

Swettenham Loop Walking Trail (please see accompanying numbered map)

Although there are several places the walker might wish to start this loop starts from the car park that lies in Swettenham village between The Swettenham Arms public house and the Church.

From the car park **(1)** with the Public house facing you look over to the right where the exit to the Car park starts to find a Public footpath sign **(2)**. Take this route along the edge of a field that has been planted with lavender. After a short distance the path reaches a stile onto a lane which you cross bearing slightly to the right and then descending down into the valley. **(3)** Follow the path up to the other side and on reaching another lane turn right. **(4)**

Walk along the lane until you reach another Public footpath sign on your right **(5)**. Having climbed the stile and entered Swettenham Meadows nature reserve descend ten metres until the path splits. Taking the left hand path down four steps, cross a boardwalk and bridge to a field gate. The reserve consists of a number of small fields with wet flushes. It is a good place to see primrose in the spring and hear chiffchaff and cuckoo calling. During the summer ragged robin and marsh thistle can be seen along with several species of butterfly such as painted lady. As autumn arrives scabious can be found and young buzzards heard overhead. The reserve is grazed by Cheshire Wildlife Trust Dexter cattle who keep the grass short enough for plants to flourish. The cattle are very use to people and although inquisitive, will leave you alone.

Passing through the gate **(6)** walk straight ahead over another boardwalk descending slowly all the time. At the bottom of the field is another boardwalk over very marshy ground. Follow this and then ascend the slope to the left towards a gap in the hedge **(7)**. Continue through the gap straight ahead to another stretch of boardwalk. Having crossed this follow the path straight ahead until you reach a pedestrian gate adjacent to a field gate **(8)**. On the other side of the gate bear right up a bank keeping near to the fence line until you reach a post with an arrow **(9)** on at which you turn left and head towards another field and pedestrian gate **(10)**.

You are now back on the lane you left before entering the reserve. Turn left and walk down the lane until you reach the Public footpath sign again. **(5)** Climb the stile and walk down the slope using the wooden steps installed to give easier passage over this very wet meadow. A bridge at the bottom takes you over the Swettenham Brook and up to the road. **(11)** Once there turn right and follow the road back to the car park.

Once again, facing the Public house, walk to the left hand side of the building and into the beer garden. From here you can enter The Quinta Arboretum **(12)** which was initially planted by Sir Bernard Lovell and which is now run by the Tatton Garden Society. The Society has an honesty box at the entrance for donations to help maintain this fascinating area.

Having entered the site, take the path that bears diagonally right. This very quickly brings you to an avenue of native trees **(13)** planted in the late 1990's. Walk long the avenue to a set of double gates **(14)** which mark the start of The Quinta nature Reserve.

On entering, you have several choices of route. You will soon arrive at a crossroads **(15)** at which we suggest you turn right. Follow the path and arrive at a pedestrian gate. Once through turn right and go through another gate into a field. Like Swettenham Meadows Dexter cattle graze this site during the summer and early autumn.

This field has cuckoo flower growing in it as well as lesser celandine. The path takes you down to the Swettenham Brook and having crossed a stile to your left you walk along the brook until the path starts to climb into the ancient woodland. Look out for the bluebells and ramsons (wild garlic) during spring. The path turns to steps and you ascend to the top, bear left and reach another gate. The plantation in front of you was planted by Sir Bernard Lovell in the early 1990's as an extension to the broadleaved woodland you have just walked through. Turn right and follow the path around to another pedestrian gate. This takes you along the top of another meadow **(16)** and enables you to see over to the River Dane. There are benches along the way if you fancy stopping to admire the view. Eventually you will arrive at another gate **(17)** after which you bear left and follow a mown path back to the avenue.

At this point you can either turn right to retrace your steps or take advantage of a stroll around the Arboretum until eventually emerging back in the car park.

If you have any questions or queries regarding this nature reserve, please call Cheshire Wildlife Trust on 01948 820728 (Mon-Fri) to speak to the reserve manager or e-mail: reserves@cheshirewt.org.uk