

Walk No 3

Discovering Oilhouse Coppice

Starting from the **Coke Hearth**, this walk will take you through a varied landscape of woodlands, streams, a dingle, and the open space of **Rough Park**. It also includes a new **community orchard** established on the site of old cottage gardens, and **New Pool**, one of the oldest reservoirs in the Ironbridge Gorge. The walk concludes with a short section of the **Sabbath Walks**, laid out in the late 18C by the Quaker ironmaster, Richard Reynolds.

 **Accessibility:** There are variable surfaces from stoned tracks to muddy paths. Boots are recommended. Some sections run next to watercourses - *children will need to be supervised.*

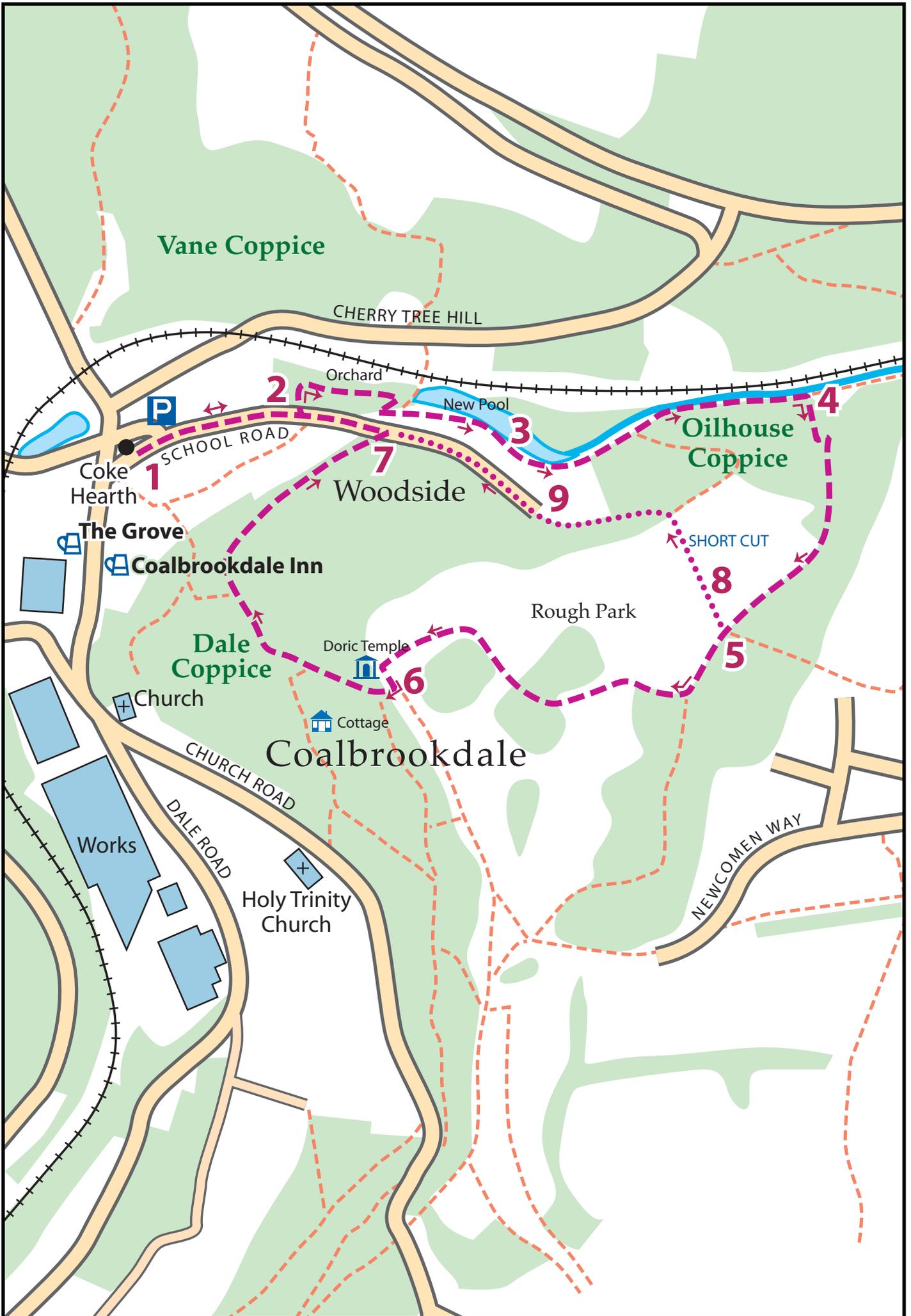
 **Key Features:** Social and industrial heritage, varied landscapes and nature.

 **Length & Time:** About 3 km (shorter option 1½ km), 1½ hours (shorter option 45 minutes)

 **Public Transport:** Buses stop and pick up near local shop by the Coke Hearth.

 **Refreshments:** Coalbrookdale Inn, The Grove, café at Museum of Iron

 **WCs:** Museum of Iron site



1 Start at the historic Coke Hearth, where, after Abraham Darby I's discovery of coke-smelted iron in 1709, the air would have been pungent with the smell of sulphur from the clamps of coal being continuously coked. With the main Dale Road behind you, and a handsome residence, Woodbury, on your right, walk up the narrow metalled road which is School Road.

This road continues uphill (fronting a row of cottages on its right), but you should stay on a level, below the road, choosing a track which has the old School House on the left (a boys' school built by the Darbys). Continue on this sunken track, known as the Ginny Rails.

After some 200 metres you will come to a stoned path and wooden 5-barred gate on your left.

2 Pass through the gate into the newly established Coalbrookdale Woodside Community Orchard.

3 Pass through the orchard exit and resume the original Ginny Rails which has now become part of Rough Park Way. A willow-and-alder-fringed tract of water known as New Pool is on your left.

Continue along the path and you will soon enter the woodland shade of Oilhouse Coppice on your right. Ignore a bridleway rising steeply on your right and continue walking with the brook gently babbling on your left and the railway corridor running parallel. You will soon come to a wooden signpost.

4 Take the right fork signed to Oilhouse Coppice. The path here winds up through a lovely dingle with several small pools and an open watercourse wending its way down to the brook at the bottom.

At the top of the dingle you will exit onto the open space of Rough Park, an entirely contrasting landscape. Continue walking along the path, passing the junction with a tarmacked path on your left which leads down from the Woodside housing estate. For the shorter walk at this point see the 'Short Cut' description at the bottom of this section.

5 Continue on this path for about 80m, bearing right at the fork (i.e. ignoring the main stone path ahead) which soon presents itself. Ahead and to your left are fine stands of poplars, one of the first trees to green the landscape in spring, planted when Rough Park was created. Nearby are also plantings of white polar, another attractive species, especially because of the pale glistening undersides that contrast with the dark upper surface of its leaves.

Resume the rather grassy path which leads up through two mixed deciduous plantings on either side. The path levels out at the top with a bench on the left, before curving round to the left and coming to a 5-barred gate and entrance point into the wood on the right. The land here is frequently very muddy.

6 Go through the gate and enter the wood which is called Dale Coppice. The main path which is often covered with beech leaves in autumn descends gently. 40m on, you will see a wooden post on the right of the path indicating the site of the former Doric Temple associated with a serpentine series of walks, the Sabbath Walks, laid out by the Quaker ironmaster Richard Reynolds in the late 18C.

Continue on down until you meet a fairly steep flight of steps, at the bottom of which there is a wooden signpost. Continue more or less straight on, signed to Woodside, Coalbrookdale. The path just here can be muddy and very uneven in places but soon leads behind a terrace of houses to your left. This stretch of the walk is believed to be part of the original northernmost extremity of the Sabbath Walks. Eventually you will come to a narrow gateway.

7 Pass through the gateway and turn left down a narrow tarmacked road, taking the right hand at the subsequent fork. This road leads back down to the starting point at the Coke Hearth, passing on its way a fine terrace of late 18C workers' cottages on the left.