



1. Start your walk from Abbey Foregate car park and follow the path along the back of the supermarket. Go through the kissing gate into the field.

2. In summer you may see cattle grazing in this field. As the cattle keep the grass short and remove nutrients from the ground, they create ideal conditions for wild flowers to grow.

Walk through another gate at the end of the field and you will see an orchard in front of you. Help yourself to an apple or pear if there are any on the trees! Turn left and follow the cycleway. This was the route of the steam railway, but now has a good covering of trees. Go underneath the road and through another kissing gate. Cross the field and pass a pond to your left before going under another underpass.

3. This meadow is another haven for wildflowers, but is managed by haymaking. Like grazing, this process removes nutrients from the land and by drying and turning the grass after it has been cut, we allow the wildflower seed to return to the ground. Follow the path alongside the brook and stop off for lunch on one of the picnic tables.

After passing another small pond you will walk into another hay meadow. To your right are the remains of an old mill channel.

4. The main path of the Rea Brook was re-routed here recently. A variety of native trees have been planted on the large mound in this field, and a Hazel coppice is being established on the lower ground.

5. Follow the path alongside the brook, passing an Ash and Alder coppice. Eventually you will reach a t-junction. Turn right and cross over the green bridge.

Walk around the football pitches and follow the path into the shaded area, up some shallow steps, eventually reaching a steeper set of steps. Turn right at the top of these and walk through the kissing gate and under the cycleway bridge.

6. Cross the 2 fields and along the path and go through a kissing gate.

Eventually you will climb a small set of steps and pass some cycle stands. Continue straight along the path amongst some Crab Apple trees.

7. After another shallow set of steps and a kissing gate you will enter a large field. Half way across this field you will pass a hedge that has recently been laid.

In the bottom corner of the field you will pass through a kissing gate and climb a set of steps up to the road. Turn right along the road and right again down the steps. You can join the path by the underpass and then retrace your steps to Abbey Foregate car park.



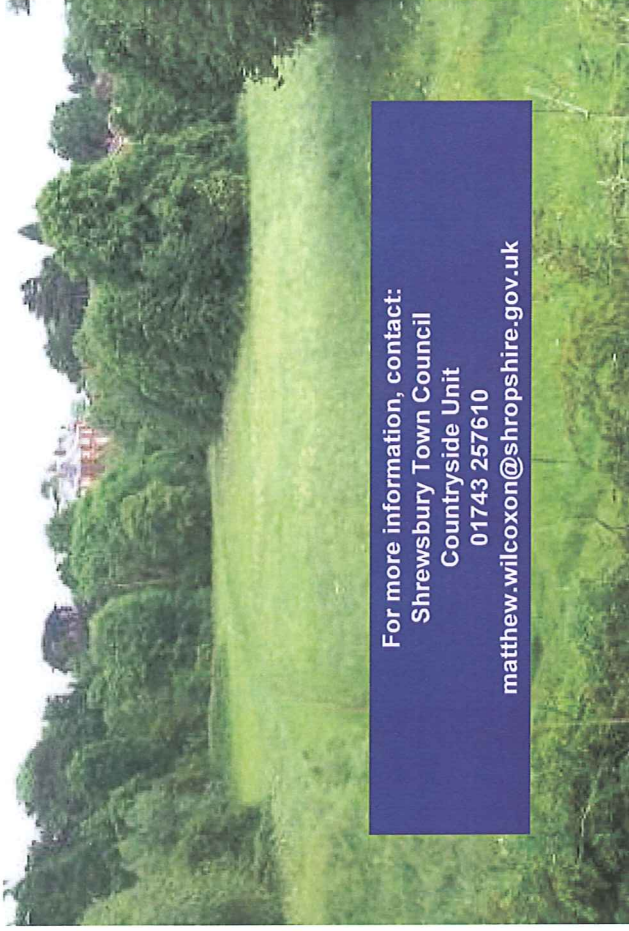
These waymarkers will guide you around the circular route.

Rea Brook Valley Circular Walk

A short walk, exploring the meadows of the Rea Brook Valley Local Nature Reserve.

The Rea Brook Valley is the largest most visited countryside site managed by Shrewsbury Town Council's Countryside Unit. Its status as a Local Nature Reserve is national recognition of its importance as a haven for wildlife and a place for people to enjoy. The valley is a green corridor from the open countryside right into the heart of the town and the reserve stretches from Abbey Foregate to Meole Brace. Early settlers, monks and farmers have shaped the landscape here over hundreds of years. Remains of their activities are still visible along the brook.

This circular walk explores the northern end of the reserve. As well as using the map, you can follow the 'Rea Brook Circular Walk' waymarkers with the Kingfisher on. The rest of the park is accessible by following the Shropshire Way signs south of Sutton. This walk is about 3 miles along generally level ground, although some areas may be muddy. There are no stiles along the route, but there are several sets of steps.



For more information, contact:
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1. This is the site of the old steam railway station, which served Shropshire until 1960

2. Dung left by the cattle attracts invertebrates, and their uneven grazing habits create patches of different vegetation. Look out for Great Spotted Woodpeckers drumming in the tops of the large trees.

3. Look out for Kingfishers here. They will usually announce their arrival with a high pitched whistle before whizzing past. They may even land on a branch hanging over the water and give you a display of expert fishing!

4. The mill channel diverted water from the brook and powered one of the six corn mills along the valley. The mill races here are recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 and are thought to be over 1000 years old.

5. Coppicing involves cutting a tree near the ground. This does not kill the tree and can actually make it live longer. Wood can be harvested year on year this way without ever needing to replant trees. This is how people would have taken firewood, building materials and cattle fodder for hundreds of years. The wildlife has benefited from this, as certain species of birds and insects favour living in coppices rather than mature woodland.

8. Hedge laying is an ancient art, used to keep livestock from straying before the use of fences. It is now used to give cover for wildlife, as an unmanaged hedge eventually becomes a line of separate trees.

7. The small pool here is a great place to see dragonflies and damselflies. Listen out for the soft calling of Bullfinches hiding in the thick Blackthorn scrub.

6. Just upstream of the bridge is Sutton Spa, which was thought to produce water with great healing properties, still being sold as late as the 1940s.

