

**The book  
‘Walking Around Sandbach’  
is released as a free download in  
pdf form.**

Please be aware that this book was published in 2002;  
therefore some maps and accounts may be out of date  
and inaccurate.

Though released in good faith the author cannot be held  
liable for any changes which may have made the  
described routes unusable or even dangerous.

**If in doubt either turn back  
or take an alternative route.**

# Walking



# Around

# SANDBACH

**Revised Edition 2002**

Roger Foden

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# The Country Code

Guard against all risk of fire.

Fasten all gates behind you.

Keep dogs under proper control.

Keep to paths across farm land.

Avoid damaging fences, hedges and walls.

Leave no litter.

Safeguard water supplies.

Protect wildlife, wild plants and trees.

Walk carefully on country roads.

Respect the life of the countryside.

**Take only photographs**

**Leave only footprints**



# Acknowledgements

This book would not have been begun or completed without the help of the following, who helped, cajoled and supported.

I thank them all.

**Jacki Foden** for her love, for accompanying me on these walks and for helping with proof-reading.

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**Cheshire County Council Countryside Management** for their continuing attention to the footpaths without which this book would be useless.

**Cheshire County Council Seedcorn Fund, Congleton Borough Council and Sandbach Town Council** for the original financial assistance.


**Cheshire Museums Service** for permission to reproduce the drawings of Sea Aster and Lesser Sea Spurrey on p 18.

**Hays (now Albion) Chemicals, English Nature**, 'History of Sandbach and District' by **Cyril Massey** and 'At the Crossroads' by **Marlene & Graham Langley** provided background material.

**RiscStation and Castle Computers (was Acorn)** whose ranges of personal computers are a joy to use, with the RISC OS operating system an example to all of how computers can be powerful and crashproof, yet easy and intuitive to use.

The many friends and acquaintances who passed on information often informally and unwittingly.

This book was produced on a Personal Computer using the RISC OS operating system and !Style, a Desk Top Publishing program by Computer Concepts.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roger Foden". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the right.

Roger Foden, March 2002

# Introduction

**Preamble** This book describes some of the Public Rights of Way around Sandbach, linking them into circular walks which can take as little as one hour to complete. (But, see Timing.) Since the walks are circular it is possible to begin at any convenient point, and the starting points chosen are those convenient and logical for the author.

Some alternatives are mentioned, together with linking routes to other walks in the book, so by joining one or more routes together it is possible to make any number of afternoon or whole day excursions.

The ultimate challenge of the book, and one of the reasons for writing it, is the final route; the 'Walk Around Sandbach' which is a circumnavigation of Sandbach Parish, keeping as far as possible to Public Footpaths or minor roads. All routes such as this are an artifice; public footpaths were originally the routes to work, to church or between villages. However, attempting to use the old routes for this purpose is an interesting puzzle to solve.

It succeeds, but in the northeast quadrant a long diversion along minor roads is necessary to stay outside the boundary. In contrast, in the east the boundary follows the Trent and Mersey canal so the towpath allows an easy route. I hope you enjoy the experience.

**Timing** The time taken to walk any route depends entirely on the participants. It is possible to go at any pace between that of a cross country run and a gentle amble. Generally one can allow a walking speed of 2½ miles per hour (about 4 km per hour) across country. Give yourself time to look at the view, take photographs, identify flowers and birds, or even get slightly lost. On a hot day your speed will almost certainly be slower than when it is cold when you need to keep on the go to stay warm.

To summarise: if it feels right it is right. The whole reason for going on a walk and actually being there is **enjoyment**.

**Sustenance** There is a good selection of pubs, restaurants, tea shops and sweet shops in Sandbach so you may either revive after a walk or stock up in anticipation. (Or do both!) Most pubs nowadays seem to sell food as well as drinks. When a pub, shop or teashop is located on or close to a route its location is given.

**Equipment** Strong footwear is recommended, since field footpaths are uneven and can be muddy. Boots or wellingtons will keep your feet dry and support your ankles. Good trainers are adequate, but you may get wet feet.

Paths unfortunately do become overgrown sometimes. A strong walking stick is useful for clearing nettles. I could suggest a machete, but really the best way to keep footpaths open is to use them regularly.

All the walks in this book are within the area covered by three new Ordnance Survey Explorer maps (orange cover): 257, 267 and 268. They superseded the two 2½ inch Pathfinder maps (green cover): Pathfinder775 (SJ66/76 Winsford) and Pathfinder791 (SJ65/75 Crewe).

All are needed as the edges of these maps run through the centre of Sandbach. Their use is recommended. All map references are six figure, eg Scotch Common, SJ759610.

**Parking** Suggested parking places are those favoured by the author since they are off road and therefore safe from that point of view. However, they may not be suitable for all readers. If you wish to start a walk at a point more convenient to yourself please park carefully, safely and without inconveniencing others. The canalside car park by United Phosphorus is owned by that firm, though they allow walkers and fishermen to use it. Please respect their property.

## **Sandbach Flashes**

As said elsewhere in this book, the Flashes formed because of subsidence caused by removal of shallow underground salt deposits. Cheshire contains huge reserves of solid rock salt left from the times when the area was covered by a shallow sea. There is a deep bed which lies between beds of impervious marl and a shallower layer where the salt is below a softer matrix.

In some places underground streams dissolve out the salt before coming to the surface as springs. From early times these natural 'brine springs' were exploited as a source of salt, which was used as a preservative. The Romans valued the salt from Cheshire.

Later, as salt came to be used in greater quantities: for cheese making; for dyeing; in the chemical industry, the natural brine springs were inadequate. Entrepreneurs dug and drilled holes into the ground to find the sources of the brine. Where they found brine - and it was quite common in Cheshire in the Northwich, Middlewich and Sandbach area - it was pumped to the surface and evaporated to give salt. The brine was replaced naturally by fresh groundwater which dissolved out more salt.

Unfortunately the brine pumpers did not know exactly from where their salt originated; the solid rock salt could be some miles away from the pumping site. It was however from the shallow layer within the soft matrix.

The salt trade grew rapidly during the 19th century and large tonnages of salt were produced. In 1878 approximately 1.3 million cubic yards of solid salt was removed in brine from the Northwich and Winsford area. This rapid removal of salt from the upper layer soon had unfortunate results; land subsided, on occasion suddenly and disastrously. Some buildings in Northwich collapsed into holes; there was loss of life. More commonly there was a somewhat gentler progression. The Flashes formed where subsidence took the land level below the local water table. There are generally two types: narrow, long and deep with steep banks like Moston Flash; wide and shallow with gently shelving shores like Watch Lane Flash and Hall Flash.

The Flashes around Sandbach are all on privately owned land. They are nature reserves and there is no access to them if not on a public right of way. Many of them are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) chosen because of their special biology, geology and geomorphology. They are administered by a Management Committee of British Salt, landowners, angling clubs, botanists, biologists and ornithologists. English Nature acts in a consultative role in consideration of SSSI status.

Historically 'wild brine' pumping with its ensuing subsidence has been expensive. The Brine Compensation Board was set up to administer compensation claims. Farmers lost land, houses collapsed and others had to be demolished, the railway line between Crewe and Sandbach has frequently needed to be re-levelled. The area is now thought to be comparatively stable

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since natural brine pumping ceased in 1979. Some of the Flashes, notably Pump House and Hall Flash, are becoming shallower and smaller through natural silting processes. Natural subsidence will inevitably continue as some salt is removed by underground streams.

Salt is still extracted from the underground deposits in the area, but today in a controlled manner, by two means:

Holes are drilled deep into the lower layer of solid rock salt. Water is injected down a pipe. The water dissolves salt and the brine is brought to the surface up a second pipe. It is pumped to an industrial site to be purified and evaporated to give pure salt which can be used for chemical processes and for the table. Regular measurements by echo sounding ensure that the cavity produced by removal of solid salt is small enough to prevent subsidence; only about 20% of the salt bed is removed. Even so, the size of the cavities is enormous: large enough to hold St Paul's Cathedral. (See p. 20).

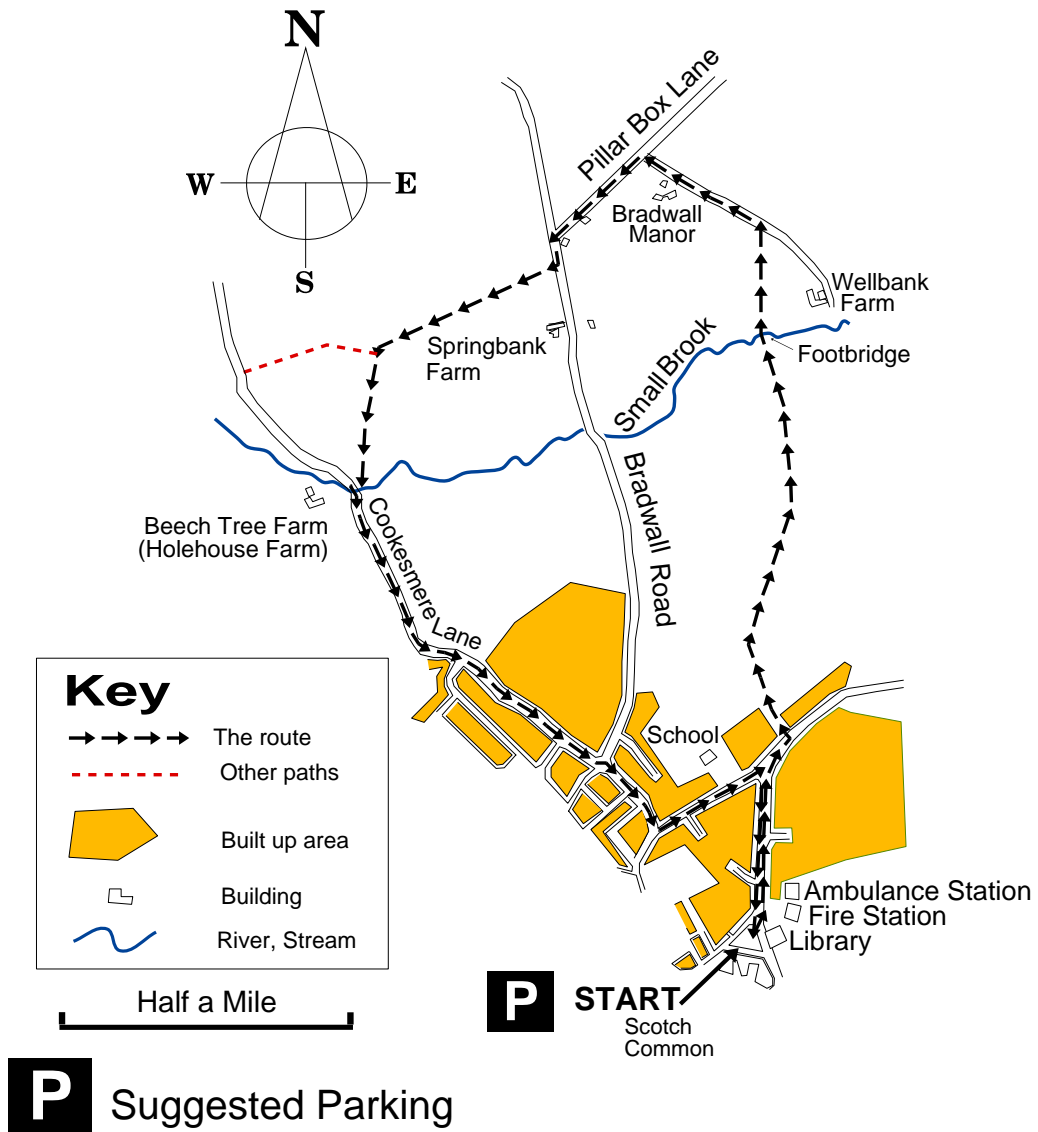
Solid salt is mined near Winsford. The salt bed is up to 30 feet thick and is cut away in a carefully controlled manner leaving adequate supporting pillars. The mine caverns are huge, with roadways that carry large quarrying vehicles. The rock salt is crushed and brought to the surface to be used mainly as a de-icer on roads.

*Unfortunately every reference book is soon out of date. Whilst making the revisions to this book I was surprised how many changes had occurred in the eight years since the first edition: Foden Trucks production has moved to Leyland, ERF to a new purpose built site at Middlewich; Hays became Albion; Arclid Hospital has been demolished. There have also been changes to footpath routes and appearance.*

*Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this account, the author cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, changes to field boundaries, rights of way or concessionary footpaths. The reader must be aware that adverse weather conditions may make some paths impassable with safety. If in doubt either turn back or take an alternative route.*

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# Bradwall Manor



# Bradwall Manor

**Map:** OS 25000:1 (2½ inch) map:

Pathfinder775 (SJ66/76) Winsford.

**Distance:** about ¾ miles or 5 km.

**Parking** is available on Scotch Common (SJ759610) except on a Thursday, which is market day.

**Pubs & Grub:** Aplenty in Sandbach!

*This walk could be combined with 'Brereton Green'.*

This short walk begins in the centre of Sandbach at The Commons, or Scotch Common, the large area adjacent to the library. It is used as a car park except on Thursdays when the whole area becomes a large open air market.

The Market Charter was granted in 1578, since when the weekly market has thrived and is very popular with hundreds of customers coming from far and wide. Originally the market was held in the cobbled market square where the Saxon Crosses stand, but it now covers the whole of the area between the library and the Town Hall and extends onto Hightown, the main shopping street.

The name Scotch Common derives from an incident on September 3rd 1651. The September Fair was in full swing when a skirmish took place there between local men and Scots cavalry returning after the battle of Worcester. The Scots, tired after their long journey, were set upon and some were killed.

From Scotch Common, with your back to the Library building, turn right and walk along Congleton Road away from the town. After about ¼ mile, 100 metres beyond the traffic bollards at the junction with Offley Road, on the left-hand side of the road is a farm gate with a footpath sign and stile on its left. Cross the stile and proceed through the field keeping the hedge to your left hand. On a clear day you should be able to see Jodrell Bank radio telescope diagonally across to your right. The next stile is in the far left corner of the field.

Cross this stile and continue directly forward across the middle of the field to the next stile. From here on, to the minor road beside Bradwall Manor, there are usually several electric fences, some of which may not have insulating pipe

placed over the footpath crossing point; take care. Again continue forward to a stile which is on the boundary of Sandbach and Bradwall. Once over it go diagonally left up the field towards some trees.

The next stile is on a farm road and to the left of a gate. Over the stile (the 5th) turn left and walk along the field boundary to the left corner and cross a stile, footbridge and stile.

Turn diagonally right and walk directly across the middle of the field (towards an electricity pole). Horse jumps have been erected in the field and around its boundaries. Cross a field boundary (a line of trees) where there is a stile by a large gap. At the far right hand corner of the field is a stile which leads out onto an unmade road.

Turn left on the road. After about 200 metres you pass the entrance to Bradwall Manor on the left, with a most unwelcoming sign. The Manor is the home of the Barlow family who own the estate. Bradwall Hall, the original manor house, was demolished in the early 1950's.

The unmade road ends at a T-junction with a minor road. (*Turning right here links with the footpath to Brereton Green.*) Turn left onto the road (Pillar Box Lane) and proceed to the next T-junction. The Pillar Box or Letter Box is in the garden wall of the house on this corner.

*(Here you could turn right to see the traces of Bradwall Hall: Walk towards Bradwall and after about ½ mile, between some holly bushes on the left, you can see the old gate posts marking the entrance to the Hall, with some more remnants visible in the trees across the field.)*

Turn left onto Bradwall Road. After a short distance there is a stile on the right of the road. Cross this stile and walk forward through the fields with the fence to your left hand, crossing two more stiles in fences across the path. The third stile is in a hedge on the left, about 500 metres from the road. Go over the stile into a field corner.

*(There is a junction of footpaths at the stile. One path follows the field boundary on your left, the other follows the field boundary on your right.)*

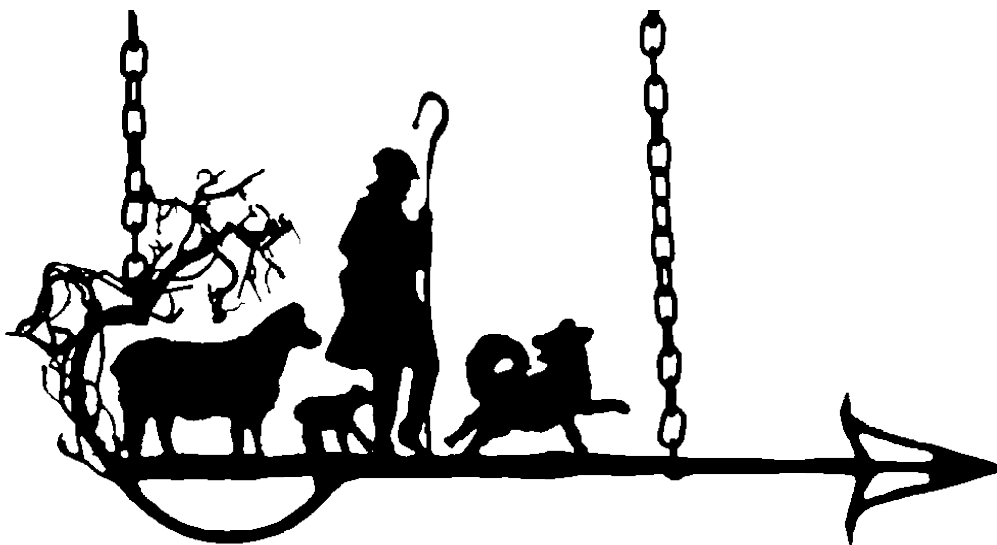
Take the left path and keep to the hedge on your left. After a short distance, at the far left corner of the field, is a stile. Cross it and proceed forward, in the same direction, through the middle of a field to a stile which leads onto a farm track. Turn right and in about 50 metres you arrive at a gate onto a minor road.

Turn left at the road (Cokesmere Lane). Beech Tree Farm is on the right

(named Holehouse Farm on the older OS map). It has a very decorative name board and on the gate posts at the drive entrance are metal plaques picturing the breeds of cattle and sheep that are farmed there. Walk down Cookesmere Lane for about ¼ mile, past the junction with Belmont Avenue, to the junction with Sweettooth Lane.

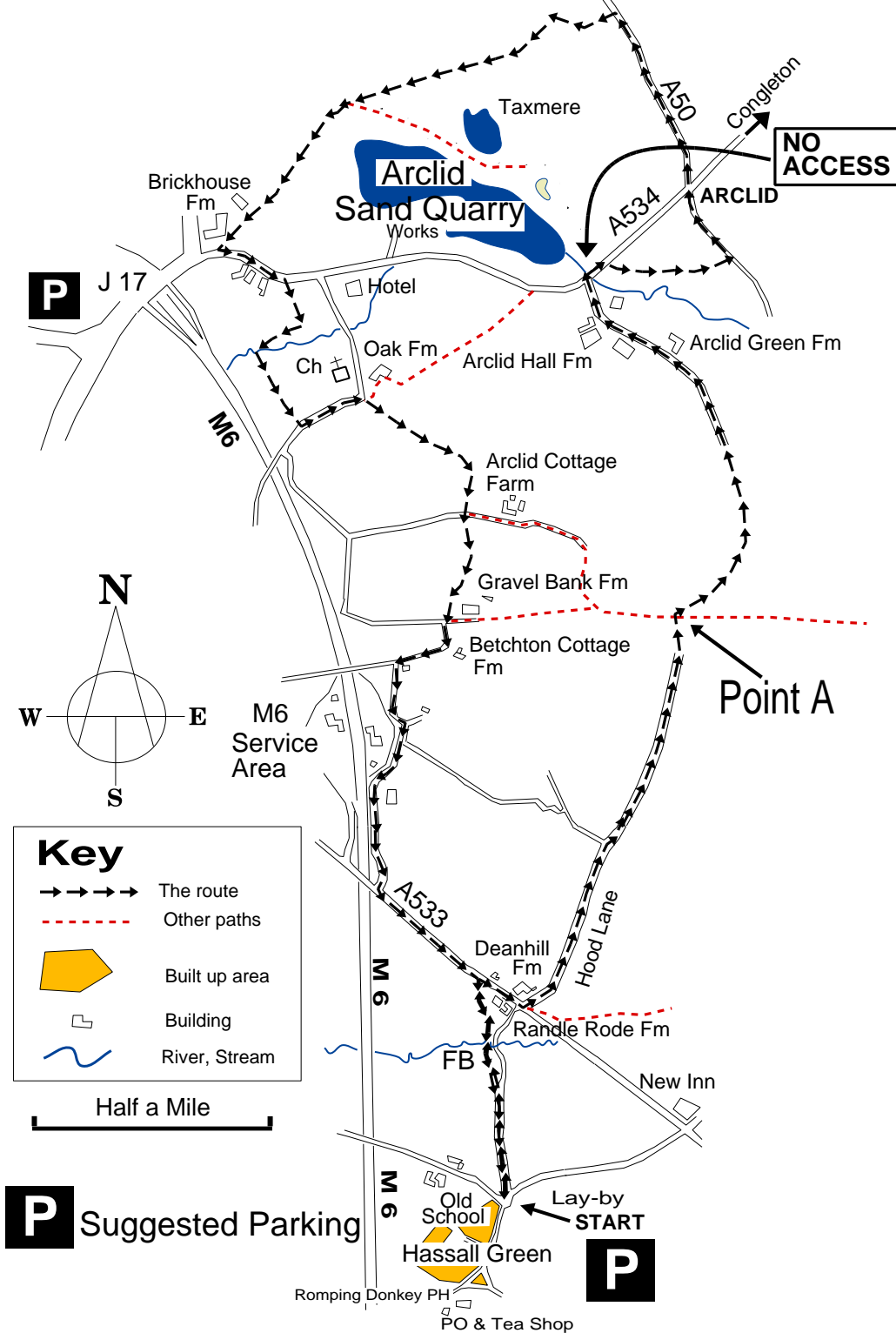
Turn left and immediately right into Bradwall Road. After about 200 metres you come to a T-junction with Offley Road. Turn left into Offley Road and in about 300 metres come to the junction with Congleton Road (with the bollards noted earlier).

Turn right and in about 400 metres you are back at Scotch Common.



*Beech Tree Farm - Gate Sign*

# Hassall Green to Arclid



# Hassall Green to Arclid

**Maps:** OS 1:25000 (2½ inch) maps:

Pathfinder775 (SJ66/76) Winsford and Pathfinder791 (SJ65/75) Crewe.

**Distance:** About 7¾ miles or 12½ km. See the note at the end of the chapter for a shortened walk.

**Parking:** The route may be followed starting at any point, but the only car parking is at Hassall (SJ781588) Scotch Common (SJ759610) or a small car park at the west of M6 Junction 17 (SJ767617).

**Pubs & Grub:** About ¼ mile from the start point, The Romping Donkey at Hassall Green (SJ780584). The Rose & Crown at Arclid cross roads. There are also a shop, Post Office, tea shop and restaurant by the canal bridge at Hassall Green (SJ779584).

*This walk could be combined with 'Brereton Green'.*

This walk begins at the T-junction of Betchton Road and New Inn Lane, grid ref SJ781588, by the old Hassall Green school building (which is now a dwelling). There is a small lay-by opposite.

At that junction, between the road to Malkin's Bank and the road to the New Inn and Smallwood, an old road runs due north, directly away from Hassall Green. It possibly formed part of the network of roads which were used for transporting salt from the Sandbach area towards the Pennines. (Saltersford, at Holmes Chapel, is one of the crossing points on the Dane.) Today the route is just a farm road running between hedges.

Take the old road. After about 300 metres the public right of way bends slightly left, entering a field through a gateway and stile. There are waymarks on the gate posts. Continue forward through the field, dropping down between some bushes to the river where there is a footbridge. (The old road has continued, slightly right, between hedge banks down to the river. It can be seen just to the right of the footbridge where it crossed the river by a ford. Some of the original road cobbles are visible in the river bed.)

Cross the bridge and continue uphill with the field boundary to your right hand. The course of the old road is visible just over the hedge. At the top of the

field, almost directly under some power lines, is a stile. Cross it and continue forward, still with the hedge to your right, to a gate and stile which lead onto the main A533 road about 500 metres east of the M6 bridge.

Turn right and walk along the road past an old brick barn on the left and the half-timbered Randle Rode Farm (AD1684) on the right. After the farm are some farm buildings and just after the farm buildings the farm drive, on the course of the old road, emerges from the right. Almost opposite this another track leads off to the left, with a public footpath sign at the junction. There is also a house on the corner: Deanhill Farm. The public footpath leads off across the fields to the east. Do not follow the field path, take the main track, which is Hood Lane, the old road to Arclid Green.

The old road is still cobbled in places. It leads between hedges in a direct line. After about half a mile there is a junction, with a farm road off to the left. Continue forward another ½ mile to a stile and gate across the old road. Over the stile the road continues, as a marked depression, for about 200 metres at the left side of the field. A row of trees marks the old road boundary at the right.

Emerging from the old road, continue through a gateway to the left of a large isolated farm building (used as a hangar by a microlight club) and go up the field, now on a surfaced field drive, with the boundary to your left. From this point it is possible to see Sandbach Heath church spire to the left.

You arrive at a farm road which runs across the end of the field, with metal gates in front of you and to your left. From here on the path has been diverted because of sand quarrying. There is now no public right of way forward (north). Left goes to Arclid Cottage Farm and Sandbach Heath, right to Smallwood, and to Arclid Green via the diversion.

*This is point 'A'. At the end of this account see the note which describes a shorter walk via point A.*

Turn right and follow the well made farm road. After a short distance it goes through a gate (ignore the waymark which indicates the path to Smallwood on the right) and continues, bending left through the middle of the field to another gate. Go through the gates and continue to follow the farm road, now running between fences. About 500 metres beyond the second gate you pass Arclid Green Farm on the right and shortly afterwards Arclid Hall Farm is on the left. The road is now tarmac faced. Continue forward down the hill to the main Sandbach - Congleton road (the A534).



**Access to the Arclid Quarry site at this point is now closed.**

Turn right on the road for about 15 metres and cross a stile on the right into a field. Follow the right hand field boundary up a gentle rise to a right hand bend in the fence. Here branch off left across the middle of the field, heading towards a bungalow. The next stile is to the left of the bungalow and a path leads beside it, emerging through a laurel hedge onto a garage forecourt.

Walk forwards to the road; the A50. Turn left and walk along the road. It is best to cross to the right hand pavement as soon as is safe; the pavement continues only on that side. Cross the A534 at Arclid traffic lights, pausing if necessary at the Rose & Crown Inn.

Continue alongside the A50 for another ½ mile, looking out for a footpath on the left just after a cottage on the right. If you reach a public footpath sign on the right you have walked about 100 metres too far!

Cross the road, enter the field and walk forward with the boundary to your left. (The path is part of the 'Brereton Green' walk.) In the far left corner is a footbridge guarded by stiles.

Cross the footbridge, turn half right and walk diagonally across the field. The building behind you is Taxmere Farm. In about 300 metres there is a waymark post in the far left hand corner. Here turn half left and walk diagonally across the middle of the adjacent field heading again for the far corner and the next stile. Over that stile continue in the same direction, going diagonally left across the middle of the field towards a tall hedge with high ground behind it.

The next stile is close to a bend in the hedge. Partly hidden in a hollow, it leads onto a footbridge. Cross the stile and bridge and climb up and to the right through Alder trees. The path becomes more open, running between a tall hedge to the right and on the left the high ground mentioned earlier. The high ground hides Arclid Sand Quarry and is the surface soil which was removed to expose the sand layer. In early summer this area hosts a magnificent display of Common Spotted Orchids which thrive in the damp alkaline conditions created by the marl in the spoil heap.

Continue forward with the hedge boundary to your right. In about 250 metres there is a stile in the right hand corner of the field. (Here it is possible to turn left to walk up onto the old spoil heap, for good views to the north. It is, however, not a public right of way.) The stile is followed in about 50 metres by another which leads onto a field drive and large field.

Cross the stile and follow this drive which leads straight to the A534 Sandbach - Congleton road by Brickhouse Farm.

At the A534 turn left and walk down the road for about 250 metres; take care, the road is a busy one. On a left hand bend and just before the big road sign there is a stile on the right. Go over the stile and down into the field. Walk directly forward through the middle of the field to the opposite hedge which is about 150 metres away.

At the hedge turn right for a short distance to a stile. Cross the stile and turn right. Go forward and slightly to the left, away from the field boundary. The footpath leads down towards a stream where there is a stile and footbridge. Cross the footbridge and go up the hill with the field boundary on your right hand. To your left is Sandbach Heath Church; St Johns.

At the top right hand corner of the field cross the stile and continue in the same direction, now with the field boundary on your left. It is about 50 metres to the next stile which leads out to a minor road.



*St John's Church, Sandbach Heath*

Turn left and walk down the road for about 250 metres, passing the entrance to Sandbach Heath church on the left. At a sharp left hand bend in the road there is a stile on the right.

Cross the stile and walk slightly left across the centre of the field to the opposite hedge and a stile beside a water trough. The next stile is straight across the field, again beside a water trough. Cross this stile and walk half left towards some farm buildings and the left hand end of a line of trees, where a stile leads into a shady corridor of trees to the right. In about 100 metres, by a small pool, another stile leads you out onto a narrow road close to Arclid Cottage Farm.

*(Turning left here you can follow a farm track past Arclid Cottage Farm back to the point 'A' mentioned earlier. From point A you may continue towards Arclid on the shorter walk. [See Note at the end of this chapter.] It is also possible to return to Hassall down Hood Lane from point A.)*

Go right and almost immediately left over another stile into a field. Walk forward through the field with the hedge on your right to a stile in the far right hand corner. Cross the stile and walk through the next field, with the hedge on your right, to the next stile which is again in the far right hand field corner. Go over this stile and turn left to walk, with the field boundary on your left, for about 100 metres to a stile which leads onto a minor road close to a farm.

*(Here you may turn left and walk directly forward over stiles through fields to a gate on a farm road at point 'A' and the shorter walk as above, or an alternative way back down Hood Lane. [See Note at the end of this chapter.]*

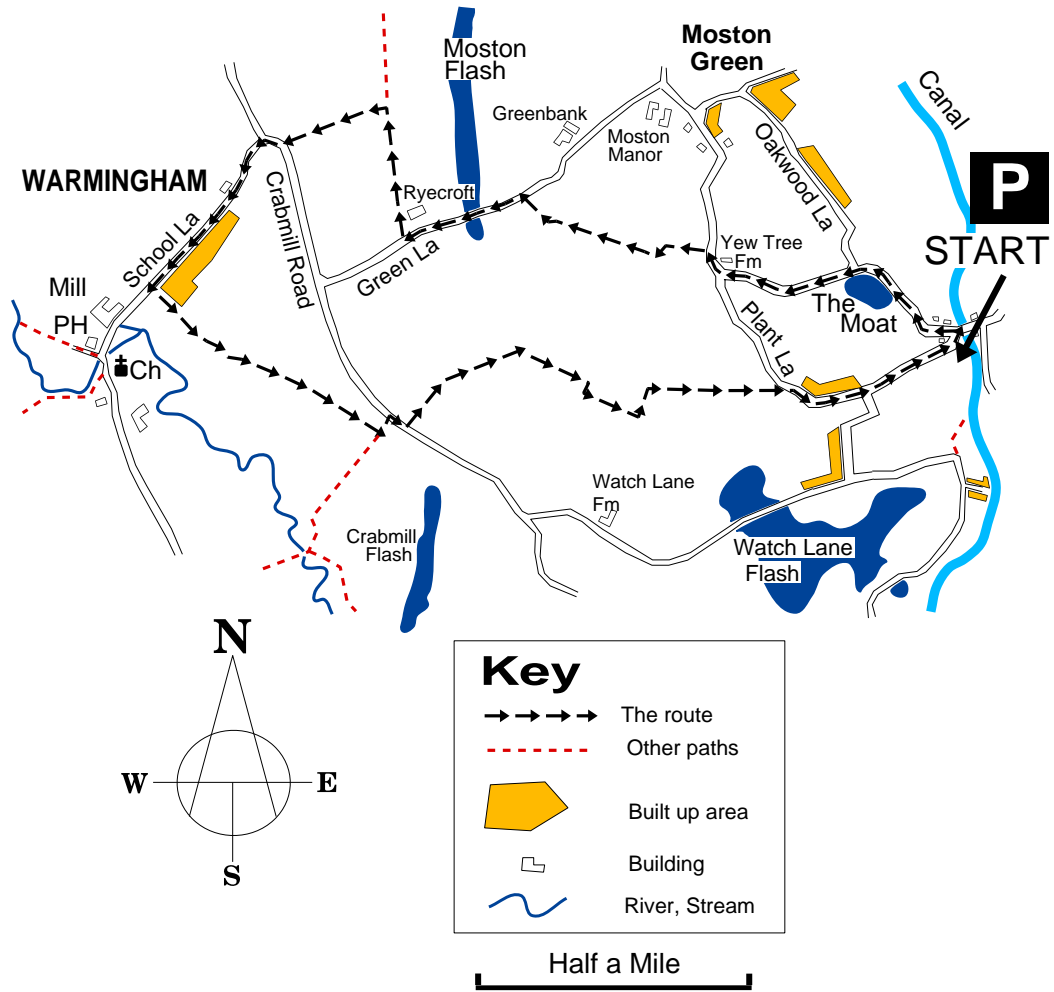
On the road turn right and immediately left, down minor roads. The road bends sharply right and after a further 150 metres, just after a cottage, as the road begins to rise to cross the M6, there is a farm road off to the left. Take the farm road. Where it bends left, on the right is a fingerpost, gate and stile to a track leading alongside the M6 service area. Cross that stile. Ignore a second farm road beyond the gate and stile.

The track leads after about 200 metres to a stile onto a tarmac road which is a service road for the M6 services. Cross the stile, keep left and walk up the road to the main road, the A533. Turn left and walk alongside the road for about 500 metres to the footpath on the right (a stile and gate) which you used at the start of the walk.

Turn right and follow the outgoing route back to the junction by Hassall Green old school.

**Note:** It is possible to walk a shorter route of about 4¾ miles or 7½ km by taking the route from Arclid Cottage Farm to point 'A' and continuing forward to Arclid Hall Farm. The best place to park for this excursion is the small car park close to Junction 17 of the M6, opposite the filling station (SJ767617). From there take the main road towards Congleton and join the walk at the stile just before the big road sign.

# The Moat and Moston



# The Moat and Moston

**Map:** OS 25000:1 (2½ inch) map:

Pathfinder775 (SJ66/76) Winsford.

**Distance:** about 3½ miles or 5½ km.

**Parking:** A small car park is adjacent to the canal, by the road bridge at the bottom of Moss Lane (SJ732611).

**Pubs and Grub:** Nothing on the route, but near the start: The Fox public house in Elworth (SJ737617); the Chinese Take Away and Chip Shop in Elworth (SJ 737617); there are shops in Elworth village. The Bear's Paw in Warmingham (SJ708612) is close to the halfway point.

*This walk could be combined with 'Warmingham and the Western Flashes' and 'Hollins Green'.*

This walk begins at Moss Lane Bridge on the Trent and Mersey canal, the same starting point as 'Hollins Green'.

From the car park walk downhill away from the canal down Oakwood Lane, the right of the two minor roads. Immediately on the right is a new house, built on the site of two small cottages which subsided due to salt extraction. Oakwood Lane proceeds between trees which overhang on both sides before it bends sharply right.

Now the ground on each side is wet and in early Summer you may see Common Spotted Orchids. Soon afterwards on both sides standing water is evident even in Summer - this is land which has subsided because of salt extraction - and then on the left there is open water: Foden's Flash or The Moat.

The Flash gets its name because it was used for cooling water by Foden's works. You may see the evidence in a small piece of half submerged rusty iron, about a foot from the bank where there is a concrete hardstanding. This object marks the place from where water was pumped. Like many of the Flashes, Foden's Flash is a Site of Special Scientific Interest; here the surrounding wetland is also important.

As the road bends slightly left at the end of the Flash a rather muddy green lane runs off to the left. Turn left down the lane.



The unsurfaced lane runs through a boggy area with overhanging trees: Willow and Alder love the wet conditions; Hawthorn, Hazel, Sycamore and Elderberry grow in drier areas. Bird song can be heard constantly. The area probably subsided slowly, allowing trees to establish in the wetland. Do not be tempted to stray off the path, some of the waters are deep and contain soft mud. After about ¼ mile the lane emerges onto Plant Lane by Yew Tree Farm.

Turn right onto Plant Lane. In about 100 metres, just beyond Yew Tree Farm, go over the stile in the hedge on the left. Walk forward through the field keeping the hedge boundary to your right hand. The hedge is tall and contains Elderberry and Sycamore in addition to the basic Hawthorn. Follow the hedge around a left and a right bend to a stile which is to the left of a gate.

Cross the stile and head very slightly to the left (rather less than the waymark suggests). Aim for a group of trees which are beyond a slight rise. The next stile is in the

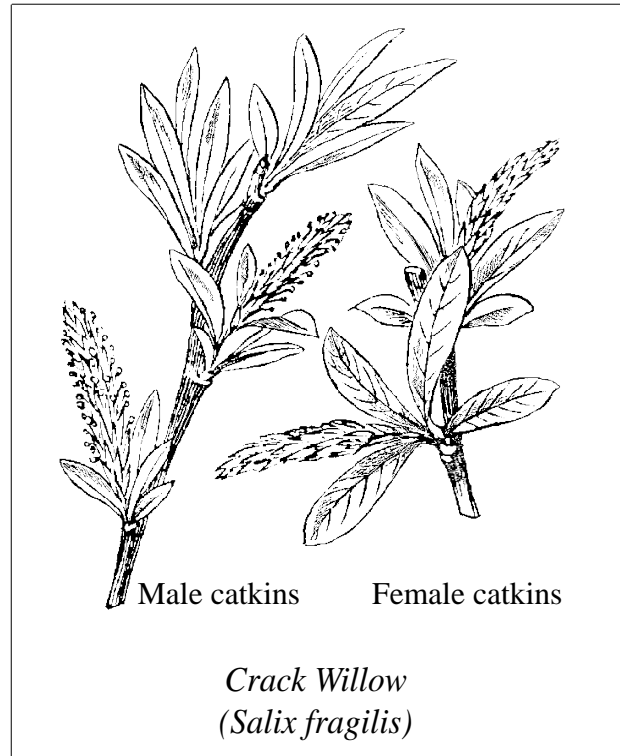
far left hand corner of the field. Go over this double stile (there is a ditch between the two) and turn right to follow the field boundary to a stile which leads out onto Green Lane, a minor road.

Turn left on Green Lane. In about 100 metres the lane drops dramatically to cross the end of Moston Flash. This narrow Flash is almost 2 km long in total. The small section to the left of the road is shallow and reeded, a haunt of coot. The part to the right is deeper and frequented



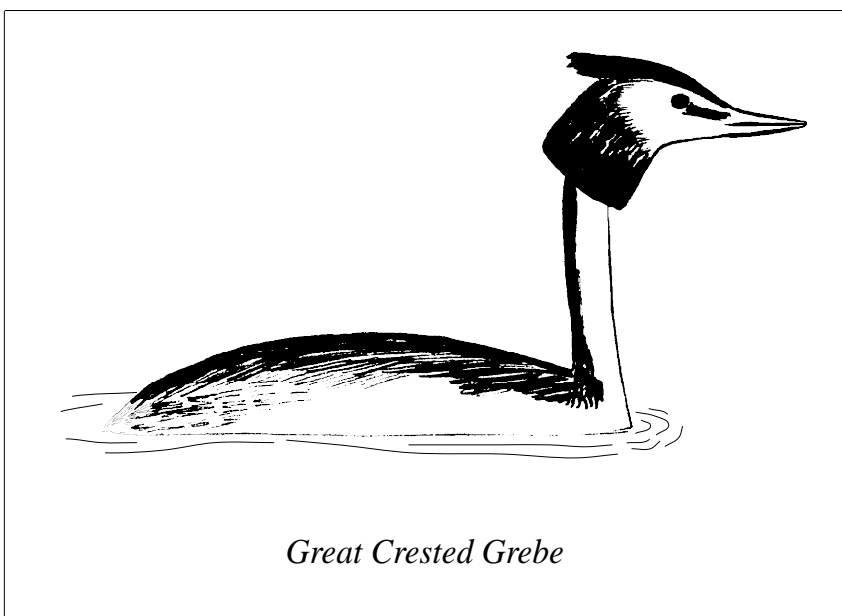
by fishers; Great Crested Grebes and Middlewich Anglers. Notice the banks of this flash; they are steep and the ground has subsided in a series of steps, contrasting with The Moat where a wide area has sunk comparatively gently.

The road rises beyond the Flash to the 'Road Clear' sign and in about 200 metres, just after Ryecroft Cottage, there is a footpath on the right. Go through the gate by the footpath sign (no stile when last checked) into the field and walk forward with the hedge to your right hand.



After about 150 metres go through a gateway into the next field. The path is now a field drive. Continue in the same direction for another 200 metres to a T-junction of field drives and turn left.

After about 150 metres there is another gateway. Go forward through it and continue with the hedge on your right for a further 200 metres to a stile and gate which lead onto Crabmill Road close to its junction with White Hall Lane and School Lane.



*Great Crested Grebe*

Turn right onto Crabmill Road and then almost immediately left into School Lane. Walk down School Lane past the Parish Hall and the school. After just over  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile, opposite the entrance to Warmingham Grange, a footpath goes left down a field

drive. (Those who require refreshment could continue down School Lane for a short distance to the Bear's Paw.) Turn left and almost immediately cross a stile by a gate. In a further 50 metres a second stile leads into a field.

In the field walk forward with the field boundary to your left hand. Continue forward through gateways past four field boundaries (no stiles at the first two when I last checked). The third field boundary has a stile on the left, as does the fourth. Continue forward with the hedge at your left hand.

About 100 metres beyond the fourth gateway, in the left hand corner of the field, a gate and stile lead onto a short length of field access drive. Cross the stile and walk up the field drive to Crabmill Road.

Turn right and in about 50 metres there is a footpath sign and stile on the left (shortly before a sign which warns of Road Liable to Subsidence).

Go left over the stile into a narrow paddock and within 5 metres go over a second stile into a larger field with a small pond immediately on your left. Walk directly forward, passing between two depressions, to a line of trees and remains of a ditch marking an old hedge bank. (The waymark on the stile suggests a course more to the right.)

At the old hedge bank turn half right and make for the far right hand corner of the field. The next stile is there, about 10 metres to the left of the corner. Cross the stile, which is a double stile, and turn half right across the corner of the field to a stile which is only about 15 metres away. Go over this stile and over a footbridge which leads through the hedge into the corner of a large field.

Walk forward through the large field keeping the hedge boundary to your left hand. In 200 metres at a field corner turn right to follow the hedge and in 25 metres cross a stile on your left. Walk forward, still with a hedge boundary on your left, and in the corner of the field, by some large Ash trees, a stile leads into the next field.

Cross the stile and walk forward with the field boundary to your right. In about 50 metres there is a double stile in the fence on the right. Go over the stiles and walk slightly left across the centre of the field, aiming for the red roof of a house and a white gable end which are visible through a gap in the trees ahead. It may be possible for those with good eyesight or binoculars to see the post and yellow waymark which mark the position of the next stile at the far side of the field.



That stile is a double stile with a footbridge between. Cross them and continue forward in the same direction to the far corner of a field, just to the left of a house with a dormer window and the white gable mentioned before.

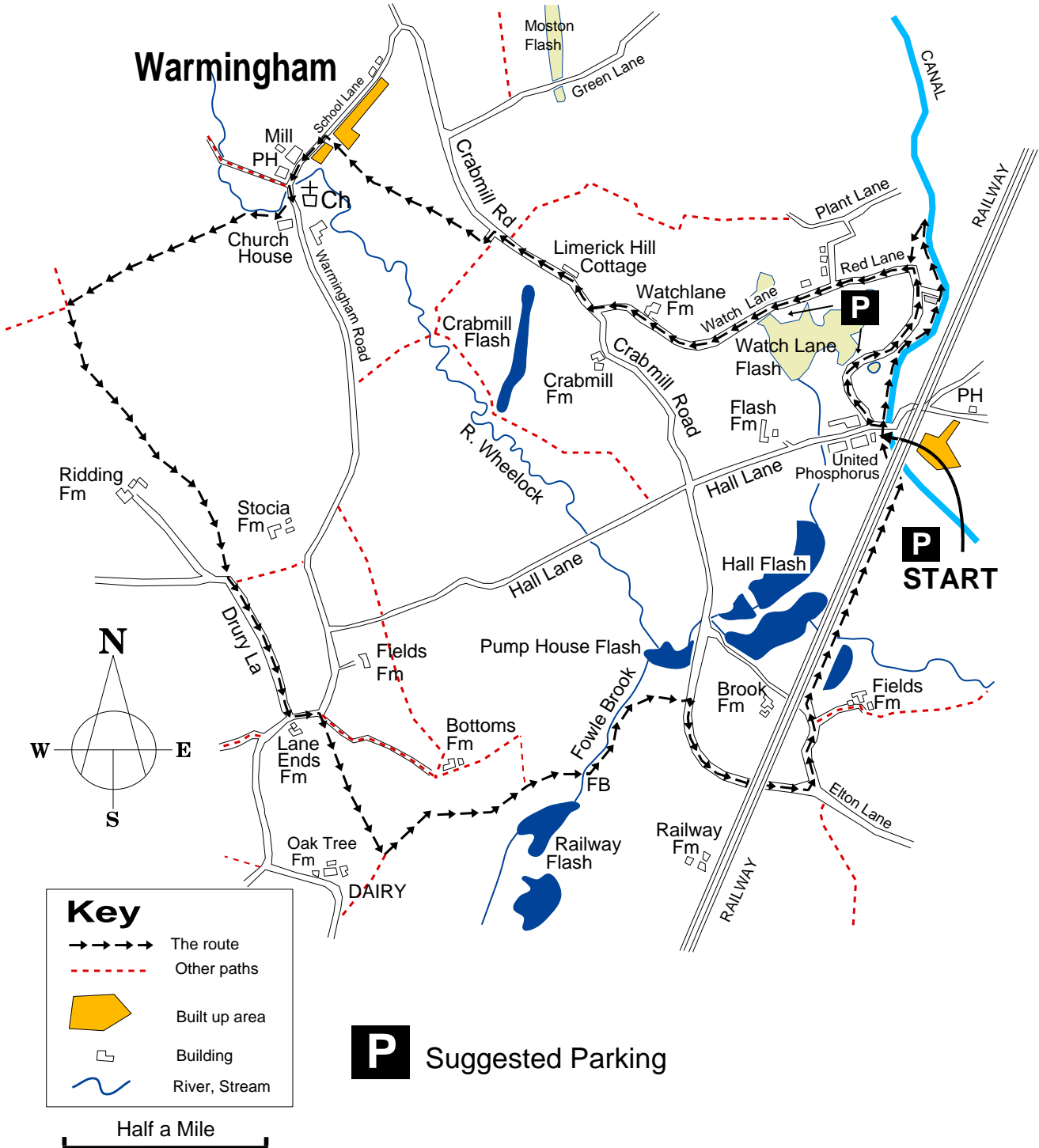
In that far field corner is a stile which leads onto a minor road, Plant Lane, directly opposite Cherry Farm. Turn right on Plant Lane and walk along the road which bends left after a short distance.

Shortly afterwards continue forward across the end of Watch Lane and about 300 metres beyond there you arrive back at the small car park by the Moss Lane canal bridge, which is where the walk started.



*The Moat*

# Warmingham and the Western Flashes



# Warmingham and the Western Flashes

**Maps:** OS 25000:1 (2½ inch) maps:

Pathfinder775 (SJ66/76) Winsford and Pathfinder791 (SJ65/75) Crewe.

**Distance:** about 6¾ miles or 11 km.

**Parking:** There are three possible car parks; alongside the canal by United Phosphorus in Hall Lane (SJ731602), in Red Lane (SJ730604) and in Watch Lane (SJ727607). The last two are within a mile of the start.

**Pubs & Grub:** The Bear's Paw at Warmingham (SJ708612). The Rookery Tavern (SJ734603) is only about ¼ mile from the start of the route.

*This walk could be combined with 'The Moat and Moston'.*

Starting from the small parking area by the canal in Hall Lane by United Phosphorus, the route passes the other two suggested car parks within the first mile.

With your back to United Phosphorus walk left along the canal tow-path. You shortly pass high to the left of two lakes or "Flashes". The Flashes are the result of subsidence caused by the commercial exploitation of underground 'brine streams' for salt production. These streams dissolved out salt deposits and the overlying ground subsided. Watch Lane Flash waters are salty and support plants such as Sea Aster and Lesser Sea Spurrey which are normally found only in estuaries and salt marshes. It is broad in shape and not deep, as can be seen from some old field boundary fence posts which still protrude from the surface. Mute Swans, Canada Geese, Great Crested Grebe, Heron, Coot and Moorhen are resident on and around it.

About 200 metres beyond a group of houses look left for a stile. Cross it and the footpath leads back to a road corner on Red Lane.

*Alternatively walk down Hall Lane away from the canal and turn right almost immediately into Red Lane. After about 250 metres you come to another*



Cheshire Museums Service

*Sea Aster*  
(*Aster tripolium*)

small car park on the left overlooking Watch Lane Flash and the smaller Red Lane Pool. Continue along Red Lane with the large expanse of Watch Lane Flash (or Big Moor) across the field to your left. Beyond the houses at Needham's Bank the road bends left where it meets the path from the canal.

From the path turn right onto Red Lane which soon crosses a small stream feeding the flash. In the field on the left beyond the stream you may see Snipe and other waders. About 100 metres beyond the stream Red Lane ends at a junction where Watch Lane goes right and forward.

Go forward along Watch Lane and after another 200 metres there is a small car park which overlooks the expanse of the flash on the left. The road here was rebuilt as a causeway after it disappeared under the waters. The stiles to right and left are for fishermen only, there is no public right

of access onto the banks of the flashes.

Continue forward along the now unmade surface of Watch Lane, with tall hedges on each side. Ignore two footpaths off to the left. The road leads to Watchlane Farm which has obviously had various extensions over the years, judging by the many different angles of the walls and roof. From the farm the road has a hard surface.

Watch Lane ends at a T-junction with Crabmill Road. Turn right. On the left in a dip in the road, just past Limerick Hill



Cheshire Museums Service

*Lesser Sea Spurrey*  
(*Spergularia marina*)

Cottage, is the entrance to Crabmill Flash, used as a fishing pool. The flash stretches south almost into the River Wheelock. Continue on along the road for 200 metres where, shortly after a stile and footpath on the right, there is an unmade road and footpath on the left.

Turn left into the unmade road which ends after about 50 metres at a gate and stile. Cross the stile and turn right, following the field boundary with the hedge to your right hand. Continue forward now; cross four more stiles and gateways at field boundaries, keeping the hedge to your right hand. Warmingham church tower can be seen to your left across the fields. After almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile you come to some houses with a gate and stile onto a field drive between them.

Go over the stile, down the drive and over a second stile to School Lane, the road into Warmingham. Turn left and walk down the hill.

In about 200 metres you come to Warmingham Mill, which is leased as craft workshops and light industrial units. During the war part of the Lancaster Bomber was built on the premises. The mill pool, to the left of the road, is almost completely overgrown with willows.

Shortly after the mill is the Bear's Paw public house. If necessary you could pause for refreshment.

Continue on past the Bear's Paw and cross the river bridge. Do not turn right immediately after the public house at the Public Footpath sign on the drive to Hill Top Farm. Beyond the river bridge, on the right, just before a telephone box, is a public footpath sign with a stile and metal gate beside it. Cross the stile and walk down to be alongside the River Wheelock.

The path runs beside the river through the garden of Church House. Cross a stile by the river behind the big house and continue alongside the water until a field boundary hedge comes down to the riverside. Turn left to follow the hedge and in less than 100 metres you come to a stile in a right hand field corner.

Go over the stile and in the next field walk directly forward, climbing up a slope to a stile in a fence. Over that stile continue forward in the same direction with the field boundary at your left to the next stile which is again in a fence and adjacent to a small group of low trees.

Over that stile turn very slightly right. Walk forward about 250 metres, now across the middle of a field as the left boundary bends away from you, to a stile which is in a fence and adjacent to a large metal cattle trough. Cross the stile

and immediately cross over a field drive. Now continue forward to meet the remains of a field boundary; a ditch and some hedge, and walk along with it at your left.

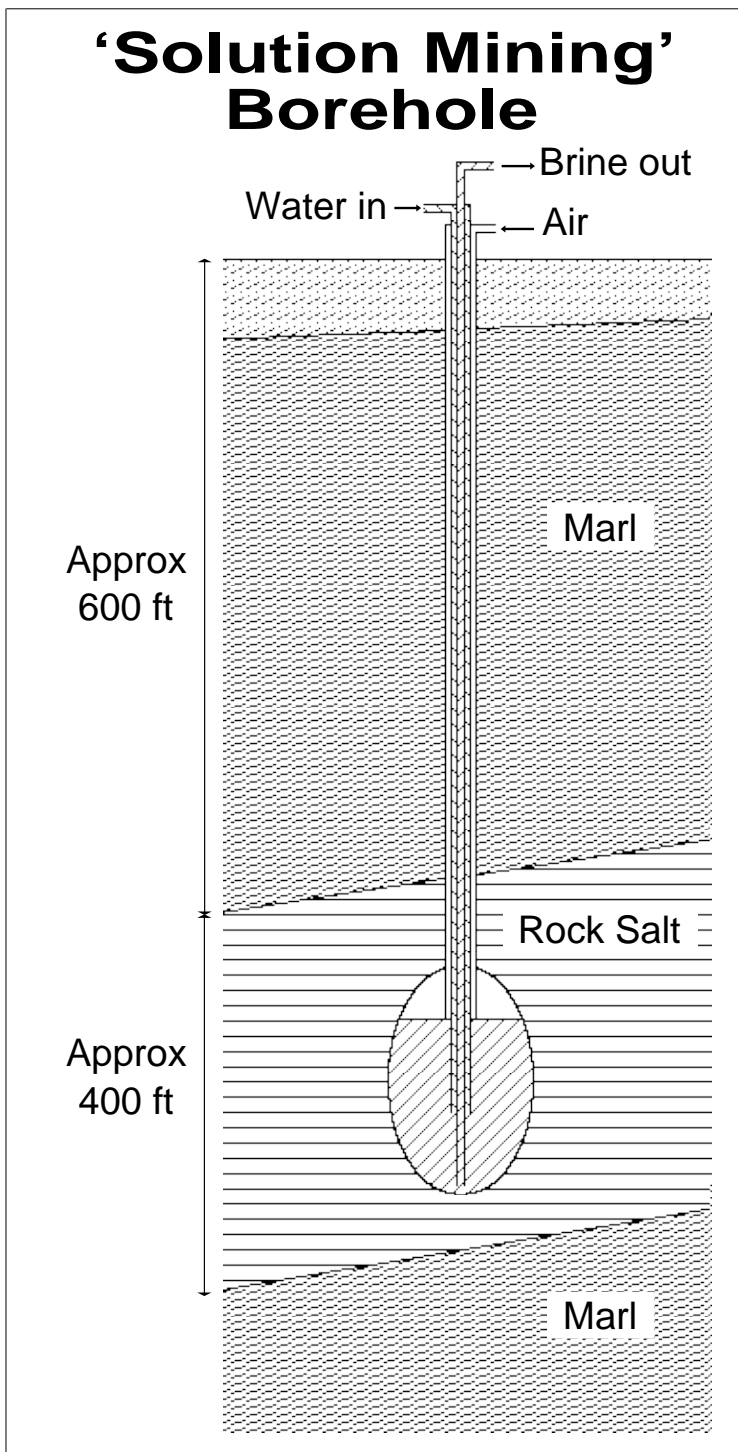
To the right you may be able to see the well heads which are at the top of boreholes driven down to the deep layer of salt. Water is injected down the hole, it dissolves out salt and the brine returns up a concentric pipe. The air protects

the upper surface of the cavity. The brine is pumped to British Salt at Middlewich, where it is purified and evaporated to give salt which is used in industry and on the table.

Each cavity formed in the salt bed is monitored by echo sounding. Sufficient material is left to support the overlying earth, thus avoiding the possibility of subsidence. The technique is called 'Solution Mining'. Empty cavities will be used to store natural gas, as happens naturally under salt domes.

Keep forward beyond the end of the old field boundary to meet a double fence and ditch. Ignore stiles crossing the fences. Turn left and walk alongside the fence to a stile in a field corner.

Across that stile continue alongside the double fence and ditch. Pass a small pond in the field to the right and after that, in a field corner, is a pair of stiles with a footbridge.



Those stiles lead into a large field. Directly ahead is a slightly raised and level grassy pathway, possibly an old field drive, to the left of the remains of another field boundary: a ditch and some trees. Walk forward along this old field drive and where it runs out continue in the same direction, over two more stiles, heading for an Oak tree on the far side of the field. Ridding Farm is in front to the right. To the left of the Oak tree are a footbridge and stile, and a pond.

Cross the stile and walk half right for a few metres to yet another old field boundary; a ditch and line of three trees. Now walk alongside the old field boundary, keeping it to your left hand, to a stile and footbridge about 200 metres away across the field. Over that stile, which is again adjacent to a pond, turn slightly right and walk across the middle of the field, aiming first of all for a tree and then for a gate and stile in the far corner.

The stile leads out onto a minor road, Drury Lane. Turn left and, ignoring a stile on the left after only a few metres, walk about 500 metres down Drury Lane to its junction with Warmingham Road. At the T-junction with Warmingham Road, opposite Lane Ends Farm, turn left and walk along the road for about 100 metres.

At a left bend turn right into the farm drive leading to Bottoms Farm. Here there is a Footpath fingerpost pointing down the drive and almost immediately afterwards a stile on the right. Go over the stile and walk diagonally left across the field in front, heading towards an old Ash tree. Just to the left of the Ash tree is a footbridge with stiles. Cross into the next field and walk directly forward across the middle to a stile in a fence. Over that turn slightly left and go across the middle of the field, aiming for the far left hand corner. Diagonally across to your right is Oaktree Farm, with an unusual round tower. The next stile is in the hedge at the left, about 10 metres from the corner.

Cross the stile and turn right. Keep the field boundary to your right hand and walk around the edge of the field. In about 25 metres ignore a stile in the first field corner, turn left and continue up the field boundary with the hedge on your right. There can be good views of Mow Cop, Bosley Cloud and Shutlingsloe from here.

You come to a stile in the field corner. Cross it and continue through the next field keeping the field boundary to your right. Follow the hedge as it bends slightly right, so that you are heading almost directly toward an electricity pylon. In the right hand corner of the field is a footbridge guarded by stiles.

Cross the footbridge and turn slightly left, aiming a little to the left of a group of trees which are visible in front. In a few metres, from a rise in the field, the open water of Railway Flash (on land owned by Railway Farm) is visible down to the right. The group of trees surrounds a small field pond. Pass to its left, heading for a stile and fingerpost which are by now visible in the hedge in front.

Cross the stile and continue forward and slightly right across the middle of the field, leaving Railway Flash behind to the right.

From a slight rise you will see in front a stile in a fence and, a little to the left of that, an orange gas pipeline marker on a pole. Head for the stile and in a short distance you come to the bank of Fowle Brook, where there is a footbridge. Cross the footbridge, turn left and go over the stile in the fence seen earlier.

Now follow the course of Fowle Brook downstream, keeping the field boundaries by the brook to your left, crossing a series of 3 small fields with stiles in their corners near the brook.

Beyond the third field is a larger field. Continue through it with the field boundary to your left, following that boundary as it bends right. In the field to the left is Pump House Flash, so called because a brine pumping station was situated by it. In Winter considerable flocks of waterfowl roost on and around this flash and large numbers of Wigeon congregate in the field. The river Wheelock flows through the flash and as a result it has become shallower through natural silting.

At the end of the field a stile leads onto Clay Lane. Turn right on the lane. For a country road it is wide and smoothly curved. This section was built about 25 years ago to bypass an area of subsidence. After about 500 metres go under a railway bridge by the entrance to Railway Farm and 200 metres beyond that turn left onto a narrow lane.

This is the original Clay Lane; it passes on a causeway between two small flashes. Beyond the flashes the road rises to the entrance drive to Fields Farm. Ignore the footpath to the right here along the farm drive, continue forward to a track which runs beside the railway embankment. The old Clay Lane, which was often flooded, went under the railway at this point.

The track runs between the railway and another, larger flash. Beyond the flash is Fields Farm. The house is new; the original building was demolished because of subsidence, though the farm buildings survived.



At the end of the flash the track and the railway cross the river Wheelock, the latter by a bridge constructed from hollow concrete sections. This arrangement is so the railway could be raised from time to time to allow for the

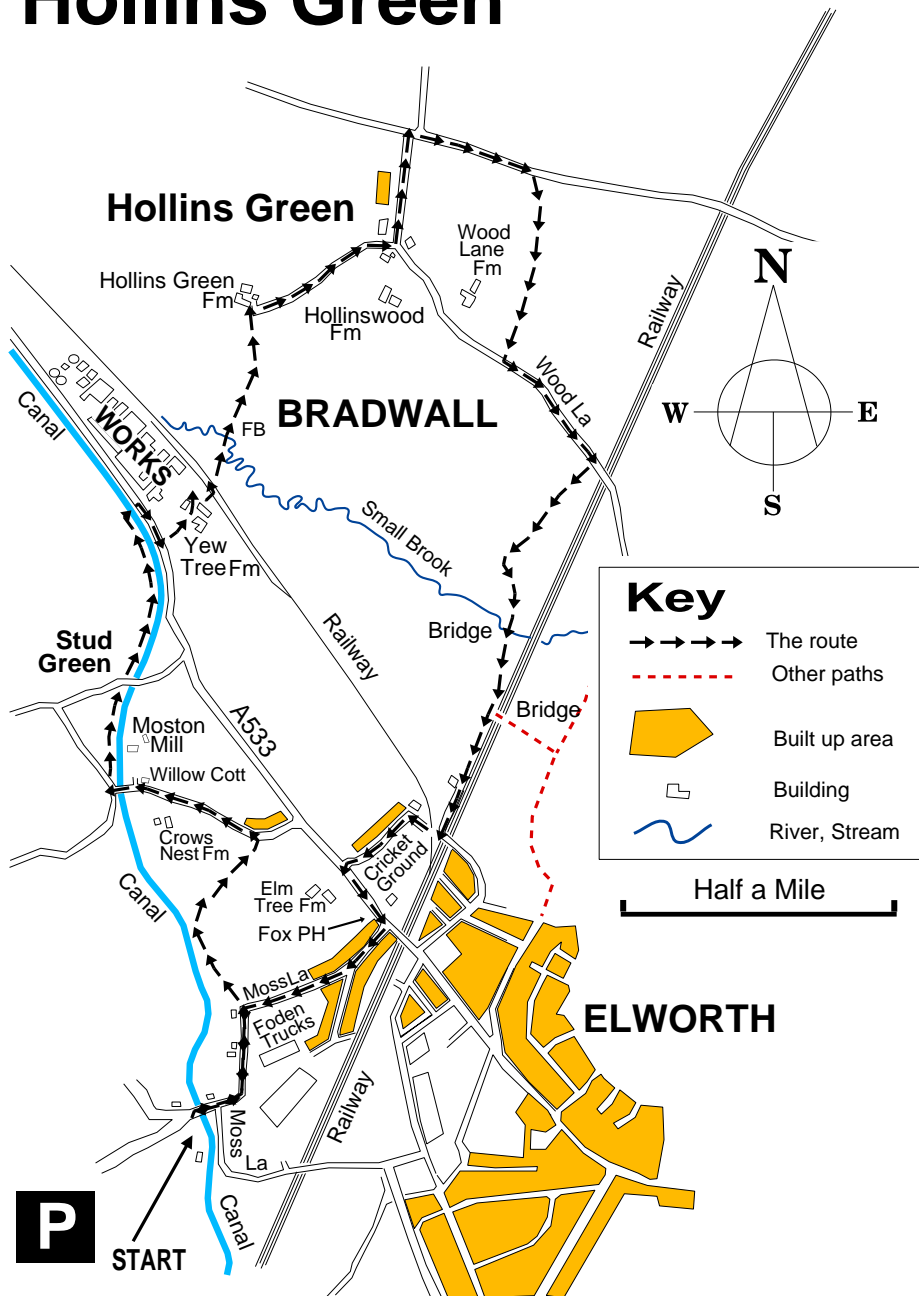


*Fields Farm*

subsidence which occurred here. Looking up to the gantries which carry the overhead power for the trains you can see they are able to be jacked up on their mounting bolts and their concrete supports built up. At one time in the late 1960's the track was sinking by over four feet a year. The gantries have been raised by at least 12 feet in the 35 years since the line was electrified, though since wild brine pumping ceased in 1979 the area has stabilised.

Continue on up the track to the canal and turn left on the towing path to go under the railway. Across to the left is the expanse of Hall Flash, a favourite of bird watchers. A further 150 metres along the towing path you return to the car park by United Phosphorus.

# Hollins Green



# Hollins Green

**Map:** OS 25000:1 (2½ inch) map:

Pathfinder775 (SJ66/76) Winsford.

**Distance:** About 4½ miles or 7 km.

**Parking:** A small car park is adjacent to the canal, by the road bridge at the bottom of Moss Lane (SJ732611).

**Pubs and Grub:** The Fox public house in Elworth (SJ737617); the Chinese Take Away and Chip Shop in Elworth (SJ 737617). There are also shops in Elworth village.

*This walk could be combined with 'The Moat and Moston'.*

This walk provides much of interest in that it shows the industrial environment upon which Sandbach is based (salt and engineering). Despite passing through and very close to industrial plants, the walk is quite rural and demonstrates that, despite its links to industry, Sandbach is still a country town. It also shows that industry does not necessarily destroy the countryside.

From the car park, which is at the junction of Plant Lane and Oakwood Lane, by the canal bridge at the bottom of Moss Lane, walk over the canal bridge and forward up Moss Lane towards the large building which is the present headquarters of Foden Trucks. (Do not turn right on Moss Lane opposite Moss Cottage with the novel welded chain front gate.)

Foden is a long-standing name in the commercial vehicle business. There were in fact two firms in Sandbach producing lorries: Foden and ERF. Until a few years ago they were rival branches of the same family and the commercial vehicle business provided work for a large proportion of the local community. They were fiercely independent, having split originally in the 1930's over a difference in manufacturing methods and usage.

ERF went the modern way of diesel engines (away from steam). They built vehicles from bought in parts: engines, gearboxes, running gear etc. were obtained from specialist manufacturers whose products could be matched to the requirements of a large range of different vehicles.

Foden remained more traditional, building the whole vehicle almost from scratch. They had a casting foundry for engines and gearboxes. But they gradually began to use other suppliers such as Gardner and Perkins for engines.

Unfortunately the Foden works ran into difficulties. It was bought out by Paccar, an American firm, who kept the name Foden for their products, because of the goodwill and good name that it carries.

The road bends round to the left below the Foden offices and after about 200 metres there is a right hand bend. At the bend, on the left, is a house called Sunnyside, with five tall Lombardy Poplar trees at the front and some large glasshouses at the rear. To the right of the house is a 'kissing gate' into the field at the start of the footpath.

Go forward across the middle of the field. The next stile is on the opposite side of the field, almost directly opposite where you entered. Over that stile continue forward in the same direction, with a fence and newly planted hedge (1993) to your right hand. The canal is a short distance to the left.

After about 100 metres there is a pond and three oak trees to the left of the path and adjacent to the canal. A very short distance beyond the trees the fence on your right bends to the right. Follow the line of the fence away from the canal to the next stile.

Cross the stile and continue forward, with the fence to your right hand, to a footbridge over a ditch and the next stile. Across that stile again continue forward, with a fence and ditch to your right, towards a small clump of trees (poplars and pine). The next stile, which leads out onto a minor road (Mill Lane) is just to the left of the trees.

On the road turn left. Walk past Crow's Nest Farm on the left and Willow Cottage and the entrance to Moston Mill on the right, before coming to the canal bridge. Cross the bridge, turn right and walk down onto the canal towpath. There turn left and walk alongside the canal.

At the side of the towpath are large concrete tanks and pipes. These are for the cooling water taken from and returned to the canal by Albion (Hays) Chemicals, of whom later. As a result of the heat input from the returned water it is said that even in the coldest weather the canal does not freeze hereabouts.

Opposite the cooling water system there is a lock; Crow's Nest Lock, and beyond the lock is Moston Mill, now refurbished as a dwelling.

Continue forward along the towpath, under a small road bridge (no. 162) at



*Moston Mill*

Stud Green. Just beyond the bridge is a ‘winding hole’; a wide area in the canal where boats could turn round and beyond that is a small private mooring area. (‘Winding’ is pronounced as in the wind that blows.) The canal bends left and meets the A533 Sandbach to Middlewich road. Albion Chemical works is now visible on the other side of the road.

Walk on along the towpath to a lock (number 68) with a bridge just beyond and cross the bridge down to the main road. Also crossing the canal alongside the bridge are two large pipes which carry the cooling water to and from the chemical works.

Cross the road and turn right. In about 100 metres there is a car park on the left and a road entrance with both a Public Footpath sign and a large notice: ‘PRIVATE PROPERTY’.

Turn left through a gateway onto the private road towards a black and white building which has been noticeable for some time. The building was recently



*Yew Tree Farm*

restored and is part of Albion Chemicals Visitors Centre. On the OS map it is called Yew Tree Farm.

On the left is the industrial complex of Albion Chemicals. Like most of the chemical companies in Cheshire it is here because they use salt as raw material; salt which is underground in vast amounts, the relict of ancient seas which once covered the Cheshire plains.

Albion was originally called Murgatroyds. The firm was established by George Lomas

Murgatroyd in 1890 at Middlewich, about 2 miles away from the present site. It started as a salt works, then began to make soda by the ammonia-soda process. Brunner Mond in Northwich challenged the right of Murgatroyds to use the process, to which Brunner Mond claimed they had the sole rights.

In 1894 G L Murgatroyd died somewhat mysteriously from an overdose of belladonna, a muscle relaxant used in those days for the relief of the colic. Since it was a natural extract of a plant, it is possible that the strength of the extract was greater than he realised.

The works was taken over by Ivan Levinstein who bought out the salt works and sold off the soda business to Brunner Mond. The firm produced salt mainly for the dyestuffs industries of Blackley and Huddersfield, but with the formation of ICI in 1927 Murgatroyds lost that outlet and had to seek other markets.

In 1937 Herbert Levinstein, son of Ivan, planned to begin a chlorine and alkali manufacturing plant, which would use salt as the starting material, north of Middlewich, but ICI objected. The war intervened.

In 1944 Levinstein purchased Yew Tree Farm from Miss A Foden and a chlor-alkali plant was set up on that site. At first brine was pumped there from the Middlewich works, 2 miles away. The Middlewich salt works closed in 1966 but brine pumping continued until 1977.

Nowadays Albion take pure salt from British Salt, whose plant is about a mile away, and dissolve it in water to make a brine solution. The brine is

'electrolysed' by subjecting it to a strong electrical current. This breaks the salt apart into chlorine and sodium. (Chemically salt is sodium chloride.) The sodium is used to make sodium hydroxide (or caustic soda) and hydrogen. Hydrogen and chlorine are burned together in a special furnace to make hydrogen chloride (hydrochloric acid). Chlorine is reacted with caustic soda to make sodium hypochlorite, the bleach used in most households.

The simple starting material, common salt, familiar to everyone, is thus used to make five commercially important products. Albion market chlorine, caustic soda, hydrogen chloride and sodium hypochlorite. Excess hydrogen is passed across to Air Products, who are adjacent, for marketing.

Walk past Yew Tree Farm and bear left around a small roundabout in front of an old stable block which was part of the old Social Club premises. Go forward between the stable block and a fence enclosing the Works, bend right and left behind the Club down to a railway line which has a private siding for Albion.

Cross the line to a waymarked post which leads up to a single track railway line. This line, used entirely for goods traffic nowadays, is between Sandbach and Middlewich, continuing to Northwich where it joins the Manchester to Chester line. Look out for trains before crossing the railway to a stile into a field.

Go over the stile and proceed diagonally left across the field towards a stile, footbridge and stile across a stream (Small Brook). Over the bridge go directly forward across the field in the same direction as the bridge points. The next stile is not visible until you are half way across the field. If no track is visible on the ground, aim between the two farms in front, tending towards the left farm, until the stile is visible.

This stile is another stile, footbridge and stile at a T-junction of running ditches. Once across go forward with a ditch to your right hand.

Looking behind, the full extent of Albion Chemicals and Air Products is visible.

In about 200 metres you come to a stile onto a farm drive. The farm to the left is Hollins Green Farm. Cross the stile and walk down the farm drive for about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to a T-junction with a minor road (Wood Lane).

Turn left along the lane and after about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile you come to a staggered cross roads. (Left to Middlewich, right to Bradwall and Sandbach, forward to Sproston.) Turn right towards Bradwall and Sandbach.

As you walk down the road you may notice that the farm gates in this area are all very similar: painted white at the top and black at the bottom. This is a characteristic of the Bradwall Estate.

About 200 metres along the road there is a thin strip of woodland on the left. Where this comes to an end, on the right of the road is a footbridge across a ditch to a stile into the field. It is about 20 metres before some power lines cross the road.

Cross the stile and walk forward across the middle of the field, aiming slightly to the left of a power line pole, to a stile in the opposite hedge. In front of this stile is a small footbridge across a ditch. Across the stile continue forward in almost the same direction, keeping a hedge to your left hand. The field is about 200 metres long and the next stile is in the far left hand corner.

Go over the stile and again continue forward in the same direction, across the middle of the field. There is a farm to the right; Wood Lane Farm. The next stile is visible by a post which is sticking up to the right of an oak tree. This stile is a double stile over a double line of fencing.

Over the double stile go across the centre of the field, very slightly to the right of your previous heading. In front are some trees which are in the field boundary hedge onto the road. The stile is to the left of an oak which is itself to the left of an ivy-covered oak tree.

Go over the stile, climb down the bank into Wood Lane and turn left, towards Sandbach.

In about ¼ mile the road rises to a bridge which crosses the Crewe to Manchester railway. Just before the bridge, on the right, is a farm road with a large sign dated November 1894:

**‘FOOTPATH ONLY.  
Cycles & Motor Vehicles  
Not Allowed.’**

The farm drive is guarded by a Bradwall Estate style 5-bar gate. Turn right and walk down the farm drive between two lines of fencing, with a field on the right and the railway to the left. After a short distance continue forward through a gateway with a





hedge to the left and a small wood beyond the field on the right. The farm road bends left towards the railway, then right. Over a bridge across a stream it enters another field and the hedge is now to your right hand.

Continue forward and at the top of the field, on the left, is a bridge across the railway. (*The footpath divides here. It is possible to go left to Vicarage Lane in Elworth or go forward to Elm Tree Lane.*)

Go forward, towards Elm Tree Lane, over a stile and down a well used footpath between a hedge and a fence, keeping the railway to your left. The path emerges by a small railway cottage 'The Lodge'.

Continue forward along the access drive to the cottage, to two railway bridges, one a road bridge, the other a footbridge. You are now almost at the junction of the Crewe to Manchester and Sandbach to Northwich railway lines.

Take the bridge on the right, the footbridge over the Northwich branch line.

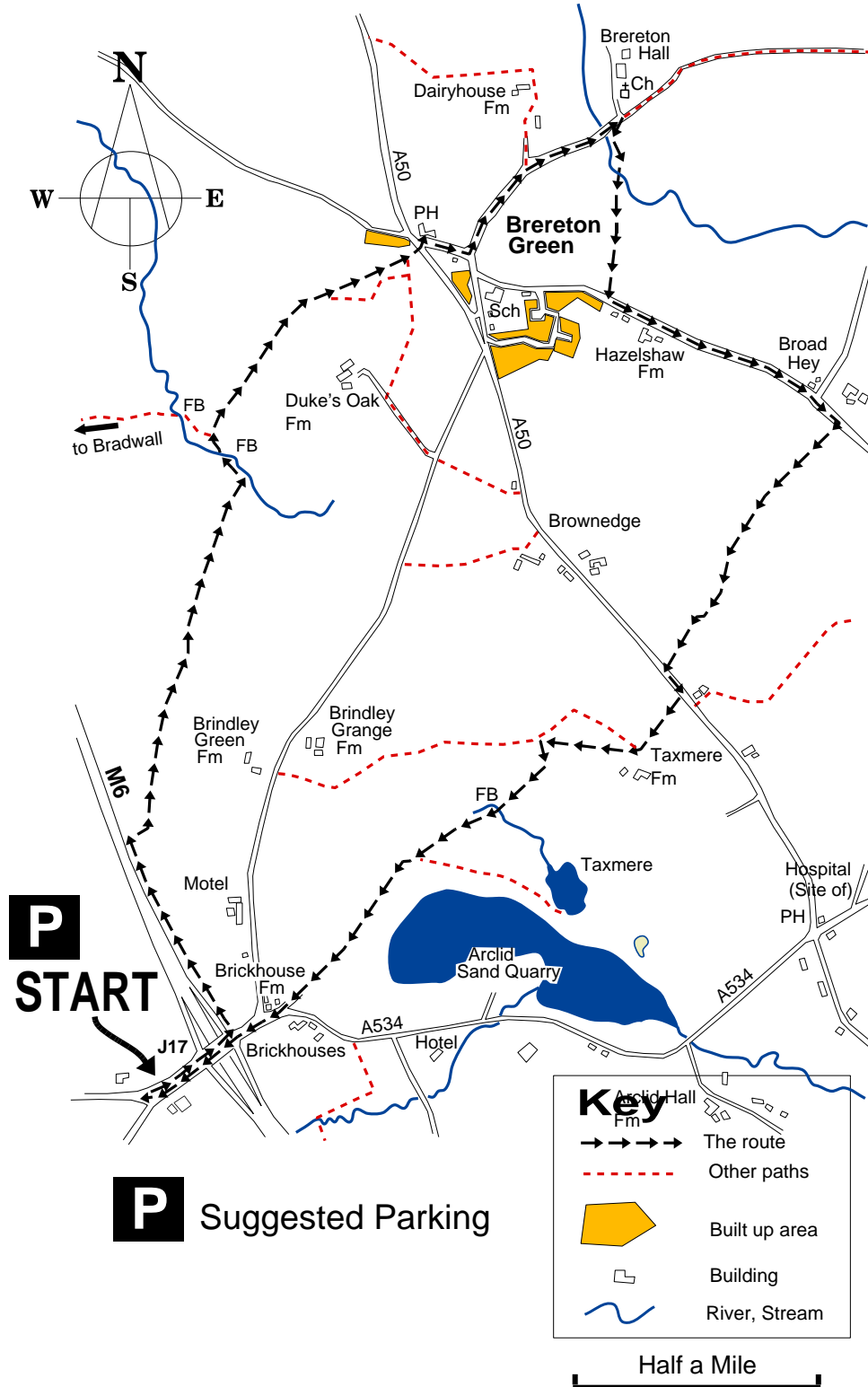
Over the bridge bend around left, following a path between a fence and hedge which comes out into houses by Bridge Farm. Bend left in front of some houses, and after a short distance you come onto a tarmac road, where the cricket ground of Elworth Cricket Club is behind a fence on the left. This road is Elm Tree Lane.

Elm Tree Lane leads to the main A533 Sandbach to Middlewich road. Cross the road, turn left, and walk towards Elworth. The farm on the right is Elm Tree Farm, with its name picked out in bricks in the wall to the right of the farmhouse. Only 200 metres from Elm Tree Lane is The Fox public house on the corner of Moss Lane. Turn right into Moss Lane.

Walk down Moss Lane, past Smithy Garage with decorative brickwork in the shape of a horseshoe, complete with nails, around its door. Keep right, ignoring the 'No Through Road' of Clifton Road, and about ¼ mile from The Fox is the entrance to Foden Trucks.

Continue forward towards the five Poplar trees you may recognise outside the house called Sunnyside. Bend left opposite 'Sunnyside' and then right, following your outward path to the canal and small car park where the walk began.

# Brereton Green



# Brereton Green

**Map:** OS 1:25000 (2½ inch) map:

Pathfinder775 (SJ66/76) Winsford.

**Distance:** About 5¼ miles or 8½ km.

**Parking:** A small car park close to M6 Junction 17 opposite the petrol station (SJ767617).

**Pubs and Grub:** Brereton has a famous old pub which serves bar meals: The Bear's Head Hotel (SJ775643). Worth diverting for is the Rose & Crown at Arclid cross roads; ½ a mile off route.

*This walk could be combined with 'Bradwall Manor'.*

This walk is best begun from the small car park opposite the petrol filling station close to the M6 Junction 17 as there is then an opportunity to pause for refreshment half way, at Brereton.

From that car park walk towards the motorway keeping to the left hand side of the road. Across the bridge, just beyond the motorway exit road, there is a stile into the first field. Cross that stile, turn left and walk along the edge of the field adjacent to the motorway. The walk is, for a while, rather noisy because of the motorway traffic. (This section of footpath is still not marked on the green cover OS Pathfinder map, which was revised in 1978, even though the path was diverted when the motorway was built, in 1960! It is on the new Explorers.)

After about 200 metres the path crosses a fence line (no fence in 1994) and stile (opposite a bungalow at the far side of the field). The rear of the Saxon Cross Hotel is now in front and to the right across the field. A further 200 metres brings you to a fence, ditch and hedge, with a double stile in the field corner. Cross the stiles and continue along the left side of the field, adjacent to the motorway, to the next field corner and stile, which is about 300 metres away.

After the next stile which is a double in a hedge, still adjacent to the motorway, turn right along the hedge for about 50 metres, then turn left and head across the middle of the field, aiming for the point in front where a hedge meets a fence and a hedge runs up the next field away from you. (Bearing very

slightly east of north.) The waymark on the next stile can be seen from about halfway across the field.

Go over that stile and walk up the field with the hedge boundary to your right hand. The noise of the motorway has now thankfully diminished. Brindley Green farm is across to your right. In another 250 metres you come to the next stile, to the left of a gate.

Cross the stile and turn slightly right to walk across the middle of the field towards the far right hand corner. Aim for a point about 10 metres from that corner (a little to the right of the point indicated on the OS map). A stile in the hedge leads over into a large field. Over the stile turn left and in about 10 metres at the field corner turn right and continue forward, with the field boundary - a mixture of hawthorn and barbed wire fence - to your left hand, to the far left hand corner of the field. Ignore a gateway part way along.

At the end of the field is another double stile. Over the stiles is another large field. The path leads across the centre of the field. Head for a solitary Oak tree which is to the right of a clump of trees and to the left of the buildings of Duke's Oak Farm.

At the Oak tree, which is on the field boundary, turn left to walk alongside a small stream. After a short distance you come to a small wood on the far side of the stream and, just before the end of the field, a footbridge guarded by stiles. Cross the footbridge into the wood and turn left alongside a wire fence. The path curves to the right under Alder trees and at the boundary of the wood is the next stile. Go over the stile into a field.

Here, over a ditch, a stile to your left leads to Bradwall and could be used to combine this walk with 'Bradwall Manor'.

Ignore the left stile and continue forward through the field, keeping the boundary to your left hand. Soon the high hedge and trees give way to low scrub and there is a view to the left. After about 400 metres, in the left hand field corner, there is a stile next to a gate. Cross the stile, turn half right and walk across the field corner to the next stile which is beneath an Oak tree.

Go over the stile and climb a low bank up into the field which is a large one, made up from several smaller fields by removal of the old hedge boundaries. The footpath originally followed those old field boundaries and now consequently takes a zigzag course across the field to a stile which exits onto the main road by the Bear's Head Hotel. The course of this path is difficult to

follow. However a new Permissive Path goes directly across, and is generally well trodden.

From the stile turn half left and walk diagonally across the field, heading directly for a stile visible in a hedge, with the black and white half timbered building of the Bear's Head directly behind it. This leads out onto the A50 road at Brereton Green, opposite the Bear's Head Hotel.

Cross the road and walk up the minor road in front of the Bear's Head. It is an old timber framed coaching inn, dated 1615.

(There is the possibility of parking opposite the Hotel).

Continue past the Bear's Head and the cottages beyond it, and after about 200 metres take the left fork, with a 'No Through Road' sign, through the decorative gatehouse to Brereton Hall. This is a private road and bridleway. About ¼ mile along the roadway a left turn leads to Dairy House Farm. Take the right hand fork. The road leads under arching trees and after a further 200 metres Brereton Hall is visible diagonally left across the fields.



*The Bear's Head Hotel*

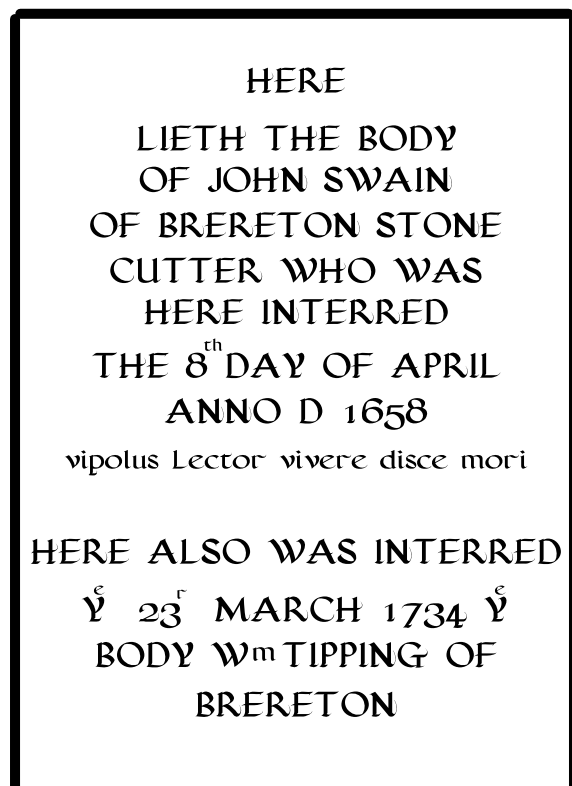
Brereton Hall was built in 1585, on the site of a previous hall, by Sir William Brereton, who also built the Bear's Head. The Brereton male line became extinct in 1722 and the Hall passed to Sir Thomas Holte of Aston Hall in Warwickshire, who married Jane, granddaughter of Sir William Brereton.

The family relinquished the Hall in 1819, when the estate was sold to satisfy creditors. It was bought for cash by John Howard. He and his successors lived in the Hall until 1937, with a break when it was leased to Mr Moir from 1891 until 1922. In 1911 extensive repairs and renovations were made, costing £3000. (Though this apparently did not include the installation of any modern conveniences - see later.)

In the early 1940's the Hall was empty when a Mrs Massey removed her Girls' Private School there from Manchester to escape the bombing. In 1947 the stable block was converted to classrooms and the Hall was improved by the installation of electricity and sanitary fittings. Mrs Massey purchased the Hall, Lodges and drive in 1957. During the 1980's the school suffered, along with other private schools, from the contraction of the diplomatic service and the armed forces. Brereton Hall School closed in July 1992 and the Hall became a private residence once more. It was recently sold again and is now used for some private functions, including civil weddings.

The road passes over a small stream and the entrance to the Hall is on the left. Just beyond, on the right, is a stile and footpath and opposite that the church of St Oswald's, Brereton.

The church as it now stands was built around 1600 from sandstone. There is a stone mounting block to the right of the gates which lead into a shady churchyard with a huge Beech tree. The bear's head from the inn is stored in the church with other memorabilia from the Brereton family. A closer view of the Hall may be gained from the back of the church, where there are some old headstones in the graveyard.



Returning to the road, cross the stile in the fence almost opposite the church entrance. Turn half right, walk down the field to the stream and turn left to walk upstream alongside it. In about 150 metres you come to a footbridge guarded by stiles. Over the footbridge turn half left and walk up the field away from the stream, heading for the junction of a fence and hedge. Just to the right of a gap in the hedge is a stile.

Cross the stile and walk forward with the field boundary to your left hand. In about 400 metres you emerge through a gate onto a minor road. Turn left and walk down the road for about ½ mile.

Broad Hey Lodge is at a junction where Bagmere Lane goes to Brereton Heath, with Lightfoot Green Farm just beyond. On the right, opposite the junction, beside a gate, a sign in the hedge indicates the footpath onwards.

Go through the gate and walk forward and slightly left through a long field. The next stile is in the far left hand corner of the field. Go over it and a small footbridge into a large open field.

Now walk forward through the middle of the field, aiming for a tree which is at the right of a line of trees 150 metres in front. That tree marks a ditch corner. At the tree continue forward in the same direction, now with a ditch to your left, heading for the right-hand tree of a pair in the middle distance.

In 100 metres you come to an ill defined field drive. Turn left along it and almost immediately follow it around to the right, now heading in the same direction as before; towards the tree. In front is a hedge running towards you and a hedge going right. At that hedge corner continue forwards about 50 metres with the hedge to your right to the next stile. Cross it and turn left, with a field boundary at your left hand, for 250 metres where you emerge onto the A50 road. The Rose & Crown at Arclid is about ½ mile to your left.

Turn left and in about 100 metres a sign in a gateway on the opposite side of the road indicates the continuation of the route. Cross the road, enter the field and walk forward with the boundary to your left. In the far left corner is a footbridge guarded by stiles.

Cross the footbridge, turn half right and walk diagonally across the field. The building behind you is Taxmere Farm. In about 300 metres there is a waymark post with several arrows in the far left hand corner of the field. Ignore paths alongside the hedge. Turn half left and walk across the middle of the next field, heading for the far left corner and a stile.

Over that stile continue in the same direction, going diagonally left across the middle of the field towards a tall hedge with high ground behind it.

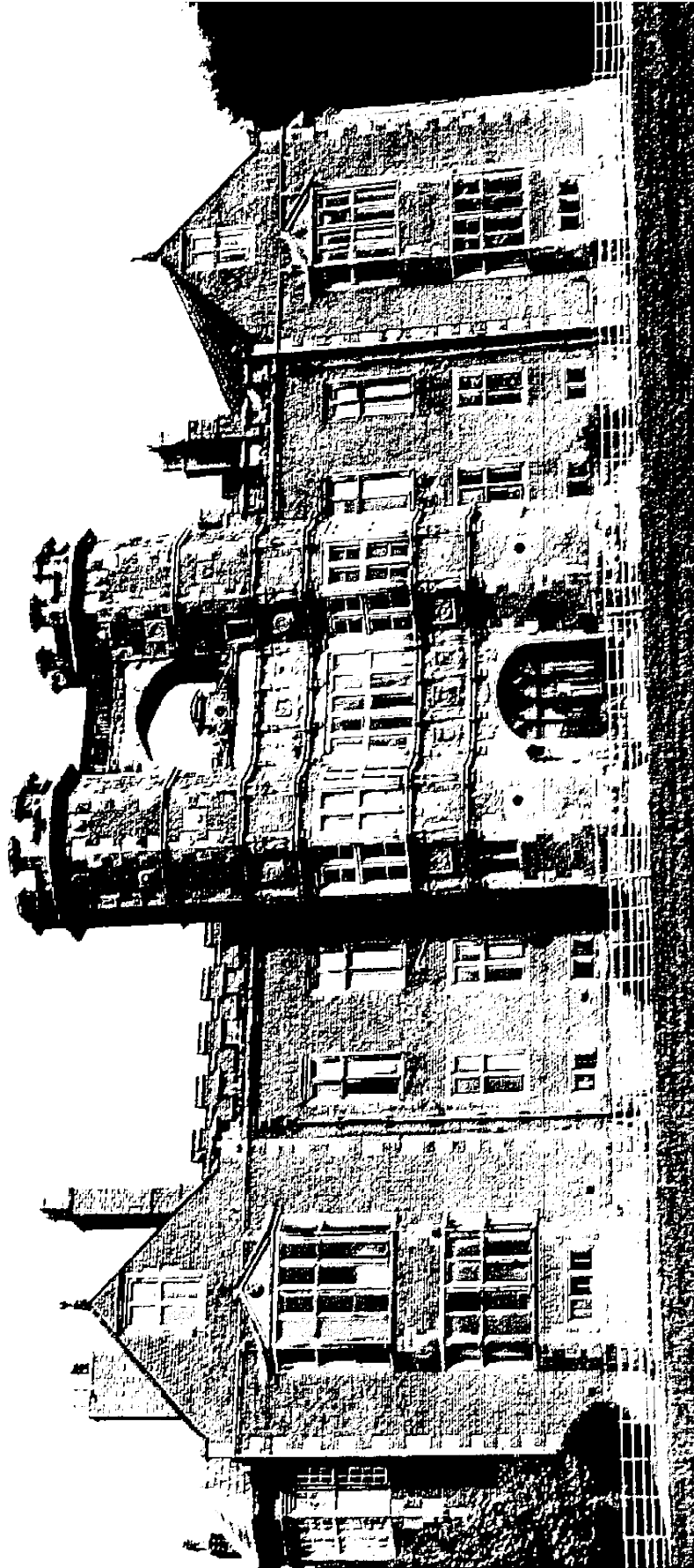
The next stile is close to a bend in the hedge. It is partly hidden in a hollow and leads onto a footbridge. Cross the stile and bridge and climb up to the right through Alder trees. The path becomes more open, running between a tall hedge to the right and on the left the high ground mentioned earlier. The high ground hides Arclid Sand Quarry and is the surface soil which was removed to expose the sand layer. In summer this area hosts a magnificent display of Common Spotted Orchids which thrive in the damp alkaline conditions created by the marl in the spoil heap.

Continue forward with the hedge boundary to your right. In about 250 metres there is a stile in the right hand corner of the field. It is followed in about 50 metres by another which leads onto a field drive and large field.

Cross onto the field drive and follow it, with the hedge to your left, for about 500 metres to the road. At intervals the extent of the sand quarry can be seen through gaps in the hedge on the left. The visible quarry is now worked out. Sand is brought to the washing and grading plant as a slurry in water, via pipes from a site behind Arclid Hall Farm on the other side of the A534.

Emerging onto the road, the A534, cross onto the pavement at the far side and turn right. Walk along for about 500 metres, crossing the motorway bridge at junction 17, then cross back over the A534 to return to the small car park opposite the petrol filling station where the walk began.

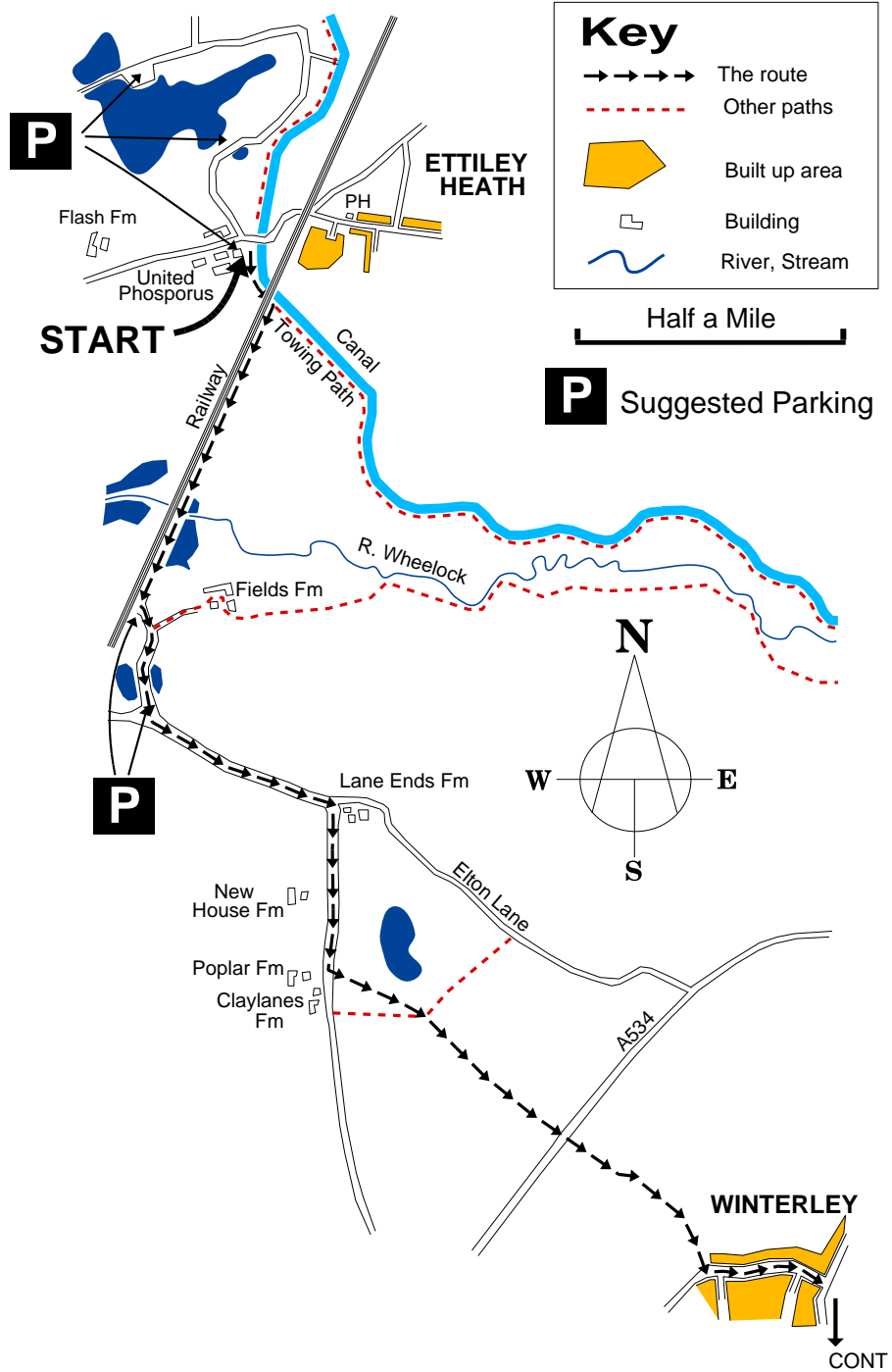




*Brereton Hall*

# A Walk Around Sandbach

Map (i) Ettiley Heath to Winterlev



# A Walk Around Sandbach

**Maps:** OS 25000:1 (2½ inch) maps:

Pathfinder775 (SJ66/76) Winsford and Pathfinder791 (SJ65/75) Crewe.

**Distance:** about 18½ miles or 30 km. (You could walk it in small sections.)

**Parking:** Several small areas:

By the canal; by United Phosphorus on Hall Lane (SJ731602), or at the junction of Moss Lane, Plant Lane and Oakwood Lane (SJ732611).

Red Lane (SJ730604) and Watch Lane (SJ727607) are very close to the route.

Near Fields Farm; by the railway (SJ728592) or the road (SJ728589).

By the Bear's Head Hotel at Brereton (SJ775643).

**Pubs & Grub:** On the route: The 19th Hole at Hassall Green Golf Course (SJ766590), The Bear's Head at Brereton (SJ775643).

Worth diverting for: The Legs of Man on the A50 (SJ790618), the Rose & Crown at Arclid cross roads (SJ788622), The Fox and the Chip Shop at Elworth (SJ737617) and The Rookery Tavern (SJ734603).

This is quite a good day's walk. Because of the distance some may wish to complete the circuit over several separate excursions.

Since it is circular it is possible to start anywhere along the route. In this account we will begin from the small private car park adjacent to the canal by United Phosphorus in Hall Lane (SJ731602) since there are five other car parks very close; at Red Lane, Watch Lane, Moss Lane and two close to Fields Farm. There is a pub within ¼ mile; The Rookery Tavern and, at around the halfway stage, the Legs of Man, the Rose and Crown and the Bear's Head at Brereton are available. (All are on the A50.)

From the car park walk alongside the canal towards the railway bridge. Just beyond the railway bridge an unsurfaced track goes off to the right. Turn off the

towpath and follow the track down between the railway embankment and fields. After about 600 metres it crosses the River Wheelock.

The railway and the path both cross by a bridge made from hollow concrete castings. The design is necessary because the ground hereabouts subsided due to salt extraction and the bridge was raised from time to time by the addition of more cast sections. In parts of Cheshire salt deposits are quite close beneath the surface and as these deposits are washed out by underground streams the ground subsides. This natural erosion was greatly increased by commercial exploitation of the brine streams in the last century.

Just beyond the river is a stretch of water; a lake or 'flash' which was formed by this subsidence. Beyond the flash is Fields Farm. The farmhouse is new, the original was demolished because of subsidence damage.

Continue forward along the track to meet a tarmac road (*a small parking area here*) and walk forward along the road past the entrance to Fields Farm on the left. A short distance after the farm drive are two more small flashes at the sides of the road and just beyond them a T-junction with Clay Lane, a minor road. (*Another small parking area here*).

Turn left onto Clay Lane and walk up the rise past the sign which informs Road Clear (end of subsidence area). Shortly afterwards there is a junction with Elton Lane by Lane Ends Farm. Turn right (signposted to Haslington). Lane Ends Farm (aka Lakemore Country Park) has unusual breeds of chickens and goats, some donkeys and exotics. Continue forward along the road past New House Farm on the right. About 200 metres beyond it, opposite Poplars Farm, a public footpath leads off left across the fields.

This path runs in a corridor between a fence on the left and a hedge. Because the path is not grazed it can become rather overgrown in the summer. (An alternative path, muddy in Winter, starts opposite Claylanes Farm.) A stile takes the path further along the corridor to an open area where the Claylanes Farm path joins. A few metres beyond is another stile. Go forward into a field.

Continue walking in the same direction along the right hand edge of this long field to the next stile which is in the right hand field corner. Over that stile walk forward about 100 metres, to a stile by a gate which leads onto the A534 Haslington by-pass. Directly opposite is another stile by a gate. Cross the road and go over the stile, where the path continues along the right hand edge of the field to another stile close to a shed and stable.

Continue forward alongside the right hand hedge for a further 100 metres to a stile onto an unmade track. Go along the track which ends at a T-junction with Newton's Lane. Turn left onto Newton's Lane and walk past the houses to the main road through Winterley.

**(MAP ii)**

Turn right at the main road and cross to walk alongside Winterley Pool. The pool was a mill pool, the mill being situated on the opposite side of the road. Currently it is used for fishing and in the winter is host to wildfowl: Mute Swans, whose numbers are increasing since lead weights were banned for fishing; Canada Geese; Great Crested Grebe and a variety of duck species, including Pochard.

Where the main road takes a sharp right bend there is a black and white cottage, Bridge Cottage, at the side of the pool. Just after Bridge Cottage a farm drive goes off to the left towards Pool Farm. Take the farm drive. Do not go over the stile at the entrance of the farm drive, that leads to Haslington.

The farm drive, which can be rather muddy, leads past Pool Farm. Running between fences, it bends gently right and after about ½ mile ends at a gate into a field. To your left is the white building of Moss Cottages.

Cross the stile to the left of the gate and turn left towards Moss Cottages. *(There is also a footpath right, towards Haslington.)* The next stile is in the left corner of the small field next to the cottages. (During the Winter this field may contain stored caravans.) Over the stile the path runs behind a hedge for a few metres and then enters the Cottages' garden. Walk along the Cottages' driveway and, at the boundary of the Cottages' garden, cross a stile into a field on the left.

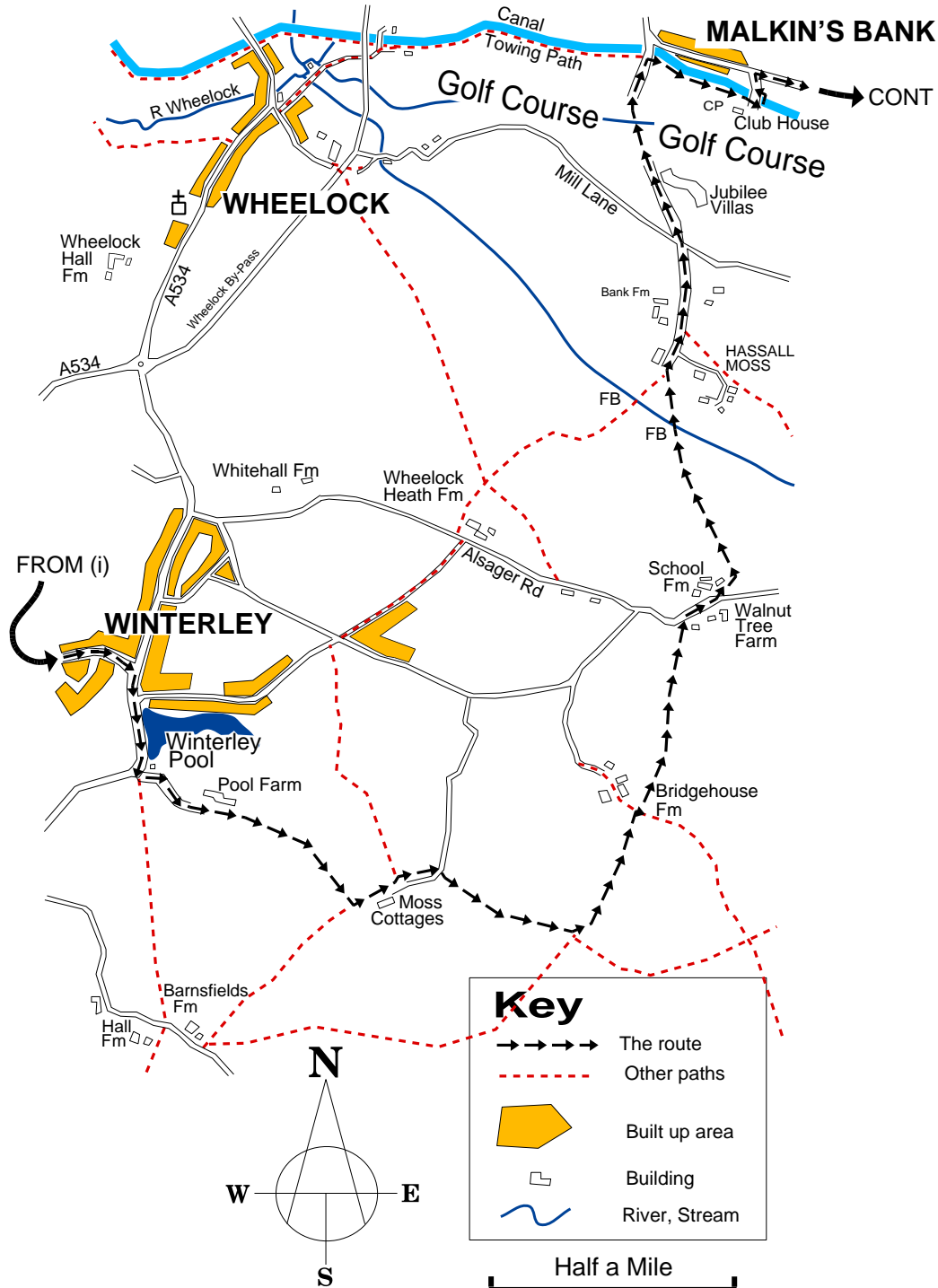
Over that stile keep right and walk with the hedge to your right hand for about 100 metres to a stile which leads back onto the Moss Cottages' access road. Cross this stile, cross the road to the next stile, and go over into a field.

Now walk through the field keeping the boundary to your right hand. (The footpath shown running diagonally across the field on the older OS map has been diverted.) In about 500 metres you arrive at a field corner with a stile and a junction of paths. Cross the stile and turn half left towards your next stile which is about 50 metres away. Between the stiles there is a fine collection of old tree roots piled in the little spinney to your right. *(There are also footpaths forward, towards Alsager and right, towards Haslington.)*

Go over the stile and continue forward, with the field boundary on your left,

# A Walk Around Sandbach

Map (ii) Winterley to Malkin's Bank



for about 400 metres to a stile which leads onto the farm drive at Bridgehouse Farm. (This is where the diverted footpath ended.)

Go over the stile onto the farm drive. Almost directly opposite you is a gateway protected by a cattle grid. Cross the cattle grid into the field and continue forward, keeping the farm buildings well to your left, to meet the farm garden fence. Here keep the garden fence by your left hand and walk on until you come down to a stream and footbridge in the left hand corner of the field.

Cross the bridge and continue in the same direction, now with a hedge at your right, to the next stile. Over that stile continue in the same line, heading slightly to the left of a house in the field beyond, gradually leaving the field boundary about 30 metres to your right. Cross a stile into the field by the house and walk straight across to the next stile which leads onto a road.

Turn right on the road. Walnut Tree Farm, with its Walnut tree between the farmyard and the house, is to your right and School Farm to your left. There is a public footpath sign and stile at the right of the entrance to the farmyard of School Farm.

Go over the stile at School Farm. Keep the fence to your right and go over another stile after about 20 metres. Now keep the fence to your left and follow it around the field for about 100 metres to the next stile which takes you into a field corner. Cross that stile and bear diagonally left until you come in about 250 metres to a stile in the bottom left hand corner of the field.

Cross the stile. Within 20 metres there is another stile on the left. Cross this stile and now, whilst keeping the field boundary to your right, bear slightly away from it. (You should be walking in line with your route from School Farm.) At a bend in the field boundary is the next stile which leads into a small area of Oak trees with a footbridge across a stream.

Once over the bridge continue diagonally left uphill through a field (still in the same direction as your route from School Farm) to the houses at Hassall Moss.

The next stile is above a wooden stairway down to an unmade road by Jacob's House. (The stairway is known locally as 'Jacob's Ladder'.) Descend Jacob's Ladder and walk forward to the tarmac road and up the hill past Bank Farm, with its attractive sign, to a cross roads with a minor road.

Here continue straight across onto another unmade road which leads past a row of distinctive white rendered houses; Jubilee Villas. Walk past the houses



and through a pedestrian gate onto a surfaced track. The track leads down through Malkin's Bank Golf Course, over a stream and up to another gate onto an unmade road with some houses.

This whole area was, until the late 1920's, heavily industrialised. A single track railway line ran on an embankment across the lower land to the left and on through the higher area to the right. To the right between the railway and canal was a chemical plant; the Sandbach Works of Brunner

Mond, which manufactured soda. South of the railway line was a series of settlement lagoons which took waste water from the works, the stream running in a culvert under that area. The works closed after the formation of ICI from the Brunner Mond group.

On the left, again between the railway and canal was Whitehall Salt Works. The area south of the railway line was used as a domestic waste tip.

When the salt works and soda works closed the settlement lagoon area was used as an infill site, taking industrial waste. There began to be concern over the amount of industrial and chemical waste on the site. The tip was closed and a team from Harwell was called in to supervise safe neutralisation and capping of the contents. The railway embankment was used to form the earth cap for the site.

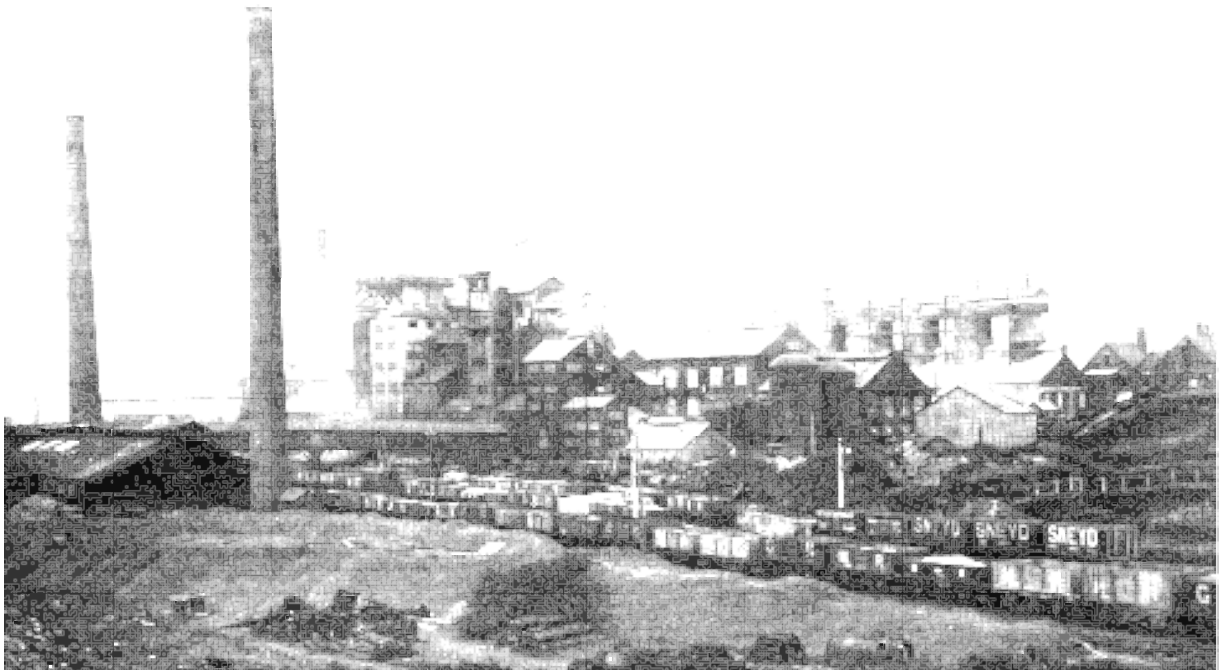
The area was converted to green fields for a few years before being turned into a municipal golf course.

Continue forward to the canal, turn right just before the bridge, go through the gap in the wall and turn right along the towpath. On your right at the end of the houses is what looks like a small crane jib. This was used to raise a small lift bridge in the towing path to allow canal boats into a wharf behind the houses. A few metres further on the towpath crosses a bridge over the entrance to a small boat yard which once led through to a wharf within the soda works.



The car park for the golf course is now in front and to the right. Walk forward along the towpath, under the bridge and up the steps onto the canal locks. Cross the locks over the bridges by the bottom gates and go through the gateway between the bridge and the electrical substation onto the golf course access road. Turn right, down to the minor road.

*(Or turn left to go to the 19th Hole on the golf course for refreshments. It is open to non golfers and serves food as well as drinks.)*



*The Sandbach Works of Brunner Mond in 1923*

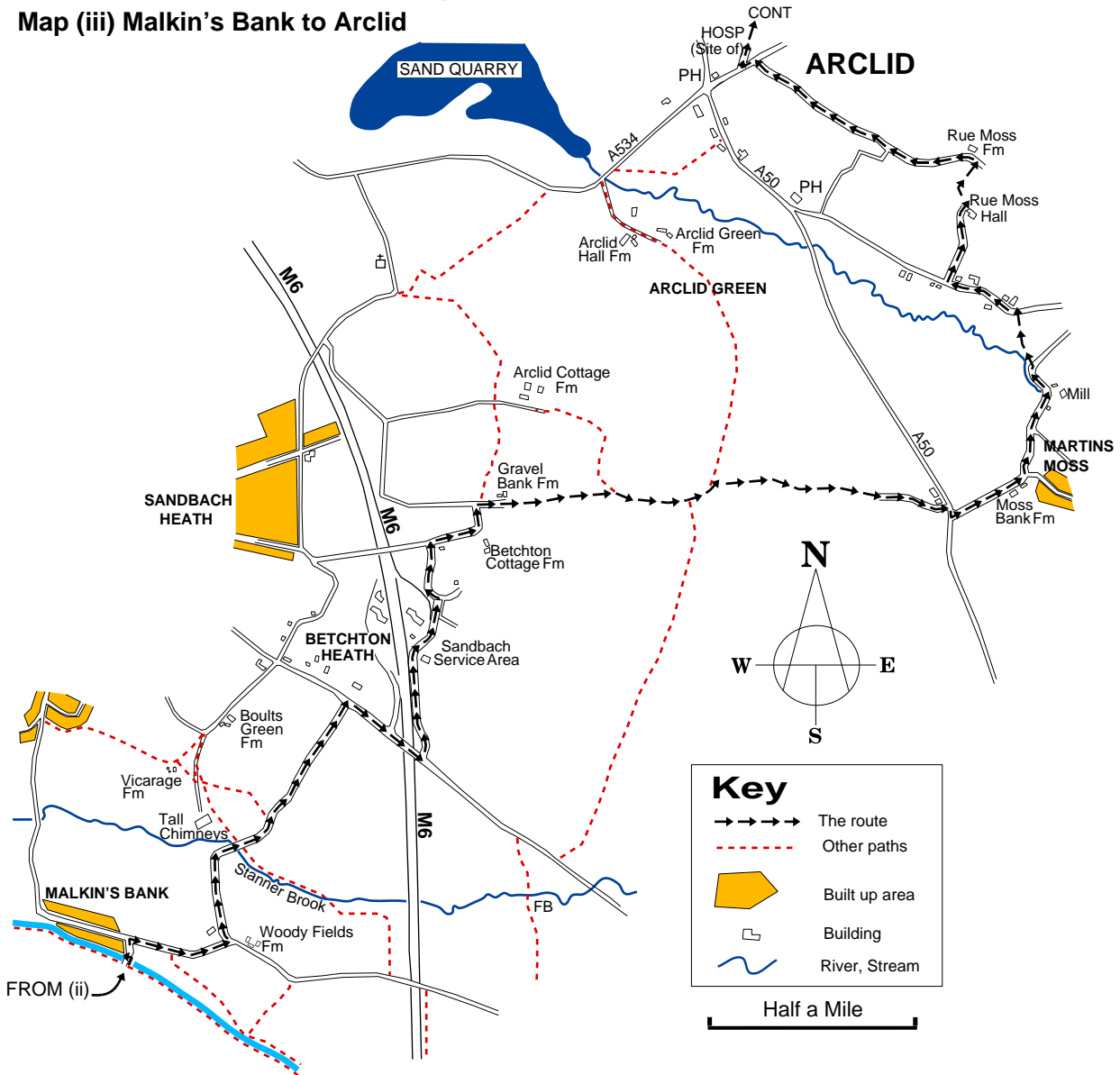
**(MAP iii)**

At the minor road turn right. In about 200 metres the road bends left and shortly afterwards right. On the right bend Stannerhouse Lane forks left. Turn left onto the lane and follow it past the entrance to Woody Fields Cottage. As the lane, now unsurfaced, begins to go downhill you may see a large house in front across the valley. It is Tall Chimneys, the old vicarage of St Mary's Church in Sandbach.

The lane winds downwards between high hedges to Stanner Brook. At the bridge across the brook, footpaths go left to Tall Chimneys and Sandbach Heath, and right to Hassall Green. Continue forwards up Stannerhouse Lane; at first between high banks and then between fields. The M6 is noticeable on the right, and Tall Chimneys is behind to the left. You come to a T-junction with the A533 road (Sandbach to the Potteries) at Betchton.

# A Walk Around Sandbach

Map (iii) Malkin's Bank to Arclid



Cross the busy main road and turn right to go over the motorway. At the far side of the motorway bridge is an access road leading to the motorway service area, with a public footpath sign pointing down it. Turn left down the access road. After about 500 metres the road turns left into the motorway service area. Straight on is a gate with a stile to its right. Go over the stile onto an unsurfaced road and proceed forward for about 200 metres to another gate with a stile to its left. Cross the stile and turn left down the farm road to a T-junction with a minor road. The easily recognisable spire of St John's church at Sandbach Heath is straight ahead.

Turn right onto the minor road. The road bends left below Betchton Cottage farm and about 100 metres beyond that comes to another T-junction. Turn right; ignore a stile and footpath on the left after about 10 metres and continue forward past Gravel Bank Farm to a gate and stile.

Cross the stile and walk forward up the right hand edge of the field to the next stile and gate. Once over that continue along the right hand field boundary to a third stile. Cross this stile and walk forward and slightly right across the middle of the field, heading slightly to the left of two tall trees in the opposite hedge. When you have walked about half way across the field and are atop a slight rise, your exit is visible: a short length of wooden fence with a stile, which leads onto a field drive.

Cross the stile and walk forward along the field road. Do not turn sharp left. In about 250 metres you come to another gate. Go through the gate and proceed forward along the field road (*the path to the right goes back to the A533*) towards another gate with an Oak tree to its right. The Oak tree carries a waymark arrow pointing forward. This field is used occasionally as a flying field for microlight aircraft, the large farm building in the near right corner being a hangar.

Go to the right of the Oak tree and continue forward and slightly right of your previous heading, through a dip in the field, until you can see the far boundary. Now head just to the right of the electricity pole in the far hedge where a stile with a bridge over a running ditch is situated.

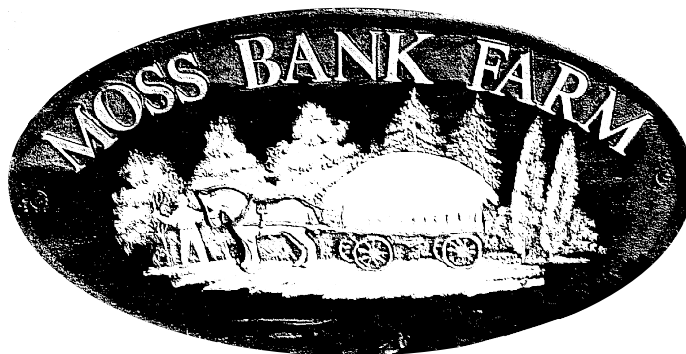
Ignore a waymark pointing left, go over the stile, turn slightly right and walk across the field to a gate and stile in the hedge opposite. Cross the stile and walk forwards along the left hand field boundary towards a prominent Oak tree. Where the hedge bends away to the left continue forwards towards the Oak and some buildings. Beyond the Oak is the entrance to an unsurfaced lane through a gateway with a stile to its right.

Walk along the lane, between tall hedges, to its emergence by some houses on the main A50 road. (The chapel on the OS map is now a dwelling.) Cross the road - with care, it is busy - turn right and after a few metres turn left onto a minor road which leads towards Smallwood.

Walk down the road past Moss Bank Farm and the converted barns of Ash Tree House on the right. The big Ash tree is just beyond the House, on the corner of Martins Moss lane, which forks off to the right. Take the left fork to

continue along the same road. Shortly afterwards ignore another minor road on the right and you come to some houses where the road bends around to the left.

The large building is Smallwood Mill, now rebuilt and housing small industrial units. The outlet stream now runs alongside the road for a short distance. In 150 metres beyond the mill, at the next bend in the road, there is an elaborate ladder stile on the left.



Cross the stile and walk alongside the stream. Where the stream bends left continue forwards and uphill towards a prominent Ash tree

close to the hedge. Beyond the tree keep the hedge to your left and there is another ladder stile, which leads onto the road, in the left corner of the field.

Turn left on the road. On the right in about 250 metres, just beyond a building, there is a footpath sign at an unsurfaced farm drive to Rue Moss Hall. Take the farm drive. It bends around to the left of Rue Moss Hall and leads past some plastic greenhouses to a gate and stile.

Cross the stile and follow a track to the next stile. The path now leads around the left hand boundary of Rue Moss Cottage to a further stile beside a shed. Over the stile turn right towards the white painted Rue Moss Farm, 150 metres away. The next stile is in the right hand corner of the field and leads onto the access lane to Rue Moss Farm. Go over the stile and turn left to walk past the farmhouse.

Continue on along the unsurfaced farm access lane. Ignore another unsurfaced lane off to the left (*unless diverting to the Legs of Man*) and about ½ mile from Rue Moss Farm the lane emerges onto the A534 Congleton to Sandbach road. Cross the road, turn left and then turn right into Davenport Lane.

*(Only 100 metres beyond Davenport Lane, by the crossroads, is the Rose and Crown, which also serves food. Since the next stage of the walk is two miles of minor road, you may wish to rest and restore your resolve. But be warned, after that two miles is another inn at Brereton Green.)*

**(MAP iv)**

Walk along Davenport Lane, ignoring any footpaths to left or right. After short distance there is an attractive row of cottages to the right.

About ¼ mile along Davenport Lane is the entrance drive to a private house. This house, the old Isolation Hospital, is the last remnant of Arclid Hospital, now demolished, which covered a large area between Davenport Lane and the A50.

“Arclid”, as it came to be known, was built in 1845 (at a cost of £7097) as a traditional Workhouse for a group of Parishes, the Congleton Union, set up to administer the Amended Poor Law Act of 1832 under a board of Guardians. The original design documents have not survived, but records show it held about 150 to 200 persons, with an infirmary of 26 beds which was soon increased to 58.

In 1901 a 200 bed hospital was built on the site, to serve the area of the Congleton Union. Beds in the hospital were offered to the War Office during the 1914-18 War. In the 1920's a few maternity beds were made available. Additionally the hospital was much in demand as the use of the motor car began to cause more road accidents.

1929 saw the formation of Local Government and the County Council took over the responsibilities of the Guardians.

‘Temporary’ extra wards; wooden huts, were added in 1939 to cater for the expected casualties of the Second World War. In the event they were not used for war casualties, only for patients who were evacuated from other hospitals.

Post War, with the formation of the National Health Service, Arclid was employed as a hospital for the chronic sick and elderly. By the 1970's it was exclusively a Geriatric Hospital, though it was unpopular amongst the elderly because of its long history as The Workhouse. Some patients still remained from the days of its Workhouse Hospital past, having been admitted as unmarried mothers or as ‘simple minded’ in the days when there was no other method of care.

In the early 1990's ‘Care in the Community’ and other specialised nursing concepts meant Arclid was too far from any urban centre to serve a modern approach to care of the elderly or chronic sick. Nursing homes for the elderly were now needed within the boundaries of the local towns. In the far off days of the Poor Law and Workhouse it had been built sufficiently far from the centres of its subscribing Parishes to be acceptable to all.

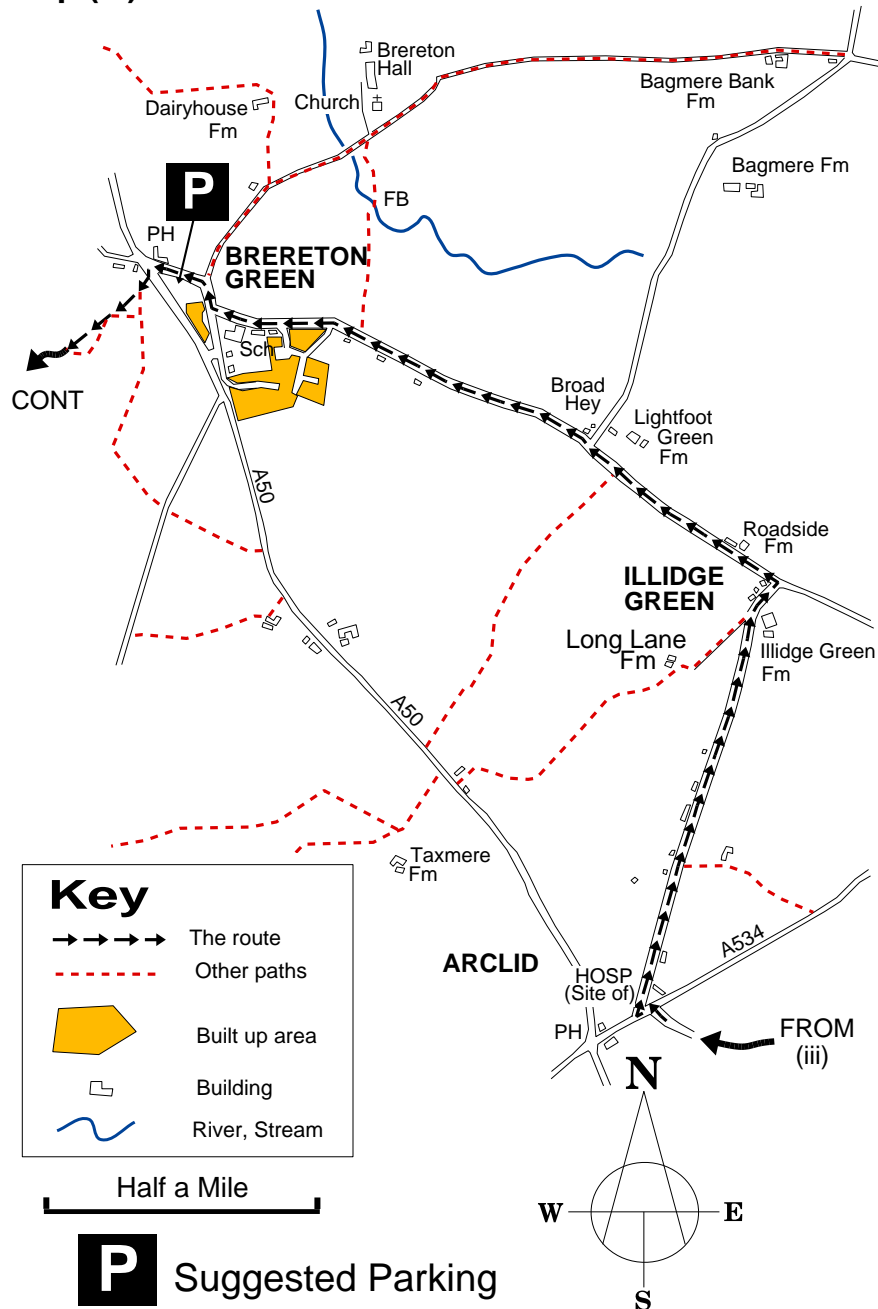
Arclid Hospital was closed in 1993 and demolished in 1996. In Spring 2002 the site was still clear, awaiting possible development.

Soon the road bends left and runs between low hedge banks where Scots Pine have been planted, to Illidge Green.

The tiny hamlet of Illidge Green, where there is a farm and three houses, is at the end of the road. Just beyond Illidge Green Cottage, no. 81, is a T-junction

# A Walk Around Sandbach

Map (iv) Arclid to Brereton Green



with a minor road; right to Congleton or left to Brereton Green and Brereton Heath. Turn left towards Brereton Green and continue along the road.

After a short distance you pass Roadside Farm and about ¼ mile further Lightfoot Green Farm. Ignore the right turn to Brereton Heath just beyond this farm.

On the adjacent corner to the farm is Broad Hey Lodge (called Broadley on the OS map) an old lodge for Brereton Hall. Half a mile beyond Broad Hey Lodge you enter Brereton village; a row of terraced houses, a more modern estate and the primary school.

The road comes to a T-junction. Turn right and walk along past the decorative gatehouse to Brereton Hall and St Oswald's Church.

*(If you have time a diversion through the gatehouse along the bridleway to see the church and the Hall is worthwhile. The Hall was an independent girls' school, but is now a private house with a licence for private functions, including Civil Weddings. See 'Brereton Green' for more details.)*

A short distance beyond the gatehouse, on the corner with the A50 road, and at about the halfway point, is the Bear's Head Hotel.

*(There is the possibility of parking by the Bear's Head.)*

**(MAP v)**

Cross the A50. In the hedge to the left of the cottages opposite the Bear's Head is a stile with a finger post. On crossing the stile you enter a large field, made from several smaller fields by removing hedges.

The footpath follows the old field boundaries in a zigzag course across what is now the middle of the field; however, a new Cheshire County Council Waymark indicates a Permissive Path to the next stile and it is easiest to follow the direction indicated by that waymark:

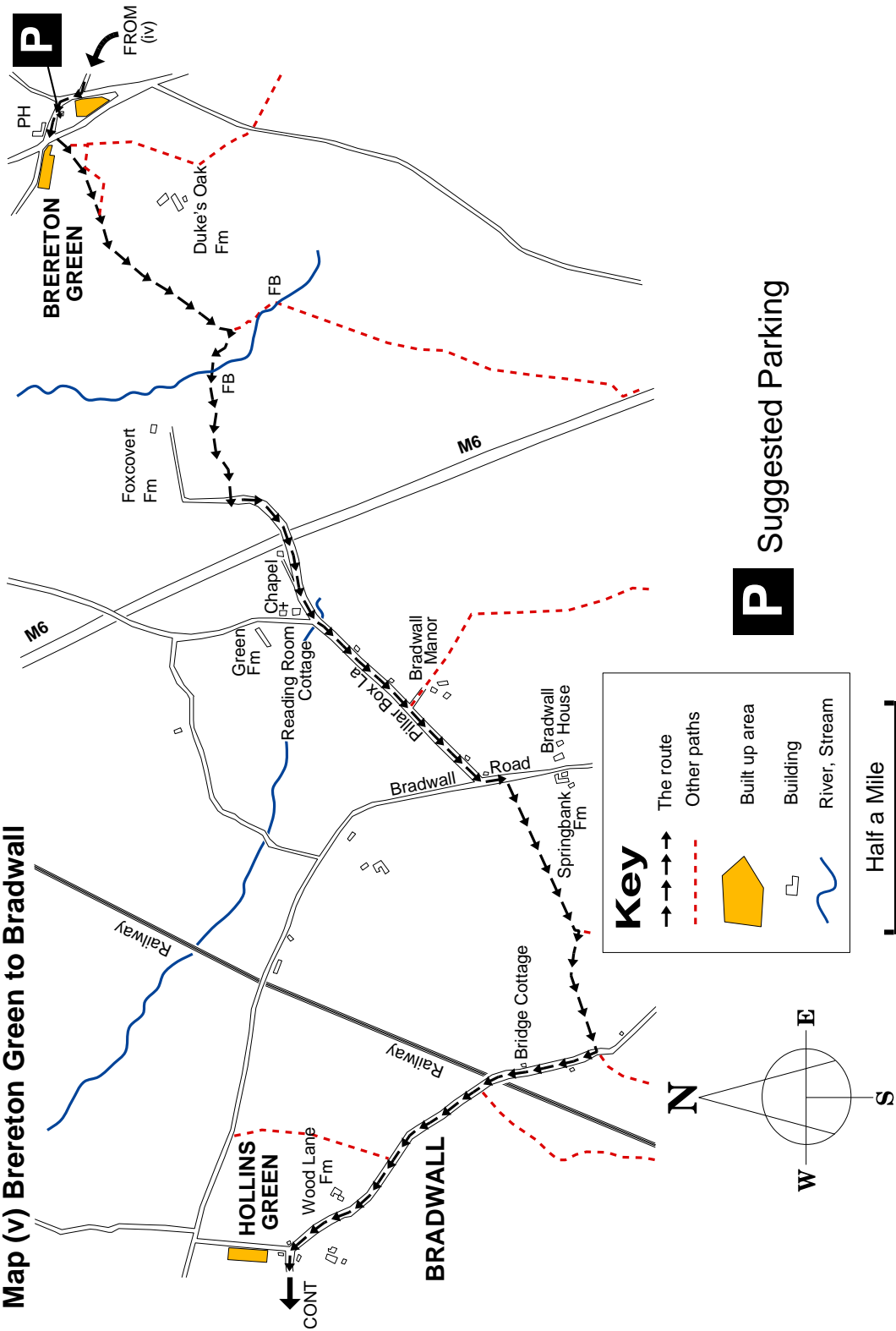
Turn slightly right and walk directly towards a stile about 250 metres in front of you and to the left of an Oak tree (the leftmost tree of three).

Cross the stile and turn half left across the field corner to a stile and gate. There are two stiles, into adjacent fields. The stile to use is on the left, to the left of a hedge.

Over the stile walk forward in another large field with the boundary at your right. Continue on for almost 500 metres. At the far right hand corner of the

# A Walk Around Sandbach

Map (v) Brereton Green to Bradwall





field, where there is a spinney, are two stiles; forward into the spinney, and right, across a running ditch, into the next field. Turn right over the ditch.

In the next field turn slightly right and head across the corner of the field, directly for the farm buildings in front (Foxcovert Farm) to a stile and footbridge. Across the footbridge follow the field boundary to the right, round the field corner and in about 50 metres cross the next stile which transfers you to the other side of the fence.

Over the stile go left, now with the field boundary to your left hand, to a stile in the left hand field corner. Over that stile continue forward, with the field edge at your left, past a small wood to the left hand field corner. Here a gate and stile lead onto Brindley Lane, an unsurfaced road which is the access for Foxcovert Farm.

Turn left, walk up the lane over the M6 and down to the junction at the corner of Pillar Box Lane, a minor road. The cottage on the corner is Reading Room Cottage. Next door is Bradwall Wesleyan Chapel and the Cottage probably formed part of the Chapel rooms.

Turn left at Pillar Box Lane and walk straight along, past the entrance to Bradwall Manor, to the T-junction with Bradwall Road. Turn left at that T-junction (by the pillar box) and in 100 metres there is a stile on the right.

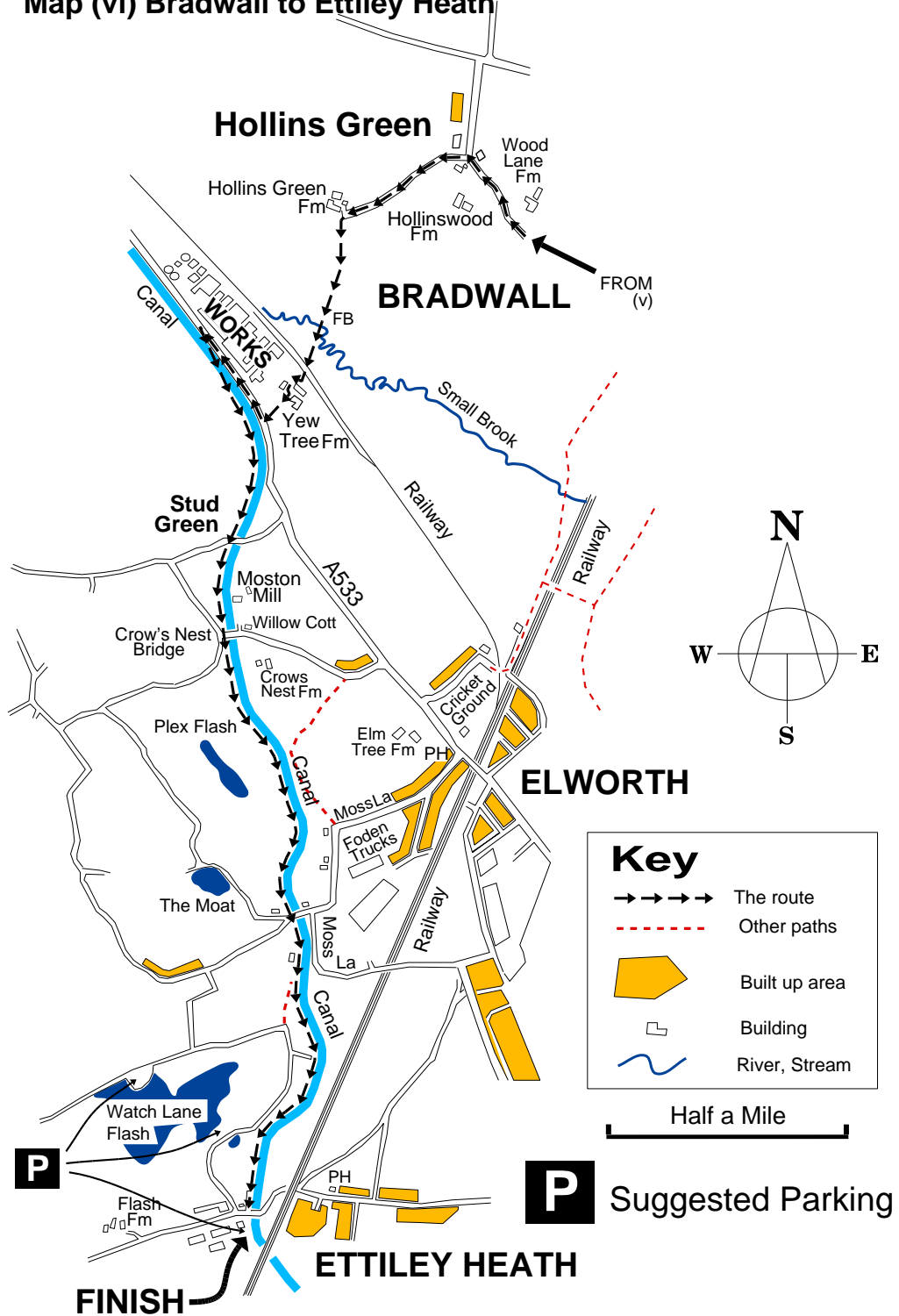
Cross the stile and walk forward through the fields with the fence at your left hand, crossing two more stiles in fences across your path. The next stile is at a right hand bend in the hedge on your left, about 500 metres after leaving Bradwall Road.

Go over this stile, turn right and walk with the hedge by your right hand to the next stile in the field corner. Over the stile turn half left and walk diagonally across the middle of the field. The course of the path is quite well worn across the field and leads to a stile in a fence. Cross that stile, turn a little more to the left and walk down to the left corner of the field to a stile which takes you onto Wood Lane, a minor road.

Ignore a stile on the opposite side of the road. Turn right and walk up the road for almost a mile. You pass two cottages, a railway bridge, Wood Lane Farm and Hollinswood Farm. Shortly after Hollinswood Farm, at a bend and by some cottages, the farm drive to Hollins Green Farm goes off to the left.

# A Walk Around Sandbach

Map (vi) Bradwall to Ettiley Heath



**(MAP vi)**

Turn left down the farm drive. In  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile, at the end of the drive where it turns sharp right to the farm buildings, there is a stile and gate facing you. Go over the stile and turn left, following the field boundary to the far left corner of the field where there is a footbridge guarded by stiles.

Across the footbridge, in front and to the right are the extensive works of Albion Chemicals and Air Products. (*The chapter 'Hollins Green' has some notes on Albion Chemicals and the section of walk as far as Crow's Nest Lock.*) Turn slightly right and walk forward across the middle of the field, heading to the left of the Albion site where there is a long low building. After about 30 metres, as you cross a rise in the centre of the field, in the far boundary you can see a stile and footbridge. Head directly for them.

Once across the footbridge, which crosses Small Brook, head very slightly left, towards a power line pole. Just to the right of the pole is a stile leading onto the embankment of a single track railway line. The line runs between Sandbach and Northwich and is used occasionally for goods traffic. Check for trains before crossing the railway and drop down to a waymark post beside another single track line leading into Albion Chemicals.

Cross the line into Albion, turn right and almost immediately left, to walk between the low building you were heading for earlier and the fence surrounding the chemical works. The path emerges from between two old buildings onto a small roundabout at the end of an access road to what was the Social Club for Hays before it became Albion Chemicals.

Turn right and walk up the access road past the black and white building of Yew Tree Farm to the main road, the A533 between Sandbach and Middlewich. Turn right along the road and after about 100 metres cross where there is a canal bridge and lock on the opposite side of the road.

Go over the canal bridge (no. 163) and turn left past the lock (no. 68) along the towing path. From now on the route is absolutely straightforward; continue along the towing path for about 2 miles.

Soon you pass under a road bridge at Stud Green. Crow's Nest Lock (named after the farm a short distance away) and another road bridge (Crow's Nest Bridge of course) follow shortly after.

The next road bridge, at Moss Lane End, is a further  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. Between Crow's Nest and Moss Lane notice how the canal banks have been built up as

the land each side has subsided. A large flash; Plex Flash, can be seen to the right. At the Moss Lane bridge, where a splendid new house now stands, a pair of cottages below the canal were twisted to destruction by local subsidence induced by salt extraction.

Continue onwards. Only one more kilometre now. (*In about 200 metres, shortly after a large house just below the canal on the right, a stile will take those parked at Watch Lane or Red Lane on a footpath diagonally across the field to the corner of Red Lane.*)

The houses at Needham's Bank are passed on the right. Soon the towing path is well above the land to the right and forms a grand promenade with the expanse of Watch Lane Flash (sometimes called Big Moor) spread out below. The large, overgrown area to the left of the canal was at one time planned to be a marina. There had been for some time a subsidence lake beside the canal. Excavations were carried out, but then work stopped and Nature has largely taken over.

Just beyond the next bridge, at Hall Lane, is the finish.

Congratulations! If it is any consolation, you have probably walked it in less time than it took me to write it.

(You could now turn left to go under the railway bridge for a celebration drink at the Rookery Tavern.)



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