

Railway days out from Euston



The text in this book is merely an indication of what might be possible ... or what might have been possible at the time of researching or later revision.

Each reader must assess whether each part of the route qualifies as suitable or safe for public access. The author does not warrant any point of legality or safety in any part of the description of the route.

Thanks are due to many people who have helped me with route-finding and with intelligence local to a number of areas traversed by the route. Their contributions enrich the route and the stories along it. Clearly, any mistakes and misinterpretations remain with the author.

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Front cover photograph:
White Nancy (Macclesfield circuit)

The days out

Introduction

This document contains details of some walks which may be reached from Euston station. All use London North Western trains except for the Macclesfield route, which uses West Coast.

Those routes which are presented without photographs require a further visit to confirm updated details, so a degree of caution is to be espoused.

Routes

- **Atherstone to Tamworth (linear)**
15.9km; 3hr 23min (*see* page 15)
- **Leighton Buzzard to Bletchley (linear)**
15.4km; 3hr 19min (*see* page 19)
- **Macclesfield, Tegg's Nose and White Nancy (circuit)**
17.4km; 4hr 06min (*see* page 23)
- **Northampton to Long Buckby (linear)**
19.5km; 4hr 14min (*see* page 31)
- **Nuneaton to Atherstone (linear)**
11.9km; 2hr 28min (*see* page 37)



General information

Planning your days

Getting to and from the routes

First of all, I intended to reach the start of each route as early in the day as possible. I did this by catching (generally) the first bus of the day from my nearest stop in the outermost fringe of London. This demonstrated the great difference between Sunday walking and the rest of the week: the first Sunday bus (at about 0740, as opposed to 0610 on other days) meant that the day's walk might not be started before 1000, and sometimes even later. I aim to finish the day's walk by 1400 if at all possible, because that's when the heat is switched off by the sun in winter (and the switch-off time comes even earlier if you are to the north of higher ground).

In the route guides, useful bus stops and stations are noted, with link routes described if they are not adjacent to the route itself. You will need both the TfL journey planner (<https://tfl.gov.uk/>) and the National Public Transport Information site (which has superseded and consolidated the various regional Traveline offerings and is at <https://www.nationalpti.co.uk/>) to plan your days. Once you know the routes you will need to research, <https://bustimes.org/> comes into its own, providing information about every bus and every stop — to give you shorter options and emergency exits.

You may note that I have tried to ensure that linear walks are chosen to be walking northwards or westwards as much as possible (unless the opposite direction makes significantly greater sense). This minimises staring into the sun, particularly in the morning when it is low in the sky. On circular walks, of course, the direction is all but immaterial, for you will be pointing south at some point in the circuit.

Finding the way

Map

Of course, the first step in finding the route is to read and to follow the detailed route-notes in the guide! But a map is still a very helpful aid, especially to find context, exit routes and alternatives, and the very best published maps for walkers are the Ordnance Survey Explorer series at a scale of 1:25000.

Assuming that you have access to a computer and printer, though, there is a far better option open to you than buying large fold-out paper maps which go out of date with every by-pass, brownfield

conversion, or cliff collapse. A subscription to the Ordnance Survey's online map service is one of the best investments any walker in Great Britain can make. For less than £40 per year (at 2026 prices), this will give unlimited online access to Ordnance Survey cartography stretching from Shetland to Scilly: you will note that they have a range of subscription plans available. See

<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/osmaps/>)

for details of the subscription service.

With this subscription, you may import GPX routes and create your own routes: these may be stored in the cloud, accessible only to you with your account or, if you so desire, made available to other users of the app. Also, you may export basic GPX data for any route to a file, and the software is able to calculate optimal directions for road trips too. You may then print maps and route-plans, using your own decisions as to paper size (A4 or A3), scale, and orientation, without limit) for your personal use. The map quality is second to none, just as one would expect from the Ordnance Survey.

The A-Z atlases and maps (and similar publications) are also useful for street names, etc., and show some of the paths, particularly in the built-up areas, but the limitations of scale are greater with a mapset which prioritises roads and streets, so the precision is diluted.

Needless to say, Google Maps (and other online services) can show the route of an imported GPX file on top of their base maps. However, the quality of the map, and of the resultant print, will suffer badly in comparison with the Ordnance Survey app's offering of crisp, clear, high-quality cartography.

Never rely solely on a map on your smartphone: the drain on the battery as the phone polls for your location is significant, and the consequences of losing navigability because of battery drainage, while perhaps not quite as life-threatening as it was for the idiots who tried to navigate across the Lakeland Fells with a phone, are still serious. Also, when all is said and done, the places where you are need navigational assistance are precisely those with extremely limited signal quality.

To return to the Lake District for an example of the vagaries of signal strength, I pulled out my phone at Hardknott Roman camp (but only to check for a text), and there was only a very weak signal ... from Manx Telecom. To cap it all, I had a text from Manx Telecom two days later, asking for my views on having experienced their service in using my phone while abroad.

Compass

Within the narrative, the sixteen main compass directions are used for most instances of orientation where the bearing is close enough. However, sometimes more accuracy is required, and a numerical

compass bearing has to be given (clockwise from north). It should be stressed that a compass is a very useful piece of equipment, even on suburban streets, but it becomes essential when crossing areas of heath or woodland where there is a multitude of paths (or none at all).

Nowadays, many of our mobile phones have compass apps, and for those whose phones are missing the app ... well, a basic Silva or Suunto (or similar) compass will be fine for these walks. Just keep yourself clear of danger by using your phone (and its battery) sparingly.

Of course, if you can see the sun, you can gauge directions pretty easily: it is in the east at 6am, in the south-east at 9am, south at noon, south-west at 3pm and west at 6pm (an hour later during British Summer Time, of course). The pedants may raise the question of longitude, but even at Macclesfield station, the clock is ahead of the sun by only eight minutes.

Logistics

Start and finish

You should note the restricted nature of much Sunday travel (and also on Saturdays, in some cases), and this may inform your choice of the day of the week for a particular route. The National Rail status page

<https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/disruptions/>

should warn you of planned and *ad hoc* disruptions to rail services, as will the TfL site for disruptions within London. Be sure to check <https://bustimes.org/> for bus availability, particularly at weekends.

Food and drink

It might seem, at first glance, unnecessary to carry provisions while walking in a well-populated area, but needing to hunt down victuals can be distracting and dispiriting. If a café or pub is not reached at the right time of day (or is found to be closed when you arrive), a period of gloom may set in; at the wrong point of the natural cycle of walking spirit, the need for a formal stop can disrupt the flow of the walk.

Each of these eventualities may lead to a mental off-switch being thrown, when you will be walking *through* an area without the experience of being *in* the area. Indeed, if you stick rigidly to the routes as given in the notes, there will often be long stretches along which you will not encounter a shop on the route itself. In areas of dearth, off-route facilities are indicated.

Of course, this applies more stringently in the rural areas, where you know that there could be long distances between refreshment facilities. You should always carry a small water bottle and some emergency nibbles; on some stretches, it can be handy to have a sandwich or similar in reserve. You are encouraged to make use of local facilities in the areas passed through, but you should also make sure that you have a Plan B tucked away in your pocket or backpack — whether for yourself, or for someone you might meet who is in greater distress.

First aid

The above advice applies equally to the carrying of a simple first aid kit of sticking plaster, antiseptic cream, antiseptic wet wipes (for disposal other than by flushing), tissues and sunscreen, plus zipped polythene bags for the sterile collection and subsequent disposal of any contaminated material. The small barrel of brandy which is stereotypically to be found round the neck of a St Bernard is optional.

Directions

I try to keep out of the trap of “cross the stile, and make for invisible barn over the skyline”, a direction which I discovered (and revised) within a set of route-notes to a long-distance path more than forty years ago.

You will see that these directions are sufficient to follow the route if you have a capable map in your hand ... and a capable map-reader in your party.

Times and distances

Each route is headed by details of the distance, ascent and duration. For the purposes of the calculation, standard walking pace is set at 5 kilometres per hour: individual readers may adjust expected timings according to their natural speed.

Distances are given in kilometres (after all, that's how the grid squares are constructed on the map, and we should really have ditched the awkward multiples of 12, 3, 220, and 8 several generations ago); the duration is based on Naismith's Rule at a flat-ground pace of 5 kilometres per hour, and accounting for slope. If your natural walking speed is at 4 kilometres per hour, you will need to adjust the duration by a factor of 1.25 to obtain an approximate duration for your own needs.

Do not assume, though, that you can manage a faster gait, especially in towns and cities: that will just put you under the cosh on expectations, and will leave no time to stand and stare. Urban

walking has its own accelerations and decelerations, separate from its rural counterpart — even waiting at traffic lights will change your overall speed. Key access points to public transport within routes are given at the appropriate points in the narrative of the route directions.

Background information

Throughout the text, I have attempted to give historical and other context to the areas through which you are passing. This may discuss a physical aspect of the route, such as the geology or architecture. Alternatively, it may point out something which might be interesting in social terms — a famous resident, perhaps, or a link with another route. These discursive alerts will be in [blue](#).

While each reader may have a favourite topic for such background information, it is hoped that there will be some interest for all in each of these inserts into the route-text.

Another form of insert alerts the reader to the various logistical matters which you will encounter — either for good (the presence of opportunities for refreshment or for the replenishment of supplies, and transport opportunities), or for the not so good (having to travel along a busy road or cross a busy railway, or the presence of other poor or dangerous walking conditions). In addition, this covers any points where an apparently obvious next step is the wrong answer. These logistical alerts will be in [red](#).

Respecting the route

Responsible walkers will always obey the Countryside Code when in the country, but respect for the route does not stop at the 30mph signs.

Whether you are on a street, a towpath, a footpath, or any other part of the route, you are only a guest passing through the community of others. The residents and other users have every right to expect that you do not abuse their environment while you borrow it for your transient use.

- Parking in residential roads, in front of gates or other field access, and beside farm driveways at the start or end of your walk is dissuaded most strongly — use local car parks if you really must arrive by car (though using public transport is a far better option, especially in walking linear routes). After all, these routes are described as *railway* days out.
- Do not make excessive noise as you go along — play no music, and quiet conversation barely above a whisper is loud enough. Let the surroundings do the talking.

- Do not block the way for other users by walking in large groups or more than two abreast (this is, of course, the most civilised way to act wherever you walk, be that along Oxford Street or in the Outer Hebrides).
- Be extremely careful not to leave litter anywhere — it is always an eyesore and may be dangerous (*e.g.*, in starting a wildfire). Always try to replenish your supplies at local shops, cafés, and so on: this helps to pay back the community for your use as you pass through.
- Finally, be sure to enjoy your passage through the areas borrowed by the routes — and show it by smiling to the locals you meet.

Conventions used in this guide

Measurement

One convention will already have been noted — the consistent use of metric measurements. This is the logical choice to correspond with map scales, and avoids the need for mental arithmetic in scales of three or of 22. Most people can be happy to consider their natural walking pace at 6kph, 5kph, or 4kph: that translates to one kilometre per 10, 12, or 15 minutes respectively. Even an ambling 3kph comes out at a nice round 20 minutes per kilometre.

However, there are other conventions to give you, the reader, help in reading the text.

Colour

Within the route sections of the guide (that is, excluding these preamble pages), black text is used to denote the detailed route descriptions, while coloured text is used for other types of information.

- Text in black is used for detailed route description.
- Text in maroon is used for logistical information, such as access to public transport or the whereabouts of cafés, restaurants, pubs or shops. It is also used to warn of dangers or “wrong-route” options
- Text in blue is used for historical and other background information, and for descriptive discussion text.
- Text in green is used to describe alternative routes.

Clearly, these classes of information may overlap in places to a greater or lesser degree, and inevitably there will be some leakage of text into what some readers may consider the ‘wrong’ colour.

Words

Within the text I use the word *refuge* in two ways to describe specific aspects of the route.

- A *refuge path* is a path provided (usually as a permissive route by the landowner, and often by agreement with the local highway authority) along the edge of a field, etc. This typically separates the walker from a roadway which would be dangerous owing to the lack of a verge. Some refuge paths are also used as off-road equestrian refuges.
- In crossing a road where there is no pedestrian crossing (whether light-controlled or a plain zebra crossing), a small island between the two directions of road travel is described as a *refuge*.

I use the word *triangle* to describe a refuge of that shape, usually as a means of separating the traffic at the approach to a junction or roundabout. The word *footway* is preferred to *pavement*, and *underpass* to *subway* to avoid ambiguity with road surfaces and underground railways respectively.

Maps of the route

The routes are mapped and are available to view on the *OS Maps Online* website and app (see the appropriate link at the end of this introduction) — *OS Maps Online* subscribers have access to the 1:25000 and 1:50000 maps, the latter really only useful for broad planning. You should note that the online access to the mapping will give you automatic updates to roads, paths and other features in the landscape (such as cliff erosion and rewilding projects) as they appear. This very useful feature is, of course, not covered by using paper maps, unless you keep purchasing replacements every time they are updated.

To find a particular route, you should home in on the area of interest (making sure that the start of the route is covered by the displayed area of the on-screen map).

- Select *Routes*, then *Discover routes*, and untick the *Premium routes* constraint (which restricts the search to some commercial providers).
- You should then be able to find the required route (whose name will begin with “Railway days out”, followed by the starting point, by scrolling through the list of routes alphabetically).

Alternatively, you may find it easier to paste the URL from the introduction to the route as given in the appropriate section of this document.

Online resources — transport and logistics

There are some very useful resources from the major transport players, and from others. A few of the most notable resources are listed below.

- **Transport for London**

<https://tfl.gov.uk/>

Full details of all TfL services, including timetables, bus route maps, status reports, live arrival data, journey planning, and more. Third-party connections such as National Rail and non-TfL bus services are included. The website also contains resources for walking routes in London.

- **National Public Transport Information**

<https://www.nationalpti.co.uk/>

Journey planning for public transport across the country. TfL is generally more detailed and more accurate within London, but NPTI is needed when you stray beyond the TfL area. This website/app supersedes and consolidates the former regional Traveline offerings.

- **National Rail**

<http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>

Journey planning for rail services. Note that the TfL journey planner includes rail services within London. There is coverage of some rail services beyond London (there are inexplicable gaps) — however, since fares, disruptions and many other details may be found on the National Rail website, it is to be preferred for travel beyond London.

- **Bustimes**

<http://www.bustimes.org/>

Timetables (and maps of bus stops) for just about every bus route in Britain and Ireland. The compact format is kinder to smartphone usage than the apps from some transport organisations, and of course it consolidates data from all such organisations.

- **Ordnance Survey**

<https://explore.osmaps.com/>

Access to Ordnance Survey maps online, for desktop, laptop, tablet and smartphone. Printing maps is possible. Walkers are urged to take out a subscription: the cost will be repaid countless times over.

- **Bikehike**

<http://www.bikehike.co.uk/mapview.php>

Using OpenStreetMap, footpaths and cycle paths are overlaid on the base map. Useful for viewing link paths

to and from the route.

- **National Library of Scotland**

<http://maps.nls.uk/>

It may seem curious to reference a library in Edinburgh for information about the topography of London and elsewhere, but NLS carries an extensive collection of digitised historic maps covering the whole of Great Britain. These may be searched from an overlay on the modern map. Within the narrative text, if a reference is made to “old maps”, then NLS will be your source.



Atherstone to Tamworth

ATH–TAM

Start	Atherstone station (ATH) — CV9 1BH
Finish	Tamworth station (TAM) — B79 7JT
Distance	14.8km
Duration	3 hours 00 minutes
Ascent	31m
Transport and ticketing	Train from Euston; day return to Tamworth
Facilities	Supermarket off-route at Polesworth; pub at Alvecote; supermarkets at Bolehall and near Tamworth station
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/33617839/

Introduction

The route is a gentle amble along the towpath of the Coventry Canal, with a short burst of streets at the very end. It picks up where the walk from Nuneaton to Atherstone (see page 37) ends. Atherstone station is served by London North Western Railway trains between Euston and Crewe (do not take a West Coast express train) — journey times to Atherstone are 1 hour 15 minutes, while the return trip from Tamworth takes about 15 minutes longer.

*Atherstone station building
(no access to station)*



The architect of the Tudoresque station building (1847) was John Livock, and there was a similar building at each station on the Trent Valley line, however, all but Atherstone's have since been demolished.

Note that there is very limited facilities for refreshment and replenishment along the canal, with pubs only having lunchtime opening at the weekend, so you must carry all provisions for the journey.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/31478847/> provides a longer and slightly more strenuous alternative to the current route, though the facilities for refreshment and replenishment are no more plentiful.

The route

2 Exit Platform 1 (the platform for trains from London) by the ramp and steps at the front of the train to reach Old Watling Street. Turn left along the left-hand footway to the junction with Merevale Road, where cross to the right-hand footway. Continue ahead to the canal bridge and turn right to descend to the towpath with the water on your left.

The Coventry Canal was dug during the 1780s, reaching the junction with the Trent and Mersey Canal in 1789. There are canal links to Birmingham and Ashby de la Zouch.

The canal towpath is now followed for almost 13km, always with the water on your left, leaving only 1.8km of Tamworth streets at the end of the route to reach the station.

Pass beneath the A5, and advance to a lock. Pass beneath Holly Lane, then pass Baddesley Basin over on your left. Pass a lock, then beneath the railway and continue ahead to pass beneath Baddesley Bridge on Whittington Lane.

3 Pass beneath medium-voltage power lines and continue along the towpath. After a further 550m, take the bend to the left and pass two more locks to reach and pass beneath Bradley Green Bridge on Spon Lane.

4 Continue ahead along the towpath, taking two slight bends to the right, to reach and pass beneath Grendon Bridge, otherwise known as Kitchen's Bridge.

5 Continue along the towpath, passing a dry dock over to your left. After about 500m, pass beneath medium-voltage power lines and pass beneath Meadow Lane Bridge. Take the gentle bend to the left to reach the railway on your left, then ease round to the right.

The water flowing on your right is the River Anker. It rises at Wolvey (a village between Coventry and Hinckley) and joins the

River Tame at Tamworth, where the water flows to join the River Trent and the River Humber before emptying into the North Sea at Spurn Head. The name of the river means *winding river*.

Take the left-hand bend to pass beneath the railway.

6 Continue along the towpath, with first a sewage works and then house-backs across the canal to your left. Pass beneath the bridge which carries Grendon Road and advance to the bridge which carries Market Street.

The centre of Polesworth lies off to the right, with the railway station 1.2km distant on the north side of the village. Do not bother trying to catch a train, though — there is one Parliamentary train westbound each weekday morning, and none eastbound. During line improvements, the footbridge was demolished, and there is no way to reach the eastbound track.

There is a small supermarket 650m distant on High Street.

7 Pass beneath the bridge and take the right-hand bend. Pass beneath Tamworth Road and follow the towpath for around 900m to pass beneath a footbridge, then take the left-hand bend to pass beneath the M42.

8 Continue ahead with the woodland of Pooley Country Park (the site of a former coal mine) on your right. Take the right-hand bend, then take a left-hand bend with the ruins of Alvecote Priory across the canal on your left to reach Pooley's Lane.

On the far side of the canal, there is a pub. However, it is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, and other weekday lunchtimes.

9 Pass beneath Pooley's Lane, and pass a large marina. Cross a bridge over an inlet and continue ahead. Pass woodland on your right, then pass beneath Hodge Lane. Pass house-backs on your right to reach Tamworth Road in Amington.

10 Pass beneath Tamworth Road and take the left-hand bend, then pass beneath three roads in quick succession. Take a slight bend to the right and follow the towpath in a straight line for almost 1km. Take the left-hand bend to reach the bridge carrying Amington Road. Do not pass beneath the bridge, but turn right to leave the towpath which has been a constant companion since Atherstone, and follow a path up to Amington Road.

11 Turn right onto the right-hand footway of Amington Road, passing a convenience shop and a small supermarket on the right. Continue ahead for 700m and pass beneath the railway.

At the roundabout, bear round to the right to follow the right-hand footway of Bolebridge Street across the river Anker and past a supermarket on your right. At the next roundabout, turn right to follow the right-hand footway of Saxondrive [sic]. Pass another supermarket on your right. Keep the next roundabout on your left as you cross over the end of Stationfields using the triangle as

a refuge, then turn right onto Victoria Road and follow it to the entrance to Tamworth station.

There are toilets and a café on Platform 1. Trains for London leave from Platform 2, up to Platform 3 (the platform for trains to Derby), then down to your left.

This station opened in 1847 and was rebuilt in 1962.

Leighton Buzzard to Bletchley

LBZ–BLY

Start	Leighton Buzzard station (LBZ) — LU7 2LY
Finish	Bletchley station (BLY) — MK3 6DZ
Distance	15.4km
Duration	3 hours 21 minutes
Ascent	174m
Transport and ticketing	Train from Euston; bus to Bletchley at Mill Lane; day return to Bletchley
Facilities	Supermarket in Linslade; pubs near Linslade tunnel and at Great Brickhill; all facilities in Bletchley
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/9320604/

Introduction

The walk begins at Leighton Buzzard station, on the line between Euston and Milton Keynes. After some time on the towpath of the Grand Union Canal, the router passes through Rushmere Country Park and Great Brickhill before returning to the canal. The towpath is followed to the nearest exit to the station.

Ignoring the slow trains with many stops, the journey time from Euston to Leighton Buzzard is between 30 and 40 minutes, while the journey time from Bletchley to Euston on the fast trains is around 40 minutes.

The railway came to Linslade (the location of the station called Leighton Buzzard) in 1838; the current station was built in 1859.

The route

2 Exit the station and turn right, squeezing between the taxi office and the railway to come out onto a recreation ground. Turn left and follow a path all the way, passing a church on your right, to reach the junction of Church Road and Vicarage Road.

Cross Church Road and take the enclosed path opposite; with a final dog-leg to the left, the path comes out onto New Road. Turn right along New Road, then left on Wing Road. Cross to the right-hand footway at the pedestrian crossing, and continue up to the junction. Turn right to cross the canal, then cross over the road at a pedestrian crossing just beyond the bridge.

There is a large supermarket over to the right.

Here, you join the Greensand Ridge walk, a 64km walking route between Leighton Buzzard and Gamlingay in Cambridgeshire. See <https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/82/countryside/434/walking/2> for details. You will follow the Greensand Ridge Walk as far as Oak Wood, in the north-west corner of Rushmere Country Park. Do not confuse the Greensand Ridge Walk with the longer Greensand Way through Surrey and Kent — the geology may be the same, but it is a different path.

3 From the crossing, go straight ahead to descend to the towpath of the Grand Union Canal. Follow the towpath, with the water on your left to Leighton Lock.

Continue ahead on the towpath past the lock through a wide left-hand bend. Pass a sewage works on the far side of the canal, and continue to reach the Globe Inn.

The pub is open daily between 1100 and 2300; meals from a standard menu are served between 1200 and 2100.

4 Continue along the towpath under the bridge. About 100m beyond the bridge, and before reaching the railway, leave the towpath by turning right on a path to reach the bank of the River Ouzel. Follow the river with the water on your right to reach a bridge; turn right to cross the bridge, then turn left to return to field level.

Turn right, away from the river, and follow a path up to a farm access track, where turn left to follow the track. The track bends half-right before reaching a belt of trees, with housing beyond.

Some maps show a path running east from the bridge to the bend in the track.

5 Do not advance to the road, but turn left on a path, known locally as Firs Path. After 750m, take a path half-right uphill. This path bends round to the right and passes through woodland, coming out to a road junction at Rushmere. There is an imposing set of gates opposite.

The village of Heath and Reach is off to the right of the gates.

6 Take Bragenham Lane from the junction (the road to the left of the imposing gated entrance) then take a kissing-gate on the right. The path leads up to a track (coming from the gates); bear slightly left to continue on the access road to Rushmere Country Park. Follow the road to pass an overflow the car park on the left. You will soon reach the Herons View visitor centre on the right, with the main car park on the left.

The visitor centre has a café and toilets.

Turn sharp left opposite the café garden, then half-right (or turn left just before reaching the café if you are not making use of any of the facilities), and pass through a gap at the end of the car park. Turn left, then sharp right to pick up a path (the Greensand Ridge Walk,

from which you briefly diverted to reach the visitor centre) heading north-west.

Ignore a path which descends at 90° on your left. Continue ahead, dropping and rising through a small valley, to reach a crossing path in Oak Wood.

Here, the Greensand Ridge Walk departs to the right.

7 Continue ahead on a path, descending to a stream and passing a sewage works on your right. The path now becomes a bit more organised, gaining the name of Cuff Lane. Follow Cuff Lane out to the centre of Great Brickhill, and turn left along Heath Road to the triangle at the junction. Take the right-hand side of the triangle to the pub.

The pub is open from noon, and serves food at lunchtimes and in the early evening.

Turn right at the pub, and take the major road round to the left, Lower Way.

The road is signposted to Bletchley on an old all-upper-case signpost whose design was superseded in 1958 by the current road direction design by Jock Kinneir and Margaret Calvert — there is a good exhibition of the outstanding work of Calvert and Kinneir in the Design Museum in Kensington.

The key advance was that the new signage (in upper and lower case with standard typography designed and optimised for the job) was much easier to read, and thus much safer, if you were travelling faster than a bicycle did in 1921.

However, it is to be regretted that some authorities have not changed such signage to the legal standard which was set over sixty years ago, preferring to wallow in the rosy glow of twee nostalgia, rather than pursuing and encouraging an improvement in road safety.

8 Follow Lower Way to Church Close, just before reaching the church. Turn left onto Church Close and follow it almost to the point where it bends to the left. There is a footpath signpost on the right of the lane.

9 Follow the path, initially parallel to the lane, then out into a field. Continue ahead to cross the field to the far corner, then pass through some trees into the next field. Follow the right-hand edge of this field almost to its far end, then turn right on a path inside the right-hand edge of a wood. Veer half-left to cross the next field and come out onto a road, Mill Lane. Turn left along the road, passing Westfield Farm on your right, to descend to the River Ouzel at Orchard Mill.

Cross the river and continue to the bridge over the Grand Union Canal.

If you continue across the bridge to the end of Mill Lane and turn right, you will find a pair of bus stops. The one on the far side of the

main road will take you to Bletchley in ten minutes (or on to Milton Keynes); the southbound stop is for Luton via Leighton Buzzard station. The service is hourly, with no service on Sundays.

10 Immediately before you reach the bridge, take a set of steps down on the left to towpath level. Turn right along the towpath with the water on your left. Go under the A4146 at Willowbridge.

11 Continue along the towpath, passing some allotment gardens on the right, to a bridge at Mill Road.

12 Continue along the towpath to a bridge at Sycamore Avenue, with more allotment gardens on the right. Bear right and turn left over the bridge. Follow Sycamore Avenue to a mini-roundabout, where turn right onto Aylesbury Street.

13 Turn left at another mini-roundabout (after all, this is Milton Keynes) onto Vicarage Road. Follow Vicarage Road to its junction with Queensway, in Fenny Stratford.

Continue ahead along Queensway, where it runs into the commercial centre of Bletchley.

The shops include a Polish grocery and a Romanian one; just before you reach the end of the shops, there is a Hungarian grocery on the left.

Squeeze through a gap to reach the Brunel roundabout. Cross one pedestrian crossing, then, in front of the concrete railway bridge, cross by a divided pedestrian crossing. Turn left and pass beneath two railway bridges, Turn right up a set of steps and follow the path ahead to reach Bletchley station.

The standard service to Euston is three trains per hour throughout the week.

Macclesfield circuit

Tegg's Nose and White Nancy

MAC

Start	Macclesfield station (MAC) — SK11 6JP
Finish	Macclesfield station (MAC) — SK11 6JP
Distance	17.4km
Duration	4 hour 06 minutes
Ascent	397m
Transport and ticketing	Train from Euston; bus to Macclesfield at Langley and Kerridge; return ticket to Macclesfield (book well in advance for major saving)
Facilities	Café at Tegg's Nose Country Park; pubs in Gurnett and Kerridge; all facilities in Macclesfield
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/13344484/

Introduction

The walk begins and ends at Macclesfield station. There is about an hour's canalside walking at the start of the circuit, and a similar length at the end. The middle section is steep in places, and deserves respect in poor weather ... and, for that matter, in hot sunny conditions. Proper walking boots with good ankle support are essential for this walk. Some may see it as overkill on the flat

View over Teggsnose reservoir (R) towards Macclesfield Forest and Shutlingsloe



towpaths, but for the section between Langley and Kerridge, nothing else will do.

Macclesfield is known for its history of silk-weaving — indeed, the new town centre by-pass is called The Silk Road. The arrival of the canal (1826-31) allowed the industry to diversify, with a canalside bread-flour mill prominent. There are fine examples of Georgian and later architecture in the town, including the large cast-iron-framed furniture warehouse of Arighi Bianchi near the station.

Journey time between Euston and Macclesfield on the hourly direct trains take about 1 hour 50 minutes for the journey, while those involving a change at Stafford or Stoke extend the journey time by no more than 15 minutes.

The route

2 Exit the station, and turn right. Turn right to pass beneath the railway, keeping on the right-hand footway. On the far side of the bridge, continue ahead onto Buxton Road, the A537 for about 550m, crossing to the left-hand footway at a suitable refuge. Cross the canal, then corkscrew down to the left to reach the towpath.

Turn left and follow the canal towpath for 1.65km to a crossover bridge; the Hovis mill near the start of our towpath section (across the canal) has been turned into flats, and much of the rest of the route to Gurnett has a golf course to the left.

Cross to the right bank of the canal by the crossover bridge and follow the towpath for 140m. Just before the aqueduct, take a set of steps on the right, down to road level, at Ye Olde King's Head pub in Gurnett.

The pub serves simple meals and beer during normal hours — you might take note that the pub in Langley village ahead is closed on Mondays, and does not open for lunch except on Saturdays and Sundays.

Turn left to pass beneath the canal. At Gurnett Farm, take the left fork at the road junction. Bear left on Langley Road, and follow it to the junction with Main Road in Langley, opposite the squat stone Methodist church.

There is an hourly bus service between Macclesfield and Langley, but I have found that it leaves Macclesfield station just before the hourly train arrives from Euston. This seems to leave two options if you want to skip the canal section — find somewhere for some refreshment, or take a taxi. If you decide on the latter course of action, my advice (from experience) is to ask for Langley Methodist church — there is a better chance that the driver will know it (or at least, that you are able to spot the building ahead: check the environs on Google Streetview first to get an idea of what the area looks like.).

Skipping the canal section might seem like a good idea to get to the meat of the walk (especially if you have left London after the 0820 train), but if you have the time, it makes for a pleasant walk of about an hour, and this will ease your legs gently into the day's walk, before the steep climb ahead.

It is also a way of using up the 58 minutes till the next bus from Macclesfield station.

3 From the junction at the church, walk down Main Street (keeping the church on your right), passing the St Dunstan's Inn on the left.

Note that the pub is closed on Mondays and also on weekday lunchtimes: the next refreshment option ahead is the café on the north side of Tegg's Nose.

Turn left down Holehouse Lane (marked *No through road*). Turn left at a junction to keep the reservoir dam on your right, and follow the lane to its end at a small car park.

Curiously, although the rock protuberance above is called *Tegg's Nose*, the reservoir bears the one-word name of *Teggsnose*. The word *tegg* is probably Scandinavian in origin, and means a sheep in its second year.

This is the point at which the route changes from the approximately horizontal to the apparently vertical. There is a 150m change in altitude between the car park and the path which rounds Tegg's Nose 680m ahead — that's an average gradient of 22%, and of course, some parts are greater than the average.

It should not need pointing out that this is where proper walking boots with good ankle support become essential. In dry weather, dust on the surface makes for a slip hazard, just as does frost and black ice. After rain, of course, there is mud. Finally, do not underestimate the likely change of conditions between the bottom and the top of the climb on a wintry day lashed by any assortment of wind, rain and snow. The stout and stable boles of bilberry bushes may be pressed into service as emergency handholds on the steeper parts of the ascent.

Pass through a gate on the right-hand side of the back of the car park and make your way up the steep and bouldery path: take it carefully, especially if you are starting the walk from Langley. Part way up, the path may bend off to the left before returning to a north-easterly direction, and finally travelling east to reach the top path.

The view is spectacular in all directions: on a clear day, you may be lucky enough to pick out both cathedrals in the centre of Liverpool, over 60km away in a west-north-westerly direction. The Clwydian Hills form the backdrop to the west, and Macclesfield Forest to the south. From the other end of the summit, Manchester is laid out before you, with the Pennines to its east.



Stonecutting equipment on the east side of Tegg's Nose

Milestone on the old coach road: Country Park buildings in the background



Turn right and follow the path which contours below the summit. Just beyond a path which zigzags up from your right, there is a very welcome bench. Continue travelling northbound — do not take a path off to the west. You will soon come to what amounts to a small open-air industrial museum.

The rocks of Tegg's Nose have long been subject to extensive quarrying, and the Country

Park's administration have laid out some of the machinery used in the quarrying and stonecutting. There are useful interpretive boards to aid the visitor's appreciation of the site.

You will see a huge quarry face on your left after leaving the equipment display: beyond the face, the path bends round to the left, meeting a track. Turn right onto this track, which makes its way to the Tegg's Nose Country Park buildings ahead on the main road. On the way, notice a carved milestone on the right of the path: this indicates that you are walking on what was once the main coach route between Macclesfield and London.

The Country Park buildings have further displays of historical displays on the area, and there is also abundant information about the local area's birdlife, wildlife and the physical and natural environment. Of more immediate interest to the walker, perhaps, is the presence of a café and toilets.

If the climb has taken it out of you, now is the time to assess the rest of the route. There will be nothing as brutal as that ascent from the reservoir, but the Kerridge ridge ahead is far from flat. This is probably the best place to call for a taxi to take you back into Macclesfield if you judge it advisable. The staff in the café should be able to help with the transport arrangements.

4 From the café, turn right along the main road for about 140m to reach Windyway House. A lane comes to meet the road opposite. Cross the road, and take a path which splits the angle between the lane and the Buxton-bound road. This path rises over a slight hill, then descends through fields to reach a road. This is



the Buxton New Road, the A537 which we took in Macclesfield to reach the canal.

It is a very busy road — take the greatest care on the roadside!

Cross the road, and turn left. Walk the 60m to reach the next road junction, which is with Bull Hill Lane.

Since leaving Langley, you have been following (more or less) the Gritstone Trail. This is a 55km long distance path maintained by Cheshire East Council, and is a hilly walk which follows the ridges across the council's area between Disley on the Greater Manchester boundary and Kids Grove on the Staffordshire boundary. Full details may be found at

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/leisure,_culture_and_tourism/ranger_service/countryside_sites/the_gritstone_trail/gritstone-trail.aspx

It is now time to leave it for a while: it will come back to meet us on Kerridge Hill.

The Gritstone Trail is an alternative route which will take you on to White Nancy if you really feel the need for the extra exercise. It regains the line of the present route just before the col on Kerridge Hill.

From the junction of Bull Hill Lane with the A537, the northbound Gritstone Trail takes off to the right, dropping into the deep clough and rising again, before dropping into Rainow, re-crossing the same stream, and climbing onto Kerridge Hill. The route of the Gritstone Trail is marked on the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 map with the usual green lozenges.

5 Set off down Bull Hill Lane, passing some fine farm buildings. After 500m, take a path off to the left which keeps to the left-hand edge of fields before dropping to Rainow Road at the line of houses which makes up Kerridge End.

Turn right along Rainow Road for about 60m, and turn left up Lidgett's Lane. Leave the road where it bends sharply left, going straight ahead through a gate onto a track.

*The route ahead is clear,
seen from the descent to
Buxton New Road*



The ridge path to the north of the Kerridge trig point

After about 150m, the path ahead forks: the bridleway continues ahead, but take the footpath (the left fork) which rises through the woodland. Ignore a path which descends right, but keep going until you reach the top. There are quarries below on your left, but stay on the path until you reach the trig point, where you are rewarded (atmospheric conditions permitting) with a splendid view to the west.

Continue ahead; the Gritstone Trail comes up from the right to

join the ridge walk just before it drops into a slight col. Beyond the col, the route rises to return to the level ridge path, the ground now falling away steeply on your right.

Keep straight ahead; soon, the unmistakable pepperpot shape of White Nancy comes into view.

White Nancy was erected to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. It was originally in the colour of the natural stone, and there was a room inside. The entry has now been stopped up and the exterior is painted brilliant white. Again, we have extensive views to enjoy. This, though, is the end of our high-level traverse: the route drops to the level of the plain.

6 Bear off to the west from White Nancy, soon picking up a path which descends steeply through woodland: there are many twists and turns on the path's descent. After 250m, join a path which comes in from the right, continuing to descend until it becomes a lane. At the bottom, the lane comes out onto a road at a riding school. Turn right and take the road, using the elevated footway on its right-hand side for part of the way, to descend to the Bull's Head pub in Kerridge.



There is an occasional bus service on Mondays to Fridays (but not on Bank Holidays) to Macclesfield from here: there are much more frequent services from Bollington. To reach Bollington from the Bull's Head, go north on Jackson Lane, then left onto Grimshaw Lane. Take the first right (Hurst Lane) and follow it all the way to its end — over the canal, then sharp right and

sharper left to descend to Palmerston Street. The bus stop is just to your right on Palmerston Street. The walk from the Bull's Head to the bus stop measures approximately 1.1km.

7 From the Bull's Head, turn south on Oak Lane. After about 160m, at the access to Dawson Farm, turn right onto a path (which a sign proclaims as a "private road" — don't worry, it is a public right of way). This path reaches the canal at a point where it bends sharply to the right: here, take a path off to the left to reach and cross the canal bridge at Tinkers Clough.

8 Turn left onto the towpath. After about 1.7km, take the "spiral bridge" up to Clarke Lane, across the canal, and down to the towpath, now with the water on your right. The towpath remains on the same side all the way from Clarke Lane to Buxton Road, passing the Hurdsfield Industrial Estate (on the far bank of the canal), and going underneath Hurdsfield Road, before reaching Buxton Road, which is accessed via a set of steps on the left. Turn right onto Buxton Road to cross the canal: continue ahead, crossing over to the left-hand footway at a convenient refuge. At the major junction, continue ahead to pass beneath the railway, and turn left to reach the station.

There are several options for refreshment close to the station, and more in the town centre up to the west.

Nothing remains, however, of the café at the old bus station across from the railway station (where the Health Hub now stands), whose atmosphere in the 1980s was like a permanent tropical rainforest without trees.



*Weddington Walk,
looking back to the south*

*Fieldpath approaching
Caldecote Grange*



Northampton to Long Buckby

NMP–LBK

Start	Northampton station (NMP) — NN1 1SP
Finish	Long Buckby station (LBK) — NN6 7QA
Distance	19.5km
Duration	4 hours 14 minutes
Ascent	212m
Transport and ticketing	Train from Euston; day return to Long Buckby
Facilities	All facilities in Northampton; pubs at Harlestone and Little Brington
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/33321962/

Introduction

The walk begins at Northampton station. After passing through the suburbs of Northampton, the route is almost exclusively on paths, mainly over farmland, but also through woods and a golf course.

Fast trains take an hour from Euston to Northampton, while the return journey from Long Buckby take about 20 minutes longer.

The route

2 Exit the station building onto Black Lion Hill and turn right to follow the right-hand footway over the railway, then over two river bridges. At the end of the brick wall of the bridge, just beyond a light-controlled pedestrian crossing, turn right onto a path which leads to St James Park Road.

There is a convenience shop on the right.

Follow the right-hand footway of St James Park Road, passing Victoria Park on your right. Cross over the end of Steene Street and continue ahead, crossing to the left-hand footway at a suitable location, to reach the junction with Spencer Bridge Road.

3 Cross Spencer Bridge Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing a few metres to your left, then turn right along the left-hand footway to regain the junction. Cross over the end of Baring Road and turn left along the right-hand footway. After 250m, follow through onto Dallington Road at the fork, and follow the right-hand footway for 1.15km to reach the centre of Dallington, the area becoming a little more rustic (the remains of the village before it was swallowed up by Northampton) after you have passed Cardigan Close.



Looking towards the south-west corner of the Roman camp at Manduessedum

There is a convenience shop on the right at the junction with Tintern Avenue, and a pub (only open for lunchtimes from Friday to Sunday) after a further 500m.

Cross Dallington Park Road and follow the right-hand footway of Raynsford Road to its end, where turn left and ascend the ramp to Mill Lane.

4 Turn right and cross Mill Lane using the refuge, and continue along the left-hand footway of Woodside Way, passing a school on your left. At a mini-roundabout, turn left onto Brookside Meadows and follow the left-hand footway round to the right, crossing over the stub end ahead.

Take a tarmac path ahead which passes between houses and along house-backs to reach open countryside next to Dallington Brook, with the water on your left. Follow the brook for about 700m to reach a footbridge on your left, with the southern tip of Heath Spinney ahead.

The bridge offers access to Harlestone Road and your last chance to catch a bus back to the centre of Northampton.

5 Continue ahead for 900m, passing new housing on your right, to reach and cross Poppyfields Way using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Continue ahead into the woodland of Dallington Heath. After 140m, cross over a public bridleway, then after a further 320m, turn half-left at a T-junction of paths. Turn right after 40m and follow a path for 270m to reach a path crossing with a sawmill ahead.

6 Turn left to follow a public bridleway through Harlestone Heath, coming to a T-junction of paths after 400m, where the Midshires Way joins from the right.

The Midshires Way is a 362km route which runs from Bledlow on the Ridgeway Path (near Princes Risborough) to Stockport, passing close to Milton Keynes, Leicester, Derby and Buxton. There is no cohesive guide, so I suggest simply searching for *Midshires Way route* to find the guides (some not exactly hot off the press) to some

of the parts. The route is marked on Ordnance Survey maps with the familiar lozenge shapes.

Turn left, then immediately turn right with the Midshires Way and follow the path out to Harlestone Road. Turn right along the right-hand footway into the village of Lower Harlestone, passing a pub on your right.

The pub is open from 1100 daily and serves a range of dishes from sandwiches to fillet steak (including a fillet steak sandwich, of all things).

Where you reach, on your right, a postbox and a telephone kiosk which now houses a defibrillator, turn left to follow a lane, still on the Midshires Way, which bends round to the right to reach a school on your left.

7 Join Church Lane as it comes in from the right. After 100m, ease to the left to keep the churchyard on your right. With a gate on your right, turn left onto a path which passes a golf club car park on your left, then crosses two fairways.

Remember to observe golfing etiquette, making no sound as you cross the course, and standing stock-still when a golfer is addressing the ball or playing a stroke.

Pass out of the golf course and cross a field, continuing ahead where a path branches off to the left. Cross the end of a lane and pass the Village Institute on your right, with the obelisk celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II on your left.

Harlestone is not without history. Originally two Saxon settlements, it was when Bonnie Prince Charlie heard about an English army at Harlestone in 1745, he turned round and marched his soldiers back to Scotland, and to their doom at Culloden.

Continue straight ahead across two fields to reach Port Road through a gate.

A short distance to the left, there is a polychromatic well-head.

Turn right along Port Road, then bear left at the triangle. Cross a field on the diagonal, then turn left to reach the corner of the next field, where turn right to follow the left-hand edge of the field into the corner at Yewtree Spinney.

8 Cross a brook, then turn half-right to cross a field on the diagonal to its far right-hand corner. Turn left-and-right and cross the next field to the corner ahead, then turn half-left to cross the next field to its far right-hand corner. Cross a stream and turn right to pass along the right-hand edge of a field, through a wood, and along the right-hand edge of another field. Turn half-left to cross the next field on the diagonal to reach Roman Road at Nobottle, where turn right.

9 Follow the right-hand side of the road until you reach a bridleway on your left. Turn right and cross the field, bending

left to follow its right-hand edge to reach Port Road, where turn right. to the point where the road bends to the right, where continue straight ahead across a stile.

After 30m, turn left to follow a path on a 278° bearing across a field, then easing to the right to cross the next field, and easing left again to make for the far right-hand corner of the third field. Turn left onto the Carriage Drive (to Althorp, off to your right) to reach the centre of Little Brington.

10 Continue ahead across Hall Lane onto Main Street, with the triangle on your left. Follow the right-hand footway ahead to reach a pub on your right.

The pub is open from noon daily and offers a range of sandwiches, light lunches and main meals.

Turn right onto Folly Lane and follow it to its end at a gate. Taking aim from the signpost, bear left to follow the public footpath (rather than the public bridleway which continues straight ahead) and cross to the protruding corner of the field. Take the corner to follow the left-hand edge of the field, then turn half-right to cross the next field, making for the right-hand end of some trees. Continue in the same direction to cross the next field on the diagonal, then turn half-left to hug the left-hand edge of a field and pass beneath high-voltage power lines.

11 Continue along the left-hand edge of the field to its end, then turn half-right to cross two fields. Continue through some trees and cross a stream on a footbridge. Turn half-right and follow the path to pass between a pond on your right and a protruding corner on your left. Bend to your left to emerge at a T-junction and carry on ahead along Main Street to reach the community exchange library (née telephone kiosk) in the centre of Whilton.

12 Take the left-hand bend and follow Main Street for 100m. Turn right onto Buckby Lane (a cause for optimism?). Continue through gates at the end of the lane and follow the public footpath along the left-hand edge of two fields. Continue ahead to cross over the next field and reach a stream.

Cross the stream and make for the left-hand corner of the field head. Continue ahead along the left-hand edge of two fields, crossing the access to Perkin's Lodge after the first of these. Continue ahead across two fields to reach the railway.

13 Cross the railway on a footbridge, and pass into the field to your left. Turn right to follow the right-hand edge of the field to its end, and continue out onto Wright Road. Cross the road and turn right along the left-hand footway to reach the T-junction with Spencer Road. Turn left to follow the left-hand footway of Spencer Road past a school on your left and a squeeze-point on your right for a little more than 500m to reach the entrance to Long Buckby station on your left.

Trains for Northampton and London leave from Platform 1. Use the underpass to reach Platform 2 if you are travelling on to Rugby and beyond.



Nuneaton to Atherstone

NUN-ATH

Start	Nuneaton station (NUN) — CV11 4BU
Finish	Atherstone station (ATH) — CV9 1BH
Distance	11.85km
Duration	2 hours 29 minutes
Ascent	74m
Transport and ticketing	From Euston, London North Western Railway train to Nuneaton; bus at Mancetter to Atherstone/Nuneaton; day return to Atherstone
Facilities	Convenience shop at Sandon Park and at Mancetter; all facilities in Atherstone
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/12895685/

Introduction

The walk begins at Nuneaton station, served by London North Western Railway trains between London Euston and Crewe (do not take a West Coast express train). It is a gentle stroll along the Anker valley. The word *Anker* is an old word meaning “winding river”.

The standard journey time from Euston to Nuneaton is around 1 hour 10 minutes, while the return journey from Atherstone to Euston takes 1 hour 20 minutes.

The station is still an important junction, with lines to Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester, but sixty years ago, the rail layout was much more complex. One of the lines left the main line towards Ashby de la Zouch and Burton on Trent, and the bed of this line will soon be met *en route*.

The route

2 Exit the station, and turn left onto Regent Street. Turn left to cross the railway, keeping on the left-hand footway. On the far side of the bridge, follow the road round to your left, then continue ahead on Weddington Road, keeping to the right of a fast-food kiosk.

Follow Weddington Road, passing the entrance to a sports ground on the left. At the entrance to a nursery school on the left, double back left through a traffic barrier, and immediately turn right into Sandon Park.

Just beyond the school, there is a convenience shop, Note that this is the only facility for refreshment and replenishment until you reach Mancetter, 8km ahead.



Weddington Walk

3 The path bears right, then crosses a simple footbridge: housing is now ahead. Turn left and, where the housing (now on your right) ends, follow the path round the left edge of the grassed area to reach a sign with a footbridge on the left. Cross the bridge, and turn left, following a path towards the railway.

Just before the path reaches the railway, turn right and right again onto the Weddington Walk. The path rises to reach the railbed of the former line to

Ashby de la Zouch; continue ahead for 800m.

Take a path which slopes down to the left: over to your right, you should be able to see a children's playground. This slope leads down to meet a path emerging from a bridge under the railbed on your right.

The path which runs over the bridge is Moore Walk.

Moore Walk is your last exit option before Mancetter for a return to Nuneaton: follow it past the church and take Church Lane out to Weddington Road, from which there are frequent buses (running from left to right as you approach Weddington Road) to the town centre.

If you find yourself on top of the bridge (there is a wall on your right, and houses may be glimpsed beyond), do not attempt to descend left (it is very unsafe ground), but return to the sloping path to make your descent.

Path to Caldecote Grange



4 Turn left, away from the bridge, and take a clear fieldpath through the field. After 150m, ignore a path on the left (there is a low signpost); after another 220m, swing to the left (that is, to the north-west) with the main path, which rises gently toward some trees at the top.

A reason to note the turn-back option at Moore Walk is the likelihood, after rain or after ploughing, that the path will be very muddy. Given that most of the route as far as Mancetter is on similar surfaces, discretion might be the better part of valour here.

The path reaches the trees, which do their bounden duty to shield the denizens of Caldecote Grange (formerly the rectory for

the little church at Caldecote Hall) from the common people, and swings left then right to descend to a lane at Caldecote.

To the right along the lane lies the entrance to Caldecote Hall. The present Hall dates from a late-Victorian rebuild of a Hall which was a noted Civil War site, and the frontage for the stable-block is a 21st-century sham. Map-readers should note that the footpath, clearly visible on the Ordnance Survey maps and running north from the church, has been stopped up and is no longer viable, to the obvious satisfaction of the inmates at the Hall.

Having been, for a time during the twentieth century, a secure home for inebriates, the Hall now functions as a gated apartment community (inebriation no longer a condition of residence) with a decidedly glacial front to all others.

5 Turn left on the lane: there is a long, tall brick wall on the right. Follow the lane past the end of the wall, and the cottages beyond. Immediately after passing the last cottage, turn right onto a track. Follow the track to, and over a bridge: the water flowing beneath is the River Anker, on its way to join the Tame in Tamworth.

Looking back and to the right, you will catch a glimpse of Caldecote Hall (now far enough away that you will not disturb the residents). The naming of Stone Bridge on the map suggests that the track is a very old connecting route in the Anker valley between Nuneaton and Atherstone at least, and possibly part of an important trade route between the Trent valley and the Avon/Nene watershed (from which, there are routes to the east, south-west and south-east).

Do not take the spur path which goes off to the left towards the railway, but continue on the main track in a generally north-westerly direction to reach a road. Turn right along the road, which bends to the right at the driveway to Leatherhill Grange (the marking on the map still refers to Leather Hill Farm, showing the recent change of focus from agriculture to residence).

6 Take the bend to the right, and pass cottages on the right. At the point where the road bends to the left, you will see a clear footpath on the right. Do not take this, but turn your back on it to espy a gap in the hedge on the other side of the lane.

Make your way through the hedge, and take a long, straight path across the field. This eventually makes for the left-hand side of a tall house on Woodford Lane.

*Caldecote Hall ,
seen from Stone Bridge*





The north-eastern corner of Mancetter Roman camp

7 Turn left on Woodford Lane, descending towards a bridge. Before reaching the bridge (after about 350m on the road), note a slight realignment of the road on your right. At the end of the old line of the road, turn right onto a path which follows the left-hand edge of a field for 300m, then cuts through a gap to keep the hedge on the right, now running approximately north-west. This path reaches a farm track: continue ahead on the track, which bends right and then left to go through the middle of the Roman camp of Manduessedum (or Mancetter as we know it today).

The camp was established in about 50CE at the point where Watling Street crossed the River Anker, but was less important as a legionary fortress after the Romans reached Uriconium (Wroxeter, which is to the south-west of modern-day Telford — The Wrekin is clearly of the same linguistic parentage as Uriconium) about five years later. It is one of the less fanciful options for the site of Boudicca's last stand by her Iceni tribe and their indigenous allies against the Roman army in 61CE. The camp was at the north-east corner of the town; archaeologists have determined the full extent of the settlement, and there are several information plaques throughout the area of the town.

8 Before the farm track turns to the right to reach Watling Street, descend towards the left-hand corner of the camp, from where a path descends (with an interesting zigzag at the end of the first field) towards the river. Ignore a path going off to the right at the start of a long bridge over the valley bottom: once across the river, the path leads into Mill Lane.

Ascend Mill Lane, passing the Scout HQ on the right. When you reach Nuneaton Road (noting all the various signposts to the Scout HQ — whatever happened to the idea of being prepared through prior study of maps?), turn right. Pass the churchyard and almshouses on the right, and cross over to the left-hand footway at the church.

The church dates from the thirteenth century, with major additions in the fifteenth century. The church at Atherstone was the minor church of two until the railway-incited growth of Atherstone in the nineteenth century. There is a memorial to two martyrs, burned at the stake during the height of sectarian intolerance in the middle of the sixteenth century.

Continue into the complex junction after passing the church, keeping on the left-hand footway to reach the junction with Manor Road in modern Mancetter.

There is a convenience shop here, and buses stop here on their route between Nuneaton and Atherstone.

9 Turn left along Manor Road, passing the shop. The road descends in a gentle right-hand curve to run parallel to the railway. Beyond the point where the houses on the left come to an end (there being no room between Manor Road and the railway), you will see four blocks of lock-up garages, a hangover from the 1950s when they were seen as suitable for car storage rather than their later use as a target for vandalism, by which time householders had come to prefer having their vehicles in sight next to their houses.

The left-hand footway peters out here, but continue ahead on the verge to pick up a track which runs next to the railway and rises to a bridge over the lines: this track leads to the towpath of the Coventry Canal, at a level higher than the railway.

The Coventry Canal was dug during the 1780s, reaching the junction with the Trent and Mersey Canal in 1789. There are canal links to Birmingham and Ashby de la Zouch.

Turn right along the towpath soon, you will see houses on the right. Beyond bridge 39, there is open space on the right, followed by more housing. Pass beneath Coleshill Road at bridge 41, then turn right to reach road level.

The long derelict building on the other side of the canal on the approach to bridge 41 is the Britannia Works, in which hats were made: it was built during the nineteenth century, with phases in the early, middle and late years of the century. Millinery was one of Atherstone's key trades until the middle of the twentieth century, when the market for fine millinery dwindled.

From Bridge 41, a map-reader will see that the canal descends locks to a point very close to the station. To reach the London-bound trains, you will need to go under Merevale Road, then swing back to the right off the towpath and turn left. Take the left-hand (lower) road at the fork and pass beneath the railway (by a bridge with very low headroom) on Old Watling Street (unless travelling northbound: see below). Turn right at the top, and turn right onto the station forecourt.

10 For the shops and eating facilities of Atherstone, continue ahead (away from the canal) on Coleshill Road, continuing

to the Red Lion at the junction with Long Street. Turn left along Long Street. If you have not found solace by the time you reach Station Road, you may divert left to a supermarket for refreshment. Beyond Station Road, you will see the fine Tudoresque station building of 1847 (when the railway arrived). Do not use the access to the station building — it is now a veterinary surgery — but use the car park entrance beyond to reach the station.

The architect of the station building was John Livock, and there was a similar building at each station on the Trent Valley line, however, all but Atherstone's have been demolished.

If you are travelling to London, your train will be on Platform 2, entering to the right of the old station house. If you are exiting northbound, you will need to take the narrow Old Watling Street which descends off Long Street and under the railway, then double back on Merevale Road to reach Platform 1.

Atherstone station is the start of a walk along the Coventry Canal to Tamworth, the description of which starts on page 15.

*Atherstone station building
(no access to station)*



