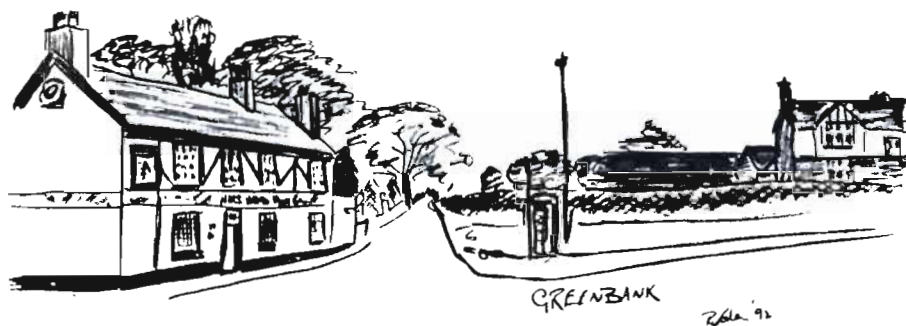


WALKS AROUND WHEELOCK

WALKS AROUND WHEELOCK

by

Trevor Boxer & Roger Foden



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TIMING

The time taken to walk any route depends entirely upon the participants. It is possible to go at any pace between that of a cross-country run and a gentle amble. The important thing is enjoyment. Generally, allow a maximum walking speed of 2½ miles per hour across country, but give yourself plenty of time to look at the view, observe Nature, take photographs or even, Heaven forbid, get slightly lost.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the routes, the writers cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, alterations in field boundaries, rights of way or concessionary paths. The reader must be aware that adverse weather conditions can result in normally easy paths becoming impassable with safety. If in doubt either turn back or take an alternative route.



PREAMBLE

Wheelock is a small village within the rural boundary of Sandbach. Lying as it does on the A534 it is at present (1992) plagued by traffic. However, there are many miles of Public Footpaths around the village, enabling one to walk in peace, away from the noise and fumes of the main road.

This booklet describes some of the Public Rights of Way around Wheelock, linking them as far as possible into circular walks which can take from as little as one hour to complete. By linking up the Footpaths to your own choice it is possible to make any number of afternoon or even whole day excursions. When possible in the descriptions alternatives are given, along with references to other walks.

The area of all the walks is covered by the 2½ inch per mile Ordnance Survey Pathfinder Map 791; Crewe (SJ 65/75). The authors recommend it and its use will enable the reader to plan other walks beyond the range of this booklet.

All the walks begin and end at "Green Bank", the triangle of common land near the centre of the village, by the Nag's Head Hotel. (Map reference SJ 752590.) There is a limited amount of parking space here. More is available at the northern end of the village, below the canal bridge, where there is off-road space at both sides of the main road: on the canal wharf adjacent to the Cheshire Cheese public house and in the area adjacent to H J Lea & Sons and the Commercial Hotel.

We advise strong footwear for the walks, as field footpaths are uneven and can be wet and muddy. Boots or wellingtons will keep your feet dry. Good trainers are perfectly adequate, but you may get wet feet.



Sustenance

Wheelock has three pubs and three churches, so we are well served. At the time of writing the Nag's Head and the Cheshire Cheese serve bar meals, as does the Romping Donkey at Hassall Green. The restaurant of the Grove House Hotel is open to non-residents. There is a traditional fish and chip shop in the centre of the village and a Chinese take-away opposite Green Bank. Mars bars and other snacks to keep you going on the route may be bought at the grocer's or newsagent's and there is a tea room at Hassall Green.

History

The name of the village is thought to derive from the word "chevel-og", which means winding. The river Wheelock on which the village stands meanders or winds its way down to the river Dane just north of Middlewich. Wheelock exists possibly because it is at a river crossing. The river bridge is as far upstream as it is possible to go before the river Wheelock splits into its four tributaries.

Wheelock was important in the salt trade. There were large salt works in Wheelock to the north of the canal just east of the village. At Malkins Bank, about a mile above the village, where the golf course is now, was another salt works and a soda works owned by Brunner. The Grove House Hotel was built as a residence for the manager of the soda works. (After that, during and after the war, it was a maternity home.)

Another salt works, a large cotton factory, several dwelling houses and a brewery were erected to the south of the river. The houses, "Cotton Row", are a row of terraced cottages south of the village on the west of the main road. On Mill Lane, about 200 metres beyond where Wheelock Court now stands, on a double bend in the road was a corn mill. Nowadays the only visible trace is the outline of the mill pool which is now a flat level field to the right of the lane. The mill itself stood to the left of the road.

West of the main road to the north of the canal in Forge Fields there was a foundry and a soap works. To the south of the canal was another salt works owned by the Forge Company, the Wheelock Iron & Salt Co. Power for this salt works was provided by a water wheel. Much of the salt was transported by cart to farms for cheese making, some as far as Nantwich.

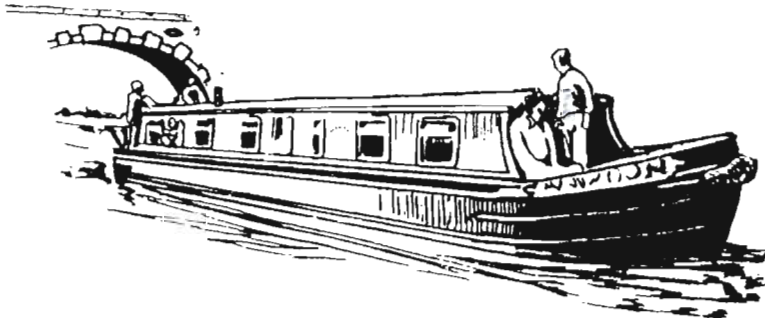
The Wheelock Chrystaline Dry Soap Company produced a soap powder much used when hard water was supplied by the new water mains.

The salt works site is now H J Lea & Sons animal feeds mill, Ensor, a concrete block and brick manufacturer, occupies the forge site and the soap works is covered by the houses of Waterside Mews.

Wheelock was important as a staging point on the Trent and Mersey canal. The wharf area by the Cheshire Cheese has buildings that were stables for the horses that towed the canal boats (narrowboats, not barges). Some of the oldest residents of the village were members of 'boating' families who lived on the canal boats that carried goods and passengers on the Trent and Mersey canal between the Midlands and the Mersey at Ellesmere Port. It was a busy highway, note the double locks and bridges. The second locks were built later and are offset from the original line of the canal.

The canal which served the industries of the area was gradually superseded by the new railway built between the Potteries and Sandbach. The railway carried both goods and passenger traffic. Road then superseded the railway which finally closed in 1971. The track was taken up and the land purchased by Cheshire County Council. The southern end, between Hassall Green and Alsager, is an adopted right of way, The Salt Line. The northern end through Wheelock is at present a permissive footpath which may eventually be turned into an access road for the Wheelock by-pass.

The canal, meanwhile, is enjoying a second lease of life as a busy holiday highway.



Please obey 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

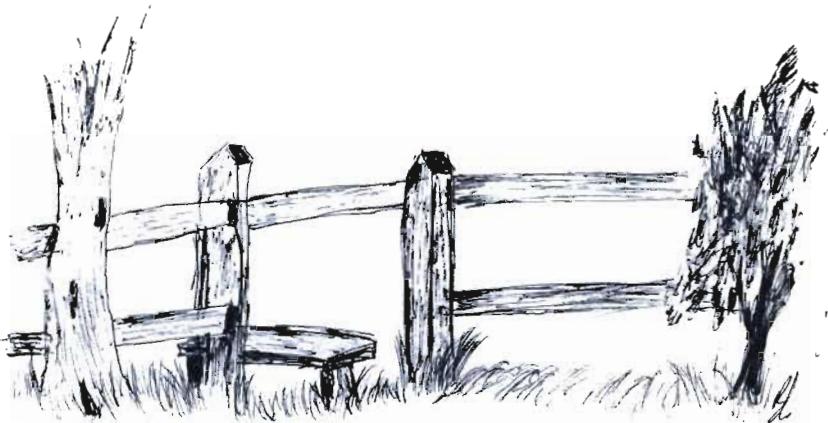
Leave no litter

Safeguard water supplies

Protect wildlife, wild plants and trees

Walk carefully on country roads

Respect the life of the countryside



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

This book would not have been begun or completed without the help of the following persons and organisations to whom we offer grateful thanks.

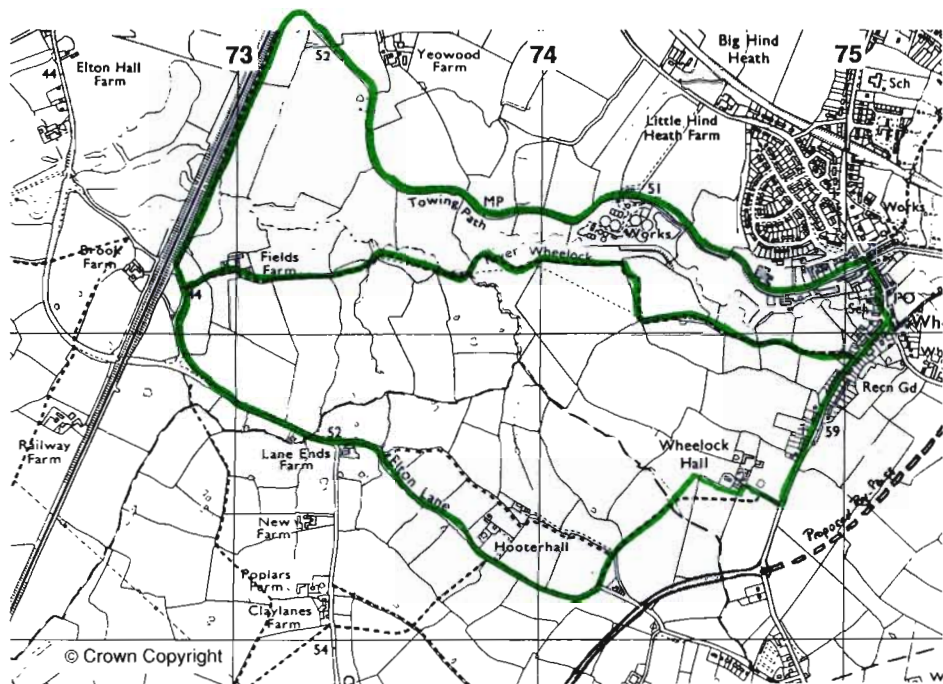
Cheshire Countryside Rangers, especially Julia Burrell
Cheshire County Council Environment Year Seedcorn Fund
Sandbach Town Council
Wheelock Network
All who helped erect stiles
The people of Wheelock who showed others the way

Illustrations by Barry Ravenscroft and the authors

Maps reproduced from the
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Footnote

In 1993 work is due to begin on a by-pass for Wheelock which will cross Mill Lane just beyond the converted barns of Wheelock Court. As a result access to the footpath at the start of the "School Farm & Jacob's Ladder" and "Haslington Hall" walks will be slightly different from the description in those routes.



ALONG THE RIVER WHEELOCK

Approx 4 miles or 6.5km

This walk can be muddy in wet weather, especially on the farm drives!

From Green Bank, with your back to the Nag's Head, walk up the main road away from the village. In 200 metres you come to Brook Farm, an old black and white building set sideways to the road. Its name is displayed on the large iron entrance gate.

Turn right into the farm and walk forward with the barn and milking parlour to your left hand. Continue forward through the small gate to the right of the steel farm gate and turn immediately left over the metal bars into the stockyard. Walk diagonally right across the yard and through a gate, which is to the right of a barn, into the farm drive.

Proceed down the farm drive, with a hedge on your left and a fence on your right, over three stiles, the last of which is nailed to a tree. Go forward about 100 metres to the next field corner and through the gate, which fastens to a tree on the left.

Continue forward through the field, keeping the field boundary to your left hand and at the field corner turn right, still keeping the boundary to your left. There is a stile at the next field corner, to the left of a gate.

Cross the stile and walk forward and slightly right to join the river Wheelock. Walk downstream, over another stile, following the course of the river, but not necessarily all its meanders.

About 300 metres beyond the stile, the field narrows down from the left as a small tributary stream forms the boundary. Some trees grow alongside the stream. As the field narrows to about 20 metres wide there is a stile and footbridge at a bend in the left boundary.

Go over the footbridge and turn right to follow the field boundary on your right. The next stile is in 100 metres, to the right of an oak tree and close to the river bank.

Cross this stile into the next field and follow the field boundary on the right, alongside the river. The next stile is in a fence.

Go over the stile in the fence and walk forward and left, alongside another small stream. (The map shows the path crossing the stream, but at the time of writing the bridge has collapsed. There are plans to rebuild it.) In the shelter of the stream valley a variety of trees have established themselves; oak, ash, elder, alder, hawthorn and a poplar. The last has deeply fissured bark and a triangular leaf with a leathery texture. The leaves are supported on flattened stems which allow the leaves to wave about easily in the slightest breeze, a characteristic of all the poplar family.

After about 100 metres the stream emerges from a culvert. Turn right to go up and forward across the field to the next stile which is at the right of a gate in the top left corner of the field. This stile leads onto a farm drive.

Cross the stile onto the farm drive. Go forward/right along the drive to Fields Farm. Just after a large black barn on the right, turn right through a gate into the farm yard. Go diagonally left to the corner of the yard and either squeeze through the gap to the right of the gate or open the gate and go through.

You are now facing the newly built Fields Farm house. The old building was demolished in about 1970 as it was subsiding dangerously.

The land has subsided due to salt extraction. Cheshire has huge volumes of solid salt underground, formed by evaporation of ancient seas. In this area the upper salt bed is covered by only about 250 feet of sandy earth. At one time salt was obtained by drilling down and pumping out the underground water, which was brine because of the underground salt. The water was replenished by rainwater which dissolved out more salt on its way through the earth. The dissolved salt could be some distance from the original brine extraction point. Eventually in some places cavities formed underground and the land subsided forming lakes or "Flashes". Flashes are common in the Sandbach, Middlewich, Winsford and Northwich areas. The flashes in the Sandbach area are now nature reserves and they are important winter roosts for large numbers of water birds.

Walk around the front of the house and down the farm drive to the minor road. Here you have a choice of return routes:

Option 1 : Turn right and follow the road and track on the right of the railway embankment. You may be able to discern the outline of a blocked off road bridge in the embankment. The road was closed because of brine subsidence. The railway was at one time carried over the river valley on a twelve arched viaduct, but as a result of brine subsidence a huge embankment has had to be built with, further on, a bridge formed of pipe sections. The ground is still subsiding slowly and the embankment and bridge must be raised from time to time. Here and there are surveying level points. There is a largish flash to the right.

Go forward down the track over the river Wheelock to the canal. At the canal turn right and walk back to Wheelock, where you come to the canal wharf by the Cheshire Cheese public house. Turn left at the main road and Greenbank is only 200 metres from the Cheshire Cheese.

Option 2 : (This route is identical to Haslington Hall Option 2 from Hooter Hall onwards.) Turn left and follow the road between the pools to the T-junction with Elton Lane. (These pools are again the result of brine subsidence and just before the pools, on the right, are the remains of



demolished cottages.) Turn left and walk up the lane. At the junction with Clay Lane by Lane Ends Farm keep left down the narrower road which is Elton Lane. Continue along, passing Hooter Hall Farm on your left. (Hooterhall on the map.) The hooter is on the gatepost.

About a quarter of a mile beyond Hooter Hall there is a public footpath on the left, just before Higher Richards, a house with a large kitchen garden.

Go over the stile into the paddock behind Higher Richards. Walk forward, going over the stile between two sheds. Keep the shed to your left, go through a gate into the next paddock and continue with the fence to your left coming to the next stile at the corner of the field. Cross the stile and walk forward, across an old farm road, to the next stile which is about 30 metres away in the right hand corner.

Cross the stile and walk forward and slightly right to join a fence. Continue forward with the fence on your right hand to the field corner where the next stile is on the right. Over this stile keep the field boundaries to your left and go forward over two more stiles to the farm drive of Wheelock Hall Farm. (The O.S. map shows the right of way going diagonally across to the farm drive to the right, or east, of the path as it is on the ground.)

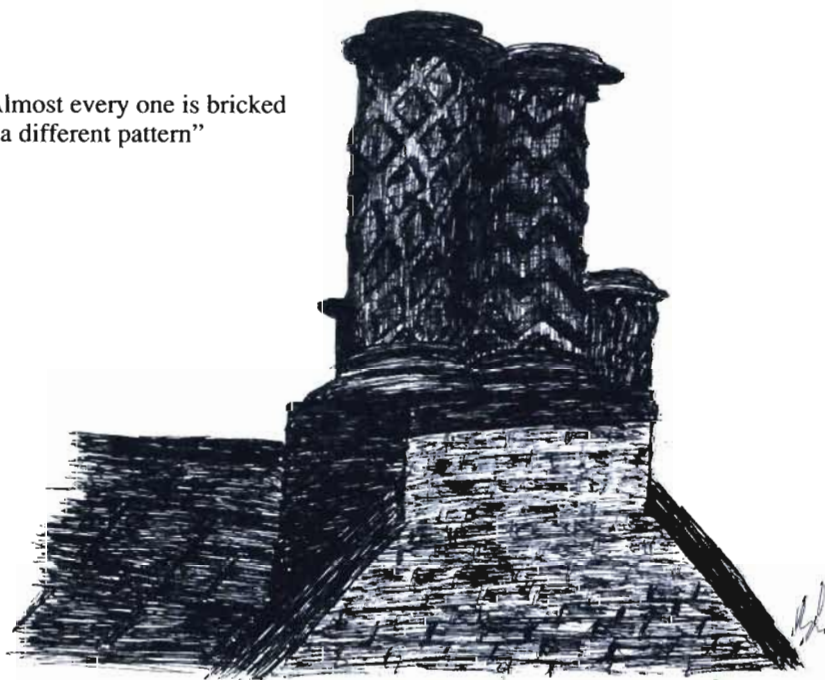
On the farm drive turn left, to a junction of farm drives. Turn right here and come out on the main road. Here turn left and walk down into Wheelock village and Green Bank.

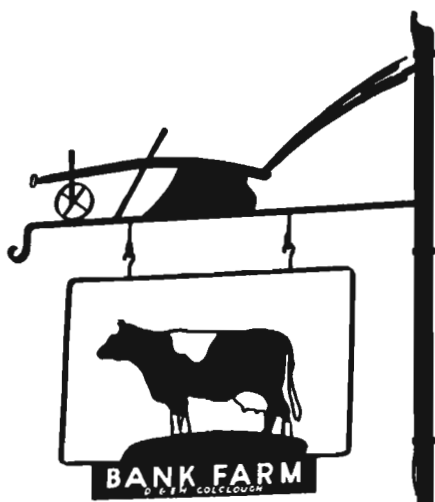
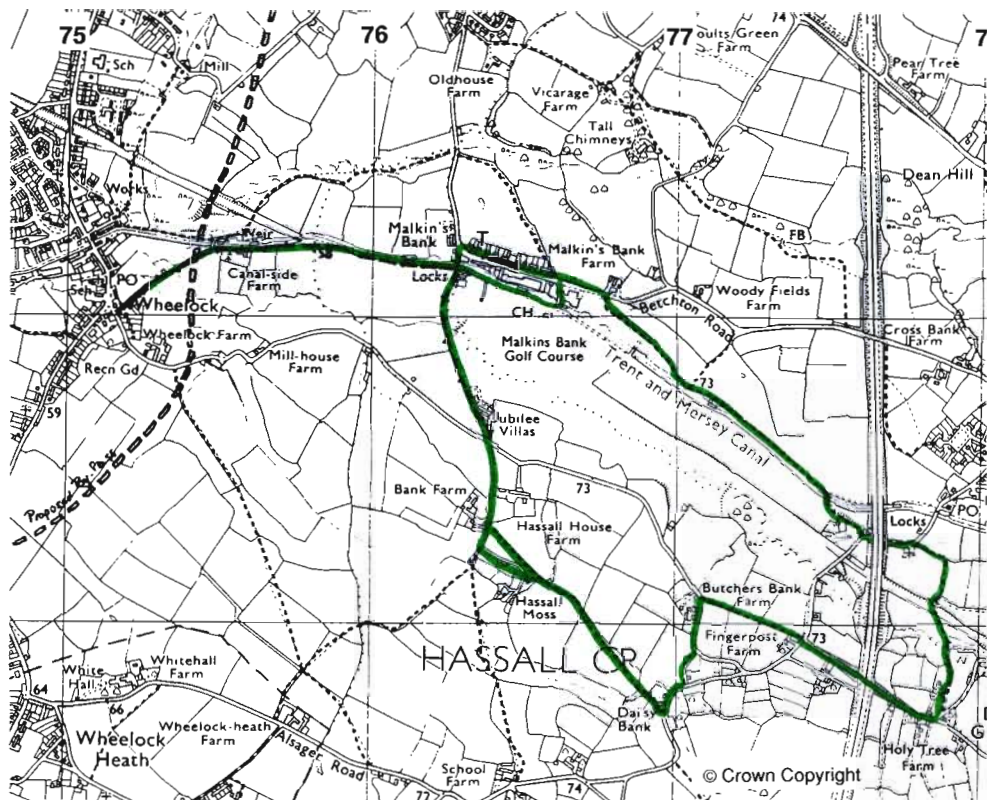




"The hooter is on the gatepost"

"Almost every one is bricked
in a different pattern"





DAISY BANK

Approx 5¼ miles or 8.5km.

From Green Bank, facing the Nag's Head, turn right then immediately left into Cotton Lane and follow it up to the canal. At the canal turn right and walk along the towpath with first Canalside Farm then the golf course on your right. At the road bridge at Malkins Bank turn right down an unmade road. Pass a white house on your left, go to the right of the metal gates and straight across the golf course on the single track road. Continue over the brook in the valley and up the other side.

Stay on the track with Jubilee Villas on your left, and at the road go straight across into the minor road. After about 250 metres, with Bank Farm on your right, you have a choice :

Either go over a high stile on your left into the field and head half right across the corner of the field towards a house, the roof of which is only just visible above the ground ahead.

Or continue down the road to Hassall Moss, turn left and in about 100 metres, just before a house, go over a stile on your left and turn right to keep the field boundary on your right. At this point you join the path which cut the corner across the field.

Walk up the field with the hedge to your right hand. At the pond go over the stile on the right, continuing with the hedge on your right. At the next gate, proceed into the next field, but now with the hedge on your left. Continue across this field, leaving the hedge a few yards to your left, going over rising ground, then drop down to a (hidden) stile about 50 metres from the left corner of the field.

Immediately over the stile go down a slope with the field boundary on your left, go over a footbridge and onto a leafy path, with trees and then a house on your left. At the end of the path you meet the road (Alsager Road). Turn left onto the road past the grey door of Lodley Smithy which is decorated with a horseshoe and past the next house, which is Daisy Bank.

Soon after Daisy Bank turn left over a stile onto a footpath and follow a hedge on your right. Rejoin the road over another stile.

Turn left and follow the road to Butchers Bank Farm (on the left). On a bend just past the farm entrance, next to the electricity pole turn right into a field and go forward, keeping the hedge on your right. Continue straight ahead over five stiles, the last of which, with Fingerpost Farm yard on your right, meets the road.

At the road cross over and continue straight over the motorway bridge. Then, just after a terrace of four houses on the left, turn left into another road and immediately turn left again onto a track signposted Hassall Green.

Keep the hedge on your right and in front of a house called "The Knoll" go downhill to its right, still with the hedge to your right, on a leafy path, springy underfoot with leaf litter.

Over a small bridge the path opens out with a hedge on the right and a wire fence left. In a glade by a river in the valley go left over a wood and concrete footbridge.

Now go half right across a field. If it is muddy a railway sleeper bridges the worst of it. Go over a stile in the opposite boundary hedge.

Go up the steps onto a very well maintained path. This is the Salt Line, on the course of the old railway between Sandbach and the Potteries. It is now an adopted footpath between Hassall Green and Alsager. Turn left, then after a few yards take a path to the right going uphill over a stile between the trees and, with a wire fence on your right, ignoring the field opening left, go over a stile where the hedge joins the fence.

In the field keep the hedge on your left. Halfway across the field the path goes downhill to the far field boundary, where you pass under a large old oak tree leaning over the path. Go over the stile on the left, onto a track which leads to the road. The track emerges adjacent to St Philip's church at Hassall Green. The church is immediately recognisable, being constructed of pink painted corrugated iron. At the road turn left, under the motorway.

(About 100 metres further down the road beyond the motorway bridge is the start of the Salt Line Footpath, with a car park opposite.)

Just after the cottages which are virtually under the bridge turn right onto a track, shortly coming up to the canal. Go over the bridge and stile.

Immediately turn left and follow a footpath alongside the canal. Cross two stiles, the second one being about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the bridge. Now cut slightly right across the field towards the houses on the opposite side, passing well to your left a double lock in the canal.

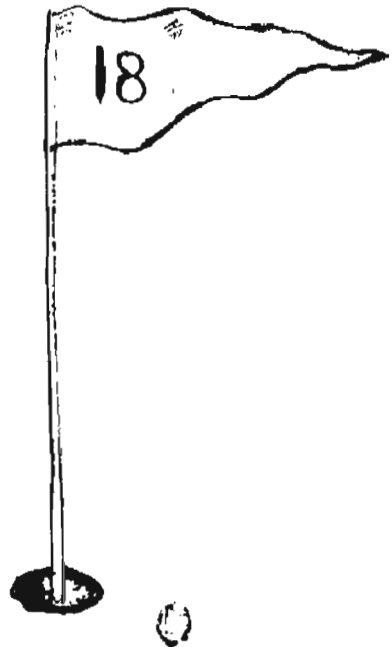
Midway in the wire fence ahead go over a stile. Turn immediately right and go forward to a stile in the right corner of the field which leads to the road. Turn left on the road, passing Malkins Bank Pig Farm.

As you approach the village of Malkins Bank there are alternative returns:

(i) Take the public footpath on the right, opposite the sign to the golf course, as in Tall Chimneys 4 (Option 2 return).

(ii) Follow the sign to Malkins Bank Golf Course on the left and go through the opening on the left just before the canal bridge. Cross the canal via the lock bridges and turn right down the canal to pick up route (iii) below.

(iii) Go through the village of Malkins Bank and, just as the road bends right, go left over the canal bridge. Turn right alongside the canal to retrace the first part of the walk. Follow the towpath back past three sets of locks to bridge number 152 and turn left down Cotton Lane to Green Bank.



HASLINGTON HALL

Approx 6 miles or 10km

From Green Bank, turn right and go up Mill Lane past the Grove Hotel. Pass the converted barns of Wheelock Court with their distinctive weather vane depicting a hunt and take a path marked with a finger post on the right. Keep to the track with the fence on your right and, as the field tapers, head for the gate at the far end and go over the stile.

From the stile head for the next stile opposite, going across the middle of the field towards some dark holly bushes. From this stile, which is to the right of the holly bushes, go diagonally across the middle of the field to the large ash tree (the largest tree ahead), where the stile is to the left of the tree.

From this stile go diagonally right, across the middle of the field, towards the clump of trees. At the trees head for the crossing fences, where you will find 3 stiles.

Cross the first stile and follow the farm track towards the farm, which is Wheelock-heath Farm. Go straight through the farmyard over the stile and onto the road. Here turn left and then immediately right down the unsurfaced road (Sandy Lane). The unmade track becomes a surfaced road with houses on the left and open fields on the right. You come to a cross roads with Hassall Road and Pool Lane.

Go straight across into Pool Lane and almost immediately, past the bungalow, turn left into Blue Gate Lane. Continue down this lane, past the ramshackle barn on the left, to the end and cross the stile which is just level with the (partly built) house.

With your back to the stile go across the field diagonally right heading for a stile next to the electricity pole. In the next field head diagonally left across the corner to the stile. Over this stile head in the same direction, to the left of the black and white house, to a stile which comes out on the house drive. The house is Moss Cottages. Notice the initials SCW on the stile, which stands for South Cheshire Way.

Walks Around Wheelock

Walk right, down the drive and across the front of Moss Cottages. Opposite the front door of the house turn right through a rustic arch which leads to a stile and then go straight through the field, keeping the boundary to your right, heading for the wooden gate at the opposite right hand corner.

Go over the stile sandwiched between two iron posts and into the field. Do not turn right down the farm track, which leads past Pool Farm to the corner of Winterley Pool. Walk along keeping the hedge on your right hand side. As you walk through this long field, beyond the water trough the boundary on your right is a barbed wire fence. Continue to the right hand corner of the field just under the wires stretched between two electricity pylons, where there is a stile and footbridge made of old railway sleepers.

Go over this stile and over the bridge. Now head diagonally across the field to the solitary oak tree between you and the farm buildings. (If you look carefully you can see another yellow arrow of the South Cheshire Way on the farm gates by the oak tree.)

Pass the oak tree and approach the farm, continuing straight on across the middle of the field, heading to the left of the farmhouse. The farm is Barnsfields Farm. Keep the farmhouse and vegetable garden to your right and go over the stile, which also has the yellow SCW arrow, onto the road.

Cross the road into the drive of Haslington Hall, again following the arrow for the South Cheshire Way.

Bear to the left of the offices of Murray Vernon towards Haslington Hall. The Hall is a very picturesque old building. It was built in 1545 by Admiral Vernon who sailed against the Spanish Armada. Some of the timbers in the house are supposedly from ships of the Armada. Old ship's timbers were often used in buildings at that time. However, since the Armada sailed in 1588, unless later repairs or extensions were made the dates do not match. Turn right at the back of the Murray Vernon offices and follow the farm track.

Just beyond the cattle grid a short distance from Haslington Hall turn right over the stile into the field. Follow the hedge on your left hand side. Go over the stile with steps onto the road. You are near to Hall Farm.

Here you have a choice:

Option 1 : Go right along the road and soon return to the stile with a yellow SCW arrow on the left near Barnsfields Farm.

Cross back over the stile but now fork right, keeping the wire fence and pond on your right hand side. Go over the stile by the gate and continue straight on across the field heading for a farm gate and stile to the right of a pylon. Go over the stiles and footbridge to the left of this gate then turn right and cut diagonally across the field, heading for a stile on its own, in the distance, midway in the barbed wire fence.

Over the stile cut across the corner of the next field, heading for the stile in the hedge. Once over that stile keep to the high ground in the centre of the field: go straight across, heading for the farm gate on the opposite side.

There is a stile to the right of the gate. Go forward, keeping the field boundary on your right hand side. (The O.S. map indicates the footpath is to the right of the fence.)

At the end of the field is a junction of paths:

left, to Moss Cottages

forward, direct to Bridgehouse Farm

right, to Bridgehouse Farm

Our route is to the right: Go over the stile on the right and follow the barbed wire fence and hedge on your left hand side with the wood also on your left. Keep the field boundary on your left hand side, curving round right until you come in about 200 metres to a rather hidden and awkward stile in a field corner.

Cross the stile and follow the boundary with the hedge on your right hand. Continue for about 500 metres with the boundary on your right hand side to a stile which joins a farm track. (From here footpaths go right to Oakhanger, forward to Alsager, and left to Wheelock Heath.) Go over the stile and turn left on the farm track back towards Wheelock, keeping the field boundary on your left.

Walks Around Wheelock

Walk down the farm track towards the farm, which is Bridgehouse Farm. As you approach Bridgehouse Farm the track is bounded on the right hand side by a line of trees: copper beech, ash, horse-chestnut, cherry, sycamore, alder, lime, mountain ash and oak. See how many species you can spot.

Before the farmyard turn right and cross the cattle grid. Go forward in the field, keeping the farm buildings well to your left. When you meet the field boundary keep it on your left until you come to the end of the field where there is a footbridge over a stream.

Cross the bridge and continue straight on, keeping the field boundary on your right, to a stile. Over that stile continue straight on, leaving the field boundary about 30 metres from your right hand, heading for a stile to the left of a newly built house in the next field.

Go over the stile into the small field by the new house and walk straight across to the next stile which leads onto a road. To your right are Walnut Tree Farm and School Farm. (See School Farm & Jacob's Ladder walk for an alternative return from here.)

Turn left on the road and keep right at the fork. On your left there are some farm buildings of Hassall House and then white painted Hassall Cottage.

Opposite Hassall Cottage go over the stile and head diagonally left across the field, almost to the far end of the lefthand boundary, to a stile. Go over the stile into the next field. Keeping the boundary fence on your right head for the large tree at the far corner.

At the tree you come to a junction with three stiles. Go over a stile by the tree onto a farm track. To your left is Wheelock-heath Farm, which you passed earlier. Turn right and go forward over the stile (which you may well recognise from earlier) into the field.

Now retrace your steps: turn half left and go diagonally across this field heading for the large ash tree which is on its own. The next stile is about 15 metres to the right of the tree.

On the way across the field take time to look at the view across the undulating Cheshire countryside. It extends from Wheelock and Mill Lane in front of you, clockwise past St Mary's church tower and white-painted Jubilee Villas, to Mow Cop with its tower folly on the Cheshire-Staffordshire border half right behind you.

From the stile to the right of the ash tree cut diagonally right downhill across the next field and over the stile by the holly trees. Go diagonally across the next field to the stile to the left of the farm gate. Then keeping the field boundary on your left, follow the farm track to the road. At the road turn left past Wheelock Court and you will reach Green Bank in about 400 metres.

Option 2 : At the road by Hall Farm go forward, across the road and over the stile into a large field. Your eventual goal is a black and white cottage about half a mile directly ahead and the path heads straight towards it. The next stile is in the top lefthand corner of the field, about 50 metres to the right of the centre pylon in the line of three across the path.

Cross the stile and follow the field boundary on the left. After about 25 metres by a field gate keep going forward, towards the black and white cottage, to a stile in the middle of a wire fence about 25 metres from the lefthand corner of the field. Over this stile continue forward, with a small market garden and parked caravans to your left, to the next stile. From here it is only about 50 metres further to a stile at the junction of a farm road and the main road by the black and white cottage. (This is the farm road which leads past Pool Farm to Moss Cottages.)

At the main road turn right and walk along the pavement past Winterley Pool. This was a mill pool, the mill being situated on the other side of the road. The pool is now used only for fishing. In the winter it is host to Canada Geese, Great Crested Grebes, Mute Swans and a variety of ducks. You may be lucky and see a Kingfisher. The number of swans in Cheshire is now recovering since the ban on using lead shot for fishing weights.

Beyond Winterley Pool cross Pool Lane and then cross the main road. Turn left into Newtons Lane. (It is possible to shorten the walk by continuing forward down the main road to Wheelock, about 2 kilometres or $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles away.)

Walk down Newtons Lane for about 300 metres. On the point of a lefthand bend there is a footpath down an unmade track on the right.

Walk down the track which ends at a stile. Cross the stile and go forward with the field boundary at your left hand. After about 150 metres is another stile which leads onto the A534, the Haslington by-pass. Take care crossing the road to the next stile.

Over this stile, keep forward with the field boundary to your left hand. After two more stiles, the second being a double stile, there is a junction of paths and a choice :

Forward and over another stile, the path runs between a hedge on the left and a fence on the right. On your right are some new pools, which are rented for fishing. Cross the next stile and go forward with the field boundary on your left to a stile which leads out onto the road. (Clay Lane.) Turn right down Clay Lane. After 300 metres is the junction with Elton Lane. Turn right here for Hooter Hall Farm to join the alternative below (or left and then right to join the River Wheelock Option 1 return via the canal towpath).

Right: with the field boundary at your right hand, head towards the house on the horizon, over a double stile and footbridge then still with the field boundary to your right go forward to the next stile which is to the left of the gate at the top righthand corner of the field. The stile leads onto Elton Lane opposite Hooter Hall Farm. (Hooterhall on the map.) Turn right on the road. (The route from now on is the same as the River Wheelock Option 2 return.)

About a quarter of a mile beyond Hooter Hall on a righthand bend there is a public footpath on the left, just before Higher Richards, a house with a large kitchen garden.

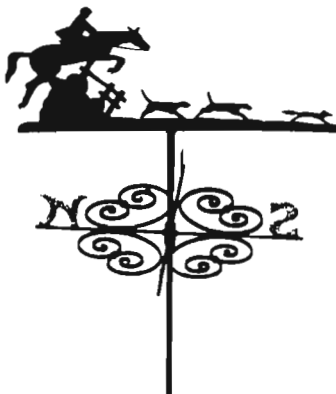
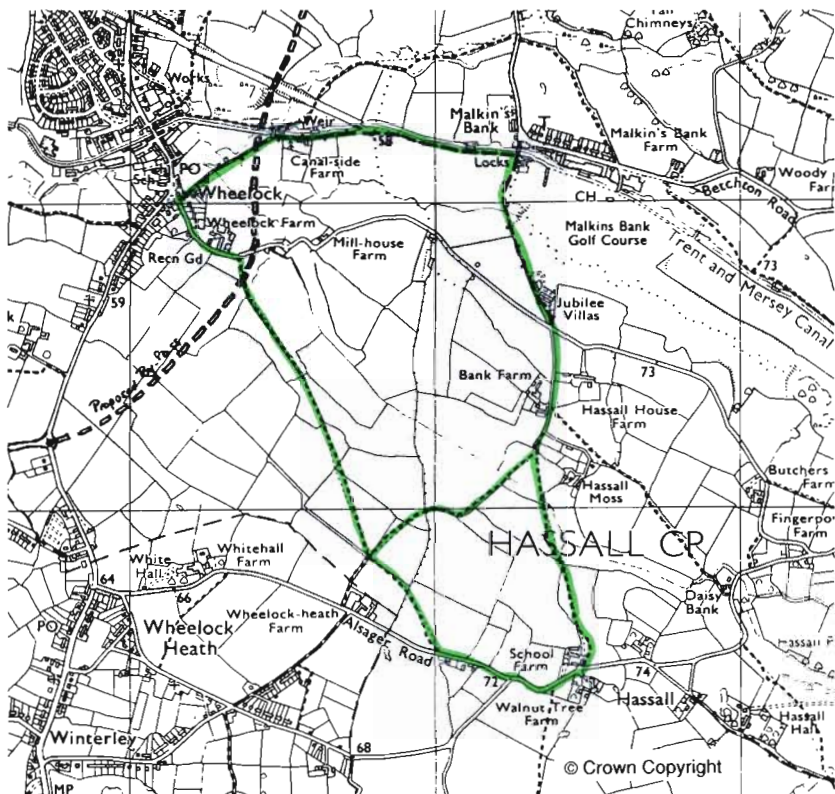
Walks Around Wheelock

Go over the stile into the paddock behind Higher Richards. Walk forward, going over the stile between two sheds. Keep the shed to your left, go through a gate into the next paddock and continue, with the fence to your left, to the stile at the corner of the field. Cross the stile and walk forward, across an old farm road, to the next stile which is about 30 metres away in the right hand corner.

Cross the stile and walk forward and slightly right to join a fence. Continue forward with the fence on your right hand to the field corner where the next stile is on the right. Over this stile keep the field boundaries to your left and go forward over two more stiles to the farm drive of Wheelock Hall Farm. (The O.S. map shows the right of way going diagonally across to the farm drive, to the right or east of the footpath on the ground.)

On the farm drive turn left, to a junction of farm drives. Turn right here and come out on the main road. Turn left and walk down into Wheelock village and Green Bank.





SCHOOL FARM AND JACOB'S LADDER

Approx 3 miles or 5km.

From Green Bank, facing the Nag's Head, turn right and walk up Mill Lane out of Wheelock past the Grove Hotel and the converted barns of Wheelock Farm, (now called Wheelock Court). Look out for the distinctive weather vane on Wheelock Court. About 50 metres beyond Wheelock Court, on the right, is the start of the Public Footpath.

Take the well-marked track which curves to the right across the field and then keep the fence to your right. The field narrows and there is a gate and stile. Over the stile head slightly right, across the middle of the field. The next stile is on a corner to the right of some holly bushes.

Over the stile head diagonally across the centre of the field, aiming just to the left of the large ash tree you can see ahead. The next stile is to the left of this tree. (The ash tree is easy to recognise; in summer it has a compound leaf of about 7 leaflets, in winter the buds are black, on the end of thick grey twigs.)

From the stile keep heading in the same direction, across the centre of the field, towards a clump of trees. Here there is a meeting of fences, with three stiles and a farm drive. Go over the stile onto the farm drive of Wheelock-heath Farm.

(From here one Public Footpath goes forward down the farm drive to Wheelock-heath Farm; another, over the stile to the left of the big ash tree, goes to Hassall Moss.)

Our path continues over the stile to the right of the ash tree. In the field, go forward keeping the fence to your left then bear right for the next stile which is about 10 metres from the left corner.

Over the stile, head diagonally across the field, aiming for the white house. The next stile, by a telegraph pole and footpath sign, is a little awkward. Take care, as it leads directly onto a minor road (Alsager Road).

On the road go left and walk for about 500 metres, past a minor road on the right, then a Public Footpath on the right (which leads to Bridgehouse Farm and thence to Winterley, Haslington or Oakhanger; see Haslington Hall walk), until you come to two farms, one on each side of the road. The farm on the right is Walnut Tree Farm (the walnut tree is between the farmyard and the house) the farm on the left is School Farm.

At School Farm is a signposted Public Footpath. Go over the stile and, following the hedge on the right, over another stile after about 20 metres. Follow round the field for about 100 metres, keeping the fence to your left and cross the next stile. From this stile bear diagonally left until you come in about 250 metres to the bottom left corner of the field and the next stile.

Over this stile keep the fence to your left and there is another stile on the left almost immediately. Go over the stile and whilst keeping the field boundary to your right bear slightly left away from it. (You should be going in line with your route from School Farm.) At a field corner is the stile which leads to a glade of small oak trees and a footbridge across a stream.

Over the stream go diagonally across the field, up the hill, to the houses at Hassall Moss. The next stile is above a wooden stairway down to Jacob's House (hence "Jacob's Ladder").

Here you have two options :

Option 1 : Descend Jacob's Ladder and walk forward and up the hill to the crossroads with Mill Lane. Cross the lane and walk forward past Jubilee Villas through the centre of the golf course to the canal. Turn left down the towpath to the third lock which has a brick bridge (no. 152) below it. The bridle path (Cotton Lane) leading downhill and left from the bridge takes you directly back to Wheelock by the Nag's Head and Green Bank.

Option 2 : Alternatively, from Jacob's Ladder you may take the footpath back to Wheelock-heath Farm: with your back to the Jacob's Ladder stile go forward and slightly right to the high point in the field then

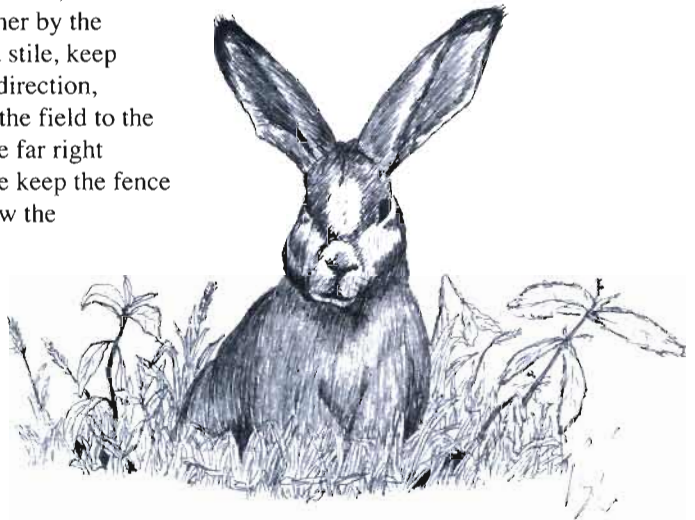
down to a wooden footbridge across the stream. (It is about 200 metres downstream of the first footbridge.) The scrubland to the left of the bridge is supposedly populated by “little people”, so beware!

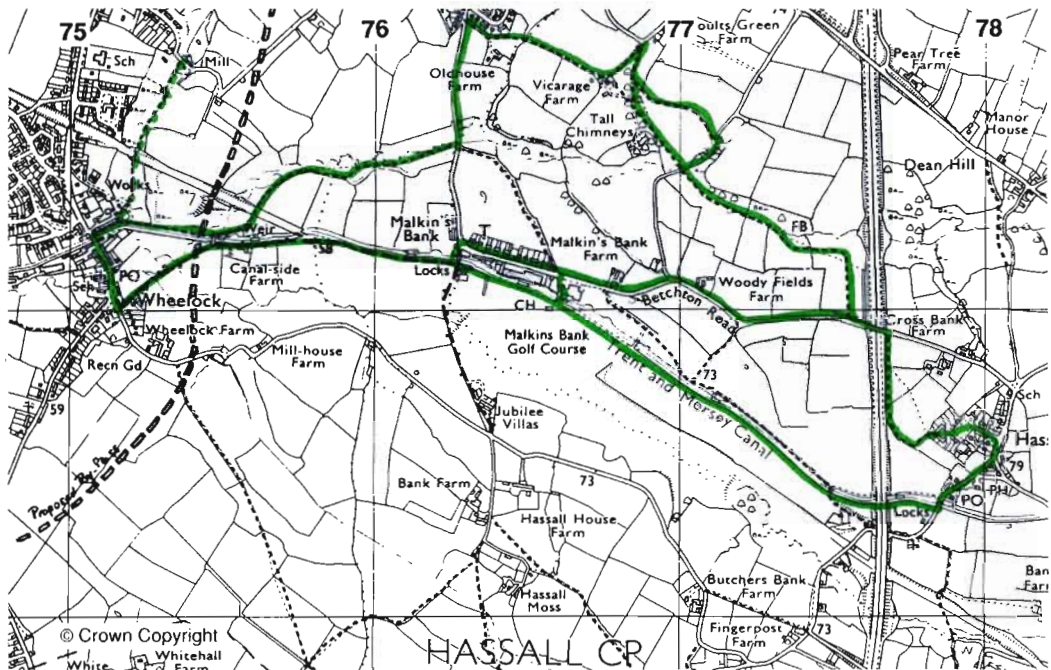
Cross the bridge and go about 300 metres up the field, with the hedge boundary to your left, to the stile in the very top corner. Over the stile go forward diagonally across the corner of the field to the next stile. From there aim for the trees ahead and in 150 metres you will arrive back at the junction of paths by Wheelock-heath Farm.

Go over the two stiles to your right, and head back the way you came earlier: diagonally across the field, aiming for the big ash tree with the stile to its right.

On the way across the field take time to look at the view across undulating Cheshire. It extends from Wheelock and Mill Lane in front of you, clockwise past St Mary’s church tower and white-painted Jubilee Villas to Mow Cop with its tower folly on the Cheshire/Staffordshire border half right behind you.

Over the stile by the ash tree keep heading in the same direction, diagonally across the field, downhill to the stile in the corner by the holly trees. Over that stile, keep heading in the same direction, across the middle of the field to the gate and stile near the far right corner. Over that stile keep the fence to your left and follow the field drive back to Mill Lane. At Mill Lane turn left and in 400 metres you are back at Green Bank.





TALL CHIMNEYS

Approx 5 miles or 8km via Hassall Green.
(Half a mile less via option 2)

From Green Bank, keeping to the righthand pavement, walk up the main road over the River Wheelock, through the village, to the canal bridge. Just over the bridge is an opening, with steps leading down to a footpath alongside the canal. (Signposted “Mill Hill La ½”.) Go down the steps and walk alongside the canal for about 500 metres, over two river bridges, to the first bridge over the canal, where the path climbs up to meet the track across the bridge.

(The path to Mill Hill Lane turns left off the canalside path just before the first river bridge. It goes over a footbridge, and follows the right side of the river valley to Mill Hill Lane by the old corn mill. The bridge under the old railway is the “Dancing Bridge”, where country dancing was practised many years ago on the large flat area .)

Turn left and follow the track past the Lock Cottage on your right and over the stile by the gate. Now cut diagonally left across the field towards the old railway archway, go over the stile and through the archway.

Just through the archway turn left over the stile into the field. Continue round the field keeping the hedge on your right. Gradually you approach the brook. After you pass under the electricity wires with the pole on your right follow the brook upstream as it meanders through the valley known locally as “The Bidneys”.

In late summer and early autumn Himalayan Balsam shows its pale purplish flowers alongside the stream. The plant is up to 1 metre tall. Introduced into Lancashire via cotton bales during the last century, more recently it has been actively spread by beekeepers as it provides nectar and pollen well into autumn. Eventually about half a mile from the railway arch the path goes up a short flight of steps to a stile which leads onto Hassall Road.

Go up the steps to join the road and turn left. (Just the other side of the road is Trean Apiary: if you look over the fence you may see some

bee-hives and a large kitchen garden). Follow the road up the hill towards the houses but, just before you reach them, turn right at the track signposted 'Colley Lane $\frac{1}{2}$ mile'. Follow the track between two hedges, keeping left to follow the hedge on your left. Then continue straight on in line with the path, down the hill, cutting across the middle of the field. At the bottom of the field cross the ditch and stream using the bridges and stiles. Follow the path uphill keeping the hedge to your right. (Ignore the path on your left immediately after the second bridge, this leads to Colley Lane.)

Go over the stile at the top of the slope then continue forward with the hedge on your right hand side. The path bends left at Vicarage Farm, keep the field boundary just on your right hand side. At the end of the field cross the stile onto the road and turn immediately right through the white gates following the sign waymarked 'Tall Chimneys'.

About half way down the avenue of Beech trees take the footpath over the stile on the left and follow the grassy path through the middle of the little field to the big old gnarled oak tree. Go over the stile to the right of the tree.

Here you can go forward or left:

Forward : keep the fence on your right hand side, passing on your right the house called "Tall Chimneys". Notice the chimneys: almost every one is bricked in a different pattern. Originally the house was the Vicarage of St Mary's Church in Sandbach. Follow the path down the hill with the fence to your right and it leads into a pleasant glade of oak trees by the brook at the bottom. Go over the stile into the old coach road by the bridge over the brook. You are now at the same point as the left route.

Left : (Since the walk is "Tall Chimneys", it is only for the sake of completeness that this option is included, as it by-passes Tall Chimneys!) Follow the field boundary on your left. The path bends round right and after about 300 metres goes left over a stile and down into a wood. Continue down, with the hedge now on your right, to an old coach road. Turn right at the road and go down to the bridge over the stream. You are now at the same point as the forward route.

Cross the stile onto the path, walking upstream with the brook on your right. Go over one stile and, about 400 metres from the road, take the stile on the right to a footbridge and another stile over the brook.

Turn left after the bridge and stile and make your way up the slope on the well trodden footpath. Notice the alder trees on your left. These trees usually grow where it is damp. The ground underfoot in this area is very wet and Ragged Robin, Common Spotted Orchid, Meadowsweet and Red Campion grow here.

As you come to the hedge, cross the waymarked stile at the top of the slope and continue on towards the motorway. About 50 metres from the motorway turn right and walk forward over a stile midway in a fence. Continue across the next field, walking parallel to the motorway and about 50 metres from it. Cross two stiles onto the road that bridges the motorway.

Here again are two options :

Option 1 : Turn left across the motorway bridge. Just across the bridge beyond the crash barrier is a stile on the right. Cross this stile, go forward and left over a stile into a field. Keeping the motorway fence to your right hand cross two more stiles. The path then follows the field boundary round to the left and there is a stile, about 50 metres from the corner, onto a path which leads to some houses: Charles Square at Hassall Green.

Cross the open area in the centre to the road out. Turn right at the telephone box and go forward down the road, passing (if you wish) the Romping Donkey public house on your left, until you come to the canal. At the canal there is a small marina and tea shop, where you may be tempted by tea and scones even if you resisted a pie and pint! (The canal bridge is about 100 metres above the church of St Philip's at Hassall Green - see the Daisy Bank walk.)

To return directly to Wheelock cross the canal by the road bridge and turn right onto the towpath. Go forward along the towpath, under the motorway, past the Golf Club at Malkins Bank and in under 2 miles (9 sets of locks) you will come to the Lock Cottage at the top of Cotton Lane by bridge number 152. Go left down Cotton lane to Greenbank.

Option 2 : Turn right on the road. Continue along the road, ignoring the path to the left which leads up to the canal. Go past Woody Fields Farm, and you come to Woody Fields Cottages where there is the old coach road on the right. (This would take you back to the track in the oak tree glade by the brook below Tall Chimneys.) Our route goes straight on down Betchton Road, past Malkins Bank Farm, to the signposted footpath on the right just before the row of houses, almost opposite the signpost to Malkins Bank Golf Course.

Go over the stile and follow the edge of the field with the hedge on your left. When the hedge bends left carry straight on diagonally across the field. Jutting into the field is a triangular fenced off area. Work towards this, going to the left of it, with the fence and man-made pool on your right, until you reach Hassall Road adjacent to Trean Apiaries. Just before you reach the road, you can get a better view into the apiary.

Cross the road and opposite the apiary the finger post directs you over the stile to the path you left earlier.

Go left onto the path, down the steps and follow the brook back, retracing your steps with the brook on your right hand side. Fork left as the brook and hedge come together under the electricity wires. Follow the hedge on your left, go left over the stile and right under the old railway arch. Cross the field, heading for Løck Cottage. Go over the stile to the left of the gate then follow Cotton Lane across the canal bridge, down to the right, back to Green Bank.

