

## A Walk around Nantwich and Acton

Enjoy this circular walk along country lanes, public footpaths, bridleways and canal towpaths.

Grade	Easy
Distance	8.5km/5m
Time	2-3 hours
Start	Nantwich Town Square. Parking is available in Nantwich Town Centre at the various Pay and Display car parks on; Welsh Row; Water Lode/Love Lane; Civic Hall (behind the library on Beam Street); Snowhill (Wall Lane).
Map	OS Explorer 257
Terrain	Minor roads, public footpaths/bridleways and canal towpath. Surfaces vary from metalled to cross-field paths (grassed). Sections will be muddy in winter. Fairly level gradients throughout but some steep gradients up and over canal bridges.
Barriers	Approximately 14 gates and 2 flights of steps
Toilets	Nantwich Town Centre.
Contact	Tel: 01270 686029



## Route Details

Come and enjoy this 8km/5mile circular walk along country lanes, public footpaths, bridleways and canal towpaths. The route currently has approximately 12 gates and 2 stiles with fairly level terrain.

Discover one of the most historic and picturesque areas in Cheshire with fine Elizabethan buildings and sandstone churches. Explore the local countryside following footpaths, towpaths and drovers roads past splendid houses and across battlefields.

St. Mary's Church in Nantwich was built during the fourteenth century. It is well worth a visit with a magnificent octagonal tower, wonderful carvings, stained glass and embroidery.

The name Castle Street is all that remains of a wooden castle, built by the first Norman Baron, William Malbank in the 11th century.

Opposite the entrance to Castle Street is the Queen's Aid House. This was built after the Great Fire which began on the 10th December 1583 and lasted 20 days, destroying most of Nantwich. A plaque on the wall displays the appreciation to Queen Elizabeth I for her help in raising funds to rebuild the town.

The bridge next to Water Lode road is all that remains of the water mill which was destroyed by fire in 1970. Water power must have been used on this site for many centuries as a mill was recorded here in the Domesday Book.

Just before Nantwich Lake, there is a memorial to an American Second World War pilot who crashed here in 1944. 1st Lieutenant Arthur L. Brown was 23 when he gave his life by staying with his blazing Thunderbolt fighter to avoid crashing into the town. During the war, the Nantwich to Market Drayton railway line was heavily used service men traveling to RAF Tern Hill. The line closed in May 1967.

Dorfold Hall Park is home to the annual Nantwich and South Cheshire Show which hosts Europe's largest

international cheese exhibition amongst many other rural attractions.

Acton was a very important Christian centre in the Kingdom of Mercia during Saxon times.

The present church has some wonderful Saxon carvings and a Norman font. In the Churchyard there is a sundial and almshouses which date from the 17th century.

The Shropshire Union Canal was built in stages.

The first section from Cheshire to Nantwich opened in 1774 and finished at Basin End. This was designed to carry 14ft wide Mersey Flats. Notice how wide the canal is under the first bridge compared with the reduced width under the second bridge. The last section of the canal between Nantwich Basin and Birmingham, completed in 1835, was only built to carry narrow boats, 7ft wide.

The owners of Dorfold Park objected to the intended route, so the engineers Telford and Cubitt had to build the half mile Nantwich embankment to avoid the park. Look at the wonderful single-arched cast-iron aqueduct, spanning Chester Road.

The fields in the area of Nantwich Basin are where the Battle of Nantwich took place on 25th January 1644. This victory over the Royalists ended a six week siege of Nantwich and is regarded as the turning point in the Civil War. The victory is still celebrated by re-enacting the battle and wearing a sprig of holly on 'Holly Holy Day'. This takes place annually on the Saturday nearest to 25th January.

The 'Wych Houses' or Walling Lands' where salt was produced from brine once stood in an area near to Town Bridge. The brine was channeled from a brine spring to the Wych Houses for evaporation in large lead pans. Salt production peaked in the late 16th century when there were 216 Wych Houses. The street layout between the Black Lion Inn and river has altered very little since the Middle Ages. The shops are on plots originally occupied by Wych Houses. Look out for Wych House Bank on the right and the brine spring or 'Old Biot' just over the Town Bridge, on the left.

The Crown Hotel was rebuilt in 1585 after the Great Fire, at the huge cost of 313 pounds, 13 shillings and 4 pence. An unusual feature is the long, windowed gallery used by guests to take gentle indoor exercise.

Welsh Row is so-called because Welsh traders drove their cattle along here to the town market. Nantwich was an important overnight stop on the London to Ireland route in Tudor times.

## Directions

1. With St. Mary's Church behind you, turn left along High Street. Turn right down Mill Street and cross Water Lode Road.
2. Cross the Mill Bridge and walk south through Nantwich Riverside past the War Memorial and Nantwich Lake.
3. Turn right along Shrewbridge Road.
4. Follow the bridleway on the right, shortly after the river bridge. From here to Acton, follow the Crewe and Nantwich Circular Walk way markers. Cross 2 fields and pass through the cattle pens. Go through a bridleway gate into the right hand field and keep the hedge on your left.
5. Cross the railway line and keep to the left of the next field. Cross over the canal bridge and follow the lane. When you reach Marsh Lane, you can see Dorfold Hall across the fields.
6. Turn left along Marsh Lane.
7. Turn right down Dig Lane.
8. Follow the farm track towards Acton.
9. Turn left at Chester Road A534 and walk into Acton.
10. After the church turn right down Wilbraham Road. Take the footpath across the fields to Shropshire Union Canal.
11. Head south along the towpath towards Nantwich.
12. Leave the canal just before the aqueduct. Walk back into Nantwich along Chester Road into Welsh Row.
13. Go straight on at Town Bridge. Take the next right into High Street and back to the town square.