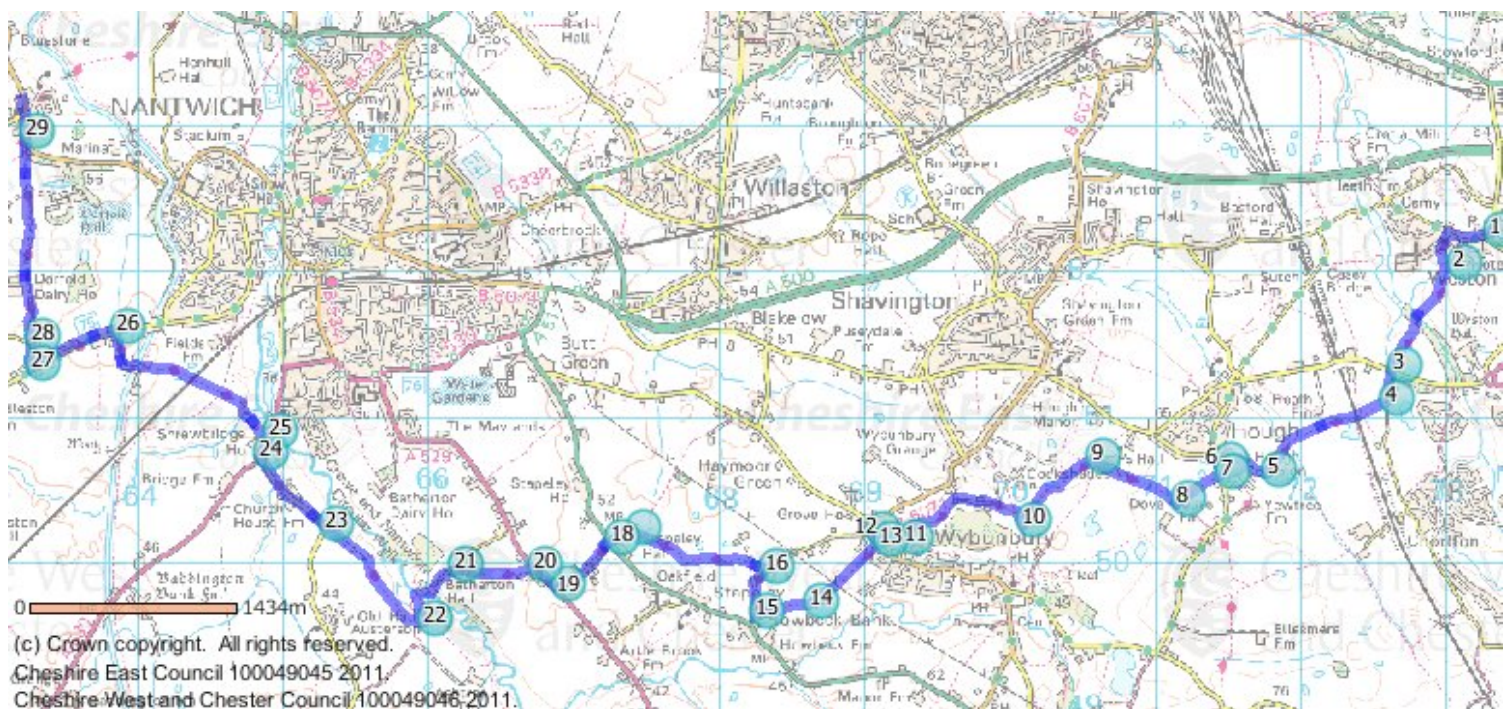


## Walking the Past

Step back in time and explore the olde worlde villages around Crewe and Nantwich.

Grade	Long distance
Distance	17km/10.5miles
Time	5-7 hours
Start	Acton Church, on the number 84 Crewe to Chester bus route.
Map	OS Explorer 257 & 267
Terrain	Fairly level terrain, mainly over public rights of way across fields, with some country lanes.
Barriers	Each section has numerous stiles.
Toilets	Nantwich Town Centre.
Contact	Tel: 01270 686029



## Route Details

Step back in time and explore the 'olde worlde' villages around Crewe and Nantwich. Discover historical buildings, old battle sites and learn how people use to live. The route starts in the picturesque village of Weston. One of the oldest buildings in Weston is the White Lion Pub, built in 1652. The bar is the original inglenook fireplace.

Hough Common is very good for wildlife. Gypsies used to camp here when traveling from one fair to the next. At night they would sit around the fire making multicoloured pegs which the women then sold to the local villagers.

Wybunbury is one of Cheshire's oldest villages. The parish church of St. Chad has been in existence since the 7th century and was named after a Celtic bishop of Lichfield. The leaning 15th century tower has been straightened several times to combat the effects of subsidence, leading to a common saying, 'as crooked as Winbury steeple'.

Nearby are the remains of two moated houses which were used as 'safe houses' for visiting clergy from Lichfield. A hermit name Nicholas Baker supposedly lived close to the church in the 15th century. The Bishop of Coventry leased him two gardens for 99 years on the condition that they were only kept by fit priests or honest hermits!

A 16th century timber framed barn remains at Old Hall Austerson. The hall itself was moved to Alvanley Cliff, by the Sandstone Trail, near Frodsham. Centuries ago, oak and hazel known as wich-wood was taken from the woods of Austerson and used by local salt producers to boil brine.

Shrewbridge Lake is supplied by the River Weaver and brine spring. In the fields to the west of the river was Shrewbridge Meadow salt works built in 1693 by Viscount Cholmondeley.

The historic market town of Nantwich, known for its salt industry, shoe making, Civil War and Great Fire is well worth a visit. Places of interest include Churche's Mansion, The Crown Hotel, Sweet Briar Hall, Nantwich Museum and St. Mary's Parish Church.

Acton Church, also dedicated to St. Mary, was built on the site of a Saxon church. This is one of the few churches in

England with stone benches for those too weak to stand in the days before churches had pews. Hence the saying “the weakest go to the wall”.

The church was repaired in the present Gothic Style after the tower was blown down by a gale in 1757. Legend has it that the devil was once so angry with the church that he hurled a rock at it from where he was sitting on Bickerton Hill. The rock fell in Bluestone near to Acton, showing he must have had a poor aim!

## Directions

The walk starts at the White Lion and finishes at Acton Church.

1. Proceed down Cemetery Road past the White Lion Pub and turn left into East Avenue.
2. At the bottom of East Avenue, go through the gate and head in a south westerly direction to Newcastle Road.
3. Cross over the road and carry on down Chorlton Lane.
4. Take the next footpath on the right just after the chapel.
5. After two foot bridges, turn right at the next footpath junction, over the stile in the field corner and past Hough Common.
6. Turn left at Cobbs Lane.
7. Take the next footpath on the right, just before Birch Farm.
8. Bear right at the rear of Dove House Farm.
9. Turn left towards Wybunbury, after the second woodland.
10. At the path junction, cross the stile on the right into an enclosed lane and keep Wybunbury Moss on your left.
11. After climbing a short hill from the Moss, turn right at the next footpath junction.
12. Turn left at the road.
13. Take the next path a short distance on the right.
14. Take the stile on the right after a small woodland.
15. Turn right onto Annion's Lane.
16. Take the next path on the left just after Yew Tree Farm drive.
17. At Stapeley Hall, turn along the farm drive.

18. At the main road, go almost straight across into First Dig Lane.
19. Turn right onto Broad Lane.
20. Take the next footpath on the left.
21. Turn left at the driveway to Batherton Mill Bank Farm. Cross the river, bear left through the gates and up the bank.
22. At the top of the bank, turn right. Old Hall Austerson can be seen on your left.
23. At Coole Lane turn right.
24. Turn right onto Baddington Lane.
25. Take the bridleway on the left before Shrewbridge Lake. Cross a stream, a railway level crossing and a canal bridge. When you reach Marsh Lane. Dorfold Hall can be seen across the fields.
26. Turn left along Marsh Lane.
27. Turn right down Dig Lane.
28. Follow the farm track towards Acton Church.
29. Turn left onto the Chester Road (A534).