

WALK 4

A Bus 'n' Boots Walk

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For those of you who have my “East Cheshire Walks” book, this walk is only in the most recent edition. For those with previous editions, think of this as a free update!

The walk goes across attractive (and mostly flat) countryside to Mobberley village, then crosses the main Knutsford road and meanders across fields through part of Great Warford and back via Lindow to Wilmslow. When I last did this walk, there was a surprising amount of birdlife; apart from the usual suspects, I heard the hooting of a tawny owl and the hammering of a woodpecker, disturbed two buzzards, noticed a third being mobbed by crows, saw lots of lapwings and spotted a great crested grebe on Lindow Common lake. Not bad for one walk!

There are refreshment stops in abundance: four pubs and a café, so you really don't need to pack your sarnies. But always take a drink and waterproofs – and, of course, your camera. Here are the details of the walk:

Starting Point: bus stop, Green Lane, Wilmslow

Map: OS Explorer 268 – Wilmslow, Macclesfield & Congleton

Length: 9½ miles (can be shortened by using intermediate bus stops)

Grade: Easy

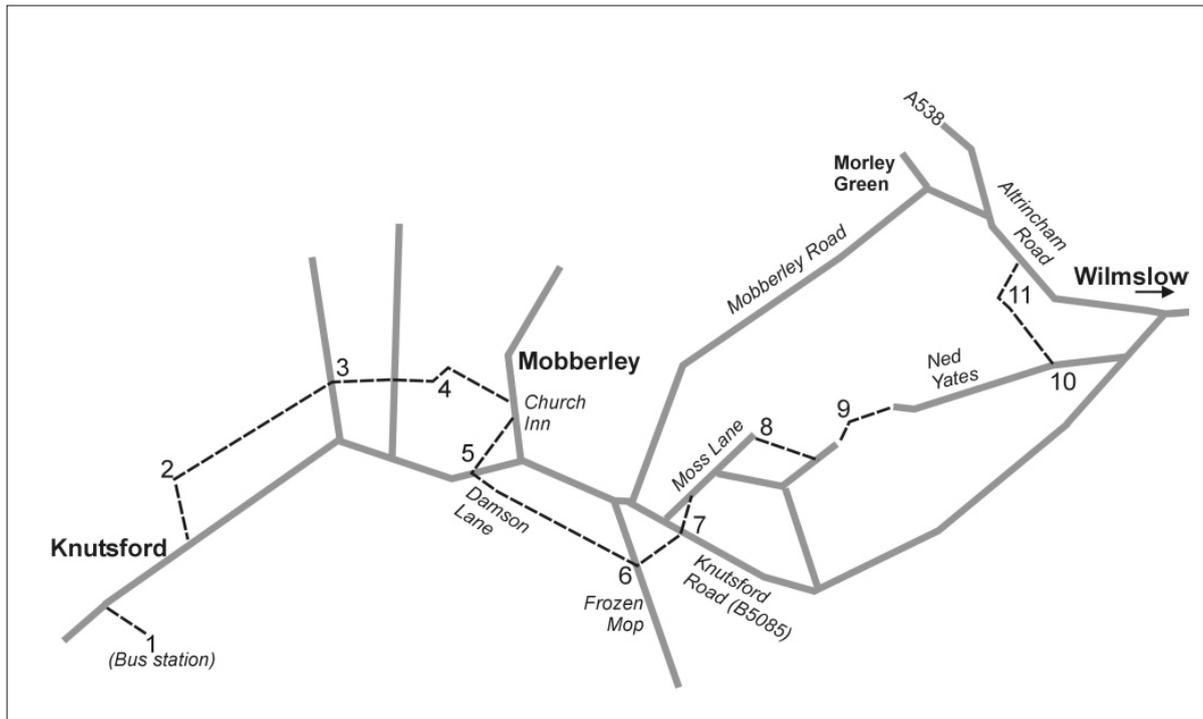
Duration: 4 hours plus refreshment breaks

The walk uses the excellent Connect 88 bus service from Wilmslow to Knutsford for the outward leg. Buses leave Green Lane at about 40 minutes past the hour from the bus stop on the opposite side of the road from the Catholic church.

Currently, we of the bus-pass generation travel free by bus most of the time – so long as we remember our pass! There's a timetable at the bus stop or online at <http://tinyurl.com/cubhyn>. Note that the service does not operate on a Sunday and you must be sure to catch the Knutsford-bound Connect 88, and not the one that goes in the opposite direction (to Altrincham) at about the same time!

The bus takes you on a scenic tour of Wilmslow, then all the way to the bus station in Knutsford, where there's a café inside the nearby Booth's supermarket. Turn right out of the bus station (1), cross the main road at the traffic lights and go almost straight ahead, towards the white tower of La Belle Epoque restaurant, down Church View and across King Street. Continue down Cotton Shop Yard to The Moor recreation area, then take a quick left and right to follow the Moor Pool on your left.

There may be better ways out of the town from this point, but this is what I suggest: at the end of the iron railings between you and the pool, turn left along a wide track



into a wood. After a few minutes, the trees thin out and you turn right on a narrower track between brambles. At a junction near a high steel gate, turn right into a housing estate. Go right at the next junction then left along the main road, walking away from Knutsford. After a few minute, turn left at the fire station into Parkgate Lane, cross the railway and head towards Parkgate Farm.

Just past the Royal Mail building on your right, turn right across a stile (2) and – bingo! – you’ve escaped from the town and are now in countryside. Cross the fields, following waymarks, stiles and electric fences. Pass a pool on your left, then skirt the edge of a wood to a stile in the far-left corner of the field. Cross this and continue slightly right to the bridge across Birkin Brook. Once over, fork left (waymark) and continue to Broadoak Lane. Cross this lane and take the footpath immediately opposite.

Walk along the right-hand edge of the field, passing several bird boxes –the big ones are for owls. Cross the railway lines (3) – **extreme caution needed here** – then follow the path diagonally across the field to the buildings of Smithlane Farm, left of the old Ilford complex.

Cross Smith Lane and follow the footpath sign along a tarmac drive. Leave this by a stile on your left, then follow the raised track and cross a stream via a green-railed bridge. At a T-junction of paths, turn right, following a fence on your right. At Valewood Farm (4), follow the waymarks that have you hopping left to right and back again (a very odd right of way!) then continue in the same direction as before.

Cross the next stile, turn left (waymark) then right after the next stile to head for Dairy Farm. Hit the road and continue to Mobberley church. It’s worth having a wander around the churchyard, with graves that include that of Herbert Leigh Mallory, rector of St Wilfrid’s from 1885 to 1904. The Everest explorer George Mallory (of the ill-fated 1924 Mallory and Irving expedition) was the son of Herbert and is said to have practised his abseiling skills on the church tower. The church is



St Wilfrid's, with its enormous churchyard

rarely open, except for services, but it does have some interesting features, including the Mallory memorial window, that can be seen online at <http://tinyurl.com/ctk28n>. For a history of the village, go to www.mobberley.info.

Just across the road there's the Church Inn – tempting for a lunch stop. If you resist, four more pubs crop up in the next half hour, so you might as well give in now. From the church or pub, go downhill to pass the churchyard on your right, then through a kissing gate into Mobberley Field. Keep the cricket pitch and fence on your left, then cross a bridge and follow a well-trodden path to the main road. There's a bus stop on your right for the possibility of a lazy return to Wilmslow – but Sod's Law means that you've almost certainly just missed the bus, so let's carry on.

Cross the road (5) and walk along Mill Lane to pass the Bull's Head and then turn left into Damson Lane (which used to be Dam Lane, but Damson sounds more rural). This soon becomes an unsurfaced bridleway which, after a few minutes, bears right – but you continue straight ahead through a kissing gate. Go across the field, slightly right and cross a footbridge. This continues to the right of a hedge and to the buildings of Coppock House Farm. Keep just to the right of the main building then follow the fence on your left. Two-thirds of the way along, change sides and continue to Faulkners Lane. The Frozen Mop is just a short way to your right, but you must have yielded to temptation before now, so turn left instead and cross Mobberley Brook via Antrobus Bridge (6).

Turn right at the footpath sign after the bridge and continue on a waymarked route, obeying any temporary diversions, to a very wet area that was submerged in several inches of water the last time I was there – see if you can find a drier way round the

problem. Fork left from here to cross a stile, then head left to walk between a fence and trees, and through the end of a building (how bizarre!) to Knutsford Road.

Cross the main road (7) and follow the signpost into a field. A path leads from here across waymarked stiles to Moss Lane. Turn right onto this quiet lane and walk for about half a mile. Keep left at a junction, still along Moss Lane, until about 100m before a sign for Coppock House (same name, different house), where you reach a stile on your right (8). Cross this and follow the waymark to the next stile, then bear left and continue to yet another stile set in the fence on your left. Cross this and follow the path to a gateway, from where you bear right to the top corner of the field, then left along a bridleway around the Lindow Farm mobile home park (9). Keep left where the track meets a tarmac lane, and continue past the Ned Yates Garden Centre (or call in – there's a café).

At the next junction (10), turn left along Rotherwood Road and continue along a bridleway. About 200m after the last house, turn right along the 'restricted byway' and go past some dilapidated stables. Continue along Lindow Lane, cross Racecourse Road and enter Lindow Common (11). Pass the new 'mire area' – soon to be home for newts, dragonflies and reptiles – and, after a short distance, bear right to Black Lake (from the Welsh/Celtic "llyn ddu"). Skim the far shore of the lake on a path that leads to Altrincham Road, the busy main road that leads into Wilmslow town centre, and you're almost home. Depending on where 'home' is!