

Eighty eight RUNCORN EAST – CASTLE & PRIORY

Visit the ruins of Halton Castle (with marvellous views), and the excavated remains of Norton Priory with its extensive gardens. There is an old real ale pub, a beautifully kept walled garden, and the canal. All are linked by quiet lanes. What is there not to like about this day out?

Catch the stopping train to Newton-Le-Willows and change there to catch the Chester/North Wales train soon after on the same platform. Alight at Runcorn East Station. *Norton station was just before it - as the train comes in you might spot the station house.*

Ascend the steps (or slope) go out through the gate and a few yards beyond turn right over the narrow concrete footbridge.

Fork left up the steps (or slope) and cross the bus way.

Go right until the set of traffic lights. Turn left along Tower Lane. *The water tower looms above the houses.*

Cross and continue as the lane curves to the right through an open area. *You then get a full view of the tower.*

Where there is a lamp post with a magpie sitting on top, go left onto the fields. *OK I'm kidding you! It flew away as I got there.*

Just before you come to a T junction with Earnleywood Lane ahead, a hedgerow starts on the left. Cross Tower Lane and follow the mowed track straight across the parkland. *You are aiming half way between two national grid pylons ahead.*

Go through the hedge, across a tiny ditch and keep ahead.

Cross a stream bridge to go between the climbing stones and the miniature railway.

At the tarmac path turn right. *You pass a litter pond.*

The miniature railway is now on your left. Turn left across it to take the tarmac path uphill.

At the top is Stockham Lane. Turn right and follow its curve to the left. *(It's quiet – houses hidden on left and lovely parkland to the right.)*

Leave the parkland, ignore first right (*Norton View*) and then follow the lane right. *You are now entering Halton conservation area – you'll soon see why.*

Turn next left along Main Street into Halton village. *On the right is a gatehouse & gate posts. The village has a great variety of attractive old buildings.*

Turn right onto The Underway and fork left immediately onto Castle Road. *On the left notice the 1733 library building – plaque above door on side road.*

Continue up Castle Road to Halton castle. *There is a bar in the 18th Century admin block but real ale drinkers should wait till later.*

Go to the left of the castle and you can circle the walls to return to the same spot. *From this path there are great views over the Mersey, Runcorn Bridge, Frodsham, and North Wales hills.*

Start to walk back down Castle Road. Go right through gap in wall of St Mary's church yard - roughly opposite the roadside monument.
[OPTION: to avoid steep steps just continue down Castle Road and back onto Main Street].
Go out through the opposite gap and left down steep steps carved into the sandstone bluff.

At the bottom turn right along Main Street skirting ground the castle rock. Next on the right is the Norton Arms built in 1758. *The pub sells real ales and the chef puts on a good menu all day. Just to the right is a stone arched gate into a bowling green (£1 a go for visitors) – all very nice.*

A little further on the left is a (*Jacobean?*) hall.
At this point cross Main Street to go straight ahead on Summer Lane. Fork first left downhill on Ashmoor Lane. Go under a bridge and at the bottom cross the bus way.
Descend the steps (or slope) and turn right down the red lane signed to Ashmoor and Old Town.

At the bottom turn right along it (*Make your own mind up about the concrete kit buildings on the right*) and then curve left to cross the road. Follow this track as it bends right on the other side of the road, and go down to walk along the canal bank. *This is the Bridgewater Canal which you might have heard of.*
[OPTION: If you feel that you've done enough for the day just continue along the canal bank and see the priory another day.]

Go under two bridges. *You pass a mere on the right.*
Then as the canal bends left to go under a third, you instead go right onto Phoenix Park.
Turn left and then left again to cross the bridge. The road now has a willow bank on its right.
As the red road ascends the bank turn right then left through the gate. The gates to Norton Priory are on your right. *There is a good display about the monastery built here in 1134. It was dissolved in 1536 and became a country estate. The gardens are in many parts and very attractive. There is a cafe. Open daily. Admission is category two (concessions). This includes the walled garden which is not open in winter. [Tel: 01928 569895](tel:01928569895) Website: www.nortonpriory.org*

To visit the walled garden cross the bridge opposite the priory entrance, go slightly right (*notice the mound*) and immediately left through the wood. Enter

the garden through the gardener's cottage on its right hand side. *There is something special about a walled garden and this one is very well looked after. Good for gardening ideas. Inside there is a modern thermally efficient straw house to see.*

On leaving the garden turn right round the walls, then left through the wood and back across the bridge. Go through gate on right and turn left along the road to the canal bridge.

Cross the canal bridge, go down the steps on the left and continue to walk along the canal bank.

Pass under two bridges. At the third cross over the canal and go right to carry on along the opposite bank.

Go under the railway bridge - *here is a lovely open landscape with Daresbury nuclear physics laboratory on the left and the west coast main line in front of it.*

Cross the next bridge - *there is a crane to put blocks in the canal during maintenance work.*

Go across the roundabout and up Barnfield Avenue opposite. *Keep on right to face traffic, as there is no pavement.*

You come to a car park on your right. Cross it to the station.

Go through the station gate on the right and then left across the footbridge.

Descend to the platform for a train to Newton le Willows.

Change at Newton le Willows for a train to Eccles.

CLASSIFICATION: MEDIUM length EASY (Grass in parkland could be wet after rain)

COUNTRYSIDE, CANAL, MUSEUM,
CASTLE, PUB, CAFE, VIEWS,
WOODLAND, GARDENS.

RAIL FARE: category three

MAP OS 1:50 000 sheet 108

Philip's Street Atlas Cheshire