

Saltersford Lane Circular Walk

This circular walk between the villages of Alton and Denstone is as rich in history as it is in natural beauty. The walk follows the River Churnet and the routes of an old canal and railway to Denstone, before returning to Alton across the hilltops along the ancient Saltersford Lane.

Distance:

Approx. 8km (5 miles)

Duration:

3 hours

Terrain:

Generally an easy walk on moderate gradients with the exception of one sharp and uneven descent into the Churnet valley after Alton

Parking:

Alton Village Hall (SK074420)

Refreshments:

Alton has plenty of good pubs and some small shops. A short detour into Denstone will take you to a small shop and a pub

Map:

OS Explorer 259 "Derby, Uttoxeter, Ashbourne and Cheadle"

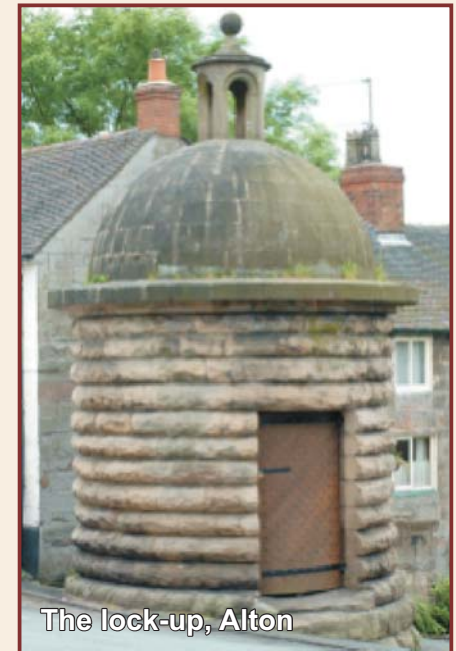
Bus Route:

First service 32a (Hanley to Uttoxeter)

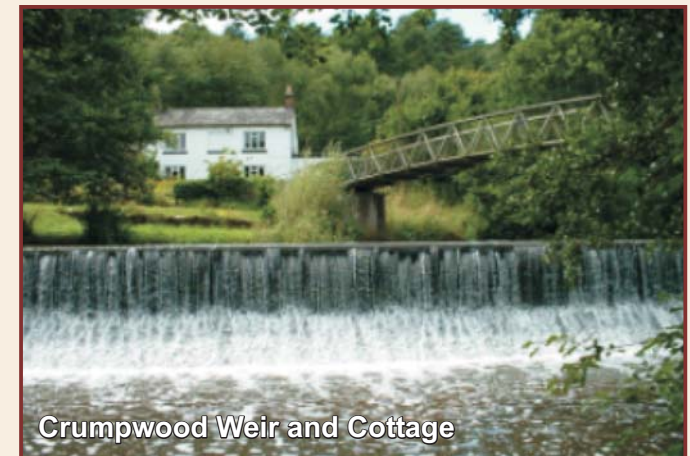


Looking northwest towards the Weaver Hills from Prestwood

- 1 From Alton Village Hall, follow Limekiln Bank down to the village centre. At the foot of the bank the village lock-up (1819) can be seen and shops and public houses can be found nearby. As the road turns abruptly to the left after the shops, bear right up High Street and gently climb past the White Hart.
- 2 Turn left into Castle Hill Road, which leads to the entrance to Alton Castle, parts of which date back to the 12th Century. Turn right in front of the castle entrance and follow the road to where it swings sharply to the right next to Wheel Farm.
- 3 Walk down the side of the farm to a waymark post by a stile, which gives the direction of several different footpaths. Select the left hand route heading diagonally across a field to the far end of a row of mature sycamore trees. Cross the stile by the last tree and descend steeply down steps through woodland until you emerge onto a small track.
- 4 Turn right along the track for 50 metres and cross the stile by the drive to Cliff Farm. Follow this footpath as it bears right towards a footbridge over the River Churnet below.
- 5 After crossing the bridge, turn right and walk through the meadows past a telegraph pole with the river on your right and the course of the old Leek to Uttoxeter railway on your left. After 500 metres the path reaches a kissing gate next to the old railway. Cross straight over and follow a path through the trees next to a remnant of the old Uttoxeter Canal (opened 1811 and replaced by the railway line in 1849).
- 6 Soon you pass a waterworks on your right and next to it there is one of the few remaining canal bridges (Seventy Bridge). This carries a footpath uphill towards Alton Park. However, our walk continues straight ahead along a metalled road. At first the old canal remains on your left but it then passes through a culvert under the road just before a second, older, waterworks building. Looking to your right just after the waterworks you will see Crumpwood Weir where the canal crossed over to run on the west side of the valley. Crumpwood Cottage stands on the far side of the river, accessed by a private footbridge.



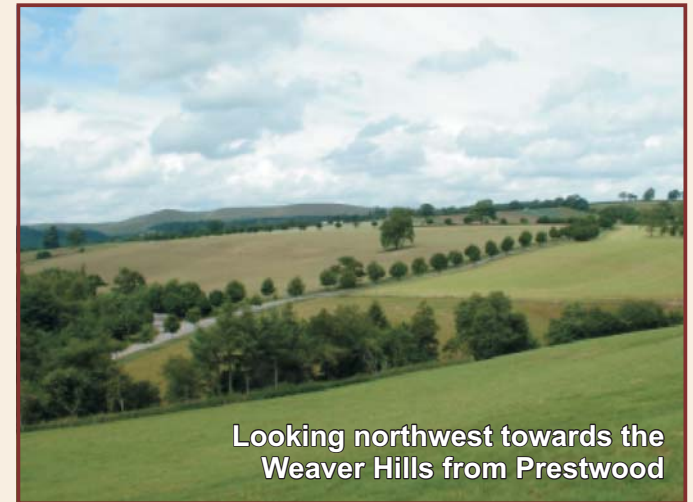
The lock-up, Alton



Crumpwood Weir and Cottage

7 Continue along the metalled road through a wooden gate. Up the slope to your left it may just be possible to see the route of the Earl of Shrewsbury's private coach road descending from Alton Abbey through the trees. Soon the surfacing on the waterworks road comes to an end and it rounds a left-hand bend. Where it swings back to the right over a cattle grid, join a track straight in front and cross Hole Brook on a small footbridge. JCB's test site lies further up this side valley.

8 Over the footbridge follow the hedge on the right up the bank and cross a stile. Moments later you arrive at a lane. Cross over the stile opposite, climb some steps and follow the path up through the trees and cross over JCB's private road which leads to their test site. Continue to follow the waymarked stiles up the hill through two small fields to arrive at a lane in the hamlet of Prestwood.



Looking northwest towards the Weaver Hills from Prestwood

9 Cross straight over the lane and walk up the track between the houses to a metal farm gate leading into a large field. Go through the gate and walk across the field aiming to the left of the solitary cottage in front. Now gently descending, walk due south across the field aiming in the direction of the JCB factory at Rocester and the high ground of Eaton Banks four miles away.

10 Cross a stile next to double farm gates and walk down a second field aiming to the right of two modern barns. Pass through a gate next to the barns and a few yards further on a second gate leads through a high hedge onto Quixhill Lane.

11 Turn left and walk through the hamlet of Quixhill and turn right onto the B5032 a few moments later. After 100 metres the Staffordshire Way is seen heading off to the left, signposted Rocester, opposite the gateway to the Earl of Shrewsbury's coach road. Ignore this and continue along the road, crossing over the River Churnet for a second time.

12 If you wish to call at the shop or pub in Denstone turn left here, pass the church and the old school and turn right into College Road. Otherwise, continue along the road over the old railway bridge and look for a Staffordshire Way fingerpost and stile immediately on the right.



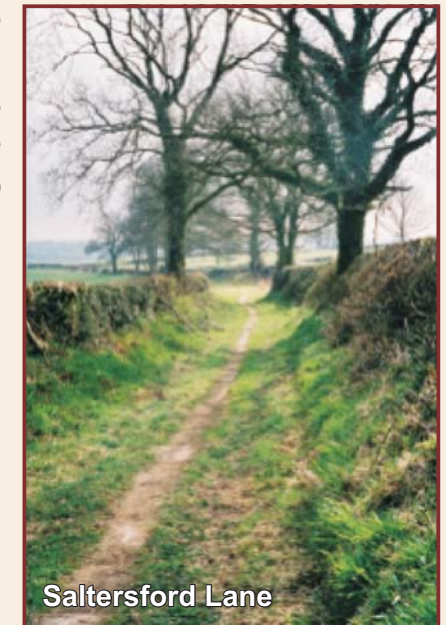
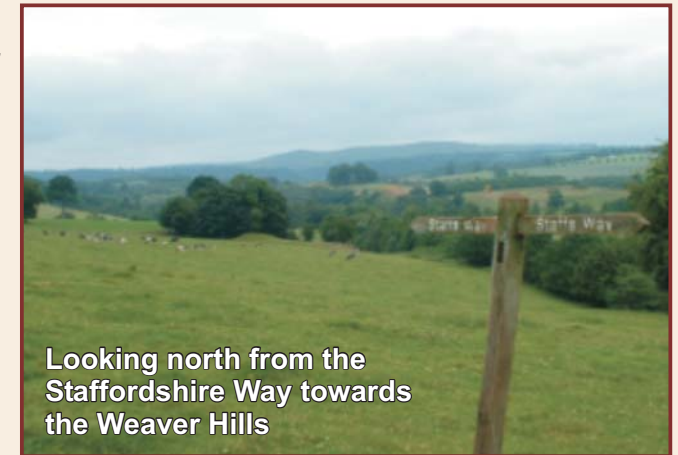
Quixhill Gates

13 Keeping the hedge (and the old railway) on the right, follow the path across three fields and through a small wood. At this point it is again possible to see the remains of the Uttoxeter Canal. The path now begins to climb gently uphill following the hedge on the right at first, then crossing over the field at the top of the bank as marked by two Staffordshire Way fingerposts.

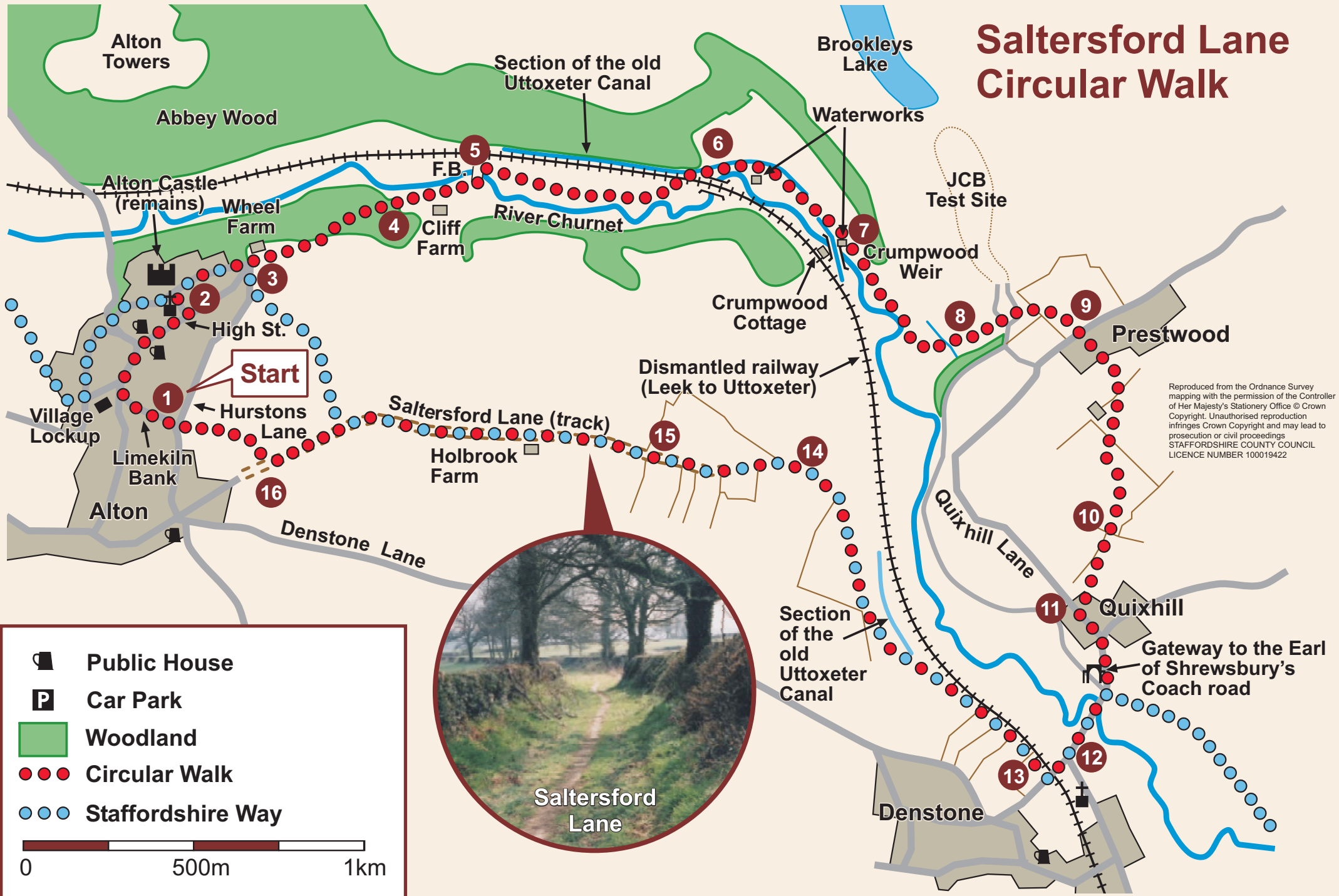
14 Looking north from this vantage point, it is just possible to see Wootton Lodge, which dates from about 1600, in the woodland below the Weaver Hills. Looking north-east, you can see the hamlet of Prestwood through which this route passed earlier. Now with the hedge on your left carry- on climbing towards a line of mature trees that mark the course of an ancient trackway known as Saltersford Lane.

15 The 'saltways' were used to transport salt across the country and are believed to date back to pre Conquest times. Saltersford Lane is thought to have linked Nantwich with Newcastle, Cheadle and Derby and has sandstone paving up as far as Holbrook Farm from which point the original paving is mainly replaced with modern concrete. After about half a mile along Saltersford Lane the Staffordshire Way is signposted off to the right. Ignore this and continue on a further 300 metres to reach a stile on the right where the paving finally comes to an end.

16 Cross the stile and follow the hedge on the right to another stile on the far side of the field. The path now climbs gently uphill between fences until you emerge onto Hurstons Lane opposite Alton Village Hall.



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