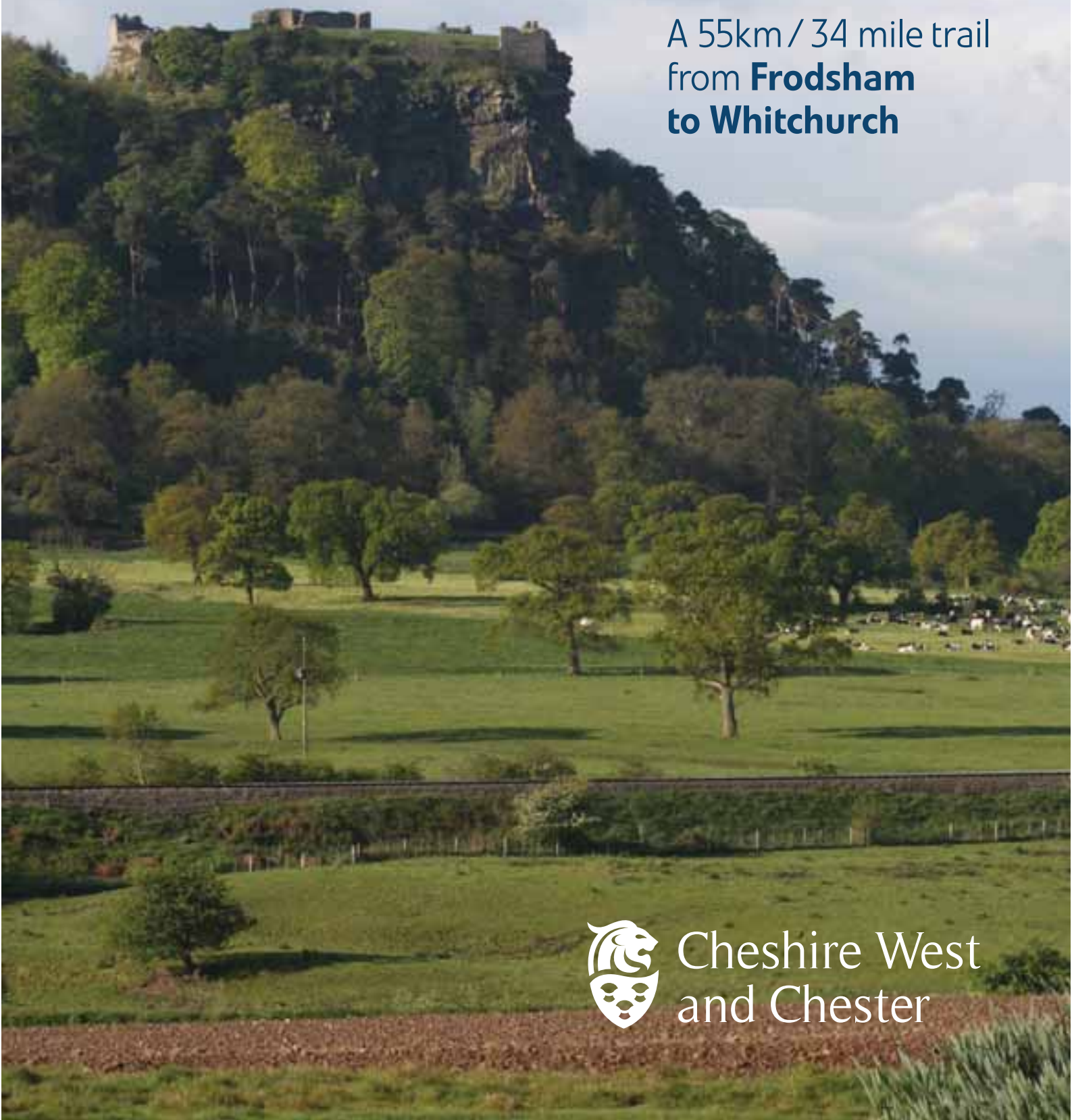
Sandstone Trail Walker's Guide

A 55km / 34 mile trail from **Frodsham to Whitchurch**



Cheshire West and Chester

Sandstone Trail **Walkers' Guide**

A 55km/34mile trail from **Frodsham** to **Whitchurch.**

Stride out along the **Sandstone Trail** and sample some of the finest walking in Cheshire. Follow the ridge of sandstone that rises dramatically from the Cheshire plain and enjoy this invigorating walk at any time of year.

This is rural Cheshire at its best, quiet and sleepy at times yet steeped in history and rich in wildlife. Evidence of early settlers abounds in the hill forts and burial mounds along the ridge while the Trail crosses a Roman road and meanders through the medieval hunting forest of Mara and Mondrum, today well known as **Delamere Forest.**

The area around Delamere is home to several fruit farms which grow many varieties of apples as well as rhubarb, strawberries, raspberries and other soft fruit.

The well-wooded **Peckforton Hills** stand proud of the **Cheshire Plain** with **Beeston Castle** commanding panoramas of eight counties. The estate woodlands are primarily managed for pheasant rearing while **Bickerton Hill**, owned by the National Trust, is managed for nature conservation to protect and improve the heathland.

South of the **Larkton Hill** the land is more suited to dairy farming, producing milk for the famous Cheshire cheese and some fabulous ice cream. **Old St Chad's Chapel** is a real gem while the final section of the Trail takes you along the **Llangollen Canal**, a relaxing and enjoyable walk at any time of year.

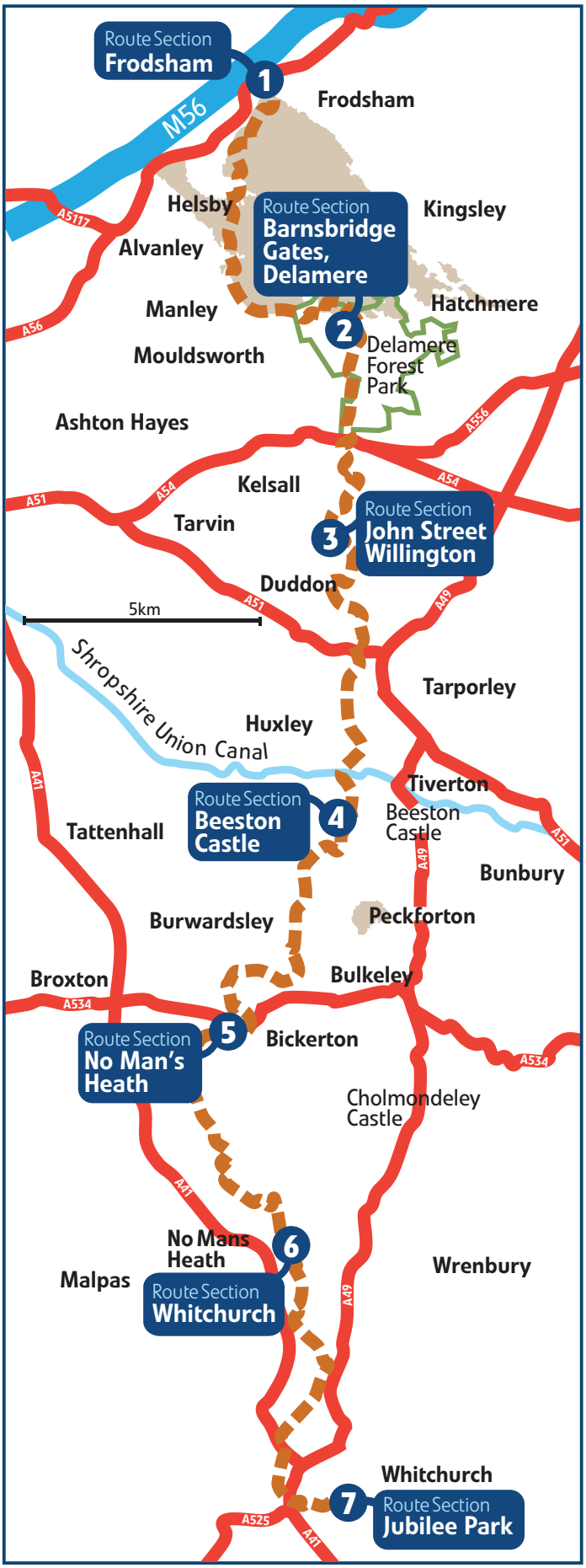
If you've not walked the Sandstone Trail before you're in for a real treat while if it has been a while we are sure you will have forgotten how stunning it is.

Helsby Hill seen from Woodhouse hill

Walking the Trail over 2 or 3 days gives a real impression of scale of the county and a sense of achievement but please don't rush it, take time to soak up the atmosphere and savour the delights of rural Cheshire. The Trail is split into six sections in this guide so you can combine 2 or 3 sections if you wish.

Also included in this guide are 2 circular walks for you to try - one above Frodsham and one around Rawhead.

The Sandstone Trail was one of the first promoted routes in the country, pioneered by Cheshire County Council's Countryside Recreation Department. The original Trail, opened in 1974, was just 16 miles long from Delamere to Duckington. Soon it was extended up to Beacon Hill in the north and Grindley Brook in the south. In the late 1990s links were added to Frodsham and Whitchurch to make it more accessible by public transport and so walkers could enjoy some well earned refreshment.



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Llangollen Canal at Grindley Brook

Key to maps

- Forestry Commission
- National Trust
- Woodland Trust
- Parking
- Information Sign
- Picnic Site
- Mast
- Slopes
- Public House
- Refreshments
- Church
- Sandstone Trails
- Circular Trails
- Footpaths
- Motorways
- Major roads
- Other roads
- Minor roads
- Railway Line
- Rivers, Lakes & Canals
- Woodland

1. Frodsham to Barnsbridge Gates, Delamere

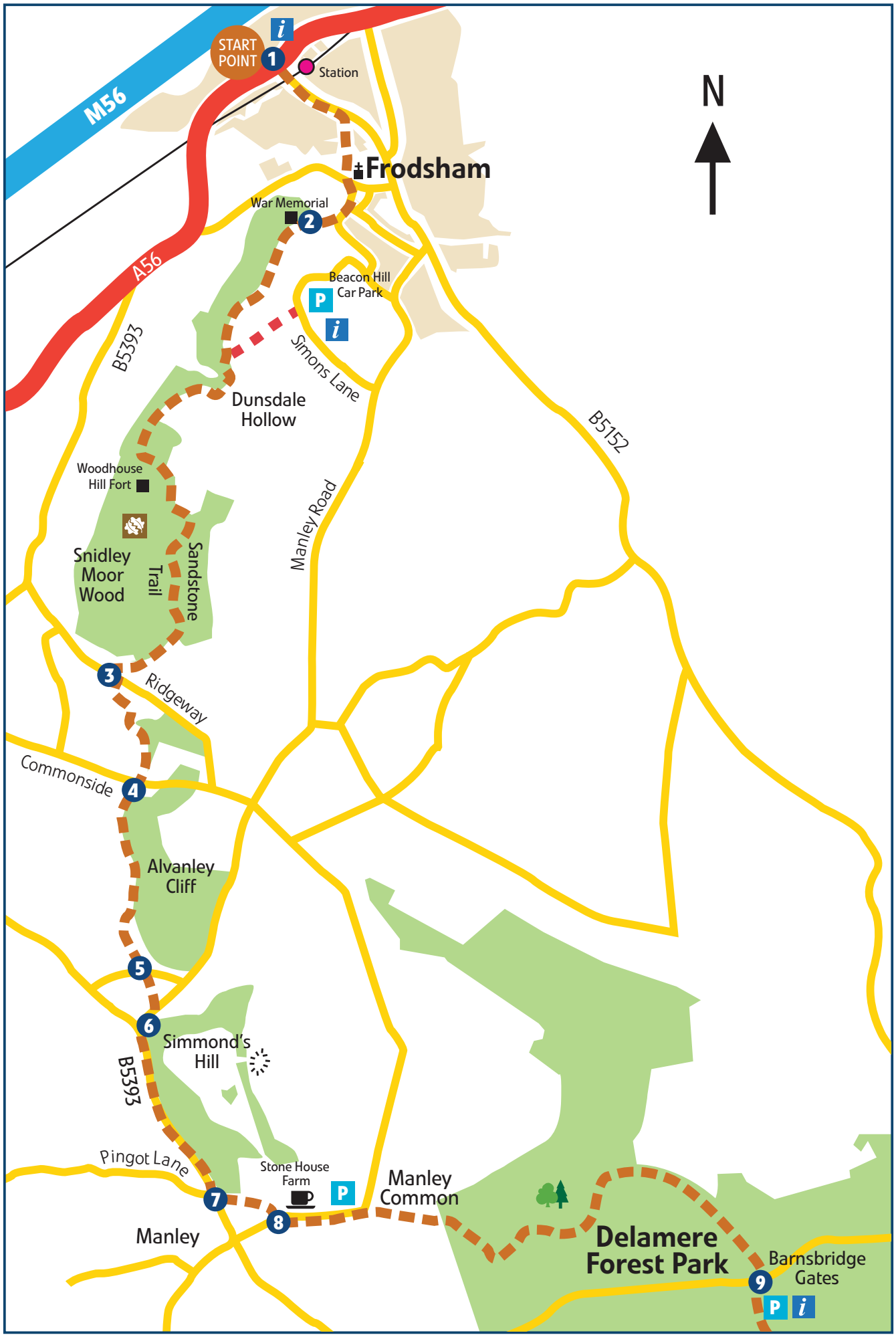
Distance: 7 1/2 miles **Allow**: 3-4 hours

The Trail begins in the bustling market town of Frodsham with individual shops and interesting places to eat. Soon you climb above the town where the views over the Mersey Estuary are spectacular. Much of this section of the Trail meanders around outcrops of sandstone through pleasant birch and oak woodland.

Jacob's Ladder, Frodsham

Frodsham

1. Start outside the Bear's Paw pub in the centre of Frodsham. Walk up Church Street and turn right up a public footpath signed Sandstone Trail. Cross into Bellemonte Road opposite, then take Middle Walk on the right into the woods. Bear left and zigzag uphill to reach the War Memorial.
2. Follow the waymarks along the edge of the hill and down Baker's Dozen steps into Dunsdale Hollow. Go up the steps cut into the rock, along the side of the golf course and continue along several woodland paths and then down the hollow track below Snidley Moor to The Ridgeway.
3. Turn left, then right up the steps into Ridgeway Wood. Cross the brook then follow the field edges to Commonside.
4. Go through the kissing gate opposite and through the fields below Alvanley Cliff to the road at Yarangall Green.
5. Cross over and go through two small fields to Manley Road.
6. Turn right, then left at the T-junction, along the pavement of the main road, B5393.
7. Turn left through a kissing gate opposite Pingot Lane and follow the field edges to New Pale Road.
8. Turn left and follow the lane to the corner. Take the open track straight ahead into Delamere Forest Park. Continue on forest tracks and paths to Ashton Road and Barnsbridge Gates car park.


START POINT
1
Station
M56
A56
Frodsham
N
War Memorial
2
Beacon Hill Car Park
B5393
Simons Lane
Dunsdale Hollow
B5152
Woodhouse Hill Fort
Snidley Moor Wood
Sandstone Trail
Manley Road
3
Ridgeway
Commonside
4
Alvanley Cliff
5
6
Simmond's Hill
B5393
Pingot Lane
Stone House Farm
7
8
Manley Common
Manley
Delamere Forest Park
Barnsbridge Gates
9
0
500
1.0
1.6 km
½ mile
1 mile

A steep climb from **Frodsham** town centre up to the War Memorial is rewarded with impressive views overlooking the Mersey Estuary to the distinctive Liverpool skyline beyond. This is a popular spot for people to watch the planes take off and land at Liverpool airport while down below the rich birdlife of the estuary attracts bird watchers from far afield.

From the top of the hill the Trail skirts a series of sandstone outcrops. Birch and oak woodland cloth the steep slopes, carpeted with ferns and bluebells in the spring. Once the path dropped into **Dunsdale Hollow** down Jacob's Ladder, a steep staircase carved into the rock, but today there is a much safer route down Baker's Dozen, named after Jack Baker who was instrumental in devising the Trail.

Look out for the remains of **Woodhouse Hill Fort**, the most northerly of 6 forts along the sandstone ridge. The trees would have been much easier to clear from the ridge than from the plain below and several Iron Age families would have lived in huts within the fort, built to take advantage of the commanding views.

Snidley Moor Wood is one of several along the Trail now managed by The Woodland Trust. Volunteers clear some of the rhododendron each winter and replant the banks with oak and other native trees.

The Trail follows the edge of the woodland on **Alvanley Cliff**. Several quarries are nearby, including one which produced particularly fine sandstone used to rebuild Chester Castle and Eaton Hall. Potatoes are traditionally grown in this area which is handy for local markets.

After a short walk along the road the Trail follows the edge of **New Pale at Manley Common**. This was enclosed from the forest by a paling fence in the seventeenth century and stocked with wild deer from the forest.

The Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust own just under 55ha of land from Overton Hill through Woodhouse Hill to Snidley Moor. The woodland contains an ancient iron age hill fort which is one of six hilllforts along the sandstone ridge. Work on preserving the ramparts of this archaeological feature is being carried out over the next few years. The pathways that criss-cross the site take you past some fantastic geological features and lead to a number of breathtaking views.

Some of the woodland across this escarpment is ancient semi-natural woodland. It is predominantly birch with scattered oak, rowan, holly and hawthorn. Path improvement projects and rhododendron removal will improve both access and biodiversity across the site.

The Trust is also trialling a number of play and art projects across the site particularly on Snidley Moor and the newly planted part of Woodhouse Hill. These will provide opportunities for exploration and discovery so look out for various unusual installations!

To find out more please phone 01476 581111 or visit our website at **www.woodland/trust.org.uk.**

Habitats and Hillforts

The Habitats and Hillforts of Cheshire's Sandstone Ridge is an exciting new Landscape Partnership Scheme which will help to:

- increase understanding and conserve the natural and historic heritage of the Ridge
- improve people's awareness and appreciation of its special assets
- provide opportunities for people to access and enjoy its heritage.

The Project will focus on the areas surrounding the six Iron Age hillforts stretching along 25km of the Sandstone Ridge. The six hillforts are Helsby, Woodhouse, Eddisbury, Kelsborrow, Beeston and Maiden Castle.

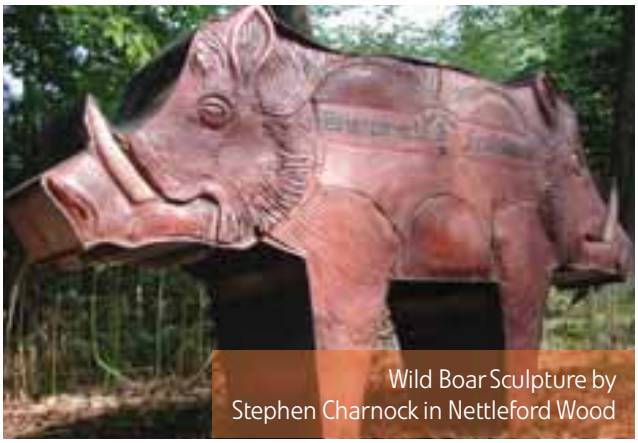
t: 01244 973195
e: habitatsandhillforts@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
www.habitatsandhillforts.co.uk

2. Barnsbridge Gates to John Street, Willington

Distance: 4 miles Allow: 2 hours

This section of the Trail is dominated by plantation woodland. Barnsbridge Gates is in the heart of Delamere Forest and is a favourite place for birdwatching. The route goes over Old Pale, a relatively recent acquisition that has been planted up with a mixture of broadleaved and coniferous trees. Primrosehill Wood is quieter than the main part of the Forest and home to Urchin's Kitchen, a magical glade just off the path.

Delamere Forest



Wild Boar Sculpture by Stephen Charnock in Nettleford Wood

Delamere Forest Park is just a small remnant of the ancient hunting forest of Mara & Mondrum, used for hunting by the Earls of Chester and later the King. A cleared area just beyond **Barnsbridge Gates** gives a feeling of what the wildwood would have been like when wild boar roamed. Today the Forest is managed by Forestry Commission and a short detour from the Trail takes you to **Blakemere Moss**. The original moss was drained and planted around the turn of the nineteenth century to grow timber for war ships. 200 years later successive trees were felled and the area allowed to re-flood so today it provides a fabulous habitat for birds and some of the special dragonflies found in Delamere including the white faced darter.

If you are feeling energetic it is well worth taking the signed detour up to the **Old Pale**, especially on a clear day when the views are spectacular. The Forestry Commission purchased just over 137 hectares (338 acres) of land at **Old Pale** on the southern edge of the forest in 2000 and has since planted it with a mixture of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

The Kings Chair, a quarry just to the east of **Nettleford Wood**, is thought to have been the source of stone for Vale Royal Abbey, built between 1277 & 1300. Just before the A54 the Trail crosses Watling Street, the Roman road from Chester to Manchester. The A54 itself follows the old Chester/Tarvin/Nantwich turnpike road. Travellers would have paid their tolls at the cottage at Gresty's Waste.

Primrosehill Wood is a lovely area with great views which change as the trees grow and then are felled. Weird and wonderful fungi appear in the autumn including strange stinkhorns with their distinctive aroma. **Urchin's Kitchen**, a glacial meltwater channel, is signed from the Trail.

From Tirley Lane the Trail follows an attractive sunken lane down to John Street.

Manley Common
Delamere Forest Park
START POINT
9
Ashton Road
Fox Howl
Spy Hill
Hatchmere
Blakemere
Visitor Centre & Toilets
Woodside
Eddisbury Lodge Farm
10
Delamere Station
N
Pale Heights
Old Pale
Nettleford Wood
Eddisbury Hill
The Yeld
to Chester
A54
11
to Northwich
A556
Gresty's Waste
Kelsall
to Winsford
A54
Urchin's Kitchen
Summer Trees Teashop
12
Primrosehill Wood
Tirley Lane
Willington Corner
13
John Street
Willington Hall Hotel
0
500
1.0
1.6 km
½ mile
1 mile

Looking towards the Old Pale at Delamere

9 Follow the track next to the car park and continue on this over the railway to Eddisbury Lodge.

10 Turn left and then right up the track to Nettleford Wood. Continue along the track down to the A54.

There is also a short but scenic alternative route that briefly goes along the side of the Old Pale extension to Delamere Forest, and then drops down again to rejoin the original route through Nettleford Wood.

11 Cross with care. Gresty's Waste car park is just to the left. Go down the steps and cross the brook. Follow the tracks through Primrosehill Wood and then continue through two fields to Summertrees Teashop* at Tirley Lane.
* Not open Monday or Friday.

12 Go straight ahead, then bear slightly right and follow the track down to John Street where there is some roadside parking on the verge.

In Delamere Forest

Delamere Forest Park

Delamere Forest Park comprises over 950 hectares of mixed deciduous and evergreen forest, open grassland and wetlands. It is the largest wooded area in Cheshire and lies within The Mersey Forest. Blakemere Moss has become an excellent habitat for a wide variety of wildlife and is particularly popular with ornithologists. Delamere offers the complete day out for all the family, with a wide range of facilities including bike hire, cafe, shop, Visitor Centre, and Go Ape!

Contact: Delamere Visitor Centre
t: 01606 882167
e: delamere@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Forestry Commission

3. John Street to Beeston Castle

Distance: 5 1/2 miles Allow: 2-3 hours

The landscape here changes as you drop onto the heavy soils of the Cheshire plain where dairy farming is the order of the day. Sunken lanes with rich hedgerows make for pleasant walking while Beeston Castle dominates the view for much of this section and lures you onward.

Beeston Castle seen from Wharton's Lock

Heather in flower at Larkton Hill

13. Turn left at the bottom of Sandy Lane onto John Street past the Information Board and then turn right over a stile. Follow field edges and turn right down a sunken track. Turn right along the brook, go over the bridge and around the field edge to Wood Lane.

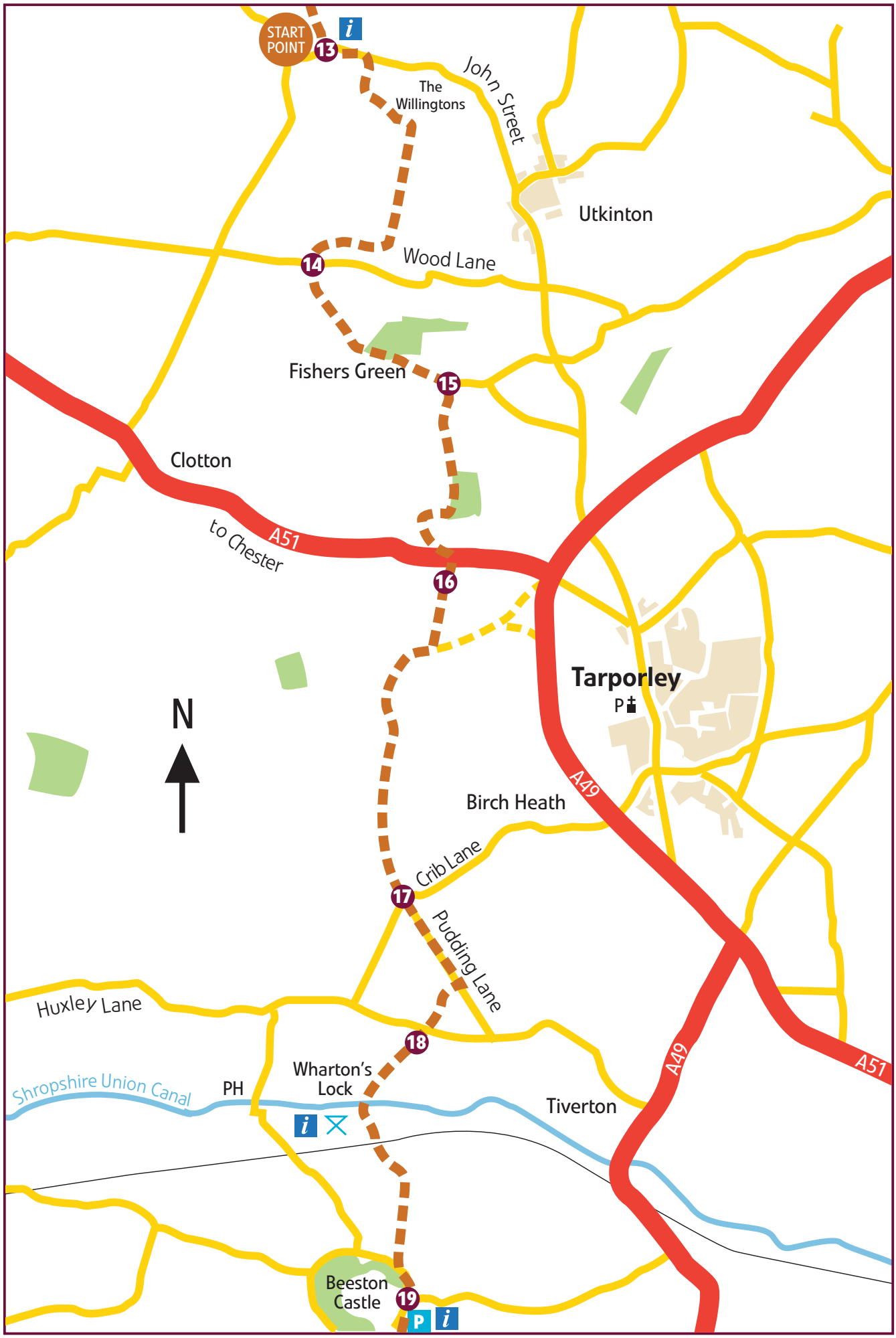
14. Cross the road and go down the track opposite (Gypsy Lane). Cross the stile on the left, then follow field edges. From the stile part way along the woodland, strike out diagonally right across the field to the lane end at Fishersgreen.

15. Continue on the track slightly to the right signposted to Beeston. Go around a field and out onto Road Street (A51).

16. Cross A51 with care. Go over the stile on the left and carry on through the fields. Turn right along the green lane, then cross the fields. In the first field continue straight ahead where the hedge turns sharply left. Follow the path through a number of kissing gates and over footbridges to Crib Lane.

17. Turn right and then immediately left into Pudding Lane. Turn right through a kissing gate and cross three fields to Huxley Lane.

18. Cross the lane and go through the kissing gate opposite. Follow the path to the canal bridge at Wharton's Lock. Cross the canal, then go under the railway and up the fields to the road. Turn left to Beeston Castle.


START POINT
13
The Willingtons
John Street
Utkinton
14
Wood Lane
Fishers Green
15
Clotton
A51
to Chester
16
Tarporley
P
N
A49
Birch Heath
Crib Lane
17
Pudding Lane
Huxley Lane
18
Wharton's Lock
PH
Shropshire Union Canal
Tiverton
A49
A51
Beeston Castle
19
P
0
500
1.0
1.6 km
½ mile
1 mile

Kelsall and **Willington** are at the heart of Cheshire's fruit farming country. Soft fruits flourish in the light, sandy soils while the ridge protects the plants from the chill, easterly winds.

From John Street the Trail heads south with splendid views towards the **Peckforton Hills**. Beyond Wood Lane is Old Gypsy Lane, one of many green lanes worn by the feet of farm workers or traders from the surrounding towns. Often the hedges are centuries old, and incredibly rich in wildlife, providing food and shelter for butterflies, birds and other creatures.

Fishers Green is a small hamlet dating back to the seventeenth century. This is the start of Cheshire's dairy country, where rich grassland on heavy soils produces fine quality milk and cheese. The farmhouse, like many in Cheshire, had a cheese parlour on the cool, north side. The Nantwich Show, held every July, hosts one of the largest cheese displays in Europe.

The Trail crosses the **Shropshire Union Canal** at **Wharton's Lock**. Originally the Chester Canal, it was built in the 1770's to link the manufacturing towns in the Midlands with the ports on the River Mersey.

Soon **Beeston Castle** looms large. This is one of the most distinctive landmarks in Cheshire, perched on a crag almost 100m high. Excavations suggest that there was a Bronze Age settlement and an Iron Age hill fort on the site long before **Beeston Castle** was begun in 1225. Today peregrine and raven make the most of its natural defences, nesting in relative safety. Recent work by English Heritage means visitors to the Castle can enjoy even better views over the eight counties.

Beeston Castle

Frodsham Circular

Grade: **Moderate**

Distance: **8km/5 miles** Time: **Allow 2 1/2 – 3 hours**

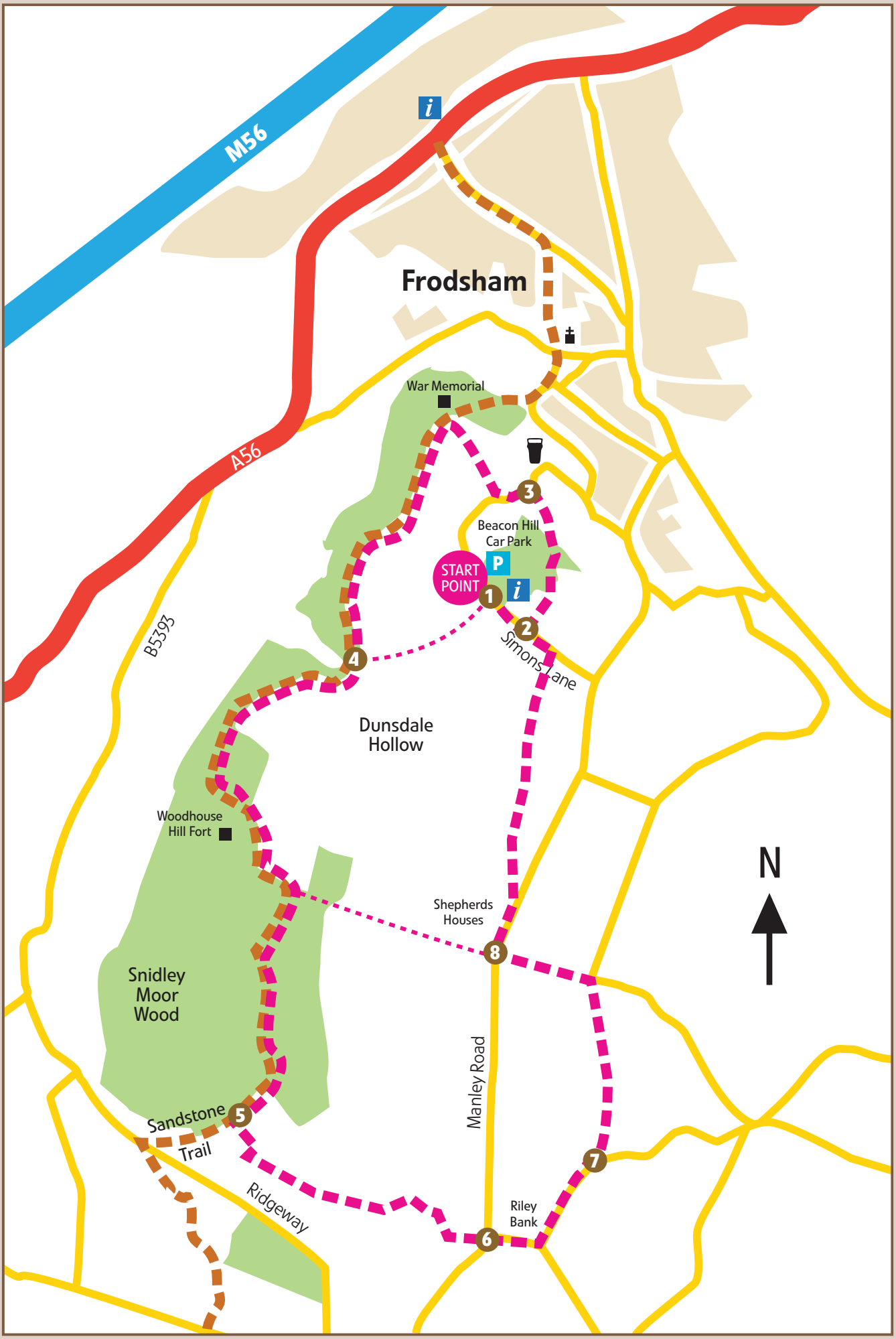
Start: **Beacon Hill car park, Simons Lane, Overton Hill, Frodsham WA6 6HG**

Map: **OS Explorer 267 Northwich and Delamere Forest**

Terrain: **Mainly good paths and tracks, several kissing gates and some rock steps. Some gradients more than 1:10.**

1. Turn left out of the car park.
2. Turn left on to the footpath at Overhill Cottage. Here you join the North Cheshire Way and the Delamere Way. Carry on past the cottage, go through the gate into the grounds of Heathercliffe Hotel and follow the path to the road. The grounds are particularly attractive in spring time when the rhododendrons and foxgloves are in flower. Suddenly the path opens up and there are excellent views over the estuary with many landmarks including the Runcorn-Widnes bridge, the M56, Halton Water Tower and Fiddlers Ferry power station.
3. Turn left up the hill and then right into the War Memorial Fields. Look out for yellow rattle and meadow cranesbill in early summer. Follow the path to the Memorial which has recently been restored. Again the views are fantastic on a clear day. Turn left past the toposcope and follow the Sandstone Trail along the cliff edge. The path meanders through the woodland with lots of rock outcrops.
4. Turn right at the fingerpost signed to Delamere Forest. Go down the steps known as Baker's Dozen into Dunsdale Hollow. Follow the Trail to the left and then up the steps in the rock. It is worth pausing at the top to look back and admire the view. Carry on past the seat and the 'Ice and Sea' interpretative panel, bearing left up the hill and continue on the Trail, turning right down the hill following the hollow track.
5. Go left off the Trail through a metal kissing gate onto a footpath. Follow the path to the right, go through a kissing gate and carry on along the path. There are some interesting trees here including cherry and the unusual spindle. Follow the path to the right up the hill. Go through the kissing gate, up the steep slope and then along the grassy path to the road. Again it is worth pausing to look back at the view.
6. Go through the kissing gate onto the road, go straight across into Riley Bank and follow the road around to the left.
7. Turn left onto the restricted byway and left again at the end onto another restricted byway. Follow this sandy track to the end.
8. Turn right onto the road. Cross over and go through the kissing gate into the field, often cropped with potatoes. Cross the farm track and continue on the path which takes you through the golf course.
9. Turn left onto road and follow this back to the car park.

Looking from Woodhouse Hill towards Helsby


M56
A56
B5393
Frodsham
War Memorial
Beacon Hill
Car Park
START
POINT
P
1
2
3
4
Simons Lane
Dunsdale
Hollow
Woodhouse
Hill Fort
Shepherds
Houses
8
Snidley
Moor
Wood
Manley Road
Sandstone
Trail
5
Ridgeway
Riley
Bank
6
7
N

Rawhead Circular Walk

Grade: **Moderate**

Distance: **5km/3miles** Time: **Allow 2 hours**

Start: **The Bickerton Poacher, Wrexham Road, Bulkeley SY14 8BE**

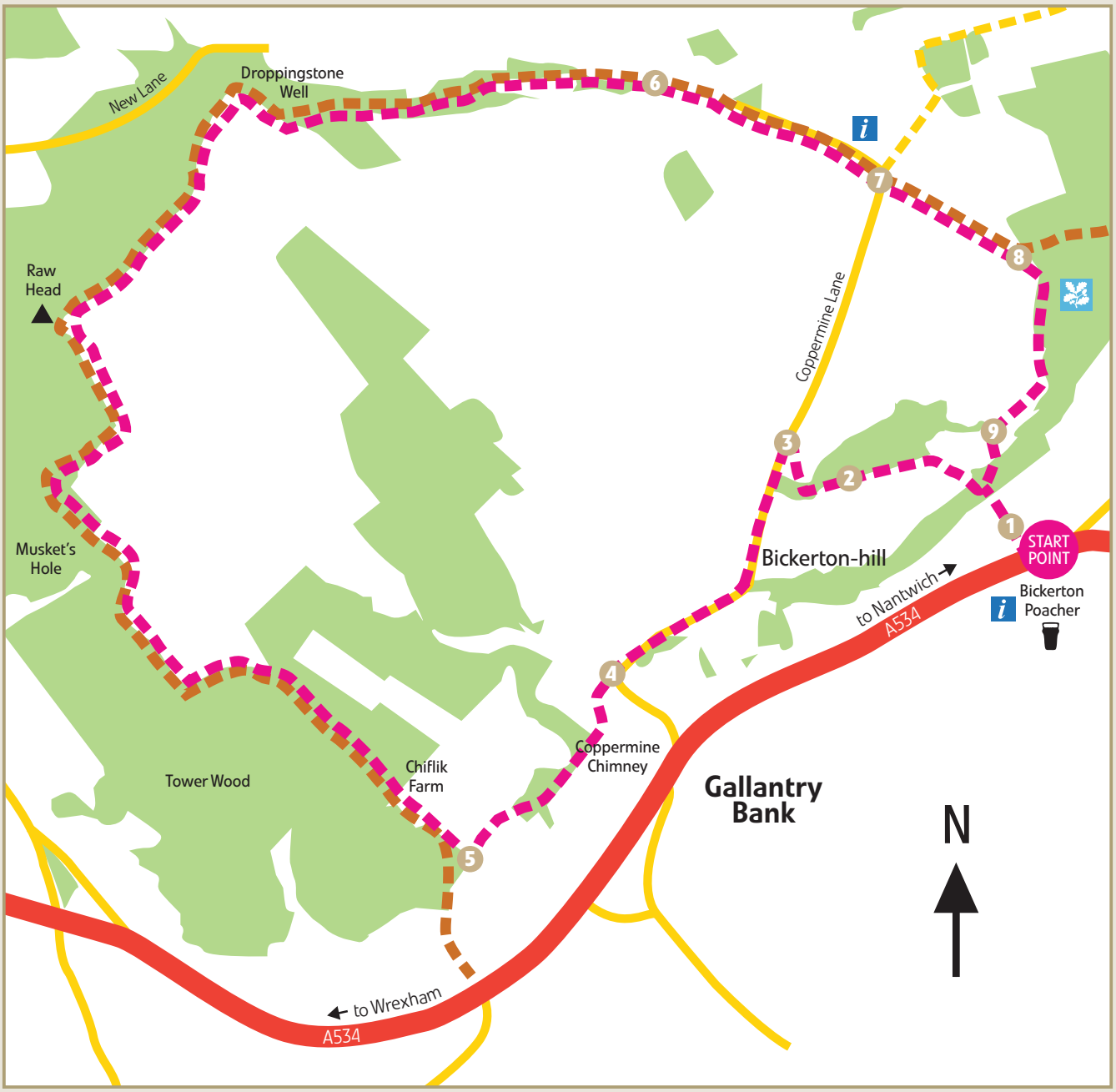
Map: **OS Explorer 257, Crewe & Nantwich**

Terrain: **Mainly good paths and tracks. Several kissing gates and irregular steps, some gradients more than 1:10**

1. Cross the road with care and go up the footpath opposite the car park. Carry on up the hill, ignoring the path on the right which is where you will rejoin this path later. Go up the steps, through the kissing gate and carry on up, bearing left at the waymark.
2. Go over the stile by Chestnut Cottage and carry on along the track to the stile on the right. Go over the stile and follow the path to Coppermine Lane.
3. Turn left down the lane.
4. Turn right onto the footpath by the cave. Go over the stile, past the coppermine chimney, and carry on along the path which follows the fence line. Cross the brook, go up the steps and carry on to the Sandstone Trail post.
5. Turn right onto the Trail. Go through the kissing gate by Chiflik Farm and carry on past the trig point at Rawhead and the steps down to Droppingstone Well, until you come to a wooden kissing gate.
6. Go through the gate and bear right up the sandy track which soon joins a larger track.
7. Cross the top of Coppermine Lane and follow the Sandstone Trail across the field.
8. Go through the kissing gate and turn right onto the worn path. (Do not follow the Sandstone Trail which continues straight up the hill.) Go through the kissing gate on the right and follow the path down the hill to the fingerpost.
9. Turn left and go down the steps, through the kissing gate and carry on until you meet the original path. Turn left and follow this back to the A534 and The Bickerton Poacher.

Pines near Rawhead

Bilberry



Rawhead behind a rainbow

4. Beeston Castle to Bickerton Church

Distance: 5 1/2 miles Allow: 2-3 hours

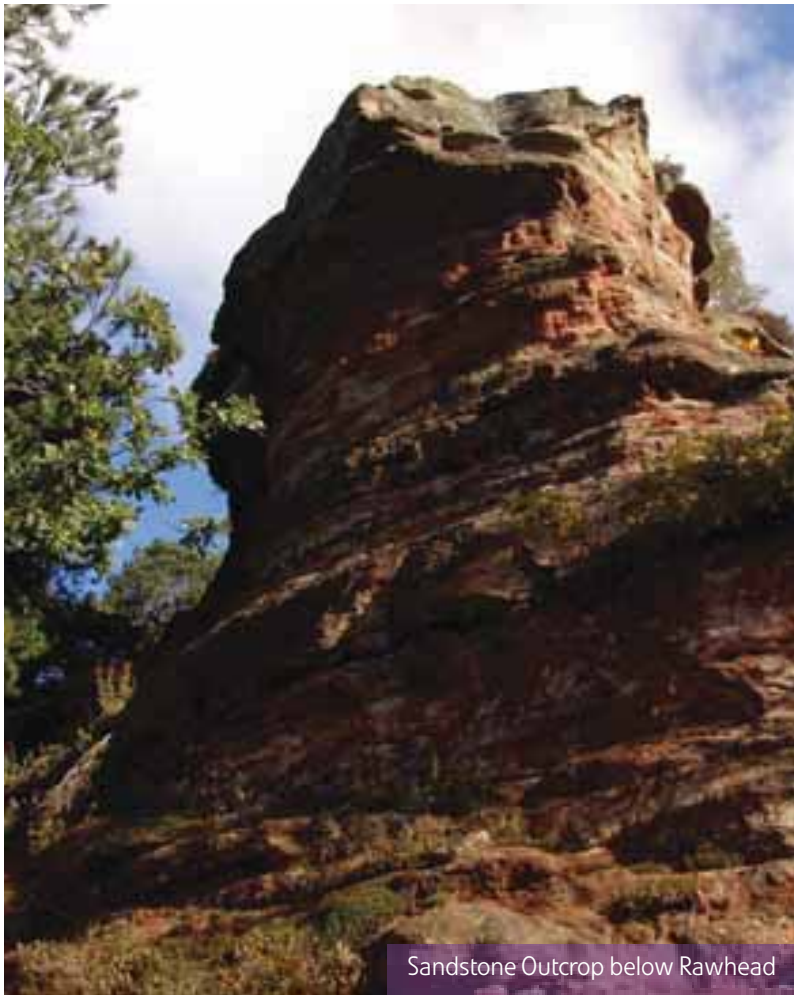
Here you sample another aspect of the Cheshire countryside as much of this area is managed by large estates. Listen out for pheasants as you walk through the woods or keep an eye open for the feeders. Rawhead is the highest point on the Trail with impressive views.

Peckforton Castle, modelled on a Norman castle, was built in the 1840s for Admiral Tollemache, using sandstone quarried on the Estate. Listen out for tiny wrens and goldcrests, searching for insects as you walk through the woodlands.

A short climb up **Bulkeley Hill** is rewarded with excellent views eastwards to the Peak District and Cannock Chase. Huge sweet chestnut trees spiral skywards, casting a welcome shade in summer. Sweet chestnut trees were introduced to Britain by the Romans and were widely grown for timber. Trees were coppiced to produce a regular supply of wood for fencing.

The Trail swings west to **Rawhead**, the highest point on the route at 227m (746'). The red cliffs, sculpted by the wind and the rain, are spectacular while the views to the west on a clear day are equally stunning.

The chimney of the copper mine just by the A534 is a rare, industrial relic in this rural landscape. The mine was worked intermittently for over 200 years but the copper return was poor and the mine has been idle for many years. The chimney was built in 1856 as a flue for the pumping engine that drained the mines.



Sandstone Outcrop below Rawhead

Sweet Chestnuts

19 From Beeston Castle follow the path alongside the castle wall and go through the woodland to Tattenhall Lane.

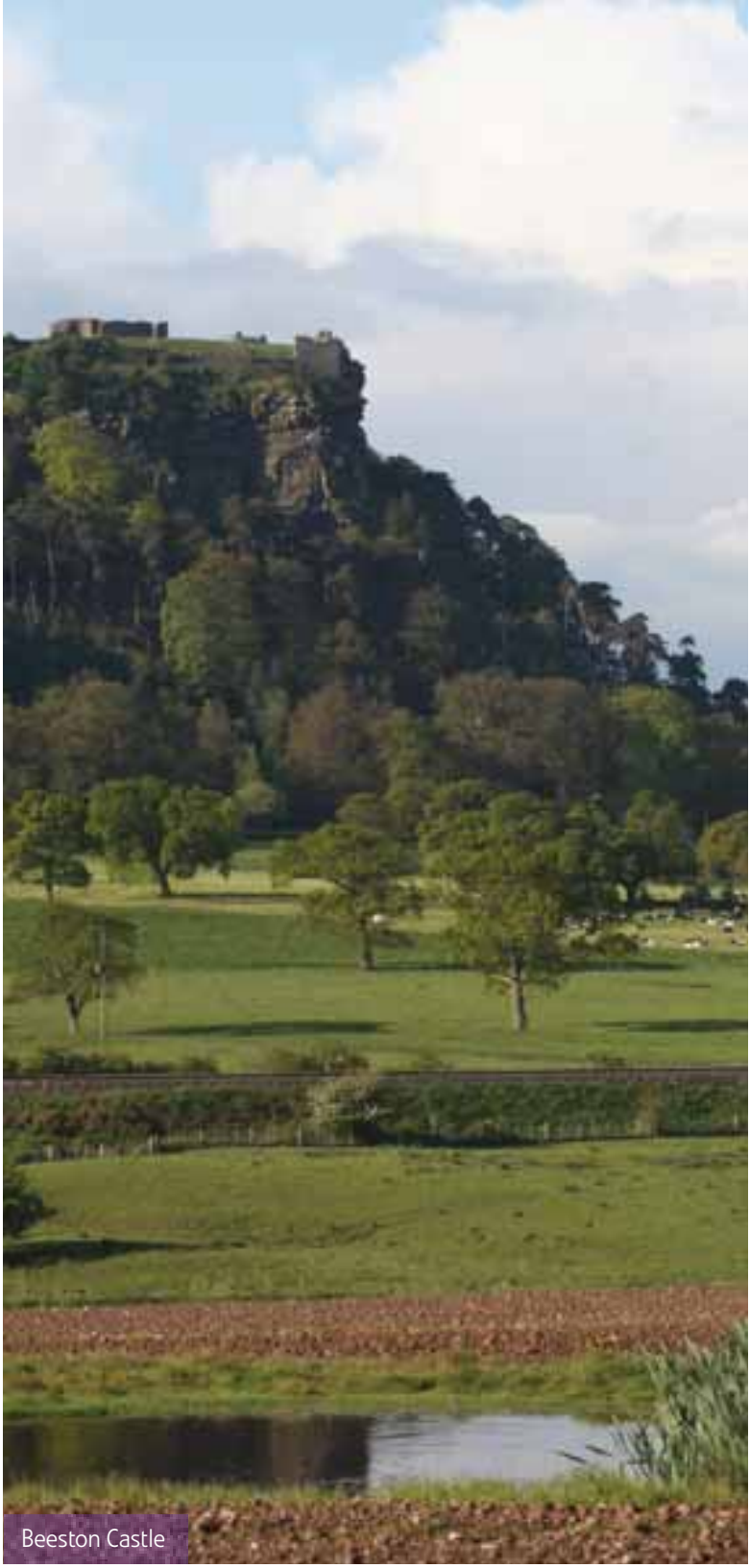
20 Turn left onto the road and take the footpath just past the cottage. Follow this through three fields via a small bridge to Horsley Lane.

21 Turn right then left up the woodland track. After a major track crossroads take the steps on the left. Climb through woodland and cross two fields to Rock Lane.

22 Bear left, then left again into Hill Lane. Go through a kissing gate on the right and follow the path to the lane. Turn left, then right along the track. Go up a flight of stone steps on the left and carry on through the woodland around Bulkeley Hill and down to a kissing gate. Cross the field diagonally right to the top of Coppermine Lane.

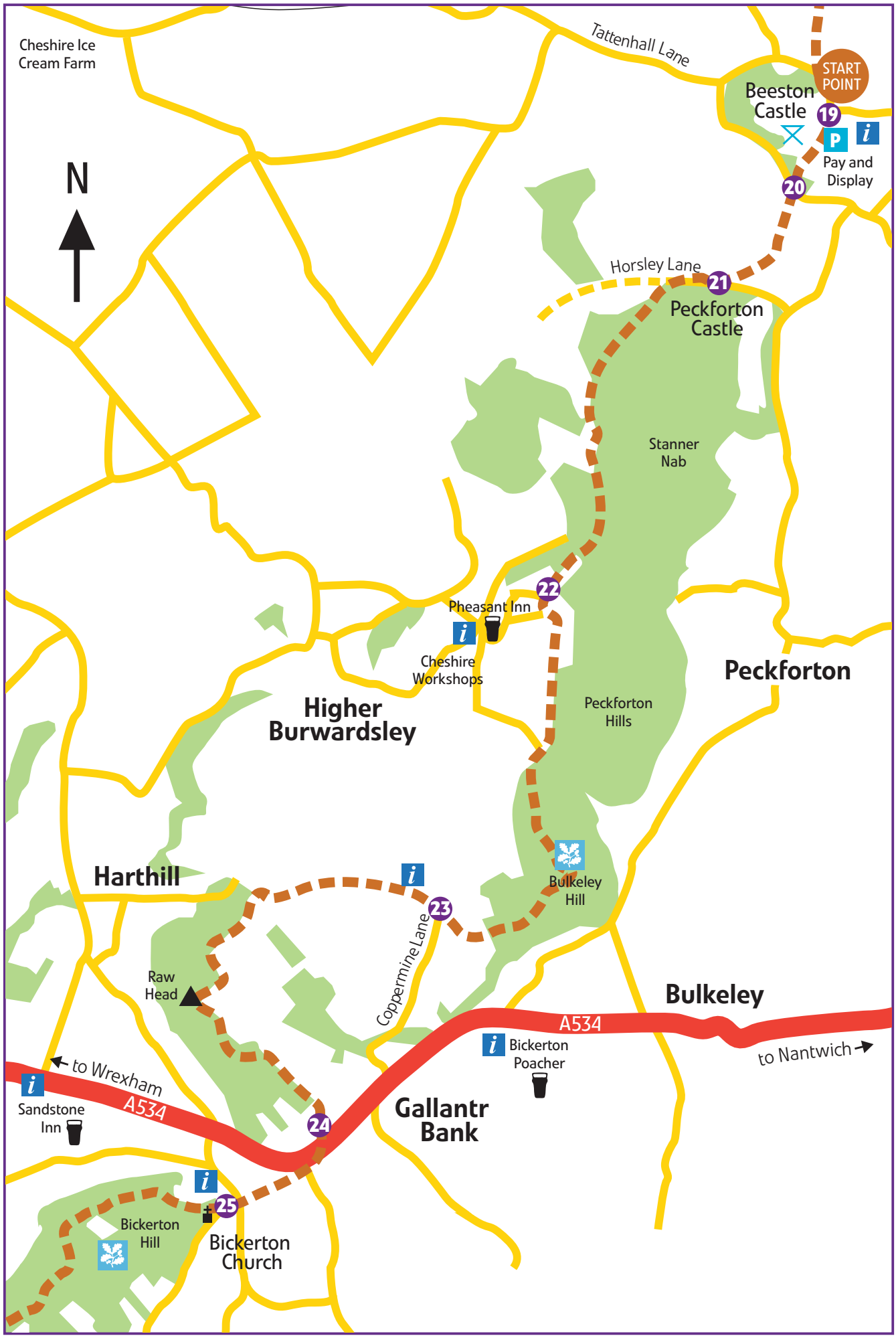
23 Cross the lane and take the track opposite. Pass the cottage and the end of the farm drive continue downhill and then bear left through a wooden kissing gate. Follow the path around the hill, past Rawhead, the highest point of the Sandstone Trail at 227m. Go through the kissing gate, past the keeper's cottage at Chiflik Farm and follow the stony track down to Wrexham Road (A534).

24 Cross the A534 with care and go down the lane opposite. Go straight over the crossroads to Bickerton Church.



Beeston Castle

Rawhead


Cheshire Ice Cream Farm
Tattenhall Lane
START POINT
Beeston Castle
19
Pay and Display
20
Horsley Lane
21
Peckforton Castle
Stanner Nab
22
Pheasant Inn
Cheshire Workshops
Higher Burwardsley
Peckforton Hills
Peckforton
Harthill
Bulkeley Hill
23
Coppermine Lane
Raw Head
Bulkeley
A534
Bickerton Poacher
to Nantwich
to Wrexham
A534
Sandstone Inn
24
Gallantr Bank
25
Bickerton Hill
Bickerton Church
N
0
500
1.0
1.6 km
½ mile
1 mile

5. Bickerton Church to No Man's Heath

Distance: 5 1/2 miles Allow: 2-3 hours

Bickerton Hill has a quite distinctive character with light birch woodland and lots of bilberry. This is the last elevated section of the Trail and it is interesting to think that early settlers would have looked out from **Maiden Castle** over 2000 years ago.

Near Hampton Green

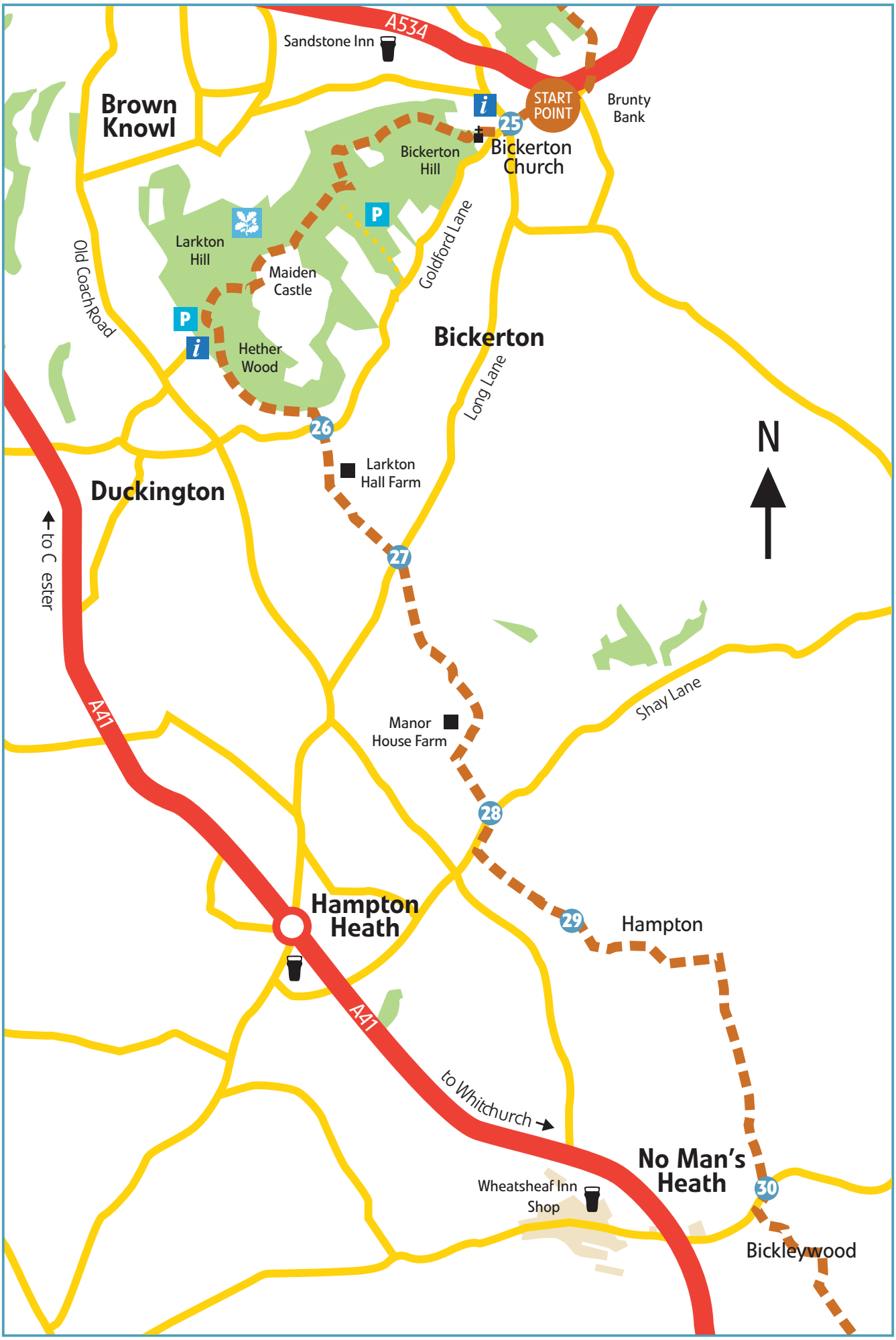
25 Go past the church and go up the track to the right onto Bickerton Hill. Follow the path up through the woods, past Kitty's Stone to Maiden Castle. Turn right down the steep path and carry on down a sunken path. Turn left and follow the path around Hether Wood. Go through the metal kissing gate on the right and cross the field to Goldford Lane.

26 Cross over and go down the track opposite. Skirt Larkton Hall then follow the farm drive to Long Lane.

27 Cross and go over the stile opposite. Keep the ponds on your left and follow the stiles and waymarks through the horse-gallops of Manor House Farm to Shay Lane.

28 Turn right along the lane to a stile on the left. Follow the edge of the fields, then head left over stiles to the lane at Hampton Green.

29 Continue up the track opposite, bear slightly left just before the wrought iron gates of Middle House, through another small gate then and round the side of a barn. Head down to a footbridge in the field corner. Go along the field edge, then continue straight across the field to a tractor bridge but don't cross it, briefly turn left along the brook to a small footbridge and then after crossing turn right to follow the opposite bank of the stream to two more footbridges. Turn right along the brook, cross two more bridges, then a stile and follow the hedge. Continue up the hill with the hedge on your right. At the top go diagonally right across the field to the road at Bickley Lane.


A534
Sandstone Inn
Brown Knowl
START POINT
Brunty Bank
25
Bickerton Church
Bickerton Hill
P
Larkton Hill
Maiden Castle
Old Coach Road
Goldford Lane
P
Hether Wood
Bickerton
Long Lane
26
Larkton Hall Farm
N
Duckington
to C ester
27
A41
Manor House Farm
Shay Lane
28
Hampton Heath
29
Hampton
A41
to Whitchurch
No Man's Heath
30
Wheatsheaf Inn
Shop
Bickleywood
0
500
1.0
1.6 km
½ mile
1 mile

The A534 or Walesmonsway was well used by salt traders. South of here the Trail passes **Bickerton Church** which was originally built as a chapel of ease for people who found it difficult to travel to the parish church at Malpas.

Bickerton Hill is a wonderful area of lowland heath managed by The National Trust. Look out for green hairstreak butterflies feeding on the bilberry in early summer.

Maiden Castle is another Iron Age fort, built on a tremendous vantage point. You can still see remains of the earth banks which protected the huts inside.

The Trail skirts **Hether Wood** before leaving the hills and heading out across the plain. The large overgrown ponds you pass south of Long Lane were originally dug for sand. Smaller ponds along the way tend to be pits dug for marl which was used as a fertiliser to sweeten the heavy soils.

Gorse in flower at Rawhead

Kitty's Stone, Bickerton Hill

The National Trust

The National Trust own and manage BickertonHill, one of the few remaining areas of lowland heath in Cheshire. The heather and bilberry are home to many threatened birds and animals such as the nightjar and the common lizard. Also look out for the green hairstreak butterfly which feeds on the bilberry. Without management the whole area would revert to woodland and so birch trees have been removed from some areas which are then grazed to create a mosaic of heath and woodland.

For further information about our work or details of volunteering please contact

The Property Manager,
Cheshire Countryside
The National Trust
Cheshire Countryside Office
Macclesfield Road, Nether Alderley
Macclesfield SK10 4UB

t: 01625 584412
e: cheshirecountry@nationaltrust.org.uk

THE NATIONAL TRUST

6. No Man's Heath to Whitchurch

Distance: 5 1/2 miles Allow: 2-3 hours

The final section of the Trail meanders through the fields past Old St Chad's Chapel before joining the Shropshire Union Canal at Willeymoor Lock. Call into the Heritage Centre in Whitchurch to find out all about the town's fascinating past.

Just south of **Bickley Hall** is a group of trees known as **Barhill Fall**. In 1687 a small rise collapsed with a 'huge noise' and a yawning pit opened and filled with water. The culprit is believed to be a layer of salt which had gradually dissolved, causing the land above to crumble. Close by is **Bickley Field** where two bronze tablets conferring citizenship on Roman soldiers were found in 1812.

Wonderful yews and Cedar of Lebanon trees surround **Old St Chad's**, built in 1689. Several services are held here during the summer including Rogation Sunday, Ascension Day & Rush Bearing Day.

Pearl Farm is one of the last chances on the trail to see a half timbered house, dating from 1607. The brick infilling would probably have replaced traditional wattle and daub.

The Trail joins the **Shropshire Union Canal** at **Willeymoor Lock** and heads west towards Ellesmere & Llangollen. This section of the canal is excellent for wildflowers. Look out for water figwort and the delicately fragranced meadowsweet alongside the towpath. Large hawker dragonflies patrol sections of canal, keeping aerial intruders at bay.

Grindley Brook is the meeting point of several trails. **The Maelor Way** heads west, the South Cheshire Way east, and the Shropshire Way south. From here it is just a short trek into Whitchurch and the end of the Sandstone Trail.

Old St Chad's Chapel, Tushingham

Llangollen Canal near Willeymoor Lock

Willeymoor Lock Inn

Whitchurch

30 Turn right, then left down the next lane. Go through the kissing gate on the left and cross four large fields, then join the drive and go straight through Barhill Farm. Turn left over a stile in front of the farmhouse and go through the fields to Old St Chad's Chapel.

31 Continue through a kissing gate to the right of the chapel and go through the fields past Pearl Farm to Willeymoor Lane.

32 Turn right onto the lane and then turn left through a kissing gate into the field. Follow three field edges, cross a track and then three more fields to Willeymoor Lock pub.

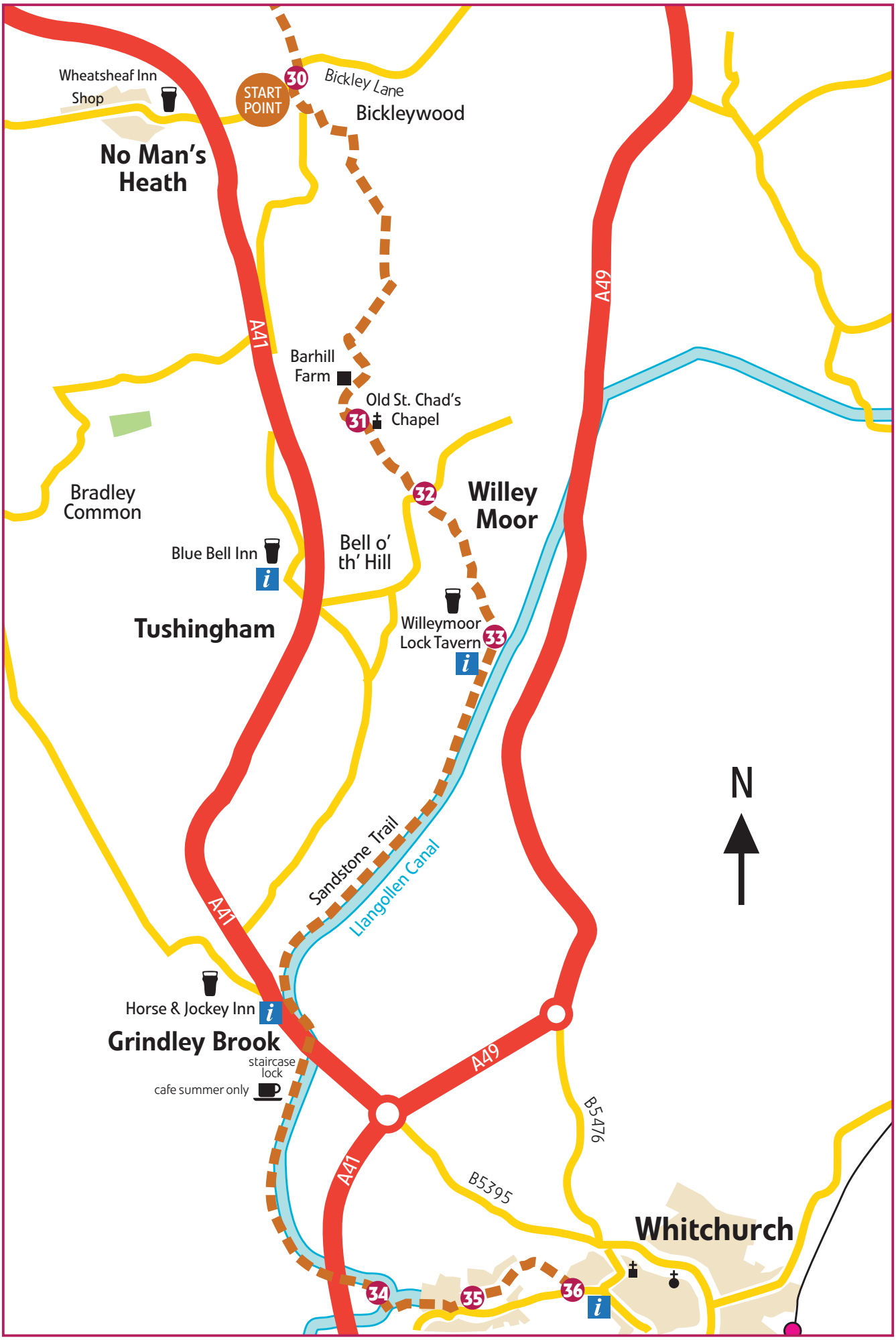
33 Turn right onto the Llangollen Canal towpath. Carry on for almost 3 miles/5km along the towpath past Grindley Brook and Danson's Bridge to the canal junction where the Whitchurch arm leads off to the left.

34 Cross over the lift-bridge and continue beyond the end of the canal below two further bridges along the track which follows the valley bottom.

35 Cross over the road at Greenfield Rise and keep to the same small valley until you reach Jubilee Park car park at the bottom of Sherrymill Hill, with its sandstone arch and Trail information board - and the end of the Trail.

36 For the centre of Whitchurch, walk up Sherrymill Hill along the road to a mini roundabout, bear left here towards the church. At the T-junction turn right and you are at the top of the High Street.

Dog Roses


Wheatsheaf Inn
Shop
START POINT
30
Bickley Lane
Bickleywood
No Man's Heath
A41
A49
Barhill Farm
Old St. Chad's Chapel
31
32
Willey Moor
Bradley Common
Blue Bell Inn
Bell o' th' Hill
Tushingham
Willeymoor Lock Tavern
33
N
Sandstone Trail
Llangollen Canal
Horse & Jockey Inn
Grindley Brook
staircase lock
cafe summer only
A49
B5476
A41
B5395
Whitchurch
34
35
36
0
500
1.0
1.6 km
½ mile
1 mile

Walking the Sandstone Trail

The Trail can be enjoyed over 2 or 3 days or at a more leisurely pace in shorter sections. The table below shows the length of each section and a suggested time to allow but please remember this is a guide only and you may find you take more or less time.

We would strongly recommend you wear comfortable boots or walking shoes as some sections can be wet, muddy or slippery at any time of year. Because the Trail follows the sandstone ridge there are few facilities on the actual route and most pubs and shops are a short distance from the Trail. Please check opening times in advance and always take some food and plenty to drink with you. Don't forget your sunscreen, especially if you are walking north to south.

Following Waymarks

The Trail is well waymarked using distinctive yellow discs with an 'S' in the footprint. Waymarks indicate the way to go as you stand directly in front of them. Because the Trail is well walked the path is usually obvious but some of the linking rights of way may not be so clear on the ground. Look out for stiles in the hedges and lines in the grass where others have walked.

Information along the way

There are several sandstone marker posts at key points along the Trail to let you know how far you have walked!

There are also distinctive blue notice boards along the way which have local information and a copy of the latest Sandstone Trail newsletter. This will have details of guided walks or special events happening on the Trail and also details of any temporary diversions. This information is also available online at **www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

Out in the Country

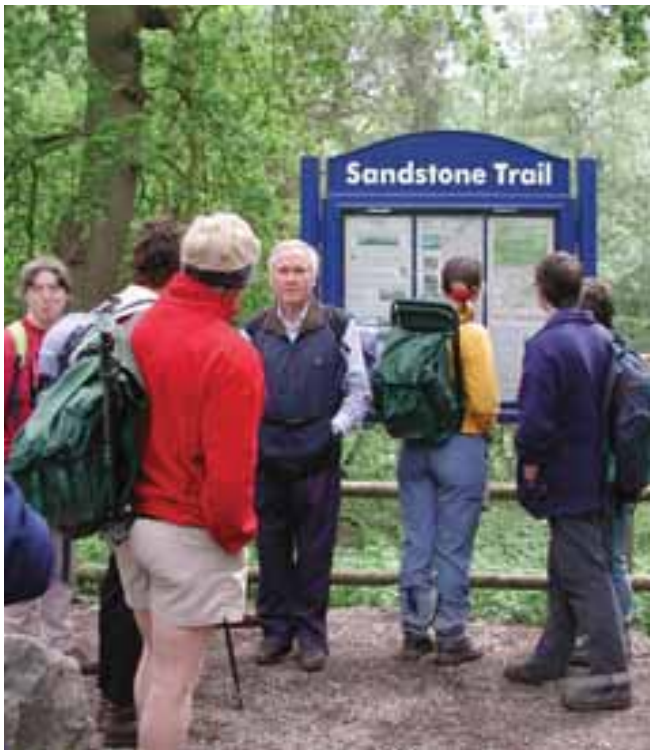
Please keep to paths across farmland and leave all gates as you find them.

Dogs should be kept under control so they are not a nuisance to other walkers, farm animals or wildlife.

	Start - End	Start OS Grid Reference	End OS Grid Reference	Distance kilometres	Distance miles	Average Time	Cumulative Height Ascended (Steepness)
Section 1	**Bear's Paw Inn**, Frodsham to **Barnsbridge Gates**, Delamere Forest	SJ 516 779	SJ 541 715	12km	7 1/2 miles	3-4 hours	372 m
Section 2	**Barnsbridge Gates**, Delamere Forest to **John Street***, Willington Hall	SJ 541 715	SJ 537 661	7km	4 miles	2 hours	169 m
Section 3	**John Street***, Willington Hall to **Beeston Castle** Entrance**	SJ 537 661	SJ 540 590	9km	5 1/2 miles	2-3 hours	114 m
Section 4	**Beeston Castle** Entrance** to **Bickerton Church***, A534	SJ 540 590	SJ 509 535	9km	5 1/2 miles	2-3 hours	300 m
Section 5	**Bickerton Church***, A534 to **Bickley**, near No Man's Heath	SJ 509 535	SJ 523 480	9km	5 1/2 miles	2-3 hours	188 m
Section 6	**Bickley**, near No Man's Heath to **Sherry Mill Hill car park**, Whitchurch	SJ 523 480	SJ 537 415	9km	5 1/2 miles	2-3 hours	91 m
			Totals	**55 k**	**34 miles**	**13 - 18 hours**	**1234 metres**

Notes: *Limited roadside parking. **Pay and Display parking. ***Very limited parking – Do not obstruct accesses

Larkton Hill



Access information

Surfaces along the Trail vary depending on the nature of the terrain but they may be rough, uneven or slippery. Some sections can be wet and muddy at any time of year. Parts of the Trail are quite hilly, particularly around Frodsham, the Peckforton Hills and Larkton Hill and over the whole length of the Trail you will have climbed a total of 1234 metres.

Stiles are gradually being replaced with kissing gates where possible to make access easier. A full access audit was undertaken in 2008 and details of this are available on line at **www.discovercheshire.co.uk** or at **www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

Maps

Although the Trail is well waymarked you are strongly advised to use the Ordnance Survey Explorer maps with this leaflet. The relevant maps are OS Explorer 267 Northwich and Delamere Forest and OS Explorer 257 Crewe & Nantwich.

Public Transport

There are good rail links to Frodsham, Delamere and Whitchurch as well as regular bus services to the major towns and villages.

For all passenger travel and timetable information please contact Cheshire Traveline on 0871 200 2233. Lines are open 8.00am to 8.00pm, every day except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day.

Accommodation

There is a range of accommodation within walking distance of the Trail.

www.discovercheshire.co.uk is ideal to help you plan your walk as you can see where establishments are in relation to the Trail.

A regularly updated list is available to download at **www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

Further reading

'Circular Walks along the Sandstone Trail' published by Mara Books and the new 'Walking Cheshire's Sandstone Trail' published by Northern Eye Books are both widely available in local bookshops.

Managing the Trail

The Trail is managed by Cheshire West and Chester Council. You should not experience any problems using the Trail but if you do, please let us know. We are always pleased to receive feedback on the route so if you have any comments or queries please contact us.

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Clough Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 4BD

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e: sandstonetrail@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Tourist Information Centres

Chester (Northgate Street)
Town Hall
Northgate Street
Chester CH1 2HJ
t: 01244 402111
e: welcome@visitchesterandcheshire.co.uk
www.visitcheshire.com

Frodsham
Frodsham Town Council
Castle Park, Frodsham via Warrington
Cheshire WA6 6SB
t: 01928 735150
e: council@frodsham.gov.uk

Whitchurch
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A favourite view from Rawhead

All photos © Cheshire West and Chester Council
www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk t: 0300 123 8123
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Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille and Large Print formats. If you would like a copy in any of these formats or in another language, please email us at **equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**
We are also able to provide a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to support customers with accessing Council services.

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