

A Winter Walk

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Distance 4 miles

Time 1½ hours

Directions

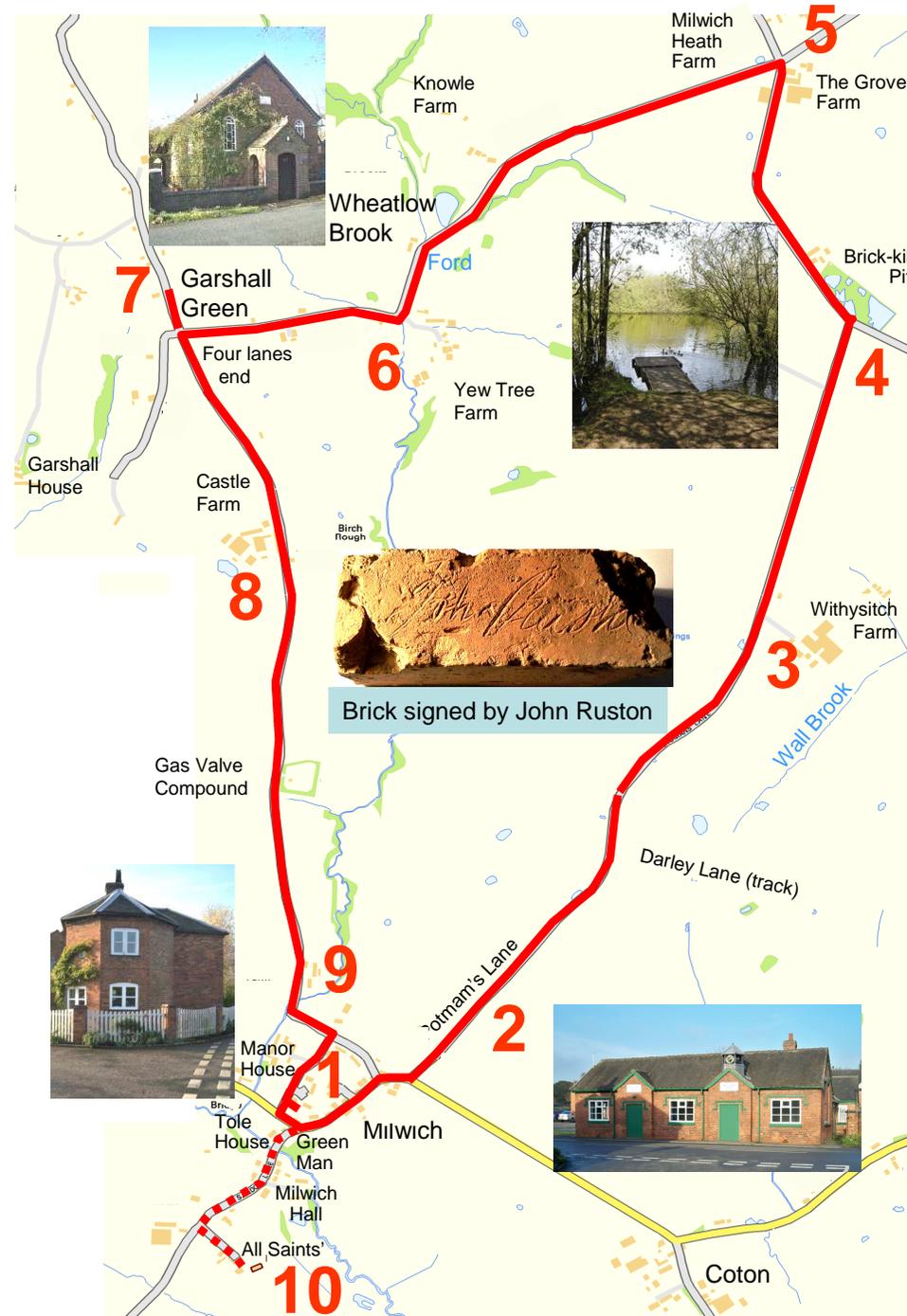
Map:OS Explorer 258

This walk follows the lanes of Milwich Parish. There are no footpaths or stiles on this route. It starts in the car park beside All Saints' Milwich Church Hall which was at one time the village school (1).

There are records of a schoolmaster in Milwich as early as the 16th century and reference made to a school building in 1785. This more recent school building was built in 1833 and children up to the age of 12 were taught here until 1929 when the schools of Milwich and Fradswell were merged to form Coton school; now Green Lea First School.

From the car park turn left to follow the main road, through Milwich towards Uttoxeter. On the far side of the road you see Toll Gate Cottage. This building dates from the late 18th century when the local roads were turnpiked. The keeper controlled the traffic on the main road from Uttoxeter to Stone and the side road to Sandon. In 1793 the toll charges were 4d for a horse and carriage, 1d for a horse and 10d for a score of cattle. No toll was charged for people going to church on Sunday.

Walking through the village you pass the Forge on your left where the local blacksmith had his workshop until 1948. The last horse shod by the blacksmith belonged to a Mrs Sargent who lived in Ivy House, the timber framed, thatched house seen on the right hand side of the road. This building dates from the early 18th century and was once used by William Sargent to hold Methodist Services before the Chapel was built at Garshall Green.



Follow the main road through the village until the road bends to the right. Just after the bend take the left-hand turn into Potmans Lane.

Follow the lane up hill for 250m and look for a farm gate on the left hand side of the road opposite a sunken lane which leads off in a south easterly direction (2). This abandoned lane is the remains of the old road from Coton to Milwich, known locally as Tittlebury Lane. The field to the left of the road, which is private property, shows traces of early, possibly medieval, dwellings. All that can be seen now is a dip in the land formed by a street between houses that runs parallel to Potmans Lane and ends at the line of Tittlebury Lane.

Half way along Potmans Lane, where the road levels off, you pass Withysitch Farm, set back on the right hand side of the road (3). In 1783 the son of the Vernon Family who owned the farm produce a map of the estate. This is the first known map of an area within the Parish of Milwich. The first complete map of land in the Parish was not drawn until 1833.

Continue along Potmans lane to the T-junction opposite the Brick Kiln Pits (4) then turn left towards Milwich Heath. When the roads were turnpiked there was a toll house on this corner, called Side Gate, to stop traffic bypassing the toll house on the main road through Milwich. The Brick Kiln Pits, part of which are now fishing pools, were dug to supply clay to a brick kiln sited further along this road in the field behind Grove Farm (5). Records of a brick kiln at Milwich Heath owned by the Rushton Family date back to the 18th century and occasionally signed bricks can be found in local buildings.

When the church in Milwich was rebuilt in 1792 it was directed that the “inside of the walls be built with good common bricks made at Milwich Common”.

At the crossroads, just past Grove Farm turn left towards Wheatlow Brooks. Follow the road downhill to the ford across Wheatlow Brook (6). The road from the ford bears first left and then sharp right, uphill. At the top of the hill you reach the crossroads at Garshall Green marked by a Victorian post box.

Garshall Green was originally known as Garshall, spelt Geringeshale in a document dated 1260, Green being added around the 18th century. This post box is well known for having been closed by the Post Office on two occasions until the young of birds nesting in the post box had fledged.

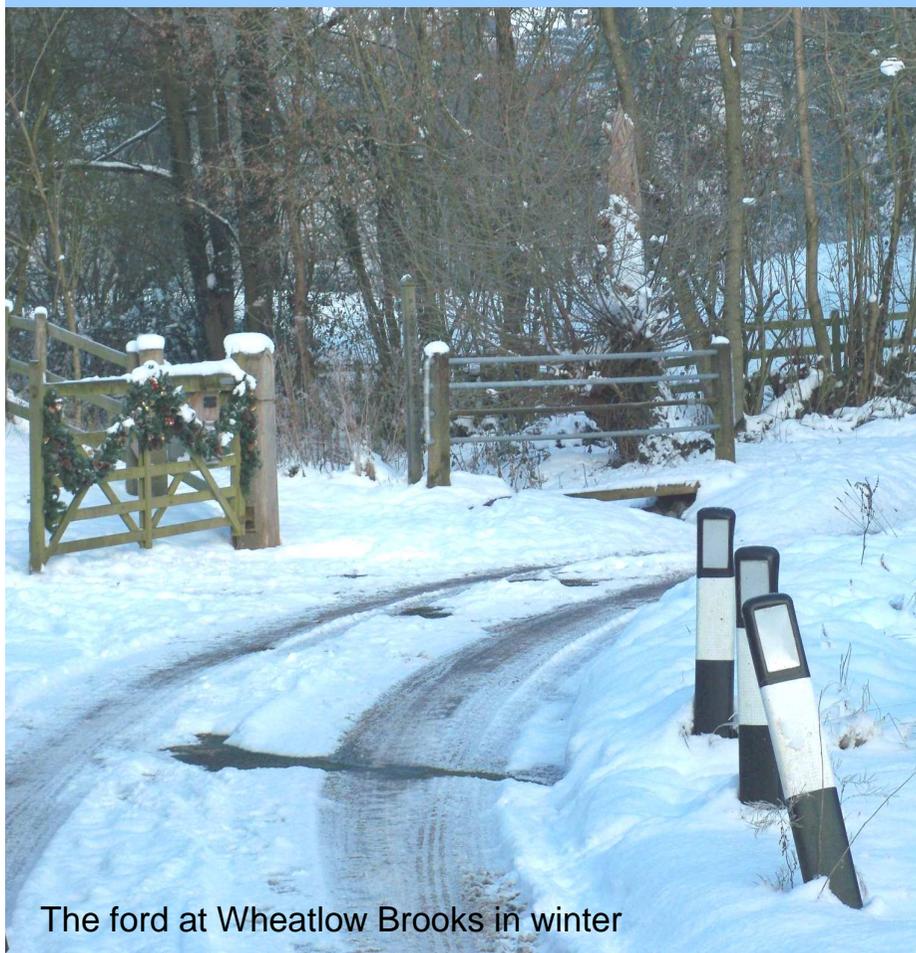
Turn right at the crossroads and follow the lane for about 100m to view the former Methodist Chapel (7). This Chapel was built in 1835 and held services until 1981, since when there has been a joint Anglican-Methodist congregation at All Saints' Church in Milwich.

Returning back to the crossroads follow the road towards Milwich. After some 300m the road passes Castle Farm (8). Behind the farm is the field known as Flint's croft. In the late 17th century William Hurlbutt bequeathed the income from this land, which amounted to 24s per year, to provide coats for the poor of Milwich.

From Castle Farm following the sunken road, locally called a drumble lane, downhill to Milwich. Entering the village the road passes Grimblebrook House (9) on the left hand side, parts of which date back to the 16th Century making this the oldest remaining domestic building in the Parish.

The old name for Wheatlow Brooks is Whitelov Brooks. There is a local rhyme that runs as follows:

***At Garshall Green the devil was seen
At Whitelov Brooks they washed his plooks
At Milwich Hall they ate him all***



The ford at Wheatlow Brooks in winter

Mrs “Doll” Eaton, who lived in Wheatlow Brooks, told the tale of the ghost of Wheatlow Brooks who would appear at dusk near Christmas time. She saw the ghost who wore a cloth cap and a khaki coloured smock about six times and wrote a poem about him.

See “A Meander through Milwich”, Benhill Press 2000

At the bottom of the hill the road bears left into Milwich. About 50m after the bend turn right into the Allways. The large house, set back on the right midway along the Allways, is the Manor. This was built in the late 17th century and may well have been home to John Crompton owner of a blast furnace in Lawton, Cheshire. In the early 18th century it was owned to the Earl of Macclesfield and is known today for hosting the annual Milwich Produce Guid Show in the field opposite the village hall.

If time permits it is a short walk from the car park to Milwich Parish Church. Cross the main road and follow the road past the Green Man Inn and up the hill for 250m before turning left into a side road signed All Saints' Church. After 100m go through the gate on the left-hand side into the churchyard (10).

Parts of All Saints' Church dates from the 12th century when in circa 1140 Nicholas of Milwich granted it to Stone Priory. The belfry contains the oldest dated bell in Staffordshire cast by John of Colsale in 1409. From the churchyard you can look down on the grounds of the large timber framed dwelling of Milwich Hall which was built around 1600.

Return back down the hill to the Green Man Free House and the village hall car park. There has been an inn here called the Green Man since 1815 when it was owned and run by John Fairbanks. Inside, beside the bar, a plaque lists the names of all 15 landlords and landladies including the current hosts Ruth and Rod Webb.