

## Eastern Loop (Blue Route)

About 6 miles (9.5 km)

Allow 2.5 hours

1. From the Loggerheads Pub turn right and walk up Eccleshall Rd. Pass the school entrance and turn left into Pinewood Drive. Turn right onto a path marked 'Newcastle Way', go straight across an unmade road and descend to a metalled road; Pinewood Rd. Turn left and walk towards Ashley looking out for a stile on the right about 30 metres before the crossroads ahead. Cross over the stile; pass between tall hedges and over another stile into Ashley Dale. Carry on walking down the Dale.

2. When you reach a house, cross a stile onto a metalled road. Just before the second house on the left is reached look out for the finger post 'Public Footpath to Hookgate' on the right and go through the gap in the bushes. Follow this track, keeping to the left at the top of the bank and in about 150 metres turn left into Back Lane.

Walk down the hill to a crossroads and turn right to enter Ashley Dale again. At the next road junction, fork left and then keep left up the steep hill. In about 300 metres note some metal railings to the left on a bend in the road - our way lies through a gap in the bushes on the right graced with a footpath sign. If you find yourself at the Catholic Church retrace your steps! The path leads through bushes and in 100 metres or so we cross a stile on the right into a field.

3. Turn half right and walk straight across the field to the right hand edge of the hedge which can be seen ahead. Go left down the side of the hedge and follow it to a stile in the field corner. Turn right into Sovereign Lane and in a few yards

look out for Norris Close on the right, we turn left opposite Norris Close, pass between hedges then over a stile into Charnes Rd. Cross Charnes Rd and proceed down the road opposite and turn left in about 50 metres into Gerrards Way.

4. In 40 metres go through a gate on the right by a footpath sign. Carry on crossing a stile into a field. Walk on, keeping the hedge to the right and in about 150 metres or so go over a stile and go left along the grass track towards an iron farm gate between the two wire fences. Go over the stile next to the iron gate, bear slightly left and immediately go over a second stile by another iron gate. Follow the track and cross two further stiles past the church to Ashley Village. The Parish Church of St John the Baptist on your left is well worth a visit if your time permits.



5. When you reach the road you will turn right and then shortly left into School Road but before you do, look over the hedge just before reaching the road. You will see on the OS map the word 'mound'. Some believe that this is a mass grave of plague victims at the time of the Great Plague, others that it is a mound associated with pre-

Christian worship as similar well investigated mounds are found alongside old parish churches. Walk up School Lane past what was the original Hugo Meynell School (now the Surgery) until you reach a crossroad. Turn left by the old Congregational Chapel into Chapel Lane (not signed).

6. After about 300 metres along Chapel Lane we arrive opposite the Peel Arms. Our route takes us first right into Wesleyan Road. Continue along Wesleyan Road for 300 metres until you can see the A53 in front of you. **At this point the route is also part of the Hungersheath Loop. Those who wish to have an extended walk have the opportunity to combine the two loops. The Hungersheath Loop crosses the A53 at the end of Wesleyan Road.**

To continue on the Eastern Loop we fork left onto an unmade gravel lane (with a white house on your left). Carry on to the top of this lane; note the fine views to the right, from the high point you are looking towards Beeston Castle and the Mid-Cheshire Ridge.

When you get to what appears like a junction of three tracks, go straight ahead. Follow the path as it curves left and joins another path, keep left here then continue down to reach the car park at the Memorial Hall.

7. TO COMPLETE THE EASTERN SECTION ONLY: leave the car park and turn right then almost immediately left into Pinewood Road (the route is now blue dots on the map). About half a km along Pinewood Road, turn half right into Tower Road and follow this as it winds through Ashley Heath. You will eventually pass part of our outward route. Soon you will meet the B5026 at which turn right and return down the hill to the Loggerheads Pub car park. WELL DONE