

The Grosvenor Arms and Aldford, Cheshire



Easy Terrain

2.5 miles
Circular
1 to 1.5
hours

170114



Access Notes



1. The walk is almost entirely flat and there are a few kissing gates/gates but no stiles.
2. The riverside path is uneven and can get muddy/overgrown so robust footwear and long trousers are recommended.

The Grosvenor Arms is a charming pub with well-spaced rooms and a great outside terrace leading into a small but very pleasing garden. From the outside it appears a rather austere Victorian governess of a building, but once inside its very welcoming.

A 2.5 mile (extendable along a riverside path) circular pub walk from the Grosvenor Arms in Aldford, Cheshire. The walking route explores the village of Aldford and follows a lovely peaceful stretch of the River Dee, visiting the impressive local iron bridge on route. Aldford is an immaculately kept 19th century model estate village with a church, village hall, post office and the remains of a Norman motte and bailey castle.

Getting there

Aldford lies in the south-west corner of Cheshire, about 5 miles south of Chester, close to the border with Wales. The walk starts and finishes from the Grosvenor Arms on Chester Road. The pub has its own large car park alongside. Approximate post code **CH3 6HJ**.

Walk Sections



Start to St John's Church



Come out of the pub car park to the main road and turn left passing in front of the pub. Keep ahead on the narrow pavement and over to the right you'll see the old wooden stocks set into the wall. These are one of just a handful of items in the village that date back to the 17th century. The house on the left, with a view of the stocks, is aptly named Stocks View.

Take the first turning on the left, Church Lane, walking

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between red brick properties with a distinctive uniform design. On a fine summer's day, Aldford looks like a film set for a Miss Marple story. The houses and gardens are all in perfect order. The village's history that led to this unusual appearance is an interesting one, worth exploring in detail.

After the Norman Conquest, the Earls of Chester controlled this estate, and it was under them that the village began to take the shape we see today. In the 1200s a market and fair was granted to Aldford to stimulate further economic growth. The manor of Aldford passed through a number of hands in the early post-medieval period, until it was sold in the early 18th century to Sir Richard Grosvenor of Eaton. It remained in the hands of the Grosvenor family, who later became the Earls and then the Dukes of Westminster.

The modern appearance of the village is a consequence of it being completely rebuilt, along with the church, in the middle of the 19th century by Richard Grosvenor, the 2nd Marquess of Westminster. The architect was John Douglas, a prolific Victorian designer who strongly divides opinion. Some people rave about his work and there are several societies and individuals devoted to preserving the buildings he designed, whilst others consider him to have been an architectural vandal, destroying many of the fine medieval buildings in and around Chester in the name of progress. Whatever your opinion, he has certainly created a unique feel to this village.

You will pass the village hall on the right and afterwards you will come to St John's Church also on the right.

1 → 2 St John's Church to Iron Bridge



The parish church of St John the Baptist, which was described as ruinous in 1818, was rebuilt by John Douglas for the Eaton Estate in 1866 in Gothic style. It has a spire with wooden shingles, added ten years after this date.

Immediately after the church turn right down the small lane and then, where the lane bends left, keep straight ahead through the white gate into a field.

There has been a settlement at Aldford since at least the 11th century, and all that survives of this time are the remains of the motte and bailey castle here. Its date of construction is uncertain, but the most plausible suggestion is that it was one of a chain of castles built soon after the Norman Conquest, to protect Chester from the Welsh. The field you are now in formed the bailey of the castle, which would once have contained most of the buildings essential to its daily life; kitchens, storerooms, stables, and accommodation.

Keep straight ahead on the obvious grass track through the field. After passing through the gap in the first boundary, follow the track as it swings left to follow the left-hand edge of this second field. Continue through a gap in the fence and then keep straight ahead through the centre of the third field. At about 11 o'clock you'll see the pinnacle of the clock tower which adorns the chapel in the Eaton Hall estate, the country house of the Duke of Westminster.

Pass through the gate in the far right-hand corner of this field, keep ahead for a short distance and then turn left along the tarmac access lane. You will come to the iron bridge over the

River Dee ahead. It is worth walking to the centre of the bridge to appreciate the views along the river.

2 → 3 Iron Bridge to Path Junction



The beautiful bridge is Grade I listed and forms a link between the village and the Eaton Hall estate. The bridge was designed by Thomas Telford and was completed in 1824. It is built in cast iron and has yellow sandstone abutments forming a single arch measuring 50 metres. On the far side is the private estate of His Grace the Duke of Westminster, one of the top-ten richest people in Britain according to the Sunday Times Rich List. The estate covers an area of about 10,000 acres and comprises formal gardens, parkland, farmland and woodland. The estate is not normally open to the public, but the gardens are open on a few days each year to raise money for charity.

(Should you wish to extend the walk, continue over to the far side of the bridge and then take the first turning on the right marked as a public footpath. Follow this riverside path for as far as you wish before returning back to the iron bridge to continue the walk.

NOTE SEPT 2013: This extension path is currently closed due to a landslip).

To continue the walk, return back along the iron bridge the way you came. Immediately afterwards turn sharp right onto the stone path which swings left into a section of trees. Here you'll have great views of the ornate sides of the iron bridge.

Follow this path with the River Dee running immediately to the right, pass through a kissing gate and continue on the more open section of riverside path. The river banks to the right are overgrown with Himalayan Balsam in the summer months. This plant has beautiful pink flowers and a lovely heady scent. However, its aggressive seed dispersal, coupled with high nectar production which attracts pollinators, often allows the balsam to outcompete native plants, making it an invasive weed.

After some distance you'll pass through a single metal gate. Keep ahead a little distance more and you'll come to a wooden post marking a junction of paths.

3 → 4 Path Junction to End

Turn left here onto the path into woodland which swings first left and then right. The path emerges out to a T-junction with a grass and stone track, turn left along this. At the end of the track, keep ahead through the wooden gate and continue to reach the T-junction with the village road.

Turn left for a few paces and then turn right down Rushmere Lane. Half way along, turn left again into Middle Lane. Follow this road where you'll have chance to see more of the estate cottages, some of which have bands of richly painted motifs.

You may notice that all the road signs and cottage plaques include the symbol of a dog. This is a Talbot, a white hunting dog that is now extinct and credited with being an ancestor of the modern day beagle. The pub was originally called the Talbot Arms, its name changing to the Grosvenor Arms sometime around



1890. Aldford saw little by way of development in the 20th century and the atmosphere of a quiet, estate village has been preserved. Indeed, its population actually declined between 1871 and 1971 from 497 to 274.

At the end of the road you will see the church ahead. Turn right back along Church Lane and then, directly opposite the village hall, turn right into the village car park. Pass through the gate at the end and follow the stone path as it swings left through the playing field. Follow the path as it swings right heading towards a thatched barn.

This community barn was built in 2013 using traditional building methods such as oak carpentry, thatching, and wattle and daub. The frame of the barn, which features curved beams, was sourced from six oak trees that were felled from the Eaton Estate.

Before you reach the barn, fork left across the grass through the back gate of the Grosvenor Arms for some well earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

