

The Old Harkers Arms and Chester City Trail, Chester, Cheshire



Easy Terrain

3 miles
Circular
2 hours

200114



Access Notes



1. The walk follows solid well-made paths and there are just a couple of inclines on route.
2. There are no gates or stiles to negotiate, just a few flights of steps.

The Old Harkers Arms is a proper old city of London boozier, only in Chester, that is set close to the commercial and professional heart of the city.

A 3 mile circular pub walk from the Old Harkers Arms in Chester, Cheshire. The walking route follows a trail exploring some of the highlights that the city offers – the canal towpath, the old city walls, the famous racecourse, the River Dee and several of Chester's beautiful parks.

Getting there

The walk starts and finishes from the Old Harkers Arms, on Russell Street (directly alongside the canal) in Chester. Approximate post code CH3 5AL. The pub does not have a car park, so if you are coming by car you'll need to park in one of the paid car parks in Chester. The nearest ones are Steam Mill Street car park (**CH3 5AN**) and Browns Yard car park on Bold Place, off York Street (**CH1 3LZ**).

Walk Sections



Start to Water Tower

To begin the walk, stand with your back to the pub (which at one time was a canal-boat chandlers run by a Mr Harker)



facing the Shropshire Union Canal and turn left along the towpath, with the canal on your right. You will pass under the City Road bridge after just a few paces and, as you approach the next bridge, keep to the right on the path alongside the canal which passes under it.

Pass under the wide road bridge which carries the dual-carriageway (Saint Oswald's Way) overhead. Alongside the canal you'll see many old red-brick buildings which, at one time, were timber yards, salt stores, corn mills and warehouses. Originally this was known as the Chester Canal, and was built in 1772 to connect Chester and

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Nantwich. It was amalgamated with the Ellesmere Canal in 1795 providing a link out to the Mersey.

The next bridge along (123E – carrying Frodsham Road overhead) is known as Cow Lane bridge – a term from when cattle were grazed outside the city walls in the day and then brought back inside the city at night for safety. After this bridge, the towpath continues with an area of woodland on the left.

(Note: Some of the retaining walls along this section are crumbling over time and the towpath can be closed from time to time due to landslips. If you come across a closure, make your way back to Frodsham Street. Head south along Frodsham Street and then turn right towards the cathedral where you can climb the steps to turn right and follow the top of the city walls. Follow the walls round to the Water Tower where you can pick up the instructions from the next section.)

Continue ahead alongside the canal and soon the path runs between the sheer rock faces of red sandstone, with the city walls running above this on the left. This section gives a real insight into the work that was needed to create this sandstone cutting for the canal to be constructed.

You will pass under the high arch bridge of Northgate overhead. Before you reach the next road bridge (with lock underneath), turn left up some steps and fork right continuing up the steps. Pass through the arch in the walls and swing right to climb the steps to reach the top of the walls. Turn left along the walls, pass by the alcove known as Pemberton's Parlour, go over the railway and at the corner you'll come to the Water Tower.

1 → 2 Water Tower to Grosvenor Road



The construction of Chester's city walls was started by the Romans when they established the fortress of Deva Victrix here between 70 and 80AD. They began with a rampart of earth and turf surmounted by a wooden palisade. From about 100AD the walls were reconstructed using sandstone, but were not completed until about 100 years later. The Water Tower was built between 1322 and 1325, at which time it stood in the River Dee. Its prime purpose was to defend the port of Chester, and it was also used to monitor the movements of shipping and to ensure that the custom dues were paid.

Bear left, still following the top of the walls, back across the railway. The paved path soon descends to become the pavement alongside Nun's Road. At the next fork keep right, following the walls over Watergate Street. Beyond this, the path continues at road level, passing Chester Racecourse on the right.

Horse racing in Chester dates back to the 16th century and Chester Racecourse is the oldest racecourse still in use in England. The racecourse site was once home to the famous and bloody Goteddsday football match. The game was very violent and, in 1533, banned by the city, to be replaced in 1539 by horse racing.

At the end of the road, you'll come to a junction with Grosvenor Road.

2 → 3 Grosvenor Road to Suspension Bridge



Cross over with care and then turn right across Grosvenor Bridge which leads over the River Dee. Grosvenor Bridge was opened in 1832, and at that time was the longest stone arch span in the world. Soon after the bridge, turn left through the metal gates to enter the cemetery.

Follow the path downhill as it swings right and then left. At the next fork, keep left to follow the path out through a gate onto River Lane. Turn left along the lane and at the end, keep right signed as the cycleway Gold Route to the city centre. Follow this tarmac path with the River Dee running to the left.

You will come to the bottom of a cobbled street. Cross over this and keep straight ahead into Edgar's Field Park. Keep to the left-hand of the two paths, closest to the river. Ahead you'll see the beautiful red-sandstone arched Old Dee Bridge. Follow the path as it swings right and then left out onto the road, Handbridge. Cross over and turn left towards the bridge but, immediately before it, turn right down some steps to continue on the riverside path.

Follow this paved section of path where you'll see the river's weir to your left, and then an old waterwheel alongside the path. Keep ahead through the next area of parkland and, immediately after it, you will see the Queen's Park Suspension Bridge overhead.

3 → 4 Suspension Bridge to End



Go right up the steps to join the bridge, which was opened in 1923, and cross it. At the far side, swing hard left and then keep right following the road back along the river. Continue until you reach the small roundabout and turn right into Souter's Lane. Follow the pavement uphill, crossing over to stay on the pavement halfway up. At the top of the hill, turn right and right again to join the arched walkway which leads you over the old Roman Amphitheatre.

Keep ahead past the parish church on your right, and follow the path as it swings right. Here you will pass the old East Ruins of

the original medieval St John's Church, reputedly founded by King Aethelred in 689AD. Turn left into Grosvenor Park.

(Note: the park is undergoing restoration from Jan 2013 to Summer 2014, so some paths may be closed. If this is the case, just use the available paths to make own your way to the gate at the far left corner, alongside the Lodge).

Within the park, keep left at the first circular junction and then right at the next two forks. At the major crossroads of paths keep left and left again and follow this path all the way to the gate out of the park alongside the old timber-framed Lodge. Ahead you'll see Union Street.

Keep ahead to join the right-hand pavement along the main road, and follow this as it bends right. Cross over a side road and then cross the main road using the pedestrian crossing. Take the next side road on the left, Russell Street, and follow this to the end where you'll find the Old Harkers 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.

