

Walk No. 6

A Circular Walk via Pettypool Woods, the Whitegate Way and Ravensclough

A longer walk combining elements of walks 4 and 5. Most of this walk is away from habitation, passing through woodland and by one (or two) large lakes, so providing good opportunities to observe both woodland and water birds.

6 1/4 miles. Say 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

Start at Kennel Lane, grid ref. SJ 601701. Parking is possible along Kennel Lane.

Start walking down Kennel Lane away from the A556, then go through the sign-posted farm gate on the left, which is on the right hand side of a large oak tree, about 1/3 mile from Chester Road. Do not get confused with the new paths which run around the edge of the recently completed sand quarry.

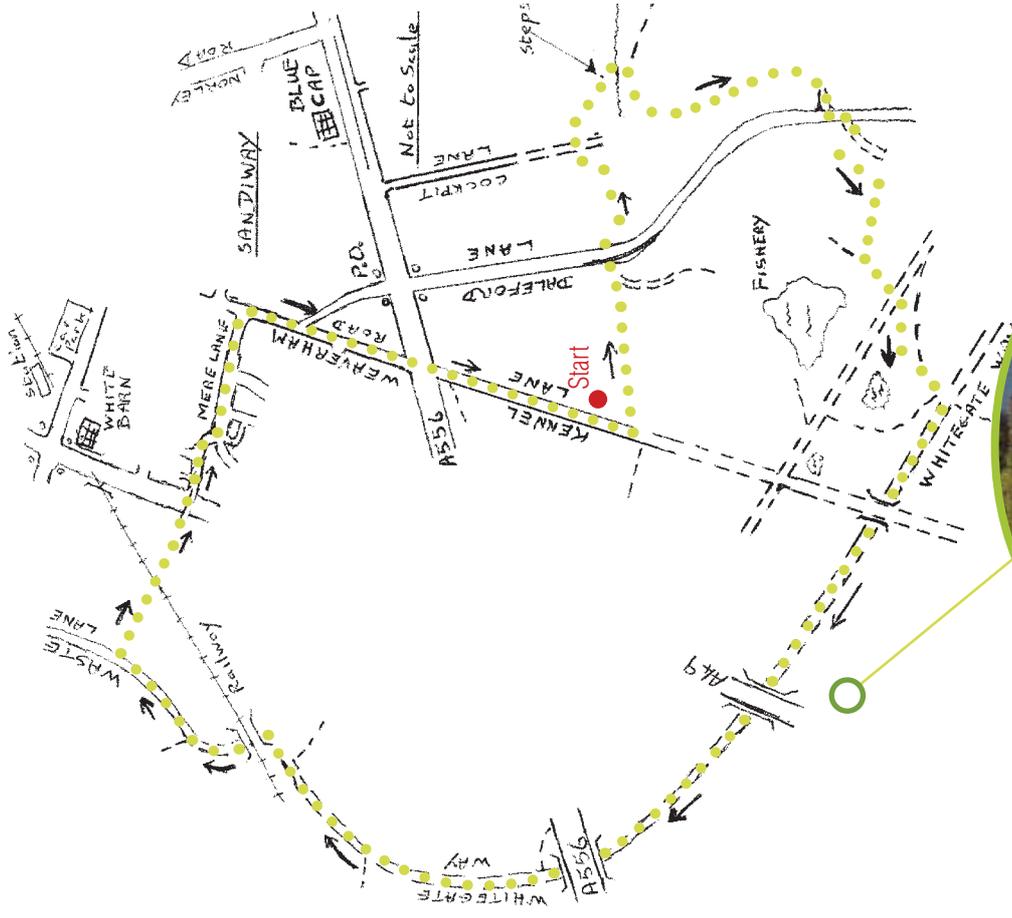
Woodland species of bird that may be seen here include nuthatch, greater spotted woodpecker, goldcrest, tree creeper, great tit, blue tit, coal tit and long-tailed tit.

Enjoy the woodland path, which soon slopes down gently at first, then steeper before flattening out again to follow a stream on the right. Bear right down wooden steps and then turn right at the signpost, over the stream and straight on up the wooded hill to meet a Forestry Commission track.

(A worthwhile diversion is possible here to see Pettypool, adding half a mile to the walk. Turn left down the track and soon the lake can be seen on the left. Retrace your steps back up the track to resume the walk.)

Turn right up the track and continue until you arrive at Dalefords Lane. Turn left along the lane, watching out for speeding traffic, and shortly turn right down a track signed "Lapwing Hall Farm" to find a stile on the right leading between a fence and a hedge to a stile into a field.

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Nunsmere Hall Hotel

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Turn left along the side of the house to a large field and then walk diagonally across the trees. Pass through the gate and turn left on to a path through the trees. The lake on your right, seen through the bushes, is the remains of the old sand quarry workings

The lake hosts numerous water fowl; in the summer the walk provides the excitement of seeing our summer warblers, swift, martins and swallows.

On leaving the trees go over a stile (avoiding the fisherman's car park on your right) and follow the path to a wide track. Go left here and shortly double back right on another track that leads to Whitegate Way at New Church Crossing with a further quarry lake on the right now used by anglers. Turn right on to the Whitegate Way and walk along either on the main path shared with bicycles and horses or on the prettier small footpath on the right-hand side.

The Whitegate Way is the track bed of the former Winsford & Over branch railway. The junction off the main Chester-Manchester line was controlled by a signal box at Ravensclough Waste.

Wherever possible use the pleasant footpaths on the embankments to either side of the main track of the old railway, which is better left to horses and bikes! Go under three bridges for Kennel Lane, the A49 and the A556, and so to Ravensclough where the path narrows and the Delamere Loop equestrian route continues ahead. Here there is a locked gate, marked private, with a footpath finger post beside it.

Ravensclough Waste/Waste Lane: This is the major area of waste land allotted to the control of the Lord of the Manor under the Cuddington Enclosure Act of 1769.

Keep ahead and slightly left at the finger post and shortly pass under the railway arch bridge with Ravensclough Manor on your right. Follow the main track (don't follow the Delamere Loop sign) and round to the right where it becomes Waste Lane. Continue along the lane until a signpost indicates a footpath to the right between a house called "Three Thornes" and a house called "Mara Green".

Mara Green is a reminder that Cuddington was once part of the great forest of Mara et Mondrum, the residue of which is now the Delamere Forest

Follow this footpath up a steep set of steps to cross the track of the Chester-Manchester railway, keeping a keen lookout for trains.

Chester-Manchester Railway: The line from Cuddington to Chester opened in 1869 and Cuddington Station opened to passengers in 1870.

After crossing the railway, follow the path between hedges, across a field and through a kissing gate to meet the main Forest Road (A49).

The big house to your left is iMap Centre, originally Beechfield, built by the Thompson salt family and later occupied for many years by the Locker family. It is now a specialist secondary school.

Cross carefully to enter Nixon Road opposite. At the end of the road, go ahead along a short footpath to Poplar Close and keep straight on to a T-junction where you turn left into Mere Lane, passing the Library on the left and shops on the right. Continue along Mere Lane to meet Weaverham Road where you turn right to reach the busy A556 Chester Road. Cross the main road carefully to enter Kennel Lane again and thus back to your starting point.

