

# More than just a village



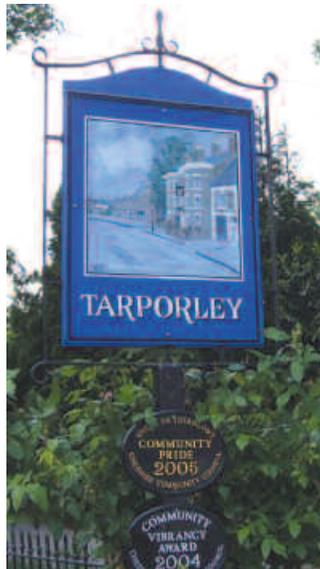
Keith Carter takes a stroll round Tarporley and a section of the Sandstone Trail

## INFORMATION

**Distance:** Four miles  
**Time to allow:** 2 1/2 hrs  
**Start and finish:** Tarporley High Street, behind British Legion  
**Map:** OS Explorer 267, Northwich and Delamere Forest.  
**Refreshments and Toilets:** In Tarporley village. Nearest Tourist Information Centre: Northwich, tel 01606 353534  
**Useful book:** Tarporley Then and Now, available in the village shops.  
**Disabled suitability:** Not suitable, mainly field path with stiles.



Route of the walk Ordnance Survey mapping © Crown copyright 2005



Top: Market court  
 Above: Old mile stone  
 Right: Tarporley Church



**1** Turn left out of the car park and walk on the pavement past the Foresters Arms to cross over Birch Heath Road, the turning to the right. Just beyond, look for a concealed footpath off the right hand footway immediately before number 22. Take this path laid with gravel and much used by local dog-walkers who haven't yet taken to using poop

bags, and follow it to where a stile gives access to a field. We pass Tarporley Fire Station on the right, the local Fire Brigade having the distinction of being the very first independent fire brigade in Britain. It is still manned by volunteers. Keeping on the same line, cross the field to a stile in the hedge opposite. Over this hedge we cross the fast A49 road to steps leading up to another stile with a signpost indicating Birch Heath and Tiverton. Keep ahead even if there are standing crops: the local farmers are well disposed towards walkers in this area, thankfully.

**2** Keep to the left of a fence corner and follow the right hand hedge to meet a stile and gate where a number of options present themselves. Our way is to the left over a stile into a field. Head south keeping the hedge on your right across this field. It was here that we watched a dog fox, oblivious to us as it followed some exciting scent across the open field, its nose to the ground. We remained frozen for several minutes until looking up it saw us and casually trotted off, disappearing into the hedgerow.

Where we meet the crossing hedge, cross a stile to the far right hand corner of the next field to a stile by an old ash tree. Cross this stile and enter an enclosed lane, Townfield Lane, an ancient footpath that emerges by some housing on the edge of Tiverton.

**P**ERCHED on a stool at the bar of the Swan Inn, my friend James asked the landlord whether Tarporley was a town or a village. His reply was uncompromising: definitely a village. The long main street reveals much more than the usual village trio of village green, pub and corner shop with smart frontages and designer shops in evidence suggesting plenty of opportunity for window shopping and browsing. There's also a good café with outdoor seating for watching the world go by and the general ambience is not unlike that of a small country town in northern France.

For our walk I wanted to include a section of the

Sandstone Trail, Cheshire's own long distance footpath. Actually the only sandstone you're likely to see is in the new housing built in brick and local sandstone to blend in with the area. The Trail is really no more than a series of linked footpaths mostly through fields and standing crops, though none the worse for that.

I suggest that you park in the small car park behind the British Legion on the High Street. Turn in opposite Tarporley Antiques up a narrow access road. There's no charge and the car will be quite safe there. Having laced up the boots: not your heavy mountain ones, fabric boots or trainers will be fine for today's walk, let's begin.



**3** Turn right on the road and cross to the left of it where a footway keeps you out of reach of the traffic. On the right round the bend, Tiverton Hall has been tastefully re-developed with the liberal use of Cheshire brick. There's a turning on the right, Pudding Lane, which we take, walking along it to a T-junction. If you look to the left as you make your way along this lane, Beeston Castle comes into view on its craggy outcrop, its dominance over the surrounding country clearly apparent. The Sandstone Trail joins us and we keep pace with it for the next half hour or so. At the T-junction, cross over to a new galvanised kissing gate and signpost and take the stile on your immediate left.



**4** Stay with the boundary on your right to a stile and plank

bridge and continue on the same line, due north, through a series of fields, some with crops in them. One field is obviously set-aside, full of thistles and docks, a haven for butterflies. Where the path meets a belt of woodland, keep left along its edge to where a footbridge crosses a stream. The path becomes enclosed and those of us ready for a rest will take advantage of the bench that has been erected along the path, a lovely shady spot inviting us to pause. Continue on this path as the Sandstone Trail leaves us to the left while we carry on emerging at a track. Turn left and within 100 yards we come to a fork. Take the right fork on a path that passes the garden of a cottage on our left.

**5** This path was heavily overgrown when I researched this walk in May 2007 but I hope somebody will decide to take

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a strimmer along it so those of us who wear shorts can avoid the stinging nettles. It leads directly to the A49 road which we have to cross, stiles confirming our expectations that this is indeed the route of the footpath. A sign here confusingly declares this to be a 'Restricted By-way' which is a new one on me! Cross the A49 and the lane that runs parallel with it and climb the stile in the hedgerow and then another to enter a field. Keep ahead to the left-hand top corner of this field to a stile and footbridge under a grand old oak. Our way bears left through a neglected field along a line of fine trees to enter an enclosed path.

**6** Follow this path to its end where it emerges at a development of some new vernacular housing with pillared porticos and we join the High Street. Turn right and walk along it admiring the nicely kept buildings that line it. The Swan Inn could be your next port of call once a staging post on the Chester to London route, an agreeable end to a delightful walk.

Continue down the High Street passing the oldest house in the village, the Manor House, built in 1585 for the Done family of Utkinson, once the Master Verderers of Delamere Forest. History is all around us. ■



Above:  
Sandstone Trail  
Top right: Swan  
Inn  
Right: Shops