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# Our Heritage

Places of Historical interest in and  
around Lower & Higher Walton

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Produced by Walton Parish Council in commemoration  
of Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

June 2022

## **Welcome to ‘Our Heritage’**

*This historical guide to places in and around Lower and Higher Walton, has been produced by Walton Parish Council to coincide with the commemoration of Her Majesty The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. We hope that residents and visitors will find this information about our community of interest. To view this publication in larger print, please visit the Walton Parish Council website ([www.waltonpc.org.uk](http://www.waltonpc.org.uk))*

Walton Parish Council, June 2022

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## Introduction

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This publication is a first attempt to draw together historical information about the civil parish of Walton and the surrounding area, based on several places with connections to the past. It is hoped that this marks the start of a collaborative venture within the community and anyone with further information about the locations mentioned, or any information about other locations, is welcome to get in touch by emailing the author.

Anyone passing through the parish of Walton could be forgiven for seeing the area just as an outer suburb of Warrington, for as the town has expanded to the south, areas of open space have disappeared, and once distinct and separated village communities have become connected with ribbons of urban development and A roads. A look at early maps shows a very different picture with several nucleated, rural communities, connected by narrow country lanes. Lower Walton, Higher Walton and Acton Grange were all small, rural villages, largely dependent on farming and local craft trades. The arrival of the Manchester Ship Canal had a major impact on the development of this area as houses were cleared and established route-ways changed. Improvements in roads and public transport, coupled with industrialisation led to the development of new housing areas, first comprising Victorian terraces and larger Victorian and Edwardian villas and later, areas of interwar housing. Expansion and redevelopment have continued with new houses being added.

## Landscape & settlement

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Any settlement owes its origins to the natural landscape and the resources that this provides. Walton is situated on elevated land to the south of the River Mersey. This would have provided early settlers with proximity to a river for transport and trade, while being safe from the risk of flooding. Fast flowing streams provided power for grinding corn and we know of three water mill sites within the parish. Early settlers would have used natural woodlands for building materials and fuel. Sandstone quarried locally would also have been used in construction. Melting ice sheets had left behind a landscape of undulating hills with rich, fertile soils, allowing the early settlers to grow a wide range of crops. The tithe maps of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century provide a window into the past and record details of the crops that were grown, and field names provide clues as to the wider uses that were made of the land. Through maps and historical records, we can piece together the story of our community. While the use of the land has evolved over the years, we are able to identify features in the landscape that help to connect us to our past.

## The earliest settlements

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Little is known about the earliest settlements in the Walton area as few artefacts of prehistoric origin have been found. We know that pre-historic settlers lived in the surrounding area as artefacts have been discovered in both Stockton Heath and Grappenhall. At Ackers Pit for example, a Bronze Age axe of Welsh origin was found in 1858 and three prehistoric stone hammers were found in the 1920s. In Grappenhall, a Bronze Age burial site was discovered in the 1930s comprising a burial cairn with a pottery urn containing the remains of one of the first people to live in the area. Excavations at Wilderspool and on Arpley Meadows have identified stone age flints and a bronze age burial mound was discovered off Greenalls Avenue, adjacent to the MSC. It seems likely that given the travel and trade associated with these early settlers that the area of Walton has prehistoric remains that are yet to be discovered.

We know that the Romans lived in the immediate vicinity of Walton as numerous artefacts have been discovered in association with the Roman settlement at Wilderspool. This was a significant site and many finds have been discovered around Wilderspool and parts of Stockton Heath. Evidence of ore smelting, iron refining, glass making, pottery kilns, enamelling, jewellery workshops, plus the foundations of dwellings and shops, all provide a picture of a flourishing Roman town. Studies conducted by Thomas May from 1897 onwards also revealed a possible Roman temple that included the discovery of part of an altar and a bronze head of the god Minerva. More recently, excavations at Stockton Heath Primary School in 2005 revealed further evidence of settlement, including the base of timber buildings, rubbish pits, a sandstone well, and cremation pots. Within Walton, apart from Roman coins, discovered in surrounding fields, no significant Roman finds have been identified, though tithe map field names may point to Roman activity. 'Cockfight fields' are situated adjacent to Runcorn Road and Underbridge Lane; given that the origin of cockfighting is Roman, there could be a yet unproven connection. Local resident Mr Priestner of Hollyhedge Lane recalls, as a child his father mentioning a Roman Road on land once belonging to Porch House Farm. This old track is marked on the tithe map as 'Shepherds Lane', it remains as a sunken hollow to one side of a field and does align with the section of the A56 beyond Hobb Lane that is marked on the early OS maps as a Roman road.

## What's in a name?

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There is some debate as to the origins of the name 'Walton'. In England there are more than sixty places named Walton, or that have Walton within their name. We know that there are three probable meanings. One is *'the town where the Britons live'*; the second is *'the town by the wall'* and the third is *'the town in the wood'*. Given that Walton grew next to the Roman station at Wilderspool, it is plausible that the name was established because it is where the Britons lived, and it was adjacent to the walled Roman Station. An alternative theory is the name Walton comes from settlement or farmstead of Wealas (Wales) as originally the border with Wales was much further east than it is now.

Over the years, Walton has evolved as two distinct settlements, 'Lower Walton' to the east and 'Higher Walton' to the west. In years gone by, these distinct communities have been variously named. Around the mid to late eighteenth century, they were known as 'Nether Walton' and 'Over Walton'. With the development of the Walton estate throughout the 1800s the communities became known as 'Walton Inferior' and 'Walton Superior'. Thankfully the days of superiority and inferiority have gone! The 'Lower' and 'Higher' distinction is mainly based on altitude as there is approximately a 10 to 15 metre difference in the height above sea level between the two areas.

Both the Higher and Lower Walton communities have an interesting history. Our earliest map records show the post medieval development of the villages. Lower Walton, for example, had its own corn mill and mill pond, on the site currently occupied by Furness Rigby car sales. The construction of the Manchester Ship Canal in the 1890s cut the old village of Lower Walton in half and many of the former thatched cottages were demolished. On the north side of the ship canal, in the area around Eastford Road, it is possible to see the remains of the cobbled lanes of the early village, as well as the path of the stream that once flowed into the River Mersey.

## The Parish of Walton

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The origin of the Civil Parish of Walton dates to 1885. Bagshaw's Directory of 1892 notes that at the time it consisted of the townships of Walton Superior and Walton Inferior. In 1936 the Parish boundary changed when Acton Grange to south of the Manchester Ship canal was added to Walton parish. Prior to this Acton Grange had been a separate township and the tithe maps show the previous boundary with Walton defined by the stream that runs through Grange Mill to the Mersey.

## Historical places

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Each location in this guide is referenced with a 'What 3 Words' address. This is an application that can be downloaded to a smart phone and used to pinpoint places by use of a random three-word address that is unique to a specific location. To give an example, the 'What 3 Words' address for the war memorial in Lower Walton is 'maker.spoken.quit.'. Maps that show the locations of the sites below can be found on the Walton Parish website ([www.waltonpc.org.uk](http://www.waltonpc.org.uk)) in the Maps & Galleries section.

### Location 1: Old Milestone, Ellesmere Road

**What 3 Words Location:** horns.palms.relax



It is likely that this mile post dates to the creation of the Turn Pike Roads in the late seventeenth century. Turn Pike Trusts were able to set tolls within the district for the repair and maintenance of roads. They were in existence from Warrington to Wigan in 1752 and from Chester to Wilderspool in 1767. The Tithe map dating back to the 1850s has 'Turn Pike Road' clearly marked and also shows the existence of a Toll House, located where the war memorial now stands, opposite the Stag Pub in Lower Walton. This mile post shows the distance to Chester (18 miles), Frodsham (8 miles) and Warrington (1.5 miles). The sign is cast in iron and is set on a more recent concrete post. The imperfections in the castings of the letters

and numbers are clear to see. Originally, the route ran directly to Wilderspool along a lane that was swept away with the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. Early photographs show sections of this road at the point where it crossed a bridge, called Tom Paine's bridge, over the earlier Old Quay Canal. Greenall's Avenue is a section of this old road. The 1873 OS Map shows the line of the road prior to the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal.

## Location 2: Pool Lane, Lower Walton, the location of the old mill

**What 3 Words Location:** insert.verse.spicy



The presence of a mill in Lower Walton has been dated to 1154 (Ref 13). This points to the village having early medieval origins. Early maps of Cheshire show the location of a mill in Lower Walton. Peter Burdett's Map of Cheshire, produced in 1777 shows the existence of a mill on the east side of the stream as it descended into the River Mersey, prior to the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. The Cheshire Tithe Maps, produced in the mid-nineteenth century, show the location of a 'Corn Mill and Mill Pool'. Nothing can be seen of the mill today, though there are a few clues to its past existence. The site of the mill pool is the land now occupied by the Furness Rigby car sales garage. The adjacent road is called 'Pool Lane' and the sandstone

wall that runs down Pool Lane is all that remains of the mill pond boundary. The mill building itself was located behind the metal building on the Furness Rigby site and this is now the location of the waste-water pumping station. Mark Olly in his book 'Celtic Warrington & other Mysteries', includes an old picture of the mill pool taken in 1900.

## Location 3: Lower Walton, evidence of the old village

**What 3 Words Location:** soup.escape.valley



The village of Lower Walton was a small, linear settlement with two lanes running north / south either side of a stream. The village is not mentioned in the Domesday records of 1086, however the earliest references to Lower Walton mill date back to 1154 suggesting that the village developed in medieval times. Early maps such as Burdett's Map of Cheshire (1777) show a settlement with a mill and several buildings. The 1850s tithe map shows some buildings with narrow, linear plots at right angles to the main streets, typical of the layout of medieval villages. There were at least two farms in the village. Baronet Farm was to the north and was a Georgian building that fell into disrepair and was demolished. New Baronet Farm is next to the site of the original farm and was

built in the late 1900s as part of the Walton Estate. To the south there is Pear Tree Farm which was originally called Walnut Tree Farm. This property is a Grade 2 listed building, noted for its Elizabethan frontage. This property shows signs of an earlier farmhouse with a timber framed structure with some wattle and daub panelling, erected on a sandstone block plinth. Parts of this property are likely to be the oldest surviving building in Walton, if not Warrington. It also has a well that is lined with masonry cut sandstone blocks. When the MSC was built, the old village was cut in half, buildings were demolished, leaving remaining sections of the old village to the north and south of the canal. Farm Lane and Pool Lane to the south once connected with Eastford Road and Westford Road to the north. Remnants of these old lanes can still be seen. Farm Lane, which is a private drive, is lined with cobbles in the mid-section and Westford Lane has a narrow, cobbled section as can be seen in this picture. Along one side of Eastford Lane is an area of grassland and trees that slopes down into a linear hollow. This is the line of the original stream channel which existed prior to the building of the MSC when the stream flowed directly into the Mersey. The field names on the Tithe map offer clues as to how the land was used. Morley Common to the northeast, now a playing field, would have been the common land in post medieval times and to the southeast, the wooded triangle opposite the Stag pub was named 'Goose Croft' suggesting it was also land for common grazing. What is now the Queen Elizabeth II field was named 'Turf Pits' suggesting that this area was dug for peat which was used as a fuel. The construction of the Ship Canal marked the end of this once distinct village community with its farms, mill & pond, slaughterhouse, and cottages. Today the village has developed away from its original nucleus and most of what is now termed Lower Walton is the area bounded by Walton and Ellesmere Roads which is mostly Victorian and inter-war housing.

#### Location 4: The Old Quay Canal

**What 3 Words Location:** sunk.driver.arch



The Old Quay Canal (also known as the Runcorn & Latchford Canal) predates the Manchester Ship Canal and connected the River Mersey at Howley, Warrington with the Mersey at Runcorn. This loop of canal waterway allowed boats to avoid waiting for the tide on the river. It opened in July 1804. Much of the Old Quay Canal was swept away with the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. A few, isolated sections remain, most notably near the blue bridge that crosses the bed of the course of the old River Mersey on Chester Road. There is a pleasant walk between this old section of canal and the River Mersey that gives a sense of what the canal landscape would have looked like before the arrival of the

much more imposing Ship Canal. Other sections of the Old Quay Canal can be seen at the back of Moore Nature Reserve, where it is mostly overgrown but with the embankment walls still visible in sections. The last section of the Old Quay Canal to be in use ran from Howley Quay on the Mersey to the swing bridge at Stockton Heath where it joined the ship canal via a lock. This section of canal, which became known as the Black Bear Canal, was in use up to the 1960s and has since been filled in to create a linear park.

#### Location 5: Walton Lock

**What 3 Words Location:** lush.shells.flood



The ruin of Walton Lock is located on the Trans Pennine path, mid-way between the points where the paths connect with Chester Road (A5060) and the A49 near Morrisons. The easiest access is from the Morrisons end by walking down Greenall's Avenue. Walton Lock was built to connect a branch of the River Mersey to the MSC. The river had been diverted as a new, straight cut alongside what is now Chester Road. The course of the original river followed the line of the linear park off Gainsborough Road and parallel to Wilderspool Causeway. The original plan had been to turn the old section of river into a dock for Warrington, but this was abandoned. The Directory for Warrington (1908) stated that "Warrington is greatly disappointed

*that the MSC Company have been unable to fulfil their obligation. The MSCC have, however, provided a wharf for local traders at the point where the Mersey joins the canal."* The old wharf still exists with its decaying landing stages and the old River Mersey section has now completely silted up leaving the old lock gates stranded in river silt.

#### Location 6: Old landing stage

**What 3 Words Location:** flood.divide.minute



This old landing stage, or what remains of it, is located not far from the old Walton Lock and is located between the lock and Chester Road. All that is left is a line of vertical posts embedded in mud and a few of the horizontal platform supports. The landing stage once stood on the north side of the section of the River Mersey that connected with the MSC via Walton Lock. Here boats were able to pull up and load / unload materials. The 1910 OS map shows the location of the landing stage and a network of single-track rail lines that were used for the transport of materials to and from the landing stage. It is hard to imagine that boats were able to dock here as the old section of the River Mersey has now completely silted up and trees and shrubs have become

established. The landing stage is now a decaying monument to Walton's transportation and industrial past.

### Location 7: Walton War Memorial

**What 3 Words location:** maker.spoken.quit.



There are approximately 100,000 war memorials across the UK. Many towns and villages have a memorial to those lost in conflict and they are located at the main point of entry into the town, village or parish. The war memorial in Lower Walton is clearly positioned on Chester Road on a bend in the main road, in direct line of sight for travellers heading into Walton from Warrington. The memorial is a two stepped base surmounted by a large plinth and a small, plain latin cross on the top. There are two plaques set one above the other. The upper plaque bears the names of 16 soldiers lost in WWI (1914-1918) and has the simple inscription 'In Proud Memory'. The lower plaque bears the names of 14 soldiers lost in WWII (1939-1945). The inscription reads: 'To the Glory of God. Went the day well? We died and never knew, but well or ill England, we died for you. Their names liveth for

evermore.' Every year in November, a service is held beside the memorial which is organised by Walton Parish Council.

### Location 8: Traveller's Rest, Lower Walton

**What 3 Words location:** pitch.handle.organs



In Lower Walton, at the junction of the the main Chester Road and Walton Road is a large block of sandstone with a single step on each side; this is a Traveller's Rest. The history of traveller's rests dates to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when travel was on horse or horse and cart. Traveller's rests allowed travellers to dismount while on their journey. Several of these traveller's rest stones in the local area were paid for by the Greenall family, the owners of Walton Hall. From the faded inscriptions on some of these stones, their provision can be attributed to Gilbert Greenall (1806-1894). Within the local area these are located on Chester Road, Grappenhall, opposite Barrymore Road; on Chester Road at the junction of Lumb

Brook Road and here in Lower Walton. A resident of Walton recalls that this stone was previously situated at the entrance to Mill Lane and was relocated to its present position in the early 1960s. The inscription on the stone has all but faded; we know from visible inscriptions at other locations that it reads 'Traveller's Rest', and beneath: 'Rest to the body is sweet, rest to the soul is sweeter'.

### Location 9: Old Mill, Acton Grange, Mill lane

**What 3 Words location:** cared.arrow.transit



A walk along Mill Lane gives an idea as to what the village landscape would have looked like over 150 years ago; a network of country lanes and isolated rural communities. Access along Mill Lane is either from Runcorn Road or the main Chester Road. Halfway along is what remains of Acton Grange, a small hamlet with three cottages, an old mill with outbuildings and what was Grange Green Farm which has been subdivided into private residences with access via a private cobbled driveway. This expanded development has been more recently named 'Grange Green Manor'. There is a signposted foot path that runs from the back of the former farm in a straight line across a field and comes out next to the old school on Runcorn Road. This footpath would have

provided convenient access both to the school and to the village of Higher Walton a short walk beyond. Of particular interest is Grange Mill which is the only surviving water mill in the locality, though it is no longer operational. The mill is marked on Burdett's 1777 map of Cheshire. The building is now a private residence and the mill pond that once existed adjacent to the mill is a field around which the stream now flows. The layout of the buildings appears largely unchanged and still fits the description stated on the 1850s tithe map: 'house, corn mill, out-buildings and yard'. The cobbled yard still exists and forms part of the lane. Next to one of the buildings are the remains of broken mill stones. The township of Acton Grange once extended to the river Mersey before the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. In the 1930s it became part of the parish of Walton.

## Location 10: Walton Lea Walled Garden

**What 3 Words Location:** lease.unity.belong



The walled garden at Walton Lea and the adjacent three cottages is all that remains of the large mansion built by local soap manufacturer, George Crosfield in 1864. In the early 1900s the Crosfield family had moved to London and the house had been sold on. By the mid 1920s the Geenalls, on whose estate the house stood, bought the house and after short period of leasing it, had it demolished. J Lee, author of 'The Crosfield's Mansion' mentions the rivalry between the two families: "*The Crosfield family, who were Liberals, Non-Conformists, and tee totallers, were the rivals of the Greenall family who were Conservatives, Anglicans, and brewers. As early as the 1890s the Greenalls had ideas concerning the removal of the Walton Lea mansion.*" The site where the

mansion stood is between the walled garden and the crematorium and is now complexly overgrown. The walled garden is an acre in size and was constructed to maximise warmth from the south facing sun. This enabled a wide range of kitchen garden produce to be grown including root vegetables, herbs, and fruits such as peaches and nectarines. The south facing wall was heated during the winter and the discovery of chimneys and flues within the wall confirms this. Early OS maps confirm the presence of greenhouses within the area of the walled garden. An interesting feature that was added to the exterior of the walled garden is a 'Fives Court', this has nothing to do with gardening and was a room for recreational activity involving a game whereby a ball is hit against a wall by several competing players. The court is on the side of the garden that faces the sports club. The walled garden is now part of the Walton Lea Partnership, which is a charity set up to support adults and young people with learning difficulties. The project includes horticultural activities making use of the walled garden. There is a small shop on the site that sells home grown produce along with woodwork and crafts and all proceeds from sales go towards the work of the charity.

## Location 11: Walton's former schools

**What 3 Words location:** quiet.royal.chemistry

**What 3 Words location:** flute.camper.enter

There are two buildings in Walton that used to function as schools, and both are now private homes. The oldest is situated within the grounds of Walton Hall and is the first building that is seen on entering across the bridge. The whole building is 'L' shaped and is now two separate houses. The section that faces the lawned garden and the driveway was the school master's house while the section to the rear was the school. The building dates to 1838. The Morris & Co Directory names a Mrs Susanna Phillips as the school's mistress around the 1850s. The second



former school building is located on Runcorn Road, just through the traffic lights on the right in the direction of Moore.

The school was built by Sir Gilbert Greenall in 1878 and is marked with a date stone. The new building was able to accommodate more of the estate workers' children than the previous school at Walton Hall. Kelly's Directory (1892) states that the school could accommodate 60 children and average attendance was 30 children. The school provided for infants and girls; boys attended schools in Daresbury and Stockton Heath. A Miss Fanny Shallcross was the school mistress in the 1890s. It is understood that the school closed in the 1910s which corresponds with the opening of a large primary school on West Avenue, Stockton Heath on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1910.

## Location 12: Walton Hall & Gardens

**What 3 Words location:** trip.camera.bonds



A detailed history Walton Hall & Gardens is beyond the scope of this brief guide and a visit to the Walton Hall website is recommended. Similarly, Jen Darling (1997) has produced a helpful booklet that provides an historical overview. Walton Hall is believed to have been built for Edward Greenall in the mid 1830s and later extended by his son, Sir Gilbert Greenall in the 1870s and his grandson, Lord Daresbury at the end of the century. The 1850s tithe map shows several buildings including a hall, stables, hot house, farm buildings and a house and school. The OS map of 1877 shows significant alterations with larger stables, greenhouses, and an extension to the hall. The hall was built in an Elizabethan style by Lancaster architect and builder, Edmund Sharpe who was

responsible for several gothic revival buildings, including mansions, schools, and churches. Electricity was added in the 1920s and was generated on site. The estate expanded in the late nineteenth century and by the death of Lord Daresbury in 1938 it had become a model farming estate. Lady Greenall was primarily responsible for developing the gardens and the planting of rare and exotic trees and plants. The gardens were managed by a team of 25 gardeners. While the gardens have changed over the years, much of the layout of the gardens and the plants that exist can be attributed to Lady Greenall. A good time to visit the gardens is in the spring and early summer when the daffodils and crocuses give way to the bright colours of the rhododendrons and azaleas. Following the death of Lord Greenall in October 1938, his son put the estate up for sale in 1941. Warrington Borough Council bought the hall and 171 acres of land around it for £19,000. The grounds opened to the public in 1945. Since then, much has changed, part of the hall had to be demolished and the greenhouses stood abandoned for many years and were left to decay. Thanks to a Heritage Lottery grant of £3.5 million in 2017 and the work of Friends of Walton Estate, the site has undergone a major transformation. Partnership projects involving Walton Lea Partnership and Myerscough College have added a wide range of educational and community-based projects for both adults and young people. Walton Hall and gardens offers a wide range of recreational activities for people of all ages.

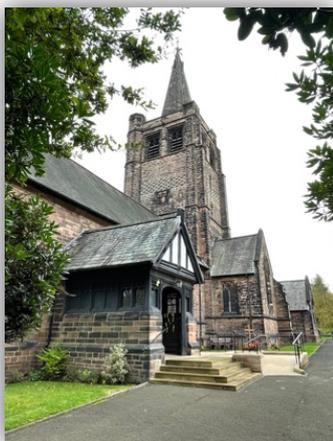
## Location 13: Higher Walton Village

**What 3 Words Location:** radar.tender.exam



The village of Higher Walton has undergone significant changes over the course of the last 150 years. Bagshaw's Directory of 1850 gives us one of the first written descriptions of the village: "A compact village, pleasantly situated on rising ground on the Runcorn and Warrington Road". The 1875 OS map shows the village had two pubs, the Bay Horse (on the site of the current Walton Arms) and the Bulls Head Inn which was further out of the village on land now occupied by the dual carriageway. There was a village smithy situated where the bus shelter now stands. The road through Higher Walton, now called Old Chester Road, was the main turnpike road from Warrington to Frodsham. Before the dual carriageway, this road joined with what is now Underbridge Lane and continued through to

Daresbury village. Higher Walton was greatly redeveloped by the Greenalls in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A terrace of four cottages, together with a post office were all part of a plan to create a model village for people who worked on the Walton estate. The plans that the Greenalls had for the village were like those of other English philanthropists, for example, Lever's Port Sunlight village on the Wirral and Cadbury's Bournville village in Birmingham. Sir Gilbert Greenall's intentions were halted by the out break of WW I. In addition to the terraced cottages, a group of cottages built from red Norfolk brick and millstone grit slabs for the roof, were built with open gardens to the rear on the south side of Old Chester Road and north side of Walton Lea Road. The compact, redeveloped village consisted of all these new estate houses, a post office, the Walton Arms pub, a wheelwright's workshop, a Parish Hall, and village church. Higher Walton village was designated as a conservation area in 1977 due to the unique period architecture.

**Location 14: St John's Church, Walton****What 3 Words location:** sudden.task.spare

The Church of St John the Evangelist is the Parish Church of Walton. Its construction was funded by Sir Gilbert Greenall at a cost of £17,500. It was consecrated in 1885. At today's prices that is equivalent to £2.5 million pounds. The church spire is 130 feet tall, and the church has been described as a mini cathedral. The interior consists of carved oak beams and panels. The church is set out in a typical cruciform plan with four large arches at the centre point, supporting the tower which is 24 feet square. The Nave is 78 feet long and the Chancel is 37 feet long and 20 feet wide. The church was designed in a Gothic style by Lancaster architects Paley and Austin who were responsible for the construction of several churches and public buildings in the Lancashire area. Within the graveyard there are two Commonwealth War Graves, one to a soldier of the Cheshire Regiment, who died in WWI in 1920, and the other, a soldier of the Royal Corps of Signals, who died in WWII in 1940. For a full account of the church history, a visit to the history section of the St John's Church, Walton website is recommended.

**Location 15: Smallpox Grave, St John's Church****What 3 Words location:** pure.light.strict

Smallpox was a killer virus until its eradication with the widespread use of vaccines. The last reported case globally is said to have been in 1997. During the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal between 1887 and 1894 some 15,000 labourers were employed. While the quality of housing varied, many lived in poor conditions in makeshift accommodation that was temporarily installed adjacent to sections of the canal, examples of these labourers' village were located at Acton Grange and Moore. These densely populated communities presented prime conditions for the spread of disease. A basic isolation hospital was constructed in Moore, sited near the bend on Moss Lane, adjacent to the canal. This was a wooden building with its own water supply.

Nothing of this building remains today. At least 35 people died during the 1892/93 smallpox epidemic. Many of these were buried in unmarked graves in St John's churchyard, Walton. In 1995 the community erected a memorial to those who lost their lives.

**Location 16: 'Lucy Box', Walton traffic lights****What 3 Words Location:** purple.prep.ranked

This ornate object is situated at the traffic lights in Higher Walton and goes by the name of a "Lucy Box" after one of several companies that made them. These boxes housed early electrical connections for power supply or telephone connections. This one is made from cast iron and is very ornate with a decorative finial on the top. It was manufactured by a company called Hardy & Padmore in Worcester, established in 1841. The company manufactured a range of cast iron street furniture including streetlights, connection boxes, tram cable supports and street name signs. Warrington's first electricity supply was produced by the 'Warrington and District Electric Light and Power Company Limited', registered in 1898. As the same style of Lucy Box was used elsewhere in Warrington for the electricity supply for the tram network, it is reasonable to assume that this one has been in place since the early 1900s when the first electricity supplies were installed. A box of the same design is situated on the north side of Warrington at the roundabout near the Rodney pub and Halliwell stadium.

### Location 17: Bridgewater canal



The Bridgewater Canal is one of the oldest in England. The canal runs west to east through the Walton parish between the adjacent parishes of Stockton Heath and Moore. It is named after the Duke of Bridgewater who built the canal for the purpose of transporting coal from his mines at Worsley. Work began in 1759 and the first section to Manchester opened in 1761. By 1766 it had been extended to Runcorn and then a final section opened in 1795 connecting Worsley to Leigh. The engineer responsible was James Brindley. The construction technique involved minimising the amount of earth removal and the need for lock construction by following a set height or contour. The result of this is a long and winding canal that is some 39 miles in length. While the intended purpose was for the transport

of coal, rock salt was also transported from Cheshire and other cargoes followed. The canal was also used for passenger transport. Wharfs were located at various points along the canal, the most significant locally being at Stockton Heath near the London Bridge. A small wharf existed in Walton near Walton Bridge, known as Mason's Wharf and this was used for the unloading of building materials used for the perimeter wall of the Walton estate. Barges were towed by horses through until the 19th century and the 'towpath' alongside the canal is the legacy of this mode of transport. Within Walton the canal is crossed by five bridges: Hough's Lane, Walton Lea, Walton Bridge, Thomason's Bridge and Acton Bridge at Hollyhedge Lane. There is also an aqueduct where the canal is carried over Underbridge Lane. Today the primary activity along the canal is for pleasure boats. All the canal bridges have Grade 2 listed status.

### Location 18: Acton Grange Bridge, evidence of horse drawn boats

**What 3 Words location:** splash.blub.gender



Acton Grange Bridge crosses the Bridgewater canal at Hollyhedge Lane which runs between Runcorn Road and the main A56. As with all the canal bridges it is Grade II listed for its unique, architectural value. The corners of the bridges on the towpath side used to have vertical recesses in which a block of wood was positioned. On many of the bridges these recesses are now open or have been infilled with brick work. This bridge is unique in that the timber infill is still in position although it is now in a heavily weathered state. The purpose of the wood was to protect the rope that was used to attach the horse to the canal boat from friction damage. The picture on the right is of

the corner section of Thomason's Bridge which is the next bridge along. On this bridge the wooden in-fill is missing, and the rope marks worn into the stone by the towing of canal boats are clearly visible. The number and depth of these marks are an indication of the volume of canal boat traffic in the past.

### Location 19: Possible plague stone

**What 3 Words location:** give.issues.forces



This intriguing object lies at the northern end of Hobb Lane and just outside Walton Parish, within the Parish of Moore. It is a large piece of granite that has a notable depression in the centre. The stone was dug up from a garden nearby and left here by the roadside. One theory is that the stone could be a plague stone. These were rocks that had a hole cut in them to hold vinegar for the purpose of disinfecting coins at the time of the Great



Plague. Warrington had a serious outbreak of Plague in 1647. An example of a Plague Stone that was located outside a house on Wash Lane, Latchford can be seen in Warrington Museum. No one knows for sure as to whether this is a plague stone, but it is similar in form to ones found elsewhere and the hole in the centre of the stone does appear to have been created by hand.



Strictly speaking, a group of boulders is beyond the scope of an historical guide as they pre-date historical records by many thousands of years, going way back to the final stages of the last ice age, 12,000 years ago. At that time, ice masses were moving south from Scotland and the Lake District and across the Irish Sea, transporting a mass of debris, including large, semi smoothed boulders as well as



fine clays. Large areas of Cheshire were covered by this 'boulder clay' material. These ice age boulders are common around Walton, they can be found along field boundaries and at the entrance to farms. Examples can be seen outside Hollyhedge Farm, Rowswood Farm, and here, near the club house at Walton Golf Course where several have been piled up, presumably at the time when the golf course was being created. One of these boulders is covered in deep scratches made by glaciers passing over it and wearing it down thousands of years ago. These boulders remind us of the natural forces that shaped our landscape creating the setting for the development of early settlements.

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- (All photos by D. Hazeldine, except Walton Lea Garden, courtesy of Walton Lea Project)

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