

Walk overview

This walk encompasses the attractive historic villages of Alderminster, Wimpstone and Preston-on-Stour and includes restored historic mileposts, delightful river scenery and evidence of an 1820s tramway.

Starting in Alderminster village the route follows the former Stratford – Long Compton turnpike road and runs parallel with the remains of the old Stratford – Moreton tramway until the re-instated milepost by the Shakespeare's Way footpath gate is reached. From here there's a steep footpath down to the river Stour – if its too steep for you there is a gentler sloping footpath which you can take about 30 metres back into the village. The path takes you over the river Stour footbridge and on to the village of Wimpstone.



Church of St Mary and Holy Cross, Alderminster.



Detail of Alderminster Cottages window by J Ross for James West 1860s.

There's an optional extension to Whitchurch Church before you reach the village (see map). Beyond which you meet Shakespeare's Way following it to Preston-on-Stour.

The suggested route takes you around the village but you may wish to spend more time exploring other routes within this attractive village.



Priest House, Preston on Stour.



Detail of 46, 47 and 48 Preston on Stour.

From Preston the route follows Preston Lane (be aware of the traffic) where you'll catch glimpses of Alscot Park House and possibly its deer. You might wish to stop at The Stalls to look around the shop and cafe for refreshments before reaching the Stratford Road junction to see the second reinstated milepost, which is grade II listed. Retrace your steps for a few metres before heading into cultivated land and woodland, crossing the River Stour again and onwards towards Alderminster Farm by Shakespeare's Way, returning to Alderminster village past the milepost you saw earlier. In all its approximately five miles.



Bridge over River Stour, Wimpstone.

History of Milestone Waymarkers

The Romans laid good roads across their Empire: they measured distance by marking every 1,000th double-step with a large cylindrical stone. 117 still survive in the UK. Post Roman roads developed to meet local needs and in the c16th parishes were made responsible for their upkeep.



At this time travel by road was slow and difficult. It took 16 days to cover 400 miles from London to Edinburgh. So Turnpike Trusts were set up by Acts of Parliament from 1706 to the 1840s often proposed by groups of local worthies who raised money to improve stretches of road and then charged the users tolls to pay for it.

From the 1840s rail travel overtook road for longer journeys and many turnpike trusts were wound up. In 1888 the new County Councils were given responsibility for main roads. As faster motorised transport developed the importance of milestones waned.

'Milestone' is a generic term including mileposts made of cast iron. Many have disappeared and around 9000 are thought to have survived in the UK. A lot were removed or defaced in World War II to baffle the potential invaders. Not all were replaced afterwards. Many have been destroyed by road widening or hedge and grass cutters. Nowadays roadside milestones generally fall within the remit of the local highway authority.

Restoring Warwickshire's Waymarkers Project

The main phase of the Project was completed in January 2023, when the surviving three, now restored, Alderminster Parish mileposts dating from 1901 were reinstated in the highways of the A422 and A3400.



Alderminster Parish mileposts dating from 1901.

The restoration and reinstatement work, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Alderminster Parish Council and The Milestone Society and supported by Warwickshire County Highways was carried out by Fisher Landscapes.

Two of the mileposts have been put back in their pre-restoration locations. The third has also been put back in its correct position by the entrance to Alderminster village. It has spent time in the Shipston-on-Stour Museum after being rescued from a skip by the late Mike Ashley, the museum's joint curator. Before he passed away Mike requested that The Milestone Society should use its best endeavours to restore the post and put it back in its rightful place. This has now been achieved and all the restored mileposts once again sit proudly in the highway adding to the historic wayside heritage for the benefit of the general public.

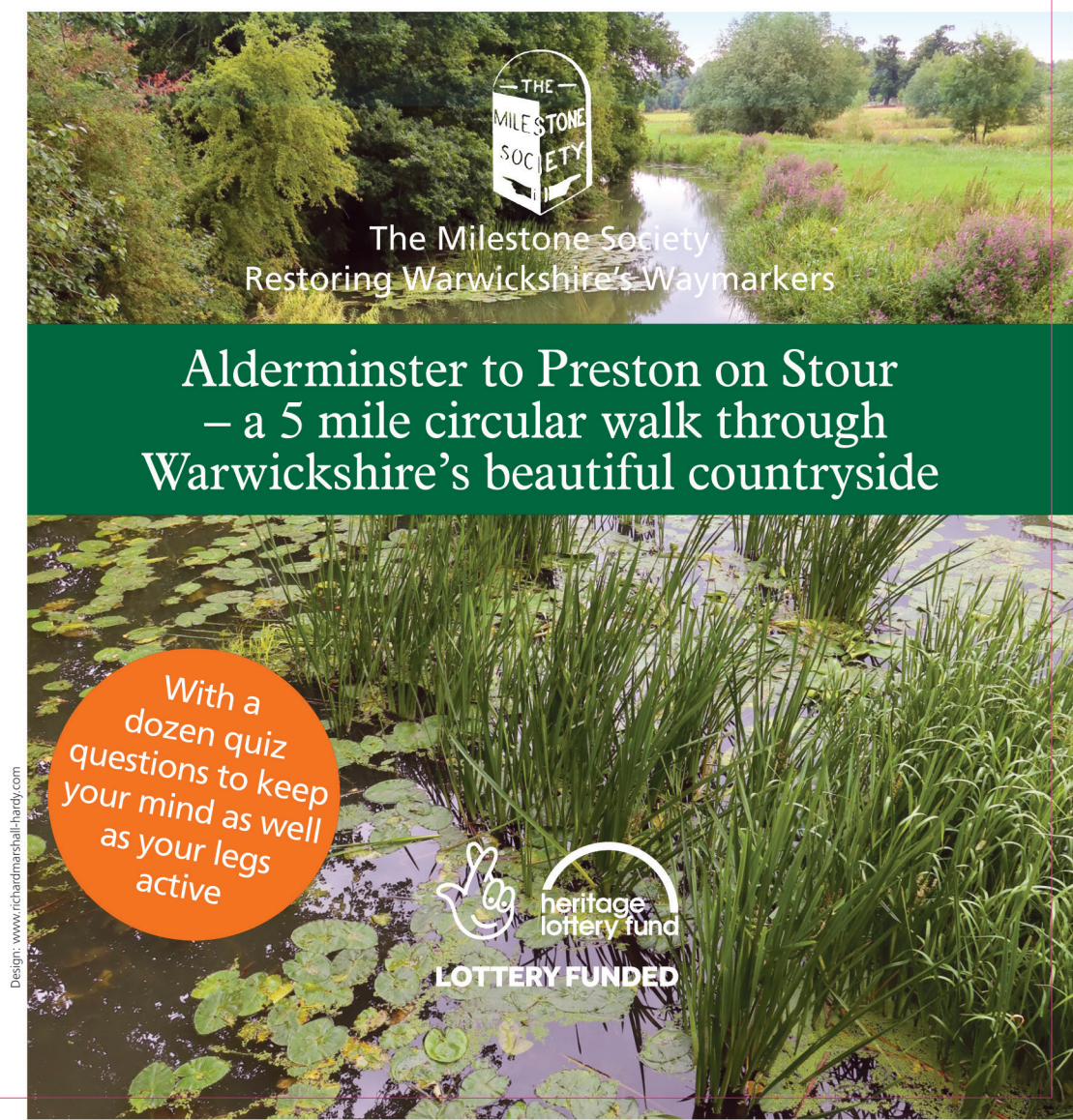


One of the Alderminster mileposts being reinstated.

Quiz answers are below

- 1** The Alderminster halt platform for the Stratford to Moreton horse drawn tramway, Warwickshire's first railway, authorised in 1821.
- 2a** After its rescue by a member of the Shipston History Society, at his request, its restoration and reinstatement was instigated and facilitated by volunteers from The Milestone Society. If you are interested in joining us visit www.milestonesociety.co.uk
- 2b** Stage coaches and other travellers on turnpike toll roads were charged at a rate per mile. Travellers needed unbiased verification of the number of miles they were paying for and stage coach drivers were helped in keeping to their exacting schedules by noting progress past milestones.
- 3** North, meeting the River Avon just to the west of Stratford upon Avon race course.
- 4** Its disappearance is probably due to the actions of Sir Edward Belknap

- who did much inclosing and depopulation here in the time of Henry VII (1485-1509).
- 5** circa 1630; formerly the village forge.
 - 6** The Globe Theatre; London.
 - 7** Because the West family of Alscot Park estate built the houses in both villages in the mid 19th century.
 - 8** Rococo Gothic.
 - 9** Stabling for Alscot Park.
 - 10** Five: the London mile (of 1593) 1760 yards; the customary mile 2428 yards; the Welsh mile 2508 yards; the Irish mile 2240 yards; the Scottish mile 1976 yards. The mile was standardised throughout the UK in 1824 when the London mile was adopted.
 - 11** Ultimately for fox hunting.
 - 12** The foundations of the current listed building legislation were first introduced in the Planning Acts of 1944 and 1947; the first listing surveys were the wartime lists known as 'Salvage Lists' created to determine whether a building should be protected from demolition if bomb damaged.



A dozen quiz questions to keep your mind as well as your legs active

8 In the distance to the north you can see Alscot Park House. It has Middle Age origins but its present form takes inspiration from what style of architecture?



9 'The Stalls' shop and cafe are associated with Alscot Park. What was the original function of these buildings?



10 Another Alderminster Parish milestone, one mile from the first you saw on the A3400, but how many different lengths of a mile have there been in the past in the UK?



1 It looks like an old raised platform opposite the Bell Inn. What was it for?



7 Preston-on-Stour has many houses which look similar to those in Alderminster. Why?



Village Shop and Cafe

Preston on Stour

11 Foxhill Bank is an old fox covert. Why were they created?



12 Alderminster Farm is a grade II statutory listed building. When and why was the listed building legislation created?



2a Who restored the mileposts?
2b Why were mileposts important?



The Bell Inn Food is served from the daily menu which can be found on its website. The Bell offers 8 bedrooms.

Wimpstone



6 You're on 'Shakespeare's Way'. He walked from Stratford-upon-Avon to a theatre called what? Where?



5 In Wimpstone there's a timber-framed cottage on a stone foundation. About how old do you think it is and what was its former use?



3 Crossing the River Stour. Where does it flow to and which river does it meet?

Medieval Village of Whitchurch (site of)

Alderminster



4 In the distance to the south east you may be able see Whitchurch Church. It's the only remaining structure of the medieval village. What happened to the village?

..... Option to visit Whitchurch Church. The round trip adds about one mile to the walk.



Information

You can review the walk before setting out via a short online video. Please either click on the QR code or visit <https://youtu.be/eAuomYC0oBQ>

Start: You may be able to park at The Bell Inn, Alderminster but check first before doing so – you might like sustenance here before setting off or on your return later. There are various other places to park along the route should you wish to start in different locations along the way.

Lunch: The Bell Inn, Alderminster, Preston on Stour village shop and cafe, or The Stalls Cafe, Alscot Park estate.

Getting there by car: From Stratford-upon-Avon follow the A3400 south to Alderminster; from Chipping Norton direction follow the A3400 north to Alderminster.

Getting there by bus: Stagecoach service 50 Stratford-upon-Avon to Chipping Norton.

For more information about historic mile markers in Warwickshire and the UK go to: www.warwickshirewayside.co.uk and www.milestonesociety.co.uk

Please honour The Countryside Code (www.naturalengland.org.uk) While every effort has been made to ensure that the details given in the Society's walks are accurate, no liability can be accepted by the Society for any inaccuracies or omissions.