

# Riverside Circular Trail

## R1 Car Park

This is a free car park (30 cars) with picnic area by the river. From Farndon village the turning is on the left, just before the traffic lights on the bridge. From Holt, cross the medieval bridge and turn right immediately after the far lights. Access is awkward and visibility restricted, especially on exit – take care.

Walk away from the bridge with the river on your right and take the boardwalk through the trees after reading **F2**.

## R2 Stay with the river

When the boardwalk bends away from the riverside, take the path to the right and continue along the river bank.

## R3 Cross into Holt

After two stiles you will arrive at the base of the bridge that carries the A534 road above the river. Climb the steps up the embankment, using the assist post to climb over the Armco barrier at the top. Turn right and cross the river, then descend the steps on the Holt side. At the bottom turn right to the river and then turn left through a kissing gate, picking up the Holt Village Trail point at **H9**.

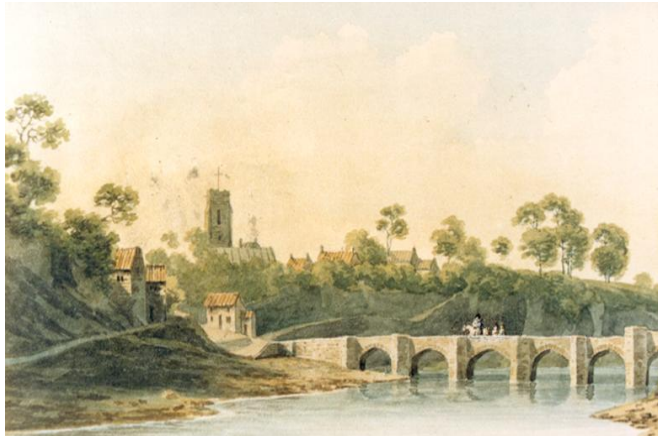
## R4 Pass the Castle

Follow the path towards the right of the castle where an information board will be found a few yards on (see **H10**). From this board, continue up the narrow hedged path, emerging alongside the Holt Endowed School on the left. (see **H11**)

## R5 Return to Car Park

Bear right and follow main road (Church Street) passing the Peal O' Bells and St Chad's Church (see nearby information board and **H2**) then continue down this street back to the medieval bridge and car park at **R1**.

*The River Dee has its source in Snowdonia, flowing out to sea beyond Chester and is said to be the most regulated river in Europe. It also has the most dramatic and intricate meandering patterns both north and south of this walk within its natural floodplain. The river is famous for fishing, particularly salmon then grayling, eel and trout with the odd otter taking its share. The bird population includes the elusive but striking kingfisher, sand martin, grey wagtail, mute swan, yellow wagtail, common sandpiper and grey heron, many of which may be seen during this stroll. The water plant life includes water crowfoot, starwort, milfoil and pondweeds. Fringing the banks are alder, willow, ash and oak trees. At the right time of year the rare club-tailed dragon fly has been seen, this being its most northerly site in Britain.*



# Farndon

Walking through the past

Guided trails in two  
Conservation Villages

# Holt

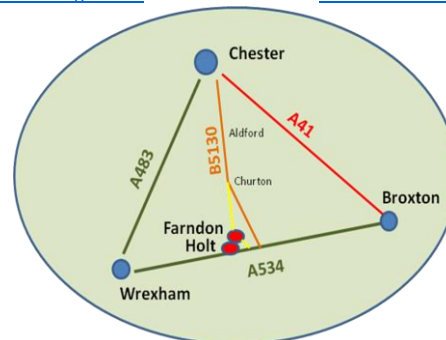
### Acknowledgements

Farndon Parish Council, Holt Town Trust, Holt Community Council, Wrexham Borough County Council, Farndon Local History Web Pages, Holt Local History Society, WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental) re Holt Steps.

Liability cannot be accepted for any accident or mishap which occurs to those using these guided trails. Much of the walking is on public rights of way over private land. Please keep to the path and use the Country Code.

[www.holtvillage.co.uk](http://www.holtvillage.co.uk)

[www.farndon.org.uk](http://www.farndon.org.uk)





# Holt

Follow the waymark posts



## H1 Car Park

This is the car park and start point for the Holt Village Trail. Turn left into Cross Street, then right opposite Manor Park (formerly the vicarage, now a home for the elderly) and head for St Chad's Church and the Peal O' Bells.

## H2 St. Chad's Church



The sandstone church dates from circa 1287, but was remodelled and enlarged in 1490 by Sir William Stanley. The octagonal font also dates from 1490 and has heraldic emblems representing previous Lords of Bromfield and Yale. In the grounds is a roman sandstone column, now a stand for a sundial. Musket ball holes, from the Civil War, can be seen around the south door of the church.



Retrace your steps to Church Street and turn right down Bridge Street passing the village green on your left (this was probably the site of the Sunday market in medieval times). Continue on and bear right just before the bridge (at the hairdresser's) to view the bridge from this car park and picnic area.

## H3 The Medieval Bridge

See map page for full detail

Continue past the information board, through the kissing gate under the dry arch of the bridge, and walk downstream with the river on your right.

## H4 First Riverside Walk

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century the river ran close to the raised banks on the left. The medieval quay was close to the bridge. The path now follows the river bank, which rarely floods. Summer chalets, built between the wars, can be seen on both banks. Fishing competitions take place throughout the year.

Continue along the river, and at the next kissing gate turn right, and continue along the track. After 70 yards turn sharp left and approach Wall Lock fields through a kissing gate. Continue through to another kissing gate (may be muddy), keeping close by the hedge on the left.

## H5 Roman Tile Works

The site of these works is on both sides of Chester Lane, in the Wall Lock and Hill fields. Little evidence remains today but the 20 acre site was extensively excavated before WW1, when, in addition, burial urns from a bronze age burial ground were found. Holt supplied the 20<sup>th</sup> Roman Legion fort at Chester with tiles, transported downstream by barge.



Continue through the next kissing gate and continue in the same direction – ahead on the left – entering Chester Lane. At the end of the lane turn left onto the main road (ie Frog Lane).

## H6 Strawberry Fields

After 40 yards turn right, at the kissing gate, to take the public footpath alongside a former strawberry field. Continue straight ahead along the path, which eventually bends to the right. Shortly afterwards turn left towards the "Dodgers" barracks.

The strawberry was introduced to Holt in 1860 and is still an important crop in the area. The pickers, known as Dodgers, lived in barracks that can be seen in the farmyard on the left. Note the information board.

Turn right at the waymark just before the modern barn on the right and keep ahead along the broad track until a junction is reached. Turn left here along the track to join the main Wrexham road, almost opposite the Pate Gateway.

## H7 The Pate Gateway

The Pate gateway is all that remains of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Pate family house, demolished during WW1.

Turn left along Wrexham road and continue to Dee Park, passing the Farm Shop with Garden Centre and cafe, on your left. Take the 2<sup>nd</sup> right, then immediately left past the telephone box and enter Dee Park housing development.



## H8 Dee Park

This pioneering housing development was built in 1950 and opened by Jenny Lee. It is on the site of the Holt Academy playing field which was the former Deer Park of the castle.

Retrace your steps to the entrance of Dee Park (Francis Lane) then turn left and immediately left again down Dee Lane. On your left "The Hollows" is the site of the former village gas works, which ceased operation in the late 1930's. At the bottom of the lane turn left at the riverside gate onto the Holt Village Trail and keep with the river, downstream on your right.

## H9 Second Riverside Walk

Two river terraces (former levels of the Dee) can be seen clearly as distinctive banks on the left. Your path joins the lower 5 foot terrace towards the Castle, (St Chad's lies on the higher terrace at 15 foot). The terraces are unique to this part of the Dee valley, as the river enters the former gorge at the sandstone cliffs.

Pass through the kissing gate to approach the Castle site.

## H10 The Castle

Holt Castle, built by Earl John de Warenne, dates from about 1282, with little remaining today. During the Civil War the Castle was an important fortress, besieged in 1646,



and the last but one Royalist stronghold to surrender to Parliamentary forces. Behind the Castle the red sandstone shows evidence of extensive quarrying. This has recently been designated a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS).

Continue past the castle and take the path up the hill to come out in the lane alongside Holt Endowed School.

## H11 Holt Endowed School

From 1874-1977 village children attended this school, which has now been converted to private dwellings.

Continuing to the end of the lane, the former Black Lion public house, now a private dwelling, can be seen on the right.



## H12 The former Black Lion

This was originally a public house and is the source of much intrigue and many ghostly stories.

Turn left and proceed to the Village Cross (↻ Tea Shop).

## H13 The Village Cross

The medieval Cross occupies what was a large open space in the centre of the village. The War Memorial is close by, as is the notice board, which provides much information about the village.



## H14 Interesting Buildings around the Cross

To the southeast is Kenyon Hall. This was opened in 1892 and stands partly on the site of the original Town Hall; Holt being a Borough from 1300 to 1886. To the west, the fashion shop was formerly a Smithy. Two other buildings of interest are the County Constabulary to the north and the White Lion to the southwest, the last remaining Lion pub from the original count of four – Red, Black, Golden and White.

Proceed along Castle Street to Academy House, 50 yards on the left.

## H15 Academy House

The Academy was founded in 1865 by Ebenezer Powell, who instigated the building of the Presbyterian Church opposite, designed by T.M. Lockwood. In the late 1850's the academy had over 80 students. H.G. Wells was a teacher there in 1887 and began his writing profession in Holt. On the opposite side of the road the present chinese takeaway was once Holt Hall and became the Girls' Academy.

Return to the village cross, proceed into Cross Street and the car park ahead on the left.

# Farndon

## F1 Car Park

*This is a free car park (30 cars) with picnic area by the river. From Farndon village the turning is on the left just before the traffic lights on the bridge. Access is awkward and visibility restricted, especially on exit – take care.*

*See map page for details of Medieval Bridge and car park notice board for the geology of this part of the River Dee.*

*The Farndon Village Trail starts by proceeding upstream with the river on your right and taking the boardwalk through the trees.*

## F2 Riverside Walk

From the medieval period until the 18<sup>th</sup> century this riverside area was used as the “shooting butts” where local men were expected to practice their archery skills should they be called up to the militia. During the last century leisure craft could be hired from the house built into the cliff which has also seen use as a cafe and restaurant.



*Continue walking along the length of the boardwalk, staying with it as it bends away from the river. At the end, turn left before the hedgerow, up towards the Farndon signpost. Turn left again at the sign and continue up the slope.*

## F3 The Hungry Hills

During the Civil War, men of Farndon who were fighting for the royalists, were imprisoned in St Chad’s Church, Holt, following the fall of both villages to Parliament. The women of Farndon evaded the Roundhead guards, crept down the slope where you are now, forded the river at this point and took food to their starving men folk. It has been known as the Hungry Hills ever since.

*Continue along the path keeping to the left of the houses. Fifty yards after passing the houses turn right at the T junction with the brick walled lane. (If you wish to return directly to the car park instead, go down the 3 steps to the left and continue straight on). Otherwise, turn right and head for the black & white cottages visible at the end of the path. Cross the road to these cottages and head left along the main High Street.*

## F4 The High Street

There are 18 Grade II listed buildings in the village, a number of which are sited along the High Street. Examples are the Black & White Cottages; Top Farm Cottage; Sunnyside; Church View and the village Lock Up.

## F5 Village Lock Up

There are over 200 village lock ups in England and Wales. Most were erected to hold drunks overnight, or felons awaiting an appearance before a local magistrate. This example dates from 1837. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was used as part of the village fire station.



## F6 The Academy House

On passing the 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced cottages of Charles Row is the Academy House on the left. This is also an 18<sup>th</sup> century Grade II listed building in Flemish bond, with stone heads and sills, rusticated quoins, gabled copings and sash windows. It was used as a private school for boarders in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Take next left into Church Street.*



## F7 Church Street

On the right is the Chapel House with its Flemish gabled roof. Jockeys are said to have lodged here during the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Farndon Races were held on the riverbank.

*Continue to the Churchyard entrance ahead.*



## F8 St Chad’s Church

The outline of the church and tower dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, although

the site is likely to have been used for worship from the Saxon period. During the Civil War, soldiers were billeted inside and the structure became damaged during fighting. Inside the church can be seen the



unique stained glass window from this period. Due to the war damage, the church,



apart from the tower, had to be completely rebuilt in 1658. There were further changes and restoration work

during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A guide book with further details is available inside the church. In the churchyard near the main door can be seen the unusual Grade II listed tombs fronted with a skull and crossbones and an hour glass (emblems of mortality).

## F9 The War Memorial

The war memorial was erected in Farndon churchyard in 1922 to commemorate the men of Farndon who lost their lives in the Great War. A further four names were added for those men who were killed in the Second World War. As well as two Commonwealth War Graves, there are several gravestones in the churchyard recording memorials to men who did not return.



*Return to the churchyard entrance gate and turn left following the road as it curves around the perimeter wall. At the cross roads turn right to return to the High Street, but before you do, pause, to view the ‘Twychooks’ sloping ahead, and Farndon Hall to the left. This is a private driveway and a better view of the Hall can be had looking from the medieval bridge.*

## F10 Farndon Hall

Farndon Hall, constructed on the cliffs overlooking the river, was used as a private boarding school during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and known as the Classical and Commercial Academy for young gentlemen. Young ladies attended the Holly Bank School, a Grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup> century building still standing on Barton Road.

## F11 The Twychooks & Church Lane

The steep path of the ‘Twychooks’ was used to haul carts up from the river. The ‘Twitch Hooks’ were attached to a wooden post at the top where the ropes were passed through. Proceeding back along the lane to the



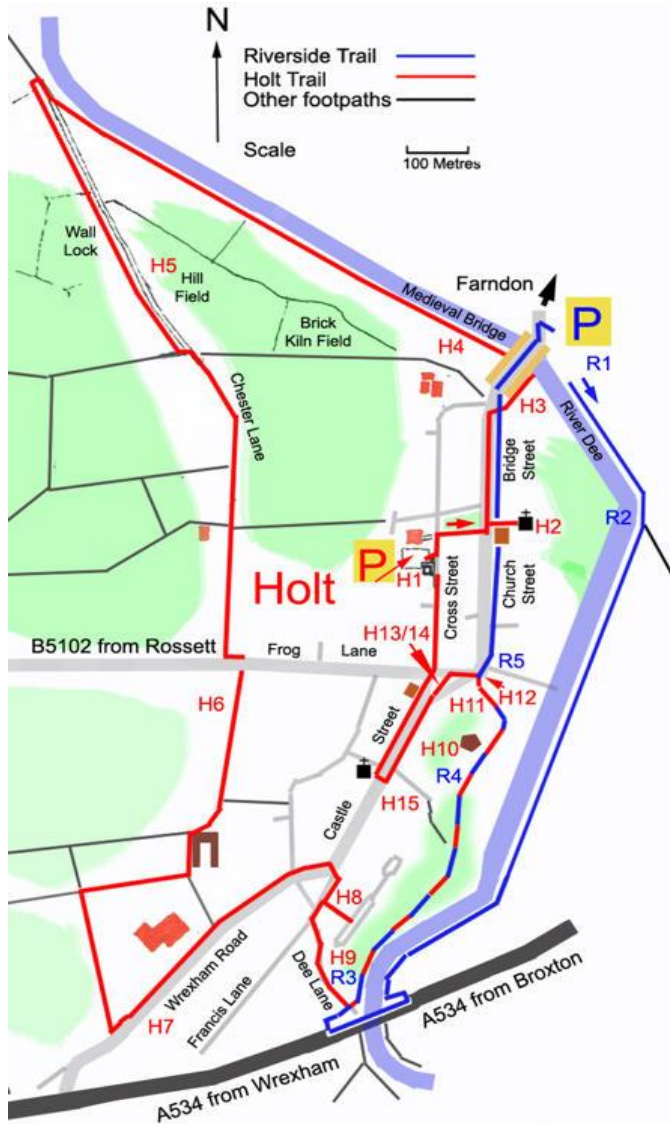
High Street, the black and white timber framed cottages on the left are also Grade II listed and typical of Shropshire and South Cheshire timber dwellings. The end cottage near the High Street was once a village store.

*At the end of Church Lane turn left and proceed down the hill to return to the car park. Before you do, you may wish to take advantage of the local hosteries on the High Street opposite and to the right, where excellent food and drink are available.*



## Holt Trail H1 – H15

## River Trail R1 - R5



## The three Trails are

Riverside Circular Trail - Blue (1 ½ miles - 45 to 60 minutes)

(mostly flat with 2 sets steps, 2 stiles and 3 kissing gates, can be muddy on riverside paths)

Holt Village Trail - Red (2 or 3 miles – 90 or 120 minutes)\*\*

(Flat riverside walk, can be muddy. Lanes are earth/chippings and there is a hill from medieval bridge to the village. No stiles, 2 kissing gates).

Farndon Village Trail - Green (¾ mile – 30 to 45 minutes)

(Flat riverside walk, can be muddy. Lanes are narrow and composed of earth /earth & chippings). There is a hill from medieval bridge to village. No stiles, 2 kissing gates).

\*\* To shorten the Holt Trail, after H3, return up Bridge Street to the village centre, turning right into Frog Lane (signposted to 'Rossett'). Walk past the last house on the left and take the kissing gate on the left into the path alongside the Strawberry Fields picking up the trail at H6.

## The Medieval Bridge

A Grade I listed medieval sandstone bridge links Holt on the Welsh bank of the Dee with its English neighbour, Farndon on the opposite bank. Built between 1338 and 1345, it was recorded as having ten arches in 1754. On the fifth arch stood a large gate tower which contained a chapel. This tower was demolished to bridge level in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and two arches were lost on the Holt side. In 1643 during the Civil War, the bridge was the scene of severe fighting involving around 4000 soldiers. Users of the bridge were required to pay tolls until 1866. A toll board of 1840 listed charges as 'a dog on a lead ½ penny; horses 1 penny and a cart 2 pence'.

## Churches

Both village churches are dedicated to St Chad, the first Bishop of Mercia who died in 672. They both have Rushbearing festivities in July / August.

## Farndon Trail F1 – F11



St. Chad's  
Holt



St. Chad's  
Farndon

