

## LOCKDOWN WALK 1

Here is one short walk to get started with, with a couple of optional detours. It may be very familiar to some, but hopefully offers something new for others.

*Oxton and Noctorum with optional access to Bidston. Basic walk: 3.7 km (2.3 miles).*

Start at St. Saviour's Church. Cross Bidston Road and walk down Townfield Lane. At the end of the rugby field on the right, and opposite Flatt Lane, take a footpath to the right, with the rugby field still on the right and houses on the left. Turn left at the end of the path and follow the road round to the right. This is Farndon Way. Continue to the end and turn left into Mere Farm Road. Continue uphill, passing the entrance to Mere Hall on the left. Mere Hall is described in the Oxton Society history periodical No. 35; it was built in 1880 by Oxton marine solicitor Gray Hill to the design of architect Edmund Kirby. A brief detour up the drive will allow you to view the exterior of the building.

At the end of Mere Farm Lane, turn right into Noctorum Lane. As the road becomes unmade, you will pass more substantial 19th century houses on your left, notably Delavor and, further on, other fine Edmund Kirby buildings Rathmore and Middlewood: see Oxton Society history periodical No. 37. Some of the smaller properties on Noctorum Lane were originally lodges to the main buildings. A substantial number of other detached houses have been built in their grounds.

Cross Budworth Road and continue along Noctorum Lane, now with Wirral Ladies' Golf Club on the right. Noctorum Lane can get a bit muddy in wet weather on this stretch. As the road becomes paved once more you can choose from a number of options.

a) Continue along Noctorum Lane, until you reach the first crossroads at Vyner Road South. Turn left and after around 400 m you will come to Bidston Court Gardens on the left. The gardens, which are open to the public, are the site of Bidston Court, built in 1891 and occupied at one time by the shipbuilder John Laird. At the end of the 1920s the house was moved in its entirety to Frankby and was renamed Hill Bark in what is now known as Royden Park.

b) *Or*, if you continue along Noctorum Lane you eventually reach Upton Road. Straight ahead you can enter the woods and reach the open area of Bidston Hill, with fine views over both the Mersey and the Dee.

c) Alternatively, if you continue along Noctorum Lane and then turn right on Upton Road and turn left when you reach Boundary Road you can spend time in the interesting Flaybrick Memorial Gardens, site of Birkenhead's first public cemetery, designed in 1857 by landscape designer William Kemp.

Return from these detours to Noctorum Lane to the remainder of the basic walk. Turn into Wirral Ladies' Golf Club on a signed footpath and continue straight ahead with the golf course on either side. The path narrows and runs between hedges and fences (can be a bit muddy here too) until you reach a metal gate that leads along a short lane and then right into Waterford Road, another area of substantial 19th century houses, interspersed with apartment blocks and nursing homes.

Continue to the end and turn left into Wexford Road. At the end by the Army Reserve Centre, turn right into Bidston Road and in 200 m reach the end of your walk at St. Saviour's Church.



