

# MAP

Long Walk is approx 1 hour 30mins

Short Walk is approx 1 hour



## Information

### How to find us

**Helsby Quarry** – Follow brown information signs marked HELSBY HILL and QUARRY from Helsby Village, Chester Road (A56). Car park at Helsby Quarry in Alvanley Road.

**Harmers Wood** – From Chester Road (A56) turn into Bates Lane, by Hillside Primary School, continue along Bates Lane for approximately ½ mile, and then turn right into Hill Road North carry on up this road until you arrive at Harmers Wood. Small car park available at wood.

### Land Ownership

**Helsby Quarry** – Cheshire West and Chester Council.  
**Helsby Hill** – National Trust  
**Harmers Wood** – The Friends of Harmers Wood Trust.

### Accessibility

**Helsby Quarry** – Limited wheelchair access. Picnic Area.

**Helsby Hill & Harmers Wood** – Unsuitable for wheelchair access. Picnic Area in Harmers Wood.

### Acknowledgements

Cheshire West and Chester Council;  
Eco Net.



# Helsby's WALK Through HISTORY



## Carriage Drive Helsby Quarry Helsby Hill & Fort Harmers Wood Cobblers Lane

- 2000BC
- 1900BC
- 1800BC
- 1700BC
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- 2000AD

## 1. Helsby Quarry

In the 18th century the Marquis of Cholmondeley owned a large part of Helsby. In 1798 he conveyed a portion of his land which included the quarry site to Thomas Brandreth and his wife. The site was later sold to John Southern. In 1828 John Southern placed a request for a horse drawn tramline to transport stone from the quarry to Ince Pier.

In 1842 he sold a portion of his land to Thomas Brandreth jnr. In 1844 the lower portion of the quarry was owned by Henry Lowe and was well known for its superior stone. William Guest bought the quarry in 1885, and in 1889 leased it to Helsby and Runcorn Red Sandstone Company. It is believed that the last of the stone was used in the construction of the bridge carrying the A56 over the old Cheshire Lines Railway tracks.

The idea to use the site for recreation was first discussed in 1975, and in 1988 Vale Royal Borough Council bought the quarry. It was officially opened in 1990 and achieved Local Nature Reserve Status in 2002. There is an exposed rock face in the quarry which shows how the rock was laid down 240 million years ago. The colour of the sandstone is due to the different iron rich minerals present.



## 2. Helsby Hill and Fort

### Top of the Hill

A wooden gibbet or gallows stood dauntingly at the top of Helsby Hill. Many a criminal met his death on this spot; a most notorious hanging took place in 1791, when a man named Lowndes was hanged here for robbing the Warrington Mail.

### The Hill & World War Two

During the War local resident, Joan Lea from Firs Farm (Built 1794) recalled seeing German bombers passing over the top of the Hill. In one attack the shed which housed her goat was hit, miraculously the goat was unharmed and not even shaken by the experience! Teas and sweets were sold from Firs Farm to visitors. Close to the summit of the Hill was the war time base for a Royal Observer Corps Monitoring Post and Vic Taylor was the ARP (Air Raid Precautions) Officer stationed here. People visited Harmers Lake for bathing; they could hire paddle boats and skate on the thick ice during winter. There was also an exclusive golf course nearby. Children were often seen collecting shrapnel after air raids.

### Iron Age Fort

The Hill fort is situated on a spur of red sandstone on top of Helsby Hill and is classified as an ancient monument. The Fort over looks the Mersey Estuary with spectacular views encompassing over eight counties. The area covered by the Fort is approximately 10.5 acres; with ramparts (walls) covering 3.5 acres leaving the Cliff Face to form a natural defence.

Inside the fort would be home to a cluster of thatched round houses and also an area for animals to graze and for crops to grow. Celtic Tribes spread across Europe from 750 800 BC. They lived in tribal groups who constantly fought with each other, hence their downfall because they were unable to unite against the invading Roman Army. The Celts introduced iron to replace bronze as a most useful metal. Land could be cleared more efficiently with axes and picks made out of iron. The iron tipped plough was developed and drawn by oxen. They were able to produce fine flour from their stone querns (hand mills) which they invented. The people of this age lived in round houses which would have had a fire in the centre of the floor.

## 3. Harmers Wood

Harmers Wood was formally known as The Pine Wood; unfortunately this was burned down during World War Two by German Bombers. The reason for this was that if the bombers met anti-aircraft fire from Liverpool Docks, (which was the German bombers target), then they jettisoned their payload in Harmers Wood and surrounding areas as they returned to Germany.

This former Pine Wood was purchased from Cholmondeley Estates in June 2007. The land was originally used for grazing in the 1880's by Samuel Cobbe who farmed the adjoining fields. His family lived at Toothill Ben House, (later Hillside cottage) which was built in 1854 to serve watered down ale to the quarrymen. The Mess family became tenants in the late 1800's. Hill Road North and South were originally called Amos Lake Road and by 1891, Armers Lake Road, which then ran from Bates lane across the Hill through the Black Cut to Alvanley Road.

On 25th March 1830, Benjamin Morris, a builder from Alvanley, negotiated with Cholmondeley Estate to open a quarry on land known as the Rough Lot (part of Cobbes Farm). He agreed on the rent on 12th March 1831 and commenced work on the 24th. By April 1832 he was finding it difficult to extract the better quality 'white' stone and in March 1834 applied to open more land – now believed to be the two quarries alongside the road. Unfortunately lack of work and funds forced him into bankruptcy in 1836. There is documentary evidence that at the time the beer house was built, Thomas Brandreth jnr. applied to the Earl for permission to quarry stone to finish off work in Liverpool. If this was agreed it would account for the large amount of stone taken from the largest quarry in the wood, and where in October 2007 a 1.5 gallon ale jar was excavated. On November 1868 the Reverend Dix wrote to the Earl as the 'poor people' of Helsby could not afford stone to build their new church. The Earl replied that they could have stone from Ben's Quarry and a hand sketched diagram on the back of his envelope agrees with the position and measurement of the first quarry opened by Benjy Morris.

## 4. Cobblers Cave

This area was designated in 1797 as one of the areas on the hill available for common use to extract marl (clay and lime), gravel and sand. In the mid nineteenth century the Tweedle family lived here, they hollowed out the sandstone from caves which are visible to the passer-by. The sand derived from these caves was sold around the district for sanding floors.

## 5. Carriage Drive

Built by landowner and philanthropist Samuel Burgess jnr. and the Marquis of Cholmondeley in 1866/70, the Carriage Drive started on Chester Road (A56), up Gully and along the hill side, (Middle Walk), providing work for locals and a leisure amenity for the newly gentrified people of Helsby.

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