

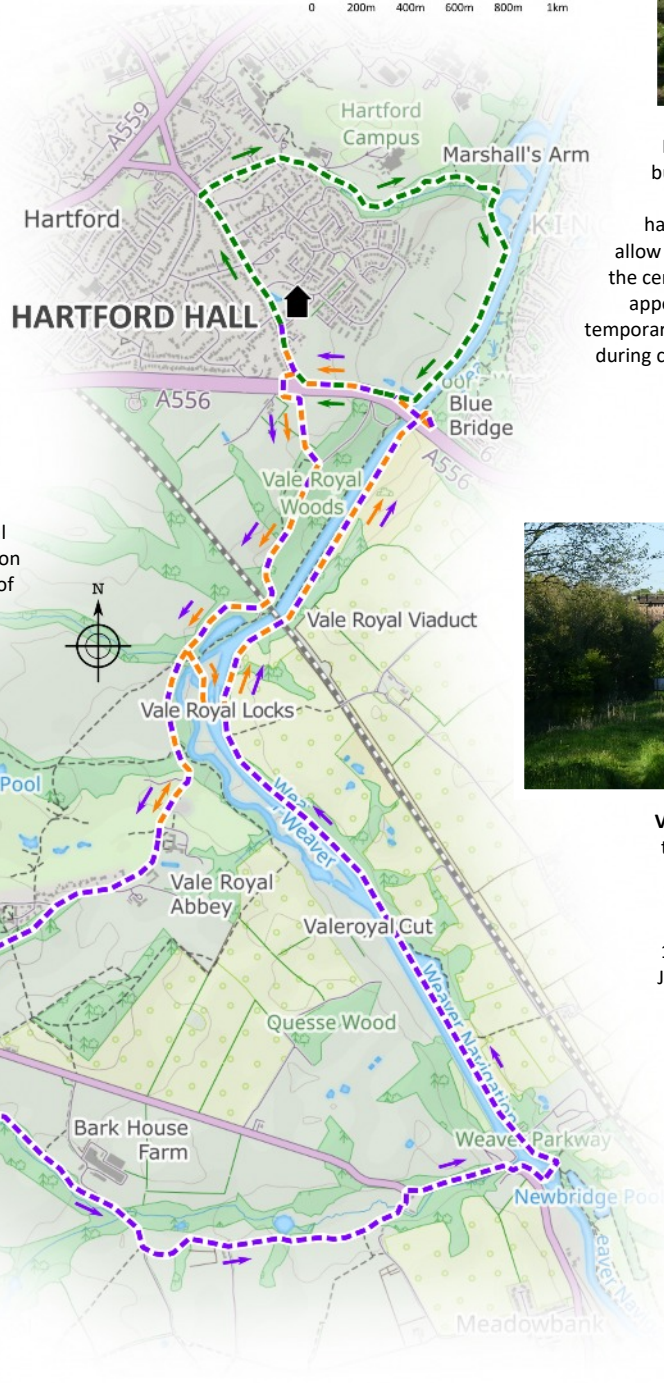
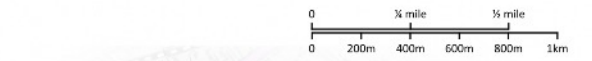


The visible parts of the house at **Vale Royal Abbey**, now a golf clubhouse and events venue, date from the 19th century, but inside the building are parts of the medieval cloister and monks' refectory from the monastery founded by Edward I in the late 1200s. The abbey church, long demolished, was one of the largest in England.



**Marshall's Arm** is a local nature reserve centred on an abandoned channel of the River Weaver.

**Whitegate Cottage** is a Grade-II-listed thatched cottage in the pretty village of Whitegate.



**Hartford Blue Bridge** was built in 1938 with Art Deco details. It is rumoured to have had a lifting section to allow tall vessels to pass below the central span, but in fact this appears to have referred to a temporary builders' platform used during construction. It replaced a single-span stone bridge.



**Vale Royal Viaduct** carries the West Coast Main Line over the River Weaver. It was built by renowned engineer Joseph Locke in 1837 as part of the Grand Junction Railway between Crewe and Warrington.



## three circular walks from



# HARTFORD HALL

EST. ON SCHOOL LANE 1750



**Marshall's Arm**  
2 miles: fairly easy

Stroll down through a wooded nature reserve to the River Weaver and return via Blue Bridge.

**Vale Royal Abbey**  
3 1/4 miles: fairly easy

An impressive house on the site of an important medieval abbey, returning along the River Weaver.

**Vale Royal and Whitegate**  
6 1/4 miles: moderate

A varied walk through the Cheshire countryside, with an extended riverside return.



## Marshall's Arm

2 miles: fairly easy

Allow 1–1½ hours. Woodland path may be muddy after rain, and includes some steps. Some road walking.

**1** From the front of Hartford Hall, turn right along School Lane, passing the ends of Woods Road (right) and Lodge Lane (left). Pass the Grade-II-listed Whitehall on your right, then the end of Whitehall Drive, the old school and the junction with Old Vicarage Lane. **2** Turn right into Stones Manor Lane, signposted to Hartford Manor Primary School, and walk to the end. **3** Beyond Marshall's Court, just before the school entrance, turn right onto a path along a fence which leads into the Marshall's Arm Nature Reserve, passing through the round entrance. **4** Follow the path down through the wood, with a stream valley on your right. You will encounter several footbridges and short flights of steps. **5** After passing under a pipeline you meet another path at a T-junction by Marshall's Arm. Turn right, signposted to Hartford Blue Bridge, shortly passing a carved stone ball. **6** Go through a gate and follow the riverside path to the Blue Bridge. **7** Beyond a gate, follow the main track right, up to the A556. **8** Follow the path alongside the main road up to the traffic lights. **9** Turn right into School Lane and follow it back to Hartford Hall.

## Vale Royal Abbey

3¼ miles: fairly easy

Allow 2 hours. Can be shortened by a mile by omitting the extension to the Abbey house. Occasional mud and one short descent and ascent.

**1** From the front of Hartford Hall, cross School Lane and turn left to the A556. **2** Cross at the lights and turn left on the other side of the main road. **3** Almost immediately, turn right up a set of steps to a metal kissing gate. **4** Cross the field beyond to another kissing gate, and bear left down the slope to a third kissing gate into Vale Royal Wood. **5** Follow the path down through the woods, ignoring a footbridge over the stream on your right. **6** When you meet Vale Royal Drive, turn right and follow it for a third of a mile to the railway viaduct, which you pass under. **7** At a gate shortly afterwards, you can omit the there-and-back continuation to Vale Royal Abbey by turning left and skipping to step **10**. **8** To continue to the abbey, stay on the drive beyond the gate, which leads (ignoring footpaths to right and left) to a gate onto the golf course. Follow the track ahead to view the grand house on the site of the abbey. **9** Return the same way and, after the second gate, turn right. **10** Cross an arm of the River Weaver then continue over the sluice and double lock to the eastern bank. **11** Turn left and pass the lock-keeper's cottage on your right. **12** Continue alongside the river and pass under the railway viaduct again. **13** Continue past Hartford Wetland to the Blue Bridge and pass underneath it. **14** Turn right immediately and walk up to the A556. **15** Turn right and cross the bridge. **16** Follow the path up the hill to the traffic lights. **17** Turn right into School Lane and follow it back to Hartford Hall.

## Vale Royal and Whitegate

6¼ miles: moderate

Allow 3–4 hours. Occasional mud and one moderate descent; field paths between Whitegate and the Weaver may be a little overgrown in summer – take a stick!

Follow steps **1** to **8** from the **Vale Royal Abbey** walk, left.

**9** Continue along the road beyond the Abbey, passing the gabled former stables on the left. **10** When the road bends right, take the track (Vale Royal Drive) through the gate straight ahead. **11** Follow the drive for a little under half a mile to Whitegate village, emerging by the lodge house opposite the church. **12** Go through the lych gate opposite and walk past the church, departing via the grand gates. **13** Walk down to thatched Whitegate Cottage and turn left into Grange Lane. **14** When the road bends left after 200 metres, keep right into Grange Lane, signposted as a no-through road. **15** Beyond the last houses and the water treatment works the drive reduces to a path, with a stream on your right. **16** Follow the path below Bark House Farm and follow the track beyond, which swings right to cross the stream and starts to climb. **17** Before a left-hand bend, go through a field gateway on the left (a footpath sign on the left may be hidden in the hedge). Keep to the left of the field to a concealed gateway in the corner. **18** Cross the next field, aiming to the right of a barn to a gateway, and follow the track beyond. **19** At a junction, follow the footpath over a stile ahead of you, and follow the fence on your right to a plank bridge and stile in the far corner. **20** Follow the left-hand edge of the next field past a telegraph pole then turn left into the bushes just after a corner, before the field edge starts to ascend. Cross a boggy patch to a gate into another field. **21** Follow the path ahead along a grassy terrace to a further stile. Walk alongside the fence beyond to a footbridge over a stream, and continue in similar vein until you meet a driveway at Bradford Mill. **22** Turn left out to the road, and turn right. Follow the road with care to the entrance to Riverside Park, where you swing right over a bridge. **23** Take the track on your immediate left down to the River Weaver and cross the two bridges to the far bank. **24** Turn left and follow the riverbank straightforwardly for a mile and a quarter, passing a series of lakes and ponds on your right. **25** Keep to the right-hand bank past Vale Royal Locks and the lock-keeper's cottage (which had to be moved 20 yards downstream when the large lock was added alongside the existing smaller one!).

Now follow steps **12**–**17** of the **Vale Royal Abbey** walk to return to Hartford Hall.



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www.walksfromthedoor.co.uk



# HARTFORD HALL

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Hartford Hall on School Lane sits within the walls of a stunning 16th-century, Grade-II-listed building in the village parish of Hartford, Cheshire.

Our drinks menus include only the best wines and gins. Also on offer are award-winning cask ales, lagers and spirits from around the world. Come enjoy a tipples with us.

Our family-friendly menu is packed full of traditional pub food created with fresh seasonal produce. There's something for everyone from pies to fish and chips.

Stay the night in one of our stunning bedrooms and take your time to explore what Cheshire has to offer. Whether you're getting away for the weekend, staying the night after a celebration or having a doggy holiday – we've got a room for you!



FAMILY BREWERS  
SINCE 1838