

# Meandering & Mysteries | a Runcorn walk

This less than two mile circular walk on designated footpaths starts at Runcorn Town Hall. The height climb is moderate and the route crosses one busy road - but only if you wish to look at Sprinch Yard and Big Pool, so take extra care there. Although not all roads are marked on this map, we think there's enough to help you keep on track. If you have access to the internet as you walk then you could listen to the Oral Histories as you go along, but if not then have a listen at home - just type the name into the search box - there's some great stories. We hope you have a great walk . . .



North

## KEY

- Walk stopping places (numbered)
- Blue Plaques (RDHS)
- Bus stops\*
- Site of old building
- Oral Histories (see our website)

NOT TO SCALE (but it's pretty close)

**ORAL HISTORY | Hilda Warder**  
Hilda was born and raised on the canal. She talks about her life afloat and getting paid for clog dancing on a Saturday night



Sprinch Yard

**12. SPRINCH DOCKYARD 1890-1948**  
The slipway can be seen at the south end of Victoria Rd. (image left). There were huge tall warehouses here between Sprinch Yard and Big Pool beyond

Canal Street, site of Runcorn AFC 1918-2000

**ORAL HISTORY | Geoff Dutton**  
His uncle worked at Puritan Tannery and travelled to Germany to meet Hitler to sell him leather

**TANNERIES & TANNING, c18th-c20th**  
There were many tanneries around Runcorn mostly sited along the Bridgewater Canal so the raw hides could be delivered easily by boat via Liverpool Docks. Tanning ceased in the 1960s

Highfield Tannery

Royal Oak Tannery



Highfield Tannery, 1899



Highfield Tannery fire, 1968



Runcorn Tannery workers, 1943



Sprinch Yard

**13. BIG POOL**  
A large natural water pool, a small part of which exists today. Some local houses still have pool in their name; Pool Dale & Pool Hollow

**15. POOL HOUSE**  
In 1845, Francis Salkeld lived at Pool House. The Salkeld family owned much of the land around this area, including that which Halton Grange was built on. In 1911 Joseph Hall Salkeld lived at Pool House with his nephew and one servant. Salkeld's Wharf was nearby at Big Pool

**16. ENTRANCE to HALTON GRANGE**  
In 1858 Edward Kemp wrote in his book, How to lay out a garden; the 'entrance shows the Italianate Lodge (gone) and the walls in elaborate architectural manner'

**14. 91 HEATH ROAD**  
Home of Henry Pawsey, Chauffeur to Sir Richard Brooke of Norton Priory. Henry's daughter Irene was also employed by the Brooke's as a Parlour Maid

**10. EDWARD R. KORTENS**  
The Kortens family lived at 76 Picton Avenue. Edward lost his life in the WWI Gallipoli campaign. Before the war Edward was a Waterman and his father, was the Dock/Pier Master, both worked for the Manchester Ship Canal Co

**CLARE & RYDER (house builders)**  
Land to the north of Halton Grange was sold in the 1930s to local house builders Clare & Ryder. The road names record them and their family connections through Latham Avenue, Duncan Avenue, Roland Avenue and Claremont Road

**9. BARNES COTTAGES**  
Noted as sub-standard and unhealthy in the 1930s & subsequently demolished

**7. GRANGE SCHOOL**  
Opened 1958, re-built in 2010 as an all-through school for children ages 3-16

**8. STONEHILLS FARM**  
This large sandstone house, built from local quarried stone was home to Fr. Edmund Carter in 1842, the first Catholic Priest resident in Runcorn. He is reputed to have held a Mass here. By 1911 this was the home of Samuel Barnes - any link to Barnes Cottages?

**STENHILL/STONEHILLS QUARRY**  
c18/19th provided some of the pink sandstone that you see in many significant local buildings. In the 1980s part of the northern quarry space at Castle Rise was filled with household waste. Most of the grassy areas you see here were part of the original quarry site. This is the highest point of the walk - what can you see?

**6. Site of CASTLE VIEW**  
(now a care home) In 1845 the house that was here was surrounded by open fields with a track to Halton Lodge

**5. A CHURCH VIEW**  
Look over the Boston Ave, past the phone box, between the 2 houses behind, you might just see St Mary's Church in Halton Village

**4. SPUR ROAD** travels under Boston Ave. 1.2m long, open 1962 to take traffic to the 'new' Runcorn-Widnes bridge, open 1961

**3. A MYSTERY of MISSING STONES (x)**  
The 1910 map shows 3 stones along an old field boundary, which is now Boston Avenue. They may have been erratics left after the last ice age that have been found around Halton. These three are not visible today, perhaps they looked like this on the image (right) found when they were digging out the Manchester Ship Canal

**2. HALTON GRANGE GARDENS**  
at the right side of the old house, just past the monkey puzzle tree there were two identical square sunken gardens planted with summer flowers and dwarf specimens, pedestals & vases (Kemp, 1858)

**1. RUNCORN HILL view**  
As the highest point visible from the grounds of the Grange, the hill was used as a vantage point for paintings of the house for its owners. Three paintings are held in the Civic collection and are on display at the Town Hall

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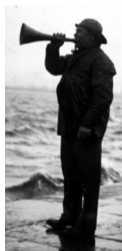


**11. MYSTERY WALL**  
There's a curious curved wall in Rock Park, is it ornamental or did it have a function? Can you find evidence of stone working in the park?

**MILL BROW WINDMILL**  
This must have had quite a presence on the Runcorn skyline; it looks huge on the painting, right. It was sited not far from the park



Mill Brow, E. Pawson



MSC Harbour Master, Halton Libraries



Barnes Cottages



**4. SPUR ROAD** travels under Boston Ave. 1.2m long, open 1962 to take traffic to the 'new' Runcorn-Widnes bridge, open 1961



Runcorn Quarrying



Runcorn Quarrying



**START HERE:**  
Runcorn Town Hall  
Heath Road  
WA7 5TN



Past Mayoress's badge

**ORAL HISTORY | John Whitaker**  
The Mayor's Attendant has many stories, including one of losing the Mayoress badge and chain



Halton Grange, 1889

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**ORAL HISTORY | Frank Brown, Manchester Ship Canal Co.** Diver talks about the dangers of his job



MSC Boulder



Private TA (Todger) Jones, 1940s

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Thanks to our Partnership groups for images and supporting research which have enabled the production of this leaflet

\* Bus Stop markers are an indication only, please check [www.haltontransport.co.uk](http://www.haltontransport.co.uk) for up to date location information





View of Boston Grange, H Crowther, 1919

RUNCORN TOWN HALL and the area around has changed significantly in the years from the rural scene shown in the painting above. Built as a private family home, Halton Grange was sited on land that had previously grown oats, potatoes, wheat & clover, according to tithe map records. The following dates list some of the key changes that have taken place:

- 1854 - Thomas Johnson buys the land to build his home
- 1856 - Halton Grange completed for the Johnson's  
The formal gardens are designed and laid out by Edward Kemp and documented in his book: How to lay out a Garden, published 1858
- 1871 - Sold to Charles Hazlehurst
- 1904 - Leased to Francis Boston
- 1909 - Sold to Francis Boston, renamed Boston Grange
- 1929 - Francis Boston dies, house & grounds auctioned
- 1931 - Local builders Clare & Ryder purchase part of the grounds to the north and build houses
- 1932 - Runcorn Urban District Council buy the property and remaining land and convert to offices
- 1965 - Office building significantly extended

#### PEEPING INSIDE . . .

Runcorn Town Hall opens its doors to the public on the first Saturday of December each year and we encourage you to have a look inside. Much of the Civic collection is on display in the Mayors Parlour, and there are many paintings and prints on the walls of the grand rooms in the original building.

Visits at other times are by arrangement.

**HALTON HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP** is a collaboration between public & community history and heritage organisations in the Borough of Halton.

In 2014 we were awarded HLF funding to develop our newly formed partnership with an exciting project: **WORKING LIVES | WORKING TOGETHER**. The website [www.haltonheritage.co.uk](http://www.haltonheritage.co.uk) launched in 2016.

This walk route and map has been researched and designed by Project Artist Jeni McConnell using images and information from our partner organisations. It was tested with some lovely local people who walked the route during September 2016 for Heritage Open Days.

The partnership will continue to strengthen its practice of working together to develop a heritage vision and focus for Halton Borough through new projects and public events. To find out more please see our website.



#### GETTING THERE:

Runcorn Town Hall, Heath Road, Runcorn, WA7 5TN  
[haltontransport.co.uk](http://haltontransport.co.uk) | [sustrans.org.uk](http://sustrans.org.uk)

#### CONTACT US:

[www.haltonheritage.co.uk](http://www.haltonheritage.co.uk) | [haltonheritage@gmail.com](mailto:haltonheritage@gmail.com)  
[facebook/HaltonHeritagePartnership](https://www.facebook.com/HaltonHeritagePartnership) | [@haltonheritage](https://twitter.com/haltonheritage)

#### RESEARCH & DESIGN:

Jeni McConnell | [www.jenimcconnell.com](http://www.jenimcconnell.com)



Meandering & Mysteries  
RUNCORN TOWN HALL  
& SURROUNDING AREA



HALTON HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP

#### RUNCORN | Place

In 1887 Charles Nickson wrote an account of Runcorn in which he said, 'the more ancient parts of the town are dull and dingy, the streets are cramped and crooked, and the houses small and shapeless. Huge chimney shafts, rising from the centres of industry, throw their outlines on the gray horizon, and smoke drifts blacken the sky. The river . . . once a pure pellicid stream now flows:

*Dank and foul, dank and foul,  
By the smoky town and its murky cowl;  
Foul and dank, foul and dank,  
By wharf and sewer and slimy bank'.*

The proximity of water combined with transported raw materials of salt and coal, the key ingredients for alkali manufacture, contributed greatly to the appearance of the area, yet it also provided much needed employment. As improvements in waterways, docks, railways links and road networks took place, these extended the reach of Runcorn products around the world. In the 1951 booklet, 'Looking Back for the Festival of Britain', it is stated that by the c20th quarries, chemical laboratories and other spheres of industry and human activity allowed Runcorn to lay claim to fame for leather and medical supplies reaching to far flung corners of the world. It notes that Runcorn can claim the origin of Nylon - maybe this is our first mystery?

Halton continues to evolve and change even today. As our Working Lives project has taken shape there have been major works on both sides of the river for a new bridge crossing. Construction methods have changed significantly and Health & Safety rules have changed too, ensuring workers are better protected. No doubt this place will continue to change moving forward . . .

#### HISTORY or MYSTERY?

*Whilst any information presented about a place and its people is fascinating to read, there are some things which we may not all agree with, some may be seen as inaccurate, or found to be confusing. A place is as much full of mystery as it is history and we hope by giving you snippets and teasers we can encourage you to find out more about Halton and its heritage . . .*



#### RUNCORN | People

##### KATHY SCHOFIELD\*

Starting work in 1971, Kathy had job options and chose to join ICI as a Lab Assistant, she was one of very few women in the post then. The facilities were good and staff were treated well. They used to make tea and coffee in the labs, something that you wouldn't be able to do now for Health & Safety reasons. Later in her career Kathy retrained to teach science at St Edwards Primary School in Runcorn. In 2004 she was awarded Science Teacher of the Year.

##### EDWARD ROBERT KORTENS (1886-1915)

In 1911, 24 year old Edward Robert and his younger brother Peter, aged 18 were both Watermen and their father was the Dock & Pier Master, all working for the Manchester Ship Canal Company. When war broke out in 1914, Edward's skills and knowledge of working on water helped him enlist with RNVR Nelson as an Able Seaman. Less than a year later, during the naval operations in the Dardenelles campaign he was declared missing and later confirmed as having died on 13/7/1915, aged 24. His name is listed on the Helles Memorial, one of the 20,763 men lost during the Gallipoli campaign who died and have no known grave. His name is also listed on the Runcorn War Memorial on Greenway Road.

##### TERRY BURNS\*

One of the significant landmarks visible in Halton is the Silver Jubilee Bridge. Built in 1961 it was a major building project that employed many people and vastly improved the transport link across the water from the original transporter bridge. Terry was one of the construction men on the project, some may say bravely, and some foolishly, he was the first person to cross from Widnes to Runcorn by jumping between the nearly connected sections. We're pretty sure we won't hear of stories like this on the new bridge construction!

\*Oral History recording: through our Working Lives project we have recorded many oral histories, some of which are hinted in this leaflet. To listen go to our website [www.haltonheritage.co.uk](http://www.haltonheritage.co.uk) and search for the name of the person.