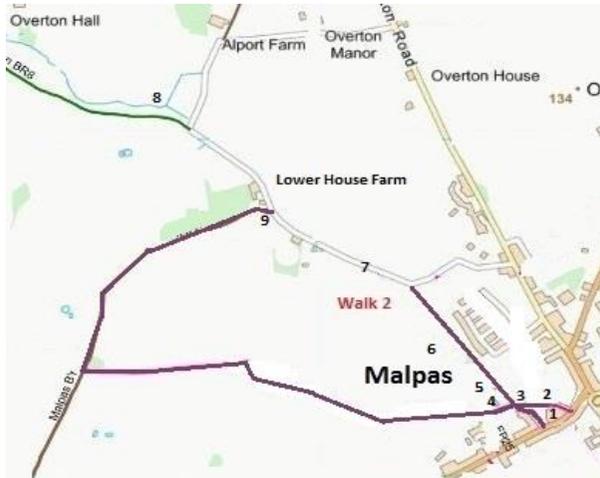


Walk Two: Heath to Heath

A circular walk
between Overton and
Cuddington Heaths from
Malpas Cross

You should allow about 1 ½ hours for this walk which will lead you through some of the fields surrounding Malpas – all access points are provided by kissing gates. **Remember to wear strong shoes.** The best time to take this walk is on a sunny afternoon when the light is good for taking photos.



Leaving the Cross, walk up Church Street to St. Oswald's Church and follow the path through the Churchyard.

Take a look around the church (1) and its gravestones – Look out for inscriptions to past church wardens within the churchyard walls. Or take a further detour behind the church to view Castle Hill mound (2)

Once you leave the churchyard, turn right along the tarmac drive. Keep to the left track past the disused Parish Hall. The way is marked by a wooden fingerpost.

The Parish Hall (3) was originally the stables for the Higher Rectory.

Malpas Parish is unusual in having had, until the 19th century, two rectors. In the 12th century, Baron Robert Fitzhugh had no male heirs, so the barony of Malpas, and the right to appoint a rector, was divided between his two daughters.

Pass through a kissing gate, turn right and follow the top edge of the field.

(4) The Ox Heys meaning a hedged enclosure for Oxen, provided pasture for the Ox of the town's plough teams. Enjoy the view from here of the Clwydian Hills including the Moel Famau peak.

(5) Behind the hedge on your right is The Old or Higher Rectory. This was the birthplace in 1783 of the Reverend Reginald Heber; see walk three for the history.

The area further along the Ox Heys (6) was the town's recreation ground and at one point it even had a bandstand. Malpas celebrations for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee were held here.

The line of twelve sycamores trees were planted to represent the 12 apostles. The largest tree, now just a stump due to vandalism, used to accommodate a small "cave" with its trunk.



Pass through 2 kissing gates and into the deep cutting of Overton Lane (7). Known locally as Love Lane, it marked the boundaries between Malpas and Overton Parishes until 2019 when Overton became part of the Malpas Parish.

Turn left and follow the lane downhill.

Look out for the sandstone wall which was the pigsty of Top House Farm. If you want a diversion, continue along the lane to the rear of Overton Hall, (8) where you may see earthworks of a deserted medieval settlement. Overton Hall is private property, please respect this.

Turn left at the fingerpost onto the "Bishop Bennet" Byway to follow an ancient drover road (9) which links Overton and Cuddington Heaths. You will now pass through what remains of what was once a much larger heath land.

Overton Common is gradually changing over time. In summer, the lower half of the common is covered by fern, but as the land is no longer used to graze livestock, young trees, bushes, wildflowers, and many species of plants flourish. However, this provides a safe haven for the Malpas wildlife

Journeying along the drover's road provides a sanctuary and a welcome contrast from the urban development, now a yearly feature of the town. Take a short respite to listen for the song of robins and wrens, view the swallows and swifts swooping low above the wheat and barley, scooping insects as they go.

If you're lucky, you'll hear the screech of a Kestrel or the whistling call of a buzzard, gliding over the open country in search of their prey.

Food is plentiful along this track, not only for the many species of mammals and birds that live here, but the blackberries and hazelnuts can be enjoyed by human kind too.

Where the footpath crosses the drover road, turn left and follow the footpath back to Malpas. You will cross football pitches at the Sports club.

St Oswald's Church and Castle Hill Mound

The origins of St Oswald's Church may be as a private chapel of the Malpas Motte and Bailey Castle. The mound behind the present church – altered in the 1830s to provide a reservoir for the town's first piped water system is all that remains of the timber and earth castle.

Today St Oswald's is largely 14th Century with 15th Century alterations. Inside are the alabaster chest tombs for both the Brereton and Cholmondeley families. Some box pews remain with the coat of Arms of their owners.

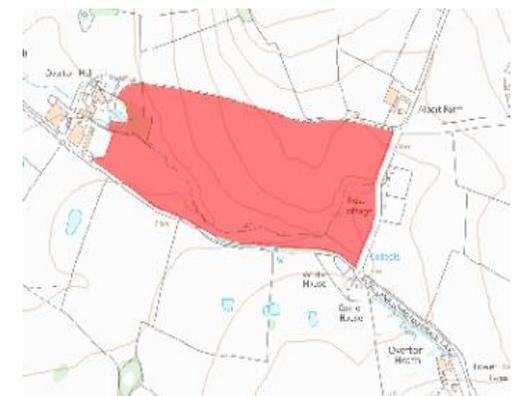
There is also a 13th Century iron-bound chest made by a local blacksmith who may have been inspired by one in Chester Cathedral.



Evidence of the past

The earthworks, which may indicate the existence of an early hamlet of Overton, were found in 1976 during an aerial survey of the area.

Overton hall belonged to the Alport family who provided Malpas with a Bluecoat charity School in 1745.



Walk Three : Cross o' th' Hill

A circular route, uphill and through fields from Malpas Cross.

For a walk of approximately 1 ¼ - 2 hours, follow the route through Malpas and the land to its east. You will find both kissing gates and stiles at the access points on this route.
Strong shoes recommended.



From the Cross, walk down Old Hall Street, passing the Red Lion Inn (1) and the old smithy garage (2). Turn left into Springfield Road and then turn right into Springfield Avenue. Half way down Springfield Avenue turn right into the garages. Access to the field is through a kissing gate situated between the two middle garages.

The names of the streets reflect this area's past, when it was the source of the water supply for the Town.

On leaving the estate, you will cross the Kilnfield (3). When walking through all these fields, please follow the direction arrows on the posts and keep to the indicated "path". You will be walking along the Marches Way.

At the Good Moors (4), is an artificial pool and today's sewage works on the site of the town's old waterworks system. Pumps were installed in the 1830's to pump water up to a reservoir in the Castle Mound. All the work was paid for by the local landowners; the Cholmondeleys and the Drakes.

Follow the narrow Cow track and then turn left towards the hill top. Looking back from the top of the hill you will have a good view of the "old Lady" of town (St Oswald's Church) with her colourful skirts spreading out below her.

Continue downhill through two kissing gates to Bawbrook Lane. (5) Turn left. An old drovers that connected Bradley Hall to Cross o' yh' Hill can be seen to your left.
Just past The Lees Farm take the footpath to the left through a kissing gate.

Follow this path to the Cross o' th' Hill, (6) where a stone cross was recorded in 1465.

Through the kissing gate onto the road (Caution) and turn right. Cross the road once you are opposite the public footpath sign.
A stile takes you into the area known as Ebnal. You will be crossing the fields to meet the main Chester to Malpas road.

Turn Left when you reach the road.
As you follow it back to the village, Bishop Heber High School (7) is on your right.

A short detour to the right up Hollowood Road and down Oathills takes you past the Oathills cottages (8). The road continues on past the Victorian civil cemetery (9), opened by the burial board in 1870.
The Chapels clock, from the 1880s is by a local clockmaker, Arthur Callcott.

The new Alport School (10) is on your right.
To see the old Alport School (11), built in 1745 from money left in his will, by Richard Alport of Overton, turn right when you reach the High Street. It is now a private house, but look out for the date of its founding and of its extensions recorded on the building.



Continuing Education

Richard Alport of Overton died in 1720, leaving £500 towards the establishing and benefit of a charity school at Malpas for poor boys or girls of the same parish.

His last wishes were finally granted in 1745 with the building of Alport School. The original building housed only 14 boys. An extension was added in 1815 (on the right as you look at the building) allowing girls to attend too. Malpas Infant School was added as a wing in 1833.

By the 1880's the school roll had outgrown the buildings. Joseph Lewis' donation of land and money enabled the new Alport School to be built, which provides primary school education in Malpas today.

Head back towards the Cross, passing Drake House (12) and the Old Fire Station (13) on your way.

Look out for the building date and initials on the rainwater heads of Drake House.
Just before you reach the Cross, you will see the Victoria Jubilee Hall on your left (14).



Bishop Heber, 1783 – 1826

"Reginald Heber was born in Malpas in 1783 at the Higher Rectory as his father was a rector in Malpas. He was famous for writing well known hymns such as 'Holy, Holy, Holy'. He achieved his education at oxford and won many prizes and awards that led him to his high fame."

Heber became Bishop of Calcutta in 1823 and spent the last few years of his life there. His only sermon preached in Malpas was his farewell one in St Oswald's Church.



Generosity knows no Bounds

Oathills cottages were built in 1884 by Joseph Lewis to address the lack of working class housing in the area.

Lewis was a farmer's son from Shropshire who had become a wealthy draper in London. He only lived in Malpas for the last 110 years off his life, but contributed money for the new Alport School and the restoration of St Oswald's Church.