

Lancashire Walks

Rufford to Croston



In winter this part of West Lancashire is a scoured landscape. Bare, stubbled fields occupy a broad prairie stretching between Southport and Parbold Hill. Interspersed between fields, rectangular stands of woodland provide feature – like black chess pieces on a chequered board. Sluices and channels navigated by the Dutch engineers in the late 17th century drain the dark soil, and their quiet waters reflect the brooding sky. If this is not incentive enough to examine this part of Lancashire, then perhaps some of the amenities to be found in the picturesque village of Croston will be.

Start: Church Road, Rufford off B5246 which is just off A59 Liverpool Road. (Readers wishing to do a shorter walk, should study the railway timetable of the Preston-Liverpool Line which links Croston and Rufford. This arrangement presumably would allow them to park at the station.)

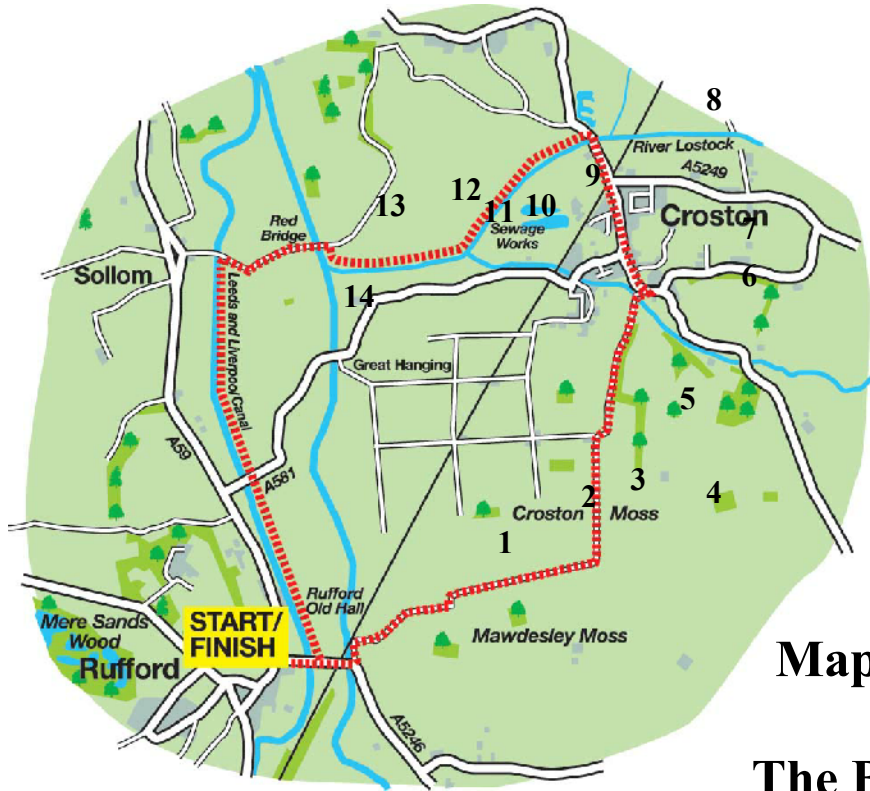
1. Rufford to Croston (4 Km or 2½ miles: 1 hour)

From Church Road turn left on B5246. Cross first the canal, then the railway and finally the river Douglas to reach meadow lane. Turn left onto a broad, **(Pic 1)** farm track and follow it as it crosses a sluice by a metal bridge. Across arable land the track reaches a branch of the same waterway. Cross this by a flat bridge and continue, beneath pylons with the channel on your right. At the end of the field turn left and walk towards a small oak tree near the corner. **(Pic 2)** On reaching the hedge turn right. For the next 15 minutes or so (1100m) walk ahead with the field boundary on your left. **(Pic 3)** To your right, across a field, you will pass Caunce Wood. The footpath is narrow and hardly discernible but the odd waymarker will confirm the direction of travel. Do not stray from the left side as you cross four large fields to reach a farm track. [This is a point of contact with the Mawdesley Jubilee Trail] **(Pic 4)** Turn left onto the track. Ahead in the distance you will notice an imposing farm. **(Pic 5)** The track will lead you to the right of this building, past tennis courts, to where it meets a tarmac lane. Turn right onto the lane and follow it as it bends to the left. This will lead you to the edge of Croston village. Turn right at Manor House Barn towards the burial ground and then left by a footpath sign and cross the river Yarrow to pass through a passageway into the church yard. **(Pic 6)** Nearby there is a primary school. With the church on your right, **(Pic 7)** cross the yard to reach Church Row which brings you on Town Road directly opposite the Grapes.

2. Croston to Rufford (7 Km or 4½ miles: 2 hours)

It is a brave editor that leaves out the view of the church and the ancient stone bridge in any calendar of Lancashire. As picturesque as that scene is, what is striking about the village is the variety of domestic architecture. Hardly a decade has gone by in the last 400 years without some addition to the range of styles and yet without detriment to the essential charm of the village. It is well worth exploration in its own right.

Turn left onto Town Road (or right if you lunched in the Grapes) and walk to the junction with Station Road. Here turn into Station Road and at the mini roundabout turn left in the direction of Bretherton on the B5274. Walk down to the bridge over the River Lostock taking care along the lane, which can be surprisingly busy at times. Cross the bridge and turn left over a wooden stile. **(Pic 8)** You are now on a raised embankment besides the channelled River Lostock which meets the channelled River Yarrow and the channelled River Douglas further on. Keep on the embankment with water on your left. **(Pics 9, 10 & 11)** In just over 2½ Km or 1½ miles (35 minutes) you will come to a green metal bridge (named Red Bridge on the map) **(Pic 12)** which takes Eyes Lane across the river. Keep on Eyes Lane, which for a short distance becomes distinctly unmetalled to reach the Rufford Branch of the Leeds Liverpool Canal, on the edge of the large hamlet of Sollom. **(Pic 13)** Turn left onto the towpath. In a little under 3 Km or 2 miles you will reach Rufford. **(Pic 14)** At the bridge turn right for the church or left for the station.



Map by Chris Wyatt
at
The Blackpool Gazette

Pic 1



Pic 2



Pic 3



Pic 4



Pic 5



Pic 6



Pic 7



Pic 8



Pic 9



Pic 10



Pic 11



Pic 12



Pic 13



Pic 14

