



Beech trees on Artists Lane.

autumn

15 Alderley Edge

4½ miles (7.2 km)

Everyone enjoys a good walk in the woods in autumn, and where could be better for taking in those rich, coppery colours than Alderley Edge? Across this abrupt, red sandstone escarpment spread woods of oak, pine, holly, and that king of all autumn trees, the beech. The National Trust has care of these woods now, and this walk takes you to the farthest corner, where a 'cathedral' of beeches, huge trees planted more than two hundred years ago, stands on the slopes of a steep valley. In autumn, their leaves shade from yellow to deepest bronze, and the floor is carpeted with the still-golden leaves of previous years.

Those 'cathedral' beeches are by no means the only ones on this route. At the beginning of the walk, the beeches flanking Artists Lane are equally impressive – and as you walk down that lane, it's fascinating to remember that in one of those tree-clad banks, a gold ingot was found some twenty-five years ago. Maybe you won't come across an ingot on this walk, but similar discoveries have been made elsewhere on Alderley Edge, including caches of jewellery and Roman coins. Other treasures hidden from your gaze are the ancient mine shafts in the slopes, with rich seams of copper and lead. And then there are the legends of the Edge: stories of the wizard, knights and white horses that haunt the caves, and which inspired Alan Garner to write his children's classic *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*. Enjoy your walk, then maybe read the book!



CHESHIRE Year Round Walks

Terrain Forest paths, firm-surfaced tracks, quiet lane.

Map OS Explorer 268 Wilmslow, Macclesfield & Congleton.

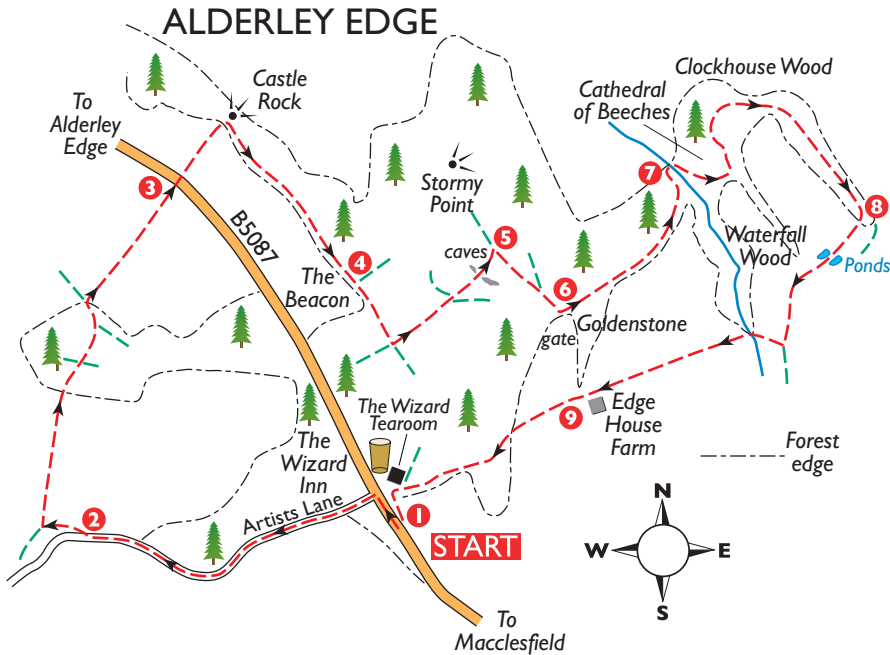
Starting point National Trust Alderley Edge car park (GR SJ 859772).

How to get there & parking In the town of Alderley Edge, follow signs for the B5087 to Macclesfield. The car park is on the left in one mile; a fee is payable; free for National Trust members. **Sat Nav:** SK10 4UB.

Refreshments The Wizard Tearoom, adjacent to the car park, is perfect for an all-day breakfast, a light lunch, or just tea and home-made cake, and is open every day except Monday. The Wizard Inn next door offers an extensive menu. ☎ 01625 584000. www.thewizardofedge.co.uk

The Walk

- 1 From the car park, walk through to the **Wizard Tearoom** and the **Wizard Inn**. Here, cross the road directly into **Artists Lane**, and continue downhill between the banks of splendid beeches.
- 2 At the bottom of the hill, take a bridleway signed off the road on the right. After going through a wooden gate, continue uphill to the right on a broad track, and at the cross-tracks, continue ahead. Reaching the top of the slope, the track bears left to a gate into a field. Do not go through the gate; instead, turn right in front of it, before reaching the edge of the woodland. This path soon becomes a lovely hedged track between fields, and continues to the road.
- 3 Cross the road, and keep directly ahead on a track between fields, soon reaching a fine viewpoint at **Castle Rock**. Apparently, an Earl of Chester decided to build a castle here around nine hundred years ago, but didn't get any further than the foundations. The view you have is to the north, across Manchester, with the Peak District over to the right. Turn right, and continue on the firm path along the edge of the cliff. Eventually, you have a stone wall on your right, and you can see a mound topped with a block of stone ahead. The stone commemorates the beacon that was lit on this site to warn of the approaching Spanish Armada in 1588. There were no trees on the hill at the time!
- 4 From the beacon, take the track straight ahead of you, and at the first cross-tracks, turn left. Continue on this path, ignoring all side turnings, until you arrive at a T-junction, with the **Edge** ahead of you once more. On the way, you



will pass through a sort of ditch with rocky sides. Quarry workers once lived in caves here.

5 To the left at this junction is **Stormy Point**, another rocky viewpoint, but you go to the right, continuing past a track leading back down the slope to reach a wooden gate. Just beyond the gate, you can see a huge stone on the left. This is the **Goldenstone**, a rock of conglomerate, alien to these parts. It is thought it may have been carried here in the Bronze Age.

6 Do not go through the wooden gate, but instead turn left down the slope. Now you are heading into **Waterfall Wood**, named for the cascade in the stream at its heart. Keep ahead, walking downhill on the main path, to reach a T-junction. Turn left here, still going downhill and now with the stream in the deep cleft on your right. At the bottom, with a field ahead, the path bears right to cross the narrow stream on two stepping stones.

7 Now the obvious path climbs, with those splendid 'cathedral' beeches soon appearing on either side. At the top of the hill, bear left with the path, then right very soon afterwards, and continue on the broad track through **Clockhouse Wood**, on the side of the slope. At the lowest point, above **Clockhouse Farm**,



autumn

CHESHIRE Year Round Walks



Looking back over the ponds in Point 8.

a buttressed balcony path takes you over a muddy patch, after which you continue to the top of the hill.

8 Here, go over a stile beside a gate on the right, and continue in the field with a hedge on your right. The path soon takes you between ponds, afterwards reaching a path junction. Turn right on a descending fenced path between fields. Ignore a path on the right, then climb, crossing two stiles to reach **Edge House Farm** at the top of the hill.

9 Cross the wide drive to a narrow track opposite, running between fields again. Where this emerges on a wide track in the woods, turn left, and keep ahead through a wooden gate to reach the car park.

What to look out for –

Caves

There are so many curious historical and legendary sites to be found on Alderley Edge. Pick up the leaflet *What Lies Beneath* from the Wizard Tearoom, and explore some more.



If you have enjoyed this walk

Not far from Alderley Edge is another National Trust property, Quarry Bank Mill. If you take the path to the north of the mill alongside the River Bollin, you will again encounter some really magnificent beeches. Visit the National Trust website (www.nationaltrust.org.uk) for more details.