

7. Cotswolds Way around King's Stanley

Estimated time 5 hours, est. distance 5 miles. Some steep slopes, stiles, mud in bad weather.

From King's Stanley car park, cross the playing fields, pass the MUGA, and bear right to find a waymarker between the floodlights. This is the least muddy route down steps and over a footbridge. Continue right around Manor Farm garden to the road. Look for the Cotswolds Way signs to direct you over fields to Middleyard's Baptist Chapel.

At the **Baptist Chapel** turn left and cross over into **Coombe Lane**, originally known as "Meeting House Lane". Go uphill, over a field, to a stile and signpost at Penn Lane. Turn left up a steep, stony gully next to Brushwood Cottage. Near the top of the gully you might pause in respect for a local man, Tony Alliss, who was killed here in a boundary dispute, July 26th, 1990.

At the signpost turn left and follow the track along the edge of the wood. Pass two houses and cross a tarmac drive. Continue towards Selsley Common along a broad track once used to haul timber from the woods. Look right for a waymarker post pointing off the broad track and uphill to a kissing gate at the edge of the wood.

At the kissing gate go uphill towards a large ash tree at the edge of "Jackdaw Quarry". Continue uphill towards a dip in the crest of the hill and then aim to pass to the right of the tumulus and reach the topograph.

There are seats a little way below the route to help you enjoy the view, birdsong, flowers and gliders. There are spectacular views to the Severn, Malverns, Forest of Dean and Wales. Details can be confirmed at the topograph, which is just beyond "**the Toots**" tumulus. From here you can Selsley Church, which gives the direction of your walk.

Bear left downhill towards **Selsley Church** to find a signpost and gate onto the road. Walk past the church along Pooles Lane, passing Stanley Park and the Scouts' Hut into New Road. At the signpost take the stile left into a field and follow waymarkers downhill towards Ebley Mill, crossing the **A419** at the pedestrian controlled traffic lights. Now you have 3 choices:

a) A signpost directs you left onto the **cycle track**. A noisy, but pleasant, stile-free, all-weather walk which takes you to **Ryeford** past old varieties of fruit trees planted as a community orchard.

b) In **dry weather** after c.100 yards of cycle track follow footpath signs left under the bridge to a stile (1). Cross the **water-meadow** to the weir and **Ebley Mill**. Go around the mill and turn left onto the towpath. Between Ebley Mill and Oil Mill Bridge is a really fine example of canal side redevelopment.

c) In **wet weather** continue along the cycle track to the next stile (2). Turn right along, Lane's Siding, an former railway line, to the river and cross the bridge into an area of new houses. Continue up Bridge Road, past **Snow Mill** to a T-junction with **Stroudwater Canal** at Oil Mills Bridge. From here you can see how worthwhile it is to restore the canal with fine examples of our industrial heritage. Snow Business International Ltd. makes artificial snow for films like "Harry Potter", but in this restored corn and oil mill SBI has transformed a ruin into a really attractive area with sculptures and improvements for wildlife. To the right of the bridge is Bridge House, which shows the wealth of former mill owners. If you peep over the red brick wall of Holly Tree House you can see an unusual circular weir.

Follow the **towpath** left, where the **restored canal** creates a really attractive easy walk to **Nowhere Locks** and on to **Ryeford Road bridge**. Turn left, cross the **A419** at the lights, and continue towards King's Stanley.

Pass **Stanley Mill** and go over the bridge. On the left, past **Old Brook House**, pick up the **Cotswolds Trail** again. Follow the track through 2 kissing gates. The next section has mud & nettles. Pass through another gate by a leylandii hedge around **Manor Farm**. The signpost may be unreliable. You can divert right to return across the footbridge and playing fields to the car park, or continue around the farm, right along Pigg (Peck) Street, past the Puggis Field and school to the main road. Turn right for **King's Stanley** and "**the King's Head**".

