

Winchcombe Walkers are Welcome

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Walk Number 12

Three hills walk

A circular walk visiting the hills of Langley, Nottingham and Cleeve. Best walked in clear weather.

Distance: 12.5 miles/ 20 km

Duration 5 hours

Difficulty: Strenuous

Start/finish: Back Lane car park, Winchcombe. (Grid ref: SP 025285)
£1 all day. Toilets 20p in car park.

OS maps: Outdoor Leisure 45, Landranger 163

Refreshments: Apple Tree Inn, Woodmancote, Rising Sun Inn, Cleeve Hill.

Ascent: 2027 feet/618 metres

Navigation: Generally straightforward although Cleeve Hill may be awkward in fog or low cloud. In these conditions we recommend the use of a compass.

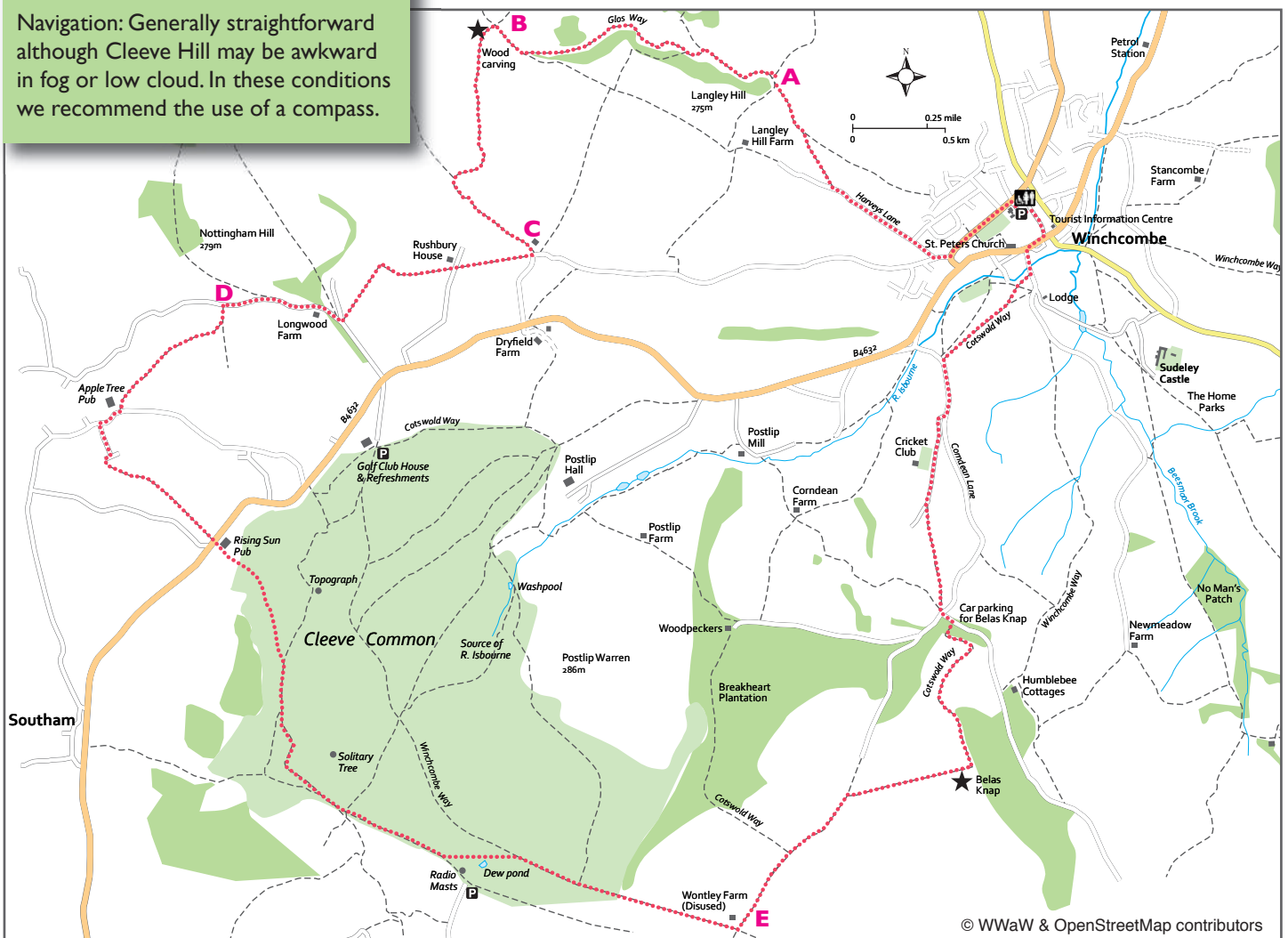
Leave Back Lane car park via the entrance into Back Lane. Turn left and follow the road past the Saxon mound on your left until you reach a road junction, the car park of the Corner Cupboard pub is on your left. Turn right and in about 50 metres turn right again into Harvey's Lane. The road steepens and shortly after passing Enfield Farm, bear right through a gate signposted Winchcombe and Gloucestershire Ways.

Follow the path diagonally up the rising hillside, pause at the metal gate halfway up the field and turn round to admire wonderful views of Cleeve Hill, Winchcombe, the Cotswold scarp and the South Midlands plain incorporating Evesham before proceeding to the top of the hill and a gate.

Go through a gate and continue ahead along a track for about 100 metres. **A** The right of way bears right through a metal

gate and then immediately left through another gate to return you to the same track. Now contour around the hillside and enjoy views to the north of the wooded hills of Alderton and Dumbleton and the whale-back Bredon Hill as they come into view. Stay close to the trees, and bear left at a junction of paths to follow the Gloucestershire Way, avoiding the temptation to follow the Winchcombe Way down to your right. A couple of springs create muddy patches, made worse by animals in wet weather.

Pass through a wooden gate bearing a 'Stanley Farm' notice and carry on along a level path. At the junction with a bridleway by a corner of a fence, turn right as the path drops away in the direction of a tin barn. Walk towards this, taking in the views of Dixton Hill and the Malvern Hills beyond Tewkesbury. To their right, and more



distant, are the Abberley and Clee Hills.

Before the metal barn is reached, and at the foot of the slope, turn left **B** and pass through a metal gate and continue on the obvious path ahead which bends slightly left heading towards an electricity pylon partly hidden by trees, ignoring the more obvious pylon down the hill to your right. Walk past an old man and his dog cleverly carved from an old tree trunk. Pass through a metal gate and continue ahead to an electricity pylon.

Here turn right and follow the field boundary to a wooden gate, which you pass through and turn left. Follow the new rustic fence towards farm buildings. In the third field, and by the buildings, the right of way leaves the field by a metal gate and re-enters the same field by another gate about 25 metres further on **C**.

Head uphill towards Rushley House on the hilltop, climbing over three stiles. Pass through a gate just to the left of the farmhouse, cross the road and continue uphill to a metal gate, go through and walk ahead across a small field to a stone stile. Cross and bear diagonally left to a stile in a stone wall. Climb this and turn right. Follow the footpath straight ahead then left along the field boundary to a stile leading to a junction of ways. Turn briefly left and then right to follow the tarmac roadway downhill, passing Longwood Farm on your left.

Follow the road over two cattle grids to a stone stile opposite a house on your right **D**. Here there are expansive views across Cheltenham. Climb the stile, cross a small field to climb another stile, follow the field boundary around to the right and climb a further stile next to a farm gate. Turn immediately left and head downhill. Ignore a left turn by a junction of a fence and bear right, down through the woods. At a junction of paths in a clearing, go straight on then bear right. Cross the boardwalk and go through a kissing gate next to a stone stile, into a field and continue downhill to a gate. Pass through the gate, cross the track, immediately pass through a second gate and bear left. In about 50 metres cross a kissing gate and stile then walk downhill to pass through a kissing gate into the Apple Tree Inn car park. About 5½ miles have now been walked.

Cross the car park and turn right onto a road. Turn left into Hillside Gardens. At the end turn right and almost immediately left to pass between houses into a field via a stile. Walk uphill, crossing one stile before reaching a further stile at the top leading onto the busy B4632 road and opposite the Rising Sun Inn. Climb the stile and the look

back to take in the views of the Malvern Hills and Nottingham Hill to the right, with its open flat top.

Carefully cross the road and head up Rising Sun Lane. Cross the cattle grid leading onto Cleeve Common. Continue in the same direction and just before a group of mature trees bear right to follow paths climbing the western face of Cleeve Hill, eventually gaining the ridge line, and walk towards Castle Rock, often the haunt of climbers. There are excellent views across the racecourse towards Cheltenham and a more distant Gloucester and the tree-topped May Hill is prominent on the horizon. On a clear day views extend to Hay Bluff and the Black Mountains.



Solitary Tree

From Castle Rock aim for a solitary tree (bearing 130°) and then continue towards the radio masts (bearing 120°).

From the radio masts, ignore the obvious path alongside the fence ahead, and look for a low fence in front of some bushes and walk towards the left hand edge of the fence (bearing 110°), passing to the right of an enclosed dew pond.



Dewpond

Continue in the same direction towards a post by some bushes, noticing a Winchcombe Way waymark where the route meets a wider grassy path joining from the left. Turn right and follow the Winchcombe Way marker to reach a metal gate (Grid ref 001247) leading you off Cleeve Common.

Walk towards electricity pylons along a good track. To the left can be seen the first hill of the day, Langley Hill, with the South Midland plain beyond. At the disused farm



Belas Knap

buildings (Wontley Farm) **E** turn left and after 1 kilometre turn right at a Cotswold Way signpost and walk to Belas Knap.

Here, climb the stone stile, pass through the enclosure, and turn left to pass under trees. Upon emerging into the open there are wonderful views of Winchcombe and Sudeley Castle below to your right.

Continue downhill keeping close to the wall on your right. Follow the field boundary, bearing left at the bottom, to come to a metal gate on your right hand side. Pass through and walk down a sunken track beneath trees to a road. Turn left before the stile and follow the Cotswold Way through a gate to meet a lane. Continue ahead through a gate and walk down the grassy hillside. At a gate turn right onto a tarmac drive, passing Winchcombe Cricket Club on your left. Pass through a gate onto a road and turn left.

In about 400 metres pass through a gate on your right to enter a field, just after the Cotswold Way. Walk diagonally across the field to a gate in the opposite corner. The tower of St Peter's is now prominent ahead. At the gate, go through, passing to the left of a football pitch.

Cross the River Isbourne by the footbridge. At the end of a path bear left and immediately right, and walk into Queens Square. Continue walking in the same direction through Abbey Terrace until you reach Cowl Lane on your left (opposite Lloyds Bank). Turn up Cowl Lane which leads you to Back Lane car park and your starting-point.

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Dew pond - an artificial pond usually sited on the top of a hill, intended for watering livestock, despite its name the water is collected from rainwater.

Belas Knap Long Barrow - one of the finest Neolithic long barrows in Gloucestershire, built about 3000 B.C. Look for the false entrance and side chambers.