

Winchcombe Walkers are Welcome

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Walk 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

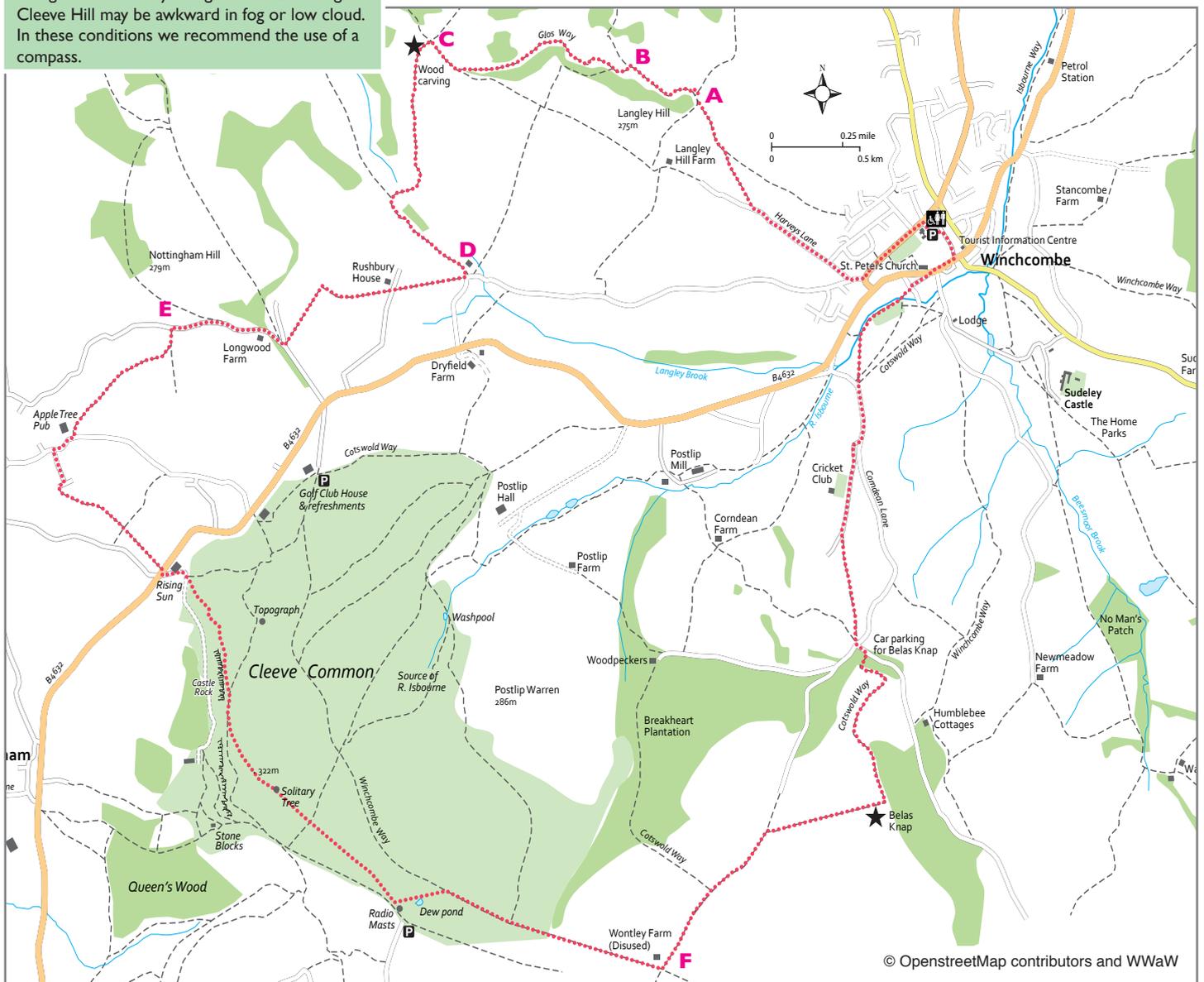
Navigation: Generally straightforward although Cleeve Hill may be awkward in fog or low cloud. In these conditions we recommend the use of a compass.

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

Follow the path diagonally up the hillside, through a gate halfway up the field (*wonderful views of Cleeve Hill, Winchcombe, and the Cotswold scarp*). Proceed to a gate in the top corner of the field. Continue through and diagonally uphill to another gate. Turn right along the track for approx 60 metres to a field gate **A**.

The right of way bears right through a field gate and then immediately left through another gate to return you to the same track. Follow signpost for 'Far Stanley' along the path around the hillside and enjoy views to the north of the wooded hills of Alderton and Dumbleton and Bredon Hill as they come into view. Stay parallel to the trees, and bear left at a post, **B** by the junction of paths to follow the Gloucestershire Way, avoiding the temptation to follow the Winchcombe Way ahead.

Pass through a field gate and continue ahead signposted Far Stanley, along this section springs can create muddy patches, made worse by animals in wet weather. The path can become indistinct but you



need to head towards the top left corner of the field to a wooden gate.

Pass through the gate with 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 metal barn. Go through a field gate walking towards the barn. *Take in the views of Dixton Hill and the Malvern Hills beyond Tewkesbury.*

At the foot of the slope turn left; **C** go through a metal gate and continue ahead. Walk past an old man and his dog cleverly carved from an old tree trunk on your left. Pass through a metal gate and continue ahead to a fork in the track; take the left fork following the fence on your left. You meet a field gate on your left; ignore this and continue ahead keeping in the same field and follow the left hand field boundary to meet a field gate. Go through and straight on up a slight slope before descending and passing under some overhead electricity cables.

Enter the next field and turn right beside a pylon, follow the field boundary to a wooden gate, go through and turn left. Follow the split rail fence beside 'Frog Wood' to reach a field gate. Go through and cross the field to another field gate. Enter the next field and two gates appear ahead in the hedgerow on your left by farm buildings. The right of way leaves the field by the first gate. Go through and turn right along the track to a lane and re-enter the same field by another gate **D**.

Head uphill towards Rushley House on the hilltop, climbing over three stiles before bearing left to another stile. Cross and go over a footbridge and head for a gate to the left of the farmhouse. Cross the road to join a concrete parking area, turn left and immediate right and continue uphill to a metal gate. Go through and bear diagonally left to a stile in a stone wall. Cross and turn right to follow the footpath ahead then left along the field boundary to a gate 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 for approx 0.5 mile (0.8km) over two cattle grids to a house on the right (Slades Farm) **E**. *Here there are expansive views across Cheltenham.* Turn left over the stone stile, cross a small field to another stile, cross and follow the right hand field boundary around to the right to a stile next to a field gate. Go over and turn immediately left and head downhill. Ignore a left turn by a junction of a fence and bear right, down through

the woods ignoring side paths. Turn right 50 metres before a fence, to follow a path which splits, both bring you to the same gate. Cross the boardwalk, go through the gate into a field and continue downhill (ignore a gate on the left) to a gate by a stable. Go through the gate, cross the track, immediately pass through a second gate and bear left. In about 50 metres go through a gate and stile then walk downhill through a 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 (no.35) into a field via a gate. Bear left and walk uphill towards a wooden gate, go through and continue uphill, the slope steepens and walk towards a post; continue uphill to reach a gate by the B4632 road opposite the Rising Sun Inn. *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. Go through the gate beside a cattle grid leading onto Cleeve Common. Continue in the same direction onto a grassy path and just after a group of mature trees turn right to follow paths climbing the western face of Cleeve Hill. Bear left and eventually you reach the ridge line. here turn right and follow a grassy track and walk towards Castle Rock, (several metal posts sticking out of the ground) often the haunt of climbers. *There are excellent views across the racecourse towards Cheltenham, 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.*

From Castle Rock walk past a Cotswold Way post and golf green before bearing left and 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 a fenced dew pond.

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

Cross the stone stile, pass through the ancient monument, over another stile and turn left through a gate 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 to a gate. Go through and follow the field boundary, bearing left at the bottom, to come to a gate on your right hand side. Pass through and walk down a sunken track beneath trees to the 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. Go through a gate and turn left along the road.

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 far 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. Turn up Cowl Lane which leads you to Back Lane car park and the start of the walk.

Places of interest

Cleeve Common - site of an Iron Age hillfort, the common is an extensive area of unimproved limestone grassland on the Cotswold escarpment.

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.

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WWaW hope you enjoy the walk, however the walk is undertaken at your sole risk and WWaW have no responsibility for loss, damage, injury or interpretation. Every possible care has been taken to ensure the information given was accurate at the time of creation.