



A circular walk from Cranham through woodland, a rural estate now a National Trust property and commons.

**Distance:** 7.2km/4½ miles with an up and down of 278m/912 ft.

**Time:** 2½ hours

**Start:** Cranham School (SatNav GL4 8HT) park on the road SO 893125

Compostable toilets at the Ebworth Centre during office hours.

**Route:**

Walk up the track at the side of the school then bear right and walk along the edge of the common onto a road down to Brook Farm, looking for a footpath to the left just before the farm entrance, and follow this footpath behind a barn, round and down to a stream.

Cross the stream (trout ponds on your right) and take the bridleway ahead up into Saltridge Wood. Walk to a junction with four paths ahead and take the path on the left uphill and round to the left. **1**

After approx ¼ mile (0.4km) at a crosstrack at the edge of the wood, **2** turn right and go downhill into the woods.

After approx 600 metres take a footpath to the left **3**, following the woodland edge with an open field on the right.

After another 150 metres approx; at a fork follow the path to the right, staying along the woodland edge. Continue to a cross path and take the right fork, still keeping along the woodland

edge. Continue to an angled cross track **4** and go up to the left following an overhead power line on wooden posts.

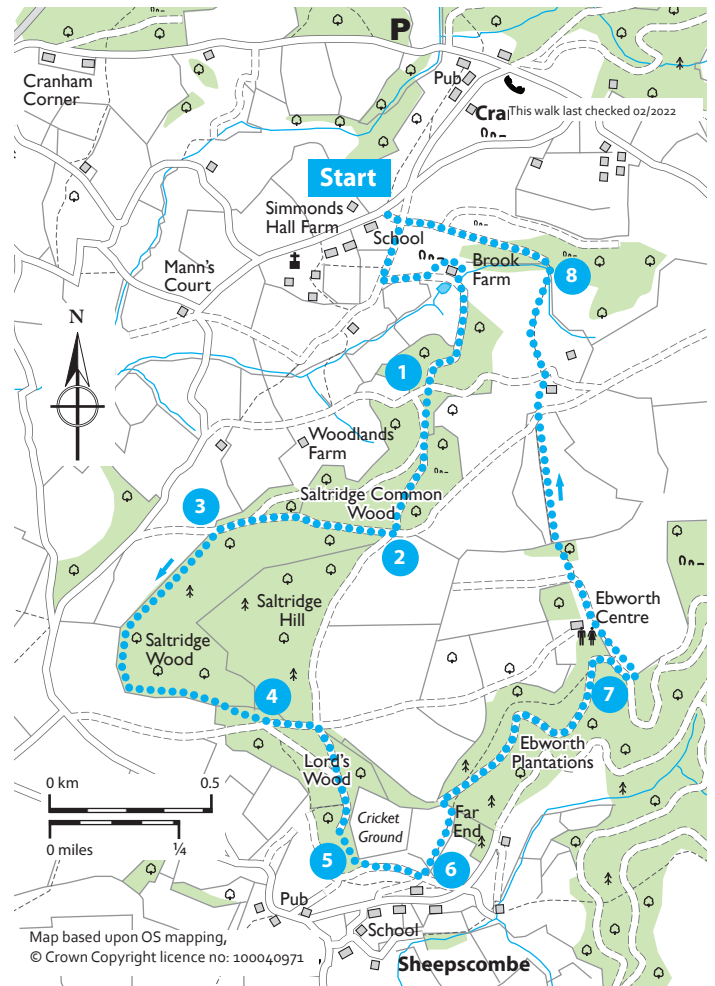
After a short but steep climb reach a T-junction and go right, back into Lords Wood.

Almost immediately is another fork - take the bridleway to the right, downhill ignoring any footpaths to the right (these bring you to a stile). Emerge from the woods on to Sheepscombe Common. *In May & June find time to look for the many orchids growing here.* At the fork, go left along the top edge of the common to pass the entrance to the cricket ground where Laurie Lee used to play. **5**

Continue down the track passing under an overhead power line, and turn immediately left onto an footpath uphill, going through a gate back onto Sheepscombe common. **6**

Keep to the path along the edge of the common to enter the woodland of Ebworth plantation through a gate.

Follow the broad track uphill over a cross track and merge later with a track from the left. Continue to a fork, going right to merge with a track on your right and go uphill to a hard left hairpin to see a sculpture of John Workman **7**. Now complete the hairpin to the left and approach the



buildings of the Ebworth Centre. As you reach the buildings continue straight on through the yard, then as the road goes right take the hand gate on the left.

Now continue ahead through a series of gates into woodland. Exit the woodland into a meadow and follow the waymark down towards the left boundary where you will see two exits. Take the one on the right, going through gates into a second

& third meadow, (house on right), down the right side to a stream at the field corner.

Go right out of the field **8** then left, through a field gate, up a sloping track and then through two gates onto Cranham Common. Continue ahead back to the school and starting point.

See the next page for more details about the walk.

## Walks With Stiles

# Cranham via Sheepscombe circular



### The Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods National Nature Reserve

offers you some of Britain's finest beechwoods and limestone grasslands. A volunteer-run Bioblitz in 2013 recorded 1039 different species in 28 hours. In the total were 76 mollusc species, 23 arachnid, 43 bird, 94 insect, 297 lepidoptera, 45 fungus.

Lord's and Lady's Woods are generally held to be named for Henry VIII and Ann Boleyn who visited the area.

**Cranham and Sheepscombe Commons** (SSSI) are first class examples of unimproved limestone grassland, featuring an array of grasses and wild flowers, including pyramidal & lesser spotted orchids, common rock-rose and butterflies. Find time in summer to explore before continuing your walk.

The grazing of the commons by Welsh Black & Galloway cattle all year round, managed in a partnership between the National Trust and Natural England, helps keep the grassland open by preventing the development of scrub and woodland.



**Sheepscombe** Reverend Hugh Stowell, in his book *The Peaceful Valley* (1825), claimed that in the early days of the 19th Century, Sheepscombe was “*a wild and lawless place*” where some 700 people lived in poverty and ignorance with scant regard for each other's welfare. In 1820, Agnes Neville despaired of “*this Godless place with its 14 ale houses*” – today, it has just the one!

**Sheepscombe School** has existed for 200 years, established in 1820 by Sheepscombe's first vicar Charles Neville and his wife Agnes, and built on its present site in 1822.



The cricket field is perched above the village with a fine view over the valley – Laurie Lee was once a regular player here.

## Ebworth Estate



Now their HQ in the Cotswolds, the estate was gifted to the National Trust by John Workman, descended from a long line of timber and woodland owners – the land was bought in 1901 by John Workman's grandfather. In 1976 the wood was recognised as a National Nature Reserve and named "Workman's Wood" in honour of the family. It comprises 120 hectares of steep sided valleys which encourage long straight timber with few branches, and therefore few knot-holes – ideal for furniture making.