

Little Sodbury and the Ploughboy's bible



A short but fascinating walk taking you back to England in the Iron Age, the Roman era and the troubled times of Henry VIII. Plus wide views to Wales.

Distance: 4 km/2½ miles with a climb and descent of 80m/260ft

Time: 2 hours

Start: Old Sodbury (on A432 near Chipping Sodbury) at St John's Church. ST 756 817.

Limited parking nearby. The Dog Inn on the A432.

Route:

Go through the lych gate and cross St John's churchyard for a wonderful view across the Vale of Berkeley.

Through the church kissing gate bear diagonally right on the grass downhill towards (but not through) a kissing gate **1** in the hedge at the bottom. Thirty metres before the kissing gate turn right to head north alongside a large depression on your left which was a medieval fishpond. Carry on through a series of gates until you see a lane ahead. The gate is a little to your right under a pylon **2**.

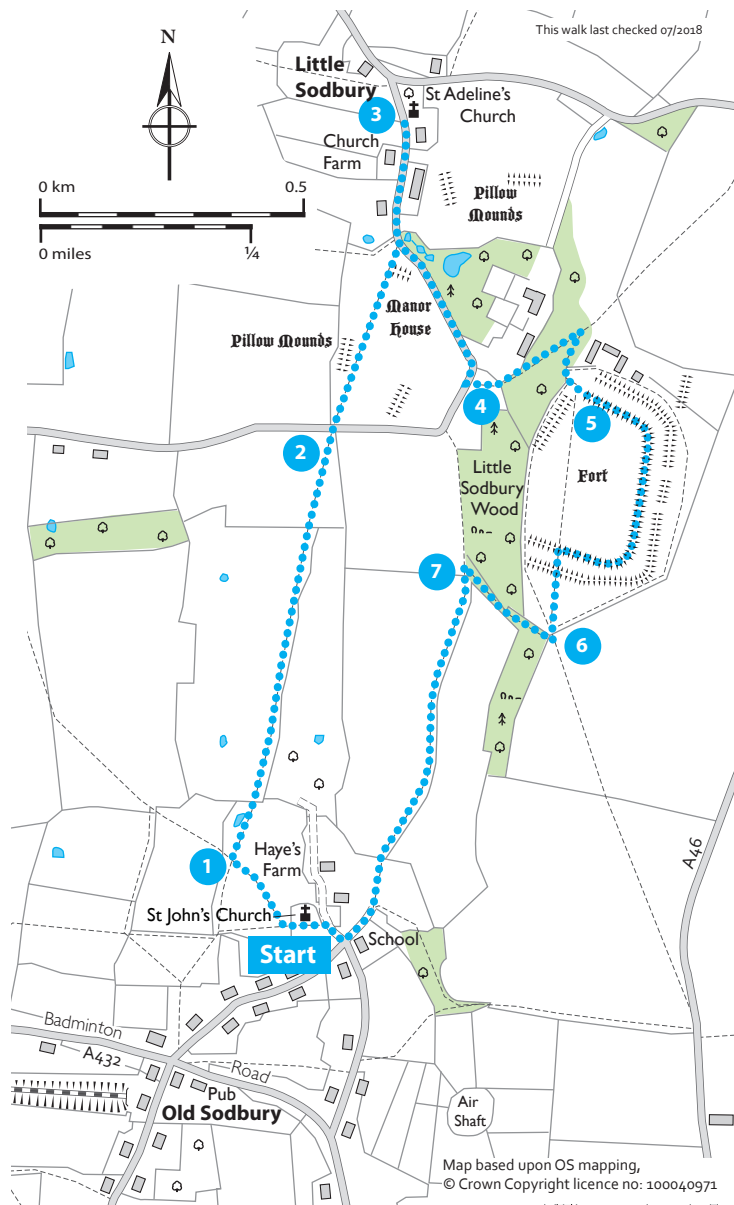
Cross the lane into a meadow and head to the right of a white house behind a hedge. Take the gate onto a lane ahead into Little Sodbury and St Adeline's Church **3**. It's only 150 years old, but is based on the medieval chapel of Little Sodbury Manor, where William Tyndale was chaplain and tutor while starting to translate the New Testament into English. (See page 2 for more of his story).

Don't leave the church without reading his letter from a Flemish prison cell (asking for a warm coat, a candle and his Hebrew bible) before he was burned at the stake. It hangs on a nail beside the lectern.

From the church go back along the lane (following Cotswold Way signs) as it bends left and climbs to two stone gateways on the left. Just past them **4** take a wooden gate on your left into a small orchard and follow the Cotswold Way into the woods and a short climb towards the fort above you. When the slope eases, turn right on an easy path below a stone building, through another gate and you are at the entrance to the fort **5** (See page 2 for more information).

The Cotswold Way goes straight across the fort but you can walk round the high ramparts on your left and rejoin the Cotswold Way on the far side **6** at a gate. The path drops quickly out of the wood and turns sharp left **7**.

From here it's an easy walk with views on your right. The next gate leads into a short muddy path between the school and the church back to the start.



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.