

Miles Without Stiles

Spelsbury and Dean Common

A walk to Dean Common and Dean Grove, an area of wet ancient woodland recorded in the Domesday Book.

Distance: 4.3km km/ 2³/₄ miles with and up and down of 47 m /154 ft

Time: 2 hours

Start: Spelsbury, 1 miles north of Charlbury on B4026. SP 349215

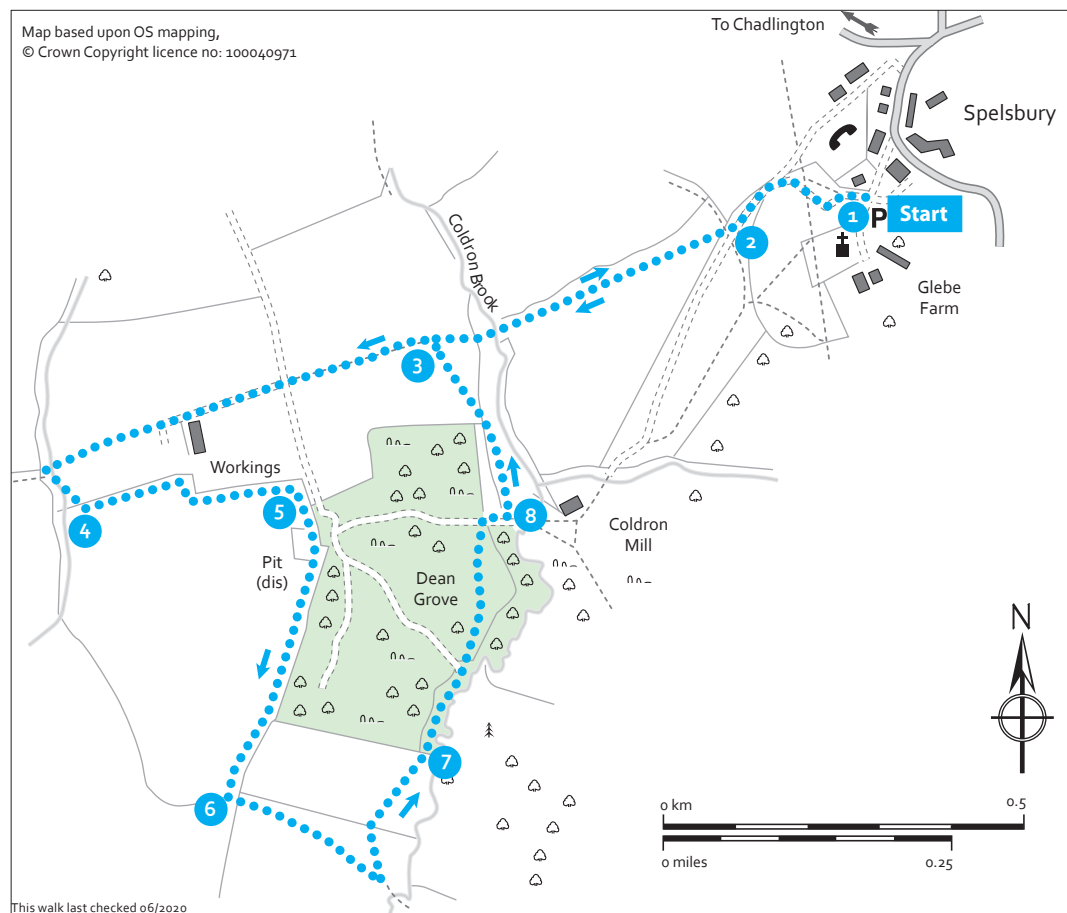
Route:

In Church Lane, take the waymarked footpath **1** on the right just before the church. Ignore the gate ahead after 100m and continue along the path as it curves to the right to meet a wider track. Go left along this and after crossing a cattle grid **2** look for a gate on the right.

Go straight ahead through this keeping close to the field edge on your right, at the far side of this field turn left to keep the hedge on your right. After two gates enter a large field. (Note that this is the point from which you retrace your steps at the end of the walk) **3**.

This area is a reclaimed landfill site and in summer there are many limestone grassland flowers. Continue straight on slightly uphill until you reach a rough track. Go straight on through the gate to enter Dean Common. There are ponds and wetland areas hidden by the trees which attract birds and other wildlife.

Carry on the wide grassy track



until you go underneath some overhead wires. At this point look out for a path going off to the left and take this as it winds towards a small footbridge **4**.

Go over this to leave the common and turn left to follow the field edge to a stony track. **5** Turn right to walk along this track beside the woodland and when you reach the end of the woodland look out for a kissing gate on your left **6**.

Continue along the left hand edge of the field to a gate on the left which you go through to cross a rough grass area to

another gate **7**.

You now enter Dean Grove which is probably a 10% remnant of the woodland recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. Groves were land set aside for the growth of the trees to provide timber for firewood, fencing and dwellings. Today many species of woodland trees and flowers can be seen.

The path follows close to the right-hand margin of the wood, alongside a stream, and after passing through a gate continues straight ahead till

going off to the right to enter a field **8**.

Turn left here keeping close to the woodland and you will reach a gate. Continue ahead for about 150m until on your right you see **3** the way you came and your return route to Spelsbury.