

LECKHAMPTON WALK

7¼ mls or 9 mls



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

This walk of about 9 miles [with an optional short cut that will reduce this distance by 1¾ miles] starts at Crickley Hill Country Park and takes you through some beautiful Cotswold countryside in the parish of Coberley. The full route will take you about 4 hours to enjoy. It explores farmland, a limestone valley, commons high above the Severn Vale and Beech woodlands along the Cotswold edge.

The route is clearly waymarked all the way from Crickley Hill Country Park. Simply follow the arrows marked Crickley Hill Walks on the round discs with a RED background. [Arrows with a green background show the way for the shorter Birdlip walk.] The colour of the arrow itself tells you what kind of public right of way you are on – yellow for a footpath and blue for a bridleway.

1 Dew pond! Contrary to what their name implies these ponds are not filled by dew, but by the falling rain. Before the days of mains water fed troughs, dew ponds provided virtually the only source of drinking water for livestock in the dry uplands of the Cotswolds. These circular dug ponds were lined and “puddled” with clay, then paved with Cotswold stone to prevent livestock from piercing the clay. This dew pond was probably constructed in the early 1850’s.

Long since abandoned and almost filled in, the dew pond was cleared out during the summer months of 2002/3 by Gloucestershire County Council park wardens and Cotswold Voluntary Wardens. Nearly 50 tonnes of silt and dumped material was cleared out by hand!!

2 A New Inn? The inn at the top of Crickley Hill first opened its doors to travellers in 1777 when it was called the New Inn. The name was later changed to the Air Balloon probably to celebrate man’s pioneering first flights by hot air-balloon in the 1780’s.

3 Barrow Wake. The view over the Severn Vale at this point is considered to be one of the finest in the Cotswolds, and on a clear day you can see the Brecon Beacons in Wales almost 60 miles away. The site derives its name from the discovery by quarry men in 1879 of a 2000-year-old Iron Age burial site! Details about this discovery and other points of interest in the area are given at the viewpoint information panels beside the footpath at the car park edge.

Cover photo: *The Devil's Chimney*

4 Radio Silence. The Birdlip Radio Station on Shab Hill was established by the Air Ministry early on in the Second World War and was later used for air traffic control. Today the buildings are used by several private firms. At this point you are 945ft above sea level.

5 Cuckoopen Barn. In 1982 the world’s largest straw rick was built in the yard at Cuckoopen Barn. It contained over 40,000 bales and raised £3000 for charity.

6 Woodland Trust. Part of the surrounding farmland is owned by the Woodland Trust. Planted in a number of stages, the 96 acres of native tree species will create a woodland important for recreation, wildlife and timber production.

7 Coberley village was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. In those days it had 1,200 acres of arable, pasture and woodland, and was occupied by 28 families. It was valued at £8! In Saxon times it was spelt Cubberley which meant “Cuthbert’s meadow” or “clearing”. A short walk from the village centre is Coberley Church and Court. Very little remains of the original court which was built by the Berkeley family in the 13th century. This fell into disrepair and was eventually knocked down in the 1790’s. The old village which had been sited nearby, was also abandoned and rebuilt in its present position around the green.



Coberley Church

N.B. The walk involves crossing stiles and in winter sections of the footpath can be muddy. (It is not suitable for young children in push chairs). The weather can change suddenly in the Cotswolds so please carry adequate wet weather clothing. If you have a dog with you please keep it under close control at all times.

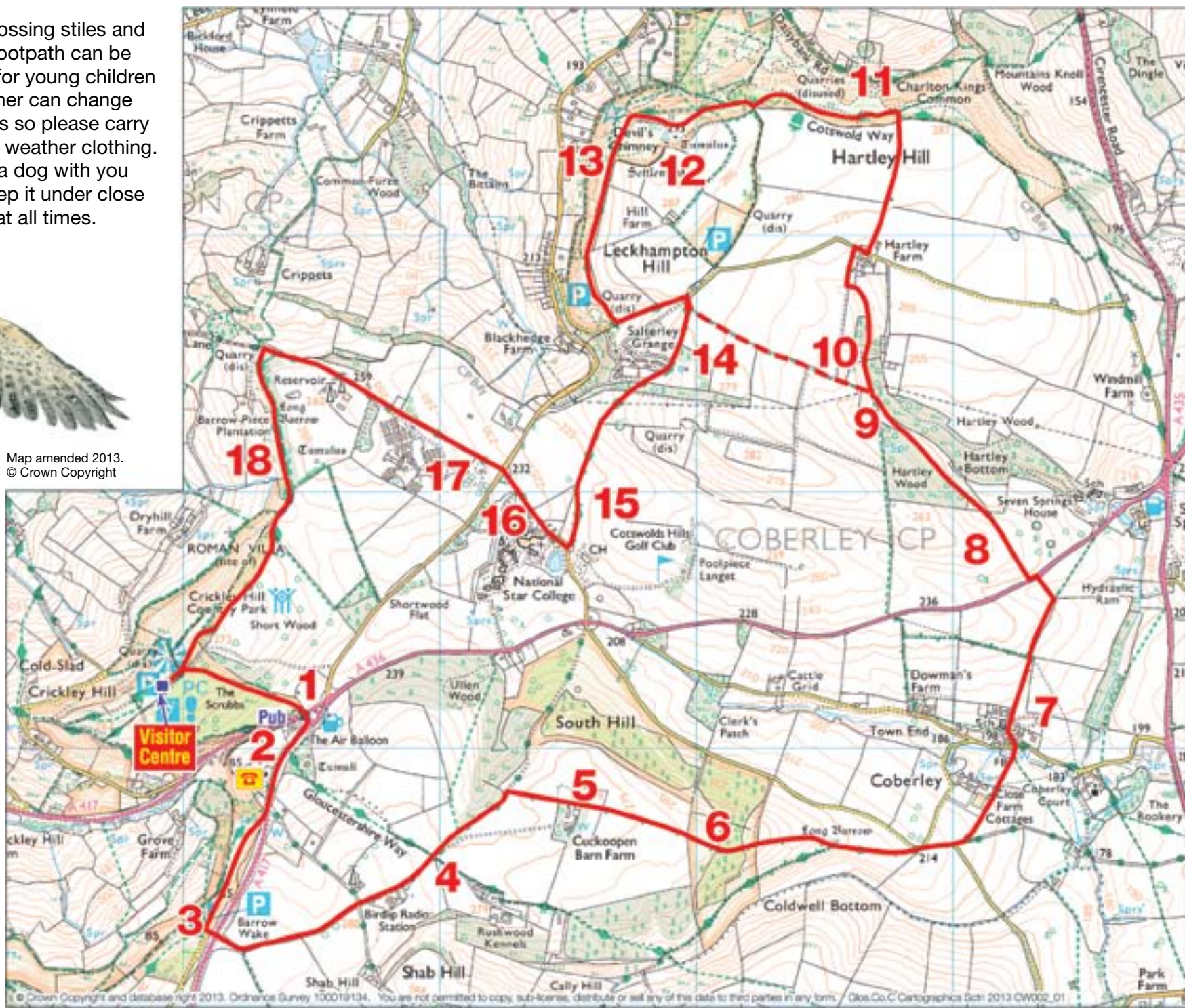


Kestrel



Vipers Bugloss

Map amended 2013.
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Seven Springs House

8 The impressive **Seven Springs House** can be seen from this point in the woodland across the valley. The house was built in the 1850's by William Hall and named after the nearby Seven Springs, which were once thought to be the source of the river Thames. [This is now generally agreed to be at Coates near Cirencester]. The house was used by Cheltenham Ladies College during the Second World War and as a girls prep' school until the mid 1960's and later as a school for children with special needs.

9 **Short cut.** At this point you are almost at the half way distance point of the walk. To shorten your walk by $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles you may bear left at this point and keep on the foot path that takes you straight up the hill, passing underneath the power cables, carrying straight on this foot path until it rejoins the original route just above Salterley Grange. *[If your legs permit however it's well worth the extra $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles to stay on route for the spectacular views and scenery of Leckhampton Hill].*

10 **Old pump house.** Birmingham City Corporation sunk a well here to supply fresh water to the nearby Salterley Grange Sanatorium. The well is 148 ft deep with a high water level of around 18ft in winter, dropping to less than 1ft in summer. The pump was originally powered by paraffin. Today the well supplies water to Hartley Farm.

11 **Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common.** This high limestone upland provides the people of Cheltenham with close access to almost 250 acres of Cotswold countryside. There are spectacular views across the Severn Vale to the Malvern Hills and Welsh Mountains. During the early part of the last century there were riots on the hill to protest against the blocking of rights of way.

12 **Leckhampton Hill** is the site of an Iron Age hill fort. A rampart enclosed an area of about 6 acres with an entrance protected by two semi-circular guard chambers. Today all that can be seen is a grassy bank, the remains of the timber-laced stone walls which formed the rampart providing the main defences for the site.

13 **Leckhampton Hill** has been a source of good quality building stone for centuries. It was the rapid expansion of Cheltenham as a spa town in the early 1800's that caused a dramatic increase in production from the many quarries in the area. The strange column of rock known as Devil's Chimney was probably made by quarrymen as a practical joke.

14 **Salterley Grange** was built as a private house in 1862. It was sold to Birmingham City Corporation in 1907 and converted to a T.B. sanatorium. In the 1960's it became a chest hospital for the Cheltenham side of the County. Today it is a private home.



Pump House



*Marbled
White
butterfly*

15 The Cotswold Hills Golf Club was formed in 1902 and originally co-existed with Cheltenham Golf Club at its Cleeve Hill course. In 1976 the club moved to its present 150 acre site here at Ullenwood.

16 The National Star College (Ullenwood Manor). Nothing to do with galaxies or solar systems, the Victorian Manor House is now a residential college of further education for students with a physical disability.

17 Greenway Lane and Ullenwood Camp. Having crossed the B4070 the straight lane ahead of you is known as Greenway Lane. This follows the line of an ancient droving road once used to drive sheep between estate lands at nearby Brockworth and the high wolds around Upper Coberley. To the left of Greenway lane is the former Ullenwood Camp. Built as an American army hospital during the Second World War, and later part used as a Civil Defence Training Centre, the site is now privately owned.

18 Cotswold Escarpment. From this point on the edge of the Cotswold Hills there are magnificent views across the Severn Vale. The escarpment is also an important area for wildlife. Plants growing on the thin limestone soils include Wild Thyme, Harebells, Yellow Rock Rose and the beautiful Vipers Bugloss. Look out too for the many types of butterflies that visit the flowers.



Wild Thyme