

The Golden Ball - Lower Swell



A Circular Walk from Lower Swell

WALK I

This walk is ideal for anyone who doesn't like steep hills, as the slopes, where there are any, are gentle. Most of the route follows quiet tracks and lanes, with a small stretch of field walking towards the end. It starts from Lower Swell, looping out into open countryside along lanes until turning onto Condicote Lane, which follows the course of an old Roman road for about two miles to reach Condicote. From there the route follows the Gloucestershire Way to reach Upper Swell then returns to Lower Swell via quiet field paths.

This walk should take around 3 and a 1/2 hours.

From the Green at Lower Swell head along the main road in a Southerly direction, passing a telephone box on your right, until after a few more yards a turning to the left signposted 'The Slaughters' is seen. Take this turning and follow the lane ahead for about a third of a mile until arriving at a fork in the road.

Take the right fork, which is noticeably less busy, and follow it as it climbs gently and steadily to the summit of a low hill. At a road turning off to the right which is signposted to Cheltenham keep straight ahead and, as the road begins to descend, look for a footpath on your right opposite a track to the left signposted 'The Old Stables. Turn right here and follow the wall to your right for a short way to reach a new stile set in the wall.

Cross this into the next field. Turn left, keeping the wall to your left and heading for the edge of a small belt of trees. After cresting the brow of the hill descend towards a waymarked metal gate. Go through this and up the bank opposite, keeping ahead along the field with a belt of trees and wall to your left until you reach another metal gate. Pass through this and through the car park of the house to your right to emerge on a road. Here turn right, heading uphill until, after a couple of hundred yards, you come to a road on your right.

Opposite will be seen an unmarked track with a sign about thirty yards down it 'Unsuitable for motors'. This is Condicote Lane, which follows the lines of Ryknild Street, an ancient Roman road.

Turn down Condicote Lane. Now follows a grand stride of about two miles along this track which undulates gently across two low hilltops, these being the highest points around for some miles. The lane runs in almost a straight line to Condicote and is solid and compact underfoot for almost its entire length.

In the course of reaching Condicote, a small lane is crossed, then the lane rises to reach its highest part, with a trig pillar set by the side of the lane on your left. It is worth pausing here for a few moments to admire the panorama surrounding you. Although at the modest elevation of only 235 metres, this is the highest point in the locality and as such gives long-ranging views over this quiet countryside.

Cross the road and continue down the last stretch of Condicote Lane, which comes to an end by emerging onto a surfaced road. Keep ahead along this road, following it as it bends first right and then left to enter the tiny village of Condicote.

Bear right through the village, keeping the walled and suspiciously wet-looking green to your left - notice the old pump still in place - to leave the village by the road to your right after passing 'Cotswold House'. . Continue up this road for about a hundred yards until a turn to the right is seen signposted 'Upper Swell/Stow on the Wold'. Turn right, here joining the Gloucestershire Way, and keep ahead to the t-junction ahead, here turning left. Follow this pleasant and quiet lane for about a mile, ignoring a fork in the road to your right, passing the entrance to our world famous Donnington Brewery and eventually reaching a road junction.

At this junction turn sharp right, heading downhill past Donnington Brewery - surely one of the best locations ever for a brewery! Cross the small river which feeds the nearby Trout Farm. Keep ahead along this lane, with the river meandering along to your left, until after about half a mile emerging onto the B4077, here turning left into Upper Swell.

Head downhill through the village until, a few yards before the bridge, a footpath signposted to Lower Swell will be seen on the right hand side of the road. Pass through the small gate, then almost immediately through another to then head diagonally right across a pasture towards an unusual squeeze stile. Pass through this and across the next field, aiming for another squeeze stile at the far side. Go through this, turn right and then left through a kissing gate to follow an enclosed path along the left-hand edge two fields.

After going through the last kissing-gate and emerging into an open pasture, keep ahead with a wire fence to your right. Where the fence turns right, again keep ahead across the pasture and aiming to join a fence which encloses a drive coming in from your left. Keep to the line of this fence until a kissing-gate is reached, go through this to join the driveway on the other side. Turn right along the

drive, following it until it turns sharp left just before joining a road.

Here at the turn before the road will be seen a stile in the fence to your right. Climb this and cross the field, making slightly for the left of the church seen ahead. At an electricity pylon look left to see a small way marked gate set into the wall. Pass through this gate, keeping ahead along a short lane between houses to reach a small surfaced road. Here turn left and walk down the road to regain the green at Lower Swell.

Drop in for a drink on your way back to the car and sample the delights of the Donnington Brewery knowing the beers has travelled less than you.