

Walk No 5

Wotton, Wotton Hill, Coombe Lakes (3¼ miles)

Leave The Chipping at the top right-hand corner. Walk down Market Street, turn left into High Street and at the crossroads go straight ahead up Bradley Street. At a junction keep right to reach a main road. Here turn left and, after passing a turning on the right, climb a steep path behind rails on the right. This is the Cotswold Way. Follow this path uphill and through a gate. On reaching a tarmac drive, cross over, climb the steps and go through a gate. Go straight on up the hill. Follow the path up the right-hand side of Wotton Hill, whose summit with its crest of trees is immediately above to the left. For a fine view, climb to the wall surrounding the trees. Observe on the metal gate a plaque giving the history of the trees and the beacon.

Now leave the Cotswold Way (which keeps left up the slope to a stile) and return to the footpath just below the summit, continuing along it and keeping right. Go through a gate and walk through a wooded area with old, overgrown quarries to the left. The path eventually swings right to the remnants of an old stile into Old London Road. Cross the road and climb the stile immediately opposite into Conygre Wood. Follow the path to the left through the wood, passing the Scout Headquarters shortly before you reach a gate leading onto Adey's Lane.

Turn left to a road junction, where there is a public footpath signpost and a stile. Climb this and follow the path to reach a drive, which is an access road to an underground reservoir. Turn right and follow the drive to the reservoir, which is a grassy mound. Cross the stile beside the gate to the left of the structure and go ahead for 50 metres to a telegraph pole, then turn 45° left and proceed steeply down the hillside – do not be tempted to follow the sheep tracks. At the foot of the hill follow the path next to the fence to the left for around 50 metres until you see a stile on the right. Cross the double stiles and continue down the field. You will cross several “strip lynchets”, which are old cultivation terraces, perhaps prehistoric or, more likely, mediaeval and associated with Kingswood Abbey.

Cross a stile just past the three garages to reach a main road. Turn left, and in a few metres go down the lane on the right, sign-posted to Coombe.

In 200 metres, just before a sharp bend to the right, take the footpath on the left behind a fence, passing through a squeeze stile onto an enclosed path. Beyond a wicket gate, walk up a track to the hamlet of Coombe, once a busy centre of the woollen industry. Note “Weaver's Cottage” on the right.

Turn left up the hill as far as the first modern house on the right. At the beginning of its garden, go up the bank and walk up the right-hand side of the garden. This is a public right of way! At the end of the garden go through a small gate into a field and continue across it in the same direction towards the electricity pylon and to a gate in the far left-hand corner. This leads onto a lane.

Turn right down the hill, and when the lane swings right to enter the farm, go straight ahead and down a bridleway and take the first footpath to the right over a stile into a field. Coombe Lakes can be seen on the right, partly obscured by the hedge. These are old millponds covering seven acres. Keep left around the edge of the field, with partial views to the left of the lakes and the renovated Old Grist Mill (which was once a woollen mill and a brewery), until you see a stile on the left (can be muddy). Beyond this a narrow path leads into a drive. Turn right along the drive to a road junction alongside a redbrick building.

Go right and straight ahead up the lane, and when it curves right, turn left through a gate into a field. Keep left, and in the far corner of the field go through the gate and follow a narrow path into a lane

between cottages. When this joins another lane turn left. In 100 metres turn right along the tarmac path (the Cotswold Way), which runs alongside the stream. The building to the right is part of an old mill. There was a woollen mill every quarter mile along this stream in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The path reaches a road at Dyehouse Farm (note the name) and a few metres further on turns left over a bridge to follow the landscaped banks of Dyer's Brook. This path is the Marchesi Walk. Follow the path, keeping left, through cycle barriers to a road.

Turn right and cross the road to view the old Ram Inn, which is the oldest building in Wotton (13th century) but no longer licensed. Continue up the hill and take the second road on the left (Church Street). Note on the left the 17th century Perry and Dawes almshouses; go through the archway to see the courtyard and the tiny chapel. Next door is the Falcon Inn (17th century). Turn right here up Long Street and halfway to the public clock turn left through an archway into Rope Walk, the name indicating its former industrial use. Follow this path to the Chipping.

