

4. Winchcombe and Belas Knap Long Barrow

This scenic and interesting walk takes you from the delightfully unspoilt town of Winchcombe, along Cotswold Way routes old and new, and up to one of the area's most intriguing ancient monuments, Belas Knap Long Barrow. A combination of history and scenery that will leave you eager to discover more of the National Trail and the inspirational landscape through which it runs.

Distance:

5¼ miles or 8.5km. Shorter route avoiding Belas Knap 3½ miles or 5.6km.

Duration:

3 - 4 hrs (Shorter 2 - 3 hours)

Difficulty:

Moderate, some steep sections and stiles.

Public transport:

No. 606 (Cheltenham - Chipping Campden) or W from Cheltenham. (Visit www.travelinesw.com).

Start/Finish:

Grid reference SP 024/282
(OS Explorer sheet OL45)
Postcode GL54 5LL

Refreshments:

Cafés and pubs in Winchcombe.

Parking

Back Lane car park £1 all day.

past the cricket ground on the right, until a fingerpost guides you through a kissing gate on your left. Head on up through the middle of the rolling green fields towards the woods at the top of the hill.

3 The kissing gate at the top is an excellent spot to rest awhile and take in the wonderful views over the town behind you. Once you've caught your breath, go through the gate and leave the Cotswold Way to turn right up the road.

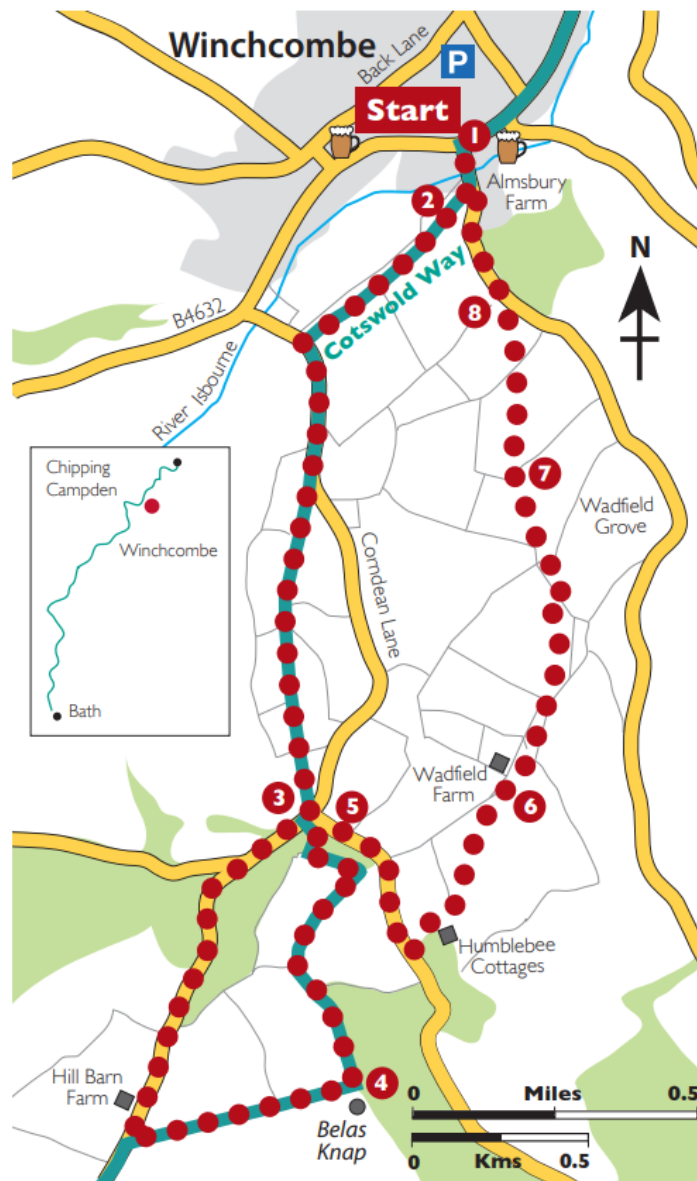
(If you don't fancy the steep climb up to Belas Knap, follow the Cotswold Way path beside the road for 60m then turn left to the stile by the road at point 5.

Bearing left at the next road junction you will climb steadily to pass Hill Barn Farm on your right. Approx 300m after the farm turn left at the fingerpost to rejoin the Cotswold Way and head towards the mound of Belas Knap rising up at the far side of the field and over the stone stile to the barrow.

4 This Neolithic long barrow, or burial chamber first recorded excavation took place in 1863, and since then hundreds of human bones have been uncovered, some of which date back over 6,000 years. It is one of the most intriguing and iconic structures in the Cotswolds, and an excellent place to pause and soak up the past. Leaving the barrow behind, cross over the stone stile at the far side,

go through the kissing gate and follow the Cotswold Way through trees to another kissing gate. Through the gate, follow the right hand field boundary to the bottom of the field and turn left to follow the edge of the wood to a kissing gate on the right. *Please avoid taking an unofficial short cut across the field.* Go down through woods until you meet the road, the Cotswold Way turns left just before the gate.

5 Go through the kissing gate to leave the Cotswold Way. Turn right along the road, taking care of any traffic approaching for approx ¼ mile (0.4km) and take the track on the left signposted 'Winchcombe



Way'. Follow this track, the old route of the Cotswold Way, down past Humblebee Cottages, bearing left at a waymarked post taking in the incredible views eastwards into the heart of the Cotswolds.

6 Follow the path across the field, down past Wadfield Farm buildings on your left to the corner of the field. Follow the narrowing path down between hedges and over two stiles. Again, wonderful views open up below you, this time over Winchcombe and the stunning Sudeley Castle with centuries of royal history and some of the most magical gardens in the country. Continue to follow the waymarked path downhill before turning right

over a stile / footbridge and turn left to the bottom of the field. Cross the footbridge into the next field and diagonally across the field to another footbridge **7**. Cross and enter the next field, cross a track to bear right over the field to a kissing gate, cross the final field to the far corner, passing through a kissing gate onto the road.

8 Turn left, and follow the road back towards point 2, retracing your steps back into Winchcombe. Whatever the time of year, this fascinating, living, breathing town has a wealth of tea rooms, pubs and places of interest ready to welcome enquiring minds and weary walkers. Rest and enjoy!

Points of Interest



Belas Knap Long Barrow

A particularly fine example of a Neolithic long barrow, with a false entrance and side chambers. Excavated in 1863 and 1865, the remains of 31 people were found in the chambers, some bones date back over 6,000 years. The barrow has since been restored.

For more information visit: english-heritage.org.uk (opens in new window)



Sudeley Castle

This remains the only private castle in England to have a queen buried within the grounds - Queen Katherine Parr, the last and surviving wife of King Henry VIII, who lived and died in the castle. Henry himself, Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, Queen Elizabeth I and Richard III have all played a part in Sudeley's story. King Charles I found refuge here during the Civil War, when his nephew Prince Rupert established headquarters at the Castle. Following its 'slighting' on Cromwell's orders at the end of the Civil War, Sudeley lay neglected and derelict for nearly 200 years. Then in 1837, Sudeley was rescued by the wealthy Worcester glove-makers, brothers John and William Dent, who began an ambitious restoration programme, which was continued by their nephew, John Coucher Dent, when he inherited the castle in 1855 and his wife, Emma Brocklehurst.

For more information visit: sudeleycastle.co.uk (opens in new window)

The Cotswold Way National Trail is managed and maintained by Cotswolds National Landscape and the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens
www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk



Photo credits: Belas Knap by John Bromley; Sudeley Castle by Terence Richardson www.picturethisfineartphotography.com