

SWC Walk 246 Kingham to Charlbury

This Cotswolds walk mostly (but not exclusively) follows the Oxfordshire Way (OW) from Kingham to Charlbury and never strays far from the river Evenlode passing through a dreamy countryside of gentle rolling hills, woods and fields that were the inspiration for Tolkien's Hobbitshire. It goes through two attractive Cotswolds villages, Shipton under Wychwood and Ascott under Wychwood which have the beautiful stone cottages in the traditional Cotswold's style.

The OW is a bridleway and the pre-lunch section is well-used by horse riders that can make the going in some places very muddy after rain. Even during a period of dry weather parts of the morning route will be rutted. After lunch the going is much better. The walk is best done and appreciated after a period of dry weather from late April through the summer. The walk is stile-free; access to fields and woods is through kissing gates or farm gates.

Walk checks

1. Wednesday 3 June 2015	Walk checked and up-dated by SWC walking group.

Length	17.6km (11.0m)
Maps	Explorer OL 45, 180 and small part of 191 between Ascott under Wchwood and Charlbury
Toughness	2/10 virtually flat ; 145m of ascent and 165m of descent.
Features	<p>The Oxfordshire Way (OW) A 104km (65 mile) route that winds its way through two areas of outstanding natural beauty, the Cotswolds and the Chilterns. It starts at Bourton in the Water in Gloucestershire and ends at the bank of the River Thames in Henley, Berkshire. The way also connects to Blenheim Park a World Heritage site. For more details about the trail and the different walks you can do in the areas it covers see the Long Distance Walkers web site here.</p> <p>Bruern Abbey You pass this early in the walk. The site was formerly a Cistercian Abbey founded in 1147 but is now a fine baroque country house built in 1740 for the Cope family. A Georgian cottage in the grounds of the house includes a three-bay vaulted chamber which may be a remnant of the original abbey buildings.</p> <p>Shipton under Wychwood This is one of three villages named after the ancient forest of Wychwood. The de Langley family were hereditary keepers of the forest and have been associated with the area since the 14th century.</p>

	<p>Ascott under Wychwood Named after the ancient forest of Wychwood the parish church of Holy Trinity Church of England was built in about 1200. The walk route goes past the scheduled ancient monument of Ascott d'Oilly castle but there are only fragmentary remains just visible from the public path. There is also a Grade 2 listed Manor House near the site of the castle.</p> <p>Charlbury A settlement since Anglo-Saxon times with a beautiful 11th century church, St Mary the Virgin which over the centuries has undergone many changes and “improvements”. The village has many fine buildings in the “Cotswolds style” and is particularly associated with the Quakers.</p>
<p>Walk options</p>	<p>Shortening the walk From Shipton under Wychwood and Ascott under Wychwood you can catch a Cotswolds Line rail bus (either the C1 or X8) that can return you to Kingham station or onward to Charlbury. Buses run every hour. Check the Railbus web site here for details.</p> <p>There are no specific options for lengthening the walk. If you bring a map or have a GPS enabled device you can go off-route to visit other villages or places of interest.</p>
<p>Transport</p>	<p>Kingham and Charlbury stations are served by First Great Western trains out of London Paddington to Moreton in Marsh, Worcester and Hereford. Buy a day return to Kingham.</p> <p>Kingham station has toilet facilities but at weekends when the station may well be unstaffed you will need a “Radar key” to access them. A key can be obtained from your local authority or Disability Rights UK.</p>
<p>Suggested trains</p>	<p>On Saturdays take the 10.15 am train from London Paddington; (the one before that is at 8.15am). The direct journey takes about 90mins. On Sundays you can take either the 9.35am or 10.42am train with the journey time taking a little longer at 100mins.</p> <p>At weekends there are trains every hour from Charlbury to London Paddington.</p>
<p>Lunch and Tea</p>	<p>Lunch options</p> <p>On summer weekends Cotswolds pubs get very busy. You must ring ahead to book before you start the walk. Ideally you should try to book a few days in advance.</p> <p><u>Shipton under Wychwood</u> Any early lunch-time pub which is just 6.4km (4m) into the walk is the Wychwood Inn (01993 831185) – 400m there and back off the main route. A refurbished pub with contemporary décor providing a good</p>

range of cask ales and a varied menu using locally sourced products .

Ascott under Wychwood

Your recommended lunch time pub however is **the Swan at Ascott under Wychwood (01993 832332)**. It is 8.8km (5.5m) into the walk and directly on your route. The restaurant is fairly expensive but there should be cheaper sandwich and soup of the day alternatives.

If you bring a picnic lunch then the churchyard of the Holy Trinity Church opposite the Swan is a lovely spot to rest and relax.

Afternoon refreshments and tea

In the afternoon you can leave the Oxfordshire Way and visit the **Café De La Poste in Chadlington (01608 676461)** which is open until 9.30pm on a Saturday but only until 2.00pm on a Sunday. It is a “community hub” and has an informative website. See [here](#) .The return journey to the café will add 2km to the walk. See walk directions for details.

Charlbury

There are three pubs all very close to each other in the centre of Charlbury before the short walk to the station.

The Bull (01608 810689) Country pub with beams and stone walls offering real ales and a full three course menu. Closed afternoons but re-opens at 6pm. Only open until 3.30pm on Sundays.

The Rose and Crown (01608 810103) CAMRA award winning pub with good range of craft beers. Basic bar snacks only.

The Bell Hotel (01608 810278) Food all day Saturday and Sunday, The pub also does mugs of tea, provides an excellent range of coffees and often has cakes.

Walk Directions

A. Kingham to the Wychwood Inn, Shipton under Wychwood.

1. Bear left out of Kingham Station and head towards the main road passing a bus shelter on your left. In 60m turn right along the busy main road (B4450) using the pavements. In 200m you go over a bridge into the village of Bledington passing a “Welcome to Gloucestershire” and Cotswolds signs. You cross over a further bridge with an attractive weir on your left to continue on the road.

2. You reach a T Junction where you turn left following a sign to Foscott. In 100m just after crossing a bridge you turn left following an Oxfordshire Way (OW) sign to go through a gate and then a further wooden gate in 40m where you turn right following a blue arrow on a path along the field edge.
3. You continue on this grassy track for 1km with a hedge to your right. Go through a gap in the hedge and continue on the now enclosed path. You reach some woodland on your left and at the end of this you turn left following a blue arrow on a post.
4. In 70m you turn right at a footpath post (or 20 or so metres before it) and continue on the track through open countryside. There is a brook to your left. You reach a small stone bridge to your left and a footpath post. Turn right following a footpath sign and head towards a wood 50m away.
5. **! 5m after entering the wood and with a footpath post just ahead of you turn left** on a clear path through the wood. Initially the River Evenlode is just away to your left but it soon veers away from your route. Continue ahead at a cross-paths ***(The path could be muddy in places but you may be able to avoid these stretches by using smaller tracks to your left or right.)***
6. You pass two footpath posts, the left hand one with an OW sign showing the way ahead and you continue now with open fields to your left. You reach a lane with an OW sign on your right. Cross the lane and go through the gate ahead of you.
7. You continue on a bearing of 120 degrees through grassland heading towards the corner of a fence which forms a barrier to a pond. Continue ahead at the fence corner with the ruins of Bruern Abbey and an attractive country house away to your left. You veer right heading towards a gate to the left of a metal field gate 70m away.
8. **! At the gate there is an OW sign. Your onward direction is straight ahead across the field but there may be no clear path.** Follow a compass bearing of 140 degrees across the field but if the underfoot conditions are not favourable or there is no clear path through any crops use the right hand field boundary and continue around it until you reach the wooden gate – in para 9 below..
9. As you cross the field a wooden gate in the hedge line will become visible ahead of you. Go through the gate passing an OW sign and continue on the track through woodland going over three sets of cross-paths as you proceed.
10. Just after the third set of cross-paths you pass a redundant gate, cross over a culvert and leave the woodland to emerge into open countryside and continue along the field edge, a line of hedges just to your right. You continue on the path through a series of small fields. You go through a gate, pass an OW sign, cross over a tarmac lane (Lyneham Road) and continue on an enclosed path.

11. You continue through a metal gate now on an open path through fields. aiming for a gap in the hedges ahead. Pass through the gap and then in 80m go through a metal field gate with a blue OW sign and continue ahead through a vast field.
12. Eventually you reach the field edge and turn left following a OW sign with a line of bushes to your right. In 140m you reach a T junction and turn right along a car-wide earth track following an OW sign. Continue down the track and just after crossing a bridge your track becomes a tarmac road (**Meadow Lane**) with a pavement.
13. Continue along the pavement ignoring roads off. You reach a T junction with a busy road (A361). **(If you want an early lunch at the Wychwood Inn you turn right here to reach the pub in 200m on your left at the corner of the A361 as it turns sharply left. After lunch retrace your steps and continue the walk from para 14.)**

B. Shipton under Wychwood to the Swan Inn at Ascott under Wychwood

14. If you are not having lunch at the Wychwood Inn turn left at the T junction along the A361 heading for a bridge over the River Evenlode. ! Beyond the bridge the road swings left and **just after a petrol station there is a finger post on the left hand pavement showing a footpath to Ascott under Wychwood.**
15. ***(Here you leave the OW and take the signed route to Ascott under Wychwood. The reason for this is both to avoid more road walking and also, for safety reasons, to avoid crossing a railway line where you have a limited view of the track.)***
16. **Route continues:** Turn right to cross the busy road following the direction of the finger post to go through a gate and then in 15m a second gate to the right of a fieldgate with a footpath sign. **!! Here you do not take the path ahead following the line of a boundary fence on your right** but bear **sharp left** passing barbed wire fences to your right to go through a grassy area. In 40m bear right following an indistinct grassy path across a large field. A post with a white top (when you reach it this is in an information sign) may just be visible ahead of you.
17. You continue on the narrow path which veers right through overgrown vegetation as you approach the fence line and in 20m you reach a wooden kissing gate to your left with a public footpath sign and a white information sign just below it. Go through the gate and turn right along the field edge on a wide grassy track passing to the left of a low voltage electrical distribution pole in 30m.
18. The track narrows as you meet a line of bushes just away to your right, (In summer the way ahead may be overgrown.) The river Evenlode is soon visible just away to your right. The path enters a wooded area and you pass the remains of a stile with a post to your right with a yellow arrow showing the way ahead. You cross a narrow two plank bridge over a ditch to veer left with the path.

19. In 60m you pass a metal gate to your left which leads across a railway line (the line you would have crossed if you had stayed on the OW). Your path has now merged with the OW and you continue on the track through a wooded area. After going through a metal field gate with footpath signs on a post to your left your now enclosed path veers away from the railway line.
20. The track veers right to cross a bridge over the River Evenlode and you approach the village of Ascott under Wychwood. The track becomes a tarmac lane and you continue ahead. Where the lane forks you turn sharp left, following an OW sign to your right to continue on through the village. Just beyond the attractive Holy Trinity Church on your right you reach **The Swan at Ascott** your recommended lunch time pub.

C. Ascot under Wychwood to Catsham Lane

21. After lunch turn left out of the pub and continue down the road. You veer right with the road heading for the small railway station. At the top of a short rise cross the railway line to continue down a tarmac lane. In 70m turn right down a tarmac lane with a single armed footpath sign just ahead of you.
22. You see attractive buildings on your right. ! As the tarmac lane bears sharply right there is a wooden field gate with a footpath sign on it directly ahead of you. ! Here you turn left down a grassy track. The track soon swings right. You cross a bridge over the River Edenlode noting a footpath post to your left. ! Here bear right with the track to take the OW as it starts to swing left through open countryside. **(!Take care not to take any tracks running alongside the river bank to your right.)**
23. ! You reach a field edge where the wide track veers sharply left but you bear right to go through a metal field gate. **(Here the OW turns right in a field to follow a winding line of bushes and a stream on your right. You can follow this if you wish but it is much simpler to continue ahead along the field edge and fence just to your left.)**
24. **Route continues.** You immediately pass another metal field gate on your left and continue ahead on no clear path a small wire fence and bushes immediately to your left. The field slopes away to your right.
25. In 200m you reach a metal field gate ahead of you and a footpath post with a number of signs on it. Continue straight ahead across a field just to the right of a shallow depression. You are aiming just to the right of an old concrete sheep pen visible ahead of you. Continue past the pen heading for an old metal field gate with an OW sign.
26. Go through the gate and continue ahead on the path passing a sign post in 40m. You bear left with the path to through a metal field gate in 200m with a wooden footpath post and continue on the clear track a metal fence to your left. Pudlicote House is away to your left.

27. You go through a wooden gate with an OW sign and continue on the enclosed track. Go through a metal field gate with a OW sign to cross a tarmac lane (**Pudlicote Lane**) and continue ahead on the earth track noting another OW sign.
28. You continue on the clear earth track of the OW in this same direction through several fields and gates. The River Evenlode will sometimes be visible away to your right. Eventually you go through a metal gate to reach a tarmac lane and OW sign. ***This is Catsham Lane.***
29. ***Here at Catsham Lane if you would like a break from the Oxfordshire Way you can turn left up the lane and in 1km you will reach the Café de la Poste at a crossroads where you can get refreshments (but note it closes at 2pm on a Sunday). If you have an OS map or GPS device there are routes to the café to avoid walking along the lane).***
30. ***Alternatively you could turn right down the lane to visit a medieval chapel at Shorthampton, a return trip of around 800m. You turn right down the lane, cross a bridge over the River Evenlode and then cross a railway bridge. Just after crossing the railway bridge take a footpath sign to your right to follow a path across two fields to the hamlet of Shorthampton visible ahead of you. Alternatively you could stay on the lane after the railway bridge and in 350m turn right down a lane to Shorthampton***

D. Catsham Lane to Charlbury

31. **To continue on the OW:** Cross Catsham Lane passing a OW sign and continue on the path. You meet a footpath post to go through a gate. You pass a wooded area to your left. You reach a primarily coniferous plantation to your right and continue ahead passing a footpath post and a track on your left.
32. You reach the end of the plantation to your right and you continue on the path as it descends towards woodland. Continue on the track past a post with arrows on it into the wood. You reach a footpath post on your left with multiple signs on it but you continue ahead gently uphill ignoring a path to your right and passing under some telegraph wires in 60m. You are in an area of bushes and scrub.
33. You continue ahead on the path. You eventually reach a metal field gate and just beyond this at a cross-roads you turn **right** along a track which on OS maps is Grove Lane.
34. In 80m the track forks and you take the right fork through a field gate following an OW sign to reach a wood on your left and you continue along the track. ***(This wood, Dean Grove will have some good displays of spring flowers in April and May and if you are feeling adventurous and have a map or GPS to get you back to the OW you may care to explore the paths in the wood. But beware the tracks can be very muddy.)***
35. The wood on your left ends and you continue on the wide track. **! In 100m just beyond a field entrance in the hedgerow on your left you turn left through a**

- metal kissing gate.** Once through this gate continue across the field on no clear path on a compass bearing of 120 degrees heading for a footpath post which should be visible ahead of you on the opposite side of the field. (Alternatively you could follow the field edge to your left to eventually meet the footpath post.)
36. At the footpath post go through a metal kissing gate to cross a bridge to continue ahead on the path as it crosses a field. You are heading towards another footpath post in a line of bushes 70m ahead of you. Continue ahead at the footpath post with a wire fence just to your left.
37. In 80m go through a metal kissing gate following an OW sign. You ignore a track to your left to continue ahead. In 80m leave the line of bushes on your left to head towards a metal kissing gate and footpath post 40m ahead of you. Go through the kissing gate and continue ahead along the clear path, a line of hedges to your left.
38. Go through a metal kissing gate to meet a track. ! ***(Here you have a choice of routes: either leave the Oxfordshire way and turn right along the potentially muddy track and in 50m turn sharp left with the track and continue all the way to Pound Hill below. Or you continue on the OW.)***
39. ***To continue on the OW:*** cross the track towards a kissing gate. Go through a wooded area for 20m to another kissing gate. Take an indistinct path on a bearing of 130 degrees across a field. You should soon see a metal kissing gate in a hedge which forms an arch over the gate.
40. Go through the gate the village of Charlbury now visible ahead of you. You go through another metal kissing gate to continue in the same direction heading for a further kissing gate just visible ahead of you beyond some open horse stables. Go through the gate to cross a narrow bridge with a footpath sign on the other side showing you the onward direction.
41. Across the bridge you follow a bearing of 135 aiming 10m to the left of a large oak tree in the field ahead of you. Pass the tree and continue ahead aiming just to the left of a fence ahead of you to go through a metal kissing gate with a two-armed footpath sign to meet a busy tarmac road. Turn right on this road passing a small enclosed grassy area with a bench and go uphill on the road (Pound Hill) into Charlbury. ***(Just away to your right you will see the lane you could have taken if not following the OW emerging onto Pound Hill.)***
42. Continue along this road ignoring ways off until just beyond Charlbury Baptist Church on your right you reach Dyers Hill and if you want to go directly to Charlbury station you turn right here and continue along this busy road for 300m until you meet the station approach road on your left.
43. If you want refreshments then continue ahead up Market Street. At a cross-roads you come to the **Rose and Crown** on your right and the **Bull** away to your left. Turn right into Church Street and the **Bell** is on your left.

44. On leaving any of the pubs you head down Church Street towards the St Mary the Virgin Church. Bear right through an iron gate into the Church grounds. Continue on this tarmac path to exit the Church grounds through a gate to continue ahead along Church Lane noting a lovely rectory away to your left.

45. In 80m you take the left fork to a busy main road and turn left. You cross a bridge over the River Evenlode and in a further 100m turn left down the station approach road to Charlbury station.