

Little Cotswold Walks



6. Stroud & Surrounds



RR Gordon

A series of short, circular walks around Cotswold villages – ending at pubs!



Covering Slad, France Lynch, Whiteshill, Randwick and Rodborough

Why not start with Walk 3. Whiteshill – a walk around the bowl-shaped Ruscombe valley with a great pub at the end!

You can also download other booklets in the series from www.rrgordon.com
including 1. Birdlip & Beyond, 2. Painswick Valley, 3. Toadsmoor Valley, 4. Frome Valley, 5. The Falcon & Oak, Painswick, 7. Stroud Brewery, 8. Windrush West



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Little Cotswolds Walks
Book 6. Stroud & Surrounds 2018 Edition
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Introduction.

When I put these walks together, I'm looking for a good part of the walk to go through the pathways and lanes of a village, but also for part to be through the countryside with a bit of up and down. I aim for an hour or so – which justifies having a pudding at the pub!

This book, entitled *Stroud & Surrounds*, contains walks around villages on the fringes of Stroud, sometimes with views across the town itself.

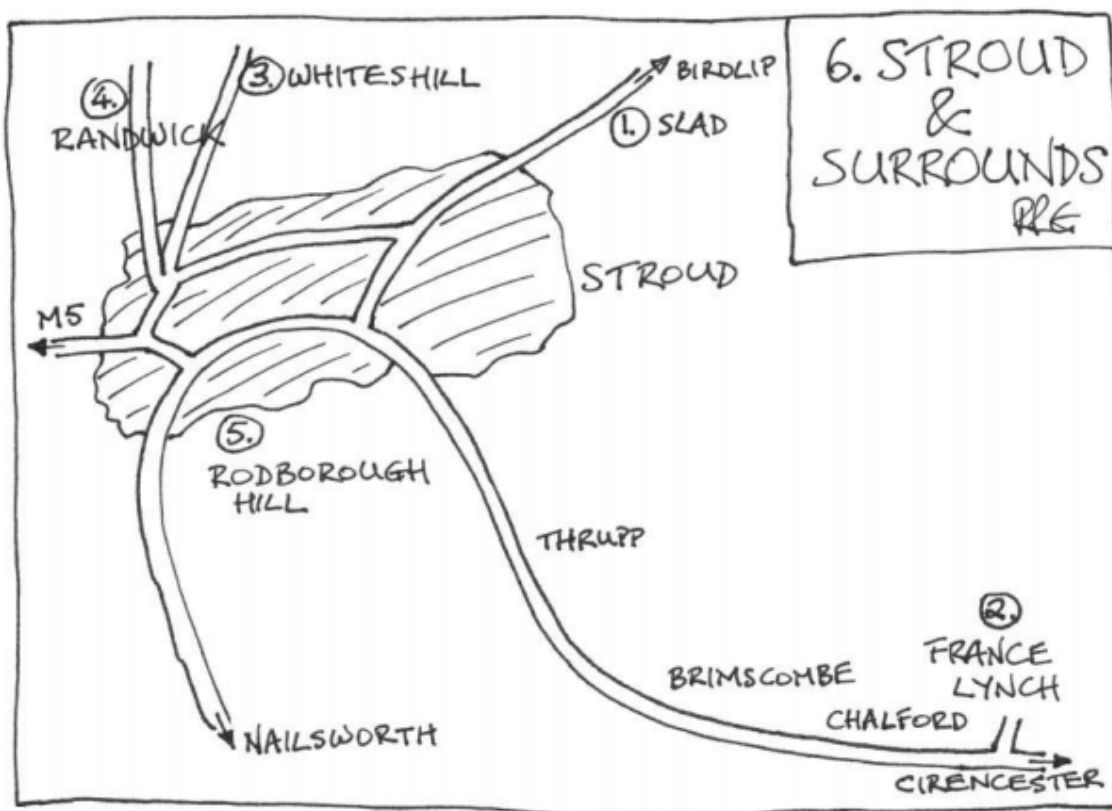
Each walk has been hand-crafted by me, my wife Nicky and our dog Daisy. Our combined objectives were:

- **A nice village:** it's always interesting to see how the other half lives and we've tried to select some places where you can look at some nice houses and discuss whether you would like to live there
- **Circular walks:** we've tried to come up with circular (ish) walks, but there might be some interesting side paths which we've suggested and sometimes these require returning by the same route.
- **A good pub:** and why not? In my mind, each of these walks operates as follows: you finish work slightly early on a summer's evening, drive to the suggested parking spot, do a good, brisk walk and then sit outside a nice country pub. Where possible we've suggested that you park at the pub.
- **Some exercise for Daisy:** uppermost in Daisy's mind was her desire that each walk should contain a stretch where she could be off the lead. This wasn't always possible with walks around villages but nevertheless she pronounced herself happy with every walk included in this book! For longer walks, I'm also aware that Daisy will need a drink so a stream, lake, horse trough is a very useful landmark on the walk. By the way, all the pubs are happy to have dogs (at time of printing!).

Daisy absolutely insists that we regularly re-trace the walks in case anything has changed, but if you spot any errors then please let me know – we will both be mortified and will correct the error immediately and re-publish on www.rrgordon.com

Rod Gordon

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1. Slad.

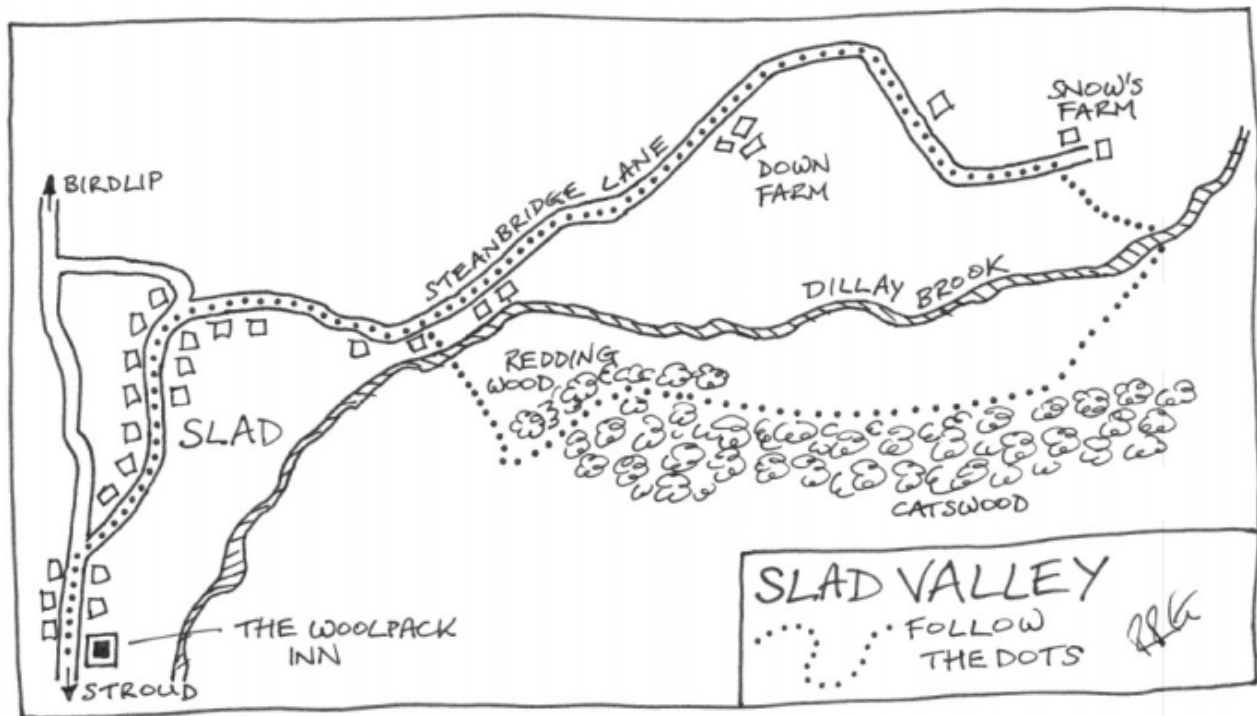
Rod's Rating	 <p>You can't have a walks booklet around this area of the Cotswolds without including Slad Valley and The Woolpack Inn – and mentioning Laurie Lee.</p> <p>And Slad is a perfect shape for a valley: soft curves swaying from left to right as it meanders down towards Stroud. A delightful walk.</p>
Daisy's Rating	 <p>Daisy is certainly keen on the middle part of the walk but disappointed that she had to be on the lead for the short sections to & from the pub along the road. It couldn't be helped though and there's no such thing as a bad walk, she says.</p>
Is it a circular walk?	Yes
Pub	<p>The Woolpack Inn, Slad Rd, Slad, Stroud GL6 7QA</p> <p>www.thewoolpackslad.com</p>
How long did it take?	1 hour 15 mins to 1 hours 30 mins

WHERE TO PARK:

The Woolpack Inn or there is a small parking area at the top of Steanbridge Lane.

THE WALK - In summary:

Up the eastern side towards the head of the valley and then back alongside the stream on the valley floor.



THE WALK - In detail:

> Turn right out of the pub and walk up the road

> Turn right onto Steanbridge Lane after about 200 yards (just after pavement ends at No Footway sign)

> Continue along the road, slightly downhill in parts & flat in parts; after a while road bends to right & goes more steeply downhill into the valley; it then bends to the left and then to the right and reaches the valley floor

> **Turn right** at a Restricted Byway sign at a short farm track after a low stone building with black & white road posts; go over a stream (large pond to the left)

> Continue straight ahead through five-bar gate, into field and up the hill, keeping hedge on your right

> Go through wooden gate at top and head right-ish into the woods, metal fence on your right

> **Turn left** onto a small footpath into the trees, 10 yards before the next wooden gate

You are now following a Cotswold stone wall on your right, with a steep drop on your left with the trees and then the field below; you are walking up the side of the valley for the next mile or so

> After 200 yards you reach a crossroads of footpaths (left is down, right is up) and you should continue **straight ahead** (slightly uphill)

> After 200 yards bear left to join a wider track coming down from the right; head downhill

> Go through a metal six-bar gate (normally open) and you can see views across the valley to the left

> After a few hundred yards there is a **stile on the left** marked by a Public Footpath sign (and a Laurie Lee Wildlife Way marker post); go over stile and into field; head diagonally right and down into the valley

Before you head down you may wish to pause & look across the valley; Down Hill is opposite with a coppice of trees at the top and all-weather horse

exercise tracks; to the left is Down Farm the base for Tom George, National Hunt racehorse trainer; to right is a house with outbuildings (Snows Farm); you are now heading to the bottom of the valley to cross the stream just below Snows Farm.

> Halfway down the hill, go through a gateway and continue to head downhill towards the valley floor

> At the bottom of the valley, go over a bridge

> Bear left to follow the stream

> Go through a kissing gate next to a metal 6-bar gate and bear left

> Go over main stream (Dillay Brook) using a small stone bridge & go up a steep grassy path the other side

> Climb over a stile by a metal six-bar gate; *I normally sit on the stile for a rest & look back across the valley!*

> **Turn left** onto a small road (actually a driveway leading to Snow's Farm);

You will now head back down the valley towards the pub following this driveway and then a quiet road (Steanbridge Lane); the road leads past occasional houses, including Down Farm (the racehorse stables), and past the point where you turned off earlier (at the footpath past the large pond). Follow the lane all the way back to the village, turn left onto the main road and down to the pub which will be on your left.

Any problems with these directions? Please email me at rod@rrgordon.com (also if you liked the walk!)

SOMETHING INTERESTING:

A short excerpt from Cider with Rosie by Laurie Lee:

"The village to which our family had come was a scattering of some twenty to thirty houses down the south-east slope of a valley. The valley was narrow, steep, and almost entirely cut off; it was also a funnel for winds, a channel for floods and a jungly, bird-crammed, insect-hopping sun-trap whenever there happened to be any sun.

Living down there was like living in a bean-pod; one could see nothing but the bed one lay in. Our horizon of woods was the limit of our world. For weeks on end the trees moved in the wind with a dry roaring that seemed a natural utterance of the landscape. In winter they ringed us with frozen spikes, and in summer they oozed over the lips of the hills like layers of green lava. Mornings, they steamed with mist or sunshine, and almost every evening threw streamers above us, reflecting sunsets we were too hidden to see."

At one stage this walk of approx. 2.5 miles starting & ending at the pub, crosses the Laurie Lee Wildlife Way which is approx. 5 miles starting & ending at Bulls Cross. You can find further information – and details of how to buy the walk booklet – from www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/laurielee P.S. Interestingly the word *slad* means valley.

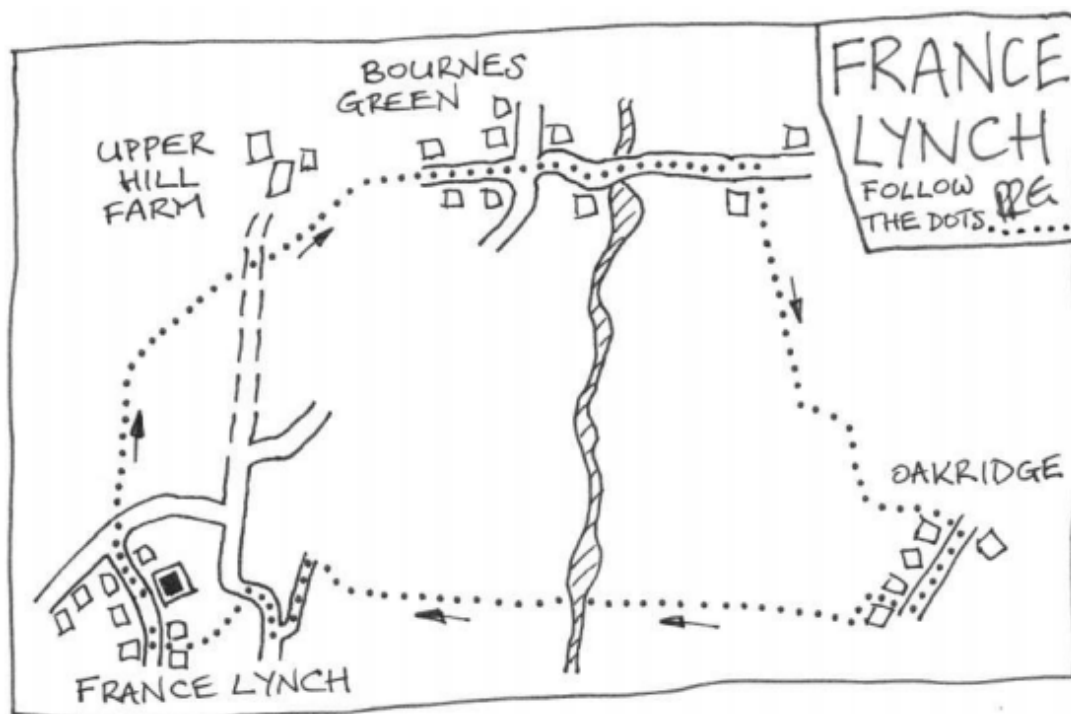
2. France Lynch

* This walk also connects to Walk 4. Oakridge Lynch in Booklet 3. Toadsmoor Valley

Rod's Rating	 <p>Delightful little up-and-down walk across an unspoilt, steep-sided valley which leads down into the Frome Valley. The walk goes from the top of Chalford, through France Lynch to the edge of Oakridge Lynch and back again.</p>
Daisy's Rating	 <p>Lots of stretches off the lead, plenty of streams for a drink. Daisy was exhausted – and wet! – at the end of this one.</p>
Is it a circular walk?	Yes. <i>NB. Butchers Arms in Oakridge Lynch is around the halfway point.</i>
Pub	<p>The King's Head, Lynch Road, France Lynch, Glos GL6 8LT</p> <p>http://www.kingsheadfrancelynch.co.uk/</p> <p>It's a small bar so dogs are not allowed inside – but there's a nice garden!</p>
How long did it take?	1 hour 10 mins - 3.5 km (2.17 miles) - 140m of ascent

WHERE TO PARK:

The pub is a tricky place to find – but good when you get there! It's at the very northern edge of Chalford, near the sports ground (which is signposted). Some of the roads around the pub are quite narrow so I sometimes park on Highfield Way: go up the road with the sports ground on your left, park on the left side of the road near the King's Head pub sign (which isn't actually outside the pub!). You can get to the pub by going down Lynch Rd on your right (very narrow lane) – but the walk actually starts by coming up the lane!



The walk in summary:

Out across a couple of fields before cutting across Upper Hill Farm to go down into valley.

Walk along the ridge at the far side which leads to Oakridge Lynch and then come back across the valley to the pub.

See instructions below for good picnic spot!

THE WALK - In detail:

> **Turn right** out of the pub car park and go up the very steep Lynch Road

> **Go straight across** at the top (over Highfield Way) and follow the Public Footpath sign diagonally right over a wooden fence and into a field (not up the tarmac lane)

- > Head for halfway along other side of field, to the corner of a protruding section of next field (by big tree)
- > Go over stone and wood stile into next field
- > Head diagonally right to the opposite side of the field; however at the other side don't cross into the next field, but turn right (following the hedge) to head towards the driveway that leads to the farm
- > Cross first farm driveway to lamppost with Public Footpath signs. Turn left, following one of the footpath signs down a second driveway to the right of the farm buildings lined by small trees; slightly downhill, heading in the direction of the valley
- > Go through a metal 7-bar gate (normally open)
- > **Turn right** following a yellow Public Footpath arrow; rough tarmac track leads steeply down thru gateway
- > Bear right at bottom to follow road with houses either side (interesting conical gateposts on one house)
- > It appears as though you come out at a T-junction, but you need to go straight across the triangle of grass (or right & immediately left) to follow the small country road that heads downhill to bottom of valley
- > Go past house called Bown's Pool and follow the road up the other side of the valley – up, up, up!
- > **Turn right** after the first house, following a Public Footpath sign for the Wysis Way
You will now walk along the side of the valley until arriving in Oakridge Lynch
- > Stay on the left/top side of the field and go over a stile near a barn
- > Stay on the left/top side of the field and head for far left corner
- > Go left through gap into next (small) field and cut diagonally right across to go over a stone stile into large field ahead
- > You will see some houses of Oakridge Lynch, but **bear right**, following the right edge of the field

- > Go through a metal 6-bar gate and **turn left**, initially track is crushed Cotswold stone but becomes tarmac

You reach Oakridge Lynch village green and benches here – and you can turn left to head to The Butchers Arms pub for a quick pint now that you're halfway! You can also connect to Oakridge Lynch walk here – see Booklet 3. Toadsmoor Valley

- > **Turn right** to walk down past the village green (on your left), walk past Little Court on right
- > **Turn right** at end, to left of garage for Stokyes Close, and go through strange metal V-shaped stile next to wooden 5-bar gate; *NB. There are often sheep in the next few fields – keep dogs on leads.*
- > Go over next stile and follow left edge of field
- > Go over next stile and **turn sharp right** (do not follow other footpath which goes to the left); follow holly hedge on your right and then go down across grassy field
- > Walk down the field towards the valley, heading to the bottom right corner of field
- > Go over stile (or through gate!) into trees and **head to the right**
- > The path opens out into a field, continue heading down and right into valley *NB. A good spot for a picnic!*
- > Cross over the stream at the bottom of the valley (small bridge made from two railway sleepers)
- > Go through wooden gate and go straight up a crushed stone track – up, up, up!
- > At the top you will see a house in front of you (Bidcombe); go up to the bottom of the garden; *I know it's steep but you're nearly there!*
- > Go over a stile and **turn right** onto a path (not left as Public Footpath sign indicates – this leads back down into valley); head slightly uphill still, garden wall on left
- > At the end of the footpath, **turn left** onto a rough tarmac road and go past the front of Bidcombe house
- > After 25 yards there is a triangle of grass, **turn sharp right**

- > Just after Hillside Farm on the left, follow Public Footpath sign that indicates **left** through a wooden gate
- > Stay left through small field and **bear left** at end down a small footpath (which leads behind Hillside Farm)
- > You come out into a small valley meadow, where you can see across to houses on the other side – one of these is the pub! *If you stand on old tree stump, the pub is on the far right (obscured by trees in summer)*

- > **Bear right** at large tree stump. **Walk straight across valley**; path looks as if it leads towards a garden
- > Cross brook using two sleepers and follow footpath up next to the garden
- > Go through a small, leaning metal gate and over a stone stile
- > **Turn right** onto the road and you will find the pub on your right after a short while – woohoo!

Any problems with these directions? Please email me at rod@rrgordon.com (also if you liked the walk!)

SOMETHING INTERESTING:

There are a number of suggestions for the origin of the name "Lynch": lynchet means a cultivated terrace following the contours of a hill, lynch is a Saxon name for ledge and another source states that lynch is another word for ridge.

However all sources are agreed that the name of France Lynch came with the settling of displaced Huguenot weavers in the 17th and 18th centuries who also brought their quality silk and woollen cloth manufacturing to the valley.

Huguenots were French Protestants inspired by the writings of John Calvin (Jean Calvin in French) in the 1530s. Unfortunately they suffered persecution from the Catholic state in France which finally peaked with Louis XIV when he issued the Edict of Fontainebleau (1685). This abolished all legal recognition of Protestantism and Huguenots were forced to convert. While nearly three-quarters eventually submitted, by the early 18th century roughly 500,000 Huguenots had fled France to many different countries where the Protestant faith was allowed.

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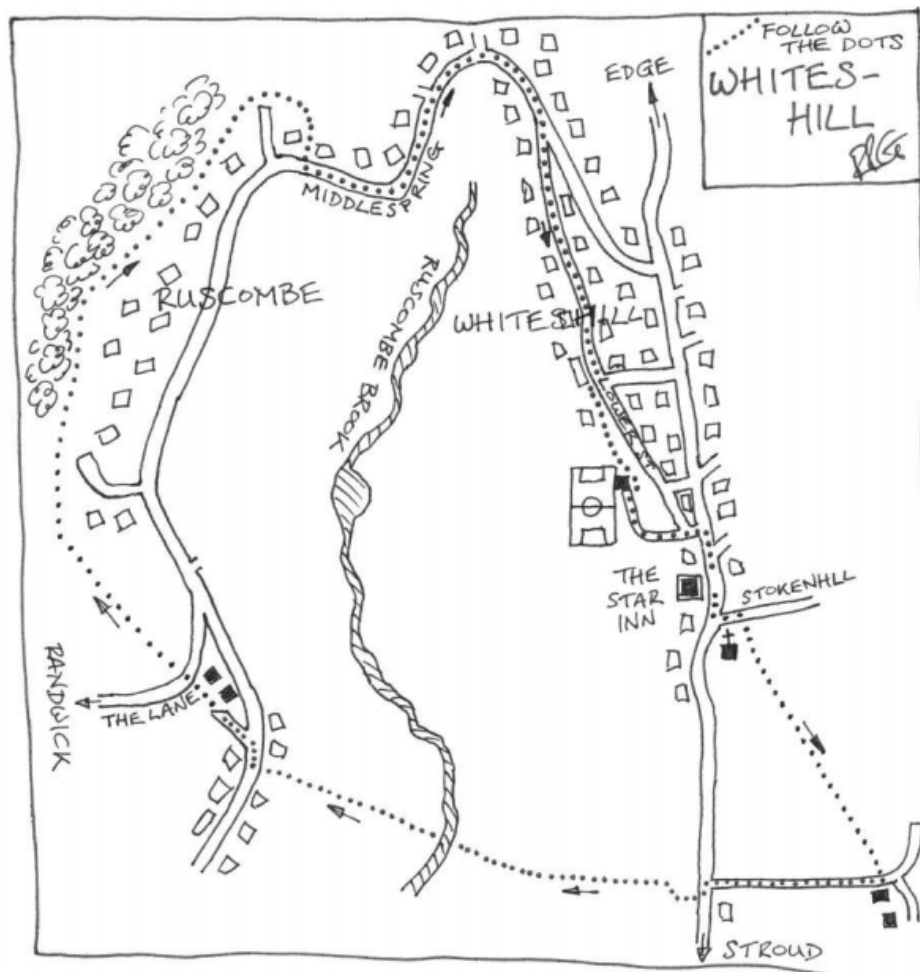
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3. Whiteshill

Rod's Rating	 <p>Probably my favourite in this booklet, this walk goes around the sides and top end of Ruscombe valley – finishing at a pub with lots of character. I first came across Whiteshill when my son Cal played junior football on the pitch which is carved into the side of the valley – the pitch features near the end of the walk.</p>
Daisy's Rating	 <p>Daisy was very keen on this walk as well, being off the lead most of the time. The first half is mostly wide open fields and the second half is through woods.</p>
Is it a circular walk?	Yes.
Pub	<p>The Star Inn, Star Green, Whiteshill, Stroud GL6 6AE</p> <p>www.the-star-inn-whiteshill.co.uk</p>
How long did it take?	1 hour 15 mins - 3.4 km (2.11 miles) – 142m of ascent

WHERE TO PARK:

Whiteshill is a couple of miles north of the Paganhill area of Stroud. The Star Inn is on your left as you go uphill along the main street in the village (almost opposite the church). Park in the pub car park or 50 yds up the road where there is a small car park (signposted Playing Field and Village Shop)



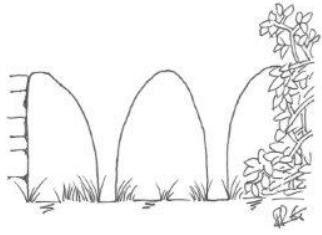
The walk in summary:

Across some fields at the back of the church, then back across the road.

Down and up the other side of Ruscombe valley behind the pub – and then skirting round the top edge of the village, at the head of the valley.

THE WALK - in detail:

- > **Turn right** out of the pub car park and cross the road
- > Walk a few yards downhill, past the bus stop and turn left into Stokenhill
- > Immediately turn right to take footpath leading along back of St Paul's church
- > Go over a stile & into the open field, **continue straight ahead**, slightly downhill
- > Go thru unusual stone stile & continue ahead to bottom left corner of field



- > Go through metal gate and **turn right** up a concrete drive, which then becomes a stone track
- > At main road, **turn left**, walk a few yards, then **turn right** to follow Public Footpath between some houses signposted Ruscombe
- > Go through metal gate and walk straight ahead (downhill) across a field
- > Cross the Ruscombe Brook at the bottom of the valley over a stile and bridge
- > Walk uphill towards houses on other side of valley, climb over stile and follow path between houses. Emerge onto a quiet residential street and **turn right**
- > After 20-30 yards **fork left** up tarmac track marked by a faded "Unsuitable For Motor Vehicles" sign, which becomes a footpath leading uphill behind some houses, eg Foxview Cottage
- > Cross road (The Lane) and continue **straight ahead** into field; continue up, up, up to gateway at top right

***** NB. the walk intersects here with the Randwick walk (next in this booklet)**

- > Go through gateway and bear right; after a few yards climb over a stile to follow a path which

SOMETHING INTERESTING:

If you enjoyed this walk and you'd like to do a longer walk (over 2 hours) then try the Whiteshill & Ruscombe Diamond Jubilee Walk which starts & ends at the village shop (you can also buy the walk map from the shop).

Also, the pub has seven walks listed on its own website go to www.the-star-inn-whiteshill.co.uk and click on The Walks.

runs between a barbed wire fence on the left and trees/houses/valley on right

- > At end of trees on right, ignore footpath on right and continue straight ahead
- > Bear right to go round the back of the (newly re-furbished) house (do not go straight ahead into woods)
- > Continue around top edge of village; the track leads up and down through woods, behind houses circling around village at head of valley
- > Take footpath to the right when you reach signpost 28 for the Whiteshill & Ruscombe Diamond Jubilee walk, ie go down steps with a metal handrail between a conservatory and shed to emerge onto a quiet residential road (Middlespring)
- > Turn left onto Middlespring around a couple of bends and just past Ruscombe Congregational Church **fork right** down Lower Street
- > Continue along Lower Street for some way and when you see a postbox in the wall in front of you (opposite a turning to the left for a road called The Shard), **turn right** to follow Public Footpath down
- > The path bends left and you walk between a fence on left & a hedge on right (with valley beyond)
- > Go past metal stile and down to a pebble-dashed building (scout hut)
- > Climb over stile & walk past village shop & past the village football pitch (where my son Cal used to play!)
- > **Bear left** at end of car park and **turn right** on the main road; the pub is a few yards along on your right

Any problems with these directions? Please email me at rod@rrgordon.com (also if you liked the walk!)

4. Randwick

Rod's Rating	 <p>Great walk with lovely views across the Stroud valleys and at one point also has a stunning view across the Severn valley as well as you walk out along a ridge.</p>
Daisy's Rating	 <p>Probably Daisy's favourite in this book - lots of woods and fields for roaming around. A stream at the midpoint for a drink & for cooling down on a hot day.</p>
Is it a circular walk?	Yes
Pub	The Vine Tree , Randwick, Stroud, GL6 6JA – NB. Closed on Mondays http://www.thevinetreerandwick.co.uk/
How long did it take?	1 hour 15 minutes - 3.7km (2.3 miles) – 130m ascent

WHERE TO PARK:

The car park of the Vine Tree – or public car park which is right next door (a few yards uphill of the pub).



The walk in summary:

Follow Cotswold Way down through the woods towards Westrip and then back across Ocker Hill playing fields.

THE WALK - In detail:

> **Turn right** out of the pub car park & head uphill on the road for approx. 100 yds (past Rosemary Cottage)

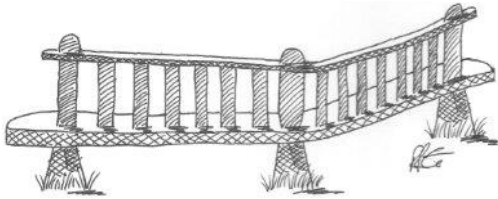
> **Turn left** through a metal circular kissing gate to follow a public footpath uphill between some fields

> Go through another metal circular kissing gate on the edge of the woods (Standish Wood, NT)

and **bear left** at the fork to stay on the left edge of the woods (overlooking the houses on the left)

> After a while the path curves uphill to the right away from the houses, but stay as left as possible (ignore footpath heading diagonally uphill on the right)

> Go past a white sign for the Randwick 2000 steps walk on the right & a bench in a clearing on the left



> A little further on, the left edge of the woods comes up to meet you & paths join from right; **stay on left edge of woods**; a little further on you will join the Cotswold Way; another bench on left

> Path continues slightly downhill; exit the woods by a small car park and go straight across the road

> Go through a gate & continue straight ahead following Cotswold Way (views on both sides!)

> At the end of the field, continue straight ahead through wooden 5-bar gate and along a farm track

> After 50 yards the track opens out into a field, **fork left** across the field still following Cotswold Way

> Climb over a large stone stile and head right, following wall on right edge of woods

> After 100 yards, path cuts across (down & left) to other side of small wood; **turn left** onto road

> Leave Cotswold Way here and continue down the road past houses such as Sandpipers & Windsmeet

> After a couple of hundred yards there is a metal gate on both sides of the road – **turn left** just afterwards at a farm drive marked The Ridge and follow Public Footpath across the top of the grassy area

> Go through two metal gates to the left of the farm buildings

> At end of 6ft fence around farm buildings, **turn right** & go steeply downhill towards Stroud in valley below

> Go through a wooden 5-bar gate (just push!) between The Bank and Hillside houses (you are in Westrip)

> **Turn left** onto the road and walk up past the Carpenters Arms pub (perhaps stop for a quick drink?!)

> **Fork left** onto main road (signposted Randwick 1¼), walk 20 yds & cross road to go down a lane behind the garage (white doors) of The Old Bakehouse; go past houses: Garmin, Jasmine Cottage, Highfield

> **Turn left** at a Public Footpath sign on the wall of the house ahead of you

> Go through two v-shaped stiles and out into a field

> Head downhill staying on left of field, towards the leftmost of two footbridges across the stream

> Head uphill on other side of stream, climbing towards playing fields at Ocker Hill (part of Randwick)

> Go round the stile into the playing fields and **turn right** to walk along right (lower) edge of field

> Climb over stile in far right corner of field to walk between a fence and a hedge (horses on left)

> Climb over a stile, bear slightly left, cross the road (The Lane) and go through a circular kissing gate

> Walk up the hill following Cotswold stone wall on your right; up, up, up!

***** NB. walk intersects here with the Whiteshill walk (no.3 in this booklet)**

> Go through gateway at top and immediately **turn left** to follow another tumbledown Cotswold stone wall

> As you crest the ridge, veer slightly right heading for a big tree with two small fir trees in front; go past trough and head for a Public Footpath to the right of rightmost house (with Allcooper alarm near apex)

> Go over a stile, head along the side of the house, thru a squeeze-gap & left to follow Cotswold stone wall

> Turn right to walk alongside a low wall with garden and greenhouse the other side

> Go down steps beside a house - look to the right and you will see the pub!

> Turn left then immediately right to walk around/below the garden of a house with a conservatory

> Turn right into back garden of pub – woohoo!
(*continue along to far end of pub to go round to car park*)

Any problems with these directions? Please email me at rod@rrgordon.com (also if you liked the walk!)

SOMETHING INTERESTING:

Randwick, meaning 'farm on the border', was formerly a centre of the cottage weaving industry.

There were c. 100 inhabitants of Randwick in 1551 and 18 households in 1563. In 1650 there were 100 families, and 60 years later c. 400 inhabitants in 80 houses. About 1775 the population was estimated at 650 in 140 houses, and in 1801 there were 856 people. There had been a reduction to 748 by 1811, but by 1821 the population was c. 1,000 at which it remained until it was roughly halved by the dismemberment of the parish in the 1880s. The population was c. 700 in the first half of the 20th century but rose to 836 in 1961. The population at the 2011 census was 1,423.

Simon Pearce, one of a numerous family in the village, emigrated to Australia in 1841 and founded the town of Randwick near Sydney – which today has a population of 129,000.

Begun in medieval times, a custom known as Randwick Wap formerly provided the chief holiday of the village year and this custom has been resurrected in modern times. On the second Monday after Easter a 'mayor' of Randwick is elected and carried in procession to a pool south of the church where a song which alludes to the local weaving trade is sung. In the 19th century an unofficial fair was held at the time and the ceremony was "often accompanied with riots and drunkenness".

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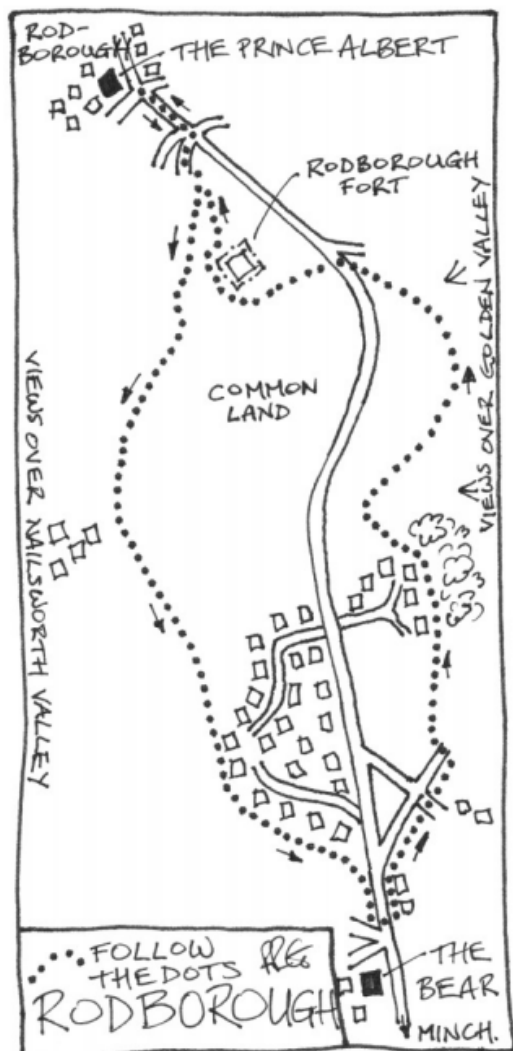
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5. Rodborough Hill – Around the Rim

Rod's Rating	 <p>Rodborough Hill is the head of a wide buttress of land which noses up between Nailsworth Valley & Golden Valley to peer over the Stroud rooftops towards the Severn valley in the distance. This walk circles around the rim of Rodborough Common with breathtaking views of first one valley & then the other – far from the madding crowds who inhabit the central area of the common.</p>
Daisy's Rating	 <p>Daisy says you can keep your breathtaking views – she insists the terrain itself is more important! What's it like for snuffling around in the undergrowth and roaming across moorland? She pronounced herself happy with this walk, but could have done with more streams for cooling down and taking a drink.</p>
Is it a circular walk?	Yes
Pub	<p>The Prince Albert, Rodborough Hill, Stroud, GL5 3SS, 01453 755600 www.theprincealbertstroud.co.uk</p> <p>Real ale, live music, like a party at your best friend's house. Halfway round the walk you can stop for a cup of tea at The Bear of Rodborough.</p>
How long did it take?	1 hour 30 mins - 5km (3.1 miles) – 130m of ascent



WHERE TO PARK:

The pub doesn't have parking but you can normally park on the side of the road further down Rodborough Hill – or continue up to the common, cross the cattle grid & park on the edge of the common land.

The walk in summary:

Climb up to escarpment & walk along overlooking Nailsworth Valley; across the common & back along the edge of Golden Valley.

P.S. There are dozens of benches along this walk and they have been noted in the instructions as way-markers.

THE WALK - In detail:

- > **Turn right** out of the front door of The Prince Albert pub and head uphill past the yellow sign saying *Oncoming vehicles in middle of road*; Inglenook cottage on the right
- > After 200 yards, cross a cattle grid by a white gate and then **fork right** just in front of a sign saying *NO PARKING more than 15 yards from the road*
- > Continue **straight ahead** up the road signposted to Little London
- > After a few yards there is a 20mph sign on both sides of the road (with 3 bins on the left); take the second wide track

which **forks up to the left** (ie the one which is 20 yards after the 20mph signs, not the first one which is just after the signs)

> Walk uphill for some way going past two benches [*Lilian Straughan*] following the wide track up to the common as it curves to the left near the top

> At the top, just past a clump of bushes, **bear right** along the right hand stony track to follow the edge of the common towards some tall trees with a surrounding Cotswold stone wall; Stroud is in valley to right;

At this point I'd like to just say that it doesn't really matter which path you follow, a comment which really applies to the entire walk. The whole area is common land and you can walk anywhere. Also there is a scarcity of landmarks so it's difficult to give detailed instructions. The main aim is to head for The Bear at one end and then back to the Prince Albert at the other end, taking as wide a route as possible on the way.

> Go past another bench still heading for tall trees [*Alan George Chambers*]

> When you get closer, head to the left (uphill) of the tall trees and then walk alongside the Cotswold stone wall which leads around a house called Braeside (with a great tree house if you can see over the wall!)

> Go past a metal frame bench [*Betty Furley*] & head slightly left towards some nearby houses surrounded by a high Cotswold stone wall; go past another bench [*Paul Dangerfield*]

> Skirt round the right side (downhill) of the houses following a high Cotswold stone wall
The view on your right is of the Nailsworth Valley; South Woodchester (to left) and North Woodchester (to right) can be seen on the opposite side at bottom of valley; Selsley is further up to the right on the hillside

> Walk round to the left still following the Cotswold stone wall; there is a road below and some more benches [*Little Boo's Seat*] [*Carl Chapman*] [*Lisa Parfitt (Samson)*]

> Where the track forks, take the higher path on left, ie the Cotswold stone path [*Arthur & Joan Perry*]

> Stay left after the Cotswold stone wall ends and go past the front of a building with 5 dormer windows

> Cross main road near Bear of Rodborough (over to your right); head for cream-coloured house opposite

The Bear of Rodborough is an inn so is open for tea & coffee at all times – why not pop in for a break! After leaving The Bear walk along the right side of the road where there is a pavement.

> After crossing the main road, a stone track forks off to the right (towards Winstones ice cream) & a footpath runs along between the road (on your left) & the track (on your right); follow this path indicated by faded Public Byway sign running parallel with Butter Row road; you are now heading for a large house with solar panels in the distance

> By a large rock, cross over a road which forks down from the main road; go past a trough; cross the Butter Row road and bear right towards the house with the solar panels

> Walk around to the right of the house ie the downhill side, between the house and the Butter Row road

> Keeping the house to the left, follow the Cotswold stone wall around the garden and into a wood

> Continue through the trees, staying left following the wall around the lower side of the houses, the path goes down and then up again and opens out onto the common once more

> Straight on at fork

> As you near the end of the promontory, go past another bench [*John Hayden and dogs Nelson & Hardy!*]

Golden Valley is to your right with the village of Bowbridge and the outskirts of Stroud

> You come to a cross roads of footpaths but continue straight on heading for the trees

> The path curves to the left shortly before the trees; cross the road (at a point where there is a cow warning on the road!) and go straight ahead following a footpath which goes slightly uphill (to the right is a small National Trust car park)

> Go past the top of the wooden steps from the National Trust car park head right towards the Cotswold stone wall around the grounds surrounding Rodborough Fort

> Head to the left of the Fort, keeping the Cotswold stone wall on your right hand side; go past some more benches [*Nesta, Des, Ben Childs*] [*Roger & Susan Green*] [*Roslyn / Frank George Tirel*]

> Continue to circle around the wall surrounding Rodborough Fort until you reach the main gate; **fork left** to head down a wide grass track, heading steeply downhill

> You are now back to the start of the walk; continue over the cattle grid by the white gate to head back down to the Prince Albert pub

Any problems with these directions? Please email me at rod@rrgordon.com (also if you liked the walk!)

SOMETHING INTERESTING:

Rodborough Fort is a folly built in 1761, but today is an 8-bedroom house owned by Dale Vince, the owner of Ecotricity. Most of the common land was donated to the National Trust in 1937 by Thomas Bainbrigge Fletcher (1878–1950), an entomologist.

The Reverend Awdry lived in Rodborough for 30 years, until his death in 1997, and preached at the village church, St Mary's. His legacy is immortalised there with a stained glass window depicting Thomas.

The train engine stories were born in Kings Norton in 1943 when his son Christopher caught measles, and his recovery consisted of long days in bed with the curtains drawn to protect him from any measles-related risks to his eyesight.

He was bored, lying in a darkened room and his father entertained him by telling him stories. But when Christopher complained that his father hadn't remembered the story correctly from the previous day, the pair decided that they must write them down. Later the reverend's wife, Hilary, pushed him to find a publisher and in 1945 the first book was published: *The Three Railway Engines* featuring Edward, Gordon and Henry.

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