10

Sherston - Luckington - Alderton

Using Tanners Hill, Backrill Lane, Brook End, Alderton Church, Luckington and Sherston 21.

6 miles - *some gentle hills, mainly fields and tracks with short distances on roads.*

Leave the High Street, heading towards Malmesbury, turn right past the Rattlebone Inn and walk down Tanners Hill to the bridge. Turn right into Thompson's Hill and past Mill Cottage, go through the metal gate on the right onto a permissive path which follows the river to Grove Wood. Go through the kissing gate into Grove Wood on SHER20 (which incorporates a section of the Macmillan Way). The Parish has acquired this wood on a long lease and it is being developed as a community asset for local groups to enhance and enjoy. The wood was probably a valuable resource as there is evidence of coppiced hazel.

On leaving the wood, turn half-left and find the waymarker on the brow of the slope. The path continues across the field to another waymarker and on to the corner of the field. Cross the stile and pass into the next field. There are two footpaths across this field but, depending on the cropping, it is suggested that the left fork (which leads straight ahead) may be the easier route. The path leads to a waymarked stile out onto Backrill Lane, the verges of which contain a variety of wild flowers.

Turn right and continue on the road to the ford which has a small causeway beside it. Cross over and turn left and walk along the road through Brook End. At the end of the houses ('M' of MI5 lived in one of the original houses),

continue along the raised causeway beside the river. Continue along the grassy path and turn right towards Luckington Court ahead but before the entrance to the Court take the signed footpath to the left through the Churchyard and around the Church. Luckington Court is a fine C18th mansion which was used as Longbourne, the home of the Bennet family in the 1997 BBC version of Pride and Prejudice.

Leaving the Churchyard walk through the gate and walk straight ahead along the path between the field and Court, noting the huge Cedars of Lebanon in the garden. Turn left onto Church Road and walk downhill, crossing the bridge over the Avon. Continue up the hill through what is known locally as 'the Rathole' due to its tunnel-like appearance. Take care for passing vehicles. At the top of the Rathole take a waymarked path to the right and walk along the path at the edge of the field towards Alderton Church. The path joins a farm track and you will pass a recently restored mediaeval carp pond on your right. Turn right onto The Street, Alderton and follow the road through the village until you reach a crossroads beside the village pond on your left. Take the turning right towards Badminton out of the village. Be especially alert for traffic as this is a narrow road with high banks. Towards the bottom of the hill there is the remains of a quarry in some woodland on your right. Shortly after this you will then see a Pumping Station. In summer this pumps water up from a huge aquifer in the Inferior Oolite below your feet. It supplements the flows in the Upper Bristol Avon as it goes down to Malmesbury.

Immediately after this, turn right into Tanhouse Meadow, following the footpath sign, through the metal kissing gate. Walk straight ahead through the steep riverside meadow with caves carved by quarriers in an outcrop of limestone at the top. You can walk along close to the nascent river which has a claim to be the source of the Bristol Avon. The river flows from here to Malmesbury, Chippenham, Bath and Bristol, reaching the sea at Avonmouth. As the hill steepens on your right you will approach a wooded area on your left, a path will lead you into this wood and you will see ahead a footpath sign and a stone slab bridge. Cross the bridge and follow the path up to the right. Amongst the trees you will see traces of houses; in the C19 this was a small hamlet housing a tannery, the area contains a large number of springs and wells, apparently one well is full of the horns of the beasts who were turned into leather. Go through the kissing gate. Cross into the next field. Aim for the picket fence behind the houses. There is a gate at the right hand end of the fence and a stone stile at the left hand end. Both paths beyond take you to Church Road.

Turn left on Church Road, pass the village playing fields on your left (and notice a very pleasant playground across the road on your right) and you will come to the Village Green. If you are not stopping at the

shop or Old Royal Ship pub, cross the main B4040 (with great care, this is the busiest road you will encounter on this walk) and take the road on the right side of the school signposted Sopworth.

Leaving the village you pass Northend Road on your left and immediately after this you will see a footpath sign, gate and narrow stone stile on your right. Cross this meadow heading for the gate on the opposite corner (the official Right of Way follows the hedge to the right along 2 sides of the field). Go through the gate and keep right, walking along the edge of the field. Beside a stone stile cross into the next field and walk towards the stile opposite (a path would be cleared if there is a crop). Climb over the wooden stile and walk towards the gate (and stile) you will see directly ahead of you. Climb the stile and walk diagonally across the next field towards the opposite top corner where you will find a well-built stile taking you to a path between hawthorn bushes and a blackthorn copse. Climb the stile at the far end of the overhung path and prepare to cross an arable field either following a path through the crop or round the edge to the right. You are heading for the far side of the field at its right edge where you will find a footbridge over a usually dry, ditch. Keep to the path at the right hand edge of the next field until you come, after 25 yards, to a field gate leading on to Shallowbrook Lane, a bridleway. Turn left up Shallowbrook lane and walk until you pass the junction with another lane on your left. Ignore this lane (but admire the views across to Sopworth) and ignore the inviting gate to your right.

The footpath which will take you east (right) towards Sherston is about 50ft ahead and is well signposted at the stile which you will need to climb over. Take this footpath SHER 21, keeping to the left of the bush in front, and walk straight across the field aiming for the tall gateposts ahead. This is known as the 'Flying Field' as Lady Blanche Scott Douglas, sister of the late Duke of Beaufort and a great early aviation enthusiast, used it as such during the 1930s. Go through the gate and cross the field, keeping the wall to your right. (There may be horses in this field.) Go through a second gate, noticing the lovely view of the river and cliff ahead. Then veer right as you make your way between the fenced trees down the hill, known as Reevers Hill. On reaching the flattened part of the slope above the gardens, turn right and walk to the kissing gate then out onto the road. Turn left here to go back up Brook Hill and into Sherston High Street, being vigilant of traffic where there is no pavement.

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Alderton

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