8

Sopworth

Using Sopworth Lane, Sherston 23, Sopworth 7, 11, 12 & 10 and Sherston 24.

4.1 miles - *fairly flat, mainly fields and tracks following the course of the River Avon with excellent views. May be muddy.*
5.2 miles - *with Didmarton option, using Sopworth 8, Didmarton 33/1, 28/2 & 30/1 and Sopworth 5 & 1.*

From the High Street turn left at the Post Office, go along Court Street and pass the recreation ground. This is known as Penny Mead and was bought for the village in 1934. At the crossroads turn left down Sopworth Lane. As you walk along past the school on your right, note the school Nature Reserve. About 3/4 of a mile along Sopworth Lane you come to Stan Bridge where a white egret is often to be seen.

Take the first of two footpaths on your right, 80 yards before the bridge, going through a gate onto SHER23. Bear left towards a clump of trees and go through a large gate. Walk along the next field with the hedgerow on the left to cross a stile beside a gate and keep walking straight ahead (SOPW7). Beyond the wall on your left are Crow Down Springs which feed the Sherston branch of the Avon coming from its source at Joyce's Pool in Didmarton, (although at times this part is dry). Keeping the wall on your left, cross the next field, listening for skylarks, and you will come to a track.

Either: turn left down this track to just before a barn where a signpost can be seen on the left. Climb over the stile onto SOPW11, cross the field, then over another stile and field, veering to the right and the end of the hedge. SOPW11 now bears left, but you should fork right onto SOPW12. Cross the field admiring the magnificent oak before continuing to the metal gate that brings you onto the Sopworth road where you rejoin the directions below*

Or: for a longer walk, turn right up the track until level with Field Barn, then turn left onto a waymarked bridleway (SOPW8). Follow this along, keeping to the right of the buildings as it curves left to the gap in the wall ahead, then onto NDM/33/1 and, keeping the wall on your left, cross the field. Large teasels sometimes grow beside this path. Go down the hill, through the gate at the bottom onto the road.

Turn left and after about 100 yards, cross the stile on the right onto the signed footpath (NDM/28/2). Cross the bridge ahead, go up the slope and through the entrance into the next field. Walk along the field edge, keeping the wall on your right, which soon becomes a tree line. Head towards the outbuilding at the end of the field. Ahead is a gate onto the road into Didmarton, which is well worth exploring but for this walk you will need to turn hard left here (NDM/30/1) and walk along the other edge of the field. Aim for the gate which then takes you into the next field and onto SOPW5. Cross this field, climb over a fence and head up the hill to a stone stile with lovely views behind you. Cross this stile, walk halfway along the left-hand side of the field to cross another stile on your left. Now veer right across this field, heading towards the nearest trees and go through a kissing gate. Continue straight ahead, through a gate and then left onto a bridleway (SOPW1). This will lead you back to the Sopworth road where you turn right to rejoin the main route at the point below.*

*Walk into the village then turn left down Church Lane and take the waymarked path (SOPW10) through the church gates. Bear right through the churchyard to a waymarked kissing gate and follow the path alongside the wall to a stile. With the church behind you, walk straight ahead through a field which is full of wild flowers in spring. Sopworth Brake is on the left. Aim for the right-hand gate and climb over the stile onto SHER24. With the hedge on your left, walk to a gap at the end of the field. Now bear slightly right towards the footbridge. Cross over and leave the field by a metal gate onto the road.

Turn left to walk back to Sherston or turn right to return via Shallowbrook Lane (SHER36 & 21), as shown on the Shallowbrook Lane Walk, which is only 1/2 a mile longer.

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