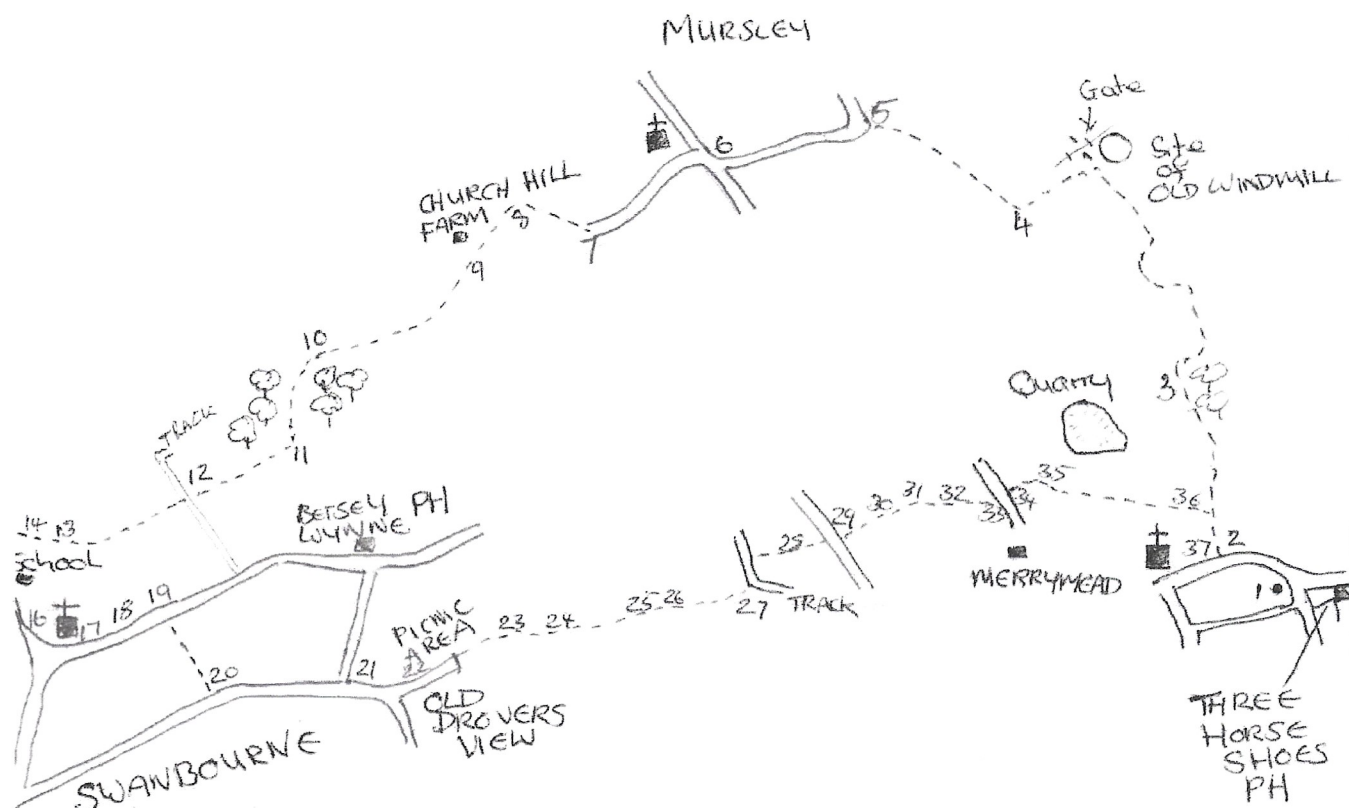


Jeremy's Walk Number 6: Swanbourne 5.9 miles



As we move into Spring, it's time to go for some longer walks. This is a fairly easy walk and most of it, where it crosses fields, is across land that is usually used for pasture. However, there are some steep steps at the midway point and there are sections which may be muddy after prolonged or heavy rain.

1. From the War Memorial go up Main Road towards the church, passing The Manor on your right.
2. Before you get to the church turn right onto the bridleway, along the tree lined track, and go through the gate.
3. Follow the track straight ahead, past the quarry on your left, and follow it around the copse on your right. Keep to the track until you have nearly reached the gate where the old windmill used to be (on your right). Just before the gate, turn left and walk with the hedge on your right.
4. Keep the hedge on your right and, before you reach the corner of the field, you will see a footpath marker with a stile to your right. Go over the stile, through the hedge, and head diagonally left towards the gate in the far left hand corner of the field.
5. Go through the gate and head straight ahead, down Cooks Lane, into Mursley. Cooks Lane used to be known as Salden Road and was the main road to Newton Longville
6. At the bottom of Cooks Lane cross over Main Street and turn right, towards the church, and then turn immediately left onto Church Lane (the church is now on your right).
7. Follow Church Lane. When you get to a small, wooded area with a stream running through it Church Lane ends and becomes a driveway serving Church Hill Farm. Continue to follow it over the stream and up the hill toward the houses on the ridge. You will see fishing lakes to your left.
8. Just before you reach the houses a footpath comes in from the right and, just after that, there is a footpath to the left. Follow the footpath to the left, through the gate and walk with the houses and buildings to your right and the fishing lakes below you to your left. Head towards the metal kissing gate on the opposite side of the field.

9. Go through the gate and head to another gate, ahead of you on the opposite side of this field. Go through the gate and follow the path as it dog legs right and then left so you cross the field next to the boundary hedge on your right. In the corner of the field go through another gate and continue across the next field with the hedge still on your right.
10. At the end of the field go through the gap in the hedge and shortly afterwards the footpath turns diagonally to the left, heading down hill towards the wood. The path continues going downhill through the wood and over a wide bridge over a stream. Once over the bridge, follow the path up to a gate at the edge of the wood.
11. Go through the gate and turn right, going across the field to another kissing gate.
12. Go through this gate and cross a track before going through another gate into a field. Head straight ahead across the field to a gap in the hedge. Follow the footpath through the gap in the hedge, curving round gently to your left, until you reach another gate.
13. Go through the gate. The footpath marker at this gate is at a bit of a rakish angle and appears to direct you diagonally left. Ignore that. The footpath actually goes straight ahead to a gate you will see on the opposite side of the field. You will see the back of Swanbourne C of E School in front of you and the footpath heads to another gate at the side of the school.
14. Go through the gate and follow the path alongside the school (the school is immediately on your left) until you get to a relatively short, but steep, flight of steps. The steps can look daunting, but they are solid and there is a handrail if you need it. Go down the steps.
15. At the bottom of the steps you reach Station Road. Turn left and walk up a short stretch of road towards the school where you can get onto the pavement. Walk past the school towards the church.
16. As you go past the church note the smaller door within the larger door on the west face of the tower. That's how the bellringers get into the tower. The stone to the left of the door was where the bellringers beer was placed - the vicar had been having trouble with bellringers bringing their beer with them into the tower. You'd never get bellringers doing that sort of thing now. Local legend claims that on Midsummers Eve the stone rolls itself down to a nearby stream to drink water.
17. Turn left into Mursley Road.
18. As you walk along Mursley Road you pass Deverell's Farmhouse which dates back to 1632. The Deverells (there are a variety of spellings) were an important family in Swanbourne until the 19th Century. Major Thomas Deverell was an Officer in the Parliamentary Army during the Civil War, but his house appears to have avoided significant damage when a Royalist force of around 1,200 men raided Swanbourne in 1643 and set fire to many of the houses.
19. Continue along Mursley Road past the shop and the village hall. On the opposite side of the road the verge opens out into a green area with an impressive wall behind it. By the bus stop, cross the road and take the footpath that leads down the side of the wall. The footpath winds down between gardens and paddocks to Nearton End.
20. When you reach the road at Nearton End, turn left onto what used to be known as Layton Road. This was once an important route on the network of Drovers roads used to move livestock around the country. As you walk down the road you will pass Hensmans Farm. In 1941 a low flying German plane fired three machine gun bursts knocking one of the chimney pots off the house.
21. Go past the Tattams Lane on your left and White Hart House. The White Hart was once a Drovers pub (Drovers weren't always welcome in village pubs). Continue along the road ignoring the bridleway/track to your right, which is the old Drove Road, and the development of new houses called Old Drovers View (they would block the view of any Drovers!).

22. Follow the road alongside a small wood on your left. There is a gate into the wood and some picnic tables if you are feeling in need of a rest this is a good place to stop. The road ends at a wooden gate with a footpath marker. Continuing on the footpath, go through the gate, following the path ahead and through another gate into a field. Follow the footpath keeping the hedge on your right.
23. When you get to the corner of the field go through a couple of kissing gates separated by a plank bridge into a farmyard beside a large modern barn. You will see a gate with a footpath diagonally right across the yard.
24. Go through that gate and follow the footpath ahead, keeping the hedge on your right.
25. At the end of the field go through another gate and turn right through yet another and immediately left. Follow the footpath ahead, keeping the hedge on your left and go through a 'kissing gate'. Keep going ahead with the hedge on your left
26. Eventually a wide band of trees blocks the route ahead. Go right and then immediately left through a gap in the hedge and then go forward with the trees now on your left.
27. Once across the field you come to a track. The track goes ahead, curving round to the right and left, through a gate, towards Mursley Road. Turn left through the gate and then immediately right through a kissing gate. The path winds round a small copse before heading across the field towards another kissing gate.
28. Go through the kissing gate and you will see a gate on the opposite side of the field, which is where you are heading. When I walked across here at the beginning of March this field had just been ploughed. Therefore, rather than head straight across the field, I turned right and walked around the wide, grassed, field margin. It's longer, but easier than getting half a ton of Buckinghamshire clay on your boots.
29. When you get to the gate, go through it onto Stewkley Lane and cross over to the driveway of the farm on the opposite side of the lane. Walk up the driveway towards the green chicken sheds and go over the stile to the left of the gate. Continue up the driveway, past the chicken sheds and over another stile.
30. The driveway ends as you go up a short rise toward a hedge. At the hedge, turn right and then go over a stile, in the corner, to the left into a field.
31. Once in the field keeping to the hedge on your right head towards a gap in the hedge on the opposite side of the field.
32. The line of the footpath isn't always clear once you're through the gap. You need to head at a slight angle to your right. The ground rises in front of you, but you should be able to see the roof of Merrymead Farm ahead, as well as some trees, spaced out along the Mursley Road. If you aim for the 2nd tree to the left of Merrymead as you head up the slope, when you crest the rise, you should be lined up with a gap in the hedge/access place.
33. When you reach the gap in the hedge, go through and cross over Mursley Road to the footpath sign on the opposite side of the road (slightly to the right of the gap you've just come through).
34. When you get to the footpath sign you'll see a stile in the hedge. Go over the stile into the field and follow the hedge on your left, past the site of the old 'Castle' mound.
35. In the left-hand corner of the field go over the plank bridge into Great Ground and head diagonally left (keeping to the right of the old quarry). When I walked across here in early March there were sheep in Great Ground, in which case you need to follow the hedge to the right and go round the edge of the field.
36. When you reach the gate on the bridleway, near the church, go through the gate and follow the bridleway out to Main Road.
37. Turn left and head down the hill to the War memorial.