


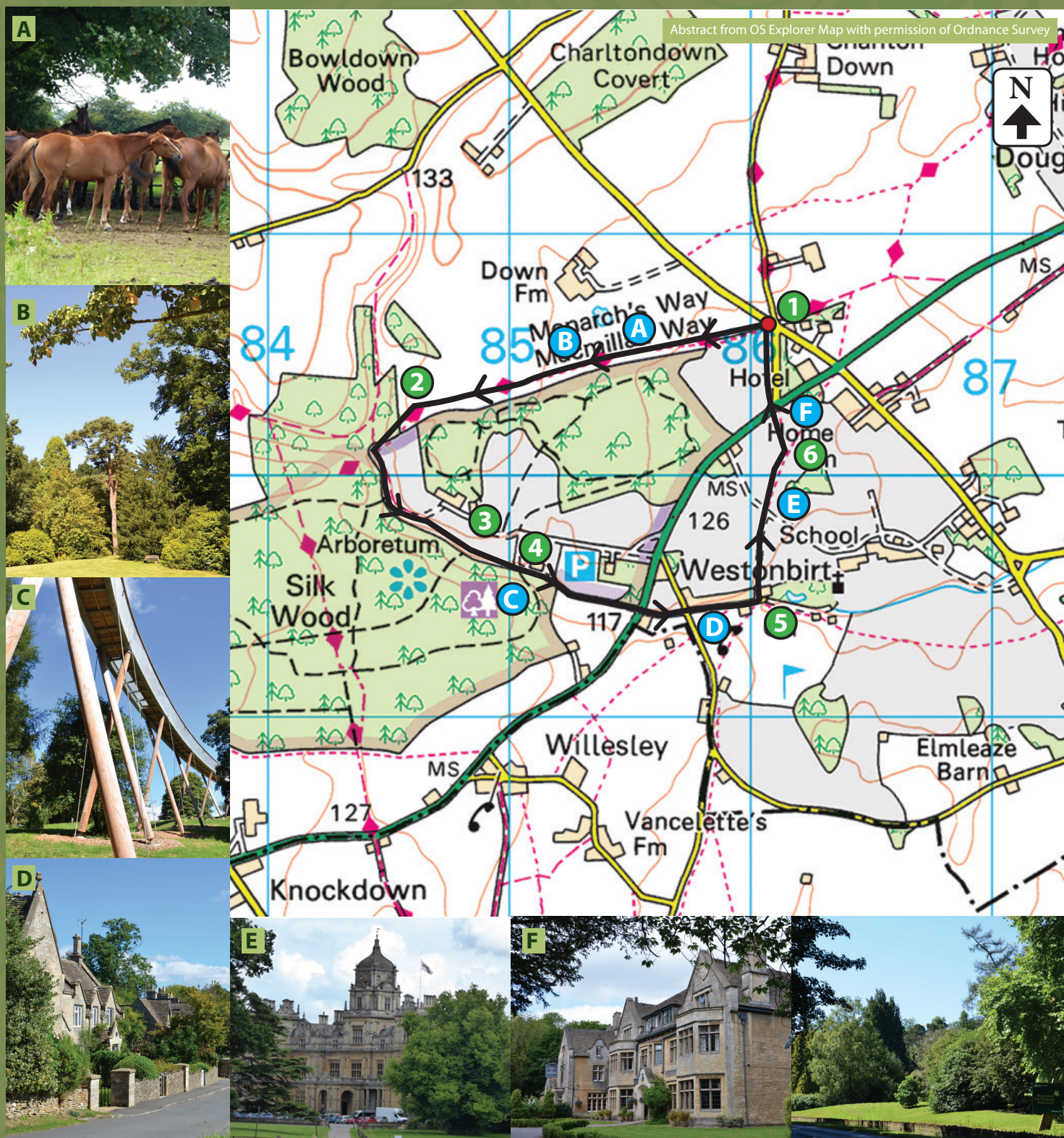


Walks around Tetbury

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Westonbirt – The Holford Legacy

A walk around and through the Westonbirt Arboretum to the village and back through Westonbirt School

Distance: 4.7 km (3 miles)

Walking Time: 1.5 hrs

Starting point: take the A433 (Bath Road) for 4 km to arrive at a crossroads with the Hare and Hounds Hotel. Before the hotel turn right and, after 250 metres, turn sharp left into a minor road. Park on the left hand verge in the small layby.

Grade A on a scale where A is easy, and D is difficult.

Description

Distance - 4.7 km (3 miles)

Starting Point - ① Retrace your path to the junction with the road you turn off from and look for the stile into a field on your left. Go over it and walk straight ahead keeping the boundary wall on your right (Polo horses from the Beaufort Polo Club can often be seen in these fields ①). At the end of the field, go over a stile at the side of a five-barred gate. The boundary wall will now be on your left and marks the perimeter of Westonbirt Arboretum ②. Following the boundary wall on your left cross this field, go over a stile, cross another field and go over a stile by a wooden gate. Ignore any electric fences in field 3, go through a squeeze gate into field 4, another squeeze gate and stile into field 5 and over a stile into field 6. About two thirds of the way to the trees there is a gate on the left into Westonbirt Arboretum.

② Still following the boundary, now bearing slightly left, for about 100 metres, look for a wooden gate set at an angle in the boundary wall just before the corner of the field. Go through the gate into the Arboretum. Follow the wall, now on your right, for a short way and then bear left down a clearly defined grass path which leads gently into the valley. It then bears left at a wooden marker post.

③ Go along the valley bottom keeping close to the fence on your right. Cross over a surfaced drive on to a track and continue along the valley for a further 600 metres, following the fence line, to emerge through a wide metal gate onto the main drive leading into Silk Wood. (you will get good views of Westonbirt's Silk Wood from this path).

④ Cross over the drive and under the elevated walkway ④ and continue in the same direction passing the back of the Chair Making Centre on the left. Carry straight on, through a wide squeeze gate and along the track, now fenced on both sides, to reach the main road. Cross directly over it and continue down the minor road opposite for about 200 metres to a crossroads. Carry straight on, following the sign for the Church and Golf Course.

⑤ Continue through the hamlet of Westonbirt to its end ⑤. Then turn left, through a pedestrian gate next to a cattle grid, into the grounds of Westonbirt School. Follow the metalled track until it joins the main drive to Westonbirt School ⑥, which can be clearly seen on the right. Cross over the drive and continue in the same direction across the parkland, but after about 100 metres bear slightly left, next to an Oak tree away from the boundary hedge to a metal kissing gate which can be seen beside a wide gate in a fence.

⑥ Go through the kissing gate into a field and head for the right of two trees at 10 o'clock. Make for the telegraph pole in the field and turn left there towards the stile you will see between the trees on the A433. Cross the stile - you will see the Hare and Hounds Hotel sign across the road, ⑦. Cross the busy main road into the minor road opposite to return to your car.



POINTS OF INTEREST

① BEAUFORT POLO CLUB PONIES

These can often be seen in the fields to your right. The actual club is further up the road where you started and it often holds polo events at weekends open to the public. Many international stars appear at these events including the Prince of Wales and his two sons who have often played here in the past.

② THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM

The National Arboretum, an outstanding collection of trees and shrubs, was begun by Robert Stayner Holford in 1829 and continued by his heir Robert Holford in 1839. It was a time of great excitement in the plant world and Victorian plant-hunters were bringing new and exotic species from the farthest reaches of the British Empire. Although Robert Holford did not travel on these expeditions he financed many and he collected much of the plant material found. These formed the basis of much of the collection.

The Arboretum has been continuously developed, improved and extended by the heirs who followed until it was handed over to the Forestry Commission in 1956. The Forestry Commission have developed the Arboretum and made it accessible to the general public. It is now the largest arboretum in the country and some would claim it to be the finest in Europe.

④ TREETOP WALKWAY

The elegant treetop walkway spanning your footpath on its way from the Visitors Centre into Silk wood through the treetops was opened in 2016. It has many interpretation panels about the trees it passes and is a source of arborol education for young people.

⑤ WESTONBIRT VILLAGE

Much of Westonbirt Village and the Hare and Hounds Hotel were moved from their original sites and rebuilt in the mid 19th Century by R.S. Holford near the existing school to the west to enable Westonbirt House to be surrounded by appropriately magnificent gardens and parkland. The cottages were probably designed by Lewis Vulliamy, the architect of the mansion built by Holford near the site of the former manor-house north-east of the church. It is interesting to note the power of the Lord of the Manor at this time who could, apparently, disrupt the lives of ordinary people without question on such a whim.

⑥ WESTONBIRT HOUSE

Westonbirt House was built, with no expense spared, by R.S. Holford in 1870 - the third and by far the most splendid house of that name to be built here. Since 1928 it has housed a well-known girls' public school. The house has a fine Italianate garden and lakes on the south side of the house which are often open to the public.

⑦ THE HARE AND HOUNDS HOTEL

The Hare and Hounds Hotel was originally built as a Coaching Inn near the village of Doughton in 1716 and owned by the Doughton Manor estate (now part of the Dutchy estate) but was acquired by and rebuilt by R.S. Holford in 1854 in the Renaissance style, on the north-west side of the recently diverted Bath to Cirencester road.