

Walk 8 (Approximately 5½ miles taking about 2 ½ -3 hours + refreshment breaks)
Bob Jennings

The walk detailed below is our favourite because it starts from Avening and goes up through Gatcombe Park with marvellous views of the House, which reminds us of the family outings to the Horse Trials and tobogganing in Winter. The walk also continues with superb views down the valley to Nailsworth and also the picturesque village of Minchinhampton with its medieval town hall on stilts. The walk then continues down towards Longford's Mill with a classical walk down through a water meadow to a mill pond and old mill buildings. There is the opportunity to call into the Weybridge Inn where we have had many happy occasions eating the famous two-in-one pies!

The walk then continues past Longford Lake and then up over the top and down into Avening with fine views of the village.

Instructions for walk (which goes off the map)

Starting at The Bell Inn (42), proceed down the High Street, past the Village Hall (39). In 100 yds, turn Right up Rectory Lane, and bear left at the bend into Steps Lane. Follow this for 2/3 mile over the Gatcombe Cross Country Course until it reaches the Avening Minchinhampton Road. Bear left and after 200 yds keep left and travel around left hand bend – past the main entrance to Gatcombe ('Private Drive'). Continue for a further 200 yds. Take footpath left. Take the lane to Gatcombe Farm and by the barn turn right where signposted. After 200 yds the path bears slightly left and you will have good views over lower Minchinhampton. Follow path down hill and at the bottom of the valley, with large house facing you (Bubblewell House), cross stile by signpost and round the left hand side of the weeping tree, up the field to the stile in the corner by the electricity pole.

Go straight over the stile and up the path, past the barn, stables and a few houses. You then reach Minchinhampton Road by a cattle grid. Turn left into Tetbury Street and after 250 yds there is a sign on the house in front of you - Friday Street. On the left hand side of the road opposite there is a marked footpath (at this stage if you wanted to look round Minchinhampton, just carry on into the middle of the village where there is a tea shop for refreshments). Return to this point to continue the walk.

Follow the path down until you reach a lane, bear left past Chapel Farm. Continue down lane but do not take marked path to the right. Keep on down the lane and a path joins from the right by telegraph pole. Continue past a house called Baylands, and after 25 yds you will see a house with a white garage in front of you. Bear right in front of the garage down marked footpath and over stile. By the waymark sign, cross into the field, then straight over the brow of the hill and down towards Gatcombe wood. The autumnal colours are spectacular. Continue through a gap in a stone and down to a meandering stream in the valley below. Cross over the stream by low wooden bridge, through another gap in the wall, straight on and cross stream again via stepping-stones.

Follow the path by the stream and you will climb slightly and then continue over a stile, straight on and you will pass to the left of a white and grey metal barn.

Follow path straight on over two stiles. In front on you, you will see a sign on the side of a building straight in front on you 'The Yarn Store Apartments 8 – 13' (you are now back on the map). Bear right down slope and by Apartment 12 bear left and then up the slope to the traffic lights. If at this stage you would like refreshments, bear right and follow path by road and you will come to the Weighbridge Inn (47) after 400 yds. After your rest, retrace your steps back to the traffic lights to continue the walk, which will be straight back towards Avening. You will then come to the 'temporary' traffic lights and the lake will appear on your left. At the end of the lake the road bears sharply round to the right and after 100 yds there is a footpath marking up to the right by the 'reduce speed now' sign.

Go up the track to the gate with sign and straight over and up the field. If you look back at this stage you will see Minchinhampton and the distinctive building on the skyline of the Church. The path in the field bears gently left towards the green barn of Longmans Barn Farm. Through the gate, passing to the left of a fine oak tree, bear left through the lower gate, which passes by the farm buildings – continue straight ahead and through the gate. You will have good views ahead of the cross country course in Gatcombe Park (48). Go 45 degrees right, up the field to the gate in the top right hand corner of field; through gate and onto the path. Look left for a wonderful view of Gatcombe house (49). Follow path through wooded lane and in front a lovely view of Avening appears. Join a larger track from your right (the old Nailsworth road) and keep going down into Woodstock Lane (5-8) and rejoin the Nailsworth/Avening road.

Turn right and after 150 yds you will come back to The Bell Inn, where further refreshments are available.

I hope you enjoy this walk as much as we do, as there is plenty to see, from beautiful views, large wooded areas, lakes, historical buildings and a wide variety of animals.