

11. Old Sodbury - the Hill Fort and Church

From the delightful village of Old Sodbury, follow the Cotswold Way up to the serenity of a medieval church, around oak-fringed farmland and along shaded paths to the breath-taking outcrop of an iron-age hillfort. Views, history, peace and rest all combine to make this simple little stroll a wonderful taster of the southern Cotswolds.

Distance:

2½ miles or 4 km

Duration:

1½ - 2 hrs

Difficulty:

Easy, - no stiles and moderate slopes.

Public transport:

Stagecoach 620 from Bath, via Yate to Old Sodbury (to The Dog and Cross Hands). Also, Coachstyle 41 Yate to Malmesbury. (Visit www.travelinesw.com).

Start/Finish:

Grid reference ST 753/815
(OS Explorer sheet 167)
Postcode BS37 6LZ

Refreshments:

The Dog Inn, Old Sodbury (parking available for customers only).
Check opening hours.

Parking

There is free parking along Chapel Lane, please park considerately.

1 The ideal place to begin the walk is just opposite the Dog Inn on the main road through the village.

Follow the Cotswold Way away from the road, between the houses and through a farmyard. Pass through the gate on the far side of the farmyard and head diagonally across the field towards a metal kissing gate. Turn right after the gate and head up towards the church looking down from the hill above you.

After taking advantage of the bench at the top and the wonderful view over the village and far beyond, pass through the kissing gate into the calm of the churchyard. This walker-friendly medieval church dates back to the 11th century and still provides year round tranquillity and fascination for those with tired feet.

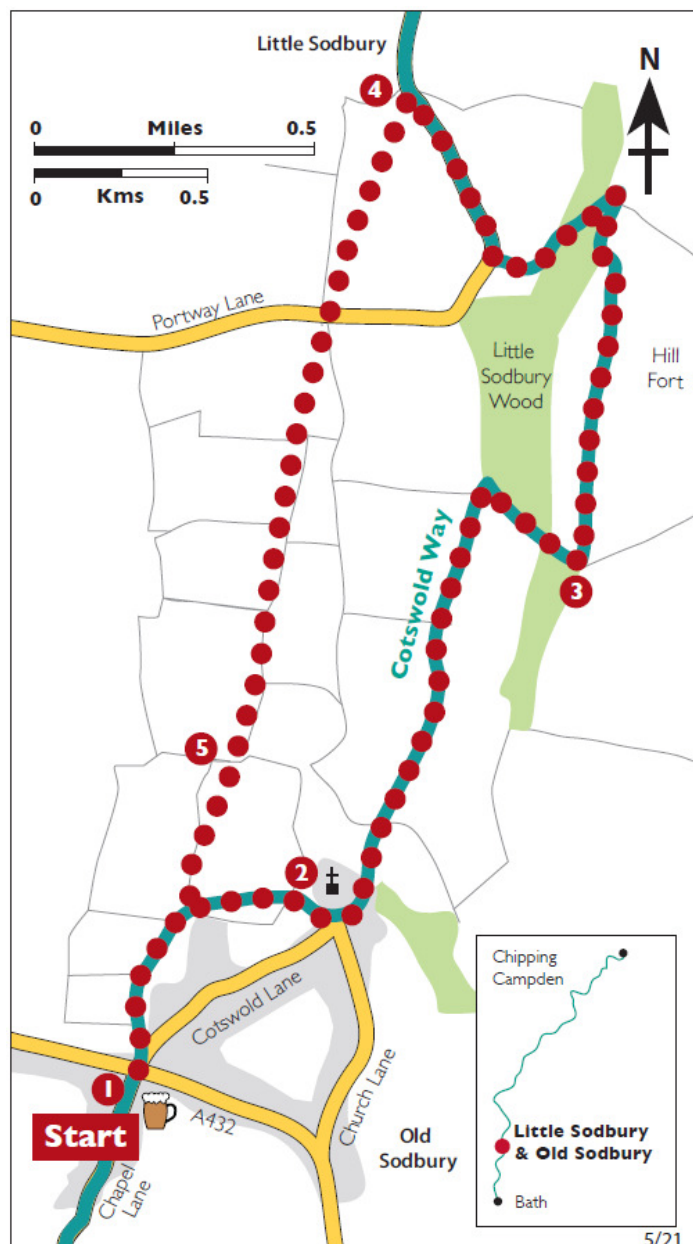
2 Head through the churchyard and pass through the lychgate to take the path opposite, up to the left of the village school. Continue up the path, through the kissing gate at the top and along a short fenced-in path. Pass through another gate along the bottom of a grassy slope, and take the kissing gate to the right of the majestic sycamore tree.

Stay on the Cotswold Way around the edge of the next field, through the kissing gate at the end and take the shaded woodland path up to the right. After the path bends to the left at the top, a kissing gate gives way to the open wonder and winter views of Sodbury Camp.

3 Follow the path across the double ramparts of this fascinating Bronze to Iron Age hill fort that has protected ancient tribes and Saxon armies, and even sheltered Edward IV before the decisive battle of the War of the Roses in 1471.

Pass over the ramparts on the far side, and follow the path left through a kissing gate. Head down the shaded path as it forks left and bends back on itself towards an orchard at the bottom. Continue down through the orchard, and keeping a good ear out for traffic, turn right along the road at the end.

4 After 300 metres, leave the road and the Cotswold Way behind to take the kissing gate on your left and follow the path diagonally across the field. At the far corner pass through a kissing gate, across a small road and through a second gate into the next field.



Pass through a field gate and follow the path along the hedge line, over a little gated footbridge, across another field and over a second footbridge.

5 Continue across the bottom of the last field pass the remnants of medieval fish ponds, with the village church welcoming you back from the top of the hill on your left.

Rejoin the Cotswold Way at the kissing gate you left two miles (3.2 km) before, and retrace your steps back towards the warm and

welcoming Dog Inn - the perfect end to the perfect little stroll.

The path from Old Sodbury Church was a coffin trail when Little Sodbury did not have a church.

Points of Interest



St Johns Church

Was built between 1215 and 1225. As with many Norman churches built at this time it is located on a knoll and has magnificent views over the vale of Sodbury. From the small iron gate near the church tower the daughter church, also dedicated to St John The Baptist, at Chipping Sodbury can be seen. Looking further to the west, the church at Yate can also be seen. On a clear day looking northwest both Severn bridges can be seen spanning the River Severn with the Brecon Beacons and Welsh hills in the far distance. To the southwest are the Mendip Hills.

A topograph (a large stone with an engraving) has been installed in the field next to the church that shows Old Sodbury in relation to its geographical surroundings.

For more information visit: svbcofe.org.uk (opens in a new window)



Sodbury Camp (Old Sodbury Hillfort)

Was a rectangular multivallate fort approximately 11 acres in size made up of a double set of ditches and ramparts. The origins can be traced as far back as the Iron Age, and is thought the Romans later strengthened and use the camp as a frontier post. The scarp slope of the Cotswold Hills provided a natural defence on its western side, the remaining defences being the high double ramparts. In AD577 the Saxon army camped here before the battle at nearby Dyrham (the Battle of Deorham). In 1471, Edward IV rested here before moving on to destroy the army of Margaret of Anjou at the Battle of Tewkesbury.

Old Sodbury hillfort is private property, but two foot paths run through and across the site. Please stick to these paths, and be wary of grazing live stock.

For more information visit:
british-history.ac.uk/rchme/ancient-glos/pp103-104 (opens in a new window)

Each winter Cotswold Voluntary Wardens carry out work on behalf of Historic England to keep the scrub trees and bramble under control. This work is necessary to reduce the root damage to the ramparts and improve the limestone grassland.



**Cotswolds
National
Landscape**

The Cotswold Way National Trail is managed and maintained by
Cotswolds National Landscape and the Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens
www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk

Photo credits: St Johns Church at sunset (c) Adrian Edmundson, 2022; Fort Rampart (c) Philip Dark, 2021