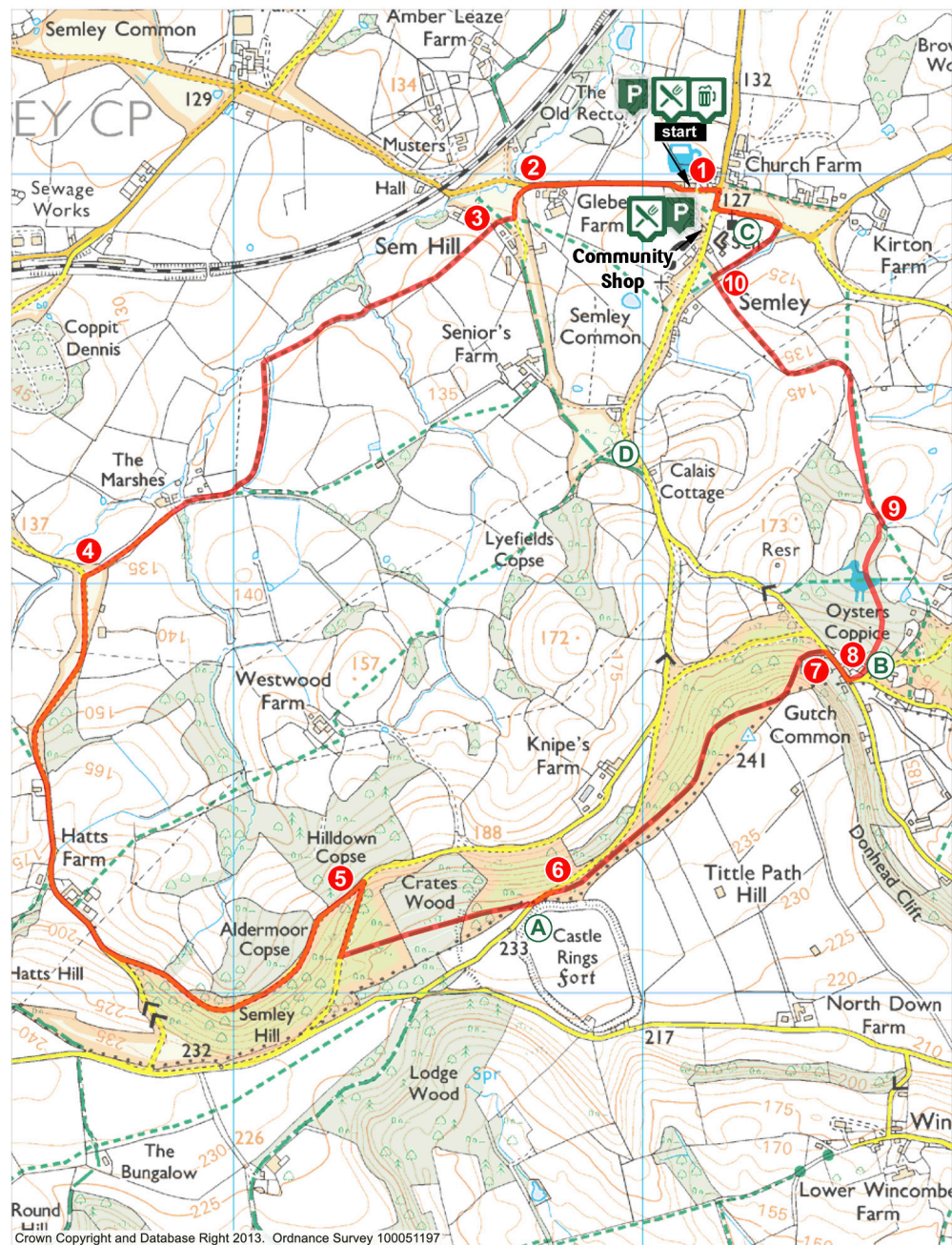


Walk 9: Semley through the Ages

Length of Walk
4.5 miles (7km)

Ordnance Survey map: Explorer 118
Walk Start: ST 89126 26974



Key

- Walk route with waypoint
- Parking
- Pub
- Place to eat
- Historic Site
- Nature Reserve
- Point of Interest

Distance: 4.5 miles (7km)

Time: Allow 3 hrs

Terrain: Field paths, tracks and country roads with some steep gradients, muddy/wet in places. The Oysters Coppice path is by permission of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and not a public right of way.

Start: The car-park of the Bennett Arms, Semley near Shaftesbury SP7 9AS. Walking groups; please notify pub well in advance. Alternatively, you can park outside the Semley Village Stores, SP7 9AU but this can get busy on school days.

Start Grid Reference:

X : 389126

Y : 126974

Latitude : 51.042018

Longitude : -2.1564843

ST 89126 26974

OS Explorer Map (1:25 000)

Shaftesbury & Cranborne Chase
No. 118

Notes & Refreshments:

The Bennett Arms in Semley and Semley Village Stores & Cafe

Journey back in time on this enjoyable circular walk around the peaceful village of Semley. Imagine what life must have been like for the previous inhabitants of Semley through the ages from life in an Ancient Iron Age Hill Fort called Castle Rings, to its rich industrial history in the 1800s supplying an endless supply of fresh milk to London from its own railway station, and village life today and as a developing antiques and crafts centre. Enjoy rich tranquil pasture land and stunning views across open countryside

1. From the car-park of The Bennett Arms, a traditional country pub trading since at least 1867, located close to one of the largest village greens in Wiltshire, turn R along the lane and continue straight on. Alternatively, park on the road near the Semley Village Stores opposite the church, and walk across to the Bennett Arms for the start of the walk.

2. Just after Glebe Farm, turn L along the lane known as Sem Hill which is a designated bridleway and bear R along the footpath at the way-marker and through metal gate

3. Then follow the L hand edge of field. At the far end, go through another footpath gate just off to the R into a belt of trees. Cross the stream and climb over the next fence (no stile). Keep the hedge to your L through the next field then through a big gap in the fence. Go across the middle of the next (marshy) field, then through another fence gate, over a stream and then a stile into the next field. Turn L along the hedge and squeeze through the gap at the end of the next fence, then across to the gate onto the lane near Marshes Farm. Turn R onto lane and go past Marshes Farm on R and continue to the end of the lane.

4. Turn L onto another lane and continue uphill past Froud's Copse then Hatt's Farm on L. Just after Hatt's Farm, turn L at V-junction along lane and descend slightly through woodland along lane for approximately half a mile (700 metres) to end.

5. Turn sharp R and start climbing uphill. Just before the bridleway sign on R, turn L along track through woodland. Continue following the footpath through Crates Wood heading east.

6. Emerge from the woodland and L onto a lane. Take the narrow but distinct footpath directly opposite on your R into woodland which takes you past the Iron Age Hill Fort of Castle Rings to your R.

7. Continue towards Gutch Common until you come to a fork in the path. The R hand fork continues along what is technically a bridleway but ends with a very steep slope down to Britmore Lane. Alternatively, the L hand fork takes you onto the lane where you turn R and R again at another junction, into Britmore Lane and on into the tiny village of Gutch Common. Go past cottages and take the first turning L and stay on this road past the next junction.

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8. Immediately opposite this junction, at the side of Woodside Bungalow, turn L into Oyster's Coppice nature reserve keeping close by the cottage fence. Turn R near the entrance and follow the path downhill through the woodland. Halfway down is a bench where you can rest awhile, relax and enjoy the stunning countryside views across meadows to the Country House of Pythouse in the distance.

9. At the bottom of the woodland, exit to R and turn L onto public footpath heading in a northerly direction across fields back towards the village of Semley (in wet weather, go straight over the opposite fence avoiding marshy ground to your L). At the next gate, follow the R hand fence to the end.

10. Turn R through the gate along the stream through woodland then long grass onto the road. Turn L past the beautiful Church of St Leonard on the L well worth a visit. Turn L along road back to the car-park of The Bennett Arms for refreshments or to the Semley Village Stores and Café for refreshments.

Countryside Code

- **Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs**
- **Leave gates and property as you find them.**
- **Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.**
- **Keep dogs under close control**
- **Consider other people**



Points of Interest

A Castle Rings. This is an Iron Age Hill Fort and Scheduled Ancient Monument (on private land and sadly you see little of it). It covers an impressive 12 acres in size and is over 700 ft high. Its defence ditch is over 52ft wide and 14ft high, though now overgrown with copse woodland. Interestingly, in the 1980s, there was an exciting archaeological find connected to the ancient Durotriges tribe, a Celtic tribe living in Briton prior to the Roman Invasion.

B Oyster's Coppice. This is a beautiful ancient woodland owned by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. The woodland has nothing to do with seafood! Its name is derived from the old English name Ecowestre which means sheepfold. The wood supports all three species of woodpecker and is regularly managed to encourage a diversity of wild plants to develop. Enjoy the colourful displays of scarce wild daffodil, bluebell, ramsons and yellow archangel in spring. From the bench, you can enjoy views across open countryside to Pythouse, a country house built in 1725 and rebuilt in 1805 by John Bennett, the then owner and amateur architect. Described as a 'fine classical house', it is similar in style to Philipps House in Dinton.

C The Church of St Leonard. This was built to 19th Century designs by Thomas Wyatt, a highly acclaimed Irish/British architect. In the Lady Chapel, there is a beautiful stained glass window in remembrance of a local girl, WPC Yvonne Fletcher who was shot and killed in the Libyan Embassy Siege in London in 1984. In the churchyard, is an impressive bronze soldier on horse-back. It is a touching memorial to Lieutenant George Dewrance Irving who served in The Sherwood Foresters who died in 1915 aged 36 years.

D Semley Plague Stone. This can still be seen at the edge of the wood just past Calais Cottage (now renamed Caleston) shown on the map. It commemorates the plague of 1665 utilising the base of a former Medieval cross. Sustenance was left presumably by the residents of Semley for the benefit of the parishioners of Donhead St Mary who had apparently been stricken by an outbreak of the plague.