

Miles Without Stiles

Ilmington and the roof of Warwickshire



From a country churchyard stride up a dry valley to a breezy hilltop with vast views north, south, east and west. It's a long haul up and a steep road down. But exhilarating!

Distance: 6 km / 3 ¾ miles with a climb and descent of 195m/640 ft

Time: 2 hours

Start: St Mary's Church, Back Street, Ilmington, near Stratford on Avon. SP210/435

Route:

From Back Street take the tree-lined path with the church on your left. Bear right by a lamp post and thatched cottage to reach Front Street and the Upper Green.

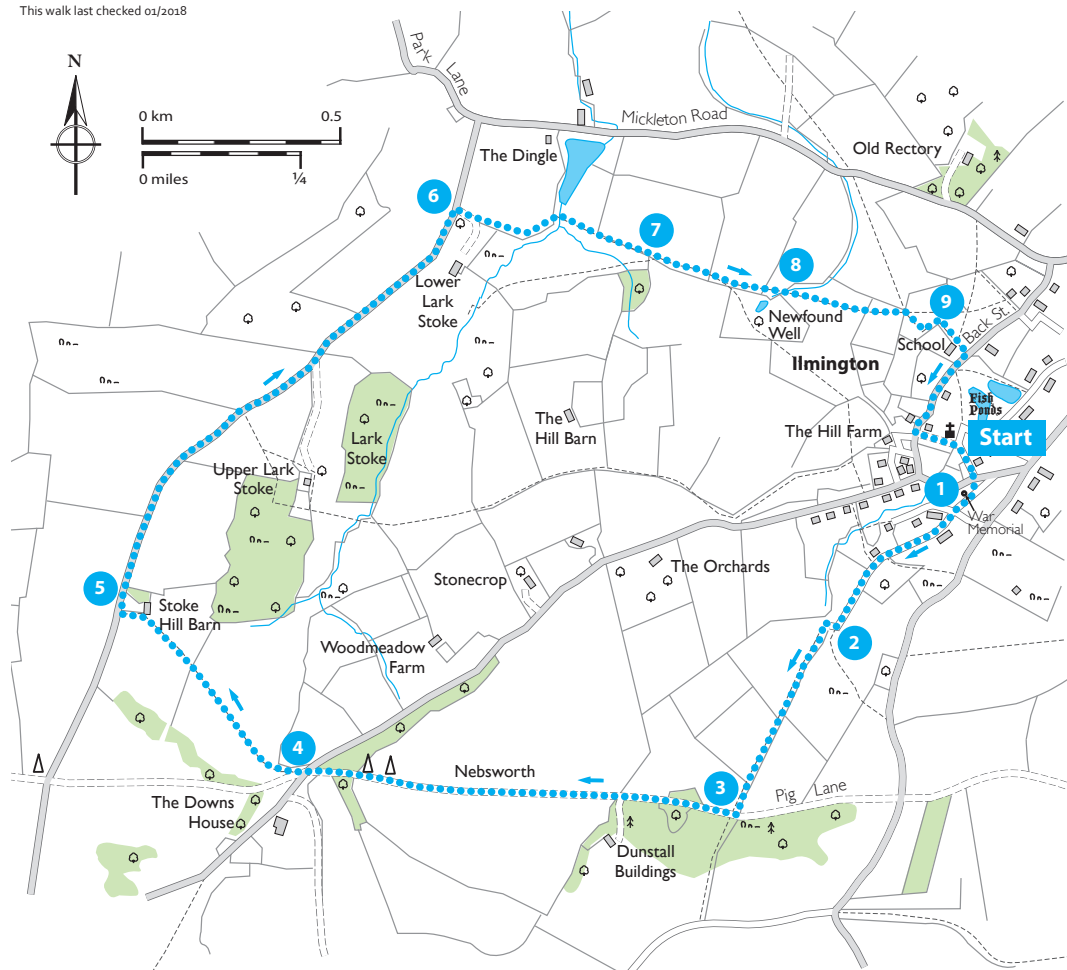
Take the path up to the War Memorial **1** and turn right onto the road (Grump Street) which climbs gently between houses, and then on a track between trees.

Just before a wide metal gate ahead **2** take the signed path diagonally down right into a field where you go through two metal gates and take a grassy path up the valley with a row of willow trees on your left.

Climb steadily alongside the willows keeping the boundary hedge to your left, through three fields until you reach a wide track (Pig Lane) **3** with a glimpse of Foxcote House ahead.

Turn right on the track and climb to Nebsworth, the highest point of the walk, where there are huge views.

This walk last checked 01/2018



After passing two high masts cross the road, go through a metal gate opposite into a paddock and after 40 metres turn right through a gate. **4** The path ahead aims for the barn on the skyline opposite, passing through a double hedge and then up on the left of the buildings to reach a lane **5**.

Here turn right steeply downhill for 1 km to Lower Lark Stoke. Nearing the

bottom of the hill, turn right **6** by a large sycamore tree.

Go along the drive for 50m and just before the house gates bear left through a gate onto a field-edge path that crosses a stream on a footbridge. Keeping close to the fence/hedge on your left, climb ahead.

After a metal kissing gate **7** carry on over the brow of the hill, ignoring a gate on your right, and

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go straight down, keeping left of a hedge and pond behind (Newfound Well) to a hidden gate **8**. Bear left for a few yards to another kissing gate, then follow the signs across the open fields through two more gates towards the school **9**.

Walk alongside the left of the school to Back Street, and turn right for the church.

The North Face of the Cotswolds

While Gloucestershire has many picturesque villages, Warwickshire's best is Ilmington.

Tucked under the limestone hill where for hundreds of years the villagers got their drinking water, Ilmington is a harmonious mixture of stone and brick, set in quiet paths between old orchards and fish ponds.

They say that Percy Grainger, listening to the Ilmington Morris Men, stole one of their traditional tunes and called it "In an English Country Garden."

You'll walk through a Roman farm on Lark Stoke, past a hill where the Roundheads won a small battle during the English Civil War, and on breezy Nebsworth — once a farmers' racecourse, where nowadays the ripe cornfields are decked with thousands of poppies.



You'll pass this 'healing well' that might have made Ilmington a spa town



Things to see in the church

- The Great Apple Map celebrating Ilmington's orchard heritage.
- Eleven carved wooden mice on the pews, the pulpit and the door.



Why 12 lime trees?

Many churchyards have an avenue of 12 shady lime trees. Why? Because Jesus Christ had 12 disciples. You can count them at the start of the walk.

Some time in the late 17th century Doctor Derham of Oxford, out walking near the village, came across a woman bathing her eyes in the waters of this pond.

He noticed that the clear water had a pale brown tint and went off to write a treatise on the curative qualities of Newfound Well.

Medical experts doubted his claim, but people kept coming here in the hope of curing eye ailments.

The landowner had a stone basin set into the water, and built a small house for those who came to bathe their eyes. He also gave the pond and its surroundings to the public "in perpetuity."

A century later, when Ilmington was enclosed, a new landowner diverted a stream into the pond which muddied the water. This caused the suffering to take their eye ailments elsewhere.

Part of the basin is displayed in an old wellhead below the village war memorial on Upper Green.