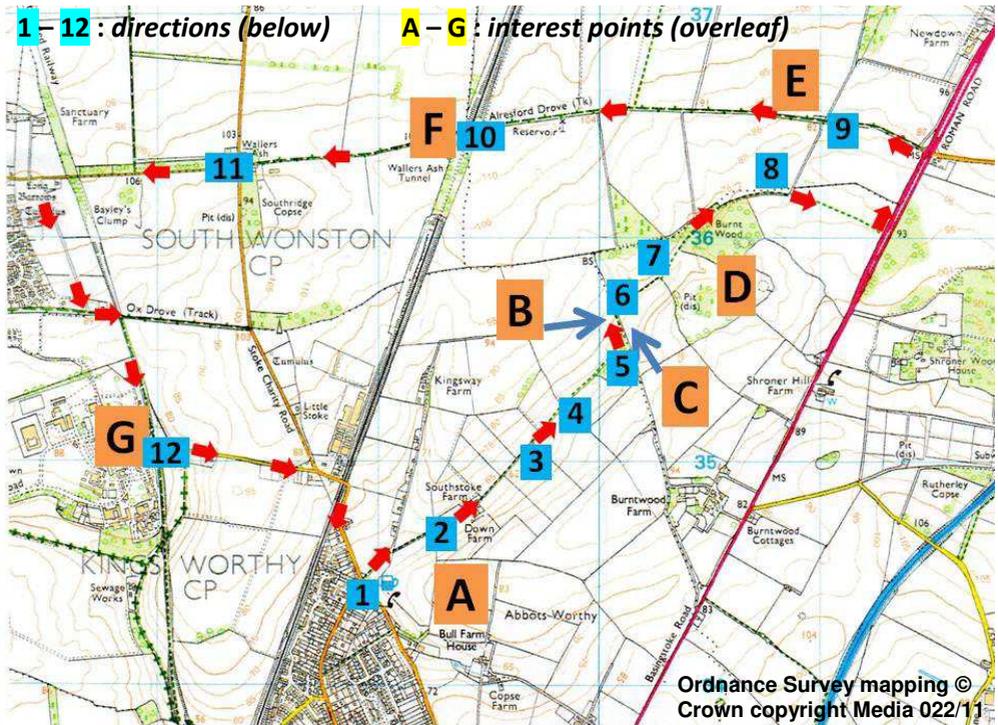


Worthy Walk 1: Burnt Wood & Alresford Drive



Easy walking but very muddy in places Distance: approx 6 ½ miles, allow 2 ½ hrs.

1. At the King Charles crossroads take the concrete track . Bear right when it forks. (A)
2. Pass South Stoke Farm keeping straight ahead on the track between 2 hedges.
3. At the end of the track, go over a stile, then ahead, keeping the fence on your right.
4. At the next field corner, turn left & then immediately right so you're again walking ahead, this time with a hedge, then a wood, on your right.
5. On the far side of the field (B) turn left up the slope, then turn right, through the belt of trees. (C)
6. Over the stile & then keep the hedge on your left.
7. Go straight across the next field to Burnt Wood.
8. Walk through Burnt Wood (D) along the track and out into the open again. You'll see a signpost on a right angled bend. The track bends left here to join the Alresford Drive although the public footpath actually runs east across the arable field to the A33. Turn left along the verge. This involves an unpleasant 200m walk in order to reach the drove road.
9. Turn left and walk up the drove road. (E) The long slope up takes about 15 minutes steady walk but is rewarded at the top by fine views north.
10. Soon you will cross the railway (where there's a small phone mast). (F) Continue to the crossroads.
11. For a shorter walk turn left here. But to avoid walking on this fast road without verges, carry straight on towards South Wonston. Take the first track on the left, then left again at the next junction. Soon afterwards turn right onto the disused railwayline. (G)
12. After 5-10 mintes walking, turn left (before the brick overbridge) and up onto the Lane. Turn left. From here it's a short walk up onto Stoke Charity Road and back down the hill to the King Charles pub.



If the whole circuit is too long, why not walk to Burnt Wood and back?

Notes:

A. On the right at the top of the slope you may notice the ridges of an **ancient field system** (there'll be better views from the Stoke Charity Road on the way back).

B. This belt of trees marks the **Parish Boundary** – in the days before the widespread use of maps, parish boundaries were marked by prominent features eg a belt of trees, a pond, a building or a marker stone. Information about boundaries had to be passed on from generation to generation often in a ceremony called “beating the bounds.” This occurred at Rogation tide (4 days after the 5th Sunday after Easter!). Villagers walked around the boundaries reinforcing their position. This could involve pushing children into ponds, banging their heads on boundary stones or pulling them through brambles and climbing trees!

C. Flint piles – removed by hand when the field was first ploughed in an activity known as stone picking. Until the early 1900's most of these fields were pasture land used for the grazing of sheep and cattle. When flints were turned over and brought to the surface they were removed (picked) sometimes by whole families working for a few pence a day of back breaking activity. The removal of the flints led to better crops and provided a supply of stone for road repairs and house building. These heaps may be too far away from roads to be of much use.

D. Coppiced woodland - Coppicing was, and sometimes still is, an important part of woodland management. The right to cut timber in sections of woodland was purchased by hurdle makers who would cut

the bushes back to the ground, using the straight wood to make interwoven hurdles to pen the sheep and sell pea sticks, bean poles and besom brooms to gardeners. Not only was this good for the rural economy but also let the light into woodland so that there was an increase in the variety of wild plants. Every 10 to 20 years the process was repeated – how's that for sustainability! However, this woodland has not been coppiced for a long time.

E. Drove Road - You may wonder why the track needs to be so wide – we are on a drove road along which sheep and cattle were herded to market long before cattle lorries did the job. The wide verges provided 'food on the hoof' and a way of avoiding the muddiest parts in winter. Water for the beasts was also important and ponds that collect surface water and dew were made – like the one on the left where another track joins.

F. Wallers Ash Tunnel - The tunnel was built in the 1840's but the name Waller goes back a further 200 years when General William Waller is reputed to have fought near here during the Civil War.

G. Didcot, Newbury & Southampton railway – opened in 1885 but due to a lack of money it only ran as far as Winchester. Here passengers had to wait while the loco was changed from a GWR to a L&SWR engine, a time consuming process, before carrying on to Southampton. The line closed in 1961. Worthy Down Halt was built in 1917 to serve the Royal Flying Corps depot nearby.

*With thanks to Derek Brockway,
Worthys Local History Group*