

Stinchcombe Heritage Walk

This is a 1¼ mile (2 km) circular route that includes many of Stinchcombe's listed buildings and other landmarks. Visit the *Our Virtual Village* pages on the Parish website for related articles – we're adding new material all the time.

The route uses public footpaths and roads, including some stretches without a pavement. There are some stiles and one fairly steep uphill section.

You are very welcome in our village, however, we kindly request that you:

- *respect the privacy of the occupants of private homes*
- *stick to the footpaths and keep dogs on leads to protect livestock and wildlife*
- *leave no litter and clear up after your dog if you have one*

Start and Finish: Village Hall Car Park

Nearest refreshments: Leaf & Ground 750 metres away on the B4060 towards Dursley

Public transport: Stagecoach No. 60 Dursley-Thornbury service stops by Village Hall

In the car park take a moment to look at the **Village Hall (1)** opened in 1955 after prolonged fundraising led by the formidable Miss Hooper, prompting some locals to nickname it Hooper's Hall. Thanks to the tireless efforts of committee members over the years, it has continued to be central to village life.

Leaving the car park by the right-hand exit, cross The Street and continue right to the disused K6 **telephone box (2)**, purchased by the Parish Council in 2017 and recently refurbished. On the back wall is a large-scale copy of the route map and leaflets for other local walks and cycle rides are available.

Re-cross the road and continue in the same direction to view **Combe House (3)** on your left. This former farmhouse, built in 1764, was associated with **Street Farm**, whose converted barn now bears that name. Street Farm was mixed arable and livestock and had walled gardens across the road, where the houses of Coombe Gardens now stand. Mid-C20 Combe House was occupied by Lady Maria Bowlby, mother of the well know child development psychologist, John Bowlby. It was frequently the venue for Berkeley Hunt meets in her day.

Next is **The Old Post Office (4)**, built end on to the road. The 1881 census first mentions its use as a post office. Sub-Postmaster Isaac Woodward and his wife Mary, who were there for decades, ran a grocer's shop on the same site. Young Thomas Fussell, who bought the business in 1924 using the savings of his postman father, was less successful and soon went bankrupt.

Continue walking past attractively converted farm buildings and a restored farmhouse. There were once at least thirteen farms in Stinchcombe. Nearing the post box, you are opposite the driveway of **Melksham Court (5)** of which there will be a distant view later.

There has been a house on the site since the time of David de Melkesham, Vicar of Berkeley 1349-1368. The Tyndale family lived there for centuries and it was possibly the birthplace of William Tyndale, translator of the Bible into English, martyred in 1536. The present house was built after the English Civil War - local folklore says that Thomas Tyndale watched from a yew tree as his home was burnt down by Royalist soldiers in 1645. A more recent occupant

was businessman Sir Maxwell Joseph, founder of the Grand Metropolitan hotel group. Persistent rumours that actor Hugh Grant briefly owned Melksham Court turned out to be untrue.

The next driveway affords a view of C18 **Court Barn (6)**, skilfully converted by the current occupants. It was once the barn of adjacent [Lampport Court \(7\)](#). Lampport Court's present name reflects ownership of the original house by the Lampport family, the last of whom died in the reign of Edward III. Centuries later, the present house was the main residence of the Mabbett family and known as Eaves or Eve's Court. By the late 1960s, it was being used as staff accommodation by Maxwell Joseph. He was persuaded to sell the dilapidated house to the Heard family, who restored and cherished it, as have subsequent owners.

Next to Lampport Court are semi-detached C17 **Overend Cottage** and **Overend House (8)**, which may incorporate a former stable block. The C18 & C19 gate piers, steps and gates at Overend House have their own listing. These properties were owned by the Morse family until Captain Morse emigrated to New Zealand in the 1890s. They were bought at auction by James Nicholls, then tenant of Melksham Court, in 1901.

Reaching the corner, you see the late C17 **Malt House (9)**. There is evidence of it being a working malthouse in the second half of the 18th century. It is often claimed that it was also an alehouse before the arrival of the Prevost family, who were strong supporters of the Temperance movement. The house was often home to more than one family and in 1939 no fewer than 16 people with four different surnames were living there.

The lane descending to the right has had various names, the oddest of which is Novering Lane. On the deeds of residents, it is Stinchcombe Lane but is usually referred to as Church Lane. Cross the lane to take the public footpath through the side gate of **Piers Court (10)**.

This impressive late C18 Palladian-style house incorporates an older, probably C16 house. The name is believed to come from successive owners of an even earlier house, all called Piers de Stintescombe. Piers Court was the home of author Evelyn Waugh from 1937 to 1956 but rented out to a Catholic girls' school during WWII. The redoubtable Doris Gadsden started the Bengad Welsh Pony Stud at Piers Court in the 1960s and at its height there were hundreds of ponies on the surrounding fields. The last three left to a good local home in 2020.

Continue on the drive, crossing a cattle grid, until you reach a low wooden footpath marker indicating the start of a well-trodden path heading roughly north-west across the grass. Soon reach a stile with a dog gate to the right of a strip of woodland. Carry on downhill, passing through a double gateway. **St Cyr's Church (12)** soon comes into view. Just before the church you pass the back of **Church Cottage (11)**. Stonemason Walter Woodward lived there in the 1880s, conveniently placed for his work one would think. He and his wife, Louisa, later had no fewer than seven sons serving in WWI.

Enter the churchyard by the gate and stone steps. If you have time, take a look around - an excellent guidebook is on sale inside. Return to the path and leave by the wooden gate next to **The Old Parsonage (13)**. This was once the churchhouse, using for brewing ale and for festivities unsuitable for the church itself. In 1650, during the Cromwellian Republic, it was surveyed and valued as former property of the deposed Royal family. At one time it was the home of the village schoolmaster, who ran a lending library there until the early 1900s.

As you emerge onto Wick Lane, don't miss the **Drinking Fountain (14)**, which is a memorial to George Phipps Prevost, veteran of the Crimea and the Indian mutiny. He was the son of Sir George Prevost, long time Perpetual Curate of St Cyr's and leading light of the Oxford Movement.

Continue 50 metres left on Wick Lane to see mid C19 **Manor Lodge (15)**, once the lodge house for Stinchcombe Manor. It housed the Church of England Temperance Club started by Sir George Prevost in 1877. Tea, coffee and cocoa were sold and, surprisingly, beer though not for consumption on the premises.

(16), (17) & (18) can also be viewed from the safety of the churchyard if the road is busy.

On the corner of Wick Lane and Echo Lane is **The School House (16)**, built in 1839 and subsequently extended. (An earlier schoolhouse is believed to have adjoined The Old Parsonage.) At its peak there were about 140 pupils, dropping to 11 by the late 1950s. During WWII, the school hosted a total of 26 evacuees. The remaining pupils were transferred to North Nibley school in 1966 after the Stinchcombe school managers lost their long battle to keep it open.

In the middle of the road near the School House is the **War Memorial (17)** erected in 1920. It was adapted by Mabel Mildmay of Drakestone House from the design of an old cross. Originally, only eight names were inscribed, most ex-pupils of the village school. In 2002, the weathered inscription was covered with a brass plaque bearing 25 names, including the two men lost in WWII.

Around the corner into "Church Lane" is C16-C17 **Church Farm (18)**. When put up for auction by Richard Hooper in 1834, it was described as a desirable and improvable freehold estate with 83 acres and valuable rights of common on Stinchcombe Hill. In 1890, it was again auctioned, along with much else in the village, as part of Mary Mabbett's estate.

Continue up "Church Lane" for a shortcut back to the start, otherwise enter Echo Lane, passing the post box and Parish noticeboard. Cotswold Tudor **Stinchcombe Manor** is sadly out of sight to the left of the road. It was built in 1837 for the Rev. Sir George Prevost Baronet as a residence more suitable than The Parsonage for a gentleman like himself. The Old Vicarage **(19)** was built by Prevost c.1848 for his great friend, the Rev. Isaac Williams, in his day a famous cleric, poet and theologian. As you gain height in a few minutes turn back for a glimpse of this house.

On reaching the gateway of Clingre Farm, turn right across a modern stone stile. Follow the driveway to the bend, then continue straight across a stile. As the path goes gently uphill, aim to the right of a few large trees and a disused stone slab stile. Cross a wooden stile to the left of a gate and take a moment to enjoy the views of the Severn Vale and the hills beyond.

Turn right over another wooden stile to follow a woodland path up the hill, quite steeply at first. Near the top, look out for the entrance to an underground cistern to the right of the path. At one time this supplied the whole of the lower village. Follow the path round to the left and on reaching a stile cross into an arable field. At this point you will get a distant view of Melksham Court, better when the trees are not in leaf. Head straight across the field and cross a further stile into a field now owned by Dursley Rugby Club. An aerial survey identified a possible Roman or Iron Age farmstead enclosure partly in this field and partly in the field to the right. Various Roman finds have been made in the vicinity.

Follow the field boundary left then right. Eventually you reach a gap in the hedge leading into the **Sports Field (20)** known as the Stragglers field and used for cricket and rugby. This area is the base of the venerable Stinchcombe Stragglers cricket team, Dursley Rugby Club, Dursley Running Club and Crock's Gym. In their 1930s heyday the Stragglers introduced Sunday cricket, then a novelty, and drew large crowds. The high standards maintained attracted many County and some England players.

Walk down the right boundary of the sports field and reach The Street by a gap to the left of a stone stile. Cross the road to look at the terrace of cottages somewhat prosaically called **The Buildings (21)**. These workers' cottages were probably erected by the Mabbett family, who owned much of Stinchcombe in the nineteenth century. Contrast the wide colour variation of the handmade bricks of No. 1 to 4, built in 1817 with the more uniform red bricks of No. 5 & 6, built 2 years later. Duplicate fireplaces and evidence of additional stair ladders suggest that each cottage originally housed two families. At the back of the terrace were privies, piggeries and shared well, wash house and bread oven.

Turn right and cross the bridleway to reach the black timber-clad **Swedish Houses (22)**. Contrary to popular belief, these prefabricated homes were purchased by the Ministry of Works rather than given as a gift by Sweden. Sixteen were allocated to Dursley Rural Council, including the four in Stinchcombe which were erected in 1946. They were not intended as permanent housing at the time.

Recross the road opposite the Swedish Houses and turn left into the Northfields. The third house you come to is **Langside (23)**, a C18 stone cottage attached to a grey rendered building. Langside is where Stinchcombe's blacksmiths lived, in a convenient location for shoeing the oxen that hauled carriages up Stinchcombe Hill to spare the horses.

Return to The Street and turn right to get back to the Village Hall car park.