

Walk 4

Southstone Rock, Temple Dingle and Sapey Brook Walk 11.5 miles.

Length: 11.5 miles

Ascent: 452m

Time: 6-7 hours

Terrain: Fields, woodland, moderate, undulating.

Stout walking boots essential

This walk is best done in conjunction with Explorer Map 203 Ludlow and 204 Worcester.

This 11.5 mile walk has waterfalls, churches, interesting villages, two former water mills, the 50' tufa cliff at Southstone Rock as well as an interesting building in Temple Dingle with wonderful views of the Teme Valley.

(1) Starting from The Baiting House turn left and walk on the B4203 for 200 metres. [Beware of the traffic.] Turn left on a minor road, signposted Upper Sapey Church. Continue for 400m, then turn left at a fingerpost, passing Church House on your left heading to the church.

The church of St Michael's dates back to pre-Norman times. It has a 13th century font and the pulpit, lectern and clergy's desk are very old.

With the church on your left go over a stile in the right hand corner. Continue in the same direction past a telegraph pole in the distance and over a stile in the hedge on the left. Keep the hedge on your right and at the end of the hedge cross the field in the same direction towards a stile. Continue ahead going slightly left uphill to a stile at the top of the hill. Go over the stile and continue in the same direction across a field for 225 metres, through two metal gates. With the hedge on your left go through a small metal gate on your left and continue with the hedge on your left to the end of the field to go over a stile then immediately over another stile on your right. Keeping the hedge on your left by a golf course continue ahead going around a boggy area and near a fallen tree and over a stile on your left onto the golf course. Turn right keeping the hedge on your right to a stile on your right. Go over the stile and turn left keeping the hedge on your left. When you reach the first house go over a stile on your left and turn right on a track to a road.

(2) Turn left and continue for 500m to a crossroad with B4203. Cross the road and continue straight down Holly Bush Lane for another 500m, Turning right at

a fingerpost just past an Exhaust, Tyre and Battery sign to go through a wooden gate into a garden. Go over a stile in the left hand corner walking downhill keeping the hedge on the left, continue through a metal kissing gate and over a bridge. Continue ahead heading uphill to go over a stile in the hedge on your right. Turn left with the hedge on your left heading towards a house on the left and a metal gate in front leading to a track. When you reach a road continue ahead into the small village of Harpley or you can go left to take a look at the new St Bartholomew's Church which was built in 1877 to replace an older one that we will visit later. Retrace your footsteps and continue into the village.

(3) Go past The Old Rectory on your left and immediately after a sign on your right saying Harpley Green take a grassy track over a small brook on your left. Go down the track for 30m into a field bearing diagonally left heading uphill going through a metal gate. Continue in the same direction heading downhill towards some trees going through a metal gate [It can be very muddy here.] Keeping the trees on your left go through a wooden gate into another field then bearing diagonally right head uphill through a metal gate. Turn right keeping the hedge on your right go downhill towards some trees. Keeping the trees on your right follow these around going down to a ford and a bridge. Go through the ford and turn left along a track OR turn right into woods and go through metal gate and cross the bridge to join the track. Take a look at the waterfall on your left and then follow the track ahead with the brook on your left until you reach old St Bartholomew's Church.

St Bartholomew's Church is a redundant church. The church dates from the early part of the 12th century, then it became neglected and was used for a time as a farm building. On the walls inside there is some interesting graffiti from around the 1930's maybe from people who helped with fruit picking from Birmingham. This is a good place to have a break as the church is always open.

(4) With the church behind you turn left going down the road for 100m. Go through a metal gate on your left heading uphill towards a telegraph pole keeping the trees on your left to another metal gate. Go through the gate and turn right keeping the hedge on your right continue ahead for 300m. Look for a wooden gate which is down an embankment on your right and is easily missed. Go through the gate heading downhill keeping the hedge on the right, go through another wooden gate heading down to a bridge over Sapey Brook to Hope Mill. Look out for a waterfall on your left. Go in between two buildings and follow the track around to the left first going uphill and then down until

you meet a road in 400m.

(5) Cross the road turning right and take the footpath immediately on your left over a stile and a bridge. Continue ahead heading slightly uphill to the right by a telegraph pole to meet a track, after 200m you will come to Holland's Mill. Go over bridge on your left in front of the house then over a stile keeping a fence on your left follow the footpath uphill until an open field [Can get overgrown here in the summer.] Turn right and follow the field round with the trees on your right. Follow the line of the trees to the corner of a field, continue across the field going by a broken stile. Turn right keeping the hedge on your right. Follow the path to the end of the field then bear left going into and through woodland to a metal gate. Go through the gate heading diagonally right downhill going over a bridge and through a metal gate [Sapey Brook] then heading uphill with ponds on your left and keeping the hedge on your right heading towards Burton Court.

The round building on your right is an old dovecote.

Go through a gate to meet a track, turn right and follow the track around keeping the farm buildings on your right. At the end of the farm buildings go through a gate on your left. With your back to the gate continue ahead bearing very slightly right with two trees on your left. When the path starts to level off and descend it bears more to the right to go over a stile on the right hand side of the field. Turn left and go through a metal gate.

(6) Bear right keeping the trees on your right for 350m. Look out for a waymarked bridge on your right [can be difficult to see in summer] go over bridge and through a wooden gate and follow the path through the wood for 1 kilometre. At the end of the wood go through a metal gate and continue ahead until you reach the B4204.

(7) Turn left and walk along the grass verge for 100m then turn right down a minor road passing Linehill and then continue along a track going through a metal gate. Continue until you come to a junction of paths and turn left going through a metal gate. Head diagonally right going downhill to a stile. Go over the stile and down 67 steps, turning right at the bottom. Continue heading downhill for 50m, passing the spring on the right. At a waymarked post turn left which will take you in front of Southstone Rock to a bridge.

Southstone Rock is made of a soft grey rock called Tufa. Tufa is formed by

the precipitation of water with a high dissolved calcium. The calcium carbonate deposits accumulate on to moss growing on the rock face. The moss continues to grow, pushing through the calcium carbonate. This new growth was coated again and so the process continued. Some of the tufa has been radiocarbon dated to at least 6700 years old.

People have been drawn to this site for thousands of years. It has been suggested that Southstone Rock lay on the important saltway from Droitwich to Leominster in Roman times. Several caves at its base were later used by travelling monks of Evesham for shelter and rest. The springs have been a focal point for human activity because they are thought to have both medicinal and spiritual properties. Southstone Rock was a retreat for hermits and pilgrims who travelled here to take the waters from a holy well. In Norman times a chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist stood on top of the rock. It is said that two monks from the Abbey of Evesham were located here as guardians of the chapel. The remains of a house can be seen atop the cliff.

Cross the bridge and continue on the footpath to a waymarked T-junction. Turn left heading uphill for 200m passing another 5 steps to a waymarked post. Turn right and continue uphill to a stile.

Go over the stile and continue straight ahead going uphill to the left hand corner of some trees, then continue in the same direction with a hedge on your right until you meet a track. Turn left keeping the hedge on your right for 600m until you meet a minor road.

(8) Turn right heading down the road passing to the right of the house [Park Cottage.] Continue ahead going over a stile into a field. The footpath heads downhill about 30m to the right of a big tree. From this point you will be able to see Stanford Court. When you are parallel with the oak tree continue down into the right hand corner of the field where you go through an open entrance onto a track into Temple Dingle. Turn left and continue until you see a derelict building in front of you. I think the building used to be a hunting lodge, but not sure. Continue left along the track in front of the building. After 400m the track starts to ascend and go back on itself, here you will meet a T-junction.

(9) Turn left and follow the path for 500m, eventually passing a pheasant pen. Turn left at a crossroad of waymarked paths heading down through woodland. Continue ahead with the woods to your left and a pheasant pen on your left until you come to a metal gate with a stile to the left of it. Go over the stile and head uphill keeping the hedge on your right to a metal gate, there is a

waymarker here which says to go straight ahead but you actually need go diagonally left. Go through what used to be a field boundary then turn right heading uphill to a gate, then continue down a track which leads to the B4204. Turn right and continue along the road for 400m.

(10) Turn left down a minor road passing Kiln Cottages and Yearston Court. Just past Yearston Court go through the farmyard on the right to a metal gate in the left hand corner. Go through the gate and head to the right hand far corner of the field towards a white house in the distance and go through a kissing gate. Continue with the hedge on your right going through gates and over stiles to the B4203. Cross the road and go through a metal gate, then keeping the hedge on your right cross two fields going downhill over a stile in the right hand corner then over another stile on the left going down a small bank towards a lake. This brings you to a drive by Sapey Brook. Turn left along the driveway and through a small wrought iron gate and continue down a track to the road. Turn left and continue up the road until you come to the B4203 [beware of the traffic] then turn right to bring you back to The Baiting House for a well earned drink.

The Baiting House

Walk 4

11.5 miles

Southstone Rock, Temple Dingle and Sapey Brook.

452 metres ascent

