

# Coils around Snake's Lane and Watledge Hill



## *Essentially*

A couple of hours of poking our noses into stuff, looking at views, listening to birds, and so on. At a guess, about **4km** (2½ miles).

Last walked: **April 2021**.

## *Casualness rating*

Potentially tiresome clambering with opportunities to get confused or lost, or a charming and varied ramble – you decide. Some difficult stiles, steep slopes, loose rubble underfoot, often narrow, some chance of mud. Dry weather only.

## *Route*

If we head north from Beaudesert Park School, along the road along the edge of Minchinhampton Common, then after about 200–300m we'll see a footpath signpost pointing left to a tunnel through a wall. This is where we start [**Point 1**].

Go through the tunnel. There's a staggered gap gate that's a tight fit, and mind your head if you're tall.

We're going down a steep, rubbly path. At the bottom there's another narrow staggered gap gate [**2**]. Turn right.

This road hasn't a name. There'll be an old pump in an alcove on our right [**3**], then a turning on our left sign-posted as a footpath [**4**]. This is Firs Road. Ignore it, we'll be coming back that way.

Carry on forwards to a fork in the road [**5**]. Bear left through a snuggle of older buildings. There's a cattle-gridded modern close on our left, then hidden away almost straight after is a footpath sign-posted to Theescombe, also on our left [**6**].

This is the top of Whips Lane. It's narrow, steep and rubbly. Take it.

## SNAKE'S LANE SECTION

After about 50m on our right there'll be a signpost pointing to Theescombe. To follow it, which we do, we need to clamber over a stone stile [7]. It's ridiculously awkward, especially for little legs, but once over it we're on **Snake's Lane**.

Note: Snake's Lane isn't what we think of as a lane nowadays, it's more like a track between field boundaries.

Cross the field and climb over a wooden stile [8], now we're in some woods and there's a fork in the path ahead of us [9]. We go right at this point, while Snake's Lane goes left. We'll come back along it from the other end.

We'll probably see a cute sign asking us to stick to the path, please do.

Nip through the woods. We have three fields to cross (and three more stiles, **10**, **11**, **12**), and it'll often be sledging-steep and slippery with it (the ground holds dew and frost), but keep heading roughly north-west towards Woodchester Priory, on the other side of the valley ahead of us.

The views here are often nice.

The stiles should keep us going the right way, as will the line of electric poles, and by the third field, the bend in Watledge Road and the kissing gate below us should pull us in the right direction.

Through the kissing gate [13] and turn left, towards Watledge and Nailsworth.

This is as main as a road gets around here, so watch out for traffic, which is often surprised to see you.

We're following the road round a bend to the left for about 200m. It takes us around Dunkirk Manor [14], which is a bit Jane Austen. It and lots of the buildings around it are listed. I think the Courthouse is the most interesting of them.

On our left there'll be a footpath sign [15], follow it.

We're in a short close created by gathering newer builds around an old farm yard. Towards the end, looking left, is the Courthouse.

At the end is a newish house called Little Orchard. To the right of its entrance gate the footpath goes up the hill, through a dodgy metal kissing gate [16].

We're back on **Snake's Lane**.

It's a steep, narrow, rubble-strewn ascent between two old and collapsing drystone walls. At the end is a double V-shaped gap gate [17]; go through this and we're back in the woods. Carry on over the wooden stile and across the fields until we're back where we came in, on Whips Lane [7].

Turn right, to go downhill.

Whips Lane is steep, narrow, rubbly and has a spring that trickles out of the path and runs down the middle of it for 100m or so, making the path more slippery than muddy.

(Look out for twin small plaques on our right before the spring starts that commemorate Nadine and Ken Hunter, who were Cotswold volunteer wardens.)

#### WATLEDGE HILL SECTION

Shortly after Whips Lane bends to the right, and the spring – if it's running – disappears, we'll come to a track on our left [18] which we need to now take.

(The track's easy to miss. If we get as far as Spring Cottage, turn back. It has a little blue plaque to William Long, who died in World War I. Going back up the hill the track'll be just past a manhole-cover on a mossy dome of concrete.)

If we're successfully on the track, we're now on **Watledge Hill Common**. Tick one off the list.

Watledge Hill is a wooded common. We have the idea around here that a common is open, rough grassland, but a common isn't a kind of habitat, it's a label that says anyone can go there, it's always open to all of the public.

So, there's the one track forwards through the trees. We're squeezing past Spring Cottage on our right, and will likely cross a muddy stretch where the spring that rose on Whips Lane crosses the path on its way downhill. It may be tricky and steep in places.

Continue. We'll meet a fence [19]. We turn left, to stay in the woods. We want to end up on Shears Path, the wide track through the woods that more or less connects Egypt Mill to Pinfarthings, passing past what used to be The Shears Inn.

There's a choice of paths through the woods (explore them some other time), but we're going to bear right along the fence line, which means we pass a mysterious small marker stone in the ground [20], which if we look at it from the other side appears to say 'HC 1865'. Also: a variety of interesting burrows. We emerge behind the National Trust sign [21].

Turn left to climb the hill (steep).

The track becomes Firs Road at the end of the common. Walk up the road to the T-junction [4]. Turn left and walk the way we went before, this time past Whips Lane, and carry on to the next fork at Cedar Cottage [22].

There are some listed cottages nearby. That's as interesting as Pinfarthings gets.

Fork right, then turn right at the bus stop [23] to come back along the Common edge, back to where we started. Pop up onto the Common for this stretch (the double-headed arrows on the map show where there are paths) – it's safer and more fun.

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