

Witton Gilbert Walks No. 1

Coach Lane to Lodge Farm 7.5 Km / 4.75 Miles

Grade: moderate

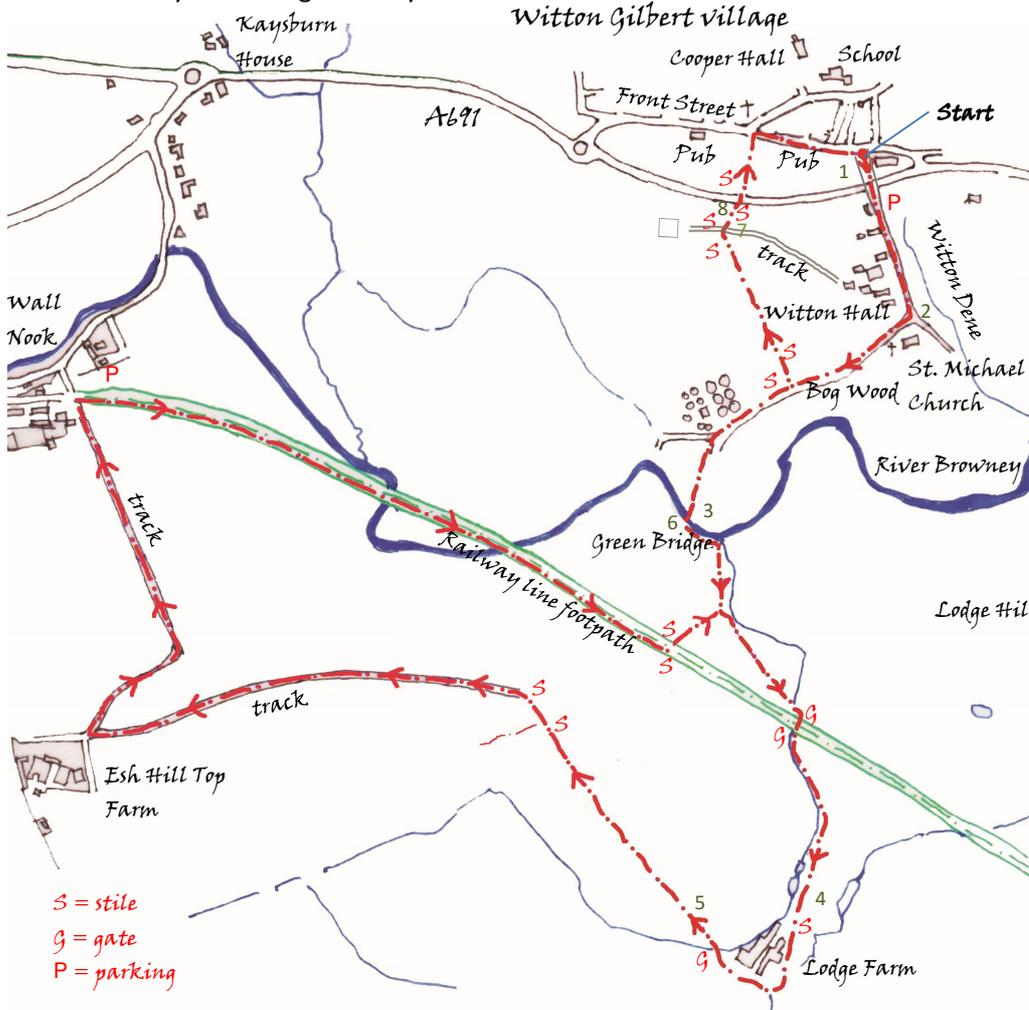
Time: 2.5hrs.

Start location: NZ 234 4565

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Directions

1 Start in Coach Lane. Head 200m away from bridge until you get to the church of St. Michael and All Angels which is home to Commonwealth War graves. **2 At the Church** turn right and walk about 400m turning left at the sewage works along the track to the green bridge over the River Browney. **3 Cross the bridge** and turn left to follow the wide track past the ford turning left again for 500m until you reach a gate giving access to the old railway track, continue straight ahead up the hill to Lodge Farm. **4.** go left to follow the footpath around the grounds of the houses and turn right for a short distance then turn left along the side of the houses. **5.** Follow the track down to the right, at the gate turn left and go uphill along the bridle path on the edge of the field. To your right you have a wonderful view of Witton Gilbert and the Browney valley. Continue along the bridle path for about 650m until you reach a stile and gate on the left at the corner of the field. Go over the stile and continue along the track to your right for about 850m until just before the farm a path leads sharply to the right. Follow this path for about 700m down the hill until you reach the old railway track at Wall Nook. Turn right onto the railway and walk for 1000m crossing the river over two iron bridges. 400m past the second bridge there are stiles on each side of the track. Cross the left stile and continue for 250m to the green bridge. **6 Turn right** over the bridge and retrace your steps, passing the sewage works. At the foot of the hill leading up to the church by the large gate, turn left across two stiles then go straight ahead over the field; cross the two stiles over the track. **7 Go diagonally** right to cross the stile and come out at the A691 road. **8 Be aware** of the traffic and cross the road to a path going off left through the hedge and cross the stile going straight ahead to another stile heading up the path to Front Street where you turn right until you reach Coach Lane.



Points of interest

The walk passes Witton Dene which is maintained as a nature reserve and amenity for the village. Although the church was largely rebuilt in the mid-1800s, the chancel walls and S. side of the nave are Norman. The churchyard is also home to its very own sub-species of slug!



Witton Hall Farm has the remains of a fine quaterfoil window in the wall – the remains of an early 13th century leper hospital. There are a number of ancient oaks by the side of the road and during the early summer, the roadside is lined with aniseed-scented *sweet cicely*. In 1913 a fine greenstone Neolithic axe was found during the construction of the sewage works; one of many prehistoric remains found in the village.

The heights beyond Lodge Farm are near the southern boundary of the medieval Beaurepaire estate belonging to the Priors of Durham Cathedral. In the valley below, towards the river, was the ancient settlement of Crookton which disappeared when the estate was created. Skylark and lapwing are frequently seen on the hill and look out for dipper and kingfisher on the river. You might also see otter and feral mink.