

## 11. France Lynch, Strawberry Banks and Dimmel's Dale

### Where

France Lynch - Strawberry Banks - Valley Bottom – Oldhills Wood – Dimmel's Dale – France Lynch

### Length

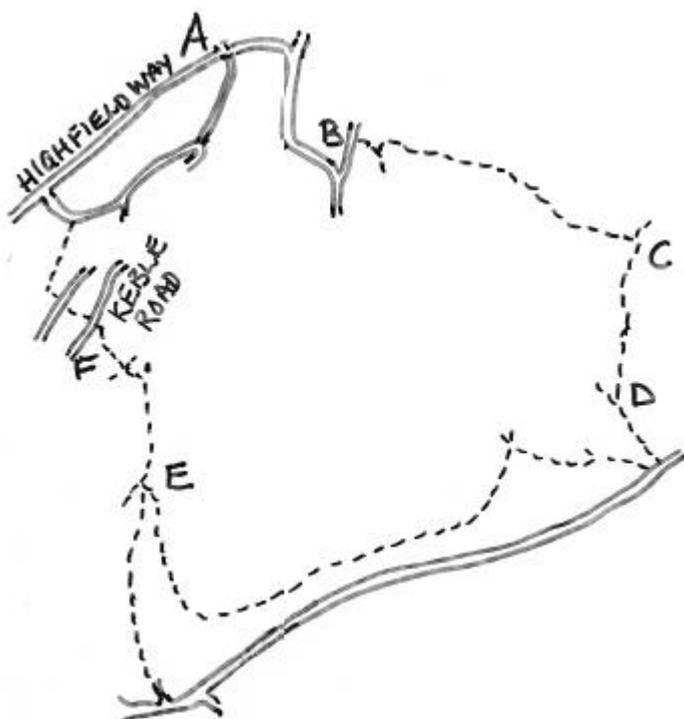
About 3 miles

### About the walk

The walk is about 3 miles in length, with some steepish ascents and descents, three stream crossings and some stiles. There is also the possibility of mud in Dimmel's Dale.

However, it offers so much: woods, fields, excellent views; also orchids, bluebells and other flowers and butterflies in season.

### The route



**A** The walk starts at the 'Kings Head' sign on Highfield Way.

At the pub sign take the road signposted Avenis Green, Bournes Green and Oakridge, passing the entrance to Upper Hill Farm on your left. When you reach the T junction, turn right, signposted **Avenis Green**.

**B** Just after '**Hillside Farm**' turn left onto a partly tarmacked track (or take a shortcut down a grassy bank). Just past "Bidcombe" veer off right onto a lightly gravelled downhill path; this is rough underfoot.

Soon you see a stile on the left. Cross this and go carefully

downhill on a steep path. The footpath, leading down to a stream, is clearly signposted.

Cross the stream but do not take the path alongside the stream on the far bank. Instead go ahead on the path up the grassy bank towards the woodland at the top, ignoring paths which go along the contours of the field. You are on **Strawberry Banks**, where you may see the butterflies and orchids.

At the top of the bank the path enters a strip of woodland, then you reach a stile and gate. Cross into the field ahead and continue uphill. The houses you see are in Oakridge; you have come that far! Towards the top of the field ignore the path which goes straight up to the hedge, instead bear right towards the top right corner of the field.

**C** At a junction of paths by a low stone wall bear right and cross the stream and stile (part of the fence here may be missing; if so you won't need to use the stile). You are now on the Wysis Way.

Keeping the hedge on your left, go down the field.

Cross one stile and then another, going quite steeply downhill. This section can be slippery in wet weather. You are entering the Gloucester Wildlife Nature Reserve. The clear track continues downhill through the wood. There is a lovely memorial bench along this path, a great place to stop and enjoy the woodland.

**D** On reaching a T junction, turn left which eventually brings you down to the road through a gate. Here there is a very informative noticeboard about the flora and fauna of the area.

**There are two options for the next section of the walk.**

**Option 1. This takes you back into the wood and has a steep uphill section. The reward is the bluebells in late April and May.**

Having come onto the lane near the information board, turn right and immediately go right again into the wood on another track. Very soon after leaving the road there is a left fork going back on itself, ignore this and continue on the track uphill. After about 100 yds take the left hand fork which goes up steeply. You reach a kissing gate into a field. **Do not go through the kissing gate.** Turn left instead onto the path which follows the edge of the wood before going deeper into the trees. The path is mostly level and there are bluebells in season [late April and May].

You reach a kissing gate. Go through and follow the path ahead which skirts the edge of the wood and then slopes down to the junction of paths, the stream crossing and a new kissing gate at **E**.

**Option 2. This option avoids the steep uphill path in the wood – but it also misses the bluebells.**

Turn right onto the road.

Continue on the road past fields, Ashmeads House and the playing field on your left. Soon after passing the playing field, look out for a tarmac track which goes right between '**Corner Cottage**' and '**Valley Cottage**'. The path follows the course of a stream. Shortly after passing Dimmelsdale Cottage the tarmac road swings up to the right, but your path continues straight on through a gate back into the Nature Reserve. The path continues going gently uphill and through another gate, eventually reaching a stream.

**E** Reaching the stream crossing, cross it [it is usually quite shallow] and go through the new kissing gate.

Turn right to another stile, cross the stream and follow the path up the field. Cross a stream and slab stile and continue uphill to a sign post where you turn left. Go through the kissing gate and continue uphill to the top right corner of the field.

You cross a slab stile and follow a wall which is on your left.

**F** Reaching **Keble Road**, cross over and go ahead up another footpath with steps to another road. Turn right and soon turn left up a signposted footpath which comes out in the corner of France Lynch Pleasure Ground.

Turn right up the track which goes past the Chalford Silver Band hut. If you are lucky you will hear their melodious practice.

At the end of the track you reach **Upper Lynch Road**. Go straight ahead and keep going through old France Lynch, passing [or popping into] '**The Kings Head**'.

At the top of the lane [**Lynch Road**] you are back at the pub sign.

**Route description by Tessa Wood, Stroud Rambling Club**

