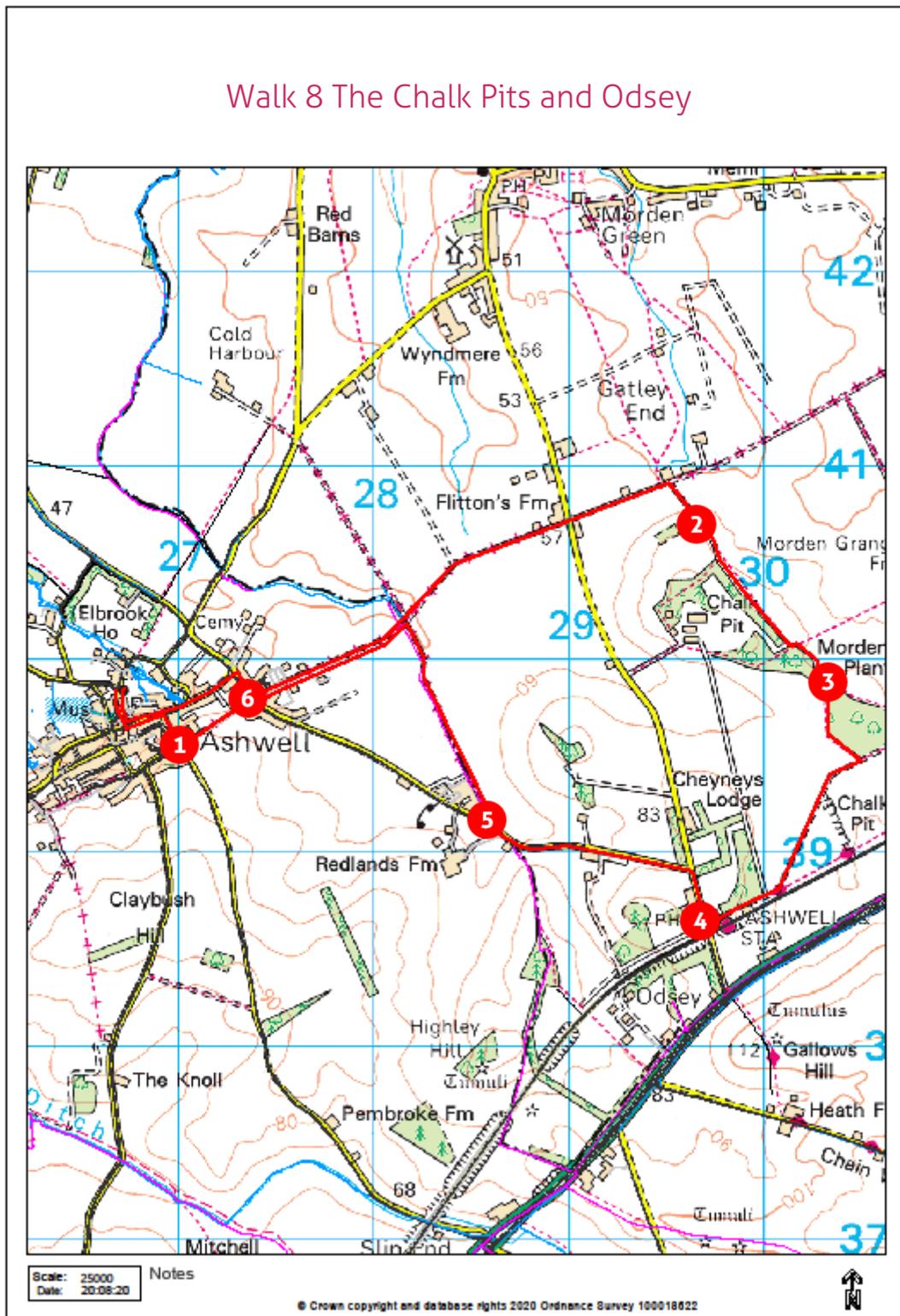


ASHWELL WALKS

Walk 8 The Chalk Pits and Odsey



Length and timing

10.9 Kilometres (6¾ miles), about 2 hrs 10 mins walking briskly, 3 hrs 20 mins at leisure.

A mostly flat walk with a short, steep-ish climb and one longer gentle climb. There is a section along a road that needs care at some points.

The route crosses open farmland, with some more wooded sections near the chalk pits. The back alley near the station has a more industrial feel.

Directions

With your back to the Parish Church lych gate in Mill Street head left to the museum and along Alms Lane onto the High Street..

At the High Street turn left and continue until you see the United Reform Church on your right. Turn right into Kingsland Way and up the hill.

1 At the crossroads 200 metres further on turn left into a road that turns into a track a short distance past Woodforde Close. This wooded track is called the Ruddery. It forms part of Ashwell Street which you will stay on for a further 2.4 kilometres.



The Ruddery

Just over the top there is a break in the trees on the left, marked by a gate. It provides a good view of the village and the countryside beyond.

Go down the Ruddery and across Station Road. Ashwell Street is tarmacked here and passes a campsite on the left before becoming gravel and then a grassy track as it enters open farmland. From here it is straight ahead, eastwards for 1.5 Kilometres up to a road.

Cross the road and carry on past two semi-detached cottages. 200 metres past these cottages take the track on the right up the hill to the chalk pits.



To the chalk pits

2 The track goes uphill between fields and is then bordered on the right by a ribbon of trees that conceals the chalk pits. At a 'T' junction with a stile turn left and then right just 20 metres further on. You then skirt a large field with a wood on the right until a break in the trees.

There is a wide view here, with the town of Royston to the east amid a large expanse of not-quite-flat farmland. The villages of Litlington and Bassingbourn are clearly visible too. Cambridge lies beyond the hills about 25 Kilometres (15 miles) to the north east.

3 Go right through the break and, on the other side, veer left to go southwards. Follow the track to the junction and turn right..



Composting is a serious business round here

Round a bend to the left, the track becomes a straight concrete drive down the railway line where there are some of the chalk pit workings. Go right at the junction.

Follow the lane past the breakers yard on the left up to the station and the main road. In my view, there's a sort of run-down charm to this section. Turn right at the road.



A contrast to open fields and woodland

4 The hamlet here is Odsey and you may want to take a break at the Jester pub at this point – assuming it's still in business. Village pubs often lead a precarious existence.

After the Jester pub go past the war memorial and turn down the road on the left, looking out for traffic. Stay on the road as it bends to the left and then down the hill to a sharp right hand bend. You should be able to catch sight of the spike on St Mary's church here.

5 After the bend and just before a couple of houses on the right is a path that slants right from the road. Go down it.

The path goes round the back of two housing developments with fields to the right. The large detached houses are built on the site of an old turkey farm.



More green fields, this time with horses

After just over a kilometre there is a four way junction where Ashwell Street crosses your path. Turn left onto the section that you walked along in the other direction earlier.

6 At Station Road, rather than go back up the Ruddy, take a right toward the recreation ground. When going left into Lucas Lane, pause to take in the war memorial. It was designed by the architect Edwin Lutyens, who played a major part in building New Delhi, amongst many other notable projects.

Where Lucas Lane becomes the High Street you will see some green railings on the right. The Springs are below, a site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) home to rare invertebrates that thrive in the consistently cool temperature of the water – water also once used to make the beer in Fordhams Brewery, which is now long gone.

Just past the Three Tuns go right into Hodwell. The road bends sharply left, then goes past the Old Rectory until the churchyard, the church and the end of your walk come into view.



View east from the chalk pits