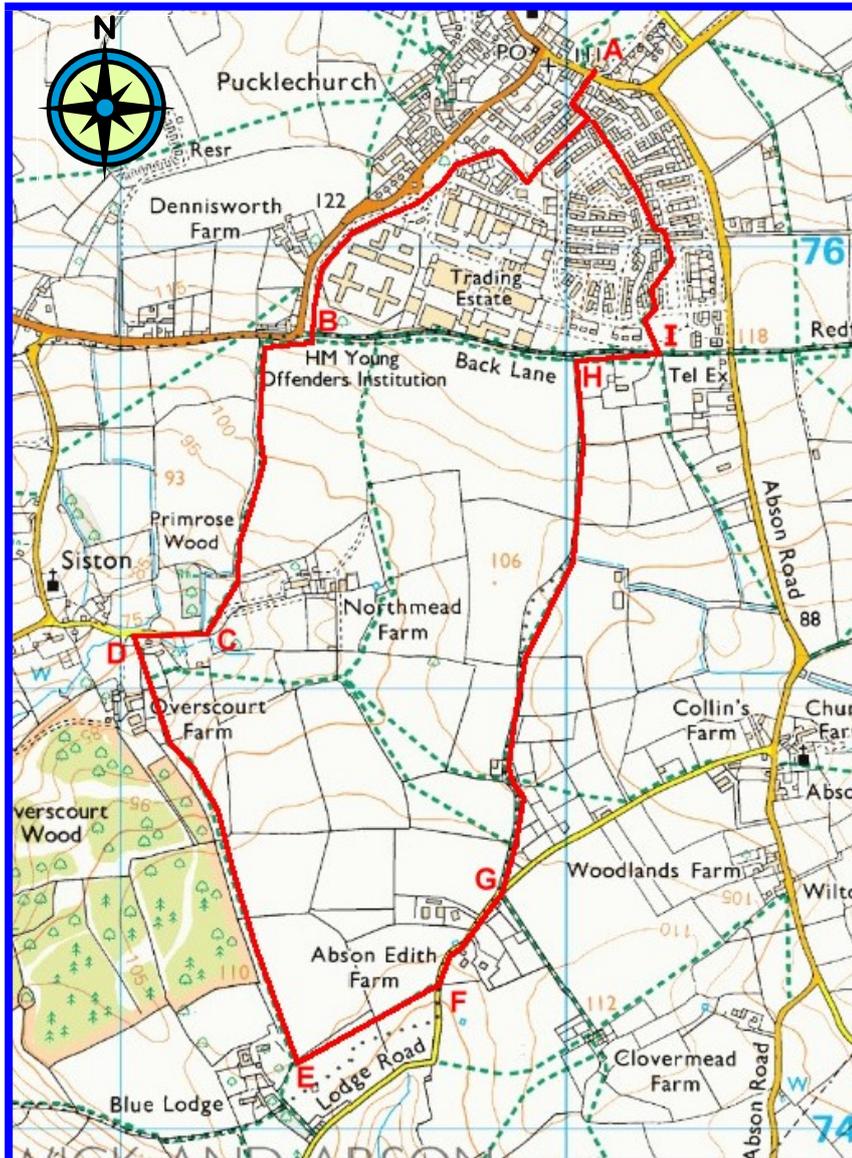




Walk #6: Community Centre to Blue Lodge

6 km (3¾ miles), about 2 hours, a circular route that includes difficult stiles and possibly muddy stretches

This lovely walk skirts Overscourt Wood and takes you past Blue Lodge, notable for being the home of Anna Sewall, author of *Black Beauty*.



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Starting from the Community Centre car park (A), take the zebra crossing over Abson Road and go through the narrow passage into the estate. Turn left at the T-junction, and then right onto the walkway between the houses on Birch Drive and Cedar Drive. At the end of the walkway, turn left onto Birch Drive and cross over to the gate into St Aldam's play area. Proceed up the slope and take the path to the right at the top, just before the car park for the

PVSSC. Follow the path through the play area and out onto Becket Court at the top. Turn left onto Becket Court and walk towards the roundabout. At the point where St Aldam's Drive comes in, take the path that veers right into the green space. When you get to the road between the two roundabouts, cross over to the wide paved path that runs along Shortwood Road. At this point the path becomes a cycle path, so keep to the left and look out for cyclists.

Countryside Access Walks

Walk #6: Community Centre to Blue Lodge (continued)



Follow the cycle path along as it turns in towards the prison car park all the way to the end, where it comes out onto Shortwood Road at policeman's bend (B).

Cycles must now take the road, but here the countryside walk begins. If there is no fencing up, you may enter the field ahead on the same side of the road. (If the field entrance is closed, turn left onto Back Lane and walk about 60 metres, where there is a bridge and a stile that crosses into the same field. Turn right into the field and backtrack along the other side of the trees to the point where the field meets Shortwood Road.) From here, the footpath runs along the fence and hedge parallel to the road. Be sure to take in the wonderful views toward the Cotswolds and Tog Hill. When you get to the top corner of the field, turn left and walk along the hedge to the bottom corner, where there is a little wooden footbridge across a drainage ditch. Cross the bridge and into the grassy field on the right. Cross this field diagonally to the bottom, through the metal kissing gate next to the gas plant, and out onto Gibbs Lane (C). The little wood on your right adjacent to the gas plant is called Primrose Wood.

Turn right into Gibbs Lane, and walk about 150 metres up the lane to the point where the footpath sign (D) directs you to turn left up the driveway to the Rickyard, which is now an alpaca farm. The footpath runs alongside the garden fence and through a wooden kissing gate. The field you enter and the next several may have livestock in them, so keep dogs on leads.

Two footpaths lead from this kissing gate. Take the one on the right, which leads straight ahead up the hill. Go through the wooden kissing gate at the top and continue straight up through the next field to a stone

Blue Lodge was the home of Anna Sewell, author of the children's classic *Black Beauty*, for six years. She moved here with her family in 1858 and drew inspiration for her writing from the local area. It's said that she based the fictional Birtwick Park on nearby Tracy Park.

stile that leads into a cow pasture. Over the fence to your right is Overscourt Wood, over 200 acres of Forestry Commission land

planted as part of the Forest of Avon. As you pass the corner of the woodland, you see Blue Lodge on the right.

As you walk towards Blue Lodge Farm, negotiate your way around any livestock or equipment to the lower right corner of the field to a metal kissing gate (E) by a large tree. Turn left and stay close to the hedge on your left. When you near the far end of the field, veer right and go over the small wooden bridge into a horse pasture. Walk straight across this field to a stone stile and a wooden stile that leads out onto Lodge Road (F). Turn left on Lodge Road and walk about 200 metres. Just past some stables on the right and opposite a private drive, take the unpaved lane that veers off to the left (G). This lane leads past several stables and eventually turns into a footpath.

This next section can be extremely muddy if it's been raining, but once you reach the large hollow tree in the middle of the path, you're past the worst of it. Proceed through a metal kissing gate and into a horse paddock. Stay close to the hedge on your left. If there's an electric fence up, be sure to close it behind you. Cross a small wooden bridge with metal gates at each end, and continue along the hedge in the arable field to a gap, which leads into another arable field and on to a wooden stile. From here the path narrows as it passes between a hedge and a row of Leyland cypresses. This path ends at Back Lane (H). Turn right onto Back Lane, which is a shady but often muddy path and walk down until you see the bollards blocking vehicle access. Just before them, turn left (I) and climb up to the village green.

From here the footpath leads across an area of scruffy grass that is Pucklechurch's historic barrage balloon mooring site. Cross Oaktree Avenue and take the walkway between Partridge Drive and Goldfinch Way. When you pass the play area and get to a junction, go left and then immediately right down the path that leads through the underpass. After the underpass, continue straight one until you come to the cut-through on the right that leads to Abson Road and the Community Centre (A).