Little Sodbury

St Adeline's Church

Church Farm

Church (ruins of)

Manor House

Pillow Mounds

Old Sodbury

Air Shaft

A432

Dog Inn

START

Haye's Farm

Sch

St John's Church

Coffin Path

Cotswold Way

Little Sodbury Wood

PO

Frome Valley Walkway

Hotel

Frome Bridge

Colt's Green

Commonmead Lane

Jubilee Way

Portway Lane

Harwoodgate Farm

Lodge

Monarch's Way

Sodbury Common

Park's Farm

Blanchards Farm

Smart's Green

Wickham

River Frome

CHIPPING SODBURY

Horse Street

Broad Street

Hales's Lane

N

0 km 0.5

0 miles 0.25

WALK 2

RIVERS, FORTS AND ROBBERIES
THE SODBURIES TRAIL

Start Point	Opposite Dog Inn, Old Sodbury
Distance	9km (6 miles)
Difficulty	Easy/Medium - includes one main climb
Time	3-4 hours with a visit to Chipping Sodbury
Refreshments	The Dog Inn at Old Sodbury and a variety of pubs and tearooms at Chipping Sodbury

INTRODUCTION

T his walk leads us from Old Sodbury through Little Sodbury, to the eastern edge of Chipping Sodbury, passing ancient hillforts, manors and churches and returning along the banks of the River Frome. Other walks in the Sodbury area are available from local Tourist Information Centres.

THE ROUTE

1 The starting point for the walk is opposite the Dog Inn, where we join the Cotswold Way National Trail. Take the lane opposite the pub, following the Cotswold Way National Trail sign. Walk through the farmyard and follow the Cotswold Way National Trail over fields to the church. Go through the metal kissing gate and churchyard to the road.

2 Take the path next to the school, signposted Cotswold Way National Trail.

3 Walk over the fortifications, following the path to the far left corner, turn left at the fence and follow the Cotswold Way National Trail down the wooded track, eventually turning right onto the road to Little Sodbury.

4 At this point we turn left, leaving the Cotswold Way National Trail (to visit St. Adeline Church walk through Little Sodbury & return to this point to continue the walk). Climb over the stile and walk through the field to the far corner (note the pillow mounds). Turn right on Portway Lane, pass Commonmead Lane and Harwoodgate Farm and enter Sodbury Common.

5 Turn left off the Common, and cross fields to the bridge, where we join the Frome Valley Walkway (to extend the walk to Chipping Sodbury see instructions for the loop walk). Turn left and follow the River Frome upstream to eventually cross another footbridge by some houses. To find out more about the Frome Valley Walkway go to www.fromewalkway.org.uk

6 Follow the Frome Valley Walkway back towards Old Sodbury as far as Commonmead Lane.

7 Cross Commonmead Lane (we leave the Frome Valley Walkway at this point) and follow the waymarked path through fields to Old Sodbury and the start of the walk.

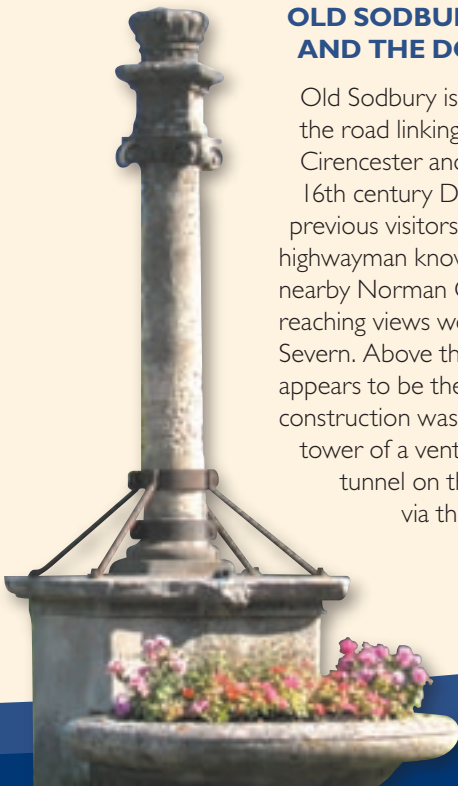**Loop walk to visit Chipping Sodbury**
(see point 5 above)

Cross the road and follow the footpath to Hatters Lane, Broad Street and into High Street. Rejoin the walk by following Horse Street away from the shops. Follow this road past The Boot pub. Turn left at the roundabout then cross the road turning down into the cul de sac (Wickham Close) opposite to join the main walk at Point 6.

SOME PLACE NAME ORIGINS:

Chipping	A market place
Sodbury	Soppa's fortified place or camp on the hill

OLD SODBURY AND THE DOG INN

Old Sodbury is a small village built around the road linking Chipping Sodbury with Bath, Cirencester and the wider Cotswolds. The 16th century Dog Inn has a fascinating history, previous visitors include William Davies, a local highwayman known as the Golden Farmer. The nearby Norman Church of St John has far-reaching views westwards across the valley to the Severn. Above the village, at first glance, there appears to be the tower of a castle. This brick construction was in fact built in 1903 and is the tower of a ventilation shaft serving the Sodbury tunnel on the London - Cardiff railway line via the Severn tunnel.

THE GOLDEN FARMER

William Davies was a local man who was also known as the Golden Farmer. He was born in Wrexham in 1627 but moved to Old Sodbury as a young man. His nickname derived from his habit of paying people in gold - stolen gold! He married the daughter of the owner of The Dog Inn, became a successful farmer and had a happy married life resulting in 18 children.
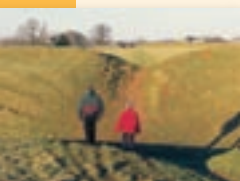
This account is taken from 'A Complete History of the Lives and Robberies of the most notorious Highwaymen, Footpads, Shoplifts & Cheats of both sexes' by Captain Alexander Smith, first published in 1719:

''He used his trade as a cloak, having early taken to the road in disguise, and robbed persons returning from cattle fairs or travelling to pay rent. He was dexterous in gaining information, and his character was above suspicion. His charming manners enabled him to secure the fidelity of accomplices and attract the confidence of his victims.''

Apparently William often rode for some distance with his victims before robbing them, many of whom were wealthy and established people. On one occasion high on Salisbury Plain he reputedly robbed the Duchess of Albermale single handedly overcoming her postilion, coachman and two footmen. ''He took three diamond rings and a gold watch, besides reproaching her for painting her face and being niggardly''' After 42 years of this secret and profitable career he was finally recognised in Salisbury Court, Fleet Street and was chased by a butcher, whom he shot in the chase, but was later caught. He was tried at the Old Bailey in 1690 at the age of 64 and ''hung in chains on Bagshot Heath''

SODBURY HILLFORT

The hillfort may have given the villages their name deriving from - 'Soppa's fortified place' - but there is dispute about this origin. The fort is unexcavated but is one of the finest Iron Age hillforts in the Cotswolds having two widely spaced ramparts enclosing an area of some 11 acres. The fort is part of a chain of defended sites on the edge of the Cotswold escarpment, looking over the Severn Valley below. Archaeologists still debate the exact role of these sites. Were they central places vital for the control of trade, were they places of refuge in times of crisis, were they symbolically important, controlling the rituals of the group and expressing their power to outsiders?

RABBITS AND FISH

Earthworks and place names of the area make continual reference to the importance of the husbandry of natural resources for food and shelter. Rabbits and fish played an important part in the diets of medieval people. Around Little Sodbury, and especially the Manor House, man-made rabbit warrens, known as pillow mounds, are prevalent. Some of these may be relatively recent constructions as they are on top of the medieval ridge and furrow field systems. Just to the south of the manor, one of the fields is known as the 'conigate' from 'coney', an old word for rabbit. Medieval fishponds are also present to the north west of the church of Old Sodbury and a site adjacent to the River Frome near Chipping Sodbury was probably the site of a fishery. Again the old names for areas echoes their use, with 'Great Fishweares' and 'Fisher's Ground' appearing as names on tithe maps.

LITTLE SODBURY MANOR

Little Sodbury Manor may well have been a site associated with the Iron Age Camp further up the hill but there is certainly evidence of a dwelling place on the site since Saxon times. Parts of the present manor date back to the 14th century, but with improvements and alterations over the years, it now has a medieval porch, a Tudor window and Jacobean mullions. Remarkable historic characters have visited here through the ages - Margaret

Pond close to site of Little Sodbury Manor

of Anjou, wife of Henry VI rested here on a long journey. Edward VI and his brother Richard (later to be Richard III) stayed for a while before the battle of Tewkesbury. In August 1535 Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn stayed at the Manor as guests of Sir John Walsh, where, it is said, he watched a tournament on the bowling green from the oriel window. William Tyndale, (1484-1536) the Gloucestershire born scholar who translated the Bible into English was also a guest and a tutor to the children of the manor. Little Sodbury Manor is not open to the public.

St. Adeline Church

NEW CHURCH AND OLD WAYS

The church in Little Sodbury is a new church, built in 1859 and dedicated to St. Adeline, the patron saint of weavers. The ruins of the original church are behind Little Sodbury Manor. An ancient trackway links Little Sodbury and Old Sodbury, and local stories refer to this as the 'coffin path' as the deceased had to be carried all the way to St John's Church at Old Sodbury before St. Adeline's Church was built. Another nearby track is known as the Portway, referring to the days when agricultural goods were transported from the Cotswolds down to the ports and wharves on the River Avon around Bristol.

CHIPPING SODBURY

The town is a fine example of early town planning. It was laid out in about 1179 by William le Gros to a grid street pattern, one of fewer than 30 such patterns in England, and still virtually unaltered. The Domesday survey of 1086 lists only two major markets in the Cotswolds, at Cirencester and Bradford-on-Avon. However, the growing prosperity of the Early Medieval Cotswolds helped establish many new towns and markets, with Chipping Sodbury being granted the right to hold markets in 1227.

Chipping Sodbury lies on an important historic trading route between the Cotswolds and Bristol. It was a staging point on the salt route from the north, and locally, on the Pilgrim's Way between Kingswood and Keynsham Abbeys. All these activities have left the town with many old coaching inns, and numerous stables for the additional horses needed to pull the coaches up the Cotswold escarpment to the east for those travelling to Bath and London. The wide market area, or pitchings, was important for both local and European merchants dealing in wool, cloth, malt, livestock and other foodstuffs.

THE FROME VALLEY WALKWAY

The Frome Valley Walkway follows the River Frome for 30km, from its source in the Cotswold Hills near Old Sodbury to the centre of Bristol, where it joins the River Avon. The route connects the Cotswold Way National Trail National Trail with the River Avon Trail and also links with other long distance paths such as the Jubilee Way, the Monarch's Way and the Community Forest Path. The name 'Frome' is derived from Anglo-Saxon "Frum" meaning rapid or vigorous, which aptly describes the flow of the river. The main features along the route are described in the Frome Valley Walkway leaflet, and include medieval churches, old quarries, mines and mills. Full details of the walkway, its history, sights, fauna and flora, can be found at: www.fromewalkway.org.uk