



Simon Evans Way



Following the 22 Kilometre rural postal delivery route to farms around the River Rea, walked by Simon Evans from 1926-1935.

The route is a figure of eight described in southern and northern sections intersecting at Detton.



Simon Evans Life

Born 1895: August 10th at Llangadfan, Llanfyllin District Montgomeryshire.

Moved aged 5 to Birkenhead, a Welsh speaker, with his parents and 3 siblings, 2 more born by 1911.

Work: Postal service from aged 13: 27 years 1 month, including 67 days sick leave.

Wartime: Joined 16th Cheshires September 1914, 3.5 years as Sergeant. Date of leg and chest injuries probably 28/29th August 1918. Awarded Victory & British medal

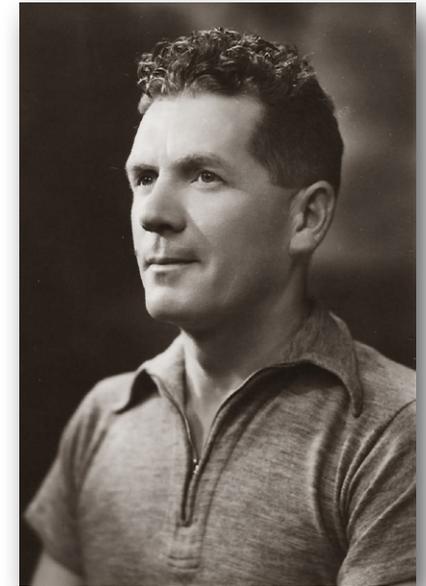
He wrote of his war wounds: 'If gas goes deep a man has it with him all of his life.'

Moved to: Cleobury Mortimer September 1926, Rea Valley route to 1935, then south for two years. Mother and two sisters also lived in Cleobury in 1930's.

Education: Ruskin College 1928, sponsored by Post Office Workers Union. His tutor encouraged him to write, leading to the publication of five books from 1931-7. These so evocatively describe the Shropshire countryside and characters he so loved.

Marriage: Met Doris Aldridge 1937, married November 1938 in St. Mary's Cleobury Mortimer, built house called Ronhill but only lived there two years.

Death: August 9th 1940 in Birmingham Hospital of pulmonary Tuberculosis, leaving £1824 0s 4d to his widow Doris, who never re-married.



Notes

- To walk the whole route, walk points 1-4 of the southern route, followed by points 1-9 of the northern route, followed by points 5-9 of the southern route.
- **Route description:** black type describes the route; green type provides background.
- **Toilets and refreshments** are available in Cleobury and its pubs & café, also in Stottesdon at the Fighting Cocks and in Oretton at the New Inn.
- **www.cmfa.co.uk** provides additional information: copies of drawings made for the original descriptive booklet of the Way by John Tuck, written by Bill Duley and Mark Baldwin, published in 2005; extracts from broadcasts about Simon's writings and life by Mark Baldwin speaking to Chris Eldon Lee; a geological guide by Professor Brian Wilkinson; archive of material researched for the 2015 Simon Evans commemorative weekend.
- Revisions to the route pioneered and designed in 2015-6 by CMFA P3 members. Full route can be downloaded at **www.shropshiregreatoutdoors** and **www.cmfa.co.uk**

Simon Evans Way Southern Section

Distance: 10 kilometre

Grade: moderate

Terrain: field and riverside paths, few stiles, short steep section at start and end, bridleway section often muddy, some road walking.

A circular walk near the river Rea passing historic houses with great views of the Clee Hills.

At the outbreak of World War 1, the British Post Office was the largest employer in the world with 250,000

staff. One of these was Simon Evans, a telegraph boy who enlisted aged 19. He served five years in the 16th Cheshire regiment, rising to Sergeant which he felt was due to his height (6'4"). Post war he went back to a city postal round but found the air debilitating for his damaged lungs. On holiday in Cleobury Mortimer he met a postman grumbling about his 29 kilometre daily round and offered to swap with him. By 1926 he was in lodging in Lower Street opposite the Post Office.

1 From the car park at Lacon Childe School in Love Lane walk ahead beside the playground. Turn left then through kissing gate onto Workhouse Bank. The town workhouse was located at the base of the slope until after World War II.

2 Bear right at the twin oaks down to the field steps ahead across a stream. At Cleanly Seat Farm left after kissing gate, eventually to cross road to follow a track to Musbatch 16th century farmhouse. Go directly forward to Bank Top farm. This is a section of Jack Mytton long distance bridleway.

3 Ahead to road left uphill, right onto track to pass Keepers Cottage. Through gate then right through gate downhill on permissive path to follow the bank of the Rea to stile onto footbridge. Follow river through gate to white footbridge. Left uphill through gate in hedge and further gate, left around the pond of black and white timbered Grade II listed Reaside Farm.

In 1914 farming was very labour intensive but one fifth had enlisted by May 1915. Pasture was turned over to arable to feed a nation which had formerly imported 60% of its food. Farm labourers were augmented by prisoners of war from a camp of 15-20 based at Mawley.

4 Left at hedge following field boundary though gap up parallel field to trees at top to regain Jack Mytton Way. Cross Tifford Bridge left ahead through open gates to see ahead timbered new house. Left through gate onto road to T junction at Detton Barns. Pause for great views of both Clee Hills Detton Hall Grade II listed with distinctive Tudor chimneys an Elizabethan Manor Farm built on site of medieval settlement called Dodingtone in Domesday Book.

Cleobury Mortimer and Ditton Priors Light Railway(CMDPLR) had sidings at Detton Ford, terminus of the aerial railway bringing dhustone from Clee Hill for road making, also shipped to France for the War. Closed to passengers in 1938, used until 1960 by Navy.

5 Retrace steps down road until right hand bend to kissing gate into Goesland Nature Reserve. Well marked route passes 1600's stone cottage and remains of steam driven sawmill beyond orchard crossing line of railway. Cross stile into open field looking for fingerpost near plank bridge. Pause to look at the river views unchanged since Simon's time.

6 Cross farm road to stile beside gate to follow riverbank for some distance crossing deep stream inlet via bridge. Look up to the bridged line of CMDPLR with weir on river below. Continue to white footbridge opposite Reaside Farm passed on outward route (point 3)

7 Go straight ahead through copse and across small stream (**take care**) then gradually uphill to stile, then kissing gate towards mature Corsican trees, left along driveway of 17th century Chilton with Georgian additions. View to Clees and Stepple Hall Farm with half timbering from 1670's and named in the Domesday Book.

Turn right down road to reach Neen Savage Ford passing Old School House endowed for 20 poor boys in 1829.

8 Uphill to St Mary's Church Grade II* listed with Norman tower, 15th century rood screen and 16th century porch. Continue ahead along track passing Lower Neen Farm Grade II listed 16th century cottage. Cross Elan Valley waterline to Birmingham, turn right across Walford's Bridge passing site of abandoned 18th century cottage and mill.

9 At road keep left up steep Ronhill where at top on right after Orchard End is Simon Evans House (lions on gateposts) built in 1938 for his wife Aunty Doris, children's radio performer he met recording a BBC broadcast about country characters he met on his deliveries or walks.

10 Continue to second right, the Hurst, past the old infant and junior schools, turn right to crossroads, then left along road to start. (Alternatively, keep down the Hurst to see ahead the Old Post Office with its commemorative plaque to Simon. Turn right up the High Street to pass the Wells see the commemorative plaque on the railings. St. Mary's Church above you on the right is well worth a visit. From there go uphill and at post box through the Talbot Yard, left at the top and right at the mini roundabout to the start.

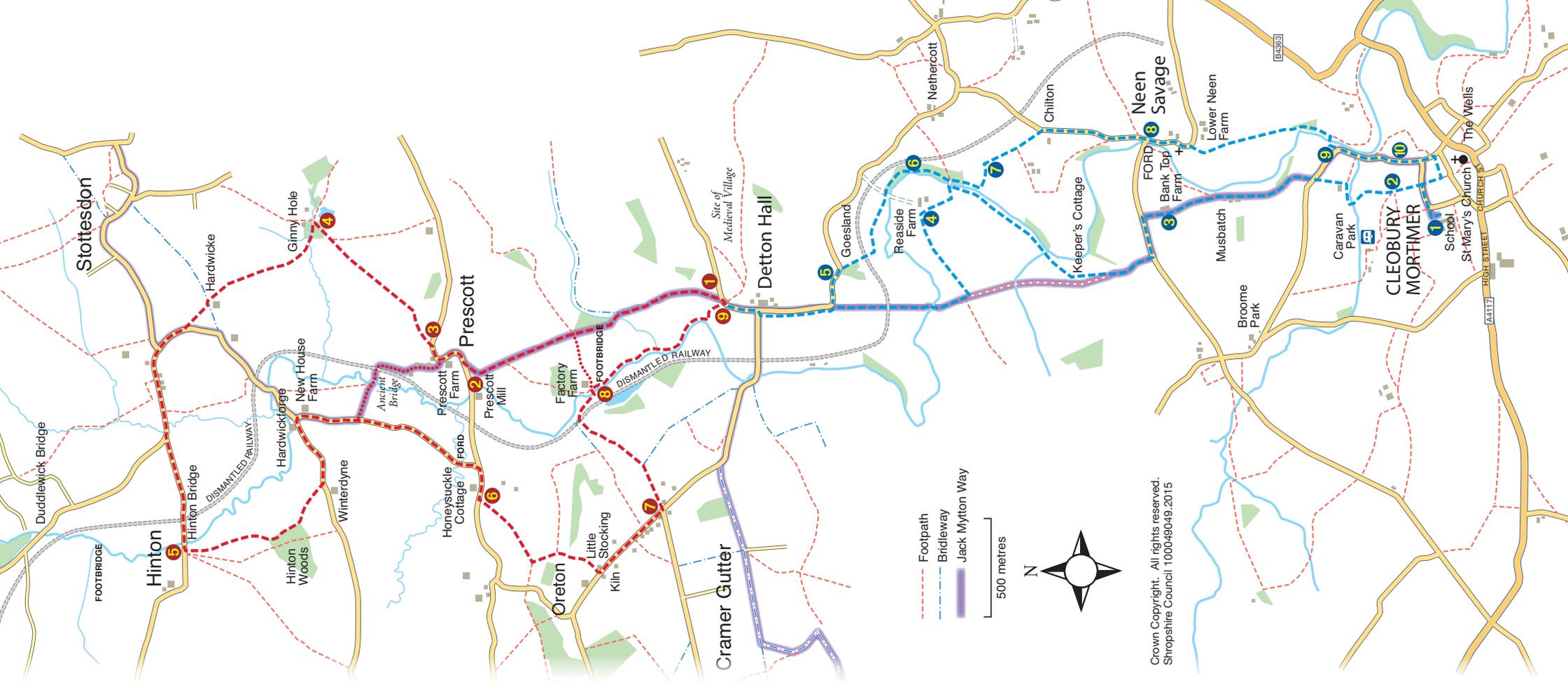
Simon Evans Way Northern section

Distance: 12 kilometre (Shorter route 6.5 km with 7 stiles)

Grade: moderate

Terrain: some steep sections, bridleways can be very muddy, fields with crops, country lanes, 12 stiles.

A circular walk with superb views passing many sites named in Simon's first book: Round about the Crooked Steeple (1931) "I am Postman of the Valley & can count many friends among the scattered population; not last among my friends, I name "The River."



1 Join Jack Mytton bridleway opposite the stable entrance to [Detton Hall](#). After 1 kilometre pause to take in the view at a seat where the route rises slightly uphill through woodland. Through open gate onto trackway steeply downhill onto road.

2 Route can be shortened by turning left here to Honeysuckle passing Prescott Mill home to Eddie & Nellie Shingleton-the only female miller in the Midlands. Simon often stopped here for a nip of Parsnip wine. Their post box was his last collection each day. The double arched 'Roman' bridge just north of Prescott was Simon's favourite.

3 Turn right round bend up road to signposted footpath on left along track into cultivated field. Right of way is diagonally across field or take right field edge if crop dense to stile in hedgerow into small field. Then directly cross to further stile. Straight on to reach dirt track then take sharp left before stream in trees, locally called Ginny's Hole, now riding stables, part of Live the Adventure Company.

Alternative route is to continue on dirt track then left at road into Stottesdon passing the [Fighting Cocks Inn open lunchtimes Tuesday to Sunday & adjacent shop, 9.30-5pm weekdays & lunchtime Saturday](#) to road junction to Hardwicke Forge – 3 kilometres of road walking.

4 Cross stile into field, then right over bridge to emerge into large field keeping to left edge as Hardwicke Farm and B&B comes into view. Take stile over

fence (not farm track) aiming for far left corner of field to emerge in front of farm buildings. Straight ahead up gravel track to join road, bearing right. At junction left onto main road then when road bears right keep straight on for Hinton Bridge. (Just before note right track into coppice for view on left platform of Stottesdon Station CMDPLR.) Simon had cider or tea about 11am at Hinton Farm, then came back to his rest hut near Hinton Bridge, provided by the Post Office. Here he stayed until 3pm before starting his return route. In Simon's words: *"I spent short weekends there. I built a camp bed along the back wall and nailed up a couple of book shelves and a long Broseley churchwarden hung from a homemade pipe rack."*

"It was the first room of my own I ever had – here I have my books". Mark Baldwin whilst doing research for Simon's biography found an old PO hut on Manor Farm at Stottesdon. John Tuck's drawing of Simon looking out of the hut is from an original taken by Barbara Everingham of Hinton Farm. From here Simon heard the whistling winds in Hinton Wood

5 A few metres beyond Hinton Bridge left onto a bridleway to emerge opposite Winterdyne Farm, left on lane to Hardwicke Forge and right into Honeysuckle Lane noting track to New House Farm and ancient bridge. The Link brothers remember Simon interviewing them for his radio talk 'Country Matters'. The road crosses Farlow Brook a little further on at Prescott Ford then uphill to Y junction, turn right to

pass Honeysuckle (Shropshire Days and Shropshire Ways 1938). House built in 1880's, only three owners, Doris Price since 1955. There is an excellent point to look back to Brown Clew.

N.B. Shorter route comes in from Prescott Mill at Y junction.

6 Uphill on left is field gate, cross stile beside it diagonally to further stile into next field keeping on same line to stile in top right hand corner. Turn left following ridge to cross stile in trees. Ravine on right could have been an ancient quarry. Ignore left turn waymark, turning steeply downhill emerging into a clearing with marker post. Turn right onto dirt track through farm gate beside Little Stocking built with bricks fired in the beehive brick kiln opposite. The Sutton family moved to Oretton in 1865 to manufacture bricks, roofing tiles and drain pipes until the turn of the century. The family became renowned local cider makers, the cider press is still in the brick kiln yard.

7 Out on Oretton road turn left uphill to pass on right former Post Office with VR postbox. Former owner Robert Link delivered groceries and fresh bread from the Stores bread oven. Turn left at the crossroads down winding Factory Lane past Riverside cottage, left around Millpool House, soon to cross a stile on right onto a grassy path between the river and field where there are traces of Farlow Cotton mill. The stone dam built to feed the mill pond remains as earthworks under a pool. Mill site demolished in 1848 was crossed in 20th

century by the CMDPLR. Ahead you can see a green iron bridge to Factory Farm, a centre of many industries in the 19th century and a workhouse.

8 Bear right along river bank to cross next bridge, then right again crossing three further field stiles keeping close to the Rea.

Imagine Simon (called Daddy Long Legs by Barbara Everingham) striding out here twisting his stick, even singing on his homeward route. Near a clump of trees cross a stile to turn right steeply uphill following the line of the hedge. In top corner cross a stile to emerge onto the road opposite Detton where you started.