

## Points of Interest on this route (see map overleaf for locations)

**A Semley Plague Stone.** This can still be seen at the edge of the wood just past Calais Cottage (now renamed Caleston) shown on the map. It commemorates the plague of 1665 utilising the base of a former Medieval cross. Sustainance was left presumably by the residents of Semley for the benefit of the parishioners of Donhead St Mary who had apparently been stricken by an outbreak of the plague.

**B Oysters Coppice.** This is a beautiful ancient woodland and nature reserve managed by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. The name Oyster's Coppice actually has nothing to do with seafood! Its name is derived from the old English name Ecwestre which means sheepfold. The wood is managed to encourage a variety of wild flowers such as wild daffodil, wild garlic, bluebell and yellow archangel.

**C Gutch Common SSSI.** The area around the village is a biological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and of national importance for wildlife, due to its valuable mosaic of oak, ash, hazel woodland, wet flushes, bracken, and large grassland meadow. Look out for great spotted woodpecker, bullfinch and tree-creeper.



**D Donhead St. Mary & Donhead St. Andrew.** The Estate of Donhead was formed in the Middle Ages from the parishes of Donhead St. Mary and St. Andrew. Both belonged to Shaftesbury Abbey in 1066. The name 'Don head' is the Saxon name for 'Head of the Downs'; Donhead St. Andrew was once the home of Ann Arundel who with her husband, the 2nd Lord Baltimore, founded the American colony of Maryland in 1633. They both lived at Hook Manor.

**E St. Mary's Church.** Built on the site of a 2nd Century Roman settlement in Donhead St. Mary. Bats roost in the building and the grounds are designated a Wildlife Conservation Area.

**F Church of St. Andrew.** Amongst the memorials is that of Captain John Cooke RN who was killed commanding HMS Belleophon at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

From the peaceful village of Semley, explore this picturesque and enchanting patchwork landscape of the Donheads, including the pretty thatched villages of Donhead St. Mary and Donhead St. Andrew, connected by a maze of quiet lanes and paths, steep hills and ancient woodland.


**Start:** The Benett Arms in Semley. Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 118, Shaftesbury and Cranborne Chase. OS Grid Reference ST891269| W3W sprays.blip.caressing

**Parking:** The Benett Arms Car Park in Semley on the edge of the village green, or on the roadside in Semley. Please park in a safe place so as not to obstruct driveways, field entrances and other traffic.

**Terrain:** Field and woodland paths with gates and stiles, unmade tracks and lanes. Several steep gradients. Field paths and tracks can be wet in places.

**Length:** Approximately 5 miles / 8 km.

**Approximate time:** 2.5 hours.

 **Dogs:** Please keep dogs on leads throughout this walk. Take care as the lanes are narrow and winding with poor long-distance visibility.

**Good to know:** Accommodation available at The Benett Arms and Mereworth House bed and breakfast in Donhead St. Andrew.

**Refreshments:** The Benett Arms and the Village Stores and Cafe in Semley.  
*The information is only intended as a general guide. Please check local arrangements.*



Respect everyone  
Protect the environment  
Enjoy the outdoors  
Follow advice and local signs

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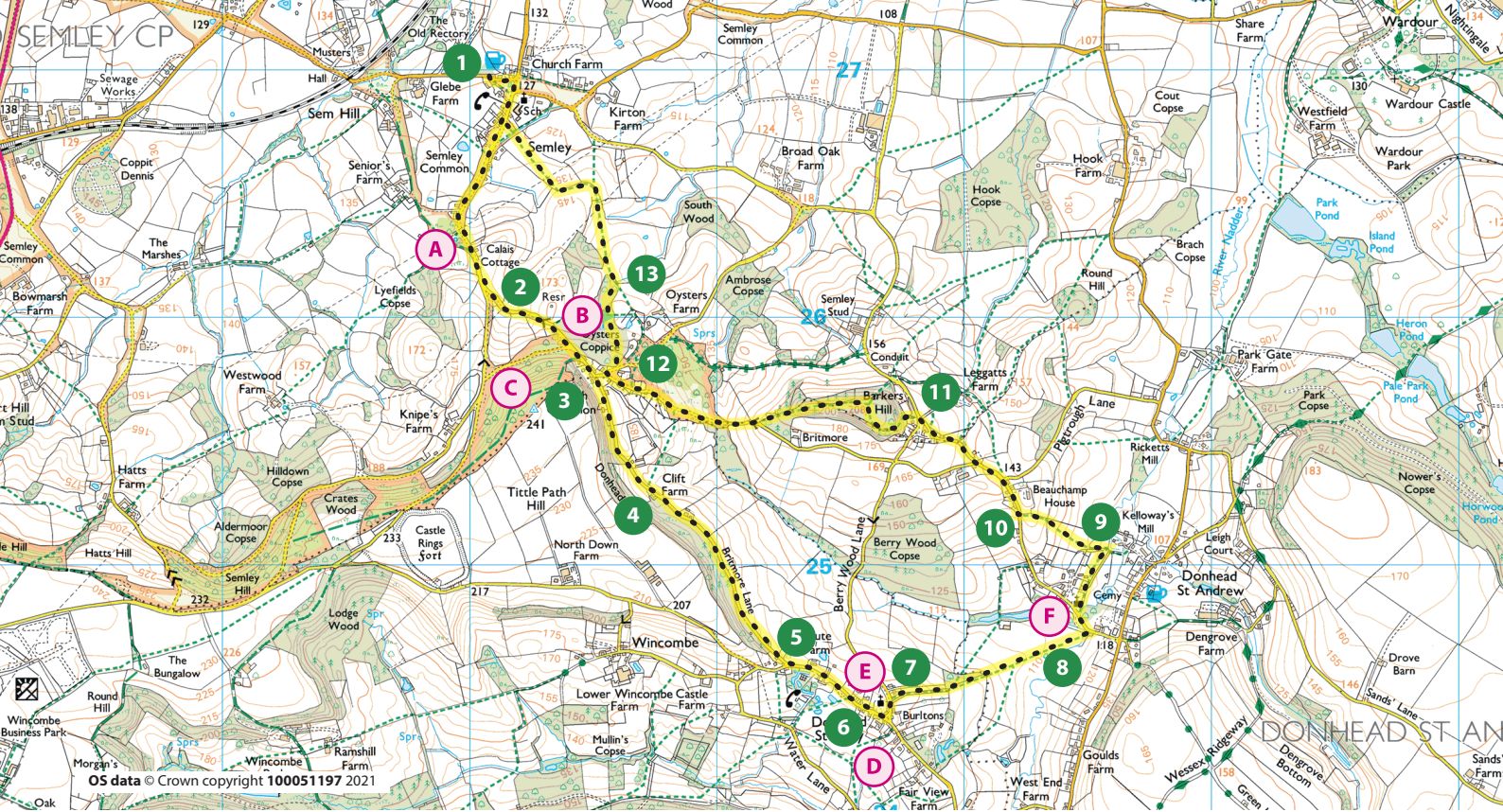
     
[cranbornechase.org.uk](https://cranbornechase.org.uk)

## Semley and The Donheads

From Cranborne Chase National Landscape to Maryland, USA

WALK #  
**W10**





## Directions

- 1 From the Benett Arms take the footpath straight ahead across the green, past the pond on the left, and turn right along the road to pass to St Leonards Church on your left and Semley Village Stores and Cafe on your right. Continue uphill along the road and take the left turn signposted to 'Donheads' and marked as 'Wiltshire Cycleway'.
- 2 The entrance gate to Oyster Coppice Nature Reserve stands to the left as you climb the hill. Either stay on the road to reach the hamlet of Gutch Common, or go through the gate and follow the path uphill to the right, up steps and past a tiny pond then through a gate onto the road, then turn right up the hill and right again before turning left at Fairview Cottage where there is a red postbox mounted in the wall, into Britmore Lane. If you have stayed on the road, keep straight ahead past Fairview Cottage.
- 3 Follow Britmore Lane through Gutch Common.
- 4 Stay on the road all the way to the village of Donhead St. Mary, passing Clift Farm and above it the ancient woodland and important habitat for bats of Donhead Clift. At the end of Britmore Lane, keep straight ahead along Church Street.
- 5 In the village of Donhead St. Mary, opposite Garden Cottage, but shown on some maps as Spring Cottage, stands a well. Turn left along the road to pass the village hall.
- 6 Pass St. Mary's Church, which dates back to the 12th century and is well worth visiting.
- 7 Immediately past the church turn left onto Berry Wood Lane where most of the cottages date back to the 17th and 18th centuries, then turn right onto a waymarked footpath through a gate and into a narrow lane between fences, alongside orchards. Go through a kissing gate into a field where you may meet cows and downhill to another kissing gate into the next field. Keep straight ahead across the field, with a view of Donhead House to the left, to meet the River Nadder. Follow the path along the river bank and over a bridge to St. Bartholomew's Street. Turn left along the road to St. Andrew's Church.
- 8 Just before the church take the footpath on the right along the gravelled drive beside the stream. Go through the metal gate on the right onto a fenced path along the edge of the field, then go through the next gate.

- 9 Our route turns left here, but to the right, over the footbridge, stands Kelloway's Mill.
- 9 From the gate, turn left along the edge of the field. Go through the gap into the next field and keep straight ahead beside the hedge to your left Cross two stiles, then bear left to follow the path across the first of two fields, heading uphill to the right across the second field to a gate in the top right hand corner, then along the edge of the next field to a gate onto St. Bartholomew's Street.
- 10 Turn right passing cottages on either side of the road, including Beauchamp House, a former rectory. Just past Hill Cottage, keep straight ahead past Pig Trough Lane on the right, where it is said that the Abbess of Shaftesbury once kept her pigs. At The Haven, do not turn left but keep straight ahead up the hill into the hamlet of St. Bartholomew's.
- 11 At the junction with Berry Wood Lane, A public footpath signpost points across the road onto a rough track up the hillside and then left through a gate into woodland at Barkers Hill. The public footpath continues uphill and along the ridge until dropping steeply down to a gate onto the road. However, just after the track turns sharply to the right, there is an alternative and easier route by turning sharp right again and following a permissive footpath around the edge of the wood, with a much less steep descent to the road.
- 12 Turn right along the road, back to Gutch Common. At the road junction, just past a small parking area, turn right downhill in front of Woodside Bungalow and then left across the grass to the gate into the Oysters Coppice Nature Reserve. Through the gate, take the path to the right, down though the coppice, to a bench from which there are lovely views. Continue downhill along the edge of the wood, to go past two metal gates into the fields on the right. Go through the third metal gate on the right, into the fields.
- 13 Bear slightly to the left along the well-trodden path across the field. As the path rises towards the end of the field, bear left to a metal gate in the corner (do not go through the metal gate in the hedge on the right), then downhill through the next field, alongside the hedge on your right. Go through the gate at the end of the field, to meet the road, and turn right to return to the starting point of this walk.