



**Cranborne
Chase
National
Landscape**



ChaseEscape Walking Festival

16 - 27 September 2026



Cranborne Chase National Landscape is delighted to offer a varied programme of ChaseEscape Walking Festival events, celebrating the area's history, communities, ecology and conservation. Whether you are looking for a walk with a particular theme or simply want to enjoy a sociable ramble, we hope you will find something to inspire you.

This year we are pleased to again be working in partnership with Dorset Visual Arts on a range of free "walking workshops". Each session invites different approaches and the chance to try a variety of materials to explore the unique landscape of Cranborne Chase. Sessions vary in distance and all involve exploration and discovery of the ecology, history and other stories of Cranborne Chase. This project is made possible thanks to funding from The Grocer's Charity.

Bookings for all events are through the Cranborne Chase Eventbrite page:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/chaseescape-walking-festival-2026-4862034>

All events have limited capacity, so we would politely ask that you only book on one or two events, so that as many people as possible can take part. If we have spare spaces on events these will be advertised in advance.

Detailed location and other helpful joining information will be provided as part of the booking process. For all events, please bring water and snacks and if it is warm a hat and sunscreen. For all events sturdy, flat shoes are recommended (no sandals/Crocs) and for the longer walks please wear comfortable walking shoes or boots.

Due to the nature of some activities, the route of walks, or wildlife/livestock concerns dogs are not permitted on some of the walks.

Forts and Feathers

31 Wednesday 16th September, 10am to 1.30pm (approx.)

🗝 Mere & White Sheet Hill

Enjoy one of our popular circular walking routes in the company of Cranborne Chase's Walking Guru, Richard, the man (and legs!) behind many of our wonderful walking routes.

The route will take us from the pretty town of Mere to the West Wiltshire Downs, visiting the Iron Age hill fort on White Sheet Hill and the site of the former stone-built Mere Castle which once stood above the town.



At White Sheet Hill we will meet Jonny Cooper, an ornithologist working with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. He will tell us about the amazing work being done as part of the Tree Sparrow Project and talk about other farmland birds in the landscape.

The walk is about 6.75 miles long and hilly, including two steep climbs and a steep descent.

In the Footsteps of Pilgrims

31 Wednesday 16th September, 1pm to 4.30pm

🗝 Farrington to Shaftesbury



On this walk we will follow the last section of the St Edward's Way. Having started at the Priory Church of Lady St Mary in Wareham the path follows the route taken when the body of St Edward the Martyr was moved and reburied at Shaftesbury Abbey in 979.

This social, friendly walk is perfect for those who are nervous of walking alone, so join us and make some new friends, we'll even finish in town for tea and cake!

The route is 6 ½ miles and includes 4 stiles, including one double stile. There are some steep climbs, but we will take these gently!

Elm Revival and Civil War in the Historic Tisbury Landscape

31 Thursday 17th September, 10am to 1pm

Tisbury

On this informative circular countryside ramble around Tisbury, Cranborne Chase's largest village, we will start at Wallmead Farm and begin our walk by heading into the village before following ancient paths through fields and woods to Old Wardour Castle, where we shall hear of its eventful story.

We'll complete the loop by returning to Wallmead Farm for a fascinating finish where Peter Shallcross, who is instrumental in reviving elms in the area, will tell us about his exciting and important work. We shall see some of these wonderful trees in the landscape and will visit the elm tree nursery, learning why these trees play such an important role, particularly in the lives of White-letter Hairstreak butterflies. A total of 5 miles in distance. Well behaved dogs on leads welcome.



Deep Time Walk through Garston Wood

31 Thursday 17th September, 2pm to 5pm

Garston Wood, nr Sixpenny Handley

This walk is led by Greg Morter <https://www.universewalk.co.uk>

A Deep Time Walk combines an introduction to the story of life on Earth with a 4.6km walk in which every metre is a million years in time. Starting at the formation of the solar system and the creation of Earth, we'll explore some of the most significant events and key revolutions in Earth's deep history, including the formation of the Moon, the origin of life in the oceans, the movement onto land, the emergence of reptiles, dinosaurs and mammals and right at the end, the origin of our own species, humans - just in the last 30 centimetres! Sorry no dogs on this walk.



Stretching out the human timeline

This 'Walking workshop' is produced by Dorset Visual Arts in partnership with Cranborne Chase National Landscape and supported by funding from The Grocer's Charity.



Down Farm Museum Visit and Talk and Walk

31 Friday 18th September, 10am to 12 noon

Down Farm, nr Sixpenny Handley

Join local landowner and archaeologist Martin Green and learn more about the fascinating history of the peoples of Cranborne Chase on a short walk taking in bell, round and pond barrows, the Dorset Cursus and a sink hole! You will also have the opportunity to explore Martin's wonderful museum with its collection of artefacts.

Approx 1-mile, gentle walk with regular stops, some uneven ground, sorry but no dogs.



Wilder Melbury and Melbury Down

31 Friday 18th September, 2.30pm to 5pm

Melbury Down, nr Shaftesbury

An escorted walk with National Trust's Area Ranger for North Dorset & Cranborne Chase exploring beautiful Melbury Down and the Melbury Valley.

Melbury Down is a beautiful, biodiverse chalk grassland with prominent interlocking chalk spurs, which runs alongside a beautiful beech plantation - home to a wide variety of specialist bird, mammal and plant species.

As we walk the Area ranger will explain how the Trust are integrating the beech wood with the adjacent downland and restoring nature by employing a range of natural processes and nature-based solutions.

Please note that whilst this is only a 2–3-mile walk, there will be some challenging terrain with steep ascents and descents and uneven ground”.

Sorry no dogs on this walk.



Drover's Way Walk

31 Saturday 19th September, 10am to 1pm (approx.)

📍 Tarrant Gunville, nr Blandford Forum

Created by the local community of Tarrant Gunville and Stubhampton, the Drover's Way is one of three routes around the village that make up their 'Coronation Pathways'.

Join local resident and Parish Councillor Charlie for a social walk in this pretty part of Cranborne Chase. On route you will learn how the village came together to create these walks as well as learning more about local history.

The route is 6 miles with some steeper sections. Well behaved dogs on leads welcome.



The Splendour of Fonthill

31 Sunday 20th September, 10am to 2pm

📍 Fonthill



Follow in the footsteps of the notorious Beckford family who once owned the Fonthill Estate. Learn of a bygone era of building extravagant country mansions, including the famous 19th century Gothic revival Fonthill Abbey (Beckford's Folly), now in ruins.



Cranborne Chase National Landscape's walking champion Richard will be your guide as you explore the pretty landscapes and vistas around Fonthill Park.

The route is 7.5 miles with undulating countryside, one steep climb and one steep descent.

Well behaved dogs on leads welcome.

Win Green Sketchbook Workshop

31 Sunday 20th September, 10.30am to 3pm

Win Green, nr Shaftesbury

This session is led by Helen Dean.

https://www.instagram.com/helendean_artist/

In this workshop, in the stunning setting of Win Green, you will create a concertina style sketchbook inspired by the landscape. You will combine drawing with found objects, rubbings, mark making, printmaking and collage to gather observations, record visual details and develop ideas through experimentation and reflection.

Our artist, Helen, is particularly excited by combining text and image. Words offer an added emotional resonance, prompting the viewer to pause and reflect. In response to the Cranborne Chase National Landscape, this approach offers a visual and experimental way to indulge in its quiet beauty, while reflecting on the fragility and significance of this protected environment.

This is a leisurely session suitable for adults and children age 12+, bring a picnic and we can enjoy lunch with Cranborne Chase laid out below us. Wet weather contingency.

Sorry but no dogs on this workshop.



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Nature Based Art

Monday 21st September, 2pm to 4pm

Shaftesbury Abbey Museum and Garden, Shaftesbury

This session is led by Sarah Smith

<https://www.groundedartisan.co.uk>

This workshop is a gentle, creative gathering to celebrate the colours, textures and rhythms of the natural world — and to make something beautiful from them.

Join us for a relaxed, felt making workshop. We'll take a gentle walk through the surrounding landscape, pausing to notice colour, texture and form, before returning to make small felted biodegradable pods, for wildflower seeds and decoration, using wool. The pieces you make will be hung, displayed, and eventually returned gently to the earth (or taken home).

This is a workshop about slowing down. About the connection between hands, materials and place. No previous felt making experience is needed — just curiosity and a willingness to have a go. All materials and tuition are provided.

By the end, you'll have something felty to take home, contributed to a small art display, and have had chance to enjoy the landscape that inspired them.

What's included:

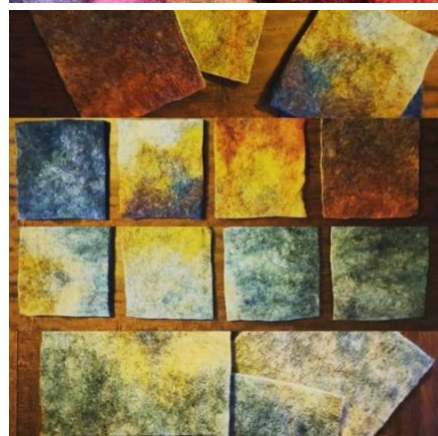
- A gentle guided walk to gather inspiration
- All felt making materials and equipment
- Step-by-step tuition — beginners very welcome
- A small display of biodegradable, nature-inspired art to take home.

Sorry but no dogs on this workshop.

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Singing Animal Totems (Clay Bird Whistles)

31 Tuesday 22nd September, 10.30am to 12.30pm

Gussage All Saints Village Hall, Gussage All Saints, Wimborne

This session is led by Imogen Charleston

<https://www.imogencharleston.co.uk>



In this workshop we will connect to the ancient ways and traditions with a short walk and through making clay animal totems. Totems are some of the earliest forms of ceramic made by humans.

The geology of Cranborne with chalk downs and clay beds, lends itself to the opportunity to seek those natural materials. Our artist Imogen will bring raw clay from Dorset deposits that she has collected along for reference and discussion.

To celebrate the natural landscape of Cranborne Chase, we will hand make pinch pot birds inspired by skylarks. Imogen will make a demonstration bird whistle first, then guide the group through making their own. Made from hollowed clay, this will be pierced with a wooden stick to create a

whistle that can be played as soon as it's made. The clay whistles will air dry and can be taken away on the day. *(They will not be fired in a kiln).* Sorry, no dogs on this session.

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Traces of the Chase: A slow photography walk with lumen printing

31 Wednesday 23rd September, 10.30am to 12.30pm

Ashmore Village Hall, Ashmore

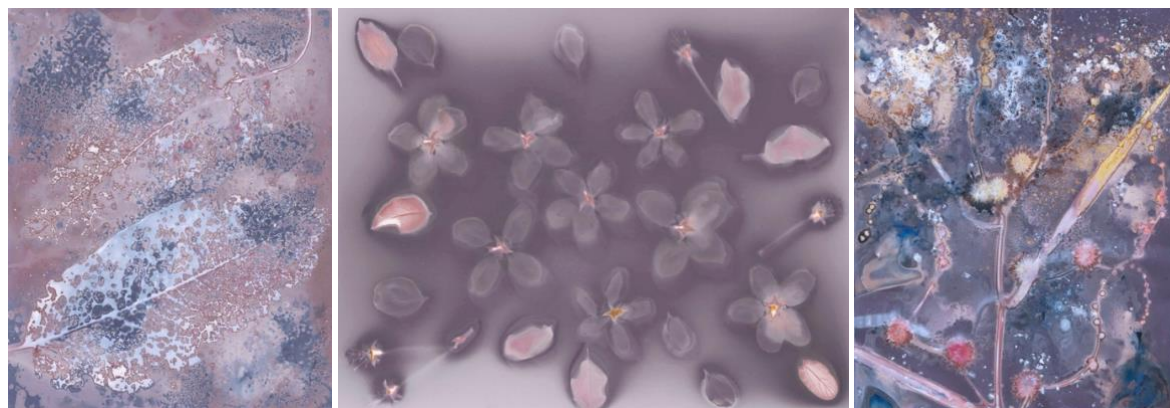
This session is led by Sian Cann

<https://www.siancann.com>

A gentle walk exploring the hidden traces of the Cranborne Chase, culminating in the creation of a unique lumen print made in collaboration with the elements of the environment.

You are invited to experience the Cranborne Chase through slow looking, discovering how careful attention can reveal the hidden stories carried by water, light and landscape.

The workshop will start with a short, easy stroll with the focus on discovering things in the landscape that usually go unnoticed, with the question in mind being 'What might I overlook if I walk too quickly?' With observational prompts and an emphasis on low-impact collecting, you will be invited to gather a few natural materials that particularly capture your attention, in order to make a natural photographic print as a memory of your experience.



Your chosen materials will be developed with the sun, creating beautiful, delicate and unique artworks. Because the prints remain unfixed, they will continue to change and gradually fade over time. Rather than permanent photographs, they become delicate traces of an encounter with the landscape. This process leaves room for surprise, change and imperfection, and allows you to consider the ever-changing nature of the environment, the quiet, unseen stories that run through the Chase, and their impact upon the landscape. Sorry, no dogs on this workshop.

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Springhead – Springs, Mill and Stream

31 Saturday 26th September, 10am to 1pm

Springhead, nr Shaftesbury

This session is led by Rachel Sargent

<https://www.rachelsargent.co.uk>

Springhead is unique with its seven springs that feed the chalk stream Collyers Brook. There has been a mill here for at least 1,000 years. At the head of the lake, where the chalk of the downs meets the greensand of the vale, icy, clear water bubbles up into the lake and then cascades beneath the mill house to become a gentle stream, Collyer's Brook, flowing into the River Stour.

We will walk through the gardens to where the springs bubble up and then round the lake to see the water running under the mill house. We continue along the track at the back to follow the stream to Collyers Brook, once a fishing pond in the Middle Ages and come back through the garden, over a little bridge to the Mill, this is approximately a 1-mile level walk - all off road.

The workshop will take place in the Mill Room which overlooks the garden and lake. In the class we will produce watery effects on paper using wax resist and inks. These will then be over printed using lino cuts (already prepared), textured wallpapers and other materials to create layered images. Suitable for all abilities, minimum age 12 years.

Sorry no dogs on this workshop.



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Shire Rack Walk and Draw

31 Sunday 27th September, 10am to 1.30pm

📍 Garston Wood, nr Sixpenny Handley

This session is led by Tonia Gunstone

<https://www.toniagunstone.com>

On this 'walking workshop' you will explore the Shire Rack; an ancient boundary steeped in history. There will be several stops along the circular route to explore and sketch/draw specific locations; Garston Wood, Mistlebury Wood and the Iron Age fort before heading to more open farmland to make a series of drawings using a variety of techniques.

Working in concertina sketchbooks (pre-prepared) and viewing the landscape in different ways (changing viewpoints, using viewfinders, taking rubbings etc) you will gather information about ancient woodlands (indigenous plants etc) and local history, engaging with the landscape on a deeper level.

We will be accompanied by Craig from Cranborne Chase National Landscape who is very knowledgeable about this area and will help bring the history and ecology to life.

Approximate time for walking and drawing is 2 hours, we will then move to Sixpenny Handley Village Hall where we will have refreshments and develop our work. This session is suitable for 14 years and above. Sorry but no dogs on this walking workshop.



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The Countryside Code



Your guide to enjoying parks and waterways, coast and countryside

Respect everyone

- be considerate to those living in, working in and enjoying the countryside
- leave gates and property as you find them
- do not block access to gateways or driveways when parking
- be nice, say hello, share the space
- follow local signs and keep to marked paths unless wider access is available

Protect the environment

- take your litter home - leave no trace of your visit
- do not light fires and only have BBQs where signs say you can
- always keep dogs under control and in sight
- dog poo - bag it and bin it in any public waste bin or take it home
- care for nature - do not cause damage or disturbance

Enjoy the outdoors

- check your route and local conditions
- plan your adventure - know what to expect and what you can do
- enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory

www.countryside-code.org.uk

