

Photo credit: Mark Simons

# Walking The River Winterborne

Four self guided, circular walking routes along the River Winterborne with links into medium and long distance routes.

Celtic Fields, Winterborne Houghton  
Photo credit: Winterborne Houghton Parish Council

Four self guided, circular walking routes along the River Winterborne with links into medium and long distance routes.

## Route 1

**Suggested starting point:** Winterborne Stickland Post Office, West Street  
**Time needed:** 2 hours **Approx distance:** 3 1/2 miles  
**Accessibility:** Some strenuous sections - steep slopes south of Winterborne Houghton, no stiles



From the post office, walk towards North Street and at the junction turn left. On the left, follow the wooden footpath marker in between house No's 34 and 35, out into fields using newly installed pedestrian and kissing gates. Follow the footpath straight ahead, passing Houghton Spring Farm until the junction with a country lane. Turn left, passing the **Old School House** on the left. Cross over Water Lane, turn left and walk for a short distance passing **St Andrew's Church**. Turn right down the bridleway leading to Glebe Farm, then past South Down Farm. Cross Dunbury Lane and follow the bridleway ahead through **Charity Wood**. Take the second turning on the left joining the Jubilee Trail and then the left turning at the fork junction. Cross back over Dunbury Lane following the footpath between the houses until West Street. Turn right, back to the post office.

## Route 2

**Suggested starting point:** St Mary's Church, Chescombe Lane, Winterborne Whitechurch  
**Time needed:** 2 - 2.5 hours **Approx distance:** 4 1/2 miles  
**Accessibility:** Reasonably flat - some short, steep slopes with some stiles



From **St Mary's Church**, cross Chescombe Lane and following Dolway Lane straight ahead, pass the village hall and school. At the crossroads turn left and then right at the fork junction. Following the edge of **Weston's Wood** for a short distance, take the right footpath leading through the woods then across a field and into Cliff Wood. Take the right turning at the fork junction, then straight over at the crossroads. Follow the bridleway on the edge of **Whatcombe Common**, at the woodland edge turn right, then up the slope with the fence on your right. At the second turning on the left, the track splits into three, take the right track leading diagonally through **Oatclose Wood**. On the other side of the wood, pass Clenston Lodge and at the road turn right. Walk along the road for approx half a mile, crossing over the River Winterborne. With the River on the right, pass through a kissing gate on the left and along a footpath leading past Whatcombe Farm. Follow the footpath with the road on the right until the A354. Turn right, back to the church.

Winterborne Clenston  
Photo credit: Sarah Bentley (AONB)



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Visit [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk) for more information.

- Consider other people
  - Keep dogs under close control
  - Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
  - Leave gates and property as you find them
  - Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs
- North Dorset is a special place. Please help to conserve it by observing the key points of the Countryside Code:

## Keeping North Dorset Special:

Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) team	01305 756782
Dorset Countryside (Rights of Way team)	01305 221000
Dorset Wildlife Trust	01305 264620
Environment Agency	08708 506506
Traveline - use public transport to access the walks	0871 200 2233

## Useful Contacts:

### Route 3

**Suggested starting point:** Entrance to Charlottes Gardens, off Blandford Hill, Winterborne Whitechurch  
**Time needed:** 30 mins **Approx distance:** 1 mile **Accessibility:** Flat, no stiles

Behind Charlottes Gardens, go through the kissing gate, walking straight ahead for half a mile and then through another kissing gate. Turning diagonally right, walk for a short distance and then through a pedestrian gate and across the bridge opposite Lower Whitechurch Farm. Turn left and along the verge for a short distance, taking the farm track on the left leading to **East Farm and Shop**. Before the farm turn left and through two gates, following the footpath along the field edge. At the end, turn left back to Charlottes Gardens.

### Route 4

**Suggested starting point:** Opposite the Greyhound Pub, North Street, Winterborne Kingston  
**Time needed:** 2.5 - 3 hours **Approx distance:** 5 1/2 miles  
**Accessibility:** Generally flat, no stiles

From the bridge follow the footpath away from the pub, noticing the information panel on the left. At the second bridge turn right onto Sackville Street and at **St Nicholas'** turn left onto East Street. At the end, join the bridleway straight ahead passing Abbot's Court Dairy. Continue straight on along Muston Lane, then onto the course of the **Roman Road**, staying on this track for just over one mile. At the junction turn diagonally left, following a tree lined bridleway to the edge of **Great Coll Wood**. At the end of the bridleway, turn right to Bushes Farm and then follow the farm track to Winterborne Zelston. Before reaching **St Mary's Church**, take the right-hand turning in between 'The Old Rectory' and the thatched cottage, past the village hall and out into fields. Follow this footpath for just under half a mile until Riverside Farm. Go round the farm and along the farm track. At the end, continue straight on a footpath leading past **Anderson Manor**, then Anderson Manor Farm. Walk around the farm to the left, through a gate and then turn right. Follow the footpath straight on to Winterborne Muston. At the junction of Muston Lane, turn right and then left through a kissing gate, following the footpath back to Abbots Court Dairy. Turn left back to East Street, right onto Sackville Street and left at the bridge.



St Nicholas' Church, Winterborne Kingston  
Photo credit: Mark Simons (Dorset County Council)

- The majority of these routes follow quiet country lanes and public rights of way. Rights of way will be waymarked with yellow arrows for footpaths and blue arrows for bridleways.
- Some sections will be muddy, especially in winter. Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Take care when crossing or walking along roads.
- Although this leaflet contains a map, you are advised to take along Ordnance Survey Explorer map (No 117) - Cerne Abbas & Bere Regis.

There is more to discover about the past along the River Winterborne. If you want to know more, have information, or would like help identifying your discoveries, please contact the Historic Environment Team at Dorset County Council on 01305 224921.

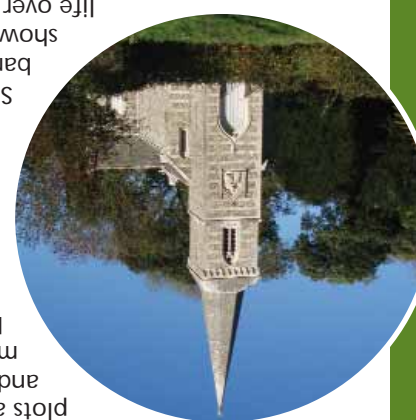
Another notable feature in the Valley is the woodland, Charity Wood and Oatclose Wood found west of Winterborne Clenston and Great Coll Wood found north of Winterborne Zelston are all classified as Ancient, meaning that they have been continuously wooded since at least 1600 AD.



Oatclose Woods, Winterborne Clenston  
Photo credit: Sandie Moors (Environment Agency)

In places, signs of earlier life in the valley such as prehistoric field systems and round barrows on higher ground are present. Barrows are burial mounds and can be seen as bumps on the skyline; it is thought and working in the valley. The prehistoric field systems are small square fields in a very regular pattern.

In nearby fields, signs of medieval farming can be seen, ridge and furrow on the flatter areas, and terraces known as *strip lynches* on the slopes - both are remains of the open field system, with fields divided into strips, surviving medieval and later farmhouses, barns and other agricultural structures show the importance of farming to valley life over the centuries.



St Nicholas' Church, Winterborne Clenston  
Photo credit: Sandie Moors (Environment Agency)

A string of villages ran through the valley during medieval times. Some are still villages, others survive as farms, or simply the humps and bumps of deserted settlements in fields near the river. Clues to their origins can be seen in today's villages, with parish churches generally situated on their original medieval plots and the survival of property boundaries and street layouts. A mixture of building materials - stone, flint, cob and brick have been used in the villages.

## Winterborne History

## Winterborne Wildlife

The River Winterborne, as its name suggests, derives its flow from winter rainfall. The rain soaks into the underlying chalk and bubbles up as springs which feed the river. In summer, the water level in the chalk drops and the springs dry up, leaving the stream dry too. With this seasonal variation in water flow, wildlife living in the stream has to be able to cope with both wet and dry conditions. This type of stream is known as a 'Winterbourne' and is a globally rare habitat, of which Dorset contains a significant proportion of the global resource.

One section of the stream flows all year round due to water flowing out of the fish farm at Winterborne Houghton. Different wildlife may be found in this 'perennial' section to that elsewhere along the river. For example, the flora of the perennial section is more aquatic in nature than the ephemeral (temporary) stretches. Yellow iris, water crow-foot, fool's water cress and water forget-me-not survive in the wetter sections, though many of these can cope with the stream drying out for much of the year. Some species are specially adapted to the temporary stretches and are only found there, including the rare mayfly, *Paraleptophlebia wernerii* - so rare it doesn't even have an English common name!



Yellow Iris  
Photo credit: Sarah Bentley (AONB)

There are ponds throughout the valley and many of these support amphibians, dragonflies and damselflies. The rare great-crested newt breeds in some of these ponds, as do smooth and palmate newts, as well as frogs and toads. Dragonflies and damselflies dart around the valley from May to October.

Water voles are found in various locations along the stream, especially in the perennial section. This riparian specialist doesn't rely on the water in the river, but the plants that live along its length. The elusive otter is also known to lie up in areas of reed and feed on the eels in the stream.



Watervole  
Photo credit: Graham Case

The farms within the valley support a host of farmland birds, such as skylarks, lapwings and corn buntings. Their songs can be heard in the open landscape above the valley. Brown hares can be seen boxing and racing within the crops and bats forage over the hedgerows and waterways in the evening, avoiding the tawny owls which hunt them.

# Walking The River Winterborne



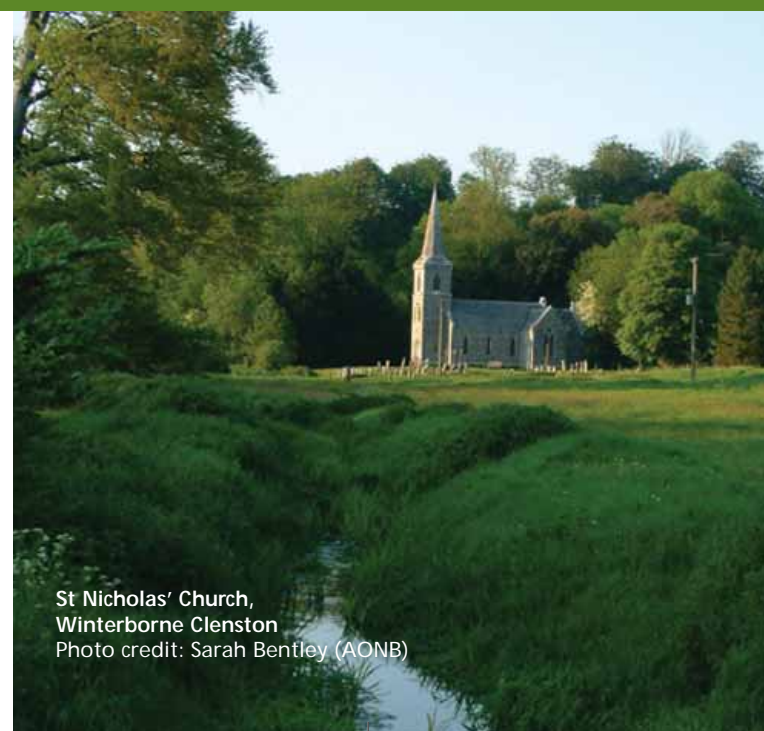
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## Walking for Health

Walking is a great way to explore the countryside and stay fit. The walks within this leaflet are between 1 and 5 and 1/2 miles, taking anywhere from half an hour up to 3 hours for the more adventurous. Why not make a day of it and stop off in one of the village pubs for lunch? The walks have differing levels of accessibility, some flat with gates only and some with more strenuous sections and stiles - take your pick and enjoy North Dorset's countryside as well as finding out about the River Winterborne.

## The Dorset Winterbournes Project

This leaflet has been produced as part of the Dorset Winterbournes Project. The Project's main aim is conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of North Dorset's internationally rare winterbourne streams. Funding and delivery of the project has been co-ordinated by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) team. Visit [www.dorsetaonb.org.uk](http://www.dorsetaonb.org.uk) or call 01305 756781 for further details about the project.



St Nicholas' Church, Winterborne Clenston. Photo credit: Sarah Bentley (AONB)

## Other medium or long distance walks in the area:

**Two circular walks from Winterborne Houghton to local points of interest**  
 Walk 1 - to Milton Abbas (5 miles)  
 Walk 2 - to Turnworth (9 miles). Visit [www.winterbornehoughton.org.uk](http://www.winterbornehoughton.org.uk) for details.

**Wareham Forest Way (13 miles)**  
 Provides a link between Sturminster Marshall and Wareham. Contact the Purbeck Information and Heritage Centre on 01929 552740 for a leaflet or visit [www.purbeck.gov.uk](http://www.purbeck.gov.uk).

**Stour Valley Way (64 miles)**  
 Linking Christchurch to Stourhead via Wimborne, Blandford and Gillingham following the River Stour. Contact Dorset County Council on 01305 221000 for a leaflet.

**Jubilee Trail (90 miles)**  
 Created by local ramblers to celebrate the associations 60th Anniversary, the Trail crosses Dorset from west to east. Visit [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk) for more information.

**The North Dorset Trailway**  
 This proposed route will run from Sturminster Marshall to Stalbridge. Contact the North Dorset Rangers on 01258 472441 for information.