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Common Blue

Martin Down is now a National Nature Reserve and a haven for rare wildflowers, butterflies and birds.

Directions



- 1 Cross the road and walk up the track (signposted "farm") opposite Martin Club. At the end of the track, go through the gate on your left and walk with the fence on your right-hand side. After a short distance, pass through the open gateway and head along the grassy bank separating two fields.
- 2 Cross the stile into the next field. Turn right and almost immediately, cross another stile on the right. Once over the second stile turn immediately left and keep walking with the hedge on your left. The path crosses another stile and then through trees up to a gate onto the road.
- 3 Turn left and immediately cross the stile on the left into the field. Head across in the direction of the footpath sign to a stile in the far hedge, just to the left of the lowest point of the field. There is a yellow marker on a post to help you find it.
- 4 Take care crossing the dual carriageway (bear in mind speed of traffic) and take the footpath opposite. Keep walking in the same direction, skirting the wood on your left.
- 5 At the far side of the field, cross over the stile. Turn left along the track. Shortly after, turn right on a track into the woods. In spring, these woods are carpeted in bluebells. Just before the "Danger falling trees sign", turn left. Keep walking on this track until you reach the fence.
- 6 Turn left along the track which runs along the old Roman road. Keep walking along this track until you reach the road.

- 7 Cross the road and take the track on the left that follows the edge of the woodland. Carry on walking in the same direction, all the time following the line of the Roman road, until you finally meet the main road again at the lay-by on the A354.
- 8 Turn left along the verge and, shortly after, cross the road (please take care) and go through the gate into the Martin Down Nature Reserve. Follow Bokerley Dyke, keeping the ditch on your right.
- 9 Turn left immediately after the rifle range (a high mound on your left) and join a track heading across open grassland towards the hedge on the far side.
- 10 On reaching the hedge, continue following the track between hedges to the road.
- 11 Turn right along the road back to Martin Club.

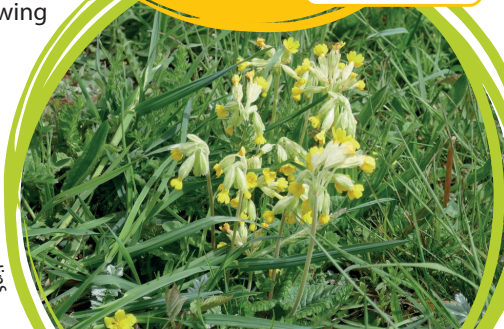
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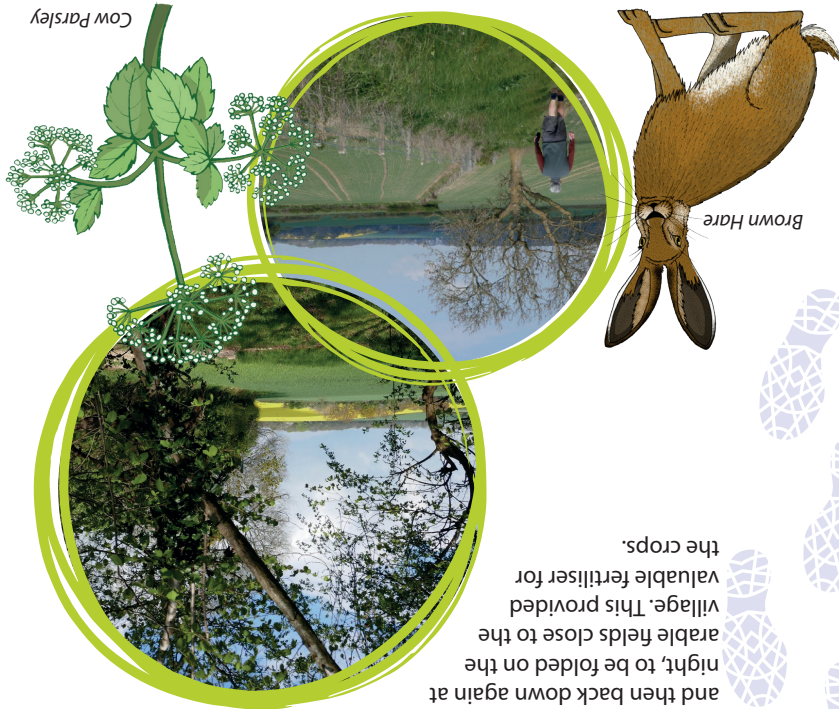
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Cowslips





in response to Barbarian attacks which were threatening the Roman occupation. Excavations have shown that the Dyke was even extended across the road at this time, although the road was later re-opened.

G Rife range. Built by the Royal Engineers in 1939 and used for training during the second world war by Home Guard and Canadian/American forces in lead up to D-Day.

H Middle Lane – one of four sheep droves connecting Martin Village with the Down. Traditionally, flocks of sheep were driven up these tracks every day for grazing and then back down again at night, to be folded on the arable fields close to the village. This provided valuable fertiliser for the crops.

A Long Barrow. This dates from the Neolithic period, and is one of four long barrows in the parish.

B Grim's Ditch runs for about 14 miles and encloses an area of 16 square miles. It is thought to have been built in the Bronze Age or the early Iron Age. The purpose of the earthwork is not known, although it may have been used to demarcate territory.

C Ackling Dyke – Roman road built in the 1st century AD, connecting Old Sarum with the hill fort at Badbury Rings. At Old Sarum, the road connected to Silchester and London. From Badbury Rings, roads led to the harbour at Hamworthy and to Dorchester. It was in regular use for over 1,000 years, fording the Ebbles at Stratford Tony and providing an important trade route for Wilton, the capital of Wiltshire at that time.

D Vernditch Chase – In 1650, there were said to be over 1,000 deer in Vernditch Chase, and their descendants can still be seen here today. Vernditch Chase was also famed for its pine martens, which were hunted for their pelts. Pine martens are now unfortunately almost extinct in England.

E Romano-British settlement north of the Roman road at Bokerley Junction. This was probably also a posting-station, where travellers could rest and get a change of horses.

F Bokerley Dyke is thought to have originated in the Bronze Age or Early Iron Age when it formed an important political and cultural boundary. The arrival of the Romans saw a new regime imposed, sweeping away the old order in the most literal sense, as their new road was driven straight through the Dyke. In the 4th century the Dyke was reinforced as a defensive structure, perhaps

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

A gentle circular walk with wonderful, extensive views, ancient earthworks and pretty woodlands. Enjoy Martin Down National Nature Reserve and walk in Roman footsteps along Ackling Dyke.

With thanks to **Janet Richards** for recommending this route.

Start Point: Martin Club, Martin Village | OS Map Ref: SU 0627 2002 | W3W: installs.trump.thighs

Parking: Park at Martin Club

Terrain: Fairly flat route with several stiles and gates. Mostly on paths, last section on quiet country road. **Note: Route crosses A354 twice please be extremely careful and bear in mind speed of traffic.**

Length: 6 miles / 9.67km

Approx Time: 2.5 hours

Dogs: On leads in Martin Down National Nature Reserve (livestock and ground nesting birds). Take care near road crossings.

Good to know: Bus stop at Martin Drove End, serving buses on Salisbury – Blandford Route.

Refreshments: Village shop in Martin, open mornings, otherwise bring a flask and picnic to enjoy.

The information is only intended as a general guide. Please check local arrangements.

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



Illustrations by Sal Meaddings



Martin Down & Vernditch

Pretty circular walk taking in the Roman Road, Martin Down and picturesque woodland

