

## CRANBORNE CHASE

After a talk by group member Don at the June meeting about the extensive archaeology of Cranborne Chase, 15 members including a guest, enjoyed a field trip to look at some of the features of the area.



First stop was Knowlton where there is a henge with a ruined Norman church in the centre of it. It is the site of an ancient site of worship and Druids still visit the site at the equinoxes to carry out their rituals. On to Martin Down to view Bockerly Dyke - a high ancient earthwork and ditch which was also used by the Romans to keep the Saxons out of Dorset. The mysterious Dorset Cursus is situated here but can only be seen in aerial photographs. We were struck by the wide vistas and huge skies which were accompanied by the many skylarks flying around us.

Lunch was calling as we approached our final destination, Down Farm. We had lunch outside- intrigued by the many swifts using the nest boxes on the nearby barn. Down Farm is farmed organically and the owner, Martin, is also an archaeologist who has excavated extensively on his own land and elsewhere. So numerous are the finds that the artefacts found are housed in a museum.

After spending time in the museum we were led to an ancient shaft 60ft deep which had been excavated by hand using a freestanding ladder system. A cantilever bridge structure is situated over the shaft that gives a bird's eye view of the extent of the pit. Continuing on, we saw the most recent excavations.

Martin is known as "the most professional amateur archaeologist" and has received an honorary doctorate from Bournemouth University. We were in very good hands. Thanks to Don for leading the trip.