

WALK 2

Cerne
Abbas

Walk Dorset's History

🕒 90 minutes to walk, sit and enjoy
reading the information



Stepping
into
nature

Welcome! As part of the Stepping into Nature project led by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team, we have produced a series of self-guided walks.

These easy access routes highlight the local history, as well as other fun snippets of information that you will find along the route.

Further Information: www.stepin2nature.org



Distance

1 mile/ 1.6 km



Suggested time

90 minutes to walk, sit and enjoy reading the information.



Difficulty

Generally level route on tarmacked paths with a few small gravel areas and an optional short slope. Near the end of the walk the path narrows with some raised tree roots, if this is an issue use the alternative path shown on the map.



Facilities

Public toilets are in the village centre.
Refreshments along the route.



Transport

Free car park on Kettle Bridge Lane.
Bus stop in the village centre.



Route map



Suggested starting point

Kettle Bridge Car Park, Kettle Bridge Lane,
Cerne Abbas, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7GY



Points of interest



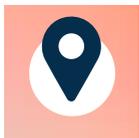
Seating



Toilets



Alternative route



Start at Kettle Bridge Car Park

Cerne Abbas is well known for the Cerne Giant, a chalk figure on a hillside overlooking the village.

The village gets its name from the Cerne river and the abbey (abbas) built here. Whilst the abbey no longer exists, we'll explore where parts of it can still be seen, some in places you may not expect!



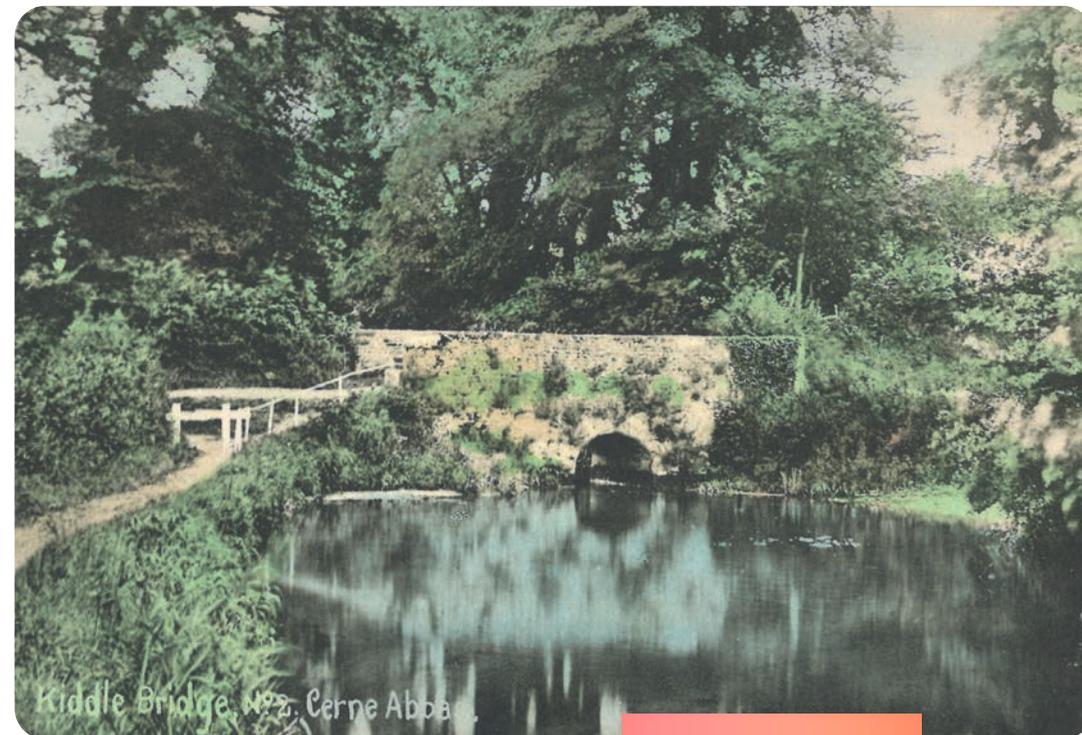
Exit the car park and go left until the bridge. Take the right signposted 'Village Centre' to go along the river.

After a short distance look back and compare today's view to the artificially-coloured photo taken in the 1900s. This bridge is over 400 years old!

It is rare to see the water level as high as in the photo nowadays thanks to the flood defences behind the bridge.



Have you noticed how clear the stream is? This chalk stream is a haven for wildlife.



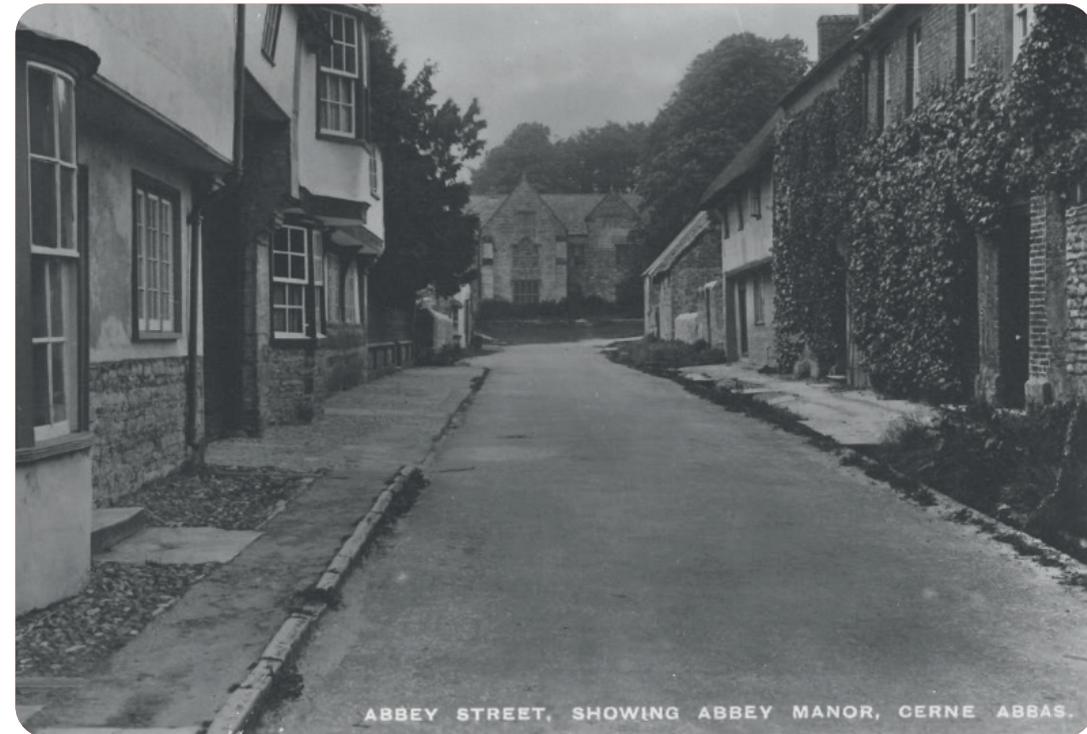
Continue along the river, then take a left over the wooden bridge. Continue until you reach Abbey Street with a lovely pond in front of you.



Abbey House

On your left is Abbey House, the gate house of the abbey. It is one of the few parts of the original abbey complex that survived after much was demolished during King Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s.

The building has changed a lot since then, but from here, you can get a sense of how imposing the abbey would have felt for visitors approaching along this street. This photo of the approach to Abbey House was taken around 100 years ago.



If you want to explore the grounds of the Abbey House then divert here via the path to the right of the house, donating if possible.



Go through the stone archway, an original abbey feature, to the graveyard. Read the information panel on the wall to your right to learn about St Augustine's Well which you're about to see. Continue along the right side of the graveyard then take the right path down to the well, or view from the top.



The respect shown to the well continues today with well dressing - an ancient practice of decorating wells and their surroundings. You can see the decorations on the photo and hopefully you will see more when you visit.

Like the river, the water here is crystal clear. The chalk geology filters water coming from the ground. From here the water flows to the pond we passed earlier.



Retrace your steps back to Abbey Street. Head left down the street and stop at the church which will be on your left. Admire the character of the buildings as you go.



St Mary's Church

Cerne Abbas was once considered a town. Some of these houses are typical town houses of well-to-do merchants. Opposite the church, you'll see an amazing 500-year-old timber framed building. Notice how the lower walls are filled with stone, we'll tell you more about this later.

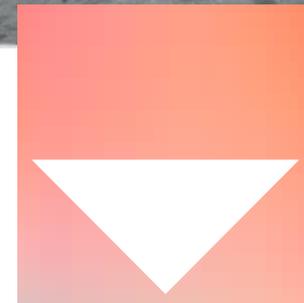
The church was built around 1300 which is over 700 years ago! It survived when the abbey was demolished because it served the people of Cerne Abbas, not the monks of the abbey.



Continue a little way past the church and look back to compare with this picture taken around 100 years ago.



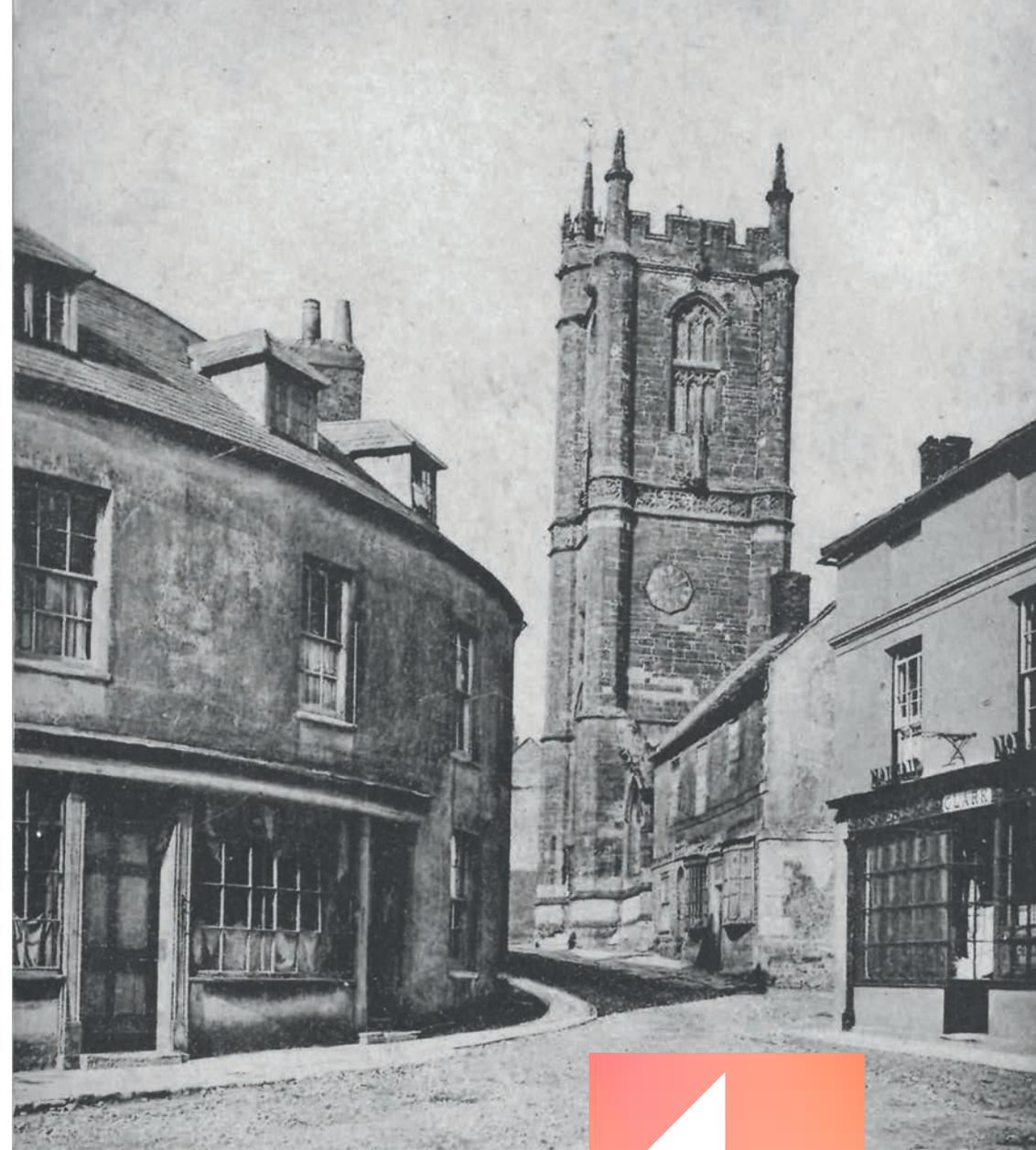
Continue to the end of Abbey Street and stand where you think the next photo was taken.





What do you notice about the clock?

This area is the town's old market place, an ideal location to provide services to support the abbey and the growing town.



If looking at the church, go left to continue along the main street until the junction by The New Inn.



When the abbey was demolished it became an ideal resource for locals looking for stone to build houses and barns close by. We can see the mix of stone in The New Inn, and on a smaller scale in the lower walls on the timber framed building.

One type is the golden stone from Ham Hill in Somerset, which you can see used haphazardly on the New Inn. Normally Ham stone would have been expensive in this part of Dorset because of the distance it had to be transported, but it was 'ten a penny' here as the demolished abbey was full of it!



This is a good spot to take a break for refreshments.



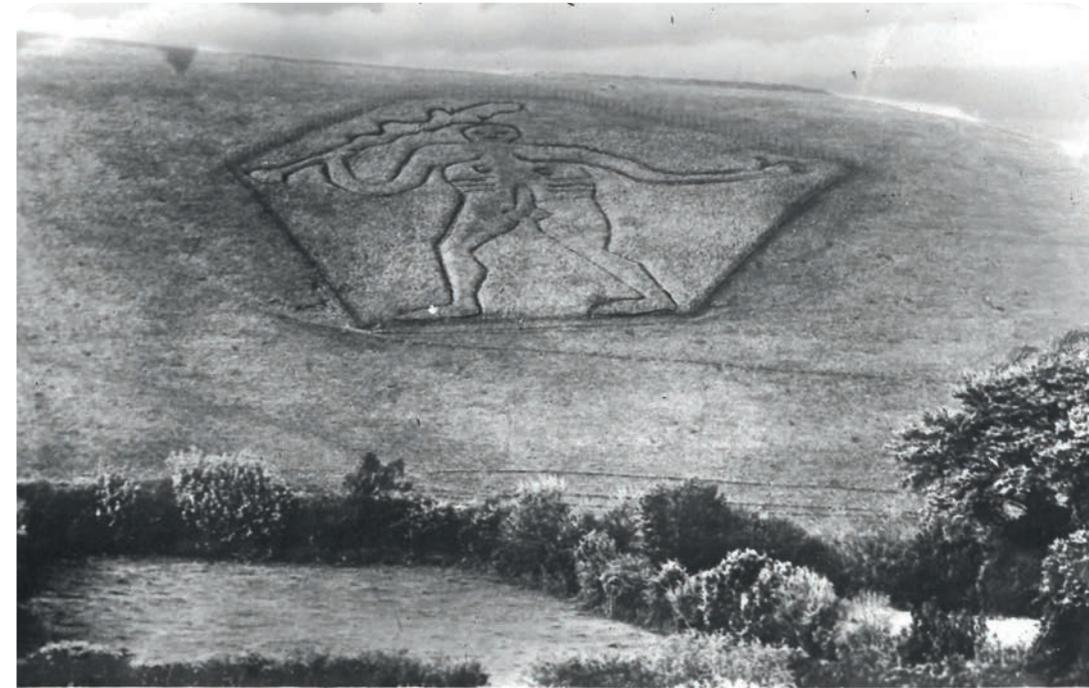
When ready, turn right onto Duck Street and then take a right into Mill Lane. Follow this path until you reach the Mill. This path narrows with some raised tree roots. If this is an issue please continue on Duck Street, then take the path on your right opposite the school to re-join route.



The Mill

The mill that gave its name to Mill Lane was demolished over 100 years ago.

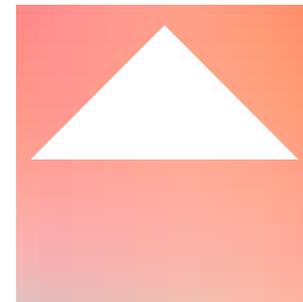
Look how narrow the river is when you first get to the river compared to the section of the river we saw earlier on. The river's banks were deliberately narrowed to make the water flow faster and thus provide more power to the mill.



THE GIANT, CERNE ABBAS DORSET



Continue going upstream, turning left when back at the bridge to return to the car park. Read the interpretation board as you enter the car park to learn more about the Cerne Giant. Enjoy views of the Giant - these are best seen from the higher side of the car park. This photo is nearly 100 years old and shows a protected area around the Giant.



Looking for some more things to do?

Picnic in the Parks

Discover new experiences and enjoy fun health and nature-related activities at Picnic in the Parks.

You can access all of the other History walks from this series as well as lots of other activities, workshops and resources to help you live well and love nature.

picnicintheparks.org



Explore the unique, varied, and outstanding natural beauty of this AONB which underpins its designation as a nationally important protected landscape.

dorsetaonb.org

Find new places to go, learn new skills and meet like-minded people through nature-themed activities held indoors and out.

stepin2nature.org



Stepping into Nature

Stepping into Nature opens opportunities for people to connect with Dorset's fascinating landscape, wildlife, history and culture, helping people live happier and healthier lives for longer.

Using Dorset's natural and cultural landscape, the project creates activities and sensory rich places for older people, people living with long term health conditions, such as dementia, and their care partners.

The Stepping into Nature project is led by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.



A series of easy access routes
highlighting local history and
the stories around them.

Other routes include

BLANDFORD FORUM

CERNE ABBAS

**EASTERN DORCHESTER
& FORDINGTON**

SHERBORNE

SWANAGE

WEYMOUTH

Further Information

www.stepin2nature.org