

westwards with the hedge now on your right towards the Five Marys, two of which were found to contain remains of skeletons in a sitting position — and with stag's antlers on their shoulders!

On reaching the first of these tumuli follow the path to the left and down over a steep bank to join what looks like a sheep track that disappears into a thicket before bringing you out onto the road. Turn left and walk down into the pretty village of East Chalden. The Sailor's Return pub is a most recommendable hostelry that serves very generous helpings! Continue on down to the village green following the road round to the left passing between farm buildings that also double as a depot for the Dorset Queen Coaches.

On leaving the village look for the signposted track to Lulworth on the right just before the road bends to the left. Climb steadily following it round the corner and continue on towards a gate — it is easy to follow this track into a private property. Go through the gate and follow the wide track down into a superb valley section on a SSE bearing. After going through a gate into a large grazing area look for another gate to your left just which looks seemingly just off the path. This is your right of way. Ignore the path that continues ahead and begins to climb away to the right, but go through this gate that will take you into a slightly wooded section with the hedge now on your right. You exit this section by a double gate system (*we call it the inner and outer air lock!*) bringing you out into the atmosphere of a small amphi-theatre. Keep the wood high to your right and head for a wide track that will take you steeply through a gate to a barn marked on the map as Sleight Buildings. It is well worthwhile looking back down the valley from the top gate and taking a picture for posterity.

Beyond this barn, which is an ideal refuge in austere weather, is the remains of a stone barn that was sadly ravaged and had its roof blown away during severe SSE storms. The local farmer was encouraging Barn Owls to breed in this particular barn.

From here make sure you take a SW bearing and walk a wide track across the plateau towards Daggers Gate. Local tales speak of the ghost of a woman walking up and down West Hill. It was never known why, but there is a possible connection to the ghost of the farmer who was stabbed with a dagger whilst on his way to market, and who is still said to haunt the scene of the grisly murder at Daggers Gate . . . *walk on!*

Do not exit onto the road at Daggers Gate but double back on yourself on the track heading due west from the "V". As you walk along here, keeping the hedge to your left, you will suddenly get a stunning "shot" of the Isle of Portland. Thomas Hardy quite aptly labelled it "The Gibraltar of Wessex".

Keep heading west on this high inland coastal route with the switch-back of the roller coaster well defined to your left. Eventually you will pass three large shell forms carved out of Purbeck marble by Peter Randall-Page promoting the importance of our English Heritage. After passing the last one the path follows the fence round to the right and at the top of the rise a large stone marks the place where the ashes of Llewelyn Powys, a local writer, were scattered after he died in Switzerland during World War II.

From here continue west, ignoring the path through a gate to the right, but continue on round and exit this large field in the far corner by a style that will bring you out onto the coastal path itself. Continue on towards Whitenothe Cottages that stand guard at the top of the cliff — some of which have become weekend homes — and take in the whole spectrum of Weymouth Bay which is marked as only 7 miles to go from this point in Purbeck stone.

Follow the path down the hill, exiting over a style and crossing the track that leads to Holworth House to go over another style that will take you by a few cottages down to a tarmac road. A few yards down here on the left is Holworth Church, a completely wooded building. Just behind and through a gate is the most peaceful garden of remembrance that you may ever see. A good time to have a break and maybe receive a spiritual uplift. The path from here is good and an obvious one to Ringstead Bay itself where there are toilets and cafe on site — seasonal opening.

Leave Ringstead Bay by the path right along the sea front, passing homes that have the closest possible view of the sea. Be careful not to walk down the drive of the last property, but aim for the "hole" in the hedge. After about a mile this path will bring you out overlooking the famous Smugglers Inn at Osmington Mills. As you descend towards this picturesque hamlet, the path takes you right through the pub garden and up the "ladder" to the road where after approx. 150yds. — just before the bend — a path will take you up a narrow gully to a style where a stone pointing left to Weymouth must be ignored if you want to make it a full 20 miles. This path has been recently opened after the landslip of the original coastal path opposite the Smugglers. However, your route lies straight on and on reaching the style at the end of the hedge on your right aim for the marker post at the top of the hill. On reaching this continue towards the style and look for the large yellow "dishes" placed by the farmer for another recent re-routing that will bring you out onto the main A353.

Turn left and walk on through the village passing the Sunray on your right. Continue on up the hill until the last of the cottages is on your right. You want the path opposite that will take you by a derelict farm building out towards the sea. As you approach the style another sudden burst of Portland illuminates the horizon. On entering this field that falls steadily away from you, head diagonally SW towards a rickety style almost hidden in the hedge — *does it still need repairing?* Walk on down through a gully towards the stone remains of Eweleaze Barn. Cross the style or go through the gate and continue SW looking for a small wooden bridge in the far corner that usually spans a muddy patch in certain weather conditions. Climb up, round and over the cliffs passing Redcliff Point to the left

on a well-worn path towards Bowleaze Cove and the Riviera Hotel. The path here heads inland away from a further landslip — this is obvious and well marked — and a gate will bring you out onto the road. Almost there. Walk up and over the green, down to the road and if you do not suffer from vertigo the ideal way to finish in style is to “walk the wall” — a 20-minute stretch that will bring you to the start of Weymouth prom. From here it is heads down to the resplendent Golden Jubilee clock tower that was erected in 1887 and the obligatory photograph.

Weymouth, with its sheltered sandy beach, is one of the safest bays for bathing in and became fashionable as a seaside resort after King George III began visiting in 1789. He is depicted riding away from Weymouth on horseback in a large chalk design some 280ft. long by 323ft. high on White Horse Hill which looks down on Osmington Village. Fine examples of Georgian terraces line the Esplanade right down to the harbour and quayside and there are plenty of quaint little back streets to explore.

Time now to have that well-earned “rave up”. Plenty of good pub grub down by the harbour, and after the tour of the sights of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis your Inter-City Challenge is rounded off by the comfort of a rail trip back and a chance to reminisce on the highs and lows of a great day out! The rail station is down the road opposite the clock tower.



FACT FILE

Distance

20 miles

Time

Allow 7/8 hours

Maps

Outdoor Leisure 15

OS Pathfinder 1332

OS Pathfinder SY88/98

Start/Parking

Wool — near Rail Station

Grid Ref. 845868

Finish

Weymouth

Terrain

Along well marked paths and tracks with a little minor road walking

Refreshments

Village Stores at Wool and Winfrith

Cafe at Ringstead Bay (seasonal)

Smugglers Pub at Osmington Mills

Sunray Pub at Osmington

All amenities at Weymouth

Toilets

Wool — also at Rail Station

Ringstead Bay

Osmington Mills

Weymouth

Accommodation

Youth Hostel at Lulworth

Hotels and B&B's at Lulworth and

Weymouth

Tourist Information

Weymouth (01305) 785747

Wareham (01929) 552740