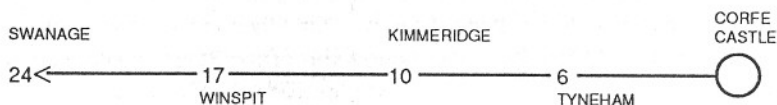


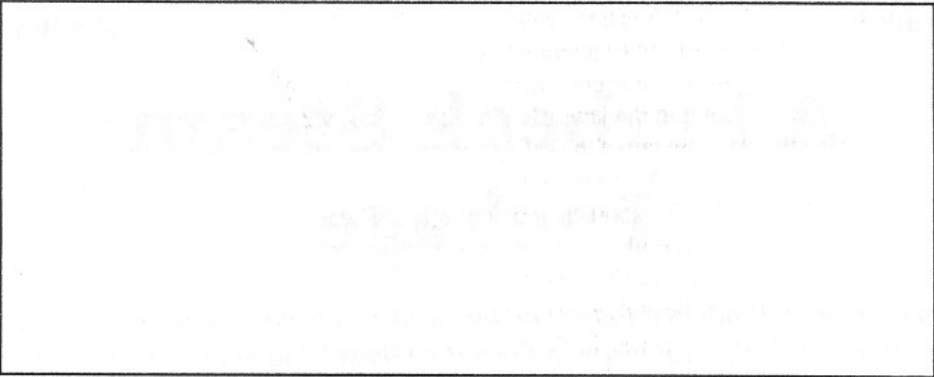
A Purbeck Steam Package

An early start is advised to take on this walk which combines the Pride of the Purbeck Hills with visits to Dorset's Ghost Village of Tyneham, the ragged Kimmeridge Ledges, and the climbing of the majestic Houns-Tout Cliff. Please note that you will need to check with the Range Officer at Bindon Abbey on 01929 462721 for clearance to enter the Tyneham section as these ranges are closed to the public during the week and six weekends of the year. The return to Corfe from Swanage is by way of the popular steam train rolling through the Purbeck landscape. Check with the 24-hour talking timetable on 01929 424276 for times.



THERE are two ways of attacking this walk. First as written and taking the challenge on of not missing the last train back to Corfe, or by staying B&B in Swanage overnight and taking the first train to Corfe, leaving you the whole day to walk back. The choice is yours.

If you are starting at Corfe park in the layby below the ruins of Corfe Castle at GR 959824 and follow the road towards Church Knowle, crossing the Corfe River where it flows under a stone bridge. Go through a gate on your right, opposite a farm, and turn left to begin to climb West Hill. Keeping the hedge to your left head for the next gate sighted at the entrance to some trees. After going through this continue along the path until it divides, then take the steep climb up to another gate on your right. This will bring you out onto Knowle Hill and it is well worth crossing over this field to view a spectacular panorama (on a clear day) of Poole Harbour. Now retrace your steps to the well-worn path and continue westwards until eventually coming out onto a lane. Go through the gate opposite, still with your nose pointing west and continue to steadily climb, noticing the stone graffiti on the hill opposite. This continually changes, as I have seen Rupert Bear, Santa Claus and on another occasion a marriage proposal etched out in the stone. Continuing west you will shortly reach the well-known folly of Grange Arch, which was built in the 1740's. This Arch looks down on Creech Grange House, owned by the Bond family, who later gave their name to a rather famous London Street on the Monopoly board. This house was also used in the TV series about HM Customs — "The Collectors". The Arch and an acre of ground was given to the National Trust by Mr. J.W.G. Bond in 1942.



After the obligatory photograph continue on down the track towards a picnic site and viewpoint. On going through the next gate you will be entering the Lulworth Firing Range which extends a further six miles to the west. Keep to the path just inside the fence with the road running parallel. As you exit the stile cross the road that disappears down the hill into Tyneham and climb the stile among the trees and continue west until a broad chalk track left will lead you down into the ghost village itself. At the right time of year bluebells are in abundance in these woods.

Tyneham was evacuated and taken over by the military authorities six days before Christmas 1943 for the benefit of training American and British tank crews in readiness for the Normandy Invasion. It's well worth taking a little time out here to visit the church, the old schoolroom, Post Office Row and the remains of the Rectory before continuing your journey.

Leave Tyneham by taking the track through the picnic site into the trees, taking the wide path to the right that will lead you down into Worbarrow Bay remembering to look over your shoulder as you veer left towards the bay to spot a well-hidden moving tank target on rail tracks. To your right is the forboding climb of Flowers Barrow, whilst in front is the whaleback hump of Worbarrow Tout — both stunningly impressive. However, your route lies to the left and eastwards along the Dorset Roller Coaster . . . destination Swanage!

It is a long and steady climb to the top of Gad Cliff followed by an easy stretch across grassy slopes before you reach a point where the path divides. Take the path to the right, skirting round Tyneham Cap and proceed down via the coast into Kimmeridge Bay where a “nodding donkey” stands guard almost at the entrance.

The path out of the bay is by a flight of steps climbing up to Clavell Tower, built in 1820 by the Rev. John Clavell. From here it is a fairly easy stretch along the top of Hen Cliff, Cuddle and Clavell's Hard towards Rope Lake head before dropping down into Egmont Bight and facing your hardest climb of the day — the 350ft. high Houns Tout Cliff, another knee trembler! A stone seat awaits your tired legs and it is worth resting awhile here to absorb in the view behind towards Kimmeridge and beyond.

Proceed on down the staircase with the delightful and impressive Chapman's Pool before you until you reach a stile on your left that will take you on a detour away from the bay because of the erosion of the cliff path. Follow the well-marked signs until you have ascended West Hill, then turn south and follow the path to the foot of yet another staircase that will lead you up to St. Aldhelm's Head and the now disused Coastguard Lookout. The

Norman Chapel to your left is late twelfth century and built of Purbeck Stone. Continue on towards Winspit with some stunning hinterland scenery, spotting some fine examples of strip lynchets — which were cut into the hillside for early-day agricultural purposes — before dropping down into the jaws of Winspit itself. A visit to the caves is worthwhile before taking the staircase out of the valley and on towards your next objective Seacombe Bottom. The path eventually takes you away from the cliffs. Look out for a style in the hedge on your right, this is a short cut into the valley of Seacombe. The walk through here is most pleasant and peaceful.

Continue up and over the cliffs towards Dancing Ledges. Here a crossroad of styles will take you down to the wide and sea-worn terrace. Another worthwhile detour for pictures — particularly if the sea is rough. Retrace your steps to the main path and continue on towards the Anvil Lighthouse. As you pass this light keep to the seaward side and you will soon reach the tunnel entrance to Tilly Whim Caves — old quarries once used by smugglers. Also look out for a wooden shed positioned just off the path — this is for dolphin watchers! Continue on by the stone wall until you see the Great Globe above you, just below the imposing Durlston Castle — it is a 40-tonne replica of the world carved out in Portland Stone. Walk up to and pass the main entrance to the Castle and take the road opposite. This is actually called The Isle of Wight Road and can be spotted in stone at some point on your right. You may be forgiven if your mind wanders a little and you expect to see Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson riding by in a horse and carriage en-route to solving another case.

Shortly a flight of steps will bring you out eventually onto the road. Follow this road round to your right for a short while before bearing right past a large house onto the green expanse of The Downs and a superb view over Swanage Bay where King Alfred beat the Danes in a naval battle in the year 877.

Descend into the town, which is a busy and bustling resort in season and where you will find many pubs and cafes for refreshment before making your way to the end of the High Street to let the train take the strain back to Corfe through the rolling Purbeck landscape, where you can reminisce on a by-gone era whilst giving your feet a touch of TLC!

Sadly if you have missed the last train, or as in my case had it cancelled due to a derailment, you have a further six miles to trek. *Be warned!*

Nevertheless, a great day, a great walk and a great sense of achievement!

FACT FILE

Distance

24 miles

Time

Allow 8/9 hours

Maps

OS Outdoor Leisure 15

Start/Parking

Corfe Castle Layby - Grid Ref. 959824

Terrain

Good paths and tracks with one steep climb on a good stretch of fairly strenuous coastal path

Refreshments

Pubs and Cafes at Corfe Castle
Pubs and Cafes at Swanage

Toilets

Corfe Castle, Tyneham, Kimmeridge and Swanage

Accommodation

Hotels and B&B's at Corfe Castle and Swanage
Youth Hostel at Swanage

Tourist Information

Swanage (01929) 422885
Swanage Railway (01929) 425800
24-hr. Talking Timetable (01929) 424276