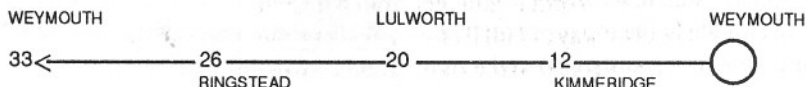


The Tesrod Elddod

The longest and most exhausting walk has been saved as the pièce de résistance or for some perhaps, the straw that breaks the camel's back! You may be forgiven for feeling "cream cracked" after this mammoth "Mother-of-all Walks" epic of 33 miles. This must be almost the ultimate challenge for a day's duration with covering more than 4,000ft. in ascents and descents. Two cars are needed and because this walk takes you through the Lulworth Firing Ranges you will need to check with the Range Officer at Bindon Abbey on 01929 462721. These ranges are closed to the public during the week and six weekends of the year.



ONE needs to be fully psyched up and in peak condition to take on this vigorous encounter with the Purbeck Roller Coaster and an early start is advised for this full day of 11 to 12 hours duration. I found that to reach half way by a 1 o'clock lunch was a super boost to morale. I also divided the walk up into four sections instead of counting off the miles. For example, the first part of the walk was taken as Swanage to Kimmeridge. Then Kimmeridge to Lulworth, followed by Lulworth to Ringstead and finally Ringstead Bay to the clock tower on Weymouth prom.

It is said good soldiers never look back. Well you may have to disregard that order and occasionally do so to take in the literally breathtaking scenery that is constantly changing ... or turn Tesrod Elddod round and re-walk the noted Dorset Doddle from Weymouth to Swanage on another day!

Having parked the first car at Wareham Rail Station (GR919881) for your return link up from Weymouth, drive on to Swanage in car two and head for the parking area at Durlston Country Park (GR032773). Walk on down past Durlston Castle to the Great Globe, a 40-tonne replica of the world hewn out of Portland Stone, and after the obligatory "team photo" in front of it descend the steps to the coastal path, turn right and *c'est en avant* westwards ... the start of a day you are unlikely to forget.

Very shortly you will pass the entrance to Tilly Whim Caves — named rather aptly after a chap named Tilly would you believe. The large wooden derricks that used to lower the blocks of stone on to the barges waiting below were called a whim. After this short history lesson you will begin a sharp descent followed by a climb that will take you round the Anvil Point Lighthouse. As you pass the brilliantly sandtexed lighthouse strike out straight ahead keeping to the path nearest to the cliff top. Soon you will see the navigation masts —

marked on the map as Mile Indicator Posts. Continue on and where the path forks at the start of some rather heavy shrubbery and blackberry bushes follow the path by the cliff edge. Eventually you will reach a fenced enclosure. Here the path follows round the fence and means a slight inland detour. Just follow the wire fence and pick up the coastal path from the other side. After approx. three miles you will reach Dancing Ledge and after a further mile you will descend into Seacombe Bottom.

Walk up this delightful valley for approx. 250yds. then look for a stepped path on your left that will take you on to higher ground. Turn left after crossing the stile and head for Winspit and from the heights of East Man walk down into Winspit itself where on a good day one can swim and scuba dive straight off the ledges into the deep water that hugs this graphic inlet.

Because of severe coastal erosion at Chapman's Pool I decided to walk inland to Worth Matravers from here and rejoin Chapman's Pool by way of Hill Bottom. Walk up the valley until the path bears round to the right. Here take the path left (almost straight on) and join a tarmac lane that will take you past houses that must have some of the finest sea views in the area. On reaching the main road take the path straight opposite and as you exit this field keep inside the roped off area — that is if the owner of this property still has the rope in position. On passing the driveway continue NNW with the path hugging the field boundary, crossing an old stone stile. Keep to this obvious path that works its way steadily down through brambles, nettles, bushes and trees. Eventually you will reach a wooden stile where the path goes left and right. Take left on a SW bearing. The other way will lead you to Corfe Castle!

This is Hill Bottom and is a delightful walk, although it can be very muddy in places. Continue straight on past cottages and eventually the path will broaden out as you head for Chapman's Pool. Soon you will see the almost vertical climb of Houns Tout Cliff. Follow the well marked signs in this direction and ascend the steep steps. From the top, whilst regaining your breath, take in the splendid view of the Encombe Valley and wooded Estate to your right before heading down the other side of Houns Tout towards the first target of the day — Kimmeridge Bay!

As you slide down through the "tunnel" undergrowth at the bottom take a look back at the longer and steeper side of Houns Tout, and if I said it takes almost as long to come

down as go up would you believe me? Be wary of the path along this section to Kimmeridge as it is badly eroded in places and has necessitated the erection of new footbridges.

The path out of Kimmeridge is beyond a line of old coastguard cottages where you will pick up a tarmac lane that will take you past Dorset's answer to the Texas oil barons of this world — a gentle rhythmic pumping action of our environmentally coloured "nodding donkey", then it's through the "wired fortress" and onto the Army's gunnery ranges. Follow the well-marked and positioned yellow signs — *and you shouldn't get shot!*

The path takes you round Horbarrow Bay and Brandy Bay, gradually climbing up on to Tyneham Cap before stretching your legs across the wider grassy slope of Gad Cliff. The view over the top is not for vertigo sufferers as it is almost a perpendicular drop. As you continue down towards Worbarrow Bay the ghost-like village of Tyneham reveals its ruins heavenward through the trees whilst you pump up your energy level for the ascent of the fast approaching Flowers Barrow. If you can do it steadily in one it makes an ideal lunch stop on a mound at the top — half way into the walk at 15 miles and a chance to replenish some lost energy whilst you soak in the atmosphere from this Iron Age hill-top fortress.

Fortified with the essential vitamins of your lunch you are now ready to take the plunge into the eerie depths of Arish Mell Gap followed by a climb of the near vertical grass wall that takes you up on to Bindon Hill overlooking the graveyard of rusting burnt-out tanks used as shell targets in the valley below. Now the path becomes a little more easier as you head due west keeping to the top path, passing the coastguard hut, until you overlook Lulworth, the car park and Hambury Tout. Descend into Lulworth by taking a "sheep track" type path away to the right. This will bring you down to the road. If you wish to use any of the amenities in Lulworth walk down the hill to the cove itself and then retrace your steps to where the road forks.

Follow this road left up the hill passing Lulworth's General Store on your left and the church on your right, heading for Newlands Farm. Where the road bends right keep straight on and pick up the track beyond the farm signposted to Ringstead. This is the alternative inland coastal path and runs parallel with the roller coaster. The path is obvious. Keep heading west with the fence to your right, eventually passing three large shell forms carved out of Purbeck marble by Peter Randall-Page to promote the importance of our cultural heritage. As you pass the last one, leave the fence on your right and strike out straight ahead across a large field to exit in the far left corner by a wooden stile, rejoining the roller coaster and where a stunning picture can be captured on camera of the magnificent coastline.

Proceed on towards Whitenoth Cottages, some of which have become weekend homes, and from where you will receive your first clear sighting of Weymouth Bay — maybe even the clock tower through extra-strong binos! Here also a resplendant Purbeck stone waymark will emphasise that you are only seven miles from "home".

Leave the cottages by taking the path left down towards Ringstead Bay. Shortly it broadens out into a grassy slope before crossing two stiles either side of a brick-built path leading towards Holworth House. Press on through some trees to pick up a tarmac lane that takes you down past the wooden "shed-type" building of Holworth Church, believed to be the smallest in Dorset and where you could "sign in" on passing through, eventually picking up the path opposite a secluded cottage sited below that appears to have an

enormous amount of grass to keep down. Keeping to the obvious path you will soon reach the Bay where there is a chance to "re-fuel" (in season).

Leave Ringstead by the coast path, passing houses that virtually sit on the water's edge. Be careful not to go down the drive of the last property, but head for the "hole" in the hedge. The path again is obvious and shortly you will pass World War II pillboxes before looking down over the hamlet of Osmington Mills. The path descends and you find yourself walking right through the pub garden — an obvious chance for a detour here and a quick "half" perhaps before climbing the steps and taking the road towards Osmington Village.

Because of the severe landslip opposite the Smugglers Inn the coastal path is re-routed inland for a while. Walk up the road for approx. 300yds. and where the road bends to the right take the narrow path signposted to your left. On emerging from the stile you will notice a Purbeck stone waymark pointing left for a recently opened new section offering an alternative route. Follow this path and eventually you will rejoin the original coastal path passing the a Holiday Camp to your right.

Continue on, heading for Redcliff Point, then up and over the top and across a wide grassy area towards where the land again has fallen away. Follow the path inland here and cross over a "His and Hers" stile exiting by a gate onto the road passing the Riviera Hotel. Walk on and over a large green and down to the main A353. Turn left here and head towards a brick-built beach cafe at the end of Furzy Cliff.

All that is left now is the victory parade along the mile-long beach wall and an obligatory photograph at the clock tower — a real sense of achievement and one you should have a "gong" for.

Unless you are in desperate need of a life support machine, now's the time to chill out ... relax on the train back to Wareham, go home to a Radox bath, a four-course supper, good nightcap and don't bother to set the alarm ... *for three days!*

FACT FILE

Distance — 33 miles

Time — Allow 11/12 hours

Maps

Outdoor Leisure 15

OS Pathfinder 1332

Start/Parking

Wareham Station - Grid Ref. 919881

Start/Walking

Durlston Country Park - Grid Ref. 032773

Finish

Weymouth Clock Tower - Grid Ref. 681795

Terrain

A long and arduous walk with over 4,000ft. of ascents and descents on well defined paths.

Refreshments

Worth Matravers, Lulworth

Ringstead Bay, Osmington Mills

Weymouth

Toilets

Durlston Head

Worth Matravers NT Car Park

Kimmeridge

Ringstead Bay (seasonal opening)

Osmington Mills

Weymouth

Accommodation

Black Bear Hotel, Wareham (01929) 553339

Cromwell House Hotel,

Lulworth (01929) 400253

Youth Hostel, Lulworth (01929) 400564

Youth Hostel, Swanage (01929) 422113

Hotels and B&B's in Swanage

Hotels and B&B's in Weymouth

Tourist Information

Wareham (01929) 552740

Swanage (01929) 422885

Weymouth (01305) 785747

Poole (01202) 673322