

DORSET AND THE JURASSIC COAST

Outstanding Circular Walks

Pathfinder® Guides 



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guides



Old Harry Rocks

descends to the road. Turn right, walking past the **Bankes Arms** to return to the car park.

SCALE 1:25 000 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ INCHES to 1 MILE 4CM to 1KM



walk 1

 Start	Hengistbury Head
 Distance	3½ miles (5.6km)
 Height gain	165 feet (50m)
 Approximate time	1¾ hours
 Route terrain	Coastal heath and dunes
 Parking	Car park at start (Pay & Display, height barrier)
 OS maps	Landranger 195 (Bournemouth & Purbeck), Explorer OL22 (New Forest)
 GPS waypoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SZ 165 911 A SZ 163 908 B SZ 183 916 C SZ 173 909

Hengistbury Head

The long, curving peninsula of Hengistbury Head almost encloses the estuary of the rivers Stour and Avon to form the virtually landlocked pool of Christchurch Harbour. It is the most easterly section of the Dorset coast and is both a local nature reserve and SSSI. This rewarding short walk winds across the headland's heath and saltmarsh, where facets of its wildlife and history are revealed.

 Begin from the **café** at the far end of the car park. Bear right along the gravel track (not the tarmac track) towards the Double Dykes, an Iron Age fortification comprising two ramparts and a ditch, built to defend the headland on its landward side. Do not pass through the dykes but go right beside the outer rampart towards the cliffs. There, turn left **A** and walk along a broad tarmac track, climbing to the triangulation pillar situated on the highest point of Hengistbury Head. Keeping with the main track along the top of the headland, there is a magnificent panorama that takes in the Isle of Purbeck, Bournemouth, Christchurch Harbour, the Hampshire coast and the Isle of Wight.

Farther on, beyond a disused coastguard station, bear right past the head of a pool, one of several that have formed in the abandoned ironstone quarries that dot the headland. Remain above the shore, the path shortly curving to reveal a superb



Descending from Hengistbury Head to Christchurch Harbour

walk 5

 Start
Southdown

 Distance
5½ miles (8.9km)

 Height gain
820 feet (250m)

 Approximate time
2¾ hours

 Route terrain
Chalky tracks, coast path and field paths

 Parking
National Trust car park
(Pay and Display)

 OS maps
Landranger 194
(Dorchester &
Weymouth), Explorer
OL15 (Purbeck & South
Dorset)

 GPS waypoints

-  SY 757 824
-  A SY 761 822
-  B SY 780 810
-  C SY 781 809
-  D SY 772 809
-  E SY 762 816
-  F SY 750 813
-  G SY 750 817

White Nothe and Ringstead Bay

Backed by a long sweep of shingle beach, Ringstead Bay is a popular and remarkable area. The slow, perpetual landslip of the cliffs, periodically accelerated by winter storm and heavy rain, has released countless fossils, which end up on the beach, while the crumbling undercliff is a superb haven for wildlife. The chalk downs above provide a fine vantage for views along the coast and occasional relics along the way offer insight to a fascinating history.

 Walk to the eastern end of the car park and keep ahead through a gate with the ongoing track. The elevation gives sweeping views along the coast back to Weymouth and the Isle of Portland. After a little over ¼ mile (400m), the track bends right past a red letterbox. Leave at that point **A**, going through the gate ahead and not the stile to its right.

The way rises past a thatched barn, later going through a gate to continue at the edge of a field. Keep walking for almost a mile (1.6km), eventually passing a couple of ancient tumuli on the right and an old chalk pit to the left **B**. Through the



give an impressive view to the Purbeck Hills and Corfe Castle. Reaching a small car park **E**, turn left between stone gateposts and then bear right through a waymarked gate. After crossing open

Swyre Head

Swyre Head is the highest point of the Purbeck Hills and gives a far-reaching panorama that extends from Dartmoor to the Isle of Wight. The prominent mound is a prehistoric tumulus, its top flattened to provide the base for a windmill that has long-since gone.

pasture, continue at the edge of Polar Wood and then climb on to Swyre Head.

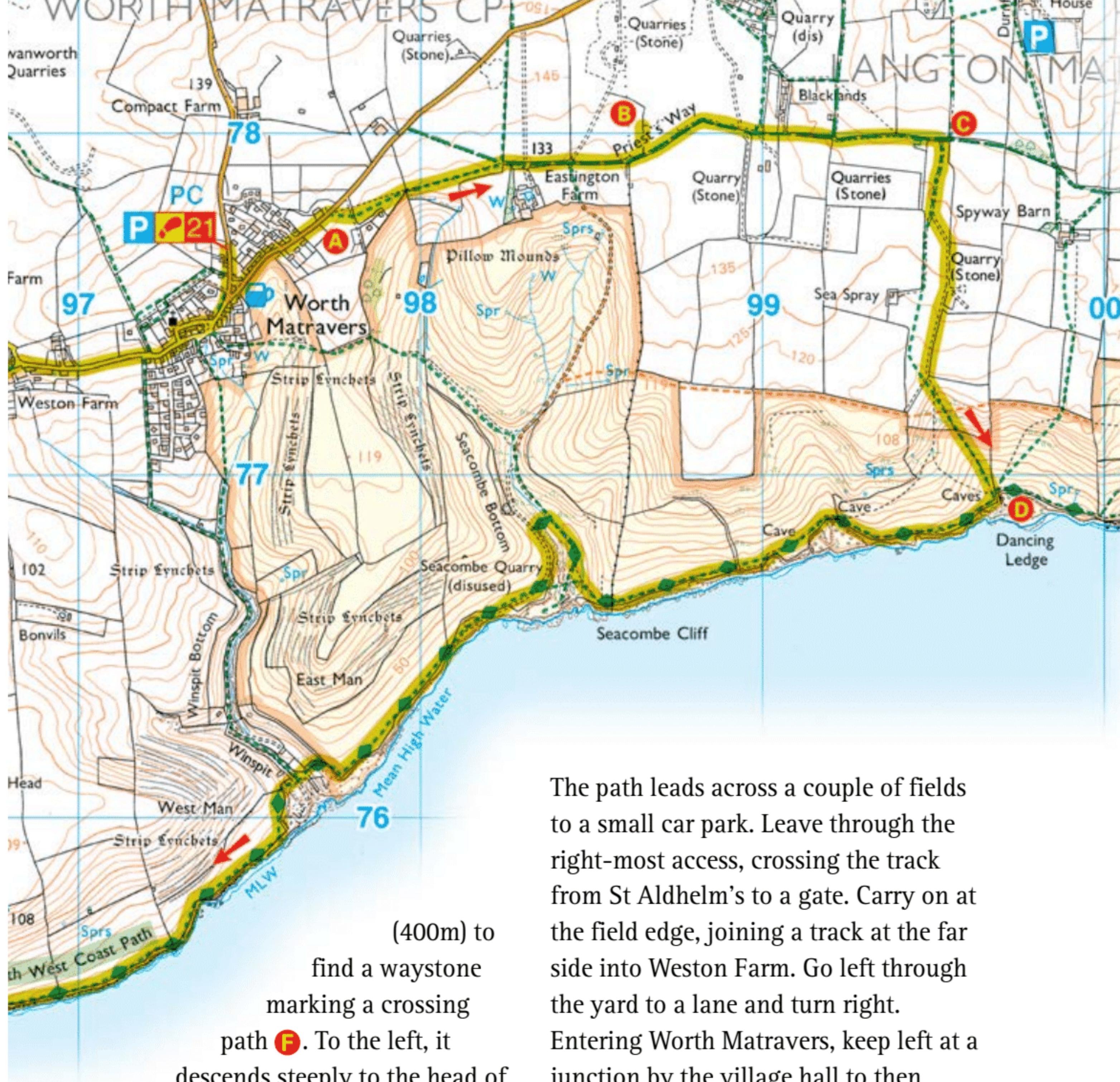
Walk past the triangulation pillar **F** and through a gate beyond to follow the crest of the ridge over Smedmore Hill. The glorious views make a grand finale to the walk, the path finally descending to a lane. Go

left and left again the short distance back to the car park.



A grassy path descends into Kimmeridge





(400m) to find a waystone marking a crossing path **F**. To the left, it descends steeply to the head of Chapman's Pool, a beautiful spot to while away the rest of the day. The way back, however, is through a gate and stile on the right signed to Renscombe.

The path leads across a couple of fields to a small car park. Leave through the right-most access, crossing the track from St Aldhelm's to a gate. Carry on at the field edge, joining a track at the far side into Weston Farm. Go left through the yard to a lane and turn right. Entering Worth Matravers, keep left at a junction by the village hall to then swing right in front of the church. Stay ahead past the village pond, forking left at the next junction back to the car park.



The beautiful cove of Chapman's Pool lies below Hounds-tout Cliff

St Eustace's Church

Ibberton nestles at the base of the hill, a short drive (or strenuous walk) away. **The Ibberton** serves appetising food and the church, which stands a little higher up the hill, is reached by continuing beyond the pub up a steep, winding track. Its dedication to St Eustace is unusual and shared by only two other churches in the country. Legend describes him as a Roman general who converted to Christianity after seeing a vision of Christ between the antlers of a stag while out hunting. Although subsequently tested, he remained true to his faith and after refusing to make a pagan sacrifice, he and his family were roasted alive within a bronze statue of an ox. The church, dating to the late 14th century, was pleasingly restored at the beginning of the last century after it partly collapsed. Stone benches line the porch and a small window allowed the priest to watch for the arrival of the coffin when conducting a funeral.

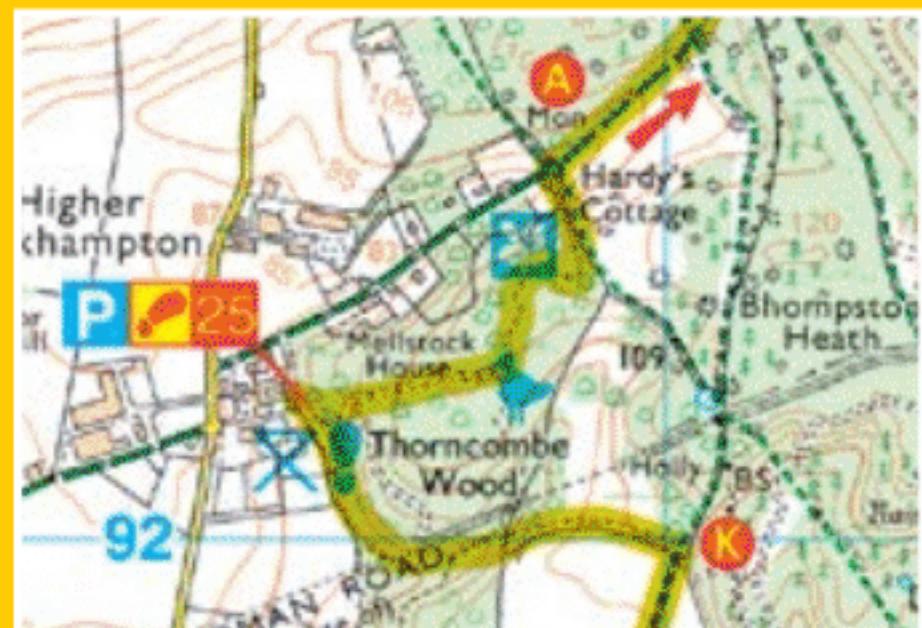


Descending South Down

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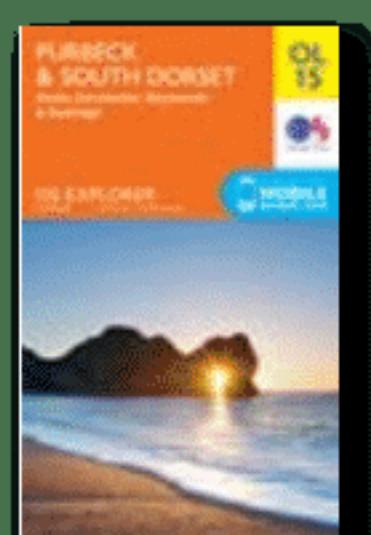
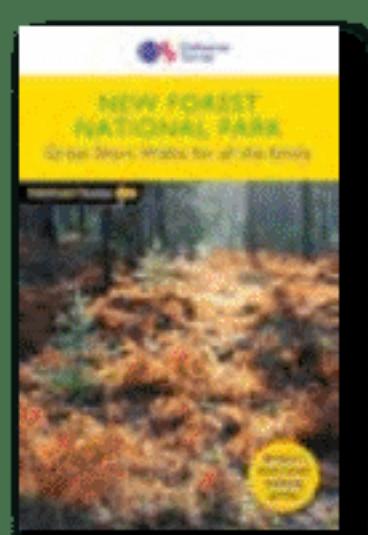
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