

The coastal scrub has a rich diversity of plant life; Wild privet, dogwood, hawthorn, wild madder, the parasitic ivy broomrape and nationally important but tiny, mosses, liverworts and lichens found on the rocks.

The mosaic of scrub grassland and boulder scree in turn provides shelter and food for a wide range of resident and migratory birds and invertebrates.

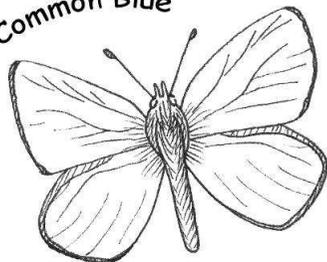
In places the invasive garden escapee cotoneaster is starting to cover the boulders and grassland and so management is on-going to remove this 'alien'.

After meandering through the Weares, you'll arrive at the ground above the beach huts. One path hugs the top of the slope above the beach huts before joining the steps. There is a steepish slope down to the left of the path and so if you prefer, follow one of the paths up towards the wooded slope where you join the steps further up towards the view point. At the steps go down to Church Ope Cove or climb back up past Rufus Castle to the viewing point.

It was worth climbing done the remaining steps to sit on the beach or go rock polling. Keep an eye out for bottlenose dolphins which can sometimes be seen from the Cove.

Pop into the Portland Museum for more information and refreshments.

Common Blue



If you have enjoyed this walk why not try one of the other circular walks at different places along the Legacy Trail. There are nine in total.



The Legacy Trail and circular walks from key 'waypoints' are part of the Wild About Weymouth and Portland Project funded by the Big Lottery Fund through Natural England's Access to Nature programme.

It aims to improve access in and between wildlife sites and encourage local people and visitors to discover and explore the wonderful natural environment of Weymouth and Portland.

For more information about the Legacy Trail and sites along the way visit:

www.visit-dorset.com/about-the-area/countryside/weymouth-and-portland-legacy-trail



Discover the Wild side

LEGACY TRAIL

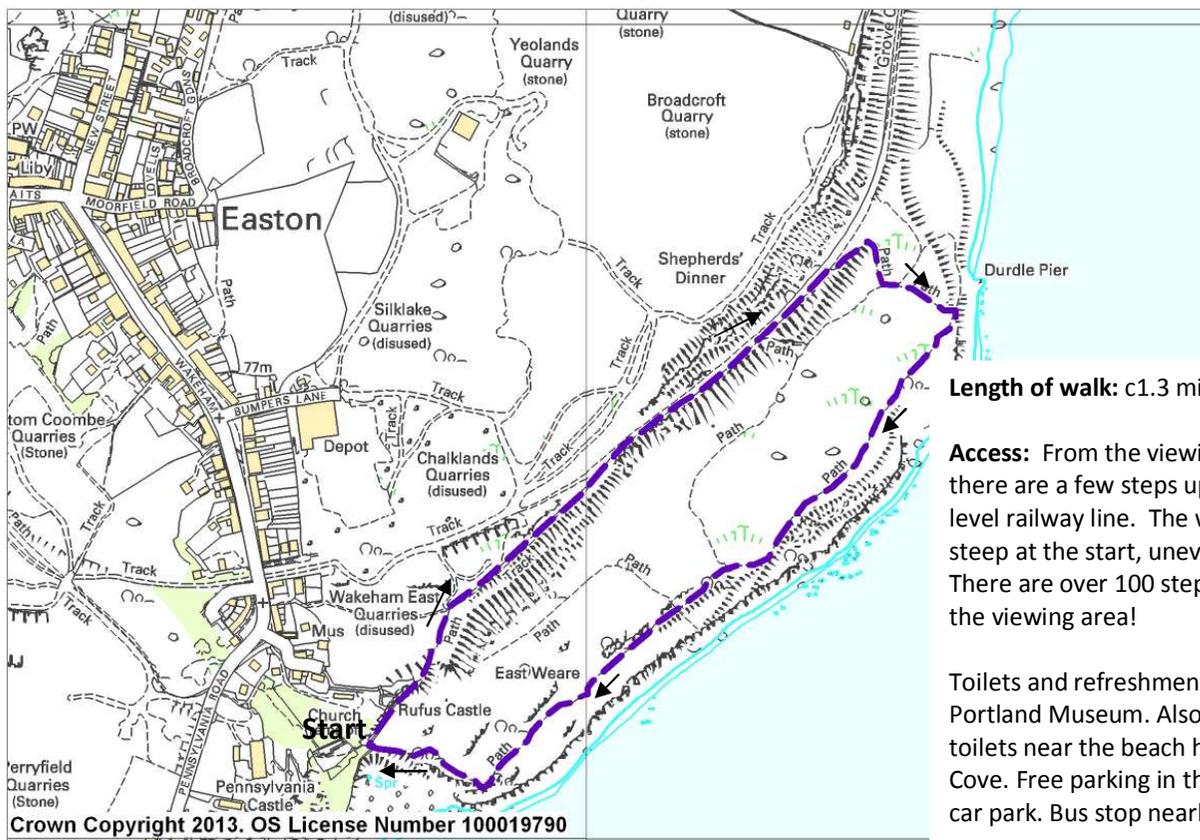
Circular walk

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**The Weares and Church Ope Cove
1.3 miles**

Peregrine





Length of walk: c1.3 miles

Access: From the viewing point there are a few steps up to join the level railway line. The weares path is steep at the start, uneven and rocky. There are over 100 steps back up to the viewing area!

Toilets and refreshments at the Portland Museum. Also there are toilets near the beach huts in the Cove. Free parking in the museum car park. Bus stop nearby.

In the cliffs you get fantastic views of the rock strata. The Lower Purbeck Beds, formed in shallow, lagoonal conditions, are at the top. Fossil trees and dinosaur footprints have also been found in this rock. Further down is the famous Portland limestone formed in Jurassic tropical seas, where giant ammonites swam, 140 million years ago. Find out more about the fossils in the Portland museum.

In places on the cliffs, you can see tufa or flow stone, formed in a similar way to the formation of stalactites in limestone caves. Impressive stone walls built to hold back the quarry waste about the natural strata as you walk along the railway. Look out for ravens and peregrines and enjoy the views across to the Chalk cliffs at Lulworth, also part of the World Heritage Site.

To the right are the Weares, a Celtic word meaning rough and wild land. These were previously common land for sheep grazing, before the quarrying and landslides.

To explore Penn's Weares, take a winding, fairly steep path on the right, down to Durdle Pier which you can see from the railway line. Look out for the path just as the Grove Cliffs ahead come into view. Alternatively, you can carry on along the railway line until you reach the security fences of Portland Port, when you will have to turn back.

This walk explores the unique landscape of the east coast, altered by landslips and quarrying but now being reclaimed and softened by nature. It is a very special area for wildlife particularly the smaller plants; mosses and lichens.

Take a short walk from the museum, down to Church Ope Cove viewing area passing the 12th Century Rufus Castle on your right.

Enjoy the views across the weares and the Cove below. In the early quarrying days, stone was shipped out on sailing barges from 3 piers around the Cove. Enormous loads of overburden were tipped over the cliffs into the sea between the Cove and Southwell.

It probably contributed to the dramatic Southwell landslide in 1734 which affected this area even changing the composition of the Cove's beach. You can see boulders and rock layers at unusual angles because of the landslide.

From the viewing point follow the Coast Path and Legacy Trail to the north along the disused passenger railway line.

The line was opened in 1902 making its last journey in 1965. You pass through a dramatic cutting, popular with climbers, where the railway swung round through the cliffs taking passengers towards Easton.

The Grove Cliffs is a sanctuary area for breeding birds, such as fulmars. The old hand winch Derrick crane remains in place and rows of roughly shaped stone are lined up ready! Portland stone has been used to camouflage the WW2 lookouts. Durdle Pier is the only example of an 18th century quay to survive on the Island and was one of the main stone shipping places on the east side.

From Durdle Pier take the meandering footpath between the boulders and scrub back towards Church Ope Cove.

This landscape of landslips, toppled rocks and old quarrying is an extremely important area for wildlife.