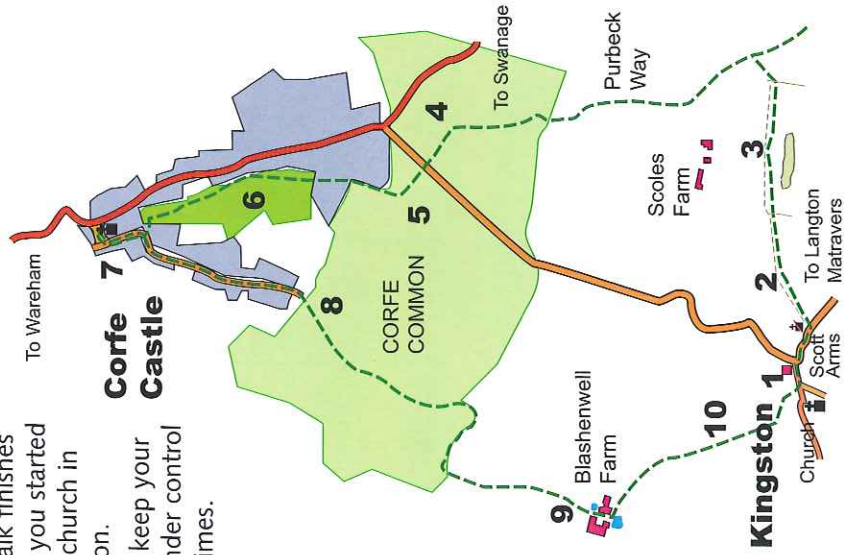


This walk starts and finishes by the church in Kingston. It is a spectacular walk with stunning views of the Purbeck Landscape. It tells the story of the life of the common working folk who have lived off the land here for thousands of years.

The walk is hilly and steep in short sections. It is almost entirely off-road and can get muddy in parts. The walk will take about 3-4 hours in total but with such beautiful views, you may want to take longer. The village of Corfe Castle is halfway and a good place for refreshment.

The walk finishes where you started at the church in Kingston.

Please keep your dog under control at all times.



The magnificent Victorian Church at Kingston was built in 1880 by Lord Eldon of Encombe. During a recession this project kept many Purbeck men employed. All the limestone and Purbeck marble came from local quarries and the timber from Lord Eldon's estate in Gloucestershire. The pink colouring of the stone is caused by algae that flourishes on the shady side of a building.



William surveying the view over Corfe from Kingston showing the small stronghold where Corfe Castle is now sited.

Kingston means 'the King's farm and royal manor' and was once owned by the Saxon kings. Later it was granted to the Abbess of Shaftesbury and William the Conqueror 'persuaded' her to exchange the mound at Corfe Castle and the land around it for a church in Gillingham. He began building the Castle in 1086 using local Saxon labour.

From the church walk down the road with the Scott Arms on your left. Continue up West Street which is sign posted to Swanage. Walk about 100 metres, past the old church of Kingston (which is now a house), until you reach a stile on your left. Cross into the field and keeping the drystone wall on your left (ignore the first stile you reach) follow the footpath across two fields.



You are standing on a limestone ridge and all around you will see evidence of how Purbeck stone is used for buildings and dry stone walling.

Looking north towards Corfe Castle you can see the Chalk Ridge where sheep and cattle grazed. There have been farms and dwellings along the lower slopes of the ridge since Saxon times and many of these are built on a 'spring line'. When rain falls on the chalk it soaks down into the rock until it meets a layer of clay and then finds its way to the surface as a spring. Some of these farms still use this clear spring water today!

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries sheep were valued for their wool and meat and became a feature of the Purbeck landscape. All the sheep belonging to the tenant farmers were taken up to the chalk ridge by the shepherd during the day. At night they were brought down to manure the fields which made the soil fertile for crops of wheat and barley. The flock of sheep was moved to a different field each night so each tenant's land was covered in turn.

Go over the stile and join a narrow path. Be careful, there is uneven ground. Follow this path until you reach a track. This is the Purbeck Way, turn left here. After a short distance turn left again through a gate following signs for Corfe Castle. This path may be muddy. Follow the path through 2 fields and over a small footbridge on the left.

Go passed the house, through a gate and across a wooden walkway onto Corfe Common. Follow the path straight up the slope to the ridge. Please keep your dog under control at all times.



Corfe Common is Dorset's largest common. Covering 140 hectares, it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its wild flowers and insects. As you walk up the slope you may notice some slightly raised banks. These are the remains of Iron Age and medieval field boundaries. Along the ridge at the top of the slope there are several large mounds. These are Bronze Age burial mounds and are known as round barrows. They are three to four thousand years old.



Can you see some deep gullies cut into the slope toward the village?

These are the old tracks to Corfe Castle now known as 'hollow ways'. Over time the carts wore away the track and it became a deep gully. When it got really deep and muddy the cart would move to the side and start a new track. This might happen several times as you can see here! The carts would have carried stone to build the castle and village as well as corn, vegetables, fish and other goods to sell in the market square.



Turn left at the top of the slope and follow the path to the road. Please be careful crossing the road.

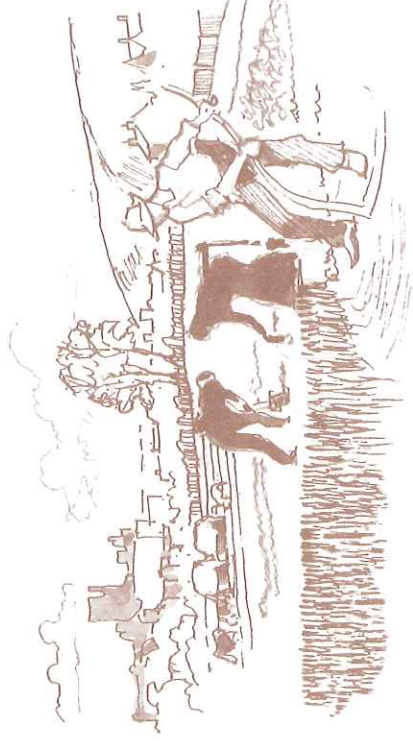


Through the gate there is a stone block, a way marker. Stand at the way marker and look up the hill, toward the village.

The grassy piece of common in front of you was ploughed in the 1940s in the middle of World War Two. This was when the 'Dig for Victory' campaign encouraged people to grow as much of their own food as they could. As a result the people of Corfe Castle grew corn and possibly potatoes on the common. This is the only time you would have seen fences on this wild bit of land!



Turn left and follow the sign towards Corfe Castle village, through the gate and join a narrow path. Follow this down between some modern houses and turn right through a stone 'Kissing Gate' into a field.



The field you are now standing in is known as the Halves. In the medieval period these fields were divided up amongst the villagers so they could grow food for themselves, their horses, cattle and a bit for the Lord of the Manor. The size of the strip was governed by the amount of land a horse could plough in one day!

Along this ancient track thousands of tons of limestone for the building of Corfe Castle was brought by horse drawn cart or sled. First a royal castle then a stately home, it was finally destroyed in 1646 by the Parliamentarians during the Civil War. It was bequeathed to The National Trust in 1982.



Continue across the fields toward the Castle until you reach the playground. Follow the path to the left, between the cottages. This path is known as the 'Drong' an old Dorset word for an alleyway! At the end of the Drong turn right and follow West Street until you reach Corfe Castle Village Square.

This guide is part of a series of circular walks designed for families to enjoy the beautiful landscape of Purbeck and at the same time help them understand a little of the history that has shaped the area.

Today, Purbeck is one of the most beautiful parts of the UK. It is rich in rare animals and plants and an enjoyable and tranquil place to visit— but it has not always been like this! As you walk and enjoy the view try to imagine the same view during past times.

200 million years ago dinosaurs wandered here and Pterodactyls flew overhead. 9000 years ago Neolithic people hunted here. 2000 years ago the Romans quarried and farmed here (and these industries continue to this very day). As you look to sea, 1000 years ago you may have seen Viking longships. 700 years ago Purbeck was a dreadful place to visit as villages were ravaged by the Black Death. 400 years ago Corfe Castle was besieged and eventually ruined during the English Civil War. 250 years ago it was smugglers who were walking these paths at night. Only 70 years ago Purbeck was preparing to fight a German invasion during World War 2.

Please let us know if you have enjoyed this walk:

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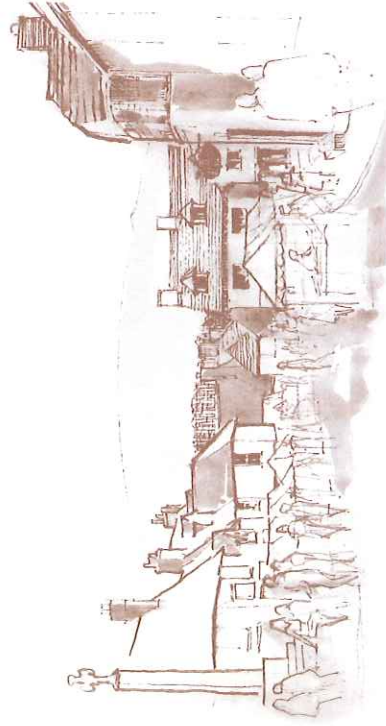


6

CORFE SQUARE

The Square was the heart of the village. Here is the village Cross and pump as well as the church, town hall and entrance to the Castle. In 1215 King John granted Corfe Castle a weekly market and a twice yearly fair. The market Square would have come alive with people buying and selling produce and animals. No fish could be sold in Purbeck until it had been offered for sale at Corfe Castle Market first! Smells of cooking would have wafted through the streets and the ale houses would do a roaring trade.

The square here is a particularly good shape for a market. It has four streets leading into it, one in each corner and these would have been blocked with a gate or bar so that the animals for sale couldn't escape. Today the square is busy with cars and coaches.



This is a good place to find refreshments but make sure you are careful crossing the roads.

Head back up West Street follow the road as it bends to the left. Continue along the road until you reach the cattle grid and Corfe Common.



7

WEST STREET



Some villagers still have 'Common Rights' and graze their cows or horses here for a small annual fee. Each year a Hayward is appointed to collect the fee and to make sure the animals are well cared for.

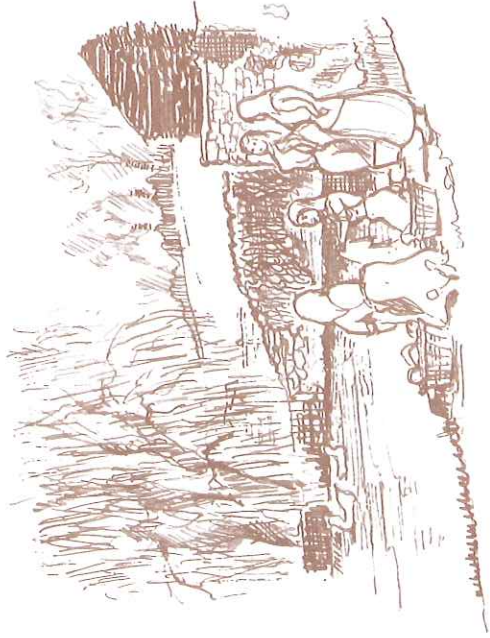
Until the beginning of the 20th Century, the gate to the common was opened in the evening and the cows would walk down West Street and turn into their own stalls. They all knew where they would get milked and fed. West Street became known as 'Duck Street' because of all the mess the cows left behind!

In the past many of the houses in Corfe Castle Village had their own brick bread ovens. Gorse or 'furze' from the common made a very good fuel for them as it burnt quickly and produced a lot of heat. The gorse was burnt in the oven, the ashes raked out and the bread put in. It was then cooked by the heat left in the bricks. Families used to take it in turn to do the baking for the whole street!

Look out for grazing animals and gorse bushes along the path. Gorse is very prickly and has a bright yellow flower which smells a bit like coconut! Follow the road across the common and past the fields until you reach Blashenwell Farm. Walk through the farm yard and past the barns.



Blashenwell farm used to be a very popular meeting place for ladies of Corfe. The name means 'spring or stream where cloth is bleached'. Minerals from the rocks dissolve in the water and have a 'bleaching' effect on cloth. The poorer women from the village were very proud that they could get their whites, 'whiter than white'.



The cast iron water wheel was added to the farm in the 19th century. The wheel was powered by water held in the man-made mill-pond slightly further up the hill. When the pond was full the sluice gate was opened and the water channelled toward the wheel. The wheel would have turned mill stones to grind corn, mainly barley and oats, for animal feed for this farm and others. Flour for bread making was ground from wheat.

Walk up the hill towards the mill pond wall. Follow the footpath sign to the left and go through the gate. Just to your right is a low wall, here you can see the mill pond which held the water to turn the water wheel below. Continue along the path until you reach an open field.



This field has been used for many things. Sometimes pasture, sometimes ploughed but it was also useful for building stone for houses and walls. The soil is very thin here and as you walk up the field you will see many pieces of limestone lying close to the surface. This was useful to the local people as it meant they could just pick the stone up from the field and use it for building. This particular limestone is known locally as 'Burr' as it is a lovely buttery colour when freshly broken, the word 'buerre' is French for butter. The Old Hall at Corfe Castle was built from this limestone found close to the surface of the fields. It is known as field pickings and is also used for the many dry stone walls in Purbeck.

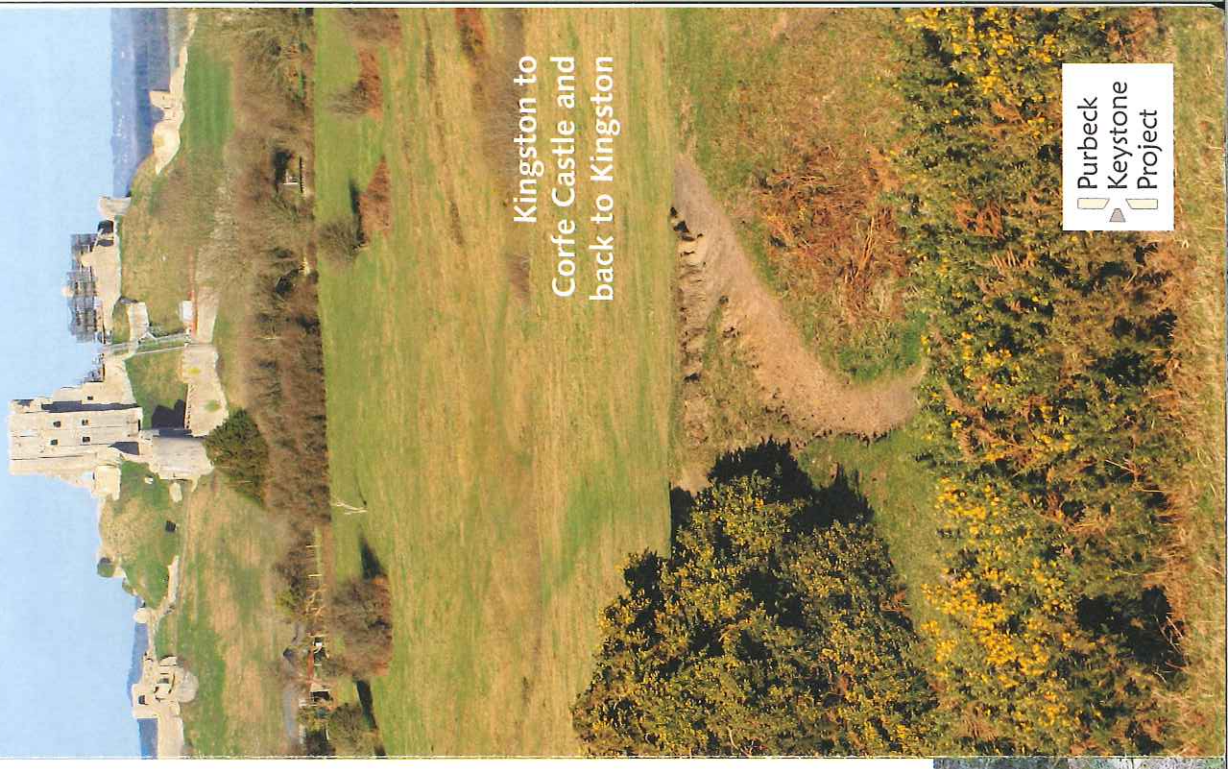


Walk up the field, heading for the top left hand corner and don't forget to turn and look at the beautiful view across the valley. Cross the stile into the woods and follow the path up the slope, cross the track, walk past a row of cottages and watch for steep steps on your right. Up these, follow the path and arrive back at the Church.



A circular walk around Corfe Common

Approx. 9km (5.5 miles)



Kingston to
Corfe Castle and
back to Kingston