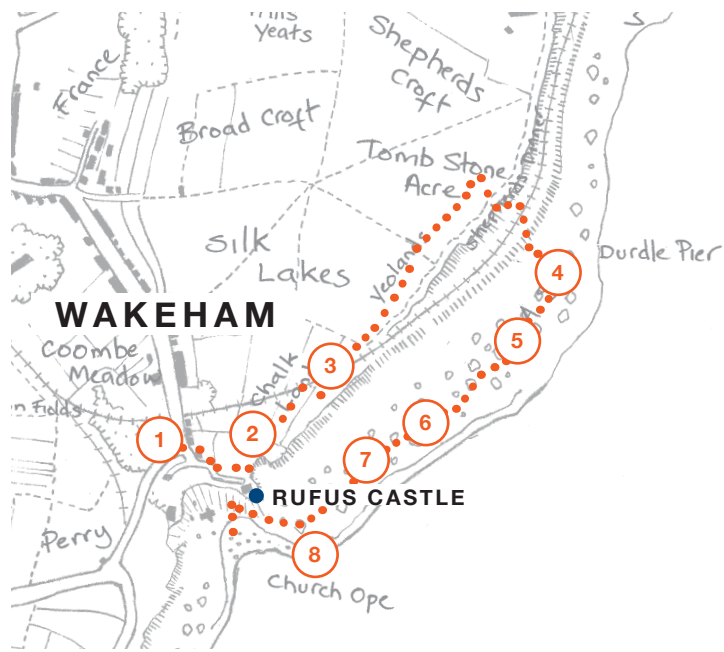


Lost Paths and Freedoms

The East Weares Walk



Start: Portland Museum, 217 Wakeham, Easton, Portland DT5 1HS.

End: Church Ope, Portland DT5 1JA.

Paths are on uneven terrain and include walking up and down hills.

This walk lasts approx 60 mins.



This short guide is a self guided version of a performative walk created and led by Ania Bas for the b-side festival 2018. The walk is based on research conducted by local residents led by Bea Moyes. It forms part of The Portland Pathways Project run by b-side and supported by The Heritage Lottery Fund. Design by Spike Golding.

1 Start the walk at Portland Museum situated in the ancient hamlet of Wakeham and above the cove at Church Ope. The museum was founded in 1930 by Dr Marie Stopes in two early 17th century stone cottages. Inspired by one of these cottages, Wessex author and Stopes' friend Thomas Hardy made it the home of Avice, the heroine in his novel 'The Well Beloved'. Dr Stopes found refuge on Portland during a difficult court case and bought Old Higher Lighthouse by Portland bill as her second home. Known for her controversial campaigns for eugenics as well as ongoing support for women's rights her presence on Portland interweaves with many other stories of the island being a site of safety, offering shelter to people from many walks of life.

2 Kite flying was a popular game on Portland in which the landscape of the island was seen as an expansive playground, traversed by children on foot. The island is frequented by strong winds and blue skies. Written testimonies from visitors to Portland from 18th and 19th century suggest an increased interest in the island as a place of beauty where middle and upper classes would come for fresh air and splendid views.

3 During 18th and 19th century the scale and prominence of the quarry industry on the island transformed the landscape of Portland and resulted in the construction of a railway track laid over East Weares. The train line was to serve a double purpose - take away removed stone and bring in visitors down the breathtaking path quarried in the cliff. The railway construction began in 1862 and served the island for almost 100 years. By 1965 the tracks were dismantled and the stations demolished but the rail beds themselves remained and are now used as pathways, including one you are walking on.

4 In early day stone was quarried directly from the East Cliffs and taken out by Durdle Pier where you can still spot a place to moor a boat as well as a line of excavated stone that was never transported to the intended site.

5 In the summer of 1967 a group of residents "keen on Portland's history and present environment"¹ got together and formed Portland Field Research Group. The group became increasingly involved in protecting historic sites and landmarks on Portland

from developers stopping new developments that would encroach on areas worth preserving. In 1972 the members of the group collected evidence of the footpaths on the island, illustrating over 6 miles of pathways which were not officially listed as public rights of way on the Definitive Map.

6 Portland was generally un-enclosed until the middle of 19th century and Portlanders are famous for a 'go-as-I-please' mentality where their landscape is open to be explored and enjoyed. This approach was well articulated by the famous Portland stonemason and poet 'Skylark' Durston: "*Freedom means to me to be able to wander the island, to walk through the quarries, to walk along the cliffs and go underneath the cliffs.*"² This liberty to roam was curtailed due to the impact of quarrying and building since the Second World War.

7 The spirit of civil disobedience still plays an important role in Portland's access to pathways which are increasingly being fenced off by landowners. From the on-going fences cut down by unnamed local residents, to stories of trespass across land which has been fenced off, Portlanders continue to resist changes that restrict their rights to roam.

8 At the lower cliff with the view of Church Ope read the excerpt from: 'A field guide to getting lost', Rebecca Solnit: "*Jorge Luis Borges wrote a parable about some cartographers who eventually created a map that was 1:1 scale and covered much of a nameless empire. Even at 1:1 scale, the two-dimensional map would be inadequate to depict the layers of being of a place, its many versions. Thus the map of languages spoken and the map of soil types canvas the same area differently, just as Freudianism and shamanism describe the same psyche differently. No representation is complete. (...) These parables say that representation is always partial, else it would not be representation, but some kind of haunting double. But the terra incognita spaces on maps say that knowledge also is an island surrounded by oceans of the unknown. They signify that the cartographers knew they did not know, and awareness of ignorance is not just ignorance; it's awareness of knowledge's limits.*"

¹ Portland Field Research Group, Invitation to Join (1968)

² Skylark Durston (1971) www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8a7Woe48hw&feature=youtu.be