

The South West Coastal Path.

Another tale from Lin and Wendy

It is said that the South West Coast Path is perhaps the UK's most challenging long distance path - and the longest waymarked at 630-miles around the coastline of the southwest peninsula.

Like many of you, we have probably walked a considerable part of it over the years while on holiday doing day hikes or even just out for a stroll.

We have now decided to join up those hikes and do a final push in 2023, to actually complete 'The Path' in a slightly more organised way than the previous random efforts.

In order to set ourselves some sort of overall plan, we've decided to use the SWCP association 52 day itinerary, (albeit back to front,) to enable realistic days hiking with identified starts and finishes for our overnight stops.

<https://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/walk-coast-path/trip-planning/SWCP-itinerary/>

There are many articles and even books written about this route. For a moving example, see The Times best seller, 'The Salt Path', which is the true story of the author Raynor Winn and her husband's somewhat harrowing time on this path. We though, unlike Raynor, are journeying in the comfort of our campervan, but as others have before us we too, have decided to record our travels. Our writings however are purely descriptive notes for each days' route, some from the perspective of the support group, others the ponderings of the walkers: all just recorded in our usual hotchpotch manner for us to read and remind ourselves when we sit and reminisce in our dotage of our hiking days and more active times. We thought we may also possibly serialise parts as a Murvi blog... 'the Path' that is, not our dotage!

There is no set way or direction to walk although it seems most people walk anti-clockwise beginning in Minehead and finishing at Poole.

We however, are travelling from Poole to Minehead and travelling clockwise.

This is simply because when a fine weather weekend presented itself in November we somewhat spontaneously decided to make a start. Poole is a lot closer to us than Minehead and so to make the best use of our time we reckoned it would be good to actually get going as soon as possible as we are very aware that we will be away a great deal of 2023. So early one sunny, Friday morning we took off to complete our first 4 days of travelling and walking.

We are looking to complete The Path by December 2023 before we leave for Spain for the winter. However this means finding time for at least 44 days of walking from March onwards (our return from this years wintering in Spain) and between various trips, to Ireland and the random 'Murvi meets' !

Our future walks will be weather dependent, weekend availability, spontaneity etc, but should anyone wish to join us for a hike or two, we will put a note on the Chat line on what, where and when we are walking. Hopefully the hikes will not be resembling some of those experienced by Raynor and Moth !

Wendy and Phin (aka The Walkers) will be walking from A to B in linear fashion, while Lin and the two wee mites Gracie and Lola (aka Support) will be doing the ferrying to and from the starts, finishes and places to stay. They will, hopefully, be doing the start and finish of each days walk and the pretty trips without the rigorous bits in between. We intend to use mostly pub overnight stops.

THE GRAND DEPART



Friday, 11th. November . South Haven Point to Worth Matravers. 14 miles.

As mentioned, Lin is doing the ferrying with starting and finishing each days walk and popping in along the pretty parts of the way while looking after the two wee mites , Gracie and the aged Lola, now 16 yrs.



So first up, a couple of miles along the sandy beach with Wend for the 'Grand Depart' and enjoying the rather lovely weather for this time of year.

Where!



Well they would be very brave today, whilst the sun continues to shine the wind would do untold damage.

Lin decided this was the time to turn around...just in case.

Wendy marched on (fully clothed) into the teeth of the wind.
Next Lin drove off to take a quick look at the pretty Studland Bay before driving on to Swanage where she joined Wend for a 'half way' walk along the seafront and a nice cup of coffee and a bun.
Then it was on to the large car park at Durlston Castle, the Globe, caves and lighthouse , all worth visiting. She did however manage by walking a variation of the Path, to completely miss Wend and somehow walked 100 yds behind her for a couple of miles (as a lady coming from the opposite direction cheerfully told her on remembering meeting Phin!)

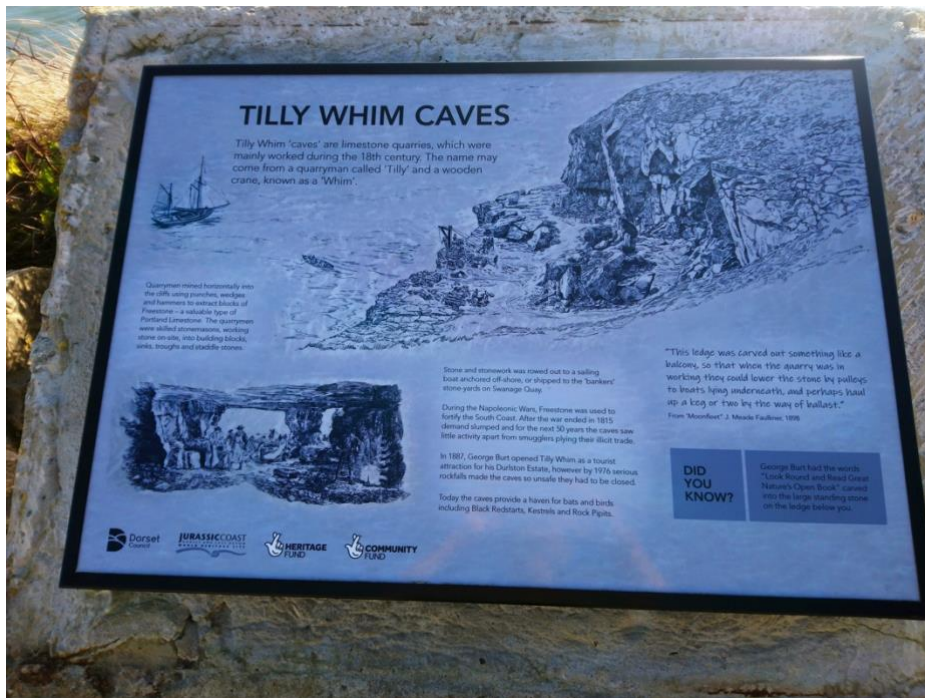


The Globe with the Castle in the background and which had been brought here by sea in segments .

Wend never saw this as she kept to the actual Path and would have had to climb back up again! So she tottered on to one of the many quarries along this part of the coast.



Below :Tilly Whims Caves (private).



Next for Lin, the short drive to Worth Matravers the destination for the day. Despite the good intention of starting and finishing each days walk, Lin found 'finishing' this first days walk thwarted by large brown steers and calves. Having managed half a field down to join the coastal path, she hastily retreated from a large steer trotting straight towards her, dragging the wee mites over two fences and a wall and clambering up a muddy hill back to civilisation, the village pub! Wend meanwhile of course, just marched up the hill towards the village going cheerfully through them all, blissfully unaware of Lins panicky retreat.



The Square and Compass village pub with its super views. Worth Matravers

Parking for the village is a large car park behind the pub, good for walking but no overnight stopping permitted.



So, for our first over night stop we popped along the road for 15 mins to Church Knowle, The New Inn , where an excellent meal was enjoyed. In the main season a charge is made to park overnight, but tonight was free as we were having a meal.



The allowed parking behind the New Inn pub.

Saturday 12 th November. Worth Matravers to Lulworth Cove .14 miles.

An early 8.45am start for the Walkers to Lulworth Cove. Wary of those brown steers lurking in the bushes, Lin managed just a wee part of the start to set Wend and Phin on their way.

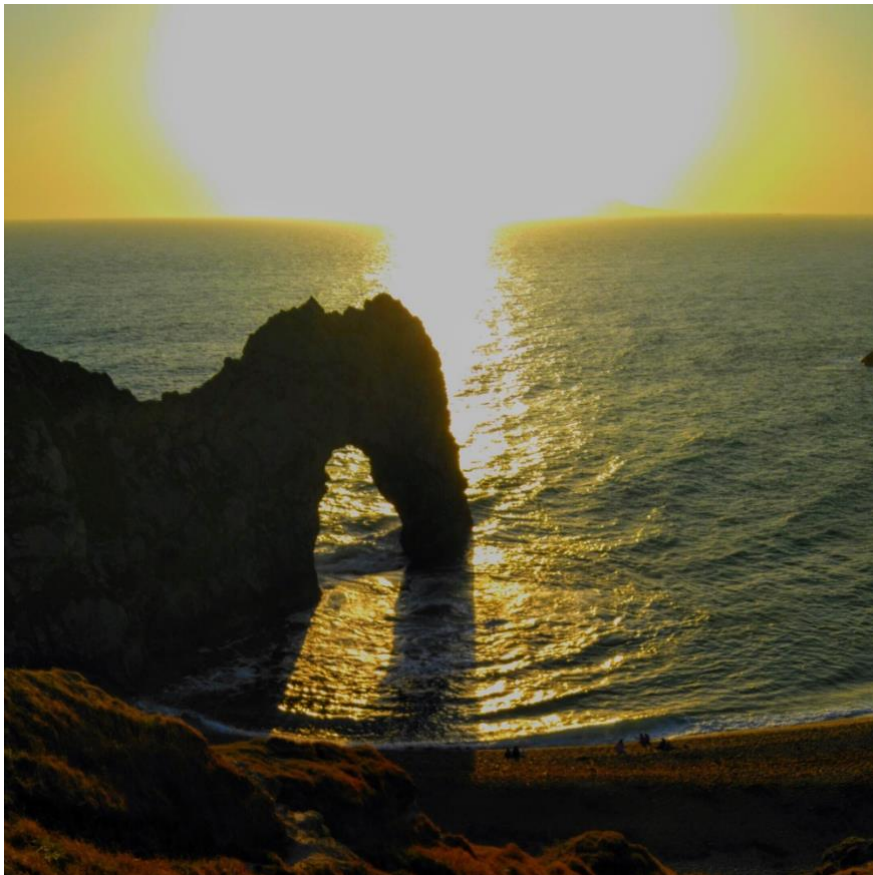
Then the Support drove off to Lulworth on the scenic route via Kimmeridge, but where sadly there seemed to be no public car parking noticeable or available to stop in order to join Wend for an hour or so. The toll to the private Kimmeridge Bay at £10 for this short stop induced her instead to take off across the army ranges down a 20% hill and head straight for Lulworth to the all day car park in order for the meet- up later. A mere snip at £15.

To while away the time, a good stretch of the legs going up to the top of the hill to the Bindon military walks and then down the hundreds of steps to Lulworth Cove nearly finished her and the wee mites off,



but not before they had also had toddled along to Durdle Door while awaiting the late arrival of the Walkers.

Durdle Door , in the last of the afternoon sun.



Wend meanwhile enjoying her coastal path, had reached the memorial for radar pioneer , Bill Penney



while Phin took the opportunity to rest.



After a final pit stop for a crunch bar and a kitkat she then attacked the last bit to Lulworth , short in distance, big in ascent and descent. The descent to Lulworth Cove was somewhat tricky due to collapsing paths but just before dropping down she spotted a large roe deer, to complete a glorious day with breathtaking views.



Once again the meet up for the end of the walk never quite happened as path closures delayed Wend and changed her final few miles (while Lin sat on the beach trying to get a mobile signal to see where she was).
The overnight from here was at Wool, the Seven Stars which has a campervan stop in a field at the back of the pub itself where we tucked ourselves in a corner under the trees.



Sunday, 13 November . Lulworth to Ferry Bridge.

Another beautiful day and back off down the road for the Walkers to resume the walk up over the hill from Lulworth Cove to Durdle Door with another 8:40 am start.



Next for Lin , it was off to the National Trust car park overlooking Ringstead Bay where she and the wee mites went to meet the Walkers coming from Lulworth. Meanwhile the Walkers, minding their own business and just enjoying their walk, watched a huge bird coming towards them which then grabbed a unsuspecting seagull for lunch! A white tailed (sea) eagle no less! It is Englands largest bird of prey with a wingspan of 8 ft. All to quick for what would have been a spectacular photo. A friend had also spotted one a week or so before along the coast here. They probably were those which had been reintroduced to the South on the Isle of Wight in 2019.

Gracie in the empty N.T. hilltop car park which has a most beautiful view



overlooking Ringstead bay where Support and Walkers met up for a short break before it was a pant back up the hill for Lin and on to Weymouth seafront while the Walkers marched stolidly on their way along their coastal path.



Mid November day on Weymouth front!



So next, a lovely walk along the sandy beach to meet up once again for a welcome cuppa before completing the journey to Ferry bridge where the Walkers were once again collected for the day. The overnight stop at The Pulpitt Inn way down at the end of Portland Bill was a good and convenient place to park to complete the next stage around Portland Bill.



Monday 14 th November , Around Portland Bill.

Portland Bill is not the most salubrious of places but to be fair we were not seeing it at its best in the middle of November. The old and current naval bases didn't add to the glamour nor did the shanty town of large beach huts.



Wend adjusting her boots at the Thomas Hardy monument at the end of the point before we all set off to complete the Portland Bill leg.



The long distance footpath, the Thomas Hardy Way, following Hardy's visits around Dorset, runs along the same route as quite a bit of the Coastal Path here. Leaving the Walkers after an hour or so, the Support group tripped their way back around 5 miles of headland and back to the van. They never did quite do the finish with Wend though as she turned up rather early and not too impressed with Portland Bill.



To be honest compared to what had gone before Wend felt this part of Dorset was a bit of a let down and seemed forgotten and rundown . Clearly an Ideal place for a prison and a young offenders institute!
It did however have a wonderful cafe by the war memorial where she had a huge piece of cake.

By now the weather was turning and the glorious sunshine turned to rain.
We did however have one last glorious view down Chesil beach and Abbotsbury beyond....that's for 2023 God willing.