Portland Pathways Research Report

About the Portland Pathways Project:

Portland Pathways was a project run by b-side, which ran from April to October 2018, generously supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.[1] The project was created to explore the histories of the footpaths, and rights of way, across the Isle of Portland, bringing together local residents to research and record this vital heritage. The research from this summary report has formed the basis of the work by commissioned artist, Ania Bas, for b-side festival in September 2018.

Between April and June 2018, a group of residents from Portland and Dorset, came together to look into this significant history, co-ordinated by Bea Moyes. As part of their research, the group visited the Dorset History Centre, The Portland Heritage Trust Study Centre, and the Portland Museum; and carried out a series of research walks of the pathways across the Island. The group also contacted local experts, and recorded residents speaking about their memories and knowledge of the pathways.

[The Portland Pathways Research Group at the Portland Heritage Trust Study Centre, May 2018]

[1] More information here: http://b-side.org.uk/events/portland-pathways

This research report is a summary of the research conducted by the Portland Pathways Research Group, compiled by the research co-ordinator, Bea Moyes. It is an overview of some of the histories which have been uncovered as part of this brief project, with we hope will continue to be explored and added to by future researchers and historians.

[Members of the Portland Pathways Research Group, on their first research walk, May 2018]

This report has been possible through the hard work and research of the members of the Portland Pathways Research Group: Sheila Ryan, Doug Stem, Chloe Taylor, Kit and David Johnson, Andrea Franken-Hughes, Elizabeth Hardy, Susan Frazer, Chris Burston, Andy McLaughlin, Fiona Taylor, Nikki Fryer, Kathy O'borne, Deborah Read, Sharon Philips, Charles Cowling and Julie Matthews.

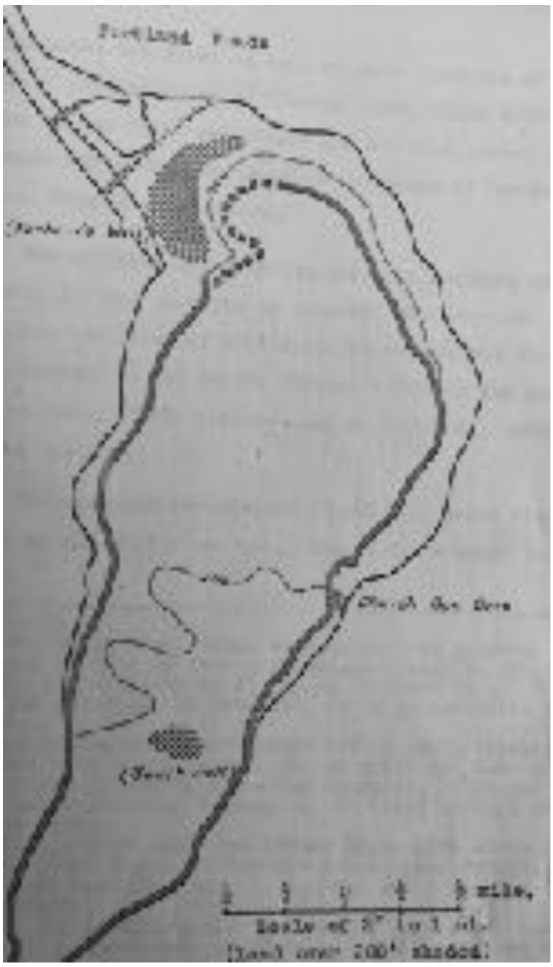
We'd also like to thank also to all the experts and local residents who have so generously shared their knowledge with us as part of the project, with particular thanks to: Stuart Morris, Andy Matthews, Shirley Mitchell (The Portland Heritage Trust Study Centre), David Carter, Dee Reilly and Lucy Watkins (Portland Museum), Sam Johnston (Dorset History Centre), Martin Cade and Beryl Clafton (Portland Bird Observation and Field Centre), Neville Warbridge, Jo and Mark Jackson, Jo Morland, Jess Tilley and Geoff Kirby.

1. Evidence for Portland's Earliest Pathways:

Pathways are, by their very nature, temporary traces of the bodies that pass along them. Routes walked by people or animals across a landscape, which are defined by their continued use over time. Most of these pathways do not leave a mark, particularly on an Island such as Portland largely made of rock. Therefore evidence for Portland's earliest pathways is scant, and often difficult to interpret. Despite this, through understanding Portland's changing landscape and resources, as well as archaeological evidence on the Island, there are indications of where pathways may have been, and what they may have been used for.

Mesolithic Pathways?

Archaeological evidence suggests that Portland has been inhabited at least from the Mesolithic period (around 7500 - 8500 years old), if not before. The settlement at Culverwell, excavated since 1967, suggests that a group of around 20 people may have settled on the site for an extensive period, living close to Culver Well spring near to Portland Bill.[2] Studying Mesolithic rubbish heaps (*middens*), archaeologists have concluded that these communities largely lived on molluscs, crabs and seasonally edible plants. Evidence is also available from thousands of stone picks, believed to have been used for digging up natural vegetation found across the island, as well as small periwinkle and limpet shells with holes artificially pierced in them, which may have been used as beads by these early inhabitants.



These archaeological finds build a picture of the importance of access to the coast for these Mesolithic islanders, and point to the probable use of pathways down to, and around the coast of Portland.[3] As the archaeologist Susann Palmer has asserted, at this time, the sea would have been around 5ft lower than its level today, allowing access to numerous sea caves around the island, which she suggests may have also been occupied by earlier hunter-gatherer groups. Her research also suggests the importance of the Fleet lagoon, which would have been rich in edible flora and fauna for these early settlers. This evidence suggests that paths along the coast of Portland were likely an important route for early Portlanders, with long habitations suggesting a more structured way of life, and perhaps established pathways used over many years, or decades. The situation of the settlement at Culverwell, near the Culver Well spring, also suggests the daily rituals of collecting water would have created established pathways to and from these water sources and their settlement.

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[2] Susann Palmer, *Ancient Portland: Archaeology of the Isle*, p. 26.

[3] H. E. Wrothsley, Map of Early Settlements, *Settlements on the Isle of Portland* (1934)

Roman Pathways

From the mid-1st to the 4th century AD, there is significant evidence of Roman settlements on Portland, with various burial sites and stone sarcophagi dating from that period, found across the Island.[4] It is during this period that many of the settlements which still exist today were originally established, including Fortuneswell, Chiswell and Castletown, and Easton, Weston and Southwell. Portland was useful to the Romans as a source of corn and stone, but also for the protection the Island provided as a natural fortress, the Roman settlement at the Verne indicating the importance of the island as a defensive viewing point. This evidence of Roman settlements on the Isle of Portland suggest established and well maintained pathways, and likely larger roadways, which connected these settlements, which it is possible remained largely unchanged up until the 19th Century, due to the topography of the island.

[Map from 1710 showing early roads and pathways across the Isle of Portland]

[4] Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016 Edition), p. 10

2. Agricultural Life and Portland's Pathways:

[Tithe Map of Portland, 1841]

The Lawnsheds:

The agricultural system of strip field farming on Portland, can be traced back to Saxon times, when Portland was divided into six 'open fields', each enclosed by a wall or fence, which are illustrated in John Taperell's tithe map of 1841 (extract above). These fields were split into broad strips called 'furlongs', the length of the furrow of a plough, and eventually divided into over 2400 individual strip fields, which could each be ploughed by one horse in a day. Each of these acres was known on Portland as a 'lawn', and the earth baulks that separated them were known as 'lynchets', 'linchets', or 'lawnsheds'. The large number of these strips reflects the impact of the system of inheritance on Portland, known as *gavelkind*, which stipulated that the property of the deceased was divided equally between children (women as well as men), which led to individuals owning very small strips of land.[5] Compared to the rest of Dorset, Portland's agricultural land was enclosed much later in the mid-19th Century, with many residents such as Jonathan Lano in the 1830s, leading petitions against partial enclosure of land by some tenants.

The common land on Portland was managed by the Court Leet, originally a Saxon authority, which continues to exist to this day. As a Royal Manor, the officials of the Court Leet on Portland are stewards of the Monarch, and it was the job of the Reeve to collect a quit rent of 3d per acre on behalf of the King or Queen. The Reeve (from the Anglo-Saxon *gerefa*, or steward) was the tenant paying the highest quit rent. Women's status on Portland is demonstrated by the fact that Margaret Heath, Margery Comben and Margery Spencer were consecutive Reeves from 1845 to 1847.[6] The ownership of land was recorded on a Reeve Staff, a wooden pole marked with notches for each acre owned. Different areas of the island were depicted with different signs. For example, Southwell was shown by a hollow circle. These staffs also reflect the physical walk the Reeve's would have made around their area, to collect the quit rent from these tenants.

[Reeve Staffs at the Portland Museum, photograph with thanks to Kathy Oborne]

The Court Leet also monitored the use if the land on Portland, making sure that individuals stuck to the rules, and challenging any attempts to enclose land or harvest at

[5] Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016 Edition), p.12.

[6] Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016 Edition), p. 62.

the wrong time. An 1828 Court Report from Leet jury member John Way suggests just how active this policing could be:

> *"On the 30th the jury went on the hill and under the hill to see what encroachments there were on the parish land and to throw down houses and walls when people would not pay when they were changed…. Began to throw down William Otters on Yeats but he paid".*[7]

The lawns were used to grow a range of carefully controlled crops, with an example of one freeholder who was fined for growing clover. Typical crops included wheat, potatoes, barley, oats and peas. The 19th century also saw the revival of arrowroot production, from wild plant arum (commonly known as "Lords and Ladies") in the 16th century, Portland arrowroot had been used to starch the ruffs of Elizabeth 1s, and her "wardrobe was governed by how much could be sent to the palace".[8]

This intricate system of lawnsheds led to an equally complex network of pathways and tracks, which can be seen on some of the tithe maps of the early 19th century, allowing individuals to access their land and to cross to the common land. This system involved generations of unofficial agreements between neighbours and relatives, for access to each others land. Sales of each lawn were managed, not through legal administrators, but through the Church, in a ceremony known as 'Church Gift'. As a result of Portland's unique legal system, this intricate system of pathways is intimately connected to the ancient agricultural systems on Portland. This important relationship between the pathways and Portland's agricultural system is also reflected in the names of many pathways that exist today, including Sweet Hill, Reap Lane, Barleycrates, Barley Croft Lane, Green Way, and Bumbles Lane.[9]

So who would have walked these pathways? Without a horse or a cart, walking would have been the only way for Islanders to travel to work their fields, so these pathways between the lawnsheds would have been very significant places of community and work. In his book 'An Illustrated History of Portland', Stuart Morris suggests that much of the agricultural labour on the island was historically done by women, as men were often able to find more lucrative work in the quarries.[10] As Elizabeth Otter records of these women, they "cut wheat, barley and oats with sickles and scythes, tied in sheaves and put it up in shocks to dry". One can imagine women using the turf baulks to walk back and

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7 J.H. Bettey, *The Island and Royal Manor of Portland* (1940), p. 37.

8 Ray Kencie, *Portland: A topographical and historical gazette* (1995).

9 J.H. Bettey, *The Island and Royal Manor of Portland* (1940), p. 36.

10 Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016), p. 62.

forth to work on these pathways, perhaps gathering to eat together at the edges of the lawnshed strips. Domestic chores were also, perhaps unsurprisingly, carried out by women, and Elizabeth Otter recalls that, "On wash day mother put washing on dry stone walls (along the paths) to dry".[11] So it's likely that that many of these pathways would have played a significant role in women's lives, not only as the access to their land, but also for domestic functions, and socially as a space for women to walk together.

[Page Above, Women gleaning near the Lower Lighthouse, from Stuart Morris, Portland: An Illustrated History, p. 62]

The Medieval Windmills

The ruins of two medieval Windmills still stand today to the south of Easton, on what was originally known as 'Haylands' or 'Droopfield'. First mentioned in The Rentals and Survey of Portland (1608), as having been owned by 'Dorothie Kames of Wakeham', it's likely that mills were in use at this site long before this, due to the increase in demand for corn in the mid-16th Century. Indeed, it is likely that before these windmills, there were a number of watermills across the island, with Hutchins recording a watermill powered by spring water on the site in 1710.[12] Today the pathways to the west of the windmills are still known as 'Watery Lane', because of the natural springs that run down the hill there. Writing in the 1970s, Bob Wollage described:

> *"walking across the fields at Weston, we pass the old windmills out on Haylands and by the side of the northern mill, the water bubbles continuously summer and winter, and runs along Watery Lane, and loses itself in the quarries at Coombefield. I have no doubt that in the long, dim past, that was one of the reasons why mills were built there".*[13]

In the 16th Century, these mills would have been one of the tallest structures on the Isle, and when their sails were moving they would have been visible from the sea. Indeed, they appear on Captain Granville Collins 'Coasting Pilot' map of 1693. The windmills would also have served as landmarks for Portlanders themselves, walking along the pathways to access the lawnsheds. In her publication 'A Portland Vase', Sarah Pearce describes her memories of walking out to the windmills, saying, "I love this way better than any other". At one point in her diaries, she describes meeting a local Portlander "resting on the stone

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11 Elizabeth Otter, *The Diary of a Southwell Maid* (1930).

12 Stuart Morris, *Portland's Ancient Windmills*, in Portland Field Research Group Newsletter, No. 12, March 1974, p. 2.

13 Portland Field Research Group, *Newsletter No.4,* February 1970, p.3.

railway bridge at the end of Park Road", and his memories of the lawnsheds around the windmills:

> *"[He said] 'I expect I came here before I could walk; but I remember very clearly when I was a little boy not more than two-and-a-half, coming here to this spot where were are now sit. We had a pony, a little Welsh pony called Tom […] Tom lived in the sweet clover field. Grammer's lawn was out lawn the fourth from the blocked up doorway of the second mill […] How could I tell which was our lawn when little Tom was not grazing there? Oh how I used to puzzle, but when I grew up I discovered my own way. First, I would walk right up to the mill door facing the west, then back to the sharp irregular pile of stones, I would stand with my eye in a line with a certain house in Gipsy Lane, then in childish pride, I would walk without mistake to the fourth lawn on my left. Simple of course, but much more exciting than owning a lawn with a landmark".*[14]

This unnamed man's description of getting lost on the pathways between the lawnsheds reveals the complexity of navigating the lawnsheds on foot, even for native Portlanders. The windmills themselves ceased to operate around the 1890s, due to cheap mass produced flour and bread being readily available via the Island's modern rail and road links to Weymouth. However the lawnsheds around them continued to be harvested up until 1968, ploughing their furrows right up to the walls of the mills.[15]

[Image of the last harvest on Hayfields in 1968, from *Portland: An Illustrated History* by Stuart Morris, p. 6]

A local Portlander, Neville Warbridge spoke to us for the project about his memories of the windmills, remembering how he used to pass the windmills everyday on the footpath from his home in Weston, to go to school in Easton. He recalled how they would play in the fields around the mills. He recalled that he would climb up one of the windmills with friends, and put up a rope so they could swing. Neville also remembered that at D-Day, aged five or six:

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[14] Sarah Pearce, *A Portland Vase* (1949), pp. 46

[15] Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016 Edition), p. 22.

> *"I got sent to Easton to get a loaf of bread. And my father always said, 'if you hear planes coming, lay flat on the ground'. All these planes started coming, I lay there flat. I must have been there ages, […] then father came looking for me. That was [at] the second windmill, I was on the footpath".*[16]

Neville also remembered that, as a young man in the 1950s, the 'Borstal Boys' were given a patch of land by the edge of the pathway, which went east to west by the south windmill, growing "mangles, cabbages, potatoes, all sorts" to eat. As he recalls, "they had to grow their own food for the prison. But then, one of the local 'Digbys', as they were called, objected. Said they were interfering with private enterprise", and the allotments were stopped.[17]

As quarrying has increased in this area in the later 20th century, the land around the windmills has been fundamentally altered, changing the network of pathways which crossed Haylands, connecting Wakeham, Easton and Weston. Despite being listed in September 1978, the mills themselves have increasingly fallen into disrepair, and the timber components of the windshaft and sailstock have been placed in the collections of the Portland Museum. In the late 1980s, a local stone company, ARC Ltd, stated their intention to demolish the southern windmill to get the stone beneath it. This caused a public outcry, which in turn forced the company to withdraw the plans. Instead they quarried close to the mill, and money was given by the company for renovations in 1991. Later in 2000, there was an attempt to preserve them, but in 2014 further quarrying in they area began in close proximity to the mills, preventing access to many of the footpaths across that land. At the same time, 40 properties were built close-by at Easton's Park Road, by Betterment Properties Ltd (with the new estate named 'The Windmills'), and a new Tesco supermarket was built. Recent attempts have been made to put the windmills in trust, with the quarrying company Stone Firms, who now own the South Mill, expressing interest in placing the mill in a trust, and providing £10,000 towards restoration.[18]

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16 Neville Warbridge, Interview (May, 2018)

17 Neville Warbridge, Interview (May, 2018)

18 The *Dorset Echo*, (2015)

Sheep farming and the pathways:

Evidence of sheep farming on Portland goes back to Roman Times, with the Doomsday book recording around 900 sheep being kept on the Island in 1299. When he visited Portland between 1535 and 1543, John Leyland remarked on the importance of sheep farming on the Island, noting that the sheep were: 'horned, remarkably small and rather short in the carcass - produces fine flavoured mutton". At the peak of sheep farming on the Island, around 1840, there were approximately 4000 sheep being reared.[19]

This importance of sheep farming, and the roaming of sheep across Portland, is evident from local place names such as Sheepcroft, Shepherds Croft, Mutton Cove, Wool lane, and Wool Meadow.[20] The pathway known as 'Shepherd's Dinner', has a well known mythology associated with it. The story goes that a shepherd was minding sheep "under Weare" (at the East Weares), waiting for a boy to tell him his dinner was left on "Target Lawn", but the boy forgot to shout that he'd left his food there. A Frenchman who had got ashore to spy was hiding in tall corn on the next lawn, and so saw the boy put the food down, the hungry Frenchman couldn't resist, so crept out and stole the food. Returning to his lawn to find his lunch gone, the shepherd found the Frenchman, tied his arms and legs together and carried him on his shoulders, handing the man over to the government.[21]

Before the 20th Century, small holdings for rearing sheep would have been found across the island. Flocks were shepherded to common grazing lands on a daily basis, with large common lands for grazing at The Verne and The Sturt (near Portland Bill). The area around Southwell was particularly important area for sheep rearing, with grazing around Reap Lane and Sweet Hill. Issues of wandering from grazing on the common lands was a constant problem, which led to fines for sheep farmers from the Portland Court Leet. Many of these common grazing meadows were fitted with 'yeat' stones (also known as 'yate' or 'yite' stones), fitted with a bar to prevent sheep from escaping. Bob Wollage described this gradual enclosure of the island:

> *"When parts of the island became walled in slotted posts were erected with a wooden bar across the top to keep the cattle in or out. They were known by Portlanders as Yeat Stones"*

Many of these Yeat stones can still be found today, marking the edges of Portland's pathways, often with newer stones from the quarries. In 1845 the Court Leet ordered the erection of gates at common fields "instead of bars as previously", at "Sweet Hill, Lane End, Reep Lane, Barley Croft Lane, Green Way, Bumbles Lane, Cole Lane and Down

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[19] https://www.portlandsheep.com/history

[20] John Clark, *The Southwell Trail to Portland Bill (1985)*, p. 2.

[21] http://www.dorsetlife.co.uk/2012/04/the-dorset-walk-portland-quarries-and-coasts/

End", which marked the more common erection of stone walls, fences and gates.[22] These sites would have been fields for communal grazing in the mid-19th century, but as these changes indicate, the system of open common lands was profoundly changing in the mid-19th century, particularly due to the increase in quarrying at that time. Photographs from the later 19th century reveal the extent of these walls, and the way in which previously informal tracks were formalised into walled lanes, as the land either side was enclosed.

[Photo from Portland Museum collection]

The particular importance of The Sturt for sheep grazing is described by a local woman, Elizabeth Otter in her book 'A Southwell Maid's Diary', in which she describes how The Sturt was used by Shepherds and Fishermen in the late 19th century:

> *"In the evenings he [the Shepherd] would drive the sheep to the folds. They would have a lot of hurdles and put them around a field of mangels or turnips like a fence. Then dogs would drive the sheep into the folds and Shepherd would put up the last hurdle and so shut them in for the night. Sometimes he would drive them down to the Common or to the Weirs - wherever there was the most grass for them. There were several flocks of sheep besides Ward's on the Island."*[23]

[22] J.H. Bettey, *The Island and Royal Manor of Portland* (1940), p. 36.

[23] Elizabeth W. Otter, *A Southwell Maid's Dairy* (1930), p. 40.

[Photograph from Portland Heritage Trust Study Centre, sheep being herded down into Easton]

Elizabeth Otter's diaries give a glimpse of the everyday experience of being a sheep farmer in the 19th Century, and the movement of flocks across the Island, along familiar pathways. Although there is very little written evidence of exactly where these flocks were driven, drovers' roads are usually at least 40ft (12m) wide, to accommodate the movement of a flock of sheep. As shown by the photograph above, it is likely that many of the main roads now used by vehicles on Portland, particularly Easton Lane, Wakeham, Reforne, Southwell Road, Portland Bill Road may have originally been used as drover's roads, and as pathways for transporting sheep. Every year, at the end of the long winter, flocks of sheep would also have been taken down to the 'Mere', to be washed before shearing. The exact path taken down to Castletown for these annual dippings is unknown, but as many sheep grazed on the Great Common, around the Verne, it is likely they were driven down the steep slopes around Fortuneswell, possibly along roads, or on smaller pathways large enough to accommodate them.

[Sheep being dipped at the 'Mere' by Castletown]

As well as the everyday herding of sheep to common land and to water sources in Easton, Weston and Southwell, annual traditions in the sheep farming calendar marked important movements of sheep around the Island.[24] As early as the 13th Century there are records of an annual Fair held up in 'Fairfield' in Fortuneswell, on November 5th, where sheep and cattle were sold. Up until the mid-19th Century there was also the popular Cow Common Day, held on May 14th. An annual holiday when all the Island's cattle were turned out onto *Geert* Common (Verne Hill), with "holiday folks […] there to witness the rural sports so much enjoyed by the hardy sons and daughters of this far-famed island", including "club walking, dancing on the green, skittles, quoits and other means of mirth".[25]

Recreation:

Even when used for agriculture, the lawnsheds were also a site of recreation for adults and children. In Elizabeth Otter's diaries, she recounts the story of an unknown man who had spent his life walking the pathways around the medieval windmills. He describes that for him:

> *"Out by the Windmills became my real playground. School and work over, I, with other boys would hurry, staying as long as we dared at play around those grey towers. Older still, and games of Cricket; yet older, and walk with the girls. 'When I am really in love', I used to tell myself, for at eighteen I had great ideas, 'I'll bring my sweetheart here; whoever she is, she will have to love this'".*[26]

It was not only humans who used the lawnsheds as a playground. According to Jeremy Harte, "Portland used to be thick with a kind of fairies called pexies, who slipped out at night to dance among the fields in the barren landscape […] on moonlit nights the pexies could be seen as they raced along these, looking for places where they might hold their revels".[27] Elizabeth Otter also confirms that "Pixeys lived down Neddy Field". These folk tales are common in the myths and legends of Portland, and suggest a Romantic vision of the lawnsheds, not only as places of labour and supplies of food, but spaces of fantasy and romance.

As suggested in the description of Cow Common day in May, from 1844, club walking was an ancient ceremony in Dorset, linked to nature and female fertility, in which women communally walked along a road, often watched by men. In Thomas Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles, written about a fictionalised Dorset, he describes a club walk in which "the banded ones (women) were all dressed in white gowns […] every woman and girl carried a peeled willow wand, and in her left a bunch of white flowers". These ceremonies may

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[24] Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016 Edition), p. 51.

[25] Ibid, p. 75.

[26] Elizabeth W. Otter, *A Southwell Maid's Dairy* (1930)

[27] Jeremy Harte, *Discover Dorset:Legends* (1998)

have had as significant place in Portland life and culture, marking the seasons and rites of passage for Portlanders through ritual walks and processions.

In 'A Portland Vase', Sarah Pearce also describes the popular games of kite flying on Portland, where "boys and girls would go forth in small gangs to find a suitable taking-off ground and where skill was necessary […] Down over common? West Weirs? East Weirs? West Cliff? East Cliff or from the piled up top of a nearby rubble heap?".[28] These games describe the landscapes of Portland as a playground, traversed in groups on foot, travelling between the lawnsheds and out to the cliffs, most probably by a network of well travelled pathways. Her descriptions also give a glimpse of these pathways as an important part of a Portland childhood, being both routes of daily life and work, as well as being themselves places of play.

[Engraving from 1825, of a well dressed couple walking the pathway to Rufus Castle, on the East Weares]

Recreational walking also comes up again and again in testimonies of life on Portland, as an important leisure activity. Sarah Pearce mentions the 'Whitsun Club Walking Day' for quarry men, which was organised by 'The Quarry Club', which had been founded in 1768. Methodist processions through the towns were also important annual rituals, along with the ceremony of 'Beating the Bounds', held every seven years on Ascension Day, which ritually walked the boundaries of each parish.[29] Written testimonies from visitors to Portland from the 18th and 19th centuries also suggest the increased interest in Portland as a beautiful place for middle and upper-classes visitors to walk. Charles Dickens visited Portland in 1858, and described the romantic landscape of the island for other future visitors: "if you would view Portland aright, visit it by the pale moonlight a day or two after a heavy gale, when the sea is still running with all its force upon the Chesil Bank. Go

[28] Sarah Pearce, *A Portland Vase* (1949), pp. 46

[29] Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016 Edition), p.14

up the hill-top, and you will trace a wizard lizard curve in all its beauty".[30] In the 19th century the splendour of Portland's walks began to attract new visitors to Portland, coming over from the busy beach resort of Weymouth as transport to the mainland became more accessible, as shown by the numbers of postcards and etchings of famous landmarks and sites on the Island, which visitors would have walked around.

[A procession in Fortuneswell, Postcard with thanks to Julie Matthews]

For Portlanders themselves, a particularly important past time was the seasonal foraging for blackberries, apples, sloes and flowers, from particular bushes and trees along the pathways. In her publication 'A Portland Vase', Sarah Pearce recalls the significance of blackberrying in her childhood at the turn of the 20th century:

> *"This best known and most popular autumn fruit could and can be found to this day in plenty. Juicy, deliciously flavoured and of average size they were to be gathered by all who seek. Up Easton Lanes, Fancy Beach, Under Grove, Down over common, the Grovefields, Sweet Hill, the fields at Southwell and Weston, where the lawns are divided by thick bramble hedges […] My favourite hunting ground was the East Weirs and it was there with friends like-minded I would spend the whole day picnicing and gathering blackberries […] We usually found our baskets more than half full by the time we reached Durdle [pier] […] On our homeward way would be the outer path. Coming along the more frequented path we would only add to our stock by picking in twos and threes".*[31]

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[30] Charles Dickens, *Household Words*, (April 17th, 1858), p. 424.

[31] Sarah Pearce, *A Portland Vase* (1949), pp. 36-37.

The picking of plants like valerian (known on the island as 'Kiss me quick'), and arum (known as 'Lords and Ladies'), were also used as common herbal medicines by Portlanders for generations. When we spoke to Neville Warbridge, he told us his grandmother had been an expert in the creation of herbal poultices from valerian and arrow root, which she would sell:

> *"For the First world War, my grandmother used to make this ointment, and it was made out of 'kiss me quick'. I think it was the roots. I know she used to boil it up, and then she used to use what they call 'the flit of the pig', which was fat, and she'd mix this liquid in with the fat, and it stopped people from having gangrene. She used to do that in little pots out of cardboard, all crinkled. Then the Home Office used to come and collect it from her".*[32]

Speaking to local Portlanders, the importance of plants like the Bee Orchids, came up again and again, in their connection to the island, but also in their memories of the pathways and as landmarks on their travels along them. As Neville Warbridge said:

> *"The trouble is, you see, when they take the footpaths, it's not just them they take. There's things like Bee Orchids, Spider Orchids, and up there [by the Windmills] was the only place where the wild anemone grew".*[33]

The unique and often rare ecologies of the island, were and continue to be very much interconnected with the pathways, where local residents could encounter these plants, with many flora growing up alongside the well trodden paths, working in symbiosis with human residents.

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[32] Neville Warbridge, Interview, (May, 2018)

[33] Ibid.

3. The impact of the Quarrying Industry on Portland's Pathways:

[Map of Portland, 1888]

Quarrying:

Portland has a long history of quarrying for stone, with evidence going back to the Roman occupation of the Island between the 1st and 4th centuries, when Portland Stone was used for everything from building materials to carved sarcophagi. In the early 17th Century, the industry of quarrying became increasingly significant due to the interests of Inigo Jones, the Royal Surveyor, who used Portland Stone to rebuild the Banqueting House at Whitehall, London, in 1619. Following the Great Fire in 1666, his successor Christopher Wren also looked to Portland Stone for the rebuilding of the City of London in stone. By December 1675 special arrangements had been made for the Isle of Portland to supply vast quantities of stone needed for the scale of rebuilding, with Charles II giving permission to raise stone not only from the Crown's quarries, but also from the common lands, causing significant anger to Portlanders.[34]

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the scale of quarrying on Portland has transformed the natural landscape of Tophill, with landmarks such as Nicodemus Knob near the East Weares, illustrating just how much stone has been excavated through this industry. Initially quarries were positioned near to the clifftops on the East and West Weares, for ease of access to load the stone onto cargo barges below, and transported by sea. Early stone was quarried directly from the East Cliffs, and taken out by Durdle Pier. However, in 1824, virgin fields near Easton were opened up, marking the beginning of inland quarrying, that continues to this day.

The increase in quarrying, and it's move inland, had a significant impact on the pathways and rights of way which had previously existed on Portland. The expansion of the quarrying transformed the agricultural system on the Island, as land became more profitable to quarry than to farm. As well as pathways between the lawnsheds being lost, the expansion of quarrying also fundamentally altered patterns and places of work, with new routes created for workers to access the quarries for work. More recently, it is in these disused quarries that new pathways have been created, in the gouges left by quarrying, as this land has gradually been reclaimed by Portlanders and by nature.

A picture of these new pathways on the East Weares in the mid-19th century, is glimpsed in Charles Dicken's writings from his visit in 1858. He recalls landing by steamer:

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[34] Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016 Edition), p.29 and p.34.

> *"about midway between the Breakwater and the shingly isthmus. Turning left from the end of the small pier, a quarter of a mile of road skirting the beach, and flanked on the right by the slope of underlying clay which forms the base of Portland, we come to the entrance of the Works […] We walk forward at once toward the huge staging. The pathway is lined with blocks of stone, iron rails and timbers; here and there lies a broken pile, with the shoe and Mitchell's screw attached. On our right is the engineer's office, at one end of which lies a magnificent specimen of fossil tree, abound in the dirt bed stratum […] Up the hill to the right run the inclines; the heavy four wagon trains rattle down them and flit by us […] Here, we pass a gang of men preparing timber for the shores and brackets that support the road pieces; there, we see a man running along a narrow footway of the workmen - a single plank laid on each side of the rails - as much as ease as if a false stop would not tumble him thirty feet down into the sea, or worse, upon the rugged rubbly heap".*[35]

This description recalls Dicken's experience of what was possibly Waycroft, Withies Croft, and King Barrow quarries at this time, detailing the pathways used by the workmen to access these quarries, and to move the quarried stone out on rail tracks, down to the piers. Unlike the foot-laid tracks of the agricultural pathways, Dicken's description suggests these pathways were heavily engineered, constructed with blocks of stone, iron rails and timbers, for industrial use. It also highlights how busy these quarries would have been, and the perilous pathways of workmen using a 'single plank on each side of the rails' to walk along, as they followed the tracks.

A good case study to consider the rapid impact which quarrying had on the landscape in the 19th century, is Tout Quarry, just above the West Weares. From the old English word meaning 'look out', tithe maps from the early 1840s show the extensive systems of lawnsheds still apparent at Tout. However, in the mid-19th century, stone was rapidly being extracted at Tout, and by the 1870s it was one of the island's most commercial quarries, along with it's neighbours, Inmosthay, West Cliff North, and the East Cliffs.[36] This was primarily due to its location, with easy access to the cliffs over the West Weares, but also because of the influence of the quarry agent at Tout, Jonathan Comben Lano, who innovated new techniques in tramways, bridges and tunnels to extract the stone, enabling the quarry to expand and to extract large amounts of good quality stone at an accelerated rate. The famous 'Lano Arch' is still visible in Tout Quarry today, and a testament to his engineering acumen.

Despite its rapid expansion in the mid-19th century, Tout Quarry began to fall into disuse at the end of the 19th century, and for many decades was a derelict site, although often used, in the early part of the 20th century, as a film location. The quarry was last worked in 1982, when thirty thousand tonnes of rocks were excavated for sea defences at West Bay.

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[35] Charles Dickens, *Household Words*, (April 17th, 1858), pp.426-427.

[36] Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016 Edition), p.157.

In 1983, with the formation of The Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trust, the quarry was established as a Sculpture Park, where artists such as Sir Anthony Gormley could carve work into the rock faces. Over the years these sculptures and carvings have multiplied as visiting artists make their marks on the stone. These sculptures have become a significant site for visitors, with a network of pathways and stone bridges allowing free public access throughout the quarry today. In 2004 it became an official nature reserve, after work from the Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trust, and The Dorset Wildlife Trust, and is known today as the Tout Quarry Sculpture Park and Nature Reserve.



[The Portland Pathways Research Group research walk, led by Andrea Franken-Hughes, in Tout Quarry (2018)]

Roads and Railways:

As the quarries moved inland in the mid-19th century, the quality of Portland's roads became increasingly problematic. In his survey of 1800, Frances Web described the roads being "very bad in general owing to heavy carriage and the want of sufficient attention in repairing them".[37] Writing in 1804, Rev.J.Skinner writes of the appalling treatment of horses used to transport the stone from the quarries, and down the hill to the port, and suggests that "all this labour might easily be obviated, by the simple construction of a rail road".[38] As a result, in 1826 the Merchants Railway was opened for the purpose of carrying stone from Priory Corner, across to the Verne, and down to the piers at

[37] J.H. Bettey, The Island and Royal Manor of Portland (1940), p. 54.

[38] Ibid, p. 54.

Castletown (and later by rail to Weymouth, with the opening of the Weymouth & Portland Railway in 1865).

[Photographs of the Merchant's and Easton Railway, with many thanks to Stuart Morris]

The prominence of the quarrying industry on Portland resulted in the construction of a railway track being laid over the East Weares, with construction beginning in 1862.[39] The Jay & Co. company, who began the works, described the new line as "amid the mounds and hillocks and overturned rocks of East Weares, where a beautiful new road now leads through the wild scenery of blackberries, adders, rugged paths and wild flowers. It is hoped that this pleasure walk will never be used for more warlike purposes".[40] This description indicates how the company intended to cater for the growing numbers of visitors coming over from Weymouth to stay in Easton. It also suggests the continued importance of the pathways across the East Weares, where Portlanders and now visitors could walk, which were being used as a selling point for visiting Portland.

The passenger railway to Easton continued to be used up until its closure in 1952. Goods traffic by rail continued until 1965, when the tracks were dismantled and the stations demolished to make way for new quarry and building developments, while the rail beds themselves remained, becoming pathways which are used today. Many of the pathways on the East Weares today are closely related, not only to the railway tracks, but also to the original routes used to ship stone from Durdle and Folly Piers. Paths cut into the stone, as a result of the original paths for carrying stone, now used as pathways for walking. This transformation can be seen in Carey's 1864 Ordnance Survey map, with the pattern of footpaths between Church Ope Cove and Durdle Pier virtually identical to that on the current OS map, with the paths shown radiating from Durdle Pier in Webb's map of 1800 having fallen out of use. Similar rubble tracks along the West Cliffs have also become a popular pathway along the cliffs to Blacknor, marked by two immense stone block arches,

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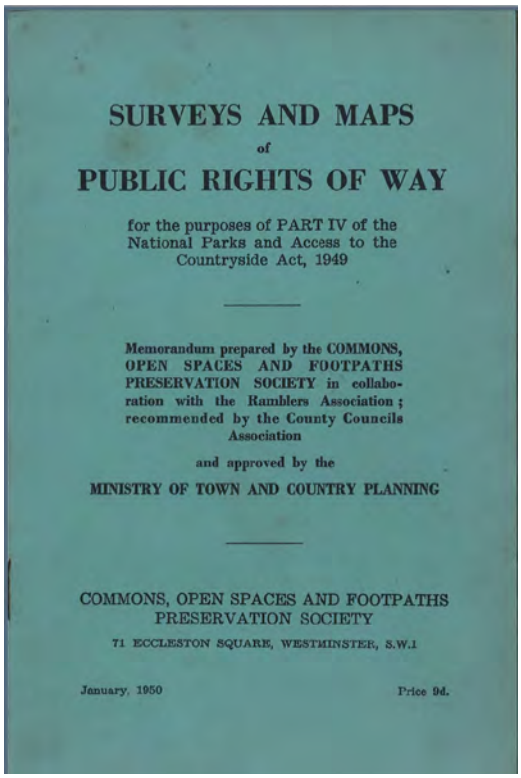
[39] Gill Hackman, *Stone to Build London* (2014).

[40] Stuart Morris, *Portland: An Illustrated History* (2016 Edition), p.82.

where the overburden from Tout quarry would have been tipped over onto the West Weares.

Like the railway to Easton, the Merchant's Railway was also converted into a public footpath, after it ceased to be used in 1939.[41] Today, the path from Priory Corner, around the Verne at Tillycombe, and down the Merchant's incline, is also a popular pathway walked as part of the South West Coastal Path. Evidence of its origins as a railway track are apparent everywhere, from the width of the pathway itself, to stones marked with the indentations of tracks and bolts on the route. Although the original railway network, and indeed the industry of quarrying that created them, re-carved the landscape of Portland, it is important that in the post-industrial landscape, many of these man-made routes are now used as public footpaths, and given back to Portlanders to reclaim a connection with what was originally common land.

4. Portland's Rights of Way since 1949:


SURVEYS AND MAPS
of
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY
for the purposes of PART IV of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949
Memorandum prepared by the COMMONS, OPEN SPACES AND FOOTPATHS PRESERVATION SOCIETY in collaboration with the Ramblers Association; recommended by the County Councils Association
and approved by the
MINISTRY OF TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING
COMMONS, OPEN SPACES AND FOOTPATHS PRESERVATION SOCIETY
71 ECCLESTON SQUARE, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1
January, 1950 Price 9d.

Since the late-19th century, the 'Ramblers' were a significant political organisation, petitioning for legal rights to access rights of way across the UK. In the 1930s, the National Council of Ramblers' Federations, along with other national groups, were part of campaigns around access for walkers, with mass trespasses on private land which brought the issue to national attention. This resulted in the 1932, 'Right of Way Act', which established legal definitions for highways, including footpaths and bridleways.

Although the 1932 Act was very significant in the history of rights of way, after the Second World War there was also considerable pressure on the Government to reconsider the legal definitions of land access, and maintenance of public land, much of which had been taken under military or national agricultural use during wartime. In 1949 the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act transformed the access and conservation of the countryside in the United Kingdom. The Act of Parliament created a National Parks Commission, (now known as Natural England), and set in motion the framework of the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Beauty in England and Wales. With an update to the legal definitions of rights of way, the Act also devolved responsibility to local councils for creating, recording, improving and maintaining public footpaths and rights of way, securing access to open

[41] J.H. Bettey, The Island and Royal Manor of Portland (1940), p. 54.

country. Each council was responsible for creating a what was called a 'Definitive Map' of the public footpaths in their district, and for keeping it updated.

In Dorset, the County Council's Planning Committee first met on April 17th 1950 to begin mapping the rights of way across the county, and established the National Parks Sub-Committee in 1952. Despite this early start in response to the 1949 National Parks and Access Act, it was many years before the Committee would be able to publish the first Definitive Maps of the county's public footpaths. A first draft for a Definitive Map for West Dorset was approved for deposit in June 1953, with draft maps for other areas of Dorset published in 1955 and 1956, and the final Definitive Map for North Dorset, completed as late as March 1960. The Provisional Maps were published in 1963/1964, and eventually a Definitive Map for each area of Dorset (West, South, South East, Pool, East, and North), between June 1966 and June 1967.[42]

Mapped as part of the South Dorset district, the Isle of Portland has always had a unique history and land use. With it's significant role in the Second World War, Portland had become a crucial site for military use during the war, and continued to be an active Navy base throughout much of the 20th century. During the 1960s and 70s, the island underwent considerable changes, as the industrial outputs of Portland's quarrying industries went into decline, and with the cessation of the passenger railways to Easton in 1952, and the final train in April 1965, following Dr Beeching's Report on freight transport in 1963. These changes marked significant shifts in land use on Portland, particularly due to the increases in the population of the Island, and due to commercial and military developments which began to encroach on still existing open fields and public land. As Susann Palmer noted in 1974, the Island faced (and still continues to face today), a "conflict between the desire and need for economic expansion […] and the deep, centuries old inborn desire of all of us to live in an environment which offers visual beauty and a feeling of culture", and it was into this conflict that the Island's public pathways would play significant role.[43]

These shifts in the land use on Portland had crucial consequences for the rights of way on the island, and a renewed recognition of the unique land history of the Island. In the summer of 1967/68, a group of residents "keen on Portland's history and present environment got together and formed the Portland Field Research Group'. The group members included archaeologist Susann Palmer (President), historian Stuart Morris (Secretary), J.S. Cooper, G. Hicks and W.Putnam, Bob Cooper and his son Richard, M. Poston, C. Evans, A Coman, P. Regement and Skylark Durston, as well as many others. In their first newsletter, in 1968, they stated the aims of the Group as acting:

'To Preserve and Enhance the best of Portland's Character.
To Research and Record the right History and Pre-History of the Island.

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[42] Dorset County Council, *'Definitive Map, Important Dates'*.

[43] Susann Palmer, *Personal Note From Your President*, in Portland Field Research Group, Newsletter No.12, (March, 1974)

To help foster good Planning and Conservation to safeguard our unique environment".[44]

Beginning with their work on the Mesolithic sites near Portland Bill, in 1969 the group published a list of 'listed' buildings on the Island, and became increasingly involved in protecting historic sites and landmarks on Portland, from developers. Their first big campaign came in 1970, when a developer looked to build a holiday camp near Perryfield, with the group joining local residents to oppose the plans, and getting together a petition of 800 signatures. A year later, the group also campaigned against a proposal to build holiday houses on the grounds of Pennsylvannia Castle, which would have encroached on the ancient church, and trees felled over a public footpath.

These early campaigns set the stage for the crucial work of the Portland Field Research Group in the 1970s to the 1990s, to protect the public footpaths on Portland. In 1972, members of the group spent months collecting evidence of the footpaths, which were sent to the County Council, illustrating over 6 miles of pathways which were not officially listed as public rights of way on the Definitive Map. As Susann Palmer noted in the Group's newsletter in February 1973:

> *"Much of our time is at present taken up by the endless fight for the preservation of the character, beauties and natural amenities of the Island […] If the 'Old Portland' were to disappear, what would remain for us and future generations to study? […] Portland has changed a lot during recent years, but there is still enough left to warrant great interest - we must keep it so. Being a small island, it is particularly vulnerable and any 'dents' on the character of the place are so much more noticeable".*[45]

The work of the group in the early 1970s, also sought to prepare for an inquiry to update the Dorset Definitive Map in 1974, and to resurvey the pathways on Portland. This update came at the same time as the merger of the Weymouth and Portland Councils (in April 1974), which the group feared would increase "pressure in the next few years to develop Portland's fields and remaining open spaces".[46] In order to evidence the additional footpaths not already mapped on the Definitive Map, the Field Research Group collected signatures and testimonies from hundreds of local residents, giving evidence for their continued use for over a decade to qualify as an 'official' right of way. Early paths which were included in their survey included the Merchant's Railway pathway, from Priory Corner to Castletown, the footpath from Hallelujah Bay to West Weares, the High Level Coastal Walk from Priory Corner along West Cliff to the Bill, and around Freshwater Bay to Church Ope and the Grove.[47]

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[44] Portland Field Research Group, *Invitation to Join*, (1968).

[45] Portland Field Research Group, *Newsletter No. 10*, (February, 1973), p. 1

[46] Portland Field Research Group, *Newsletter No. 11*, (August, 1973), p. 4.

[47] Portland Field Research Group, *Newsletter No. 10*, (February 1973), pp. 3-4.

In the post-industrial landscape, a key role for the Portland Field Research Group was also the potential of the new open spaces created in the derelict quarries, for public footpaths. One area the Portland Field Research Group were particularly involved in, were quarries on West Cliff, Verne Hill and Glacis, where it was proposed that there should be, "a Quarry Park and Public Amenity Area, centred on the intricate 18th and 19th century quarry workings, bridges, tunnels, rail tracks and cuttings", which represented a "marvellous opportunity" for reclamation. As noted in the section above about the pathways of Tout Quarry, this work was incredibly important in creating new pathways in the disused quarries, as these spaces began to be opened up for public use. These old quarries have transformed the number of public footpaths available on the Island, allowing spaces which were claimed by the quarrying industry in the 18th and 19th centuries, to again be reclaimed by residents and visitors to Portland.

The Portland Field Research Group played a hugely significant, and often unacknowledged role, in the history of Portland's Pathways right up until they ceased to exist in the 1990s. Their work from the late 1960s played a significant role in mapping, protecting and maintaining Portland's Pathways for future generations. As Susann Palmer noted in an early Newsletter:

"We should remember that with small local groups, like ours, the real significance of our work may not always be immediately noticeable - it is the cumulative results over the years which will count'.[48]

Their achievements were made possible by continuous and detailed surveys of the pathways, but also by involving local residents in their campaigns, using the Portland Free News as a source of news to galvanise local support for the pathways. The result of this is that, while many residents on Portland are not directly aware of the Research Group, the significance they instilled in the local consciousness about the protection of these public assets very much continues to this day.

KEEP OFF!
MORE FOOTPATHS ARE CLOSED

[Extract from the Free Portland News]

[48] Portland Field Research Group, *Newsletter No.4*, (February, 1970).

5. Case Study: The West Weares/Path 5

In the history of Portland's Pathways, the promenade known as 'Path 5' has a particular significance to Portlanders. Giving a path this identifying number, has its origins in the Definitive Maps created by Dorset County Council, which gave numbers rather than names to each pathway. Leading under the West Cliff, from Brandy Row to Hallelujah Bay, the path itself merges with 'Path 2', which runs north of the Masonic Hall in Victoria Hall, along the sea wall to Brandy Row and up to Priory Corner. This pathway was once many paths, most probably originally created by goats or cows who grazed under the West Cliffs. Evidence of this can still be seen in the wall of Path 5, near Quiddles, where a local cow trough has been embedded in the stone, originally belonging to nearby Combens Farm. For the community of Chiswell, the pathway has a long history as a place of leisure and recreation, but also for it's connection with a local man named Hiram Otter. Defined by its proximity to the sea, and association with the local fishing community, the path would have originally passed along the beach and across the rocks of the coast line. Stuart Morris has described how the Portland women would have waited for the Portland fishermen on what is now Path 5, and taken the baskets of fish to Weymouth to sell.[49] Over the centuries the pathway has taken the brunt of storms and shipwrecks, and become a place of remembrance for lives lost as a result of the sea. And, in recent years this proximity has also significantly impacted the pathway itself, as erosion by the sea, and from the cliffs above, has threatened the path, making some sections near to Hallelujah bay currently almost un-walkable.

[View of some of the many pathways heading down to the West Wears,
Postcard with thanks to Julie Matthews]

[49] Stuart Morris, *Portland in Old Picture Postcards* (1983), p. 44.

The West Weares pathway is particularly famous due to its connection to a local man called Hiram Otter, so much so that it's often referred to as 'Hiram's Walk'. Hiram was a quarryman, with legendary strength, as a story from Ron Smith's Characters relates:

"At Portland Fair, he hit a try your strength machine so hard it collapsed. He had a famous fight with a tough and skilled street fighter known as Mahogany, who danced around Hiram, raining blows on him while Hiram muttered 'I'll get a plumb on 'ee". Of course he did and the fight was over. One blow from Hiram was always more than sufficient. Even before he saw the light, he still had his convictions. He took a soldier outside the Alexandria, on night, and beat him to a pulp."[50]

After numerous convictions for drunkenness and indecent behaviour, Hiram Otter reformed when he was recruited by the Salvation Army at a public meeting in Easton Square in 1885.[51] As part of his 'redemption' he threw his considerable energies into rebuilding sections of the West Weares pathway in stone, which he salvaged and shaped with his quarry tools, from the rocks thrown down from Tout Quarry. There are conflicting accounts, but he apparently wrote biblical scriptures and verses onto the stone, daubing large letters on the rock, possibly in tar. He renamed the bay 'Hallelujah', or 'Allelujah' Bay, and apparently also renamed the popular spring 'Silverwell', to the biblical 'Jacob's Well'.[52] Recorded memories of Hiram say that he would often walk the path with his large umbrella (see photograph above), also carrying biblical texts in bright colours, which he continued to carry with him on his walks across the West Weares into his 80s.

Sadly none of Hiram's inscriptions are visible on the pathway today, having been eroded by the sea. However, there is a modern legacy to Hiram's story. Local legend had it that he had carved 'Jessu' on a rock near Tar Rocks, and that this had been defaced, and now said 'Jessica 1992'. As part of her research for this project, local resident Nikki Fryer, contacted Jessica Walmersley about the graffiti, and was told a different story:

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[50] Ron Smith's, *Characters:A Selection Of Portland Stories,* Vol.1 (1994)

[51] Howard White, *Stone and Salvation* (1985), p. 9.

[52] Free Portland News, April 1979, pp. 106-107.

"It was a really hot sunny day in 1992 when my Dad promised me he could carve my name on the rock. It was Jess for years, until someone started adding names and shapes to it, so dad decided t make it into my proper name Jessica. There are also three other rocks with similar on. You'd have to walk all the way to Blacknor though. The Jessu is nonsense. I read in the "Spirit of Portland" book that this is what it means, well it doesn't. A ten year old child went out for a walk with her Dad; nothing that mystical".[53]

The updated history of this graffiti, shows how generations of local residents continue to make the pathway their own, and how important the Hiram Otter story continues to be, as it becomes woven into more contemporary legends of the Island.

[Nikki Fryer giving a tour of Path 5, and 'Jessica's Rock' in May 2018]

The community at Chiswell have always had a close connection to the sea, with Path 5 playing a significant role as a place to fish, and for fishermen to bring their boats in for repair. What is known as 'Tar Rocks' was originally known as 'Tor Rocks'. Here many residents from the village of Chisewell, would have collected water from the springs at Silverwell/Jacobswell, before they had mains plumbing. Indeed, Nikki Fryer spoke to local residents who recalled that their relatives had continued taking water from the well into the 20th century, because of their suspicions about bringing modern plumbed water into their houses.

[53] Jessica Walmersley, Interview (May, 2018)

[Cottage known as 'Entry' on Brandy Row, Postcard with thanks to Julie Matthews]

Photographs of Brandy Row at the start of Path 5, from the late 19th century, reveal the original Tudor and Jacobean thatched cottages which were built closely together there, with a communal doorway. These doorways led onto the beach, and entered onto a courtyard with a number of other cottages behind. These houses would have had floodways built into the floors, with grills back and front, to let the flood water through, to protect these homes against the regular impact of storms and floods. A mirror, now part of the collections at the Portland Museum, records the high tide mark at 149 Chiswell (Brandy Row), from a particularly violent storm in November, 1824, which flooded the house up to the second-story, and destroyed much of the building. As Stuart Morris has described, 20 people were killed or drowned by the storm, including women and children. A local man, William Hansford, broke his leg trying to escape, "the sea overflowing the Village of Chissel", when his house fell down on him. His gravestone speaks to the perils of living close to the sea, and the difficulties the residents of Brandy Row encountered during these storms:

"My death was sudden and severe,
The wind and sea its fury broke,
The wondrous works of God bespoke,
Man's dwellings levell'd with the ground,
When some were killed and some were drown'd".

Throughout the 20th century, the difficulty of defending this area from high seas levels has continued to impact residents of Chiswell, and use and route of the pathway known as Path 5. In August 1980, the Middlesex Polytechnic Flood Hazard Research Centre made a report for the Chesil Sea Defence Scheme, which recorded the number of major floods which had hit this area of Chiswell, including significant floods in 1824, 1865, 1883, 1899,

1903, 1904, 1910, 1912, 1924, 1936, 1942, 1949, 1954 and 1962.[54] In the 1970s there had been at least seven major floods, particularly in December 1978 and February 1979. As the report says:

> *"Recent flooding in Chiswell has generated considerable fear and stress in the community. Both the storm surge and ocean swell type floods have generated the most fear and anxiety has been considered heightened by the severity of the 1978 and 1979 events. As a result of fear and stress some families have moved away from Chiswell permanently and some remaining residents live in a state of continual nervousness […] An improved flood warning system has now been established at Chiswell. It is likely that the major affect of this system is to save lives and residents' treasured possessions".*

The impact of these floods has led to significant erosion of the Chesil beach, observed as far back as the 1950s.[55] As the historian Stuart Morris has noted, due to this erosion the promenade from Brandy Row was significantly under threat, with the ancient fishermen's huts which lined the West Weares largely derelict. Under the new powers granted to Portland Council by the Coastal Protection Act of 1949, an ambitious coastal protection scheme was developed between 1959 and 1965, to rebuild the sea walls and the promenade from the Cove Inn. After the successive storms in the 1970s, the West Weares Walk was also rebuilt by the Council, and was opened by the Mayor, Peter Harvey, and the Town Mayor, Yvonne Copus in March 1986. This came at the same time as the creation of The Chesil Earthworks land sculpture on the West Weares. The Earthworks were initiated by a local resident and owner of the Chesil Gallery, Margaret Somerville, and became one of the Common Ground's New Milestone projects, created by John Maine RA, between 1986 and 1993.

PAGE TWELVE DORSET EVENING ECHO Tuesday, March 4, 1986

New path opened

BOROUGH Council officials, councillors and members of the Community Programme Team accompanied Mayor Mr. Peter Harvey and Town Mayor Mrs. Yvonne Copus on their trek along the newly opened West Weares Walk.

Deviating slightly from the original footpath along the Weares, which was constructed in the 1880s by Portland worthy, Hiram Otter, the new pathway will delight both the enthusiastic ramblers and those who merely enjoy a stroll.

In a pyramid -type exercise during which all materials had to be transported either by hand or wheelbarrow, the Community Programme Team battled in an extremely exposed position within years of overgrowth, and with the elements, to provide this splendid new walk with rough stone steps on the inclines, handrails and stone blocks where the walker can rest to admire the unsurpassed views.

The path stretches to Clay Ope, passing Jacob's Well, Green Hump and Hallelujah Bay, a name which arose from Hiram Otter's penchant for smothering the rocks there with Biblical texts.

Both Mayors congratulated the team on their fine effort, which has enhanced and preserved part of the environment and contributed to the leisure activity of the community.

The Mayor of Weymouth and Portland, Mr. Peter Harvey, cuts the ribbon to officially open West Weares Walk, at Portland. (ev)

[Opening of the West Weares Path by the Council in 1986, photographs with thanks to Stuart Morris]

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[54] Middlesex Polytechnic Flood Hazard Research Centre, *Chesil Sea Defence Scheme: Benefit Assessment: Summary*, (August,1980), p. 4.

[55] Stuart Morris, *Portland Then and Now* (2006), p. 35.

Today, memorials to those who lost their lives in these storms and shipwrecks can be found along the walls and benches that line the beginning of Path 5, from Quiddles cafe at Chiswell along the walls of the Chesil earthworks. In the 19th century, Thomas Hardy named the beach, 'Dead man's bay' because of the number who lost their lives there. As Sir Frederick Treves recalled:

> *"Probably no part of the English coast has ever seen more numerous or more fatal wrecks than has the Chesil Bank. The numbers of lives lost here are to be counted by thousands, for it has been to the seaman a veritable beach of death. When the sea gives up her dead it will be a host unaccountable who will crowd the steep sides of the amphitheatre of Deadman's Bay".*[56]

Many of those remembered on plaques today are also more recent loved ones, lost to the community at Chiswell. From many of the tragic stories of its past, the pathway has become, in its own way, a site of remembrance for those who have been lost through the centuries.

As well as its close connections to the sea, the Path 5 esplanade along the West Weares has also been for centuries, a place for local residents to enjoy their leisure time. In 'A Portland Vase', Sarah Pearce (published in the 1940s), a poem by a E. Comben recalls this recreational use of the pathway, and to sites along the stretch to Hallelujah Bay, where local people would spend their leisure time:

"It was a lovely Summer's day,
When rambling through the wild West Weares,
The rocks and boulders on the way
Recalled the jaunts of long past years.
But soon I reached a grassy mound,
A favoured spot oft sought before,
Then stretched full length within the sound
Of wavelets splashing on the shore".[57]

Beyond walking, the pathway along Chesil Cove has also long been a popular place for bathing and fishing. Along it's route, the pathway has been home to many local landmarks, where children would have played, including the newt pond, which was recently been rediscovered still active near Tar rocks. The beach huts along the under-cliffs continue to be popular with local families, and are used throughout the summer months. Local resident Carol Trotter Camp spoke to Nikki Fryer about their family beach hut, recalling how they had once set up a hose directly from Jacob's Well spring into the

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[56] Sir Frederick Treves quoted in, Simon Rae, *Victorian and Edwardian Dorset (*1993), p. 68.

[57] E. Comben poem in, Sarah Pearce*, A Portland Vase* (1949), p. 62

hut, for their fresh water. Nikki also remembered her own family spending time by the sea at Chesil Cove:

> *"We've spent hours at Strawberry Rock and beyond rock pooling, paddling and swimming. My younger daughter Sophie has always loved the water and would scull herself like a seal down the pebbles before she could walk to try to get to the shore. One windy day I was having a picnic with both girls and a guillemot was swept by a big wave and landed next to us on Chesil Beach near Strawberry Rock. Mothers' instinct kicked in and I threw it back into the air and it flew away".*[58]

Today, the esplanade from Brandy Row takes you along past the Cove Inn, past Quiddles, and the newer part of the sea wall. While the pathway has been formalised with tarmac, many residents still fondly remember the numerous pathways that would have wound their way across the West Weares past the fishermen's huts to Hallelujah Bay, before they were formalised into a single path by the Council in the 1980s. Local resident, Julie Matthews, recalled that, as a child, she would often feel lost wandering down one of the many footpaths from their family beach hut, coming back to Chiswell by another path. This path would likely not have gone beyond Hallelujah Bay, but still connects, via Path 2, to the cliff walk along the West Cliffs, which would have carried you all the way to Portland Bill, (although sections have recently been diverted due to erosion of the cliffs). Elizabeth Pearce in her diaries recalled in the early 20th century that she would, "take the lower path to Priory, and walk round the cliff to the lighthouse, for I dearly loved to ramble, quite by myself. On a fine day, it is just glorious round the cliff".[59] As she said later:

> *"These landslides have ever been one of the terrors hanging over us during long spells of wet weather; for our old people can mind so many; and tell us how they carried away roadways and piers, till, some day, maybe all Portland will slide into the sea – unless the Day of Doom should come first".*[60]

Many of the lost pathways along the West Weares still hold an important place in the memories of local people in Chiswell and Fortuneswell. Sadly today, due to erosion from the cliffs above, much of the latter part of the walk has been destroyed, and access to Hallelujah Bay is increasingly difficult. However the path is still used daily by local Chiswell residents, walkers, bird-watchers, divers and climbers, who use the coastal path to access the rocks at Mutton Cove.

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[58] Nikki Fryer, Memories from her Research Report for the Portland Pathways project (2018).

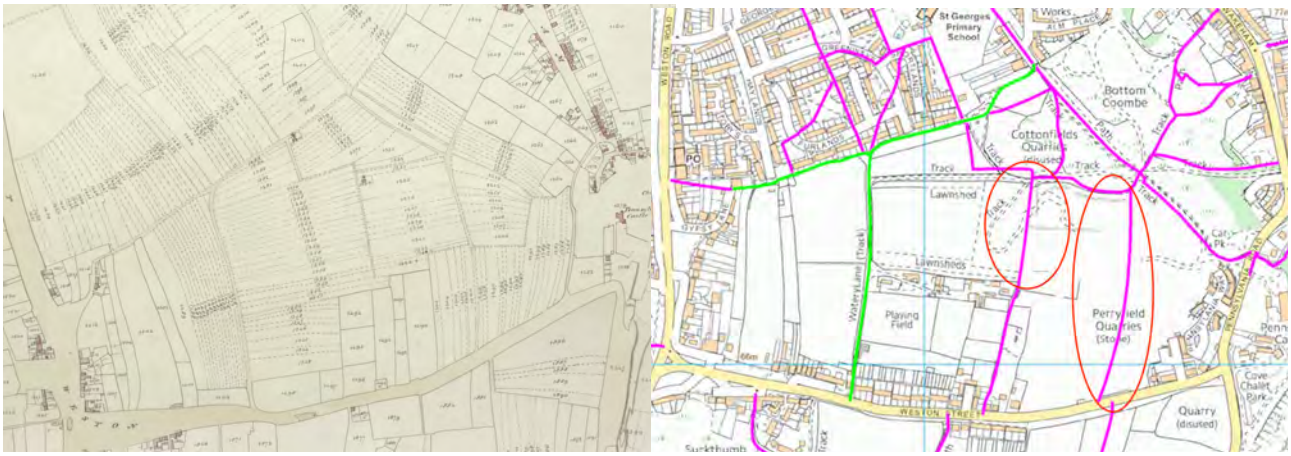
[59] Elizabeth Pearce quoted in Jean M Edwards & Rodney Legg, Old Portland (1983), p. 31.

[60] Elizabeth Pearce quoted in Jean M Edwards & Rodney Legg, Old Portland (1983), p. 20.

6. Portland's Pathways Today:

[OS Map with official Rights of Way Mapped, 2018]

Portland's pathways continue to have a very important place in the memories and mythologies of Portland's history. However, over recent years, many pathways on the Island have been lost to the threats of erosion, extraction and from the encroachment of building developments across the Island. Many more continue to be under threat. In areas such as the West Cliffs, recent landfalls down on to the West Weares have led to cliff paths being redirected through Tout and Trade quarries, and around landmarks such as the windmills at Haylands, the pathway from Easton across to Weston as been 'redirected' around the new quarrying activities, leading to a rapid disconnection of routes which had been walked since at least the early 19th century, and most probably long before (see tithe map below).



[Extract of tithe Map from 1841, alongside OS Map of the official rights of way from the current Dorset Definitive Map showing Haylands. The marked circles show pathways which have recently been lost/ re-directed by quarrying.]

For many local residents, who have spent their whole lives using these pathways, their loss is significant. As Neville Warbridge, a resident of Weston, said when we spoke to him about the footpaths around the windmills:

> *"[It] wasn't necessary for them to take away the windmill path. What they could have done is, take away part of the path and build a bridge across […] that's what they should have been made to do by the Council, who are custodians of the footpaths […] The trouble is, when they take the footpaths, it's not just them they take. There's things like Bee Orchids, Spider Orchids, and up there [by the Windmills] was the only place where the wild anemone grew, and he's [the quarryman] has covered it up with stone banks".*[61]

Neville's passion for the footpaths shows how Portland's pathways are not only a means of traversing the Island, but are deeply intertwined with the identity of Portland itself. From it's history as Crown Land, generally un-enclosed until the middle of the 19th century,

[61] Neville Warbridge, Interview, (May, 2018).

Portlanders have inherited a 'go-as-I-please' mentality, and a time-honoured traditional of civil disobedience to access to the land, which continues to this day. The famous Portland stonemason and poet, 'Skylark' Durston (1910 - 1996), was particularly reflective of this in his poetry As he wrote:

> *"Freedom means to me being able to wander the island, to walk through the quarries, to walk along the cliffs and go underneath the cliffs".*[62]

For Skylark, as for many Portlanders, the freedom to wander has been an innate right of Island life, "you walked where you wanted to walk, and no-one said anything to you".[63] However, his reflection on the liberty to roam the Island, is often contested against the modern curtailment of these freedoms, due to the effects of quarrying and building since the Second World War. As Durston wrote, when he was young:

> *"There was no barbed wire there was no restrictive fences, they wouldn't have this kind of thing if there'd been one put up thirty years ago they'd have promptly flattened it. It wasn't part of Portland. […] When freedom as we know it dies, this will be home no more".*[64]

This sentiment of loss is also reflected in the poetry of contemporaries to Skylark Durston, including his friend George Davy, who wrote about the rapid changes to the island due to the encroachment of building developments:

> *"The fields have since gone near the homes we once knew*
> *The walks we had used are now getting so few.*
> *Such old scenes have vanished from our aged gaze*
> *Replaced in this day by the new buildings maze".*[65]

This lament for the loss of the Island they once knew, is also apparent in a poem by another resident, and member of the Portland Field Research Group, Bob Wollage. In his poem he spoke of the impact which tourism has had to the Island, about the loss of the agricultural systems on Portland, and the impact which rapid building developments have had on the landscape:

> *"Let's walk out to West Cliff Mar, an' goo drew Rip Lane,*
> *I'd like to see bass strayin' an' Barnes Tip again.*
> *Well if you say tis muddy, an' there's nothing' ther to see*
> *Let's git down cross Neddyfield, t'will help me gammy knee.*

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

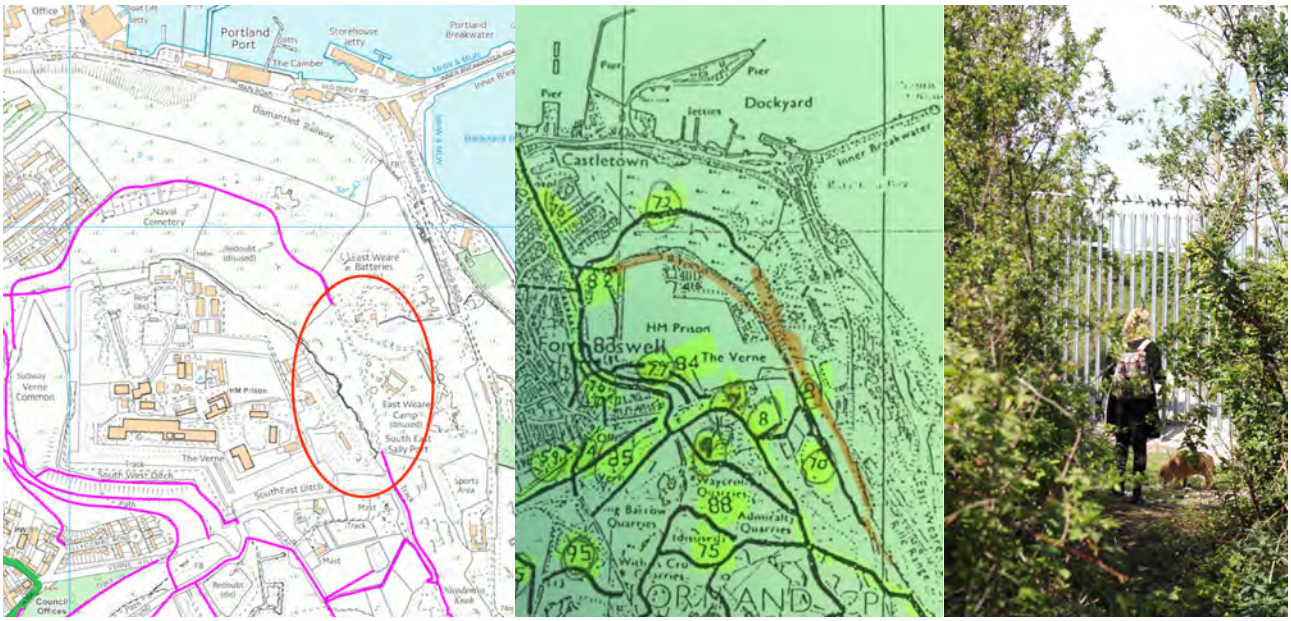
63 Skylark Durston in Jane Taylor, *When I Was A Boy: Upon This Ancient Rock - Skylark Durston Remembered* (2016)

64 Ibid.

65 George Davy, '*Long Day*', Poem (source unknown).

[…]
No you' don't understand Dad, how altered tis today.
Cornfields at Haylands you knew, have all bin took away.
West fields that gave our livin', is swallowed up an' gone
with peoples homes and motorcars, that make a mighty pong,
An' all our "lawns" have fallen to strangers overseas -
Who never wants to know ye - but do just as they please".[66]

Instead of merely lamenting the modern changes which have occurred on the Island, many Portlanders continue to be active in the protection of their land, and footpaths. The spirit of civil disobedience invoked by Skylark Durston still plays an important role in Portlander's access to pathways which have been fenced off by private landowners. Local stories recall the fences which have been cut down by unnamed residents, acts of subtle trespass across land which has been fenced off, and acts of defiance against encroaching restrictions to pathways they once used. Portlanders continue to resist many of the changes which restrict their rights to roam. For example, the pathway under the East Cliffs, which once allowed walkers to travel from Nicodemus Knob, all the way around the Verne to the Naval Cemetery, now has two large fences on each side to prevent access to the Naval base below. Many locals remember being able to walk the route, and continue to maintain the pathway, but also have stories of people who continued to climb past the fences to access the pathway. These stories may sometimes be apocryphal, but themselves suggest the spirit of rebellion and resistance which is a significant part of the Portland identity.



[Path known as 'Path 8'. Left, Current OS Map of the Rights of Way on Portland. Centre, Map from the Portland Footpaths Survey in 1999, from the Portland Heritage Trust Study Centre. Right, photograph of fence in 2018].

[66] Yet Stones: The Ramblings of Bob Wollage No.1, by Bob Wollage, p. 9.

Today many older Portlanders lament the continued threat to their pathways, not only from outside forces, but also from neglect and lack of use. Many locals who spoke to us for the project, felt that younger children and new residents are no longer interested in walking, and playing along the paths. In the past, children would have walked to local schools along many of the pathways. Indeed, the publication 'The Southwell Trail to Portland Bill', created by John Clark in 1985, was created for school children from Southwell School aged 5 to 11 years old, to walk in the summer of 1986. However, with recent changes to the school system on Portland, and the closure of many local schools, these pathways are no longer in daily use, and many fear it will have an impact on the next generation's connection to these footpaths.

However, while some of the popularity of walking may have changed, along with modern forms of transport, there is evidence that many of Portland's pathways continue to be used, perhaps more than ever. In 2003, Portland was added to the South West Coastal Path, and has since seen a dramatic increase in visiting hikers, who walk the coastal path around the Island. This walking tourism has a significant economic impact for the Island, and has become a key part of the 'Portland Plan', led by Andy Matthews, which envisages the increasing importance of eco-tourism to Portland. As part of the Plan, Matthews hopes to secure funding to redirect and re-fence Path 8, under the East Cliffs, so that walkers could travel on a coastal path around the whole Island, which he believes will bring even more visitors to Portland.[67]

As well as outside visitors, in recent years there has also been an increase in dog walkers, cyclists and horse riders using the pathways. Despite having only one designated bridleway on Portland (along Watery Lane, and across the north side of the Windmills), many of the pathways are used by horse-riders, as the numbers of horses kept on Portland increases. These different 'uses' have created considerable conflict between different users about their rights of way, and the preservation of the pathways. However, these debates over who should uses the pathways also indicate how popular the paths continue to be, and how many Portlanders continue to use them.

As part of this project, Kathy O'borne interviewed the Warden of the Portland Bird Sanctuary, Martin Cade, about the use of the pathways by birdwatchers today. He revealed that bird watchers had their own map with 'long established Portland names' (such as Culverwell), to identify each pathways, so they could easily find the spot to observe a particular species of bird. Over recent years, the number of birdwatchers that visit the

[67] Andy Matthews, The Portland Plan, https://www.design-now.co.uk/project/the-portland-plan/

Island has grown considerably, particularly due the influence of social media, with over 400 people descending on a pathway on one day in 2017, to view an American Yellow Warbler.

[Page Above, Birdwatchers Map. Above left, birdwatchers on Sweet Hill. Above Right, birdwatchers in 2017 watching the Yellow Warbler, from the Dorset Echo.]

Today a small army of Portlanders continue to walk, maintain and protect the pathways around the Island. From clearing away brambles and overgrowth throughout the year, to petitioning the council for markings and signs of public footpath status. Many on-going battles are waged by dedicated residents who fight to maintain access and use of these rights of way, which could easily be lost through the pressures of commercial industry, or council bureaucracy. Local residents, Sheila Ryan and Doug Stem have, over many years, petitioned and physically maintained the paths around Pennsylvannia Wood, trying to protect this route down through the wood to the ruins of St Andrew's Church, and down a set of steps to Church Ope Cove. As Sheila has said about their work around Penn woods:

> *"As regular walkers of local paths over the last twenty years, and on talking with many residents who have walked the paths for many decades longer than this, we have become aware that vigilance is needed in order to maintain public rights of way and mapped footpaths. Pro-action to ensure the integrity of footpaths, trees and other flora is sometimes necessary as well as of course regular walking and clearing of paths".*[68]

Doug and Sheila also recall another recent dispute over the railway cutting at the end of Park Road, near to Perryfields Quarry, and how the stone firm in question decided to fill in the unique old railway line path, which had it's own micro-climate of flora, fauna and butterflies. As they recall, a local activist stopped the bulldozer from filling in the whole path, and a local campaign created to retain the pathway there. These local, often

[68] Sheila Ryan, 'Footpath through Penn Wood', Portland Pathways Research Report (May, 2018)

unnoticed, forms of resistance and activism are a typical part of Portland life, and a legacy of past Portlanders like Hiram Otter, Skylark Durston, and the Portland Field Research Group; protecting, preserving and rebuilding the pathways, and maintaining open access across Portland.

[Photographs from Sheila Ryan and Doug Stem, of their work to maintain and keep access open to the pathway at Pennsylvannia Woods]

In 2000, the new Countryside and Right of Way Act imposed a deadline of January 2026, for Councils to map any unregistered pathways, in use prior to 1949, on their local Definitive Maps. This restriction is designed to limit the amendments and additions to the rights of way, and the number of pathways which Councils will be responsible for maintaining. As a result, any pathways not mapped by that date will likely be lost. This deadline will likely reignite many debates over the official rights of way on Portland, with many pathways not officially recognised on the new Definitive Map ceasing to be maintained and protected by the Council. As this deadline looms, it is this 'spirit of Portland' which is perhaps needed more than ever, to protect and preserve the Island's pathways for the future.