

Storms, Rocks and Thrills

The West Weares Walk



Start: Brandy Row, Chiswell, Portland DT5 1LN.

End: St George's Church Reforne, Portland DT5 2JP.

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

This walk lasts approx 60 mins.

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

- 1 Start your walk at Brandy Row, where the smuggling past of the island is remembered in the street's name.
- 2 This beach in 19th century was known as 'Deadman's bay' due to the number of people who lost their lives in the storms when treacherous currents and strong winds pushed the ships onto the rocks. The shipwrecks line the bay.
- 3 Fishing was the main occupation of people living in Chiswell and this path was used by fisherman and their families. Women played the main role in keeping households going: raising children, cooking meals and selling fish.
- 4 Hiram Otter was a quarryman with legendary strength. In his youth he was known for his indecent behaviour and drunkenness. He sobered up after the death of his wife and as part of his redemption he spent years rebuilding sections of this walk and renaming some of its landmarks. He called the walk itself Paradise Way.
- 5 Hiram renamed the springs used by Chiswell residents as Jacob's Well. The springs are hidden in the rocks but a well trodden path leads to the well.
- 6 Sheep used to graze on this hill.
- 7 At the top of the cliff you can gaze onto vast blue of sea and sky, read an excerpt from 'A field guide to getting lost' by Rebecca Solnit:

"The world is blue at its edges and in its depths. This blue is the light that got lost. Light at the blue end of the spectrum does not travel the whole distance from the sun to us. It disperses among the molecules of the air, it scatters in water. Water is colorless, shallow water appears to be the color of whatever lies underneath it, but deep water is full of this scattered light, the purer the water the deeper the blue. The sky is blue for the same reason, but the blue at the horizon, the blue of land that seems to be dissolving into the sky, is a deeper, dreamier, melancholy blue, the blue at the farthest reaches of the places where you see for miles, the blue of distance. This light that does not touch us, does not travel the whole distance, the light that gets lost, gives us the beauty of the world, so much of which is in the color blue."

- 8 Tout used to be farmland until mid-19th century when it was rapidly quarried. The quarry was last worked in 1982 and a year later it was established as a Sculpture Park. The landscape is filled with marks of its industrial past. Look out for old tramway tracks and stone arches (especially Lano Arch named after an engineer and quarry agent Jonathan Comben Lano) as well as contemporary sculptures located around the site.
- 9 You can spot Bee Orchids in this quarry.
- 10 We finish the walk in the cemetery grounds where you can find Hiram Otter and his wife's grave. It's also a place of final rest of many people who lost their lives in floods and storms on Portland.