

Portland Heights Walking Breaks
Sunday October 3rd – Wednesday October 6th

Monday October 4th

Weather: A bit drizzly first thing but then uninterrupted sunshine all day

Portland Bill, 0700

An early morning visit by the birders in the group to the Bill produced plenty of Gannets offshore and a superb but distant Great Skua annoying the gulls. The car park was covered in wagtails including 2 lovely Yellow Wagtails.



Heights Hotel - Bill 1000 - 1200

In gorgeous warm sunshine we walked along the Westcliffs to the Bill where we enjoyed a very welcome cup of coffee at the [Lobster Pot Café](#). On the way we saw several Kestrels, a Sparrowhawk, a pair of Ravens and numerous Wheatears. All the time Swallows and House Martins streamed overhead on their way south for the winter. As we approached the village of Southwell we passed a flock of Portland Sheep grazing in a field.



Bill – Cheyne Lookout, 1200 - 1300

Just a few metres along the Westcliffs we stopped to admire a fine bull Grey Seal “bottling” just off the cliffs. Our walk then took us through the quarries of the Eastcliffs to Cheyne Point where the male of the resident pair of Peregrines was sat on the cliffs. At Cheyne Lookout we stopped for lunch and a Chiffchaff popped up in a tree just in front of us.



Cheyne – High Angle Battery, 1300 - 1600

After walking into the village of Wakeham we crossed over onto the old railway line and continued under the cliffs above Penn’s Weare. Butterflies were abundant here with Common Blue, Red Admiral and Peacock on the path or in the Buddleia bushes. After negotiating the steep climb up to Grove Point we walked through Admiralty Quarries to the High Angle Battery. From here it was a short walk back to the hotel, where we were pleased to see a few stems of Autumn Ladies Tresses still visible.



Tuesday October 5th

Weather: Low cloud in the morning soon giving way to a warm and sunny afternoon.

Ringstead – Durdle Door 1000 – 1200

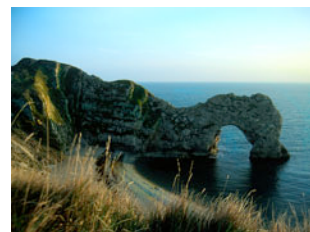
Most of us left the car park well wrapped-up in the breezy and cloudy conditions but we had barely finished the first mile of the walk when coats and jumpers started coming off as the sun came out once again. The fields above the cliffs of White Nothe were alive with Skylarks and Linnets, with a Merlin making a brief appearance as it chased a flock of pipits around a field. Kestrels and Buzzards were also hunting along the cliffs with a lone Raven passing through as well. The descent to Durdle Door was a bit tricky but worth it for the view of this amazing feature as well as the view along the coast westwards to Bat's Head and beyond to Portland. Harebells were growing along the path here.

Durdle Door – Lulworth Cove 1200 – 1300

Spiders were not really an expected feature of this weekend but the male *Dysdera crocata* (Woodlouse-eating Spider) was an unexpected find. A pair of Stonechats were seen flitting around just above the car park as we left after our lunch stop.

Lulworth Cove – Ringstead 1300 – 1600

The walk back saw us spit into 2 groups with the hard-core walkers taking the strenuous cliff-top path and the rest of us the more relaxed inland path. A couple of Roe Deer were resting in a field off to the north and many more Skylarks were seen. Fungi were numerous even in the cultivated fields but defied identification. Don't forget to use the [iSpot web site](#) to identify any you find in future!



Wednesday October 6th

Weather: Cool westerly breeze but bright sunshine again all day.

Hardy Monument – Maiden Castle 1000 – 1200

After enjoying the superb view from the car park we dropped down to the ridgeway track and walked east through one of the most extensive collections of round barrows you will see anywhere. After a while Maiden Castle appeared on the horizon and we descended down to approach the ramparts of this most impressive Celtic hill fort. It's true scale only became clear as we walked round its perimeter and marvelled at the amount of labour required to build such a huge structure.



Maiden Castle – Martinstown 1200 – 1400

The beautiful village of Martinstown (Winterborne St Martin) was exceptionally pretty on this lovely Indian Summer afternoon and we spent a very pleasant hour in the beer garden of the Brewer's Arms drinking in the atmosphere (and the beer!).



Martinstown – Hardy Monument 1400 – 1600

The walk back up to the ridgeway was a bit of a slog but we did see a good number of Red-legged Partridges and a couple of Buzzards on the way. Looking east we could pick out some white cliffs in the far distance – the Isle of Wight!



Bob Ford, October 6th 2010