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## Swyre Head

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Swyre Head car park, near Kingston (SY 943793)
Ordnance Survey map	OL15 – Purbeck and South Dorset
Distance	5 miles
Date of Walk	5 July 2019
Traffic light rating	

**Introduction:** At 666ft (203m), as at the trig. point, Swyre Head is the highest point of the Purbeck Hills which seemed reason enough to visit it. From its summit are fabulous views along the coast to the west, over Poole Harbour and to Dartmoor. Just to confuse, there is another hill of the same name but much lower, about eight and a half miles to the west as the crow flies.

Near the trig. point is a prominent grass mound, which is a tumulus. This adds another five metres or so to the overall height. The views from its top are even better! It is a “bowl barrow” or burial mound, though is believed to have been modified to provide a windmill mound. The burial mound dates from the Late Neolithic period to the Late Bronze Age. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The views west look along the Kimmeridge Ledges, part of the Jurassic Coast which is legendary for its fossils.

The furthest east point of this walk, before you turn back inland, is Egmont Point and Houns-tout cliffs. From here are views down to Chapman’s Pool. There is more information about this on my St. Alban’s Head walk. Indeed, if you wanted a longer walk, it would be a fairly simple matter to combine that walk with this.

The return journey takes you within sight of an obelisk (no access to it). This was erected in 1835 in honour of Sir William Scott, created Baron Stowell. It is a Grade II Listed Building. He was an English judge and his brother owned the estate at the time.

This walk starts from free parking provided by the Encombe Estate along a no through road, SW from Kingston. Kingston is on the B3069 from Corfe Castle to Swanage. Turn down the side of the Scott Arms pub. Stay on this road, passing the church. Ignore the first car park and park at the second.

**Start:** Go between the large stone gateposts (SY 943793) from the car park, then through a walkers’ gate. Head right following the edge of the trees and in the direction of the fingerpost for “Swyre Head 1 mile.”

At SY 940789, pass a memorial bench to airmen who died in flying accidents during World War II.

As you reach the top of the hill, the trig. point (SY 934786) is over to the right, from where is a terrific view along the coast.

The tumulus is unmistakable and there are a couple of benches further on from which there are more views. From here, retrace your steps towards the trig. point and cross a stile on the left. There is a stone direction indicator here showing a permissive footpath to Rope Lake Head and the coast path.

Initially, the path descends some rough steps and it was a bit of a squeeze between the gorse bushes but it does improve as you descend further.

The path drops down to a walkers' gate. Go through this to follow the left hand boundary to a stile. Cross this and bear left for the coast footpath, following the green arrow for the permissive path.

You soon join a broad track. Turn right along it, towards the coast. As the track bends right, go through a walkers' gate on the left following the stone marker post for Rope Lake Head and coast path. This gate was pretty blocked by vegetation but there is a large gate alongside. Follow the right hand boundary of the field.

At the bottom of the field, cross a stile and turn left along the coast path.

After a lung bursting ascent, you will be grateful for the bench (SY 950774) at the top of Houns-Tout Cliff. It is worth venturing a few yards further on to look down a Chapman's Pool but the onward route is inland, over a stile to the rear of the bench. There is an arrow on the stile in addition to the footpath arrow indicating it is part of the Hardy Way.

The path sweeps round to follow the top of a smooth valley, across which you can see the obelisk referred to in the introduction. At the trees follow the obvious track, following the fingerpost for "Kingston  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile".

When you come to a crossroads of tracks, keep straight ahead. There is a fingerpost just after the junction for Kingston. Note: do not mistake the road immediately on the left through a gap in the trees for the road you want!

Emerge on to the road at the Houns-Tout car park (SY 952795). Turn left and follow the road for the half mile back to where you parked.

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