

**WALK 5**

Swanage

# Walk Dorset's History

🕒 90 minutes to walk, sit and enjoy  
reading the information



Stepping  
into  
nature

Welcome! As part of the Stepping into Nature project led by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team, we have produced a series of self-guided walks.

These easy access routes highlight the local history, as well as other fun snippets of information that you will find along the route.

Further Information: [www.stepin2nature.org](http://www.stepin2nature.org)



### Distance

1.2 miles/ 2km



### Suggested time

90 minutes to walk, sit and enjoy reading the information.



### Difficulty

Generally level route on tarmacked paths, with a gentle slope through the gardens and town. Seafront seats at regular intervals.



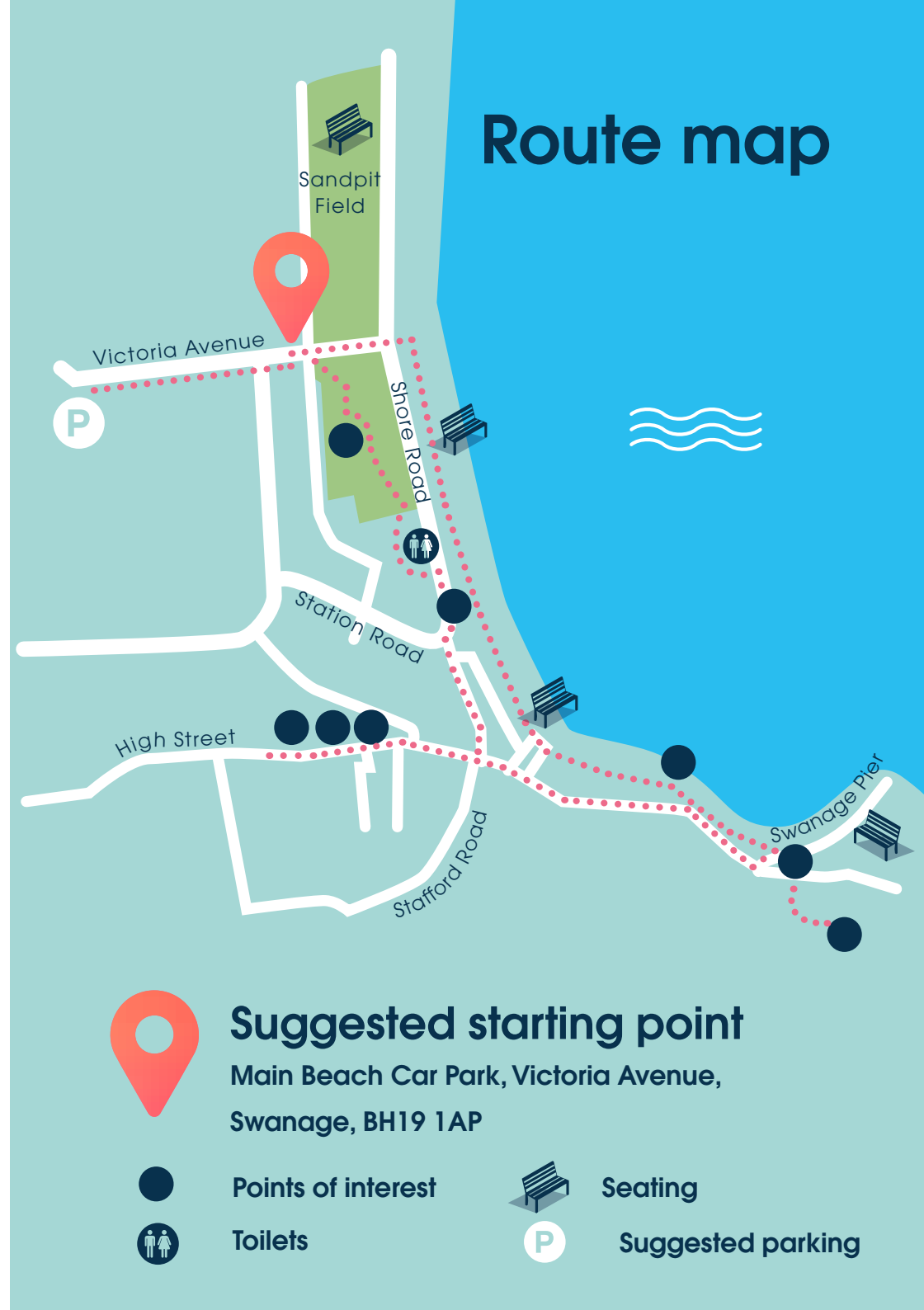
### Facilities

Along the route you will find many places for refreshments. Public toilets are on the seafront.



### Transport

Car park, bus and train stop (using a steam train on the Swanage Railway!) within a 5 minute walk.





**Leave Main Beach Car Park by the exit on Victoria Avenue. Continue ahead until you reach the gardens on the right just before the seafront. Take the slope into the gardens and go to the War Memorial.**

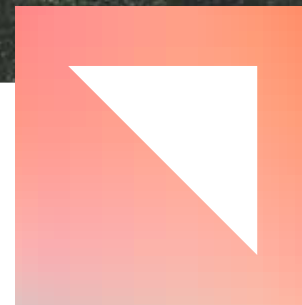
Have a look at the information panels on the War Memorial. Then compare today's view with this photo taken around 120 years ago. Today the Esplanade is used by traffic and visitors can only walk along the pavement, but back then it was used for pleasure drives in horse-drawn vehicles.



**Look out to the middle of the bay and the land you see on a clear day is the Isle of Wight.**



Turn right to go down the slope, then cross the road to the seafront. Go right until you reach the monument pictured next.



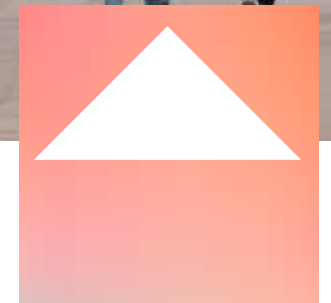


Monuments like this one can be found all over Swanage thanks to the quarrying business of John Mowlem, and his nephew, George Burt. In the 19th century, they shipped local stone from Swanage to London then, to ensure the ship stayed steady on their return, they loaded up with demolished monuments from London to act as ballast. The question was - what would the locals do with yet another monument in Swanage?! The answer to which can be found scattered all over the town, as we'll see on this walk.

Historically, Swanage was almost two different places - a fishing village located on the seafront and a stone quarrying village further inland close to the quarries.



Go past The Mowlem Theatre along Institute Road, then cross the road to go right up the High Street. Keep going straight at the junction with Kings Road East. Cross to the left side of the road and stop when you reach the spot where this picture was taken.

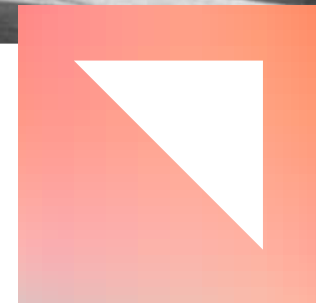


This photograph was taken around 100 years ago and shows the Town Hall on the right. Admire this fine building, constructed in 1882. The whole frontage was once ballast in one of Burt's ships! Previously it had belonged to the Mercer's Hall in London's Cheapside!

The grand looking building on the left in the distance is Purbeck House Hotel, originally built in 1875 as George Burt's home. As you may expect, it includes salvaged stone from London including leftovers from the construction of the Albert Memorial.



Cross the road again and go down Town Hall Lane (to the right of the Town Hall) to a courtyard behind.



This little courtyard building was the local prison. We suspect locals came by on Sunday mornings to get the gossip and see who had 'let themselves down' the previous evening! To the left of this building is a cast iron pump which would have been used to provide water for washing and drinking – probably very necessary after a drunken night!



**Read the information panels to find out more. Look closely at the black bollards to see where they came from.**



Return to the High Street and turn right. Just past the Town Hall, and on your right, you'll see a stone plaque on the wall between two driveways.



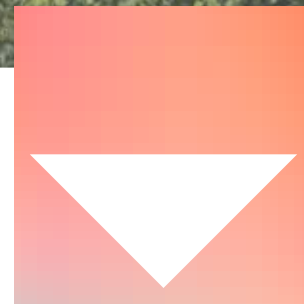


The name of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, appears on the plaque as he stayed at the cottage during several visits to Swanage. Unfortunately, the cottage was destroyed in an air raid on 14th May 1941, but the picture shows what it looked like soon after 1900.

Many other buildings around here were destroyed or damaged during the bombing raid so you'll see replacements mixed in with the old.



Cross the road and return down the High Street, following it as it bends to the right until the sea is in clear view. Cross the road again to the path on the seafront.





Look to your left and compare the 100 year old picture of the jetty with today's view.

The jetty was built by MP and local landowner William Morton Pitt in 1825, as part of his scheme to promote Swanage as a seaside resort. Whilst it doesn't look much nowadays, it was once of great value to land tourists aswell as fish.

Another part of his scheme was Marine Villas which now house the shop and café on the pier. They were intended as a complex of 'baths, billiards and coffee rooms' for visitors.



Go right along the seafront until you reach the entrance of the pier.





This picture from around 1910 shows just how rural this part of Swanage was until recently. You may also notice the pier has two 'arms'.

The one on the right was the original one, built in 1860 to transfer quarried stone onto ships. In 1874, George Burt started a steamer service from Bournemouth and Poole. As this became more successful, a bigger pier was needed, so the present one was built in the 1890s, and the original was abandoned. If you look closely today you can still see the supporting posts in the water from the original pier.

These steamers and the arrival of the railway in 1885 helped to make Swanage into a popular holiday resort.



You may wish to stroll up into Prince Albert Gardens above the pier, but if not you can view the structures pictured next from here.



You will not be surprised to know that the two Greek-style stone columns were brought from London. They were placed on the forecourt of The Grove Hotel, built nearby in 1838 as part of William Morton Pitt's scheme. When the hotel was demolished in 1988, the columns were reset here.

Beyond these gardens on the clifftop around Durlston Bay is Durlston Castle. It was built by George Burt, and today it is the centrepiece of Durlston Country Park. The Castle can be reached from the gardens by a walk of around one kilometre (with two steepish sections) or you could drive around.

You might like to wander along the pier and visit the shop and café where there is more information on Swanage's marine life and history.



To return to the car park, head left along to the seafront, hugging the seafront all the way until you reach Victoria Avenue on your left. Go straight down Victoria Avenue and the car park will appear on your left.



# Looking for some more things to do?

## Picnic in the Parks

Discover new experiences and enjoy fun health and nature-related activities at Picnic in the Parks.

You can access all of the other History walks from this series as well as lots of other activities, films and resources to help you live well and love nature.

[picnicintheparks.org](http://picnicintheparks.org)



Explore the unique, varied, and outstanding natural beauty of this AONB which underpins its designation as a nationally important protected landscape.

[dorsetaonb.org](http://dorsetaonb.org)

Find new places to go, learn new skills and meet like-minded people through nature-themed activities held indoors and out.

[stepin2nature.org](http://stepin2nature.org)



Stepping into nature





# Stepping into Nature

Stepping into Nature opens opportunities for people to connect with Dorset's fascinating landscape, wildlife, history and culture, helping people live happier and healthier lives for longer.

Using Dorset's natural and cultural landscape, the project creates activities and sensory rich places for older people, people living with long term health conditions, such as dementia, and their care partners.

The Stepping into Nature project is led by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.



A series of easy access routes  
highlighting local history and  
the stories around them.

Other routes include

**BLANDFORD FORUM**

**CERNE ABBAS**

**EASTERN DORCHESTER  
& FORDINGTON**

**SHERBORNE**

**SWANAGE**

**WEYMOUTH**

Further Information

**[www.stepin2nature.org](http://www.stepin2nature.org)**