

Brighstone to Niton Coastal Path Dinosaur Walk



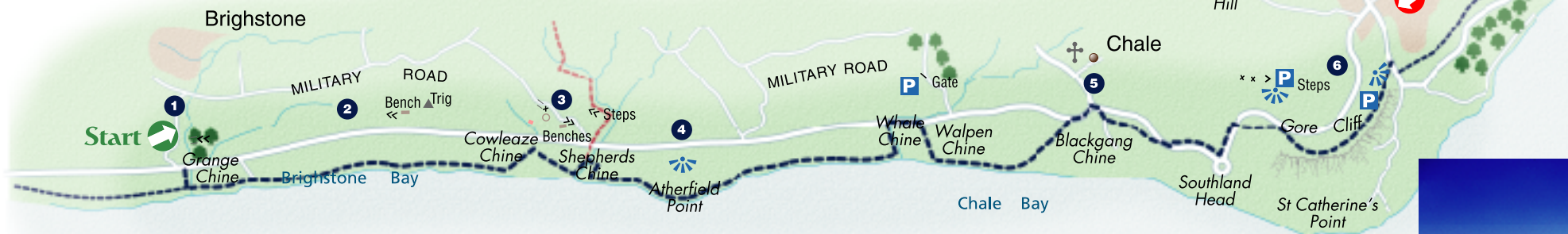
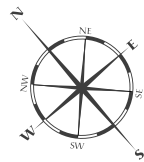
Starting at Grange Chine this walk ambles over cliff tops giving superb views of the crumbling coastline. The chines are a special feature of this shoreline. As you meander along the cliff top route, it is easy to imagine the smuggling trade of old going on along this relatively remote stretch of coast. Before starting the walk, a visit to the Dinosaur Farm museum is worthwhile. There's a part reconstruction of a Brachiosaur, as well as some Polacanthus material and a diorama, showing all the dinosaurs found on the Island.



Niton Down

Coastal Path Sights

Brighstone Bay is the best site for dinosaur finds on the Island, and has been studied since Iguanodon was first found. As well as Iguanodon; Polacanthus, Neovenator, Eotyrannus and Hypsilophodon are all found at Brighstone Bay, with the Hypsilophodon being abundant at Cowleaze Chine.



Whale Chine is the most spectacular of the chines, formed by the rapid erosion of soft clays and sands, which form the cliff. The rivers cut down into the cliff and the face is worn back by the sea, resulting in vigorous downward erosion by the stream producing the steep sided narrow gullies, which are characteristics of this coastline.

Above the cliff on the summit of Niton Down are two buildings known as the 'Pepper Pot' and 'Salt Cellar'. The Pepper Pot, an octagonal structure is the remains of a medieval lighthouse constructed in about 1320 by Walter de Godeton reputedly as a penance from the Pope for illegally acquiring wine from a wrecked ship. Nearby, the Salt Cellar is an uncompleted lighthouse begun in 1800 and replaced by St Catherine's Lighthouse in 1836.

The cliffs along this stretch of coastline are a jumble of chalk, sandstone and clay. The nature of this material means that it is susceptible to landslides caused by the undercutting of the coastal erosion. The road connecting Niton and Blackgang fell into the sea along with several houses in 1928.

- 1 Leave the Military Road at Grange Chine and walk towards the sea following the signposts BS58. Walk down into the chine across the bridge and up the other side. Continue along the cliff overlooking Brighstone Bay, to pass the comparatively diminutive Barnes Chine before reaching the crumbling yellow sandstone.
- 2 Continue along the cliff top to Cowleaze Chine and follow the path inland around the head of the chine and walk parallel with the opposite side towards the cliff top again. Cross over a stile footbridge and another stile and passing the old water works in your right, strike diagonally left across the field to the far corner.
- 3 Pass over the stile and down the chalk path with a, central rail turning left inland along the side of Shepherds Chine. For fossil hunters, this is the best place to get to the beach, as there's a well-worn footpath, which can be a bit precarious but is reasonably safe. Minute fish vertebrae and scales are common. There are occasional rich pockets of shells, gastropods and bivalves. The thin limestone bands are composed almost entirely of the bivalve Filosina. Rare vertebrate remains are turtle plates, crocodile bones and armour scutes and very rare sole casts of dinosaur footprints. Continuing the walk; at the irrigation dam and pump house turn right and climb to the rim of the chine via the steps, turn right and return to the cliff edge.
- 4 Continue along the cliff top to Atherfield Point where the coastguard lookout and the chiming buoy at sea warns ships of this notoriously bad coastline. Large detached blocks on the foreshore contain the

small subspherical coral *Holocytis*; large well preserved bivalves, *Aetostreon Latissimum*, *Astarte*, *Sphaera*, *Yaadia*, the ammonites *Deshayesites* and many *Serpulid* worm casts. There is always adequate loose fossil debris lying about. Some 800m to the east of Atherfield Point, the Lower Gryphaea Beds contain the large oysters *Exogyra*, *Prohinnites* and the small crinkle-shelled *Rastellum*. These fossils are seen in a hard, cemented sandstone layer descending to and eventually passing beneath the beach some hundreds of metres before Whale Chine. The overlying *Scaphites* Bed and the Lower *Crioceras* Bed contain occasional large ammonites such as *Australicera* and *Tropaeum*. Continuing the walk to Whale Chine; walk parallel with the chine to the Military Road; turn right through the car park and then right again over the gate crossing a field to rejoin the coastal path. Skirt around Ladder Chine, which lies to the right, and continue eastwards around Walpen Chine taking the footpath towards Cliff Farm and the village of Chale, alongside a hedge

and now heading inland. Walk over the footbridge between the fields to the stile, keeping the hedge on the right. Turn right along the road past Cliff Farm to the village, passing the church with its perpendicular tower and graveyard tombs where errant smugglers used to hide. Shortly after passing the church, turn right along the terrace then left along bridleway C15.

- 5 At the main road (Blythe Shute), cross over and follow the left hand verge uphill. The 'Wight Mouse Inn' is a popular refreshment and food stop at Chale. About 100 metres past the roundabout, turn right into footpath C10. Follow the left hand edge of the field uphill through scrub to a car park. Turn right across the car park, up the steps to the seat on the cliff top.



St Catherine's Lighthouse

- 6 The coastal path follows a well-defined track along the cliff top above the Undercliff. Continue on the cliff top, above St Catherine's Point and Rocken End, a large offshore rock and the home of a colony of cormorants, this is the most southerly part of the Island.

Pass the telecom transmitting station and masts and walk along the path with the fence and bushes either side. Cross a stile, continue to the edge of the field, over another stile and conclude this section of coastal path by descending into Barrack Shute, via Boxers Lane footpath. Those in need of refreshment will find the 'Buddle Inn' in St Catherine's Road, Niton. It is a traditional 16th century pub with log fires and oak beams.



Blackgang Coastline

For Red Funnel ferry information and places to stay, visit www.redfunnel.co.uk or phone the Travel Centre on 0844 844 9988

