

HALL&WOODHOUSE

The Duchess of Cornwall, Poundbury: Hills, valleys & ancient settlements walk.

Part of the Woodhouse Walks & Badger Trails Series.

Walks & Trails produced with thanks by 'Tess of the Vale'  tessofthevale.com



Key Facts

Distance: 7 miles/ 11km

Duration: 3 hours

Ability: Easy.

Max Height: 400ft

Min Height: 200ft

Total climb: 370ft

Terrain: Path, track, road and field.

Map: OS Explorer 117 Cerne Abbas and Bere Regis

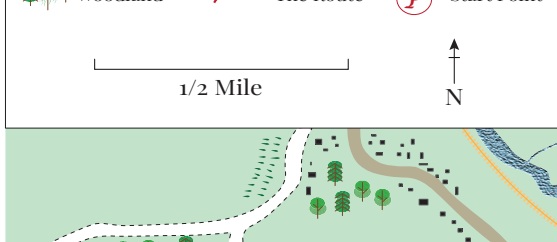
Start Point: The Duchess of Cornwall Inn, Queen Mother's Square, Poundbury (Postcode: DT1 3WY, Grid reference: SY672907, What Three Words: quirky.limped.refills)

How to Get There: From Dorchester town centre, head west. On entering Poundbury, take the third exit off the second roundabout. Continue to follow the road until it reaches Queen Mother's Square. The Inn is on your right. Plenty of parking is available.

Dogs: Dogs are permitted accordance with the Countryside Code and any notices on route.

Refreshments: You always need a drink and a bite to eat at the start and the end of a walk. It's just one of those unwritten rules in life! At The Duchess of Cornwall, you'll find a range of light bites and main meals available. Or if it's just a quick pit-stop, come and enjoy a pint or even a coffee and cake with us instead.

The Duchess of Cornwall Inn

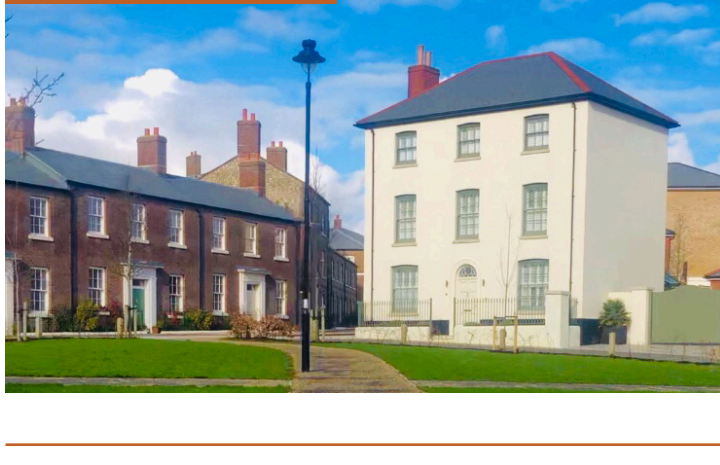


The Walk

The Duchess of Cornwall Inn, Poundbury: Hills, valleys and ancient settlements.

The walk starts in the centre of Poundbury where the architecture is both elegant and impressive. Built in 2016, the **Duchess of Cornwall Inn** was named after the Duchess of Cornwall, at the direct request of the Prince of Wales and opened by the Prince and Duchess themselves. It has become the flagship pub of **Hall and Woodhouse**, filled with historical artefacts from the family of brewers, dating back to the 18th century.

Poundbury village



Poundbury is an urban extension of the county town of Dorchester, built on Duchy of Cornwall land. Building began in 1993 (due to be completed in 2025) and is designed to principles of architecture and urban planning as advocated by the HRH The Prince of Wales in his book 'A Vision of Britain'. This includes creating beauty, mixing affordable housing with private, prioritising the pedestrian and creating a mixture of uses.

From **Queen Mother's Square**, and with the pub behind you, walk straight down Peverell Avenue West. Take the second turning on your right down Dunnabridge Street and, at the end, join a permissive path guiding you down the hill. On your right, as the development of Poundbury drops away, the valley of the River Frome can be seen carved between the hills. Continue down the slope to dip under the Dorchester bypass. Immediately after the bridge, turn right through a small gate, into a field. Ahead of you, as you walk parallel to the road, the channelled earthworks of the old Roman aqueduct slowly emerge.

Dorchester was first developed during the Roman times as a fort by the river, during the siege of the nearby Iron Age Hillfort of **Maiden Castle**. When the castle was overthrown, the river settlement grew into Dunovaria, a highly populated Roman town. This new 'modern' settlement included villas, mills, markets and public baths, all of which required a constant supply of water. One of the many impressive and clearly visible parts of the Roman remains is the aqueduct. Built in the 1st century AD, it was used to transport fresh water from a reservoir, around 3 miles away, to the town. Some stretches are well preserved; visible from the

Roman Villa Remains



bypass, from Poundbury Hillfort and the other side of the bypass to Bradford Peverell. Its path continues North West to near Southover where remains of a Roman villa have been uncovered.

Turn left off the field just as it begins to narrow and through a small metal gate. Cut through the woodland and make your way up the hill keeping the woodland on your right. As you gain height, don't forget to turn around and admire the views back to Poundbury. The cupolas of Queen Mother's Square lift high above the skyline, adding to its elegance. To the south Maiden Castle can be seen, its ramparts rise, interrupting the horizon, as well as **Hardy's Monument** both framed by the sky behind.

Cross over a track and continue following the boundary on your right. Pass through a gate and down to woodland, exiting the field at the corner. Here Tilly Whim Cottage appears, a perfect example of a thatched, woodland home. Continue on past but stay on the track to reach the road. There seems to be no access to, or evidence of, the bridleway marked on the OS map.

On joining the road, turn right to head down into the valley. When you meet another road, cross straight over. The road you cross is an old Roman road that went from Dunovaria to Lindinis (Ilchester). It follows the valley and aqueduct to **Stratton** to then divert north. Continue down the track, past the farm buildings and under the railway bridge.

This area can become flooded during wetter seasons. If you find that it is impassable you can return to Dorchester via the Roman road, where you join Poundbury Hillfort. Within the marshy valley you cut across the water meadows of the **River Frome** that stretch back to Dorchester and are an important area for wildlife.

Go over two bridges, which span two sections of the same river, and up to the main road. Cross straight over and follow a small country lane up the hill. Curve around to the right and then take the next left, down Drakes Lane. Climb on up the gentle hill and then back down towards Charminster. As the village appears in the valley the earthworks of a medieval farmstead can be seen on the slopes above.

Continue to head down the hill and straight over the main road. Cross over the **River Cerne** with the farmstead earthworks on your left. Follow the track around to the right, walking parallel to the river along Mill Lane. Divert slightly around Pinking Plot and continue to follow Mill Lane to the church. Cross over the Cerne for the second time and through the church graveyard.

Turn left at the road and walk up the hill to take the footpath on your right, following a cob and flint wall. Cross straight over the driveway to Wolfeton House and through a gate opposite.

In the field on your right are more remains of another medieval settlement, or possibly earlier. Beyond the field sits the old riding

Crossing the river Frome



house' of Wolfeton Manor. It is likely to be one of the oldest surviving riding houses in the country, possibly the oldest in the world. A riding house was an indoor manège for the training of both horses and riders but this one, has for centuries, been used as a barn. Its stone walls and mullioned windows are the biggest clues to its important past and, although currently rather shabby, it is now in the care of a trust that is carrying out renovations.

Hidden in the trees to the left of the riding house is **Wolfeton Manor**. During winter months you may be blessed with a better view, but even then the trees help keep it a secret. The gate house is slightly more visible, clearly represented by its turreted towers. They are the oldest part of the overall house, with a real castle-like appearance. At the base of the towers is a tiny chapel, still in use, which adds a little magic to the building.

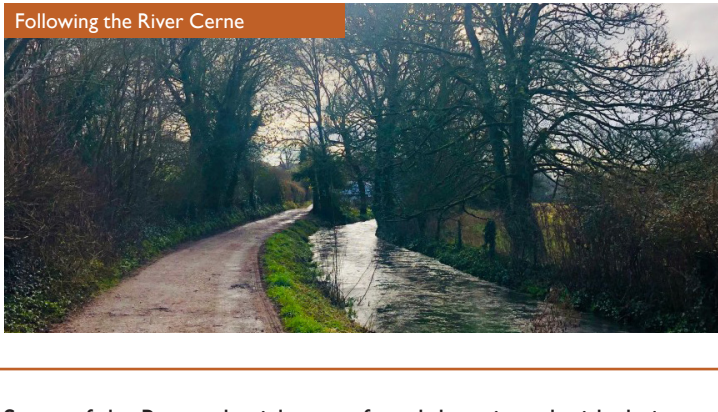
Wolfeton itself is an early Tudor and Elizabethan manor, the oldest part of the building dating back to 1480 but settlement here could be linked to the Romans, or even earlier. The house has been the country seat of several families, including the Mohuns and Trenchards. The current building is a relic, built by the Trenchard family who were one of the most prominent families in Dorset during the 16th century. Over time the house slowly fell into disrepair, bodge jobs only called upon to make money or save money.

The house was bought in 1961 by the Thimbleby family who have a distant connection with the Trenchards. Today the owner is Nigel Thimbleby who has made it his life's work in bringing the Manor back to what it deserves to be.

Leave the earthworks behind and enter into the next field. On your right sits the **River Frome** and its water meadows. High above, on the opposite hill, is Poundbury Hillfort, its ramparts rising above the ridge. Follow the line of trees ahead, down to another boundary passing a small Wessex Water building. Cut straight across the next field to join onto the main road.

Cross over and turn right onto the pavement, passing **The Sun Inn** on your left. Take the small footpath that forks off from the road, safely away from traffic. Cross over the River Frome twice and turn left when you approach the traffic again, keeping the river

Following the River Cerne



on your right. Follow the path to meet **John's Pond** on your left. This is an old irrigation well associated with the flood plains. Dorchester gaol, that was not far from here, had an amazing record for preventing prisoners escaping. Nevertheless, a gentleman (or rebel) named John managed to circumnavigate the old water works of the gaol and run away into the night. However, the pond was camouflaged in the darkness resulting in his unlucky drowning. His memory lives on at this pond, and in the cover of darkness, the rattle of chains can sometimes be heard according to some!

Continuing with a criminal theme, after crossing the river, on your right is Hangman's Cottage. It is said that the hangman who carried out the 74 death sentences for the bloody assizes lived here. There is also legend that a tunnel ran from the cottage to the gaol, which could very rightly be true as Dorchester is home to a large underground tunnel system, dating back to the 1600s.

From Hangman's Cottage, turn right and make your way up to the wall on your left. Shortly a small gate allows you access through the wall to the Roman Town House. Dorchester is full of Roman history and this town house was found when excavations occurred in the 1930s. A number of houses and other associated buildings were also discovered, but this was the best example, complete with underfloor heating systems and floor mosaics.

From the town house head out towards the main road and make your way up the hill, through the avenue of trees. Just before the roundabout, you meet **Thomas Hardy**, forever watching the traffic below. His statue was erected in 1931, three years after his death, to celebrate his life and love for Dorchester.

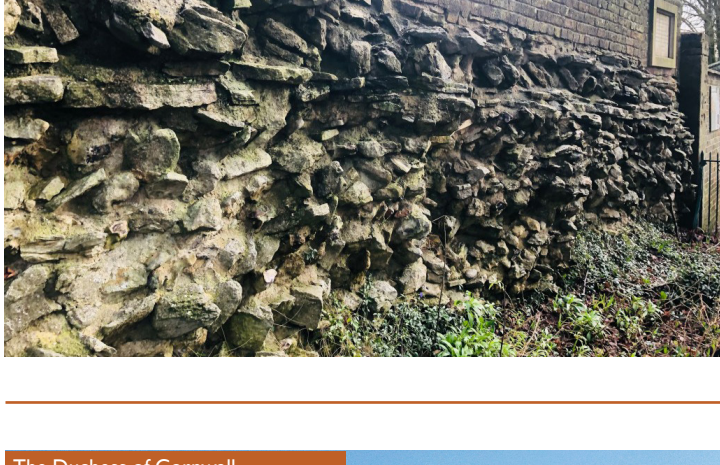
Continue straight on and cross over the road. Just ahead and on your left are the final remains of the old Roman wall that once circled and protected Dunovaria. Now merged into another wall and itself protected by the outside world with railings, it is so easily missed.

Turn around to head back to the roundabout and cross over to the left. On the next road cross over again to then take the next right hand road that runs past the Keep. Built around 1880, it was once part of a military barracks but today is a military museum. Continue to follow the road through the industrial estate and over the railway line. Make your way up the hill and when you approach the top take the gate on your right onto **Poundbury Hillfort**.

Poundbury Hillfort is a site dating from the Middle Bronze Age. Its raised Iron Age ramparts are roughly rectangular, covering an area of 13½ acres, commanding views over the River Frome and its disappearing valley to the north.

Just outside the fort was a large Romano-British cemetery. The majority of burials date to the late Roman era of the 4th century AD, although the cemetery was in use from the Neolithic times to the Middle Ages.

Roman Wall



Some of the Roman burials were found decapitated with their heads by their feet!

The northern and eastern sides of the hillfort's outer defences were damaged by the construction of the Roman aqueduct. The main Dorchester to Yeovil railway line later tunneled beneath the hill fort, in an effort to minimise damage. Isambard Kingdom Brunel wanted to put the tracks in a cutting through the site but local outrage meant that the more expensive tunnel was chosen.

Make your way around the ramparts, keeping your eyes peeled for the railway disappearing under your feet and the remains of the aqueduct. To leave, take the exit at the top western corner opposite Poundbury cemetery, appropriately styled with the Romans in mind!

Take the path on the left hand side of the buildings to return to **Poundbury**. Here you have a choice. Either remain on the cutting back to Queen Mother's Square, or have an adventure through Poundbury.

On return, the three metre statue of the Queen Mother, unveiled by Prince Charles in 2016, comes into view, welcoming you back to the Duchess of Cornwall Inn.

Congratulations! You have reached the end of the walk. Pop in for a well earned drink & refuel with our amazing signature dishes.

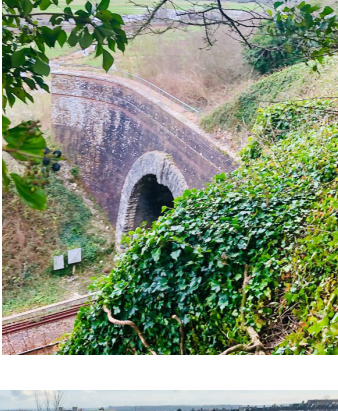
Poundbury Cemetery



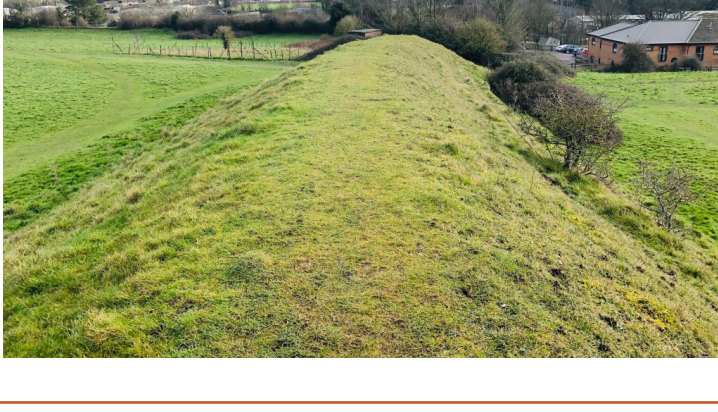
Thomas Hardy statue



Railway Tunnel



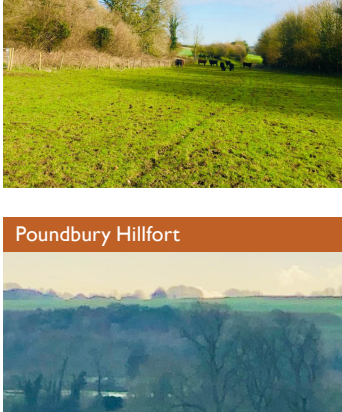
Poundbury Hillfort Ramparts



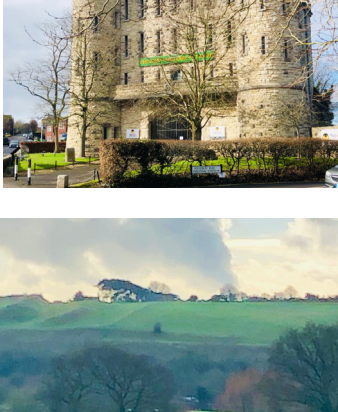
The Duchess of Cornwall



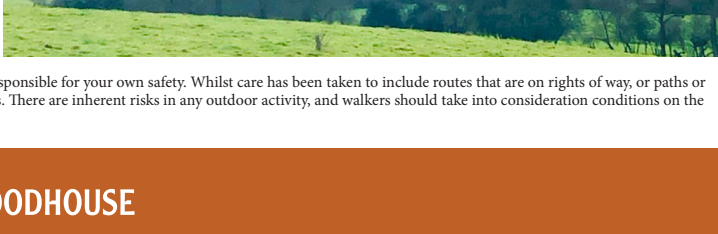
The Valley and Aquaduct



The Keep



Poundbury Hillfort



By providing walking routes, we are not guaranteeing usability or safety for any particular walker and you must be responsible for your own safety. Whilst care has been taken to include routes that are on rights of way, or paths or access areas where permission exists, inclusion of a route is no evidence of a current right of way or permissive access. There are inherent risks in any outdoor activity, and walkers should take into consideration conditions on the day as well as their own fitness and experience levels to ensure they enjoy these routes safely.

HALL&WOODHOUSE

The Duchess of Cornwall

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