

START

Tyneham Village - BH20 5DE

FINISH

Tyneham Village

LENGTH

4.0 miles (6.5 km)

SUMMARY

A short ascent from the ghost village of Tyneham leads to the prehistoric ridgeway along the top of the Purbeck Hills, where the massive Iron Age Flowers Barrow hillfort has a tremendous outlook over coastal vistas stretching from Portland to Poole Harbour. There are also panoramic views over huge areas of heathland whose military ownership has preserved them from ploughing and agricultural development, resulting in a landscape that is home to an abundance of wildlife, including many rare flowers, fungi and insects. A good walk for children, who will love the air of mystery in the abandoned village.

Worbarrow Bay is dog-friendly throughout the year and there is a nearby pub where dogs are welcome. Have a look at our **Top Dog Walks on the South West Coast Path** for more dog friendly beaches and pubs.

DIFFICULTY

Moderate

TERRAIN

Apart from one steady climb and a steep descent this walk is fairly level. **The paths around Tyneham village, down to Worbarrow Tout and from Whiteway Hill car park to Flower's Barrow hillfort have been improved to make them accessible to people with mobility problems.**

Route Description

This walk is entirely on the Ministry of Defence's Lulworth Firing range, and is only accessible at weekends (apart from 6 during the year) and during Christmas, Easter, all of August and all public holidays – for more details see our page on Military Training areas. As live ammunition is used, you must not stray off the paths which are clearly marked by yellow posts, and do not pick up any metal objects lying on the ground.

1. *From the Tyneham Village Car Park take the farm track that leads from behind the church, climbing steadily to the chalk ridge of Whiteway Hill.*

In times gone by Tyneham was a tranquil hamlet composed of a handful of cottages, a school, a church, a farm, and Tyneham House (see below). Four Tynehams were listed in the Domesday Book of 1086, thought to be the settlements of Tyneham, Baltington, North and South Egliston. Tyneham itself was held by William the Conqueror's half-brother, Robert of Mortain, and was known then as 'Tigeham', possibly meaning 'goat enclosure'.

Today Tyneham is a ghost village and its school and church are given over to displays of life in the village as it was before it was taken over by the MOD during the Second World War.

It was the invention of the tank during the First World War that brought the military to the area, when a training camp was established at nearby Bovington and a gunnery range at Lulworth. Improvements in weapons by the Second World War meant that larger areas were needed for firing, and public access was barred as the Warbarrow/Tyneham area was commandeered for this. In 1941 the Royal Air Force requisitioned Tyneham House as an administrative centre for the radar station at Brandy Bay, which was part of a long-range general navigation system, and in 1943 Winston Churchill's War Cabinet issued clearance notices to all 106 properties in the area around and including Tyneham village,

giving the villagers one month to quit. Because they did not own their properties, the only compensation they received was the estimated value of the produce in their gardens.

They left a notice pinned to the door of the church: 'Please treat the church and houses with care; we have given up our homes where many of us lived for generations to help win the war to keep men free. We shall return one day and thank you for treating the village kindly.'

However, there was to be no return to the village. In 1948 the War Office issued a compulsory purchase order for the area and a campaign by landowners and local politicians to overturn the order was unsuccessful. A government white paper stated an ongoing need to use the land for military training. At the end of the 1960s the Ministry of Works took down the Elizabethan section of Tyneham House and a new campaign was launched to free the village from the MOD. Prime Minister Ted Heath set up the Nugent Defence Lands Committee to consider whether any part of the area could be returned to private ownership, and in 1973 the committee recommended that the sites at Lulworth be released and the Gunnery School relocated to Castlemartin in Dyfed. The following year the government issued a White Paper rejecting the plan as too costly and in 1975 consideration was given instead to opening up the area to occasional public access, resulting in the establishment of the Lulworth Range Walks.

1. *Turn left as you reach the summit, to take the track leading along the ridge past the trig point. From here it descends gently before pulling up to Rings Hill, ahead, topped by the massive embankments of the Iron Age hillfort of Flower's Barrow.*

Occupying about fifteen acres today, at least a third of the original hillfort has been eroded and has tumbled towards the sea. It is thought to have been constructed in two phases, the first being a simple fort with a single rampart from around the fourth century BC, with further fortifications added at a later date to strengthen the structure. The original entrance to the

south east is still visible, as are three sides of an enclosure, with two banks and ditches. It is also possible to identify occupation platforms on the north-facing slope inside, and the quarry ditches resulting from the removal of the earth to build the banks.

There are also traces of cross dykes nearby, thought to be associated with the hillfort, and remnants of Celtic field systems. To the north west and north east are some thirty acres of small squarish fields, with some irregularly shaped ones too, and strip lynchets between four and ten feet high, cut into the hillside and arranged along contours. On Whiteway and Povington Hills, about twenty acres are divided into regular strips around thirty metres apart, marked by small banks about half a metre high and as long as 150 metres in places.

1. *At Flower's Barrow turn onto the Coast Path and follow it to the left, descending steeply to Worbarrow Bay.*
2. *For a shortcut from the beach, take the fairly level surfaced track following the river through the Tyneham Valley, turning left at Tyneham Farm to return to the car park. For the longer walk carry on along the Coast Path around the headland at Worbarrow, climbing above Gad Cliff for about a mile, until you come to a track on the left, heading inland.*

Here the chalk and limestone grasslands are full of wildflowers and their springy turf is scented with wild thyme. Look out for the pinks and purples of thrift, scabious, thistles and orchids, the blues of delicate harebells and milkwort, and the vivid yellows of cowslips, vetches, trefoils and wild parsnip.

1. *Take this track and descend with it to the valley, carrying straight on ahead at Tyneham Farm to return to the car park.*

Tyneham House was built in the fourteenth century and added to early in the sixteenth century, when the timber hall was divided into two storeys, and further alterations were made throughout the next three centuries. When the Ministry of

Works in 1967 removed the Elizabethan portion of the house in 1967, the east front was reconstructed at Athelhampton and the building's main range was removed to Bingham's Melcombe. The shell of the house remaining at Tyneham is almost completely ruinous.

Nearby refreshments

East Lulworth Village. Near to the walk in East Lulworth Village the Weld Arms is recommended by users of www.doggiepubs.org.uk as serving good food and being dog-fri