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Ballard Down *and* Nine Barrow Down

Panoramic views of Sandbanks and Studland Bay abound on this walk by Edward Griffiths



Distance: 5 miles (8km)

Time: 3½ hours

Exertion: Fairly easy, some gentle ascents on heath

Start: National Trust Pay & Display car park at Bankes Arms, Studland (Grid Ref: SZ038825)

Map: OS Landranger Sheet 195

Public Transport: Wilts and Dorset 50 between Bournemouth and Swanage daily

Terrain: Some avoidable mud and a boggy bit after Newton Woods boardwalk after rain.

Dogs: On leads in Studland and on the golf course

Refreshments: Bankes Arms, Studland for all day bar meals



BASED ON ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPPING © CROWN COPYRIGHT MEDIA 001/13

Just a stone's throw from bustling Swanage there are some surprisingly remote farmsteads, footpaths which are more like sheep tracks, where few people wander, and outstanding views. Early on this walk, the 'underhill' paths below Ballard Down afford fine views over Swanage and Langton Matravers to Kingston ridge, and Nine Barrow Down has panoramic views over Poole Harbour and along Corfe Ridge before you return through farms and along bluebell-lined paths.

This is quite a long, strenuous and hilly walk, though it does reward with spectacular views. For a shorter version

that just takes in Ballard Down, follow the instructions at point 3 for the 2¾ mile version.

The Walk

1 From the lay-by, walk down towards Swanage, past the 50 bus-stop. At 'Tall Trees', take the left footpath-track to the kissing-gate. Into the field, bear half-right to the footpath-stile/gate. Over, follow the right paddock fence to the footpath-stile/gate, then cross the field to the footpath-stile/gate onto Whitecliff Farm track. Reaching the milestone fork, take the right 'Swanage' track down to the facing footpath-stile. Over the stile, continue along the fenced path with fine valley

views. Emerge between houses into Hill Road. Walk down to Moor Road and turn left. Continue to Ballard Down Stores and turn left. Continuing into Ballard Private Estate, follow Coastal Path and Footpath signs. After bending left, facing Ballard Down, take the right footpath after Number 31. Pass 24.

2 Emerging into the cliff-top field, cross half-left for 'Studland'. Descend steps, cross the bridge and ascend the other side onto a long meandering fenced path above cliffs with superb views for ½ mile. Through the 'Coastal Path' kissing-gate, go up 43 steps. Turn left for 'Ulwell' along Ballard Down's narrow lower path. Slowly



Above: Ballard Down cliffs



Nine Barrow Down's
Giant's Trencher facing you

ascending at first, follow the main path, ignoring any forks and keeping straight on even when the path fades. Keep roughly the same level, with trees and fields below, for ½ mile, joining two other paths on the way. At a paths' crossing with 'Swanage' left, continue for 'Ulwell' and 'Woodhouse'. Still ignoring all forks, leave 'NT Ballard Down' through a kissing-gate and continue with Nine Barrow Down's 'Giant's Trencher' dry-valley facing you.

3 Emerging onto a level 'shelf' above the left road, walk to the paths' crossing with 'Obelisk' right. If you want to take the shorter version of this walk make a left hairpin back to the lay-to finish the walk. Otherwise, continue for 'Studland'. Through the kissing-gate, follow the path past left woods and through coppice to the kissing-gate before the Studland road.

Carefully, cross to the kissing-gate 20 yards left of the 'Wareham' road. Through this, cross to the nearby kissing-gate and follow overhead wires to the rising 'Purbeck Way Nine Barrow Down' track left of the Giant's Trencher. Past a left turn with exposed rocks, slowly ascend the mile long track, ignoring the left 'Underhill' fork. Past a bench and through 1½ gates, continue up the fenced bridleway-track to the top of Nine Barrow Down.

4 Through the end 1½ bridleway gates, enjoy the views along the Corfe Ridge and over Poole Harbour. Follow the left fence for ¼ mile and over a low cross-dyke to the milestone. Turn sharp left for 'Knitson', bending left with Swanage ahead. Through 1½ gates, continue down the deep track, through the 2-way bridleway-gate and past the left quarry. At the T-junction, turn right for 'Knitson', through the gate, down the track and past



Looking over Knitson Farm fields to Nine Barrow Down

Photographs by Edward Griffiths

the right farmhouse to the road. Turn left. After Dairy Cottage, bend left at Knitson Farm. Now, take the right 'New Barn ¾' footpath, navigate around the facing low building and leave by the far left corner track opening.

5 Through the gate, descend the fenced track before rising to another footpath-gate. Through this, follow the right hedge. Before the far corner, turn left onto the footpath down the right hedge and into the shady bluebell path. In ¼ mile, after the left camping field, turn left down the road. Round the left bend, take the right footpath-stile/gate. Follow the field's right edge round two sides up to the right-turning track where the trees end. Follow the right edge up and over the field. Past the footpath-post, walk through Godlingston Farm. Immediately past the Manor House, take the left 'Godlingston Hill' footpath-gate.

6 In 70 yards, take the right footpath-stile into a field divided into temporary paddocks. Make your way diagonally-left past an electricity post to a twin-posted stanchion and follow the hedge left down to the corner stile. Over this, go through the facing footpath-gate. Cross the field to twin-stiles on the Caravan Park's corner. Over these, continue along the driveway. Leave by the 'Exit' onto the lane. Turn left. Past the 'Village Inn', cross the Studland road to the starting point lay-by. ■

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