

THE NATIONAL TRUST AND ITS WEST DORSET PROPERTIES

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GENERAL

The National Trust is Britain's largest conservation charity, and has the specific purpose of permanently protecting places of historic interest or natural beauty, for the benefit of the nation. It achieves this through ownership and management of sites in England, Wales and Northern Ireland deemed worthy of presentation.

Founded in 1895 by three Victorian philanthropists - Miss Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley and so concerned were they about the impact of uncontrolled development and industrialisation, they set up the Trust to act as a guardian for the nation in the acquisition and protection of threatened coastline, countryside and buildings.

The National Trust is a charity and is completely independent of Government. We rely for income on membership fees, donations and legacies, and revenue raised from our commercial operations.

We now have 3.5 million members and 52,000 volunteers who gave 2.3 million hours in 2007/08. More than 12 million people visit our pay for entry properties, while an estimated 50 million visit our open air properties.

We protect and open to the public over 300 historic houses and gardens and 49 industrial monuments and mills. But it doesn't stop there. We also look after forests, woods, fens, beaches, farmland, downs, moorland, islands, archaeological remains, castles, nature reserves and villages - for ever, for everyone.

Most of these properties are held in perpetuity and so their future protection is secure. The vast majority are open to visitors and we are constantly looking at ways in which we can improve public access and on-site facilities

WESSEX REGION

The National Trust is divided into eleven administrative regions and the West Dorset properties are situated in the Wessex Region. This comprises the counties of Wiltshire, Somerset, Gloucestershire and Dorset. A regional office is situated at Warminster in Wiltshire, with Area Offices in Gloucestershire and Dorset. The Dorset Area Office is situated near Wimborne.

WEST DORSET COUNTRYSIDE



THE GOLDEN CAP ESTATE

This estate has been built up through around 30 separate acquisitions to its present extent of nearly 1000 hectares. It stretches for six miles along the south Dorset Coast between Eype near Bridport and Lyme Regis on the Devon border, with the famous Golden Cap being the highest cliff in southern England. Much of the land is traditionally farmed with livestock, but in addition there are a number of let houses and cottages, five holiday cottages, more than 25 miles of footpaths, open spaces, semi-natural and plantation woodland, heathland, undercliff and foreshore. The estate has been termed the Trust's 'Jewel in the Crown' on the Dorset coast, and it spearheaded the Trust's Enterprise Neptune Campaign in the 1960's.

There is considerable nature conservation, archaeological, geological, geomorphological and paleontological interest on the estate, which attracts large numbers of visitors each year, particularly to walk the South West Coast Path National Trail. The estate supports one of the largest areas of neutral grassland in Southern England and also has areas of heath and acid grassland. The undercliffs are particularly important culturally for fossil collecting, and support a number of unusual habitats and rare species. The estate is heavily designated; the West Dorset Coast SSSI covers much of the estate, the cliffs and foreshore are candidates for SAC and designated a World Heritage Site status, and AONB and Heritage Coast designations affect its entirety. There is a landscape restoration scheme ongoing.

BURTON BRADSTOCK, COGDEN, WEST BEXINGTON AND RINGSTEAD



Other coastal properties extend to approximately 445 hectares (1100 acres) for a total distance of around 4.7 miles. All are similarly heavily designated for their landscape, natural history and archaeological interests. The properties include mixed farmland, coastal scrub habitat, undercliffs and foreshore. They are all well visited by holidaymakers and walkers. There are a number of Trust owned car parks giving access to the South West Coast Path. Ringstead and Hive Beach at Burton Bradstock are popular shingle and sand beaches and attract families. All except Ringstead Bay lie along the Chesil Beach shingle bar. Ringstead lies at the western extreme of the Isle of Purbeck between Lulworth and Weymouth.

THE DORSET HILLFORTS AND THE CERNE GIANT



The Trust owns five intact hillforts and areas of surrounding land: Lambert's Castle Hill, Coney's Castle, Pilsdon Pen, Eggardon Hill and Hod Hill. These cover a total area of nearly 170 hectares (420 acres) and provide an important representative range of the extensive Iron Age archaeological remains in Dorset. All are scheduled Ancient Monuments but have significant natural history and landscape interests which must also be considered in overall management. Hod Hill is a nationally important site for its Iron Age and Roman remains, and as an area of chalk downland supporting nationally and internationally rare species of butterfly. The Cerne Giant is a well-known chalk figure of disputed origins in the heart of the Dorset chalklands. All these properties, except the Cerne Giant and parts of Lambert's Castle Hill, have unrestricted public access over them, and some are within the South Wessex Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area.

WOODLAND PROPERTIES



Winyards Gap, Langdon Hill Wood, Lewesdon Hill, Turnworth Down and Crook Hill amount to 74 hectares (183 acres) and are mainly ancient semi-natural woodland. Lewesdon Hill has the remains of a much damaged Iron Age hillfort. Turnworth Down is a large area of wood pasture and chalk downland with important archaeological and veteran tree interests, as has Lewesdon Hill. The downland at Turnworth is also of considerable interest. All are unrestricted public

open spaces.

PROPERTIES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

There are four properties open to the public at a charge; Max Gate, Clouds Hill, Hardy's Cottage and the Hardy Monument. All except Max Gate are administered directly by the Trust. Max Gate is let privately and opened by the tenants.

MINOR PROPERTIES

There are a number of minor properties mostly with limited or no public access. The exception is the Village Green at Tolpuddle with historic links to the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Other areas of land (about 700 acres) are subject to restrictive covenants routinely monitored by the Trust.

March 2008