

## Poole Heritage Cycle Route

A circular route between Upton Country Park and Poole Town Centre.

Look out for the penny farthing signs along the route.



*Upton Country Park provides a good place to start your heritage trip, either arriving by bike on the Trailway/Roman road, or the Hamworthy cycleways, with the [bike on the car or by other means](#). Refreshments can be obtained at a kiosk at the house or in the heritage centre.*

We start at Upton House, an early 19th century mansion which is a Grade II listed building set in over 100 acres of woodland, parkland and shoreline. This was built for Christopher Spurrier, one of Poole's "Merchant Princes" and MP for Bridport. The wealth of the Spurriers came from the Newfoundland trade which was based on salt cod. This trade went into decline at the end of the Napoleonic Wars and in 1830 Spurrier was declared bankrupt. It is said that he even lost the family silver in a bet on a maggot race. Subsequent owners included the Doughtys and the Llewellyns.

Near the Heritage Centre you can glimpse the gravestones of a pet cemetery amongst the flower beds.

The Heritage Centre has interpretative panels on the flora and fauna of the lovely gardens. Close by is the Romano-British farm, an archaeologically correct reconstruction of the sort of building that might have stood here 2000 years ago. The thatched building is used by schools as a centre for educational activities.

### ***Down to the town***

Returning up the drive you can now cycle along the shores of Holes Bay passing Pergins Island. Originally this was known as Longfleet bay, Parkstone



bay being called Holes Bay until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Soon

the Old Town becomes visible on low ground projecting into the great Harbour. The Tudor antiquary Leland said of Poole that "it standith almost as an isle in the haven".

Approaching the town, the Victorian houses to the left, on Sterte Esplanade show the historic shoreline, but these too are on land reclaimed when the railway arrived. To the right are some of the old timber wharfs, most now replaced. You will also see the national works for the RNLI.

### ***Along the (long gone) Northern Defences***

We enter  
Bridge(2),  
entrance



the town under the Towngate next to the railway station. The town to Poole used to be defended by a dyke and a fortified gate around here. These defences withstood the Royalist forces throughout the Civil War when

Poole was staunchly for Cromwell and Parliament. Once we get to Baiter, on a clear day the Royalist stronghold of Corfe Castle can be seen nestling into the Purbeck hills across the harbour.

Moving along North Street one is faced with the impressive bulk of Beech Hurst (3) built for Samuel Rolles in 1798.

Around the corner in Lagland Street is the magnificent Victorian edifice of the Free Library, School of Art and Museum (4) given to the Borough by the redoubtable timber merchant JJ Norton in 1887.

We now pass along Green Road and Emerson Road to emerge on the edge of Poole Harbour itself. This great harbour, one of the largest in the world, lies at the heart of Poole's history - it is from here that Poole traders, pirates and smugglers left to make their fortunes.

### ***Baiter Park***

At the end of Green Road, the cycleway leaves the road, and you can explore the open land of Baiter. Historically, Baiter was a narrow peninsula. The ancient maps of the area show a windmill (near 5) on Baiter and the town archives refer to a storehouse for gunpowder at a safe distance from the Old Town (6). There was also an isolation hospital in use until 1936. A cycle link continues towards Poole Park, Lilliput and Bournemouth, but we retrace our tyre tread at the foundations of what may have been the powder house.

At low tide, the outline of the first public swimming pool can be seen (near 5). Built in 1890, salt water and tidal, it was replaced by one in Poole Park in the 1930s.

### ***Fishermans Dock***

Returning towards the town we pass through the hard of Fishermen's' Dock. Here are the modern inheritors of a tradition that goes back over 2000 years. Opposite is Brownsea Island off which an Iron Age logboat (dated 300 BC) was discovered in 1964.



Next we pass Poole Old Lifeboat Station (7) built in 1882. It now houses the retired lifeboat - the Thomas Kirkwright - which served Poole from 1939 to 1962 and participated in the Dunkirk evacuation. The museum is open daily. Close by is a memorial plaque to the United States Coastguard a flotilla of which was based on Poole Quay during World War II saving many hundreds of lives.

### **The Quays**

Soon we are on Poole Quay a delightful mix of historic pubs and warehouses punctuated by narrow alleys. Ahead rises the towering modern sculpture, Sea Music (8), by Sir Anthony Caro. Opposite are the boatyards and Quays of Hamworthy reminding us that Poole is still a working port.

*Note: The Environment Agency have now built a sea defence wall along this stretch. The practical purpose is to prevent waves in winter from overtopping the quay wall, but it incorporates seating and some interesting carvings of items associated with Poole.* A contraflow cycleway takes us along the New Quay to the bottom of the High street. Ahead of us lies the third Poole lift bridge, built in 1927.

Shortly after Sea Music, between the Harbour office and the magnificent Custom House (9), we turn right into Thames Street. We immediately pass between the ancient Town Cellars on the right and the King's Hall of the King Charles on the left. Once this was one building - the longest medieval storehouse known in Northern Europe. The Town Cellars are now part of Waterfront Museum(10) where you can learn more of the story of Poole.

### **Mansions of Old Poole**

Thames Street takes us into the heart of Georgian Poole. If we pause at the junction with Church Street we can see a group of buildings that form a testament to the prosperous days of Poole's dominance of the Newfoundland trade in the 18th and early 19th centuries. This trade saw goods and men shipped from Poole across the Atlantic. Off Newfoundland the most prolific fishing grounds in the world were exploited for millions of cod which were dried and salted. Poole ships then took the salt cod to the West Indies to feed the slave plantations and to the Catholic countries of southern Europe. Back came wine, salt and olive oil to the port of Poole. Vast fortunes were made by families such as the Lesters who built the Mansion House (11) and the Slades who built West End House (12) at the far side of the square.

Turning right to go up Church Street we have St James Church (13) on the left. This was built in 1820 to replace a medieval church. Inside the structure is supported by giant pillars made up from the trunks of massive pine trees brought back from Newfoundland. On the other side of Church Street is the old Church School bombed in the Second World War.

Church Street is a delight of Georgian domestic architecture with occasional medieval buildings such as St George's Almshouses (14) with origins in the 15th century. We pass seamlessly into Market Street (now a one way street) to be faced by the Guildhall (15) an elegant Georgian building of 1761. Originally the arches under the Guildhall were open and the ground floor used for market stalls. The impressive room above was used for Council meetings and courts..

We fork right at the Guildhall steps and follow the side of the building to the corner by the main road. This is the site of the assassination of Alderman

Horatio Hamilton, a onetime mayor of Poole, shot by a discontented water pilot in 1886. The sunken garden to the right contains the town maypole - a modern revival of an old Poole tradition, also in early May, Market Street hosts the Poole Cockle Festival.

*Note: If following the route in reverse, you are advised to continue to the High Street, turn right and right again into New Street. Pause at the junction with Market Street to admire the Guildhall, then turn left.*

### **Leaving the Old Town**

Crossing the main road (New Orchard), and right into Dear Hay Lane, we see ahead the Blue Boar pub (16) once the home of the Adey family of wine merchants. Bearing left of the Blue Boar we go up Market Close passing the Lodge of Amity on the left - home of the oldest Masonic Lodge in Dorset. Further up the close, on the right, is Sir Peter Thompson's House (17) - Dorset's finest Georgian town house built in 1749, and used as the Town Hall before 1923.

Love Lane takes us down to busy West Street be careful as you cross here and when you cross West Quay Road. We pass alongside the headquarters of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (18) an honoured Poole resident. West Quay Road takes us back to the Town Gate roundabout and so to the cycle track back to Upton House. We hope that you have enjoyed this glimpse of Poole's rich heritage.

