



Five go down to the Sea 2017



Walking the Dorset Coast





Five go down to Dorset 2017

DAY ONE (Friday 28th April 2017)

2+2+1 head for Dorset – Durdle Door – Litton Cheney (5.1 mile)

Mrs AB had not been too well; in fact, when I mentioned that I was going on (another?) walking weekend she was speechless. Yes, that's right dear reader; Mrs AB had lost her voice – tragic as this may have seemed, the main benefit from Mr AB's perspective was that she literally could not say no. I'm not an expert at sign language, but I had to duck several times as her hands performed all manner of wild gesticulations in my direction. I can only guess that this meant she was delighted that her lovely husband was embarking on the latest walking expedition to southern climes.

The alarm was reluctantly set for 04:45 am and with the combination of a late night and Mrs AB's persistent coughing, poor Mr AB was deprived of a decent night's sleep. I felt quite weary as I dragged myself out of bed and headed off for the rendezvous at Roger's. The Expo pre-flight checklist was ready:



But wait. Let's just rewind a second to the democratic process that lead to this particular expo. Thanks to returning officer Webb, a referendum was duly held based on a set of candidate locations. Each eligible voter was asked to select three locations in order of preference, from ten candidates – the corresponding points were awarded to each location with 3 points for top choice, 2



points for second and 1 point for third. An interesting exercise with early exit polls revealing their hand to the remaining strategic voters; the eagerly anticipated results were revealed:

Reference	Hostel name and Address	Webb's Comments	Steve	Andy	Mike	Mick	Roger	Total
A	YHA Litton Cheney Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 9AT from £50 per room per night	3 hours drive. Looks like an old Nissan Hut but has 3 stars so can't be too bad.	2	3		2	2	9
B	YHA Portland Portland, Dorset, DT5 1AU from £109 per room per night	3 hours drive. A bit pricey?				1		1
C	Cholderton Cholderton, Wiltshire, SP4 0EW from £72 per room per night	2 hours drive. Anyone fancy some walks on Salisbury Plain?						0
D	YHA Cheddar Cheddar, Somerset, BS27 3HN from £99 per room per night	3 hours drive. More cheese Grommit?				3		3
E	YHA Newport Pembrokeshire Newport, Pembrokeshire, SA42 0TS from £49 per room per night	5 hours drive. Too far?	3		3			6
F	YHA Wye Valley Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 6JJ from £60 per room per night	3 hours drive. Possible?		2	2		1	5
G	YHA St Davids St David's, Pembrokeshire, SA62 6PR from £40 per room per night	5 hours drive. Too far?			1		3	4
H	YHA Exford Minehead, Somerset, TA24 7PU from £70 per room per night	4 hours drive. Exmoor?		1				1
I	YHA Okehampton Bracken Tor Okehampton, Devon, EX20 1QW from £32 per room per night	4 hours drive. Dartmoor?	1					1
J	YHA Dartmoor Postbridge, Devon, PL20 6TU from £100 per room per night	4 hours 20mins. Dartmoor?						0

“I Steven No-legs Webb being the returning officer for Brentwood South do duly declare that the winner of the 2017 Spring Expo venue popular vote with 9 points is(drum roll).... Litton Cheney!”

It just goes to show that you cannot please all the people all the time. In Mike's case, none of his selections included the ultimate winner, Litton Cheney. Of course there were the usual complaints from the minority remoaners:

“...but but I didn't vote for Litton Cheney!!! I may have to consider a referendum for my independence.” – spluttered a disgruntled voter who was finding it hard to come to terms with the democratic process. His demands for a second referendum ... or however many referenda it took until his choice was selected, were unheeded. Now was not the time for another snap election... remind you of anyone?

On the other hand, just one (lucky?) person had Litton Cheney as their first choice:

“It was like waking up with a Trump – as Mrs Brown can testify.” Said an anonymous Mr B.



“Excellent job returning officer (and number two Transapient fan – I hope that did not influence the outcome). Now let me just look at the results. Oh, my goodness, what a surprise, my first choice!

Спасибо ... sorry, what I meant to say was thank you for allowing me access to the electoral database.”

– oh yes it was me!

Still, the second place location (Newport) would have been even more divisive; looks like it would have been an age related split – none of the retired voters had this selection on their list, but it was first choice for the working voters, Mike and Steve.

*Despite his protests about the outcome Mike set about booking the hostel for us all – even for those with lapsed VFA membership. Some forward looking arrangements for breakfast were made by Mick. Shock, horror, the Youth Hostel did not provide breakfast, but don't panic –
////////////////////////////////////
//////////////////////////////////// [sorry about that, Maisie just walked over the keyboard to gain access to my lap]..... On the up side, the White Horse Inn located next door did do breakfast – so they were in for quite a bit of business from us as a result of our trip by virtue of their close proximity to the Youth Hostel. We would keep them game fully employed with:*

(breakfast + evening meal + liquid refreshment) x 2 days x 5 hungry exponents = over £300!

Returning swiftly to the morning of departure, the travel arrangements were becoming re-arranged right up until zero hour. Mike would be picked up en route from a Premier Inn at Petersfield, where he had been working the previous day (not at the Premier Inn itself I hasten to add - I think he was working at Gosport Service station) – this would afford him a few welcome extra hours in bed. Steve made a last minute decision to use his own car in addition to Mick's as his Dad had been unwell so he needed flexible travelling arrangements.



Mick arrived on schedule at Roger's where I had already stowed the Lotus in its designated cloaked parking bay at 5:30 am. The three retirees then made their way to Brentwood where we split the four accumulated exponents into two as Steve was now taking his car separately – are you keeping up with this Mother. Mother? Wake up!

Steve and I arrived at the Premier Inn at Petersfield in good time – well ahead of Mick and Roger. Their Sat-Nav had taken them on a scenic route and also by luck Steve and I seemed to be in the moving lanes of congested motorway traffic. We found Mike in the Premier Inn with his oversized baggage especially designed for extended excursions – it was good that we had two cars



available. We all made use of the local facilities for a light breakfast before continuing onwards to our first walk of the weekend at Lullworth.

The two cars arrived at the spacious and exorbitantly priced car park near Lullworth Cove and were relieved of £7.50 per car – probably our most expensive car park fee to date! The weather was overcast, but dry, and it was good to stretch the legs as we ascended the path from the car park towards Durdle Door.



Steve's GPS track of Lullworth to Durdle Door

I opened my ruck sack in search of the Expo drone camera... and then remembered that we did not actually have one – so I've included a Google Earth view of what we could of recorded:



Andy's imaginary drone's eye view of Durdle Door

It was then that we spotted some curious behaviour from Steve. I think he must have recently been on a health and safety course, as he was inexplicably drawn to every warning and prohibition sign in sight. As it turned out it was fortunate that we neither had nor deployed a drone as one of the first signs clearly indicated that this was not allowed.



Oh look!

No Durdle Door Drones





“No photography” (just joking): Steve surreptitiously snaps several safety signs

The unfolding view...



A bit of a dour Durdle Door day



... reminded me of a previous Brown family visit back in 2007.



Flashback to the summer of 2007: Matthew(5) and Emma(3)



Katy's 1st birthday framed by Durdle Door (August 27th 2007)



Then I remembered that this was a  trip. Which was just as well as there were a lot

of  signs that would be a bit worrying for parents such as:



Slips and trips and falls and what the..!!!!
[do not insert Maisie text here]

Let's hope we would heed these signs and there would be no misadventures to report. Unfortunately however dear reader, some signs were ignored with dire consequences (yes I said dire):



Someone misses a crucial sign – there is a third way beckoning

But let's not dwell on that episode. I don't want this write up to be full of toilet humour. Let us wander down to a tranquil bay just to the east side of Durdle Door and soak up the ambience; marvelling at the geology of twisted sedimentary layers deposited over many millennia.



Oh all right then, that's enough of the heavy rock – it's time for a group selfie... Expo style?



One of these men is about to have a mishap ... probably brought on by pulling up his right trouser leg too far. But no, I said on the previous page that I would not stoop that low – even though he had to. You do not want to hear about it, I can tell you.



With several selfie snaps bagged (Mike's group picture going on to be included in this prestigious publication), we headed up and over to Durdle Door,



*Intrepid Expo photographer ignores warning sign and is swept out to sea while taking daring Durdle Door snap
Note that he tries to keep his new camera dry by raising his arms above his head crying "Save the Nikon!"*



We asked a man with a stick to help pull him out, but he said he was not willing to risk his camera and in any case he was too busy trying to ruin other people's photographs



Leaving Durdle Door behind we ambled along the beach where Roger took this rather splendid shot looking back from Bat's Head towards Lullworth along the beach. Note that this is an unadulterated image with no attempts to detract from the interesting composition – although I was tempted to add a “No Bats” sign in the top right corner.



Bat Man heads to the Bat Cave – “Excuse me, is this the toilets? is this the toilets? is this the toilets?”



Sorry I could not keep up the high level of praise any longer. Oh no here we go again – a picture of two merry men crying out for a crafted caption:



The Dorset Coast is well known for its many fossils that turn up unexpectedly on the beach – the one on the right has probably just inadvertently deleted all his pictures

By now all Exponents were getting hungry – it was quite hard work walking on the subsiding pebbles -so we had a break for lunch sitting on the beach looking out to sea before returning along from the dead end that jutted out to halt any further walking in that direction.

A lone drone was spotted surveying us a short way out to sea – obviously they had not understood the 'No Drone' sign.



We ascended the steps from Durdle Door beach and I noticed a worried look etched on Roger's face. One minute we were pausing to take in the views when we suddenly realised that Roger was conspicuous by his absence. We scanned the horizons near and far to try to locate the wanderer, and then he, or a part of him, was spotted just beyond a distant ridge, his head bobbing up behind a Gorse bush. Telephoto lenses confirmed that it was our man all right, but what the dickens was he... oh. Readers of a delicate disposition should look away now.



Now I know that on the previous pages I said I would not reduce this publication to sordid accounts of unfortunate incidents, but on reflection and consultation with the person concerned, the editor has conceded and agreed that on this particular occasion, provided that a degree of decorum is maintained, the desperate-at-Durdle-Door incident should be included. So here goes...

Desperate-at-Durdle-Door:

After intense image processing, enlargement and editorial cropping we were able to make a positive identification of the missing Expo member – who had succumbed to an urgent and untimely call for a comfort break.



Have you seen this man? Oh - there he is! Just leave him alone for a minute would you

After a while, Roger eventually broke cover and gave us far too much information regarding his disappearing act. Suffice to say that a blue handkerchief, a past gift from Mike, had been sacrificed and now might one day find its way into a seagull's nest – hopefully after a number of storms had done their best to restore it to a usable state once more.



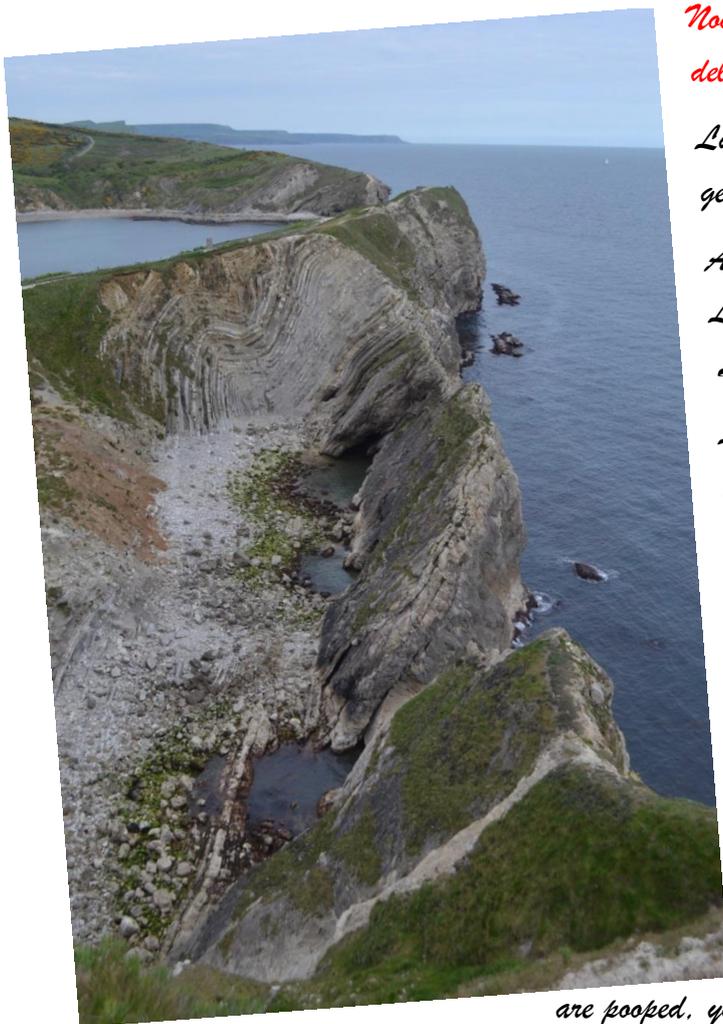
We tried to shake the graphic images from our minds as we headed off to visit Lullworth. But thoughts of Roger's attempt to re-define the Dorset coastline were persistent. Fortunately after bringing up three children, two rabbits a hamster and a cat, I was now immune to any potential psychological trauma from thinking about this type of unfortunate episode.



Okay, let's flush these thoughts away and get back to the main story-line: Oh yes, the path to Lullworth ...



Ah... that's a relief... even the sky has got more colour in its cheeks



Now stop it right now or I'm going to have to delete the previous page.

Lullworth provided plenty of interesting geological features. That's better!

And of course there's the natural harbour of Lullworth Cove. Yes, go on.

The folded limestone strata known as the Lullworth crumple are particularly visible at Stair Hole in the foreground. Splendid!

Did you know that Stair Hole featured in Five on a Treasure Island, a 1957 film? It served as the Kivrin Island landing spot for the rowing boat in the movie.

Yawn. All right that's enough for this page. Now let's get back to the hostel – I'm pooped (oops, sorry).

That's okay; "Pooped" definition: If you are pooped, you are very tired.

Thank goodness for that! By the way, next time please make sure your horizon is horizontal. – Ed.



We arrived at Litton Cheney Youth hostel (which looked like an old Nissan hut) in good time – so after a long day Mick was looking forward to a nice hot shower to freshen up before the evening stroll to the pub. The water started off tepid so Mick quickly lathered up (it's okay Mick, there are no accompanying photos for this account). But rather than heat up as expected the water quickly went stone cold and no amount of adjustment would remedy the



situation. Mick was forced to endure a freezing shower which actually gave him a headache. The boiler was on the blink but we were assured that it might be fixed the following day.



I'm afraid that I had given in to a nap in an attempt to catch up on some sleep; I was just beginning to dream up a sequel to Transparent when I was brought back to Earth in time for the evening meal.



As noted earlier, the White Horse Inn was literally just a few yards away – and so we embarked on the shortest of walks to the welcoming pub next door.

The food and service were agreeable and we would make this our main recovery base for the next couple of days.

Some expo members were particularly pleased with the amenities – as they rehydrated themselves and reflected on the day's events.



Reviving Roger – colour back in his cheeks at last



Okay, let's get rid of that image before there is any more references to toilets and let's hope the showers are fixed tomorrow otherwise we may have to report on more uncivilised exploits.

All exponents slept soundly that night. Well I assume they did – as I said earlier – I was pooped and heard nothing until the early hours of Saturday morning.

DAY TWO (Saturday 29th April 2017)

Seatown - Golden Cap - Lyme Regis (7.3 mile + 7.1 mile bus)

Saturday dawned and instead of the usual Youth Hostel breakfast, we made the short stroll back to the White Horse Inn for the pre-arranged cooked breakfast. The options for the day's walk were discussed and down selected.

The Expo group had two cars at their disposal, which made a linear coastal walk a possibility by dropping off a one car at the end of the walk, and one at the beginning. However another option prevailed, which was to catch a bus from Lyme Regis back to a location close to the starting point – this especially appealed to the more senior members of the party, who could profit from their



advancing years by making use of their old person's bus pass. Alas, I would have to wait at the bus stop until April 23rd 2025 in order to qualify. Now stop feeling sorry for yourself and just get on with the write up will you. Nobody wants to hear about the fact that you are discriminated against by your fellow passengers. It's pathetic!



Coastal walk from Seatown to Lyme Regis via Golden Cap and then bus to Chideock

Steve drove us all down to Seatown where there was a convenient car park with a more agreeable parking fee of £4. With everyone squeezed into one car the parking cost would be 80p per person, as opposed to £3 per person the previous day. I'm sorry but you can't just pad out the write up with trivial points like this – can we concentrate on the walk and see some views please?

We made our way along a coastal path from Seatown, and gradually ascended along the cliff tops towards Golden Cap. I gathered that from the sign post. Any chance of view of the path?



Path towards Golden Cap



At the Cap of Golden Cap – grey skies are gonna clear up – put on a 😊

When we got to the top we had a break to take in the views along the coast from this elevated position. As anticipated the skies began to clear and the rest of the walk would be bathed in welcome sunshine.

It was at this point near steep cliff edges and lingering memories of the day before; we noticed that yet again, one of our party was missing. He had last been seen taking a picture of a sign on a stone tablet – but now was nowhere to be seen (the tablet was still there; but Roger had gone).

With thoughts of tentative search disturb him if it



or was it another dose of the party – not sure whether we was the splatter - sorry ?



we sent out a wanted to mean latter.

Now look here – I'm not sure our readers will tolerate another account like yesterday.

Finally Mike decided to give Roger a ring on his mobile; it was a long shot, but worth a try. The radio waves came to the rescue much as they had done so for many souls in peril and lost at (or in this case nearby) the sea. Thankfully Roger answered to reveal that he had followed a group of people down from the summit – who turned out to be not the people he thought they were. It took quite a while before he realised that the group which he noted were speeding up as he tried to catch them up – were not who they seemed. The pursued group were probably relieved when Roger finally gave up and sat down to eat his sandwiches.

And this is how we found him about twenty minutes later – another “Missing” event resolved.

Okay, I believe that will meet the board of censors' approval – you can keep that bit in.



In search of the wandering Expo member on Golden Cap – tracker Steve back tracks but to no avail



Looking back - I wonder why it's called Golden Cap

After joining Roger for our reunion lunch we set off down the rolling path towards Charmouth. Along the way there were some colourful views to be had – including some photogenic bluebells (my Mum will like that one).



*There'll be Bluebells over the white cliffs of Charmouth?**CUT!***

*At last the distant settlements of Charmouth and further in the distance, Lyme Regis came into view. It was a good job we had not lost Roger, or else we might not have had the following splendid snap. **But wouldn't we still have the picture that Mike took? Good point.***



Snapping the snapper – Mike taking in the coastal view of Charmouth and Lyme Regis



There is something about sun shine that makes you think it's summer and hence time for a delicious ice cream. Fortunately, just below the cliffs at Charmouth there was a beach shop selling ice cream cones and it was just too much to resist. With 5 ice creams in hand we were ready for the beach.



You can't miss it - mine's the blue beach hut



The stroll along the beach was pleasant with various fossil hunters busy cracking open rocks.

I noticed some people were collecting bits of metal that littered the shoreline.

Stepping carefully over large boulders we eventually arrived at Lyme Regis and stood for a while on the prom looking at the view.







Hello Lime Regis

*And so it was time to grab a quick coffee and wait for the bus to ferry us back to Chideock which was not far from the car park. I noticed that an OAP was sitting in the front seat on the top deck of the bus and so I asked him politely not to hog the seat and let someone else look at the view too. He grudgingly moved to one side – and then I recognised him as one of the bus pass holders who had proudly brandished his perpetually free ride card. He looked far too sprightly to be awarded such a concession. *Now, now don't be envious – remember you'll get one too some day.**



Goodbye Lyme Regis – by the way, is that Bill or is it Ben?



A short walk from Chideock to the car park completed the circuit and the end of the walk was marked by snapping a bird later identified as a Snipe (well done Steve).



And there was good news back at base camp: a man in a van had fixed the hot water problem for the showers at the Youth Hostel –so we could freshen up before the short stroll to the White Horse Inn. Of course, there is always one comedian (Mike) who turns on the hot tap full blast at the nearby sink in an attempt to cause discomfort to the unsuspecting showering occupant (Mick). The defence was that this hot water was needed for shaving (unlikely story).

DAY THREE (Sunday 30th April 2017)

Old Harry Rocks (3.8 mile)

The last day of the expo dawned and the weather forecast was not promising. Rain clouds were rolling in from the Atlantic and it was only a matter of when and not if it would start raining that morning. The Tank museum put up a good case for selection, but it was eventually decided to make a dash to Old Harry Rocks for some last dramatic views of the Dorset coastline.

We arrived at a National Trust car park and I was so pleased that I had my National Trust card with me; it was like landing on Free Parking in Monopoly. However I was almost disappointed to find that both drivers were also National Trust members, so my card was somewhat redundant. To make myself feel better I got an extra car park ticket anyway. Maybe I could claim it on expenses.

I really don't think our readers are going endorse such behaviour – and besides, your fixation with car parking fees seems a little obsessive if you don't mind me saying so. Please stick to the coastal path.



It was a grey day. But when we set off it was still dry, so maybe we would be lucky and not get soaked. We soon arrived at the cliff top and took a few snaps of the view.



Sheer cliff faces around Old Harry Rocks





Freedom of the open sea

After capturing scenes around Old Harry Rocks as best we could, we decided to walk a small circuit rather than heading straight back to the car. At this point the rain had arrived and when we got back to the car I was in need of a change of trousers (they were just wet I hasten to add).



The rain in Dorset falls mainly down my corset – not true but he couldn't think of anything else to rhyme



We decided to make the route home more interesting by taking the ferry from Studland across the short stretch of water to Sandbanks. This also gave us one more sign to add to Steve's collection:



Lemming cars ahead

On the way back home there was just enough time for one of these:



Steve orders cream tea for Lisa, Lola and Hanna (not sure how he'll get these home)

Only one delay on the way home to report. A vehicle broke down in the left hand tunnel of the Dartford crossing, so all traffic was diverted to the right tunnel. To celebrate our delayed arrival back in Essex, Mike took this Brexit photograph.



The End is nigh; a can see light at The End of the tunnel

Wawn – can I go home now? Yes, just got to do the credits:

Thanks go to:

- *Mick and Steve for driving*
- *Roger for providing unscripted entertainment and hence write-up footage*
- *Steve for all his signs*
- *Mike for bookings*
- *Everyone for pics*
- *Well Red Ed for his helpful comments and guidance on unacceptable content.*

