

Romans and Railways Trailway

A self-guided tour of Broadstone and district for walkers and cyclists using the Trailway.

This route of about 6 miles can be followed on foot or by bicycle. The surface is variable, particularly on Roman Road, and in some places it will be necessary to get off your bike and walk. Parts of the route are affected by development – proceed with care.

1. Start from the car park in Station Approach, Broadstone and take the Trailway alongside the Sports Centre. This was the site of Broadstone Pond which appears as the first reference to Broadstone on Isacc Taylor's map of 1765. The pond was drained when the railway was built in 1847, and in 1872 a station was opened here called New Poole Junction but it was not until 1890 that the station was called Broadstone.
2. The new bridge crosses the access road to Broadstone Golf Course. The Course was laid out in 1898 for Lord Wimborne's family and friends and was opened by Mr Balfour, the nephew of Lord Salisbury the Prime Minister of the time and later to become Prime Minister himself. The future King George VI played the course during the First World War while on leave from the Navy and Sir Winston Churchill also played here. The club house was originally separated from the course by the railway and the two were lined by an iron bridge.
3. The entrance to Delph Woods is on your right. The word 'Delph' is derived from the Old English word for mining and quarrying and is a site from which local people extracted sand and gravel for building purposes. Taylor's map of 1765 also shows that there was a brick kiln in the area and brick-making lasted into 20th Century. Twenty four acres of woodland are public open space and contain a Woodland Trail.
4. The bridge carries the main road between Poole and Wimborne. The steps leading off to the left bring you to Merley Stores, once a coach house for Merley House, the ancestral home of the Willett family.

The trailway ends at the Willett Arms: cross the main road and the bridge over the Wimborne By-Pass and turn immediately left into the bridleway leading to Willett Road.

5. To your right is the old Blandford to Wimborne Railway line opened in 1860 but closed as early as 1933.
6. This point gives a panoramic view of Wimborne from Canford Bridge to your right (built in 1793), to Julian's Bridge (1636 and rebuilt in 1844).

The main buildings of Wimborne, including the Minster, Deans Court and Old Grammar School, lie in a group of trees across the Stour.

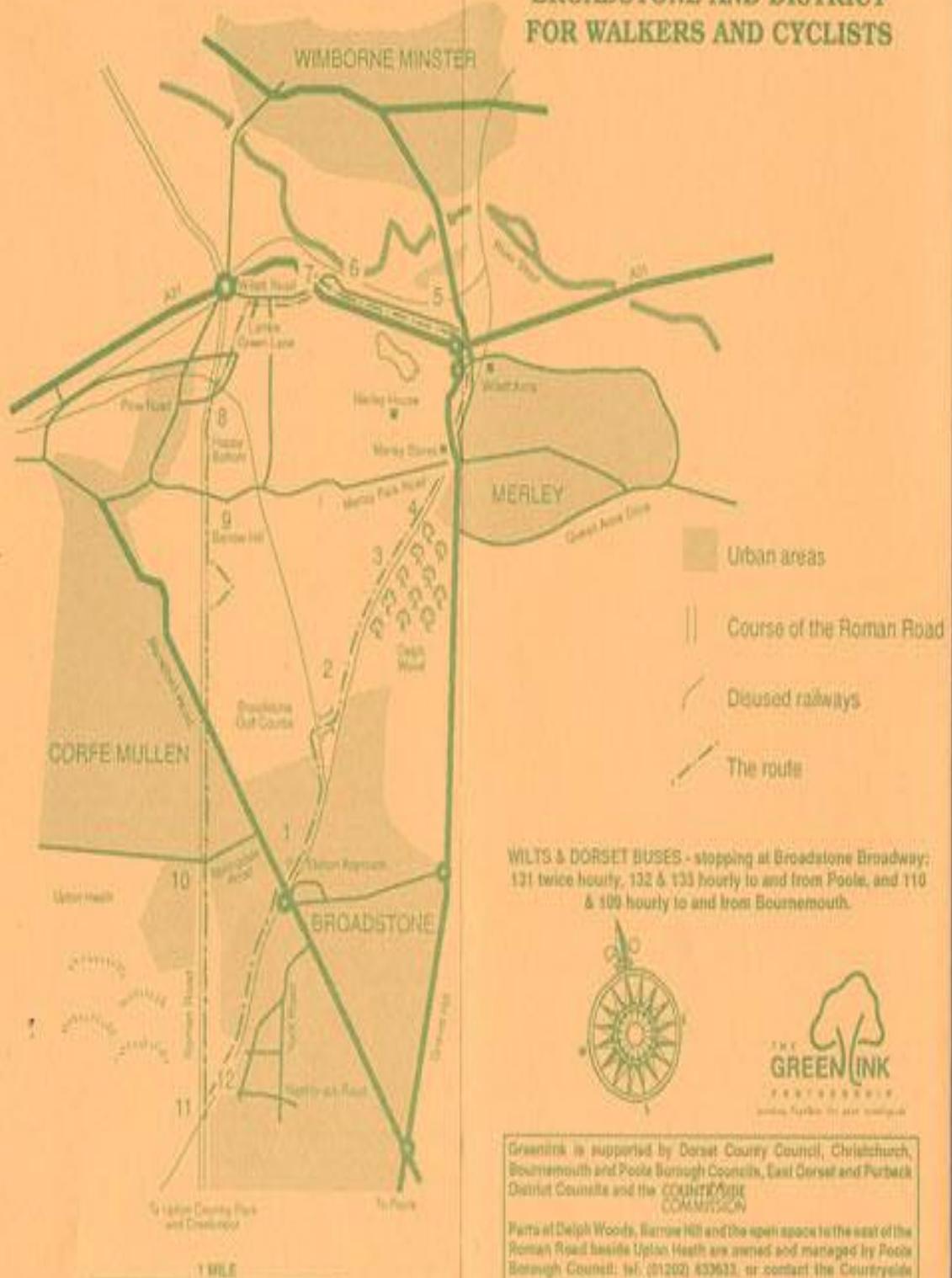
Turn left under the bridge – please leave gates as you find them.

7. This hamlet was the original Merley, pre-dating Merley House and the modern settlement, three-quarters of a mile away. 'Merley' is reputed to mean a glad by a pool.

Take the second turning left into Lamb's Green Lane. At the bend take the gravel path to the right of the chapel-like building. Between Pine Road and Merley Park Road the route is a footpath, not a bridleway: cyclists should walk their bikes here.

8. Happy Bottom forms a pleasant wetland habitat supporting a wide variety of plants and animals. The stream which drains to the Stour acts as a watering hole for deer, foxes and other mammals. No explanation for the name 'Happy Bottom' has been found.
9. Under the bracken to your left is the best preserved section of Roman Road in this area, constructed to support the invasion of 43AD. The turf and gravel construction, with drainage ditches either side, is indicative of the haste with which it was built. This section crosses Barrow Hill which shows evidence of an earlier Bronze Age culture: farming the easily tillable soils on the upper edges of the Stour Valley and burying their dead in barrows or tumuli.
10. Beyond Springdale Road to your right was Corfe Lodge Farm where sixty acres of lavender were grown to supply a perfume factory in Station Approach, Broadstone, at the turn of the century. This area is reputedly haunted by the Lavender Lady of Corfe Lodge who disappeared in nearby marshes while searching for her lost child.
11. The land either side of the route at this point is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Upton Heath is one of the few remaining fragments of the Dorset Heath and provides a fragile habitat for a rare species such as the Sand Lizard and Dartford Warbler.
12. Northbrook Road was formerly called Victoria Road and in the 1930's much of the view would have been taken up by greenhouses on the many small nurseries here. Some of the fruit and vegetables produced here were despatched to more distant markets by train.

A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF BROADSTONE AND DISTRICT FOR WALKERS AND CYCLISTS



WILTS & DORSET BUSES - stopping at Broadstone Broadway:
131 twice hourly, 132 & 133 hourly to and from Poole, and 110
& 109 hourly to and from Bournemouth.

Greenlink is supported by Dorset County Council, Christchurch,
Bournemouth and Poole Borough Councils, East Dorset and Purbeck
District Councils and the **COUNTRYSIDE**
COMMISSION

Parts of Delph Woods, Ramble Hill and the open space to the east of the
Roman Road beside Upton Heath are owned and managed by Poole
Borough Council: tel: (01202) 833633, or contact the Countryside
Service direct on (01202) 833554 for further information.

Roman Road

This Roman Road was built soon after the invasion of 43AD of Vespasian's Second Augustan Legion to aid the conquest of the local tribe, the Durotiges. Initially, its main purpose was to supply a large fortress base at Lake, near Wimborne, from a port at Hamworthy.

From Lake the road was extended northwards towards Bath. Later, when the Romans built the Salisbury – Dorchester Road, the two crossed at Badbury Rings. Fine quality tableware (Samian Ware) originating from potteries near Toulouse and Lyon and wine from other parts of Gaul were imported through Hamworthy. Corn was raised as taxes, ground locally and sent along the road to garrisons further inland. About 60-65 AD with the local tribes subdued, the campaign moved north and the road declined in importance, although continuing in use throughout the Roman period and up to the present day mainly as a bridleway.

The line of the Roman Road can still be followed, with some deviations between Upton Country Park and Eye Mead, Pamphill. Use of local footpaths and minor roads on the National Trust's Kingston Lacy Estate allows the Roman Road to be rejoined near Badbury Rings.

The Roman Road left its mark on the landscape and parts of the original construction can still be seen at Corfe Hills and Barrow Hill. Excavations at vineyards Copse near Hamworthy show that the road surface was gravel built on a foundation of turves collected locally.

The Roman Road also forms the boundary between Poole Borough, East Dorset and Purbeck Districts in the area covered by this leaflet. In some places it is also possible to see the boundary banks which separated the Parishes of Canford Magna (later sub-divided to create the Parish of Broadstone) from the Parish of Corfe Mullen.

Railways

On a summer afternoon in the 1950's, Broadstone was an extremely busy station offering trains to Bournemouth, Weymouth, Bristol, Manchester, Salisbury and Brockenhurst. Your route makes use of the tracks radiating from the station and mainly follows the route of the oldest of these, the Southampton and Dorchester Railway, opened in 1847. This railway provided a less than direct route through Hampshire and Dorset and was affectionately known as 'Castleman's Corkscrew' after a Wimborne solicitor who was instrumental in promoting the line. Passengers for Poole had to go to a station on Hamworthy Quay, until a new line was built between Broadstone and Poole in 1872. With the introduction of this new line Broadstone Station became New Poole Junction.

Just north of the Sports Centre, the railway follows a short section of the old Somerset and Dorset Railway before crossing the bridge by the golf course club house. The S & D opened as the Dorset Central Railway in November

1860 between Wimborne and Blandford, and originally ran almost parallel to Willett Lane. This section was very indirect and closed in 1933. A new link to Corfe Mullen was built in 1886 and this became the main route to Bath and the north. However, despite some very attractive scenery, the line was rarely profitable and was closed to passengers in 1966 as part of the Beeching cuts, although freight trains ran until 1969. The S & D line outlived Castleman's Corkscrew, or the 'Old Road' as it was known, by a matter of months, as in May 1964 Broadstone had lost its passenger service to Wimborne and Brockenhurst. The Corkscrew was foreshortened progressively to West Moors petrol depot until 1974 and to Wimborne and its final closure in 1977. One of the last passengers on the line was Her Majesty the Queen when the Royal Train rested in siding at Wimborne in 1969.

The Trailway

When the railway was closed, British Railways sold off sections of line. The section featured in this leaflet was bought by Dorset County Council and has been converted to a footpath and cycleway by a Manpower Services Scheme for the unemployed managed by Poole Borough Council, who lease the route. Two other sections of the route – between West Moors and Ringwood and a short section at Upton – also form part of a long-term project to provide a route between Poole, Hamworthy and Ringwood. Regrettably, parts have already been lost and alternative routes may have to be sought.

The Willetts

Willett Lane and the Willett Arms take their name from the Willett family whose ancestral home was at Merley House.

The Willett family were Royalists during the Civil War, and on the defeat of King Charles I, Ralph was forced to flee to the West Indies, losing a very respectable fortune in the process. While on the island of St. Kitts, he married Anne Estridge, a lady of considerable wealth. With the family fortune restored, Ralph's grandson, also Ralph, was able to return to England with a first class classical education and a wealth of social contacts. In 1740 when he was 21 his father Henry died and Ralph, suddenly wealthy, was able to buy and rebuild Merley House. This he accomplished between 1752 and 1760 and built a new wing to house his extensive collection of books and paintings. For nearly forty years Ralph Willett entertained the cream of Society at Merley House but on his death in 1795 the estate passed to a relative who sold all Ralph's books and paintings in 1813. The sale must have aroused considerable interest because it lasted a full nineteen days. The house eventually passed out of the Willett family in 1875.