

village was not built with motor traffic in mind. Beware of the high pavements and also be considerate of horse-riders. In the summer months especially the road can get extremely congested as vehicles far too large for our small village attempt to negotiate the narrow streets and restricted bends.



Follow the main road through the village around the comparatively gradual right hand bend then turn "sharp left" by tearooms. You are now in **Rodden Row**. The main car park is approximately 100 metres on your right just before the **Swan Inn**. Here you can park all day secure in the knowledge that you are neither obstructing anyone nor running up a huge parking fine! Being in a central location, the car park provides the perfect point from which to continue exploring Abbotsbury.

Continue your journey **Discovering Abbotsbury** with the next leaflet in this series:

2: St Nicholas's Church

For more information about our village visit the Abbotsbury Heritage website at:
www.abbotsbury-heritage.org.uk

Abbotsbury Time-line

170} million	Jurassic coast formed
100} years	Chesil Beach created
50 } ago	Abbotsbury fault occurred, creating the Ridgeway
6000 BC	First evidence of hunters / gatherers around the Fleet
500 BC	Iron Age fort built
44 AD	Roman invasion of Great Britain began –mill built here?
6 th C	Chapel built by Bertulfus?
1023	Canute gave land, including Portesham & Abbotsbury, to Orc
1044	Abbey built
14 th C	Church of St Nicholas, Tithe Barn & St Catherine's chapel
1540's	Abbey destroyed (Henry VIII), first Manor House built
1644	Manor House burned down in Civil War
1672	First non-conformist meeting place established in Abbotsbury
1765 along	Second Manor House built Chesil Beach
1890's	Railway opened – for iron ore mining initially, then tourism
1913	Second Manor House burned down, third one built (badly)
1934	Third Manor House demolished
1939-46	British & US forces occupy Abbotsbury
1950	Railway closed
2000	World Heritage status awarded to Jurassic Coast

DISCOVERING ABBOTSBURY



1: An Introduction to the Village (Drive)

Prepared by Chris Wade & Peter Evans for
Abbotsbury Heritage Research Project



The visitor's first impression of Abbotsbury is of a picturesque, rural village nestled between rolling hills. To fully appreciate Abbotsbury's awe-inspiring setting it is best to approach the village from the west. If you have a car (it's a steep climb on foot!) take the B3157 through the village going towards Bridport and pull off the road into one of the convenient lay-bys at the summit of the hill above Abbotsbury. From this vantage point there is a spectacular panoramic view of the village, the Jurassic coast and surrounding countryside.



From the top of Abbotsbury hill the vista looking eastwards along the Chesil Bank to the Island of Portland is stunning. Down to your right, behind a screen of trees lie **Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Gardens** and just beyond them the **Fleet** (the stretch of water between the Chesil Bank and the mainland) broadens out in a sheltered lagoon to form **The Swannery**. As the eye moves inland, the 14th century **St. Catherine's Chapel** stands solitary upon a hill that dominates the village, its ancient terraced slopes leading the eye downwards towards the church and village.

The range of hills to the north and east of the village is known as the **Ridgeway**. This line of hills serves to protect Abbotsbury from the worst of the weather.

In winter the hills are often shrouded in mists whilst Abbotsbury basks in unseasonable sunshine. The prevailing weather generally comes up from the southwest. Storms approaching from the Atlantic rise over Start Point and deposit their rains to the west of Abbotsbury leaving the village unscathed. This coastal stretch with its sea breezes rarely suffers from prolonged frosts or snow in winter months. "Sub-tropical" may not be a term that the local people apply to their surroundings when a south-westerly gale blows up from off the beach but the existence of the gardens with their exotic plants and trees nonetheless gives evidence of an unusually temperate climate.

On Wears Hill, to the northwest of the village and forming the western end of the Ridgeway, lies **Abbotsbury's Iron Age hill fort**. The existence of these Celtic earthworks suggests the presence of a settlement that later possibly evolved into Abbotsbury Village. The fertile valley below the hill fort is sheltered and would have been protected by the fortification, the villagers being secure in the knowledge that they could always retreat to the safety of the hilltop if danger threatened. The hill fort is certainly worth a stroll around the ramparts.



If you cross over the road from the lay-by and take the little turning on the right marked "Ashley Chase", the hill fort lies upon the brow of the hill to the left of that lane. We suggest you explore the fortifications leaving your car in the lay-by at the top of Abbotsbury hill as there is extremely limited parking adjacent to the fort.



The views from this vantage point are unparalleled. This hill-fort is unusual in that it is triangular in shape. The two mounds on the seaward side were probably lookout points. Excavation of the fort has revealed no evidence of attack or siege yet there is evidence to suggest that there was a Roman signal tower here. It is also known that there was a beacon placed here at the time of the Spanish Armada to alert the population in case of invasion and a new basket was erected as part of the commemorations for the 200th anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar.

The fort was obviously of great importance to the Iron Age population because of its strategic location. At the first sighting of any seaward invasion the news could be passed to the other great hill-forts making up the defences of the region, notably Maiden Castle and Eggardon. Looking south-westwards from the fort provides another stunning view, this time over Lyme Bay. From this observation point it is claimed that you can see all the way down the coast to Start Point near Plymouth on a clear day.

Drive back to Abbotsbury village. Take care when driving through the village as the width of the street varies considerably because the