

Netherway out and about 2020

This booklet is a list of notes, tips and personal recommendations which hopefully will make your stay more comfortable and enjoyable and is a supplement to our welcome notes. It's a living document and we will aim to update it from time to time. These are personal recommendations but we would welcome contributions from our guests – just send us an email if you wish to make some recommendations (credited or anonymous) to the benefit of future guests and we will include them in a section!

arden.

Where to buy food and provisions when you arrive.

Supermarkets

The village shop and post-office is small but well stocked and opens until 7pm on weekdays and until 5pm Saturday and midday Sunday. The staff are very helpful and friendly and the meat is from a local butchers, so is excellent quality (try their sausages). You can buy chilled wines, lagers and beers at a very competitive price. The trout is also very good and very fresh from Lee's trout farm (you will see the van round the village with the sign '*Watch Out there's a Trout about!*')!

The nearest supermarket is the small Co-op in Shillingstone village (about 2 miles away). There is a larger Co-op in Sturminster Newton (about 4 miles away). The Tesco in Blandford Forum is much larger and there is also a Morrison's near the high street, which can be accessed from the Town Centre car park, convenient if you wish to walk round the town as well.

There is a Marks and Spencer food hall in Blandford, located in the centre on the Wimborne road out of Blandford. We have started to use it quite regularly when we are working on the cottage, the 'meals for 2' - main course, side dish, desert and wine for £10 we find are good quality. There is also a Lidl discount supermarket located on the most northerly Blandford bypass roundabout which for this not familiar offers cost effective basics and a small but interesting range of specialities using their local buying power in the European countries where they operate.

Further afield the largest supermarkets in the area are in Gillingham with a large Asda and a Waitrose.

Well worth a visit for an independent supermarket that is a bit different is 'Dike and Son' in Stalbridge. This is very popular with the locals who enjoy supporting a supermarket that has been family run since the 1850s. It is large enough to purchase everything you need in one shop. Stalbridge is also home to Else's Butchers (you can buy their meat in the village shop at the same prices).

Other food and drink shopping

If you are looking for more specialty or fun items the closest delicatessen is Olives et Al. This is good quality if a little expensive for standard items. It's on the Sherborne road on the outskirts of Sturminster, turn right out of the cottage going to Sturminster and turn left when you reach the main Sturminster road, the opposite direction to the mill and traffic lights.

There is also a delicatessen in Sturminster centre, occasional parking places outside where you can buy local pasties and meat from the butchers. Other good butchers can be found in Blandford- J Mato and Sons in the main high street or Stuart Pearce Family Butchers across the road. This butchers has an interesting range including their sausages - try their curried goat which they make occasionally. Mato are quite famous in the area and also supply the pub for the Friday meat draw. Down the road from there is a good 'artisan' bakers called Oxford's.

Also with convenient parking is the Dorset Larder in Blandford, with a bakery next door to Stuart Pierce selling good bread, pasties etc. If you are in to sourdoughs it probably has the best loaf, though not cheap at £4.25 for a large loaf but worth a try. To save you asking them their Wiltshire pasty is more meat and with gravy!

Buying food on foot

As mentioned above, the Village Shop is well worth a visit with a good range of stock for a small shop at competitive prices. If you wander around the village, there are also various houses selling fresh eggs from their own chickens or ducks.

The Mud Pie Cafe is open on a Saturday from 10:30 until 12:30 at the Village Hall which is just at the end of the road to the right of the church. Here you can buy home-made cakes, bacon rolls, coffee and tea.

The Royal Oak is the village pub and they are always very friendly and welcoming, they are now offering food some lunchtimes as well, check with their board outside. We think the food is good, honest reasonably priced and there is a cosy open fire in the public bar in the winter. Quite a few of the locals go for an 'early doors' drink some weekdays which is a tradition we have started to adopt.

There is also a Fish and Chip van in the car-park of the Royal Oak on a Tuesday evening between 5:30 to 7:30. You can purchase your fish and chips here to take-away or to eat in the pub if you wish, where they provide plates and knives and forks etc. It is best to arrive not too late otherwise they may have sold out!

Food , drink and wine further afield.

Breakfast

When we have been working on the cottage we have often had breakfast out. Here is our experience so far:

The closest good breakfast cafe is 'The Stur of the Moment' at the Gillingham end of the high street in Sturminster, opposite Symonds the estate agent. The cooked breakfast is always well prepared and the owners are very friendly.

In Blandford there is Café 65 in the centre, which also serves good coffee. Or for something a little more unusual there is the Yellow Bicycle Cafe in Salisbury Street. Or for a more upmarket touch, try the Hall and Woodhouse brewery which serves until 2 pm.

Takeaways

If you fancy a bacon roll, olives et al are OK but pricey, served with good coffee. You can also get takeaway pastries from the village shop in Child Okeford . Other takeaways to consider:

The fish and chip shop in Sturminster is excellent. We will add to this list as we receive recommendations. On a Tuesday, like the Royal Oak there is a Fish and Chip van outside the Old Ox Inn in Shillingstone, where you can buy fish and chips from about 6:00 to 7:30 and take them into the pub with you where they provide plates, cutlery and condiments to eat them in comfort. The van can also be found outside The Baker's Pub in Child Okeford on a Thursday where we understand you can also eat your fish and chips inside the pub, but we have as yet to experience this one.

The best Indian takeaway is Spice India in Blandford who deliver to the cottage, cash on delivery. If you like a hot curry try their Naga chilli chicken. Chinese: try the in Townhouse

Dragon in Sturminster - they do not deliver but you can have a pint in the Swan opposite whilst waiting.

Wine and beer

Here are some tips for wine and beer purchase:

Concerning beer purchases a trip to the Hall and Woodhouse beer shop in Blandford is a must. The prices are no cheaper than the supermarket but the choice is better and they often have special edition brews you cannot get elsewhere. The brewery tour is also good on a rainy day, you need to book. 01258 452141 or drop in, at the centre Blandford near Tesco.

Turning to wine, the barn complex off the main road in Hinton Martell is the No.8 wine company, a good wine shop with a range of prices. There are tastings on Fridays around 5.30 if you want to get some wine for the weekend. The building is a converted barn, designed by Western Design Architects who have designed a similar conversion to the Netherway Barn (yet to be completed).

If it's a cup of tea you are after, try Comins Tea house in Sturminster. They buy teas from all over the world directly and brew them properly in the cafe. The owner is very helpful and informative.

The closest for a cream tea is the Willow guest house in Shillingstone (also do meals and good service). If however you fancy a ride out we recommend the Wishing Well in Upwey, about 20 miles away. Corie used to visit there as a child and it's still very good, with a nice garden around the wishing well.

Sunday Lunch and other meals

Apart from the Royal Oak in the village we would recommend also the following:

The Ibberton in Ibberton does fantastic Sunday roast , the best we've had for a long time but closed sometimes in August (the owners have a family too).

The Saxon Inn in Child Okeford we tried recently - good and very friendly.slightly further afield is the Crown in Marnhull on the Gillingham road which has a good carvery and atmosphere.

A guest has recently recommended also the Kings head in East Stour.

If you really want to push the boat out Plumber Manor is very good for refined meals. Here you need to book well in advance. It's food and service are from another era with sumptuous beef wellingtons and a famous sweet trolley served in country house surroundings.

The White Horse in Stourpaine is an excellent all round pub. It is well run and has been visited on occasions by Prince Charles. Try their homemade scotch eggs when fresh- they are delicious! They also serve Guy Richie's brewery beer called 'Lore'.

Trips to towns and other places

We think the following are worth considering, in rough order of distance:

Sturminster Newton . Obvious as it's on your doorstep. Don't forget to check out the water mill, working and very interesting if you are into that sort of thing (you can buy the flour made in the mill). Also there is a surprisingly large modern theatre complex in this small town. Toya plays there occasionally, married to Robert Fripp, 'King Crimson' who went to my old school in Wimborne!

Shaftesbury is a hill town with the famous Gold Hill used in the Hovis bread adverts. You can enjoy a drink or snack at the top looking down the hill. (The Mitre) or there is a cafe on the top of Gold Hill.

Blandford is also a must as it's so close, interesting architecture - the whole town burnt down in 1850 and was rebuilt in the Georgian style by the unfortunately named 'Bastard Brothers'. On the outskirts of Blandford is Bryanston, one of UK's most famous public schools. In the early 1950s my father was fortunate enough to win a scholarship there. You can drive through the main arch into the grounds.

Wimborne Minster (which was my home town) is also worth a visit, very attractive with good local shops and plenty to eat and drink. I bought my first pint in the White Hart behind the Minster. There is a theatre there called the Tivoli. During my youth it was termed the 'flea pit' where we used to see the latest films when they had completed the run in Bournemouth. Now it's trendy with plays at past celebrities performing.

In a similar vein try Wareham with quirky shops and some pubs by the bridge on the river (kids swim there in the summer). It has a renovated old cinema called the Rex with a quaint bar showing both modern and classic films.

Dorchester is the county town of Dorset on the banks of the River Frome. There are a variety of large and small shops and an up and coming Brewery Square development with a wide range of restaurants including Carluccio's, Nandos, Wagamama, Zizzi to name a few.

On the outskirts of Dorchester is the new town, Poundbury, which is an interesting place to see a range of different architectural styles of buildings in a new development. Of course this is the Prince Charles inspired development. It does work, the buildings are elegant but I would not like to actually live there as it would be like living in the film set of Mary Poppins or maybe The Prisoner. In August, the Dorset Food and Arts Festival is held here in the Queen Mother's Square. Here you will also find the Duchess of Cornwall pub which for a new build is impressive in its design, with a large wooden staircase in the centre.

To the North East of Dorchester, only about a 20 minute drive from Netherway, you can visit the Langham Wine Estate and Vineyard. Here you can purchase or sample some delicious sparkling white wines, go on a tour of the vineyard, or enjoy afternoon tea at the Vineyard Cafe.

If you fancy a day out in a big town, try Bournemouth. It combines the usual shops with attractive gardens with a meandering stream towards the pier. The Bournemouth International Centre (BIC) is the largest for big name entertainment and there is also the Winter Gardens and Pavilion. Like many towns the shopping centre has become a little tired, the M&S has closed for example but still maintains some charm. If you fancy a fun restaurant try the Turtle Bay with a Caribbean cocktail atmosphere and spicy recipes like goat curry.

Poole is also worth a visit with a modern shopping centre and an older high street leading down to Poole quay with shops, bars and potteries.

On a sunny day we would recommend a visit to Brownsea Island, owned by the National Trust. It's an island in Poole Bay reached from a boat service which operates from Poole Quay. Red squirrels populate the Island, the rest of the UK having largely been driven out by the aggressive grey squirrel.

To the north there is Salisbury with the magnificent cathedral. Sherborne is an interesting town with upmarket shops, antiques and the Abbey.

Country walks and visits near the cottage.

There are plenty of walks and footpaths directly from the cottage. If you are feeling fit a walk up Okeford hill on a sunny morning is advised. Turn right past the church and follow the path to the top, there you have a magnificent view of the village and surrounding countryside. The road at the top leads past Bryanston to Blandford and is a good route to approach the village. That view is magnificent, one of the best in Dorset, looking down towards the village, the vale and Hambledon Hill to the right so don't miss it!

Hambleton Hill was recently purchased by the National Trust. It is one of the best preserved Iron Age hill forts in Great Britain and one of the best preserved Neolithic landscapes in Europe. Approach it from Child Okeford. The north side is very steep and was used by Colonel Wolf in around 1750 to train his troops for the battle of Quebec. Then finish with a swift half in the Bakers arms.

Cerne Abbas

A beautiful village with the added attraction of an ancient giant, cut into the chalk hill. The origins are unclear, the earliest recording of the site was in the mid 17th Century (after Netherway was built!). The giant is best seen from an official vantage point off the A352 just to the north of the town. If you wish to make a morning or afternoon, here is a suggestion: Park at the car park near the vantage point and take the path towards the Giant. It is possible to circumnavigate the whole hill if you really wish to, however we would recommend turning back and following the path into the centre of the village, very pretty. The village is liable to flooding and very interesting to walk round. We would recommend a pint of Cerne Abbas ale in the Royal Oak, or if you wish to have a more upmarket meal try the newly- refurbished New Inn.

The Coast

Although the cottage is inland it is a good base for visiting the varied Dorset coastline as the sandy east and the rugged west are approximately equidistant from Okeford.

The Dorset coast is magnificent and varied, from the sandy beaches of Poole bay to the Jurassic rocky beaches further west. Its good to explore the contrasts, so we will briefly recommend a tour from east to west:

Starting at Bournemouth- this is the most heavily populated area of sandy beach, fine if you want a combination of sea, sand and shopping. It is possible to walk on the beach or promenade all the way west to Sandbanks. However if you are looking for a family day on the beach we would recommend you start at Canford Cliffs to the west of Bournemouth.

Canford Cliffs and Sandbanks have the most expensive real estate in Great Britain outside central London. Arrive early as it's difficult to park, however you will be rewarded with a walk down through the cliff through a wooded area where in the summer season dragon flies can be seen.

At the bottom you will see the Blue Flag rated sandy beaches of pool bay stretching from the east towards Bournemouth and to the west towards Old Harry Rocks in the distance.

You can walk to Sandbanks from here, the most popular beach in the bay with parking (again arrive early in peak season). Sandbanks has a few extra attractions/ eating places for young people.

Continuing our journey west along the coast, drive west towards Sandbanks with the bay on your right and the sea on your left towards the toll ferry to Studland and Swanage. You will need to be patient in peak periods in the queue.

On the other side of the ferry there are unspoilt beaches as part of the Studland Nature reserve – including a naturist beach.

There is also a now-renowned Restaurant called The Pig if you fancy and upmarket lunch - and a pub nearby. In any case if you are now lost put SO42 7QL into your satnav.

Continuing on by car you reach Swanage, a typical Victorian- built seaside town with cafes, kiosks, harbour and a small funfair.

It is at Swanage where the terrain of the coastline changes west as you leave Poole Bay and enter the more rugged Jurassic coastline. Travel to Wareham, a quaint town which houses the Rex cinema, still in service. In the 1970s I used to go there and enjoy a pint of beer in the interval which they allowed you to take back into the cinema for the main showing. My friends locally said this was still possible.

Towards the coast Worth Matravers is well worth a visit. If you look on the map there is a road which follows this peninsula but keeping a mile from the sea. There is a great pub there called the square and compass operated since the late 1700's. You are served by 2 small serving hatches and either drink in the 2 small bars or outside overlooking the coast. You can also walk down to the sea, there is a footpath which is part road down to Winspit. Winspit is the site of a disused quarry from the 1940s where there are a series of man made caves. The coastline is great and there are some footpaths down to the sea where some people camp, barbecue or swim in the pools the sea has carved out from the stone. Just a long enough walk to restrict high numbers in peak season.

Leaving Wareham and my misspent youth, head south towards Lulworth Cove. This is a 'must' visit, despite being a bit over popular now (again, arrive early or outside peak times). If you are fit for a cliff walk the best advice is to park at Lulworth, then walk the short but steep walk up the cliff and down to Durdle Door, a natural arch formed in the rocks.

Head back towards Lulworth and down to the cove with a safe rocky beach. There are plenty of eating and drinking places, in the village up from the Cove and one shellfish café on the beach. There are places selling lobster and prawn burgers, they are ok -ish but suspect more prawn than lobster. There is also a small fish shop there, expensive but we have tried it and it's good quality and fresh.

Travel further west and the coastline becomes less accessible by car, it remains rugged until reaching the sandy bay of Weymouth. Weymouth is another Victorian seaside town, much larger than Swanage with a greater variety attractions. It was of course the venue for the 2012 Olympic sailing competitions. It also boasts the relatively famous sand sculpture competition as the sand is particularly fine for sandcastles which hold their shape well. The beach is good; the tourist area behind the bay is full of bars and shops quite 'touristy'. It's probably best to aim for the harbour area if you want to soak up the atmosphere of the town.

Head south of Weymouth on the A354 and you arrive at Portland. At first sight Portland looks a bit dull but persevere toward Portland Bill, which is well worth a visit – and particularly exciting on a windy day where you can experience the waves crashing on the rocks.

Returning from the Bill you can stop at the vantage point and look North/ west to see the magnificent Chesil Beach. There is a car park where you can stop, its worth walking over the Chesil for a view of the sea- swimming is not possible /dangerous. However, if you would like to try your hand at fishing the Mackerel fishing is particularly good along the Chesil. (By the way if you are really keen to try there is a fishing tackle shop in Blandford where you can buy a beach casting set).

Continuing on the B3157 north, the Chesil breaks from the land for a stretch so its not possible to see the sea. However a lagoon is formed between the land and sea. If you are interested in a stroll, you could turn left and wind down to Langton Herring. You can park in the pub there, have a taste of ale and walk down to the lagoon.

Bridport and West Bay

Continuing west from the Chesil if you enjoy beautiful Gardens then Abbotsbury Tropical gardens is worth a visit, right near the Chesil so you can visit the sea from there. Then continue on to Burton Bradstock, a pretty village, also of note due to the Beach (National Trust) where the coast turns to sand. Here if you like fish you can enjoy a meal or snack at the Hive Beach Café, which has grown from a basic tea kiosk into a rustic gourmet restaurant, self service and good for fish.

From Burton Bradstock you join the A35 to reach Bridport . Bridport is a very enjoyable market town and close enough to the sea to hear the seagulls. Here you can eat, shop and maybe browse for some antique items or books. If you are planning a meal, a visit to Balsan's Butchers is well recommended. Located at the west bottom of the high street on the left, it is Britain's oldest butcher which last year celebrated its 500th anniversary! It has survived the English civil war (and before the Kangaroo was discovered according to a local we met in the pub!) It is famous for its faggots. When we purchased some last we held the boot open for a restaurateur who in turn suggested to us that they are delicious fried in a little butter then moistened with half a glass of red wine.

From Bridport drive barely a mile towards the coast to West Bay. Those guests familiar with the ITV series Broadchurch will know this well; The coastline takes on a dramatic evolution with steep cliffs and a sandy bay at the bottom.

We have nearly reached the end of the coastal tour now, but there is one other attraction to mention. Lyme Regis, further west and near the border with Devon is again worth visiting. Parking is possible on the outskirts and there is a reasonably short, steep walk into the town and harbour through some gardens. The harbour is worth a visit, from there you can go on fishing trips . In the town there are a variety of specialist shops celebrating fossils (we brought the small exhibit of an ammonite there).

We hope some of this information will be of interest to you. Please let us know if you have any further suggestions and we will add to our collection of notes.