



ROUTE F · HARDY MONUMENT

THINKING OUT LOUD RUNNERS

HARDY MONUMENT & BLACKDOWN

The ridge, the column, the coast from here to Portland Bill. One loop. No shortcuts.

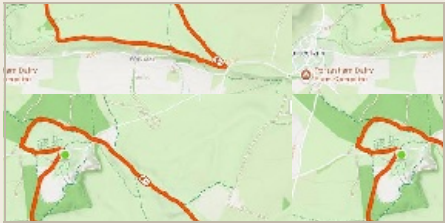
5.96 MI
DISTANCE

863 FT
ELEVATION

MODERATE
GRADING

MIXED
SURFACE

ONE LOOP. ALL THE GOOD STUFF.



The Hardy Monument loop is one of the most complete walks in the Dorset AONB. Six miles, 863 feet of elevation, open heathland, chalk tracks, field paths, and a 72-foot Portland stone column at 771 feet above sea level. The coast is visible in every direction from the top.

The route starts and finishes at the National Trust car park on the Black Down ridge — signed off the B3159 between Martinstown and Abbotsbury. From there it drops south and east via field paths and farm tracks, loops around the lower ground near Waddon, then climbs back via the South Dorset Ridgeway for the final approach.

Three waymarking systems operate throughout: the Hardy Monument Trail blue circular compass rose markers at key junctions; South Dorset Ridgeway posts on the upper section; and yellow Dorset County footpath arrows on the lower field paths. Signage is consistent. A map is still recommended on open heathland.

Note: a group route adjustment is under review on the upper section (gorse, page 4). Route F will be updated once the revised line is confirmed.

QUICK FACTS

START	NT Car Park, Black Down
DISTANCE	5.96 miles
ELEVATION	863 ft
MOVING TIME	2:11:22
GRADING	Moderate
DOGS	Yes — gates throughout
CAFÉ	None on route. Martinstown nearest.
PARKING	NT car park — free for members

1 START · WAYPOINTS 1-5 CAR PARK TO THE LOWER PATH

W01 · START

NATIONAL TRUST CAR PARK

Black Down ridge, off the B3159. Signed for Hardy Monument. Free for NT members — charges apply otherwise. The monument is visible from the car park.

What3Words: confirm on survey walk.

W02 · 0.3 MI

FIRST GATE — SOUTH DESCENT

The route drops away from the ridge immediately. Metal farm gate on the left. The monument disappears behind you — you'll be oriented back toward it for the whole lower loop.

Follow yellow footpath arrows from here.

W03 · 0.8 MI

DRY STONE WALL TRACK

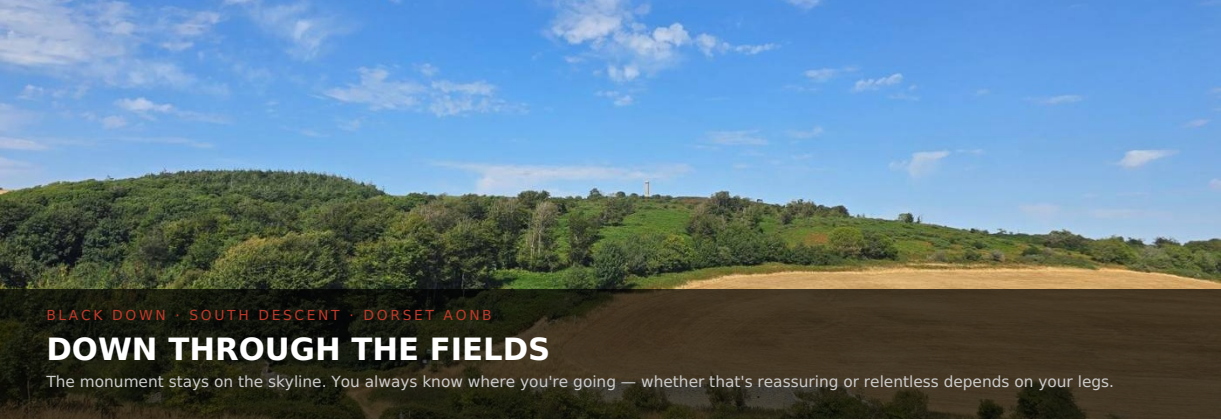
Chalk and gravel track with dry stone walls on either side. The monument reappears as a small spike on the skyline to the north — a useful orientation marker throughout the lower loop. Good surface underfoot.

W04 · 1.4 MI

OPEN FARMLAND CROSSING

The path crosses open field. Patchwork landscape toward the coast in late summer. Gate in the far corner — look for the yellow footpath arrow.

Portland Bill visible to the southeast on clear days.



BLACK DOWN · SOUTH DESCENT · DORSET AONB

DOWN THROUGH THE FIELDS

The monument stays on the skyline. You always know where you're going — whether that's reassuring or relentless depends on your legs.

VICE ADMIRAL SIR THOMAS MASTERMAN HARDY · BUILT 1844 · PORTLAND STONE

NOT THAT THOMAS HARDY

The Hardy Monument was built in 1844 by public subscription, five years after the death of Vice Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy. This is not Thomas Hardy the novelist — that Thomas Hardy was born in 1840, twenty-one years after this one died. Both men are embedded in Dorset's story. Only one has a column on the highest point of Black Down.

Hardy was Nelson's flag captain at Trafalgar. Born in Kingston Russell, a few miles from where you're standing. He was beside Nelson when he died on 21 October 1805. "*Kiss me, Hardy*" — or "*Kismet, Hardy*", depending on your source. The monument is octagonal, Portland stone, 72 feet tall, at approximately 771 feet above sea level.

W05 · 1.8 MI

RIDGEWAY SIGNPOST JUNCTION

South Dorset Ridgeway signpost at the field junction. Hardy Monument marked with mileage. Other destinations include Bincombe and Hell Bottom.

Hell Bottom is half a mile. The name is better than the detour. Stay on the main route.

2

WAYPOINTS 6-10 · THE LOWER LOOP

WADDON & THE RIDGEWAY CLIMB

W06 · 2.2 MI

APPROACHING WADDON

The track runs east. The landscape becomes more enclosed — hedgerows closer, the open ridge left behind. A stile with a yellow footpath arrow marks the onward line.

W07 · 2.8 MI

WADDON — SOUTHEAST CORNER

The furthest point east. The route turns northwest here. Hardy Monument Trail blue circular compass rose marker at the junction — look for it on a wooden post.

Blue compass rose marker on a wooden post. Don't miss the turn.

W08 · 3.4 MI

SOUTH DORSET RIDGEWAY JOIN

The route joins the South Dorset Ridgeway. Wide chalk track. Surface improves noticeably. Views begin to open south. The monument reappears prominently on the skyline.

Ridgeway waymarkers take over from here — consistent to the top.

W09 · 4.0 MI

ONTO THE HEATHLAND

The path enters open heathland. Gorse and bracken on both sides. The character of the walk changes completely — from enclosed field paths to exposed ridge. Big views. This is AONB at full volume.

BLACK DOWN · 771 FT · DORSET AONB

THE VIEW THAT EARNS IT

Abbotsbury to Portland Bill. Patchwork Dorset running south to the Channel. This is what 863 feet looks like from the top.

ROUTE NOTE · UPPER SECTION · UNDER REVIEW · AUGUST 2026

AN HONEST WORD ABOUT THE GORSE

Several sections between W09 and W11 have narrow paths with gorse closing in on both sides. In July, in shorts, this is uncomfortable rather than impassable — but a group with mixed kit would find certain pinch points genuinely frustrating, and the correct line isn't always obvious.

A slightly adjusted line is under review before Route F is confirmed for group use. Route F will be updated once that revised line is confirmed. *The bones of the route are excellent. This is the one fixable problem.*

3

WAYPOINTS 10-14 · THE SUMMIT APPROACH

THE CLIMB TO THE MONUMENT

W10 · 4.4 MI

GORSE APPROACH

Path narrows through gorse. Stay on the main line — where the path diverges, take the wider option. The monument is now clearly visible above.

Note any pinch points for the route review. Section under adjustment.

W11 · 4.9 MI

THE STONE INSTALLATION

Just below the monument: dry stone structures around a standing stone, each with a rectangular window opening. Made from the same local stone as the field walls. A good place to stop.

Look through the window openings for framed views toward the coast.

W12 · 5.2 MI

HARDY MONUMENT

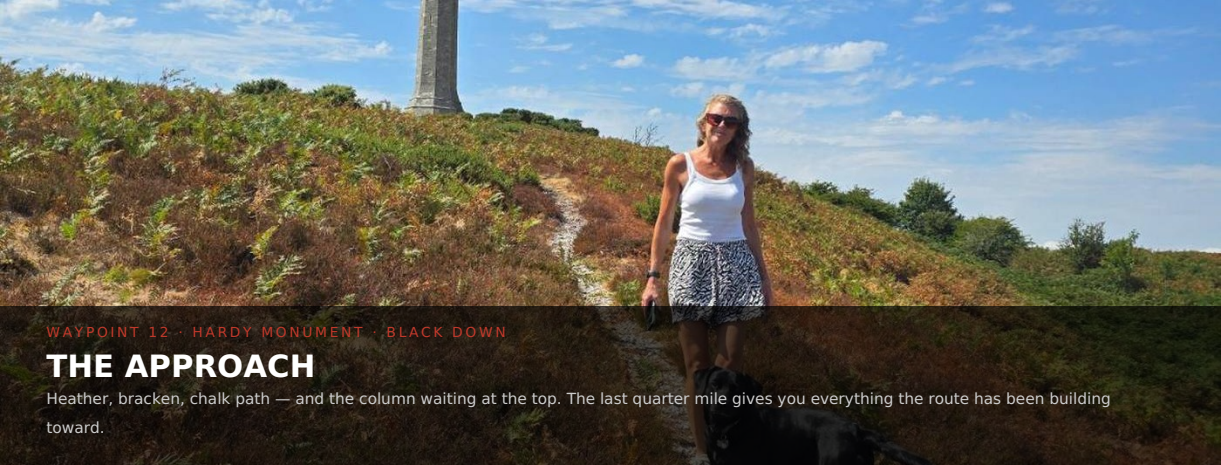
72 feet of Portland stone. 771 feet above sea level. The coast from Abbotsbury to Portland Bill. Fleet lagoon to the west. Colmers Hill to the northwest on a clear day.

NT members can check the website for dates the interior is open.

W13 · 5.6 MI

RIDGE PATH RETURN

From the monument, the path follows the ridge back to the car park. Wide, clear, well-surfaced. Flat and direct — the hard work is done. Good place to regroup if you've been moving at different paces.



WAYPOINT 12 · HARDY MONUMENT · BLACK DOWN

THE APPROACH

Heather, bracken, chalk path — and the column waiting at the top. The last quarter mile gives you everything the route has been building toward.

W14 · 5.96 MI · FINISH

NATIONAL TRUST CAR PARK

Back where you started. 5.96 miles. 863 feet of elevation. 13,192 steps. The monument is still visible from the car park — one of those things that makes you realise how well-placed it is.

If you're stopping, the stone installation (W11) is worth a second look on the way past the monument.

WAYMARKING

Three systems operate throughout:

Hardy Monument Trail — blue circular markers, compass rose design. Handles key junctions.

South Dorset Ridgeway — consistent throughout the upper section and ridge approach.

WILDLIFE & TERRAIN

Terrain: Heathland, chalk and gravel track, field paths, dry stone walls.

Surface: Mixed — chalk gravel (good), field path (variable), heathland (rough in places).

Wildlife: Stonechat and Dartford Warbler on the heathland. Buzzard overhead. Dogs on leads on all farmland sections.

THINKING OUT LOUD RUNNERS · TOL ROUTE F · DORSET AONB

WHAT THIS MIGHT BECOME

The Hardy Monument has been on the TOL list since before we had a list. High enough to feel like an achievement. Open enough to keep a group together. The monument as a shared focal point — and a history worth telling at the top, which is always useful when you're trying to keep a conversation going without it feeling like a guided tour.

The gorse adjustment on the upper section is the outstanding item. Once that revised line is confirmed, this is a group walk. *It stays on the list.*