

Point Hanover – roamed by Mantell's Lizard – over 127 million years ago

In 1992, bones from a Sauropod were found above the beach in the red-brown mudstone. The head was missing, but an almost complete skeleton some 45 feet long can be seen at Dinosaur Isle, Sandown. Polocanthus, a spiky dinosaur, was found in 1864 in a bed of blue shaly clay. This three-foot tall dinosaur is now in the Natural History Museum, London.

Barnes High
In 1854, a perfect femur (thigh bone) was dug out of a fallen mass of cliff. The bone was 3ft 4ins in length and probably from an Iguanodon. A similar find has been made more recently.

Brook Bay
There have been some marvellous finds here – an almost complete skeleton of a species of Iguanodontid with a beautifully preserved skull was found in the mid 20th century. It is now in the Natural History Museum in London. Dinosaur footprints were discovered at the mouth of Chilton Chine in 1978. A very rare and beautifully preserved leg of Valdosaurus (Wealden Lizard) was also found in this area.

Grange Chine to Barnes High
About half a mile from Grange Chine is 3-6 feet thick, grey, muddy layer in the cliff known as plant debris bed. It contains plant material and rare bones can sometimes be found in this "black band". In 1996, the incomplete skeleton of an early form of tyrannosauroid was found. After years of research and further digging this new species was named as Neovenator salerii.



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Hanover Point
At Hanover Point, the 'Fossil Forest' was once a prominent feature. Enormous fossil tree trunks were swept most of them into Brook Bay. Today when the tide is right the remains of blackened fossil wood can still be seen lying in gullies on the foreshore.

Beautifully preserved claws, as well as the pelvis, ribs and vertebrae. Sauropods had very long necks, long tails, small heads, and thick, pillar-like legs.

Main picture in the footsteps of dinosaurs: Hanover Point. Inset left to right Evidence of dinosaurs at Hanover Point; Towards St Catherine's Point; Neovenator bones

Recently a skull of a fossil hybrid shark was found washed from the cliffs. Limestone slabs can be found along with shells and flints. In 2010, at the lower cliffs at the far end of the bay, a collector discovered a species of Sauropod, finding a complete leg and foot with lower rocks which are millions of years old.

Dinosaur Finds
The cliff top here has a gravel layer which has become a burial place of ancient elephants and trees. It is about 10,000 years old. This is no time at all compared to the lower rocks which are millions of years old.

These differences show that conditions varied greatly during their deposition as sediments. For example, chalk, youngest of the Cretaceous rocks, was once the floor of the sea, while many of the much older Wealden age rocks were deposited on land.

Some are full of fossils, while others are barren; some are fine grained and others coarse, and there are many mudstones and limestones among the more obvious. Here are many different types of rocks. Sandstones, along the south east and south west coasts.

All Island rocks are sedimentary in origin (laid down by water), but those in the north were deposited long after the much older Cretaceous-age rocks in the south. Cretaceous sediments are exposed in cliff sections all along the south east and south west coasts.

Running from The Needles in the far west to Culver Cliff in the far east is a ridge of low chalk hills which neatly divides the Isle of Wight into north and south.

Discovering Dinosaurs

Discovering Dinosaurs

Description A linear walk that follows the coastal path, with spectacular seascapes. **Distance** 9.3 miles Compton Bay to Chale. Shorter routes are possible e.g. Compton Bay to Grange Chine 3.5 miles. **Start** Compton Bay and Hanover Point National Trust car park. **Access information** Mainly level walk, apart from when negotiating chines where steps are provided. Diversions may be signposted if there has been path erosion. **Refreshments** Mobile van at busy times at Compton Bay car park. Café at Isle of Wight Pearl. **Toilets** Compton Bay car park and Isle of Wight Pearl. **Internet** All walks in this series can be downloaded from www.iowramblers.com/page44.htm.

Countryside Code

Respect Protect Enjoy

Respect other people

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

Protect the natural environment

- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control

Enjoy the outdoors

- Plan ahead and be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs



If you would like to discover more about dinosaurs on this walk, a good place to start would be a booklet produced by the West Wight Landscape Partnership called *Where Dinosaurs Roamed*. It is available from Dinosaur Isle, Culver Parade, Sandown and other outlets on the Island and costs £2.

"The quantity of bones collected from the seashore in Sandown, Brixton, Brook and Compton Bays, during the last few years, is very considerable; the examples which I have seen... must have belonged to between 150 and 200 individuals. What the waves cast up on the strand, the fishermen gather together, the casual visitor selects such as pleases his fancy, and the remainder are thrown away, or employed to pave the footpath, or surround the flower-border of the cottager's dwelling".

Gideon Mantell

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In season the hop-on, hop-off Island Coaster bus follows the coast between Ryde and Yarmouth. There is also a regular bus service at Brook and Compton Bay (no 12) as well as at Chale (no 6).

With planning, it is possible to walk a short or long route and have time to explore the dinosaur beaches. Access to the beach is possible at some of the chines (clefts in the cliff) when tides permit, and several footpaths lead to the Military Road where bus stops are

located. Great care should be taken when the weather is wet and windy.

Erosion causes the Island to shrink a little each day as rain turns soft rocks into mud and the sea gnaws away at the cliffs. This is good news for collectors as cliff falls reveal fossils: shells, bits of trees, even fragments of dinosaur bones. Occasionally, a large part of a skeleton is found, perhaps a series of vertebrae (backbones), together with a few ribs – all that has survived after

millions of years of burial and erosion. Very much rarer is the discovery of a scientifically-important dinosaur fossil, but it is surprising how many great finds have been made on this small island.

The Isle of Wight's south west coast has yielded the richest collection of early Cretaceous dinosaurs in the world with at least 20 different species already recorded. The area is highly valued for its tranquillity and unspoilt coastal landscapes.



Pictured, left to right Hanover Point; a new chine, Churchill's Chine, appears to be forming in Brook Bay; soft sandstones and clays form much of the cliffs on the south-west coast.

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