

Explore The Cordite Way



Welcome to the Cordite Way!

The Cordite Way derives its name from the Royal Naval Cordite Factory (RNCF) and the Admiralty railway line which originally linked it to Rockley Jetty for transfer of cordite by sea to naval shell production plants.

The route between Sandford and the Trading Estate is along existing footpaths and roads via Holton Heath station ultimately ending at Rockley Jetty **Point 9**. Cyclists can either use Blackhill Road to see the memorial stone or Station Road to see the former RNCF cottages and RNCF administrative buildings.

The route beyond the gates at the Holton Road roundabout (**Point 1** on the map) is on private industrial land and was formally designated as a footpath (SE25/30) by Dorset Council in 2022. The route between Sandford and the Trading Estate is along existing footpaths and roads via Holton Heath station. Enjoy two viewpoints at **Points 6 & 7** offering scenic views of the harbour. Between **Points 3 & 4** the path follows the original cinder path formerly used by security guards.

Royal Naval Cordite Factory (RNCF)

From 1916, the RNCF manufactured cordite, a high-grade propellant used in naval shells during World Wars 1 and 2. The site was chosen for its remoteness and suitability for the production process. Access to the mainline railway catered for input of raw materials. Access to sea permitted output by barge to the Navy Armaments depots at Priddy's Hard near Gosport and Upnor Castle near Chatham until 1938 when deemed too risky due to the threat of war and to avoid attack at sea. Cordite was then sent by trains on the mainline railway.

The site was extensive and manufactured materials of a dangerous, explosive nature. Materials were moved between different zones and storage facilities by narrow gauge locomotives on the internal railway system. Incoming and outgoing materials were moved to transfer areas by standard gauge industrial steam engines. The latter also transferred cordite to the Jetty along the Admiralty line, plus waste ash from the RNCF boilers and the steam engines. The factory closed in 1957.

Explosion and Memorial

A massive explosion occurred in 1931 which was heard from many miles away. 10 staff were killed. A memorial dedicated to these staff was erected in 2015 in Blackhill Road near the Chemring premises.



Cordite Way Timeline

2003	Cordite Way proposed as part of Round Harbour route
2010	Right of Way (ROW) application submitted
2022	March: Footpath confirmed from Holton Road Roundabout to Rockley Jetty (1860m)
2023	Discussion starts with Network Rail on replacing the missing mainline bridge
2023	September: Footpath clearance and route identification commences
2025	March: Phase 1 footpath officially opens
TBC	Phase 2 missing mainline bridge reinstated
TBC	Phase 3 link to Hamworthy or Turlin Moor e.g via a bridge over Lytchett Bay entrance (Point 10)

Restoring the Cordite Way in Three Phases

The Cordite Way is intended to follow the ex-Admiralty railway line trackbed but, after nearly 70 years since the RNCF closed, some of the intended route was overgrown. The section between **Points 3 & 4** was also obstructed by rubble from the demolition of the pyrites store and the ditch alongside was full of mulch, turning the route into a swamp. Just before the footpath was designated in 2022, the mainline bridge that led to Rockley Jetty was demolished, dividing the footpath in half. Clearance of the first section was undertaken during 2023-2024 by Friends of the Cordite Way and Poole Harbour Trails volunteers. Support was provided by the Dorset Council's Senior Ranger (Purbeck). Jade-Aden funded removal of the cinder path mulch and Wareham St Martins Solar fund funded the signage, benches and improved drainage. Ongoing maintenance will rely on DC with volunteer support.



The Cordite Way project is being undertaken in 3 phases:

- ▶ **Phase 1** - Trading Estate to Viewpoints
- ▶ **Phase 2** - Admiralty Viewpoint to Rockley Jetty
- ▶ **Phase 3** - Extension to Hamworthy/Turlin Moor

When the mainline bridge is replaced in Phase 2, access will once more be available to a coastline scenic path to the former jetty location. If a future route and bridge across the entrance to Lytchett Bay (**Point 10**) can be established and funded, a direct and scenic link could be provided to a walking and cycling network between the Isle of Purbeck and Poole area. Work is also underway to create further traffic-free links on a Castleman Trailway extension to Hamworthy Station and a North Dorset Trailway extension to Broadstone.

Flora & Fauna

There is much to enjoy along the pleasant woodland walk to the viewpoints. During one survey in June 2023, 60 species of animals, birds and plants were identified. See what plants and wildlife you can spot along the way. Be careful not to linger too long where wood ants are active!



Sponsored by:



Please note:

- ▶ There are no amenities on the Cordite Way
- ▶ No public parking is permitted between **Points 1 & 2** - park considerably on Holton Rd
- ▶ Respect the countryside code
- ▶ Take all your litter home
- ▶ Dog litter bins are on Organford Rd and Station Rd
- ▶ Cycling is not permitted on footpaths

PHT: Linking and promoting walking & cycling routes around Poole Harbour
Further Information visit: www.pooleharbourtrails.org.uk

© Poole Harbour Trails 2025. ROW & viewpoints: courtesy of Lees Estates and Jade-Aden
Designed and illustrated by Maria Burns Illustration & Design www.mb-id.co.uk Email: maria@mb-id.co.uk

