

Poole Harbour Trails Group

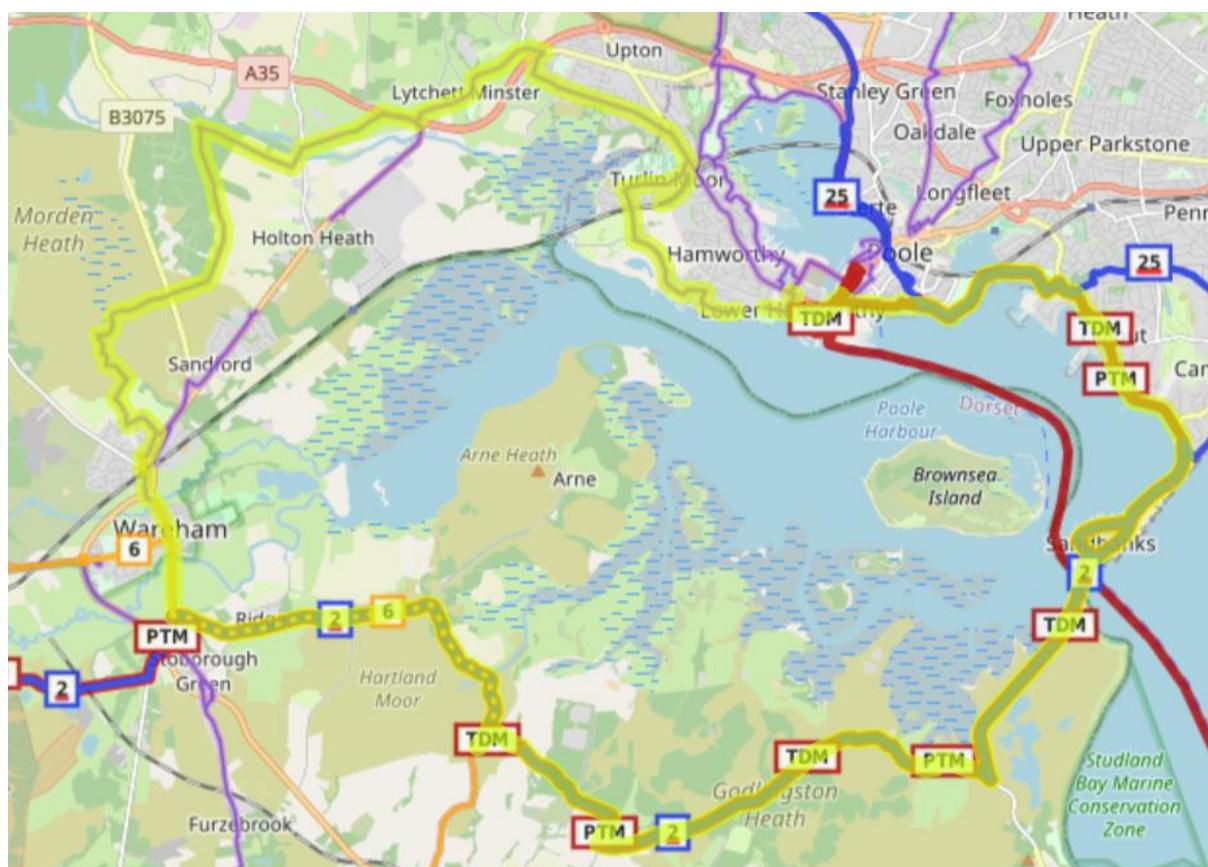
Cycling Trail around Poole Harbour

The Poole Harbour Trails (PHT) group has created a waymarked walking trail right around the harbour, and are working to improve the least attractive and safe segments for both walking and cycling.

A number of other walking trails are also described on our Website <http://www.pooleharbourtrails.org.uk/>



The Round Harbour Cycling Trail is not waymarked, except where it coincides with the PHT walking routes, or joins other waymarked cycling trails. There are a range of possible routes, here we describe a couple of variants and optional linking routes. The main circular route as mapped out and described below is about 49 Km or 30 miles.



The Walking Trail is marked on the Ordnance Survey maps, OL15 is recommended. The Cycling route has been mapped onto OpenStreetMap, accurate to the best of our knowledge and the community mapping there. A good visualisation of the OSM data is at <https://cycling.waymarkedtrails.org/#route?id=15015659>

Like the PHT walking routes, the cycling route can be accessed from local railway stations as alternative starting points. The nearest station to our starting point at Poole Quay is Poole Station, on the London Waterloo to Weymouth Line. To link to other points, there are local stations at Wareham and Hamworthy. Holton Heath Station provides an additional link with a less frequent service, and Parkstone is not far from the route.

Norden Station provides a link from Swanage Railway. There is also a large car park and bike hire at Purbeck Park adjacent to Norden Station. See Purbeck Community Rail Partnership <https://purbeckcrp.org.uk/> for station details.

For the travel weary, the half-hourly rail service between Poole, Hamworthy, Holton Heath, Wareham and Parkstone Stations provides an option for the return journey. Check Rail websites for local services, including Swanage Railway <https://www.swanagerailway.co.uk/> for services between Swanage and Wareham.

Routes A-C form the main circuit, (with Route D as an alternative to C)

Routes N, R and O are optional extensions to the route, to viewpoints.

Route	From	To	Via	Distance
A	Poole Quay	South Haven	Sandbanks	9.8km
B	South Haven	Wareham Station		18 km
C	Wareham Station	Poole Quay	Wareham Forest	21 km
D	Wareham Station	Poole Quay	Sandford	
N	Purbeck Park Norden	access link from the car park		
R	Arne	Shipstall Point		9.6 Km return
O	Ower Passage House			1.7 Km return

a) Pool Station and Quay to Sandbanks

Segment a) <https://cycling.waymarkedtrails.org/#route?id=15013954> is 9.8Km mostly on roads with cycle lanes.

Starting at Poole Bridge, note the Poole Lifeboat station on your right, this now has two inshore lifeboats, and is one of the busiest stations in the country. The offshore lifeboat is now based at Swanage. Head East along Poole Quay, with the flow of traffic. During summer months, motor vehicles are not allowed on the central section of the quay during the daytime. Please moderate speed and anticipate pedestrians crossing. (If doing the route in reverse there is a cycle contraflow in the middle section for when traffic is here).

The sculpture at the bottom of the high street is Sea Music, a gift designed for the site by Anthony Caro who lived locally. There are various historic pubs around here. Fish Shambles is the site of the old fish market.

At the roundabout cross straight over, this is South Quay. Heading past Dolphin Quays and the Quay Hotel, you can see Brownsea Island off to the right. The old Poole Lifeboat station is now a museum. <https://nlii.org/find-my-nearest/museums/poole-old-lifeboat-museum>

At the Cherbourg Roundabout, take the 3rd exit. Shortly after this, turn right onto a path that leads up to the Fishermans Drying Grounds and Fisherman's Dock, and onwards to Baiter. At low tide, the remains of the 1890s sea-swimming pool are visible. A shared path takes you around Baiter Park, with good views out into the Harbour. This then becomes Whitecliff Park. Beyond the football pitches, at the treeline, turn left staying inside the park, parallel with Turks Lane.

Just before the main road, there is a crossing, and a short section of shared pavement to a light-controlled crossing of Sandbanks Road. Turn right onto the on-road cycle lane. This takes you to the top of Evening Hill. (If travelling in reverse, beware of parked cars as you pass the Lilliput shops).

There are great views heading down Evening Hill, over towards Sandbanks, Old Harry rock, and the Purbecks. (In reverse, uphill now has a protected crawler lane). A marked cycle lane now takes you around Shore Road. At the corner, if you go straight ahead, is the beginning of the seafront promenade, which is a level 10-mile cycle to Hengistbury Head (available to cycle except at peak season). Our route around the harbour stays on the main road, now called Banks Road. To your right is Whitely Lake, very shallow and a great place to learn water-sports.

Just past the big Sandbanks carpark on the left, there is a roundabout, and the road splits. The cycle lane is now on the right-hand side of the one-way road, to avoid vehicles queuing for the ferry. Just after the entrance to the Haven hotel is a public toilet, and then the ferry ramp. Cyclists and pedestrians pay for the ferry at the hut to the left of the ramp. The trip across the entrance is only about 5 minutes, if you like you can leave your bike and climb upstairs to get a better view. The tide rushes through here at up to 7 miles an hour at peak. Looking into the harbour, Brownsea Castle commands the entrance. The core was a Henry VIII fort, but the buttresses you see are 19th Century.

South Haven to Greenland

Leaving the Ferry, this is the point at which the South West Coast-path starts, a continuous footpath to Minehead. There is no cycle path, but after a short while, there is a lane to the left for cyclist to go around the Tollbooths. The sandy verge is parking spaces. Road bike users must follow the road, but for mountain bike riders, there is a very sandy track, initially along the harbour side of the road, which then crosses to flow alongside the road on the left.

To your left you can glimpse the "Little Sea". This was open to the sea until Tudor times, and is where the Poole Pirate Harry Paye was reputed to often keep his boat. There is an RSPB Bird Hide.

After a bend in the road is decision time. Greenlands Farm. The shortest route around the harbour is off on a track to the right, but you may want to detour straight on to Studland, which has several pubs, and a great track out to Old Harry Rocks. Or to go even further to the pretty seaside resort of Swanage, and onward to Wareham via Worth Maltravers, where the Square and Compass pub is well known for its fabulous views, homemade cider, pasties and Dorset Apple Cake.

b) Greenlands Farm to Wareham Station (mostly off road route)

Segment b) <https://cycling.waymarkedtrails.org/#route?id=15014049> is 18Km, mostly on gravel tracks.

For the direct route, turn right onto the track, and go straight ahead. This bridleway is waymarked with PHT symbols, and fingerposts to Ower and Norden. It is also on the National Cycleway NCN Route 2.

After about 1Km, bear left, with Greenlands Farm on your right. The track then turns right. Pass over a stream and take the left-hand track, not the one to Goathorn Farm and Point. This is now the line of one of a number of tramways that were used to load ball-clay onto barges, this one leading to Goathorn Point.

Pass to the left of Newton Cottage, and take the right-hand bridleway out into an open grassy area. Pass Ower Farm on your right. Go through a field gate and turn left. You come to a crossroads.

The main route is straight ahead (SW), but you could detour up the right-hand track on a bridleway to Ower Point, which was a passage house, used when ferries plied across the harbour. In medieval times, Ower was an important place to ship Purbeck Marble and other materials. It is now hired as a tranquil holiday home.

[Detour to Ower <https://cycling.waymarkedtrails.org/#route?id=15045155> (1.7Km return)]

Shortly the Poole Harbour Trails footpath heads off to the right, but we cycle straight on across Rempstone Heath, ignoring the left turn.

Meeting a minor road, Meadus's Lane, turn right. Just by Meadus' cottage, the route does a left turn right-angle, and shortly crosses Thrashers Lane. Take the right of the two tracks, now heading North East to Sherford Bridge. In winter months this section can be very muddy. Through a gate, and the path heads south to join a road. Turn left if you want to detour to Corfe Castle, which has several pubs, and the Swanage Railway steam trains.

For our route, turn right towards Slepe and Arne. Another Tramway route crosses the road, the Middlebere Plateway, Dorset's first railway. To the left is now a footpath. We stay on the road to keep going, but you can detour and turn right to go down towards bird hides at Middlebere (Harrier Hide is then a short walk up the hill to the right).

The road descends towards the creek by Slepe Farm, and then rises up again. The road then passes through a section of ancient woodland. Another T-junction, with a detour if you choose, to the Arne bird reserve off to the right. There is a bridleway right across to Shipstall Point, which provides lovely views out to the harbour, and there is an RSPB shop and café in Arne.

[Detour to Arne <https://cycling.waymarkedtrails.org/#route?id=15044949> (7.6Km return)]

For the main route turn left towards Ridge and Stoborough. As you enter Ridge, there is Pikes tramway on the left, and down near the boatyard to the right, an old engine shed. We pass straight on through Ridge to Stoborough. Turn right at the main road towards Wareham. As you cross the water meadows, there is a fine view of Wareham, a Saxon walled town.

If you've time, it is possible to cycle around alongside the walls (or to walk along the top of them). The tightly packed pattern of houses within the walls leaves little space for cars.

There's a market on the Quay on Saturdays. Heading through Wareham there are a variety of pubs and cafés. As you head out of the town, note the small St Martin's-on-the-Walls church built on the wall on the right of the road, where there is a stone tomb effigy of T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia). Wareham is from the old English "Homestead by the Weir", and if you head up the road on the walls to the left, you look down on a lovely old Mill house, on the River Piddle.

Staying on the main road, before the roundabout, there is a cycle path off to the left which leads to an underpass. This takes you to Wareham Station, and a level crossing, which must be crossed on foot.

Wareham Station to Poole via Lytchett Minster

Once over the level crossing at Wareham Station, another choice - the Wareham Forest, or the A351 road route, to the Bakers Arms roundabout in Lytchett Minster.

Wareham Station to Lytchett Minster (Bakers Arms via Wareham Forest)

Segment c) <https://cycling.waymarkedtrails.org/#route?id=14995031> (21 Km)

This is the more scenic off-road route with a shorter hazardous section.

From Wareham station level crossing, skirt the roundabout, and follow the shared path which crosses Bere Road, and across to Northmoor Way. Turn right onto the road. This then bears left. Keep going, and ignore the right turn out to the main road, bear left again. After a while another turn to the left, ignoring Great Ovens Drive. Nearly opposite Burns Road, and just before it, is a bridleway to the right. This leads across the Golf Course and up onto the heath.

There are signs here marked the Sika Trail, but we are also back onto the PHT waymarked trail again. Soon the track forks, take the right-hand branch. This wide track bends around quite a lot, turn right to go over the bridge. When the track turns to the west again, turn right, heading North.

At the bridleway crossroads, turn right, and cross the Morden Road. This track leads you to Organford, with a left turn by the house to join the road. Straight ahead to cross the Sherford River. The building on the right used to be a post office, but is now a private house. Turn right immediately after it onto Organford Lane. This emerges onto the main A35.

This is a hazardous section. Do not cross here unless very confident, but turn right onto the verge. There is no footway, but a dirt track worn on the verge on the southern side of the road.

At the Bakers Arms Roundabout, there is a crossing of the A35. With merging multiple lanes, take great care that you have been seen by both lanes of traffic before crossing to follow the Dorchester Road through Lytchett Minster. There, you may wish to visit either the Baker's Arms pub or further along the road, the St Peter's Finger pub to refresh.

Wareham Station to Lytchett Minster Bakers Arms via A351

This is the more direct and tarmac route, but has a longer hazardous section with no protection for cycling as yet.

From the level crossing, skirt around the shared pavement on the southern side of the roundabout. My preference is to then go straight ahead, under the flyover and on the old Sandford Road. This does mean crossing the main road further along. As you approach the busy main road, there is an uncontrolled crossing point beyond the junction. The far pavement is a shared cycleway. Continue on this until Morden Road peels off to the left. Its an unfortunate diversion, because the main road pavement is narrow between here and the roundabout.

The shared pavement cycle path continues through Sandford as far as the primary school. Cyclists are dumped back onto the road at a narrow and fast section, although the pavement is rarely occupied.

After the Holton Heath traffic lights, the cycle provision starts on both sides of the road, but just after the Blackhill roundabout, you are expected to switch to the right-hand side of the road. This continues past the site of the former Royal Naval Cordite Factory, then the entrance to Holton Lea and an Industrial Estate, to arrive at the Bakers Arms roundabout. Here you must cross the A351, and then the A35, both of which are hazardous because of fast moving and turning traffic.

Lytchett Minster to Hamworthy Station

The Dorchester Road through Lytchett Minster currently has cycle lane markings on both sides, and no central line for traffic. This creates some interesting and dangerous driver behaviour. Past the St Peter's Finger pub on your right, the road swings left towards the Parish Church next to the former Lytchett Minster Primary School, and then swings sharp right.

The main route is straight ahead curving to the right, however, just past the South Lytchett Manor Caravan and Camping Park is a turning to the left. If you fancy a stop, the Courtyard Centre crafts and coffee shop are a short way down this road, turn left again. For the main route, cross over the dual carriageway bridge, and into Upton.

Just past the bridge, turn right into Policemans Lane. Where this joins Watery Lane, turn left. Watery Lane passes French's Farm on the right, and then becomes Sandy Lane, a straight long road. Optionally, from Policemans Lane, turn right for a trip around Watery Lane and Slough Lane past the RSPB site to join Sandy Lane (Watery Lane lives up to its name in winter months).

There are a number of Lytchett Bay nature reserves and viewing points accessible from the south side of Sandy Lane. Optionally turn right into Lytchett Way, follow this around into Shore Lane, and turn right into Boundary Road. This brings you back out onto Sandy Lane just before it joins the busy Blandford Road, and across into Poole territory.

Turn right onto Blandford Road. There are marked cycle lanes here. Pass a garage on your left, and the Turlin Moor playing fields on your right to the traffic lights just before the railway arches.

The Hamworthy Peninsula

Depending on how you feel, there are several options for cycling to Poole Quay from this junction. You could take the most direct route to Poole by continuing along the Blandford Road cycle lanes and via one of the two harbour bridges to regain our starting point on Poole Quay.

To avoid the narrow railway arches, a short deviation is possible via the Hamworthy Station subway (which must be walked). After the subway, turn left then right to cycle along Carters Avenue to re-join Blandford Road.

However, there are two further options. Option 1 is to head past the railway station and circle the Hamworthy peninsula, including Rockley and Hamworthy Park. Option 2 is to head back to Poole Quay via Upton Country Park and Holes Bay.

Hamworthy Station to Poole Quay via Hamworthy Peninsula (Option 1)

To circle the Hamworthy peninsula, just before the first Blandford Road railway arch, turn right at the traffic lights onto Turlin Road. This is also the way to Hamworthy Station.

Turn left into Junction Road and head past the railway station and parking. At the end of the road, is a shared path. This leads to Middlebere Crescent. Take the first left into Russell Gardens. As the road swings to the right, turn left into a cul-de-sac, at the end of which is another section of shared path. This leads to Foreland Road.

If you wish to view the Lytchett Bay Nature Reserve, turn right into Egmont Road, turn left into South Haven Close and then right onto a track to access the Bay. PHT 5b walking route back to Sandy Lane will be seen on the right.

To continue our route, turn sharp left into Foreland Road, and onto another path which leads to a bridge over the railway. On the right is Rockley Park holiday park, on the left, beyond their maintenance yard, is the home of the Marines and Special Boat Squadron (**SBS**).

The shared path from the bridge leads up-hill to the main entrance to the holiday park. You could detour to the right and head straight down to the beach café at Rockley for ice creams and other refreshments, or the Ham Common View Point for great views up towards Wareham. Straight across takes you onto Ham Common, but that is not a through route for cycling. To continue our route, turn left onto Napier Road. At the roundabout, turn right into Lake Drive.

For another view, there is a road marked "Car Park" on your right down to Lake Pier, which has a beach and jetty, and great views up towards Wareham reach. Watch out for Ospreys circling the harbour (see <https://www.birdsofpooleharbour.co.uk/> for project to reintroduce them, and sightings). But the main route bears to the left, past another part of the Royal Marines (SBS) base, and Lake Boatyard. The road turns left and then right into Lake Avenue.

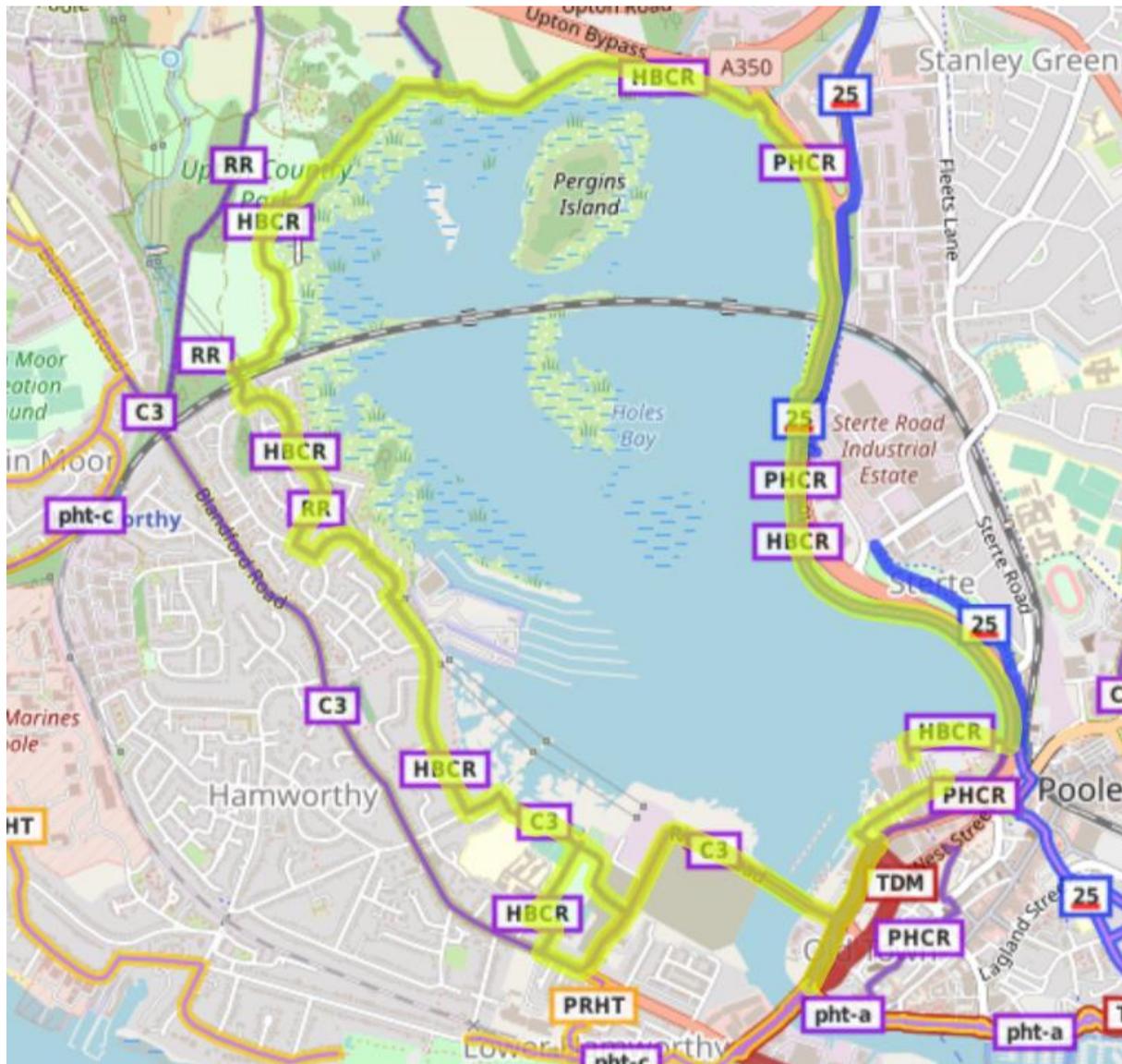
Turn Right into Lake Road. You can pop down to the water here, but to continue, turn left into Branksea Avenue. The houses on your right have great harbour views. At the end of the road we are now in Hamworthy Park. Across the park, there is a track running alongside the railway to a bridge into Harbour Reach. Across the bridge, we turn right past the front of the buildings, and then turn Right onto Norton Way.

JJ Norton was a Victorian Timber Merchant, who funded the free library in Poole (now the Lord Wimborne, a Weatherspoon pub). The Harbour Reach estate is built on what was the Carter Floor Tile Factory, and a long way prior to that, it was the location that the Romans chose for the first camp on their invasion of Dorset.

Norton way leads into Station Road, which takes you out to a mini roundabout on Blandford Road. If you've had enough, go straight ahead (the pavements are shared use), and across the Poole Bridge (built in 1922, the third bridge sited here) to Poole Quay. Otherwise, we can circle Holes Bay.

Circling Holes Bay

This section is a 9.3Km route <https://cycling.waymarkedtrails.org/#route?id=11845890>



If you want to circle Holes Bay, turn left onto Blandford Road. Shortly you will come to a bus stop and the building that was until recently the Potters Arms on the left. On the right is Jefferson Avenue, a new road, but the site of the other Carters Tiles Factory, where wall tiles were made. These were widely used on the London Underground.

Keep going on Blandford Road up to the traffic lights. Here, turn right into Rigler Road. Shortly, take the path to the left, which runs between green fencing. This passes around to the right of the recreation ground, and past the back of the school playing fields. Soon you will get views across Holes Bay.

At the T-junction, turn left, the track passes between houses. Turn right onto Woodlands Avenue. This heads past the entrance to two boatyards. At the end of the road, turn right onto Harkwood Drive. This bends to the left. Turn right into Inglesham Way, and right again into Hewitt Road. You are never far from the waterfront, but it's mostly hidden by houses. This becomes Symes Road. As it swings away from the harbour, there is a path to the right, which crosses the railway via an underpass and into Upton Country Park. Turn right onto the path towards the water. The route from here to Poole Quay is described in Option 2.

Hamworthy Station to Poole Quay via Holes Bay (Option 2)

To cut directly across to Holes Bay, from the station go down the hill to the Blandford Road traffic lights, turn right and pass under the first railway arch. Before the second arch, turn left into Upton Country Park <https://uptoncountrypark.com/> At the first junction, turn right to pass alongside the railway line towards the water, and pass the railway underpass mentioned in Option 1. This now skirts the Country Park, and dips into woodland. There's a bird hide on the right. Upton House has a tea-room and a kiosk for snacks.

Keep going around the harbour edge, you will come to a track winding through woodland along the foreshore. This becomes a tarmac path as you leave the Country Park, with open views of Holes Bay, full of feeding birds at low tide.

The path curves around the whole bay, arriving at traffic lights at the entrance to Asda Car Park. Poole Railway Station is just across the road.

Head across the crossing, and the cycleway bends to the right into West Quay Road. The Poole Bottle Knot sculpture on this junction is based on the knot used to lift large bottles from ships in the port, associated with the 18th Century Newfoundland trade from Poole.

You then pass between buildings that are the RNLI Headquarters, Training school and all-weather lifeboat construction yard. This was previously BDH, that made a range of chemicals amongst others used by schools. Then you pass Sunseekers sales area, and arrive at the Twin Sails Approach. When that bridge is up, it is designed to look like two sailing boats. Cross this road, and head to the old Poole Bridge, which is clad in copper. There's a Twin crossing across the mouth of this bridge, which brings you onto Poole Quay, which is where the Round Harbour Cycling Trail started. Total distance of the shortest trail route around the harbour is approximately 49 Km, 30 miles.

The information is current as of January 2023 to the best of our knowledge, but users of this information need to ensure that their confidence, and their bikes are suitable to the terrain and traffic. We welcome suggestions for omissions, corrections and updates, contact details on our website. <https://www.pooleharbourtrails.org.uk/>

Andy Hadley, Chair of Poole Harbour Trails Group, Jan 2023