

## THE ACCIDENT

The novelist Henry Williamson wrote to Lawrence in May 1935 to say that he would like to visit Clouds Hill. The letter was delivered on the 11th, a Saturday, so on Monday morning Lawrence rode into Bovington Camp on his Brough Superior SS-100 motorcycle, registration number GW 2275, to send a telegram to Williamson.

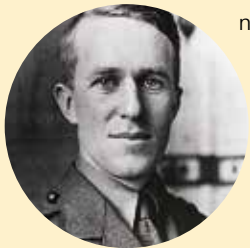
Returning from the post office, Lawrence was travelling fast when he came upon two young cyclists in a dip in the road. Swerving to avoid them, he clipped one of the cycles and was thrown from his motorcycle.

He sustained serious injury and died at the Military Hospital on the 19th May 1935 without recovering consciousness. It was recorded that the cause of his death was congestion of the lungs and heart failure following a fracture of the skull and laceration of the brain.

The inquest was held on the following Tuesday, the 21st, at the hospital. It was conducted by the East Dorset Coroner, Ralph Neville-Jones. Witnesses included the two cyclists, Frank Fletcher and Albert Hargreaves, Corporal Catchpole of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and Captain Allen of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Mystery inevitably surrounds the death of a celebrity but in Lawrence's case it has been excessive. It has been prompted largely by Corporal Catchpole's statement to the inquest that, just before Lawrence swerved to avoid the young cyclists, he passed a black car travelling in the opposite direction. Neither of the boys recalled the car and indeed swore that there was no car.

On 13 May 1983, 48 years after the accident, a memorial oak tree, dedicated to Lawrence, was planted close to the site of the accident by Mr. Tom Beaumont who served with Lawrence in Arabia as his No.1 Vickers machine-gunner. In the nearby woods, another memorial stone has more recently been donated by the T. E. Lawrence Society.



The T.E. Lawrence Society was formed in 1985. If you would like more information, please write to:

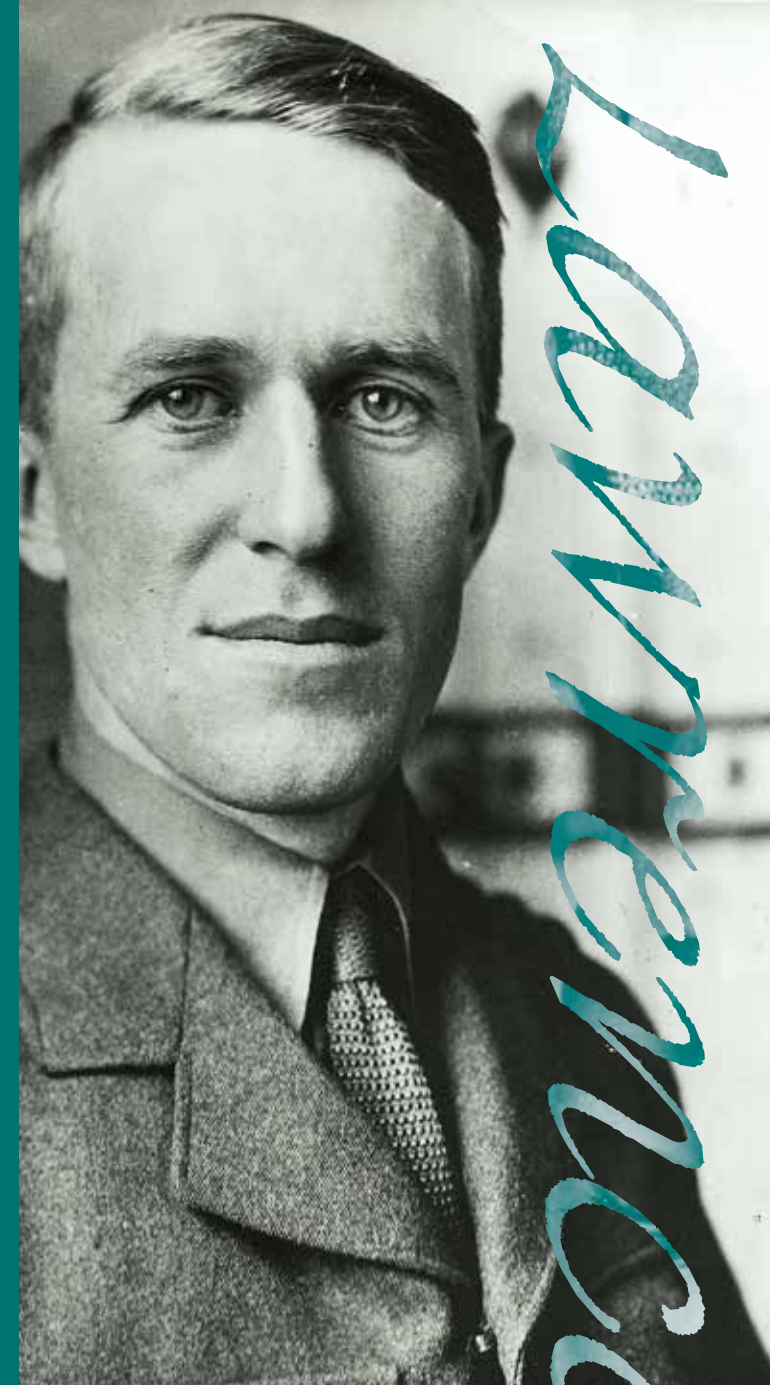
The T.E. Lawrence Society,  
P.O.Box 728, Oxford.  
OX2 9ZJ .  
or email:  
memsec@telsociety.org.uk

You can also contact the society by internet at [www.telsociety.org.uk](http://www.telsociety.org.uk)



Produced by Dorset Council and Dorset Community Action in association with Bovington Tank Museum and David Fletcher, Andrew Fern, HealthWorks, Ministry of Defence, Moreton Church, National Trust and the T.E. Lawrence Society. © 2003, updated 2019.

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# LAWRENCE OF ARABIA WALKING TRAIL

Call 01258 456970 for a large print version.

# LAWRENCE ARABIA

Thomas Edward Lawrence, also known as Lawrence of Arabia, was born in Wales on 16 August 1888. From the age of eight, he lived in Oxford, where he later studied Modern History at Jesus College. In 1909, he undertook an 1100 mile walking tour of Palestine and Syria, collecting material for his thesis, 'Crusader Castles'.

In 1911, Lawrence started work as an archaeologist at Carchemish in Syria, where he gained knowledge of Arabs and Arabic. In 1914 he joined the Army and was posted to Military Intelligence in Cairo.

As Captain T. E. Lawrence he led Bedouin tribesmen in guerrilla raids against the Turkish Army, especially the Hejaz railway. He progressed to Major and then to Lieutenant Colonel. In July 1917 Arab forces captured Akaba and then went on to capture Damascus in 1918, the highpoint of the Arab campaign.

He returned to Britain in 1918 as Colonel Lawrence where he lobbied unsuccessfully for Arab independence. He turned down a succession of prestigious posts and tried to escape from the public eye by changing his identity.

In 1922, he became known as Aircraftsman Ross at Uxbridge, but his alias was discovered. In 1923, as T. E. Shaw, he made Dorset his new home. He joined the Tank Corps at Bovington and purchased nearby Clouds Hill as a retreat. During this time he was to finish writing 'The Seven Pillars of Wisdom' and 'The Mint.' In 1925, he was allowed to rejoin the RAF, and after a spell in Karachi, he was posted to Plymouth, where he lobbied successfully for faster rescue boats.

He spent the rest of his career developing and testing high speed rescue boats, which formed the basis of the air-sea rescue service.

He retired to Clouds Hill in 1935, where, only a few months later, he was involved in a fatal crash on his Brough Superior motorcycle. His final resting place is in the nearby cemetery at Moreton.

## BOVINGTON AND WAREHAM



The Lawrence of Arabia Trail starts at the Bovington Tank Museum and concentrates on his life in this part of Dorset. Why not call in to the museum to see their new exhibitions?

When Lawrence first came to Bovington in 1923, the muddy main street contained a selection of shops and cafes known as Tintown, while the troops were accommodated in wooden huts on both sides of the road.

Lawrence had three diversions at Bovington. He could visit the author Thomas Hardy at his Dorchester home, tear about the countryside on his big Brough Superior motorcycle and restore

the old cottage at Clouds Hill, near Bovington, which he hoped to retire to and in which he regularly entertained his friends.

He did not like the Army and in the summer of 1925 he was admitted to the RAF as Aircraftsman Shaw and posted to RAF Cranwell in Lincolnshire.

In 1935 he came back to Bovington. He had now retired from the RAF and planned to settle down in peace and quiet, but was fatally injured on 13th May 1935 and died six days later in the military hospital at Bovington Camp.

The Wareham Town Museum has devoted a special section to Lawrence with important documents and other exhibits connected with his full and fascinating life. The museum is open Mon-Sat, 10am - 4pm, (April to October). Admission free. Tel: 01929 553448.



## CLOUDS HILL, near Bovington



Clouds Hill was accepted by the National Trust and is held inalienably because of its association with T. E. Lawrence, who occupied it between 1923 and 1935. It was given to the Trust in 1937 by Arnold Lawrence, as he wanted it to be kept for the nation as a memorial for his brother.

Formerly an undistinguished estate forester's cottage of 1808, Clouds Hill was altered by Lawrence. Along with surviving decorations and furnishings, although

incomplete, it today expresses and evokes his austere and sometimes innovative tastes and diverse intellectual interests. Bought as a retreat from his army life he read, wrote and listened to music here. Of the many places where he lived, this is the only one to survive with physical evidence of his occupation.

## ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH, Moreton

Lawrence's funeral service took place at St Nicholas, Moreton, on the afternoon of 21st May 1935. It was conducted by the Rector, Canon Michael Kinloch, was well attended, and widely covered by the press, although the public were asked not to come. Six pall bearers were chosen to represent different aspects of Lawrence's life.

The cemetery is located near to the church and Lawrence's grave can be found at the far end, on the right. Notice that the headstone records his real name, although he was officially T. E. Shaw when he died, having changed his name by deed poll. There is a bust of Lawrence by Eric Kennington in St Paul's Cathedral, while St Martin's Church in Wareham contains a Crusader style effigy of Lawrence, also by Kennington, showing him recumbent in full Arab dress.





# THE LAWRENCE OF ARABIA TRAIL BEGINS AT THE TANK MUSEUM IN BOVINGTON

The complete trail is 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> miles long (10.8 km)

## SECTION 1

**Tank Museum to the River Frome at Moreton**  
Approx. 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> miles (3.6 km)

**i** There are 4 outdoor information panels en-route. The first panel, near the entrance to the Tank Museum, includes information about Lawrence's life here in Bovington. Information about his life in Bovington is also shown overleaf.

Leave the Tank Museum on foot, following the vehicle exit signs and keeping the museum on your left.

When you reach the main road, cross over and turn right. A few metres along the road, turn left onto the track with a wooden signpost towards Moreton.

Follow the track, cross over Menin Road and continue straight ahead with Cranesmoor Close on your left. You will now enter the woodland path.

Continue along this path for approximately 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> miles (2 km) and when you reach the T junction, turn left to the River Frome and Moreton.

### NATURE WATCH in Section 1

Leaving Bovington you pass through deciduous woodland with beautiful displays of **bluebells** in the spring. **Marsh tits** may be found all year round and in the winter watch out for **finches** such as **redpoll** feeding quietly in the birch trees.

The path continues onto what is a fragment of Hardy's Egdon Heath. The open heath is rich in wildlife with **nightjar** and **Dorset heath** (a rare and local plant) in the summer, and **Dartford warbler** all year round. The various pools here support **dragonflies**, **damselflies** and the carnivorous **sundew**. Beyond the heath the path passes across the Frome floodplain. The fields of the floodplain are enclosed by old trees and bushy hedgerows.

## SECTION 2

**The River Frome and Moreton**  
Approx. 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> mile (0.4 km)

Cross over the main river bridge and enter the village of Moreton. On the left is a path to St. Nicholas Church where Lawrence's funeral service took place on 21st May 1935.

**i** The second outdoor information panel can be found at the church entrance. Information about the funeral and cemetery is also shown overleaf.

The church dates from 1776 and is described by one local author as Georgian Gothic. It is also mentioned in the '1000 Best Churches' guide. Unusually, for such an isolated parish, it was struck and badly damaged by a bomb on 8th October 1940. Rebuilt in 1950, it is now graced by a series of exquisite engraved glass windows by the late Sir Laurence Whistler, the last of which was dedicated in 1985. The church is normally open for visitors, and the windows are best viewed from inside. Guide books and cards are available for sale inside the church. After leaving the church, return to the village street and turn left. Bear left again at the road junction. The gateway to the cemetery is on the right hand side of the road (Lawrence's grave is at the far end of the cemetery).

### NATURE WATCH in Section 2

The Frome at Moreton is a fine example of a chalk river that is protected for its wildlife interest. **Salmon** and **brown trout** slip by unnoticed, but look for **grey heron**, **kingfisher** and **reed bunting** all year round and listen for the chattering of **reed warbler** in the summer.

**Marsh marigolds** and **lady's smock** bring colour to the ditches and damp corners in the spring and **lapwings** still breed in the area. There are good populations of both **water vole** and **otter** on the river but you will need a lot of luck to see one.

## SECTION 3

**Moreton to Clouds Hill**  
Approx. 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> miles (2.8 km)

After leaving the cemetery, retrace your steps back over the river bridge and continue straight along the inclining path through Moreton Plantation for about 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> miles (2.4 km) until you reach the main road.

Turn right and take care as you walk along the roadside verge. Turn right at the next road and you will find Clouds Hill on your left.

**i** The third outdoor information panel can be found at the gateway to the cottage. Information about Lawrence's life at Clouds Hill is also shown overleaf.

Opening times for Clouds Hill as of 2018 are daily from the start of March to end of October, between 11am and 5pm or dusk if earlier. Admission charge (free to National Trust members) £7.00 for adults, £3.50 for children.

### NATURE WATCH in Section 3

The track which you follow from Moreton village passes through Moreton Plantation which was once Hardy's Egdon Heath. In the small patches of heathland that remain, a variety of rare and specialized species occur. Look out for **reptiles** on open sunny banks through the spring and summer.

**Woodlarks** and **nightjar** occupy recently felled areas, listen for the latter churring on warm summer evenings before they head down to the flood plain to feed on flying insects and moths.

In late summer, the heath turns an unforgettable purple before it regains its wild and remote feel in winter. Look out for soaring **buzzards** above the plantations and flocks of **crossbill** in the tree tops. This bird has a specially adapted bill for removing the seeds from pine cones.

## SECTION 4

**Clouds Hill to Bovington**  
Approx. 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> miles (4 km)

On leaving Clouds Hill, turn right and right again at the main road, following the verge for 200 metres. Turn right following the public footpath to the right behind Clouds Hill and through woodland. Along this path is a memorial stone donated by the T. E.

Lawrence Society.

Follow the path to the lay-by at the main tank viewing area. On 13th May 1983 a memorial oak tree, dedicated to Lawrence, was planted here by Mr. Tom Beaumont who served with him in Arabia. The planting ceremony took place 48 years after the accident which occurred close to this spot.

**i** The fourth outdoor information panel can be found in the lay-by. Information about the accident and subsequent memorials is also shown overleaf.

After leaving the main viewing area, cross over the road and through the gate to the right hand side of the military training area. Follow this path alongside the training area and on reaching a fence, bear right and through a gate.

Follow the path downhill and bear left at the next junction. Continue into the open heathland and at the bottom of the hill you will come to a sandy T junction.

Turn left here to return to Bovington (this is the same path which you walked along earlier from Bovington to Moreton).

Soon after leaving the woodland, turn left at Menin Road, passing the Students Mess and a car park on your right.

Turn right at the crossroads into Holt Road. This is the area where the Military Hospital was sited and where Lawrence died on 19th May 1935. A commemorative plaque, dedicated to him, can be found in the entrance foyer of the Medical Reception Station which is on the left hand side of Holt Road via Purbeck Way. At the end of Holt Road you will reach the main road, turn right here and return to the Tank Museum.

To Puddletown  
3¼ miles, (6 km)

To Bere Regis  
2½ miles, (4 km)

To Wareham  
5¼ miles, (8.4 km)

**Please note:** The representation of a track or path is no evidence of a public right of way. This is not a Definitive Map of Rights of Way and has no legal status. Users of all routes shown in this leaflet do so entirely at their own risk and are responsible for their own safety, and the safety of others using the same route. We cannot guarantee that all routes will be passable, particularly in wet weather.

- Key**
- ..... Lawrence of Arabia Trail
  - Trail Information boards
  - Places of interest
  - National Cycle Network Route 2
  - Shared Cycleway/Footpath
  - - - Railway line
  - Railway Station
  - Public Telephone
  - Public Car Park
  - Cycle Parking
  - Public Convenience
  - Tea shop/Restaurant
  - Pub
  - Residential areas
  - St. Nicholas Church
  - Bus stop

**Sturdy footwear is recommended for this walk due to rough terrain. It is advisable to take an Ordnance Survey Map with you:**

OS Explorer Map No. OL15 (Purbeck & South Dorset) Scale 1:25 000  
2 1/2 inches to 1 mile (4cm to 1km) or  
OS Landranger Map No. 194 (Dorchester & Weymouth) Scale 1:50 000  
1 1/4 inches to 1 mile (2cm to 1 km)

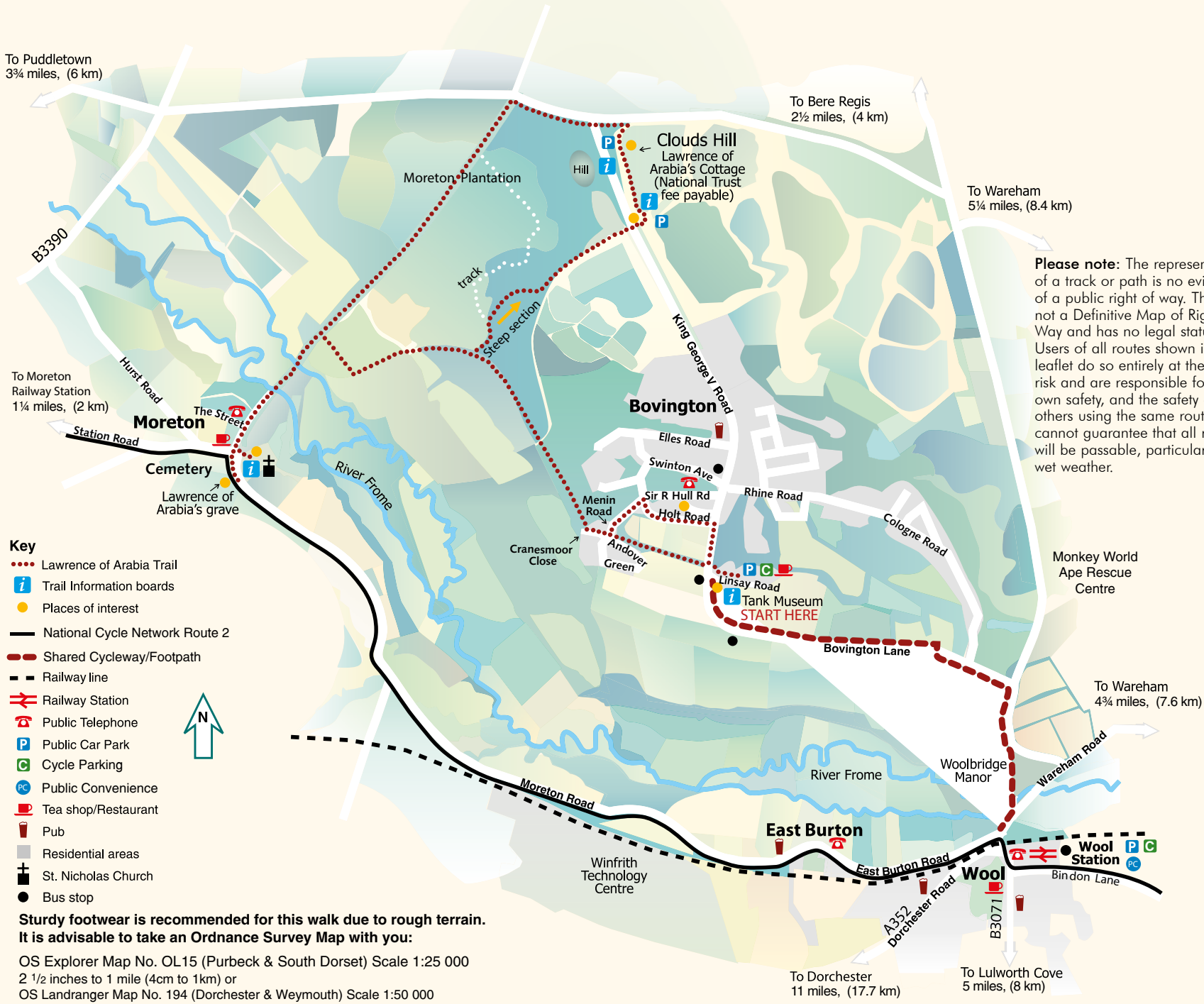
**Public Transport**

X54 Jurassic Coaster bus, 2 hourly service, Poole to Weymouth }  
Trains to Wool Railway Station

Traveline: 0871 200 2233  
Calls cost 12p per minute plus your phone company's access charge.

**Cycle Routes**

Wool Station to Tank Museum 1¼ miles   
National Cycle Network Route 2 - Dorchester to Norden Park & Ride



To Wareham  
4¾ miles, (7.6 km)

To Dorchester  
11 miles, (17.7 km)

To Lulworth Cove  
5 miles, (8 km)