

The changing face of Poole Harbour

Poole Harbour and the surrounding coast has changed dramatically over time. It has seen rivers of ice, huge storms and the wrenching of rock. Meanwhile tides and waves work tirelessly with changing sea level to scour and shape the coast and continue to do so today.



125,000^{BC}
Poole Harbour



125,000 years ago – The area we now know as Poole Harbour was a river valley enclosed by a chalk ridge the remains of which are still visible at The Needles, Isle of Wight.



10-18,000^{BC}
Poole Harbour

The last period of glaciation comes to an end and sea levels rise at rates of up to 1.5 metre per year flooding an ancient river valley to create Poole Harbour.



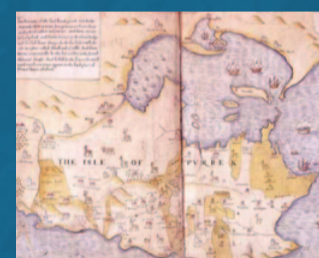
4,000^{BC}
Poole Harbour

Sea levels in the harbour reach their highest point and begin to fall, marking the beginning of a period of varying sea levels.



300^{BC}
Poole Harbour

Sea levels in the harbour are approx. 2.7metres lower than they are today.



1586
Studland

Ralph Treswell completes his map of Studland Parish. At the time Little's Sea was partly open to the sea but has now been closed off by the build up of sand.



1700
Wareham

The marshes south of the river Frome at Wareham were slowly drained to create grazing land as historian John Hutchins wrote in 1774 'they have been improved and made firm ground by cutting drains, and raising the banks of the river, within the memory of man'.

Have we missed anything?
Stick your own stories and photographs here

1800
Poole

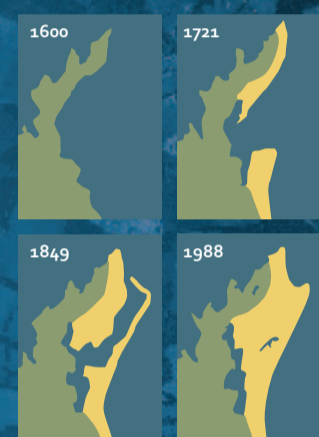


90% of Poole's population was dependent on the harbour for employment, but this dropped to 20% when railways reached the town and deep hulled boats moved to Southampton.

1824
Poole



The great gale devastates the south west coast of the UK. Hurricane force winds and a storm surge flood Poole to depths of 1.5 metres where local people used boats to navigate the flooded streets.



1880
Studland

Shell Bay, at the mouth of the Harbour, erodes more than 1 metre per year, resulting in the loss of 200 metres of shoreline over the next 50 years.



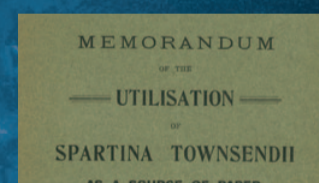
1881
Sandbanks

Postcard of sand dunes and early development of Sandbanks.



1885
Swanage

The arrival of the steam train in Swanage transforms the town's fortunes, bringing in tourists and transporting Purbeck stone.



1890
Brownsea

Spartina anglica, a species of cord grass begins to colonise mudflats in Poole Harbour transforming them into salt marsh and dramatically changing the coast of the harbour in locations like Hole's Bay to the alarm of local people. The spread of Spartina continues until the 1930s when the species begins to decline Poole Harbour Commissioners looked at how the spread of Spartina could be taken advantage of even considering making paper from it.

1891
Brownsea Island



The Pottery works on Brownsea Island with drainage pipes stacked ready for shipping.

1920
Swanage



Construction of Swanage sea wall.

1926
Wareham



The 11th century five arched South Bridge, Wareham's gateway to the Isle of Purbeck is removed and replaced with a wider road to improve access to motorists who had to travel a mile upstream to cross the River Frome.

1930
Brownsea Island



Construction of Brownsea Island defences and Poole town defences begins.

1935
Swanage



The great flood of Swanage.

1945
Old Poole Town



After the Second World War landing Craft are used as a temporary breakwater near Poole Quay. Their remains are still there below the surface today.

1996
Poole Harbour



The Little Egret was confirmed as a new British breeding bird, and by 1999 at least 30 breeding pairs were recorded at a total of nine sites, including Swanage and Poole Harbour.

1999
Poole Harbour



Shoreline Management Plans are introduced by central government setting out how the UK's coastline should be managed over the next 50 years. The whole coastline was split into different sections and each was allocated one of the following management options: 'Do Nothing', 'Managed Retreat' or 'Hold The Line'.

2005
Swanage



Swanage beach recharge scheme: During the winter of 2005/2006, 1.1 million cubic metres of sand was dredged from Poole Harbour channels and pumped on to the beaches of Swanage, Poole and Bournemouth to protect them from erosion as part of a £5 million coastal protection project.

2005
Swanage



Storms and high tides caused flooding in Swanage.

2008
Poole



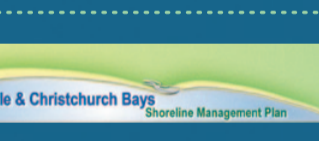
A high tide, storm surge and heavy rain combine to cause flooding around the Harbour even overtopping the sea wall at Poole Quay causing flooding in the town.

2010
Brownsea Island



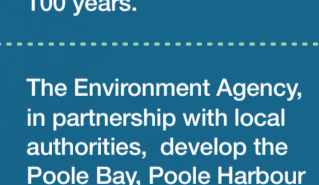
Redundant coastal defences are removed by National Trust on Brownsea Island as part of a policy of allowing the coast to change naturally wherever possible.

2011
Poole Harbour



The second Poole and Christchurch Bay Shoreline Management Plan is published setting out how we can manage coastal change over the next 100 years.

2012
Poole Harbour



The Environment Agency, in partnership with local authorities, develop the Poole Bay, Poole Harbour and Wareham Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy setting out plans for how to manage tidal flooding and erosion risk around Poole Harbour.

Have we missed anything?
Stick your own stories and photographs here