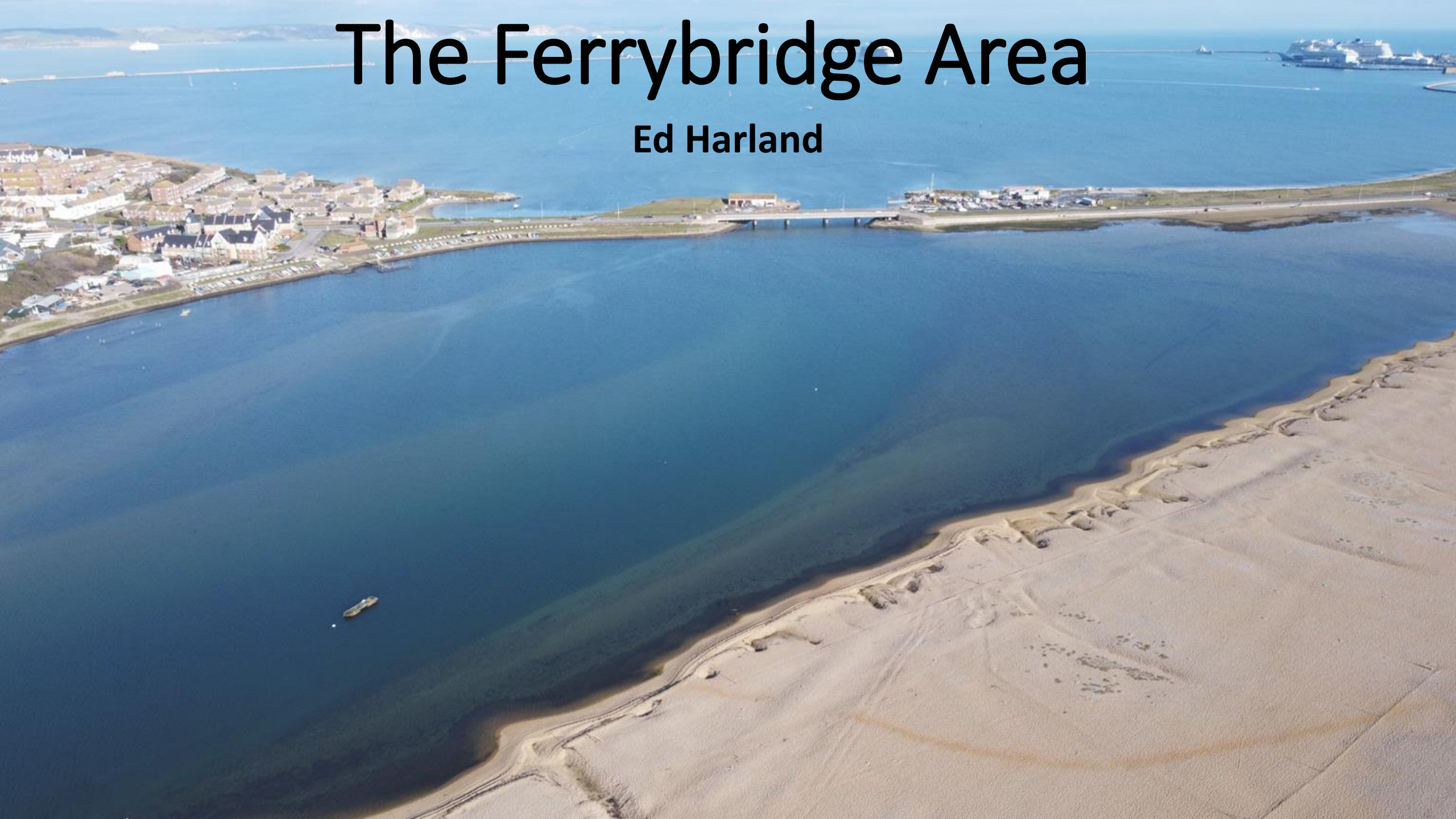
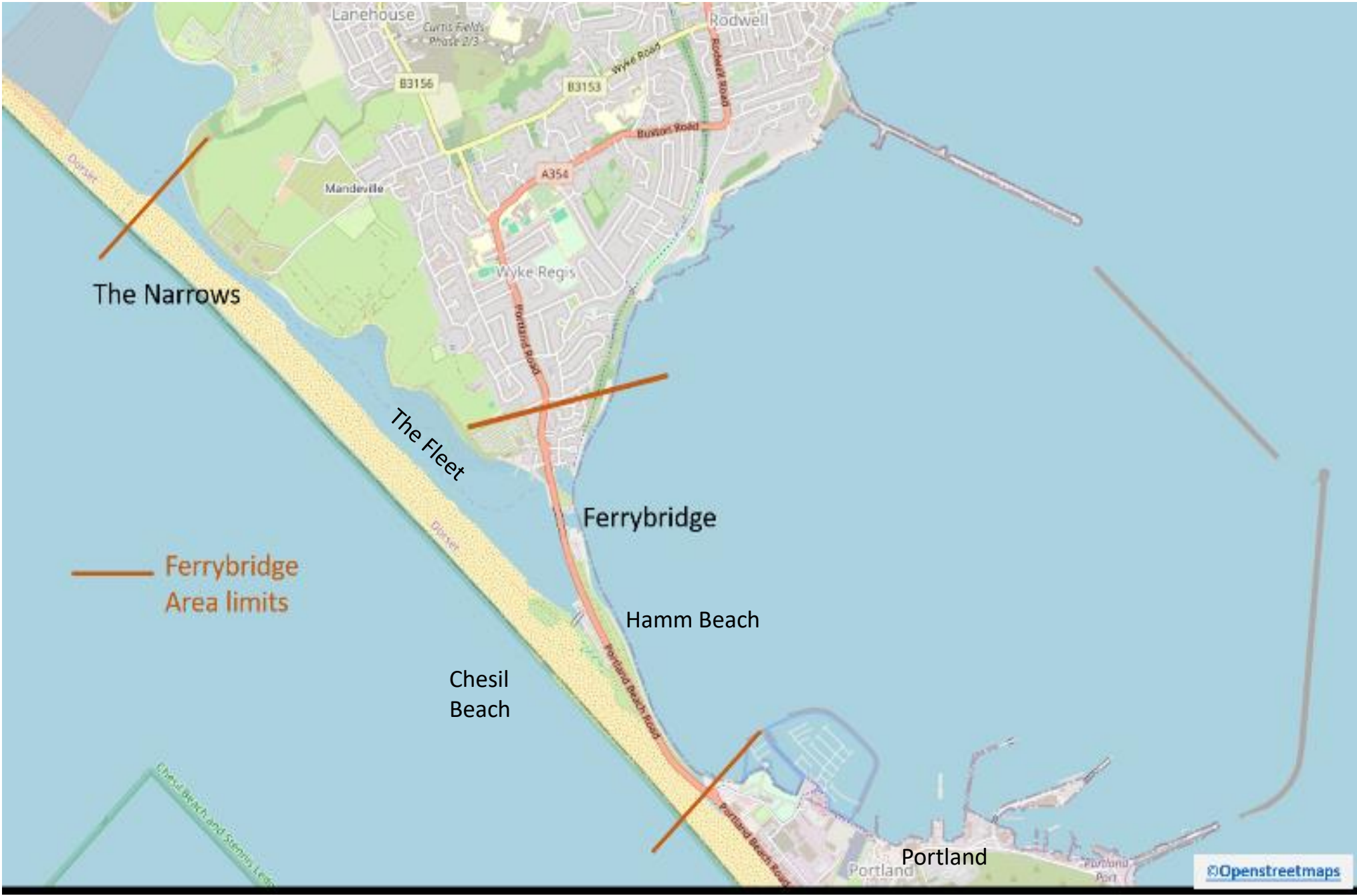


The Ferrybridge Area

Ed Harland





The Narrows

The Fleet

Ferrybridge

Hamm Beach

Chesil Beach

Portland

Ferrybridge Area limits



This area has many designations, but how pristine is it?



Bridging Camp

Caravan Park

Factories, then
Leisure and housing

This linear feature is a WWII pipeline

Visitors
Centre

Channel moved when bridge replaced
Railway line on bank
with ditches

There has been a grassy area here
for recorded history, but it was
considerably modified during WWII

This area has been much disturbed
by trampling.

A354 road on
bank

This area was cleared for D-Day parking
This area of water results from pebble extraction,
it is not natural

This area was shaped by the 2014 and later storms

This area is the
least disturbed

1860 rifle range



So, very little of the area is truly undisturbed, yet it is still worthy of the designations because of the wide range of flora and fauna it supports

Ferrybridge in 1024

- Very little information available
- Using current estimates of beach progression, the beach would have been 150 metres further to the west than it is now
- The Fleet was much wider at Smallmouth than it is now
- Later information suggests there was an area where the Fleet could be crossed on horseback at low tide
- It was probable that some sort of rowed or punted ferry existed
- There were no Portland Harbour breakwaters so Hamm beach was fully exposed to easterly gales and was being replenished by pebbles from the east side of Portland

Probable 1024
shoreline

There is no evidence to suggest
that the Hamm Beach shoreline
has changed significantly over
the centuries

Estimated 1024 shoreline position
based on the beach advancing, on
average, 15cms per annum

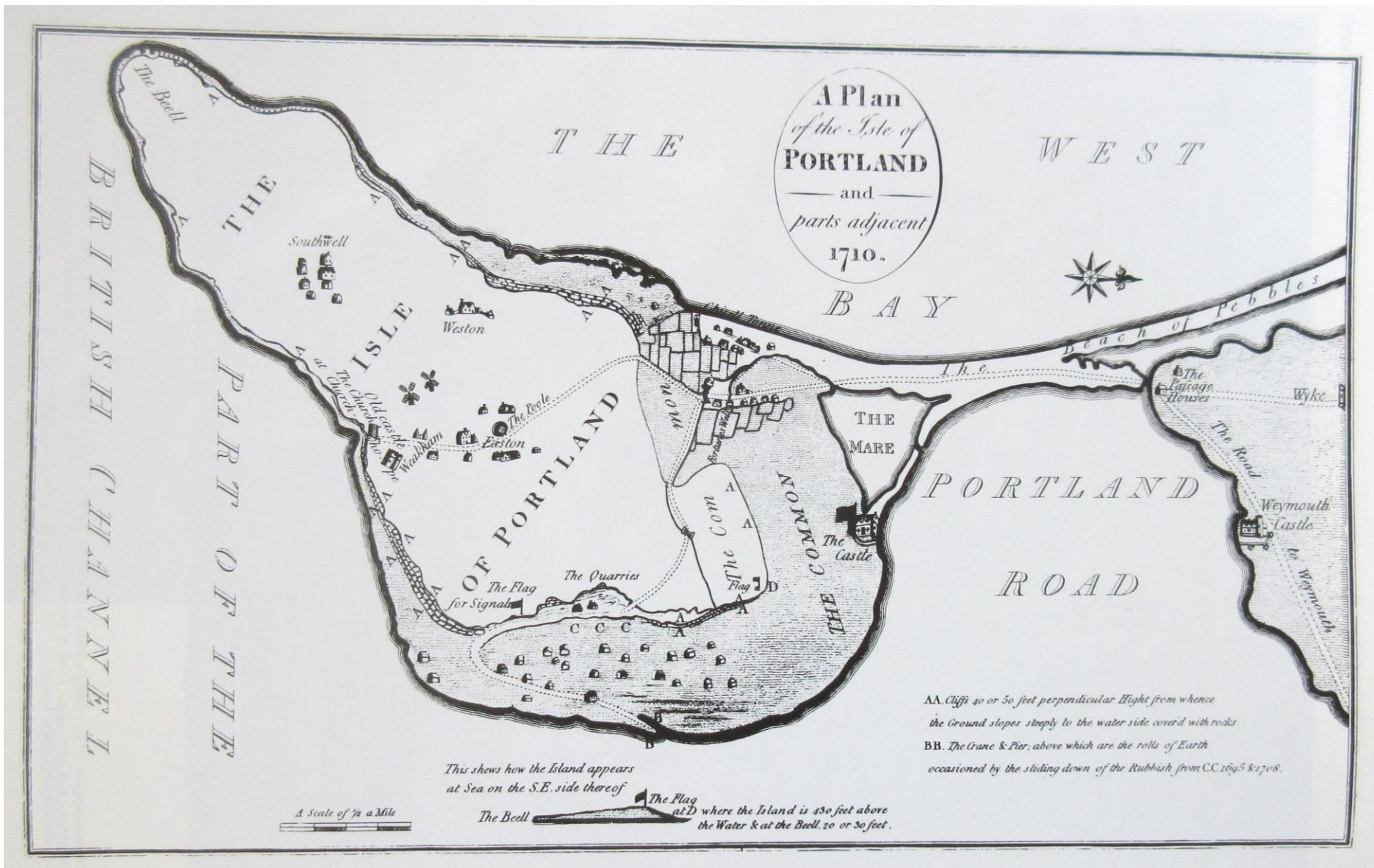


As the centuries passed

- Storms altered the shape and location of Chesil and Hamm beaches
- Various forms of ferry were tried, including rowed, punted and roped
- Otherwise, very little changed....

By the 1600's some pictures and maps started to appear, although some were of dubious accuracy!





Note that the road from Ferrybridge to Weymouth followed the course of what is now Old Castle Road. The section from Sandsfoot to Ferrybridge no longer exists due to erosion and a railway line.



1837

After the great storm
Of 1824. Note the very
different layout at the mouth
of the Fleet



The 1903 OS map of the area. Apart from moving the bridge in the 1980's the layout is much as it is today.

Some further information on the ferry also started to appear



It was the 1800's before more detailed information started to appear

- The great storm of 1824 was better documented than previous storms
 - It had a major impact on the Ferrybridge area:
 - A ship was left stranded on the top of the beach
 - The ferry, ferry house and ferryman were washed away
 - The wadeable part of the Fleet was washed away
 - It is likely that the beach moved eastwards by up to 10 metres during the storm
 - As a result of the damage there was increasing pressure to replace the ferry with a bridge

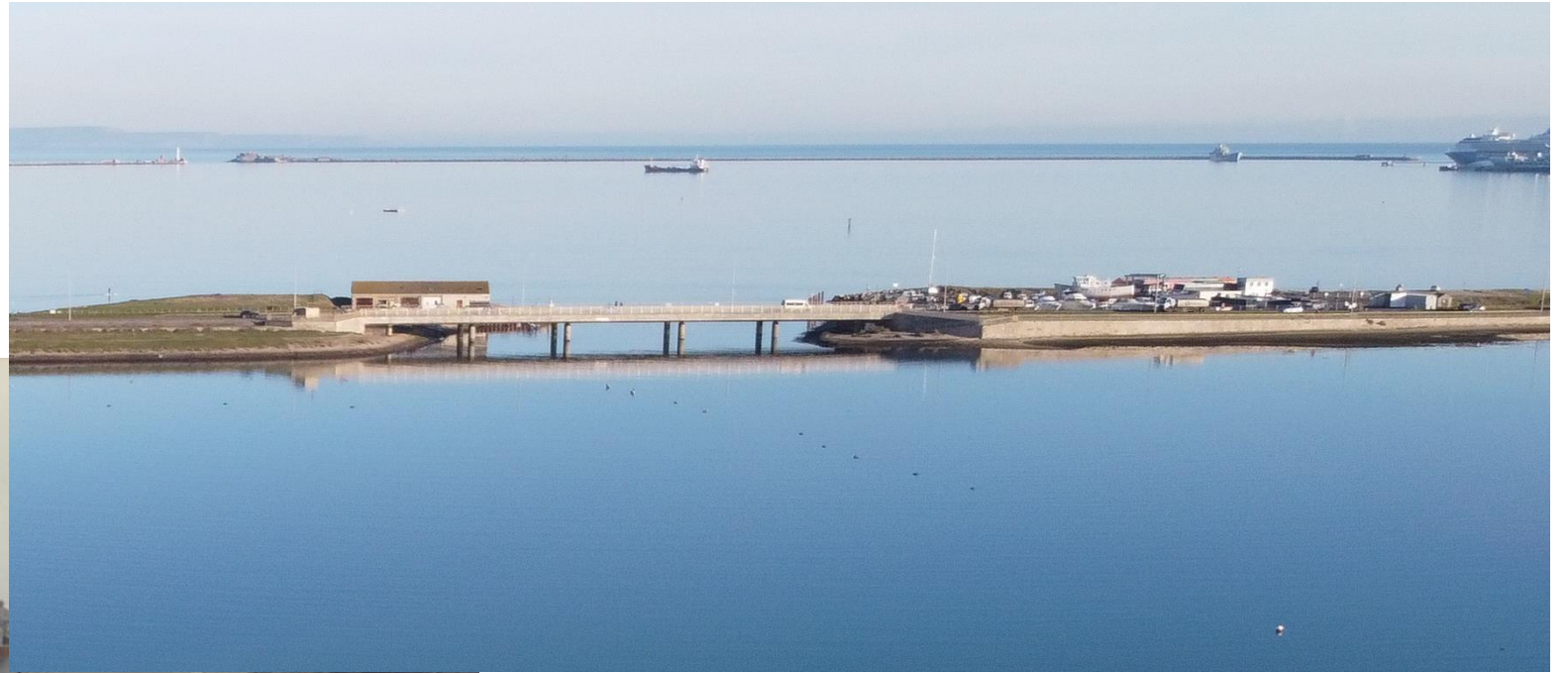
The road bridges

- An act of Parliament was passed in 1835 to enable the construction of the first bridge
- A wooden trestle bridge was built and opened in 1839
- The cost of maintenance proved very high and in 1867 the span was shortened by extending the southern approach causeway
- In 1896 a new iron bridge was opened and this lasted until 1985 when the current concrete bridge opened



The first road bridge

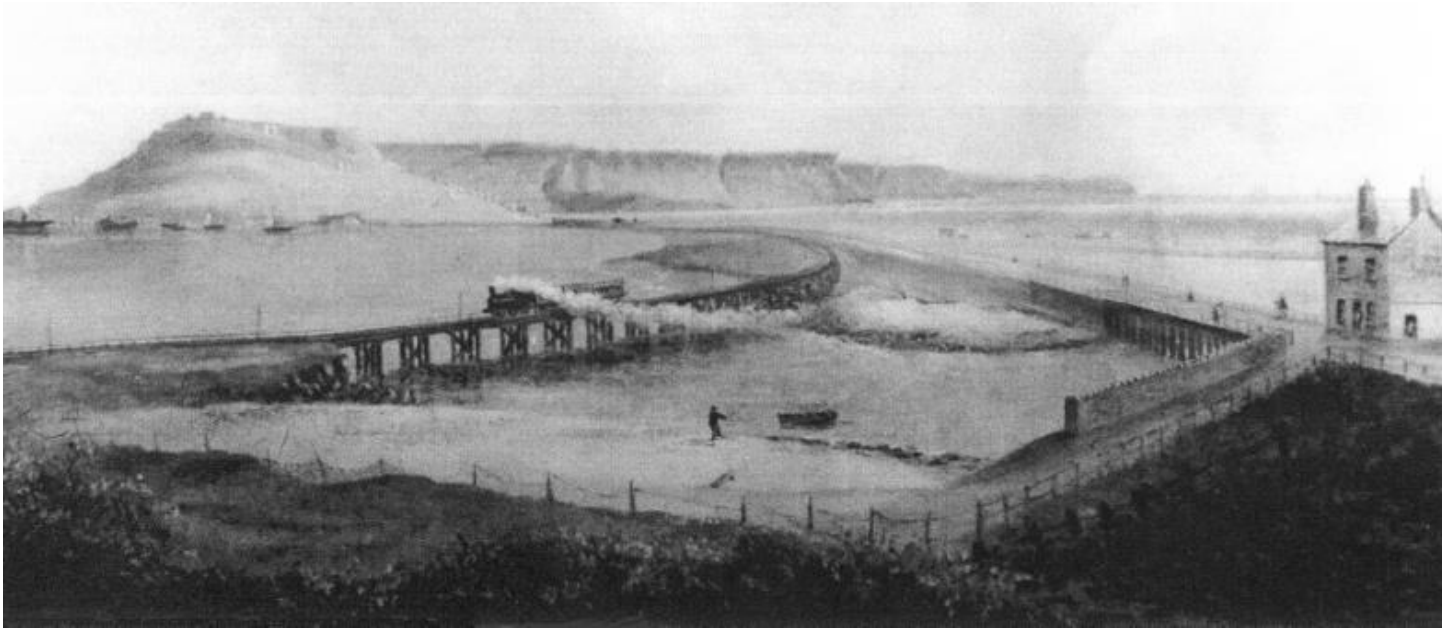
The current road bridge



The old Victorian road bridge with the temporary road used while the new bridge was being constructed. Note the kink in the old bridge

Portland Railway

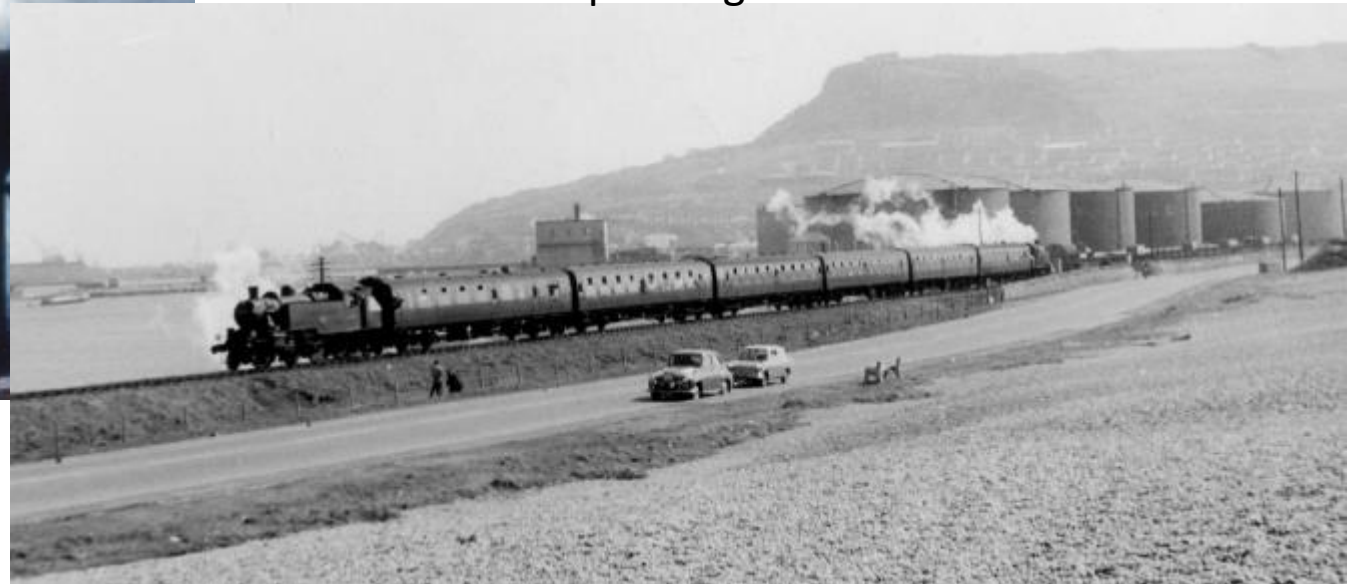
- In the mid-1800's there were plans to build a railway to Portland
- There was much disagreement over who should build it and who should operate it
- The first train ran to Portland in 1864 but it was not until October 1865 that a scheduled service started operated jointly by the GWR and LSWR
- The track crossed the Fleet entrance on a wooden trestle bridge and then ran the length of Hamm Beach into Victoria Square
- This wooden bridge also proved costly to maintain and was replaced in 1903 by an iron bridge which remained in use until the line close in 1965
- The old trackbed is now part of the SAC because of some unique habitats that it introduced



The original railway bridge over the Fleet of 1864



The replacement railway bridge of 1903



The last passenger train to Portland 1965

The military at Ferrybridge

- The first known military presence at Ferrybridge was the building of a rifle range, probably around 1860 for the Weymouth corps of the Dorset Volunteer Rifle Battalion
- This had a very short life and was out of use by 1901
- It was probably taken out of use in 1881 when the local volunteer corps were absorbed into the Dorset Regiment
- Parts of the rifle range can still be seen today, although much of it has been covered by pebbles during storms in the last few years



Military use 1900-1939

- There is no documented use of the area by the military during this period, although a small number of artefacts found in the area suggest there may have been an encampment on the grassy area during WWI
- In the 1920's the RE Bridging Camp became established at the Narrows. Initially summer camp only then more permanent.
- However, as WWII approached and Portland Harbour became an important naval base things were about to change

Military use 1939-1945

- During the early stages of the war a number of anti-aircraft guns were positioned in the area. Different maps show different locations and it was likely that the guns changed locations
- One was located on the top of the beach near the rifle range target, another next to the railway line on Hamm Beach and several around the Whitehead torpedo works
- The road bridge was fitted with a demolition charge so that in the event of an invasion it could be destroyed
- A number of barbed wire fences also appeared
- Two pillboxes were built, one on Chesil, the other on the Wyke foreshore

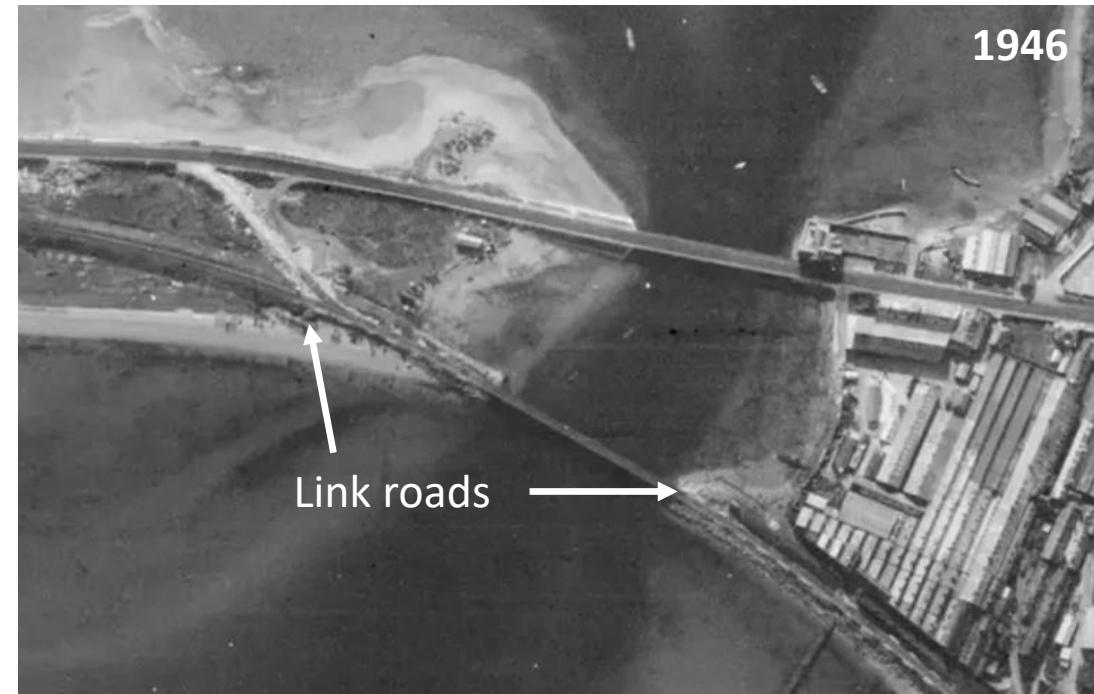


Military use 1939-1945

- During these early stages of the war very little changed at Ferrybridge. A few bomb craters appeared on the beach, some tracks were made across the grassy area to get the guns into position
- However, as D-Day approached a number of changes happened that had a significant impact on the area
- Portland was a major embarkation point for the American troops heading for Omaha Beach

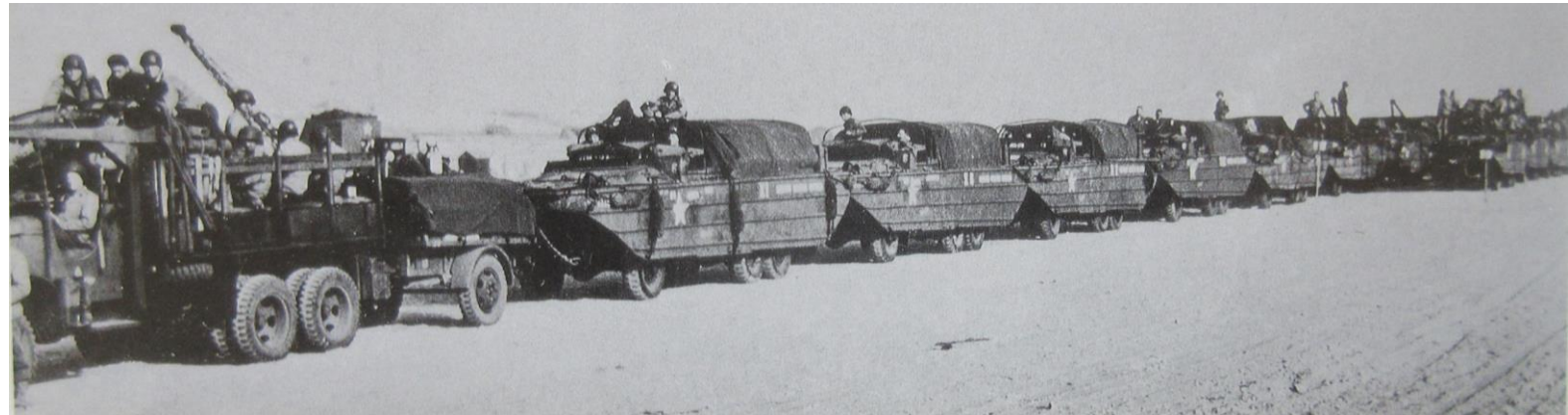
D-Day preparations

- Because Ferrybridge was considered vulnerable to bombing, particularly with its proximity to the Whitehead works a number of changes were made:
 - The railway bridge was modified to allow it to carry road traffic with roads into it from opposite the Ferrybridge Inn and through what is now a boatyard on the Portland side
 - A new water main was laid across the Fleet and along Chesil Beach to bypass the bridge



D-Day preparations

- Another major change was the construction of a large parking area alongside the beach road to act as a staging area for vehicles waiting to embark
- This involved some major pebble excavations to form the base of the park which was then stabilised using crushed Portland stone
- A number of buildings also appeared on the grassy area alongside the parking area



AA – Anti-Aircraft guns
PB - Pillboxes

Military buildings



This area excavated to provide pebbles for the staging area foundations and other military construction work

This area excavated post WWII to provide pebbles for post war reconstruction

Military use 1946 - present

- An anchor testing system was established on the beach by the Visitors Centre
- This consisted of a winch on Chesil Beach, a large metal gantry arrangement that connected to the anchor under test and an array of anchors that provided the solid base against which the test anchor was pulled.
- Only visible remains today is the base of the winch house.



Other military use 1946-present

- The RE Bridging camp continued to expand and its activities evolve
- Tods boat builders switched from boat building to building sonar domes for the RN and other navies



Other post-war changes

- Storms continued to impact the area:
 - A 1978 storm breached the beach by the checkpoint and washed the road and railway line away
 - The February 2014 storms pushed the beach crest back around 5 metres
- The D-Day staging area became the Beach Road car park and a visitors centre was built
- Electricity cable for Portland was laid across the Fleet and along Chesil Beach



Other post-war changes

- The predominant activity in the area changed from commercial to leisure
 - The caravan camp was established around the old Port Sanitary Hospital
 - Various water sport schools were established on Hamm Beach
 - Visitors Centre extended in the Beach Road car park
 - Boatyard established between the bridges
 - Oyster farm moved to the area
- Environmental protection became important as the area became protected by a number of designations



Old Port Sanitary Hospital

Oyster farm racks

↑
WWII water pipe

Ferrybridge today

- A number of changes are affecting the area:
 - Hamm beach is suffering from too much footfall
 - The Fleet north shore is suffering over-development for leisure and housing use
 - The boom in watersports is impacting Hamm Beach and the Fleet
 - The Fleet land shoreline is suffering significant erosion as it is a soft clay bank
 - Chesil Beach is still moving eastwards, but the land shoreline has been anchored in places by modern developments