

# Corton Cutting and Quarry

NGR: SY636 855

The site is a road cutting and a small quarry cut through beds of Portland Sands, situated at the hamlet of Corton, between Friar Waddon and Coryates on the road from Upwey which meets the main coast road east of Portesham.



Corton road cutting



The quarry viewed from the east

The Portland Group, comprising the Portland Sands with Portland Stone above, are marine beds laid down in the late Jurassic Period (Tithonian age) about 150 million years ago in warm, shallow, well oxygenated seas where marine life flourished.

The rocks at Corton dip steeply to the north at about 45 degrees and comprise a sequence of sandstones of the Corton Hill Member. The upper levels are alternating thin layers of siltstones and cementstones rich in lime, some with bivalve casts (*Thracia depressa*). The intervening quartz sand contains shell debris, immature oyster shells and broken knots of serpulid worm casts. The lower part comprises more massive cementstone, again with invertebrate fossils.

The quarry comprises 2-3m of cementstone on the up-throw side of a north/south fault immediately west of the cutting so the cementstone is the equivalent to that seen in the cutting.



Bivalve casts in cementstone

## The Chapel

Corton (*Corfetone*) is mentioned in the Domesday Book. The first mention of the chapel was in 1341. It was a free chapel, so called because it was independent of Diocesan control, on private land. When free chapels were suppressed by the Chantry Act in the reign of Edward VI in 1547, it was used for agricultural purposes until re-consecrated in 1897.

The chapel was built with 'Cypris' Freestone from Portesham Quarry nearby, with windows of Ham Stone from Somerset.



Corton Chapel



The altar slab in Corton Chapel

The altar slab is of Purbeck Marble and cannot be dated exactly, but is not later than 1400 and thought to be much earlier. It survived the order of 1550 to remove all stone altars as the chapel had already been closed for public worship for three years.