

## An in-depth article submitted by Lois Wakeman on her Secret Places images

### The Crimean Seat, Pinhay, East Devon

The first in an occasional series of articles from members of the Southwest Region of the RPS, telling us a bit more about one of their favourite locations in the region. This follows on from our recent online exhibition to showcase some secret places in Devon and Cornwall.

Lois Wakeman LRPS lives in Uplyme, just on the East Devon/West Dorset border. She found out about this recently-created walk from a friend, although anyone can now follow the permissive path from the Southwest Coast Path along the Undercliff near Lyme Regis.

She says “It was lovely to find a new and rather interesting place so close to my home. I’ve walked along the Undercliff many times, but it’s only recently been possible to see this little building, which is in the middle of a private estate, tucked away in the woods.



*The Crimean Seat*

This is the Crimean Seat, a flint shelter that commands sweeping views east along the channel from the top of the cliffs. You get a bird’s-eye view of the lush vegetation of the Undercliff, which is perhaps the nearest thing to a temperate rainforest you are likely to visit in England, and a welcome stretch of wilderness in our rather crowded island. From high up, I and my friend watched falcons and ravens wheeling from the chalk cliffs and over the trees, far below and oblivious of our presence. There’s something very restful about spending time away from traffic noise, just *being there* with no distractions.”

Here’s a link to the approximate location of the seat:



<https://explore.osmaps.com/pin?lat=50.715463&lon=-2.969819&zoom=14.048>



*The view east from the Crimean Seat across Lyme Bay*

From the information board:

"The Crimean Seat was built by John Ames, who owned the Pinhay Estate from 1834-67 and is buried in Uplyme churchyard. He was much concerned about a possible Russian invasion during the Crimean War (1854-56) and built this seat so that he could keep watch over the sea and give warning of approaching Russian fleets.

The fine views east towards Portland would have been different in his day because the trees to the south-possibly planted by Ames himself have grown up. We know that in the 1850s much of the Undercliff was open grassland, grazed by sheep. Ames seems to have been generally distrustful and suspicious, and his selfish attempt to block the public path was contested in the Exeter assizes in 1841. When he lost he built a double wall about a mile so walkers couldn't see inland or out to sea. Little of this now remains.

The seat has recently been restored by the Pinhay Estate and lies on a permissive circular walk which forms a diversion from the Coast Path. The walk also takes in Lynch Meadow which is an area of steep flower-rich chalk grassland."

### The Undercliff

A national nature reserve, the Undercliff is a constantly-changing tumbled landscape of cliffs, rocks, ruins, woods and temporary ponds, which is worth visiting at any time of year for the flora and fauna on show. Set on a large and active landslip, mixed broadleaf woodland and dappled glades are full of birdsong in the late winter and spring, and at any time of year you can hear the unearthly honking of pheasants echoing through the still air under the trees. In spring and early summer, there's a profusion of wildflowers to look for, and in autumn, fall colour to admire. The only time of year I might advise not visiting is during prolonged wet periods (especially in the winter), when you may emerge back onto the road with sticky grey mud up to the knees!





*A temporary pond on the Undercliff near Chimney Rock*



*Wildflowers next to the coast path in spring*