

WIGHT SAFARIS

Walks in the wild

A Wightlink guide to adventure walks on the Isle of Wight



Walks IN THE WILD

Walking on Wight is an experience that can be enjoyed by everyone – whether you like the odd leisure stroll or prefer a more energetic ramble. The Isle of Wight boasts a tremendous variety of walking country with over 500 miles of marked footpaths, many of them passing through nationally-classified *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*. And while some of the walks leading over the Island's high downs and chalk cliffs are challenging, many more are an easy amble around the sandy coastline and in ecologically-important forests and wetlands.

What all have in common is that they are walks in the wild – with mile upon mile of rural greenbelt to discover. That's why we have called the eight walks featured in this booklet *Wight Safaris*. The word 'safari' is most often associated

with African game drives but its' literal meaning is 'an overland expedition for exploring' and that description fits each of the adventure routes on the following pages – even though some may take no longer than an hour to walk from start to finish.

Each of these expeditions has a specific theme which means that you might see rare flora and fauna like the greatly-endangered red squirrel and the water vole, discover unusual trees (just imagine finding Californian Redwoods in a Wight wood) or find a prehistoric monument standing proud in pastoral downland. There is always something unexpected to discover on a *Wight Safari* and that's in addition to glorious panoramas that stretch right across from the Island to the south coast of the mainland.



For each of the *Wight Safaris*, there are detailed route instructions to follow and an illustrated map to guide you. In addition, we highlight the discoveries to be made along the way – often providing short detours to points of interest – and include a selection of interesting places to visit as well as suggesting refreshment pit stops.

And because so many great Wight walks are hidden just around the corner but not easily found, we have included a surprising trail just south of the Island's main town, Newport. This was chosen for Wightlink by 90-year old Islander Bill Shepard, a keen naturalist who walks every single day of the year. In Bill's view it's what you observe on a walk that makes it exciting – exactly the thinking behind *Wight Safaris*.



The Long Stone, Mottistone Down



View across the Bowcombe Valley and the walls of Carisbrooke Castle

Using Wight Safaris

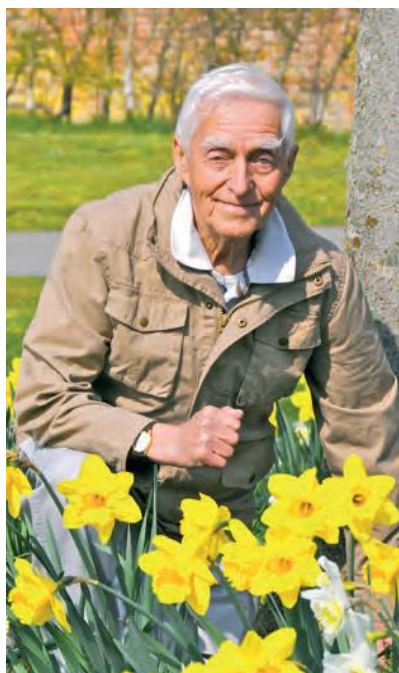
Each *Wight Safari* contains information on the walk's length, likely duration and level of difficulty.

The distances quoted give an approximate guide in both miles and kilometres, while the times indicated suggest how long it might take to walk at a leisurely pace, not including any stopping time.

The effort rating assesses the degree of difficulty and exertion required for each safari – based on the ability of a leisure walker rather than an experienced ramble – and grades them as easy, moderate or more challenging.

Used in conjunction with one another, the illustrated map and numbered instructions should provide a clear route guide for each safari. Bear in mind that the map scales shown are approximate and that individual maps are not to scale with others in the booklet.

An Ordnance Survey grid reference is given for the start point of each safari and it would be advisable to carry a copy of the latest OS Outdoor Leisure 29 map to use alongside the *Wight Safaris* ones.



Bill Shepard

Key to map symbols

Ferry terminal



Parking



Broadleaf trees



Mixed woodland



Trees on Histree Trail



Wildfowl/birds



Wildlife



Viewing hide



Church



Priory



Cemetery



Castle



Historic building



Monument



Pre-historic stone



Steam railway



Camp site



Picnic site



Pub



Café



Bar



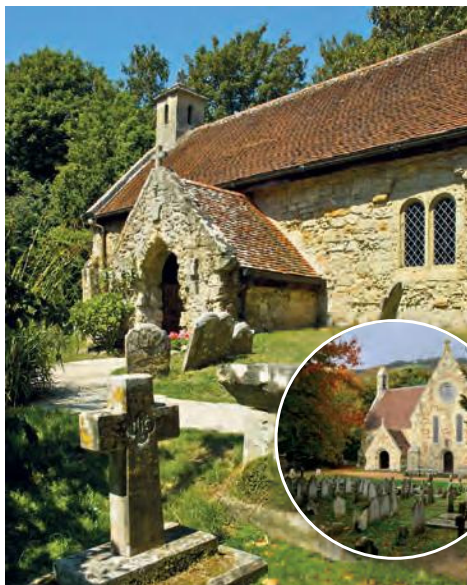
Literary SAFARI



Step back in time into the Isle of Wight's literary past on a safari in south coast Bonchurch. This evocative trail leads past the childhood home of the Victorian poet Algernon Swinburne and the waterfront house that enchanted Charles Dickens, taking in the leafy seaside scenery that inspired these and other writers to write some of their most famous works.

MODERATE WALKING

- 1½mils/2½kms. 1 – 1½ hours
- The terrain on this walk varies from pavements to potentially muddy footpaths and beach shingle. Expect steep climbing in places, particularly up the 101 steps from Bonchurch Pond to The Pitts.
- Start: OS Grid Reference SZ 578 780



'Old' St Boniface Church (inset: St Boniface 'New' Church)



East Dene

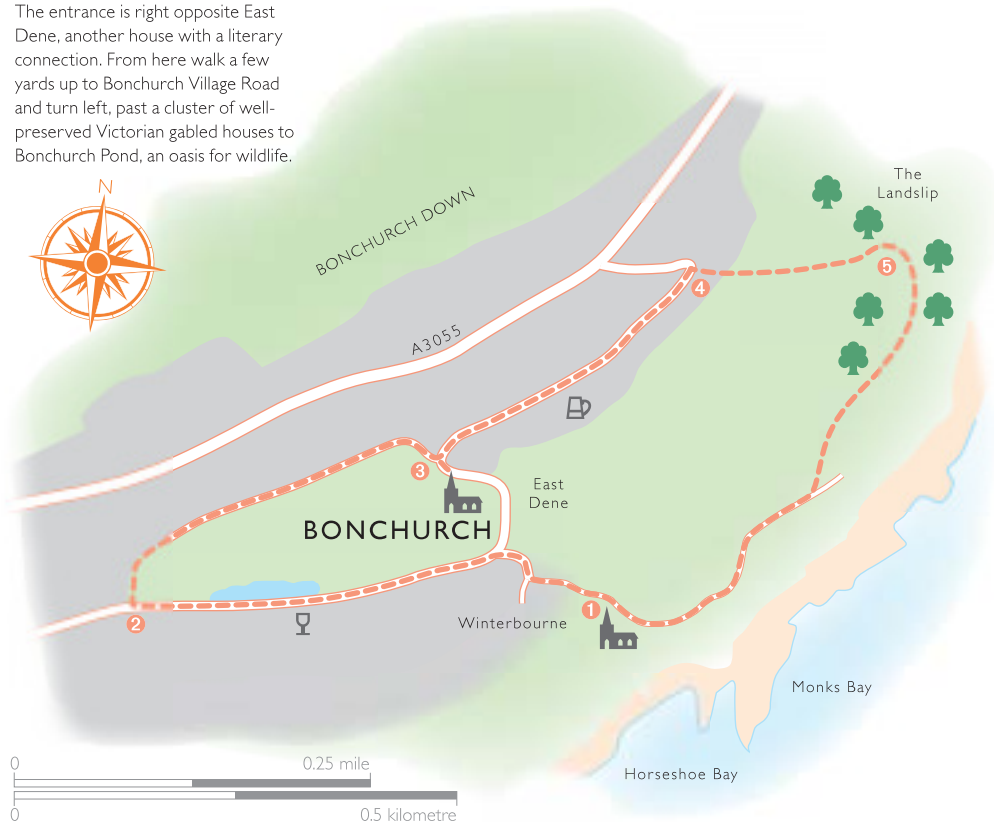
GREAT SIGHTS

The picture book village of Bonchurch is stacked with impressive, well-preserved Victorian mansions, but among these, find time to stop and admire East Dene. This great house overlooking the sea and surrounded by National Trust coastal woodland is now a recreational centre for students, but was once home to the Victorian poet Algernon Swinburne.

1. First find 'Old' St Boniface Church, a tiny chapel-like church tucked away on footpath V69 just off Bonchurch Village Road. One of the oldest examples of Norman architecture, from its graveyard you can see across to Winterbourne, the house that made Bonchurch famous. This is where Charles Dickens stayed for one summer, declaring it "the prettiest place I ever saw" and writing the first six chapters of *David Copperfield* there. The entrance is right opposite East Dene, another house with a literary connection. From here walk a few yards up to Bonchurch Village Road and turn left, past a cluster of well-preserved Victorian gabled houses to Bonchurch Pond, an oasis for wildlife.

2. Continue past the pond and, almost immediately, take a deep breath. You'll need it – and all the energy you can muster. On your right are the 101 steps (Public Footpath VI06), a steep climb up to The Pitts. Climb the steps pausing half way for breath. When you reach the top, turn right and walk along The Pitts past a succession of contrasting mansions, tucked in below Bonchurch Down.

3. At the road junction, take a short detour turning right next to Cliffdene, the former home of novelist Henry de Stacpoole. This takes you onto the rural path to St Boniface 'New' Church, designed in Romanesque style in the mid 19th century! Take time to visit the church and admire some of its extraordinary gravestones, including that of Swinburne.

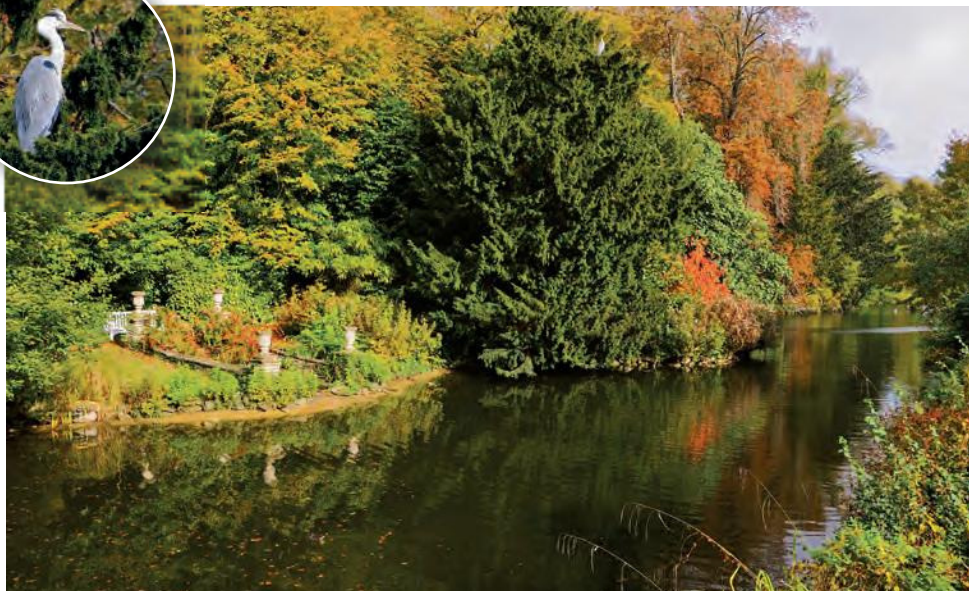


Winterbourne

4. After the detour turn back up and follow the main road past the Bonchurch Inn, a quaint old hostelry, crossing the road where it turns sharply back left. Here take footpath V66 down to the Coastal Path. This is known as the Landslip and is so named because parts of the woodland area have fallen away in the sea.

5. Now follow the leafy path downhill until it curves back right where you pick up the Coastal Path along to Monks Bay.

You can climb down onto the beach here and walk along to adjacent Horseshoe Bay before retracing your steps back onto the Coastal Path. Continue walking along the footpath around the perimeter of East Dene with great views of the house on your right and the sea on your left, which leads around to 'Old' St Boniface Church and the end of this history-filled walk.



Bonchurch Pond (inset: a heron in the trees)

TIME OUT

Bonchurch Pond: Count the carp, butterflies and dragonflies at Bonchurch Pond, originally a quarry and now a spectacular setting for winged wildlife. This beautiful place was given to the village in 1934 by the novelist Henry de Stacpoole, writer of *The Blue Lagoon*, later made into a notorious film starring Brooke Shields.

St Boniface Old and New Churches: Visit St Boniface Parish Church, which dates from Victorian times and boasts the impressive grave of the poet Swinburne

where Thomas Hardy sat and wrote the poem *A Singer Asleep*. Compare the Romanesque architecture of the 'new' church with the pretty 11th century Norman church sandwiched between Winterbourne and East Dene, reputed to be the oldest in southern England.

Monks Bay and Horseshoe Bay: Check out these quiet sheltered beaches, where hundreds of rock pools are exposed in the sands at low tide.

PITSTOPS

Halfway along the walk, historic **Bonchurch Inn**, Bonchurch (01983 852611) is well-known for its tasty Italian fare.

The Pond Café, Bonchurch (01983 855666) Robert Thompson's stylish modern brasserie opposite Bonchurch Pond, is now open from 10am to 10pm seven days a week. Eat in for brunch, lunch and afternoon light bites, which are suitable to take out as picnics.



The beach at Horseshoe Bay



The 101 steps, Bonchurch

Wildlife SAFARI



The extensive wetlands to see on this safari around Alverstone Mead have become something of a national rarity – and provide a haven for wildlife that is disappearing from mainland Britain. In the water meadows, along the river bank and in the ancient woodland that together make up this 44-acre nature reserve near Sandown are barn owls, kingfishers, water voles, dragonflies, bats and dormice to spot – if you are lucky.

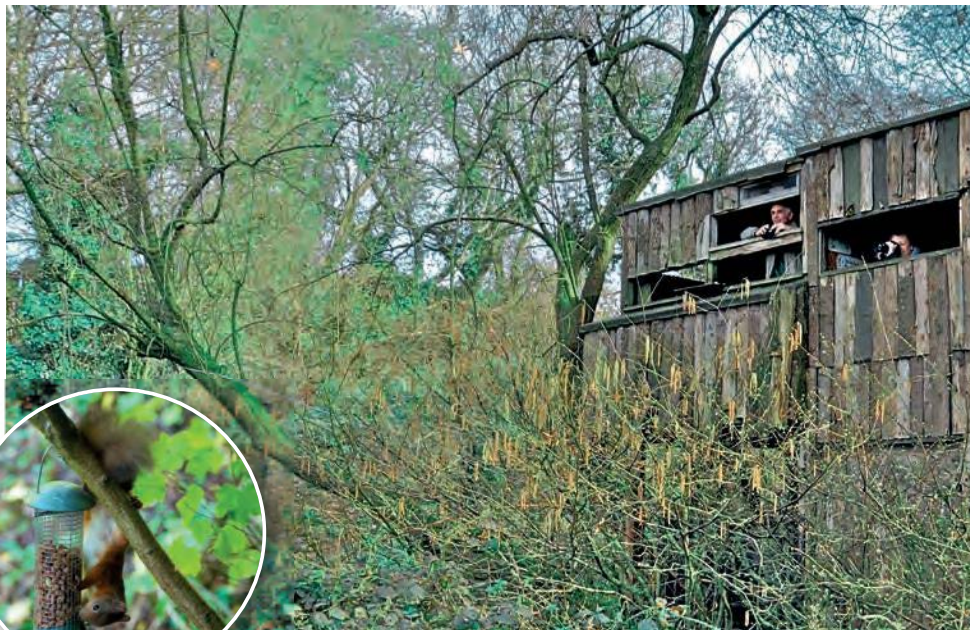
The biggest draw, though, in this *Site of Special Scientific Interest* is the resident red squirrel. The reds – and a host of bird species too – are easily spotted from the wildlife hide visited on this safari.

EASY WALKING

- 1¾miles/3kms. 1 – 1½ hours
- An easy circular stroll, the route leads first along the flat Newport-Sandown cycleway and then on a rough track and boardwalk in the nature reserve where conditions can be slippery. After visiting the wildlife hide, the route back is downhill, feeding onto a flat section of the Nunwell Trail.
- Start: OS Grid Reference SZ 588 851

GREAT SIGHTS

From the wildlife hide, there are extensive views of the wet meadow and its network of ditches that harbour the shy water vole, Britain's fastest declining mammal. Surrounding the hide is a tree canopy that is home to a huge variety of birds including red kites, jays and buzzards, as well as to red squirrels. A patient wait in the hide is likely to be repaid with a close up view of one or more of these charming creatures as they come to retrieve food. wighnaturefund.org.uk



The hide at Alverstone Mead



1. After parking by the Southern Water Supply Works, turn left where Longwood Lane meets the Newport-Sandown cycle route 23 and walk along the Yar River Trail. After around 15 minutes you will reach the perimeter of Alverstone Mead on the left hand side.

2. Continuing to walk along the cycle route, you have a prime view of the ditches and canals that run in lines along the wet meadow of the nature reserve. When you reach the stream ahead, bear right over a small iron bridge and walk on to the junction with Alverstone Road.

3. Turn left along Alverstone Road and, approximately 250 yards later, turn left again onto footpath NC17 for Borthwood Lynch and Burnt House Lane, passing through a gate marked Alverstone Mead Nature Reserve.

4. Keep to the path as the area gets flooded and can be very boggy. After a few yards a boardwalk provides a more stable route through the reeds. Continue on past two stiles after which the route begins to climb and the boardwalk ends. Keep walking straight uphill along the edge of the reserve past mixed woodland of oaks and hazel trees with nesting boxes.

5. Just before reaching the gated perimeter; turn left down an elevated boardwalk to the wildlife hide. After visiting the hide, return to the perimeter gate and pass through it, turning left to walk down a winding leafy lane (footpath NC44) with wetlands to your left. Where you see the turning for footpath NC38, ignore this and continue to follow the lane downhill as it winds back right.

6. At the bottom of the hill go through two gates over Scotchells Brook onto the Nunwell Trail (footpath SS47). This becomes a wider flat woodland track that eventually opens out with views of Sandown Golf Course on the right.

7. When you reach the junction with the road, turn left to return to the start point of the walk.

Gift to Nature

Wightlink is proud to be sponsoring the conservation work currently being undertaken at Alverstone Mead by the Isle of Wight-based **Gift to Nature** project.



Pub to Pub SAFARI



Walk from Yarmouth Harbour to Freshwater Causeway and back on a circular route that skirts around the Western Yar Estuary conservation area. Not only will you see mudflats, reed beds and saltmarsh crammed full of wildlife in an *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*, but you can stop off at either end and enjoy pit stops in picturesque pubs.

EASY WALKING

- 3¼mils/6kms. 2 – 2½ hours
- Walking over generally flat terrain, this safari has some potentially muddy areas along its western section. The cycle track on the east side is an easier route for the elderly or infirm.
- OS Grid Reference SZ 354 895

1. Set out from Yarmouth car park and walk across the grass to meet the path alongside the estuary. Turn left and follow the footpath (Y1), keeping the river on your right, until past the old tide mill on your left you join up with the cycleway (F61).

2. Originally a railway track, this wide gravel path snakes along the eastern side of the Yar Estuary until it meets The Causeway. Tree-lined and wooded in places, it provides some of the Island's most beautiful rural views, with bulrushes and mudflats on both sides of the path.

3. After the path emerges from Bucket's Copse, continue walking until you reach The Causeway. Turn right and cross the bridge over the River Yar. Follow The Causeway – taking care as the road is narrow with blind bends – until you reach Freshwater's All Saints Church, in whose graveyard Tennyson's wife Emily is buried. Just beyond is the Red Lion, a pub dedicated to gastronomy and a great pit stop for lunch.

4. From the church, turn right onto the Freshwater Way (F1) which leads back to Yarmouth along the western side of the Yar Estuary. Climb over the stile and follow the footpath.

5. Just before reaching Kings Manor Farm, cross a stile on the left and bear right behind the farm buildings. After passing through an enclosure planted with trees, turn left up a grass track which curves to the right and leads down to a footbridge over a stream.

6. Continue along the Freshwater Way onto a wide path through Saltern Wood, crossing through the staggered barrier at the far end. From here the road bends to the right and emerges from woodland into Gasworks Lane. At the end of this lane turn right onto the main A3054 road into Yarmouth and follow the pavement across the bridge over the River Yar back to the car park.

PITSTOPS

Red Lion Inn, Freshwater (01983 754925):

Open 11.30am-3pm, lunch served 12-2pm – best to book in advance. There is a country farmhouse feel to this award-winning pub, much-acclaimed for its food and with an extensive wine list. Real ales include Goddards and London Pride.

The King's Head, Yarmouth (01983 760351):

Open from 11am, lunch served 12-2.30pm. This ancient 16th century pub is divided into contrasting rooms, most with stripped pine or dark oak furniture. Real ales include Speckled Hen and Flowers; home-cooked food with fresh fish and daily specials.

Wheatsheaf, Yarmouth (01983 760456):

Open from 11am, food served all day. This attractive old coaching inn has been well-modernised with a large conservatory for families and serves a wide range of well-priced, fresh-cooked food. Four real ales include Goddards and Brakspear.



Red Lion Inn, Freshwater



The King's Head, Yarmouth



Wheatsheaf, Yarmouth



View across Western Yar Estuary

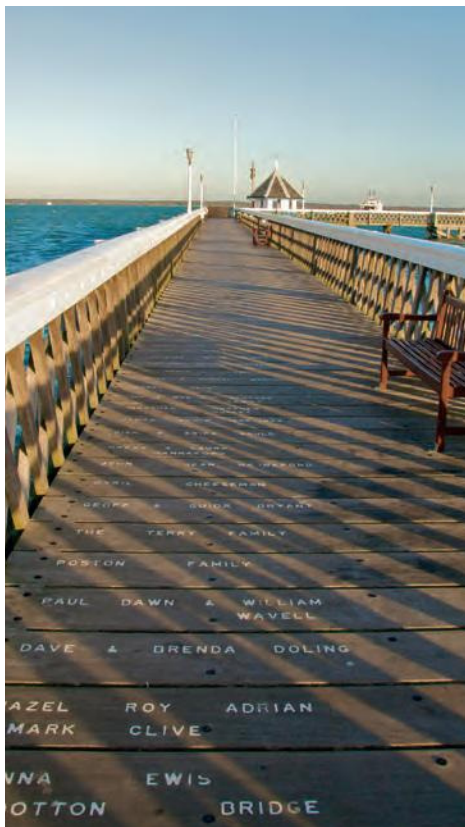
TIME OUT



Yarmouth Castle (above): The last stone artillery fortress built for Henry VIII, this Tudor castle was completed after his death in 1547 as one of a line of fortifications to defend England against the French. See recreations of 16th century castle rooms and an exhibition about Solent shipwrecks. Open April-October, Monday-Thursday, Sunday 11am-4pm.
english-heritage.org.uk/yarmouthcastle

Yarmouth Harbour: This colourful working harbour is the gateway into beautiful West Wight – full of yachts, fishing boats and home to the Wightlink Lymington-Yarmouth ferry.

Yarmouth Pier (pictured right): Count the wooden planks on Yarmouth's famous pier, built in 1876 and reputed to be the longest timber one still open to the public. There are 552 deck planks to walk, covering 700 feet, and each is engraved with the name of the person who donated it.



GREAT SIGHTS

Enjoy extensive estuary and harbour views from the cycle track and equally evocative panoramas of the Western Yar and its teeming birdlife from the bridge on The Causeway at Freshwater. Wading birds and waterfowl are frequent visitors and look out too for red squirrels in trees along the route.



Tree SAFARI



Majestic and mysterious oaks, soaring pines, lithe poplars and a traditional churchyard yew are among the trees to be discovered on a safari inspired by the *Venerable Oaks Histree Trail*, one of eight specially-created Island tree trails. A second great attraction on this leafy route between Fishbourne and Binstead is the towering monastery of Quarr Abbey, England's largest brick building.

EASY WALKING

- 2½mils/4kms. 1½ – 1¾ hours
- A gentle flat walk past woodland and open fields with some stiles and gates to negotiate. Take care as the trail can be muddy and uneven underfoot in places.
- Start: OS Grid Reference SZ 556 929



12th Century abbey ruins



Old oak tree at Infirmary ruin, Quarr



1. Set out from the Wightlink ferry terminal turning left into Fishbourne Lane and then right into Quarr Lane (bridleway R3, Binstead Coastal Path). As its name suggests, this leafy track, overhung with trees, leads to Quarr Abbey. First, though, the track provides attractive views of the Solent on the left through pastureland.

2. After around a quarter of a mile turn left at the next crossroads into the private Abbey driveway lined with ornamental London Plane trees, notable for their striking camouflage-pattern bark. Just in front of the gates stand two huge Monterey Pine trees (T1), probably planted when the Abbey was completed in 1914. First introduced to the Island in the 1850s by Prince Albert, the Monterey Pine is a native of California where it has a very localised and restricted range. In southern England, however, it does extremely well and can frequently be seen in Island parks and gardens.

3. Leaving the Abbey drive, turn left onto the Coastal Path and at the next junction on the right take a short detour down Coronation Lane (footpath R4a) to admire a row of Poplar trees planted in 1953 to commemorate Queen Elizabeth's coronation.

These Poplars (T2) are hybrids between the scarce native Black Poplar and the American Eastern Cottonwood and are also notable for supporting large clumps of mistletoe, best seen in the winter when the trees are leafless.

4. Returning to the Coastal Path turn right and on the left beside a striking cottage are the remains of the original 12th century Cistercian Abbey, which fell to ruin after Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in 1536. The cottage dates back to 1706 and is predominantly made up from stone retrieved from the ruins. Trace the line of the wall eastwards and, in the bottom right corner of the pasture, sits a mysterious Oak (T3). This mighty tree is reputed to have grown from an acorn which dropped onto the top of the wall. As it grew, the tree put down three large roots which have now become trunks supporting the tree and forming a natural archway. This is the location of the old infirmary chapel where one wall and a window frame remains, which this special tree seems to mimic. Just beyond the ruins, pass through the 'Poetry Gate' into Quarr Road, a wooded residential area.

5. After about half a mile the road veers left (bridleway R45). Follow it past several large oak trees, some of which are ancient pollards, until the wooded track emerges at Church Road. Bear left and left again to reach the Church of the Holy Cross at Binstead.

6. Next to the church car park are some unusual West Himalayan Spruce trees also known as Morinda Spruce, uncommon on the Island and with spectacular pendulous cones. Within the churchyard, to the right of the church is an impressive Ash tree thought to be around 120 years old, and to the left a Yew (T4). Yews have a long association with churchyards and, although this one is not ancient, it dates back to mid-Victorian times when the area beneath the Yew was usually reserved for parish dignitaries.

7. Retrace your steps back to Fishbourne, turning right from Quarr Lane into Fishbourne Lane. Continue past the Fishbourne Inn to the bottom of the hill where a wonderfully-shaped Oak (T5) sits in the centre of an attractive circular green. This tree has been a focal point for the Fishbourne community for around 150 years and its bench provides a welcome rest stop at the end of the walk.

GREAT SIGHTS

The towering trees and awe-inspiring ecclesiastical buildings on this safari provide a marvellous natural and man-made spectacle to admire - but look out too for interesting views of life on the water as the dense woodland gives way to pastoral fields and reveals unexpected Solent vistas beyond.

TIME OUT

Quarr Abbey: Built by Island artisans a century ago for a community of French Benedictine monks, this magnificent monastery was created from two million bricks shipped across to Wootton Creek from Belgium. A place of peace and tranquillity, the Abbey welcomes visitors who can take a tour inside to admire its complex network of arches and vaults or stay in the newly-renovated guesthouse.

quarrabbey.co.uk

Binstead Church: The present day Church of the Holy Cross has Norman origins, built originally for men quarrying stone for the medieval Cistercian Abbey. Its oldest surviving part is the 13th century chancel and you can also see the remains of the original Norman doorway with a medieval figure sculpted into the top of the arch.

PITSTOPS

Fishbourne Inn, Fishbourne (01983 882823): Conveniently located at the end of the walk, this inn with large gardens for alfresco eating has an extensive menu. Check out the Sunday carvery and local crab and seafood.

Quarr Abbey Teashop, Fishbourne (01983 882420): Break the walk with a pitstop in the Abbey teashop, set within its peaceful gardens and serving Fairtrade tea and coffee. Cakes are mostly made locally or in Quarr's kitchen and light lunches are newly available.

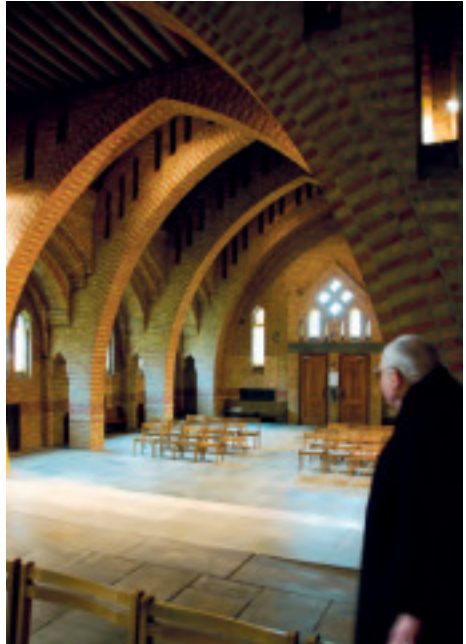
HISTREE TRAILS

The *Tree Safari* features valuable extracts from *Venerable Oaks*, one of eight *Histree Trail* leaflets available from Island libraries or to download at histreetrail.com. 13 trees are highlighted along the full 5½ mile trail between Ryde and Fishbourne, with a map and instructions to help find them.

The *Histree Trail* project was led by Isle of Wight Council's parks and countryside section and funded by the Heritage Lottery.



Quarr Abbey



Interior of Quarr Abbey



Monterey Pine, in the grounds of Quarr Abbey

Heritage SAFARI



This safari is none other than the Tennyson Trail, the Isle of Wight's best-known walk, named after the Island's most famous forefather, Alfred, Lord Tennyson. It may be long, but this challenging hike will repay the tremendous effort needed to navigate its 14 mile length by providing unparalleled views from high downs and southern cliff tops.

Take the trail in one go and an experienced Rambler might be expected to walk it in six to eight hours – but there are bite-sized sections and detours from the trail to enjoy as well.

Aside from magnificent natural scenery that includes the iconic Needles, this is genuinely a heritage safari with some of the Island's most important historic – and prehistoric – landmarks to discover along the way. At one end is the Tennyson Monument, at the other Carisbrooke Castle and en route the attractions include Mottistone Manor, Dimbola Lodge, Needles Battery and a host of Bronze Age burial mounds – most notably the Long Stone. Take time off from walking to explore these.

TIME OUT

Carisbrooke Castle: Best-known as the fortress where King Charles I was imprisoned before his trial and execution in London in 1649, this fine medieval castle can trace its' history back to Norman times – with origins further back still to the Saxon era. Visitors can see the evidence of that history extending through from the 11th to the 20th century.

Not only is Carisbrooke Castle a classic 'motte and bailey' castle with extensive ramparts to roam, but it also boasts an impressive 14th century gatehouse with drum towers, vast Tudor artillery earthworks and ditches, an 800-year old Great Hall, now home to Carisbrooke Castle Museum and the Chapel of St Nicholas, dedicated to the Island's world war soldiers.



Open April-September 10am-5pm, October-March 10am-4pm.
english-heritage.org.uk/carisbrookecastle

VICTORIAN HERITAGE: TENNYSON DOWN

Tread in Tennyson's footsteps on a walk that offers spectacular cliff top views – but keep away from the cliff edge!

ENERGETIC WALKING

- 3mils/5kms. 2 – 2½ hours
- This walk involves a very steep uphill climb from Freshwater Bay onto Tennyson Down. Good walking shoes are recommended and care is needed when walking on the cliff top, especially in windy conditions.
- Start: OS Grid Reference SZ 345 857

TIME OUT

Dimbola Lodge: Originally the home of Victorian portrait photographer Julia Margaret Cameron and a hub for the cream of creative talent attracted to this corner of the Isle of Wight by Tennyson, Dimbola Lodge is now a fascinating photographic museum and gallery. See Cameron's images of Victorian 'A' listers like Charles Darwin, Ellen Terry, Edward Lear and Alice Liddell, the inspiration for Lewis Carroll's Alice, alongside contemporary photographic exhibitions. An arresting bronze of Jimi Hendrix stands in its grounds. Open March-October 10am-5pm; November-February 10am-4pm.

dimbola.co.uk

1. Start in Freshwater Bay where the Tennyson Trail joins the Coastal Path on a lane signposted to Fort Redoubt.

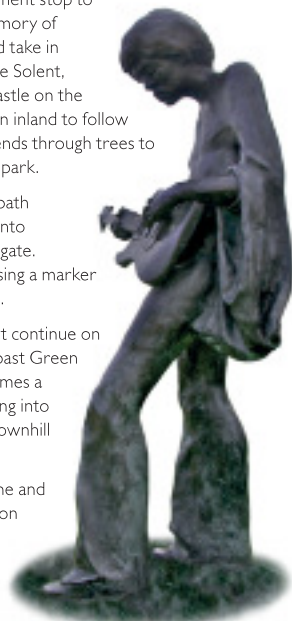
2. Where the lane turns left, keep walking straight ahead on the Coastal Path, passing through two stiles up onto Tennyson Down. Climb uphill to reach an information board and from there follow the coastline along to the Tennyson Monument.

3. At the Tennyson Monument stop to read the inscription in memory of Alfred, Lord Tennyson and take in the panoramic views of the Solent, West Wight and Hurst Castle on the mainland. At this point turn inland to follow footpath T27, which descends through trees to an old disused pit by a car park.

4. Turn right onto a wide path (footpath T24) that leads into woodland and to a kissing gate. Continue on this path passing a marker post and another chalk pit.

5. At the next marker post continue on bridleway F46a until, just past Green Lane on the left, this becomes a footpath again (F46), leading into a field. Follow the route downhill until you reach Gate Lane.

6. Turn right into Gate Lane and walk past Dimbola Lodge on your right, where you see the bronze statue of Jimi Hendrix in the garden. Retrace your steps to Freshwater Bay.



PITSTOPS

Cameron Tearooms, Freshwater (01983 756814): Hot and cold drinks, hearty homemade meals, snacks and cakes are served in this café/restaurant within Dimbola Lodge.

Freshwater Bay Tea Rooms, Freshwater: Simple café located conveniently close to the start of climb up to the Tennyson Monument.

Heritage SAFARI

The safari starts in Carisbrooke, turning left into Nodgham Lane from the B3401 Alvington Shute where a sign indicates the Tennyson Trail (OS Grid Reference SZ 482 882).

The trail is well marked thereafter with regular signposts and is fully described in the Isle of Wight Council's Coastal Paths and Inland Trails booklet, Trail No. 10. From this long and challenging 14-mile marathon, we have chosen to focus on two shorter sections which are more suitable as leisure walks.




GREAT SIGHTS

Whether it is the panorama of Carisbrooke Castle and the fertile Bowcombe Valley, the stunning spectacle of the 'Back of the Wight' coastline as the trail emerges from Brighstone Forest or the dramatic cliff top scenery of Tennyson's Highdown Cliffs, the views come thick and fast on this spectacular trail.



TIME OUT

The Long Stone: Plenty of evidence of ancient Island communities can be found along or close to the Tennyson Trail – including Bronze Age burial mounds, an Iron Age enclosure and Neolithic standing stones. The most important – and mysterious – is the Long Stone, a 6,000 year-old Neolithic communal barrow (burial place) on Mottistone Down.

Carisbrooke 



View of 'Back of the Wight' through to Tennyson Down

PREHISTORIC HERITAGE: THE LONG STONE

Take a scenic detour from the Tennyson Trail to discover a 6,000 year old prehistoric monument – the Neolithic Long Stone – and back on the trail find more recent Bronze Age burial mounds, just 4,000 years old.

ENERGETIC WALKING

- 2¾mils/4½kms. 2 – 2½ hours
- Although a gentle stroll downhill at first, this walk involves an energetic uphill climb from the Long Stone to the top of Mottistone Down. Good walking shoes are recommended. This is an exposed walk where high winds are possible on the section heading east along the Tennyson Trail.
- Start: OS Grid Reference SZ 419 845

PITSTOP

Sun Inn, Hulverstone (01983 741124): A six hundred year-old hostelry between Brook and Mottistone serving excellent pub food in an attractive bar with open fire and separate restaurant. There's a large garden for sunny days.

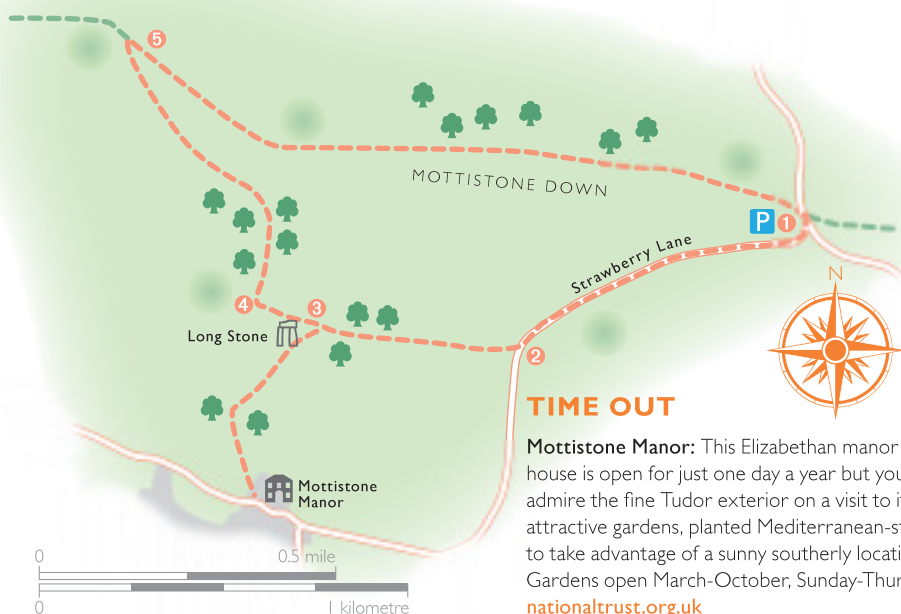
1. Starting from the National Trust Jubilee Car Park, turn sharp right into Lynch Lane and almost immediately right again into Strawberry Lane. Take extra care on the first part of this single track road until it bears round to the right and you can see ahead clearly. Walk downhill for 0.6 mile with Grammar's Common beyond on the left.

2. Turn right at the National Trust sign for the Mottistone Estate through a five-bar gate and onto footpath BS84. Follow this path past an old thatched barn on the right with stunning views of Mottistone Down then, just beyond a gate, walk past woodland on the right. This opens out onto a grassy field leading past the redbrick Longstone Cottage on the right to the Long Stone, an impressive 10 ton megalith dating from the New Stone Age. From here a short detour leads down to Mottistone Manor on footpath BS43 – around 0.3 mile/0.5 km.

3. Leaving the Long Stone behind, follow a wide track upward to a five-bar gate on the right, marked 'not open access'.

4. Keep strictly to the narrow wooded track (footpath BS88) and walk uphill to an iron gate. Beyond this the path leads up on a grassy slope with southerly views across to the coast and to forested Mottistone Common below.

5. As the track reaches the top of Mottistone Down there are magnificent panoramas of Tennyson Down and Freshwater Way in one direction and across to the mainland in the other. Turn right here onto the Tennyson Trail (footpath BS44). Follow this eastward passing early Bronze Age burial mounds on the left and views of the impressive chimneys of J.B. Priestley's old home Brook Hill House on the right, finally descending down to Jubilee Car Park.



TIME OUT

Mottistone Manor: This Elizabethan manor house is open for just one day a year but you can admire the fine Tudor exterior on a visit to its attractive gardens, planted Mediterranean-style to take advantage of a sunny southerly location. Gardens open March-October, Sunday-Thursday. nationaltrust.org.uk

TIME OUT

Tennyson Monument: 147 metres above sea level on cliffs overlooking Freshwater Bay stands an imposing memorial to Lord Tennyson. Erected in 1897, five years after his death, the site of the striking granite Iona cross marks the poet's spiritual home. He lived nearby at Farringford for almost 40 years, writing famous works like *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and *Maud* there, but it was the wild cliff landscape that fuelled his imagination and provided the inspiration for his great masterpieces.



Needles Old Battery: The most famous of *Palmerston's Follies*, built to guard against the threat of a French invasion in the 1860s, the battery still houses two 12 ton gun barrels and offers the best view of the Needles from land from the searchlight emplacement at the end of a 71-yard tunnel. Open mid-March to October, 10.30am-5pm.

theneedlesbattery.org.uk



Insider's SAFARI



Few walks on Wight showcase the changing seasons in the way this safari does. It traces a scenic route around the south of Newport known to local walkers but few others and provides marvellous views in all directions, whatever the time of year. *A Walk For All Seasons* was the winning entry in a Wightlink competition that asked Island locals to recommend walks that were well-kept secrets.

90-year old Bill Shepard, born on the Isle of Wight and a resident all his life, recommended it as one of his favourites – a walk that provides an ever-changing panorama with diverse scenery and wildlife to spot along the way. A devoted naturalist and writer on flora and fauna, Bill's belief is that "walking may be health-giving but it is what you observe that makes it exciting." How appropriate then that his Insider's Safari should be chosen for a collection dedicated to looking and learning while you walk.

MODERATE WALKING

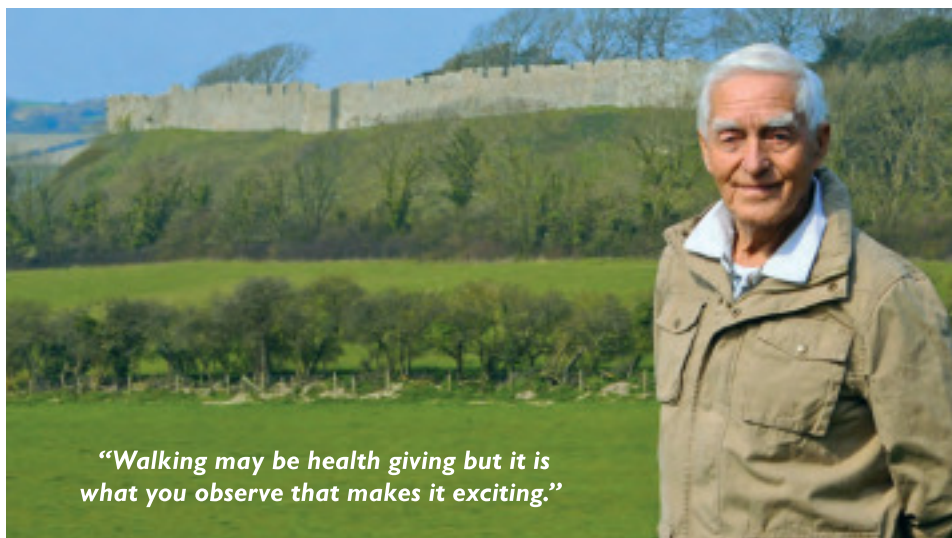
- 3¾mils/6 kms. 2 – 2½ hours
- Although steep in places, the route starts by leading downhill to a long flat section along the old rail track. Only in its final stage does the trail lead up and over Mount Joy.
- Start: OS Grid Reference SZ 489 876

GREAT SIGHTS

The panoramas westward from Carisbrooke Priory car park, south from Nunnery Lane, east from Marvel Lane and north from Mount Joy reveal the staggering extent of unspoiled greenbelt on the Isle of Wight.

TIME OUT

Carisbrooke Priory (01983 523354): An ideal place to spend some time in quiet reflection. Enjoy the walled gardens and chapel at this house of prayer, where the 'open door' policy includes a Thursday prayer service followed by a simple communal lunch. Spend time exploring the extensive collection of second-hand books at Carisbooks in the entrance to the chapel. Make the Priory a refreshment pitstop too. Tea and coffee is usually available from its dining room. carisbrookepriory.org.uk



"Walking may be health giving but it is what you observe that makes it exciting."

Bill Shepard with view of Carisbrooke Castle

1. Start from the car park opposite Carisbrooke Priory and before setting off, look westward at the Bowcombe Valley, little changed in centuries. Only the artillery rampart of Carisbrooke Castle terminates the view northward. Turn into Nunnery Lane, named after the nunnery that predated the priory. The nunnery was built in 1861 and prior to that the lane was known as Love Lane. As soon as you enter the lane, there is a gate on the right hand side, from which to see breathtaking views of the Island's south. You can even spot the tower of St Saviour-on-the-Cliff protruding out of the skyline in far off Shanklin. The fields on both sides of the lane belong to Newclose Farm, not so much a farm in the traditional sense, but a park with two species of deer and other exotic animals. A pond, visible when the hedge loses its leaves, is home to a variety of exotic waterfowl, including a pair of black swans who produced cygnets in 2010.

2. Walk down to Watergate at the junction of Nunnery and Marvel Lanes. In times gone by this provided a watering hole for animals destined for Newport Market, before the town boasted piped water. You also had to pay to pass with a vehicle. Continue along Marvel Lane, which is bordered by fields, but backed by trees. To the west, capping the hill, you can see Marvel Copse, a favourite haunt of kestrels, buzzards and other birds of prey because of the lofty view it offers. While walking along the lane, note the dominance of hazel in the hedgerow, an indication of its antiquity.

3. At the junction of Marvel and Sandy Lanes the safari changes direction. Walk left along Sandy Lane for around two hundred yards towards the hamlet of Blackwater.

4. When you reach a bridge, turn left to join the former rail track between Blackwater and Shide, where the river Medina runs down both sides of the raised track. Why, you may ask? Look at the large water catchment area to the left, whose waters had to be drained into the river. This could have been solved by running a series of pipes under the track, but a better idea was thought to be to run water along a deep trench and pass it to the



View toward south Wight



main river at a point under the bridge. This mile long section of the walk, known as the Troll Trail, is lined almost in its entirety by alders, which usually attract a flock of siskins in winter. All rivers attract birds but some here are unexpected, like the Little Egret, the flash of a passing Kingfisher or a nesting Grey Wagtail.

5. Reaching Shide at the end of the track, turn left and left again, almost opposite the Bengal Palace, into Dairy Lane. The path (footpath N23) skirts St George's School and deposits you in Watergate Road. Turn right and walk along to the road junction, turning left into Whitepit Lane.

6. A short distance further on, turn left onto footpath N24 which leads high over Mount Joy on a very pleasant country lane. At the 'summit' of Mount Joy, on the right the footpath borders the most remarkable hilltop cemetery. Passing this, the footpath becomes the N25 and drops down via a row of steps to Whitcombe Road, where you turn left back to Carisbrooke Priory.



Troll Trail picnic bench



Carisbrooke
Priory
No. 10
Rushmore, Wokingham

Carisbrooke Priory, on the Insider's Safari

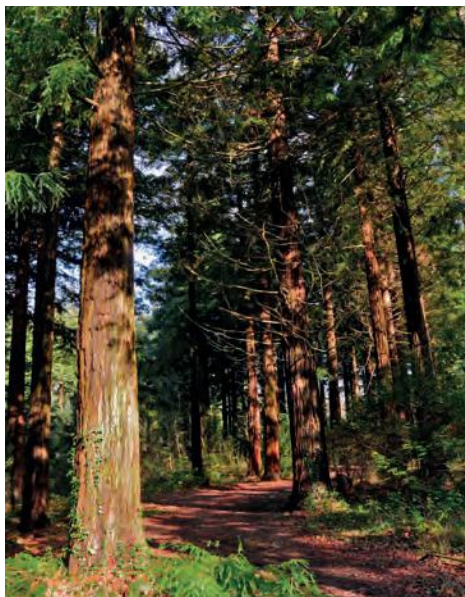
Woodland SAFARI



There are spectacular rare trees to spot along the route for this safari in Firestone Copse, an important sanctuary for ancient broadleaved woodland and home to the rare nocturnal Bechstein's bat as well as to the seriously-endangered red squirrel and dormouse. What starts out as a woodland trail offers the surprising bonus of a waterside walk with a bird-rich panorama of wild salt marsh and mudflats to behold.

EASY WALKING

- 1¼ mls/3 kms. 1 – 1½ hours
- This is a gentle, mostly flat hike that starts and ends on well-marked forestry tracks but which descends onto potentially muddy land along the creek and follows a rougher woodland path back to the wider track.
- Start: OS Grid Reference SZ 557 910



Redwood Glade, Firestone Copse

GREAT SIGHTS

Firestone Copse's waterside path provides panoramic views of the Old Mill Pond and the wildfowl and wading birds that visit, including herons and snipe. Best seen through the twisted oaks that line up along the creek, this extensive tidal area of salt marsh and mudflats is not the only reason that Firestone is designated a *Site of Special Scientific Interest* (SSSI). It is also a remarkable area of ancient broadleaved woodland and among the rare species that flourish close to the creek is the Wild Service Tree, a little known native British species whose leaves turn a vivid blood red, tinged with copper, in the autumn.

Look out too for the Californian Redwoods that grow in profusion along the safari route. You can identify these striking trees by their distinctive chestnut colour and deeply-furrowed bark.



Old Mill Pond looking toward Wootton Bridge

1. Set out from Firestone Copse car park and picnic site at the junction of three walking trails. Take the Wootton Creek Trail and follow the wide track, bearing right when you see the perimeter of the copse.

2. Follow the wide track around until it bends sharp right. Here turn left by a yellow footprint on a wooden post descending into pine woods with views through to the Old Mill Pond. Skirt the water on a scenic path that provides a birds-eye view of herons and other interesting 'pond' life on the tidal lake. Walk through a natural sculpture of gnarled oak trees before taking the upper path by a yellow-ringed post to avoid a boggy inlet.

3. At the other side of this inlet walk on firm ground back to the waterside path. Follow this, ignoring the next yellow-ringed post, until you reach the head of another inlet. Now turn inland away from the shoreline.

4. Bear left to cross the valley bottom and on the other side, keeping parallel with the stream, walk through woods to reach Map Post 15/P. Here cross a gully and 200 yards further on at a path turn right to cross the stream.

5. Climb up the track, crossing the first path and a yellow-ringed post just ahead of it on the left. Continue straight on, next reaching a right-angled track with a yellow footprint on the left. Ignore this and walk straight uphill to a wide service track for forestry vehicles.

6. Walk on the track past several tall redwood trees on the left, noting their distinctive chestnut-red bark and ridged primeval-looking trunks.

7. Arriving at a T-junction, turn left onto another wide path and walk past a track on the right, marked with a blue footprint, back to the car park and picnic site.



TIME OUT

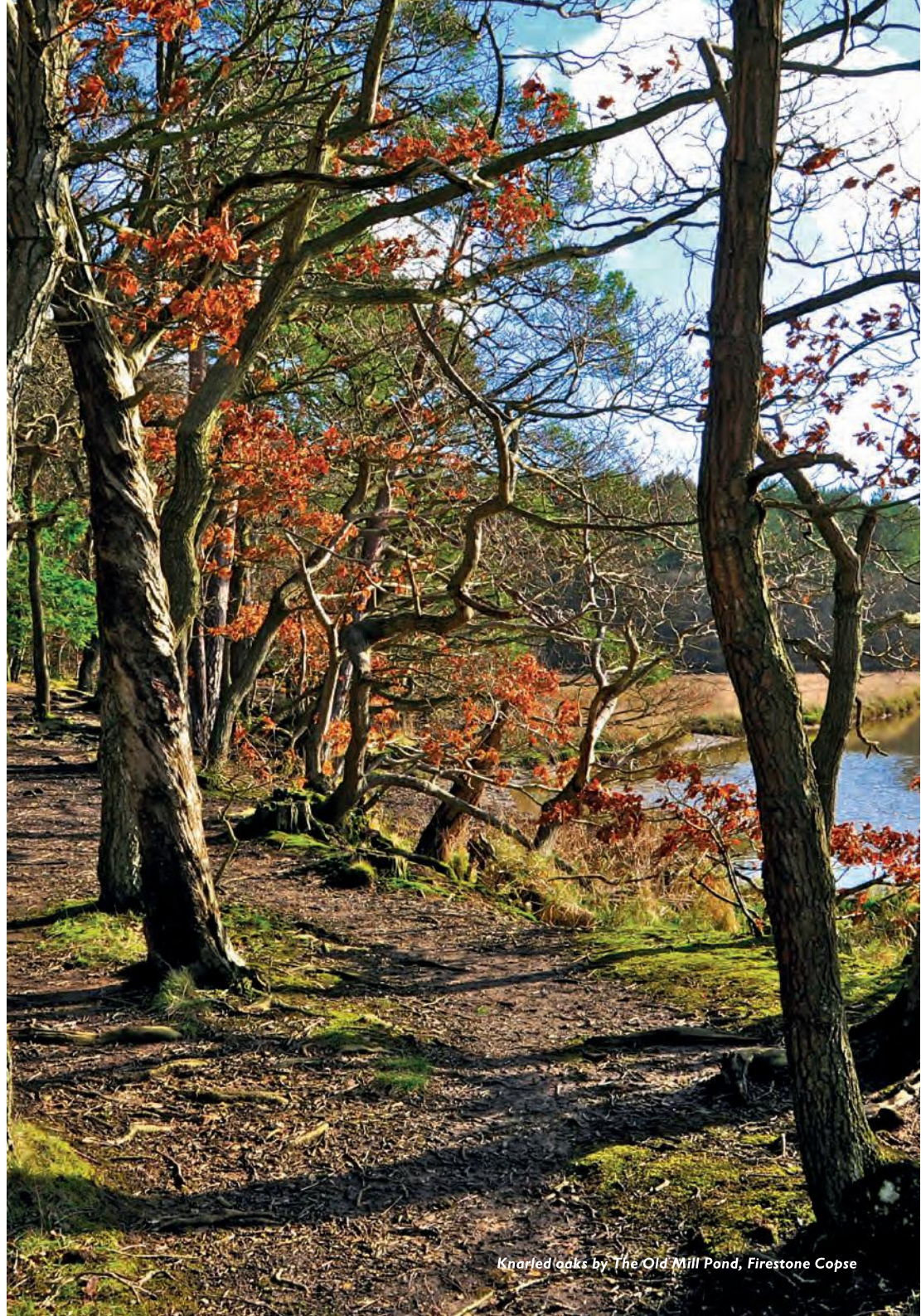
Isle of Wight Steam Railway: Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2011, the award-winning Isle of Wight Steam Railway's Havenstreet station is a brisk walk from Firestone Copse. Take the path furthest to the left from the bottom of Firestone Copse car park which leads past a glade of redwood trees. Cross a small wooden-planked bridge and two stiles to connect with footpath R6. When this meets Havenstreet Main Road turn right and walk through the village to the station on its outskirts. There's an excellent museum charting the Island's railway history and the option to ride in beautifully-restored heritage carriages on five miles of track running between Smallbrook Junction, Havenstreet, Ashey and Wootton. iwsteamrailway.co.uk

PITSTOPS

Sloop Inn, Wootton (01983 882544): Situated by the creek at Wootton Bridge with great views of boat life, this character pub serves great value meals all day.

Lakeside Park Hotel, Wootton (01983 882266): The stylish bar and brasserie of this newest addition to the Island hotel scene has fabulous views overlooking the Old Mill Pond. Better still, there is an extensive lakeside terrace for alfresco dining in warmer weather.

White Hart Inn, Havenstreet (01983 883485): Close to the Isle of Wight Steam Railway and recently refurbished, this cosy Havenstreet village pub serves real ales and home-made food using local produce.



Gnarled oaks by The Old Mill Pond, Firestone Copse

Birdland SAFARI



Little Egret

Explore north coast Newtown Estuary on a nature-lovers' safari to spot migratory birds on the move and to see nationally rare bird species year round at this national nature reserve where the winged wildlife well-outnumbers human beings. They are attracted by the remote eco-landscape of mudflats, salt marsh, ancient woodlands and meadows surrounding a natural harbour considered the most remarkable in southern Britain.

EASY WALKING

- 3½mils/5½kms. 2 – 2½ hours
- This is a very easy walk on the flat but do expect muddy fields approaching the estuary at wet times of the year. A shorter alternative is to settle for the initial 1¼mils /2kms walk (around 30-40 minutes) leading down to Shalfleet Quay and back.
- Start: OS Grid Reference SZ 414 895



Salt marsh at Newtown Estuary



Wigeon in flight over Shalfleet Estuary



Newtown Estuary

A STEP BACK IN TIME

Even though a small boatyard is still in existence, Shalfleet Quay today shows little sign of its former maritime significance. Yet there has been a quay on the site since medieval times when Newtown was the most important port on the Isle of Wight because of its deep and sheltered harbour, saltworks and shellfish beds. Francheville, as it was also called, flourished for many years until a French raid on the town in the late 14th century and the gradual silting up of the harbour led to a loss of trade.

However, the wild watery marshland of Newtown Estuary can trace its history much further back in time to the prehistoric age – offering perhaps the most accurate picture of what the Isle of Wight landscape would have looked like at its birth, around 7,000 years ago.

GREAT SIGHTS



Newtown Estuary is a real treasure where sightings of more than 180 bird species have been recorded within this National Nature Reserve's remote and atmospheric habitat. There are wonderful estuary views from both Shalfleet Quay (*above*) and Newtown.

TIME OUT

Newtown Old Town Hall: Built in 1699, this ancient building is the only remaining evidence that Newtown was once an important place – significant both strategically and politically from the reign of Elizabeth I for over two centuries. The Town Hall fell to rack and ruin after the 'rotten borough' of Newtown was abolished by the 1832 Reform Act but was rescued a century later by the mysterious Ferguson's Gang. They gave it to the National Trust, which has mounted an exhibition in the building that charts their exploits. Open mid March-late October, Tuesday-Thursday and Sunday 2-5pm (also Monday, July-August). nationaltrust.org.uk



Newtown Old Town Hall

Mercia Seabroke Hide: Check out the sightings board at the main hide to find out which birds have been spotted recently. It could be a Little Egret, now common at Newtown, or a Black-headed Gull from the colony that breeds in the reserve and, in spring, an Island rarity like the Pintail or Corn Bunting. Open April-September.

PITSTOPS

New Inn, Shalfleet (01983 531314): A few yards from the start of the walk, this atmospheric old inn with authentic flagstone floors and oak beams is a regular award-winner. Currently featuring in the AA's 'Pick of the Pubs', it is well-known for its local seasonal seafood and game and serves a wide range of wines and local real ales.

Dairy Deli Farm Shop, Shalfleet (01983 531557): Located at Shalfleet Corner on the A3054, this is a great place to pick up local produce for a picnic, including RSPCA Freedom Food-accredited dairy produce direct from the owners' farm nearby.



Mercia Seabroke Hide



The boat house, Newtown Estuary



1. Park in the Shalfleet car park just down from the New Inn and turn left to walk down the lane signed to Shalfleet Quay. It's an easy, peaceful stroll down a broad gravel track (footpath S12) to the quaint old boat yard, affording fantastic views of the estuary (mudflats at low tide, river estuary at high tide) and its bird life all the way.

2. Walk back to the Shalfleet Quay sign. Turn left on the Coastal Path into Mill Road and past Shalfleet Mill, crossing over a little footbridge. Follow the woodland path for approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile until it joins up with a tarmaced country lane.

3. Turn left here and walk along the lane past the sign for Corf scout camp, turning left after a bend in the road into Town Lane, signposted to Newtown. Follow Town Lane for around 200 yards, crossing the humpback bridge over Causeway Lake.

4. Turn left immediately after the bridge onto footpath CB 16a, signposted Newtown Village $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. Walk along the shoreline, which can be muddy, to a five-bar gate marked National Trust Newtown and cross two fields up to a stile in the far corner to join a narrow tree-lined path leading into Newtown village. At the tarmac road go straight ahead and follow it as it bears left through the village to a parking area.

5. Beyond the parking area follow footpath CB9 reached through a gate beside the Old Coastguard Station. This leads through a meadow down to the new National Trust timber boardwalk.

6. Cross the boardwalk over salt marsh to reach a romantic old quay and boathouse. Take some time out to enjoy the 360° estuary panorama and spot a variety of birds. From here

head back inland across the boardwalk bridge to a gate. A few steps beyond the gate turn left and follow footpath CB15a to the main bird hide, where the latest sightings are chalked on a board.

7. After the hide bear right continuing along the footpath until it reaches the village lane. Follow this to the Church of the Holy Spirit on the left and enjoy a pleasant country stroll past a group of village cottages

also on the left with more views across the estuary.

8. At the T-junction turn right into Town Lane past the National Trust car park on the right and Newtown Old Town Hall on the left. Follow the lane back to the bridge over Causeway Lake and from here retrace your steps on the road and woodland route back to the sign for Shalfleet Quay and the car park.



Get ORGANISED

Our *Wight Safaris* are great for people who like to walk alone, with friends or with family members but if you would prefer to walk in a group organised by experts with real local know-how, the opportunities come thick and fast on the Isle of Wight. Themed walks take place year round, led by local experts keen to share their insight and knowledge.

The best demonstration of what the Isle of Wight has to offer walkers takes place every May when the Island hosts the UK's largest Walking Festival, attracting over 20,000 people annually. More than 300 themed walks are packed into a two week period – including a large number of special interest hikes. The options range from the ultimate stamina test of walking non-stop round the 72-mile coastal path to the famous Speed Dating Walk, an 'event' that has led to three weddings thus far.

Wightlink sponsors the *Isle of Wight Walking Festival* and its sister event, the *Autumn Walking Weekend* in October, offering a range of special ferry fares that make it cheaper to get across to the Island by car or on foot.

Aside from these two annual events, a host of guided walks take place across the seasons, especially in the spring and summer months. Many are designed to provide an insight into the Island's rare flora and fauna or to explore specific aspects of its diverse landscape. You could take part in an evening *Batzap* to find out

why the Isle of Wight is internationally significant for its bat population, go on a *Great Bug Hunt* at Alverstone to find strange minibeasts, or explore the rocky shores of Bembridge Ledge on a *Rockpool Rummage*.

The Isle of Wight is Europe's most important site for dinosaur remains because of the ongoing cliff erosion around the south of the Island. You can find out more by signing-up for one of the fossil walks led by palaeontologists from Sandown's Dinosaur Isle, which houses one of Europe's finest collections of dinosaur and fossil finds. Go searching for fossils then visit the museum to see life-size dinosaur reconstructions.

There's Island heritage from a different era at the multi award-winning *Isle of Wight Steam Railway* where beautifully-restored locomotives and carriages run on five miles of track between Wootton, Ashey and Havenstreet. In the golden era of steam travel during the 19th century, 54 miles of track ran across the Island and you can trace these old rail routes on a regular series of *Walks from Rails*.



Guided walk on the Tennyson Trail, part of the Isle of Wight Walking Festival

GOING YELLOW

If you see a walker dressed in yellow or decorated in sunflowers, chances are that he or she is helping to support the Isle of Wight-based Earl Mountbatten Hospice, one of Wightlink's main charity sponsorships. The organisation's biggest event is its annual Hospice Walk the Wight, which takes place annually during the Isle of Wight Walking Festival raising well over £2 million for patient care over the past 20 years. Check out iwhospice.org



Steve Hutt, palaeontologist, with a dinosaur footprint cast at Compton



Group Safaris – useful websites

To find out more about the organised walks available, contact:

iwight.com/walks

iowramblers.com

dinosaurisle.com

iwsteamrailway.co.uk

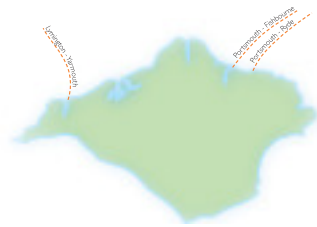
For more information on Island flora and fauna, go to:

gifttonature.org.uk

wildonwight.co.uk



Crossing THE SOLENT



With three Wightlink ferry routes linking the Isle of Wight to the mainland, it couldn't be easier to make the short crossing to either the eastern coast of the Island or to the scenic West Wight.

What's more, two of the walks featured in *Wight Safaris* start from Yarmouth and Fishbourne – literally a few yards from Wightlink's ferry terminals. Starting in Yarmouth, the *Pub to Pub Safari* provides walkers with attractive estuary and harbour views while the *Tree Safari* sets out from Fishbourne to discover some of the Island's most historically interesting specimens. And keen walkers can also pick up the Island Coastal Path close to all three Wightlink ferry terminals.

By Car

Wightlink's fleet of seven car ferries provides a regular shuttle service linking Portsmouth with Fishbourne in the east of the Island and Lymington with picturesque Yarmouth in West Wight, half-hourly at peak times and with more than 200 sailings a day. **Journey time:** approximately 35 minutes from Lymington and 40 minutes from Portsmouth.

On Foot

Take a Wight Ryder passenger catamaran from Portsmouth Harbour to Ryde, arriving on Ryde Pier Head, at the end of the UK's oldest and most historic pier. **Journey time:** approximately 22 minutes. Numerous trains and buses feed Portsmouth Harbour and the catamarans link with Island Line trains between Ryde and Shanklin, as well as with Southern Vectis buses.



Wight Ryder leaving Portsmouth



Wight Class ferry arriving at Yarmouth

Online

Wightlink's website, wightlink.co.uk, provides up to the minute information about ferry times, a wide range of special Island events, activities to try and attractions to visit. Customers can also benefit from a range of money-saving fares available when bookings are made online. Travel bookings can also be made by calling Wightlink's call centre.

Wightlink Themed Booklets

Wight Safaris is the latest in a series of illustrated Wightlink guides providing short breaks ideas for people with specific interests. Available free (call Wightlink's call centre or download at wightlink.co.uk), others to collect include *Secret Wight*, a series of family adventure challenges, and the *Wight History Trail*, a 33-stop trail around the living history of the Isle of Wight.



St Class ferry leaving Fishbourne

