

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to follow a river on its journey from source to sea?

Here on the Isle of Wight you can do just that. From a spring in Niton you will see the East Yar river grow from the smallest trickle and gather itself through a host of tributaries before spreading across its wide floodplain and joining the sea at Bembridge Harbour. Along the way the river will guide you through rolling landscapes, past ancient manors and into busy cosy pubs.

This waymarker guides you along the Yar River Trail and is attached to signposts, gates and fences.



There are 20 Portland Limestone milestones in a variety of shapes that mark distances along the trail. Sculptor Paul Mason also carved a series of spherical stone forms which were sited along the route.



Niton to Godshill – *The Young River*

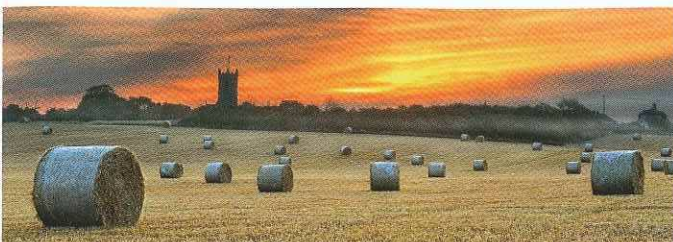
Distance – 5 miles

Located at the source of the Yar (look out for a sculpture!), Niton was once renowned as a centre for smuggling and the table-top tombs (1) in the churchyard were a good hiding place for the smugglers and their contraband.



The next village you come to is Whitwell, where pilgrims followed the trail to receive healing waters at the holy well (2).

The trail then follows the Yar through fens and marshes alive with wildlife and blooming with colourful wild flowers and into the picturesque village of Godshill where legend has it that an argument between a bishop and the devil led to the siting of the church high on the hill.



Godshill to Newchurch –

The Developing River Distance – 4 ½ miles

This stretch of the trail reveals the long standing importance of the river and its valley to the farming economy. Medieval manor houses line the route, most of which are still part of working farms today. Their names reveal watery origins, Redway (3) for example means 'the way to the reedbed' and Langbridge (4) is the 'long bridge over the river'.

Many of the hamlets along the Yar were at one time bustling communities before the arrival of the railway in the late 19th century. This together with the increasing agricultural mechanisation led people to leave the countryside for the town. The life of the East Yar valley was dramatically changed but then changed again when the railway itself was dismantled in the 1960s. The old track-bed today provides much of the Yar River Trail. Part of the Developing River section joins National Cycleway Route 23 that stretches all the way to Reading on the mainland and links Sandown with Cowes on the Island.



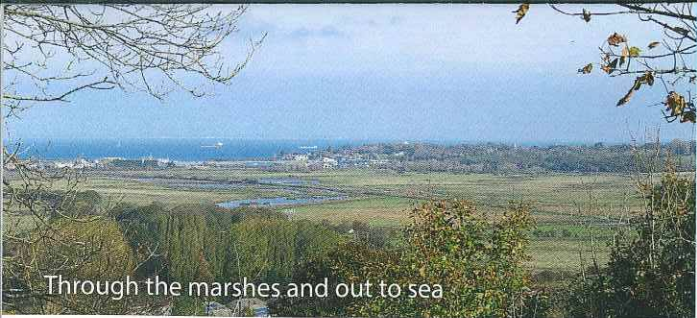
Highland Cattle

Newchurch to Brading –

The Central Floodplain Distance – 4 miles

As you walk from Newchurch along the cycletrack look out for one of Paul Mason's sculptures attached to a tree. The marshes around Alverstone (5) are buzzing with wildlife and include a large Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Look out for damselflies and dragonflies along the water's edge, keep an eye open for water voles swimming across the river and listen for the many wetland birds calling and singing from the reedbeds and fens around you. Peep over the bridge and spot one of Paul Mason's sculptures. A large amount of the land you are passing is now owned and managed by conservation organisations to protect the water environment. One of Paul Mason's sculptures is located outside Sandown Community Orchard.





Through the marshes and out to sea

Brading to St Helens – *The River Mouth* Distance – 5 miles

For centuries Brading was a port with sheltered waters deep enough for cargo vessels to carry goods to and from the Island. It's hard to imagine as you cross the now reclaimed marshes that all of this was under the sea less than 150 years ago. By the 17th century the harbour began to silt up and Brading Haven was no longer suitable for larger barges.

It was not until 1882 when the railway line was built that the Haven was permanently drained.

Brading Marshes (6) is now an important nature reserve. As you cross Middle Sluice, look out for one of Paul Mason's sculptures. Folktales of strangers, wicker cages and sacrifices indicate how mysterious this place can be. Leaving the marsh you travel through Centurions Copse which hides an abandoned medieval village and past Bembridge Mill. The last surviving windmill on the Isle of Wight, Bembridge Mill (7) was featured in a watercolour by artist JMW Turner.



The Yar River Trail finally reaches its end at St Helen's where the 13th century church was abandoned in the early 1700s and its tower now forms a seamark (8).

The Eastern Yar, at 19 miles long is the Island's longest river draining over a fifth of its land surface. Spend a rewarding weekend walking the whole trail and getting to know the Island.

Or you could walk one of the four shorter sections each themed on a different stage of the river. Our downloadable guides will give you precise directions.

More information about the trail and maps can be found at islandrivers.org.uk/yar

The Yar River Trail is one of three beautiful walks through the largest river catchment on the Isle of Wight. You can join the Yar River Trail from Ventnor or Shanklin. Look out for our leaflets on the Wroxall Stream Link and Scotchells Brook Link.



ISLAND RIVERS
PARTNERSHIP

natural enterprise
an economic and environmental partnership

DOWN TO
THE COAST

HERITAGE
FUND

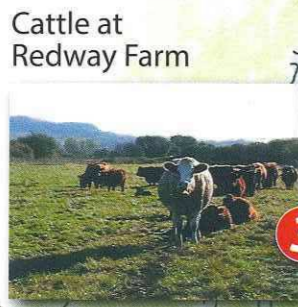
ramblers
at the heart of walking

Yar River Trail



Yar River Trail

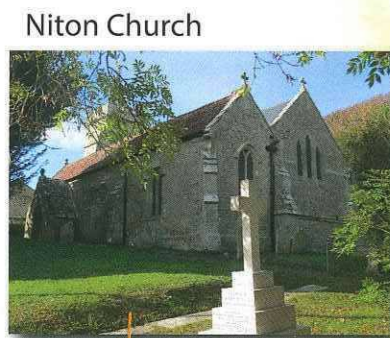
--- Main Route
 Summer Route



3



5



Niton Church



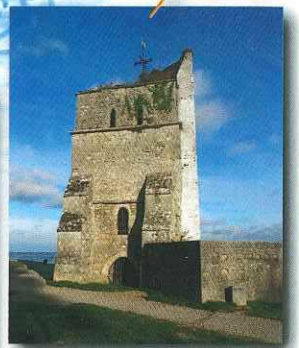
Langbridge



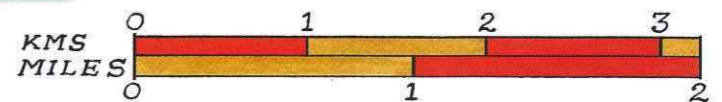
Brading Marshes and out to the Solent



Bembridge Windmill



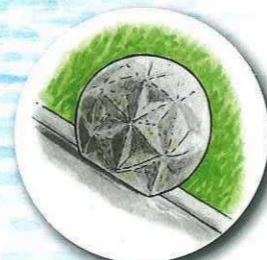
Tower at St. Helen's



Keep a look out for...



Portland Limestone milestones



Stone sculptures by Paul Mason



Azure Damselfly



Common Orchid



Kingfisher



Meadowsweet



Creeping Thistle



Red Squirrel
 (Credit: Stephen Brown)



Marsh Marigold



Common Blue Butterfly

