

TASTE THE VIEW



Three beautiful walks through the West Wight exploring the relationship between food and the landscape



West Wight
Landscape
Partnership

This booklet presents three circular country walks through the stunning West Wight.

Each has been selected to show you how beautiful landscapes intricately link past and present with the production of food.

In common with the majority of the UK, the landscapes of the West Wight are the product of the combined forces of nature and human action. Even the wildest of Island countryside will have gained its character through centuries of farming and the landscape in turn is a key factor in what can be grown and reared.

The links between food and the landscape are numerous and complex, and we are only able to give you a taste of them within these pages. We hope this will encourage you to look at the countryside around you in a new way and to explore further the relationship between the food on your plate and the landscape that it helps to both define and sustain.

We have noted for you some of the farm shops and cafes on each route which will give you a taste of the view.



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The three walks are:

Grape & Grain 6_{miles}

(with shorter options)

Mixed terrain and a number of stiles, includes sections on quiet country roads.

Yar Estuary 4_{miles}

Eastern side of the route uses fairly level, surfaced path on former railway line. Western side on mixed surfaces. No stiles. Fairly level with some modest slopes.

Downs & Coast 5³/₄ miles

Some steep climbs and stiles.

Notes...

All the routes have been carefully researched and the instructions are believed to be correct at the time of going to press, however some details may change over time. We recommend you use this guide alongside an Ordnance Survey map of the Island - just in case you take an inadvertent detour at any time! The routes use public rights of way and established routes through open access land, but any mention of a route in this guide should not be taken as definitive evidence that a right to walk there exists. Car parks mentioned may be subject to a charge and/or restricted opening hours - please check before leaving your car. Farm shops and cafes may not be open every day, if you are making a special trip please check before visiting.

Grape & Grain 6 miles

Starting Point: Mill Road Car Park, Shalfleet.
(GPS users - PO30 4NE)
Nearest Bus Stop, Shalfleet, New Inn
(directly on walking route)

1 Turn right out of the car park. Walk to the end of the road and turn right at the New Inn onto the main road, then immediately left into Church Lane. Follow the road as it bends round the church, then turn left onto public footpath S17 when you reach the green. The footpath follows the hedge on the left hand side - don't follow the surfaced path.

2 Follow the path through several fields along the edge of the stream (the Caul Bourne), crossing stiles between the fields. At the last stile there is an arrow pointing diagonally across the field. Follow the direction of this arrow across the field to leave via stile onto a track.



Field Margins

Management of field margins plays a key part in balancing the needs of agriculture and wildlife. Often uncultivated boundary strips are left at the edge of crops. These can aid access; either along footpaths or for agricultural purposes, such as to trim hedges. They also provide habitat for wildlife which can often include predators of agricultural pests and can act as a buffer to stop pesticides entering watercourses at the edge of the field. Look out for butterflies, hoverflies and bees.

Caul Bourne





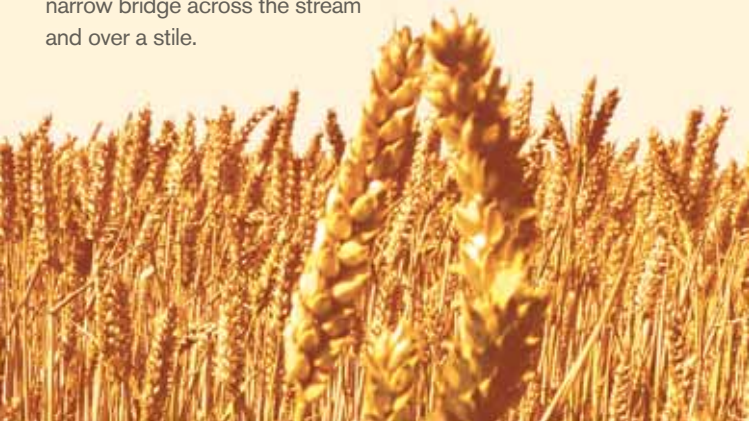
3 Carry straight on and walk along this track, crossing over the old railway line and past farm buildings, where the track turns into a surfaced minor road. As the road bends sharp left, carry straight on over a stile onto footpath S35 towards Newchurch. Follow this path until you reach the road. Turn right onto the road and then left onto Clay Lane.

For a shorter walk skip section 4 (you will miss Calbourne Water Mill) at the end of the lane bear right onto Bridleway S22.

4 At the end turn left (not over the stile) onto footpath S42 towards Norman's Common and Calbourne Mill. Shortly afterwards the path veers left around the field boundary and then runs straight across the field towards the copse. After crossing the field there is an entrance to the copse down a few steps. Follow the path through the copse, over a bridge and up some steps. When you reach a T junction of paths, turn right. Follow this path through the copse, over a narrow bridge across the stream and over a stile.

Milling along the Caul

The flow of water down the Caul provided the power for a number of mills, several of which have now disappeared. These include mills at Shishford (next to the point where your route crosses the old railway line) and Norman's Mill. Newbridge Mill and Shalfleet Mill, which still stand, are now private houses. Upper Calbourne Mill was the last active mill, grinding corn until 1955. Towards the end of the twentieth century the mill re-opened as a visitor attraction and in the year 2000 milling recommenced with one ton of flour produced. The mill is still open to visitors and is now producing over 40 tons of flour each year.



Grape & Grain continued

Turn left, then shortly afterwards left again, crossing the stream once more. The path comes out into a meadow and heads up the hill towards a pedestrian gate, with the timber holiday lodges on your left. Go through the metal gate and you will arrive at Calbourne Water Mill. Return to the end of Clay Lane and turn left onto Bridleway S22 (not over the stile).

5 Follow the bridleway past the farm, up the hill and turn right at the road. Follow the road to the end and turn left towards Wellow. When the road bends sharp right, continue straight on into Wellow Top Road. Continue for 3/4 mile along the road between the arable fields.

6 When you reach three barns opposite a house, turn right onto the footpath that runs beside the house. Follow this through the fields to the road. Opposite you will find Rossiters Vineyard.

A new vista

The landscape you see around Wellow today is relatively recent, the result of post-war farming efficiencies that removed hedges to make larger fields easier to cultivate and harvest. Lost hedgerows are now being replanted through schemes such as Countryside Stewardship, all part of a dynamic and working countryside.



7 Turn right (or left out of Rossiters if you've dropped in) and follow the road until you reach a T junction with Station Road (the old station is on your left just before the junction). Turn left. After 300 yards turn right onto Warlands Road, towards Shalfleet. Follow this road until you reach the main road at Shalfleet. Turn right, and follow the road through the village, past the New Inn on your left and over the Caul. As you reach the end of the village you will come to the Dairy Deli - a farm shop and cafe. Either turn left immediately before this into Corfe Road or drop in to sample some local produce.

8 Continue up Corfe Road taking the first road on the left (a no-through road, signposted for the coastal path). Follow this road to the end and turn right onto a footpath through the woods, over a footbridge. The path turns into a road and you will shortly arrive back at the car park.

Wight Wine

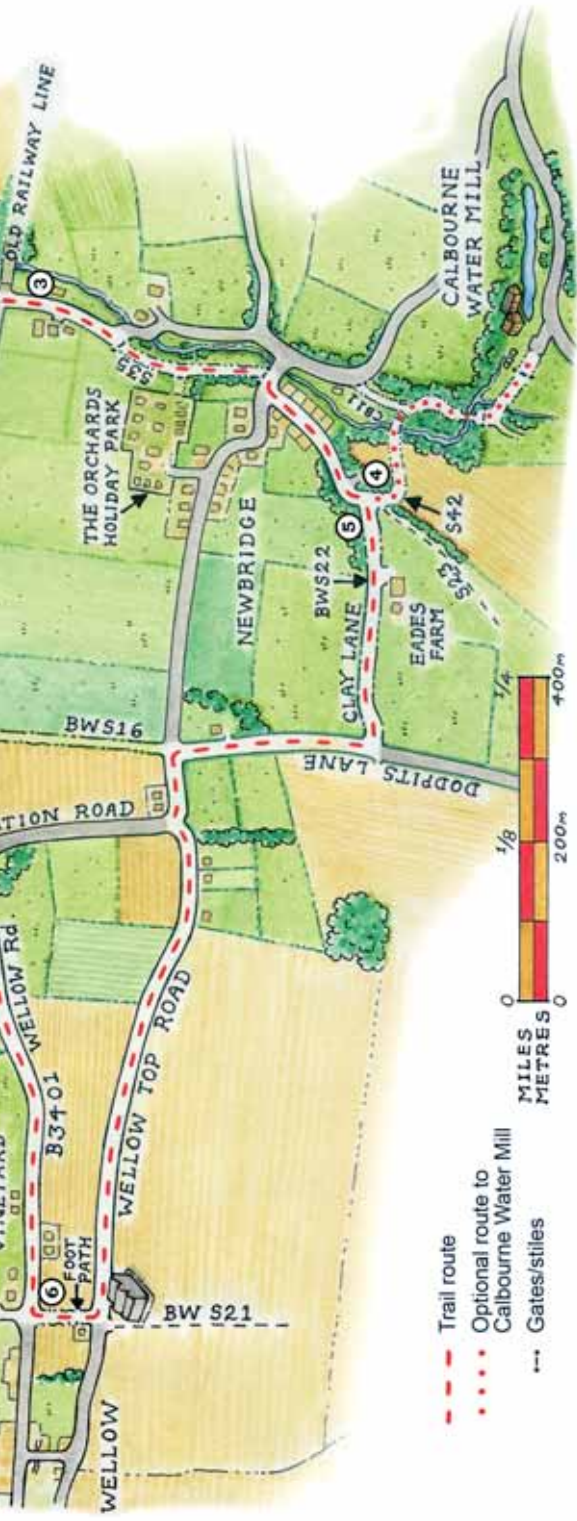
The Isle of Wight is famously one of the sunniest places in the UK and has a mild maritime climate. This has encouraged wine-growers to plant their vineyards here as far back as Roman times. Rossiters is the newest of the Island's wine producers and first added their touch of the Mediterranean to the West Wight's agricultural landscape in 1990.

Farm buildings

Changes in agriculture and wider societal changes have also impacted on the built environment. There is less need for farm workers to be accommodated directly on farms, and modern agricultural techniques mean fewer but larger buildings can be seen in the landscape. Many older agricultural buildings have been put to other uses, such as holiday accommodation.

trail map overleaf...





Grape & Grain 6 miles

Yar Estuary 4 miles

Starting Point: River Road car park, Yarmouth (GPS users - PO41 ONL).

Nearest Bus Stop - Yarmouth bus station

Nearest Ferry - Wightlink Yarmouth terminal (both opposite start)

1 Leave the car park onto the grassy area away from the road and walk towards the river. Turn left onto the surfaced path along the river and follow this, bearing right onto a track past the mill. Follow the path alongside the river until you pass through a gate and reach a T junction. Turn right here onto the old railway line between Yarmouth and Freshwater. Follow the path for about 2 miles until you reach a road.

Afton Orchard is a short distance off the route at this point, you may want to follow the detour shown on the map to visit their cafe, shop and gardens.

Coastal Grazing Marsh

The enclosure of saltmarsh for grazing has created a distinctive habitat of international conservation significance thanks to the many rare species found there. It is especially important for the huge flocks of wildfowl and waders that it feeds through the winter. Low intensity grazing helps manage the marsh and ensure this very specific environment remains in balance. Areas of coastal grazing marsh around the Yar estuary are recognised for their importance, and are managed by local farmers.



Yarmouth Mill





2 Turn right on to the road, follow it over the causeway and past the church. Turn right between the church and Red Lion pub onto Public Footpath F1, the Freshwater Way.

3 Pass through two gates and the farm shop/cafe (pausing for refreshment if desired) and straight on to the lane. At the entrance to the farm yard turn left through a gate then immediately right, following the field boundary, with a barn on your right. Pass through a wooden gate out of the field and along a narrow path. After another gate bear left onto a track up the hill.

Land Management at Kings Manor Farm

Kings Manor Farm is a 1500 acre organic farm, surrounding the entire Yar estuary. It is mainly arable but with some grazing by Aberdeen Angus cattle and Black Hebridean sheep which you will probably spot on your walk. A range of initiatives to improve the landscape and wildlife value of the farm are ongoing. Salt marsh encroachment is being encouraged in some areas, mainly on the west bank but the fresh water marshland is being protected as far as possible on the east side to provide suitable habitat for the likes of teal and widgeon. There have been extensive tree and hedge planting programmes, linking up pieces of ancient woodland as part of the Jigsaw project to encourage the spread of Red Squirrels and other rare species. Planting is of English field species such as hazel, alder and hawthorn.



Black Hebridean Sheep

Yar Estuary continued



4 Follow the track as it then descends the hill into a copse. When you reach this pass through the right hand gate to stay on the footpath. Pass through another gate and follow the path round the left hand edge of the field with the copse on your left, through another gate and straight ahead on the same path, keeping the fence on your right and heading towards the woods. Pass through two more gates, through the woods and you will reach a T junction with a track. Turn left and follow this track all the way to the main road.

Bees - Keeping you fed

Bees play a vital role in producing our food, and not just the honey! The health of their populations depends on a carefully maintained balance between farming, landscape and wildlife. Bees of course pollinate a huge range of food plants from raspberries to potatoes, tomatoes to runner beans; most of your meals will have benefited from a bee's endeavours.

The loss of diversity in wildflowers growing in the countryside and the meadow habitats they create have been two of the biggest threats to bees, not just in this country but across the world.

New agricultural policies and practices are creating and managing the hedgerows and field margins in the landscape around you. A real difference is being made as the hedges create nectar-rich corridors across farmland, connecting other nesting and feeding sites and allowing bee populations to build up once again.





5 Turn right and follow the pavement alongside the road, across the swing bridge then take the path to the right, past Yarmouth Sailing Club and back to the car park.



Fishing from Yarmouth

Yarmouth has been a port town since the 13th century, with fishing being a key part of the local economy, and commercial catches are still landed in the harbour today. Fishing off the pier is also popular - though a relatively new aspect of Yarmouth life, the pier having only been constructed in 1876. If you want to take a more leisurely approach you could simply try one of the town's restaurants serving locally caught fish.

trail map overleaf...



FRESHWATER

END OF THE LINE CAFE

KINGS MANOR FARM SHOP/CAFE

RED LION PUB

FRESHWATER WAY FP F1

KINGS MANOR FARM

A3054

COPSE LANE

GASWORKS LANE

F2

BW F61

AFTON ROAD

NEWPORT

5

4

3

2

6



Yar Estuary 4^{miles}

Downs & Coast 5³/₄ miles

**Starting Point: National Trust Car Park, Mottistone (GPS Users PO30 4ED)
Nearest bus stop Mottistone Manor
(Alternatively you can start at Brook Car Park (PO30 4HA) and follow the directions from 2)**

1 Follow the footpath out of the car park towards Mottistone Manor. Cross the road and take the turning by the church, Church Lane which leads into Ridget Lane. Follow Ridget Lane, which bends round to the left then heads to the sea. When you reach the road cross over onto public footpath BS75 until you reach the coastal footpath.

2 Turn right onto the coastal footpath and follow it for just over a mile until you reach a row of houses stretching out to the sea. Turn right here and follow the path onto the drive and back to the Military Road.



Ancient Road

There are many paths and tracks like Ridget Lane running north-south from the coast to the downland that rises above it. These are ancient roads, used originally to connect the cultivated coastal lands with common grazing on the downs. Many routes developed centuries ago for agricultural purposes make up large parts of our current network of roads, bridleways and footpaths. Food production from a bygone era is still impacting on our everyday travel patterns centuries on.

A dynamic landscape

The coastline here is a constantly changing scene, with erosion causing landslides along the soft cliffs. The cliffs provide an important habitat for wildflowers and a range of insects, including rare bees and butterflies. Intensive agriculture on the cliff tops has in the past damaged this sensitive environment. But as you can see this stretch of coast is now carefully managed to promote the right kind of grassland for wildlife.

3 Cross over onto Brook Village Road. Follow the road for a few hundred yards then turn left onto Coastguard Lane. At the end of the road turn right between a garage and house onto a grass footpath BS51 towards Dunsbury Farm. Follow this path in a straight line beside the house then along the field edge until you reach a track. Continue straight on and follow the track through various farm buildings until you reach a T junction.

Dunsbury Farm

Predominantly a sheep farm, around half of which is on steeply sloping high ground, a landscape which is unsuitable for most types of agriculture but has been used for grazing animals for thousands of years. Dunsbury have a flock of 850 Ewes, many of which are Poll Dorsets – a traditional breed for the Island which lambs out of season, allowing production of meat year round. Carrying on a traditional system of sheep farming keeps the downland on the farm managed, maintaining this stunning landscape and important habitat. Dunsbury also run a number of environmental programmes including managing ponds, field margins and woodland to benefit wildlife.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows are a key part of the British landscape. Many of our hedgerows stem from the enclosure of previously open fields during the 18th and 19th centuries. Changes in the efficiency of agricultural methods after the Second World War led to a huge loss of hedgerows across the country as fields were made larger. With this came inevitable changes to the character of the countryside and this was particularly marked in some parts of the Island such as the Wellow Plain; look around you and you will see an open landscape with few dividing hedges. However, many farms are now replanting hedgerows as agricultural policy and practice changes again to focus more on the conservation of biodiversity.

Hedgerows are also a traditional source of autumn and winter food, yielding sloes (perfect for sloe gin or jelly) sweet chestnuts, blackberries and much more. Good foraging for humans and wildlife alike.



Downs & Coast continued

4 Turn right, follow this track for about 200 yards and then turn left onto a track which heads towards a copse. Follow this track as it twists around the outside edge of the copse. You will join a public bridleway, keep right to stay on the same track. On reaching a fork, take the left hand path, through a farm gate. Shortly after this turn right onto a deeply rutted chalk track which bears slightly right and down the hill. You will then reach a wide chalk track, the Tennyson Trail. Turn right onto this.

5 Pass through a gate and then bear right, cross the road and continue up the Tennyson Trail opposite. After a steep climb through open fields you will pass through a gate and reach a wide crossing of tracks. Bear right about 45 degrees onto a Bridleway (don't turn hard right). Keep following this bridleway which sweeps round the edge of the hill then round to the right. Pass through a gate and follow the bridleway along the edge of a wood.

Downland

Unimproved chalk downland was once common in Southern England, but a huge amount was lost to agricultural intensification in the 20th century.

The Isle of Wight now holds 10% of south-east England's resource of this habitat/landscape type. Grazing animals are essential to the survival of good quality downland - a great example of the production of food, the conservation of wildlife and the protection of our historic landscape.



6 After a gate marking the entrance to Mottistone Common, turn left onto a chalk track. Follow that track past the Longstone on your right. Just after the stone the track turns to reveal panoramic views across the coastal plain. As you drop down the hill you will come to a turning on the right. Turn hard right here onto the sandy track, almost doubling back on yourself. You can see on your left the village of Mottistone. Follow the track into the woods until you reach a footpath crossing the track. Turn left here, through a kissing gate and down a set of steps. Follow the path as it winds through the woods then down into Mottistone where you will emerge opposite the church.

Mottistone has a farm shop which you can find by turning right onto the main road and walking along the road for a few hundred yards. There is a pub in nearby Hulverstone which can be reached by walking or driving half a mile further along the road.

Early farming shaping the land

There is evidence of farming activity going back to around 3000BC (Neolithic) on the downland above Mottistone Village; the Longstone is an iconic reminder of this distant age. Such early agriculture took place in cleared pockets of what was otherwise a heavily wooded landscape across the UK and the Island. The succeeding Bronze Age saw much more extensive woodland clearance for grazing animals and cultivating crops and these actions became a key part of shaping the open landscapes of downland and heathland that we see today.



Clustered Bellflower



trail map overleaf...





Downs & Coast 5³/₄ miles

Farm shop

The days of the farm shop consisting of a garden shed and chest freezer are long gone and the number of farm shops has been rising with several emerging in recent years in the West Wight alone.

Food scares in recent years (for example BSE and worries about GM food) have made many people far more aware of the quality and safety of the food they eat. This has led to an increasing demand for fresh 'wholesome' food and customers are keen to meet the people who produce their food with many eager to show their support for local farmers. Similarly, concerns about the environment and animal welfare have encouraged people to buy locally produced and welfare-friendly food.



Farm shops are ideally placed to take advantage of this growing market and also provide a way to reconnect the surrounding landscape back to the products which they sell.

Farmers are currently being encouraged to diversify and have often had to do so in order to survive. A farm shop is an ideal way to expand their business and offers them the opportunity to sell directly to the customer.

You will come across a farm shop on all of these walks; each selling local foods grown, picked, reared or produced on the farm and you can't find food much fresher than that.



TASTE THE VIEW

West Wight Landscape Partnership is a three and a half year project based in the west of the Isle of Wight and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

We are working on a range of projects with communities, landowners and local groups in the area to conserve the special qualities of the West Wight landscape and provide new opportunities for people to learn about, enjoy and celebrate the area's rich natural, built and cultural heritage.

