

# Welcome to the Medina Estuary

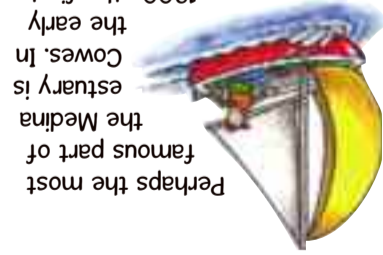
The Medina Estuary has a wonderfully interesting character made up of a rich maritime heritage, wealth of natural habitats and vibrant mix of recreation, transportation and industry.



Now the estuary is home to a wide range of marine related industries such as sailmakers, boat building and

Local marine industries grew up around the Medina which prospered from strong trading links with the North American colonies in the 17th century. Goods cleared customs in East Cowes before being redistributed to other ports on the mainland and the continent. In the 18th century East Cowes began to build its reputation as a major shipbuilding centre.

Perhaps the most famous part of the Medina estuary is Cowes. In the early 1800s the first organised yacht races in Britain were established here, royal patronage followed and, ever since, Cowes has been an internationally renowned venue for yachting. In the summer particularly, the estuary mouth is bustling with activity and Cowes Week in August attracts nearly 10,000 visitors a day to watch the racing and soak up the shore-side atmosphere.



To make sure the estuary is healthy enough to support such a wide variety of activities in the future there needs to be some co-ordination!

Estuaries are extremely productive ecosystems and the Medina is no exception. Its mudflats are crammed full of snails, shellfish, shrimps and marine worms. These provide food for a variety of wading birds and waterfowl including dunlin, redshank, curlew, black-tailed godwit, dark-bellied Brent goose, shelduck, wigeon and teal. Oystercatchers and mute swans are seen all year round.



Although yachting has a high profile in the Medina, the estuary also supports a wide range of other activities from bird watching, walking and cycling to kayaking, angling, learning to sail or just enjoying being by the water.



Saltmarsh is made up of different plants that are well adapted to the changing conditions of life on the shore. They have to deal with saltwater, freshwater, hot sunshine, wind, waves and the movement of the mud they grow in. They are very vulnerable to pressure from trampling or landing/launching, excessive wash from boats and natural change such as sea level rise.



From source to sea the River Medina is 17km long and rises as chalk Catherine's Down on the south of the Island. As it flows north it collects water from an area over 70km<sup>2</sup>.

The Medina estuary is such an important area for nature conservation that it is protected by six different designations under national and international law.



The estuary's birds are all adapted to their own diet so large numbers of different species can live together. They have specially evolved beaks to help them take advantage of the food living in the mud. Wading birds with long bills such as curlew and redshank probe deep into the mud for lugworms and ragworms. Birds with shorter bills rely on the small creatures that live near the surface.



Over 40 different species of marine worm have been recorded here!

The Isle of Wight estuaries project aims to promote and co-ordinate the integrated use of the Island's estuaries through partnership and develop understanding of estuarine features and processes. It is a partnership project supported and funded by Natural England, the Environment Agency, Cowes Harbour Commission, the Crown Estate, the Isle of Wight Council and Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners. The project currently oversees and assists in the implementation of the estuary management plans for the Medina and the Western Yar estuaries.

Supported by:

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To find out more about the Medina and other estuaries check out the website [www.iwight.com/estuaries](http://www.iwight.com/estuaries)

- Avoid launching, landing or walking on the saltmarsh - it is very sensitive.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Consider other people.



This leaflet has been funded through the Biffaward scheme with a contribution from Vestas Blades and support and assistance from the Island 2000 Trust.



# Medina Estuary circular walk



The Medina Estuary circular walk is approximately 9 miles/ 14km long and at a fairly brisk pace can be completed in approximately 4 hours.

Medina is the Latinised form of its Saxon name 'Medene' meaning 'middle river'.

The Medina is home to many different creatures but is a key spot for wading birds and waterfowl, especially in the winter. Keep an eye out for little egret, oystercatchers, curlew, black tailed godwits, grey herons and redshank.

The tree lined cycleway is a great place to catch a glimpse of red squirrels.

Please take care - particularly on the paths closest to the estuary - they may be muddy!

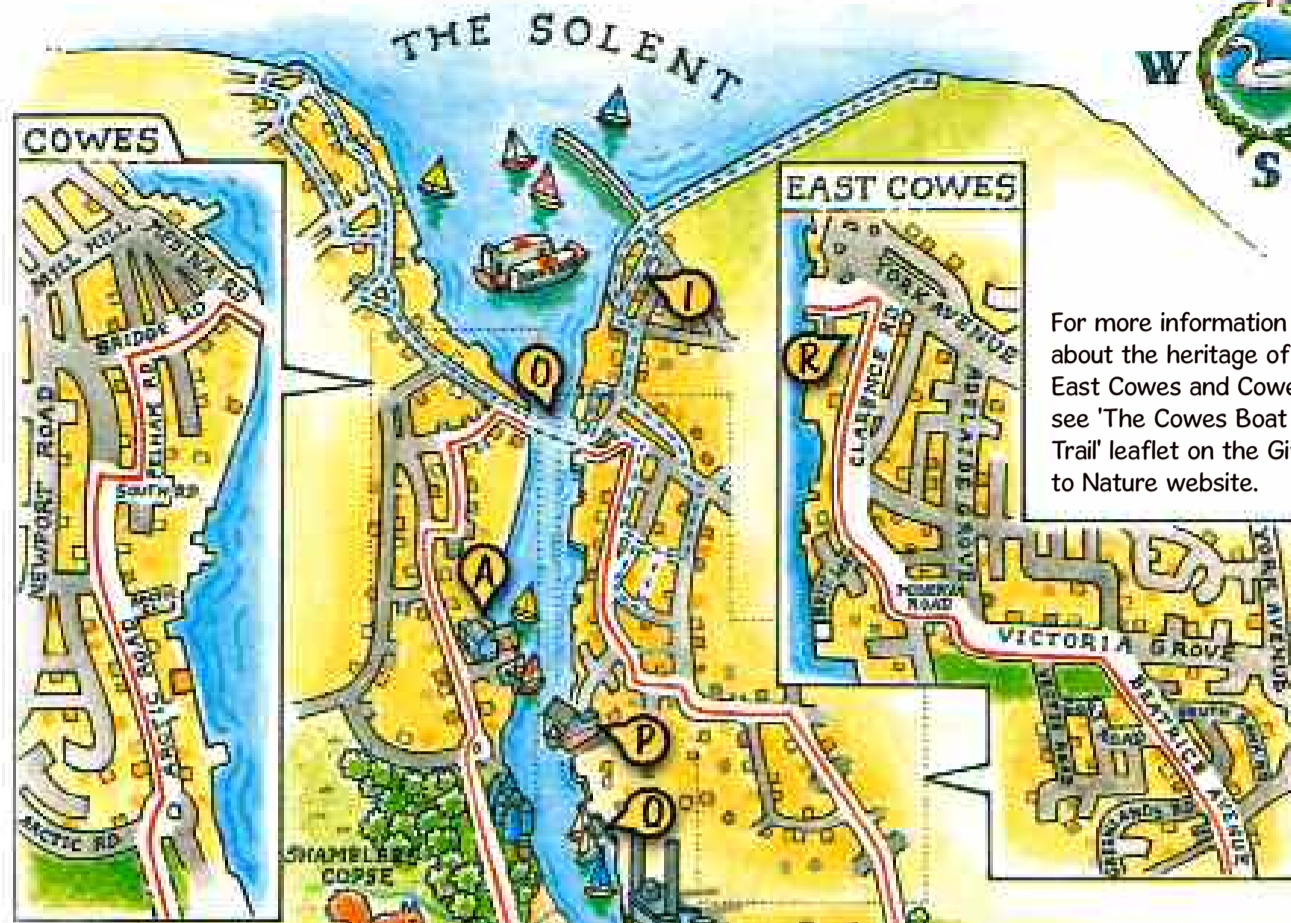
Look out for the blades! A feature of the estuary since 2000, Vestas (🌀) transports its wind turbine blades on a specially designed barge which causes very little wash and therefore less disturbance to the river banks and the wildlife.

The cycleway along the old railway line is very popular so look and listen out for cyclists!

Newport rowing club headquarters (🚣) has been here since 1863.

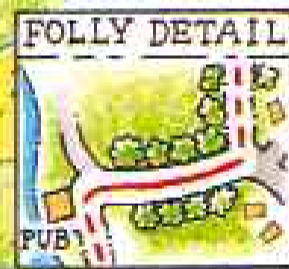
Newport was a flourishing port by the 15th century.

In 1862 the first of the Island's railways was opened between Cowes and Newport. This was a key feature in the development of the Medina as a major waterway for trade and transport. The railway lasted just over 100 years and was closed in 1966.



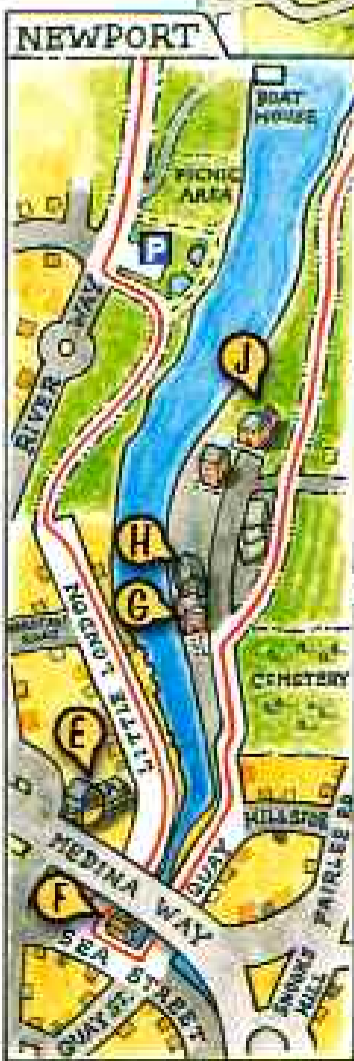
For more information about the heritage of East Cowes and Cowes see 'The Cowes Boat Trail' leaflet on the Gift to Nature website.

Many of the birds have travelled thousands of miles and are using the estuary as a stopping off point to rest on the banks at high tide or stocking up with food at low tide. Please keep dogs on leads in these areas.



## Key to features

- UK Sailing Academy (A)
- Medina Valley Centre (B)
- Vestas Blades (C)
- Newport Rowing Club (D)
- Bargeman's Rest (PH) (E)
- Quay Arts Centre (F)
- Jubilee Stores (G)
- Bus Museum (H)
- Classic Boat Museum (I)
- Medina Quay (PH) (J)
- Paddle steamer 'Ryde' (K)
- Island Harbour (L)
- Folly Inn (PH) (M)
- Whippingham Church (N)
- The Floating Bridge (O)
- The Lifeboat (PH) (P)
- East Cowes Marina (Q)
- The Heritage Centre (R)



Also known as The Ryde Queen, the paddle steamer 'Ryde' (🚢) was built in 1937 and her varied history includes service as a minesweeper, an anti-aircraft vessel, a ferry, a disco and a hotel!

To make the route circular, use the chain ferry or 'floating bridge' (🚢) which runs throughout the day and is free to foot passengers and cyclists.

The route is public footpath, cycleway and roadside pavement. There are a few stretches around Newport Quay and north of Whippingham Church that have no pavement so please take special care in these areas.

- | MAIN ROUTE KEY | GENERAL KEY      |
|----------------|------------------|
| CYCLE WAY      | FOOTPATH / TRACK |
| FOOTPATH       | ROADS            |
| ROAD/PAVEMENT  | THE BOAT TRAIL   |



Please remember to wear suitable footwear!