

# Managing the Marsh and Defending the Down...7 miles Bembridge, Isle of Wight

 THE NATIONAL TRUST

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/walks](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/walks)

An invigorating walk over the downs and RSPB Brading Marshes reserve with splendid views of the surrounding coast and countryside and the opportunity to visit the Island's only surviving windmill.

**Start:** Brading Station    **Map:** OS Landranger 196    **Grid ref:** SZ609869

## Getting there...

**Train:** Every 30mins, Ryde to Shanklin, links to Portsmouth via fast catamaran.

**Bus:** Services 2, 3, 10 from Newport, Ryde and Sandown to Brading High Street

**Cycling:** The Round the Island cycleway passes within ½ mile at Yarbridge




**Road:** A3055 to Station Road, linking Ryde and Sandown, south of Brading centre

**Facilities:** WCs and visitor centre (not NT) at Brading station.

## Contact us...

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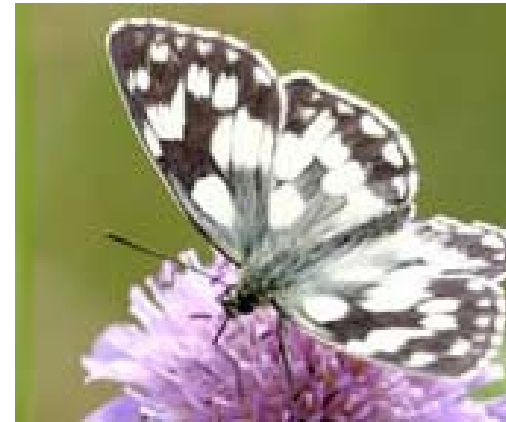
## Look out for...

-  **Downland Wildlife:** Hardy black Hebridean sheep graze Culver Down in winter, preferring tough brambles and coarse grass to more tender chalk grassland flowers; look out for Rock Rose, Bee Orchid and Birdsfoot Trefoil in the shorter turf. Spring brings pretty Cowslip displays and bush crickets, grasshoppers and Chalkhill Blue butterflies can be spotted in summer. *Please keep dogs under control when near sheep and cattle.*
-  **Culver Beacon and Battery:** Beacons like this were part of a medieval warning system and were updated prior to the Spanish Armada. A chain of beacons stretched across the Island, passing messages to and from the mainland. Built in 1893, Culver Battery was part of a series of forts and batteries guarding the Solent approaches from attack by the French.
-  **RSPB Brading Marshes:** The medieval town of Brading was once an important port with a natural harbour. It was cut off from the sea when Brading Haven was reclaimed in 1878 in a scheme to bring prosperity to St Helens and Bembridge. The reclaimed wetland is now home to birds such as Little Egrets and Reed and Sedge Warblers. Lapwings breed here in spring and flocks of Wigeon can be seen in winter. Higher areas, like Gander Down, are being restored to chalk grassland to encourage wildflowers and butterflies, including the Chalkhill Blue and Marbled White.



Bembridge Windmill is an early 18<sup>th</sup> century 'wooden cap' mill. Last used in 1913 and built of local limestone, it's the only surviving windmill on the Island. Used by the Home Guard as a look-out post in WWII, it was then restored by the National Trust from a near derelict state using much of the original wooden machinery.

© NT/sue Oldham



The Marbled White is an attractive butterfly with distinctive markings that make it easy to identify. The chalk grassland at Bembridge provides a great habitat for these butterflies, but they can also be found in woodland clearings, coastal grassland and brownfield sites. © RSPB



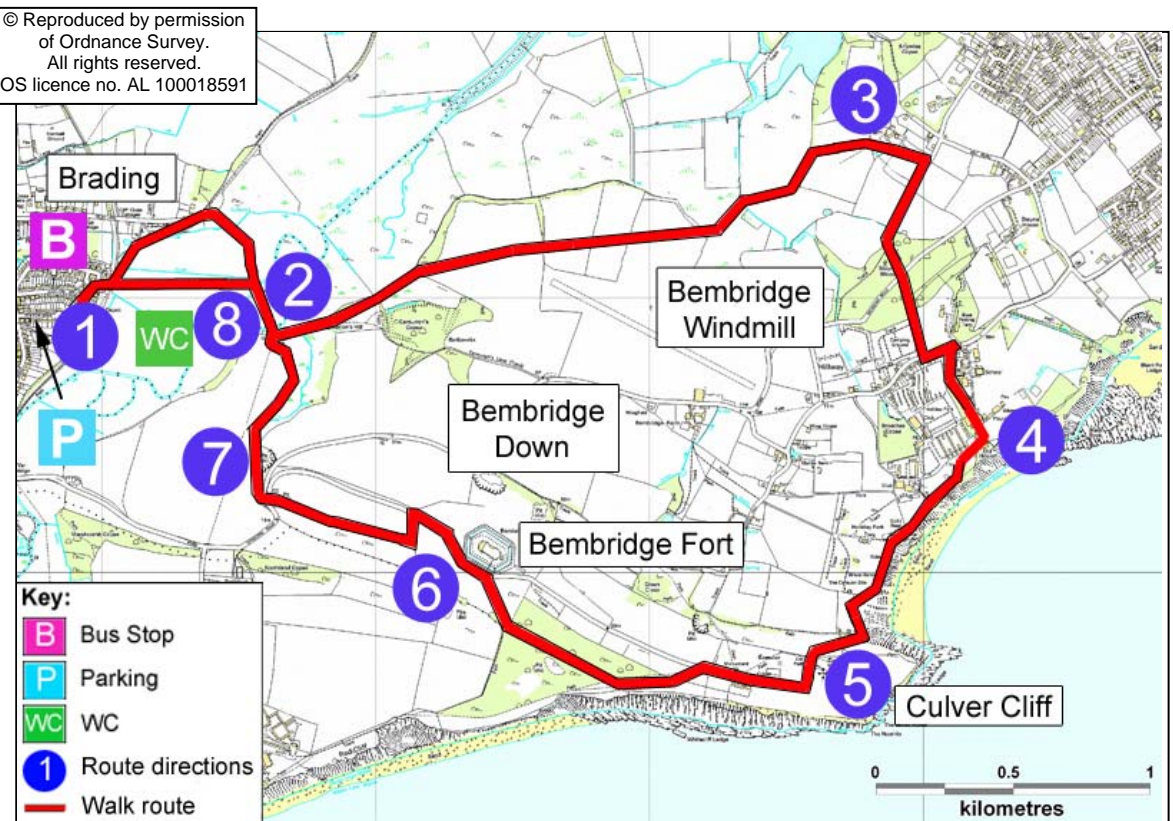
Ravens nest on the cliffs along with peregrine falcons and sea birds. Ravens are members of the crow family and are often heard before they are seen, thanks to their distinctive hoarse call – "cronk! cronk!"

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## Route and directions...

1. From the station walk 100m and turn right by the brown sign into an alleyway. After 60m turn right again at another brown sign between two houses. Go through a mesh gate and cross the railway track. Turn left to follow a track by the railway fence, signed St Helens, past the sewage works to a junction. Take the Bembridge path on the right through the kissing gate.
2. In the RSPB reserve, bear left at the fork, then turn left at Centurions Copse and left at the next sign. Cross the middle of the field by the solitary tree to a stile at the far side, then over the next field to a gap in the hedge. After a stile the path crosses Bembridge Airfield runway. Cross more stiles and follow the path to the top corner of a field, bearing right to Bembridge Windmill.
3. Walk down hill to Steyne Wood. 50m into the wood bear left to follow a path which crosses a busy road, leading to Hillway Road. Turn left up the road, then right into Jenny Streets Lane.
4. Turn right at the coastal path. Bearing right by the seats, cross the top of the concrete ramp to follow the onward path on the right side of a hut and left of caravans. Keeping left by the hedge pass into the woods to the left of three huts. Follow the path diagonally up the hillside, turning left at a gate to pass through a kissing gate. After 30m bear right, cross the car park and go up steep concrete steps to the beacon.
5. From the beacon, turn right at the road to the Yarborough Monument. Follow the signed Sandown coastal path, through a kissing gate and follow the cliff edge for 400m to reach a line of scrub. Bear right along the lower edge; the path becomes more distinct. Just before the path bends downwards, cross the scrub and follow a parallel track on its upper edge. Continue onwards at the field corner until you join a diagonal path heading upwards to the left of Bembridge Fort, running parallel to the road to reach a barrier close to a parking area. Make a small detour to see the Fort entrance (only open for pre-booked tours, telephone 01983 741020).

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6. Go downhill, keeping to the immediate right of an old fence line marked by bushes. Turn right after reaching the track at the valley bottom and continue to the road.
7. Follow the road to the right for 40m then take the left footpath, entering the RSPB Reserve. Bear right and follow the hedge, turning into the wood at the gate, then after 20m turn left towards Brading to rejoin the outward track.
8. After the track crosses the river, turn left down a ramp and over a little bridge. Continue in the same direction across the meadow, passing two stiles. The path rejoins the outward path through a gate. Follow this back to Brading station.

### Walk distance, terrain and accessibility

7mils (11km), ascent 500ft (150m), approx 3hrs. Many gates and stiles, path crosses active railway line and runway. Watch out for ex-military features. Seats at viewpoints.

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