

Links and Ledges... 4 miles

Discover the Duver!

A varied coastal walk exploring St Helens Duver, a sandy spit of land rich in wildlife and history. From busy Bembridge harbour you pass along the rocky seashore before climbing up inland and returning via picturesque St Helens village.

Start: St Helens Duver NT car park **Nearest Post Code:** PO33 1XY
Grid Ref: SZ 637892 **Map:** OS Landranger 196 or OS Explorer OL29

How to get here and local facilities

Bus: Hourly service from Newport, every 30 minutes from Ryde

Cycling: The "Round the Island" cycleway passes less than ½ mile from the start of walk

Road: Off the B3330 Seaview to Bembridge road, east of St Helens Green

Facilities: WCs next to a café on St Helens Duver seafront and in Seagrove Bay, picnic area at St Helens Old Church, a pub and shops can be found in St Helens village.

The Duver

Pronounced 'duvver', this is the local name for a stretch of sand by the sea. Sea currents have deposited sand and shingle at the mouth of the River Yar over many years. There are bright displays of wildflowers, like thrift, here in May and it's also home to rare clovers and autumn squill.

Bembridge Harbour

In 1620, Dutch engineers created a sea wall from the Duver to Bembridge Point to create farmland by draining the estuary known as Brading Haven. This only lasted 10 years and it was not until 1880 that an embankment was built for the railway. Now a road, it separates Bembridge Harbour from Brading Marshes RSPB Reserve and the Yar Valley.

St Helens Fort

Part of a defence system put in place by Prime Minister Lord Palmerston in 1859 to defend Portsmouth from French attack; it was never needed and became known as a Palmerston Folly. Low tides expose a causeway which allows you to walk out to the fort.

Links and Ledges

The prestigious Royal Isle of Wight Golf Club was founded in 1882. Queen Victoria's sons played here and it became world famous. After decline in the 1950s, it closed and was given to the National Trust. The clubhouse is now an NT holiday cottage.

Stretching from St Helens Old Church to Node's Point, these rocky outcrops of Bembridge limestone are home to many marine creatures. Try to find sea anemones, shrimps and small fish in the rock pools created at low tide.



St Helens Old Church was built on sand in the 14th century and dedicated to St Helena (from whom the village takes its name); now only the tower remains. It was reinforced in 1703 and painted white to act as a sea-mark to aid shipping.



Priory Bay is a sweeping sandy beach at low tide with great views to the Spinnaker tower in Portsmouth and offshore to 'No Man's Land' and Horse Sand forts.



St Helens Common is an area of deciduous woodland and meadow. It is now grazed by very woolly black Hebridean sheep.

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Smuggling brandy, tobacco and silk was rife in the 18th century around here... Dickie Dawes was a renowned local smuggler. Look out for a blue plaque in St Helens village which marks the birthplace of his daughter, Sophie, who became the mistress of a French duke.

Directions

1. Leave the National Trust car park via right-hand steps at its southern end. Cross sandy ground and a road to reach the edge of **Bembridge Harbour**.
2. Turn left along the embankment, then across the road. Head across the Duver to the houses on the right. Follow a track between the houses onto the promenade. Walk along the promenade to the ruins of **St Helens Church**. Pass through a gate marked Node's Point and onto the sands.
3. At low tide, simply walk along the beach until you reach a raised boardwalk. At other times follow a trail through **Priory Woods**, just inland but parallel to the coast. It is marked by a yellow arrow turning left off the beach after 50m.
4. The path emerges onto the beach again after a steep wooden staircase half way along **Priory Bay**. Turn left along the sands, take some steps up the cliff and turn right to cross the headland of **Horestone Point**.

A wooden staircase leads down to a boardwalk in **Seagrove Bay**. Walk along the promenade, at the end of which take a path to the left up a slipway and climb Ferniclose Road. Continue to the top of the hill, reaching a stile 50m beyond the Priory Hotel driveway.

5. Go over the stile and continue straight on keeping a hedge on your left. Go over another stile at the field boundary and follow in the same direction until you reach a road.
6. On the other side of the road, slightly to your right, find and follow a footpath towards **St Helens**. Bending left at a junction, cross a cul-de-sac and follow a path between houses, before emerging alongside a pub onto St Helens Green. Turn left and continue along a road back towards the Duver, turning right into Duver Road.
7. Just before some traffic lights, turn right onto a path which leads through **St Helens Common**. The Gaggen Path gets its name from press gangs which used to hide here and then gag their victims.



Walk distance, terrain and accessibility

4 mile (6.4 km) circular walk, ascent 200ft (65m), takes about 2 hours.

Two stiles and some steep slopes in the woods which can be muddy and slippery after wet weather. Please check tides before setting out as both sections of beach may be under water at high tide.

Dogs welcome, but please keep your dog on a lead around wildlife and take any mess home with you.

Contact us

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