



Bembridge and Culver Downs,  
Bembridge Fort, Culver Down  
Road, Sandown, Isle of Wight.  
Nearest postcode PO36 8QY

**TRAIL**  
**Walking**

**GRADE**  
**Easy**

**DISTANCE**  
**2.75 miles (4.5km)**

**TIME**  
**1 hour 30 minutes**

**OS MAP**  
**Landranger 196;**  
**Explorer OL29**

#### Contact

01983 741020  
isleofwight@nationaltrust.org.uk

#### Facilities

**National**  
**Trust**

[nationaltrust.org.uk/walks](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/walks)

# Fine fortifications and wonderful wildlife walk

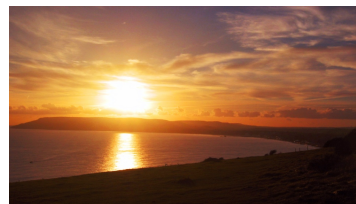
Although peaceful today, Bembridge and Culver Downs were once a scene of much military activity. This short but energetic coastal walk will give you a fascinating insight into the Isle of Wight's role in wartime defence and intelligence. It is also rich in wildlife and offers spectacular views over Sandown and Whitecliff Bays.



## Terrain

Circular walk, with an ascent of 250ft (75m). Two kissing gates, one step-stile and a steep flight of concrete steps. Mostly well-defined grassy paths with some stony and uneven surfaces. Keep well clear of the cliff edge, it can be slippery in wet conditions. Dogs are welcome, but please keep your dog on a lead around wildlife and take any mess home with you. Sadly there have been incidents of dogs worrying the Hebridean sheep.

## Things to see



### Military history

Beacons like the one on Culver Down were part of a Medieval south coast early warning system to respond to the threat of French invasion. A chain of beacons, each consisting of a mast with an access ladder and a fire bucket on top, stretched across the Island and were used to pass messages, by way of a flame, to and from the mainland. Culver Gun Battery built in 1893 was part of a series of batteries guarding the Solent approaches from attack by the French. All that remains today are the gun emplacements.

### Culver Signal Station

One of a series of wireless stations built on the south coast by Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of the radiotelegraph system; in 1899 the first ever message by wireless telegraphy was sent across the English Channel from St Catherines Point on the Isle of Wight. In the Second World War the Culver station was used for intelligence gathering due to its good reception and was staffed by Wrens billeted in nearby coastguard cottages. Nearly all evidence has now gone.

### Look down on the Down

Culver Down is rich in tender chalk grassland flowers, like rock rose, Bee orchid and birdsfoot trefoil, that live in the shorter turf. Look for fine displays of cowslip in spring. In summer you may see bush crickets and grasshoppers, plus many butterflies including the chalkhill blue. In addition to the wildlife on Culver Down, look out for gun platforms, War Department boundary stones, fence posts, trenches and radar mast anchor chains.



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## Start/end

Start: National Trust car park  
near Bembridge Fort, grid ref:  
SZ626859

End: Brading Station car park,  
grid ref: SZ626859

## How to get there

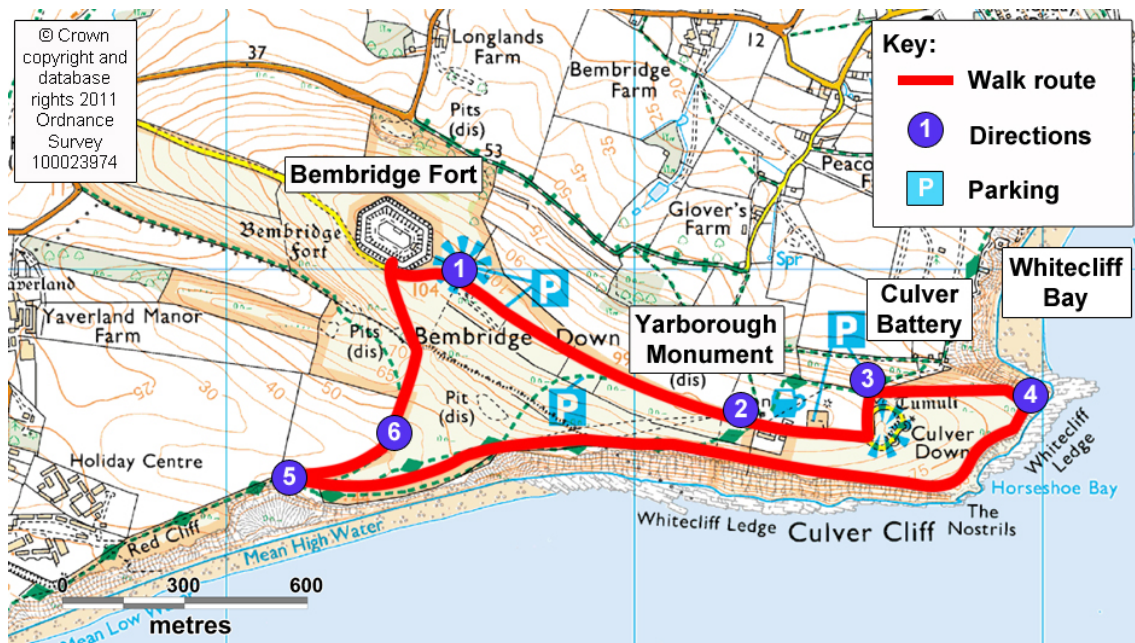
By foot: This trail follows the  
Isle of Wight coastal path  
between points 4 and 5 on the  
map

By bike: 'Round the Island'  
Sustrans Regional route 67  
follows the B3395, about 0.5  
miles (0.8km) from the start

By bus: Southern Vectis (tel:  
01983 827000) No. 8 service  
linking Newport, Ryde and  
Sandown passes along the  
B3395, about 0.5 mile (0.8km)  
from the walk start, hourly

By ferry: Fishbourne-  
Portsmouth (Wightlink, tel: 0871  
376 1000) 10 miles (16km);  
East Cowes-Southampton (Red  
Funnel, tel: 0844 844 9988) 13  
miles (21km)

By car: Culver Down road,  
leaves the B3395 Sandown/  
Brading to Bembridge road to  
the east, close to Yaverland.  
The Fort is at the top of the hill



1. From the car park near Bembridge Fort, follow a grassy path on the right side of the road towards the coast. Keeping a hedge on your left and taking the left fork when the path splits, you'll meet the road again by a cattle grid. Cross this road and emerge onto Culver Down. Head along the road towards the monument. Take care, this road can be busy at times.
2. Take a look at the Yarborough Monument (a memorial to Lord Yarborough, the first Commodore of the Royal Yacht Squadron), then return to the road. Continue past the Culver Haven Inn and the site of Culver Signal Station (now a car park) to Culver Beacon and Culver Battery.
3. Descend some steep concrete steps and cross Culver Battery car park. Continue in the direction of Whitecliff Bay, along a grassy path which bends to the right and follows the crest of the chalk ridge of Culver Down eastwards to the sea.
4. On reaching the cliff top fence, turn right and follow the path southwest, in the direction of Sandown, for the next 1.5 miles (2.5km). Pass through two kissing gates before reaching the natural amphitheatre of Red Cliff, shortly before a holiday park.
5. Marvel at the views before turning round and retracing your steps to the last gate you went through.
6. Take the left fork in the path and follow a grassy track away from the coast. Head across the down, back towards Bembridge Fort, which is visible on the horizon. Keep a fence on your left and at the way marker follow the path uphill. Within 50 yd (50m) of the Fort, branch right, under some electric wires, to reach the Fort entrance directly. The Fort is not open to the public. You can visit a viewpoint on the east side of the Fort on the way back to the car park.

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