



St Catherine's Down and
Knowles Farm, Blackgang
Road, Blackgang, Isle of Wight.
Nearest postcode PO38 2JB

TRAIL
Walking

GRADE
Moderate

DISTANCE
4.8 miles (8km)

TIME
**2 hours to 2 hours 30
minutes**

OS MAP
**Landranger 196;
Explorer OL29**

Contact

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Facilities

**National
Trust**

nationaltrust.org.uk/walks

The monk and the merchant walk

Ships A-Hoy! A breathtaking circular walk steeped in history with spectacular panoramic views across the Island.



Terrain

This walk has an ascent of 800ft (250m) and includes many stiles and gates. A high and exposed headland, can be very windy and covered by low cloud or mist, and paths can be very muddy and slippery. Dogs are very welcome, but please keep your dog on a lead around wildlife and take any mess home with you.

Things to see



Ancient Grasslands

There are records of sheep being kept on the down from medieval times. The hill beneath the Oratory is made of chalk; look out for birdsfoot trefoil and thyme in the short grass of the old quarries. The lower ridge leading to the Hoy Monument is made of greensand which has more acid-loving plants like sheep's sorrel and heath bedstraw. You may spot old boundary banks. The view is west from St Catherine's Down to Tennyson Down.

The Hoy Monument

The Hoy Monument or Alexandrian Pillar, a 72ft (22m) high column and ball finial built of local stone. Michael Hoy, a wealthy merchant who traded with Russia and lived in the nearby Hermitage, built this monument in preparation for the visit to England of Tsar Alexander I in 1814. The Tsar had successfully repelled the French invasion of Russia in 1812, dealing a serious blow to Napoleon's campaign. Ironically, the south side of the monument bears an inscription to the memory of British soldiers who died fighting the Russians in the Crimean War in 1854.

Wydcome

This delightful valley lies at the head of a tributary of the eastern River Yar, which rises on the slopes of St Catherine's Down. The farmhouse has a drystone wall (an unusual feature on the island) and this may have been built using stone from the chapel ruins. Look out for the rare golden-ringed dragonfly, demoiselle damselfly, parasol fungus and green-veined white butterfly.



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Start/end

Start: Blackgang viewpoint car park, grid ref: SZ491767.
Nearest postcode PO38 2JB
End: Blackgang viewpoint car park, grid ref SZ491767

How to get there

By foot: The start point of this trail lies on the Isle of Wight coastal path

By bike: Sustrans regional 'Round the Island' route 67 passes along the A3055 by the start point

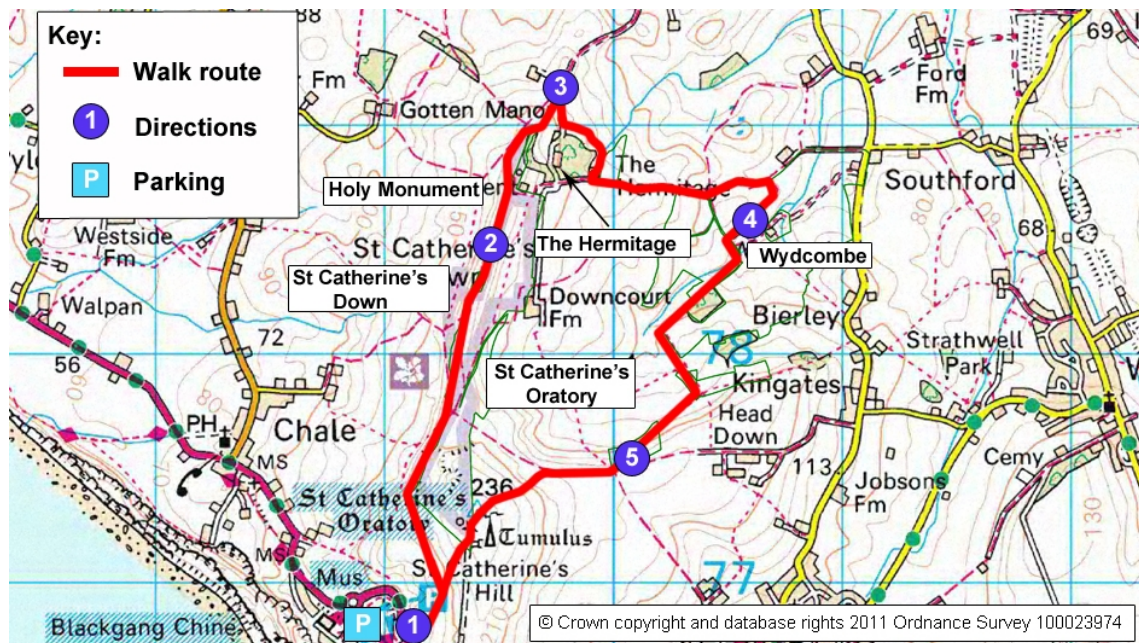
By bus: Southern Vectis (tel: 01983 827000) No. 6 service from Newport to Ventnor passes along the A3055, two-hourly. Alight at the car park

By ferry: Fishbourne-Portsmouth (Wightlink, tel: 0871 3761000) 15 miles (24km); East Cowes-Southampton (Red Funnel, tel: 0844 8449988) 15 miles (24km)

By car: Car park on the A3055 in the far south of the Isle of Wight, very close to Blackgang Chine

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1. At the car park, cross the road and go through the kissing gate to follow the path diagonally left. Turn left onto a cattle track and follow the upper edge of the scrub line. The track bends left but keep straight ahead over the crest and keep on the level following the line of the hill, bending gradually to the right. Cross a stile to the left of a gate in the fence ahead and follow the path which keeps the fence to its immediate right. Cross the next stile and the field straight ahead, passing through the gate onto St Catherine's Down. Follow the wide, grassy path to the Hoy Monument.
2. Turn left and go through the gate in the fence by the plinth. Turn immediately right and downhill, then right at the T-junction signed C3. After 60yds (60m) turn right, with the fence on your left, and go through two gates. Take a straight line across the field aiming for the right-most gate in the boundary, leading onto a road.
3. Turn right, then left onto the GL26 path by the wall of The Hermitage. Follow the path round the copse until it reaches a track by a house. Turn left, taking a path through the gate to the right of the driveway and then through a metal gate, until you reach a junction. Turn left, then right through a gate. Keep the fence to your left and follow the path, continuing across a field on the track heading down the valley.
4. 50yds (45m) before the field gate, take the right path crossing through the hedge by a footbridge. Keeping the fence to your left, continue on the path bending above Wydcombe House. Cross the stile to the right of a field gate and descend to a junction, taking the right-hand track through a metal gate. Before the next gate, turn left down a path between hedges which cross a stream. Turn right, following the stream along a tree-lined track. When the path leaves the valley it emerges into a field by a stile and rusted garden gate. Cross through the gap in the hedges about 20yds (20m) in front, aiming for the uphill corner of the field. In the field corner cross the stile on the right and turn right to join the diagonal path climbing onto Head Down.
5. Cross the stile at the top of the slope and turn left to reach another stile 30yds (30m) away. Turn right onto a level green lane and pass through a gate onto the hillside. The path goes diagonally left towards the radio mast on the skyline, passing between two small mounds before climbing to the left of an old quarry area. Cross over the stile then head straight uphill towards St Catherine's Oratory. Cross over the stile by the trig point to look at the unfinished 18th-century lighthouse base at the base of the radio mast, then return heading downhill to cross another stile. The path aims straight for the start point, clearly visible above the Blackgang Chine car park.