



Please follow the Countryside Code and help to protect the wildlife of the Western Yar estuary:

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



To find out more about the Western Yar and other Island estuaries check out the website.
www.iwight.com/estuaries



Supported through the West Wight Landscape Partnership by the Heritage Lottery Fund

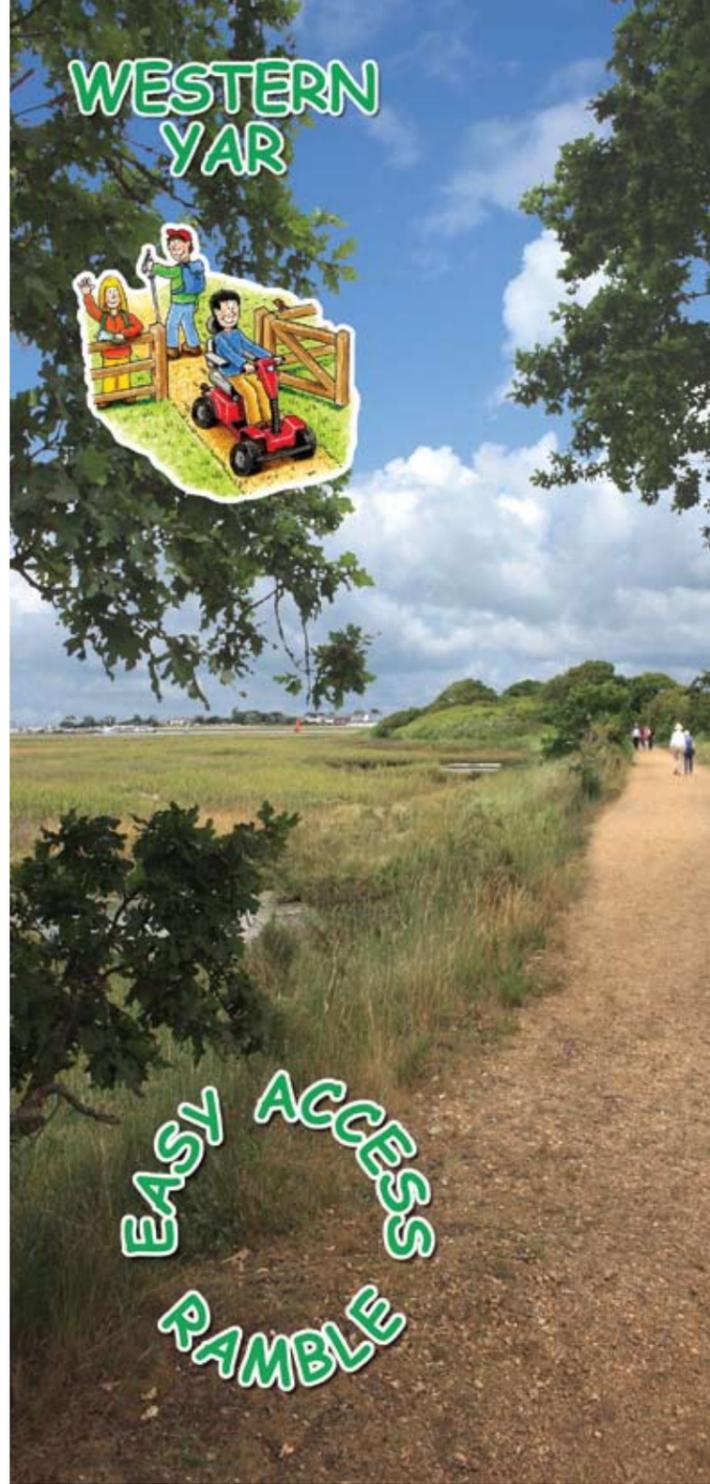
This leaflet was produced by the Isle of Wight Estuaries Project with funding from the West Wight Landscape Partnership and the Isle of Wight Ramblers (Doris Trappitt Fund).

The Isle of Wight Ramblers 'Access for All' project aims to encourage more people to take up walking and to make it easier for people of all abilities to access the countryside. Stiles are often one of the main obstacles, particularly for less mobile people, dog-walkers and people with pushchairs. The Western Yar Improvement Scheme is part of the Ramblers' ongoing campaign to replace stiles with suitable gates.

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 funded by Cowes Harbour Commission, Environment Agency, Isle of Wight Council, Natural England and Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners.



Original artwork by Alan Rowe at Potting Shed Cartoons.
 Design concept by Sue Hawley (Isle of Wight Estuaries Project).



Welcome to the Western Yar Estuary

The Western Yar is a fascinating estuary with a wealth of wildlife and heritage.

Estuaries are one of the most productive and fertile parts of the planet, just 1m² of mud has the calorie content of 15 Mars Bars! The Western Yar is no exception and its mudflats are crammed full of snails, shellfish, shrimps and marine worms. These provide lots of food for a variety of wading birds and waterfowl including dunlin, redshank, curlew, black-tailed godwit, dark-bellied brent goose, shelduck, wigeon, teal, oystercatcher and little egret.



The harbour breakwater was built in 1847. This, and other development, slowed down the flow of the river and caused the saltmarshes to develop. As the mud settled the plants moved in and stabilised the muddy banks so more plants could live there. The distinctive saltmarsh now covers 44 hectares.



Sea Lavender.

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, probe deep into the mud for lugworms and ragworms. Birds with shorter bills, like dunlin, rely on the small creatures that live near the mud's surface.



Saltmarsh is home to 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, landing and launching, excessive wash from boats and natural change such as sea level rise.



Glasswort.

A redshank can peck and probe the mud up to 40,000 times a day!



Until the mill embankment was built in 1664, ships used to sail up to Thorley to load and discharge their cargoes. This became more difficult as the haven silted up and an alternative site was needed. The settlement that is now Yarmouth developed as a harbour and soon prospered. The mill that remains today was built in 1793 and replaced a wooden mill built around 1664.



Yarmouth has a thriving harbour which supports a small fishing fleet and attracts thousands of yachts each year. There is also the Old Gaffers Festival, held in June, that involves the whole town and over 100 gaff-rigged boats visit the harbour.



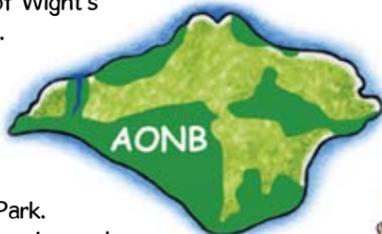
Saltmarsh.



In ancient times the Western Yar was a large river but erosion has reduced its catchment area. It is now a very small river with a large estuary. The sea wall at Freshwater Bay stops the sea flowing into the Western Yar river.



The Western Yar estuary is within the Isle of Wight's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This is an important area for landscape that is shaped by people and their activities. It covers nearly half of the Isle of Wight (shown right as the dark green area) and is protected like a National Park. Lots of work goes into conserving and enhancing the area for people and wildlife.



AONB

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



The Western Yar Estuary Management Plan helps to co-ordinate activities and conserve the environment. It is implemented by a wide range of local people and organisations. By keeping the estuary healthy we can ensure that it continues to support our activities in the future.



Western Yar Estuary Easy Access Ramble

The Western Yar Estuary Circular Walk is approximately 3.8 miles/6.1 km long and at a fairly brisk pace takes about 1.5 hours.

Yarmouth has been a settlement since about 991. Its old name of Eremue came from Ermud - meaning 'muddy estuary'!

Before the bridge was built, a small ferry carried passengers across the estuary. The first road bridge was built in 1863 and replaced with the current one in 1987.

The Western Yar is home to many different creatures and is a key spot for wading birds and waterfowl, especially in the winter. Keep an eye out for little egret, oystercatcher, curlew, brent goose, black tailed godwit, lapwing, wigeon and redshank.

Please take care, particularly across muddy fields and close gates behind you.

Sea level around the Isle of Wight's coast is rising at around 6mm a year. This rate is thought to be accelerating.

The saltmarsh is a very vulnerable habitat and private land, please keep to the paths.

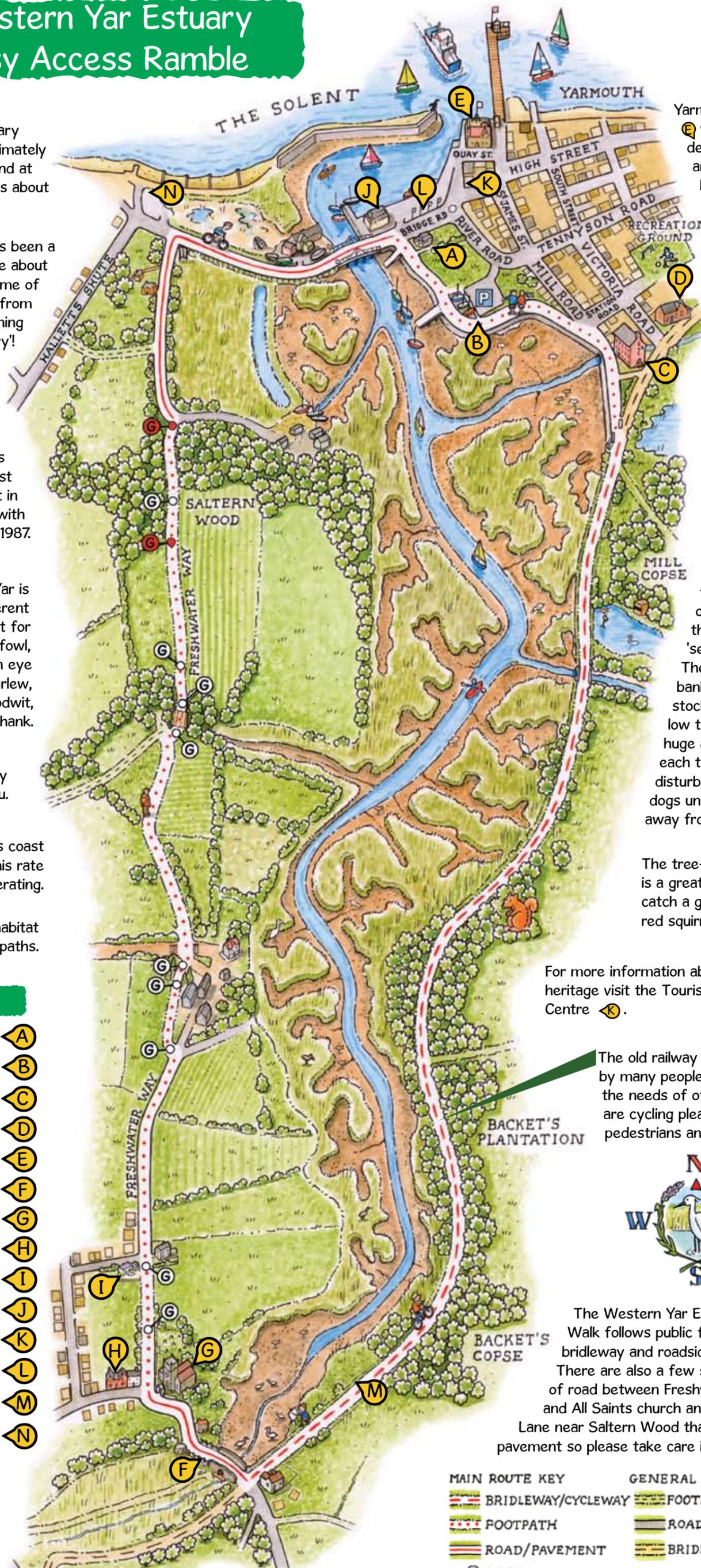
Key to features

- Yarmouth Sailing Club 
- Information board 
- Yarmouth Mill 
- The old railway station 
- Yarmouth Castle 
- Freshwater Causeway 
- All Saints Church 
- The Red Lion (PH) 
- Farm shop and cafe 
- Harbour office 
- Tourist Information 
- Bus station 
- Information Board 
- Information Board 



← FRESHWATER BAY →

Please remember to wear suitable footwear!



Yarmouth Castle  was built to defend the town and was completed by 1547.

Yarmouth pier was built in 1876 and is reputed to be the longest timber pier in the country still open to the public.

The railway linked Yarmouth with other Island towns between 1889 and 1953.

Many birds travel thousands of miles and use the estuary as a 'service station'. They rest on the banks at high tide and stock up with food at low tide. They use a huge amount of energy each time they are disturbed so please keep dogs under control and away from the saltmarsh.

The tree-lined bridleway is a great place to catch a glimpse of red squirrels!

For more information about Yarmouth's heritage visit the Tourist Information Centre .

The old railway line is shared by many people. Please respect the needs of others and if you are cycling please give way to pedestrians and horses.



The Western Yar Estuary Circular Walk follows public footpaths, bridleway and roadside pavement. There are also a few short stretches of road between Freshwater Causeway and All Saints church and on Gasworks Lane near Saltern Wood that have no pavement so please take care in these areas.

- | MAIN ROUTE KEY | GENERAL KEY |
|---|--|
|  BRIDLEWAY/CYCLEWAY |  FOOTPATH/TRACK |
|  FOOTPATH |  ROADS |
|  ROAD/PAVEMENT |  BRIDLEWAY/CYCLEWAY |
|  GATE | |
|  GATE WITH ADDITIONAL RADAR ACCESS | |

