

## What are Heritage Coasts?

The term 'Heritage Coast' has been given to those stretches of the Country's most natural and undeveloped stretches of coastline that are particularly noted for their beauty, tranquility and scientific interest. It is a true reflection of the outstanding nature of much of the Island, that we have two very contrasting stretches of Heritage Coast.

In 1973, two areas of Heritage Coast, amounting to about 50% of the Island's coastline were defined. In the south the dramatic **Tennyson Heritage Coast** stretches from Steephill, in Ventnor, through to Widdick Chine at Totland. To the north the more serene **Hamstead Heritage Coast** encompasses woodland and estuary from Bouldnor through to Thorness. Both the Tennyson and Hamstead Heritage Coasts are 'completely defined' which means that they also 'have an agreed inland boundary taking in, for example, coastal downland, marshes or beach access roads.'

Along with AONB's and National Parks, Heritage Coasts are part of the national family of protected landscapes and the primary aim of the Heritage Coast definition is to protect and enhance the natural beauty of these coastlines. There is also a secondary aim to improve and enhance people's enjoyment of these coasts, through appropriate recreational, educational, tourism and sporting opportunities wherever they do not conflict with the conservation of the resource. Finally they aim to 'maintain and improve the environmental health of the inshore waters and beaches.'

There are 43 Heritage Coasts in England & Wales offering protection to 31% of English coastline and 42% in Wales.

Isle of Wight AONB Partnership

## Hamstead

- The wildlife reflects the tranquil nature of the landscape – the wildlife and habitats that thrive here are susceptible to disturbance, please respect this – please stay on the paths and avoid lighting fires or barbeques.
- Fossils are easy to find amongst the beach gravel. Look for flat, black coloured pieces of turtle shell, after you have found these start looking for teeth and bones.
- Birds such as teal, curlew, snipe and little egrets feed on a diet of insects, worms and crustaceans.
- A home to 95 different species, suggests that life in the mud of Newtown Harbour is relatively unaffected by human activities.
- Some of the woodland is ancient and the woods contain a huge biodiversity with many nationally rare species such as red squirrels.



Entrance to Newtown River CA

- Once part of the ancient river floodplain, this Heritage Coast was used by the first humans to visit England over 425,000 years ago. Prehistoric remains are known from Bouldnor, Cranmore and



Bouldnor Cliffs CA



Hamstead Ledge AONB

- 38 Million year old shells, washed out from the rocks are very common on the beach.
- Alligator scutes have round holes in them.
- Turtle shell is either smooth on both surfaces or with a ripple pattern on one surface.



Bird watching walks NT



Wooden causeway at Newtown CA

- The salt marsh at Newtown is a valuable habitat that supports a wide range of wildlife and is also a superb natural resource for learning.



Newtown from the air IWCAHES



Newtown Town Hall CA

- The medieval port of Newtown was abandoned in the 14th Century due to environmental change, the Black Death and French raids. The earthwork remains of the medieval town its streets and houses can be visited on foot.



Newtown NT

### Key to map

- Coastal Path
- Hamstead Trail
- Worsley Trail
- Tennyson Trail
- Shepherds Trail
- Freshwater Way
- Footpath at Newtown
- Urban/built-up areas

This map is illustrative only – for information on this legally defined Heritage Coast contact the Isle of Wight AONB Partnership.

## Tennyson & Hamstead Heritage Coasts

The best and most valued parts of the coastlines of England and Wales have been nationally recognised through the Heritage Coast accolade.

### Hamstead Heritage Coast

The Hamstead Heritage Coast is situated on the north west of the Isle of Wight running from Thorness near Cowes to Bouldnor near Yarmouth. A tranquil and secretive coastline with inlets, estuaries and creeks; wooded hinterland and gently sloping soft cliffs, this beautiful area offers a haven for wildlife including red squirrels and migratory birds. The ancient town of Newtown and its National Nature Reserve also fall within this area.

### Tennyson Heritage Coast

In marked contrast, the Tennyson Heritage Coast is breathtaking, with an open aspect, long distance views to the English Channel; a special quality of light; the iconic Needles chalk stacks and other multi-coloured cliffs; a fossil rich coastline including the well known dinosaur footprints at Brook Bay; miles of undeveloped coastline and unspoilt beaches; important wildlife habitats; smugglers and memories of past Islanders; Chines and lighthouses.

No wonder that both coasts fall within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), further testament to their importance for the nation both now and into the future. Both Heritage Coasts are very accessible. Information on public transport services and places to park is available at all Tourist Information Centres.

### Useful Contacts

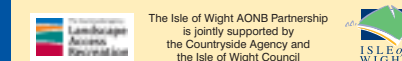
Isle of Wight AONB Partnership	(01983) 823855
IW Council - Countryside Section	(01983) 823893
Isle of Wight County Archaeological & Historic Environment Service	(01983) 823810
Dinosaur Isle	(01983) 404344
National Trust	(01983) 741020
Isle of Wight Tourism	(01983) 813813
Coastal Visitor Centre, Ventnor	(01983) 857221
Tourist Information Centres	(01983) 813818
Wight Wildlife	(01983) 533180

Additional information and useful contacts can be found on our website : [www.wightaonb.org.uk](http://www.wightaonb.org.uk)

**Isle of Wight AONB Partnership Innovation Centre**  
 St Cross Business Park  
 Monks Brook, Newport  
 Isle of Wight PO30 5WB  
 Tel: 01983 823855

Over half the Isle of Wight is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including over 50 miles of Heritage Coast, both part of the national family of protected landscapes recognised for their special qualities and character.

The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership is working to conserve and enhance these special land and seascapes for future generations.



This leaflet was produced by The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership who would like to thank the Isle of Wight County Archaeologist, County Ecology Officer, County Geologist and The National Trust for their assistance and to SEEDA for their financial support.



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# Tennyson

● In the land of the Gianville Fritillary – wildlife residents of the Tennyson Heritage Coast habitats need to be more adaptable than their Hamstead neighbours. Thriving in the sunny open aspect of this coastline they rely upon the changes that the natural coastal erosion processes bring.

● What can we find... Dinosaurs, probably footprints and perhaps ammonites and lobsters further south.



Tennyson Monument CA



Gianville Fritillary butterflies IWNHAS



Mottistone Down Long Stone CA



**Get out and Explore...Rambling, Walking, Horse Riding, Mountain Biking...**  
The Island's extensive Rights of Way network, offers the walker ample opportunity to get away from it all and enjoy the stunning views. For those wanting to step up the pace on two wheels or four legs, the byways and bridleways combined with a selection of quiet roads can be as challenging or relaxing as you choose.

**Down on the beach ...Fossil hunting, beachcombing, rock pooling, sandcastles, beach games, following Dinosaurs footprints...**  
There are miles of varied beaches from sand to shingle to enjoy and explore.

**Take to the Sea... surfing, kite-boarding, fishing - from the beach & out in a boat ...from extreme water sports to the more traditional craft of angling this Heritage Coast can cover it all.**

**Take to the Skies ...Para-gliding, hang-gliding, kite flying...** the location and climate offers frequent opportunities to ride the thermals or keep your feet on terra firma and let the breeze do the work.

**Look to the skies -** The clear 'Dark Skies' of much of this coast offer plenty of opportunity at night for star-gazing.

**Be inspired -** take in the atmosphere of the dramatic landscape views and follow Turner, Tennyson and Cameron by capturing it through drawing, painting, poetry or camera.

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Compton Beach CA



The Needles AONB

● Natural casts of footprints of dinosaurs which lived here 125 million years ago.



Dinosaur footprint AONB

● Chines are the remains of ancient river valleys, now mostly small gullies leading down to the sea. The term 'chine' is only used on the Isle of Wight

● The chalk was laid down in a deep sea, which covered Europe between 96 and 65 million years ago.

● Bones of dinosaurs are found on this coast, look amongst the pebbles for pieces. Bones are usually black-coloured, they will most likely have a honey-comb structure, filled in with white coloured minerals.

● If you look amongst the pebbles on the beach you might be lucky enough to find fossil shells.

● Most of the pebbles on the beach are flint. Flint comes from the Chalk and is made of microscopic needles from fossil sponges that lived millions of years ago.

● The coal you see on the beach is the remains of trees that grew here 125 million years ago.

● From the Palaeolithic (425,000 years ago) to the Bronze Age (4,000 years ago), this Heritage Coast has been used by our prehistoric ancestors who have left huge ceremonial landscapes of burial mounds on the chalk ridge and its downlands. Even the medieval lighthouse at St Catherine's Down was built next to a Bronze Age burial mound. The nearby Medieval Oratory (place of prayer) was built as a place of quiet contemplation of the coastal landscape over 700 years ago.



The Coastal Path CA



Fossil hunting on Compton Beach CA

- Useful Tips for Fossil Hunting:**
- Check for permission to collect fossils
  - Check Tide Times
  - Avoid unstable cliffs
  - Collect loose fossils only
  - Only collect what you need
  - Seek identifications from professional organisations
  - Avoid leaving litter

● Walk through the prehistoric burial landscapes on Afton Down using the Tennyson Trail or visit the Medieval Lighthouse and Oratory for the quiet enjoyment and extensive views of this dramatic coastline.



St Catherine's Oratory NT



The lighthouse at St Catherine's Point CA



Steephill Cove AONB

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