

THE BOAT TRAIL

INFORMATION

LENGTH - 4 miles.

START POINT - The trail can be joined at any point along its route.

DURATION - 3 hours for the average walker, including stops at points of interest and the floating bridge crossing.

DISABLED ACCESS - The whole trail is accessible by wheelchair.

FACILITIES - There are public toilets on the trail in each town. There are also numerous pubs, shops and cafes along the route.

The Floating Bridge links the two towns and is free to foot passengers and cyclists, with a charge of £1.30 for cars.

GETTING TO COWES

BY FERRY Red Funnel operates a fast Red Jet foot passenger service between Southampton and Cowes.

BY CAR See map for available car parks.

BY BUS The 1 buses run from Newport Bus Station.

GETTING TO EAST COWES

BY FERRY Red Funnel runs a car ferry from Southampton to East Cowes.

BY CAR See map for available car parks.

BY BUS The 4 runs from Ryde and the 5 from Newport Bus Station.

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

RED FUNNEL FERRIES 02380 333042
SOUTHERN VECTIS BUSES 0870 608 2608
TOURIST INFORMATION 01983 813818

THE BOAT TRAIL IS SUPPORTED BY



COWES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP
EAST COWES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP



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Map created by Alan Rowe



COWES

- 1 RATSEY AND LAPTHORN
- 2 J.SAMUEL WHITE
- 3 SHEPARDS WHARF
- 4 CLARE LALLOW
- 5 WESTBOURNE HOUSE
- 6 BEKEN OF COWES
- 7 THE YACHT HAVEN
- 8 THE BREAKWATER
- 9 TOWN QUAY
- 10 THE FOUNTAIN HOTEL
- 11 MEW LANGTON BREWERY DEPOT
- 12 THE SIR MAX AITKEN MUSEUM
- 13 BENZIES OF COWES
- 14 THE UNION INN
- 15 THE CUSTOMS HOUSE
- 16 ROYAL YACHT SQUADRON
- 17 HOLY TRINITY CHURCH
- 18 PASCALL ATKEY
- 19 ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY
- 20 THE ROPE WALK

FURTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

- 21 EGYPT POINT (10 MINS)
- 22 NORTHWOOD PARK AND HOUSE (10 MINS)
- 23 SPENCER RIGGING (2 MINS)
- 24 MARITIME MUSEUM (1MIN)
- 25 HAMMERHEAD CRANE (5 MINS)

EAST COWES

- 1 FLOATING BRIDGE
- 2 THE GRIDIRON SHED
- 3 TRINITY HOUSE
- 4 LOCKS LANE
- 5 COLUMBINE YARD
- 6 VICTORIA BARRACKS
- 7 COASTGUARD COTTAGES
- 8 CAVALIER PROPELLER
- 9 SITE OF ROPE WALK
- 10 CAMBRIDGE ROAD TERRACE
- 11 THE OLD WASH HOUSE
- 12 HENRY VIII FORTIFICATIONS
- 13 NO BARRIERS
- 14 ST JAMES' CHURCH
- 15 FRANK JAMES HOSPITAL
- 16 METHODIST CHURCH
- 17 FALCON YARD
- 18 THE HERITAGE CENTRE
- 19 THE UMBRELLA TREE
- 20 THE TOWN HALL

DIRECTIONAL SIGNS - FURTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

- 21 CASTLE POINT (10 MINS)
- 22 NORTH LODGE (10 MINS)
- 23 OSBORNE HOUSE (20 MINS)
- 24 ALTERNATIVE ROUTE AVOIDING 4 STEPS
- 25 EAST COWES MARINA (10 MINS)

OTHER SYMBOLS

- P PARKING
- WC PUBLIC CONVENIENCE
- TAXI RANK
- FERRY TERMINAL
- BUS STATION
- LIMITED/DIFFICULT WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

COWES

is now a world-renowned venue of high-class yacht racing but has been a seaport of considerable importance for many centuries. Like East Cowes it developed from manorial importance to a Solent defence. King Henry VIII built several forts, one of which is now the home of the Royal Yacht Squadron. Cowes is home to several Yacht Clubs and many support services for the sport of yachting. This ensures that Cowes remains a sporting and social hive of activity with yacht building and maintenance at its heart. Millions of keen sailors, socialites and spectators flock to Cowes each summer and to the internationally acclaimed racing of Cowes Week.

1 RATSEY AND LAPHORN - arguably the greatest name in yacht sails, occupies a former Victorian barracks. Established as Ratseys in 1790 and supplying sails for work boats, the company merged with Laphorns in 1882 and has lofts on the Island, mainland and in New York.

2 J.SAMUEL WHITE - a ship-building empire which started in East Cowes in 1803 and expanded over the next 50 years to both sides of the Medina. A varied output included yachts, clippers and lifeboats. J.Samuel White expanded the concern to become a leading builder of ships, including torpedo boats and destroyers. The company finally closed in 1968.

3 SHEPARDS WHARF is a fascinating place for general yacht spotting. It is also home to the famous Etchells fleet. These racing boats must have their bottoms scrubbed each week in the racing season to ensure optimum performance.

4 CLARE LALLOW was founded in 1867 on the existing premises and was run by members of the family until 1996 when it was taken over by local employee Lawrence Boarer. Lallows made its reputation on the construction of fine handcrafted wooden yachts. Today, it continues to restore and maintain these craft, using the finest of traditional skills.

5 WESTBOURNE HOUSE was the childhood home of Thomas Arnold, famous headmaster of Rugby School. His father was the customs officer at East Cowes.

6 BEKEN OF COWES was founded in 1888 by Alfred Beken, a chemist and keen photographer, who developed a more robust camera to cope with salt water. His son Frank further built up the famous archive of yacht images, followed by his son and grandson, Keith and Kenneth. Kenneth travels the world capturing the best of yachting through the lens.

7 THE YACHT HAVEN is the hub of Cowes Week. It is home to yachts and boats of the highest calibre, although all are welcome at the longest bar in Britain to toast the day's racing and enjoy a wealth of entertainment during the August regatta. Also a fascinating venue for watching winter yacht maintenance work.

8 THE BREAKWATER was built recently as part of the Cowes Yacht Haven and it offers protection and calm water for the many, often valuable, yachts that are moored there.

9 TOWN QUAY is one of the principal landing places in Cowes and is connected to Fountain Quay. Steam packet companies used to discharge and board passengers here, as Red Funnel does today with the Red Jet. It was developed by

George Ward whose family were great patrons of Cowes and lived in Northwood House.

10 THE FOUNTAIN HOTEL is possibly one of the oldest hotels in Cowes, although at one time it had a lot of competition as virtually every other building along the street was a pub or hostelry. The Fountain retains its popularity today as a rendezvous for travellers on the Red Jet.

11 THE MEW LANGTON BREWERY was situated right on the quay so that the delivery boat 'The Four X' from Newport, could easily drop off its important cargo of beer for the people of Cowes. It closed about 50 years ago.

12 THE SIR MAX AITKEN MUSEUM is named after the former chairman of Express newspapers and legendary Cowes Yachtsman Sir Max Aitken, who bought the Prospect in 1947. Formerly a Ratsey and Laphorn premises, the museum houses many fine items of yachting memorabilia and can be visited from May to September on guided tours.

13 BENZIES OF COWES was founded in 1862 and is renowned the world over for its fine and unique pieces of yachting jewellery. It has enjoyed patronage from many Royals, including Queen Victoria, George V and the Duke of Edinburgh. Unable to get membership at the Royal Yacht Squadron, Earl Mountbatten would watch the racing from Benzie's observation tower.

14 THE UNION INN is thought to have once been known as the Watch House, but nobody knows when it was built. Smuggling was probably carried out in and around the premises, borne out by a number of tunnels and secret chambers found during excavations.

15 THE CUSTOMS HOUSE - although the first customs house was built in East Cowes in 1575 trade grew rapidly during the 16th and 17th centuries, mainly due to the colonisation of America. Cowes expanded due to deeper water moorings and the growth of a large navy which ensured customs officers were kept busy. Today, this waterside site is still in use as a customs and excise building.

16 ROYAL YACHT SQUADRON is one of the most exclusive clubs in the world. It was founded in 1815 by a group of sailing gentlemen who met at the Thatched House Tavern in St James' Square, London. It then moved to Cowes Castle in 1856 and the Prince of Wales became its patron. It was the first club to organise races in this country.

17 HOLY TRINITY CHURCH is commonly known as the Yachtsman's Church. It was built at the expense of Cowes resident Mrs Goodwin at a cost of £6,687 and was consecrated in 1832.

18 PASCALL ATKEY was founded in 1799 and is thought to be the oldest yacht chandlery in the world. It stocks everything for yachtsmen from clothing to shackles.

19 ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY church was built in 1776, making it one of the earliest Catholic churches to be built after the reformation.

20 THE ROPE WALK formerly ran through the heart of Cowes and was so long that a road was built over it so as to allow a road to be built across its course. The rope works, known as 'Cowes Steam Hemp and Wire Rope Works', were founded by Henry Bannister. There were also saw mills and grinding and gristing mills, making it one of the largest industrial sites of its kind on the Island.

a heritage trail linking Cowes and East Cowes

THE BOAT TRAIL

welcome to the Boat Trail

A four mile heritage walk, connecting the towns of Cowes and East Cowes and bringing to life their rich histories; a tale of international sports personalities, pleasure seekers and engineering innovation in the boating world.

Through the employment of artists and makers, we are ensuring that the illustrious heritage of the two towns is not lost as they develop in the 21st century.

The first of the transformations en-route is the interior of the floating bridge, which is now a 'cabinet of curiosities'. Please cross the water and marvel!

To lead you round the trail, a series of signs, designed by artist Sasha Ward, have been sited on all 40 points of interest and strategic points in between.

Inspiration for the signage has been drawn from knots and signal flags, with the colours inspired by sails on a grey sea.

Cowes Waterfront Initiative



SEEDA and English Partnerships are promoting a comprehensive plan for the regeneration of East Cowes as part of the Cowes Waterfront Initiative.

It includes proposals for the revitalisation of the town centre, a new marine quarter on the waterfront, new homes, shops and facilities.

Work is already underway and you can witness the changing face of East Cowes as you walk the Boat Trail. More information is available at coweswaterfront.co.uk

EAST COWES

together with Cowes, forms part of the River Medina gateway to the Island. East Shamlord, as it was known in the 13th century, was originally more important than West Shamlord, although settlement was minimal. Under constant threat from the French, King Henry VIII built castles on both banks of the Medina to guard the river, although the 'East Cowe' is now gone. East Cowes became important as a customs clearance port in the 16th and 17th centuries and in the 18th century began to build its reputation as a major shipbuilding centre. Once the engineering industry arrived here it stayed, with Saunders Roe, Westland, British Hovercraft Corporation and GKN all making use of its tailor-made industrial sites. East Cowes is also, of course, noted as the favourite home of Queen Victoria, who lived at the splendid Osborne House, in complete contrast to the industrial endeavours taking place at the bottom of the hill.

- 1 A FLOATING BRIDGE** has been carrying passengers across the Medina since 1859, running on chains which are stretched from one bank to the other. The present ferry, the eighth, was built by Fairey Marine of East Cowes and launched in 1976. She has travelled more miles than any of her predecessors. As you leave the chain ferry stop and check out the East Cowes poetry stone.
- 2 THE GRIDIRON SHED** site was used to build boats for hundreds of years and the first seaplane was launched from here in May 1913. The SWS on the wall stands for 'static water supply', used by firemen during bombing raids in World War II.
- 3 TRINITY WHARF** is the former Trinity House Depot servicing the

lighthouses of England and Wales. All lighthouses are now automatic. The depot closed in 2005.

- 4 LOCKS LANE** is one of the last remaining alleys of its kind in East Cowes. Most other lanes of this width in the area have been redeveloped for industry or car parking.
- 5 COLUMBINE YARD** - an amazing example of British industrial architecture built by Saunders-Roe in 1935 specifically for constructing flying boats. Before WWII the firm specialised in manufacturing power boats and record breaking craft such as Sir Malcolm Campbell's Bluebird. They also developed the Princess Flying Boats and, after 1945, helped to develop the British Ballistic Rocket 'Black Knight'. It was also here that Sir Christopher Cockerell pioneered designs for the worlds first hovercraft. Inspiration is said to have come from a coffee tin, a kite-e-kat tin, a hairdryer and a pair of scales!!!
- 6 VICTORIA BARRACKS** were built in 1872 to house troops to guard Queen Victoria. Luckily the impressive railings around the parade ground were not taken for re-cycling during WWII as the barracks were in use.
- 7 COASTGUARD COTTAGES** were built in 1881 and sold in 1924. East Cowes was the customs post for the Island and all duties were paid here. The original post was in the town centre and William Arnold, father of Rugby School head Matthew Arnold, was customs officer until 1801.
- 8 CAVALIER PROPELLER** is from HMS Cavalier, built at the J.S.Whites East Cowes Yard in 1944. She was the fastest ship in the Royal Navy for 27 years. The nearby fountain was given to East Cowes by Miss Shedden of Springhill in 1896 and stood originally in York Avenue.
- 9 SITE OF ROPE WALK** is just in front of the present caravan park. This is where hemp rope was twisted and prepared for use on ships that were probably beached here for repair. The rope walk and beach are featured on the 1783 Admiralty Chart.
- 10 CAMBRIDGE ROW TERRACE** is a beautiful row of houses that were nearly not completed due to lack of money. However a second builder finished them in 1870.
- 11 THE OLD WASH HOUSE** was an important part of life at Coastguard Cottages, as it was here that the women would meet to do their laundry and catch up on local news.
- 12 HENRY VIII FORTIFICATIONS** - the last remnant may be seen in this old wall. The East Cowe (or castle) was commissioned by him at the same time as the West Cowe (now the Royal Yacht Squadron) as part of his Solent Defences.
- 13 NO BARRIERS** is the first ever open air art gallery of its kind, transforming the blue hoardings currently surrounding the East Cowes Project site. This unique and expanding exhibition showcases work produced by the community of East Cowes.
- 14 ST JAMES' CHURCH** was designed by John Nash and dedicated by Princess Victoria in 1831, although the dedication stone has since disappeared. Nash is famous for designing Regency streets and Buckingham Palace in London. His tomb is beside the church tower. He lived in the now demolished East Cowes Castle, just up the hill.
- 15 FRANK JAMES HOSPITAL** was built in memory of Frank James, a yachting enthusiast who was killed by an elephant while hunting in West Africa. His brothers

gave the building to the town in 1893 as a home for aged seamen. Ten years later, it became a cottage hospital. Frank's yacht, Lancashire Witch, is featured as a weather vane.

- 16 THE METHODIST CHURCH** was opened in 1878, in response to the growing congregation, as Wesleyan preachers came to the Island. The chapel was damaged by bombs in WWII and two windows given by Queen Victoria were lost.
- 17 FALCON YARD** was one of the most prolific of J.S.Whites shipbuilding yards on the river, producing destroyers and other vessels for the Royal Navy and other fleets. Badly bombed on the night of 4 - 5 May 1942, it is now owned by GKN.
- 18 THE HERITAGE CENTRE** was set up by local historians who keep it open from 10am - 1pm Mon - Sat. If you want to learn about the heritage of the town, the Centre is packed full of fascinating information, local history displays and books for sale. Look out for their nine heritage information boards positioned around the town as you walk the East Cowes part of the Trail.
- 19 THE UMBRELLA TREE** is a weeping ash, with a shady seat beneath and has stood in this spot since 1914. Look out for its sister tree on the Green in Cowes.
- 20 THE TOWN HALL** was completed in 1897, funded by Amy White, the wife of J.S.White the shipbuilder who so influenced the shape of the two towns. It is currently being refurbished and is home to a host of community activities, clubs and exhibitions.