

8 Hamstead Trail



A walk traversing the Island from north to south, passing alongside salt water marshes and over downland. Ancient burial sites are also passed en route to the south coast, where a fossil forest is visible at low tide.



Newtown

Hamstead Trail Landmarks

Two well known houses of the area lie just off the trail. Brook House is where Garibaldi, the Italian patriot, planted an oak tree. Nearby is Brook Hill House, a former home of the author J B Priestley.

Hanover Point near Brook is noted for its pine raft, the remains of a petrified forest which is visible at low tide.

1 The trail starts on the Coastal Path where it comes down to sea level at the eastern end of Hamstead Cliffs. The nearest bus stop is at Hamstead Road, Cranmore and from there walk to Hamstead to pick up the Coastal Path heading east.

It is inadvisable to leave the path along the Hamstead Cliffs as the ground between the path and the sea is exceptionally soft. Even in summer one can sink in to a considerable depth.

Turn inland at the sign for Coastal Path S3 up steps and cross the stile which is just above on the bank. Follow the path through a thicket which leads directly onto a wooden causeway with a stile at the far end. Bear left into a field and cross to a stile in the hedge on the far side.

Turn right over the stile and continue with the hedge on your right. Cross a culvert then follow the edge of the marshland, crossing a series of boardwalks and two stiles on the way. Leave the marsh over a stile and follow the enclosed path with a field on right to a further stile. Turn right along a level gravel track, passing Creek Farm on your left and ignoring footpath S5 to Hamstead on right.

2 Reach the junction with the lane from Hamstead Grange. Turn left and follow the Hamstead Trail sign for 100 metres (110 yards) down over a stream then up the other side where the Coastal Path is signposted straight ahead but the Hamstead Trail separates to the right into another lane. Follow this level lane, immediately passing a white cottage set back on the right, until reaching the junction with Solent Road next to a letter box. Bear left along Hamstead Road to the main road (A3054).

Cross the road and turn right to the Hamstead Trail sign. Cross two stiles close together and proceed through a small belt of oak trees then across a field to a stile in the far right corner. Follow the level track through woodland, crossing one intermediate stile. Over another stile at the end of the wood cross an overgrown track to a further stile opposite. Over this stile a short path passes through scrub to reach a small footbridge across a ditch with a stile beyond. Bear right in the field and keep to the hedge on your right, crossing a stile on the way before reaching two further stiles, one on each side of a former railway line. Thereafter the track is enclosed with thorn hedges and passes through an open gate with adjacent stile before descending to the road at Wellow. Cross the road into Coopers Lane opposite, then cross a ford by means of a footbridge to reach a further road after short distance.

3 Turn left for 70 metres (80 yards) down hill then turn right where signposted to Brook Down. Immediately cross a stream via a footbridge then follow the track uphill through a large field, aiming for the top left corner of Hummet Copse ahead, stepping over the stream once more on the way. At the top of the copse, continue through the gate and follow a grass track upwards into open fields. Near the summit, you can look back to panoramic views of the Solent. Once over the crest, the path runs alongside a fence on the right where yellow arrows indicate other paths leaving to left and right. Proceed straight ahead to the track enclosed by thorn hedges then, just before reaching the road, pass a gate on the right at the entrance to a quarry. Turn left opposite Prospect Cottage for 50 metres (55 yards) to the Hamstead Trail sign pointing up a concrete track on the right. Follow this track, ignoring where it turns into The Quarries, and continue straight ahead uphill where the track becomes grass enclosed by hedges thus reaching the main road (B3399).

4 Cross the road at the Hamstead Trail sign then pass through metal gates and uphill in a field keeping to the hedge on the left. Over a stile at the top left hand corner of the field, continue upward, keeping the old quarry on your right, to reach a field above.

Pass through two consecutive gates which bring you out onto downland. The path meanders roughly in line with the fenced woodland to the left before bearing away towards the top of Brook Down where the sea comes into view and you then aim to the right of the barrow ahead on the skyline.

Here the track joins the Tennyson Trail and passes the lower side of Five Barrows tumuli where you have a view of Brook Hill House ahead in the distance before rapidly descending down a chalk track. There are numerous barrows or tumuli in this immediate area.

5 The Tennyson Trail continues to a gate at the bottom of the track but, 50 metres (55 yards) before that, the Hamstead Trail turns acutely right into a sunken grass track climbing steeply uphill and following a line of overhead electric cables. At the crest of the hill, turn left under the overhead cables to follow the signed Byway BS89 along a grass track which soon becomes gravel and drops down through scrub. Go through a gate after which the track skirts woodland on left, until you come to gates ahead signposted to a bridleway. Turn left in front of the gates, but instead of proceeding down the well made lane, keep next to the hedge on the right to pick up an unmarked level path which quickly enters a copse where there are a small pair of metal barriers acting as gates.

Thereafter, descend the hill in this sunken path with small trees each side (an ancient road) until reaching the lane through a metal gate at the bottom.

By way of a short diversion, turn left along this lane to see Brook House and Brook Hill House then retrace your steps to regain the trail.

Turn right at the lane then after 50 metres (55 yards) turn left at the signpost in the farmyard and take the mainly level track that curves between Dunsbury Farm buildings in a southerly direction. At the end of this lane, continue straight ahead through a field after which the path is enclosed by a wire fence one side and a thicket the other side then exit by a white house onto another lane. Over the stile continue straight ahead and cross the narrow field to Military Road (A3055), at a point just west of Brook.

