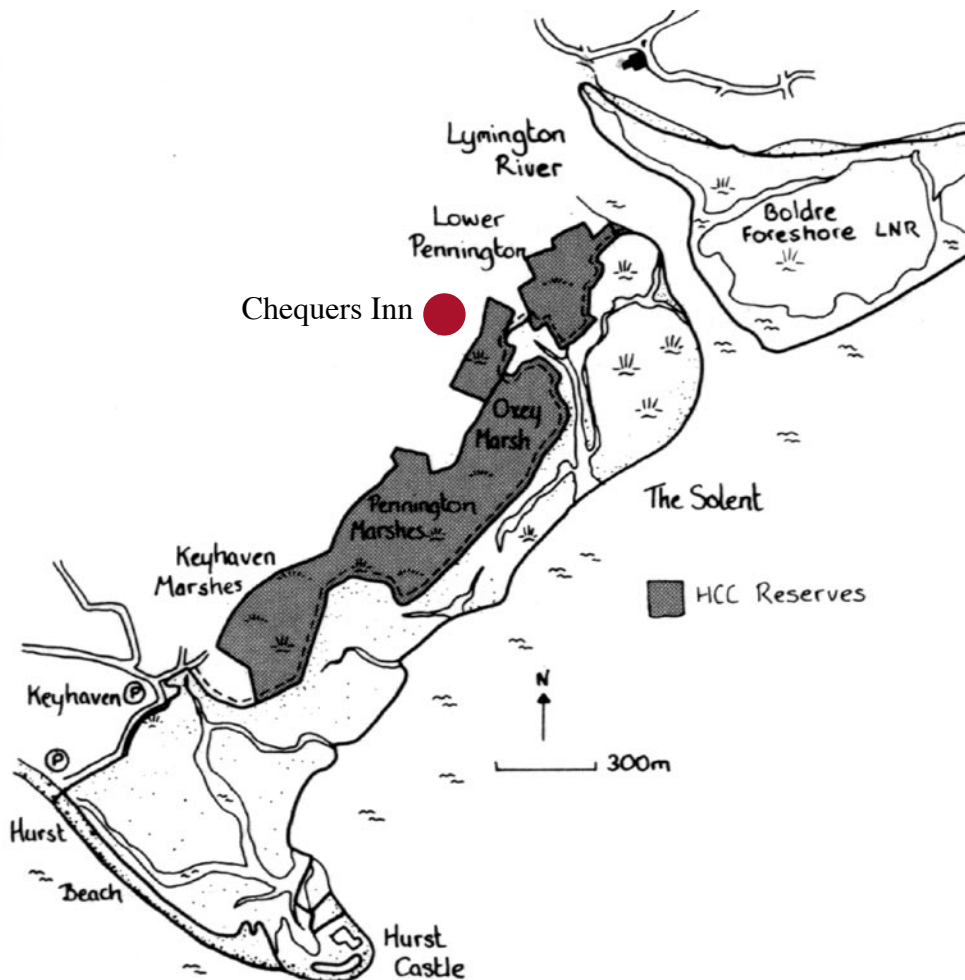




Keyhaven & Pennington Marshes

In association with Hampshire Wildlife, we will be bringing you some well-known and not so well-known walks in and around the New Forest. These walks will take in some stunning natural beauty, as well as give you an insight into some of the inhabitants to be found along the path.



There are two alternative walks to take in, both with splendid views over the Western Solent.

1. Part of the long distance Solent Way runs along the sea-wall, giving good views of the marshes. The seawall and grazed marsh inside it form part of a nature reserve owned and managed by Hampshire County Council. Please keep off the marshes to avoid disturbance.
2. Hurst Spit is accessible on foot along the shingle spit. This can be hard going, so why not return by ferry to Keyhaven.

HOW TO GET THERE

The reserve lies east from Hurst Castle Spit, south east of Milford-on-Sea. Parking is available in Keyhaven or near the spit. A ferry plies between Keyhaven Harbour, and Hurst Castle.

WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION

The long shingle ridge of Hurst Spit runs out to Henry VIII's fort and protects a large area of intertidal habitats. Mudflats with

their seaweeds and eelgrasses give way to saltmarsh, dominated by Cord-grass and Glasswort. The upper marsh and shingle support fascinating and colourful plants such as Little-Robin, Sea Campion, Thrift, Yellow-Horned Poppy and the uncommon Golden-Samphire with its golden, daisy-like flowers.

The Solent is a complex and highly productive environment, holding an internationally important number of birds, but facing many threats. Among breeding species here, are Little Tern - scarce and sensitive to disturbance - and a large colony of Black-headed Gull. In winter Brent Geese feed on the eelgrass, with flocks of Shelduck, Teal, Dunlin and Lapwing. Red-breasted Mergansers gather in autumn and on migration spectacular numbers of waders pass through, including Black-Tailed and Bar-Tailed Godwits.

Managed through a series of leases and licences, the needs of various users are balanced to respect traditional marsh uses and to avoid disturbance to wildlife. Worryingly, a rise in sea level is aiding rapid erosion of the marshes.