

BUCKLER'S HARD TO LEPE FROM THE WATER

The lower reaches of the Beaulieu River are best seen from the water as they are not served by a footpath.

1 Gilbury Pier connecting to the Exbury Estate.

2 Mulberry Dock

This is the site of the old oyster beds created in the 1870s. During the Second World War, an experimental floating dock was built here, together with components for the Mulberry Harbour, used in the D-Day landings. Today, oysters are again being bred on the river, where the water is pure enough for a licence to be granted.

3 Fiddler's Reach

In the 18th century, this was an anchoring point for the hulls of newly launched ships en route for Portsmouth. The grass that covers the mudflats along the river is called *Spartina Townsendii*. This first appeared on the river in the 1870s to help bind the mud flats, thus reducing erosion. A second variety, *Spartina Anglica*, was introduced in 1898.

4 Gins

This was where the monks of Beaulieu Abbey kept their fishing boats and trading ships. It was a convenient place to load and unload without having to navigate the narrower channel upstream. The name 'Gins' is thought to derive from 'ingenium', a lifting or winding mechanism used to move the load. Today, Gins is a base for the Royal Southampton Yacht Club. An oil pipeline from Wytch Farm near Poole to Fawley Oil Refinery passes under the river at this point.

5 Sea Banks

The land behind these banks was reclaimed in the 18th century and used for salt production. Salt was a highly prized commodity and Salt Officers were based in Buckler's Hard to check that the quantity of salt produced tallied with the amount of tax paid. Two hundred years later, the banks remain intact, but they do not hold out the highest tides, and the meadows behind are periodically flooded. This provides waterfowl, particularly brent geese and wigeon, with feeding areas in autumn and winter.

6 Needs Ore Coastguard Cottages

Built in the 1860s for the Coastguard, who were at the forefront of the fight against smuggling, as well as defence and rescue. Officers were moved around from station to station to prevent them becoming established in the local community and susceptible to bribery and collusion. The Needs Ore Station closed in 1922 but the cottages continue to be occupied by tenants of the estate.

7 Needs Ore Point

This was where Charles Bull created his 'Bull's Run' in 1726–27 as a shortcut into the river from the Solent. It was closed by a Special Act of Parliament in 1986 to protect Gull Island from erosion. Needs Ore is the base of the Beaulieu River Sailing Club whose dinghy races take place in this part of the river.

8 Gull Island

This is actually a spit and owes its name to the black-headed gulls which used to nest here in abundance, and after a period of time away are now nesting again. This forms part of the Special Protection Area (SPA) and is out of bounds to public.

9 Millennium Beacon

This miniature lighthouse serves as a day mark and contains a sectored light for guiding boats into the river at night. Its construction was kindly funded by many of the yachtsmen who use these waters.

The lands bordering the river contain an exceptional variety of habitats, which support an equally varied assemblage of wildlife. To protect important colonies of nesting seabirds, Gull Island and Warren Shore are closed to the public; however, access to other parts of the Reserve is possible by permit, issued by the Beaulieu Estate Office.

