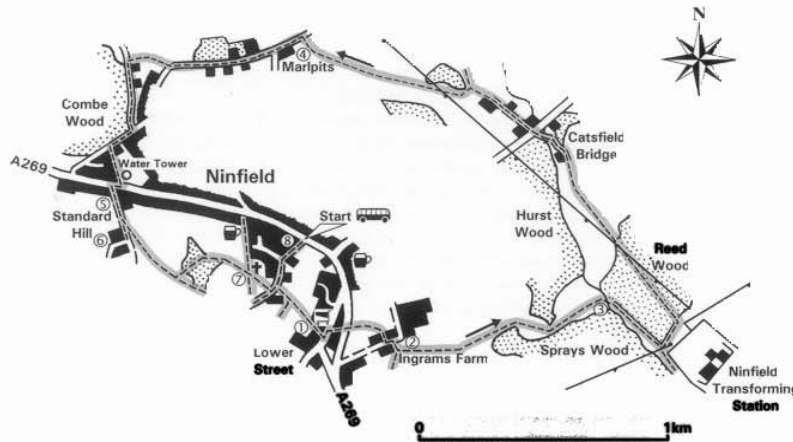




# "A thousand years OF PROGRESS"

*In the year 1000, the people of Ninfield had just created their village by cutting the space for it from the Wealden Forest - the name originally being "Niwnumenan Felda - Newly Cleared Fields". This walk explores man's impact on the area in the thousand years since those Saxon settlers first swung their axes.*



**Length 4 Miles - 6 Kilometres**  
**Approximately 3 hours - Grade 2**

**START -** Junction of Church Street and A269, Ninfield adjacent to village stocks (O.S. Explorer 124 - NGR 707124)

**ACCESS -** Car - On street parking in Church Street and Downsview, Ninfield  
Bus - 19, 22, 98, 328 and 498  
Train - Nil

**PUBLIC TOILETS -** Nil

**REFRESHMENTS -** Pubs at Ninfield  
Village shop at Ninfield

**CAUTION -** This walk includes two crossings of the A271 road.

4  
Miles



# "A thousand years OF PROGRESS"

- The Saxons literally cut Ninfield from the Wealden forests as its name "Niwnumenan Felda - Newly Cleared Fields" suggests. This resulted in a dispersed pattern of settlement around the parish and an unusually high number of freeholders. Amongst a population of about 50 people, no less than 6 lords owned different parts of the parish, each probably representing an original clearance site.
- Ingrams Farm represents one of these original sites where the "freeholders claim to hold their land without paying heriot (death duties)". The earliest known record is in 1264 when it was held by Robert and Andrew Ingeram. By 1570 it was described as "There is no manor house but a mean thatched house with a kitchen (detached due to the fire risk), orchard with garden and curtilage containing half an acre of land".
- The chain of ponds (now dried up), provided power to Potmans Forge ironworks nearly half a mile away, south of the electricity transforming station. The forge itself had a short life; built by William Waters around 1580, it is last heard of in 1637. It did, however, produce one unique piece of work which can still be seen today on this walk.
- Marlpits represents an industrial area of the parish, with the now disused quarries still visible. A list of parish trades in 1681 shows extreme levels of demarcation, including: *1 innkeeper and shoemaker, 1 shoemaker only, 1 sawyer and carpenter, 1 carpenter only, 1 sawyer only and, the slightly more versatile, 1 joiner, carpenter and fiddler - presumably he couldn't play while he worked though.*
- Standard Hill marks the spot where William the Conqueror is alleged to have raised his banner on arrival in England (some distance from his landing point of Pevensey it must be said). On the whole, the Norman Conquest was not good for Ninfield. Parties of soldiers looted all villages in the region to feed themselves before the Battle of Hastings. Ninfield, worth £6 before the soldiers' arrival, was worth only £1 after their departure.
- Moorhall formed another of the original, clearance sites and in time became a separate manor in its own right. By 1342, however, much of its wealth was gone - "a great part of cultivated land called Moorhall, had been submerged" (by the sea) and a further "130 acres of land lay uncultivated on account of poverty".
- Ninfield church has endured throughout the whole thousand years. The church held by 'Robert' in the Domesday Book can still be visited today. On view, amongst other things, are a coat of arms of James I (amazingly not destroyed during the later Civil War), a minstrels gallery (dating from the time when a local band rather than an organ provided church music) and locking staples on the cover of the lead font to prevent the theft of holy water.
- Having passed the forge earlier on the walk, it now finishes adjacent to one of the products - the unique iron stocks. Two different sized leg holes and two different sized shackles are thoughtfully provided. Here, errant villagers could be secured by the legs, before being pelted with rotten fruit (or worse) or handcuffed to the post for whipping.

4  
Miles

