



"Inns, Innings and the GHOST PORT"

This walk graphically illustrates the battle between man and nature over a thousand years for an area which was once an estuary. Old sea walls, drainage channels, saltworks and the ghost of a port remain to mark this struggle.

Length 7 Miles = 11 Kilometres
Approximately 4 hours – Grade 3

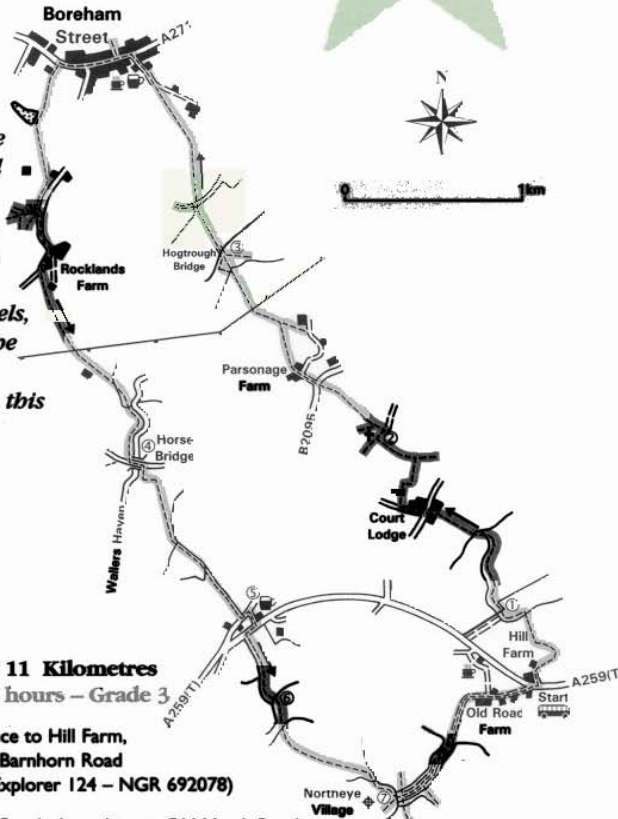
START – Entrance to Hill Farm, A259, Barnhorn Road (O.S. Explorer 124 – NGR 692078)

ACCESS – Car – Roadside parking at Old Marsh Road, (site of) accessed off Barnhorn Road (A259)
Bus – 19, 319, 710 and 711
Train – Nil

PUBLIC TOILETS – Nil

REFRESHMENTS – Pubs on A259 and at Boreham Street
Tea Rooms and Restaurants at Boreham Street
Café on A259 at Barnhorn

CAUTION – Portions of the route cross wetland and may be flooded following wet weather. There are two crossings of the A259.



"Inns, Innings and the GHOST PORT"

- As the invading Saxons sailed into this area, they could see a coastline of peninsulas and islands rising above a shallow estuary, into which flowed many streams. As their land holdings later became more organised, charters were drawn up describing the bounds of each estate in terms of landscape features. Today the inlet of the sea described as an estate boundary 1,000 years ago is now a small stream, yet still marks a boundary between modern district council areas.
- The visitor to Hooe church may well ask "where is the village?", given the church's isolated location. The answer lies in a village always composed of isolated farms rather than a grouped settlement. Perhaps this isolation helped to preserve the contents of the church. Unusually, both the Saxon font and a document chest (made from a hollowed out tree trunk) are older than the building which contains them.
- Between about 1100 and 1350, the pressure of an increasing population forced the pace in reclaiming land from the sea. "Inning" produced a series of piecemeal banks enclosing one small field at a time and gradually pushing the sea back. However, the population collapse after the Black Death, followed by higher tides and storms, undid most of this work, leading to the re-flooding of the greater part of the area.
- After 1400, man began again to drain the marshes, but with greater coordination than before. In this area all the land was drained into Wallers Haven which once flowed right across the marsh to an outlet forming the port of Pevensey. A new artificial outlet to the sea was constructed

at Codyngeshaven in 1402, thus speeding up the flow of water from the marshes but leaving the port of Pevensey (the old haven) without enough water. Even this was not enough. Shingle choked Codyngeshaven and another new channel, called the Mark Dyke, was constructed further east in 1455 and remains in use today.

- One advantage to locals of the new drainage system was the ability to use the channels to land smuggled goods by small boats. Isolated inns such as The Lamb situated next to such channels were obviously in an ideal position to benefit from smuggling. The casks themselves could be hidden underwater to avoid detection by customs.
- The Domesday entry for Hooe includes "4 saltworks value 20s". Saltworks were a vitally important part of the medieval economy, as the only viable way of preserving meat. (Hence the expression "worth his salt".) At high tide, sea water was trapped in shallow basins and allowed to evaporate. The salt was then removed and the other solids piled up in waste heaps which are the main visible evidence of the industry today. As the sea was pushed back the salt industry had to move with it, leaving these debris mounds isolated inland today.
- On a small "island" (accessible via a causeway at low tide) stands the ghost port of Northeye. Now visible as a mound in flat fields, the route passes through the humps and bumps in the ground that mark the remains of houses, inns and shops. Once a large enough harbour to supply ships to fight the French, the port survived until the sea was pushed back around 1450. The ruins of the church lingered until 1850 but today even those are gone.

7
Miles



7
Miles

