



# **The Blue Anchor Ruckinge**

**Tel: 01233 732387**

**www.theblueanchor-ruckinge.co.uk**

## **WALKING AT THE BLUE ANCHOR**

*The Blue Anchor is a historic Inn, once the haunt of notorious smugglers. The Ransley brothers were part of a smuggling gang from nearby Aldington and were hanged for their deeds in Penenden Heath Near Maidstone. They are buried in the Churchyard of St Mary's Magdalene (well worth a visit, 200 yards along the road towards Hamstreet).*

*The following circular walks enable the rambler to explore the varied local scenery from the Royal Military Canal to Hamstreet Woods. Laminated walks with maps produced by the Ruckinge & Hamstreet Scouts are also available by emailing: AdamGColton@aol.com*

### **Bilsington Loop 2 miles**

*Exiting the pub turn right and walk along the B2067 for around half a mile, taking great care as this road can be dangerous. You will pass over a hillock by Herne Farm; upon descending there is a sharp left hand bend. Take the public footpath straight ahead, across the field towards a house at the top of the hill. Keep to the right hand side of the house and descend the other side, heading for the corner next to the road. Cross the stile and continue along the left hand side of the following field to come back out onto the road via the gate beside a little bridge.*

*Turn right, following the road up the hill into Bilsington village, again taking great care. Here the pub is the White Horse and the church is of St Peter & St Paul. The obelisk is a monument built in 1835, to honour a local landowner, Sir Richard Cosway, who was famed for his generosity towards his workers and was tragically killed in a coaching accident.*

*Turning right at the crossroads follow the lane down the hill past the cricket field on your right. You will notice an optional footpath, parallel to the road along the field edge, which will bring you back out onto the lane at the bottom. It is now a simple matter of turning right onto the canal path, just before the bridge to follow it for a mile back to Ruckinge Bridge. From this bridge, turn right to wander up the lane, which will bring you past the chapel and back to the T junction beside the pub and village sign. The house opposite the T junction used to be the village Post Office.*

### **Hamstreet Loop 5 miles**

*Exit the pub, turn left and left again onto Marsh Road. When you reach the Royal Military Canal, turn right along the south bank and follow this for a mile and a half. You will pass a pumping station half way and will get a fell of the totally flat Romney Marsh which was under the sea in Roman times and emerged to be artificially drained when a river changed its course in the 13th century. The Canal was built as a line of defence against a feared invasion from Napoleon. The footpath follows its banks for the full 28 miles from Seabrook (near Folkestone) to Cliff End (near Hastings).*

*Upon reaching Hamstreet canal bridge, turn right to follow the road for half a mile into the village centre. You will pass the garden centre, garage and village sign which has some interesting facts about the village on its plaque.*

*Maps of this village were featured on every UK postage stamp in 1991. This was to commemorate 200 years of the Ordnance Survey, the reason being that the Ruckinge and Hamstreet area was the first to be mapped. This is also commemorated on the Ruckinge village sign. Today Hamstreet has the only shops within a four mile radius and a railway station on one of only two diesel lines in the provincial south east. The 110 mile long Greensand Way footpath starts at the village crossroads.*

*Upon reaching this crossroads (by the Dukes Head) turn right along the one-way street and take the second turning left down Bourne Lane. At the end of the lane bear right, through the gate into Hamstreet Woods. The Weald of Kent was once covered by deciduous woodland of this kind. You are free to roam any trails within the reserve and may even hear a nightingale!*

*As you enter the woods the Saxon Shore Way bridges a stream and turns sharp left. Then after around 100 yards it forks right. Stay on the grassy right-hand side, as the surfaced path on the left eventually deviates. Our trail (known as Gill Farm track) heads due northeast through the woods, gradually climbing for around a mile until reaching a gate at the other end. Go through the gate and continue up to the T-junction with Gill Lane bridleway.*

*Bear left and climb out of the woods. The Saxon Shore Way then exits right along a farm track, while we continue ahead along Gill Lane. Three Hundred yards later you will reach a junction; turn right taking great care as the lane is narrow and bounded by hedges.*

*After three hundred yards you will reach another junction with a gravel-surfaced byway leading straight ahead. Follow this all the way into the woods, around the sharp right hand bend and on for around a mile, descending to meet the B2067 near Herne Farm. The Blue Anchor is just 400 yards right along the road.*

## **Warehorne loop 7 miles**

*This loop is more like a figure of eight. Follow the Hamstreet loop as far as the crossroads by the Duke's Head. Turn left towards Tenterden along the B 2067. After passing beneath the arched railway bridge and the bypass bridge, climb the steps on you left. A short distance along this stony path there is a stile to your right. Climb over and follow the Saxon Shore Way in a straight line towards the church tower across the fields. You will eventually descend into a dip and then gently climb again. Having walked along the right hand edge of the final field, you will find a stile surrounded by bushes. Cross this and continue along the drive out to the lane. Turn right.*

*The 16th century Woolpack Inn is connected to the church of St Matthew by an underground tunnel. This was built and used by smugglers, a common practice in this area in centuries past.*

*Take the path left, into the churchyard and walk around the west side of the building. If you imagine a straight line right through the church bearing slightly left, this is roughly the route of the footpath down to the lane through the bushes to the left of the house at the bottom. When you emerge, cross the level crossing and continue down to the Royal Military Canal.*

*Cross the stile on your left before the bridge and turn left again to take the footpath that leads due northeast across the fields towards a static lorry-back. You will have to negotiate your way around a sheep pen - the clearest route is normally is to remain north of the lorry-back and cross the stile on your right. Beyond this, continue northeast and look carefully for the bridges across the dykes. The telegraph pole in the middle of the distant sloping field is a good reference point to check you are on course. You will eventually reach the Hamstreet bypass; cross this and continue descending to the village where the path bridges a dyke and follows a short lane out to the High Street. Turn left to return to the crossroads and then follow the remainder of the Hamstreet loop to return to the Blue Anchor.*

## **Marsh loop 4 miles**

*Exit the pub, turn left and left again onto Marsh Road. When you reach the Royal Military Canal, turn right along the south bank and follow this for three quarters of a mile until you pass a pumping station.*

*Beyond this, take the bridleway on your left and after several hundred yards you will cross a bridge where the main route bears sharp left. Turn right at this point and follow a grassy byway along the edge of the ditch. You may have to climb over a few gates during the next two thirds of a mile.*

*Eventually you will notice a wide wooden footbridge to your right. Cross this and follow the footpath ahead along the left hand edge of the field. Be warned: the grass can be quite high and weedy here at times.*

*When the row of bushes ends, bear slightly left and continue in the same direction so that the next line of bushes is on your right. At the end of this section, bear slightly right to pass through the gap in the bushes and then curve naturally left along the field edge.*

*The footpath crosses this field diagonally, due northwest to the opposite corner. If you are unable to cross the field, follow the field edge to your left until you are able to turn right (due north). Either way you will eventually reach a footbridge, with another bridge immediately after on the left. Follow the footpath diagonally across this final field, due northwest towards Hamstreet canal bridge. To return to Ruckinge, simply turn right and follow the track along the canal for a mile and a half.*

**THE BLUE ANCHOR WILL BE HAPPY TO CATER FOR ANY WALKS GROUP OR OTHERWISE. PLEASE TELEPHONE TO PRE ORDER OR MAKE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS. 01233 732387**