



THE WHITE HORSE

Bilsington TN25 7JX

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Walks from the White Horse

The White Horse is located in the centre of Bilsington and is the only remaining service in a village that once possessed a shop, garage and school. Both the ancient church of St Peter and St Paul and the Bilsington Monument are well worth a visit by heading south from the pub towards Romney Marsh. The obelisk was built in 1835 to honour a local landowner, Sir Richard Cosway, who was famed for his generosity towards his workers and tragically killed in a coaching accident.

Ruckinge Loop (2 Miles)

Exiting the pub, turn right at the crossroads to 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 edge of the field, 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 to Ruckinge Bridge. The totally flat Romney Marsh 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 bank for the full 28 miles from Seabrook (near Folkestone) to Cliff End (near Hastings).

From Ruckinge bridge, turn right to wander up the lane, which will bring you past the chapel and up to the T-junction beside the Blue Anchor pub and village sign. The house opposite the T-junction used to be the village Post Office. Turn right and walk along the B 2067 for around 600 yards, taking great care as the 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. Return to the pub and 'refresh'!

Bonnington Route (2 miles / 3.5 miles)

Exiting the pub, turn right at the crossroads to follow the lane down the hill past the cricket field on your right, again using the optional footpath parallel to the road along the field edge if you wish. Turn left onto the canal path just before the bridge and follow this for a mile, across fields enjoying the views of the Greensand Ridge ahead.

This line of hills runs from Hythe to Aldington and then disappears for almost ten miles, re-emerging at Pluckley to eventually contain the highest points in Kent and Surrey.

You will eventually reach a lane opposite St Rumwold's Church, Bonnington. The parish of Bonnington has a population of less than one hundred but once contained a pub, located a mile out into Romney marsh, known as the Royal Oak.

This tranquil church is well worth a visit. For a short two mile walk, you can retrace your steps along the canal to Bilsington. For a longer walk, head north to climb the hill along the lane. Cross the B2067 (Hamstreet to Hythe road) and continue for around half a mile.

You will eventually encounter a sign for the Saxon Shore Way on your left.

Follow the path along the right hand field edge and into the woods. When you emerge, bear right to follow the edge of the woods (to your right) as you climb towards Priory Lane. Turn left and walk the lane for around a half a mile, passing the Priory on your left and descending the hill.

Upon reaching a T-junction will be the B2067, turn right and take great care walking the last three hundred yards to the pub.

Hamstreet Loop (7 miles)

Exiting the pub, turn right at the crossroads to follow the lane down the hill past the cricket field on your right, again using the optional footpath parallel to the road along the field edge if you wish. Turn right onto the canal path just before the bridge to follow it for a mile to Ruckinge Bridge, where the path switches to the south bank and continues for another mile and a half. You will pass a pumping station around half way.

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 postage stamp in 1991. This was to commemorate two hundred years of the Ordnance Survey, the reason being that the local area was the first to be mapped. This is also commemorated on the Ruckinge village sign. Continue through the High Street, passing shops and turn right along the one-way street by the Duke's Head pub.

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 with deciduous woodland of this kind. You are free to roam any of the trails within the wood and you may even hear a nightingale!

As you enter the woods, the Saxon Shore Way bridges a stream and turns sharp left. The long-distance footpath runs around the former coastline all the way from Hastings to Gravesend.

After around a hundred yards the SSW 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 byway.

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 another mile, descending to meet the B2067 near Herne Farm.

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. Return to the pub and 'refresh'!

Aldington Frith Loop (2.5 miles)

One mile north of Bilsington on the lane towards Kingsnorth and Ashford, the Saxon Shore Way enters a wood on your right. After one hundred yards, another path forks left to run along the wood edge. Follow this until it emerges into fields. Keep going straight ahead, crossing the field and walking along the right hand edge. Cross the stile on your right and turn left to walk down the grass to emerge onto a track which comes out onto the lane at Aldington Frith. The Good Intent pub is two hundred yards on your left.

Our route turns right to follow the lane for around half a mile. Continue past the sign for the Saxon Shore Way on your left, until there is a sign for the SSW on your right. Follow this path into the woods and follow the SSW markers to eventually return to the point on the lane where our loop began.

*Routes compiled by Adam Colton.
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