

### **Fishtoft & North Sea Camp**

<b>Start:</b>	<i>Clampgate Road by St Guthlac's Church (ample roadside parking).</i>
<b>Nearest Post Code:</b>	<i>PE21 0RZ</i>
<b>Grid Ref</b>	<i>TF363425</i>
<b>what3words</b>	<i>shady.folds.bath</i>
<b>Refreshments</b>	<i>Red Lion pub, Fishtoft, nothing en-route.</i>
<b>Getting there:</b>	<i>Fishtoft is signed from the A52 Boston-Wainfleet Road.</i>
<b>Distance:</b>	<i>10.25 miles / 16.5km (can be shortened to 8.75 miles / 14km)</i>
<b>Route Description:</b>	<i>An easy, level walk along riverbank, field paths and tracks, but with some road walking. The route passes through H.M. prison – where one inmate said to me “it’s nice to get out”! Allow about four hours.</i>

*Note: the route through HMP North Sea Camp requires an escort. A sign as you approach the camp gives you the phone number and someone will arrive within a few minutes. There is absolutely no problem walking through – staff are very friendly.*

#### ***The Walk***

Leaving your car [A], walk into the village and turn into Gaysfield Road, passing the Red Lion pub on your right. Continue, passing Scalp Road and the old Wesleyan Chapel on the right, to reach Pinfold Lane and beyond, Nunn's Bridge [B].

*Constructed in 1948, Nunn's Bridge is the first prestressed concrete bridge to be built in Britain. From the bridge, you can enjoy extensive views down Hobhole Drain toward The Haven.*

Your route doesn't cross the bridge, but turns right just before it, following a secluded route parallel with the watercourse for almost a mile until, with the sluice in sight on the left, you go right at a finger post. Follow the clear path for about 10 minutes to reach the Pilgrim Fathers' memorial, a useful coffee stop.

*This small granite obelisk mounted on a granite block, commemorates the Pilgrims' first attempt at finding religious freedom. In September 1607 they attempted to escape to Holland by chartering a Dutch vessel to transport them. The attempt was thwarted when the captain betrayed them to the local authorities, as trying to leave England without permission was illegal at the time. The memorial was erected by Boston Council in 1957, on the 350th anniversary of the event.*

*The Haven is Boston's tidal river, providing access for shipping between Boston Deeps in The Wash and the town's dock. It also serves as the outfall into the sea of the River Witham. The channel originally meandered and frequently silted up, making the port of Boston unusable, so in 1800 the engineer John Rennie was commissioned to solve the problem. By 1884, the channel had been dredged, straightened and shortened by four miles, ensuring the viability of the docks.*

To continue, follow the England Coast Path with The Haven on your right, soon passing the blue-painted 'Horizon'.

*This engaging structure was built as part of a series of installations along the Lincolnshire coast known as 'Structures on the Edge' which promote developing artwork and coastal architecture. Horizon explores themes of nautical navigation by allowing visitors to imagine journeys into the unknown and beyond the horizon, as the Pilgrim Fathers once did.*

Keep to the path closest to the river and passing the long-defunct 'Jolly Sailor' pub on the left [C].

*With its now-silted wharf and redundant coastguard station and cottages to the rear, this hostelry would have been bustling in the 19th century. Closed in 1955, it is now used as a private residence*

The path now bears left, crossing the Hobhole Drain outfall, then right, to pick up the coastal path again. Ignore a path left (an old sea bank) and continue, to reach a track running down to Cut End Road and a small car park. Take this, passing Cut End cottages left, to reach a finger post a short distance further. Go right, across the field, soon with a ditch on your left. In due course, you climb the old sea bank and go through a kissing gate [D]. Continue along the bank – overgrown in summer – to reach the kissing gate that is the back entrance to HMP North Sea Camp, an 'open' prison. You will need to phone for an escort before going further (01205 769321). With permission granted, follow your guide through the camp, noticing the narrow-gauge railway tracks embedded in the concrete.

*In 1935, a group of teenagers arrived here from a borstal in Stafford, and over the next year they constructed a new camp on farmland in the lee of the old sea bank, for which they were paid a nominal sum. Once complete, the lads were instructed to set about reclaiming the saltmarsh for agricultural land. Steel trolleys loaded with soil to form a new sea bank were run on the rails and emptied out on the marsh.*

*In 1963, the camp changed its role from borstal to detention centre, but the reclamation work continued with the help of diesel engines to haul the trolleys. The work was completed in 1979 with 970 acres being protected by a new sea bank, the reclaimed land being used for farming until it was sold in 2004. In 1988, North Sea Camp became an adult Open Prison, but maintenance work on the sea defences continues to ensure the land is not lost once again to the sea.*

You may be instructed to follow the official footpath along the top of the bank on your left, or just walk on the concrete road. If the former, you will reach a pedestrian gate with an old pillbox beyond. The route from here along the old sea bank is heavily overgrown, being no longer grazed by cattle, so drop down to the concrete driveway. If you were escorted along the driveway, you'll reach a padlocked metal field gate. You will need to climb this, or more sensibly, the low wooden fence to its right. Either way, you are out of prison [E]!

You can lop 1.5 miles from your walk by following the driveway to point [G].

The walk proper goes right, just beyond the prison boundary, where a good path heads out to the (new) sea bank and steps give access to the England Coast Path again. Turn left and follow the bank for a mile, with the newly-enclosed (2026) wetland of RSPB Freiston Shore on your left. When the sea bank bends right, go left, dropping down to a surfaced track through the RSPB reserve, and passing a hide right, and a viewing platform left. Follow the track to its end at the car park, then climb to pass the exit barrier. Immediately beyond, at the top of the bank, a footpath goes left, take this passing through a metal gate [F].

You now have a fascinating walk along the top of the bank, passing a succession of back gardens, each with their own gate. The property to your right is/was Plummers Hotel.

*This was an early 18th century house which was converted to a hotel in the late 18th century to accommodate the flourishing seaside trade of the late 18th century. Hard to imagine that in those days, Freiston had a sandy beach and was being developed as a sea-bathing resort. By the mid-19th century there were horse races and other attractions on the beach. However, the process of coastal accretion caused a salt marsh to develop, leaving hotels without customers and since the mid-20th century, more marsh has been enclosed behind sea banks for use as arable land, leaving Freiston Shore half a mile inland. In recent years, Plummers has advertised itself as a guest house, and the former barns and coach houses have become residential accommodation.*

*Beyond the gardens, the sea bank continues with a number of WW2 gun emplacements still existing. The first one you encounter was 'The Freiston Examination Battery'. Built in 1940, its purpose was to support the Royal Navy who stopped suspect merchant ships and escorted them to anchor for inspection, before clearing them to enter the Port of Boston.*

Now take the steps down to the concrete driveway (this is the same driveway that runs through the prison) and follow it right for a little under half a mile to an unsigned, but obvious path climbing the bank [G]. If you took the shortened route, you will arrive here from the other direction. This is the only place one can cross the old sea bank now, and it's a pity it's not waymarked. (The w3w location is: *fever.inner.comedy*.) Clamber to the top, then descend with great care to cross the footbridge. Follow the grass path, soon becoming a track, to reach a farm. The track bends to the right and becomes a metalled lane, which leads to crossroads. Go left, to reach the hamlet of Scrane End.

*Known as Crane End in the Domesday Book. The Grade II listed farmhouse (Miramar House) that you reach at the next T-junction, was constructed in the late 18th century, with a redesigned façade being added around 1823.*

Turn right at the T-junction [H]. You now have a mile of road walking. Continue to a T junction, go right and walk to the first left turn – Grovefield Lane. At a sharp right bend [I], leave the road and walk ahead along a track, following it as it turns right, then left, to reach a watercourse as the track bends left again. This is Hobhole Drain, one of a number of channels dug in the early 19th century to aid land drainage and prevent flooding. Climb the bank, turn right and walk a short distance to reach Clamp Gate Bridge. Cross the bridge and follow the road with care. This is Clampgate Road and in a short distance, the church and your transport will be reached.



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