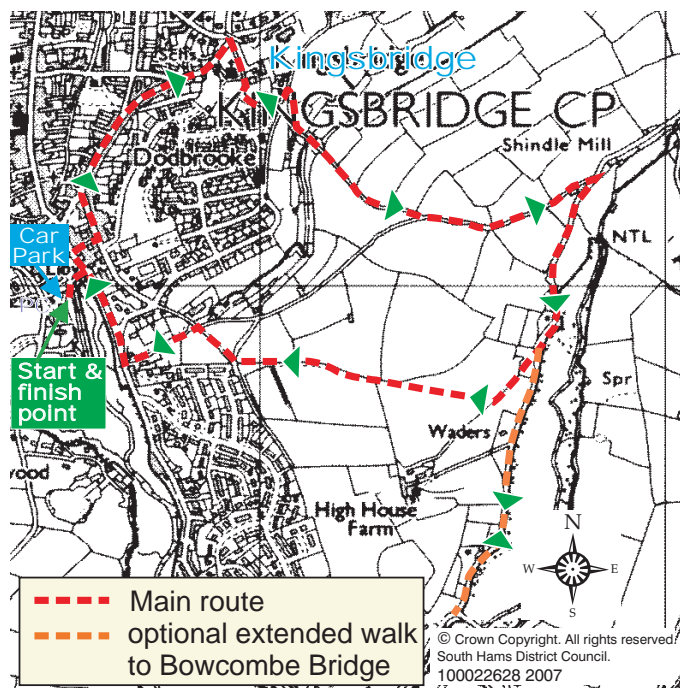


Kingsbridge to Bowcombe Creek

A delightful route following creeks and green lanes steeped in the trade and travel of past times. Melting views of the boat-bobbing estuary and charming South Hams countryside, and a host of waterfowl and wading birds into the bargain.

Start:	Quay Street car park, Kingsbridge
Distance:	2.75 miles (Extended walk to Bowcombe Bridge 1 mile).
Circular Walk:	Yes
Grade:	Moderate
Terrain:	Surfaced roads and paths; tracks and green lanes, with some uneven sections, and erosion down to bedrock in places; country footpaths.
Obstacles & Steep Gradients:	7 stiles; 1 flight of steps; 1 steep ascent; 1 steep descent.
Public transport:	Kingsbridge is served by buses from Plymouth, Exeter, Totnes, Salcombe and many other locations throughout the South Hams. For information on public transport in South Hams please call Traveline on 0870 6082608 www.traveline.org.uk .
Refreshment stops:	Many pubs, cafes and restaurants in Kingsbridge.
Toilets:	Public toilets at the Quay in Kingsbridge.
Parking:	pay and display car park at Quay Street, Kingsbridge.
Accommodation:	Please contact Kingsbridge Information Centre on 01548 853195 www.kingsbridgeinfo.co.uk
Other facilities:	Many shops in Kingsbridge. Tourist Information Centre and public payphones at the Quay. Payphone by Dodbrooke Church.
OS map:	Explorer 0L20
Grid Ref:	SX735439



Directions

1. At the entrance to the car park, cross the road at the pedestrian crossing.
2. Go through the narrow alley to the right of Harbour House, then left along Ebrington Street.
3. Follow the right hand side pavement behind the bingo hall, and continue along raised footway up hill.
4. By the phone box just above the church, turn right down a tarmac path. Turn left at the road and sharp right after 100m. Continue past Washbrook Farm, and up the rocky green lane.
5. At the junction, take the track to the left. At the bottom, turn sharp right onto the road along Bowcombe Creek.
6. (To extend the walk here, follow the road along to the viewing platform, and the recreation area beyond at Bowcombe Bridge. Return the same way).
7. Just past Rose cottage, turn right over stile and up footpath. At the 'public footpath' fingerpost, but diagonally up across the field.
8. Cross over the stone stile and follow the field edge path.
9. Keep right through rugby club car park. Cross road and stile onto footpath down steep scrubby field.
10. Join the road left, then turn immediately left through the Recreation Ground. At the road, turn right, and follow the Creek back to the car park.



Heritage

Kingsbridge gets its first historical mention in a charter of 962, and the town was at one time owned by Buckfast Abbey. Trade was via the sea. Ships plied between the estuary and south west France in mediaeval times, and at one time clippers, schooners and barges were all built here. Later still, packet steamers loaded and landed goods at the Quay. The advent of steel ships finally put paid to Kingsbridge as a port.

Bowcombe Creek was once a busy transport route, with boats taking slate from the nearby quarry, and cider produced on



local farms. Barges also headed up the creek to the mill at its head. One of the arches of the bridge was originally made of timber, and pivoted on 12 cannon balls to allow shipping to pass through.

Landscape

The estuary of which Bowcombe Creek and Kingsbridge Creek are both part, is unusual in not being fed by a sizeable river. However, it was formed in a similar way to other estuaries. Melt-waters carved out the valleys during the last ice age, and these valleys flooded to form the estuary when the ice age ended and sea levels rose.

Wildlife

On the right at Washabrook Lane is a mass of Buddleia, with mauve and white cone flower heads. This shrub is a magnet for butterflies in the summer.

The shady green lane from Washabrook abounds in characteristic hedgerow plantings such as Hazel and Blackthorn, along with Elder. All are hung with edible fruits in the autumn. Ferns include the prolific strap-like Hartstongue, and there are Cuckoo Pints along the banks. These shade-loving plants are also known as 'lords and ladies'. They have a distinctive form, with a finger-like purple flower spike framed by a pale greenish cowl, which gives way later in the summer to a cluster of bright red berries atop a fleshy stalk. Butterflies to be found along these lanes include Red Admiral and the delicate brown Speckled Wood with its cream markings and black ringed 'eyes'.



Bowcombe Creek is a haven for many birds. The trees across the creek used to house a huge heronry. This has now gone, but the odd Heron may still be seen standing motionless by the water. Brilliant white



little Egrets are a common sight both here and by the creek in Kingsbridge. Buzzards are often seen overhead, rising on the thermals on broad fingered wings, as is the swifter, smaller Peregrine Falcon.



The Creek is host to Mallard and Shelduck, the latter sporting red bills and black heads, with orange and dark markings against their white body plumage. Wading birds are numerous, particularly in

winter. They feed here on worms and tiny invertebrates on the mud banks and shoreline, and have bills adapted to probing the mud and picking around for food. Redshank and Greenshank, with red and grey-green legs respectively, are found here. So too are the orange-billed Oystercatchers, and Curlews with their long, down-curved bills and haunting call.

