



EGERTON WALK - 4



These walks have been compiled to enable you to enjoy our village from different aspects. We hope you will appreciate that we use the footpaths through the courtesy of local landowners, who do their best to keep them in good order, so that we can access the countryside at our leisure. Please help us to support farmers in the course of their work by leaving no hazardous litter, closing all gates and keeping dogs under control at all times. Watch out for the occasional rabbit hole and slippery mud – walking boots are a bonus!

WALK 4: The Forstal

START:

The George Inn, Egerton

DISTANCE:

4 miles (approx.)

TERRAIN:

Pasture, plough, tarmac roads, some hills.

Before you begin your walk, you may wish to visit the **Village Stores** (along **The Street** towards the church) to purchase some simple sustenance to help you on your way.

From the **George Inn**, walk down **Rock Hill Road** and past the school. Take the path marked to the right, alongside the school building. As you emerge into the open field, follow the path over to the left hand side. As you continue, notice the wonderful views across the Kentish Weald, to your left. This undulating landscape between the North and South Downs was where, in medieval times, swine would be driven down ancient tracks to feed on acorns abundant in the oak-filled forests. Many of these tracks became the major routeways of today. After the left hand field boundary turns sharp right and then left, you will see a path down some rough steps on the left. Go carefully down this incline and out onto **Link Hill Lane** below. At the lane turn left.

Walking down the hill, you will see, on your left, a most splendid example of a Wealden hall house with the central hall area, where the open fire would have burned in the middle of the dirt floor, the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. At each end there was a two-storey bay, the upper storey being 'jettied' over the lower. These beautiful oak-framed houses are abundant in this area and date between 1300 and 1500AD. They were built by the yeomen farmers of the period. Lovely undulating landscape can be seen on the right hand side and, as you descend, note the variety of species so typical of these ancient hedgerows. At the bottom of the hill, turn right into **Crockenhill Road**, at which point you will see another fine hall house on the right hand side.

A little way up Crockenhill, before you reach Island Farm, take the footpath across the fields to the left, keeping to the right hand hedge. A little way on you will come to a stile on the right. Cross the stile and turn immediately left across another stile. Keep to the left of the orchard, crossing a stile, a ditch and up three steps. Then go to the left of the garage and out onto **Chapel Lane**. Turn left into the lane and walk to the end, perhaps stopping for refreshment at the **Queen's Arms** public house on your left. You are now in **Egerton Forstal**. A forstal was the area where cattle would be mustered before going to auction. Beef auctions were held at the end of **Forstal Road** right up to the middle of the twentieth century. As a result, this small community, in the early nineteenth hundreds, supported several butchers, there were also two stores, three public houses and a forge here.

Turn left into **Forstal Road** then immediately right down **Forge Lane**, the two new houses on the right hand corner stand on the site of the old forge. Half way down **Forge Lane** on your right (just past yet another oak-framed house, this one constructed a little later than the hall houses) you can see the well which would have served the nearby residents until the first half of the twentieth century. Continue to the end of the lane, turning left in front of **Poplar Farm**, where the footpath takes you through the gate and across the left hand side of the field to a stile. Once over the stile, turn right and up the hill to where you will see another stile ahead of you. Before this stile, turn left, over another stile and on across the field, emerging onto **Munday Bois Road**.

Turn right at this road and take the footpath across the field to your left. Follow this path across to the left hand side of the houses and out onto **Rock Hill Road**. At the road, turn right and follow the roadway up and into the right hand turning - **Stone Hill Road**. As you may wish to pause for breath up this steep incline, it is well worth gazing back now and then at the fine views. Winding your way up the hill, you will notice below you, to your left, a large, ancient, brick-built house, **Barling Manor**, dating back to the 13th century, when it was owned by Robert de Barling. His descendants resided there for centuries. Several are buried in Egerton churchyard and many are mentioned in the Parish records.

Eventually, your steep climb will ease around a left hand bend. After this, take the footpath to the left, downhill beside a field and out behind the **Millennium Hall**. This wonderful village community hall was completed in 1999, as a result of the receipt of a grant from the **Millennium Commission** in celebration of the advent of the 21st century, the amount had to be matched by tremendous fund-raising efforts of the local community, supported also by Ashford Borough Council. Egerton was the first village in Kent to be successful in obtaining such a grant. You may wish to rest a while here before the final ascent and a well-earned rest back at the ancient **George Inn**.