

## 1

## JOURNEY WITH AN OLD SMUGGLER

It's the year 1790. My name is Isaac Gulliver and I live in Worth Matravers. The only jobs here are farming and quarrying which are hard and dangerous and no-one can earn enough to live on. Most of us have to have a second job, one we don't talk about much – we're also smugglers!



I live in the house above the duck pond with my wife. There's a little upstairs window which has a good view out to sea. My wife looks out for the boats coming across from France carrying our cargo. There are kegs of brandy and bales of lace coming in tonight and I'll get word to the men to help me unload. We'd better not be caught by the Customs men because there's jail, or worse still, a bullet waiting if we are!

Are you ready to come with me?

Keep the village pond to your right and walk down towards a row of terraced cottages also on your right. Follow the footpath that runs down the hill across a field into a valley

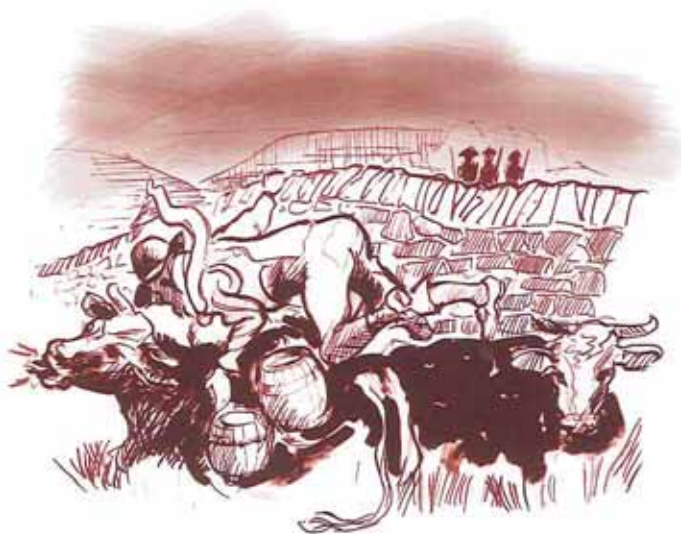


## 2

## FRIGHTENED COWS

Can you see all these stone walls? Some nights, when it's pitch black and the rain is lashing down, all we can do is follow the walls to get to the sea.

It was on a night like that, a month or two ago when we had unloaded kegs of brandy. We had to carry four each and I reckon that's about 160lb (75kg). We were keeping quiet, even though the path was wet and slippery. Suddenly, above the wind and the rain I heard someone stumble up ahead.



Over the wall we went, kegs of brandy and all, right on top of some sleeping cows. Apart from smugglers there's only one other group of men who'd be out on a night like that, and that's the law. They didn't get us that time but it was a close one, we have to play a constant game of cat and mouse.

Follow on down the path into a deep valley

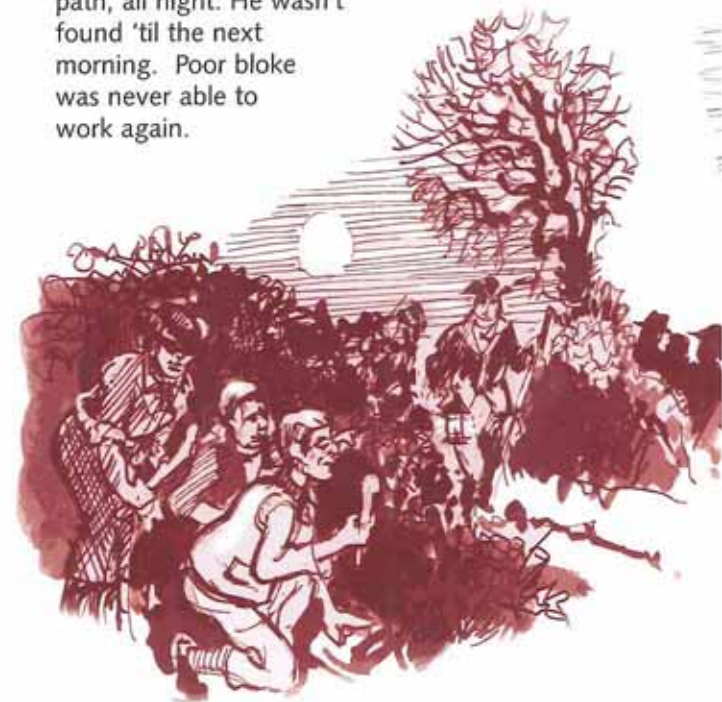


## 3

## VIOLENT TIMES

Windspirit Quarry is just ahead. Folk round here know it as Winspit, easier to say when whispering instructions between men at night. We were expecting a valuable load of brandy and wine to come in one night. Most of the men from the village were down here, waiting to unload and hide all the barrels.

It was a mistake, I should have left more men in the village. One of the customs men got suspicious and came down this path to see what was going on. Unlucky for him I'd posted 6 look-outs who beat the poor fellow up. They left him, tied up with a broken leg, right here on the path, all night. He wasn't found 'til the next morning. Poor bloke was never able to work again.



Go on down the path and turn right into Winspit Quarry.

Be very careful whilst you're here - keep away from the cliff edge and the crumbling quarry face.





## 4

## SMUGGLERS' VENGEANCE

A new customs man, Mr James, was sent down here and was determined to make a name for himself and vowed to run us smugglers to earth. One night, he spotted one of my boats pulling in under the cliff. It was low in the water because it was full of brandy. James raised his rifle and without warning fired.



My men had to pull in to shore and surrender themselves and their cargo of brandy because one of them was horribly injured, he died after four days of agony.

The funeral was difficult. I couldn't control the men's fury but I didn't want any more killings. So I did something I've kept secret ever since – I sent word to the head of the customs men to quickly send James away as the whole village were out to get him.

As you leave the quarry, follow the signs up the hill to Seacombe. Go along the path inside the fence. The path outside the fence is very close to the cliff edge.



## 5

## CAREFUL WHERE YOU STEP

Be careful on these paths, it's easy to slip. We have to be careful or we'd go over the edge on foggy nights. Mind you, we're all born and bred here so we know the paths well. The Customs men don't though, they're outsiders.

One of them decided to paint the stones at the side of the path as markers so they could see their way at night. All the tricky bends had these little white stones on them.



Eventually one of my men worked out what they were for and moved them to lead to the cliff edge. That's how some Customs men fell to their deaths over the cliffs. So you be careful on these narrow paths.

Follow the path until you get to a gate, turn left and down steep steps to the right, these can be slippery when wet.

Turn right at the bottom and over the stile, follow the main path to Seacombe Quarry.



## 6

## A VALUABLE LUNCH

Can you see the caves? There are tunnels under these cliffs where we hide our smuggled goods. They say the tunnels join up and you can walk all the way to Swanage.



The quarrymen here take their small lunch to work in big baskets but the baskets don't stay empty when they have finished. They load them up with silk, tobacco or even coffin nails and carry them back up to the villages. Everyone has a hand in smuggling and the quarrymen don't go short of brandy in the inn at night, I can tell you.

**KEEP OUT OF THE QUARRY CAVES  
THEY ARE DANGEROUS!**

Head back along the same path you came in on and look for a path on your right. This leads to a secretive and spectacular cove. Watch out for big waves.





This guide is part of a series of circular walks designed for families to enjoy the beautiful landscape of Purbeck and at the same time help them understand a little of the history that has shaped the area.

Today, Purbeck is one of the most beautiful parts of the UK. It is rich in rare animals and plants and an enjoyable and tranquil place to visit- but it has not always been like this! As you walk and enjoy the view try to imagine the same view during past times.

200 million years ago dinosaurs wandered here and Pterodactyls flew overhead. 9000 years ago Neolithic people hunted here. 2000 years ago the Romans quarried and farmed here (and these industries continue to this very day). As you look to sea, 1000 years ago you may have seen Viking longships. 700 years ago Purbeck was a dreadful place to visit as villages were ravaged by the Black Death. 400 years ago Corfe Castle was besieged and eventually ruined during the English Civil War. 250 years ago it was smugglers who were walking these paths at night. Only 70 years ago Purbeck was preparing to fight a German invasion during World War 2.

Please let us know if you have enjoyed this walk:

[keystone@purbeck-dc.gov.uk](mailto:keystone@purbeck-dc.gov.uk)

Can you see how good this cove is for a small boat to bring in smuggled goods? We bring in huge amounts of brandy from France here. The Customs try very hard to stop us but they have a tricky time of it. They even send a coast guard cutter, a type of armed sailing ship, to patrol the sea between Portland and the Isle of Wight.



"Seeding the Sea"

If we don't have time to unload the boats because the Customs are around we tie iron bars to the barrels and throw them overboard. We always make sure a rope with a cork on the end is tied on to them. The cork bobs about on the waves and when the cutter has gone we row over to the floating corks and fetch in the barrels. We sometimes lose a few, so keep your eyes open.

See that pile of stones? They've been there for years and never been used. But one day the stones were all moved and my biggest cellar had been found, I had been betrayed.

You can imagine how furious I was, I don't like traitors. My guess was that one of my men, named Harry, told them where it was. I had no proof but I wanted to give him a warning he'd never forget. So one night my whole gang gathered in front of his house and burnt an effigy of him. It frightened him and his family half to death and I was never betrayed by anybody again!



Return to the stile and walk back up the path and keep an eye out for a large pile of quarried stone to your left.



Keep walking up the path that leads straight up the valley to a gate. Through the gate follow the steep path and steps to a wooden stile. Keep going until you reach the stone stile above Worth village.





You can just see St Aldhelm's chapel across the valley towards the sea. It's perched up there on top of the cliff. That's where my rival, Lucas, had his smuggling gang. He was the landlord of the Ship Inn at Wool so he was keen to smuggle brandy.

One night he was out hauling kegs up the cliffs when the Customs men pounced. There was a fight, some lads were injured and two of his gang were killed. Lucas escaped with his life but the leader of the



Customs, a Captain Johnson, soon discovered his name.

The next day they came knocking at the door of the Ship Inn. Johnson bangs on the door. "Who's there?" says Lucas.

The captain puts on a little girl's voice and says;

"Can I have some brandy for me poor mother? She's right poorly."

Now for all his rough ways, Lucas had a kind heart and he opened the door to the little girl. What a shock when he saw Johnson stood on his doorstep. The Customs forced their way into the pub and found it full of brandy! Poor old Lucas ended up in "St Peter's Palace" – that's the local name for Dorchester prison, a terrible place to have to live out your days.

Head across the valley to the village.



Well, I hope you've enjoyed your walk with this old smuggler. I'd better be off, there'll be barrels to hide and Customs men to trick, see you again soon and remember, don't go on the cliffs at night, you don't know who you might bump into...



In a report from the Customs House in Poole, written in 1788 to His Majesty's Commissioners in London it was mentioned that:

"Gulliver was considered one of the greatest and most notorious smugglers in the west of England and particularly in the spirits and tea trades. In the year 1782 he took the benefit of His Majesty's proclamation for pardoning such offences and as we are informed, dropped that branch of smuggling and afterwards confined himself chiefly to the wine trade. He carried on to a considerable extent having vaults at various places along the coast and remote places."

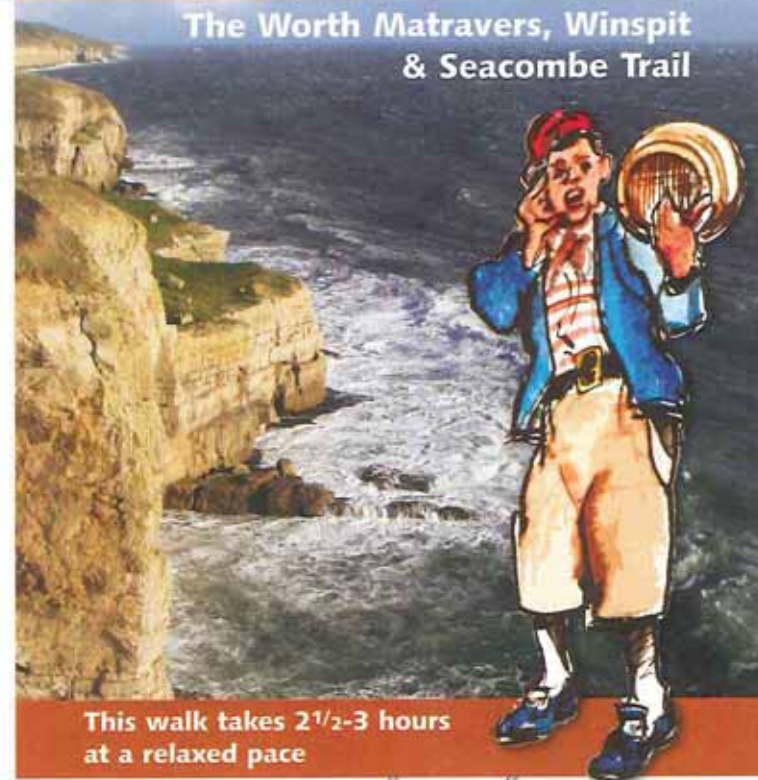


In 1805 following the French and Spanish fleets' defeat by Admiral Nelson at Trafalgar, the British navy was left with little more to do than patrol the southern shores and break up smugglers routes. Demand for smuggled goods became less as the government removed taxes from many of the original contraband items, making it much easier for everyone to buy what they wanted at reasonable prices.

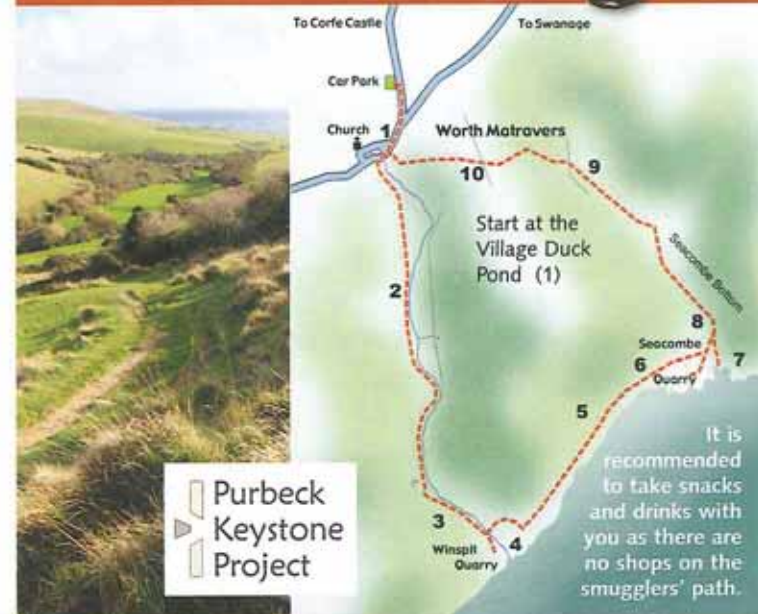
So smuggling along this coastline, as known in the 18th century, had finally come to an end.

## Smugglers' Ways

### The Worth Matravers, Winspit & Seacombe Trail



This walk takes 2 1/2-3 hours at a relaxed pace



Purbeck  
Keystone  
Project

It is recommended to take snacks and drinks with you as there are no shops on the smugglers' path.