

STOKE & GRAIN ROUTES

Sheet 1 (first and last sections)

F Open fields (see 'Introductory Notes')

88 Direction label (as in the walk notes)

ROADS:

==== Significant roads

== Others - on route

Others - adjoining

PATHS:

———— On route

Adjoining

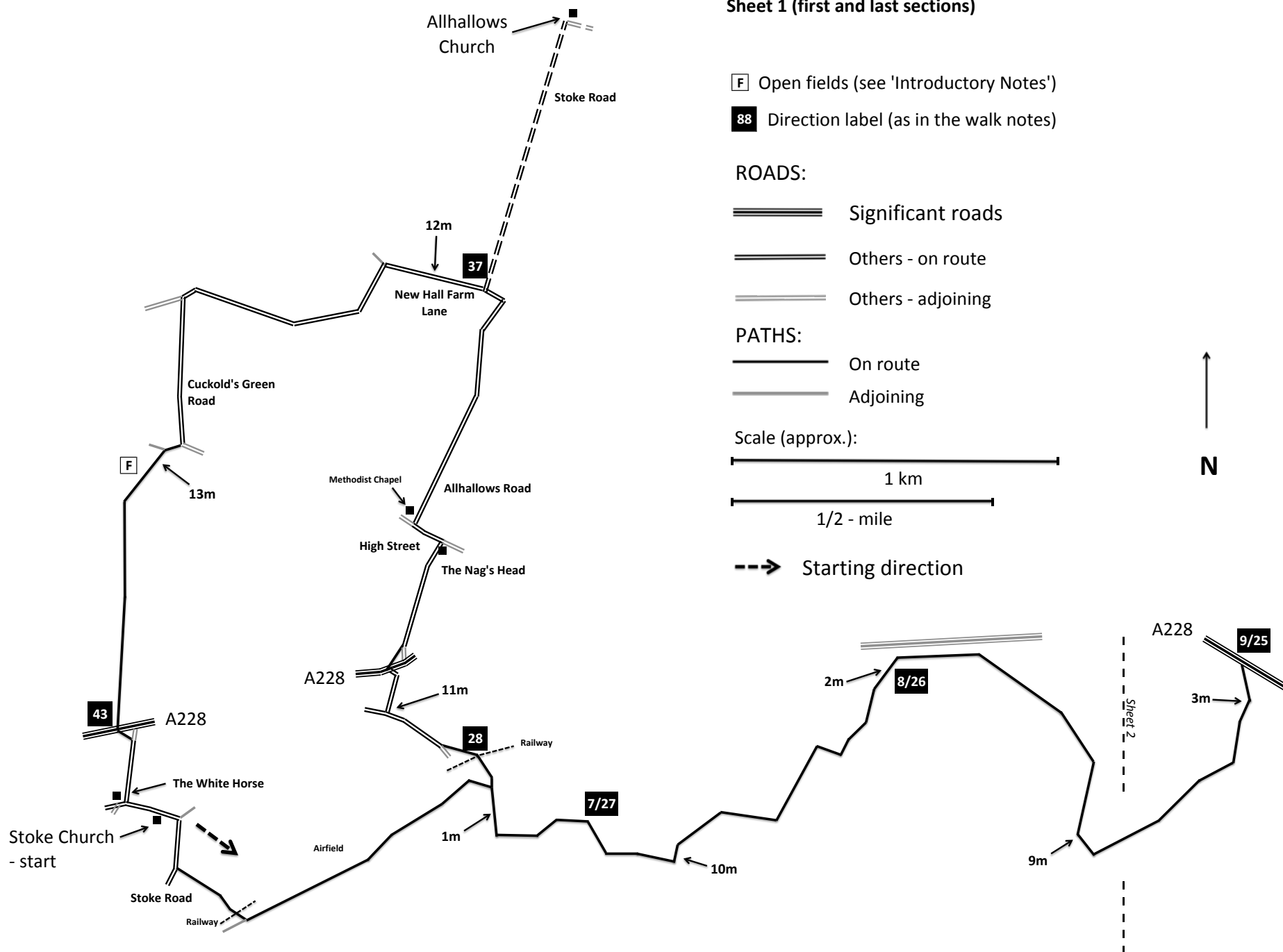
Scale (approx.):

1 km

1/2 - mile

--➔ Starting direction

N



STOKE & GRAIN ROUTES

Sheet 2 (middle section)

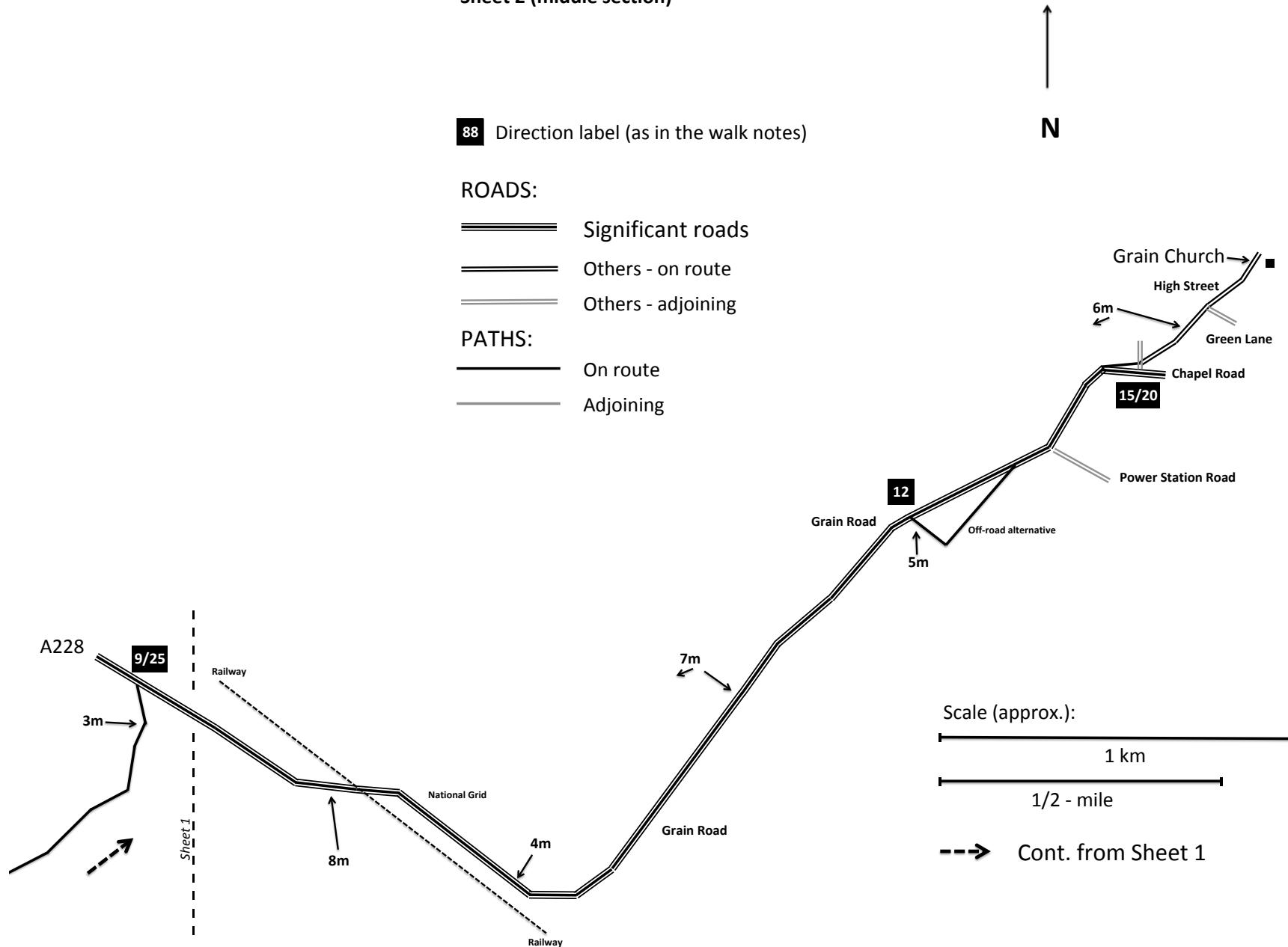
88 Direction label (as in the walk notes)

ROADS:

- Significant roads
- Others - on route
- Others - adjoining

PATHS:

- On route
- Adjoining



STOKE & GRAIN ROUTES - 5.83 or 13.63 or 14.57 miles! (See below)

Churches in the 'circuit':

Stoke (start and finish)

Grain (Directions 17/18)

Allhallows (37B: Detour - see Appendix)

Walks on the Hoo Peninsula

Because of the greater distances between the churches I have adopted a compromise approach to developing the walks on the peninsula. In each of the five circuits (Cliffe, High Halstow and Hoo, Allhallows, Stoke and Grain, Kingsnorth) there is just one walk – not a 'full' or 'shorter' circuit, but mostly of a length in between ('Stoke and Grain' being a flexible exception!) – and there are also no 'local' circuits.

The continuity of the spine route nevertheless remains unbroken throughout.

This 'circuit':

An extreme case of the above! It is not really a circuit at all, and exists simply to enable the inclusion of the church at Grain, which would otherwise be too far away and accessible only by a single route (other than unofficial ones discouraged by stern Ministry of Defence notices).

I have presented it as a walk from Stoke to Grain, with a return to Stoke which is largely on the same paths but additionally provides the spine section and includes a possible detour to visit the church at Allhallows. I don't imagine many would wish to cover all 14.57 miles of this! Alternative options would of course include a car-at-each-end arrangement (Grain, and Stoke or Allhallows); and buses (currently the 191s) connect the three places (though infrequently enough to make consulting the timetable in advance advisable).

Grain is a particularly pleasant village to be in, but it is accessed only by a long, drab road, a good half-hour in the walking, heavily used by industrial traffic. The first three miles or so of the outward route from Stoke is a lovely meander, with a muddy estuary-charm, alongside the lower reaches of the Medway. But once it reaches the A228 near the container terminal (Direction 9) it is no longer enjoyable. (Directions 12 and 13 offer a token brief escape, which could always be incorporated into the return as well.)

The return retraces most of the route, including the riverside walk, but then returns to Stoke via an additional loop, which accommodates the spine route and offers the option of a there-and-back extension up the road to Allhallows.

My self-imposed 'project-rules' require the inclusion of the spine section (37 to the end), and the coverage of all the diocese's churches, including Grain. How readers will dip into the menu of alternatives implied here will be for them to decide!

Roads and hindrances:

From the container terminal to Grain and back (Directions 10 to 14 and 20 to 22) the industrial road has a perfectly safe pavement. The section between the end of the riverside path and the terminal (9, and 23 on the way back) is reasonably short and has verges at some points. At no point, in either direction, does this section feel dangerous, but it does demand 100% attention.

The final loop on the way back to Stoke crosses (33) and re-crosses (43) the A228, but without undue difficulty (lights, and good sightlines, respectively).

STOKE & GRAIN 'CIRCUIT'

Upper Stoke - Grain - Lower Stoke - Allhallows Road - Upper Stoke

Notes taken: Summer 2018

The start and finish is at Stoke Church, The Street, Upper Stoke (near ME3 9SA).

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
1		At the lych-gate of Stoke Church , in Upper Stoke, turn right and walk along the road.	824 751	
2	1	Follow the road as it swings to the right.		
3	3	Just after passing Dickensian Close, turn left down the signposted footpath keeping on the right-hand side of the ditch.		
4	8	Cross the railway at the level crossing. Once across, pass beside the rusty gate, and turn left over a small grass area to start with, and then go ahead on to an embankment alongside and above the airstrip.		
5	20	Make your way over a stile without a platform, and beyond continue up to reach the embankment above.		
6	21	Turn right along the embankment which carries the estuary path, now mainly leftwards along the river, but with many windings.	833 752	
7	27	[Map point] Stay on the embankment, crossing another stile and swinging right.		1.22
8	46	[Map point] Use the stile on left, and then continue along the top of embankment on its big rightward swing. (Despite its proximity, there is no access to the road here.)		2.05
9	71	[Map point] At the end of the path, cross the stile and then go carefully down to road. Turn right along it.		3.19
10	78	Reach and cross the first access road to the Isle of Grain terminal. Then continue on to the pavement on the other side.	861 753	
11	81	Go over the level crossing and cross to the left-hand side of road. Continue past the entrance to the National Grid site, initially over the grass, keeping behind the metal traffic barrier for safety, then cross the two parts of the access road and go on (for about 1.3 miles) along the left-hand side of the main road, including its left-turn.		3.64
12	107	[Map point] For brief relief from road, cross it (good sightlines) and turn right (opposite the sign saying 'Grain Village - no overnight parking', and next to the '40' speed limit reminder) along an unsignposted minor roadway.		4.98
13	109	Swing left with the roadway.		
14	112	Rejoin and cross the main road (good sightlines), and follow it along its left-hand side.		

* **"Mins."** is very approximate! See 'Introductory Notes' for an explanation of how this column is used.

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
15	117	[Map point] Continue ahead, passing West Lane on the left, then keep straight on across the grass and directly ahead along High Street, as the main road swings away to the right.		
16	119	After passing shops on the left, reach the Grain High Street bus stop on the right, just before Doggetts Row. (The stop seems to serve buses in both directions). Continue along the road, passing the green and then the school on the right.		
17	123	Reach Grain Church on the right.	889 768	5.83
18		From Grain Church , retrace the steps of the outward route by way of the gate on the path from the south side of the church and merging leftwards into the road. Then continue along it, passing the Hogarth Inn on your right.	889 768	5.83
19	129	At the end go ahead across the grass to join the major road which merges from the left.		
20	130	[Map point] Continue ahead, passing West Lane on the right, and follow this main road along its right-hand pavement, including eventually a big right-hand bend, all the way to the main entrance to the National Grid site (about 1.7 miles).		6.18
21	164	Cross the two parts of the access road, and keep ahead alongside the main road, but keeping on the grass behind the metal traffic barrier for safety.	864 753	7.79
22	165	Go over the level crossing, and also cross the road, to join the pavement which begins on its left-hand side.		
23	167	After the entrances to the Isle of Grain terminal, the pavement comes to an end. The verges along this final fairly busy road section are sporadic, so it is probably best to cross back to the right-hand side, to be able to see oncoming traffic; but it is a matter for individual judgement.		
24	174	Leave the road by going up the short, steep rise on the left to join the signposted RS33 footpath.	856 756	
25		[Map point] At the top cross the stile, and start out along the embankment which carries the estuary path, mainly rightwards along the river, but with many windings.		8.40
26	198	[Map point] Cross a stile and continue along the embankment. (Despite its proximity, there is no access to the road here.)		9.54
27	218	[Map point] Stay on the embankment, swinging left and crossing another stile.		10.37
28	225	[Map point] When the embankment path comes to an end at the railway, continue ahead over the level crossing, and on beyond it.		
29	226	Faced by a field, turn left along its left-hand edge.		
30	228	Turn right along the road which joins from the left.		
31	230	When the road opens out before a patch of grass (with house no.4 on the left), turn right, up towards the main road.	830 754	
32	232	At the main road, turn right, towards the light-controlled crossing.		
33	233	Use the crossing, and on the other side turn right, not along the road itself, but along the far edge of the grass triangle.		
34	234	Go straight ahead to start out along High Street.		
35	237	At the junction at the end, by the Nag's Head, turn left.		11.33

* *"Mins." is very approximate! See 'Introductory Notes' for an explanation of how this column is used.*

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
36	239	Cross the road at the junction by the Methodist chapel, and turn right, up along the road.	831 760	
37	248	[Map point] <i>[To visit <u>Allhallows Church</u>, now divert instead to the <u>Detour</u> in the Appendix.]</i> Main route: START OF THE SPINE SECTION (from here to the end) Follow the road as it turns left, but when the main road swings right, instead go straight on along New Hall Farm Road.		
38	252	At the first road junction turn left and follow the road as it winds rightwards.		12.07
39	261	Turn left down Cuckolds Green Road.		
40	267	As the road embarks on a significant bend to the left, instead turn right along the signposted footpath (RS15).		
41	268	[!!F!!] After about 100 yds., faced by a large field, cross it by going about 30 degrees to the left, cutting off its left-hand corner. (Currently, the line is grudgingly marked by faint tractor tracks. Bearing about 217.)		12.83
42	271	Reaching the left-hand edge of the field, turn half-left away from it, at a point where the bordering ditch can be crossed.	822 761	
43	280	[Map point] Reaching the main road, cross it and turn left for a few yards.		
44		After about 40 yds., turn right at the junction.		
45	283	Swing left with the road, just after the White Horse.		
46	284	Reach the entrance to <u>Stoke Church</u> , the starting point of the walk.	824 751	13.63

* **"Mins." is very approximate!** See 'Introductory Notes' for an explanation of how this column is used.

!!F!! : Field crossing might be unmarked. See 'Open Fields' in 'Introductory Notes' for some thoughts about dealing with this.

APPENDIX

Detour to Allhallows Church

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
37A		To reach Allhallows Church: in Direction 37 follow the road as it turns left, but then turn right with it (instead of following the main route straight on).		0.00
37B	11	Reach <u>Allhallows Church</u> on the right. Then retrace your steps back down to the junction in Direction 37.		0.47
37C	21	Reaching the junction, rejoin the main route by turning right along New Hall Farm Road (where you would have gone straight on at Direction 37). Add 21 minutes to subsequent total times and 0.94 miles to cumulative distances.		0.94

* **"Mins." is very approximate!** See 'Introductory Notes' for an explanation of how this column is used.

FOR THOSE WHO WALK WITH THEIR DOGS

I do not venture to give advice about walking with your dog. As well as the joys, you will be well aware of the issues involved, and particularly that relationships between dogs and other countryside animals potentially involve mutual suspicion, or worse.

But what this footnote does try to do, in response to requests, is to give some indication of the nature of the walk from a dog's point of view, to enable you to decide whether it is suitable.

The percentage distances on the right should be self-explanatory.

The information in the middle column may look a bit cluttered, but I think it should enable you (if the detail is of interest) to mark up within a few minutes a print-out of the walk notes, so that you have some idea what might be round the next corner.

The risk in all this is that **things change so quickly** in the agricultural working world; and what I describe might become misleading after subsequent changes. I have done my best, but there is no guarantee that you will find the information up to date!

STOKE & GRAIN ROUTES	Direction numbers	% of walk
Busy road	9-11, 14-15a, 19-24, 32, 34-36, 43	37
Quiet road \$\$	1-2, 15b-16, 18, 30-31, 37-39, 44-45	15
Open field with livestock		0
Edge of field with livestock	6-7, 26-28a	17
Field (or edge) without livestock **	8, 12-13, 25, 29, 40-42	24
Path (hedged, or otherwise forced)	3-5, 28b, 33	6
Woods		0

** This is not a promise, just a statement of fact - that, having walked these sections perhaps two or three times, I have found no animals or any sign of them.

\$\$ Again, not a promise that there will be no traffic to worry about. Just a personal judgement of conditions as I have found them.

STILES (7) – Details noted in Spring 2019, but **subject to frequent change:**

There are four stiles, three of which are encountered in both directions: they are at Directions 5, 7/27, 8/26 and 9/25. All have easy gaps.