



THE ARMADA COAST ~ Bonchurch

Spymaster Francis Walsingham's agent, Gilbert Lee, captaining the vessel 'Rat o' Wight', caught sight of the Spanish Armada setting off from Lisbon on the 25th May 1588. Having relayed the news, Queen Elizabeth's naval and shore defences were set in motion. Lee sailed past Dunnose Point on 5th July 1588 with information that would save a nation. The Armada eventually sailed from Corunna on the 21st July. On the 25th July Lee sailed again as part of Effingham's Squadron, culminating in the Battle off Dunnose.

Gunhouses

The Isle of Wight's land defences included deploying cannons from the village gun houses and so the Brading Gun was hauled to Culver Cliff in advance of the Spanish Armada appearing off the Isle of Wight.

The Armada, keeping its ingenious 'crescent' formation, of 135 ships exhibited brilliant seamanship. "The Spanish in their sailing observed very diligent and good order, sailing three and four, and sometimes more ships in a rank, and following close up one after another, and the stronger and greater ships protecting the lesser".

Frobisher repelled the Armada from any possibility of occupying the Bay but was damaged by Spanish cannon fire and became trapped until released by an unexpected offshore gust of wind.

San Martin v Triumph

Frobisher was saved by a sudden wind gust, Sidonia recording, "At this moment the wind freshened in favour of the enemy's admiral, whereby she began to slip away



from us, and to leave the boats which were towing her".

Recalde was furious at what he assessed was a wasted opportunity, noting: "We should not have desisted as our flagship did, until we had either made them run aground or else followed them into a port".

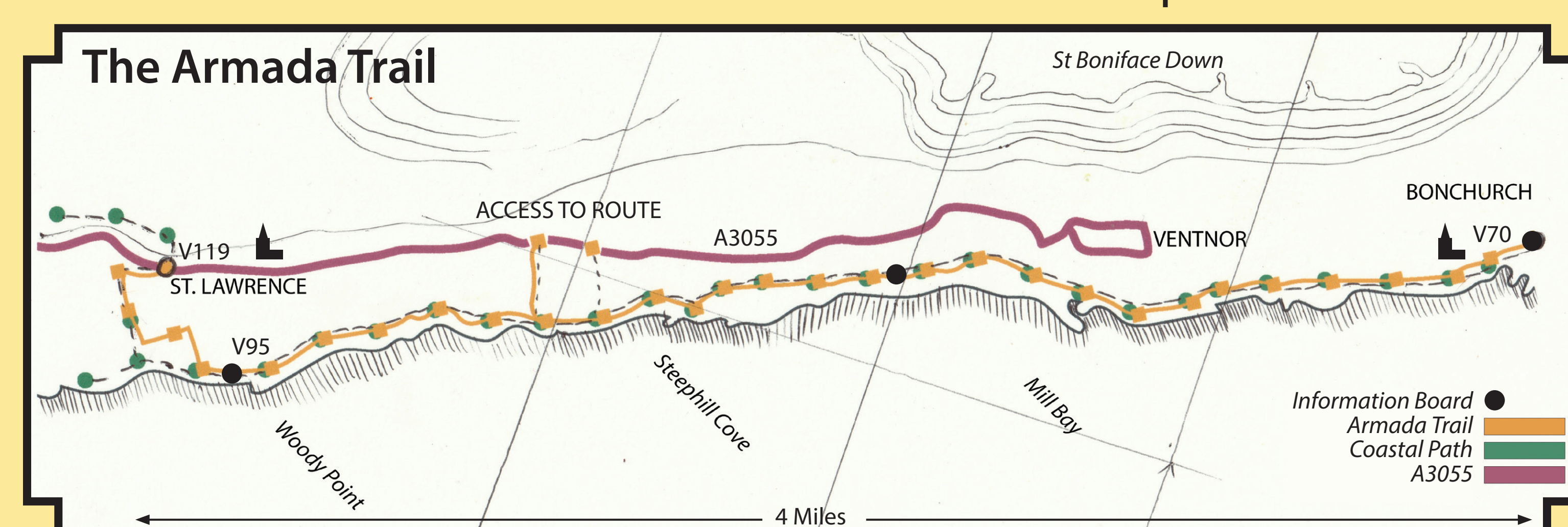
George Carey, Governor of the Isle of Wight, wrote to the Earl of Sussex from Carisbrooke Castle at 8pm in which he said the fleet engagements that begun at 5am off the Island lasted until 10am

when the firing of ordnance ceased and the Armada eventually hove out of sight at 3pm.

Fire Ships

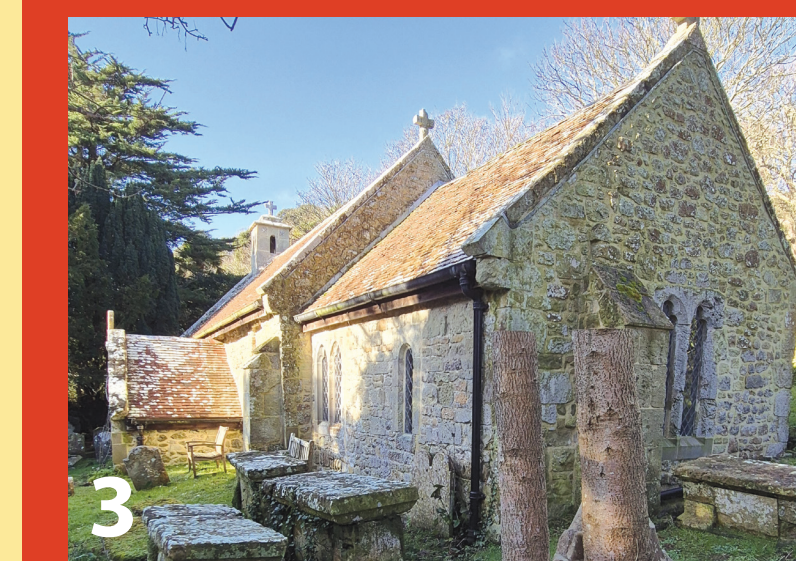
One of the eight fire ships later deployed by Drake at Gravelines off Calais. These caused the Armada to cut its anchors and thus any prospect of standing off the coast to await and transport Parma's invasion forces from the Spanish Netherlands, across the English

Channel to Margate on the Thames estuary. They were provided by Isle of Wight Governor George Carey – and bore a pun on his name "Cure's Ship".



1. Battle off Dunnose, Isle of Wight (25th July 1588).

2. Armada Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I



3. Rector Richard Coke rang the bell of the St Boniface church, as the Armada hove into sight

4. Model of the 'San Martin', Museo Navale, Madrid



5. UK Official Postage Stamp issued in 1988

6. Portrait of George Carey by Nicholas Hilliard

7. Engagement off Dunnose, beacons well lit.



With thanks to David Baldwin MVO, RVM



South Wight CHRONICLE

