



Curriculum Links

History

WW2 Naval Decoy

Built and operational in August 1941 and in use through to March 1942. This is a QL (decoy lighting) and SF or Starfish (decoy fires) site. There is an oil store for powering the generator and providing fuel for fires, and a bunker for the safety of the operators. The bunker comprises a room for the generator and switching equipment, a bunk room for the operators and a toilet. In addition to the main entrance there is an escape hatch through the roof. The bunker is made of poured reinforced concrete and covered with earth.

Link: <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1019882>

Victorian clay works and barge berths

As part of the trade in Victorian times, clay was dug from the saltings to provide the raw material for bricks for rapidly expanding industrial London. There are barge berths in the salting also where the barges could load up with clay, wheat, straw and other farm goods to take to London. Return trips brought manure which could be ploughed into the fields as fertilizer.

Kirby Riots

Early in the 19th century farming was beginning to become increasingly mechanised with the introduction of steam powered equipment. The tenant at Birch Hall, Samuel Baker, was the first to acquire a mechanised threshing machine, which the farm workers saw as a threat to their jobs. This resulted on 8th December 1830 in a riot.

Link: <http://www.battym.freeserve.co.uk/kirbyriot.htm>

Henry Baker

Henry Baker was the brother of Samuel Baker. As the second son he had no interest in the farm at Birch Hall so was sent to learn a trade in Colchester. While training as a cabinet maker he was converted and subsequently became a missionary with the Church Missionary Society to Kerala in Southern India. He successfully brought the Christian message to the people of the region. His son, born in India (1818) and then educated in the UK, also became a missionary. He had an even greater impact in the region, establishing schools, hospitals and churches. He eventually became the first Bishop of Kerala. There is still a connection between the farm and the region of East Kerala where Henry Baker Jnr, worked. The Baker Hall at Kirby Cross is named after the family.

Pockey Hall

Pockey Hall is the likely site of a smallpox settlement built outside the village of Kirby-le-Soken where smallpox victims would be quarantined to prevent infection to the rest of the community.

Domesday record

There is a farm recorded at Birch Hall since at least 1066 and probably long before due to its significant location near the coast.

Link: <http://domesdaymap.co.uk/place/TM2122/birch-hall/>

Geography

Settlements

Birch Hall has been the site of farming since at least Roman times. The farm has three natural ponds situated on the top of a hill, which make it an excellent natural site for a settlement as it has access to water as well as good visibility – for defence – and access to the sea for trade.

Coastal studies

The area around Birch Hall is great for studying the physical geography aspects of erosion, deposition and man-made sea defences.

Mapping

Following in the footsteps of Arthur Ransome's Swallows in Secret Water, there is the opportunity to try surveying and map making techniques.

Land Use

Birch Hall is a working farm. It makes use of modern farming techniques to maximise the productivity from the farm whilst maintaining a sustainable and sensitive approach to preserving the local ecology. Areas of the farm are set aside for wildlife and biodiversity is encouraged.

Biology

Protected Species

The nature reserve, Hamford Water, borders the farm and contains several protected species, including Turtle dove, Fisher's Estuarine Moth and Sea Hog's Fennel. It is an area of wetland that hosts a large number of overwintering birds including dark-bellied Brent geese, black-tailed godwits, redshank, ringer and grey plover and shelduck.

Link: <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/nnr/1006070.aspx>

Seal colonies

There are several seal colonies, which are easily accessible from Birch Hall by water and trips can be arranged in the centres sailing boats.

Mathematics

How much bread does the farm make? How big is a field and how do you measure it? How much seed do you need for a field? This activity looks at the mathematics of food production and includes calculating areas, ratios, yields as well as learning about the production of wheat and bread. It can also include some practical bread making.

English

Secret Water

Arthur Ransome set his eighth book, Secret Water, in Hamford Water. The family of children are marooned by their parents on Horse Island with the task of mapping this secret archipelago of islands. They meet some local children and reconnect with the Amazons for adventures in boats and on the mud. Ransome's secret water makes accurate use of the islands and creeks which can be identified by pupils. Some evidence of the Mastodon's barge still remains and Birch Hall is the likely site of the Mastodon's home farm.

Link: <http://www.arthur-ransome.org.uk/>

Religious Studies

Birch Hall Adventures has a Christian underpinning to its work and we are happy to run reflective sessions, explore moral and ethical issues and to offer bible teaching. This can be as a separate activity or as part of the other work that we do.