

Off by Heart and Out of Breath

A wandergram for a lecture

In the context of the exhibition Off by Heart and Out of Breath at Argos Centre of Art and Media, Brussels, Wendy Morris has published a silva rerum for her Huguenot ancestors. In her search for traces of these religious refugees she could find brief histories of them after they arrived at the Cape of Good Hope but no traces of them leading up to their departure from Europe. She could find no letters exchanged between relatives, no documentation of lands or property lost, no narratives of escape handed down through the generations. Three hundred years after her forebears fled France for southern Africa Morris had made the journey the other way and was living not far from the villages they had once occupied. To remedy the absence of narratives and a sense of discontinuity with this history Morris set off on a project of recuperation. She walked a circle around these villages and then a line from northern France to the Dutch harbour of Vlissingen. Along the way she started to compile a silva rerum and she took as her model 17th century Polish examples of a family chronicle added to by successive generations. Off by Heart and Out of Breath - a Silva Rerum is a 'living book' that merges traces of the past with experiences in the present, and invites entries in the future.

Wendy Morris is a Belgian-based visual artist and animated filmmaker. Her work explores fictional, documentary and autobiographical genres and is frequently concerned with colonial migrations and histories of religious dissent. A South African artist, born in Namibia, the focus of her work has been on the two-way traffic between Europe and Southern Africa. Integral to her practice are her notebooks, letters, diaries, and her walking journals.

This wandergram for a lecture was presented as a public talk at ARGOS in April 2016.

#1 Vieille Eglise

Early one Sunday morning in July I find myself in a street in a small village in Northern France. My rucksack is packed for a ten day journey: change of clothing, set of topographical maps, camera, sound recorder and binaural mics, and a **journey book** already divided into ten sections.

I am at the start of walk that will lead me to the Zeeland port of **Vlissingen**.

The walk is to retrace the route that one family of Huguenot forebears followed when they fled France in 1685 after the Edict of Nantes was revoked.

There are to be **two parts to this walk**.

The first is **circular** and takes in the three villages in which this family lived - Offekerque, Vieille-Eglise and Guemps – as well as the two towns that had **Protestant temples** to which they went to baptize their children – Guînes and Calais.

Following on from this will be a longer **linear** walk that will lead away from these French villages to the Dutch harbour of Vlissingen.

It is part of my project *Off by Heart and Out of Breath*, conceived of as a **project of recuperation**.

Three hundred and twenty-eight years separate the fleeing of these forebears from France and **my re-visiting of the places they once inhabited**.

Beyond knowing their names, the villages in which they lived and the towns in which their children were baptized, the ship aboard which they left Vlissingen for the Cape of Good Hope, and the farm that they were granted on their arrival there, **I know very little about this family**.

There is no story, no existing diary, no letters, no family narrative retold through the generations.

Walking these villages is **an attempt to connect myself to the places they knew**. I know that there will not be much that outwardly refers to this history and I realise that I will have to pay attention to the **less obvious**:

I will need to consider that which is missing - **the sound of psalms sung**, for instance, an act already forbidden to Huguenots before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Or the **absence of Reformed schools and Temples** that had been forced to close. I doubt that there will be any **traces of Protestant graveyards** since they were, eventually, forbidden from burying their dead at all.

In looking for **traces in the obscure**, I plan to pay attention to the weeds growing on the verges and to **consider them as guides to culinary, medicinal and domestic habits** of the 17th century. Plants now disregarded as being of little use were once considered valuable enough to carry away as seeds to a new country. South Africa is the adopted home to any number of plants once prized in Europe as herbal remedies and brought with settlers to the Cape. Weeds speak of migrancy and disruption and as such are **rich in metaphorical potential**. They are not always invaders but can be part of the legacy of a place. They can be regarded as an ancestral presence or an **archaeological trace**.

I set myself tasks that I will perform while walking that will **insert the voice of this Huguenot descendant into these places abandoned**.

I will teach myself to **recite the line of descent from Suzanne de Vos and Pierre Jacob to myself** – eleven generations - and then **the lines of descent from my other Huguenot ancestors**. I will repeat the names of the children who were born (and died) in these villages.

I will memorize the **common names and uses of the weeds** that I will find growing on the verges.

As I walk I will **record a set of audio wandergrams** about my **desire to know something of these forebears and their experiences** while admitting to the **elusiveness, even impossibility, of such a task.**

I am prepared, if my feet grew tired on the long route from these villages to Zeeland, to **resort to old remedies and put mugwort leaves in my shoes.**

I wander around the village of Vieille Eglise. In the ditches running alongside a set of old cottages there is Mallow or Kaasjeskruid growing. It is one of the weeds that I have been studying and I knew that it **was used widely in the 17th century as a vegetable, medication, tea and even as a rudimentary toothbrush.** If it is growing here now then it might have been growing here in the time of the Huguenots.

Apart from these few old cottages and the old church from which the town is named, there is not much to take note of. So I **concentrate not on recuperation but on projection.** As I walk I imagine my **footsteps impressing a weight upon the roads of this village.** I think of my body as a **returning presence,** a physical trace of those ancestors whose blood still runs in my veins. I **return a gaze and a listening ear to a place that had once been seen and heard by my forebears.**

#2 Offekerque

In the next village, Offekerque, I shelter from the rain in a café, and I start writing into my **journey-book.** This book had already been divided into sections, one for each day of the walk, and each section is further sub-divided. In each section there is a **walking-diary page** that I will write into during my stops, as I am doing in the café.

There is a **page for a map** that I will work on later.

There is a page for **each of the 14 weeds** that I have **associated with uses in the 17th century and which I am collecting along the way.** These pages already contain information about each plant and are there to remind me to look out for them.

There is a page entitled *Off by Heart* in which the line of my descent from the seven Huguenot women who fled France for the Cape **is set out so that I can learn the names as I walk.**

The rest of the pages carry headings and have margin notes but are otherwise blank. There is a page for **remedies and recipes, for considerations of absence, for the listing of sound recordings and wandergrams, for descriptions of smells, and for thinking about the act of walking in connecting myself to places and histories.**

The **margin notes** on each page are intended to keep me attentive to these tasks.

The **journey-book is to become a form of silva rerum**

This term, SILVA RERUM, 'a forest of things', is rooted in Roman literature of the first century, and it **describes a work in which different kinds of writing and genres are blended.**

The first silva was a publication by **Pablius Statius** around 95AD. It consisted of five volumes of poems that he had written for different occasions. Some were **praise poems to the emperor**, some were **lamentations** on the death of his father or the wives of friends and even of his favourite parrot. There were **joking pieces, wedding poems and even descriptions** of the villas, gardens, and artworks owned by his friends.

Fifteen centuries later the idea of a book 'of everything on anything' was reborn. Sylvae were created within **Polish land-owning families in the 16th and 17thc and were worked on over many generations.** These books contained a variety of subjects of interest to the family that included **genealogy, agricultural advice, personal memoirs, philosophical musings and recipes.**

They contained a **blend of forms and genres. Paintings, drawings and music scores mixed with historical, anecdotal, and even fictional texts.**

As one generation passed on, so the next generation took over the task of compiling the silva. **Never intended for publication** these 'living books' were for the **edification of the family.** They served not only as a **bond to its past** but also as a **means of ensuring survival in the future.**

The idea at the heart of my project has been to create a silva rerum for this family of refugees. It would contain the kind of information that they – and **especially the women** - might have thought important enough to take with them: remedies, recipes, genealogy, anecdotes, favourite psalms, contact addresses, title-deeds of lands abandoned or confiscated. **In contrast to the Polish sylvae which were about continuity, this one was to be about discontinuity and dislocation.** It was to be a **sort of migrant's manual.**

A 'living book', however, needs to be **written by the living and in the present.** As I started to prepare the book I realised the limitations of what could be included. Though I might imagine what Suzanne De Vos thought valuable enough to enter into such a book, I was **not wanting nor able to do it on her behalf.** More interesting, I thought, would be to **focus on the frustration of not knowing, on the absence of information.** This **not-knowing-but-determined-to-try-to-know** could be **physically explored by journeying through the villages and roads that Suzanne knew.**

Absence of knowledge could be mitigated by **physical presence and exertion,** and the **silva rerum could be the record of this interaction.**

The **present of this silva rerum has become the time of the walk.**
The **receptacle has become the journey-book.**
The **anecdotes are mine.**

#3 Guemps

From Offekerque I walk on to the village of Guemps, where the last of Suzanne De Vos and Pierre Jacob's children were born.

It is **midday on Sunday** and I listen to the **bells of the Catholic church chiming the hour**, once, then again, and then a third time.

- With each set the **sound grows softer until it gradually disappears into the sound of the rain falling.**

In an amendment to the Edict of Nantes **Protestants were forbidden from ringing the church bell** for their services **between Thursday morning and Saturday noon**. It was not as though the sound of their bell was any competition to the **harmonious chimes of the bells** of the Catholic Church. It was a **simple bell rung once** to give notice of the hour of the service.

Many of the restrictions made on the practices of the Protestants were aimed at silencing them.

To make noise is the prerogative of those with power and with every amendment to the Edict, **the Protestants ability to be heard, to hear themselves, was eroded**. From 1661 **no singing of psalms on the way to services, no singing of psalms outside churches or temples. No whistling of psalms either**. Singing was **tolerated inside the temple** only if done quietly and not if a Roman Catholic procession carrying the sacrament was passing by outside. By **1685 all singing of psalms was banned**, even in the privacy of their homes, and confiscation of all property was the punishment.

Psalm singing had long been a contentious issue. It had become a **form of Calvinist self-identity, a rallying cry** and a form of defiance. In the period **before the Reformation** singing in religious services had been the **responsibility of clergy and priests**. That changed when Calvin introduced psalm singing into services in the early 1500s. By 1562 he had published the **Genevan Psalter** with all 150 psalms being put to verse and to music.

It was an instant best-seller.

Reformists were encouraged to sing psalms in church, at home, in the workplace, streets and fields. These were **sung not in the slow, soporific way that we learnt in Sunday school but vigorously, in brisk folk tune tempo**. These were **rousing songs** and they provided believers with a **sense of unity, courage and consolation in times of persecution**. They became **battle hymns**,

Frightening sounds have been used in situations of war since the earliest times. Drums, music and shouting are **old tactics** to strike fear in the enemy.

In World War II **whistling devices were added to bombs to make them more terrifying**. In Syria, in recent times, the government has dropped **exploding SOUND bombs over**

rebel areas. Israeli drones sent into the Palestinian areas are **equipped with noise for maximum psychological intimidation.**

The Huguenots were **not only silenced but were subject to noise as a tactic of coercion.**

In 1681 the first **Dragoons** were billeted on Protestant households. The intention was to use these mounted infantry soldiers as **'boot missionaries'** to force Calvinists to renounce their faith. The households in which they were placed had to pay their wages and upkeep and the soldiers were given free rein to indulge themselves as they pleased.

The Dragoons **communicated orders on the battlefield with drums** and they seemed to have used these **same drums as tools of conversion.** There are reports of Huguenot households being subjected to **incessant drumming** to deprive them of sleep and push them to the limits of **their endurance.**

As I walk quietly along a canal towards the next village of Balinghem I try to imagine meeting my forebears returning this way from the temple in Guînes. If it was **before 1661 I might have heard them singing psalms** as they walked or rowed. Later they would have had to sing very quietly, if they dared to at all. Wondering if I was a Calvinist **they might have hummed a bar of a well-known psalm as they passed by.** And if I was a Calvinist I would have been expected to hum a bar back as a sign of recognition.

#4 Canal

As I pass an open patch of stony ground I smell a **sweet fragrance that I recognize.** My nose alerts me to its presence before my eyes pick it out.

It is **Melilot** - Honingklaver - a tall scraggy bush with little white flowers dotted along the stalks. It isn't very common and I am really pleased to find it. It smells good and I take my time picking it. Before I left on this walk I had **collected armfuls of Melilot near home and spread them out in the studio to dry.** Each time I entered the room I was **overwhelmed by the fragrance which seemed to get stronger as the weeks wore on.**

The flower stalks go carefully into an envelope and into my backpack.

As I walk on I **wonder how many times before this walk that I must have passed Melilot and never smelled it.** Or rather, **never realized that I was smelling it.** It is only since I have been studying weeds and have learnt to recognize Melilot that I seem to be alert to its smell and presence. I start to realize that we **probably smell many odours that we do not consciously register.**

In my journey-book I am **describing every smell that I notice during the ten days.**

In Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries people washed infrequently and their houses and bodies smelled strongly. To combat these odours **reeds or straw** were strewn thickly on the floors and **covered with a layer of aromatic plants or strewing herbs.** As the herbs were walked upon their **natural oils and aromas were released and**

the rooms smelled 'sweete'. They were strewn in all areas of the house, from the kitchen to the bedrooms, and even in the stables.

Meadowsweet, Tansy, Chamomile, Lemon Balm, Sweet Woodruff and Melilot **were amongst the 21 strewing herbs recommended by Thomas Tusser in his 1557 instructional poem, 'Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry'.**

They worked as insecticides too, repelling **fleas, flies and moths.**

The scent of Melilot cannot have changed from the 17th c and so I add this fragrance to my short list of sensory experiences that I might share with my Huguenot forebears. The list includes the sight of the **church of Vieille-Eglise**, the smell of the **manure heap outside Offekerque**, and the sound of the **church bells in Guemps.**

#5 Balinghem

The daughter of Suzanne De Vos and Pierre Jacobs, **Suzanne Jacobs**, was fourteen when she fled France with her parents, and seventeen when she arrived at the Cape in 1688. Within months she was married to a Dutch immigrant, **Gerrit Van Vuuren**, who had arrived the previous year. Van Vuuren was awarded a tract of land that his wife (it must have been her) **named Balinghem.** Today the farm, a successful wine estate, is **called Bellingham.**

As I walk into the tiny town of Balinghem I wonder why Suzanne had called her farm after this place. In my research I have found no connection of the family to this town. Suzanne did not choose to call her farm after the towns in which she and her siblings were born - though that is no surprise as most of them refer to Catholic churches.

Her parents called their new farm **De Goede Hoop**, which reflected an **optimism that their future might be better than their past.**

Balinghem had a substantial Huguenot population before the Edict of Nantes was revoked, but as I wander through it **the town offers no clues that can reinforce that knowledge.** It is a very small place, four streets, a few houses and a tiny 'English' church. There are no shops or café and nowhere to sit but in the graveyard that encircles the church. There is nobody around. It **feels as though the eyes of the town are closed and it is refusing me eye-contact.**

Did I expect to discover the connection between Suzanne Jacobs and Balinghem by coming there. Not really. So why have I made this detour. It would have been quicker to have gone directly from Guemps to Guines.

I knew when I set out that the project would be less about what I would find in the villages than what I would bring to them. I have called it A PROJECT OF RECUPERATION BUT IT IS AS MUCH A PROJECT OF PROJECTION.

The tasks that I have set myself while walking have been about **impressing my presence** onto these places.

The sound of my voice.
The weight of my footsteps.
The vapour of my exhaled breath.

In Balinghem I teach myself the first of seven lines of descent from my Huguenot grandmothers. I don't find it easy to speak out aloud. There is no one about so it isn't that I am afraid of being overheard. It is that my **voice sounds foreign to me**. I do it anyway.

It **starts off as awkward recitation**, committing the names and their order to memory, mixing them up, stumbling on the **Johanna Jacobas and the Catharina Dorotheas**. Eventually I can remember them from beginning to end. Now I recite the names as an INCANTATION, a line of descent projected onto this little town that seems to want to reveal nothing of its troubled history.

#6 Guînes

In the town Guînes I find the ruins of the Calvinist temple.

I have brought with me a **small photograph of the site** that I found when doing research. Without it I would never have known that the site still existed and I would not have gone looking for it. The woman at the **tourist office** has not heard of the temple or of Huguenots in Guînes but she recognizes the site in the photograph and directs me to it.

I walk past it before I **realize that the low stone wall and expanse of concrete behind it are the remains of the temple**. The back and side wall have been retained but the front wall has been demolished to a half-meter in height. The street entrance is still visible in the stone work, though it has been bricked in. The concrete floor stretching away from it is being used as a parking space by the car repair garage adjoining the site.

The **temple of Guînes was described at the time as being a spacious building** shaped as a large trapezium with two tiers of galleries. It could house more than three thousand people.

I want to see around the side of the building and walk a little way down the driveway of the property next door. A woman comes out of the house and I show her the two photographs that I have. The second one is of the empty site between two houses where the minister used to live. She recognizes it instantly and sends me around the block in the other direction. There, at the back of the temple, and probably leading onto it, is the site of the minister's missing house.

It is an empty space between two other buildings. The left wall belongs to the town hall, the right wall to another house. Traces of the demolished building can still be seen as a palimpsest on the side wall of the neighbouring house.

It is strange, this double absence.

Strange that both the temple site and the minister's house **have not been replaced with new buildings**. If the inhabitants of Guînes wanted Huguenot history to be erased from memory then surely they would have rebuilt these two sites and removed the traces.

It makes me wonder if a small memory of this history does linger here after all.

It is a wonderfully sunny morning and I find myself a table on the terrace of the **café Au Duc de Guise**. I angle my chair so that I can face the space that once was the **house of priest Trouillard**.

My thoughts are **on the idea that a sense of absence depends on being aware that something or someone is missing**. Because I know of the forced closing of the Guînes temple and the exodus of the congregation I **perceive these two spaces as sites of absence**. Sites that were once meaningful to many thousands of people. **Sites that still radiate, for me, a spectral presence**.

#7 Calais

At midday I set off along the canal towards Calais

There is a weed that has been accompanying me on my walk. Through all the villages and the roads in between it has been constantly at my feet. **It is officially called Plantain but is better described by its common names of Waybread, Traveller's foot, Roadweed or Cart-track plant**.

Waybread grows close to the ground with a rosette of tough green leaves and a brown flowering spike. It is a **nondescript little plant**, one that is not only resilient to scuffing or being walked upon but **seems actively to prosper from such treatment**. The plant is so common along my route that I begin to see it as a **travelling companion**.

It is one of the plants that I have been studying. Despite its weedy appearance Waybread has been **esteemed as a medicinal herb**. It is mentioned in the **10thc Lacnunga, a collection of Anglo-Saxon remedies and prayers**, where it is described as **one of the sacred herbs and an ingredient in the Nine Herbs Charm**. Venerated as the **'mother of all worts'**, Waybread is mentioned in every influential English or European herbal that follows.

It is recommended variously as a treatment for **dysentery, rabies, hemorrhoids, inflammations, bites, stings, scabs, shingles, sores, itchiness, sunburn, repelling of worms, and the staunching of blood**.

Travellers were encouraged to **crush the leaves and bind them to their feet to prevent blisters**

It has other common names, one of which is **White man's foot**. Carried to North America in the seed pouches of settlers, Waybread seemed to **follow in the tracks of the immigrants**. Native Americans observed that wherever Europeans went this weed would

soon spring up. As they learned of its **many medicinal properties they began to include it into their own repertoire of remedies.**

The canal from Guînes flows into the waterways encircling Calais. I leave the water and head through the town towards the old centre.

Here and there young men are asleep on patches of public grass. Crossing over the railway bridge I can see down to the tracks and here too men are stretched out and sleeping on the waste ground alongside. As I near the centre of town young men in groups of twos or threes pass me by.

They are darker than the average Calais burgher, with facial features suggesting they have travelled from East Africa or the Middle East. It seems to have been a long journey for they look worn out. Their hair is ungroomed, their clothes were ill-fitting, second-hand.

These are refugees heading for England, biding their time in Calais until they can hitch an illicit night ride in or under a truck heading for the ferry to Dover.

Before I left on this walk I learnt that **the term refugee** entered the English language with the influx of French Huguenots in the 17th century. Fifty thousand fled across the Channel while Louis XIV sat on the throne. **Emigration of Huguenots was forbidden** and the French authorities stepped up patrols of ships and the sea coast. Capture meant fines and imprisonment at the least, possibly transportation to the new world or, for men, a lifetime's service chained aboard the **French King's galleys.**

Traffickers were as active then as now and Huguenots paid dearly to stow away on fishing or foreign ships.

The authorities took to **fumigating the holds of ships with noxious gases in an effort to flush stowaways out.** Today they use heart-beat detectors and sniffer dogs.

#8 Bourbourg

By the time I get to Bourbourg my **footsteps have formed a path between the villages and towns in which my ancestors had lived and worshipped and between which they would have journeyed.**

For me the circle is closed and from Bourbourg I set out to walk a line to Zeeland.

At the outset I **conceived of the walk as having these two parts,** the circle and the line, **each walked with a different intention in mind.**

The first part has been about discovering the places that my ancestors once occupied and **walking between them in such a way as to inscribe a circle.** **The sphere that it delineates once meant something to them and now means something to me.**

Walking the line has a different purpose.

There is no record of the route that the Jacobs-De Vos family took in their escape from France. In 1683 they were living in these villages, and 1688 they were listed as passengers on a Dutch East India Company ship bound for the Cape of Good Hope.

All that can be known for certain about their journey from Northern France to Zeeland is the distance they covered. Walking the line is to be about measuring that distance.

In 1685 routes leading to the border teemed with fugitives. **Forbidden from leaving the country but facing persecution if they remained, Huguenots took every chance they had to escape.** Despite all roads out of France being patrolled two hundred thousand managed to get away. Some went openly as bodies of armed men. Others assumed disguises: **as beggars, travelling merchants, sellers of beads, as gypsies, soldiers, shepherds, or even as Catholic pilgrims ostensibly on pilgrimage.** Many were forced to bribe officials or pay 'guides' to help them over the border. Others seized the moment to escape when patrols were off guard. Some **travelled by night**, or under cover of bad weather.

#9 The border

A day later I walk off from Dunkerque towards the Belgian border. I am not certain exactly where the border was in 1685. It would have been **north of Dunkerque** as this was the most northerly French port at the time. Dunkerque had been **acquired by the French in 1662 when they bought it from the English.** They immediately fortified it as a large military port that could hold up to **thirty warships.** The area must have been teeming with military personnel and I **imagine that my ancestors would have kept a wide berth of it. In their attempt to cross the border they would more likely have chosen a quieter inland route.**

The country north of France, now Belgium, was in the hands of the Catholic Spanish and would not have offered refuge to fleeing Huguenots. **It was the next border**, between the Spanish Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, which they needed to cross before they could feel safe from persecution.

Leaving Dunkerque I follow the red-and-white footpath markings of the GR route and they point to the beach. **The tide is out and there is a broad stretch of hard sand. It turns out to be a comfortable walking surface, softer than asphalt but firmer than dry sand.**

Massive concrete bunkers from World War II lie on the beach. It is hard to tell if they have rolled down from the dunes or if the dunes have been washed out from under them.

On the beach I record a wandergram. I **remind myself of the reasons for this walk. I try to formulate a question that has been uppermost in my thoughts throughout this**

project. Which is: how can religious belief lead to justifications for killing those defined as 'heretics'? I struggle to understand the deadliness of religious beliefs that disallow the reverence of any but **one 'true' deity**, and one correct way to revere that deity. How it is that deviations from the 'true' belief can be perceived as so threatening to communities that dissenters must be forced to renounce their 'heretical' beliefs or face death.

After three hours of walking facing into the sun I head through the soft sand up to the promenade of Bray Dunes. It is a relief to get my pack off and sit down. My clothes are drenched in sweat.

I start to hear snatches of Dutch intermingling with the French spoken at the tables around me. It is the melodic Dutch of Flanders and it makes me feel as though I am near home.

I did not expect the border to approach as a sound, as a language.

I wanted to have a sense of crossing from France into Belgium but there is no border. The beach continues onwards, uninterrupted. In the dunes I see a French flag on a pole, a small parking area and a restaurant, advertizing pizza. Is this the border? There is an earthen road coming down to the beach and then more dunes. Two women are walking towards me and I ask them if this is it. **They are Belgian and yes, this is the border.**

An unfortified border. That would have been helpful to my fleeing forebears. It is a **bit of a disappointment** to me though.

I wanted to have a sense of walking out of one country and into another.

There have been numerous signs along the way that attested to the defense of borders: those **German bunkers from World War II** that have rolled onto the beach, **those refugees in Calais waiting to catch an illicit ride under a truck in order to cross the sea border** between France and the United Kingdom.

But here I do not need to wait for dark, nor pay a guide or bribe an official. I do not have to dress as a Catholic pilgrim or a seller of rosaries to move from one country to another.

It is a lovely warm day and I just kept on walking. **France disappears behind me.**

#10 Cadzand

Some days later I reach Cadzand.

It is to this town that I have been heading, for it is here that I am assuming the Jacobs-De Vos family was headed.

In 1685 when the temple at Guiñnes was closed Pierre Trouillard and his congregation left on foot for Cadzand. Here there were Reformed communities with strong ties to the Huguenots of Guiñnes and Calais. It would have been these contacts, as well as the

belief that there was land to be farmed here, that would have persuaded Pierre Jacob and Suzanne de Vos to risk leaving everything they knew and try their chances here.

Religious refugees did not flee their home country without careful thought and planning. **Like all migrants they would have had to consider where they could go, how they could get there, and whether they would be likely to find work there.**

Most Huguenots decided not to take the risk. They stayed in France, converted to Catholicism for the short term, and hoped that the situation would improve.

I do not know if my ancestors came to Cadzand but I am guessing that they might have. If they had heard that Trouillard and his congregation had arrived here and were welcomed, that there was work to be had or land to be farmed, then Pierre Jacob and Suzanne De Vos might well have decided that it was to Cadzand that they would head.

As with many of the villages that I have explored on this walk, and of which I have had expectations that **they would somehow reveal something of the histories that I was seeking**, Cadzand proves as unrelenting. It is a neat little place with a bakery, a restaurant and a B&B. There is one street name in French. The church is locked.

I leave Cadzand without having connected to it in any way. That is not the fault of the place, I have made little effort to scratch its surface. It has been ten days on the walk and my imagination and enthusiasm are wearing a little thin.

I wanted to feel how far it was to walk from the villages in France to here, and now I know.

Outside of the town there is a crossroad and I study the map for the most interesting route to Breskens. A cyclist stops to offer help and directs me to the path on the sea dike. It turns out to be good advice and for the next few hours I **walk in a stiff breeze along the North Sea dike.**

The wind gets stronger as I round the headland. **From here I can see the western mouth of the river Schelde.**

I reach a black and white lighthouse and sit down, pleased to get out of the wind. **Across the water, in the distance, is Vlissingen.**

The Huguenots who left aboard De Schelde from the harbour of Vlissingen would have sailed across this river mouth and out into the channel.

They would have seen land on this side and possibly this lighthouse.

I realize, as I look at this expanse of water, that I am looking at the place of my forebears' departure. It was from here that we left Europe. Sitting in the shade of the lighthouse and out of the wind I contemplate this fact.

I am no longer in a hurry.

From here it will be only a short walk to the passenger ferry at Breskens and the crossing to Vlissingen.