



Viewpoint

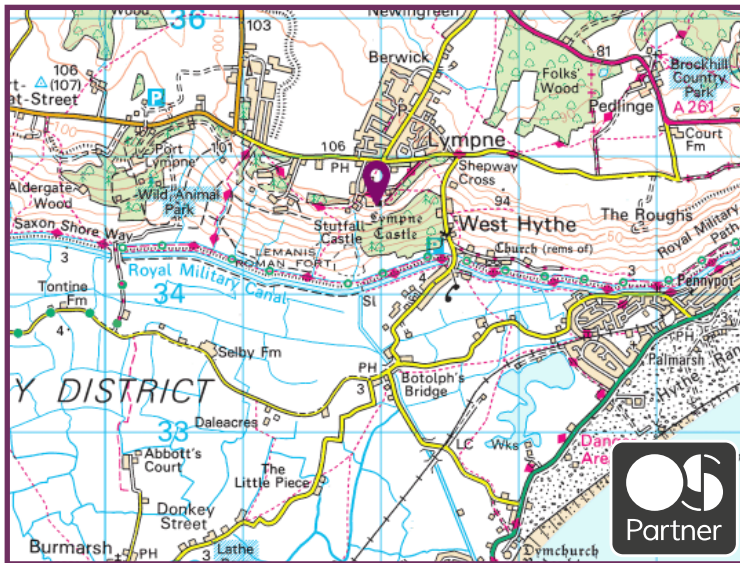
## Out on a Lympne



Time: 15 mins

Region: South East England

Landscape: rural



### Location:

St Stephen's Churchyard, Lympne, Kent, CT21 4LQ

### Grid reference:

TR 11968 34643

### Keep an eye out for:

The windowed lookout on top of the church tower - during the Second World War the flames of rockets launched from Calais were spotted from here.

### Stretch your legs:

You can also enjoy this viewpoint as part of a 4-mile Discovering Britain walk

From the churchyard of St Stephen at the top of Lympne Hill, we can marvel at the magical view of the East Kent coastline as it curves away into the distance. To the left, you can see the town of Hythe with its two Martello Towers guarding the shore. Ahead you might be able to see the power stations that cling to the shingle at the end of Dungeness.

In between, and sweeping to the right, is a patchwork of fields and farmland. Known as Romney Marsh, until a few thousand years ago none of this land was here.

## How was Romney Marsh a gift from the sea?



The Kent coast c.1200 AD - showing Romney Marsh as a tidal lagoon  
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

The high ground we are standing on that affords us such spectacular views, was once a cliff line at the edge of the sea that stretched from Hythe all the way to Rye in East Sussex.

Look down to the bottom of the hill where a line of trees marks the course of the Royal Military Canal. It also marks the old prehistoric coastline: everything beyond it was once under water.

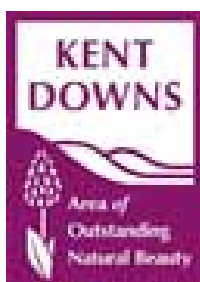
Around 6,000 years ago, however, this coastline began to change. A huge barrier of shingle built up between Hastings and Hythe, creating a tidal lagoon behind it.

The Romans took advantage of this changing coastline and chose the lagoon's natural shelter to anchor the 'Classis Britannica', the main Roman fleet in British waters. In AD 260 they built a fort at the head of a river here called Portus Lemanis.

Lemanis comes from the word 'limen' which means marshy river (and gave its name to the current village of Lympne). Portus Lemanis was one of eleven defences known as the Saxon Shore forts. They were built along England's east coast in response to the growing threat of Saxon raids from Scandinavia.

Over time, the tidal lagoon became silted up and gradually evolved into marshland. Fast forward to the twelfth century. As the population rapidly expanded, more land was needed for food. So drainage ditches and dykes were dug, sea walls built and a hundred square miles of land, now known as Romney Marsh, was 'reclaimed' from the sea. Gradually it became fertile farmland on which sheep could be grazed and arable crops grown.

Today, the emptiness of this low-lying, unpopulated land with its big, uninterrupted skies, small scattered villages and fields grazed by the hardy Romney sheep, is a mecca for those seeking peace, quiet and the wonder of walking in a landscape that was once under the waves.



This viewpoint is one of 12 created in partnership with  
**Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**  
to celebrate their 50 year anniversary in 2018.

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