

MILITARY MEANDERS

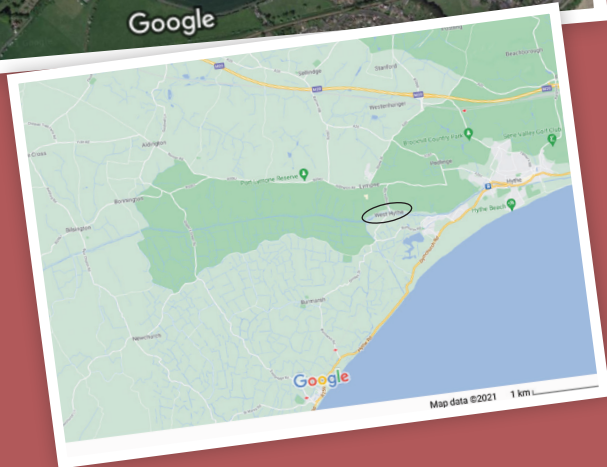


ROMNEY MARSH
— THE FIFTH CONTINENT —

Doorstep Discoveries

MILITARY MEANDERS

- Hard surfaces ✓
- Views ✓
- Nature and Wildlife ✓
- Refreshments ✓
- History ✓
- Buggy Friendly ✓
- Family friendly ✓
- Interactive ✓



DESCRIPTION: This is a longer walk around the beautiful Royal Military Canal to discover exactly what's on our doorstep! This is an interactive walk searching for hidden clues to what the canal's past, present and future is all about!

THINGS TO TAKE OR KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: Paper, wax crayon, double-sided sticky tape or glue, camera, binoculars if you have them, magnifying glass if you have one, duck food.

LENGTH OF WALK: 1 mile or 1.5km each way (2 miles or 3km in total).

TERRAIN: Flat and hard surfaces (optional different return with uneven surfaces).

PARKING: Easy parking at the start of the walk in flat parking bays off of West Hythe Road.

POSTCODE TO THE START OF THE WALK: CT21 4NB
Grid Reference: TR 12593419

TRANSPORT: Nearest bus routes are either Route 16 from Folkestone to Hythe alighting at Hythe station and walking to the centre of the walk along the military canal, or route 10A from Ashford or Folkestone and alight at Lympe to walk down Lympe Hill to the start. Please check www.stagecoach.com for more information.

MAPS TO USE: OS Explorer map: 138: Dover, Folkestone and Hythe.

REFRESHMENTS: Available at Unit 1 at the start of the walk www.unit1riverside.co.uk 01303 265000.

TOILETS: Also available at Unit 1, but usually for customers only. Please contact to enquire.

START/FINISH: The carpark (East off of West Hythe Road, South of the Royal Military Canal).

 Be careful of moving cars. 

1 Standing in the car park, you should see a path that leads down to the waters edge. Stroll down it to take a quick look.



What shapes can you see painted on the bridge?
Draw a quick sketch here...



INTERESTING FACT

Royal Military Canal! THE FACTS!

You are looking at a huge part of our history and an almighty attempt at defending England from a potential invasion from France in the early 1800s.

It is 28 miles long (45km) and connects Hythe to Rye.

It is now a haven for people and wildlife.

Water can be pumped in or out of the canal into surrounding ditches to help prevent flooding when it's wet or to help with irrigation when its dry.



There is a tree very close to where you are standing called a weeping willow. Can you guess which tree this is? And why do you think it has got this amazing name?



Being very careful, look into the water. Can you see your reflection and wave at it? If you can't, why is that?



2 Return up the path to the carpark. With your back facing the bridge and keeping the canal on your left, walk and find the noticeboard. Walk to the notice board.



Can you find this symbol?

What do these red symbols mean?



3 Continue walking past the notice board with the canal on your left.

INTERESTING FACT

Spooky silver birches!

Silver birch trees are native in the UK and can grow around 30m tall. It is easily recognised by the dazzling silver coloured bark which can often peel off in horizontal strips. Its bushy branches are perfect for making besom brooms or witches brooms!



Can you find the silver birch tree next to the first bench that you see? Take a piece of paper and a wax crayon and see if you can make a bark rubbing of the silver birch. What textures can you find?



INTERESTING FACT

How was The Military Canal made?

The canal was hand dug by hand with picks, shovels and wheelbarrows! It took 5 years and had a maximum of 150,000 men working on it at one time!

Can you imagine digging the military canal with a spade?

4 Continue up the tow path and cross under an electricity pylon with balls attached to the cable above the canal.



Why do you think the electricity cable has got balls attached to it? (Tick your answers).

- To make it look nice
- So that flying birds landing on the canal can see that it is there
- To advertise footballs
- To make fishermen aware that it is there so their fishing equipment does not touch it.

5 Continue up the tow path for 50 paces and choose your favourite tree that you can have a close look at.



Using your real or pretend magnifying glass, can you take a close look at the tree trunk? Can you find 3 different things that are growing on the trees?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

6 Continue up the tow path till you find a wooden bench.



Sit on the bench and listen to all of the noises around you. Circle the noises that you can hear below:

Cars Wind blowing through the trees Dogs

Water splashing Aeroplanes Marsh Frogs

Birds singing Steam train People chatting

Crickets and grasshoppers Footsteps

Other: _____

INTERESTING FACT



Charles J. Sharp, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Listen out for marsh frogs! They are frequently heard across the Romney Marsh area and make a loud distinctive noise which sounds a bit like croaky laughing or chirping. Edward Percy Smith, a playwright who lived in Stone-in-Oxney on the edge of Romney Marsh, released 12 Marsh frogs in his garden pond after bringing them back from a trip to Hungary in 1935! They escaped and happily spread through the huge network of ditches and canals on the Marsh. By 1937 they were so widespread that there were numerous complaints to the Ministry of Health about the noise!

7 Continue up the tow path till you see a brick wall or culvert next to the path on the left hand side.



Being very careful, take a look over the culvert and into the edge of the canal. What can you see in the waters edge?

Can you see the incredible webbed roots of an Alder tree? Why do you think an Alder tree likes growing here?



Can you find any leaves or cones on the alder tree, or on the floor around its base? Stick them here.....

A large, empty rectangular box with a white background and a thin red border, intended for students to stick leaves or cones found during their fieldwork.

INTERESTING FACT

Amazing Alders!

An Alder tree is the only British native deciduous tree to grow cones! The timber is extremely good at not rotting if submerged in water, so has therefore been used in construction of boats and boardwalks in the past. It is fantastic for wildlife as produces pollen early in the spring...perfect for our insects!

8 Continue along the tow path for 50 paces!



Depending on the time of year, you might be able to find different types of berries along this stretch of the canal. Can you see any? Please be careful as some berries can be poisonous to humans.

INTERESTING FACT

Berry Clever!

Berries are an amazing source of food for wildlife such as birds and small mammals and can often help wildlife to survive through winter months when other food is scarce. Whilst the fruit of most berries here are easily digested by animals, the seeds can often pass through the stomach and out through its poo undamaged! A very clever way for the plant to distribute its seeds.



INTERESTING FACT

Why was the military canal built?

In the late 1700s and early 1800s England was at war with France. Napoleon had an army of 130,000 troops and 2000 boats in Boulogne ready to invade England at a moment's notice across the channel. The government decided that the Romney Marsh area was vulnerable and needed protecting... by a huge canal to keep the enemy out! A bank of soil was to be kept one side of the canal for English troops to hide behind and shoot from.

9 Continue along the canal until you reach another wooden bench.



Finding some leaves or twigs, can you make yourself into an animal?

(Hint: You can use big leaves for elephant ears or twigs for antlers!)



10 Continue along the tow path in the same direction until you reach a foot bridge across the canal!



Count how many steps it takes to cross the bridge.



Can you find the model of the 'Sound ear' or 'Acoustic Mirror' on the other side of the bridge?



Using the instructions on the panel, can you listen to someone standing on the other side of the footbridge using the acoustic mirror?
How might this have helped during a war?

11 Standing and facing the acoustic mirror, you now have 2 options for the return of the walk. You can either turn left and follow the path which runs nearest to the canal (some uneven surfaces and can get a little soggy in winter months) or turn left and travel down the bank and onto a surfaced track (easy to navigate along all year round, but watch out for fast moving bicycles)



Look for something beginning with the letter 'S'



Can you find a dragon/unicorn/broomstick?!
Find a nice long stick and use it as a vehicle of your choice to zoom to the next question!



12 Continue along your chosen path in a Westerly direction with the canal on your left hand side.



Can you find a gate into a field on the right hand side? Looking up the steep hill, you may be able to see one of the original acoustic mirrors built in 1923!



INTERESTING FACT

Geology of Romney marsh.

Did you know that much of Romney Marsh did not exist and was under sea?! It wasn't until the great storms of 1287 which were so fierce, that whole areas of shingle washed up, changing the course of rivers and creating the coastline that we see today.



Can you make a grass whistle?

INTERESTING FACT



How to make a grass whistle!

Find a long wide blade of grass. Cup your hands lined up and the blade of grass sandwiched between your thumbs. Your thumbs should touch at the top and bottom and should leave an opening up in the middle. Blow through the gap and the grass should rattle and whistle!

13 Continue in the same direction along the path till you find a picnic area.



Find something soft.



Find something that is not supposed to be there.
Hint... perhaps a piece of litter.

14 Continue in the same direction looking out for a wooden marker post along the surfaced track.



Using your binoculars, can you see something floating on the canal surface? What is it?



Find the wooden marker post that says '2 miles to Hythe'. How many kilometres is this?



INTERESTING FACT

So was the canal a waste of time? You decide!

The canal was never used for its intended purpose! Napoleon changed his mind on invading England and focussed on invading other parts of Europe.

The canal cost a total of £234,310 to build (a lot of money in Georgian times!) and was even said to be a bit of an embarrassment to the government!

So areas of the canal were sold off, tolls were charged to use the road built along the edge of the canal and barges were ran up and down it for trade.

Then in 1914 war in Europe was declared. The banks were lined with pill-boxes and acoustic ears were built and the area was once again used as a line of defence.

Today the canal is a tranquil place to spend time, cycle, walk, ride boats. Amazing for wildlife and fantastic at helping with drainage.

What do you think?

15 Continue your walk along your chosen path with the canal on your left hand side and pass another picnic area on your left.



Looking at the trees in the picnic area, what wildlife do you think might be using the trees as habitat? Circle any evidence you can see.

Bird boxes Bat boxes Nests Bird poo

Holes or cracks in the trees Rotten branches

Spider webs Other: _____

INTERESTING FACT

What is a habitat?

A place where a plant or animal lives. The Royal Military canal provides hundreds, if not, thousands of habitat opportunities for wildlife. The water, surrounding trees and scrub, dead wood, banks and ditches all provide amazing places for animals and plants to thrive. Which is your favourite habitat?



Look for some dead trees or wood. Carefully look and see if you can find anything living there.

Why not take a photo and share it on our Facebook page, @KentWildlife



16

Continue walking for 50 paces.



Mini Scavenger hunt!
Whilst walking along, can you find the following?

	Alder cone	Stick with lichen on it	Yellow leaf	Feather
				
Tick				

17

Keep walking along your chosen path until you see the road and are nearly at the bridge.



What wooden animals have been installed here?!

18

When you reach the road, being careful of the traffic turn left and cross over the bridge to find the start of the walk.

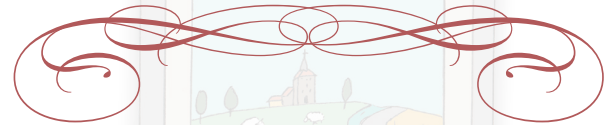


Be careful of moving cars.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Certificate of Completion



This acknowledges that

has successfully completed the
Doorstep Discoveries -
Military Meanders walk

discoveries

DATE



ANSWERS

- 1.2 |** It is thought the name derived from raindrops looking like tears as they drip down the branches into the water.
- 2.1 |** Things that are not permitted to do on the canal, e.g. no swimming.
- 4.1 |** So that flying birds can see it AND to make fishermen aware that it is there.
- 5.1 |** Answers could include; ivy, moss and lichens.
- 7.1 |** Alders love to grow in wet conditions.
- 10.3 |** Acoustic ears helped to detect the early sound of an approaching military aircraft.
- 11.1 |** Answers could include; stinging nettles, sticky willy, etc.
- 14.1 |** Answers could include; floating weed, logs, ducks, canoe, etc.
- 14.2 |** 3.2km.
- 17.1 |** Grass hopper and dragonfly.

HAVE YOU DONE THE DOORSTEP DISCOVERY THROUGH DYMCHURCH, IVYCHURCH AND LYDD YET?

If you enjoyed this walk then get your next copies and go exploring!



**REMEMBER TO UPLOAD YOUR PHOTOS
TO OUR FACEBOOK PAGE, AND KEEP
UPDATED FOR THE NEXT
DOORSTEP DISCOVERY.**

