

# relax under wide skies

Savour the atmosphere and sense of remoteness to be enjoyed on Romney Marsh throughout the year.





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**Location:** Stone-in-Oxney

**Distance:** 3.2 miles (5.1km)

**Time:** allow 2 hours

**Explorer Map:** 125

**Terrain:** rough grazing pasture, slopes and some roadway

**Stiles:** 11

**Parking:** on road at Stone-in-Oxney

**Refreshments and facilities:** Public house in Stone-in-Oxney and neighbouring villages

**Public transport:** for information about local bus and train services in Kent, contact Traveline tel: 0870 6082608, [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)

**Step count:** approx 6,400



Wide skies and the unusual quality of the light enhance panoramic and dramatic views over the Rother Levels. This is a tranquil and relaxing walk heading over the cliffs which once marked the edge of the sea and on to classic Romney Marsh sheep farming pasture.



From Stone-in-Oxney village, head to the picturesque 15th century St Mary's Church. Continue up Church Hill before branching off onto farmland and the top of Stone Cliff (54m/150ft above sea level).

Wildlife thrives in the many ditches draining this rich arable land. Before crossing the Kent Ditch – the boundary between the counties of Kent and East Sussex – look back to see hedgerows lining the ancient cliffs like soldiers on guard.

The route follows along the banks of the Royal Military Canal, a major fortification designed to keep Napoleon's forces at bay. The historic canal is a Scheduled Monument. It now plays an important role in keeping the marshes drained and is very popular locally for fishing.

Leave the banks of the canal at Stone Bridge and turn back uphill, heading across the fields to return to St Mary's.

This walk offers plenty of opportunities to discover the less familiar plants, animals and insects thriving on this large area of reclaimed land and along the banks of the canal.

Few walkers will leave the waterside without spotting a mute swan, moorhen or grey heron. Kingfishers are regularly seen in summer as are dragonflies.

However, not all the most widespread species to be discovered on the marsh are native. For example, the marsh frog, frequently called the "laughing frog" because of its rather unusual "croak", can be found right across Romney Marsh. Today's population came from just 12 Hungarian frogs introduced to a garden pond in Stone-in-Oxney in 1932. The frogs escaped on to the marsh and have flourished ever since.

Full details of all the work being done to protect and preserve the wildlife that thrives on Romney Marsh can be found at the website of the Romney Marsh Countryside Project ([www.rmcp.co.uk](http://www.rmcp.co.uk)).



# look out for...

- 15th century St Mary's Church
- Royal Military Canal
- **Water voles** (*Ratty from Kenneth Graeme's Wind in the Willows*) and **marsh frogs**; **mute swans, grey herons, moorhens, kingfishers; damselflies and dragonflies**
- **Yellow flag iris and fringed water lilies**
- **World War II pillbox**

"Laughing" frogs have flourished on Romney Marsh since they were first introduced in 1932.



## did you know?

The Roman ragstone altar at St Mary's Church, Stone-in-Oxney, features carvings of Mithras the Bull.

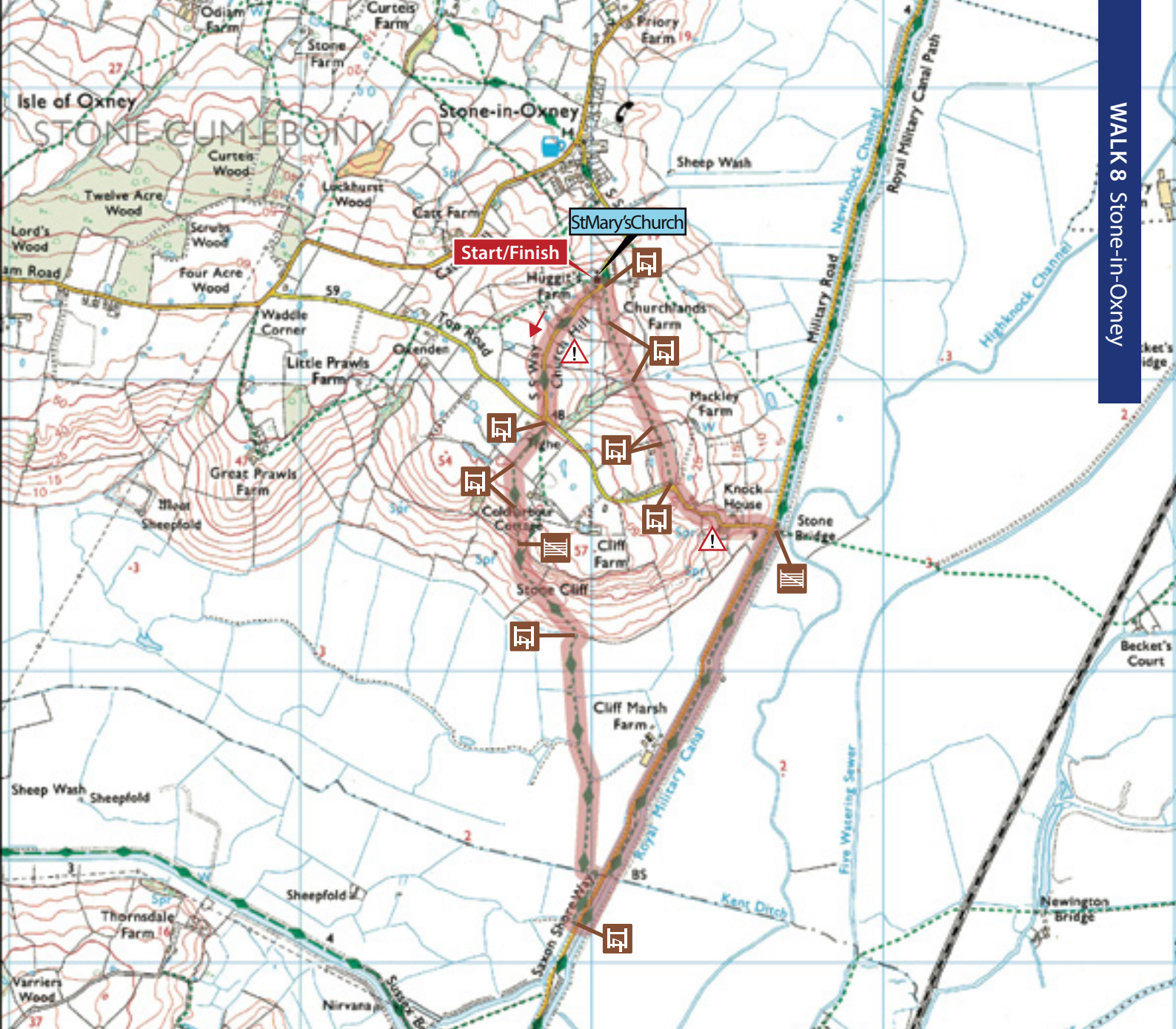
*Wealthy landowners employed "lookers" to care for their flocks of sheep grazing on Romney Marsh. Lookers huts, small brick-built houses with tiled roofs and a single chimney, were used by shepherds across the marsh from the 18th century.*

The Kent Ditch is the boundary between the counties of Kent and East Sussex.

*The Royal Military Canal and the Caledonian Canal are the only two wholly state-funded canals to have been built in Britain. Today, the Royal Military Canal is important for draining the marshes.*

Appledore was originally a port on the estuary of the River Rother. The village now stands more than eight miles (12.8km) from the sea.

*Romney Marsh provides the setting for author Russell Thorndyke's popular character Dr Syn – a vicar by day and a hard-hearted smuggler by night.*



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