

## HYTHER - LIGNE DE FRONT - HISTORIQUE DE 'LA LIGNE DE FRONT DU KENT' DEPUIS L'EPOQUE ROMAINE

De l'époque romaine jusqu'au Moyen-Age, le port de Hythe fourmillait d'activités avec ses bateaux de pêche, ses bateaux de guerre et négociants avec le Continent.

La Charte de 1278 du roi Edward Premier exigeait de la ville qu'elle envoie cinq bateaux pour défendre la côte sur les ordres du roi. En échange, Hythe fut exemptée de certains impôts et reçut le statut de port franc, devenant ainsi l'un des Cinq Ports. L'immense tête de pont de la ville a toujours été l'endroit idéal pour débarquer des hommes, chevaux et provisions mais la rendait également vulnérable aux invasions.

Le début du XIXe siècle vit l'arrivée de la menace napoléonienne. Fort de ses victoires en Europe, Napoléon jeta alors son dévolu sur l'Angleterre. Afin de faire face aux menaces d'invasion, les 'Martello Towers' furent construites en 1805 formant une ligne de défense impressionnante. Chaque tour qui abritait 24 hommes était couverte d'un toit plat sur lequel se trouvait un canon de deux tonnes et demie.

Un autre obstacle construit comme moyen de défense contre une éventuelle invasion napoléonienne fut une véritable prouesse technique - the Royal Military Canal. Son tracé fut conçu en zig-zag dont chaque courbe (tous les 260 mètres) abritait un canon qui défendait chaque section. Le canal s'étend de Seabrook dans le Kent à Pett Level dans l'East Sussex. L'un des plus anciens vestiges architecturaux de Hythe est la nef de St. Leonard's Church, qui date du XIe siècle. La crypte contient une macabre collection de 2000 crânes et 8000 fémurs.

En 1917 et 1940, l'église fut sérieusement endommagée par des bombardements. Un artiste du pays créa le vitrail actuel du côté est afin de remplacer l'ancien détruit au cours de la seconde guerre mondiale. Inauguré en 1951, ce dernier commémore le rôle de 'ligne de front' tenu par Hythe.

Non loin de là, au château de Saltwood, en 1170, quatre malfaiteurs se réunirent pour comploter l'assassinat de St. Thomas à Becket sous les ordres, semblerait-il, du roi Henry II. Ils auraient vraisemblablement traversé Hythe pour se rendre à la cathédrale de Canterbury.

Vous pouvez maintenant revivre l'histoire de Hythe 'Ligne de Front' en visitant ce Cinq Port fascinant. La carte vous indiquera l'itinéraire à suivre de site en site.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 55BC-410AD Roman Occupation.  
Portus Lemanis becomes one of the main entry ports into Great Britain.
- 597 Augustine reaches Canterbury.
- 1026 King Canute grants Hythe lands to the Church.
- 1066 Norman Conquest, Manor of Saltwood given to Christchurch, Canterbury.
- 1170 Assassins journey from Saltwood to murder Thomas à Becket.
- 1200 Hythe on Pilgrims' route to Saint's Shrine in Canterbury.
- 1278 Charter of King Edward I.
- 1293 French ships defeated in sea battle. Revenge attack on Hythe repulsed - 200 Frenchmen killed on shore.
- 1804-1807 Construction of the Royal Military Canal.
- 1805-1808 Martello Towers built.
- 1853 Founding of the School of Musketry.
- 1914-1918 WWI - Hythe under attack.
- 1927 Opening of the RH & DR.
- 1930-1936 Experiments with Acoustic Sound Mirrors.
- 1939-1945 WWII - Hythe under air attack and threat of invasion.
- 1940 Evacuation of children to Wales. Hythe depopulated and made a restricted area.



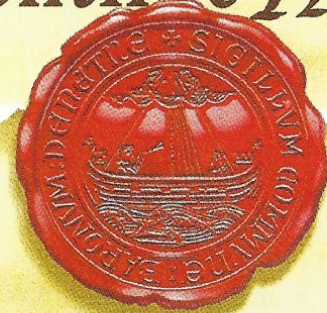
THE ARMS OF THE CONFEDERATION  
OF THE CINQUE PORTS

**SHEPWAY**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



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# Frontline Hythe



## A HERITAGE WALK AROUND THE CINQUE PORT TOWN OF HYTHE



## A HISTORY OF HYTHE FROM ROMAN TIMES TO THE SECOND WORLD WAR

# A HISTORY OF KENT'S 'FRONTLINE' SINCE ROMAN TIMES

**H**ythe means haven and the town is one of the original Cinque Ports nominated by Edward the Confessor in the 11th century to defend the surrounding coastline. But even before it was a town, the sheer geography of the terrain made this part of Kent vulnerable to attack, especially from the sea. Hythe's vast sweeping beachhead was the ideal spot for landing men, horses and provisions.

If England were ever to face an invasion, this was one of the most likely places.



*Hythe lifeboat crew, with the 'City of Nottingham'.*

And that threat came more than once during Hythe's turbulent history as a 'frontline' town. Even the Romans, aware of its vulnerability, built Stutfall Castle to protect their harbour, Portus Lemanis, from sea or land attack. The ruins of this fortress can still be seen today.

One of the earliest pieces of surviving architecture in the town is the Nave in St Leonard's Church, which dates from the 11th century. There has been a church here since Saxon times and, on closer inspection, some fascinating ancient traces can still be seen. In the Crypt you will find a macabre collection of 2,000 skulls and 8,000 thigh bones which were displaced from the churchyard when the Chancel foundations were excavated in the 12th century.

From Roman times up to the Middle Ages the harbour at Hythe was a hive of activity with fishing boats, fighting ships and merchantmen trading with the Continent.

By 1026 Hythe was already a borough and it was then that King Canute signed the documents that conveyed the lands of Hith to the Church at Canterbury and the monks serving Christ there.

It was at nearby Saltwood Castle in 1170 that

the four assassins met to plot the murder of Thomas à Becket under the perceived orders of King Henry II. The route would have taken them through Hythe on their fateful journey to Canterbury Cathedral.



*Firing on the Army Ranges (circa 1860)*

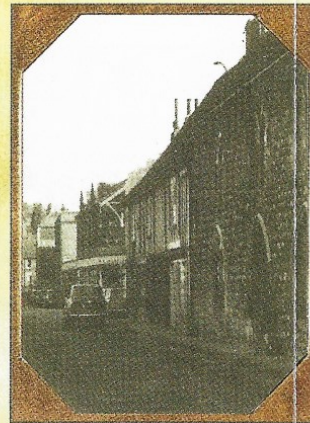
Under King Edward I's Charter of 1278 the town was required to send five ships, each with a crew of 22 men and a boy, to defend the coast on the King's command. In return the town was granted freedom from certain taxes and awarded the status of a free port.

In the High Street you will find The King's Head, which was formerly known as The George, where in 1653 Cromwell was proclaimed Lord Protector and the Jurats (Councillors) spent £3.14.6 on wine and beer in celebration of the event. In 1750 it became the King's Head and during the 18th and 19th centuries it was here that the local Recruiting Sergeant would encourage young men to fight for King and Country.

In the early 19th century came the Napoleonic threat. Triumphant from his victories in Europe, the assertive Napoleon set his expansionist sights on England. Under threat of invasion 74 Martello Towers were built in 1805 in a formidable defence line ranging from Folkestone to Seaford, Nr. Eastbourne. Each tower housed 24 men, and the roof platform carried a two and a half ton cannon mounted on a 360 degree traversing carriage.

Ironically, the Martello Towers were never used against Napoleon, but in later years they were used to combat smuggling which was rife in the area. During the 20th century they were used as signalling stations and as coastal defences in both World Wars.

Another obstacle which was built as a defence against the Napoleonic threat was an incredible engineering feat in itself - The Royal Military Canal. It was designed as a series of measured staggers at 800 feet apart so each section could be defended within cannon range. Because of the emergency it was built by the Royal Staff Corps, as civilian contractors were considered too slow. The canal runs from Seabrook in Kent to Pett Level in East Sussex.



*The attractive arched windows of St John's Hospital at the lower end of the High Street*

In 1853 The Hythe School of Musketry officially started using the designated area near Fisherman's Beach, now known as the Army Ranges, to practise firing drill. With the wind in the right direction, the crackle of rifle fire can still be heard today.

At the outbreak of the First World War the horses which were used to pull trams from Hythe to Folkestone were requisitioned by the War Department.

They were unsuccessfully replaced by mules. Needless to say, timetables went out the window. When hostilities ceased the local population was delighted to see the return of horse-drawn trams!

On May 25th 1917, sixteen German aircraft dropped bombs over Ashford, Folkestone, Lympne and Hythe. One of these bombs fell in St. Leonard's Churchyard where the Rev. H D Dale was talking to the Verger. Sadly, the Verger was mortally wounded. The Vicar escaped unhurt and only later realised what a close call he had had when he discovered a hot piece of shrapnel in his pocket.

In 1940, another bomb blast seriously damaged the East end of the church destroying the Victorian stained glass window. The replacement window which you can now see at St. Leonard's was designed by Wallace Wood, a local artist. Unveiled in 1951 it commemorates Hythe's 'frontline' role with colourful pictures of a Cinque Ports' ship, probing searchlights and anti-aircraft guns.

The history of 'frontline' Hythe can now be experienced first hand by visiting this fascinating Cinque Port town. Use the map to get from site to site in a circular route. A history of each of these ten historic sites is depicted in old photographs and engravings, which are displayed on Heritage Panels strategically placed along this interesting walk.



*This detail of the stained glass window is a reminder of Hythe's role in the front line of England's defences*



*Part of the fuselage of a doodlebug shot down over Kent*

# Frontline Hythe



Discover how Hythe has helped defend England against occupation over the centuries in this fascinating heritage walk. From Roman times to World War II, this quaint little town has played a pivotal role against the threat of invasion.

The beguiling story of Hythe is told through these illustrative heritage panels, placed at historic sites in a convenient circular route, bringing the town's unique history to life!

## 1 RED LION SQUARE RAMPART ROAD

There is a mention of a brewery in Hythe in 1669, and much later, the famous Mackeson's Brewery in Red Lion Square used the same fresh water springs until its closure in 1968.

The building behind the exposed tramline, which runs across the pavement in Red Lion Square, was the former Hythe tramshed. In 1914 tram work-horses were requisitioned for the war effort and were temporarily replaced by mules.

The threat to England from the air during WWI was countered by setting up a Machine-Gun School at the Imperial Hotel in 1915. Curious cut-out silhouettes of enemy aircraft were regularly mounted on trucks outside the hotel for 'moving target' practice.

### RED LION SQUARE / RAMPART ROAD

*Il est fait mention d'une distillerie à Hythe en 1669 et beaucoup plus tard, la célèbre distillerie Mackeson sur Red Lion Square continua à utiliser la même eau de source jusqu'à sa fermeture en 1968.*

*Le bâtiment derrière la ligne de tramway apparente qui traverse le trottoir sur Red Lion Square est l'ancien dépôt de trams. En 1914 les chevaux de trait des tramways furent réquisitionnés pour l'effort de guerre et furent remplacés temporairement par des mules.*

*Afin de combattre les menaces aériennes au-dessus de l'Angleterre pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale, on créa un camp d'entraînement au tir de la mitrailleuse à l'Imperial Hotel en 1915. De curieuses silhouettes de contreplaqué, représentant les avions ennemis, étaient régulièrement juchées sur des camions et servaient de cibles mobiles.*



## 2 CENTURIES

The earliest part of this Historic Building of Kent was begun in 1107. It was the childhood home of Bishop Hamo of Rochester (born in 1275) who founded a Hospital/Almshouse in 1336.

Hythe was a main landing point from the Continent during the Middle Ages. Church Hill, past St. Leonard's Church, was the main road to Canterbury and the Shrine of St. Thomas à Becket. His callous assassins passed this spot one winter's night in 1170 to plot his murder at Saltwood Castle.

### DES SIÈCLES

*La construction de la partie la plus ancienne de ce bâtiment historique du Kent commença en 1107. L'évêque Hamo de Rochester (né en 1275) y passa son enfance et y fonda un hôpital/hospice en 1336.*

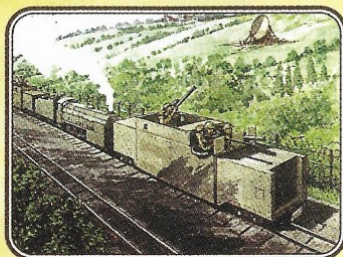
*Au Moyen-Âge, Hythe était un port important pour les voyageurs et commerçants en provenance du continent. Church Hill, qui passe devant St Leonard's Church était la route principale vers Canterbury et la tombe de St Thomas à Becket. Vous vous trouvez à proximité de la route rendue tristement célèbre qu'empruntèrent ses impitoyables meurtriers par une nuit d'hiver 1170 après avoir complété son assassinat au château de Saltwood.*



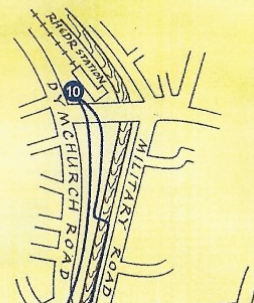
## 10 SCANLON'S BRIDGE & THE PLUTO PIPELINE

The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway was opened in 1927 and requisitioned during World War II to carry supplies to Dungeness by armoured train.

Dungeness was one of the locations of PLUTO - Pipeline under the Ocean - part of a network of underground fuel pipelines built to supply the allied



# Hythe



## 3 ST LEONARD'S CHURCH

There has been a church on this site since Saxon times. The present Nave was built in the 11th Century and the Chancel around 1200.

The Crypt, which was created by digging out the Chancel foundations, houses a neatly stacked collection of 2,000 skulls and 8,000 thigh bones. It is likely that most of these were displaced when the foundations for the Chancel were originally excavated.

In 1940, a bomb seriously damaged the east end of the church, destroying the original stained glass window. The replacement window commemorates Hythe's 'front line' role with pictures of a Cinque Ports Ship, probing searchlights and anti-aircraft guns in action.

### ST. LEONARD'S CHURCH

*Depuis l'époque des Saxons, ce site a toujours été occupé par une église. La nef actuelle date du XIe siècle et le chœur fut construit vers 1200.*

*La crypte, qui vit le jour à la suite des excavations nécessaires à la construction des fondations du chœur vers 1200, abrite une collection impressionnante de 2000 crânes et 8000 fémurs. On suppose que la plupart de ces ossements fut déplacé au cours du creusement des fondations du chœur.*

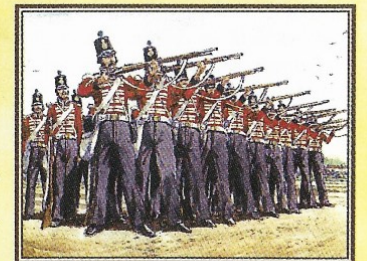
*En 1940, une bombe endommagea sérieusement le côté est de l'église, détruisant ainsi le vitrail d'origine. Le vitrail de remplacement commémore le rôle de "ligne de front" tenu par Hythe en montrant un bateau de Cinque Port, des projecteurs et des batteries anti-aériennes en action.*



## 4 KING'S HEAD / ST JOHN'S ALMSHOUSE

There was a public house on this site in 1583 called The George, and in 1750 it became known as the King's Head. It was here, during the 18th & 19th Centuries, that the local Recruiting Sergeant would encourage young men to fight for King and Country.

St John's Hospital Almshouse opposite is known to have been on this site before 1336 as a hospital for lepers. It was purposely built away from the town in an isolated spot, on the edge of the seashore. In the



The walk from here to West Hythe passes the concrete 'sound mirror', an acoustic invention designed in the 1930s to hear approaching enemy aircraft. The system did not come up to expectations but fortunately it was superseded by radar just before The Battle of Britain.

### SCANLON'S BRIDGE & THE PLUTO PIPELINE

La ligne ferroviaire de Romney, Hythe et Dymchurch fut ouverte au public en 1927, puis réquisitionnée pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale pour transporter l'approvisionnement à Dungeness en trains blindés.

**PLUTO** – Pipeline sous-marin – était situé à Dungeness et faisait partie d'un réseau de pipelines de pétrole souterrains construits dans le but d'approvisionner le Royaume-Uni dans un premier temps et plus tard les troupes alliées en Europe.

En vous promenant d'ici vers l'ouest de Hythe, vous passerez devant le 'Miroir Acoustique' dont la conception qui remonte aux années 1930 avait pour but d'écouter l'approche des avions ennemis. Le système ne fut pas à la hauteur des espérances et il fut heureusement supplanté par le radar juste avant la Bataille d'Angleterre.

### 9 WEST PARADE FISHERMAN'S BEACH

From Fisherman's Beach you can see two of the 74 Martello Towers, which originally stretched along this coast as a deterrent against the threatened Napoleonic invasion. They were built in 1805 and their walls vary in thickness from 8 feet on the landward side to 13 feet on the Channel side and are deliberately sloped to deflect shot. The two and a half ton cannon, mounted on the firing platform, could fire a 24lb shot a mile out to sea.



Later, the remaining towers were used to combat smuggling and, in the 20th century, as formidable coastal defences in both World Wars.

### WEST PARADE • FISHERMAN'S BEACH

De Fisherman's Beach vous pouvez voir deux des 103 Martello Towers dont la construction le long du littoral avait pour but de former une ligne de défense contre la menace de l'invasion du pays par Napoléon et ses troupes au XIXe siècle. Ces tours furent construites en 1805 et l'épaisseur de leurs murs va de 2,40 mètres côté terre pour atteindre 3,90 côté mer. Leur position volontairement inclinée permettait de dévier les tirs. Le canon de 2,5 tonnes installé sur la plate-forme de tir, utilisait des boulets de 10 kg et avait une portée de 1600 mètres.

Avec le temps, les tours restantes servirent à lutter contre la contrebande et au XXe siècle formèrent une ligne redoutable de défense du littoral au cours des deux guerres mondiales.

### 8 MARINE PARADE

This part of Hythe was once a windswept shingle beach enclosing a sheltered harbour with a narrow entrance. It was then a hive of activity with fishing boats, fighting ships and merchantmen trading with the Continent.

Following several disasters - The Black Death, a huge storm at sea and an earthquake - the harbour silted up and the town's prosperity waned.

During WWII, Marine Parade was a prohibited area, covered with coils of barbed wire and pill boxes armed with machine-guns.

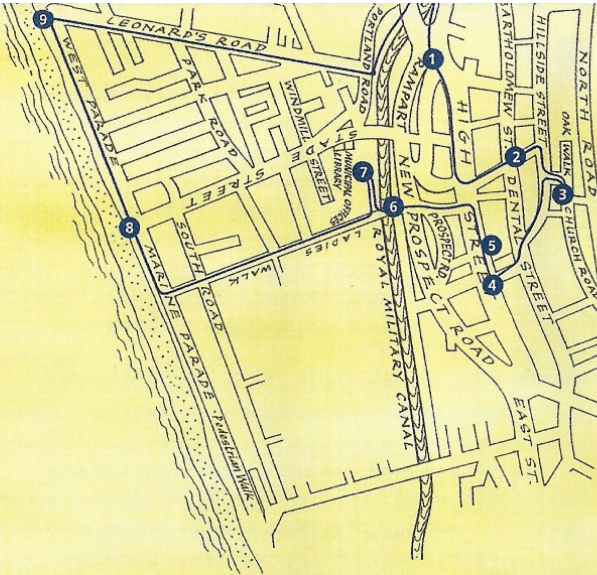


### MARINE PARADE

A une époque, cette partie de Hythe n'était autre qu'une plage de galets balayée par les vents et abritant un port à l'entrée étroite. Il fut également un temps où elle fourmillait de bateaux de pêche, de bateaux de guerre et de négociants avec le continent.

Au fil du temps et à la suite d'un grand incendie, de la peste noire, d'une énorme tempête et d'un tremblement de terre, le port s'enlisa peu à peu entraînant le déclin de la prospérité de la ville.

Pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale, Marine Parade fut interdite au public, recouverte de rouleaux de fil de fer barbelé et de gubrites équipées de mitrailleuses.



THE ARMS OF THE CONFEDERATION OF THE CINQUE PORTS.

### 7 OAKLANDS AND LOCAL HISTORY ROOM

In 1932, Dr. Randall Davis bequeathed Oaklands to the town to be used as a History Room. One of the rooms commemorates the School of Musketry, later known as the Small Arms Wing of the School of Infantry, which was based in Hythe from 1853 to 1968.

Oaklands is situated in Stade Street. Stade means landing place and this street once led down to the harbour built in the Middle Ages in a vain attempt to replace the earlier silted-up unusable harbour entrance.

The Local History Room contains many artefacts relating to the coastal defence of Hythe, including pictures and objects which illustrate the town's history from Roman times up to the present day.



### OAKLANDS ET SALLES D'HISTOIRE LOCALE

En 1932, Dr. Randall Davis légua Oaklands à la ville en demandant que le bâtiment serve de musée. Une salle du musée commémore l'Ecole de Tir au Mousquet, rebaptisée plus tard sous le nom de Petite Aile d'Armes de l'Ecole d'Infanterie dont le siège se trouvait à Hythe de 1853 à 1968. Oaklands se trouve dans Stade Street. Le mot "Stade" signifie débarcadere et il fut un temps où cette rue descendait vers le port construit au Moyen-Age dans le vague espoir de remplacer l'entrée du port rendue inutilisable de par son enlèvement.

La salle d'histoire locale contient beaucoup d'objets et de tableaux en rapport avec l'histoire de la défense du littoral de Hythe et qui illustrent l'histoire de la ville de l'époque romaine à nos jours.

mid 10th century, it "maintained 8 beas for the needy and poor people and such as were maimed in wars".

### KING'S HEAD/ST JOHN'S ALMSHOUSE

En 1583, cet endroit était occupé par une auberge "The George" qui fut rebaptisée sous le nom de "King's Head" en 1750. C'est là qu'aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, le Sergent responsable du recrutement des troupes, encourageait les jeunes à s'enrôler dans l'armée.

En face, St John's Hospital Almshouse est un bâtiment connu comme ayant servi d'hôpital pour les lépreux avant 1336. Il fut délibérément construit à l'écart de la ville, dans un endroit isolé qui, à l'époque, se trouvait situé sur la grève. Au milieu du XVIe siècle, il "gardait 8 lits pour les pauvres et les gens dans le besoin ainsi que pour les mutilés de guerre".

### 5 TOWN HALL

The Town Hall was built in 1794 and the ground floor Undercroft was the old marketplace. In 1805, the wife of one of the men working on the Royal Military Canal's construction was sold for 6 pence to a drummer at Shorncliffe Barracks.

The Council Chamber above contains an oak panel, carved with the names of the Town Bailiffs and Mayors dating from 1349.

During World War I the warnings of air raids were given by the flying of a cone from the roof of the Town Hall. Next door stands The White Hart Inn, first recorded in 1625. Here, Prime Minister Pitt discussed the coastal defences to ward off a Napoleonic invasion with Wellington and his staff.



### TOWN HALL

L'Hôtel de Ville dont le rez-de-chaussée se trouve au-dessus de l'ancienne place du marché fut construit en 1794.

En 1805, la femme d'un des ouvriers du Royal Military Canal y fut vendue pour deux sous à un joueur de tambour de la garnison de Shorncliffe. Dans la Chambre du Conseil au dessus, se trouve un panneau de chêne dans lequel sont gravés les noms des maires et huissiers de la ville depuis 1349.

Pendant la première guerre mondiale, on faisait flotter une manche à air sur le toit de l'Hôtel de Ville pour signaler l'arrivée des attaques aériennes. A côté se trouve The White Hart Inn, dont les premières archives datent de 1625. C'est dans cette auberge que le Premier Ministre Pitt mit au point avec Wellington et ses hommes le système de défense du littoral afin de parer à l'invasion des armées napoléoniennes.

### 6 ROYAL MILITARY CANAL

The Royal Military Canal was built between 1804 and 1807. It was constructed as a defence against Napoleon when it was feared that an invasion by the Imperial Army was imminent.

The Canal was designed as a series of measured staggers at 800 feet apart (within cannon range) to defend each section.

Hitler, too, had to take account of this formidable obstacle in planning his invasion of Britain. The Canal runs from Seabrook in Kent to Pett Level in East Sussex.



### ROYAL MILITARY CANAL

Le Royal Military Canal fut construit de 1804 à 1807 comme moyen de défense contre Napoléon dont l'armée impériale menaçait la région d'une invasion imminente. Le tracé du canal fut conçu en zig-zag dont chaque courbe (tous les 260 mètres) abritait un canon qui défendait chaque section.

Hitler, lui aussi, dut tenir compte de ce redoutable obstacle pour organiser son invasion de la Grande-Bretagne. Le canal va de Seabrook dans le Kent jusqu'à Pett Level dans l'East Sussex.