

SUGGESTED START: Lytham Windmill, FY8 5HF (SD 3698 2708).

DISTANCE: 8.4 km / 5.2 miles

TIME: 2 hrs 30mins (plus sightseeing)

TERRAIN: Flat and in very good condition; mostly hard surfaces and no stiles. Woodland tracks can be slightly wet under-foot in places.

DIFFICULTY: Gentle

OS MAP: It is advisable to use OS Explorer 286 with this guide.



Regular buses stop along Clifton Street and Church Road. The route also passes Ansdell and Fairhaven, and Lytham train stations.



East Beach, near the Windmill; Fairhaven Lake and on the road near Park View 4U



Park View 4U and Fairhaven Lake



The RNLI lifeboat shop, Woodands Road, Ansdell and the Ribble Discovery Centre RSPB shop



The Queens on Lytham Green and the Railway Hotel on Station Road



Park View 4U, Woodlands Road, Ansdell, Lytham Hall and Fairhaven Lake

THE RIVERS: The route gives good views of the **River Ribble** and the daily cycle of its estuary, as it flows in to the Irish Sea.

Drainage of Lytham Moss began in the C17th, eventually forming **Liggard Brook**, the **Main Drain**, and their tributaries. Liggard Brook is fed by surface water drains (and some combined sewers) as it passes through the town. It flows into the Ribble, along with Main Drain, at the Lytham Dock a little further east. This was where the Ribble Pilots' had their first land base, meeting ships at the Nelson Buoy and guiding them into the docks at Preston. For more information about this, take a look at our 'Riversway Docklands' route guide and its associated digital walk guide available with the Ribble Life app.



WILDLIFE: The estuary is a fantastic place to see migrating birds as they meet our shoreline. Its combination of wetland, mud and sand flats, sand dunes and saltmarsh make it an internationally important roosting site for wading birds, wildfowl, terns and other migrating species. Care is needed to avoid disturbing them during their much needed rest. It is classed as a Special Protection Area, National Nature Reserve and RAMSAR Wetland of International Importance. These habitats support shellfish and insects that provide a valuable food source for resident and visiting birds.



Oystercatcher

The mixing of salt water and river water makes these brackish waters home to sole, flounder and plaice. Porpoises and grey seals can be sighted and blooms of moon jellyfish even bring turtles to this coast. The area is also rich with flora specific to sand dunes and salt marshes, including samphire.

WHAT TO EXPECT: Vast open skies and wide panoramas spanning out to the Irish Sea and across the estuary to Southport can be enjoyed on a clear day. The flat landscape here contrasts greatly with the mountains of the Yorkshire Dales where the River Ribble begins. This route meanders gently around 'leafy Lytham' to discover hints of the area's past.



LOOK OUT FOR: (see points on the map)

1. The **Lytham Windmill** was a flour mill and is open to the public in the summer. It used wheat and oats from the surrounding flat farmland of the Lancashire Amounderness Plain. The drainage of the original marsh, or 'mossland', for agriculture has shaped the landscape as it stands today. The earliest records of this drainage date back to medieval times, relating to Benedictine Monks who lived in Lytham Priory (which was built on the land that today sites Lytham Hall).



Lytham windmill



Lytham Hall's entrance

2. Beneath the playing-fields and Ballam Road **water pumping station** lies a storm water storage tank .

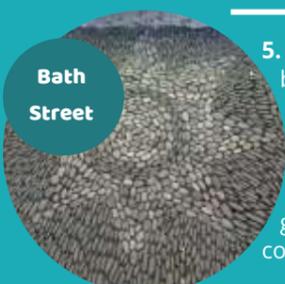
3. The Clifton family, who lived in **Lytham Hall** from the C17th, played a major role in the drainage of the 'moss land' for agriculture.

4. The Clifton family, of Lytham Hall, rode down Church Drive (intersecting **Witch Wood**) to St Cuthbert's Church. The gravestone marks the resting place of a family horse - 'The Witch'.



The Witch's grave

The Lytham St Annes Civic Society maintain the route through the woodland. The town is locally known as 'leafy Lytham', owing to its greenery.



Bath Street

5. **Cobble walls and pavements** can still be seen around the town. In the absence of alternative materials, cobbles from the estuary have been used for hundreds of years to create various structures. The Clifton family granted permission to extract the cobbles which are now much depleted.

6. The RSPB's **Ribble Discovery Centre** at **Fairhaven Lake** is a great place to hear about the latest wildlife sightings in the area. Also look out for the **Lytham Spitfire**.

7. Small fishing vessels still enter the estuary at the **slipway**.

8. The town's former **mussel tanks** are situated near the windmill, one of which has been newly refurbished by Lytham St Annes Civic Society as a public open space. The others now accommodating the Ribble Cruising (sailing) Club and **RNLI lifeboat station**. The station houses a small visitor centre where you can view their lifeboat. For further details and photographs of the mussel tanks, please see the reverse. Lytham Green, the strip of grass that you have walked along-side was built as a sea defence after a severe storm in 1720.

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The Ribble Catchment

You are here



Follow us:



This route celebrates the link between the river and sea, taking in Liggard Brook, the Ribble Estuary and railway. In the 1800s, Lytham was a small fishing village with a few cottages. It grew with the industrial revolution, along with the rest of the Fylde coastline, as the railways allowed easier access to the coast from the surrounding area and towns for workers.



This walk has been created by Ribble Rivers Trust as part of a series of circular routes for the Ribble Life Together project. Scan the QR code to find out more or visit www.ribbonlifealtogether.org

- Follow the Countryside Code: consider wildlife and other users
- Carry spare food and drinks
- Take a charged mobile phone, first aid kit, map and compass
- Wear sturdy boots and clothing suitable for forecast conditions

Enjoy safely

- Lancashire Coastal Footpath
- Longton Marsh.
- The Ribble Way—leads along the south side of the Ribble to

Nearby trails

Ribble Life Together is working to create a healthier river system by 2020 for people and wildlife. The project celebrates the heritage of the rivers, improving access and using the river to inspire and educate. Through practical environmental action, based on science, we aim to leave a positive legacy for future generations.

River Walks Ribble Estuary



Distance: 8.4 km / 5.2 miles

Difficulty: Gentle

Thank you!

ROUTE DIRECTIONS

A. The Lytham Windmill

From Lytham Windmill (1), head away from the estuary crossing East Beach and heading up Station Road – **for safety, use the zebra crossing at the mini roundabout.** Continue up Station Road, passing the Railway Hotel and Booths Supermarket. Cross the railway bridge and continue to a mini-roundabout.

B. Park View 4U

Turn left into the Queen Elizabeth II Park View 4U playing fields at the gates.

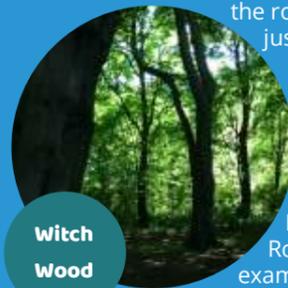
Follow the path through the park with the play areas on your left and the BMX track on your right. Cross over the bridge and exit the car park turning left onto Ballam Road (2).



Park View 4U

C. Witch Wood

Continue along Ballam Road. Keep left at the mini-roundabout and Lytham Hall's entrance (3) on your right. Cross at the zebra crossing and continue down the right-hand side of the road, turning right into Witch Wood (4) just before the railway bridge.



Witch Wood

Follow the path through the wood for approximately 1.6km (1 mile), passing Lytham Hall Park Primary School on your right and crossing another path through a pair of gates. Exit the wood to the B5261 Blackpool Road. Here, you can see a good example of the cobble walls (5).

D. To Fairhaven

Taking care, cross Blackpool Road and head down Bridge Road, bearing right to Oxford Road. [After around 500m, and before the road turns right, take the flight of steps up to Woodlands Road.] *(For a more accessible route, see the * below and green dashed line on the map.)*

* Follow Oxford Road as it bears right. Turn left on Rossall Road, then left to Woodlands Road with the Ansdell Institute on your right. Continue up the hill and over the railway bridge, past the steps leading up from Oxford Road.

Cross the road to the taxi rank and turn left. Continue gently downhill along the road, passing Fairhaven Methodist Church, until you reach the mini-roundabout at the junction with Clifton Drive. Cross the road, using the zebra crossing, and turn left, passing the tramway shelter (restored by Lytham St. Annes Civic Society) as you turn right down Marine Drive. Cross Inner Promenade towards the lake.



Tramway passenger shelter

E. Around Fairhaven Lake

Reach Fairhaven Lake (6) through the concrete gateposts down a ramp to the lake. Pass the public toilets on your left and continue around the lake, passing the RSPB centre, boat ticket office, café, play area, crazy golf, tennis courts and skate park towards the Lytham Spitfire. Continue up to the car park and walk towards the estuary.



Lytham Spitfire

F. Along the front

Exit the car park and follow the footpath to the left along the seafront, heading east and 'upriver'.

Follow the coastal path past Fairhaven Lake and cross Granny's Bay along the sand, before joining the coastal footpath again at the junction between Inner Promenade and Ansdell Road South.

Continue along the coastal path by Lytham Green, passing Lowther Gardens and the slipway (7). A short way further along the promenade, you will pass the refurbished mussel tank (8), Ribble Cruising Club and the RNLI Lifeboat Centre before arriving back at the Lytham Windmill.



Slipway



Looking out to the estuary

The changing face of the River Ribble's mouth

The channel's course has changed greatly, through both natural and human processes. It is an accreting (growing) coast as more sediment is building up than wearing away.

In the C19th, the Port of Preston was constructed to trade and transport goods, including those used in the textile industry. The build-up of silt and sand posed a challenge. So, to enable sea vessels to navigate to the docks, the River Ribble was dredged. This resulted in a deeper, narrower and straighter river channel. Training walls were also constructed to delineate the channel and reduce siltation.

Dredging ended here shortly before the docks closed in 1981, and the effects can already be seen. As deposits of silt and sand build, without removal, salt marshes are redeveloping and meanders are reappearing in the channel.



Sand dunes

Ribble Rivers Trust projects (see map points)

A key concern here is water quality, due to faecal matter from farming and private sewage systems. Through the Tidal Ribble project, land-owners, schools and communities are working to improve the quality of the bathing and shellfish waters for all to enjoy. The project is also increasing awareness of the litter washing up on the estuary's shores, mostly originating from the land and travelling to this area via our network of rivers.

Following consultation with the community, Ribble Rivers Trust commissioned a sculpture of a mussel by Martyn Bednarczyk. The sculpture, which celebrates the important shellfish waters around these shores, is situated in the refurbished mussel tank.

8. Lytham mussel tanks continued

Used until the 1940s to purge mussels from the polluted coastal waters, one of the former tanks now houses the RNLI centre and another the Ribble Cruising Club. The Civic Society have re-developed the third tank for the public to enjoy and discover more about the site's heritage.



Historical use of the tanks



Tank refurbished in 2018

