

# LYDSTEP



*Naws am Le  
Sense of Place*

## ***Location and Name***

Lydstep straddles the border of Manorbier and Penally. The name means an inlet or bay and recalls Viking raids on this coast a thousand years ago or more. Lyd may have been a personal name.

## ***Prehistory***

Occasionally remnants of a submerged forest are visible at the north end of Lydstep Haven and finds now at Tenby Museum indicate that people roamed over the former land surface, perhaps 6000 years ago.

The 'long stone' which used to stand just east of the parish boundary in the field behind the Palace, may have been a Bronze Age monolith.

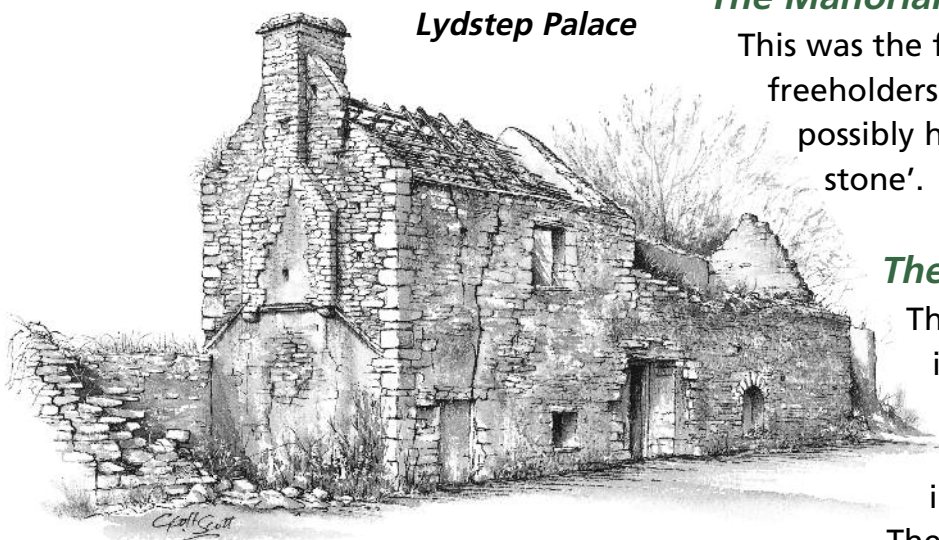
Occupation during the Iron Age is suggested by a promontory fort about half a mile south of the village at Skomar. Earthworks on Lydstep Point were destroyed by quarrying in the 19th century.

## ***Celts, Welsh and Normans***

The descendants of the Iron Age Celts were dominant here until the end of the 11th century, and there may have been a holding or holdings of high status. The Normans arrived in the late 11th century and the Cantref of Penfro was re-organised as the Lordship of Pembroke

## ***The Manor of Manorbier and Penally***

Held by various individuals in medieval and Tudor times, in 1601 it was leased by Queen Elizabeth I to Thomas Bowen esq. of Trefloyne in Penally. In 1670 another Thomas Bowen, conveyed the manor to Sir Erasmus Philipps of Picton Castle.



***Lydstep Palace***

## ***The Manorial Court of Longstone***

This was the fortnightly court of the freeholders of Manorbier and Penally, possibly held near the Lydstep 'long stone'.

## ***The Palace***

This medieval building, has intrigued countless passers-by; the name 'Palace' seems to suggest connections of importance.

The Palace is now owned by the County Council. The structure of the building was analysed by N D Ludlow of Cambria Archaeology who describes it as 'a fine example of a first floor hall-house over a vaulted basement'. Towards the end of the medieval period a latrine block was built on the north-west corner. There were post-medieval alterations and additions but there was a decline in the status of the building. In 1841 it was the residence of two agricultural labourers and their families, and so it continued.

## ***The Palace and its Land***

A strip of fields in Penally Parish extending northwards from the Palace, seem to constitute its former land. It was already under the ownership of the same family as Norchard (in Manorbier) which it bordered, by 1699.

***House or houses formerly on the site of Home Farm, re-drawn from a view by EL Barnwell, 1867 - since demolished***

## ***Other Houses***

In 1811, the antiquary Richard Fenton, having commented on a house in Penally, continued 'to the east and south-east on to Ludstep the country was formerly thickly studded with houses above the rank of such as farmers might have been supposed to inhabit most of them being surrounded with a court, and entered by an arched gateway...'

The 19th century antiquary and artist E L Barnwell recorded an ancient house (or possibly two houses) in the approximate location of

Lydstep Home Farm. It was demolished about 1908.

## ***The Lydstep Farms***

There were five properties called Lydstep - variously spelt. To use 1786 as an anchor date, there were West 'Lydstop' (the Palace) and Lydstep Farm (Home Farm), in Penally Parish. In Manorbier were the future Lydstep House owned by John Adams esq. and occupied by 'Widow' Teague, also a much smaller property owned and

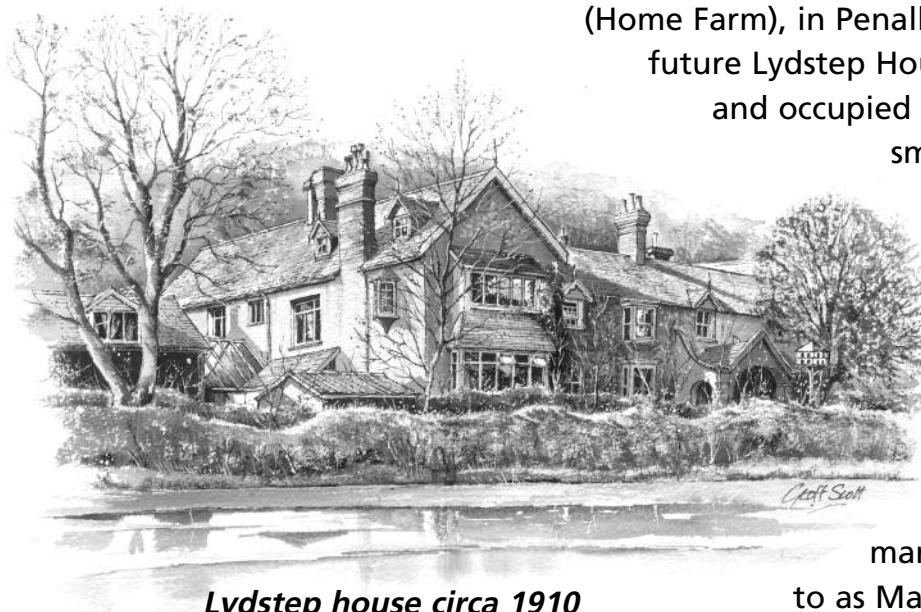
occupied by Widow Teague (could this have been Court Farm?) and a farm owned by Lord Milford of Picton Castle. This, acquired as part of the Trefloyne Estate, had particular status as the property of the lord of the manor, and was sometimes referred

to as Manor Farm. 'Lydstep Farm' and

'Manor Farm' were in a continuity of

ownership since the early 17th Century, but the 'Haven'/'Lydstep House' was a recent Adams purchase from the Stackpole Estate.

***Lydstep house circa 1910***



## **The Haven**

The property of the Adams family for over a century, it was often let to tenants. The house did not merit any particular comment. In 1856 P H Gosse wrote, 'we pull across Lidstep Bay - a shingle beach, backed by low, green hills and fields, with a few farmhouses'. Quarrying in progress, would have diminished the attractions of the property, but in 1841 it had a Lodge on the approach lane from the village.

### **Quarrying**

The first large-scale OS map shows two or three old quarries to the north of the village and an old lime kiln a field's distance from the road just north-east of Lydstep Cottage. Other old quarries are

***The brigantine 'Express' of  
Barnstaple loading limestone on  
Lydstep beach circa 1870***

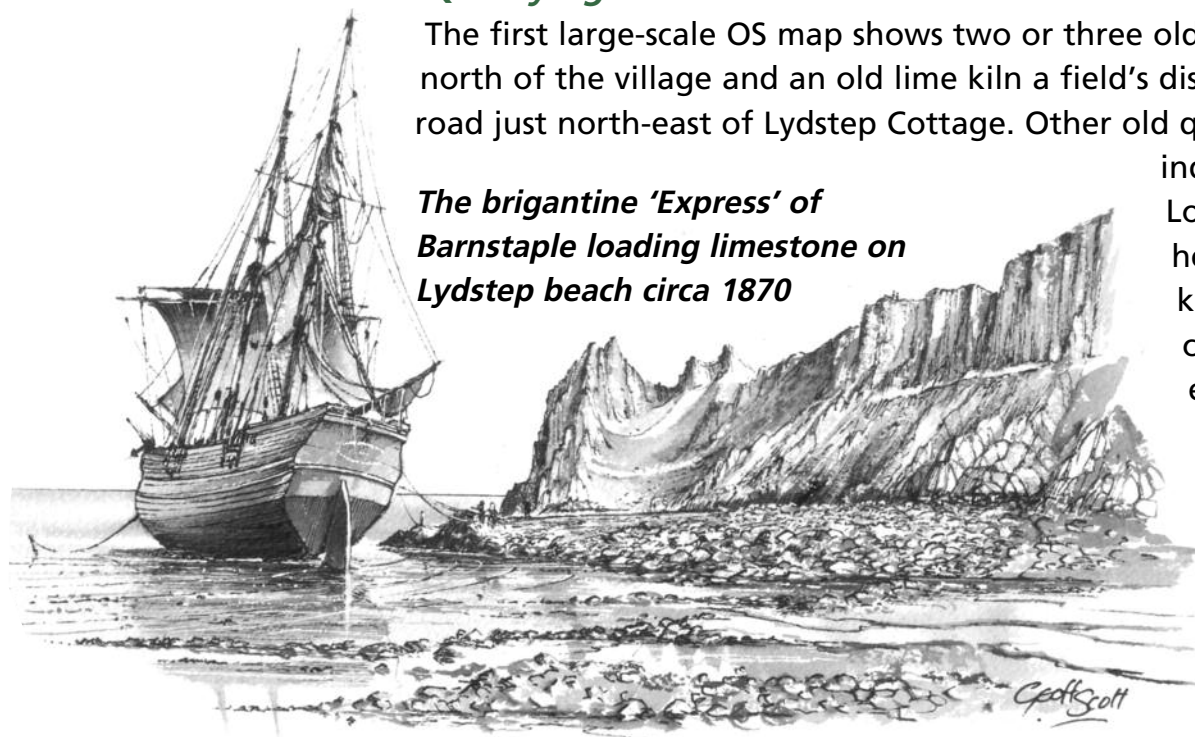
indicated near South Lodge and on the headland. It is not known when commercial exploitation at the Point began, but the picture which emerges is of the stones being conveyed in trucks over a tramway on the flat of the quarry

to the edge of a cliff, and of a device involving a frame to lower the stones on to the vessels, which, although of up to one hundred and thirty tons would lie in close underneath the cliffs for loading. This was a summer trade and boats came from other parts of Wales (Cardigan is named) and North Devon (for example Bideford).

### **John Wynford Philipps - Viscount St Davids**

In the last decade of the 19th century Lydstep House and other property was purchased by John Wynford Philipps and his first wife Nora (Gerstenberg). Lydstep House was extended, a new drive constructed and hundreds of trees planted. The village was enlarged to accommodate workmen and servants.

A new house was built at Lydstep Farm (which became Home Farm) and the Lodges and a Reading Room constructed. The red pantiles which were part of the style can still be seen. Mrs Philipps/Lady Nora had a deep commitment to a variety of causes in London, Wales and the local area. Her constructive approach emerges very clearly in the nine numbers which appeared of 'Our Village Society Chronicle' (Manorbier, Penally, St Florence and Gumfreston) from January 1913. Mr Philipps, the eldest son of Rev Canon Sir James Erasmus Philipps 12th Baronet of Picton, in due course succeeded his father as 13th Baronet. A Liberal MP, elevated to the House of Lords in 1908 as Lord St Davids, he was created Viscount in 1918. He suffered the death of Lady St Davids, and the loss of their two sons in action in 1915 and 1916. A son and daughter were born of his second marriage.



*Main Street circa 1900*



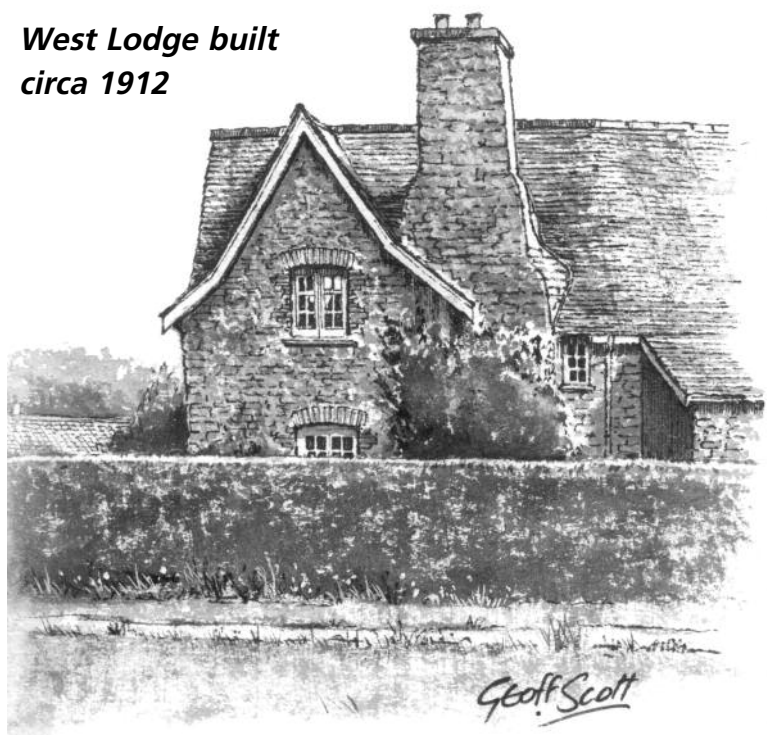
### ***Lydstep House Recalled***

A member of the local history group recalls that a relative of his, Maurice (Morris) Davies of Lydstep son of Edward Davies, was bound apprentice to Thomas Davies of Manorbier, Builder and Cabinet Maker, for five years from 24 May 1899 and that during his apprenticeship they worked at Lydstep House.

### ***Departure and Change***

In 1926 Lydstep Haven Estate was for sale. Following the departure of Lord and Lady St Davids, Lydstep Haven House was occupied first by the Earl of Essex and then by Colonel John Edward Grimble Groves. After the war Mr Harry Victor Thomas opened it as a guest house and introduced the first caravans. His son, Mr David Thomas, sold it to Pontins in 1982. It is now a Bourne Leisure Holiday Complex.

***West Lodge built  
circa 1912***



### ***World War II***

The army requisitioned houses and built Nissen huts at Lydstep Haven. Most of Lydstep House was also given over to the use of the Anti-Aircraft School at Manorbier. In 'The Girls Behind the Guns: With the ATS in World War II', Dorothy Brewer Kerr, recalls work with radar, computing in the library of Lydstep House, quarters in a Nissen hut, and the warmth and welcome to be found in Mrs Walters' cafe.

## **Meeting Places and Inns**

Mrs Walters' cafe is now part of the Lydstep Tavern where the local history group met. Lydstep has never had a church, chapel or school and the Reading Room is now a residence (Sea View).

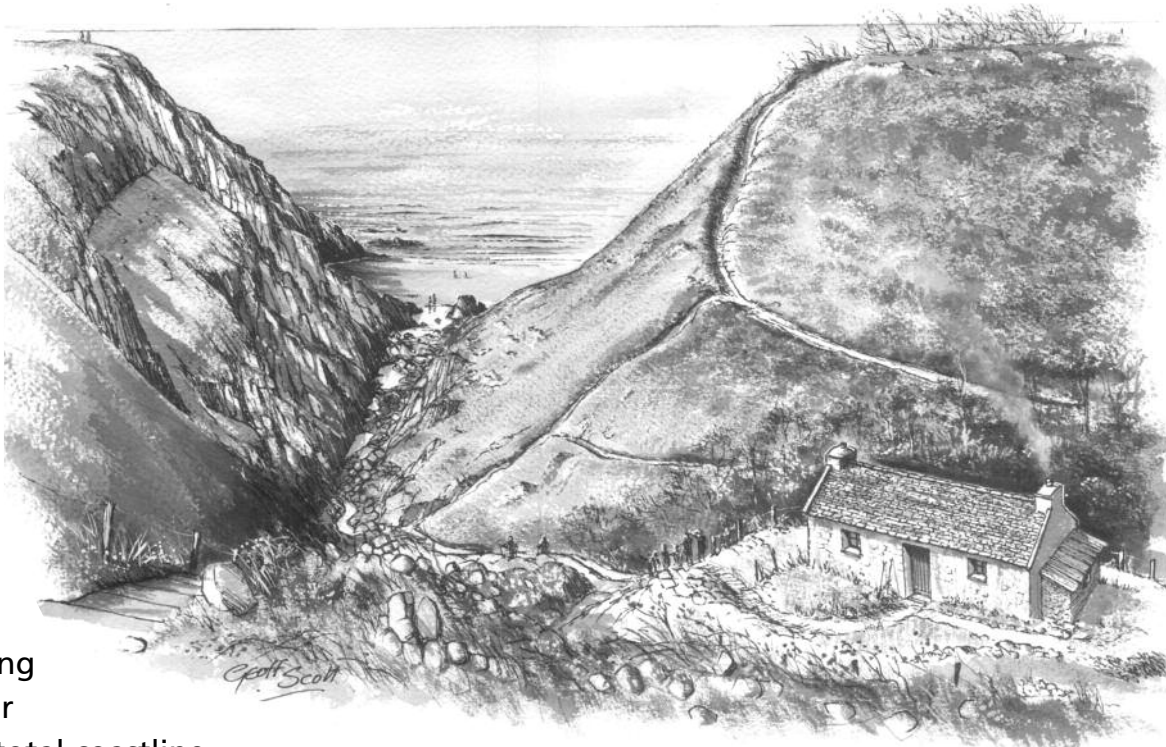
In 1851 John Twigg was innkeeper of the Quarry Hotel on or very near the site of the present inn. Described variously as The Quarry Hotel, Quarry Inn and the Quarry, the public house was kept for a long period at the end of the 19th century by Andrew Nicholl but by 1906 it had ceased to exist, apparently in an attempt to prevent workers drinking their wages. A Trade Directory of 1910 lists a Temperance Hotel kept by Henry Fair, sub-postmaster. The inn was re-opened as the Lydstep Tavern on 4 July, 1974.

## **The Shore**

Wonders of Lydstep Bay were caverns called the Cave of Beauty, the Tower cave, the Drot (local pronunciation of Droch or Draught) and the Smugglers Cave.

Mrs F P Gwynne in her 'Guide to Tenby' mentioned Betsy Brinn who with her child lived in the guide's cottage and would show visitors the caves and the route along the Highlands round the entire peninsula and back to the Ivy Lodge. (Betsy Brinn and her daughter were living at Drot in 1871).

Above the beach at the eastern end, a few yards away from the path, there used to be a cross-stone in memory of J Cockburn Thompson who was drowned while bathing on 26th May 1860.



## **National Trust**

In 1936 Lydstep headland consisting of about fifty four acres and with a total coastline of one and a quarter miles was acquired by the National Trust from J L Adams, W G Wynne and F George Loring.

***Betsy Brinn's Cottage, now demolished, in the valley above Lydstep Caverns Beach***

## **Lydstep Point-to-Point**

Point to point horse races began in 1947, the main one being the South Pembrokeshire Hunt on Easter Monday.

## ***Walks and Wildlife***

The walk to Lydstep Point, owned by the National Trust, is mostly level and affords excellent views.

Lydstep caves involve a steep climb down and a scramble over the rocks. Check the tide tables; the caverns can only be reached at low tide. For

a longer walk, head north to Norchard Farm and over the Ridgeway to St Florence. You could return using the Ritec Walk to Penally and back along the Pembrokeshire Coast Path.

Along the coast path enjoy typical limestone scenery and flora. On sea-facing slopes, look out for salt tolerant plants such as Sea Beet, Rock Samphire, Sea Lavender and Thrift. In spring a wide range of seabirds nest on the cliffs and you may spot a Peregrine Falcon. Overhead, look out for Buzzards and Kestrels.



## **Country Code**

### **Respect • Protect • Enjoy**

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Text researched and written by Lydstep Local History Group  
in conjunction with Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

Design by Waterfront Graphics

Illustrations by Geoff Scott & Neil Ludlow

SPARC ©