

Introduction

Contacts

Brixham HM tel 01803 853321 VHF #14 (c/s "Brixham Harbour Radio")

Brixham Marina tel 01803 882929 VHF #80 (c/s "Brixham Marina")

Brixham Yacht Club tel 01803 853332

Brixham, is a busy fishing harbour, and with the trawlers come the seagulls, the fish quays, and all the noise and bustle of a busy working port. It also serves as an important station for the Channel pilots, with large vessels regularly entering Torbay to pick up or drop off. There are also many angling boats and tripper boats plying their trade, while the marina caters for visiting boats.

Brixham is now one of the main fishing ports in England, although large steel trawlers now replace the traditional sailing craft developed in this area, the famous Brixham trawlers. Some of these powerful gaff rig ketches worked as far afield as the North Sea. There are still some Brixham trawlers working, but nowadays as charter or sail training vessels.

Brixham Marina was opened in 1989, is safe and easy to enter and Brixham is becoming an increasingly popular port of call for pleasure boats. The half mile long Victorian breakwater, with white lighthouse at the end provides protection from the easterly quadrant, but the outer harbour can get a bit lumpy in a north-westerly blow. However the berths in the Marina are sheltered by wavescreen. .

The town is steep too, and the colourful cottages seem to fall right down to the water's edge, all in all a very pretty, picturesque place, where the passing yachtsman can stock up, water up, and get repairs and spares, as well as taking in the ambience of the place.

A regeneration project was in the pipeline, involving a northern breakwater, land reclamation, revitalisation of the centre, and improved transport. Maybe. An application has been put in for funds for this but it may only be to improve facilities for landing fish.

Entry to the harbour is safe in all weather and tides, and there's plenty of depth.

Approach

Approach and entry to Brixham Harbour is relatively simple for the yachtsman or motorboater.

It is a requirement that all vessels within the harbour limits of Torbay Harbour should monitor #14 and call for clearance to enter or leave any of the harbours within those limits

Victoria Breakwater lies just over 1 mile west of Berry head. It has a white lighthouse at the outer end (Oc R 15s) and needs to be given a wide berth when approaching. It is best to put yourself in a position where you can see what's emerging as large trawlers can often leave the harbour at some speed.

As you enter the harbour keep to the starboard side of the fairway which is clearly marked by port hand (FI R) and starboard hand (FI G) buoys. This fairway leads straight to the Marina on your port side, and the fish quays to starboard. At night the fairway is covered by the white sector of the light (Dir Iso WGR 5s) which is at the southern end of the harbour. (See chart). The fairway is about 75 m wide and must be kept clear at all times.

The harbour authorities can be contacted on VHF channel 14 callsign "BRIXHAM HARBOUR" telephone 01803 851854, and the Marina is on VHF channel 80, or telephone 01803 882929 or mobile 07740 806034.

Berthing

Do not anchor in the clearly marked fairway or close to the breakwater,

..... although not marked as a fairway, this is used by the lifeboat. Although large the harbour is crowded with moorings, and the only place to lie to your own anchor is to seaward of the moorings.

Alternatively just to the west of the harbour, Fishcombe Cove is sheltered from the south and west, although not so convenient for the town. It has a small sandy beach, toilets and refreshments, and it is free to anchor here.

There are three possibilities for berthing within the harbour, Brixham Marina, the Yacht club, and the Town Pontoons.

Most visitors make straight for the Marina, which has 30 visitors berths, and is protected somewhat from the North West by its wavescreen. Vessels over 18 m, need to make prior arrangements with the Marina dock master. Charges (2022) are £4.40 per metre per night up to 12.5 metres, £5.60 per metre per night up to 18m and £6.25 per metre per night up to 24m. (These prices are the same as the big MDL marinas in the Solent) These prices include water and electricity ; there is an "Events" pontoon with neither shore power or water at £3.40 per meter per night up to 12.5 meters and £4.00 per metre per night over that. All facilities available. Call them on VHF channel 80 (callsign Brixham Marina) or telephone 01803 882929, with a link to their site below:

<http://www.mdlmarinas.co.uk/mdl-brixham-marina/>

The town pontoon adjacent to the Marina visitors pontoon provides a base for historic sailing vessels including remaining examples of the famous Brixham trawlers. There is only limited berthing for visitors, and berths are allocated by draft in clearly indicated spots (check with the Harbour Authority). Usually you will have to raft out. Prices (2022) are unchanged from last year and are dependent on length with under 5.5m boats being charged at £12.00 per night, and over 5.5m 2.00 per meter per night stay three nights and get the fourth night free; so it is worth checking with them before you make straight for the Marina, **if there is room they are quite happy to take you**. There is no charge for short stays of up to 2 hours and shore power (extra charge) can be organised through the harbour office. The harbour office listens on VHF channel 16, with working on channel 14 callsign Brixham Harbour Radio, telephone 01803 853321. Link to their website below:

<http://www.tor-bay-harbour.co.uk/brixham/>

Brixham Yacht Club , telephone 01803 853332 has two 10 m isolated pontoons immediately off the club. These are primarily for use of club members, but two visitors berths are reserved and you may be able to raft up on these. at a daily rate of £20 per boat.(payable at the bar as they do not have a Bosun at the moment) It is a very short hop in the dingy ashore from these pontoons. During the summer the club runs a water taxi service, mainly to service yachts on moorings. Link to website below:

<http://www.brixhamyachtclub.com>

The inner Harbour dries totally, and is reserved for local vessels. The deepwater fishing harbour is barred to yachts. There are some scrubbing grids around the inner harbour that can be booked at the harbour office.

Facilities

Freshwater available at the marina or from New Pier, see the detailed chart. Diesel available from the end of pontoon C at the marina. Coin-operated launderettes and good showers at the marina as well as rubbish disposal facilities. Showers also available at the yacht club. Camping and Calor gas available at the Chandlers, close to the Marina.

Brixham Yacht Club welcomes visitors, and great views of the harbour can be seen from their bar high above on the cliff. They have helpful staff welcoming members and a restaurant open for dinner. The club has an unusual burgee which includes a crown with an orange. This is based on the landing of Prince William of Orange in Brixham when he set out to restore the throne of England to Protestantism.(See history section) The club was not around then of course, being formed in 1937....

The harbour area is always bustling with activity, and the main town has all facilities, banks, pubs, restaurants etc. There is a replica of Drake's Golden Hind moored in the inner Harbour and also a platform where you can watch the trawlers unloading their catch. The tourist information Centre telephone 01803 211211, is located on the inner Quayside.

The town very much retains its fishing village character based around the drying inner harbour. The main shopping centre is located in Fore Street, set in a valley leading inland from the harbour. Here you will find banks, supermarkets, etc.

For the boat, most things can be found in this town, including marine engineering Chandlers and repairs. (See the business directory).

For the trailer Sailer, there are four places around town to launch and recover. The Strand, Brixham Harbour, is located at the inner drying harbour with access at about one quarter of the tidal range. Mainly suitable for smaller boats and use at higher tides. Oxen Cove, underneath the yacht club is available for about half the tidal range, and consists of a wide concrete ramp leading into the outer harbour. The Breakwater Slipway, is usable at any state of the tide but the lower part of the slipway is steep. This large slipway was built for embarking troops and vehicles for the D-Day landings. Report to the Harbour master's office before using the ramp. Launching might also be possible at the marina. Jetskis may not be allowed to use these ramps, check with the harbour authorities.

Transport.... buses run to Torquay and Paignton, for railway connections, and there is also a fast and frequent ferry to Torquay.

What To Do

Unsurprisingly many of the restaurants in the town specialise in seafood, and you can find a good selection of them in the business directory, together with Indian, Chinese, Vegetarian and good old fish and chips!

[THE 10 BEST Restaurants & Places to Eat in Brixham 2022 - Tripadvisor](#)

There are plenty of pubs around the town to choose from, most of which serve food, and they will also be found in the directory.

[Brixham pubs and bars:](#)

For the energetic in need of a good walk, Bury Head National Nature Reserve, offers fantastic views of Tor Bay from the south-west coastal footpath. There are two Napoleonic Forts that were built to protect the Naval Anchorage, World War II defences, Lighthouse, Coastguard lookout and a cafe.

The replica Golden Hinde ship in the drying harbour is worth a look, as is the Brixham Heritage Museum, New Road, Brixham, telephone 01803 856267.

Local Tourist Office

<http://www.englishriviera.co.uk/site/about-the-area/brixham>

History

As you explore this harbour you may wonder about the heavy concrete launching ramps seen here and in many other harbours near by. These were built to load tanks and other armaments into landing vessels preparing for the D Day assault on Utah Beach. Thousands of young American servicemen were billeted in the area and were training hard for the forthcoming attack.

A terrible and devastating incident occurred in the early hours of 28 April 1944.... Exercise Tiger (a full-scale rehearsal for the Utah beach landings) was well underway off the Devon coast when German E Boats fell upon the unsuspecting Americans. In the ensuing carnage two landing craft were sunk, one was badly damaged and 749 American servicemen (many of them teenagers) lost their lives. This was more than four times the casualties suffered than the actual D-Day assault on Utah beach. This tragedy was researched and publicised by a British man, Ken Small (sadly now dead). With the help of local residents he managed to salvage a Sherman tank and set

it up as a War Memorial to those poor lads who perished that dreadful night. The website below covers this incident fully, with pictures and plenty of input from people who were there at the time:

<http://www.mikekemble.com/ww2/tiger1.html>

The text below gives the bare facts:

In late 1943, as part of the war effort, the British Government evacuated approximately 3000 local residents in the area of Slapton, South Hams District of Devon. Some of them had never left their villages before.

Landing exercises had started in December 1943. Exercise Tiger was one of the larger exercises that would take place in April and May 1944. The make up of Slapton Beach was selected for its similarity to Utah beach, namely a gravel beach, followed by a strip of land and then a lake.

The exercise was to last from 22 April until 30 April 1944, at the Slapton Sands beach in Slapton, South Devon. On board nine large Tank landing ships (LSTs), the 30,000 troops prepared for their mock beach landing.

Protection for the exercise area came from the Royal Navy. Two destroyers, three Motor Torpedo Boats and two Motor Gun Boats patrolled the entrance to Lyme Bay and Motor Torpedo Boats were watching the Cherbourg area where German E-boats were based.

The first practice took place on the morning of 27 April. These proceeded successfully, but then early in the morning of 28 April, German E-boats that had left Cherbourg on patrol spotted a convoy of 8 LSTs carrying vehicles and combat engineers of the 1st Engineer Special Brigade in Lyme Bay and attacked. One of these E-Boats was S-130 now in dry dock in Plymouth UK. One transport caught fire and was abandoned, a second sank shortly after being torpedoed, a third was set on fire but eventually made it back to shore. The remaining ships and their escort fired back and the E-boats made no more attacks.

The attack caused over 600 casualties, compared to only about 200 in the Utah Beach invasion. 638 servicemen were killed - 441 U.S. Army and 197 U.S. Navy personnel. Many servicemen drowned in the cold sea waters while waiting to be rescued. Soldiers unused to being at sea panicked and put on their lifebelts incorrectly. In some cases this meant that when they jumped into the water, the weight of their combat packs flipped them onto their backs, pushing their heads underwater and drowning them. Dale Rodman, who travelled on LST 507, commented "The worst memory I have is setting off in the lifeboat away from the sinking ship and watching bodies float by."

Of the two ships assigned to protect the convoy, only one was present. HMS Azalea, a corvette was leading the nine LSTs in a straight line, a formation which later drew criticism since it presented an easy target to the E-boats. The second boat which was supposed to be present, HMS Scimitar, a World War I destroyer, had checked into Plymouth for minor repairs. The American forces had not been told this. When other British ships sighted the E-boats earlier in the night and told the corvette, its commander failed to tell the LST convoy, assuming incorrectly that they had already been told. This did not happen because the LSTs and British naval headquarters were operating on different frequencies. Also, British shore batteries defending Salcombe Harbour had seen silhouettes of the E-boats but had been instructed to hold fire so the Germans would not find that Salcombe was defended.

When the remaining LSTs landed on Slapton Beach, the blunders continued. The British heavy cruiser HMS Hawkins shelled the beach with live ammunition, following an order made by General Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, who felt that the men must be hardened by exposure to real battle conditions. British marines on the boat recorded in its log book (the only log which has since been recovered from any of the boats) that men were being killed by friendly fire. "On the beaches they had a white tape line beyond which the Americans should not cross until the live firing had finished. But the Marines said they were going straight through the white tape line and getting blown up".

Aftermath

As a result of official embarrassment and concerns over possible leaks just prior to the real invasion, all survivors were sworn to secrecy by their superiors. Ten missing officers involved in the exercise had Bigot-level clearance for D-Day, meaning that they knew the invasion plans and could have compromised the invasion should they have been captured alive. As a result, the invasion was nearly called off until the bodies of all ten victims were found.

There is little information about how exactly individual soldiers and sailors died. Various eyewitness accounts detail

hasty treatment of casualties and unmarked mass graves in Devon fields.

Several changes resulted from mistakes made in Exercise Tiger:

Radio frequencies were standardised; the British escort vessels were late and out of position due to radio problems, and a signal of the E-boats' presence was not picked up by the LSTs. Better life vest training for landing troops. New plans for small craft to pick up floating survivors on D-Day. The casualty statistics from Tiger were not released until August 1944 along with the casualties of the actual D-Day landings themselves.

There is still very little documentation in official histories about the tragedy. Some commentators have called it a cover-up, but the initial critical secrecy about Tiger may have merely resulted in longer-term quietness. In his book *The Forgotten Dead - Why 946 American Servicemen Died Off The Coast Of Devon In 1944 - And The Man Who Discovered Their True Story*, published in 1988, Ken Small declares that the event "was never covered up; it was 'conveniently forgotten'". Charles B. MacDonald, author and former deputy chief historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History, notes that the incident was reported in a press release issued from the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, and appeared in the July issue of *Stars and Stripes*. In addition, the story was detailed in at least three books at the end of the war, including, Captain Harry C. Butcher's *My Three Years With Eisenhower* (1946), and in several publications and speeches in the intervening years. MacDonald surmises that the press release went largely unnoticed in light of the larger events that were occurring at the time, the battle for France in the summer of 1944, and the fact that they were just glad that the war was over in 1946.

Memorials to the victims

With little or no support from the American or British armed forces for any venture to recover remains or dedicate a memorial to the incident, Devon resident and civilian Ken Small took on the task of seeking to memorialize the event, after discovering evidence of the aftermath washed up on the shore while beachcombing in the early 1970s.

In 1974, Mr. Small bought from the U.S. Government the rights to a submerged tank from the 70th Tank Battalion discovered by his search efforts. In 1984, with the aid of local residents and diving firms, he finally raised the tank, which now stands as a memorial to the incident. The local authority provided a plinth on the seafront to put the tank on, and erected a plaque in memory of those men killed.

Ken Small died of cancer in March 2004, a few weeks before the 60th anniversary of the Exercise Tiger incident.

In 2006, the Slapton Sands Memorial Tank Limited (a non-profit organization, one of whose directors is Mr. Small's son Dean) are seeking to establish a more prominent memorial listing the names of all the victims of the attacks on Exercise Tiger.

A radio play 'The Tank Man' by Julia Stoneham, describing Ken Small's efforts was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 24th October 2007. Ken documents how the local villagers were of more assistance than either the US or UK military officials. Later the American military honored and supported him, when at the same time the UK military were snubbing his efforts.

Exercise Tiger recently formed the basis of the last episode of the BBC Series *Foyle's War*.

Brixham History

Although there is evidence of Ice age inhabitants here, and probable trading in the Bronze age, the first evidence of a town comes from Saxon times. It is possible that Saxon settlement originated by sea from Hampshire in the sixth century, or overland around the year 800.

Brixham was called Briseham in the Domesday Book. Its population then was 39.

Brixham was part of the former Haytor Hundred. The population was 3,671 in 1801 and 8,092 in 1901. In 1334 the town's value was assessed at one pound, twelve shillings and eightpence; by 1524 the valuation had risen to £24 and sixteen shillings. It is recorded as a borough from 1536, and a market is recorded from 1822.

William III of Orange landed in Brixham with his Dutch army, on 5 November 1688, during the Glorious Revolution, and many local people still have Dutch surnames, being direct descendants of soldiers in that army. A road leading from the harbour up a steep hill to where the Dutch made their camp, is still called Overgang, meaning 'transition' in Dutch.

The coffin house reflects Brixham humour: it is coffin-shaped and when a father was asked for the hand in marriage of his daughter, he said he would 'see her in a coffin, before she wed'. The future son-in-law bought the coffin-shaped property, called it the Coffin House, and went back to the father and said 'Your wishes will be met,

you will see your daughter in a coffin, the Coffin House'. Amazed by this, the father gave his blessing. The street names reflect the town's history. Pump Street is where the village pump stood. Monksbridge was a bridge built by the monks of Totnes Priory. Lichfield Drive was the route that the dead (from the Anglo-Saxon 'lich' meaning a corpse) were taken for burial at St Mary's churchyard. Salutation Mews, near that church, dates from when England was Catholic, and the salutation was to the Virgin Mary. Similarly, Laywell Road recalls Our Lady's Well. The first building seen when coming into Brixham from Paignton is the old white-boarded Toll House where all travellers had to pay a fee to keep the roads repaired.

The tower of All Saints' Church, founded in 1815, stands guard over the town. The composer of Abide With Me, Rev. Francis Lyte was a vicar at the church. He lived at Berry Head House, now a hotel, and when he was a very sick man, near to dying, he looked out from his garden as dusk fell over Torbay, and the words of that hymn came into his mind.

The main church is St. Mary's, about a mile from the sea. It is the third to have been on the site (which was an ancient Celtic burial ground). The original wooden Saxon church was replaced by a stone Norman church that was in its turn built over in about 1360. Many of the important townspeople are buried in the churchyard.

Brixham was served by the short Torbay and Brixham Railway from Churston. The line, opened in February 1868 to carry passengers and goods (mainly fish), was closed in May 1963 as a result of the Beeching Axe cuts. Although the former line to Brixham is deserted and overgrown, the branch line through nearby Churston is now maintained and operated as a heritage railway by a team of volunteers as the Paignton and Dartmouth Steam Railway.

Maritime

Brixham is also notable for being the town where the fishing trawler was invented in the 19th century; their distinctive sails inspired the song "Red Sails in the Sunset", which was written aboard a Brixham sailing trawler called the Torbay Lass.

Looking west across Brixham HarbourIn the Middle Ages, Brixham was the largest fishing port in the south west of England. Known as the 'Mother of Deep-Sea Fisheries'. Its boats helped to establish the fishing industries of Hull, Grimsby and Lowestoft. In the 1890s there were about 300 trawling vessels in Brixham, most individually owned. The trawlers can still be seen coming in and out of the harbour, followed by flocks of seagulls. The fish market is open to the public on two special days in the summer, when the finer points of catching and cooking fish are explained. The modern boats are diesel-driven, but several of the old sailing trawlers have been preserved. Hundreds of ships have been wrecked on the rocks around the town. Brixham men have always known the dangers but even they were taken by surprise by a terrible storm that blew up on the night of 10th January, 1866. The fishing boats only had sails then and could not get back into harbour because gale force winds and the high waves were against them. To make things worse, the beacon on the breakwater was swept away, and in the black darkness they could not determine their position. According to local legend, their wives brought everything they could carry, including furniture and bedding, to make a big bonfire on the quayside to guide their men home. Fifty vessels were wrecked and more than one hundred lives were lost in the storm; when dawn broke the wreckage stretched for nearly three miles up the coast.

Hearing of this tragedy, the citizens of Exeter gave money to set up what became the RNLI's Torbay lifeboat, which has since rescued hundreds of people.

Since 1866, Torbay lifeboat station, located in Brixham, has operated an all-weather lifeboat. The station also has an inshore D-class lifeboat. The crews have a history of bravery, with 52 awards for gallantry. The boathouse can be visited and memorials to the brave deeds seen; on special occasions visitors can go on board the boat. Two maroons (bangs) are the signal for the lifeboat to be launched.

Smuggling was more profitable than fishing, but if the men were caught, they were hanged. There are many legends about the local gangs and how they evaded the Revenue men. One humorous poem describes how a notorious local character, Bob Elliott ("Resurrection Bob"), could not run away because he had gout and hid in a coffin. Another villain was caught in possession but evaded capture by pretending to be the Devil, rising out of the morning mists. On another occasion when there was a cholera epidemic, some Brixham smugglers drove their cargo up from the beach in a hearse, accompanied by a bevy of supposed mourners following the cortege drawn by horses with muffled hooves.

The town's outer harbour is protected by a long breakwater, useful for sea angling. In winter this is a regular site for Purple Sandpiper birds. During the Second World War, a ramp and piers were built from which American servicemen left for the D-day landings.

To the south of Brixham, and sheltering the southern side of its harbour, lies the coastal headland of Berry Head with a lighthouse, Iron Age Fort and National Nature Reserve.

Military

Warships have been seen in Torbay from the days of the Vikings up until 1944 when part of the D-Day fleet sailed

from here. In 1588 Brixham watched Sir Francis Drake attacking the Spanish Armada after he had (so the legend goes) finished his game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe. Today in Brixham harbour there is a one third-sized replica of the ship, the Golden Hind, in which Drake circumnavigated the globe; visitors can go on board.

For centuries, ships going down the English Channel have come into Torbay to seek refuge from the storms and to replenish food supplies. Sometimes these were merchants, taking cargoes to far away places and bringing back exotic goods and rare spices; sometimes they were carrying pilgrims, or gentlemen on the Grand Tour.

Since the days of Henry VIII Brixham has played a part in the defence of the nation. The headland known as Berry Head is now a National Nature Reserve, but it is also a military site where guns were once positioned to defend the naval ships that were re-victualling at Brixham. Twelve guns were put there during the War of American Independence, but were removed when peace came in 1783. Just ten years later, during a war with France, guns were again deployed around the town. The major position was at Berry Head, but this time fortifications were built to defend the gun positions. These can still be seen, and are now some of the best preserved Napoleonic forts in the country.

During the long series of wars against the French that began in 1689 and lasted until 1815, the Royal Navy came into Brixham to get supplies of fresh vegetables, beef and water. There might have been twenty or so of the big men-o'-war lying at anchor in Torbay, recovering from exploits of the sort described in the books about Hornblower, Bolitho or Jack Aubrey. On the harbourside towards the marina there is a grey stone building which today is the Coastguard headquarters; then, it was the King's Quay where His Majesty's vessels were provisioned. Local farmers brought vegetables to ward off scurvy, and cattle were slaughtered and their meat packed into barrels. The water came from a big reservoir situated near the crossroads in the middle of town; from there a pipeline carried it under the streets and under the harbour to the King's Quay.

Many of the well-known Admirals of the day visited Brixham. Not only Nelson, but also Lord St. Vincent, Cornwallis, Hood, Rodney and Hawke. There was also Earl Howe, who earned the nickname of Lord Torbay because he spent so much time ashore in Brixham. A notorious visitor was Napoleon Bonaparte, who, as a prisoner on HMS Bellerophon, spent several days off Brixham waiting to be taken to exile on St. Helena.

Battery Gardens have a military history leading back to the Napoleonic wars and the time of the Spanish Armada. The emplacements and features seen here today are those of the Second World War and are of national importance. The site, listed by English Heritage, is recognised as one of the best preserved of its kind in the UK. Of the 116 'Emergency Coastal Defence Batteries' set up in the UK in 1940, only seven remain intact.

Industrial

Apart from fishing, most of the other local industries were connected with stone. Limestone was once quarried extensively and used to build the breakwater, for houses and roads, and was sent to Dagenham to make steel for Ford cars. It was also burnt in limekilns to reduce it to a powder which was spread on the land in other parts of Devon as an agricultural fertiliser. The old quarries and the limekilns can still be seen.

Another mineral found in Brixham is ochre. This gave the old fishing boats their "Red Sails in the Sunset", but the purpose was to protect the canvas from sea water. It was boiled in great caldrons, together with tar, tallow and oak bark. The latter ingredient gave its name to the barking yards which were places where the hot mixture was painted on to the sails, which were then hung up to dry.

The ochre was also used to make a very special paint. This was invented in Brixham in about 1845 and was the first substance in the world that would stop cast iron from rusting. Other types of paint were made here as well, and the works were in existence until 1961.

There were iron mines at Brixham, and for a while they produced very high quality ore but the last one closed in 1925. Most of the sites have been built over and there are now no remains of this once important industry.

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Text_of_the_GNU_Free_Documentation_License

History of the Harbour itself is covered here

<http://www.torbytes.co.uk/aup.htm>

Old photos of Brixham

http://www.ouldukphotos.com/devon_brixham.htm