

Introduction

Paignton was once a small commercial fishing harbour, but is

.....now basically devoted to leisure. The town is roughly central in Tor Bay, and is a popular resort. In the summer it is bustling with holidaymaker activity, and could be an interesting stopover if you have a small boat that can take the ground, as the harbour dries at low tide.

Approach

Locate Roundham Head, a low red cliff with white hotels, in the middle

..... of the Torbay shoreline. You should spot Paignton Pier, and the harbour lies 1/4 mile south of this. Locate and identify the easterly cardinal lattice tower marking Black Rock (Q(3)10s),and make sure that you keep seawards of this at all times as it marks a rocky outcrop that dries 3.5 m above chart datum.
Further Pilotage and Harbour Entry.

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

Entry to this harbour is best made from a north easterly direction, and the approaches progressively dry out to a height of 1.8 m above chart datum at the visitors berths alongside the East Quay, giving depths of approximately 3 m at HW Springs, and nearly 2 m at HW Neaps. As you approach the harbour from the north-east, you should come across a unique piece of buoyage consisting of a low red metal base, topped by a flagpole which in the summer months is supposed to be flying a "N" flag, but no top mark as such. The meaning of this mark is that vessels approach this harbour keeping to the port side of the fairway, ie drive on the left. This is the opposite of normal convention, but works with this harbour as the entrance is very narrow, and by keeping to the port side of the fairway you can see what is emerging before you make your entry. The approximate position of this buoy is marked on the chart by a red dot. At close quarters the narrow harbour entrance will be seen to be marked in huge letters " DEAD SLOW".

Visitors should contact the harbour office on VHF channel 14, callsign " Paignton Harbour", for berthing instructions, further advice and permission. Berthing is limited in the harbour, and it is best to check beforehand, you can telephone the harbour on 01803 557812.

Harbour Authority
<http://www.tor-bay-harbour.co.uk/paignton/>

Berthing

Anchoring is possible anywhere in the Torbay area in westerly winds,

..... anchor off to suit draft. Obviously there is no anchoring within Paignton harbour. Visitors to the harbour normally dry alongside the pontoon (a recent addition) on the East Quay, or lay to fore and aft trot moorings within the harbour.(see photo). As mentioned above, it is wise to arrange the harbour authorities before attempting entry to this harbour.

The harbour dues for visiting boats (2022) are £2.00 m/day for a visit of over two hours in a 7m to 10m boat.

Facilities

Freshwater is available on the North Quay, East Quay, and the slipway. Public toilets are in the north-west corner of the harbour and are locked at night. No fuel of any kind is available here. There are several restaurants and bars around the port and the usual range of tourist activities, but to do a good stock up you'll have to make your way to town centre. There is not much in the way of specialist boat services at Paignton, Brixham nearby is the best bet. Paignton harbour offers an easily accessible slipway with good launch facilities. It is particularly busy during the weekends and in the summer, the facility is also used by the local sailing club and nearby businesses. The slipway descends on to a firm sand at low water springs, and in these conditions a four-wheel-drive vehicle is essential. Visiting boat owners should seek advice from the harbour authority before using the slip.

Paignton is at the end of a branch line from Newton Abbott. Regular trains from Exeter and Exmouth. There are daily long-distance services from London Waterloo, London Paddington, Birmingham and Bristol direct to Paignton. There is also the scenic steam railway that runs between Paignton and Kingswear during the summer months. Regular buses run from Paignton to Totnes, Torquay, Brixham and Kingswear, and a regular express coach service from Exeter to Torquay and Paignton.

What To Do

Paignton harbour is about 10 minute walk from the historic Paignton Pier, and the state-of-the-art Cinema on Paignton seafront. Nearby there is Paignton Zoo and Quaywest water park. During the summer Paignton Green thrives with activity with sunbathers, fairground rides, donkey rides etc.

As already mentioned the harbour is approximately 3 km from the town centre but there are plenty of places to eat and drink in the immediate locality. For a night out it would probably be worth going into the main town.

For railway enthusiasts, the local steam railway is a treat, the station is nearby and we provide far more information on this site in a separate article.

Below are a couple of links that may give you some further ideas.

<http://www.dartmouthrailriver.co.uk/tours/steam-train-cruise> Steam Railway

<http://www.englishriviera.co.uk/things-to-do/after-dark/pubs-and-nightclubs> Eating, Drinking, Nightlife

History

Paignton is mentioned in records dating back to the Domesday Book of 1086 AD. Formerly spelled both as Peynton and Paington, the name has is derived from Paega's town, the original Celtic settlement.

Paignton was a small fishing village until the 19th century, when in 1837 the Paington (sic) Harbour Act led to the construction of a new harbour. It was around this time that the modern spelling of Paignton first appeared. The historic part of Paignton is centred around Church Street, Winner Street and Palace Avenue which contains fine examples of Victorian architecture. Kirkham House is a late medieval stone house in the town which is open to the public at certain times of year.[1] The Coverdale Tower is adjacent to Paignton Parish Church and is named after Bishop Miles Coverdale, who published an English translation of the Bible in 1536. Coverdale was Bishop of Exeter between 1551 and 1553 and is said to have lived in the tower during this period, although this is regarded as doubtful by modern historians.

Oldway Mansion was built for Isaac Merritt Singer. The railway line to Paignton was built by the Dartmouth and Torbay Railway, and was opened to passengers on 2 August 1859, thus providing Torquay and Paignton a link to London. The people of Paignton acquired the nickname of pudden eaters when thousands turned up hoping to obtain a piece of a huge pudding that had been baked to celebrate the arrival of the railway. A Paignton Pudding was baked in 1968 to celebrate the town's charter, and another was baked in 2006 to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of the engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Oldway Mansion is a large house and gardens in Paignton constructed in the 1870s for Isaac Merritt Singer, who had amassed a considerable fortune by dint of his improvements to the sewing machine. The building is now occupied by Torbay Council. Other Singer legacies in Paignton include the Palace Hotel and the Inn On The Green, which were built as homes for Singer's sons Washington and Mortimer respectively.

As Paignton's population grew, it merged with the coastal villages of Goodrington and Preston. The town had its own urban district council until 1968, when the creation of Torbay Council led to a single body covering Torquay, Paignton and Brixham. The unitary authority formed in 1998 now handles all local government for Torbay, which has its own directly elected mayor.

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.

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