

Introduction

Sandwich is another Cinque Port town that has found itself silted up and nowadays lays some 4 1/2 miles from the sea.

Like Rye, the town has an very interesting history and is picturesque in the extreme.

A good look at the map provided will show how in times gone past ships could easily reach the town. In fact the French did just that in 1457 when 4000 men from Honfleur gave the town of "Sand Wick" a good sacking, more or less burning the place down. On this infamous day the Town Mayor met his end, an event still commemorated by the present day Mayor wearing black. Nowadays with Anglo-French relationships somewhat less antagonistic, the town of Sandwich is twinned with Honfleur.

Sandwich has the distinction of being the first town in England to actually see a live elephant... the beast was landed on the Quay in 1255, a gift from the French monarch to Henry III. It was subsequently walked to the King's zoo at the Tower of London. The journey through Kent is reported to have proceeded without incident, except when a bull in a field adjacent to the roadside took umbrage to the great beast passing and attacked it. In one move the poor animal was thrown by the elephant and killed outright.

The quayside now is elephant free and can be used by boats prepared to take the ground. There are a couple of further mooring options within the River Stour also.

Approach is across the drying Pegwell Bay and the twisting channel is well marked in season. Boats of up to 2m can just manage it, but the Town is probably more suited to smaller shallow draft craft..as seen in the photos. Long term and liveaboard berths are available in the area.

The ancient town is well worth a look, and absolutely reeks of history...you will see names like "No Name Street", "Knightrider Street" and "Holy Ghost Alley". A few miles out of town you will find a roadsign directing you to the village of Ham, and the town of Sandwich..thus reading Ham Sandwich

Approach

The tidal flows in the River Stour are slightly unusual..... with the net result that strangers are advised to only tackle the passage to Sandwich on a rising tide.

The tide times given in the link are for Richborough, which is near the entrance. High water at the Quay comes around 40 minutes later. The flood tide can reach a surprising speed in the last hour or two. This is probably because the flood is of a somewhat shorter than usual duration, varying between three and five hours. The duration of the flood is dependent on it's height and also on the amount of freshwater trying to flow out of the River. In contrast to the truncated flood, the ebb can persist for up to 9 hours....

The bar across Pegwell Bay dries out at almost 1 m over CD. The River varies between depths of 0.5 m and 1 m under CD with plenty of drying patches. Levels fluctuate and cannot be guaranteed. Maximum depth at the quay is slightly over 2 m during spring tides. Almost this much can be carried under the swing bridge at Sandwich to the adjacent boatyard. With careful pilotage boats drawing up to 2 m can reach Sandwich at spring tides. At other times only shallower draft craft should attempt the passage..... after careful consultations with the charts and tide tables. See the harbour website for more information:

<http://www.sandwichphc.uk/>

Further Pilotage Details...**NEW 2018. The channel across Pegwell Bay has altered dramatically. The old loop around past the car wreck has been abandoned and a newly developed straight channel replaces it. The buoyage has been enhanced but the buoy marking the Vauxhall wreck remains in place. The R/W safe water mark at the entry to the channel has been moved and is now in position 51° 18.3'N 001° 24.0'E**

Probably the ideal time to make your approach is about two hours before high water, and to bear in mind while in the river that the tide may well be propelling you forwards (and into possible trouble) more quickly than you think. Strangers should not even contemplate a night-time entry as everything is unlit. Inter boat communications on the

River is handled on VHF channel 8, and there is 6 kn speed limit. The approach lays to the SW of Ramsgate and it's beginning is marked by a red and white safe watermark (that is actually not what it says as it can dry out). If approaching from an easterly direction attention needs to be paid to the Quern Bank, marked by a westerly cardinal buoy West Quern (Q(9).15s). This dries to less than one metre at LAT.

From the South East the Cross Ledge just about dries at LAT, and is marked only on its western extremity by an unlit green buoy. With sufficient rise of tide neither of these should be a problem for a shoal draft boat. The red and white safe water buoy can be found by leaving the absolute outer edge of Ramsgate harbour wall behind you on a bearing of 065T (Unfortunately the chimneys at Richborough Power Station which were a useful guide are no longer there). Moving on this transit line which is at approximately 255° will first bring you to the red and white buoy, marking the start of the entrance channel.

We posted warnings in 2014, 2016 and now in 2018 about the buoyage in the channel. **They have rebuoyed the channel and a 2023 chartlet of this can be found by clicking the thumbnail image below (It will open in a separate window)** Note that they warn that the channel can change and this chartlet and the buoyage needs to be taken as "advisory" in addition to our notes there are the compiler's notes in our "Have your say section below"

NB At the time of editing at the end of March 2023 the buoyage does NOT conform to the channel. SHMs 5 & 7 are up on the mud to the NE of the Channel and both the PHM No2 and SHM No 1 are up on the mud to the SW of the channel. It is uncertain when the Port Authority intends to reposition these buoys so if you do discover they've been repositioned it would be good if you informed us

Establish the midriver depth going sharply from side to side. Then go to the inside of each bend and follow a contour of say half a meter shallower than the deepest water. Then when round that bend and in the straight before the next cross over, noting the deepest depth again, and begin to follow a shallower contour around the next bend. Do not go anywhere near the Isolated Danger Mark pole. The outside of the bends are VERY steep to. From the Fairway Buoy you should be able to see a four-legged scaffold tower with a northerly Cardinal topmark almost due North of you; ignore this for the moment, lay a course about 346T from the Fairway Buoy and look for the red and the green buoys between you and the beacon; try not to straight line nav between the buoys as the corners are not for cutting!!

Once you have reached these two buoys turn gently to port, eyeball the next two buoys to the West of you and follow the buoyage in. The Pepperness buoy is in the middle of the channel.

At the top of extremely high tides the marshes and the beaches are completely covered in this area, and it is essential to stay within the 35 m wide channel as marked by the withies/buoys. At the end of the marked channel you will be in the River proper and the deeper water tends to be on the inside of the bends. Check the chart. Move up to Sandwich town on the rising tide. Exiting the River Stour requires this process to be run in reverse, no matter how tempting it looks to head directly to sea. You must go round the U bends. The Harbourmaster notes that from 2010 the buoyage leading up to Richborough will be placed further towards the edges of the channel (to accomodate occasional ships). Visitors used to skirting these closely would be advised to give them a wider offing than usual

Berthing

There is not enough room for the yachtsman or motorboater to anchor anywhere within the River Stour.

Most make straight for Sandwich Town Quay...

When following the river towards Sandwich you will come across "Sandwich Marina" on your starboard hand in Bowling Green Reach. This offers boatyard facilities and long-term moorings, while also catering for live aboards. A link to their website is provided below:

<http://www.sandwichmarina.co.uk/>

Following the River onwards towards the Town Quay you will need to take careful stock of what the tide is doing underneath you. As mentioned before the flood can be swift and when you get to the Town Quay area you may be in danger of being swept into the low bridge.

There are two possibilities if the tide is running hard underneath you, the first is to make your turn before reaching the Quay and allowing the tide to propel you onwards while you gently nudge forwards into it, thus maintaining complete control. You will arrive at the Quay stern-first. The other method could be employed by a larger craft and it involves swinging hard to starboard and pushing their bows into the mud on the Northern bank. The flooding tide then catches the stern and swings the boat round in its own length, at which point you will be facing into the tide and thus have control of your boat.

If you find yourself being set down onto the bridge by the flooding tide this method could save the day.

Berthing is made against the Town Quay, good fendering will be needed and you will dry out on a shingly bottom. Rafting up outside a larger boat moored there long-term is acceptable. At this distance away from the Quay there is normally 1.5 m at MLWS, so shallow draught boats may be able to lie afloat, whilst the keels of deeper draught boats tend to settle into the ground a little bit allowing them to remain more or less upright.

The swing bridge will open with one hours notice for free, and passing through here will allow you to access Highway Marine's boatyard. Medium and long-term berthing can be sorted out here for quite large craft at surprisingly good prices. Most boatyard facilities are available too. The helpful yard can be reached on 01304 613925 and are happy to give any information about Sandwich you may need. A link to their website is provided below:

www.highwaymarinegroup.co.uk

To arrange opening of the bridge use these numbers: 01304 207707 or 07860 378792

The town quay itself is owned and managed directly by Dover Council of all people, and their contact details for any enquiries are below:

Property Services Division, Dover District Council, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover, Kent, CT16 3PJ.

Tel: 01304 872406. Mon – Fri 9.00 – 17.00.

Long-term berthing is available here, with decent discounts available for persons living locally.

Shortstay visitors are charged at £10.00 per day and if staying a bit longer you can get a week for the price of five days; instructions on who and where to pay this can be found on the noticeboard on the Quay! In 2021 they will be charging £20 for an overnight stay.

The local harbourmaster Ian M Broughton is on 07463 721714.

Facilities

Not a lot for the boat on the Town Quay. Water may be obtainable. Toilets and showers are now available daytimes. Boatyard facilities are available at Sandwich Marina just outside the town.

The nearest local facilities for the boat however are just under the Swing Bridge at Highway Marine. If mooring here they have water and electricity available. They also have a chandlery and sell bottled gas. Boatyard services include hauling up to 10 tonnes with repairs and engineering. Fuel can be obtained here too.

Trailer Sailability can launch and recover from this outfit as well, but will have the Bridge to content with (if carrying a mast and intending to head seawards). Incidentally non masted vessels can explore up river a good few miles...

There is a public slipway at the Town Quay with access for two hours either side of high water. Dover district Council are in charge of this.

Sandwich Sailing And Motor Boat Club (01843 587836) at the Stonar Industrial Estate, just before Sandwich Marina completes the boating facilities here.

The town can provide most stocking up needs, and has banks and rail connections too.

Information updated 2021

What To Do

The small historic town can certainly offer enough choices for the hungry or thirsty crew. Virtually all the pubs serve food, and the Quay is central meaning you won't have far to go. A link is provided below the deals exclusively with this town:

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

For those interested in finding out a bit more about the town we can recommend the homepage of this site from where you can find out all you need to know:

<http://www.open-sandwich.co.uk/index.htm>

History

Sandwich is a historic town in Kent, south-east England. It was one of the Cinque Ports and still has many original medieval buildings. While once a major port, it is now two miles from the sea, its historic centre preserved.

History

Before Sandwich became a Cinque Port, the ancient Saxon town of Stonar, located on the opposite bank of the Wantsum estuary, at the mouth of the River Stour, was already well established. It remained a place of considerable importance until it disappeared almost without trace in the 14th century. The ruins of the major Roman fort of Richborough are close by.

On 21 May 1216, Prince Louis of France landed at Sandwich in support of the baron's war against King John.

On 28 August 1457, after four years of uneasy peace in England the king presided over a wasting realm, with feudal barons lording over the population of the north and the west of the realm. The French took advantage of the situation by sending a raiding party to Kent, burning much of Sandwich to the ground. A force of 4,000 men from Honfleur, under the command of Marshal de Breze came ashore to pillage the town, in the process murdering the mayor, John Drury. It thereafter became an established tradition, which survives to this day, that the Mayor of Sandwich wears a black robe in mourning for this ignoble deed.

Sandwich was later to gain significantly from the skills brought to the town by many Dutch settlers, who were granted the right to settle by Queen Elizabeth I in 1560. These settlers, brought with them techniques of market gardening, and were responsible for growing the first English celery. The Huguenot refugees also brought over Dutch architectural techniques, that are now as much a part of Kent as the thatched cottage. In addition techniques

of silk manufacture were imported, enhancing the Kent cloth industry.

The local economy has benefited from significant investment by Pfizer, a US pharmaceuticals company, which has built a research and development centre near Sandwich, employing over 3,000 people. Laboratory experiments at the site have aroused negative comment by animal rights activists. Several important drugs including Viagra, Pfizer's treatment for erectile dysfunction and Maraviroc, a drug used for treatment of HIV, were discovered here.

Sandwich has two world-class golf courses, Royal St George's which hosts The Open Championship approximately every 10 years and Prince's which hosted The Open Championship in 1932 and is currently an Open Championship Final Qualifying course. The Open Championship returns to Sandwich in 2011.

Sandwich Festival

The town of Sandwich has an annual festival period towards the end of August where a number of events are staged. During Sandwich festivals of the past there have been European markets, motorcycle meets, raft racing in the river, street parties, various concerts (both classical and modern pop/rock) and a number of smaller events. The festival usually lasts for 1-2 weeks.

Road signs

There is a nearby hamlet to the south called Ham. A fingerpost some miles away in the village of "Worth" points towards both Ham and Sandwich, thus reading:

Ham
Sandwich

There is a railway station.

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More local historical information with photographs is available at this site:

http://www.open-sandwich.co.uk/town_history/index.htm