



The Kent Coast

Coastal Access Report

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4.4 Swale's Coast

4.4.1 Description

4.4.1.1 Swale's coast starts at TQ828671 at Otterham Quay. It extends for 115 km to TR056650 on Graveney Marshes to the west of The Sportsman pub. It takes in the Isle of Sheppey which is connected to the mainland by two bridges at Swale. It is the longest coastline in Kent.

4.4.1.2 Approximately 55 km is on PRowS, 27 km is de facto access (though some is difficult walking) and 33 km is inaccessible to walkers. The majority of the 27 km of inaccessible coast does not appear to be excepted land. From the Coastal Access aspect it is the most complicated coastline in Kent.

Part of the mainland route is along the Saxon Shore Way.

4.4.1.3 The view to seaward at the start is over the Medway estuary. There are extensive saltings and several uninhabited islands. The route then follows the River Swale to Sheppey and back to the Medway Estuary. The north and east coasts of Sheppey look out to the Thames Estuary. The south coast of the Island looks back to the Swale as does the remainder of mainland coast.

The scenery at the start is low hills and farmland. It then becomes reclaimed saltmarsh to the Kings Ferry Bridge and the same on the Sheppey side to Rushenden. Queenborough to Sheerness is urban and heavily industrialised. The former has an attractive Town Quay and Sheerness a heritage trail. Sheerness is a major port. Sheerness to Minster is shingle beach leading to the low London clay cliffs of the north east coast of Sheppey. There are no sea defences here and the cliffs are eroding and sliding into the sea. Warden and Leysdown are holiday villages with sandy beaches. The remainder of the Sheppey coast is reclaimed saltmarsh with hills at Hartly and Elmley. There is a small hamlet at Shellness. It is very remote.

From the King's Ferry Bridge, back on the mainland, it is reclaimed salt marsh but industrialised. Ridham Dock is busy. A new road bridge is under construction at Milton which will avoid the need to follow the creek through the commercial/industrial areas of Sittingbourne. From Milton to the end of Swale's coast at Graveney Marshes it is reclaimed saltmarsh with creeks and villages at Conyer and Oare. Faversham also has a creek but is urban. It is disappointing at Faversham that no effort has been made to maintain a creek side walk when recent redevelopments were approved.

4.4.1.4 The start of the route is on road away from the coast. *There are paths across farmland to the coast at Hamgreen Saltings which may not be a right of way.* It is then the Saxon Shore Way along the sea defence bank to Lower Halstow where again access to the coast is lost. It is back on the road to Raspberry Hill. The Saxon Shore Way follows paths some way inland that probably provide better walking and views. The road joins and follows the coast at Bedlam Bottom. A short stretch of coast at the bottom of Raspberry Hill is inaccessible on foot and then it is back on the SSW and a path to the sea defence bank out to Chetney Hill. The top end of the Chetney Marshes peninsular is inaccessible and the Saxon Shore Way cuts across on raised banks to the sea defence along the Swale.

The older Kingsferry Bridge provides foot access across the Swale to Sheppey. There is a footpath to the west which appears to be de facto access along the sea defence bank to Ladies Hole Point. There is then a PRow through a waste area to an unmade road and sea defence bank to Queenborough where the footpath has been blocked. The route then follows roads through Queenborough, past the Quay, to a narrow urban footpath to a PRow and promenade. The footpath deviates inland around a huge park for imported cars to join the A249 to Sheerness. There is a heritage trail through the old "Blue Town" leading to the promenade and beach at Sheerness. From Sheerness there is the option of walking along the top of a shingle bank or path beside the road to Minster where there is another promenade. At the end of the promenade there is no option but to walk along the beach which is a mixture of old building material, shingle, clay and sand. It is muddy, slippery and heavy going and not passable at high tide. The only alternative is to follow roads some way inland. Between Warden and Leysdown-on-Sea are sections of promenade and sea defence bank. There is no PRow along the north coast of Sheppey but it appears to be de facto access. From Leysdown to Shellness there is a PRow along the top of the sea defence bank.

At Shellness there are notices claiming the beach above high water is private. The PRow continues along the sea defence bank around the SE corner of Sheppey towards Harty. There are extensive saltings between it and the sea. It deviates inland around Sayes Court along paths and farm roads to The Ferry Inn.

From The Ferry Inn westward the route is in some doubt. The bridleway nearest the coast at Mocketts has recently been diverted even further inland. There are "Keep Out" notices around the bottom of Harty Hill. It was possible to follow the tide line around the hill to rejoin the sea defence bank on the western side.

The sea defence bank along the south coast of Sheppey is not a PRow and it is not clear whether there is de facto access. Part of it is the RSPBs Elmley Marshes reserve where there are permissive paths but visitors are asked to keep below the bank on the landward side so as not to disturb the birds. There is a PRow along the sea defence from Elmley Hill to the Kingsferry Bridge. Here there is another major coastal access issue as there is a railway line and no crossing between the footpath and the road back across the bridge. The option at low tide is to scramble down the bank and walk under the railway and bridge or follow a 3 km detour inland.

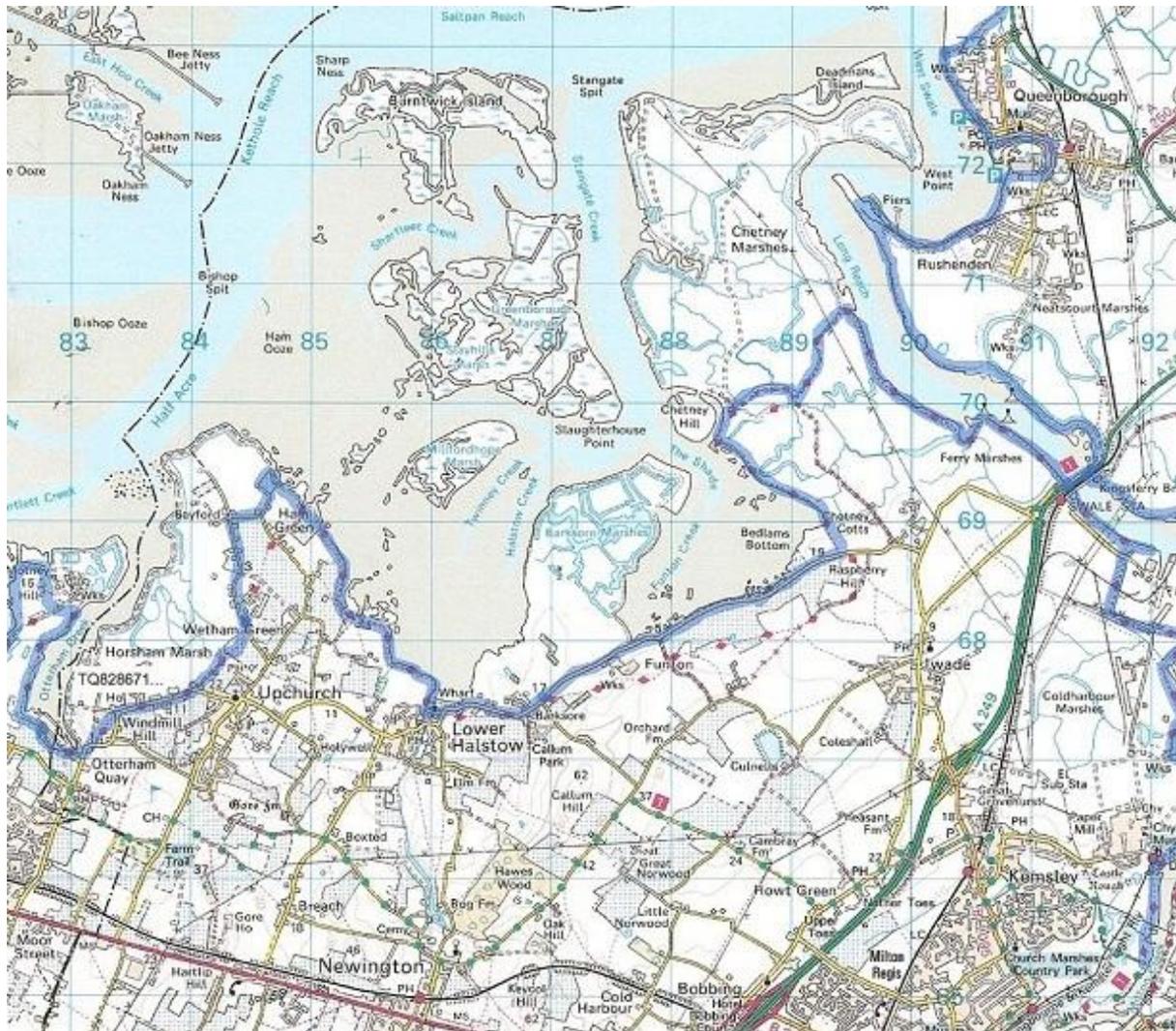
Back on the mainland the route follows the Saxon Shore Way along the top of the sea defence bank to Graveney Marshes just to the west of Seasalter. There is a deviation along paths and roads around Ridham Dock and some road walking at Conyer, Oare and Faversham.

4.4.1.5 The route includes the RSPB Elmley Marshes Reserve, Kent Wildlife Trust's Oare Marshes and South Swale Reserves and English Nature's Medway Estuary & Marshes and The Swale SSSIs.

Kent's only official naturist beach is at Shellness.

4.4.2 The Route

4.4.2.1 Otterham to Swale



Swale's coast starts at Otterham Quay at TQ828671. It is not a promising start. There is a road alongside the creek through a boatyard and caravan park.



It is just possible to walk along the edge of the creek.



This is the Saxon Shore Way. It leaves the road at TQ841676 down what appears to be a private drive.



It is not possible to get to Horsham Marsh because of a fence at TQ830677. Signs on the nearby gate discourage attempts to get any further.



This becomes an old single track road, with views across to the Medway, turning into an unsurfaced farm track.



Coming back to TQ834674, the minor road is quite busy and there is no pavement.



It leads to a kissing gate and across a field to rejoin the road at TQ845681 at Wetham Green



The SSW cuts across the Upchurch peninsular but the road follows around in a U marginally closer to the coast. Signs on farm drives make it clear there is no access to the coast.



At TQ846691 there is an unlocked gate and paths through orchards. This is not a PRow.



These join the coast at Hamgreen Saltings at TQ846695. There is a path northwest along the bank but it would inevitably become a dead end. Turning southeast there is a small boatyard/moorings at TQ849691.



It is just possible to get along a very overgrown path by the fence of the boatyard to rejoin the SSW. This path may not be apparent to anyone coming from the other direction.

The sea defence bank here is quite narrow .



The path leaves the bank briefly at TQ852687 and widens again at Twinney Warf.



It continues to Lower Halstow .



At Lower Halstow it is possible to follow the bank around the creek to the Yacht Club where it is securely blocked.



Coming back and around the church there is no option but to follow the road west.



There is no access to Barksore Marshes.



The route of the SSW goes inland away from the coast.

The road joins the coast at TQ877680 and runs along Bedlams Bottom. There are extensive saltings between the road and the river.



The road goes up Raspberry Hill.



At TQ894687 the SSW is rejoined and proceeds across a field to the coast and sea defence bank out towards Chetney Marshes.



There is no option but to chop off the top of the Chetney Marshes peninsular. The gates are padlocked with barbed wire along the top and numerous signs saying keep out.



Turning east to follow the sea defence bank along the Swale, the SSW leads under the new Sheppey Crossing road bridge to the older Kingsferry Bridge which provides access on foot to the island.

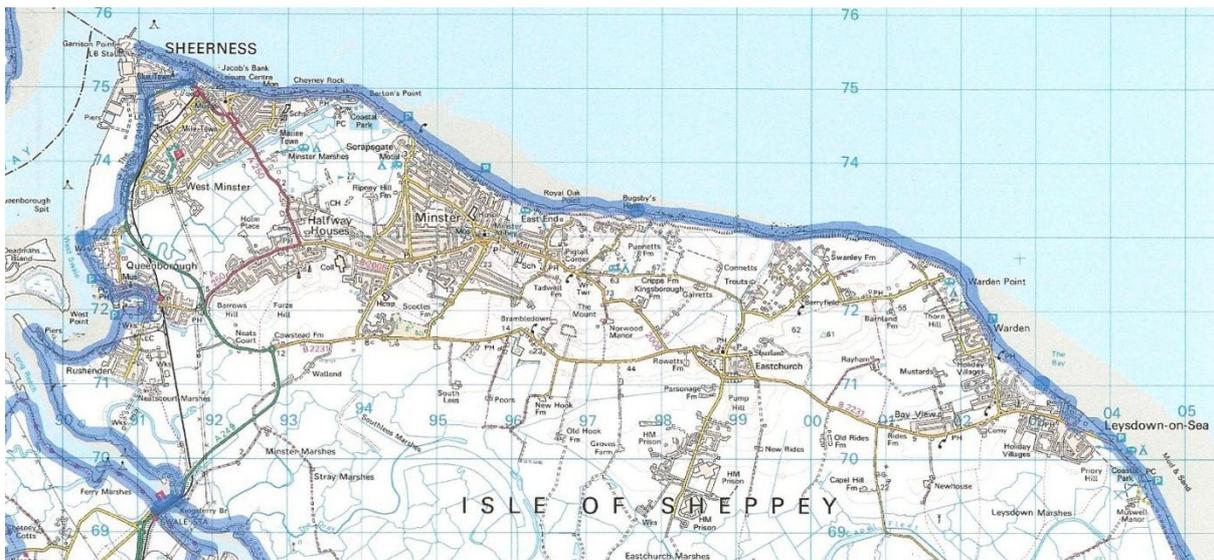
The SSW turns right at Chetney Hill and cuts across the peninsular. The path is in poor condition - it is heavily churned up by cattle and farm vehicles.



It comes out on the banks of the Swale at TQ894708.



4.4.2.2 Swale to Leysdown



Crossing over the bridge



Turning west, there is a short drop down to the grass sea defence bank. It is not a PRoW but to start with is quite well walked.



At TQ898714 approaching the spit at Ladies Hole Point there is a scramble across a ditch and then over a large pipe to an old road.



This is a disused industrial area, a bit of a tip and not walker friendly.



The top of the spit is still saltmarsh.



The north side is a PRoW with a disused railway and an unmade road.



There is a vehicle barrier at TQ906715. Shortly after this a metal stile up to the top of the sea defence bank.



This is a PRoW but was blocked at TQ908719.



There was no alternative but to follow the roads around the industrial area.



To the Town Quay at TQ910722.



Following the road around the Quay there is a narrow footpath between buildings leading to a promenade.



This is the last bit of the Swale before it joins the Medway.



At TQ903730 the promenade ends.



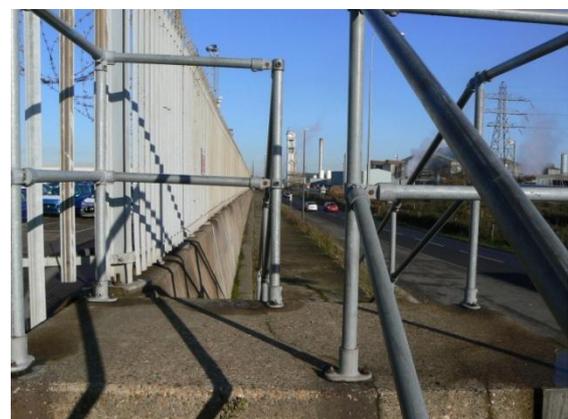
The path goes inland behind a car storage area at The Lapel that is almost 2 km long. There is a sea wall on one side and security fence on the other.



At one point there is a bridge over a roadway.



At TQ911743 the path joins the busy A249.



This leads to the start of the Sheerness 'Blue Tow n' Heritage Trail.



It is a short distance along a path to the promenade.



The coast at TQ917752 is the Thames Estuary. It is possible to walk west along the promenade back towards Garrison Point.



It rejoins the A249 at the entrance to Sheerness docks.



There is a short stretch of beach before access is barred by the Port Authority at TQ910756.



Proceeding east, the promenade is 5m wide, with shared cycle path, along Sheerness seafront to TQ940748, Barton's Point.



From Barton's Point there is a surfaced path along the back of the high shingle beach leading to the option of walking along a shared cycle/footpath beside the road or along a wide compacted shingle path along the top of the beach.



There is a 100m stretch of shingle beach at TQ925750 with an alternative path behind the sea wall.



Minster promenade starts at TQ947744.



It is of varying width.



It ends at TQ960736.



From here on there is no option but to walk along the beach which is only possible when the tide is out.



The coast from Round Hill Point to Warden, about 7k, is below London clay cliffs which are extremely unstable and visibly slipping into the sea. There are no sea defences.



This is a difficult area as the tide comes right up to the cliffs and there are no obvious safe access points to the top for anyone cut off. The cliffs, although not high, would be dangerous to climb. The beach is a mixture of old building material, shingle, clay and sand which is slippery and heavy going for such a long distance. In practice it is easier and quicker to walk along the clay at low tide which is just slippery.



This area is popular with fossil hunters. There is no alternative footpath along the top and the only option is to walk along inland roads for most of the way.



At Warden Point the erosion is very apparent.

This leads to the start of a short promenade at TR024718.

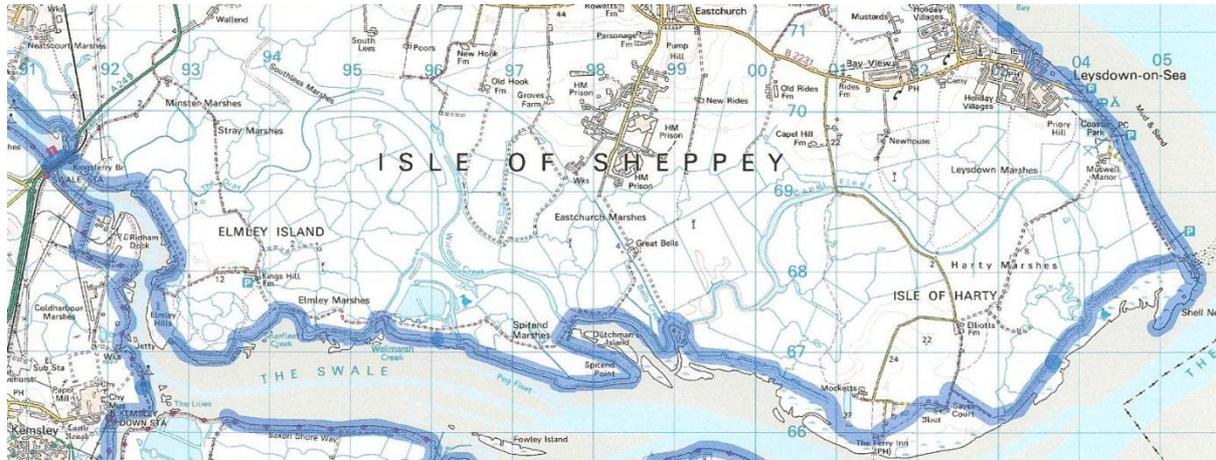


At Warden there are large rocks on the beach where the sea defences begin. There is a shingle path behind.

Progress to Leysdown n-on-Sea is sections of promenade and grass across the top of the beach.



4.4.2.3 Leysdown to Swale



At Leysdown the promenade ends.

It joins Shellness Road at TR035705.



The route detours around a derelict plot, across and through a small housing estate.

It is a short distance past a mobile home park to a grassed area and back to the coast.



There is a continuous route along the top of the sea defences all the way to the hamlet of Shellness.



There is a private estate at Shellness and a fence and notices claiming the beach above high water is private.



At the time the tide was low and it was possible to walk around the estate beach.



Past the estate there is a permissive path to the limit of the beach at TR050673.



This is The Swale National Nature Reserve and further progress south westwards is not possible as the land is saltings.



Retracing the route there is a permissive path behind the estate



This leads to a footpath at TR052682 which is a PRow. The path is along the top of a grassed bank set some way inland behind the saltings.



At TR030661 it crosses a field.



There is a locked gate with "No entry please" barring further access along the coast.



The path goes inland around fields to Sayes Court



It comes back to the coast at The Ferry Inn at Harty.



It looked as if it would have been possible to follow the coast to this point.

From here there is a problem with onward access but it was possible without too much trouble to get through some scrub and along the shoreline around the bottom of the hill



The sea defence bank was rejoined at TR009664. There were "Keep Out" notices which would not be apparent if approaching from the other direction.

The route is now west along grass sea defence banks keeping close as possible to the coast with extensive saltings on the seaward side.



The bank is being seriously damaged by rabbit warrens.



It is not a PRow until TQ982674 at Windmill Creek. This is a very remote area.



After crossing the top of Windmill Creek the footpath follows a mainly inland course all the way to Elmley. However, it was possible to follow the sea defence out to Spitend Point



The sea defence bank continues along the coast, past Wellmarsh Creek, Cockleshell Creek and Sharfleet Creek. This is not a

Prow but it is an RSPB reserve. There are hides and people are asked not to walk along the top of the bank as it disturbs the birds.



However there is no alternative in the latter stage as there is no lower path on the approach to Elmley Hills.





This area is open cattle grazing and it was possible to follow the coast around the hill or go over the top for the extensive views.



The PRoW is rejoined at TQ927678 and is along the top of quite a narrow bank



It widens as it approaches the old King's Ferry Bridge.



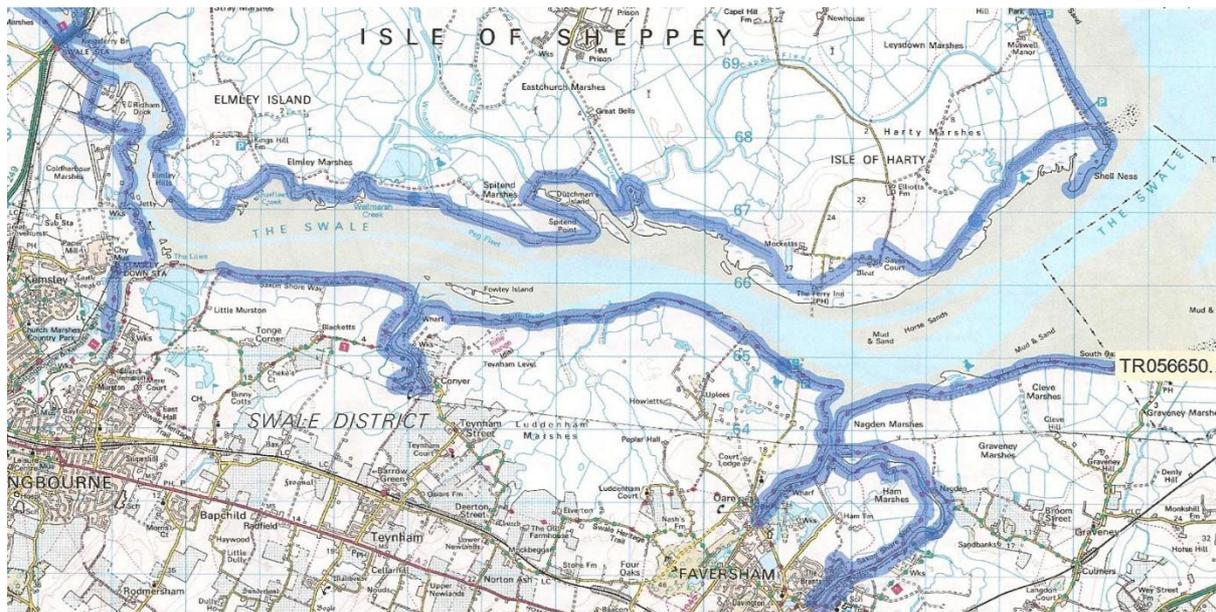
There is a major problem here as the bank is blocked by the railway and bridge and the only route is a 3k detour inland and back along the A249 to cross over the bridge and rejoin the Saxon Shore Way eastwards. If the tide is out, it is possible to scramble down the bank along a messy beach under the bridge and up the other side.



Then it is simply back across the bridge to Swale.



4.4.2.4 Swale to Graveney Marshes



On the south side the SSW goes under the bridge at TQ913692 and up onto the grass sea defence bank towards Ridham Dock.



At TQ918688 it is possible to continue along the bank to the entrance to the dock



As this is a dead end, the path turns inland along a tree lined grass bank past the industrial zone.



It crosses a disused railway and turns left along a broad block paved road



It goes across a roundabout at the entrance to the industrial estate and up steps to a path back to the bank of the Swale at TQ923680.



It is possible to follow the footpath back to the entrance to the dock. The sea defence bank continues towards Milton Creek past sewage works



It becomes an unmade road leading under an aggregates conveyor.



The path follows the bank of the creek.

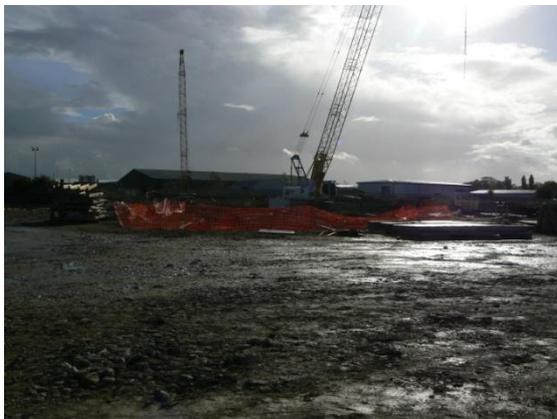


At TQ919653 construction was underway for a new road bridge over the creek.



Having had an open view from the other side of the creek, there is nothing to suggest that the closed section will not be similar and easily walkable once it reopens.

The path continues along the top of the stone faced grass sea defence to Conyer Creek



This will be a new crossing point which will be of great benefit to anyone walking the coast. It will avoid a 5 km walk through the business/industrial parks of Sittingbourne. Because of this there was no point in recording the walk into and out of Sittingbourne.

Here the route follows the creek around the marina to the road.

On the other side of the creek, the east bank, the Saxon Shore Way was temporarily closed because of the construction of the bridge. It was not possible to rejoin the SSW and the Swale until TQ935662.





Past the pub the Saxon Shore Way cuts off the corner to rejoin the Swale at TQ966655.

Although there is no PRow there is a good path through the old brickworks following the east bank of the creek. Views are restricted by vegetation in places.



The path follows the sea defence for 6 km.



Past the disused explosives jetty.



Past Dans Dock



To the mouth of Faversham and Oare Creeks.



The Oare Marshes Local Nature Reserve starts at TR006653 and ends at TR016640. The Saxon Shore Way continues inland along the west bank of the creek.



At the marina at Oare, it is surfaced.



This leads to a path set back from the creek edge.



It joins the road at TR007628 which is the head of the creek.



At the time it appeared that this path was being improved.



On the east side of the creek is a road behind the boatyard.





At the Shipwrights Arms TR017636, the junction of the Oare and Faversham Creeks, the path turns sharp right



The path turns right and goes inland around an industrial estate



It follows Faversham Creek to the town. In places it is set quite far back from the creek because of saltings.



It comes back to the creek at TR017619. There is a path along the front of the estate but it is blocked at both ends.



At TR021620 the creek bank is abruptly blocked by a relatively new development of houses.



There is a surfaced path along the creek broadening to a road at the Albion.



Faversham Creek is crossed by a road bridge over the old lock gates at TR015616.



The Saxon Shore Way then follows roads eventually leading to Standard Quay.



Rejoining the SSW, the path goes behind old warehouses



It crosses a small field, through a gate to an unmade road.

Through a boatyard



At Nagden TR031633 the Saxon Shore Way has recently been diverted away from the creek around a new house (the diversion does not show on the current OS map) set in a field.

Then crosses a narrow lifting bridge.



It then runs along the top of a sea defence bank

The path along the top of a grass sea defence then continues to the mouth of the creek



The path continues on the landward side of the wall for 4 km past Castle Coot to the end of Swales coast at TR056648 just to the west of the Sportsman Inn.



Here a concrete sea wall on the seaward side of the bank starts.



4.4.3 Access Issues

4.4.3.1 Horsham Marsh TQ828671 to TQ849691 4.3 km

This does not appear to be excepted land. Apart from a wharf at TQ831678 there would appear to be a continuous sea defence bank around the peninsular. According to a local there used to be a continuous footpath around the coast. There should be unobstructed access.

4.4.3.2 Barksore Marshes TQ863675 to TQ877680 5.1 km

This does not appear to be excepted land. There are security issues for the Yacht Club but no other obvious reasons why access is denied to the sea defence bank around the peninsular. There should be unobstructed access.

4.4.3.3 Bedlams Bottom TQ889685 to TQ892690 0.5 km

This is not a particularly significant deviation from the coast. It just appears that this corner has become overgrown and it is easier to follow the road and Saxon Shore Way.

4.4.3.4 Chetney Marshes TQ884699 to TQ894708 7.8 km

This does not appear to be excepted land. There are a profusion of signs implying it is a nature reserve and threatening prosecution of anyone disturbing the birds. It is securely fenced with barbed wire on the top of the gates. However, it does not appear to be a recognised nature reserve and parts are not included in the Medway Estuary and Marshes SSSI. There should be unobstructed access.

4.4.3.5 South Marshes and Rushenden Marshes TQ916695 to TQ898714 3.1 km

This is the sea defence bank from the Kings Ferry Bridge to Ladies Hole Point on Sheppey. It is not a PRoW but may be de facto access. It is quite well used at the bridge end..

4.4.3.6 Queenborough TQ908719 to TQ906722 0.3 km

The PRoW has been blocked at TQ908719 so access to Queenborough Creek is no longer possible. Kent County Council is aware of this problem.

Most of this deviation from the coast would appear to be excepted land.

4.4.3.7 The Lappel and Sheerness TQ903730 to TQ910756 3.1 km

This would appear to be excepted land. The first part is a deviation around a huge car park for imported cars and the latter around the Port of Sheerness.

4.4.3.8 Round Hill to Warden TQ960736 to TR022721 6.8 km

The problem here is simply that a footpath does not exist along this part of the coast. Walking along the beach, below the London clay cliff, is heavy going and there is the risk of

being cut off by the tide with no safe escape route. The cliffs are subsiding. The ideal solution would be a completely new coastal path along the top of the cliffs

4.4.3.9 Leysdown **TR035708 to TR038705** **0.4 km**

This diversion is mainly around a mobile home holiday park. The possibility of continuous coastal access should be examined.

4.4.3.10 Shell Ness **TR053682 to TR055679** **0.4 km**

This beach has been fenced off and there are notices indicating it is private above the high water mark. There should be unobstructed access.

4.4.3.11 Sayes Court **TR031662 to TR 016659** **1.4 km**

This does not appear to be excepted land. There is a locked gate and notice at the start saying "Wildlife Sanctuary No Entry Please". Otherwise there does not seem to be a problem providing better coastal access.

4.4.3.12 Ferry Inn to Windmill Creek **TR015659 to TQ982674** **4.6 km**

This does not appear to be excepted land. Access at the start is difficult if the tide is up as it is through scrub and there are "Keep Out" notices. There should be unobstructed access.

4.4.3.13 Windmill Creek to Elmley Hills **TQ982674 to TQ927678** **10.0 km**

There are PRoWs set some way back from the coast. This is an RSPB reserve and there are notices, in places, asking people to keep to the permissive paths below and on the landward side of the sea defence bank. Hides have been provided. However, this is a very monotonous walk without a view.

4.4.3.14 Kings Ferry Bridge **TQ915694**

The problem here is that progress along the coast is blocked by the railway line. It is a 3 km diversion inland to the first crossing point. A pedestrian crossing of some form needs to be provided

4.4.3.15 Ridham Dock **TQ920688 to TQ922687** **0.1 km**

This appears to be excepted land. The entrance to the dock is no great distance but the diversion around the industrial area is significant.

4.4.3.16 Conyer **TQ958646 to TQ966655** **2.4 km**

The first part is around the marina and through the village and would appear to be excepted land. The second part follows the coast through a disused brick works. There is no PRoW but there does seem to be de facto access.

4.4.3.17 Oare **TR007628 to TR016633** **0.8 km**

The route is around the marina which extends along the creek bank.

4.4.3.18 Favesham – Site of Pollock's Ship Yard TR021620 to TR017619 0.3 km

A housing development has been built on this site and the tow path blocked off. There is a creek side path in front of the houses that should be opened at both ends.

4.4.3.19 Faversham – Pent Sluice to Iron Wharf TR015618 to TR020620 0.6 km

Considerable recent redevelopment has taken place and a number of housing developments have a creek side walkway. However, it appears that no consideration was given at the planning stages to maintaining the continuous path along the creek. This would be an attractive feature of the town and the possibility of reinstating it should be considered.

4.4.3.20 Nagden TR031633 0.1 km

Here the Saxon Shore Way has recently been diverted away from the creek around a field where a house has been built. The diversion does not appear on the current OS map. There is no obvious reason why this should have been allowed since the PRoW was there before the house. Consideration should be given to reinstating the path.