

Swale – Sittingbourne, Faversham & Isle of Sheppey

Attractive orchards, extensive farmlands, pretty villages, popular beaches, maritime marshland and idyllic sailing waters all of which make up Swale where countryside meets the coast!



Facts about Swale

Did you know about....??

History

The borough of Swale is named after the narrow channel called The Swale, this separates the mainland of Kent from the Isle of Sheppey. On the mainland, there is glorious downland countryside, dense woodlands, picturesque orchards and hop-gardens, and unspoilt villages. While on the Isle of Sheppey, there are splendid views over to Essex and Whitstable in Kent. Its name means simply 'sheep island'. Today it's easily reached by the new and commanding bridge known as the Sheppey Crossing.

Faversham town was known as a harbour and market community and is also at the centre of the county's brewing industry, being home to Britain's oldest brewery, Shepherd Neame. The town formerly also housed Fremlins and Whitbread breweries. Abbey Street and the centre of the town include a remarkable collection of original medieval houses. Much of the town was intended for demolition until the 1960s, when the value of the buildings, now listed, were recognised.

Sittingbourne was a small town derived from "Sedingbourne" a Saxon word meaning a hamlet by the bourne or small stream. The Romans created Watling St. as the main road from London to Dover and Sittingbourne and had a long history of catering for travellers. There is evidence of settlement in the area dating back to the Iron Age and the Romans found it a good place to establish themselves with its good road communications, the A2, and also between London and the continent. After the Romans left around 400 A.D. Sittingbourne continued as a small hamlet with farming, salt pans on the marshes and Oyster fisheries being the local industries.

As travel increased, the High St. was busy, with coaches passing through every hour. In 1708 the Rose Inn was built and was described by a noted traveller as one of the best in England. In 1858 the railway came to Sittingbourne and it lost its reputation as a traveller's town. Fortunately building Victorian London created a vast demand for bricks and Sittingbourne had the brick earth and the barge transport to convey the completed bricks from Milton Creek to London. Another industry was paper making, the Sittingbourne Mill during the 1870s became a major supplier of newsprint. During the 20th century saw the closure of the brick making industry, and the paper mill.

Sheerness was formed when a fort was built by Henry VIII to prevent enemy ships from entering the River Medway and attacking the naval dockyard at Chatham. However before its completion the fort was destroyed in 1667. The Secretary of the Admiralty, Samuel Pepys, subsequently ordered the construction of a naval dockyard at Sheerness as an extension to that at Chatham where naval ships would be built, maintained, and repaired. The first dry-dock was not completed until 1708. Using materials they were allowed to take from the yard, dockyard construction workers built the first houses in Sheerness. The grey-blue naval paint they used on the exteriors led to their homes becoming known as the Blue Houses. This eventually led to the name Bluetown in the north west of Sheerness.

In the early 1820s a fire destroyed many buildings at the dockyard, including all the Blue Houses. New houses and a major redevelopment of the dockyard followed and the dockyard formally opened on 5 September 1823. A high brick wall and a moat were constructed around the yard to serve as a defence measure and remained in place until the end of the 19th century. As the settlement expanded eastwards, away from the dockyard and Bluetown, the wider area became known as Sheerness, taking its new name, it's said, from the brightness of the water at the mouth of the River Medway.

In 1960 the Royal Navy ceased operating at Sheerness dockyard and the Medway Port Authority took over the site for commercial use. The closure led to a loss of jobs and many people left the area. Today Bluetown is an industrial area and Sheerness, with enviable deep-water berths, has become one of the largest ports in the UK for motor car imports.

Countryside

Stretching from the beauty of the rolling Kent Downs to the peaceful flatlands of the north Kent marshes, Swale is richer than most areas in fine unspoilt scenery, nature reserves and country parks.

Blean Woods, to the east of Faversham, are the largest in Kent, covering more than 11 square miles, and have been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, as well as an RSPB nature reserve. Till the 16th century they formed part of a Royal hunting forest. With a network of public rights of way in the Woods and surrounding countryside, they are deservedly popular with walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Website: www.theblean.co.uk

Church Marshes at Sittingbourne is a historic landfill site that is now being turned into Kent's newest country park. As well as the recreational potential, the site also houses a unique habitat for insects. The Park is due for completion in 2010 but the first part of the park will be completed and open to the public in spring 2007. Website: www.churchmarshes.info

Cromers Wood, Bottom Pond Road, Wormshill, near Sittingbourne, is a 28 hectare, ancient semi-natural woodland on the southeast side of a dry slope valley. The greatest diversity of woodland flora is found on the lowest slopes where the chalk has its greatest effect in reducing soil acidity. Website: www.kentwildlife.org.uk

Elmley National Nature Reserve, Kingshill Farm, Elmley, on the south-west of the Isle of Sheppey consists largely of flat, open grazing marsh. The grazing marsh is divided by ditches that act as 'wet fences' for stock control. In winter and spring there is extensive shallow surface flooding. The reserve is important for large numbers of wintering waterfowl and for birds of prey. Website www.rspb.org.uk/reserves

Oare Marshes Nature Reserve, Harty Ferry Road, Oare, near Faversham, consists of over 81 hectares of grazing marsh with freshwater dykes, open water 'scrapes', seawall and salt marsh. The reserve is of international importance for migratory, over-wintering and breeding wetland birds. Almost unbelievably, it occupies part of the site of a huge high explosives factory which closed in 1918. Website: www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk

Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park, Bysing Wood Road, near Faversham, is a unique blend of industrial heritage and wildlife. After Waltham Abbey in Essex, it was the most important explosives heritage site in the UK. Most gunpowder factories were inherently places of great beauty, as forest trees were planted in between the process-houses to reduce damage in the event of a 'blow' (accidental explosion) and canals and leats were built both to provide water-power for the mills and provide safe facilities for internal transport by punt. Visitors are invited to follow well-marked trails to discover the remains of the factory and enjoy its fascinating wildlife, though the bats for which it provides perfect roosting sites can only be seen at dusk. Website: www.gunpowderworks.co.uk

To the south of Faversham and stretching across the whole of the southern part of the Faversham area are the beautiful **Kent Downs**. The Kent Downs are an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty made up of diverse and natural landscapes, tiny rural villages, historic woodlands and unique forms of wildlife. www.kentdowns.org.uk

Towns & Villages

Sittingbourne is a modern day market town, with strong links to its sailing barge past. Today visitors will find a long high street with many shops and a statue of a jolly bronze bargeman. That's because Sittingbourne, and the older adjacent Milton Regis, were barge making towns. Just outside of Sittingbourne are the beautiful Kentish villages Tunstall,

Upchurch and Rodmersham, where you will find thatched roofs, historic churches and traditional pubs surrounded by orchards and grazing sheep.

Faversham on the mainland is known for farming. Once a large hop growing community, this is where the Shepherd Neame Brewery first started. The annual Hop Festival is a reminder of the town's historic roots. Not far from Faversham is the Brogdale Farm home of the national fruit collections; ten acres of Edwardian gardens at Mount Ephraim Gardens providing year round horticultural interest and Farming World an opportunity for family fun a must see rural base.

Isle of Sheppey originates from when it was an Island of Sheep. Today it can be accessed more easily via a new Sheppey Crossing, which opened in the summer of 2006. The island is still very rural and has outstanding natural landscape and is known for its qualities as a bird watching destination. The Swale National Nature Reserve is on the southern tip of the island. There are also amazing views from the north of the isle, with beaches overlooking Whitstable and Essex.

Sheerness is the main town on the Isle of Sheppey and has a rich naval heritage for its dockyard. Visitors can walk around Bluetown to view the blue houses or the High Street to see the usual clock tower. Beach Street at Sheerness is an award winning beach popular with families with a mixture of seaside facilities and amusement arcades.

Minster is at Sheppey's highest point, so the views are wonderful. The hilltop Abbey Church and twelfth century gatehouse remind you that a nunnery was founded here in AD 675. The little village of Minster nestles beneath the Abbey and close to 20th-century development at Minster Leas.

Leysdown, at the East tip of the Isle of Sheppey, is a traditional seaside resort with a range of amusements, souvenir shops and a variety of cafes, takeaways and pubs. Running parallel to the main street is the "Spinny", a grassy picnic area with attractive flower beds and a children's play area. This is an award winning sandy beach, which is perfect for a family day out with its shallow waters and excellent facilities.

Queenborough is a small harbour town on the Isle Sheppey. Its distinguished name it takes from Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III, who in 1361-1377 built a huge castle here as a defence against French raids. The town even gained a borough charter in 1368 and had two MPs of its own till 1832. Unfortunately the castle was demolished at Cromwell's instigation in the early 1650s. Its story is told at the Guildhall Museum in the High Street.

Milton Regis was once more important than its S neighbour Sittingbourne, but now forms part of it. Old houses in its High Street, and its timber-framed Court Hall (now a Museum), reflect its original standing as a Royal town and port. The tower of the medieval parish church may not be high, but is one of the most massive in the UK.

Throwley, in wonderfully unspoilt countryside S of Faversham, is where you'll find a small vineyard producing sought-after wines and Belmont, an 18th-century country houses with the UK's largest collection of clocks and watches in private ownership.

Doddington, in the lovely Syndale Valley, boasts two important country houses, Sharsted Court and Doddington Place, as well as a prize-winning butcher.

Walking & Cycling Routes

Faversham Walk is a circular route between 4-8 Miles. This walk starts near Stonebridge Pond once the heart of the nation's gunpowder industry. After a stroll across the marshes, the final section of the walk takes you past Davington Priory which is over 850 years old.

Saxon Shore Way & Swale Heritage Trail is a long distance trail over 160 miles long that follows the Kent coast from Gravesend to Rye in East Sussex, some 140 miles. The

Faversham area section of the Saxon Shore Way extends from Conyer Creek in the west, alongside The Swale, passing through Harty Ferry, the village of Oare, through Faversham and on to north of Graveney in the east. The **Swale Heritage Trail** is a shorter footpath of some 11 miles from Murston, west of Sittingbourne, to Goodnestone, near Graveney.

Sheldwich and Badlesmere Walk

This is a circular walk of about 3½ miles from Sheldwich Lees and which takes you through Badlesmere Court. You will find this walk, along with nine others in the Faversham area, in the booklet *Ten Walks around Faversham*, available from the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre.

Guided Town Walks

Enjoy a guided walk in Faversham, available on Saturdays from Easter to October at 10.30am from the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre in Preston Street.

Two Creeks Circular Walk

This walk largely follows the Saxon Shore Way and takes you through Faversham's heritage rich town centre and then out into the marshes and the glorious countryside. The walk takes approximately one and a half to two hours.

Queenborough and Rushenden Wildlife and Heritage Trail

This walk takes in the heritage and wildlife that surrounds Queenborough and Rushenden.

The Trim Trail Cycle Route - The trail goes through the villages of Tunstall and Bredgar which contain some of the more challenging section of the trail. The route is 9 miles and suitable for a keen cyclist.

The Woodlands Trail Cycle Route – is a 14 mile route with varied scenery, including woodland and rural areas. Starting from the Queens Head Inn in Boughton and passing many different types of woodland.

The Fruit and Wine Trail Cycle Route - The Faversham trail provides a scenic route around some of Faversham's many historic horticultural features and through Faversham's traditional town centre.

The Swale Downs Trail Cycle Route – is a Picturesque trail through Swales countryside, passing through some of Swales many villages. The route is 10 miles with some steep sections.

Places to Visit:

Historical Sites & Stately Homes

Belmont House and Gardens

Belmont, Throwley, Faversham, Kent, ME13 0HH

Tel: (01795) 890202

Fax: (01795) 890042

Email: belmontadmin@btconnect.com

Website: www.belmont-house.org

Maison Dieu

Ospringe Street, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8TW
Tel: (01795) 534542

Shrine of St Jude

Nuala Hughes
Whitefriars, Tanners Street
Faversham
Kent ME13 7JN
Email: chaplain@stjudeshrine.org.uk
Website: www.stjudeshrine.org.uk

Mount Ephraim Gardens

Staple Street, Hernhill, Nr Faversham, Kent, ME13 9TX
Tel: (01227) 751496
Fax: (01227) 750940
Email: info@mountephraimgardens.co.uk
Website: www.mountephraimgardens.co.uk

Doddington Place Gardens

Church Lane, Doddington, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 0BB
Tel: (01795) 886101
Email: enquiries@doddingtonplacegardens.co.uk
Website: www.doddingtonplacegardens.co.uk

Churches:

All Saints Eastchurch

The Rectory, Warden Road, Eastchurch, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 4EJ
Tel: (01795) 880205

Holy Trinity Church, Queensborough

High Street, Queensborough, Kent, ME11 5EN
Tel: (01795) 662648

The Church of St Mary with St Sexburgha

Vicarage Road, Minster on Sea, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 2HE
Tel: (01795) 873185

The Church of St Thomas the Apostle

Harty Ferry Road, Leysdown on Sea, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 4BQ
Tel: (01795) 875146

Minster Road Baptist Church

70 Minster Road, Minster on Sea, Sheerness, Kent
Tel: (01795) 662951

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church

Whitefriars, Tanners Street, Faversham, Kent
Tel: (01795) 532449

Museums

Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre

As well as a museum, the complex also features Swale's Tourist Information Centre, bookshops, a gallery, a small Georgian garden.
11-13 Preston Street, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8NS
Tel: (01795) 534542
Email: fleurmuseum@tiscali.co.uk

Guildhall Museum

High Street, Queensborough, Kent, ME11 5AA
Tel: (01795) 667295

Maison Dieu

Once part of a 13th-century foundation which served as Royal lodge, pilgrims' hostel, and care home, this picturesque medieval building now serves as a museum housing a fine collection of Roman materials.

Ospringe Street, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8TW

Tel: (01795) 533751

Minster Abbey Gatehouse Museum

Union Road, Minster on Sea, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 2HW

Tel: (01795) 872303

Sittingbourne Heritage Museum

67 East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4BQ

Tel: (01795) 423215

Sheerness Heritage Centre

Rose Street, Sheerness, Kent

Tel: (01795) 875047

Industrial Heritage & Railways

Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway

PO Box 300, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 2DZ

Tel: (Information Line) 0871 222 1568. (Booking hotline) 0871 222 1569 (Evenings)

Email: info@sklr.net

Website: www.sklr.net

Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway

The Warren, Bredgar, Kent, ME9 8AT

Tel: (01622) 884254

Website: www.bwlr.co.uk

Chart Gunpowder Mill

Chart Close, Faversham, Kent, ME13 7SE

Contact: John Breeze (01795) 534915 for Group booking

Contact: Tony Golding (01795) 539852 for Guided Tours

Periwinkle Watermill Museum

4 Stanhope Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4TU

Tel: (01795) 473807

Shepherd Neame - Brewery Tour

Graham Hukins, 17 Court Street

Faversham, Kent ME13 7AX

Tel: 01795 542016

Fax: 01795 542062

Email: tours@shepherd-neame.co.uk

Website: www.shepherd-neame.co.uk

Arts & Crafts

Oad Street Centre

Oad Street, Borden, Kent, ME9 8LB

Tel: (01795) 843130

African Craft Centre

Gardening World Ltd, Lower Hartlip Road, Newington, Nr Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 7S2

Tel: 07860 503592

Sandhurst Farm Forge

Seed Road, Newnham, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 0NE
Tel: (01795) 886854
Email: hammer.tongs@btinternet.com
Website: www.sandhurstfarmforge.co.uk

Wyards Print & Artworks Ltd

99 Ospringe Road, Faversham, Kent, ME13 7LG
Tel: (01795) 590680
Website: www.wyards.com

Apple Craft Centre

Selling Road, Nr Faversham, Kent
Tel: (01795) 590504

Birds Birds Birds

4 Limes Place, Preston Street, Faversham, Kent, ME13 8PQ
Tel: (01795) 532370
Email: birdsbirdsbirds@birdsbirdsbirds.co.uk
Website: www.birdsbirdsbirds.co.uk

Gardens and Countryside Attractions

Farming World

Nash Court, Boughton under Blean, Faversham, Kent, ME13 9SW
Tel: (01227) 751144
Email: farmingworld@hotmail.com
Website: www.farming-world.com

The Barn Yard

Gore Farm, Upchurch, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 7BE
Tel: (01634) 235059
Email: gorefarm@the-barnyard.co.uk

Brogdale Collections

Brogdale Farm, Ospringe,
Kent ME13 8XZ
Tel: 01795 535 286
Email: hobdayt@btconnect.com
Website www.brogdale.org

Wildlife & Nature

Cromer's Wood Nature Reserve

Bottom Pond Road, Wormshill, Nr Sittingbourne
Tel: (01622) 662012
Website: www.kentwildlife.org.uk

Elmley Marshes Nature Reserve

Kingshill Farm, Elmley, Sheerness, Kent
Tel: (01795) 665969/ (01634) 222480
Website: www.rspb.org.uk/reserves

Oare Marshes

Harty Ferry Road, Oare, Faversham, Kent
Tel: (01622) 662012
Website: www.kentwildlife.org.uk

Queendown Warren Nature Reserve

Yaugher Lane, Hartlip, Sittingbourne, Kent
Tel: (01622) 662012
Website: www.kentwildlife.org.uk

South Swale Nature Reserve

Oare Road, Faversham, Kent
Tel: (01622) 662012
Website: www.kentwildlife.org.uk

The Swale National Nature Reserve
Shellness Road, Leysdown on Sea, Sheerness, Kent
Tel: (01622) 765222
Website: www.naturalengland.co.uk

The Blean
Nr Faversham, Kent
Tel: (01227) 862015
Email: blean.initiative@canterbury.gov.uk

Leisure Activities

Faversham Pools
Leslie Smith Drive, Faversham, Kent ME13 8PW
Tel: 01795 532426

'Greta' Sailing Barge
Steven Norris
Standard Quay, Faversham, Kent ME13 7BS
Tel: 07711 657 919
Fax: 01795 534 541
Email: greta@thamesbarges.co.uk
Website: www.thamesbarges.co.uk

New Century Cinema
High Street, Sittingbourne
Kent, ME10 4PG
Tel: 01795 423984
Website: www.reeltime-cinemas.co.uk/sittingbourne.php

Screen on Sheppey
The Healthy Living Centre
Off The Broadway, Sheerness, Kent ME12 1HH
Tel: (01795) 583547
Website: www.sheppeyhlc.org.uk

Royal Cinema
Market Place
Faversham, Kent ME13
Tel: (01795) 591211/591735
Fax (01795) 538033
Email: PTE440@aol.com

Sheerness Golf Club
Power Station Rd, Minster on Sea, Sheerness, Kent ME12 3AE
Tel: (01795) 662585
Fax: (01795) 668100
Email: thesecretary@sheernessgc.freeserve.co.uk

Bayford Meadows Kart Circuit Ltd
Symmonds Drive, Euro Link Industrial Estate, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3RY
Tel: (01795) 410707

Swallows Leisure Centre
Central Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4NT
Tel: (01795) 420420
Website: www.swallowsleisure.com

The Healthy Living Centre (Sheppey Leisure Complex)

Off The Broadway, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 1HH
Tel: (01795) 668061
Website: www.sheppeyhlc.org.uk

Seaside

Sheerness Beach

Beach Street, Sheerness, Kent
Tel: (01795) 667015

Minster Leas

The Leas, Minster on Sea, Sheerness, Kent
Tel: (01795) 667015

Leysdown Beach

The Promenade, Sheerness, Kent
Tel: (01795) 667015
Beachfields Park, Sheerness Seafront
Sheerness
Tel: (01795) 417127
Fax: (01795) 417477
Email: parks@swale.gov.uk
Website: www.swale.gov.uk

Coastal Parks

Leysdown Coastal Park

Shellness Road, Leysdown on Sea, Sheerness, Kent
Tel: (01795) 417478

Barton's Point Coastal Park

Marine Parade, Sheerness, Kent
Tel: (01795) 583745

The Tourism Figures: Key headline figures for Swale for 2006

- ◆ It is estimated that around 395,618 overnight tourism staying trips were made to Swale in 2006. Of these trips, domestic visitors made 91% of trips (359,313) and overseas visitors made 9% of trips (36,305). £52,824,137 was spent by staying visitors on their trip to
- ◆ Of all commercial accommodation available to visitors, caravan or camping accommodation was the most popular choice among visitors (used by 39% of domestic staying visitors and 17% of overseas staying visitors). 10% of visitors used serviced accommodation (hotels, guest houses and B&Bs) and a further 2% of all staying visitors used self-catering accommodation.
- ◆ It is estimated that around 4.1 million tourism day trips were made to Swale in 2006, generating a further £122,993,849 trip expenditure.
- ◆ In total £175,836,472 was spent by all visitors on their trip. With the addition of other expenditure tourism activity generated £186,900,986 expenditure.
- ◆ Of this expenditure, £173,724,930 translates into direct income for local business; and a further £17,372,493 of income is generated through indirect and induced effects (a total of £191,097,423 business turnover).

- ◆ It is estimated that 10% of total trip expenditure went towards the cost of accommodation. Over a third of total trip expenditure (40%) was spent in catering establishments and 18% was spent in the retail sector. Approximately 13% of total trip expenditure went on visits to attractions and other entertainment. Finally, the remaining 19% of total trip expenditure was spent in the transport sector.
- ◆ This income supported 2,832 FTE jobs and 3,873 Actual jobs. Overall it is estimated that tourism expenditure supported 6% of local employment.

*Figures from Cambridge Model 2006

Accommodation within Swale:

Type of Accommodation	Bedrooms/ Units/Pitches	Bed spaces
Caravan & Camping	2,373	12,509
Self catering (Cottages, Barns & Houses)	41	134
Serviced (Hotels, B&B's & Inn's)	537	1,130
Group (shared accommodation)	8	56

*Information sourced by Tourism South East

Population Figures

	Male	Female	Total
Population (Mid 2006)	63,600	65,000	128,600
Population Forecast	-	-	-
2011			128,500
2016			131,100

Source: Population Estimates Unit, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

To find out more, visit your local Visitor Information Centre:

Faversham TIC

Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre
13 Preston Street, Faversham
Kent ME13 8NS
Tel: 01795 534542
Email: ticfaversham@btconnect.com
Website: www.faversham.org

Useful Local Tourism Contacts:

Swale Tourism Association

Tourism Section of Swale Borough Council
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT
Tel: 01795 417478
Fax: 01795 417275
Email: tourism@swale.gov.uk

Website: swaletourism.co.uk

Faversham Area Tourism Association

Website: www.faversham.org

Visit Kent

Kent County Council

Invicta House

County Hall

Maidstone

Kent, ME14 1XX

Tel: +44 (0) 1622 671411

Website: www.visitkent.co.uk

www.visitkent.co.uk/business

