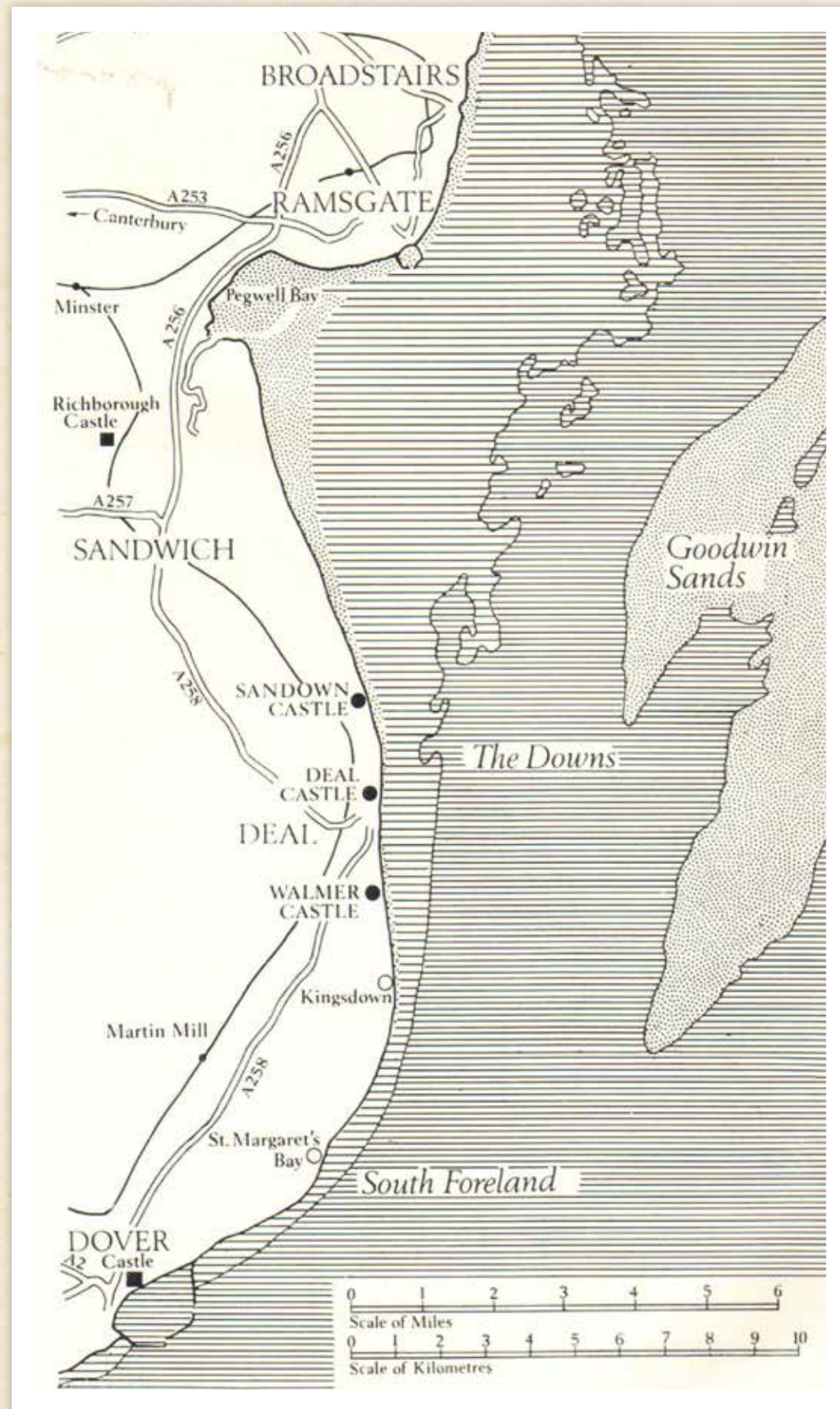


THE GOODWIN SANDS

The Goodwin Sands

Although Deal was once a major port, it never had a harbour or docks. The Goodwin Sands created a sheltered stretch of sea to the coast, known as The Downs. Sailing ships anchored here to wait for the wind to change before they could continue their journey. Many famous mariners stopped here, including Captain Cook on the Endeavour in 1776, on his return trip from Australia.



Map showing the position of the Goodwin Sands. The Goodwins comprise two large sandbanks that are constantly altering in shape, making them a hazard to shipping.

Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson often visited his fleet that anchored here while they prepared for battle.

The Goodwins lie 8-10km (5-6 miles) off the Deal coast. They are two large sandbanks that constantly change shape, making them a hazard to shipping. They are about 16km (10 miles) long and between 1.5 and 3km (1-2 miles) wide. At high water, the sands are completely covered but at very low tide, parts can be as much as 4 metres above the sea. The sands are the most dangerous at high tide when the sea can seem clear for miles, despite the immense obstacle lying centimetres below the surface.

Legends

One legend says the Goodwins are the remains of an island that was owned in the first half of the 11th century by Godwin, Earl of Wessex, after whom the sands are named. When he fell from favour, the land passed to St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury, whose Abbot supposedly failed to maintain the sea walls. This neglect led to the island's destruction during a storm in 1099. However, the island is not mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. A 19th-century book



These three lifeboat men, J Laming, R Roberts and J Mackins, named 'Heroes of the Goodwin Sands', saved hundreds of lives between them. The men are wearing cork lifejackets. The photograph was taken in 1892 by WH Franklin.

says the 'Godwin Sands' were created during a sea-tide inundation in 1092. However, the modern view is that this was once a low-lying wetland area until 6800BC when it was submerged under rising sea levels after the last Ice Age.

Wrecks

The Goodwin Sands are known as the 'ship swallow' and they are believed to have claimed more than 2000 wrecks. They are the graveyard of many seafarers.

The first recorded wreck was in 1298 when ship owner William Martyn appealed to King Edward I to appoint a jury to investigate a claim of plunder from a wreck near Sandwich.



The French cargo ship Agen, which became stranded on the sands and split into two in January 1952.

William Shakespeare mentions the Goodwins in The Merchant of Venice as 'a very dangerous flat and fatal, where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried.'

The sands shift with the tides and historically important wrecks are resurfacing all the time. The Great Storm of 27 November 1703 battered and took out several Royal Navy ships, including the HMS Stirling Castle, Northumberland and the Mary, along with 40 merchant vessels. The captain of HMS Stirling Castle, John Johnson, perished and there were only 70 survivors from a crew of 349.

The wrecks have all been uncovered in the early 21st century, as well as a German U-boat and a Dornier aircraft from the Second World War.

One of the most notable wrecks in recent years was that of the South Goodwin Light Vessel in 1954. It was driven onto the sands in a gale and only one crew member survived.

In years past, the Deal galleys were quick to take to sea when a ship hit the sands. This was usually to help rescue the crew but often to claim salvage.



A shipwreck in heavy seas and Captain Bullock's safety beacon which was built on the Goodwin Sands in 1840. The idea was that people could climb up the beacons but there were problems fixing them in the sand and so they did not work.

Light vessels

From the late 1700s, light vessels were introduced around the sands to try to avoid loss of life. Over time there were four light vessels and 21 light buoys anchored around the Goodwin Sands. However, vessels still floundered, including some of the Liberty ships that brought supplies from America to Europe after the Second World War.

From the mid-19th century, the boatmen of Deal, Walmer and Kingsdown crewed volunteer

lifeboats. Of the three, only the Walmer Lifeboat Station remains today. Walmer's existing boathouse was built in 1871.

Sport

Cricket has been played on the Goodwin Sands since the early 19th century; an annual match was held between local mariners from 1824 until 2003. An official run took place in August 2018, and in September 2019 a group of swimmers undertook the first ever swim to the Goodwins. A hovercraft used to take people sightseeing in the 1980s and 1990s.



A day trip to the Goodwin Sands. At favourable times of the year the sands are uncovered and provide a unique area for leisurely pursuits. Other noted activities have included cricket matches and fun runs.

Wildlife

At low tide, Harbour and Grey Seals bask on the sands which are good foraging grounds for birds. There are also Ross worm reefs and blue mussel beds. The Goodwin Sands are a Marine Conservation Zone.

Specific features within the area are protected and managed.

Find this and more heritage panels at www.towntrail.uk



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