A walk through the historic streets

Longer walk: about 2.5km (about 1.5ml); shorter walk: about 1.5km (less than 1m); both on level ground

This walk around the narrow and winding streets of Sandwich takes you through the historical heart of the town. The starting point is the Quay, which was once a lively harbour, not the quiet marina that it is today. During the Middle Ages the port of Sandwich was one of the busiest in the kingdom, with merchant ships from the Continent bringing wine, silk and spices and even pilgrims bound for St Thomas's shrine at Canterbury. Sandwich's merchants profited from this and built themselves great houses, some of which you will see as you walk around the town.
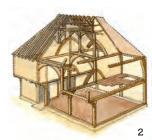
But the grand houses of Strand Street are only part of the picture. This walk will also take you through much less spectacular streets lined with two-storey dwellings with brick or plastered fronts. They often look as if they had been built in the 18th or 19th century, but many of them are fundamentally medieval, with timber-framed buildings hidden behind the later facades. These were mostly the homes of the mariners, craftsmen and artisans who made up the great majority of the townspeople.

We start at the Quay beside the river Stour (paying car park, and public conveniences)

Turn your back on the river and you will see a stone gateway built of flint and limestone. This is **Fisher Gate**, the earliest remains of the town's medieval defences (see Walls Walk for details). Walk through the gate and up to the top of Quay Lane where it is
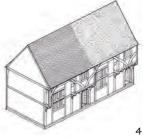
crossed by **Upper Strand Street.** Looking left down the street you will see opposite the white-painted front of **Numbers 22–24 (1)**, hiding a medieval framework (**2**)
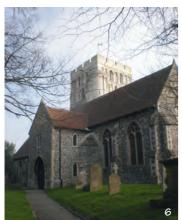

Cross from Quay Lane to **Fisher Street**, lined with two-storey houses. Many of their brick fronts disguise 15th-century timber buildings, of a rather modest type (**3/4**). Further on, The George and Dragon public house on the other side of the street (**5**) appears rather grander, but it was originally two small cottages, built just before 1600. Just beyond this, turn left into **Church**

Street St Clement and walk to the churchyard at the end. St Clement's church (6) was constructed about the year 1000 and was the first of Sandwich's three churches to be built in stone. Only a very few fragments of the earliest church survive, and its most prominent feature today is its magnificent 12th-century

tower. The church was founded on the highest point in the town, overlooking the harbour, and it would have been a landmark for shipping. It was always an important church: King Edward the Confessor attended mass there, and it was used as a royal court of law presided over by the king's bailiff. It also played a large part in the life of the town, as the place where the mayor was elected and

as the starting point for civic processions. St Clement's is now Sandwich's only parish church.

It is open daily in the summer; guidebooks are available in English and five other languages.

Retrace your steps along Church Street St Clement until you come to a T-junction where you should turn left into The Chain, a short stretch of road which is lined with small 16th- and 17th-century houses, some with 19th-century shop fronts. When you reach King Street, look to your left along Millwall Place. At the far end you can see the town wall which was built in the 14th century across what was once the main southern route into and out of town (see Walls Walk for details).

Turn right along King Street, now one of the commercial hubs of Sandwich, with shops along much of its length. Number 68 on the corner opposite the end of The Chain is a good example of a modern shop front on a 16th-century house. Number 62, The Old Dutch House (7), was newly built in the 17th century with

ornamental brickwork along the front (now painted). The windows and doorway were put in during the 18th century. Next to it, the **Sandwich Bookshop** was built as a shop in the 19th century. It preserves the original front and most of the internal layout of what was **Rose's Supply Store**. On the other side of the street, the building which is now numbered **27–29** was built in the very early 16th century as the rectory of St Peter's church. Its medieval origins can be seen in the jetty or overhang to the first floor. The mathematical tiles (imitating bricks) on its front face date from a renovation in the 18th century.

At the junction, bear right into **St Peter's Street**. On your left there is a fine 17th-century brick building now painted white (**8**). It is called **The Old Gaol** because it incorporates timbers from the medieval gaol which once stood on this site. Opposite is Holy Ghost Alley, now a lane used as a short cut through to the High Street, but in the late 14th century the timber doorway that frames the entrance led not into a lane but into a house now **Number 18** (**9**). Its

present appearance dates from the middle of the 17th century – a little later than the '1636' which you can see on the front at first-floor level.

The next point of interest is **St Peter's church** (**10**). This was a very large medieval church but in 1661 its tower collapsed, destroying the south aisle. The aisle was never rebuilt, but the wall was patched up to make the south side of the church, which overlooks a very small churchyard. Its central tower was restored in the late 17th century by descendants of the Strangers, refugees from the Low Countries who had come to Sandwich a hundred years earlier to escape from the religious persecution which they suffered in their homeland. They also restored the chapel at the south-east end of the church with a brick 'Dutch' gable, which you can see on the right.

Walk around the west end of the church, passing a fine 14th-century window, which stands isolated in the churchyard (**11**). It once lit the hall of the medieval St Thomas's Hospital, an almshouse founded in 1392 by Thomas Elys, a wealthy wine merchant. He was mayor and MP for Sandwich, and