

# Where was Bradings Medieval Quay?

## "FORMERREY YE BOATES CAME UP YE MIDDLE OF BRADINGE STRETE"

*Historical writings are scattered with brief remarks that are more tantalising than informative. Such is the case with Sir John Oglander's 17th century reference to the location of Brading's medieval quay. Over the years it has given rise to much speculation as to the precise position of the quay. For the first time, archaeology has been employed to try and locate some associated structure, unfortunately without success.*

The medieval quay became redundant in the 1530s when reclaimed land left it dry. It was replaced with one at the bottom of Quay Lane that survived into the 19th century. The common assumption among Brading locals has been that Oglander was pointing to the quay running parallel with the High Street, in the centre of the town. He could not have experienced it himself so the comment is presumably based on the recollection of his elders. He also gives an indication of the capacity of the harbour with "*....before that ye Mearches weare Inned a Shyppe of 40 Tonnes myght Come up to Bradinge Towne...*"

In an attempt to verify the location, Brading Town Council sought the help of the County Archaeological Service. Three excavations were carried out at the rear of housing fronting the High Street, with the assistance of local volunteers. A fair amount of medieval pottery was recovered but there was no evidence of a quay. This could be because it was further out from the street but it's more likely the Oglander quote has been misinterpreted.



Alluvium deposits establish where waterways once existed. This geological map covering Brading shows the alluvium deposit coming in from the right with a 'finger' stretching up towards the town. However, it stops well short of the High Street and shows no indication of running parallel to the street. This evidence would seem to be verified by the archaeology. They found no alluvium deposits in their main excavations but did find some in one additional dig further east, off Quay Lane.

What evidence there is might suggest Oglander was saying the quay came up *towards* the middle of the High Street, in which case it could be at a right angle to the street. Wherever it was, there is a strong possibility it was timber built, perhaps leaving few remains.

The excavations did uncover one mysterious feature that has yet to be explained. The item is over a metre across and made of firm red clay. The part excavated item to its left seems to be of similar design. One suggestion is that it's a salt pan, although at this size it wouldn't be very productive. Another idea is that the two pieces would make a mould of some sort but there are no other finds to support this theory. The IW Archaeological Service would welcome suggestions.

