



Isle of Sheppey

Kent's Treasure Island

The Pioneers of Aviation

This Country Break explores the **Isle of Sheppey**, one of England's few true islands, sited at the mouths of the Thames and the Medway and cut off from the rest of Kent by the tidal channel and estuary known as the Swale.

At just 36 square miles the island packs a lot in, from the miles of beaches (perfect for lazing on or getting wet from), its acres of low-lying marshes making it one of the best places in UK to see birds of prey, to its renowned fossil beds which provide regular prehistoric finds.

Scratch a little beneath the surface and you'll also discover more history and heritage per square mile than just about anywhere else in the country. Uncover the strong maritime tradition, stand on the same soil as Saxon Queens, Dutch Invaders and famous writers, and for the piece-de-résistance visit the site of the birthplace of UK aviation.

So forget what you think you know about Sheppey and come and take a fresh look, you're sure to find something surprising!



Heritage...

Sheppey has so much to **heritage and history** to choose from, it can seem a bit overwhelming, so just to keep things simple here are some ideas to enjoy the very best of the Island's past...

These are just a few ideas so feel free to mix it up or swap them around, combine with any events that are on in the area (remember to check local websites and magazines) and in short make it an experience of your own. Do be sure to note those activities that need to be booked in advance.

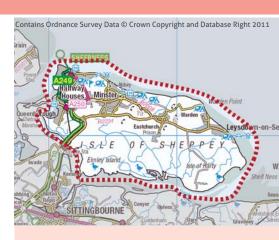
Speaking of which, why not book a **Sheppey Greeter** to get things off to a good start? These are volunteers full of useful local knowledge and experience to help you get even more from your day.





Further Information

www.visitsheppey.com www.visit.swale.gov.uk www.visitkent.co.uk www.visitkent.co.uk/greeters/ www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk www.southeasternrailway.co.uk www.ruralkent.org.uk/swailrail.htm



Getting There

The Isle of Sheppey is easily reached via the **Sheppey** Crossing (A249) from the M2 and the A2 at Sittingbourne.

Several bus routes cross the island linking to Maidstone, Canterbury and the rest of Kent. See the map.

Trains operated by **South** Eastern call at Sheerness and Queenborough, with connections to Kent, London and points beyond.



Getting Started...

There really is more history here than you can shake a stick at! Why not start with an overview of the most important sights?

We've laid out the very best on page 3.





Minster Abbey

into the past

Sheppey's Historical Highlights

Scratch beneath the surface and you'll discover the Isle of Sheppey probably has more history per square mile than just about anywhere else in the UK. But have no fear, we've done the hard work and packed the very best into just one day!

Get started in historic Queenborough, where Edward III established a Castle in 1377 with massive circular stone walls to guard the entrance to the estuary. Although demolished, you can explore the site in the public park at the heart of Queenborough and stop by Castle Connections and take a look at the "finds" uncovered by the recent archaeological dig. If you need something more solid from that period to look at, then make the **Church of the Holy Trinity** your next stop. This fine little church has a Norman tower, the imposing tomb of Thomas Greet, and some fascinating inscriptions. For a real overview of the history of Queenborough head over to the **Guildhall Museum** (by prior arrangement) to discover interactive displays and a wealth of information on HMS Wildfire, the WW2 Minesweeping base.

Time is pressing, so your next stop is **Bluetown**, once the home to dockyard workers and visiting sailors frequenting its gin palaces, theatres and brothels. You can follow the heritage trail to discover more but make sure to drop by the **Blue Town** Heritage Centre, site of the Criterion "Palace of Varieties" to get a real sense of the past. Happily several of the **pubs** in Bluetown have survived and either one or the cafe at the Heritage Centre makes a good spot for lunch.



Step further back in time and head east to **Minster**, with its **Abbey** founded by Queen Sexburgha in 674, parts of which incorporate inlaid Roman tiles into its Saxon and Norman architecture. The **Abbey Church** is open during the summer but check the website for times. The **Gatehouse Museum** contains an astonishing variety of artefacts from fossils to WW2 radios and an unparalleled view from the roof!

Make a pit stop at the **Memorial to British Aviation** in **Eastchurch**, home of some of the earliest technological advancements in the art of Flying. To get back to the very start, continue through Leysdown to Muswell Manor (open Fri-Sun), site of the very first recorded circular flight on British soil in 1909. Stop for a drink in the exhibition filled bar and absorb all this pioneering activity!

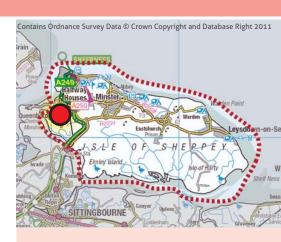
For your last stop of the day head to **Harty** and isolated early Norman **Church of St. Thomas**. Don't forget to seek out the 14th century carved chest before you adjourn to the neighbouring Ferry House Inn for a sundowner and a well deserved dinner.





Further Information

www.visitsheppey.com www.visit.swale.gov.uk www.sheppeywebsite.co.uk www.castleconnections.co.uk www.bluetownheritagecentre.com www.minsterabbey.org.uk www.minstergatehousemuseum.info www.muswellmanor.co.uk www.hartychurch.org.uk www.theferryhouseinn.co.uk



Getting There

Queenborough is easily reached via the Sheppey Crossing (A249) from the M2 and the A2 at Sittingbourne.

Bus routes 360/362/363 cross the island calling at Queenborough. See the map.

Queenborough has its own station and trains run to Sheerness and destinations off the island via Sittingbourne.



Extending your break...

Looking for more detail?

No problem, why not try an in-depth look at the history of UK aviation and its pioneers over on page 5?



Early Flights at Leysdown

magnificent men

Sheppey's Aviation History

Just how important has Sheppey been to flying and the development of aviation? Why not come and explore the birthplace and cradle of UK powered flight for yourself!

You are best armed with the facts first, so begin your journey at the **Blue Town Heritage Centre**. Formerly the site of Criterion public house and theatre, the centre holds a repository of history for the island. You are specifically looking for the aviation room, with its old photographs and artefacts charting the very beginnings of British aviation and featuring such illustrious personages as; Lord Moore-Brabazon, Sir C.S.Rolls (cofounder of Rolls Royce) the Short Brothers and of course Orville and Wilbur Wright.

To get into the story, start at the very beginning by heading all the way East to **Leysdown** and **Muswell Manor**. Known in 1909 as Mussell Manor, the flat landscape and favourable winds for flying led the first aircraft factory to be built here and was the spot for the first recorded flight by a British pilot on UK Soil at Shellbeach. Take in the aviation exhibition, including such gems as the story of Icarus 11 (the first pig to literally fly) and the incredible photograph of all the flying pioneers (including the Wright Brothers) gathered outside the Manor. You can have a drink in the bar or lunch (weekends only) or head back to **Leysdown's** cafes and pubs for the all important pit stop.



After lunch, visit the sight of the first flight by taking a walk along the beach to the hamlet at Shellness in the Swale National Nature Reserve. The only flying here these days is the flocks of sea and marsh birds that call the estuary home, but take in the atmosphere before heading back to **Leysdown** Coastal Park - (allegedly site of the first airstrip) and west to the village of Eastchurch.

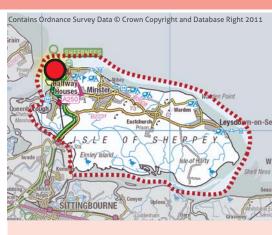
Aviation moved from Leysdown to Eastchurch in 1910 and flourished, with the village becoming the first Royal Naval Air Service Station. Stop by the Memorial to British Aviation unveiled in 1955 and make sure to pay a visit to the Church of All Saints which contains a memorial window to the earliest fatal flying accident in which C. S. Rolls and Cecil Grace died in 1910.

As you leave Eastchurch take a look at the model of the Wright **Flyer** at the entrance to the village as you head back towards Queenborough and finish a flying day with dinner and a traditional pint at the **Aviator**.





Further Information www.visitsheppey.com www.visit.swale.gov.uk www.sheppeywebsite.co.uk www.bluetownheritagecentre.com www.muswellmanor.co.uk www.naturalengland.org.uk www.leysdownonsea.com www.sheppeywebsite.co.uk www.aviatorsheerness.co.uk



Getting There

Sheerness and Bluetown are easily reached from the Sheppey Crossing following the A249 Brielle Way.

Almost all the bus routes on the island run from **Sheerness**. See the map.

Sheerness station is situated at the top of the High Street, trains run via Queenborough to the rest of Kent and beyond.



Extending your break...

Aviation is the comparative new boy on Sheppey compared with its long relationship with the sea,

Head to page 7 for some seafaring action!



Queenborough Harbour

Rural Britannia

A day (or two) of Maritime History

Come and explore all things ship-shape and salty as we delve into Sheppey's rich Maritime history.

The best place to get started is with a trip to The Blue Town Heritage Centre, which not only holds a collection of maritime memorabilia and artefacts but also arranges tours of the Sheerness Dockyard. Normally closed to the public you can take a minibus tour, taking in the Georgian buildings on Naval Terrace, the Dockyard Church and Garrison Point Fort.

Afterwards take the **Bluetown Heritage Trail** and learn more about the less than salubrious past of this area of dockworkers accommodation, drinking establishments and brothels that grew up around the dockyard.

After Bluetown make sure to stop off at the **Sheerness Heritage Centre**, housed in a restored 19th Century Dockworkers cottage and featuring an exhibition on the dockyard tools used by its workers. It's also worth a stroll down **Sheerness** High Street, a town that grew largely from the presence of the dockyard and the giant hulks it repaired and refitted.

After all that heritage why not find somewhere bracing for a spot of sea air before lunch? We recommend heading for a wander on the beach at **Minster Leas** and then keeping it salty with Fish and Chips from the **Briny Chip Shop**.



The historic harbour of **Queenborough** is your next destination and a wander down to Crundles Wharf is a great way to walk off your lunch and take in the history of a town captured by the Dutch in 1667 and only given back in 1967! Make certain to visit the Guildhall Museum for the information on HMS Wildfire, the base for Minesweepers during WW2. If you're still peckish stop by **Captain Crimps** for some fresh cockles before trekking west to the remote Isle of Harty and dinner at the Ferry House Inn.

The Ferry House Inn offers accommodation and can also organise a day trip on the Thames Barge "Greta". The day's sailing out of Whitstable harbour circumnavigates the island giving you views of the naval fortifications, Deadman's island, and the unexploded wreck of the USS Richard Montgomery and a real sense of maritime adventure.

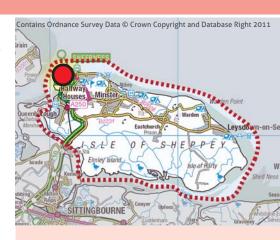
If you still want more then we suggest an evening of traditional Sea Shanties at the **Old House at Home** in Queenborough, or check in with **Big Fish Arts** and see if there are any performances from the Big Fish band coming up!





Further Information

www.visitsheppey.com www.visit.swale.gov.uk www.sheppeywebsite.co.uk www.bluetownheritagecentre.com www.sheernessheritagecentre.com www.theferryhouseinn.co.uk www.greta1892.co.uk www.bigfish.org.uk



Getting There

Sheerness and Bluetown are easily reached from the Sheppey Crossing following the A249 Brielle Way.

Almost all the bus routes on the island run from **Sheerness**. See the map.

Sheerness station is situated at the top of the High Street, trains run via Queenborough to the rest of Kent and beyond.



Extending your break...

Yearning for dry land?

Get up close and personal with history as we explore some of Sheppey's oldest and grandest buildings on page 9.

Heritage



Queenborough Churchyard

Stories in stone

Churches and Abbeys oh my!

Get immersed in Sheppey's history by taking in some of its most venerable and important buildings.

Get started in Queenborough by visiting the **Church of the Holy Trinity**, built in 1367 by Edward III, take note of the Norman tower, the ornately painted ceiling, and the inscriptions on the charity boards. The "Whale Tablet" commemorates one of the first arctic explorers and travellers with a rhyming inscription.

Wend your way next to Sheerness and pay a flying visit to the abandoned shell of the **Dockyard Church** which dates back to around 1828 (although a church has been here since 1690), it closed in 1970 but you can still visit on a minibus tour from the **Blue Town Heritage Centre**. The altar and wooden panelling was moved to the nearby **Holy Trinity Church** in Sheerness which is worth a visit in its own right. Don't miss the imposing **Roman Catholic Church of St Henry & Elizabeth**, designed by the famous Victorian architect Pugin.

Next, head towards Minster and stop for lunch on the Leas at **The Playa**. Suitably refuelled make **Minster Abbey** your next stop. One of the oldest churches in England founded in 664, the Abbey contains fine examples of Saxon architecture as well as monuments and effigies to some of Sheppey's famous (or infamous) residents including Robert de Shurland and his horse Grey Dolphin (do check the website for opening times).



The next stop is Eastchurch and the Church of All Saints, built in 1432, note the memorial window to the first fatal flying accident which claimed the lives of C.S. Rolls and Cecil Grace in 1910.

Take the Leysdown Road as far as Warden Bay (there is a car park on Imperial drive from where you can walk along the beach to the point). The Church of St. James would have been your destination if it wasn't now a few hundred yards out to sea as the result of cliff erosion along this portion of the coast! Still it's a bracing walk and a change of pace.

Finish your pilgrimage with a visit to the isolated Church of St Thomas at Harty and its timeless atmosphere (with no gas or electricity, lighting is by candles and oil lamps only). Make sure to grab a copy of the church guide to help you locate all its treasures including the 14th century chest carved with jousting knights.

For the evening why not head back to Sheerness for dinner and a show at the Sheppey Little Theatre (check website for details of performances)?





Further Information

www.visitsheppey.com

www.visit.swale.gov.uk

www.sheppeywebsite.co.uk

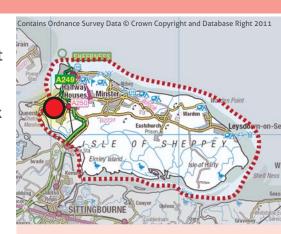
www.bluetownheritagecentre.com

www.the-playa.com

www.minsterabbey.org.uk/3.html

www.hartychurch.org.uk

www.sheppeylittletheatre.org



Getting There

Queenborough is easily reached via the Sheppey Crossing (A249) from the M2 and the A2 at Sittingbourne.

Bus routes 360/362/363 cross the island calling at Queenborough. See the map.

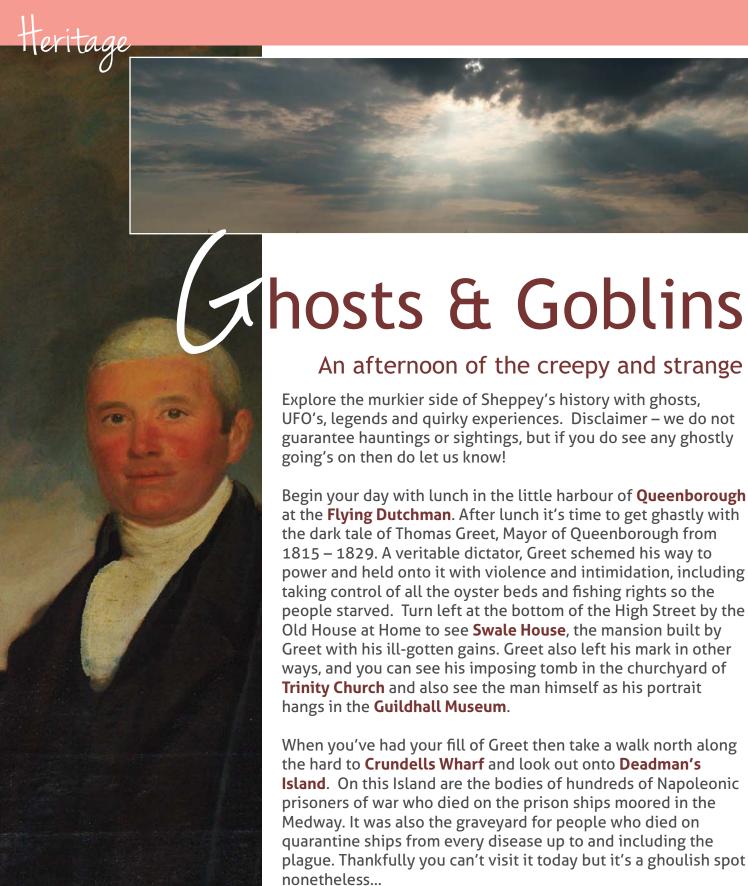
Queenborough has its own station and trains run to Sheerness and destinations off the island via Sittingbourne.



Extending your break...

Be afraid, be very afraid!

We've collected all of Sheppey's most ghoulish legends and stories together on page 11, turn the page if you dare!



Island. On this Island are the bodies of hundreds of Napoleonic prisoners of war who died on the prison ships moored in the Medway. It was also the graveyard for people who died on quarantine ships from every disease up to and including the plague. Thankfully you can't visit it today but it's a ghoulish spot



Mayor Thomas Greet

Next its onto **Sheerness** where you can grab an afternoon drink at one of the haunted pubs on the High Street like the Old House at Home or the Castle Inn.

Stop by the **Sheerness Heritage Centre** to find out more about the 1912 UFO sighting. Witnesses described it as a large object with lights emitting a buzzing sound, which shortly vanished. This "scareship" sighting marked the very beginning of official interest in UFO's when the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, requested an investigation. Read more about it here.

Spend some time in **Bluetown**, once the dock workers quarter, follow the heritage trail plaques and particularly take note of the old alleyways behind the high street, once the haunt of press gangs and ladies of the night. There is plenty to discover including a hidden Jewish cemetery on Hope Street (read more here) and a colony of some 10,000 yellow tail scorpions that inhabit the dockyard wall (the only ones in the UK – read more).

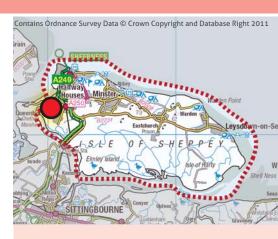
Finish your day in ghoulish style with a **Big Fish ghost walk** (by prior arrangement) and meet some of the nastiest and scariest of Sheppey's residents before dinner at the frequently haunted **Shurland hotel**(see the video evidence here!).





Further Information

www.visitsheppey.com www.visit.swale.gov.uk www.sheppeywebsite.co.uk www.sheernessheritagecentre.com www.bluetownheritagecentre.com www.bigfish.org.uk www.theshurlandhotel.co.uk



Getting There

Queenborough is easily reached via the Sheppey Crossing (A249) from the M2 and the A2 at Sittingbourne.

Bus routes 360/362/363 cross the island calling at Queenborough. See the map.

Queenborough has its own station and trains run to Sheerness and destinations off the island via Sittingbourne.



Extending your break...

Those of faint-hearted disposition turn back now!

Everyone else head to page 13 for more ghoulish, ghastly and legendary goings-on!



houls & Ghosts

A Second afternoon of the macabre...

Prepare yourself for another ghoulish afternoon with lunch (and some Dutch courage) at the **Ship on Shore** in Sheerness before heading east to **Barton's Point Coastal Park**.

Aqua zorbing at Barton's Point is scary enough but we're here to look 1.5 miles out to sea and spot the masts marking the final resting place of the **USS Richard Montgomery**, a munitions ship that sank in 1944 with around 1500 tonnes of high explosives on board (read more here). All the bombs are still down there and if it blew up it would create a 5m high wave and send debris up to 3,000m in the air!

Moving swiftly along (and out of the blast zone) to Minster Leas, take a walk along the beach into one of Sheppey's earliest legends, that of Robert de Shurland. Robert, after killing a monk rode his horse Grey Dolphin out into the Thames to beg for mercy from the King aboard his ship, impressed the king did so, but on his return Robert was confronted by a witch who cursed him and prophesised that Grey Dolphin would cause his death. Not taking kindly to this Robert beheaded the horse on the spot, however fate intervened and a year later whilst walking on the beach at Minster he cut his foot on the horse's bones and died of the infection. Robert is buried in Minster Abbey and on his tomb is carved an effigy of Grey Dolphin, the horse who saved him, then later caused his death.



Hous

Make sure to also stop by the **Minster Gatehouse Museum** to witness firsthand the bloody aftermath of smuggling in this area, here you can see a gravestone of an unfortunate man mistaken by smugglers for an informer, and dealt summary justice! (Read more here) Smuggling was also rife at Warden, stop for a swift half at the Wheatsheaf before a wander at Warden Point. These cliffs are eroding rapidly causing the Church of St James to be lost to the sea in 1887 but legend says you can hear the bells ringing from the sea on windy days from the cliff tops!

Next take a trip down **Harty Ferry Road**, but keep your eyes peeled, as this area is purportedly home to the fabled "Black Cat of Sheppey" (possibly a black leopard living wild -read more). The last stop for the day is **Harty Church**, with its isolated aspect amongst the marsh (lit only by candles and oil lamps it's a great spot for moody gothic-style black & white pictures!)

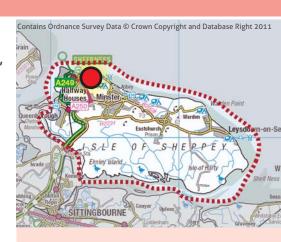
Finish your day with dinner and a chance to get ghoulish (or turn detective) yourself with a murder mystery evening (selected dates only) at the Ferry House Inn.





Further Information

www.visitsheppey.com www.visit.swale.gov.uk www.sheppeywebsite.co.uk www.bartonspointcoastalpark.co.uk www.minsterabbey.org.uk/3.html www.minstergatehousemuseum.info www.hartychurch.org.uk www.theferryhouseinn.co.uk



Getting There

Sheerness is easily reached from the Sheppey Crossing following the A249 Brielle Way.

Several bus routes stop along Marine Parade, with route **367** being your best bet. See the map.

The nearest station is at Sheerness-on-sea about a mile away where you can pick up the 367.



Extending your break...

Feeling frazzled by all the ghoulish going's on?

The best cure is to spend in day in the sunshine, so why not try one of our **Outdoor** itineraries?

Heritage More Information

Listings & Details



_ /\				idns	
_/\	حلد	ل ــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــــ	ہے۔	, 151. C	
		1 Y (1)		DNC	~
,	1	CIV		1010	2

Queenborough Castle Site	N/A	http://www.sheppeywebsite.co.u k/index.php?id=86	Queenborough
Holy Trinity Church	01795 662648	http://www.kentchurches.info/ch urch.asp?p=Queenborough	High Street, Queenborough, ME11 5EN
Queenborough Guildhall Museum	01795 667295	N/A	High Street, Queenborough, ME11 5AA
Bluetown Heritage Centre	01795 662981	http://www.bluetownheritage- centre.com	69 High Street, Bluetown, Sheerness, ME12 1RW
Minster Abbey	01795 879200	http://www.minsterabbey.org.uk/ 3.html	High Street, Minster, ME12 3QD
MInster Abbey Gatehouse Museum	01795 875111	http://www.minstergatehouse- museum.info/index.php	Union Road, Minster-on-Sea, ME12 2HW
Memorial to British Aviation	N/A	http://www.sheppeywebsite.co.u k/index.php?id=72	High Street, Eastchurch, ME12 4DA
Muswell Manor	01795 510245	http://www.muswellmanor.co.uk	Shellness Road, Leysdown-on-sea ME12 4RJ
Chruch of St.Thomas the Apostle	01795 875146	http://www.hartychurch.org.uk/	Harty Ferry Road, Harty, ME12 4BQ
Swale National Nature Reserve	0845 600 3078	http://www.naturalengland.org.u k/ourwork/conservation/desig- natedareas/nnr/1006143.aspx	Shellness Road, Shellness, ME12 4RJ
Leysdown Coastal Park	01795 417127	http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_a nd_culture/countryside_and_coas t/parks_and_open_spaces/coun- try_parks/leysdown_coastal_park .aspx	Shellness Road, Shellness, ME12 4RJ

Attractions			
Church of All Saints, Eastchurch	01795 880 205	N/A	High Street, Eastchurch, ME12 4DA
Sheerness Heritage Centre	01795 663317	http://www.sheernessheritage- centre.com/	10 Rose Street, Sheerness, ME12 1AJ
Thames Barge "Greta"	01795 534 541	http://www.greta1892.co.uk/	Whitstable Harbour, Whitastable, CT5 1AB
Holy Trinity Church, Sheerness	01795 662399	http://www.achurchnearyou.com/ sheerness-holy-trinity-st-paul/	The Broadway, Sheerness, ME12 1AF
Roman Catholic Church of St Henry & Elizabeth	01795 662142	http://www.sheppeywebsite.co.u k/index.php?id=93	53 The Broadway, Sheerness, ME12 1TS
Sheppey Little Theatre	01795 665700	http://www.sheppeylittlethe- atre.org/	Meyrick Road, Sheerness, ME12 2NX
Big Fish Arts	07775 712306	http://www.bigfish.org.uk	N/A
RSPB Capel Fleet Raptor Viewpoint	01795 665969	http://www.rspb.org.uk/re- serves/guide/e/elmleymarshes/	Harty Ferry Road, Harty, ME12 4BQ

Food & Drink			
Name			
The Ferry House Inn	01795 510214	http://www.theferryhouseinn.co. uk/	Harty Ferry Road, Harty, ME12 4BQ

Heritage

The Red Lion	01795 664354	N/A	61 High Street, Bluetown, ME12 1RW
The Albion & Coffee Dock	01795 664564	N/A	41 High Street, Bluetown, ME12 1RN
Muswell Manor	01795 510245	http://www.muswellmanor.co.uk	Shellness Road, Leysdown-on-sea ME12 4RJ
The Aviator	01795 666094	http://www.aviatorsheerness.co.u k/	Queenborough Corner, Queenborough, ME12 3DJ
Castle Connections	01795 661277	www.castleconnections.co.uk	Railway Terrace, Queenborough, ME11 5AY
Briny Chip Shop	01795 874450	N/A	29 Trafalgar Parade, Minster-on-Sea, ME12 2RW
Captain Crimps	01795 664209	N/A	South Street, Queenborough, ME11 5AA
The Old House at Home, Queenborough	01795 662463	N/A	1 High Street, Queenborough, ME11 5AA
The Playa	01795 873059	http://www.the-playa.com	The Leas, Minster-on-Sea, ME12 2NL
The Old House at Home, Sheerness	01795 581743	http://www.shepherdneame.co.u k/pub/sheerness/old-house-at- home.aspx	158-160 High Street, Sheerness, ME12 1UQ

The Castle Tavern	01795 662503	N/A	210-212 High Street, Sheerness, ME12 1UN
The Shurland Hotel	01795 881100	http://www.theshurlandhotel.co. uk	79-81 High Street, Eastchurch, ME12 4EH
The Flying Dutchman	01795 662884	N/A	19 High Street, Queenborough, ME11 5AA
The Ship-on-Shore	01795 662880	N/A	155 Marine Parade, Sheerness, ME12 2BX
The Wheatsheaf Inn	01795 880318	N/A	Warden Road, Warden, ME12 4HA

General Information

O energy information					
Name					
Sheppey Greeters	N/A	http://www.visitkent.co.uk/greete rs/	N/A		
Sheppey History Website	N/A	http://www.sheppeywebsite.co.u k	N/A		
Visit Sheppey	N/A	http://www.visitsheppey.com	N/A		
Visit Swale	N/A	http://www.visit.swale.gov.uk	N/A		
Visit Kent	N/A	http://www.visitkent.co.uk	N/A		

For more on The Isle of Sheppey

and across Kent...

Active Family

Dutdoors Pickn' Mix



Supported by:









