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## RYA Guide to the River Tamar - Plymouth

The Tamar River has been the official border between Devon and Cornwall since Saxon times. It was a vital trade link for the mining industry and agriculture, taking resource from the valley slopes and transporting it to Plymouth and beyond.

The Tamar Valley is rich in beauty and history, possessing some of the finest scenery in the West Country and is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

To the curious mariner, it offers unparalleled beauty. Quiet anchorages, hidden ports and historic houses are all waiting to be discovered either for an overnight stop or to visit on the tide.

### The Tamar Bridge



Royal Albert and Tamar Bridges joining Devon and Cornwall (Chart point 1)

Cruising past the Plymouth dockyards our journey starts at the Tamar Bridge, which connects Plymouth in Devon to Saltash in Cornwall.

The bridge was completed in 1961 and at the time was the longest span bridge in England. Just downstream of the Tamar Bridge is the Royal Albert Bridge, Isambard Kingdom Brunel's famous railway bridge completed in 1859.

## Saltash



Saltash and the unmistakable 'Union Inn' nestling under the bridges on the Cornish side of the Tamar (Chart point 2)

Sir Francis Drake had strong connections with Saltash, his wife Mary Newman was a local girl and he used the port facilities to unload some of the Spanish treasure ships of their cargo.

Upstream of the bridges, the pontoon off Saltash Jubilee Green is available for visiting boats up to 10m, with no charge for a short stay. There's many a good pub and eatery.

## The Tamar River

Heading north, green buoys mark the eastern bank. At low water, beware a small drying patch (drying 0.3) in the middle of the river near the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> green buoys (Warren Point and Neal Point).



Off to starboard the River Tavy and Railway Bridge (7.2m clearance)  
(Chart point 3)

Deep water lies close to the buoys. Off to the north east, the entrance to the River Tavy is clearly identifiable by the railway bridge (7.2m clearance).

We continue to head north passing Weir Point between the yellow conical buoy and red post, and passing under the overhead power lines crossing the river (21m clearance). From here the river wanders more to the north west.

**Cargreen**



Cargreen to port (Chart point 4)

Trots of moorings mark the approach of Cargreen to port.

Just off the quay, remain four visitors' buoys which were provided by the Crooked Spaniards Inn as a service to customers.

Sadly the Crooked Spaniards is no longer the village pub becoming instead a wedding venue but the buoys are still available for use but contact The Spaniards first. The current owners are hoping to install a pontoon and re-establish a village pub in the future.

Continuing up river buoyage is sparse from now on, but rows of small craft moorings generally mark the deep water. You can also normally expect the deeper water to be found on the outside of the bends.

**Weir Quay**

Next to come into view on the starboard side is Weir Quay Boatyard.

It offers visitor moorings and boatyard facilities including, launch and recovery, storage ashore, toilets and showers.



Weir Quay Boatyard (Chart point 5)

### Pentillie Quay



Picturesque Pentillie Quay with the bathing hut on the water's edge (Chart point 6)

Once past Weir Quay, hug the outside of the next two bends, which offer anchorages, and you'll be rewarded by Pentillie Quay which has a picturesque building on the water's edge known as Pentillie Castle's Bathing Hut.

The building has had many uses over the years from Sunday school house to tea room. Pentillie Castle is now run as a B&B.

### Halton Quay

The next quay ½ mile further along is Halton Quay, host to the smallest Anglican chapel in England.

Originally the chapel was the clerk's office during the lime trade era.



Halton Quay and the smallest chapel, with the remains of the lime kilns on the left. (Chart point 7)

Halton Quay was one of the most important quays for the lime trade, the remains of the 4 kilns used to burn the lime are still visible today. You can anchor here and take a row ashore.

## Cotehele Quay



Ducks taking flight with Cotehele Quay ahead.

Continuing along the Tamar, wildlife can be seen in abundance and justifiably the Tamar Valley is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Cotehele Quay is owned by the National Trust and is home to the restored Tamar sailing barge 'Shamrock'. The Cotehele Estate can be accessed from the quay.

The National Maritime Museum (Falmouth) also has a display area on the quay.

There are plenty of deep water holes for anchoring near the quay.



Cotehele Quay, owned by the National Trust. Visiting yacht alongside. (Chart point 8)

## Upriver to Calstock

High reed beds and small inlets line the final few bends as you approach the impressive rail viaduct marking Calstock.

Calstock has had a quay since Saxon times and has been used as a vital transport link for centuries, latterly for barges carrying cargo to and from the numerous mines and now with occasional steamer full of tourists.



The Tamar Passenger Ferry links Calstock with Cotehele Quay.

The pontoon just past the viaduct is for use by the ferries only, however it is possible to use the pontoon as a drop off point.

The impressive railway viaduct crossing the Tamar at Calstock.  
(Chart point 9)

A quay just upstream of the bridge can be used to moor dinghies to and the boatyard at Calstock has some mooring available by arrangement as well as fresh water, showers and toilets.

Ashore you will find a couple of pubs serving food and the local shop has some provisions.

The Calstock Festival is held in early June each year with lots of music, entertainment and stalls.



Houses in Calstock nestle against the vast viaduct.

**Fact File**
**Web/Contact**

Calstock Ferry & Motor Launch Co	<a href="http://www.calstockferry.co.uk">www.calstockferry.co.uk</a>
Weir Quay Boatyard	<a href="http://www.weir-quay.com">www.weir-quay.com</a>
Pentillie Estate	<a href="http://www.pentillie.co.uk/estate/bathing-hut">www.pentillie.co.uk/estate/bathing-hut</a>
Cotehele	<a href="http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cotehele/">www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cotehele/</a>
Queens Harbourmaster	<a href="http://www.qhmplymouth.org.uk">www.qhmplymouth.org.uk</a>
Calstock Festival	<a href="http://www.calstockfestival.co.uk/">www.calstockfestival.co.uk/</a>
The Spaniards, Cargreen	01752 848177

**VHF**

QHM	Call Long room	Ch.13 or 14
Marinas	Ch.80	

The Port of Plymouth is under the jurisdiction of the Queens Harbour Master so it is worth keeping a listening watch on VHF channel 13 or 14.

**Tides**

Devonport		Range	Heights	
	Spring	4.7m	MHWS 5.5	MLWS 0.8
	Neap	2.2m	MHWN 4.4	MLWN 2.2
Cargreen		Range	Heights	
	Spring	4.7m	MHWS 5.5	MLWS 0.8
	Neap	2.3m	MHWN 4.4	MLWN 2.1
Cotehele Quay		Range	Heights	
	Spring	4.2m	MHWS 4.6	MLWS 0.4
	Neap	2.1m	MHWN 3.5	MLWN 1.4

### Public slipways

- Calstock
- Plymouth
- Saltash
- Saltash Passage
- Torpoint
- Weir Quay.

### Anchorage

The bend in the river immediately before Pentillie Quay has some deep holes for anchoring as does the approach to Cotehele Quay. Keep an eye out for the Day Cruise ferries (tides permitting) operating between Plymouth and Morwellham.

### Charts

Imray C14

BA 5602 folio

BA 871

### Thanks

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Many thanks to Richard Brown at Plymouth Sailing School for his kindness in providing a boat for the making of this article.

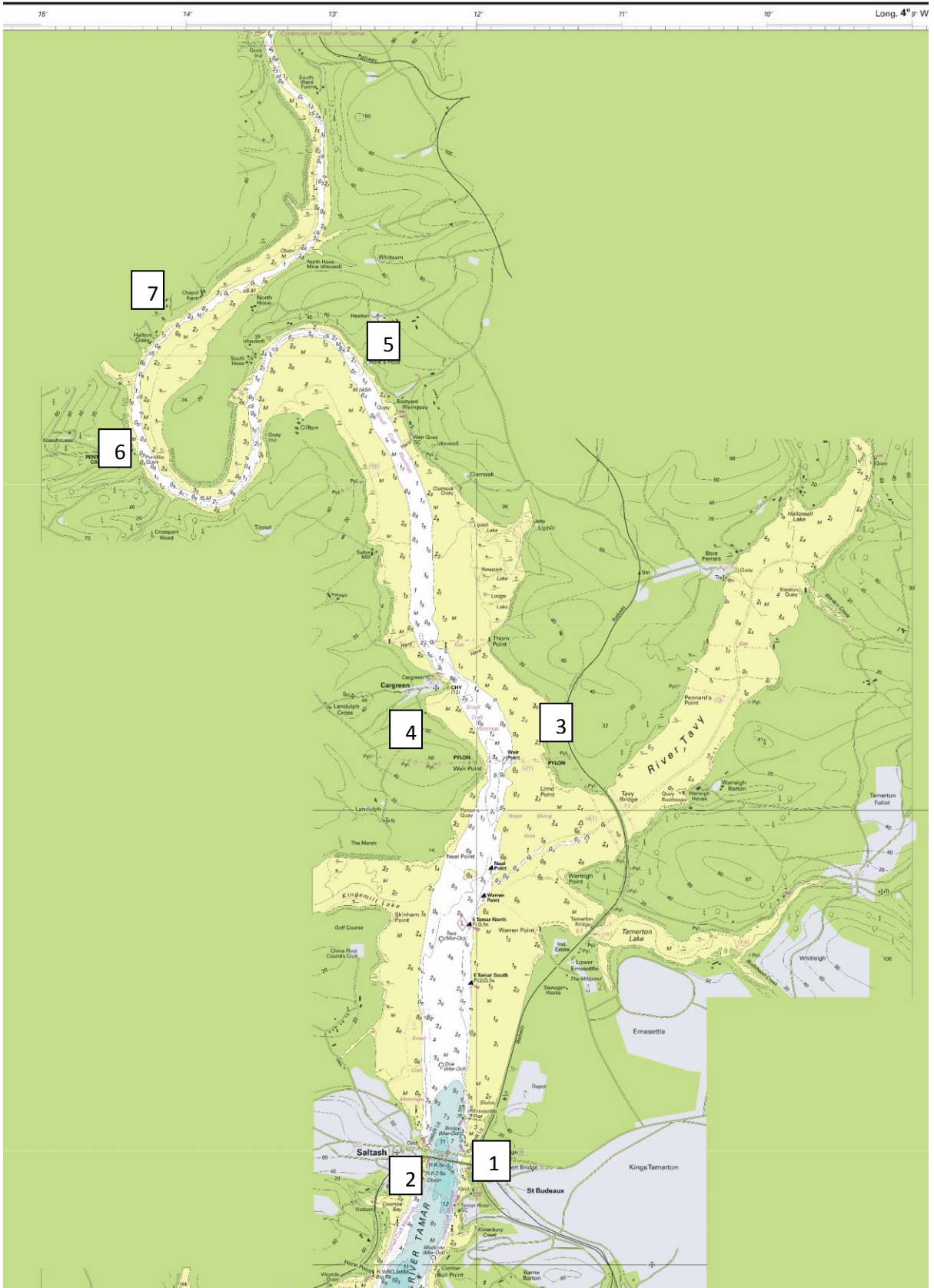
[www.plymouthsailingschool.com](http://www.plymouthsailingschool.com)

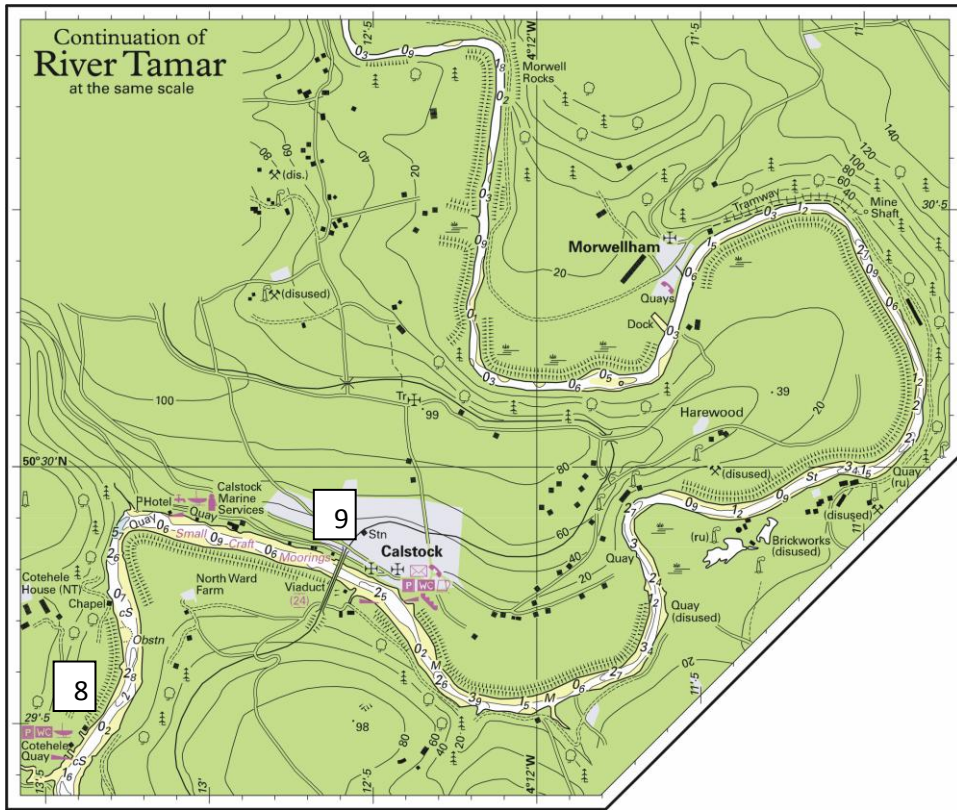
Tel: 01752 493377

By Simon Jinks, Yachtmaster Examiner and marine journalist

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