



View of Dartmouth
from Kingswear

Dartmouth was first mentioned in the Anglo-saxon chronicle of 1049, as the 'mouth of the Dart', described as a haven and a landing place. It is still a haven today with its historical and architectural buildings such as the 17th century Butterwalk, its plethora of art galleries and boutique shops and the impressive Royal Britannia Naval College prominent on the hill leading down into the town itself. It is also a popular boating centre with a famous regatta, as well as a fishing port with fresh catches traded on the quayside at Kingswear across the water from Dartmouth.

The boatfloat could be considered one of the focal points of Dartmouth where you can watch the small boats coming

in and out along with the waterfowl; mallards and mute swans are common. The boatfloat was once open to the river before the embankment was built in 1885.

Facing the boatfloat are a row of fine houses which date from 1584 to 1640, these were built for the wealthy merchants who made their money importing exotic goods from Europe and further afield. The most prominent is the Royal Castle Hotel which in fact is a combination of two houses dating from 1639, with a façade of 1831. Fairfax Place is a narrow street leading off from the boatfloat which has some interesting buildings, one is 'Kendricks' built in 1880, as a Victorian copy of medieval style.



The boatfloat



Royal Britannia Naval College





The Butterwalk (left) leads off from the other end of the boatfloat, this is a grand row of houses dating from 1635, with fine carvings on the upper floors which are supported

on stone columns. These houses were built for a merchant who made his money from Newfoundland cod. At the time, his ships would have been able to sail right up to his backdoor!

Bayard's Cove (right) was first developed as a quay in the 16th Century and today still retains its historic appearance. It is from here that the Pilgrim Fathers set sail in 1620. Beyond the cove is Bayard's Castle built in 1539 as part of Henry VIII's coastal defences. This was a second line of defence behind the two castles at the mouth of the river. It is a good place to view the comings and goings on the river and in the summer months watch for the shoals of mackerel which come to feed on the bait fish, causing a writhing mass. Gulls are common on the water here and you may even spot a guillemot or razorbill if you are lucky.



The oldest building in Dartmouth is the Cherub Inn built in 1380; it has been carefully restored with original windows and ships' timbers. Along from the

Cherub (right) are yet more well-preserved medieval houses which were originally the shambles, or butchers' shops at the centre of the medieval town.



St. Saviour's Church was consecrated in 1372; the wooden door of the South porch dates from the 14th century and was refurbished in 1631. Take a look at the ornamental scrollwork with the arms of Edward I. There are always plenty of jackdaws milling around the church and its surroundings and in the summer watch the swifts reeling around, their nesting sites are in many of the roofs of the old buildings including the church. Inside the church is a 15th century rood screen and finely carved stone pulpit which are worth a look, check for signs of bats while you are in there, stains from the urine and droppings are common. Incidentally the west gallery is believed to be built with timber from a ship of the Spanish Armada.



This is just a snippet of what Dartmouth has to offer; for a more detailed account there are plenty of publications available from the Local Tourist information Centre or the AONB's website:

www.southdevonaonb.org.uk which has walks and trails to download.