

SW Sunk swatch way 2014

I visited the SW Sunk on 3rd June, 2014 to see what remained of the swatch way that had been in place for the last four or so years. Reports late in 2013 suggested that the sands were encroaching from the direction of the old wrecked SW Sunk beacon and this last winter's storms do seem to have made some changes.

I arrived shortly before LW Neaps and immediately could see a narrow ridge of sand just showing, running from south-west to north-east, seemingly at right angles to the 2013 swatch way. There may have been a gap between this ridge and the large knoll (Mystique's¹ Knoll) to the north-east but at best it was a boat's length wide so I did not attempt it. Shoal draft vessels may be able to cross close to HW but there is no detailed information about the remainder of the swatch way and therefore the advice is **NOT** to use last year's chart.

However, by following the contour of Mystique's Knoll north-east, after about a mile from last year's swatch way, a way across was apparent. I spent several hours collecting data until the rising SSW wind and the start of the flood started sufficient wave action to make data collection dubious. That explains why some of the data on the eastern side of the swatch way is a little sparse.

There are two *FOULS* marked on the Admiralty charts in this swatch way. I have been in contact with the UKHO who have referred to their original data; both were originally discovered during PLA surveys in 1993, one at 51°37.990N. 001°16.863E (WGS84) being at 6.1m, the second at 51°37.940N. 001°17.391E (WGS84) at 5.3m. I found a general depth of over 7 metres round these positions.

I believe this is a viable crossing point but as ever it is up to individuals to review the data and make up their own mind. Two suggested waypoints are shown on the sketch plan overleaf. These are 1.65nm apart at 101°(T)/281°(T).

This swatch way is more conveniently placed than last year's for those using Fisherman's Gat, saving at least 1nm and bringing you out opposite the Gat on the edge of the PLA precautionary area. I would encourage readers heading south not to turn off the rhumb line early to shape up for Fisherman's Gat but to go to the second waypoint as there was some indication of shoal water off to starboard.

I must remind readers that the Port of London Authority encourage us to avoid using the Black Deep, Fisherman's Gat and the Princes Channel so there is a strong requirement on us to ensure that we do not hinder any shipping in this area. There is ample depth for yachts outside of the buoyed channel in Fisherman's to the east of the marked channel. Crossing the Black Deep must be done with care: monitoring London VTS on VHF 69 is probably wise. Out-bound craft usually announce their intention to use Fisherman's Gat and in-bound vessels are required to report in at the Outer Fisherman whilst those using the Black Deep are required to announce their arrival in the Black Deep on reaching Sunk Head Tower.

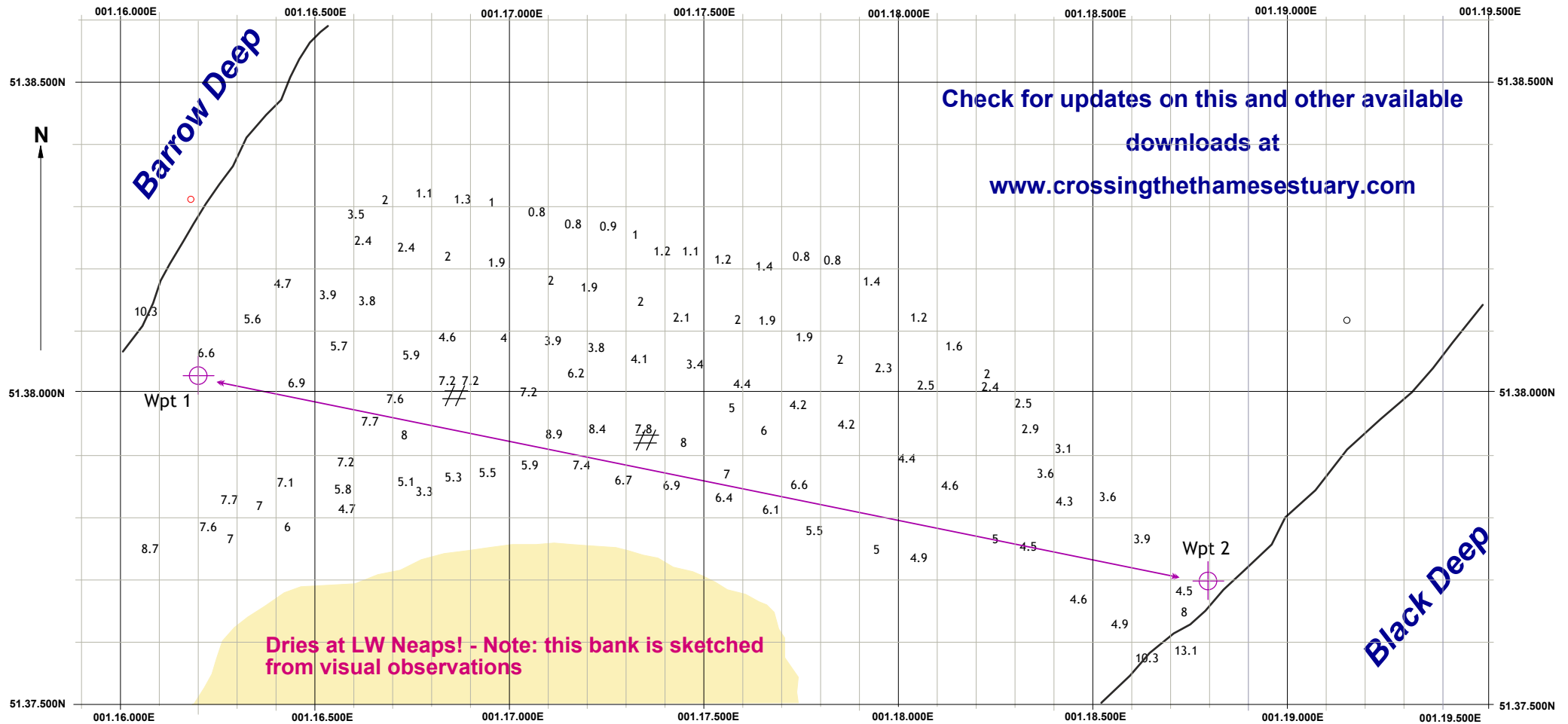
Attached are two sketch plans: the first showing soundings reduced to chart datum, the second including some contours and colouring. The second sketch is intended to assist in understanding the shape of the swatch way, apparently quiet steep-to to the south-west and shelving more gradually to the north-east. Note that the contours are drawn freehand and therefore are no more than general guidance. Feedback on these sketch plans or any other relevant issue will be welcomed via info@crossingthethamesestuary.com.

¹ 'Mystique' is a 40+ft motor yacht from Fambridge who after careful planning endeavoured to cross the SW Sunk where the UKHO chart showed 3.7m at chart datum only to find through no fault of their own, that it now dried at least 0.5m. The SW Sunk is subject to change!

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Depth shown in metres at Chart Datum



Dries at LW Neaps! - Note: this bank is sketched from visual observations

1. Depth in metres. Soundings taken by the author have been reduced to chart datum using data from the *National Tidal and Sea Level Facility*, provided by the British Oceanography Data Centre and funded by the *Environment Agency*. Positions refer to the WGS84 datum.

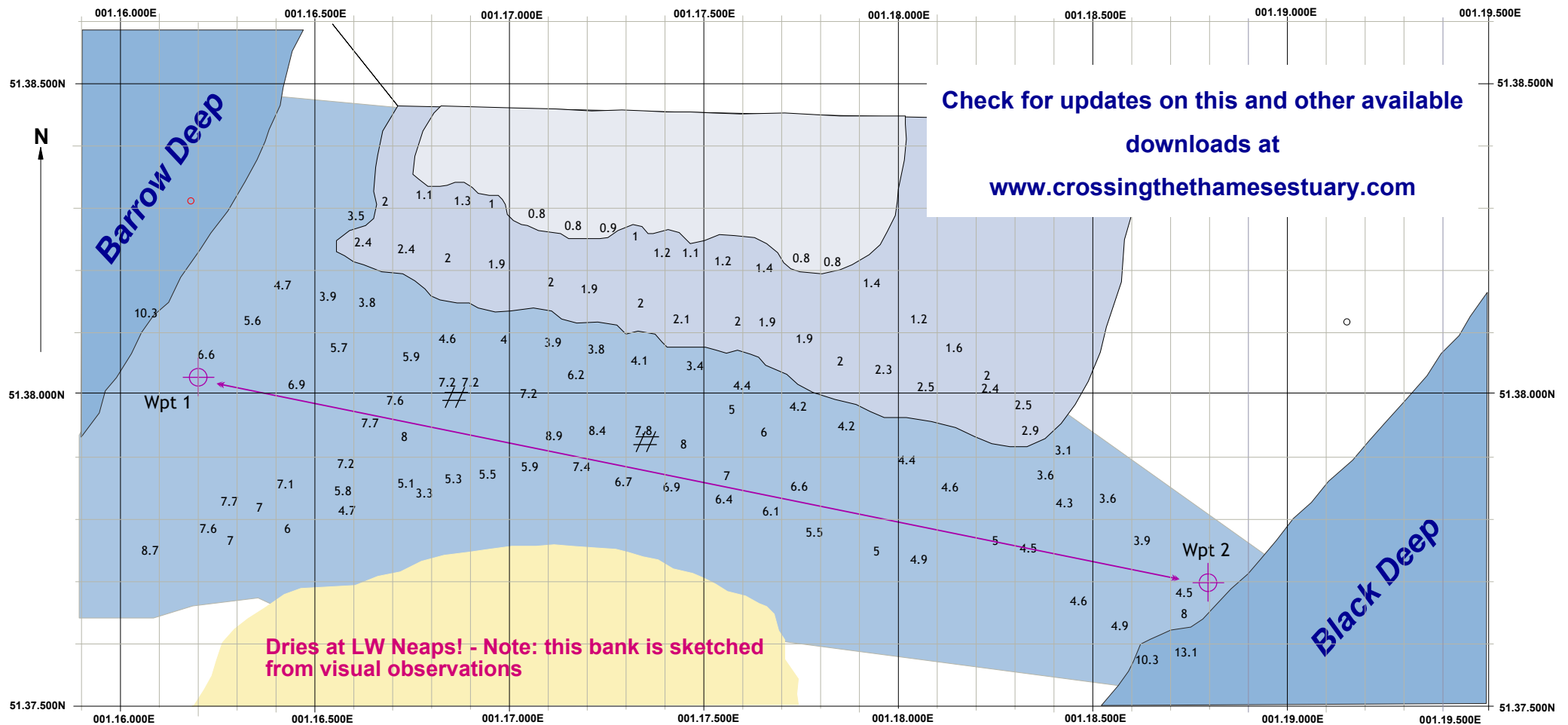
2. Waypoints: **Wpt 1.** 51°38'02.5N 001°16'20.0E **Wpt 2.** 51°37'00N 001°18'8.0E. Rhumb Line 1.65nm at 101°(T)/281°(T).

3. Caution: Soundings taken on leisure equipment. Whilst every care has been taken in the preparation of the data, it cannot be guaranteed that these depths will remain. Navigators should consider the suitability of the Waypoints for their own use.

5. Soundings taken 3rd June, 2014

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Depth shown in metres at Chart Datum



1. Depth in metres. Soundings taken by the author have been reduced to chart datum using data from the *National Tidal and Sea Level Facility*, provided by the British Oceanography Data Centre and funded by the *Environment Agency*. Positions refer to the WGS84 datum.

2. Waypoints: **Wpt 1.** 51°38'025N 001°16'200E **Wpt 2.** 51°37'700N 001°18'800E. Rhumb Line 1.65nm at 101°(T)/281°(T).

3. Caution: Soundings taken on leisure equipment. Whilst every care has been taken in the preparation of the data, it cannot be guaranteed that these depths will remain. Navigators should consider the suitability of the Waypoints for their own use.

5. Soundings taken 3rd June, 2014