

BIDEFORD

APPLEDORE

INSTOW

PPPA/Patrick Roach

# BIDEFORD

## Appledore and Instow

North Devon's River Torridge is a destination few cruising sailors tend to visit – but the adventurous yachtsman will find it's full of old-world charm, says Cameron Snell

**T**here aren't too many harbours left where you can pick a spot, lay your own mooring and claim a berth

without paying any fees or annual charges, but the River Torridge in the north of Devon is one of those places you can.

The River Torridge serves the commercial ports of Bideford and Appledore and the village of Instow, home of the North Devon Yacht Club.

The entrance to the Torridge has a fierce reputation as being one of the most difficult and dangerous approaches along this coastline. A shifting sandbar lies across the river mouth, leaving just a small but well-defined channel. The Bristol Channel tide hardly stops, leaving just a short period of slack to get in or out – but with proper planning it should not prove beyond any competent yachtsman. Commercial vessels come and go all the time.

### Access

Everywhere dries here, except for the guts, which are only navigable by dinghy at low tide. The chart suggests approaches can be made two hours either side of HW, but local knowledge provided by Thom Flaxman, the exceptionally helpful secretary of the North Devon Yacht Club, recommends that visitors stick to one hour either side of HW.

Don't be put off by the tidal restrictions or the size of the channel. Bideford is a commercial port that accommodates ships up to 100m in length: if they can make it in safely, so can a leisure sailor in a yacht.

### Facilities

If it's marinas, celebrity chefs and lots of retail therapy you want, you'll need to look elsewhere. If you want to escape the crowds, camp out a little and hear birdsong, than take the challenge

at the entrance one hour before HW and navigate the Torridge for some old-world charm.

On my first visit both the weather and the tide were right and I had no issues whatsoever getting in. I wouldn't like to try it as a port in a storm or swell, though.

### Berthing

Because visiting yachts are rare, berthing is fairly casual in the Torridge and relies on common sense: I'm told you just stick your hook in, or pull a vacant buoy. If you like it so much you plan on mooring more permanently you can apparently just drop a lump of concrete and stake your claim. (It's best to get a professional to do this, obviously, and to consult with the locals first).

### Mooring fees

Nobody asked me for any fees – something to do with Elizabeth I granting Bideford free port status following its assistance in dealing with the Spanish Armada.

## Instow

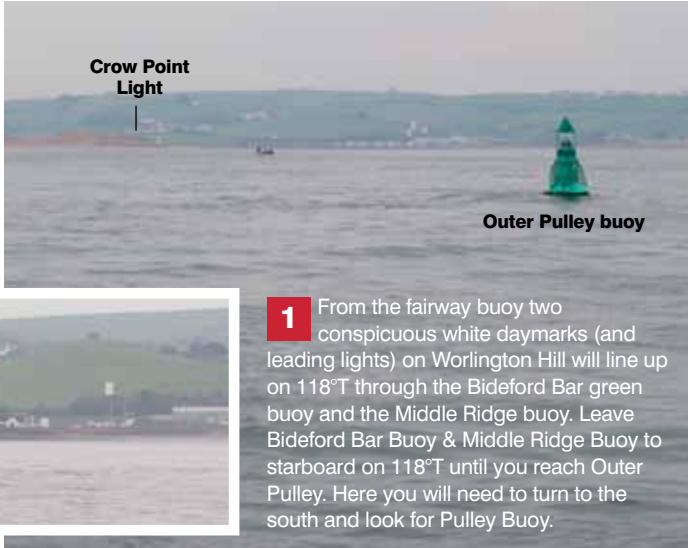
On the east bank of the Torridge, slightly upstream from Appledore, is the village of Instow, home to the North Devon Yacht Club. Visitors are most welcome here, and every attempt will be made to accommodate you.

Along the quay at Instow is Johns delicatessen, winner of Local Shop of The Year, and The Moorings restaurant and bar with amazing views.

The village of Instow is worthy of a stroll, and when the tide is out the golden sands are revealed on this side of the river. There is a magic in the air when the tide is out here that reminds me of the similar North Cornwall villages of Rock, Padstow and St Ives, that looked just like this 20 years ago.

North Devon  
Yacht Club

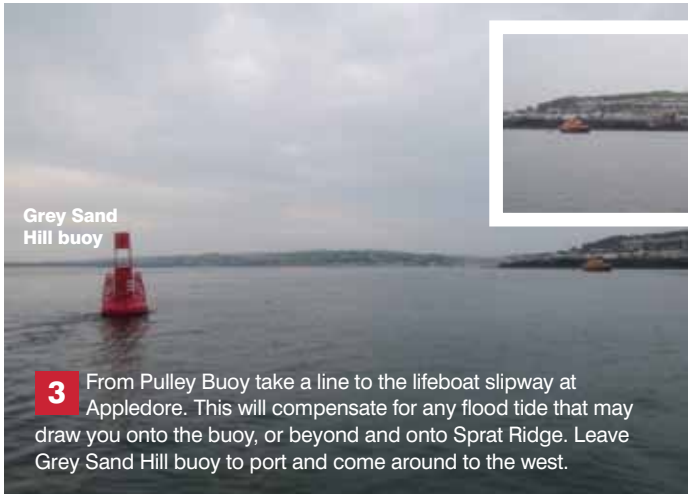




**1** From the fairway buoy two conspicuous white daymarks (and leading lights) on Worlington Hill will line up on 118°T through the Bideford Bar green buoy and the Middle Ridge buoy. Leave Bideford Bar Buoy & Middle Ridge Buoy to starboard on 118°T until you reach Outer Pulley. Here you will need to turn to the south and look for Pulley Buoy.



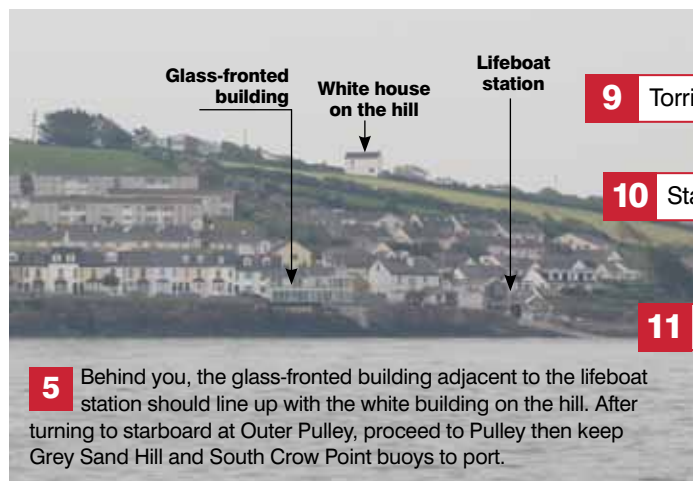
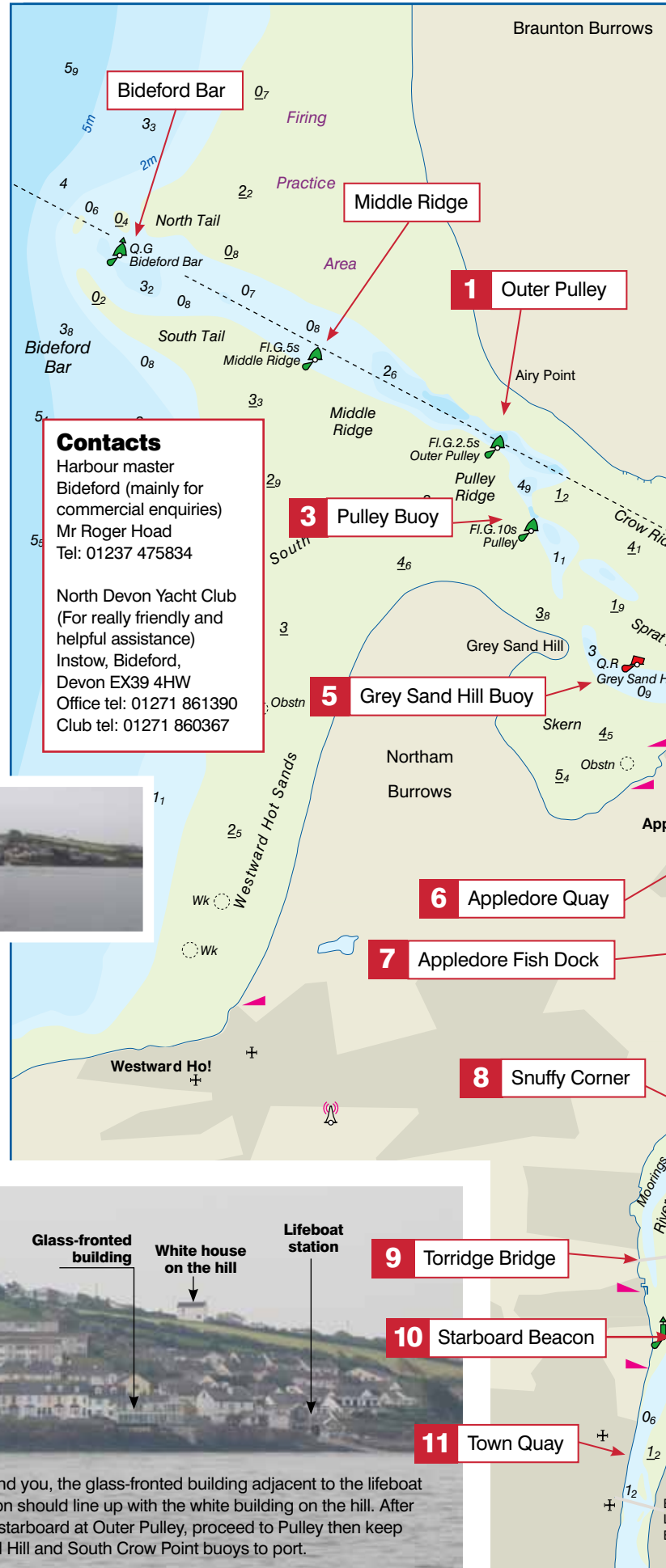
**2** Glancing over to port you will see Crow Point light, with two pylons in the distance. Keeping the first pylon to the right of Crow Point Light will ensure you are clear of Crow Rock. To be certain, stick to the buoyed channel.



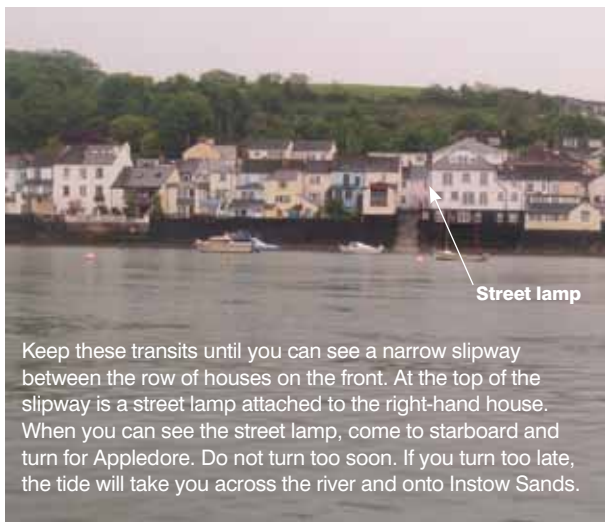
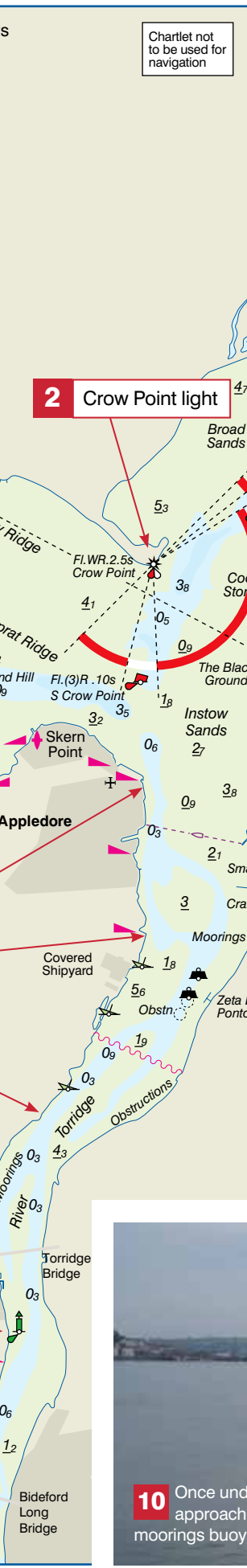
**3** From Pulley Buoy take a line to the lifeboat slipway at Appledore. This will compensate for any flood tide that may draw you onto the buoy, or beyond and onto Sprat Ridge. Leave Grey Sand Hill buoy to port and come around to the west.



**4** Ahead of you will be Worlington Hill, with the two leading daymarks. At the top of the hill is the remains of a windmill, this is called Mill Stump. Align Mill Stump and the inner daymark in transit. This will keep you in the deeper water between Grey Sand Hill buoy and Crow Point buoy.

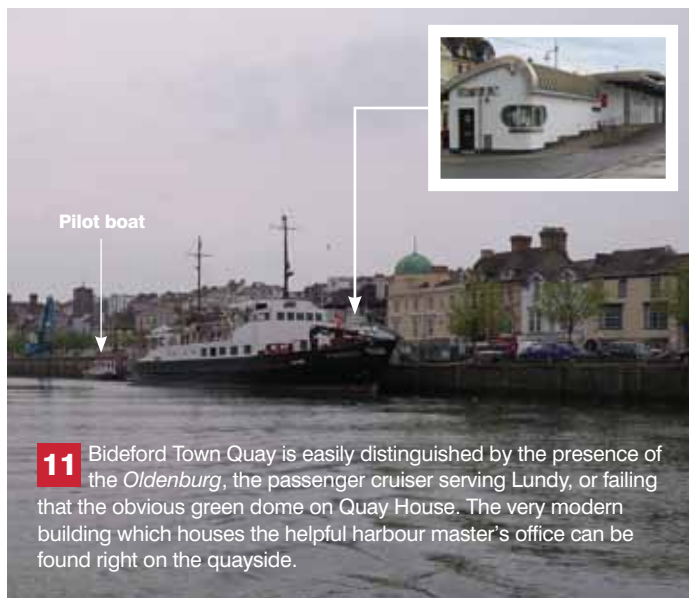
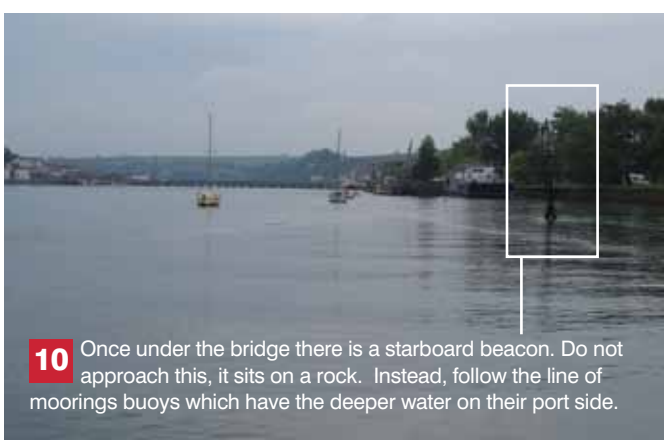
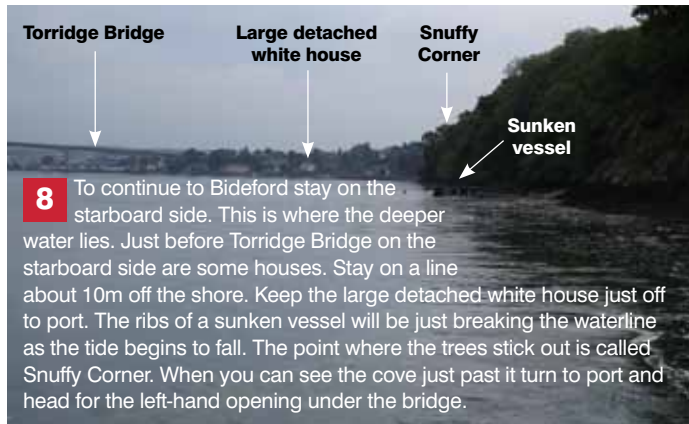


**5** Behind you, the glass-fronted building adjacent to the lifeboat station should line up with the white building on the hill. After turning to starboard at Outer Pulley, proceed to Pulley then keep Grey Sand Hill and South Crow Point buoys to port.



**2** Crow Point light

**4** Mill Stump



The entire range of Cameron Snell's video pilotage guides is available to view online or buy on DVD from [www.harboursonfilm.com](http://www.harboursonfilm.com)