

## RAMSGATE HARBOUR

The harbour is not unlike an onion in two ways; it is arranged in three concentric shells, and it can also smell pretty bad. First you have the yacht marina, heaving with yachts (of all things). Then the main harbour proper, with its sturdy Georgian piers. Over the past decade the expansion of the immediately adjacent Port Ramsgate has added a third shell, of big ugly rocks dumped in a rough approximation of a wall.

The east pier of the main harbour is open to the public and you can walk right out to the end. Access to the west pier, and the dividing wall that separates the main harbour from the marina, is theoretically restricted, but I've never had any problem and I've not heard of anyone else getting tufted out either.

### The Birds

Primarily a winter site, and only sporadically worth a visit, but all the grebes have been recorded here at some time or other, as have all the divers. The last Great Northern to take up temporary residence was in 1998/99 - I managed to get it on Christmas Day. Shag were regular in winter, at least when I watched the place regularly in my school lunch breaks. I gather they're less frequent now, but you can still find them here.

Among the gulls recorded here, Glaucous are irregular but probably annual, and Iceland and Sabine's have also crept onto the list. Mediterranean Gull is also not infrequent, and not just in winter. Other birds recorded here include Grey Phalarope, Kingfisher (!) and Coot (!!).

If all else fails you can try sea watching from the end of the pier, but if the weather's good for sea watching then you're probably better off going to Foreness or North Foreland.

Not a brilliant site, then, but it has turned up good birds from time to time. And how many places do *you* know where you can watch a Black-necked Grebe at point-blank range with a hot bag of chips in your hands?