

Entrance to the Ray. Survey of 15 Sept 2022.

Phil Bostock, BYC

Summary. The sandbank which formed over the last few years has moved north east and moved passed the two red buoys, so that they can now cause incoming boats to run aground. The buoyed entrance channel is now less than 30m wide.

At low tide springs the sandbanks effectively close off access to the Ray for all but shallow draught vessels. They may enter by following the buoyed channel. These waypoints may be useful:

Leigh buoy 51deg 31.10' N, 0deg 42.72' E. Entrance* 51deg 31.6' N, 0deg 42.4' E. Yellow SWM 51deg 31.55' N, 0deg 41.49' E

*Note that the 'Entrance' waypoint may only be valid for a limited time. You may need to keep further north in a few months.

Alternatively wait for more water at the rate of about one metre per hour. At half tide, three hours before HW, there should be at least 3m on a bearing 300 deg from the Leigh buoy towards the yellow safe water mark. A tall building on the horizon is a good initial aiming point.

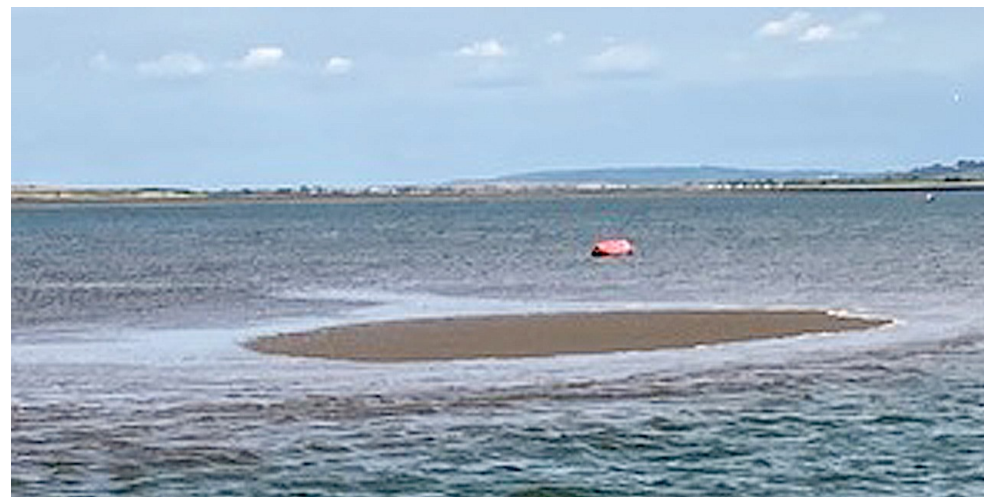
Nearer HW there is no problem with plenty of water depth from the Leigh buoy into the Ray.

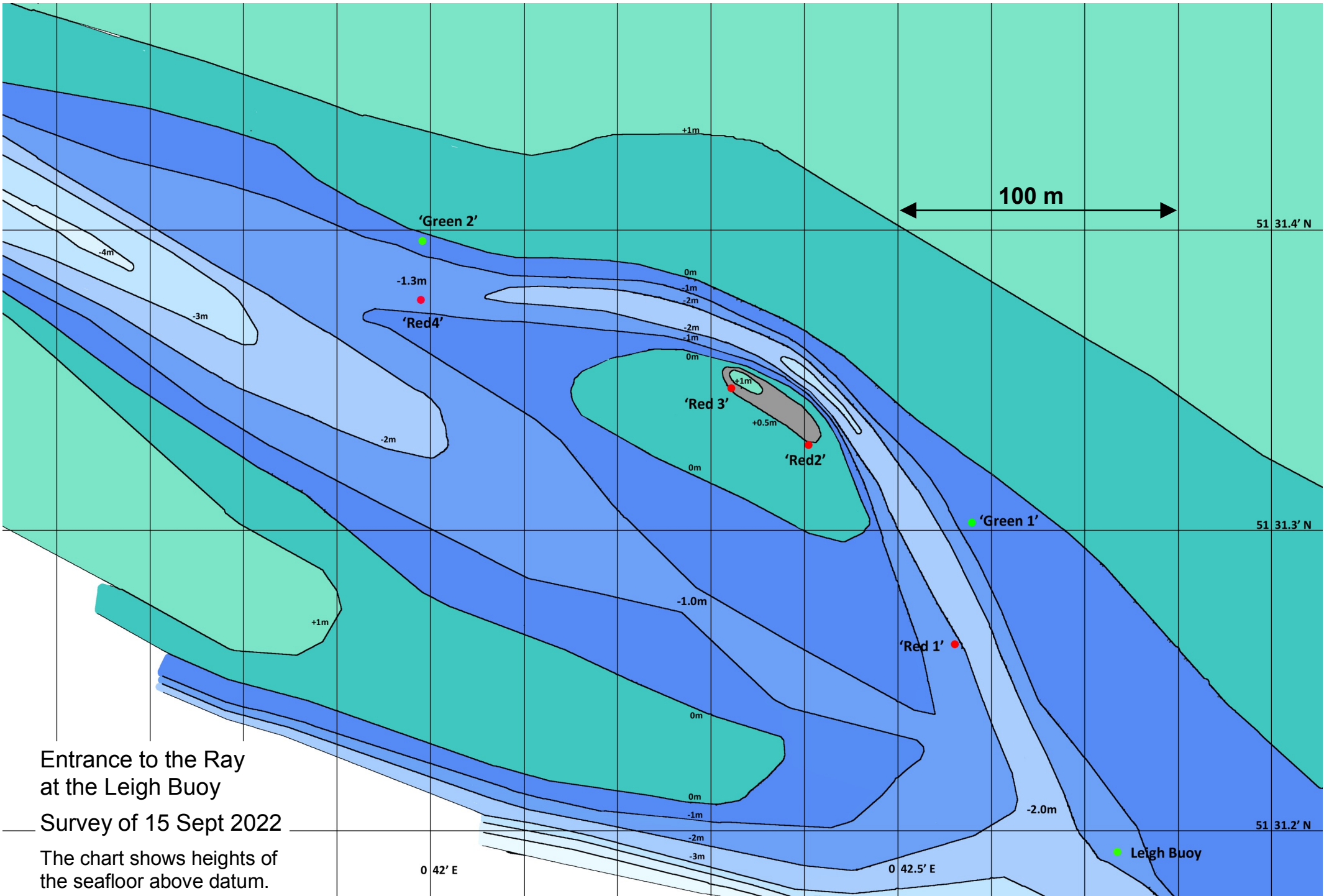
The area has been surveyed from dinghies and small boats for more than a decade. The main Ray sandbank, 'Marsh End Sand', formed a hook which separated and moved away north east over this time. Wave action is steepening the northern edge and narrowing the buoyed channel. Unfortunately the red port hand buoys helpfully installed in good faith by Southend BC are now in the wrong place and tend to guide incoming boats onto the sandbank.

The direct approach channel on a bearing 300 deg from the Leigh buoy has increased in depth and may soon take over as the preferred route into the Ray next year. Or maybe another hook will form to block off this route! We must wait and see.

I am indebted to Dave Whitby for the use of his Rib to survey the area. It takes much longer from a sailing dinghy!

I must also thank John Harris for his photos of the sandbank at low tide springs, taken from his catamaran, with the water almost exactly one metre above datum. Handy!





Entrance to the Ray
at the Leigh Buoy
Survey of 15 Sept 2022
The chart shows heights of
the seafloor above datum.