

Crossing the Thames Estuary

The Ray Sand

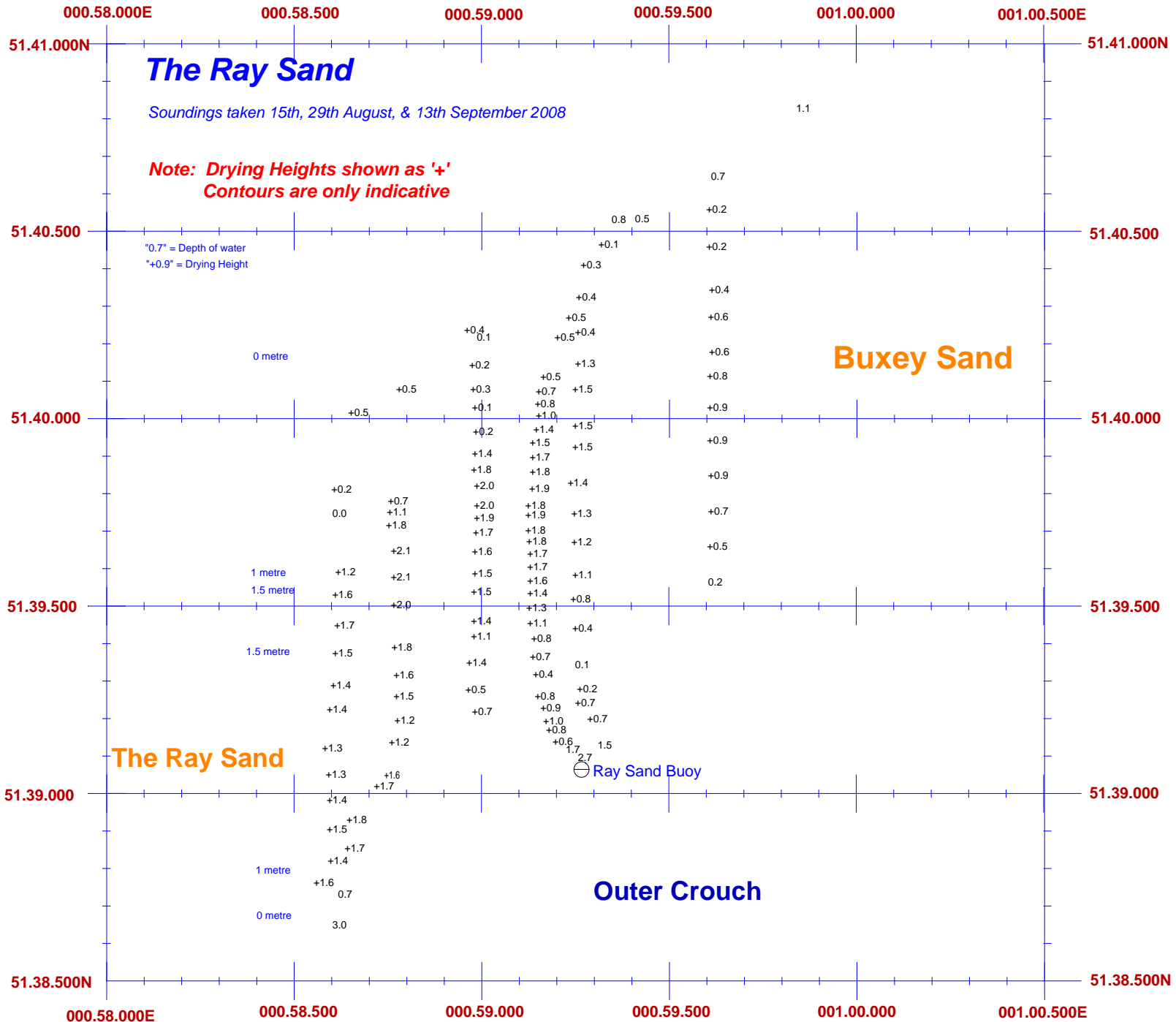
Arguably several centuries ago the Ray Sand Channel was the main exit from the Crouch. In 1900, 12 foot of water was reported. In 1920 charts showed a fathom and a half and in 1956 in his first edition of East Coast Rivers, Jack Coote reported "a minimum depth of only two or three feet in the southern entrance". By 1988 it was "little or no water"!

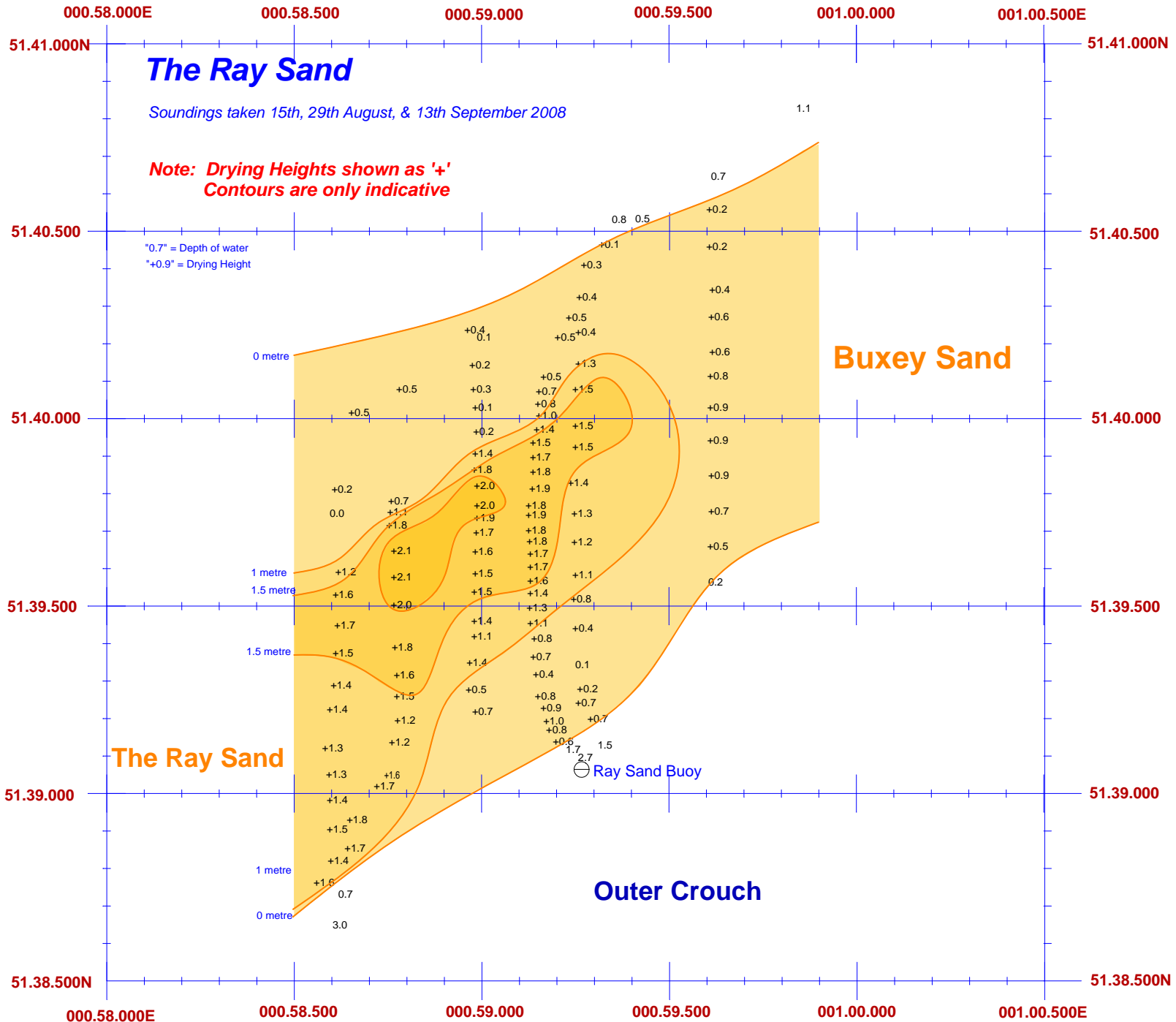
This sampling of depths close to high water on three days in August and September, 2008 shows that the sand dries at low water springs. In consequence passage using this route is only possible when there is sufficient height of tide. Many yachts and motor yachts continue to use the route.

The drawing is produced from soundings taken on 15th August, 2008 and 13th September by the Yacht 'Rockhopper', skipper David Holburn, during two north bound passages, and on the 29th August, 2008 by the author and Colin Jarman using the yacht 'Tiller Girl' when two north and south bound passes were made. The soundings from all these passes over the sands have been 'reduced' to a single datum which is probably best regarded as low water springs rather than the more usual LAT.

It will be seen that there is no discernable channel as such now. The best water discovered on these crossings was to the East of the Ray Sand buoy on the meridian of 000° 59' 600E. If the opportunity presents further passes will be made further to the east but as the aerial photographs show, there is no obvious single deep water channel over the sand. The white objects in the photographs are yachts and a motor yacht in the Whitaker Channel. Some local yachts cut across Batchelor Spit at high water adjacent approximately to the 001°E Meridian.

Please Note: The drawing overleaf was produced from soundings taken on ordinary yacht equipment and reduced to a datum using publicly available tidal data. Whilst every care has been taken in its preparation, it is only a guide to what might be expected. The contours on the drawing are hand drawn in order to help make sense of the soundings and may suffer in places from a lack of data. For this reason, the drawing is also included without the contours.







Marks for the Ray Sand



The Ray Sand marker in the Crouch at approximately $51^{\circ}39'060N$ $000^{\circ}59'270E$. Very difficult to see heading towards the Crouch.



The Buxey Beacon (unlit) at $51^{\circ}41'139N$ $001^{\circ}01'335E$