

DORSET SMUGGLERS' PUBS

Terry Townsend

Few walkers today enjoying Dorset's stunning coastal path will have an awareness of its dramatic origins as a preventive measure in the fight against serious organised crime. The track was established as the nocturnal patrol route for Customs Riding Officers on the lookout for smugglers.

In the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries smuggling became a way of life in England's southern counties. During these politically turbulent times successive governments imposed duties on a vast range of imported luxury items to fund foreign wars. From the moment taxes were imposed they were evaded and so began the delicious deception of smuggling.

It became a logistic tour de force as thousands of gallons of spirits and hundreds of tons of tea purchased in France and the Channel Islands were shipped, landed, concealed, transported and distributed quickly and efficiently to the eager customers.

People from all walks of life were involved and in many cases the local inn became the smugglers' centre of operations where plots were hatched, arrangements made and runs commissioned. Drawing on jail records, Customs' reports, contemporary newspaper articles and eye witness accounts, the story of smuggling in Dorset is revealed here through the history of the pubs that served as meeting places, recruitment centres, secret storage facilities, distribution depots and valued customers.

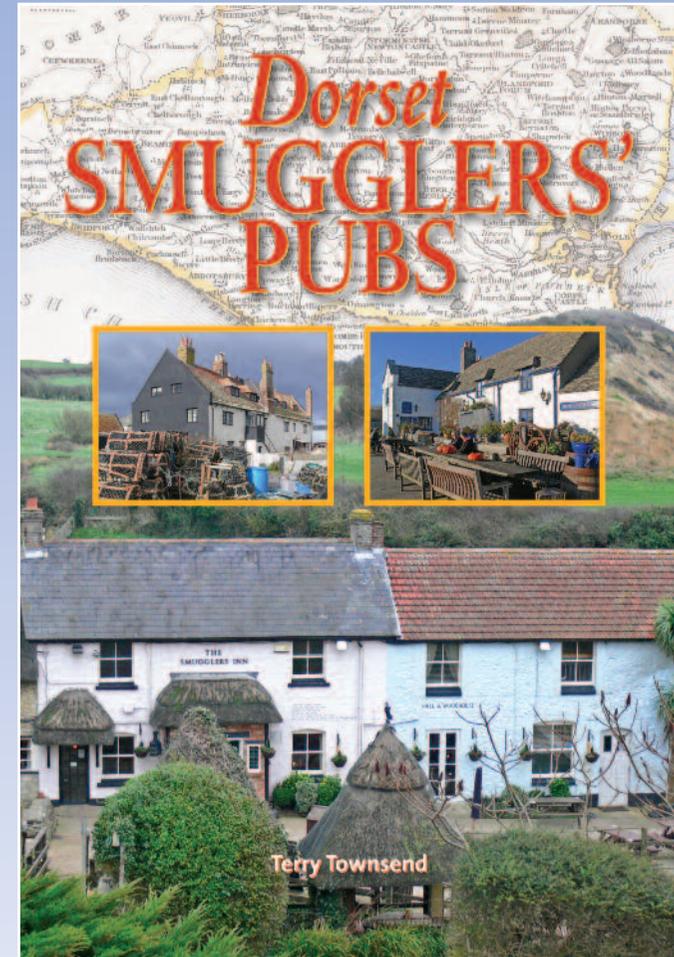
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Retired graphic designer Terry Townsend lives in Dorset with his wife Carol and their cat Smudge. His other books for Halsgrove include: *Once Upon a Pint – A Readers Guide to the Literary Pubs and Inns of Dorset and Somerset*, *Kent Smugglers' Pubs*, *Jane Austen's Hampshire*, *Jane Austen and Bath* and *Jane Austen's Kent*.

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In 1812 Tregonwell remodelled or rebuilt the Tapps Arms and renamed it the Tregonwell Arms. It later became a Temperance Coffee Tavern before finally being demolished in 1885.



Above: In 1719 it was recorded that five ships unloaded their illicit cargoes here at Worbarrow Bay.



Left: From the beach, smugglers' trails led off across the dunes.



Left: The village bar where Ridout's descendants still enjoy a drink by the big inglenook fireplace.

Below: The contraband was transported from the quarry in a horse-drawn wagon under a ton or two of stone.



Weymouth Custom House on the Quay was the centre of preventive operations for a wide area but reports suggest the officers were not very effective.



Example of a double-page spread.

