



KING ETHELRED'S COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Established in 978 (ish)

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL, SIEGE
AND UNNECESSARILY ROBUST ENGINEERING

TWO LEGS AND A FLAG

Being a structural and constitutional survey of the Principality of Sealand, a sea fort of 1942 that has not moved since it was put down, and has been a country since 1967; with a comparison of three other places nobody can agree about, and a reply to the Trebuchet Research Group



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OTTOLINE J. MARDLE-HYTHER

M.Eng. (Hons.), Ph.D. (King Ethelred's)

Research Fellow in Marine Structures, Sandbanks & Things That Stay Where They Are Put

*Fortitudine.
Ingenio.
Tea and biscuits.*



ABSTRACT

At a quarter to five on the afternoon of 11 February 1942 the base of a reinforced concrete fort of about 4,500 tons was flooded, on purpose, and the fort sank onto Rough Sands, a sandbar some six nautical miles off the coast of Suffolk.[2,3] It has not moved since. Since 2 September 1967 it has also been, in the view of the family who hold it, the Principality of Sealand.[1] The Department of Civil, Siege and Unnecessarily Robust Engineering was asked to survey it after the College's Trebuchet Research Group cited it in support of an application to declare the Group's defence area on the water meadow independent.

The paper surveys the fort as a structure and the Principality as a constitution, in the order the record requires: the design and the tow, the occupation, the court case of 1968, the coup of 1978, the widening of British territorial waters in 1987, and the economy. It then compares three other places whose ownership is unusual: an Arctic island divided in 2022 after decades of bottles, a river island that changes hands every six months, and a stretch of desert that no country claims.

The engineering finding is that the fort has not moved. Almost everything around it has: the law, the border, the passports, the data haven, its sister fort, which the Royal Engineers blew up twelve days before Sealand was declared, and one postage stamp, which went into space. The Trebuchet Research Group's application is refused, for reasons set out in Chapter 9, the first of which is that its territory is under water twice a year.

Research status. The fort, its construction, the Bates family's occupation, the court case, the events of 1978, the law, the titles and their prices, and the three comparison territories are real and referenced; where sources disagree, the paper gives both, and where a story rests on popular accounts alone, the paper says so. The College, its Department, the Trebuchet Research Group's application and draft constitution, and every finding are fiction. The Bates family are real people and the paper's humour is not at their expense: it is at the expense of the law, the price list, the paperwork and the College. The Department did not visit the fort, which is privately held, and surveyed it from the record.

Keywords: Sealand, HM Fort Roughs, Maunsell forts, Rough Sands, territorial sea, Montevideo Convention, micronations, Hans Island, Pheasant Island, Bir Tawil, the water meadow.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Department thanks the Trebuchet Research Group, whose application began this paper, and who have asked to see it before Mr Stobbs does. They have not.

Mr Arthur Stobbs, Clerk of Works, refused the application with reasons before the Department had begun, and has asked that the reasons be printed in full. They are in Chapter 9.

Miss Honoria Catchpole of the Æthelred Library of Useful Numbers held every figure in the paper, including two years for the fort and four accounts of one afternoon in 1968, and filed them facing one another.

Major (Retd.) Alistair MacTavish marked the defence of 1978 against his maxim without being asked, and Professor Sir Peregrine Fortescue applied his rule to a population of one. Professor Cuthbert Widdowson-Bligh checked the arithmetic and commented on it twice. The Bursar priced the titles. Mrs Enid Partridge was offered one, and supplied the tea.

Statement on nomenclature. 'The fort' means the structure, HM Fort Roughs, also called Roughs Tower. 'Sealand' means the Principality its occupants declared in 1967. The Department uses both names without deciding between them, which it understands to be the position of most governments. Distances at sea are in nautical miles of 1,852 metres, as the Territorial Sea Act 1987 requires.[7] 'The water meadow' means the College's, beside the Piddle.

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NOMENCLATURE

Symbol	Meaning
Condominium	A territory ruled jointly by two states. Pheasant Island is the smallest
Data haven	A server beyond the reach of any law. HavenCo proposed one on Sealand in 2000
De facto recognition	Recognition by conduct rather than declaration. Claimed by Sealand twice; conceded by nobody
HM Fort Roughs	The fort. Also Roughs Tower. Maunsell navy fort U1, grounded 11 February 1942
Maunsell fort	A wartime sea fort designed by Guy Maunsell. Four navy forts and six army forts were built
Montevideo Convention	The treaty of 1933 setting four tests for a state: population, territory, government, relations
nmi	Nautical mile: 1,852 metres. The unit in which the border moved
Pontoon	The fort's concrete base, 51 by 27 metres. Flooded on purpose; now on the sandbar
Rough Sands	A sandbar about six nautical miles off Suffolk and seven off Essex
Terra nullius	Land belonging to nobody. Bir Tawil is the usual example
Territorial sea	The sea a state governs as its own. Three nautical miles for Britain until 1987, twelve since
Title	A Sealand rank, sold online. A Lord from £24.99; a Count from £199.99
Water meadow	The College's. Holds the Trebuchet Group's defence area. Floods

1 THE APPLICATION

1.1 The application

The Trebuchet Research Group holds a defence area on the College's water meadow under the Agreement of the Water Meadow, on the 1951 pattern: two flags, no rent and no end date. In September the Group announced permanent control of it. In October it went further, and applied to Estates for leave to declare the defence area independent of the College, as a principality, so that the Trebuchet practical, which has not run since Mr Stobbs was asked about it, could run under regulations of the Group's own.

The application cited one precedent: a wartime fort in the North Sea, occupied since 1966 by a family who declared it a principality in 1967, and who have held it ever since. The Group's covering note said that if a concrete platform off Felixstowe could be a country, a water meadow with two flags and a siege engine could certainly be one. Mr Stobbs refused the application the same afternoon, with reasons. The Group appealed to the Vice-Chancellor, who receives appeals, and the Vice-Chancellor asked this Department to survey the precedent before anybody did anything else.



Figure 1.1: The defence area on the water meadow, with the Group's two flags and the Trebuchet, on the morning the application was lodged. Mr Stobbs is on the path. The Department's drawing.

1.2 Method

The Department surveyed the precedent as it would survey any structure: what it stands on, what it is made of, what it carries, and whether it has moved. It added the constitution because the Group insisted. The fort is privately held, the Department was not invited, and it did not go; the survey is from the record, which is unusually full for a building of its size. Where the sources disagree, and on several points they do, the paper gives both, and Miss Catchpole holds both.

Departmental finding 1. The Group's precedent is a real structure with a real history, and deserves a proper survey. The Group's application is held over until Chapter 9. *The application:* Held over. The Group has agreed to do nothing until Chapter 9, provisionally, and has been seen measuring the meadow.

2 THE STRUCTURE

2.1 The design

The fort was designed by Guy Maunsell, a civil engineer born in 1884 who had learned reinforced concrete in Lausanne, built concrete ships at Shoreham in the First World War, and worked on the Admiralty's concrete and steel towers for closing the Strait of Dover, one of which still stands as the Nab Tower lighthouse.[4] In the Second World War he designed sea forts for the approaches to the Thames: four navy forts, to deter and report German aircraft and stop them laying mines in the shipping channels, and six army forts.[2] Roughs, navy fort U1, was the first of the four deployed, to protect Harwich, Felixstowe and Ipswich.[2]

It was built in dry dock at Red Lion Wharf, Gravesend. It consists of a rectangular reinforced concrete pontoon, 168 by 88 feet (51 by 27 metres), carrying two hollow reinforced concrete towers, each 60 feet (18 metres) tall and 24 feet (7.3 metres) across, with walls about three and a half inches (9 centimetres) thick. Each tower has seven floors, four of them for the crew. A steel deck joins the towers above the water and carried the guns, two 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns and two Bofors, with the radar on a central tower. The whole weighs about 4,500 tons.[3] Mr Stobbs, shown the wall thickness, observed that the College's boiler-house roof is thicker and leaks, and that he has been telling the Bursar so as rapidly as possible since 1987.

2.2 The tow

The fort was commissioned as HM Fort Roughs on 8 February 1942.[2] It left Tilbury on the morning of 9 February behind four tugs, the Dapper, the Crested Cock, the King Lear and the Lady Brassey, and after what its historians call an eventful journey reached Rough Sands at four o'clock on the afternoon of 11 February. Held in place by the Dapper, its base was flooded, and at 16:45 it came to rest on the sandbar in about 37 feet of water, Maunsell supervising.[2,3] About a hundred men had embarked at Tilbury; the fort was later manned by between 150 and 300, and the last full-time personnel left in 1956.[1,3] Miss Catchpole notes that the article on Sealand gives the year of construction as 1943 and the articles on the fort give 1942, and has filed the two facing one another; the Department prefers the year in which the fort sank, which is harder to be wrong about. The Department knows of no other structure whose commissioning instruction was, in effect, to flood it, or in which the commissioning step and the worst outcome are the same operation.

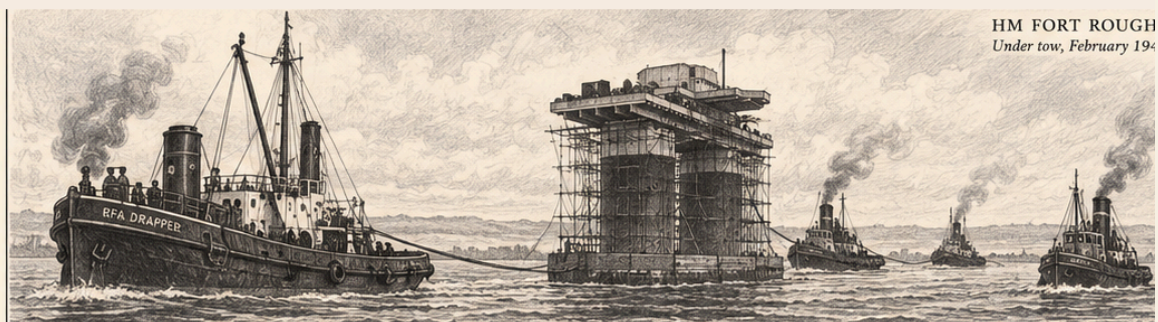


Figure 2.1: HM Fort Roughs under tow down the estuary, 9 to 11 February 1942, behind the Dapper, the Crested Cock, the King Lear and the Lady Brassey. The Department's reconstruction.

2.3 The sister

The second navy fort, Sunk Head, was grounded on 1 June 1942 further out, about ten nautical miles off Essex, and abandoned in 1956. In August 1967, as a new law against broadcasting from such structures came into force, the Government was anxious that nobody should take Sunk Head over. On 18 August the 24th Field Squadron, Royal Engineers, boarded it from the tug Col-lie, weakened it with cutting torches and set 3,200 pounds of explosives; on 21 August it was blown, leaving twenty feet of leg stumps.[2] Twelve days later, Roughs became a country. The Department notes, as engineers, that the Government's method of preventing the occupation of a Maunsell fort was to demolish one, and that it demolished the other one.

Element	As built	Duty	Record since
Foundation	Concrete pontoon, 51 by 27 m, flooded onto Rough Sands in 37 ft of water	Stay put	Has stayed put since 16:45 on 11 February 1942
Towers	Two, hollow reinforced concrete, 18 m tall, walls 9 cm	Carry the deck; house the crew	Standing
Deck	Steel, carrying guns and a radar tower	Carry guns; later, a country	Top platform burned, 23 June 2006, electrical fault; repaired by November
Movement	None designed	None	None recorded
Sister fort	Sunk Head, the same design	The same	Blown up by the Royal Engineers, 21 August 1967

Table 2.1: The structural survey, from the record. References 1, 2, 3.

Professor Widdowson-Bligh, told that Maunsell, who designed the smallest principality in the world, died in 1961 at Tunbridge Wells, replied: 'It is a town.'[4]

Departmental finding 2. The structure is sound, stands where it was put, and has not moved in eighty-four years. It was built for a war and has outlasted it by eighty-one years, which the Department regards as a factor of safety the Bursar would describe as a lifestyle. *The application:* The Group asked whether the Trebuchet could be sunk onto the meadow on the same principle, so that it could not be moved either. Mr Stobbs replied that the meadow does that unaided, twice a year, and that the Trebuchet is not to be moved in any case.

3 THE OCCUPATION

3.1 Radio

Paddy Roy Bates was born in Ealing in 1921. He served in the Army in the Second World War, with the Eighth Army in North Africa and at Monte Cassino, rose to the rank of major, and was wounded several times; afterwards he became a fisherman.[5] In 1965 he took over Knock John, another Maunsell fort, from the staff of a pirate station, and broadcast from it as Radio Essex, using an old United States Air Force radio beacon; it was the first pirate station to broadcast twenty-four hours a day. Convicted under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 and fined £100, he renamed it Britain's Better Music Station, and it went off the air for lack of funds on Christmas Day 1966.[5] The court had found that Knock John lay inside British waters.[21]

Roughs had been occupied before, in 1965, by Jack Moore and his daughter Jane on behalf of Wonderful Radio London.[1] Bates moved his equipment there, further out and beyond the three-mile limit, but did not broadcast from it.[1,5] His son Michael joined him on the fort on 24 December 1966, at the age of fourteen, having come out from boarding school for what he later called 'a six-week adventure, not 34 years'.[6] Mr Stobbs, who accepted the post of Clerk of Works on a similar understanding, said nothing. Supply boats came when the weather allowed, newspapers wanting an interview rang the nearest Coastguard station, and Michael once handed a letter to a passing yacht and asked whoever was aboard to post it to his father.[21] The Porters' Lodge, which receives the College's post, regards a passing yacht as within its standards.

3.2 The declaration

The Marine, &c., Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 came into force in the middle of August 1967 and forbade broadcasting from structures such as these; the sources give the 14th and the 15th.[5,21] Eighteen or nineteen days later, on 2 September 1967, Bates declared Roughs Tower independent, as the Principality of Sealand.[5] It was Joan Bates's birthday, and she became Princess Joan.[18] Mrs Partridge observed that a country is a better birthday present than a kettle, and that she would know. The Department observes that the Act was passed to stop people broadcasting from forts; that Bates, on Roughs, had not broadcast and did not; and that he did something else instead, which the Act had not thought of.

The fort was disputed from the start. Ronan O'Rahilly of Radio Caroline and a small group of men tried to take it, and Bates and his associates drove them off with firearms and petrol bombs.[5] The record of the years that follow is a record of people trying to get onto the fort and the family declining to let them, which, from an engineering point of view, is what a fort is for.

Departmental finding 3. Sealand was declared eighteen or nineteen days after Parliament made broadcasting from such forts unlawful and twelve days after the Royal Engineers demolished its sister. The occupation has been continuous since 1966. The Department finds that the fort was put to a new use without alteration, which in its experience is rare. *The application:* The Group asked whether it must first set up a radio station. It was told that Bates stopped broadcasting before he founded a country, so that the Group, which has never broadcast anything, is in that respect ahead.

4 THE COURT

4.1 One afternoon, four accounts

In 1968 Michael Bates, then a teenager, fired what he said were warning shots from a .22 pistol at a crew servicing a navigation buoy near the fort, in what the family regarded as Sealand's waters.[1,20] The sources agree about the pistol and disagree about the boat. Britannica and the encyclopaedia's article on Sealand say it carried the buoy crew; the article on Roy Bates says it was the Royal Navy; the article on the fort, the Royal Marines.[1,3,5,20] Miss Catchpole holds all three, and, there being three, has filed them in a triangle, the first in the Library's history. She asked for a fourth account, so that she could file them in a square, and the Department found one: a popular history of 2014 says that the workmen had shouted remarks up at Michael's sister, Penny, and that he fired to shut them up.[14] The encyclopaedia does not mention it. The four accounts are now filed in a square, and Miss Catchpole has asked that nobody find a fifth. Major MacTavish, told that the weapon was a .22 pistol, said nothing, which the Department has learned to read.

4.2 The ruling

Michael Bates was still, technically, a British subject, and he was charged with the illegal possession and discharge of a firearm. The case, *Regina v. Paddy Roy Bates and Michael Roy Bates*, was heard at the Essex Assizes, in the Shire Hall, Chelmsford, on 25 October 1968. The court ruled that because the incident had taken place outside British territory, beyond the three nautical miles that then applied, no judgment could be handed down.[1,20] The family took the ruling as Sealand's first instance of *de facto* recognition.[1,20] In 1975 he gave Sealand a constitution, then a flag, a national anthem, *E Mare Libertas*, a currency, passports and an immigration stamp.[1]

Professor Sir Peregrine Fortescue applied his rule, that a place belongs to the people who live in it, and found it satisfied: the people who live on the fort regard it as Sealand. He then asked how many people that was. Sealand has one permanent resident, and its prince has said that the population is normally about two.[1] Professor Fortescue observed that his rule had not previously been tested on a population that could be counted without taking his hand off the desk, and that it held.

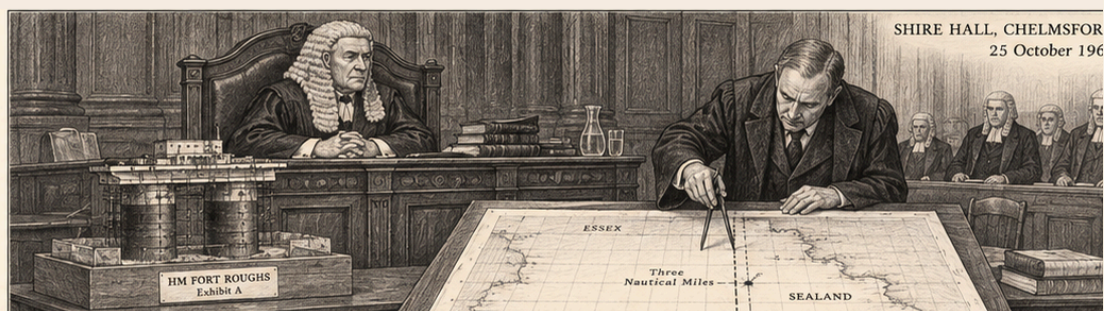


Figure 4.1: The Shire Hall, Chelmsford, 25 October 1968. The court finds that the fort is beyond its reach; the fort, which was not called, is not present. The Department's reconstruction.

4.3 Why the case matters

It is the case on which everything else stands. So far as the record shows, it is the only time a British court has considered the fort, and Sealand has treated it from that day as the first evidence of its sovereignty.[1,20] The constitution, the flag and the passports followed within seven years; the claim made of Germany's diplomat in 1978 was made in the same terms; and the Territorial Sea Act of 1987 removed the ground the ruling stood on, not by overturning it, but by moving the border, so that the question the court had answered no longer arose. The family had learned where the line fell from both sides of it: in 1966 a court convicted Roy Bates over Knock John because it lay inside British waters, and in 1968 a court could not try his son over Roughs because it lay outside them.[21]

Papers since declassified, and recounted in Michael Bates's memoir, show that Harold Wilson's government drew up plans to take the fort with Royal Marines and helicopters, and that Wilson refused to authorise them. The policy Britain has preferred since, by the same account, is to leave the family alone and wait for them to give up; Michael Bates describes it as trying to 'ignore things and hope they go away'. [21] The Department observes that the Government's policy towards the fort and the family's policy towards the Government have been the same for fifty-nine years, which is not moving. Major MacTavish has been unable to separate them, and has awarded both full marks.

The Department, as engineers, reads the ruling as it would read a structure that declines a load: it tells you what the court would not carry, and nothing at all about what carries it instead. Sealand reads it the other way. The College's lawyers, of whom it has none, have not been asked.

Departmental finding 4. In 1968 an English court found that the fort was beyond its jurisdiction. That is a finding about where the court's waters ended, not about where Sealand began, and the Department notes that both readings have been in use ever since. *The application:* The Group asked which court would have jurisdiction over the water meadow. Estates replied that it would be Mr Stobbs, who is not three nautical miles away but on the path.

5 THE COUP

5.1 August 1978

By 1978 Sealand had a prime minister: Alexander Achenbach, a German lawyer who held a Seal- and passport. He and Bates disagreed over a plan, with German and Dutch businessmen, to turn the fort into a luxury hotel and casino. In August Achenbach invited Bates and his wife to Austria to discuss a sale; while they were away, German and Dutch men he had hired stormed the fort and took Michael Bates hostage.[1] Bates and others counterattacked in the early hours of the morning and retook the fort, and held the men as prisoners of war.[5] Achenbach was charged with treason against Sealand and held unless he paid 75,000 Deutschmarks.[1]

How the fort was retaken is recorded in the encyclopaedia, as read for this paper, by a single word in brackets: 'how?'.[1] The other accounts agree on the answer: the invaders, whom one describes as businessmen and lawyers, landed by helicopter, and Roy Bates retook the fort at dawn a few days later by helicopter, with an armed party.[21] In a popular version, father and son slid down ropes onto the deck, the son carrying a sawed-off shotgun.[14,15] None says what was in the pilot's flask.

Germany asked Britain to intervene; Britain replied that it had no jurisdiction. Germany then sent a diplomat from its London embassy to the fort itself, and after several weeks of negotiation Achenbach was released.[1,5] Bates claimed the visit as de facto recognition of Sealand by Germany; Germany has denied it.[5] Achenbach and an associate then proclaimed a Sealand government in exile, in Germany.[1] Miss Catchpole has filed the claim and the denial facing one another, under Recognition, and has observed that it is the only drawer in the Library in which every item is contested.

5.2 The marking

Major MacTavish, given the account, marked the defence of 1978 against his maxim, in red, as he had marked Helm's Deep. Not moving: full marks, the fort being the first defence he has marked that could not have moved if it had wanted to, and the family not having wanted to; he deducted nothing for the helicopter, which moved, on the ground that it left. A rifle: the record offers a sawed-off shotgun, which he marked, without enthusiasm, as not a rifle. A brew: not in the record; but the fort keeps 'quite a serious stock of tinned food' against the weather,[16] which he accepted as evidence of stores, if not of a kettle. He was further impressed to learn that British officials, by Michael Bates's account, opened every tin of beans going out to the fort in case of what might be inside,[21] which makes it the first garrison he has studied whose rations were inspected by the besieger. He gave it one and a half out of three, provisionally two, and asked whether the Department could find out about the kettle. It could not.

Departmental finding 5. The only invasion of Sealand was arranged in Austria by its own prime minister and reversed by its own family before breakfast. The diplomatic visit that followed is recognition in Sealand's view and nothing of the kind in Germany's, and the Library holds both. *The application:* The Group asked whether it should appoint a prime minister. It was referred to Section 5.1, and has withdrawn the question.

6 THE BORDER MOVES

6.1 Nine nautical miles

Rough Sands lies about six nautical miles off Suffolk and seven off Essex.[1] When the fort was put there it was outside Britain's territorial sea, which then ran three nautical miles from the coast, and that is where the court of 1968 left it. In 1987 Parliament passed the Territorial Sea Act, which provides that the breadth of the territorial sea adjacent to the United Kingdom 'shall for all purposes be 12 nautical miles'.[7] The fort did not move. The border did, by nine nautical miles, and passed over it, and the fort now stands in waters internationally recognised as British.[1] The Act took effect on 1 October 1987. Sealand had declared a twelve-mile limit of its own a few days earlier, and holds that where two such limits cross there should be a median line.[21] The fort stands six nautical miles off Suffolk, so the median line runs three nautical miles from the Suffolk coast, which is where the border was before it moved. The seabed within the new limit, the fort's included, belongs almost entirely to the Crown Estate.[21] The Bursar has asked whether ground rent has ever been paid, and has entered the fort as a debtor, provisionally.

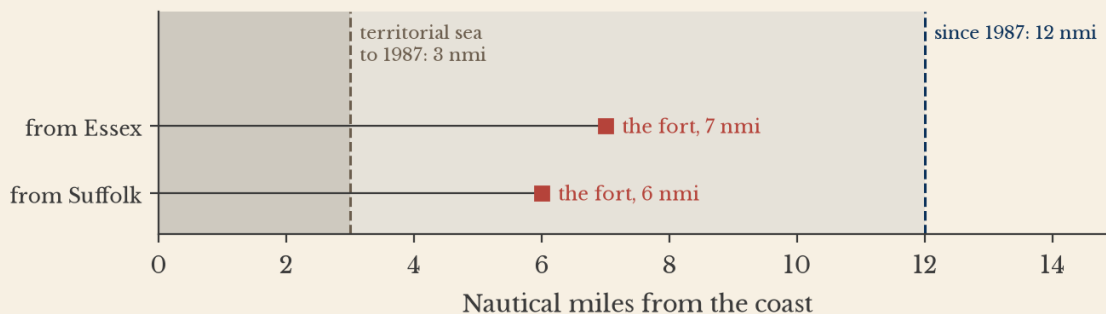


Figure 6.1: The fort and the border. Distance of HM Fort Roughs from the coasts of Suffolk and Essex, against Britain's territorial sea before and after the Territorial Sea Act 1987. References 1, 7.

The Department records this as the only movement in the survey, and notes that it was made by the border. Mr Stobbs, asked whether the College's own boundary had ever moved over a structure, replied that the ha-ha constitutes a ha-ha, and would not be drawn.

6.2 The four tests

The usual tests of statehood are those of the Montevideo Convention of 1933: a state should possess a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states. The Convention also holds that a state's political existence is independent of recognition by other states.[8] No state recognises Sealand, and one law academic has given it little chance of recognition because it is a man-made structure.[1] Its prince has said: 'We have never asked for recognition'.[6] The Department notes that Sealand has nonetheless found some twice, in a court in 1968 and a diplomat in 1978, neither of whom meant to leave any.

The only court to rule directly on its statehood sat in Cologne, also in 1978, on a German supporter's request to give up his German nationality; it held that Sealand was not a state, because a platform is not part of the earth's surface and it lacked a settled community. Under the Law of the Sea Convention, which the United Kingdom ratified in 1997, artificial islands and structures have no territorial sea of their own.[21] The Department, as engineers, notes that the fort's base rests on Rough Sands, which is part of the earth's surface; and that in 1978 Germany sent the fort both a diplomat and a judgment, of which Sealand has kept the diplomat.

The Department, being made up of engineers, applied the four tests anyway, as it would apply four tests to a beam.

Test	Sealand	The Department's note
A permanent population	One permanent resident (2024); "normally like two people" (2015)	Professor Widdowson-Bligh, shown both figures: "It is one."
A defined territory	0.0004 square kilometres	Defined exactly, by the edge of the deck
A government	Hereditary; run by the Bates family as if sovereign	Present and continuous since 1967
Relations with other states	One diplomatic visit, 1978; one German judgment, 1978, that it is no state	Claimed as recognition; denied by Germany

Table 6.1: Sealand and the Montevideo tests. The Convention's four tests and the record; the notes are the Department's. References 1, 5, 8, 21.

6.3 Passports

Sealand issued passports from 1975. In 1997 the family revoked every one of them, including those they had issued themselves over twenty-two years, on discovering that an international money-laundering ring had been selling fake Sealand passports, some four thousand of them to Hong Kong citizens at about a thousand dollars each.[1] Other estimates of the forgeries run as high as 150,000. In 1997 one surfaced in the investigation of a murder in Miami Beach, and an officer from Interpol called at Roy Bates's house; the family had known nothing of it, and revoked every passport that year.[21] The Council of the European Union lists Sealand's passports as fantasy passports, not valid for travel.[1] The Proctor, asked whether he would accept one as identification at the examination door, replied that he would not, that it had been revoked in 1997, and that it would go in his book under 'instruments, other', beside the ferret.

Departmental finding 6. The fort has not moved since 1942. The border moved nine nautical miles in 1987 and passed over it. On Montevideo's four tests Sealand has a population of one, a territory defined to the edge of the deck, a government, and one visit, disputed. The Department records the structure as within the United Kingdom's territorial sea, and the Principality as of the view that it is not. *The application:* The Group measured the meadow's territorial waters at twelve nautical miles. They include the Piddle, Upper Piddlington and the Bursar's house. The Bursar has objected, and the Group has offered him a title.

7 THE ECONOMY

7.1 Titles

Sealand has issued coins and stamps, and sells titles of nobility on its website.[1] On the day the Department looked, a Lord or Lady cost from £24.99, a Baron or Baroness from £39.99, a Sir or Dame from £99.99, and a Count or Countess from £199.99.[9] Figure 7.1 gives the prices in the unit the Bursar adopted at once, which is the Lord.

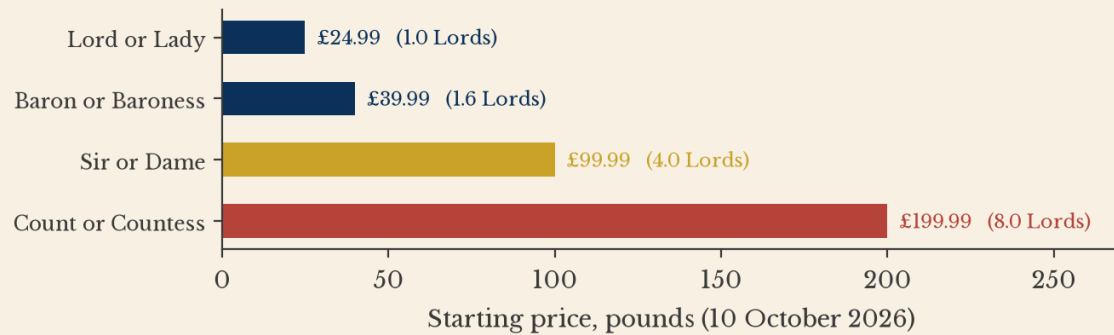


Figure 7.1: The price of nobility. Sealand's titles at their starting prices on 10 October 2026, in pounds and in Lords. Reference 9.

The Bursar found that a Count costs eight Lords and seven pence, and asked whom the seven pence was for. Professor Widdowson-Bligh replied: 'It is seven pence.' A knighthood costs two and a half Baronies, which the Bursar regards as a sound rate for a knighthood and a poor one for a Barony. Mrs Partridge, offered a Damehood at the College's expense to mark the paper, declined: a Dame costs four Lords, a Dame would still be making the tea, and the urn has never asked her title.

Sealand's coins are in Sealand dollars, first commissioned in 1972, at parity with the United States dollar; none has ever circulated, and no country accepts them.[15,17] The Bursar regards the Seal-and dollar as the only currency he has known to hold its value, which it does by never being spent, and has proposed the same policy for the College's. Sealand also printed stamps in 1969 and 1970, and in 2020 a Sealand stamp was sent into space.[17] The Department records it as the only part of Sealand known to have moved since 1942. A Sealand stamp has since been found in the shoebox under Gerald's desk; Miss Catchpole has catalogued it under Apparatus, foreign, and nobody has asked Gerald, who has not been found.

The titles, sold for about fifteen years, and an e-citizenship opened in the summer of 2024, have made Sealand, in its own words, community funded, with e-citizens in 138 countries.[21] The Bursar has compared this with the number of countries from which the College receives fees, and has asked not to be given the figure again.

7.2 The data haven

In 2000 a company called HavenCo set out to run a data haven from the fort: servers beyond the reach of any government's law. It appeared on the cover of Wired and in some two hundred press articles. It was, in fact, a dormant British company, bought on 22 August 2000 and renamed, with a registration number from Companies House and a registered office in London; its registration later moved to Cyprus. One founder left in 2002 after disagreements with the family, and HavenCo ceased operations in November 2008.[10] The Department notes that the first offshore data haven was registered onshore, in E14, which it regards as prudent.

7.3 For sale

In January 2007 The Pirate Bay tried to buy Sealand. Michael Bates told a Canadian interviewer that file-sharing was 'theft of proprietary rights' and 'doesn't suit us at all', and Sealand's estate agent said that it had pledged not to permit a sale that would harm the interests of the United Kingdom.[19] The Department notes that a principality founded by a pirate broadcaster declined to sell to pirates, and that its most considerate policy is towards the one state whose jurisdiction it does not recognise. Between 2007 and 2010 it was offered through a Spanish estate agent at €750 million.[1] The Bursar divided the price by the area, made it €1.875 million a square metre, compared it with the College's own estate, and had to sit down. It was not sold. Sealand also has a national football team, founded in 2003, and its flag has been carried to the summit of Everest.[1]

Departmental finding 7. Sealand's economy is titles, stamps, coins, a shop and, for eight years, a data haven registered in London. It sells nobility at a lower price per syllable than the College has ever charged for anything. The Bursar has asked to see the accounts, has been told that the Department does not have them, and has filed that under Sovereignty, Evidence of. *The application:* The Group proposed Lordships of the Meadow, free to members. The Bursar replied that free is not a price (Appendix B), and that he would accept Sealand dollars, which would come to the same thing.

8 ELSEWHERE

The Trebuchet Group's application rests on one precedent. The Department looked for others, and found that the unusual ownership of small places is not rare. It chose three, each the opposite of Sealand in some way: one claimed by two countries, one shared by two countries, and one claimed by none. The nearest parallel to Sealand itself, the Republic of Rose Island, a platform an Italian engineer built in the Adriatic and declared a state on 1 May 1968, was seized by Italy within two months and demolished the following year.[21] The Department notes that both governments in this paper which faced a platform state reached for demolition, and that only Italy's demolished the right platform.

8.1 Hans Island: two bottles

Hans Island, Tartupaluk in Inuktitut and Greenlandic, is a rock of 1.3 square kilometres in the Kennedy Channel between Ellesmere Island and Greenland, within the territorial waters of both and likely part of Inuit hunting grounds since the fourteenth century. Canada and Denmark both claimed it.[11] In 1984 the Danish Minister for Greenland planted a Danish flag on it with a note welcoming visitors to the Danish island and, it is said, a bottle of schnapps; the Canadians answered with their own flag and a bottle of Canadian Club. Each side's visits thereafter left a bottle for the other, and during the dispute the Canadian foreign ministry let it be known that Danish pastries would still be sold in its cafeteria.[11] Mrs Partridge asked who drank the bottles, was told that the record does not say, and said that in her experience it never does.

On 14 June 2022, after years of negotiation, the governments of Canada, Denmark, Greenland and Nunavut agreed to divide the island along a natural rift, about forty per cent to Canada and sixty to Greenland, giving each country a land border with the other, 1,280 metres long. The Danish parliament ratified the treaty on 19 December 2023.[11] The Bursar, who approved the Greenland Agreement of 2026 because nobody in it paid anybody, approved this one as well: thirty-eight years of bottles exchanged both ways, settled at nil. Miss Catchpole filed the treaty beside the Greenland Agreement, under the Atlantic, the second item in the South Atlantic Map Cupboard under the right ocean, and has noted that it is becoming a habit.

8.2 Pheasant Island: six months each

Pheasant Island is an uninhabited island of 0.682 hectares in the Bidasoa, the river between Hendaye in France and Irun in Spain. It is a condominium, the smallest in the world, under the joint sovereignty of both countries, and its administration changes hands every six months: Spain's from 1 February to 31 July, under the naval commander at Hondarribia, and France's from 1 August to 31 January, under a French official who carries the title of viceroy of Pheasant Island.[12] As this paper is written, the island is French. The Treaty of the Pyrenees was concluded there in 1659, after twenty-four conferences between Spain's chief minister and Cardinal Mazarin, and Louis XIV met his future wife there.[12] Access is forbidden except on occasional heritage days, and municipal staff go across every six months to clean and do the gardening.[12] On 1 February it will become Spanish without moving, the second thing in this paper to change countries while standing still.

Mr Stobbs, asked whether the Fellows' Lawn could be administered on the Pheasant Island pattern, by the Fellows and by Estates in alternate halves of the year, replied that it was administered on that pattern in 1643 and took until 1911 to get level.

8.3 Bir Tawil: nobody's

Bir Tawil is 2,060 square kilometres of land on the border of Egypt and Sudan that neither country claims. An agreement of 1899 between the United Kingdom and Egypt put the boundary along the 22nd parallel; in 1902 the United Kingdom drew a separate administrative boundary to reflect how the land was actually used, and Bir Tawil, grazing land of the Ababda, was placed under Egyptian administration. Egypt now asserts the line of 1899 and Sudan the line of 1902, so that the neighbouring Halaib Triangle is claimed by both and Bir Tawil by neither. Members of the Ababda and Bishari peoples pass through it.[13]

Professor Fortescue, asked to apply his rule, said that it applies: the land belongs with the people who use it, which is what the line of 1902 was drawn to reflect. He added that this is the only place in the paper for which the British drew both boundaries, three years apart, and that he would not be taking questions on it.

Place	Area	Claimed by	People	Settled by
Sealand	0.0004 km ²	Its occupants; the waters are British	One resident	Not settled
Pheasant Island	0.00682 km ²	France and Spain, jointly	None	Turns, every six months
Hans Island	1.3 km ²	Canada and Denmark	None	Bottles; then a treaty, 2022
Bir Tawil	2,060 km ²	Nobody	Ababda and Bishari pass through	Not settled

Table 8.1: Four places, four arrangements. References 1, 11, 12, 13.

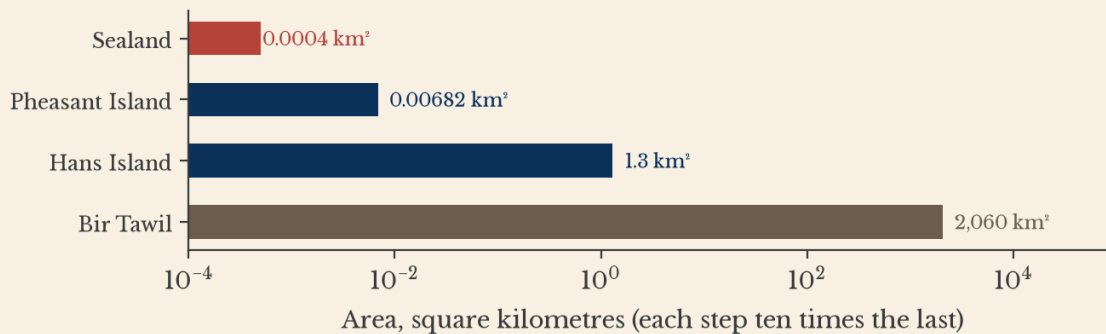


Figure 8.1: The four places by area, on a scale in which each step is ten times the last. Pheasant Island is seventeen Sealand; Bir Tawil is five million. References 1, 11, 12, 13.

Departmental finding 8. Small places are owned in more ways than the Group's application allows: by two countries in turn, by two countries split down a rift, and by nobody. Of the four, only Sealand is a structure, and only Sealand has a resident. Professor Widdowson-Bligh says that this is not chance. *The application:* The Group asked whether two flags and a bottle would do, on the Hans Island pattern. Mr Stobbs replied that the flags are already there and the bottle is not to be left on the meadow.

9 CONCLUSIONS

9.1 The precedent

The Department finds the precedent sound as a structure and unproven as a state. HM Fort Roughs was built in a dry dock, towed out over three days and sunk where it was wanted, and it has not moved since. It has outlasted its war by eighty-one years, its sister fort by fifty-nine and its border by thirty-nine. It has been held continuously by one family since 1966, which is the longest tenancy the Department has surveyed outside the Porters' Lodge. No state recognises it. A court found it beyond its reach in 1968, and Parliament reached it in 1987. On the Major's three principles it scores one in full: it has not moved. The only part of Sealand known to have moved is a postage stamp, and it went into space. The Major has asked for the fort to be set as the reading for DE103, Not Moving.

9.2 The application

Mr Stobbs refused the Trebuchet Research Group's application on four grounds, which he has asked to be printed in full, and they are. First, the water meadow is under water twice a year, and Sealand, to its credit, never is. Second, the Group's population is a siege engine, which is not a person, though it is the most permanent thing on the meadow. Third, the Group's draft constitution, in Appendix B, has the Trebuchet pointing at the Library, which the College's regulations forbid and a principality's would not. Fourth, the Agreement of the Water Meadow already gives the Group a defence area with two flags, no rent and no end date, by agreement, which is more than Sealand has been able to get from anybody in fifty-nine years; and nobody recognises that either.

The law agrees with him. Declaring one's farm or house an independent country is not in itself a criminal offence, but it changes nothing: the land stays in the United Kingdom, and tax, planning and licensing law go on applying to it.[21] Mr Stobbs regards this as the first occasion on which the law has agreed with him about planning. Liam Bates, who now runs much of Sealand with his brother, has said that an online community without territory 'remains an idea in people's minds', and that Sealand 'only survives if people believe it should be there'.[21] The Group, which has a territory and no believers outside its own membership, considers itself the other half of a country, and is looking for the first.

The Vice-Chancellor has upheld the refusal. The Group has asked whether it may instead buy each of its members a Lordship, at £24.99. The Bursar has replied that he will consider it at Count rate.

Principal finding. A sea fort sunk on a sandbank in 1942, and held by one family since 1966, is sound as a structure and unrecognised as a state, and its titles are keenly priced. The Trebuchet Research Group's application is refused: its territory floods, its population is a siege engine, and it already holds a defence area that nobody recognises. The fort has not moved. Neither has the Government. The border has.

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APPENDIX A - SAMPLE CALCULATIONS

A.1 Movement

The fort, since 16:45 on 11 February 1942: nil. The border, in 1987: $12 - 3 = 9$ nautical miles, or $9 \times 1,852 = 16,668$ metres. Sunk Head blown (21 August 1967) to Sealand declared (2 September 1967): 12 days. The Act in force (14 or 15 August 1967) to the declaration: 19 or 18 days. The median line: $6 / 2 = 3$ nautical miles off Suffolk, the old limit. Service: 1942 to 2026, 84 years; since the war ended in 1945, 81.

A.2 Area

Claimed: $0.0004 \text{ km}^2 = 400 \text{ m}^2$. The pontoon: $51 \times 27 = 1,377 \text{ m}^2$. The country is 29 per cent of its own foundations. Per permanent resident: 400 m^2 .

A.3 Prices

Count / Lord = $199.99 / 24.99 = 8.003$. Eight Lords = $8 \times 24.99 = 199.92$; the Count costs 7p more. Dame / Lord = $99.99 / 24.99 = 4.001$; four Lords = 99.96. Knight / Baron = $99.99 / 39.99 = 2.5$. Sale price per square metre: $750,000,000 / 400 = 1,875,000$ euros.

A.4 Other places, in Sealands

Pheasant Island: $6,820 / 400 = 17$. Hans Island: $1,300,000 / 400 = 3,250$. Bir Tawil: $2,060,000,000 / 400 = 5,150,000$. Hans Island bottles: 1984 to 2022, 38 years. Passports: $4,000 \times \$1,000 = \$4$ million.

APPENDIX B - THE GROUP'S DRAFT CONSTITUTION

The Trebuchet Research Group submitted the following with its application. It is reproduced with Estates' notes, which were written in the margin in pencil, and with the Bursar's, which were written in ink. Fiction.

Article	The Group	Estates and the Bursar
1. Territory	The defence area on the water meadow, between the two flags	Under water twice a year
2. Population	The members of the Group, and the Trebuchet	The Trebuchet is not a person
3. The Trebuchet	Shall point where the Group decides	Away from the Library (College Regulations)
4. Recognition	Deemed given by any visitor, including Mr Stobbs	Mr Stobbs will not visit
5. Currency	The 10 mm socket	Gerald has all of them
6. Titles	Lord of the Meadow, free to members	Free is not a price (the Bursar)
7. Anthem	The counterweight falling	Not after 6 p.m.

Table B.1: The Principality of the Water Meadow, as proposed. Fiction.

APPENDIX C - DEPARTMENTAL NOTE

The Department of Civil, Siege and Unnecessarily Robust Engineering teaches the BEng in Civil, Siege and Unnecessarily Robust Engineering (KE11). From Michaelmas 2026 the module Bridges, Removal of will set this question: 'A concrete fort of 4,500 tons was sunk onto a sandbar in 1942 and has not moved since. Its border moved nine nautical miles in 1987. Which of the two is the structure? Show your working. Do not visit.'

The Trebuchet practical is still not running. Mr Stobbs has been asked.

Persevera Etelred