

Brightlingsea's Coat of Arms as a Member of the Cinque Ports & Limb of Sandwich.

Brightlingsea as a historic Cinque Port & Limb of Sandwich has long borne the arms of its head port. These are formally described as *'pale dimidiated, dexter, gules, three lions passant gardant or, sinister, azure, three demi-hulks of ships argent'*. Brightlingsea shares Sandwich's use of silver hulls rather than that of gold of some of the other Ports & the Confederation.

The Cinque Ports share a heraldic device of the front of lions deriving from the Plantagenet Royal Arms of England and the stern of ships representing their ship's service to the Crown. (It was essentially a pictogram displaying the role of the Ports as a 'royal –navy'). This form of joined devices is termed dimidiation and is remarkably early, and was only used for a brief period. It was in use by 1305, and possibly by 1297.

In "The Heraldry of the Cinque Ports" Geoffrey William only noted the use in 1896 by Brightlingsea UDC of its seal as the arms of Sandwich. He was probably unaware of the heraldic device remaining in use in Brightlingsea from the time when the rights of the Cinque Ports were more complete in 1804 in George III's reign. This is on the batons of office of the Deputy and Assistants of that date. One of these is still used by the Deputy when he wears full regalia, (two others are held in Brightlingsea museum on display). On these batons used in Brightlingsea, the hulls are silver.

These had been largely overlooked for an emblem, but they were identified and photographically "unwound" by Deputy Roger Tabor & Lady Deputy Liz Artindale and the heraldic arms from these printed flat. This form was then presented to the Lord Warden Admiral the Lord Boyce at Choosing Day 2nd December 2013 at Brightlingsea.

Most of the heraldic emblems of the Cinque Ports show a half lion (no back feet or legs showing) including Sandwich's first remaining Mayoral seal, but Hastings and Sandwich in later form show the lions back feet, and for Sandwich the same plus some of the cats' back legs, and both reveal part of the tails. It is this pattern that is shown on Brightlingsea's baton emblems of 1804, except that the entirety of the back leg is shown to the extent of around two thirds of each cat is visible.

The Cinque Ports Bailiff's banner of 1632 for the Bailiffs of the Ports at Yarmouth Annual Herring Fair showed the full tail with luxuriant end tuft of hair. Brightlingsea's lions have similar tails, plus a crowned cartouche frame as richly depicted as that of the Cinque Port Bailiff's banner.