

## explore start bay

# Hallsands

The story of Hallsands is often told. Many visitors come down to see the ruins of the village and enjoy the panoramic beauty of Start Bay.

We aim to tell the stories of what happened in this little fishing village, why it was built here, how the villagers lived and ultimately, how it was destroyed.

# A Changing Coastline

Before you begin unravelling the tale of Hallsands, it may help to understand a bit more about the bigger picture of the Bay.

The coastline of Start Bay fights a long term struggle with the sea. The nature of the bay means it often receives the full force of winter storms and tides. Over the years villages have disappeared and coastal roads breached. In front of Prospect House, formerly the Trouts Hotel, at Hallsands you can still see the remains of the road that used to run into the village and down to the slipway and beach. This became impassable as recently as the mid 1990s.

Hallsands was lost as a direct result of shingle being removed in order to enlarge Plymouth docks just before the 1st World War.

## The Science Bit...

The village was built on a secure rock ledge, originally formed when sea levels were higher (breaking waves create a terrace - a 'wave cut platform'). Over time the gaps in the rock were filled with sand and earth which became cemented together, making a wide, flat shelf. The site may look precarious now, but the wide shingle beach that used to be in front of Hallsands provided a protective buffer from powerful waves coming from the east.

What wasn't understood at the time the shingle was dredged, was that as Hallsands beach is bounded by cliffs at either end, no more shingle could wash in to replace what was removed.

What's more the shingle wasn't going to be replaced by the cliffs eroding - most of it was put there thousands of years ago by rising seas following the ice age. This meant that when the shingle was dredged from the water, waves and currents simply filled the holes with shingle from the beach. The beach just became narrower, the high watermark crept up the shore and the sea started to wash away the 'cemented' sand and rocks from the ledge.

Eventually, land gave way to sea and as written in the Western Daily Mercury 29th January 1917,

"Hallsands... ceased to be".

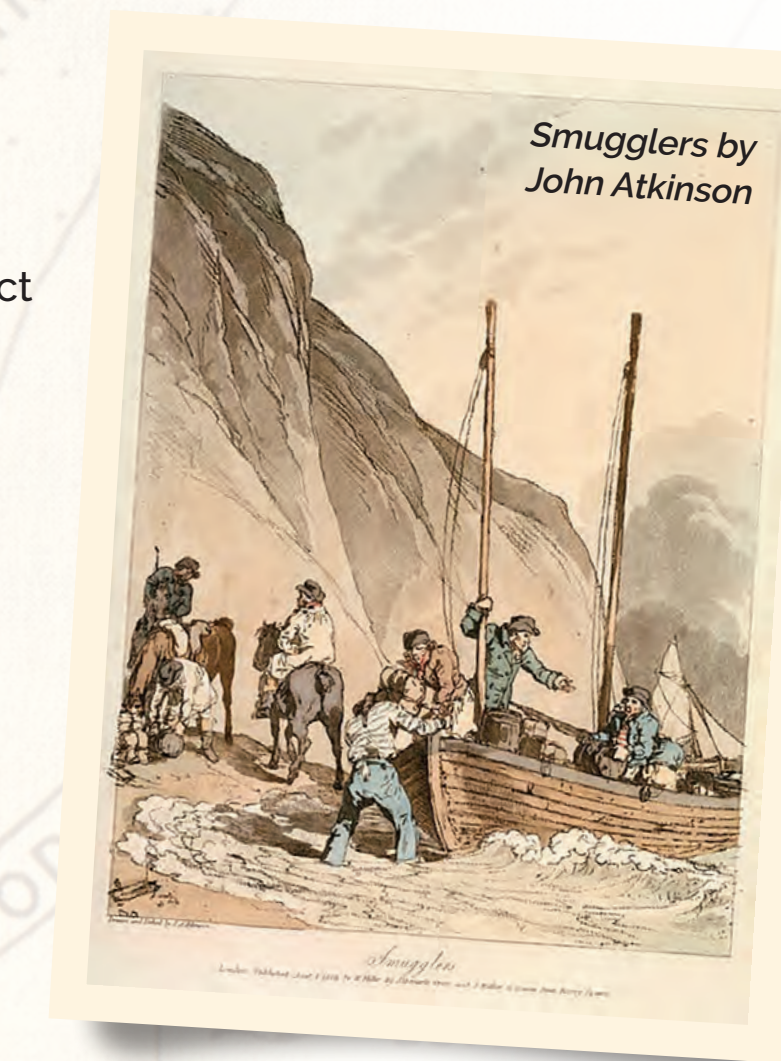


# Living on the Coast

## Smuggling

The contorted remote coast made it a perfect location for smuggling which goes back to when King Edward I put taxes on the export of wool in 1275, to fund his wars. As a result merchants or 'free traders' looked for beaches and ports where 'Collectors' or tax men were not in attendance.

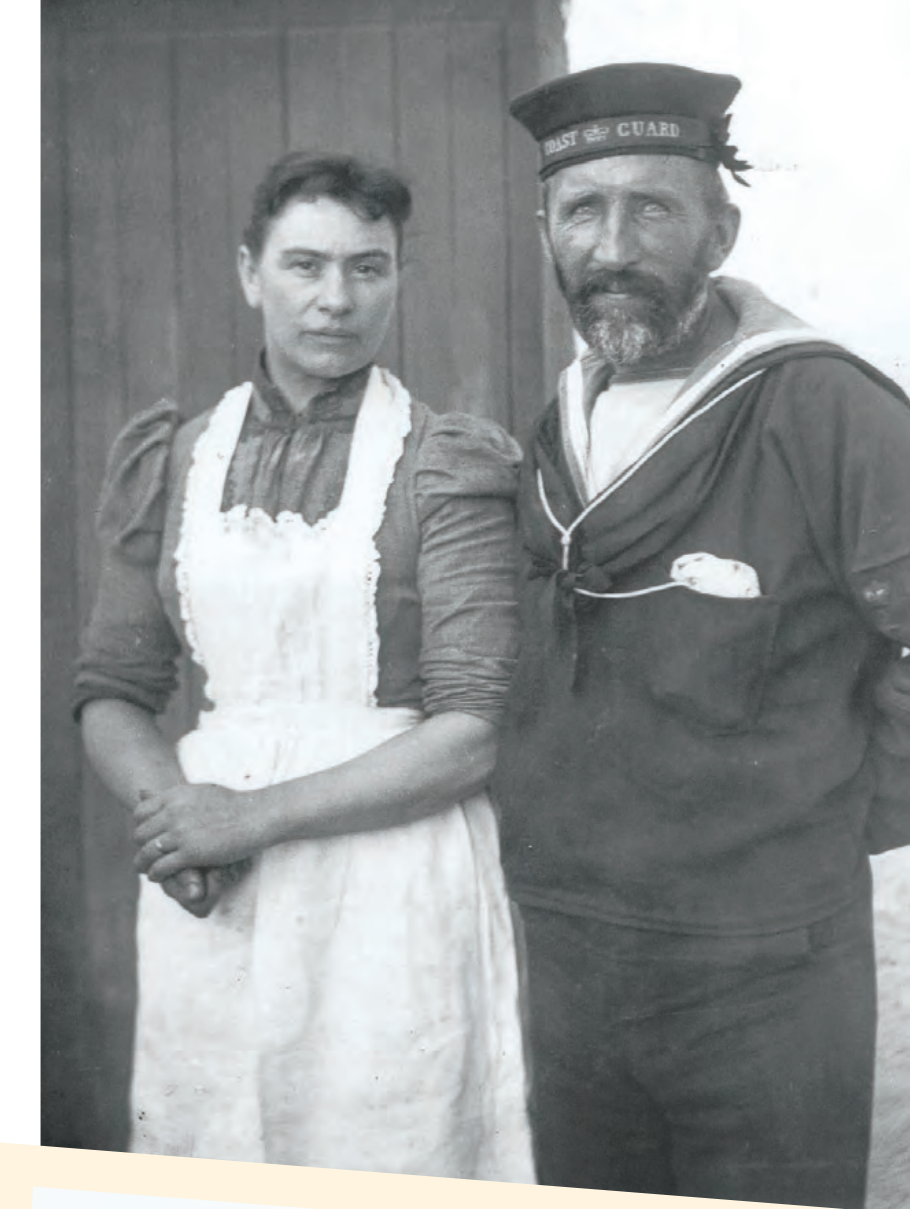
When standards of living were low, luxury items such as tobacco, tea, and spirits if bought legally, were out of most people's reach. Smugglers preyed on this and provided the luxuries of life at a price that ordinary folk could afford, and made a hefty profit into the bargain. It was estimated that towards the end of the 18th century, about two thirds of the brandy drunk in this country had been smuggled in.



## The Coast Guard

The Coast Guard has its origins in the efforts made to combat smuggling throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. The Board of Customs and the Board of Excise were responsible for the prevention of the evasion of Duty and had a small fleet of boats and a few men on the coast.

The Coast Guards were not local people. There were placed in villages where they did not know anyone and were moved on every few years. This was to reduce the possibility of collusion. They lived in houses built just outside the main village. At Hallsands, they lived up on the cliff tops in the small row of terraced houses you can still see today. There were also Coast Guards stationed at Lannacombe, Prawle and Torcross.

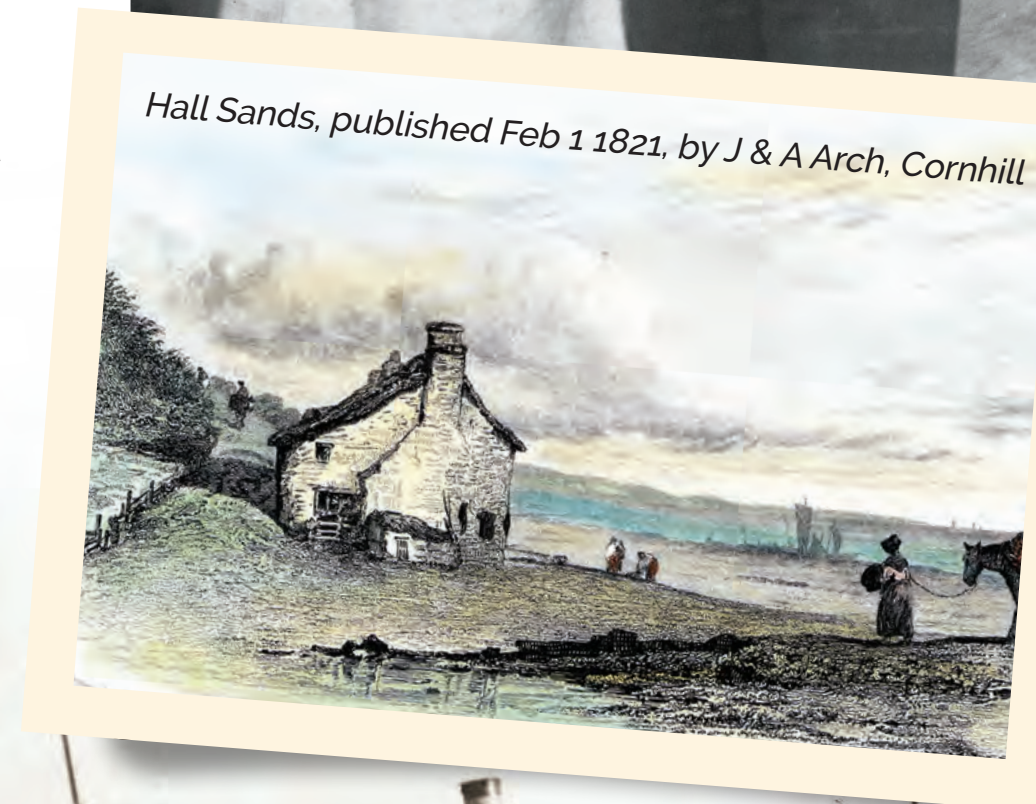


## Transport

Throughout Devon the roads were so bad that wheeled transport was unusual until the end of the 18th century. Goods travelled around the coast and up rivers by boat or into the hinterland via packhorse. One man could control a string of up to 20 horses but compared with the distribution of goods by boat the packhorse was uneconomic. The average coastal cargo ship in the 19th Century could carry a load of 50 tons. To move the same by road required 400 packhorses.

There was also less need to travel outside each community in those days. Food was produced locally and most villages were fairly self sufficient

Traditionally the communities along Start Bay, including Hallsands, had a stronger connection with Dartmouth owing to the sea transport. This started to change with the better roads and the railway. This linked fishing communities to new markets for their catches in London, travelling via horse and cart to Kingsbridge railway station.



Paddle steamer at Torcross



- 120,000 yrs

Sea levels are higher: A wave cut platform, the rock ledge that the village was built on, is formed.

-18,000 yrs

During the Ice Age, so much water is frozen that sea levels fall dramatically. The coast is about 20 miles further out.

-10,000 yrs

Ice is melting, sea-level is rising. The rising waters bring in the flint and quartz from off shore to form the beach.

-3,000 yrs

Shingle stretches around Start Bay forming several ridge beaches like that between Strete Gate and Torcross.

1784

First title deeds recorded for The London Inn at Hallsands.

1857

Sir Robert Newman, the owner of the village dies in the Crimean war and the property is put up for sale. Most of the villagers are able to buy their cottages at a reasonable price. Hallsands is one of the few Devon villages at this time where nearly everyone owns their own homes.

1891

Population of Hallsands reaches 159.

March 1891

The Great Blizzard strikes the South West. Many ships are wrecked in the storm, including two large vessels off Hallsands: The Lunesdale, a 140 ton schooner and the Lizzie Ellen, a 73 ton schooner. No reports of any damage to the village.

1894

The Royal Navy plans to extend Devonport Dockyard at Keyham, needing around 400,000 cubic metres of shingle. Extracting it from Start Bay is decided to be "a sound business proposition". The planning application is made without villagers being aware.

January 1896

Construction contract awarded to Sir John Jackson, who built part of the Manchester Ship Canal and Tower Bridge. Work starts immediately.

November 1896

Agreement made between Sir John Jackson and owners of the shingle (Board of Trade, for the Crown) to dredge just north of Hallsands. Jackson has to pay the Board of Trade a fee of £50 a year for dredging rights.

April 1897

Dredging starts, at an average of 1600 tons per day, covering an 1100m stretch from just north of the village to Tinsey Head, the promontory between North Hallsands and Beesands.

April/May 1897

Removal of shingle alters the shape and angle of the beach, so much so that the low water mark moves until it is actually further inland than the old high water mark. Holes left behind are not being filled in and villagers ask local MP - Col. Mildmay White for help.

June 1897

Enquiry held at Hallsands Coast Guard station with villagers and a Board of Trade appointed inspector. Villagers state that there was damage to their crab pots, disturbance to the fish and the lowering beach level was threatening their homes. Jackson said it was only a matter of time until new sand moved along the coast to re-fill the holes. Jackson won the case.

August 1897

As an act of goodwill, Jackson acknowledges the work is interfering with fishing and agrees to pay £125 to the community each year until dredging ends, plus an extra £20 as a Christmas gift. This amounts to around £4 per adult male villager a year (estimated at around £1900 using average earnings calculations for 2021). He also agrees to pay for any damage to pots or fishing gear.



# Living on the Coast



## Why here?

Hallsands seems to have always been a fishing community but why did the fishermen choose this narrow and uncomfortable rock ledge instead of the more open ground to the north?

- The reduction in piracy, with the advent of the Navy, must have made people feel more secure about living right on the coast.
- The location was tucked into the 'lee' of the cliffs from the prevailing South Westerly wind and the flat rock ledge provided instant foundations for the first houses.
- The long shallow beach was ideal for pulling the boats up on.
- The proximity to the good fishing around the Skerries bank.



Clara, Edith, Ella and Patience Trout

## Focus on a family - The Trout Sisters

The destroyed family home at the south end of the village

## Early Days

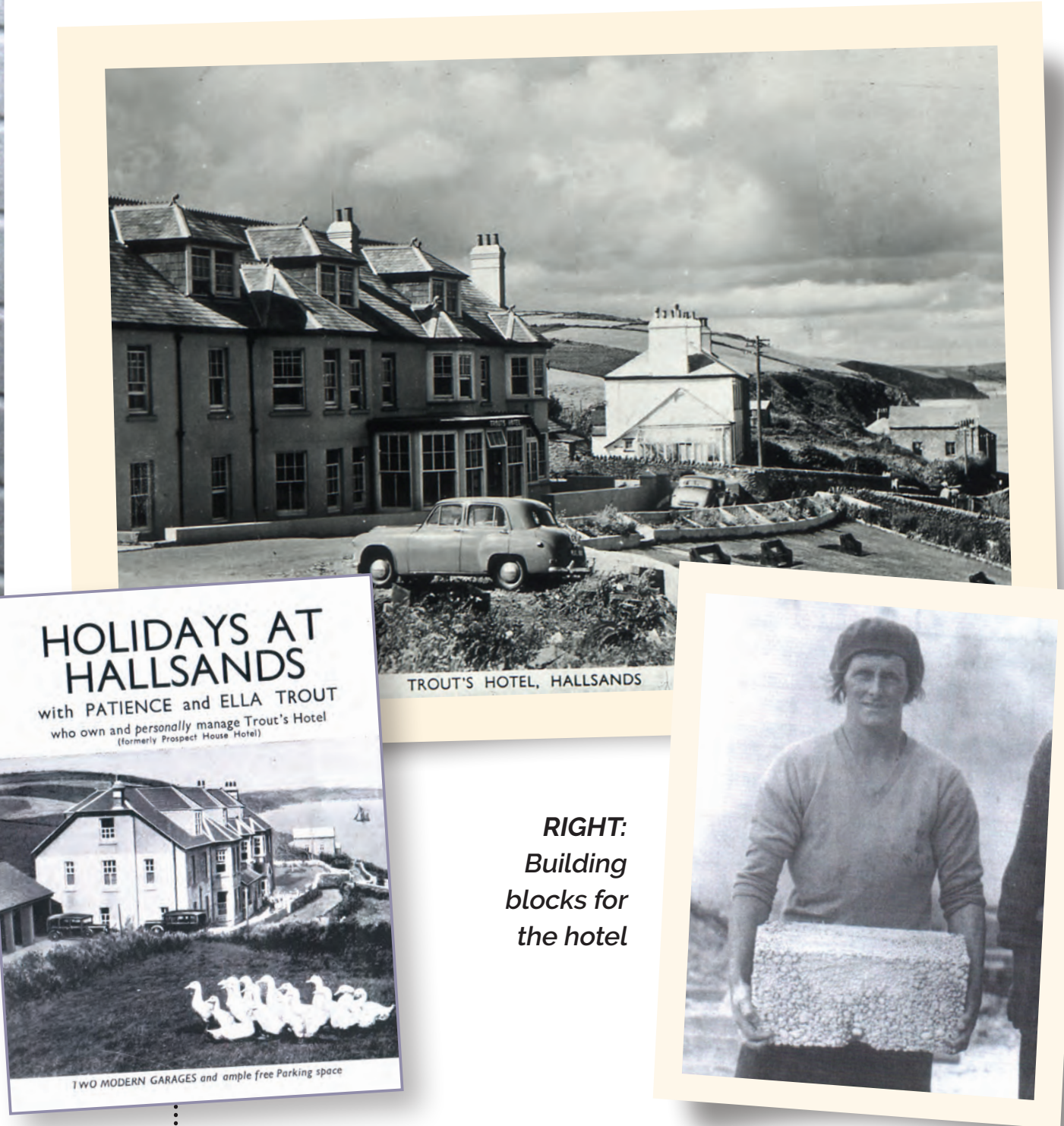
The Trouts were one of the large families in Hallsands. Eliza Ann, her husband William and their children Patience, Ella, Edith and Clara, lived in one of the end houses at the far south of the village. William supported his family by fishing until he became ill. Patience left school at age 14 to take his place and work the boat full-time with her uncle. Ella later joined her sister and they carried on fishing off Hallsands all of their lives. Their father was very proud of the way his daughters had gone out into a very male world and taken on supporting the family. He died a couple of years later. The girls had all grown up with the dredging and talk of the beach dropping. As their house was on the end, it received the full brunt of the storms and waves. It was one of the first to be damaged and the women decided that they must move.

Patience and Ella on their boat 'The Guide' 1919



## Hallsands Heroine

In September 1917, Ella was out with her younger cousin checking the crab pots beyond Start Point when they saw a steamer explode and disappear. She rowed for more than a mile through dangerous cross currents towards the sunken ship and arrived in time to rescue a crew member who was clinging to wreckage. The boat was later found to have hit a mine. The newspapers picked up the story and Ella was praised as a hero. She was awarded the Medal of Order of the British Empire, or OBE, on April 18th 1918.



RIGHT: Building blocks for the hotel

## Ella's big dream

One day whilst out fishing with her sister Patience, Ella got the idea to build a house on the cliff top above Hallsands. Using money saved from their wartime fishing, Ella bought the land and a second hand wooden building that would serve as the family home whilst they waited for their compensation.

## Prospect House

Disappointingly the authorities decided that for two homes the Trouts were due £150, much less than they were expecting. A chance encounter with a visitor gave Ella the idea of asking her bank for a loan, suggesting that if they built extra rooms for holiday makers they could cover a mortgage. He promised that he and his family would be their first guests! The guest house opened in 1925 and was so successful they asked for another loan to extend it. They were not granted the full amount but undeterred, Ella and Patience did much of the work themselves, including making 8000 blocks from beach shingle, digging trenches and installing hot and cold water in every room.

## Trout's Hotel

Trout's Hotel was the model of self sufficiency, providing its own vegetables, eggs, chicken and fish. The family ran the hotel alongside the fishing, even taking visitors out in motor boats for trips and to fish themselves.

Ella had achieved her dream. Patience died suddenly in 1949, leaving Ella without her best friend and soul mate. In 1952, aged 55 Ella died leaving the hotel to her younger sister Edith. Things ran smoothly for a while before closing in 1959. Edith then lived there in seclusion until her death in 1975.



The hotel was sold by auction and re-sold following restoration. It has now been redeveloped into luxury apartments and houses, and the name changed back to the original - Prospect House.

### 1897-1900

Dredgers and villagers co-exist.

### Autumn 1900

Beach levels have fallen noticeably, and no new shingle is coming into the bay. The Hallsands platform is unprotected and the rough stone between the clefts in the rock ledge is being demolished by waves and washed out to sea. Houses are damaged.

### November 1900

Villagers petition their MP about damage to the houses. At spring high tide the sea now comes within 1m (3ft) of the village rather than the 21 - 24 metres (70-80ft) it had been before dredging started. Cracks appear in houses at the south end of the village and the sea wall is undermined. Following another Board of Trade Inspection, Jackson is ordered to provide new concrete footings to the sea wall and a concrete slipway for the boats, to compensate for the lack of beach.

### March 1901

Kingsbridge Rural District Council writes to the Board of Trade, complaining of damage to the road. Part of the sea wall protecting the London Inn collapses and needs rebuilding.

### September 1901

A new inspector, Captain Frederick, concludes in his report that the beach had fallen 2 - 3.5 metres (7-12 ft). He recommends dredging should be stopped. The licence was restricted immediately.

### 1st January 1902

Villagers take action, pull ashore dredger marker buoys and prevent them from mooring.

### 8th January 1902

The licence to dredge is revoked. After nearly 5 years of dredging, around 650,000 tonnes of shingle have been removed.

This is roughly the same as removing 1.5 metres deep from the whole of Slapton beach, from Torcross the Strete Gate, at low tide.

### August 1902

The beach appears to recover, but this is only an illusion. Sand rather than shingle has drifted in on the gentle summer waves.

### Winter 1902/3

All the new sand is removed and it is agreed that the level of the beach is at least 2m (6 ft) lower than when dredging began. The winter storms bring extensive damage to the sea wall and houses, one is flattened and another made uninhabitable. Many struggle on with waves crashing over roofs and down chimneys, flooding houses. It is clear that the villagers need help.

### March 1903

Richard Hansford Worth is appointed as Honorary Engineering Advisor for the fishermen, to ensure they get a fair deal. He gives his services free of charge and is a strong champion. He is the first person to scientifically analyse the shingle which makes up the beach, to show that it could not be replaced from another source when it was removed by man.

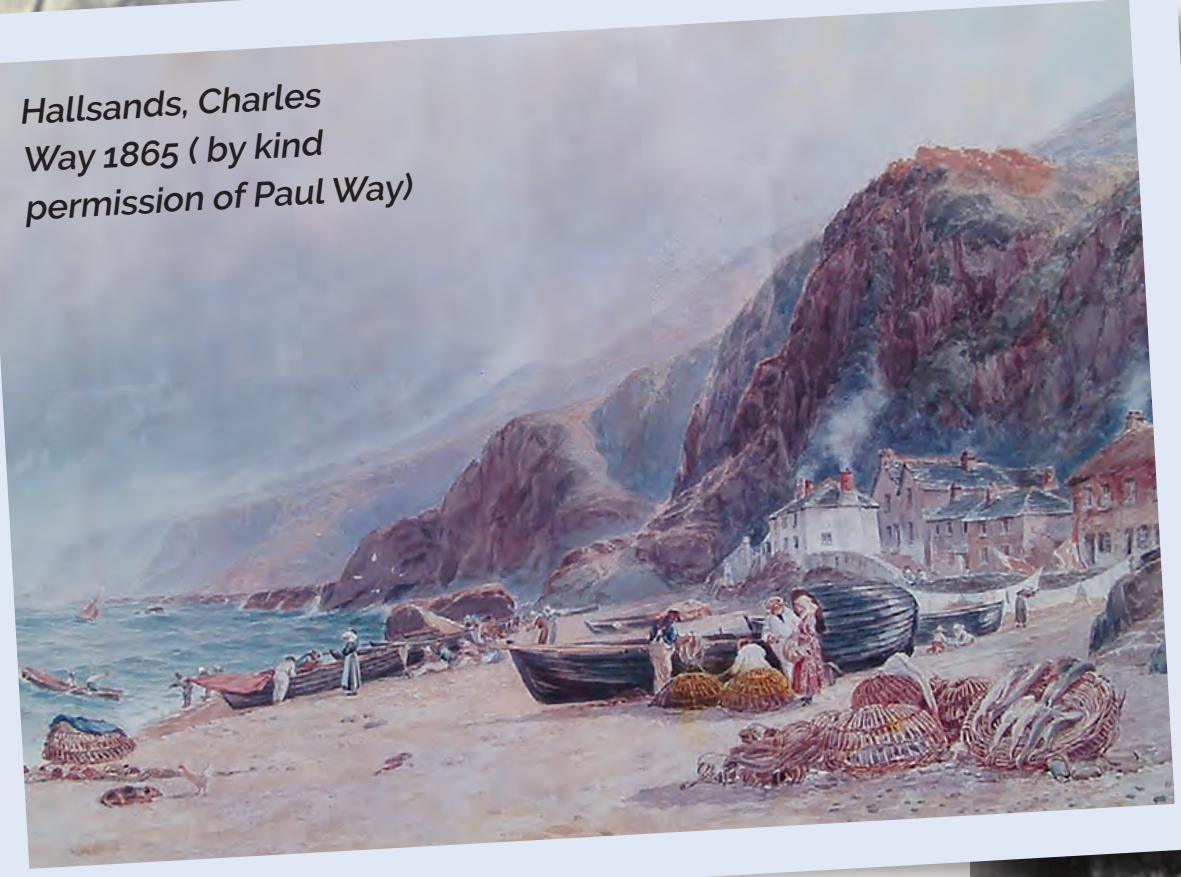


# Living here - Village Life

Hallsands grew as a fishing village during the 18th and 19th century, reaching a population of 159 by 1891.

Looking down there now, it is hard to believe that it was once a thriving community, living under the cliffs, on a high ledge above the sea, protected by a wide shingle beach.

There were 37 houses in Hallsands, mainly owned by their occupants, as well as a pub with stables – The London Inn, a Post Office, green grocers, bakery, piggery and Mission Room.



Hallsands, Charles Way 1865 ( by kind permission of Paul Way)



## Working life

It was a very hard life for the small community, which could not be sustained by fishing alone. In the winter and times of bad weather, some fishermen farmed the plots on the steep slopes at the top of the cliff. Most village men had other trades – tailor, carpenter and blacksmith – to bring in extra income. In many ways the village was self sufficient.

Fishing was the main activity of Hallsands, like other villages facing Start Bay. Everyone helped when the shoals came into the bay. A lookout watched for the tell-tale oily film on the surface of the water indicating mackerel or pilchards.



He would call 'Aye Boat' and wave his bowler hat, worn just for this purpose. All villagers, including women and children, would come out of the houses and run down onto the beach to help pull the big seine nets in, with the large catches of fish. The best of the catch was sent off to Kingsbridge for dispatch to London. They also laid crab pots, making them out of withies (willow wands) which grew nearby.

The villagers kept working Newfoundland dogs. These dogs were trained to go out and bring in the end of the ropes attached to the crab pots, or boats, when the sea was rough in bad weather. It is also said that the women of the village waded out to the launched boats in the mornings, with the menfolk on their backs, so that they did not have to start the day with wet feet!



Making crab pots on the slipway in 1902

## Family life

The pub records go back to 1784. It served its own brew of White Ale and was popular with many of the fisherman from local villages as well as the lighthouse keepers from Start Point. Tourists from Torbay and Dartmouth would be entertained when the pleasure steamers made regular stop-offs.

Once the chapel opened in 1850, the old Mission Room became a social venue used for concerts and sing-songs. Neighbouring villagers from Prawle, Beesands, Torcross and the lighthouse would join in with these get-togethers, many looking no further for a husband or wife.

There was no school in the village, the children had to make the 2.5 km (1.5 mile) walk to the small hamlet of Huccombe each day.



Hallsands Hotel



Start Bay fishwives 1890

## March 1903

Worth's first report to the Fisheries Commission shows that the beach in front of the houses had fallen by over 3m (9ft) and predicts (correctly) that the worst is yet to come...

## April 1903

The Board of Trade first offers compensation of £1000 to the villagers for loss or damage to property, fishing gear and boats, and to repair the sea walls. Some accept, but many feel it is an insulting amount.

## Sept 1903

The kitchen, beer cellar, and a bedroom of the London Inn collapses.

## January 1904

The offer of compensation is increased to £1,750.

## June 1904

The Board and Jackson offer £3,250 which all villagers except Mrs Spital, owner of the London Inn, accept. Because of the dissent they reduce the offer to £3,000 but it is made back up by Col. Mildmay, ever supportive of the villagers. All villagers agree to this, but have to sign a receipt stating they will make no further claims. A public fund, run by the Western Morning News, raises a further £650. This money goes into a trust to build new houses as and when the villagers lose their homes. Mrs Spital takes Sir John Jackson to court independently, for damage to The London Inn, and receives £500 plus costs in an out of court settlement. This is far more than the villagers individually had been awarded by the Board of Trade.

## 1903-4

Strong easterly gales make conditions difficult: the village walls are breached 12 times destroying most of the north end of the village, the road and the pub. It also cuts off the south end of the village. Some of the compensation money is used to recompense the owners of 6 houses which had completely disappeared and for repairs to others. The remainder is used to build a new sea wall to protect the most vulnerable parts of the ledge, Worth oversees the job and admits they will not be strong enough, but could at least be speedily built.

## 1904

Jackson returns to remove a large quantity of sand from the Skerries sandbar, about 2 miles offshore.

## 1906

A new stronger sea wall is in place to protect the remaining 25 houses and their 93 inhabitants. The four families who were washed out of their homes are re-housed in new cottages on the cliff top next to the chapel, known as the Mildmay Cottages. They were built with money raised in the Western Morning News appeal fund. Although the population falls to 79, villagers grow more confident in their strong new sea wall and enjoy several years of peace.

## 1904 – 1917

There is a period of relative tranquillity, although those living near the new sea walls get used to the sea breaking in the back door when there is an easterly storm. Fishing continues although boats have to be pulled right up into the village and the exposed rocks often tear the nets. Makeshift bridges are built over the open clefts in the rock ledge.



# The demise of Hallsands

The tale of the demise of Hallsands is a long and complicated one. A timeline of events, globally, nationally and locally, which affected the village, as well as what happened here, is told all around the bottom edge of these panels. This section tells the story in pictures and words from the time – quotes, newspaper articles and reports.

“The quantity required cannot be accurately stated but in no case will it be sufficient as to in any way interfere with the cliffs or adjoining land.”

Application letter to Board of Trade from Sir John Jackson; for permission to dredge off Hallsands. 5th August 1896

Sir John Jackson



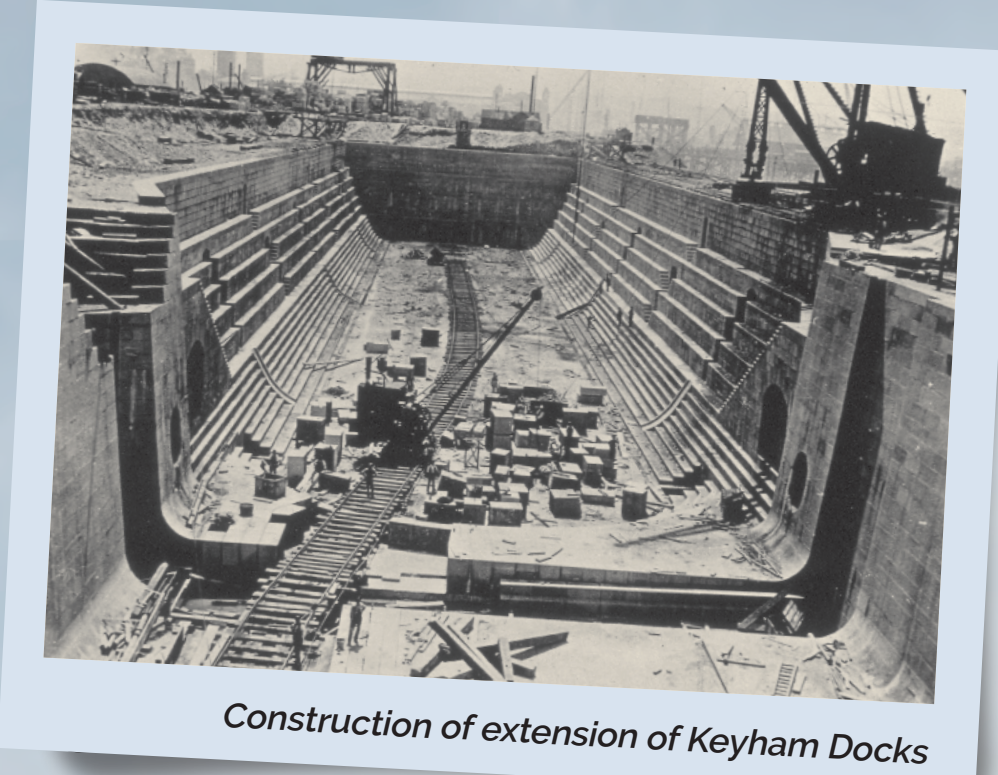
## Dredging

“(in) conducting dredging or carrying away sand and shingle (he) was to do so in such a manner as to not expose the land above high water mark to the encroachment of the sea, and not to cause damage or nuisance to persons using the foreshore or owners of property above the high water mark.”

Licence granted to Sir John Jackson by the Office of Woods and Forests (owners of land above high water mark)

“A sound business proposition”

Decision to extract shingle from Start Bay, 1894



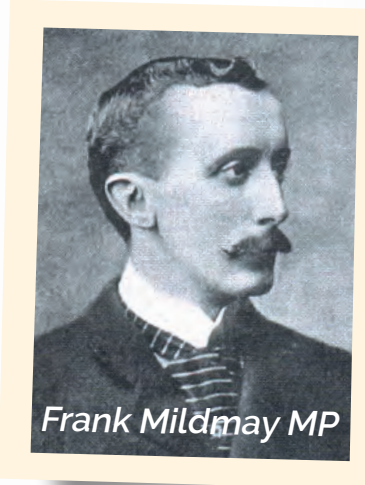
“...permission to dredge, and carry away sand, shingle and other materials from that part of the sea bed between high and low water marks at Start Bay and opposite Hallsands and Beeson Sands (Beesands).”

Agreement made between Sir John Jackson and owners of shingle (Board of Trade, for the Crown), April 1897

## Damage

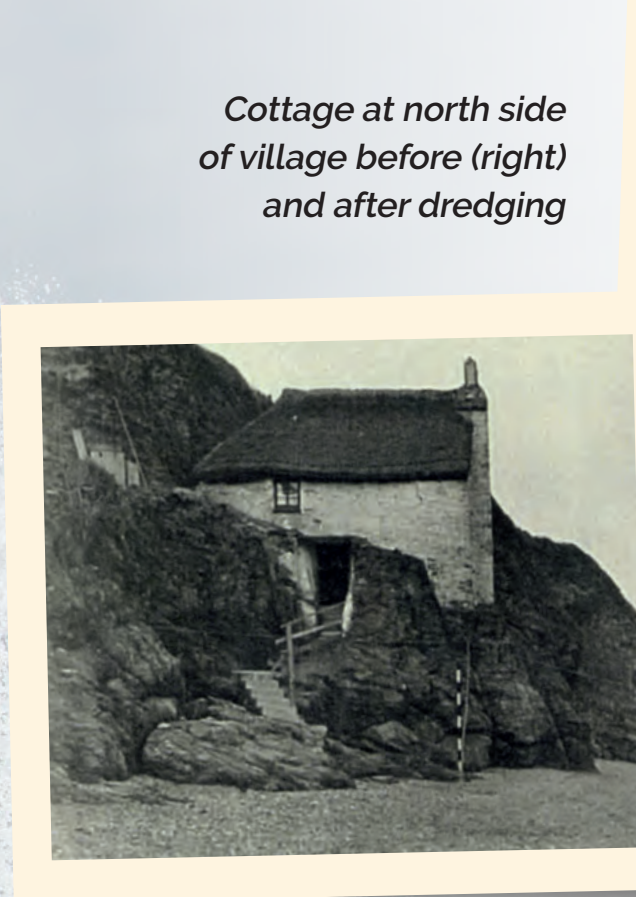
“...whether he will hold a local enquiry upon the allegations as to the damage to fishermen's cottages and from the fishing industry likely to result there from.”

From Mildmay's parliamentary question to the President of the Board of Trade, 13th May 1897



“Insufficient grounds on which to revoke the licence.”

Inspector at Hallsands enquiry, June 1897



“In the event of a heavy gale from the east...few houses will not be flooded, if not seriously damaged.”

Report by Inspector, Captain Frederick, Sept 1901

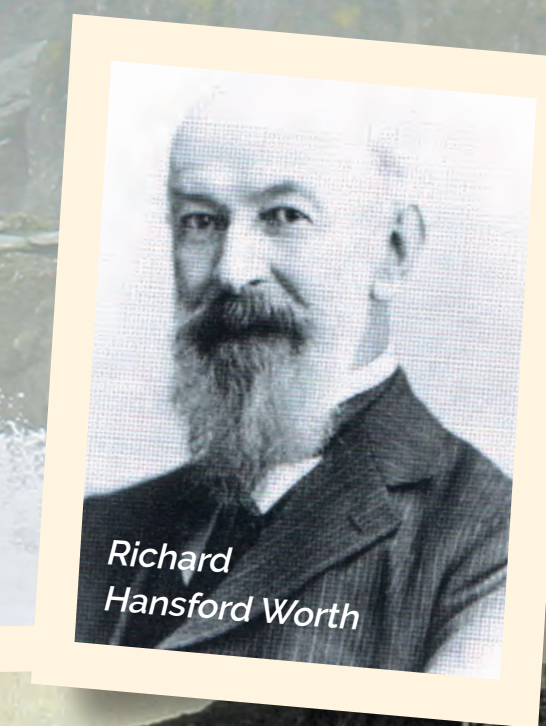


“The villagers say that they have known worse gales before the removal of the shingle, when no damage was done, and if it sinks much lower they express the fear that they will be washed out like rats from a hole.”

Western Morning News, 15th Dec 1903

“The damage up to Saturday last had been mostly confined to the west [north] side and middle of the village, but now two cottages, at almost the extreme and east [south] end have been practically demolished, and a third one is in immediate danger; all access is cut from it, and it is isolated; whilst the earth and gravel have been sucked out almost to it's walls.”

Western Morning News, 15th Dec 1903



## Defences

“Unless some properly considered measures are promptly taken, houses and roads alike must fall, with the exception of the houses founded entirely on rock, and that these will be left without access”

Richard Hansford Worth's first report to the Fisheries Commission, March 1903

Autumn 1916

Storms begin to undermine the Trout's cottage at the southern end of the village again. They move out.

26th January 1917

Fishermen, expecting worsening gales, storms and a high tide, haul the boats high up in to the village street and batten them down. The children are evacuated to the Mildmay Cottages.

8pm

Spring tides bring huge waves which crash into the houses at roof height and destroy the buildings behind the sea walls from above. The houses built over the rock cavities, where the sand 'cement' has been washed out, collapse. Those built on the rocks are battered by wind, waves and stones. The villagers fear for their lives.

Midnight

Four houses have been totally demolished and none remain intact. Amazingly, all 79 villagers survive and scramble to safety during a lull in the storm at low tide.

Dawn 27th January

First light reveals a devastating picture, the sea is strewn with timber and broken furniture. The sea walls have held, otherwise many more houses, and possibly lives, would have been lost. It is likely that the next high tide will destroy all that remains so with the wind still raging, villagers work to salvage what they can.

27th January 1917

The Kingsbridge Gazette leads with 'The beach went to Devonport and the cottages went to the sea.'

28th January 1917

With the next high tide, the walls break and the village is destroyed. Only one house remains in any way habitable, the highest in the village, that of the Prettejohn family.

This gale was certainly severe, but was it really worse than the Great Blizzard of 1891? Worth pointed out that the 1891 gale had caused widespread damage, whereas the 1917 storm caused "only the occasional tree to come down" inferring that were it not for the removal of the beach at Hallsands, the village would have survived.

1917-1919

Homeless villagers have to fend for themselves. Many stay with friends or relatives, but others are not so fortunate. Five men have to share a hayloft, some sleep in the ruins during the summer months. Funds raised earlier are all spent and local dignitaries take up the crusade for compensation. A claim is made to The Board of Trade but again they deny any responsibility and remind the villagers of the certificate they signed stating no further claims. The Western Morning News runs a huge public support campaign and eventually The Board of Trade consents to an independent inquiry.

26th September 1917

The Kingsbridge Gazette reports on the official inquiry. The Board of Trade appoints Sir Maurice Fitzmaurice to investigate and make recommendations. He ends saying that he will present his report to the Board of Trade and it was for that authority to decide the course they would take. The report of the Board's decision is not made public.

1919

Compensation of £6000 is made to the villagers. £2,800 of which is considered the market value of lost property and goods, no account was taken of trauma or inconvenience. The remaining £3,200 is for the rebuilding programme. It is clear they couldn't afford to rebuild the 37 houses that once made up the village. Two more years of political wrangling follow.

1921

The Fisheries Committee acting on behalf of the villagers decide to build ten houses in Bickerton Valley, now North Hallsands. With six other houses having been built independently, only 16 of 37 houses were ever replaced. Elizabeth Prettejohn and her brother remain in their house in the village.



# The demise of Hallsands



“ The beach went to Devonport and the cottages went to the sea. ”

Kingsbridge Gazette, 27th Jan 1917

## Destruction

“ All of a sudden the walls came toppling down, the floor caved in. We felt like being right in the sea, the roaring waves bouncing over us, the rafters all breaking in. We could see the white waves foaming underneath the floors. The coal house all slipping away, no fires, the sea came down the chimney. ”

Edith Patey, age 17, Villager, 26th Jan 1917

“ The seas were breaking as high as the house. My great trouble was the missus and the four youngsters, who were asleep upstairs, but we got them safely out. ”

James Lynn, Villager, 26th Jan 1917



Hallsands village before and after destruction



“ What are we going to do?...we have spent the whole of our lives here fishing. We know no other trade, and we are useless. We have no homes, much of our furniture is lost. I tell you it's hard, very hard, for our wives and families. It's all gone. ”

Hallsands fisherman, January 1917

“ If we offer (a grant) at once we shall only be pressed for more - the Hallsands fishermen, as past history shows, are past masters in squeezing.....One sympathises with them in the disaster which has overtaken them, but a year or more has now elapsed, and it is probable that by now they have managed to get homes and a livelihood. ”

Assistant secretary to the Treasury, unpublished memo after independent inquiry for Board of Trade in 1918

## Dereliction

“ by the manner in which they have endured undeserved ill-fortune the inhabitants of Hallsands have earned the respect of all who have been associated with them. ”

Conclusion of report on Hallsands, 1924

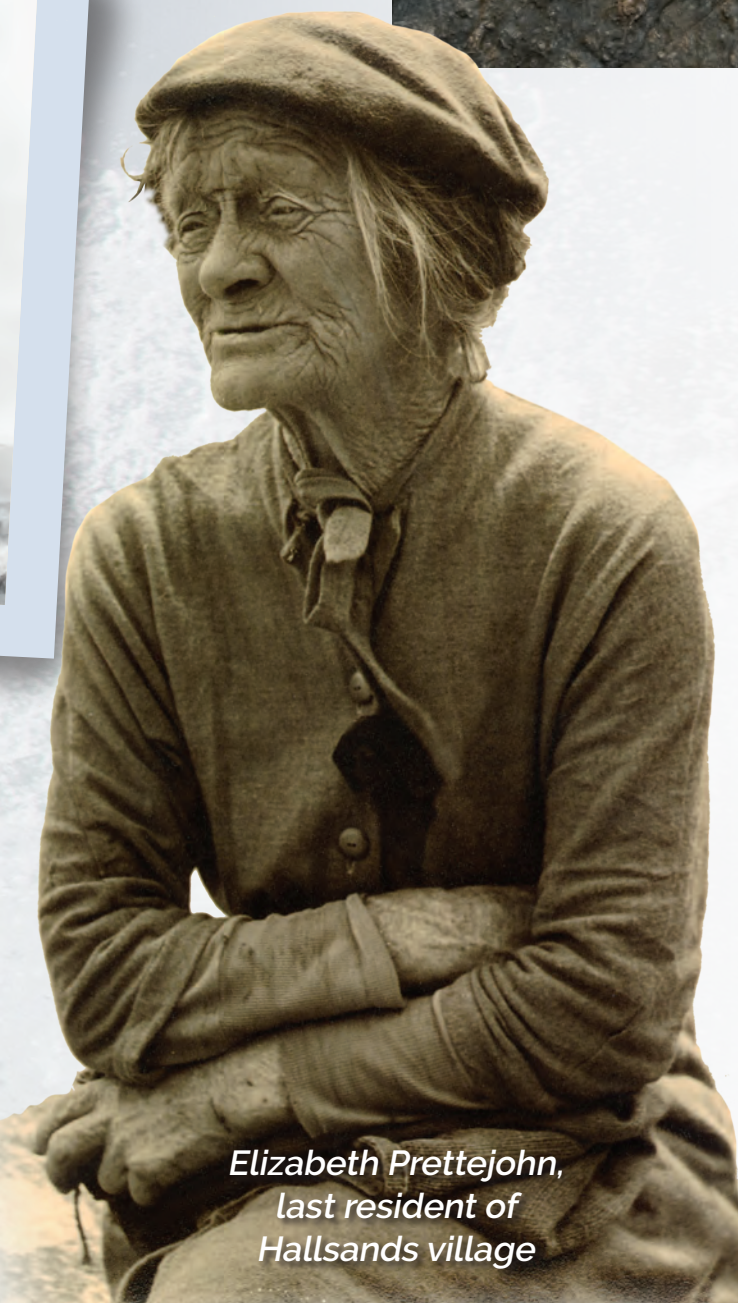


“ This is the end of our village. We shall have to go elsewhere. ”

Hallsands Villager, 27th January 1917

“ I have all my memories here, but it's no good sitting down moping. It was the dockyard that took all our beach. It blew for four days and four nights. The sea was like mountains. I prayed God that the wind would stop... Once I thought of moving to Dartmouth, but this is where I belong with my memories. ”

Elizabeth Prettejohn, last resident of Hallsands village, until she died in 1964



Elizabeth Prettejohn, last resident of Hallsands village

“ Almost a century after the Devon fishing village of Hallsands was washed into the sea, fatally undermined by commercial gravel dredging, an unpublished report has revealed how the fishermen and their families were cheated of compensation recommended by an independent inspector. ”

The Guardian, May 2002

This panel has been produced by the South Devon National Landscape team thanks to funding from the South West Coast Path and with kind permission of the Blackpool and Start Estate.

### Explore closer...

You can still get a close up view of the ruined village by watching our drone film – it is available on our website [www.southdevon-nl.org.uk/explore-start-bay/hallsands](http://www.southdevon-nl.org.uk/explore-start-bay/hallsands)



You can also scan the QR code on the gatepost to the Coast Path which will take you directly to the film.

### Explore further...

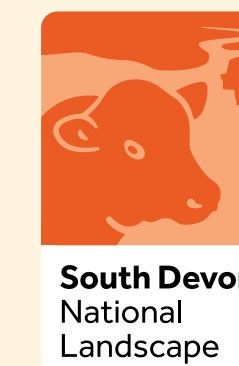
There are also more photos, information and links to downloadable walks with audio content on the website to help you explore the area around Hallsands and Start Bay.

### Research & Reading

- Hallsands, a pictorial history – Kathy Tanner and Peter Walsh
- Sisters against the sea – Ruth and Frank Milton
- The tragedy of Hallsands village – John L Harvey
- Hallsands, a village betrayed – Steve Melia
- [www.abandonedcommunities.co.uk/hallsands.html](http://www.abandonedcommunities.co.uk/hallsands.html)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/devon](http://www.bbc.co.uk/devon)

### Images

- Cookworthy Museum, Kingsbridge
- Torquay Museum
- The Devons
- Plymouth Record Office
- Robin Rose Price
- Paul Way



Panels designed by  [luketom.com](http://luketom.com)



1924

Fordsworth Cottages are completed.

1924

A report recorded that the consequences of the dredging had been stabilized.

1964

Elizabeth Prettejohn – the last remaining village resident dies. The cottage is bought and turned into a holiday home.

1995

A 'new' path down to the village is built 6m (20 ft) inland from the original road.

1996

The new path is closed because of severe instability and erosion.

2nd May 2002

#### THE GUARDIAN REPORTS

"Almost a century after the Devon fishing village of Hallsands was washed into the sea, fatally undermined by commercial gravel dredging, an unpublished report has revealed how the fishermen and their families were cheated of compensation recommended by an independent inspector.

Local journalist and author Steve Melia has now found a suppressed report in the public records office at Kew in London, in which the inspector recommended compensation of £10,500 to rebuild the village safely inland, and unequivocally found that the dredging caused the collapse.

Mr Melia also found at Kew and in the county records, many memos from officials rubbing the villagers' claims.

In fact most were still camping out nearby, taken in by friends or neighbours or living in rented rooms. After the final collapse in 1917 the inspector recommended that all 25 houses and the reading room should be replaced, and compensation paid for the lost furnishings and fishing gear: £10,500 in all. In 1919, after endless argument and two years of inflation, just 10 houses were built at a cost of £6,000. "

2002

South Hams District Council installs the Hallsands viewing platform allowing a better and safer view of the remains of Hallsands village.

May 2012

A 200 tonne, 10m long section of the coastal cliff collapses and damages a stone barn. The path down to the village below the viewing platform is damaged. The viewing platform, complete with new interpretation produced by South Devon National Landscape remains open.

March 2018

Storm Emma damages the buildings in the village and the path down to the village collapses, cutting off any access to the remaining houses. The viewing platform remains open.

October 2022

Monitoring inspections reveal a large section of the path to the platform has been undermined. The path is fully closed and the viewing platform inaccessible.

April 2024

With funding from the South West Coast Path and permission from the Blackpool and Start Estate, a new interpretation point is installed at Start Point car park. A drone film is made which gives people a close up view of the remains of the village.