

The village of St Germans grew up on the banks of the River Tiddy. There appears to have been a church here from the 5th century, and for a short time, 926-1050, it was the seat of the Bishop of Cornwall. An Augustinian priory was founded in the 12th century, and in medieval times the area was divided into two manors, one leased to the Prior and Canons at St Germans and the other, with lands along towards present-day Polbathic, the Manor of Cuddenbeake.

John Eliot, a leading Plymouth merchant in the 1530s, had by the 1550s become Lord of the Manor of Cuddenbeake. In 1562 he persuaded Queen Elizabeth to make St Germans a borough, with two MPs - elected by seven voters. Although the village of St Germans grew in size over the years, when the Reform Act was passed in 1832, abolishing the Borough, there were still only seven voters on the electoral roll.



The old police houses

St Germans station (1 on the map) is one of the few in the south west to retain its original buildings, the station being opened in May 1859 at the same time as the Cornwall Railway and the Royal Albert Bridge in Saltash. Go out from Platform 2, down the hill, and turn left on the main road, past the block of old police houses (3), which were built at the same time as the railway station. This was when the Cornwall Constabulary was formed. The building was staffed and occupied by a sergeant and two constables - with occasional additional occupants in the cells.

Opposite the church is a collection of buildings where there was recently a post office (see the old post box in the wall). This collection of buildings at an earlier time was the Blue Anchor public house, the licensee in the 19th century being Methuseleh Wills. It later became a grocers and shoemakers as well as the Post Office.

The church (6) is well worth a visit, the present church, with its two west towers, dating from the Norman period, though with many later additions and changes. The large east window behind the altar is a Burne Jones design, executed by William Morris's company in 1896.

Behind the church lies Port Eliot (5), which is open to the public between March and June at present. The 16th century dissolution of the priory was followed by the sale of the estate, and by the 1560s it had passed into the hands of the Eliot family. The house was rebuilt in the 18th century, and most of what can now be seen is the work of John Soane between 1802 and 1806. The river originally flowed in front of the house, but in the 1790s an embankment was built to divert the river, and the gardens were designed and laid out by Repton in the 1790s, though they were considerably altered in Victorian times.



St Germans Church

Opposite the gatehouse (7) to Port Eliot you will see the entrance to the 19th and 20th century graveyard. There is an imposing plot set high up on the left as you enter, where a number of the Eliot family are remembered. A number of old gravestones give an indication of life in the 19th century, an interesting example being Rebecca Henwood who died in 1846, aged 55 years, the mother of 18 children, though only 11 children still alive when she died, the others having died in infancy.

Continue along the main road on the raised walkway - "the Causeway" - and you will reach the Methodist Chapel on the left (13). The first chapel here was built soon after the middle of the 18th century, following some harassment of early Methodists, and the present one is the fourth on this site. Farther along, on the right, the Eliot Arms (14) (originally the Red Lion), until the middle of the 20th century consisted of a single bar, with an upstairs club room and a substantial stable block. During the period of railway building in the 19th century, there were five or more beer houses and inns in St Germans.

Opposite the pub, the house on the corner with the monkey puzzle tree in the garden, Eliot Cottage was built for the Port Eliot bailiff. Over the other side of the road, in Bag Lane, the terraced row on your left dates in part from the 17th century, but the western part was built with materials from the destruction of the old town hall which used to overlook the church, but which was pulled down in the early 20th century.



Eliot Cottage



St. Germans

Key

1. Railway Station
2. Post Boxes
3. The Old Police Houses
4. Quay Lane Surgery
5. Port Eliot
6. Church
7. The Gatehouse (pedestrian entrance to Port Eliot)
8. The Masonic Lodge
9. Public Toilet
10. The Eliot Hall
11. Notice Boards
12. Bus Stops
13. Methodist Chapel
14. The Eliot Arms Pub
15. Memorial cottage
16. The Gallery
17. St. Germans Primary School
18. Treland Play Park and Nature Reserve
19. Sailing Club / Quay
20. Village Shop & Post Office

Useful Information

Places to eat:

- **Eliot Arms** - 01503 232 733
- **Halfway House, Polbathic** - 01503 230 202
- **Rod & Line, Tideford** - 01752 851 323
- **Long Gallery Cafe-bar** - 01503 230 753

Village Community Shop & Post Office:

(next to the Eliot Arms pub - 01503 232 887)

Local Taxis:

- **Anthony's Taxis** - 07788 900 222
- **Advance Taxis** - 07730 059 255

Places to stay:

- **Railholiday** - 01503 230 783
www.railholiday.co.uk
- **Eliot Arms** - 01503 232 733

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For more information contact the group
by phone on **01503 230 281**,
or email **SGRUG@btinternet.com**

Go down the hill past the pub and the terrace next to it. Towards the bottom of the hill were a pound house where the village cider apples used to be crushed, a slaughter house, a shop and another pub. On the corner is the Memorial cottage (15), built in memory of the Eliot son and men of the Scots Greys killed in the First World War, and occupied for a long time by the District nurse/midwife.

On the opposite corner is the old smithy. At one time it had three storeys. This was one of the houses which sold beer and cider in the days of the railway construction. Also here you will see the Almshouses, known as The Gallery (16), originally intended for 12 widows who received a shilling and a peck of barley at New Year. The Almshouses have been modernised and husbands may now stay with their wives.



The Almshouses

Turn right now along Newport. This was the industrial part of the town in medieval days when pots and tiles were made in the kilns here. At the bend on the right was the old tannery and forge. The tannery was run in conjunction with a farm. When the toll road was cut from Torpoint to Treurefoot after the Turnpike Act of 1826, enormous quantities of bark were brought in here for the tanning process.

19th century work records from the forge show that they used to sharpen farm and quarry tools, make nails and hinges as well as maintaining the steam engines used for agricultural work.



Stable Yard

Stable Yard at the end of Newport is a fine example of the work of Sir John Soane, as part of his redesigning of Port Eliot. You will need now to retrace your steps as far as Memorial cottage.

Turn right at the main road and then almost immediately turn left along the tiny lane between the houses. This is sometimes known as Well Lane, and you will see some indications of why along here. Turn right at the top, and then right again along Bag Lane. Take the next turning on the left, going steeply up under the railway. Where the road turns right at the top, you should turn left through the gate into Long Field. As the track rises towards the end of the field, you will be able to see fine views towards Dartmoor ahead of you, Bodmin Moor and Kit Hill to your left and behind. You should be able to pick out Landrake Church on the hill to your left. The sea is just over the hills to your right. Ahead of you is Colgear, thought to be the original prehistoric fort, and the first known settlement in the area, although no trace now remains.

Just before the top of the rise, turn right through the gate into the field and follow the path down the hill, where you will have a good view of the estuary.

Turn left on the road when you come out of the field. Soon you will see Fairfield House on your left. Surgeons and doctors lived here in the 19th century. In 1835 Dr Kerswill had to deal with a serious smallpox outbreak in the Parish and had to decide whether to vaccinate the Pauper children. Later in the century his son, similarly a doctor, had to deal with a bad cholera epidemic and had to build a temporary hospital.

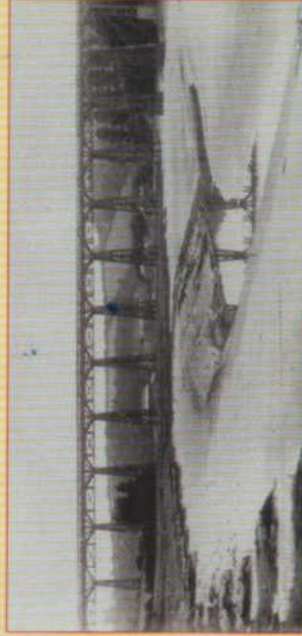
Taking the third turning on the right, Quay Road, you will find good views of the estuary and the railway viaduct opening up. On your right you will pass Cuddenbeake House. This was built when the railway came, the old Cuddenbeake (an early manor house) being demolished at that time.

The road turns to the left at Cradick's Yard. There has been a quay here for many years. It was occupied for a long time by Blewett Goard & Co, general engineers who repaired boats, traction engines, water wheels, sausage machines and agricultural tools not only for the local area but for as far afield as Dorset.

Continue round to the main quay (19) - a New Quay built in 1835 - which, before the railway, was the main link between St Germans and the world outside, trading through Saltash, Devonport and Plymouth, as well as Tidesford upstream (which could be reached by barge up until about 1950). Various agricultural goods passed through here (the warehouse is now the Sailing Club clubhouse) as well as timber, coal and limestone, and there are several old lime kilns, including some past the cottages on the left, where limestone was burnt to produce fertiliser for the fields.

Continue through the kissing gate at the end of the quay and along the path under the railway viaduct. This was built in 1908 to replace the old, largely wooden structure which had been a Brunel construction in 1859, and which the Earl had insisted should be painted white in order to "harmonize with the scenery in its vicinity". The abutments of the old viaduct can still be seen up in the woods.

The path drops down some steps to river level again. This is the old quay, and it was here near the bank, just under the steps, that fish would be packed into hogsheads and stored in sheds before being exported, as St Germans was for many years an important fishing village. Battery Cottage ahead of you, with its old cannon, was previously called Quay Lodge. It was fashionable for landed gentry to buy guns such as these to raise money for the Napoleonic and Crimean wars. The lane ahead of you was once called Fish Street. At the top, opposite the old Rectory, you might notice Nut Tree Cottage, a reminder that a walnut tree used to stand in the road here in a triangle of grass, until it was felled around the start of the 20th century to make way for the road.



The Old Railway Viaduct

You are nearly back to the railway, but if you have time before your train you might like to make a short additional walk by turning right just before the station approach road, up East Hill and Lovely Lane. The house on the left was possibly where Robert Brickwood, an early schoolmaster, lived, who ran a boarding school for orphans. Over the railway bridge, Colgear Hill lies ahead of you. Turn left along the Ragg, so called as the Poor Houses used to be here. They were destroyed, however, when the railway was built. The Earl insisted that an embankment should be built along the northern side of the railway, with trees on it, so that Port Eliot should be hidden from the gaze of the railway passengers. Eventually you will reach the main road again; turn left and the slip road will take you back to the station.

Walks from the Railway

A Walk Round St Germans



Starting Point
Distance

St Germans Station
3 miles