



Torcross 1912



During the storm of December 1979



Torcross village 1938

If you enjoyed exploring Torcross why not visit the Village Information Points.

There are four in Torcross, each revealing a different part of the story:

Wartime Torcross **Start Bay Inn info. point**

Wild Torcross **Slapton Ley viewing point**

Life in Torcross **Village Stores info. point**

Fishing in Start Bay ... The Boat House info. point

Why not explore further? Pick up a **Shore Explorer Trail** from one of these points.

This trail is part of a series telling the story of the Start Bay area.

Explore Start Bay panels and trails can be found along the coastal path around the Bay or by visiting www.explorestartbay.org



There is also an audio trail of Start Bay. For the price of a local call, you can hear stories about the area. Simply dial **01548 802315**, then 905 when prompted.

**explore
start bay**

Torcross Village Explorer Trail

Find out more about Torcross on this short trail with fabulous views over the coast and the lake



This project is run by the Slapton Line Partnership
www.slaptonline.org.uk, working with the
South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit.
Design by South Hams District Council, printed by Kingfisher Press Ltd.



A Sea defences

The village has long been battered by the sea and survived many terrible storms. In 1951 the sea front was devastated when a large section was undermined by the sea. New walls were built and these provided some protection, but not enough to prevent massive damage in the 1979 storms. Enormous waves washed right over the roofs of the buildings along here and destroyed much of the sea front. The new sea wall was built in 1980.



B Fishing

Start Bay is well known for its fishing. Traditionally, crab was caught along the coast at Beesands and Hallsands, whilst here at Torcross they generally fished with nets. Seine nets were used for open water fish such as mackerel, pilchard, grey mullet, sardines and herring. Tuck nets were weighted down at the ends, so that they dragged along the sea bed.



These caught ground fish such as plaice, dabs and whiting, used as bait or eaten by the fishing families. They also caught sand eels, prized as bait on longlines. In the 1860s fishermen from France came over to Torcross to buy these eels!

C Coastal defences

As you climb the steps up from the sea wall on the coast path you pass right alongside a WWII fortification! Known as 'pillboxes', these gun emplacements were hastily built from June 1940, to provide a last line of defence to any possible invasion. There were seven basic designs but over 26 variations and were often adapted to use the same inner concrete strengthening, whilst the shell was made of local material. This helped them to blend in. A great example of this can be seen over this hill in the next cove, where a pill box sits over the outflow from the Ley.

D Slapton Line

From here you have a really good view of the Slapton Line. Behind the village is Slapton Ley, a nature reserve and good example of serial or ecological succession - the process whereby open water becomes reed bed and eventually, as silt and leaf litter builds up, woodland. The beach itself is a good example of a barrier beach: the material that makes up the beach was pushed up by the rising sea levels between 10000 to 5000 years ago.

E Village History

For many years there was no village at Torcross, only fishing cellars and workshops. Families lived further back from the coast because of the threat from pirates and to be close to work on the farms.

As the fishing industry grew and the Royal Navy kept our seas safe in Tudor times, people started to live on the coast and the village of Torcross came about. It was officially recognised in 1602 when representation was made at the Manorial court at Stokenham.

F Slapton Ley

The Ley, (pronounced 'lee') at 70 hectares (173 acres), is the largest naturally occurring freshwater body in south west England. It is split into two at Slapton Bridge. The Higher Ley is at the northern end and the Lower Ley to the south. Three main streams enter the Ley, the river Gara flows into the Higher Ley and the Start and Stokeley come into the Lower Ley. It is important for overwintering water fowl, passage migrants and breeding birds. Tens of thousands of swallows use the surrounding reeds as a roosting site before they migrate south in the late summer months.

G Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve

The Reserve covers a wide range of habitats including an open freshwater lake, the beach, shingle ridge, marshland, ancient Oak woodlands and wetland meadows.

Reed beds, marshes and woodland surround the lake. These provide excellent feeding and breeding grounds for a rich and varied wildlife including Cetti's Warbler and Great Crested Grebes. If you are lucky you might catch a glimpse of badgers, otters, dormice and bats. It is home to 250 species of lichen (this is the largest number of lichen in an area of this size anywhere in England) and 2000 species of fungi, 29 of which have been described as new to science.

