



*Saltash was a borough town  
When Plymouth was a fuzzy town...*



## A History Of the Town

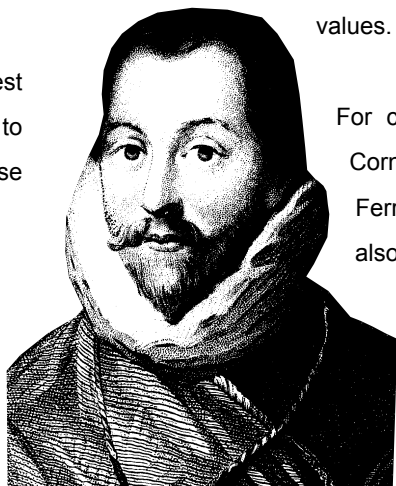
### The history of the town

The Waterside area of Saltash has been inhabited for at least a thousand years. The site lay within the Anglo-Saxon manor of Trematon, at a place where a major highway crossed the Tamar Estuary by means of a ferry which belonged to the manor. One of the factors that determined the location of the ferry was the existence of a hard beach interrupting the estuarial mud on the western side. The northern end of the beach was protected by a great rock (called Ashtor) which protruded into the estuary.

The first settlement at Ash (which – in its Middle English form Esse, meaning ash tree – was Saltash's original name) probably consisted of a few ferrymen's and fishermen's dwellings lining the foreshore behind the beach. Circa 1175 this small community was absorbed when one of de Valletorts, lords of Trematon Castle, had streets and building plots laid out on the adjoining hillside and founded a Borough. The new market town prospered, and also became a port.

To distinguish it from other places in the Southwest called Ash, around 1300 the prefix Salt- was added to the town's name (probably this term was used because of the location beside a tidal estuary).

Although the town of Sutton (later name: Plymouth) outgrew Saltash before the end of the 13th century, Saltash continued to prosper. It had some advantages: Saltash Reach in the Tamar was a

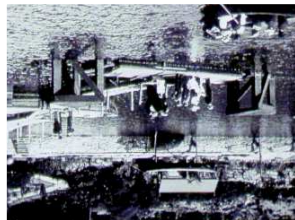


good deep-water anchorage for large ships at all states of the tide, and it was a safe five miles from the open sea.

Saltash merchants operated a small fleet of ocean-going vessels crewed by local men. Their ships were requisitioned for war service on various occasions during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. In the 15th century the 'Thomas' of Saltash carried pilgrims bound for Compostela, and the 'Nicholas' traded as far as NE Norway (well inside the Arctic Circle).

In 1568 the inhabitants of Waterside were excited when two Spanish treasure ships which had been seized were unloaded there. There was an even greater spectacle for Saltash in 1587, when Sir Francis Drake brought up river the carrack 'San Felipe' (a prize seized by him off the Azores). She was laden with calicoes, silks and spices, as well as chests of jewels, gold plate, etc. All the cargo was discharged and inventoried at Saltash; it was worth £12,000,000 in relation to today's values.

For centuries the Earls and Dukes of Cornwall leased the operation of the Ferry to the Saltash burgesses, and also leased to them control over activities in the estuaries of the Tamar and its tributaries, together with Plymouth Sound. Both the Ferry and the 'silver oar' jurisdiction (known as the Liberty of the



*Wearde Quay*  
Beside the lane leading down to the quay are the remains of a Royalist Civil War battery (i.e. a gun platform). It is a scheduled Ancient Monument. From 1886 to 1930 H.M.S. Defiance, a torpedo training ship was moored in the Lynher Estuary off Wearde Quay. Aboard her in 1896, Capt. Henry Jackson (later Admiral Sir Henry) made pioneering radio transmissions from the ship and so became the first Briton to use radio for practical communication.

**By Road**  
Saltash is situated on the A38, the main road into Cornwall and is approached over the Tamar Bridge. There is a toll of £1 eastbound out of Cornwall. There are several car parks convenient for the Town Trail including: Pay & Display - Alexandra Square, Belle Vue Road - East & West and Culver Road. Free long term Jubilee Green on the Waterside.

**From the River**  
Saltash is easily accessible from the River Tamar. There are seasonal boat trips up the river from Mayflower Steps on the Barbican in Plymouth which includes drop offs at Saltash. Timetable details and tickets are available from Ashtor Rock centre **Tel 01752 845227**

**Rail Services**  
Saltash has a mainline station linked to Devon by the Royal Albert Bridge. Rail Services **Tel. 08457 484950**

**Coach & Bus**  
There is a regular bus service between Plymouth City Centre and Saltash and from surrounding areas of Cornwall. Saltash is connected to the national bus network.  
National Express **Tel. 0870 5808080**  
First Western National **Tel. 01752 402060**  
Cornwall Public Transport Timetable, Passenger Transport Unit, County Hall, Truro, Cornwall TR1 3AY Price £1.50 inc p&p or 75p locally.

Produced by Saltash Town Council with support from East Cornwall Rural Transport Partnership, Caradon District Council, www.tamarbridge.org.uk and Saltash Heritage  
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### Mary Newman's Cottage Culver Road

including a merchant's mark. St Stephens Church about a mile from the town centre is a parish church founded early in the Norman period. It was the mother church of Saltash. The core of the present building dates from the 13th century, with the North and South aisles and the upper part of the tower added in the late fifteenth century – with little altered since. There are a number of points of interest including a fine Norman font, a 13th century coffin-lid and fragments of medieval brass, including a merchant's mark.

Saltash oral history associates the building with Sir Francis Drake's first wife Mary Newman. It is undoubtedly a pleasing example of fifteenth century domestic architecture. The building is now leased to the Tamar Protection Society who restored the building and created a herb garden at the rear. The premises contain period furniture on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum and the cottage and gardens are open to the public. For times of opening please contact the Council Offices Saltash (01752 844846).



### St Stephens Church

Water Tamar) were granted to Saltash outright by Queen Elizabeth's charter of 1585.

The prosperous years of the 16th century gave way to troubled years during the Civil War, 1642-1646. Plymouth was a Roundhead town and Saltash was severely damaged as Cromwell's troops tried to gain a foothold in Cornwall. The town changed hands several times with so much damage being done to buildings that this accounts for the lack of Tudor and Jacobean properties in Saltash.



After the Civil War the town declined and with the increasing importance of Plymouth and Devonport, never really regained its former prosperity. The ferry however survived and continued to retain its importance. It continued to play a major transport role well into the 20th century.

In 1853 work began on Isambard K Brunel's great railway bridge and in 1859, the year Brunel died, it was finally opened, creating opportunity for the Cornish vegetable and flower growers to get their produce to markets in the larger trading centres.





In 1886 the Victorian Charter of Incorporation established a free election of twelve Councillors by ballot. The new Borough Council took over the running of the steam ferry in 1891 and in 1899 it sold to the Admiralty the long-held rights over the waters of the Hamoaze, the Sound and the River Tamar as far as Calstock.

The two world wars did not pass without leaving their mark and in April 1941 a raid of incendiary and high explosive bombs caused deaths and destruction in the town. In 1961 the completion of a road suspension bridge across the Tamar made the old ferry redundant. The road network was further enhanced by the completion of the A38 Saltash Road Tunnel linking the Tamar Road bridge with the newly-built A38 by-pass.

The Borough status of the town disappeared in 1974 as a result of the Local Government Act of 1972 and Saltash at Parish level is now part of the District Council is known as Caradon. In recognition of its former status however, Saltash retains the office of Mayor who as chairman, presides over meetings of the Town Council.

## The Guildhall

The Guildhall is a dignified listed building which stands in the middle of old Saltash, next door to the Parish Church of St Nicholas and St Faith. The Guildhall was built in 1775 as a Market House and Assembly Hall. On the Fore Street frontage the ground floor had a Tuscan colonnade, and was used as a pannier market until the end of the 19th century. The first floor hall was known as the Long Room; it became the Guildhall in 1841. The ground floor was enclosed in 1910, but the Tuscan columns can still be seen. The Guildhall was restored in 1998-99 and the public can now once again see the beautiful ceiling in the Long Room. The Guildhall is for hire, for details please telephone 01752 844846.



## Borough Seals

Heralds from the College of Arms made official visits to Cornwall in 1573 and 1620. Their main purpose was to register the armorial bearings of families in the county. The devices used by the Cornish Boroughs on their common seals were also recorded on each occasion. Unusually, at Saltash the Corporation registered two seals. One of these was the seal of the Borough of Saltash; the other was the seal of the Liberty of the Water Tamar.

The Borough seal has a number of significant elements in its design. The shield bears the arms of two Earls of Cornwall who were overlords of Saltash from 1270 to 1300 (Earl Richard, 1270-1272, and his son Earl Edmund, 1272-1300). The Prince's coronet may refer to the fact that Earl Richard was a son of King John. The supporting Ostrich feathers come from the badge used by Edward the Black Prince, first Duke of Cornwall (created 1337) and his successors, who were also overlords of Saltash. The water at the base denotes Saltash's position on an estuary.

The seal of the Liberty of the Water Tamar depicts a three-masted ship at anchor. This was an appropriate emblem, as the collection of anchorage dues within the Liberty was one of the rights exercised by Saltash until the end of the 19th Century. Depictions of the two seals can be seen on a tablet at the west end of the Guildhall roof.



## The Ceremonial Mayoral Chains

The chain worn by the Mayor of Saltash has 40 links and all but one of the shields is of 18 carat gold. The shields all record the names of various Mayors except one which records the name of a Town Clerk. The middle shield is a different shape and records the ancient Water Court. The seal on the medallion is based on the Common Seal of the town which was used in 1886; it is



the shape of the St John's Cross. The lid of the container shows the seal. Full regalia is worn on rare occasions but the chain is in constant use. Mayoress Chain - Saltash is one of the few towns to have a chain specifically for the Mayoress. It consists of 9 links all of which depict an event in Saltash since 1919.

## Town Maces

There are five silver maces including two 500mm Oar Maces one of which was presented to the Borough in 1623 by Edmund Herring (then Mayor), the other was obtained soon after. They are in fact the oldest bar maces in the country; replicas of them are on display in the Saltash Heritage Museum.

The two larger maces (1100mm) were presented in 1696 by Francis Buller, then one of the Borough's two MPs. They are unique in design, having crossed oars above the crown. The 190mm miniature oar mace was made in 1760 and is possibly the only mace of its type in existence. It was used by the collector of Port Dues who would carry it as proof of his authority.

## St Nicholas and St Faith Church

St Nicholas and St Faith Church has an unusual history, its ownership having been claimed by the Corporation from the 17th century until 1924, although it became a Parish Church in 1881. It was built in the 12th century as a chapel of ease for the new borough, and much Norman work remains, including the tower and some rare buttresses. Additions were made in the 14th and 15th centuries. It contains much of interest including ancient carved roof bosses and a font that was originally a medieval domestic mortar. Outside, a section of inscribed stone which formerly surmounted a public well adjoins the town's only remaining section of cobblestone pavement.

The other main churches in and around the town include, Saltash Baptist Church, Culver Road; Saltash Wesley Methodist Church, Callington Road; Burraton Methodist Church, Liskeard Road; Saltash Roman Catholic Church, South Pill, and Saltash Gospel Hall, Liskeard Road.

## Royal Albert Bridge

The bridge required 4000 tons of iron to complete its 680 metres long, 9 metres wide and 80 metres high structure. The project cost almost a quarter of a million pounds. The work was commenced in 1853; the Victorian genius I K Brunel having selected the narrowest point of the Tamar as the best site. This unique bridge took six years to build; it was opened by the Prince Consort on 2nd May 1859.

## Tamar Road Bridge



Completed in October 1961 the bridge was formally opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, on the 26th April 1962. It was a joint venture by Cornwall County Council and the Plymouth City Council without a grant from the Government and is still a toll bridge. Its suspended length is 564 metres and the length of the main span is 335 metres. At the time of opening it was the longest span bridge in England.

## Victoria Gardens

This very pleasant park lies at the top of Fore Street and contains the Penn Symons Monument which commemorates the death of Sir William Penn Symons of Hatt, near Saltash, who was the first British General to be killed in the Boer War, 1899. Also in the park is the Maurice Huggins Room, (named after a former Mayor). It makes a much appreciated stopping place for refreshment after a morning's shopping.



## Trematon Castle



A mile from the town near the hamlet of Forder, across the valley from St Stephens, Trematon Castle stands proud. In 1068, two years after the Norman Conquest, there was a rebellion in SW England. One of the countermeasures ordered by King William was the construction of this castle.

The grounds and the Castle keep and gatehouse are only occasionally opened for charity events.

## Ince Castle

Saltash has another castle at Ince, a few miles up the Lynher River. Its construction was commenced by Henry Killigrew circa 1640, and completed by Edward Nosworthy circa 1655. Originally known as Ince House, it was designed as a dwelling in 'mock-castle' form. It is the oldest brick building in Cornwall. Again only the grounds are occasionally opened for charity events.

