

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

Produced by **St Germans Rail Users Group**
with financial assistance from
Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership and
First Great Western.

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.

