

Town and Country Environment: A Heritage Landscape

Lostwithiel has a rich industrial and political heritage: it is a historic gem within Cornwall.

Although it is difficult to place Lostwithiel's origins into any definite period, it is likely there was some occupation from the early medieval period onwards as there is evidence of a Roman settlement on a hill just south of Restormel Castle ('Uzella').

The town of Lostwithiel developed as a port settlement in the century following the Norman conquest and received its Royal Charter in 1189. By the early 13th century, Lostwithiel was exporting cured fish, butter, cheese, salted hogs, cloth and tin in ever increasing amounts. Up until the 14th century, Lostwithiel was one of the busiest towns in the country and a change in legislation, in 1305, meant that Lostwithiel was the only town in Cornwall, where tin could be purchased. Unfortunately, following 'The Black Death' (which wiped out approximately a quarter of the town's population) and continued silting of the River Fowey by tin workings (which meant boats could no longer reach Lostwithiel for fear of grounding), the heyday of the town as a port, was relatively short lived.

During the 13th and 14th century, a number of 'planted' towns were established, these were designed to improve access, communication and aid industrial specialization. Lostwithiel is regarded as being the finest remaining and relatively untouched example of a 'planted' town.

When Edmund became 'Earl of Cornwall', in the 13th century, Lostwithiel was the undisputed capital of Cornwall. It was a the first coinage town where tin ingots were brought to the Stannary Hall for weighing, assaying and stamping. Lostwithiel retained its pre-eminence as a Stannary Town until the 18th century. The thirteenth century Duchy Palace (part of the original of administrative complex) is one of the oldest buildings in the West Country. It recently underwent extensive restoration.

In the thirteenth century, Restormel Castle was popular as a Royal Cornish residence owing to its large deer park and extensive hunting grounds. During the Civil War, Lostwithiel (which was strongly Royalist owing to its Duchy affiliations) was occupied by approximately 10,000 parliamentary soldiers and cavalry, for two weeks. Lostwithiel's importance during this time in history is recognised by the town having a Registered Battlefield, commemorating the 'Battle of Lostwithiel', which took place on the 21st August, 1644 (1413619).

Today, Lostwithiel's heritage is recognized as being of national significance and it has been awarded 'Conservation Areas' status: it remains among the best preserved medieval towns in Cornwall.

The town boasts several scheduled monuments and 92 listed buildings, including three grade I listed properties (which is high as only 2% of listed buildings are prioritized at grade one nationally):

The scheduled monuments include:

- Roman Fort, 440m south west of Restormel Farm (1004660)
- Restormel Castle (1017574)
- Lantern cross and grave slab, immediately south of St Bartholomew's Church (1019677).

The Listed Buildings include:

Grade I: Lostwithiel Bridge (1327324), Church of St Bartholomew (1327333), Freemason's Hall (1327326)

Grade II*: Edgumbe House (1144230), 8-9 Quay Street (1146531), Palace Printers and The Old Palace, Quay Street (1146471)

Grade II: Fore Street (22 items listed), Quay Street (7 items listed), North Street (7 items listed), Queen Street (7 items listed), Bodmin Hill (6 items listed) and Grenville Road (4 items listed).

The town's residents are rightly proud of the wealth and significance of Lostwithiel's heritage and wish to see this protected for future generations. This was reflected during public consultations, where 93% of residences stated that they valued the town's Conservation Status and 88% of respondents felt that they wanted more to be done to further promote the Lostwithiel's heritage.