

# History of Falmouth



Previously known as Smithick and Penny-come-quick, Falmouth's development began in Tudor times thanks to the Killigrew family. At that time the River Fal saw more shipping than any other port in the country.

Pendennis Castle and Arwenack Manor are probably the oldest buildings in Falmouth, with Henry VIII giving the orders for the castle's construction in 1545 as part of the country's main defence.

During the English Civil War Falmouth became a stronghold of the Royalists. The historic siege of Pendennis began in 1646 when Parliamentary forces cut the castle off with trenches and gun positions running from Gyllyngvase to the docks. Under the command of Sir John Arundel and Sir Henry Killigrew the castle held out for five months. Pendennis was the penultimate Royalist stronghold in the country to hold out, after earlier giving sanctuary to Queen Henrietta Maria, and the Prince of Wales (Charles II) before their escape to France.

In 1688 the Post Office designated Falmouth its Packet station for foreign mail (with the harbour coming in to what is now the Moor area of the town). The Falmouth Packets were so successful that by 1827, the fast brigantines were delivering cargo to

Spain, West Indies, New York, Pensacola, St. Augustine, Charlestown, Lisbon, the Mediterranean, Brazil, Jamaica, Carthagena, Halifax, Bermuda, the Leeward Islands, Vera Cruz, Tampico and Buenos Aires.

Falmouth's development continued with the construction of the Docks in 1860, and the completion of the Truro to Falmouth railway line in 1863. The Docks continued to develop and expand with further ship building and repair services. During both World Wars the Docks and Falmouth played a key role. In 1940 there were over 200 ships anchored in the bay after the evacuation of Europe, with Allied troops filling the area. In 1944 the Docks, the Bay and the Helford River were used as launching sites from which troops left for the Normandy landings.

Today the Docks is still one of the main aspects of the town together with tourism and service industries. Many major events have taken place here over the last few years with Falmouth hosting start of The Tall Ships Race in summer 1998, and the town was also on the line of Totality for The Eclipse in August 1999.