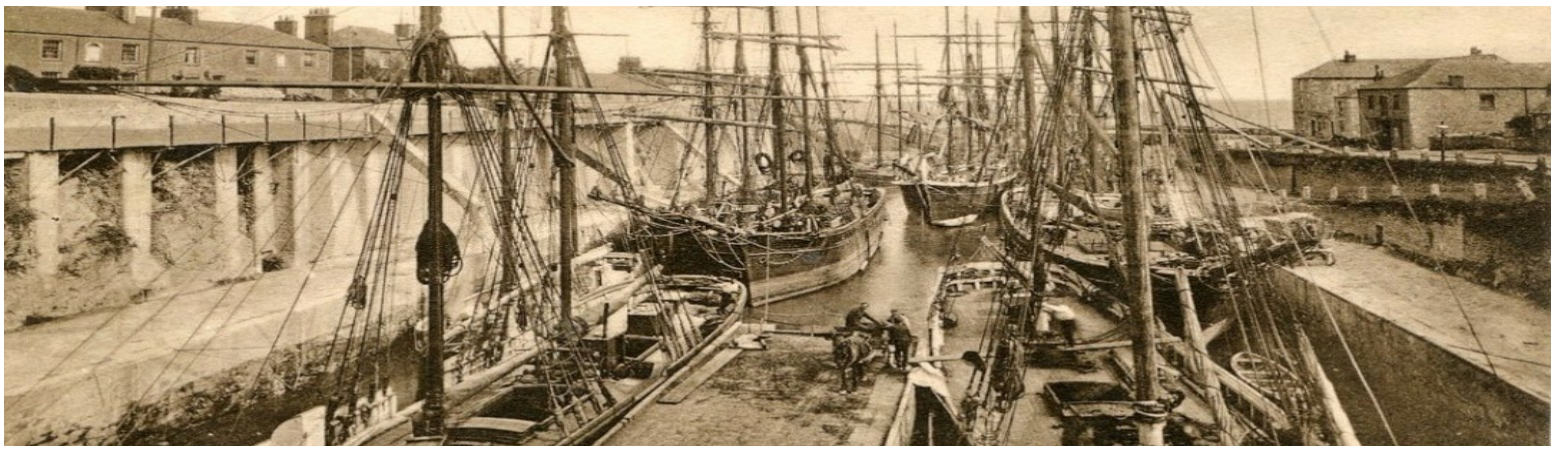




Digest

The Quarterly Historical Journal from
The Charlestown History Group

Editorial. Charlestown — The Best Place.



It is always very pleasing when our articles in Digest receive feedback and we were thrilled to hear that a recent edition provoked one of the most heartwarming responses from the great-granddaughter of the diarist featured.

We encourage all our readers and members to continue sharing their thoughts and feedback. Whether it's a personal anecdote, a historical insight, or a suggestion for future issues or indeed general feedback on the work of the History group, your input is invaluable. Together, we can ensure that our work remains a true reflection of the vibrant and cherished community of Charlestown.

As Digest reaches it's 20th edition and nears it's 5th Birthday, thank you all for being a part of this journey and let's continue to celebrate Charlestown as a great place, one story at a time.

Thank you so much for sending a copy of your history magazine containing an extract from the diary.

I found the article about the leat system very interesting.

As a child, 300 miles away from Charlestown, I remember my grandparents discussing our family history and memories passed down by my great grandfather about his very happy childhood there, and an impression of a very special place.

I am so pleased that he managed to return and still found it the best place on earth.

Andy Trudgian - Editor

Digest is available quarterly to our members in January, April, July and October. It is made available to the public, free of charge, three months later. Download the current and past issues from:
charlestownhistorygroup.com/digest/



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Autumn 2025*

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Charlestown, Cornwall, UK.

September 2025

The Charlestown Residents Association from 1986.

Time to put up a “Fight”!

by Sue Facey

From 1791 the fortunes of Charlestown were on a roller coaster. This was apparent in the almost daily letters between John Crowder, the owner of the village and harbour and his estate manager, Walter Bulteel. Almost all of the local trades were connected to the shipping of copper, tin and of course clay, the harbour being the *raison d'être*.

There was fishing and farming but these were not the reason for the unregulated growth of the village. All associated building was linked to necessity rather than profit. Shops to supply the requirements of the workers and their families and workshops to house the various related industries which had grown up. Pubs and Ale houses provided refreshment for the thirsty workers.

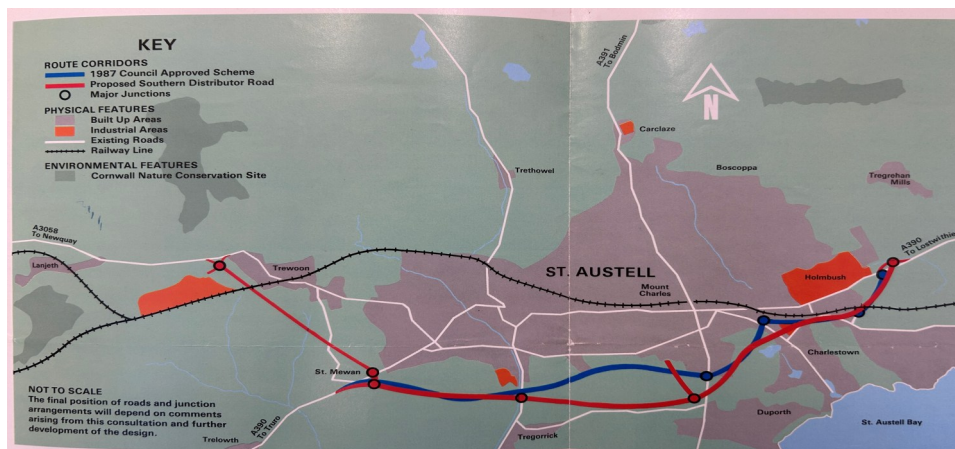
The dock workers, farmers and fishermen would have been amazed to see how their humble damp cottages became the desirable second homes or lucrative holiday lets of the well off in the twenty first century. Which brings us to 1986.

The old 'Feudal' system ended abruptly with the sale of the village. Houses were available to buy and land was available to develop. Fortunately, the local Council had a reasonably robust Planning department. The residents of Charlestown and the surrounding area were however not happy to rely on this alone and the Residents and Tenants Association was duly formed. The first meeting in 1988 was attended by a large number of residents who realised that they were living somewhere very special.

They were very lucky to have some excellent stalwarts in the village who were able to turn the association into a force to be reckoned with! - Malcolm Neill, Geoff Beare, Shirley Mathieson and Jeremy Facey to name a few and Tony Nicholls who in later years was instrumental in preventing the worst disaster to befall Charlestown [arguably].

There were three major battles to be fought in the ensuing years. The first being the £12 million development plans to infill all available space in the village. [The Charlestown History group is in possession of those plans today]. Unlike the previous years, this was entirely profit driven. The Residents and Tennants Association and Restormel council fought them off in a blaze of publicity, with the BBC virtually taking up residence. A big presentation event was planned to woo the residents into supporting the scheme, with invitations sent out to a champagne and strawberries party in a marquee in the carpark. Sadly, the wooden temporary floor of the marquee collapsed before the presentation could proceed. Fortunately, only one minor injury was sustained.

The next threat was a four-mile dual carriageway making up St Austell's proposed southern distributor road. The proposed route began on the A390 at Cuddra, proceeding up through Higher Cuddra Farm and over the railway line and through the grounds of Charlestown school. It then passed down behind Church Road (as an elevated section) and crossed over through the Charlestown valley and Tregorrick. When it reached Tregongeeves it rejoined the A390.



Copy of map from the information leaflet sent to residents detailing the proposed route of St Austell's southern distributor road (1)

Continued on page 3...

The Residents and Tenants Association worked together with the St Austell Road Action Group for six long years to finally see the scheme thrown out of the Transport Proposal Plan not before Hundreds of thousands of pounds had been spent on the compulsory purchase of several properties along the route. Tony Nicholls and his wife were going to be badly affected and on the advice of STARAG's legal team, threatened to sue the local authority for blight. This threat brought the scheme to an end.

The third blow to the village was with the closing of the beautiful chapel. The vultures descended! The Residents Association joined forces with The Rowing club and Charlestown Regatta to buy the chapel and save it from falling into disrepair. Money was raised and a deposit paid. The plan was to have a community centre right in the heart of the village, what an asset that could have been. It was not to be.

This short account of the work of the Residents Association cannot possibly show the many years of endless meetings, letters to the authorities, lobbying of councillors and fund-raising events. Many people who worked tirelessly are not mentioned here but without doubt did it for the love of Charlestown. The Residents and Tenants Association decided not to continue as a separate entity when St Austell Bay Oarish Council was formed in 2009.

The Impact of the First World War on a Charlestown Family. Part I.

by Gail Roberts and Peter Hancock

This three-part series highlights a turbulent period in a prominent Charlestown family's life, told through their letters from December 1913 to November 1916.

Henry James Bulteel (1853-1924) was appointed Land Agent in November 1885 for Charlestown Estate and corresponded regularly with Augustus George Crowder (1844-1924), the Estate's absentee owner living in London, providing updates of day-to-day business, including the harbour, accounts, maintenance of rented properties and staff, etc. As well as this, the letters also throw light on personal matters, and the involvement of his two sons, Walter and Alan, in the First World War. Walter Gordon was born in Axbridge, Somerset in 1885, while Alan Hillersden was born in Wrington, Somerset on 6th December 1882. They also had a sister called Violet (1888-1954). Recounted in three instalments, it will be seen that the conflict would have a profound effect on the boys and their family.

10th December 1913 Walter *He will certainly be living at home during my absence. I am anxious if possible that he should come here for a few days at Xmas in order that we may discuss the terms of our partnership with our cousin. It is possible he may get leave from the 24th to the 28th but I do not know yet.*

The Bulteels resided at Pond House in Charlestown.

31st Dec 1913 Partnership with Walter. *Walter and I have discussed this matter with my cousin and have practically settled the terms. We think March 25th 1914 would be convenient, as date from which our partnership should commence.*

14th January 1914 Partnership with Walter. *Thank you for letting me know that the directors have approved of my taking Walter into partnership.*

22nd Sep. 1914 *Walter's help is most useful under present conditions and I am most grateful to you for using your influence to secure this for me.*



Pond House (2)

Continued on page 4...

30th March 1915 *Walter's wish to join Army. I find that Walter is still most anxious to join the Army, and is not content to remain here. I quite understand and appreciate his anxiety to serve his country, and if matters can be arranged to your satisfaction and that of the Directors, and certain provisions made for dealing with matters affected by the Partnership Deed, I feel that it would be selfish and unpatriotic on my part to oppose Walter's wishes.*

I understand that Walter mentioned this matter to you last December. He is writing you (sic) further and will ask for an appointment shortly, in order that he may be able to explain all the circumstances, and answer any questions you may wish to ask.

28th April 1915 *Walter has gone to London and intended calling at the War Office, with a view to obtaining all possible information first hand before deciding in what Regiment to apply for a Commission.*

He proposed writing to ask you for an appointment, as there were several matters relating to this Estate, which we both thought could be more clearly set before you at a personal interview than by letter.

16th June 1915 *I have very good news of Walter, who is in camp at Richmond Park. He seems to be very fit and in good spirits.*

The park was used for military training, the construction of a fully-equipped hospital, and a top-secret experiment to counter Zeppelin airships.

25th June 1915 *Thank you for your kind congratulations about Walter. He arrived last night, having been given a few days leave. He will take up his new duties at Windsor next week.*

On 3rd October Walter was appointed Lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards.

21st November 1915 *Walter arrived on Friday evening. He was looking very well and appears to have seen a good deal in a comparatively short time. The Trench Mortar Battery is attached to his Brigade, and he hopes the latest pattern of these Mortars will be supplied by the time he returns to France.*

19th Jan 1916 *Walter told me, in a letter received yesterday, that he expected to be in England the first week in February and that he would be married in London on the day after his arrival. I shall be glad of your kind permission to leave home in order to attend the wedding.*

He married Ada Constance Gaunt in Kensington.

2nd February 1916

Walter has written to say that he expects to arrive in England on Sunday next, and in that case the wedding will take place on Monday. Unless I hear anything further I propose to leave home on Saturday afternoon and shall stay at the "Grafton" as usual.

This was probably the Grafton Hotel on Tottenham Court Road, London.

1st May 1916 *The last accounts of Walter were good, and he expects to be in England again next Friday, and hopes to come to us on Saturday.*

10th May 1916 *Walter arrived here on Sunday, looking very well. I do not know yet how long he may be able to stay.*

17th May 1916 *I think Walter has been fairly lucky about leave. He crossed the Channel again yesterday morning. He is now in command of a Trench Mortar Battery, attached to the 2nd Guards Brigade, and is very pleased with his Mortars, which are the latest pattern, and he can make good practice with them.*

The 2nd Guards Brigade was formed in France in August 1915 and included the 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards.

26th July 1916 *I have had good news of Alan & Walter within the last few days. Walter is very keen on his Trench Mortars. The two batteries attached to the 2nd Guards Brigade have been amalgamated and placed under his command, and he has been given the rank of Captain, the Captain's pay and allowances, so long as he is in command of these batteries. He has seen some heavy fighting with them and has been complimented by the General on the good practice made by these batteries. I am therefore hopeful that he may be confirmed in his temporary rank, if he continues to do good work.*

18th October 1916 *Walter is expected in England this week, but I understand his leave will be limited to 8 days.*

8th November, 1916 *Walter and I met at Exeter on Saturday week, and spent three hours together in the lounge at "Rougemont". He was looking very well in spite of the trouble to which I alluded – Mr Fenwick did not advise on an operation but ordered a special bandage, and a short period of rest from anything like heavy marching. Walter was granted an extension of leave, and has been staying with his cousin at Buxton, who was anxious to see him. I think Walter will sail from Southampton tomorrow at midnight, but should a further extension be granted, he will come here for a few days.*

The Victorian Rougemont Hotel, Queen Street, Exeter is opposite the railway station. Walter was probably injured during the Battle of Le Transloy, part of The Somme Offensive, but the nature of his injury is unclear.

15th November 1916

I have heard nothing from Walter, so I imagine he must have crossed last Thursday night.

To be continued...

In 2003 an Archaeological Assessment of Charlestown Coal yard was carried out by the Cornwall Archaeological Unit prior to a proposed development of what is now known as Cooperage Court.

The following is a quote from the summary of the document.

'The site area includes a plot currently used as a coal yard together with gardens associated with a terrace of former back to back houses on Duporth Road.

The gardens are likely to have been in existence since at least 1795, when the terrace of houses was first mapped.(a nautical chart) The present coal yard was first recorded as an ore floor in 1825 but by 1882 the eastern end of the floor was built over by housing adjoining Charlestown Road. By 1907 almost the entire area of the remaining ore floor was occupied by two large buildings and used as a cooperage (barrel making associated with export of china clay). In the later 20th century these buildings were removed, re-exposing a considerable portion of the former ore floor.

Today (2003) the coal yard comprises a large open space, bounded by a retaining wall on its northside. Approximately half the yard retains its cobbled surface, a survival from the earlier 19th century when this space was used for the storage of minerals. The adjoining gardens have been abandoned, probably from the time when the back row of the terrace was demolished in the mid 1960's. Ruins of privies, paths and gateways for each of the former houses are still visible.



**Remains of the ore floor at Cooperage Court
now used as a parking area. (2)**



**Close up of the geology of the
ore floor. (2)**

Ore floors are now very rare in the UK, and the yard here is comparable to a similar one nearby now used as a car park for the Rashleigh Arms. It is worth commenting however that the coal yard site is in an area of the village which is not generally seen. Carefully designed to retain historic fabric so far as possible, redevelopment need not have an adverse impact on the character of the site or the remainder of the village. For example housing could be concentrated in the southern part of the present yard, in the form of a small terraced development with associated car parking at the rear – re using the cobbled area. The abandoned gardens could be brought into the same scheme and reused so as to reflect their historic division and preserve and enhance their historic character.'

In a quote from Richard and Bridget Larn's Charlestown - The History of a Cornish Seaport about what is now the Rashleigh Arms carpark -

'It is in fact listed as being of historical importance, and is a geologist's delight, since the rounded beach stones with which it is covered can be traced from far and wide. Stone can be identified as originating from Plymouth and Scotland, Scandinavia. and France and Germany and Spain, all ballast stones discharged at Charlestown from early sailing ships, brought up from the beach and set in the ground'

Forthcoming Events Programme

“Battery Recharge”

Sunday 23rd November 2025. 10am-Noon.

Sunday 23rd February 2026. 10am-Noon.

Join us for a couple of hours helping to clear vegetation and tidy up of the Battery site. Please bring gloves, saws, loppers, secateurs etc & wear suitable clothing.

Meeting at Coastguard Lane at 10am.



St Piran's Day Celebration

Thursday 5th March 2026. 7pm - 9pm.

Join us for a super evening of Cornishness including a pasty supper. Evening will end with a Trelawney Shout.

Full details to follow.

Spring Walk

The Charlestown Leat at Luxulyan

Sunday 12th April 2026. 10am.

Join us for a leisurely 2-3 hour walk exploring the source of the Charlestown Leat and Luxulyan Valley. Wear suitable clothing and footwear for the weather and the off track route.

References & Acknowledgements

- (1) Charlestown History Group S162
- (2) Charlestown History Group

Something Special ?

You can fly a flag at the Battery for your occasion.

The flag is planned to fly on a few dates in the year. If you'd like to see the flag flying to mark your significant occasion whilst helping us raise funds for our important work, More detail from :

charlestownhistorygroup.com/flag

Get involved

The Charlestown History Group's mission is to protect and promote the unique and varied history and heritage of Charlestown for the benefit of current and future generations.

We can do even more with your help. Please do get involved, there are lots of ways :

- Join us by becoming a [member](#) of the group. You continue to receive Digest quarterly and get priority access and reduced fees for some of our events.
- Volunteer your time to help us. Maybe helping us in the Archive or on a work day. We have lots to do and all help is welcome.
- Follow us on social media and keep on top of what is going on and what is planned. [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#)
- Loan to us or donate relevant historical material to the community archive and library, where it will be protected for the benefit of current and future generations.
- Undertake historical research and add it to the story of Charlestown.
- Submit a relevant historical article for publication in a future issue of Digest.
- Join us at one of our [events](#).
- Fly a flag at the Battery to mark your occasion (see below or charlestownhistorygroup.com/flag for info.)
- Make a [donation](#) to help us fund our work.

Community Archive Update

The Charlestown Community History Archive and Library is open at the Pattern Hall 2pm to 4pm on Mondays and 10am to Noon on Fridays.

Look out for our sign on Charlestown road when we are open.

Members are very welcome to pop in and chat about our work. Please contact us in advance if you are making a special trip or wish to see something In particular.

