

**B**eyond Hartland's popular tourist destinations, lesser known, but equally fascinating historical places are to be found.

People have left their mark on this landscape for thousands of years. The oldest remains are often the most elusive, like the Bronze-Age burial mounds, hidden on Bursdon Moor.

On the coast path, you might walk past ancient remains without ever knowing it. Perched on heavily eroding cliffs are the traces of Iron Age hillforts. In their day they were imposing, and visible at great distances, from land and sea.

This is both a beautiful and treacherous coastline. Immense chunks of rusting ironwork from shipwrecks can be found, as can memorials to RAF pilots who crash-landed here during World War II.

The Hartland Peninsula has many more features which are difficult to miss. The tower of St. Nectan's church is thought to be the highest in Devon, and like the incongruous 'golf ball' at Hartland Point, is visible for miles around.

The 'heritage hotspots' featured in this guide are a starting point – scratch beneath the surface and you'll find many more. We hope that you find many hours of discovery both inland and along this wonderful stretch of North Devon's coastline.

## DISCOVERING HARTLAND'S HERITAGE

Hartland was once known for being 'furthest from railways' and although still remote, the area is easily explored by car and on foot.

The well-known heritage hotspots featured in this guide offer a great day out with ample parking, visitor facilities and attractions. Some of the 'off the beaten track' locations are exposed and involve walking on difficult terrain – so be prepared! Most appear on the South West Coast Path, or on public footpaths and open access land.

Please follow the Countryside Code and do not trespass.

For more information about the history, heritage and archaeology of the Hartland Peninsula, please visit:

[www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/coastalheritage](http://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk/coastalheritage)

[www.hartlandpeninsula.co.uk](http://www.hartlandpeninsula.co.uk)

[www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)



Information post at the remains of the World War II radar station at Hartland Point

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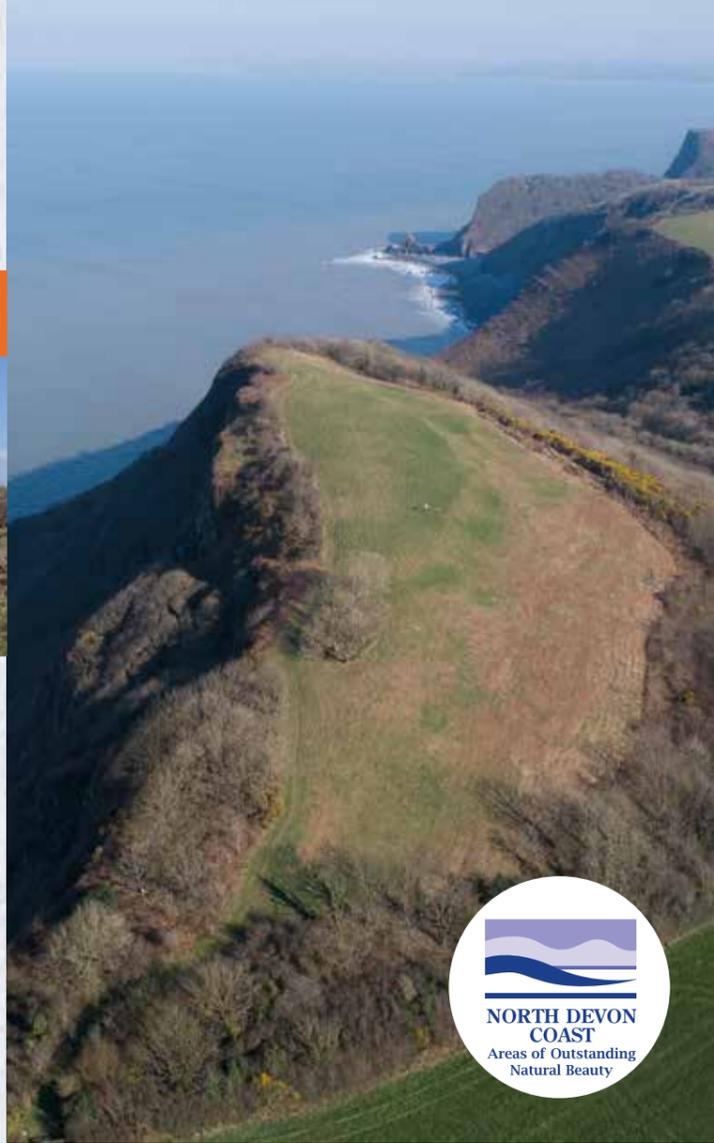
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# HERITAGE HOTSPOTS IN THE HARTLAND PENINSULA



© Neville Stanikk



An Ordnance Survey Explorer map 126 is recommended to help find the points of interest. Use the grid references to locate the information panels or memorial plaques near each site.

0 1 2 3 kilometres  
0 1 2 3 miles

### ★ Hartland Quay

Hartland Quay is a little known but historically important local port. The building of the Quay was authorised by Act of Parliament in 1566 and was sponsored by such notables as Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake. It was a small, thriving port involved in trading along the north coast, with South Wales and up the Bristol Channel. Imports included limestone, coal, timber and glass. Many ships have met their end along this stretch of coastline and in 1887, a storm destroyed the pier wall. Parts of the old foundation stones can be seen at low tide, as can the remains of a 19<sup>th</sup> century limekiln on the slipway down to the beach. The distinctive remains of a 16<sup>th</sup> century folly (or possibly a warren's lodge) are also nearby, situated atop the cliff to the north beside the Coast Path.

### ★ Clovelly

Clovelly is a world famous tourist attraction: timeless, picturesque, and steeped in seafaring tradition. Why was a village built on a 400ft cliff, accessible only on foot? The Bay provided a plentiful supply of fish. Facing north east, Clovelly offered protection from the prevailing south-westerly winds. It owed its prosperity in former times to the 'silver darlings' – the herring shoals that gathered in Bideford Bay. Clovelly is owned by the Rous family, one of only three families who have held the village since medieval times. The author of the celebrated 'Westward Ho!', Charles Kingsley, was brought up here and his novels put Clovelly on the map. Victorians once flocked here by paddle steamer. A walk along this beautiful stretch of coastline reveals some hidden attractions that were created at the time, including the Angel's Wings, The Cabin and the Lookout.



© Neville Stanikk

Clovelly

### ★ Hartland Abbey

Hartland Abbey became an Augustinian monastery shortly after it was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. However, the religious life of the Abbey came to an end 400 years later when it was deconsecrated during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries in 1539.

The Abbey was then granted to William Abbott, keeper of the King's wine cellar. Since then the Abbey has had a fairly stable existence, passing down the generations to the present owners, the Stucleys.

The house was extensively rebuilt in 1779 but some of the original features of the Abbey, including part of the cloisters and doorways, can still be seen.

For more information visit:

[www.hartlandabbey.com](http://www.hartlandabbey.com)

- South West Coast Path
- Car park
- Star site
- Bronze Age barrow
- Iron Age hillfort
- Hartland's medieval deer parks
- 19<sup>th</sup> century limekiln
- Radar and the RAF
- World War II plane crash site

An artist's impression of how Bursdon Moor would have appeared in the Bronze Age



© David Powell

### Bronze Age barrows

On the high ground of **Bursdon Moor** are nine barrows, or burial mounds. In common with many other surviving barrows, they occupy a commanding position with wide ranging views.

They were constructed during the Bronze Age, when burial practice changed from group burial (long barrows) to the burial of an individual beneath a circular earthen mound.

The barrows on the moor are situated on open access land and lie in two groups, with an isolated example to the south. Eight of them have been identified as 'bowl barrows' (c.2400-1500 BC), with one, rare, 'bell barrow' (1500-1100 BC) to the north-west. Look out for an information panel at the small parking area to help find them.

Hollows in the tops of some of the barrows suggest that amateur archaeologists, or just grave robbers, had dug into the mounds in the past.

The bell barrow perched on the cliff at **Gallantry Bower** shows evidence of this, but thankfully they now receive legal protection as Scheduled Monuments.

### 19<sup>th</sup> century limekilns

At **Mouthmill**, near to the impressive Blackchurch Rock, is a fine example of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century limekiln.

Lime-burning was a very important industry in the local economy at the time. Spread on the land, the burnt lime made the local acid soils more productive. It was also used to form mortars and limewash for domestic and agricultural buildings.

Limestone is rarely found in the rocks of North Devon, so together with coal it was brought in by ship from South Wales. The cargo was dumped overboard at high tide. Then, when the tide had retreated, both lime and coal were hauled up on top of the limekilns by pony and the kilns 'charged' for burning.

The remains of limekilns are found all along the North Devon coast, especially at places where boats can more easily reach the foreshore. Other examples can be found at Hartland Quay, Clovelly and at nearby Bucks Mills. The limekiln at Mouthmill is possibly the best-preserved limekiln along North Devon's coastline.

Access to Mouthmill is via the National Trust parking at Brownsam, or from Clovelly, via a beautiful walk west along the coast path.

The limekiln at Mouthmill



### Iron Age hillforts

Hillforts generally date to the Iron Age, a period between the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC and the middle of the first century AD.

The term 'hillfort' is misleading. Not all hillforts were built on hills, and neither were they necessarily defensive. Hillforts were also an expression of status – they were places to *see and be seen*. The occupants could keep a watchful eye over the tribal landscape and together with neighbouring hillforts, were probably a focus for travel and trade.

Lying beside the Coast Path about one mile north of the parking area at Welcombe Mouth, is **Embury Beacon**. Perched on a heavily eroding cliff, the earthwork remains suggest that this would have been a much larger hillfort. Only a fraction of the ramparts survives – a small section of the inner enclosure, which hangs precariously on the cliff edge, and part of the outer, which contains a complex set of earthworks, most likely an entrance to the interior.

Accessible from Brownsam, the earthworks at **Windbury Head** are more subtle and may have been partially flattened by ploughing. The elliptical curve of the remains suggests that here too, the site was once a fully enclosed hillfort, extending on land that has since been the victim of cliff fall.



Embury Beacon



Hartland Point Type 13 Radar

### RADAR and the RAF

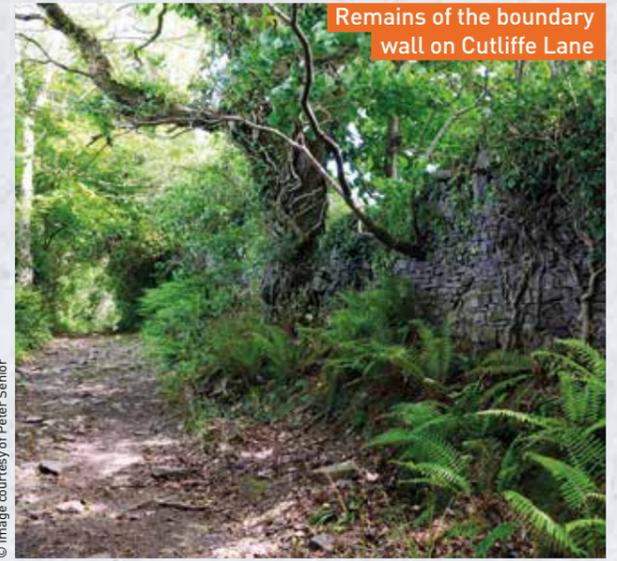
Near the 'golf ball' at Hartland Point, are the hidden foundations of the original radar station which was sited here. The remains of four concrete footings can be found alongside the path, if you look closely.

Built during World War II, the former radar station at Hartland Point was part of a comprehensive early warning system. It was used to raise the alarm against the aerial and naval threat posed by Germany. The radar station was one of many: the 'Chain Home' network of radar stations which stretched almost all the way around England's coastline.

During the height of the Cold War in the mid-1950s the site was reactivated and at this stage accommodation facilities were built for personnel. However, the main base was located some distance away in Hartland at a now derelict site, located on the outskirts of the village.

The station continued to function until the 1980s, but finally closed in 1987. The radar station that continues to operate at Hartland Point is now automated and is maintained by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Both the 'new' and the 'old' radar stations are reached by a short, steep walk from the parking area at Hartland Point.



Remains of the boundary wall on Cutliffe Lane

### Hartland's medieval deer parks

After the Norman Conquest of 1066 Hartland Peninsula belonged to William the Conqueror. His Domesday Book lists the manor of Hartland as being in the top 20% by value. After William's death it became the most important property of the Dinham family until 1501. They became one of the most important families in the southwest.

Two **Deer Parks** were created in an expression of their wealth and aspiration to high status. Previously deer parks had been the exclusive right of Norman kings but later the nobility were allowed to establish them. To further impress their guests, they had fine quality gold-tipped arrows for hunting the deer. No deer are kept now, but impressive sections of walls and banks needed to keep deer in (and poachers out!) can be found.

A circular Parkland Heritage Walk starting from the car park in Hartland village includes the Deer Parks and much more of interest.

See [www.hartlandpeninsula.co.uk/walkers-paradise-2](http://www.hartlandpeninsula.co.uk/walkers-paradise-2) for details.

### World War II aircraft crash sites

There are several World War II aircraft crash sites within the Hartland Peninsula. Many of these aircraft operated out of RAF Chivenor near Braunton and trained along the North Devon coast. They took part in anti-shiping and anti-submarine missions in the Atlantic.

The most well-known crash was near Higher Clovelly on the night of 24<sup>th</sup> August 1943. A Wellington bomber, piloted by U-Boat "Ace" Wing Commander Rowland Musson flew into the ground after colliding with telegraph wires, killing all the crew.

Another notable wreck site is located below the cliffs at Windbury Head. The aircraft flew into the hillside in foggy weather in 1942 on a transfer flight from Chivenor to St Eval in Cornwall. In the 1980s the engine was recovered and is on display in the Hartland Quay Museum.

A crash also occurred above Shipload Bay. A US Liberator bomber deployed on anti-submarine missions crashed into cliffs near Eldern Point, killing all ten Americans on board.

The three sites have memorial plaques to commemorate those who died.



A US Navy Liberator in flight over Hartland Point in 1945. Note the lighthouse visible in the background.