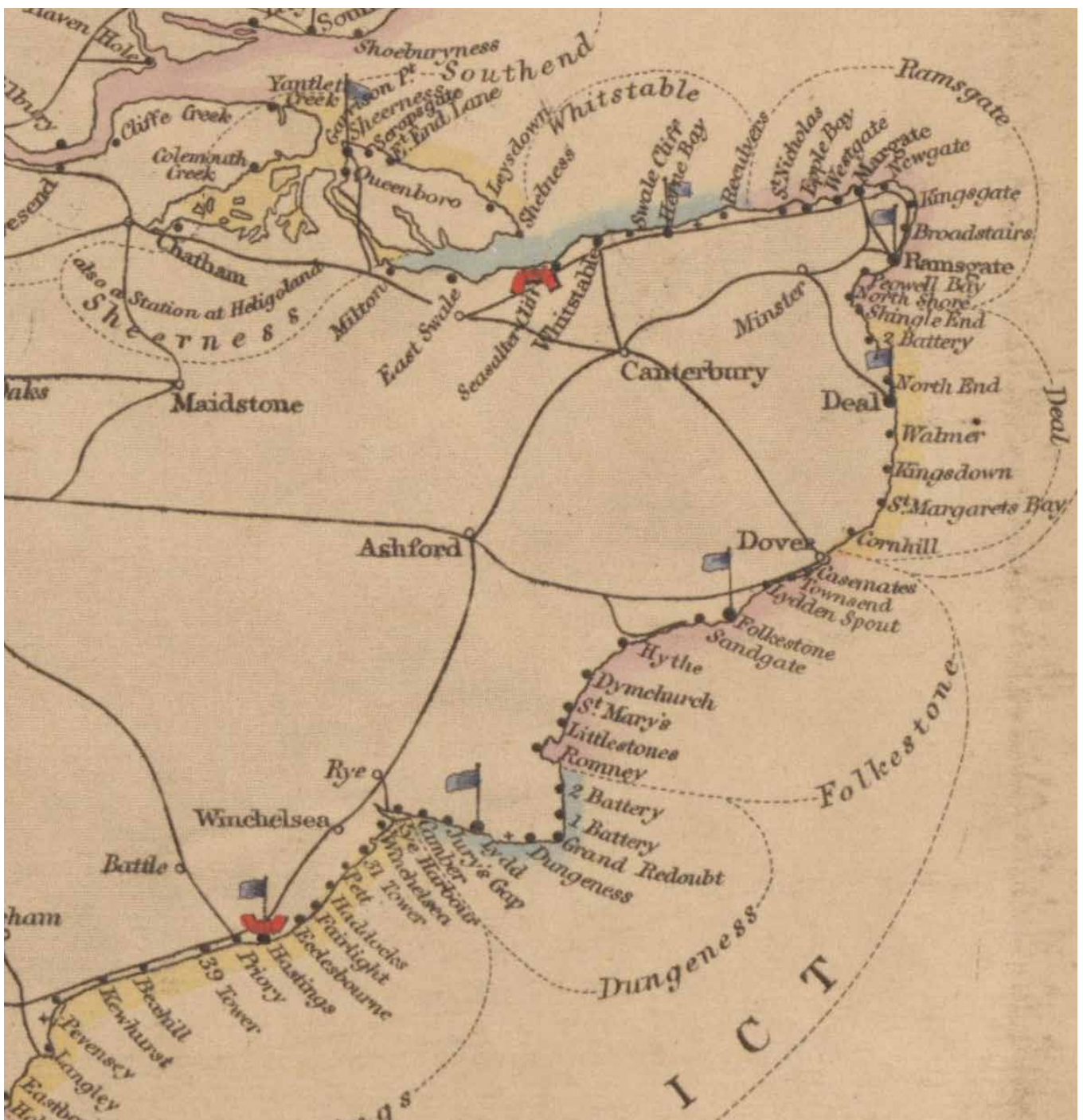




Historic England

Coastguard Stations

Introductions to Heritage Assets



Summary

Historic England's Introductions to Heritage Assets (IHAs) are accessible, authoritative, illustrated summaries of what we know about specific types of archaeological site, building, landscape or marine asset. Typically they deal with subjects which lack such a summary. This can either be where the literature is dauntingly voluminous, or alternatively where little has been written. Most often it is the latter, and many IHAs bring understanding of site or building types which are neglected or little understood. Many of these are what might be thought of as 'new heritage', that is they date from after the Second World War.

Since Roman times structures have watched over England's shore and coastal waters to prevent smuggling, to co-ordinate assistance to ships in distress and as part of defensive facilities. Since 1822 many sites have been operated by Her Majesty's Coastguard. In the 1920s life-saving became its primary role, along with coastal observation. Until the late 20th century the basic elements of a Coastguard station usually consisted of living accommodation, a watch room or house, boathouse and equipment store, sometimes supplemented by subsidiary lookouts or watch towers. There has been a considerable architectural variety although a degree of standardisation seems to have taken place from the turn of the 20th century when the number of stations peaked.

This guidance note has been written by Joanna Smith and edited by Paul Stamper.

It is one of several guidance documents that can be accessed at HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/selection-criteria/listing-selection/ihas-buildings/

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Front cover

Detail of a map of Coastguard establishments in England, 1879.

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Introduction

Britain is a maritime nation, and since Roman times has had structures adorning the coastline dedicated to maintaining a watch over shore and coastal waters. In recent centuries these have been constructed for various reasons including the prevention of smuggling, locating and co-ordinating assistance to ships in distress or as part of defensive facilities against attack or invasion. Since 1822 many of these sites have been occupied by, and constructed for, Her Majesty's Coastguard. When first established the Coastguard inherited facilities from previous government initiatives to counter the clandestine transportation of goods. These provided the basis of what became a national network of coastguard stations.



Figure 1
'A typical Coastguard station', possibly Birling Gap, East Sussex, in 1901. This view emphasises the prominent flagpole but also shows the walled complex containing the accommodation and other structures. While this

may have been the 'typical' of some establishments, there was considerable variety in the locations of stations and type of buildings used by the Coastguard.
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The initial purpose of the Coastguard was revenue protection, but this altered during the 19th century to that of a naval reserve. The service also had some life-saving responsibilities and in the 1920s this became its primary role, along with coastal observation. These shifts in function were often accompanied by administrative change, as control of the service was passed between different government bodies. The duties were carried out from land-based stations but also sometimes from ships. The Coastguard has also maintained a close association with other coastal rescue services, most particularly the lifeboat service and life-saving companies and brigades.

Until the late 20th century the basic elements of a Coastguard station usually consisted of accommodation for Coastguards, a watch room or house, boathouse and equipment store. These facilities were sometimes supplemented by subsidiary lookouts or watch towers. In the early years of the service the premises were often leased but from the mid 19th century they were increasingly purpose-built. Over the last two centuries the numbers of stations has fluctuated, probably reaching a peak of over 500 in the early 20th century. Their locations have varied from isolated coastal or estuarine situations to seafront positions in towns

and ports. Architecturally there has been a considerable variety in the style and building materials of the station buildings although a degree of standardisation seems to have taken place from the turn of the 20th century.

As a consequence of organisational and technological change many Coastguard facilities have passed out of their original use. Stations have been demolished or adapted for other purposes and the accommodation has passed into private ownership. The term Coastguard Station is now largely a historic one, as the service consists of volunteers based at Coastguard Rescue Stations, co-ordinated by Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centres. That organisational structure was under review in 2011.

The architectural history of Coastguard stations has received little attention. From secondary sources it is possible to give a broad outline of the historical development of the service and the extent, characteristic elements and design of the stations but there remains much that is inadequately understood. Historic England's listing selection guide on Maritime and Naval Buildings sets out the current designation thresholds of the building type, to which this introduction acts as supplementary information.



Figure 2
A Coastguard's lookout at Hurlstone Point, Selworth, Somerset. Built around 1900, it has lost its roof and first-floor oriel window from where the watch would have been maintained.



Figure 3
A Coastguard and friend watching from the cliffs near Hartland Point, Devon. A lighthouse is just visible in the distance while in the vicinity, but out of view, is a signal station latterly a Coastguard station. Such co-location of coastal establishments was quite common.

1 Historical Background

The development of the Coastguard service can be broadly divided into four eras: the Board of Custom era (1822-1856); the Admiralty era (1856-1923); the Board of Trade and its successors (1923-1964); and the modern era under Ministry of Trade etc (1964 onwards).

1.1 The Board of Custom era (1822-1856)

Before the creation of the Coastguard a number of government departments had responsibility for anti-smuggling activity. From the late 17th century both the Board of Customs and the Board of Excise operated Revenue Cruisers and Riding Officers, patrolling the coastal waters and shore. In 1809 a ship-based Preventative Water Guard was established, controlled by the Treasury from 1816. In the latter year the Admiralty established a shore-based service, the Coast Blockade, focussed on an area between Kent and Sussex. This duplication of effort and overlapping of functions prompted a committee of enquiry in 1821, which recommended the creation of a new force, the Coast Guard (so named until it became a single word, Coastguard, in the 20th century). The new body replaced the Preventative Water Guard, the Riding Officers and the Revenue Cruisers and came into being the following year under the control of the Board of Customs. In 1831 the entire coastline came under the supervision of the Coastguard when it took over from the Coast Blockade.

Although the original purpose of the Preventative Water Guard had been to hinder smuggling it had also acquired other duties, such as responsibility for shipwrecks and assisting ships in distress. To this end, life-saving apparatus was provided from 1810 by the Board of Ordnance in the form of Manby's mortars (which fired a shot and line from shore to ship to enable passengers and crew to be rescued). These duties were taken over by the Coastguard. After 1831 the Admiralty was granted the right to appoint Coastguard officers, paving the way for an additional role as a Naval reserve and recruiting agency.

1.2 The Admiralty era (1856-1923)

Following the Coastguard Service Act of 1856 control passed from the Board of Customs to the Admiralty. This indicated a shift in priorities as smuggling activity declined. The role of the service was now often as an auxiliary to the Navy although protection of the revenue remained part of its duties. Life saving was viewed as a subsidiary activity (Fig. 4) although the Coastguard did provide assistance to the lifeboat service, a charitable body formed from disparate local organisations in 1824 into the National

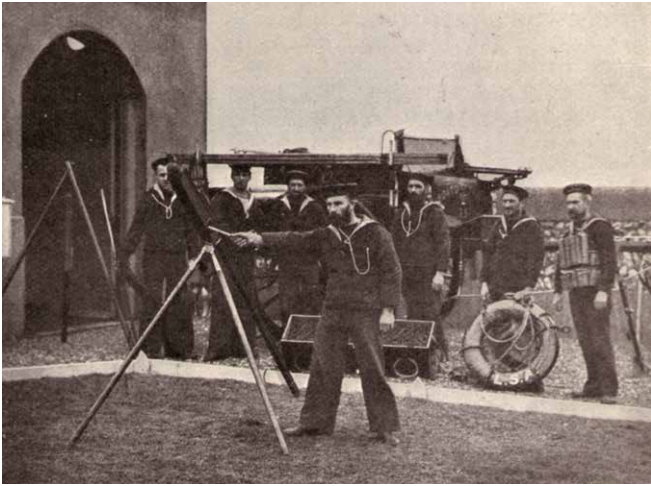


Figure 4
Coastguards posing with their life-saving apparatus in 1901. The rocket was used to fire a line to a distressed or sinking ship enabling the crew and passengers to be brought safely to the shore.
© *The Strand Magazine*



Figure 5
36-40 Sea Lane, Hunstanton, Norfolk. Cottages used by the Coastguard possibly built around 1818 just before or around the time of the formation of the service. Listed Grade II. These buildings were probably leased rather than purpose built but little research has been done on early Coastguard stations.

Institution for Preservation of Life from Shipwreck, and renamed the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in the 1850s. It also collaborated with the independent life-saving companies and brigades that proliferated from the 1860s.

Under the Admiralty the Coastguard was divided into three bodies: the Shore Force, the Permanent Cruiser Force and the Guard Ships (which lay at major ports). All Coastguardsmen were required to make an annual cruise and practise gunnery and signalling and communications played an increasingly important role from the late 19th century. This led to the establishment of Port War Signal Stations, developed to permit the rapid transfer of intelligence and orders between the Admiralty and naval ships and manned by the Coastguard.

By the 1900s the Admiralty was proposing that the Coastguard, often seen as the 'Cinderella of the Service', be drastically curtailed. Objections to these proposals were raised by the Board of Customs and Board of Trade, responsible for revenue protection and life saving respectively, and there was considerable public opposition.

1.3 The Board of Trade and its successors (1923-1964)

Further discussion over the future of the service was deferred by the outbreak of the First World War, when the majority of the Coastguardsmen were called up. The problems this caused underlined the necessity for a service that did not function primarily as a naval reserve. In 1921 an inter-departmental committee was established to look at the civil duties of the Coastguard. Further committees followed and in 1923 the government implemented major changes to the service. Responsibility for the Coastguard was transferred to the Board of Trade and its main purpose became coastal observation and life saving, sanctioned by the Coastguard Act of 1925. This revised role emphasised the lookout system of watching posts and modern electrical communications and conferred on the Coastguard responsibility for co-ordinating of all life-saving activities (including the RNLI) and the training and inspection of life-saving companies.

The Coastguard was able to call upon the services of auxiliaries and in 1931 their role was enhanced. Renamed the Coast Life-Saving Corps (later the

Coastguard Auxiliary Service), it had responsibility for working the life-saving apparatus, manning secondary stations and acting as a relief to the regulars in the Coastguard stations. From 1948 the apparatus included modern rescue rockets, used in conjunction with the breeches-buoy (Manby's mortars having been replaced by a succession of different rockets during the 19th century). Under the Board of Trade the Coastguard gave up its own ships, hiring boats as necessary.

1.4 The modern era (1964 onwards)

The Coastguard remained under the control of the Board of Trade until the outbreak of the Second World War, when it passed in succession to the Ministry of Shipping (1939-40); Admiralty (1940-45); and Ministry of War Transport (1945-1964). It then returned to the Department of Trade until 1983 when responsibility passed to the Department of Transport. The service became a government executive agency in the 1990s and is currently run by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.



Figure 6

The Coastguard station, Chapel Road, Isle of Grain, Kent was built by the Admiralty in 1900. The row of brick houses is orientated towards the river Medway; the larger northernmost house, with its attached single-storey watch room, was for the Chief Officer; the other twelve cottages were for the coastguards and their families.

In the 1960s a programme of modernization was initiated in response to the post-war popularity of leisure craft and small boats, which had led to a significant increase in seaside incidents. As a result there was a shift in emphasis to co-ordination of search and rescue operations, facilitated by improvements in communication technology. This led to a move away from the coastal watch in Coastguard stations to the remote monitoring of ship movements from Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centres (Fig. 8).

1.5 Extent

The Coastguard has always had a regional structure, sub divided into units distributed around the coastline of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland (from 1921 Northern Ireland only). Although the numbers and names of these organisational units have varied over time, the most consistently used has been 'Coastguard station' and auxiliary 'Lookouts'.

The Coastguard inherited an unevenly distributed force, with a concentration of establishments on

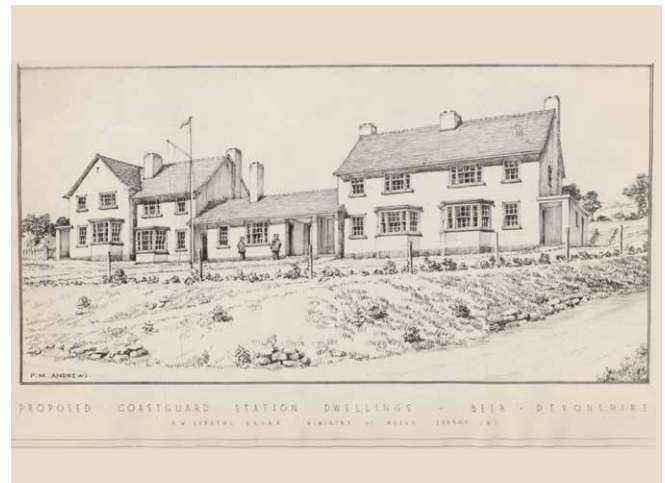


Figure 7

Drawing of a proposed Coastguard Station at Common Hill, Beer, Devon. An example of a station built by the Board of Trade in the late 1940s in a traditional English domestic style, designed by P M Andrews, an architect in the Ministry of Works.

the 'smuggling coasts' of the south-east, south and south-west and few, if any, in the north-west. Where they existed, the facilities seem to have been quite numerous. Under the Board of Customs the Coastguard was organised by 'Port', of which there were 65 in England, and then station (which varied in number according to the port but probably exceeded 300 in England). Stations were often inherited by the Coastguard from its predecessors, including a number of Martello towers used by the Coast Blockade. During the Board of Customs era the Coastguard force numbered over 4,000 men.

Under the Admiralty the Coastguard was organised into seven districts (five of which were all or almost entirely in England). These were subdivided into divisions, stations and detachments, some associated with Royal Naval Reserve Batteries. In 1879 England was covered by 40 divisions, 314 stations and 149 detachments. There was a continuity in the location of many of the stations from the previous era but number were additionally based in hulks or 'watch vessels' (the last remained in use until 1903). The 1856 Act had permitted the acquisition of land for new

stations and the enlargement of existing ones, and the Admiralty undertook much new building, spending £35,000 between 1856 and 1862.

By 1903 the number of stations had reached 533, when the Admiralty decided to acquire all leased property and, where necessary, build new premises, at an estimated cost of £200,000. Just a few years later the Admiralty began closing stations and 79 were shut between 1907 and 1912. At the turn of the century the numbers of men employed in the Coastguard was in the region of 4,100, but this had dropped to just over 3,000 by 1911.

After control of the Coastguard passed to the Board of Trade in 1923 it underwent a significant reorganisation. The coast was split into 12 divisions (8 covering England, although the boundaries did not exactly correspond with national borders) and 49 districts. These were further divided into stations (323) and auxiliary watching stations. Because the location of Admiralty stations had been influenced by different priorities it was necessary to close or downgrade some facilities as well as building new lookouts to ensure a more even coastal coverage. The number of 'regular' Coastguards was significantly fewer, around 822 in 1931, but was supplemented by auxiliary staff. As a consequence, the reorganised stations were manned by smaller complements, two or three men rather than the dozen or so of the Admiralty era, and some accommodation had to be improved or replaced. By 1931 in England there were 193 stations and 339 auxiliary watching stations and lookouts.

The Coastguard retained this structure throughout much of the 20th century, albeit with a diminishing numbers of establishments. By 1974 there were 29 districts, 127 'regular' stations (including Rescue Headquarters, constantly manned stations and Coastguard stations) and 245 auxiliary stations (containing rescue equipment). Around this date the decision appears to have been taken to sell off the Coastguard accommodation. A subsequent reorganisation has produced a slimline service, currently divided into three divisions and 18 centres, although this is likely to be reduced.



Figure 8

By the end of the 20th century Coastguard stations had evolved into Marine Rescue Centres; their altered role was reflected in their different architectural treatment. This sub-centre at Tynemouth Priory, North Tyneside was designed by the Property Services Agency (job architect George Spencer). It opened in 1980 and only remained in operation for 21 years.

2 Description of the Building Type

In 1901 the following account was published of the typical arrangements of Coastguard stations:

‘Anyone who has been much about our coasts cannot but have noticed the coastguard stations dotting them here and there like sentinels. North or south, east or west, almost wherever we touch the sea, at no great distance away there will be seen a little cluster of houses, a watch-tower, maybe, or look-out, and a flagstaff denoting a station of the coastguard. Generally, too, there will be a boat-house, with a stout pinnace or yawl, ready for any work that may be necessary, whether it be rescue or salvage.’ [Alfred T. Story, 1901 ‘Hands Round the Coast’, *Strand Magazine* vol xxii, no 129, 273-281]

This range of functions was sometimes housed within a single block or in separate buildings. Often the station was enclosed by a wall, perhaps on a terrace of levelled ground. Under the 1854 Act three acres of land has been thought adequate to house all the necessary facilities. In addition to the accommodation and storage facilities there might also be a slipway, outbuildings such as carpenter’s shops, bakehouses, earth closets, wash houses and rain-water tanks, as the more isolated stations were required to be self-sufficient. The urban sites were sometimes more constrained with the various elements sometimes separately located.

The arrangement of cottages, watch room, boathouse and equipment store seems to have been a long-established one and was quite possibly inherited by the Coastguard from its predecessors. In addition to renting facilities, the Board of Customs seem to have been building stations from the 1830s. The Admiralty

rebuilt, enlarged and constructed new stations throughout its period of control, including a ‘show station’ at Ramsgate in the 1860s (Fig. 13). Under the Board of Trade the need for boathouses diminished but more lookout towers were required. This formed part of a larger phase of work, including the adaptation and building of new stations, during the 1920s and early 1930s. Another spate of building may have occurred in the late 1940s and early 1950s, perhaps as a consequence of reorganisation in 1949. Since the 1970s the traditional Coastguard station has been increasingly superseded by rescue centres; essentially operation rooms with associated facilities (Fig. 8).

2.1 Coastguard Cottages

Until the late 20th century accommodation was provided for most ranks of the Coastguard service and their families - that is District Officers/

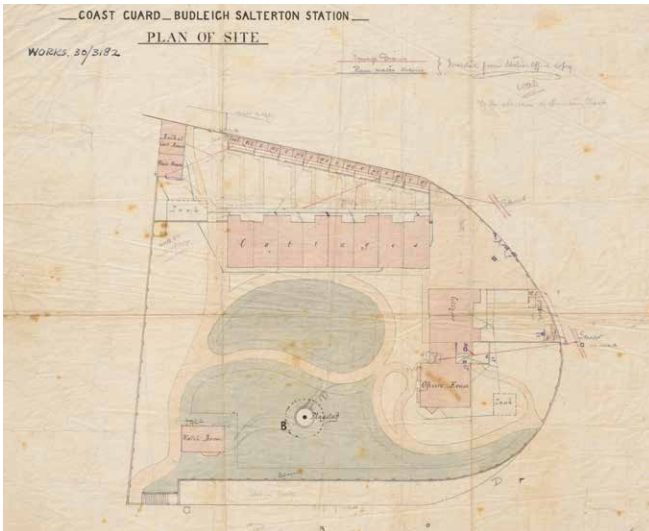


Figure 9
The Coastguard station as Budleigh Salterton, designed by John Haite in 1873, encompassed accommodation, a watch room, rocket cart house, wash house and flagstaff but not a boat house; this was separately located closer to the water. The station complex is listed Grade II as an unusually complete ensemble.
© The National Archives



Figure 10
The impressive Coastguard station at St Margarets at Cliffe, Dover, Kent is dated 1884 and listed Grade II. The roughcast exterior and the curved treatment of the projecting end cottage gives the row an Arts and Crafts feel; the detached single-storey building was probably built as a boat house.

Inspecting Officers; Station Officers/Chief Officers; and Boatmen/Coastguardsmen (the titles have varied over time). This usually took the form of rows of cottages, of up to 16 properties for the Admiralty and three or four for the Board of Trade and its successors (Figs 5, 6, 7, 11, 14, 15). Because the Admiralty era stations might need to be defended from attack it has been said that the houses were designed to be intercommunicating and the number of entrances was kept to a minimum. Gardens were provided to allow for the growing of vegetables. Sometimes the senior officer's house was built separately, otherwise it might be placed at one end of the terrace.

The difference in accommodation between the officer's house and the cottages for the men does not seem to have been great. The former may have had four bedrooms while the latter had two, or later more commonly, three. The Admiralty provided some furniture but under the Board of Trade the perception was that the quarters had been inadequate and a considerable sum of money was spent in the 1920s bringing the houses up to standard and in providing new accommodation.

Sometimes the officer's house contained a watch room (see below). If so, this was provided with separate access and was unconnected to the residence. From the 1920s this space was usually called the duty room and contained the station telephone; it was sometimes provided with a canted bay window from which a watch could be maintained.

2.2 Watch Rooms or Watch Houses

These spaces were used to store arms and ammunition, which in the 1850s included muskets, bayonets, pistols, swords and powder. Signalling and observation equipment, such as telescopes, binoculars, signal lamps, foghorns, megaphones and rockets, may also have been kept here. It was also the place in which Coastguards were mustered and orders were issued. Watch rooms seem to be more a feature of pre-1920s Coastguard stations, after when the duty room may have served a similar function.

2.3 Boathouses

Not all coastguard stations include boathouses as some had no direct access to the water or because the necessary facilities were located elsewhere. When provided, boathouses are perhaps more likely to have been built by the Board of Custom or Admiralty as the Coastguard leased its vessels from the 1920s.

2.4 Equipment stores

These were provided for a number of purposes but perhaps most importantly for housing life-saving apparatus (LSA), the Manby mortars and its successors, and a cart to transport it (Fig. 12). Detached LSA stores were sometimes provided away from the station and from 1860s the equipment was increasingly operated by life-saving companies under the supervision of the Coastguard.



Figure 11

When built in 1893 the row of cottages at St Agnes Coastguard Station, Cornwall had four houses for coastguardsmen, with a larger station officers house at the far end. Behind the garden wall is a wash house, which was provided along with an attached range of earth closets at the rear of the gardens.

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2.5 Watch towers, watching posts and lookouts

Until the late 20th century coast watching formed a major part of a Coastguard's duty (Fig. 3); the role continues but to a lesser degree. The service was not the first to use towers and lookouts; the Preventative Water Guard appear to have built permanent watching posts, and a much older ancestry is probable. Watch towers and lookouts were sometimes provided within the stations but many were separate facilities provided at intermediate locations (Fig. 2). The latter were sometimes provided with bunks.

2.6 Communication facilities

Under the Admiralty signalling formed an important aspect of Coastguard activity and Coastguardsmen were expected to be proficient in morse, semaphore and telegraphy. A flagpole was often a prominent feature of the station. New communication technology was also installed



Figure 12

The Coastguard Station at St Agnes, Cornwall, built in 1893, has a separate apparatus store. The killas stone structure has a cart house on the ground floor while the upper floor, which has external access, functioned as the Life Saving Apparatus store or the watch room. The whole group, a handsome example of an Admiralty era station, is listed Grade 11.

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at an early date. By 1892 a general telegraphic system was in operation and. The service was quick to adopt the use of telephones and had established a coastal telephone circuit by the early 20th century across its stations and lookouts. From the 1920s a close association was developed with the Post Office, which built a number of Coast Wireless Stations adjacent to Coastguard stations. The shift in the mid 1960s from watching to listening led to the introduction of operation rooms in Coastguard stations.

2.7 Signal stations

A number of stations seem to have become dedicated signalling facilities by the end of the 19th century and six stations were given wireless telegraphs in 1902 (Dover, Kent; Culver Cliff, Isle of Wight, Hants; Portland, Dorset; Rame Head, Cornwall; Isles of Scilly, Cornwall; and Roche's Point, Ireland). During the Admiralty era a number of specialist Coastguard establishments were developed, such as Port War Signal Stations,



Figure 13
The Admiralty 'show station' at Ramsgate, built 1865, has cottages and watch house ranged around a walled courtyard. Constructed of red brick with ashlar dressings, the buildings are treated in a 16th century domestic style, and are listed, along the wall, at Grade II. The boathouse, apparatus store and the flagpole were separately located.

wireless stations and direction-finding stations, which they retained when the service was taken over by the Board of Trade in 1923.

2.8 Design

Many aspects of the design of Coastguard stations remain poorly understood: such as the identity of their architects; the particularities of their layout and how these changed over time; the degree of standardisation; and the evolving character of their architecture. Also, little is known about the earliest stations and their predecessors.

The Board of Customs appears to have begun to developing purpose-built Coastguard stations from the 1830s, either leased from the builders or owners or, in some instances, constructed by the board. Responsibility for their design probably lay with the Surveyor of Buildings to the Board of Customs, a post that was vacant between 1825 and 1830 and subsequently held by John Taylor until about 1841. In the 1850s the



Figure 14
The long row of Coastguards cottages on Barrack Road, Weymouth, Dorset were built around 1880. Although relatively plain, the brick and stone terrace of eight houses has a considerable impact because of its scale and situation. It was listed at Grade II as an unusually complete row of purpose-built housing of its type.



Figure 15
2-8 Haven Road, Canvey Island, Essex is a relatively rare example of a timber framed and weatherboarded row of Coastguard cottages. Dating from the late 19th century, the buildings are listed Grade II.
© Joanna Smith



Figure 16
An impressive sequence of associated coastal buildings at Hawker's Cove, Padstow, Cornwall. A lifeboat station and a terrace of Pilots' cottages, dating from the mid-to-late 19th century, were joined by a row of turn-of-the-20th-century Coastguard cottages. The latter is built to the same design as the Isle of Grain station, indicating a more standardised design approach by the Admiralty.

War Office was building stations but by 1860 the Admiralty had created a post of Surveyor to Coast Guard Buildings, held initially by Henry Case, who presumably had a design role. Later, responsibility for Coastguard buildings (except in London) passed to the Navy's Director of Architectural and Engineering Works. His office produced schemes and recommendations for the Controller of the Navy. Although many stations were constructed or enlarged and altered during the Admiralty era they were sometimes the subject of complaints about their suitability for the work. After 1923 responsibility for Coastguard buildings passed to the Office of Works – the architect in charge in 1927 was P. K. Hanton – succeeded in turn by the Ministry of Works, the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works and the Property Services Agency (PSA).

Architecturally, Coastguard stations usually have straightforward layouts and little adornment but often form a picturesque group, particularly when set in an open coastal landscape. Within more built-up locations the long rows of cottages or mass of buildings, such as 1-9 Coastguard Cottages, St Margarets at Cliffe, Kent (Fig. 10), can be impressive

in scale and impact. Although the buildings were often plain their construction could be costly because of difficult sites that needed to be levelled or the expense of transporting building materials to isolated locations. In towns a higher level of exterior ornament was sometimes used, for example at Ramsgate (Fig. 13). More unusual treatments include a battlemented parapet to the Coastguard cottages on Brownsea Island, Dorset (c1842, Grade II).

Building materials varied according to the region, with stations and lookouts mainly constructed of stone or brick, sometimes rendered or painted, with slate roofs. Timber was less commonly used, such as 1-8 Haven Road, Canvey Island, Essex (Fig. 15). A few buildings may have been constructed from non-traditional materials such as mass concrete, for example at The Ham, Faversham (c1870s, grade II). Lookouts were similarly built from stone and brick, with concrete being favoured during the expansion in detached lookouts in the 1920s. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the Ministry of Works designed several lookouts in brick or stone at Formby, Bishopstone/Herne Bay and Lindisfarne.



Figure 17

The Grade II listed watch house on Rocky Island, Seaton Sluice, Northumberland was built around 1876 for the Seaton Sluice Voluntary Life Saving Company and later used as an auxiliary Coastguard station.

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Figure 18

A number of Martello towers on the south and east coast were inherited by the Coastguard in 1831. This example off Langer Road, Felixstowe, Essex was built between 1808 and 1812 and is listed Grade II. It has a disused Coastguard observation point on its roof and nearby are the remains of a row of late 19th century Coastguards cottages.

From the 1920s the Office of Works and its successors seem to have maintained a traditional style for their Coastguard stations until at least the 1950s, although the lookouts might be given a contemporary treatment (or so a group of drawings by P. M. Johnson, a Ministry of Work's architect, would suggest). By the early 1970s the PSA was embracing a post-war Modernist idiom for its rescue centres (Fig. 8).

The Admiralty appears to have been using a standardised design for some of its Coastguard cottages by the turn of the 20th century, as, for example, at the Isle of Grain, Kent and Padstow, Cornwall (Figs 6, 16). In 1925 a scheme for houses was drawn up in 1925 for the Board of Trade. After a review in 1935, this was replaced by a specification of requirements and it was left to the architects to adapt this to individual sites.

3 Associations

Because of its life-saving role the Coastguard has a particularly close association with other rescue organisations. The longest relationship has been with the lifeboat service, already in existence when the Coastguard was formed in 1822. Providing vessels that undertake rescue at sea, many of its lifeboat stations were at one time associated with Coastguard establishments. Another organisation with whom the Coastguard collaborated were the shore-based life-saving companies or brigades. Its volunteers operated apparatus that fired lines to ships in difficulty. The companies had a strong presence in the north-east of England, a dangerous coast for shipping, and Tynemouth Life Brigade was the first to be established in 1864 (rebuilt watch club house, 1886-7, grade II). Improvements in RNLI lifeboats are said to have contributed to the decline in life-saving companies, which had ceased operation by the late 20th century.

The lifeboat service and the life-saving companies constructed the same kinds of buildings as the Coastguard, that is watchtowers, boathouses and apparatus stores. Some of the life-saving company premises subsequently became auxiliary Coastguard stations, for example the watch house on Rocky Island, Seaton Sluice, Northumberland (Fig. 17). Rows of coastal houses of a similar character to the Coastguards cottages were sometimes constructed by other bodies or organisations, such as the lighthouse keepers accommodation built by Trinity House and a row of pilots cottages at Hawker's Cove, Padstow, Cornwall (Fig. 16).

In the 19th and early 20th century Coastguard stations were sometimes situated near to other coastal structures such as lighthouses, day marks, telegraph towers and wireless stations, as for

example at St Mary's, Isle of Scilly, or military establishments such as forts and batteries, as happened at the Needles in the Isle of Wight. Port War Signal Stations, of which examples can be found at Dover Castle and Allhallows, Kent, were built for, and operated by, the Coastguards until 1923.

As well as purpose-built premises the Coastguard used adapted or converted buildings as stations and lookouts. One significant group of re-used structures were Martello towers on the south and east coast (for example Clacton-on-Sea, Felixstowe and Shingle Street, Essex) (Fig. 18) Another was hulks, mainly poor condition ex-Naval ships, used as 'watch vessels' in the late 19th century. The dismantled ships were located in estuaries, particularly in Kent and Essex, and included HMS Kangaroo (Fig. 19) and HMS Beagle.

4 Further Reading

No general history of Coastguard stations has been published although some information is contained in the limited literature on the Coastguard service, principally Frank Bowen *His Majesty's Coastguard: the Story of this Important Naval Force from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (1928) and William Webb *Coastguard! An Official History of HM Coastguard* (1976). An early account of the service can be found in Alfred T Story 'Hands Round the Coast', *Strand Magazine* vol xxii, no 129, (1901), 273-281. For developments since the 1970s see the Maritime and Coastguard Agency *The History of HM Coastguard* (2004). The changing role of the Coastguard has been summarised in Walter Minchinton 'Her Majesty's Coastguard' in *Research in Maritime History*, No. 3. (1992). Information on individual stations can be found in local history publications and regional journals.

Because of the complex administrative history of the service its official documents are scattered across several classes of records in The National Archive. A research guide to the Coastguard has been produced by TNA. Drawings of Coastguard stations can be found in WORK 30/, BT 235/92 and WORK 22/365 while CUST 147/5 has a map with the locations of all Coastguard establishments in 1879. The Parliamentary Papers of 1860, 1861 and 1863 include returns on the number of Coastguard cottages erected by the Admiralty since 1856. The Historic England Archive holds photographs of some stations and lookouts.

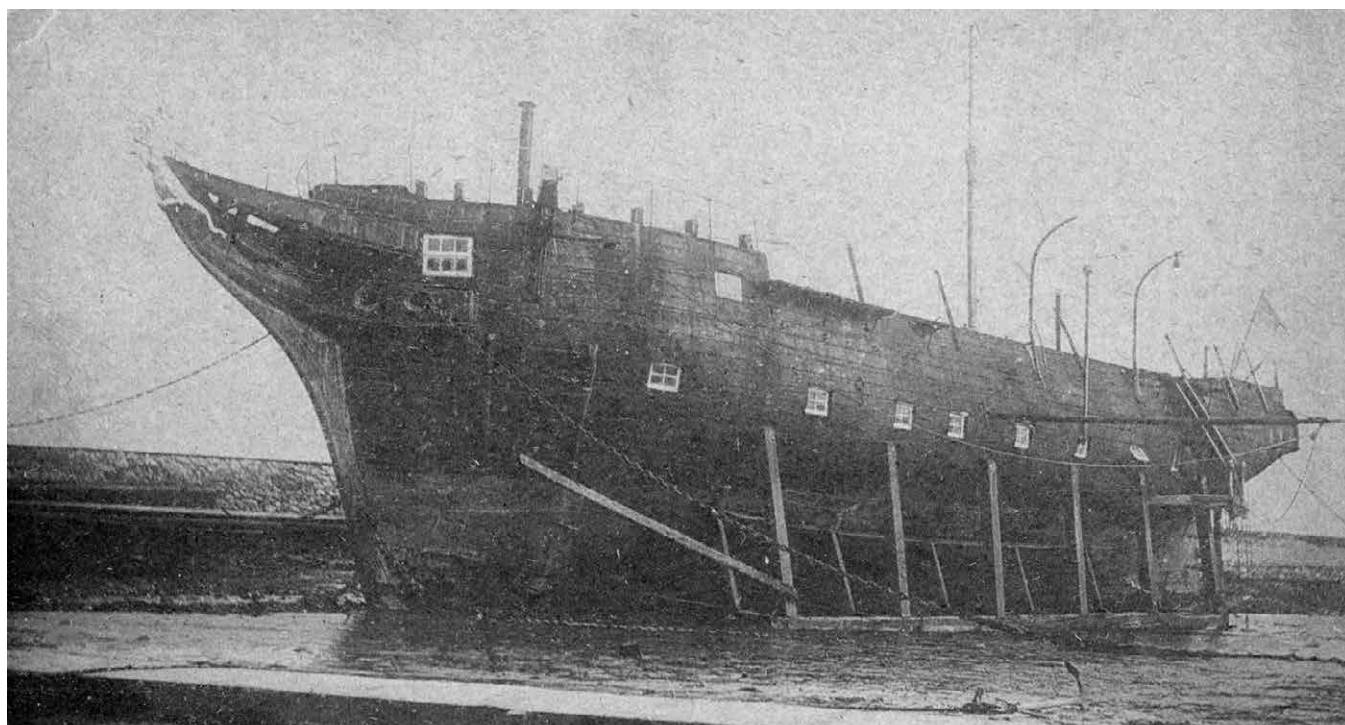


Figure 19

The Admiralty used hulks and beached ships as accommodation for Coastguards, particularly in Essex and Kent. Her Majesty's Watch Vessel Kangeroo was a naval frigate that served this function in Stangate Creek

on the River Medway between 1865 and 1872 before being moved to Burnham-on-Crouch, where this picture was taken. The ship remained there until the 1890s.

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5 Acknowledgements

Cover: Detail of a map of Coastguard establishments in England, 1879. © The National Archives, ref CUST 147/5

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