

Falmouth's Myths & Legends

Gyllyngvase beach

Falmouth's main beach is called Gyllyngvase beach. The name Gyllyngvase has a controversial translation, which does not reflect the beauty or serenity of the beach. Myth and legend tell us that the beach was named after the death of a prince.

In 1120 Prince William the son of Henry I was shipwrecked off Barfleur in Normandy with his sister and several Norman nobles. Prince William was consequently buried at Gyllyng Vase, which translates to, 'William's Grave'. Gyllyngdune, which means 'William's Hill', is also named in memory of the unlucky prince.

This story is deemed to be myth by local historians, however, as the literal meaning of Gyllyngdune is Goengellom Downe meaning Goen or goon, open land.

Black rock

St. Mawes was the tenth son of an Irish king and his name is revered not only here but in Brittany too, where he is known as St. Maudez and, possibly St. Malo. His stone chair is still preserved in the wall of a house in St. Mawes village. One day, so the legend goes, he was sitting there preaching when a noisy seal came out of the sea and interrupted him with its barking. After a while he became impatient, picked up a large rock and threw it at the animal. It missed, but legend tells us that the rock still remains where it fell, wedged on top of the Black Rocks halfway across Falmouth Harbour.

Morgawr

Another sea mystery is the legend of Morgawr (Sea Giant), a sea monster, which allegedly resides in Falmouth bay. According to the myth, there have been documented sightings over the years. The monster allegedly favours calm conditions and hot summers for an appearance.

In the ancient language of Cornwall, the name Morgawr, meaning 'Sea Giant', describes an enormous marine monster which lives in the waters of Falmouth Bay. A long-necked sea-serpent, similar in appearance to the famous 'Nessie' of Loch Ness.



Cornwall is known as the 'Land of Legend' and, until fairly recently, the Great Cornish Sea-Serpent was regarded as part of that legend; a romantic rumour, a mythological beast, a figment of the Celtic imagination, along with piskies, mermaids and spriggans. However, a hundred years ago, a long-necked monster was caught by fishermen in Gerrans Bay. Fifty years later, a Mr. Reece and a Mr. Gilbert, trawling three miles south of Falmouth netted an amazing creature. It was twenty feet long, with an eight foot tail, a 'beaked' head, scaly legs, and a broad back covered with 'matted brown hair'. Marine Biologists of the day were unable to identify the beast.

One sunny evening in September 1975, Morgawr was spotted off Pendennis Point. Mrs Scott, of Falmouth, and her friend Mr. Riley, saw a hideous, hump-backed creature, with 'stumpy-horns', and bristles down the back of its long neck. The huge animal dived for a few seconds, and then resurfaced with a conger eel in its jaws. Mrs. Scott says that she will never forget 'the face on that thing', as long as she lives.

Shortly after the Scott/Riley sighting, Morgawr was encountered by several mackerel fishermen, and blamed for bad luck, bad weather and bad catches.

In January 1976 a strange (and, so far unidentified) carcass was discovered on Durgan Beach in the Helford River, by Mrs. Payne of Falmouth. For a while it was thought that the monster was dead, until the 'Falmouth Packet'

newspaper published two photographs of Morgawr, taken in February by a lady who called herself 'Mary F'. They showed a long necked, hump backed creature, at least eighteen feet long, swimming in the water off Trefusis Point, near Flushing. 'Mary F's', monster was described as 'black or very dark brown', with a snake-like head and 'humps on the back which moved in a funny way'.

After publishing those historic photographs, the 'Packet' received a flood of letters from people who claimed to have seen Morgawr. Estimates of the creature's length varied from twelve to forty five feet. At the beginning of May, two London bankers, on a fishing holiday, saw a pair of monsters in the mouth of the Helford River. Now it seems as if Falmouth Bay could contain a whole family of Sea Serpents!

Unexplained

At 3.31pm on December 29 2007, Kelvin Barbery snapped this mystery **Unidentified Flying Object** from a coastal path between Swanpool and Maenporth, near Falmouth.

Nick Pope, one of Britain's foremost UFO experts, said the photo was one of the best he had seen and Michael Soper, of the Contact International UFO group, agreed: "This does appear genuine. Digital photos can be doctored but everything about it appears consistent."

