

## The Cement Industry at Cliffe

During the 1850's Isaac Charles Johnson built a factory at Cliffe Creek, this was called the nine Elms Cement Works Many of the villagers quarried chalk and clay by hand and for this they received 19 shillings a week (95p today). It was from this quarry and the factory at Black Lane - behind the RSPB pinnacle viewpoint, where the remains of old kilns can still be seen - that the cement was made that built the Eddystone Lighthouse. Cliffe cement was famous for its very high quality and was also used to build The Lizard Lighthouse in Cornwall and The Needles Lighthouse on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. 'Tubby' Slater, whose descendants still live in Cliffe, used his land yacht to ferry passengers between Quarry Cottages, below the RSPB pinnacle viewpoint, and the sea wall.

Hand digging of clay was eventually replaced by machinery and this was carried out by two men who operated a grab crane and wash mill on a floating pontoon. The factories were all closed by 1970 and the quarries abandoned. Uninterrupted they soon became a haven for wildlife. The RSPB acquired the Pools in 2001 and have secured the area for wildlife and those who enjoy the tranquil beauty of the marshes. They intend to turn it into a 'Flagship' reserve and initial plans include a visitor centre and car park.

### Viewpoints

- 1.The Dando wind pump was used here to keep the clay pits dry circa 1910
- 2.View across Cliffe Pools towards Boatwick House
- 3.Views of Cliffe Creek, Cliffe Fort and River Thames
- 4.RSPB Pinnacle viewpoint with dramatic views across the whole area towards the Thames and Essex with the Curtis and Harvey Powder Works to the north
- 5.Fantastic views of the marshes from The Buttway



Views of "Old Cliffe-at-Hoo" including the Curtis and Harvey Powder Works at Lower Hope Point (centre), Coast guard cottages (top right), Canal Tavern (bottom right), Cement works (by RSPB pinnacle viewpoint), St. Helen's School Cliffe village (by church)

## The Curtis and Harvey Powder Works

Messrs. Curtis and Harvey built their biggest works in 1901 at 'Lower Hope Point' on Cliffe Marshes. This site was chosen because of its isolation and was where high explosives were produced under contract to the government. During WW1 around two thousand people travelled to work there by foot, a six horse coach or cycles provided by the company. It was extremely dangerous work especially for the people who handled the nitro-glycerine which was an oily yellow substance and sadly some workers died in explosions there. This sixty acre site, once covered in trees for camouflage purposes, can be seen in the distance from the RSPB pinnacle viewpoint.



The Curtis and Harvey Powder Works,  
Lower Hope Point

# North Kent Marshes Self Guided Trails Cliffe Cliffe Industrial Heritage Trail

Distance approximately 4 miles



'Tubby' Slater on his land yacht

A circular trail starting at St Helen's Church.  
Travel in the footsteps of people who have worked in this area since c.1850  
Please take care on the road sections

Other trails in this series;

Wildlife Heritage Trail  
Military Heritage Trail  
Heritage Buildings Trail  
Industrial Heritage Trail

Literary Heritage along the Saxon Shore Way



# Cliffe Industrial Heritage Trail

Starting at St Helens Church – turn left at ‘Six Bells’ then straight down Pond Hill to the marshes



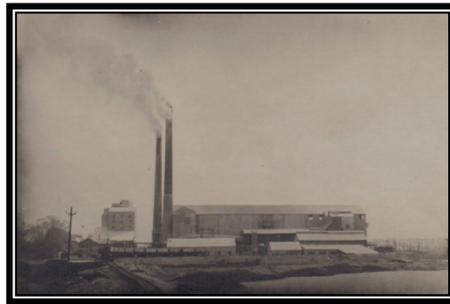
D. Cliffe Pontoon by the Coastguard Cottages 1938



E. Tubby Slater and his land yacht



F. Ms Skauvann loading cement clinker at Cliffe Jetty



G. Alpha Cement Works, Salt Lane



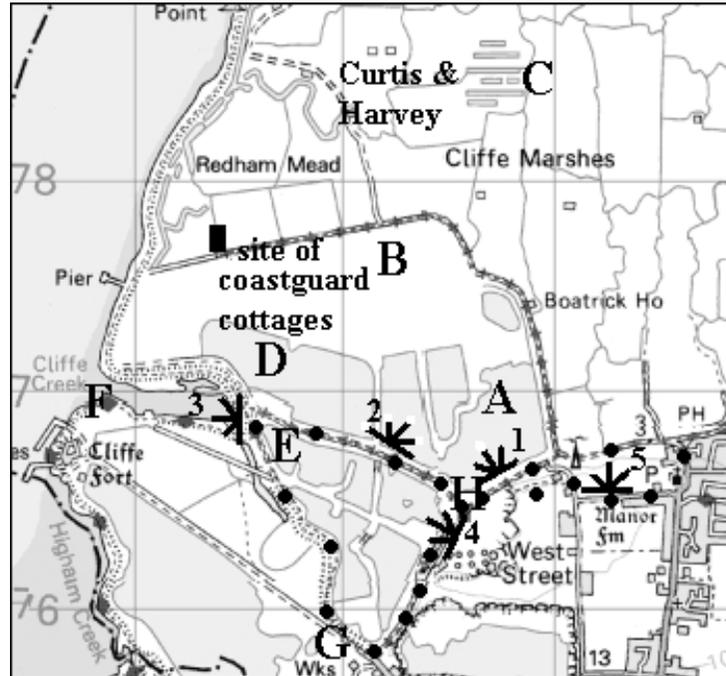
H. Quarry Cottages with watch tower now demolished



C. Curtis & Harvey Powder Works management and workers



B. Swanscombe workers building no. 2 pontoon



A. View of Cliffe Pools before they were dug. Boatwick House in the background

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