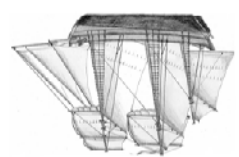


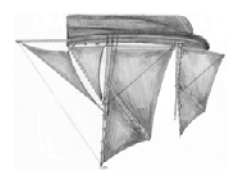


*Standing Into Danger*  
*Wrecks and Rescues of the Holderness Coast*



Also by Hidden Holderness  
 Lost to the Waters of the Sea and the Humber  
 The Lost Villages Trail  
 Defending Holderness in Wartime  
 Available from Tourist Information Centres

Research by members of Hidden Holderness  
 Photographs kindly loaned by Rachel Speck and Ben Chapman  
 Cover Painting by Larry Malkin  
 Ships and Withersea Pier drawings by John Ramage



**Hidden Holderness**  
*Researching and promoting the unique heritage of the Withersea and South East Holderness Area.*

Hidden Holderness was formed in August 2000 as a locally based community group from the Withersea and South East Holderness Regeneration Area. Our interest area is Withersea and the surrounding parishes of Easington, Holmpton, Halsnam, Rimswell, Roos, Welwick, Sunk Island, East Garton, Patrington and Cullingham.

The Hidden Holderness project would like to acknowledge the support of the Local Heritage Initiative in the development phase of our project and the production of the first print run of this leaflet.

**Ashore Off Holderness**  
*"It's an awful night on the Holderness Coast, and vessels are reported ashore at Dimlington and Kilnsea."*

The hazards of navigating the waters of the North Sea, especially where it meets the powerful Humber tides, have claimed many lives. Hidden Holderness researchers have found records of over 500 shipwrecks along the tiny stretch of coasting between the village of Aldborough and the narrow peninsula of Spurn Point.

Many others have gone unrecorded, either lost before records began, or small craft which sank without trace. The loss of life on the seas around Holderness is almost impossible to calculate.

The Holderness Lifeboats and Rocket Brigades and have been responsible for many daring rescues and have saved hundreds of lives. Headstones in the churchyards at Withersea, Easington, Rimswell, and Kilnsea amongst others tell of many sailors who could not be saved and were lost to the cold, grey waters of the sea.

So take a few moments to gaze out to sea and imagine the scene on a wild stormy night. Stand on the stricken Henry Parr ripped down the piles of the Pier 'span after span'.

Remember also to keep a lookout at very low tides, when it is said that the remains of some of the lost ships can be seen above the water.

*Saving Lives on the Sea*

**Lifeboats**

*"The lifeboat was afloat, and quickly launched."*

The lifeboat stations at Withersea and Easington have seen much action and saved many lives on this hazardous coast. Between 1852 and 1913 a succession of five Withersea lifeboats were responsible for saving a total of 88 lives. Six were rescued from the dandy Harry Sinclair in 1893 in seas so heavy that three oars were broken in trying to reach her.

In 1821 the troopship Thomas was one of the earliest rescues by the Spurn lifeboat. Stranded on Stony Binks in high winds, 26 troops and crew were taken off in a rescue lasting eleven hours. A child was saved after being washed overboard, but his mother drowned in trying to rescue him.

Such is the treacherous nature of the sea and Humber around Spurn Point that the Spurn lifeboat remains as the only full-time manned lifeboat in the country. The boats have been responsible for countless rescues and remain active today. In more recent times the rescue of the Revl in 1979 has been described as one of the most daring rescues in RNLI history. Crew members were awarded medals for their bravery that night, when the lifeboat was almost lost during at least ten attempts to aid the ship.

Lifeboat Docea Chapman parades in Withersea

**Rocket Brigades**

*Fireworks inspire the 'sailor's friend'.*

Rocket brigades were based at Easington, Withersea and Holmpton and provided timely rescue for many ships which floundered off the Holderness coast.

The Brigades used rockets to fire a line out to a stricken ship. Once a connection was made, this line was used to pull a heavier rope from the vessel to shore so that the crew could climb to safety.

The inventor of the rocket apparatus was a Cornishman, Henry Trengrouse. Known as the 'sailor's friend', Trengrouse dedicated his life to inventing life-saving equipment after witnessing the loss of the frigate HMS Anson during a gale off Cornwall in 1807. He invented the equipment used by the Rocket Brigades shortly afterwards, inspired by a firework display held to celebrate the birthday of King George III.

The Rocket Brigades could often offer help to ships when the sea was too rough for the lifeboat to reach them. Our local brigades were responsible for the rescue of many craft including the brig Emelie whose eight crew members were saved after a long battle.

Holmpton Rocket Brigade return from a rescue in 1935

**Lighthouses**

*Withernsea's Morse Code warning: "You are standing into danger"*

Withernsea lighthouse was opened on 1st March 1894. For at least two hundred years, the Spurn lighthouse had warned ships of danger on the Holderness coast but ships had travelled blind between the lights of Spurn and Flamborough.

Many wrecks occurred because of this but it was the wreck of the Genesta in 1890 which finally convinced the elders of Trinity House in Hull that a lighthouse was necessary. The vessel grounded at Waxholme and all but the Captain, who froze to the rigging, were rescued. The Coroner at the unfortunate Captain's inquest remarked that he doubted that the tragedy would have occurred if there had been a guiding light at Withersea.

Built, unusually, in the middle of the town to keep it safe from coastal erosion, the lighthouse is 120 feet tall and took eighteen months to build. Its beam had a range of seventeen miles on a clear night and flashed the Morse code signal 'U' meaning 'You are standing into danger.'

For 82 years the beam of Withersea's lighthouse swept across the town. It closed in 1976 and is now open as a lifeboat and local history museum.

Withernsea Lighthouse