

# Heysham Peninsula

## *14. Storms*

*5th February 1913*

### **Morecambe Visitor**

Referring to Mr Wilson recalls an old story of his bravery in rescuing the people from the old 'Pot-houses', which stood on the shore a little further seaward than Mr. John Hatch's present house, and which were then washed away in a great storm. A few still remember his going into the houses with the sea coming through them and bringing Mrs Calvert ashore, returning again to fetch some of her belongings which she was greatly distressed at having left behind. As he went in the second time a feeling ran through the watchers that he would not come out again, but he did, with a bag over his shoulder containing the papers and cash-box which he had ventured back for.

It is difficult to fix the exact date of this storm, but it would be about 1851. Christmas Day was on a Saturday and the storm was on the following Monday.

### **Building the Harbour**

As with most coastal areas Heysham was very much at the mercy of the weather, especially the wind. An anemometer registered 100mph at Heysham in 1903. From the very beginning of the operation precautions had to be taken to ensure that the work done was not undone by the wind and tides.

In constructing the embankments a trench was first cut in the sand and filled with sandstone rock to form a toe and to prevent erosion by the sea. Provision had also to be made for protecting these tips during stormy weather by keeping in reserve a set of wagons filled with stone.

At least once during the construction the wagons were pushed off the site and into the sea to reduce encroachment.

### ***Written about 1950***

Opposite the entrance to the harbour are the steel masts and wire stays of a wreck whose hull is now buried in the sand. This was the steamer 'Western Valley', registered out of Swansea. She was bound from Port Brieria to Heysham with Spanish Iron ore, and on the night of December 31st 1924 was anchored outside the harbour. A gale caused the anchors to drag and she went aground where she now is. A Heysham native was on board, and the crew took to the boats and landed close to the North breakwater. The wreck is now used as a drying place for cormorants.

### ***An eyewitness account***

FD's father died in 1921 in the 'flu epidemic after the war. Quite a lot of them died. And they buried him in the middle of the churchyard. Well not quite in the middle. He was buried where they put that new wall at the bottom and the



Bay Cottage (Pot House), Heysham Village Bay

tide came in and washed it all out in 1927 when there was a great storm, and it came over and washed the coffin out of a child, or it may have been two children, and the coffin was washed up at the Pothouse. Parson Royds, he went up and put his gown on and fetched the coffin to be buried again. Before the police came to keep you away - because when they got

word we had to stay away - well, we went there and we saw his toes. All his toe nails, all good and just a bit of bone and stuff on and that. And I said well anybody who has been dead ten years their toe nails are as good as new. They were telling us not to go, but I went, and it was really frightening.