



Viewpoint

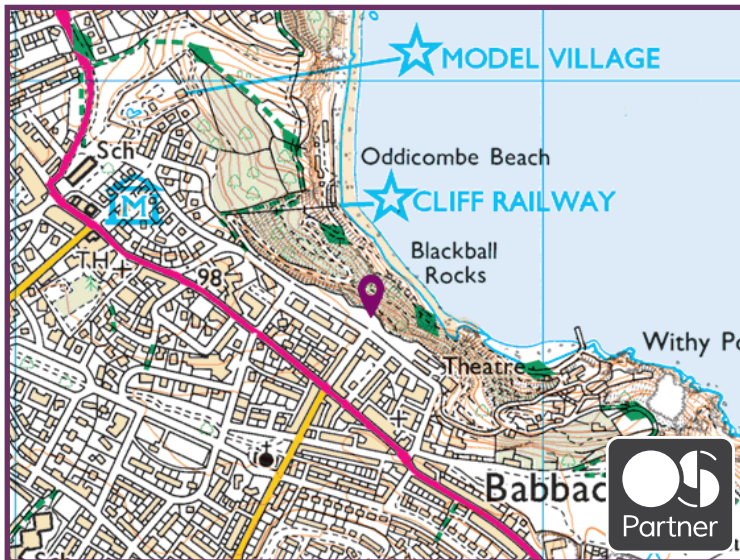
Faulty Towers



Time: 15 mins

Region: South West England

Landscape: coastal



Location: Oddicombe Bay landslip, Babbacombe Downs Road, Torquay TQ1 3LQ

Grid reference: SX 92675 65550

Getting there: From Torquay take the A379 for approx 3 miles passing the large Palace Hotel on the right. After ¼ mile take the second right into Babbacombe Downs Road. Follow it until you find a space to park. Cross the lawns to the cliff path and stop by the viewing platform.

With views across Babbacombe Bay and the English Channel and perched just above the glorious Oddicombe beach, this large, detached house appears to be the dream seaside home.

But since this photograph was taken in 2010 it has completely gone.

How did this dream seaside home in Torquay disappear?



The house perched on the clifftop in 2010 - by 2013 it had almost collapsed
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The answer is right before your eyes. You can't fail to notice the exposed red rock above the beach. This is a landslip.

But what is a landslip and how did it affect the clifftop homes?

To answer that question look at the grey/white headland just beyond the beach. You'll notice immediately that it's very different in colour to the red rocks. These grey rocks are Devonian limestone formed 416-238 million years ago.

The cliffs you are standing on now are also made of the same Devonian limestones but sandwiched in between is the startlingly red rock. And this is the problem. The red rocks are 100 million years younger and date from the Permian period.

After a major mountain building period, pressures in the Earth's crust caused parallel cracks or faults to appear in it. As a result, a block of younger Permian (red) rocks dropped down between the older limestones. This created an unstable area which over time has created land slipping along the fault line.

We know from Victorian photographs that the landslip was a known fact but even so houses were still built over the fault line. In 2003 a major rock fall resulted in beach closure and concerns began about the instability of the slip. In 2010 a buyer bought the house nearest the fault line for £150,000 yet days later a 5,000 tonne rock fall turned the dream into a nightmare. The sea turned red, the beach was closed and the house was now situated just 150 feet from the cliff edge.

By 2013 it was in a collapsed state and the cottage next to it was 'deemed officially uninhabitable'. By 2016 the original house had disappeared completely down the landslip and no longer exists.

As property becomes ever more expensive, desirable clifftop homes around our coastline are reaching staggering sums, but at what cost?