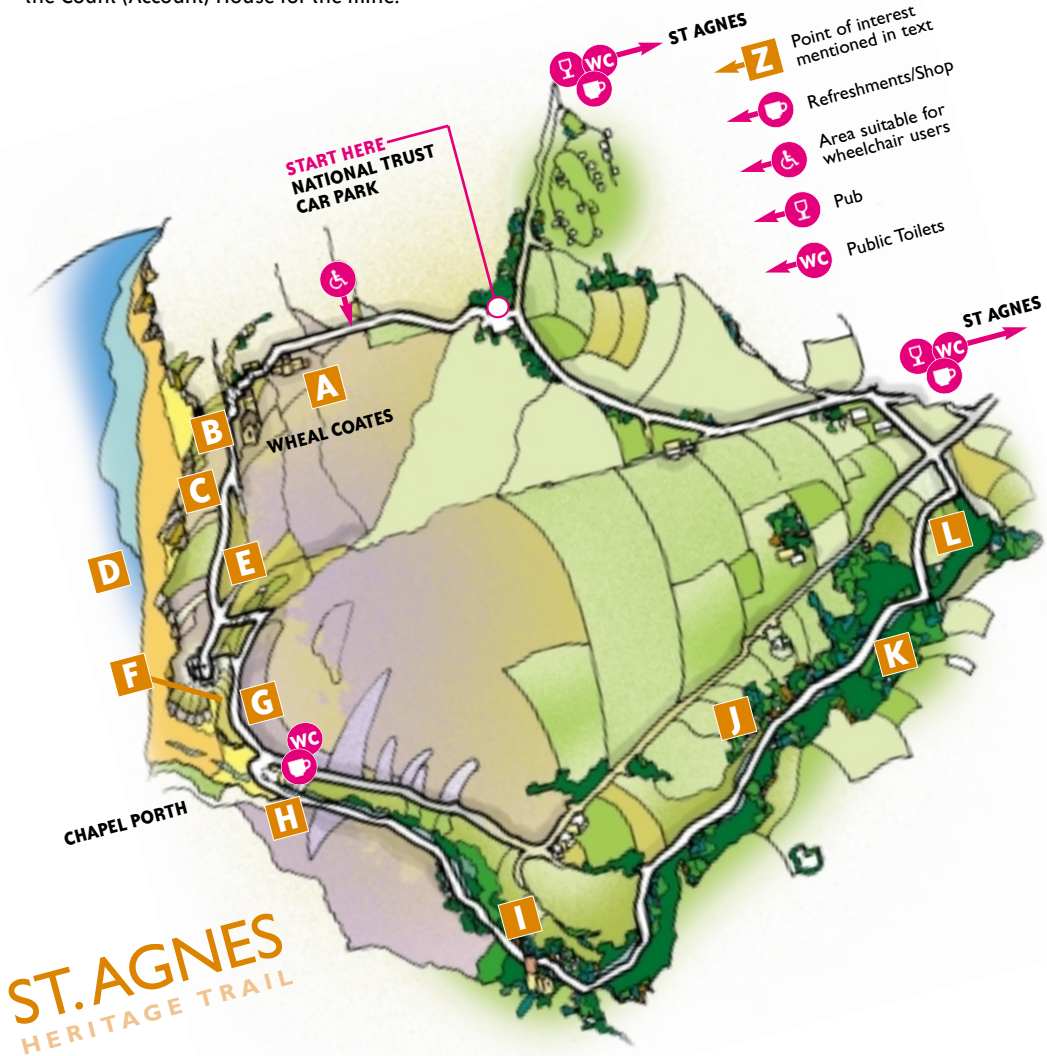


## Wheal Coates, Chapel Porth, Wheal Lawrence Valley and Goonvrea

The National Trust Car park at Wheal Coates is a good starting point for a walk that takes you from open heathland and cliffs at Wheal Coates, through the sheltered valley at Chapel Porth to Goonvrea, and so back to the car park along Beacon Drive.

### THE CAR PARK

Behind two of the banks which edge the car park are clay pits, evidence of the narrow band of granite which curls around the south-western side of the Beacon. Now the pits are overgrown by heather, gorse and willow but in the past clay was extracted for pottery making and for use in the mines. As you leave the car park past the donation box look to the right and you will see a single isolated stack; this is the earliest part of Wheal Coates mine, built around 1830. Near it is a sloping roofed cottage which was once the Count (Account) House for the mine.



### THE CAR PARK TO WHEAL COATES

Follow the wide track from the car park to the main buildings at Wheal Coates **A**. (This small section of the walk is wheelchair friendly). In early summer the heathland is purple with bell heather and dotted with smaller patches of pink cross-leaved heath. These give way in late summer to the mauve of ling and the gold of dwarf gorse. On the right hand side of the track are many pits and bumps, some of which are thought to be relics of mediaeval surface mining.



c.1912



### THE MINE

On the wall of the whim engine house at Wheal Coates, the National Trust have thoughtfully fixed an information board which describes the original function of the ruined mine buildings, built in the quest for tin and copper. Now the buildings, particularly the engine-house and calciner stack, are used instead by ravens and nesting jackdaws. Have a look at how expertly the huge blocks were laid one on top of another; the soft colours of the rocks reflect the minerals - particularly copper and iron - which they contain. St Agnes Museum has the bell from Wheal Coates which signalled the ends of the shifts, and also other information on the mine, including the

amounts of tin and copper it produced, and the rates of pay for the men who worked there **B**.

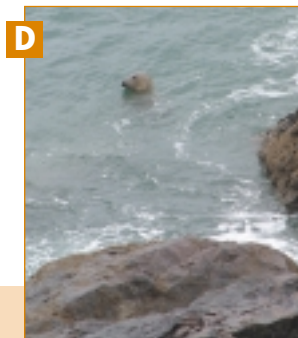
### TOWANROATH SHAFT

Find the steps at the left-hand side of the main engine-house and follow the path which leads to the lower cliff path, Towanroath shaft and the pumping engine-house. This shaft drops into the back of a cave which at low spring tides can be entered from the beach **C**. Walk a few metres along the path towards the west. If you look South-west along the coast you will see the inlets at Porthtowan and Portreath. Further still are North Cliffs and Godrevy Lighthouse on its island, the inspiration for Virginia Woolf's "To the Lighthouse". Behind Godrevy is the curve of St. Ives Bay. In the other direction, the nearest headland is Tubby's Point, where a "kitchen midden" (heap) of shells suggests how important seafood was in the local diet of prehistoric times. Between Tubby's Point and St Agnes Head, Mesolithic flint flakes and scrapers can still be found providing further evidence of early human activity in the area.

### TOWANROATH TO WHITE ROCKS

Walk along the path west from the engine-house, checking occasionally for movement in or above the sea. If the latter is calm enough and the tide is full, you may be lucky and see one or more seals fishing or "bottling" (hanging in the water with their heads just above the surface) **D**. And if you are particularly fortunate, you might see a school of dolphins, or in the summer, even a huge and harmless basking shark cruising past.

Birds are always present. In late summer the local jackdaws and pipits are joined on the heathland by migrating wheatears which often run along the paths. At any time of year you are likely to see a kestrel hovering above the cliffs; peregrine falcons also come hunting from their breeding site a couple of



miles away. As well as herring gulls, blackback gulls, kittiwakes and fulmars frequent this stretch of coast. shags and cormorants and flocks of oyster-catchers may also be seen flying low over the water. The most spectacular display however is provided by gannets which plummet from a great height on to unsuspecting fish. As you walk towards Chapel Porth look carefully at the edge of the path nearest to the sea. Among the thrift, wild carrot and heather, you'll see a low-growing plant with dark green leathery leaves; this is madder, the roots of which were traditionally used to produce a pink dye.



**Where the path forks take the lower path. Head towards the rocky outcrop (known as White Rocks) above the cove at Chapel Porth;** by the path in the spring you may be lucky enough to see the low-growing burnet rose **E**, its white petals bright against apple green leaves. White Rocks is a great vantage point for viewing Chapel Porth, and the rock itself is covered by beautiful mustard coloured and blue-grey lichens. Early flowering scurvy grass, followed by sea campion and thrift, take advantage of the cracks and hollows in and around the rock.

### WHITE ROCKS TO CHAPEL PORTH

**Retrace your steps for a few yards and follow the path which winds towards the beach.** A bench sits by the bend in the path. **If you fancy a brief detour to see the rather small imprint of Giant Bolster's foot, take the path immediately behind the bench. About a hundred metres up the path is the moorstone topped by its 'footprint'. Return to the bench and continue towards the cove.** On your right is a grassy area, the tussocks and thrift covering old walls where St Agnes Chapel stood. The Eighteenth century historian Dr William Borlase mentions the chapel and describes the building over St Agnes Well in some detail. The well, which disappeared in the nineteenth century, was on the edge of the cliff, probably



above the double cave known as Two Vugs. Here in the spring the cliffs are covered with blue squill, yellow kidney vetch and pink thrift and here in May the story of Giant Bolster and St Agnes is re-enacted by the local community **F**. In the same grassy area in July, glow worms light up at dusk. Another bench provides a point from which, when the tide is out, the boiler from the SS Eltham, wrecked in 1928, can be seen to the left of the beach. Around the edges of the cliffs, samphire, a food plant in earlier centuries, appears as patches of bright green. **Follow the path to the road and the car park G.**

### THE CAR PARK

In the nineteenth century the car park area contained a stamping mill driven by a twenty foot diameter water wheel, positioned by the wall next to the present day toilets. Stamps crushed the rock containing tin ore and buddles then separated the heavy tin from the waste rock.

c.1912

H



### WHEAL LAWRENCE VALLEY

**Cross the bridge by the café and follow the path by the side of the stream.** In spring, the stream is fringed by hemlock water dropwort, and in summer by soft pink hemp agrimony and yellow fleabane **H**. A hundred metres from the car park two banks of earth form a partial barrier across the valley. During and just after the Second World War, a wooden bridge connected these two banks, built, together with the wide track leading up the hillside, as a training exercise by US troops stationed at the camp near St Agnes Head. Next to the bank is a wet area with a very obviously circular dome of raised bog which reflects the shape of a buddle underneath. Here in summer royal ferns tower over other vegetation and the 'chink chink' of stonechats is likely to be heard as they flit from bramble to bush.

As the path rounds the hillside, Charlotte United engine house comes into view **I**, part of a complex of mines which is recorded as having produced 23,000 tons of 8.5 percent copper ore. A little bridge below the engine house spans the iron-stained water which flows from an adit or tunnel built to release water from the mine.

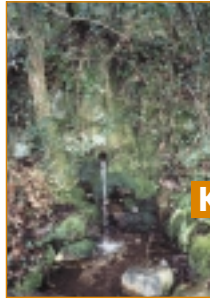
**Follow the path through the willow bushes and at a crossroads in the paths, turn left through the 'kissing gate'. Cross the stream, and a concrete bridge over a smaller spring. Turn right and follow the track along the Wheal Lawrence valley, ignoring a turning to the left by an open gate, where the track again crosses the stream.**

In recent years oak, beech, larch and other young trees have been planted in this area.

I



On the left by the stream, a copse of small elms has grown again after larger specimens succumbed to Dutch elm disease. On the right, there are the heaps and shafts of further mine-workings. A bend in the valley provides shelter from the prevailing winds, and on the left, a cottage with early-flowering camellias, magnolias and azaleas fits snugly into the hillside. The trees in the garden provide homes



for many birds, including jays, long-tailed tits and goldcrests. In spring, the lush vegetation in the valley **J** encourages migrant birds such as chiff chaffs, black caps and, less frequently now, willow warblers. In sunny weather, dragon and damselflies appear, and speckled wood butterflies are resident. 150 metres from the cottage the track passes, on the right, a pipe from which water flows all the year round **K**. This spring and the stream it joins must have been used for thousands of years by local people. Flint scrapers and flakes dating from 5,000 BC have been found in the field behind the water-chute.

**A few metres beyond the spring, turn left, (stepping over a little stream if it's wintertime!) into a narrow lane **L** and follow this up the side of the slope, listening for the buzzard which nests in the nearby pine trees. Part of this lane probably follows the line of the ancient Bolster Bank or Dyke as it runs towards Chapel Porth. At the top end, it emerges by houses on to a wider lane. Turn left up a steep slope. Head straight across the Chapel Porth road, following a footpath sign which says 'Public Bridleway'. Turn left when you reach another road, Beacon Drive, and follow it for a kilometre, looking out (between July and March) for curlews in the neighbouring fields. You will then find yourself back at Wheal Coates car park.**

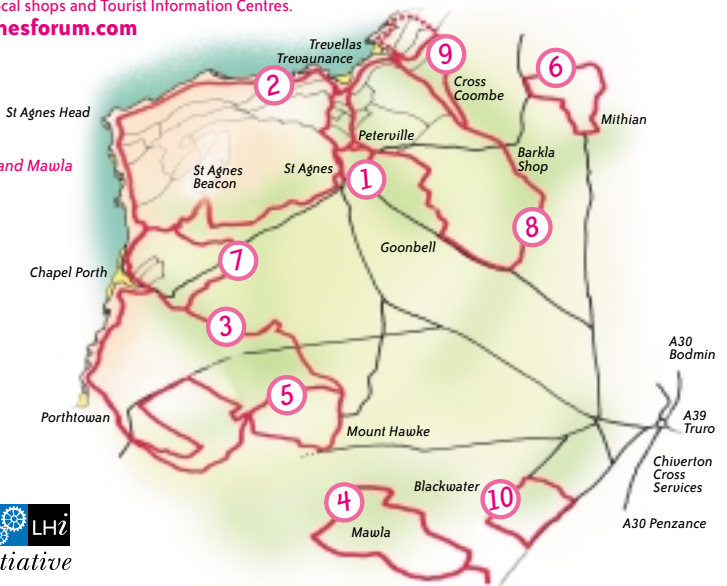
Further information from:  
 The National Trust pamphlet: "St Agnes and Chapel Porth"  
 Journal Number 14, St Agnes Museum Trust – an article by Dr. Joanna Mattingly, "A well without water? The rise and fall of the Holy Well at St Agnes."  
 St Agnes Parish Museum

This map is one of a series available from local shops and Tourist Information Centres.  
 For further information visit [www.stagnesforum.com](http://www.stagnesforum.com)

- Walk 1 St Agnes Village Trail
- Walk 2 St Agnes Beacon
- Walk 3 Porthlowan, Banns Vale, Mount Hawke and Chapel Porth
- Walk 4 Wheal Rose, the Poldice Plateway and Mawla
- Walk 5 Mount Hawke
- Walk 6 Mithian Walk
- Walk 7 Wheal Coates, Chapel Porth and Wheal Lawrence Valley
- Walk 8 Water Lane, Wheal Butson and Jericho Valley
- Walk 9 Jericho Valley and Cross Coombe
- Walk 10 Blackwater



St Agnes 2000  
 Regeneration Forum  
 Chairman - John Slater  
 Parish Rooms  
 St Agnes  
 Cornwall



Local Heritage initiative



walk number

7

# ST. AGNES HERITAGE TRAIL

Wheal Coates, Chapel Porth,  
Wheal Lawrence Valley and Goonurea  
4km or 2 miles

