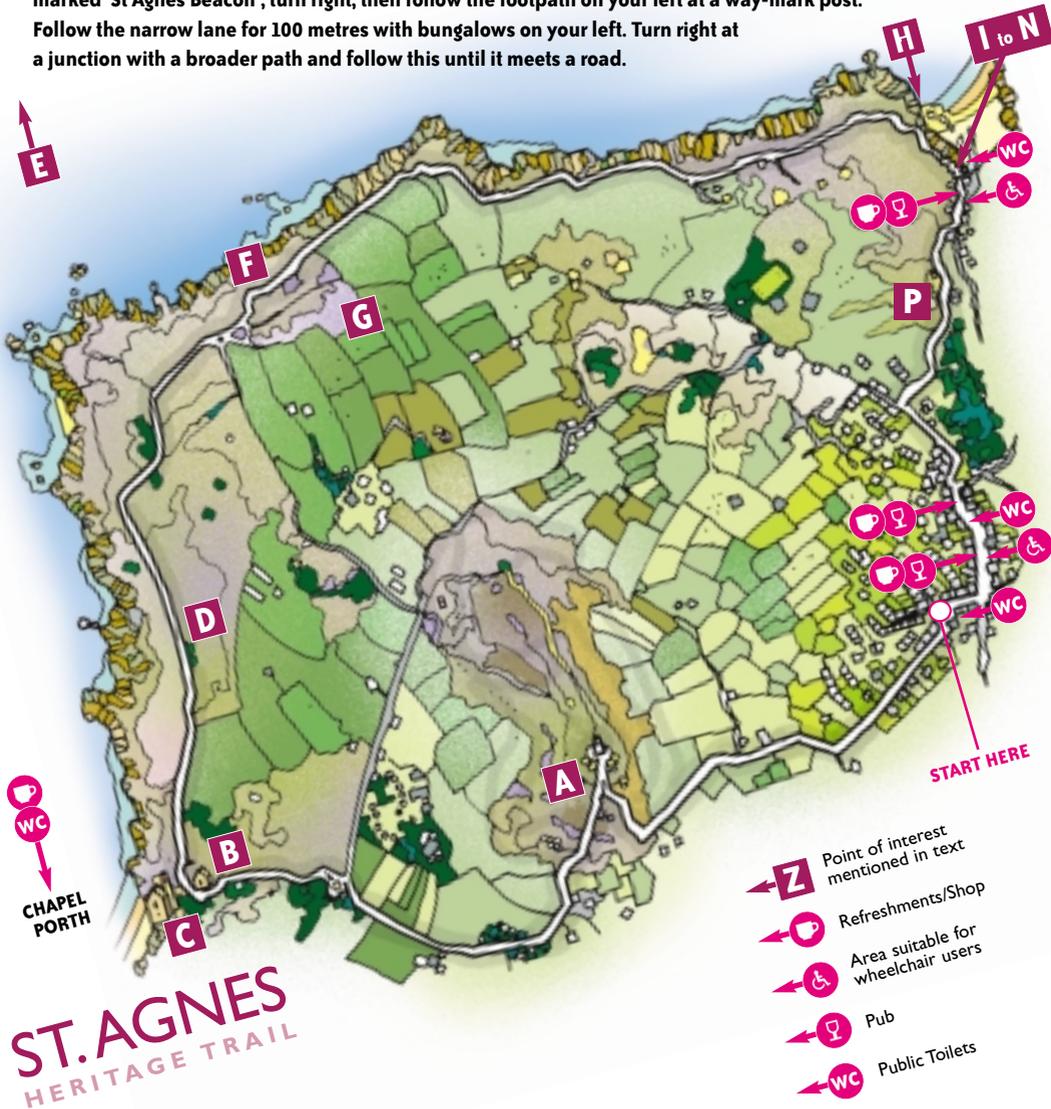


St Agnes Beacon

Polbreen Lane, Beacon Farm, Beacon Summit, Wheal Coates, St. Agnes Head, Trevaunance Cove, Wheal Friendly. Starting and ending at St. Agnes Car Park.

POLBREEN LANE

Start at the car park in the village centre. Go to the top end; between the Public Library and the Scout Hut entrance you will find a track which leads past a row of garages and brings you to Polbreen Lane. Turn right and follow the lane to a road junction. The lane led in the past to Polbreen Mine, one of St. Agnes' many tin and copper mines. Cross the road and continue between the bungalows of Whitworth Close. After 100 metres the Close joins a road from the right; keep straight on towards a grassy area and wooden seat on the right. Opposite bungalow No 7 at a post marked 'St Agnes Beacon', turn right, then follow the footpath on your left at a way-mark post. Follow the narrow lane for 100 metres with bungalows on your left. Turn right at a junction with a broader path and follow this until it meets a road.



BEACON FARM

Cross this road taking the lane immediately in front of you to Beacon Farm. Pass a row of terraced cottages on your left. Take the old green lane ahead. Climb over a stile beside a field gate. Walk across a very sloping field, parallel to a hedge on your right.

BEACON SUMMIT

Climb another stone stile and follow the path for just a few metres. Turn right up a very narrow path which climbs through the heather to an overhanging rock (beneath which there is a seat). Follow the path on the left-hand side of the rock and after a few metres turn right at another smaller outcrop of rock.

The two rocks were known in Cornish as Garder Wartha (upper seat) and Garder Wollas (lower seat). The path leads to the highest point of the hill at 192 metres (628 feet). From here on a clear day there is an excellent view along the coast from St Ives in the west, to Trevoze Head near Padstow to the north. A topographic plate on the Ordnance Survey triangulation pillar ('trig point') indicates other points of interest **A**. The base of the mound on which you stand is the remains of a Bronze Age barrow, dating from between 2000-1500 B.C. Two other smaller barrows, heaps of stones or 'cairns', are hidden by undergrowth at the southern end of the ridge, with another to the northern end. The main function of the barrows was burial, but they doubtless provided the focus of other 'ritual events'. The Beacon derives its name from the hill-top beacon light or fire which could be lit to warn of invasion, part of a chain throughout the country. At the end of the eighteenth century the beacon light was



c.1912



joined by a white painted tower, variously known as St Ann's Summer House, the Pleasure House, and Unwin and Donnithorne's Castle (the Donnithornes lived at Trevellas Manor). In March 1812 the 'West Briton' printed a request for information (with a 10 guinea reward) on 'persons who broke and carried off the window frames and broke floors and doors'. By the 1850s the 'ruins of a pleasure house' were noted, and it is probably on this rubble that the present trig point stands. When the topograph was added in the late 1990s the concrete pillar was encased in stone.

D Flint flakes and scrapers found near St Agnes Head.

Produced in the making of tools and arrowheads in the Stone and Bronze Ages. A visit to St Agnes Museum will show you much more about the history of the area (open every day, 10:30am - 5:00pm, Easter - October, Free Entry).

Retrace your steps to the smaller of the two rock outcrops and follow the path, which leads downhill in front of you.



In summer this is a purple and yellow patchwork of bell heather, dwarf gorse and ling. **At the bottom of the slope turn right towards a gate but then almost immediately turn downhill through gorse bushes in a small dip and towards a shallow former mine working on the left (marked with a warning post). This will lead you to a lane and a garden entrance on your left. Veer right, down the lane, and after 100 metres turn right as you meet a road, Beacon Drive. Continue for 800 metres (1/2 mile) until on a bend, with willow bushes on your left, you see the entrance to Wheal Coates National Trust car park.**

WHEAL COATES

Turn left, following the track that starts in the far left of the car park, towards the mine buildings. A quote from the National Trust leaflet 'Wheal Coates and Chapel Porth', helps to explain why tin and copper mining became so important in this area: - *'Beneath the Beacon is a boss of granite, pushed up red hot from the earth's core about 275 million years ago. The tremendous heat and pressure affected the overlying and surrounding Killas rocks; later volatile gases and liquids were forced up through the fissures altering the rocks' chemical composition. Ores of tin ,copper, silver, lead, zinc and wolfram were formed'*.

Pits and bumps on the right of the path suggest mediaeval surface working, but the buildings date from the nineteenth century. The mine worked sporadically between the 1820s and 1914. The National Trust has attached a useful information board to the Whim engine house wall, describing the functions of all the ruined buildings. The largest engine house on the upper level contained a beam engine which pulled the ores to the surface and also powered stamps which crushed the ore .

Look for the steps to the left of this building leading to the path which drops towards the lower engine house by Towanroath shaft . This building was erected in 1872 to hold a pumping engine to prevent flooding in the mine. There are records of 335 tons of 9% copper ore and 700 tons of tin ore being produced in 1836 and 1861-89. In 1912, 17 tons of black tin was the final output.

Follow the path downwards; on the second hairpin bend turn right onto a way-marked path which leads you north-west towards a pole with iron footholds on the side. This was used in the past by the coast-guards as a rocket-firing mark when they were practising use of the life saving apparatus called the Breeches Buoy.

The path joins another which runs along by a field hedge then across open heath-land. As you approach the rocky outcrop of St Agnes Head, bear right towards the car park. Follow the tarmac road which passes, on your left, the old Coast Guard look-out hut which was closed in 1990. Look inland and you will see the modern buildings of Newdowns sand and clay quarry. Some time between 2 and 5 million years ago, St Agnes Beacon was an island bounded on the west by a wave-cut platform at 120 metres (about 400 feet) above modern sea level. Old mining activity found evidence of a wave-smoothed sea cliff and sea-washed pebbles and boulders at about the level of the road which now circles the North West side of the Beacon.

Today the old sea floor shoreline is covered by thick layers of "china clay "and sand of various colours, which are still extracted in the present-day quarry . The sands and clays are probably freshwater sediments formed by the erosion of a local outcrop of soft decomposed 'china-clay' granite; they have industrial uses, for example in pottery and glass making. In the past the clay was used to stick candles to miners' hard hats and to the walls of the mines.

ST AGNES HEAD

Though difficult to imagine now, during the Second World War, the land on your right was covered by bungalows, Nissen huts , a NAAFI and even a theatre! It was known as Cameron Camp  and was used first by the Royal Artillery as a 'Light Anti-Aircraft Practice Camp'. From 1943-44 it housed American army units prior to embarkation to France. After the war, the bungalows were used to accommodate local families until more council houses were built in the village.

As the road turns to the right, go straight on through a parking area and follow the track which bears to the left and joins the cliff path. Pass the sign Newdowns Head. On your right is a wall which in May is covered with pink thrift and white sea-campion. Look out for ravens on the cliffs, and shags, guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes, black-back gulls, fulmars and gannets on or above the sea. Directly out at sea Bawden Rocks (known also as Man and his Man or Cow and Calf) provide undisturbed resting and breeding places for birds **E**.

The path winds its way around two small valleys where cone-capped shafts are evidence of 'Seal Hole' mine. Under here, in a natural cavern, shareholders once held a celebratory meal. Seal Hole is part of the Polberro complex of mines which from 1750 onwards produced a rich output of tin and copper, so much so that it was visited by Prince Albert. Polberro employed 450 people in 1838 and remained productive until the end of the nineteenth century.

Follow the bends in the path. On your right you will pass a quarry in the 'killas', the local miners' name for old sea floor sediments of mud and sand that were cooked by the hot granite millions of years ago. **Keeping to the cliff path and passing a mine waste area and another quarry, follow the path downhill towards Trevaunance Cove.**

TREVAUNANCE COVE

Above the cove, steps have been cut into the steep slope and at the base of these there is the first evidence of the harbour that once existed down below. In the early eighteenth century the Tonkin family from Trevaunance Manor were bankrupted by successive attempts to keep the walls of a harbour standing against the force of the Atlantic. Later in 1798, others were more successful and the harbour functioned from then until 1916 when sadly, because a hole wasn't repaired, the sea put paid to the North Pier, and the South Pier soon followed.

The harbour was built because of the need for fuel for smelting tin, and for steam engines in the mines. Ships could leave loaded with copper ore (for smelting in Wales) and return carrying coal, lime and other goods. The harbour also gave

c.1942



F

c.1900



H

shelter to the local pilchard and mackerel fishing boats and the 'hobbling' or pilot boat which guided ships through the difficult entrance to the harbour.

On your left as you walk along the flat track from the steps are the remains of 'hutches' - stone bins where copper ore was stored before being shipped to Wales for smelting. Along this stretch of cliff were a coal-yard, stables and horse whims which served the gantries, beneath which 'kibbles' (buckets, or in this case, iron braced wood boxes) containing coal and other goods were raised and lowered **I**. The harbour was the focus for Regattas and The Royal Cornwall Gazette of 1839 records that a showman 'Sam the Jumper', dived from one of the gantries into the harbour in front of three thousand people.

The second house on your left was used as offices for a shipping business. On your right the first cottage housed a weighbridge and another is on the site of the 'Ship and Castle Inn'.

Look over the wall opposite the cottages; if the tide is low enough you will see an area of tumbled granite blocks which are all that remains of the harbour **I**. St. Agnes Museum has an excellent scale model of the harbour and also possesses one of two cannons which faced out to sea from the cliff. The museum also has on display the beautiful figurehead from the schooner the 'Lady Agnes' **I** which was one of four ships built in the 1870s at the top of the beach in Trevaunance Cove.

Look at the cliffs above the beach; on the edge are spoil heaps from Wheal Kitty mine. Walk to the bottom of the track. On your left, in the Local Improvement Committee car park area there were buddles (circular pits used for separating tin from the crushed ore), a burning house and a shed containing equipment for extracting tin from sand and slimes, and water-wheels working stamps which crushed the tin ore **K**.

The Driftwood Spars Hotel **L** on the left appears on the 1841 tithe map as a warehouse and fish cellars, used by the

harbour and the 'Good Intent' pilchard seine company. In the 1930s it was renovated and became a hotel. It was used during the war for the billeting of troops and displaced families and after the war became a public house.

c.1900



c.1900



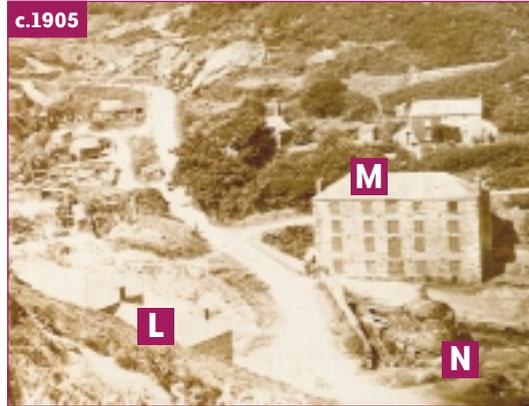
Turn right opposite the Driftwood and face the steep slope of Rocky Lane. On the right is a tall building converted from a store for ropes, wires and chains used in ships **M**. In front of it on the corner where the picnic tables are, was a brick kiln **N**.

Start the steep climb; this area is known as Repper's Coombe. Here on the left where the car park now is, there were water-wheels, stamps, buddles, and a burning house. Eddie Tredinnick noted (Journal No 11 St. Agnes Museum Trust) that often the stamps worked day and night. The noise can only be guessed at.

WHEAL FRIENDLY

After a bend in the lane, look out for the sign 'Wheal Friendly Chalets' on the left. Turn left into the lane to the chalets but after 30 metres turn right and climb some rough steps by the side of an iron pole. In the course of the path up the steep hillside you will pass the remains of concrete buildings and a spoil heap, connected with the working of Wheal Friendly mine **P**.

On the left at the top of the slope is the engine house which housed a 60" pumping engine. On the right are high walls which retained the mine reservoir, and next on the right is a restored building - now a dwelling - which was probably the miners' 'dry'. Records show that between 1823-5 the mine produced 160 tons of 10% copper ore and between 1855-95, 440 tons of 'black tin'.



The mine was taken over by West Kitty in 1900 and although pneumatic stamps and dressing equipment were installed in 1907, the mine was hampered by the expense of sending the ore to be processed in Jericho Valley, Trevellas. There had been objections to burning or 'calcining' the tin ore on site because fumes given off from the chimney, particularly those containing arsenic compounds, destroyed surrounding crops and vegetation. A tramway ran from the mine at the top of the hill to Quay Road which runs along the valley bottom, with full trucks of ore descending and pulling empty ones up to the top **Q**. The ore then continued its journey to Jericho Valley by horse and cart.

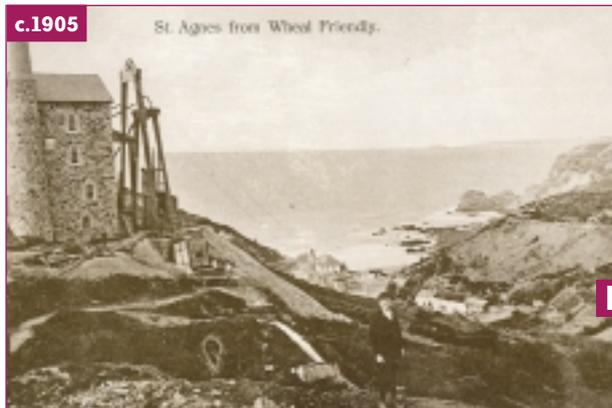
Don't forget to visit St Agnes museum

In 1913 there were technical problems in the mine. The engine that removed water from the mine was stopped and so the water level rose. This was followed by a fall in the price of tin and the call up of men at the outbreak of war. The mine was closed in 1916, opening briefly to help ventilate Wheal Kitty mine in the late 1920s.

Follow the track up the slope, passing on your left a grassy sitting area called 'Wheal Friendly Retreat'. Continue between bungalows and, at the top, with the Roman Catholic Church on your left, turn left into Trevaunance Road.

Follow the road to the junction opposite the Anglican Church. Turn right and follow the main street for about 400 metres until you see the sign directing you to the car park where your trek began.

Turn right and your walk is complete.

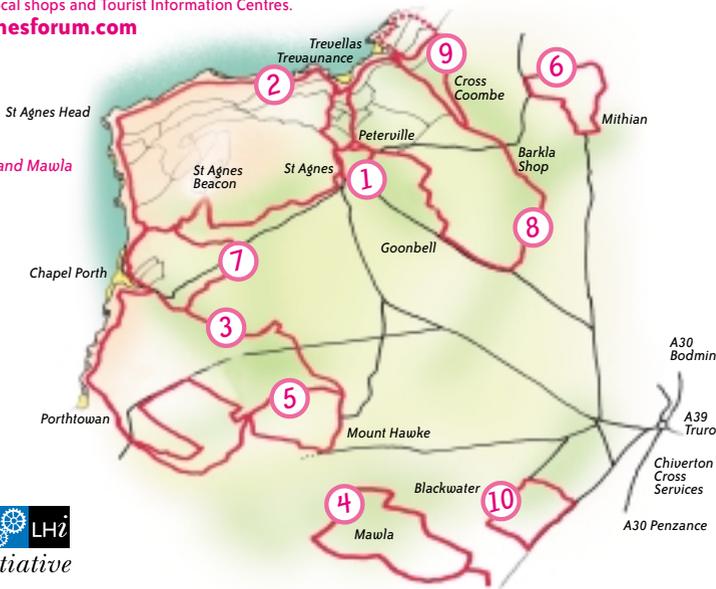


For further information refer to :-
Journal of St Agnes Museum Trust Nos 6, 10, 11 & 13.
National Trust Pamphlet St. Agnes & Chapel Porth.
Exploring Cornish Mines Vol. 3 Kenneth Brown & Bob Acton.
The Metalliferous Mining Region of South-West England,
Vol. 1. H.M. Stationery Office 1958.
'Down Quay' by Clive Benney

This map is one of a series available from local shops and Tourist Information Centres.
For further information visit www.stagnesforum.com

- Walk 1 St Agnes Village Trail
- Walk 2 St Agnes Beacon
- Walk 3 Porthtowan, 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



walk number

2

ST. AGNES

HERITAGE TRAIL

St Agnes Beacon, Wheal Coates, St Agnes Head,
Trevaunancne Cove, Wheal Friendly
9km or 5½ miles

