

South West Coast Path National Trail, 28th May to 2nd July 2023

**In the company of ‘chat’s and lark’s’: a personal account of the
630 miles journey**



Mevagissey



Lulworth Cove



NATIONAL TRAILS 



At Minehead sea front ready to start walking!

28th May: Day One. Rugmoor to Minehead. Alarm at 06:00, get up and start getting things together – bag mostly packed, just a bit of tweaking. Charge phone and watch. Chuck’s fed and watered, drank coffee and ate breakfast.

On my feet I’ll be wearing Inov8 Rocfly G350 (size 10) and Danish Endurance socks, and I’ll be taking a pair of sandals (Clarks ATL). Also, I have a pair of Bridgedale Stormsocks should it get wet. The forecast for the next few days looks good with some warm sunshine.

Departed Rugmoor 08:10, arrived Minehead 09:45. An uneventful journey to the seaside, thankfully, the traffic was light. Found a parking space next to the South West Coast Path (SWCP) starting point and sculpture. A comfort break before setting off. Loaded up my bag(s), Roz took the obligatory photo, we said our goodbyes and off I went. Set an easy/moderate pace, short section along coast path on tarmac before the going got a bit more strenuous. A stiff climb up to North Hill/Bossington Hill. Good view to Porlock so I stopped for a short break. Updated journal/notebook. Once on the ridge, a gently undulating path before a steep descent down to Bossington/Porlock storm beach, followed by a level walk to Porlock Weir. Lunch break, c.4 hours.

Minehead to Porlock Weir: 10 miles (16 km) 620m elevation gain

Lunched at the Ship Inn. Ordered too much really (could have made do without a side of chips). Rested for about 1 hour, before setting off again and a steep ascent from Porlock Weir to Culbone. The meal I had just consumed sat heavily in my stomach. Stopped briefly at the quaint little church at Culbone. Then followed a rolling woodland path with some steeper and warm sections. Several trees had come down across the path too. Another short break at the presently dry Sister Fountain. There’s plenty of evidence along the route of frequent landslips. Continued through the woodland (more steep sections). Eventually, the path narrows on the steep cliff at Glenthorne, opening onto Countisbury Common with another steep climb up to Foreland. This is where I decided to stop for the day (about 2 miles from Lynmouth). found a bivvy spot, made a brew, updated notebook while the sun was setting.

29th May: Day Two. What a night! I had set up the tarp on the Foreland, slipped into my sleeping bag and got my head down. Then the wind picked up, becoming increasingly stronger, seemed like gale force at times! I honestly thought the tarp would be torn to shreds or blown away, it was flattened over me by the strength of the wind. I suppose my choice of camp spot was not ideal perched on the top of an exposed headland. It was scenic, but...

The tarp survived the night but at first light (c.04:30) I decided to break camp and get away from here. Breakfast could wait. Made my way to Lynmouth (c.05:30). Of course, if I had continued walking last night for another half-hour or so I would have found plenty of more sheltered spots – but I didn't...

After an initial climb the narrow cliff path levelled off and then descended into Lynmouth where I sought shelter and made breakfast. There's water available too.

Porlock Weir to Lynmouth 11 miles (18 km). Total = 21 miles. 1200m elev. gain

A steep ascent up a tarmac path alongside (and crossing) the cliff railway. Then, a scenic, easy path through the Valley of the Rocks. There's quite a lot of road surface to follow to Woody Bay. Stopped for a quick break before the next section to Heddon's Mouth. Stripped off a layer. It's sunny but still a stiff wind blowing from a generally easterly direction (behind me!). A short walk leads through woodland to another road section then onto a narrow ascending path through more woodland before the path hugs the steep cliff slope with extensive sea views. Had to tie my hat on – didn't want it to blow away! Along descent to Heddon's Mouth to the Hunter's Inn where I stopped for tea and cake. I've been here before, about 20 years ago, when I ran a coastal marathon from here, part of a 5-run series (I did them all and still have the t-shirts). After my break, headed back towards Heddon's Mouth, crossed the river, and a very steep ascent to reach a rugged cliff path with extensive sea views and a gusting wind. Another climb to follow a grassy path along the cliff edge adjacent to farmland. Obvious landslips have moved the SWCP at East/North Cleave. Route then follows "County Road", a hard-packed gravel/turf track – easy, undulating. More climbing to Great Hangman (318m OD), as ever with these things a steep descent leads to a combe, across the stream, and a steep zig-zag path to regain height lost. A stoney, narrow path eventually opens to a wider grass/stone track with easier gradient. At the summit a cairn. An undulating descent to Combe Martin.

Lynmouth to Combe Martin 13½ miles (21.5 km). Total = 34½ miles. 1330m elev. gain

I 'sort of' planned to spend a while on the beach at Combe Martin but the novelty soon wore off and I decided to walk further. Bit of a slope out of the town but nothing excessive. Quite a lot of tarmac, then a wide gravel road leading onto a path towards Watermouth. The path led through a campsite, and I decided to stop for the night (Watermouth Valley Campsite £12). I needed a shower, and I took the opportunity to rinse socks, shreddies, and t-shirt that I've been wearing for two warm, sweaty days. Typical campsite – people playing crap music and talking very loudly, and there's a road.

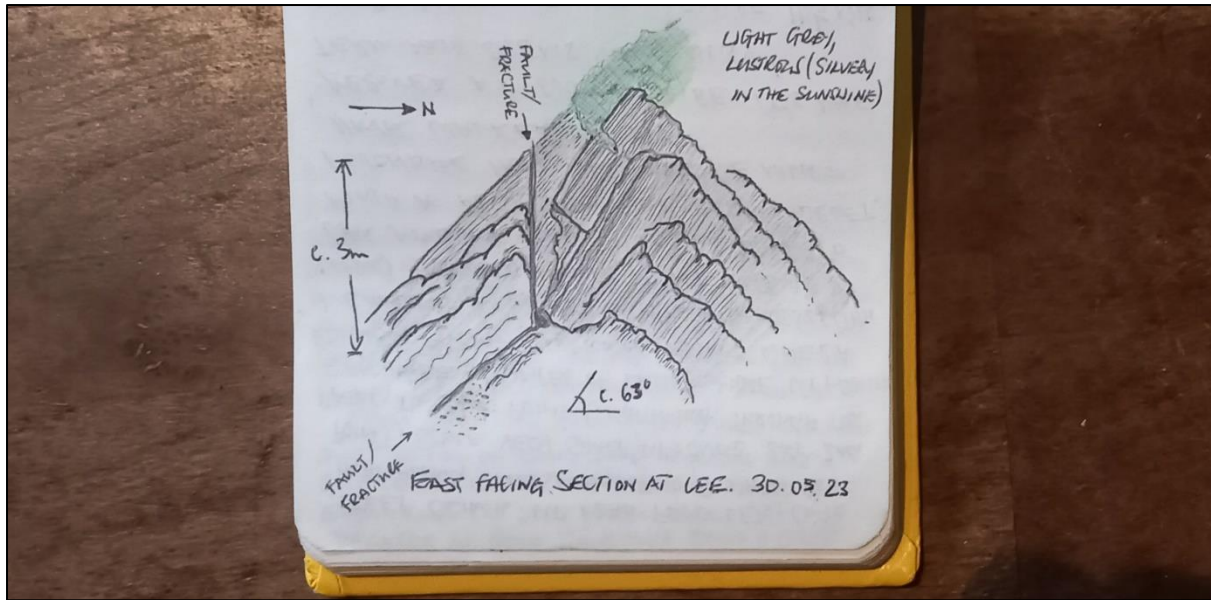
30th May: Day Three. An excellent rest. After a shower, some chips, and a brew, I slowly crept into my bag and that was it! Alarm at 06:00, I was already awake, got up, and started packing. Some breakfast – usual stuff: porridge and coffee. A relaxed start to the day. Left the campsite at 08:00. A varied route – bit of road, around headlands, a lot of up and down steps, bit more road. From Hele, a particularly steep climb over Hillsborough (hillfort) to drop down into Ilfracombe (near harbour). Found a café for a cooked breakfast. Glanced through the guidebook to get some idea of the day ahead.

From the town, a moderately steep climb much of it on tarmac leads to Torrs Walk/Park and Coastal Path. Undulating, good views, steep road descent (1 mile) to Lee. Stopped for a break. At sea level, so a stiff climb to come.

Followed the road up out of Lee, onto path along cliffs/headland towards Bull Point, some very sharp up and over zig-zag paths to Bull Point lighthouse. Through the haze were glimpses of Lundy Island. More up and down rolling along to Morte Point where I got my first sighting of seals on this trip. Ambled around Morte Point and looked down to find a Late Neo/Early BA scraper/bladelet. I wondered how many people must have passed it by.

Arrived at Woolacombe, it's half-term, and it was busy!

Combe Martin to Woolacombe 14½ miles (23.5 km). Total = 49 miles. 1020m elev. gain



Sketch of geological section at Lee, 30/05/23

Stopped for refreshment at the Red Barn, Woolacombe. Very expensive Thatcher's Zero £5.45 a bottle (500 ml).

A busy walk out of the town – lots of 'red' people! Then walked along a sandy path at top of dunes – didn't like it much, too soft – then onto an undulating bridlepath and grass/gravel track to Baggy Point (it was further than I had thought – 4 miles). A great view of Lundy but there was too much sunshine for a photograph. An easy path to Croyde Bay. I stopped at the first campsite (Ocean Pitch, Croyde Bay) I got to and asked if there was space to pitch for the night? They were full, but someone that had paid for two nights had decided to leave early and so, I got their vacant spot for FREE – how good was that! Neighbours were friendly too, even offered to feed me but I declined the offer. A shower at the end of a good days walking is so refreshing.

31st May: Day Four. Another good night's rest. Leant against a wall, preparing porridge and coffee, and contemplating on the day ahead. The forecast is a bit cooler and cloudy today, at least for the morning. Water's boiled.

On my way just after 08:00. An easy stroll across the beach, although I can't say I'm a fan of walking over soft sand. Did get a close-up view of eroded dunes though. Onto a gravel/grass path to a noisy, busy roadside path to Saunton where I stopped for coffee and a cooked breakfast at a beach café. Plugged in charger for power pack.

From Saunton, some easy miles, a short, but busy, section of road onto a sandy bridleway over a golf course, leading to gravel tracks, then path along the top of an embankment – to be honest, it was a bit dull. Arrived at Velator in good time and found another café on route so stopped for refreshment, it was midday.

Woolacombe to Braunton (Velator) 14½ miles (23.5 km). Total = 63 miles. 430m elev. gain

Onto familiar ground, the Tarka Trail, I've been along the next bit when I cycled the Sustrans Devon Coast to Coast (Ilfracombe < > Plymouth) a couple of years ago. A shoe change, to wearing sandals again. Easy miles to Barnstaple but monotonous on hard-surfaced trail (okay for bikes but not for walking). Across the River Taw (road bridge), found a bench and changed footwear back to trail shoes. Took a short break too. Walked on for a while to a café at Fremington, fancied an ice cream but there were too many people 'faffing' couldn't be arsed with that so walked on. Passed a sign for Tarka Trail Camping, kept going a little way, dithered, decided to stop (c.16:45) a bit earlier than of late, and went

back. I'd done my 8 hours for the day, and about 20 miles, and my feet were hot – all the pounding on tarmac! Campsite at Lower Yelland cost £12.50, decent showers, rinsed today's garments. I had some paracord with me so fashioned a drying line between a couple of saplings (sucker elm) and hung-up stuff to dry.

Actually, stopping earlier allowed more time for rest and relaxation. Prepared something to eat – a pack of noodles (Mugshots) to which I added a 'Cuppa Soup' – it worked for me.

1st June: Day Five. Another glorious morning. Alarm at 06:00, started to get it together. Even found some time for a bit of yoga – salutations and stretches, really should be doing this every day.

Porridge and coffee, packed, and back on the Tarka Trail just after 08:15. The trail was broken up by a detour around East Yelland marsh with views of the river, then more easy tarmac miles. Refreshment break at the Old Railway Station, Bideford, the fare on offer was not great, but...needs must. Instant coffee is not coffee!

Across the river (Torridge) and back along the other side of the estuary. It is a much more pleasant undulating path, although narrow and overgrown in places. Appledore is actually quite an attractive sea front. Stopped for an ice cream. Then off to Northam Burrows – put on my sandals. There were a lot of vehicles parked alongside the toll road with occupants never very far away. Crossed over to the other side and walked along the beach, even taking the opportunity for a paddle, the sea was warm (*see Addendum, 04/08/2023*). A nice stroll along to Westward Ho!

Braunton to Westward Ho! 23½ miles (37.5 km). Total = 87 miles. 250m elev. gain

Stopped for a pub lunch and a couple of bottles of Thatcher's Zero, I really fancied a salad and that's exactly what I had, a traditional Greek salad with feta cheese, capers, and olives.

After some more easy miles it was back to the rugged rollercoaster terrain expected with some steep descents/ascents. Unfortunately, a lot of the path has become overgrown, and the views are often obscured. When it was open, the views were, of course, spectacular. It was about 18:00 hours, and I decided I'd had enough for the day and stopped at Peppercombe. Bit disappointed to find somebody else there, but I wasn't going any further and there was plenty of space available. Went down to the pebble beach for a dip in the sea to cool off. Roz would love it here. Sat on the beach for a while to dry off and listened to some cricket. Away on the horizon, I could see Lundy and, through the haze, Clovelly – I'll be there tomorrow.

2nd June: Day Six. Alarm at 06:00, sat on beach for breakfast, letting things air for a while before packing it all away again. Quite a lot of condensation, which surprised me, probably the long grass. Peering across the bay, Clovelly doesn't look so far away, but I'm not easily fooled by illusions.

Started the day with a climb, of course. The path to Buck's Mills was okay, there were plenty of steps but, thankfully, not too long. Most of the route undulated through woodland with some glimpses of the sea. Quite pleasant walking, there is a steeper climb to come out of Buck's Mills. Well, it wasn't too strenuous. The route continued through mixed woodland, including oak, maple, hazel, beech, and willow, occasionally opening along field edges. Then onto 'Hobby Drive' a wide, hard-packed gravel track all the way to Clovelly – easy couple of miles or so.

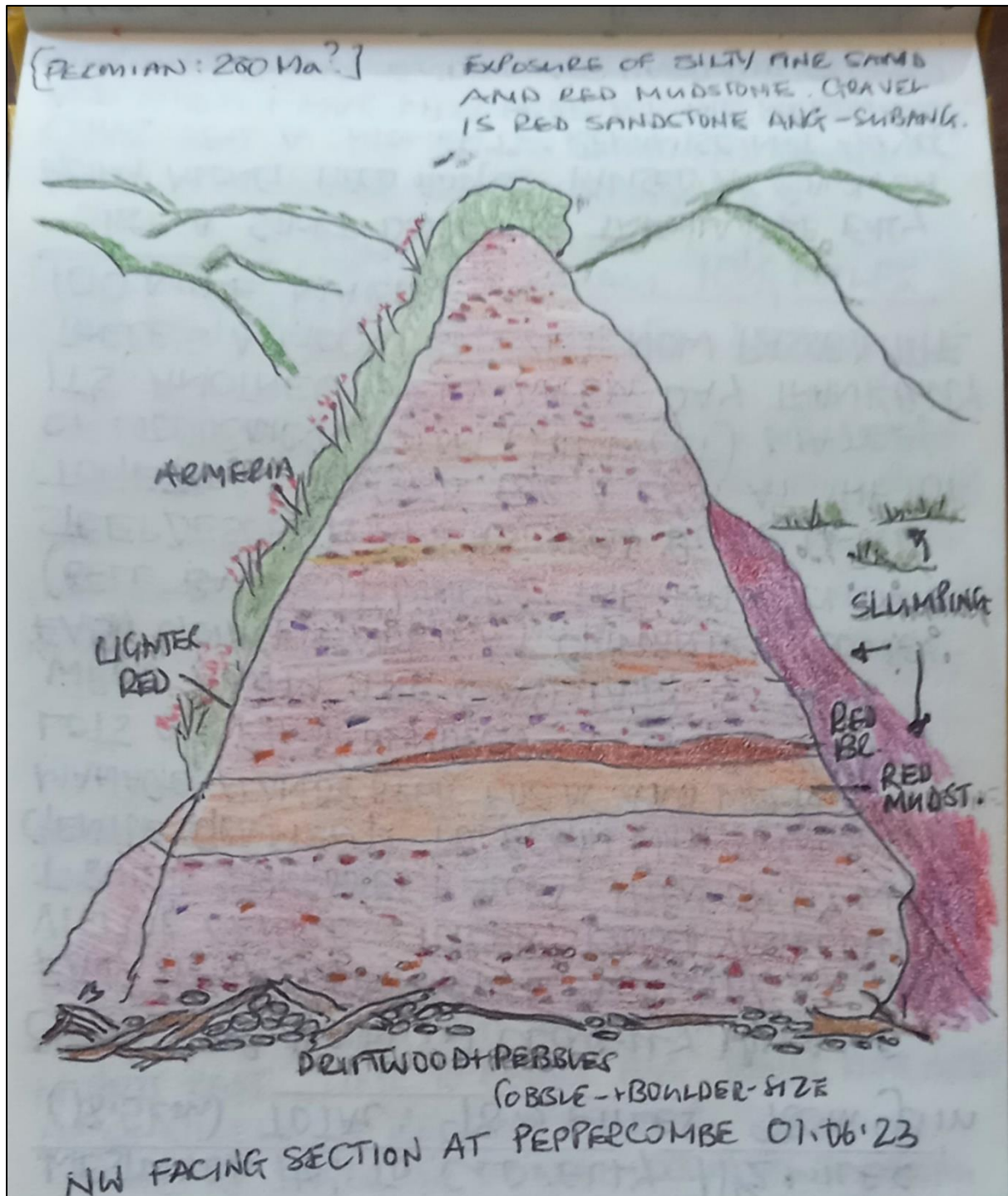
Westward Ho! To Clovelly 11½ miles (18.5 km). Total 98½ miles. 980m elev. gain

Café stop down in Clovelly village. Easy down, but steep back up the cobbles. At the visitor centre – toilets – rinsed yesterday's garments, then on my way again.

Gentle gradients to begin with through a managed landscape of fields and woodland. A lot of rhododendrons, which is a particularly invasive escapee from [Victorian] gardens especially so along this part of the coastline path (and Exmoor). The easier going ended at Gallantry Bower (bell barrow,

BA) where the path follows a succession of steep descents/ascents. Stopped for a rest at Woodbury Point (hillfort, IA). Water. It is another warm day, thankfully, there's a good breeze.

I'm now past the 100-mile mark!

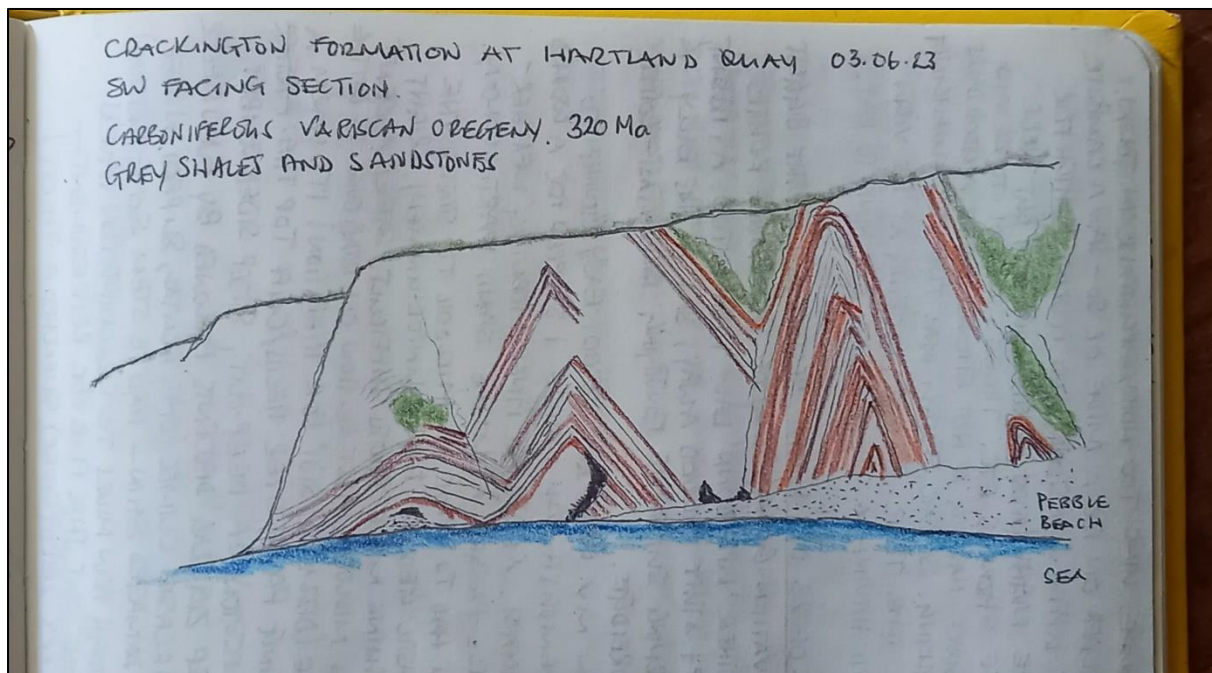


Sketch of geological section at Peppercombe, 01/06/23

Just a short down and up, then more easier going along field edges. Paused at Gawlish Cliffs for a moment to reminisce, I was last here about 40 years ago when staying at the Needham's (Gawlish Cottage). The easy going ended at Hartland Point, the next three miles seemed to be non-stop steep ascents/descents. I was relieved to arrive at Hartland Quay for some refreshment.

Clovelly to Hartland Quay 10¼ miles (16.5 km). Total = 108¾ miles. 1000m elev. gain

A couple of drinks, something to eat (curry), and I made the decision to book a room here for the night rather than continue to walk. It has been a long warm day and tomorrow is going to be harder. Have a good rest, charge electrical stuff, air/dry sleeping kit, rinse/dry garments. Room at the Hartland Quay Hotel, £90 inc. breakfast. Breakfast is at 08:15, a bit later than hoped for, but I can live with it.



Sketch of geological section at Hartland Quay, 03/06/23

3rd June: Day Seven. A bit noisy with punters sat outside, and warm, but eventually got a good night's rest. Time to re-pack bag, things have aired/dried nicely. A relaxed start to the day.

Time to spare before breakfast so walked down to the quay to admire and sketch the amazing geology to be seen there.

***Note:** Folding during the Carboniferous Variscan Orogeny [mudstones and sandstones] known as the Crackington Formation. Variscan Orogeny occurred from the Late Devonian > Early Permian as a result of collision of Gondwana and Laurasia tectonic plates resulting, eventually, in the formation of Pangea, 290 Ma.*

The first five miles of the day were moderately comfortable going. The scenery is awesome, dramatic, spectacular, and the geology is amazing. Had to refrain from taking too many photos. The archaeology is interesting too, passed by Embury Beacon, an IA hillfort that is slowly being lost to cliff erosion. There was a rescue excavation at the site several years ago.

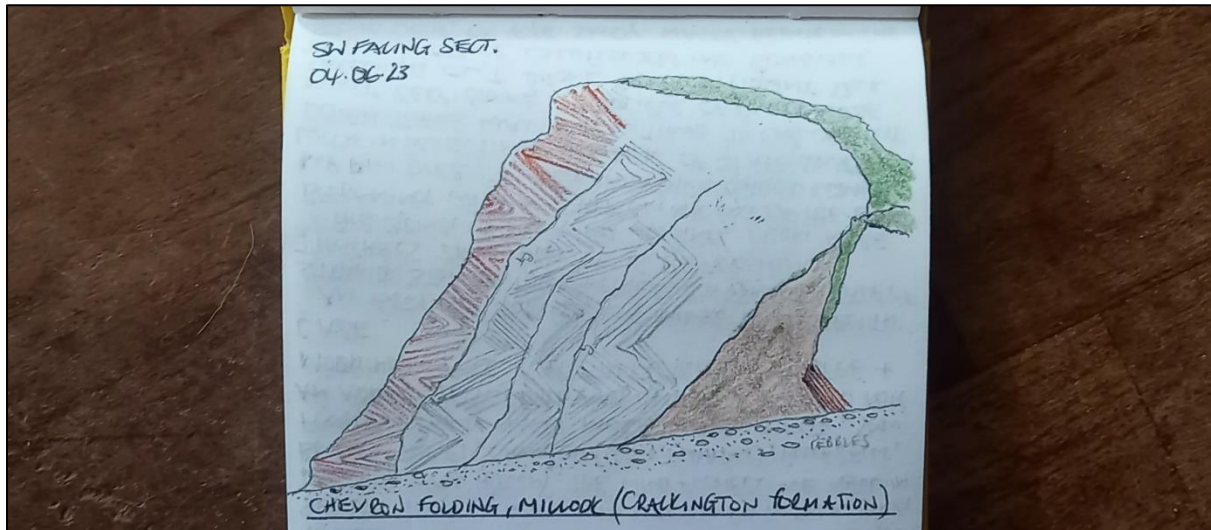
Descended steeply to Wellcombe Mouth, nearly at sea level where I enjoyed some hydrotherapy with my feet in the cool stream. There are some steep climbs (and descents) ahead.

Feet refreshed, drink and nibbles taken, ready for the next, tougher section. A succession of deep-cut, steep sided combes with lots of steps, zig-zag paths, and loose gravelly descents. I have crossed the border into Cornwall (Kernow), North Devon coast path is done and dusted. Stopped at the bottom of another combe to enjoy some more hydrotherapy and refreshment before the next climb, Morwenna's Well to Vicarage Cliff. After all the 'up's' there's some easier going along cliff top and field paths. A brief stop at the radio station. From here on a few more steep-sided combe to traverse but not quite so deeply cut. Eventually, the altitude reduces and easier gradients into Bude. Thirsty, first objective, find a pub and get some refreshment – Thatcher's Zero was good!

Hartland Quay to Bude 15¼miles (24.5 km). Total = 124 miles. 1390m elev. gain

Bude was too noisy – there's a funfair in town. Walked for a mile or so, saw a campsite at Upper Lynstone and booked a pitch for the night, most expensive yet, £15 but there are showers, etc. and there's a lot to be said for having a shower after a good day's walking. So far, today was the best walking of the trip. Relaxed, looking at the view and enjoying a brew after eating.

4th June: Day Eight. Yesterday was the greatest elevation gain (1390m) of the entire SWCP. And another up and down day to come. At present, tarp and stuff packed, sat in the early morning sunshine enjoying breakfast of porridge and coffee.



Sketch of geological section at Millook, 04/06/23

On my way at 08:00, easy going to Widemouth where I stopped for a cooked breakfast. Another fine morning, weatherwise. Passed a little sand martin colony along the route. Just had to stop at Millook to wonder and sketch the amazing geology seen there (chevron folding). Unfortunately, the bright sunshine made photography difficult.

From Millook, a steep ascent, initially on road over to Dizzard. It was warm so stopped to hydrate. A rolling path leads over fields and cliff top to another succession of steep, deep-cut combes with steep zig-zagging descents followed by even steeper staircase climbs (one brutal, slipped on step, and damaged shin – had to stem some bleeding). A few more tough miles to Crackington Haven where I sought out some refreshment, Rattler's Zero worked for me!

Leaving Crackington Haven, some more steep ascents/descents. My preference: zig-zag paths are better than steps every time! Wow! That was a hard six miles from Crackington Haven to Boscastle – seemed to be an awful lot of uphill and steps. It was very warm too. Odd thing was, I did not see many other walkers, it had been quite busy on the path during the morning. I have noticed that there are a lot more step-over stiles since crossing into Cornwall. Anyway, got to Boscastle and I didn't feel like walking any further so located the Youth Hostel there and was able to book a room for the night (£30). Dumped my kit and got a shower. Much refreshed, I ventured out to get something to eat – a ploughman's at the Cobweb Inn washed down with Thatcher's Zero.

Bude to Boscastle 16¾ miles (27 km). Total = 140¼ miles. 1380m elev. gain

5th June: Day Nine. A good night's rest. The sun has rose and the sky is blue – another fine morning. Another warm and sunny day is forecast. Going to walk up to the local shop for some odds and sods, something I should have done yesterday evening.



'Curzyway' drystone walling, 05/06/23

Left Boscastle YHA just before 08:00, the walk to Tintagel was an easy to moderate undulating with lots of good views of sea stacks and little rocky beaches and coves. There were some steeper sections, but these were quite short. Stopped briefly to sketch an interesting drystone wall in a style known as 'curzyway'. The wild flowers are well in bloom, including thrift, red campion, sea campion, bluebells, foxgloves, scabious, ox-eye daisy, and many more. Saw an adder yesterday and caught a glimpse of a lizard this morning. A stop at Tintagel for coffee and cake. An easy-ish couple of miles to Trebarwith Strand where I stopped for another expensive bottle of Thatcher's Zero, but it is refreshing.

The going gets a bit tougher from here beginning with a stiff climb out of the bay. Up and over to drop into a steep-sided combe with some interesting remains of the quarrying/mineral extraction.



Evidence of historical mineral extraction, 05/06/23

Wished there was more time to investigate but have to keep pressing on. There were a couple of guys carrying out a drone survey of the structural remains (I didn't stop to talk to them). A water break in the next shallow combe. There was a little stream, but it was too overgrown for hydrotherapy. The combes, so far, have intersected longer sections of good going. The SWCP continued with the same format, valleys cutting longer sections of cliff top paths. Poked my head into an old mine at Delabole Point/Barrett's Zawn. 'Helluva' draught so I expect the two mines indicated on OS map are connected.

I didn't venture too far underground for obvious reasons. There were plenty of ups and downs but nothing too excessive, nowhere near as strenuous as yesterday. Arrived at Port Isaac c.16:15.

Boscastle to Port Isaac 13¾ miles (22 km). Total = 154½ miles. 1250m elev. gain

Stopped for more expensive refreshments! This time £7.80 for two 330ml bottles of 0% beer. I think I should just go to a local shop and buy a bottle of coke or something! It would be much cheaper. Anyway, the experience wasn't peaceful – some people have too much sun and alcohol and become very loud, especially fat, blonde women of a certain age! And they talk absolute shite! Left the pub and got some fish and chips, sat down in the harbour to eat, but was pestered by flies. I decided to walk on. I thought about finding somewhere I could have a swim or, at least, a dip in the sea. The first spot was too rough so just kept walking, then planned to go on beyond Port Quin but at a spot called Reedy Cliffs found a pleasant bivvy spot and after some pondering decided to stay here, c.18:30. There's a phone signal (just) and I wanted to chat with Roz who is having some issues at work. Time for a brew, I reckoned.

Somewhere near to 25% (quarter) of the way around SWCP.

A phone call to Roz who seemed less stressed and work issues were not as drastic as she had thought, I'm glad all is better, it was playing on my mind a bit today. Almost time to get my head down for the night, but another brew before that. A couple of walkers passed by (father and young son) who stopped for a chat. I managed to scramble down to the sea to wash my feet which was refreshing, clambered back up, got into my bivvy bag, and watched the sunset.

6th June: Day Ten. Awoke and got up before my alarm went off, the sun was rising anyway. Everything felt a bit damp so draped my sleeping stuff over some boulders to air dry while I had some breakfast. It was another lovely morning. Slowly got it together and was on my way about 07:30.

A staircase to climb to start the day's walking, around a headland to Port Quin. A tap was located here so rinsed my garments and refilled water bottles. Ahead, an undulating route to Pentire Point but nothing strenuous. A lot of sea caves spotted including an arch known as Lundy Hole and several enticing coves. Easy gradients from Pentire Head to Polzeath. At a local shop stopped for something to eat and drink. An easy three mile walk around to Rock including an amble across the beach from Brea Hill to catch the ferry across to Padstow (£3). Walked down to the harbour, not impressed! Far too many people milling around and definitely too many dogs! Found a convenience store and purchased food and drink then located somewhere (almost) peaceful to consume it. Updated notes and glanced at the guidebook to see what the next stage had to offer.

Port Isaac to Padstow 11¾ miles (19 km). Total = 166¼ miles. 920m elev. gain

I guess it is worth noting that this was the first of several ferry crossings that I needed to make during the SWCP walk.

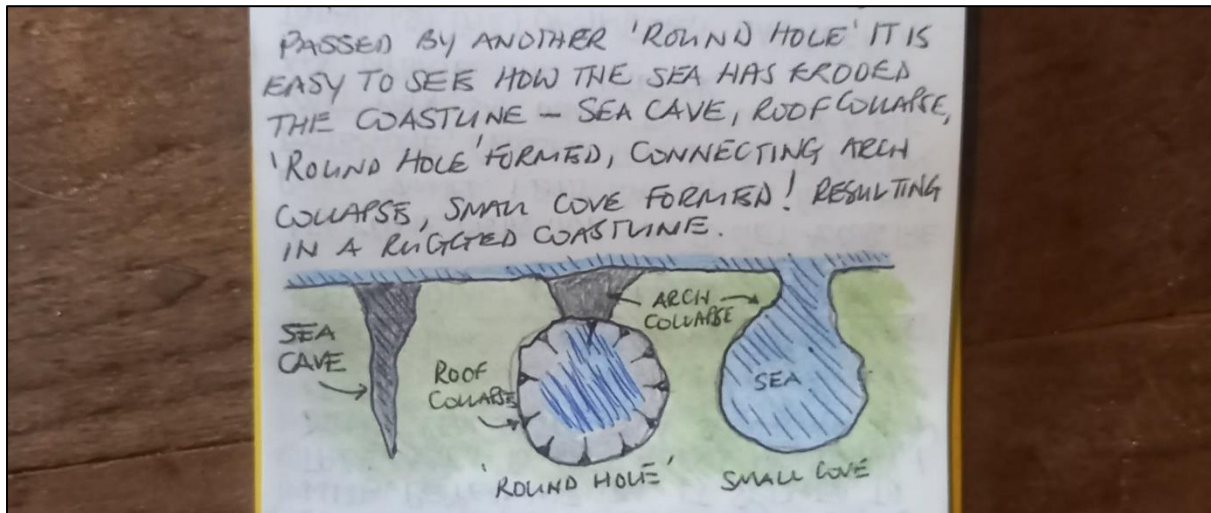
I was out of Padstow as quick as I could. The guidebook describes easier going with gentler gradients, and so it was. A couple of headlands, lots of sandy beaches, and I wanted a dip in the sea. But I also wanted to get some miles done too – mileage won. At (or, near) Trevone an interesting blowhole can be seen (Round Hole, on the OS map). Stopped at a site in Mother Ivey's Bay but they didn't really cater for backpackers and were asking very silly money. So, I kept going. Around Trevoise Head where I passed another blowhole and onwards, passed by some nice beaches to arrive at Treynon Bay. I spotted another Youth Hostel, and they offered camping, and there I pitched for the night (£10). Pitched the tarp, the tide was in, it was still warm and sunny, so I got my dip in the sea. Back at site, a shower, and rinsed garments as usual. Boiled a kettle of water in the YHA kitchen, had some noodles, and purchased a couple of bottles of 0% beer from the bar. Sat by the tarp, ate and drank, and updated my notes. When I looked at the map I'm almost done with this stage. Well over 170 miles done.

7th June: Day Eleven. Didn't have the best night's sleep – fidgety. My left knee aches and my right big toe joint is sore – arthritis on both counts, it'll walk off. Took some ibuprofen before setting off. Sat drinking coffee as the sun rose and letting thing air for a bit before packing it all away again. It is a peaceful time, just birds singing and the lapping of the waves.

It was about one hour of easy walking to Porthcothan and the end of the stage.

Padstow to Porthcothan 13¾ miles (22 km). Total = 180 miles. 640m elev. gain

Passed another 'Round Hole' (see sketch below).



Sketch from notebook, 07/06/23

An easy/moderate route to Newquay. The slopes were short and gradients gentle. Some interesting geology along the walk and archaeology too, a hillfort at Griffin's Point and several barrows, one of which was perched precariously on the cliff edge indicating significant cliff erosion and subsidence in the last few millenia. From Whipsidery the route becomes increasingly urban (and unpleasant), wated time in stores trying, unsuccessfully, to find coffee bags, so will make do with peppermint tea. It seemed to take ages to get across Newquay, I didn't realise what a sprawling town it is.

Porthcothan to Newquay 11¾ miles (18 km). Total = 191¼ miles. 580m elev. gain

My prime objective now was to get across the River Gannel, I did that by the Fern Café footbridge. Across the dunes to regain the SWCP, sat down to chill for a while and updated notebook. So far, today of interest has been a sighting of a cirl bunting along with stonechats and rock pipits. And I've met some chilled people: a very chatty woman, an interested German woman and a van driver who stopped alongside me to say "Respect, man" with a fist pump!

Plenty of time in the day to press on further. Continued along the SWCP following gentle gradients over headlands, beaches, and dunes. Got to Holywell and tried to find a campsite, one was asking £41/night – I walked on! Decided on wild camping again but had to clear a military training area beforehand, so kept on walking. Eventually, found a spot at the north end of Perran Beach (not too far away from Perranporth). Along the was sighted seal(s) and a peregrine falcon. As I wrote my notes the sun was setting, and I was tired. Phoned Roz.

8th June: Day Twelve. A good night's sleep, best one (wild camping) of the journey, so far. Hopefully, I can walk along the beach to Perranporth rather than go over the dunes, time will tell. Breakfast and packed away. Quick look at 'caves' in small rock cliff in area of shafts/mines, as indicated on OS map (NE Perran Sands). The cave entrances were gated.

Set-off along the beach, c.07:30 but couldn't make it all the way to Perranporth, had to go up and over a small, jutting headland. Strong winds created quite a sandstorm across the beach into town.

Newquay to Perranporth 11¼ mile (18 km). Total = 202½ miles. 580m elev. gain

A little time to spare waiting for shops to open (wanted some camping gas) and I had arrived in Perranporth at 08:15. Found some coffee bags, topped up water bottles and had a cooked breakfast. Rinsed garments in the river at the beach. Got some gas and set-off on my wanderings again.

A steep climb out of the town leads to a landscape created by historical mineral extraction – quarrying and mining – spoil heaps and shafts (Cligga). In the area surrounding St. Agnes, winding houses, and other workings. Coffee break at Trevaunance Cove.

Once the climb out of the village/town is done the walking along the cliff top is comfortable going, although the wind over St. Agnes Head was ferocious! The remaining standing structures at Wheal Coates were absolutely amazing and a distraction. Descended to Chapel Porth where I stopped for tea and a piece of flapjack at the NT café. There was no charge, the people behind the counter had great respect for my undertaking – how good is that. I've also had a few comments regarding the compactness of my 40-litre bag.

A steady climb up from Chapel Porth and a rather non-descript walk over the cliff top. There were two lots of steep steps at valleys. The problem being the very strong and blustery wind that blew me off-balance several times. Dropped down into Portreath and kept going, the town has nothing going for it, although I later regretted not getting something to drink at least.

Perranporth to Portreath 12 miles (19.5 km). Total = 214½ miles. 880m elev. gain

On the climb out of Portreath met a guy going the other way around SWCP, he was on Day 28 of his journey, fist pump of respect! Stopped for water, and phone call with Roz, catch up on notes. When I say “non-descript” it's probably because I'm getting rather blasé about the amazing coastal scenery that is before my eyes every day.

As usual, a climb out of town, comfortable going over the cliff top with a couple of steep-sided valley's to break it up – I am not a fan of steps especially when being buffeted by strong winds. I decided to change into sandals as sand has rubbed between toes (left foot), so I put on some healing cream and let my feet air. A really well-maintained path between Bassett's Cove and Reskajeague made for some rapid progress. As it was now approaching 19:00, I decided to look for a spot to camp for the night. It was not easy to find somewhere sheltered from the wind. Eventually, settled for a spot on Hudder Down, it was a bit close to a road and I saw dog walkers, but it will have to do. Dilemma was tarp or bivvy – tarp it was. All set-up settled down to eat and drink when some local youth's turned up, they were a bit surprised to see me and left, but now I'm uneasy. Too late in the day to pack up now – will have to see if anything occurs.

9th June: Day Thirteen. My unease was unfounded, of course, and I had an okay night. There was some light rain overnight but by morning everything had dried. It is still windy, and the sky is grey. Going to start the day in shoes and socks but might change into sandals later when I get to the dunes section over the next headland. Good path over the headland (dog walkers just arriving at Godrevy). Spotted a seal at Godrevy Point. Gwithian to Hayle Towans, it was high tide so had to walk through the dunes, and it was 4 hours of tedium, up and down through soft sand, just energy sapping. Finally arrived at Hayle and had a breakfast stop.

There was a long walk around from Hayle to get to the Causeway across the River Hayle and back along the estuary towards St. Ives. Lots of tarmac. I had changed into sandals while crossing the dunes and decided to stick with them. The route to St. Ives was largely uninspiring, lots of road, more sand dunes, overgrown paths, residential dwellings, and urbanisation. Seemed to take forever. Got to St. Ives

and straight away found an art shop selling coloured pencils. Got something to snack on and a bottle of water and sat down at the harbour.

Portreath to St. Ives 18 miles (29 km). Total = 232½ miles, < 400 miles to go. 810m elev. gain

When the faffing was done got on with the walk ahead. Rain is forecast for later so will see how far I get today.

Once away from the town the route became far more interesting. Narrow, stoney paths zig-zagged up, down, and around a rugged and scenic coastline and cliffs. Picking a way through jumbled boulders slowed progress, never going to be quick. Highlight of the day, at Trevalgan Cliff, was seeing and hearing a couple of choughs with their vibrant red bills and legs – superb!

Got to just beyond Wicca Cliff (Carn Porth) when it started to rain so I hastily found a camping spot. It was a bit close to the path, but it will do. It was a bit earlier than I intended, but I don't want to get a soaking. Sod's law that as soon as camp was set the rain eased off, but not for long.

10th June: Day Fourteen. There were more rain showers through the night, but I was warm and dry under the tarp, and in my bivvy bag for good measure. Awoke and the first thing to do was to have a wash in a nearby stream, it was refreshing. Back to the tarp, started packing stuff away, some breakfast, and prepare for the day ahead. Hopefully, it will be a brighter day, weatherwise.

More zigzagging up, down, and around the rugged coastline path, it was not so easy now everything was wet. The going eased after Gurnard Head, but there were some steep valleys to traverse too. Got a niggle in my right calf muscle (cramp/strain) which slowed me down. Stopped for a drink, and took some painkillers, and it sort of eased, but I took it steady anyway. Saw a small group of choughs within a mixed gathering of corvid's. Also, red admiral butterflies (*see Addendum, 04/08/2023*), cinnabar moths, and hawk moth caterpillars. Got to Pendeen Watch and decided to walk up to Pendeen for something to eat and to replenish water supplies. Of course, I went via the longer route!

St. Ives to Pendeen Watch 13¼ miles (21 km). Total = 245¾ miles. 1100m elev. gain

Rather than retracing my steps I took a direct route through Lower Boscaswell (Geevor Mine). I had hoped to get around Land's End today, but not so sure at the moment. Well, as it turned out, didn't really get too much further. Rejoined the SWCP as intended and walked on. All of a sudden, I felt very tired – it had been a tough couple of days, and I was a bit concerned about the calf muscle. Got to Botallack Mine and decided to bail out for the day and made my way to a nearby campsite. Trevaylor Campsite, £16/night, there were showers, washroom, laundry facilities, and somewhere to charge power packs. I felt it prudent to allow more rest time.

So had a shower, rinsed clothes, aired sleep kit, wrote some notes, sketched, and generally chilled out for the afternoon. I'm thinking I probably won't push the mileage for the next couple of days or so. On the short distance I covered today there were plenty of reminders of Cornish mining heritage – Geevor, Levant, and Botallack, and there's a lot more to come. Also spotted along the SWCP; wheatears, several species of gulls, egrets, oystercatchers, shelduck, cormorant, rock pipits, skylarks, goldfinches, dunnocks, pied and grey wagtails, orange tip butterflies, and of course, stonechats.

11th June: Day Fifteen. Not the most inspiring of mornings, it was grey with low cloud and mizzle. The tarp's wet, but on the plus side the calf is okay, not brilliant but okay and good to go (gently).

Very slowly got it together. I've decided to wear Bridgedale Stormsocks as my feet got very wet yesterday. Rain jacket too, probably going to feel quite warm. Annoyingly, I've misplaced the stuff sac for my mattress – I've put it somewhere and I'm sure it will turn up.

Botallack to Sennen Cove, the day started in low cloud and mizzle, not great for the views. Followed a track from the campsite towards the coast to rejoin the SWCP. My smartphone does not like wet weather

(as I experienced when walking Offa's Dyke Trail in April) which was frustrating. However, no problem getting back on route. In general, the paths were good, all the usual zigzagging up, down, and around the coastline but there were long cliff top sections too. Best of all there was none of the boulder hopping of the previous couple of days. There were some short scrambles but nothing strenuous. There were some steeper descents/ascents across and around valleys, but not too many. Had to remove my rain jacket after walking up from Cape Cornwall, far too warm and humid. As the morning progressed the early mist started to lift. There was a bit of beach walking approaching Sennen. And more choughs were spotted.

Absolutely made the right decision to rest up yesterday, calf muscle is holding up well, using walking poles more diligently today and being careful not to over-extend. So far, so good. Stopped for a café break at Sennen and changed my socks. Then an easy mile from Sennen Cove to Land's End along a well-trodden path. As expected, it is heaving! Didn't tarry too long and walked on. Near Trevilley Cliff (Gweeb) picked up another struck flint. The walk from Land's End to Porthcurno was along quite good paths, there were a few steep bits but nothing extreme. Steep steps led down to Porthcurno. There had been some super granite cliffs and tors that made me want to stop and sketch but I kept on walking, maybe tomorrow. Lots of honeysuckle on the cliffs.

Pendeen Watch to Porthcurno 15½ miles (25 km). Total = 261¼ miles. 900m elev. gain

Stopped at Treen Cliff Campsite (£15 + 50p shower token). Located close to SWCP. It was a pleasant walk today and I'm so glad that the calf muscle is not a problem although will still take it easy for a day or so. There was a pizza van onsite so that is what I had for supper, and very nice it was too, washed down with a can of apple fizz.

A chance tomorrow to restock in Penzance where I have booked a room at the Premier Inn there, bit expensive, c.£150, but it's my treat to me! I had passed by the Minack Theatre, but it was closed to visitors (as there was a performance).

12th June: Day Sixteen. Could not believe it! Walk 260 miles to a campsite in Cornwall to have my night disturbed by some bloke snoring in a tent nearly ten metres away! Could have stayed home and listened to Roz.

The usual 06:00 alarm, started getting together at a leisurely pace this morning as a shorter walk was planned, about 11 miles to Penzance. Shoes are beginning to look a bit frayed around the edges after the boulder hopping. Left the campsite about 08:30.

A short walk along a bridleway to regain SWCP and on the cliff top path. Passed IA hillfort, Treryn Dinas, to Penberth Cove with a fine stone fish landing area. A descent/ascent leads to a narrow, undulating cliff top path that is very overgrown, limiting any views, and rendering poles useless. Another descent/ascent at Porthguarnon.

<p>Note: SD card has corrupted which is very annoying and a problem if I've lost all my photos of the trip so far!</p>

The path description above set the tone for the rest of the morning, and it was especially uncomfortable when the vegetation comprised gorse, bramble, bracken, and nettles. There were some rare open sections and a patch of woodland. And there were boggy bits. The half-mile of boulder hopping approaching Lamorna Cove were a welcome change. Stopped at the cove for a cream tea.

From the cove, another short section of boulder hopping before the path opens out to be quite pleasant. Disappointingly though soon back into dense vegetation. Problem is that you can never get into a good walking rhythm following these narrow, overgrown paths. More boggy sections too. As habitation was approached the condition of the paths improved. The final road section into Mousehole and Penzance

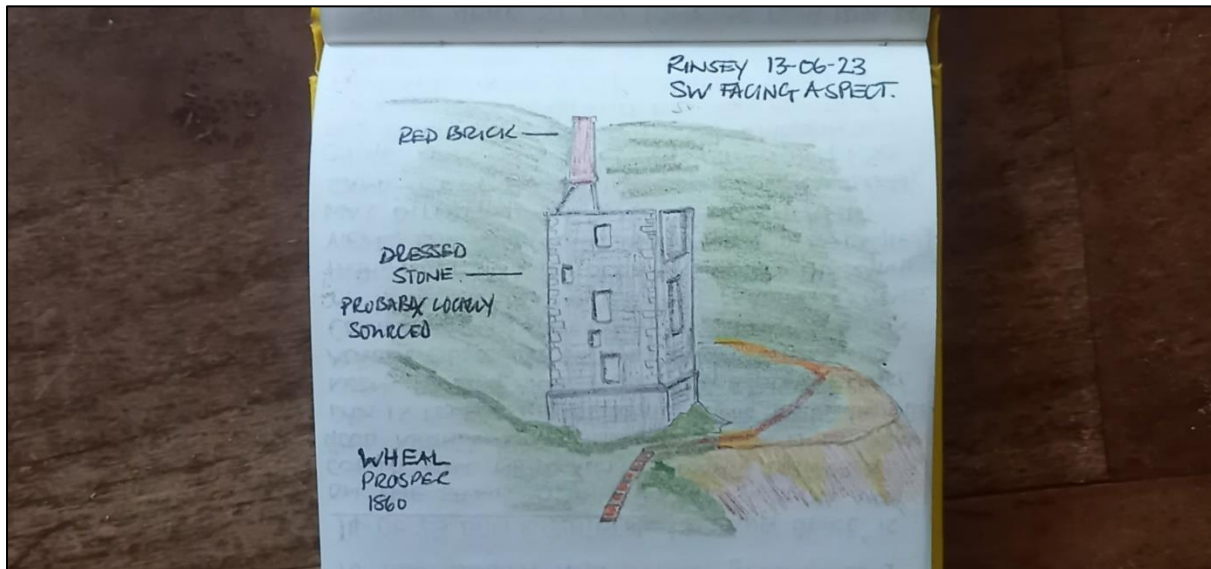
was almost a relief, but the novelty soon wore off. I was glad to arrive at the Premier Inn. A largely tedious day's walking, another to add to the boring sections of the SWCP.

Porthcurno to Penzance 11½ miles (18.5 km). Total = 272¾ miles. 550m elev. gain

Shopping trip to restock food supplies, etc. and food/drink for the evening. I'd already had a shower and rinsed garments, now time to sit back and chill for the evening.

13th June: Day Seventeen. I need to try and get the SD card problem sorted, so a late start to the walking day. So, waited for the shops to open. Eventually, I was advised to forget SD card, save to internal storage and back-up to Google Photos (wi-fi required), and take out the corrupt SD card (keep it safe and check when PC available when back home). Nothing I can do until then.

Started walking about 10:30, from Penzance to Marazion easy three miles along the sea front. The SWCP then climbs to a gravel path (short diversion due to cliff subsidence). It was easy going to Perranuthnoe where I stopped for tea and cake. In general, the paths remained good to Prussia Cove, there were some overgrown, narrow sections and along the way more undulations, climbs, and descents to Praa Sands. Thankfully, the overgrown sections were wide enough to keep a reasonable pace.



Wheal Prosper, (built 1860) at Rinsey, 13/06/23

From Praa Sands, up and over a number of headlands with some steep ascents/descents but nothing excessive. At Rinsey, a fine restored winding house that I stopped to quickly sketch (above) and a bit further on another unrestored structure at Trewavas Head. Got delayed at a stile when I met a couple who asked about my walk and then wanted to know more details about kit, etc. – they were very complementary and remarked that I was an “inspiration”. It’s a curious thing but the last few miles always seem to take forever. Located a campsite at Mill Lane, Porthleven and paid for a nights pitch (£10). It was attached to a pub so had a beer 0% and wrote up notes.

Penzance to Porthleven 13¾ miles (22 km). Total = 286½ miles. 790m elev. gain

It had been a pleasant days walking; I could see the sea (most of the time) and the paths were reasonably comfortable to follow and keep a good rhythm going. Met some friendly and inquisitive people along the way too. Chilling at the campsite after eating (noodles) and a peppermint tea. Phone call to Roz, some sketching, almost ready to get my head down, just a bit of tidying to do.

14th June: Day Eighteen. “Snoring bloke” is on the same site, and I’m pitched 25m away and could still hear him! It didn’t really disturb a good night’s rest though. Another fine day is forecast, it got quite humid yesterday afternoon. Packing away and getting some breakfast ready.

Departed about 08:00. Comfortable walking to Gunwalloe, a mixture of hard-paved road/footpath leading onto gravel tracks and paths, mostly with open panoramic views. Loe Bar, comprised sand and gravel, was different, I'm not fussed about sand, it gets everywhere. At 09:45, it's warm already, the sea does look very inviting. So far, the gradients have been easy to moderate. Up and over headland to Winnianton Farm, Gunwalloe Church Cove (NT) where I stopped for tea and flapjack. More choughs spotted.

Headlands and coves, short steep ups and downs, long sections of cliff top paths within a beautiful landscape and stunning views.

Climb up from Mullion Cove to enter the Lizard NNR. Interesting scramble to Kynance Cove, skylarks singing and wild thyme in flower. Tea and ginger beer at Kynance Cove, a bit of a sun trap. It's been super walking, so far today.



The Lizard NNR, 14.06/23

It was quite a clamber up from the cove back onto the headland/cliff top path to Lizard Point where there is a real sense of direction change “going around the Lizard” like turning a corner!

Porthleven to Lizard Point 13¾ miles (22 km). Total = 300¼ miles. 760m elev. gain

Stopped for a crab sandwich with tea and juice. Walked on for another three miles or so along narrower paths sometimes overgrown away from the tourist traps. Spied a campsite and made a beeline for it. Gwavas Jersey Farm (Cadgwith Campsite) £10 for a nights pitch (special price for SWCP backpackers). An old-style farm campsite in a field with more basic facilities. Paid my dues at the farmhouse, got back to the field and pitched tarp – needed to dry out a bit. I do like a shower after a day of walking, it has been warm and sticky again today. Sitting down with a brew enjoying the warm evening sunshine and drying breeze. Useful as I've rinsed me smalls. I really enjoyed today's walking!

15th June: Day Nineteen. The dawn chorus starts about 04:00 and seems exuberant, especially gulls and corvids. No matter. A good night's rest and the sun is rising. There is a slight breeze. Sitting down, preparing breakfast, and slowly packing ready for another day of walking.

The campsite has self-built amenities – compost toilets, showers, etc. – the whole thing has a rural feel to it, and I like it!

It's a nice feeling walking within the natural environment and a simpler way of travelling, almost philosophical, at one with your own thoughts. The busier locations come as an unwelcome distraction.

Left camp c.07:45. Headlands and coves; up, down, and over, some bits are steeper than others, paths are, on occasion, overgrown, at other times, are open, wide, and easy going. The views are good too.

Of especial interest, Devil's Frying Pan, a cave/sea arch near Cadgwith; and the structural remains of serpentine works at Poltesco.



Devil's Frying Pan, near Cadgwith, 15/06/23

Stopped for a sip of water at Kennack Sands, too early for the café to be open. A steep descent into Downas Valley followed by a very steep, stepped ascent that was narrow and very overgrown – a complete bastard. Needed to stop for water at the top – phew...!

Thankfully, there was a long section of undulating cliff path to recover a bit. Approached Coverack via the sculpture park route, I must admit that I didn't see any I guess I passed them by. Stopped for lunch in the village.

A change of elevation leaving Coverack, a low headland (Lowland Point) with easy gradients. Spotted a group of seals bobbing just off the beach. The terrain changed again when the quarries were reached. A path closure forces an inland diversion. A steep climb leads to a poorly waymarked route through a village and across fields, some footpaths marked on OS map no longer exist. Lots of road tramping with steep descents/ascents, and it is warm again. Eventually, arrived at Porthallow, not much choice for refreshments, luckily the pub was open, but no food served, glass of Rattler's Zero and a bag of crisps.

Lizard Point to Porthallow 15¼ miles (24.5 km). Total = 315½ miles – halfway round the SWCP. 900m elev. gain [No wonder it took longer than expected, I thought it was only 13¼ miles! No matter]

On my way again. Didn't get too far when I came across another sign stating "Footpath Closed" so another diversion followed, this time better waymarked. Arrived at Gillan Creek, no ferry, so walked around, then I decided on a slight detour to Helford. Unfortunately, by the time I got there the ferry service was finished for the day. Stuffed and in a dilemma – first ferry tomorrow is at 09:30! Decided to get something to eat and drink at a local hostel and consider the situation.

Nothing for it but another wild camp, although finding somewhere suitable would be a problem. Walked to some woods but the slopes were all very steep. Found a little chapel in the woods but though better not. Eventually, I located a flattish spot at the base of a larch tree, cleared away branches, twigs, and cones and got into the bivvy bag. It was now late, and still very warm. There were, also, a lot of midges and mossies!

16th June: Day Twenty. Well! The midges and mossies proved to be too much of a distraction and annoyance, so I got up again, bundled everything up, and made my way back to the little chapel, and there I spent the rest of the night, and very comfortable it was.



The little chapel at Pengwedhen Woodland Walk, near Helford, 16/06/23

I got up before the alarm went off at 06:00 just in case someone turned up and packed all away. Sat on the step and made breakfast/coffee. I've plenty of time to spare before the first ferry. It was a very tranquil morning, and it was nice just to sit and think for a while. The little chapel/shrine is dedicated to St. Francis and is located on the banks of the Helford river in Pengwedhen Woods (built by Leo O'Neil). The rivers Fal and Helford are examples of rias, drowned river valleys.

I wandered around, found some toilets, and went to the ferry point to wait. I had a paddle and washed my feet in the estuary.

Across the river (£7) and on my way to Falmouth along a rolling path and nothing to excess. Stopped at Treworgan for a water break, it is warm and humid again. I can see Falmouth in the distance. Stopped again at Maenporth for tea and cake. From Maenporth, the route followed undulating tarmac paths, and hard-packed gravel tracks, sometimes a bit overgrown. Arrived at Custom House Quay, Falmouth and purchased ticket(s) for tomorrow for Falmouth/St. Mawes/Place (£15), one price for two ferries. First ferry leaves at 10:00 am. Met up with Hazel and Gryffin.

Porthallow to Falmouth 16 miles (26 km). Total = 331½ miles – 300 miles to go! 770m elev. gain

Stayed the night in Penryn with Hazel and Gryffin. A chance to chat. Also. Stuff needs charging, I need a shower, and there is stuff to be washed. And I can send a postcard to my mother.

17th June: Day Twenty-One. Awoke, got up, usual stuff, sorted myself out, started packing. Need coffee.

Breakfast done, bag packed, said goodbye to Hazel and Gryffin and on my way c.08:00. Caught the bus to Falmouth (I've actually used my concessionary bus pass at last). Got some more coffee and pastries and sat down to wait for the St. Mawes ferry. Sat back and watched people and boats.

All aboard the ferry, and the next one, arrived at Place c.10:45. Ready to go walking!

At the Church of St. Anthony, Roseland, a stone medieval coffin, and some graffiti in the form of crosses on either side of the doorway.



Stone medieval coffin, near St. Anthony Church, Roseland, 17/06/23

Easy to moderate paths, tracks, and roads over low headlands and cliffs, and passing beaches along the way. It's cloudier today, but still warm and humid. Let's hope it stays dry. On the way observed cormorants, shags, and seals.

In Portscatho went to the local shop to buy something to eat and drink for lunch and sat down on the harbour slipway to consume it. The next part of the walk becomes more undulating, and some parts, were more vegetated. A stiff, steep climb up to Nare Head, stopped for some water.

The next bit was a 'sting in the tail' a rollercoaster path, zigzagging, up, down, around, and over a couple of headlands before dropping into Portloe, which appears all of a sudden.

Falmouth to Portloe 13¾ miles (22 km). Total = 345¼ miles. 860m elev. gain

Thirsty, found the Ship Inn in the village and went in for some refreshment. I inquired about B&B, "fully booked" was the reply, "but you can camp in the beer garden later" the landlord added. That I thought was an excellent plan and decided to stay for a pub meal. Spent the evening in conversation with others in the pub who had asked about my walking venture. At sunset, I pitched the tarp, phoned Roz, and got my head down for the night.

18th June: Day Twenty-Two. A decent night's rest. Awoke early and set about getting ready for the day to come. The disabled toilets were left open so was in a position to use the facilities, so washed myself and yesterday's garments. All packed and breakfasted time to move on. Cloudy this morning but still warm and humid, not much breeze in the beer garden, there were midges too. Mevagissey was the first target of the day, the guidebook suggests an 'up and down' start from Portloe – probably similar to yesterday's approach to the village – will soon find out.

It was indeed a rolling path, up, down, and around, some steep, some dense vegetation, with no long sections of cliff top to recover and catch a breath, all the way to Portholland. Following on there more steep climbs but with longer section to recover (a bit!) And there were steps.

Yesterday I had come across several gated stiles too tight to negotiate a way through with a rucksack and had to climb over them. It hasn't been like that today, so far.

A brief stop to apply some Sudocreme to a scuffed elbow (damaged a few days ago when I took a tumble) and while I was stopped time to re-hydrate and energise (water and wine gums) for the next steep section over towards Hemmick Beach (Greeb Point).

Most of the path turned out to be quite unpleasant with thick, clawing undergrowth, mostly of bracken. It was a long slog from Hemmick Beach to Dodman Point with even more vegetation and steps. Thankfully, a long recovery stretch down from Dodman Point to Gorran Haven with a little 'kicker' up and over just before reaching the village where I stopped for some lunch.

Comfortable going, after the usual up and over from the village to Portmellow then a road section up and over to Mevagissey. There was a bit of drizzly rain so found a pub for refreshment and shelter, very busy.

Portloe to Mevagissey 12 miles (19.5 km). Total = 357¼ miles. 890m elev. gain

It was only 15:30 so continued on my way. Another rollercoaster section with steep ups and downs, at times narrow and densely vegetated, and there were lots and lots of steps, but I kept on going. The problem was that I couldn't find anywhere suitable to camp, and it was becoming increasingly urbanised. I ended up in Charlestown and I'd had enough, it was 19:30. I decided to find a B&B somewhere and found a room at the Rashleigh Arms (£90), after all, it is Father's Day! And I needed a shower. Washed garments as usual, everything out to air/dry and electrics on charge. I didn't bother with eating but needed to venture out to find a phone signal to call home. Had a drink in the pub, then up to my room to write up the day's activities. It had been a good day of walking, probably 20 miles covered.

19th June: Day Twenty-Three. Seagulls are very noisy. Time to get out of bed and re-pack all my stuff before breakfast.

On my way about 08:30. Comfortable, undulating c.3-mile stroll to Polmear. Surprisingly green, although most of it was golf course so not suitable for camping. A road section detouring around an industrial area, then through Par Sands (including another holiday park) which wasn't great, but it is the route I suppose.

Mevagissey to Polmear 11¾ miles (19 km). Total = 369 miles. 690m elev. gain

Ever onwards... [Phoned Roz to wish her a happy birthday!]

Usual stuff, cliff top at low elevation dropping to a small cove then back up t'other side. Coffee and cake at Polkerris.

A pleasant morning's walk to Fowey with the usual up, down, and over's, all to be expected. The paths were busy today, lots of people milling around. Stopped every now and then to chat (people were curious about my walk). Tapas in Fowey then another ferry.

This afternoon's walking might be a bit lumpier. And so it was, another rollercoaster path with lots of up and down, and some climbs were bigger than others...and there was a lot of steps. But it was enjoyable although the path was busy, and people did want to chat...that was okay. Polperro was another of those places that you don't see until you actually arrive in it. Stopped for a quick drink, it was warm, and I was thirsty.

Polmear to Polperro 13 miles (21 km). Total = 382 miles. 940m elev. gain

Decided to head inland to a campsite at Tencreek and followed the road around rather than SWCP...it was very steep. Got to the top, turned right, and dropped down to Porthallow (briefly rejoining SWCP), from this beach I made an error – not checking OS map properly and wasting time (c.½ hour) and effort. Another steep climb, and I had to retrace my steps. Back at Porthallow, checked OS map, and set off in the right direction. Up another steep road, onto a track, another steep climb to arrive, eventually, at Tencreek Campsite. My heart sank when I realised it was another holiday park, but I was stuffed and tired. It was getting late, so I had to go for it. Found the reception (in the bar) and paid for a pitch (£29.99, ouch!). And it was shit, just full of grockles. But I had to make the most of it. Pitched tarp to

allow it to dry out, went for a shower, rinsed my garments, and put them into a tumble drier (£1/15 mins.), and phoned Roz again. Drier finished, returned to tarp, and had something to eat and drink. Wrote up the day's activities in my notebook.

Might need the bivvy tonight as rain is forecast, possibly heavy. Tomorrow, rather than backtrack to regain SWCP might just follow a road down to West Looe and rejoin the path there.

Typical holiday park just full of noisy, fat wankers!

20th June: Day Twenty-Four. It did rain last night but not heavily, and I was in the bivvy bag just in case, and very cosy it was. The rain stopped in the early hours and a breeze picked up to dry-out the tarp. To allow it to dry some more, going to have breakfast before packing stuff away. Oh dear, the last coffee bag!

Note: coastal erosion has been evident in many places along the SWCP. There are a lot of sections of the path that seem to be very fragile, a good storm or two and they might be gone. The route that I am currently following may not be possible to repeat in a few years' time!

An easy walk down to West Looe, passing a little cross in the hedgerow at Portlooe, it took about ½-hour and was probably the quickest and easiest way to regain the SWCP. Stopped for a cooked (veggie) breakfast in the town.

From Looe to Seaton, a lot of tarmac, urbanisation, although the last mile or so to Seaton is actually on a cliff top/edge path. There were, of course, plenty of up's and down's, and some were steep. Weatherwise, it was warm and humid again.

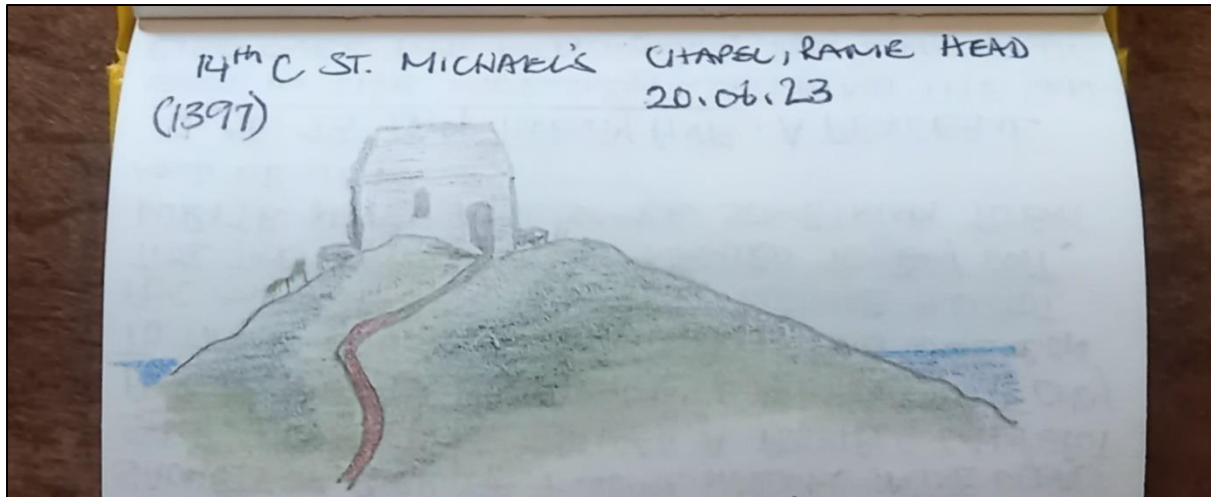
And another road section, then back onto path, steep climb onto cliff top then roll along to Portwrinkle. There is a pleasant breeze to keep me cool. At Portwrinkle, stopped for a bite to eat and a drink.

Polperro to Portwrinkle 13 miles (21 km). Total = 395 miles. 860m elev. gain

From Portwrinkle, a climb up to the cliff/headland, across another golf course, the path undulating comfortably. Got to (or, near) Tregantile the path over the firing range was open so over I went. The 19th century fort is an imposing, grey building (no photo as it is still in MOD use). The SWCP then follows a long and boring road section. The scenery is marred by a ramshackle collection of 'shacks and sheds' along with associated 'private' and 'keep out' signs, not a great place! Eventually, the path passes by the residential/holiday 'home' shambles to climb, once again, onto a headland, this leading to Rame Head. There is an interesting little chapel perched atop the head and I stopped to sketch (and photograph) the structure. I had to go and have a closer investigation, so extra steps to climb/descend.

Medieval period, built during the 14th century (c.1397) and dedicated to St. Michael. A scheduled monument (LE: 1004510), the chapel is Listed Grade II (61698). . The chapel is a simple single-cell rectangular building, built of slate and granite rubble under a gabled roof. There is a single door on the north (landward) side, single-lancet windows in the north and south walls, a smaller lancet high under the west gable, and a large east window looking along the coast towards Plymouth. The windows are very deep and splayed, but no tracery remains at all, just the stone window framing. The interior has no discernable decoration save for a small ledge beside the east window, and no floor, just earth and rock underfoot. The roof is a basic barrel vault. The interior and exterior were likely whitewashed but is now plain stone (Historic England, online accessed 10th July 2023).*

It would have made a great little 'camp' spot were it not full of horse shit. And it was an obviously very popular visitor location, there were a lot of people milling around.



The chapel on Rame Head, 20/06/23

Retraced my steps, used the public facilities at the Coastguard Lookout and then returned to the SWCP. Walked to Penlee Point keeping an eye open for likely camping spots for the night. Came across an interesting little grotto that would have been a good but probably an oft visited location so not practical or sensible for wild camp. Backtracked a few hundred metres to a gravel track I noticed earlier, went along the track for a short distance and found a suitable spot. Sat for a while writing notes, a fisherman passed by (I had noticed him earlier when at the grotto). I didn't see anyone else so pitched the tarp.

Just getting comfortable (c.20:30), tarp up, time to eat/drink, and chill out before getting my head down, when another group of people passed by (obviously off on a fishing trip), I couldn't believe it. Never mind.

I have passed 400 miles!

21st June: Day Twenty-Five. In spite of my slight uneasiness the night passed by relatively peacefully. The fishing group did return but paid no attention to me.

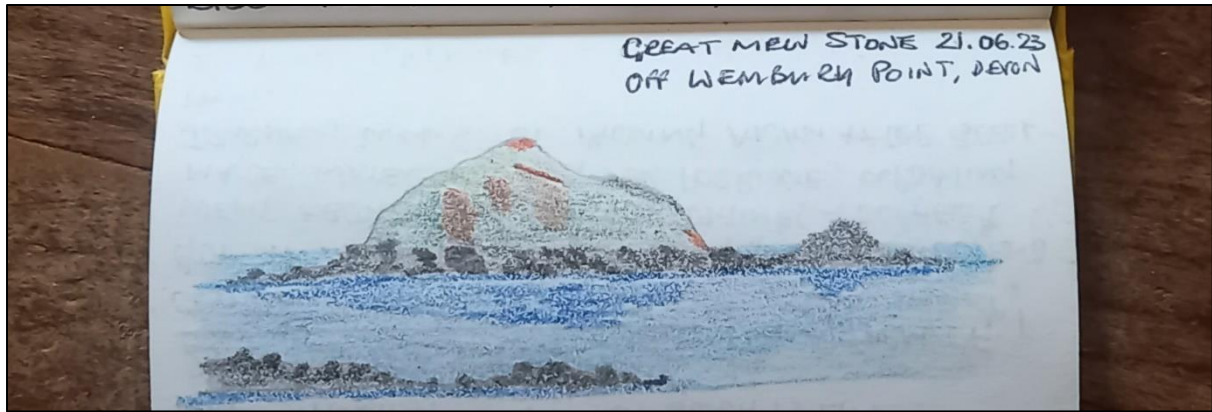
Got up, washed, breakfasted, and packed away. Just a few more miles of Cornish coastline, the across the River Tamar to (south) Devon. Easy walking to Cawsand/Kingsand, took shelter from a heavy but short shower of rain, onto well-maintained paths through Mount Edgecumbe Country Park. That was until I came across some path diversions due to cliff erosion and landslides, and a fallen tree – bit of a faff because there were several likely-looking paths and not great waymarking. About two hours walking and arrived at Cremyll, the ferry was already there so stepped on board and across the river to Plymouth. The entire Cornish coastline completed and now back in Devon on the south-side!

Portwrinkle to Plymouth 12¾ miles (20.5 km). Total = 407¾ miles. 700m elev. gain

Found a nice café for breakfast, updated my journal, and set-off for the next ferry. Walked along Hoe Waterfront – nothing to get excited about – to the Marina and caught the ferry across to Mount Batten.

From Mount Batten, after getting my bearings, an easy walk to Jenny Cliff (obligatory steps), then a steep climb (more steps) to an easy path to Bovisand Bay. Lunch time, stopped for tea and cake. A walk through another unappealing caravan/shack park leads to a pleasant, meandering path along low cliffs.

Stopped to quickly sketch Great Mewstone (below), then carried on to Wembury Beach arriving c.16:00 hours. A sign stated that the ferry across the River Yealm operated between 10:00am and 16:00pm and there was no signal to phone the ferry person. It is a 45-minute walk to the ferry point from Wembury Beach. Stopped for tea and a panini.



Great Mewstone, off Wembury Point, 21/06/23

I had passed a possible camp spot not too far away back at Wembury Point and might head back there later, but right now, I am thinking of a swim, or at least a dip in the sea.

Plymouth to Wembury Beach 14¼ miles (23 km). Total = 422 miles. 440m elev. gain. Two-thirds of the way around the SWCP!

And I'm going to spend some time on the beach. I've only got my shreddies to wear but I don't care. A refreshing dip in the sea, there was a bit of seaweed floating around, but it was good, very refreshing. Now to dry out in the sunshine.

Mid-summer's day/Solstice/the longest day, and all that stuff!

I decided to amble up to Wembury village to see what was on offer as I had time to spare. As it turned out it wasn't a place that you would choose to visit twice! Absolutely nothing of interest, although I did manage to replenish stock in a local convenience store. I walked back down to Wembury Beach and backtracked to the camp spot on the Point only to find it occupied by wild ponies. I had to search for another location. It didn't take too long to find somewhere, pitched the tarp, wrote notes, and had something to eat and drink. Another day done.



Wild camping at Wembury Point, Great Mewstone just off the coastline, 22/06/23

22nd June: Day Twenty-Six. A peaceful spot in the morning, watching the sunrise over the headlands, the lapping of the waves. I need to finish breakfast and pack stuff away. Camp spot located on Wembury Point, overlooking Great Mewstone. Super views. Spotted a group of swifts circling above the water's edge.

When I set-off it quickly became apparent that I had backtracked over a mile from Wembury Beach to the Point. Arrived at Wembury Beach and rinsed yesterday's socks and attached to rucksack to 'dry'. Then over the headland to wait for the ferry there were other's waiting to cross too. A 45-minutes wait for a 5-minutes ferry crossing (£4). Across the Yealm to Nos Mayo and an easy to moderate climb through woodland leading onto an open cliff top route along wide gravel tracks that were gently undulating for about 5 or 6 miles. Good pace. It all ended abruptly at a very steep descent and horrible overgrown and narrow path back a up the other side. The next few miles weren't so good as the first few, narrow and overgrown sections, meandering up, down, and around. Finally arrived at the Erme Estuary and a wade across (low tide) to rejoin the SWCP on the other side. There were no facilities available here or further on, so I stopped to make a brew and something to eat. I was hungry and it had been some time since my early breakfast.

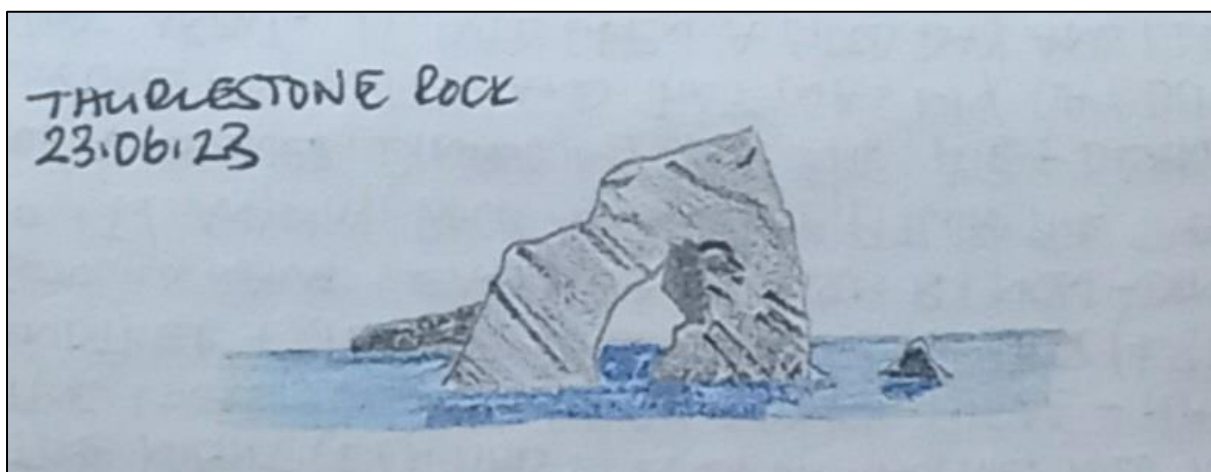
From the Erme, easy going for a while, gently gaining height before the walk turned back to the usual roller-coaster. Up, down, and around with some sharp descents and ascents, particularly so at Arymer Cove, the ascent coming at the end of a hard day of walking. Good views to Burgh Island which has a fine (but very expensive) hotel in 'Art Deco' style, originally built in 1929 and extended 1932. Stopped at a local shop at Challaborough for some 'odds and sods' where the cashier kindly directed me to a nearby campsite. Another steep climb but it didn't take too long and soon I arrived at Mount Folly Farm (£10/night cash only). Pitched, showered, and food/drink consumed, notes were written.

There's another river to cross tomorrow which might delay walking again.

Wembury Beach to Bigbury-on-Sea 15½ miles (25 km). Total = 437½ miles. 920m elev. gain

23rd June: Day Twenty-Seven. It is a farm, and there were cockerel's and sheep! No matter didn't cause too much of a disturbance. The ferry doesn't start until 10:00am so another more leisurely start to the day. All packed away and ready to go, still time to spare. There was a snack bar at the campsite so, coffee and pain au chocolat. Sat around chatting with some fellow SWCP walkers, before ambling down to Cocklebridge to await ferry.

A small group of SWCP crossed the River Avon on the ferry (£4.50) and then went their own way's On the other side of the river. An easy climb from Bantham followed by easy going along low cliffs to Hope Cove. Stopped briefly to sketch Thurlestone Rock (below) but from a distance, unfortunately the best views had been obscured by building development and associated 'private property' signs!



Thurlestone Rock, 23/06/23

Leaving Hope Cove, the route again became more rugged. The scenery was great, a geological landscape - lots of rocky outcrops and evidence for mountain building processes (Variscan Orogeny). It was a lovely walk.

Salcombe looked good from a distance but the last 1½ miles along the road weren't so great. Mooched around the town for a while but the scope of shops was very limited – 'sort of' got what I was looking for but had to look hard for it!

Bigbury-on-Sea to Salcombe 13½ miles (21.5 km). Total = 451 miles. 720m elev. gain

Now to catch yet another ferry, across to East Portlemouth (£2.30). a quick stop for tea and cake, time to gather my thoughts, before setting-off again.

A ½-mile along road section, bit of woodland then, once clear of the estuary, good walking following a contour-hugging path, mid-slope between cliff top and sea. There were up's and down's but nothing too drastic. It was lovely walking with some exceptional views. Approaching Prawle Point, stopped for water, it is another warm and sunny afternoon. Haven't spotted too many suitable camp spots though not thinking too hard about that quite yet.

Climbed/scrambled around Prawle Point, passed the Coastguard Watchout Station and, in the distance spied a campsite at East Prawle so made a beeline for it. Arrived to find the usual sign on the gate – bookings only! There was a phone number so made the call and managed to arrange a pitch for the night (£7). Had to slog up another hill to the local pub and left money behind the bar. Another very expensive couple of 0% beers (£8)! Should have learned my lesson by now!

Anyway, back at the campsite, pitched the tarp, got a shower, rinsed today's garments, ate and drank, wrote my notes, and that was my day done just about. It had been a good one, I was happy with progress and had enjoyed a fine day of walking.

I had forked out £7.99 on a pair of nail clippers because my toe nails were getting long and just becoming uncomfortable – they worked a treat!

24th June: Day Twenty-Eight. My left heel has been sore for a few days but this morning it seems especially painful. Taken some painkillers, hopefully, it will be okay when I get going later. It's a bit cloudy this morning but the sun soon broke through – nice and warm. Got breakfast sorted, all packed, start walking.

From the campsite I followed a byway/bridlepath along to regain the SWCP. The route became gnarly, picking a way through boulders, at Lannacombe. The path got better around Start Point. However, I felt I was running on low and about to 'bonk' so mixed some oats with cold water and had a drink. Soon felt better. There was a bit of scrambling and clambering amongst boulders to get over Start Point, across headland the descent to Hallsands. There were no facilities so continued to Beesands where I stopped for tea and (veggie) sausage bap. Went to set off again but felt very jaded so rested with my eyes closed for 20-minutes or so, felt better after that. It was a tedious slog along Slapton Ley, trudging along a sandy/gravelly path. At the end, before the next uphill section, stopped for another tea and bap at a snack bar.

A short tarmac section led onto a rising gravel path that became much tougher than expected including a steep zig-zag bit and another rollercoaster to Blackpool Sands and uphill all the way to Stoke Fleming. Unfortunately, the local shop was closed so had to seek solace in the local hostelry. Plugged in charger and updated notes.

Salcombe to Stoke Fleming 18½ miles (29.5 km). Total = 469½ miles. 1100m elev. gain

Made the decision not to press on further today but to find a campsite and rest for what was left of the day. Walked up the road to a campsite indicated on OS map, it turned out to be a 'Camping & Caravanning Club' site, which I thought was probably only open to member's. Well, I was here so I asked the question, "Can I pitch my tent for the night?" the reply, "Are you walking the SWCP and backpacking?" "Yes" I replied. The response "We never turn away backpackers, and we'll find you a

spot” How good was that! It cost £14.50, but there plenty of facilities to a good standard. Tarp pitched, shower, stuff washed and in the drier. Time to update notebook, and chill in the warm sunshine for a while.

25th June: Day Twenty-Nine. Couldn’t believe it! My heel was fine for most of the day, yet, as soon as I got my head down it started to throb – took painkillers (ibuprofen and paracetamol). Also, it was quite noisy as there was a road on the other side of the hedge. But I eventually got some rest.

Another bright start to the day. Perform all the usual morning rituals before setting off to Dartmouth and another ferry crossing, this time the River Dart.

- Dartmouth was very picturesque but good photo opportunities were limited (not really possible) due to the amount of modern development (and scaffolding) at all the best spots. So, I didn’t bother trying!
- Peregrine’s spotted at Coleton Fishacre

From the campsite, followed a byway and bridlepath (tarmac and gravel) to regain SWCP close to Dartmouth Castle. An easy walk all the way into Dartmouth. Found a local shop (Co-op) and got some breakfast, sat in a park to consume, then walked to the lower ferry and across to Kingswear (£2). Stopped for a coffee and got my bearings.

A road section to leave Kingswear, after about ¾-mile a rolling gravel track is followed with zigzag’s and streps through woodland to Froward Point, where there are defensive structures leftover from times of conflict. Back to the rollercoaster format that sums up the SWCP to Scabbacombe, where I stopped for a short break before another steep climb. And it wasn’t the only one, some real calf-burners. The going got a bit easier once over Sharkham Point/Berry Head. The descent into Brixham was mostly along road. As expected Brixham was bustling with many grockles. Found a Tesco Express purchased some provisions, consumed, and left the town.

- Earlier in the day I had booked accommodation at the Premier Inn, Goodrington Sands

Stoke Fleming to Brixham 15¼ miles (25 km). Total = 485 miles. 1300m elev. gain

From Brixham, the path starts off with some easy going on hard surfacing, leading to gravel path a few sharp descents/ascents around several small coves. There were lots of steps too. A surprisingly up and down route to Broadsands, parallel to the Dart Railway. I was quite relieved to finally arrive at my destination, Goodrington Sands. Better still it’s bang on the SWCP for tomorrow’s urban start.

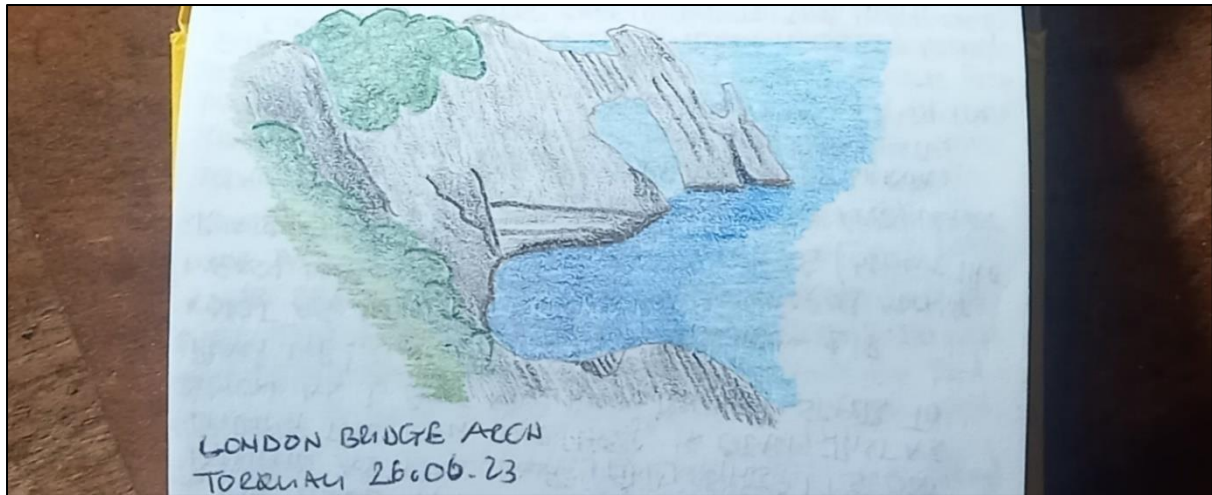
Signed in at reception and straight up to my room – power packs on charge, shower, garments rinsed and drying, drink tea, hang up sleep kit to air and dry, write up some notes, listen to a bit of Glasto’.

- Brewer’s Fayre – I don’t think you would go there for the quality of the food!

I reckon about 20-miles walked today.

26th June: Day Thirty. My left heel was painful again last night, and, of more concern, it is still painful this morning. Took more painkillers. I suppose that having walked nearly 500-miles there is going to be the likelihood of some niggles to put up with!

Breakfast eaten, bags packed, and on my way about 08:00. It was easy walking along paved surfaces. Paignton was scruffy, tired, and dated, it’s much the same as I remembered from my childhood. Alongside the main road to Torquay (not pleasant), around the rejuvenated marina/harbour area and onwards. Stopped to sketch London Bridge Arch (below). Easy miles but not all that exciting. Another wooded path – lots more Holm Oak.



London Bridge Arch, Torquay, 26/06/23

Took a slight detour as I wanted to visit Kent's Cavern where I managed to get on a guided tour (£16) that had just started rather than having to wait 45-minutes for the next one. Quite nicely decorated cave within Devonian limestone, with plenty of evidence for Pleistocene frost/ice damage.



Evidence for frost/ice damage at Kent's Cavern, Torquay, 26/06/23

The tour guide was okay but a lot of the spiel he was giving out was not accurate (I couldn't be bothered to put him right). I guess it made a change to do something different for a short time, and I've wanted to visit the caves for a while anyway. Stopped for tea and cake before resuming my walk.

Back to the SWCP, up and over, and down, and up headland and cove towards Babbacombe. It was a shame that the Oddicombe Cliff Railway is still closed (there was a fatality some years ago), it might have provided an easier option.

Once away from the urban, commercialised 'English Riviera' the SWCP returns to a more familiar rolling format, unfortunately, much of it through woodland – the views aren't great, at times, I could have been anywhere. I suppose it was peaceful.

Some stiff descents/ascents on the way from Maidencombe to Shaldon. A lot of tedious steps! Steps slow progress considerably. Much of the route seemed rather pointless dropping down into little combs and valleys where there was no view. Thankfully the ferry to Teignmouth was still operating, straight aboard and across the river (£2). Found a Gregg's and stopped to refuel, and update journal.

Brixham to Shaldon 19¼ miles (31 km). Total = 504¼ miles. 1300m elev. gain

After eating, drinking, and resting for a short time, back on my way again. Along Teignmouth promenade/sea wall and followed the 'low tide' route to Holcombe. Then a couple of up and over's before descent to Dawlish sea front.



Railway cutting exposure of red sandstone with crossbedding, 26/06/23

Along the promenade/sea wall parallel to the railway line bore an overbridge to follow a road to a campsite on Dawlish Warren (Leadstone Campsite). On arrival, the reception was closed, rang the number given, and was directed to a pitch. I'll have to settle up in the morning when the reception opens at 08:30.

27th June: Day Thirty-One. My heel is still quite sore, but not as painful as the last few nights. It is odd, during the day the heel is fine, but at night, as soon as I get my head down it starts to play up.

I was expecting this to be an expensive overnight stay, but not quite as costly as imagined - £18

Easy walking to the ferry crossing at Starcross following cycle trails and roads. I was early for the ferry so sat around waiting until the ferry left at 10:10am. Ferry cost £5.

Arrived at Exmouth c.10:30am, walked to the town centre, purchased another gas canister (just in case), and a cooked breakfast ready for the walk ahead.

An easy walk out of the town, mostly along the sea front. Gentle climb up to the High Land of Orcombe, where the 'Geo-needle' marks the start/finish of the Jurassic Coast Heritage site. Unfortunately, much of the path is densely vegetated and obscures the geology. Then a walk through a horrendous holiday park – all dull greys and dirty whites – with the sounds of gun shots from the nearby military firing range it was all a bit surreal, it was like a third world war-zone refugee camp! A longer steep climb over the headland before a descent to Budleigh Salterton. Stopped for a savoury tea – cheese scone and a pot of chai.

Shaldon to Budleigh Salterton 13¾ miles (22 km). Total = 518 miles. 470m elev. gain

Easy going out of the town along the sea front, a long excursion around the Otter Estuary (where there are some extensive marsh improvement works being carried out). Then a climb up over the cliff tops to Ladram Bay (another area marred by a holiday park!). at least there were some better views of some fine geological features including some fine sea stacks at Ladram Bay. Stopped for an ice cream and cold drink before continuing on my way. A couple of up and over's (including Peak Hill) before a drop

down to Sidmouth sea front passing by some interesting graffiti inscribed sandstone cliffs. Stopped to rest and refuel at a local hostelry (Dukes Seaside Inn).



Graffiti inscribed cliffs at Sidmouth, 27/06/23

Suitably refuelled, there are more hills to be climbed...there were hills (including Salcombe Hill) and there were steps! There were valleys too. I was just starting to think about a bivvy spot when a passer-by intervened and directed me to a likely spot down on the beach at Weston Mouth. It was a bit pebbly, so doubted I'd get any pegs in so a bivvy night. It was 20:00 by the time I stopped walking. Penned a few notes, phoned Roz.

28th June: Day Thirty-Two. Awoke on the beach, a fledgling robin had come to visit. It was peaceful, birdsong, and the lapping of the waves. Not the best night, heel still nigglng so woke to take more ibuprofen. Always feel a bit clammy in the bivvy bag. Got up and followed the usual routine. Caught sight of a seal while sipping my morning tea (ran out of coffee).

The day will start with a stiff climb out of Weston Mouth, starting at sea level to Weston Cliff at 162m OD. Climb took about 20-minutes, and there were steps. A recovery section along the cliff top though.

- Spotted a possible clouded yellow in cliff top meadow (Weston Cliff)
- Earthworks, Berry Camp (IA hillfort). Not especially prominent

Dropped down to Branscombe Mouth where I stopped for coffee and cake. Some fantastic rock exposures at Hooken Cliff. Stopped to sketch Hooken Adit (stone mine). Over the cliff top, through yet another holiday park, and into Beer. I didn't bother stopping and continued walking up and over to Seaton. Walked around the town to find something to eat and drink. The town looks very tired and rather dilapidated. Sat on the sea front to refuel, rest, and write notes.

Budleigh Salterton to Seaton 17 miles (27.5 km). Total = 535 miles. 1160m elev. gain.

Less than 100 miles to go!

From Sidmouth, along the sea front, across the road bridge over the River Axe, up and over a golf course, onto cliff top paths leading to the Undercliff, an area formed by past landslips and subsidence. It was densely vegetated – scrub, trees, and assorted undergrowth through which the SWCP passes on the way to Lyme Regis. And, of course, there are steps...the route meanders and rolls along...there ain't many views...stopped to look at a restored sheep-wash along the route to break the monotony. It hadn't taken too long for the path to become tedious. It was a relief to arrive at Lyme Regis. Found a Tesco Express to purchase some food and drink.



Hooken Cliff, the adit is mid-point in the cliffs to the right of the image, 28/06/23

The SWCP takes an inland route to avoid an area of recent subsidence. I knew it was going to be a slog up the road because I spent a long time on the archaeological monitoring during the restoration project following the subsidence. It was indeed a slog, over another golf course, and drop down to the A3052 Charmouth Road, to a campsite. Disappointingly, the campsite turned out to be another holiday park. I got a pitch but no idea of what it would cost until the office opens tomorrow at 09:00. Another delayed start to the day!

Pitched the tarp, showered, rinsed garments, found the laundrette but it was far too complicated for me – needed to download an app and pay for the services through that – no coin slot! Two lots of damp/wet kit, just as well I had a spare set. Had something to eat, a couple of brews, and phoned Roz. Another day done. Led down and listened to a podcast “Conversations from a long marriage”, it is entertaining. Sleep.

29th June: Day Thirty-Three. Awoke to a fine morning. Usual morning routine soon underway. Garments didn't dry so well yesterday. Campsite cost £10 cash, happy with that!

Route follows road down to Charmouth, nothing was open (café's) so local convenience store for something to eat and drink. Now ready to walk...there are climbs ahead including Golden Cap (191m OD). Then descent to Seatown. Stopped to refuel and rest for a while.

Seaton to Seatown 15¼ miles (24.5 km). Total = 550¼ miles. 920m elev. gain

A bit more climbing at the beginning of the next section then it gets a bit easier (apparently). Some short but steep climbs and descents. West Bay was a disappointing tourist trap – very little of interest. Rolled along to Freshwater, another holiday park. A refreshing paddle across a little river to the next little climb up and over to Burton Bradstock, or more precisely, Burton [Hive] Beach. A tea and cake stop. Over a little 'hiccup' through yet another holiday park, then the amazing sight of Chesil Beach stretching all the way to Portland. Tried hard to avoid walking on the shingle bank but had to endure it for a mile or so around West Bexington but soon onto hard-surfaced track to the beach car park near Abbotsbury. The path then turns inland, I found a permissive path that went directly to the Swannery and avoided Abbotsbury village, so I followed that.

Seatown to Abbotsbury 12 miles (19.5 km). Total = 562¼ miles. 360m elev. gain

Kept pressing on! Most of the path being followed is vaguely familiar as I ran along them about 15 years ago when taking part in the Chesil Marathon, I remember it being very warm, and a lot of competitors struggling with the heat and lack of water. I followed a signpost pointing the way to West

Fleet Campsite. Arriving just after 20:00. Phoned the proprietor who grumbled a bit and wanted payment over the phone, very expensive £30, but I was too tired to go elsewhere. Set-up, showered, rinsed garments, wrote notes. No signal so no phone home.

30th June: Day Thirty-Four. I reckon it going to be blustery around Portland later, there's quite a wind blowing. Grey and cloudy too. At least it is good drying weather. It's going to be another long day I think, many miles to walk.

Left West Fleet Campsite c.08:00, followed road to East Fleet and regained SWCP. Along the way booked a night at the Premier Inn on Weymouth Sea Front (£150 with breakfast) for tonight. The SWCP meandered around the north shoreline of the Fleet Lagoon. It was disappointing to see a holiday park on the shoreline. There is a path diversion for the last mile or so to Ferrybridge through an unsightly housing estate...nothing more to be said! Stopped for a cooked breakfast at the Wild Chesil Centre on the Causeway to Portland.

Abbotsbury to Ferrybridge 11¼ miles (18 km). Total = 573½ miles. 250m elev. gain

After breakfast, a tour around the Isle of Portland. It was a long walk alongside the road from the Chesil Centre to Chiswell. Followed by a stiff climb up to the cliff top and walked along west cliff. There were path diversions due to cliff falls in a couple of sections. One diversion led through Tout Quarry Sculpture Park, which was neat. Got to Portland Bill in two hours and stopped for tea and (not very nice) scone, trying not to feed the shite-hawks! Before setting off again to follow the east cliff path.

- Coincidentally, many of these paths are again familiar, another marathon, part of a 5no. Coastal Marathon Series organised by Endurance life (south Devon, Cornwall, Exmoor, Pembroke, and Portland).

The east cliff is a bit more meandering passing through several quarries with many artefacts still in situ.



Crane, seen in east cliff quarry, Portland, 30/06/23

Spent 20-minutes or so following a path that I did not want to be on (led to a dead end!) so had to backtrack. Bumped into a young mum and her son who were also walking the entire SWCP (they began 2nd May) so walked with them for quite a while. Nice to have someone to chat with and they were pleasant company. Eventually, we went our separate ways, my pace was a little too much for them. Back at Ferrybridge, Portland circuit completed.

Isle of Portland Circuit 13¾ miles (22 km). Total = 587¼ miles. 510m elev. gain

From Ferrybridge, the SWCP follows a cycle trail then road/footpath through the houses and town to Weymouth sea front. Stopped to purchase some supplies on the way, then along the promenade to Lodmoor Country Park where the hotel is located, it was a bit further than I thought. Probably over 590 miles by now.

Arrived at Premier Inn, booked in at reception and up to room. Dumped bag and started to sort stuff out, showered, rinsed garments, hung up sleep kit to air, wrote notes, all the usual things.

1st July: Day Thirty-Five. Not the best of nights – too warm and my heel was playing up again. But stuff has dried nicely and was ready to pack, power packs all charged too. Down for a good breakfast.

Going to be a tough day, returning to the rollercoaster format after an initial amble along the sea front. An atrocious holiday park at Bowleaze – glad to leave that behind! A rolling path to Osmington Mills with some moderate gradients to ease into the day. Stopped for a coffee at the Smugglers Inn, 6¼ miles to Lulworth Cove. An easy low-level path as far as Ringstead followed by an easy to moderate climb to White Nothe, then easy cliff top walking. It all changed, a succession of steep descents and ascents near Durdle Door/Lulworth Cove. I could not believe the number of grockles at Durdle Door (mostly south Asian it seemed), like an endless trail of ants milling around aimlessly. Appalling!

Stopped at Lulworth Cove for some lunch.

Ferrybridge to Lulworth Cove 14½ miles (23.5 km). Total = 601¾ miles. 640m elev. gain

Next mission os to get across the firing range. Got around the cove as quickly as I could, I was keen to get away from the masses. From the cove a scramble up to reach the path and decided not to visit the fossil forest. There is enough climbing in this day without the extra 97 steps each way to the geological feature. It was comfortable going as far as Mupe Bay then it ramped up. Some tough arduous climbs and descents, some real calf-burners.



On the descent to Arish Mill, Worbarrow Bay in the background, 01/07/23

Stopped at Arish Mill for a drink of water and some nibbles. Onwards...some good geological exposures, and a fine, multi-vallate IA hillfort, Flower's Barrow. From the top I could easily see Poole Harbour in the distance. Thankfully there were recovery sections after the climbs although the steep descents weren't much fun. The views, however, were magnificent!

Well! That was a tough section of walking, but the days main objective had been achieved, the range walk completed. I was glad to find a snack shack at Kimmeridge Bay was still open, stopped for tea and cake, and water, and a cold drink – I needed it!

My plan now (c.17:45) was to keep going as far as I could make it. Easy/moderate going along cliff edge following an initial climb up to Clavell Tower.

- It has to be noted that the path hugging the cliff edge looks for long sections that a good storm or two might see it disappear into the sea below, it looks very precariously balanced! In a few years, the path I'm following might no longer exist in its present alignment (*see Addendum, 2nd August 2023*).

The path is annoyingly vegetated. A big climb up Houns Toot with an awkward descent on the other side with a lot of steps to Hill Bottom (Chapmans Pool). A water stop. The route goes inland to get around a small but deep cut valley. As I went around the to the other side, I recognised some of the path from the 'Beast' a run I had taken part in about 20 years ago that was based at Corfe Castle. A gently graded climb up leads along the cliff top towards St. Aldhelm's Head. Then, more steps, lots of them, down and up to the Coastguard Watchout at St. Aldhelm's Head. I did, briefly, consider camping in the small chapel located there but it was too close to habitation and walked on by.



St. Aldhelm's Chapel (LE No. 1120256). Anglican chapel-of-ease. C12. Rubble stone walls, pyramidal stone slate roof surmounted by a C20 stone cross on a circular base. Moulded corbel table on north-east wall. Large added buttresses on north-west, northeast, and south-east walls, and at north angle. Original shallow buttress at south angle. Square plan. Small lancet window at east end of south-east wall. Moulded string course on this wall. Entrance in north west wall has a round-headed doorway of 2 simple orders with hoodmould. Internally a central composite pier supports a quadrupartite vault, with simple chamfered ribs and shallow wall shafts. Unplastered walls. Stone flagged floor. This has been raised but is still below ground level. C19 stone font. Note. Although always described as a chapel and, according to Hutchins, served by a royal chaplain in the C13, this building has no specifically ecclesiastical features. The plan form, orientation, and small amount of natural lighting are unusual for a church. It has rather the appearance of a vaulted undercroft - possibly for a projected but uncompleted tower structure. It stands on a platform in the centre of an earthwork enclosure. RCHM Monument 2 (Dorset, Vol II). Scheduled Ancient Monument (Historic England, online accessed 16/07/23).

Further along the cliff path I spotted a small disused and sheltered quarry, I was not the only one, a tent had already been pitched. It was after 21:00 hours so I found a suitable spot and pitched the tarp. I quickly penned some notes and got my head down for the night, I had set my alarm for 04:00 tomorrow morning.

2nd July: Day Thirty-Six. So, here it is, all being well the last day of walking the SWCP! Still a lot of up and down's to come between here and Swanage but it gets easier at the end.

Alarm at 04:00, breakfast, packed, and on my way at c.05:30. Easier going along the cliff top as the cliffs start to lose some height. Distracted at Winspit where I stopped to look at and sketch some interesting stone mines and quarries there. Pity my head torch was flat! I could see the pillar and stall extraction method had been used.



Stone mines at Winspit, 02/07/23

Several more mines/adits were observed along the SWCP route. The cliffs might have had a lower elevation, but the views were still very good. Unfortunately, Tilly Whim Caves were gated and so inaccessible at the time.



Noticeboard at Tilly Whim Caves, 2/07/23

There was a bit of a slope up from the caves over Durlston Head then an easy path all the way into Swanage. Stopped for a good, cooked breakfast.

Lulworth Cove to Swanage 20½ miles (33 km). Total = 622¼ miles. 1340m elev. gain

From the town, followed the sea front until it ran out, then along road through the houses, and the last climb up and along to Old Harry Rocks. Chalk sea stacks, now looking at strata of the Cretaceous Period. A long gradual descent to Studland and a long sandy bit with lots of people (and dogs). Walked along the beach to South Haven Point and the end of the South West Coast Path – 630 miles, 36 days, averaging 17½ miles per day. An obligatory photo of the end sculpture, and straight onto the chain ferry

across to Sandbanks. Walked around the corner and got onto a bus to Poole Bus Station. A short walk to the railway station where I got a ticket to Bristol Temple Meads (£48), train leaving at 13:32. Just enough time for tea and pastry.

I definitely made the right call to push on as far as possible yesterday, made for a much easier walk today – all the hard climbing was out of the way!

Swanage to Suth Haven Point 7¾ miles (12.5 km). Total = 630 miles. 180m elev. gain

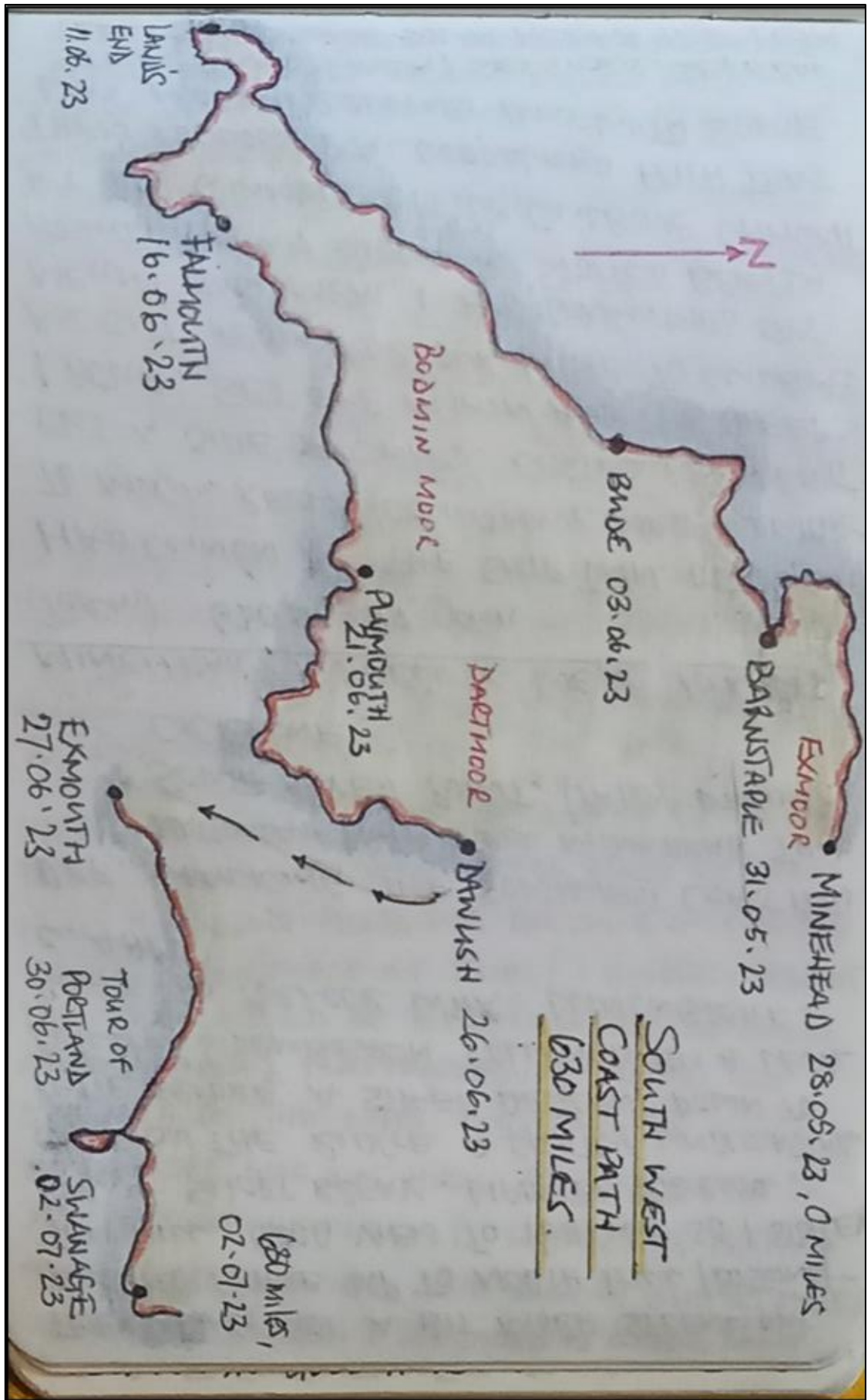
An epic journey, job done!



The finish at South Haven Point

Reference: Dillon, Paddy. 2021. *Walking the South West Coast Path National Trail from Minehead to South Haven Point*. Published by Ciccerone

Constant companions along the trail were stonechats and whinchats, and the cliff top meadows and grassland, the song of soaring skylarks. It was never silent.



Map of progress from my notebook



East facing geological section at Lee, 30/05/23



Late Neo./Early BA scraper found on path at Morte Point, Devon, 30/05/23



Northwest facing geological section at Peppercombe, 01/06/23



Gallantry Bower, an example of a BA 'bell barrow', 02/06/23



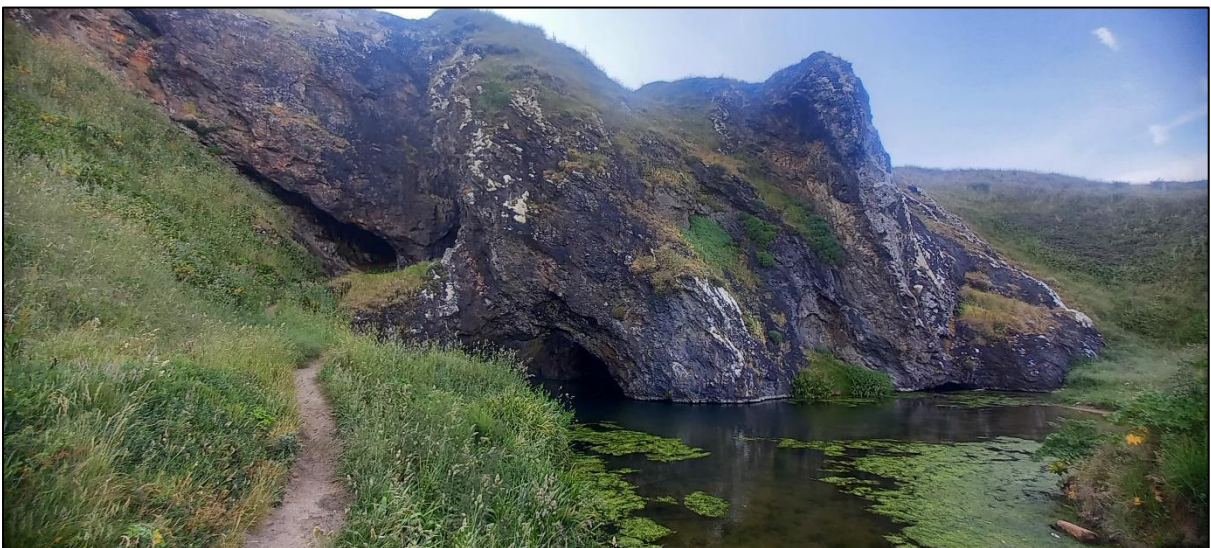
Crackington Formation at Hartland Quay, southwest facing geological section, 03/06/23



Chevron folding at Millook, southwest facing geological section, 04/06/23



Lundy hole, 06/06/23



Caves, northeast end of Perran Sands, 08/06/23



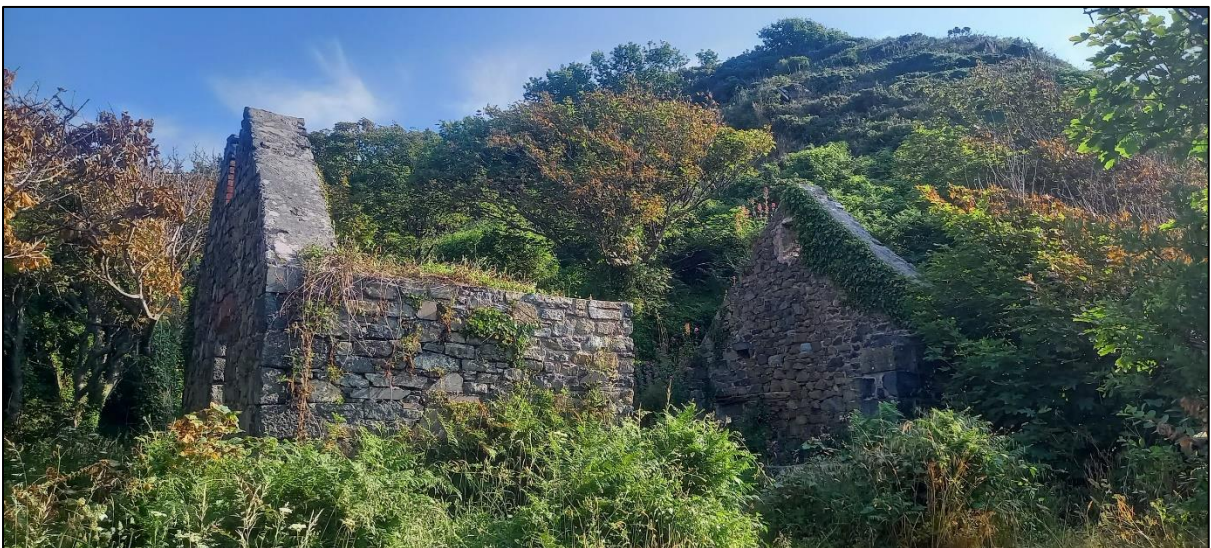
Wheal Coates, 08/06/23



Penberth Cove, 12/06/23



Wheal Prosper (built 1860) at Rinsey, southwest facing aspect, 13/06/23



Serpentine works, near Poltesco, 15/06/23



'Cross' inscribed in doorway, Church of St. Anthony, Roseland, 17/06/23



St. Michael's Chapel (14th century), Rame Head, 20/06/23



Great Mewstone, off Wembury Point, 21/06/23



Thurlestone (Thurlestone Rock, centre image), 23/06/23



London Bridge Arch, Torquay, 26/06/23



Kent's Cavern, Torquay; line of calcite 'false floor' removed during antiquarian excavations visible in lower part of image, 26/06/23



Sandstone stacks at Ladram Bay, 27/06/23



Stone mines at Winspit, 02/07/23



Old Harry Rocks, chalk deposited during the Cretaceous Period, 02/07/23

ADDENDUM:

Cliff collapse at Eype beach, Dorset prompts warning

- *Published by BBC News, 2 August 2021*

The large rock fall, which happened on Saturday, blocked off the beach between Eype and Seatown in Dorset. Dorset Council warned the fall had "*not yet settled*" and the ground inland was "*relaxing with more cracks opening up*". The authority has urged people to obey the safety signs and not cross the cordons or climb on the debris on the beach. Dorset Council repeated its warnings to visitors to stay clear of the tops and bases of cliffs. A stretch of the South West Coast Path, which runs along the top of the cliff, has also been diverted inland. Two large sections of cliff fell in the same spot in April. The council said rangers were monitoring the cliff for any further movement. A large crack has also appeared in cliffs above Seatown Beach, sparking a warning from coastguards.



IMAGE SOURCE, DORSET COUNCIL A section of cliff has collapsed cutting off a stretch of beach on the Jurassic Coast.



IMAGE SOURCE, DORSET COUNCIL More movement was expected as fresh cracks had appeared on the cliff top

Red Admiral butterflies: Climate change sees migratory species stay in UK, says charity

- *Published BBC News/Climate Change by Andre Rhoden-Paul, 3rd August 2023*



IMAGE SOURCE, GETTY IMAGES

Climate change is seeing a species of migratory butterfly stay in the UK over the winter instead of returning to Europe and Africa, experts say.

A charity's butterfly count in July recorded a four-fold increase in sightings of the majestic red admiral - continuing a long-term trend. Sightings rose by more than 175,000 compared to the same period last year. Butterfly Conservation said "there can be no doubt climate change is the driver" behind the increase. The red admiral is a common sight in British and Irish gardens with its distinctive dark brown body, red stripes, and white patches, but is actually a migrant species from continental Europe and North Africa. It migrates north to the UK each spring and summer, and the females lay eggs. The experts say it appears many more are staying in southern England over the winter months, leading to more sightings this year. The Big Butterfly Count found between 14 July and 2 August this year there was a 400% increase in sightings of red admirals. The count continues until 6 August and scientists at Butterfly Conservation are looking to see how many more red admirals are recorded, and how they are dispersed around the UK.

In total the count - which involves butterfly watchers reporting online which species they see - recorded 177,000 sightings of red admirals so far. Butterfly Conservation, which works to reverse the decline of the most threatened species, said with global temperatures rising the need for the red admiral to return to continental Europe and Africa is reducing, and it is possible a greater number will now be spending winter in the UK. Dr Zoe Randle, senior surveys officer at the charity, said: "We've been surprised to see the red admiral taking the lead; however, with the increased frequency of warm weather, the UK may well become a permanent home for this species..." *With climate change here to stay, we need people to take part more than ever before and help us understand how extreme weather is affecting our butterflies.*

Overall, more than one million butterfly sightings have been recorded in the Big Butterfly Count so far this year by nearly 65,000 participants.

Ocean heat record broken, with grim implications for the planet

- *Published BBC News/Climate Change by Georgina Rannard, Mark Poynting, Jana Tauschinski, Becky Dale, BBC climate reporter & data team, 4th August 2023*



IMAGE SOURCE, GETTY IMAGES

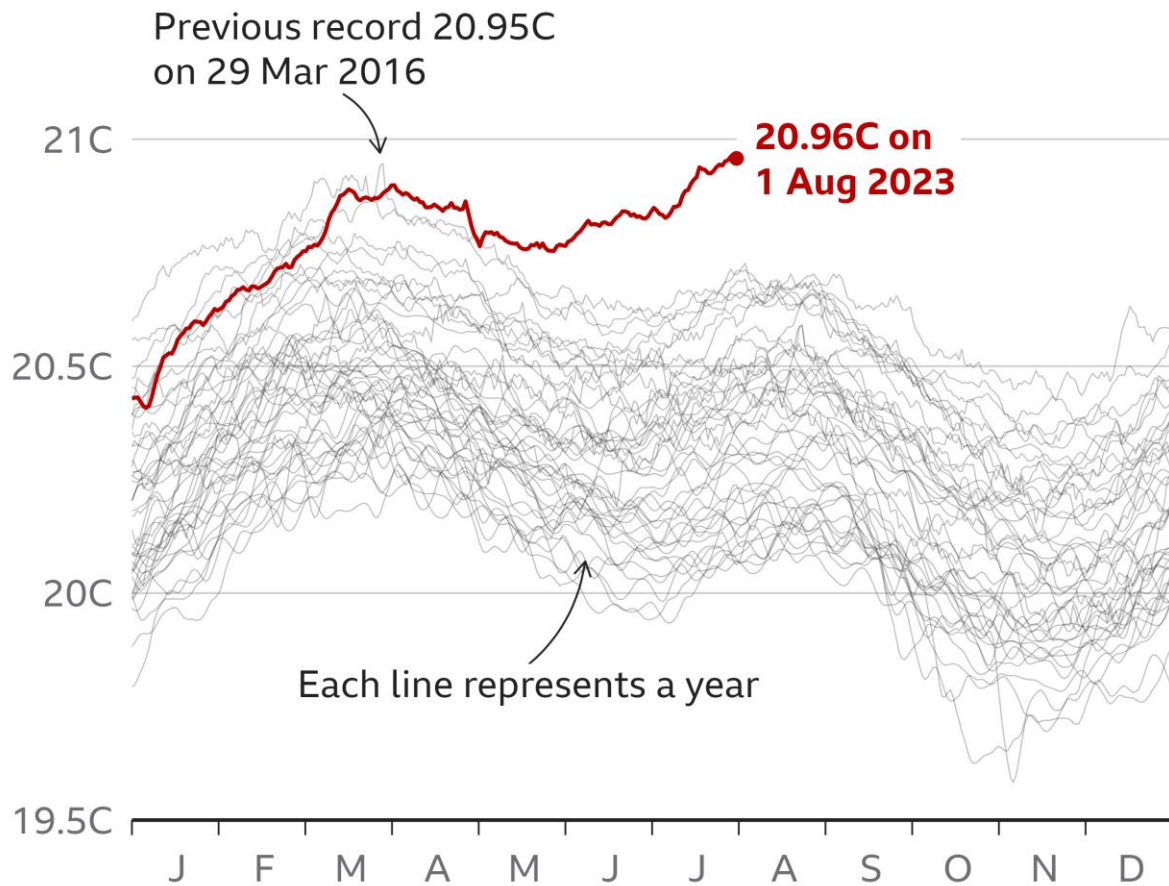
The oceans have hit their hottest ever recorded temperature as they soak up warmth from climate change, with dire implications for our planet's health.

The average daily global sea surface temperature beat a 2016 record this week, according to the EU's climate change service Copernicus. It reached 20.96C. That's far above the average for this time of year. Oceans are a vital climate regulator. They soak up heat, produce half Earth's oxygen and drive weather patterns. Warmer waters have less ability to absorb carbon dioxide, meaning more of that planet-warming gas will stay in the atmosphere. And it can also accelerate the melting of glaciers that flow into the ocean, leading to more sea level rise. Hotter oceans and heatwaves disturb marine species like fish and whales as they move in search of cooler waters, upsetting the food chain. Experts warn that fish stocks could be affected. Some predatory animals including sharks can become aggressive as they get confused in hotter temperatures. *"The water feels like a bath when you jump in,"* says Dr Kathryn Lesneski, who is monitoring a marine heatwave in the Gulf of Mexico for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. *"There is widespread coral bleaching at shallow reefs in Florida and many corals have already died."*

"We are putting oceans under more stress than we have done at any point in history," says Dr Matt Frost, from the Plymouth Marine Lab in the UK, referring to the fact pollution and overfishing also change the oceans.

Ocean temperatures highest on record

Daily average sea surface temperature between 60° North and 60° South, 1979-2023



Source: ERA5, C3S/ECMWF

BBC

Scientists are worried about the timing of this broken record. Dr Samantha Burgess, from the Copernicus Climate Change Service, says March should be when the oceans globally are warmest, not August. *"The fact that we've seen the record now makes me nervous about how much warmer the ocean may get between now and next March,"* she says.

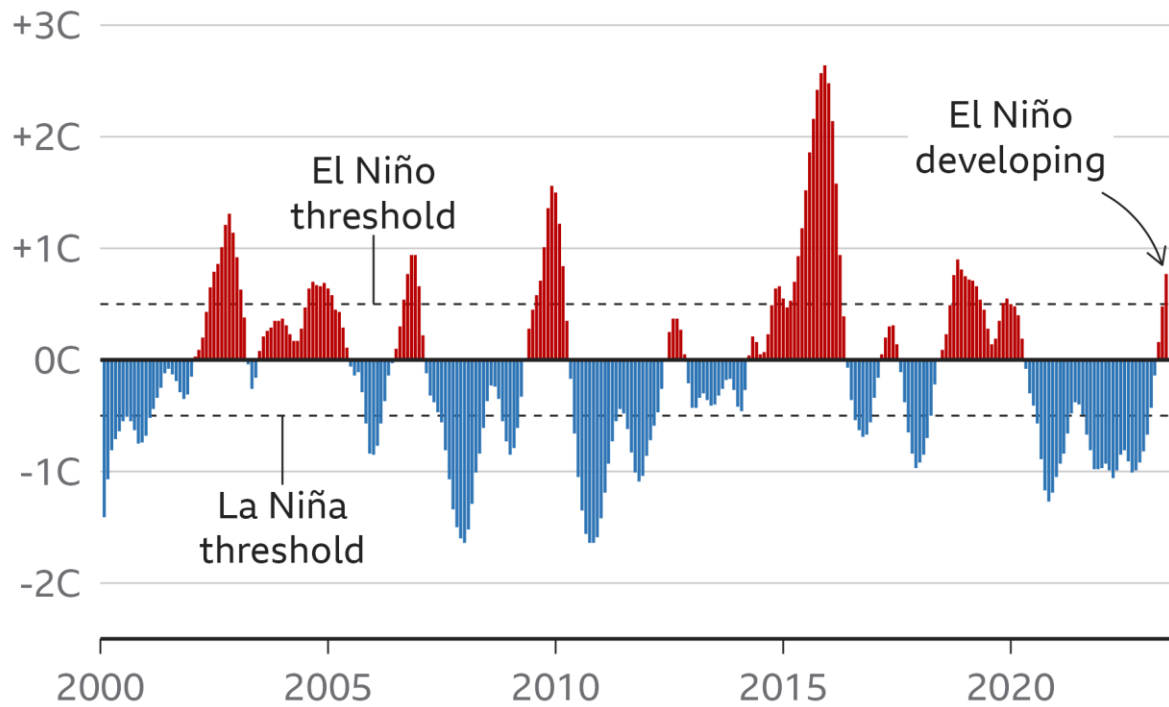
"It is sobering to see this change happening so quickly," says Prof Mike Burrows, who is monitoring impacts on Scottish sea shores with the Scottish Association for Marine Science.

Scientists are investigating why the oceans are so hot right now but say that climate change is making the seas warmer as they absorb most of the heating from greenhouse gas emissions. *"The more we burn fossil fuels, the more excess heat will be taken out by the oceans, which means the longer it will take to stabilize them and get them back to where they were,"* explains Dr Burgess. The new average temperature record beats one set in 2016 when the naturally occurring climate fluctuation El Niño was in full swing and at its most powerful. El Niño happens when warm water rises to the surface off the west coast of South America, pushing up global temperatures.

Another El Niño has now started but scientists say it is still weak - meaning ocean temperatures are expected to rise further above average in the coming months.

A new El Niño is starting to grow

Change in sea surface temperature in the equatorial Pacific compared with the seasonal average



When temperatures are 0.5C above or below average, El Niño and La Niña conditions are typically declared. The seasonal average is the mean temperature for a three-month period over 30 previous years.

Source: NOAA Oceanic Niño Index; latest data for June 2023

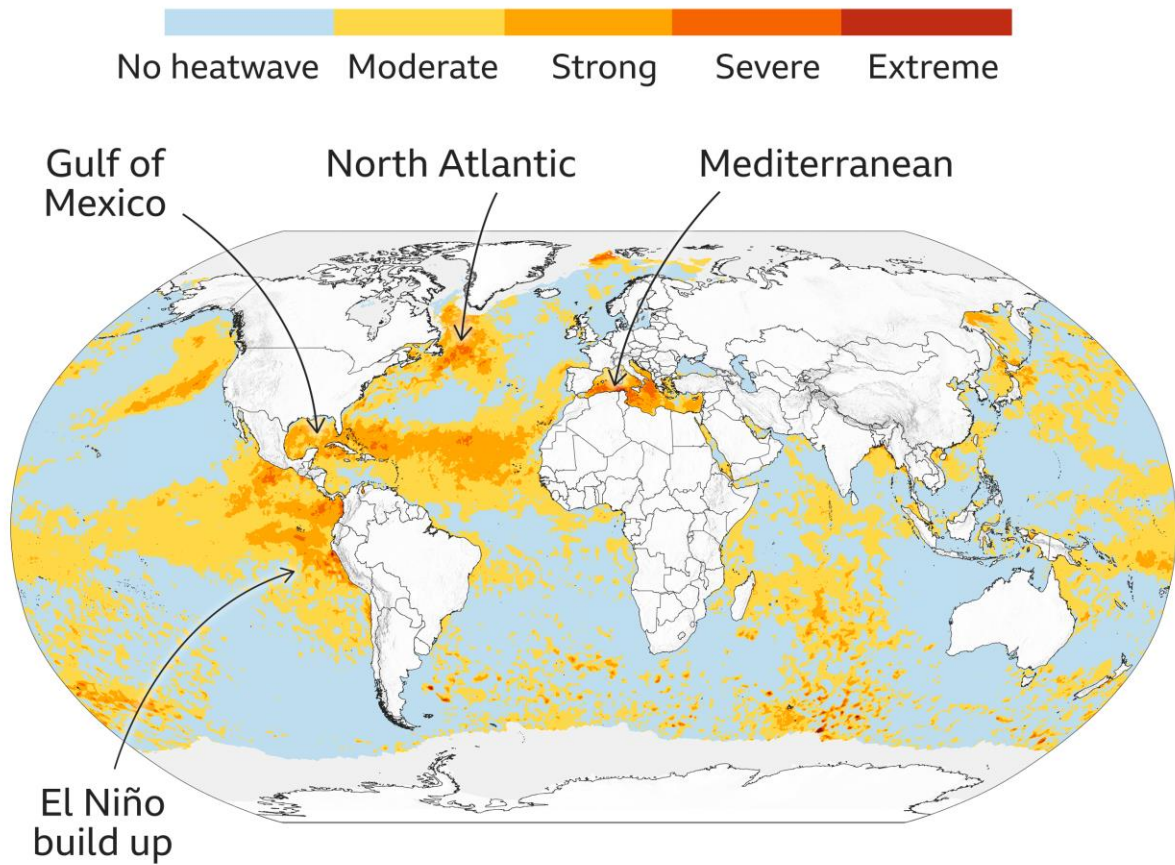
BBC

The broken temperature record follows a series of marine heatwaves this year including in the UK, the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Mexico. "*The marine heatwaves that we're seeing are happening in unusual locations where we haven't expected them,*" says Prof Burgess. In June, temperatures in UK waters were 3C to 5C higher than average, according to the Met Office and the European Space Agency. In Florida, sea surface temperatures hit 38.44C last week - comparable to a hot tub. Normally temperatures should be between 23C and 31C, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Marine heatwaves doubled in frequency between 1982 and 2016, and have become more intense and longer since the 1980s, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

While air temperatures have seen some dramatic increases in recent years, the oceans take longer to heat up, even though they have absorbed 90% of the Earth's warming from greenhouse gas emissions. But there are signs now that ocean temperatures may be catching up. One theory is a lot of the heat has been stored in ocean depths, which is now coming to the surface, possibly linked to El Niño, says Dr Karina von Schuckmann at Mercator Ocean International. While scientists have known that the sea surface would continue to warm up because of greenhouse gas emissions, they are still investigating exactly why temperatures have surged so far above previous years.

Multiple marine heatwaves across the globe

Severity of marine heatwaves on 24 July 2023



Note: heatwave classifications are calculated from sea surface temperatures. Areas affected by sea ice are excluded and shown in grey.

Source: NOAA Coral Reef Watch, reference period 1985 to 2012

BBC