



"There were a few cottages in Helford hamlet, but they made no impression upon the river life itself, which belonged to the birds - curlew and redshank, guillemot and puffin."

From Daphne Du Maurier's Frenchman's Creek, published by Virago Modern Classics. © The Chichester Partnership

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A historic and exotic wooded garden leading down to the Helford River.

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The Helford River has long been recognised for its beauty and biological importance and its wide range of habitats are home to many species. Among the notable seaweeds in its rich and colourful rock pools are species of *Cystoseira*, one of which is iridescent. Twenty species of species, the Trumpet Anemone and the Ginkgo Tilly. Eelgrass, the only British flowering plant growing in the sea, can be found off Durgan (see map). Tufts of leaves arise from its underground stems to provide shelter while cuttlefish, sea hares and lemons use it to anchor their eggs. In time, the Eelgrass beds may provide a habitat for seahorses as in other parts of the UK.

Above Helford Passage, the river is more sheltered. Of particular interest are worm populations – the delicate Tube Worms as well from the Peacock Worm spreading its fan-like tentacles to catch food from the swirling water. Waders and gulls move around the Helford the Helford. The woods fringing the estuary still contain part of the original ancient oak woodland of Cornwall. Exploring by boat or kayak is the best opportunity to discover the many inland creeks such as Frenchman's Creek on the south Helford, setting for Daphne du Maurier's famous novel. Tree-fringed and muddy these creeks are home to myriad wildlife and, being more secluded than the main river, are tranquil and beautiful spots to explore.

Helford Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (HVMA) is a group whose aim is to encourage people to become more involved with the marine environment and work together to conserve it. You'll see several HVMA interpretation boards along the coast to help people understand, enjoy and conserve this unique, special place.

## THE HELFORD RIVER

We are lucky to still retain a regular hourly bus service to Falmouth & Helston, where you can join up with national bus and rail services

The Helford is a ra – a drowned river valley – joining the open sea at Rosemullion in the north and Nare Point to the south. Gweek, at the head of the Helford and the furthest point inland, is just over six miles (20km) from the coast. The Helford shoreline is over 29 miles (47km) long and includes a wide range of habitats, from exposed rocky coasts at the mouth to steep-sided muddy inland creeks upstream.

For hundreds of years the Helford River has been an important route for ships serving local mines, farms and quarries as well as the local fishing industry. During the 20th Century, these staples began to be replaced by pleasure craft and the lime kilns, customs houses, coastguard stations, fishermen's cottages and fish cellars converted to housing. Helford and Durgan have become popular moorings for yachts and other craft and tourism is now the main industry – although a fleet of commercial fishing boats still operates out of the Helford.

## MAWNAN

## Mawnan Smith

[www.mawnan.org.uk](http://www.mawnan.org.uk)

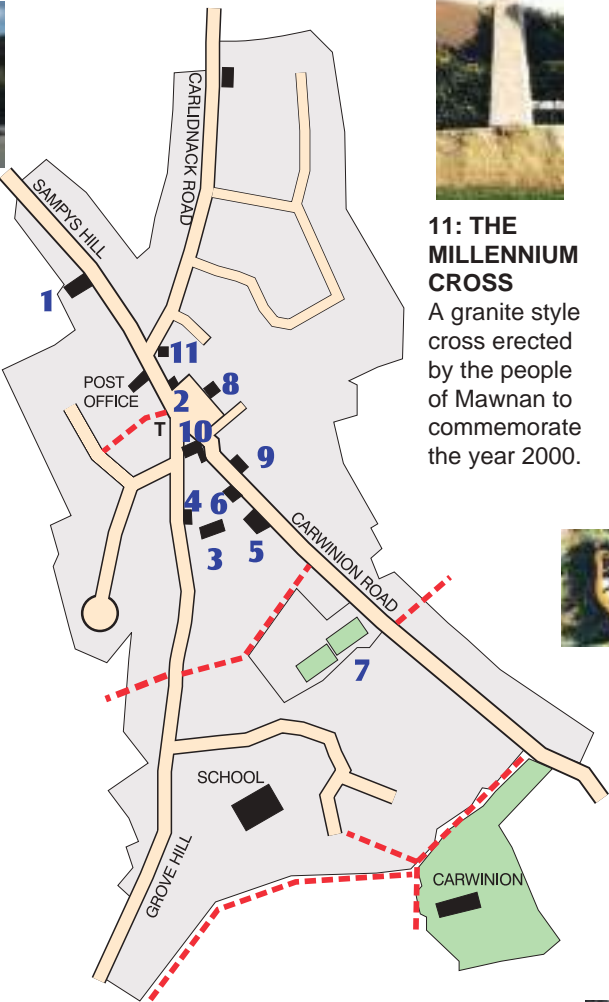


**2:** This site was originally Miss Cochrane's Shop (see photo above). Miss Cochrane worked on the land at Trebah during WW1. In 1919, she established a traditional village store here, and ran it for 30 years. It is now a cafe & deli.

**3 St. MICHAEL'S CHURCH** was built in 1874 on land given by the Rogers family of Carwinion. Between 1830 and 1900, some 50- 60 new churches (chapels-of-ease) were built in Cornwall, including St. Michael's. One reason for this extensive building programme was a belated response to Methodism, as the Methodist chapel in the village provided an attractive alternative to the long walk to the parish church.

**4: THE READING ROOM**

In 1865, R. Rogers of Carwinion leased a plot of land to three yeomen of Mawnan - Revd. William Rogers, Ralph Freethy and Edward Skewes - to construct a building to house two steam threshing machines on the ground floor with a Lecture or Reading Room on the first floor. It was not to be used as a Tavern, Hotel, Coffee, Eating or Beer House! Note the site of the old village taps between the Reading Room and the church steps.



**11: THE MILLENNIUM CROSS**

A granite style cross erected by the people of Mawnan to commemorate the year 2000.



**7: MAWNAN BOWLING CLUB'S** land was donated by Lord and Lady Rendlesham of Bosloe in 1927. The Club's distinctive badge incorporates the Penwarne coat-of-arms.

**6: THE VILLAGE SMITHY** is the last of the four Blacksmith's shops in the village, hence the name Mawnan SMITH. Billy James followed by his son, Dryden, plied their craft here for over 100 years, until 1994. The Village Smithy and adjacent buildings were fully restored and now provide a home for 4 artisan craft workshops. Visitors are able to observe these craftspeople as they create a range of distinctive, high quality products and bespoke designs.

The Smithy and craft workshops are open most days.



**5: TREVANION COURT**

A block of six flats. From 1833-1972 the village school was here. Across St. Michael's Church path were the school allot-ments. From 1903 to approx. 1958, this land was used for horticultural classes with 9-14 year old boys at Mawnan School.



**10: THE RED LION**

A traditional, thatched, cob-walled public house. It was already a well-established hostelry in 1717 for, when landlord Walter Lory died that year, he left a large number of goods and chattels.

**8:MAWNAN METHODIST CHAPEL** was granted a license for public worship in 1815. The schoolroom was added in 1901. Both remained in use until 2023.



## CIRCULAR WALK FROM MAENPORTH BEACH, AROUND ROSEMULLION HEAD & PORTH SAWSSEN

This walk is about 5.3 miles (8.5km) and is a well signposted easy walk. You can change up the route using the full map overleaf to see more of our parish.



1 – starting at the beach carpark at Maenporth cross the road at the entrance to the Maenporth Estate (the site of the former Crag Hotel which burnt to the ground in 1981, and now a holiday apartment complex) and start the gentle climb up through the wooded valley locally called Carwinion Woods. Keep left and follow the footpath on through the woodland and over the stream into the fields beyond. Crossing through two or three fields you should find yourself at the cattlesheds of Meudon Farm – so watch out for passing bovines!

2 - Follow the signposted path over the stile here and head towards the village of Mawnan Smith (keep this in mind for another day, as we don't quite reach here on this walk) until you come out on the road just opposite the Mawnan Bowling Club and turn left, following the road up carefully as traffic does get a bit heavy during peak season here.

3- As the road widens out on your right you will find the entrance to Carwinion House – an eighteenth-century stone manor house which Carwinion's owners, the Rogers family had filled with specimens of exotic species with assistance of the Victorian plant-hunters. Take the bridleway signposted next to the main gates and wander downhill through tree-lined path towards the sea, but be warned as this path does tend to wander so follow the sound of the sea down to the shoreline boathouse.

4 - You're now on the shoreline at the entrance to the Helford River. Seahorses live in the estuary's beds of eelgrass and the estuary is a haven for wildlife and juvenile fish species, as well as a magnet for those searching for Daphne Du Maurier's Frenchmans' Creek further up the estuary. From here – if you don't want to slip of your shoes for a quick paddle that is – turn right and follow the coast path round below the church of St Mawnan (5) and out to the mouth of the Helford River at Rosemullion Head, with its spectacular views across the whole of Falmouth Bay.

6- An Iron Age cliff castle once sat on Rosemullion Head for defence, with the headland was similarly used for defence in WWII , when it hosted a gun emplacement for anti-aircraft guns, although all that remains now are the concrete bases of these and the searchlight emplacements. The path here now hugs the cliffs – so be warned to take extra care to avoid any crumbling sections you might encounter. Continue walking the path and you will come to the beach at Hotel Meudon, another garden filled by the Fox family with Victorian plant-hunter treasures. A large gate gives public access to the hotel gardens ... and an excuse to walk up through them to indulge in a coffee, lunch or afternoon tea does not go amiss at this point.

7- Back on the path you now pass the cliffs at The Hutches and High Cliff – location of a couple of sea caves and secluded sandy coves. The path is a riot of colour during summer: swathes of pink clover, purple heather, vetch, wild thyme and thistles, yellow trefoil, buttercups, dandelions, blue bugloss and sheep's bit, red campions and speckled white sea campions, white and purple daisies. Also on this stretch are spots well favoured by the resident lizard population - so keep an eye out from them as you walk. The final stretch of the path leads you back across the cliffs and down to Maenporth Beach.

Maenporth Beach Cafe has been serving Kelly's Cornish ice cream for over 10 years and has 20+ flavours available, along with various coffee, cake and light bite options. That's if you can fit anything else in after a stop at Hotel Meudon!!



### PENWARNE HOUSE

The Penwarne family exercised considerable influence in the area during the Middle Ages. Gardens open to the public occasionally in the spring.

### BAREPPA

The three cottages in the hillside on the Mawnan side of the hamlet housed miners from the adjacent arsenic mine. A succession of Packet Captains occupied Bareppa House. (From 1688-1850, the Packet Service, carrying overseas mail, was associated with Falmouth.)

### TREGARNE MILL

In 1621, Tregarne Mill served the manor of Boskensoe. There were two mills - the upper one ceased working in the middle of the 19th century and very little remains. The lower mill was working until the mid thirties.

### BOSKENSOE DOWNS

Temporary landing strip for Sir Alan Cobham's Flying Circus and Cornwall Aviation Company in the 1930s, when passengers enjoyed flights over the Helford River.

### BOSVEAL CROSSROADS

The woods provided perfect cover for a large US Army storage depot in 1944. Stone and ash from old mine workings were rolled to make a firm surface for tents and vehicles.

### WHEAL ANNA MARIA (Wheal - mine)

The Engine Shaft, still visible but overgrown by bushes, is at the head of the creek. It took its name from Anna Maria Pender of Budock Vean, on whose land it stood. Copper and silver were mined here from 1833 onwards. A final attempt was made to re-open it in 1906.

**HIGHER PENPOLL** nestles in a valley, beside a stream which joins the Helford River at Anna Maria Creek. In the 1820s, most of the young people from the seven farm labourers' cottages emigrated to America.

### OYSTERS

The Romans ate them; lovers relish them; Lewis Carroll had them walking with the Walrus and they are farmed at Porth Navas. The Prince of Wales (Edward VIII) was a visitor and, in more recent times, Prince Charles, Duke of Cornwall, has been welcomed.

### TREBAH WARTHA

A little cluster of houses which were initially Trebah estate workers' homes. The Tower House was the laundry, water being stored in the tower.

**BAR HOUSE** (with its concrete jetty) was home to Claude Worth (died 1936), Moorfields Hospital surgeon and well-known yachtsman. From the local paper, The Falmouth Packet 1930:

*The Royal Cruising Club celebrated its jubilee by meeting on the Helford River .... where members were the guests of the vice-commander, Dr Worth at Bar House. Boats of five ton and upwards came from all over Europe for the event.*

### BAR BEACH

Shellfish Collectors: Please leave the tradition of trigging (scraping cockles from the mud) on Good Friday to local people, so conserving the shellfish, which have greatly diminished. Watch rather than participate!

In 1943, Lord Runciman's yacht *Sunbeam II* anchored off Bar Beach to become the base for a Special Intelligence Service (SIS) unit. With Special Operations Executive (SOE) already ensconced in two nearby properties, *Ridifarne* and *Pedn Billy* with its thatched boathouse on the foreshore, they were involved in clandestine sea communications with Brittany and further afield.

### THE HELFORD FERRY

On-demand passenger and cycle ferry operates from 1st April (or Good Friday) to 31st October. The earliest known reference to a franchise for the operation of a ferry is by a Charter of King Canute in 1023. Horses and carts were transported until the beginning of the 20th century, with the animals swimming astern, tethered by a rope. Tel: 01326 250770 E-mail: info

### TREBAH GARDEN

A sub-tropical paradise with a stunning coastal backdrop. Open daily from 9.30am. Free entry to the Visitors Centre, Trebah Kitchen, Gift Shop and Plant Centre. Tel 01326 252200 [www.trebah-garden.co.uk](http://www.trebah-garden.co.uk)

### POLGWIDDEN COVE

Trebah's private beach, accessible from the main garden entrance only. Early in 1944, a military road was created in a few days from the established road to Helford Passage. The foreshore was encased in a concrete mat and a 150ft (46m) jetty protruded out into the river. In June 1944, the US 29th Infantry Division embarked for the assault landing on Omaha Beach, Normandy.

### GLENDURGAN

Glendurgan was given to the National Trust in 1962 by the Fox family. There is a lovely mix of native and exotic plants and a puzzling maze. The village of Durgan is at the foot of the valley garden. Open to the public from February to October, Tuesday to Sunday. Tel: 01326 252020

### DURGAN

This thriving fishing cove with fish cellars, donkey sheds, coal yard, chapel and ale-house was purchased in 1823 by Alfred Fox. The Schoolroom was built over a fish cellar in 1876 by Mr Fox's son-in-law, Sir Joseph Pease. At the same time, he demolished *The Two Cutters* ale house on the opposite quay, replacing it with *Quay Cottage* and *Beach Cottage*. Several of the cottages are now holiday lets.

### PORTH SAXON

A chain of pill-boxes (relics of WW2) from Rosemullion Head to Helford Passage, includes the one overlooking the beach from the east.

### GREEN LANE

(NT land - not open to the public) This grassy track between little stone built hedges is a relic of the main route connecting Trebah to Trerose. Up to the end of the 18th century, most of the county's merchandise was carried on the backs of mules and ponies along such lanes.

### BOSLOE

In 1880, Chatham Cottage was enlarged and renamed Bosloe. From 1920-1939 it was occupied by Lord Rendlesham. His yacht, *The Lady Bee*, was crewed by Durgan ex-fishermen. One of his hobbies was the hybridisation of daffodils. Bosloe is now split into three National Trust holiday apartments.

### MAWNAN CHURCH

The ancient earthwork, within which St Maunanus, a Celtic saint, established his church, remains as a section of the churchyard's western hedge. In the 13th century, a more substantial building was erected, with the Tower added 100 years later. A request from Trinity House in 1842 to whitewash the Tower as a guide to mariners was never followed up! The Cornish inscription over the lych gate has been translated *It is good for me to draw nigh unto God.*

### TREROSE

The manor of Trerose originally comprised all the land between Maenporth and Porth Navas. From 1635-1642 the manor house was occupied by the governor of Pendennis Castle, Sir Nicholas Slanning.

### PRISK COVE

Noted for outstanding rock pools, each one like a natural aquarium.

### MEUDON FARMHOUSE

Dates from 1250. The present house was built between 1700 and 1710. The Fox family, who lived here at the end of the 18th century, kept a coach (with a secret compartment for valuables) prepared for a quick escape if the French invaded.

### St EDWARD'S Catholic Church

The church was built in 1964 on land donated by Mrs Alice Pilgrim of Nansidwell Hotel (now a private residence) in memory of her husband.

### CARWINION

is a classic Cornish granite and sandstone manor that has been the home of the Rogers family for 200 years.

### BREAM COVE

*A large party of us met on Meudon Beach (Bream Cove) to draw a seine for Prof. Owen. We all lounged on the beach most peacefully, John Sterling reading some Tennyson to us.* CAROLINE FOX 1818-1871.

**SEINING** was an in-shore daytime operation which entailed encircling a shoal of pilchards with a large net. The fish were *drawn in* nearly on to the beach, where they could be kept alive and taken out and cured in manageable quantities.

### THE MAENPORTH ESTATE

In 1836, the *Summer House* and *Pleasure Gardens* were part of the Fox family holdings. Julia and Hester Sterling (grand-daughters of *The Times* leader writer) then constructed an impressive mansion on the hilltop. After Julia's death in 1911, The Crag was occupied by Mr & Mrs Black, who had plantations in Sri Lanka. The mansion became the much-loved Crag Hotel until it was destroyed by fire. It is now an estate of leisure homes.

**SAT NIGHT 30th DEC 1978** During a blizzard, with winds of storm force 10-11, the Aberdeen trawler, Ben Asdale, was wrecked off the rocks at Maenporth. Her hull has virtually disappeared now.

# The Parish of MAWNAN in Cornwall

Published by the Mawnan Parish Council. © Mawnan Parish Council 2024  
Parish map may extend beyond the boundaries of Mawnan Parish  
Photographs with thanks to Anne Ohly and others.

