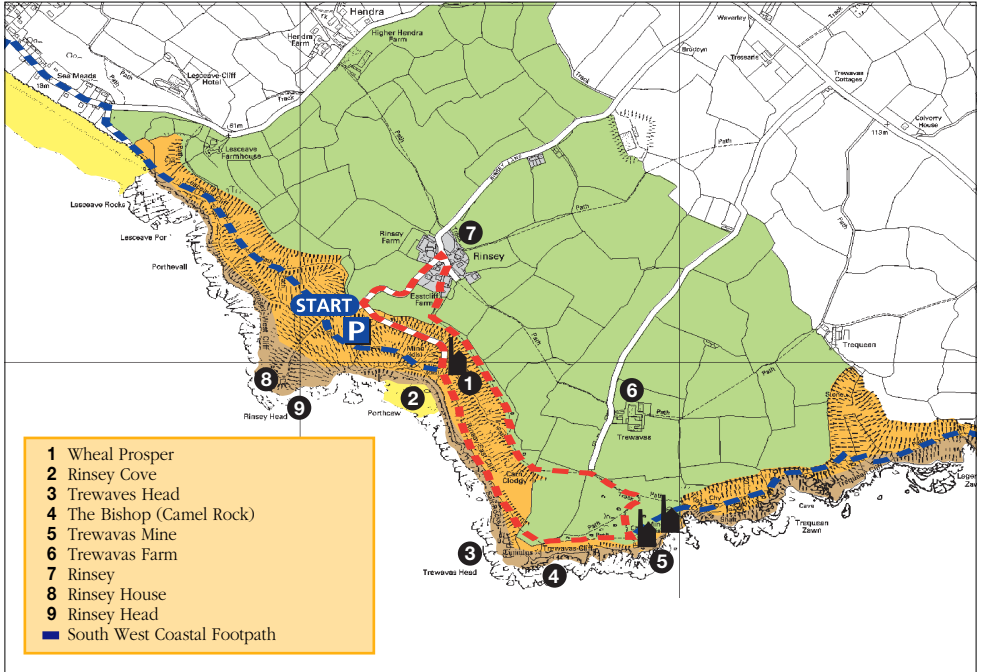


Rinsey Cove



Time: Allow 1½ hours.

Difficulty: Moderate.

Length: 2½ miles.

Location: At Ashton on the A394 Penzance-Helston Road, take the turning opposite the Lion & Lamb pub signed for Rinsey. Where the road goes left towards Porthleven, go straight on to Rinsey. The car park is a little further on at the end of a bumpy road.

Parking: At the National Trust car park above Rinsey Cove.

Refreshments: At Ashton, food is served at the Lion & Lamb pub, or you can buy snacks from the Post Office.

The National Trust owns much of the coast here. Wheal Prosper has been used for filming a Poldark sequel and further round is Trewavas Mine perched precariously on the cliff edge but a breathtaking sight. In spring and summer the clifftops are full of flowers and attracts many species of birds and insects. If you're feeling adventurous, climb down to Rinsey Cove and explore the rockpools, take a swim or study the geology.



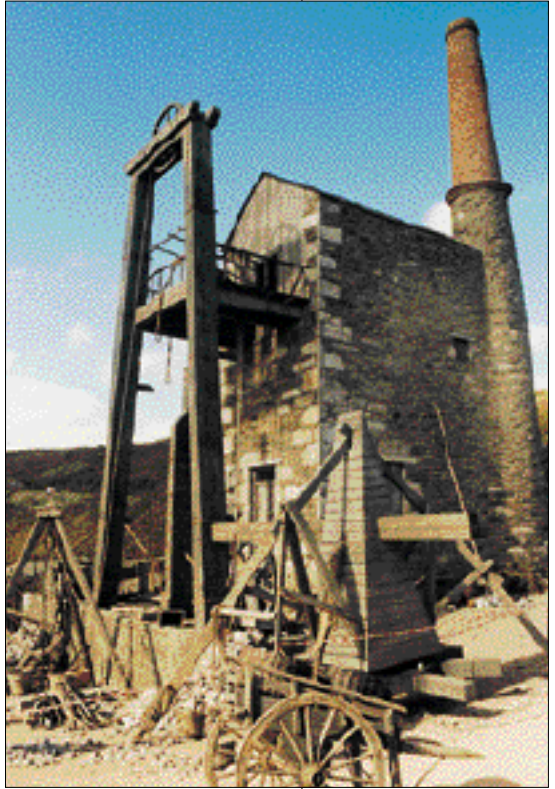
Wheal Prosper.

Take the footpath from the car park down towards the engine house to join the South West Coastal Footpath. On your way down look to your right for a structure known as a bat castle, perched on a pile of old mine spoil.

The bat castle sits on top of an old mine shaft and was put there for safety reasons to stop people falling in. Its design allows the resident bat population to roost in the underground workings – if you're here at twilight you're likely to see them flying about.

When you reach the engine house there's a flat area where you can sit and admire the view. On your right is Rinsey Head, with Rinsey House perched near the cliff edge and below you Rinsey Cove. When the tide is out, there's a large rock pool here known as Ray Pool, a favourite with swimmers if the sea is rough. The area of rock to its left is known as The Flat Rocks and often you'll see anglers fishing from here. The engine house was part of Wheal Prosper.

Wheal Prosper engine house was built in 1860 with slate, or killas as it is locally known, sourced from a small quarry just up on the hillside. The granite quoins were added to strengthen the structure. The Wheal Prosper workings were over 450 feet deep and were pumped to adit level by a 30-inch cylinder pumping engine. The pump shaft in front of it has been capped for public safety. After the engine house



Wheal Prosper when filming a Poldark sequel in mid-1990s.

Rinsey Cove - The mining connection

Wheal Prosper's adit portal opens on the beach. It can be seen at the bottom of the steps near the end of the path going down to the beach. Looking above the adit portal, the mineralised vein can be seen snaking up the cliff; on the rare occasions when the sand has been stripped from the beach, this vein can be traced among the rocks running towards the sea.

The back of the beach is a geologist's delight. Visible is an exposed 'roof pendant', which occurs when hot molten granite comes up through sedimentary rock and metamorphoses or bakes it. The vertical bands you can see are distorted slates next to the granite intrusion.

was stabilised by the National Trust some years ago, a television company was able to reconstruct the mine site to film a Poldark sequel.

Bear left from the engine house, taking the bottom path along the clifftop with the sea on your right. Just before you reach a Cornish hedge is a marshy area that attracts birds and butterflies. At the hedge, go over the stile. The path then takes you uphill a short distance and through a gap in another hedge to Trewavas Head.

Ahead you'll see a large sea stack known as The Bishop (or Camel Rock) above the next cove with Porthleven behind.



The Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary. These lavishly patterned butterflies are easily spotted flying around bluebells in late May and early June. If you miss this opportunity, then try again in August when the second brood emerges.



The Clouded Yellow. Britain is as far north as this butterfly can survive. Arriving here on southerly airstreams in May or June and breeding to produce a second brood. No stage in its life cycle was known to survive the British winter until 1999/2000, when caterpillars were seen feeding throughout the winter. This may be a sign that that climate change is shifting their range northwards – a phenomenon recently observed with other butterfly species in Europe.

Coastal wildlife

This part of the coast is a brilliant place to watch for birds and butterflies – you might be lucky enough to spot unusual species blown off-course by the gale force winds. Offshore look for seals, dolphins and basking sharks.

An amazing 23 species of butterfly have been recorded here, including the Silver-studded Blue, the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, the Green Hairstreak and the Grayling.

The Naval Air Station at Cudrose often use this stretch of coastline for air sea rescue practice and you may be lucky enough to see a helicopter drop its rear wheel on the Bishop's nose.

Continue along the coastal path past The Bishop to the highest point of the headland. At the top where the path forks, bear left across an area of old mine spoil. This spectacular section of the coastline has plenty of wow factor, as you walk round Trewavas Head the view in front of you is a tribute to the ingenuity and skill of the Cornish engineer. The Wheal Trewavas engine houses have sat precariously on the cliff edge here for at least 150 years and are crying out for preservation. The engine houses are in a dangerous state so please don't get too close.

These now empty buildings once housed steam pumping engines, needed to drain copper lodes that coursed out under the sea. You may see Cudrose helicopters in action here again as they attempt to land on the circular platform to the right of the nearest engine house. This platform was the site of the capstan used for lowering the heavy pumping gear into the shaft. The great mining historian AK Hamilton Jenkin in his book *Mines and Miners of Cornwall* tells the well known story of the Christmas feast that was laid out on trestles underground, however the sea broke in and flooded the submarine section of the mine. As there was no loss of life reported, it was thought the tale was more folklore than truth.



The Bishop (or Camel Rock).



Trewavas Mine.

Part of the cliffs here have been designated a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) because of their mineralogical importance. The mine spoil here contains mainly sulphides, as well as arsenopyrite, chlorite, mica, pyrite, tristramite and other minerals.

Beyond the mine buildings, Porthleven is tucked round the coastline just before the long sandy beach at Loe Bar. Let your eye follow the coast further to the right, this is the Lizard, Britain's most southerly point on the mainland. The coastline between here and Lands End is notoriously dangerous and hundreds of ships have been wrecked here over the centuries, due to the combined dangers of rocks and wreckers.



Trewavas Mine.

Saving lives at sea

On 28th December 1807, the frigate HMS Anson was wrecked off the Loe Bar. Although the vessel was not far from the shore, around 100 men drowned as they tried to swim to safety. This incident and others led to the passing of an Act of Parliament permitting the construction of Porthleven harbour (the Prince of Wales harbour), a safe refuge that took 15 years to build (1811-1825). Encouraged by Helston's MP Mr Grylls, another local man Davis Gilbert played an active part in promoting the 1808 Act allowing bodies cast up by the sea to have a Christian burial. The burial registers after the Act give an idea of the extent of human lives being lost.

The tragedy enticed a Helston cabinetmaker named Henry Trengrouse (1772-1854) to design ship-to-shore life-saving equipment. His work has saved many lives – modern versions of the rocket launchers, rocket lines, life-jackets and the bosun's chair (later becoming the Breeches Buoy) continued in use until being replaced by helicopters in 1988.

Breage and Germoe men had the reputation of being the most savage of all Cornish wreckers. Any vessels failing to get to the sheltered waters of

Mount's Bay, or into a harbour, risked being driven onto reefs and sands.

Wreckers were skilled at plundering any ship, as well as vessels limping into port. The plunder of foreign vessels attracted some government attention, in case international relations were upset.



Etching of HMS Anson wreck, by WE Deey and H Trengrouse, showing how the crew might have been rescued if Trengrouse's life-saving equipment had been available.

“From wicked rocks and shelving sands,
from Breage and Germoe men's hands,
Dear Lord deliver us”

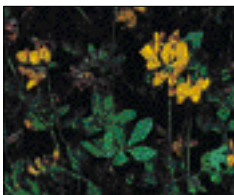
Rinsey Cove



Kittiwake.



Great Green Bush Cricket.



Bird's-foot Trefoil.



Sea Campions.



Thrift.

Praa Sands Beach from Rinsey Head.

Just before the first chimney of Trewavas Mine, go left, which takes you inland over the upper side of the area of mine spoil and towards Trewavas Farm. Go left over a stile (mind the electrical fencing) and take the path straight ahead, with the farm to your right. At the two gates, go through the left gate into the field. The return path then takes you across the top of this field. Below you towards the sea is the path you've already walked along. At the end of the field go over a stile. From here the path follows the wall, and soon you'll see Rinsey House ahead of you. Wheal Prosper engine house is soon also in view again, with magnificent views across Mounts Bay – one of the world's most beautiful bays.

The path begins to curve inland and soon you'll come to the hamlet of Rinsey. Here the path is walled between the cottages, then joins a tarmaced road. Follow this round to the left, then go left down the lane back down to the car park.

At this point you can join Walk 6, by following the coastal footpath over Rinsey Head and down to the sandy beach at Praa Sands.

Wildlife on Rinsey Head

Rinsey Head is a mosaic of coastal maritime heath and grassland. The heathland is mainly Ling, Bell Heather, Tormentil and Gorse. In late summer, look for reddish strands with pale pink flowers strewn across gorse bushes, these belong to the parasitic plant Dodder.

The paths around mine buildings support a rich variety of wild flowers. These include Subterranean Clover, which pushes its seedpods into the ground. Look for the National rarity Hairy Bird's-foot Trefoil and Bird's-foot, both so named because their seed pods splay out like avian feet. Other plants growing here are Wild Thyme, Sea & Musk Stork's-bill, Yellow & Blue Forget-me-nots and Common Violet.

Rinsey Head is home to one of Cornwall's largest breeding colonies of Kittiwakes. You might also see Black Redstarts, Wheatears, Skylarks and Song Thrushes. Amongst the cliff vegetation 5 species of ant and 4 species of grasshoppers and crickets have been found, including the magnificent Great Green Bush-cricket.

