

Holywell Cave can be seen at low tide beneath the southern cliffs of Kelsey Head. Although it seems to be no more than a slit from the beach, on entering the cave it is possible to make out some slimy steps leading up a series of pools to a hole in the roof of the cave. The rocks forming the cave are tinted red and blue, with the edges of the pools encrusted with calcareous deposits formed by water rich in minerals dripping from above. The cave was seized upon by Victorian Romantics as the holy well after which the bay was named. However, it is likely that it is an entirely natural feature, and the real well of Holywell is St Cubert's. This is found, midway between the village and the coast, in the Trevornick Valley on land which is now part of the Holywell Bay Fun Park. Thought to be fourteenth century, the well was discovered in a ruined state in 1916 and has been restored by the Newquay Old Cornwall Society.

4. Stay with the Coast Path as it leaves the beach and travels through the sand dunes to Holywell.

Cornish crime writer W.J. Burley, who was born in Falmouth, lived in Holywell until his death in 2002. Best known for his detective novels featuring Charles Wycliffe, televised in the mid 1990s, Burley won a scholarship to study zoology at Oxford after the Second World War and was Head of Biology at Newquay Grammar School until he retired in 1974, by which time he was well established as a novelist.

5. Approaching Holywell, take one of the paths leading to the left before the houses, bearing left to pass on the seaward side of the golf course. Cross the track at the far end to continue straight ahead. Ignore the path which branches off to the left and drop gently downhill to the stream.

6. Carry on ahead again to cross a track and continue along the footpath over Cubert Common as it goes over the brow of the hill and descends to another track.

On the far south edge of the common is a large round barrow with excellent sea views towards Castle an Dinas to the north east and St Agnes Beacon to the south west. Because of these, it is believed to have been a particularly important burial site in the Bronze Age.

7. Turn right on the track to Treago Farm. Take the path to the left through the campsite heading north east towards the West Pentire to Crantock road.

8. Reaching the road, turn left and follow the road back to the Bowgie Inn.

Text and photos of Kelsey Cliffs and Holywell Bay by Ruth Luckhurst and the SWCP team



The Bowgie Inn, a Freehouse Restaurant, with a large car park, is a popular place to eat throughout the year, open daily from 11.00am!!

Bowgie is a Cornish word meaning "Cow Shed". The Bowgie was a farm building up until the 1950's. Hence the name of the main bar being The Pig Sty, and the Locals bar being called the Stable Bar!! The current landlord, has owned the pub for over 40 years. Back in the 1970's, he used to grow potatoes in the field on the cliff edge to make the pub chips.

The South West Coast Path Association
(www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk)
exists to help everyone enjoy the coast path.

Other useful information

Refreshments - The Bowgie Inn
Toilets - In Holywell and The Bowgie Inn
Further information - Newquay Tourist Information Centre
01637 854020

Produced by the South West Coast Path Team with support from:



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
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Walks on and around the
South West Coast Path NATIONAL TRAIL
from the Bowgie Inn

Kelsey Head and Holywell

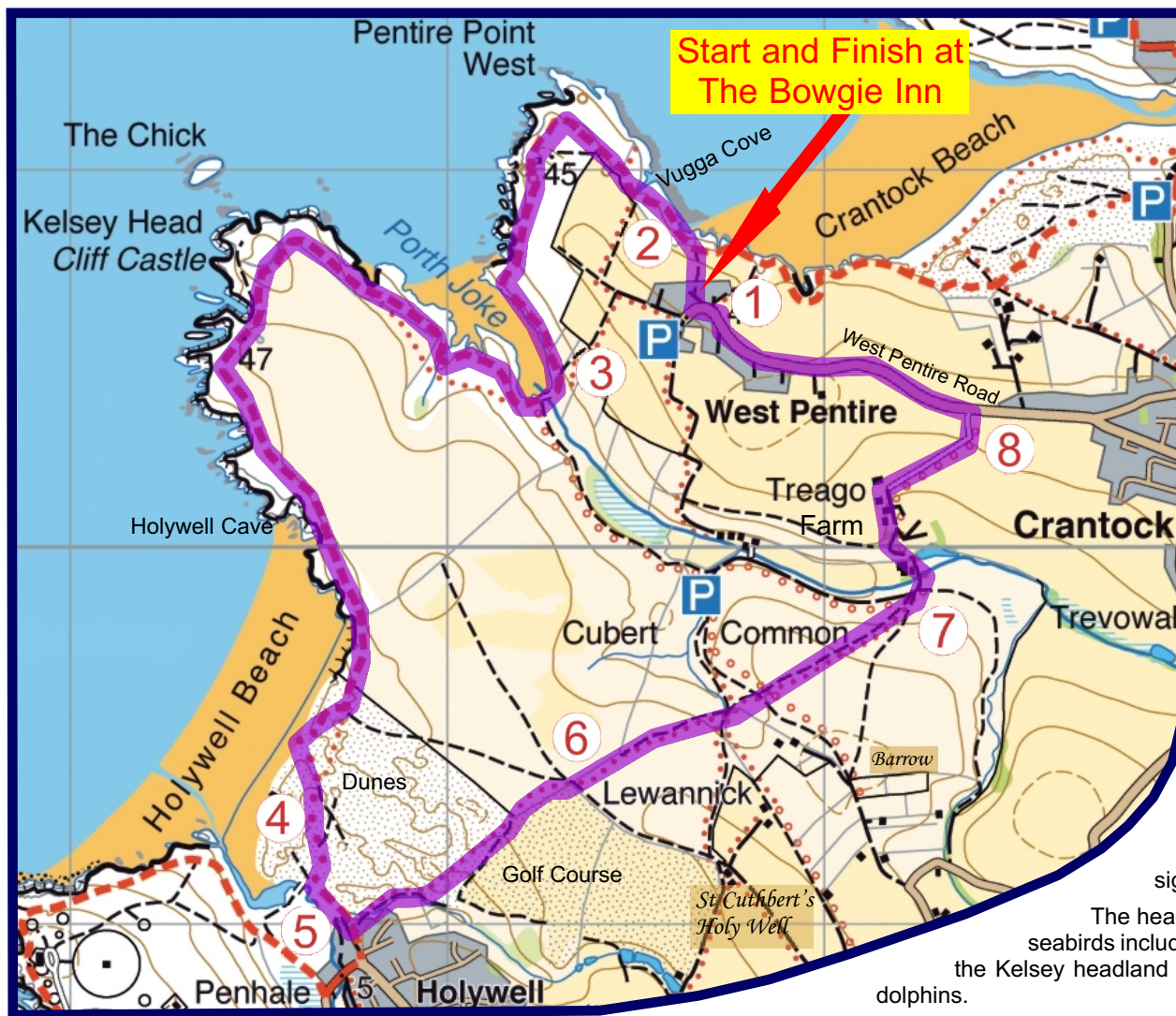
Featuring a sandy beach, caves and a holy well, this is a relatively gentle stroll in an area particularly important for wildlife. Watch out for seals around The Chick and check out the prehistoric cliff castle on the headland.



Distance: 5¼ miles (8½ km)
Estimated time: 3 hours
Difficulty: Challenging
Starting point: The Bowgie Inn
OS Explorer map 104 Redruth & St Agnes

the BOWgie inn
CRANTOCK • NEWQUAY • BOWGIE.COM

This is one of the many walks that can be found at
www.southwestcoastpath.com



Directions

1. *From the Bowgie Inn walk down through the car park to join the South West Coast Path turning left.*

Listen out for the Gannel crake, a mythical bird whose desolate howl has been heard all around Crantock Beach. The name is attributed to two brothers who were once working beneath West Pentire, gathering seaweed to use as fertiliser. One of the brothers described the sound, which frightened their horses into galloping away, as 'like a thousand voices in pent-up misery with one long-drawn wail dying away into the distance.'

2. *Follow the South West Coast Path as it travels towards and around Pentire Point West.*

At Vugga Cove, en route to the headland, there are a few rusty mooring pins and rings leaded into the rocks, evidence that the cove was once used by boats. There are also twin grooves where massive timbers once lay across the narrow channel, possibly to enable local boatbuilders to scrape the bottom of a boat.

The lower path on Pentire Point West leads to a collapsed sea cave, a common feature on the North Cornish coastline. The cave was carved into the rock by the erosive action of the waves, which then washed around inside it, causing such a build-up of air pressure that the roof fell in.

3. *Beyond the headland descend to the beach at Porth Joke and keep on the South West Coast Path and follow it around Kelsey Head and on to Holywell Beach.*

Known to the locals as 'Polly Joke', the beach was originally called Porth Lojowek, meaning 'plant-rich cove'.

Kelsey Head is a Site of Special Scientific Interest with a wide range of habitats, the most extensive being the sand dune system and the maritime grassland which has grown over wind-blown sand around the fringes of the headlands and on Cubert Common.

Conservation methods used by the National Trust around Kelsey Head ensure that no fewer than 154 different species of plant thrive here today, and in the summer it is a riot of colour. Other important wildlife areas are the wet meadows alongside the stream as you walk to Porth Joke and the brackish marsh at Holywell Bay.

A number of rare plants grow around here, including sea holly in the sand dunes and Babington's leek in the area of marshland. The particularly unusual and beautiful Silver-Studded Blue butterfly has also been seen at Kelsey Head. The stripe-winged grasshopper spotted here is one of only three sightings in Devon and Cornwall in recent years.

The headland and the offshore islands are also noteworthy for the colonies of breeding seabirds including the guillemot, shag and razorbill. The small island just offshore as you round the Kelsey headland is known as The Chick. At low tide, look out for grey seals and maybe even dolphins.

Evidence of human activity has been found around Kelsey Head dating back to the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) times around 4000-8000 BC. This includes flint tools, as well as shells and bone in what is thought to have been a midden, suggesting that there was a settlement here. There are also tumuli, or burial barrows, dating from the Bronze Age.

Archaeologists have found two cliff castles here. Cliff castles date from the Iron Age, generally between 100 and 200AD. They are coastal enclosures making use of the natural defences of steep cliffs around a headland. The prehistoric inhabitants would fortify the landward side of the headland by means of ramparts and ditches. The low bank and shallow ditch across Kelsey Head can still be seen. The area enclosed is much smaller than it originally would have been, since the north and west sides are assumed to have fallen into the sea.