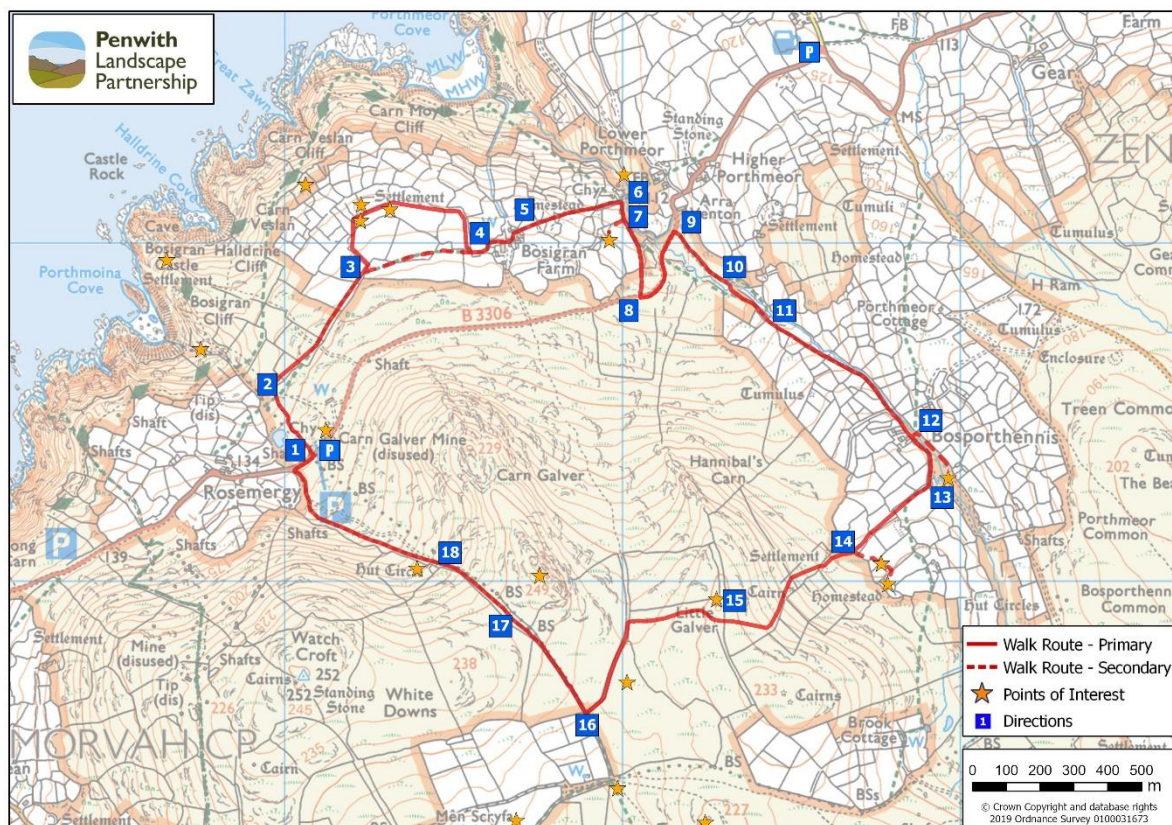


Trail Guide: Bosigran, Bosporthennis and Carn Galva

A walk far back into time, through some of Penwith's most ancient farmed landscapes and into the heart of the Penwith moors. The route passes by a host of features of interest, including: Bosigran, Mill Farm, Porthmeor Tin Stamps, Bosporthennis Fields, Settlement & Beehive Hut, Little Galva and Carn Galva.

The majority of this trail is on National Trust land.

Distance:	4.3 miles / 6.9 km
Time:	Allow at least four hours
Starting grid ref:	SW 421 364
Public Transport:	First Kernow 'Land's End Coaster' bus and Transport for Cornwall bus 16a will stop here
Car Parking:	National Trust Car Park at Carn Galva Mine
Nearest Facilities:	Gurnards Head Hotel, Treen. Rosemergy Cream Teas
Accessibility & Terrain:	Multiple granite stiles, a stream crossing across stepping-stones, rough moorland paths, and a good hill climb. Some parts likely to be very wet in winter. Cattle grazed openly around much of Bosigran, Bosporthennis and the Galvas. A more challenging walk.
Safety & disclaimer:	See here



1. Before you set off, take a look around the Carn Galva Mine buildings. A number of paths head down in the direction of the coast from around the mine buildings, converging at a gate and stile leading onto the open fields sloping down to Bosigran Cliffs.

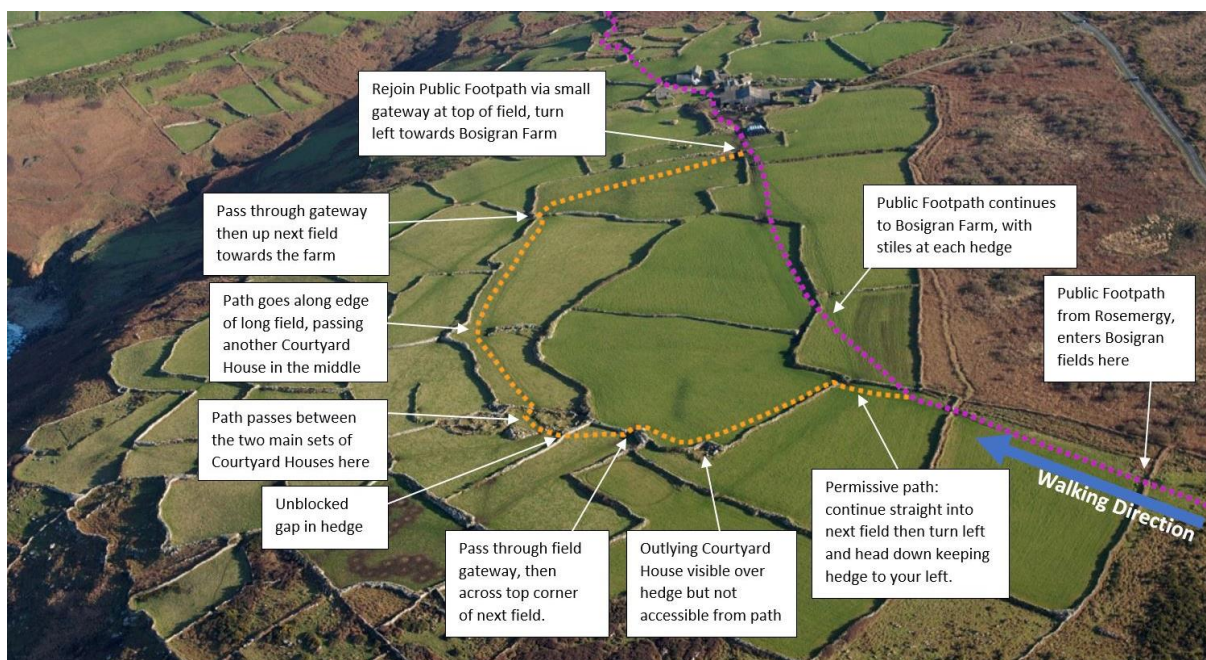
The two engine houses of Carn Galva Mine were built in the 1850s and active up to 1875 when the mine closed. The [eastern house](#) contained the whim engine, for hauling materials to the surface. The [western house](#) contained the pumping engine, pumping water from a shaft some way to the west. Shafts for pumping, hauling and ventilating ran eastwards alongside the road. The engine houses were consolidated by the National Trust in the 1980s. The paths pass through some very nice scrub willow woodland.

2. Cross the granite stile beside the Penwith Gate, into the open field. Head up to your right, crossing over a number of very old, low field boundaries, and coming upon a pedestrian gate. Pass through the gate, and into the fields of Bosigran farm. The footpath crosses each field boundary at a stile, usually near to the field opening.

Although the Public Right of Way (PRoW) is mapped here as being uphill of the field boundary, the established route follows through the fields just below. The headland in front of you is Bosigran Cliff. On the top is an [Iron Age Cliff Castle](#) - enclosed by a single stone rampart, with prehistoric field systems immediately inland from the castle rampart. The cliffs on the western face of the headland are world-renowned among rock climbers.

The fields of Bosigran are a fantastic example of prehistoric field systems still in use today; a result of careful early design that considered the nature of the land and its ability to meet the needs of sustainable mixed farming.

3. Permissive footpath to Bosigran Courtyard Houses:



This is a [Romano-British courtyard house settlement](#), (dating to the 1st century CE) within a contemporary radial field system, made up of four widely separated courtyard houses and possible roundhouse. This is a fantastic example of a courtyard house settlement, and you can clearly see how these courtyard houses would have developed from earlier roundhouses.

In 2022, PLP and the National Trust established a permissive footpath route to the courtyard houses, as a spur off the existing public footpath. An old, long-blocked gap in the hedge next to the courtyard houses was re-opened to facilitate the route - allowing the public to legitimately access the courtyard houses for the first time.

4. Upon reaching the farm, the footpath goes between the buildings, across the bottom of the yard and out over a stile into the field beyond.

The [Bosigran hamlet](#), as it is today, was first recorded in 1333, in a different location than the original courtyard houses. The trackway, part holloway, rising from Bosigran settlement up the valley between Carn Galva and Hannibal's Carn, is at least medieval in origin, but possibly older.

5. The footpath now follows down through the fields into the Porthmeor valley. As it drops down, it becomes a sturdy, built pathway, hedged either side and ditched, with a granite stile at the bottom.

6. Over the stile is a crossing of trackways. Turn right and cross the stile onto a track that climbs up the valley.

Downstream here are the remnants of the extensive [Porthmeor Tin Stamping Mill](#), established in 1861 following abandonment of the Porthmoina Stamps (on the other side of Bosigran) due to insufficient water flow; the Porthmeor stream is longer and stronger than Porthmoina.

7. A short way up from the stile, just past a field boundary, bear right off the track and climb a short way up to the structure ahead of you. This is Mill Farm, a 17th Century farmstead.

Return to the track and carry on up the built track, following it up to the road. Note that the PRoW, as mapped, bears off into the scrub towards the road - likely an old path line that predated the built track for the stamps.

[Mill Farm](#) is an abandoned, post-medieval hamlet, containing the shells of two single storey dwellings, within a pattern of late medieval fields, cleared and surveyed by PLP volunteers during early 2019 (Access permitted into the hamlet off the Public Footpath).

8. Out on the road, turn left and head down the hill and around the S-bend.

Nearby are the remains of an [1870s steam powered stamping mill](#), just off the road further up the stream. Proceed cautiously walking along the road at this point.

9. Soon after the road crosses the stream, you'll see a field gate and a footpath way marker on your right. Go through the gate and follow up the grassy track.

Note the two PRoW lines on the map heading up the valley and converging - not all present on the ground. The suggested route links up the two usable sections.

10. A short way up, look out for a small path diving off into the undergrowth on the right, just as the track heads up to the left. It is indicated by a permissive waymarker on a post, though this can be obscured by vegetation in the summer! Follow the path across stepping-stones over the stream, and through a kissing gate into the rough ground beyond.

This permissive path section links between the two Public Footpath lines. The lower section of the southerly line does not appear to exist on the ground and the whole area very boggy.

11. Pick up the line of the footpath here by heading upstream from the kissing gate, keeping the scrub that borders the stream on your left. You'll soon come to an established line - follow it, and you'll know for sure when you reach the first granite stile.

These are the lower fields of Bosporthennis. The exact meaning of the placename is uncertain. Bos/bod certainly means 'dwelling'. The 'porth' element could mean 'entrance/gateway' or 'on the way to'. 'Enys' might mean 'isolated/remote spot' or 'land beside a river', or it could be referring to Ninnes - which is where you get to if you walk to the top of the valley and down the other side!

[Bosporthennis Quoit](#) - in a nearby field but not publicly accessible - once considered neolithic, is now thought to be an Early Bronze Age Cairn. As per many local neolithic sites, it is located with visual reference to the Carn Galva tors, which here are just in view behind the nearer Hannibal's Carn

12. Follow the track passing by Bosporthennis farm buildings. You can visit the Bosporthennis Holy Well from this point by crossing the granite bridge over the stream and taking the small path that heads off to the right up the opposite side of the stream.

Return to the track, continue a short way further up, looking for a 'merriment stone' on the left-hand side of the track.

Bosporthennis Well - the remains of a holy well, once as famous as Madron Well; children were taken there to be cured of skin diseases.

Above the farm, a little further up the track on the left-hand side is an [obvious stone with a set of holes drilled into it](#). Drilling contests are a well recorded feature of feast days in mining areas; such stones may have been then used to stage firework displays by packing the holes with gunpowder; hence "Merriment" stones or holes.

13. Just beyond the 'merriment stone' look for a rough footpath forking off the track to the right, leading out into the fields.



The public footpath line bears south across the first field towards the opposite corner, leading towards Brook Cottage and the Nine Maidens Common. Here we leave the PRoW, instead walking straight ahead (south-east) along the edge of the first field, on an informal permissive route towards the open access land on the slopes of Little Galva.

14. After crossing through two field gateways, continue ahead towards the third - beyond which the ground becomes obviously rougher and the slope of the hill begins. At this point it is possible to turn left into the adjacent field, ending up right next to the Bosporthennis Beehive Hut (set into a very prominent high hedge), and courtyard house settlement in the next field beyond that.

Backtrack a short way to the gateway leading out onto the rough ground, and continue heading up the hillside, climbing ultimately up to the outcrop of Little Galva - look for a timber pedestrian gate in the hedge at the top and pass through it.

The "Beehive hut" forms part of the Bosporthennis courtyard house settlement. Whilst the settlement dates to the Iron Age, and the nearby field systems back to the Bronze Age, the hut is more likely a post medieval "crow" built into the foot of a prehistoric lynchet. A very special, remote, and difficult to find site!

When you first enter the rough ground and begin climbing up the hill, you pass through the faint remains of another settlement, likely originating from the bronze age - with three courtyard houses and six round houses. It is quite extensive but can be easy to miss when absorbed in navigating through this spectacular and remote part of the landscape. One of the structures is thought to be a 'proto-courtyard house' - with two contiguous circular chambers - an unusual mid-point in the evolution from round houses to courtyard houses.

15. From beside Little Galva, pick a path west from the summit, to join the old trackway climbing up from Bosigran, and along to join the trackway heading up from Four Parishes.

There is a set of four bronze-age cairns, in a line, towards the top of the drove road rising from Bosigran. Assumed to be burial chambers or ceremonial cairns, positioned with reference to Carn Galva.

16. You reach a gate leading into a hedged trackway - join the track and head right, uphill, and through a second gate. Follow the track up to the saddle between the hills of Carn Galva and Watch Croft.

Nearby to the south is [The Four Parishes Stone](#), or Men Crows (men, "stone" + crows, "cross"). An elongated natural boulder with a small incised cross, which marked the meeting point of four ecclesiastical parishes (CW).

17. When the path levels out on top of the saddle, it is a short detour up a path to the right, to the rocky summit of Carn Galva. Returning to the main track, follow it downhill into the valley.

Likely the earliest known remains of human activity in West Penwith; the southern tor of Carn Galva is enclosed by the remains of a stony bank - a Tor Enclosure dating back to the early neolithic, 4th millennium BC. A Bronze Age standing stone, just off the summit of Watch Croft, can be seen on the skyline from certain points.

18. Halfway down, the path passes by a round house nestled in between large boundary hedges. Continue down the track, ultimately to the gate at the bottom onto the road. At the road, turn right, cross the cattle grid and return to the start.

A [hut circle and enclosure](#) sit on the south side of the path here. The hut circle is bronze age, likely contemporary to the remnants of prehistoric field systems of adjacent White Downs. The enclosure, uphill & partially on top of the hut circle is thought to be medieval, used as a collecting pound when grazing the upper moors.

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