

walk 7

Feock

Saints and sailors

compiled by Phil Allen



Route: Feock Playing Field, Pill Creek, Loe Hill, Harcourt, Carnon Yard, Trolver, Feock Playing Field. Encompassing breathtaking views of the Carrick Roads and Restronguet Creek this premier walk contains all surfaces between roadway, grassy field, shoreline and muddy lane with three stiles. To appreciate the full walk avoid high tides as the beach path at Pill Creek will be covered. Approximate time 1.5 to 2 hours.

The walk starts at the Feock Retallack Playing Field **A**, which was established by the Parish Council in 1994. As you look to the field at the entrance gate, take the track on your right.

As you approach Grange House you will see the Victorian village pump **B**, and steps down to the ancient well. Although it does not have the description of a Holy Well, it has served the village since early times.



Photograph by Phil Allen

The correct prefix of 'La', within local names La Feock and La Vague is an abbreviation of 'Lan' meaning religious place, and is taken to mean that the village originated from a hermitage or small monastic cell. It was common for such communities to be established around a spring or well, many spawning legends of a patron saint miraculously summoning the water to gush forth. In the 6th century 'Celtic' Christian evangelism

was at its height and the Saints' Ways connecting Brittany, Cornwall, Wales and Ireland were well trodden. The Fal estuary played a major part in this and retained as a legacy its remarkable necklace of shoreside churches which are some of the prettiest in the country.

The origin of the name, Feock, is open to conjecture, possibly derived from the Irish Saint Fiacc or, allowing for the mutation to Meock or Veock, it could be associated with the Breton Saint Meoc.

Continue down the lane and, at La Feock Grange, take the track to the left and towards the barn. Bear right and pass through the right hand field gate. Keep to the left hand hedge in the field, gaining the first of many magnificent views of the Carrick Roads.

Pass through the gate at the bottom and turn left on the track taking you down the hill to the head of Pill Creek. Turn right on the road taking you uphill.

This road **C** is part of the ancient traveller route bordering the west Fal, which provided the shortest distance travelling from Tresillian Bridge to Penryn. Up the hill to the right, it leads towards Feock and via Restronguet Passage, onwards to Mylor and Penryn. On the left it leads through Trevilla and Old Kea to link with ferry points at King Harry, Tolverne and Malpas. The three-way Malpas ferry is famous for its connection with the tragic story of Tristan and Iseult set in the 6th Century AD.

A few yards up the road take the path to the left which leads down to the beach at Pill, if it is low tide take this beach route. If it is high tide, the path along the beach will be covered and you will have to continue to follow the road up towards Feock Church. The beach route is most pretty and unusual.

Low tide: At the fork take the left hand path down to the beach, keep the concrete wall on your right and walk along the beach ahead.

Across the creek you will see Pill Quay **D**, built in the 1760s by Thomas Daniell, one of many along the banks of the Fal which gave access for shipping servicing the mines of Kea and Gwennap. The Daniell family rose quickly to fame under Thomas who amassed a fortune in association with Sir William Lemon of Carclew. Small wonder that both their names are prominent in Truro today, indeed Thomas was nicknamed "guinea a minute Daniell" due to his vast income. His son, Ralph Allen Daniell further advanced the families interests, acquiring the Trelissick estate in 1813. Unfortunately Ralph's son, another Thomas, was a gambling man and lost the family fortune even more quickly than it had been made!

In the late 1800s Pill Creek was the centre of the oyster fishery on the Fal, with Pill or Feock men holding over half the licences. Fal oysters, now a delicacy, provided a staple food locally in days past. During the 1840s oysters from the estuaries in the east of England became very scarce and prices rocketed, giving our local industry a dramatic boost. At this time of bonanza, up to two hundred boats might have been seen in the fishery, with minor fortunes being



made as a consequence. In following years, intensive commercial interests prevailed and large scale industrial boats were attracted from across the country prompting fears that the fishery would become exhausted, however it was not until 1868 that the Truro Corporation introduced the current bylaws, which regulated the fishery to the non-mechanised techniques only. This action uniquely

enforced stability and sustainability to the fishery and also provided a focus for the design and building of the Falmouth Working Boats. These are now the poster craft of the Fal, either in the form of the traditional oyster dredge or the out and out racing derivative. Whilst now widely called Falmouth Working Boats they might more fittingly be named after Pill or Restronguet, as the best known traditional builders, Ferris, Hitchens and Brabyn hailed from shipyards in these creeks **D**. The yards also produced larger vessels and many schooners of over one hundred tons capacity were launched.

As you pass the lychgate and the remaining 13th century tower you will see, across the road, a little further up the hill on the right is the old Schoolhouse which closed in 1983. The school was built in 1847 by the 'National Society for the Education of the poor in the Principles of the Established Church'. It cost £308, of which £243 was raised by local subscription. The building was designed by J L Pearson, who was also responsible for Devoran School, Devoran Church and finally Truro Cathedral.



As you draw opposite the low sheds on the opposite bank, leave the beach taking the curved steps up on your right and passing in front of the old shipwrights cottages built in the 1740s.

As you follow this track up the hill you pass St Feock Church Hall on your right.

At the top, turn left on the main road. If you had taken the high tide route, the two routes merge here.

The road dog-legs right and left, to pass around St Feock churchyard **E**, its circular boundary a sign of its ancient origin. The earliest written record of the name 'Lan Fioc' occurs in 1160, with the first vicar registered in 1264.

The current church was however built in 1875/6 under the direction of its recently retired vicar Rev. Thomas Philpotts. The old church was completely taken down although much of the stonework of windows, columns, arches and the south porch were saved and re-used.



The estuary contains important habitats and the Carrick Roads is a Special Area of Conservation as well as containing areas of Special Scientific Interest.



D
Photograph courtesy of the RIC

An elegant steam launch at Pill (your walk route up the curved steps and the path in front of the cottages can be clearly seen).



D
Photograph by Phil Allen

Working boats racing in Feock Regatta with the entrance to Pill Creek in the distance.

Take the footpath between the post box and the Telephone box into the field beyond and carry on straight ahead, before following the contour around to the right.

The footpath provides fine views **I** over Loe Beach and the Carrick Roads beyond. An outing to Loe Beach has been a favourite for generations of local families. Today you may visit the cafe, boat hire, watersports centre or simply relax on the delightful shingle beach. A charge is made for car parking and this parking area is made available for boat layup in winter months. There is a public lavatory off the car park.

Its deep water and open aspect has made Loe a favourite venue for regattas since Victorian times. Of the 1876 regatta the Royal Cornwall Gazette reported, "The position is one of the most lovely that can be imagined. Loe Beach is fringed by wooded heights and sloping green swards and from these, which on Friday were covered with spectators, a splendid view of the whole proceedings could be had. It was the opinion of the oldest inhabitants that so many people were never seen in the district before."



Loe Beach regatta of yesteryear and watersports of today.



Photograph courtesy of the RIC

Photograph courtesy of Loe Beach Watersports

Exit the field via the pedestrian gate and take the road up the hill to the right, Loe Beach is down to the left if you wish to visit. At the junction at the top of Loe Hill turn left, and at the next junction turn left again towards Restronguet Point **I**.

Porthgwiddden House **I**, on your left, was built a little before 1829, although its name, meaning "The White Haven" is recorded as early as 1248. Its most illustrious owner was Thomas Phillpotts, vicar of Feock in the latter half of the 19th century. He was an exceptionally energetic churchman and champion of the poor, expressing his mission for evangelism as; "if people would not come to the church, the church must be brought to the people". He was a driving force behind the building of both Devoran and Feock schools and championed the new church at Devoran, later overseeing the rebuild of Feock church itself. He held two passions for competition, horticultural shows and yacht racing and was always an active supporter of Feock Regatta.

At the post box and telephone box take the road to your right. If you carried straight on you would come to Restronguet Point **I**.

The ferry there was in action until 1956 when you might still have rung the bell to summon the ferry taking you across to the Pandora Inn and Mylor beyond. The oldest reference to the Restronguet ferry passage is mid-15th century, however it certainly existed before this, as did the Malpas ferry which dates back to the 6th century.



A view of Restronguet Point before the war. This image shows the old ferry bell (which later mysteriously disappeared), it originally came from the steamer 'Penpol'.

On your left, past the old barn, you will catch a glimpse of the 13th century Pandora Inn on the far side of the creek. Carry on through the houses at Harcourt (Herket on old maps). Continue as the road becomes a farm track and then a footpath. Keeping straight ahead between other tracks to left and right. Sometimes called 'Splish Splish Lane' this stretch is invariably muddy when wet.

You will notice the Pittosporum and Eucalyptus trees on either side marking the continuing nursery industry which has been a mainstay of this part of the creek's economy for much of the 20th century.

Carry on over a stile, and along the path leading finally on to a tarmac road. Continue up the rise and, as you join the main Trolver Croft byway, continue briefly until you see a footpath on your right which passes beside a large fir tree. Our route now follows this track uphill, however it is well worth a short amble down to the beach at Carnon Yard **I** and back again.

For this pretty detour, turn back to the byway track to the left and follow it down to the beach, turning right to follow the shoreline. At the dinghy park you may rest on a bench seat **I** and drink in the atmosphere.

The area you are walking around is Carnon Yard, named because it was an important boatyard between the 1840s and the turn of the century. First owned by the Ferris family it was taken over by John Stephens in 1859. 'Foreman Ferris' carried on as designer at the yard, and his skills were legendary. He was instrumental in building the Rhoda Mary **I** in 1868. At 130 tons, this three masted coastal cargo schooner demonstrated her speed on many occasions against lesser rivals. A model of her may be seen at the National Maritime Museum at Falmouth.



The Rhoda Mary, before she was converted to three masts, seen passing St Antony Light.

The area was also formerly the site of a tin mine sunk to win alluvial tin from the creek bed. A shaft was sunk on the point and levels dug out along the old creek bed connecting to a ventilation shaft positioned on the artificial island in the centre of the creek.

Photograph courtesy of the Rhoda Mary Project

Photograph by Marie Bird



From the tunnel workings in the compressed mud of the creek floor, tin bearing material was brought to surface. The mine was operated by the Cornish Copper Company from 1835-43 and was a considerable enterprise employing two hundred and twelve people in 1836, however it was not a financial success and closed with an overall loss of £16,000 (this converts to £1.8m in today's money).

Leaving the dinghy park, continue along the shore and take the narrow path off the beach back up to the main lane, turn left at the lane retracing your steps up the hill to the fork in order to rejoin the main route. Here take the footpath up the hill (as described previously) through the left hand entrance beside a large fir tree.

As you follow this path you will again find many fine views over Penpol and Point to the valley beyond. This area of Trolver Croft was once a nursery and flower farm. The Bersey family bought their holding from the Treliwick Estate at its major dispersal sale in 1920, having established their farm and business in the 1840s. They took advantage of the

new horticultural industry which was enabled by the mainline railway system opened in 1859. They were amongst the first in the area to send Cornish violets **K** up to London.

The trade to London increased at a pace after 1900. Foliage plants were introduced including eucalyptus and pittosporum, by the end of the 1930s there were seven flower and vegetable



Photograph by Jane Verran

smallholdings on the creekside having violets, anemones and pittosporum as specialities.

Harold Bersey was still sending Pittosporum on the overnight train to Covent Garden in the 1970s.

As the wide track ends, continue along the path ahead and at the T-junction turn right through the iron gate. The path takes you up through woods and then narrows. Carry on through the gate at the top, turning immediately left and passing through the vehicle gate.

As you reach Higher Trolver Farm, turn right, and take the field gate, following the track up the field, edge once again gaining terrific views **L** of the creek and valleys beyond.

Take the stile at the top and follow the right hand hedge, to the final stile. Cross the road, taking the route down the hill back to the Playing Field.



Photograph courtesy of the RIC

The view below depicts Point in the middle of the 19th century during its industrial heyday. Tin and lead smelting works lie behind the wharfs and quays which were served by the Redruth and Chasewater Tramway. Tall chimneys towered over the village and clinker waste shovelled from the furnaces littered the foreshore as today. The tin smelter was operational until 1921, however its name, the "Penpoll Tin Smelting Works" lived on well into the 20th century. Its parent company had opened a subsidiary works bearing the same name at Bootle on Merseyside in order to take advantage of the newly imported ores from Bolivia and Nigeria. Bootle, in its own time, became the largest tin smelter in Britain.

This walk leaflet was produced by Feock Parish Council with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Design and illustration by graeme@graemerust.com



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Pause here on your climb **L** and compare the view before you with the scene as it was in 1857 shown in this painting held in the Royal Cornwall Museum Truro.