



West Cornwall

Malpas-Tresillian

Every now and again the Westcountry traveller and explorer mind find themselves in the upper reaches of the Fal estuary complex. At Malpas he or she may well come over all lyrical. Malpas hangs over the river like a village in a dream, is the sort of thing you hear. Malpas is a place invented by water-colourists. That sort of thing.

The best way to get to this area is not by road but by boat. There is something about gaining access to a place by boat - something poetic and other-worldly.

We moored just under the village near the place where the river splits, had lunch below decks and poured over the local maps. The original plan was to go ashore, have a drink in the excellent Heron Inn with our boat owning friend, and phone a taxi to take us back down to our car at Flushing - but, looking at the Ordnance Survey's Explorer 105 map, we realised there was a very beautiful walk to be had to the nearest main road.

The walk is the basis for this week's hike and is unusual for this column in that it's very much a one-way affair. However, you could adapt it easily enough - indeed, it would make a very fine hike indeed if you were suddenly to find yourself stuck in Truro with a couple of hours to spare. Let me explain how that would work.

Most readers will know the city's main roundabout, between the cathedral and the police station. Well, take the steep road east up from the roundabout and, after a few yards, turn right up Trennick Lane. This leads past the school and up onto the ridge which commands fine views of the Truro River. The paved lane terminates at Trennick, but a track continues to the south east in the direction of St Clement.

Down into the valley you go, and up again past Park Farm, across the spur of hill and down the footpath that leads across the fields to St Clement, which is another village that sets me into full lyrical mode.

To quote Liz Luck's book *South Cornish Harbours*, the place is: 'Astonishingly unspoilt, and its position idyllic. Nestling outside the churchyard there is an almost unbearably pretty little square of cottages, along with a slate-faced lych gate which in the past has served as a parish vestry room, village school, Sunday school and pigsty.'



Basic Hike: Variations on a theme - but the basic hike is from Malpas up the Tresillian River to Tresillian. People wanting to walk from Truro can easily access all this via Trennick Lane and the inter-connecting footpaths.

Recommended map: Ordnance Survey 105.

Distance and going: basic one-way route is two-and-a-half miles. If you did the Truro loop and walked both ways, you'd be looking at seven miles.

On my last visit I'd taken the aforementioned hill and field route to St Clement, this time I walked along the Tresillian River path which, near Malpas, is called Dennis Lane. This is not marked on the Ordnance Survey map, but it is well worthwhile finding. If you're beginning this walk from Malpas, like I did, simply turn right with your back to the waterfront and take the road as far as it goes. At the end of the cul-de-sac you will see a public footpath which wends its way between some posh looking gardens to gain a woodland.

This is where the OS map gives up - as far as the shoreline footpath is concerned. But just after you cross a stream in the middle of the wood you will come across a path that continues through the wood to the right (the OS marked path goes into a field and climbs the hill). Take this right hand path and you will soon be rewarded with fantastic views of Malpas and the Tresillian River.

The path now ducks and dives through the trees above the water as it rounds the headland that divides Malpas with St Clement. The latter village comes as something of a surprise. On this walk you are surrounded by nought but wood and water - you begin to think you will never reach civilisation again. But suddenly, there is St Clement - all serene and beautiful - tucked away in its own little bay between the trees.

A few boats line this humble bay, and as you near the place you can make out the tower of the historic church. You can also envy the folk who live here. To dwell in such a remote and lovely spot, but be just two-and-a-half miles from a city centre, seems almost too good to be true.

We keep to the waterside and join the old carriageway that follows the river faithfully all the way to Tresillian. W.P. Hodgkinson once wrote: To me there is a magic in the changing Cornish scene, which can best be sensed inland - particularly among them wooded valleys of the Fal and Helford Rivers. There is just such a magic about the Under-Fal road as it leaves the beautiful village of St Clement and passes beneath the lichen-fragrant trees at the edge of the creek. On the way, one gets an occasional peep of the creek and its mud-banks, clothed right down to the water's edge with thick woodland.

Half a mile beyond the road passes a large pond upon which the alert birdwatcher may see anything from a spoonbill to a dabchick, according to the season of the year. And when the tide is in, having the appearance of a tranquil lake, or low - so that it is a mere brook between mud-banks - the ebbers' will be out with their ebbing-nets, standing like lone sentinels in their boats.

Such was the scene exactly when I walked up the riverside the other evening. And the tide was in, which always makes these silted rivers a good deal easier on the eye.

You cannot get lost - the old carriageway continues all the way to the village of Tresillian which is on the main Truro-St Austell road. Indeed, latterly, the path crosses a bridge over a stream and introduces you to the bus stop, so you can bide your time and catch the next bus back to Truro if you so wish.

Or you can ring for a taxi, as I did - only to be told by four different firms that I'd have to wait until nine in the evening for one to become available.

People who don't have to regain distant motor vehicles can simply turn around and walk back down the lovely Tresillian River. In a word, I cannot think of anything more satisfying and pleasant.