



West Cornwall

Mullion to Kynance Cove Circular

Predannack is a far flung place close to the end of the Lizard peninsula and its landscape is as outlandish as its distant location. It is a graveyard for the helicopters and aeroplanes which you can see in our photographs. And you can see them on this walk - but please note that these shots were taken inside the military airfield while on an official visit - walkers will not get quite so close.

Here's a brief World War Two tale that refers to RAF Predannack. A World War Two Flying Fortress co-pilot wrote that he had been returning to England after a bombing mission in his Flying Fortress when he and his crew were attacked by German FW-190's, and in the scrap they lost an engine and had two others damaged.

«We jettisoned over two tons of equipment and had dropped to 20 feet over the water when we were attacked by another two FW-190's. One was shot down by our gunner, and the other flew away. We landed our badly damaged B-17 at RAF Predannack on the southern coast of England.»

A harrowing tale, simply put. But set out on a fine day across the great bleak downs just south of Mullion Cove and you will come across the old aerodrome where Dave Rogan of the 358th managed to land that giant machine, and you may even feel a frisson of fear, thrill and danger just looking at the disused runway where larks now sing.

First we must find the beginning of this eight-mile circular hike. It's easy enough, all you have to do is stop at the big car park to the rear of Mullion Cove and find the footpath which branches left off the road a few hundred yards towards the sea. This soon joins another path that leads south, past Predannack Manor Farm, to the lane which terminates at Windyridge Farm.

An apt name in these parts, and one that introduces you to the wild heights of Predannack Downs. A quick look at the map will show you how the old airfield dominates the landscape up here, and you should also notice that a bridleway skirts its way south-east along the very edge of the military demesne.

Be warned that this is a very muddy right-of-way, but you are about to see what must be Britain's only graveyard for helicopters. There are other venerable aircraft too, nose-dived or otherwise into the heathy downland, but primarily its yesterday's helicopters which dominate the landscape. Somehow a



Basic Hike: Inland route from Mullion to Kynance Cove, and back via Coast Path.

Recommended Map: Ordnance Survey Explorer 103 - The Lizard.

Distance and going: eight miles, very muddy, even impenetrable in places.

helicopter without its rotor-blades is an even more melancholic sight than an aeroplane devoid of wings.

Now we head further south towards the Lizard itself - by-the-way, did you know that the name Lizard has nothing to do with four-legged reptiles but means «Court on a hill» in Cornish...

Unfortunately the bridleway now passes through an impenetrable bog. It's in a low valley near a place called Grochall, and the map shows how you simply cross the stream and make you way up to the next bridleway that turns right to Kynance Cove.

Maps however, make easy reading. In reality that stream is a bog and just about impenetrable. We had to edge our way along Lower Predannack Downs until we found the next footpath which crossed the stream in a more businesslike manner.

But don't let this little glitch put you off, it really is a magnificent hike for the most part and I'm sure you'll work out an alternative route once you're there.

And before you know it you'll be down at Kynance Cove which is one of the great National Trust treasures to be found along our splendid shores. It is the most quintessential of coves and over the years I've been lucky enough to see it in all its moods: from soft sand paddling pool to boiling raging cauldron.

It was probably in the latter state back in 1616, or thereabouts, when a galleon of some sort was wrecked just around the corner in Rill Cove. No one knows what ship this was but divers have brought up a banded breechloading gun and more than 300 16th Century coins from its tide based skeleton. We walk past Rill Cove on our way back along the Coastal Path to Mullion, but before turning our backs on Kynance I'd love to know a little more about the massive rock that divides the two bays.

It's called Asparagus Island and, more than once I've been told that the reason for this is because wild asparagus grows there. But is it true? I've had the pleasure of eating wild asparagus in Spain and in Greece, but I've never seen hide nor hair of it in our northerly isles.

Stunning coastal panoramas. That sums up the salty second half of this walk in a seashell and if you like dizzying cliffs and the roaring crash of the wildest of seas, then this is the place for you.

The walk back simply follows the South West Coast Path along the clifftops past features with fantastic names - in one bay alone there's Gew-graze, Pigeon Ogo and Ogo Pons...