Godolphin Warren

Time: Allow 2½ - 3 hours.

Difficulty: Moderate.

Length: 5¾ miles.

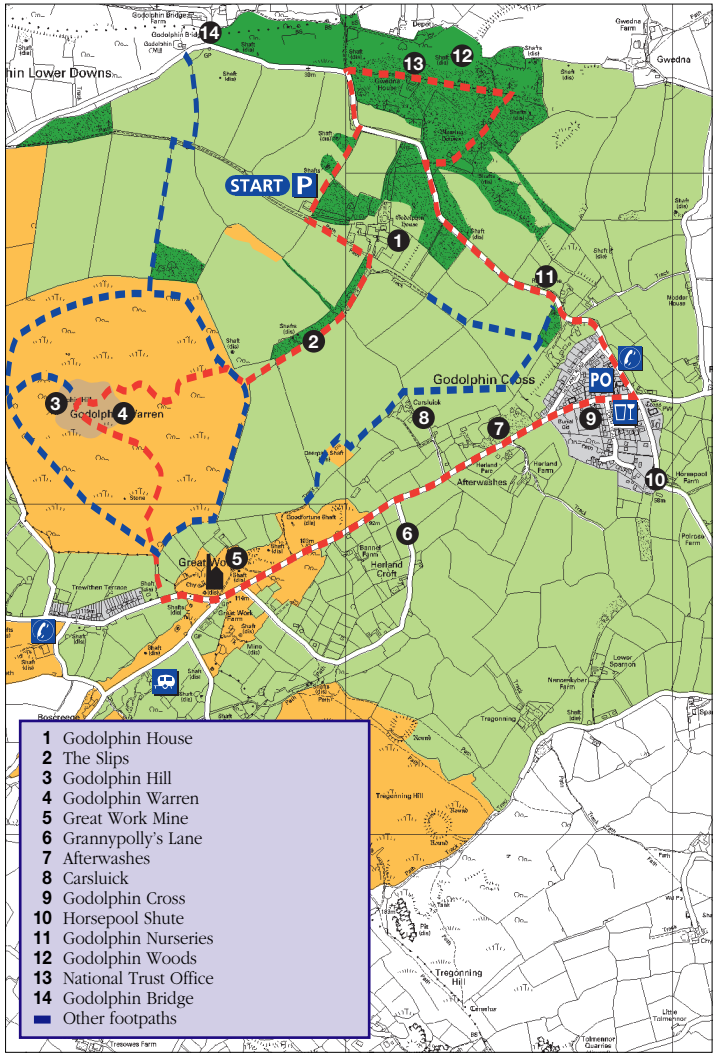
Location: Either take the B3302 Hayle-Helston Road, at St Erth Praze take the turning to Townsend, go straight across the crossroads, down the hill and Godolphin House car park is signed on your right.
Or from the A394 Penzance-Helston Road, turn off at Breage and follow the signs for Carleen and Godolphin, go through Godolphin Cross and after about half a mile you'll find the Godolphin House/ National Trust car park signed on your left.

Parking: At the Godolphin House/ National Trust car park. Roadside parking is strongly discouraged.

Refreshments: At Godolphin Cross you can eat at the Godolphin Arms or buy snacks at the Post Office. When open, Godolphin House serves cream teas.

Dogs: No dogs are allowed at Godolphin House. Well-behaved dogs are welcome on National Trust land.

Please note: Godolphin House is privately owned. The National Trust owns the surrounding estate.



This walk explores the heartland of the Godolphins, one of the most influential families of the early Cornish mining industry. They ascended to the highest office from the wealth of minerals extracted from around Godolphin and Tregonning Hills. Their estate has remained almost unchanged for the last 200 years or so and is now part of a short-listed bid to achieve World Heritage Site status for Cornish mining. The terrain varies from the wilds of the hill to sheltered woodland in the river valley, all havens for wildlife. We pass by Godolphin House, the largest and grandest house in 17th century Cornwall, with extensive gardens and an adjoining deerpark.

Leave the car park and turn left down the lane to the road. Go left, cross over the road and follow the verge as far as the bend, then go right over a stile into Godolphin Woods.

A wrought iron kibble. The design is attributed to Richard Trevithick.

Old boundary walls on the Godolphin Estate.

This is the site of Godolphin Copper Mine. Five lodes were worked in this valley from below Godolphin Bridge in the north over to Gwedna in the east, a distance of nearly a mile. Three different groups of adventurers worked the area, these were Godolphin Bridge Mine, Godolphin Mine and Wheal Dolphin. However, the workings were so wet that 5 steam pumping engines and 2 water wheel driven pumps were needed to dewater the mine. The water wheels were enormous, being 44 and 48 feet in diameter. Around one of the engine houses the ground was so extensively worked that in the 1840s the sides of the shaft collapsed and the engine house slid perpendicularly down into the shaft.

There was mining activity in Godolphin Woods from the 1600s to the 1840s. The remains of Polglase's Shaft can be seen on the right, just one of over 50 shafts in the woods. Ore was drawn up the shaft to the surface by means of a *horse whim*. This consisted of a horizontally mounted drum with a beam slung below. Horses were harnessed to the beam and walked in a circle, so that the drum turned. Wound onto the drum was a rope, both ends of which passed over pulleys and down into the shaft. Buckets known as *kibbles* were attached to the ends of the rope, and as the drum rotated, one kibble was lowered and the other raised. Smaller shafts had just one kibble. Altogether 23 of these horse whims worked at this mine.

J.H. Collins (1912) states that the mine sold over 9,000 tons of copper ore between 1815 and 1846.

Bluebells in Godolphin Woods - one of the best shows of bluebells you are likely to see anywhere.

Godolphin Woods

The woods are not as old as you might think. Most of the trees here were planted after the 1840s when the mines closed and are a mix of oaks, pines and sycamores. Few plants grow beneath the oaks because the dense canopy lets little light through, but in spring there are breathtaking displays of bluebells and snowdrops. Ferns and a rich mix of plants grow under the pines including Wood Sorrel, Holly, Herb Robert and Ivy.

The heathland areas within the wood have been designated as a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) because rare mosses and liverworts grow on mineral-rich soil. To the naked eye they don't look at all interesting, but seen close-up through a lens an intricate and delicate structure is revealed. Also growing here is a species of unique Bramble, which is only found in Cornwall.

There are also several man-made ponds in the woods. These were originally built to store water for the mining industry and are today home to dragonflies and damselflies. Look out for the exotically named Broad-bodied Chaser, the smaller Beautiful Demoiselle or Emerald Damselfly. To main difference between dragonflies and damselflies is that the latter are usually smaller and rest with their wings together over their backs.

A dragonfly.

The Purple Hairstreak
This butterfly is dependent on oak trees. The caterpillars emerge in springtime and feed on the leaf buds. Later in July/August the adults emerge and can be seen flying about the canopy of the oak and ash trees.

Britain's most westerly colony of this butterfly is found in Godolphin Woods where it feeds on Alder Buckthorn. The best times to spot them are between March-June or August-October before they hibernate for the winter.

The wheel plate in garden, now a table.

Follow the path straight ahead. After about 200 yards into the woods you'll come across a large house on your right – this is Godolphin Count House.

This was the old Count (Account) House for Godolphin Mine. Now owned by the National Trust, it has been refurbished to provide an educational centre for schools and other groups, plus offices and a store. The National Trust took over the 555-acre estate in 2000, a deal excluding Godolphin House. Landscape and access works to the estate have included new parking; repairing and replacing gates; improving old footpaths and creating new ones; safety works at Great Work and Godolphin Mines; clearing fly-tipping; and letting farmland with conservation restrictions.

Butterflies

For the enthusiast, 29 species have been recorded around Godolphin Estate, with gems like the Purple Hairstreak and Brimstones, as well as the Large Skipper, Small Skipper and Silver-washed Fritillary.

Carry straight on to a bridge, crossing over the old water course (leat) and continue on until you reach a wide track. Here turn right, then after a few yards go right along the first marked footpath. Go over the bridge and immediately fork left. Follow this path through the trees until you reach a driveway. Go straight across the driveway, following the hedge on your left until you reach a stile at the end. Go over the stile onto the road.
Here turn left following the road. Go past Godolphin Nursery on your left and then down to the bottom of the dip. Stop here a moment to step back in time.

Around 200 years ago you would be standing amongst a cluster of three noisy waterwheel powered stamping mills. On your right was Maiden Stamps, to your left Black Downs Stamps, and behind you the Ruthdower Stamps. These mills treated ore from the local mines. Maiden Stamps was still working in the 1940s.

(The path to your right, just before the driveway, joins a National Trust permissive path and other Public Rights of Way on Godolphin Hill.)
Continue along the road up the short hill into the village of Godolphin Cross.

Godolphin Cross lies within the ancient tenement of Herland and was known as Herland Cross until the late 1800s. It is said that the village name was changed by the proprietors of the first post office here, because they thought Godolphin sounded more distinguished than Herland. The name Herland means *'long pool'* and dates from around 1300. It is likely that a pool existed nearby possibly connected with the tin streaming industry.

The 1786 Godolphin Estate map shows just one house just to the south of where the church now stands. By 1840 however, the tithe maps show most of the granite cottages had been built, probably to house workers at the nearby stamping mills.

Almost immediately you come to the village Post Office and shop.

This has been here for over 100 years and is one of five shops that existed in the village before the days of public transport. Between them these shops sold everything from bootlaces and tin baths to shotguns and cartridges!

Moving on, the Methodist church on your right was built in 1929. At the back is the former and older chapel, now the village hall.

The curving stone wall here was the site of the blacksmith's shop until the 1970s when it was demolished, although by then it had been disused

Left: Horsepool Chute showing the front portal for filling barrels and the side portal for filling buckets. Built in 1890 just before a severe drought, it was the only source of water for miles that didn't dry up.

Above: The blacksmith's shop, with a gentleman and his dog. Godolphin Cross c1900.

for some years. In earlier times it was a great gathering place where much gossip was exchanged. The blacksmith in the 1940s was Jimmer Johns. Euchre, the much loved card game of the Cornish, was Jimmer's passion. He and a few like-minded friends would often play by the dying embers of the forge till 3 o'clock in the morning.

Soon you reach the crossroads, with the church on your left and the Godolphin Arms on your right.

The church was built in the mid-1900s to relieve overcrowding at Breage. Sadly the church closed in 1998. One tall tale relates how a young man riding a bike rode down the steep roof while roofing repairs were in progress!

Bear right up the side of the Godolphin Arms.

The Godolphin Arms was built c.1830 by a local mine captain who lived nearby at Trenear Farm. The roof and upper floors were constructed from old mine timbers. At one time it was known as the Trelawney Arms and later The Wellington, finally becoming the Godolphin Arms when the pub of the same name at Trewithen, Great Work closed in the early 1900s. The long building extending from the back of the pub was once a cheese factory.

Within a few yards you pass The Old Post House on your right.

The Godolphin Arms.

This was the depot for horse drawn buses many years ago. Next door was the carpenter's shop, this was situated on the first floor and was run by Jim Bailey until the late 1940s. On the ground floor were cow stalls where his daughter Lily kept a few cows. Like others in the village, she drove them to the fields on the outskirts of the village, bringing them back in the late afternoon for milking. Many villagers would also have kept a pig in a small sty in the back garden to fatten for the table.

A little further along on your left is the old village hall and behind this is the vicarage, both now private dwellings. Next you pass the village school on your right.

Horse drawn bus at Godolphin Cross c1900.

Until the late 1990s, the school bore the name of Herland Cross School, the last remnant of the old village name to exist. The school was opened in 1878, until this time many children would have attended the day school at Masters Pond, Great Work:

this closed a year later. Judging by the early Herland record book, absenteeism was a problem with children being kept at home for weeks at a time to help with haymaking and harvest.

Great Work Mine in 1890s. This view was taken from the top of the sand dump when the area looked more like a moonscape than a landscape. The only mine building still standing is Leeds Shaft engine house. The stamps engine house on the far left of the photograph was blown up in the 1960s.

As you leave the village the wooded area to the right is known as Afterwashes -so called because the tailings, or afterwashes, from the tin separation process ran through here. The Great Work deep adit had its portal down amongst the trees. Continue up the hill. The next lane on the right leads to Carsluick.

Carsluick too is old, first recorded in 1320. Caer means *'fortified settlement'* though the meaning *sluick* has been lost in the mists of time.

Next on your left is Grannypolly's Lane.

Named after Granny Polglase who lived in a cottage along here. Ore was brought from South Wheal Breage Mine on the lower slopes of Tregonning Hill, down this lane to the stamps at Godolphin.

The area to your right, was once the lower end of the sand tailings dump from the Great Work tin dressing floors. These extended up the hill some 150 yards and were over 15 yards high. Head up to the next junction signed Trescowe and Millpool. Turn right into Bal Lane, which brings you past Great Work Mine.

Before venturing onto Godolphin Hill (also known as Godolphin Warren) turn towards the Leeds Shaft engine house and contemplate for a moment. The engine house is the last remnant of Great Work Mine and was built in 1829 to house a 60-inch cylinder steam-pumping engine built by Harvey's of Hayle. There would have been a large complex of buildings here including another two engine houses for winding and stamping (crushing), a blacksmith's shop, a carpenter's shop and a count house. The engine house was named after the Duke of Leeds, who inherited the Godolphin estate when the Godolphin family line died out in 1785.

Great Work was the principle mine of Godolphin Bal and produced great wealth for the Godolphins, who were the landowners and mineral lords. Documentary evidence shows that the mine was in full swing by the 1540s although the archaeological remains indicate that mining could have been going on here for 200 years before this.

Leeds Shaft in front of the engine house is 30 fathoms (180 feet) to the adit level and another 1000 feet to the bottom. The Great Work lode workings extend about half a mile from Boscreege in the west to Deerpark Shaft in the east. Since records were kept in 1825, Great Work produced 6,250 tons of black (unsmelted) tin. Considering the mine had been working for 300 years before this time, the true quantity of tin raised must have been far in excess of this figure.

From Great Work Mine continue along the road for about a hundred yards, then go right up the lane just before some houses. At the gate go straight on, not through the gate. Soon you reach another gate with a stile, go over this stile onto Godolphin Hill.

Almost immediately the path splits into three, take the middle path to the summit for stunning views over the estate and beyond. If you don't want to go to the summit, take the right path to 'The Slips'.

Over to your right (south) is Tregonning Hill with its distinctive war memorial on the top. A little further to the left are the satellite dishes at Goonhilly Earth Station. Ahead of you (east) is the Basset monument on Carn Brea and beyond that St Agnes Beacon. Behind you (west) are Mount's Bay and St Michael's Mount. The engine house to the right (north-west) is Wheal Junket, near Trescowe.

This hill and its pair Tregonning are made from 270-290 million year old granite. Godolphin Hill takes its name from the Godolphin family who claimed it as their own, probably in the 13th or 14th century. However, there is evidence of Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age peoples living here.

During World War Two, the hill was used by the home guard as a lookout for German invasion. An old black car with no wheels was set up on the side of the hill facing the sea. The plan was that if the enemy were sighted, their fastest runner Harry Smith, would be despatched to the nearest phone box to warn of the Nazi invasion.

Leeds Shaft engine house of Great Work Mine with Tregonning Hill behind.

Walk back down the hill in the direction of Godolphin Woods, with Tregonning Hill to your right. Near the bottom where the path forks, bear right. Cross straight over the base path and head towards a wooded lane known as The Slips. In spring this area is full of primroses.

The name possibly derives from slipping deerhound leashes when coursing deer. Bordering this path are several shafts denoted by circular walls *(collars),* however please stay on the path for safety reasons. These shafts were sunk on the Warren Lode, which stretches back into the hill. Although there is little evidence of mineral extraction underground, an adit connects the shafts and has its portal at the bottom of The Slips. This adit supplies water to the manor and may have been driven for this purpose. The flow of water can vary from a trickle in summer to a torrent in winter. The workings here are very early, possibly pre-1600.

At the bottom of The Slips is a gate in the boundary wall of Godolphin House. There is no public access to the house from here, so as you approach the gate bear left and go over a granite cattle grid into the field.

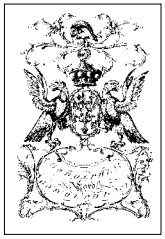
On your immediate right against the hedge you'll notice a ditch. This is the remains of a leat that brought water from the Great Work shallow adit via Carsluick Farm and the lower fields of the manor. This water supplied the stew ponds just to the south of the manor and powered two water wheels in the farm complex.

Walk along the bottom of the field to another granite cattle grid. Go over this into a lane. Turn right past some modern farm buildings and follow the lane back to the Godolphin House/National Trust car park.

Buzzard.

Wildlife on Godolphin Warren

The hill's moorland habitat supports the nationally scarce Pale Heath-violet, Purple Moor-grass, Ling, Bell heather, Bilberry, European Gorse and its smaller, more compact, autumn-flowering cousin Western Gorse. The hill is a good place to look for green woodpeckers, warblers, nightjars and cuckoos. Buzzards and foxes might be seen preying on rabbits. Watch out killers can be small as well – look carefully for Longhorn beetles, Green Tiger beetles and Heath Assassins.



The Godolphin Family coat of arms.

Godolphin House

The Hearth Tax in 1664 recorded the highest number of hearths in Cornwall was at Godolphin, suggesting it was then the largest and grandest house in the County. The fact that the house came to be built here at all, far from the fashionable centres of Europe reflects the immense wealth and influence of the Godolphin family.

It was mining that brought the Godolphins such immense wealth and power. In 1539, they achieved their first seat in Parliament, after which successive generations became politicians and held other high-ranking positions at court.

The first written mention of the Manor of Godolghan was in 1297, however by the 1530s this name had changed to the anglicised form, Godolphin. During this time the Godolghans were actively expanding their agricultural and mining interests. Like other wealthy people across Britain, they built a defended house to protect their possessions, which was later replaced by the present house. When William Worcestre was listing West Country castles in 1478, he recorded 'Castle Godolghan in the settlement of Godolghan, ruined.'

The present house was completed in six main phases. The first established a sizeable courtyard house in c.1470 and over the next 160 years extensions and modifications were added. The final phase of c.1630 included the double colonnade front - an exceptionally modern design for a mansion so remote from the cultural centre of London –joining the two older wings of the house to provide a range of entertainment rooms.

Besides refashioning the house, the Godolphins laid out gardens to openly display their wealth. Two mediaeval gardens survive. The Side Garden is early 14th century and at its peak covered 4½ acres. The younger garden is the King's Garden of c1500.

The decline of the Godolphins

From the early-1800s, the family focus shifted to London. The Godolphin Estate was left to stagnate and was rarely visited by the time of Francis 2nd Earl of Godolphin. Francis lived near Newmarket, a location suited to his great love horse racing. Today's British bloodstock is said to descend from his famous stallion, The Godolphin Arabian.

By 1785 there were no male heirs and the estate passed to the Dukes of Leeds, whose seat was in Yorkshire. They were classic absentee landlords, investing little in the estate whilst extracting large amounts from its mining and farming interests. They planned to extend the house, but this work was never materialised.

Revival

The Schofield family bought the estate in 1937. In 2000 the National Trust bought the estate, an arrangement enabling the Schofields to keep the house, stables, farm buildings and gardens. One of Cornwall's exceptional historic sites has now been safeguarded and essential repairs began in 2001.

The Deerpark and Warren

Probably created by Sir Alexander Godolghan around 1300, the deerpark and warren were symbols of wealth and affluence. The deerpark encompassed most of the hill and the fields that ran down to the manor, as well as a large tract of land on the northern side of the hill reaching as far as the River Hayle. The entire area was surrounded by a deep ditch and a high hedge known as a deer pale, constructed to allow deer on the outside to jump in, but made it difficult for deer on the inside to jump out. A large part of the deer pale is still intact today.

Remnants of the deer herd lingered on until the mid-19th century. Hounds chased one almost to Camborne, where it dropped dead from exhaustion. A second was shot at nearby Crawle. The third and last deer was trapped at Carsluick, where the farmer had become so incensed by the animal ravaging his crops that he set a trap made from an upturned harrow in a pit. When the animal jumped over the hedge, it became impaled and the farmer then secretly butchered the deer.

In mediaeval times, rabbits were imported from the Mediterranean and accommodation was provided for them in the form of pillow mounds. These were earth mounds with small stone chambers inside where the rabbits could shelter from the wet and cold. Rabbit meat was considered a great delicacy and to possess a colony was another sign of affluence.

Rabbit pillows on Godolphin Hill, said to be the finest examples in Cornwall.

Godolphin House.