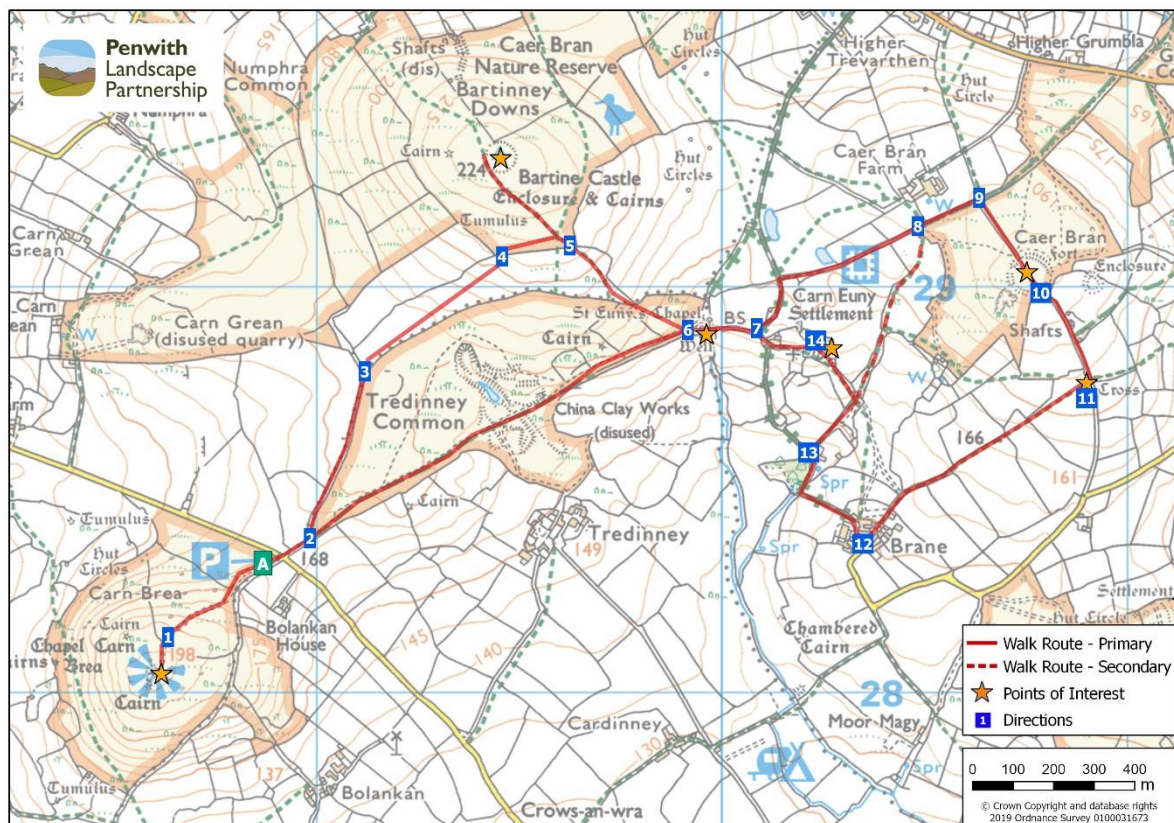




## Trail Guide: Chapel Carn Brea, Bartinney and Caer Bran

A great walk taking in the three most south-westerly hills in Cornwall. Featuring Iron Age hill forts, Bronze Age cairns, a holy well, Courtyard House settlement, ancient field systems, moorland and improved grassland, tin streaming and china clay mining. Rich with history, habitat, and folklore.

Distance:	4.5 miles / 7.25 km
Time:	Allow at least 3 hours 30 minutes
Starting Location:	SW 388 283 - Chapel Carn Brea Car Park
Public Transport:	Buses from Penzance through Sancreed First A3 bus stop (seasonal) at Land's End Airport
Car Parking:	Large National Trust Car Park on Chapel Carn Brea (off A30 at Crows-an-wra)
Nearest Facilities:	<a href="#">St Buryan Farm Shop</a> , and St Buryan Village
Accessibility & Terrain:	A fair amount of hill climbing, but all quite gentle slopes. Numerous stiles. Cattle may be grazed in some areas.



## Route instructions:

**1.** From the National Trust Car Park at Chapel Carn Brea, it's well worth beginning the walk with a short return hike up to the summit of Chapel Carn Brea.

*Chapel Carn Brea is the most south-westerly of all the West Penwith hills, and very prominent in the surrounding landscape. The summit features several prehistoric monuments, including a [substantial Bronze Age barrow](#), which once had a [Medieval chapel](#) built on top of it. The beacon itself was a maritime beacon maintained beside the chapel. During WW2 a shelter was dug into the east side of the cairn and an observation post was built on the summit of the mound.*

**2.** Back down to the car park, look for the gate on the opposite side of the road slightly to the right. At a fork in the track a short way up, take the more obvious left-hand fork and up through the hedged lane skirting Tredinney Common.

*The large area of grassland over the hedge to your left is a well-known location for Short-eared Owls in winter.*

**3.** At the end of the lane, the landscape opens out as you cross into the [Cornwall Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve](#). This whole area is periodically grazed by cattle. Follow the pathway uphill across the middle of the field.

*Heathland restoration efforts are ongoing here, and you can expect to see all three of the most common types of heather, especially higher up the hill: Common Heather (with tightly packed serrated leaves, most abundant and bushy, the last of the three to come into flower); Bell Heather (bell shaped, deep purple flowers, smooth leaves, prefers drier ground); and Cross-leaved Heath (largest leaves, grey in colour, with large pale flowers, likes wet ground) If you're incredibly lucky, you might glimpse a hen harrier in these parts. The reserve is named "Caer Bran Nature Reserve" despite being centred around the edges of Bartinney Downs.*

**4.** Here you reach the corner of a large hedge, follow along it to reach a recently constructed granite stile in keeping with traditional 'Penwith' style. Climb over it and out onto the heathland that covers the top of the hillside. Follow the path to a crossing of footpaths, bear left and uphill towards the summit. At the top, look for a small path off to your right to take you to the trig point at the summit.

When done, return down the path you came, continue ahead at the crossing, towards another stile in the corner.

At 224m, the summit of Bartinney is the highest of the three hills on the walk, with Chapel Carn Brea at 198m, and Caer Bran at 150m. As such it provides a fantastic panoramic view over much of West Penwith. [Bartinney Castle](#) gives the impression of an “unfinished hillfort” without the typical perimeter ditch; it is more likely a Bronze Age cairn enclosure with three ring cairns inside. It was also the site of fire festivals for Samhain (Halloween) and had a beacon fire light for midsummer, just like the one still lit at Chapel Carn Brea.

**5.** Over the stile, turn left and head downhill keeping the boundary hedge to your left, to reach another stile in the bottom corner. Cross over and continue downhill, to join the bridleway running along the bottom of Tredinney Common. Turn left and head towards the well.

**6.** Go through the gate and follow the path into the lightly wooded area containing the well. Continue ahead until you reach an established track.

‘St Euny’s Chapel’, or [Chapel Euny](#), is the site of a former Medieval Chapel to St Euny, an early Christian missionary and hermit. There are two wells on the site either side of the path; the one to the right (south) with stone steps down into it being the original [Medieval Holy Well](#) associated with the chapel.

*Like other local wells, the well at Chapel Euny was reported to have healing properties; it was particularly used to help cure rickets or other childhood joint problems. It is recorded in ‘Popular Romances of the West of England’ that “On the first three Wednesdays in May, children suffering from mesenteric diseases are dipped three times in this well, against the sun, and dragged three times around the well on the grass, in the same direction.” The well was also known as the Giant's well, but no one seems to know where the name comes from or why it was used, although there was a story that the large stones on the neighbouring fogou were placed by giants. The site also features in the tale of a changeling, where a woman whose baby was replaced with what was thought to be a Spriggan tried taking it to the well to cleanse it and get her own child back. It was eventually banished by the local women beating it with broomsticks and leaving it on a stile overnight, when the original child was returned - although it still had an 'unearthly' look!*

**7.** Turn left onto the track (a public byway), past a property on your left. A little way on, you come to a clear junction, with another track branching off to the right. Take this right-hand track which climbs steadily uphill towards Caer Bran. The lane is wide, but it gets quite closed in with vegetation at times.

**8.** Here the trackway opens out onto edge of the rough ground around the hilltop of Caer Bran. Continue straight ahead up the broad track, keeping the boundary hedge to your left.

**9.** As the track starts to level out, look for a granite stile in the hedge on your left (a footpath leading down to Grumbla). Opposite this, on the other side of the track, is the start of the path leading up to the hill fort (it is partially concealed by earthworks, presumably to prevent vehicles going up that way). Follow this path up to the summit.

*The straight track to the top runs between two low hedges. Towards the top, you pass through the massive ramparts of the fort, visible as a large ditch and bank. Passing through the ramparts, you enter the large, flat, circular interior of [Caer Bran hillfort](#). This is a defended settlement dating to the Iron Age situated in a very prominent position in the surrounding landscape, likely fashioned from an earlier cairn enclosure; the interior containing the remains of three [Bronze Age ring cairns](#). The straight track running through the fort is a more recent construction, probably to serve the mineral workings to the north and south; the proper entrance to the fort is oriented to the east towards St Michael's Mount and has a causeway crossing the ditch.*

*'Bran' is the Cornish for Crow or Raven; some think the name might come from Bran the Blessed, a reputed giant and King of Britain who features in Welsh mythology. The name Bran appears in the inscription on Men Scryfa, in the form 'Rialobran' which translates as 'kingly or royal Bran (or raven)'. One story goes that Bran was attacked by invaders coming from the direction of Penzance, and he retreated to his fort at Caer Bran. After a battle it was thought that Bran was killed while trying to move to another fort nearby, possibly Chûn Castle. Men Scryfa was erected where he allegedly fell. Local legend also suggests it is a site for protection from evil spirits, and possible home for the Pobel Vean (little people, i.e. fairies).*

**10.** Follow the path through to the other side of the hillfort. Take in the southerly vista (across to St Buryan and the Lamorna Valley), before passing through the outer ramparts and a bridle gate, and into the lane below. Follow the lane downhill.

**11.** You reach a rugged medieval wayside cross in the lane, with granite stiles either side. Pass over the stile on your right, beside the cross. Enter the field and follow the path straight ahead for the hamlet of Brane. Cross three fields and enter a wide track running into Brane. There is a gate across this track which you will need to open (and close again).

*The cross may be from the 12th Century, probably still in its original location on a historic path leading from Brane to Sancreed Church, and on the trackway up to Caer Bran.*

*[Brane](#) is a settlement of early medieval origin first recorded in 1323, the name likely being associated with the nearby Caer Bran hillfort.*

**12.** You reach a junction in the centre of the hamlet. Turn right and follow the brown signs to Carn Euny.

**13.** Through a wooded area and past a property, a track branches off to the right, again signposted to Carn Euny. A short way up the track opens out into a narrow field. Carry on ahead, looking for an opening into a field on your left. It is marked by a large granite stone with rusted gate hangings in it, and lettering and an arrow carved in the face. Follow this to the settlement of Carn Euny.

*[Carn Euny settlement](#) is one of the best-preserved ancient villages in Cornwall. First inhabited in the Iron Age, it is around 2500 years old, and features numerous courtyard houses and an underground fogou. It is managed by [Cornwall Heritage Trust](#) on behalf of English Heritage; entrance is free.*

**14.** To leave the settlement, head for the upper corner of the site. Behind an information board is a stone stile leading to an onward path. Follow through here, emerging out onto the lane coming up from Brane. Turn right, and a short way up, you'll recognise the path heading back towards St Euny's, off to the left. This is point 7. From here retrace your steps past the well, and out onto Tredinney Common. At point 6, instead of heading back up the hill, continue straight along the bridleway that runs along the edge of the common, all the way back to the start. You have the clear landmark of Chapel Carn Brea ahead of you.

*Tredinney Common, on the southern flanks of Bartinney, is an easily overlooked but fascinating place. The whole area is designated a [Scheduled Monument](#), described as a 'rich, multi-period archaeological landscape'. There is evidence of use from prehistoric to post medieval periods; a Bronze Age barrow, Prehistoric and Medieval field systems, field clearance cairns, post medieval pools and peat cutting, and a china clay works from the early 19th Century, the form of which is visible under the gorse and heather as a long quarry - the bridleway passing right through the lower part of it. There are also pits and spoil heaps associated with Tredinney Mine. All this area has now become a valuable wildlife habitat as well.*

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