

# walk the south penquite farm trail



From the farm-yard walk down the leafy lane and out through the farm entrance gate onto an area of moorland known as Pendrift Downs.

All of the common land on Bodmin Moor is still owned by a 'Lord of the Manor' but the right to graze animals (or cut turf, or feed the acorns to pigs!) belongs to the 'commoners' (like us) who have farms that touch the moor.

Once over the little bridge take the farm track to the right that leads across the moor, gently winding between the gorse and bracken, eventually crossing a ford and passing over a cattle grid.

Follow this track up through a 'protected' area that is not stocked at all during the winter and only very lightly in the summer.

This management reflects the importance of the field's fauna and flora, and in the boggier areas the presence of plants such as **Pale Butterwort** (*Pinguicula lusitanica*) and **Bog Asphodel** (*Narthecium ossifragum*) indicates that it is a wildlife habitat of high nature conservation value. To your left you will have panoramic views of the county from the china clay works at St Austell in the south up to the Camel Estuary and even a glimpse of the sea (on a fine day) to the north.



Do not follow the track over the next cattle grid, which leads to a private residence. Instead when you are about 50 metres from the second grid, turn left off the track and head for the footpath gate into a narrow path we call the **Gallery**.

You now find yourself walking along the head of an ancient woodland called **The Coombe** which stretches out of sight below you. Because the terrain is so inaccessible this woodland has gained international importance as it has remained untouched for centuries and contains many rare and interesting lichens which you can see clinging to the trees.

As you approach the end of the Gallery you can look back at the full extent of woodland and beyond, and you have a view of a lonely piece of moorland known as **Pendrift Bottoms**. Pretty though it might be it is extremely hard to get to - there are only two precipitous paths down a steep slope to it and you need a brave pony and a clever dog to retrieve any sheep which might have wandered down.

On through the next gate and the footpath will lead you to a stile from where you can stand and see the whole of the historic De Lank quarry laid out below you.

Quarrying started in the 1840s and the exceptional quality of the silver-grey granite made it highly desirable in the construction of bridges, lighthouses and other engineering works. For over 100 years it employed many of the men from both of the local villages and even piped the De Lank River to drive turbine engines.

The Eddystone - and several other lighthouses - came from here, while to your right is **The Canyon**, the spectacular entrance road to the quarry which was cut through the hillside. In more recent times the stone for the Princess Diana Memorial Fountain in Hyde Park, and the Eden Project's giant 'seed' came from here.



pied wagtail

The steep valley side at your feet is home to the nationally rare (and endangered) **Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly** which favours undisturbed South-west facing slopes with plenty of violets for the caterpillars to feed on.



At this point you need to leave the footpath and bear off to the right up into the field and you will come across a settlement of well preserved bronze age hut circles and reeves (prehistoric field systems) - evidence that shows that South Penquite has been farmed now for over four thousand years.

Here you can leave the trail for a while and explore this nationally important Bronze Age landscape -

how many of the hut circles can you find?



bog asphodel



Walk now towards disused **Hantergantick Quarry** and you will drop down through a gate towards the beautiful and picturesque De Lank River - follow the information posts down to the riverbank path.

The fence stopping the livestock from getting to the river was erected to maintain a wildlife corridor. The river has been graded in the top five rivers in Europe for water purity and biodiversity, and was designated a **SAC** (Special Area of Conservation) by Natural England in recognition of its international importance to the **otter** and **Bullhead** fish.



After a few hundred yards along the river bank you will come across our **Story Circle** - the stone bench ends, which align with North, South, East and West, are carved with the symbols of the elements.

At this point you should climb up through a gate and leave the river behind you. Keep the river fence on your left for about 1/2 mile, and you will walk through some large beech trees and onto our furthest field - **Ryedown**, which contains a striking standing stone.



Hut Circle



This imposing stone is thought perhaps to be the remains of a prehistoric kerbed Cairn which would have been a highly visible landmark in the sacred Bronze Age landscape.

From the stone you can also see one of the most popular beauty spots on Bodmin Moor - **Delphi Bridge** (De Lank Ford Bridge).

From here you can now take the moorland road back up to South Penquite's entrance lane or feel free to meander back through the fields where if you are lucky you might get a close-up look of this year's lambs with their mothers.