

The Churches of Far West Cornwall, Trail 2. Gulval; St Buryan; St Levan.

Visited Friday 29th July 2016



Grave of John 'Eyebrows' Thomas the Pirate of Marazion, who died in 1733.

Alas we began our second Cornish trail with a 'blank' - unfortunately **Gulval Church** was closed. However we were able to look at the churchyard filled with many different varieties of trees and flowers, and home to the remains of local pirate and smuggler John 'Eyebrows' Thomas of Marazion, as well as to William Wingfield, MP. One of the vicars of Gulval, the Rev. William W. Wingfield, was vicar for a remarkable 72 years, from 1839 until his death in 1912.

The church dates from the 12th Century and tower from 1440. It is named after a 6th-century saint, Gulval. There is some dispute as to precisely who this figure might have been, and where they originated.



The secluded churchyard at Gulval.



A familiar name was encountered on the wall of Gulval Church!



Martin outside Gulval Church.



A rare and exotic flower in the churchyard at Gulval.



Enigmatic stones by the church at Gulval.

After Gulval, we decided to visit the National Trust gardens at Trengwainton Gardens - which alas were also closed – it was a Friday and many Trust properties close on that day. It wasn't so bad as we had been twice before. We did at least make use of their car park for lunch! The next church was well worth the wait – **St Buryan**. A church has stood on the current site since ca. 930 AD, built by King Athelstan in thanks for his successful conquest of Cornwall on the site of the oratory of Saint Buriana (probably founded in the 6th century).



A prayer cross outside the entrance to St Buryan.



The tower of St Buryan.



Delightful flowers in the churchyard at St Buryan.



The pulpit at St Buryan.



The rood screen at St Buryan. Many medieval churches have staircases that allow access to the top of the roodscreen. One purpose of providing access was to hang a Lenten Veil from the screen for use during reading of the Passion story on Palm Sunday, denoting the veil of the Temple being torn asunder - during the Passion reading.



A novel means of collecting church donations at St Buryan!



The nave and rood screen at St Buryan.



Banner commemorating 'St Buryana' who founded an oratory on the site in the 6th century.



A statue of 'St Buriana'.

After St Buryan we visited **Treen** on our way to St Leven, and went for a walk on the coastal path walk towards Minack.



The coastal path at Treen, near Minack.

St Levan was one of the most secluded, and impressive churches on our trails. It lies at the end of a single track road which during the holiday season means frequently drawing over to allow oncoming vehicles to pass, and reversing when necessary. Don't argue with a combine harvester!

St Levan, named after his great-uncle St Soloman, in the Celtic tongue, St Selevan, today corrupted into the name St Levan, was born in the sixth century at, it is said, Boslevan, which lies to the east of St Buryan. He travelled to and lived at Bodellan by the Port of Cornwall, now Porthcurno, and built a chapelry on the site of the present church above Porth Levan or Porthchapel, as it is called today. He built a cell near a well now named after him.



St Levan Church.



An encrusted cross in the churchyard at St Levan.



The beautiful altar at St Levan.



A stained glass window at St Levan.



A contemporary sculpture at St Levan.



The beautiful interior of St Levan showing its carved bench pews.



The figure of a medieval pilgrim bearing a cockleshell on his hat, with a 'breviary' (book of liturgical texts) and 'discipline' (a scourge).

The pew bench ends at St Levan are one of its most notable and attractive features. There is a shepherd with a crook, a jester with cap, profiles of medieval parishioners, and two eagles. In addition to the medieval carvings there are many modern carved bench ends, showing that the tradition has continued to the present day.



Another example of a coffin rest. These were used - as the name suggests - by undertakers to rest the coffin while awaiting the start of a funeral and the entry of the coffin into church.

Martin and Magda Jones

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13/8/16: First draft. Article to be updated later with more detail.