



## LET'S EXPLORE *St Nectan*

### YOU WILL NEED

Good shoes or boots for walking on rough paths, a drink and a snack, a camera on a phone.

### THEMES

Holy Well, Cornish history, Romans, woodland wildlife, Celtic saints, rock stacking.

### DISTANCE

3km or 1.7 miles. This pilgrimage is through farmland & woodland & follows a well-worn path. There are sections with steps & steep slopes by the river so please take care, especially in wet weather.

Saint Nectan was a 6th century Welsh saint who lived in Cornwall and Devon. On this pilgrimage you will follow in Saint Nectan's footprints.

Start at the **car park**. You can see the waterfalls from the pilgrimage route but will need to pay an entrance fee at **St Nectan's Glen** if you wish to visit them up close.

Follow the track up the hill, but before you do, stop at the **Holy Well** on your right. This well is dedicated to St Piran, the patron saint of Cornwall, and would have been the main source of water for the surrounding buildings until relatively recently.





Take a minute to stop here and pray or dip your toes in the holy water.



Stop at the top of the steep hill to catch your breath and take in the view out across Tintagel castle and the Celtic sea, before heading down the other side and into the wooded valley.

Follow the path around past the shop and café (where you can visit the waterfalls for a fee) and down the stone steps – be careful here, especially when the ground is wet.



This valley is home to all sorts of wildlife and is a site of special scientific interest.

See if you can spot any of these creatures as you travel through the trees:

**Otter** – Otters were once a common site in Britain, but pollution brought them to the brink of extinction. Thankfully, they're making a comeback, and beautiful, clean waterways such as the river here are the perfect habitat for them. Otters are super shy but you might just see one if you're really lucky.

**Southern Hawker Dragonfly** – All sorts of dragonflies can be seen darting to and fro above the water here, but the Southern Hawker is one you're very likely to spot, as they're quite large and prefer a woodland environment such as this.

**Scarlet Elfcup** – These bright little fungi can be seen amongst the leaf litter along the banks of the river. As the name suggests, folk lore has it that wood elves use the cups to capture and drink the morning dew.

**Dipper** – These uncommon birds like to live and hunt by fast flowing water and even have a third transparent eyelid so they can still see whilst swimming. You'll recognise the bird by its characteristic dipping, which is how it gets its name. No one's quite sure why they bob up and down: some think it's to confuse their underwater prey whilst others believe it helps them to spot what they're hunting beneath the surface of the water.



Follow along the path with the river on your left.



**Can you see any rock-stacks like this in the shallow water?**

People from all different faith traditions hold this place as sacred and many come here to pray and meditate. Rock stacking is a great way to do this because it helps you to empty your mind, to be present and to connect with the natural world around you.



## TIME TO PLAY

**Collect some rocks and have a go at building your own rock stack in the shallow water.**

**You can take a photo of your creation and post it on Instagram.**



Follow the path up and out of the woodland valley, pausing at the '**Penny Tree**' on the way.

Continue up the hill and past the houses until you reach the **Roman Marker Post** on your left. It was discovered in 1919 being used as a gatepost and is one of just five in Cornwall and one of 20 in the whole of England. The Latin inscription reads:

**C DOMI N GALLO ET VOLUS or *For the Emperor Caesars our lords Gallus and Volusian***

Which means the stone dates to the short reign of the emperors Gallus and Volusian, from AD 251-253. There is another Roman milestone in St Materiana's Church in Tintagel, suggesting that there was a major Roman road running near both sites.

Call into the small church of on your right just past the Roman Milestone.



This church, like the Holy Well outside, is dedicated to St Piran and has been here since at least the 15th century, although it has probably been a sacred site for far longer than that. The building was abandoned during the Reformation and used as a farm storage for several hundred years before being restored to a church in 1944.



## *The Legend of Saint Nectan*

Saint Nectan was the son of the Welsh King Breychan. King Breychan had lots of children, many of whom chose to live as Christian Hermits – holy people living simple, peaceful lives in the wilderness. In fact, many of the places in Cornwall are named after Nectan's brothers and sisters, including nearby St Endellion, St Teath, St Minver and St Mabyn, and it was said that they would often call in here to visit their brother. Nectan had a small hermitage above the waterfalls where he lived and worshipped, and kept an eye out for ships in distress along the treacherous north coast. Legend has it that he had a miraculous silver bell he would ring from the clifftops to warn ships of danger, the sound of which could be heard across the roaring of the mightiest storm. Nectan is said to have been buried along with his magic bell beneath the waterfalls, and pilgrims have been traveling here as a sacred place ever since.

## **READY TO REFLECT?**

Take a few minutes to sit in the quiet stillness of this ancient church and think of St Nectan and St Piran and all the other ancient saints who passed through this way, your name now joining theirs on the list of Pilgrims to the glen.



This place marks the end of the pilgrimage. Cross back over the road to the car park.

**DON'T FORGET TO POST & TAG YOUR PHOTOS ON INSTAGRAM: #PILGRIMEXPLORERS**



*Join us for  
another pilgrimage  
adventure soon!*

