

# HIDDEN LANDSCAPES OF THE SOUTH WEST COAST PATH

WALK – EXPLORE – DISCOVER

Ruth Luckhurst

The South West Coast Path is one of the world's most popular long-distance walking routes, taking in 630 miles of breathtaking scenery, from Minehead to Poole via Land's End and the Lizard. The reader will find no better recommendation for reading this book than that provided by the SWCP National Trail Officer, Mark Owen:

*Anyone who loves walking the South West Coast Path National Trail and wants to find out more about the landscapes it passes through and the heritage found along our coastline will enjoy this book. The author has done a great job of bringing to life the stories behind the diverse landscapes to be found as you walk around our wonderful peninsula.*

*For millennia, people have lived, worked, worshipped and occasionally had to fight along the coastline followed by the South West Coast Path and Ruth Luckhurst covered thousands of miles, spoke to numerous experts and local people, as well as unearthing material from archives and museums. I'm delighted that through this book, she is able to bring all this together to give a fascinating overview of what you'll find as you explore the UK's longest National Trail.*

This book, along with its superb illustrations, will add immeasurably to the pleasure of exploring the lesser known aspects of the Coast Path, whether in planning a route to take or in looking back at a section already covered and appreciating in more detail the unique qualities of the coastal landscapes, places and people.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A writer, editor, designer and publisher, based in NW Scotland and SW England, Ruth specialises in the stories of the British landscape, from geology to mythology and including everything in between. As the official walks writer for the South West Coast Path's four-year 'Unlocking Our Coastal Heritage' project, Ruth Luckhurst devised over 500 short circular routes based on the Coast Path, her research giving her a unique insight into the most fascinating features of the landscape and the stories behind them which she includes in this present book.

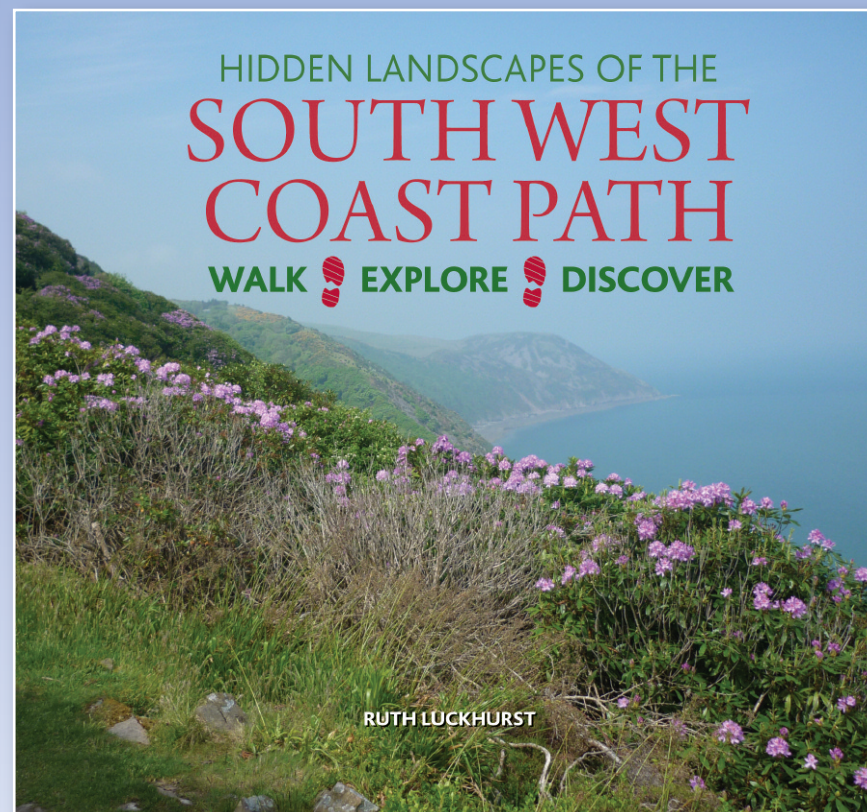
Travel, long distance backpacking and exploring the wilder regions of the country underpin her career as a writer, photographer and blogger. In her spare time she

is renovating a croft house in Scotland's Assynt, an area so remote that the only broadband is via satellite and the nearest shop is 15 miles away.

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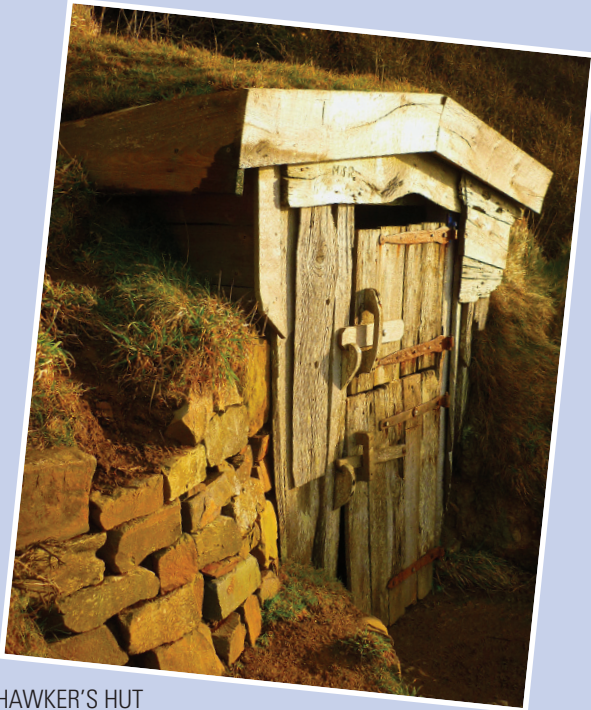
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**MERMAID OF ZENNOR**  
In Zennor a bench end depicts the village’s famous mermaid, who lured a local lad to a watery doom.

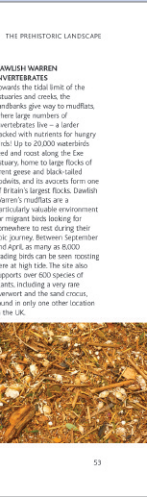


**HAWKER’S HUT**  
The Reverend Hawker built himself a driftwood hut on the cliffs, where he would gaze out to sea, opium pipe in hand, on occasion accompanied by his friends Charles Kingsley and Alfred Lord Tennyson.



**OLD HARRY ROCKS** As the sea deepened later in the Cretaceous period, the sand contained higher levels of calcium carbonate, forming chalk, with fossils featuring seabed animals.

**CORFE CASTLE** Corfe Castle was one of William I's early strongholds.



**PORTHKERRY HABITAT**  
On the Atlantic coast, large quantities of sand were blown into the Hagle estuary, and Porthkerry Sands are backed by a large area of dunes. Formed from crushed seashells, the sand is rich in lime and supports an unusual array of wildflowers, including Mountain St John's wort and the Halesden orchid. The UK's most easterly estuary, the Hagle rarely freezes, making it an important site for overwintering birds. As many as 10,000 birds flock here in a cold winter.

Between the River Hagle and the headland at Cockney, the 'Towers' (Cockney 'bar' dunes) are Cornwall's second-largest dune system, facing north west. They are exposed to the full force of Atlantic storms and the sand is continually shifting, causing the surface to change along the shoreline. The sea stacks are still topped by the remnants of dunes, making them of particular importance to geologists. Later agricultural and industrial use of this area has resulted in additional habitats, and a third of all plant species found in Cornwall can be seen here, attracting rare butterflies and moths.

THE PREHISTORIC LANDSCAPE

**DANISH WARREN**

**INVERTEBRATES**

Towards the tidal limit of the estuary and creek, the sandbanks give way to mudflats, where large numbers of invertebrates live – a ladder packed with nutrients for hungry birds. Up to 20,000 waders feed and roost along the Ee. Estuary home to large flocks of Brent geese and black-tailed godwits, and its avocets form one of Britain's largest flocks. Danish Warren's mudflats are a particularly valuable environment for migrant birds looking for somewhere to rest during their epic journey. Between September and April, as many as 8,000 wading birds can be seen roosting here at high tide. The site also supports over 100 species of plants, including a very rare liverwort and the sand crocus, found in only one other location in the UK.

