

# WALKING THE SOUTH WEST COAST PATH

## A Companion Guide

REPRINT

Simon Butler & Philip Carter

This companion guide to the South West Coast Path is intended to provide added pleasure and knowledge for those who have walked it in whole or in part, or those who are planning to walk it. With the inclusion of over 200 illustrations – spectacular aerial photographs appearing alongside historic photos and stories – this companion guide paints a picture of the places the walker will find along the coastal route depicting them as they were in bygone days. This background information will enhance the reader's experience of their walk, long or short, helping them visualise the small villages, seaside towns and ports through which they pass, as they looked in earlier times.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Philip Carter** was born in Devon and was involved with the South West Coast Path Association from its inception. Few knew the Coast Path better than Philip, and he authored a number of books including *The South West Coast Path - An Illustrated History*, and *Exploring the South West Coast Path*, upon which this Companion Guide is based.

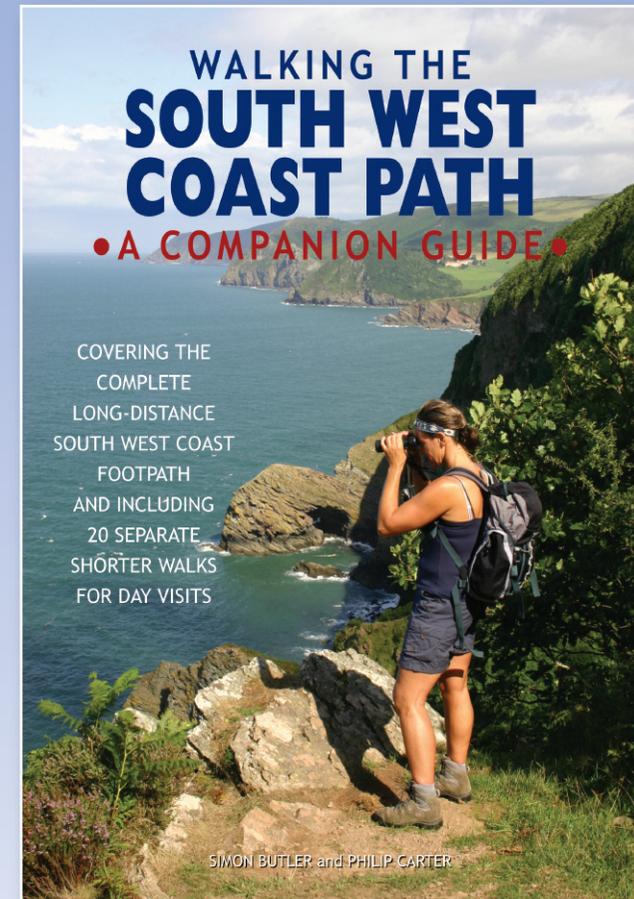
**Simon Butler** is an author and publisher living and working in the Westcountry. His recent books include *The War Horses*, *Goodbye Old Friend* and *The Farmer's Wife*. He worked closely with Philip on the publication of his walking guides and, up to the time of Philip's death in 2011, planned to publish several other walks books with him.



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South West Coast Path marker at Minehead.



Cawsand to the left, Kingsand to the right. The former has always been in Cornwall but the latter was once in Devon. Fish cellars were built in Kingsand for the landing and processing of fish so the duties that were payable in Plymouth could be evaded.



Slapton memorial

Example of a double-page spread.

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Celtic for a stone outcrop or hill. The view surprisingly is even better from the Little Hangman below, where you can look across Combe Martin Bay. Nearby silver-lead mines were active intermittently for about six hundred years and some of the silver was made into regalia, now in the Exeter Guildhall. Combe Martin has a winding main street two miles long, claimed to be the longest in England. Well back from the shore is the Pack of Cards Inn dating from the eighteenth century. Its features are based on the numbers significant to a pack of cards; it has four floors to represent the four suits, and fifty-two windows the number of cards in a pack. It was built as a private house, reputedly by a successful gambler. Strange as it may seem even when it became an inn for a long while it was not called the Pack of Cards.

Beyond Combe Martin, at Watermouth, wartime trials were held for PLUTO the Pipe Line Under the Ocean that was used so effectively after D-Day in the World War II to get fuel to our forces in France.

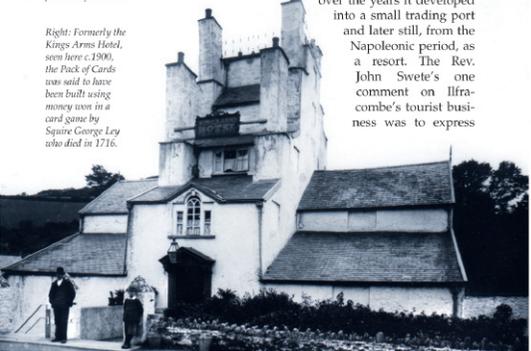
The first view of Ilfracombe is from Hillsborough, the big hill just to the east of it. Originally Ilfracombe was a small market town and fishing port; over the years it developed into a small trading port and later still, from the Napoleonic period, as a resort. The Rev. John Swete's one comment on Ilfracombe's tourist business was to express



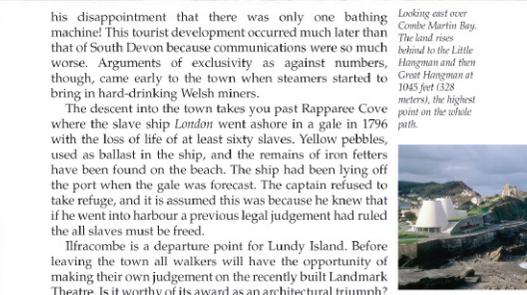
his disappointment that there was only one bathing machine! This tourist development occurred much later than that of South Devon because communications were so much worse. Arguments of exclusivity as against numbers, though, came early to the town when steamers started to bring in hard-drinking Welsh miners.

The descent into the town takes you past Rapparee Cove where the slave ship *London* went ashore in a gale in 1796 with the loss of life of at least sixty slaves. Yellow pebbles, used as ballast in the ship, and the remains of iron fetters have been found on the beach. The ship had been lying off the port when the gale was forecast. The captain refused to take refuge, and it is assumed this was because he knew that if he went into harbour a previous legal judgement had ruled the all slaves must be freed.

Ilfracombe is a departure point for Lundy Island. Before leaving the town all walkers will have the opportunity of making their own judgement on the recently built Landmark Theatre. Is it worthy of its award as an architectural triumph? Alternatively should it ever have been built in that setting? A few miles along the coast from Ilfracombe is Bull Point lighthouse. The original tower was built in 1879 but it



Right: Formerly the Kings Arms Hotel, seen here c.1900, the Pack of Cards was said to have been built using money won in a card game by Squire George Ley who died in 1716.



Looking east over Combe Martin Bay. The land rises behind to the Little Hangman and then Great Hangman at 1045 feet (328 meters), the highest point on the whole path.



The Landmark Theatre has drawn much controversy over its design.

Below: The Island, Tintagel, clearly showing the outline of early settlement and, at the landward end, the remains of the castle Inner Ward.

