

BAY TO BAY ACROSS 'THE WAY'

FROM THE FOOTSTEPS OF LEADVILLE'S

My journey began 2 years ago in August 2014 on the brightest and hottest summer day of the year.

One of my passions and hobbies and I suppose obsessive habits is that I like to highlight all the routes that I run in the numerous Ordinance Survey maps I have in number order(Also possibly obsessive).

Looking for new routes to run I began trawling through Long distance walking websites and stumbled on one that I can see the first 5 and a half miles of from my own front door.

St Michaels Way. The path of the pilgrims. The path of the righteous and brave. The path of those who believe in a greater power, presence and calling.

St Uny Church to the Mount of Sen Mighal. A 12 or so mile adventure, pilgrimage and trek into the unknown for myself from coast to coast. St Ives Bay to the Bay of the Mount.

The LDWA website had recommended a 4 day walking holiday for this particular route listing out the particular stops en route where you could stop for the night or perhaps a little something to eat and drink. Well if it takes 4 days to walk it with a holiday package then that definitely has to be a challenge to run it right?

On went my grey and black hydration pack which the bladder/antidote reservoir burst just 2 days prior. And with it loaded with 3 bottles of Lucozade Sport and a dozen Jaffa Cakes, off I set.

I left home from Hayle to run the A30 down to Marazion and then took the Way from the Marshland opposite the Mount into Lelant and took the main road home clocking 24.1 miles in total that day. The main roads added a few miles from the original 12 it stated online but nothing compared to the amount of times I had gone the wrong way. Anyway I made it back home and registered my longest run to date at that point as I had only been running since April of the same year so regardless of getting lost, tired, and incredibly stropky, there was no feeling like it before.

As my running journey took me some incredible places, venues and races over the next 18 months I began to forget I had ever ran at all on that path. That was until I staged my own running event which attracted bang on a hundred runners from various locations called 'The Cousin Jack Classic' which was a celebration of St Piran's Day and the incredible story of our dedicated miner ancestors who created our future. When this was all said, done and over with I began thinking, "What next?"

The section of coast on this run was Cape Cornwall to St Ives and barely gets raced or run in events apart from on 'The Arc Of Attrition' organised by the brilliant Mudcrew that covers 100 miles.

Giving runners some beautifully wonderful history to run into got me thinking that maybe this is why I am here. This is why some force such as fate made me fall in love with the sport of running. To give back to those who make me who I am and to give them something they've never had on the run before...

History!

The first idea that popped into my head was St Michaels Way but this time the opposite way around to what I had run before. Lelant to Marazion. But for the life of me I couldn't remember much about the route from the first time I ran it just because I took so many wrong turnings and ran so far when I didn't need to that I was just glad to get it over and done with. This time was different! I had to give runners the best quality of events. I can't possibly expect anybody to run this if I don't or can't.

Off I went for a reconnaissance. My mission to obtain information by visual observation and detection. I ran 3 of these almost one day after another and got lost on all 3 occasions but on the 4th I had cracked it perfectly. There seemed to be signs where you didn't need them and no signs where you did. Thankfully there were signs that had eventually popped up out there in the form of laminated paper arrows and orange tape around stiles. With this my real story of the route began and Fordh Sen Migal: A Pilgrimage was born. The UK's very first and only European Designated Cultural Route would be raced for the very first time as a race with the single theme of the entire way.

The incredible views across St Ives Bay onto the Cornish Mining World Heritage District of Hayle is something to behold from St Uny church past West Cornwall Golf Club and onto the main train bridge. There is something quite exhilarating about running as fast as you can over sand dunes chasing a branch line train with a sea quite visibly smashing off the inspiration for a Virginia Wolfe novel (Godrevy Lighthouse).

Where in the world could you ever do that but there?

Scaling up and down the towans, up and over the bridge, through what seems to be somebody's private woodland and step lane area you break out into the big wide open once more pacing through the sea breeze with crystal clear waters and a visual

display of St Ives and the Island next to Porthmeor Beach. The boats and rafts in and out of the world famous art proud and heritage town brings so much life into a route that is about to become deeper and darker after bypassing through the Carbis Bay Hotel.

Up steps that seem like they will never end and down a vicious rolling and declining descent onto the hotel steps. The only point of the route with any real flaw and not so much beauty. The view here is spoiled somewhat by having to share your run with a bunch of sunbathing city folk who are angry that you disturbed 4 seconds of their tanning day by having the audacity to heavily breathe by as fast as you can.

An incline and inward path follows for half a mile almost seemingly once again through what looks like private land to the very worst part of the journey: a long upward struggle with what seems like never ending tarmac and steps to a swing gate and onto a main A road past the Cornish Arms in Carbis Bay to tackle running off your tiptoes to keep momentum to the top of the exquisitely long Steeple Lane.

From here it is where it really starts to become lonely. Nothing here but you and a steeple monument that absorbs the skyline surrounded by an unfathomable wooded area. Somehow 2.91 miles into this journey from the very start of the way the chills and shivers kick in and you forget about the dreaded tarmac (all trail runners understand the hatred for heinous tarmac sections).

The imposing steeple soon becomes the background after a right turning down a rocky and challenging footpath and out on the road left to Withen and Withen Farm. Here is the fastest of all the route. Suddenly you trade in 9-10 minute miles on the terrain of the South West Coast Path for 5 and a half minute miles down and around a drifting and winding road with the tarmac battering your knees.

The next section on a right turning over a stile becomes epically overgrown and overshadowed somewhat by some sort of 'Rent-A-Fence' but this is quickly ignored as the cows and angry bulls are there to greet you before getting toward the Bowl Rock crossing to Trencrom. Something I've learned as a runner is when you run cows sometimes like to do the same. With a whimper and a cry thankfully I hop over a couple more stiles and out to the Bowl crossing which is the most dangerous part of the route as the view of the traffic here can be deceiving. Onward and upward(Quite literally) to what can only be described as fell running across the West Penwith Peninsula up another bovine populated grassy moor of cattle hell and out toward the horse track of Trencrom(slightly off the path but a run wouldn't be a run without a challenge).

Up the side of Trencrom Hill Fort. All 577 feet of the magnificent sight. This signals pretty much bang on half way to the end and the only place you can stand and visibly see the two bays in the same band of water. Godrevy where you came and St Michaels Mount where you'll crawl yourself even if it kills you on this tough and unsteady route. I have never not finished a run no matter the distance or pain as it's like I am programmed with the planet's worse case of stubbornness.

Out of the car park and back on track I run a road section and a gravel track over a stile into more fields passing through the wonderfully named 'Gonew Viscoe' which I believe has a farm here called 'Treviscoe Farm' which always reminds me of growing up in St Austell as a child and being fascinated with wanting to climb the clay pits of Little Treviscoe which was just down the road. Always a sense of adventure from a young age see.

Ninnes Bridge, Tremethow and past 'Curcurrian Mill' to the most stunning ford I've ever seen on a beautiful day. You're quite in need of this whilst running as it is a perfect opportunity to soak your snood and throw it back on your head and take a little

walking break for a minute before you run onto 'Nanceddan' and Angwinack into Ludgvan through quite incredible climbing woods out to the cemetery and Ludgvan Church where a left turning downhill toward and past The White Hart pub is required. (Turning right here gives you all sorts of headaches as that is the Gulval alternative of the route and has a part added from the opposite way at the end of the race anyway).

Through an uneven field and a minor road crossing into another over Long Lane and into Ludvan Leaze ready to cross the A30 road and through more stunning fields with the mount getting closer and closer the faster you go before crossing the Long Rock to Helston A394 into the Marsh over wood trail paths, sludgy and slip-sliding mud and over a train crossing that requires silence as lights are not present here and out toward Green Lane. Here there is a sign pointing back the way you came saying 'Lelant 12 Miles'. I'm not sure how distance on the route was measured but it's misinformation at best. It's actually less than 10 miles at this point every single time using several methods of GPS data and tracking.

Up through the main road of Marazion and around the Godolphin re-joining the South West Coast Path toward Long Rock and Penzance scanning over the everlasting Mount's Bay, Gwavas Lake, Mousehole, Newlyn and the coast headed out to Kemyal Crease woods before Lamorna before the finish outside the Station House Inn where a rest and a coffee is in order before the walk to Penzance carrying on the coast to then get the bus back to Hayle.

There are several points on this route where you could be in any time and era as I'm sure nothing has ever changed. It feels like it's your link to the past and future as this route has been here for thousands of years before you and will long be there after you're dead and gone, leaving you with an empty feeling of deep and dark insignificance of how tiny you feel as life and the planet is

turning in the big wide open universe as you're a speck in a field terrified by Daisy the local friendly and curious cow.

As I put on my Leadville trail runners every time I take this route on I know I'm in for a personal journey complete with things I have never thought nor discovered before. I couldn't possibly just simply walk this route. To be able to run it and have my head and my heart working together in such a way that physical exertion lets it is the only way I can look into my own anxiety and depressive state and find the ways I need to cope.

St Michaels Way for me isn't about religion or art. It's about finding my place in the great beyond on my own doorstep and being engaged with a greater power, presence and calling...

David Andrewartha