



Looe Old Lifeboat Station

HERITAGE & CONSERVATION WALK



Route features:

OUTWARD:

- Panoramic river and harbour views
- Historic lanes and byways
- Downland and magnificent coastal views
- Restored historic lifeboat station on South East Cornwall's primary seafront

RETURN:

- Lively ancient fishing port with a great mixture of stylish local shops and national brands
- Pubs, restaurants of many styles specialise in freshly landed Looe Day Caught Fish

MODERATE - SOME STEPS & SLOPES

1.6 MILES (CIRCULAR) | 45 MIN - 1 HOUR

Line Looe Valley Line

Start/End Looe station



Leaving Looe railway station, cross Station Road towards The Globe pub and begin to walk up Shutta hill, to its left. In 40m turn right uphill into Shutta Road where after a sharp left and right bend the narrow road levels off ([photo 1](#)).

Shutta was the earliest part of Looe to be settled; being well upstream from the coast gave families protection from the weather, and in later times, from raids by Barbary pirates who plundered and took slaves from the ports of East & West Looe and coastal communities into the 17th Century.



The panorama (2, 3) to your right begins with Trenant Point at the confluence of the East and West Looe Rivers, and their backdrop of steep wooded slopes.

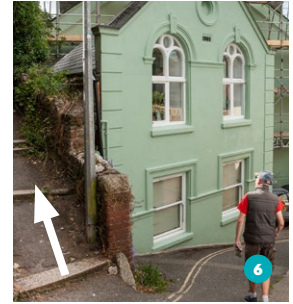
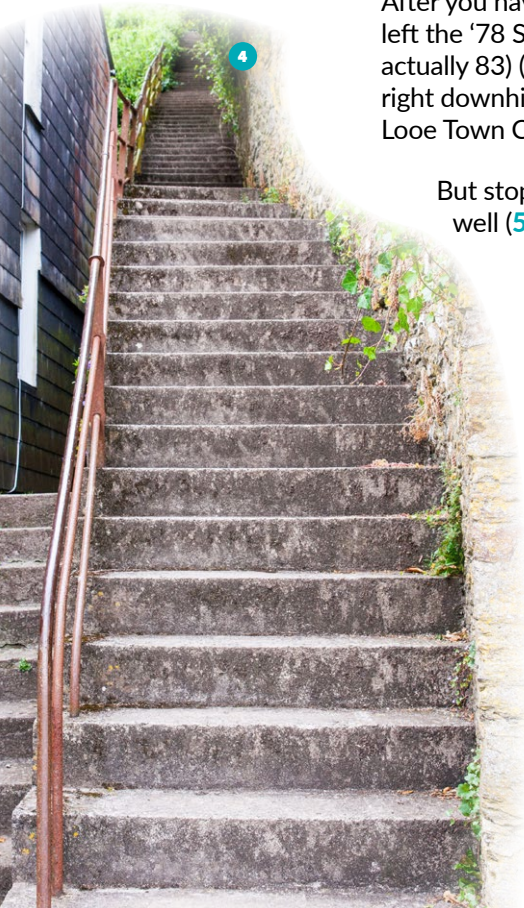
The Millpool pond leads the eye past Pearn's boatyard, toward Looe's iconic seven arched bridge, the historic port of Looe and the sea beyond.



Standing above the Shutta Road to your left are a succession of Edwardian and early 20th Century seaside villas of distinctive and varied design.

After you have passed on your left the '78 Steps' (there are actually 83) (4) the road bears right downhill towards East Looe Town Centre.

But stop here, at the gated well (5) and its constantly running water.



Turn left up the narrow lane (6) that runs behind the old chapel.

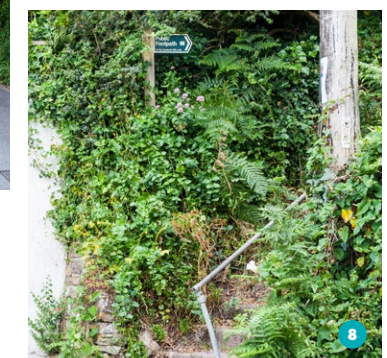
(Whether the lane is called Belinda Lane or Blind Lane is debated locally, but is academic as it has no road sign).

At the top there is a defibrillator and bench at the junction with Barbican Hill (7).

Turn left uphill to the footpath sign (8) and walk up through the woods on an unsurfaced path with steps and handrails to the Wooldown.

The Wooldown is more than 16 acres of former farmland owned and maintained by East Looe Town Trust for the public to enjoy. It is a dog-friendly public open space, and is well provided with litter bins.

The pattern of open fields and hedgerows has been retained, and a number of areas are being maintained for nature conservation. There are no hard surfaced paths.





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As you leave the woods keep ahead until you reach the bench above an area where a memorable view of West Looe has been opened up (9).

Rising from the harbour and quay, West Looe Hill the historic road to Polperro is flanked by historic cottages and houses in the conservation area.

"East Looe is the sunny side but West Looe is the money side" is a favourite Looe saying.

Tucked in snugly with their backs to the prevailing south west wind West Looe is where the double fronted 'captains' cottages' and larger houses of the ship owners and boat builders were found.

Rising above the path, the downland rises to the Wooldown Beacon (10) at its crest.

It is a link in our national chain of beacons and lit by East Looe Town Trust for celebrations such as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the D-Day 80th anniversary.

On a clear day there is a coastal panorama from Dodman Head in the west to Start Point beyond Plymouth. Standing on the southern horizon the Eddystone lighthouse may be seen 12 miles distant. (If it's needle sharp there's rain on the way)!

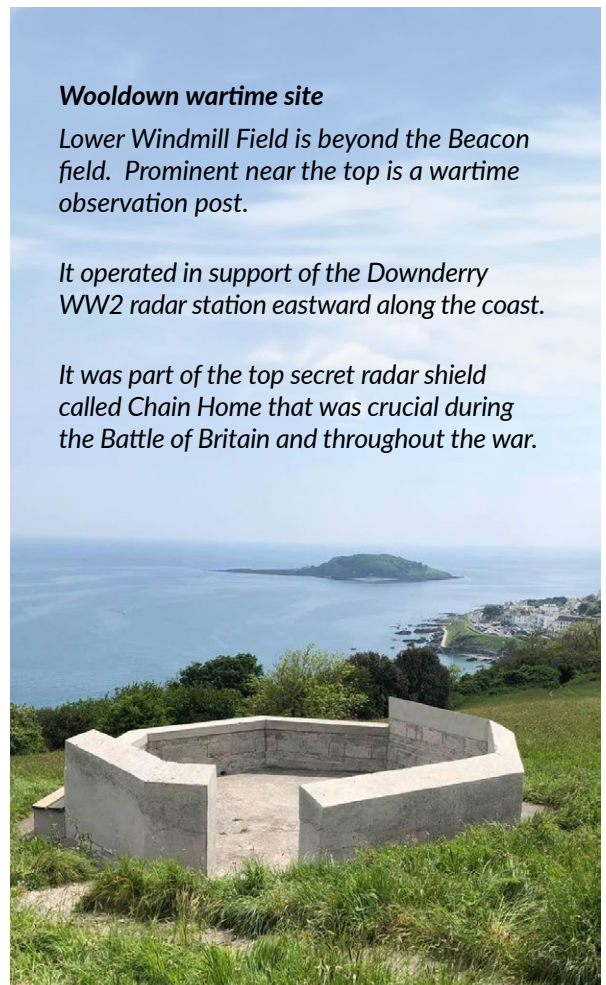


Wooldown wartime site

Lower Windmill Field is beyond the Beacon field. Prominent near the top is a wartime observation post.

It operated in support of the Downderry WW2 radar station eastward along the coast.

It was part of the top secret radar shield called Chain Home that was crucial during the Battle of Britain and throughout the war.



Below the beacon, the stand of Monterey pines at Mount Ararat makes a fine viewing point above East Looe Beach and the harbour entrance (11, 12).



Banjo Pier

In 1896, Joseph Thomas solved the problem of silting up of the entrance to the harbour at Looe, by shortening the existing pier at the mouth of the river and building a larger round structure at the end.

Thomas offered to pay for the work himself if it did not solve the problem. It proved successful, and the Banjo Pier was the prototype for other similar structures built elsewhere.

Continue on the path. The steep slope to the right is Mount Ararat Bee Glade (13).

Pass through the hedge to the granite bench and take the boarded earth steps (no handrail) descending to the South West Coast Path, beside a second bee glade.



Conservation

Working with Looe based Kernow Ecology, East Looe Town Trust (ELTT) is managing two areas as bee glades and another as a wildflower meadow.

Designed to increase biodiversity, attention is focussed on the rare long horned mining bee population of which there are barely a handful in Cornwall.

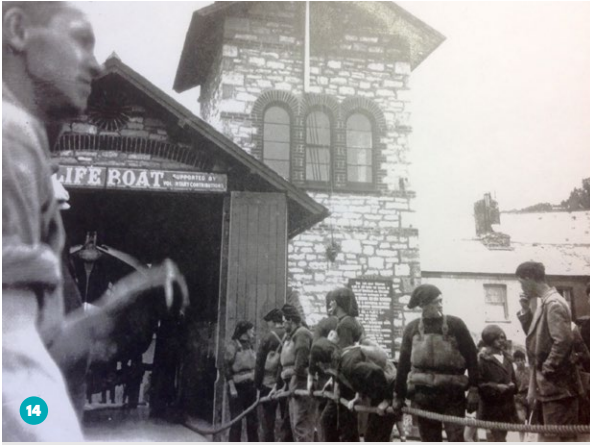
Based on natural regeneration of wild plant species we aim to benefit a wide range of wildlife too.

ELTT welcomes business sponsorship of the cost of maintaining the steep slopes.

Turn right on the coastal path towards Looe until the view opens up above the seafront which you reach using the concrete steps with handrails, passing Looe rowing club's gig shed.

The beach is maintained by ELTT and is Looe's designated bathing water, classified as Good - with seafront cafes, and beach equipment hire.

Standing behind the slipway is the Grade II listed Old Lifeboat Station and Watchtower (14 overleaf).



Old Lifeboat Station and Watchtower

Grade II listed, it was built in 1866 after many local shipwrecks. Three successive rowing and sailing lifeboats served there until 1930 when it was closed.

In 2024, funded by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Good Growth fund a regeneration project to restore the building included an online history and archive of the boats, their rescues and the men who served in them:

oldlifeboatstation-looe.co.uk

You can see important lifeboat artefacts in the Old Guildhall Museum & Gaol just round the corner in Higher Market Street.



To return to the station the most direct route is Higher Market Street. On the left you will see the Grade II* listed Old Guildhall Museum & Gaol (15).



In the narrow street behind it spot the clock on the tower of St Mary's church which was designed with a single hand (16).

At the end of Higher Market Street (17) bear right into Fore Street and see the distinctive profile of the Grade II listed Guildhall ahead (18).



Alternatively, follow any of the streets and narrow lanes running back along the river from the sea. The pattern of streets in East Looe is unchanged since mediaeval times.

Train times

■ GWR.COM ■ 03457 48 49 50

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All public rights of way cross private land, so please keep to paths and keep dogs on leads. Occasionally work may mean diversions are put in place. If so, please follow local signs. These directions are intended as a guide only. It is always advisable to carry the relevant OS Map whilst out walking.

Walk developed as part of the Looe Old Lifeboat Station & Watchtower Heritage Led Regeneration Project

