

Blackwater

Blackwater can be approached from various directions but most easily from the A30 at Chiverton Cross roundabout. Take the exit signed to Blackwater. Pass the filling stations and go down the long hill that leads to the village. Look for the Post Office on your right which is the starting point of the walk.

THE INSTITUTE

Walk due west along the main road, away from Chiverton Cross. After a couple of hundred metres you will see, on the other side of the road, an old building that edges the road, presenting its side to you **A**. This is the Blackwater Institute as it is commonly known, originally the Blackwater Lecture and Reading Room.



c.1910



A

The Institute dates from 1890 and was donated to the inhabitants of Blackwater by John Passmore Edwards (1823-1911), a London newspaper proprietor and philanthropist who was born in Blackwater, in a cottage in Back Lane which today runs beside the Institute.

Between 1889 and 1904 John Passmore Edwards financed the construction of 72 public buildings, many in his native Cornwall, including the Miners' and Mechanics' Institute

in St Agnes Village (see Walk 1) and the Village Hall in Mithian (see Walk 6).

But it was the Blackwater building that began the chain of donations. The Revd Fursdon Rogers of Mithian Church wrote to John Passmore Edwards asking for books for the people of Blackwater. Coming from a poor family, Edwards had struggled to raise money to buy books with which to supplement the basic education he had received from the local school. He had also joined the Reading Society in nearby Chacewater. So, when he

received the request for books, he went one better and provided both books and a building for use as a library and reading room.

c.1925



B

Subsequent use of the building includes it being a concert hall, a general meeting place for the village, and the home of the Blackwater Mens' Institute, hence the name today.

THE RED LION

Continue walking west past the

garage B and you will soon approach the Red Lion Public House C where you might wish to enjoy a drink at the end of your walk. In days past there were four pubs in Blackwater itself: The Red Lion, The Spread Eagle, The Cornish Miners Inn, and Clinton House.

c.1902



C

THE RAILWAY

Continue walking west and pass the sign advertising a picture framing service.

Almost immediately you will see embankments covered in rhododendrons **D** on both sides of the road. These were planted at the instigation of John Oates, headmaster of Blackwater school for 41 years from 1878. The embankments were created to support the railway bridge that passed over the Blackwater road at this point but they were unattractive and the headmaster came up with a planting scheme which solved the problem then and left a colourful legacy to the present day.

The railway line was the Chacewater to Newquay branch line and its first section opened in 1903. It left the main line at Chacewater, crossed the Blackwater road, and continued through cuttings until it reached Mount Hawke near Gover Farm (see Walk 5). It then swept south of St Agnes, along a route parallel to Goonbell until it left the Parish east of Mithian (see Walk 6).

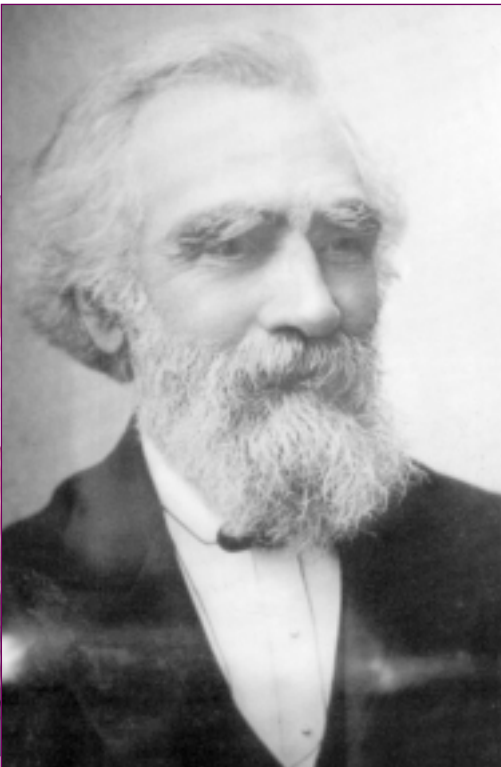
Sixty years later the branch line was closed as part of Dr Beeching's package of railway economies. The railway bridge itself was demolished in 1972.

Remains of the line can still be seen quite clearly in many locations and the curve of the branch line is marked on Ordnance Survey maps. What used to be a station building is to be seen near St Agnes in the small industrial estate south of Presingoll Barns.

c.1908



John Passmore Edwards



SKINNERS BOTTOM - MURDER HOUSE

About 25 metres past the embankment you will see a narrow lane on the right, between white dwarf walls, next to a house called Roseland Villa **E**. Follow this lane (quite a long walk) until you reach a tarmac road. Turn left down this road (which leads to Skinners Bottom) and look for the first house on your right **F**. Now called Concord Farm and considerably extended and improved, it is the site of a double murder that took place in 1920 and has still not been solved.

Joseph Charles Hoare, a cattle and horse dealer aged 57, and his common law wife, Laura Sara, aged 45, were bludgeoned to death on Sunday 25th January 1920 at their cottage, then called Seaview.

At about 9.00am on the morning of the murder Jack Pryor from Mount Hawke went to visit Hoare about a horse that had died and he knew Hoare bought carcasses. He looked over the garden wall from the road and saw Laura Sara lying face down. He could hear her breathing and her head was bleeding. He shouted to Hoare and on getting no reply ran to a neighbouring farm.



When Pryor, the neighbour and P. C. Stephens from Blackwater reached the house they found Sara struggling to get up on her hands and knees; she was wearing her nightdress. Hoare was then found lying near a small wicket gate; he was fully dressed and around his neck was a sack which was pulled up over his head. Both were still living but had serious head injuries. Hoare and Sara were taken indoors and Doctor Forsyth from Chacewater was sent for but both died before he arrived.

Enquiries by the local police started immediately and Scotland Yard was called for. The initial inquest on 27th January was adjourned until 12th February when it was held at the Blackwater Men's Institute with Mr A. J. Whale, the Blackwater School Headmaster, foreman of the jury. The jury's decision was arrived at by a majority of seven out of eight: "a verdict of wilful murder by some person or persons unknown". The couple were buried at St Peter's Church, Mithian. In 2004 Carlton Television featured this crime in its series 'Murder Most Foul'.

WHEAL CONCORD **G**

Retrace your steps, walk back to and pass the narrow lane, continuing on the road. Shortly, on your left, you will see the wooden headgear of a mine. Here the mines Wheal Concord and Wheal Briton stand alongside the road which leads from Skinners Bottom to the top of Blackwater North Hill. Wheal Briton closed in 1791 but was reopened in 1810, the same year that work resumed at Concord. The mines then combined and in 1860 The Wheal Concord Silver, Lead and Copper Mining Company Limited was formed but within a couple of years the low price of tin caused it to close. It was thought that operations had ceased forever but, under the leadership of Nicholas Warrell from Falmouth and guidance of Jack Trounson, Wheal Concord again began to produce tin in the 1980s. After a great deal of clearance and preparatory work, and with St Piran's flag flying from the headgear, the mine began to yield up its tin. In December 1981 Prince Charles paid a visit to Concord and descended into the workings. He was glowing in his comments applauding the initiative. The project was, however, short-lived and closed within a few years.

METHODIST CHAPEL

Continue along the tarmac road, passing the remains of a railway bridge **H**. Go straight across the crossroads (you are crossing North Hill) and after 75 metres turn right down the first lane. Follow this lane (which starts wide enough for cars but switches to the width of a footpath) until you reach a house named 'Kaimai' directly in front of you. Turning right here brings you out opposite the side of the Blackwater Methodist Chapel. Turn left onto the lane that runs past the Chapel **I**. Opened in 1825,



this was the successor to a much simpler 18th century chapel destroyed by fire in 1821. The new chapel was a plain, earth floored building: men sat on one side and women on the other. A gallery was added in 1832 and, to mark its

approaching centenary, a new pipe organ was installed in 1923. The last service was conducted on 28th April 1985. Subsequently the building has been used as an office, auction room, and a dwelling.

When you exit the lane turn left which will lead you back to the post office.

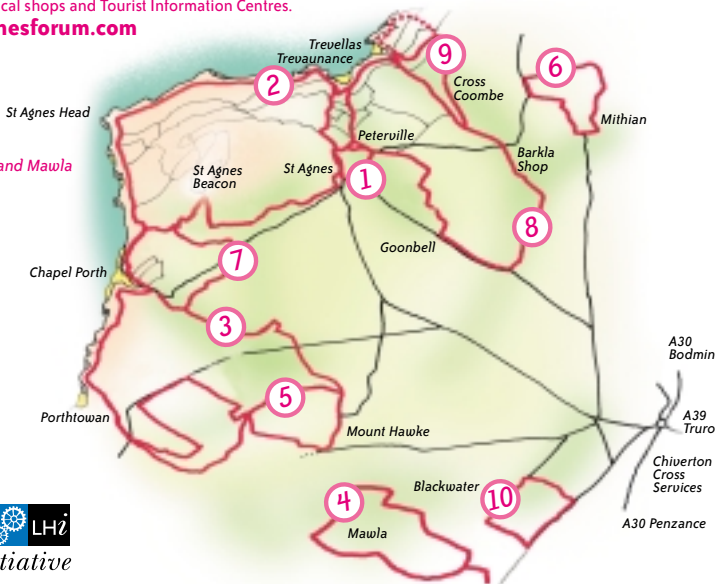
Any direct quotations from "A History of Blackwater" are with the kind permission of the authors, Clive Benney and Tony Mansell.

This map is one of a series available from local shops and Tourist Information Centres.

For further information visit www.stagnesforum.com

- Walk 1 St Agnes Village Trail
- Walk 2 St Agnes Beacon
- Walk 3 Porthlowan, Banns Vale, Mount Hawke and Chapel Porth
- Walk 4 Wheal Rose, the Poldice Plateway and Mawla
- Walk 5 Mount Hawke
- Walk 6 Mithian Walk
- Walk 7 Wheal Coates, Chapel Porth and Wheal Lawrence Valley
- Walk 8 Water Lane, Wheal Butson and Jericho Valley
- Walk 9 Jericho Valley and Cross Coombe
- Walk 10 Blackwater

St Agnes 2000
Regeneration Forum
Chairman - John Slater
Parish Rooms
St Agnes
Cornwall




Local Heritage initiative



walk number

10

ST. AGNES

HERITAGE TRAIL

Blackwater
2 1/2 km or 1 1/2 miles

