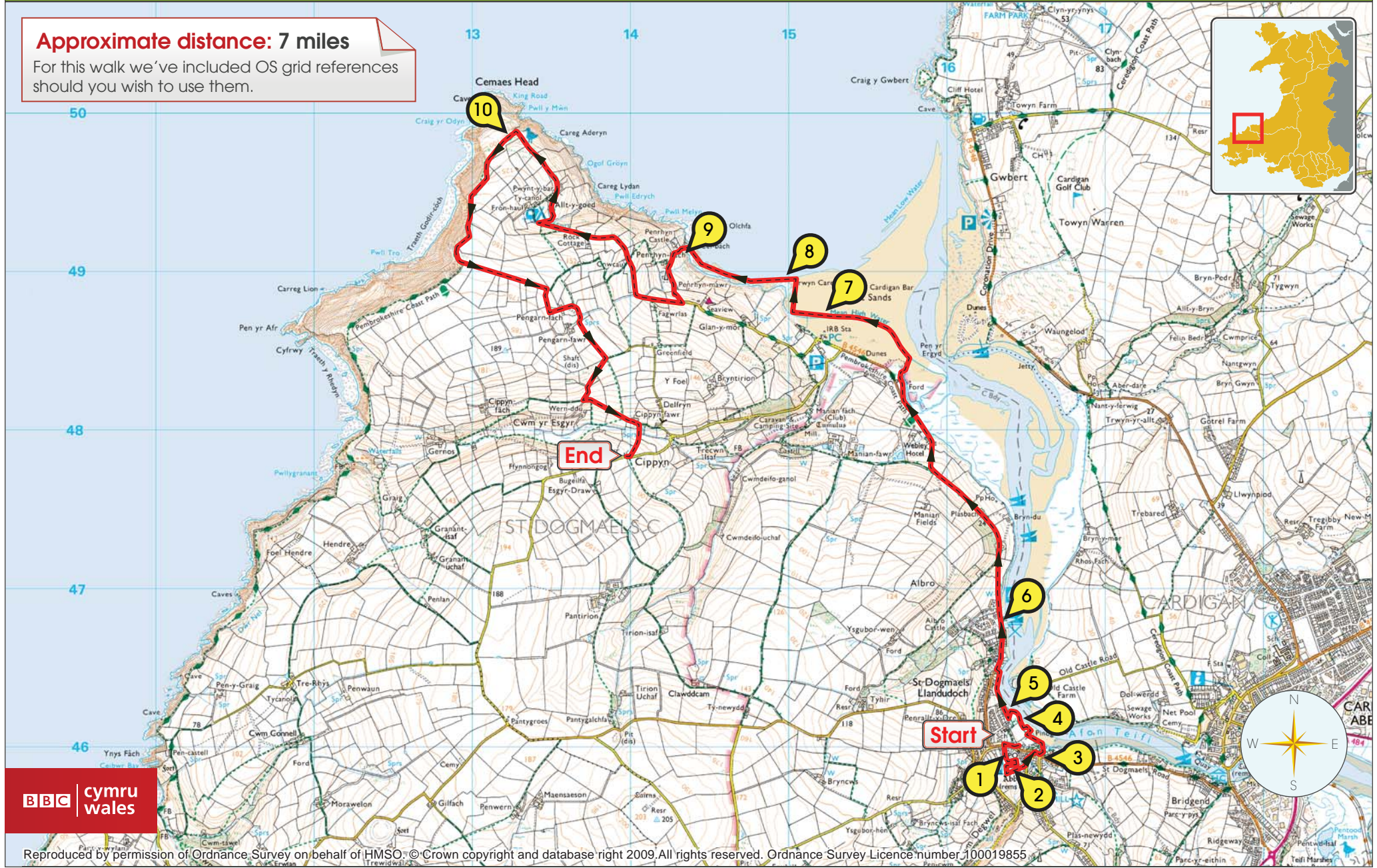
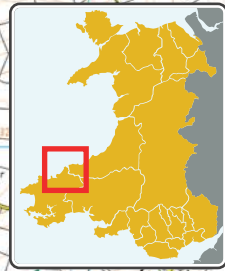


Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

Approximate distance: 7 miles

For this walk we've included OS grid references should you wish to use them.



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The Weatherman Walking maps are intended as a guide to help you walk the route. We recommend using an OS map of the area in conjunction with this guide. Routes and conditions may have changed since this guide was written. The BBC takes no responsibility for any accident or injury that may occur while following the route. Always wear appropriate clothing and footwear and check weather conditions before heading out.

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

Start: High St car park, St Dogmaels

Starting ref: SN 1643 4601

Distance: 6.92miles (11.14km)

Grade: Moderate / Strenuous

Walk time : Allow 3.5 hours (3 hours + stops)

This coast and countryside trail follows the start of the stunning Pembrokeshire Coast Path – or the end of it, for some walkers! Don't worry; you don't have to trek the whole 186 miles to Amroth as there is more than enough to find along this diverse seven-mile walk, including centuries-old landmarks, a bracing stretch of sandy beach, seals, dolphins and a very unusual stone!

The Welsh name for the village is Llandudoch, after Saint Tudoc. St Dogmaels, said to be the cousin of Welsh patron saint David, came later, founding a Celtic monastery 1,500 years ago and establishing the area as an important Christian site.



Derek and walking guide Anne enjoy a visit to St Dogmaels market

Directions

From the car park, turn right and walk a short distance along High Street. As you go, look out for the distinctive houses built from rich brown stone with bands of pale blue Teifi Valley slate. This technique can also be seen in towns such as Dinas and Newport but nowhere to the same extent as St Dogmaels, giving the village its distinct character!

Turn left into Church Lane and follow it to St Thomas' Church.



One of St Dogmaels' eye-catching stone and slate houses

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

1

St Thomas' Church (SN 1639 4590)

The church standing today is a Victorian rebuild of the medieval church of St Thomas, which itself replaced a pre-Norman church dedicated to St Dogmael. The church is significant for its Sagraanus stone, inscribed with Ogham writing, an Old Irish text found in Ireland, Wales and Scotland. A number of early Christian stones show the importance of St Dogmaels as a religious site, and a collection of these and carved medieval stones are on display in the Coach House museum at the neighbouring abbey.

Take a look at the massive yew tree outside the church porch – it's impossible to miss!



St Thomas' Church houses the Sagraanus stone, depicting Ogham script

Walk from St Thomas' Church to the adjacent St Dogmaels Abbey

2

St Dogmaels Abbey (SN 1638 4588)

St Dogmaels Abbey was founded by Robert Fitzmartin and his wife, Maud Peverel, in September 1120, although it wasn't completed until more than 100 years later. The chronicler Gerald of Wales and the Archbishop of Canterbury stayed here in 1188 as the guests of Prince Rhys, arriving with an enormous entourage and recruiting soldiers for a crusade to the Holy Land.

The monastery was struck by the plague and by the end of the 1300s was inhabited by just four monks. By Tudor times this had increased to eight monks and an abbot, but Henry VIII's dissolution saw the monastery buildings leased to a wealthy merchant called John Bradshaw. He built a mansion here but by 1603 the site was a ruin.

The site is now in the hands of Cadw and the Coach House has been converted into a museum, visitor centre and café.



The abbey ruins are in the care of Cadw

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

Leave the abbey site next to the Coach House onto Shingrig. This is the site of St Dogmaels' popular market every Tuesday morning, and where Derek spent quite some time sampling the tasty goods on sale!

Walk past the mill pond and turn right into Mill Street. Here's another place that Derek enjoyed visiting!



Derek tests the local produce

3 Y Felin / The Mill (SN 1650 4590)

Y Felin is one of the last working watermills in Wales producing traditional stoneground flour. It's passed hands many times since it was built in the 1640s, with current owner Michael Hall and his family running it since 1977. Mr Hall takes the flour to Queen's Bakery in Cardigan every night and returns to collect the bread each morning!

Visitors can take guided tours at certain times and flour, bread and other goods can be bought at the mill shop.



Anne and the crew find out more about the old mill

Continue to the end of Mill St and carefully cross High Street. Follow the footpath sign, keeping the car dealership to your right. At the gates to the large, private property called Penally, follow the sign to the estuary and bear left along the path. The estuary is the home of the otter, so take note of the sign asking walkers to stay 10m from the shore!

Continue along the path, bearing right at the fork. The path soon begins to climb uphill to a wooden gate, which leads to a children's play area and Netpool Green.



Derek and Anne stroll along the Teifi

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

4 Netpool Green (SN 1644 4618)

It might look like your average village green, but the Netpool has a more interesting history than a first glance might suggest! Cardigan was an important port from the Middle Ages and by the 19th century was one of the most important in Wales! More than 200 ships were built on the Teifi, including some here at the Netpool.

The Teifi has also long been a source of fish, particularly salmon and sewin, or sea trout. Seine fishing – salmon fishing from boats with nets – is a tradition thought to have been introduced to St Dogmaels by the abbey monks and still practiced today by a small number of fishermen with a Seine licence.

Still visible in front of the Netpool Inn are a number of wooden posts, or standards. They used to be connected by crossbars, on which the nets would be dried out and repaired. In 1884, more than 20 fishing boats operated, with stone lots being drawn before each tide to decide the order in which the salmon pools were to be fished.

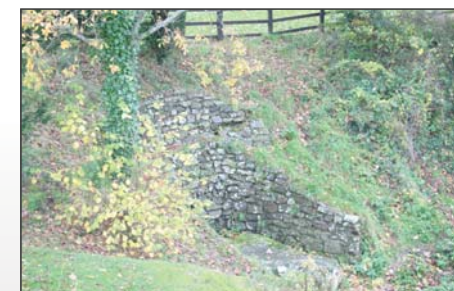


These wooden posts on Netpool Green were essential for the drying out and repair of nets used to catch salmon

Follow the path as it loops around Netpool Green, stopping at the far side to take in the lovely views of the Teifi Estuary. As the path circles around, it runs left towards the Netpool Inn or right, down the bank, to a large stone feature. This is the Blessing Stone, another St Dogmaels landmark!

5 The Blessing Stone (SN 1638 4622)

The Blessing Stone is of Pembrokeshire bluestone and was thought to have been the capstone of an ancient burial chamber. This is the spot where the abbot blessed the fishermen before they started the season, and a ceremony to bless the river is still held here annually. The stone is also known as the Carreg Ateb, or Answer Stone, due to its echoes. Can you shout across the river as loudly as Derek?



The Blessing Stone was rediscovered in the 1960s and is now the focus of an important annual ceremony

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

From the Blessing Stone return to the main path and continue right, passing above the stone. The path runs alongside green railings above the estuary until it reaches the B4546, or Pilot Street. Turn right, passing the Ferry Inn, and walk to the Moorings

6 The Moorings (SN 1634 4680)

This is where the Pembrokeshire Coast Path officially begins! This 186-mile route between St Dogmaels and Amroth is incredibly popular, with visitors from all over the world undertaking the challenge, and is one of the UK's 15 National Trails. The Moorings has spectacular views across the Teifi and features a mermaid statue and an anchor as well as a Pembrokeshire Coast Path marker stone and mosaic.



The official start – or end! – of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path!

The next mile or so of the trail is along the B4546, and there is no pavement for most of this stretch so extra care is needed. Where the road forks, follow the main road around to the right and slightly downhill, passing the Webley Hotel (SN 1590 4792).

Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam

The road passes Cippyn Marsh, where aliens are lurking! Alien plant species including Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam, which are extremely fast-growing and hard to eradicate, have invaded the Pembrokeshire coast. Volunteers from St Dogmaels Footpath Association have been tirelessly holding 'balsam bashing' working parties and their aim is to entirely rid the area of the plants.

Carry on along the B4546 until you reach the car park and Poppit Sands.

Alternatively, at low tide it is possible to avoid some of this road section. About 350 yards after the Webley Hotel bear right off the road along a footpath beside a tidal inlet. This leads to stepping stones which in turn lead to a sandy path through the dunes and onto the beach. Follow the line of the dunes to the left to reach Poppit Sands and the lifeboat station.

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

7 Poppit Sands (SN 1517 4857)

Poppit Sands is amongst Pembrokeshire's most popular beaches. Its Keep Britain Tidy Seaside Award means it is clean, safe, attractive and well managed, with level access, toilets and refreshments. The beach is good for spotting seals, porpoises and even bottle-nosed dolphins.

Also at Poppit is Cardigan Lifeboat Station. The original lifeboat – of which we will see more signs later! – closed in 1932, leaving the nearest crews a long way away at Fishguard and Aberystwyth. Due to public pressure, the lifeboat reopened at Poppit in 1971 and the current station, with two inshore lifeboats, was built in 1998.

Today, within about five minutes of the crew being paged, the lifeboat is launched, with crew members changing into thermal undersuits, drysuits, lifejackets and helmets within 90 seconds of reaching the station! In December 2011 the UK's first all-female crew in the UK responded to a 'shout' at Cardigan.



Cardigan Lifeboat Station overlooking Poppit Sands

The next section crosses a long stretch of beach. It's an invigorating walk across beautiful golden sand, but it's only possible at low tide and it's essential to check tide times before setting out. Remember that walking on sand can be quite tough-going, particularly for children, so make sure you have plenty of time and don't risk it if unsure. An alternative route is to follow the minor road at the top end of Poppit Sands car park (not the road at the lower end), which climbs uphill above the beach and passes Poppit Youth Hostel.

If you are able to cross the sands, follow the beach around to the left.



Beach art at Poppit Sands!

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

8 Views of Cardigan Island

From Poppit are excellent views across the water to Cardigan Island, a nature reserve managed by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. Following the wreck of the SS Herefordshire in 1934, the island suffered an infestation of brown rats, which feasted on the eggs of nesting birds and wiped out the island's population of puffins and Manx shearwaters. The island is now home to sheep and other birds, whilst grey seals breed in the sea caves.

Beyond Cardigan Island is Foel y Mwnt, a landmark conical hill overlooking Mwnt Beach, which can be better seen a little further along the trail.



Cardigan Island Nature Reserve from Poppit Sands

Continue along the sands to the breakwater at the very end of the beach.

9 Old lifeboat station at Cei Bach (SN 1438 4913)

Cardigan's first lifeboat arrived at this beach, called Cei Bach, in 1849. It was replaced in 1876 by a larger lifeboat house – the building you can still see today. In the storms of early 2014, the doors were smashed to pieces, but luckily were repaired just in time for Derek's visit!

The RNLI bought the slipway and the jetty after the lifeboat house was built and the lifeboat operated from here until 1932. Penrhyn Castle, a grand house on the cliff above Cei Bach, was bought by the Admiralty and became Penrhyn Castle Coastguard Station. Penrhyn Castle was never actually a castle but had a castellated roof, a flagstaff and a folly. The house is now privately owned and this former lifeboat house belongs to the owners.



The old lifeboat station is almost 140 years old and has survived numerous storms over the years

To the right of the old lifeboat house, the footpath is signposted. It's quite a steep climb from here! Follow the steps and then the path running alongside the boundary fence of the house named Penrhyn Castle. At the gate to the property, follow the lane uphill and turn right onto the minor road.

This is the road from Poppit Sands car park, mentioned above as the alternative route.

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

The road continues past Cnwcau and Rock Cottage. At Allt y Coed campsite the road forks; bear right, slightly downhill.

Continue to the second fork, where both routes - a lane on the right passing through Allt y Coed farmyard and a lane on the left going around the top of the yurt field - reach the same point.

Follow the signs past the stone building, with Cardigan Island in the distance ahead. When you're nearly at the top of the incline, go through the wooden gate, with the boulders on the other side, and onto the cliff-top path. You're now in Cemaes Head Nature Reserve!



Head downhill to Allt y Coed, where campers stay in yurts!

Cemaes Head Nature Reserve

Cemaes Head is renowned for its sea caves and inaccessible beaches. The headland is inhabited by ponies, rabbits, choughs, herring gulls, fulmars and cormorants, whilst peregrines and kestrels breed here and seals, dolphins and porpoises can often be spotted.



Derek and the crew spot seals from Cemaes Head

The coast path is very well signposted along this stretch. Soon after reaching the point of the head and turning south, the path runs past an old, dilapidated building that used to be a coastguard look-out hut (SN 1298 4922)

Shortly after the hut, the path descends several steps then climbs up a steep flight. At the top, it's time to leave the cliff path and turn left, over the stile, to follow the path alongside the hedge on the right.



This ruined hut used to be a coastguard look-out

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

At the end of the field, go over the stile, turn left and immediately go over a second stile. The path continues between two hedges and arrives in front of a telegraph pole in the corner of the field. Bear right and, keeping to the edge of the field, skirt around Pengarn Fach Farm.

After passing the farm buildings go through the gate on the left and cross the field to the track ahead. Join the track, bearing right and crossing the cattle grid. Pass Pengarn Fawr and go through another gate.

The trail now follows a stone track until reaching a gate on the right hand side. Leave the track through the gate and follow the grassy path downhill. At the bottom are the ruins of Bryn Salem Chapel (SN 1373 4822). Walk around the chapel, following the bend left, and continue along the track to pass Cippyn Fawr and reach the lane.

Turn right and walk down the lane to reach the country road, where you have a number of choices! You can turn left and follow the road for about a mile to return to Poppit Sands car park, or turn right, walk a little way along to the bus stop next to Gerizim Chapel and catch a bus like Derek!



Turn right at the telegraph pole, past Pengarn Fach



Bryn Salem Chapel makes a sorry sight on the hillside above Cippyn

The Poppit Rocket

The Poppit Rocket is a bus service that runs between Fishguard and Cardigan, via Cippyn and St Dogmaels, several times daily during the summer and on Thursdays and Saturdays during the winter. The service is operated by west Wales travel firm Richards Bros, who can be contacted for summer and winter timetables.

Weatherman Walking

St Dogmaels

Alternatively, a multitude of footpaths criss-cross the countryside around St Dogmaels, depicted in detail in the Footpath Association's Popular walks near St Dogmaels map. The foldaway waterproof map is available in the village and from www.walkstdogmaels.co.uk. A big point of interest is that it was lovingly created by Derek's very own walking guide, Anne, who is a talented graphic designer when she's not busy greeting guests at her St Dogmaels B+B!



Anne runs the Oriel Milgi B+B in the village centre