

**REPORT ON CHRIS AND PAT CALOW'S
FUNDRAISING ADVENTURE
27TH AUGUST TO 7TH SEPTEMBER
THE PEMBROKESHIRE COASTAL PATH**

"I have always wanted to walk a long distance path, but when I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia in 2000 those dreams were put on hold. On 1st March 2001 I started the Guaifenesin Protocol which has been reversing the effects of my Fibromyalgia. This has meant that I finally got to the stage when I could contemplate my dream of walking a long distance path with my favourite walking partner, my wife Pat."

Chris Calow



26th August We travelled down to Amroth, the finish of the walk, from our home in Chesterfield. On the way we called in to Talgarth, recently featured in the BBC's Village SOS, for lunch at the restored mill. We were fortunate to see red kites as we travelled; magnificent birds. We had arranged to leave our car at our B & B in Amroth and we then had a taxi to take us up to Newport, where we spent the first two nights. The driver was very chatty and took us across by the scenic route so we saw the Preseli Hills close up for the first time. We made a note to ourselves to go back and walk there in the future.



Day 1 St Dogmaels to Newport: distance 15.8 miles, total ascent 3,123 feet [St Dogmaels - 186 miles to go!] Having read that the first section is the toughest – nowhere to purchase any refreshments, on our own with the elements – we woke wondering how the day would go. It was a rollercoaster kind of day but all our preparation (Kinder Scout, Lose Hill, Win Hill, Mam Tor and others) helped to make it very enjoyable. ['The Witches Cauldron'] It was a very blustery day and the scenery was wild and rugged but brightened by beautiful patches of intermingled heather and gorse. As we started and finished at estuaries we saw a lot of wading birds. ['Newport Sands']

Day 2 Newport to Goodwick: distance 13.4 miles, total ascent 2,578 feet ['Parrog, Newport'] Walking from was easier as there were no steep climbs. There was lots of colour in the flowers again and we were often walking through 'tunnels' in the blackthorn bushes. It's a great area for those who like sloe gin. We prefer the abundant blackberries and it was evident from the amount of poo on the path on the northern part of the trail that the badgers were feasting also! We went past the church in the valley, Cwm-yr-Eglwys, which used to hold 300 worshippers but has been eroded so only part of a wall remains. It was easy to spot Goodwick in the distance as the ferry arrived. ['Lower Town, Fishguard']



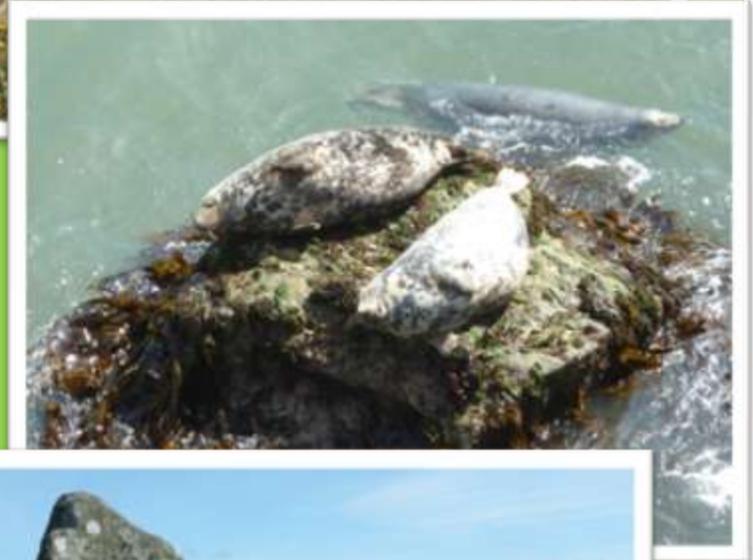
We were already developing a routine of eating, sleeping and walking, with little spare time or energy for anything else. The stunning scenery made it worthwhile though; new things to enjoy around every corner.



Day 3 Goodwick to Abercastle: distance 16.7 miles, total ascent 3,120 feet

We set off later than usual and it was hot and sunny all day. The cliffs above Goodwick were a carpet of colour and there was much to see and distract us (grey seals and pups, numerous different butterflies, a grasshopper, a pair of choughs). ['Seals relaxing in the morning sunshine'] Our coffee stop was on Carreg Goffa which was the scene of the last invasion of Britain. ['Memorial erected in 1897 to commemorate landing of the French'] The Lighthouse at Strumble Head was a good landmark and a popular spot for birdwatchers. ['Strumble Head']

We had relaxed and found ourselves behind schedule; only half the distance covered but in rather more than half the allotted time. This made for a tough afternoon as we had to really increase our pace. This was made more difficult as we could not see Abercastle ['Abercastle'] until almost there as it is tucked away in a small 'fjord'. Leaving the path we had quite a walk up to our B & B, as happened most days.



Day 4 Abercastle to St Justinian's:

distance 15.7 miles, total ascent 2,627 feet

Today was generally cloudy but warm, with good walking becoming more difficult towards St David's Head. We saw more seal pups and a peregrine falcon. At Porthgain there is a restored brickworks. The little harbour was used between 1837 and 1931 for the export of roadstone, slates and bricks.



Next was Aberiddi where there is a flooded former quarry, known as the Blue Lagoon. It was being used by people practising for coasteering. As we progressed we came under the shadow of Penberry, one of three high points on St David's Head. On reaching St Justinian's we opted to catch the local shuttle bus into St David's for our B & B; otherwise it was a walk of a further two miles along roads.



Day 5 St Justinian's to Nolton Haven:

18.1 miles, total ascent 3,044 feet

It was a warm day, sunny in the morning but cloudy later. By being very organised, we managed to catch an early shuttle bus back to the trail at St Justinian's. As we walked the path close to Ramsey Island we could see and hear the Irish Sea rushing through Ramsey Sound – exhilarating! We passed through the very picturesque harbour of Porth Clais which has two fairly intact lime kilns. These are a feature of almost every sheltered inlet where a small sailing boat could unload.

The lime was burnt and then spread on the fields. Soon afterwards we came across Ben Fogle and a group of others on the path, all in wetsuits so not walking. To our surprise we made it as far as Solva for our lunch stop. This is another very picturesque harbour, again reminding us of a fjord. It is a place we have stayed at several times on family holidays with our sons.



After a while we came to Newgale where there is Pembrokeshire's most impressive sandy beach – nearly 2 ½ miles of level sand. We walked on to Nolton Haven to shorten the next day's walk and were picked up there by a pre-arranged taxi which took us to our B & B in Broad Haven (and back again the next day).

Day 6 Nolton Haven to Marloes

Sands:

16.4 miles, total ascent 2,562 feet

Another day of clear blue sky and high temperature. This was the best day for butterflies of all colours – brown, blue, white, yellow and orange – some of which we had never seen before. We had our lunch near to St Bride’s Castle (actually a former baronial residence) and passed several excellent beaches – Broad Haven, Little Haven, [‘Little Haven’].



Musselwick Sands and finally Marloes Sands, [‘Marloes Sands’] which is one of the best beaches along the Coastal Path. From Marloes Sands we had a 1.5 mile walk up into the village of Marloes to our B & B. Fortunately we were able to eat in that evening which saved time and effort.

Day 7 Marloes Sands to Sandy Haven:

14 miles, total ascent 2,040 feet

The day started well, being very sunny and warm but after about six miles Pat had to admit that the thigh muscle which had been troublesome since setting off was now so painful that she could not complete this section. After sending a text to our prayer circle requesting specific prayer, we slowly made our way to Dale [St Brides] (Pat having to walk backwards down into the village) where Pat retired. We contacted our hosts for that night, who not only agreed to Pat coming in early but came to pick her up and gave her such TLC that she was able to resume walking the next day. Chris continued on from Dale, across the Pickleridge and some stepping stones to cross The Gann and then more steppingstones across Sandy Haven. There is a window of about four hours to navigate both these inlets; otherwise the high-tide detour is an extra three miles or so.

Day 8 Sandy Haven to Neyland: 10.9 miles, total ascent 2,139 feet. Talking to the couple at breakfast, we found that they are Christians. So, although Pat was very disappointed to have missed part of the walk, God answered our prayers by making sure that the injury happened at a time and place when his people were there to help. Also, the distance to be covered this day was much less than usual.

However, there was really heavy rain all day, such that we had our flasks of coffee in one bus stop shelter and our lunch in another. We were very grateful for our Paramo gear, which kept us snug and dry. The mention of bus stops shows that we were now into different terrain. Very soon after setting off we were passing refineries and other industry.[St Brides] To us, it was really interesting and we are very glad that we did this part of the path, which occupied two days. We were told that many people miss out this section but the local people we spoke to were very pleased that we went for it. We all agreed that it is just as much part of the experience as seeing remnants of past industry such as the brickworks and lime kilns. Our pace was slow as we were both nursing injuries and we saw very few people. It was not possible to take many photos either due to the rain as we did not have an underwater camera! The B & B was very comfortable and our hostess was extremely helpful and made sure that our boots and waterproofs were dried out for the next day.



Day 9 Neyland to Angle:

18.6 miles, total ascent 2,867 feet

This turned out to be a very tough day, partly because we were only expecting to do 17 miles. It was a challenging walk with very varied terrain and scenery. The weather was bright initially but by 1.30pm it was again raining very heavily. We started by passing the yacht marina, climbed up to a road bridge taking us over Westfield Pill and on to the Cleddau road bridge over the main Milford Haven seaway. This led us to Pembroke Dock so it was pavements through this built-up area and we had to look carefully for the small signs guiding us through (often just a sticker on a lamp post) and use our own GPS. We continued to Pembroke Castle and were fortunate to find a seat in sunshine by Castle Pond to sit on and enjoy our coffee. Even more fortuitous – Chris picked up a WiFi signal from the pub across from us so he was able to email some photos to our ‘blog master’ at home.

Technology caused us a few problems; our younger son had very generously loaned his iPhone so we could email text and photos for him to put on the blog but often there was only an intermittent signal or no service at all. More walking on pavements followed but then we were out into countryside again and soon passing behind a power station. The rain came on suddenly and we had our sandwiches standing up in the corner of a field, whilst also getting into our waterproofs. God always gave us a blessing/encouragement and we saw five little egrets and startled a grey heron that obviously had not heard us coming. There was another refinery before we left the industry behind and started walking around the bay towards Angle, our destination that day. Actually, for a time, we were walking *away* from our night’s resting place, due to the shape of this quite large bay. This was quite demoralising as we were tired and had realised it was going to be well over 17



miles. The rain stopped though and there was a breeze so we had mostly dried off by the time we arrived at our B & B, a 15th century inn. [‘The Old Point House’] A warm welcome from our host, hot drinks and hot baths all helped to revive us, as did a really good meal in-house.

Day 10 Angle to Bosherton:

15 miles, total ascent 2,191 feet

It was a very blustery day with only a couple of sharp showers. After two days following the banks of Milford Haven we were now back onto the more expected kind of trail, with some tough climbs and descents. Soon after Angle we passed by Thorn Island. A fort was built here in the 1850s which is now a hotel for those who *really* like to get away from it all. Walking across the beach at Freshwater West near the large waves rolling in made a change and was exhilarating. As anticipated, the red flags were flying and the gates were closed, so we had to do the inland route around the Castlemartin danger area.



In the village of Castlemartin we found a former cattle pound that is now used as a traffic roundabout. Its walls enclose beds of flowers and shrubs and there are a couple of park benches so we took the opportunity to have our lunch with some protection from the wind, although it did seem that a battle was raging nearby as the artillery range was in use. After that it was mainly tarmac roads to Bosherton, which is hard on the feet, but we did enjoy a cream tea when we arrived. As we were waiting for this to be served a local man came to speak to us. He had discovered a mix-up over our accommodation for that night, had been to the country inn next to the cafe to arrange a room, and was just about to transport our luggage to there for us. He also said he would take it on to the next night's stop in Lydstep. Once again, God was there before us, providing help that we hadn't even known we needed! The inn was very comfortable and we had a hot bath and good evening meal.



Day 11 Bosherton to Lydstep:

14.9 miles, total ascent 3,182 feet

There was a very strong wind all day and one very heavy shower, which came when we were literally only two minutes from our B & B. Shouldn't have taken that extra photo and had those few more blackberries! We saw two grey herons and one little egret at Bosherton Lily Ponds, a beautiful place that we have visited several times in the past. The waves were crashing onto the cliffs as we walked along and then we came around and down into Barafundle Bay (Pat's favourite beach) and it was calm and there was a grey seal looking at us from the water.



We had coffee and cake at the National Trust's Boathouse cafe at Stackpole Quay; what a treat to have real coffee. Our lunch stop was more basic – a stile overlooking Swanlake Bay. Next was Manorbier, where there is a castle that was used in the BBC's series of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe made many years ago. After that it was not far to Lydstep, passing Manorbier camp on the way. This was another challenging day, with many ascents and descents. We were really looking forward to completing the final section and then having a day off!!



Day 12 Lydstep to Amroth:

15.1 miles, total ascent 3,116 feet
It was cloudy most of the day, with stiff breeze, and only started to rain towards the end. There is another danger area on this section but fortunately it was not being used so we were able to walk out to Giltar Point, which gave us a good view of Tenby, with South Beach in the foreground. ['Approaching Tenby'] We walked along this beach and then up into the town to use the facilities. We bought a packet of Welsh cakes and had these with our flasks of coffee, sitting on a seat with part of the medieval wall just behind us. It was very busy here and we were pleased to get back on the path.



The section between Tenby and Saundersfoot ['Saundersfoot Harbour'] was, unexpectedly to us, extremely challenging, with several steep climbs and descents, including the steepest, longest, single ascent of the entire path. Chris by now had a problem with his thigh similar to Pat's so this was a very difficult day for him. Leaving Saundersfoot we prepared ourselves mentally for more climbing but found that the trail passes through three tunnels carved through the rock. What a relief! The last few miles, passing Wiseman's Bridge, to Amroth, were relatively level and easier going but Chris was really struggling. We had to walk all along the sea front at Amroth as the finish point, just a finger post, is at the far end. ['Journey's End!']

After taking a photo we then had to walk all the way back as our B & B was at the other end. We treated ourselves to an icecream on the way. That evening we were able to go by car for our evening meal. Just as well as Chris's thigh muscle was now very painful. We felt a great sense of achievement –

WE HAD MADE IT!



We hoped to raise £1,000 for the Vision Project; donations keep coming and it is now about £1,200 and not too late for further contributions. <http://www.justgiving.com/Christopher-Calow>

Our thoughts and reflections

It was a great experience for us both, on many levels. It was very challenging but mostly enjoyable. We were aware of many blessings, answers to prayer and God's provision for us. It showed us the importance of team work and supporting each other and of the need to accept help and support from others.

We had little free time due to preparing for the walk each morning (making flasks of coffee and our energy drinks, then packing the rucksacks) walking many miles, often a further walk off the path to the B & B, unpack

and wash up, shower, usually a walk to the evening meal and back and then soon to bed as we were so tired. Frequently we had to text, or type and email, the posting whilst waiting for our evening meal as we knew we would be too tired later. Finding a connection could be problematic.

The variety and beauty of the scenery and the wildlife was breathtaking and the evidence of human activity along the coast, whether past or present, was fascinating.

We had expected that Chris would struggle with fatigue and were very heartened that this did not happen. Several years ago, when Chris's illness was at its worst, walking this trail was just a dream. Now it is a reality. This gives us confidence that we will be able to serve the Lord in Romania for a longer period than usual in the not too distant future.

We would encourage you all to go for it and try to realise your dreams. With God on your side, it could well happen.

Chris and Pat Calow

