



History

This branch line was opened in 1877 by the Great Western Railway and was the last new 7ft (2.134 metres) broad gauge railway to be constructed in the country.

Converted to standard 4ft 8.5inches (1,435 metres) gauge in 1892, the branch line is a single-track line with no passing places and runs alongside the Hayle estuary as it leaves St Erth and then hugs the coast all the way to St Ives. It originally served the fishing industry in St Ives but it is now an important tourist route. The line was proposed for closure in 1960's but was reprieved by the Minister of Transport, Barbara Castle.



(To get the most benefit from this trail it is better if you sit on the right-hand side of the train.)



Shortly after leaving St Erth station you go under the road bridge and you will see **Carnsew Pool** where the RSPB manages a bird reserve. Depending on the time of year you may see Cormorants, Shags, Geese, Shelducks, Curlews, Teals, Wigeons, and Sandpipers.

The train then passes through **Lelant Station** serving the village of Lelant which can trace its history back to the twelfth century. Some services on this route can be requested to stop at this station. It was from here that the spur line went off to Dynamite Quay.



After leaving Lelant the train passes **Dynamite Quay** which cannot be seen from the train. This quay was used in the second World War for loading fuses for explosives and unloading coal. Originally built in the 1870's a spur railway line connected the quay to the branch line at Lelant Station. This quay was one of a number of quays used for trading in this area.



On the left-hand side of the train you will be passing **West Cornwall Golf Club**; established in 1889 it is the oldest course in Cornwall and is built around the sand dunes above Porthkidney beach with panoramic views from each hole. The church in the distance is St Uny in Lelant.

The line now passes **Porthkidney Beach** which is associated with the artist John Miller who had a studio in Lelant overlooking this beach. John Miller became best known for his paintings of blue sky, blue sea and yellow sands beach scenes.





Across the water on the right can be seen the town of Hayle and the **Towans**. Towans is a Cornish word for 'dunes'. At low water the beaches at the foot of the Towans join up to give a three-mile-long sandy beach.

Beyond the Towans in the distance you can see the **Godrevy Lighthouse**. This lighthouse was built in 1859 and warns sailors of a dangerous reef called The Stones. The tower is 26 metres high; Godrevy is a Cornish word meaning 'little huts'. Godrevy Lighthouse was the inspiration for Virginia Woolf in her novel 'To the Lighthouse'. Virginia Woolf spent childhood holidays in St Ives and many of her other books reflect the time she spent in St Ives and Cornwall.



Your next stop on this line is **Carbis Bay** which lies at the seaward end of Carbis Valley which in the past was the site of one of the Providence copper and tin mines. This mine provided employment for almost all the people living in the valley. In between Carbis Bay and St Ives to the left above the train line there is a hut called **Huers Hut**. This provided a look out for the Huer whose job was to watch for the incoming Pilchards shoals and when sighted would shout 'Hewa', 'Hewa' to the fisherman and guide them towards the shoal.

The train then arrives at **St Ives station** which is above Porthminster Beach. As you leave the station a short walk will take you to some steps on your right, signposted to Pedn Olva Hotel. Go down the steps and turn left past the hotel which is built on granite rocks with the sea thirty feet below. Pedn Olva is Cornish and means 'look out headland'. Below the hotel was the Pedn Olva copper mine which dates back to the 18th century. The hotel stands on the site of the mine's engine house. More information about the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape Heritage Site can be found by clicking this link: <https://www.cornishmining.org.uk>

Continue along this narrow street until you come to a building on your right which has this plaque. This was a centre where artists would meet and socialise. St Ives became an important centre for artists from all over the world. The art included painting, pottery, sculpture and the artists included Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Bernard Leach.



Carry on and take the right fork by the railings with the sea on your right until you reach the Lifeboat Station. Here you will see **St Ives harbour** in front of you. **The pier** on the far side of the harbour was designed by John Smeaton and construction completed in 1770. The lighthouse was built and opened in 1890 following an extension to Smeaton's original pier.

Looking straight in front of you along the harbour side you will see some huts; these huts are **Fisherman's Lodges** which provided space for fisherman to relax and socialise. Please click on the link below to find out more:

<https://www.fishermenslodgesdigital.com/>



This is the end of the trail but please enjoy St Ives and its many art galleries including Tate St Ives and the Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden.

If you would like to know more about our trails, please go to <https://trails.theartsociety.org>