The Poldark stories of Winston Graham first enthralled readers in the 1940s, before being brought to a new audience by means of the very popular BBC television drama in the 1970s.

It is the stirring tale of a British Army officer, Captain Ross Poldark, returning to his Cornish homeland from the American War of Independence in the 1780s. Upon his arrival, Ross finds the life he knew changed utterly, with his home in ruins and his fiancée, Elizabeth Chynoweth, now betrothed to his cousin, Francis. In order to rebuild his fortunes, Ross toils to reopen one of his family’s tin mines and the scene is set for much drama as a long running feud ensues with his arch-enemy, the banker George Warleggan.

Like its predecessor, the current BBC adaption uses many stunning locations throughout Cornwall. This guide includes key locations and also details of visitor attractions in Cornwall and west Devon where you can find out more about the real history that inspired the storylines.

The name Poldark holds a special place in the hearts of many

Poldark provides a window into the eighteenth century lives and landscapes of Cornwall

This was a time when the local copper mining industry was in turmoil through the overwhelming competition from the Welsh Anglesey mines. The Poldark stories owe much to Cornish history and heritage, which form the backdrop to the characters’ eventful and often turbulent lives. Today the metal mining landscapes of Cornwall and west Devon have World Heritage Site status. We are sure that Ross would have approved of the international recognition of his compatriot’s efforts to bring copper and tin to the world!

The original programme was to make international stars of its principal leads Robin Ellis and Angharad Rees, who portrayed the brooding Ross Poldark and the striking Demelza Carne. The current series features two internationally prominent actors in the form of Aidan Turner, who has appeared in The Hobbit and the series Being Human, and Eleanor Tomlinson, whose roles include the blockbuster Jack the Giant Slayer and the BBC drama The White Queen. Both have proven to be a considerable hit with viewers.

Visit Cornwall, the official tourist board, has a Poldark film location page at: www.visitcornwall.com/poldark/blog

The National Trust has information indicating where its historic landscapes were used during the production: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lists/poldarks-filming-locations

The community website for St Agnes has a page dedicated to Poldark Country, highlighting the role of St Agnes in setting the scene for the original Winston Graham novels: www.st-agnes.com/discover/st-agnes-com-discover-poldark

To find out more about the World Heritage Site and how Cornish Mining changed the world, please visit: www.cornishmining.org.uk

For more information about Poldark and the World Heritage Site, please follow the links below

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Locations within the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site

St Agnes Head (Penn Breaneck) provides the sweeping valley setting for Ross Poldark’s family home, Nampara. Botallack Mine, Crowns Section, near St Just (Bal Botอาชีพlack): doubles as Granby’s tin mine, with its myriad structures and buildings clinging to the ragged cliff face. Charlestown Harbour (Portmear): this perfectly preserved eighteenth century copper and clay port stands in for Falmouth Harbour in the heyday of sail. Levant Mine, near St Just (Bal Levant): the wonderfully restored steam winding engine in the care of the National Trust was used at the setting of Tristram’s Rolling Mill. Poldark Mine, Wendron, near Helston (Bad Pollederg): the eighteenth century Wheal Roots tin mine at Poldark had just the right atmosphere for some crucial underground scenes in the fictional Wheal Leisure. West Wheel Owles mine, near St Just (Trew Ayes West): the setting for the fictional Wheal Leisure tin mine which Ross finds in ruins on his return to Cornwall.

Cradock Moor, Minions (Hal Poldarkreck, Merrivale): the crossroads where Ross steps off the coach following his return from America. Gunwalloe Church Cove (Dollar Cove), near Helston (Gwennapwarra): this famous cove and site of many a shipwreck was, appropriately enough, used to stage the dramatic night time shipwreck.

 Locations outside the World Heritage Site

Stepper Point (Penn Snapper): the dramatic headland here marks the entrance to the sweeping Camel Estuary and features prominently in the opening episodes. Lizard Point, Lizard, near Helston (Penn Lyvarld): this beautiful but hazardous stretch of coastline has had a lighthouses since 1751 and the Man o’ War Rocks, just off shore, are a reminder of what lies in wait for the unwary. Pedn Vounder Beach, near Porthcurno (Treth Porthkedhon): this wide and sandy cove has a fine level beach below the imposing Logan Rock headland.

Related mining heritage attractions

The attractions listed here have links to the Cornish Mining industry in the late eighteenth century – the period when the Poldark stories are set – and will give a fascinating insight into Cornwall life at the time.

Botallack, Levant, and Geevor mines, near St Just

The north coastal fringe of the St Just area is dominated by mining for copper and tin, and Botallack, Levant and Geevor mines chart this process from the eighteenth through to the late twentieth centuries.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/levant-mine-and-beam-engine
www.geevor.com

Cotehele House and Quay, near Calstock

Former home of the Edgcumbe’s, who like many other land owning families at the time, had financial interests in mining and related industries. They developed the substantial industrial quay here on the river Tamar during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cotehele

Godolphin House, near Helston

Godolphin House was known as the largest in Cornwall by the 1760s and retains gardens which in part date from the late Middle Ages. It was once home to one of Cornwall’s most successful mine owners and politicians, Sidney Godolphin - the 1st Earl of Godolphin - who became First Lord of the Treasury.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/godolphin

Poldark Mine, Wendron, near Helston

Venturing down into Wheal Roots – the eighteenth century tin mine at Poldark – to learn about Cornish mining history and find out what conditions were actually like for Cornish miners. www.poldarkmine.org.uk

Gwennap Pit, near Redruth

Gwennap Pit, where John Wesley preached between 1762 and 1799, Wesley is known to have addressed many thousands at this location, before the Pit’s capacity was reduced to 1,500 when the grassed tiers were introduced in 1806.

www.gwennappit.co.uk

St Agnes Museum, St Agnes

This community-focused museum is a gem and highlights all that is special about St Agnes including its amazing tin mining legacy, stretching back to at least the seventeenth century. A Cornish saying recognises the quality of the tin produced here: ‘St Agnes tin is the finest tin in Cornwall.’

www.stagnesmuseum.org.uk

Morwellham Quay, near Tavistock (west Devon)

Morwellham is a perfectly preserved mineral quay on the Devon bank of the river Tamar which retains all the facilities needed to manage the shipment of copper ore from the surrounding mines. Also go underground at Morwellham’s George & Charlotte Mine to experience the atmosphere of an eighteenth century copper mine. www.morwellham-quay.co.uk

Wheat Martyn Clay Works, near St Austell

Cornwall is also known for its china clay, or ‘white gold’, discovered at Breage (in the Tregonning Area of the World Heritage Site), by 1748, and Wheat Martyn sets out the importance of this in a local and global context. Many metal miners were to work in the clay industry following the demise of the former and the two industries shared much of their technology and terminology.

www.wheat-martyn.com

If these locations inspire you to discover more about Cornwall and west Devon’s globally important mining landscapes and culture, there are many more places to visit. For more information see the list of Cornish Mining Attractions Marketing Association members on our website:

www.cornish-mining.org.uk/areas-places-activities