

GUNWALLOE CHURCH COVE

and Dollar Cove

Two adjacent westerly facing beaches that are best known for the 15th Century church of St. Winwaloe which nestles in the cliff on the northern side of Church Cove which unusually has a small squat bell tower that is detached from the rest of the church. Dollar Cove, the northerly of the two beaches, appears to have derived its name from folklore in which a Portuguese treasure ship sank offshore in 1526 and in 1783 a ship carrying silver dollars was wrecked nearby.



Church Cove at low tide in winter



TR12 7QE - On the A3083 road from Helston to the Lizard at the southerly end of Culdrose Naval Airbase is a road signposted to Gunwalloe. 2kms beyond the village of Gunwalloe the road terminates at Winnianton Farm and the National Trust car park (capacity about 180 cars). Alternatively, Church Cove can be reached by taking the road north of [Poldhu Cove](#) where there are about 10 roadside parking spaces before the road terminates about 150m from the beach. Many years ago before cliff falls necessitated the road closure the two roads to Church Cove were joined as part of a coast road.



It is only 100m from the car park to Dollar Cove along the road and 300m to Church Cove along the road and then along a path across the dunes making it ideal for the less mobile. Access from the south is by the Coast Path which crosses the beachhead.



Dollar Cove looking north towards the headland of Pedngwinian



In summer both beaches offer fine expanses of golden sand. Church Cove has a sizeable area of sand above high water but Dollar Cove is mostly shingle and stone. In winter, Dollar Cove has often very little sand and is mostly rock platforms, shingle and stone. Church Cove is very like neighbouring Poldhu having less sand and banks of shingle. A stream crosses the beach at Church Cove which is popular with children in summer. Mullion Golf Course backs on to Church Cove being largely created on former dunes. The beaches are owned and managed by the National Trust. There are a number of caves but cliff falls are a hazard to be borne in mind.



There is safety/rescue equipment at Church Cove and there is a Lifeguard Service during July and August. There are no facilities at Dollar Cove.



Both beaches are unsuitable for swimming because of strong currents at low water, although bathing at Church Cove is acceptable when the lifeguards are on duty and the flag system indicates it is permissible. Occasionally in summer during very calm conditions at high water it may be possible to swim but care needs to be taken.



St. Winwaloe Church next to the beach



It is not a major surfing beach but when there is a good westerly swell coupled with a northerly or easterly wind there can be good surfing conditions for all abilities. Care needs to be taken of rip currents at low water, especially in winter, and at high tide the shelving nature of the beach makes surfing less conducive. Kite surfing and inflatables are not permitted.



There are a limited number of rock pools in summer on the northern side of Church Cove and across Dollar Cove; there are many more in winter when the sand level drops.



Both beaches are not suitable for snorkelling unless conditions are unusually calm. Beach fishing is popular in the autumn.



Dogs are not permitted at Church Cove from Easter Day until the beginning of October, 7.00hrs to 19.00hrs but dogs are permitted all year on Dollar Cove.



Church Cove looking towards the headland next to the Church



The toilets are next to the road above Dollar Cove and about 200m from Church Cove but are closed during the winter.



There is a small cafe at the end of the access road which is open during the summer. The nearest shops, restaurants and pubs are at either Helston or Mullion, and although the latter is close, it involves a lengthy circuitous drive along the A3083.



The sea water quality is excellent and has been for a number of years. There are, however, no details available on the quality of the stream that crosses the beach at Church Cove. Beach cleaning is carried out by the National Trust at various times of the year.



Dollar Cove in winter



Location – Part of OS Explorer Map 103



Church Cove is undoubtedly the more attractive of the two beaches and is a good family beach if the lack of commercial facilities is not an issue. If geology is an interest, the rock formations with its heavily folded strata are visually well portrayed. It is referred to as Gunwalloe Church Cove to differentiate it from Church Cove on the eastern side of the Lizard although locally it is known as simply Church Cove.



Church Cove



Sand dunes above Church Cove