

# Tai Chi Walks

## South West Peninsula Coast Path

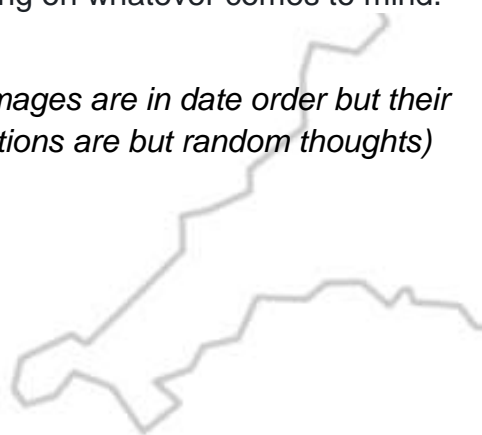
A somatic - proprioceptive approach to Tai Chi can touch on amongst other things walking, breathing, and our connection to our natural world  
#Embodied Tai Chi, #Tai Chi Walks and #Awe Tai Chi.

These came together in late August 2023 journeying along parts of the South West peninsula coast path.

The reading material for the two weeks was a find in a charity shop, Allan Watts 1966 'The Book, On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are'.

Two weeks of exercise in nature, using tai chi principles in physically challenging long distance walks, relating to nature through inner calm, reflecting on whatever comes to mind.

*(The images are in date order but their inscriptions are but random thoughts)*



## South West Peninsula Coast Path



## Beeny to Tintagel Friday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Re visiting some much loved parts of the coast path. Managed to finish up, eat and get back to the camp site before storm Betty hit with 50mph winds. Had the old tent jumping around in the middle of the night.



Original posted 19<sup>th</sup> August 2023

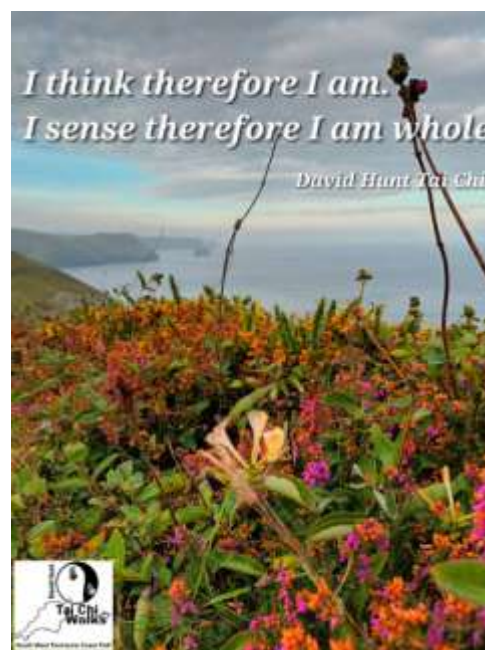


Original video posted on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZGJtnEaBm/>



Original posted 18<sup>th</sup> August 2023



Original posted on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023

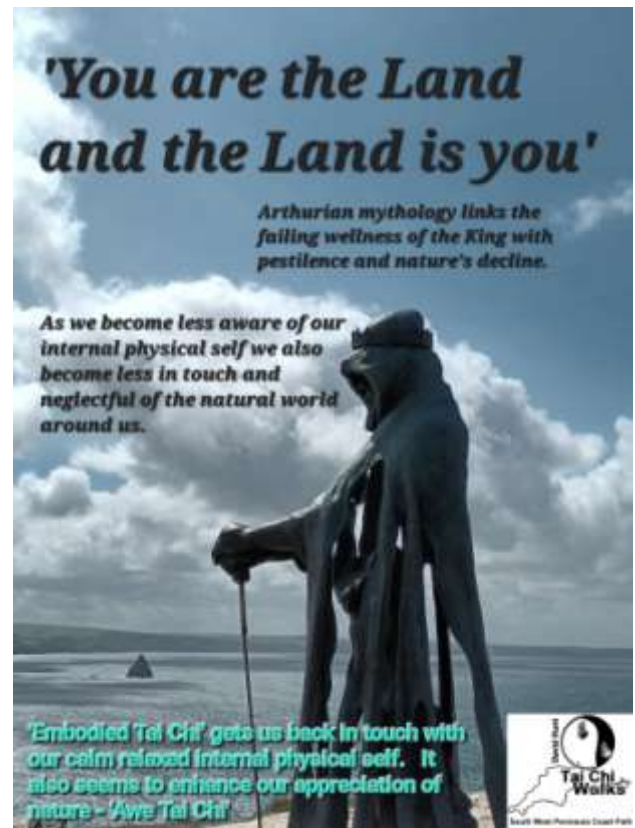


## Port Issac to Delabole Point to Port Issac Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> August 2023

So fresh Cornish pasties are the ideal breakfast, pick up from bakery then find a nice spot to eat on the path. Highly recommend the Wellington Hotel in Boscastle as a place to eat, they also draw an excellent pint of 'Hicks'.

Visit to Tingagel for a rest day on Saturday, chance to walk the new bridge and see the inspiring Gallos Statue. Gallos was the inspiration for some of the embodied Tai Chi video's allowing nature to be seen through the Tai Chi movements. This represents a connection to our natural world through the awareness of our inner sensations and feelings practiced in the form

A line from the John Boorman 1981 film 'Excalibur' comes to mind 'You and the Land are one'.

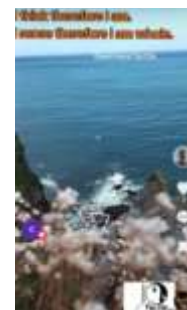


Original posted on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2023



Original posted on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023

When we are no longer in touch with our inner self we also neglect our natural world and the resulting crisis in terms of climate change.



Original video posted on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023

<https://vm.tiktok.com/ZGJtnvDy1/>



## Pentireglaze to Port Quin to The Rumps to Pentireglaze

Monday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023

Starting to see a change in the coast path as the geology changes. Folds in the rock creating arches and caves.

**You Don't Have to Fear What You Can't Control**

Alan Watts (1966) explores the illusion of our perception as being an 'ego inside a bag of skin' resulting in us thinking 'the world "outside" us is largely hostile'. Nature is something that needs to be controlled - conquered.

Embodied Tai Chi can alter this perception of our 'bag of skin' thereby enabling us to be comfortable with, fear - less of our natural world. We can no longer rage at and destroy nature, hid away in the illusion of secure homes or remain numb to climate change.

Original posted on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023

## Peninsula Coast Path

On a challenging climb Tai Chi walking is 'breath paced'. The whole body moves together lifting from acupuncture point K1. Breathe slowly keeping the abdomen relaxed and soft. The length and pace of your steps is governed by the capacity to breathe slowly. Placing my right hand gently on my abdomen with the left covering it helped the abdomen remain soft, warm and calm. This improved endurance.

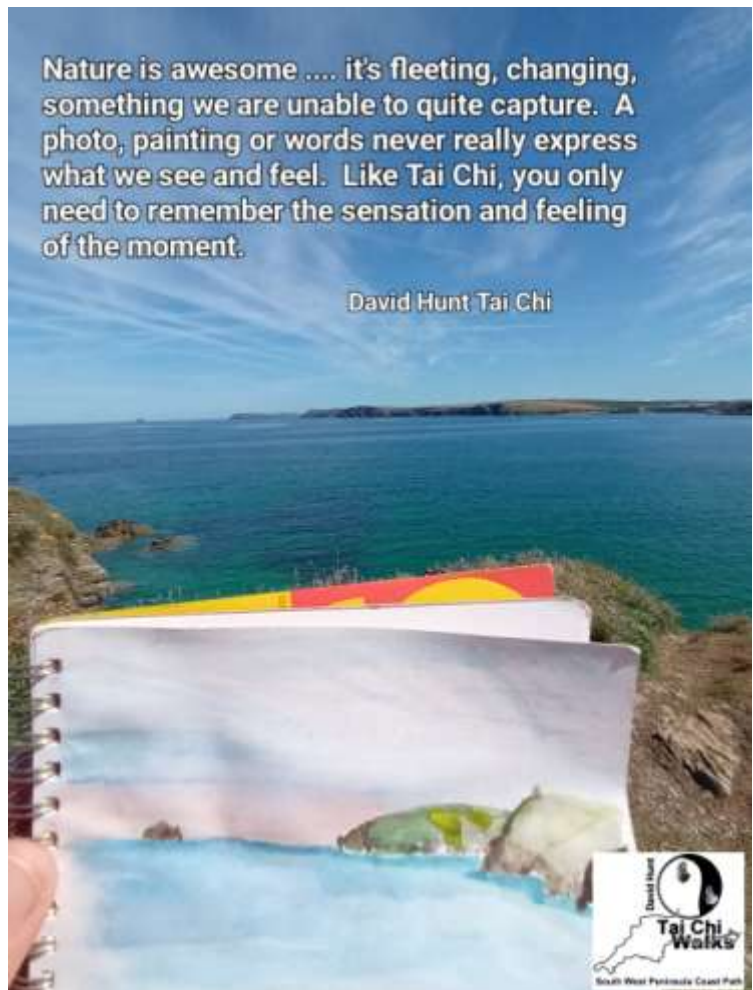
Photo: Eleanor Hunt-Newberry



# Constantine Bay to Harlyn Bay to Constantine Bay Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023

Basic eco campsite at Bedruthan Steps with great open sea views. Good jump off point for this leg of the coast path. Food to die for and amazing sunsets. Not as wild with more sandy beaches and caravan parks.

Reflecting on the number of memorials people have left to loved ones they have lost. How there is a common connection with shared nature and the memory we hold of those no longer with us in life.



Nature is awesome .... it's fleeting, changing, something we are unable to quite capture. A photo, painting or words never really express what we see and feel. Like Tai Chi, you only need to remember the sensation and feeling of the moment.

David Hunt Tai Chi



Original posted on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2023



Nature heals, it helps us calm, to recall a memory, the sense and feel we hold of those we have lost. The calm that can be found in Tai Chi also allows us to tap into those memories of sensation and feeling.

David Hunt Tai Chi



Many find solace through remembering family they have lost in the peace of nature. That same peace we find in Tai Chi that ends with a bow to ancestors and teachers.

David Hunt Tai Chi





## Bedruthan Steps to Porthcothan Bay to Bedruthan Steps

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Another short walk for me as support driver so able to take time and wonder out to each small headland. An ancient earth mound on one maybe marking a spot that our ancestors used to hold a memory of those no longer with them in life!


First cream tea to mark the end of this leg of the walk. Cream tea shops seem to have given way to artisan coffee houses.

Bank holiday weekend coming up so tomorrow jumping to our next section at the very tip of the coast path.

**Releasing Tension**

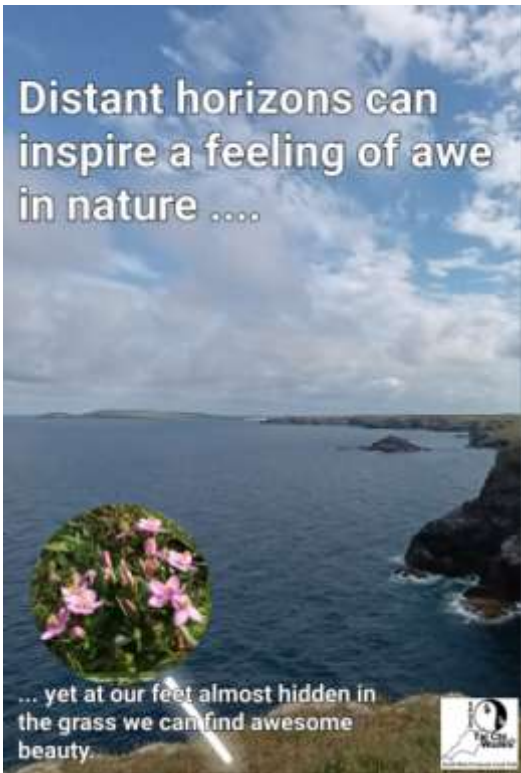
Releasing tension in our body posture is a different experience from just going floppy or laying down. When our posture is finely balanced our muscles, tendons and fascia act on our skeleton against gravity. There is a flexing of these muscles tendons and fascia to maintain that posture. A process not unlike the concept of tensegrity. This can be experienced as flowing or light movement, being in the zone. However, tension or loss of flexibility in any muscle, tendon or fascia shifts this ideal posture out of alignment effecting the whole posture. I would suggest the traditional teaching of Tai Chi aims to help us feel or sense our personal ideal posture. Practicing Embodied Tai Chi can enable us to be sensitive to changes in posture enabling us to take action to find a correction. This has been helpful during challenging walks prevention premature tiring or injury.

**David Hunt Tai Chi**




Original posted on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**Distant horizons can inspire a feeling of awe in nature ....**



**... yet at our feet almost hidden in the grass we can find awesome beauty.**



Original posted on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023



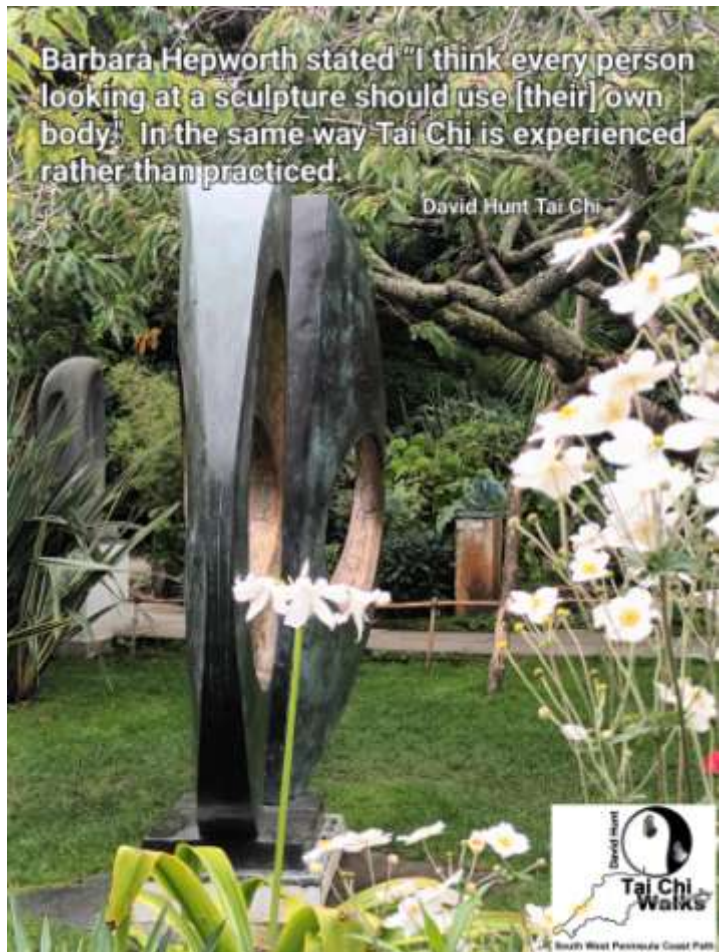


## St Ives to Zennor Saturday 26th August

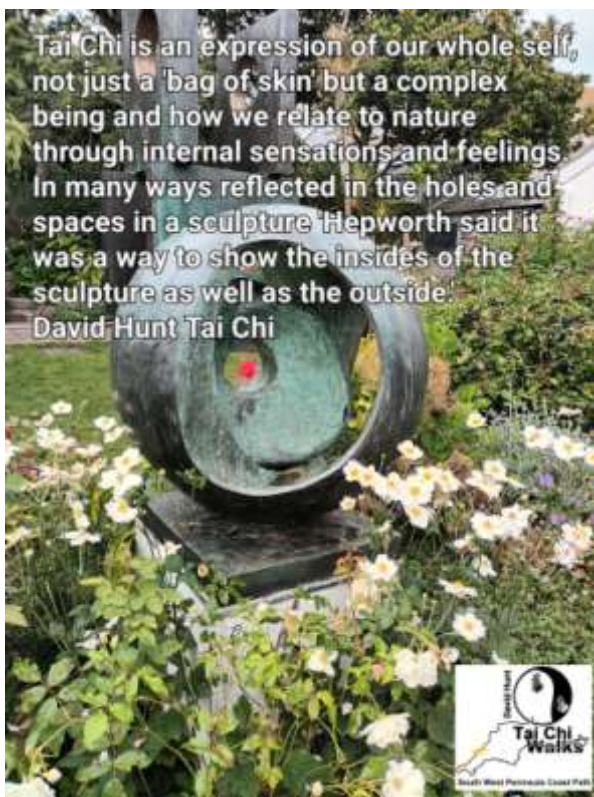
This part of Cornwall has an hourly summer coastal bus service so we can all walk together.

Discovered the Hepworth museum, sculpture inspired by this coastline, with voids to connect with the inside, relating to the concept of Embodied Tai Chi.

This leg of the walk is the hardest I have ever travelled along, more a bolder field than a path.



Original posted on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023



Original posted on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2023



Original posted on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2023



Image; Barbara Hepworth Museum and Sculpture Garden, Trewyn Studio, St Ives, Cornwall



## Gurnards Hotel to Pendeen

Sunday 27th August

The path is a little less gruelling on this section. The Atlantic Ocean churning against the granite coast roils the sea into an aquamarine blue. A mobile phone camera just does not capture this action of nature nor the colours I experienced. In trying to enhance the colour of the sea in this image a spectacular display of varied hues emerged in a landscape that had seemed grey and dour.

The driving rain let to a natural stop at Pendeen, a chance to chat to fellow walkers met on the coast path, a pint in the pub and bus home.



South West Peninsula Coast Path





## Pendeen to Lands End

Monday 28th August 2023

This section started with a stark walk through Cornwall's mining past, back to a rugged coast then ending over the holiday sands and up to the fun park that is Lands End.

David Hunt





## Polperro to Talland Bay to Polperro

Wednesday 30th August 2023

A stopover in Polruan on the way home enabled us to catch up with local friends and a walk on a very different part of the coast path. 'Respect' to all Cornish bus drivers and your skill, humour, kindness and patience in negotiating narrow roads inhabited by town drivers in shiny cars.

**You feel the push away from the ground as you walk up steps or a steep hill. The flexing muscles, tendons or fascia acting in the leg. The pressure of the ground under the centre of the foot, relaxing the abdomen, spine and head lifting rather than leaning forward. Being in touch with the Earth is the internal sensation and feeling of directly pressing away from it's centre rather than a mental projection down into it's core.**

David Hunt Tai Chi



South West

Original posted on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023

## Reflections

So nice to be home, have a shower and sleep in a bed. Pile of washing in the hall and tents drying out in the garden. I feel more than just physically well. There is also a strong inner sense of resilience - I did it, I can do that. I can journey from A to B under my own steam.

However, another more subtle inner feeling also exists. The nearest words I have to describe it are; heaviness, oppressive, dark or even restricted. Probably not surprising after two weeks camping in open fields and walking all day experiencing the awe of nature. Seeing horizons, the curve of the earth or a winding path into the distance. Maybe why I fell in love with coast walks 42 years ago. Sometimes we have to go back and experience, to literally 'touch base' with an idea or memory.

### Environment and our Inner Physical Self

I have come to the conclusion that climate catastrophe and the polarisation of views around the world result from neglecting to 'touch base' with our self. The first chapter of Allen's 1966 book touches on many of these issues.

Although today I would offer a different embodied interpretation in terms of a response. Barbara Hepworth drew this out in her sculptures inspired by nature. A tranquillity found not just through external shape but the inner void. The Arthurian sculpture at Tintagel exemplifies Hepworth's vision. The 'Gallos' statue draw people to it not just because of its form but because we experience nature both with and through it. This links – connects us to Embodied Tai Chi, the way we experience our muscles, tendons and fascia through the movement.

That inward awareness helps us find a sense of tranquillity - contentment. Its techniques can be tested and applied in a practical way easing our physical challenges on a long coastal walk.

A more subtle result of calming our inner physical sensations and feelings is that being able to experience the awe and beauty of the landscape we are travelling through. Over 40 years ago I breathlessly pounded along a coast path eating up miles. Today I can set a breathing pace that allows reflection of the land under my feet - I and the Land are one.

### The Takeaway

Embodied Tai Chi is a practical direct way to balance our awareness. To shift from a predominately outward perspective by paying attention to our inner physical self. To self test our own practice simple by physically feeling good or bad posture. By learning to feel in your body rather than just logically follow an instruction it is possible to opens doors to a more balanced way of thinking. That more balanced way of thinking, testing with your body, may nurture more independent and less polarised human interaction. Lastly a relaxed inner physical state may elicit appreciation of our natural world and the need to live in harmony with our environment rather than recklessly exploiting it. That same environment that humans have sought solace and healing for perhaps thousands of years.



*David Hunt September 2023*

