

WALK 5

Narrow gauge Nirvana near 'The Village'

Serene hills and railway heritage beside the Glaslyn Estuary

Yachts bob easily at their moorings in the peaceful harbour at Porthmadog. What a contrast to 125 years ago, when this modest North Wales port was amongst the busiest in the world. From here were exported millions of tons of finest slates to roof both great and humble buildings the world over. The mines were up in the mountains to the north and east of the port, so to convey the slates to the waiting ships a network of narrow-gauge railways and tramways was developed. Two of these

remain, of which one - the Ffestiniog - is amongst the foremost preserved railways in Britain, having first re-opened for tourists in the 1950's. The other, the Welsh Highland, is gradually being reopened along a scenic route past Snowdon. Across the Glaslyn Estuary, the wooded peninsula hides the remarkable Italianate village of Portmeirion, used in the 1960's cult TV programme, "The Prisoner" as "The Village".

1 Walk past the Tourist Information Centre along the harbour side at Porthmadog.

Turn left around the end of the harbour and along the lane past the Yacht Club; a wall-mounted sign pointing to chandlers and a "Walkway to Borth-y-Gest". Pass behind the boatyards and at the end bear right up the tarred path, walking through to the lovely little bay at **Borth-y-Gest**.

Walk around the promenade and through the car park. Keep right of the detached block of houses and go ahead along the "Dead End". Off to your left are superb views up the Glaslyn estuary into the heart of Snowdonia; straight across the bay is the wooded promontory hiding Portmeirion.

2 Beyond the road keep ahead through the fence on a firm path. Pass by a series of benches and stay on the path, ignoring

steps down to the waterside. A **stretch of boardwalk** then heads towards the dunes, fork right at the split along a sandy path into woodland, rising to a lane. Turn left and pass behind the strand of houses, re-entering woodland. At the fence keep right to a low waymark post pointing right, alongside a stretch of woodlap fencing. At the tarred lane go left to walk into the caravan park. Follow the "main" road through the site, passing by the site shop and laundry on your right. Eventually the road reaches a main road; turn right up this.

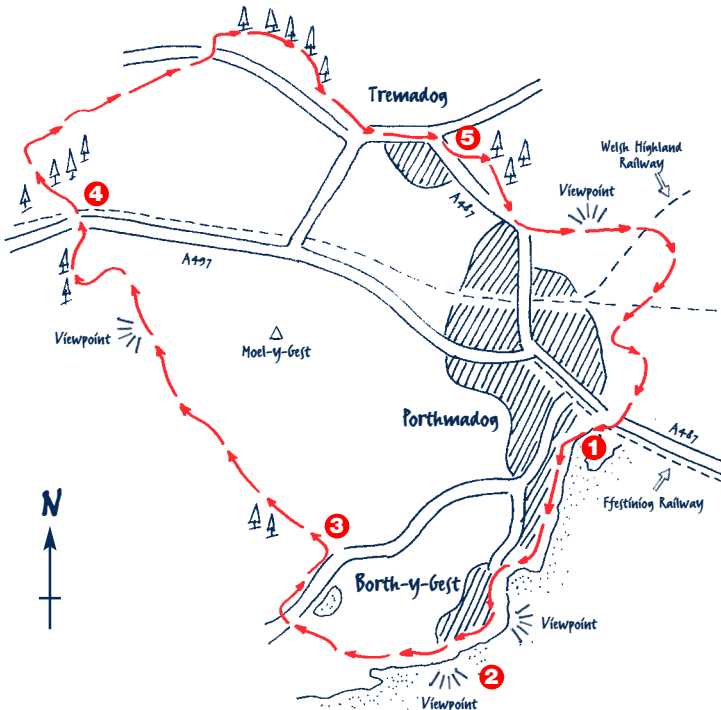
3 Walk up to the bend. Your way is left here; climb the waymarked stile, following a wide grassy track parallel to the wall. Stick with this through scrubby woodland to reach a gateway. Go through this and, in about 15 paces, keep ahead-right off

the wider track, soon passing a **waymark post hidden by gorse**. This path rises as an obvious route through gorse to a rusty old gate into a walled track. Climb a ladder stile to the left of a wrought iron gate and trace the wall to and through another gate, then past the isolated farm. Just before and above the next farm fork left down the steep pasture to the telegraph pole. Below is a small gateway by a fallen tree. Take this and trace the line of fence/wall, left, through another field gate and then take the narrow path beside the **old chapel** down to a lane. Turn right to the main road at railway bridges.

- 4 Pass under the **small bridge** and fork left up the rough driveway (not through the gates). Pass cottages and rise along the path through oakwoods, passing in front of a traditional **Welsh longhouse** to reach a rough lane. Turn right and follow this all the way through to the main road at Penmorfa. Turn right, cross to the left and take the waymarked path by the postbox. Bend right behind the barn, then left up a green path to a cottage. Turn right; the lane narrows past a gateway. A kissing gate

takes the track into woodland. This is the line of the **Gorseddau Tramroad**, opened in the 1830's to link slate quarries, and an iron mine at Llydiart Ysptyty to the new harbour at Porthmadog. Follow it all the way to the school at Tremadog. At the Royal Madog Arms turn right into the compact square of Tremadog, the birthplace in 1888 of the author **TE Lawrence** (Lawrence of Arabia) which is now a back packers hostel 'Snowdon Lodge'.

- 5 Turn left just past the church on a wide track. Go through the gate and, in 120 yards, turn right alongside a brook. At the end of the oakwoods take the stile past the picnic tables and turn left along the road to the bend. Fork left along the lane. There are superb views north to Cnicht's sharp peak. In half-a-mile this passes over the **Welsh Highland trackbed**; keep ahead to a lane and turn right. This, the bed of the former **Croesor Tramroad**, leads to and across the main line railway. About 200 yards past this, turn left at the fingerpost to take the embanked path around a tidal lagoon. At the far end is the **Ffestiniog Railway Station** and nearby TIC.



DISTANCE

c. 8 miles (13 km).

TIME

allow 3½ - 4 hours.

TERRAIN

mostly paths and lanes, some modest climbs.

PARKING

Porthmadog.

REFRESHMENTS

Pubs, cafes and shops in Porthmadog and Tremadog.

LOCATION

Porthmadog is in the very northeast corner of Cardigan Bay.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

buses and trains to Porthmadog.

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

Porthmadog .

O.S. DETAILS

OS Map Explorer sheets OL18 and 254.

GRID REF:

SH 570389



Porthmadog Harbour



The falls of Ceunant Cynfal

Cataracts and oakwoods above the Vale of Ffestiniog

The village of Llan Ffestiniog has far-reaching views down into the Vale of Ffestiniog and along the Afon Dwyrdd, beyond which glint the waters of Cardigan Bay. Nearer to hand is a secluded wooded gorge with a fine series of waterfalls and shoots, including the sublime cascade of Rhaeadr Cynfal. This short walk makes the most of this varied countryside, delving into woodlands of old, moss-covered oaks and rising to a low ridge that unveils grand views to the shapely Moelwyn Mountains.

- 1** From the car park opposite the Abbey Arms Hotel, walk uphill along the main A470 road, signed for Dolgellau. Walk around the bend to reach, opposite a garage, a fingerpost for Rhaeadr Cynfal Falls pointing right along a tarred lane. Pass through the farmyard via gates, pausing to enjoy the glorious **views across to The Moelwyns**. On your left is a remnant of the former Blaenau Ffestiniog to Bala railway,

servicing the now-closed Trawsfynydd Nuclear Power Station just to the south. At the field barn turn left along the signed path, skirting field edges to enter the **Ceunant Cynfal National Nature Reserve** via a ladder stile.

- 2** At the information board turn right down the path, soon arriving at a viewing platform right above the **thundering waterfall**, deep in its spectacular winding gorge. Climb back up the steps and take the narrow path to the right, passing above more cataracts lost in the depths of the wood. On reaching the main path turn right and follow this down to a footbridge. Views from this are also sublime, upstream the marvellous old oakwoods, downstream the chasm cut by the Afon Cynfal. Just beyond the bridge take the waymarked stile on the right. A firm path skirts the woods, passing several stiles and gates to emerge into open pastures. Crossing a plank bridge and stile, the path re-enters the woodland along a path lined with coppiced hazels.
- 3** At a waymark post turn right down steps to a footbridge. Cross this and take the path ahead over a stile, then rising steeply to two more stiles. Climb the one on your left and trace the old forestry road through a clearing and back into woods. The path drops gradually for 500 yards before rising to a steep ladder stile out of the woods. Keep ahead through a gate, walk through the broken wall and turn right up alongside it. Slip through the gate at the top corner and keep a fence on your left. On the knoll to your right is a **memorial to William Charles, 4th Baronet Newborough**, a casualty of WW1. Walk ahead towards the chapel and turn uphill to return to the village.

DISTANCE

c. 3 miles (4.8 km).

TIME

2 hours.

TERRAIN

mostly easy paths and lanes, expect some mud. One short, steep climb.

PARKING

Llan Ffestiniog.

REFRESHMENTS

pubs and shops in Llan Ffestiniog.

LOCATION

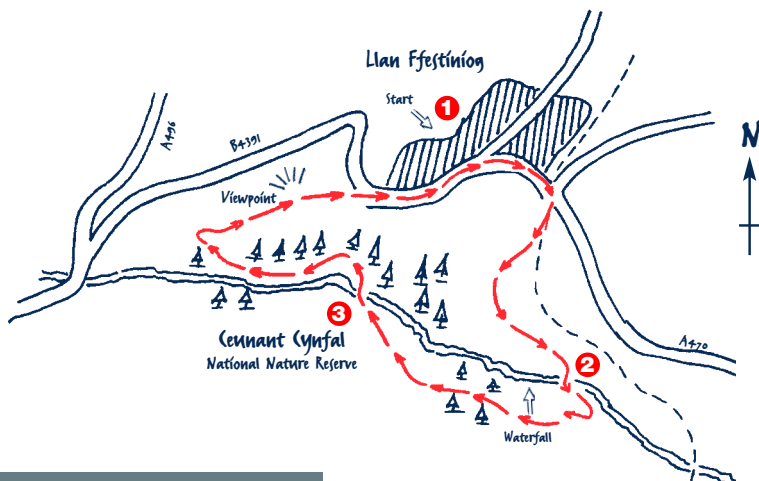
Llan Ffestiniog is about 3 miles south of Blaenau Ffestiniog on the A470.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Buses from Blaenau Ffestiniog.

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

in the village.



The Moelwyns

O.S. DETAILS

OS Map Explorer Sheet OL18.

GRID REF:

SH 701419

