

Walking around Snowdon.

**A cultural guide to a low-level
route around the base of
Yr Wyddfa, Snowdon.**

Including a day walk around Yr Aran.

Peter Treharne Jenkins.

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Guard's Van to Wales

Via Euston, via the Friday rush,
Via starting-time arrears
I landed in the guard's van with
A scree of mountaineers.

All corduroyed and confident
They cluttered up the floor
With rucksacks, ropes and one-man tents
And climbing gear galore.

Sprawled careless on the oil-soaked boards
Basic to all guard's vans
They spread their multi-coloured maps
Discussing craggy plans.

And I, still dressed in city rig,
Nostalgic and *de trop*,
Eavesdropped along the rocky routes
I'd scrambled long ago.

As, bumping through the gusty dark
We followed mountain trails
With foothold and belaying point
From Euston up to Wales.

By Ogwen and her guardian heights
Their talking carried me
To Idwal's nail-scarred slabs and past
The cauldron of Twll Du.

Till Bangor's gloomy station yard,
Gale-swept and slatey-wet,
Reminded me what different ways
Our compasses were set.

Robert Challoner

Circuit of Snowdon, Yr Wyddfa

Once around the Mountain

Introduction

Yr Wyddfa, Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales and England at 1085m or 3564ft. The most summited mountain in the United Kingdom, it has 7 main routes to the top and a plethora of more difficult options to try.

This is the iconic mountain, instantly recognisable to millions worldwide, the focus of countless trips to Wales. It is also a sacrificial mountain, scarred by the passage of endless boots and the black rails of the mountain railway. It is at once spoilt and perfect, populated and remote, welcoming and deadly. It is the ultimate contradiction, a mountain visited by hundreds of thousands that still allows the adventurous to explore in peace, at once a high point and a low point. Within a few paces of the tourist motorways one can be alone and a long way from help. There are wild places on Snowdon that are rarely visited; the discerning can still disappear into the environment.

The Welsh name for Snowdon (actually just the main summit) is Yr Wyddfa (pronounced 'with vah') this means 'The Tomb' or 'Cenotaph' and it is not hard to see why. The towering triangular face overlooking Glaslyn, Green Lake (on account of the copper) has the weight and presence of a monolithic tombstone, it can have a silence that silences. The tomb is that of Rhita Gawr a giant that made his clothes from the beards of his victims.

The bulk, scale and grandeur of the mountain means that it holds sway over everything around it. It affects the weather, creates winds of its own and blocks out light. From my front window it never looks the same twice, its colours change with the time of day, with the passing of days and with the seasons. The clouds swirl around it, loop over it and sit on its shoulders. The sun plays its light over it, switching colours and intensities, masking, highlighting, silhouetting. The mountain moves, sometimes laying back in rest, sometimes looming above the valley, commanding attention, it is never still.

Yr Wyddfa is made up of both sedimentary and igneous rocks and was sculpted by the passage of no less than six glaciers. These cut deep into the mountain to create the sharp edged ridges, scoop out the cwms and give birth to the lakes. The summit is Rhyolite that erupted,

flowed and cooled quickly. The famous ridge of Crib Goch is also rhyolite, but one that squeezed in between layers of sedimentary rock before being exposed by erosion. Cwm Llan on the mountain's southern side has reasonable quality slate (metamorphic rock), which then degrades higher up the mountain and also has veins of copper, a hydrothermal mineral deposited by hot water or steam.

The whole thing is known as the Snowdon Syncline which sits on the northern edge of the remains of the Harlech Dome; this contains some of the oldest rocks to be found anywhere on the planet. These are the Pre Cambrian rocks that make up the Padarn Ridge best seen at Pen Llyn, the lower end of Llyn Padarn. The Fachwen Outcrop, also known as Lion Rock is well frequented by groups learning the basics of rock climbing, it was there that I took my first steps on the vertical as a young boy.

Surrounding all this is the remains of thousands of years of human habitation and industry, burial chambers, ruined fortifications, roman roads, castles and quarries. Woven through this is the fabric of local culture, tales, legend and history, some unique to the area, some shared with other cultures, some based on truth, others with origins lost in time. Recent history is concerned with social and economic battles as well as uplifting sporting endeavour. Mix all this together and we have a complex area with a rich depth of interest, an area that has been through many cycles and that is struggling to find its place in the rapidly changing modern world.

Our route takes us on an intimate journey through this Welsh heartland. We will experience the landscape that made this the last retreat of the free Welsh, a landscape that once repulsed all invaders but which now attracts people from all over the world. A relatively small mountainous area packed full to bursting with history, stunning views and magical walking, like the Tardis it is 'bigger on the inside'.

The route follows the valleys of Dyffryn Peris, Nantgwynant and Dyffryn Gwyrfaï better known to visitors as the Llanberis Pass, the Gwynant and, well, what is the English for Dyffryn Gwyrfaï?

I have chosen to describe the route in one direction only, this is not to say that there is no merit in going 'the wrong way round' just that it seems to flow and reveal better this way. On top of this if everyone walks the same way around the mountain we will end up with a much more peaceful trip meeting fewer people along the way.

There are a number of excellent variations to choose from as well as some pleasant 'time wasters' should you arrive at your destination early. The choice of route should depend on the weather, time available and your knowledge of the area. Some of the variations take you a little higher into the mountains; on less trodden routes requiring a little more route finding ability, all have something to offer. With a little planning it is possible to walk the route twice without covering too much of the same ground.

I have also described an excellent though long day out, which is a circuit around Yr Aran. This route stays high on the mountain for two-thirds of its length and then after a short sojourn in Beddgelert dives into the woods for the remainder. This day out warrants a trip to Snowdonia on its own merit because of its use of a newly created path, off the radar of the majority of walkers.

I have a long and deep relationship with Yr Wyddfa, for all but 6 of my 41 years I have lived within sight of the mountain. I have had more adventures on it than I care to remember but have also spent some of my most enjoyable hours in its company. From walking, running, mine exploring, scrambling, rock and ice climbing, mountain biking, paragliding and mountain rescue I have seen the mountain in all its guises and from many angles.

One of my favourite memories is of a trip over Crib Goch during the winter of 2004. Having not been on the hills for a few months because of the arrival of my baby daughter I was a little frustrated to see clean white snow lying over the whole of Snowdonia. Realising that I might miss out on these excellent conditions I called a mate who was always game for the unusual and asked if he fancied a night trip over Crib Goch. Late that evening, after the kids had gone to bed, we headed out from Pen-y-pass in perfect winter conditions. The temperature was well below zero, with the brightest full moon reflected on the snow and a little light cloud cover.

We saw no one else that night and because of the moonlight did not turn our head torches on until the summit of Crib Goch and only then to check that our crampons were correctly fitted before turning them off again for the traverse of the ridge. The snow conditions were perfect with squeaky noises on the neve followed by sparks and cordite on the odd exposed rock. The moon was playing searchlights over the hillside as a few clouds rushed through, and there was silence, long, deep silence. Gerry and I barely spoke all the way round,

sometimes just the company is enough and saying nothing communicates more.

The world was tucked up in bed, nothing but the streetlights down in the valley gave civilisation away and here we were enjoying perfection. No stress, no worries just two old mates competently doing what they do best.

In a different vein there is a magic to be witnessed a few times a year when watching Snowdon from Pen Llyn or Llanberis. In certain conditions the sun sets early behind a layer of low cloud near the horizon, the valley darkens and the uninitiated turn their backs to the mountain and head for home. But they leave too soon! For had they stayed just few minutes more they may have seen the explosion of orange and red that suddenly floods the valley as the sun ducks back out from under the cloud. This intense light soaks the wooded hillside above the lake giving the rocks and trees a deep and mesmerising glow. The top of the mountain lights up like a beacon and all the cliffs in the Pass stand out more strongly than at any other time of day.

This is typical of the mountain, it rewards those who give it time, those who use their imagination and those who try something different but most of all it rewards those who love and respect it for being more than just a statistic on a postcard.

Warning!

Mountaineering and walking can be dangerous. Make sure that you are properly prepared with the right clothing, skills and equipment for this walk. I can't be held liable for your ineptitude, should you have any!

Geology

North Wales and Snowdonia in particular has had a longstanding relationship with the development of the science of geology. Many geological terms have Welsh origins as much of the early studies were undertaken here. Terms such as Pre Cambrian and Cambrian refer to the old name for Wales and the Welsh. The Ordovician and Silurian periods were likewise named after Celtic / Welsh tribes.

Darwin himself (though not famous for his geological study) visited the area several times in the 1830's and 40's in the company of the eminent Adam Sedgwick looking for fossils. On their first visit to Cwm Idwal they failed to see the signs of glaciation that are so obvious to us now, but at that time Ice Age theory was not understood. However, his notes on the subject were later an inspiration to A C Ramsay who was the first to develop a cohesive argument for the affect of glacial erosion on the landscape.

In each section I shall attempt to give a very brief description of the Solid (bedrock) and Drift geology (deposits, soil etc) that the route will be passing through. Often the two can be very different as the bedrock may be covered in material that has been transported from other areas by glaciers or rivers. Sometimes material has simply fallen down a hillside after being eroded or been moved along the coast by the tides.

For a much better informed and more comprehensive description of the area you will do no better than "Geology of Snowdonia", by Matthew Bennett, 2007. The British Geological Survey map of Snowdon (sheet 119) is also 'educational'.

Llanberis

Llanberis will always be known as the village at the foot of Snowdon, Yr Wyddfa, it is home to the most popular route up the mountain, the Llanberis Path, as well as the Snowdon Mountain Railway. While its prosperity is inexorably linked to the popularity of the mountain it also lays claim to being the capital of the outdoor scene in North Wales and many would argue, the UK. For such a small village it has an enviable number of internationally famous climbers, canoeists, paragliders, writers, film makers etc all living within a few miles and focussed on the village. Many would say however that the village has yet to take full advantage of its position within the outdoor world.

There has been some kind of settlement at Llanberis since at least the Iron Age when a small hill fort was established at gr 567 598. Though little now remains of the fort it is a pleasant viewpoint perched high above the lake under the protective wing of the nearby Moel Eilio, a hill much frequented by paragliders and part of 'the alternative Snowdon horseshoe'.

It is thought that the name 'Padarn' given to the lake, castle and one of the churches is that of a sixth century saint who passed through the area on his way from Brittany (via Ireland) to Mid Wales where he became a Bishop at Llanbadarn Fawr near Aberystwyth. He is reputed to have said "What man does, God will judge".

The two lakes Padarn and Peris, once thought to have been one, are now separated by silted up meadows. Both lakes have stocks of Torgoch or Arctic Char though those in Llyn Peris were re-homed when the lake was drained during the construction of the pump storage scheme and have somehow made their way back, perhaps via a reputed secret tunnel from Llyn Cwellyn! The Nant Peris stream was also re-homed at the same time, it now flows through a special tunnel that keeps its waters from re filling the lake.

Interestingly Llanberis had a larger population at the end of the 19th century (3,000) than it did at the end of the 20th century (1,900) and this was due to the large scale of the quarrying efforts underway at the time.

Llanberis to Nant Peris

At Penllyn to the north end of Llyn Padarn is the Fachwen Outcrop made up of Pre Cambrian rock, some of the oldest on the planet and up to 4,600 million years old. Literally squeezed between this and the mainly igneous rocks that make up the Snowdon Massif is a western outcrop of the metamorphic Cambrian Slate (544 – 510 million years old). As we near Nant Peris the slate dips under Yr Wyddfa to emerge again at Blaenau Ffestiniog.

So for some of this section we are walking on the muddy sediment of an ancient sea, squashed and heated to create slate. As we drop into Nant Peris this abruptly changes and we move to younger rock volcanic or igneous rock that forced its way through and onto the sediment during periods of volcanism. This was in part responsible for the metamorphosis of the mud into slate.

From Llanberis follow the road south as it leads out of the village heading towards Nant Peris. At the obvious bus turning area a hundred metres before the Victoria Hotel bear left following signs towards the Slate Museum. After a hundred metres or so you will see a footpath leading right and over the Afon Arddu. Take this as it winds pleasantly up through the oaks to Castell Dolbadarn (Castle [above] Padarn's Meadow).

The castle was built somewhere around 1230 by Llywelyn ap Iorwerth or Llywelyn the Great, Prince of Gwynedd who lived between 1194 and 1240. His grandson and the last Welsh prince, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd is reputed to have imprisoned his elder brother Owain Goch in the tower for 22 years. During the 15th century uprising lead by Owain Glyndwr there was a battle here and local lore holds that the site was later used by a bandit gang lead by one Ab Rhys. Centuries later scenes from the 1983 film "The Keep" starring Sir Ian McKellen were shot here.

After a look around the castle and the views that it affords over the lakes, follow the path back down through the wood until it reaches the road leading to both the Llanberis Slate Museum and the Dinorwig pump storage scheme.

Dinorwig pump storage was commissioned in 1984 and was the largest of its kind in Europe. It has some 16km of underground tunnels and a vast underground chamber housing the six turbines. It is used as a 'surge buster' being able to go from a standing start to full capacity (1,300 mega watts) in 16 seconds, with the turbines spinning ready

the response time is even faster. Interestingly a few miles away near Holyhead lies Anglesey Aluminium the largest single user of electricity in the Principality. When producing aluminium it consumes up to 12% of all electricity in Wales and in an interesting twist is in direct competition with Dinorwig. By turning off its process for up to 4 minutes during peak times (such as breaks in a popular film or sporting event on TV) it can to some degree remove the need for the surge busting power of Dinorwig. The company is apparently paid to do just this by the national grid and makes a healthy profit by *not* using electricity!

The pump storage scheme has an interesting and worthwhile underground tour that starts from the 'Power of Wales' Building opposite the south entrance to the high street. A good lunch can also be had courtesy of the café inside the building and there are also a number of permanent and guest exhibitions at different times of the year.

The Slate Museum can easily be seen from the grounds of Dolbadarn Castle with its large square courtyard and water wheel tower. The museum is free to visit and offers a fascinating glimpse into the now largely forgotten life of slate quarrying in the valley. It contains the largest working waterwheel (15.4m in diameter) in mainland Britain and much more of interest. For me the heart of the museum is the pattern loft above the forge. This contains all the wooden blanks needed to cast the vast array of the metalwork required for the quarries, from cogs to window frames, pipes to railway lines it's all here.

The carpenters who made these pieces undertook a seven-year apprenticeship but then became the most highly paid workmen in the quarries. Many of the items on display here would not be out of place in an art gallery but in reality are pieces of a vast industrial heritage that still has an enormous bearing on the collective psyche of the local population.

Interestingly one of the reasons given locally for the closure of the quarries is that of copyright and patent protection. When these began to be pursued more vigorously the quarry became unable to cast its own replacement parts and instead had to rely on much more expensive parts direct from the manufacturer. This helped tip the balance of profitability the wrong way.

Cut into the hillside above the museum is the Vivian Quarry a very obvious and dramatic feature. It has six levels, the bottom of which is flooded and used as a dive school because of its clear waters and easy access through a slate archway. The sheer quarried slabs are favourites with climbers giving as number of very fine routes in great positions. The best known in this quarry is definitely 'Comes the Dervish' a three star E3 5c first climbed by Stevie Haston. During the third ascent the climbers were accosted by a security guard who was repulsed with the immortal line "It's OK man, we're experienced rock cats!" Probably the most famous slate route in the world, it is on every aspiring rock climbers tick list.

There is much to see both in and around the quarry and because of its position inside the Padarn Country Park much of the history is easily accessible. There are a number of short, historical walks that guide you through the industrial heritage; information and leaflets are available at the museum. It is easy to while away a few hours here, especially if you would enjoy hunting down some of the many interesting photographic subjects to be found.

Back at the point where the castle path joins the road, turn right passing between Llyn Peris and Llyn Padarn until the road bears right towards the power station. Go bravely past the "authorised access only" sign and then cross the road direct to the footpath sign beneath the trees. Begin the climb up the historic but crumbling zig zag footpath which was used by quarry workers to get from Llanberis to the upper Dinorwig quarries. After only a few metres a diversion takes you off to the right and steeply up through an oak forest. Follow the path pleasantly up through the trees until you re join the zig zags (known by my kids as Potter's scar) for the last few turns.

You will shortly come out at the top of the first incline above the slate museum, here it is possible to drop onto the railway by crossing the metal bridge then bearing right down a few steps. Our way is up the valley but before you go it is worth ducking back under the bridge and going through a gap in the wall on the left to emerge on the top of the spoil heap. The view back down the lake over the museum roofs is well worth the effort and as well as a few photographs.

Reluctantly turning your back on Llyn Padarn make your way along the route of the slate railway with fine views up the Llanberis Pass to Crib Goch and Yr Wyddfa. There is much

industrial heritage to be seen as we make our way through the quarries. It is sometimes hard to get to grips with the scale of the excavations especially when you consider that much of the work was done by hand.

The railway curves around to the left and then climbs steeply up an incline with some quarryman's cottages known as the Anglesey Barracks to the left. These small two roomed cottages each housed four men, most of which came (funnily enough) from Anglesey and lived in the cottages during the week before returning home at the weekend. **Just above these the path passes under the huge wooden drums of a winch house.** Pausing for breath here is a good excuse to take in the views back over the route covered earlier in the day. You can also make out with a little imagination, the Lady of Snowdon who resides on a section of hillside opposite at gr 590 586. Look for the profile of a lady's head well defined by rock, heather and grass. Below you and to the left you can get glimpses into the Dinorwig pump storage site nestled into a fold in the quarry.

After one more steep pull up a narrow incline lined with heather you join a large access track. Go through both kissing gates trending right and into the heart of the quarried devastation. In one sense the quarries are still working, as they are slowly falling down, with huge collapses occurring after heavy winters and prolonged wet periods.

Dinorwig has become the generic name for all the quarries on the flanks of Elidir Fach and Elidir Fawr. Though they were once many separate workings, the Dinorwig Quarry was by far the largest, dwarfing the others many times over.

Established in 1787, Dinorwig at one time employed close to 3,000 men and produced a quarter of all Welsh slate. It was worked for almost 200 years before finally closing in 1969. Much of the quarry is off limits to the general public and is owned by the International Power, First Hydro company. However this exclusion has meant the survival of an unparalleled amount of buildings and machinery. Climbers have long explored the quarries in search of virgin rock and there is even a guide to the quarry now that rock-climbing is tolerated by the landowners. The landscape within the quarries is both awe inspiring and humbling with huge sweeping cliffs plummeting sheer into the depths of the quarry holes. The exposure on some of the routes is staggering and the industrial birth rite of the cliffs just adds to the atmosphere.

After a short drop into a dip with a pool known locally as Dali's Hole the road takes you up and then through the 'Watford Gap' and past the 1000ft deep Twll Mawr. This 'Big Hole' hosts one of the hardest rock climbs of the 80's, "The Quarryman" at E8 7a/b was a mighty and gymnastic effort by the maverick genius that is Johnny Dawes. The first ascent was captured by local filmmaker Al Hughes for the film 'Stone Monkey' and catalogues a climbing legend at the very peak of his game.

On the climb up from the dip before Watford Gap you are well positioned to look down the line of the inclines, spoil heaps and cliffs etc below. You should be able to make out a large slab with a curving formation running over it. This is the 'Rainbow Slab' who's smooth heights are home to perhaps the biggest concentration of extreme routes on any Welsh crag. A testament to the mind-control, skill and competitive nature of climbers such as Johnny Dawes, John Redhead, Nick Dixon, Paul Pritchard and John Silvester.

The wide track continues its way south eastwards and we follow easily until the first doubling back of the track. At this point we have two options to take us down to Nant Peris. The first will lead you into the village and its amenities the second will skirt the village.

For the first option take the stile and footpath that leads more or less straight on from the outside of the bend. This path takes you over to and then down into a valley between spoil-heaps following old quarry steps that lead in turn towards Nant Peris. You soon come out of the spoil heaps and start across open fields looking up and across the Llanberis Pass in what feels like an unusual position, the valley feels different from here and it takes a moment or two to re-orientate. There are some great views of the folds of rock that make up Clogwyn Mawr (Big Cliff) on the other side of the valley.

In that region there are a number of copper mines from the 18th and 19th centuries, looking closely you may be able to spot the workings and spoil from the opposite side of the valley. The largest of these was 'Llanberis' gr 597 587 which had a number of shafts, tunnels and even a large chamber. These workings run from close to the lake's shore passing under what is now the main road.

Other workings were 'Yew Tree' and 'Bridge' and there are also a number of trial workings all the way up the Pass of Llanberis. Some of these are high on the very steep hillsides of Esgair Felen and Bryn Du. Try scanning the hillside for them as you get deeper into the valley, look for a tunnel entrance with a short section of wall in front, most turn out to be only a few paces deep on closer inspection. These workings seem to be much less stable than their slate counterparts with dangerous stopes for floors and crumbling walls, not at all inviting for casual exploration.

I have poked my nose into a number of the workings, mine exploration being a favoured winter pastime, and can honestly say that I would not return to a number of the copper mines in this area. I can clearly recall the dread feeling at reaching the end of a tunnel to find that the floor was not in fact solid rock but a stope made up of rotting wood and rubble held in place by a friction and mud glue. Beneath the stope was a yawning and hungry looking rock crevasse where the copper vein had once been. With no safe refuge to be found we left quickly and gently, thinking light thoughts!

The easily followed path leads over stiles and bridges until you reach a gate just behind Fron Farm. Go through the gate and then onto the track behind the farm. This quickly leads to the head of the metalled road and you follow this all the way down into the village. Here it passes a campsite before emerging on the main road pretty much opposite the welcoming Vaynol Arms or Ty'n Llan with its bunkhouse and climbers bar.

The second option continues along the broad track leading easily down to the main road. At that point turn right (yes, back towards Llanberis!) following the pavement for a couple of hundred yards until a layby opens up on the far side of the road. Cross to this and head through the kissing gate in the corner, following the path gently through the meadow back towards Nant Peris.

You soon pass over the tunnel which diverts Nant Peris (stream) around Llyn Peris and into the lower Llyn Padarn (part of the engineering work for the Dinorwig pump storage), at the same point you can see the original but now dry river bed which used to take the river into Llyn Peris. Continue along the easy path below some old workings and then along beside the stream until you reach a point where a path comes in from the left over a footbridge made up of a huge slate slab. Our

route continues along the true left bank and this is the point where the other option re joins us. (see end of paragraph 4 in the next section).

Nant Peris to Pont y Cromlech

As we move into the Llanberis Pass (Dyffryn Peris) we step into the Ordovician, Volcanic period from 510 to 439 million years of age. The Pass is a mixture of Basalt, Rhyolite (types of lava) and Acid Tuff made from hot volcanic ash.

Underfoot we pass over hummocky glacial deposits or moraine and the weathered remains of the cliffs above, scree. The Pass is a glacial valley though less 'classic' than the Ogwen Valley to the east. Look carefully and you will see truncated spurs, hanging valleys, roche moutonnée, moraines and erratics. The great cwms above your head were carved out by the last of the glaciers, particularly the north and east facing ones where the ice hung on for longer. Crib Goch itself is the remains of a landscape eaten away on both sides by the ice.

An interesting point with the erratics is to note which ones were transported on top of the glacier (more angular) and which ones were buried within the glacier becoming more rounded and smoothed like river stones.

The route now makes its way up the north side of the Pass. There has been a long history of access in The Pass with climbers and walkers being long tolerated by the Vaynol Estate who up owned most of the land in the area. When the estate was broken up in 1968 the Welsh Office purchased the land and then resold it on the agreement that the new owners entered into Access Land agreements with the Snowdonia National Park Authority, for which they were paid an annual fee. These have probably have been superseded by the CROW legislation of November 2000.

There are many ways to work your way through this section. I have chosen to describe one taught to me by Sam Roberts of the National Park Warden service, the navigation on this section is the trickiest on the whole route (particularly in summer when the bracken is high) and the going underfoot is the hardest.

There is always the option of taking the Sherpa bus service from Nant Peris to Pont y Cromlech before rejoining the route at page 25. This

should be given serious consideration if there has been heavy rainfall over the last few hours as the mountain springs will be in spate and potentially lethal. With several streams to cross and few bridges, discretion may prove to be the better part of valour, saving the lost time of a forced retreat! Additionally this is the most complex section of the walk as well as the vaguest.

The route up the Llanberis Pass heads off from the middle of Nant Peris. A few metres down valley from the Vaynol Arms is a bus shelter and public phone, the footpath starts here.

Take the footpath between the houses, past the children's playground and across a field before a gate leads you towards the bridge over Afon Nant Peris. The bridge is made up of one long piece of slate, quite impressive, with an awkward gate in the middle. On the far side the footpath turns right towards the head of the lake but our route lies over the stile to the left.

Follow the grassy path upstream along the riverbank until another smaller stream comes down the mountainside and gets between you and the main flow. At this point you should strike diagonally up across the hillside, through the bracken on a vague path, until you cross a small shoulder and reach a wall. There is a wooden stile at this point leading directly to a low wall beyond, gr 606 577. Sometimes however the hillside path can be overgrown with bracken, if this is the case it is much easier to stay low following a wall to a corner and then working your way steeply up the hillside beside another wall to reach and cross a metal stile. Once over this climb a few more metres steeply up beside the wall to reach the wooden stile mentioned above.

Follow a vague broken wall diagonally across the hillside keeping to its uphill side with a view down to an old wartime rifle range well hidden in the hillside below. Climb up next to the wall until you reach an open bay with a ruin on its edge and low cliffs at its back at gr 608 576. From the ruin contour across a field full of rushes to re join the wall where it crosses the rocky shoulder on the far edge of the bay.

Climb carefully over the rocks and then around the hillside dropping slightly and taking care on some slippery sections. The view begins to open out as you do so and soon you will reach a wall that rises gently across the hillside. Follow the

wall upwards towards the field corner but a little way before this you will reach a stile over the wall with a large boulder in the wood beyond.

Cross into the wood going around to the front of the boulder where you will find the beginnings of a path through the trees. Follow this as it leads somewhat improbably through the wood and then climbs out the far side to reach a new fence, cross this via the stile. Head through a few hawthorn trees and then over to the bottom of some smooth cliffs a few metres beyond.

From here climb up towards a lone ash tree standing on the far side of a stream, it marks a new wooden bridge offering safe passage over an otherwise tricky stream.

Once on the far side you can walk over to the ruins of a large hafod (summer dwelling) and from there around the hillside towards an area of boulders and erratics some 300m beyond. When you reach this point you will have great views up and down Dyffryn Peris or Llanberis Pass as well as over to the climbers paradise on the far side of the valley.

You will be roughly level with Craig Ddu, the Black Crag, this is the first of the great crags of 'The Pass' as it is universally known in climbing circles and beyond. Craig Ddu always looks wet and this is often the case due to the drainage from the hillside above but its dark look is also due to the colour of the smooth rock. Less popular than some of the other crags it never the less has a number of fine routes in both summer and winter conditions.

Walk through the boulders and then drop gently down through bracken until you need to jump down from a low wall that cuts across your path.

Make your way from here down to walk underneath a short line of low outcrops and then cross over to walk beneath the next set of boulders/crags. You are heading over towards the small house which you can see a few hundred metres away across the hillside.

You are now opposite the second 'north side of the pass' crag, this is Clogwyn y Grochan or Cliff of the Cauldron. This one is a very popular cliff with mid grade climbers who come to climb classics like 'Nea' and 'Phantom Rib' at very severe (VS) grade as well as 'Spectre' and 'Brant

Direct' at hard very severe (HVS) grade. Then there is the popular 'SS Special' at E2 5b and the much photographed 'Cockblock' E5 6b by John Redhead for those in search of a much fallen off test piece.

Follow the path from the last set of boulders as it leads you up and through a wall at a vague corner, from there cross the stream on a slab of rock following the path through the middle of the field beyond. Our aim is to pass beneath the house and join its access track.

To do this you need to keep above the first short section of wall that you meet before walking between a small ruin and a boulder that another wall climbs over. You then go through that wall where it takes a sharp turn and leads beneath the house. Go through a gap in the wall just below the house before making a quick climb up to the access track. Sounds complicated? Try just one direction at a time! If all else fails just head toward the house but try to keep discretely below it.

The track leads easily down towards the road slowly getting less distinct until you are able to cross the Afon Gennog at a bridge that leads immediately to a stile. Gennog means lichenous and probably indicates a spot where natural dyes were once collected.

Climb the style and then head diagonally over the field (may contain tents) heading to the far corner of the field. Here in the back of the field next to the sheep folds you will find a new gate which allows you back onto the open hillside above Blaeny-nant farm. Turn left continuing in the same direction and dropping gently to behind Ynys Ettws which is the Climbers Club hut.

Ynys usually means island or less frequently as in this case, river meadow and Ettws was probably someone's name. **Pass directly behind the hut and then follow the wall up for a few metres, as the wall bears away and down we continue in our direction climbing up the slope and away from the hut. (CHECK THIS OUT FOR CHANGES)**

From here you can look across to the next cliff, Garreg Wastad, Flat Rock so named because of its conspicuous flat top. This crag like all the others has a number of classic routes such as 'Wrinkle' a very difficult or v diff grade, 'Crackstone Rib' which is probably the best

severe (S) graded route in Eryri and the much underrated and surprisingly tricky 'Old Holborn' at HVS.

High above you and on the same side of the valley is Cwm Glas or Grey Cwm with its imposing cliff Cyn Las, The Grey Horn. This was originally known as Diffwys Ddu, The Black Precipice but somehow the name was changed by the early climbing pioneers and has stuck. (Maybe there were just too many Black Cliffs, Craig Ddu, Clogwyn Du'r Arddu, Diffwys Du etc) Glas in welsh means green, blue or grey (its more about the tone than the colour) so the interpretation depends on circumstance, the cliffs in this instance are grey so... Either way this 600 foot cliff is home to one of the best hard severe (HS) graded routes in the UK. 'Main Wall' was first climbed by P L Roberts and J K Cook in 1935 and has been entertaining the adventurous ever since.

It is a masterpiece of route finding through some very improbable territory, I have enjoyed climbing it several times, with just the one epic. I was working in Aberdyfi building bunks for the Outward Bound Centre at the time, three of us drove up one February lunchtime arriving at the bottom of the route with barely two hours of light left. At this point we should have changed our plans but at 18 years of age adventure counts for more than common sense, so off we went.

The ice on the third pitch should have been our next warning as should the sunset glow on the opposite side of the valley but hell, we were having fun. I lead the last two pitches in the dark without a torch (lost somewhere in my rucksack) and when we finally topped out there were runnels of ice across the descent route and not an ice axe or crampon to be had. Finally we did the right thing, sitting down behind a large boulder to wait for the dawn, all the time praying that the mountain rescue would not be called as two of us were members of other teams! During the night the sky cleared and the moon came out such that we could see a way off via a couple of abseils. We finally made the car at about 5am to find a note from the police under a wiper blade. Luckily Dad had persuaded them to leave us to our fate until dawn, knowing as he did that we would get through somehow, he had been in similar positions himself enough times!

Between you and the Grey Horn is a slope littered in boulders of all sizes and on a dry day you may see small groups of boulderers testing their skill on their walls. You may see them wandering around looking a little odd with their crash mats on their backs like huge rucksacks. At mid height to the left of the cwm is a smooth looking, weeping cliff, this is Craig y Rhaeadr, the Waterfall Cliff which in winter provides

some of the very best ice climbing in Wales. One outstanding test piece is Central Icefall Direct a grade VI first climbed in ?????? A friend of mine had an interesting experience on it in the late 90's, in his own words,

Central Icefall Direct. By John Gladston.

This route had been on my tick list for some years. However, successive mild winters had refused to let the main feature of the climb, a large free hanging icicle on the last pitch, form sufficiently. With climbing partner Dai Lampard, and a nearly successful first winter traverse of Llewidd recently under our harnesses, we set off for Craig y Rhaeadr hoping that the route would be in condition and we could bag the first ascent in years!

Read the whole account on page 89.

Some time after John wrote this story for me, I was on a long train journey to a meeting. Sharing the journey was Matt Strickland and after some time we got to swapping stories about our respective adventures. To cut a long story short, it transpired that he had been one of the climbers standing directly under the icicle when it detached from the cliff, I asked him to write up the story from his perspective.....

Fall Line. By Matt Strickland.

It is not that often that you get proved right for the decision not to even start up a route.

Let's be honest I had overslept, waking to an irate Graham Frost stamping about the kitchen muttering that we had to "go now" if we were going to do the route. The drive from Bethesda to The Pass seemed slow compared to the high speed, conversation free stomp up to the base of the crag.

Read the whole account on page 91.

To the left and above Cwm Glas is Cwm Hetiau or Cwm of Hats so named because of its hat collection. In the early days of the Snowdon Railway the carriages were open topped affairs and the wind frequently blew hats off passengers heads. These inevitably ended up in the cwm because it lies directly below where the railway is closest to the ridge.

After a short way we join the remains of a low wall and follow this for some distance over and around the hillside before we are forced by the terrain to drop down to a short wet section. Cross this and then follow the border of the valley floor and the valley side along a line of quartz striped boulders which quickly lead to a stile.

At this point you will be opposite another crag, this is probably the second most recognisable cliff in the world after El Capitan in Yosemite (at least to a climber). It is the fantastic Dinas y Gromlech or Fortress of the Cromlech so called because of its appearance as two giant standing stones formed like an open book. This is home to the route that defines climbing in Snowdonia and probably the whole of the UK, the route is of course Cenotaph Corner, E1 5c first climbed by Joe Brown in 1952. One of the most perfect lines on any piece of rock it climbs the corner (surprise) in the middle of the book. The name comes from the destination on the front of a Manchester bus near where Joe lived, next stop 'Cenotaph Corner', as does the other Joe Brown and Don Whillans classic of the cliff, 'Cemetery Gates'.

At the roadside directly below 'Dinas Cromlech' you will be able to make out a number of large boulders, these are the famous 'Cromlech Boulders' popular with climbers and boulderers. It is hard to imagine these days with the importance of climbing and walking tourists to the area, but these boulders were nearly blown up by the council in the 70's. The hero of the day was one Harvey Lloyd, the mastermind behind a co-ordinated and resourceful campaign to save the rocks. He gave a talk on the subject during the 2003 Llanberis Mountain Film Festival (LLAMFF) and is generous enough to allow me to print his story, in his own words, here.

The Battle of the Cromlech Boulders, by Harvey Lloyd.

In 1973 I was the joint manager of Pen-y-pass Youth Hostel. Each morning I drove down the pass to take the children to catch the school bus in Nant Peris. The county surveyor had decided late in the autumn of 1973 to devote some of his department's resources to widening the A4086 road, about a mile above Nant, more to the standard that was required of an "A" class road. Each morning as I drove past I viewed their handiwork as they slowly progress upwards, and somewhere deep down I had a nagging question about what they would do when they reached the length by the boulders, and of course what they would do with the old stone bridge, which was clearly the biggest hazard to motor traffic on the whole section.....

Read the whole account on page 85.

Despite all this in 2007 the Llanberis Mountain Rescue Team (LLMRT) had cause to lever a large chunk off one of the boulders. With the assistance of the local fireservice they had to free a young climber who had become stuck whilst squeezing through a gap in a boulder. After some five hours of pushing, pulling and lubricating they were becoming increasingly concerned for the climbers welfare and resorted to hydraulic jacks to lift and remove the capstone of the squeeze, thankfully the climber fully recovered.

Note, If you have decided to skip the more challenging navigation of the previous section and to re join the route at Pont y Cromlech then this is where you should pick up the route by carefully crossing the narrow road bridge before taking the gate / stile leading onto the hillside. The stile between the bluffs mentioned in the next paragraph is about 30 metres away along the bluff.

Pont y Gromlech to Pen-y-pass

Much of our time in the upper section of the valley is spent on the lateral moraine of a glacier. We end up at Pen-y-pass and area of Glacial Till or unsorted fragments that dropped out of the glacier as it retreated as well as the obvious outcrops of Tuff.

From the stile go leftwards over the field beyond heading to a point between two rocky bluffs a short way away. Between the bluffs is a stile, which we take and then climb quickly up to following the narrow path over the open hillside eventually reaching another stile at a ruin. From here it is easiest to follow the power cables across the hillside for a while. You will soon come to a point where the cables meet a wall, the cables make a turn down the slope and the wall does a quick dogleg. Where the wall makes it's turns you will be able to cross it easily at a low section and follow a good path immediately beyond.

This path takes you over the spoil heap of a small quarry before leading up to a point where a good wall meets a cliff. Go through the new gate at the foot of the cliff crossing the stream beyond via a well-placed rock slab before climbing up to a

small summit. This is a great viewpoint from which to gaze back down the valley with its successive truncated spurs and scree slopes. This is particularly stunning during the late evening when the sun often lights up the hillside with a flood of dramatic, low and powerful light. **From this point stroll over to a large boulder, cross the wall at the foot of the boulder and then carefully negotiate the bog on the other side.**

You can now look back on the final crag of the Pass, Esgair Maen Gwyn, Spur of White Rock commonly known as Scimitar Ridge (among climbers at least). If you cast your eye down the fall line of the slope as you stroll up this section you may be able to make out the remains of a much older route up the Pass than the modern road just below you. There is some evidence that this is a roman road running from the former training camp at Pen-y-Gwryd to Dinas Deiniolen, an iron age fort near Caernarfon gr 549 652. This route is described in a book by D E Jenkins about Beddgelert from 1899. Certainly it continues from there down into Nantgwynant and on towards Nantmor.

Once free of the bog pass a small ruin before making your way over to a gully in a rocky spur beyond. Go up the gully and then traverse the hillside beyond keeping 50 – 150m above the power cables until the terrain forces you down and underneath them. As you continue up the slope you will get drawn into a low valley which leads you up until you can see Pen-y-pass a few metres beyond a square cut boulder. The ridge to your left contains a crater which I am reliably informed was made by a bomb jettisoned on the way back from a wartime raid, have a look, see what you think! **Head past the square boulder to cross the wall and take the last few strides into the Pen-y-pass carpark.**

Pen-y-pass is a bustling little place with two of the most popular routes up Snowdon starting from here (Miner's and PyG tracks) as well as the justifiably famous Crib Goch ridge. The carpark is almost permanently full and the Sherpa busses constantly disgorge more walkers onto the tracks. There are toilets, the National Park Warden's office and a slightly dark café should you require weather information and services. On the other side of the road is the Pen-y-pass YHA once the Gorffwysfa Hotel famous in mountaineering circles as a haunt of legendary characters from the early 'gentleman climber' days.

Pen-y-Pass to Llyn Gwynant

As we cross the watershed we move from the Glacial Till and back onto the moraine deposits as we descend above Afon Trawsnant. Then as the angle eases we are back on the Till for a few hundred metres before passing quickly from Tuff (ash) to Rhyolite (lava) to Alluvium or silt, clay, sand and gravel dropped by the river as it slows with the change in slope. The obvious lump in the middle of the valley (with a farm on it) is Basalt that weathered the glacier. It is partially covered in Glacial Till that I imagine dropped out of the glacier as it was forced over the rock.

From Pen-y-pass carpark gr 647 557, search for the footpath hidden away in the corner near the carpark entrance. This leads easily down above the true left bank of Afon Trawsnant (river that crosses the valley) keeping roughly level with the telephone wires on the opposite side of the valley.

You are descending the steep western slopes of Moel Berfedd, 448m (Central Mountain, mountain in the midst of the mountains) this isolated hill is much loved by paraglider pilots as it allows access to the Snowdon Horseshoe on days when the wind blows from the east. Keep a lookout overhead for pilots making the jump to Gallt y Wenallt (Bluff of the White Wood/Hill) at the bottom of the Lliwed ridge before they head into the horseshoe itself.

Seeing the horseshoe by the extremely intimate and technical means of a paraglider has to be one of the most thrilling and satisfying of all mountain experiences. Even sitting at my desk I can feel the excitement building at the thought of making the trip once more. I clearly remember having to tell myself to "breathe, breathe" the first time that I ventured into the airspace of Cwm Dyli between Lliwed and Crib Coch.

Flying directly onto the summit triangle of Yr Wyddfa one day I was catapulted upwards at 10m per second, screaming with both delight and fear I kept the wing spinning in tight circles as I fled upwards away from the summit, faster than the tourists could draw their cameras, I was gone! I topped out at a very high (for the UK) 7000ft and from here the mountains had gone flat looking like a relief map spread out below me, I could see the Isle of man and Ireland and felt as if I could fly there, though in fact I only made it as far as Porthmadog.

After about 1km you will be walking beside a fence that in turn leads down to a steep cutting above a stream. Climb a stile and

continue more steeply until you reach the banks of the stream at gr 655 547. There are in fact two streams here and you are in the crook of their junction.

You now have a couple of route options to reach the Cwm Dyli power station further down the valley to your right.

Firstly, the short route, this is really a dry weather only option as there are a couple of stream crossings to make and boggy paths to follow,

Cross the shallow water on your right to join the less obvious path on the far side. Now chase the path carefully as it leads you between a wall and the river on a sometimes-boggy route towards the Power station. Pass through two openings in the wall before crossing the stream at a suitable point, just where you choose to do this will depend on the level of the water, there is no bridge. Once over join an obvious track to re-cross the river, this time via a bridge, and enter the grounds of the power station.

The second option is probably the most suitable for most people most of the time in most weathers!

Cross the small stream directly in front of you via some reasonable 'stepping stones'. On the far side head slightly right and up across slope along a vague path heading towards a few trees. Go through the trees to join a low broken wall that continues across the hillside in roughly the same direction. Follow this slightly damp route up until you reach what was the road and head downhill along this rough track in a fine position. From this point, looking across at the pipeline, you may recognise it as the one briefly used in the 1999 Bond Movie "The World is not Enough". After a few hundred metres turn right along a similar track which in turn leads you down and slightly back on yourself, cross the bridge and enter grounds of the power station.

About 50m away on the opposite side of the grounds the footpath leaves the power station grounds via a gate and stone slab bridge before bearing left on a newly made route over the water pipe at gr 653 540.

Cwm Dyli power station was opened in 1906 and its first manager was one Arthur Lockwood a man who left his mark on the area in several ways. In 1909 he climbed the enigmatic route known as Lockwood's Chimney on Clogwyn y Bustach, Cliff of the Bullock, which lies partly hidden in the woods ahead. This is one of the most unique of Welsh rock climbs being mostly underground, or at least behind a huge section of detached cliff. At the grade of 'Difficult' it is an easy climb by modern standards requiring less style than brute force and energy to ascend. There has long been a tradition of climbing the route after the pub on New Years Eve, Christmas Day, rainy days and just about any other excuse you can think of. There have been mass ascents by whole climbing clubs and I can remember climbing the route with a couple of mates and a border collie named Meg, who to be honest was a natural climber and first to the top!

In 1909 Arthur married the then manager of the Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel, Florence Bloomfield, and in 1921 he bought the hotel, which he ran until the war. He was responsible for creating the lake in front of the hotel as well as a trout hatchery behind it to stock his new fishing lake. The lake has been known as both Llyn Penygwryd and Llyn Gwryd but on the present OS Explorer 1:25,000 it is called Llyn Lockwood after its creator.

Interestingly, both the lake and the house beside the hotel are now owned by Harvey Lloyd. Harvey who we met earlier in conjunction with the Cromlech Boulders, is presently researching Arthur Lockwood's biography. While digging in the pond behind the house Harvey unearthed an old ice axe head stamped with the words 'A Lockwood'. He also has an early climbing guide to the area inscribed with notes in Lockwood's handwriting. These go some way to answering a question about whether Lockwood continued to climb during his days as an hotelier.

The hotel still has a strong association with the climbing world and is probably best known for its connections to the successful Everest expedition of 1953. They trained in Eryri before the trip and their names still adorn the ceiling of the Everest room in the hotel.

Follow the path pleasantly down the side of the valley alongside what is now Afon Glaslyn. River of the Verdant Pool was originally the name of the lower part of the river below Beddgelert but it has migrated upstream over time. It refers to a pool near the Aberglaslyn bridge that has a special hue caused by the copper sulphate in the water.

The path meanders through trees and boulders keeping more or less to where the flat valley bottom joins the steeper hillside. The huge overhanging boulder that you pass close under is known as The Homage Boulder and is one of a number used by local boulderers seeking the more esoteric challenges.

After a pleasant and gentle km you pass the recently excavated foundations of a small house, this dwelling was once called Y Wenallt (White Bluff/Wood) after the hillside above of the same name. It is said that Madog the Welsh explorer stayed here just before he set sail and eventually discovered America (along with the Chinese, Vikings, Portugese....).

Madog was one of the sons of Owain Gwynedd who ruled the area in the 12th century, upon his death two of his sons, Dafydd and Hywel fought over control of the principedom. Madog on the other hand kept out of trouble and decided to sail west, he then disappeared for some years before returning on his boat Gwennan Gorn claiming to have found a great new land. He persuaded a number of by now war weary population to join him in returning to this new land, they set sail and were never seen again. In Mobile Bay, Alabama there was a plaque erected in 1953 by the local people which read,

'In memory of Prince Madoc, a Welsh explorer who landed on the shores of Mobile Bay in 1170 and left behind, with the Indians, the Welsh language.'

This plaque was removed at a later date and now there is now a campaign by the 'Alabama Welsh' Society to have it reinstated.

It is said that when the first settlers reached this area they found a tribe of pale Indians who spoke a language recognisable as Welsh.

So back to the ruin! Many years later the house was badly damaged one night when a huge boulder rolled down from the hillside above and demolished the kitchen knocking a plate from the hand of one of the inhabitants. The boulder was apparently too big to be removed and was buried where it fell.

The excellent little crag now above you is called Gallt y Wenallt and seems to have picked up the bovine theme for route names which would have been more logically used on the previous Clogwyn y

Bustach, Cliff of the Bullock, names such as Bovril, Bovine, Oxo and Matador.

A short way further on you will reach the footbridge that leads to the campsite at Llyn Gwynant. The bridge is known locally as the Roman Bridge but it is unlikely that it is in fact Roman, though the roman road may have come this way. The name Gwynant is probably derived from a much older word meaning swift stream and so means Lake of the Swift Stream, the Nantgwynant valley was therefore the Vale of Swift Streams or Torrents. Another version suggests that the name refers to a forgotten saint possibly called Gwynen or Hwynen and I have seen references to Nant Gwynen and Nanhwynen which was apparently the name of the valley as recently as the end of the 19th century.

If you were to idle away a few hours at the bridge it is likely that you would notice a huge variation in the flow rate and strength of the stream, this is due to the discharge of water from the hydro power station upstream.

Llyn Gwynant to Beddgelert

Not surprisingly now that we are in the bottom of a relatively flat valley the drift geology slowly becomes more river orientated. As we walk around Llyn Gwynant we climb back onto the basalt before wondering up the tuff headland that is Penmaen-brith. A short sojourn on the glacial till leads to alluvial deposits in the grounds of Hafod-y-llan. Basalt and rhyolite give us firm ground as we climb up to and descend the Watkin Path section followed by various alluvial deposits as we round Llyn Dinas and descend to Beddgelert.

Above us all the time are volcanic mountains and cliffs, slowly weathering into the valley. There are veins of copper here too as can be seen by the Sygyn Copper Mine, if you look carefully you can see them. Stand in the village and look south-east, there is a bleached streak in the rhododendrons that runs up the steep hillside, this is the result of a copper vein just below the surface. Chinese geologists have been able to identify many minerals from the plant growth above them for thousands of years, though not here, obviously!

Ignore the bridge (unless you intend to camp) and continue on through pleasant woodland above the right hand bank of the lake. Climbing gently you soon reach the summit of Penmaen-

brith or Mottled Headland and known locally as Elephant Rock, gr 639 518. This affords an excellent view down the lake and across to the flanks of Y Moelwyn or the White Hills, so called either because they get frequent dustings of snow or because the grassy hillsides bleach in the summer sun and can become quite pale.

Continuing along the path and taking care not to descend too soon (you will end up in a lakeside cul de sac, mind you it is a popular swimming spot) you emerge from the trees and cross into a low open valley. This leads gently up and then down to farmland with a view towards Llyn Dinas. This lies just behind Pen Gallt-y-Llyn (Head of the Bluff of the Lake) the obvious wooded hill dead ahead. Ignore a potential turning towards a house and continue in your present direction until you reach a gate and stile at Ysgubor Bwlch gr 635 514.

If your chosen route is to Bryn Gwynant YHA then at this point you can cross the river to the left via a wonderful stone slab bridge and permissive path before making your way back along the roadside to the YHA. It can be worth a quick visit to the bridge in any case particularly if the light is good for photography.

Note, to reach the YHA it is also possible to bear left towards the house mentioned above from a point some 150m before Ysgubor Bwlch, pass between the house and some farm buildings then cross the river on a new wooden bridge which brings you out onto the road less than 100m from the northern entrance to the YHA.

If you intend to continue on the route towards Llyn Dinas, cross the stile next to the gate then bear immediately right beside the wall following the footpath markers up the hillside. Turn left once up the slope, now following a walled track around the hillside and up to the edge of the woods. Ignore a gate into the woods and head off left along the wall at gr 633 515. Follow the 'farm trail' along the track as it drops gently down towards Hafod-y-llan farm. This probably means 'Summer dwelling at the leaping river' and is now owned by the National Trust, it is being used to experiment with traditional farming methods that do not denude the hillside in the same way as modern sheep farming. This includes grazing cattle on the high ground instead of sheep.

At a gate adorned with a big white "H" you bear left and rejoin the main track at a gate that leads over Afon Cwm Llan at a bridge. Afon Cwm Llan is the Leaping River derived from the word

Llam or Llem meaning leaping. Pausing a few hundred metres further on where the path joins the Watkin Path and then tracing the route of the river should make it easy to understand the name. On the other hand, I have been told that it is simply a reference to the church in Beddgelert, river of the church in the vale.

Just beyond the gate but before the farm buildings you should follow the footpath signs rightwards through a gate and over the campsite field. The signs lead you pleasantly around the back of the farm, through a gate and onto a hillside path that soon joins the lower section of the Watkin Path at gr 625 514.

The views from this point are excellent, looking up into Cwm Llan you can see the majestic sweep of the incline that once carried slate down to the valley floor from the Cwm Llan workings high on Yr Wyddfa. To its right you see the Leaping River with its many waterfalls and further right the flanks of Lliwed, part of the famed Snowdon Horseshoe. This part of the Watkin Path was used in the 1968 film "Carry on up the Khyber" with Kenneth Williams, Sid James and co marching around Snowdonia to the sound of echoing double entendre.

There are a number of theories as to the meaning of the name Lliwed, possibly Stained Mountain or Bird Mountain after its appearance as an eagle with its wings held as if pulled in for speed, when seen from the north at least. Legend has it that King Arthur's men rest in a cave high on the mountain in readiness to defend Britain once more, the cave is known as Ogof Llanciau Eryri or the Cave of the young men of Snowdonia. Having climbed Lliwedd's vast and confusing cliffs in both summer and winter I can attest to their powerful brooding aura. By paraglider the cliffs feel positively Himalayan as you soar the updrafts just a few feet out from the cliff face, an experience to thrill.

Turn your back to the mountain, heading down hill until you go through a wrought iron gate, the sharp eyed will notice the continuation of the incline from Cwm Llan where it crossed over our track. **Just beyond the gate you should turn right through a similar one following a newly opened path through woods and down to the road.** This National Trust route is much more pleasant than the usual descent along the track and road. On the way down you will pass the tumbled remains of Sir Edward Watkin's chalet. Watkin was a railway tycoon and Liberal MP who was responsible for the construction of the path through Cwm Llan to the summit of Yr Wyddfa.

The woodland path brings you out on the main road to Beddgelert at exactly the same point as the usual Watkin Path route. Turn right along the informal footway and just as this ends cross the main road and follow the minor road opposite. This eventually leads up to the beautiful and quiet Nantmor valley but we bear right along a farm track when the road turns sharp left, about 200m from the main road.

It is worth pausing at the café (Cafi Gwynant) part way along the footway as it is situated in the nicely renovated Capel Bethania (built in 1822) and serves excellent locally sourced food. Near the pulpit there is a photograph of the 83 year old Liberal Prime Minister Gladstone making his 'Justice for Wales' speech at what is now known as the Gladstone Rock. This speech was held at the official opening of the Watkin Path in the heart of Cwm Llan in 1892.

Nantmor means either Big Vale or more likely Sea-brook (Nant y Mor) as prior to the construction of the Porthmadog Cob in 1811 by William Madog the sea reached the western edge of the valley and sea going ships could sail right up to the Aberglaslyn bridge gr 594 462. This makes even more sense when you take into account that the word Aber usually means the mouth of the river (Aberglaslyn, the mouth of the Glaslyn) and is associated with estuaries, Aberdyfi being where the river Dyfi reaches the sea and so on.

Follow the track as it leads to the pleasant Llyndu Isaf farm and then continue straight on along the track beyond. After a 100m or so you cross a stream and the path splits, take the right hand fork and a stile into the trees. Shortly after that you emerge from the trees at another stile and cross into marshy grassland at the edge of a lake. Follow the path in a fine position with good views as it heads along the edge of Llyn Dinas or Lake of the Fortress.

This area is full of myth and legend, the best of which refers to the steep sided, natural fortress called Dinas Emrys situated at the far end of the lake gr 606 491. Now owned and managed by the National Trust it was once the retreat of the British Chieftain Vortigern (Gwrtheyrn or High King) who fled here having become unable to control the Saxon mercenaries that he had been using to keep the Picts and the Irish in order. Each night the newly built walls of his castle would fall down and after a frustrating time he asked his wise men for advice. They suggested that the life of a young fatherless boy be sacrificed and his blood sprinkled around the walls. A lad called Myrddin Emrys was

found and taken up the hill, he asked why he was to die and once told suggested that the wise men were wrong and that he could show Vortigern why his walls kept falling down.

He then lead the entourage down the hill and into a hidden cave, deep under the hillside they found a stone chest containing a red dragon and a white dragon which were symbols for the Britons (red) and the Saxons (white). Each night the dragons fought and it was their nightly battles that shook the walls down. Eventually Myrddin said, the red dragon would kill the white one and only then when the battle was over could the castle be built. The truth of his words became apparent and the wise men were put to death in his place.

Vortigern fled to build his castle at the beautiful Nant Gwrtheyrn on the Llyn Peninsular. This is now the site of the Welsh language and Heritage Centre and according to their website early editions of the Ordnance Survey maps showed a Castell Gwrtheyrn, Vortigern's Castle. Myrddin (or Merlin) claimed Dinas Emrys for himself; he was eventually forced to leave, but not before he had buried a vast treasure including a golden throne somewhere in the valley. Have a look for it if you like but should a vast storm of thunder and lightning spring up then it is probably best to leave as unfortunately you are not virtuous enough to claim the treasure!

Interestingly the roots of the Welsh use of the Red Dragon as a national symbol come from this tale. It was the battle standard for King Cadwalader in the 7th century and was also used by Henry Tudor (a distant relative of Cadwalader) during the battle of Bosworth. Versions of this tale can be found in both 'The Lakes of Eryri' by G Roberts and 'Eryri, The Story of Snowdonia' by M Senior. These books are excellent sources of information about the history and names of the.

In his short book 'The History of the Red Dragon' Lofmark argues that the dragon first came to Wales as the battle emblem of a Roman Cohort (480 fighting men) which was the most common size of fighting unit used in the mountains. They frequently went into battle beneath a kind of dragon kite trailed from a tall pike and designed to strike fear into the hearts of their enemies. When the Romans finally left Britain the resistance to the following Saxon invasion was often organised by romanised Britons who would have found it natural to fight beneath a dragon standard. The Welsh word 'draig' was often used to denote a military leader and pendraig or pendragon as a chief among leaders. The earliest reference to the Red Dragon (AD 600) as a symbol of the

Britons comes from a period when the then Britons were being driven into the mountainous areas by the Saxons. The Welsh Dragon had to wait until 1953 to become the authorised Welsh National Flag when it was made the official royal badge of Wales.

The ruined remains of the castle and of Myrddin's well can just be made out on the summit of the hill but access is not encouraged due to the fragile nature of the site. The National Trust Warden from nearby Craflwyn Hall sometimes leads organised groups to the ruins.

One final legend worth mentioning concerns Brenin Arthur or King Arthur who from his encampment near Dinas Emrys hand picked an elite force to accompany him to his final battle at Llyn Llydaw (gr 630 545). The site of the encampment is known locally as Gwaen y Gweheilion or Field of the Discarded after the men who had to stay behind.

Unfortunately, though Arthur won the battle, he was fatally wounded at Bwlch y Seuthau (Pass of Arrows) by the retreating enemy. He was then taken over the lake at Llyn Llydaw and up to his resting place in the cave on Lliwed.

Climb up through some newly planted trees and pass through a small coll before descending to the far end of the lake. For the sure footed the scramble up to the summit of the hillock to the right of the coll is rewarded with an excellent elevated view down the lake as well as back along our route. The area of the lake's outflow was used in the film "The Inn of the Sixth Happiness" with Ingrid Bergman, filmed in 1958.

The steep looking crag slightly behind you on the far side of the lake is Craig y Llyn, Crag of the Lake and though not a popular crag it contains a number of high grade, extreme routes of a bold and steep nature.

Ignore the footbridge and continue down the true left bank of Afon Glaslyn, after about 100m you will pass a mound with a small standing stone on top. This is known as Bedd Owain y Cawr or Owain the Giant's Grave. Owain came to fight another giant living on the hill from the previous tale, Dinas Emrys. After a boulder throwing contest ended in a draw they fought to the death resulting in Owain being crushed and killed by his opponent who was in his own death throes having been pitched onto a sharp rock by Owain.

There was a time when an oxen was sacrificed at this site every May Day and a decorated raft towed the length of the lake before the lighting of a ceremonial bonfire on the mound.

The path winds through the rhododendrons beside the river before emerging onto the Sigyn Copper Mine track. Follow the track towards the mine and just before it goes into the mine bear right following the footpath sign past a small water wheel.

Sigyn Copper Mine is now an established tourist attraction where visitors are able to explore the workings of a mine and see for themselves how the ore was removed and processed. However, I would have to be honest and say that when we visited as a family, it did not live up to the marketing. If you do have a little time to spare then you may be better off crossing the river at the obvious bridge before the copper mine and making your way left along the far bank to reach Craflwyn Hall a newly renovated National Trust property that has some interesting buildings and overgrown gardens to explore.

The mine itself has a long and complex history full of fraudulent dealings, innovations, over blown claims and any number of purchases and sales much too complex to present here. The mine was in production from Roman times but mainly between 1830 and 1903 though it seems never to have quite fulfilled anyone's expectations. For a full and interesting detail of it's history (and all the other copper mines in the area) one should read "The Old Copper Mines of Snowdonia" by David Bick, from Landmark Publishing, a must have companion to anyone exploring the history of this area.

The area of mine buildings now part of the visitor attraction also had a short part in 'The Inn of the Sixth Happiness' having being briefly transformed into a small Chinese village.

After 100m or so the path goes through a gate and joins the end of a very minor road. Follow this until it is about to cross the river and join the main road. Instead bear left over the wall and continue down the riverside looking across at the nicely located riverside properties opposite. Do the same thing the next time a road cuts across toward the main road, this time following the path down an alley before emerging at the footbridge where Afon Glaslyn and Afon Colwyn meet.

On the opposite bank is the Prince Llewelyn Hotel which on the night of the 21st of September 1949 was struck by a 4,500 million year old

meteorite weighing 1lb 12oz. Only a dozen or so are known to have landed in the UK over the last couple of hundred years. The story and a cast of the meteorite can be seen in the hotel with the remains of the meteorite being held at Durham University and the Natural History Museum in London. **Cross the footbridge and head into the centre of the village.**

The village of Beddgelert lies in the junction of three valleys, the Nantgwynant, which we have followed to arrive here, the Gwyrfai that will lead us out of the village and the Aberglaslyn Gorge which takes the river away towards Porthmadog. Once described as "a few dozen hard grey houses huddled together in some majestic mountain scenery" it is today a popular place for visitors to while away the day, once it was a royal residence, or was it?

The story goes that Llewelyn Ap Iorweth (Llywelyn Fawr) went on a hunting trip leaving his son in the charge of his faithful hunting dog named Gelert. On his return he found that the baby's room was in turmoil and the dog covered in blood. He drew his sword and slew the dog, only to hear a faint cry from under a pile of bedding. Looking closer he found the body of a huge wolf and his son safe and sound under his crib. Too late he realised the true reason for the blood on the jaws of the dog. Apart from the obvious comment about his suitability as a father leaving an infant in the charge of a dog, it is a good story.

You can now visit the grave of faithful Gelert and the remains of the royal palace by walking along the pleasant riverside path from the centre of the village. However, David Pritchard the then landlord of the Goat Hotel, *may* have borrowed the story from Scandinavian legend. Certainly in the late 18th century he (along with the village Clerk and Postmaster) created the grave to draw visitors to the village and increase trade. Some say that he was merely captivated by a popular local legend and added the grave as a romantic gesture. Well either way it certainly worked and most people do not even question the truth of the story, after all, does it really matter? The name does mean Gelert's grave but Gelert or possibly Celert was likely to have been a saint rather than a hound.

An interesting footnote to this story is that its creator also spawned a legend. David Pritchard died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 52 without leaving a will. His ghost then haunted the village for some weeks until an old friend sought out the ghost and asked why it was not at rest. The friend was directed to lift the hearthstone in one of the hotel bars in order to find a hoard of 100 gold guineas that were to be

given to widow Pritchard. Once this was done the ghost was never seen again and the brave friend was rewarded with part of the hoard.

Above the village stands the powerful looking bulk of Moel Hebog, Hill of the Hawk, standing at 782m, sometimes called Moel Hellofaslog by tired walkers! On the night of the thirteenth of June 1944 an Avro Anson code named EG472 was on a night flying exercise with five crewmen onboard. Believing that they were over Hawarden the pilot was descending in order to find smoother air as one of the crew was feeling airsick. Difficulty with radio fixes and a dark night meant that they were not over Hawarden and at approximately one in the morning they flew into the north face of the Moel Hebog killing four of the five crew.

The survivor, one Sergeant Harry Howard was amazingly (and luckily for him) thrown through the fabric roof of the aircraft when it struck the side of the mountain. He had just undone his harness and was moving to another station in the aircraft, an act that undoubtedly saved his life. The aircraft bounced further up the hillside and caught fire.

Sergeant Howard was making his way down the mountain in the dark when he noticed another figure beside him, in his dazed state he presumed that it was another survivor of the crash. Suddenly the figure moved ahead and caused him to come to a halt right on the edge of a steep precipice, the ghostly figure then vanished. After the war Harry Howard married a Caernarfon girl and lived in the town until his death from heart attack in the 70's.

One breed of modern day aviators (paraglider pilots) take frequent advantage of the wind conditions generated by the village's position in the junction of three valleys. With two sea breezes, one from Porthmadog and the other from Caernarfon as well as the prevailing wind all battling for dominance, conversion conditions can set in. This can give powerful lift over the village when the winds collide, it is also quite usual to find the wind to be 180 degrees from the prevailing. All this can lead to paragliders, about to land in the village, being picked up and thrown literally thousands of feet into the air, enabling them to continue their flight, usually towards Porthmadog or Nefyn.

Beddgelert to Rhyd Ddu

The first half of this section is the most homogeneous that we have encountered, it is mostly glacial till with a few short sections of

mudstone, our first sedimentary rocks. Had these been pressurised they may well have become slate, as they have in surrounding areas.

The route up to Llyn Llywelyn is composed of scree and peat underfoot with rounded outcrops of Dolerite which have intruded through the sedimentary rocks below. As we approach Rhyd Ddu we are back on the glacial till which can easily be seen where the path has cut into the mountainside above Llyn y Gader. The final section into the village is a typically wet section of peat bog.

From the centre of the village walk the pavement beside the Porthmadog road until you reach the Royal Goat Hotel on the outskirts of the village. Turn onto the access road on the right hand side of the hotel until just behind the hotel it is possible to bear right towards some footpath signs. Choose the right hand path directly through the metal gate and out into an open field below the recently rebuilt narrow gauge railway.

This was the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway (NWNGR) and originally served the various slate quarries in the Gwyrfai valley during the late 19th century, having reached Rhyd Ddu in 1881. After a number of attempts it was finally opened to Beddgelert and then on via the Aberglaslyn Gorge to Porthmadog in 1923. Here it joined the Ffestiniog Railway and the two were amalgamated to create the Welsh Highland Railway (WHR).

Unfortunately timing could not have been worse, the slate quarries of the Gwyrfai were past their peak and the motorcar and bus were providing quicker and easier links between Caernarfon and Porthmadog. After a difficult period the railway closed in 1937 and track lifting began in 1941. This process was reversed in 1989 when the Ffestiniog Railway began the long process of purchasing and re building the line. Thus far the track is complete between Caernarfon and Rhyd Ddu with work ongoing to reopen the rest of the route to Porthmadog.

Take what becomes a well made path along the edge of the station area following the footpath signs as they lead you below the embankment and along to a newly rebuilt bridge. Pass under the railway before heading back up behind the water tower, take the gate on your left away from the railway and onto a path along the edge of a field. The wall leads around the field and through beech trees until you cross over a stile and stream to reach a farm track.

Turn uphill (left) and just before passing a farmhouse you will re cross the railway. This feels wrong as you just left the railway behind and below. However, because of the need to climb up the side of the valley the railway makes a series of long turns up the slope and our route bisects those turns. Continuing up through a small but pleasant pine-wood crossing the railway for the third and final time. The track soon emerges from the wood and turns back over the stream to Cwm Cloch Canol, the Middle house in the Craggy Cwm and not Bell Cwm as could easily be surmised. Turn right in what was the farmyard going over a stile leading to open fields.

A well surfaced path wanders up the hillside towards Moel Hebog but we only follow it as far as the first culvert and a lone stone gatepost. Just beyond this point we need to strike off (signposted with a blue arrow) to the right along a vague and wet path leading to a gate about 40m off. Once through the wall turn left to join a slowly improving grassy path that follows the wall all be it a few metres down the slope. There are excellent wide views and the path becomes easier to follow as it leads you up to a new wooden gate. Beyond this there is a deep drainage ditch and a bridge to cross before the wall leads you over to the edge of the forest and an old metal gate under the edge of the trees gr 577 484.

This is a pleasant spot to stay awhile in the dappled shade (if you are lucky with the weather), we are drawing near to the home of Welsh poet T. H. Parry Williams who lived in Rhyd Ddy for many years. As good an excuse as I can think of to spend a few seconds reading one of his thoughtful works.

Conviction

I stood, like a god, just at the corner where
The old red trail near mighty Snowdon's summit
Turns left, a level rock-strewn path, and there,
Like one who can rule fate, boldly, and straight
Down the tangled cliff, I rolled a massive stone,
And I watched it swiftly gallop, with a group
Of small rocks in a racing competition,
As it set them clattering down the slope.
I knew full well that it was I alone
- The god, indeed - who gave this role to play

To the foolish stone, and fashioned the design
Of each move since I sent it on its way.
But then I realized, when it was gone,
I was no god – what I was was the stone.

T. H. Parry Williams

Translated by Joseph P. Clancy

Beyond the gate there is a shallow stream that you carefully cross before bearing left up a narrow but good path through the trees.

If you look at your feet as you cross the river you will probably notice how different the bed of the river is when compared to those you crossed near the Cwm Dyli power station. The rocks here are all slate, washed round by the river rather than the volcanic rocks we saw earlier. Just another indication that we are moving both through the landscape and geological time!

Once out onto the forest track turn right and wander down hill for about 100m until it is possible to take an obvious path up and left, note, continuing down the main track would soon bring you out at the forest campsite and its amenities. Follow the narrow path uphill between the edge of the wood and the fields of Meillionen Farm, continuing until you join another forest track with good views out over Snowdon etc at gr 573 484.

Meillionen is the welsh word for clover and there is a tale to be told about the house, one that I remember from my schooldays.

At one time it was the abode of two bachelors, one day they were visited by a complete stranger who claimed to have had a dream about a ruin situated some way above their house. In the dream he had been directed to look under a large stone where he would find a hoard of treasure. The cunning (and unscrupulous) bachelors managed to convince the stranger that the house in question was one of the similar name but on the Llyn peninsular and he departed to look there. While he was undoubtedly scratching his head some miles away they went up to the ruin and found the treasure, becoming very rich in the process. Doubtless it is only a coincidence that the house is called clover!

Turn right and follow the track above the farm until it dives into the woods, keep to the main track ignoring all junctions for nearly 2km of gentle ascent. It is quite likely that you will meet families and groups on mountain bikes as you stroll through the forest, while there are no purpose made off road routes it is popular with casual cyclists so keep an eye open. **As the track begins to drop you will cross a bridge and almost immediately a wide path crosses the track at gr 567 501. Turn left up that path as it climbs quite steeply at first and follow it straight over a four way junction continuing up until you reach Llyn Llywelyn.** This quiet lake is equipped with picnic benches and makes an excellent lunch spot.

According to local legend the lake was created when two giants were having a jumping competition at a point called Llam Trwsgl (Awkward Jump) gr 574 504, a rocky gorge where the River Colwyn was once crossed. Colwyn means, pup, whelp or even small. The first giant slipped and barely made it over the river leaving his footprint in the rock where he landed. The second fared much better and jumped right up into the cwm landing in soft ground, the resulting depression filled with water to form the lake.

A large brass shield was found near the lake in 1794, it had 27 concentric circles on the front and weighed four pounds. It was chronicled at that time and later but seems to have disappeared again.

Just below Llam Trwsgl is a pool called Llyn Nad y Forwyn or Pool of the Maiden's Cry where a young girl was murdered by her fiancée who had fallen for another woman. Her ghost haunts the pool and is known as Bwgan Pen Pwll Coch. It is unfortunate and possibly a little insensitive that an area with such a rich history has been blighted with a small building and damn but it is still worth a visit to swim with the ghost and hunt down the giant's footprint!

Continue up the track beside the lake before taking the first track on the right as it leads up the shoulder of the ridge and continues around the edge of the hill for a little over km. The track then drops down and just as it turns back upwards a large track heads to the right and downhill from the dip, take this as it leads towards the bottom of the valley.

As the gradient levels out the track meets a stream, we are aiming to go more or less directly across but this involves a little left right shimmy along the tracks. Once established on

the other side of the stream follow the track on the right and then almost immediately turn left up a path through the trees, focus! This leads over the brow of the hill and out of the woods with a significant change in the view. There has been a large amount of felling in this area of the forest in recent years. This has led to the creation of an excellent thermal source over the woods, often used by paraglider pilots as they climb back up to cloudbase.

The path now drops across the hillside with wide-open views down to Rhyd Ddu (Black Ford) and Llyn-y-Gader. The early name for this lake was Llyn Cadair yr Aur Frychin so it is easy to see why it has become shortened for convenience. Cadair means chair or seat and in this instance that probably means the seat of power of an ancient chieftain called Aur Frychin. Alternatively, the Aur Frychin was a golden haired water beast that drowned swimmers in the lake. Eventually, so the story goes, it was chased over the mountains and cornered in the Dyffryn Nantlle valley before being killed. This gives a clue to the name Nantlle with nant meaning stream and llef meaning scream or cry, referring to the death of the beast. You choose which version you find most attractive.

Llyn y Gadair,

The jaunty traveller that comes to peer
Across its shallow waters to the scene beyond
Would almost not see it. Mountains here
Have far more beauty than this bit of pond
With one man fishing in a lonely boat
Whipping the water, rowing now and then
Like a poor errant wretch, condemned to float
The floods of nightmare never reaching land.

But there's some sorcerer's bedevilling art
That makes me see heaven in its face,
Though glory in that aspect has no part
Nor on its shore is any compelling grace –
Nothing but a peat bog, dead stumps brittle and brown,
Two crags and a pair of quarries, both closed down.

T. H. Parry Williams
Translated by Tony Conran

The path is deeply cut into the hillside and soon crosses a steep mountain stream with another nice lunch spot one pool uphill.

From the stream the view down valley includes the remains of a lakeside slate quarry named after the lake. It was worked for 35 years between 1885 and 1920 leaving behind a number of ruins, a small underground working and most obviously the remains of the tramway for dumping the waste material into the lake. There is also an unfinished causeway built to transport the finished slates to the railway in the village, along which the Snowdonia National Park Authority has been attempting to create a lakeside footpath.

Follow the brashly painted white arrows down the hillside until you end up at a couple of gates on the edge of some better kept fields. Take the right hand gate leading quickly to the roadside, however turn immediately right and off the road. Cross over a stile made of old railway line onto a private track with a right of way along it, a few metres along the track you are asked to follow the arrows to the left and over a low brow. Near the house you cross the stream and then head out over a flagstone path through a marshy area, this leads pleasantly to the main Caernarfon road.

It is worth pausing as you cross the flagstones to look back at the bulk of Mynydd Drws-y-coed, Mountain of the Wooded Pass (695m), which guards the eastern end of the Nantlle Ridge. This ridge gives an excellent days walk, after a bit of a slog up the initial slope. Generally a quiet route, it gives fantastic views to the sea on two sides as well as back to the high mountains. A car parked at both ends makes life easier facilitating a descent via the slopes of Craig Cwm Silyn, another day perhaps. It is also possible to use an unique service provided by the County Council (and others) whereby you book a taxi for the trip back to the start but only pay the equivalent bus fare.

Rhyd Ddu to Snowdon Ranger YHA

Heading out of Rhyd Ddu we cross a complex area of glacial till containing intrusions of dolerite and Rhyolite as well as small outcrops of mudstone. The intrusions take the form of dykes and sills or vertical and horizontal intrusions either through or along the underlying rocks. There are also large areas of scree under the soil and beneath that, slate, as can be seen from the quarries. Beyond the Glanrafon quarry things settle down to glacial till with outcrops of mudstone poking through.

Cross the main A4085 directly to the car park at the foot of the Rhyd Ddu paths up Snowdon (Bwlch Cwm Llan and Llechog

Path routes) where you will also find the present terminus of the Welsh Highland Railway.

Go left past the conveniences and along the track toward the village. Ignore the railway crossing continuing instead along the track as it drops between a few houses until just before it meets the road it is possible to bear right through an unlikely looking gate and out onto fields, alternatively there is a café and a pub in the village.....

The path is sportingly waymarked with short wooden posts as it crosses the open fields and soon joins another path coming from the excellent Cwellyn Arms public house. Join this path and bear right winding over the brow of the hill. It would be easy to follow the stony track leading back up towards the railway a few metres beyond but our route lies along the less distinct but easy to follow path to the left and over some railway sleeper bridges.

This path leads gently up and over some boggy fields until it too crosses the railway at a formal crossing. Once over the railway bear left along the fence to take the second gate that leads back to open hillside.

Looking right from this point you cannot fail to notice a seemingly isolated quarry incline. In fact just behind the top of the incline and out of sight are the remains of a small quarry known as Rhos Clogwyn, rhos means flat mountain land (moor) and clogwyn is cliff. The quarry was worked in the 1880s and again in the 1920s, the incline above you was used for a short while until the arrival of the railway when a siding was built to the quarry.

The signposting is well spaced for a while now (designed by a National Park Warden with a wry sense of humour!) so concentration is required as you go directly up a shallow valley with a dry stone wall on your right and small rocky bluffs to the left. Continue walking up the valley keeping an eye out for intermittent way marking posts until you reach the back wall of the small cwm. At this point you need to exit left via a wet section before striking up and across towards the obvious large spoil heaps several hundred yards away.

There are way marking posts but they are sometimes hard to spot being weather worn so keep an eye out as you head up

towards the upper end of the spoil heaps. You will soon find two stiles leading onto the heaps at about two thirds of the way up their length. Cross the stiles and walk over the detritus following some more obvious markers.

Speaking of the Warden with the wry sense of humour, Sam gave me a lovely piece that he had written for the son of an old friend of his, in memory and homage. The friend, Al Harris, was also friends with my father and they shared many early adventures. The son, Toby, is a friend of both my wife and I, we have had the odd adventure too.

I remember that when Dad heard of Al's death it was the first time I had seen him shocked. As a young boy I didn't realise that such things could happen, dads are always supermen aren't they? The tale vividly describes a period in the Llanberis climbing scene that was rich with character, adventure and madness. It also (for me at least) shows how we are all linked through various lifelines and how past events can impact even decades later. I had been looking for a way to tie it neatly into the text but give up and just offer it here for what it is, a great piece of writing.

Harris is Alive! By Sam Roberts.

"Alan Russell Harris of Bigil, Dinorwic, died last night as a result of a horrific car crash on the A5 in Capel Curig....." That is how I heard the tragic news, on the radio at Sue Owens place in Cardigan, twenty five years ago.

Fuck, Harris is dead!

Read the whole account on page 89.

Named Glanrafon or Riverside after the farm below, this was once the largest quarry in the Dyffryn Gwyrfa, employing in excess of 100 men during the late 19th century. As with many of the quarries in the valley it did not really get going until the railway arrived, making the removal of the final product easier and cheaper. There was however an extra expense caused by the double handling necessary to change from the narrow gauge to the standard gauge when the branch line met the main line. There are a number of workings, the largest now sporting a gem like blue lake. This can only be seen from directly above as the landowner guards the site jealously and it is not recommended to stray from the right of way. Most of the workings and tunnels have been covered or have collapsed but the barracks that stand

dramatically in a valley between spoil heaps give some flavour. The cutting through which the main incline descends is also of interest.

You drop down into a small valley between tips and pass the workers cottages with their striking view before walking out at the foot of the heaps. The path now bears right so keep close to the toe of the spoil heaps as you use some old quarry steps to access a gorse covered hillside and then use a modern aluminium bridge to cross a small but fast moving stream which races out from between the final two spoil heaps.

This is Afon Treweunydd a name derived from an older word for torrent, it has a somewhat complex hydrology as can be seen from the OS map. The waters come from high up on Yr Wyddfa via a number of small lakes and Afon Coch, Red River that disappears into a marsh. It then reappears as our river and finally cascades down into Llyn Cwellyn after a short distance as part of Afon Gwyrfai the Meandering River.

Soon after this point you cross a track and continue over the hillside beyond, once again playing the spot the footpath marker game. The path winds over the open hillside and slowly becomes more obvious as it climbs up towards the Snowdon Ranger path. You finally reach that path after crossing one last stile, time now to turn left and put your back to the mountain.

As you pause for the odd rest on the previous section you will be able to admire the ridge and summit of Mynydd Mawr (Large / Big Mountain) on the opposite side of the valley. This hill has claimed two aircraft and the lives of both their aircrews. The first was a De Havilland Mosquito that hit near the summit of the mountain on the night of the first of November 1944. The second was a De Havilland Vampire that again flew into the summit this time at night on the 12th of October 1956. Most of the wreckage has been removed but reminders of these sad events can still be found in the heather on the hillside. It is illegal to remove any wreckage that you may find so I have had to leave a couple of nice pieces where I found them, a moment of sad reflection usually accompanies their discovery.

There are over 100 crash sites in the mountains of Eryri and tributes to the aircrews adorn mountainsides, roadsides and buildings from Machynlleth to Llandudno. The excellent and well researched 'No Landing Place' books by Edward Doylerush, Midland Counties

Publications, provide an interesting and sympathetic history of aircraft crashes in Snowdonia and are well worth purchasing.

Almost immediately you go through a gate and climb out of the stream gully beyond. You can now bear right along the fence line heading up to Bwlch y Maesgwm, Coll of Open Land or continue around to and down the zig zags which lead to the Snowdon Ranger YHA (if you intend to stay there).

Snowdon Ranger to Llanberis

The climb out from the hostel begins on a section of glacial till before stepping onto a wide band of mudstone running diagonally across the map for many miles in a SW to NE direction. Once over the coll at Bwlch Maesgwm we begin our descent on a peat and scree before dropping back onto the mudstone. Shortly before reaching the ruins near the bottom of the path we cross a narrow band of Grit on the way to a different mudstone, this one 'laminated' with thin sandstone bands. One possible explanation for this formation is that it was caused by variations in the level of the ancient seashore; sand being overlaid by mud (as the sea deepened) being overlaid by sand as the sea shallowed again.

As we descend into Llanberis and the end of our walk we cross a coarse sandstone / grit and finally a green mudstone that becomes the Llanberis slate formation.

Snowdon Ranger Youth Hostel is situated just above (and has access to) Llyn Cwellyn, a picturesque lake that seems to have no formal public access to its shores and as a result is driven past but rarely visited. However there is a path leading down to the lakeside from the roadside opposite the YHA entrance or via the carpark.

This path has recently been given an overhaul and has metamorphosed into a short but pleasant boardwalk through the trees and around to a viewpoint above the lake. There are some interesting live 'sculptures' of willow and there was a promontory out over the water. I say was, it is still there, just fenced off thanks to the health and safety mafia. To be fair there is a big drop from the end of the path and no fence, but I suspect that a gate with a warning on it would have covered everyone's backs, my kids survived the visit.

There is a picnic spot next to the lake and a nice inscription in both Welsh and English at the entrance,

Janus' Path.

Come take a walk down to the lake,
where night comes in the sunlight's wake;
where willows weep old fairies keep
to shadows while we're still asleep,
where they would lead us, if they could,
along old paths through hazel wood,
to see a brand new dawn unfurled
to see beyond another world.

Llyn Cwellyn has had many names in the past based around family names, names of farms and so on. The oldest incantation seems to be Llyn Tadderni for which I can find no explanation or Llyn Torlennudd which seems to have some connection with steep or undercut banks but this does not seem to fit with what you see on the ground.

The lake is one of the few in Wales to contain Arctic Char or Torgoch as they are locally known. They are the remnants of a migratory fish cut off from the sea by the retreating ice sheets. Local lore has the fish using a tunnel between Llyn Padarn and Llyn Cwellyn, presumably for social visits.

One of the many Tylwydd Teg (fairy) tales told about the lake is that of a young man from Clogwyn-y-gwin farm at gr 574 536 who followed the Tylwydd Teg home to their land and staying one night, or so he thought. In fact on his return he finds that 7 years have passed, his parents have died, no one recognises him and his lover has married another! He dies of a broken heart within a few days.

As you can see the Tylwydd teg are not like the English fairies but have more in common with the mischievous and often nasty Leprechauns of Irish lore.

From the free car park opposite the Snowdon Ranger YHA cross the main road directly to the footpath that also leads to the Welsh Highland Railway station.

Instead of joining the station turn left along the edge of the railway before going through a gate onto a track that then

crosses the railway line. Follow the track up the hillside towards the obvious Llwyn Onn farm (probably Ash Grove after the welsh Onnen for Ash) making your way to the right behind the building and quickly out onto the open hillside.

Go through a gate leading to the zig zag path that winds laboriously up the hillside before straightening up, leading you through a wall and then around the hillside as the view to Snowdon opens up.

Be aware that this path is in fact a bridleway and that you may meet mountain bikers or horses. This is particularly the case during the summer when the other bridleways up Snowdon are closed to two-wheeled traffic for much of the day.

Before you leave sight of the lake, take a minute to look back and identify the cliffs of Castell Cidwm at the far end of the lake. The crag is home to a number of very hard and very steep rock routes. One is immortalised as the silhouette used by Joe Brown as the logo for his mountaineering shops. The route in question is called 'Tramgo' (E4 6a) first climbed with some aid by Joe Brown and Chris Bonington in 1962 and climbed free from aid by Jim Moran in 1978. The lake has a reputation (among fishermen) for sudden squalls and having been forced to retreat from the last pitch of a climb by a freak blizzard (in June!) I would have to agree.

The crag is supposed to be the site of a fort though nothing can be seen on the ground, however it is the site of an assassination! The tale goes that a Roman leader named Elen Luyddog was marching north to meet her son who was in turn marching down from Caernarfon (Segontium) to meet her. His envious older half brother ambushed and killed him as he passed the cliffs. A nearby farm is still called Llech yr ola or 'Last man drop' after the warning given (too late) by one of the soldier's companions.

Elen gives her name to Sarn Helen the roman road that runs for 168km along the length of Wales. She was married to one of the last roman emperors, Magnus Maximus, know as Maccsen Wledig to the Welsh, wledig comes from the welsh for land, gwlad, and probably means ruler or holder of land. Magnus lived from 335 to 388 and was emperor for the last five years of his life before being captured and executed in Gaul by his rival Theodosius the first. Maccsen makes an appearance in Y Mabinogion, the book of Welsh folklore under the title 'Breuddwyd Maccsen Wledig' or 'the Dream of Maccsen Wledig'. The love

between Macsen and Elen is given as the reason that the Romans left Wales a full twenty years before they left the rest of Britain to self-rule.

You soon reach a wooden bridleway post pointing left and up steep grass towards Llanberis. Go up a short steep slope and then follow an improving path up the grassy hillside until you reach a gate and stile.

A short way further on you go through another gate at Bwlch y Maesgwm (467m) and immediately begin to descend the other side of the coll into Maesgwm or Open Land. This valley is also known as Telegraph Valley on account of the telegraph poles that once ran through it. A new and spectacular view presents itself at this point as you look across to Elidir Fawr and the giant Dinorwig quarries which hang over Llanberis like a grey glacier.

Quarries at Dinorwic, The Hill

This is the black mountain
labour unpacked
so much, so long, it might have
built it:

ziggurat of terraces

precipitous pilgrimage of z-bend paths

poised avalanche of scree

fissile mud-stone home of the ancient, still-perfect

segmented trilobite

wall and roof

the industrial history of a region

metamorphic headstone of a village.

Mile-high litter
of slate.

Duncan Bush.

Elidir Fawr (and Elidir Fach) were originally called Carnedd Elidir until the first maps appeared when they were re named to 'balance' Glyder Fach and Fawr. Elidir was probably the name of a local noble and is still used as a male first name, fach and fawr mean small and large respectively. Sadly this pair of mountains claimed two RAF aircraft and aircrews during the second world war, the first was a Blackburn Skua, L3054 from 801 squadron that flew into the east face in cloud killing the whole crew on the 19th of February 1941. The second was a Bristol Blenheim that hit the mountain at night on the 30th of March 1943. Again the crew were all killed, the wreckage was not found for twelve days. Since then the mountain has claimed further aircraft and lives right up to the present day.

The path has recently been bomb-proofed and drops easily down between Foel Goch (605M) and Moel Cynghorion, First Hill (604m) as it heads towards the valley floor.

Be aware that this path is in fact a bridleway and that you may meet both mountain bikers and horse riders. This is particularly the case during the summer when the other bridleways up Snowdon are closed to two-wheeled traffic for much of the day.

The Snowdon railway labours it's way up the opposite hillside and ruined hafodau (summer dwellings) litter the hillside, a testament to hill farming days of yesteryear. Some are now being rebuilt but this is probably a reflection of rising house prices rather than improving conditions for hill farmers.

The Snowdon Railway was a major feat of Victorian engineering, constructed between December 1894 and February 1896 it cost £76,000. Who knows what it would cost to build today, the latest cost to re build the summit café alone is eight million pounds! The rack and pinion system employed to get the trains to within 66ft of the summit also acts as a brake on the descent allowing the railway to have some sections as steep as 1:5. Because of the gradient the steam locomotives boilers are inclined to keep the firebox submerged whilst climbing. Three of the steam engines built for the railway in 1895 remain working to this day, it may (or may not) reassure you to know that the carriages are not coupled to the locomotives that push them uphill!

There are many stories associated with the railway but one of the oddest occurred on the morning of 11th of August 1952 when two trainloads of tourists were stranded in the summit building for nearly 24 hours. The cause of the delay was not some weak modern excuse such as leaves on the line or even rock fall as might be expected, this was something much more dramatic.

On that morning an Avro Anson VM407 had taken off from RAF Aldegrove in Northern Ireland on a flight to RAF Llandow in South Wales. On board was Polish born 'Master Pilot' J Malenczuk, Flight Sgt J Tracey and W Elliott. What followed was probably caused by an inappropriate flight plan and a failure to check the weather on the Welsh side of the Irish Sea. The plan had been to fly at 2000ft, but this would have proved impossible due to the high ground along the route and within a few minutes they found themselves in thick cloud, flying on instruments. Climbing to 3500ft they attempted to clarify the weather situation at both RAF Valley and RAF Llandow but only Valley was able to hear them and it was completely clagged in. It would appear that the aircraft was blown some 20 miles off course and because it was now flying at 3500ft rather than the safe height for the area of 5000ft, it flew straight into Snowdon. It hit a little way below the railway line just above Cloggy and skidded up onto the railway before bursting into flames, the crew would appear to have died instantly.

The crash blocked the railway and in atrocious conditions clearing the line and removing the bodies took most of the day, it was decided to wait until the next day to bring the 120 marooned passengers down. They therefore spend a long night in the summit building sustained on tea and sandwiches and by the fine baritone voice of one of the railway staff. The weather improved overnight and the whole ensemble was back in the village by 7.30am to be treated to free breakfast in the Victoria and Padarn Hotels.

As the path curves towards the north the view to Llyn Peris opens up as does the view of the Y Glyderau (the Glyders) and Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) itself as it lurks behind the magnificent and menacing cliffs of Clogwyn Du'r Arddu or High Dark Cliff, Black Cliff in the Dark Heights, Cloggy as it is affectionately known. On fine days you may see climbers on its steep expanses as well as paragliders making their way there from Moel Eilio (726m) a few kilometres to the north. It was from Moel Eilio on the 29th of July 2007 that John Sylvester flew his paraglider 194.02km to the Severn Crossing at Chepstow. He took just 5 hours and 39 minutes to fly himself into the record books with

the longest ever UK flight, a flight that most of us could only dream of completing.

Cloggy is one of those cliffs with a brooding and awe inspiring atmosphere, almost a living entity. It has a fine collection of routes of most grades and includes the earliest recorded rock climb in Wales, the Eastern Terrace, climbed in 1798 by the Reverends W Bingley and P Williams. Most of the important rock climbers in Welsh climbing history have left their mark here with routes that were all of the highest grades for their time. An interesting and illuminating read is the first ascents section in the late Paul Williams' guide to the cliff, bravery, talent and controversy in equal measures!

One of the classics is 'Vember' climbed by Joe brown and Don Whillance in 1951, the route was named after the patron of the half way tea shack, who at that time served home made lemonade to walkers and climbers ascending the Llanberis Path. This was a popular service with climbers heading up to Cloggy, unfortunately the shack blew away and for many years resisted all attempts to rebuild it. Recently though it seems to be surviving long enough to serve vitals to weary walkers once again. If you look across to the path on the opposite side of the valley you will (weather permitting) be able to make out the building.

The path drops down first behind a ruin and then a climbing club hut just as the slope levels off and the path becomes a track. At this point you will see a stile a little ahead and on your right, cross this and then make your way to another stile a little way across the rushes filled field beyond. This leads to an improving path that wanders along the riverside until it is possible to cross the river at a good bridge. The river that you have just crossed is called Afon Arddu, Dark Heights, on the O.S. map but some claim that it is more correctly known as Afon Cerniach or Hummocks. You may notice a number of WW2 rifle ranges scattered about the hillside.

Bear left on the riverbank path and then stroll quite pleasantly through fields to cross the railway line and then reach a metalled road. Turn left down the road passing (or even pausing at) the excellent teashop before descending steeply down the road and into the back of Llanberis at Victoria Terrace. At this point it is well worth turning left, passing under the railway bridge and then looking for a path (over the cattlegrid on the left) that leads back under the bridge to the point where the Afon

Hwch or Sow falls as the magnificent Ceunantmawr (Big Gorge) waterfall into a dark pool at gr 578 593.

Note, if for some reason you are desperate to avoid Llanberis then it is possible (and pleasant) to turn right passing through the teashop carpark and then along a path and track through Coed Victoria. This zig zags down to meet the main road at the Victoria Hotel, turn right here to head over to Castell Dolbadarn.

The main part of the village and its amenities are to the left when you reach the far end of Victoria Terrace. The amenities include a Tourist Information Centre, the infamous "Pete's Eats" café (definitely the most famous café in the outdoor world), Joe Browns and V12 Outdoor outdoor shops as well as numerous hotels, hostels, bookshops, galleries etc. Many visitors never get further into the village than the Snowdon Railway terminus, this is a shame as the heart of the village is on the high street. My particular favourite is Georgio's ice cream parlour, home made ice cream of many varieties including dairy and gluten free versions.

We are now back in the self-proclaimed 'outdoor adventure capital of the UK', surrounded once again by the detritus and aura of the slate industry. It is perhaps fitting to end with one more story, one that weaves together the two most important aspects of the village's recent history, slate and adventure. Few would have guessed in 1969 when the quarries finally closed their doors that their influence would continue through the antics of climbers, explorers, divers, mountain-bikers and paragliders. Few would have guessed that such a rugged and tough workplace would become a playground for a generation of 'Thatchers Climbers', who climbed on the dole. Then that several other groups would also claim the area as their own private playground, including the one from which we are about to hear. In his own words,

Australia, by John Silvester.

In the early years of flying, paragliders were dangerous.

But far more dangerous were the people that flew them.

A hot mid summer's morning in '89 sees me high up on Elidir Fach, laying out my wing above the Dinorwig quarries. We are filming a ten-minute TV filler for S4C and need some aerial shots, we have attached a brick like camcorder to the top part of the paraglider.... with long pieces of string.

Read the whole account on page 95.

Circuit of Yr Aran

Introduction

This pleasant route takes you right round the isolated peak of Yr Aran, which lies at the end of the south ridge of Snowdon. It is a fairly long undertaking being in the region of 18km in length but much of the walking is straightforward especially towards the second half of the route. There is a little navigation to do on the section from Bwlch Cwm Llan to the Watkin path and from there to Craflwyn Hall but those sections are well covered in the text, beyond that everything is straightforward.

The section from Craflwyn Hall to Beddgelert and then on to Rhyd Ddu is common to the main Snowdon circuit but it would be easy to create a new way through the forest if you required. If you are ahead of time at this point then the Cwm Trwsgl variation would add another 45 minutes or so to the length of the route. If you run out of time at Beddgelert then the Snowdon Sherpa busses will take you right back to the car in a matter of minutes.

Obviously you can start from any of the access points along the route, Pont Bethannia, Craflwyn Hall, Beddgelert or Beddgelert forest campsite if you are staying there but I have chosen to start the description at Rhyd Ddu. This means that the higher sections are taken first when legs are fresher and the second half of the day is easy walking along the riverside and through the forest, the views work well this way as does the chance of an ice cream or even a pint in Beddgelert before the final section back to Rhyd Ddu.

Geology

From Rhyd Ddu the drift geology is predominantly glacial till and peat with outcrops of mudstone, Rhyolite, dolerite and tuff poking through all in quick succession. Higher up towards the coll we are in a large area of mudstone with some (poor) slate in the crook of the valley. I suppose you could say that mudstone and slate are on the opposite ends of a scale, in between will be poor slate that did not get heated and pressurised enough to become high quality. The slate miners would have to make a judgment on the value of extracting this marginal product depending on the prevailing economics.

As we drop into Cwm Llan we pass through bands of glacial till, tuff, basalt and Rhyolite as we drop through the weathered landscape of

geological time. There is even some alluvial deposit at the front edge of the upper cwm. The route over to Plas Craflwyn is our usual Rhyolite, Basalt and Tuff combination. Back down in the valley bottom we are following river deposits pretty much all the way to Beddgelert with tuffs on the hillside above us. The route back to Rhyd Ddu is it is mostly glacial till with a few short sections of mudstone.

The route up to Llyn Llywelyn is composed of scree and peat underfoot with outcrops of Dolerite which have intruded along the sedimentary rocks below. As we approach Rhyd Ddu we are back on the glacial till which can easily be seen where the path has cut into the mountainside above Llyn-y-Gader. The final section into the village is a typically wet section of peat bog.

Rhyd Ddu to the Watkin Path

From the Snowdon carpark in Rhyd Ddu gr 571 525, follow the track past the public conveniences continuing until it is possible to cross the Welsh Highland Railway and head out towards Snowdon along the wide track beyond.

The track bears right at a red metal gate then passes the tiny Ffridd Quarry at gr 573 526 as you begin a long, easy and winding climb. Ffridd means wood or wooded country so the landscape must have been very different at one time. The view opens out to Llyn Cwellyn named after the wicker creels or traps that were used to catch fish at the lake outflow. There are other reasons argued for the name of the lake and in the main text I have used an alternative and completely different version!

Cross a stile between a couple of rocky bluffs at gr 582 525 then a few metres beyond this ignore the smaller path to the left that is the Rhyd Ddu path up Snowdon. Continue instead on the present track as it heads towards Bwlch Cwm Llan, which is hidden behind the slate tips on the skyline.

Stroll pleasantly along the wide cart road, which was built to remove finished product from the Bwlch Cwm Llan quarry but which now gives easy walking where once was hard labour. Yr Aran or High Ridge (747m) is to the right with the peaceful and very enjoyable south ridge of Snowdon to the left. The south ridge is my favourite route up the mountain with changing views, few walkers and a nice section of narrow, exposed ridge just before the top. It is not uncommon to see

no one on the route until you suddenly reach the hordes milling around the summit or 'copa' as it is in welsh.

After a long straight and gentle climb our route winds up to pass very close to a couple of quarry holes with sharp edges. A little beyond these the track splits, take the left hand option up the shallow incline leading up and over to the edge of the tips above. The track now narrows to a path as you pass a ruined quarry building before heading up to a steep incline just beyond another much bigger quarry hole. Go direct to the winching house at the top of the short sharp incline probably pausing at the top to "enjoy the view"!

A little way behind the winching house the path takes you over a wet section via some handy rock slabs. Beyond this a short rise leads suddenly to the lip of the pass and the wonderful view beyond at gr 605 121. This truly is a place to pause, from here you can look over to Lliwedd, Moel Siabod and Y Moelwyn as well as down into Cwm Llan. Sitting on a rock behind the wall and out of the wind is a great place to have a bite to eat and contemplate the quality of the welsh mountain environment. This is the highest point on the route though it is not all downhill from here!

The valley beyond is home to both slate and copper workings with abandoned buildings, inclines, tramways, trial pits, spoil etc littering the hillsides. The observant eye will make out more and more of them as you wander down towards the Watkin path, some of the positions of the copper workings high up on steep hillsides beggar belief.

From the coll find a rocky path to the left of the small quarry on the lip of the coll (as you look down), note, this is not the public footpath, that is approximately 100m away to your right. Work this rough route down to a wall some way below and once through the wall head out along the now grassy path below as it unrolls lazily across the valley side. As you come alongside (but some distance from) the first derelict buildings you will see lots of slates stuck into the ground like gravestones. They have been accumulating there for years placed by passing walkers just like the stones on a cairn. Shortly after you drop down a short, steep grassy slope to reach the remains of an abandoned tramway.

Stroll along this easy surface enjoying the view as the tramway heads towards the mouth of the valley. Go through a cutting and soon after this the tramway crosses a graceful stone embankment. At this point

our route drops left down the obvious incline but you should take a minor detour before descending.

All you have to do is to carry on along the tramway for a short distance until you reach the edge of a very steep and very dramatic incline. This has great views out over the valley below, Cnicht to the south and Moel Siabod to the east. It is possible to make out the Cwm Nantmor route as well as getting a birds eye view of the Watkin path almost directly below. This is definitely one of the best viewpoints on the whole walk and a dramatic place to take a break.

I am unsure why the following poem fits with this spot, maybe it is the contemplative peace, it just feels appropriate.

When it's Over

Letter to S.S. from Mametz Wood, 1917

... there's a blue bay
Shining in front, and on the right
Snowdon and Hebog capped with white,
And lots of other jolly peaks
That you could wander at for weeks,
With jag and spur and hump and cleft.
There's a grey castle on the left...

No traveller yet has hit upon
A wilder land than Meirion,
For desolate hills and tumbling stones,
Bogland and melody and old bones.
Fairies and ghosts are here galore,
And poetry most splendid, more
Than can be written with the pen
Or understood by common men.

In Gweithdy Bach we'll rest awhile,
We'll dress our wounds and learn to smile
With easier lips; we'll stretch our legs,
And live on bilberry tart and eggs,
And store up solar energy,
Basking in sunshine by the sea,
Until we feel a match once more
For *anything* but another war.

Robert Graves

Once you have stopped messing about with detours you should head down the incline beside the stone embankment to emerge on the Watkin path at the valley floor.

Off course there is always another distraction in such an interesting area as this. Those of a political historical bent will no doubt be easily swayed to visit the Gladstone Rock or Pulpit Rock (and plaque) which lies about 400m to the left (up valley) at a point where the track makes a marked turn to the left.

On the 13th of September 1892 the 82 year old, four-time Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone spoke to an assembled 2,500 liberals, including David Lloyd George, on 'Justice for Wales'. At that time there was a real chance of self-rule for Wales though the moment soon passed and we have had to wait another 100 years to move towards devolution.

Watkin Path to Beddgelert

Bear right along the track next to the river overlooking the copper mine workings that stand above a number of fine swimming pools. The bomb-proof track now offers an easy if rocky descent from the valley.

Soon you will reach a point where the incline that you most probably stood on the lip of a few minutes ago crosses the track. At this point the path to Plas Craflwyn Hall heads off to the right along a grassy track across the hillside.

Take this unpromising looking track as it leads up and away from the Watkin path and quickly begin to enjoy improving views over the valley below as well as the flanks of Lliwedd. The going is easy as you climb up beneath a wall and then pass through it, continuing up to a narrow coll to the right of a rocky bluff.

Beyond the coll the track levels off as you enter a hidden valley of quite contrasting character to the terrain below. It is worth pausing to look back after you have walked about 50m into the valley, the view down to Llyn Gwynnant is now framed by two rocky bluffs and gives an excellent photo opportunity.

Follow the track upwards and then as it becomes more vague head over to the right hand side of the valley and up to a marker post which

in turn leads you onto a shelf above the valley floor. Keep to this in a nice position as it leads you easily along towards an obvious zig zag in the high wall ahead. Cross a couple of small streams until you are below the wall with a steep slope to your right, bear right up the slope and then head immediately left to the obvious style.

Beyond the style the path leads up and over the ridge beyond, make sure that you are not tempted to climb up the ridge but drop over the far side looking for the next marker post. At this point you say goodbye to the Nantgwynnant valley and enter the remote feeling Cwm Bleiddiaid (Cwm of Wolves), heather filled and peaceful.

The narrow path winds towards mine workings below, passing under a steep spoil heap with views all the way down the valley, this is the route for the next km or so. Cross some rocky sections and over an old bridge before reaching some quarry cottages on a small platform.

Beyond the cottages the track steadily improves and the angle slowly eases as it follows the river down. Keep to the track until you go through a gate with a style. 20m beyond this bear right on a short track which leads down to the stream and cross this via some stepping stones, heading towards a small ruin. (If the river is up you may need to go back up along the stream until it is narrow enough to cross.)

The next km or so requires a little more concentration than the previous few so time to concentrate. Once safely on the other side of the stream turn left in front of the ruin and contour through the field somewhere between the fence below and the rocky outcrops above. You will shortly reach the beginning of a built section of path that leads under a small outcrop and through a wet section. Beyond this you climb gently up through heather and rocks onto the open hillside. It is quite easy to lose the path in the heather, but just as easy to find it again!

The path leads around the hillside and onto a grassy area before going through a hole in a wall and bearing right in front of the fence beyond. Follow the fence for a few metres until the path climbs a very short slope and you arrive at an obvious style with a bridge beyond. Cross the style and bridge then walk along the path through the bracken until you reach a junction and a marker post.

Bear left along the path as it drops down and heads back the way that you have come, all be it at a lower level. This leads you down to a wall that soon becomes a fence and then you reach a style over the fence

and enter the enclosed grounds of Craflwyn Hall. Just beyond the fence crossing is a nice little viewpoint with a couple of rudimentary benches just begging for a quick tea break.

There are several ways down through the grounds following various coloured arrows, we will start by following the red arrows of the "extended hillside walk" as they lead steeply down through the dreaded rhododendrons until you arrive at a cross junction with the yellow arrowed "Llywelyn Parry" route. Turn left and use this path to bring you down to the main Craflwyn Hall buildings. This is a National Trust property that has recently undergone a multi million pound renovation, there is a bunkhouse and some self catering as well if you fancy staying in this beautiful location.

Walk between the buildings and out the far side joining another lower track continuing in the same direction to reach the car park and conveniences near the junction with the main road.

Make your way to and over the main road turning left along the verge for a short distance until it is possible to go through a wooden gate and onto a new path leading upstream a few metres from the river. Keep to the path crossing a nice wooden footbridge before going through a second gate at the roadside next to the turning for the Sigyn Copper mine.

Follow the track over the bridge and towards the mine then just before it goes up towards the mine buildings, bear right here following the footpath sign past a small water wheel.

After 100m or so the path goes through a gate and joins the end of a very minor road. Follow this until it is about to cross the river and reach the main road. Instead bear left over the wall and continue down the riverside looking across at the nicely located riverside properties opposite. Do the same thing the next time a road cuts across toward the main road, this time following the path down an alley before emerging at the footbridge where Afon Glaslyn and Afon Colwyn meet. Cross the footbridge and head into the centre of the village where the ice cream shop awaits, pass it without a purchase if you dare!

Beddgelert to Rhyd Ddu

The first half of this section is the most homogeneous that we have encountered, it is mostly glacial till with a few short sections of mudstone, our first sedimentary rocks. Had these been pressurised they may well have become slate, as they have in surrounding areas.

The route up to Llyn Llywelyn is composed of scree and peat underfoot with rounded outcrops of Dolerite which have intruded through the sedimentary rocks below. As we approach Rhyd Ddu we are back on the glacial till which can easily be seen where the path has cut into the mountainside above Llyn-y-Gader. The final section into the village is a typically wet section of peat bog.

From the centre of the village walk the pavement beside the Porthmadog road until you reach the Royal Goat Hotel on the outskirts of the village. Turn onto the access road on the right hand side of the hotel until just behind the hotel it is possible to bear right towards some footpath signs. Choose the right hand path directly through the metal gate and out into an open field below the recently rebuilt narrow gauge railway.

This was the North Wales Narrow Gauge Railway (NWNGR) and originally served the various slate quarries in the Gwyrfaï valley during the late 19th century, having reached Rhyd Ddu in 1881. After a number of attempts it was finally opened to Beddgelert and then on via the Aberglaslyn Gorge to Porthmadog in 1923. Here it joined the Ffestiniog Railway and the two were amalgamated to create the Welsh Highland Railway (WHR).

Unfortunately timing could not have been worse, the slate quarries of the Gwyrfaï were past their peak and the motorcar and bus were providing quicker and easier links between Caernarfon and Porthmadog. After a difficult period the railway closed in 1937 and track lifting began in 1941. This process was reversed in 1989 when the Ffestiniog Railway began the long process of purchasing and rebuilding the line. Thus far the track is complete between Caernarfon and Rhyd Ddu with work ongoing to reopen the rest of the route to Porthmadog.

Take what becomes a well made path along the edge of the station area following the footpath signs as they lead you below the embankment and along to a newly rebuilt bridge. Pass under the railway before heading back up behind the water tower, take the gate

on your left away from the railway and onto a path along the edge of a field. The wall leads around the field and through beech trees until you cross over a stile and stream to reach a farm track.

Turn uphill (left) and just before passing a farmhouse you will re cross the railway. This feels wrong as you just left the railway behind and below. However, because of its need to climb up the side of the valley the railway makes a series of long turns up the slope and our route bisects those turns. Continuing up through a small but pleasant pine-wood crossing the railway for the third and final time. The track soon emerges from the wood and turns back over the stream to Cwm Cloch Canol, the Middle house in the Craggy Cwm and not Bell Cwm as could easily be surmised. Turn right in what was the farmyard going over a stile leading to open fields.

A well surfaced path wanders up the hillside towards Moel Hebog but we only follow it as far as the first culvert and a lone stone gatepost. Just beyond this point we need to strike off (signposted with a blue arrow) to the right along a vague and wet path leading to a gate about 40m off. Once through the wall turn left to join a slowly improving grassy path that follows the wall all be it a few metres down the slope. There are excellent wide views and the path becomes easier to follow as it leads you up to a new wooden gate. Beyond this there is a deep drainage ditch and a bridge to cross before the wall leads you over to the edge of the forest and an old metal gate under the edge of the trees gr 577 484.

Beyond the gate there is a shallow stream that you carefully cross before bearing left up a narrow but good path through the trees.

If you look at your feet as you cross the river you will probably notice how different the bed of the river is when compared to those you crossed near the Cwm Dyli power station. The rocks here are all slate, washed round by the river rather than the volcanic rocks we saw earlier. Just another indication that we are moving both through the landscape and geological time!

Once out onto the forest track turn right and wander down hill for about 100m until it is possible to take an obvious path up and left. Note, continuing down the main track would soon bring you out at the forest campsite and its amenities. Follow the narrow path uphill between the edge of the wood and the fields of Meillionen Farm, continuing until you join another forest track with good views out over

Snowdon etc at gr 573 484. Meillionen is the Welsh word for clover and there is a tale to be told about the house.

At one time it was the abode of two bachelors, one day they were visited by a complete stranger who claimed to have had a dream about a ruin situated some way above their house. In the dream he had been directed to look under a large stone where he would find a hoard of treasure. The cunning (and unscrupulous) bachelors managed to convince the stranger that the house in question was one of the similar name but on the Lleyn peninsular and he departed to look there. While he was undoubtedly scratching his head some miles away they went up to the ruin and found the treasure, becoming very rich in the process. Doubtless it is only a coincidence that the house is called clover?

Turn right and follow the track above the farm until it dives into the woods, keep to the main track ignoring all junctions for nearly 2km of gentle ascent. It is quite likely that you will meet families and groups on mountain bikes as you stroll through the forest, while there are no purpose made off road routes it is popular with casual cyclists so keep an eye open. As the track begins to drop you will cross a bridge and almost immediately a wide path crosses the track at gr 567 501. Turn left up that path as it climbs quite steeply at first and follow it straight over a four-way junction continuing up until you reach Llyn Llywelyn. This quiet lake is equipped with picnic benches and makes an excellent lunch spot.

According to local legend the lake was created when two giants were having a jumping competition at a point called Llam Trwsgl (Awkward Jump) gr 574 504, a rocky gorge where the river Colwyn was once crossed. Colwyn means, pup, whelp or even small. The first giant slipped and barely made it over the river leaving his footprint in the rock where he landed. The second fared much better and jumped right up into the cwm landing in soft ground, the resulting depression filled with water to form the lake.

A large brass shield was found near the lake in 1794, it had 27 concentric circles on the front and weighed four pounds. It was chronicled at that time and later but then disappeared.

Just below Llam Trwsgl is a pool called Llyn Nad y Forwyn or Pool of the Maiden's Cry where a young girl was murdered by her fiancée who had fallen for another woman. Her ghost haunts the pool and is known as Bwgan Pen Pwll Coch, bwgan being a word for ghost or spirit and

Pen Pwll Coch? Well you work it out, should be simple by now! It is unfortunate and possibly a little insensitive that an area with such a rich history has been blighted with a small building and damn but it is still worth a visit to swim with the ghost and hunt down the giant's footprint!

Continue up the track beside the lake before taking the first track on the right as it leads up the shoulder of the ridge and continues around the edge of the hill for a little over km. The track then drops down and just as it turns back upwards a large track heads to the right and downhill from the dip, take this as it leads towards the bottom of the valley.

As the gradient levels out the track meets a stream, we are aiming to go more or less directly across but this involves a little left right shimmy along the tracks. Once established on the other side of the stream follow the track on the right and then almost immediately turn left up a path through the trees, focus! This leads over the brow of the hill and out of the woods with a significant change in the view. There has been a large amount of felling in this area of the forest in recent years. This has led to the creation of an excellent thermal source over the woods, often used by paraglider pilots as they climb back up to cloudbase.

The path now drops across the hillside with wide-open views down to Rhyd Ddu (Black Ford) and Llyn-y-Gader. The early name for this lake was Llyn Cadair yr Aur Frychin so it is easy to see why it has become shortened for convenience. Cadair means chair or seat and in this instance that probably means the seat of power of an ancient chieftain called Aur Frychin. Alternatively, the Aur Frychin was a golden haired water beast that drowned swimmers in the lake. Eventually, so the story goes, it was chased over the mountains and cornered in the Nantlle valley before being killed. This gives a clue to the name Nantlle with nant meaning stream and llef meaning scream or cry, referring to the death of the beast. You choose which version you find most attractive.

The path is deeply cut into the hillside and soon crosses a steep mountain stream with another nice lunch spot one pool uphill. From the stream the view down valley includes the remains of a lakeside slate quarry named after the lake. It was worked for 35 years between 1885 and 1920 leaving behind a number of ruins, a small underground working and most obviously the remains of the tramway for dumping the waste material into the lake. There is also an unfinished causeway

built to transport the finished slates to the railway in the village, along which the Snowdonia National Park Authority is attempting to create a lakeside footpath.

Follow the brashly painted white arrows down the hillside until you end up at a couple of gates on the edge of some better kept fields. The right hand gate leads quickly to the roadside, once there however turn immediately right, then right again and off the road. Cross over a stile made of old railway line onto a private track with a right of way along it, a few metres along the track you are asked to follow the arrows to the left and over a low brow. Near the house you cross the stream and then head out over a flagstone path through a marshy area, this leads pleasantly to the main Caernarfon road.

It is worth pausing as you cross the flagstones to look back at the bulk of Mynydd Drws-y-Coed, Mountain of the Wooded Pass (695m), which guards the eastern end of the Nantlle Ridge. This ridge gives an excellent days walk, after a bit of a slog up the initial slope. Generally a quiet route, it gives fantastic views to the sea on two sides as well as back to the high mountains. A car parked at both ends makes life easier facilitating a descent via the slopes of Craig Cwm Silyn, another day perhaps. It is also possible to use an unique service provided by the County Council (and others) whereby you book a taxi for the trip back to the start but only pay the equivalent bus fare.

Carefully cross the road and re join your vehicle in the carpark beyond happy in the knowledge that a good days walking is over and whatever comforts you have planned for the evening have been well earned.

Variations

Llyn Padarn

This is a pleasant stroll around Llyn Padarn Lake, it can be added to your day or used as an afternoon or evenings diversion. There is plenty of opportunity to increase the time investment by making visits to the Power of Wales exhibition, the Welsh Slate Museum, Quarry Hospital, Woollen Mill ruin, Padarn Café and Cei Lydan Station not to mention the temptation to loiter beneath the magnificent views to be found en route.

If you do have a little spare time then the most highly recommendable (in my view) is the Slate Museum. It is free to visit with the upstairs pattern loft as well as the huge waterwheel (15.4m diameter) being well worth the effort. The quality and texture of the wooden blanks used to cast all manner of machine parts, window frames, pipes etc is akin to walking through a sculpture gallery but with much more relevance given that the objects made from the blanks are all around you and still at work on site.

There are a number of way-marked trails in the Padarn Country Park and free leaflets are available from the slate museum reception at Gilfach Ddu.

Start from the lakeside carpark behind Pete's Eat's café gr 577 604. From the corner of the carpark take the path beside the lake towards the children's playground. Follow the edge of the lake past the playground taking the lower of two footbridges beyond. Just after the footbridge bear left along a surfaced track that leads through a wooden gate and then into open fields beside the lake. Stroll pleasantly along through the fields and once through a kissing gate you can take either option when the path splits. Both paths eventually lead to the footbridge at gr 585 601, this crosses the Nant Peris stream and leads on to the Slate Museum. Either way you get great views up into the valley of Nant Peris with Castell Dolbadarn guarding the way and Crib Goch high above. The bridge also gives a great chance to admire the steam trains of the lake railway thanks to the new line extension that takes it over the river and across to Llanberis.

Once over the footbridge go straight over both the road and railway heading to the narrow access road opposite. Follow this gently up above the museum road and after a short way you will go through some gates leading to the offices of the Padarn Country Park. At a

point the road bears right to Glan y Bala house, this was the quarry managers home. Bala means 'where the river flows from the lake' (hence the name of the lakeside town in Mid Wales) and Glan means 'shore' or 'bank'. The road leads pleasantly above the hustle and bustle of the museum, railway station and ferry (!) with the odd view back across the same and an excellent view into the Vivian Quarry below at gr 586 604. This flooded quarry is now used as a dive training school thanks to its constantly clear waters and easy access.

Continue climbing along the road below some high retaining walls then under an incline until you are able to pass into the grounds of the Quarry Hospital, gr 583 606. The hospital was opened in the 1860's and is now a museum it contains much original equipment including the very first x-ray machine to be used in Wales. Go around in front of the building (picnic benches) pausing to look out over the steps that lead back down towards the slate museum. The view from here is excellent with the summit of Snowdon visible above Garnedd Ugain or 'Twentieth Cairn'. Keep to the front of the hospital to sneak out the far corner beside the mortuary (1906) with its cold sad slabs and then onto a short section of level path that heads off more cheerfully into Coed Dinorwig woods. In late spring these woods become carpeted with a magnificent number of Bluebells and are well worth a special visit at that time.

This woodland is one of the few remaining Sessile Oak woods in Wales and is an important and ancient habitat, for this reason it is a designated SSSI. Llyn Padarn is also an SSSI because of the Arctic Char that are landlocked in its waters as well as some geomorphological features such as the ancient pre Cambrian rocks in the Fachwen outcrop.

You are now in an old part of the Sessile Oak wood and the path begins to climb easily up through the trees passing the odd wooden bench and then an excellent viewpoint overlooking the lake at gr 579 609. From this point you enter a much younger part of the wood and start to descend as you do so. Ignore a turning to the left to the Woollen Mill ruin and continue across to a kissing gate and bridge of slate slabs just beyond at gr 579 612. Cross the Afon Wen and then begin the long climb up the track beyond, bear in mind that there are a few houses on this section so you may encounter some traffic.

The track climbs easily past some disused quarries and under a tramway though the view is a little spoilt at one point by the minibus carcasses in the adjacent field. All is not lost as you soon reach the

Padarn Café at gr 575 615. You can stop for a breather and if you have time take a few minutes to drop along the excellent Cwm Derwen (Valley of Oak) paths that lead to the waters edge at Cei Llydan Station (Wide Quay). Here you can reach the waters edge and admire the view up the valley from the lakeside. This is well worth the effort as there are few places that you can do access this side of the lake. Shamefully there is no lakeside path and access is restricted to fishermen only, surely a missed opportunity for the area's tourist trade?

From the café continue up the now concrete and tarmac track until it is possible to head straight on from the outside of a steep and sharp right hand bend. Follow the narrow path up to a barely visible gate that lies below the easily visible Bigil TV mast on the hillside above. You will reach the road at gr 575 618 near the phonebox or slightly higher if you missed the footpath.

Turn left and head along the minor road through the beautifully situated houses of Fachwen. The narrow road (beware cars) leads easily down through the trees and near the bottom passes Lion Rock where there will undoubtedly be a beginners climbing group or three. Interestingly for a valley of international rock climbing renown there are remarkably few beginners crags and this one suffers accordingly from high demand.

Follow the road until it is possible to cross the old road bridge at Pen Llyn or Lake's Head gr 559 623 pausing to soak up one of the best views in Eryri as the lake leads the eye up the valley and on to Yr Wyddfa and Y Glyderau. If you fancy a brew or a meal then you could do much worse than follow the minor road for 200m into Brynrefail (turn right just before the bridge) and seek out the calm and airy Caban Café in the recently rebuilt school, now home to a number of outdoor orientated businesses.

I have an odd feeling of deja vue whenever I visit 'Caban' having lived in the old school during part of my childhood. Dad was Chief Instructor at a time when the building was used as an outdoor centre for 'bad lads' from Liverpool.

Once satiated, cross the bridge and bear immediately left along the remains of what was once the main road into Llanberis. Unfortunately this road has been allowed to become a dumping ground for rock, aggregate and slurry, where there should be picnic benches and a fine viewpoint there is rubble and muck. This is a great shame considering

the reliance of the local economy on tourism, worse still is that some gates do not open so anyone with pushchairs or bikes has to heave them over the styles. As you wander along the road you will pass a couple of commemorative plaques on Craig yr Undeb or Union Rock where in 1874 the first meeting of the quarrymen's union took place. As they were not allowed to meet on quarry owned land they had to decamp here to the far end of the lake.

Follow the old road until you arrive at the new one at a point called the Lake Bends now equipped with a new set of gates. Follow the track around to the right and back away from the bends to a crossing place a safe distance from the blind corner. Cross the main road to reach the old Llanberis to Caernarfon railway line, bear left along this passing through the old railway tunnel. You are now on 'Lon Las Peris' foot and cycle way, leading pleasantly towards Llanberis. This lakeside route soon leaves the traffic noise behind and gives nice views over the lake as well as the manmade lagoon on the opposite side that has a growing colony of water lilies that give good flowers around June and July. This section of the lake was cut off from the rest when the railway was constructed and is now called Llyn Tan y Pant or Lake below the Valley.

Pass under the wrought iron bridge leading from the Kent Mountain Centre and you will soon reach the metalled road beyond a gate gr 571 611. Bear left down to Y Glyn, The Lagoons and make your way along the lake's shore on paths and beaches passing the memorial to the helicopter crash of 12th August 1993. On that day a Wessex from 22 Squadron was flying with 4 air cadets on board when the drive shaft of the tail rotor sheared over Llanberis.

The pilot managed the desperate task of getting the stricken aircraft away from the town and out over the lake where it crash-landed in the water. The aircrew and one cadet managed to scramble clear as the aircraft sank but sadly the remaining cadets Amanda Whitehead, Mark Oakden and Christopher Bailey were drowned. My father in law remembers coming out of his house in Llanberis to see the aircraft twisting and turning directly overhead.

Continue along the shore passing (in all probability) numerous canoeing groups from local activity centres until you will eventually reach a carpark and in the far corner of this is a ramp that leads back to the road. Bear left to reach the Llanberis bypass at gr 575 607 and bear left again along the cycle and footway to regain your vehicle a few hundred yards further on.

Llyn Gwynant to Llyn Dinas via Cwm Nantmor

This variation provides a route from Llyn Gwynant to Llyn Dinas via the scenic and tranquil Cwm Nantmor. The going is quite rough and wet at times, but the views are excellent and the route is interesting with a Mirkwood like forest and Rhododendron infested moor followed by open hillside.

For those staying at Bryngwynant YHA it provides an alternative to re joining the route at Hafod-y-llan (though this is still possible) and for those wishing to escape the valley floor it provides a means to an elevated position.

First locate the footpath sign about midway along Llyn Gwynant (gr 645 516), this is easily found either from the head of the lake or YHA by following the footway along the road in a north easterly direction.

Go through the gate and begin to climb the well-made and walled track leading south and up the hillside. The track soon makes a turn to the right and at this point you should climb the short narrow stone stairway that leads straight onto the field above the track. There is a vague path through the field but the plan is to keep to the edge of the field, beside the wall and beneath the trees until you re join the track at it's next zig zag after about 100m. Again you should ignore the track and continue up along the wall dodging the odd fallen branch until you rejoin the track for the second time.

About 15m back down the track is a small stone bench in memory of John Harold Huckerby (1932 – 1997) and it is worth the few paces required to sit for a moment and enjoy the open view down to Llyn Gwynant and over to Gallt y Wenallt (619m) or Bluff of the White Wood.

From this point you can follow the walled track upward with the wood to your left until you pass through a stone gateway (without a gate) at gr 644 512. The track carries straight on but our footpath heads out right across the wet looking field. There are three walled copses of trees in the field and we keep to the left of them before making a b-line for the ruin situated at the far side of the field. A little care with the chosen route is necessary to keep your boots dry at this point.

Once at the ruin it is time to head into the trees so go through the gateway on the left of the ruin and then hug the edge of the rhododendrons (stepping left and off the track) as they lead you

toward the plantation beyond. There is a wide muddy patch just as you reach the pine trees but it is possible to divert around this to the right.

Dive left and into the trees on an improving path and follow this as it burrows through the forest. The route is dark, wet and entertaining for those wishing to keep their feet dry as it draws you deeper into the woods. The going underfoot varies from ancient flagstones to bottomless mud and minor diversions into the trees may be necessary at times, but don't go far just in case you can't find your way back.....

A brief respite from the tunnel leads you through a rhododendron filled clearing then over a stile and stream back into the forest. The trees close in over the path for the last few metres until you burst out over another stile and onto the open hillside. At least it used to be open hillside until the rhododendrons came. Look around and you will see the creeping insidious death that is rhododendron as it spreads its plague like shadow, dark green and oily across the Welsh mountains. It leaves a landscape where nothing grows except a bittersweet explosion of spring colour, like carpet bombing at night, briefly bright and glorious to see but dark and destructive in its legacy.

Work your way through the bushes using all your cunning to keep from getting wet feet too early in the day until you reach a new gate at a corner of a wall. Go through this and into the grassy field beyond crossing a small bridge before climbing a short rise onto a level area. Wander along the path heading toward a distant house, there are good views into Y Moelwyn and back to Snowdon at this point and it is possible to look into Cwm Llan, almost opposite now. The Watkin path is visible and it is possible with a little imagination to work out the route of the Watkin to Craflwyn path.

The grassy path leads closer and closer to Afon Llynedno (river of the lake of birds) until you can cross it via a wooden and sometimes slippery bridge. On the far side continue upstream crossing a stile before climbing briefly beside some trees to reach a minor road.

Afon Llynedno leads upward via a somewhat tortuous route to Llyn Edno high and remote on the flanks of the Moelwyn. In Cwm Edno there is a slate memorial to the victims of the worst civilian air crash in local history. On the night of the 10th January 1952 an Aer Lingus DC-3 Dakota crashed into the bog high in the cwm killing all 23 passengers and crew. Four of the bodies were never recovered having disappeared into the marsh where the aircraft had gauged a 15ft deep

crater. The area became consecrated ground after a service by Father James Donnelly of Trefriw, and while all signs of the crash have long since been removed a lonely memorial lies hidden in the grass overlooking the site. The full story of the crash can be found in considerable detail in 'Aircraft crashes' Flying accidents in Gwynedd 1910 – 1990 by Roy Sloan.

At this point it is possible to bear right down the road and make your way to the foot of the Watkin Path. Despite being on the road this is a pleasant proposition, it is probably best to take the footpath at gr 631 502 that leads behind Plas Gwynant and emerges onto the main road adjacent to the Watkin Path car park. From here you can rejoin the main route or take either the Cwm Llan or Craflwyn variations to either shorten or lengthen your route.

However if you are following this variation in its entirety you should carry straight on along the quiet minor road taking advantage of the good going underfoot to admire the view into Y Moelwyn. After some 400 metres or so you will reach a point where a footpath crosses a road next to a small house called Blaen Nant, gr 634 490.

Take the right hand footpath beside the house, immediately through a kissing gate and into a field. Wonder across this before climbing a low ridge and making a dog leg to the left then right descending steeply down the other side of the ridge toward a more obvious path beyond. Follow this path along the left hand side of a stone wall until you reach a style which invites you to cross it. On the other side of the wall ignore any option other than continuing along the same wall this time with it to your left. At this point the line of the footpath on the map and on the ground are definitely not the same so it makes most sense to follow the well trodden route.

Cross over a track before climbing up toward the trees at Coed Llywelyn, at the far side of these there is another gate and style which brings you over the watershed and opens the view down into the valley below.

On the far side of the shallow valley you will see an isolated cottage called Hafod-Owen at gr 626 489, this is your next target. When you reach it please follow the signs leading you around the right hand side of the building and down through a recently cleared area of rhododendrons. Drop steeply down to a style and then practice walking on water for a few metres until you re establish yourself on the path beyond the bog.

This leads you down toward Llyn Dinas with fine open views and fairly straight forward route finding. Cross the odd style and make your way over a couple of perfectly flat terraces before crossing a further style into a silver birch and oak wood. The path winds down through this and sometimes a number of paths diverge in the wood, choose any path because it makes no difference. Drop past a moss bound ruin before the final 100m leads you to the woods edge, a style and the footpath around the southern shore of Llyn Dinas at gr 619 493.

You can now continue to the west and Beddgelert or make your way east along the lake path to the foot of the Watkin and Craflwyn routes depending on your route choice.

Watkin Path to Plas Craflwyn Hall

Walk up the Watkin Path to a point where it bisects the ski jump of an incline dropping from a cutting in Clogwyn Brith (gr 622 516).

At this point the path to Plas Craflwyn Hall heads off to the left along a grassy track across the hillside.

Take this unpromising looking track as it leads up and away from the Watkin path and quickly begin to enjoy improving views over the valley below as well as the flanks of Lliwedd. The going is easy as you climb up beneath a wall and then pass through it, continuing up to a narrow coll to the right of a rocky bluff.

Beyond the coll the track levels off as you enter a hidden valley of quite contrasting character to the terrain below. It is worth pausing to look back after you have walked about 50m into the valley, the view down to Llyn Gwynnant is now framed by two rocky bluffs and gives an excellent photo opportunity.

Follow the track upwards and then as it becomes more vague head over to the right hand side of the valley and up to a marker post which in turn leads you onto a shelf above the valley floor. Keep to this in a nice position as it leads you easily along towards an obvious zig-zag in the high wall ahead. Cross a couple of small streams until you are below the wall with a steep slope to your right, bear right up the slope and then head immediately left to the obvious style.

Beyond the style the path leads up and over the ridge beyond, make sure that you are not tempted to climb up the ridge but drop down the far side looking for the next marker post. At this point you say goodbye to the Nantgwynnant valley and enter the remote feeling Cwm Bleiddiaid (Cwm of Wolves), heather filled and peaceful.

The narrow path winds towards mine workings below, passing under a steep spoil heap with views all the way down the valley, this is the route for the next km or so. Cross some rocky sections and over an old bridge before reaching some quarry cottages on a small platform.

Beyond the cottages the track steadily improves and the angle slowly eases as it follows the river down. Keep to the track until you go through a gate with a style. 20m beyond this bear right on a short track which leads down to the stream and cross this via some stepping

stones, heading towards a small ruin. (If the river is up you may need to go back up along the stream until it is narrow enough to cross.)

The next km or so requires a little more concentration than the previous few so time to concentrate. Once safely on the other side of the stream turn left in front of the ruin and contour through the field somewhere between the fence below and the rocky outcrops above. You will shortly reach the beginning of a built section of path that leads under a small outcrop and through a wet section. Beyond this you climb gently up through heather and rocks onto the open hillside. It is quite easy to lose the path in the heather, but just as easy to find it again!

The path leads around the hillside and onto a grassy area before going through a hole in a wall and bearing right in front of the fence beyond. Follow the fence for a few metres until the path climbs a very short slope and you arrive at an obvious stile with a bridge beyond. Cross the stile and bridge then walk along the path through the bracken until you reach a junction and a marker post.

Bear left along the path as it drops down and heads back the way that you have come, all be it at a lower level. This leads you down to a wall that soon becomes a fence and then you reach a stile over the fence and enter the enclosed grounds of Craflwyn Hall. Just beyond the fence crossing is a nice little viewpoint with a couple of rudimentary benches just begging for a quick tea break.

There are several ways down through the grounds following various coloured arrows, we will start by following the red arrows of the "extended hillside walk" as they lead steeply down through the dreaded rhododendrons until you arrive at a cross junction with the yellow arrowed "Llywelyn Parry" route. Turn left and use this path to bring you down to the main Craflwyn Hall buildings. This is a National Trust property that has recently undergone a multi million pound renovation, there is a bunkhouse and some self catering as well if you fancy staying in this beautiful location.

Walk between the buildings and out the far side joining another lower track continuing in the same direction to reach the car park and conveniences near the junction with the main road.

Make your way to and over the main road turning left along the verge for a short distance until it is possible to go through a wooden gate and onto a new path leading upstream a few metres from the river.

Keep to the path crossing a nice wooden footbridge before going through a second gate at the roadside next to the turning for the Sigyn Copper mine.

Follow the track over the bridge and towards the mine then just before it goes up towards the mine buildings, bear right here following the footpath sign past a small water wheel.

Watkin Path to Rhyd Ddu

This is a pleasant variation that cuts some kilometres off the route and avoids the village of Beddgelert. It has plenty of interesting industrial heritage to ponder and some stunning views up into the mountains as well as out again cross the adjoining hills. This route takes you further from civilisation than any other point on the walk and consideration should be given to this when choosing a route to suit the weather.

In one sense it represents the true route of the Snowdon circuit as to take the other way via Beddgelert is to include Yr Aran in the loop. I have described it here as a variation because in my mind the spirit of the route goes via Beddgelert. It is also part of the long and pleasant route around Yr Aran but in the opposite direction.

The downside of taking this route (other than missing out Beddgelert) is that it means that you will also miss out on the Cwm Trwsgl and Beddgelert Forest sections, but 'you pays your money and takes your choice'.

In general and on a clear day the route is easy to follow but on misty or wet days the section from the back of Cwm Llan to the bwlch / pass above can be difficult to find for those used to more formal walking routes.

The route parts company with the main circuit at the point where the path from the back of Hafod-y-lan farm meets the Watkin Path at gr 626 514. The main route goes left and down from here but the Cwm Llan and Plas Craflwyn variations strike up along the broad track heading into the mountains. This track was part of a network of tracks, inclines, tramways, slides and aerial ropeways designed to transport copper, slate and men around the valley, for what is now a quiet empty cwm was once a bustling industrial area.

Stroll pleasantly up the track with excellent views of the tumbling river that falls out of the mouth of the cwm. Soon you will reach a point where a soaring incline cuts across the track cutting a dramatic scar into the steep hillside. At this point the Plas Craflwyn route heads off to the left along a grassy track, our route however, carries on up the rocky trail.

Climbing easily up the rocky and well made track it is easy to forget that the sounds of the adjacent river would once have been confused by the sounds of industry, inclines lowering slate, mills crushing and

washing copper ore, men shouting about their work. Towards the top of the slope and on the edge of the upper valley stands the ruin of the Hafod-y-Llan mill, that once had a couple of waterwheels for power. Behind and slightly further upstream are the mine areas that threw ore down the hillside via a slide and into the mill. Below the mill are a number of beautiful pools with clear and cold water.

A few metres beyond the point where the angle eases and the view into the upper valley opens up you will find a path leading to the left. This passes a couple of trial pits and joins an incline that in turn leads steeply up towards a large stone built embankment. Take this route away from the valley floor with ever improving views until you are able to step onto the embankment and tramway that lies on top.

The route lies to your right but there is a 'must see' to the left. About 200m or so along the tramway you will reach the ruined brake house and the head of that scar like incline that we crossed earlier. This has to be one of the most dramatic of all places, with wide views and for those willing to brave the very edge a very real sense of exposure, one of those places that makes you want to jump, just to see what happens. From the hidden copper mines high on the hillside to the left or the patterns in the landscape below, there is much to discern from this eyrie like spot.

Once back on route along the tramway the navigation is straightforward for a while, this is great because the good going underfoot allows you to walk 'head up', looking at the view. Your eye is taken first to the back of the valley and then above to Bwlch Cwm Llan, before following the south ridge of Yr Wyddfa up and up again to reach the very summit itself.

Follow the tramway until it is possible to strike leftwards up a short sharp grassy slope, just before a point where the path gets wetter, muddier and less well trod and so acts as a good warning that you have come too far. The remedy if needed is simple, head up the grassy hillside to join the fairly obvious path leading to the coll. The path begins grassy but after passing a low wall becomes much steeper, rockier and windier as it leads up passing a small quarry just before the coll. Note, this is not the footpath marked on the OS map and now almost impossible to follow.

The top offers an excellent excuse to rest and recover lost breath as the views back into the valley below, over to the back of Lliwedd and out to Moel Siabod are justification enough.

Behind the wall lies the watershed and a new set of views out towards Moel Hebog (Hill of Birds), Rhyd Ddu (Black Ford) and the sea. To your left is Yr Aran or High Ridge and to your right the steep entry to the south ridge of Snowdon. Our way is the easiest, dropping down through Bwlch Cwm Llan or Pass of the Leaping River, via the slate quarry just below.

Viewed from above (on Yr Aran or the south ridge of Snowdon) the quarries spoil heaps create a beautiful fan like pattern as they spill out into a damn assisted lake few yards down from the coll.

With your back to all that you have just walked through, take the few steps required to loose the view and head over to a line of rock slabs that make crossing the wet area to the quarry a simplicity. Join the obvious track through the quarries until it leads you to the top of a short sharp incline. Drop carefully down continuing along the edge of the workings to emerge on a broad plateau with a large quarry hole on the right. Follow the fence for a way until the path narrows and drops into a ravine with ruined buildings to the left before emerging onto the open hillside at the furthest extremity of the spoil heaps.

You are now joining the well made (though completely uneconomic) cart road built to ferry finished slates down to the valley. This road makes our going very easy as it winds down, perilously close to a couple of sharp edged quarry holes and out across the side of a wide shallow valley.

The views will have widened out by now to show the whole of the Hebog – Nantlle ridge and it is possible to trace the route from Beddgelert to Rhyd Ddu through the forest and even the entry and exit of the Cwm Trwsgl sections. The Nantlle ridge is a well known but less frequently walked route which offers the discerning a great alternative to the crowded routes in the heart of Eryri. Also to be seen is Llyn Cwellyn so named after the wicker traps used to fish the lakes outflow. This is one explanation for the name, there are others and I have used them elsewhere in the text.

Follow the track pleasantly and after a long straight section you will see a path off to the right, this is the Rhyd Ddu or Llechog route up Snowdon. Continue on the track passing between a couple of rocky bluffs before beginning to swing downward in long sweeping turns. You will pass the tiny Ffridd Quarry at gr 573 526 before reaching a red metal gate beyond which is a short stride to the newly re built Welsh Highland Railway. Cross this and you will be back with the main route

and should pick up a few yards along the Rhyd Ddu to Snowdon Ranger section of the text.

Mynydd Sygyn

This is a worthy variation that can be used to lengthen a day, it offers a more interesting route into Beddgelert adding about 250m of height gain and 3km to the trip between Pen-y-pass and Beddgelert. There are some excellent views, interesting mine history and the priceless Aberglaslyn Gorge to enjoy. It is often walked as a short circular route from the village and for the really hardy it is possible to cut back to it from the other variation between the Watkin Path and Craflwyn Hall.

From the foot of Llyn Dinas gr 612 492 take the steep mountain path rather than the riverside path. Climb steeply up this with ever improving views back over the route and Yr Wyddfa until you reach a shallow valley where the angle eases, thankfully. Keep going up the side of Grib Ddu, Black Ridge until you reach a junction with a signpost at the area of the Llwyndu mine workings gr 604 482, Bwlch-y-Sygyn.

Take the left hand option that leads across a shoulder with fine views towards Y Moelwyn and Cnicht or Knight which from this angle looks like a long ridge but from the west takes on a more Matterhorn like outline. The path soon reaches a stile and then drops into the top of a narrow valley, looking down you can see what look like pylons lower down the valley.

This is Cwm Bychan, bychan meaning little or small and is owned by the National Trust, it is a little gem. There is much to be seen of the copper mining that seems to have been rampant here about, with tunnels, spoil and the remains of an aerial cableway for removing ore. As well as this there are a couple of very nice side valleys to explore if you have the time.

Wander down the valley with fine views to the sea at Porthmadog and across to Moel-y-Gest until you reach a gate. Beyond the gate the path drops into some woods but it is worth stepping over to the stream just through the gate, there are some nice pools and grassy banks to take the weight off your feet for a moment.

Continue down through the trees passing some odd looking workings from the copper mines, David Bick's book is good here. You will suddenly come upon the remains of the railway from Beddgelert to Porthmadog and at this point should cross the railway rather than pass under it.

The gate and sign lead you over the railway and around the hillside beyond through the trees passing the southern end of the long railway tunnel beside the gorge. The path is a little random here but all routes lead to Aberglaslyn so there is no need to worry. The path drops down towards the road bridge just as the river comes into view and our path heads off to the right just above the river.

Follow the excellent path, now with new walkways, bridges and handholds in a fine position almost at water level. After a few adventurous steps you will emerge onto a flat flood plain with the railway bed above you. This whole area has recently been cleared of the rampant rhododendron and is much improved for that, it is now possible to see much more of the river. For the brave kayaker this gorge is a tantalising test piece, when the river is up it provides an awe inspiring spectacle and those brave enough to make the descent deserve plenty of respect.

Follow the newly laid path now alongside the railway line until it is possible to cross a new footbridge and bear right on the opposite bank. This path leads you along the riverbank passing Gelert's grave on the way to the village. Bear left into the village at the kissing gate, the Rhyd yr Onnen pub is only a hundred metres up the lane and serves an excellent pint of Guinness, enough said.

Cwm Trwsgl

This special little route is a must in fine weather as it offers great walking through varying terrain with some quite stunning views. It takes you through a beautiful hidden pass, gives views of the sea and takes you through the middle of an old quarry, well worth the extra effort.

Firstly you need to locate a junction where a track joins the one you are walking along from your left. The grid reference of the junction is 567 496 and the joining track will be coming down hill and from slightly back the way you have come. The final clue is that as you look ahead along your present route the track is still climbing gently and there is a large pine tree a few metres further ahead and on the right hand side of the track.

Once you have located the junction turn left along the new track following as it zig zags uphill. You will soon reach a lesser track on your right and at this point we will take a short detour by heading into the trees along a very narrow path just before the lesser and muddy track mentioned above. Head out into the trees for about 40m and you will reach a raised rocky point offering a quiet spot to spend a few minutes contemplating the vista beyond. Once you have drunk your fill of the view return to the main track and continue uphill for a few metres and you reach a post with the number 30 painted on it.

This post is some 250m from the initial junction, just behind the post, in the trees, is a dark stony path leading up through some tall trees. Take this path as it leads you up to the left side of an area of cleared and fallen trees. This area is obviously in the path of a fairly frequent downdraft from the mountains as there are a number of fallen and snapped trees in varying stages of decay.

At this point you may have spotted some blue paint splashes, these serve to lead you up through the woods and out onto open moorland at a rather dilapidated style at gr 563 496 having covered about 600m.

The view opens up as you make your way along the rocky and wet path with views of Llyn Llywellyn below, Y Castell (388m) above and Moel Lefn (the rounded hill, 638m) ahead. You will need to take care to find the driest route up the hillside but you are rewarded with excellent views back to the Snowdon group each time you look back.

Climb easily up above the lake heading towards the edge of the forest, you soon reach this at gr 557 496 and about 1.4km since starting the variation. Cross the stile and go into the dark forest on a good quartz path. This is easily followed as it winds through the trees passing a blue marker post and continuing down to a boggy and vague area which you pick your way through. The path runs just below the forest road until you come out onto that road after a short gravelled section.

Turn left along the road for about 50m then just before the end of the track you bear right over a new culvert along another short gravelled section that leads you back into the trees. Climb the wide rocky trail steeply up through the trees and make your way to the edge of the trees via a very wet section and a rickety stile. You are now at gr 553 496.

You have entered the hidden pass of Bwlch Cwm-trwsgl, which roughly translated means the Pass of the Rocky (or awkward) Cwm. This is a peaceful, rocky and wild place with nesting birds of prey and hidden quarries. For me it is one of the jewels of the whole walk, its impact being way out of proportion to its size.

From the edge of the forest climb briefly up beside the wall and get your first view into and through the pass. Drop down the far side to follow the wall around the back of the marshy, silted up lake below. Go through the wall and walk around to the far side of the marsh then follow the boulder-strewn path around the hillside and into the middle of the valley. Look back and to the right to make out the well disguised spoil heaps of the Princess Quarry and ahead to make out the rocky peaks of the Nantlle Ridge.

You all too quickly make your way through the pass with Craig Cwm-trwsgl to the left and Y Gyrn (The Horn) to the right but as you reach the edge of the pass you are rewarded with wonderful views over to Craig Pennant (Valley Head crag) and peak that stands out is Craig Cwm Silyn (Cliff of Silyn's Cwm) at 734m.

The path leads you to the right and down into the workings of the Prince of Wales Quarry (gr 550 498) which are spread out all around you. Follow the fence above the pit to your right and then pick your way up the very bottom of the valley heading towards the top of the workings some way above. (It is possible to make your way up the hillside above as far as the obvious quarryman's cottages and then bear right along the level to rejoin the route at a higher level)

As you climb up the valley bottom you will pass several worked areas and care should be taken as the edges of the pits and holes are very abrupt, there is also a vertical shaft with a metal grill over it to avoid. There is much to see and photograph, the view back down to the sea at Pwllheli is lovely.

At the top of the quarry you continue easily up the path which makes a bee line for the pass above. This is Bwlch-y-Ddwy-elor, which stands at 407m and roughly translated means pass of the two biers. The name comes from a time when if you wished to be buried in a different parish from that which you lived in then your bier was carried to the parish boundary for your family to collect, the pass was the boundary, hence the name.

You reach the pass at a gate at gr 552 503, go through the gate and the pass to suddenly get a magnificent view across to Yr Wyddfa. In fact you get a great view of Aran, Lliwedd, Yr Wyddfa, Crib-y-Ddisgl, Moel Cynghorion and if you look carefully you can see Moel Siabod lying close to Lliwedd.

The good path now leads you down and back into the forest, beware some slippery rocks just before the forest and then dive into the dark tunnel ahead. The path is slate based and winds easily down passing two small quarries to emerge onto a forest track at gr 555 509 after a pleasant 3.3km variation to the walk. Turn right and at the large junction just below you re join the main route.

The Stories in full

Central Icefall Direct. By John Gladston.

This route had been on my tick list for some years. However, successive mild winters had refused to let the main feature of the climb, a large free hanging icicle on the last pitch, form sufficiently. With climbing partner Dai Lampard, and a nearly successful first winter traverse of Llewidd recently under our harnesses, we set off for Craig y Rhaeadr hoping that the route would be in condition and we could bag the first ascent in years!

Approaching the crag we could see the icicle on the overhang had not yet fully formed and crucially had not joined the ice below to become a column. This meant that the icicle would be under maximum tension and should be avoided. With a growing feeling of disappointment we reached the base of the cliff to find a large group of climbers queuing for the neighbouring icefall. One of the Twins seeing us deliberating the risks of our intended climb informed us that Steve Long had done the route the evening before. After the initial disappointment of missing the chance to bag the first ascent of the season, a new dread descended as I realised we now had to do it!

I led the first easier angled pitch and belayed Dai to a large stance on a ledge. Terry Taylor and a client joined us at this point, we decided to minimise the risk and climb as one group. Terry being a Guide had all the latest kit, including Fred Hall from DMM's stunning new design of ice axe, the Predator! Curiously he was climbing on a single rope. I asked "what happens if you need to abseil off?" He gave me one of those looks and said "I have never needed to back off a route!" Impressed I belayed Dai as he made easy work of the main pitch and then anchored himself under the overhang behind the icicle. Terry went next and tied himself in next to Dai.

Soon, there we were, four of us huddled under the overhang. I knew it was my lead and I secretly thought this free hanging icicle was going to fail as soon as I put my weight on it. Nobody volunteered to take my place so I gingerly transferred my bulk into space. What appeared to be a large crowd was stared up from several hundred feet below and I couldn't resist the temptation to do a "Harry Worth" on the front face. Then, within a few moves I knew the worst was over as the angle began to ease.

I belayed Dai up, before calling down to Terry that the route was free and he could begin his ascent. Although we couldn't see him we could hear his axes bite as he set off.

Suddenly a loud "crack" shot across the top of the cliff followed by a louder smash and a rumble, it was like the sound of a large serac braking off right next to you. Stunned, Dai and I looked at each other, "shit, I tied my dog Stout at the bottom!" The noise was deafening, then silence descended. We both shouted down knowing that there had been a lot of people below. After what seemed an age we heard Terry's voice, quiet at first, so that I couldn't make out what he was saying, then louder "pass me a rope!" So he was still alive then! We threw him a rope then rushed down the side of the cliff not knowing what carnage faced us at the bottom.

To our amazement there were a lot of people wandering around dazed but unhurt. Stout was fine, if a little grumpy.

So what had happened? When Terry joined us he explained how the icicle had suddenly broken off in one piece, with him still attached. They fell together until his belay caught him, ripping him free and he then swung to one side. The icicle continued to accelerate until it hit the ledge at the top of the first pitch, there it exploded into fist-sized lumps, showering down onto the scattering climbers below.

No harm done, we grinned and set off to the pub.

Fall Line, By Matt Strickland.

It is not that often that you get proved right for the decision not to even start up a route.

Let's be honest I had overslept, waking to an irate Graham Frost stamping about the kitchen muttering that we had to "go now" if we were going to do the route. The drive from Bethesda to The Pass seemed slow compared to the high speed, conversation free stomp up to the base of the crag.

It was busy, lots of people on 'Cascade', and far worse, two pairs on 'Central Icefall', our intended route. As we fuffed about at the foot of the first pitch, little chips of ice were landing close to us. We looked up to the stance at the top of the first pitch and the thin ice with sparse protection between us and the belay. More worryingly though was that

it was directly in the fall line of the huge icicle that formed the main feature of the route.

I'm not good at having to wait to start a route, the mix of fear and anticipation makes time go very slowly. I don't know how long we waited but the frustration at our '*once in a very long time*' shot at climbing Central Icefall was growing. Alongside this was the increasing concern that there was no way we should climb the first pitch till both the pairs had climbed through the icicle, the thought of being trapped on the stance unable to avoid falling ice was not good.

Watching the second leader step onto the icicle most of the casual banter around us faded away, with everyone absorbed in the spectacle above us. He climbed up a little and then the ice cracked like a gunshot, the whole icicle detached and fell in Matrix-like slow motion straight towards the first belay ledge.

The short time between what my eyes saw, my brain processed and my legs starting to run is a little hazy. I saw the icicle fall, think I saw it hit the main crag and then ran like hell off to the right. All around me there was movement, people, noise and big lumps of ice raining down, then silence.

The sense of un-reality evaporated as the I wondered if everyone was ok, all seemed fine. Graham had run, then dived down a scree slope to escape the basket ball sized angular chunks of ice which had peppered the snow like some huge blast from a frozen shotgun. No one was hit, and even the big black dog tied to the rock at the base of the crag was unhurt.

The fallen climber seemed ok and was being lowered a spare rope from the first pair.

It was not our day, or even our year to bag the route, so off to Pete's Eats for a second breakfast it was.

All these years later and still neither of us has climbed it, ho hum.....

The Battle of the Cromlech Boulders, by Harvey Lloyd.

In 1973 I was the joint manager of Pen-y-pass Youth Hostel. Each morning I drove down the pass to take the children to catch the school

bus in Nant Peris. The county surveyor had decided late in the autumn of 1973 to devote some of his department's resources to widening the A4086 road, about a mile above Nant, more to the standard that was required of an "A" class road. Each morning as I drove past I viewed their handiwork as they slowly progress upwards, and somewhere deep down I had a nagging question about what they would do when they reached the length by the boulders, and of course what they would do with the old stone bridge, which was clearly the biggest hazard to motor traffic on the whole section.

But being a fairly optimistic type of person, I could not really get hold of the prospect of them planning to drive the road straight through the site of the boulders. When I stopped and examined the site it was clearly possible to realign the road a little to the right, and so not disturb the feature that was probably one of the most important in the Llanberis Pass. This would have meant encroaching into the lay-by but I felt that the trade off of a section of the lay-by was a fair deal if we kept the boulders.

As the day's progressed into weeks so the width of the road grew by about six feet. The work arrived at the first boulder, and by this time I was starting to get a little more anxious. The new road had arrived in the position of having the big boulder partially blocking its way, or so it was in on the morning run. The journey in the afternoon and a set of traffic lights showed how road builders' deal with such difficulties, a good size lump of the boulder was missing. (Mind you they did create an overhang, which today is covered with patches of chalk!).

But still in my world I felt that they would be happy now, they would leave the others alone, after all everyone respects and loves the Cromlech Boulders. They were a part of local folk lore; from times long forgotten tales were told of Giants and Fairies being a part of them and living under them. Hetty, an 18th century character had made her home here. I guess she was someone the road builders would not have argued with, for she is described as being both a farmer and a wrestler, who supplemented her earnings by transporting, before the road was built, copper ore in a rowing boat across the lake. It is even said that Joe Brown used to sleep under them too, so what other reason could there be to save them?

Suddenly things went banana shape. Thursday 6th of December arrived and I did my usual traverse of the bridge on two wheels (there was not so much traffic around in those days and North Wales had not heard of Richard Brunstrom). "Christ" I said to myself "What are

those two fellers doing with that pneumatic drill on the top of the boulders?" It was a silly question, but I had time to consider it whilst I continued the journey to Nant.

By the time I was returning a plan started to formulate itself, about how was I going to stop them drilling holes in the top of the rocks. Soon I was back at the boulders - there seemed to be a way forward. I would climb up to them and tell them that there was an unholy row going on in the council offices in Caernarfon about the work, there had been a change of mind in the highways department, and that they were to stop drilling till the County Surveyor, Tegid Lloyd Roberts came on site. Which is what I did. When I got on top they fortunately stopped drilling for me to have my say, and I must have sounded convincing, for they believed me.

Scrambling down quickly I then shot back up the pass like a bat out of hell – well let's say I drove fast! The phone was the key to the next chapter. I rang everyone I knew who might have some influence or could be of some help. At that time I was the Hon. Sec. of the Snowdonia National Park Society, so the first person I rang was Mrs Esme Kirby, the Chairperson; anyone she didn't know in the National Park wasn't worth knowing. Having explained the situation and my action so far she set to arrange a site meeting ASAP. I then rang Plas y Brenin and quickly they agreed to move things on via the BMC and use the contacts that they had through their management committee to bring pressure to bear on the Highways Department. The regional office of the YHA, who have a countryside department, were soon brought on board, and by 10 am the Battle of the Boulders had been well and truly launched. The next line of action seemed to be very clear, I would drive down the pass and park my car under the said boulder; an action that I hoped would cause a slight bleep in the road builders plans, and so gain a little time. Returning to the boulders there was no sign of the workmen, so it appeared that in the first skirmish we had a little success. Parking the car then meant I had to walk back up the pass to continue the fray.

More frantic phone calls were made another car was parked there (a mini van, from the Brenin I think), and because of all this desperate activity the drilling was halted. The media were sounded out and support began to trickle in. The story was fed through to John Hunt, who I believe was in the House of Lords. He immediately sent a telegram to Caernarfon protesting against the proposals. I'm sure that stories of Boulders being blown up in Snowdonia would have added something to that day in the exalted chamber!

Using Esme's words," It might be stretching a point to say that there was an international outcry, but the locals, climbers, historians, conservationists, geologists and the ordinary people who loved the pass rallied to the defence of these great rocks". It was discovered that the boulders stood on land that belonged to the Welsh Office so protests and appeals poured in to the Secretary of State, Mr Peter Thomas. Even the executive secretary of the Prince of Wales committee wrote to the Clerk of the council asking for details of the proposals, so that he could pass them on to the Princes private secretary.

We set about putting together a large petition against the demolition. A form was drafted out and soon Raj Jones's printers from Bethesda printing presses were rolling. Forms were distributed far and wide; not one letter left Pen-y-pass hostel without a form in it and a covering letter asking for support. The forms in the Vaynol Arms did particularly well, this had an added advantage for publicising the campaign. Many thousands of signatures were eventually dispatched to the Welsh Office, including that of Sir Michael Duff the previous owner of the land. After a period that seemed an eternity Peter Thomas eventually intervened and the Boulders won their reprieve. But of course the county surveyor had an unfinished road widening scheme.

So nearly three years after the first plans were thwarted, plan B was announced.

This initially involved a site meeting between the Highways Authority and the National Park sub committee. The plan was to "Tidy Up" the road widening, and yes you've guessed it, the boulders were in the way. On an extremely wet and windy morning pre knowledge of the meeting meant that the opposing forces were on site when the dignitaries arrived, so were the police. This was not on the agenda, and the Chairman had to announce that sub committee site meetings were confidential to the public, and that we all had to go away. As this was not an option for the protesters, the councillors decided that they would adjourn to the local School (I think John Redhead lives there now!) were they could come to a learned decision.

They had three options to look at, spending £74,000 to bypass them, £51,000 to blow a large piece off one, or £26,000 to blow two large pieces off two of them. It does not take a genius to work out that the councillors went for - the cheapest option. The protesters were not

happy with the treatment they received. Edmund Hamond, owner of the Waterloo Hotel, Betws y Coed, and BMC area committee chairman was quoted as saying "I was told by the Clerk that I was not entitled to stand on the Queens Highway within earshot when a private meeting was taking place. While we object strongly to what has been done, we want to behave as responsible persons, so we withdrew. Climbers will not move or budge on the issue of the boulders". He went on to say that people were not willing to stand by and see them blown up. If they will blow them up, they will blow people up with them. The headlines in the press were "The Explosive Battle of the Boulders!"

And so stage two of the Battle commenced, the mood of the protesters was that the council should leave things as they were; there had been no traffic accidents, no congestion and as it seemed to everyone no inconvenience either. But Councillor Albert Owen of Llanerchymedd had different thoughts and told the park committee who were considering it, "These are two stones, and not two families. I doubt whether we would have paid so much attention to them if they had been people's homes and family hearths. I move that we go ahead and split them for the sake of road safety". The councillors agreed with him.

The media again played their part – we even got a mention in the Editorial of The Daily Post. But their sympathies were split - headlines like "Three Thousand Tons of Sentiment" and the fact that Caernarfonshire ratepayers were going to initially find £10,000 and later £26,000 were not found to be supportive by the protesters. But the resolve to save them could not be diluted – even a school from Caernarfon got together a petition that they should be saved, with both the children and the teachers signing it.

Again the Welsh office was targeted, and it was said that the Secretary of State knew the pass and that our pleas would not fall on deaf ears. What ever his reasons, the protesters had found a receptive home and after another delay he found in favour of the protesters, nearly a unique event in the world of public protest. Interestingly the County Council never re aligned the curb, the proposed line is quite clear to see. One wonders if they have left it that way out of spite – or perhaps they will say 'we told you so' if there is ever a road traffic accident on the site.

We all owe a great deal to a number of people that manned the front line. Esme Kirby was one of these and of course the BMC Officers too. But at the end of the day many, many people contributed and when I

drive past the boulders today I am thankful that we were able to draw on their support and that it was readily given.

Harris is Alive! By Sam Roberts.

"Alan Russell Harris of Bigil, Dinorwic, died last night as a result of a horrific car crash on the A5 in Capel Curig....." That is how I heard the tragic news, on the radio at Sue Owens place in Cardigan, twenty five years ago.

Fuck, Harris is dead!

Toby recently turned up at my place, bubbling with enthusiasm about his new toy and asking me out to play. He had bought himself a 20 foot Rigid Inflatable Boat with a monster of an 80 hp outboard engine to push it through the water at eye watering cheek flapping speed. The water in the Straits that day was ebbing, the wind was gusting to a strong Force 6 and the skies were ominously dark – not ideal conditions for a first time out sea trial with such a beast. Captain Sensible was saying leave it for a better day. Captain Sensible had no pact with Al, and I was very gladdened to realise that Toby was uncannily similar in his disposition to sensibleness. I enjoyed a very stimulating ride up and down the Straits, laughing as we bounced over the waves, oblivious to the spray that was soaking us and filling the boat with water. We got back to shore at low water and during the long haul through the mud, using various Heath Robinson techniques, I noticed a round rubber bung suspended from the aerial housing. I also noticed a round hole in the bilge buoyancy tank with water pouring out of it – shouldn't we have.....?

Toby was laughing, and wearing that innocent, little boy lost, kind of expression that Al always wore whenever he had been a tad naughty - a strange sensation crept up my spine.

Harris is alive!

Cloggy.

Sometimes we would go up to Cloggy on Al's scooter; on this occasion a young lady was coming with us - the train would be better. We checked on departure times and made our way, not to the station but to the viaduct that crosses the river Hwch a short distance along the line – Al had a cunning plan. We hid behind the pillars of the bridge so

that neither the guard nor the driver of the ascending train could see us. As soon as the rear of the train passed by we jumped, Al and I on to the buffers and Elaine onto the coupling block – it worked – the guard in the front carriage could not see us and the driver and fireman, behind the bulkhead inches from us, were too intent on their jobs to notice or to hear us. We traveled that way through Hebron Station; fortunately there was no down coming train, and nobody at the station to notice the stowaways. Above Halfway house we jumped off, glad to straighten stiffening legs as we ran down the grassy slope to the track that led to Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. There were shouts from the train, the driver shaking his fists and cursing. We waved back, laughing.

Llithryg would be a great route to do, said Al – clinching the suggestion by volunteering to lead the 'hard part'. The route would be done in two pitches, Al taking the first involving the crux, a pendulum move across a steep wall that got one to a small ledge in the middle of the huge intimidating face; Elaine would follow and I would bring up the rear and lead through on the final pitch. Al set off and soon disappeared round the arête. Some time later his head reappeared some fifty feet above and proceeded to give instruction on what he was about to do and what we needed to do to follow; from our perspective it made little sense. The situation became further confused when Al shouted for slack Mabel and tight Alice. At this point Elaine was ready to abort the mission. If she was a little concerned crouching and clinging to the back of the steam engine rattling over the lines, she must by now be convinced that her companions were totally insane. I assured her that Al knew what he was doing – he had named all his climbing gear, nice to be personal with the stuff – it was just that I could never remember whether Mabel was the red or the blue rope! "Climb when you are ready," said a voice from above and around the corner. Al must have reached the ledge; it was a call for Elaine to follow. "Climbing," she answered, with the tremor of a condemned person proclaiming their last wish. She scampered up and out of sight, the climb wasn't the concern it was the company; there was a demand for more tension, then slack. The rope (I think this one was Julie) was tight to me. Elaine had joined Al on the ledge, I could hear them shouting at someone on the ground way below – it was my turn.

When I reached the sling that anchors the pendulum move and asked for some slack to accomplish the swing Al, from a position about twenty feet right and slightly lower, pleadingly begged me not to leave Marion behind. I had been sandbagged, this was indeed the hard part of the climb but more so for the last rather than the leader. I put

Marion around my neck, a tatty old sling and a rusty karabiner, and down-climbed until there was the vaguest possibility of traversing free to the belay where Al was smiling and beckoning encouragement. How I managed those few feet without falling off shall forever be a mystery. "I thought that would go free," said Al adding with a very mischievous smile – "Your turn to lead now."

The top pitch is why the route is called Llithryg (Welsh for slippery); it is steep and usually wet. Today was different – it was very wet. I slid rather than climbed the next sixty feet, Elaine and Al joined me and we scrambled over to and down the eastern terrace. It had been a good route, exhilarating and thoroughly enjoyable, and now it was time to go to the pub. It was a beautiful evening – the sun, big and red, appearing for the first time that day between cloud and sea and casting its dazzling columns of golden red light towards us – it was touch and go whether the old current bun would disappear behind the 'Padarn' before we got to the bar inside it.

Our thirsts satisfied, but our hedonistic tendencies merely tantalised, an 'FBCO' was arranged and our company, now extended to several dozen, made its way to Bigil. To call Bigil Al's home would be rather misleading. A home it certainly was; Sally and Toby were lovingly raised here, but on occasion it would transform into what can be best described as a nightclub. The old crofter's cottage on the hill above Llanberis, with open aspects towards Eryri to the east and the Irish Sea to the west, would vibrate to the sounds of rock and roll, for Al loved his music. He was also the showman, a forerunner of the artists that DJs have become today. His record collection was huge and precious, no one else was allowed to touch the sleeves yet alone handle the coveted discs within. His collections of several hundred LPs' were arranged methodically on shelves above the turntable in the corner of the living room where the open stairway rose to the crog-loft. This was Al's station where he would select, carefully remove and dust the album before placing it on the turntable, then with great precision and the lightest of touches engage the stylus. Then he would turn on the strobe or the oil-wheel as the mood depicted and as the party gathered momentum so did Al; he was happy, he was laughing, he was in control. Troyd wanted to hear Frank Zappa, Minks was shouting for The Doobie Brothers, I by now did not care; Al played Jimmy Hendrix.

It had been a wonderful day, still as sharp in my mind as it was over thirty years ago. I remember contemplating the fireplace in that most unusual of homes and wondering why a large brass screw had been

drilled through a loose slate above the grate, surely not to hold it in place? Hendrix disturbed my meditation..... "There's got to be some way out of here..."

I eventually found it.

Cornwall.

"It's too nice to be in the pub. Let's go climbing."

"Oh! Just one more game and we'll go up the Pass."

The pub was the 'Black Boy', Caernarfon where we had been quaffing pints of Bass. The game was 'tip it', a team game where two sides of three face each other across a table, the defending team having secreted the 'piece' in one of their six fists; the challengers have to guess which hand holds the 'piece'. After a process of elimination and pointing to the suspect fist the call of 'tip it' is made; if correct the 'piece' is transferred to the opposite side. Al was the team captain and on a winning streak and very reluctant to leave this cosy company of afternoon drinkers. Several games and several pints later last orders were called (there were no breathalysers and pubs shut in the afternoon) myself Dafydd and Gail, his girlfriend, departed in Al's Escort for the Pass.

We would do 'Brant Direct' – Al had done this route many times, being one of the favourites on the climbing courses he ran with Keith Peall, aka Troyd, a course they advertised with the catchy phrase 'Climb with Harris and Peall'. I was never sure whether the pun was intentional! Al would lead, but he would need music for the performance. A diversion to Bigil was made to pick up the sounds and after careful instruction to Gail, the appointed DJ, we set off to climb. Al, to the accompaniment of 'The Clash' resounding 'London Calling' through the quietude of Llanberis Pass, sailed up the route and I followed. We sat next to each other on the ledge simply savoring the moment, but where was Dafydd and what had happened to the 'sounds'? It was clear that some sort of altercation was taking place at the layby where the Escort acting as a disco, with the very loud speakers on the roof, was parked. Gail was on the receiving end of a finger-wagging from a bloke who we surmised was not a fan of 'The Clash', and Dafydd was racing down the scree towards the melee. Of the consequences there was little doubt (Dafydd was the son of a preacher but calm and compassion were not among his highest attributes). One punch and the remonstrator was backing off; Gail was now putting herself between

the non fan of 'The Clash' and Dafydd, who seemed intent on delivering some more fist-shaped debate - Al and I were suddenly distracted, a hang glider was flying down the Pass and Al looked at me and said, "Oh man, we gotta have one of those."

Martin Jones, climber and a RN helicopter pilot, had one for sale; he would show us how to use it and we could probably knock the price down. He lived in Cornwall; what were we waiting for?

As usual we were waiting for Al - the mentor of procrastination.

Pete Minks and I were waiting for Al at the White Lion in Penzance. We had survived the journey down and were grateful for the few pints to settle our nerves whilst Al went in search of Martin at the RN base nearby, to clinch the deal on the glider. When Al came in with his jaw on his chest it was clear that all had not gone according to plan. It had been almost a month since Al had contacted Martin about the glider and not having heard anything since then, Martin had got tired of waiting. As he was due to go overseas fairly imminently, he had sold the wing.

Procrastination is the thief of time and in this case - flight.

We were quite philosophical about the whole thing and decided that at this stage of their development, hang-gliders were very dangerous and we were very lucky in fact not to have secured the deal. So we decided to go solo climbing in Bosegran instead!

It was Minks' idea to go soloing. He had just got back from the Alps where he had made the first British solo ascent of the Walker Spur, and he was full of it. Al and I were happy pottering about on the Ding Dong Slabs and declined Pete's invitation to follow a party of French climbers on Suicide Wall. Pete had met one of the French group (a very attractive female guide) in Chamonix and was out to impress. Some time later Al and I came round to the base of Suicide Wall only to find Pete on the small ledge at the top of the second pitch, about two thirds way up this big imposing wall. There was no sign of the French.

"Av a look in the guide book an tell me where it goes from 'ere." Pete shouts down. Al finds the page and as his eyes are scanning the description a wide, wicked grin begins stretching from ear to ear. "What's up?" say I.

Laughing out loud now, and unable to speak, he points to the text. The beautiful black comedy of the situation is infectious, I join his laughter and the more we look at Minks then at one another the more we laugh. Even the gulls seem affected and are screeching a primordial cacophony in this towering theatre of Cornish granite.

"What the fuck's up with you pair of prats?" yells Pete.

Our laughter abated and we decided to read out the text together.

"Stand on your second's shoulder." We both shouted and immediately fell about in helpless laughter once again.

Milking the situation for all its worth, Al teases Pete and suggests that we call out the Rescue Team. The parries in this strange pantomime continue for some time until Al and I rope up and climb up to the ledge that Pete has been standing on for some considerable time by now. He joins our rope and we finish the climb.

A strange kind of tension hangs over us as we walk away from the cliff; it is still there when we sit in the Rajule enjoying a beer. Al is talking to Willie the landlord, at 83 the oldest one in Britain and a wonderful character. He worked, as a lad, in the copper mines that go far out under the sea and is telling Al all about them. Al returns to the table with more pints and proclaims that Willie has told him how we can get into the mines, now derelict and very dangerous. Pete accepts his pint and says:

"Harris you are a twat!" The tension is still there – I look at Al he is wearing that little boy lost face, Pete is not sure what face to wear, I smile, Pete smiles. Somewhere I imagine Joe Strummer of the Clash singing "After all this won't you give me a smile?" Al grins, we all laugh. 'Normal insanity' is resumed.

"Let's go down the mines."

Australia, by John Silvester.

In the early years of flying, paragliders were dangerous.

But far more dangerous were the people that flew them.

A hot mid summer's morning in '89 sees me high up on Elidir Fach, laying out my wing above the Dinorwig quarries. We are filming a ten-minute TV filler for S4C and need some aerial shots, we have attached a brick like camcorder to the top part of the paraglider.... with long pieces of string.

After securely tying the final knot, Alun turns the camera on, and then helps it delicately into the air, the camera spins gently in its cut up milk carton. Everything seems ok and it's not long until it is flying with me, soaring the upper south facing walls of the biggest of all the quarry holes, Australia.

Nice, pleasant thermals are raising me up on a gentle, warm wind, everything seems fine, tempting me in closer to the steep black cliffs, enticing me to find some better, stronger lift... whilst all the time, unbeknown to me, a northerly sea breeze is blowing in strongly from behind.

BOOF!... the glider collapses viciously above me and a familiar paragliding fairground ride begins. Initially it is just freefall, which I attempt to cut short by hitting the brakes hard to re-inflate the wing, but that just adds a spin to the manoeuvre, I counter this with a sharp right hand turn. Looking up I see only the tips of my paraglider. The rest is neatly tied up in the camera strings and it is immediately obvious that I am definitely going down into the depths of Australia.

A climber's instinct for falling onto the least spiky stuff takes over and I exert what little directional control I have towards the miniscule flat bit in the very middle of the quarry hole. It seems a futile effort but is the only thing I can think of doing. I use my right hand to constantly tweak the brake that prevents me spinning, whilst mentally calculating my glide-angle over a graveyard of razor sharp boulders.

Boulders now approaching with the closing speed of a car crash.

I am not going to make it, no way, but it doesn't really sink in until the ground-rush comes up to meet me, with venom.

"THE RESERVE"...that stupid thing you always clip on to the front of your harness, "THROW IT".

I reach with my left and throw the missile with passion, whilst cursing myself with the words "TOO LATE".

BOOF!...And then its all over, everything is quiet, draped in the soft white fabric of ripstop nylon.

Ridiculously I am on my feet, standing on top of a boulder the size of a minibus... whilst unbelievably, the beautiful multicoloured Apco parachute is draped over another huge boulder behind. Amazing.

I am the luckiest ***** ***** alive and the world somehow seems a more beautiful place. I give out a manic 'I don't believe it' laugh that reverberates around and around the steep slate walls, echoing on and on, until, I hear a small, far off cry from Alun a thousand feet above me.

"Are you OK?"

And, because I was.

And, because we were the stupid dangerous people that we were, I packed up and flew again.

Without a reserve.

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Welsh Terms

Afon	River
Bach	Small
Blaen	Front
Brith	Speckled
Bwlch	Pass
Cam	Step
Canol	Middle
Carnedd	Cairn
Castell	Castle
Cefn	Back / behind
Ceunant	Gorge / ravine
Coch	Red
Coed	Wood
Copa	Summit
Craig	Cliff
Crib	Comb \ ridge
Cwm	Corrie
Dol	Meadow
Dyffryn	Valley
Ddu	Black
Ffridd	Wood / woodland
Glas	Grey / blue / green
Is	Lower
Isaf	Lower
Llyn	Lake
Llwyn	Grove
Mawr	Big / large
Mynydd	Mountain
Nant	Stream
Pen	Head / top
Pwll	Pool
Rhaeadr	Waterfall
Rhos	Moor
Rhyd	Ford
Uchaf	Upper
Uwch	Above
Wen	White

Geological Terms

Igneous	Rocks formed from cooled magma or molten rock.
Sedimentary	Rocks formed from sediments of various types.
Metamorphic	Rocks formed by the heating and pressurising of other rock types.
Rhyolite	A very viscous and silica rich volcanic rock that can form volcanic dykes and sills, it may have a glassy appearance.
Dolerite	Similar to Rhyolite but the 'low silica' version, forms intrusions such as dikes (where it cuts through the bedrock) or sills where it pushed along the grain of the bedrock. Weathers into domes often found in swarms radiating from the volcanic centre.
Basalt	The most common volcanic rock often found on the ocean floor as pillow lava, a fine grained matrix with large crystals and dark, it may contain air pockets.
Breccias	A rock made up of angular fragments of other rocks or minerals held together with a cementing agent. There are many types from sedimentary to igneous and the cement may be similar or different to the fragments within.
Mudstone	A very fine grained sedimentary rock with the grains too small to see with the naked eye.
Slate	A fine grained metamorphic rock formed from the heating and pressurising of sedimentary mudstone.
Tuff	Rocks formed from pyroclastic ash flows from volcanic activity. If the ash flows were hot enough the particles would weld together as they settled forming a solid rock.
Intrusion	Where an igneous rock cuts through an older rock.

Dyke	A near vertical igneous intrusion through an older rock, they tend to be long, thin and deep and can be found in clusters or 'swarms' around a source. Intrusions into slate can cause the abandonment of a mine due to its weakening effect on the rock making mining unsafe.
Sill	A horizontal igneous intrusion where the molten rock has worked its way along the grain or strata of the older rock. Tectonic processes may move both dykes and sills away from their original aspect.
Glacial Till	Till is unsorted glacial sediment, deposited directly by the glacier via its moraines. As the glacier melts much of the finer deposits can be washed away, it can be made up of clay, sand, gravel and boulders.
Erratic	Rocks and boulders carried from their original positions by glaciers
Moraine	Accumulations of unconsolidated glacial debris, these may be alongside the glacier or lateral moraine, at the end of the glacier or terminal moraine and under the glacier or ground moraine.
Peat	Accumulations of partially decayed vegetable matter.
Alluvium	Soil and sediments deposited by rivers and running water, typically silt, clay, sand and gravel. Fast running sections of river pick up alluvium and then deposit it when the river slows in deltas, flood planes and lakes.
Syncline	A downward curving fold of rock with layers that dip towards the middle of the fold, like a stack of bowls.

Locality

Croak of the raven will echo from Pendist Mawr
On Snowdon's slopes when I fight with the giant death.

And weeping from Nant-y-Betws and Drwy-y-Coed
And from Cae'r-Gors bridge when the verdict is announced.

A scar will crease the face of Llyn Cwellyn, and on
Llyn y Gadair too wrinkles that weren't there before.

A crack will appear on the schoolhouse by the road
When the news is told to the listening telephone.

A crick will contract Eryri and through the flow
Of Gwyrfai river the cramp of my death will creep.

This is not a mere madman's fantasy-thinking –
There are bits of me scattered all over that land.

T. H. Parry Williams

Translated by R. Gerallt Jones