

A large sycamore tree stands amongst the remains of another derelict dwelling (Gelli) as the track trends more steeply left. A wooden footpath signpost here points the way right (eastwards) along a narrower path traversing the hillside above the oak woods.

Take this path and a fine vista unfolds below of the patchwork quilt of the field boundaries, meandering river, Rheidol falls, and the Vale of Rheidol railway line, once used to export ore from the mines to Aberystwyth harbour.

This fine path carries on through an old fence line and skirts the edge of pasture land beyond. Having clambered over the stile and crossing the field beyond down to a gate the route takes you over huge pipes feeding the Rheidol Hydro-Electric Power Station below. The pipes come all the way from Nant y Moch reservoir some 8 miles away and are identified only by two ornate metal ventilation valves that emerge from the ground to the right of the path.

In front now is the prominent hill fort of Bwa Drain. To the left, a mine with the same name can be distinguished. The route leaves the steep wooded slopes of the Rheidol valley behind and heads left after the gateway and follows the track through another gate, past the gable of a ruined house, over a stream, to another stile beside a gateway at the roadside. Turning right and walking down the road towards the farm that shares the same name as the hill fort, a metal water wheel can be seen lying on the verge. Before entering the farm itself turn left along the tarmac road. This quiet lane follows Nant Bwa Drain back up the hill and, after passing a pond and going underneath the power lines, reaches the road along which the walk started.

You have only now to retrace your steps along the 'string of the balloon' so to speak, first right then left down the road. Turn right through the gates where the ruined miners' cottages are and double back, over the hill and down to the start point. As you descend towards the visitor centre Plynlimon, the highest summit in Ceredigion commands the skyline ahead.

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Spirit of the Miners Walks

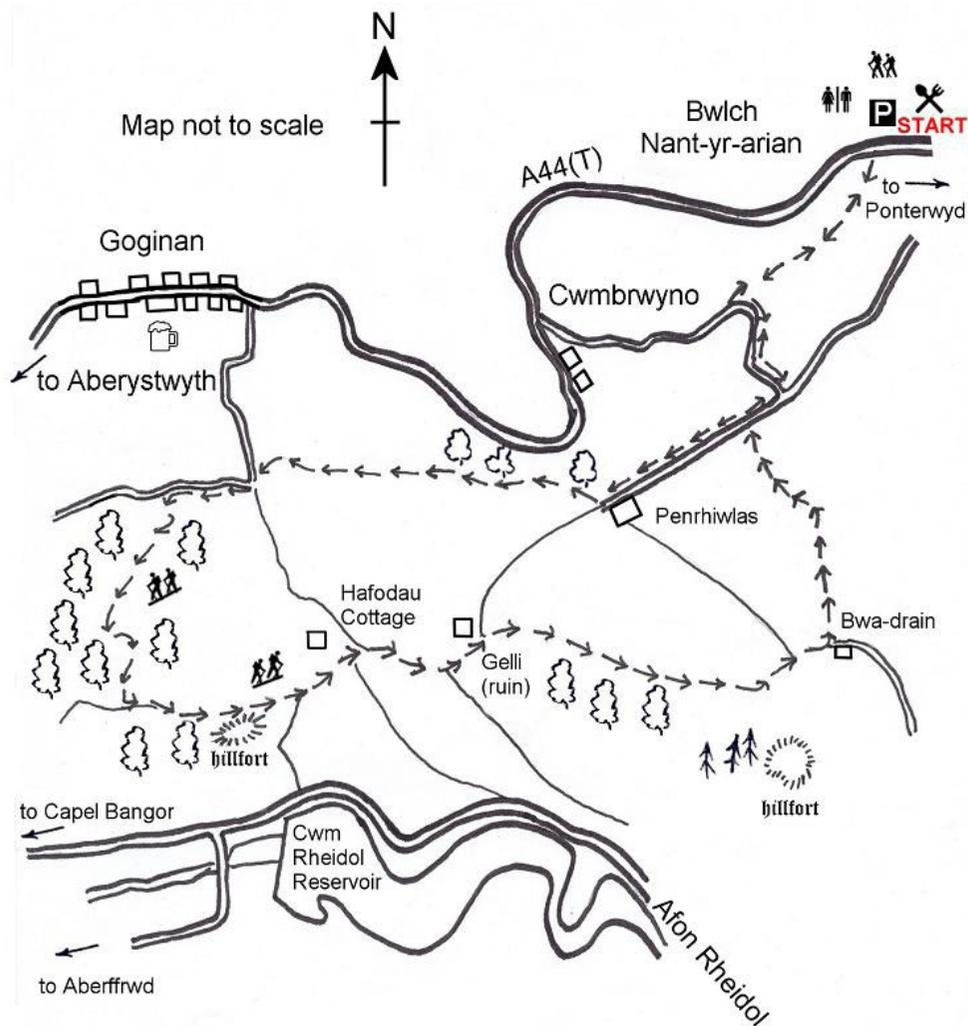


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CIRCULAR WALK: NANT YR ARIAN

- Distance & time:** 11K / 7 miles. 3 hours
Terrain: Open fields, paths, tracks and quiet country lanes crossing upland pasture and exploring wooded valleys. Some steep sections but these are rewarded with memorable views from paths along the rim of the Rheidol valley.
- Suitable for:** Most sections suitable for all the family.
Grade: **This is a grade B walk** graded according to the following criteria:
- A Strenuous:** Ability to walk on rough terrain for up to 6 hours with a light rucksack
 - B Moderate:** Ability to walk on rough terrain for up to 4 hours with a light rucksack
 - C Easy:** Ability to walk on rough terrain for up to 2 hours with a light rucksack
- Start & finish:** Bwlch Nant yr Arian Forest Visitor Centre, located just off the A44 (SN 718 812)
- Refreshments:** Llywernog, Ponterwyd & Forest Visitor Centre
Public Toilets: Public toilets + facilities for disabled persons at the Forest Visitor Centre
- Public transport:** Consult Aberystwyth Tourist Information Centre 01970 612125 or ring Traveline Cymru on 0870 608 2608.
OS Explorer 213, Aberystwyth & Cwm Rheidol
- Maps:**

CEREDIGION



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Park at the Forestry Commission Wales Forest Visitor Centre (car park charge). Carefully cross the road and take the stile opposite the entrance to the Forest Visitor Centre from the A44..

Climb straight up the hill perpendicular to the road, crossing the entrance drive that leads to a mast on your right. Do not head for the mast, walk straight uphill and, when they become visible, keep the turbines and pylons to your left. Do not follow a way-marker for the Mal Evans Way branching off to the left, carry on bearing slightly right and make for a gateway that comes into view.

From the gateway a permissive path heads right (west), ignore this and carry straight on down the hill, traversing the slope to a quarried area. A track leads down to the road through two gates above the ruined mine buildings, the chimney of one still intact.

Turn left along the road with the pond that fed the mining machinery on your left. The road crosses a stream then rises, take the track to the right which joins the road to Penrhiwlas farm. After passing a turning with a cattle grid to the left a short rise opens up panoramic views of Goginan below as the road follows the ridge above the old Cwmbwrwyno mines where some of the wheel pits can still be identified. There were two crushing mills and four large waterwheels (one of 48ft. in diameter) together with five smaller wheels at the dressing floors. Some 6000 tons of ore were extracted.

Wheel the gate open and pass by the farm. After the farm buildings the tarmac ends and there is a crossroads. Take the right hand turn and follow the track, hewn out of the bedrock, that contours the hill above the A44 below, ignoring the stiles to the right.

Eventually, after the second gateway, the route leaves the road below behind and heads towards the more peaceful Rheidol Valley with the hill fort of Pendinas, near Aberystwyth directly in front. The track along which you are travelling is an unclassified road which means that motorised vehicles, cyclists, horse riders and walkers alike enjoy the right to use it.

The track approaches a tarmac road that rises steeply from Goginan, go through the kissing gate, cross straight over, along the tarmac road signposted as a 'dead end'.

On your right stunted sessile oaks, so typical of this area, bear witness to the poor acidic soils and constant hammering they receive from the prevailing south westerly winds. Shortly, a bridleway signpost appears, enter the field on the left and on through a small metal gate to enter woodland below. Follow the well defined path down steeply to the stream below. In spring this path is carpeted in bluebells.

Ford the stream, go through the gateway and follow the track down with the stream on your right. The path emerges onto a track through an iron gate by a wooden bridleway signpost. Turn left (east), and follow the lane that steadily climbs with another stream below on the right. Pass by a gateway marking a permissive path entering woodland to the right and continue climbing.

The mound on the skyline to the right is the site of an iron-age hill fort, one of many which pepper the hillsides in the area. It is thought these forts were built to defend the wealth generated by the mines.

Ignore a wooden footpath sign to the right, carrying on to a gateway where the path emerges onto pasture. Ahead and to the right the three summits of Tŷ'n Castell stand out, this is another hilltop fort above Devil's Bridge on the opposite side of the Rheidol Valley. The path eventually passes by Hafodau cottages where the stream has adopted the track as its new course. Pick your way carefully along the stream bed and bear right up past the ruins of yet another old dwelling (Gwar-Ilyn), through a gate and past another wooden footpath signpost.