

Spirit of the Miners Walks

Leave the woods and skirt the field below Dolgamfa farm. Cross the stile on the top left hand corner of the field and follow the lane below the trees. Leave this field climbing more steeply up to a gateway beside a ruin. Follow the track up to the left and join the track leading down to Dolgamfa. Continue until you reach the tarmac road at Llwynteifi Isaf farm. Straight ahead is Devil's Bridge, on the other side of the gorge and behind you is the summit of Pumlumon.

The road turns to the right and just after the second gateway, by a ruin on your right, take a stile in the hedgebank to your left. Drop down to a footbridge and climb the bank ahead to a lane leading to Penrhiw farm. Turn left along a lane, passing by a well in the stone wall on your right, to meet a junction. Turn right here to drop steeply down into Cwm Rheidol. Entering the woodland, on your left there is a stand of fine Scots pine trees. These trees have an association with rights of way. Overnight stops for animals to rest and feed were often marked by small groups of them and they were often planted along difficult sections of routes.

To the right a fine view unfolds of Cwm Rheidol with the track of the steam railway directly opposite passing underneath Tynycastell. This steep path is much shorter than the signposted Borth to Devil's bridge path -though both lead to the same point. At the bottom of the steep descent double back right, down the gravel track, past a few cottages to reach the tarmac road beyond Llain, to the right the orange slopes of Cwm Rheidol mines stand out and down below to your left the aqueduct that carried the water to power the mill wheels can be seen. A steep aerial ropeway carried the concentrates to the Vale of Rheidol railway and power for the dressing plant was provided by a turbine.

There are fine swimming pools in the river to your left, a good place to stop for a picnic. Carry on down past the filter beds and cross the river by the concrete bridge on your left. Climb to the stile beside the gate and carry straight on avoiding the steep footpath to your right. This fine path follows the river, below you to the left, until you enter the woodland and begin the steep climb to Devil's Bridge by bearing right as directed by the waymark sign.

American Red Oaks, to your left, give a magnificent display of golden leaves in the autumn. The Noble Fir to your right have blisters on the bark which, when broken, reveal the aromatic essence of the sap.

The path zigzags up to the railway line and the steep climb is rewarded with spectacular views. The path enters a hidden cwm and crosses the river by a wooden footbridge near a small waterfall. Here can be seen the remains of the old turbine shed that used to supply power to Devil's Bridge.

Follow the path round to the kissing gate beside the railway line once more and climb up through the oaks. You are now nearing the end of your walk as the path veers right past the extremely prominent waymark signpost and out onto the road through a wooden gate by the 30mph signpost. Turn left and proceed with care along the road back to the start point in the village.

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For further information on holidays in Ceredigion contact the Aberystwyth Tourist Information Centre, Terrace Road, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, Wales SY23 2AG Tel: 01970 612125

Email: AberystwythTIC@Ceredigion.gov.uk

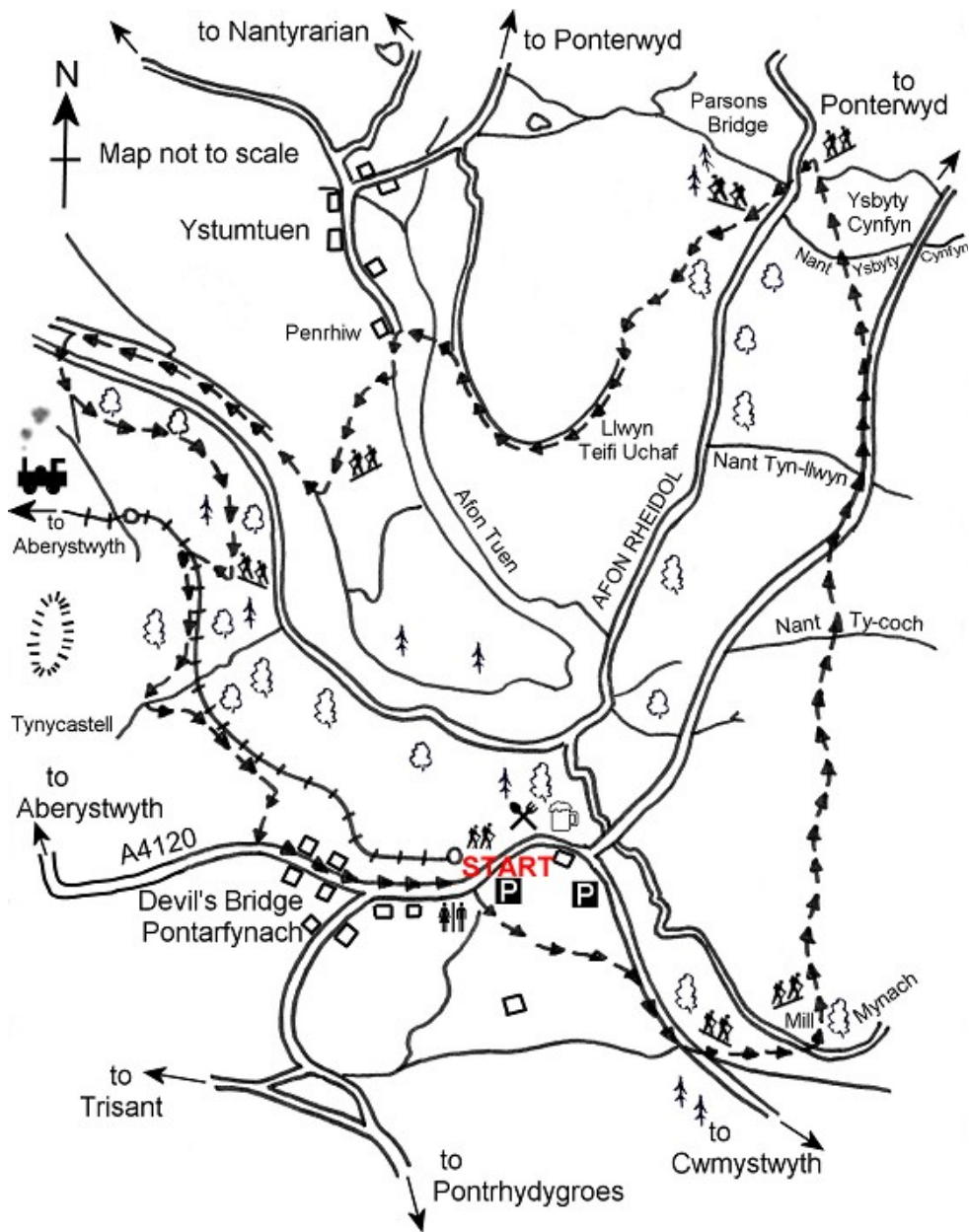


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CIRCULAR WALK: DEVIL'S BRIDGE

Distance & time:	10K / 6 miles. 3hours
Terrain:	Open fields, steep woodland trails with three spectacular river crossings
Suitable for:	Moderately fit walkers. The walk crosses steep ground.
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:	Devil's Bridge (SN 738 767), opposite the Vale of Rheidol railway station
Refreshments:	Devil's Bridge – a choice of facilities
Public Toilets:	Devil's Bridge, at the start of the walk
Public transport:	Consult Aberystwyth Tourist Information Centre 01970 612125 or ring Traveline Cymru on 0870 608 2608.
Maps:	OS Explorer 213, Aberystwyth & Cwm Rheidol

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Directly opposite the Vale of Rheidol Railway station car park a tarmac lane leads up to public toilets. The footpath divides here. Take the left fork, pass through a gate and follow the track heading east.

Carry straight ahead first before making for the trees on the bank to your left. Cross over the knoll to emerge on the road. Proceed with caution to the right. The road bends to the right and then to the left. Just after the left hand bend there is a brideway sign on your left, go through the gate and immediately leave the brideway and drop left down the sign posted footpath.

This path leads down to the ruin of Bodcoll Woollen Mill. As you cross the footbridge note the outflow from the mill built into the stone work and the fine pools nearby. The river Mynach feeds the famous punch bowl waterfall which tumbles into the Rheidol Valley below Devil's Bridge.

Carry on up past the old ruined mill house, with what appears to be the old wheel pit on your right. Leave the woodland and enter the pasture above climbing with the rocky crest on your immediate right, until you reach a gate to the right of which is a stile. Ignore the track off to your right continuing straight on, heading north.

Pass a quarried area on your right and bear right through the oak trees ignoring a track down to your left (leading to the farm and caravan site). Follow the track uphill slightly, at the bottom of the oak woods, until you reach a stile on your left. Cross the stile and ford the stream, go through the gateway and proceed to a stile ahead on the skyline to join a track which traverses diagonally across the hill leading to a gateway.

Pass through the gate and cross the stream to another stile on your left. Follow the lane down and take the stile on your right - head straight across the field in the direction of Erwbarfe Farm to the north. Drop down to the lay-by on the main road.

Turn right and carefully follow the busy road leading to Ponterwyd. There are verges to both sides with a caravan park on the left. After the lay-by on your right it is probably best to take the verge on your left as you pass by the farm. The deep gorge of the river Rheidol is below you to your left. The heather and bracken bank on the other side of the gorge is Bryn Bras, a Local Nature Reserve.

A lay-by appears under the trees on the left hand side of the road not long after the farm, after the triangle of trees enter the gateway and follow the path that drops diagonally down across the field towards the trees. The knoll straight ahead is just above the churchyard of Ysbyty Cynfyn, home of the grave of the first set of quads to be recorded in Wales. The quads lived in a remote house called Nantsyddion, but did not survive long before falling victim to smallpox. The churchyard is also famous for the fine standing stones that appear as if built into its surrounding wall, two being used as gateposts. The reality, of course, is that the church and churchyard were built on the site of an ancient stone circle.

Go down to the stream, cross the footbridge and head diagonally across the field to a gap in the stone wall. Proceed to a stile at the top of the gorge. There is a steep drop down to the left, take care here and take the higher of the two paths (way marked) to join the path that leads down towards Parsons Bridge.

This path is steep as it zigzags down the steep valley side. Ahead are the ruins of Temple Mine, a spectacular location. Extracting ore in such a location required 1¼ miles of leat, much of which was built with pitch pine boards. A 40ft by 4ft waterwheel was installed which pumped the underground shafts via flat rods, worked a compressor for rock drills and operated an inclined tramway at the surface via pulleys and 400 fathoms of steel rope.

The bridge crossing the river was installed by a helicopter. Note how the river has scoured gorges and circular holes in the bedrock. Legend has it that gold collects in the residues at the bottom of these circular holes. Climbing steeply up from the bridge, take the left hand fork in the path heading upwards in a south westerly direction below a stand of larch. In wet weather a spectacular waterfall can be seen on the opposite bank of the gorge at this point.