

3-5 Llan Ffestiniog to Penmachno

59 61 63

Distance 13.3 miles 21.3 km

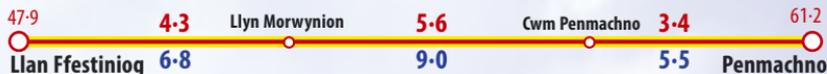
Terrain rough paths, open moorland with very boggy sections, quarry tracks

Grade steep climb out of Cwm Cynfal, then steep descent into Cwm Penmachno followed by undulating forest walk into Penmachno

Food and drink none between Llan Ffestiniog and Penmachno

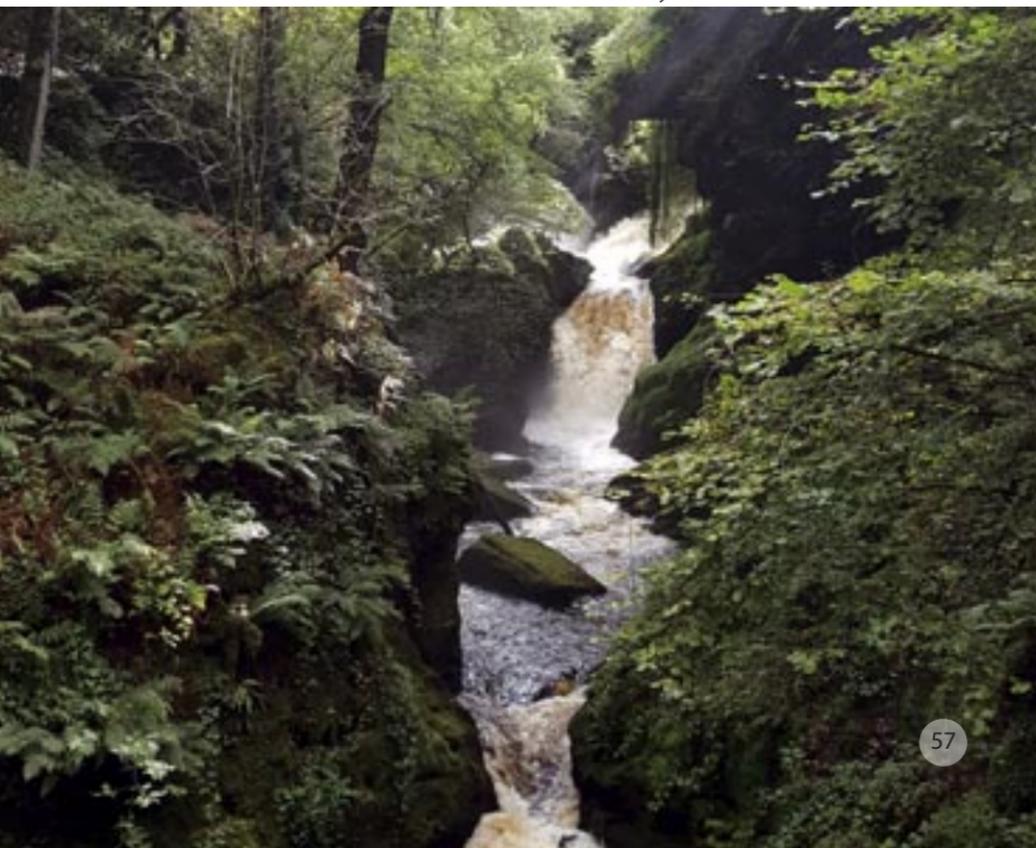
Side-trips Rhiwbach quarry and village remains, Cwm Heritage Drop-in Room, St Tudclud's church

Summary a tough but rewarding day, from the spectacular gorge and waterfalls of the Afon Cynfal to open moorland and a taste of real wilderness, followed by a steep descent to the remote ruined village and quarry of Rhiwbach



- From the Pengwern Arms, turn right down the road for just a few metres and cross over. Go through the gate into the field at the sign 'Rhaeadr Cynfal Falls'. Walk down the field to another gate on your left, signposted to the falls.
- Cross the field, aiming about 50 m left of the pole-mounted electricity substation, making for a footbridge in the bottom of the field. Climb the hill to a gate and along the path until you see two metal gates next to each other. Take the one on the right, signed 'Cynfal Falls'.
- Follow a broad grassy track alongside the wall/fence on your left, which takes you into the Cwm Cynfal Nature Reserve. Immediately turn right down the steps to the viewpoint. Cwm Cynfal is a hidden gem, little frequented but beautiful.

Cwm Cynfal



- After the viewpoint, turn right along a narrow path and follow the river upstream to join the main path. Descend this path down steps, cross the river and go up more steps to a path crossroads.
- Turn left at the crossroads, with the river to your left. This path hugs the edge of the gorge and is narrow in places. Exciting views may be enjoyed from the gorge edge, but take care.
- Pass under the towering viaduct, which carries the disused Blaenau Ffestiniog to Trawsfynydd railway. Continue up and down steps, through walls and over bridges, always with the rushing Afon Cynfal on your left.
-  Cross a half-stile and turn right to reach a lane where you go left. At the road junction, bear left until you meet the main road (A470): beware of traffic. Go into the fields opposite over a stile located just behind the end of the bridge parapet.
- Follow the fence and the river on your left until you reach a gate slightly up the slope. Skirt the steep bank on your left.
- The public footpath bears sharply left but this area can be boggy: to avoid the bog you may prefer to pass above four large boundary trees to reach a gap in the wall at the lower edge of the slope.
- Once through the gap, keep to the dilapidated wall on your left. Pass through a gate into an area of reeds crossed by a clear path that leads to a stile into the woods.
- Go left along the forest track, passing an abandoned building on your left to reach a stream which the track crosses on an embankment. Before the stream, take the rough track that goes left to a sturdy wooden footbridge over the river. Cross the field, climbing to the gate at the top right corner.
- Turn right along the lane. At a fork, take the left track signed 'Fferm Cwm farm'. Just before this historic farm (see panel on page 59) go through the gate on the left into the field. Follow the wall and fence on your right, eventually to cross a stile. Afterwards, the route climbs left up the steep slope.
- Ascend a grassy path through the bracken, broadly along the field boundary and then beside a stream on your left. Near a small waterfall, bear right and continue with the fence on your left.

Cwm Cynfal near Cwm farm





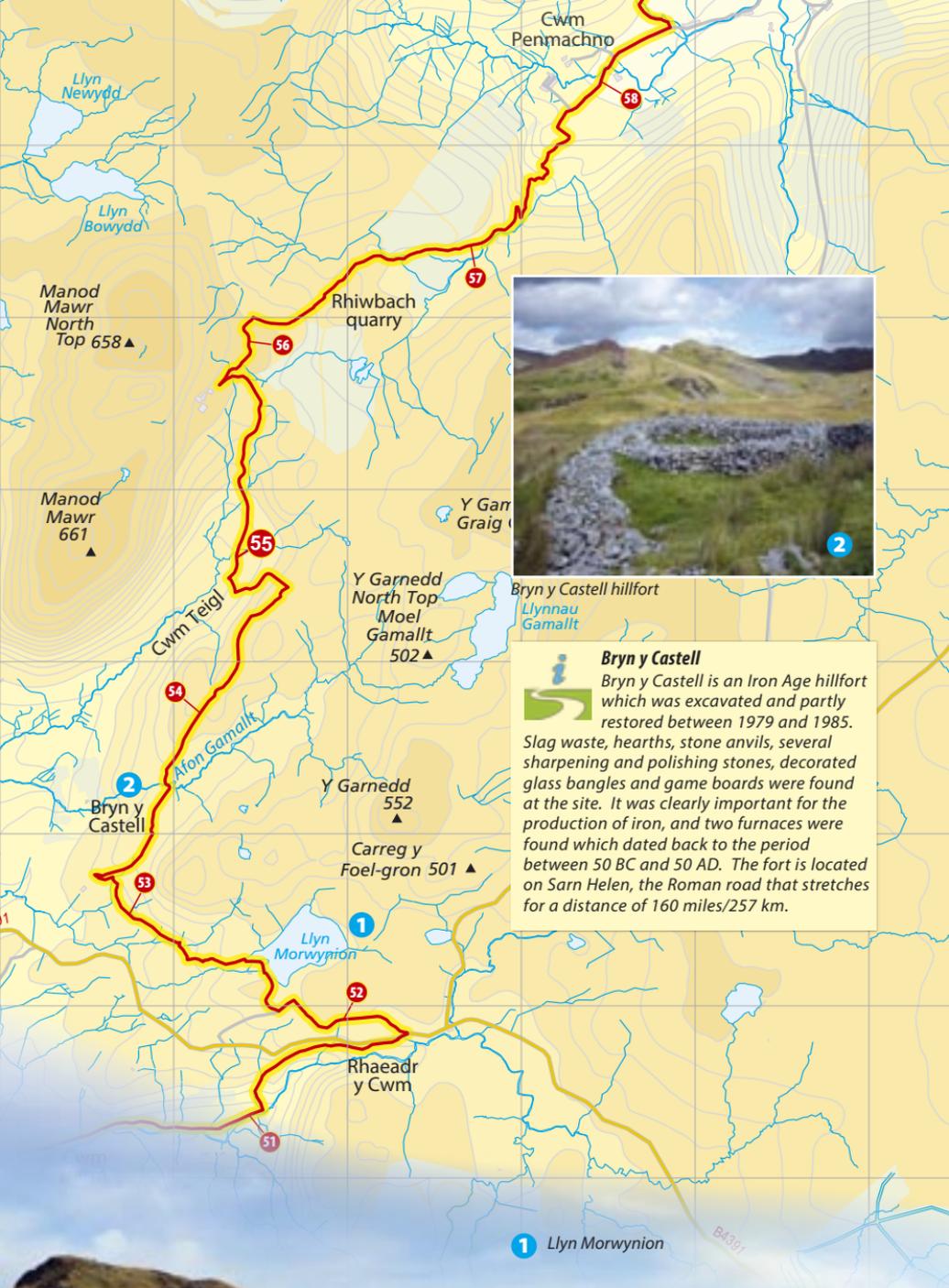
Cwm farm
Cwm farmhouse is a Grade II listed medieval hallhouse built in a distinctive Snowdonian style. It is cruck-framed (curved timber beams) with wedge-shaped stone forming the lintel to the front door. Tree ring dating places the fireplace and the cruck beams at about 1535. It was extensively altered some time in the 17th century. It is a rare example of a very early Welsh house, but the date of 1492 at the entrance somewhat exaggerates its age.



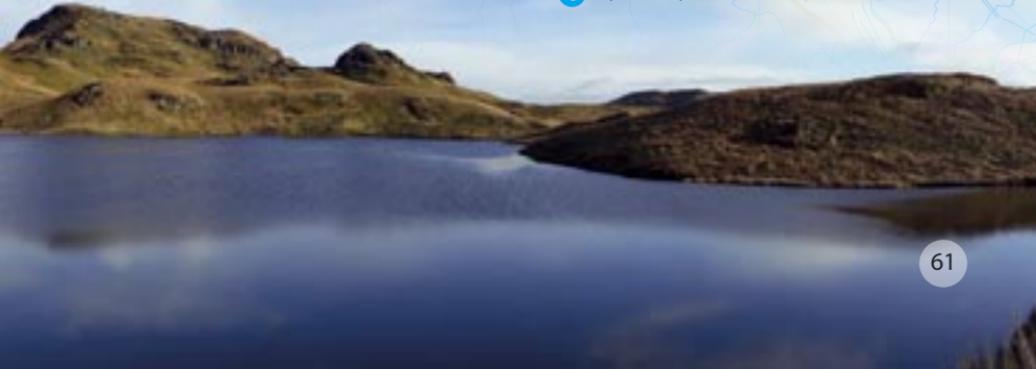
- Pass a small slate tip and beware of a small mineshaft on the left, part of Cynfal copper mine. When you emerge onto fairly level ground, the view in front opens up to the impressive waterfall, Rhaeadr y Cwm.
- Ahead of you, the clear path contours the steep-sided valley, with the road above retained by high slate walls. Continue alongside the fence until you reach another gate to the road at a footpath sign. At the B4391, turn right and cross the road to the footpath sign just after the cattle grid.



- This next 5 km is the wildest of the entire Trail, much of it within the Migneint Site of Special Scientific Interest which features extensive dry heathland and blanket bog, mixed with seasonal ponds. Because waymarkers have had to be minimised in the SSSI, pay close attention to the map and instructions.
- Cross the stile and follow the fence, keeping to the slightly higher (and drier) ground to the right just below the crags. Aim for a stile in the left corner.
- The faint, grassy path beside the fence becomes a wider track, which passes over a hump between rocky outcrops.
- Follow the track to a T-junction and turn right towards Llyn Morwynion (Maidens' lake). **1** Skirt the left end of the lake, follow the overflow from the dam a short way downstream, to cross the stream at a narrow point. The path from here leads to an iron gate on the left, at the junction of the fence and the wall. Pass through it, following a narrow path leftwards below the crags.
- At the footpath post just beyond a ruin, gradually descend the slope on the left to a galvanised gate in the wall ahead. Do not pass through this gate but instead continue with the wall on your left.
- Make your way through the rushes, ignoring a stile on your left. Contour the hillside on your right, keeping the wall to your left, until you reach a further stile a short way ahead.
- Cross the stile and follow faint sheep tracks to the left, keeping the fence on your left, until you reach the abandoned farmstead of Garreglwyd. Cross over the stile and skirt around the right of the farm until you reach a footpath sign.
- Cross the field as directed by the footpath sign. Keep to the left of a field enclosure, then follow the recently constructed stepping stone path, aiming for a stile at the junction of wall and fence.
- Go over the stile. To the left are waterworks buildings. Scramble up the steep grassy hillside ahead (or skirt to its left) to reach a broad grassy track.
- Turn right along this track, bearing left at all junctions. You may wish to make a short detour to the top of the hill on your left to visit Bryn y Castell **2**, a partly restored Iron Age fort.



Bryn y Castell
 Bryn y Castell is an Iron Age hillfort which was excavated and partly restored between 1979 and 1985. Slag waste, hearths, stone anvils, several sharpening and polishing stones, decorated glass bangles and game boards were found at the site. It was clearly important for the production of iron, and two furnaces were found which dated back to the period between 50 BC and 50 AD. The fort is located on Sarn Helen, the Roman road that stretches for a distance of 160 miles/257 km.



- Follow the track leftwards into the valley of the Afon Gamallt, and cross it by a wooden footbridge. Continue along the track up the other side of the valley, beside the fence and along the line of Sarn Helen, the Roman road.
- Where the track bends off to the right, leave it to continue straight ahead, keeping to the fence past a small lake on its other side.
- Pass large rocky outcrops to left and right, along faint paths, where necessary taking to higher ground on the right to avoid wet areas, until you reach a footpath sign and stile.
- Cross the stile and descend the steep grassy slope as directed by the way-marker on the stile until you reach an old, grassy track going off left from the disused quarry. Take this, turning right when it reaches more level ground, to join the road at a prominent post.
- Climb the road to the right until you reach the quarry. At its entrance, go sharp right along a broad track which passes the remains of a radio station before dropping down to the Rhiwbach tramway (mile 56.1). This took slate from Rhiwbach quarry to Blaenau Ffestiniog. Turn right to follow the tramway, which soon leads to the head of a steep incline.
- Go carefully down the steep incline, bearing slightly left towards a pond as the incline enters a cutting. Cross the stile and explore the ruins of the works and the village.
- When finished, follow the track to the right of the fence. The track veers right and passes between the remains of buildings before going steeply down between slate tips.

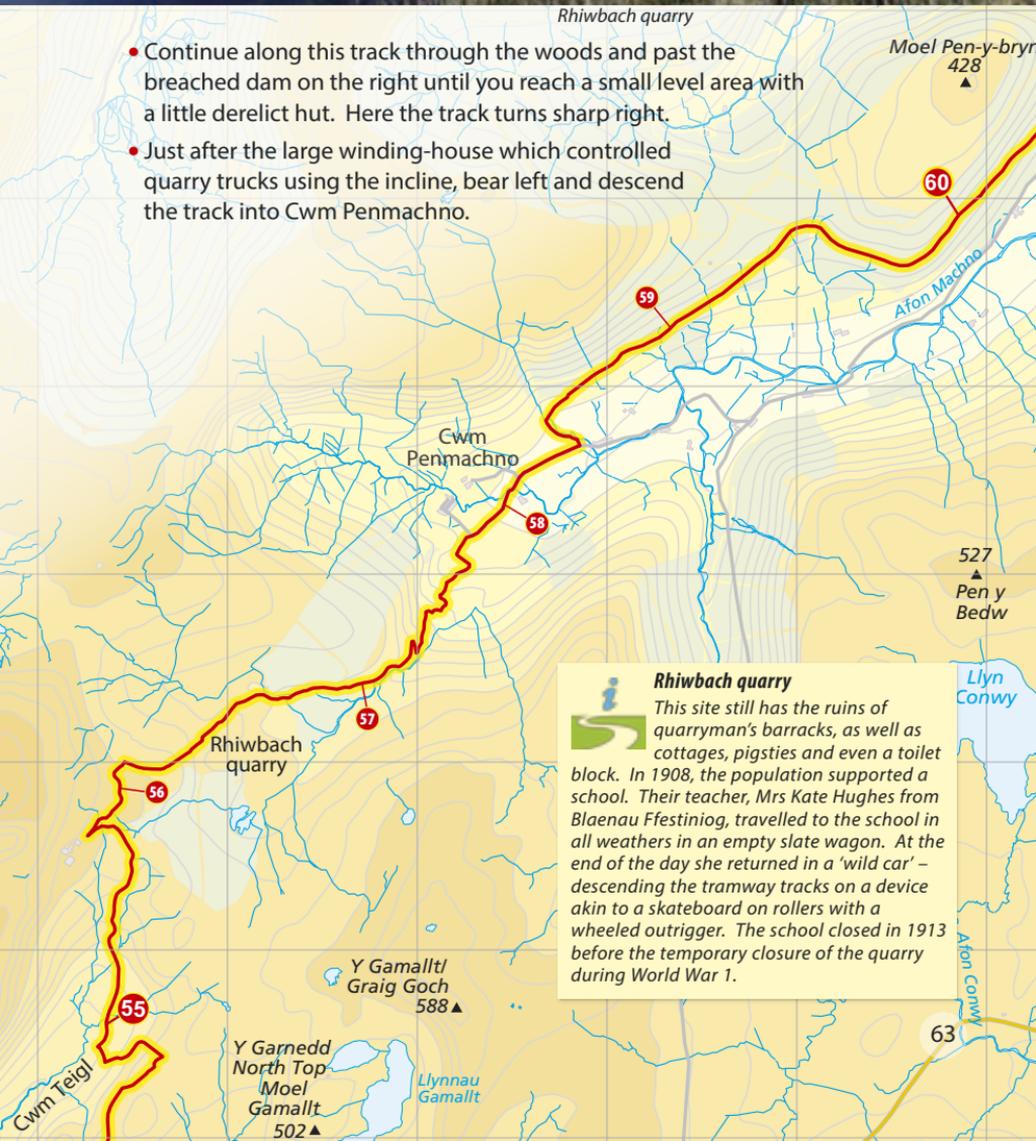
Cwm Teigl: the Trail runs along the near ridgeline





Rhiwbach quarry

- Continue along this track through the woods and past the breached dam on the right until you reach a small level area with a little derelict hut. Here the track turns sharp right.
- Just after the large winding-house which controlled quarry trucks using the incline, bear left and descend the track into Cwm Penmachno.



Rhiwbach quarry

This site still has the ruins of quarryman's barracks, as well as cottages, pigsties and even a toilet block. In 1908, the population supported a school. Their teacher, Mrs Kate Hughes from Blaenau Ffestiniog, travelled to the school in all weathers in an empty slate wagon. At the end of the day she returned in a 'wild car' – descending the tramway tracks on a device akin to a skateboard on rollers with a wheeled outrigger. The school closed in 1913 before the temporary closure of the quarry during World War 1.

Moel Pen-y-bryn
428 ▲

527
▲ Pen y Bedw

Y Gamallt/
Graig Goch
588 ▲

Y Garnedd
North Top
Moel
Gamallt
502 ▲

63



Cwm Penmachno

- From the quarry gate, walk straight ahead along the road for about 770 m until you reach a converted church on the left. At this point, if time permits, visit the Cwm Heritage Drop-in Room about 50 m further down the road: access is gained on request by emailing ahead of time to ccagtrustees@outlook.com.
- Otherwise, go up the track on the left before the church. Climb the stile into the field and keep beside the fence, eventually to cross the stream on a timber footbridge.
- Follow a faint path up to a stile at the corner of the felled woodland. Continue on the forest path, past the ruins of Hafod Fraith Uchaf. When you reach a forest road, turn right and follow it slightly downhill to reach a forest crossroads.
- Continue straight ahead, and each time the track forks, bear right. After about 2.5 km you reach the road at the beginning of the Penmachno mountain bike trail.
- Turn left along the road for 250 m and then take the grassy lane down to the right, to pass stepping stones over the river. The grassy track becomes a tarmac road, White Street. At the fork, take the street on the left to reach Gethin Square outside the Eagles pub in the centre of Penmachno.

Penmachno

