



The Celtic Way

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CONTENTS

	Archive Beginning	i
1	Preseli Mountains	1
2	Secret Carmarthenshire	Pg #
3	Golden Grove	Pg #
4	The Black Mountain	Pg #
5	Waterfall Country	Pg #
6	Iron Hills	Pg #
7	Celtic Crossroads	Pg #
8	High Ways and Holy Places	Pg #
9	Gwent Borderlands	Pg #
10	Linking the Ways	Pg #
11	Megalithic Sites	Pg
12	The Athurian Centre	pg

READ THIS BEFORE YOU READ THE ARCHIVE...

You are welcome to the archived route descriptions for the Celtic Way Walk.

It is not wise to attempt any part of the route without being ready to check and correct each detail. All walking is at your own risk. In my experience it is wise to underestimate your abilities. Boggy ground, windchill, rain and mist are wearing. Broken signs, steep slopes and rough terrain are challenging. Twenty years have passed since the guide came out was published. Some sections' notes, where the walking is over remote high terrain, are best avoided by all but the experienced walker for safety reasons.

Yet everyone can enjoy reading the descriptions written by over twenty local volunteers who devised these routes. Their comments and shared knowledge is engaging.

If this archive inspires you to find, check and test your own routes then that is great. It is a bonus if you enjoy spending time at some of the ancient sites in each section. We aim to tread lightly and respectfully over the land and the past. It is the most sustainable way to travel.

THE BEGINNING

Strumble Head (Ynys Meicel) to Fishguard - 9 miles

Maps: O.S. Outdoor Leisure 35 covers this and all the Pembroke section and extends about 10 miles into the Carmarthen section. Landrangers: 157 from here to the other side of Fishguard, then 145 to Gors Fawr.

Introduction

There are at least four islands around the Celtic coastline named after Saint Michael. Two lie within the area covered by the Celtic Way: St. Michael's Mount off the Cornish coast where the Celtic Way ends, and Ynys Meicel (Michael's Isle) at the tip of the Strumble Headland where the Celtic Way begins. The other two, Mont St Michel and Skellig Michael, lie off the coasts of Brittany and Ireland respectively.

Entry into Pembrokeshire is most direct by way of Fishguard because of its combined rail and ferry links. Its position as a terminus makes it, like Penzance at the other end of the route, a natural place to begin or end a journey. In addition, anyone who drives along

the A40 to Fishguard past the lair of Wolfs Castle and the Treffgarne Rocks will see how even the landscape creates a sense of entry at this point On arrival at Fishguard it may be more practical for most people to start the walking from there. However the Celtic Way route begins with the hill-forts and burial chambers which run over Strumble Head and for those with the time and enthusiasm it provides a perfect introduction to the area and the walking.

On your arrival in Fishguard, if you decide to walk the beginning of the Celtic Way and have plenty of time free in which to walk, then it is possible to follow the way-markedⁱⁱ Pembrokeshire Coastal Footpath along the coast for 6 miles from Goodwick to Strumble Head. Here you will find the start of the Celtic Way at Ynys Meicel, a small island with its white lighthouse. If you have less time for walking take a bus or taxi through the lanes for 4 miles to the car park at Ynys Meicel. (Ask the driver for the car park at Strumble Head).

When walking any part of the coastal footpath you will be exposed to the full impact of the weather and you need to be prepared for this. The coastal path is exceptionally beautiful but is quite demanding in its ascents and descents to bays and coves. Way-finding is not a problem but you need to exercise appropriate caution when walking along a cliff's edge, especially in strong winds or wet conditions. This is a remote area and there will be nowhere to get refreshment on route. The Youth Hostel is self-catering and carries a small stock of basic items.

The Celtic Way walking starts from Ynys Meicel and makes for Pwll Deri which is 3 miles on the coast path. There is a simple and attractive Youth Hostel at Pwll Deri, a good place to spend the first night, especially if you have walked from Fishguard on the Pembrokeshire Coastal Footpath. The next six miles begin on a stony ridge then follow a bridleway and lanes. This is a gentle exploration of a route less than 200 feet above sea level yet full of views. The walking brings you into contact with the atmosphere of this

remote part of Pembrokeshire and includes several sites of interest.

Highlights: Garn Fawr hill-fort, Garn Gilfach burial chamber, Garn Folch and Garn Gelli. Ffynnon Druidion is a short diversion. Goodwick Brook footpath

Starting point:

Ynys Meicel (Strumble Head) Car Park:. 895 412.

On the cliff-top - whether having walked from Fishguard by the Pembrokeshire Coastal Footpath or taken a bus or taxi to this point - stand and enjoy the fresh clean air. This is a good time to feel anticipation of the walking ahead. In clear weather the views are inspiring.

Facing the sea, turn left and follow the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path signs for three miles eastwards. The walking is beautiful and isolated. It crosses a cwm and stream at Pwll Arian (Silver Bay). Next is Porth Maesmelyn and the small stony isles of Tri Maen-trai and Ynys Ddu. After something over two miles comes

another isle: Ynys Melyn and the site of a fort on the hill slope. If, like me, you approach it as light is fading, the lights of the Youth Hostel and few nearby cottages signal the welcome approach of Pwll Deri.

Pwll Deri is famous for its views & vivid sunsets; grey seals are a possibility here and elsewhere along the coast.

Continuing the walk at Pwll Deri, **Garn Fawr** hill-fort rises up behind you. From the Youth Hostel buildings cross the road and follow the signs past Swn y Mor Cottage to the stile.

Apparently, there is a clochan -type hut behind Swn y Mor Cottage which might have been a hermit's cell or pigsty or hut used for drying fish like those in Western Ireland. I have not investigated.

Crossing the stile brings you onto the **open hillside** of Garn Fawr hillfort. There is no path to the top so choose your way sensitively. There is a path which

goes to the right and will bring you round the hillside to the car park. Use this if you prefer.

Once on the summit there is a ridge path.

Garn Fawr is part of the volcanic eruptions which give Strumble Head its distinctive dragon's back crest. (Another dramatic outline of hills on St. David's Head are visible in the SE). Garn Fawr was an Iron Age hillfort and on the summit it is possible to get a sense of its defensive enclosures.

Follow the **summit path** over and down into the car park (The path round the hillside comes out close to the same). There are two very simple cottages to the right below - looking as though they were part of the hill themselves - one belonged to John Piper, the artist.

From the car park, turn left. Follow the lane to the west and down the hill past the entrance to **Tan y Mynydd Farm** on the left. (Garn Fechan is the crest on the right). Go 100 yards past the farm to a sign for

a track and bridleway onto the hillside over to Garn Gilfach and Garn Folch. Take it.

The path runs between two drystone walls. It was rich in wild flowers when walked in June. Gradually, **Garn Gilfach**, to your right, rises above you. It has a distinctive atmosphere. There is definitely one burial chamber and it might have been a burial ground. After the bright openness of the rest of the walking I found it dour when walking in June; revisiting it in December I am not so sure.

Go through a gate onto open moor (note the stone gatepost). Follow the path under the ridge unless you want to climb to explore the top. Continue on the path under **Garn Folch**. Going right as a path joins from the left. On approaching two hillside cottages go through the aluminium gate. The path becomes a track going downhill. Follow it to come out opposite **Penysgwarne**. You are joining a quiet lane. Turn left and follow the lane to the first right signed **Rhosycaerau**. Follow the lane uphill towards Garn Gelli.

Garn Gelli stands out in all directions. It is only a couple of rock formations at less than 200 metres but its characteristic appearance draws the eye. It creates a strong visual link between the dragon back hills you have just walked over and leads the eye on to the Gwaun Valley, to Mynydd Dinas, and ultimately Carn Ingli. Footpaths exist in theory but not in practice at the time of walking on this next stretch but the lanes used instead are unfrequented. The hedgerows are bursting with wildlife. These and the views lift the spirits.

From the lane there is a FP sign for the Garn Gelli footpath, but the undergrowth was 5 foot high in the summer. Use it to visit the top if possible but be warned that the path down was indistinguishable in muddy cattle-filled fields when last walked. It may be best to keep to the lane. It is possible to take a detour to Rhosycaerau to see the church and churchyard if you wish.

Continue along and down the lane, passing entrance to Fron Haul on the left and on to the **crossroads** From here you have a choice. The route goes left for 2/3 mile along a belvedere lane with outstanding views of Pembrokeshire's hills, valleys and amazing coastline. However, if you have time, it is well worth making the diversion to see the burial chamber, spring, and standing stone at **Ffynnon Druidion** by going right for ½ mile.

Ffynnon Druidion SN921 365. For this diversion go right for nearly ½ mile to the complex of farm buildings. Turn downhill. The burial chamber is just off the road in a field to the right. The standing stone is alongside the road on the right a little further down the hill. It is an attractive spot. There are various suggestions as to the origins of the name: Ffynnon refers to the spring and Drudion, or Druidionⁱⁱⁱ, spelling dependant on which source used, could refer to several legendary figures: interestingly, the older name for the site of the well was Fonnán Pedrykaun, then later Fynnon Pendrigion. Well at the head or end of Drigion's land would be one interpretation. It is

tempting if not misleading to see the word Pendragon. Retrace your steps back to the crossroads to rejoin the route.

Continue along the lane. Rocky outcrops from Garn Gelli come close to the road; enjoy the view, you have a ring-side seat.

Take the turning right and go down a **steep lane** downhill for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile passing Ty Newydd. When the road turns to the right by Trefwrgi continue going downhill. Pass Glanmor B&B and cross the A487 with care. Continue down past the Ivybridge B&B and under the **old tunnel** to come out on a forked track. Take the left and go uphill past some cottages. You will pass a meadow with goal posts on your left. Follow the path down and round, approaching reed beds and the **Goodwick Brook**. The path becomes a Dyfed nature Walk with a blue house on a yellow background waymark signs, not that you need them as the path is the only one possible across the reed-land. You are walking on a narrow stony path edged with small gnarled trees close to the brook and reeds. This

is one of two points on the Celtic Way when one gets a sense of being on a Way. Look back up the valley to a small cottage on the hill. You could be looking at a view from anytime in the past - the present does not intrude apart from a piece of rusty farm equipment and a notice about SSI status. I disturbed a heron fishing. Cross the small footbridge over the brook and turn left at the junction of tracks. The path then rises to come out by the Seaview Hotel. Cross the road to the Strumble Art Gallery. On your right is the commemorative plaque for the Fishguard **Marine Walk**.

Before doing this spend a moment at the **Goodwick Parrog**. Enjoy the tide-flows, cloud-scenes, sea-colours and cormorants.. The Strumble Art Gallery has paintings by three fine and very different local artists.

Fishguard - The Marine Walk is delightful: coast-hugging and often shaded by trees, it avoids traffic and reinforces the contact with the sea which is this area's hallmark. However it is worth coming up to the

Square in Fishguard. My ventures into the town took me to very helpful Tourist Information, and the Bird in Hand Coffee Shop and the Hamilton Backpackers' Hostel, both of which I enjoyed for their friendliness and character.

Additional information:

Refreshments:

Carry enough for your needs. Youth Hostel (self-catering with a few food items). Nothing till Fishguard.

Accommodation:

Plenty of B&B in and around Fishguard. I've stayed at Pwll Deri Hostel, Hamilton Backpackers Hostel and Brynawel Country House, but you really are spoilt for choice in the area.

Tourist Information:

Fishguard Harbour at Goodwick (station and ferry) - 01348 872037

Fishguard Town Centre - 01348 873484

Hanging on:

The route now goes from Fishguard to Newport, Carn Ingli, Pentre Ifan, and Gors Fawr, roughly two days' walking. Accommodation is available in Newport, but needs careful planning once the route moves inland.

Anyone interested in the St Michael Line might find helpful the book *The Sun and the Serpent*, an investigation into earth energies, by Hamish Miller and Paul Broadhurst (Pendragon Press). It gives an account of their exploration of the St. Michael Line by dowsing from the tip of Cornwall up to Stonehenge and beyond.

The guide I used was *The Pembrokeshire Coastal Footpath* by Dennis R Kelsall.

Information from *Sacred Stones* by Terry Jones, Gomer Press

1. PRESELI MOUNTAINS

Fishguard to Gors Fawr: 20½ miles

Maps: O.S. Outdoor Leisure 35 covers this and all the Pemboke section and extends about 10 miles into the Carmarthen section. Landrangers: 157 from here to the other side of Fishguard, then 145 to Gors Fawr.

Stages:

- 1. Fishguard to Castell Henllys - 12 ½ miles**
- 2. Castell Henllys to Gors Fawr - 8 miles**

Highlights:

Fishguard, Tre-Llan Holy Well, Mynydd Dinas, Parc y Meirw megaliths, Carn Ingli, Castell Henllys Iron Age Village reconstruction, Pentre Ifan burial chamber, the Preselis Mountains, Gors Fawr stone circle.

Introduction:

The route ahead described by Wayne and Dave has so many highlights that, although the distances are not

great, it is worth allowing plenty of time to appreciate the ancient sites.

Pembrokeshire lays its past to the open skies for all to see. The many sites of prehistoric interest - old routes, burial chambers and standing stones - argue the significance of Pembrokeshire, almost as if it was once the beginning of a route and not the end, as it is seen today. This is one reason for beginning the Celtic Way here. The emphasis given to localities may have changed throughout our history, but the sites remain. The link between Carn Meini Bluestones and Stonehenge supports the idea of Pembrokeshire's prehistoric importance. But Pembrokeshire has not only coastline and mountains: the solitary Gwaun Valley is an important feature of this section of the walking.

Leaving Old Fishguard harbour by foot is a challenge. The section along the A487 is fortunately brief. Entering the Gwaun Valley is a huge contrast: stepping back in time may be a cliché; in the Gwaun Valley there are places where it is a reality. The route

passes a holy well and close to the Parc y Meirw megalithic alignment. before moving onto open hilltops and an old track over to the Bedd Morus stone and Carn Ingli. The walking is undulating, with wonderful views on a good day but very exposed on the hills in rough weather. After Newport is important to plan carefully and give some thought to where to stop overnight. It is possible to break the journey anywhere before the Preselis mountains, but after that part has been started you will need to complete it.

Starting point:

At Fishguard Ferryport and Railway station. On leaving the ferry or station proceed to the port gates. Turn left and walk along newly paved area which follows the sea's edge. On leaving paved area, walk for about 100 yards along the edge of the beach before rejoining newly paved area.

At this point you will see a mosaic depicting the French invasion of Fishguard in 1797, the last

invasion force to land on British soil. More details available in town.

On leaving the footpath, pass to the landward side of a number of flagpoles at Goodwick Parrog and follow the old road (now disused) for approx. 50 yards behind some renovated cottages where you will see a blue footpath sign heading to your left. **This is where the beginning of the route, from Strumble, joins with this section.** The current A40, with the Seaview Hotel, doglegs to your right. Proceed up a flight of steps and follow the well-marked **Marine Walk** around the headland until Old Fishguard Harbour emerges into view on your left. Proceed along footpath which then drops downhill.

On approaching above the **old harbour**, almost opposite an old bus shelter-type building, take smaller path which drops away down to your left. Path shortly joins a metalled road near some cottages (finger post) and drops sharply back to the left, emerging at sea level. Cross river at road bridge: Enter Quayside car park. Opposite the exit is a grey corrugated iron

building. Follow path to left and round the back. Cross road into **Old Newport Road**. Climb the hill. Come out alongside the A487.

At A487 turn right and in 50 yards right again along footpath, through gate. Go left at stile to main road. Walk along grass verge for 400 yards to **Cilshafe track**. Turn right down metalled track marked as a bridleway at entrance to Cilshafe Uchaf. Pass through gates and to **Cilshafe Uchaf Farm**. 979 374

In farmyard, in tin covered Dutch barn, appears to be a nesting box for barn owls. The farm, whilst a working unit, has some of the buildings given over to holiday accommodation apparently.

Carry on through farmyard. At farm pond go straight through metal gate and follow bridleway up hill. At top of short rise keep **high point** of field (gorse covered) to your left and carry straight on towards gateway before then following bridleway downhill.

At bottom of hill cross a small **stream** through gate mounted on piece of old railway track and head uphill. At top of hill pass through gateway with stone posts and head through farm yard straight in front.

In farm yard, bear left and pass whitewashed farm building on right and head up through gateway (stone post, Dutch barn on left). Up hill over stile and turn right along concrete road for 50 yards. Go straight on at end of concrete road (ignore gate on the left). On cresting the top of the field there is a **small standing stone** in front of you and directly ahead of that, a semi-derelict church. This is **Tre Llan 982 364** - location of a Holy Well - in the field left of the church. At this point Mynydd Dinas can be seen clearly in front and slightly to the left.

The next part of the walking goes to the Parc y Meirw megalithic alignment and through the Gwaun Valley

Exit field through gate. Cross metalled road and head up lane in front of you for about 10 yards before turning right through gateway and down farm track.

After 50 yards pass small pond on left and carry on through farm gate before then passing **farm buildings** on right followed shortly afterwards by newer farm buildings also on the right. Head slightly uphill through gate following obvious track. Continue to rise uphill at track end keeping fence on your right. At end of field pass through gateway. (Wire fence on right and stone wall heading uphill 90 degrees on left)

On passing through gateway, note the standing stone on brow of hill in field on left. This is one of a series of standing stones that are all well marked on the maps and stand to the left of the path we are taking. The stones of **Parc y Meirw**, SM 998 359 (originally eight) form an alignment. One of the fallen stones may have been decorated. The name - Field of the Dead - may give some clue as to the original function of the stones.

Views to the right are of Cwm Gwaun and the valleys of the Gwaun's tributaries.

At the bottom corner of this field, no stile exists so it is a matter of climbing an existing wall which appears to have been built across what was an original gateway. This can be done without too much trouble for someone with full mobility. Now head diagonally across the field to your right, passing the **standing stone** on your left at 999 353. By line of eye, the path runs from the wall straight across the top of the standing stone to the bottom corner of the field. At the corner of the field you will need to negotiate a fence as no stile exists, then descend through a wooded area on a fairly obvious path. The path proceeds downhill.

At time of writing (January) the area is covered in the leaves of bluebells. Should be beautiful in the Spring. The woodland itself largely consists of small sessile oaks which are very typical of this area.

At end of a woodland path turn left onto a small path. This is a new footpath as the valley floor path is no longer in use. Proceed up valley with **Afon Gwaun** on your right. After 100-150 yards, go diagonally left to stile at base of wood. Follow path at base of wood for

approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile until it meets track by building. Follow track and cross a small stream by concrete bridge. 006 349. Beware fierce dog at farm on road (usually chained)

Pass house on right and immediately turn left up an obvious track heading at 90 degrees to the road. A beautiful stream runs downhill parallel to the road for a few hundred yards before the **road doglegs** back to the right. Carry on uphill across a main track which goes off to the left. Track narrows to footpath with banks on both sides. Pass white painted **old farmhouse** with green tin barns. House is a relatively traditional design for this area. Note small, almost round, walled garden with traditional stone steps leading into it from the track.. Follow track bearing up hill to right to the metalled road at 021 358

Follow track which goes along bottom hedgerow to your right and then turns 90 degrees left again keeping hedgerow on right. (Footpath, whilst marked on the map as going straight ahead from this field, is in fact

blocked off). Exit field through gateway and take obvious track again leading right.

At this point you notice that you have gained considerable height and there are views back down Cwm Gwaun towards Fishguard although the town is obscured. Follow track which leads from the farm all the way to the main metalled road.

(Note - it is always worth stopping to blow your nose and look back over your shoulder. You'll be pleased with the views and also able to appreciate the distinct contrast between the Gwaun Valley and the upland area you are now approaching. As a point of interest one of the main airline routes from London to North America passes overhead so, if all else fails, in bad weather you can find a shady nook and plan your next sunny holiday making use of public transport. My more academic colleague points out that the aeroplane vapour trails will also give you some orientation as regards East/West.....a man of very little soul).

On reaching the metal road cross over and into the field directly in front through gate. On entering field

keep wire fence immediately on your right and follow straight ahead. (At time of writing, you immediately pass old metal wheeled plough which will no doubt find itself in front of some suburban house all very brightly, if inappropriately, painted.) At this point ahead of you and to the right, you will notice the Preseli Range rising somewhat gently. It was from these hills that the lintel stones for Stonehenge were originally quarried. How they were transported remains a matter for conjecture although at the time of writing an underwater archaeologist claims to have found evidence of similar stones on a sea bed at Milford Haven suggesting they may have been taken by boat.

Exit field through gate and head diagonally left through centre of field rising very gently as you go. When you reach the other side of the field, follow the wire fence uphill and as you start gently descending and the sea is directly in front of you, exit field through iron gate with two railway sleepers as **gate posts**. (Ignore first iron gate in fence).

At this point, if you want to visit **Mynydd Melyn, 029 364**, instead of exiting the field head back North West and visit the impressive Carn on the summit. Back at the field's exit, head northeast.

You are now leaving cultivated field areas and moving on to **open common land** which is gorse and heather covered. Follow the path directly across open common land and to your right there are remnants of old **hut circles**

In clear weather, probably not in summer, if you look to your left it is possible to see the Lley Peninsula of North Wales with Bardsey Island lighthouse flashing at night. The bay which is in evidence is Newport Bay and Parrog with Dinas Head back to your left and towards the south.

Exit this rough grazing land through small iron gate and carry on straight ahead through quite narrow **strip field**. There is an old stone wall on your left topped by a barbed wire fence.

Head out of strip field and proceed directly ahead following a stone wall on left. As you crest the top of this field, there is a small car park 038365 ahead of you. Here, on the mountain road which crosses from Gwaun Valley to Newport, is the **Bedd Morris (Morus/Morys)** standing stone. According to Terry Jones, there is a relatively recent inscription on the stone to indicate that it shows the junction of two parishes. The maenhir is a beautifully tall and mottled stone, and, with the name, must have had some memorial function once in its high spot at the road-side. At the time of the last visit, an old cheap metal chair was tied to the fence alongside the stone; its purpose is harder to surmise than that of the maenhir.

Directly beyond that, about 1 ½ miles away, is the summit of Carn Ingli (carn of angels).

In the car park, you will notice a wooden **finger-post** which highlights directions of Nevern/Nanhyfer, Castell Henllys (reconstruction of an iron age fort) and Moylegrove. Although not on the main route it may be worth considering a detour to visit the old church at

Nevern/Nanyhfer which has one of the few existing standing stones with Ogham inscriptions. There is also a 'bleeding yew' oozing red sap, plus an interesting Celtic Cross.

If you wish to either visit Newport or perhaps stay overnight, on reaching the tarmac road, Ffordd Bedd Morys, turn left and start to head gently downhill. At this point there is a large boundary stone, the inscription on which is now almost totally indecipherable. However, at the time of writing (Dec 1997)

the Local Authority had recently affixed a Public Notice indicating that Carningli has recently been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a welcome development.

The road at this point has a field wall to your left and an open unfenced land to your right. There are beautiful views out over the sea and estuary around Newport and Parrog from this point and almost the whole way down into the town itself.

You meet the first house on this road after exactly one mile on the right with houses (including B+B's) becoming more frequent as you progress down the lane.

After a further half mile and opposite a house called 'Blaenpant', there is an interesting old pig sty with 6 or 8 huge stone slabs used as roofing material.

Cross cattle grid.

Ffordd Bedd Morys meets the main coast road almost exactly 2 miles from the point at which you joined it near Bedd Morys. Turn right and enter Newport via West St in approximately half a mile.

There are some lovely local walks, especially along the coastal path in this area. More particularly, however, there is some fine food to be had in this town, so it is worth stopping over. For further information, you could contact the Pembs. National Park Tourist Info. Centre in the town, where their staff are always very helpful.

(If you make Newport the end of your walk for the day there is a particularly nice restaurant in Newport called 'Cnapan' which, for a price, provides excellent food backed up by some superb wine (if available try the Lebanese Red wine. I can recommend it). The track down into Newport runs down and off the hillside. It joins a track from the right and becomes a deep lane passing Castle Hill House. Ignore all tracks leading off the lane, which will come out to the right of the castle and into Newport by St Mary's Church. To rejoin the route you can return up the Carn Ingli track where you left it, or take the Cilgwyn Road out of Newport for a mile, take the right fork onto a no-through road and follow this along the lee of the hillside to meet up with the route at the junction of tracks at O.S.069 370)

(You can reach Carn Ingli from Newport by walking up Castle Hill and taking the signed steep track up past some cottages. At the end of the cottages leave the track and go left onto the open hillside. Climb the

track to the summit and pick up the directions from there).

Continuations to Carn Ingli 065 373. Leave car park following finger post in the direction of Castell Henllys. An obvious path goes gently up hill keeping the Carn on your left and wire fence on your right. Path runs over and round large boulders. Follow path gently downhill to stile keeping woodland on right. Ignore the stile and turn left following wire fence parallel to you on your right for approximately 200 yards heading uphill gently and towards coast. Good views out to sea.

Follow fence which turns at right angles to right and the obvious path that runs parallel with fence. Proceed gently up hill for ¼ mile. Pass **Carn Edward** 055 365 on your right with stile access. **Carn Ingli** now comes into view in front and to your left.

At end of fence pass to the left of small spring and to the right of Carn Ingli. Start to head down hill. (Note sheep gate next to gateway near end of fence).

Countyside in the distance ahead of you becomes more gently rolling leaving Preselis on right and behind.

Keeping **Carn Ingli** to your left, head downhill to point where path again meets the fence at field corner. (Note fence runs at top of the stone wall). Path runs across side of hill for approx. 25 yards in a small ditch between banks. Leave ditch after 25 yards and again head down hill to right keeping stone wall to right. At metalled road (finger post to Cwm Gwaun, Nefyn and Newport) turn left and proceed 50 yards to telegraph pole. Leave road to right and head diagonally down across open ground towards house. At track turn left through farm gate and down track to metalled road. Turn right for 200 yards. and left at road junction. Proceed down track to stile and finger. Carry straight on down track ignoring stile. Through ford and up hill to metalled road. 081 369. Turn left after approx. quarter of a mile passing over small bridge and turn

right up farm track to **Fachongle Ganol** 083371 (iron drain cover at mouth of track).

*Take care here as sign posts are scarce.

Pass Fachongle Ganol on your right and proceed to **Fachongle Uchaf**. Pass some farm buildings on right and through farm gates (there is, or was, a small finger post in the hedge at this point, though difficult to see until you look back having passed through the gate). Farmhouse is in front of you and down on your right. Do not go down to the house, but pass into the field through gate in front of you and slightly to your left.

On entering the field immediately head to your right towards large oak tree with stile underneath. Cross stile and head diagonally up hill to your left towards fence and edge of woodland. Follow fence up to next stile and enter wood (stile slightly hidden behind set of fire beaters) 089 370

Having crossed the stile enter nature reserve and follow way-marked '**Path through the Woodland**'. This part of the walk is absolutely enchanting with the

woodland being made up of old Oak and Ash. Follow the path for approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ mile through wood, gently rising with steep-sided small valley on your right. The path splits at head of small valley. Turn left and rise immediately up a little bank to where the house, **Ty Canol**, becomes visible 093 368.

At this point the obvious path seems to take you straight ahead and slightly to your right but you need to turn left. Follow marked path out past front of house (facing left) and proceed down track towards **Pentre Ifan**. Follow track (views behind to estuary at Newport) to metalled road 098 368 and turn left. Views of Pentre Ifan left across two fields. (At junction of track and metalled road there is a small green lane to your right which will take you up to Carnedd Meibion Owen for a mile diversion which enjoys good views).

Pentre Ifan

Proceed down metalled road for approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to where Pentre Ifan is to be found well sign-posted on

your left.100 370 .This example of a burial chamber is worth a visit for many reasons, not least that the current writer knows that in the teeth of a westerly gale it provides some shelter for lunch! Follow metalled road gently downhill for approx. another mile past **Iet-wen** to T junction 105 379 where you turn right and proceed approx. 100yds and take marked path to your left and then 200 yards to gate and finger post. Proceed through farm gate (attractive house up to left) and go gently downhill along the edge of a wood for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.105 383. This path is marked as a bridleway and the lower part can be very wet underfoot. At end of path go through gates and further down track towards the house at **Wenallt**. Go through the gate into house yard and immediately at the far end of the house turn right and head down short path and cross river via **footbridge** with hand rails. at end of footbridge turn left and exit to main road through entrance to garden of family house, **Pen Y Bont**105 388

At main road (A487) turn right and follow road up hill for around 250 yards. (note public toilet at this point).

At the lay-by enter field on left via stile 108 386 and head diagonally right to stile. Cross next field to gate below house and across following field to stile (slightly to your left). Cross next field and proceed into **Glanduad-fawr** Farmyard through gate. In yard go **left** and exit through gate and slightly down hill to stream crossed by footbridge. 115 389

After footbridge go to tarmac road and head right uphill past boundary fence of **Castell Henllys**. Continue uphill before descending to stile on right. Cross stile and enter woodland.

This path skirts round the base of the hillock on which Castell Henllys has been reconstructed and on this part of the path you will often find examples of reconstructed items and craft-type artworks displayed within the woodland. Follow the obvious path and take route over stream by the side of the house. (Note WCs during tourist season as well as a cafe and various artworks).Entrance fees needed to view Castell Henllys.

Go up hill following main track past Mammoth! (yes, honestly). On leaving track there turn right onto tarmac lane and pass in front of **Eglwys Meline Church**. 118 387.

Leave tarmac road and take farm track. At this point follow track to junction with main farm track from Glanduant Fawr Farm (which you have now looped) down to your right. Turn left and follow up hill to main Cardigan- Fishguard road 115 384. At this point you are well placed to get a taxi, public transport or walk back down into Newport or to accommodation in the more immediate area. The next stage over the Preselis begins from here

Stage Two - Castell Henllys (A487) 115 385 to Gors Fawr stone circle 135 294 - 8 miles

Cross main road and follow farm track directly opposite. At Pen y Benglog Farm pass first farm buildings on right and then after about 100 yards take bridle way to left just before track swings 90 degrees to right. 113 381 Follow bridle way as it ascends and

descends. Pass through small gate with **Castell Llwyd** marked on right. 114 375. Proceed gently downhill.

You can hear the river on your right as the path bottoms out and passes through semi-ornate gate. Carry on and exit through farmyard crossing over river via bridge at **Troed y Rhiw**. 114 374

At tarmac road turn left and proceed uphill slightly for 150 yards past house on your right. Take stile on right at finger post. On entering the field follow marked path downhill towards the **River Bryberian**. Pass ruin of an old house. Follow along riverside (it's very beautiful and quiet) for approx. $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. Exit field through gate by ford and footbridge (water level marked on bridge) and turn left onto tarmac road.

Uphill to main road and turn left. At T junction 120 363 Turn left and follow the B4329 down into the village of Crosswell.

Ffynnongroes/Crosswell 125 365

At crossroads, turn right and after approx. 20 yards turn right again up track through farm gate. (At the time of writing, a black and white **footpath sign** in the shape of a boot has been placed on the farm gatepost but is only visible if doing walk from east to west). After approx. 200 - 300 yards the track is blocked by 2 farm gates separated by very old gate post, entering 2 separate fields. Take right gate and proceed directly ahead for the length of the field keeping the old, now overgrown track route to your left.

Rejoin track at top left corner of field passing through farm gate set between 2 stone posts so typical of this area. Track proceeds directly ahead, slightly sunken below field level with trees meeting over your head, producing, at time of writing, a beautiful dappled sunlight. Track can be very wet, even in summer .Cross more definite farm lane which merges from right and proceed directly ahead up original track. Track remains in what my 2 year old son would call a 'tunnel of trees'.

Arrive at small isolated **cottage**, pass to rear of building and then immediately to right past pine end

of building, through small gate and down to stream which is crossed by a footbridge. 132 357. Proceed with stream to your right until path meets track to house. Turn left and go to metalled road. 133 356

Here turn right and head gently uphill. Follow road to its end adjacent to farm buildings of **Mirianog-fach** on your left 133 350, and pass over stream to fork in road. Take left fork and continue to rise gently to a **cattle grid** and head upwards again on tarmac road.

Note: At this point various Carnedd are visible on Mynydd Preseli in front of you and it is worth **planning the route** you intend to take across the open moorland from here prior to following the road on to Mirianog Ganol.

At **Mirianog Ganol 137 345** directly in front and slightly to the right you see Carnalw 139337. You need to proceed diagonally to the right below this Carn, keeping it to your left. To the right of Carnalw, you can see Carn Breseb 135 332. Again your route needs to take you below this Carn. Further to your

right you can see Carn Goedog 128 331. The route you need runs between Carn Breseb and Carn Goedog, eventually passing towards the summit immediately above the latter.

You are now going to cross the Preseli Mountains. Take account of distance, weather, stamina levels and proximity of overnight accommodation. This section is best attempted on a reasonably clear day.

For the next two miles the paths are not clear over the Preselis, so refer closely to the map for this section.

At the end of metalled track (139345) you are facing the Preseli Hills.

Follow footpath sign to the right going gently uphill towards outcrop of rocks which is **Carnalw** on your left (138 337).

Pass below Carnalw and then a second crop of rocks on your left which is **Carn Breseb** (133 333). Keep **Carn Goedog** (128 332) close to your right. Head diagonally left to a **saddle in the hills** (122342).

Proceed down the saddle on the other side - **an indistinct path** crosses your way at this point. Head south on the rough path towards **house with barn** in the distance on the left of the **open valley** in front of you. The path gradually becomes clearer as you descend to the road at 127 307 where there is a **sheep fold**

Turn left and continue on road for 1½ miles where the road bears left (132 304) At this point turn right and join track. After 50 yards bear left on track leading towards farm buildings at **Llain-wen**. Keep to the right of this farm and the collection of scrap implements. Go through gate and keeping farm fields to your left cross rather boggy land for another 150 yards. Ignore gate to old **green lane** on left and continue ahead and then half right towards standing stone and beyond to **Gors Fawr stone circle**. (135 294).

Additional Information:

Refreshments: Not easy to find on the first stage.

Possible at Castell Henllys (in season) and Crosswell on the next section. None on third section.

Accommodation: easy in Newport; YHA and B&B available. Ask at TIC about accommodation later in the route. Camping may be an option near Gors Fawr. An alternative to stopping overnight in Newport might be to take accommodation in the Eglwyserw or Felindre Farchog areas. Booking ahead and careful planning is essential on this part of the route.

Public transport

Apart from the railway at Fishguard enquire at TI about local bus companies and timetables. Local taxis can be an economic option if shared(TI will have names and numbers) Some B&B owners will offer a pick-up service if you are staying with them. Enquire at time of booking.

Tourist Information

Fishguard TIC - 01348 873484 Fax 875246

Fishguard Harbour - TIC 01348 872037 Fax 875125

Newport TIC - Tel/Fax 012339 820912

Newcastle Emlyn TIC - 01239 711333

Handing on:

The next section begins at Gors Fawr where this route ends. It takes the route into Carmarthenshire as far as Merlin's Hill just outside Carmarthen. It runs through hilly farming country and includes some interesting villages and a burial chamber.

2 SECRET CARMARTHENSHIRE

Gors Fawr to Merlins Hill - 32 ¼ miles/51.5km

Maps It is strongly recommended that 1:25000 scale OS maps are used to follow this part of the Celtic Way. You will require Outdoor Leisure 24 (North Pembrokeshire), and Pathfinders 1058 (Llanboidy & Cynwel Elfed) and 1059 (Carmarthen). The equivalent 1:50000 scale OS maps are Landrangers 145 (Cardigan & Mynydd Preseli) and 159 (Swansea, Gower & surrounding area).

Stages:

- 1. Gors Fawr to Gors Fach (3.3 mls/5.3 km)**
- 2. Gors Fach to Login (5.2 mls/8.2 km)**
- 3. Login to Llanboidy (3.6 mls/5.8 km)**
- 4. Llanboidy to Maesllwyd Inn (3.6 mls/5.8 km)**
- 5. Maesllwyd Inn to Abernant (7.2 mls/11.5 km)**
- 6. Abernant to Newchurch (2.5 mls/4 km)**
- 7. Newchurch to Afon Gwili (3.5 mls/5.6 km)**
- 8. Afon-Gwili to Merlin's Hill (3.4 mls/5.4 km)**

Introduction

The next part of the walk takes us through rural western Carmarthenshire to Merlin's Hill, situated just to the east of the

county town itself. This is farming country, and all walkers should show sensitivity to the agricultural importance of the area by keeping to footpaths, shutting all gates, and, of course, following the country code at all times. Unfortunately, while many farmers are happy to have walkers crossing their land so long as they keep to the rights of way, others are less welcoming, and a significant number of the rights of way marked on the OS maps are blocked. Thus, in some sections it is necessary to keep to country lanes even when it may appear from the OS maps that other rights of way make provide better walking. This chapter is broken down into eight sections, allowing the walker to plan each day's journey as required. Overnight accommodation around this area is sparse. Unless you can persuade a farmer to allow you to camp in a field (which is unlikely, in my experience), Llanboidy offers the best bet for an overnight stop with accommodation available in the Lamb Inn. There is little else, however, before Carmarthen itself.

Stage 1: Gors Fawr-Gors Fach (3.3 mls/5.3 km)

Starting Point:

The stone circle at Gors Fawr is thought to be of Bronze Age origin (c2000 BC), and consists of 16 stones with two outlying standing stones clearly visible just east of north. The functions of circles such as this are not entirely clear, though it seems likely they may have had some ritual significance and a number of contemporary theories have suggested that they may also have had some astronomical function relating to the calendar, perhaps allowing Bronze Age peoples to plan their agricultural activities according to the seasons.

From the stone circle at Gors Fawr, head south-east to the white building of **Pen-rhos Farm**. Pass through the kissing gate to the road, then turn right and follow the lane down to the junction at 132282. Turn left here and continue past **Allt-y-gog Farm** to the junction at 144286.

Turn left again and head north towards the entrance to **Trefach** Caravan Park (there is also a pub and other amenities here) at 145290. Continue north along the lane for about 150 yards, then turn right uphill onto the bridle path leading to **Fferm-y-Capel**. After about 500 yards, follow the main track round to the right towards the farm buildings. Just before the white buildings, follow the grassy track off to the left.

Keep following this track just south of east through several gates until you arrive at a series of pylons. At the pylon containing a yellow waymark sign pointing back the way you have just come you will see a **green lane** just to the right following more or less the direction you have been walking in. Follow this green lane eastish to a gate, beyond which is a stony track running left to right. Turn right downhill, then past **Iet Goch Farm** and over a small bridge, which marks your passage out of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and into Carmarthenshire. Continue on the main path uphill to the A478 just west of Gors Fach.

Stage 2: Gors Fach to Login (5.2 mls/8.2 km)

The spectacular burial chamber, or cromlech, at Gwal y Filiast (“Lair of the Greyhound”) - which is also known as Dolwilym or Bwrdd Arthur (“Arthur’s Table”) - lies on private land, though since it is immediately adjacent to the right of way it is very easy to visit. It is neolithic in origin, probably dating from about 3500-2500 BC, and consists of four sidestones and a capstone, although there may once have been more than four side stones. A 19th century description of the cromlech suggests that it may once have been surrounded by a stone circle and covered by a barrow,

though no evidence of this exists now. There are, however, two small stones a little way uphill from the tomb, which has led to suggestions that this may once have been a passage tomb, though since it has not yet been excavated this cannot yet be proved. The cromlech is protected by Cadw, the Welsh historical monuments organisation.

Head north-east up the A478 for about 100 yards, then turn right at the first road junction at 169289. Turn right, tending south, to the road junction at 169271. Turn right here, then left, to emerge at the road junction at 173267. Turn left, and follow the road over the Taf into **Llanglydwen** (passing telephone on left).

Continue along main road, heading southish up **Rose Hill** to the junction at 182260. Turn right, then, after about 150 yards, right again onto the obvious track signposted for **Penpontbren Farm**. Proceed west to the farm, taking the right fork down a green lane, keeping the buildings to your left. Continue to a gate where the path forks, taking the left fork uphill past an old stone gatepost to the neolithic **Gwal y Filiast** burial chamber (170257).

Continue along the main track to a clearing at 172255. On the far side of the clearing, to the right, the main track continues before

bending to the right and coming to a fork. Take the left fork uphill, and proceed to the sharp bend to the left at 170250. Head on uphill south-westish past the farm to the road at 177247. Turn right, and follow this road south-west into **Login**. (Note that at the junction at 177244, bed and breakfast facilities are signposted left at Maencochyrwyn, a detour of about 750 yards.)

Stage 3: Login to Llanboidy (3.6 mls/5.8 km)

This section follows the course of the **Landsker Borderlands Trail**, which is well waymarked for most of the way, though a little confusing around Cilgynydd Farm. Although the word Landsker is most likely of Viking origin, the name refers to a colony of Flemings that was established under English patronage in southern Pembrokeshire in the Middle Ages. Almost from the beginning, the Flemish immigrants resisted Welsh influence, and remained loyal to the English crown to the extent that they fought on the side of the English against the forces of Owain Glyndwr in the fifteenth century. In fact, the colonists resisted Welsh language and culture so strongly that even today the Landsker is widely known within Wales as “Little England Beyond Wales”, and southern Pembrokeshire remains a curious part of the nation: apparently slap-bang in the middle of some of the most traditional

areas of all, yet almost devoid of the unmistakable stamp of Welshness that pervades even the most easterly borderlands of the Marches.

At the junction at 167233, turn right uphill, ignoring the initial overgrown path off to the left (1:25000 map) until you reach the Login village sign. A few metres past, on the left, the correct (which appears to be the correct route for the Landsker Borderlands Trail according to the path is waymarked). Follow this **waymarked path** through the woodlands (copious with Devil's-bit Scabious, in flower from June-October) to a **wooden bridge**. Cross the bridge, and follow the path almost due east to a stile at the edge of the woods at 177236.

Cross the stile, and proceed just north of east uphill across the field until a "standing stone" (actually the remnant of an old fencepost or gatepost) comes into view, then head for this stone. From the stone, head roughly north-east to the corner of the field, then follow the waymarked track along the side of the field to **Cilgynydd Farm**.

At the end of the track at the farm, there are metal gates left and right. Pass through the left-hand gate then walk around the north

side of the farm to another metal gate on the right hand side. Pass through this gate, and then proceed south through a small enclosure and through more gates to the track on the south-east side of the farm. Continue uphill, south-east, to the road junction at 194231. There are **Bronze Age tumuli** to the south of the junction, though these may be difficult to see when the hedgerow is dense (a series of these leads north-north-east for about seven miles from Cross Hands). Cross the road and proceed just south of east to another junction at 198230.

Turn left and head north-east, past Rose Villa, to the part-metalled track on the right, at 203234, leading to Maesgwyn Isaf. Turn right up this track until you reach a waymarked stile on the left hand side. Cross the stile, and follow the waymarked direction across the fields, bearing east. Keep heading east, tending downhill to rejoin the track at about 209229. Follow this track, rich in willowherb, north of east into Llanboidy.

Stage 4: Llanboidy to Maesllwyd Inn (3.6 mls/5.8 km)

Llanboidy is well supplied with both historical references and facilities for the walker. The Lamb Inn provides food and accommodation, as well as the more traditional forms of

refreshment (if muddy, which is highly likely given the nature of the farmland you have just crossed, keep to the Public Bar where walkers appear welcome), and there is a grocery store that opens seven days a week, together with Post Office and telephone facilities, public conveniences and tourist information. There is evidence of human settlement in this area from Neolithic times (c3000 BC), although the earliest remaining structure is the hillfort at Hafod, just to the south of the village (at 218 225: a round detour of 1.5 km would allow you to visit it) thought to date from the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age (800 BC-100 AD). The discovery of Roman coins here suggests that the site later developed into a Romano-Celtic settlement. Other Bronze Age burial grounds (2000-1400 BC) and Iron Age defended enclosures (circa 700 BC) have been found in the area. The motte and bailey castle - Castell Mawr - at the east end of the village, which would have consisted of an earthen mound topped with a wooden tower, may be of Norman origin, built in the early to mid 12th century as part of the lordship of St Clears, or may be of Welsh origin, built by Rhys ap Gruffudd in his re-conquest of the area in the late 12th century. The castle certainly hints at a strategic importance for the area in the 12th century, and it is possible that the village, which is thought to have grown up around this time, may have evolved around the road between the

castle and the church of St Brynach, which is thought to have been of late 10th or early 11th century origin. However, two 5th or 6th century stones - one of which was built into the church and the other of which was lost - suggest that the site of St Brynach's may also previously have been the site of a Christian cemetery considerably pre-dating the church.

Emerging into the village of Llanboidy between the school and the pub, turn right onto the main road through the village and continue past the Lamb Inn. Follow the road, left and then right, passing **St Brynach's church** on the left, to the car park at the eastern end of the village, where public conveniences and local tourist information can be found. Opposite the car park, the path is waymarked through a kissing gate next to a metal farm gate. Immediately apparent on the right is the residual mound of Castell Mawr at 219231.

Follow the right of way, keeping the field boundary to your left, to a stile and a wooden walkway over a bog. Cross these and continue north-east crossing two more stiles to a metal gate. Ahead in the field is an upright stone. Pass this and continue in the same direction across the field to the farm buildings. On the far side of the field is a sharp dip down to the stream. A wooden

stile leads down to a bridge over the stream and into another field. On the far side is a metal gate leading to the lane at about 226235. Turn right past **Ddol Farm**, then head south to the road junction at 227234.

Turn left at the junction and proceed southeastish to the crossroads at 239225. Continue in this direction to a second crossroads at 257219 and a third at the Maenllwyd Inn at 277212.

Stage 5: Maesllwyd Inn to Abernant (7.2 mls/11.5 km)

Turn left here onto a smaller lane heading north up to **Bwlchgwynt Farm** at 276227. Before the farm, cross the cattle grid and turn left uphill along a farm track to head northeastish towards **Waun-oleu-fach**. When the track ends at about 281281, continue in the same direction through a field, keeping the field boundary to your left.

On reaching the road at 284232, head straight on for about 150 yards, just past the **Gellywen** road on the left, before turning right onto the farm track. At the far side of the farm the path diverges. The main path heads to the right, but to the left there is a rusty metal gate leading to a reasonably obvious grassy track through

the field. Cross the gate and turn left to head north-east down this grassy track, which weaves its way to the road at **Plas-paun Farm** (293234). Go through the gate here, past the houses, then turn right and follow the road down to **Cenllaith Farm** at 302228.

Follow the road down to the junction at 304224, then turn left to head eastish past **Dyffryn Farm**. At the T-junction (there is a telephone and post box here), turn right (signposted Abernant) and follow the road down, enjoying the views of the Cywyn Valley, to a second T-junction at 330215. Turn left here, then bear left again at the junction just over hump-backed bridge crossing the river (again signposted for Abernant), and into Abernant.

Stage 6: Abernant to Newchurch (2.5 mls/4 km)

Walk through Abernant, passing **Cottage Farm**, to the road junction at 349236. Turn left (signposted for Carmarthen; there is a post box here), and walk to the crossroads at 356246.

Turn right, and proceed to the junction at 373242 (you may be able to catch a glimpse through the hedgerow of a **tumulus** to the

left at 360247). Turn right at the junction, past the old Post Office, then left again (signposted for Newchurch), and walk into Newchurch.

Stage 7: Newchurch to Afon Gwili (3.5 mls/5.6 km)

Continue on the road through Newchurch, then after the last house on the right at 385243 turn right onto a waymarked bridlepath. Continue just east of south, following the obvious path through several gates to **Nant Hir** at 389238 (it is steep in parts, here, and care must be taken). Continue to follow the path, taking the main path south at the fork, through more gates to the road at 391231.

Turn left onto the road and continue just east of north past **Breezy-bank** to a waymarked footpath on the right at 394241 just opposite Ffoshelyg Farm. Turn right here, then at Garn Fawr Farm turn left over a stile and follow the right of way northeast along the fence. At the end of that field, pass through the right-hand gate, continuing northeast keeping the field boundary to your left. At the end of this field there is another stile and waymark. Cross the stile and follow the waymark to the road, noting the obvious **Bronze Age tumulus** to your right.

Turn right onto the road and follow it all the way down to the junction with the A484 at 417237. Turn right and follow the main road for 150 yards to the junction with the B4301. Turn sharp left (signposted for the steam railway), then immediately right onto the smaller road to cross the **railway line** and the river. (Note that if you carry straight on after the sharp left turn, this will bring you to the main terminus of the Gwili Steam Railway, which is a pleasant diversion if you are into that sort of thing, and food and conveniences are available here also).

Stage 8: Afon-Gwili to Merlin's Hill (3.4 mls/5.4 km)

Rather surprisingly, the hillfort atop **Merlin's Hill** was discovered only recently, and little is known about it. Presumably Iron Age in origin, it may well have been a defensive structure of the Demetae, the local Celtic tribe for whom Carmarthen was the capital at the time of the Roman invasion. The fort covers about four hectares and was clearly well designed to withstand attack, having massive ramparts with a well-defended entrance to the north-east, although it would seem that the Romans were not deterred for too long as Carmarthen subsequently became the important Roman town of Moridunum. Interestingly, the Welsh

name for Carmarthen - Caerfyrddin - literally means “Merlin’s Castle”, although it seems unlikely that there is a link between this and the Celtic hillfort of Merlin’s Hill. The walk description below includes a possible detour to visit Carmarthen Museum in Abergwili.

From the bridge over the Gwili, follow the road round to the left to the junction at 421238. Bear right uphill, then after about 500 yards turn right to head south past Awelfryn Farm and Upper Lodge. Continue to the fork at 428227, and bear right, proceeding east of south through **Glangwili** to the A485 at 432219. Turn left, then quickly right onto a road marked “Private Drive” which is waymarked for walkers.

Follow this drive for about 125 yards to red signs proclaiming no public access. Immediately before the signs there is a **kissing gate** on the right hand side leading through to a well-defined path. Pass through the gate and follow this path south-east until you emerge at the road at 436218. Turn right and follow the road past the rugby ground to the junction at 436214*. Turn left to follow the waymarked metalled track north eastish until it veers away to the left after about 100 yards. Keep straight on uphill (just north of east) to a gate at the end of the track. The main track now leads

off to the left, but there is a waymarked path leading south of east across some fields. Merlin’s Hill is now in full view straight ahead.

Across the first field there is a gate and stile - use the stile - then across the next field there is a stone stile some way to the right of the obvious gate. Go over this, and you will see the white building of **Pen-y-gadair Farm**. The right of way passes to the left of this, and over a stile onto the road. Head east uphill, until you reach a house on the left called **Porth Myrddin**. On the right hand side of the road there is a stile and a waymark. Cross the stile and follow the waymark to another stile and waymark ahead.

Beyond that stile, the path proceeds into **woodland**. It becomes indistinct for a few metres, but soon on the left you can see a set of wooden steps. Climb the steps to a **green lane** and cross it to reach more steps. These are very steep, but the Llanelli Ramblers have helpfully provided a piece of rope to help you up. Follow the path at the top through the woodland to another wooden waymarked stile on the left. Cross the stile and head right, tending uphill, to a dead tree-trunk. Here, the path continues round along the contour, but there is a clearing to the left which will take you right to the summit of **Merlin’s Hill**.

* To visit the excellent **Carmarthen Museum at Abergwili**, turn right here and head south to the A40. Turn left onto the main road into Abergwili. The museum is signposted just off the main road (address below). It contains a rich variety of exhibits from the Paleolithic to the Romano-Celtic eras, including Paleolithic and Neolithic tools, early Christian inscribed stones, and a collection of Roman coins found in the area. To rejoin the walk, continue east along the A40 for about 350m to a junction at 444210. Turn left and head uphill to rejoin the walk at Pen-y-gadair Farm.

Additional Information

Cadw, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Road, Cardiff.	Tel	
01222-465511		
Carmarthenshire County Museum, The Old Palace, Abergwili.		
Tel 01267-231691		
Carmarthen Tourist Information Centre	Tel	
01267-231557		
Lamb Inn, Llanboidy.	Tel	01994-
448243		
Trefach Manor Caravan Park	Tel	01994-
419225		

Tourist Information

Carmarthen TIC - 01267 231557 Open all year.

Llandeilo TIC - 01558 824226 Easter - September

Newcastle Emlyn TIC - 01239 711333 - Easter - September

Llandovery TIC - 01550 720693 All year - jointly operated with the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Handing on:

This has been an exceptionally difficult area to bring the route through and Steve Edwards has made a outstanding job of it. The temptation is to end here, and re-start the route at Llandeilo where Peter Thomas has brought his experience to bear to create some great walking. However, to accept the need for a break in the journey and just give bus directions to the next good walking would mean missing out an area intrinsic to the idea of the Celtic Way. a route has to be found. To do it will be as fascinating as it is frustrating.

In the absence of a local expert - although one was sought and nearly found - below is a stop-gap walking guide for the next part of the route: Merlin's Hill to Llandeilo through Golden Grove. It needs considerable improvement - in particular, some footpaths

which appear to have disappeared need to be re-discovered. But - at all points - you are walking through an uncommon landscape. Where there is something unique, there may well be a defensive desire to safeguard it. See what you think as you walk it.

3 GOLDEN GROVE

Bryn Myrddin (Merlin's Hill) to Llandeilo - 18 miles

Maps: Landranger 159; Pathfinder 1059.

Highlights:

Bryn Myrddin (Merlin's Hill); Llanfihangel-uwch-Gwili Church; Pen-y-cnap; Llanegwad Church; Dryslwyn Castle remains; Gron gaer Hillfort; Dinefawr Castle.

Stages:

1. Bryn Myrddin to Llanfihangel-uwch-Gwili - 3 miles
2. Llanfihangel-uwch-Gwili to Llanegwad - 3 miles
3. Llanegwad to Dryslwyn - 6 miles (less with the PFP from Llwynfortune across to Nantymab-Iasf,)
4. Dryslwyn to Llandeilo - 5 ½ miles

Introduction

This is an exceptional valley, guarded by the remains of its old fortifications, and the shapely hill-tops which run through it. It deserves to be walked on its merits, not just to make the Celtic Way route a continuous one. Although initiatives were taken to find a guide writer who lived in the area, and somebody made attempts to get the route moving, there is no local writer as yet for this part of the route. This is understandable: there are frustrating

problems in bringing a route along the Tywi Valley - public footpaths tend not to be signed; the dominance of the A40; finding crossings for the loops of the river and its tributaries; changes in hedges and field boundaries which frustrate attempts to follow the rights of way as marked on Pathfinder maps.

However, there is a route, an old and impressive one, and I have set out the best details I could find at this point. Because of uncertainties about some, though not all of the footpaths, parts of this route use the tiny lanes which wind through the hills. It is harder underfoot and ultimately less satisfying than using a footpath, but it eliminates way-finding and obstruction problems until we can get some knowledgeable local expert to improve on it.

I have been told that many visitors have a soft spot for the Tywi Valley and make frequent enquiries about its history. This is hardly surprising considering it is the home of the enigmatic Merlin. It featured memorably during the raids and skirmishes by Owain Glyndwr to take Carmarthen and Dryslwn as part of his campaign for Welsh Independence. It has at least three memorably located churches - one, at Llanfihangel-uwch-Gwili, tucked away above the folds of the hills; at Llanegwad, standing

proud in the heart of the valley, and the high-placed Llangathen amongst its ancient yew trees. Golden Grove used to be the telephone exchange name for the area and name by which I came to know this part of the Tywi Valley; Golden Grove itself is a small spot on the southern slope, and Gelli Aur Country Park carries the Welsh version of the name.

The suggested route runs through a delightful west/east running valley with rich water meadows and the Tywi river snaking its way through it. The hills which line each valley-side are strongly defined. There is also a run of hills within the valley itself. At Llandeilo the hills fall away to reveal the vista of the Black Mountains and Carmarthenshire Vans ahead. In between are the landmarks of Bryn Myrddin, where we start, Pen-y-cnap and Llanegwad, Dryslwyn and Gron-gaer, before the Dinefawr Estate just before Llandeilo. Forgive the inadequacies of this route - especially the long detour around Eisteddfa - and enjoy the delights, especially the stunning views from Pen-cnap and Gron-gaer.

There is plenty of B&B in the area and the village of Pont-ar-Cothi has inns and hotels. Llandeilo, at the end of this section, is an historic market town where Welsh is the first language. There

is a cosmopolitan variety and character about the town. It attracts a lot of incomers and visitors and is a good place to end this part of the walking before moving on to the high-level walking of the next section.

Stage One: Bryn Myrddin to Llanfihangel-uwch-Gwili - 3 miles

Starting point:

While taking in the views across 3 counties from the top of Bryn Myrddin one can see the lane ahead. It looks as if it could be reached by striking across the fields towards it, but the correct way down is to retrace your steps the way you came, back to Porth Myrddin. On the way down through the woods take time to admire the spring in its basin, the surrounding plant growth kept carefully at bay by some guardian of the area. At the green lane, look to your left for the steps down into the second part the woods.

On reaching the lane, turn right and follow it downhill for ½ mile to a T junction. Take a swift right then left.

Diversion. If you want refreshments go right and follow the lane for ¾ mile into White Mill. White Mill, with its two pubs - the White Mill Inn and the Adams Arms - is ½ mile to the right.

Close to White Mill, on the A40 main road, is the High Noon Café, famous for its good food - a bowl of cawl, a good rich mutton and vegetable stew, comes with a roll, butter and cheese for £2)

The route to Llanfihangel goes right then a quick left. Turning left and follow the lane down the side of the Annell valley to a T junction, where you turn left and follow the lane for 1 ½ miles to **Llanfihangel-uwch-Gwili** (Church of St Michael above the Gwili).

This is a very quiet spot - a place for reflection.

Stage Two - Llanfihangel-uwch-Gwili to Llanegwad - 3 miles

There is an attractive track here which would take us to Nantgaredig with its standing stones, and this would be our route if, at Nantgaredig, the old dismantled railway line could be walked along the valley floor. But it cannot. So our route has to leave out Nantgaredig and make for Pont-ar-Gothi.

Continue along the lane past the studio and follow it as it bears to the right for just over a mile. At the crossroads, go straight across - take care as the road you are crossing, unlike the lanes, carries

regular traffic. Follow the lane as it moves downhill towards the Cothi Valley, with some good views of the way ahead. Turn right at the junction, and follow the lane which brings you through the back of the village and into **Pont-ar-Gothi**. Turn left at the A40 opposite Cothi House and follow the A40 for 100 yards over the Afon Cothi. Turn right by the Cothi Bridge Hotel.

You are now on a 'no through road' alongside the River Cothi. Ahead is a long, large hill covered with trees. At the fork in the lane turn left and head uphill on a stony track. Follow the track, which rises quickly and passes Kincoed Farm. Go through the gate and continue on the track through the hill pastures for about ½ mile on a scenic path. This track has the atmosphere and position of an ancient way, adjacent to the hill-fort of **Pen-y-cnap** above, and with a good view of the surrounding countryside. Carry on through a rusty gate and as you walk you begin to get changing views of the valley and the hills ahead. By the next aluminium gate you can see the lovely top of Pen Arthur, which we walk in the next section of the Celtic Way.

Go down the stony track, enjoying the views, and come to a junction at Pen-y-garn. It is possible to go left here, but take the right hand lane which curves round to the small village of

Llanegwad with its ancient church. The church ground is a llan - an old sacred site - with its curved walls. Inside the church is an indecipherable drawing or symbol on its south wall. Outside the church is a stricken tree with steps alongside and a holly bush growing out of the trunk.

Stage Three - Llanegwad to Dryslwyn - 6 miles

After the mystery of Llanegwad and the vigour of the old track we have the frustration of a 2 mile detour. No-one in their right mind would want to walk alongside the A40. The footpaths in this next part are not signed and acknowledged where I have enquired. So we need to walk for 3 miles on unused lanes to get to the road crossing for Felindre, until the position regarding local footpaths is clarified by the appropriate authorities. Requests have been set in hand, it is worth enquiring at the Celtic Way contact address where details of any improvements will be available. If you can find a bus or taxi and want to avoid this bit - good luck to you. Even so, it is not all bad, the route is quiet and atmospheric - but a better one must exist.

Starting point:

From Llanegwad follow the road out of the village to its junction with the A40. Cross with care to the other side and follow the

verge for 30 yards then enter the lane on your left. Pass **Llwynfortune** Farm - where a FP is shown on the map but is not known of when enquiries were made - and continue on this quiet lane as it rises. Go past Coed-saithpren and descend into the Cothi Valley where you join a wider road for almost a mile before turning off right towards **Eisteddfa**. You are on a rarely used lane which soon rises and goes through trees to come out on high ground. Continue along the lane passing the entrance to Nant-y-mab Ganol. The road goes down to Nantymab-Isaf - where the PFP should have brought us and saved two miles of lane walking.

Go down to a crossroads. Take the unmetalled track opposite which goes uphill. Follow it between two hedges until it comes out on a lane which has been widened at this point. Go right for ¼ mile, then right at the next turning and follow this for ¼ mile again until a lane to the left which runs downhill to a crossing of the A40 opposite. Cross and take the lane to **Felindre** about a mile away through the valley floor. You have been able to see the hill and dramatic ruins of Dryslwn Castle ahead of you for some time. At Felindre there is a junction just before the telephone box. Take the right-hand lane and follow this to its junction with a wider road.

This road runs to the right past **Dryslwyn** and gives access to the site. It is worth a diversion to visit this. The site can be entered opposite the picnic area by the river. From Dryslwyn retrace your steps to the junction and take the road right, opposite the Felindre road.

Stage Four - Dryslwyn to Llandeilo - 5 ½ miles

Some fine tracks and footpaths, plus quiet lanes: there are two sticky points on this walk. I have spoken to the Ramblers and Carmarthen Footpaths Officer about these and the route ahead reflects the current state of affairs.

Starting point:

Back at the wider road opposite the lane from Felindre, enter the quiet lane which runs under the heights of the **Castle Hill**. After ¾ mile the lane forks. Go straight ahead along the road which gives off to Cwmagol and Pentre Davis farms. The Pathfinder suggests that you go on until you reach the huge complex at Alltygaer Farm and - negotiating the warnings about loose dogs - go through the farm building towards the steeply wooded hillside. However, there is an alternative, which may or may not be preferable. There is a diversion, (which may be allowed or opposed) which should be signed, though I saw no indications. It

involves entering the last field on the left before the farm complex and following the right-hand hedge up the slope to a stile which gives access into the woods. Once you get there you are on a straightforward FP which leads along the side of the hill which had **Gron-gaer** hillfort on its eastern edge.

Follow this for ½ mile under the steep hillside, gradually climbing, though at no point does this path come out onto the top. The freedom to explore the top seems to have been lost. The track continues through sheep pastures under the heights of Gron-gaer then joins up with the farm road down from Grongar Farm. Go through the gate and carry on downhill to come to some cottages on the right. This is **Aberglasney** and looks like the fringe of an estate where renovation is taking place. At time of walking there was a notice about lottery Funds aiding the work. It will be interesting to see what emerges. There is a real sense of peace around here. This stage will be beautiful walking in summer.

Follow the lane to an apparent T junction. Go right for 100 yards, then left up the steep hill into **Llangathen**. Go right at the lane which leads past Church House and into Llangathen Churchyard. You are confronted by an enormous Yew tree, the first of several, and probably the biggest I have ever seen. It has supporting stone

walled steps around its circumference and looks to be 12 foot in diameter across the trunk. There are tremendous views to be had from walking through the churchyard. Come out at the opposite gate and go left uphill for a few hundred yards to a Y junction. Go right. This is the spectacular lane to **Cilsan**. Follow the tree-lined lane - which is little used - downhill to a ford and go straight across the large footbridge to Cilsan Mill on your left.

Follow this next quiet tree-lined lane for almost a mile. As it opens out - apart from noticing all the new gates in the area - you will see parts of the Dinefwr Estate (which is managed by the National Trust). Beyond the coming hill there is a conspicuous white house at **Pen-y-banc**. From here there is an unsigned PFP over toward Dynevor Home Farm and Llandeilo.

Go through the central new gate and follow the faint track up the slope over the pastured hillside. Follow the track up over the remains of an old hedge and cross it. There is no way-marking. (There is a path up a track from Birdshill Farm with a series of new stiles leading off south on a path to the Deer Park which is not a PFP). Carry on up the hill towards a **clump of trees** and pass between them.

Currently, just after the January storms which hit this valley hard, there is a lot of re-hedging and felling going on. Carry on rising , go to the left of two hollow trees. The way ahead is unclear. There is a lot of new fencing around the woodland to your right and the landscape appears to be in the course of being re-shaped. Aim across this changing landscape for the **aluminium gate** in the distance to the left of the woodland. You join a track which runs alongside right edge of a field. Cross into the next field, keeping to the right edge. There is a farm building in the field. This is a walked and established path, however there is a history of diversion applications in this area, and the situation on the ground may change..

Go through the next gate and continue on the track beside the field's edge until it comes out above the large complex of Dynevor Home Farm. At an indistinct junction **O.S.SN 615 230** by a small clump of trees to your right, strike out into the next field across the hillside to the east. Cross the fields and a farm track aiming for the houses of Llandeilo. The main track into the Dinefwr estate is now visible to the right. The field crossing just before the road is unclear, but the **kissing gate** out on to the A40 is a guide to direction. You come out in Llandeilo about 100 yards from the Police Station. Go down the hill, passing the

Salutation Inn towards the main road. Go right for the church and the railway station to begin the next section.

Llandeilo was once the ancient capital of West Wales and its position above the river is a defensive one. The town has abundant inns, (the Cawdor Arms, the White Hart Inn) and accommodation, and a popular market on the last Saturday of each month.

Additional Information:

Gelli Aur Country Park - 2 miles west of Llandeilo - 01558 668885

Carmarthen Heritage Centre -Displays of the area's history from AD75 to present - 01267 223788

South Wales and West railway. For details of the line which runs from Swansea through the heart of Wales and stops at Llandeilo - all enquiries - 0345 484950

Llanelli Ramblers run a festival of walks in the area over the Spring bank Holiday - contact festival office on 01554 770077

Tourist Information:

Carmarthen - 01267 231 557 - open all year.

Llandeilo - 01558 824226 - Easter to September

Llanelli - 01554 772020 - open all year.

Llandovery - 01550 720693 - open all year.

Pont Abraham (M4 Services) - 01792 883838

Youth Hostels

Regional Office at Cardiff - 01222 222122

Llandeusant - 01550 740619

Ystradfellte - 01639 720301

Handing on:

The next section, which benefits from the expertise of someone who knows the area, begins in Llandeilo Station and climbs slowly up onto the Black Mountain and the Carmarthen Vans - the great whale-backed mountains with the sawn-off edges that you caught glimpses of in the distance. Plan overnight stops carefully. There is a lot to be said for aiming for the Youth Hostel at Llandeusant for the next night (check opening times). From Dan-yr-Ogof it is possible to make your way by bus to Swansea if you do not have any more time to spend in the area.

4 THE BLACK MOUNTAIN

Section Four - The Black Mountain -

**Llandeilo to Pen Arthur and over Fan
Brycheinog to Dan yr Ogof**

Maps:It is recommended that you use the
**Ordnance Survey Outdoor Leisure 12 for the
high-level part of the route. Landrangers 159
and 160 (Brecon Beacons)**

Stages:

- 1.Llandeilo Railway Station to Garn Goch Hillfort
- 5 miles (8kilometres)
- 2.Garn Goch to Hen Bont (via Capel Gwynfe and
Pont Newydd)- 6 miles
- 3.Hen Bont to Llanddeusant 3 miles
- 4.Llanddeusant to Dan yr Ogof - Fair Weather
Route - distance 10 miles (16 kilometres)
Optional foul weather route keeping to lower
ground - distance 7 ½ miles (13 kilometres)

Highlights: Carn Goch Hillfort ; Fan Brycheinog
Ridge; Llywn y Fan Fach; Llywn Y Fan Fawr;
Maen Mawr

Nearby Roman Camps at Arosfa Garreg lwyd at
GR 804263 and Y Pigwyn at GR 828313

Stone Circles :Cerrig Duon at GR 852206 and
Maen Mawr with avenue; Godre'r Garn las at GR
820258

Stone Avenue: Saith Maen at GR 832154

Background to the walking and area.

This section of the Celtic Way starts in the wide
and richly fertile Towy Valley and climbs up into
the Black Mountain area, which contains some of
the most remote hill country in South Wales,
before descending into the upper reaches of the
valley of the River Tawe. The highest of the Black
Mountain hills - Fan Brycheiniog - is just over
2,630 ft.(800 metres so it is important not to
underestimate the effects of bad weather. Check
weather forecasts and seek local advice if at all
doubtful. Carry a map and compass and know how
to use them. Have a whistle to keep signalling six

long blasts in an emergency. Navigation on the ridges is straightforward in fair weather but avoid the ridges in wet and windy weather. You won't be able to appreciate the views and you might get blown off! You will need to plan each stage carefully and allow plenty of time for the walking. Overnight stops are possible in a variety of places at the start and finish and the route is written with the possibility of an overnight break in either Llandeusan - where there is a Youth Hostel, or at Capel Gwynfe. Tourist Information at Llandeilo will be able to give more information about accommodation possibilities.

In Neolithic times, as well as rich farmland for settlements, the Towy Valley would have provided a convenient migration route westward towards the coastal plain. The revolution in agriculture which had begun in the river valleys of the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris eventually reached into the river valleys of Wales over a period of about 2000 years.

A number of burial cairns have been identified in the area dating from the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods. There is evidence that there were links with the people settling in what is now Ireland. Later, at around the time that the "Blue Stones" were being taken from the Preselli Hills to Stonehenge, there were incursions by peoples from Brittany by way of the Severn-Cotswolds area. Towards the end of the Bronze Age, at around 2000 B.C. other groups of immigrants originating from Eastern Europe, were making their way into the area. These are known as the "Beaker People" and it is recorded that the superior weapons of the invaders enabled them to win a major victory over the indigenous tribes. However, the pressure on land caused by the increase in population was eased somewhat by a change to a warmer, drier climate which permitted more settlement and cultivation in the upland areas. From this period we now begin to find evidence of ritual that is not only based on funerary rites and located around burial mounds. Stone Circles now appear in the

record and two of these will be mentioned later in the descriptions of walks.

Evidence of the need to protect the settlements growing up in the good agricultural land of the Towy Valley can be found in the many hill forts in the area. The largest of these, Carn Goch, was built on the site of a much older stone cairn which is thought to date from around 4000 B.C. Later Celtic tribes added banks for defence in pre-Roman times. The Romans themselves made good use of the Towy Valley, building roads across from their base at Brecon towards the gold mines at Dolaucothi, villas on the valley floor and marching camps in the hills around. The Romans never colonised Wales, they established military stations and built roads mainly to exploit the mineral wealth of the country. The villa sites were probably those of wealthy romanised Britons. The bulk of the local population continued to live their lives much as before but in a peaceful way facilitated by the pax romana. Initially, however, the Roman advance into the area was bitterly but

vainly opposed by the Celtic Silurian tribes and it was not until 74-78AD that they were finally subdued. The proliferation of Roman camps and roads is evidence of the serious view which the Romans took of the military threat. On the other hand it appears from the absence of major military ruins that the Demetae peoples further west, whose tribal capital was Carmarthen, presented less of a military threat to the Romans. The Silures were still sufficiently strong when the Romans left to be able to mount a vigorous defence of their lands against invasion by marauders seeking rich pickings from the remains of the Roman Empire.

Many leaders of the Celts emerged in this period. The most well known is Arthur Pendragon. The location of his famous Battle of Mount Badon against the Saxons in 516 A.D. is unknown but one legend places it at Mynydd Baedon near Bridgend. His magician, Merlin, hailed from Carmarthen and Arthur himself, together with his trusty companions is said to be asleep in a cave under Dinas Rock, near Pont-Nedd-Fechan,

awaiting a call to defend the homeland! Over 200 years later, at Dinefwr Castle, in the Towy Valley another leader, Rhodri Mawr, having reduced the Viking menace, arranged for his lands to be governed after his death by the three strongest of his six sons giving the country a unity which it enjoyed for many years until the death of Hywel Dda in 950 A.D.

Stage 1 : Llandeilo Railway Station to Garn Goch Hillfort - 5 miles (8kilometres).

Introduction.

Take a moment to stop at the seat in Claredon Road on the approach to the station. Many of the features of the next section of the walk will, weather permitting, be visible from here. On your left is Maes-y-Dderwen Hill with the bulk of Trichrug rising up to its right. To the left of Maes-y-Dderwen are the twin mounds of the hill forts of Y Garn Goch. The smooth grass covered mounds in front across the valley mark the site of old quarry workings. The river Towy flows down from the hills away to your left and meanders

across the valley floor beneath you. Your way ahead after the station is over the suspension bridge to the right and along the path across the meadow to the Bethlehem Road beyond which marks the boundary of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Starting Point:

Llandeilo Railway Station 634 226 At the station, cross the line with care and take the footpath to the right passing over stiles to reach the suspension bridge.. **Suspension Bridge.** Feel the bridge swinging as you cross over to the concrete path which leads you through gates to the Bethlehem Road Bethlehem is the famous village where the young and not so young send or hand in their Christmas Mail in order for it to have the distinctive post-mark. Go right along the **Bethlehem road** Take care of traffic: although traffic is light, walkers are rare and speeds often high. After approx. 300 yards take the way-marked footpath on the left over a cattle grid and up a driveway

Pass to the left of the dwelling, crossing an electric fence if necessary, to pick up the footpath again up on the **bank** in front of you. From here the path passes near a stream, the path is not very distinct but goes straight ahead to a way-marked stile in a hedgerow. Cross the stile into a lane and turn left.

Pass a disused **old well** in a red brick enclosure at the foot of a mound on the left to reach a country road

Turn right up the hill for the start of a gradual climb for about 2 miles (3 kilometres). As you climb the hill the telegraph line crosses over to your right and the poles are numbered. Near the top of the climb look back over the hedge between poles 5 and 8 for views over the Towy Valley west of Llandeilo. Beyond the bridge is Dynevor Castle on its mound high above the river. On the left bank the mansion of Gelli Aur and in the distance high on the left is Paxton's Folly (also known as the Nelson Tower, a National Trust property)

Ysgubor-Wen Farm is passed on your right and then, on a bend, the road leading to Pantyfynnon and Highfield goes off on the left. Start to climb again past **Troed-y-Rhiw** ("The Foot of the Slope") Farm 652225. The road now follows a **ravine** where the stream has cut down into a deep valley. Pen-y-Cae Farm is on the left and a little way ahead a old milk churn stand marks the turn off on the right to Brynteg Farm. The long lane and way-marked footpath leading to Pen-y-Garn and Tir-y-Lan comes next on the right, but stay on the road a little longer passing Waun Hir on your left and coming to a sharp right hand bend in the road approximately 2 ½ miles from Llandeilo. Waun Hir 664 227. At the bend in the road after passing Waun Hir go left to take the main route to **Garn Goch** and proceed towards **Maesydderwen Hall**. Go right for the optional detour to the standing stone, then return to this fork and go left.

Standing Stone Detour at Carreg-Cyn-Ffyrdd Farm 668 228

This digression gives the opportunity to visit a Standing Stone by taking the **right fork** and continuing for another 700 yards around the left hand bend in the road and going up the slope passing and the track to Ty'r garn Farm. The Standing Stone is approximately 6 feet high and stands at the right hand side of the road near a metal gate and next to a wooden telegraph pole. Further on up the slope is **Cennen Tower** woodland. In the woodland are the ruins of Cennen Tower, possibly a lookout tower for Carreg Cennen Castle, which was still standing in the late 1950's. Legend links it with the nearby mansion of Glyn Hir, at one time the home of a Huguenot family, and with tales of a Frenchman living in the tower with a number of "wives"! From the top of the tower it was possible to see as far as Penlle'r Castell about 6 miles away on Bettws Mountain

Continuing at 668230 Whilst on the road towards Maesydderwen Hall with its large pond, in

approximately 200 yards, at the end of the drive to "Dderwen Deg", go right, following the road towards **Maesydderwen Hall**. Do not bear left at the main gateway but go straight on towards farm buildings and pass through a metal gate on the right of the main building. At the far end of the building turn left and cross over a way-marked stile and then a second stile also on your left about 50 yards up the slope. After the stile, continue up the slope keeping the wire fence on your right to reach another way-marked stile

Cross this stile and follow the **waymark** to the right keeping the old quarry workings on your left. The track leads to a way-marked wicket gate which is set in the stone wall ahead about half way down the slope. Follow the way-marking down the slope with the stone wall on your right until you reach a gap for a gateway in the wall. At this point go left for about 50 yards to another wicket gate and pass through to cross a muddy field, keeping an earth bank and fence to your right, until you

reach a gate giving access to a quiet country road near a way-marked post.

Turn left in the lane and walk down passing Gors Cottage on your left then another house on your right before you reach **Cwmdu** where the road turns sharply left down hill to a stream then rises to a road junction. At the junction turn right signposted Bethlehem.

Keep straight on until the sign for **Garn Goch Hill Fort** is reached on the right. At this point there is a plaque with a pictorial map and brief description of the Iron Age fort.

Garn Goch Hill Fort

Follow the well defined path 682243 up the slope behind the descriptive plaque passing through **Y Garn Fach** where there are extensive views up the Towy Valley. Keep to the path into the dip between the two forts. At a fork in the path a right turn will take you around the outside of Y Garn Fach showing the impressive fortification and opening up views down the Towy Valley past

Dynevor Castle. Return to the main path and continue up to **Y Garn Fawr**. Pass the 4000 year old cairn and keep following the path out over the north wall of the hill fort.

The remains of an ancient cairn lie in the bracken below on the right and the plain alongside the river ahead contains the site of a roman villa at 705255 as well as **Llysbyrchan Farm** (q.v.)

Llysbyrchan :

This farm stands at Grid Reference SN 705254 near the site of a roman villa. The name translates as “The Court of Brychan” The Welsh name “Brycheiniog” for Breconshire is derived from “Brychan” who ruled over the area in the second half of the fifth century A.D. According to Giraldus Cambensis, Brychan had 24 daughters. Among these were Tydfil the Martyr (from whom we get Merthyr Tydfil), Gwladys, commemorated in the name of the waterfall Sgwd Gwladys near Ystradfellte (in the next section) and Eluned or Adwenhelye with a chapel near Brecon. Brychan

was an early convert to Christianity and many of his daughters suffered martyrdom for their faith.

Nearer to Llangadog Town are the remains of Castell Meurig at GR 709276 which can be reached by a public footpath from the main road.

Stage Two: Garn Goch to Hen Bont (via Capel Gwynfe and Pont Newydd) - 6 miles

Starting Point:

The path now drops down the bracken covered hillside to a farm road. 696242 Go right on the road and pass a track on your left at which leads off to **Tan-y-Lan Farm**. 696239 Still continue on the farm road towards Garn-wen Farm. Trichrug now looms above you to your left. Pass through a gate and bear to the left towards an iron gate at the beginning of an enclosed track. Follow the track up hill past a ruined cottage. The slope now gets steeper but with more open views back over the Towy Valley. Pass through a gate at the top of the slope turn left then cross a stile on your right

696234. Follow the track south west with the mass of **Trichrug** getting closer on your left. The track climbs even more steeply to reach another stile and gate.

695229 You are now at **Bwlch-y-Gors**. Climb over the stile and turn left along the way-marked footpath. The route now follows an old trackway below the crest of Trichrug towards Llandeilo Forest at **Pen-Arthur** with panoramic views over the Towy Valley. Keep the fence on your left hand side until, in about 500 yards, reaching a gate and stile in front of you at the end of a stone wall. Cross the stile and continue ahead with the fence on your left until you reach another stile and gate this time at the end of a wire fence. Cross over the stile and continue ahead with a fence still on your left, at the next stile and gate continue ahead with a wire fence still on your left.

The path now drops down to cross a rivulet and continues up the slope in front with a wire fence

on each side to another gate and stile. Cross the stile and continue with a fence now on your right hand side through an area of **reeds** and through the next stile and gate. Continue downhill with the fence still on your right and up the rise until you reach a metal gate in front. Cross the stile at the right of the gate and., almost immediately, cross over the next stile on the right into an area of forest which, in 1997, had been clear felled.

Follow the **way-marked public footpath** which goes off half left (towards the SE) from the stile. The path becomes easier to find as you proceed, keeping the stream gully on the right hand side. In front now is a panoramic view over the valley of the Gwenllan towards the Black Mountain. In the felled area the width of the path is indicated by a row of tree stumps on each side. Follow the path as it bears left just before the boundary fence and continue round to the left, past where a rough track joins from the left, until the path widens into a grass covered track. Continue on the grass track with a hill slope rising up on the left. The path

now turns downhill through the trees and becomes more distinct. Pass through a gate and turn right and then left to follow a stream downhill to the white painted building of Lletty Farm.

Cross over the track coming from the left and head towards the farm house building. Turn right through a wooden gate before you reach the farm house and enter a lane. Follow the lane downhill with banks on each side. The lane turns sharply right and continues downhill to join a wide forest road. 715232. Pass with the gate on your right and continue to a metal gate and waymarked stile. Over the stile follow the track downhill to a wooden gate. Follow the waymarked track ahead, passing **Llwyn-y-neuadd Farm** on your right.

713226 The track is now **tree lined** and comes to two gates. Take the waymarked wooden gate on left hand side into forestry and pass a large ruin on your right hand side. The **old trackway** rises up to your right to pass the ruin but take the newer track downhill on your left to pass through a gate in

approx. 100 yards and rejoin the route of the old trackway downhill to a footbridge beside another ruin

714223. The track rises up to a junction on the other side of the bridge. At the junction turn right and walk up the hill for 25 yards to a wooden gate into woodland on your left. After the gate turn left and follow a broad path on the right up hill crossing first a stream culvert and then a wider stream. Continue uphill with a stream on your left, through a wooden gate, and continue uphill with the stream on your left and a clearing on your right. The ground becomes boggy but keep the stream, and now also a boundary fence, on your left until you come out of the trees and reach a hedgerow in front of you. Pass through a metal kissing gate at the right hand end of the hedgerow and cross straight over the field in front, with a hedge on your right, to pass through a metal gate and reach the road.

Gwynfe School is opposite to your right Turn left on the road for 800 metres,

Come to **All Saints Church, Gwynfe**, where there is a post box and public telephone box. Pass All Saints Church at Capel Gwynfe and continue along road passing Ysgybor-lan Cottage on your right and with distant views of the Black Mountain further away on your right.

727224 Go straight on at the road junction at Bryn Clydach and descend for approx. one mile. to pass Crud-yr-Awel and join the main road (A4069) at **Pont Newydd** (the “New bridge”) Cross the bridge, over the River. Clydach, and take the minor road opposite. In approx. 400 yards, at the fork, go left towards **Llanddeusant** along a road marked “unsuitable for long vehicles”.

Pass Glasfryn on your left and drop down to the River Sawdde at **Hen Bont** (the ‘old bridge’). Immediately before the bridge cross the waymarked stile on your right. **742233**

The Sawdde River ;

In his book "Wild Wales" George Borrow ("Romany Rye") writes of coming to a beautifully wooded glen some three hours after leaving Llangadog. To his left a river called "Sawdde" or "Southey" roared down from the hills in the south-east. He then came to a village standing in a semi circle ("Pont Newydd"?) and later, along the same road towards "Gutter Fawr" (the present day Brynamman) was a "pandy" or fulling mill driven by the waters of the river which he calls "Lleidach" (this may have been the Clydach). The present road between Pont Newydd and Pen-y-Cae du could not have been cut because he then reaches Capel Gwynfe which he translates as "the Chapel of the place of bliss". The rest of his journey to Brynamman was past a toll-bar and along the roadway past the Pantyfynnon Quarries which had been cut to bring coal from the Amman Valley to the farms of the Towy Valley.

Stage 3 - Hen Bont to Llanddeusant 3 miles

Cross the stile at Hen Bont and follow a way-marked path through trees with the river on your left. The path is muddy in places but passable. Continue alongside the river until another way-marked stile is reached straight ahead of you. Cross the stile and drop down to a tributary stream in a deep gully. Follow the stream left to reach a crossing place and then cross a **ruined wall** to follow the path winding steeply up to your right to reach another stile. Windblown trees can often be encountered across the path in this area. After the stile cross the field ahead keeping near to the fence on your right, passing a wooden gate to reach a hedgerow. Continue with the hedgerow now on your right to a metal gate with a stone barn visible across the valley to your left. Pass through the gate and cross diagonally across the field ahead to reach another metal gate into the yard of **Wern-fawr Farm**.747233

Go to the right around the yard to reach a short driveway leading to another metal gate and a

country road with a footpath signpost opposite. Turn left on the road for about 600 yards to reach the abandoned Acheth farmhouse.

752 237 **Acheth Farm** Cross the stile on the left before the farm and follow the path around keeping the farm buildings on your right. Cross a muddy track and continue across a gully Do not go through the gateway ahead but keep to the left where the ground is very boggy in places. Go down the field to a causeway track leading to the right to a stile in a wire fence. Cross the stile and go right to cross a small stream then go left around an area of bracken and through a gap in an earth bank to pass by the ruin of **Ynys-wen Farm** and reach the footbridge beyond. 753240

After the **footbridge** go left towards a tree covered hillside following a worn path through undergrowth to where way-marks begin to lead up the hill alongside a small stream to a wicket gate. Cross straight across the field ahead towards a white cottage. Opposite the cottage pass through

another wicket gate. Come out onto a quiet country road and turn right to walk on the road to the Youth Hostel at Llanddeusant. At the next road junction follow signs to Llanddeusant Youth Hostel.

Keep straight ahead at Aber Llechach 760243 Bear right at the fork keeping to the road. 762244 Cross river at **Pont Felin-fach** and continue on road up a steep hill Pass the entrance to Tredomen 770243. Pass Bwlchyfedwen 774243. The Youth Hostel 777245 is beside the church and the Red Lion Inn at **Llanddeusant**

Stage Four Llanddeusant to Dan yr Ogof - Fair Weather Route - distance 10 miles (16 kilometres)

Optional foul weather route keeping to lower ground - distance 7 ½ miles (13 kilometres)

Before starting out check the warnings given about safety and weather conditions.

Starting Point:**Llanddeusant Youth Hostel (next to the church)****GR 777245.**

Take the lane opposite the church, passing with the churchyard on your left. Descend a very steep hill down past the entrance to Cwmsawdde Farm **776242** to reach a road bridge over the Sawdde with a commemorative stone dated 1929. Climb up for a short distance to a fork in the road.

For the fair weather route bear left towards Blaensawdde 784239

For a lower level “foul weather” route bear right towards Gellygron

The Fair Weather Route

Turn left at the junction to cross another bridge and pass through a wooden gate. Follow the lane up the slope and continue as the lane becomes a track leading to Blaensawdde Farm and open country.

Blaen Sawdde Farm. This old farmstead, situated at Grid Reference SN 784239, at the head of the

River Sawdde, is closely associated with the legend of the Lady of Llyn-y-Fan and thus with the story of the Physicians of Myddfai :

The son of Blaensawdde Farm, whilst grazing his mother's cattle on the slopes around Llyn-y-Fan Fach, saw a beautiful girl sitting on the surface of the lake. After an enduring courtship she agreed to marry him, but only after warning him that she was no ordinary mortal and that she would return to the lake if ever he struck her three times. They wed and she bore him three sons. One day, after many years, he forgot about the warning and teasingly tapped her on the shoulder. He repeated later and, on the third occasion, she left the house and vanished under the waters of Llyn-y-Fan Fach. The three sons, grieving for their mother, often sat gazing into the depths of the mountain lake. One day their mother reappeared and gave the eldest son, Rhiwallon, a leather container saying, “The mission of you and your brothers shall be to heal the sick. In this bag are the healing secrets of the Other World .” After showing them the different

herbs growing on the mountain and explaining their use as cures she returned to the lake and the brothers went down from the mountain full of their new mission. For generation after generation all the sons of the Myddfai family practised medicine and their last known descendent, Dr. C. Rice Davies, practised in Aberystwyth in 1881. A manuscript containing details of all the remedies can be seen at the National Library in that town

Continuing the fair weather route:

From Blaen Sawdde farm the steep escarpment of **Fan Brycheiniog** is visible directly ahead. Go into the farm yard with the house on your right, pass through two metal gates to reach a lane between a wire fence and a hedge which leads down to a way-marked stile and gate. After the stile follow an enclosed lane between hedgerows to reach Gorsddu Farm 788241

Pass through a metal gate and bear left to the continuation of the footpath Unfortunately the footbridge over the river no longer exists and the

road cannot be reached from the footpath A farm road leads around the buildings and down to a metal gate which opens onto a lane. The lane swings left over a bridge and the land ahead through another metal gate is subject to an **access** agreement under the Countryside Council for Wales's Tir Cymmen Scheme so you can go through the gate and follow a bridleway alongside the River Sawdde to see some typical upland valley scenery before returning to the bridge. After the bridge the lane rises steeply to join a country road 792242 .

Turn right and follow the road which quickly becomes the vehicle track towards the lake **Llyn-y-Fan Fach** The track passes Blaenau Farm and makes a sharp turn to the right at the **Mountain Rescue Post** 797239.

Cross over a cattle grid and enter open country on Welsh Water land. The track proceeds alongside the river to reach the lake in another mile. After the point where the track crosses the river 804228

climb up the slope on the right to reach a well marked path leading up onto the ridge of Bannau Sir Gaer and continue above and to the south of Llyn-y-fan Fach.

On Fan Brycheiniog, above the next lake, Llyn-y-Fan Fawr, a triangulation pillar at **825218** marks the spot height of 802 metres (2630 ft.) Approx. 300 yards further on is the steeply dropping pass of Bwlch y Giedd.

Escape Route if needed at Bwlch y Giedd 828215. Above Llyn-y-fan Fawr, it is possible to abandon the ridge walk if the weather deteriorates and take a steep but easily followed route of nearly 2 miles passing waterfalls and a stone circle to join the road at **853202** and which is followed by a road walk of approx. 2 miles to reach Tafarn-y-Garreg Public House at **849171**.

To do this, after passing the end of a wire fence on your left, follow the path down to the left off the ridge towards the lake. The path descends very

steeply and care is needed in wet weather as the rocks can be slippery. Walk ahead with the lake on your left to reach a small stream (Nant-y-Llyn) emerging from the lake. Cross the stream and bear right where the path forks to follow the stream down towards the road.

Keeping the stream on your right follow a steep track down hill and pass a series of increasingly dramatic waterfalls until the path swings to the left away from the stream with a standing stone visible below and to the left. Follow the path down to the standing stone, **Maen Mawr**, at 851207 with a circle of much smaller stones alongside. This stone circle is known as “Cerrig-Duon”, attributed to the Beaker Folk, it is similar in origin to Stonehenge and Avebury but is one of only 8 of its type known in South Wales. An avenue of stones reported nearby is not now visible but Maen Mawr itself can still be shown to influence the direction of a compass needle.

The road ahead is reached by crossing the narrow River Tawe at any one of a number of crossing places. Turn right on the road and walk down in the direction of **Tafarn-y-Garreg**.

Fan Brycheinog Continuation

If not descending at Bwlch y Giedd follow on up the slope ahead. The lake, Llyn-y-Fan Fawr is now below on your left. The path ahead is not very definite at this point but gradually becomes more distinct as you ascend keeping the steep drop to Llyn-y-Fan Fawr on your left.

Continue along the hill slopes of **Waun Hir**, passing lichen covered outcrops of old red sandstone, until the steep slopes of **Allt Fach** are reached. Head south along the line of the slope towards the field boundaries below.

Descend to the boulder strewn valley of the River Haffes and follow the river down to meet the way-marked footpath which leads down past a riding school to reach the main road at 845165.

The Lower Level or “Foul Weather” Route

Turn right at the junction after Cwmsawdde Farm and the River. Sawdde bridge (signposted “Gellygron”) and follow the lane past the entrance to **Gellygron**.

Bear right to follow the waymarked bridleway as you begin the long ascent to **Carreg yr Ogof**.

At the **junction** of the bridleway keep straight ahead Drop down towards the **River Twrch**.

After fording the river pass with the **bog** of Banwen Gwys on your right look out for the ruins of some very old limekilns.

Keep straight ahead at the next junction to reach **the ford** where the River Giedd meanders between deeply cut banks. The track, also known as “**The Coffin Road**”, continues all the way to Craig y Nos passing old quarries and lime kilns above the **Dan yr Ogof** Caves complex

On reaching the main road pass The Shire Horse Centre where, in addition to shire horses, Highland cattle and even alpacas (!) can be seen grazing the fields.

This is a good place to break your journey if you are continuing on to the Waterfalls section. If not, it is possible to get to Swansea or Neath - both with bus and rail stations - by public transport. More details from the numbers below. Don't be in too much of a hurry to leave this area.

Useful Information:

Accommodation:

Camping available at Capel Gwynfe

Youth Hostels:

Regional Office at Cardiff - 01222 222122

Llandeusan - 01550 740619

Ystradfellte - 01639 720301

(B&B) available at Gwynfe, Llangadog. Tel. (01550) 740686.

Transport:

South Wales and West railway. For details of the line which runs from Swansea through the heart of Wales and stops at Llandeilo - all enquiries - 0345 484950

Tourist Information:

Carmarthen - 01267 231 557 - open all year.

Llandeilo - 01558 824226 - Easter to September

Llanelli - 01554 772020 - open all year.

Llandovery - 01550 720693 - open all year.

Pont Abraham (M4 Services) - 01792 883838

Centres:

Dan-yr-Ogof Cave Complex - 01639 730284

Craig y Nos Country park - 01639 730395

Suggestions for further reading :

The Journey through Wales/The Description of Wales by Giraldus Cambrensis.

Penguin Classics ISBN 0 14 044.3398

Roman Britain by I.A.Richmond. The Pelican History of England ISBN 0 14 02.0315X

Wales Before 1066 - A Guide by D. Gregory, Gwasg Carreg Gwalch ISBN 0-86381-177-5

When was Wales ? by Gwyn A. Williams Pelican
Books ISBN 0-14-022569-7

Wild Wales by George Borrow Chapters XCVII to
XCVIII (for description of area around Pen Arthur
and Capel Gwynfe)

British Regional Geology (SouthWales) HMSO
ISBN 0 11 881184 1 for geological significance of
the Llandeilo, Trichrug and Lletty areas

Handing on:

The next section gradually makes the transition
from high ground to the river valleys. The walking
is matchless in this area so we have included two
routes from Dan yr Ogof. The intention is to
provide a circular walk from Dan yr Ogof to
Ystradfellte and Pontneddfechan which returns to
Sarn Helen to pick up Ron Elliot's linear route
from Dan yr Ogof to Melincourt. It allows an
opportunity to spend an extra day exploring the
area.

5 DAN YR OGOF

Section Five: Waterfall Country

**Dan yr Ogof across Waterfall Country to
Melincourt in the Neath Valley**

Options:

**Circuit from Dan-yr-Ogof to Ystradfellte and
Pontneddfechan joining the linear route at Sarn
Helen.**

**Linear Route between Dan yr Ogof to Cribarth,
Henrhydd Falls and Sarn Helen over to
Melincourt.**

Maps:

Ordnance Survey Outdoor Leisure Series 12 Brecon
Beacons National Park, West and Central areas.

This is a double sided map giving full cover of the
section in one.

Landrangers 160 and 170

Stages:

Circuit route

1. Dan-yr-Ogof to Pont-Nedd Fechan - 15 miles and
1200 foot ascent).

2. Pontneddfechan to Banwen - 5 miles
3. Pontneddfechan to Sarn Helen at Banwen - 6 miles

Linear route:

1. Dan Yr Ogof to Melincourt. - 15 miles

Highlights:

Circuit: Scwd Eira waterfall; Sgwd Gwladys; Sarn Helen.

Linear: Cribarth; Henrhyd Falls; Sarn Helen;

The Circuit Route

Introduction:

The move from high ground to the river valleys crosses some uncommon countryside. From the exposed tops of the Carmarthen Fans the route comes down into the wooded valleys of the rivers Tawe, Nant Llech, Pryddin, Nedd, The section from Dan-yr-Ogof to Pont Nedd Fechan offers the walker a variety of terrains ranging from the gentle riverside walk to the vast open spaces above Penwyllt and over to Ystradfellte and on to the ruggedness of the climb down to the waterfall between Ystradfellte and Pont Nedd Fechan. The intention of this route option is to provide a circular walk from Dan yr Ogof to

Ystradfellte and Pontneddfechan then back along the Prydein river valley to join up with the linear route just before it crosses the A4109 Inter-Valley Road for Banwen and Sarn Helen.

There are no public transport services from Pont Nedd Fechan to Ystradfellte which is about 6 miles. Both Dan Yr Ogof and Pont Nedd Fechan can be reached reasonably easily by bus from the centres of Swansea or Neath. The bus journeys in themselves are scenic and a good introduction to the localities.

The beginning of the walk is sheltered. It has excellent tourist value with the impressive Dan-yr-Ogof cave complex at its start. This complex has a large car park and a Cafe/restaurant which welcomes walkers. Accommodation is available. Also within half a mile of the caves are two Public Houses, The Gwyn Arms which has an extensive menu and excellent facilities, and the Tafarn-y Garreg which is a traditional old style pub with much character, it has a basic menu and the Landlord Keith Morgan (01639 730267) has access to a field opposite the Pub for camping.

This walking from the Caving club at Penwyllt to the Farm at Blaen- Nedd-Isaf is excellent on a good dry day even in the cold but if contemplating doing this section on a wet and rainy day bear in mind that there is little if any shelter on the open mountain and few signs. In the driving rain on the top visibility can be down to a few yards.

The walking from Ystradfellte is mainly above and through the Mellte Valley with its succession of waterfalls. It is not particularly exposed, but there is no way off the route until arrival at Pont Nedd Fechan..

Stage One: Dan yr Ogof to Ystradfellte - 9 miles

Starting Point:

The start of the walk is in the car park of the **Dan-yr-Ogof caves complex**. The path leads directly from the car park through the field down onto the A4067 the main Ystradgynlais to Brecon road.

On reaching the road immediately on the opposite side can be seen a stile and a footpath sign. This leads into a field with a duck pond and picnic area which is owned by the Dan-yr-Ogof caves complex. Walk to the right of the pond to the gate with a footpath sign keeping the river on your right.

Proceed to the wooden bridge leading over the river. There are also large stepping stones to the right of the bridge for the more adventurous. This is the **River Tawe**.

On crossing the river do not turn right as this leads into the Craig -y Nos Country Park. Follow the **Bridleway** sign climbing slightly to a gate, which on passing through you turn right onto the bridleway which now takes you between fields, the bridleway at this point is about 12 feet in width. In the wet this area can be extremely muddy but is easy walking. You pass a large 3 storey stone house with a gate across the path. Exit onto the unclassified road and walk 100 yards passing a small brick built bungalow keeping the bungalow to your left. Now on the left is a gate with a footpath sign. Enter into the woodland where the path now climbs quite steeply

and unevenly to a gate which brings you out onto the road.

Now turn left and walk up the hill on the road for about 200 yards arriving at a disused railway crossing and the **Penwyllt Quarry**. (This point is about 45 minutes from Dan-yr-Ogof.). After walking over the railway crossing/cattle grid follow the rough stone road to your right for about 300 yards. Here you will see a long stone built building which was at one time several workmen's cottages. **This is the South Wales Caving Club Headquarters**. Some 30 yards before the club there is a footpath sign.(Stating Legally diverted foot path.) Follow this to the left onto a grass path. and continue bearing left along easily distinguishable path for 400 yards to a dry stone wall and a stile.

The sign here indicates **Ogof Ffynnon Ddu** Nature Reserve. Cross the stile and after 20 yards take the right hand fork still on the grass path. This takes you uphill to a disused Tramway. Where the path meets this Tramway walk straight over the tramway to the

path where some old stone steps can be seen. There are no signs at this point. or for quite a distance after.

Follow the steps and the path ahead it bears left and climbs gradually for about 300 yards. There are no signs, there is a single tree on the left with an old broken stone wall behind it. Twenty yards before the tree turn right onto the faint path walk uphill to the right of the **Limestone outcrop** climbing to meet a farm vehicle track.

Bear left onto this path and follow for 200 yards until seeing a fenced-in section of land. Take the path to the right of the fence it follows the line of the fence. On the right of the path is a steel post with **yellow and red** markings. Walk 200 yards and see second steel post with yellow and red markings. Continue with the fence on your left, on reaching the end of the fence follow the path immediately in front walking between two **rocky outcrops** 400 yards up to the brow of the rise.

Immediately in front can be seen a wooden pole on the right of the path and a large mound with a **cairn** of stones on top.

Follow the path to the cairn and go to the **left** of the cairn. On the Ordnance Survey Map the path is shown to the right of the cairn but it disappears in 20 yards and I could not pick it up. This point is 40 minutes from the Caving Club. Some 30 yards past the cairn the path bears slightly right over very uneven ground.

There is a long **drystone wall** about 150-200 yards to your left. Keep it that distance on your left and after about 400 yards see a small stone cairn 2 feet in height on the right of the path. There is an excellent view over the Brecon Beacons and Pen-y Fan can be seen on the horizon to the front left.

The path is undulating and very narrow with deep **shake holes** on the right, next to the path on the left is a boarded over cave hole. (Railway sleepers used as covering.) The path goes between two rock mounds, it is narrow with deep heather on both sides.

The path crosses the brow and drops gently down to a dry stone wall and a stile. There is a **sign** here to show that you are leaving the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu Nature Reserve. (This point is one hour from the caving club about two and a half miles from the club.)

Climb the stile out of the Nature Reserve. The path goes **straight** in front and drops down a gentle gradient in the distance and to the left can be seen a long dry stone wall. Whilst still descending the path bears to the right and widens as you begin to move more to the right. There are no signs.

Half a mile ahead and to your left can be seen a small stone cairn on a rocky outcrop, keep it well to your left and follow the path which is still wide to the brow of the ridge ahead. On the **ridge** about one and a half miles ahead and slightly to the right can be seen a forestry **plantation**. Follow the path in this direction. **Two trees** will come into view directly ahead. Walk towards these on nearing these you will see **derelict farmhouse** on the left of the path, a

signpost in the middle and an old Railway wagon (**Sheep shelter**) on the right of the path.

Follow the path sign straight ahead for half to three-quarters of a mile where you meet a signpost and the old Tramway (road).

Turn right onto the Tramway and follow to the **two gates** 500 yards away. Go over the stile at the first gate then 25 yards to the next gate, front left. Go through this gate and immediately over the stile on your right. There is a signpost marked **Blaen-Nedd-Isaf**. This point is 40 minutes from the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu Nature Reserve. After crossing the stile into the field follow the path keeping the fence on your right stay close to the fence as there are usually sheep or cows in the field. At the other end of the field go through the gate follow the sign to Blaen-Nedd-Isaf again keeping the fence on your right.

The path descends to another gate. Go through the gate and the path is now **very steep**, rough and can be very muddy and slippery in the wet. Descend 30 yards to the **concrete bridge** over the stream,(Quite

deep in wet weather) cross bridge to the rear of the barn and keeping the barn on your left, cross the stile into the farm yard and walk around the farmhouse keeping it on your right.

On meeting the road walk to your right in front of the farmhouse. There are usually several farm dogs, noisy at the most and a large flock of geese, more frightening than the dogs. The farmer Mr. Morgan Lewis is friendly and if asked allows parking on the grass verge 30 yards from the farm.(This point is 50 minutes from leaving the nature reserve.).Follow the road away from the farm in the direction of Ystradfellte

About 300 yards along the road will be seen a signpost marked **Ystradfellte**. Cross the stile into the field to the stile on the opposite side, climbing gradually up to the ridge you will pass through a newly made gate and a Public Bridleway sign on the fence. Follow the arrow and 200 yards in front you will meet another signpost and direction arrow. Follow the path through the gap in the broken stone wall and bear right. The path is now barely visible

descending slightly then climbing gradually to the top of the ridge where you will see another signpost, marked Public **Bridleway**. Follow the path to the group of large square stone blocks which are on the right of the path. One hundred yards ahead is another stile and gate with a further sign.

Continue to follow the path descending for about 300 yards. At this point the path completely **disappears**. But there is a **deep shake hole**, circular in shape and fenced in. Keep this shake hole to your right walk alongside it to the top of the brow of the hill in front where you meet a 10 foot wide grassy path. Turn right onto the path, continue along to the rusty gate in the corner where two walls meet (200 yds.) Go through the gate into the **green lane** which takes you between two fields it has fences or walls either side. Follow to the next gate, pass through and straight on still descending. There is a sign nailed to a tree on the left as you meet a lane. (**Tyle Farm**).

Go straight on, now on a tarmac road, descending to a gate (200yds), through the gate onto a Cul-de-Sac there is a large car park on the right. Walk along the road towards Ystradfellte church

and the New Inn pub. This Public House does meals, hot and cold drinks but does not welcome the eating of one's own food on the premises. There are several bed and breakfast facilities in the village and a Youth Hostel about 600 yards along the road. Blaen-Neddisaf to Ystradfellte is about 45mins.

Stage 2: Ystradfellte to Pont Nedd Fechan 6 miles

Starting Point:

From the **New Inn Pub** walk to the right of the church, passing the public W.C. on your right, and on down the road to the bridge. Cross the bridge:

There is a **sign** on the right indicating that the path is 400 yards up the hill. Walk up to the path entrance and cross the stile at this point into the woodland on your right. Follow the path keeping the river on your right. It is a very good path and remain on it passing through several stiles to the cave car park at **Porthyr-Ogof**. Pass through the car park and see the sign for Blue Pool and Clun Gwyn. Follow this path - not the one for the caves unless you intend to visit them.

If you do you have to return to this point to continue the walk.

After 50 yards go through the kissing gate keeping the river on your right. You emerge onto a grassy area - pass through to the path which is ahead. The river is on your right and you come to bridge. Do not cross the bridge. Continue along the path with the river on your right. The path bears left and goes uphill for 50 yards. Turn right onto the path where you come to a high point above the river. You can detour down to the river but must return to this point to continue the walk.

At this high point there is a sign for **Sgwd** IsafClun Gwyn, Scwd-y-Pannwr. Follow this path climbing to the right to meet another path with Pine trees immediately in front -of you. Turn right here, you are reaching the top of the walk with the river far below you in a deep valley. You can hear the sound of the waterfall.

Follow the path to the sign **Scwd Eira** pointing to the right Follow this path ie. a set of steep steps

made from wood and earth with some wooden handrails. At this point **take care** if it is wet as it can be very slippery and muddy. The steps drop down for about 200 feet to the river and this is when all the effort has been worth it. The view of the waterfall is tremendous . On a day when there has been rain the flow of water is very powerful, the falls are about 30feet in height and well worth seeing. Walk along the rivers edge keeping the river to your right you are actually walking on large rocks and boulders. This brings you up to the base of the falls and the path takes you under the flow of water **behind the falls** where you emerge on the other side of the river. How wet you get will depend on the type of gear you are wearing, but you will get wet.

There is only one route out and its a steep climb up the side of the river bank with excellent views behind you. At the top of the steps and path you meet another path and a large boulder, turn right onto the path, walking along a level path to the signs marked Silica Mines and **Dinas Rock**. Follow this path bearing right and going down to the Dinas Rock Car park, named Craig-y-Dinas. In this car park you will

also see a large rock face used by climbers for abseiling , this is on your left as you enter the car park.

Dinas Rock - or Craig y Dinas - has a variety of legends associated with it. ^{iv}Some claim it to be the last spot in Wales visited by the Faery Kingdom; A more common claim is that it is the home of a band of sleeping warriors who will reawaken when the country is once again in need of their services. The identity of the war-band is alternatively claimed to be that of Arthur and his knights and Owen Lawgoch, a Welsh chieftain.

At the end of the car park turn right and cross the bridge walking into a small housing estate. Now bear left onto the road, and walk for about 1 mile , passing the Graig-y Dinas Hotel until reaching the Post Office at **Pont-Nedd-Fechan** Here you will find the Angel Public House which does food and welcomes walkers and tourists in general.

Stage Three- Pontneddfechan to Banwen - 6 miles

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Introduction

The Afon Prydein river valley, because of its inaccessibility, becomes more of a time warp the deeper one travels. Clear paths exist along the Prydein as far as the Logan Rock then it is a question of getting back on the hills to pick up Sarn Helen. The walking is atmospheric in this area. However, it has presented a few problems due to some ongoing footpath resiting and parts of the Bro Nedd walk being almost impassable in places due to uncleared fallen trees. Below is the best route so far in terms of ease of wayfinding and lack of obstruction.

A wonderful beginning to this stretch through the Prydein river valley to the Logan Stone with an easily followed path is followed by walking mainly through old forest with some wet areas and paths made difficult by fallen trees. Bro Nedd Walk waymarking helps the direction finding. The next part of the walking moves through forestry onto open hill tracks with a final stretch along a quiet lane. The rewards of this section are the landscape and natural features, the sense of history, and the unique atmosphere.

Starting Point:

From the car park at the Angel Inn, opposite the Tourist Information Centre. Coming out from the inn car park turn left and immediately left again down a lane with a few properties and you will see ahead of you wrought iron gates with the words, Sgwd Gwladys - Lady Waterfall, and a kissing gate entrance. Go through these go along the easily followed path alongside the left bank of the River Nedd.

You are in a deep gorge which then widens out. Iron ore was mined from this area and you will notice a blocked mine entrance tucked away into the hillside adjacent to the path. It is a good reminder of the rich mineral wealth and the difficulties in getting to it. There is reputedly a chalybeate spring nearby. You will also pass the ruins of a flour mill. When you reach the juncture of two rivers take the left fork and follow the **Afon Pryddin**. You will then cross a footbridge to the right bank of the Pryddin.

After almost ½ mile, at a point where the path rises, you can keep by the river and come out by the Falls, or take the rising path to come out above the Falls on a natural stone pavement. (My walking companion and I have argued over whether this is limestone or millstone grit, either way, it is fascinating). **Sgwd Gwladys** translates as the cascade of Gwladys, who you may remember from the legend of Brychan of Brycheiniog referred to in the Black Mountain section. Gwladys, was one of his daughters and the mother of St Cadoc. It is a beautiful cascade to which to give one's name.

This is an excellent point to take a break and take in the many views and the very ancient atmosphere of this area. It is possible to continue alongside the Pryddin for some time, but it entails much crossing and re-crossing of the river as the cliff sides come in to the water's edge. It is certainly a remarkable area and one where there is little evidence of human hand, but much of nature.

There is a distinctive triangular stone in the middle of the river above the Falls. To the right of this area

there is a clearing with a larger rectangular stone - **the Logan Stone** - set in the middle. This is a logan, or rocking stone - one of the 20 or so reputedly placed in the landscape thousands of years ago. ^v A theory has linked these stones to ley lines suggesting that stones originally were positioned so that they could be easily rocked with the intention of renewing the forces travelling on the ley lines. The stone weighs 17 tons and apparently could once be moved with one finger's pressure upon it. It was overturned by mineral railway workers in the 19th century. Although it no longer rocks, it has a strong presence and commands respect in its clearing setting.

Take the path up the hill and bear left when there is a choice. You are climbing quickly through mixed oak and birch woodland well populated by birds and soon you have good views back of the valley and the opposite hillside. The path continues upwards and curves around a little to the right. You now start to pick up Bro Nedd waymark signs. The **Bro Nedd** route starts and finishes on the coast coming all the way up the valleys to Sarn Helen. We shall be coming across parts of it for the next mile.

The woodland is still deciduous but edged by pines, conifer and larches. The path becomes blocked in places by fallen trees and because of these walkers have to take diversions so the path itself is less distinct. Follow the waymarking along the edge of a field and the woodland until you reach **ruined farm buildings** - Cilfach Bronwydd - keeping this to your left head for the metalled road just beyond the stile and trees. As you come out onto the road you will see the finger post for Sgwd Gwladys pointing back the way you have just come.

Turn right and go past the entrances on your right to Bronwydd Farm. Continue for 500 yards to where this quiet metalled lane turns sharply right. You will see a path left through the trees, then a signed **bridleway**. Take the bridleway. It can be muddy in wet weather and winter. Follow it for about ½ mile where it crosses the Nant Hir.

It continues for another ½ mile through open forestry land to a cattle grid where it meets with a path from the right. This is **Sarn Helen**. Where the two tracks

join becomes a metalled track. Go left along it passing a small reservoir and continue on what is now a metalled road passing through the open gates of Cefngwaunhynog Farm. Sarn Helen goes off to the left before this across farm land but it is worth staying on the metalled road - which is a no through road and serves only the adjacent farms. The road crosses the head waters of the Fedwen and Bryn streams and after just over a mile comes out close to **Henrhydd Falls**. Here you can turn right and follow the road for 500 yards to the Falls or go left and follow Camnant Road around to the A4109 and cross it into **Banwen**. In other words, you are now on the linear route over to Melincourt and need to follow the walking directions for that stage of the route. You will find them below.

Linear route- Dan yr Ogof to Melincourt Waterfall Car park 822 019 - 15 miles - Landrangers 160 and 170

Introduction:

The route includes a fascinating conglomerate of caves with displays of Paleolithic life in the area, a

country park, two memorable hills, delightful woodland and farmland and two spectacular waterfalls. This is a walk that really does have something for everyone. Much of the route is strenuous but the views from Cribarth and Sarn Helen reward the climbing. The first part of the walking includes the famous Henrhyd Waterfall. The route then climbs onto Hirfynydd picking up Sarn Helen Roman Road. Then it drops down to Abergarwed, crossing the river Neath and under the new A465 and comes up into Melincourt

Starting point:

Dan yr Ogof 839 161. From the car park follow the finger post crossing the A4067 to **Craig y Nos Country Park**. The castle around which the park was created was once the home of world famous opera singer, Adelina Patti who, in the later years of the nineteenth century entertained the rich and famous in a most opulent manner.

Opposite the castle, cross the main road again. Then cross a series of stiles alongside a farm and follow the path just to the right. Then go left up the steep-

sided **Cribarth.828 142** Beyond a farm gate take a left fork and continue until you meet a wall on the left. At this point leave the track and climb the hill on the right to admire the glorious views of the Swansea Valley and the Black Mountain from the Trig. Point.

Return to the track and follow the wall where it turns to the left down a rocky trail to a stile. Across the stile turn right and follow the path as it meanders down to another stile. Ignore this one and turn left to go through a farm gate then a second one and through a third one on the right and take the right hand path through **Abercrave Wood. 830 133**

At the bottom, enter the extremely well-kept Abercrave Farm via two farm gates and exit alongside a stream onto a metalled road to the right down to Abercrave Inn. Here turn sharp left, then right to cross a road bridge over the **River Tawe. 825 127** Immediately across the bridge go through a kissing gate on the left alongside a house, then a further two kissing gates under a major road and

across a field to small wooded area alongside the river.

Follow the waymark to the left then fork upward to the right to a stile. Cross another stile in the far right corner of a field onto a metalled road. Turn left and follow the lane down a steep hill to **Llech Bridge** and then to a stile on the right. Now you have almost two miles of the most enchanting woodland running alongside the river to **Henrhyd Falls 854 119**, the highest in South Wales at 30 metres.

From the Falls take the steep path uphill to a car park. Go through the car park and turn right crossing **Pont Henrhyd** and follow the very quiet road south for just over a mile. Come out at the main A4109 road and take the local access road immediately opposite to enter the village of **Banwen Pryddin.856 095** Walk through the main street of the small village.

At time of writing the colourful local inn was up for sale and not in operation so refreshments cannot be guaranteed in this area.

You are heading straight uphill to the forestry area ahead which will eventually lead to Sarn Helen. Cross the cattle grid and enter the forestry. At the junction of Forestry Enterprise road with numerous waymark signs continue up the hill on a track which bears southerly again. On reaching a monument '**The Gnoll Stones**' a pause for breath will be welcome if not essential.

A little further up the road and you arrive at **Sarn Helen.831 070** The track, the old Roman Road, will be enjoyed for the next hour or so as you journey south-west with Rheola Forest on the left and spectacular views over the Swansea Valley and the Black Mountain and Brecon Beacons beyond.

Change to Landranger 170 Vale of Glamorgan and Rhondda

Eventually you again emerge onto a Forestry road and here turn left through a vehicle barrier then right until a wire fence is reached enclosing a **quarry**. Immediately the fence becomes parallel with the road seek a rather obscure path on the left slanting

down the hillside through the heath. After the first 10 yards or so the path is well-defined as a woodland track. On emerging on a lower road continue directly ahead down a wide forestry road.

At a Y junction turn right following a stream. A dead tree stands as sentry on the road immediately before a lay-by or turning area. At the end of the lay-by near a clump of Buddleia on the left is an **ill-defined path dropping steeply to the valley floor**.

Having negotiated the ill-kept path you will find, at the bottom, a '**St Illtyd's Walk**' waymark directing you to the left. Follow this most pleasant woodland path over a babbling brook down to a major curve in a forestry road. You will choose to pause here awhile to marvel at the view across the valley and the next stage of the walk to Afan Argoed.

Take the down curve, ignore the next waymark, a sadly overgrown path, and continue to a cluster of rocks guarding the entry to a path which turns very abruptly to the right. After about 30 yards or so follow a waymark directing sharp left, a most

pleasant downhill walk through the woods. Cross another path and at a y junction turn sharp right onto an ancient tramway and turn left on a concrete path to enter the village of **Abergarwed**. Where you will find pubs and refreshment.

Cross the road and follow a public footpath sign down a lane past some car yards. The lane leads to a footbridge over the fast-flowing **River Neath/Nedd**. The path then runs under the A465 Heads of the Valley road. Continue to a road, turn right then left to a path which crosses a railway line then continue to the quiet car park for the Melincourt Waterfall.

Additional Information

Tourist Information:

Swansea: Phone - 01792 468321 Fax - 01792 464602. Open all year.

Pontneddfechan, near Glynneath: Phone 01639 721795. Open weekends only out of season.

Llandarcy, Neath: 01792 813030. Open all year.

Transport:

Swansea/Cork Ferries 01792 456116

Cardiff Wales Airport: 01446 711111

Swansea Airport: 01792 204063

Rail:

National Rail Enquiries, Swansea: 01792 467777

London Paddington: 0171 262667

Eurostar: 0345 881881

Road:

National Express Office, Swansea - 0990808080

SWT, local bus information - 01792 580580

Eurotunnel Motorist Information - 0990 353535

Outdoor Centres:

Afan Argoed Country Park - 01639 850564

Pelenna Mountain Centre - 01639 636227

Dan-yr-Ogof Cave Complex - 01639 730284

Craig y Nos Country park - 01639 730395

Handing on

Beginning at Melincourt the route continues its pattern of crossing successive river valleys to the coast. There are some impressive hills and two river valleys to cross in the next section before coming out at Margam and crossing the coastal plain to the sand dunes at Kenfig.

6 IRON HILLS

Section Six - The Iron Hills of Afan

Melincourt to Afan Argoed and Margam Country Parks then to the Heritage Coast at Ogmore.- 36 miles

Maps: Landranger 160 Brecon Beacons and Landranger 170 Vale of Glamorgan and Rhondda

Stages:

1. Melincourt to Afan Argoed Country park. - 10 miles
2. Afan Argoed to Kenfig Castle. - 14 miles
3. Kenfig Castle to Newton Church - 6 miles
4. Newton to the Ogmore River Crossing - 6 miles

Highlights: Melincourt Falls; Pelenna Mountain; Afan Mountain; Bodvic Stone and Twmpath Dilith; Cwm Philip Valley; Margam Abbey; Kenfig Castle; Kenfig Nature Reserve and Dunes; Sker House; St David's Well; Tythegston Long Barrow; Ogmore Castle.

Alternative: It is possible to take the Ogwr Ridgeway from Margam to Llantrisant to meet up with the Ridgeway route. The Ridgeway is signed and marked on O.S. maps.

Introduction:

Moving down from waterfall country the route traverses the great hills above the coastal plain where the rivers we have been crossing cut their way through to the sea. We leave our last waterfall at Melincourt and cross the hills into the Afan Valley and Afan Argoed Country Park where we walk part of the Coed Morgannwg Way. The route brings us into Margam Country Park and the Cwm Philip Valley before we cross Margam Moors to the coast and the Nature Reserve at Kenfig Dunes. From the dunes the route takes in the local wells on the way to the long barrow at Tythegston and the river crossing at Ogmore.

Evidence from Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements suggests that the early inhabitants of the area moved from the coastal plain to the hills because climate change, over-farming, population growth, or the Roman presence, or all these things made it expedient. Archaeological finds in Margam and Newton give evidence of previous settlement. The Museum of Standing Stones in the Margam Abbey complex houses

the original standing stones: replicas have been placed in the sites where they stood.

Walking the Celtic Way through this section is to experience contrasts and surprises. Industry and husbandry compete for the valley floors. In the valley there may be a sunrise technology site, an open-cast mine, or dairy farm on its oasis of pasture. On the hills 1500 feet above there may be an ancient track, a standing stone, the weather-flattened remains of hillcamps. Open whale-backed tops and slopes covered with mixed woodlands and forestry are the reward for climbing out of the valleys, but there are times when the incentives of an pub lunch, a dive into a general store, or the tired stroll past gardens to the B&B make the descent to the valley floor attractive. The villages of the Neath Valley, those adjacent to Afan Argoed, or the towns of Maesteg, Pyle and Porthcawl offer refreshment and accommodation on the route through this section of the Celtic Way.

Stage One- Melincourt to Afan Argoed - 10 miles
Landranger 170 Vale of Glamorgan and Rhondda

The Route: A waterfall, woodland, farmland and open moorland: of considerable variety, this is a walk suitable for all.

Starting Point:

From the car park at Melincourt cross the road (B4434) and follow the path to the right of the OAP Hall alongside Melincourt Brook to **Melincourt Falls**. After a rainy period this can be an awe-inspiring experience.

Retrace your path as far as a stepped path which **zig-zags** up the side of the valley to a stile onto a farm track. Turn left and continue through a gate to a metalled road and here turn right up the hill. At this point, if time allows, the top of the Falls provides a splendid place to linger for further exploration or a picnic on the banks of the river.

About 200yards up the hill cross a stile on the right, waymarked **St Illtyd's Walk**, and follow the blue arrow directing left then take the next left fork up a gressy bank. Immediately after passing through a gap in a wall turn left and head up through another gap in a wall to the

brow of a hill from which you will see the next waymark on a gate and stile.

Follow the direction of this arrow which takes you southerly across open country where you will soon pick up a grassy trail. Where the zig-zagging path bends to the right of a wall, pick out **rocky outcrops** or cairns, the topmost of which is your next point of reference.

At the top of the hill do not enter the farm gate but turn left and with the wire fence on your right continue to another gate at the corner of a forestry plantation. Go through the gate and follow the line of trees until they turn **90 degrees** to the right at which point enter a single gate and here pick up the St Iltyd Walk waymarks again.

An extremely pleasant woodland walk leads to a stile over which you emerge to a stony track in open and most attractive **moorland**. Turn right and follow the track as it twists left then turn right to enter forestry again over a cattle grid. After about 150 yards turn left following a yellow waymark but ignore the second arrow to your right.

Eventually the road crosses a stream and just past embankments on both sides of the road and a right-hand bend look for a footpath to the left, obscure except for a recently constructed cairn.

Half a mile through the woodland cross a stile to **Cwm Blaen Pelenna**, an open interesting valley with an industrial history. Take the rocky path down to the river, cross by a footbridge and follow the Pelenna River on its southern bank until you cross a stile near a single road bridge. Turn left following a farm road up the hill and at a farm gate turn right to cross a stile into a woodland of broad-leafed trees.

Just below and to the left are the remains of Fforch-dwm Viaduct, once part of a tramroad system known locally as Parson's Folly. It was built to convey coal to the Neath Canal but the rapid growth of the coal industry established the railway before this method of transportation was proved commercially viable. Hence the apparent folly.

The path crosses a footbridge over **Nant Fforch-dwm** then climbs through a beech wood to a forestry road.

Turn right and after about half a mile follow a yellow waymark to the left for a further half mile again along a most pleasant grassy track.

On emerging onto yet another Forestry road turn right to the **Pelenna Mountain Centre** and the remains of **Gyfylchi Chapel**. Turn sharp left then immediately right following the large indicator to **Penrhys Walk**. At the bottom where the track bends to the right continue straight ahead on a bridleway and follow the path to the next bridleway arrow turning **sharp right** downhill. Just prior to this turning on your left may be seen the bricked up remains of the Gyfylchi Railway tunnel. This was part of the South Wales Mineral Railway opened in 1861 from Briton Ferry to Glyncoed.

At the foot of the short bridleway turn right onto yet another disused railway. A sharp left turn takes you down to the river bridge which leads across to the **Afan Argoed Countryside Centre**.

Stage Two - Afan Argoed to Newton - 16 miles - Landranger 170

Features: The Bodvic Stone; Cwm Philip; Margam Abbey; remains of Kenfig Castle;

Warning: the route crosses the River Kenfig where it comes out into runnels on the beach. Generally there is no problem crossing this here, but, exceptionally, at times of high tides or heavy rain, the beach crossing may not be possible. Tide tables can be checked at Tourist Information Offices before starting out.

The Route: Broad open hills with some forestry climbing from 500 to 1500 feet. The walking starts at Afan Argoed Centre and goes over the hill to Rhiw Tor Cymry then onto the Coed Morgannwg Way into Margam Forest where the route comes down into the Cwm Philip Valley. It skirts the Margam Estate to come out by Margam Abbey with its museum of standing stones. From here the route crosses Margam Moors passing the British Steel Coking Depot and runs alongside the beach and dunes, before turning inland to the ruins of Kenfig Castle.

Starting point:

From **Afan Argoed 820 950** car park go up past the museum onto a tarmac track up to **Ty Canol** Farmhouse on your left. Go through small gate into well-fenced off green track rising quickly. Carry on up the hill. The path is marked with brown arrows. Pass fenced-off fields and get a splendid view as the height increases. At the end of the track come to a gate and take the uphill path marked with blue arrow. There is a fence to right, open hillside to your left: view back of river valley cleft you are leaving behind. You are walking east.

Coming out onto top to a **blue** waymark arrow passing Forestry firs; see Swansea miles behind you (on an unCeltic Note - the high building is the famous Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre - DVLC)

The path crosses over **small ravine**, there are trees to the right, hilly bank on left. then a gate and stile. Turn right onto open hillside. Go through farm gate. Choice of 4 tracks - take **south-west track** second from right, third from left. You pass a pond with **bullrushes**. As you go downhill, there is a view of the route ahead, and view of hills to Vale of Glamorgan. Nice place for a swift breather.

Go down hill leaving **Rhiw Tor Cymry** behind and out of forest by small car park. Cross the B4282 Bryn/Maesteg road. and cross stile (currently in poor state of repair) to **Maesteg Golf Course**.

Golf Course: at entrance to golf course take track through centre keeping an eye on low-flying golf balls. Go up onto the forestry hill following the track as it curves up and round to left. Good views of Maesteg hills.

Cross the cattle grid - and follow 200 yds of forestry land path till you come, on your left, to **Coed Morgannwg Way** footprint signposts with black footprint on white background and arrow pointing in the path's direction. Follow these unless stated different. After 10 minutes there is a division of path - follow sign and take middle road.

At a corner in a **small valley** follow sign straight on into trees - it is a green lane and very attractive. Contrast with the next bit - a metalled forestry road with a stream and

marshy bit on right. At choice of tracks keep on the main road

Memorial stone to Billy Vaughan forestry commissioner:, last seen surrounded by masses of pine cones.

At the next division, take left by the skyscraper trees. No sign at next junction-so look for small **cairn** and go straight up hill passing enclosed conifer forest then open cleared area.

The next waymark is by the **Bodvic Stone** (replica - the original is in the Museum of Standing Stones). There is a small pool with a diversion to a stile and a path leading across boggy ground to the twmpath diwlith. This was a preaching mound in the last century. It is chastening to imagine the zeal which drew preacher and audience to this exposed hilltop.

From the Bodvic Stone follow the forestry road downhill and south east to a wide metalled road forming a T junction. Here is the point where those who wish to can leave the Celtic Way and follow the waymarked Ogwr

Ridgeway to Llantrisant. Turn left at the forestry road junction and in 400 yards you will reach the signs for the Ogwr Ridgeway (Ogwr (Ogmore) was the name of the old borough council).The route is shown on O.S. maps and well-signed.

Continuing on the Celtic Way route take the path downhill into **Cwm Philip** by going a quick left then right and take the route downhill into the valley. This is not waymarked. It is a distinctive **curving track with hairpin bends** which loops down the valley-side. The hill below the track become mixed woodland - predominantly birch, oak and larch. You are entering a small valley accessible only on foot Follow the path south-west along the stream: This is Cwm Philip, the heart of the Welsh part of the walk, and the place where the idea for the Celtic Way came about. During next mile of walking see if you agree that the valley has a special atmosphere of its own.

After a mile you will come out at the back of the Margam Estate. Directly ahead is the slope leading to its dramatic hill-fort - **Mynydd y Castell**.

At the junction by the old iron washeries there is a choice of paths: into the estate, up to the hillfort or out through the back exit. There is no right of entry to the estate, the castle or the amenities. If you are well prepared you will have asked TI for a leaflet showing you all the features of this place to help you decide if you want to pay to enter. Unless you are prepared to pay you should turn right to leave through the back route out of Margam. Go downhill alongside the ore-stained Philip River, passing a glade on your right. The path bears left, then right, and then crosses the river and leaves the estate through a kissing gate. It continues alongside the remarkably emerald waters of a boating lake, passes a lodge and comes to a complex of buildings which include **Margam Abbey**, the museum of standing stones, and the Abbot's Kitchen.

The Cisterian Abbey was established by Robert, Earl of Gloucester in 1147. However a Celtic monastery was previously there and the site had been holy for centuries before. Some early crosses are preserved in the museum. The Museum of Standing Stones is a small collection managed by CADW. It contains some inscribed Romanesque, Roman and Celtic stones and crosses,

including the great wheel cross of Conbelin^{vi}. Allow yourself some time in this area before going on to the coastal part of the walking. There will be no places for refreshment for rest of this stage in the walking.

Now you move onto something completely different. Leave the Abbey Complex on the small access lane and walk past several houses and a copse until you come to the **A48**. This road used to be the jugular of S Wales, before the M4 was completed. For the moment it is relatively quiet, although I am told by people who work to protect the extremely vulnerable area our route now takes us over, that there are plans to add housing and industry to the Margam Moors and Hirwaun Woods areas. Cross the A48 and make for the huge roundabout. You are going to cross this and take an industrial access road to the coast. Keep your wits about you and take a deep breath: the air is going to alter for the next mile.

Go south down the **access road** past the playing fields, crematorium, and BOC. - this is about half a mile and should take about 20 minutes. Now you are on **Longlands** - an attractive open lane with fields either side of you and British Steel's Coking Depot in front of

you and some railway lines to cross. Go over the lines for the main Swansea/Paddington Rail Link, and also for British Steel. Keep going south. You are still on Longlands Lane and passing adjacent to the fragile ecosystem of Margam Moor. You are approaching the beach, fir copses and dunes.

Friendly horses will probably come to greet you as you pass them. As you walk the next few miles it is a good time to make a leap of the imagination to visualise the empty beauty of the coastal plain when small Celtic tribes farmed its soil, then the Romans built their roads and marching posts, then the early saints moved all along the coastal plain alongside the Severn Sea, building churches on local sacred sites and bringing their unique vision of Christianity.

If passing on a week-day you will not be able to take your eyes off the activities of lorry after lorry on the slope to the right carrying its black load, nor the sweep of the gantries where the coal is unloaded - coal from countries which subsidize their mining industry is a complaint I have heard. Walking here, I am struck by the paradox of the creative and destructive potential of the

iron, water and coal. The qualities of the land that have drawn us to this coastal strip - from the earliest Iron Age dwellers to those who earn their livelihoods today in the iron towns - have also led to its contamination.

Go through the small car park and cross the tarmac Haul Road and go onto **the beach**. Now you turn left.

Although not easy underfoot, if the tide is going out or still some way from being high, the beach is a good place to walk..

Do not attempt the beach route in heavy weather with a high tide. Go back to the A48 and take Water Lane to Mawdlam to connect with the route.

Walking along the beach for about a mile until you reach the **Afon Kenfig** (River Kenfig). Cross it on the beach where it is only a series of runnels.

After crossing the river follow it back upstream for about 100 yards until you come to a Kenfig Dunes Nature Reserve sign. There are the remaining stanchions of what was once a bridge over the Kenfig. Take the **long straight track** east for 300 yards. This is a

continuation of the British Steel Haul Road once used to fetch stones from the local quarry to build the deep-water harbour. When you leave it you will be aiming for the green trees alongside the river and then the Church of St Mary Magdelene at Mawdlam so take sightings of the tower to your North North East to get familiar with the landscape. Direction finding here can be awkward because the river's reed-beds force you wide and the dunes are full of shifting paths.

Alternative path to Porthcawl:

If, at this stage in the walking, you are tired of direction-finding and want an easier time of it, then just follow the beach or the adjacent path all the way into Porthcawl, which is where you are most likely to have reserved your accommodation. It will take a couple of hours. You will pass the ruins of Sker House, a lifeguard hut, and the Royal Porthcawl Golf Club before coming to Rest Bay with the famous 'Rest' convalescent home, associated with Florence Nightingale, then the low cliffs of Locks Common after which you stumble onto the revitalised seafront of Porthcawl with the lights of the harbour and fairground ahead of you. Not very Celtic to look at: yet

the hills above Porthcawl contain the remains of a round barrow and a long barrow.)

Continuation:

Just after the **low grass bank** which blocks the track you are on, leave the track. You will see a **mere** in front. Hit out across the dunes for about ½ mile to meet up with the river once the reed-beds are passed. If it is cloudy and you cannot see the church tower just keep going north. Current markers are: rusted buoy, fencing on the dunes, lone Scots pine.

After ¾ of a mile of **tracking the river** you will meet up with it. The trees which line its banks are the clue, they stand out amongst the dune-scape you are travelling through. Once you find the riverside path follow it northwards, enjoying the shade if it is a warm day, until you reach the ruins of Kenfig Castle.

These few walls are all that remains of the royal borough of Kenfig, once a thriving town, all buried under the sand. The destruction took place in the 15th century; the church was rebuilt and is the one you have been using as a landmark.

You are about half a mile from the highly visible Angel Inn on the eastern skyline and the less visible Prince of Wales Inn. Both provide refreshment. Alternatively, this is a good time to end your walking with a visit to the Kenfig Nature Reserve and Centre at Kenfig Pool. Buses and taxis to nearby Pyle and Porthcawl are available.

Stage Three - Kenfig Castle 801 827 to Newton

Church- 6 miles

Landranger 170

From the castle head south-easterly towards the **church tower**. Cross the road and with the church of St Mary Magdelene on your left walk into Mawdlam Village. Take the first road to the right: Heol Broom, and follow it for about half a mile. It rises slowly and on a bright day gives views back to Swansea Bay and the Gower Peninsula beyond. Take the third PFP sign to the right just as the road bends 90 degrees to the left. Cross two fields on the well-defined paths by hedges and enter a metalled road. Continue in the same direction towards the sea, crossing a minor road, and you come to the

Kenfig Nature Reserve Centre which is well worth a visit.

The sea-birds in this area are varied and keen ornithologists will find a hide at Kenfig Pool Nature Reserve

Now head south skirting the golf course. Such a mish-mash of paths cross the dunes that the best option is to aim for the sea. All paths come out at the **Haul Road** met in the earlier section - built to bring limestone from the quarry at Cornelly to build the new British Steel Deep Water Harbour.

On reaching this track turn left and approach **Skerr House** as it comes into view.

This is the home of Elizabeth, the Maid of Sker who was the subject of R.D. Blackmore's novel of that name. Blackmore's more famous novel is Lorna Doone, and the two settings of Exmoor and Sker Beach face each other across the Bristol Channel. The future of the house has recently been taken on by CADW, the agency responsible for the management of historic buildings in Wales. Reports are that it has been sold and will be

developed - in what form has yet to be seen. It would make a terrific hostel for walkers!

Approach the house along a rough farm track and climb three stone steps over a wall to enter the farmyard and then exit onto a wide farm track going east. This runs for about a mile before coming to a minor road. Cross it and go into Moor Lane opposite.

Walk along this quiet lane and pass under a railway bridge. Then take the right hand fork 500 yards or so further on. Here lies **St David's Well**. Continue along the lane to an enchanting spot, a small green valley to the left known as Dewiscomb- David's Valley: it is a place of peace and soft on the eye. Opposite is what is left of the old Nottage Halt from the days of rail. Continue until reaching a T junction.

You have the opportunity to turn right into Nottage Village - with three pubs, two hops and a PO an excellent place for refreshment.

To continue, turn left and follow the lane as it runs down towards a main road. Just before the main road you will

see a signed and small **footpath** to your right edged by trees (ignore the earlier signed path across the field) and running the perimeter of the grounds of Nottage Court. Keep to the footpath and follow it for 400 yards through a tunnel of trees to the well called **Ffynnon Fawr**.

5. To move on from the well return back into the tunnel of trees running parallel but unseen from the road. At a pair of stiles take the right hand one and cross the A4229 to a gate and stile immediately opposite. Cross a field and a lane by means of a further two stiles and then a series of stiles across fields - aiming roughly eastwards where the stiles are not immediately visible - to emerge on a lane with a secondary lane immediately ahead. This is **Tyn y Caeau Lane** which leads to a roundabout on the Bridgend road.

Cross the roundabout and follow the signs for Newton. Turn second left onto Clevis Hill and follow this to the village green before the ancient church of St John. At the seaward edge of the green is **Sandford's Well**. Read the legend in verse attached to the well. On the route between the Kenfig and Ogmore rivers we have been close to or passed 5 wells. If you are spending any time

in the area the local tourist office in Porthcawl will be able to supply leaflets which describe the wells walk in more detail

Stage Four - Newton Church to Ogmere - 6 miles

Landranger 170

Walking: The route takes in the Long Barrow at Tythegston then the Ogmere river crossing.

Starting Point:

With **Newton church** on your right walk up the hill and follow the road around past the allotments. At the end of the allotments take the track to the left. This crosses two small access roads then take a left fork into woodland. On approaching a large house turn right down a sandy trail to a T junction. Turn left and left again onto a grassy plain. At the next fork go left and then a straight ahead path following a **waymark** into a woodland in a pleasant valley.

8. At the next fork go left again to a stile into a narrow field in a **shallow valley**. Through a gap in the trees the path bears to the right up the side of a valley to a stile

and follows the hedge on the left to the next stile onto a metalled road.

Follow the road to the left into the village of **Tythegston**. Just before the main Porthcawl/Bridgend road ahead of you take a stone stile to the right and cross the centre of a field (currently with a glorious sycamore in the middle) to a stile which crosses onto a farm track and then into another field.

Cross the centre of this field to a gate and continue ahead to a wooded area - pheasant country. To the left of the copse and near a pond is a **long barrow**, a must for any walker in this area. Cae Tor at Tythegston is one of the six acknowledged chambered tombs in the area once known as Glamorgan and the most westerly of the long barrows. Three of the others are encountered in the next section. One of the most interesting aspects of the distribution of chambered tombs in Wales is the way they are found around estuaries and on peninsulas. A case has been made for an overseas origin for the megalith builders^{vii}.

After viewing this cromlech retrace your steps to the path and continue with the copse on your left past an old farm barn to an ancient gateway in the corner of the wood near the wall. Follow the steps down into a ditch and up the other side to a stile into a field.

Head toward to busy major road (A48) via a stone stile in the far right-hand corner and again remaining alongside the hedge to a similar one. Immediately ahead is the stone stile which is the entry to the A 48. From here it is necessary to walk the A48 footpath but only for 150 yards. At a break in the footpath, turn right, taking the left fork through a gateway alongside a **sheepfold**. Follow the path between two clumps of trees and near the fence enclosure at the bottom climb an inferior stile to the right, turn left and cross yet another one. Follow the line of trees on the left to a stile in the bottom left hand corner. Turn right, and in the left corner of the field cross a gully. Keep to the hedge on the right to a novel stile made of removable logs. After crossing this head directly up the field to two farm gates. Turn left onto a road which runs through two gates, into and out of **Whitney Farmyard** and continue on the road to the delightful village of **Merthyr Mawr**.

Continue through the village past the church for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to Candleston Castle. Really a fortified manor house; it is worth adding another hour to the walk to see it. You are also in the vicinity here of the highest sand dunes in Europe. Return to the vMerthyr Mawr Church and immediately after the village green turn right down a road to a suspension bridge over the **River Ogmore**.

After this a path directs the walker to stepping stones over the **Ewenny river** to Ogmore Castle. In the event of flooding making a crossing by means of stepping stones impractical turn left after the suspension bridge across a field to a footbridge to a road (B4524).

Turn right into **Ogmore Castle**. After exploring the site go up the hill and cross the road to the Pelican Public House opposite, where the next section of the walking begins, through the Vale of Glamorgan.

Handing on;

You are now crossing a physical and psychological divide between SW and SE Wales and entering the area of the Vale of Glamorgan - cradle of Celtic Christianity -

with the college at Llantwit Major being the training ground for the early Celtic Saints The route will follow the Heritage coast almost to Barry before going inland to two famous long barrows then onto meet with the Ridgeway at Llantrisant.

Information

Centres:

Porthcawl Tourist Information - 01656 786639

Pelenna Mountain Centre - 01639 636227

Afan Argoed Centre - 01639 850564

Margam Abbey complex - 01639 871184 (includes the Museum of Standing Stones)

Kenfig Nature Reserve Centre - 01656 743386

Accommodation:

B&B, Camping, Hotels close to route at Cymmer and Cwmavon one mile from Afan Argoed;

Maesteg and Bryn 1 mile from Rhiw Tor Cymry/Golf Course crossing;

Mawdlam, Pyle near Kenfig. Abundant camping B&B and hotels at Porthcawl.

Transport:

Nearest Rail Stations at Bridgend and Port Talbot

Bus Stations at Bridgend and Port Talbot. Good local services to most villages and towns adjacent to the route.

Wales Cymru Tourist Guide 1997

A Guide to the Prehistoric and Roman Monuments of England and Wales by Jacquetta Hawkes

The Megalithic Monuments of Wales by W F Grimes

The Penguin Guide to Prehistoric England and Wales by James Dyer

7 CELTIC CROSSROADS

**Heritage Coast and Vale of Glamorgan to the
Ridgeway at Llantrisant - 48 miles**

**Maps: Landranger 170 Vale of Glamorgan and
Rhondda**

Stages

1. Ogmore to Llantwit Major - 13 ½ miles
2. Llantwit Major to Porthkerry - 12 miles
3. Porthkerry to Llantrissant - 13 miles
4. Llantrissant to Caerphilly - 10 miles

**Highlights: Dunraven hill-fort; Llantwit Major
Church; The Bulwarks; Tinkiniswood Burial
Chamber; St Lythan's Burial chamber; Garth
mountain.**

Introduction

Allow enough time to experience this historic area - little walked except by locals who know how good it is. The route generally follows the Heritage Coastline before turning inland to cross the Vale and approach the defensively placed hill town of Llantrisant. The area is bounded by the Heritage Coast to the south and the

Welsh Ridgeway, which we rejoin in the north. We cross the undulating Vale of Glamorgan, with its prosperous central town of Cowbridge. Llantwit Major, the cradle of Celtic Christianity, lies halfway along the Heritage Coast route just inland. Unfortunately, the demands of a long-distance route do not allow enough time to properly explore the historical secrets of the Vale, merely give a taste that may whet the appetite. Accommodation is available in the main centres of Llantwit Major, Barry and Llantrisant. Between these it will be limited to occasional inns and B&B. Llantwit Major possesses more old inns per square mile than most places - a reflection perhaps of its historical status as a place of learning and the visitors it attracted- and Barry, like Porthcawl, a seaside resort, will have plenty of accommodation. As well as hillfort remains, there are two significant burial chambers on the route: St Lythan's and Tinkiniswood. After these the route goes directly north. Karl's route ends just before Llantrisant. Follow the directions to join the next stage of the Celtic Way at Rhiwsaeson and backtrack to Llantrisant.

Here, we follow the Ridgeway and Viv takes over as the guide. He describes the features you will encounter

walking up on the ridges and over the top of the Garth Mountain then down into the Taff Gorge before coming out in the historic town of Caerphilly. The nearest Youth Hostels are at Llywn y Pia and Cardiff, both entail a bus journey to get to them from the route. Both Llantrisant and Caerphilly have plenty of B&B and inns.

Walking along the coastline and the Ridgeway offers wonderful views but can be very exposed in bad weather. The Heritage Coast is a cliff edge path and subject to erosion. It is generally wide and often drops are screened, but it has some exposed edges and sheer drops. The Ridgeway is an exhilarating walk. It involves ascent and descent so can be tiring. The intermediate route through the Vale is likely to be changed by an airport link road and future improvements which will allow for less walking on minor roads.

Stage One Ogmore Castle to Llantwit Major - 13 ½ miles

Starting Point:

The Pelican Inn, Ogmore near Ewenny at SS883 767

Look around you, this is the start of the beautiful walk around the Vale of Glamorgan - the Vale. As an archaeologist I feel this trip needs to be a trip into the past, which I feel supports the natural beauty of the Vale.

Looking north from the Inn you can see a flat flooded plain (in winter and high tides), also the remains of a picturesque castle once built by the De London family. Take note too of the late medieval so-called ancient stepping stones.

Let's now move south-west towards Ogmore by Sea. On your right is the River Ewenny, and on your left is a hill. Soon you'll be taking advantage of the peace and quiet that is found behind the hill. The road that you are taking is the B4524 and as there is a bend in the road, you turn left along a footpath (before the Spires Woodland) into **Pant y Cwertí Valley**. This is surrounded by steep sandy slopes. There is a small **well**, partway along the footpath, you can imagine that this would have played an important role in village life years ago.

Continue on until you reach **Pant Mari Flanders** - an area that until the 19th century Enclosures Act was an

open landscape, and on it visible several burial chambers. These are no longer visible. Carry on forward into the village of St Brides along a B road. The village of St Brides has two public houses: the Farmer's Arms and the Fox and Hounds, whereas the Fox and Hounds is in the village centre, the latter is on the outskirts along the route of the walk. Even though you have walked a modest half an hour or so, sit outside and have a look at the ducks and swans swimming. As St Brides Major is an important village it also has a pleasant church with an ancient cross nearby, well worth a visit on a future occasion.

Now check that your walking gear is securely laced up and that you have made somebody aware that you will be walking along the dangerous **Vale of Glamorgan coast**. At this point check your map, you should be at SS895 743. Fifty metres south along the B4265, you will find a trackway leading past a farm on your right. Follow this until the trackway forks after 50 metres into two public footpaths. Take the one on your left.

Follow the footpath until you reach a woodland, take care as you head downhill towards the coast. You will

now enter a valley called **Pant y Slade**. This short valley opens out into a car park at Dunraven Bay. Here you will find the Heritage Coast Centre with toilets and exhibition boards. Turn into the car park and head left through a gate (which closes in late evening).

In front of you and on your left is **Dunraven**, the remains of a once very large hillfort, now partly destroyed but still accessible. This once impressive site still preserves some of its majesty in its banks and ditches. Let's discover parts of this site. Go to your right heading up a slope, all the time looking down at the banks and ditches, the smaller ones in particular belong to internal divisions and building for storage and habitation. As you head to the crown of the hill, be wary always of the edge of the cliff.

Now head downhill towards several burial mounds, or at least that is what we believe they are.

The end of the point here is called **Trwyn y Witch**. From here you can look south and north along the heritage coast. The natural beauty here is awe-inspiring. The natural geology of the rocks shoots out at you as a

message from millions of years ago. This can only be matched by a flight over the area in a light plane.

Following the cliff edge around until you are safely on the footpath again, take ten minutes to have a look at this moat of a castle once a splendid site, before all came to a Bonfire Night end when all was lost in a deliberate fire after the second world war. Only a tower, some wall, and a well-maintained garden exists, but contemplation here isn't a waste, take a look around at the exotic plants.

Head southeast now, hopefully after a break, along a private trackway until you come to **Cwm Mawr Lodge**. Note the woodland here is reminiscent of a storybook, also the farmland that is the Vale of Glamorgan. Enter a valley called Cwm Mawr that is lightly wooded until you reach the **Sealands Farm** where you reach another trackway heading east and walk this until you reach the B4265 again.

Carry along this road due south until you reach **Monknash** at least one mile south. Monknash once bustled with song and the sound of monks working in the local field. On your right are the remains of a

dovecote. You can gain permission to see this after you have asked the publican in the Plough and Harrow.

Around the dovecote there are various building of Monastic use over 500 years ago. The footpath here is dangerous, and difficult to follow. So take the B road, heading south-west to the coast. As you reach New Mill Farm over half a mile down along this road on your left you will see a road heading north-west. Follow this until you reach a small bridge over the Nash Brook. There is a footpath stile here on your left: head over this. The valley here hides many secrets, lost building amongst others. Beware of uneven and wet surfaces. Please take care. The woodland is dark and dull, but suddenly it opens into a sheltered but open, narrow valley called Cwm Nash.

The coast here, as before, is beautiful, and boggy. Head south up a bank onto the cliff-edge path. This heads across eight large fields, remember the country code, and take heed. Keep safe and stay away from the edge of the cliff. A safe distance here is between 1 and 2 metres. Carry on south for 1 ½ miles. Look around at the flat landscape which has been home over the centuries to

many crops from the Iron Age Emmer wheat to Roman Barley and today's oats.

You will now come to another hillfort, namely that of **Nash Point**. All but an east bank has been destroyed by erosion. The valley here is very well-maintained, with a nature trail through the short stretch of woodland, apparently foxes roam here. Next head up the opposing hill to a small café, open for refreshments. Directly in front of you there are **two lighthouses**. Let's check at this point, take an O.S. check. You should be at SS 917 683. The shorter of the lighthouses is the oldest, soon it is planned to mechanise the remaining lighthouse (being the tallest).

Carry on past the lighthouses. Note the cracking of the ground. This could be due to the undercutting and natural erosion by the sea of the cliff's edge nearby.

Now follow the path for over one mile alongside open farmland. One interesting feature about this part of the countryside is the true diversity of the natural environment between modern agriculture, ancient woodland and hedgerows. Crossing a stone stile the

footpath enters woodland with steps in places to stop slipping and erosion.

As you reach **St Donat's** care must be taken with the beaches, its large boulders and sharp rocks. The small inlet of Cavalry Barracks at St Donat's Bay is reached by steps. Take a brief look at the 19th century buildings to your left. This is the modern home of the Inshore Rescue Station at home along this windy coast. In the bay are two second world war pillboxes now filled up with pebbles and rubbish. It seems ironic that a so-called smugglers cave still accessible along the west side of this cliff forming the bay somewhat is protected by 20th century defences, such is the mixed legacy of the past.

Now continue along the coast into Barracks Wood, a short stretch of dull, dark woodland. Then go on to **Tresilian Bay**. There is a wonderful hamlet of houses here. Head up some steep steps again to the top of the cliff. An O.S. check now: SS 948 677. Look over to your left, there is a wonderful ruined farm building, once many such sites were the home to many semi-independent communities.

From here it is possible to continue walking or to break your journey at in **Llantwit Major**. You will return to the coast for the next stage of the walking Take the footpath signed to the left across fields into the west end of Llantwit Major (Llanilltud Fawr).. Enter the village and make for the church tower.

Llantwit Major Church was and is a centre for pilgrimage, being one of the oldest Christian sites in Europe^{viii}. The church is dedicated to St Illtyd who reputedly came to this area and founded the college from which the saints went to take the gospel to western Britain, Ireland and Brittany. A visit to the church is rewarding. There are local historians who will answer the visitor's questions. There are also some fascinating Celtic crosses in the West Church standing over 8 feet high. The Houelt Cross is a splendid 9th century Celtic Wheel-cross. One cannot escape comparing them with the standing stones met on the Celtic Way. Although the present building is Norman and medieval, a sense of earlier times is present in the place and the artefacts. There is a recent renewal of the **Festival of St Illtyd** which is celebrated on November 5th and involves townspeople, local schoolchildren, arts groups and

students from the nearby international college in a torch-lit procession to the hilltop Church Field. With its candle-filled lanterns and paper figures, dancing skeleton and banging drums, it is a dramatic procession. The bonfire and fireworks bring a secular note to the occasion.

Stage Two - Llantwit Major to Porthkerry - 12 miles

Starting point

To continue the walking leave Llantwit Major by the signed Beach Road and follow this for a mile into the Col-Huw Valley past the car park to rejoin the route.

Cwm Col-Huw, a sheltered valley that is protected on one promontory by a hill-fort. There is a coffee and tea shop for refreshments, they do a nice selection of snacks. Now head up the very steep hill in front on the east (taking a look back at the). Here is another hill-fort. This, like most of the other hill-forts along the coast, isn't complete. Local legend has it that the Romans disembarked here in the year 436AD, but there is no archaeological or supporting documentary evidence to prove it. The defences encircle over an acre, which is divided into two by an internal defence.

Carry on over the banks and ditches and go east for one mile. The contours go up and down. Here head to **Stout Point**, and start heading up hill. From this point you can see miles along the coast, this is a magnificent demonstration of the geological past that has been all around us on this walk. Now head east along the coast for 1½ miles until you reach the ex-coastguard Lookout Post.

This is now called the **Seawatch** Centre and used as a centre for study. If it is open the warden will allow you up the ladder to visit the lookout area and explain some of the tasks they do, and show a few of the artefacts which people have brought to them.

Continuing from the centre you will be met by another ditch of a hill-fort, this time that at **Summerhouse Point**. This ditch is one of the deepest to be found at all the sites visited. Now carry on past the so-called Summerhouse, there is also the remains of a 19th century ruined summerhouse in the woods surrounded by the defences of the hillfort. You can either proceed along the

cliff edge - less dramatic than before - or along the pebbly beach. Whatever route you take, do take care.

Walk for ¾ mile until you reach a marshy area, which is protected by second world war tank blocks (large stacks of cement). This area is known as the '**Walls**' and Limpet/Limpert Bay. In times past the Aberthaw area was known for being an important harbour. Now that place has been taken by a large power station, ugly by all standards, but still the buildings do chart the development man has made in producing electricity for its towns and cities for past decades. The power station is very reliant on the energy produced by water power, a circular building, (laissez0 can be seen off-shore.

Head north into the village of **Gileston**, take a look at this interesting church and remains of a very ancient village. Take note that when you enter the village take the right fork in the road and walk for ½ mile. Take the road to the left that heads under the railway bridge onto the A4265 and head east for ¾ mile towards the Aberthaw turning. Before this the countryside is a mix of woodland and marshland. There is hidden a castle and series of bridges at East orchard, but today with the

footpath now overgrown and blocked up (please take note Ramblers groups). Head past the Cement Works and the old road on your right and head into **East Aberthaw**. Aberthaw has a wonderful olde-worlde public house known as the Blue Anchor, well worth a visit.

Carry on down the road until you come across a turning on your right which heads over the railway, take this and walk down to the large ruined building. There are many suggestions why this was constructed, but one thing is clear: it is good for exploration! Before we carry on you must find time to look at the large pond here. From time to time it is possible to see a whole variety of birds feeding, or building nests.

Now take the footpath, not clearly marked out, for around 1/3 mile until you arrive at a set of steps heading up along the cliff. Now follow this. On your left is the **Ffontgari** Caravan Park. Continue along the cliff edge until you come across the Cement Works. It is dangerous to continue along this footpath directly in front. Take the left turning until you come to a railway bridge. Go under this and head into the village of **Rhooose**. Continue for

300 yards until you reach the main road. Walk east along the road for just under ½ mile until you reach the footpath on your right. Continue on down this until you reach the coast again.

After a track across farmland, and under yet again another railway bridge, you should now be in an area rarely visited by anybody. This is a small pocket of farmland yet it looks fallow. Now continue the footpath to your left for a distance of ¼ mile. The landscape here is truly barren. You will reach a quarry. Do take care. After this assault up and own the quarry, you should now have reached the **lime-kilns**. These now defunct but proudly looking structures once assisted the quarrying industry in the area.

It's time we looked back and reflected on the scenic views and ideas collated along the coast. The O.S. now is ST 076 659.

Head into the caravan park due north-east towards its exit. You will before the exit of the caravan Park find a sign for the ancient monument of **The Bulwarks**. Yet

again another hill-fort and the gateway to the last part of the walk.

The Bulwarks - nearly complete in defences - allows the walker to appreciate past events. The large open space that you are met by was once a temporary home to hundreds of Celts. On hot summer's days when the grass is a few inches high you can discover the outlines of ancient hut circles, these once wooden-built structures housed grain and people..

Now let's move on. Head east towards **Porthkerry Park**, a track in the woods, close to the cliff's edge. Beware, take light steps or you might slip on the dark mud. Enter the park of Porthkerry, once owned by Romilly Estates. This large park becomes water-logged in winter, a sign that once this large sheltered valley was an inlet to the sea. You will now be aware of a large viaduct, built at the end of the last century. The park must be negotiated with care as it is easy to become lost. Head east along the open grassland, with great woodland on either side. Maybe you might see the ghostly figure of Annie Jenkins, the 18th century witch of Cliffwood

Cottage. Or even still the ghosts of smugglers may leap out at you and question your presence in their domain.

You will enter the second part of the park under the bridge. Continue for 50 yards until the roadway forks in two. Head north along the roadway that soon becomes unmetalled. Go past a house on your left and over a fence. You are still on the footpath. Keep your eye on the ground, wary of outlines of buildings which once belonged to a medieval village of **Cwm Ciddy**. As you head north several gates block your way: negotiate these.

You will see a large complex of newly refurbished building on your left, a model farm maybe?

Continue north along a roadway for ½ mile until you reach the A4226. This road is the main access route for the airport - due to change. Please note that the new Airport link road will be developed over the next few years, this description does not take that into account. Follow the road east for just over ¼ mile until you reach a traffic island. Continue on over this into the northern part of Barry. This may be a good point to break your

journey for the day. It is possible to walk, get taxi or public transport into the centre of Barry

Stage Three Barry to Llantrisant - 12 miles

Starting point:

Leave Barry by the road which brings you out on the north-western edge of the town. You will see Tesco's. Turn here and follow the road along in a northerly direction for ¼ mile until you reach a trackway. Follow this. On your right is **Highlight Farm** and a Skip Company. Continue over the gate, along a trackway (also a footpath). You must check your map now O/S ST 099 697. You will come to another gate. Head over this, on your left is the **church of Highlight**, however now ruined. It is difficult to imagine it in its medieval state. What is clear is that once a congregation would have fought to enter the small Nave.

Head now in a northerly direction. You are now on the newly upgraded footpath. Head down a hill, this part of the Vale constantly undulates. There is a golf course on your right. Head down to a bridge, cross this and continue past two farm buildings for about 1 mile until you reach **Duffryn Mill Farm**. Duffryn has many

secrets: a possible medieval maot and several pre-historic monuments. Carry on along the road until you are forced right, passing a bridge on your left. Pass Home Farm and continue, with a daunting wall on your left. This encircles Duffryn Gardens and house. You will now find yourself surrounded by trees, just as it would have been in Neolithic Britain.

Continue north-east passing a northern turning on your left. You will find a lay-by and a sign for St Lythan's burial chamber. This stone built Megalithic site was once buried by a huge mound now weathered away. This is another legacy of pre-historic times. Briefly contemplate the walk, however don't fall asleep as legend has it that :
'one who falls asleep here may turn into a poet, go mad, or simply die'.

Head back along the road that you have just walked until you reach that northern turning again. To stop any confusion a map check: O/S ST 099 723.

Head North now with **Duffryn House** on your left. Note too the curious contrast here between Mother Nature and

Geology. Continue for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile until you reach a sign for **St Nicholas Tinkinswood burial chamber**. Head through a kissing gate, time to embrace anybody with you, and head south over a wooden bridge spanning a dry moast.

You will see a gap in the hedge to your right. Head through this and walk forward until you see the long cairn that is St Nicholas burial chamber. An immense cap-stone is present here: this is one of the largest in Europe. The complex of stones was constructed in two main phases. The site was first occupied over 4000 years ago. In excavation in 1914, over 40 human remains were found, bones are still being found today.

Enough of pre-history for today. Let's head back along to the main road. What I can't resist is pointing out the other stones on your right; these people of the past were keen on their dead.

Now that you are back on the road head north into St Nicholas. The village can be reached if you turn left along the main road, here the A48.

In the village is the old church of St Nicholas. No time to stop however, let's move north again, past the old school on your left, along a footpath, O/S check ST 089 744.

This footpath forks into two after 150 yards, take the left-hand fork. Continue along this footpath until you meet a trackway. Continue along this until you see an undulating area. There was once a motte and bailey castle known as **Y Gaer** here. Access is very difficult. There is also a triangulation station here, used for surveying.

Keep on this trackway and head north for at least one mile. You should now be on a secondary road. Continue along this in a northerly direction taking the left fork at the road, under a further railway bridge. Walk along this road, along flat countryside for two miles until you reach the M4 motorway. It is now time to call an end to this walk, but thank you for participating on this journey.

To reach Llantrisant continue along this road as it crosses the M4 and follow it for a further 2 miles until reaching the junction at Rhiwsaeson. This is on the route

out of Llantrisant which follows the ridges to Caerphilly, but for now your path will probably be into Llantrisant for accommodation and refreshment. The walking notes continue from the centre of Llantrisant.

**Stage Four - Llantrisant to Caerphilly - 10 miles
along the Ridgeway Path.**

**Maps: Landranger 170 Vale and Rhondda; 171
Cardiff and Caerphilly.**

The Ridgeway:

The Ridgeway is a longstanding footpath route and waymarked. It is also shown on the Ordnance Survey Landranger map for the area. The route is described by Viv Small of Llantrisant, who gives his perspective as a local historian on the walking ahead.

Following the Ridgeway route from Llantrisant to Caerphilly the walking is predominantly on hills from 300 to 1000 feet. Walking starts with the path from Llantrisant to Caerau Hillfort, then moves on to Rhiwsaeson. From here walking aims for the tumulus which tops the Garth Mountain, a conspicuous destination, although at 307 metres not especially high.

From Garth Mountain the route drops down into Gwaelod y Garth and crosses the narrow Taff valley to climb again to the distinctive building of Castell Goch. The route then continues on the Ridgeway over Caerphilly Mountain.

Llantrisant:

The town, with its ancient church, pubs, castle and common sits on top of a hill overlooking the Vale of Glamorgan to the south and mountains to its other sides. The town name is dedicated to Illtud, Gwynno, and Tyfodwg, three Celtic saints, and although the church is Norman, an earlier church may have occupied the site. The town Of Llantrisant was chosen by the Normans in the 12th century to defend their gains in South Wales. The castle was probably fought over and destroyed during the fierce clashes between the Welsh and the Norman conquerors. The bowmen of Llantrisant had given their allegiance to the English and fought bravely at the Battle of Crecy earning themselves the title 'Black Army' after Edward, the Black Prince, youngest son of Edward the Third. Because of its situation on top of an hill, it has changed very little in character since the Middle Ages. Llantrisant is unique, charming and

unspoilt The Bullring was named after the sport of bullbaiting a barbaric game where dogs were set upon a bull roped to an iron ring. The people of Llantrisant were expected to provide entertainment at the Markets and fairs at this important Mediaeval centre until the Industrial Revolution transformed Britain and turned the town into a sleepy backwater full of curiosity for the traveller and historian.

Starting point:

At the Wheatsheaf pub in High Street is the **Erw Hir** , a collection of cottages where the Ridgeway Walk continues along the slopes of East Caerlan. Here Llantrisant's favourite eccentric, Dr William Price, cremated his young son and created unknowingly the revival of the custom of cremation. Dr Price was a strong individual with deep sense of social justice , a man who came along and left a very strong impact on Wales.

The Vale and Cardiff stretches to the south as we descend towards the tiny hamlet of **Cross Inn**, pausing to cross the A 473 road and begin to follow the

Ridgeway Walk as it winds its way around the ancient hillfort of Caerau.

The history of **Caerau** is lost in antiquity..... built by the hardy Celts and probably attacked by the Romans when they conquered South Wales, the ancient banks and ditches are now home to sheep and cattle who graze among the tangle of defences once designed to trap and destroy the attackers of Caerau.

Following the Ridgeway Path from Caerau we arrive at the Rhiwsaeson to Efail fsaf road. **Rhiwsaeson** (Slope of the Saxons) is part of a local tradition which tells of a great battle fought here between the Saxons and the Danes.

Just before the old Taff Vale railway bridge the trail turns into a footpath that follows **the valley of the Clun**.

From **Caesar's Arms** the path begins to climb towards the **Garth mountain**, passing through mixed woodland that contains remnants of old level mining the shafts were sunk at a gradual gradient into the side of the hill.

At the top of **Mynydd Y Garth** are the tumuli, visible from practically each point of the compass in Glamorgan. The ancient barrows run in a line that corresponds with sunrise and sunset of the druidic festivals of Mayday and Halloween.

At the summit Iolo Morganwg held a Gorsedd festival, unfortunately the local militia thought he was signalling to a possible French Fleet in the Bristol Channel during the Napoleonic Wars and so they hurriedly dispersed the crowds. From the tumuli the view south to the Vale extends across the Bristol Channel to the coast of Somerset and the hills of Devon. Cardiff and the Penarth Head seems laid out like a map and in the distance are the white columns of the new Severn Bridge. To the north is the valley of the Taff and beyond that we can see the distant Brecon Beacons.

Foreign tourists still visit the Garth lured by the Film..... "The Englishman Who Went Up A Hill And came Down A Mountain ", The story being a piece of fiction that turned into a legend and then became a fact. Who built these barrows will probably remain a mystery on

this windswept summit, empty and silent now except for the grazing sheep.

At **Gwaelod y Garth** we can rest to get our bearings before walking south along a country lane along the slope of the Garth. A winding public footpath will now take us to the footbridge over the Taff and the Edwardian Spa of Taff's Well. Following a path between gorse and bracken we walk towards the **Taff Gorge** and begin to descend to **Taff's Well** taking care to avoid the Legendary White Horse believed to haunt these slopes, the ground rapidly falling away as we leave the hill to crickets and swallows that swoop and swerve across the heathland.

The path goes through forestry, silent except for the murmur of the wind, then gradually the sounds of the valley floor drift with the rumble of traffic, rattle of a train and the barks of a dog. The village, set at the mouth of a chasm which hems in the **River Taff** on its journey to the sea, is a collection of middle class houses and villas that probably date back to the turn of the century. There are a few quiet pubs, tennis courts, bowling green,

that suggest that it was created during the affluent days of King Coal, a middle class dormitory of Cardiff.

The fortunes of the village of **Tongwynlais** were founded on the Glamorgan canal and the Melin Griffith iron and tin works. Using local iron and coal, the company forged a reputation for excellence throughout the world from the 1850's until the 1870's when the local economy suffered a depression. During this period the Marquess of Bute began work on the rebuilding of **Castell Coch** and a project to create a vineyard, although the industrial village enjoyed a grisly reputation for rowdiness and murder. An international trade depression plus cheaper imported ores led to liquidation of Melin Griffith in 1878 which in turn led to lower wages and the soup kitchens. The situation was so bad at Penttyrch that people resorted to eating donkeys. With the decline of the canal, the village stagnated to the sleepy hamlet that lies in the shadow of Castell Coch today.

The antiquarian John Leland describes **Castell Coch** in the 1540s as standing

‘On a high rock of a redde stone or soil a 2 miles from Landaf upper on tawe
Castelle Gough no big thing but high ‘

Although the lands had been owned by the church since the beginning of the 12th century, the bishops of Llandaff experienced the savagery of the natives and the invasions of the Normans who began to build Castell Coch around 1256-67 when they came into conflict with the Welsh Lords Of Senghennydd. Nature returned to reclaim the castle which soon was covered with ivy then weeds and brushwood grew thick and fast to cover the courtyard and towers. During the eighteenth century, the castle became popular with the "romantic" travellers and artists who came to Wales to capture an age that was quickly disappearing. They saw an idyllic landscape of an ivy covered castle, quaint cottages, a rural tradition of farming and quarrying the iron ore in the surrounding hills to be packed upon donkeys to feed the blast furnaces in the valley. When the Third Marquess of Bute saw Castell Coch he was so dazzled by its picturesque charm that he commissioned William Burges (1827-81) to rebuild and furnish the castle in

the gothic style of a Rhinish castle. Burges lavished colour and ornament to turn the medieval structure into a Victorian romantic poem.

Leaving Castell Coch behind, we may follow the footpath that climbs through the trees to ascend **Caerphilly Mountain**, to follow lanes and footpaths until we reach the summit .

If we turn right and follow the road to the inn **Travellers Rest**, then walk through the car park until we reach a break in the fence, a secret world begins to open with trees that grow out of walls. .vacant towers, and between the thickly wooded slopes can be viewed a vista of Cardiff that stretches to the Bristol Channel. Cardiff Castle and the city centre clearly visible..... a tempting prospect to the Welshmen who built Morgraig against the rapacious Normans who began to infiltrate the coastal plain during the 12th century. Morgraig was built to counter the Marcher Lord de Clare with his attempt to build castles at Castell Coch , Caerphilly and Cardiff. The story of Morgraig is one of deceit and murder, treachery and lies, of men and the depths to which they stooped in their quest for land and power. But it all

seems so quiet now among these ivy covered walls and rocky outcrops and peaceful view across the leafy suburbs of Cardiff.

A few words of advice to the intrepid Rambler. Will you get lost? Yes you will get lost as you attempt to chart a course through maze of brambles, footpaths and forests, yet the Tumuli of the Garth will always be framed on some horizon acting like beacon as it did in days of old.

A word of caution: there are many quiet inns on leafy lanes between Llantrisant and Caerphilly that will enchant the Rambler who tends to emerge back into the highways and byeways, like Rip Van Winkle after a long period in some timeless public bar.

Additional Information

Public Transport

Cardiff Central Railway Station - 01222 227281

Tourist information

Caerphilly Visitor Centre - Twyn Square - 01222880011

Sarn Services - Junction 36, near Bridgend - 01656
654906

Centres

Caerphilly Castle - 01222 883143

Llancaiach Fawr Living History Museum - 01443
412248

Handing On:

The next stage of the walking is along the ridges from Caerphilly to the border crossing at Chepstow. It begins in the centre of Caerphilly. The route and the historical background to the area are both described in detail by John Owen in the next two sections.

Vivian Kelly - The Pilgrim's Guide to St Illtyd's Church

8 HIGH WAYS

Caerphilly to Caerleon - 17 miles

Stages:

1. Caerphilly to Rudry 3 miles
2. Rudry to Draethen 2 miles
3. Draethen to Llandanglws -2 miles
4. Llandanglws to Twmbarlwm - 3 miles
5. Twmbarlwm to Henllys Vale - 3 miles
6. Henllys Vale to Caerleon - 4 miles

Introduction

Traditionally Britain is divided into Highland Britain and Lowland Britain, the divide running from the Severn to the Trent. It is a topographical divide between the less fertile and more fertile areas of Britain. To some extent it is a cultural divide, but not in historical terms a racial one. It is now felt that most of the Romano British population survived in what is now England, merely changing overlords, language and culture.

One end of this Highland Lowland barrier is anchored on the Severn and the division is evident in the

Caerphilly Caerleon area and makes for spectacular scenery on a small scale and an interesting historic record.

The Glamorgan County History describes the ridges between the coastal plain around Cardiff and the Valleys to the north as the border ridges. Separating the coastal plain from the higher ground to the north, but also being separate from them. These ridges actually form the southern outcrop of the South Wales coalfield and form a distinctive barrier to the north of Cardiff. In the Caerphilly area there are three distinctive ridges. To the south we have a ridge of Old Red Sandstone, followed to the north by ridges of Carboniferous Limestone and Millstone Grit.

These ridges are pierced, to the west of Caerphilly, by the Taff which cut a spectacular gorge on its way to the sea, on the east the ridges are pierced by the Rhymney which breaks out of the hills to the coastal plain at Machen. At Machen the outcrop turns sharply north towards Pontypool and Blaenavon. The southern portion of this is marked by Machen Mountain which dominates the area. The coalfield rim is well marked

topographically presenting a steep scarp to the Vale of Gwent. The scarp is pierced at Risca by the Ebbw. To the South of the Sirhowy Machen mountain dominates the Machen ridge between the Rhymney and the Ebbw. To the North of the the Ebbw, Twmbarlwm dominates the scarp running north to Pontypool. Twmbarlwm, like Machen mountain is of tough Pennant Sandstone.

From the mountain grasses of Twmbarlwm the ground dips steeply to the east. The outcrop of the coal measures, which were ridges north of Cardiff, appearing as successive terraces running north south along the scarp. Below these terraces the land sweeps down to the fertile landscape of Gwent. The fertility increases rapidly from Henllys down to the valley of the Afon Llwyd where the Monastery at Llantarnam was established in the 12th Century. To the east of the Afon Llwyd a low ridge of limestone forms a low barrier from the Usk valley. The Afon Llwyd is a tributary of the Usk and joins it at the Roman settlement at Caerleon.

To understand the area we must be aware of the variety of landscape. This ranges from high moorland of the coal field plateau in the north west with hills of 300 to

400 metres contrasting with the undulating landscape of the south east around Caerleon. Today the Coalfield Plateau (known as the Valleys) is an area of bleak moorland cut by urbanised river valleys running mainly north south. As a result of industrialisation from about 1750 the Plateau was transformed from an area of low population to one of high urban density in the river valleys separated from each other by open moorland. The growth of the iron and coal industries transformed the landscape. While much of this occurred to the north of the area, small scale industrial development occurred in Machen from the 16th century. The pace of industrialisation increased and by the early twentieth century there were large urban populations in the Rhymney and Ebbw valleys.

During the post second world war era the valley of the Afon Llwyd was transformed by the creation of Cwmbran new town and more recently by the expansion of Newport. In the 1950s the eastern slopes of Mynydd Henllys and Mynydd Maen its northern extension was an area of small farms with some industry. Now large housing estates run north and west from Llantarnam Abbey up to Pontypool and up the slopes of Mynydd

Maen. To the south, Newport has developed large housing estates at Malpas and Bettws. Despite this urban development there are still large areas of open moorland, woodland and farmland along the route.

The present day valley communities are the result of intense industrial development and inward migration over the last two hundred years. This was not the pattern in the past. The older theory that Britain saw successive huge waves of migrants is now discounted by modern archaeologists. They tend to deprecate the notion of abrupt change and to emphasise the continuity and development of society. Along the Caerphilly Caerleon interface there are examples of changing cultures from Bronze Age to Iron Age to Roman to Dark age to the Norman period and beyond. Despite this the overall pattern was of continuity and adaptation on both sides.

Early settlement was on the high ground. Areas which today are bleak moorland were in the Neolithic and Early and Middle Bronze ages were densely occupied. This is because the climate was much milder than today. There are major areas of Bronze Age settlement but they are some miles to the north of our route. Gelligaer

Common and the Machen ridge have much evidence of Bronze Age occupation.

After about 1500 BC the climate deteriorated, the temperature dropped about 5 degrees and the Sub Atlantic climatic period saw an increased rainfall and a change in settlement pattern. Coupled with this climate change there was a migration of Iron Age peoples into Britain. This migration which was small but influential, spoke a Celtic Language. Professor Sir Ifor Williams has shown that this language did not fully develop into Welsh until about 700 AD. More recently Peter Sted of the University College of Swansea made the statement that the Welsh were more Romano British than Celtic.

The area, centred on Caerphilly, to the north of Cardiff was the Lordship of Senghenydd. It had its origin in the post Roman period and survived under as Welsh Lordship until 1270. By 1263 Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, the last native Welsh Prince of Wales, had extended his power from Gwynedd down to Glamorgan and its furthest extension was Caerphilly mountain. He was now in conflict with Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Lord of Glamorgan. Despite a siege and destruction of

the half built Caerphilly castle, Llywelyn was driven northwards out of Glamorgan. This emphasises the border nature of the area dictated by the landscape. Gilbert took over Senghenydd and reorganised it under Anglo Norman control, a state of affairs that lasted until 1536. The Act of Union, between England and Wales, in that year saw Senghenydd, long with the other autonomous Lordships in Wales, being reorganised on a Shire basis.

The Rhymney valley Ridgeway

This is a route developed by the old Rhymney Valley District Council. It runs east west along the ridge between Cardiff and Caerphilly towards Machen and then runs north along the Machen ridge. Though the route may be old, the southern portion was not identified as such by the Royal Commission of Ancient Monuments in their Inventory of Glamorgan. In their Volumes covering the Iron Age and Roman Occupation and the early Christian period they only identify ridgeways running north south, for the Route used by the Roman road from Cardiff to Brecon. This ran through the Caerphilly basin northwards with a secondary route over Mynydd Eglwysilan.

Similarly, a route has been identified running from Bassaleg along the Machen ridge, the small collection of round barrows above Bedwas may indicate an early date for this route. All these routes provide access from the coastal plain to the interior.

The Rhymney Valley Ridgeway runs along the Border Ridges of the Coalfield outcrop. There are a number of Iron Age settlements along this route. There is a homestead at Graig y Parc and a small hill fort at Llwynau Du, both near Penttyrch, on the west. side of the Taff. These are connected by pathways, which in some instances are hollow ways, always an indication of age.

East of the Taff there is a small hillfort on the Wenallt, above Rhiwbina, and a large one at Coed Graig Ruperra. Both sites may be on an identifiable route .It is possible to suggest there may have been a route from the west along this ridge and going to the large hillfort at Newport known as the Gaer. this may have crossed the Ebbw at Bassaleg.

The later Roman road from Caerleon to Cardiff passed through Bassaleg but ran south along a low ridge to Michaelston y Fedw and then to Cardiff, The Roman priorities were different.

Public Transport

It is possible to catch a bus from the Bus Stations at Caerphilly and Cardiff to the Travellers Rest Public House and join the Ridgeway there. The relevant services are nos 70.71 and 72.It is possible to catch a train from Cardiff to Caerphilly for those who want to join the Celtic Way from Caerphilly.

Stage 1 - Caerphilly to Rudry - 3 miles

Caerphilly is now a dormitory town mainly for Cardiff, with some small scale industry. There was a small Roman fort to the north of the castle. Prior to the construction of the castle in 1270-1278 and the Borough in about 1280 Caerphilly has no recorded history. The castle was built by Gilbert de Clare to counter Llywelyn ap Gruffyd, the last native prince of Wales, who had extended his power from Gwynedd down to Glamorgan. Despite being the second biggest castle in Britain, its

recorded history is limited. The most significant event was the siege of 1326, which led to the capture and death of Edward the Second.

Starting point

The Twyn Tourist Information office ST156869 in Caerphilly. This is on the Market site of the medieval borough, to the immediate south of the castle. At the top end of the Twyn, Van Road leads to the Van Mansion at (ST167869). This mainly dates from 1583, but there was a house there in 1400. The woodland to the north is known locally as **Maerdy Woods**. The presence of a Maerdy place name indicates a pre Norman manorial centre. It is highly likely that it was the centre of an early Welsh estate. The house was enlarged in 1583, by Thomas Lewis, one of the leading local gentry, who claimed descent from Gwaethfod an eighth century prince. It has been recently restored and is now a group of private residences.

Return to Van Road and turn left. After about half a mile, take the small lane on the right. This is a pleasant walk between Forestry plantations which once were part of the Deer Park attached to **The Van**. After about three

quarters of a mile the road forks. The left fork climbs up to the Cefn Onn ridge and is an optional short cut. The right fork carries on up through the woods to the A469, the main Caerphilly/Cardiff road.

On reaching the A469 turn left. The road descends into a small valley between the ridges at Blaen Nofydd Farm (ST 159845) the **Rhymney Valley Ridgeway** crosses the road. The Celtic Way follows the Rhymney Valley Ridgeway in this area. Turn left onto the ridgeway, the direction is waymarked.

Optional Site of Interest and link to the previous section.

On the ridge to the south of Blaen Nofydd farm is a Public house called the **Travellers Rest**. To the immediate east of the public house is **Castell Morgraig (ST160843)**. There is a stile from the pub car park giving access to the castle, which is on private property but access is allowed. The castle is an item of contention. CADW feels it was an Anglo Norman castle, built by Richard de Clare in the 1240s. Local historians "disagree, claiming it was a castle built by the Lords of Senghenydd, but financed by Llywelyn ap Gruffydd.

The style is not Anglo-Norman the Keep is very similar to Dolbadarn, Welsh castle in North Wales, and the towers are D shaped in the Welsh fashion. There is no recorded history, but style and location suggest it was built by the Welsh to guard a ridge crossing and to act as a political statement of their presence on the skyline.

After visiting the castle, return to the Celtic Way at **Blaen Nofydd Farm** The ridgeway is very well defined, running between old hedge lines. It can be muddy after rain. Though it not confirmed this route was an ancient ridgeway ,it is recorded that in the 18th century the track was used to carry iron ore from Rudry Common to the Pentyrch iron works, owned by the Lewis family of New House. The path runs parallel to the ridge following the side of a clearing, long used for grazing. To the north of the path is a ridge of limestone containing conglomerate. You will meet this again on Gray Hill between Caerleon and Chepstow. The Welsh name for the ridge is **Cefn Carnau (the Ridge of the small stones)**. However, local tradition used to claim the meaning was Ridge of the Horseshoes, the horseshoes in question being those of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd who was campaigning locally in 1270.

The area where the Ridgeway crosses the road is known as **Thornhill** (Y Ddraenen in Welsh).However there are no thorn trees today closer than Cefn Onn Quarry. To the south of the ridge below the Travellers Rest is a hotel, called the New House Hotel. It could make a convenient, though expensive starting point. The core of this is an 18th century house, built by Thomas Lewis, a descendant of the builder of the Van.

At (ST169849) the Ridgeway meets a hollow way running north south over the ridge. This is **Heol Hir** (The **Long Road**), running from Cardiff to the Rhymney Valley. The old name for the area is Bwlch Y Llechfaen(The pass ofthe standing stone).There is no tradition of a stone on the site. Take the left fork and follow the waymarked path alongside a large group of old Beech trees. This leads alongside the old Cefn Onn Quarry and meets a road at (ST178852).This is the road you would have followed if you had taken the left fork, on the road from the Van up through the woods.

For the next half mile the unmetalled road follows the ridge. Here we have thorn trees and views of Caerphilly

to the north and Cardiff to the south. The name **Cefn Onn** means **Ash Ridge** but there are no Ash trees. The soil is red, because of the eroded Old Red Sandstone which forms the ridge to the south.

Though pleasant on a summer day, Cefn Onn can be cold in winter. This is celebrated in a poem in a traditional Glamorgan verse form.

Y tri lle oera yng Nghymru
Yw Mynydd Bach Y Rhydri,
Twyn Y fan a Cefn Onn
Lle buo i bron a sythu.

(The three coldest places in Wales Are Rudry Mountain,
The Fan Heath and Cefn Onn
Where I almost froze to death)

In the Cefn Onn area Richard Williams, Oliver Cromwell's grandfather was born, he later moved to East Anglia and changed his name. Local tradition has it when Oliver was in the area, he stabled his horse in the local churches.

At **Cefn Onn Farm (ST182854)** the route meets another cross ridge road. It is reputed that the farm was once a public house During the 1939/1945 war a farmer ploughing marginal ground is said to have exposed a Roman coffin lid, made of lead. There was considerable small scale lead mining along the ridge from the Roman period. The Ridgeway is waymarked to the right of the farm yard.

There is a choice here: to follow the Ridgeway or turn right. There is a prominent path between hedgerows through woodland along the ridge. This is waymarked to (ST201844) where it meets the road at the Maen Llwyd Public House. This name **Maen Llwyd**(Grey or Holy Stone) may indicate the site of a standing stone.

It is worth while making a short detour before reaching the Maenllwyd. At (ST183863)there is a path to the left. This leads down to **St James Church**, in the parish church of Rudry. This small church, with a saddleback tower, is probably an Anglo Norman foundation, being mentioned in a survey of Llandaff in 1280.Rudry is a parish which has a rural Welsh style dispersed settlement. The church has virtually no buildings around

it. The farms which comprise the parish are widely separated. The small village centre is a half a mile north of the church, comprising mainly of two terraces, built to serve the Rudry Colliery(1890-1906).

At the side of the church is the Griffin Motel, its core is claimed to be a medieval priest's house. The motel and restaurant, tailored for the Cardiff middle class does food, drink and accommodation. You can retrace your route back to the ridge or walk about a third of a mile on the road to the Maen Llwyd. Care should be taken on the road.

If you turn right at Cefn Onn Farm, the road goes steeply down the side of the limestone ridge and climbs up on to the Old Red Sandstone ridge. This is known as Craig LLysfaen. **Llysfaen** (Stone Court in English) the modern Cardiff suburb of Lisvane, was an early Welsh manorial centre. Its site may indicate an earlier settlement, because in the parish is an Iron Age Camp at ST205840.

As the road reaches the ridge above Lisvane, it turns sharply right down the hill. The Celtic Way turns left at this point, along the unmetalled track along **Craig**

Llysfaen. As you turn, there are two mounds of stone in the the field facing you. These are the remains of two Medieval towers built to control traffic over or along the ridge. The track is well defined along the ridge crest, in the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1875, it is marked as Old Road and may well be an early route.

One advantage of this route is the spectacular view up and down the Bristol Channel. As a result it is popular with walkers, one walker you will not meet, is **Diana of Lisvane**, who lived in the 17th century. She was traditionally claimed to a be witch, but according to my grandmother was a only a healer collecting herbs on the ridge.

The route is easy to follow, being well indicated even through the woods. As you leave the woods the track to the left will take you down to the valley bottom from which you can climb up to the Maenllwyd Public House. If you turn right a footpath takes you to the Lisvane/Rudry road. Follow this to the next cross roads at ST200866. facing you will be the entrance to **Ruperra Park** marked private road. Any self satisfaction you may get at having followed the more likely ridgeway may be

dampened by the fact that the Maenllwyd public house is the other side of a small valley.

Stage 2 - Rudry to Draethen 2 miles

Outside the Maenllwyd there is a cross roads. Take the road to Lisvane. This goes down to the valley bottom and climbs up to another crossroad, care should be taken on this road. On the left of this cross road is a sign saying Private Road, along side one of the lodges to Ruperra Park. This is the old Caerphilly/Newport Road which ran through Ruperra Park It is a public right of way along the south of the ridge. It is easy to follow and pleasant walking. The immediate landscape was planned, being part of Ruperra Park. There are lovely views over the coastal plain and the Bristol Channel. As you proceed you get occasional glimpses of **Ruperra Castle**.

Ruperra Castle(ST220863) is a Country House, rebuilt in 1626 in a European style, on the site of an earlier building. Its architect was Robert Smythson, also responsible for Lulworth Castle in Dorset. The castle is in the parish of Llanfihangell y Vedw, the current parish church of Michaelstone y Vedw is on the other side of

the Rhymney River. It has been suggested that the earliest church was near the castle dedicated to a 6th century Welsh saint Fedw.

The castle, originally owned by relations of the Lewis family of the Van, passed by marriage to the Morgan Family of Tredegar Park. The building is a good example of a type of house favoured by the "new men", coming to local eminence at the beginning of the 17th century. It is in private hands, but may be viewed from adjacent footpaths. The house is in an unsafe condition and no attempt should be made to enter the building.

About a hundred yards from the castle entrance the ridgeway climbs steeply to the left off the estate road, it is not well marked. A short but steep climb takes you to the ridge top. The Celtic Way crosses the ridge, but it is worth taking a diversion to the right and climb to the crest of the ridge.

The views alone would make it worthwhile, but in addition the ridge is crowned with an **Iron Age Hill Fort** and an eleventh century Motte (ST222866).The Hill Fort, tentatively dated to 250BC,was built by the

Silures. According to Tacitus, they were swarthy and curly haired, (the Celts were tall and fair haired).He also said that "Neither punishment nor kindness could turn them from their ways". Their territory comprised most of South Wales, west of the Usk. They were predominantly a pastoral people,. but the presence of Lead mines on Cefn Coed Pwll Du(The wooded ridge of the black pits) (ST217878),just to the north may indicate industrial activity on their part.

The presence of the Motte, erected over a 1000 years later indicates the military value of the site. The Normans (or The French as the Welsh chronicles called them), built a Motte on the northern end of the Hillfort utilising part as a bailey. There is no known history of the site, but the early Norman advance into the area by 1100 was repulsed by the Welsh by before 1150 holding the area for another 100 years.

It is best to retrace your steps to the Celtic Way which follows the **Rhymney Valley Ridge Way** down a forest drive through the woods, covered with bluebells and foxgloves in early summer. This track can be muddy even in summer. The Rhymney Valley Ridgeway then

branches left along a footpath down to the edge of the woods. Where it leaves the woods it runs diagonally down the field to the Holly Bush Public House in **Draethen** (ST221873).The right of way runs through the Pub grounds. Draethen is a small hamlet, originally built for the Ruperra estate. There are some buildings which predate the estate. On the hill to the west there are lead mines that have been worked since at least the Roman period.

At the pub entrance there is a road junction. Take the road through Draethen hamlet marked **Lower Machen**. This is a narrow lane to be used with care. Once over the bridge over the Rhymney,the road is wider and safer.

Stage 3 - Draethen to Llandanglws - 2 miles

As you cross the **River Rhymney**, known as Afon Elyrch(The Swan's River), you cross from Senghenydd into what was the Lordship of Gwynllwg (sometimes called the Lordship of Machen).The river is an old boundary, dating back to the Dark Ages.

The Welsh lordship of **Gwynllyw** was named after Gwynllyw, a 6th century ruler who abducted Gwaldys, a

daughter of Brychan, king of Brychieniog. They are important in the early Welsh church, both becoming saints, the Cathedral at Newport is dedicated to Gwynllwg. Their son, Cadoc, was a very important figure in the early Welsh Church becoming a major saint and a great teacher. The quality of scholarship in his monastery at Llantwit Major has been described as being of University status.

The arrival of the Normans in the 12th century split Gwynllwg in two, the more fertile southern part becoming the Norman Wentloog and the northern part becoming the Welsh Lordship of Machen, one family, the Morgan family, dominated the area for over a thousand years eventually becoming ennobled as Lord Tredegar. The generosity of the family in bardic patronage was reflected in the words of the poet Gwilym Tew, who in the fifteenth century, described the then owner, John Morgan as Gwin llydan Gwynllwg (The bounteous vine of Wentloog)

Another poet patronised by the Morgan family was Dafydd ap Gwylim, who revitalised Welsh poetry in the fourteenth century. He was renowned for both his

religious poems and his love poems. He was also a nature poet of European stature, and some of his work must have been inspired by the natural beauty of the area. He is sometimes described as the Welsh Wordsworth. But it would be more correct to say that Wordsworth was the English Dafydd ap Gwylim, since Dafydd was earlier.

There are two options here.

Option 1: Carry on along the road to the main road at (ST225880). You will notice the valley bottom here is wide and flat. The village at ST225880 is **Lower Machen**. In the 1930s on road widening, a Roman mining settlement was discovered. The actual Lead mines were at Cefn Coed Pwll Du on the ridge to your left. On your right in the distance you can see Plas Machen mainly a Tudor Building, but it was the medieval manor of Machen. It is felt that in Lower Machen we can see development from the Roman period, through the Dark Ages and a major Welsh pre Norman estate which developed into a Lordship which lasted until the Act of Union between Wales and England in 1542.

At the road, cross carefully, and turn into Lower Machen. You will come to a cross roads turn left up to the church. The church is mentioned in 1102, but the site is earlier. There is reused Roman brick in the Tower and there is a Roman Gorgon's Head, built into the vestry inner wall. It is felt it may be the site of a Roman temple.

Leave the church and turn left. It is possible to follow the lane up to the top of the ridge. At the top there is a crossroads, just before the crossroads there is a Tumulus in the field to your right. At the crossroads at (ST239890) turn left. You are now on an early Ridgeway running from Newport into the hinterland. About a hundred yards up the track is a farm

Llandanglws. This is the site of a **6th century Chapel** to the Celtic Saint Tanglwst, a sister of Gwynllyw. She was one of the alleged 24 sons and daughters of Brychan, who was the half Irish, half pagan, half mythical ruler of Brecon. In reality, they were Christian missionaries or more probably reforming Evangelists, since there is good evidence of survival of Roman Christianity in the area.

Alternative from Machen Church: Just north of the church follow the waymarked footpath along the back of the church. Cross the field and make for the large house called the Volland. Here you join the old Caerphilly Newport road which is now a lane effectively the drive to The Volland. On your left you have good views of the hillfort and leadmine area. Where the old road rejoins the existing Caerphilly Newport road, turn right up under the railway arch, you are now joining option 2.

Option 2 from Draethen to Llandanglws

At the bridge take the footpath to the left and follow the river. At Pandy House (ST222883) the path climbs up to the road. Cross the road with care and follow the small lane to the quarry under the railway line. The railway, initially horse drawn, was opened in 1826 to take iron to Newport. Once under the railway, the quarry road goes left but you go straight ahead over the cattle grid. Follow the track up past the Park farm onto the ridge where it meets the Ridgeway at Llandanglws. At (ST225887) are the much eroded remains of Castell Meredydd, a Welsh castle built about 1150. This was a castle of the Morgan family who were the Lords of Machen and Caerleon. Though on private property responsible visitors are

welcome. Return to the track and follow it up to the ridge. At the ridge the farm passes Llandanglwys farm.

Stage 4 - Llandanglws to Twmbarlwm - 3 miles

Opposite the farm is a stile. Follow the path down through the fields, where it forks take the left hand fork to the small hamlet of **Upper**

Ochrwyth(ST239894). There a signposted path leads to Risca. The first portion is through the fields but after it crosses a road it is a well defined green lane between hedgerows. This lane runs diagonally down the hillside to Danygraig(ST236903).

At Danygraig it passes the cemetery and passes through a small bungalow estate. At the other end of the estate there is junction, take the left hand fork and follow the road. The road runs below and alongside the Risca bypass. After you pass a small factory on your left the road forks. Take the right hand fork which leads to a tunnel under the bypass and a bridge over the River Ebbw.(ST236911)

This is probably the shortest way to cross **Risca**. Facing you is Exchange Street, at the end of which on the main

road is the Exchange Public house At the main road, St Mary Street, cross the road and turn left. You pass St Marys Church, rebuilt in 1852. During the reconstruction, Roman remains were found, including a floor of tiles stamped with mark of the Second Augustan Legion.

The name Risca was probably "Yr Isca". Isca being originally an early British name for water, in the sense of "river". Modern survivals are found in the river names Esk and Usk in the western half of Britain. The name Isca is associated with Roman occupation e.g Isca Dumnoniorum (now Exeter) and Isca Silurum(now Caerleon). The Second Augustan Legion was present at both Exeter and Caerleon, the presence at Risca may have been to do with Lead mining.

Just past the church is the Darren public house(ST234913). This provides food, drink and accommodation. Turn sharp right past the Darren, and over the level crossing. The railway was opened by the Monmouthshire Canal Company and now serves Ebbw Vale Steelworks. Turn left after the railway past the houses and a track bears right up a lane. As you turn

right you pass the remains of the Monmouthshire canal opened in 1792.

The track you are on is part of a walk called **Ravens Path** and is signposted. It is a steep climb up to Twmbarlwm and should be approached with caution, if you are unfit.

Follow the lane up the side of the hill, it is a lane leading to a cottage. Do not take any of the paths crossing the lane. Eventually the lane bears left and footpath carries on up the hill. This is signposted and a stile leads to the Forestry land. The path is well-signed ; after about ten minutes a forestry drive cuts across the path. Carry on straight up. As you reach the crest at Pegwn y Bwlch (ST248938) you see a signpost, pointing to the right marked **Castle Mound**. Another signpost, pointing the way you have come reads Darren Road. The Ravens Path goes left here, but at this point you leave it and turn right.

25.Immediately to the north are the wooded valleys of two tributaries o the Ebbw. These are now devoted to commercial Forestry. On the skyline you can see the

Brecon Beacons. To the south the Severn Estuary is visible.

From Pegwrn y Bwlch, a steepish climb of about ten minutes over grassland and whinberry covered mountain brings you to **Twmbarlwm**. The path crosses the bank and ditch of an Iron Age hillfort, which crowns the summit. At the other end of the fort is a Motte, but you cannot see it from the first bank of the hillfort. The path crosses the fort to the Motte.

Twmbarlwm (ST242926),height 419 metres, is a **landmark** for miles around and has much legend attached to it It is rumoured to be the burial site of a giant and at the end of the last century tradition in Newport, claimed the motte was the burial mound of the horse Lord Tredegar rode at the Charge of the Light Brigade. On a clear day the panorama makes the ascent worthwhile. You can see the whole of the Severn Estuary from Devon up to the Severn Bridge, and around through Gloucestershire, and Herefordshire. To the north the Brecon Beacons are prominent.

On a wet or misty day Twmbarlwrn should not be climbed. There is no shelter and you could easily get lost or injured.

It was the view from Twmbarlwm which stimulated W.H.Davies, the Newport born poet author of "Autobiography of a Supertramp", He wrote

"Can I forget the sweet days that have gone.
When poetry first began to stir my blood
And from the hills of Gwent I saw
The earth torn in two by Severn's silver flood".

The top of Twmbarlwm is crowned by a **hillfort** which may be Iron Age, though the current feeling is that some hillforts have their origin in the Late Bronze Age. This may be true for at Twmbarlwm, there is a small Bronze Age Tumulus, on the outer lip of the ditch around the motte.

Occupation of the area may even predate the Bronze Age. About twenty years ago a flint arrowhead was found "near Twmbarlwin". It may have come from the

hill just to the north. Mynydd Maen, has yielded several worked flint items over many years.

As mentioned earlier, at the eastern end of the hillfort is a motte of possibly the 12th century. There have been suggestions that the hillfort is a large bailey to the motte. Examination of the bank and ditch indicate a style more common to the Iron Age. It is doubtful if the fort was completed. The location is very exposed and would not have been attractive in the deteriorating climate of the Iron Age. The motte is also open to question. At the time of the Domesday book Caerleon was under Norman control, but by 1150 the native Welsh had reoccupied the area.

Some authorities suggest that the motte is a 13th century build, dating from the time Gilbert de Clare was in conflict with Llywelyn ap Gruffydd in the 1270's. A motte at this period, and in this location would be anachronistic. The motte can easily be seen from the lowland to the south and east, which would have been Norman controlled and this suggests that Twmbarlwm is a Welsh motte, which would have been a constant reminder of their presence to the dwellers in the lowland.

Stage 5 - Twmbarlwm to Henlys Vale - 3 miles

From the top of the motte a path leads eastwards and down a steep slope. A minor road from Rogerstone can be seen which runs to the west of a woodland plantation. Where it enters the plantation(ST248926) a forest track turns right off the road and into the wood. Follow this track through the wood. At the other side of the wood the lane becomes almost a hollow way leading down the slopes of **Mynydd Henlllys** .Just above Cwrt Henlllys farm at ST(ST257922) the track becomes metalled Henllys (Old Court) takes its name from the dwelling of a Welsh Chieftain. There is no positive evidence of the location of the court Cwrt Henlllys farm from a distance looks like a long house, but is a substantial building modernised in the 18th century. This could be the site of the court.

The track from Twmbarlwm past Cwrt Henlllys has the feel of of ancient way. There is little motor traffic and is a pleasant walk.

About a mile from Cwrt Henlllys you pass Henlllys Church(ST268911).The church is dedicated to St Peter,

any possible Celtic dedication being unknown. The current building is medieval and has a Preaching Cross base outside the porch .Henlllys and Bettws to the east were chapelries of Bassaleg .Bassaleg was the mother church of a pre Norman group of chapels, so Henlllys may have an early foundation. Today Henllys church is near the edge of the Newport Cwmbran conurbation. It is remarkable to see several Welsh language memorials in the graveyard, one as late as 1925.The language link with the Silures of Twmbarlwm and some of the graves in Henllys are a reminder of continuity of culture.

The ancient way from Twmbarlwrn continues east past Bettws, now a Newport housing estate, to Malpas and possibly Caerleon. However to follow it would mean a considerable amount of urban walking.

Opposite the church alongside the farm is a stile. Cross that and after the farm bear right. The stiles here have route markers, set up by the Council and if you follow the direction indicated by the arrow you cannot get lost. You cross a **small stream** on a footbridge and cross two fields to a road linking Rogerstone and Cwmbran (ST272913).The view from the road back to the church

with Twmbdrlwrn in the distance is spectacular, though daunting if you are walking east west. The route crosses the road and over a stile. This road though narrow is dangerous ,be careful crossing.

Stage 6 - Henllys Vale to Caerleon - 4 miles

Once over the stile the route crosses a field to Mill Wood, the route is obvious through the wood. Once out of the wood the route crosses several fields to **Henllys Vale farm**. It is hard to believe you are in the middle of urban South Wales. At each stile follow the arrow to the next. The stiles are well made, but in some instances overgrown. On reaching the farm, the route goes through the farmyard out to the road. Turn left at the road and follow the road to Llantarnam.

This may be part of the Pilgrims Route from **Llantarnam Abbey** to Penrhys in the Rhondda where a Marian cult developed in the middle ages. This route ran from Llantarnam past Croes y Mwyacalh (this may have been a wayside cross and their grange at Pentrebach.It would have continued up past Henllysvale Farm to Castell y Bwch Public house on the Rogerstone Henllys road,from there a series of footpaths runs to

Henllys Court farm.This could be an alternative route but it would miss Henllyss church.

This is a lane with little traffic, but care must be taken. After about a half a mile you pass Pentre Bach farm. This was a manor house and prior to the dissolutionof the Monasteries was a Grange of Llantarnam Abbey. The site was apparently moated at one time. In the house is a Roman sepulchral slab with an inscription to the memory of Vinditus,a soldier of the Second Augustan Legion.

A walk of half a mile brings you to **Croes Y Mwyalch** (the Blackbirds Cross) at Llantarnam and the which provides good food. As stated above this Cross may have been a wayside cross on the Pilgrims route. On the way you cross the Monmouthshire canal and the Cwmbran Driveway.

On reaching Llantarnam you may empathise with W.H.Davies, who lonely and homesick at the sight of the pretty American villages he was tramping through.

"Wished they were Llantarnam's Green"

Just past the public house is a crossroads (ST302924) At the crossroads go straight across to Malthouse Lane and follow **Malthouse Lane**. To the left about half a mile away is the site of Llantarnam Abbey a Cistercian foundation established in 1170 by Howell ap Iorwerth, Lord of Machen and Caerleon. Recent urbanisation and road building have succeeded in making the Abbey site missable.

Having crossed yet another Urban Expressway on the right you see **Pen Y Parc** cottage. The public right of way runs through the garden on the side of the house. Once in the garden take the right hand path. The right of way follows the field boundaries up to and past Park Farm. It may be easier to pass Pen Y Parc cottage and take the farm road leading to Park Farm. The Park in question is the Park that was attached to the Tudor house, built on the site of Llantarnam Abbey. The Abbey was purchased by William Morgan of Pentrebach at the Dissolution He built a Tudor house from the ruins of the Abbey.

Cross the fields beyond Park Farm and you reach **Lodge Wood**. This is an **Iron Age hillfort**. The views are quite impressive. This is a large multivallate fort with an area of 17 acres. It may typically be dated from about 500BC. Inside the Iron Age Hillfort, is smaller structure that appears to be later than the fort. This may be the site of a post Roman or Dark Age occupation, though none of the Arthurian experts have made the possible link with the literary connection between Arthur and Caerleon.

From the eastern side of the hillfort you walk through a modern housing development down to **Caerleon** along "The Paddocks", "Lodge Hill Road" and "Lodge Road", passing St Cadocs Hospital. The centre of Caerleon is pleasant small town, much of the which overlies the Legionary fortress of the Second Augustan Legion. This dictated the road pattern in the town centre. It is possible to see the amphitheatre, bathhouses, barrack blocks and remains of walls. The excellent **museum** can do more justice to the site than this short guide.

The town is also famous for its **early Christian** associations being the site of the Martyrdom of Saints Julius and Aaron who were martyred here at the end of

the Roman era. Following the departure of the Romans the Christian tradition persisted long before Augustine landed in Kent. The church of Llangattock juxta Caerleon is dedicated to St Cadoc .The dedication indicates an early date for the foundation of the church, which is on the site of a Roman temple. It was the seat of the Welsh Lords of Caerleon and Machen before and after the Norman arrival. The Welsh were not finally expelled until 1230.

Caerleon is famed for its possible connection with **King Arthur**. In one of the group of early Welsh traditional stories, known collectively as "Y Mabinogion", he is holding a Court at Caerllion ar Wysg(Caerleon on Usk).The earliest of these stories date from the sixth century, but were not written down until the Early Middle Ages. The Mabinogion gives us the earliest literary mention of Arthur, who may have been a battle leader among the early Welsh.

The transference of his story to a wider world is due mainly to Geoffrey of Monmouth, who was a Breton Monk. In his "History of the Kings of Britain", a work which may possibly be more fiction than fact, he has

Arthur hold court at Caerleon. Through Geoffrey's work in Norman French Arthur became a European wide hero. The myth was used by authors dealing with the new concepts of chivalry and courtly love. He and his knights were intended as role models for the real world.

The Welsh scholar T Gwynn Jones wrote in 1909
Tithau a'th ramant weithion a'i meddwaist Oni liwiaist y
byd a'th chwedleuon

(Wales may have been conquered by the Normans
But through them it coloured the world with its tales)

The appeal of Arthur, a noble hero fighting for justice was bound to attract a wide range of authors at many periods^{ix}. These range from the 12th century works of Chretien de Troyes in his Conte Del Graal, through T.H.White in "The Once and Future King", to George Lucas and the latest manifestation of Arthur as Luke Skywalker in Star Wars. Luke even had a Merlin in Obi Wan Kenobi and Excalibur as a Light Sabre, but fighting the eternal fight of good against evil.

One cannot write of Caerleon without mentioning **Arthur Machen**. He spent his early life in the town, but went to London as a journalist at the end of the last century. He wrote a number of novels and short stories based on Celtic legends and the stories of Caerleon and district. These are considered to be minor masterpieces of the supernatural.

However in Caerleon, it is King Arthur who is the more important, there is even a small museum to Arthur^x. He may not have existed, despite the possible Dark Age site on Lodge Farm^{xi}, but the myth does.

The power of the myth attracted Alfred Lord Tennyson to Caerleon, and he wrote the masterly Arthurian Romance "Idylls of the King" in the Hanbury Arms at Caerleon. The Hanbury Arms is still a public house in an idyllic location, on the banks of the Usk .It is quite easy to sit there all day watching the tide rise and fall under the slopes of Wentwood, contemplating the next portion of the Celtic Way.

Additional Information

Public Transport
Cardiff Central Railway Station - 01222 227281

Valley Lines - 01222 231978 - local rail service which runs between Caerphilly and Cardiff.

Tourist information

Caerphilly Visitor Centre - Twyn Square - 01222880011

Magor Granada Services - Junction 23 - 01633 881122

Caerleon, Ffwrwm, High Street - 01633 430777

Centres

Caerphilly Castle - 01222 883143

Handing on:

The next section, also by John Owen, continues the route through the ancient kingdom of Gwent - an area dominated by Wentwood - to the towns of Caerwent and Chepstow before leaving Wales on the border crossing on the old Severn Bridge. As in this section, the wealth of detail given is a reflection of the many sites of significance in this area.

9 GWENT BORDERLANDS

Stage Nine - The Gwent Borderlands -

Caerleon to Chepstow - 18 miles

Stages:

- 1. Caerleon to Gray Hill - 7 miles**
- 2. Gray Hill to Llanmelin - 3 miles**
- 3. Llanmelin to Chepstow - 8 miles**

Introduction

East of the river Usk you are in the old land of Gwent. This was the post Roman name for the land between the Usk and the Wye, its name from the town of Caerwent. Caerwent was a town established by the Romans for the Silures. It was known as Venta Silurum, the Market Place of the Silures. Unlike Caerleon it was essentially a civil settlement. The importance of the site in the post Roman period was such that it gave its name to the district between the rivers Usk and Wye. Tradition has it that there was a king in Caerwent in about 500AD

The old Welsh kingdom of Gwent was broken up by the arrival of the Normans. William I placed some of his most powerful barons on the Welsh Border to contain the Welsh and to conquer part of Wales in their own right. Since Gwent was not in England, the various Norman lordships such as Striguil based on Chepstow, were virtually independent of England, not being held from the English king but held as a Lord of Caldicot said "Per Gladium", "By the sword!".

The lordship of Striguil (Chepstow) covered most of the land between the Wye and the Usk, south of and including much of the Wentwood ridge. The western part of the coastal plain was part of the lordship of Caerleon. During the late 12th century the lordship of Caldicot and its detached portion became separated from Striguil. The big change created in the landscape by these Norman lordships, was the introduction of the manorial system. Each manor being held by knight service at Chepstow Castle, there were two grades of knight service, one the standard

forty days attendance and a Welsh knights service where the attendance was only twenty days. This may also indicate native Welsh participation in the manorial system from an early date.

In 1536 Henry VIII passed the Act of Union between Englnd and Wales. As a result of that Act the County of Monmouthshire was created out of the Norman lordships in Gwent and Gwynllwg. From lands in Wales in the words of the Act. For years writers have used the term "Gwent" in a romantic literary way to describe the County of Monmouthshire. In 1974 with local Government reorganisation the County of Monmouthshire was renamed Gwent .In 1995 more, reorganisation dismembered Gwent and created a new County of Monmouthshire from rural eastern (Modern)Gwent, but covering the pre Norman kingdom of Gwent. The rest of the county, being the industrial urban areas were made into County Boroughs. When I use the term Gwent I mean the old pre Norman district.

The area was divided into two by the wooded ridge known as Wentwood. This is an outlier of the Forest of Dean and forms a prominent ridge, which runs east west. To the north we have the so called plain of Gwent, which is in fact an area of rounded hills, between the coal field and Wentwood. This is the land of the Usk which meanders through it. To the south of the ridge the coastal fringe is underlain by Carboniferous Limestone which gives rise to fertile soils along the A48. There is a low range of hills, running east west, to the south of the A48, which was the Roman road.

Between the hills, bounded by the 50ft Contour and the sea are the Gwent Levels, which were alluvial marshes and even today lie below the highest tide level.

The topography of Gwent 'has affected its settlement pattern, the lower more fertile land attracting successive waves of migrant from the Neolithic period on. The areas identified by the late E.G. Bowen, of surviving Welsh tenure on the higher ground, in the Middle

Ages in Gwent were the same areas ignored by the Romans. These are the same areas with a higher percentage of surviving Welsh place names.

By the 8th century there were two distinct areas, Gwent Uwchcoed (Gwent above the Wood) and Gwent Is Coed (Gwent below the Wood). The ridge was a major barrier in earlier periods, its northern slope was steep and the vast number of trees made communication difficult. Today communication is difficult only minor roads cross the ridge. The wood consisted of a wide range of trees but oak dominated the landscape.

In the middle of Wentwood at the head of the valley dominated by the modern reservoir was an open space at the meeting of several tracks. A grove of trees here was known as Foresters Oaks and was the area used to hold the Foresters Court. This was a similar arrangement to the more well known Speech House in the Forest of Dean.

The clearance of Wentwood was carried out over a long period. The monks of Tintern were among some of the most successful in clearing the wood, leaving areas such as Newchurch almost treeless. Similarly, there is a large area treeless area to the east of Wentwood called Earlswood, which now is an area of small farms and fields cut out of the wood by squatters centuries ago when the landlords were absentee. Today the wood is a mere shadow of itself and what remains is mainly replanted coniferous. However the ridge of Wentwood is useful for the walker because it provides a good path between the Usk and the Wye avoiding as far as possible urban areas.

Stage 1 - Caerleon to Gray Hill - 7 miles

Starting Point:

The obvious starting place in Caerleon is the **Hanbury Arms**^{xii}. The Roman bridge was to east of the Hanbury, but the modern bridge is a hundred yards to the west. Cross the river using the footbridge alongside the road bridge, on your left is the Ship public house. Turn left

just after the Ship into Lulworth Road and then turn right into Isca road. This was the Roman Road access to Caerleon. Turn left again at the end of Isca Road and follow the lane alongside the river. After a couple of hundred yards at (ST348902) there is footpath to the right up the hill. This is the route of the Roman road from Caerwent. Follow the curving footpath up the hill and just after the house Cock of the North take the left hand fork up to the **Cats Ash Road**^{xiii}.

This area has been transformed in the last few years with the creation of several golf course on both sides the road. On clear days there are good views up the Usk valley and over the Severn. On your left you pass a group of houses called Mount St Albans. In a field alongside them was the burial place of Julius and Aaron who were Christian Martyrs, during the late Roman period. The site is on private land and there is nothing visible. The road is on the route of the Roman road along the ridge and is pleasant walking but you should be aware of the Golf Club traffic.

After about half a mile you cross the A449 on a bridge at **Cats Ash**. The name is reputedly derived from Villa Cathonen, Cathonen being, according to tradition, the ruler of the district. Cats Ash farm incorporates an early chapel in its structure. The Roman road runs downhill to Langstone where it becomes the A48. Walk down the Roman road for about 50 yards and at the signpost marked Coed y Caerau turn left up the lane, carry on to Chapel cottage(ST375911). At Chapel Cottage there a spectacular views back over Caerleon with Twmbarlwm and Mynydd Machen to the west. To the south and east you have the coastal plain the Severn and the English coast.

You have a choice at Chapel Cottage, the first option is to carry straight on up the lane. This runs along the spine of the ridge up into **Wentwood**. It looks to be old because it is obviously a hollow way. The problem is that because it was a hollow way there is not much room to stand clear of traffic. In the fields on the left are a series of earthworks at ST378913

these are called Pen Toppen Ash and are thought to be Iron age. Another suggestion is that they were the site of a Roman signal station. Caerleon is inline of site and so is Caerwent. Apart from the Ordnance Survey, the best if not only plans are in the travel book known as Coxes Monmouthshire, written almost two hundred years ago.

Just after the enclosures is Coed y Caerau Common(Wood of the Camps) (ST382915).This is not open heath, but a small coppiced Beech wood, there are several paths running parallel to the road and these may be safer. The ground in the wood is heavily disturbed Much of it may be small scale quarrying but there are several banks which could be **Dark Age Cross Ridge Dykes**. Cross Ridge Dykes were used to control traffic on Ridgeways and to delineate tribal boundaries. The possible dykes at Coed y Caerau are not identified as such on the Ordnance Survey Map.

After a few hundred yards there is another earthwork, reputedley on a Roman site; you cross the site opposite **Kemeys Folly**(ST385922).In an old guide to the County of Monmouthshire it says that Kemeys Folly commands a wide and interesting view. That is an understatement: it is claimed eight counties are visible. There are magificent views along the southern slopes of Wentwood with Gray Hill a bracken covered eminence in the distance. At the foot of Wentwood there is the corridor of the A48 separated from the Gwent Levels by a low ridge of hills. Just after Kemeys Folly there is a road junction to the left. At the right a Bridle Way climbs up from Kemeys House.

If you took the second option at Chapel cottage you would rejoin the Ridgeway up this path.The second option follows the **Usk Valley walk** along the northern slopes of Wentwood, with views up th e Usk Valley. The northern edge of Wentwood slopes steeply down through the woods to the river. There is a collection of farms,a church and an

old manor house Kemeys House, alongside the river. This is probably the "Cemeis" given to the See of Llandaff mentioned in the 7th century Book of Llandaff. Another reference speaks of King Ffernwael "holding his court in the middle of Cemeis". What we have in Cemeis is an estate traceable back through the Medieval period, the "Dark Ages", the Roman period and probably into the Iron Age.

From the junction with the Bridle path(ST38794),the **Ridgeway** becomes a road leading to a private house, but is still a right of way. To the left the ground falls away down the Wooded slopes of Kemeys Graig. On the right, the wood has been cleared giving panoramic views over the coastal plain and the Severn. Standing out among the landscape to the south is the Llanwern Steelworks, symbol of the Steel Age, while the conical wooded hill to the east is from the Iron Age being Wilcrick Hillfort.

Soon the Ridgeway passes through a small wood. This is **Caer Licyn**, another site whose

origin is in dispute. The Ordnance Survey calls it a Norman Motte and Bailey castle, whereas some authorities consider it to be Iron Age, with the mound to one side being a Bronze Age tumulus. If it is a castle it may well be an early castle of the Kemeys Family, one of whom, Stephen Kemeys, held the manor of Kemeys as a sub-lordship of Caerleon in 1234.The Kemeys family were a large half Norman half Welsh family who held extensive estates in South Wales, Kemeys Manor was sold out of the family in 1700.

Soon after the castle the track ends at a house but the Celtic Way enters the woodland and follows the high ground. The route is well defined being partially a Hollow Way or running between low banks. The route here is unmetalled and in some place is muddy. even in summer. For about a mile the Celtic Way runs through the woodland. At ST400941 the path forks and the left hand fork goes down to **Pen Cae Mawr**.

If you were here in 1798, you would have met The Reverend William Coxe and Sir Richard Colte Hoare. They were travelling in the area collecting material for what is known to antiquarians as "Coxes Monmouthshire", a guide to the county written by Coxe and illustrated by Colte Hoare. Coxe says of this path:

"The road is a narrow level way, leading through groves of coppice interspersed with oak, beech and other timber The height commands at one time the view I so much admired from the top of Pen y cae Mawr and at another the southern parts of Monmouthshire, with the Bristol Channel, bordered by the hills of Somersetshire and Gloucestershire, till they are lost in the expanse of ocean"

It is a measure of humanity that the sights Coxe saw can fill us with the same emotions two hundred years later. Like Coxe, it took me some time to suspect that I was "treading the site of an old British way".

The left hand fork goes down along the northern slope to Pen Y Cae Mawr. The path leaves the woods and runs through a field to a cross roads. This is Pen y Cae Mawr, the view is spectacular again with magnificent views. But I suspect that Coxe actually stood on the hill above for he writes

"From the middle of the forest scenery I looked down on the rich vales of Monmouthshire, watered by the limpid and winding Usk"

Near Pen Y Cae Mawr is, in my opinion, one of the most romantic castles in the area. This is **Castell Troggy** (ST415954), it lies in a field opposite the cross roads. A path leads across the field to the other side and then you follow the edge line to the right. The castle lies in marshy ground that is the source of the Castroggy brook. It may have been an outpost of the Lordship of Striguil, based on Chepstow. Coxe in 1798 called it Striguil Castle. In Welsh this may have been Cas

Striguil which could have become corrupted to Castroggy.

The surviving remains date from the 13th century. The surviving masonry consists of a high curtain wall and towers on the eastern side. It was probably built as a hunting lodge by the Bigod family, Earls of Norfolk, who held Chepstow through marriage. Eventually it became the dwelling of the lord's forester. These overgrown remains show how some castles should be presented, covered in ivy and full of mystery.

On returning to the crossroads take the road marked Llanvair Discoed. After about a quarter of a mile there is a path to the right after a house called Timothy Cottage, this climbs up to the top of the ridge. This, I think was the Pen y Cae Mawr (Top of the Great Enclosure), where Coxe stood and to the location of two Bronze Age Barrows. The name Pen y Cae Mawr probably relates to the enclosure of Wentwood as a hunting preserve.

If you take the right hand fork at ST400941, the route runs up through the forest along the high ground. The slopes to the left are known as Bertholau Graig. This is best translated as **The Boundary Ridge**, emphasising the role Wentwood played in the past as a barrier to communication. The nature of this ridge is best appreciated from the Raglan Newport road, where it looms high above the river. After about a mile, the woodland track crosses a minor road (ST422948) which runs between Parc Seymour and Pen y Cae Mawr. The lack of good roads shows how great a barrier Wentwood is even today. Long may it be so. In bad weather, if you follow the road to the right down to Parc Seymour, you reach the A48. There is a bus service on the A48 running between Newport and Chepstow.

From the point where the track crosses the road, the Celtic Way is on a Forestry Drive. This part of Wentwood is used extensively for recreation and the Forestry Commission has a

large car park, barbecue facilities and an adventure playground.

Just to the north of the Car park the **Wentwood Round Barrows**(ST416945) are seen in a group of beech trees. These Bronze Age(2000-1000BC) Barrows are some 260m above sea level on the edge of the northern scarp. They are thought to be outliers of the Gray Hill complex. However not enough is known of the Bronze Age landscape to be sure if they would have been visible from Gray Hill. As mentioned earlier, this spot on the edge of the ridge may well be the spot Coxe stood at to see his view of the vales of Gwent.

To the north and north west there is no evidence of Bronze Age settlement, these Barrows may mark the edge of a tribal settlement. Unfortunately, the Barrows are not well protected or even acknowledged as such by the Forestry Commission. As a result they are damaged by car parking, by off road vehicles driving over them and people using them as a picnic site and the replanting of the

wood. The presence of Beech trees, possibly a 19th century planting, around the barrows relieves the monotony of the conifer.

From the cairns the track carries on eastward through the woodland for about a quarter of a mile until it meets a minor road. This runs from Llanvair Discoed to Pen y Cae Mawr. Turn right on reaching the road and walk down the hill toward the reservoir. The road is a minor one but in summer there is traffic to the Picnic Site. It is possible to follow woodland tracks down the hill and not use the road. Do not turn off the road until you leave the woods. At the edge of the wood there is a road to the right signposted Llanvaches going alongside the reservoir: do not take it. Take the path to the left.

There i s another Picnic site, on the right, just after the cross roads above the reservoir, here there are public toilets which are occasionally open.

The path at (ST428939) leads to the summit of **Gray Hill**. The track leads upward from a house called Casa Mia. The track forks in two here, one fork runs around the bottom of the hill giving views over the Gwent Levels and leads eventually to Llanvair Discoed. The other fork is a bridle way at the north of the hill at the edge of the wood. Another track climbs up the steep western edge of Gray Hill. The climb to the bracken covered summit is well rewarded by the view since Gray Hill stands out from the hills surrounding it. The more extensive view to the south is almost uninterrupted. To the west lies the conical hill of Mynydd Allt Hir(also known as Money Turvey being a literal English pronunciation of Mynydd Allt Hir).Between Mynydd Allt Hir and Gray Hill is the Wentwood reservoir supplying Newport.

The view is not the main reason for visiting Gray Hill .In Welsh, Gray Hill is called Mynydd Llwyd. One meaning of Llwyd is gray. However there is a meaning best interpreted as Holy. Gray Hill is one of the old

Holy places of Wales. The landscape has changed from the Bronze Age and today's bracken covered hill would have been far more fertile with agriculture reaching up to the edges of what must have been a major cultural religious site.

Gray Hill dominates the surrounding area, being a focal point in the landscape. From it there are views of the upland ridges beyond Wentwood, the Gwent Levels, though the land to the south of the A48 would have been marshy, though over the last ten years much evidence of Iron Age occupation of the Levels has come to light. In the distance the hills around Bath are visible, as are the Quantocks and Exmoor. Conversely, Gray Hill or its location could be seen from a wide area dominating the landscape, as in a similar way Salisbury Cathedral dominates much of southern Wiltshire.

Gray Hill has a complex of **Bronze Age cairns, three standing stones and a Stone circle**. To reach the circle at ST438935

walk along the path to the top of the hill. After about 300 yards along the hill, the bracken thins and you reach an area of grass. At this point there are a large number of quarry scoops where the exposed Conglomerate limestone has been quarried, at this point a path runs down left through the bracken to the stone circle. This lies to the south below the summit of the hill. After a few hundred yards a standing stone is seen, and beyond this, partially hidden in the bracken, is the stone circle. This has been described as a ring cairn, containing a cist burial from the second millenium BC, rather than a small version of Stonehenge.

There are also three groups of **barrows and cairns** on the hill on the northern, southern and eastern slopes. These may form part of a ritual complex centred on the stone circle. The series of linear earthworks on Gray Hill may be contemporary with the other elements. The site has not been excavated and so the chronological sequence of construction is not known and we are not sure what the

relationship of each element in the landscape is-to the other elements.

The function of the complex is the subject of much speculation, was it located on a prominent hill to be the religious centre for a wide area to the south. Alternatively, as is normal in such situations, the circles have been variously described as prehistoric observatories with stones aligned. to the midwinter sunrise. Another explanation is that the arrangement of circles and barrows had a role connected with funerary ritual.

Much has been written about stone circles and Barrows but it is best to keep an open mind. Without written record, it is difficult to come to a firm judgement without imposing our cultural values on Bronze Age society. Whatever the explanation, a visit to Gray Hill makes one aware of a sense of place with an identity special to itself, a holy place in a non specific religious sense of a oneness with the land and an echo of humanity down the aeons, and a feeling of almost being able to

empathise with Bronze Age Man through the continuity present in the landscape.

Stage 2 - Gray Hill to Llanmelin - 3 miles

From Gray Hill there are two alternative routes to Llanmelin hillfort.

Option 1 - Firstly, you can return to the track on the top of Gray Hill and turn left. The path runs eastwards through the bracken and the mass of Silver Birch which now covers the eastern end of Gray Hill. Turn left where the path makes a T junction with the bridle way leading to Bica Common. This bridle way, which can be muddy in portions, is well defined but there are tracks off it leading into the wood which can be confusing. At ST442939, at a junction of bridleways, turn right to the farm Cil Voynog, this name which means the Enclosure of the Stony Ploughland is evidence of the process of reclamation of the woodland.

From the farm, a narrow lane leads down to **Bica Common**. This is a small bracken covered common with a maze of tracks. It is

best to stay on the road until you approach Pandy Farm, down on the left. Just before the farm entrance take the road to the right. This leads across the base of the common, above the small valley of the Castroggy Brook. Below in the valley bottom, and spreading up the hill, is the small collection of houses sometimes called **Earlswood Bottom**.

The road leads to two houses, only one, Rocks Cottage, is shown on the map. The path goes in through the gate and turns sharp left down to the side of the Castroggy Brook. At the end of the garden the path goes into a small wooded stone walled enclosure. The area is filled with a jumble of large rocks, which may be from field clearance, but it has an atmosphere about it. There is what appears to be a well, near the southern end of the wood but it does not appear as such in the standard work on the Holy Wells of Wales.

Once out of the wood the path follows the **Castroggy Brook** down the valley. On your left the valley sides are wooded but you walk

through pastureland, which rises steeply to your right. This valley can be wet underfoot and even on a late autumn day is a frost hollow, despite that it is a little bit of paradise, hidden from the world. As the valley turns you pass the Cribau Mill complex and at the end of the field join the lane which runs to **Cribau**. At this point you join the path taken by Option 2

Option 2 - On a more practical note, if you are hungry or thirsty it may be worth visiting **Llanvair Discoed** (ST442924). This is to the south of Gray Hill and may be reached by walking down the south side of the hill from the stone circle. A path runs through the bracken, down to join the minor road that skirts the hill. The road acts as a boundary between the common land on the hill and the fields. Soon, on your left, is the start of the bridle way to Bica Common, to go to Llanvair Discoed stay on the road. At the old house Ysgubor Kemeys, which looks 17th century, the road turns down to the village. Turn left at the main road to the village centre. Llanvair

Discoed (The Church of St Mary below the Wood) is a charming but small village. It contains the Woodland Tavern which provides food and drink for the weary, but it is closed between 3pm and 7pm.

The village indicates continuity of settlement not in a specific spot but in a landscape. As mentioned before it is felt the higher ground remained Celtic/Welsh despite several waves of invaders. The very name Llanvair Discoed suggests a Welsh speaking population. The large proportion of Welsh surnames in the graveyard tends to confirm this cultural continuity. Its cultural identity contrasts with St Brides Nether Went an Anglicised coastal counterpart.

It would be foolish to suggest the medieval inhabitants of "Lamecare", as Llanfair Discoed was recorded in Domesday, were direct descendants of the Bronze Age dwellers. The church is dedicated to St Mary, any earlier Celtic dedication being unknown. Behind the church is a small castle, held by

the St John family as a Welsh knight's fee under Chepstow. The presence of the castle records the introduction of the manorial system by the Normans.

If time is short it is possible to walk to Llanmelin along the road. Walk down from the public house about 100 yards and take the left fork. Where the houses end take the left fork up the lane. At the next junction turn left again under Culhere woods towards **Old Cwm Mill**. From the mill the road climbs up to the entrance to **Llanmelin** hillfort opposite the entrance to Coombe Farm.

If you have time it is worth taking the scenic route. Starting from the pub take the small lane to the left, back up towards Gray Hill. About a quarter of a mile up the lane is Village farm. Just before the farm on the right hand side of the lane is **Llanfair Discoed well**. This is not recorded in the standard work on Holy Wells. At the farm is a footpath

signposted Earlswood, follow it up the field to a stile. You will notice many of the old field boundaries are composed of large blocks of stone. This is Conglomerate Limestone which, as the name suggests, comprises of small Quartz pebbles in a matrix of Limestone, it is known locally as Puddingstone from its appearance.

At the stile the path crosses a small road, this is the access road to the house Penhiem. the path runs through a small wood and recrosses the Penheim access road. On your right are the remains of old limekilns. The path follows the edge of the **Penheim** boundary. At the end of the field you go through the gate and turn right through another gate and the path follows the northern edge of the Penheim property, which is marked by an attractive stand of trees. In this area the stiles are well made and bear the motif "Landowners welcome caring walkers". It is hoped you will live up to their expectation. At the end of this field you cross the access road to the private dwelling called The Cottage.

You are now on the way down to the valley of the Castroggy which lies below you. In the distance the patchwork of fields, woods and farms is Earlswood. Once **Earlswood** was a large wood, it belonged to the detached Shirenew ton portion of Caldicot lordship. At the end of the Middle Ages the owners were absentees. In their absence, and coupled with a succession of weak agents, squatters moved into the wood, cut it down and built small cottages, holdings and farms. This explains the chaotic road and field pattern you see before you.

The path runs down across the next field to a gate at the edge of a wood. The path runs diagonally across the field to the corner of a wood, from there it falls steeply down to the valley of the Castroggy. The path comes out on a lane at the entrance to a complex of houses called **Cribau Mill**. Cribau Mill was from its name a woollen mill, the root Crib means Comb in English, and refers to the

habit of combing the finished wool with teazles.,

At this point (ST456938) you meet the path from Option 1. There is a right of way down the lane from the start of the Cribau land. The land is basically a long drive to Cribau, it runs along side the Castroggy. We first met the Castroggy as a marsh at Castle Troggy, now we meet it where it has cut its route through Wentwood in a deep steep sided valley known as Cwm(Valley). The stream was there before Wentwood was formed and cut its way down as Wentwood was being eroded. Today it runs around Wentwood and this may give another clue to its name. In Welsh the verb Tro means to turn, possibly the Castroggy was so named because of the way it turns around Wentwood. There is just room along the valley floor for the brook and the narrow lane. It is one of Gwent's best kept secrets. It is particularly attractive in spring with the wild flowers. **The Cwm** runs for about a mile north south between wooded slopes and comes out at a cottage called Old Cwm Mill.(ST458928)

At Old Cwm Mill you join a minor lane, turn left up the lane. Care must be taken, it is not a busy road but it is narrow. It climbs up between two wooded slopes. On the crest of the one to the right is the hillfort of Llanmelin, hidden by the trees. Towards the top of the hill you pass the entrance to Coombe Farm, a large building across the fields. Opposite the entrance to Coombe farm is an overgrown lane(ST464928). This is the access to **Llanmelin Hillfort**.

The border nature of the area you are now entering is emphasised by the name Coombe Farm, this is an Anglicisation of the Welsh Cwm. Eastern Monmouthshire, close to the Wye has long been exposed to English settlement and influence. You are now leaving the higher ground which was the last refuge of various groups of original populations and are entering a more cosmopolitan world.

As you pass along the overgrown lane, on your left covered by trees is an earthwork

sometimes known as "The Outpost". However nothing is known of the relationship of this to Llanmelin itself. As you leave the wooded lane you enter a large field. Llanmelin is at the western edge of this field. It is essential you respect the farmers property and crops. You **must** follow the **western hedgeline**, this helps the farmer and maintains a good relationship between him and visitors to Llanmelin.

The name Llanmelin probably is fairly modern. Though, normally, in Welsh the prefix Llan means Church, occasionally it is a corruption of Glan which can mean river valley. Melin is the Welsh for mill. Thus, the location of Old Cwrn Mill, situated at the mouth of the valley of the Castroggy gave the area its name. By retrospection the name passed to the hillfort.

It was once considered that Llanmelin was the tribal capital of the Silures. This was strengthened by the fact that 2 miles to the south lies Caerwent, a Roman civil town. However, despite its magnificent location, on

a south facing ridge, its double rampart ditch and counterscarp and the annexe to the east, Llanmelin is one of the smaller hillforts. Nash Williams who excavated it in 1930 thought it dated from the second century BC, but now it is thought to be probably older. Around 170BC it is thought the fort was enlarged and the massive double rampart built. The entrance to the southeast was refashioned in about 50BC.

The annexe to the south east is the subject of much dispute. It is proposed that it may have formed part of an early fort that was much reshaped. Another suggestion is that it was built as a cattle compound, since the economy of the Iron Age revolved around cattle. Yet again the presence of two medieval huts has led to the suggestion it may have a medieval origin. There are a total of **29 recognised hillforts** in the pre 1974 county of Monmouthshire, Llanmelin, though spectacular is just one of them.

Stage 3 - Llanmelin to Chepstow - 8 miles

Return to the road opposite Coombe farm and turn left back down the hill. At **Old Cwm Mill** turn left and after a few hundred yards a footpath cuts across the field, east of Great Llanmelin Farm. When it rejoins the road turn left along the road and follow it across a cross roads down to the A48. Regretably there is no option but to follow the road. Alongside the road among the trees runs the Castroggy brook, which by now is an old friend. There are no footpaths running east west in this area.

The road down is pleasant and tree lined and runs through, good farming country. To your left, not shown on the map, is the site of **RAF Caerwent** established in the last war as a munitions factory and covering a large area of southern Gwent. It is one of Gwent's worst kept secrets, many families, like mine, had relations who worked there during the War. Now on a care and maintenance basis, it has been disused for a number of years. It is an oasis of wildlife and archaeological remains containing a large Roman villa. The land below Wentwood is good agricultural land

.RAF Caerwent has been spared decades of modern farming and reputedly contains many natural meadows with an abundance of flora.

The route down the road has also a symbolic significance. Up on Wentwood you were closer to "Celtic Wales". Down this road in the first century AD, came the Silures of Llanmelin to become the Romano-British citizens of Caerwent. You are also entering a landscape that was changed by the arrival of the Normans. They transformed the agriculture by the creation of the manorial system. The villages between here and Chepstow being creations of or adaptations to the manorial system, held by Knight's service from Chepstow castle.

Eventually, the road ends at the A48, which was the Roman Road. You must cross the A48 at the junction. Be very careful crossing the road. Across the A48 the Roman road is the smaller left hand fork. Take it and walk into Caerwent. After about 500 yards you enter Caerwent. On your right is the start of one of

the best preserved Roman town walls in northern Europe.

Caerwent is the opposite of Caerleon, Caerleon was the military base, the Legionary centre, with troops from all over the Roman Empire. Caerwent was the Silurian Town, built by the Romans for the Silures, once they had accepted the rule of Rome. Not all tribes were treated this way, some were not "civilised" they were enslaved. The Celtic Silures came here and over the next three and a half centuries became Romano-Britons with some measure of self government. As mentioned earlier, the name Caerwent is derived from the Latin "Venta Silurum" the Market of the Silures.

In 1862, George Borrow published a book called "Wild Wales", being a record of his 1854 walk around Wales. He passed through Caerwent and commented that it was "a poor desolate place consisting of a few old fashioned houses and a strange looking desolate church". Today, it is a pleasant small

village, possibly more English in style than Welsh with an attractive collection of stone buildings gathered around the church. Borrow mentioned in 1854 that "No Welsh is spoken in Caerwent, nor to the east of it, nor indeed for two miles to the west".

The best way to explore Caerwent is to climb upon the western wall, and follow it around the southern edge of the village. The wall and towers survive to a considerable height, overlooking the water meadows of the Castroggy Brook, which here has changed its name to the Nedern Brook. The walls enclose an area of 44 acres, almost the whole modern village. At the eastern end of the southern wall, the Normans built a motte on the corner tower, which survives today. Turn left at the motte and walk up to the east gate of the town.

Turn into the town and walk to St Stephens Church. As you approach the church you will notice the excavated Roman buildings including a temple, shops, the Basilica and the site of the Forum.

The present church of **St Stephens**, dates mainly from the 13th century, but it is on the site of a church dedicated to the Celtic St Tathan. Tradition says Tathan was granted land here in about 500AD by King Caradoc who ruled Gwent from Caerwent. Here we see that on the departure of the Romans, it remained a centre of government. The monastery aroused the wrath of Gwynlliw, King of Glywyseg to the west at Newport. This led to a dispute which was eventually settled amicably. Gwynlliw even sent his son Cadoc to the monastery. He became one of the major Saints in the Welsh Church.

The discovery of a silver bowl, dated to about 500AD with the Chi Rho symbol scratched on the base, gives weight to the belief that the Caerwent area has been Christian from the late Roman period. Before coming under the influence of the See of Llandaff, Caerwent was probably the site of a post Roman Bishop, ministering to the Romano-British who had

been Celtic Silures and were turning into the Welsh.

Thus, it is appropriate that St Stephens consists of much reused Roman material, building on the Roman experience in more ways than one. In the porch are two Roman stones, one called the Silurum Stone dedicated to the Pro Consul Paulinus on his departure in 202AD. The other is a pedestal of a statue to the god Mars. Many relics from the various religions of the Roman period have been exposed in Caerwent. The most interesting, because it was obviously from a non-Roman school of sculpture, was a small Celtic deity, which has been linked to a healing shrine.

Leaving St Stephens, go north across the cross roads to the site of the Northgate of the town. Alongside the gate is the Northgate pub which does good food and drink, during normal opening hours. You may need to visit the Northgate because the next two miles is alongside the **A48**. The M4 has taken most of the through traffic from the A48 and walking

is relatively easy, the verges are wide with a good footpath. George Borrow wrote "the country between Caerwent and Chepstow is delightfully green, but somewhat tame". The same comment is true today. It is obvious that you are now in Lowland Britain. The landscape could be England and the domination of arable agriculture is obvious. In the distance you see the higher wooded slopes running from Wentwood to Chepstow, a vista which pleases the eye and lifts the heart.

As you walk along the A48 you are walking through a palimpsest of history. Successive **layers of history** being laid on a pre Celtic foundation, the road is on the route of a Roman road, but the landscape is older. As you approach the village of Crick, you pass on the left a **Bronze Age tumulus**, just inside the boundary of RAF Caerwent. This is one of the largest tumuli in Monmouthshire; it is one of a series of tumuli in the lowlands. Along the ridge to the west are three other barrows overlooking the Gwent levels. It has been

proposed that the kerbing evident around the circumference of the tumulus may have its origin in a crude circular structure dating from the Late Neolithic Period. No one has yet drawn the parallel with the ring cairn on Gray Hill.

Margaret Gelling, the renowned authority on place name studies, suggests that place names like Creech, Crich, Crouch and Cricket St Thomas have their origin in the proto-Welsh word "Crug" meaning hill, mound or tumulus. Thus the village name Crick is probably derived from the Tumulus in RAF Caerwent. The importance of the site perhaps having been burned into folk memory. The alternative explanation that it is a corruption of "Creek" does not bear serious consideration. Locally, Creeks are called Pills as in Magor Pill. The word Pill coming from the Welsh, Pwll meaning hollow, inlet or creek.

Passing under the disused branch railway line to the base you enter **Crick**. Architecturally, Crick is a village that would not be out of

place in the Cotswolds. Despite its English appearance, Crick was the site of St Nedyn's chapel(yet again another Celtic saint). To the north of the chapel site was a medieval moated grange. In 1250 Sir William Dernford held Crick as half a Welsh knight's fee under the Lordship of Chepstow, his house probably at the Farm called Ty Mawr(Big House)was the manorial centre.

Passing under the M4 you continue along the A48 towards Chepstow. The A48 is not now a busy road and there is an adequate pavement alongside it. The road climbs up from Crick with woods on each side. Just as the woods end on your left is yet another **tumulus**, hidden behind some houses. The scenery consists of rolling farmland fringed to the north by the wooded hills which are the south eastern slopes of the Wentwood ridge and St Pierre Wood.

About a mile from Crick you come to Parkwall Roundabout. The A48 takes the left hand fork to Pwll Meyric and Chepstow. On

the roundabout is a restaurant, this provides overnight accommodation and food from 7.30 am(1997).To the left of the restaurant, past the Garden centre, half hidden by a boarding, is a footpath signpost waymarked **St Pierre Church**. Following the sign leads to a large wrought iron gateway, this was the western entrance to St Pierre Park. The official footpath goes through the gap in the railings to the left of the gate.

Borrow claimed the landscape in this area was tame, here in St Pierre Park, extending to 200acres,it is manicured. It is a manmade landscape that has matured with a diversity of trees and it contains a large ornamental lake. It is now a famous golf course, but originally was a knights fee held in the 12th century by Roger de St Pierre, hence the name. By the end of the 15th century it was owned by a branch of the Morgan family of Tredegar Park, near Newport. Their house is now the St Pierre Golf and Country Club, your fellow traveller Archdeacon Coxe stayed there in 1798.If you have the money or desire you can

follow his example because it provides excellent accommodation.

The owners of St Pierre have co-operated with the Monmouthshire County Council over public access to the footpaths through the park. It is expected that their co-operation and understanding are not abused. From the gate the path runs easterly towards the large pond .At the pond it turns right towards the house and church.

The small and ancient church is basically Norman, being the chapel attached to the lord's habitation. The church has two early 13th century sepulchral slab s to members of the St Pierre family, as well as to the later Lewis family. From the church the path runs eastwards toward **Mathern** There are two ponds to the east of the church, the path goes between them across the course to wooden "Kissing gate" at the corner of a field at ST518906.Crossing the Golf Course you should be remember it is a Golf Course and do not disturb the players.

From the Kissing gate the Celtic Way follows the edge of a large water filled field boundary. Above the field you can just see **Moynes Court** on your left. Alongside the three gabled building are the remains of a partly ditched mound, which may be the site of the castle of Sir Bogo de Knovil who held Mathern in the 13th century. In a booklet on the Life of St Tewdric, on sale in Mathern Church, it is noted that the ditch is on the inside of the bank. This suggests an alternative origin as 'a "Causewayed Camp" of the Neolithic period.

The slope of the ground hides the site of the possible moat, and indeed much of Moynes Court. The manor of Moynes Court was created by the Lords of Chepstow who had cast their eyes on the Episcopal property. The manor was in existence in 1254 and eventually passed to the Morgans of Pencoed, who in turn sold it to the Lewis family of St Pierre.

The path follows the Moynes Court boundary around to the left. At the field gate you take

the right hand fork, the path runs towards **Mathern Church** on your right among a clump of trees. It is best to keep to the path because in wet weather the low ground becomes water-logged. The evidence of land drainage is all around. Not far to the south is **St Pierre Pill** (Pill is the local name for a creek), which was a large expanse of water. It has been suggested that at one time the Pill extended over the water meadows up to the church.

The footpaths here through the water meadows are well waymarked. At the field end ignore the footpath to Moynes Court and go through the gate into the lane leading to the church. Below the church the lane runs up the hill to the east side of the church. A right hand fork takes you up some ancient looking stone steps to the back of the church. The large building behind the church is **Mathern Palace**, for a long time a residence of the Bishops of Llandaff.

Mathern, according to tradition became a possession of the see of Llandaff. Llandaff

cathedral is two miles from Cardiff city centre and is the centre of the diocese of the same name .At one time the diocese covered most of south east Wales-Thus it was only natural in the 6th century that Meyric, son of St Tewdric,s hould grant the church and land to Llandaff. Tewdric had been a king in south Wales but had given up his throne and had gone to live the life of a hermit at Tintern. His quiet life was shattered by a Saxon invasion. He reluctantly took command of the army and defeated the Saxons in a battle on the banks of the Wye. Mortally wounded he was brought for cleansing in a holy well, now known as St Tewdrics Well.

He died of his wounds and a church was built on the place he died, it became to be known Merthyr Tewdric (The burial place of Tewdric). Tewdric by virtue of being a Christian and having died in battle against the then heathen English, naturally became a Saint of the Welsh Church. It is a tribute to his fame that on the arrival of the Normans the dedication did not change. In the fullness of

time Tewdric was accepted as a saint by the Church of England. By the Middle Ages the Merthyr Tewdric became known as Mathern, best translated as Ma Teyrn(The place of a king).The story begs many questions but the church exists and the palace of the Bishops of Llandaff.

The current church, dedicated to St Tewdric, is probably the fourth on the site. It is a beautifully proportioned church and for the area quite large. Its quality and size are due to the fact that the Bishops of Llandaff held much of the parish, before and after the Norman conquest, and that the church was built on Episcopal land. It has an interior of 13th century date. The side aisles and tower are later probably 15th century .The church survived Victorian "Restoration" and the **grave of Tewdric** can be seen in the Chancel. The church contains the burials of several of the Bishops of Llandaff, as well as members of local gentry families.

In its way Mathern has the same sense of place, you feel at Gray Hill. Mathern Church and Palace sit on a low hill surrounded by trees separated from Moynes Court by water meadows. On an autumn morning with mist covering the water-meadows you can almost see the barges bringing the body of St Twedric for burial.

At the front gate of the church, turn left towards a road junction, opposite the junction is a farmhouse called Innage .From there take a footpath signposted **Bulwark** .Just after the farm buildings another path crosses the Bulwark footpath, take the right hand fork. Follow this well marked footpath as it runs through the fields to Junction 22 at the **Old Severn Bridge**.

You may wish to visit **St Tewdric's Well**, before going to Chepstow. At Innage farm carry on up the road to the left. Just before the M4,the well is on the left hand side of the road. Wells were important as religious sites in the pre Christian period. The Celts

venerated many wells and the Cult of the Holy Well can be traced back at least to them. The arrival of Christianity lead to a conscious decision by the church to include Wells in the process of conversion. Thus many pre Christian Well cults were adapted to suit the new faith. The story of St Tewdric being brought to the well to wash his wounds may hide a process of adapation of the existing well.

On a more mundane level, those in need of modern comfort can walk under the M4 and a hundred yards up the road on the right is the Millers Arms Pub. On leaving the pub retrace your steps back under the motorway. After about fifty yards, you see on the left a **fingerpost marked Thornwell**, you can follow this across the fields to the Severn Bridge.

In this area the footpaths and stiles are particularly well marked and made. As you near the bridge, the landscape becomes grimmer on your left is the Severn Bridge

Industrial Estate. At the end of the footpath is a large underpass under the motorway leading to the estate. Cross the small road running through the underpass and another path runs along the bottom of the motorway embankment, this leads to **the footway over the Severn Bridge**.

You now have a serious choice, the walk should not be undertaken without planning. Once over the bridge you are a long way from a major town .It may be best to stop overnight in Chepstow and start afresh in the morning.

To get to **Chepstow** go through the underpass, which is a surreal experience. Once through the underpass you see on your left the abandoned Thornwell farmhouse. Thornwell was a part of Mathern parish but is now a dormitory estate, mainly for Bristol. During the building of the estate in 1990 two **burial mounds** were discovered, one Neolithic and the other Bronze Age. They are located at ST539917, on the corner of Fountain Way

surrounded by a wooden fence. The spot is marked by a large tree.

They are not on the highest point of the landscape, but are located in a small valley overlooking the Severn Estuary. Their location overlooks the **natural crossing point** of the Severn. The tomb is alongside the Old Severn Bridge, the New Severn Bridge is visible in the distance and between the two, are the sites of the ferries at Old and New Passage and the pumping station for the Severn Tunnel. It is even reported that in the nineteenth century drovers taking cattle to London would swim them across at low tide. **The Neolithic tomb** is an example of the Severn Cotswold style, which can be found along the Severn and in the Cotswolds, with outliers in the Black Mountains. Until it was found the type was unusual in Monmouthshire.

The site may have been important because the location was reused in the Bronze Age. Two **Early Bronze Age cist burials** were found close to the main chamber .These contained

the remains of two men. Alongside, but unexcavated is a mound classified as a Bronze Age cairn. It is tempting to identify continuity of occupation on what was a strategic crossing of the Severn.

To get to Chepstow you can walk up Thornwell Road which runs through the estate and leads eventually into Chepstow. There is also the "Scenic Route" which has the advantage of passing an **Iron Age Camp**. Portions of this path are lonely. As you leave the underpass, turn sharp right along a footpath over a rough field. This leads up to a road, turn right and follow the footpath fingerpost at the edge of the sports field. This runs up the Wye along the outside edge of the housing estate. At ST542917, a stile leads down across the fields to the river. This path goes under the railway by an arch, the railway was the South Wales Railway, designed by Brunel. After the arch the path turns left and follows the River. Just at this point it can be wet, even flooded after a high tide. The views on the Wye make it worthwhile. However,

soon you climb back up to the path alongside the estate.

The path runs along a back lane to Victoria road, where you turn left and after about twenty yards a narrow entrance on the right takes the path towards Chepstow. At ST538927 is what appears to be a park. It is in fact the Bulwarks, an Iron Age Promontory Fort high above the Wye. Its banks and ditches are covered in scrubland. Situated in the middle of a housing development it is one of the larger forts in the county.

The next portion above **Beaufort Quarry** and alongside an industrial estate is bleak, but compensated by an occasional glimpse of the Wye. The last portion of the footpath before the road is pleasant and wooded, down below you can see the remains of the old shipyards set up in the First War to compensate for losses suffered in submarine warfare. Chepstow was an important port and had had a long tradition of shipbuilding going back to the Middle Ages.

The footpath ends at Wye Crescent and at the end of Wye Crescent, turn left into Hardwick Road. This estate located outside the **town walls** of Chepstow, around a small valley leading down to the Wye, was built for the shipyard workers. At the end of the estate turn right toward the town wall. This is known as the Port Wall and was built in the 13th century. The road runs down the hill to the town.

Chepstow is a pleasant town, which has grown with opening of the Severn Bridge. It is a quintessential Border Town, located in Wales' Celtic roots in the Bulwark Fort, the town established by the French(Normans), it thinks of itself English, much of its traditional dialect being similar to that of Gloucestershire. Its picturesque situation on the side of a declivity sloping down to the Wye has made it a popular tourist centre and dormitory town.

The old town is situated inside the Port Wall. Some of this wall was demolished to build the Chepstow Inner Relief Road, but the sacrifice was worth it, because the reduction in traffic has transformed Chepstow town centre. It is a pleasure to walk down the steep main street to the river. The medieval town plan is evident as you walk down through the town later development mostly complementing the townscape. Chepstow town centre has a varied range of traditional shops.

It may be unique in Britain in having three names, Its earliest recorded name was the Norman French "Striguil", named after the bend in the river Wye. The Welsh name is Cas Gwent(The castle of Gwent) Chepstow castle being the first castle in Gwent. Chepstow itself means Market in Anglo Saxon, a role it carries out today as a small market town.

The **castle** presents a picture of a feudal fortress almost unequalled in the country. The best view is from the Gloucester side of the

Wye. It hangs off a limestone cliff above the Wye, the masonry is mainly limestone and it is hard to tell where the cliff ends and the castle begins. The castle was started in 1067 and the keep, built by William Fitz Osbern, is one of the oldest stone buildings in Wales.

Chepstow is a good place to start or finish a section of the Celtic Way. It has a wide range of accommodation from a **Youth Hostel** to quality Hotels. It is also a good centre for public transport with a Bus Station and a Railway Station. George Borrow, in 1854, ended his tour of Wales here He took advantage of the hotels and the railway. He had dinner in the principal inn, and after which passed his time until his train at ten o'clock at night with his feet placed against the side of the grate drinking wine and singing Welsh songs. You could do worse than to follow his example. But you might need to catch an earlier train

Additional Information:

I wish to express my gratitude to the Officers of the Countryside Unit of the Planning Department of the Monmouthshire County Council, for their guidance on the footpaths and rights of way in the County.

Public Transport

Caerleon is accessible by public transport from Newport. Newport has a mainline Train Station and a good Bus Station

Cardiff Central Railway Station - 01222 227281

Valley Lines - 01222 231978 - local rail service which runs between Caerphilly and Cardiff.

Tourist information

Cwmearn Visitor Centre - Near Cross Keys, Gwent - 01495 272001

Magor Granada Services - Junction 23 - 01633 881122

Caerleon, Ffwrwm, High Street - 01633 430777

Monmouth - 01600 713898

Chipping Sodbury - The Clock Tower - 01454 888686

Centres

Caerphilly Castle - 01222 883143

Short Terminology

BARROW A mound of earth or heap of stones forming ancient or prehistoric graves

CAIRN A rounded or conical heap of stones erected as a monument, usually sepulchral.

TUMULUS A round mound of earth, usually covering a grave.

MOTTE A large mound of earth and stone, normally with a timber tower, forming the strong point of earth and timber castle. Introduced to Britain by the Normans after 1066 they were relatively cheap and easy to build.

Handing on:

Now is the time to cross the Old Severn Bridge and enter England. The bridge crossing is not an unpleasant walk, nor unfrequented. The walkway is also used by cycles. Allow $\frac{3}{4}$ hour to cross the bridge itself. Immediately upon the other side you will pick up way-marking for the Jubilee Way which is the first

stage of the route across Wiltshire to Avebury.

The Jubilee Way is shown on Ordnance Survey maps and a free leaflet showing the route in more detail is available from the Tourist Information centre in Chipping Sodbury, where the Jubilee Way ends. The tourist office will also provide an accommodation list for the area. To leave Chepstow in the morning and arrive in Chipping Sodbury in the evening is a good day's walking where one has moved not only into another country, but also into a different landscape. The Jubilee Way was devised in 1985 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Ramblers' Association. It was created to use existing paths to link Britain's long-distance footpaths. The part we use is the Northavon section, which is 16 miles long and links Offa's Dyke to the Cotswold Way.^{xiv}

This is an old Roman Road linked with the Via Julia which ran from Bath to Carmarthen. Walks in Northavon by Northavon District Council.

10 LINKING THE WAYS

Dyrham to Avebury - 33 ½ miles

Additional 23 miles from Severn bridge to

Dyrham: Severn Bridge to Chipping

Sodbury on the Jubilee Way - 16 miles;

Cotswold Way to Dyrham - 7 miles;

Maps: Landranger 172 Bristol and Bath;

Landranger 173, Swindon and Devizes;

Pathfinders 1168 Chippenham and Castle

Coombe and 1169 Marlborough Downs.

Stages:

1. Dyrham to Castle Coombe - 9 miles
2. Castle Coombe to Kingston St Michael Church - 6 miles
3. Kingston St Michael Church to Foxham Church- 6 ½ miles
4. Foxham Church to Highway Hill - 5 ½ miles
5. Highway Hill to Avebury. - 6 ½ miles

Highlights: Lugbury long barrow; Castle Coombe; churches at West Kington, Kington St. Michael, Kington Langley; Avon Weir; Spirt Hill; Highway Hill; Windmill Hill; Avebury Great Stone Circle.

Introduction

From the Old Severn Bridge Crossing follow the Jubilee Way - opened to commemorate the anniversary of the founding of the Ramblers' Association, This runs to the centre of Chipping Sodbury where the route then picks up the Cotswold Way to Dyrham. From Dyrham it is possible to leave the Cotswold Way and follow the Celtic Way. It runs directly east across the grain of the land to Castle Coombe, Kington St Michael, then through Foxham over to Hilmarton and the path to Windmill Hill - in site of the White Horse and Downs at Cherhill, in

site of Avebury and the route to Stonehenge.

The Jubilee Way^{xv} and the Cotswold Way^{xvi} are described by the appropriate leaflet and books, respectively, available at local tourist offices such as Chipping Sodbury. It is also possible to follow both by the way-marking and Landranger map 172 for the Bristol and Bath area.

Once leaving these way-marked and established routes the walking is on tracks across Wiltshire, by-ways, bridleways, footpaths, and occasionally, quiet lanes. Paths across fields are generally way-marked near their point of entry and exit. When through the middle of a ploughed or seeded area look for the gap in the hedge across the field to see which way to go. The route passes through a well-husbanded part of England, which combines tradition and modernity. Parts

of the walking can be exposed in wind and rain, but walkers are rarely more than half an hour from shelter. Although never far from the white noise of the nearby M4, the route touches on beautiful hamlets and includes some peaceful tracks. There are several villages on the route, most offer refreshment at inns - Kington St Michael, Yatton Keynell and Foxham have general stores. Accommodation is available at some inns and B&B close to the route, and the facilities of Chippenham and Calne are a short bus journey from the route.

Stage 1 - Dyrham to Castle Coombe - 9 miles

Starting Point:

Leaving the village and the Cotswold Way at the finger-post crossroads, walk up the hill for about ½ mile. Go past Sands Farm entrance and the Dyrham

Estate high stone walls to your left, until reaching a signed PFP and stone steps to a stile crossing into the estate. Take the clear path through new tree planting to a strange arrangement of fencing which allows you into the field on the right where the path continues. Follow it until it comes out - by way of a very attractive set of steps in a curved wall - next to the very busy A46 link road to the M4. Cross the road carefully to the PFP sign immediately opposite.

Take the footpath across the field to West Littleton. At the time of walking, the direction was indicated by flattened earth, but it goes straight across the middle. On reaching the second field a row of trees and church spire on the skyline ahead show the direction to West Littleton. Cross the second field and then a stone stile into the third field. The footpath is not visible but aim for the point where

two walls meet. Back on a visible path make for the point in the wall where there is a gap in the middle. Cross the gap and then a wooden stile with a yellow arrow. The route climbs a slope alongside a hedge to the right. There are **good views** from the top of the hill of a farmhouse and distant hills.

Cross a ladder stile and then go through gate into a pasture field. Aim for the small gate opposite.. This leads to a hollow track lined by stone walls running past a garden with a tennis court. The church's spire is an unusual one and surmounted by a cockerel above four balls. A gap in the stone wall leads to the graveyard.

The path shortly comes out in **West Littleton** opposite a telephone box.

Turn right and follow the road around until reaching a lane leading off to the

after a letter box. Take the lane which soon turns into a track of yellow stony earth. Pass a **fortified barn**. The route follows a long open and unbroken trackway for almost 2 miles. The route is edged by drystone walling and the views are superb.

There are pheasants and their feeding stations at points adjacent to the path and it will be unusual to not startle a few of these noisy birds.

After a mile and a half a large farmhouse comes into view on the right above the track. Walk past the entrance to this and take the metalled path bearing left and follow it downhill.

The route now approaches the Broadmead Brook. It is possible to pick up the footpath which follows it here, but it is simpler to follow the metalled track to the point 200 yards ahead where it comes out

on a small unclassified road. Turn right downhill and cross the road where the green PFP sign for the Broadmead Brook footpath points to entry to the field below the road. Take the ladder stile (yellow arrow) down into the field. Take a look back at the stone reinforcements supporting the road wall.

The route follows the **Broadmead Brook** footpath. Go through an iron gate; you can hear a rush of water on the right hand side. Pass through a field walk alongside the stream. The route continues for over a mile through fine meadow and pasture.

At time of walking there were ewes and tups sharing the field and hillside. The tups can be very protective of their territory and ewes so give them space.

The footpath comes out at the edge of the village of **West Kington** and cottages can

been seen on the hillside to the left. The path goes through an iron gate then passes along a lane by the gardens of the cottages for 200 yards before reaching a metalled unclassified road. The route does not go into the village so turn right up the hill - signed Drifton Hill higher up the lane - for about 200 yards until reaching a signed bridleway on the right just after the yellow sand bunker.

Follow this attractive bridleway, which has good views over the valley as it runs to the right above the road. The bridleway soon becomes a narrow path along the edge of a ploughed field. Come to the end of the bridleway and cross a small lane then take the footpath sign ahead This path becomes a proper bridleway again. Walk straight across and through some wooden gates then a large field. Visible are some houses to the right. Follow the path around, getting glimpses of the

village church tower to the right plus some farm buildings. When reaching a point where there are three gates close together, take the second gate (wooden) to visit the church of **West Kington**, which, as the halfway point, is a beautiful place to take a break. To reach the church cross a tiny field, with a drystone wall. Go through little wooden gate to church car park.

From the church the route goes from the car park through the stud farm to the unclassified road. To do this, from the car park turn right along track passing horses and stables on both sides. Walk straight on. Follow the track around completely . It will veer to right to the road. Go through a gate with sign back to the church. Come out onto B road with a small lodge-type house on left. Go left onto the metalled lane and follow it round

Follow this road to the left for 400 yards to the sign for **Nettleton** village, then take the first turning left.

(It is possible to reach this same point on footpaths through the field by avoiding the gate to the church and taking the third gate and following the footpath across the fields until it comes out at the same point in Nettleton Green.)

Passing houses, follow the road as it bears right into Long Leaze and continue until coming to a crossroad. There is a PFP opposite but there is also a rope barrier all around the field so do not take this. The route takes the Burton road for about 200 yards until it turns to the left. Do not follow it any further. Instead, continue on an unsigned metalled road which starts straight (ignore PFP signs) then curves to the right past **Manor Farm**.

Follow the road until a right-angled bend where there are 2 aluminium gates. This is the route to Luggbury Long Barrow. Take the left-hand gate and pass through the muddy entrances to the fields and another gate in quick succession. Keep to the left of the stone wall and aim for the copse ahead. On reaching the copse it is entered through hunting gates. Pass through the copse and out into a field. **Luggbury Long Barrow** is on the left - a fifty foot long raised grass mound with a sarsen stone at end.

The barrow was excavated in the 19th century. A central burial revealed a single crouched skeleton with a short flint spear. Four additional chambers were found later containing 26 skeletons. It is an evocative site and standing beside the barrow leads the visitor to consider the kind of conflicts and society which left these dramatic and enduring remains. There is a cromlech at

the eastern end of the barrow: two support stones and a fallen cap-stone, all three stones are similar to the sarsen stones found at Marlborough, some distance away.

Leaving the Long barrow, continue on the path eastwards to the edge of the field. The metalled road ahead is the **Fosseway**.

(When looking for the route we considered three alternatives here - the path through the field opposite - at time of walking there was no stile and the gate was tied several times with knotted string.(Checked in January, and still the same, except leaning less securely in its gap). To the right about 200 yards down the road past the copse on the left is the back entrance to Manor House Golf Club from which it is possible - eventually - to pick up the Macmillan Way into Castle Coombe at the far side of the Golf Course,

but although a PFP runs through the golf course I do not think this is the place to access it, or the third option, which is the one chosen and described below).

Coming out of the Long Barrow field turn right on the Fosseway and follow it for about half a mile. At the time of walking only one car came past, but be alert and walk to face any possible oncoming traffic. On the whole, because it is a Roman Road, the visibility is good. On approaching Fossway Farm Hotel and Restaurant -tea-shop refreshments usually available here - take turning to the left down a steep tree-lined lane for about ½ mile to the complex of attractive houses at the bottom of the hill where you are greeted by a no parking or turning sign. Passing the houses go through a remarkable wrought iron high swing gate with its own roof, cross the Broadmead Brook and continue on the track as it

swings around to cross the **Bybrook** by a beautiful stone bridge. Ornamental signs indicate the way ahead through the golf course. Do not go along the tarmac track alongside the brook The path rises with the ground to join the **Macmillan Way** just as it enters some trees. Follow the signs to a stile to the right. Take this and follow the track where it runs past the high stone wall of the Manor House Hotel and offers lovely views of the church. Turn right at the small bridge and take the track - which passes under part of the hotel and comes out in the centre of Castle Coombe village at the Market Cross..

The village, apart from being a tourist spot in season, has inns and a shop. We enjoyed the cream tea and cider in the Castle Inn.

Stage 2 - Castle Coombe to Kingston St
Michael - 6 miles

The whole of this section is evidently horse country. One the evidence of the many herds of cattle we met while walking it, this stage is also beef country.. It also has a lovely ledge walk at the beginning.

Starting Point:

Beginning at the market cross in Castle Coombe village turn uphill and continue until reaching the museum, an isolated building about 500 yards out of the village. Immediately opposite is a steeply rising stony bridleway through trees signed Upper Castle Coombe. Take it and follow the deep path edged with rocky erosion until it comes out alongside first one, then a second barrier on the right hand side of the track. Go through the second right-hand barrier. You are entering a very attractive conservation

area and the ledge path above the **Bybrook Valley**.

Both the Broadmead and ByBrook flow into the Wiltshire Avon.

Continue for a mile along this beautiful woodland path - which is also part of the **MacMillan Way**. It continues sometimes in mixed woodland and sometimes in open hillside. Other small paths run into and from it but ignore these. Old stone gateposts are passed at various points.

One highlight to watch out for is the Loch Ness Monster Tree - a fallen tree which has definitely had some monstrous face-lifting tree surgery.

The path begins to descend (close to a sewage treatment unit) into **Long Dean** where a cluster of attractive houses form around a choice of lanes at the bottom. Go

left past Rose Cottage for 150 yards and come out on a very quiet lane.

(Opposite is an entrance to a signed bridleway which goes around the foot of West Yatton Down. There are also warning signs about keeping to the path. It was tempting to use this track, but at time of walking the path was almost unusable due to grazing cattle, mainly bullocks, who had worked their way through the valley floor and churned it into a quagmire underfoot. Tracks above the path suggest that walkers have had to walk a higher route to find decent footage in spite of warning notices not to do so.. This route leads through to Hammerdown Woods and comes out at Kents Bottom which would then involve some busy road walking, or in Yatton Keynell where it was not possible to pick up the footpath. Such were the deterrents to ease of foot and mind that we decided to take the route

along the lanes to Yatton Keynell instead until the bridleway is less obstructed).

To continue, go right then take the lane up the steep hill through the trees of **Chapel Wood** to the right. Follow it for just over a mile to the hamlet of **West Yatton**. At the crossroads take the left-hand lane for Yatton Keynell. Follow the lane for again just over a mile. There is a good view of the valley and hills to the west.

Entering **Yatton Keynell** there is a P. O. store at the road junction, and an inn (The Bell). Go right in the village, then take the first road right after 100 yards. Ignore the first signed footpath on the right and take Grove Lane 50yards later on the right. Follow the lane around past the duck pond - filled with raucous ducks who 'laugh' at pedestrians - and continue as it leaves the houses and becomes the track to Grove Farm. The first way-marked footpath runs

straight across the fields to Kington St Michael. The route however does not use this path but the next signed footpath 100 yards later on the left.

Take this and cross the stile and the ploughed field making for the gap in the hedge. At the second field do the same. The third field is pasture at time of writing, and full of feeding rabbits when walked at dusk. Keep to the hedge to the left of the field and cross the stile into the next field. Keep following this path until it comes out across a field onto the narrow lane to **Easton Piercy**. Go right and follow the lane around, ignoring all footpath signs, until a left fork signed to Priory Farm. Take this fork and come out after 500 yards in front of the farm. There is a good view of the area from here. There are indications of its previous importance: the farm is on what was once priory land, and there is the site of a

medieval village about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the NW. Whatever the past significance of this village both Kington St Michael and Kington Langley (long ley) are spread over a large area and possess churches and farms of some substance.

At **Priory Farm**, facing south-east is a signed footpath to Kington St Michael Church. Take this across the field downhill and cross over the small footbridge and pass through a tiny copse and aim to the right of the football goalpost as you climb the small hill going towards some grey houses. Cross **Grove Lane** to the PFP sign and open (if you can) the aluminium gate into the fields which goes along the backs of village houses and almshouses by means of stiles and gates until it comes out at the imposing **Church of St Michael and All Angels** in the middle of the village.

This is a good point to break the journey.
There is a shop and inn here (The Jolly Huntsman).

Stage 3 - Kington St Michael Church to Foxham Church - 6 miles

This is a relatively straightforward walk across fields and bridleways. The bridleway from Avon Weir is a wide walking passage fit for a king.

Starting point:

Leave village going to the right along the main road. At the end of the village, pass the last house - Hill House - and, taking great care because of the traffic, walk along the main road (no pavement) for about 30 yards and cross to FP sign on left. Enter the field.

(The way ahead is not clear - the obvious and visible choice is to go straight ahead to the gap in the hedge. If you choose this you will need then to follow the right

hand hedge in the next field until you reach the farm storage buildings. Then aim for the crest of the rising ground ahead. As you reach the crest the way ahead is clear - go to the wooden open field entrance with the PFP sign).

The way as shown on the map suggests aiming instead for the top hedge and following this until you see a large straw bale (currently sprouting grass so difficult to pick out from a distance) which may denote the way into the adjacent field. Then aim for the **storage buildings** and take the track into the next field and aim for the **crest** of the rising ground and the field's clear exit.

Here the route approaches the A350 - the busy dual carriageway to Junction 17 of the M4. There is some B&B close by which is well-placed for the walking. Cross very carefully and head for the

signed track directly opposite which is heading east and towards a hill.

This is a reasonably pleasant bridleway type of path - rutted and hedged. It runs straight then tends around to the left. As it approaches the base of the hill it swings more to the left and there is a fork - a small path and old green painted metal gate on your right. Take this gate and aim for the left hedge and gate gap into the left hand field. This tends to be a cattle field and was very churned up when walked. Follow the right hand hedge up and as it opens more to the right go straight up to the stile 50 yards ahead. Continue straight on and up - less steeply now - to the next stile into a meadow-type field and follow the path to a stile and out onto the lane at **Newlands Green** in **Kington Langley**.

You are on Day's Lane - a long lane. Turn right, not hard right into Ashes Lane, but middle right and follow this lane, which

passes the Hit and Miss Inn if you need a break. On coming out on Church Road, turn left and follow this to Lower Common and the main B4122 road.

Opposite is the **Great House**, a Cheshire Home. The signed bridleway lies just to the right of it. Cross the road and enter the bridleway flanked by two stone gateposts. Pass a little lodge-type house. At time of walking - just after the storms of early January '98 - this **boggy bridleway** was deep in water draining off the crop field to its right. Mercifully, after 400 yards you leave it. There are 2 more stone gateposts and waymark blue and yellow arrows which point right to the next field. Go to your right and walk along the fenced left edge of the field passing an ornamental pond (the map shows three but I only saw one) in the adjacent gardens and some large pines. Pylons are to your right and they will be with you for most of this part

of the walking towards Sutton Lane.

Sidney's Woods is off to your right. Spirt Hill is in the far distance.

Here the path on the maps and the route on the land do not seem to agree. The bridleway on the map goes over to the right to the top corner of Sidney's Woods and doubles back to **Bull's Elms**, the prominent group of trees to your left. On the ground the gaps in hedges and occasional track line in fields suggest that the used route is to follow these and the pylon line over to Bull's Elms on the left skyline. Aim to the right of Bull's Elms. Beyond Bull's Elms there is a farm storage building. The pylons are on your right. Take a line from the last pylon as you go to the right of Bull's Elms. Aim for a gap in the hedge, straight across the field. The path isn't obvious. As you do so, Bull's Elms and storage building pass to your left.

At about 2 o'clock there is a **stile between two trees** in the hedge. Cross to the stile by the right of the two trees. It has a white waymark on it. Straight across, directly opposite is another stile - white waymark arrow again - you come to what must be, to my ignorant eyes, **a large warren** - about 20 or 30 holes in the ground -. Cross the mini-estate of bunny holes to another way-marked stile and into a square-ish pasture field with an aluminium gate to the right. (You leave the white waymarking now - that path goes off to a stile in the left corner of the field towards Sutton Benger). There is an obvious line across the next field to another aluminium gate with adjacent wooden fencing but no waymarking. From here to Sutton Lane is straightforward along a pleasant bridleway which passes under the pylon line and comes out on **Sutton Lane**

opposite Langley Burrell Farm with the signed bridleway to the weir and Avon and Foxham straight ahead. The difficult part has been done. The next 2 miles or so to Foxham is straightforward and extremely pleasant walking.

Take the **Weir bridleway** passing the farm complex with its dark sheds on your right. Visitors to the weir and River Avon fishers use this bridleway so you may find the occasional car bumping its way along as far as the Avon. After this is very peaceful.

After ½ mile you will hear and then see the **River Avon**. Both the river and then the weir are impressive and beautiful, marred only by the inevitable fly-tipper who seems only to see something lovely to want to spoil it.

Cross the **Avon Weir** and continue along the bridleway which curls around towards

the railway bridge which carries the Great Western high speed trains.

Under the railway bridge the walking opens out into a **long mile of broad and beautiful bridleway** - over 20 feet wide for most of the way with occasional great shade trees. There is no interruption along this part of the route. To complete it you pass over a stile and, as the bridleway eventually narrows, you come out at the **West End** of the attractive and meandering village of Foxham.

From West End to the village centre by the church and Foxham Arms is about a mile along the very quiet tarmac road. (As you go along it, about 200 yards after leaving the bridleway, on your left is a footpath sign across a debris covered field. This footpath exists on the map but I failed to find it. You can surmount the locked gate and make your way to the far

corner where boards bridge the hedge. The path - in theory - crosses the field, hugging the hedges, to come out on the Dauntsey road. It is not significantly shorter, and, as far as I can see, is not marked at the other end although another PFP on the Dauntsey Road, which goes over to Christain Malford is signed and well-marked. It is an illustration of the way footpaths can be uniformly signed at the road but very different in their progress across the fields).

For ease and simplicity, follow the Foxham road, which is very quiet, until it comes out at **Foxham Church** and Foxham Arms. This is a good place to rest, look around, and get refreshment before the next part of the route over to Spirt Hill, where no refreshment is possible, and on to Hilmarton, which has a pub and possible accommodation.

Stage 4 - Foxham Church to Highway Hill - 6 miles

The route takes footpaths across fields crossing two small valleys and climbing onto Spirt Hill which rises between them. It is very atmospheric.

Starting point:

From the church go left along the village lane with common land edges for ½ mile. The land begins to rise. You pass the PFP to Foxham Locks. The handsome hill with Melsome and Avon Grove Woods is on your right. Follow the lane past Stockham Marsh Farm on the left and then Godsell Farm entrance and cottages on the right. On cresting the rise in the road you will see a PF sign to the left into a tempting field. Ignore it and take the bridleway sign to the right indicating the route across the fields to Spirt Hill, then Hilmarton.

Beacon Hill Option.

(This is not the recommended route but is mentioned because it may be attractive if you don't mind road walking and want to go over Beacon Hill directly to Highway. It is not a busy lane, but it does not qualify as a quiet walker's lane either. The attraction of the lane route is that it follows the old route up to Highway, going over **Beacon Hill**. Although not busy, it is used by local traffic so if you choose this option be prepared to walk for 2 miles with the probability of cars. From Beacon Hill, cross the A3102 road and take the Highway Road immediately opposite. Follow this for 1 mile to the straggling crossroads in the middle of nowhere, at OS SU033 752 where you join up with the main walking footpath which continues to Highway).

The Celtic Way continues on the **Bridleway route** which is very pleasant

and clearly marked until its slightly tricky moment at Spirt Hill.

Take the path downhill for 100 yards across the crop field to a small wooden gate. The handle is hard to find. Pushing works best. There is a clear path on the good left margin of the next field. Keep to the left hedge. The way through the next fields is separated from the rest of the field by posts and electric wire which keeps stock areas clear. Go to the next gate. Cross the flat field which has drainage equipment on it to a metal gate. Stockham Marsh Farm is on your right. There are **three tracks**. Take the one more or less straight ahead - currently there are arrows, perhaps home-made, indicating the route. Moving between 2 lines of wire and fence posts you are coming under the lee of Spirt Hill. Cross the first of three drainage brooks and come to a rusty large gate. Carry on to the

next drainage brook and a hunting gate. You are at the foot of the hill and it is very attractive here. Go through a new hunting gate. You are now climbing. At the next field entrance there is a hunting gate, white arrow way-mark and a **Beware of the Bull** sign. This is the sticky part.

The path curves to the right and there is an option to go around to the right but this is not the route. Head for the **thicket**. It is full of low-hanging small trees, more 'Beware' signs and notices about electrified fences. Other walkers have made a route which keeps to the far right of the thicket and comes out in the right corner of the field above. The correct way - if you can find it - aims at about 10 o'clock through the thicket to come out at the stile with the **white waymark arrow**. Cross this with some difficulty into the large crop field above. The route goes straight across this field to the gate-gap in

the hedge to the next and last field. Continue straight across this last field where the gate opposite, just to the right of the Leylandii garden hedge, leads onto the lane through Spirt Hill.

Spirt Hill has been a feature on the horizon for some time and is an interesting place - it seems quiet and unvisited. Our route takes the waymarked path directly **opposite** which will take us on a relatively problem-free route to Hilmarton.

Go into the way marked track to the right of **Leekshedge Farm**. There is a stile and white double way-mark. Take the fairly obvious path across the field to the aluminium fence and way-marked stile next to it. These stiles are a bit overgrown at the time of writing. Continue with hedge on right to next stile, then the next field, hedge on right to third stile. Cross

right into field. You are moving downhill. The line of direction is very clear. There is woodland $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to your right, and across the valley bottom you are aiming for a **lone farm building** (which looks fairly new or being restored) clearly opposite on the rising hillside.

Hilmarton Church is on the skyline immediately ahead and the Windmill Hill plateau beyond.

Go down to the **corner** of the field where the point where hedges converge at the **valley bottom**. Pass through small copse area and enter the large field with the conspicuous farm building with the track on the left leading off. Aim for the left track. You are going through what appears to be a cattle field - though they were safely tucked up in barns when I walked it.

Go through the gate and follow the very pleasant and straightforward track between two hedges as it rises and passes some farm buildings, then private gardens to come out on the main road through Hilmarton at its southern edge. Turn left and walk for 300 yards passing Manor House Farm and turn into the village by the church. You are on Church road. There is a large inn opposite which offers refreshment and accommodation.

Take Church Road, passing the imposing church on the left, and follow as it goes left into a 'no through road'. Pass some attractive old cottages. (There is a bridleway to Foxham on the left down a steep narrow lane. It comes out on the road to Highway). The Celtic Way route goes straight on and into Llammas Close past some new small houses.

At the end of the Close is a way-marked path. Cross the ivy-covered stile and take the path passing some large pines on the right and coming to some poplars on the left. Continue to a stile. Cross this into a field - usually cattle, but you can follow the left margin. On the left, after 200 yards, is an impressive **new wooden footbridge**. Cross this and enter some very attractive woodland. The path is currently well-cleared. You pass through a tunnel of trees for 300 yards before coming out at the corner of an enormous field.

This was apparently two fields, now merged. Your **landmark** for the route to take across this huge field is the two high and conspicuous trees ahead. Walk across the field - currently seeded grass - aiming for the centre of these two trees. The field abuts the Highway road although you cannot see that yet. When reaching the

trees you will see the far corner of the field. Aim for this. There are no hedges or stiles remaining at the corner. (It looks as if a land-change programme of some sort is going on here. Further back down the road is an attractive old farm complex currently being renovated by the North Wilts Conservation and Urban Design department, so maybe they know what is happening).

At the field's edge you meet a straggling cross-roads. Go left the right across the junction at O.S. SU033 752 and take the attractive and open lane across **Highway Common** to Highway.

In just over a mile the road curves to the right, passing close to what appears to have been the church at Highway, when there was a busy travellers' route over to Avebury. It now appears to be a private house. Opposite it - on your left - is

Highway Farm and a signed path onto Highway Hill.

Stage 5 - Highway Hill to Avebury - 6 ½ miles

The walking now leaves the lower farmland to follow a succession of bridleways onto the plateau which has Windmill Hill on its southern flank. You are away from habitation for about four miles of this route and it can be exposed in stormy weather.

Starting point:

Take the signed path to the left at Highway Farm and go past the farm buildings and take the metalled track up **Highway Hill**, which rises quickly. At a fork take a concrete road bearing sharply left uphill and into the trees. There is no confusion - the other option is clearly marked as a private road.

The concrete track continues to rise quickly. There is a small gorge in the woodland to your left. The track's surface can be slimy underfoot in wet weather. The track becomes a bridleway between 2 metal fences and a low hedge. There are views towards Cherhill with its monument and white horse on the right. You will have them with you for much of this part of the walking. You also pass a raised water tank in the field on your right.

On reaching a fork in the bridleways, ignore the one signed for Cherhill and take the unsigned track to the left with views of the plateau ahead. The track stays concrete underfoot for about 700 yards then becomes a bridleway. It continues in a straight line alongside a hedge coming down off the hill. At a T junction of bridleways - there is a blue arrow marker - go left and follow for ¼ mile along the rutted track, called

Yatesbury Lane on the relevant Pathfinder map. (You reach a bridleway which goes off from the right and is a shorter route to Windmill Hill, but it becomes a footpath across crop fields and at the time of walking there was nothing to indicate the way across. It may be easier in summer if a line is left across the crop).

Instead, continue on the same Yatesbury Lane bridleway. There is a straggling copse to your right for about ½ mile. Continue on this bridleway for just over a mile altogether. Views are opening out and you come to an unclear junction to the right opposite **two large trees** - sessile oaks. Check you are at the correct point - 074 741 - by looking out for an old wooden post on your right and, more visibly, check the oak trees on your left. One of them, the one opposite the junction, has a small metal square with

D16 on it. It is also a nice place to sit for a break - good views, good trees.

Take the unclear junction to the right and follow the rutted track for ¼ mile, keeping the field's edge to your right. It leads to another junction. Follow this straight on. In places it forms an attractive tunnel of trees and could be delightful in summer. You pass a gate and copses to the left. Continue for nearly ½ mile along the obvious bridlepath to where you come out at a junction of bridleways. Go right on a path which is rutted and open to the left and with a hedge to the right. It bears left after 100 yards. Follow for another 200 yards to an **overgrown bridleway** to the right. Take this and follow until it comes out on a yellowish earth trackway. There is way-marking at the next fork where the yellow track goes right to Yatesbury. Ignore this and follow the white arrow - O.S.077 723 - into a bridleway which has

fallen trees and undergrowth to negotiate at time of writing.

At the next junction of ways turn into the bridleway through the gate. There is a copse on the left. Follow the bridleway between two fences. It is tree-lined and has **new tree-planting** towards its end. Windmill Hill is ahead. At a gate you have a choice. You can go left or right to pick up the path over **Windmill Hill** and to the tumulus on top, or go straight over the stile ahead to cut straight up the hillside.

The path to Avebury is to the right. Follow this until a junction of paths - 083 724 - facing Cherhill. Turn left and follow the bridleway up the hill. You will pass a stile to the **summit**. Carry on down the track towards Avebury Trusloe. It is open track for about ¼ mile then becomes metalled. You have terrific views of the

area which is so rich in ancient sites and remains.

You are coming towards a farm. Before this there is a footpath through a field to the left directly to Avebury Trusloe but at time of writing was very wet underfoot. Instead **continue** on the metalled lane as it goes to the left towards the small village. There is B&B available here. From Avebury Trusloe to Avebury village and information complex is another mile. At the junction on Bray Street take the metalled lane to the left. After the village take a tarmac path again - with the characteristic white railings. This will bring you out in the churchyard at **Avebury**. From here you can visit the Tourist Complex, with its shop and café with very wholesome food. The car park is adjacent; the Keiller Museum is well worth a visit - Alexander Keiller, from the Marmalade family, bought several of the

ancient sites in the area and had them excavated. The complex is well worth a visit but the main reason for being here is the Stones of Avebury.

Various guides^{xvii} are available on the stones of Avebury, and they all stress is that Avebury's Great Stone Circle is one of the most impressive in the world. There is the Great Circle - built around 2500BC - and 2 other circles within the Great Circle. There are 2 stone rows (avenues) - Beckhampton and West Kennet - leading to it. At the end of the West Kennet avenue is the Sanctuary - stone and wood rings. Then, alone and utterly outlandish in this English landscape, is the inexplicable huge chalk mound of Silsbury Hill. A British pyramid or what? Compare it with other huge mound hills further down the route at Glastonbury, Burrowbridge, and Brent Tor and the Mynde in Caerleon.

As you take time to explore the circles and avenues you will see that missing stones have been replaced by markers - indication of a different set of priorities in the past, where these great stones were rooted up and smashed. Thankfully, many remain, and that it is possible to walk amongst them today is, I feel, a heritage worth passing on. If you have visited it the comparison with the great stone avenues at Carnac in Brittany is hard to avoid.

Additional information:

Tourist Information

Chipping Sodbury - The Clock Tower -
01454 888687

Thornbury - The Town Hall - 01454 281
638

Devizes - St John Street - 01380 729408

Avebury - The Great Barn - 01672
539425

Bristol - 01117 9260767

Salisbury - 01722 334956

Youth Hostel

Bath - 01225 465674

Salisbury - 01722 327572

Other Centres

DyrhamPark (National Trust) 01179
372501

Public Transport:

Badgerline Buses - 01179 553231

Dorset/Wiltshire Buses - Salisbury - 1722
336855

Train Enquiries - 0117 9294255

Handing on:

The walking now enters the heart of the
Celtic Way route: Megalithic Sites. Colin
Feltham has described a route from
Avebury to Stonehenge which is an
achievement in itself when the difficulties

because of the military presence in the
area of Salisbury Plain are considered.
The walking ahead to Stonehenge, and
then on the Glastonbury is a new
experience for us, but must once have
been one of the most travelled parts of
western Britain when one considers the
importance of the ancient sites in the area.
The next section begins at Avebury,
where this one ends.

11 MEGALITHIC SITES

**Avebury via Stonehenge to Cley Hill, near
Warminster - 60 miles.**

Landrangers 173, 183, 184

Stages:

1. Avebury to Devizes - 10 miles
2. Devizes to The Lavingtons (Ridgeway) - 11 miles
3. Ridgeway/A30 Junction to Shrewton - 9 miles
4. Shrewton to Stonehenge - 4 miles
5. Stonehenge to Berwick St James - 4 miles
6. Berwick St. James to Near Heytesbury - 12 miles
7. Near Heytesbury to Arn Hill, Warminster - 5 ½ miles
8. Arn Hill to Cley Hill - 4 ½ miles

Highlights:

Avebury; Silsbury Hill; Oldbury Castle; White Barrow; Winterbourne Stole group of barrows; Wessex Ridgeway; Stonehenge; The Harrow Way; Yarnbury Camp; Scratchbury Camp; Battlesbury Camp; Arn Hill; Cley Hill.

Information

Generally easy walking, except on the hard military perimeter roads around Salisbury Plain and over the hill forts near Warminster.

From Avebury to West Lavington the route initially follows the Wessex Ridgeway, first across the Vale of Pewsey, then up and around the north-west escarpment of the Salisbury Plain. The route then continues, going south-east down the gap between military ranges to Stonehenge. The direction turns west around the southern edge of the Plain to the distinctively separate hill forts near Warminster, and finally across the Wylke Valley to Cley Hill.

The landscape is generally open, with mainly arable farming land and wide open spaces on Salisbury Plain, some of which are bleak and exclusively used for military training. However, within these are conservation areas and the perimeter walks are often alive with birds, butterflies, wild flowers, etc. thriving in

the absence of agricultural pesticides.

Its main features are a proliferation of very old prehistoric sites from Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) to New Stone Age (Neolithic) and Bronze Age. The focal point of this prehistoric area, and of the Celtic Way, is Stonehenge and as 4-ton blue stones from Pembrokeshire were used in the second phase of Stonehenge, it may also have been an early link for subsequent Celtic migration.

Stage 1 - Avebury to Devizes - 10 miles.

Landranger 173

Background

Avebury has been a settlement from prehistoric to present times, with the current village situated within the major stone circle of (originally) 100 sarsen (sandstone from chalk areas) stones. At 18 acres, Avebury is the largest megalithic ceremonial monument in

Europe. This small village, with its museum and Elizabethan Manor is at the centre of a collection of prehistoric sites within a 2-mile radius:

Windmill Hill is the largest and best known Neolithic earthwork of its kind in Britain (21 acres), based on early settlement in 3000 BC. Silbury Hill is the largest raised by prehistoric man (approximately 2000 BC) in Europe, with its base of 5¼ acres, and 130 feet higher than the fields. West Kennet Long Barrow (2500 BC) is a remarkable chambered tomb in which visitors can stand upright in a roofed passage. The Stone Avenue leads south-east from Avebury towards the Overton Hill Barrow Sanctuary (linear cemetery of six round barrows, with associated bell and bowl barrows).

Starting Point SU 102 699

Leave the Red Lion in a south-westerly direction down the village street, passing St.

James church. Just before the street stops, take a right turning before the house called The Forge, down a lane until a bridge is reached. Just before the bridge, look left for a view of Silbury Hill.

Cross the bridge over the **River Kennet** and take a left fork going on through fields towards a thatched cottage. Go through the gate in front of the cottage, and walk up the small road from the cottage to the minor road. Turn right along the road past the telephone box, with Avebury Trusloe on the left. Continue along this until a junction by some barns is reached.

At this point there is a Footpath/Ancient Monument signpost pointing up the road, and in that direction Windmill Hill can be seen (about a 30-minute walk away).

At the junction turn left (south-west) along the track between the barns, and follow the track to the end of the field. On the left at the end of the field are the two **Longstones**, assumed to be

the only remains of a western avenue from Avebury.

Turn right, around the White Gate, and proceed until the A4 is reached. At the A4, turn right up the footpath, on the right of this former major trunk road from London to Bath/Bristol, and continue until the **milestone** is reached 077 692. (It states 82 miles to London, 5 miles to Calne, 7 miles to Marlborough). Cross the A4 with care, to the layby on the other side, and at the top of the layby follow a **green track** going up towards a copse of trees. Go on through the trees, and on emerging from them continue along the earthwork ridge towards the monument pillar on the hill ahead. To the left in the valley below racehorse training gallops can be seen.

From the ridge aim for the barn on the side of the hill below the monument, and, in due course, turn left on to the track passing to the right of this barn, and go over the stile. At the next stile there is a National Trust (NT) sign for

Cherhill Down and Oldbury Castle. Continue up the track until the **Lansdowne Monument** is reached, where there are extensive views to the north and west.

At the monument turn left (south) along the ramparts of **Oldbury Castle**, keeping the lower fence to the right, and 70 yards before a stile turn right through a gate. Head downhill until another gate is reached, with a sign marking the other side of the NT property. Go through the gate and downhill towards a line of trees in the near distance. Just before the line of trees, go through a gate and turn right up a Roman Road, towards twin communication towers on top of **Morgans Hill**. This old track goes around the right-hand shoulder of the hill, and a notice on the third gate identifies Morgans Hill as a nature reserve. The track goes through a short wooded section, and after this there is a further gate into Morgans Hill Nature Reserve, as the track swings right. Go through this gate, taking a marked pathway left up a gentle slope.

At the top of this pathway, there is a further gate going into the North Wiltshire Golf Course. Go through the gate and turn immediately left, going around the course inside the fencing. When the fencing ends, taking care, follow the white posts across the course towards the left-hand side of the clubhouse.

O.S.022 667. On reaching the road, cross over into a broad green track going left of the clubhouse. Looking ahead, the line of the route goes up the hill towards the right-hand copse. To the right of this track there is Roundway Down, the site of a civil war battle (1643). It was originally called Runaway Hill to denote the flight of the losing side. At the top of the **Roundway Hill** there is an English Heritage site on the left, and looking across this, the Vale of Pewsey can be seen running in a south-westerly direction. To the south is the town of Devizes, and the escarpment of

Salisbury Plain in the distance.

Continue down the road past the wood on the right until a road branches to the right. Go up this road until a double gate and adjoining walkers gap is reached. At this point, if time is available (about 30 minutes), a detour up the hill and along to Olivers Castle, a hill fort, would offer excellent views to the south-west.

O.S. 011 638 Go through the walkers gap down the pathway passing by an electricity pylon. Bear right across the next field to the far side, where there is a minor road and a footpath signpost to the left. Go left around the road until another footpath sign on the right indicates a route into the field. Turn left in the field along the pathway which follows a power line across the centre of the field to a gateway. Follow the very obvious track bearing slightly right across the next field towards some houses. At the housing estate road, cross straight over and go down a pathway through an avenue of trees - called **Quaker's Walk** - and go over the canal

bridge.

O.S.006 617 The far side of the bridge is the finish of this part, and the start of the next part of the walk. Devizes can be reached by walking straight ahead into the centre of the town. **Devizes**, founded after the Norman Conquest, has two Norman churches, many interesting and historical buildings and the Museum of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society. The Devizes to Avebury bus route is run by Thamesdown Transport.

Stage 2 - Devizes to The Lavingtons/Ridgeway/A360 - 11 miles

Landrangers 173, 184

This route has been written with three possible finishing points to fit in with either accommodation or bus requirements.

Starting point:

From the Market Square in Devizes, go through the Indoor Market and the car park behind. Turn left at the main road, and right into New Park Road, following this road until the canal is reached, just opposite Quaker's Walk. The start of the walk is along the **Kennet and Avon tow path**.006 617

Leave the canal bridge and walk eastward along the tow path until the third bridge, Coate bridge, is reached. Go up to the road, and turn right. Continue along this road, which has been built since the latest OS revision, alongside the new housing estate. Go to the end of the road, past the turning right named The Patchway, and walk over the rough ground to meet the byway coming down the hill. Cross this byway, taking a left byway running eastward. Continue along this track, which goes up a small hill, until a byway running north to south is reached. Turn right southward. At this point there are good distant views of the North Wiltshire and Marlborough Down to the north-east. Directly

ahead and southward is Etchilhampton Hill, and the Vale of Pewsey runs between them.

The byway continues southward up and around the right-hand shoulder of **Etchilhampton Hill**. When it reaches a minor road, cross this and go down the pathway to the road, ignoring a crossing pathway. Looking ahead from the far right to the far left there is a high escarpment which is the edge of Salisbury Plain, and the route will climb this escarpment.

O.S.037 594. When the pathway reaches the A342 road, go straight across down into the village of **Stert** and take the first turning left which is signposted to Fulloway Farm and Crookwood Mill Farm. As the first farm is passed, there is a good view of the edge of Stert village and church to the right. Continue along this road until a farm gate and cattle grid is reached, which is marked **Crookwood Mill Farm**. Just before this gate/grid, turn left and go through a small gate into a field. Walk across and down the middle of the field (SE)

passing through a small gap in the hedge and across the middle of the next field to a white stile. Cross the stile and go up through the wooded embankment, and climb the steps to the railway. Taking care, cross the railway track, climb down the steps and cross over a stile at the edge of the wooded embankment.

From this stile take a route halfway down the field from the right-hand fence to the bottom left of the field. This route arrives at a double stile and footbridge through the hedge. From here continue straight across the next field and near the far side turn right, picking up a farm road bearing right, until a gate is reached. Go over the gate and bear left to a stile. Climb over the stile and walk up the field keeping parallel with the farm road, and pass over a stile in the hedge by a power pole. Continue up the hill parallel with the farm road until the top of the field is reached. At this point go straight across the farm road via two stiles, and proceed up the next field to the far end, walking to the

left of the right-hand gardens. Climb over the fence, by the way markers. Turn right then left along the **Urchfont** Village road, bearing left at the green, passing the Lamb Inn, bearing right at the duck pond until the main B3098 road is reached.

Urchfont has two shops and two public houses, two B & Bs, a 600-year old church and William and Mary Manor House, once owned by the elder Pitt.

O.S.041 569. Turn right at the B3098. After 150 yards turn left by a layby up a track on the lower side of some houses, and start climbing up to the downs. After about ½ mile, turn right off the track by some cattle pens, and go straight up the hill away from the track until a stile in a fence is reached. From this stile go to another stile in line with the right-hand side of a copse. Over this stile and walk just to the right of these trees to meet the **perimeter road**, with "Danger, Keep Out" signs on the far side.

Large parts of the Salisbury Plain are military ranges and training areas, with public access either limited or banned. At this point the area ahead is a bleak training area, and the route will go south-westwards around the perimeter path. Generally the Plain is an open area of gently rolling farmland, with good views, especially from the escarpments. The route ahead where it follows perimeter roads, is hard walking and can be noisy with military exercises.

Walk along the perimeter road, which follows the Ridgeway, until an army vedette post at **Lavington Hill** is reached.

O.S.024 534 From this vedette post there are three alternative routes, and each one will be routed to a common point where the Ridgeway meets the A360.

A. Continue straight along the perimeter Ridgeway road, which is now tarmac, going downhill to meet the A360.

At this point Wilts and Dorset buses to and from Devizes, Shrewton and Salisbury are available.

B. Turn right (north-west) at the vedette post and go straight down to the town of Market Lavington, via White Street, where there are shops, accommodation and buses (Badgerline) to and from Devizes. To continue the route go back up White Street. Just before the last houses on the left, turn right (before the last right-hand house) up a cemented road towards a storage depot, then turn right up a byway. This byway passes between fields, and just after the edge of the left-hand field of Strip Lynchets, goes into a wooded area. At this point the byway meets one coming up the hill from the right, which leads to West Lavington, which will be called the 'T' junction. To meet the Ridgeway/A360 junction, continue straight along the byway which narrows at this point. This shortly meets a road coming up from West Lavington. Turn left, and just over 100 yards,

turn right along a byway which goes along the left-hand side of a wood. This byway goes along a wide strip between two fields to meet the point just after the farm buildings, where the Ridgeway meets the A360.

C. From the 'T' junction O.S.012 527 in the wooded area, turn right down to West Lavington going straight across the first road junction. Continue down Rutts Lane until the main A360 is reached. This is at a point 100 yards south of the Ship Inn. Further north up the A360 there are a number of shops, Inns and other accommodation. Also Wilts and Dorset buses to and from Devizes, Shrewton and Salisbury are available. To continue the route to the Ridgeway/A36 junction, go back up Rutts Lane to the 'T' junction, turn right and proceed as in alternative B.

Junction of the Ridgeway and the A360 -
O.S.009 509

Stage 3 - The Ridgeway/A30 Junction(near The Lavingtons) to Shrewton - 9 miles

Landranger 184

Starting Point:

O.S.009 509. From the Ridgeway/A360 junction turn south towards Tilshead for about 200 yards, then turn right along the **Imber Range pathway** (IRP), signposted along a road. This IRP is a circular walk all around the Imber Range, which is closed to the general public. After a further 200 yards, go straight along the IRP which leaves the road as it bends to the right. Go up this pathway to the first corner of the left-hand field, and turn left here as signposted, on a strip between two fields. At the end of the fields where there are further signposts, carry straight on, parallel with the main road, crossing military roads going down to the main road. Just after a track going down to the road between a double line of bushes, the pathway goes up the hill and starts to meander towards the right-hand side of the long line of trees ahead.

At this point pick out a building partially hidden by the trees. Head for this, keeping a fenced field to the left and tumulae to the right. One of the **tumulae** is fenced and has star shaped "No Digging" signs around it. This military sign denotes sites of antiquity which should not be damaged in any way. Meeting the minor road, turn left and go downhill to meet the A360 into Tilshead.

O.S. 031 479. At the western end of **Tilshead** Village, just after the garage, there is a byway to the right which goes behind the Black Horse public house. It is also signposted as the Imber Range Path (IRP). When some small outbuildings are reached the byway turns left. At this point turn right up the IRP - this is a straight pathway running parallel with the main road (A360).

At the brow of this first part of the pathway look right (south-west). A modern looking

village can be seen on the hill. This is an **'enemy village'**, used by the military for training purposes. At the end of the first large field there is a byway leading up from the main road. Turn right here, up the IRP towards the top of the hill, ignoring military roads crossing, until the National Trust property - **White Barrow** - is reached. Cut through the right-hand corner of this property using the two stiles. Climb over the second stile and turn left to take a track which runs (SSE) parallel with the main road.

Continue along this track, ignoring military roads crossing. After about 2/3 mile it meets a military road close to the main road. This is at a point at the bottom of the hill that leads up to a farm building on the right-hand side of the main road. At this point go straight over the military road and take the track which goes diagonally up the hill, to the right, and away from the main road and farm building. At the top of the hill there is a pathway crossing away

from the 'enemy village', and going towards (ESE) a small communication tower. Turn left here. When a partly fenced field is reached, go straight on, passing the '**No Entry To Military Vehicles**' sign. Head for a clump of fir trees in the distance.

This track leads to the main road. Cross over the road and turn right, walking down the left-hand grass verge for 200 yards until a road off to the left is reached. Turn left into this road, and after a few yards turn right, down a track. This leads down into the north end of **Shrewton** village.

At the bottom end of this road, in the village, cross over a stream and turn right onto the road from Orcheston. Then turn right again at the George Inn, and continue down through the village until the main A360 road is reached by the Catherine Wheel public house.

O.S.068 438. Shrewton village is large, has a number of public houses, some with

accommodation, other guest houses, a post office and mini stores. There are buses to and from Salisbury and Stonehenge.

Stage 4 - Shrewton to Stonehenge - 4 miles

Landranger 184

Starting Point:

O.S. 068 438 From the Catherine Wheel Public House turn left along the A360, pass the 30 mph de-limit and continue down past the **Rolleston** Road. About two thirds of the way up the next hill, turn right into the rough road, and immediately bear left along the bridleway. After 150 yards where the bridleway turns right, turn left along a footpath. After a further 200 yards, go through a gate into a field. Bear left up the side of the field, and then follow the field fence downhill. At the bottom end of the field go straight on through the gate and diagonally up the right-hand shoulder of the hill, going to the right of a number of tumulae surrounded by a shallow ditch.

Proceed around the hill and leave the field by the bottom right-hand corner near some farm buildings. Go through the gate and farm buildings with the lowest building to the right. Continue along the track running in a southerly direction, which then goes up hill to the A303 trunk road.

O.S.085 412. Turn left at the A303, going eastward. Unfortunately - at the moment - there is no reasonable alternative to walking for a mile along the grass verges to this busy highway. If English Heritage's plans go ahead too re-route or close the A303 and make Stonehenge and its approach the show-piece of Europe then this point in the route will alter completely.

Continue along the A303 past the A360 roundabout. Just beyond the roundabout, at the start of a layby, there is a National Trust pathway into the wood. Cross the stile and follow this footpath to the other side of the

wood where there is a NT information board describing the group of barrows just in front.

This group of barrows - the **Winterbourne Stole Group** (Neolithic and Bronze Age) are considered the best in Wessex, containing examples of every type of prehistoric barrows encountered in this region (e.g. Long, Round, Bowl, Disc, Saucer and Pond), some being formed when the main part of Stonehenge was erected.

Walk to the right of the first two barrows and climb over the stile into the adjoining field on the right. The footpath follows the left-hand fence of this field in a NE direction. The footpath eventually meets the main A334 road. Looking right (east) a little way along this pathway there is the first intriguing view of Stonehenge.

O.S.111 427. Climb over a stile, cross the road and climb over the stile on the other side.

Follow the NT footpath through the wood. On emerging from the wood, cross the stile and walk to a small tumulus on the left. At this tumulus there is a NT information board describing the Circus - twin parallel banks 110 yards apart, stretching for 1¼ miles west to east - constructed approximately 3000 BC, thought to be for some ceremonial purpose.

Walk up the Circus keeping to the right where there are further more dramatic views of Stonehenge. Half way along the Circus there is a byway; turn right here and walk to the Stonehenge car park.

O.S.123 424. At the top of the car park is the entrance to the English Heritage managed site of Stonehenge. Members of the English Heritage or the National Trust have free entry to the site.

Stonehenge

Stonehenge has become one of the most

famous prehistoric monuments in Europe, and the most visited in Britain.

Most visitors will be aware of this, and many will have first impressions of a rugged heavy temple rising from an open site miles from anything else. However, on approaching the site, especially by foot, many megalithic remains may have been seen; and closer examination is likely to give rise to marvel and wonder.

It ranks with the Egyptian pyramids, etc. as one of the greatest and most mysterious of all man-made structures: Why was it built, and how, are the questions most often asked. Was it a temple, or an astrological instrument? How were the stone transported or erected?

Stonehenge was built in three phases ⁽³⁾:

1. The first, 2200 BC (approximately) - started with the Heelstone.
2. The second, 1700-1600 BC (approximately)

- erection of 'blue' stones 4-ton in weight, brought from Pembrokeshire in Wales, with axis of monument pointing to sunrise on the longest day of the year.

3. The third, 1600-1200 BC (approximately) - rebuilding using 'blue' stones, and sarsen stones up to 45 tones in weight, from Marlborough Downs.

The transport of the stones, the careful dressing, erection and fitting of the stones from the awesome second and third phases must have been carried out by powerful and well organised societies, spanning different civilisations over many hundreds of years.

Stonehenge is surrounded by many sites, eight within two miles, each with many barrow cemeteries. For example, the Normanton site has twenty-four various bowl, bell, disc and saucer barrows. A further twenty-seven are at Winterbourne Stoke, etc.

The outlying sites are mainly under the National Trust with English Heritage managing the Stonehenge site. A visit to the site, which is free to NT or EH members, is a must using the hand-held cassette guide provided.

Stage 5 - Stonehenge to Berwick St. James - 4 miles

Landranger 184

Starting Point:

O.S.123 424 · Landranger 184

Stonehenge Car Park: Leave the car park by its lower west end on to a byway, and cross immediately over the A344 on to the continuation of the byway heading south- west. This is the route of the ancient Harrow Way.

The Harrow Way⁽²⁾, or 'Hard Way', from the Kentish Coast near Dover crosses the Thames in Berkshire. It is one of the oldest roads in Britain, and like the Great Ridgeway, crosses the county East to West and intermingles with the Ridgeway through Dorset, with both finishing near Axe in Devon.

Continue on this byway which then crosses the A303 and is marked "Old Sarum 7½ miles" on the other side. After a few hundred yards, there is a footpath on the left to Old Sarum. Ignore this, and continue along the byway in a south-westerly direction. Just past the Old Sarum footpath sign there is a National Trust Information Board describing the adjoining Bronze Age Disc Barrows on **Normanton Down**, which archaeologists have determined were for female burials.

At the top of the next hill the byway turns left through a "No Right Of Way", and at this point the official footpath continues straight on up the track through a field. This track leads up to and through a wood on the brow of the hill. The path through the wood emerges on to a main road (A360) by an old garage.

O.S.099 394. Turn left southwards along the road and, by the water tower, cross over the

road. Take a small road forking south-west from the main road, passing **Druids Lodge** on the right. Keep on this estate road until just before it passes into estate buildings at the top of the hill. At this point, carry on to the left of the buildings following a track which goes around to the far side, and drops down into the valley. Continue down the track until it eventually meets the road going into **Berwick St. James** by the Wiltshire Girl Guides buildings. At the main road (B3083) turn right northwards up the High Street. Walk up past the church, and just before the bus stop on the left there is a signpost to **Steeple Langford**, up a rough road.

O.S.072 393. Berwick St. James is on the regular Wilts and Dorset bus route from Salisbury to Devizes via Shrewton, and has a post office shop and public house, appropriately called The Boot Inn - a welcome sight if timed with the limited opening hours, frustrating if not!

Stage 6 - Berwick St. James to Near Heytesbury - 12 miles

Landranger 184

Starting Point:

O.S.072 393. Go up this rough road towards Steeple Langford until it forks just before some farm buildings, and take the left-hand fork up the hill. A little further on the route, the path can be seen going up to two small towers on top of the hill. Just before the first tower (communication) turn right along a crossing byway, keeping the other tower (water) to the left. (Leave the Harrow Way at this point). Follow the track heading north-west, aiming toward a barn on the edge of a wood near the top of the next hill. Pass the barn, and continue up the track to the A303. Just to the left on the other side can be seen the ramparts of **Yarnbury Castle**. Just before the A303 there is an old milestone which states in roman numerals "9 miles from Sarum and 27 miles from Bath".

O.S.041 402. Cross over the A303 with care, and continue along the byway going to the right of Yarnbury Castle (167 metres/550 feet high). **Yarnbury Castle**⁽³⁾, only partially excavated in 1932, is an impressive hill fort. The first phase is an Early Iron Age enclosure of 12 acres and, probably in the 1st Century BC, was doubled in size. There are probable additions from the Roman period. (There is no direct access to the site).

Carry along this bridleway heading north-west, crossing a bridleway and bearing slightly left avoiding the track through the private land. The bridleway continues north-west along the right of a field which has "Private Land, Keep Out" signs. On the right of this bridleway is an area marked with "Active Airstrip" warning signs. Continue along the bridleway until it reaches a road (B390). Turn right, and after approximately 100 yards, cross over and turn down a farm road marked "**Chitterne** Village

Only".

Looking right from this farm road there is another good view of the modern-looking 'enemy' village built for military training. Just before Chitterne village there is a track marked "Imber Range Path" (IRP) crossing the farm road, and turn left along this path. The **IRP** is a recently opened circular pathway around the Imber Range which is a large military area from which the public are prohibited. The walk will now follow the IRP until the far side of Arn Hill.

On reaching a minor road, turn left down to the village. Turn left on reaching the village road, and just afterward turn right down the main road (B390), walking adjacent to the stream following the *Codford* sign. This route then reaches the King's Head (with some accommodation) at the southern end of the village.

O.S.990 438. Continue from the King's Head up the B390 and on the first bend there is, on the right hand side, a byway and IRP sign pointing up a track. Follow this track up the hill, crossing a farm road, through the left edge of a copse and towards the right-hand end of a line of trees. A little way past these trees the IRP bears slightly left along the right-hand side of a field with '**Penang**' signposts. In this field there are star shaped signs on the top of poles. These denote sites of antiquity, which the military must not damage in any way. Continue along the IRP, aiming for the storage tank on the top of the next hill. On reaching the storage tank carry straight on the IRP ignoring the byway to the left. There are earthworks, just short of the tank, which on the left link to **Knook Castle** settlement.

On reaching the top of the hill, just past the storage tank, look straight ahead and through a gap in the hills across the valley can be seen the distinctive shape of **Cley Hill** with its smaller

hill on the right. To the right of these the **hill forts** on the edge of the Salisbury Plain can be picked out and the walk travels along these e.g. Battlesbury, Scratchbury, Arn, before dropping down into the head of the Wylde Valley north of Warminster, and making its way to Cley Hill.

Continue down the hill, ignoring the byway to the left, and up over the next hill and halfway down the next there is a IRP sign pointing diagonally left down the hill. A footpath will probably not be discernable, and the line to aim for is the left-hand end of a wood on the opposite hill, roughly south-west. At the left-hand corner of this wood, continue along the left side of the wood, and at the next corner of these trees aim left towards the left-hand side of the next line of trees. At this corner, turn right and walk along to the farm (East Hill). At the farm, turn left down the road (south west) again following the IRP sign. The IRP follows the farm road down from East Hill Farm. The road

eventually bears left and at the end of the next field on the right there is a IRP sign on the road pointing up through a line of trees.

O.S. 930 432. This point is ¼ mile from the main A360(T) which bypasses Heytesbury, and just before the entrance to Heytesbury House. This is the nearest point to **Heytesbury Village**, where there is a regular Wilts and Dorset bus service between Salisbury and Warminster. Heytesbury is an interesting village with an old hospital dating from 1449, rebuilt in the 18th century and still in use. There is a Round House (lock up) and the Angel Inn dating back to the 13th century.

Stage 7 - Near Heytesbury to Arn Hill, Warminster - 5½ miles

Landranger 184

Starting Point:

O.S.930 432. Take the pathway up between the trees. On emerging from the trees by a stile, go up the right-hand side of the next hedge and, bearing slightly right, aim for the middle of the trees on the hill. As you reach the wood you will see a track running up through a gap in the wood to the other side. Before entering the wood take a moment to look back. On the left is the previous route down from the Salisbury Plain and the Imber Range; to the right can be seen Heytesbury House and Heytesbury Church.

Pass through the wood and on reaching the far side go on bearing slightly right across the field, aiming towards the top of the hill (Cotley Hill) and the stile to the right of the tumulus (Bronze Age barrow) at the top. (Height 193 metres/636 feet). At this point look north-west to view the route of the walk across a line of individual hill forts (Scratchbury, Battlesbury and Arn) which appear to protect the Salisbury Plain. Warminster nestles underneath the west

of the far hills and to its left, and west north-west from Cotley Hill is the distinctive shape of Cley Hill arising from the valley (like a hump back whale).

O.S.920 433. After crossing the stile, head across the field in a north-westerly direction towards the stile on the far side. Cross this stile and proceed to the next corner of the right-hand field (50 yards) where there is a further IRP sign, and follow its directions between the side of the right-hand field, and the tumulus on the lower side of the path. At the next corner of the field, turn left to the next stile (50 yards). Cross the stile and bear slightly right along the footpath through the next field, heading towards the far side of the field where there is a stile (approximately half way along the hill ahead (**Scratchbury**). On crossing this next stile, turn right to follow a path which goes all around the hill to the far side, keeping to the lower side of the rampart.

This hill is Scratchbury Hill⁽³⁾, or Camp (Scratch is an old west country word for Devil). The hill (197 metres/649 feet high), with the camp covering 37 acres, has four Bronze Age barrows, artefacts from which reside in Devizes Museum. It also has many Iron Age platforms cut into the north-west slope. It was vulnerable on the south-eastern side, and this weakness led to the fortification at Battlesbury.

On the stile you may note a Wessex Ridgeway sign. The **Wessex Ridgeway** runs south from Avebury to Lyme Regis on the Dorset/Devon border. It is largely coterminous with the Great Ridgeway walk which starts at Holme, near Hunstanton Norfolk on the side of the Wash. This part of the Celtic Way follows the same route (in reverse) as the Wessex Ridgeway (and IRP) from near Heytesbury to Arn Hill.

O.S.911 445. On reaching the far side of Scratchbury Hill (ignoring a path half way around leading down the left-hand side of the

field to the farm below) the route ahead can be seen dropping down the hill over a stile (signposted Warminster) to the farm road, then going up from the corner of this road (where a track goes to the right), diagonally up the next hill (**Middle Hill**) to the right-hand side of a copse. Looking to the right of Middle Hill, **Strip Lynchets** can be seen - these are medieval cultivated terraces formed during a period of acute land shortage. To the left of Middle Hill, below the copse, is the site of the Medieval village of Middleton - although only an open space can be seen above Middleton farm. Middle Hill (179 metres/590 feet high) has a **barrow** on top.

On reaching the copse, half way up Middle Hill, carry on along the path around the right side of the copse and left-hand side (south-west) of the Hill, keeping below the tumulus on top, eventually aiming down northwards towards two barns in the valley below. Across the valley is Battlesbury Hill; also with Strip

Lynchets on its lower side.

O.S.907 452. The pathway goes across the farm road (leading to the barns) and up Battlesbury Hill. Keeping to the right-hand side of two fields, cross another track between the fields, aiming towards the right-hand shoulder of the hill. At the top of the second field there is a double stile just below the lowest rampart. Cross the left-hand stile, and go up to the highest rampart and turn left (south-west) to go around the hill to its far side, keeping to the left-hand side of the fenced central grazing area, and above the copse. These hills are not cultivated, and mainly used only for grazing. This encourages wildlife, especially skylarks, etc. The above copse is a favourite nesting place for buzzards.

Battlesbury Hill⁽³⁾ or Camp (208 metres/682 feet, with a central camp of 24 acres) dominates the Wylde Valley and is one of the finest examples of an Iron Age Hill Fort in England.

It has double ramparts, except on the west side where it has 3 ramparts. It was built over an earlier occupation site, and is thought to be one of the British 'oppido' stormed by the Roman General Vespasian during the conquest of Wessex. A 'massacre' cemetery was discovered outside the western entrance, and may relate to this event. A refuge during times of stress, it was also a market and meeting place both during the Iron Age and early Saxon periods. Artefacts can be found in Devizes Museum.

Continue around the hill, crossing the stile at the end of the copse. At this point, Arn Hill appears with its communications tower on top behind the golf clubhouse, and down below in the valley is the School of Infantry barracks. The route ahead passes through these barracks to the lower parts of **Arn Hill**. To the left of, and before Arn Hill (but not on the route) is a small hill (Cop Heap (550 feet) with a Bronze Age burial mound on top). Further left in a westerly direction is Cley Hill.

At the far north corner of Battlesbury Hill there is a farm track from the top of the Hill passing through a gap in the ramparts. Turn left here, following the farm track for 100 yards, then bear left down the pathway to the corner of the field where there is a stile and IRP signpost. Cross the stile and follow the footpath sign direction around the left-hand side of the field (any unusual smells here probably emanate from the sewage works below) until an underground reservoir, surrounded by a high fence, is reached.

O.S.897 462. At this point, turn left, cross a stile and go down to the main road. Turn left down this road which runs through the army site. Continue along this road, ignoring any side roads until **St. Giles Church** is reached. Turn right just before the church, and follow the road until the 'T' junction at the end. At this junction, turn left along the road in the direction of the IRP sign. Walk along this road towards a

pair of cottages on a corner on the right. Just past these cottages is a road running up to West Wilts Golf Club and course. There is an IRP sign here that appears to point up the golf course road, but in fact the IRP pathway runs immediately alongside the left-hand side of the garage to the left-hand cottage.

O.S. 878 458. Note: This is the nearest point to the centre of Warminster, which can be reached in 20 @ 30 minutes by either walking down the hill away from the golf club, or taking the footpath on the left just before the cottages, which goes south of Cop Heap and into the centre of town.

Warminster lies at the head of the Wylye Valley, has had a long association with the Army and was an important stopping place for stage coaches en route to London, Bristol, Poole and Southampton. Some of the Market Place hotels are former Coaching Inns with the Old Bell retaining its colonnaded front.

According to Defoe, Warminster was the greatest market for wheat in England, and many houses date back 200 years or more.

There is a large free car park which has the new Tourist Information Office and the new Library on its Market Street side. Silver Street is the main location for antique shops.

Stage 8 - Arn Hill to Cley Hill - 4½ miles

Landranger 183

Starting Point:

O.S.ST 879 459 Follow the IRP sign (not up the road to the Golf Club) immediately left of the garage (to the left of the two semi-detached cottages). The initial route of this part of the walk goes around three sides of the West Wilts golf course, which covers all of the top of Arn Hill and most of its ancient sites.

Arn Hill, height over 675 feet, has Bronze and Iron Age burial mounds with three types of barrows - Long, Round and Bowl - but some

were destroyed in 1911/1912 in making the golf course. Artefacts are kept in Devizes Museum.

Follow the footpath up and along the first side of the golf course, with the clubhouse to the left, until the corner of the golf course is reached by the 6th tee. At this point, looking east, the Battlesbury and Scratchbury hills can be seen, and to the north-east lies the Imber Military Artillery Range, which is out of bounds to the public.

At this first corner, although the IRP continues north-east turn left (north-west) following a bridleway sign along the outside of the golf course. At the next corner of the golf course, by an underground reservoir on the right, turn left (southwards) up and alongside the golf course, ignoring the track heading down hill. At this corner there is a tumulus lying underneath the greens and tees. Also, looking south-west, there is a good view of the distinctive Cley Hill.

Continue along the third side of the golf course keeping outside of the white topped boundary posts until an isolated stile is reached. The path now continues diagonally down hill in the direction of a **small lake** in the valley below.

Looking towards Cley Hill the route will be down across the roads and railway on the edge of Warminster, and after the church, through fields to the A36 bypass road, then over the A36 across the field to the south of the wood, and taking a left-hand route around further fields to the bottom of Cley Hill. Part way down the hill, cross a stile and take the track bearing right down hill, ignoring any further tracks to the left, until the main road (**A356**) is reached.

O.S.872 462. Cross over the road, turn left and walk along the pathway and turn down a footpath which runs between houses numbered 20 and 19. This footpath continues over a railway footbridge and meets a residential road.

Cross this, going straight down between the houses, taking the pathway at the lower left-hand corner around the houses, and keep left past the small electricity **substation**. Taking the next pathway to the right, go down to the road with open space on the other side.

On reaching the road, turn right for 30 yards and cross over, taking the pathway through the open space marked with a public footpath signpost. This path goes down through a line of trees across the recreation ground to a footbridge on the far side. Just before the footbridge, there are seats to the right and left. Pass over the stream footbridge going straight ahead along the path which goes past the left-hand side of the cemetery and church grounds. The church is the Parish Church of St. Denys The Minster, originated in Saxon times. The present 14th century building was extensively rebuilt in the 19th century. The **Yew Tree** in front is over 600 years old.

O.S.869 455. Turn right around the church grounds and up the footpath alongside the main road going (north-west) out of Warminster. Just outside the 30 mph limit, there is on the left-hand side a house with the name Coldharbour. Cross over the road by the Footpath sign, and take the small road (Coldharbour Lane), up the right-hand side of this house. Walk up this lane ignoring a turning to the left and follow the signpost direction "**Cley Hill, 1¼ miles**". Walk through the farm buildings keeping left of the third building where the lane turns into a grass track. Keep along this track until a stile on the right is reached. Do not cross the stile, but turn immediately left up a track between trees and bushes. At the end of this there is a small field, probably with no apparent footpath across it, however the official footpath route is straight across to the corner of the copse 50 yards away. On reaching the copse, walk down the left-hand side straight to the stile by the side of the A36 bypass. Cross the stile and turn left alongside

the A36. About 70 yards down there is an Information Board with maps and information on the local area. After a further 100 yards, cross over the A36 to meet a small road emerging from the wood, and continue alongside the A36 in the direction of the signpost, "2½ miles Corsley".

O.S.853 454. On reaching the lay-by, climb over the stile into an open field with the wood on the right and bypass on the left. The official footpath line is alongside the road for about 100 yards westwards across the field to meet a farm track on the far side. However, if this is obstructed, continue along the side of the field adjacent to the bypass until the farm track from the right is reached by an underpass.

O.S.849 448. Do not go through the underpass, but continue straight up the farm road between the highway and a field. At the next corner of the field cross over a stile into the field (there should be a signpost to Longleat at this point).

Keep to the left-hand side of the field with Cley Hill on the right. At the next corner of the field go through a gate and again, keep to the left-hand side of this field. At the next corner of the field cross over the stile. Pass behind some **paddocks** on the left-hand side of this next field until a stile is reached which leads down into a gully. Cross this stile and turn right up the gully between two lines of trees - a pleasant cool walk on a hot day.

At the end of the gully a track runs across, going left to a car park by the main road, and right up to **Cley Hill**.

O.S.838 443. To visit Cley Hill turn right going up to the top as directed by a National Trust Information Board situated part way up the track, and then return to this point. There are good views all around from Cley Hill, which at 784 feet is highest of the local hills. It is an Iron Age fort with two Bronze Age bowl barrows on the highest part. More recently, in

the 1960's it became famous as a watch point for UFOs, with many (alleged) sightings.

PublicTransport

The cathedral city of Salisbury is on the London West County route, and is 7 miles from Stonehenge.

The area is well served by buses: Avebury to Devizes (Thamesdown Transport); Devizes to Salisbury via West Lavington and Shrewton, with special services to Stonehenge from Salisbury (hourly) and Shrewton; buses between Salisbury and Warminster, all run by the Wilts and Dorset bus company; and Warminster to Frome, via Cley Hill by Badgerline. Buses and accommodation in Devizes, Shrewton and Warminster will cover all this route in stages. Museums: Avebury, Devizes, Salisbury, Warminster

There are Badgerline buses from Cley Hill to Warminster.

Tourist Information:

Tourist Information Centre, Avebury	016 723 425
Tourist Information Centre, Devizes	01380 729408
Tourist Information Centre, Salisbury	01722 334956
Tourist Information Centre, Warminster	91747 861211
Train Enquiries	0117 929 4255
Badgerline Buses	01225 464446
Wilts and Dorset Bus Company	01722 336855
Thamesdown Transport	01793 523700

Accommodation: Plenty of B&B in the area

Youth Hostels:

Salisbury - 01722 327572
Bath - 01225 465674
Bristol - 01179221659

References:

⁽¹⁾The Wessex Ridgeway - The Rambler's Association, May 1988
(A 137-mile walk from Marlborough to Lyme Regis, linked to the Great Ridgeway which

started at Holme in East Anglia, and incorporates the Pedlars Way, Icknield Way and Ridgeway Path).

⁽²⁾Ancient Trackways of Wessex - H. W. Timberley and Edith Bell, Phoenix House, 1965. ISBN 0 946 643 008

⁽³⁾A Guide to the Prehistoric Remains in Britain, Vol 1 : South and East .R. Wainwright (Constable)
ISBN 0 09 460 320 0 (This describes nearly all the Megalithic sites mentioned in this route).

Handing-on:

The next section is The Arthurian Centre, which runs from Gare Hill (Gaer Hill on some maps).The link between Cley Hill and Gaer Hill runs through the Longleat Estate and there appear to be some queries about the best way to link the two points. For the purposes of this walk, the section ends here, and it is suggested

that on overnight stop and public transport be used to get to the start of the. next section at Gaer Hill. From Gaer Hill, the Celtic Way will runs for 40 miles to Glastonbury and then Cadbury Castle before offering the choice of the Exmoor or Hillforts of Wessex options to move deeper into the West Country.

12 ARTHURIAN CENTRE

Gaer Hill to Glastonbury then South Cadbury - 49 miles.

Maps: Landranger 183, Yeovil and Frome.

Stages:

1. Cley Hill to Gaer Hill - 6 miles.
2. Gaer Hill to Bruton - 9 ½ miles
3. Bruton to Glastonbury - 13 ½ miles
4. Glastonbury to South Cadbury - 20 miles.

Highlights:

Forest of Selwood; The Hard Way; Glastonbury Tor, Well, and Abbey; Cadbury Castle

Introduction

By the middle of the 6th century the Saxons had established themselves over the chalk lands of Wessex and after the battle of Dyrham in 577 had reached the Severn estuary. But west of the open chalk lands lay the

Forest of Selwood ,known to the British as the Coit Maur or great wood which acted as a barrier to further Saxon expansion and so for a hundred years after Dyrham British rule survived west of Selwood and south of the Bristol Wansdyke ,perhaps constructed after Dyrham to divide the Saxon from the British lands .

The path from Gaer Hill retraces the old 6th century boundary between the emerging Kingdom of Wessex and the British lands - the present boundary between Wiltshire and Somerset.. It passes through the surviving woodland of the old forest, and on its way to the isle of Avallon and the Somerset levels descends into first into the valley of the Brue and across the low hills between the Brue and Alham valleys. Here during Roman times people had carved out for themselves great landed estates whose memory is preserved in the villas that dot the countryside such as the one near Ditcheat .Towards the end of the Empire Roman and Celtic ways of looking at life seem to have coalesced -certainly as far as religious observance is concerned as wealthy citizens built temples to on what were old Celtic sites at Lamyatt and South Cadbury. Such a way of life no doubt

survived in some measure when the Empire came to an end.

Dominating the whole area is the great fortress of Cadbury positioned just behind the Saxon frontier. In the middle of the old marshlands is the enigmatic cult centre of Glastonbury.

Stage 1 - - Cley Hill to Gaer Hill-6 miles

Starting Point:

Descend from Cley Hill to A362.Turn left and then right at roundabout. Straight road ahead follows the line of an ancient trackway through the **Forest of Selwood** - now part of the Longleat estate.

After 1 ½ miles the road leaves the wood. Take signed PFP right which descends to a metalled lane. Follow-the lane to a T junction. Pass through the gate opposite and cross the field. Emerge onto a road and take T left along the road which climbs sharply to the church at **Hornigsham**.

Turn right and follow the road around to the Bath Arms. Continue straight on. After $\frac{3}{4}$ mile the road bends sharply to the right. Straight ahead is signed PF through woods. After about 200 yards take right fork in track which descends gently through forest eventually emerging through the gate into a field.

Follow the track on right of the field, pass pond on left and follow metalled lane straight ahead. Cross the road ahead and follow signed PF. After $\frac{1}{2}$ mile take the fork right. The path descends gently through wood. At next major fork, path joins from left. Carry straight on to **Gaer Hill**. (Gare Hill on some maps).

Stage 2 - Gaer Hill to Bruton-9 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles

This is generally an easy well way marked route along a ridge mostly with good signposting and waymarking to Bruton, but paths through fields not always obvious. Keep eyes peeled for stiles and gates: there are bulls sometimes in fields. There are no facilities on the ridge

but you will find a pub at South Brewham (not open all day) plus pubs cafes and shops at Bruton.

Starting Point:

~~Take the road to South Brewham. Beyond some cottages take the public footpath signed to~~ **Witham Friary**. Enter a wood and follow a Public Footpath (PF) until it emerges onto a road behind a house at ~~Yarnfield Gate.~~ ~~Take a right fork along the road towards South Brewham. The road soon descends sharply.~~ Opposite Druly Hill Farm is a gate leading to well waymarked track through a plantation. eventually emerging onto metalled road.

PF opposite leads to hill fort near Penselwood where in 658AD Cenwahl of Wessex decisively defeated the Britons and established Saxon rule over all of Somerset east of the Parrett.

Climb the road on the left to **Jack's Castle**, a Round Barrow, and King Alfred's Tower. King Alfred's Tower

was constructed by Henry Hoare, creator of the Stourhead estate, in 1769 on a hill known as Kingsettle Hill. It is the supposed location of the Egbert Stone where, after his exile at Athelney, King Alfred mustered forces from Wiltshire, Somerset, and Hampshire amid the marshes along the River Parrett. After collecting his troops at the Egbert stone Alfred moved to Iley Oak near Warminster and thence to Edington near Westbury where Guthrum the Danish leader was decisively defeated. The Danish threat to Wessex was removed.

Retrace steps down road which winds off the ridge to the plain of the Brue. Pass Hilcombe Farm on the right..

You are now travelling along **The Hardway**, an ancient trackway that ran from Devonshire to Dover. It is the likely route of retreat of the Britons after the Battle of Pensewood. In Saxon times this was one of the Herepath-military means of communications. This one would have been used by Alfred when advancing from Athelney on the Parrett to Egbert's stone..

About 100 yards beyond are farm buildings and signed PF right. to North Brewham. The PF leads into a large field. Follow a track to the diagonally opposite corner of the field. Cross into the next field by stile and pass by Holland Farm to your left. Join the road leading to **South Brewham**.

Follow the road to T junction. Turn left and climb to the Church. Pass the Village Hall and School House then turn right over a stile. Cross the field to a gap in the hedge. Turn left. and follow the hedge to a stile and then bridge over a brook. Follow the hedge to a large field. The PF runs diagonally right across this field(which may be obstructed by planting), crossing a track from left, and descends through pasture to a waymarked stile.

Cross the stile into a meadow. Cross the meadow keeping woodland on your left and a manor house on your right. The PF meets and then follows a railway on the left. At the bridge the path passes under railway;

follow a signpost left. The PF is well waymarked to Bruton.

Stage 3 - Bruton to Glastonbury-13 ½ miles

The route runs initially over hills behind Bruton, then down to the valley of the Alham, then onto higher ground at Pennard Hill, before descending to the Somerset Levels beyond West Pennard. Waymarking and signposting is erratic and the line of the footpath not always obvious. There are pubs and shops at Ditchat and West Pennard, a café at Evercreech Junction and a Farm Shop at Havyatt.

Starting Point:

Leave Bruton by Coombe Lane and go left at a fork signposted Evercreech.. Continue to the signpost indicating PF right to Snakelake Hill and Greencombe Farm. Go into a field and enter a tree-line lane which descends to a stream. Cross the stream and carry on straight across the next field for about 100 yards. Then bear left and cross to gate leading onto a metalled road .Turn right along the road and then cross into field on the

left at next gate which gives access to **new dedicated bridleway** (not shown on OS maps). The path descends to a stream and then bears right and climbs sharply to the gate giving access to **Creech Hill** (Creech comes from cruc, old Welsh word for Hill)

Cross the road and take the signposted bridleway into the field opposite (currently a corn crop in summer but farmer has left paths through corn.). Look for gate at edge of wood left (designated path proceeds straight ahead and then doubles back) Go through a gate into the next field. Turn right along the edge of a wood to the next gate then bear right to the top of the ridge of **Lamyatt Beacon**

The wood at Lamyatt Beacon is the site of Roman Temple (remains not visible). The hill to north west is site of some kind of Iron Age enclosure - a small hill fort or cattle enclosure. There is a possibility of military use preserved in local stories of a battle on the hill. The temple site is dated to the end of the 2nd century and survived until at least early 5th century .It was dedicated to Mars and possibly Cogonumus a Celtic horned god

“adopted” by the Romans. Excavators also found burials adjacent to Temple (almost entirely of female graves) dating from late 6th to early 8th century .indicating a continued sacred significance of site up to Saxon conquest..

The temple may have had special regional significance since there is some evidence that a special Roman road was built to link site with the Fosse way at Pylle Hill through Lamyatt and Ditcheat .The road may have passed through the present South West entrance the wood and descended to Lamyatt along path of the bridleway followed by the Celtic Way..

Creech Hill has local reputation of being haunted. Old stories speak of people seeing grey apparitions. This tradition is reflected in a tapestry in Lamyatt Church below

The PF is well waymarked to a farm on the road. Turn right and descend into **Lamyatt**.

At the T junction in village turn right. After about 20 yards there is a gateway on the left with public footpath sign. Enter the field and keep to left following stream to footbridge. Cross stream and follow well-waymarked route through fields to old railway embankment. Path now follows dead straight line of local parish boundaries - leading to speculation that they were following some straight linear feature - possibly a Roman Road to Lamyatt Beacon.

Look for iron gate leading to passage under embankment. Pass under embankment and then turn right. Cross River Alham by waymarked bridge. Cross next field to A371. Cross road and follow waymark over stile into field. Cross bridge over stream into next field and follow direction of waymark to road. Turn right along the road which leads to **Ditcheat** Follow road around to the church. At the next junction take road marked East Pennard. Continue about 500 yards to end of houses on right. Enter field on the right through a gate. The PF climbs steeply up Ditcheat Hill. Go through the field gate and then diagonally left across the next field. Go through the

gate and follow field boundary to metalled road. If path is blocked at this point follow boundary between field and road to the right until you come to an iron gate leading directly onto the road.

Turn left and continue to junction with Fosse Way.

Fosse Way is the Roman Road from Newark to Ilchester. Constructed in the 1st century it marks the boundary at that time between areas fully absorbed into Empire and those as yet to be conquered. We cross it in a later section of the walking too.

Cross the Fosse Way - beware of restricted sight lines - and continue on East Pennard Road. Turn left at the next junction, then pass a cottage to the left. About 100 yards from the cottage a public footpath leads through a gate into a small enclosure. Go over the fence into a field and cross the field diagonally to the right, descend the hill and cross a stream. Now climb a hill and bear right. There is a school ahead. Leave the field by half concealed access by a fence to the right then turn right into **East Pennard**.

Follow the road through village to the Church. Take a turning to the left passing the church on your left and take the paved footpath which leads onto a lane. Turn right and then left onto the road.

Follow road until you reach steps into field on the right. and sign post marking footpath right to Worthy Lane. Enter the field and cross to the next stile (waymarked) and then walk towards a large metalled road and turn left again at next junction. At the following junction turn right. Turn at farmhouse onto crest of **Pennard Hill** (Old Welsh for High Hill). At Pennard Hill Farm join a metalled road left to a junction. Turn right and then left down a narrow unmetalled lane. Turn left when the lane meets a metalled road and left at next junction. At following junction turn right. Follow road till it turns sharp right. The PF is through a gate and runs downhill through the field. Bear across right to the opposite corner and pass a track on right. Go through a second field to

the road. Turn right and follow the road to West Pennard.

Continue through the village to the main Shepton to Glastonbury Road. On reaching it turn left to Havyatt

Just beyond the road to **Baltonsborough** there is a signpost indicating a PF to the right. Follow the path which emerges onto flat levels criss-crossed with electric fencing (insulated gateways provided at necessary points). Cross to stile to the right of ancient earth bank-Ponters Ball

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Ponters Ball consists of an embankment with a ditch on the east side suggesting that if its purpose was defensive it was built by the inhabitants of Glastonbury to block access along the causeway from Shepton. It may have been built by the British inhabitants of Glastonbury in the post Roman period as defensive work against the Saxons or other Britons. Other theories point to an Iron Age or even a medieval origin delineating the boundary of the Abbey estates.

There is a fine prospect of the 'Isle of Avallon' and Glastonbury Tor. The present levels would have been underwater in the Dark Ages and medieval times. Havyatt may have been some kind of port since the name means 'Harbour Gate' and there are local stories that Ponters Ball was used by the Abbots of Glastonbury as a jetty.

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Continue across a field to a concrete road. Continue diagonally left, across the next field to a new waymarked stile. The diagonal route across the next field may be obstructed by planting in which case cross stile and turn left along edge of field and then turn right, on emerging onto pasture. Cross to Norwood Park Farm. The PF passes around north of the farm and emerges through the driveway of the house onto a lane.

Cross the lane and ascend a steep lane over Stony Down which leads to the foot of **Glastonbury Tor**

Stage4 - Glastonbury to South Cadbury - 20 miles.

There are stiff climbs onto the Tor and the Poldens. Otherwise it is flat walking through a mixture of arable

and pastoral landscape. Waymarking is good through Glastonbury, variable elsewhere. Footpaths are occasionally obstructed by planting. Shops hotels pubs and restaurants at Glastonbury and Street. Pubs at Keinton Mandeville, Babcary, South Cadbury and Barton St David.

Beginning

From the foot of the Tor a steep signposted path leads to summit.

From the top of the Tor is a fine prospect of Somerset Levels. In Prehistoric or Roman times one would have looked out on a vast expanse of water interrupted by occasional islands that now stand out as hills, such as the Poldens On the top of Tor is the tower of St Michael-all that remains of 13th century church. Dedication to St Michael-the angel who fought and defeated the devil - suggests Tor was pagan cult centre. Excavations on the Tor have revealed fifth to seventh century remains-possibly a Celtic hermitage.

By the Norman Conquest Glastonbury Abbey was the second only to Westminster abbey in wealth. Its fame rested on its claim to great antiquity making it the oldest Christian foundation in Britain. In the Middle Ages evidence of this early monastery existed in the form of a famous wattle church that survived until the great abbey fire of 1184.(now the site of the Lady Chapel) Monks convinced the Norman historian, William of Malmesbury, that this definitely dated back to a Christian mission of 166AD and possibly to a mission sent out by the apostle Philip in the first century. Later this first century mission came to be accepted as fact and identified with St Joseph of Arimathea., the man responsible for arranging Christ's burial..

Another of Glastonbury's claims was as a great centre of the Celtic Church before St Augustine's mission to Kent in 597AD Several distinguished scholars have argued for the existence of a monastery here earlier than the Saxon conquest. In post Roman times Glastonbury lay close to the routes travelled by the Celtic saints between Ireland, South Wales , the British Kingdom of Dumnonia and Brittany and the abbey claimed close association with

many of the pillars Celtic Christianity.- including St Patrick(claimed as the Abbey's founder), St David, St Columba. and St Brigid.

The Celtic connection brought with it tales of King Arthur and the holy grail .Arthur was originally the legendary British hero who led a rearguard action against the Saxons. His story became entwined around the legends of the grail-originally some Celtic pre-Christian symbol but later identified with the chalice of the Last Supper. And how could the Chalice have reached Britain except through St Joseph of Arimathea.? The Arthurian connection was confirmed with the 'discovery ' in the Abbey grounds in 1191 two bodies asserted to be of Arthur and Guinevere. It was a Welshman-Gerald of Wales- who in his account of the exhumation made the connection between Glastonbury and the Isle of Avallon-the mystic isle of the dead of Welsh legends..

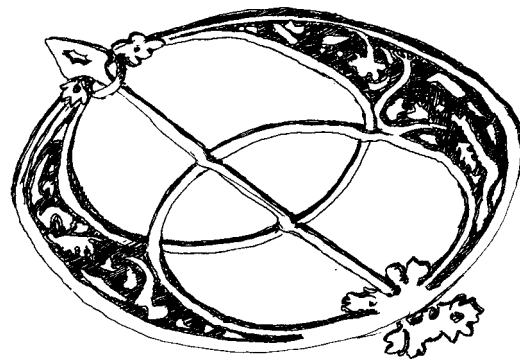
The vitality and inventiveness of Glastonbury legends lives on.-legends of Arthur and the Grail have become enmeshed with speculation about ley lines, the Druids,

and celestial zodiacs. So thirteen hundred years or more after the foundation of the Abbey Glastonbury still carries with it the atmosphere of a medieval pilgrimage centre -attracting to itself healers, practitioners of esoteric cults and "new age " religion and traders in the exotic as well as tourists coming for salvation or just to stare.

Take path leading down spine of Tor towards the Town.

Note the terraces built up onto the hillside.. These have been taken to be relics of Celtic or medieval farming, but one theory asserts that they comprise a man made labyrinth cut out of the hillside some three thousand years ago as part of a penitential rite. Such labyrinths were found in ancient Egypt and Crete. Local tradition also believed that the Tor is hollow and comprises the entrance to the underworld.

Path descends to road .Chalice Well on the right- peaceful gardens.^{xviii} The Chalice



Chalice Well symbol.

Late tradition identifies Chalice Well as the spot where Joseph of Arimathea hid the Grail-the spring flow through Iron Stone which gives its waters a red tinge. In the 18th century it was famous for its healing qualities, particularly for asthma

At next junction turn left. At the next major junction go straight on (Hill House). The the left.

Wearyall Hill is where St Joseph is supposed to have rested on his journey and stuck his staff into the ground whereupon it immediately burst into flower. The old thorn tree was cut down by the Puritans in the 17th century but cuttings were taken. The present tree dates from the early 19th century. It flowers in early January.

Looking west over the present industrial estate, by the Brue river, are meadows once known as St Brides Fields because of the association of the local chapel there with St Brigid .The area would have been natural landfall for pilgrims coming from Ireland. The chapel also features as the Chapel Adventurous in Arthurian Legends.

Return to road and descend the hill Turn right at the junction and look for a waymarked entrance to fields on the left. Cross the fields following waymarking. to an iron bridge over a weir. Half a mile down stream is **Pomparles Bridge** -the Arthurian Pons Perilis where Arthur, mortally wounded after the Battle of Cammlann, threw his sword into the water before being ferried across to Avallon.

After crossing the bridge turn right and walk along the river bank for about 400 yards. Turn left and cross the fields to a road. Turn right to follow road to church at **Street.**

Street has the air of a 19th and 20th century industrial town but has very ancient origins. Originally known as Lantakoy-the settlement of St Cai an otherwise unknown Celtic saint- it is one of the few Somerset settlements that preserved a Celtic place name after the Saxon conquests. The site is sited in a circular churchyard usually a sign of very early foundation ,and possible pre-christian religious use. In the middle ages the church was associated with St Gildas the Wise,the historian of Britain's decline and defeat, who is supposed to have retired from Glastonbury to found a church by a river nearby.

From the church follow the road past Strode College to Somerton Road. Turn left and carry on. After about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile turn right along Portway. Look for footpath sign on your left. Cross the fields to a lane. Turn right and then left. Continue along the road until you reach Middle

Brooks. Turn right and continue 400yards to Gooselade on the left. Turn into the close which leads to a path crossing a field. The path emerges onto a road .Turn right and then left along a path which climbs onto the Poldens

At the top of the hill turn left At just over 400 yards there is a cross roads. Take the narrow metalled lane immediately to your right .Pass Ivy Thorn Manor. Continue until road turns sharp right into the Somerset Levels. At this point turn left following the waymarking into a field .Turn right over a stile and then left over the next waymarked stile onto lane which leads to metalled road that goes to village of **Dundon.**

Go straight across the crossroads and follow the road around the village. The road passes around an Iron Age hill fort. After one mile turn right onto the Somerton Road and after about 300 yards turn left following footpath sign to **Bunch Wood.**The paths through Bunch Wood and Great Breach Wood are unwaymarked. .When the path enters the wood follow the track straight ahead; it soon bears right and meets a track climbing from the

right. Turn left and follow a track leading to a small clearing. Look for some wooden steps left which take the path up a steep incline where it emerges onto a track running left-right. Turn right and after 10 yards look for steps entering wood to the left. Climb steps to track joining from left. Turn right and soon join more steps which take the path onto a wooded plateau. Turn right along the path and after about 20 yards turn left along a grassy track which after 100 yards meets a slightly better defined forest track from the right. Turn left and keep on this track which bears right, with other tracks joining from left..

The track passes a marble **obelisk** commemorating the death of the son of a local rector in shooting accident in the mid 19th century

About 300 yard past the monument the track crosses a substantial forest track and after a further 400 yards the path leaves the wood and continues in a field along the wood's edge. When the corner of field is reached turn left along the field boundary. The path passes farm building to emerge onto Poldens Ridge road..Cross the

road and enter a field through a white gate. PF crosses the field diagonally right to a white gate clearly visible. It may be obstructed by planting in summer in which case turn right along the **Poldens Ridgeway** and take next road left. signed Butleigh.

Where the PF emerges onto Butleigh Road cross over and follow road marked to **Higher Hill Farm**. Follow road down to cross roads. At cross roads turn right and walk along the road to the lodge gate and take the track straight ahead leading to Kingsweston House and church.

Cross a cattle grid and turn left off a roadway by farm buildings. There are cottages on the right. The PF crosses a field but may be obstructed by planting in which case follow the field boundary to the left. The PF meets a track from the right. Carry on along the track which soon turns left and becomes overgrown but passable. Continue until the track emerges into a field. Cross the field diagonally left to join a track on the far side which leads down to Barton St. David.

Turn right by the church .Just beyond the church is a track way to the right. Follow it to a stile and enter a meadow. PF crosses to far side but there is very long grass in summer. The best route may be to cross to the ar side and pick up a rough track to the far corner of field .This path emerges onto metalled road. Turn right here and follow the road to T junction at **Keinton Mandeville**.

Turn right and then immediately left to take a PF signed to Coombe Lane. Follow the hedge left to the second gap. Then look right for a for stile and footbridge leading over ditch to next field. Take this and follow path to road, then turn left.. Follow the road past houses to its end and then turn right under a railway bridge. Beyond the bridge follow a PF signposted to the **Fosseway** .Turn right at the end and go to the end of an overgrown track .Take the stile left into a field. Cross to the field gate opposite, then follow the hedge to the right to the edge of the field. Cross to the next field by a stile and follow the PF to a gate diagonally opposite which leads onto Fosse Way.

Cross Fosse way and follow road to **Babcary**. Pass the church and turn right at the pub. After just over ½ mile take the road left leading to Little Stuert House. To the left of house is an entrance to a bridleway which can be muddy. After 1 mile the bridleway is crossed by track from the left. Turn right and follow the track for about 200 yards to where it enters a field . Look left for a small gap in hedge leading to an overgrown stile giving access to a field. Note waymark arrow indicating PF along edge of field. Follow the field's edge round to left to the field entrance(no gate) and cross into the next field. Carry straight on following the field boundary on the left. to a concrete bridge over a ditch. Turn left -do not cross ditch. At the next waymark point go straight on, joining track which veers right. When the track crosses into the next field go straight on (follow waymark). At the end of the field turn right over a ditch and then left following waymarking around field edges. Look out for a wooden bridge to the left which takes the path across next the field to a stile and bridge . Once over the bridge turn left. After ½ mile the path meets a trackway. Turn right to A303

Cross A303 (a very busy road) to a signed PF which after $\frac{3}{4}$ mile reaches **Queen Camel**. When the PF emerges onto a narrow road turn left. Cross the A359 and follow marked PF opposite to Western Bamfylde. Cross the field diagonally to your left. Cross into the next field and follow field's boundary to the left. Cross a railway line and go through the next field to the road. Turn right and take the next right. At the next junction follow signs to Little Weston. Just beyond the next junction is a Leyland Trail sign to the left. Cadbury Castle is on the on right . Follow the field boundary left and waymark signs to **South Cadbury**

Cadbury Castle shows signs of occupation going back 3000 years to Neolithic times. The huge hill fort was constructed about 600AD and became a stronghold of the Durotriges who controlled Dorset and South Somerset. Fell to the Romans in 70 AD after which it was abandoned as a stronghold. but may have contained a Roman Temple from the 3rd century. Re-fortified in the post Roman period and probably became centre of British rule in this part of the Britain guarding the southern flank of Selwood. .Probably abandoned for a

time after the Saxon conquests but reoccupied and substantially re-fortified by Ethelred the Unready who may have minted coins here. John Leyland was told during his journey through Somerset in the 1540's that Cadbury was the site of King Arthur's Camelot. By the entrance to the fort is a well known as **Arthur's Well**.

Additional Information

Public Transport

Train Enquiries	0117 929 4255
Badgerline Buses	01225 464446
Wilts and Dorset Bus Company	01722 336855
Thamesdown Transport	01793 523700

Tourist Information:

Glastonbury - 9,High Street - 01485 832954

Street - Clarks Village - 01458 447384

Accommodation: B&B is abundant in the area.

Youth Hostels:

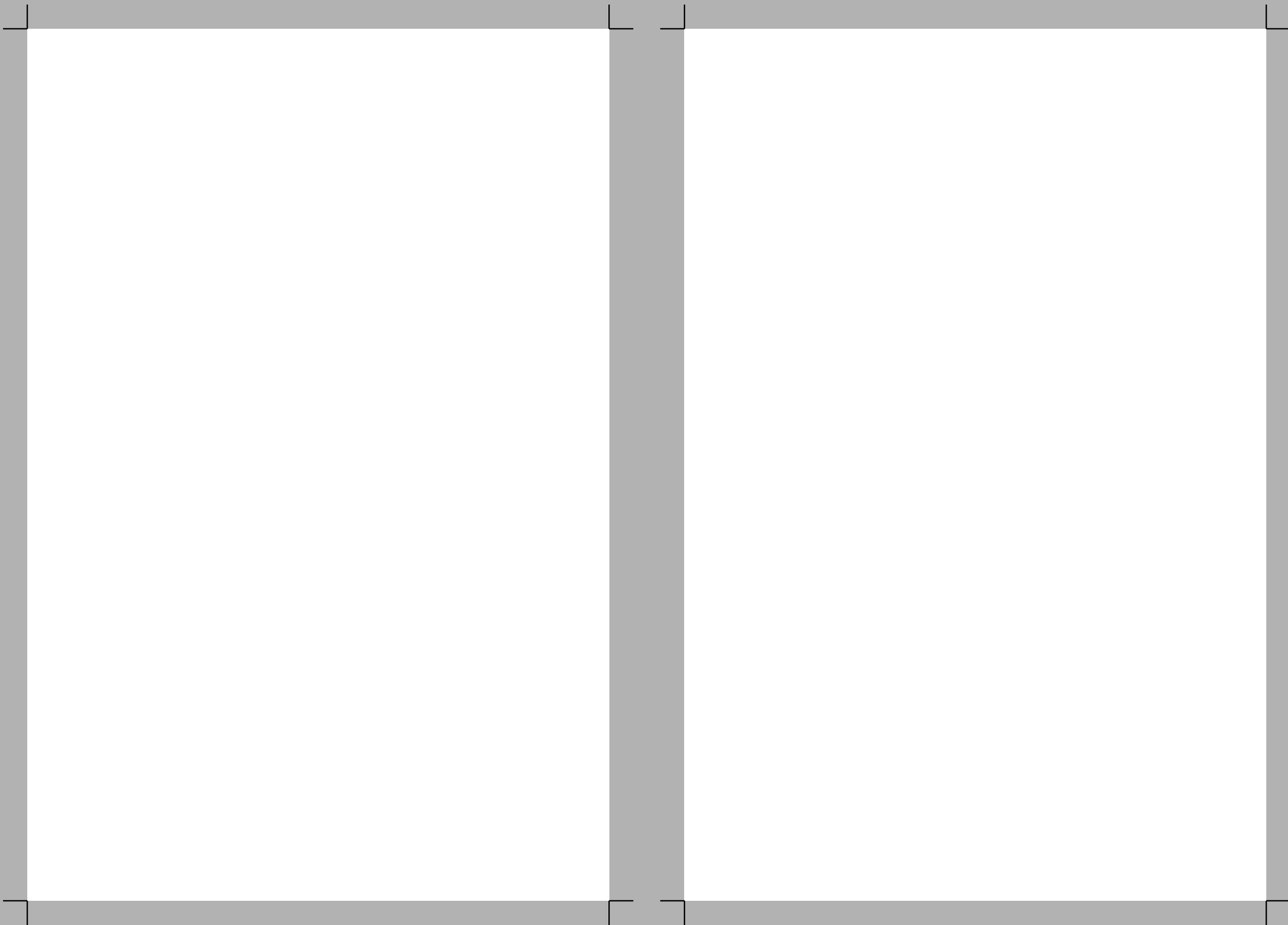
Street - 01458 442961

Salisbury - 01722 327572

Cheddar - 01934 742494

Centres:

The Chalice Well Trust - 01458 831154



ⁱ Anyone interested in the St Michael Line might find helpful the book *The Sun and the Serpent*, an investigation into earth energies, by Hamish Miller and Paul Broadhurst (Pendragon Press). It gives an account of their exploration of the St. Michael Line by dowsing from the tip of Cornwall up to Stonehenge and beyond.

ⁱⁱ The guide I used was *The Pembrokeshire Coastal Footpath* by Dennis R Kelsall.

ⁱⁱⁱ Information from *Sacred Stones* by Terry Jones, Gomer Press

Newport TIC - Tel/Fax 012339 820912

Newcastle Emlyn TIC - 01239 711333

Handing on:

The next section begins at Gors Fawr where this route ends. It takes the route

into Carmarthenshire as far as Merlin's Hill just outside Carmarthen. It runs through hilly farming country and includes some interesting villages and a burial chamber.

^{iv} Janet and Colin Bond's book: Mysterious Britain is the source of this information. The name of the rock: city or king's town, is interesting too. But then the whole area abounds with more questions than answers.

^v Tourist Information offices may still have copies of the old West Glamorgan leaflet about this walk which explains the history of this Logan Stone.

^{vi} Wales Cymru Tourist Guide 1997

^{vii} A Guide to the Prehistoric and Roman Monuments of England and Wales by Jacquetta Hawkes

The Megalithic Monuments of Wales by W F Grimes

The Penguin Guide to Prehistoric England and Wales by James Dyer

^{viii} Vivian Kelly - The Pilgrim's Guide to St Illtyd's Church

^{ix} There is a man-made conical mound in Caerleon - The Mynde - about 50 feet high which may be worth a visit. Tennyson

links it with Guinevere and it is also one of the many places where story has it that Arthur and his knights lie sleeping(Editor)

^x The Ffwrwm complex in Caerleon is the main source of information - inevitably speculative - about the Arthurian connection with Caerleon. (Editor).

^{xi} This Dark Age site has been compared with the site at Cadbury in the West Country by Chris Barber in his book on Arthurian Caerleon, published by Blorenge Press.(Editor)

^{xiii} This is an old Roman Road linked with the Via Julia which ran from Bath to Carmarthen.

^{xiv} Walks in Northavon by Northavon District Council.

^{xv} The Jubilee Way, Northavon section, published by the old Northavon District Council, obtainable from Tourist Information in Chipping Sodbury

^{xvi} The Cotswold Way, by Mark Richards, published by Reardon and Son ISBN 1 873877 10 2

^{xvii} Avebury and Stonehenge - the greatest stone circles in the world - by Michael Pitts printed by Stones Print

^{xviii} The Chalice gardens, out of all the spiritual and material attractions of

Glastonbury, comes close to holding the essence of this pilgrimage town. Not only is it s deeply healing and peaceful place - thanks to the devoted efforts of the Chalice Well Trust - it is also a place of retreat and learning. For further information, a newsletter is available from the Trust's address - also in the Information section.

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chalicewell@dial.pipex.com (VJ Evans)

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