

THE IRON MOUNTAIN TRAIL - Part One

Circular Walk

Approx 11½ Km (7 miles) / 4½ hours / moderate to energetic



BLAENAVON CIRCULAR WALK

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This is a circular walk that can either be treated as a separate walk or can be combined with Part Two to give a 18Km, 12mile circuit of the major sites of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site. Both parts of the trail start from Pen-ffordd-goch Pond Car Park (locally known as Keeper's Pond) at SO 254 197. There are other car parks, indicated in red in the route description with their locations marked on the plan; these car parks can also be used as your starting point if you wish, as the route description takes this into account. Parts of the trail cross open mountain and rocky areas so please ensure you have warm and waterproof clothing. Good walking boots or shoes are essential.



Winter scene at Keeper's Pond

Starting from the **Keeper's Pond Car Park**, follow the stoned footpath that goes around the outskirts of the pond to the interpretation panel at the end of the path. Keeper's was the final of three reservoirs or ponds built to supply water for the forges and works of Garn Ddyrys (garn = cairn, ddyrys = tangled/difficult). At the information panel, turn down to your



Native wildlife on the walk!

Cwm lfor. About 100 m from the road the path forks at a large grey limestone boulder set in the grass. Take the right hand path that heads down hill along an old parish road known as **Rhiw lfor** (rhiw=incline/ascent). Shortly after passing a rocky outcrop on your left, the path comes to a junction where Rhiw lfor crosses **Hill's Tramroad**, turn right and crossing the head of the Cwm Sienkin brook, continue along the tramroad towards **Garn Ddyrys**. This tramroad, named after the Blaenavon Ironmaster, Thomas Hill, was constructed around the 1820's and was built to connect the Blaenavon Ironworks with the canal at Llanfoist. About 20m along from the brook, on the right there are the remains of a building that may have housed a blacksmith's shop (although it is also known as the Tumble beer house!). Continue along the track, looking for the large misshapen pile of forge slag to your left. After about ½Km and just before you walk between what appears to be two long mounds, the long mound on your right is actually a retaining wall for the lower pond. As the track turns to the right, in the distance are the distinctive Sugarloaf and Tabletop mountains: beyond that, on a clear day can be seen Pen y fan and Fan y Big (fan = lofty, peak, big = point/spike, pen = top/chief) of the Brecon Beacons. As the track turns up hill, to your right is the rectangular depression of the silted-up lower pond. Do not continue up the hill, turn left and walk between a high bank on your right and a fence on your left.

You are now walking through the site of the **Garn Ddyrys** foundry with the overgrown foundations of the furnaces, forges and other buildings all around. The slope to your right is topped by the ruin of the retaining wall for the upper pond that supplied water to the forge steam engine. Water could be fed directly from this pond into

left, (crossing a wooden footbridge and continue to bear left) along a rough path that takes you down onto the road. Cross over the road and follow the footpath that curves to the right around the head of the valley of



Lower pond at Garn Ddyrys

the steam engine's boiler from an outlet that can still be seen in the upper part of the retaining wall, or fed to the lower pond by way of a stone lined culvert. The furnaces and forges butted up to this slope on the right and on the left are the foundations of a house and what remains of the sites waste heaps.

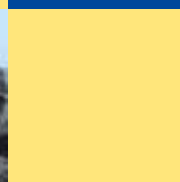
Garn Ddyrys processed the 'pig' iron from Blaenavon Ironworks, producing a less brittle, more malleable product. The iron pigs or ingots were fed into a long low brick furnace which had a hearth between the coal fire and the chimney. Once the metal became semi molten, it was 'puddled' to allow as much of the metal as possible to come into contact with the air, burning off the carbon that made the iron brittle. It could take several hours before the worked iron would form a solid lump or 'bloom' which could then be wrought.

The process required a lot of strength and skill as the puddlers had to 'raddle' the iron continually, gauging and altering the temperature of the furnace. Once they felt the bloom was finished, they lifted the 2cwt lump of iron out of the furnace and took it to the hammers. The bloom still contained impurities in the form of slag which had to be removed by beating the iron with a steam driven hammer. The forge was a dangerous place as a workman had to manipulate the iron during the process and at each drop of the hammer white hot slag would spray across the workshop.

Once the slag had been removed, the iron was then rolled into bars or rails in the steam powered rolling mills. The site was only productive for about 50 years and in the 1860's its machinery was dismantled and moved a new site at Forgeside, Blaenavon.



Upper pond outlet



Head for the pair of wooden electricity poles ahead of you, skirting around to the right of the stone wall continue to the right hand side of the poles, then follow the green track up onto the road. Cross the road and bear left up the grassy bank, keeping the stone walls on your right and the road on the left. Head towards a ruined stone enclosure about 40m ahead of you, cut across the left hand corner of the enclosure and then make your way carefully down to the **Hill's Tramroad** below. The stone walls and brick rubble around you are all that remain of the part of the village known as **Garn Ddyrys Row**. In 1851, a few years before the closure of the plant, the census recorded a population of 300 people living around the forge.

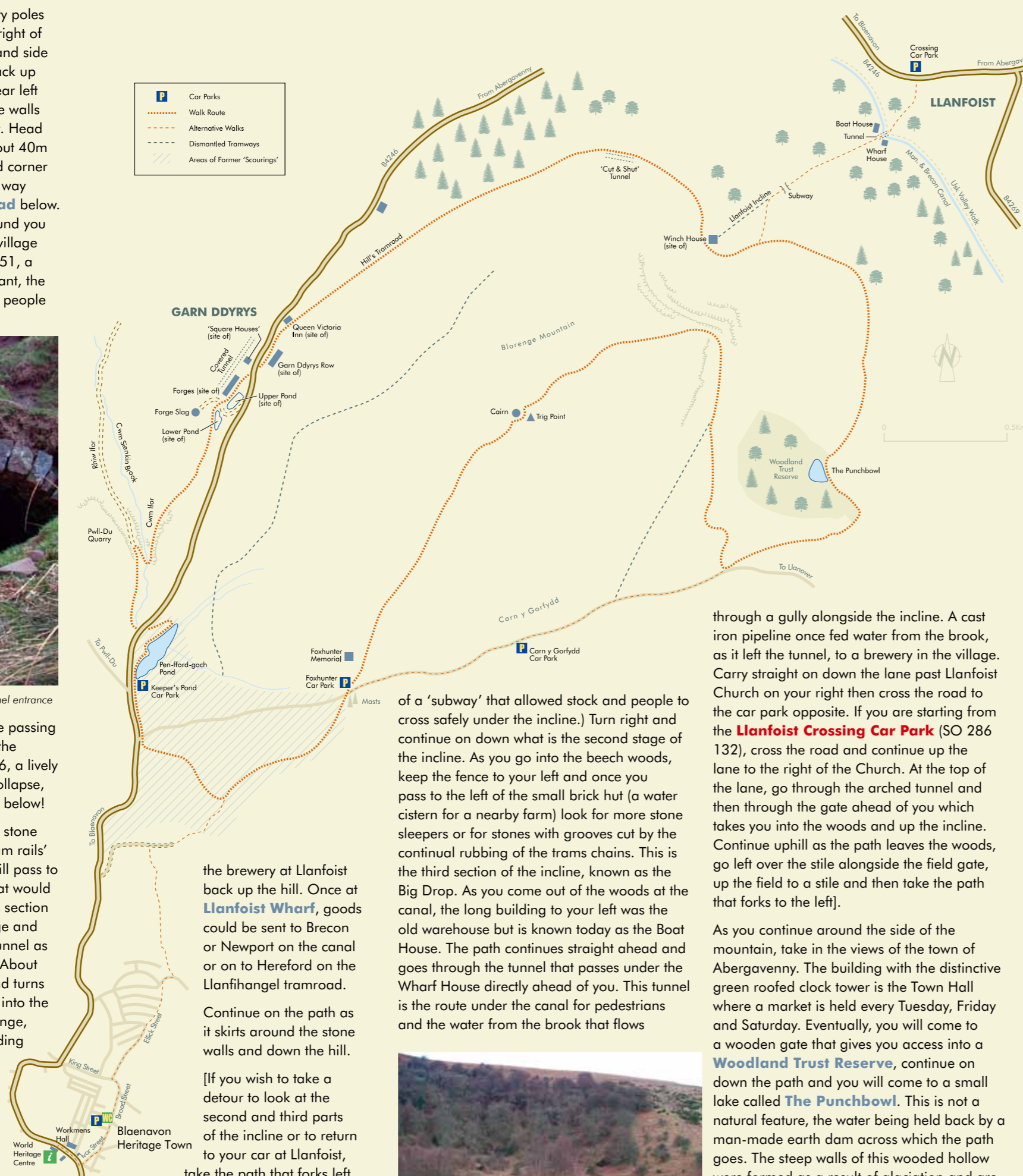


'Cut & shut' tunnel entrance

On the tramroad once again, you are passing (on your left) the site of a pub called the **Queen Victoria Inn**, where in 1946, a lively party caused the floor of the bar to collapse, depositing the clientele into the cellar below!

As you walk along the track, look for stone sleepers that would have held the tram rails' plates in place. Further along, you will pass to the left of a 'cut & shut' tunnel that would have been constructed to protect this section of the tramroad from ground slippage and loose rock. Please do not enter the tunnel as it is a scheduled ancient monument. About 1/2km further on the path narrows and turns more sharply to the right, taking you into the hollow on the north face of the Blorenge, to the right are the remains of a building built into the bank.

You are approximately at the site of the **Winch House** at the top of the first section of the three stage incline down the Cwm Craf Valley to Llanfoist. The wooden trams, loaded with iron ore, coal, limestone and finished iron, were attached to continuous chains which passed around a brake wheel. The full trams descended under gravity, pulling the empty or trams lightly laden with agricultural produce or beer from



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the brewery at Llanfoist back up the hill. Once at **Llanfoist Wharf**, goods could be sent to Brecon or Newport on the canal or on to Hereford on the Llanfihangel tramroad.

Continue on the path as it skirts around the stone walls and down the hill.

[If you wish to take a detour to look at the second and third parts of the incline or to return to your car at Llanfoist, take the path that forks left, continue over the stile and down through the field, then go left over the stile alongside the field gate. (Before you go over the stile, to your left further down the field there is an arched stone structure, the remains

of a 'subway' that allowed stock and people to cross safely under the incline.) Turn right and continue on down what is the second stage of the incline. As you go into the beech woods, keep the fence to your left and once you pass to the left of the small brick hut (a water cistern for a nearby farm) look for more stone sleepers or for stones with grooves cut by the continual rubbing of the trams chains. This is the third section of the incline, known as the Big Drop. As you come out of the woods at the canal, the long building to your left was the old warehouse but is known today as the Boat House. The path continues straight ahead and goes through the tunnel that passes under the Wharf House directly ahead of you. This tunnel is the route under the canal for pedestrians and the water from the brook that flows



The Punchbowl

through a gully alongside the incline. A cast iron pipeline once fed water from the brook, as it left the tunnel, to a brewery in the village. Carry straight on down the lane past Llanfoist Church on your right then cross the road to the car park opposite. If you are starting from the **Llanfoist Crossing Car Park** (SO 286 132), cross the road and continue up the lane to the right of the Church. At the top of the lane, go through the arched tunnel and then through the gate ahead of you which takes you into the woods and up the incline. Continue uphill as the path leaves the woods, go left over the stile alongside the field gate, up the field to a stile and then take the path that forks to the left].

As you continue around the side of the mountain, take in the views of the town of Abergavenny. The building with the distinctive green roofed clock tower is the Town Hall where a market is held every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday. Eventually, you will come to a wooden gate that gives you access into a **Woodland Trust Reserve**, continue on down the path and you will come to a small lake called **The Punchbowl**. This is not a natural feature, the water being held back by a man-made earth dam across which the path goes. The steep walls of this wooded hollow were formed as a result of glaciation and are now a favourite haunt of Green Woodpeckers and Buzzards. In the past, this secluded spot was a venue for illegal bare knuckle fist fights! Continue up the path as it follows the line of an old stone wall and ancient beech hedge.

Up in the woods is at least one charcoal burning platform as timber from beech trees produced a hot burning charcoal that was essential in the very early years of iron production. After going through the gate at the top of the path, continue straight ahead and through another wooden gate. At the metallated road, turn right at the end of the walled wooded enclosure and follow the path as it climbs uphill.

[Should you wish to take a slightly easier route, continue along the road until you reach the Foxhunter Car Park by the twin masts. Be aware that whilst this road is not very busy it is narrow with poor visibility, so be vigilant for vehicles.]

The path bears right, then steeply uphill away from the wall for about 120m, where the wall turns back towards the path. From this corner of the wall, continue straight up the hill and after about another 200m the path meets a sunken track. Turn right into this track and continue on until this leads you up onto a



Stone sleepers on Hill's Tramroad

wider grassed track. This would be a good opportunity to catch your breath and take in the view of the Usk Valley. The low rounded shoulder of the hill directly below you is Coed y Prior (Priors Wood), the small wooded tump in the middle is Ysgyryd Fach (the Little Skirrid) and on the left is the Ysgyryd Fawr (the Big Skirrid). This hill is easily identified by the prominent landslip on its left slope, about which there are many legends, one being that Noah's Ark sliced through the hill when the flood was receding. During the Iron Age the top of the hill was fortified and in later years a small medieval chapel was constructed at the summit of the Skirrid as it was believed to be a 'Holy' mountain. Turn right and follow this track as it comes up onto one of the many false summits of the **Blorenge Mountain**. There are many little grassy hollows, pits

and spoil heaps on either side of the track, evidence of where the local stone has been 'quarried'. The limestone would have been used for agricultural purposes or for iron making whilst the conglomerate or pudding stone was used for millstones. Pass to the left of a small brick building once used as a wireless hut. Follow the rough path through the heather which leads up and over another false summit from where you can see the Trig Point ahead of you. As you climb, the underlying layer of the quartz studded conglomerate stone is clearly visible. Continue on to the trig point, the true summit of the mountain. To the right of the concrete pillar is a much older stone cairn that marks the remains of a Bronze Age burial site. Go to the left of the **Trig Point** and follow the path as it heads towards the twin masts in the distance. Just before you reach the **Foxhunter Car Park** (SO 263 107), as you pass a jumble of limestone rocks, take a short detour to visit the memorial for the Olympic gold medal show jumper '**Foxhunter**'. Cross the road and take a path to the right of the masts. After about 700m you have 3 choices. You can continue onwards to link with Part 2 of the Iron Mountain Trail. To return to the car park, turn right into a small valley (caused by miners "scouring out" iron ore with water) and go along the path cut through the heather. Cross the road and walk down the grass verge back towards the Keepers Pond car park; on the eastern side of which further scourings can be seen. The third option, if you wish to visit the town or to use its many amenities, turn left at the finger post and follow the way marks down the valley, past the reservoir and pond onto the Elgam Road. Cross over and bear right, then take the stepped path down the left hand side of the Elgam Estate. After about 200m, at the bottom of the path, keeping the green area on your left, continue straight ahead down the road. At the bottom of the road, turn left then bear right down Broad Street. Toilets and a bank can be found half way down, on the corner of Lion Street. Follow the fingerposts if you wish to visit the heritage centre. Retrace your steps to rejoin the Iron Mountain Trail Part 1.



Foxhunter Memorial

LLWYBR Y MYNYDD HAEARN - Rhan Un

Taith Gylch

Tua 11½ Km (7 milltir) / 4½ awr /
cymedrol i agniol



TAITH GYLCH BLAENAFON LLWYBR Y MYNYDD HAEARN - Rhan Un

Tua 11½Km (7 milltir) /4½ awr / cymedrol i egnïol

Dyma daith gylch sydd modd ei thrin fel taith ar wahân neu ei chyfuno â Rhan Dau i greu taith gylch sy'n 18Km/12milltir o gwmpas safleoedd amlycaf Tirwedd Ddiwydiannol Safle Treftadaeth y Byd Blaenafon. Mae'r ddwy ran o'r llwybr yn cychwyn o Faes Parcio Pwll Pen-ffordd-goch (neu "Pwll y Ceidwad" fel y'i gelwir yn lleol) - SO 254 197. Mae yna feysydd parcio eraill wedi eu nodi mewn lliw coch yn y disgrifiad o'r llwybr - nodwyd eu lleoliadau ar y cynllun; gellir hefyd defnyddio'r meysydd parcio hyn fel man cychwyn os ydych yn dymuno; rhoddir ystyriaeth i hyn yn nisgrifiad y llwybr. Mae rhannau o'r llwybr yn croesi'r mynydd agored a manau creigiog felly gwnewch yn siŵr fod gennyh ddillad cynnes sy'n dal dŵr. Mae esgidiau cerdded cryf yn hanfodol.

Gan gychwyn o **Faes Parcio Pwll y Ceidwad**, dilynwch y llwybr troed caregog sy'n mynd o amgylch cyrion y pwll tua'r panel dehongli ar ddiwedd y llwybr. Pwll y Ceidwad oedd yr olaf o'r tair cronfa ddŵr neu byllau a adeiladwyd er mwyn cyflenwi dŵr i'r gefeiliau a gwaith Garn Ddyrys. Wedi cyrraedd y panel gwybodaeth, trowch



Pwll y Ceidwad yn y Gaeaf



Bywyd gwyllt brodorol ar y daith!

mae yna fforch yn y llwybr ger clogfaen galchfaen mawr o liw llwyd sydd i'w weld ar y borfa. Cymerwch y llwybr ar y chwith sy'n teithio i lawr y bryn ar hyd hen ffordd y plwyf a elwir yn **Rhiw Ifor**. Nid nepell wedi mynd heibio brig creigiog ar eich chwith, daw'r llwybr at gyffordd lle mae Rhiw Ifor yn croesi **Tramffordd Hill**, trowch i'r dde a gan groesi blaen nant Cwm Siencyn, parhewch ar hyd y dramffordd tuag at **Garn Ddyrys**. Adeiladwyd y dramffordd hon a enwyd ar ôl Thomas Hill, Haearnfeistr Blaenafon, oddeutu'r 1820au er mwyn cysylltu Gwaith Haearn Blaenafon â'r gamlas yn Llan-ffwyst. Tua 20m ar hyd y nant, ar yr ochr dde fe welch adfeilion adeilad a allai ar un adeg fod wedi cynnwys siop gof (er ei fod hefyd yn cael ei alw'n 'Tumble beer house'). Parhewch ar hyd y trac, gan gadw llygad agored am bentwr o sorod di-lun i'ch chwith. Ar ôl tua ½Km, fe welch yr hyn sy'n ymddangos fel dau dwmpath hir, y twmpath ar eich ochr dde mewn gwirionedd yw wal gynnal y pwll isaf. Wrth i'r trac droi i'r dde, fe welch yn y pellter fynydd Pen-y-fâl a'r hyn a elwir yn fynydd Tabletop: y tu hwnt i'r rhain, ar ddiwrnod clir mae modd gweld Pen y Fan a Fan y Big ym Mannau Brycheiniog. Wrth i'r trac droi am i fyny, i'ch ochr dde fe welch bant cyfonglog, lleidiog y pwll isaf. Peidiwch â pharhau i fyny'r bryn, trowch i'r chwith a cherddwch rhwng y banc uchel ar eich ochr dde â'r ffens ar eich chwith.

Rydych nawr yn cerdded drwy safle ffowndri **Garn Ddyrys** lle welch sylfeini'r ffwrneisi, gefeiliau ac adeiladau gwasgaredig sydd bellach wedi eu gorchuddio â thyfiant. Ar ben y llethr ar eich ochr dde fe welch adfail wal gynnal y pwll uchaf a fu unwaith yn cyflenwi dŵr ar gyfer injan ager yr efail. Roedd modd bwydo'r dŵr yn uniongyrchol o'r pwll i foeler yr injan ager a hynny drwy allfa sydd i'w gweld hyn oed heddiw yn

i'ch chwith, (gan groesi pompren a pharhau i gadw i'r chwith) ar hyd llwybr garw sy'n eich tywys i lawr i'r heol. Croeswch y bont a dilynwch y llwybr troed sy'n troi tua'r dde o gwmpas pen y cwm, **Cwm Ifor**. Tua 100m o'r heol



Pwll isaf yn Ngharn Ddyrys

rhan uchaf y wal gynnal, neu ei fwydo i'r pwll isaf drwy geuffos wedi'i leinio â cherrig. Arferai'r ffwrneisi a'r gefeiliau fod yn agos iawn i'r llethr ar y dde, ac ar y chwith mae sylfeini'r hyn a fu unwaith yn dŵr, a gweddillion tomennydd gwastraff y safle.

Arferai Garn Ddyrys brosesu haearn 'crai' o Waith Haearn Blaenafon, gan gynhyrchu cynnyrch llai brau a oedd yn fwy hydrin. Bwydwyd yr haearn crai neu'r ingotau i'r ffwrnais briciau hir ac isel a oedd yn meddu ar aelwyd rhwng y tan glo â'r simnai. Unwaith byddai'r metel wedi toddi'n rhannol cawsai ei 'bwdlo' er mwyn caniatáu i gymaint o'r metel â phosib ddod i gyswllt â'r aer, felly'n llosgi'r carbon a wnaed yr haearn yn frau. Gallai hyn gymryd nifer o oriau cyn y byddai'r haearn a driniwyd yn ffurfio cnepyn solid neu 'blŵm' a fyddai wedyn yn cael ei droi'n haearn gyr.

Roedd angen cryn lawer o nerth a sgil ar y pydlwyr wrth iddynt 'radlo'r' haearn yn barhaol yn ystod y broses, gan fedryddu a newid tymheredd y ffwrnais. Unwaith y teimlent fod y blŵm wedi dod i ben, byddent yn codi cnepyn 2 ganpws o haearn allan o'r ffwrnais a'i ddwyn at y morthwylion. Roedd y blŵm yn parhau i gynnwys amhureddau ar ffurf sorod, felly rhaid oedd gwaredu arno drwy guro'r haearn â morthwyl ager. Roedd yr efail yn le peryglus gan fod yn rhaid i weithiwr drin yr haearn yn ystod y broses, a gyda chwymp y morthwyl, byddai sorod poeth yn chwistrellu ar draws y gweithdy.

Unwaith y tynnwyd y sorod, cawsai'r haearn ei rholio i farrau neu reiliau yn y melinau rholio a bwerwyd gan ager. Bu'r safle'n cynhyrchu am tua 50 mlynedd yn unig ac yn y 1860au datgysylltwyd a symudwyd beiriannau i safle newydd Forgeside, Blaenafon.



Allfa'r pwll uchaf



TAITH GYLCH BLAENAFON

LLWYBR Y MYNYDD HAEARN - Rhan Un

Mae Llwybr y Mynydd Haearn yn gyfle unigryw i archwilio tirwedd ryfeddol Safle Treftadaeth y Byd, sydd wedi ei lleoli rhwng trefi Blaenafon a'r Fenni yng nghornel De Ddwyrain Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog yn Ne Cymru. Mae'r llwybr ysbennnydd yn dilyn llwybrau'r tramffyrdd, y llethrau a'r llwybrau troed gynt sy'n cysylltu nifer o nodweddion hanesyddol a rhydd statws mor bwysig i'r dirwedd hon.

Yn Nhachwedd 2000 cafodd Tirwedd Ddiwydiannol Blaenafon ei dynodi'n Safle Treftadaeth y Byd gan ei bod yn un o'r enghreifftiau gorau o'i fath yn y byd hyd heddiw o ran tirwedd a grëwyd wrth gloddio am lo a chreu haearn'.

Mae'r llwybr yn ymdroelli drwy'r dirwedd heibio i nifer o safleoedd y cyfeirir atynt yn 'Rape of the Fair Country', gan Alexander Cordell, gan gynnwys safle Gefail Garn Ddrys.

Mae yna hefyd nifer o nodweddion naturiol rhyfeddol, gyda Mynydd y Bloreus yn ffurfio rhan uchaf y llwybr ac yn cynnig golygfeydd godidog ar draws y Mynyddoedd Du, Dyffryn Wysg a Dyffryn Torfaen. Mae'r nodweddion eraill megis y 'Punchbowl', Chwael Pwll Du a Gwaith Haearn Blaenafon yn sicrhau bod y llwybr yn un bythgofiadwy.



Tomen slag y ffwrn yng Ngharn Ddrys

TAITH GYLCH BLAENAFON

LLWYBR Y MYNYDD HAEARN - Rhan Un

Mwynhewch gefn gwlad a pharchwch ei fywyd a'i waith;
Gwylwch rhag unrhyw risg o dân;
Caewch bob clwyd;
Cadwch eich cŵn dan reolaeth, ar dennyn os yn bosib;
Cadwch at lwybrau cyhoeddus sy'n croesi tir fferm;
Defnyddiwch glwydi a chamfeydd i groesi ffensys, llwyni a waliau;
Gadwch lonydd i dda byw, cynydau a pheiriannau;
Ewch â'ch sbwriel adref;
Helpwch gadw dŵr yn lân;
Gwarchodwch fywyd gwyllt, planhigion a choed;
Cymerwch ofal arbennig ar ffyrdd gwledig;
Peidiwch â gwneud sŵn diangen.

Mae tafenni teithiau cerdded eraill ar gyfer Safle Treftadaeth y Byd ac ardaloedd eraill yn Nhorfaen ar gael. Am wybodaeth bellach cysylltwch â Chanolfan Groeso Blaenafon ar 01495 742333 www.visitblaenavon.co.uk



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

*Cefnogir gan Raglen
Blaenau'r Cymoedd*

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