

# PRESELI CIRCLE WALKING TRAIL

*Bedd Arthur*



Pembrokeshire Greenways  
Lonydd Glas Sir Benfro



## GREENWAYS

One in a series of free publications that detail walks which are accessible by public transport. Other titles are available from local Tourist Information Centres, [www.planed.org.uk](http://www.planed.org.uk) or 01834 860965.

**Area Guides:** Walk & Ride, Explore Pembrokeshire by Rail, The Landsker Borderlands, South of the Landsker, the Secret Waterway, Coastal Splendour and Hidden Heritage.

**Walking Guides:** Angle Peninsula Walks, All Saints Walks, Canaston, Minwear Woods & the Knights Way, Guided Walks from Railway Stations, Lampeter Vale Walks, Llawhaden Walks, Narberth Country Walkers, the Miners Walk, the Ritec Valley Walk, Three Walks in Newport Pembrokeshire,

Llandissilio - St Tysilio's Walks and Crymych - The Frenni Trails.

**Details of walks can also be found on:** [www.pembrokeshiregreenways.co.uk](http://www.pembrokeshiregreenways.co.uk)

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

### Buses

**405 Poppit Rocket**, serving Coastal Path between Cardigan - Fishguard

**PGD Preseli Green Dragon** (0845 602 7008) serving Preseli Hills and Gwaun valley

**404 Strumble Shuttle**, Fishguard-St Davids (via coast)

**411** Fishguard-St Davids-Haverfordwest

**412** Cardigan-Fishguard-Haverfordwest

**410** Fishguard town service

**390** Tenby-Narberth-Cardigan

**430** Crymych-Cardigan

**460/461/X60** Cardigan-Carmarthen

### Trains

Station - Fishguard Harbour. National Rail

Enquiries 08457 48 49 50, Welsh Language 0845

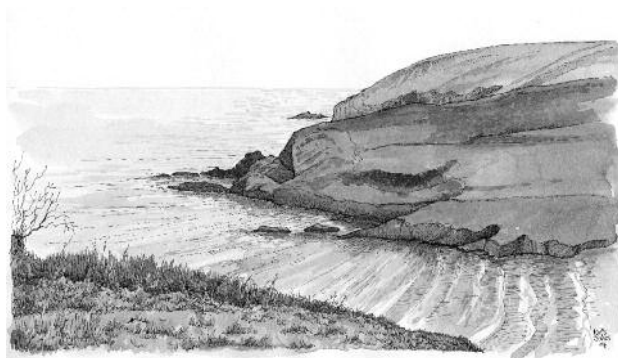
60 40 500, Textphone 0845 60 50 600,

[www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

All Wales Public Transport Information Service

Traveline Cymru 0870 608 2 608 (Minicom 0870 241 2216)

[www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)



*Pwllgwaelod*

The 67 mile (108km) **Preseli Circle Walking Trail** offers 7 days of walking through a unique variety of landscapes and the experience of the distinct North Pembrokeshire culture.

The walk begins at Fishguard, then heads inland to the timelessness of the Gwaun valley.

On from the Gwaun Valley, the mystery of the Preseli Hills unfolds, where the memories of ancient peoples are almost tangible and prehistoric sites abound. The area is shrouded in mysticism, with strong links to King Arthur and the Mabinogion. The Bluestone quarry is awe inspiring provoking thoughts and questions about man's very existence. The trail

then follows the redundant Cardi Bach railway tracks to Cilgerran along the Teifi Gorge with its coracle fishing and on to the estuary at Cardigan. The Pembrokeshire Coast Path marks the return trek westwards with the spectacular cliffs of Cemaes Head and on to the

cosy refreshment hives of Newport, the final stretch from Dinas Island to Fishguard, completes a journey truly worth making.

Copies of Ordnance Survey Explorer OL 35, 185 and 198 maps are recommended. All times/distances are approximate.

### The key to en-route facilities

S - Shop, R - Refreshments, B - Bank, A - Accommodation,  
I - Information, T - Toilet, CP - Car parking, SP - Street Parking

### Wildlife

Springtime flora of snowdrops, primroses, dog violets and purple orchids blossom, followed in late summer by red campion and sea campion on the cliffs. Woodland plants include wood sorrel, wood anemone, wild garlic and bluebell, upland plants include fir clubmoss, liverwort, sundews and orchids with a late summer carpet of heather and gorse.

The native woodlands include ash, beech, birch, blackthorn, grey willow, hawthorn, hazel, holly, oak, rowan, sweet chestnut, sycamore and wild cherry.

There are red admiral and marsh fritillary butterflies and southern damselfly.

Curlew, heron and oystercatcher frequent the estuaries and red kites around the hills. Coastal cliff birds include fulmars, guillemots, razorbills, cormorants, shags, peregrine falcons, ravens and choughs. Dolphins, porpoises and North Atlantic grey seals are seen along the coastline and otters, kingfishers and dippers along the riverbanks.



### 1) THE GWAUN VALLEY - Goodwick to Tregynon

(10½m/17km, 5 hrs)

Ascents 230m, descents 45m. 18 stiles, 6 gates, 1 footbridge.

**Gwaun Valley** R A CP Bus PGD

During the ice age melting water carved out the steep sided Gwaun valley which has helped to preserve its distinctive

communities. The Julian calendar remained after the Gregorian calendar was

introduced and local people still celebrate New Year 'Hen Galan' on 13th January.

The medieval ball game **Cnapan** described in George Owen's book 'Description of Pembrokeshire' 1603, was played in this part of North Pembrokeshire.

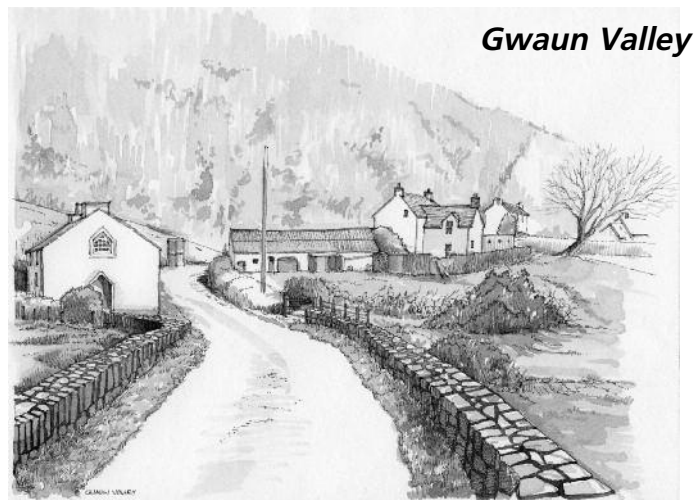
**Carn Ingli (Mount of Angels)**, visited by the C6th St Brynach, is the site of an Iron Age fort with stone embankments and hut circle remains.

**Llanychaer**, an Iron Age defensive enclosure is situated behind the village pub.

**Pontfaen**, St Brynach's churchyard has a Latin cross stone and a Celtic cross stone.

**Tregynon**, a probable Iron Age enclosure, with a semicircular earth bank and ditch.

**Gellifawr** sits between the two Preseli hills of Carningli and Foel Eryr.



## 2) THE PRESELI HILLS - Tregynon to Crymych

(11m/18km, 5½ hrs)

Ascents 455m, descents 410m. 9 stiles, 7 gates, 2 footbridges.

*In order to preserve the quality of the experience, paths are not waymarked or signposted on the open hill. Weather conditions can change rapidly. Please prepare accordingly and carry a map, compass and rations and wear appropriate clothing and footwear.*

**Preseli Hills** (no refreshment stops)

The Preseli views stretch to the Black Mountains, Snowdonia and the Wicklow Hills of Ireland. 'Everywhere you feel the presence of the megalithic tomb-builders, of the Iron Age warriors who piled the stones of the great hill forts and of kindly and absentminded old Celtic saints' wrote Wynford Vaughan Thomas.

**Foel Eryr (Eagles hill)** 1535ft/468m. Bronze Age burial cairn on the summit. The river Gwaun has its source on Foel Eryr's slopes.

**Bwlch Gwynt** 1325ft/405m. A drovers route from Fishguard towards Crymych.

**Foel Cwmcerwyn** 1760ft/536m. Highest point. The **Mabinogion** story of **Culhwch** and **Olwen** tells of the wild Irish boar **Twrch Trwyth**.

Culhwch's cousin **King Arthur** helped him on his quest to Ireland which ended in the killing of one of Twrch Trwyth's young boars. Twrch Trwyth crossed from Ireland to Foel Cwmcerwyn to gain revenge. He battled with **King Arthur** and many of Arthur's knights were slain, their bodies turning instantly to stone at the site known as **Cerrig Marchogion** (the Knight's Stones). **Bedd Arthur** is a stone circle claimed to be King Arthur's grave.

Another Mabinogion tale tells of **Pwyll Prince of Dyfed**, meeting his nobles at Preseli.

**The Golden Road** was an ancient trading route along the Preseli ridge to Whitesands Bay and Ireland.

**Carn Meini** is thought by some to be the source of the Bluestone used to construct the inner circle of Stonehenge.

**Foel Drygarn** 1200ft/363m is a formidable Iron Age fortress with double ramparts and ditches built around 350 BC, on the site of 3 Bronze Age burial cairns. **Bwrdd y Brenin**, a stone on the summit, fabled to hide a pot of gold. The Preseli Hills were used for training purposes during the two world wars and Rosebush hosted a World War II American military camp.

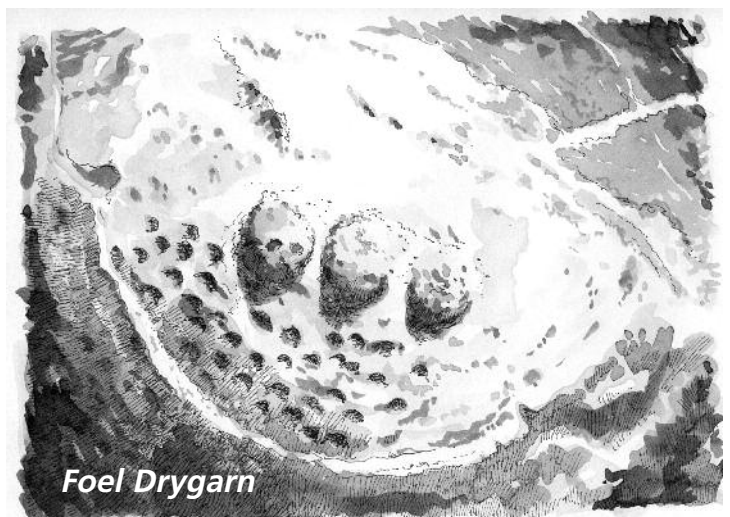
**Rosebush** S R A Bus PGD.

The railway was extended to Rosebush in 1876 to export the local slate and there

were ambitions to develop Rosebush as a mountain spa and holiday resort. A row of quarrymen's cottages and a corrugated zinc hotel were built. In 1943 Barnes Wallis used the area for his 'dam buster bouncing bomb' experiments.

**Maenclochog** S R A T CP SP Bus PGD.

St Mary's church stands in a raised churchyard and contains the inscribed stones to the sons of Cavetus. Monthly fairs were held on the village green which unusually surrounds the church. Maenclochog means the ringing stones.



## **Mynachlogddu** A SP Bus PGD

Mynachlogddu refers to the black habited monks of St Dogmaels Abbey who used the land for sheep grazing. **Gors Fawr** is the only Preseli free standing stone circle.

**Waldo's stone** commemorates the famous Welsh poet Waldo Williams 1904 -1971. His poem 'Preseli' is a personal testament to the hills.

**Thomas Rees** known as **Twm Carnabwth**, was believed to be **Rebecca** the leader of the first **Rebecca Riots** and is buried at Bethel Chapel.



**Twm Carnabwth's**  
*grave*

## **3) THE CARDI BACH - Crymych to Cilgerran**

10m/16km, 5 hrs. Ascents 230m, descents 440m. 36 stiles, 35 gates, 3 footbridges

**The Cardi Bach railway**, originally built from Whitland in 1873 for Glogue slate quarries and Llanfyrnach silver lead mines, reached Crymych in 1876, and extended to Cardigan in 1886. During the World Wars, military trains carried troops to Crymych railway station for the Preseli training camps. The line closed in 1962.



**Crymych**  
*Village*

**Crymych S R B A I T CP SP Buses**  
PGD 390 430.

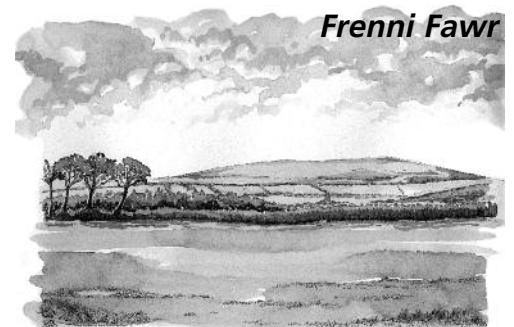
In the early 1800's Crymych was only a handful of houses and farms and the Crymych Arms. The village was originally a collection site for cattle herded along the drover's routes. It was also a coaching stop between Haverfordwest and Cardigan. The railway soon transformed Crymych into a busy commercial centre with a monthly market and two annual fairs.

## **Frenni Fawr**

1297ft/395m Frenni Fawr Folklore tells of an encounter of a shepherd with the Tylwyth Teg (the fairies) near the Bronze Age burial cairns on the summit, while legend tells of a chest filled with gold. The **Mabinogion** tells the dream of Maccsen Wledig, or Magnus Maximus, who proclaimed himself Roman Emperor of the West. When hunting on Frenni Fawr, he camped at a site that is to this day called Cadair Facsen (Mascen's Chair).

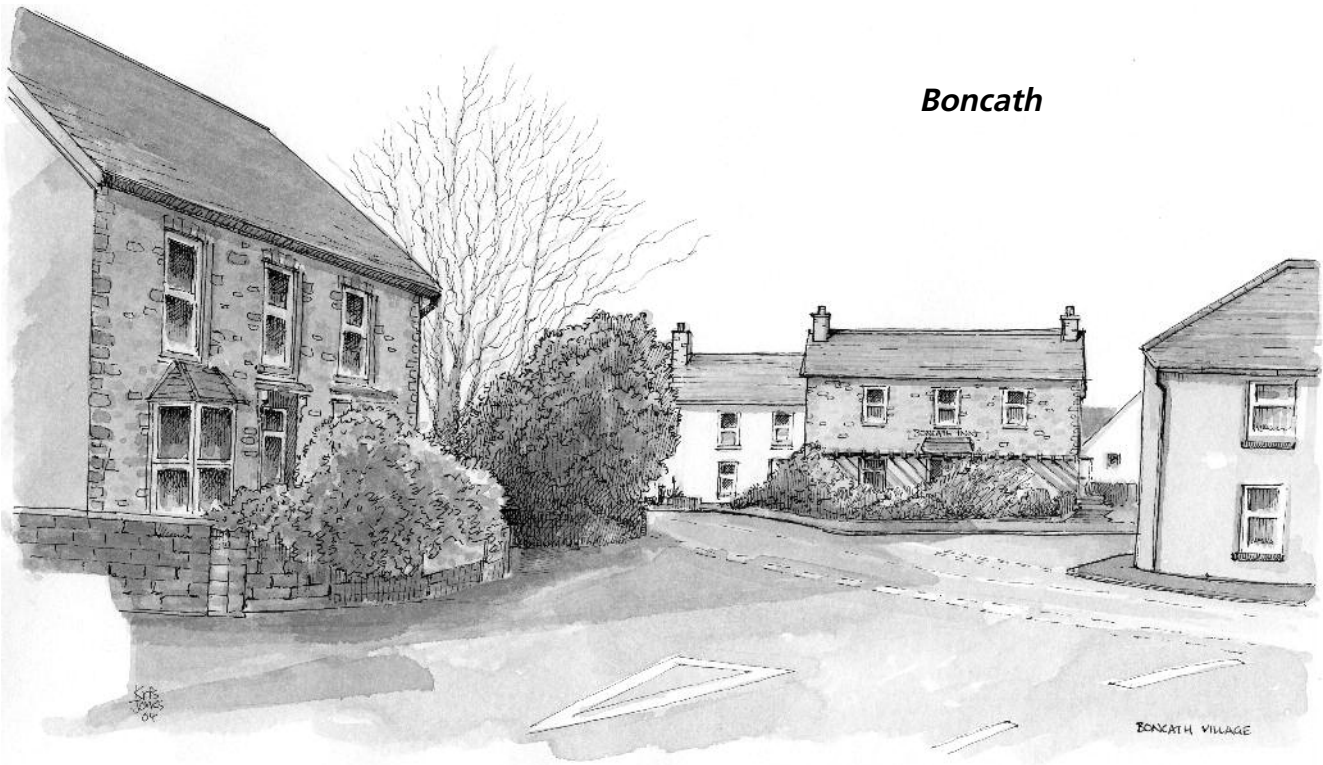
**Blaenffos** S R A Buses 390 430

The Cardi Bach line was extended from Crymych into Blaenffos en route to Cardigan.



**Frenni Fawr**

## Boncath



**Boncath** S, R, A, CP, SP 430 Bus

Boncath is Welsh for Buzzard. The village grew with the extension of the railway from Crymych.

### 4) THE TEIFI ESTUARY - Cilgerran to Poppit Sands

6m/9½km, 3 hrs

Ascents 145m, descents 145m. 4 stiles, 2 gates, 5 footbridges

**Cilgerran** S R A T CP SP Bus 430.

Cilgerran castle, high above the Teifi gorge, was rebuilt after a troubled period of capture and recapture from Welsh hands. St Llawddog churchyard has a C6th stone with Latin and Ogham inscriptions. Cilgerran was an important wool centre and exporter of Teifi slate, and coracles were used for salmon fishing.

The **Wildlife Centre** near Cilgerran is a popular nature reserve and study centre.

**Cardigan (Aberteifi)** S R B A I T CP SP Buses 405 390 412 430.

The strategically important Cardigan castle was built late C11th when the Norman, Robert

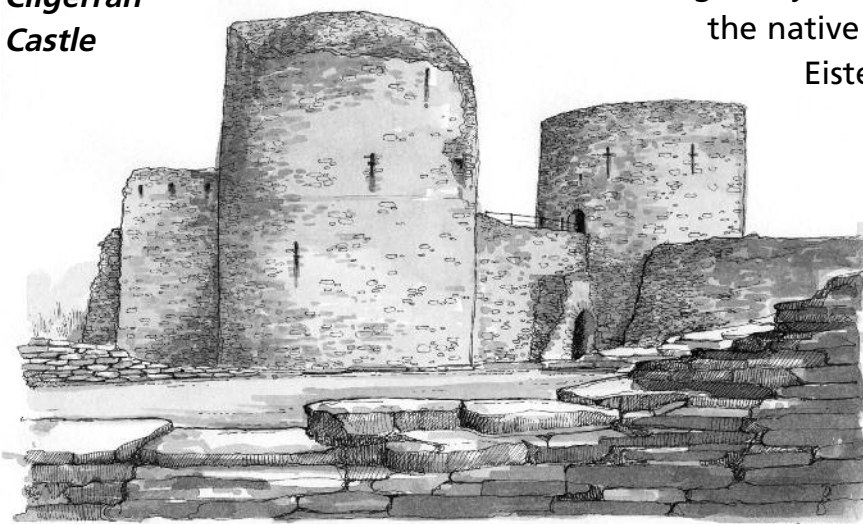
### **Cilgerran Castle**

Montgomery, established a stronghold against the native Welsh. The first recorded

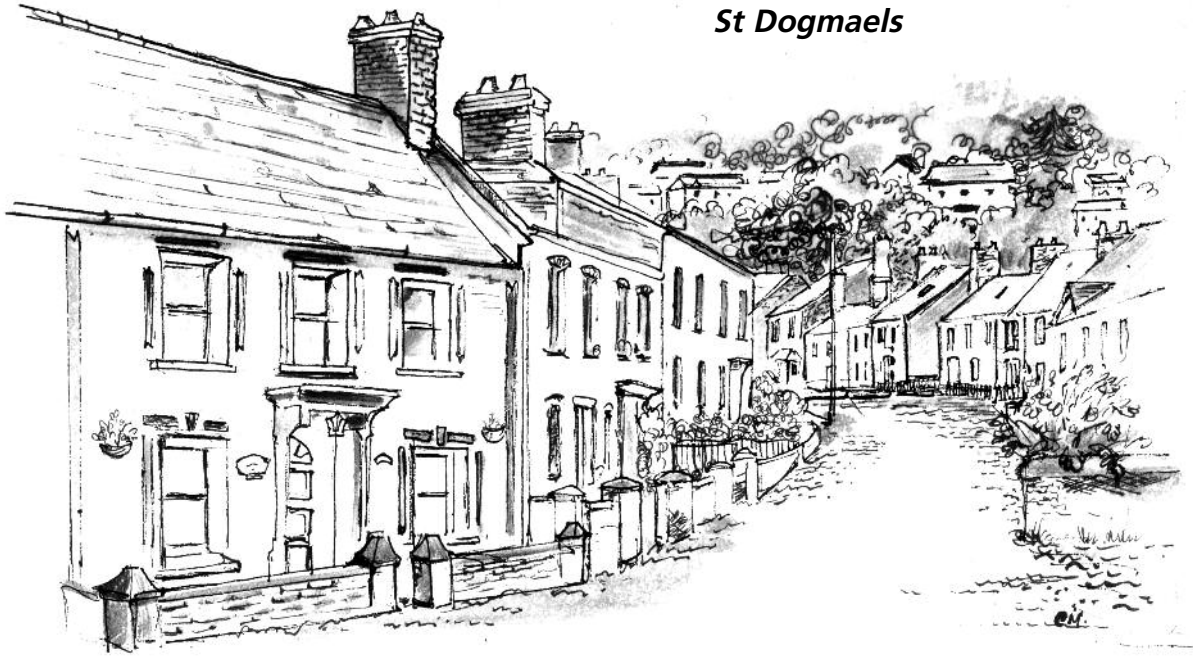
Eisteddfod was held at Aberteifi

castle in 1176, with competitors from other Celtic countries. Cardigan was an important seaport until the early C19th with busy shipbuilding and herring fishing industries.

It also developed as a market town.



## St Dogmaels



**St Dogmaels** S R A T CPSP Bus 405.

The Ogham stones indicate a C5th or C6th Christian presence and the SAGRANUS stone was important for deciphering the ancient Ogham script. Following the Norman invasion Benedictine monks built an abbey in 1120, replacing the earlier Celtic monastery. In the C18th and C19th, salted herrings being exported to Ireland and Spain. The monks introduced seine net fishing for salmon.

### **5) THE PEMBROKESHIRE COAST PATH - Poppit Sands to Newport**

14m/22½km. 7½ hrs or (7m/11km to Moylgrove and 8m/13km to Newport).

Ascents 415m, descents 415m. 17 stiles, 13 gates, 408 steps.

#### **Coast Path Safety Code**

Take care on the Coast Path - it runs through rugged, natural terrain. Please follow the Coast Path Safety Code:

- Keep to the path, away from cliff edges and overhangs.
- Always supervise children, especially near cliff edges.
- Walking surfaces can vary considerably with the weather. Always wear strong footwear with a good grip.
- Wear or carry warm and waterproof clothing.
- Cliff-top walking can be dangerous in high winds.
- Beware of taking shortcuts across beaches - you may be cut off by the tide. Swimming can also be dangerous.
- Do not sit under cliffs or climb them.
- Keep dogs under close control.

Remember - the Coast Path is for walkers. Most of its length is not suitable or safe for cycling or horse riding.



**Poppit Sands**

**Poppit Sands** S R A T CP Bus 405.

Poppit Sands is located at the mouth of the River Teifi, the dunes provide an important wildlife habitat, especially for the bee orchid.

**Cemaes Head** (no refreshment stops until reaching Newport)

The spectacular cliffs rise 175m. Thin layers of sandstone and shale alternate with mudstone, later compressed to form the

visible folds in the cliffs between Cemaes Head and **Ceibwr Bay**.

**Witches Cauldron** is a blowhole, a collapsed cave roof with a narrow passage connecting it to the sea. Bottle-nosed dolphins and porpoise may be seen offshore.

**Moylgrove/Trewyddel** S R A Bus 405.

The settlement was originally named 'Grava Matildas' - Matilda's grave. Matilda was the wife of Robert Fitzmartin, the Norman invader of Cemaes.

**Nevern** R A T Bus PGD.

Nevern Castle was built by Norman conqueror Robert Fitzmartin, but was seized by Prince Rhys ap Gruffydd in 1191. Inside St Brynach's church are the Latin Vitalianus and Ogham Maglocunus inscribed stones. Nevern Cross, C10th or early C11th, is almost 14ft high and of local dolerite stone. The famous yew tree is known for its blood-like seeping red sap.

## 6) THE PEMBROKESHIRE COAST PATH - Newport to Pwllgwaelod/Dinas

8½m/13½km, 4 hrs.

Ascents 100m, descents 100m. 6 stiles, 11 gates, 138 steps.

**Newport** S R B A I T CP SP. Buses PGD, 405, 412.

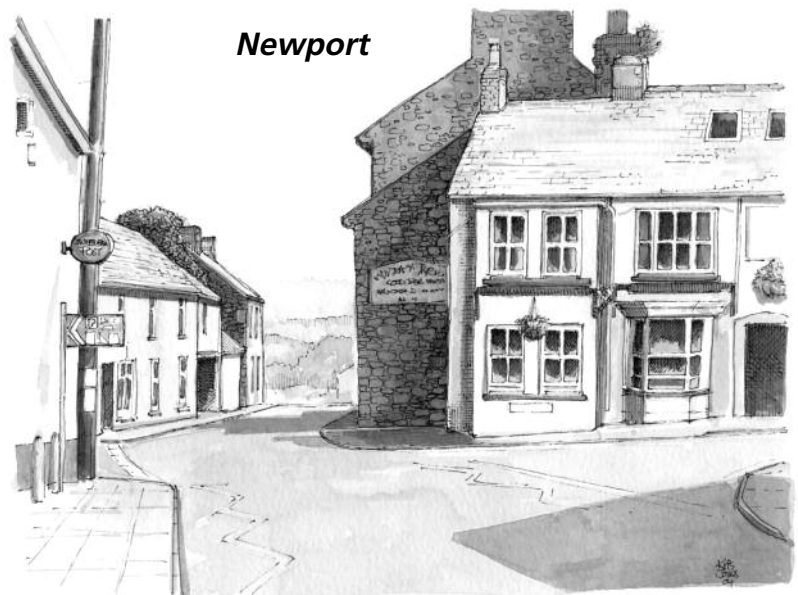
Newport castle was founded around 1200 by the Norman Lord William Fitzmartin after he was driven out of Nevern. The site changed hands several times between the fighting Normans and Welsh.

From 16Cth onwards Newport was an important trading and shipbuilding centre, exporting wool and herrings and importing bricks, limestone, tiles and coal.

**Carreg Coetan Arthur** is a Neolithic burial chamber. **Parrog** had several warehouses, one of which is now the Newport Boat Club.

**Dinas Island** S R A CP SP Bus 405, 412 (Dinas).

Dinas Island is almost separated from the mainland by a deep valley. The C12th church of St Brynach at Cwm-yr-Eglwys was destroyed by the great storm of 1859 and only the Belfry and west wall remain. **Pwllgwaelod** was once busy with little ships, an inn and a limekiln.



**Newport**

## 7) THE PEMBROKESHIRE COAST PATH - Pwllgwaelod to Goodwick

7m/11km, 3½ hrs.

Ascents 200m, descents 200m. 16 stiles, 8 gates, 295 steps.

**Fishguard (Abergwaun, mouth of the River Gwaun)** S R B A I T CP SP. Train. Buses 405, 404, 411, 412, 410.

**Lower Town** was the original Abergwaun.

Two centuries ago it was an important trading centre with more than 50 ships exporting corn, butter, fish and slate and it remained busy until the railway came. Lower Town was the setting for the film of Dylan Thomas' 'Under Milk Wood'. Glyn y Mel mansion was the home of Richard Fenton, author of 'A Historical Tour Through Pembrokeshire'. A new harbour and rail terminal were built at **Goodwick**.

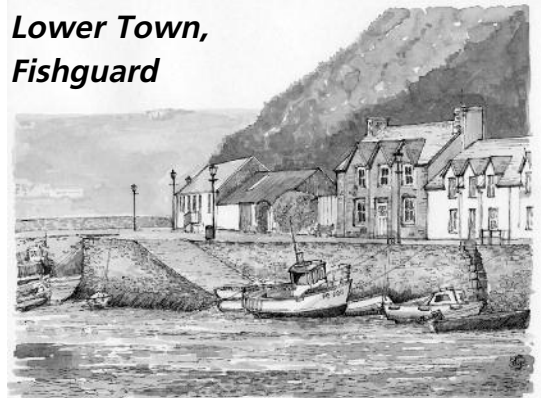
**Strumble Head** lighthouse was built 1908 and is a famous spot for watching seabirds and migrant birds.

**Fishguard Fort** was built 1779-81 and on 22 February 1797 its guns were fired to warn of approaching French ships. Four Napoleonic French vessels anchored off **Carreg Wastad** and the American commander William Tate and 1400 soldiers landed. They looted farms, got drunk and eventually surrendered on Goodwick Sands. The Royal Oak Inn displays the table on which the surrender was signed. It is said that **Jemima Nicholas** single-handedly rounded up some of the invaders, a memorial stone to Jemima is in St Mary's Church.

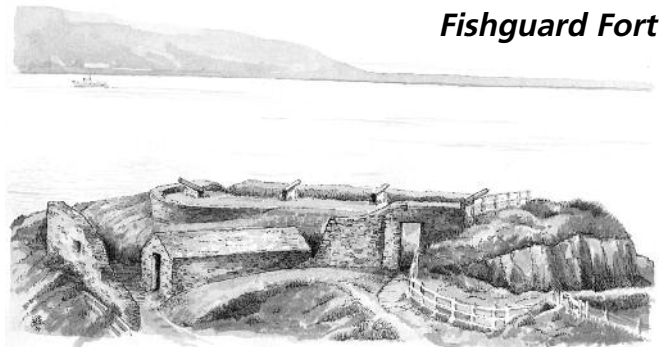


**Goodwick**

**Lower Town,  
Fishguard**



**Fishguard Fort**



## Country Code

### Respect • Protect • Enjoy

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.