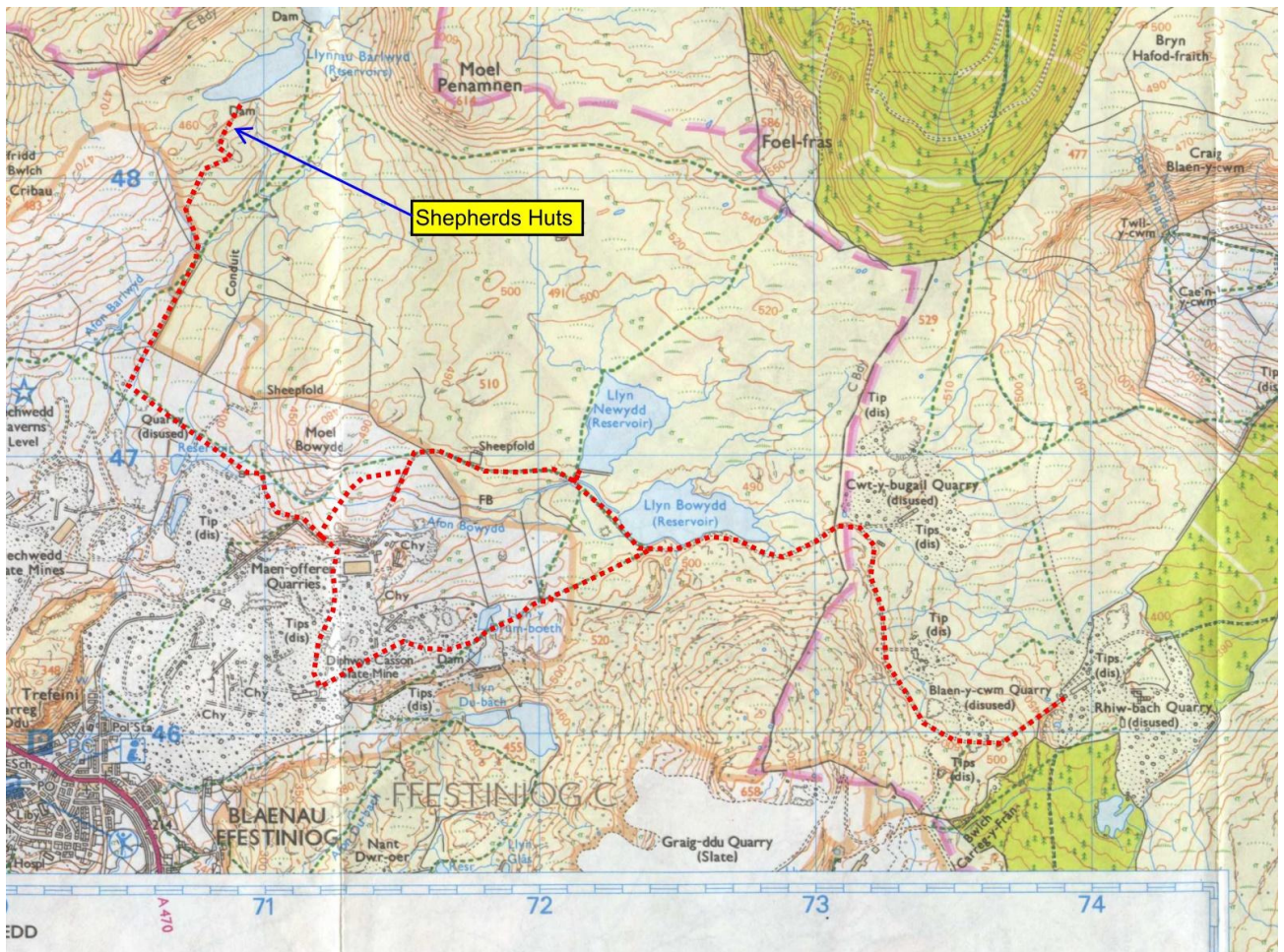


Walk 2 – The Rhiwbach Tramway and Diffwys Quarry - 10km circular walk.

The walk takes you to the long-abandoned Rhiwbach Quarry, which, due to its remoteness, still has buildings and the remains of a village. Along the way, you will pass beside two of our reservoirs in a very unspoilt area and may often encounter no one at all. On the return, you will go through Diffwys Quarry, the original quarry in Blaenau Ffestiniog, and on a clear day, you can see all the way down the valley to the sea.



From your hut either walk or take the buggy down the track until you get to a yellow post on the left which is 120m beyond the lower cattle grid. If taking the buggy please leave it off the road around here and take the key! Turn left and follow a feint path uphill which is marked by yellow-capped posts. The first post is where you left the track and the second is fairly obvious although the third is partially hidden by a small conifer tree.



The third marker post hiding beside a conifer tree.



Footpath marker on the end of the fence.

Head over tussock moorland to a pedestrian gate. Pass through, cross a track, and look for a footpath marker on the end of a line of fence. Head across the moorland aiming just to the left of a square building, which is our Maenofferen Power Station. This produces around 165kW of green electricity and uses a turbine which dates from 1927 – it might just make it to a hundred years! Ignore a footpath post up to the left which is in the wrong place. Aim for an electricity pole which has a metal box on it and this will bring you to a small stream with a slate slab bridge. Cross this and proceed through the gate ahead.

Head slightly downhill until, and, at the far corner of the building, turn left up a track. Before the next electricity post turn right onto an old tramway and follow this till it joins a quarry road coming in from the right. Note the old tank on your left at this point – it is an important marker on your return journey. Follow the quarry road to the left and soon a panorama opens on your right. The foreground is completely dominated by the remains of Slate Quarries but in the distance can be seen the Rhinog and Moelwyn mountains and in the far distance the sea to the north of Harlech. Carry along the track and after passing a building just below the track proceed a further 40m and turn left on a small track going steeply uphill – don't be tempted by some old buildings you will have seen ahead as you turn left since you will see more of these later.

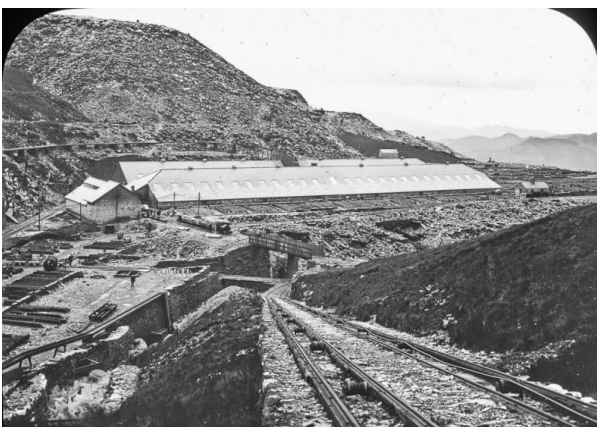


Looking down the valley with slate quarries in the foreground and the Moelwyns (White Mountains) centre right.



As the track becomes less distinct pass to the left of the rocky outcrop but to the right of the higher ground on the left.

Head uphill and, after a brief respite, pass by a small rocky outcrop to your left or to the right of a fenced area. The ground will start to steepen again, and you will see pipes on a ledge to your left. Keep going straight and you will soon find yourself on a plateau with a faint, but damp path. There's a small building off to your right, but you should keep going straight. After a while, you will reach the remains of an old horse-worked tramway that linked the Rhiwbach quarry with Blaenau Ffestiniog. This tramway was called the Rhiwbach Tramway and was built in 1860. Turn right and walk along the tramway until you reach the small building. This was a drum house that was used to lower wagons from the tramway down the hillside while at the same time pulling empty wagons up. Since the full wagons were heavier than the empty ones, no power was needed. Spread out beneath you are the remains of the Maenofferen Slate Quarry and its large slate mill. The mine was operational until 1997 and employed up to 400 men at its peak. We are currently seeking funding to restore the building.



This is how the derelict scene you see today at Maenofferen looked in 1908.



Gate with unusual slate tile, to the right, on the Rhiwbach Tramway.

To head back, turn around and follow the tramway for about 3 kilometres. You will need to cross a wall using a slate stile. After heavy rainfall, there might be large puddles on the tramway, but you can easily get around them. On your way, you will come across an old building, known as Ty'r-Mynydd (Mountain House), which has distinctive slate fencing. This type of fencing was commonly used in all slate quarrying areas, as it was inexpensive, easily available, and effective. Just before a large dip in the tramway, where a bridge used to be, you can take a short detour to the left to see Llyn Newydd, one of our reservoirs. It's a beautiful spot on a good day. Keep going along the tramway, and you will soon reach Llyn Bowydd. If you turn around just before reaching Llyn Bowydd, you can see Snowdon in the distance. It's worth noting that the tramway and the dam at Llyn Bowydd are the same structure.



Llyn Newydd with Moel Penamnen in the background.



Llyn Bowydd. The walk follows the formation of the tramway as it curves across the photo.

To continue your journey, keep following the tramway that runs alongside Llyn Bowydd and passes through a rock cutting. You will eventually come across a gate with a stile. Cross over it and proceed towards a wet section where you must stay to the left side of the ground. You will pass a few quarries along the way, which offer excellent views of the Machno Valley. Ignore any junctions that lead to the left or right, and finally, you will reach the top of the incline that leads down to Rhiwbach Quarry. You can explore the area, but please refrain from going underground. However, if you are feeling adventurous, you can visit <https://www.go-below.co.uk/>, which provides information about Rhiwbach and other sites.



Looking down on Rhiwbach Quarry. Feel free to walk down and explore the surface.



On your return journey, you should get good views up to the Shepherd's Huts.

Once you have finished sightseeing, head back along the tramway until you reach Llyn Bowydd. When you come across the beginning of the dam, take a faint path down to the left. This path is located to the left of the damper ground on the right. Gradually ascend on this path until you reach a wall that comes in from the left. If you lose the path or come across a small rock face with an old building beneath you, don't be surprised. Simply turn left and head towards the wall. Follow this wall and you will see a ladder stile.

To follow this trail, cross the stile and start by walking along the wall. Look for a small track on the left that leads through some higher ground and boggy ground. This path will take you uphill, through a wall and past a small reservoir. Follow the path between the reservoir and an old fence, and you will see the mountains Manod Mawr and Manod Bach on your left. After ascending a few feet onto a slate tip, start contouring around to the left, and then drop down to a grassy area on your right. Cross this area diagonally, ignoring a small path on the left, until you reach a boulder. At this point, take a tiny path on the right that ascends slightly and leads to a gate. Climb over the gate to enter Diffwys Quarry. From there, you can continue on the obvious quarry road, or take a detour to the left for a nice view down the valley. Don't miss the boulder with the plaque and the incorrect height.

The Diffwys quarry in Blaenau Ffestiniog is the oldest quarry in the area. It was started by Methusalem Jones in the 1750s, although local farmers at that time had also quarried slate for their own needs. There are tales that the location of good slate rock came to Methusalem in a dream, but regardless of how he found it, William Turner and the brothers William and Thomas Casson from the Lake District bought the quarry in 1799 and really started to develop the site.

After admiring the view, make your way down the quarry road. Be careful on a short stretch of loose granite surface that could cause you to trip. Once you pass this area, turn left and proceed down the road. You'll have views of the old workings on your right-hand side. As you approach the Australia Mill ruins, the road will turn sharply to the right. Stay on the road and you'll soon see the Votty & Bowydd Quarry, where large amounts of slate waste - around 8 or 9 million tonnes of it - is crushed for aggregates. When you start to descend towards the Maenofferen Mill buildings, keep an eye out for the road continuing along a shelf ahead, which is your route onwards. Once you reach the Mill buildings, you're welcome to take a look around outside, but please avoid entering them as they're in a dangerous state with loose slates. Follow the road and you'll reach the water tank you saw earlier. From there, retrace your steps back to the Shepherd's Hut.

If you have any feedback on the walks or you think the notes are not clear please email Jon at jonknowles1@btinternet.com