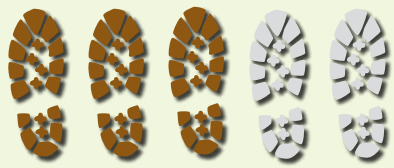


**2.5hr
WALK**



Difficulty of walk - 3 (moderate)



Cwm Ffrwd Circular Walk

Torfaen South East Wales

TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH



Pontypool Community Council
Cyngor Cymuned Pont-y-pŵl

Os hoffech gopi o'r ffurflen yn Gymraeg, cysylltwch â'r Gwasanaethau Cefn Gwlad Torfaen

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Explore our Countryside

Cwm Ffrwd Circular Walk

A circular walk around the Pontypool area, exploring a quiet and rarely visited cwm on the west side of the Eastern Valley.

The Cwm Ffrwd walk takes you through wooded areas, along the line of the old railway and gives you the opportunity to see various remnants of the ironworks and mining features.

Begin at Talywain Rugby Club car park just off Albert Road, Talywain. Walk to the minor road at the back of the car park and turn right. Pass the rugby ground and the houses of Golynos to the right where Lower Varteg Colliery (Deakin's Slope) and an ironworks were situated. A tip nearly 100 feet high once towered over the site of Talywain golf driving range at the end of the road.

Just before reaching the Golf Driving Range car park, the road veers to the right and is marked by a footpath signpost. Go through the green metal gate and follow the track upwards.

As you walk up the track you will see the Nant Ffrwd brook, which carries quite a volume of water down from Coity Mountain to the Afon Lwyd. Ahead, below the rise, are the tips from Varteg Hill Colliery and the Red Ash Level.

Cross a cattle grid. On the left is the ruined farmhouse Graig Wen, of which only a right-angle of wall stands. To the right are 'The Bungalows' and 'Balance Meadows', which no doubt housed some of the local colliery workers.

The path enters Graig Wen Wood, a carefully preserved remnant of beech woodland that once covered much of upland Gwent. The trees would have been

pollarded for charcoal, to provide fuel for the early ironworks. Keep to the main path as it winds uphill through the woods. To the left, above is a relatively recently abandoned drift mine, the buildings of which were never finished. Here can be seen rusting rails and drams, and the entrance to the adit. The views down the Eastern Valley from this point are quite spectacular, with the Wentwood Ridge and Severn Estuary in the distance.

Back on the route, bear right at the waymark to join an old road, possibly a drovers' road, which was later laid with rails to carry trams. On the valley-side opposite is the ruined Yewtree Farm.

Ahead on the left are the ruins of Graig Ddu, which were inhabited until 1963. It was built between the late 17th and early 18th centuries when it served the sparse community as both a chapel and a public house known as 'The New Inn'. It was also a venue for bare-knuckle boxing matches (fisticuffs), and the last residents brought up twelve boys and two girls. More recently still, it is the setting for local writer Marguerite Shaw's historical novels 'We Shall Sing Again' and 'Shall We Meet Again'.

A little further on, follow the path alongside the beech trees, a path which becomes quite narrow in places and finally leaves the trees altogether. The farmhouse on the other side of the stream is Blaen Melyn.





Follow the Nant Ffrwd upstream for a short distance, crossing via a bridge. Climb diagonally right, up the tip opposite following the waymarks carefully, heading to the roof of the red brick mine building at the farm drive. Turn right, past the building of the old Varteg Hill or Vipond's top, in 1848. The seams here were low and water in the galleries meant that the miners used waders. Many men working later became victims of pneumoconiosis. Behind are the ruins of Colliery Row.

The views from here are excellent. Garndiffaith in the foreground with its 1876 railway viaduct (now part of the Eastern Valley cycletrack), Mynydd Garn Wen above the town, and to the right of that, straight down the Afon Lwyd Valley to the town of Varteg. The whole of the western mountainside between Pontypool and Blaenavon was leased by the Hanburys for £100 a year to supply their Pontypool forges with ore. The drive follows the line of a mineral railway serving Varteg Hill Colliery and other workings at the head of the valley.

Continue along the track, past the cattle grid, for approximately 1 mile until it veers round towards the left. Follow this route and take the right hand fork after approximately 400 metres. Just before Salisbury Terrace take a right turn into Pembroke Place and past Pembroke terrace until joining a track. Follow this route for approximately 400 metres, until reaching a main road (Varteg Road).

Take the small road immediately to the right off Varteg Road, walking past Greenfield Terrace further down. At the bottom of the road turn left at the T-junction and right at New Road, past St John's Burial Ground.

Take care where the road narrows and the pavement disappears. Continue along this road to return to the rugby club car park.

Countryside Code

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work;
- Guard against all risk of fire;
- Leave all gates and property as you find them;
- Keep your dogs under close control, preferably on a lead as there may be other animals along the route;
- Keep to public paths;
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls;
- Leave livestock and machinery alone;
- Take your litter home;
- Help to keep all water clean;
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees;
- Take special care on country roads.

Advice for Walkers

To get the most enjoyment from walking and exploring Torfaen's varied countryside, making use of an Ordnance Survey map is strongly recommended. The countryside can change rapidly and way-markers can easily be missed.

Ensure that you wear appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear in case of muddy and slippery surfaces.

Walking is a perfect activity to improve your physical health, it can help your circulation and maintain a healthy heart!

Some of the paths referred to are not Public Rights of Way but are permissive paths or are across common land which enjoys open access.

Public Transport

Torfaen has a good network of public transport. To plan your journey visit www.traveline.org.uk.

Tourist Information Centre

Blaenavon Tourist Information Centre provides information on days out, attractions, accommodation, activities and route planning in the area.

Tel: 01495 792615, or visit: www.blaenavontic.com

Website

For information on other circular walks in Torfaen, as well as details of the various activities in the area, visit the Countryside Services website at:-

www.countryside.torfaen.gov.uk

