

Difficulty of walk - 3 (moderate)



# Cwm Sychan Circular Walk

## Torfaen South East Wales



### Explore our Countryside

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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# Cwm Sychan 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 Cwmsychan walk takes you through the site of 'The British' and the Cwmsychan Valley, an area which once featured a major ironworks. Built in 1826 by the British Iron Company, the ironworks was later sold in 1852 to the owners of the Ebbw Vale ironworks. A number of Listed Buildings exist to this day, including a Grade II Listed Cornish Engine House and Big Arch. Various other remnants of the ironworks and mining features are also of archaeological interest.

Begin at Talywain Rugby Club car park, just off New Road, Talywain. Turn right onto New Road and follow Albert Road downhill. Turn right opposite the row of shops and The Globe public house at the signpost for 'Castle Wood' and 'British'.

Follow the road and then take the road to the right, signposted for Castle Wood. After a short distance take the left fork (through a green metal gate), heading for the red brick building. Bear left again, crossing the Blaengaefog Brook. Follow the path around the back of the red brick building, the Engine House for the British Top Pits, which once stood on this site.

This was a Cornish beam pumping engine-house built by the British Iron Company to drain its mines. The engine-house stood within the complex of buildings of the British Ironworks, most of which were dismantled in the 1880's following closure of the ironworks in 1883. The British Ironworks began production in 1827 and operated several coal mines in the vicinity. The pumping engine was installed in 1845 to assist drainage from the deep levels.

The interior is very unusual in retaining some of the timber beams and stairs on the upper floors. There are also cast and wrought iron brackets, bolts and plates. All traces of the Cornish beam pumping engine are long removed.

Continue following the track of the old dismantled tramway, past some barns. Above on the right is a ruined farm known as The New Found Out. Follow the path round and in front is the embankment of the Cwm Sychan or Big Pond. This supplied the British Ironworks with all the water required for iron making. It was also an attractive and useful feature in itself, being stocked with trout for the 'Big House'. The wall of the embankment was breached by the owners in 1988, following a ruling that it was in a dangerous condition.

Continue the walk by following the path above the former reservoir, passing some ruins on the left. On the right above is Ty Cwm Sychan, a substantial but sadly derelict farmhouse, reputedly the Keeper's House. The terraces below the house were evidently used as a garden and cultivating ridges can be made out in one place.

Take a sharp left and follow the Sychan Brook downstream along the well-used path. Cross a stile into a field, follow the path to another stile, cross this field and the next stile to reach the road. On the hillside to the right is the Pant-Glas slip, a geological feature caused by faults in the pennant sandstone.

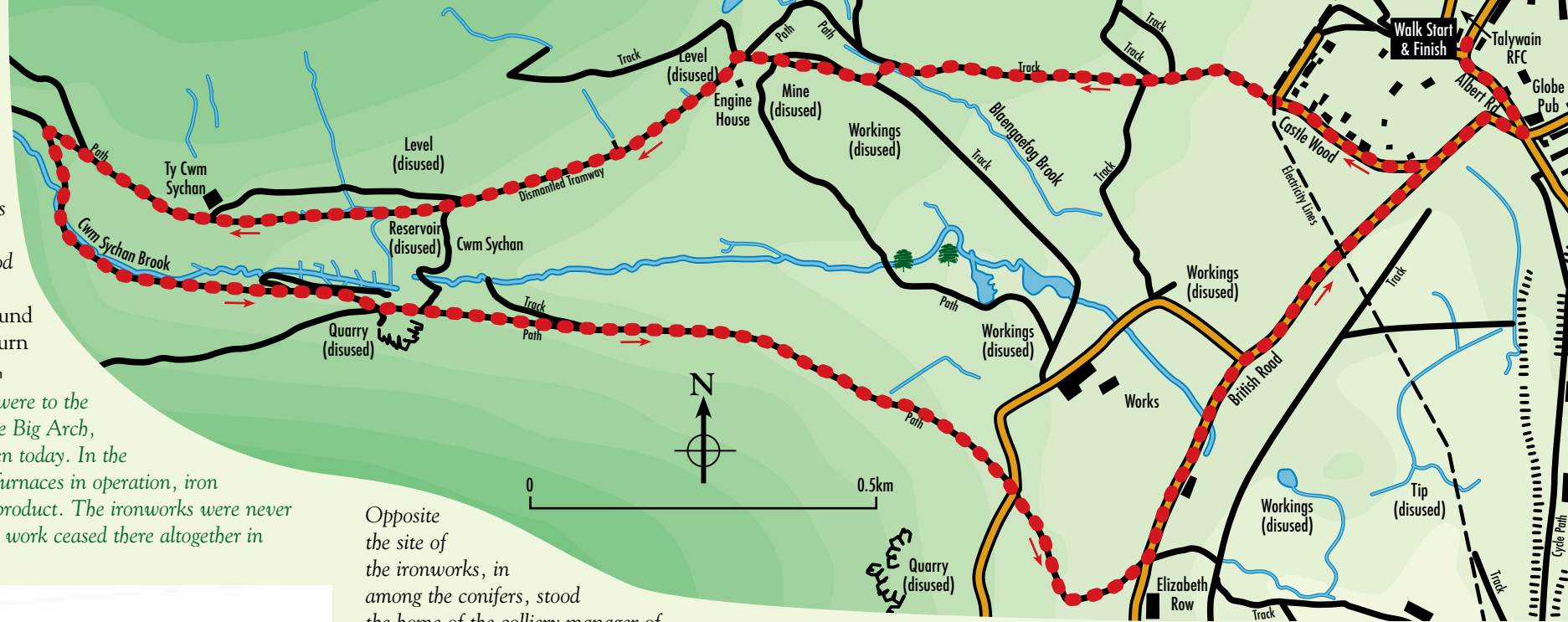




The slips took place in 1860 and 1861, engulfing the Cwm Byrgwm Mine and several cottages, although remarkably no-one was hurt.

Cross the road to go down a track. All around are remnants of former inhabitants' gardens. Of all the houses that once stood here, only Elizabeth Row has survived. The track bends round to the left to meet a road. Turn left along this road.

The famous British ironworks were to the right of this road, in front of the Big Arch, although little remains to be seen today. In the 1830's, the ironworks had six furnaces in operation, iron rails being the most important product. The ironworks were never a financial success though, and work ceased there altogether in 1876.



Opposite the site of the ironworks, in among the conifers, stood the home of the colliery manager of The Navigation. Local people remember the house well, although it was dilapidated over 30 years ago. Behind the house site is the red brick Powerhouse associated with The Navigation Colliery, which was sunk in 1912.

Continue along this road to retrace your steps back to Talywain 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.countryside.torfaen.gov.uk)