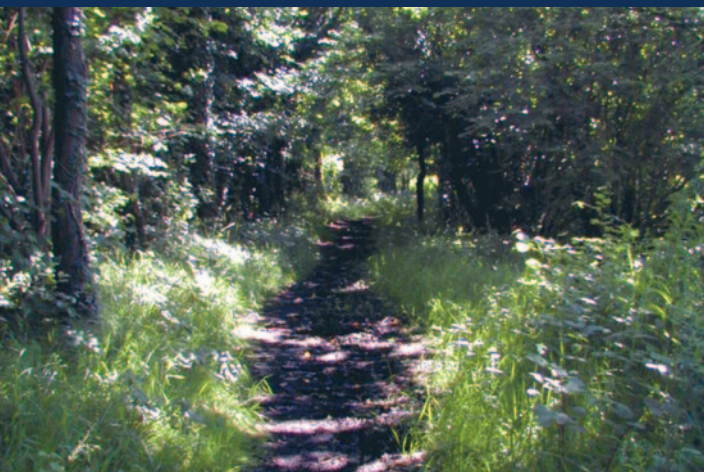


# Pontyates



## Why Walk?

It's a fascinating walk for nature lovers due to the diverse habitats and wildlife and has historical interest as the walk follows the oldest canal in Wales.



## How Long?

**The flat section** to Pont-newydd and back by the same route is 5.5km. (3.5 miles) Allow 2 hours.

**The longer circular route** is 6.5km (4 miles) long with 59m (193ft) of ascent. Allow 2 1/2 hours.



## How Hard?

The flat section alongside the river and the canal is virtually flat on a gravel surfaced path making it ideal for the less able walker whilst the longer circular route is mainly along grassy tracks, all of a reasonable gradient.

**Nb.** Sections alongside the old canal and river are prone to flooding after heavy rain.



**Starting point** - Pontyates village



**Parking** - Pontyates village



**Public Transport** - ✓

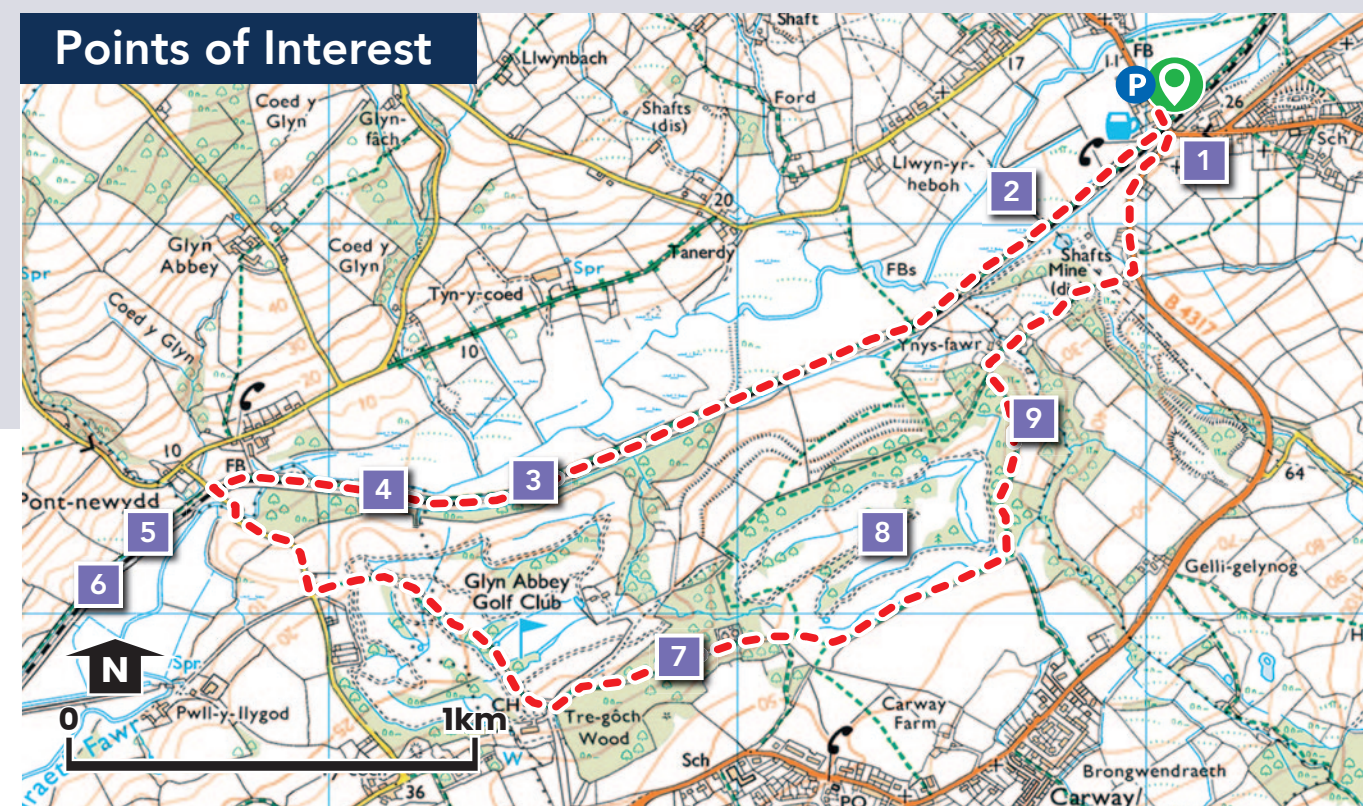


**Refreshments** - ✓

**1** The many brambles along the trail are very good for nectar loving insects and food for butterflies and caterpillars. Peacock butterflies, Comma and Red Admirals can be seen on warm summer days. The variety of lichens growing on the old fence posts and trees are a good indicator of clean air as many lichens are sensitive to air pollution.

**2** The fields in the valley bottom have rich alluvial soils due to regular flooding by the Gwendraeth Fawr. The wet meadows are Sites of Special Scientific Interest due to their rich and distinct flora and fauna. The rush pasture, the river and the old canal are all havens for wildlife and form an important wetland habitat.

## Points of Interest



**3** Sections of the of the oldest canal in Wales (built by the pioneering industrialist Thomas Kymer) can still be seen alongside the more recent Burry Port and Gwendraeth Valley Railway line. The Canal was constructed in 1768 and ran from Kymer's pits at Pwll y Llygod to the Quay at Kidwelly. The railway was built in 1866.

**4** Here the Gwendraeth Fawr runs alongside the footpath, it once ran black due to the many coal mines in the valley. It is now a much cleaner river so you may be rewarded with a view of Kingfisher or Grey Wagtail or perhaps Damselflies and Dragonflies, which are a common sight, fluttering amongst the waterside vegetation in summer.

**5** Alder trees, like the ones growing in this wet area, have been put to many uses. The timber, when kept wet, is highly resistant to rotting. It was hollowed out and made into water pipes, carved for the soles of clogs and used in boat building. It was also an important ingredient in the manufacture of gunpowder and one of the finest woods used for making charcoal.

**6** The old canal path continues, fringed by rushes down to Parc-y-llog 1.3Km (3/4 mile) away, beyond this the canal remains as no more than a ditch but re-emerges again at Kidwelly Quay. If you hear a sound like the squealing of a pig it is probably just a Water Rail skulking amongst the reed beds. You are

unlikely to see this secretive bird but during the summer months you may well hear and see reed and sedge warblers.

**7** Many of the Ash, Oak and Hazel trees in this wood appear to be the same age and are multi-stemmed showing that the woodland was once coppiced, perhaps to provide firewood for the local community or timber for the mines. On warm dry days the wood is alive with the songs of Blue Tit, Blackbird, and Thrush.

**8** Until recently the area covered by the golf course was an open cast mine. The reclamation project gave an ideal opportunity to create semi-natural habitats of great benefit to wildlife. Ponds have been created, and rushes, grasses and wildflowers such as Marsh Thistle, Knapweed and Fleabane (the old English name suggests it was once used to repel fleas) have been allowed to re-colonise the rough areas of the golf course.

**9** The old shady lane has a wonderful variety of ferns and flowers growing on the steep hedge banks. Amongst the ferns are, Polypody, Male fern and Harts Tongue Fern. In early spring the hedge banks are studded with the golden yellow flowers of Lesser Celandines, followed by the white flowers of Field Rose, Wild Strawberry and Stitchwort.