

PENTYRCH

CIRCULAR WALKS

The summit of Garth Hill, and the woodland tracks in the river valley are easily accessible from the network of public footpaths in the district of Taff's Well and Pentyrch. The circular walks described below vary in length to suit your time and ability. The starting-point is Taff's Well BR, but the trails may be joined at any point along their routes.

Taff's Well to Garth Hill. 41.5 miles, 2 hours.

From the railway station turn right along the main road of the village, to the public gardens on the left-hand side. At the rear of the gardens is a square, brick built structure, the location of Taff's Well itself.

The water from the underground spring is similar in composition to that of Bath Spa. In the later 19th.c., with the expansion of the rail network, local people were opening their houses to accommodate the many visitors to "the smallest spa in the world". The well proved popular into the 20th; in 1929 it was renovated and a swimming pool was built on adjacent land, but floods in the 1950's ended its career.

Take the left-hand path, between the Taff's Well public-house and the school, cross the bridge and walk up the steps. Bear left up the zig-zag path and turn right, into the village of Gwaelod-y-Garth.

This small settlement still contains many excellently preserved cottages, some originally built for workers in the local iron and brick-making industries. Despite its rural character, the area has been exploited in the past for its natural resources, particularly iron-ore, extracted from the network of rich veins in the area. In the late-16th.c. iron furnaces were established on a site near the river, setting a trend that continued in the larger operations of the Pentyrch Iron Company which ceased production



in the 1890's.

Turn left beside the Gwaelod-y-Garth Inn and continue upwards onto a rough track, leading to a stile and a gate. Go through the gate and follow the path up to Lan Farm. Walk through the yard and out into the lane beyond. Continue down to a metal gate and road. Turn left, and continue this leftward curve to the entrance of another farm, Garth Fawr. Cross the stile, bear right, then take the left-hand upward path through ruined farm-buildings. Continue on this gradual upward ascent to reach the trig point on Garth Hill.

The view is unexpected, and dramatic. Turning full-circle on the trig. point mound, the hill ridges of the Rhondda, Cynon, and Taff valleys form the rim of a gigantic bowl. To the south lies the vast sweep of the coastline, with the islands of Flatholm and Steepholm to your left, and Somerset in the distance.

There are two optional return routes, both of roughly equal length, described below.

OPTION 1

From the trig. point mound, turn to face the sea. Just beneath the mound is a sheep-track, traversing the summit. Take the left-hand route on this path, leading towards Taff's Well, then take the right-hand path

leading down to a rocky outcrop.

Bear right before the outcrop, along a narrow track which leads along the contour of the hill.

Continue to a stream and small waterfall, bear left and descend to the road. Turn left on the road to a public footpath on the right. Cross the field to a gate into woodland; turn left after the gate and take the winding path which descends through the trees. This is Coed Rhiw'r-Ceiliog, designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a sanctuary for several rare plants.

The path emerges onto a road. Turn right past housing, and walk past a playing-field in front of a crescent of houses. Continue to the main road, and turn left at the junction. Continue beyond another playing-field, turn left on the public footpath and return to the station.

OPTION 2.

From the trig. point, take the downward route, heading towards the coast. This route bears right, passing farms and leading down to a T junction at the main road. Take the road straight ahead for a few yards, then cross the stile in the hedge to the left. Take a rightward diagonal route across the field, cross the next stile and bear right towards the woodland.



**Taff's Well and Pentyrch 3.5 miles
1 3/4 hours**

From the main entrance of Taff's Well BR, cross the road by the pedestrian crossing, walk over the bridge and up the lane beside the playing-field. Turn right at the main road, and walk beyond the playing-field, with the wooded hill to your left, up to a road junction. Cross to the left of the main road, and take the path leading upwards into the woodland.

From here, the route follows this fairly direct path through the woods. Initially, the route runs close to the road, but after a while the path ascends to an upper level. (Where the route crosses a metalled road, watch out for lorries transporting quarry-stone).

The view to your right opens up to reveal the ridgeway of Garth Hill, with farms and fields below. The path emerges near housing, and a road which leads to the Lewis Arms, near a war memorial and children's play area. Turn left at the next junction, passing Capel Horeb, and walk down the road for about a mile to the King's Arms. The interior of the pub still retains many of its original features, with beamed ceilings and stone floors; an open fire in the colder weather makes for a welcome half way house after the

walk through the woods.

Just beyond the pub is the centre of Pentyrch village, and St. Cattwg's church. Close to the church is the site of Cattwg's Well, an earlier site of pilgrimage than the spring of Ffynnon Taf, but no less important in its day. As with many centres of early, Celtic Christianity, the saint's well provided a focus for a religious community during the period of post-Roman settlement, and the formation of the Welsh kingdom of Morgannwg.

From the church, retrace your route along the road to the left-hand bend and go through the kissing gate on the right-hand side. Bear left and walk to the next kissing-gate; again, bear left to emerge onto the old parish road. Turn right for the return route to Taff's Well, linking with your original path through the woods.

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Cross the fence, go left, and walk along with a stream on your right, to the point at which it is joined by another stream. Continue straight ahead, taking the path with fence and trees on your right. Continue to another fence, with a stream and stile over to the left of your route. Cross the stile and walk across the field to another (high) wooden stile. Beyond this, veer right and downwards to a path beside a stream.

Bear left, with the stream on your right, and follow the path through the trees. Walk through a small gate, then through dense woodland, to emerge at an upper gate leading to a road and housing. Continue to the junction, turn right then first left and take the lower route which leads through a gate to a road. Turn right, past a playing-field, and crescent of houses on your left. Continue to the junction, turn left, walk to the far side of another playing-field, and turn left for the footpath to the station.



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