

2. PANT-Y-LLYN HILL AND THE GARTH (ROUTE OVER THE OPEN HILL)

A fine hill walk. Map: Explorer 188. For walks A and B take a compass.

Walk A: The full circular: 2.1 to 2.9. 10 miles. 4 hours.

Walk B: From top to bottom: 2.4 to 2.9. 6 miles. 2 1/2 hours. Arrange a lift or take a taxi to the top. Leave Builth by the Brecon road, the B4520. It goes left at the top of the High Street, bends right, and passes the supermarket. Stay on it for 3 miles. (After a mile a turning left, to Tregaer and Erwood, leads to the Duhonw bridge at Dollynwydd - 2.2). Staying on the main road, cross the Duhonw at a gorge, pass Llandewi'r Cwm church, and skirt Pant-y-llyn Hill climbing steadily. At the foot of a steep pitch (25%) known as Tumbledown Dick, turn left on the small road which ascends Pant-y-llyn, unfenced and very pretty. Just before the top a well defined track leads off left to the pool. Alternatively park at the top of the hill with the profile of the Black Mountains above Hay-on-Wye filling the skyline. **WALK B BEGINS.** Set off north and pick up the broad track diagonally crossing our route. Turn left and in 5 minutes the pool is in view. On to 2.4.

Walk C: Lanes & The Garth: 2.1, 2.2, 2.8, 2.9. 5 miles. 2 hours.

Walk D: Garth Hill only: 2.1, 2.8, 2.9. 3.5 miles. 1 1/4 hours.

2.1 Builth Wells town - T junction 20 mins

The walk begins at Newry Road behind the Castle mound. Down the road. After a mile we reach the T junction at the back of Garth Hill (For Walk D turn and face Builth Wells and skip to 2.8)

2.2 T junction - River Duhonw 20 mins

Turn right and continue along the road to Dollynwydd. Turn left and cross the Duhonw.

(For Walk C continue left 3/4 mile along the lane to Pwllgwyn Farm and skip to 2.7)

2.3 River Duhonw - Pant-y-llyn (the climb) 60 mins

From the road junction just beyond the bridge take the field path up the hill. Where it joins the path contouring the hill turn left. After about 200 yards leave the path and follow the cascading stream, Grid ref: 487047, uphill to the small pool at its source. Just ahead is a path contouring the hill at this level and gently ascending. Turn right and stay on it climbing steadily, circling the hill until you reach the pool.

2.4 Pant-y-llyn Pool linger awhile!

The lake is on the north-west flank of the hill. A good spot is the cliff on its south shore. To the west is the great bulk of the Cambrian Mountains, the parish of Llanafan nestled in its foothills. A series of wild valleys takes the water from these hills to the Irfon.

2.5 Pant-y-llyn Pool - Ty'n-y-dwntyn 30 mins

Head north-east over the open hill. Use the sheep trods to explore the dips and streams of this soft mountain. As the eastern skyline comes into view the Black Mountains appear on the right. To their left is the broad pointed hill of The Begwyns with its circular wall on top. In the foreground, across the Wye Valley, Llandeilo Hill (Walk 4). Noticeable is a series of curved terraces making a sort of amphitheatre. Here is hidden Llywelyn's Cave. Continue northeast, along the edge of the hilltop, to a small clump of conifers at Ty'n-y-dwntyn where we meet the field boundary wall. Made of slate it reflects the composition of these hills - thin, horizontal bands of slate. The terraces around Llewelyn's Cave are the same.

2.6 Ty'n-y-dwntyn - Pwllgwyn Farm 45 mins

Follow along the boundary and do not go through any gates. Our view of Llandeilo Hill is replaced by the wide sweep of Aberedw Hill. Next to it is the knobbly Carneddau (Walk 3) which ends ungraciously in the quarry above Builth Wells. Where the wall makes a right-angled turn continue in the direction we've been walking to the northern brow of the hill. The quarry view now includes the sugar-loaf shape of Garth Hill. Below to the right is the friendly roof of Pantypyliau Farm. Our route stays left of the farm's fields following the fence-line down. Suddenly at a stand of fine old Scots pine and larch, the hill drops steeply away. There is a ravine in here which we will shortly see. Either clamber down close to the fence or make a long zig-zag on sheep trods to the left to join the footpath a little lower down. Turn right with the fence on your left, through the gate and onto a broad track. It crosses the ravine and joins the road at Pwllgwyn.

2.7 Pwllgwyn Farm - T junction 20 mins

The path goes through the farmyard, crosses the hill beneath trees, and joins a green lane. Alternatively, stay on the road and go uphill to the crossroads of green and metalled lanes. Turn left on the sunken track, which serves also as a water-course, cross the Duhonw and take the lane uphill to the T junction at the back of Garth Hill.

2.8 T junction - The Garth 15 mins

(For a quick return to Builth Wells carry on down Newry Road.) For the Garth, cross the stile on the right and follow the ridge. Pant-y-llyn slips behind and Aberedw Hill dominates the view. Its top is pimpled with Bronze Age burial mounds. Between the two hills are the wooded cliffs of Aberedw Rocks (Walk 4). To the left the Wye points from Builth Wells towards the Cambrians around Llanafan (Walk 6). As soon as the 'trig' point on top of the Garth comes into view notice bumps on the ground. We are entering the enclosure - which is what Garth means. This vantage point, where the hills and valleys converge and the Wye enters a strait, was probably a fortified settlement. See Builth Wells Castle mound controlling the ford where the bridge evolved. Across the bridge, beneath Cefn Dyrys, the "big house" of the district, is the spread of the Royal Welsh Showground. Far off, between Carneddau and Aberedw Hill, is Radnor Forest, the highest upland east of the Cambrians. To the right, popping out of it, The Whimble.

2.9 The Garth - Builth Wells Town 25 mins

It would take about 40 mins to return to town via Newry Road. For a shorter but intrepid route (not a right of way) carry on down the prow of the hill picking a way through hawthorns and bracken. At the steepest bit near the bottom the easiest route bears left. At the foot of the hill by the fence turn left along a track lined with old conifers. Take the gate in the corner and continue walking towards the quarry. The field funnels to a gate. Beyond on the left another gate takes us past some farm buildings and into the town at Oaklands. At the end of Oaklands turn right and then left to return to Newry Road.