

### 3. THE CARNEDDAU

A Dramatic Walk of Cairns and Hill Forts. Map: Explorer 200. Circular: 6 miles. 3 1/2 hours.

There are plans to create a new path onto the hill avoiding the quarry. At present the route goes via the main entrance to the quarry. Park at the Groe in Builth Wells. Alternatively, to shorten the walk by about an hour, drive over the bridge, turn right at the roundabout and use the housing estate car park opposite St Mathew's Church, Llanelwedd. Cross to the Hundred House road at the road junction and the houses on the quarry side. Go to 3.2.

#### 3.1 Builth Wells - Llanelwedd

35 mins

Cross the Wye bridge into Radnorshire. Turn right taking the path alongside Jewson. We are in the former goods yard of the railway station (there were once direct trains to London/Liverpool etc). Follow the river along the old line - now part of the sustrans cycle network. Pass St Mathew's Church on the old track and then cross the field that adjoins the track to the gate at the road junction (there is a squeeze to the right of the gate). Cross the road to the houses opposite.

#### 3.2 Llanelwedd Quarry- Maengowan Farm

20 mins

The old right of way goes between the houses and up the bank to the quarry offices. As it is blocked, follow the main road up the hill; take the quarry entrance on the right; turn right in the quarry and walk past the offices. Take great care as the right of way is shared with the quarry's main thoroughfare. It follows the main track up the hill opposite the offices. Best keep to the right. Following the signs to Maengowan Farm we soon leave the quarry behind. The view to the right is of Pant-y-llyn and The Garth (**Walk 2**). A little further on, just before a collection of farm machinery, a knoll on the right gives a bigger view: left is Aberedw Hill and the Wye snaking off to England. To the right, the broad low country, a great glaciated valley, contained by the Radnor Hills, the Cambrian Mountains and Mynydd Epynt. Just before the entrance to the farm take the track going up to the left.

#### 3.3 Maengowan Farm - the Saddle

20 mins

We shortly come into a big field. Ahead is the great lump of Caer Fawr, a Bronze Age settlement. A wall crosses the middle. Horizontal terraces left of the wall indicate the old ramparts. Following the fence on the right, head towards Caer Fawr. A small gate picks up an ancient road that skirts the cliffs to the right of the fort. Rounding the fort the hill flattens off to a saddle. A large bog oozes a sulphur spring. It cascades off the hill in a miniature ravine. (**Go to 3.7 to shorten the walk**)

#### 3.4 The Saddle - Caer Eionon

10 mins

Ahead, a spur of the hill jutting right is crowned by the ramparts of Caer Eionon hill fort. Cross the stream and head over to it. If you wish to avoid narrow sheep trods on steep hillsides stay on top of the hill. Looking back to Caer Fawr from Caer Eionon the terracing of the rock where the hometeads were built is evident. This is the sheltered side of the hill although, the climate in the Bronze Age resembled more that of the Mediterranean.

#### 3.5 Caer Eionon - The Cairn

30 mins

Over to our right, at the top of the hill, can be seen the pile of stones of the cairn. Head towards it using paths skirting the bracken. Where the path rounds a couple of bumps, the easiest routes head toward the great boundary wall that follows the ridge of the hill and extends over Caer Fawr. The stone probably came from the ramparts of the forts. Where the wall makes a sharp turn to the left, take a diagonal, right, and head up to the cairn.

#### 3.6 The View from the Cairn

timeless

The pile of stones here today sits inside a large circle. This is the foundation of what was a carefully built structure. It probably housed a burial and also made a significant landmark. Sitting on the east side of the cairn we look north-east along the hill to the skyline. To the left is Radnor Forest, the highest upland east of the Cambrians. Rising from it, the haystack shape of The Whimble. To its right, in the middle distance, extend the hills bordering the Edw valley. Further right, beyond them, are the Black Mountains. In the near distance is Aberedw Hill; the cairns that adorn its ridge are clearly seen. Interestingly, despite having many ritual sites, there are no fortified settlements on Aberedw, whereas the hills we are on are littered with them, testimony to the waves of invaders that came here. From where we sit the hill drops away between two rocky knolls to Colwyn Brook; The Whimble, in the distance, is midway between them. The knoll on the left has ramparts on it, protecting the flat plateau behind, site of another settlement. Beyond the knoll stretches a long serpent of a hill called Castle Bank, the higher end of it encircled by magnificent ramparts. Just visible behind the right knoll is a neat mound, the motte of a medieval castle. Looking at the map one may see Colwyn Brook leads to Colwyn Castle, now occupied by Fforest Farm. Clearly these hills were supremely strategic. To the west march the Cambrian Mountains above Llanafan. Below us is Pencerrig Lake. Over the boundary wall and slightly right is the concrete post of the Ordnance Survey 'trig' point. Does it sit between more ramparts?

#### 3.7 The Cairn - Caer Fawr

30 mins

Return to the saddle below Caer Fawr. Note the standing stone incorporated into the boundary wall. There is a gate where the wall becomes a fence to cross the bog. Go through, skirt the bog and head up, through the gap just right of Caer Fawr. Drop over the other side to the field gate.

#### 3.8 Caer Fawr - Builth Wells

50 mins

A few yards across the field is a well made track. Follow it down. The view looks up the broad Irfon Valley towards the Cambrians above Llanwrtyd Wells. In the middle distance is the conical shape of Garth Bank. We join the road to Maengowan Farm just outside the quarry. Return to Builth Wells the route we came.