

Walk No. 17, Llancarfan

Valley of the Stags



The Manse, Llambethery

Photograph © G. Woosnam

These walks lead you through one of the more interesting parts of the Vale, an area of attractive scenery that abounds with historical features. They also introduce you to four Vale settlements, Llancarfan, Penmark, Llancadle and Llambethery. The terrain is mostly gentle, with just a few short climbs. However, there are two or three stretches that can become very muddy, mostly during winter's rainy spells. The opening up of the footpath to the south of Llancarfan, along Nant Carfan's (stream of the stags) valley, means that a shorter walk option (17A) can now be also offered.

Distance Main walk 6 miles; shorter option 3¾ miles.

Map Explorer 151.

Parking At the walk's start in Llancarfan: Car Park over bridge to rear of The Fox and Hounds Inn

Public Transport Buses to Cowbridge.

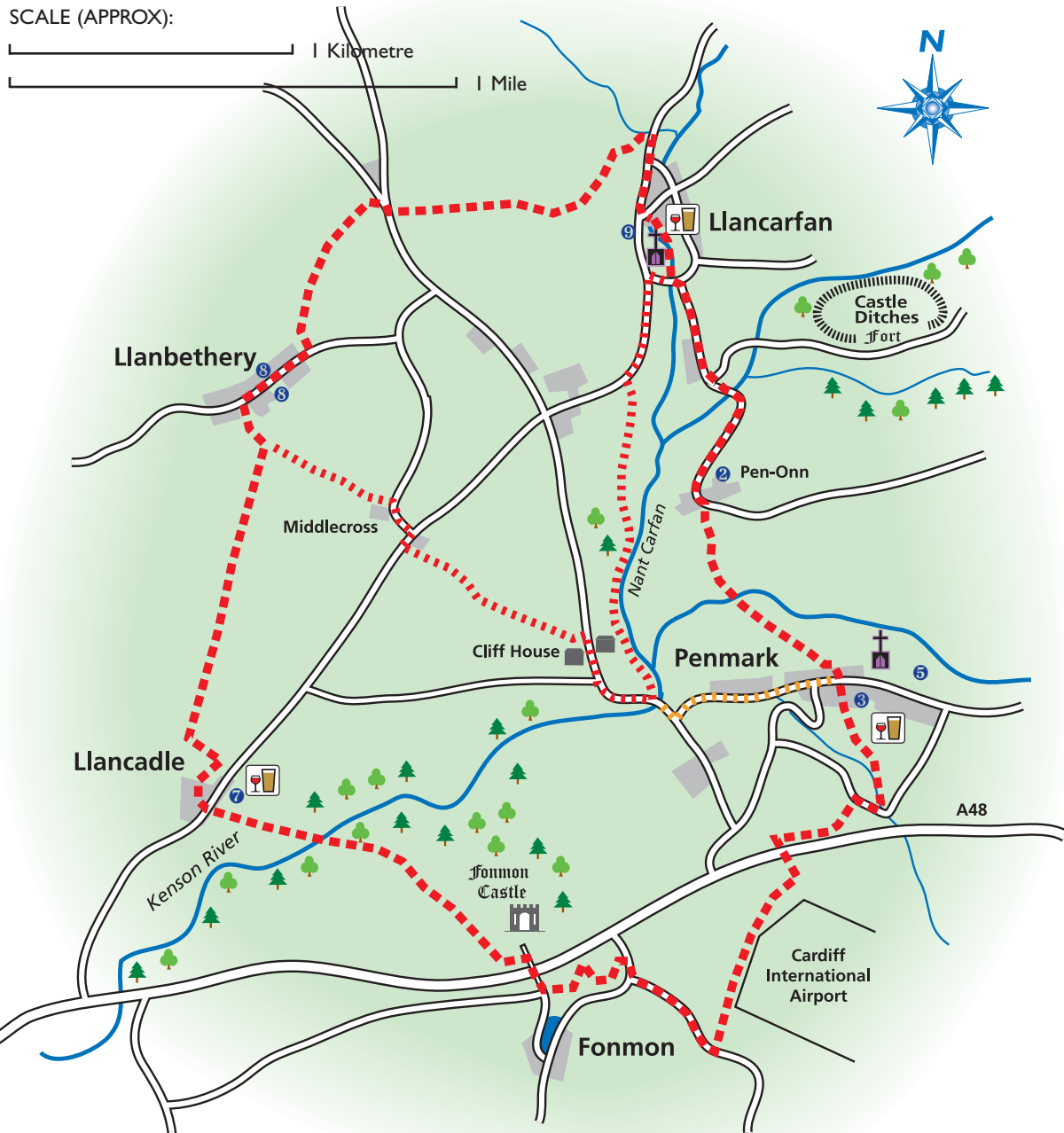
Refreshments At the Fox & Hounds (Llancarfan) and Six Bells (Penmark).

Toilets

START Car Park at Grid Ref: ST 052702.

SCALE (APPROX):

1 Kilometre
1 Mile



THE ROUTE

S Leave the car park via the metal bridge towards the church **1**. Pass alongside the church grounds to turn left on reaching the road. Very soon turn right at minor road junction along Moulton Road. Stay on this road for 400 yards to the point where the Moulton Road bears left. You carry straight on to cross a low bridge and then walk uphill to reach the hamlet of Pen-Onn **2**. Turn right along a concrete drive, at a sign indicating Ross Kear House. (Note three rather intrusive features appear on the skyline, the stacks of Aberthaw Power Station and the nearby cement works and the British Airways large maintenance base at Cardiff Airport.

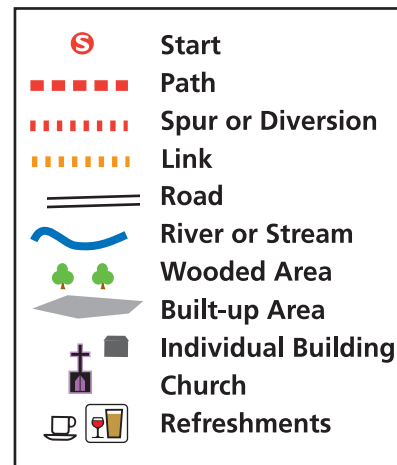
Pass to the left of Ross Kear and proceed down the valley side to cross the River Waycock via a bridge. Then bear left, uphill through a wood to enter a large open field (site of medieval village). Cross this field heading to the right of the church tower that you will see over to your left. You will arrive at a stile that leads you on to the road in Penmark. (The

church, castle and Six Bells Inn **6**, **4** & **5**) are but yards away to your left). Cross the road to enter Croft John. At the end of this street turn left into a lane. The lane leads you to a stile that you climb to enter a long field. Bear right and keeping to the higher ground, walk on, roughly in line with telegraph posts, past a waymarker post to reach a stone stile that gives on to a country lane.

Turn right along this lane. You pass a bungalow on your right and soon reach a stepped stile on your left. Once over this cross the field diagonally left to the hedge line below the road embankment. Continue right along this hedge to reach a stile. Pass through a subway and then back up to enter a field on your right. Cross this field bearing slightly left (the Power Station stack is a good sight-line) to a gap in the field boundary. Now bear left to the airfield perimeter embankment. Pass between this and the array of approach lights to a point where the embankment swings left. You continue straight on to reach a stile and gate. Now turn right along the road till you reach a junction.

Here turn right and almost immediately to the left is a stile that you cross to proceed diagonally left to a waymarker post and then downslope to a stile that leads into a spinney. Follow a stepped path gently uphill through the trees to reach a bigger track. Turn right and follow it as it wends its way up through the pretty woodland to reach a broad roadside verge. You are now at the entrance to Fonmon Castle **6**.

Enter the grounds of the castle via the bridge but quickly turn off the drive to steps going down to a stile. Now bear right to cross two fields, using a clump of evergreen trees on the near horizon as your target. You will cross a stone stile at the boundary between the fields then reach another stile just to the left of the evergreens. This takes you down a good path to a bridge over what is now the River Kenson. Cross the valley's flat floor diagonally left to a walkway that leads to two stiles. Continue more or less straight on to climb a short, sharp slope to a stile giving on to a lane between houses. This takes you to the main road in



Llancadle (The Green Dragon Inn **7** is to the right).

Cross this road, heading slightly left, to enter a lane between houses that takes you into Llancadle farmyard. Turn right to proceed through the yard between a barn and stables, negotiating three gates in the process, to enter a field. Walk along the right hand side of this field towards a lone tree. Here turn left and keeping parallel to the hedge on your right head for the gate that faces you in the field's top corner. At this gate turn sharp right. With the hedge to your right walk through two fields and into a third. In this field proceed diagonally left down to a waymarker post that directs you into a wooded area. Bearing right, you cross a stile into a field. Continue straight on for a short distance to reach a stile on the left. Once over this, walk diagonally right uphill to turn right where a dogleg delays you sighting a stile. Climb it, turn sharply left and head for a stone stile (Do not be distracted by wooden ones also here)*. Proceed in same direction through the following field to reach two stiles. Cross these, to turn sharply right, walking on to a roadside gate. Once more turn right and proceed through the village of Llambethery passing The Vines and The Manse **8** en route. At the village end turn left at a stile. You now enter a large field. The path runs across this field to the right diagonal corner. Aim for the house you can see on the skyline.

On reaching the stile in the field corner cross the main road, bearing a little right, to another stile. Go over this to enter a field. With the field hedge to your left, pass through this quite long field to reach a stile. A newly created embankment lies to your right. Now, aiming for the left of the wood, below you to the right, start your descent, to reach via a series of stiles the main road below. Here turn right to walk through Llancarfan back to the Inn **9** and car park.

PLACES OF INTEREST

1 ST. CADOC'S CHURCH

This is a Grade A listed building dating largely from the 14th and 15th centuries. There are some earlier remnants. The church is of a decorative and perpendicular style with, unusually for the Vale, unstained windows. The church was built, on or close to, the site of the monastery set up by St Cadoc in the Dark Ages (aided, so legend has it, by stags). The monastery was ravaged in 988 by Danish pirates.

2 PEN-ONN

The birthplace of Edward Williams, better known as Iolo Morgannwg, creator of the modern Eisteddfod Gorsedd.

3 SIX BELLS INN, PENMARK

Of 16th century origin, but now almost completely modernised. Bar and restaurant.

4 ST. MARY'S CHURCH

Has a 13th century chancel arch, yew trees reputedly over 500 years old and lists its vicars back to 1242.

5 PENMARK CASTLE

A 13th century western curtain wall (see photo) and remains of a tower are its best surviving features. Built by the Norman de Umbraville family, it served as their home for generations.

6 FONMON CASTLE

Originated in the 12th century, but much of its present appearance stems from the 1762 remodelling by Thomas Paty. The plain castellations of the exterior contrast with the rococo style of the interior. The famous parliamentarian, Col Philip Jones, bought it in 1656, and his descendants still use it as their private residence. Tours are by arrangement.

7 GREEN DRAGON INN, LLANCADLE

15th century origins but extensively modernised. Bar, restaurant, B&B.

8 THE VINES & THE MANSE, LLAMBETHERY

The former is late medieval with an 18th century kitchen added; the latter a thatched medieval house rebuilt around 1650.

9 FOX AND HOUNDS INN, LLANCARFAN

16th century origins but largely modernised. S.Wales Echo Pub of the Year, 2004. Bar, restaurant, B&B.

10 CARFAN VALLEY WALK

Particularly when the sun is low in the sky, you will note that the sides of the valley are tiered with terraces. These are the result of the differing rates of erosion of the thin bands of limestone and intervening clays that make up this area; the terraces are enhanced by the tread of sheep.

SHORTER WALK ALTERNATIVE

It is not recommended that the average walker chooses this route during wet weather conditions because the Carfan valley section of it becomes very muddy. However, this valley section is recommended at other times, for those walkers who want a short walk and those who dislike using country roads. It acts as an alternative to the Llancafarn, Penonn to Penmark section of the main walk. (see map)

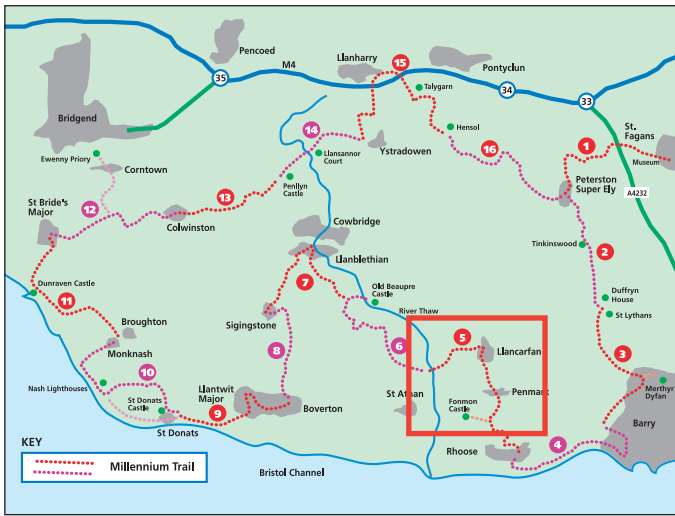
THE ROUTE

As with the main walk, you leave the car park via the bridge, go past the church to the road. Here turn right and then left to follow the road that leads uphill out of the village. Just beyond the last of the houses you will come upon a stile on the left of the road. Climb it and proceed down the valley that opens out ahead of you. The route is uncomplicated. Guided by the waymarked stiles you keep to the right of the River Carfan, which gently winds its way seaward over the flat valley floor. In total there are five stiles, but only the first two have to be climbed. At the fifth stile you reach a country road. Turn right to walk uphill.



West Curtain Wall of Penmark Castle
Photograph © G. Woosnam

WALK LOCATION IN RELATION TO VALEWAYS' MILLENNIUM HERITAGE TRAIL



Valeways' Millennium Heritage Trail covers a distance of over 100km, spanning over 6,000 years of history. It wends its way through a variety of beautiful landscapes. At its northern edge there are panoramic vistas of the Blaenau Morgannwg, while in the south it skirts a spectacular cliffed coastline.

The Trail is split into 16 easy to follow sections, each of which can be walked within a few hours. The surroundings are diverse, often spectacular and steeped in history.

Those who have never visited this part of Wales will enjoy walking through fertile, lowland countryside adjoining the spectacular Heritage Coast with its beautiful beaches. The route includes many fascinating historic features, from prehistoric burial chambers to magnificent castles, churches and mansions.

Valeways has published a guide to the Millennium Heritage Trail. This colourful book describes the 16 sections which make up the Trail and comes in a package with 16 separate A3 maps. The guide can be obtained from Valeways for £8.49 including post and packing.

(Those intending to walk the full walk should turn left, cross a low bridge and then turn left to climb into the village of Penmark. Here you meet the longer route at Croft John.)

Back on the shorter walk continue uphill. Ignore a road off to the left. You soon arrive at Cliff House Farm on your right. Climb the stile opposite, at the side of a house, and bearing slightly right proceed to the stile at the field boundary. Now walk on, heading just to the right of the house you will clearly see lying ahead of you, to cross or pass three more stiles. Pass through the gap between the already mentioned house and a barn to your right. Then walk through a farmyard to reach the road.

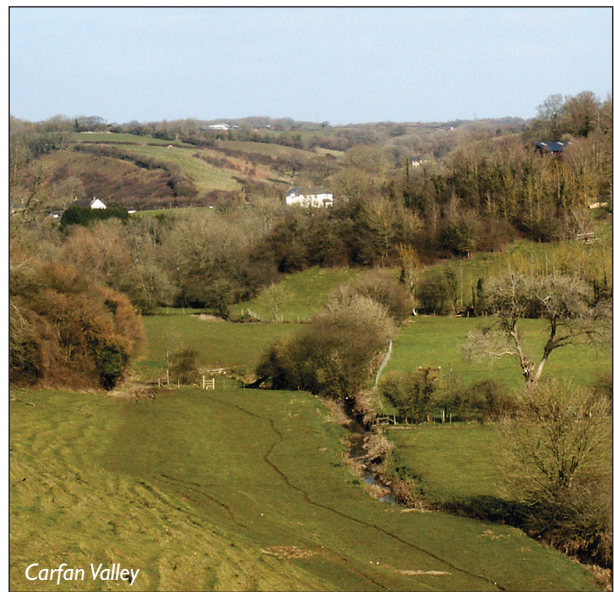
At the road turn right, then very soon, left. This brings you to Middlecross Farm. Turn left, off the track, when just past the farmhouse. Negotiate a solid iron gate and continue in a similar direction to a stile at the next field boundary. Now continue to walk in a similar direction towards a stone stile in the far corner. Ignore the wooden stiles in this field. On reaching the stone stile you will have rejoined the longer walk. To continue, return to the route guide for the longer walk at **



Llancafarn Church
Photograph © G. Woosnam

WALK FEATURES

- Carfan Valley views
- St Cadoc's Church
- St Mary's Church
- Penmark Castle
- Fonmon Castle
- A variety of good Inns



Carfan Valley
Photograph © G. Woosnam



Valeways is a registered charity working in partnership with the community to reopen existing footpaths to create a network of enjoyable circular walks across the Vale of Glamorgan, linking towns and villages to the surrounding countryside and points of interest. We are indebted to the many volunteers who give up their time freely to provide this walk for your enjoyment.



Valeways Partnership - Many thanks to the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Countryside Council for Wales for their continued support.

Cefnogwyd gal Supported by



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Walk No. 17, Llancafarn

Valley of the Stags

Distance: 6 miles (short version 3.5 miles)



Weather vane
Photograph © Vale of Glamorgan Council



FOLLOW THE WALKER'S CODE

- Guard against all risk of fire
 - Fasten all gates
- Keep all dogs under close control
- Keep to public paths on farmland
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges & walls
 - Take your litter home
- Protect all wildlife, plants and trees