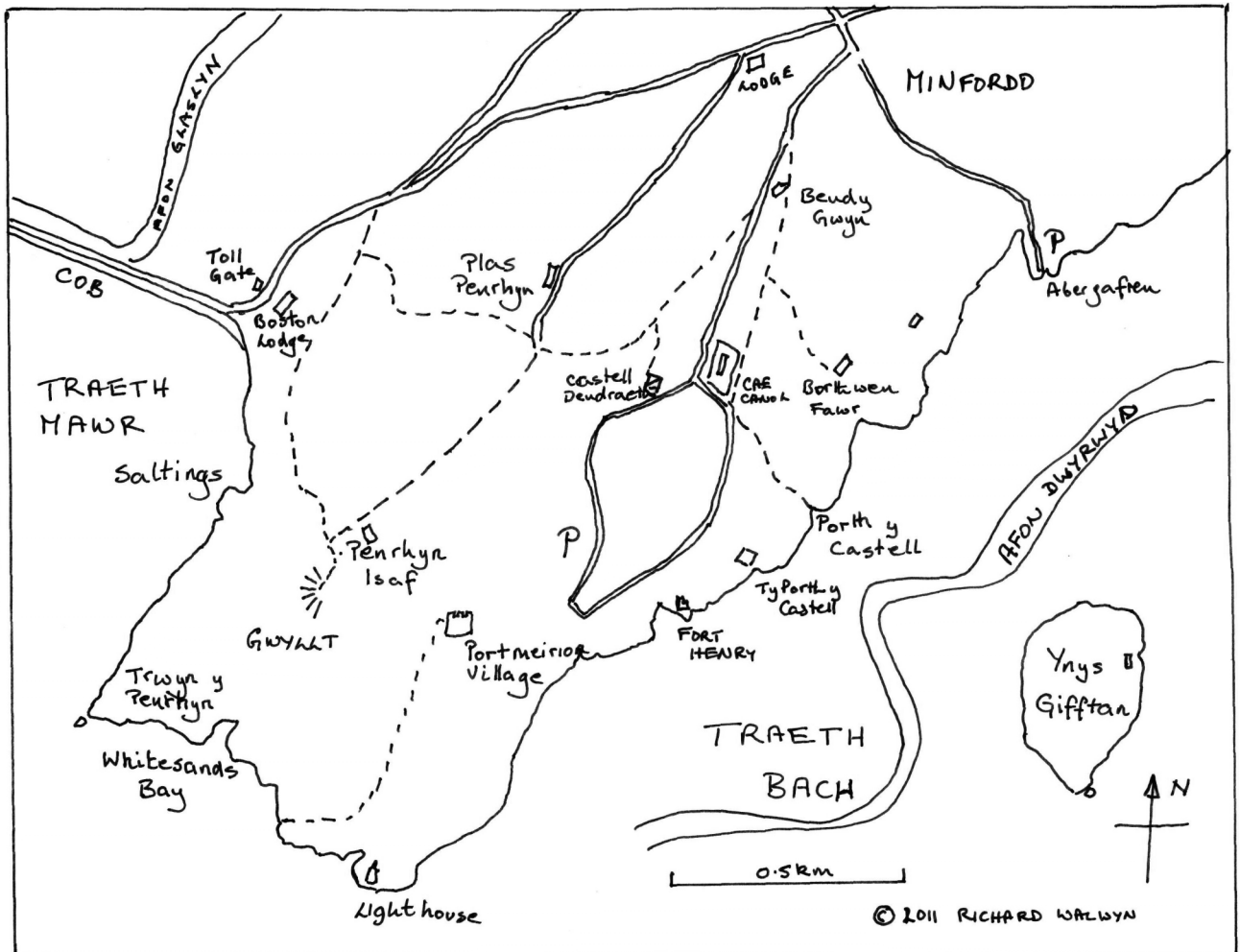


A walk round the Portmeirion peninsula

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As this is a circular walk we could start and finish at any of a number of places. In winter locals will probably choose to park in Portmeirion car park, and if one is happy to pay the summer entrance fee (and why not) this would be a good starting point then as well – there is the promise of tea at the end. These notes are based on that assumption. However, it is actually possible to follow the walk, except for a visit to purported site of the ancient Castell Deudraeth, without going into Portmeirion at all, in which case the car park on the road at Boston Lodge is perhaps a good starting point. You must be prepared to paddle though, and should choose a starting time just before low tide. A fairly relaxed walk should take no more than two hours. The more ambitious could start from Porthmadog, perhaps walking across the saltings from the Ffestiniog railway station to Trwyn Penrhyn and returning along the Cob



The village we know as Penrhyn deudraeth did not exist before the 1850s; up to 1852 when the swamp on the site of the modern village was drained Penrhyn Deudraeth (or just Penrhyn) had been the name of a headland (Penrhyn) jutting out between two beaches. These notes will have very little to say about the modern village, so by Penrhyn I shall mean the promontory. The historical spelling of Welsh place names, particularly when anglicised, is idiosyncratic at the best of times; I have not even tried to be consistent. Some of the proper names concerned are quite long, so I mean no disrespect if, for example, I refer to Clough Williams-Ellis as Clough.

There is a good deal of confusion over dates, particularly with regard to Portmeirion. I have done my best, but guarantee nothing!

The history of Portmeirion Village itself has been very thoroughly covered in all manner of publications but particularly in *Portmeirion The Place and its Meaning* by Clough Williams-Ellis so we shall make our way directly down to Traeth Bach and head up the estuary towards the Briwet railway bridge.

Fort Henry

The first structure we reach is a ruined folly (Fort Henry) overlooking what appears to be a small dock. This folly harbour was ruined from birth, having been constructed by Clough Williams-Ellis in the early days of Portmeirion to serve as a bathing place before the building of the swimming pool. There is a precipitous path to it from the village car park, but this is now overgrown and inaccessible; the rather attractive small bridge which used to take the path over a tiny ravine is still visible.

Porth y Castell and Quay

Beyond the Bathing Place we come to a spectacularly sited south facing house overlooking the traeth. This is Porth y Castell, newly built by Clough in 1964, although contriving to appear a hundred years older. It is a private house, though the gardens may occasionally be open under the National Gardens Scheme. Porth y Castell takes its name from the little tumbled down quay we come to next, though to get there we may have to clamber along the top of the low cliff unless the tide is very low and the Afon Dwyrdd in a benign mood. The river is fickle here; sometimes it comes nowhere near this shore, a few years ago flowing round the far side of Ynys Giffan, the island opposite. Recently it has been hugging this bank, forcing us to climb out of the way. We are not the only creatures that use this path: a flock of sheep has taken a fancy to the sweet sea-washed grass under Portmeirion and the rocks have been worn smooth by their clattering feet as they make their way to and fro.

Porth y Castell quay is so-called because it was used to bring building materials for the extension of Castell Deudraeth which we will come to soon; that was in the nineteenth century, but this place had been used for many centuries as a departure point for people wishing to cross the traeth. We are going to follow the public right of way which comes down here, and the existence of a right of way is a fairly sure sign that the route has been in use for a very long time. This is only one of a number of departure points on this stretch of shore; there is another further upstream which is accessible by car from Minffordd. The destination was probably Tygwyn y Gamlas on Ynys, which we can see on the other side. Before the coming of the railway and the building of the Briwet Bridge in 1860 the alternative route would have taken you all the way up the Dwyrdd valley to the bridge at Maentwrog and back down the other side.

Giraldus Cambrensis

On the morning of 9th April 1188 Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales) set off on horseback from Llanfair just south of present day Harlech where he had spent the night in order to ride to Nevin on the north coast of Llŷn. He was going to spend the night there. His party had spent the previous night in Towyn, crossing the Mawdach and Artro rivers to get to Llanfair. They travelled fast, but this day's journey was to be quite a marathon. He was accompanying Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, on a journey through Wales in order to drum up recruits for the Third Crusade, and in due course would write an account of their progress. Of course they had to cross both Traeth Bach and Traeth Mawr. Luckily, as the moon was just three days past the first quarter, the tides that day were neap and low tide was about midday. So long as they didn't mind getting their toes a bit wet and had a good guide, they should have been able to ride across.

At that time the lower road from Harlech to Tan y Bwlch did not exist. The Morfa Harlech dunes had not yet been formed and Ynys Llanfihangel-y-Traethau was still a proper island. The high tide would have come up over the Great Salt Marsh to where Talsarnau stands today, making the crossing of Traeth Bach as much if not more of a challenge than the crossing of Traeth Mawr. We do not know their exact route, but they would certainly have started off over the high ground from Llanfair in the direction of Llandechwyn church, riding along the ancient track which one can still follow and passing below Moel Goedog before coming down to Traeth Bach, either through Eisingrug or Soar. They seem to have missed Harlech altogether – of course the castle as we know it today would not be built for another hundred years.

From the Merionnydd shore of Traeth Bach the most direct route to Nevin would have taken them via Penrhyn where we are now standing, then Borth y Gest, Penmorfa and Llanybi. In any case they crossed without incident, having been welcomed into his domain by the local prince Maredudd ap Cynan “with a number of his people, just as we were crossing a bridge”. Gerald's account of this day's journey is brief and he does not identify this bridge but it may have been near Soar. He does say that there were two ‘recently built’ stone castles in the area; one, belonging to the sons of Cynan is called Deudraeth and situated in the Eifionydd area, “facing the northern mountains” and the other “called Carn Madryn, belonging to the sons of Owain, is on the Llŷn peninsula, on the other side of the river, and it faces the sea”. We shall examine one possible site of the former castle in due course.

Dorlan Goch

Following the path through the gate we come out into a field called Dorlan Goch (the red riverbank – perhaps from the peaty red colour of the Dwyrdd). The path hugs the right hand side of the field. On the other side is another house designed by Clough Williams-Ellis originally called the White Cottage, but now named after the field in which it stands. This is one of those cottages on the estate which is let out to holidaymakers, but it was built in 1932 as an artist's studio, and during the Second World War it probably became the home of Meryl Watts (1910-1992), one of our more notable local artists. When she left here she settled at Bron Afon in Borth y Gest where she spent much of the rest of her life. Many of her paintings are of local scenes and at least one was done from the terrace of this house looking out over the traeth and Ynys Giffan towards the Rhinogydd. Incidentally, the story goes that Ynys Giffan, which was farmed until well into the last century was so called because it had been a present to Queen Anne.

Borthwen and Cae Canol

We shall follow the path up the hill and out through the gate onto the Portmeirion drive then, instead of going straight up to the looming Castell Deudraeth let us turn right by a folly seat and go along a rough track for a few yards from where, below us on the right we can see the old house of Borthwen Fawr and beyond it the smaller Borthwen Bach, and on our left is another old house called Cae Canol. All these will enter the story soon. There is another old house further along this track called Beudy Gwyn which also has a role to play. If you have time another day you could follow the path past Beudy Gwyn and then take the footpath over the field to join the old lane down to the other crossing point on the traeth.

Castell Deudraeth

And so to Castell Deudraeth; you could hardly miss it! This was a pleasant early Victorian house called Bron Eryri until David Williams, a solicitor from Pwllheli who became the controller of the Tremadog Estate, got to work on it. If we turn left a little way down the road we can look at the back of the castle overlooking the garden and see what remains of this earlier house. David Williams was born in 1799 at Saethon, Llangian, on the Llŷn where his father, another David and grandfather, John, had also been born. The younger David did very well out of investments in land and founded something of a dynasty of his own, fathering more than twelve children.

The history of this group of buildings is involved and not entirely clear; Samuel Holland, of whom more later, says in his memoirs that a Mr. Cartwright who had once kept the Tan y Bwlch Hotel (the Oakley Arms) bought the Cae Canol estate and lived there. He in turn sold the estate to a Capt. Barton who developed it, building a quay at Aber Ia, Bron Eryri and the existing Cae Canol houses and in due course selling it on to John Williams, the elder brother of David Williams. Eventually John Williams sold the estate to his brother in 1841, and David set to work making the place fit for a man of expanding wealth and status. Meanwhile Samuel Holland had taken (i.e. rented) Dorlan Goch field from a Mr Davies of Borthwen Bach and sold it for him to John Williams in 1840, thus giving Williams easy access to Traeth Bach from Cae Canol. David had started his law career by being articled to his brother John, then a solicitor at Llanfyllin, Montgomeryshire before practising at Pwllheli and eventually Porthmadog

In due course David Williams used his expanding wealth to consolidate his position as a landed proprietor and became in turn clerk of the peace for Merioneth from 1842-59, one of the deputy-lieutenants for Merioneth and Caernarvonshire, high sheriff for Merioneth in, 1861-2, and for Caernarvonshire in 1862-3. He contested Merioneth as a Liberal in 1859 and 1865 unsuccessfully, but he won the seat in 1868, thus becoming the first Liberal MP for Merioneth and breaking a long tradition of Tory representation by the established landed gentry. He was succeeded as MP by Samuel Holland in 1870 and the seat remained Liberal until 1951 when it went Labour. Williams was a cultured man, having literary interests, and was responsible for the development pretty much from scratch of present day Penrhyndeudraeth – up till then it had been a marshy unhealthy place, scratching a living from cockle picking and metal mining. The transformation of Bron Eryri into Castell Deudraeth began in the 1850s, the name finally being changed in 1858.

David Williams was succeeded at Castell Deudraeth by his eldest son Sir Arthur Osmond Williams, uncle of Clough Williams-Ellis. Born in 1849 Osmond went to Eton and was created the first baronet in 1909. He followed in his father's footsteps, becoming Liberal MP for Merioneth from 1900 to 1910. He was justice of the peace and deputy-lieutenant for Caernarvonshire, chairman of quarter sessions for Merioneth, constable of Harlech castle and lord-lieutenant of Merioneth from 1909 until 1927 when he died in Australia.

And so we come to the twentieth century. Clough Williams-Ellis bought the Aber Ia estate, which had been leased in 1861 to Sir William Fothergill Cooke, from his uncle in 1925 and used the land to build Portmeirion. He bought Castell Deudraeth itself in 1931 and converted it into an hotel; one reason for the purchase having been to provide Portmeirion with a more satisfactory entrance drive. Bertrand Russell wrote *Freedom and Organization 1814-1914* in the library while staying at the hotel in 1933 and 1934. The hotel did not last long because in 1939 the castle was requisitioned by the Ministry of Education, and in 1940 Hillcrest School from Frinton on Sea came to occupy the buildings. They stayed until 1946 when they left for Akeley Wood, a large house in Buckinghamshire. It is said that their only reason for leaving was the lack of level playing fields – a common problem for schools in North Wales! After it moved the school changed its name to Akeley Wood School and still exists.

One of the more notable teachers at the school during the war was Rupert Crawshay-Williams (1908–1977) who taught mathematics, French and English. He and his wife Elizabeth moved into a cottage in Castle Yard, the group of buildings between Cae Canol and Castell Deudraeth which had been built as a stable yard for the castle; after the war they stayed on. Crawshay-Williams was the great grandson of T.H. Huxley (Darwin's bulldog) and, following family tradition, was a convinced atheist. There is a nice story about Rupert Crawshay-Williams's grandmother Ethel Collier (née Huxley) who made a habit of vetting the potential wives of the boys in the family; she is said to have met Elizabeth Powell, Rupert's fiancé and asked "You are marrying into one of the great atheist families; I know you are an atheist now, but will you be able to keep it up until you die?"

Before the war he worked for Gramophone Records and High Fidelity Reproduction and was a regular reviewer for the periodical Gramophone Records. He was a founding member of the Classification Society and an honorary associate of the Rationalist Press Association. Crawshay-Williams spent most of the rest of his life writing (pretty good) academic philosophy having been encouraged to do so by Bertrand Russell. He became something of a Boswell to Russell and his papers are in the library of McMaster University in Canada where Russell's are also deposited. When Elizabeth developed a fatal debilitating and progressive paralysis Rupert decided he could not live without her; they took sleeping pills and were found in each others arms.

The much loved art and carpentry teacher at the school, Mark Wolf, lived with his wife Irene in the cottage known as Trwyn Penrhyn which we will pass later. When the school left the area they moved to the very ancient cottage of Hafod Ysphyty in Cwm Teigl below Manod Mawr.

Plas yn Penrhyn

Now we leave Castell Deudraeth by climbing the short flight of steps opposite the front door and making our way to the top of the hill where there is a small automatic weather station. On the right we look across to Plas yn Penrhyn, a house with a notable and romantic history. It is an ancient holding, but first comes to our attention between 1809 and 1811 when Captain Joseph Huddart bought first the Bryncir Estate and then the Wern and Eithinog estates. At this time Plas Penrhyn came into his possession as part of the Wern estate. Joseph Huddart was born in 1741 at Allonby in Cumberland and started his working life as a seaman in the family fishing business, rising to be master of his own brig the *Patience* which he both designed and built himself. He had been interested in maths and science as a child, and soon became an adept hydrographer, publishing many charts culminating in his definitive survey of St George's Channel in 1778.

He joined the East India Company and did much work charting the waters between India and China. On his retirement from the sea in 1791 he became an FRS (one of two connected with this house) becoming one of the first directors of the East India Dock Company in 1798 and laying the Dock's first foundation stone in 1804. His scientific brilliance resulted in many important inventions, perhaps the greatest being in the development of steam-driven machinery for making rope. This resulted in vastly improved quality and reliability and set the standard for all future ropemaking. It also made him a great deal of money which he invested in land, mainly in North Wales. He died in London in August 1816 and is buried in St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

Captain Joseph Huddart's son, also Joseph, inherited the estates and lived at Bryncir which he enormously enlarged. This Joseph Huddart, who was knighted in 1821 by George IV on his way to Ireland after his coronation, built the folly tower at Bryncir to celebrate the occasion. He was a diplomat who became consul at Leghorn.

Samuel Holland (October 1803–December 1892)

Samuel Holland's father, also Samuel Holland, was a merchant from Liverpool who had extensive mining and slate quarrying interests in North Wales. In 1819 he took out a lease (a take note) on land at Rhiwbryfdir from Mr W.G. Oakley, who lived at Plas Tan y Bwlch. He had been advised that this was a very good prospect, as indeed it turned out to be. Work started in 1818 under the supervision of one Peter Whitehead who lived at the Grapes Hotel in Maentwrog. The quarry went well, but Whitehead was a failure as Holland discovered on one of his periodic visits. So in 1821 Samuel Holland junior, aged eighteen, was summoned to come and take charge. He stayed in North Wales for the rest of his life. The manuscript of Holland's memoirs is in the National Library and was published by the Merioneth Historical and Record Society; it makes fascinating reading. His first journey from Liverpool to North Wales was quite daunting: he was told by his father to take ship to Baglit on the Dee, and then walk the rest of the way via St. Asaph where he stayed one night, Llanrwst the next and he was to reach Ffestiniog the day after that. He says he went out and bought a carpet bag, took it home, said his goodbyes to his mother and set off the next day. All went according to plan until he got to Dolwyddelan and asked the way to Ffestiniog, only to be told there was only an indistinct mountain path and no road [where the Crimea Pass is now]; instead he was advised to go via Penmachno which he did having first engaged a man to carry his bag "as he was tired". He found the quarry and his father, who showed him round, introduced him to people, advised him to find cheaper lodgings than the Pengwern Hotel and then rode off to Liverpool leaving young Samuel to his own devices.

After a while Holland took a lease on a cottage by the by wharf at Trwyn y Garnedd on the road from Minffordd to Tan y Bwlch from where the slates were taken by boat to Ynys Cyngar. This may have been Laundry Cottage or perhaps those on the other side of the road. He walked daily from there to the quarry, in fact he walked a very great deal including to Liverpool and back a few times! He got on well, learning Welsh and acquiring a faithful servant who stayed with him for nearly fifty years. He extended his cottage and started having family visitors, including his cousins from Knutsford. All went well until he was forced to leave his house in 1825 and instead moved to a small cottage on Adwy Ddu farm which has now been swallowed up by Penrhyndeudraeth. This did not prove satisfactory so he moved to the Grapes Hotel in Maentwrog while looking for something better. Which brings us back to Plas yn Penrhyn.

Holland applied to Sir Joseph Huddart for the lease and eventually, in 1827, he took it on together with Borthwen Fawr and Beudy Gwyn, and Huddart also agreed to build the lodge which still stands on the main road. We have seen Borthwen Fawr; until he died recently Beudy Gwyn was the home of Michael (Micky) Burn about whom another long story could be told. When Holland arrived, Plas Penrhyn was being farmed by a tenant, so he bought the stock and let the tenant carry on farming at Borthwen. Holland says proudly that he paid £160 a year for the lot, but that he sublet half the farm for half the term of the lease for the rent he paid for the whole. Clearly a canny businessman! He soon set about improving his property, and the house as we see it today is almost all Holland's work. He seems to have had rather better taste than David Williams. He doubled the size of the house, roofed the lot, built new farm buildings from scratch – they are still very fine – and as has already been said he took on Dorlan Goch and Cae Canol for a while.

Mrs Gaskell

The slate enterprise flourished and young Samuel started on his own account, borrowing money from his extensive family to do so. One of his cousins we know well as Mrs Elizabeth Gaskell. Her mother was sister to the older Samuel Holland and she had married a Mr Stevenson, an eccentric, bookish man, who worked for the Treasury in Whitehall. Elizabeth was the last of eight children, six of whom died in childhood. She was born in 1810 to the forty year old Mrs Stevenson, who died of exhaustion before Elizabeth was two years old. She was rejected by her father, who was remarried to a woman who resented the child, and went to live with her mother's sister in Knutsford by whom she was very much loved. Tragedy struck when her surviving brother, who had gone to sea, was lost when she was eighteen, but her Holland relations were tight knit and supportive. Despite that she pined for more than rural Cheshire could offer, so she did the rounds of other distant relatives in Edinburgh, Newcastle and London. She attended balls, including one which she had been told had "capital flirting places in the balcony". However she met and fell in love with The Reverend William Gaskell, a minister in the Unitarian Church to which her family belonged. They spent at least part of their honeymoon with cousin Samuel Holland in Plas yn Penrhyn.

In fact Mrs Gaskell spent a good deal of time here, writing, or at least beginning to write *Mary Barton* while staying in the house. She also based part of *Ruth* on stories she had been told here, and there is a short story, *The Well of Penmorfa* which is set in the area and which gives an insight into contemporary social conditions.

In old age Samuel Holland moved away from Plas yn Penrhyn to Plas Caerdeon, a house above the road between Barmouth and Dolgelley. The house had been built in 1854 for the Rev W.E Jelf, an Oxford Classics don and in 1869 was taken for the summer holidays by Charles Darwin and his family; it is said that he wrote part of *The Descent of Man* there. As a liberal and something of a free thinker Holland may well have appreciated that endorsement, for Darwin clearly loved the house. He wrote to his friend T.D. Hooker "*How I wish it was possible for you to pay a visit here, we have a beautiful house with a terraced garden and a really magnificent view of Cader right opposite*". Holland appears to have moved to Caerdeon from Plas Penrhyn in the very early 1870s.

In 1841 Samuel, described as a Slate Merchant was at Plas yn Penrhyn on census night together with his father and mother, his wife Anne, a cook, a house maid, a dairy maid and a stable boy. In 1851 the Holland family is still at the Plas; Samuel's father, aged 83, is still there, as is young Samuel's wife, a ladies maid, a house maid, a cook, a dairy maid, and a farm servant. In 1861 Samuel Holland junior is still living in the Plas with his wife, a cook, two house servants and a groom, but his father has died. In 1871 young Thomas Casson the banker is spending census night in the Plas and by 1881 Plas yn Penrhyn is being farmed by Henry Jones.

In 1871 Caerdeon is still occupied by Rev. Jelf and his considerable family – fifteen in all. In 1881 it is being looked after by a housemaid with a skeleton staff of three. Ann Holland died in March 1877 and is buried in the churchyard at Caerdeon. The next year Samuel was married again to Caroline Jane Burt, born 1844 who is also buried at Caerdeon, having died there in 1924. He does not appear to have had any children though in the family plot at Caerdeon there is the grave of Llewelyn Urquhart Burt L.A.C., perhaps his brother in law, who lived from 1854 to 1923. When they died the estate was sold to a convent and is now owned by Liverpool Hope University and run as an Outdoor Education Centre

Bertrand Russell

The story now moves on to 1954 when Bertrand Russell, on the recommendation of Rupert Crawshay-Williams took a lease on Plas Penrhyn; he stayed there until he died in 1970. Russell, born in 1872, was arguably the greatest English speaking philosopher of the twentieth century as well as being a superlative English stylist; among his numerous honours he was elected FRS in 1908, was awarded the Order of Merit in 1949 and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1950. As a grandson of John Russell, third son of the Duke of Bedford who had brought about the Great Reform Bill of 1832 and who in 1861 was raised to the peerage as Earl Russell, Bertrand Russell was definitely a patrician despite which, or perhaps because of which he was a lifelong radical and atheist. Some thought he courted what today we would call 'negative publicity'.

Russell's father, Viscount Amberley and his mother, the daughter of Baron Stanley of Alderley were both atheists and wanted their son brought up as an agnostic and said so in their wills; by the time Russell was three they were both dead, but not before arranging for John Stuart Mill to become the child's 'secular godfather' – to no avail. He was actually brought up by his highly religious grandmother who circumvented the wishes of Russell's parents by having the child made a ward of court. Perhaps Russell spent the rest of his life reacting against his grandmother's influence. In his childhood he discovered Shelley and wrote later "*I spent all my spare time reading him, and learning him by heart, knowing no one to whom I could speak of what I thought or felt, I used to reflect how wonderful it would have been to know Shelley, and to wonder whether I should meet any live human being with whom I should feel so much sympathy.*" When he discovered that Shelley had spent some time at Plas Tan yr Allt on the other side of Traeth Mawr he was even more enthusiastic about leasing Plas Penrhyn, together with the glory of the sunsets. The congenial company in the neighbourhood no doubt also appealed.

In 1952 Russell had married his fourth wife Edith M Finch who had taught English literature at Bryn Mawr where he had been a visiting lecturer. She was an accomplished artist and by all accounts this last marriage was extremely happy. There is a water colour by her of Borth-y-Gest harbour dated 1943, so she had been familiar with the area for some time before marrying Russell, and in fact they had known each other for twenty five years. After Russell died in 1970 Lady Russell stayed on in the house until her own death in 1978.

Penrhyn Isaf

Now, after passing the Plas yn Penrhyn farm buildings we will turn left along the rough road towards Penrhyn Isaf, the farm towards the end of the peninsula. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was crucial to Madocks' plans for the Cob. He needed to open up a stone quarry to provide a nearby source of material, so he bought the farm. The quarry, barracks and works at Boston Lodge were built on Penrhyn Isaf land.

There is one notorious and tragic incident associated with this house; Madocks imported a large workforce to work on the embankment and one man, Thomas Edwards known locally as yr Hwntw Mawr – the big South Walian – was of their number. He was a very tall man and notably strong, though he may actually have been from the North Wales. He lodged at the cottage now known as White Horses on the quay at Aber Ia. After the great breach in the Cob in 1812 a good deal of money was held at Penrhyn Isaf, and Edwards knew its whereabouts. During the harvest, on September 7th, when he thought the coast would be clear he broke in and attempted to open the dresser drawer where it was kept but was surprised by the maid, Mary Jones, who was preparing food for the harvesters. She was eighteen at the time and pregnant. Edwards hit her with a stone and killed her (some accounts say she was stabbed with a pair of sheep shears or a sickle). He ran away towards the south with a group of men in pursuit. There was a fight as Edwards tried to cross the Dwyrdd and one man, Robert Williams the victim's uncle, was drowned. However Edwards was caught and bound and sent to Dolgellau in the custody of six constables. Even so he managed to escape on the way. A few days later he was caught by John Jones of Ynysfor and taken to Dolgellau prison. He was tried, found guilty and sentenced to death. This sentence was carried out in public on April 17th 1813. Mary Jones is buried at Llanfrothen.

The headland beyond Penrhyn Isaf is known as the Gwylt (the wild place). This area nearly became Open Access land but an appeal was upheld; however now there is a permissive path across it to a fine viewpoint looking across Traeth Mawr with a panoramic vista from the tip of Llŷn to the Moelwynion and beyond.

Boston Lodge

The right of way now crosses the field below Penrhyn Isaf, through the gate and down the track to Boston Lodge. We will cross the road at this point and head towards the old toll gate. The new main footpath over the Cob passes behind the toll gate, but it is worth sticking to the footpath along the main road in order to see the slate notice of tariffs attached to the front of the building. Madocks had many reasons for building the Cob, but one of them was the potential income from tolls. The enabling act of parliament specified the rates he was allowed to charge, and these are shown on the notice; it would be hard to imagine a contemporary situation that was not covered.

We pass a blind tunnel which was once a low level entrance to Boston Lodge works, cross the road and climb to the top of the Cob up a flight of steps. Boston Lodge, named after Madocks' Lincolnshire constituency, was originally built as a barracks to house much of his large workforce together with smithies and stables. When the railway was built it was adapted with workshops, foundries and all the paraphernalia of a railway works.

We cross over the track and make our way down on to the saltings. The highest spring tides reach up to here – you can see the strand line – but normal tides now barely cover this area and at neaps you can walk over the saltings at any stage of the tide. Before the Cob was built much of Traeth Mawr and the Penmorfa marshes would have been like this. Actually, before the river Glaslyn was 'turned' along the back of the Cob it flowed out to sea more or less where we are going to walk. You can see that it would have missed Borth y Gest by a long way, so that side of the estuary would probably have been composed of saltings like this and would only have been covered at high water springs. The salt marsh is passable so long as you know your way, but the bigger creeks can bring one up short. Sheep don't much like getting their feet wet and keep to well trodden paths, so if all else fails follow a sheep trail. There are one or two patches which stay quite wet, but there is nothing dangerous. Salt marsh like this is self-perpetuating: the first vegetation to establish slows the flow of water which encourages it to drop its load of silt, thereby raising the level of the ground, allowing fussier plants to get established. Now and again a channel will change direction and then the marsh may be eroded but it will soon re-establish itself.

Trwyn Penrhyn

Heading out to sea we pass the cottage known as Trwyn Penrhyn (the promontory's nose) where the art teacher Mark Wolf lived with his wife Irene during the war. The Portmeirion guides refer to it as the old Ferryman's Cottage, which it may well have been. Now we have a choice; either we wade across the stream leading out of the big pool under Trwyn Penrhyn, or we clamber over the rocks on to the beach in White Sands Bay. If the former we should aim to arrive at the bottom of the tide; if the latter it is worth climbing to the top of the outcrop – there is a good view and an easy way down the far side. Once on the sands we will head for the steps marked by a red lifebuoy and follow the path inland towards the village. (Unless, that is, we are avoiding the Portmeirion entrance fee in which case we should skirt round the folly lighthouse and head back to Fort Henry, paddling as necessary).

The 12th century Castell Deudraeth

There is one last thing to see on this history walk (apart of course from Portmeirion itself where tea beckons) and to do so we will climb the steps by the lifebuoy and follow the path inland through the Gwylt. Carry straight on along the path, keeping to the left of the first lake and Chinoiserie gazebo, and then to the right of another lake with a classical gazebo on the far side of it until we come to a crag with signs of masonry on top. Keeping on round the back we come to a path which leads to the top. This crag is believed by many, the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments for Wales included, to mark the site of the Castell Deudraeth noted in 1188 by Giraldus Cambrensis. To put it mildly, the evidence is thin! Clough Williams Ellis has done his bit to enhance the tale by building a wall round the top of the putative motte and leaving an incongruous stray cannon here. There is a notice on the Campanile in the village (inaccessible to the general public) stating that:

*This Tower, built in 1928 by
Clough Williams Ellis
Architect & Publican
Embodies Stones from the
12th Century Castle of
His Ancestor
Gruffydd ap Cynan
King of North Wales
that stood on an eminence
150yds to the west*

*It was finally razed c.1869 by
Sir William Fothergill Cook
inventor of the Electric Telegraph
“lest the ruins should become known
& attract visitors to the place”*

*This 19th Century affront
to the 12th is thus piously
redressed in the 20th*

Perhaps Clough was having another of his little jokes. Never mind, the RCAHMW considers that some of the infill wall work round this crag *may* be 12th century workmanship, but it does look much like all the other dry stone walling in the neighbourhood, and what of “facing the northern mountains”? Perhaps if there were no trees in the way?..... It does seem to be just the sort of eminence on which there *ought* to be a castle though. Anyway, between this crag and the village there is a perfectly splendid viewpoint in the form of yet another gazebo built, this time, round a couple of old spirally fluted chimney pots and more of the ubiquitous cast iron mermaid panels which Clough Williams-Ellis rescued from a Liverpool sailors’ home. This one was opened by Sir Hugh Casson in 1983 having been built to mark the centenary of Clough’s birth, and like the others was designed by Clough’s daughter Susan Williams-Ellis. The steps down to the village are pretty steep, so if you don’t want to risk them you had better retrace your steps a bit and head for the village by way of the childrens’ playground.

And so to tea.....

TOLLS TO BE TAKEN AT THIS GATE.

	S	D
<p>For every Horse or other Beast of Draught drawing and Coach, Sociable, Berlin, Landau, Chariot, Vis-à-vis, Chaise Calash, Chaise-marine, Curricule, Chair, Gig, Whisky, Caravan, Hearse, Litter, Waggon, Wain, Cart, Dray, or other Carriage, any Sum not exceeding One Shilling</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em;">}</p> <p style="font-size: 2em;">}</p>	<p>1 0</p> <p>0 6</p> <p>0 4¹/₂</p>
<p>For every Horse, Mare, Gelding, or Ass, laden or Unladen, and not drawing, the Sum of Sixpence: but if there shall be more than One such Horse, Mare, Gelding, Mule or Ass, belonging to the same Person, then The Sum of Sixpence shall be paid for one of them only for every other of them:</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em;">}</p>	<p>0 3</p>
<p>For every Drove of Oxen, Cows or Neat Cattle, any Sum not exceeding Five Shillings <i>per</i> Score, and so in proportion</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em;">}</p>	<p>1 8</p>
<p>For and greater or less Number:</p>		
<p>For every Drove of Calves, Pigs, Sheep or Lambs, and Sum not exceeding Three Shillings and Sixpence per Score, and So in proportion for any greater or less Number:</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em;">}</p> <p style="font-size: 2em;">}</p>	<p>1 3</p> <p>0 9</p>
<p>And for every Person crossing or passing on Foot, without and Beast or Carriage, any Sum not exceeding Two-pence.</p>	<p style="font-size: 2em;">}</p>	<p>0 1</p>

Good Sources and Further Reading:

There are many good books relating to the matter of these notes and this list gives some of the more helpful. Of course nowadays the Internet has become almost a primary source, and it is wonderful what can be found, but quite a lot needs to be read critically – not to be underestimated though. If all else fails type something hopeful into Google and then ignore the first page or two which will be trying to sell you a house or a holiday! Here are a few useful web sites:

1) The National Library of Wales website, and in particular their dictionary of Welsh Biography.
<http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/index.html>

The Library in Aberystwyth holds vast stocks, including much archival material of e.g. the large local estates. You will need a reader's ticket but this is easy to obtain on a first visit. The catalogue is online at
<http://cat.llgc.org.uk/cgi-bin/gw/chameleon?&skin=full&lng=en>

Of particular value is the catalogue of wills, many of which have been digitized and may be examined online
<http://cat.llgc.org.uk/cgi-bin/gw/chameleon?skin=profef&lng=en>

2) We are blessed with a wonderful county library service who will get you practically any book you could mention – free if it comes from another Gwynedd source. The catalogue is online at:
<http://talisprium.talnet.gov.uk/TalisPrism/>

3) The County Archives at Caernarfon and Dolgellau (housed in the library there) have a wealth of material with a kind helpful and tolerant staff. See
http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy_doc.asp?cat=3693&doc=12971&language=1

One particularly interesting resource is the collection of W.A. Madocks material
http://www.archiveswales.org.uk/anw/get_collection.php?coll_id=3264&inst_id=37&term=Madocks%20%20William%20Alexander%20%201773-1828

4) The census returns from 1841 to 1901 and now much of 1911 are available online. You will have to pay for access via the Ancestry web site if you want to work from home, but public libraries are subscribed and access there is free. Take along a USB key and you will be able to take home anything you download.

5) CADW's series on Historic Landscape Characterisation. <http://www.heneb.co.uk/charlist.html>

6) Samuel Lewis's A Topographical Dictionary of Wales, made wonderfully available in the British History Online website <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=371>

7) The RCAHMW website has some useful stuff: <http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk/HI/ENG/Home/>

8) So does the GENUKI site, for example
<http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/wal/MER/LlanfihangelYTraethau/index.html>

9) A surprising one is MedLibrary giving a list of High Sheriffs:
http://medlibrary.org/medwiki/High_Sheriff_of_Merionethshire

10) Equally surprising is this Antiquarian Map Seller's site with an excellent potted biography of Joseph Huddart
<http://www.barron.co.uk/Portrait+Reference+Library/Surnames+F+to+J/Huddart+Captain+Joseph+1741-1816>

11) A good way to see the pictures Meryl Watts painted in the area is to look at:
<https://picasaweb.google.com/HuttonIT>

12) On Michael (Micky) Burn see:
http://web.me.com/Richard.Luckett/Michael_Burn_MC/QT_w_subtitles.html

And so to some books:

- 1) *Portmeirion The Place and its Meaning* by Clough Williams Ellis (ISBN: 0-216-90672-5), as well as being a splendid read, is the definitive introduction to Portmeirion village and its surroundings.
- 2) *Portmeirion*, published to celebrate the village's 80th anniversary, is a large glossy 'coffee table' book with contributions by Jan Morris, Alwyn W Turner, Mark Eastment, Stephen Lacey and Robin Llywelyn, together with a foreword by Jools Holland. (ISBN: 1-85149-522-3).
- 3) For an account of Portmeirion village, apart from 'official' guides, one could hardly better the articles in *The Buildings of Wales – Gwynedd* by Haslam, Orbach and Voelcker (ISBN: 978-0-300-14169-6). See particularly pp. 685-697. This is in any case a book no house should be without.
- 4) *Madocks & the Wonder of Wales* by Elisabeth Beazley (ISBN: 0-9510748-0-6) is a gem of a book, now criminally out of print but usually available on the Internet. It is the one you need to learn all about Madocks and the building of the Cob.
- 5) *The Book of Harlech* by Lewis William Lloyd (ISBN: 0-86023-280-8) tells the story of the Meirionnydd shore. It is quite hard to come by though.
- 6) *The Journey through Wales and The Description of Wales* by Gerald of Wales, translated and edited by Lewis Thorpe (ISBN: 978-0-14-044339-4) tells the amazing tale of the 1188 journey. A good read.
- 7) *Sails on the Dwyryd* by M.J.T. Lewis (ISBN: 0-9512373-3-0) tells the story of how the slates from Ffestiniog were shipped abroad before the building of the Cob.
- 8) *Unpathed Waters. Account Of The Life And Times Of Joseph Huddart* by William Huddart (ISBN: 187094836X / 1-870948-36-X) tells the remarkable tale of a major Penrhyn landowner.
- 9) *Turned Towards the Sun an autobiography* by Michael Burn (ISBN: 970-0-85995-308-7) gives an account of a really extraordinary local 'character' who lived at Beudy Gwyn, mentioned but not covered in these notes; a rare book but if you can find it then read it and marvel. When he died Michael Burn was cooperating with a company making a film of his life.
- 10) *Russell Remembered* by Rupert Crawshay-Williams (SBN 19-211197-3) kills two birds with one stone by giving a flavour of both men.
- 11) *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell* in three volumes is, one supposes, definitive. Actually the third volume which includes his account of life at Plas Penrhyn is less racy than the first two but still essential reading.
- 12) There is an unpublished memoir by Mollie Keen who was the matron of Hillcrest School at Castell Deudraeth during the war which tells the story of the evacuated school, but misses out key names.
- 13) *The Memoirs of Samuel Holland one of the pioneers of the North Wales Slate Industry*, Extra publication Series I, number I, published by the Merioneth Historical Record Society in 1952 is a wonderful account of how Holland came to Plas Penrhyn – definitely a must-read. Holland went on to help establish the Ffestiniog Railway, and there is a plethora of publications on that topic.
- 14) *Cartrefi Cymreig: Welsh Homes* by Gwenda Griffith and Greg Stevenson tells the story of Porth y Castell (with pictures!)
- 15) There are many biographies of Mrs Gaskell; *Elizabeth Gaskell: The Early Years* by John Chapple (ISBN: 9780719082429) tells the full story.
- 16) If you are interested in Clough Williams-Ellis as an architect you will need to read *Clough Williams-Ellis* by Richard Haslam (ISBN: 1-85490-430-2). This is out of print and rare, but Porthmadog public library has a copy.