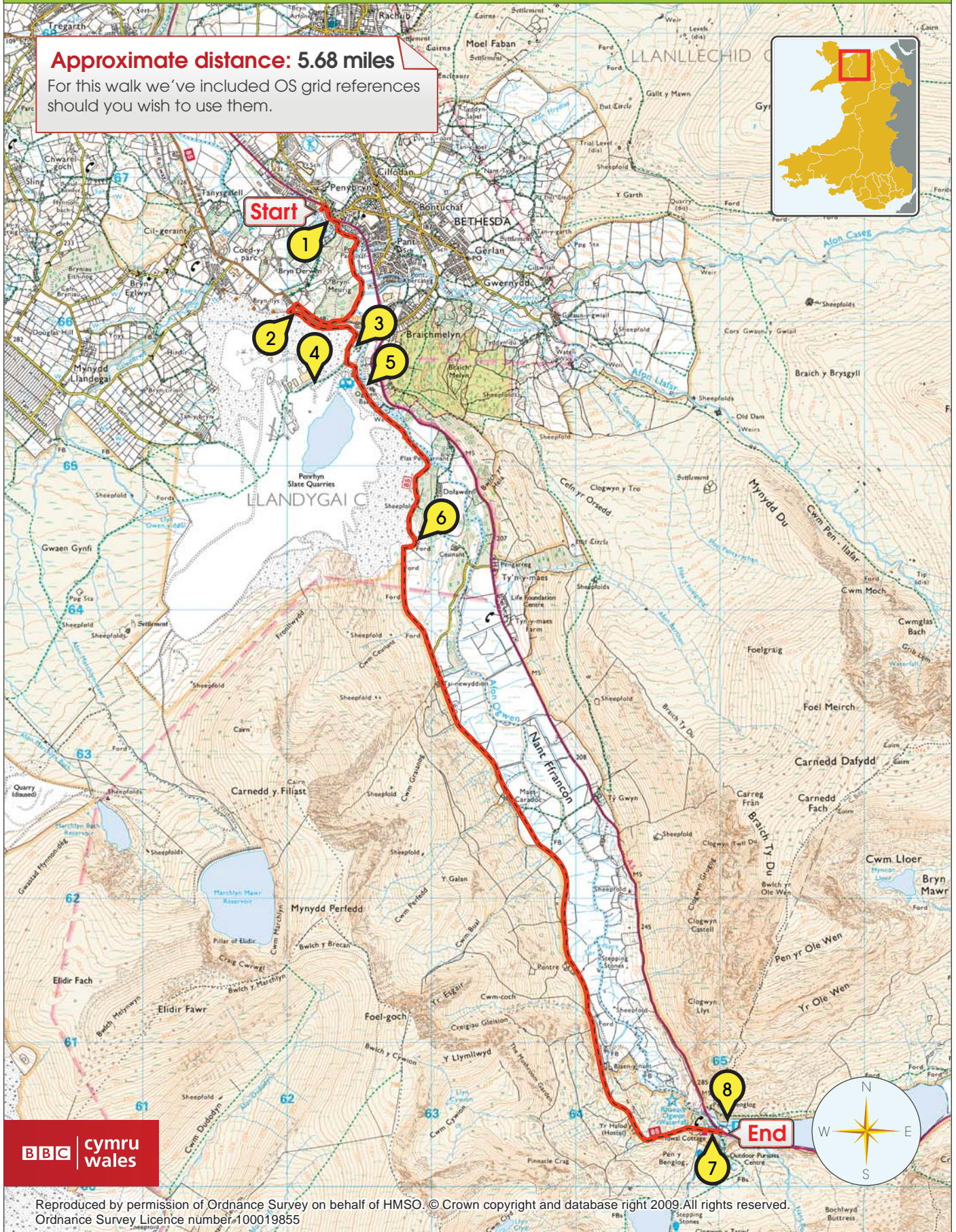
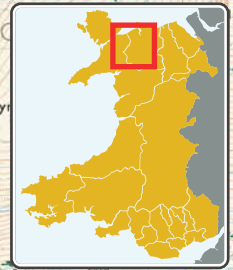


# Weatherman Walking

# Bethesda

**Approximate distance: 5.68 miles**

For this walk we've included OS grid references should you wish to use them.



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The Weatherman Walking maps are intended as a guide to help you walk the route. We recommend using an OS map of the area in conjunction with this guide. Routes and conditions may have changed since this guide was written. The BBC takes no responsibility for any accident or injury that may occur while following the route. Always wear appropriate clothing and footwear and check weather conditions before heading out.



# Weatherman Walking

# Bethesda

**Start:** From the car park behind the high street shops in the centre of the town (turn down the side street called Cae Star)

**Starting ref:** SH 6222 6675

**Distance:** 5.68 miles

**Grade:** Moderate

**Walk time :** 3hrs (2.5hrs plus stops)

**PLEASE NOTE :** There is currently (January 2015) no bus service back down the valley, so unless you retrace your steps the whole way, other travel arrangements, a taxi perhaps, will have to be made to get back to the start. However it is also worth checking whether bus services have been resumed.

The Ogwen Valley is arguably one of the most beautiful spots in Wales and renowned for its majestic peaks, world-class climbs and low-level walks. This route could be said to offer the best of both worlds, as it's gentle enough for most abilities whilst taking in some of the most stunning sights to be seen!

When Derek visited Ogwen, it wasn't so much a case of Weatherman Walking as 'weatherman zipping through the air!' Follow his trail to see why he needed a strong head for heights and find out how, these days, this once-proud slate capital is a hub for arts and adventure!



Ogwen Valley, beautiful even on a misty day

## Directions

**From the car park behind the shops, walk back to the high street and turn right.**

**Walk up the high street for about 200 yards, passing numerous pubs on the way. Look out also for the colourful painted murals as you go.**



Derek and Homan on the side of the high street with all the pubs!



### 1 Bethesda (SH 622 666)

Bethesda boomed as a slate town in the 19th century but suffered a change in fortunes as the industry declined. Known to the locals as 'Pesda', the town enjoyed something of a revival as a popular place for artists to settle and has inspired famous painters such as Peter Prendergast and Martin Bloch. There is still a thriving arts community here and the Neuadd Ogwen arts centre recently opened on the High Street.

A curious fact about Bethesda is that all the pubs on the High Street are on one side! It's reputedly because Lord Penrhyn shut down his pubs, on the other side, during the Great Strike of 1900-03.

## Weatherman Walking

## Bethesda

After walking up the high street for about 200 yards, turn right down a narrow side street immediately after the large old Bethesda chapel, just before the old A.G.Jones & Son bakers and confectionary shop.



Turn down the side street immediately after the old chapel

The narrow side street leads to a footbridge over the river Ogwen. Cross the bridge and turn immediately left along a path initially called the Wil Cwac Cwac route which then becomes The Surgeon's Walk a little further on.



Footbridge into Parc Meurig over the Afon Ogwen

Follow the pleasant undulating path which skirts around the perimeter of the woods with glimpses of the river down to the left.

After half a mile a metal kissing gate leads to a road. Turn right along the road which doesn't have a pavement or footpath beside it, so take great care.



The Surgeon's Walk through Bryn Meurig woods

Follow the road for about 400 yards, passing the driveway entrance for Bryn Meurig on the way. About a hundred yards before a row of terraced cottages, turn left down a rather indistinct path beside a metal gate and chain link fence.

The path quickly leads to the slate gravel path of Lon Las Cymru. Turn left onto the path which is also a popular cycle route, part of National Route 82 of the National Cycle Network, so keep a look out for approaching cyclists.



Footpath leading to Lon Las Ogwen from the B4409 Tregarth road

## 2 Lon Las Ogwen (SH 620 660)

Lon Las Ogwen is an 11-mile community cycle and walking route climbing through the valley of Afon Cegin from Porth Penrhyn at Bangor to Llyn Ogwen. The route was created by sustainable transport organisation Sustrans and can be completed in one day or in two stages; the first from Bangor to Bethesda and the second from Bethesda to Ogwen, as walked by Derek!



Lon Las Ogwen

**Continue along Lon Las Ogwen which skirts around the large old slate tips that overlook the path.**

## 3 Penrhyn Slate Quarry and the Great Strike:

Slate has been quarried at Bethesda for 700 years and the establishment of the Penrhyn quarry by Richard Pennant in 1770 saw Bethesda slate shipped all around the globe. Pennant was the 1st Baron Penrhyn and his quarry, at one mile long and 1,200ft deep, was the largest opencast system in the world!

The Pennant family amassed a fortune, building the sumptuous Penrhyn Castle on the Mendai Straits. The second Lord Penrhyn was a decent employer, providing a hospital and a local school, but there was a huge discrepancy between the Penrhyns' wealth and the workers' poverty. The workers increasingly began to call for trade union representation and their demands culminated in the Great Strike. Lasting from 1900 until 1903, it was one of the largest industrial disputes ever seen in Britain, with huge support from across the country and a two-and-a-half-ton Christmas pudding delivered from Ashton-under-Lyme!

With some quarrymen choosing to return to work and others refusing, the strike eventually divided the community. By 1902 about 700 men were back at work, but 2,000 migrated to other areas, including south Wales. The quarry never returned to its pre-strike peak and finally closed in 1962.



The massive slate tips of Penrhyn Quarry



# Weatherman Walking

# Bethesda

Lon Las Ogwen, which is also well-signposted as NCN Route 82, is now your route for the remainder of the walk all the way up the valley to Llyn Ogwen, unless of course you choose to take a short detour, as Derek did, for a quick adrenalin rush at Zip World.

To visit Zip World turn right immediately after the green metal gate (SH 6243 6569), and walk up the hill for a few hundred yards. Otherwise continue on your walk and go straight across the road and through another green metal gate on the far side.



Turn right beyond the green metal gate if visiting Zip World

## 4 Zip World:

Job opportunities for local workers have been revived with the arrival of Zip World, an adventure experience that opened at Penrhyn quarry in 2013. You need a good head for heights to give it a go; the main wire is the longest in the northern hemisphere and the fastest in the world, with visitors travelling at up to 100mph, 500ft above the ground! Derek was brave enough to zoom down the zip not once, but twice – are you?!



Derek prepares for lift-off!

Beyond the green metal gate the route continues along a section where the river tumbles down a rocky gorge and where the path is cut into the rock in places – evidence of its previous life as the trackbed of the quarry railway.

## 5 Penrhyn Quarry Railway:

Lon Las Ogwen partly follows the route of the Penrhyn Quarry Railway. Originally built in 1801 as a tramroad for mule-drawn wagons transporting slate to Bangor, it was replaced in 1870 with a railway for steam locomotives. The railway was a two foot gauge railway, and there are claims that Lord Penrhyn was the first in the world to use this system. The trains ran for almost 100 years, until the quarry closed.



Derek and Homan continue along beside a gorge in the river

The path now passes a stunning waterfall, up past a bridge on the left and through another green metal gate (SH 6262 6537). The next section is overlooked once again by impressive slate tips on the right with a gentler part of the river down to the left.

After a few turns in the track the last slate tip is rounded to reveal a wonderful view straight up the valley.



Ogwen Bank waterfall

## Weatherman Walking

## Bethesda

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### Nant Ffrancon Pass:

Nant Ffrancon, or the Valley of the Beavers, is a glaciated valley between Bethesda and Cwm Idwal, formed when the whole of Snowdonia was covered in a huge ice sheet. The Afon Ogwen runs through it, whilst near Llyn Ogwen are Ogwen Falls. The path's ascent is gentle, leaving walkers with plenty of energy to admire the spectacular scenery, including the imposing triangle of Tryfan rising at the head of the pass. Don't worry - we'll save that one for another time!

The valley is little-developed agriculturally, leaving it a safe haven for a lot of fascinating wildlife including dippers, wagtails, sandpipers, goosander ducks, otters and water voles. There is a lot of history here, too, with the remains of plenty of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments, Iron Age hill forts and medieval settlements in the surrounding area.



The view looking up Nant Ffrancon from Lon Las Cymru

**Heading straight up the valley, the path soon joins a quiet minor road leading past a number of farms, first of all at a very gentle gradient then a little more steeply up to reach the Idwal Cottage Youth Hostel, Ogwen Cottage warden centre and the main A5 road, the end of your walk.**



Derek and Homan nearing Ogwen Cottage on the final leg of their walk

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### Ogwen Cottage / Ogwen warden centre: (SH 649 603)

Ogwen Cottage is an adventure centre which was, until summer 2014, run by Birmingham City Council for 50 years. The warden centre is a new building with toilets, a café and an information room and is one of Snowdonia National Park Authority's most popular centres.

**After a well-deserved cuppa from the café then, unless you're retracing your steps down the valley, this isn't a bad spot to wait for a taxi or a lift from a friend, with the magnificent 3000 foot peaks that surround this stunning setting at the end of the lake.**



Tryfan from Ogwen Cottage



### Llyn Ogwen:

Llyn Ogwen is about a mile long and is extremely shallow, at about 3m deep. It has Pen yr Ole Wen on one side and Tryfan on the other, both considered to be amongst Snowdonia's most challenging mountains. Pen yr Ole Wen is 3,208ft and, whilst there has been some debate over whether Tryfan is over 3,000ft, it was last measured in 2010 and found to be 3,010ft.



Derek and Homan beside Llyn Ogwen at the end of their walk