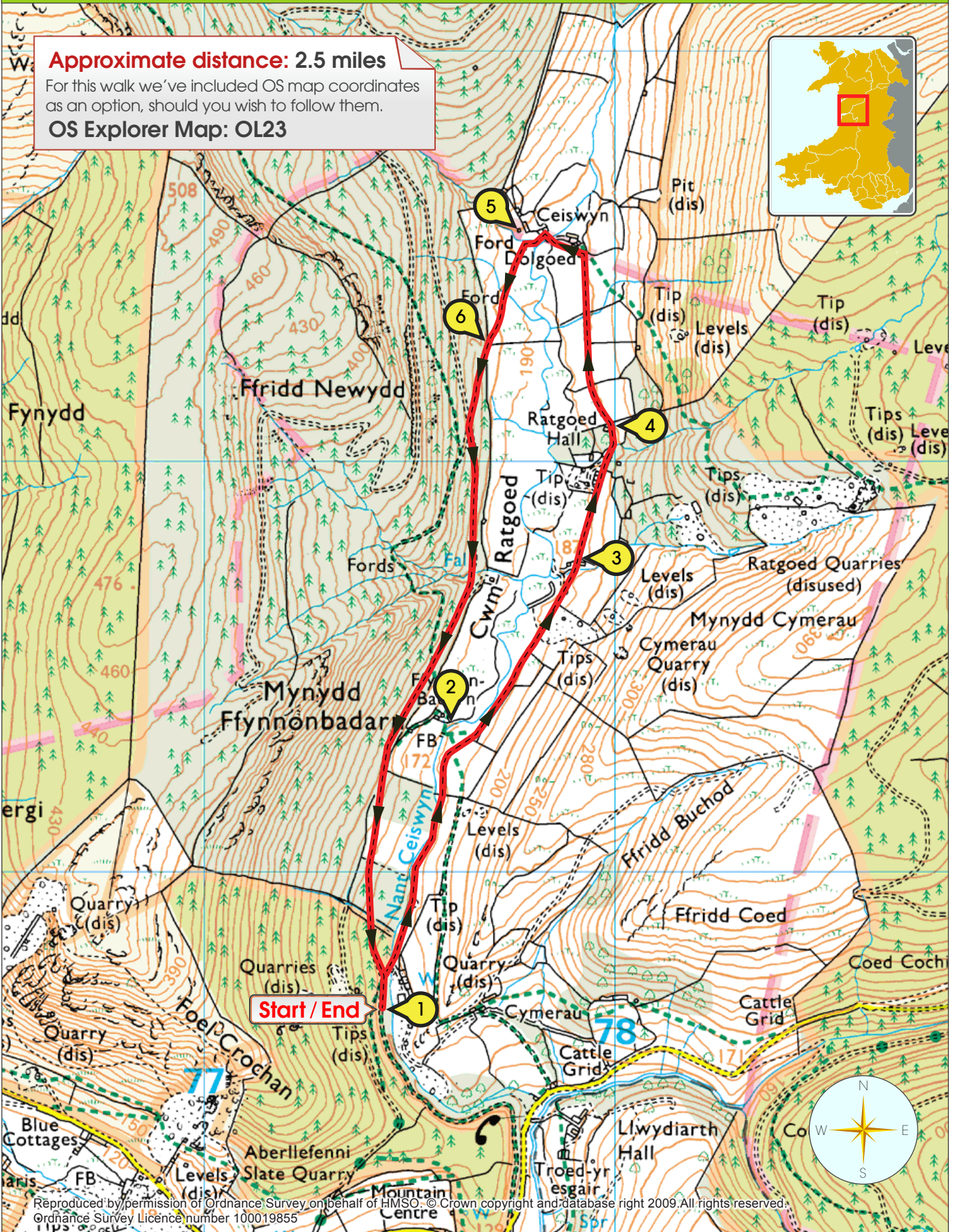


Weatherman Walking

Cwm Ratgoed Walk



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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.

Walking information

1. Parking spot for this walk (SH 77454 10772)

Park your car in the layby on the right-hand side of the road (SH 77440 10662) and walk up the road. Turn right and cross over a bridge and river onto a rough 4x4 track alongside the farm.

Pass through a metal gate and continue along the track, keeping the river and marshy area to your left for around 500 metres until you arrive at the first slate tip (SH 77587 11175).

Above you are the rolling hills. Sycamore, rowan, oak and ash trees can all be found growing along the river bank.

2. Ffynnon Badarn (SH 77655 11331)

From here you'll catch your first glimpse of Ffynnon Badarn or the Cadbury House - a simple white-washed stone cottage bought by the Cadbury chocolate family in the 1960s.

Ffynnon Badarn means St Padarn's Well and it's said to be the site of one of the holy wells of Wales. Its exact location is unknown but it's believed to be located in the woods beyond the house.

The family were very socially aware for the time and allowed staff to use the accommodation for holidays. It was also used by the Bourneville family who came here to hill walk.

Walk through a small wooded area past an old slate wall on your right. You'll pass another slate tip. Walk by a farm gate and over a river arriving at some old derelict buildings.

3. Old quarry shop (SH 77925 11753)

There were once four buildings here which housed the local quarry workers. The end building closest to the tramway doubled up as the local shop and had a bay window, allowing customers to peer inside.

A little further on, buried amongst the trees, is an old Calvinist Methodist chapel which opened in 1871. It's only a small building made completely of slate with ornate arches and doorway. Worshippers would have travelled long distances to get to what is still an isolated spot.

Pass the chapel and continue up the track until you reach a fork in the road. Keep left and walk towards a large oak tree shading a ruined slate building which was once the blacksmith's. Behind it are the old slate dressing sheds.

Ahead on your left is a clearing and a pleasant picnic area, on top of what was once a slate tip, now grassed over. On a clear day there are some lovely views down over the green valley you've just walked up.

Head up the lane and to your left below the track are the old stables. In 1936 the nearby quarry reservoir burst its banks and the water cascaded down the hillside, smashing into the stables and nearly killing the family who worked there.

Miraculously everyone survived the incident and the stream continues to run through the decaying buildings.

Beyond this is a small hut once used to weigh the slate. Opposite, amongst the moss and ferns is the old incline running up the hillside where the wagons once carried the slate.

4. Ratgoed Hall (SH 77987 12077)

Around the corner, you'll arrive at an impressive walled driveway leading to Ratgoed Hall. This would have once had a gate and bridge with a much grander entrance.

The hall was owned by quarry owner Horatio Nelson Hughes, a wealthy Liverpoolian who built the Hall in around 1870.

In the early 1940s the hall became a youth hostel, popular with army servicemen from Tonfannau Camp near Towyn who used to go hillwalking when they were off duty.

Ratgoed means wooded hillside and possibly refers to the deciduous woods on the hillside to the right.

Pass through a metal farm gate and out into open countryside. The land here offers marshy grazing land for sheep with a muddy 4x4 track running through the middle.

Cross over a couple of shallow streams, stopping at a large sycamore tree on your left - just before a metal farm gate. Beyond the gate is an ancient Quaker house, Dolgoed - the oldest house in Meirionnydd and privately owned by the same family since the 1600s.

The Quakers who lived here would have walked miles over the mountains in order to worship in Tabor near Dolgellau.

A number of leading industrialists in the 19th century were Quakers including the Rowntree, Cadbury and Clark families and the industrial revolution owed much to them.

At the sycamore tree turn left and walk across a grassy field, past the solar powered panels towards the fence line and stile opposite.

Climb over the stile and walk carefully down a steep uneven track that leads down below some large Douglas fir trees.

Turn right and make your way towards a slippery wooden bridge and cross over. Walk through a metal gate and into a field. Keep left.

Pass under a beech tree and cross over a small slate footbridge spanning Nant Ceiswyn which flows down from Mynydd Ceiswyn to the north.

5. Ceiswyn Farmhouse (SH 77791 12561)

The river gives its name to this old farmhouse dating from the 1500s and has an interesting history.

The Red Brigands of Dinas Mawddwy were an infamous group of red-haired highwaymen who operated in this lawless area during the 16th century.

They achieved notoriety after capturing and killing a local judge, Sir Lewis Owain in a revenge attack for having some of their members tried and executed.

The judge's companion at the time was a Sion Lloyd who survived the ambush and lived in this house. Legend has it that Lloyd hid swords in the chimney in case of future attacks.

6. Forestry track (SH 77684 12263)

Cross the stream and follow the track to the left leading up into the pine forests until you arrive at a private forestry road. Keep left and enjoy the quiet woods and sounds of the river to your left, catching occasional glimpses of the other side of the valley you walked along earlier.

Colourful mosses and lichen line the track along with fabulous wildflowers in summer such as foxgloves, heather and gorse. In amongst the trees you'll spot remains of the slate industry in the shape of old huts and mine workings.

Pass through the last kissing gate, down the hill on a meandering track to the starting point at the bridge and the end of the walk.