

INSPIRING LANDSCAPES – FASCINATING HISTORY & LEGEND
GREAT WALKS IN AFAN FOREST PARK
Along the trail of the former South Wales Mineral railway
Glyncorwg to Cymmer



Walk through history along the former South Wales Mineral Railway

The Corrwg Valley and its many collieries were the original 'raison d'être' for the South Wales Mineral Railway which connected the valley to Briton Ferry docks on a convoluted routing via Cymmer, Tonmawr and Crythan Point.

Back in 1863, the South Wales Mineral Railway opened its line linking Glyncorwg to Tonmawr and on to Briton Ferry via the Ynysmaerdy incline. Engineered by Brunel, it was built to the broad gauge (7'0¼") but converted to standard (4'8½") in 1872. By 1878, a receiver had been appointed, the same year as a viaduct (still extant but derelict) was built at Cymmer connecting the SMWR to the GWR Llynfi Valley line. The railway was sold to the Port Talbot Railway and traffic continued on the original line via Tonmawr until 1947 when a landslip closed the Gyfylchi tunnel for good. For a brief period the line from Glyncorwg to Cymmer Corrwg carried passengers (1918-1930), although prior to that passengers were carried gratis in open goods wagons as the railway had no official carriage licence!

Coal traffic on the line continued until 1970 as did a workmen's passenger service between Glyncorwg and North Rhondda (necessary as there was no road north of Glyncorwg). At that time, South Pit (along with Abergwynfi, the last collieries in the Afan Valley)

THE WALK

Route summary and terrain

The route initially takes in the trail to the former South Pit and North Rhondda collieries then follows the route of the South Wales Mineral Railway to Cymmer. Most of the route except the initial part to the colliery sites is well surfaced and level.



This walk is suitable for disabled people (except for the section between Glyncorrwg and North Rhondda)

Start point	Glyncorrwg Bridge Street (GR 875993)
End point	Cymmer Old Station (GR 860962)
Recommended Maps	O.S. Explorer 166 O.S. Landranger 170
Distance	4.5 kilometres
Estimated net time	2 hours
Grade	Leisurely
Refreshments	Glyncorrwg Ponds Visitor Centre (0.5 kms) Cymmer Refreshment Rooms
Toilets	Glyncorrwg Ponds Visitor Centre (0.5 kilometres) Cymmer Refreshment Rooms (patrons only)



THE ROUTE IN DETAIL

You start at the site of the former Glyncorrwg Railway Station (GR 875993) and first head north east along the track of the railway serving South Pit and North Rhondda collieries (closed 1960's; little trace remains) for 1 km to where the footpath diverges into two at Lletty Dafydd (GR 886997), site of North Rhondda colliery. When the mines were active, there was no road access to them and a special workman's train was run from Glyncorrwg for each shift change.

The start of the walk at Glyncorrwg is at the site of the station from which regular advertised passenger services were withdrawn in the 1930's. However, the line north to South Pit and North Rhondda had no parallel road so unadvertised workmen's trains were provided at shift change-overs to convey miners to and from their work. There were stations close to both mines, of which no trace remains. Whilst North Rhondda closed in 1960, South Pit continued to 1970 and became the very last pit in the Afan Valley. South Pit was the scene of a significant explosion in 1954 with 24 serious injuries but no fatalities.



Miners train at North Rhondda halt

Retrace your steps to Glyncorrwg and continue south to south-west along the old railway line. You will see Glyncorrwg Mountain Bike Centre below (left) followed by the 'Ponds', a popular angling facility. Shortly after (GR 872974) you will see the track bed of a railway serving a former drift mine come in (right). The path continues some way above the River Corrwg with the rugged but attractive landscape partially shaped by recent felling of trees due to extensive Larch disease.

You will note a considerable amount of tree felling has taken place. This is because in 2010, a tree disease called 'Phytophthora ramorum' was discovered on Japanese larch trees in Afan Forest Park and elsewhere in South Wales. As a result, many trees along the valley have been felled, and you will notice it has had a particularly savage effect on the hills in this part of the valley.

The path enters Cymmer on the north side of the river Afan and you cross over to the main village on a concrete road bridge parallel to the steel latticed former railway viaduct. Turn right once across the river and it's a short walk to the 'Refreshment Rooms', a pub so named as it used to be a pub/café for both Cymmer stations.

To reach the bus interchange (GR 857960), take the minor road past the fire station and at the clock tower, turn R and walk 200 metres down the A4107

Notes

All distances are given in metric

GR refers to Ordnance Survey grid reference

LOCAL TRANSPORT and PARKING

Train Stations

Maesteg	9 kilometres
Port Talbot	15 kilometres

Bus Stops

Glyncorrwg Bridge St (adjacent)
Cymmer Interchange (0.5 kilometres)

Parking

Glyncorrwg old station (free)
Glyncorrwg Ponds (charged)
Cymmer Old Station (free)

Buses

Both ends of the walk are on the 80 bus route Cymmer-Glyncorrwg which operates every hour daytime with some peak time extras. There are connecting buses into Cymmer:
70 Bridgend-Maesteg-Cymmer every 20 minutes
83 Port Talbot- Cymmer-Blaengwynfi every hour
Both routes operated by First Cymru buses on Mondays to Saturdays.
From and to Swansea, take the X3 Cymru Clipper changing buses at Maesteg.

Tickets

First Day tickets South West Wales or Neath Port Talbot areas give a day's unlimited travel (adult, 16 & under and family options available) and can be purchased from the driver on the bus
For walkers arriving by train, Port Talbot [Plus Bus](#) tickets for onward travel can be purchased when you buy your train ticket. Plus Bus tickets are not available for Maesteg

[Plan your journey](#)

GALLERY: portraying the natural beauty and historic interest on this walk



Glyncorrwg village in its attractive setting



Nothing remains of the colliery at South Pit. To the right are reed beds that filters out iron-contaminated water



There are some remains of North Rhondda station: the mine was north of here



The trail south of Glynorrwg is much used by walkers and cyclists



The trail approaching Cymmer; many trees have been felled here due to disease



End of the line: this viaduct connected Glynorrwg to the rest of the railway network