



## 19 Portdinorwic : Short Introduction



Returning to the Gwynedd “mainland”, we begin this section of our tour at the southern end of the Britannia rail - road bridge, then proceed by the route of the A487 road towards Caernarvon. We look briefly at the former Caernarvon branch railway, which had a station serving the hamlet of Treborth, and then plunged into twin tunnels beneath Vaynol Park.....

.....this walled estate was once the local home of the Assheton-Smith family, proprietors of the mighty Dinorwic Slate Quarries at Llanberis, and most of this and the following section are concerned with their activities – the Vaynol estate stretched from here to the vicinity of Snowdon summit, encompassing much of the land in between. We visit the park first, which has some fine old buildings, then on to the village of Port Dinorwic (Y Felinheli) along the old main road, which was the shipping point on the Menai Straits for the roofing slate output of the Dinorwic Quarries.....

.....there are several items of railway interest remaining in the village, including two station houses on the standard-gauge Caernarvon branch, the route of a siding from it down to the slate quays, a long incline down from the terminus of the 4ft gauge “Padarn Railway”, through a tunnel under the main street onto the quay, and some traces of the older horse-worked “Dinorwic Tramway” which it replaced. Both of the latter were used to bring slate down from the Dinorwic Quarries, the tramway from 1824 to 1843, then the railway until 1961. Apart from the railway remains and the former slate quays, there are several interesting buildings on the village main street.....

.....we now venture inland, following as closely as possible the route of the Padarn Railway, starting at the old incline head above Port Dinorwic, the area known as Penscoins. A workmen’s train service once operated between here and the quarry, and the combined carriage and engine shed survives. We pick up the line further on at several points, several of which also had workmen’s stations, as well as school slate factories. At Ponrhythallt, the Padarn Railway ran close to the old standard gauge branch railway from Caernarvon to Llanberis.....

.....the last two miles of the Padarn Railway ran on a slate causeway alongside Llyn Padarn, now rebuilt and accessible to all as the narrow-gauge Llanberis Lake Railway. This may be joined at the Gilfach Ddu station, in the former quarry transhipment yard, where there is also the fine “Welsh Slate Quarry Museum” housed in the former Dinorwic Quarry engineering workshops complex. There is much to see here, and several hours or a whole day is necessary to explore thoroughly.

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