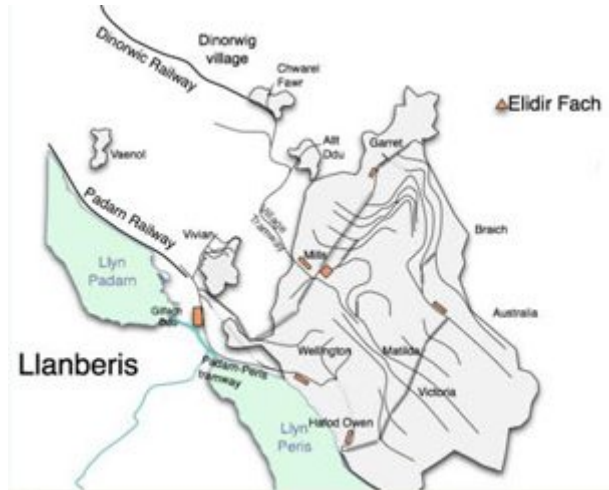




20 Dinorwic Slate Quarries and Old Villages: Short Introduction



The Dinorwic slate quarries (National Slate Museum) covered an area exceeding one square mile, to the east of the Gilfach Ddu complex, alongside Llyn Peris and rising up the mountainside here and behind it to a height of some 1900 ft. The much smaller Vivian Quarry immediately behind the Llanberis Lake Railway station is a miniature version of the main workings.

worthy of easy exploration by those with little time (or energy!). This area and much of the woodland overlooking Llyn Padarn is now fully open to the public as the Padarn Country Park, and includes the fine building of the old Quarry Hospital, complete with a fascinating exhibition of Victorian medical equipment and practises.....

The first commercial attempts at slate mining took place in 1787, when a private partnership obtained a lease from the landowner, Assheton Smith. Although this met with moderate success, the outbreak of war with France, taxes and transportation costs limited the development of the quarry. A new business partnership led by Assheton Smith himself was formed on the expiry of the lease in 1809 and the business boomed after the construction of a horse-drawn tramway to Port Dinorwic in 1824. At its peak in the late 1800s, "when it was producing an annual outcome of 100,000 tons", Dinorwic employed over 3,000 men and was the second largest opencast slate producer in the country. Although by 1930 its working employment had dropped to 2,000, it kept a steady production until 1969.

.....after visiting this area, for the more fit with time to spare, and hopefully appropriate weather, it is possible to undertake a comprehensive walking tour of the upper reaches of the main quarry, part of the old 1824 tramway through the oldest parts of the workings, to the villages of Dinorwic and Deiniolen, then back right through the quarry to the extensive remains of the east side levels, then down to the main valley road at Nant Peris, where there are remains of old Copper mines. Finally, we head back along the southern shore of Llyn Peris back to our starting point at Gilfach Ddu. This is the route described in our full tour of this section.....

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