



27 The hinterland, Pwllheli to Portmadog: Short Introduction



Inland from Pwllheli the country is flat and predominantly rural with no real centres of population: the former intermediate stations on the L&NWR line at Ynys, Llangybi and Bryncir served districts rather than villages.....indeed the principal role of the last-named was as a watering place for the steam engines, being near the summit of the steeply-graded line.....

.....there are more corn mills to be seen.....Rhyd-Hir retains its 10 ft diameter waterwheel.....Melin Rhyd-y-Benllig survives under a preservation order; it was built by Zaccharius Hughes in 1777.....the extensive buildings of Melin Friddllwyd at Afon Wen have more recently been used as the Portmadoc Steam Laundry.....Porth-y-Felin corn mill (480435) had tandem waterwheels, one of iron and one of all-wooden construction.....the millers' cottages are adjacent.....Melin Wlan ("Woolloen Mill") at Bryncir was recently still operating using a 10 ft diameter overshot waterwheel.

.....In the Dolbenmaen district there are interspersed mine workings for both copper and slate. Cwmstradllyn was served by the Gorseddau Tramway, running down to the sea at Portmadoc, and later extended up the Pennant valley to the Prince of Wales Quarry, and worked by a steam locomotive. The large, gaunt roofless structure which stands prominently at the valley entrance was the Ynys-y-Pandy slate mill.....constructed around a deep pit in its centre which once housed a 30 ft waterwheel, driving dressing machinery on either side.....interesting features are the unusually large number of window openings and the recess high in the end wall for a clock which once presided over the mill operations.....

....The course of the main tramway crosses the river and runs through a waterlogged cutting to intersect the road at (552441); this is "Braich-y-Big Junction"; the branch to the right is the original tramway, disused since the 1870's.....note the remarkable dry-slate overhanging wall, built to protect the tramway from waste rock coming down the tips.....the even more remote Gilfach Copper mine requires a fair trek over some rough country.....the items of most interest by the mineshaft itself (526478) have recently been conserved.....a 24 ft diameter pumping waterwheel supplied by Dingey & Sons of Truro connected by horizontal square-section wooden pump rods to the shaft headgear some distance off, which retains the pump mechanism.....

.....The Croesor Tramway was a horse-worked line built to convey slate from Croesor valley mines down to Portmadoc in 1864.....the route may be

followed on foot from the river bridge at Carreg Hyldrem..... ascends via two long gravity inclines.....a high stretch of dry slab embankment.....



.....The other incline is 1500 ft long and ascends 650 ft, gently at first but becoming ever steeper until the gradient of the top section is about 55 degrees to the horizontal..... to view this construction today is to wonder how the men of the past were able to operate it satisfactorily, let alone build it in the first place.....

....after traversing the spectacular ledge section, the New Rhosydd slate quarry is entered through a gate leading into the main dressing mill area (664461). Slate was brought out from the underground workings here by trams hauled on a continuous cableway system; the large-bore tunnel, which is fairly dry and still explorable, runs a very considerable distance into the mountainsidea curious survival is the double row of two-storey barracks for the workmen who lived up here during the week. Totally unexpected in this remote setting, they most nearly resemble a typical Victorian northern town street.....

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