



## 8 Penmaenmawr and the granite quarries:

### Short Introduction



Penmaenmawr is a "resort" of largely Victorian origins, then famous for the patronage of W. E. Gladstone but now somewhat diminished in importance in the tourist repertoire, probably due to the dominance of the town's main industry, the granite quarries that surround and tower above it.....the top of the mountain on which they are situated has been conspicuously "scalped" to the extent of some two hundred feet over the years, leaving a flat top with just a small pillar of rock upstanding in the middle.....large-scale

quarrying started here as late as the 1870's, but a long time before this (in the Neolithic period) a remarkable form of early industry was in operation, namely a stone axe factory. Axes from Craig Llwyd have been found throughout much of Britain. The site, despite extensive archaeological excavations over the last hundred years or so, is well worth a visit.....

.... The main workshops of the Craiglwyd Quarry were situated at Braichllwyd (709757), at the summit of a long inclined plane from the works offices at Bell Yard (715762) which can be used for access. Near to the incline head, a small old jaw-type stone-crusher is exhibited on a plinth. From here, tramways run to left and right and there are further inclines to the rear..... a notable feature of the inclines themselves, not overmuch appreciated by tiring climbers, is the way they are laid out with steepening gradients towards the summit, to assist the deceleration of ascending wagons.....Right at the top of the second set of inclines (though only about half way up the workings) the well-rusted remains of the last De Winton vertical-boilered quarry locomotive, "Penmaen" of 1878, are isolated in the tiny engine shed whence it retired after its last job circa 1944.....

..... The summit level workings, and the separate levels of the Penmaen West Quarry (693756) served by a continuation of the tramway which we originally followed to Penmaen Mill, may be explored also from the next village of Llanfairfechan.....d as access is somewhat easier from this side of the mountain it will be covered in the next section.....Granite, mainly in the form of road chippings, is still occasionally shipped from the jetty on the beach at Penmaenmawr, though most now leaves by the main line railway adjacent.....

.....The incline leading down from the main quarry is walkable and partly intact, since the conveyor belt system now in use is carried on tram wheels running on the original incline rails, to allow for expansion and contraction of the carrier structure. This feature would also explain the presence of numerous wheel-less wagons in the quarry! A spur line ran off above the first bridge and

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leads across the roadway to tip into storage hoppers at the top of the mill. The main coast road crosses the inclines by "New York Bridge" which carries plaques recording its rebuilding on May 9th 1893.....just down the road is a large granite sign carrying the old company name..... we may then ascend past rows of gloomy but characteristic terraces of workmen's housing, largely unaltered, to reach the quarry offices and workshops at Bell Yard where our tour of the quarry workings commenced.

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