

# Rural Ramble: Glyncorrwg to Cymmer

## A delightful and historic walk along the former railway

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

In 1863, the SWMR opened its line linking Glyncorrwg to Tonmawr and on to Briton Ferry via the Ynysymaerdy incline. Engineered by Brunel, it was built to the broad gauge (7'0 1/4") but converted to standard (4'8 1/2") in 1872. By 1878, a receiver had been appointed, the same year as a viaduct (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 line via Tonmawr until 1947 when a landslip closed the Gyfylchi tunnel for ever. For a brief period (1918-1930) passengers were carried, prior to which they were carried gratis in open goods wagons as the railway had no official carriage licence!

Coal traffic continued until 1970 as did a workmen's passenger service between Glyncorrwg and North Rhondda (necessary as there was no road north of Glyncorrwg). At that time, South Pit closed (one of the last two collieries in the Afan Valley).

## The Route in detail

Alight from the bus at Bridge Street, adjacent to the start of the walk at the site of the former Glyncorrwg station (GR 875993); head north east along the formation of the railway serving South Pit and North Rhondda collieries (closed 1960's; little trace remains) for 1 kilometre to where the footpath diverges into two at Lletty Dafydd (GR 886997), site of North Rhondda colliery.



Start point  
Glyncorrwg Bridge Street  
(GR 875993)  
End point  
Cymmer Old Station  
(GR 860962)



O.S. Explorer 166  
O.S. Landranger 170



4.5 kilometres



2 hours



Easy to moderate



Glyncorrwg Ponds Visitor  
Centre (0.5 kms)  
Cymmer Refreshment Rooms



Glyncorrwg Ponds Visitor  
Centre (0.5 kilometres)  
Cymmer Refreshment Rooms



Maesteg 9 kilometres  
Port Talbot 15 kilometres



Glyncorrwg Bridge Street (adjacent)  
Cymmer Interchange (0.5 km)



On street parking is available in  
Glyncorrwg and Cymmer (free)  
Glyncorrwg Ponds (charged)  
The 80 bus connects Cymmer  
and Glyncorrwg

The start of the walk at Glynorrwg is the site of the station from which regular advertised passenger services were withdrawn in the 1930's. However, the line to South Pit and North Rhondda had no parallel road so unadvertised workmen's trains were provided at shift change-overs to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; it was known for a significant explosion in 1954 with 24 serious injuries but no fatalities.

Retrace steps to Glynorrwg and continue south-west along the old railway line. Glynorrwg Mountain Bike Centre is below (left) followed by the 'Ponds', a popular angling facility. Shortly after (GR 872974) you will see the formation of a siding serving a drift mine on the mountain side (right). The path continues some way above the River Corrwg with a rugged but attractive landscape partially shaped by the recent felling of trees.

Note a considerable amount of tree felling has taken place. In 2010, a tree disease called *Phytophthora ramorum* was discovered on Japanese larch in Afan Forest and elsewhere; as a result, many trees have been felled. The forest was planted as recently as the 1930s, and the felling programme is now allowing native hardwood species such as oak and rowan, to re-establish.

The path enters Cymmer on the north side of the river Afan where you cross over to the village on a concrete road bridge parallel to the old railway viaduct. Turn right 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 right and walk 200 metres down the A4107.

*All distances are given in metric.*

*GR refers to Ordnance Survey grid reference.*



Both ends of the walk are on the 80 bus route Cymmer-Glynorrwg which operates every hour weekdays' daytime; no Sunday service. There are connecting buses at Cymmer from Bridgend, Maesteg and Port Talbot.



First Day tickets Swansea Bay or Neath Port Talbot areas giving a day's unlimited travel (adult, youth and family options) can be purchased from the bus driver

If coming by train, Port Talbot Plus Bus tickets for local travel can be purchased with your train ticket.





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Site of South Pit and natural filter beds



4

Site of North Rhondda station



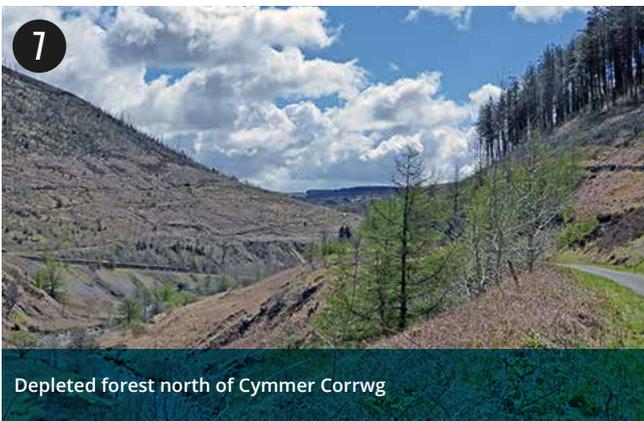
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Glyncorrwg Ponds, a popular spot for anglers



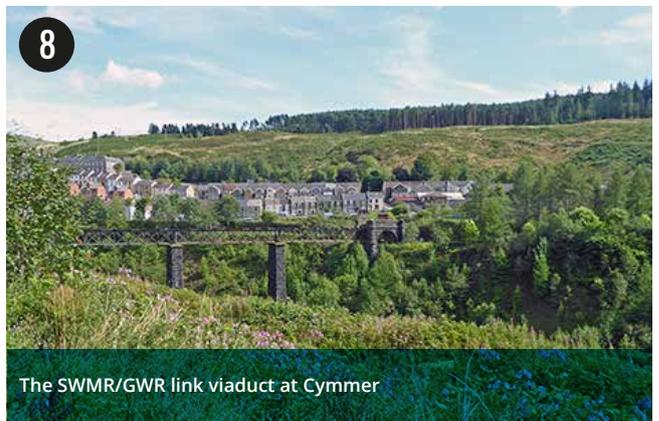
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Nant Tewlath, south of Glyncorrwg



7

Depleted forest north of Cymmer Corrwg



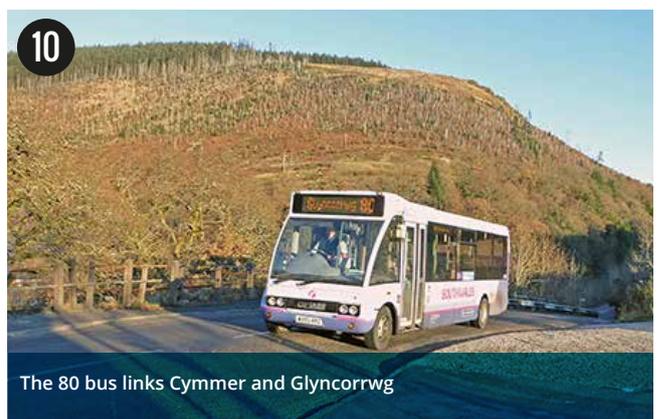
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The SWMR/GWR link viaduct at Cymmer



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Cymmer Afan station and 'Refreshment Rooms'



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The 80 bus links Cymmer and Glyncorrwg

