

Rural Ramble: Cilybebyll to Pontardawe

A fascinating walk of natural beauty and industrial heritage

The Cilybebyll estate was established in the 15th century and after development by various families, by 1838 was recorded as having the largest land holding in the district. The main house, Plas Cilybebyll, was redeveloped in 1840 by Henry Leach, creating a south-facing Victorian facade on the property. His son Frances inherited the estate in 1848, changing his name to Lloyd in 1849 by Royal Charter so as not to forfeit his inheritance. The Plas today is a guest house.

As in much of South Wales, small-scale coal mining has taken place here for centuries. By 1849 it was producing large quantities of coal, which were transported around the world from Swansea docks. The dangers of coal mining are highlighted by two disasters in the locality; in 1858, 14 men and boys died from engine fumes being accidentally pumped into the Primrose Colliery.

Today, the area is a peaceful haven free from the noise and bustle of modern life and has plentiful bird life and stunning scenery.

The Route in detail

From the bus stop at Rhos Post Office (GR 738032), turn right on to Plas Road, noting the unusual finger post directing you to Cilybebyll, 1 mile 1¼ furlongs. Follow this country road for 1.5 kilometres with the attractive landscape of Mynydd March Hywel and the entrance to Plas Cilybebyll (right) until you get to the left turn signposted Cilybebyll.

Take this turn and after 200 metres you will see (right) the ancient church of St John the Evangelist surrounded by several large houses which make up the tiny village. Opposite the church, join the marked Cilybebyll Trail taking you through the fields on a path variously surfaced and paved with intermittent rough and rocky stretches. This brings you to Tramway Road in the village of Gellinudd; turn right and this leads to the remains of a tramway of which little is known except that it took coal from small mines down to the railway below.



Start point
Rhos Post Office
(GR 738032)
End point
Pontardawe Arts Centre
(GR 723040)



O.S. Explorer 165
O.S. Landranger 159



6 kilometres



3 hours



Easy to Moderate



Pontardawe Town Centre



Pontardawe Herbert St



Neath 6 kilometres



Rhos Post Offices (adjacent)
Pontardawe Jubilee (200 metres)



Pontardawe Council Car Park
(charged) The 56 or 256 bus takes
you to Rhos

Follow the course of the tramway and where its earthworks disappear, turn left along a partly way marked trail south westward to emerge near Glyndole Farm. The tramroad route is steep and rough underfoot and the subsequent footpath can be muddy. The farm track (which is not a public right of way) leads to Alltwen and you pass a modern housing estate (left) followed by the shell of a former factory then above the railway and river on an urban road. Despite being such a prominent landmark, St Peter's Church doesn't come to view until now. The road comes out at a large roundabout and into Pontardawe crossing the A4067 (which previously was the Midland Railway and Pontardawe station; sadly no trace whatever remains of either now).

From here, turn right at the next roundabout then left into Herbert Street. The bus terminus is just above on the left.

All distances are given in metric.

GR refers to Ordnance Survey grid reference



Both ends of the walk are on the 56 (First Cymru) and 256 (South Wales Transport) Pontardawe-Rhos-Neath routes, both operating every hour weekdays daytime



First Day tickets Swansea Bay or Neath Port Talbot areas give you a day's unlimited travel (adult, youth and family options) and can be purchased from the bus driver. South Wales Transport issue all-day tickets; the 56 and 256 tickets are inter-available

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



The unusual finger post at Rhos



Mynydd March Hywel seen from Rhos-Cilybebyll road



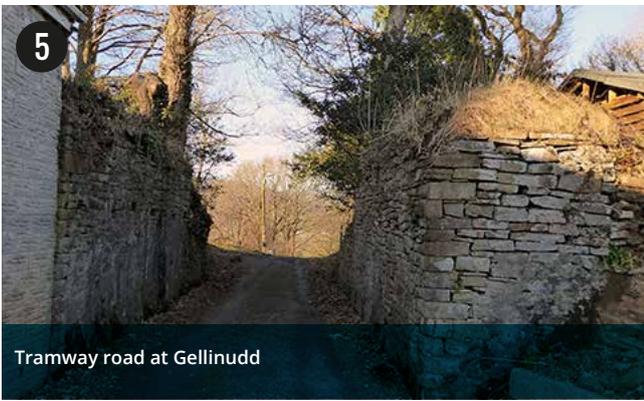
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Near Plas Cilybebyll



4

St John the Evangelist church at Cilybebyll



5

Tramway road at Gellinudd



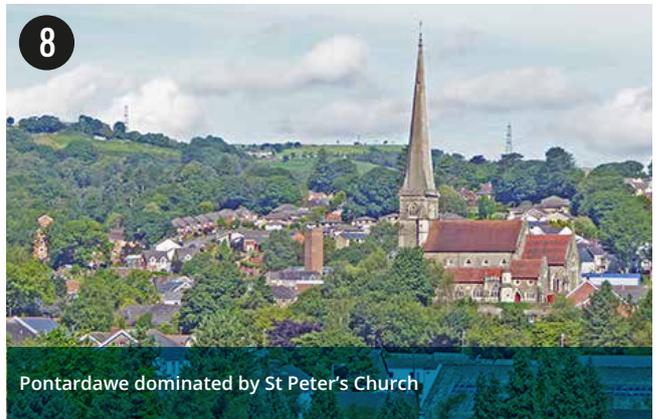
6

Bottom of tramway incline



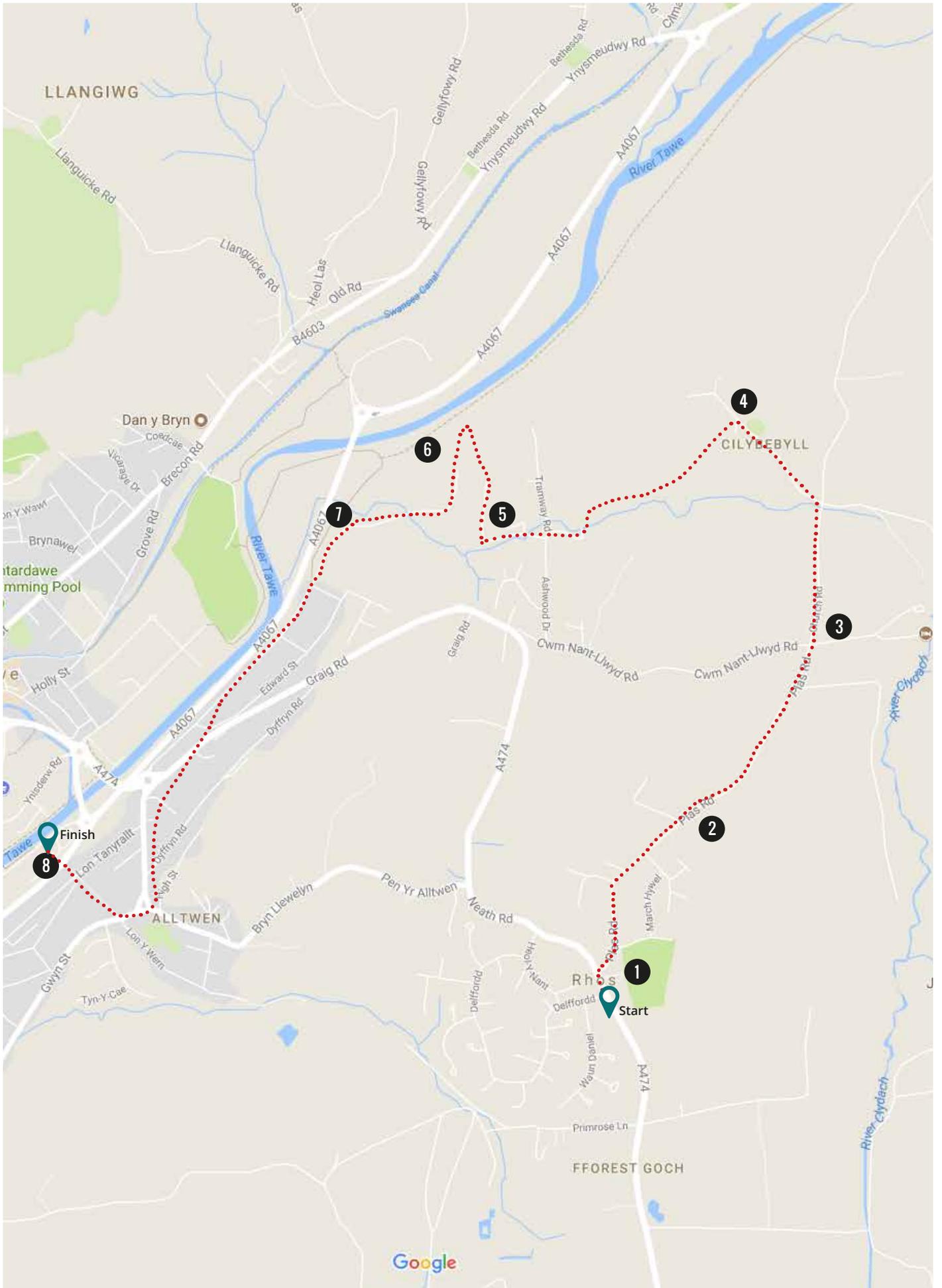
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Track to Alltwn



8

Pontardawe dominated by St Peter's Church



LLANGIWG

Llangwicke Rd

Llangwicke Rd

6

4

CILYBEBYLL

7

5

3

8

Finish

2

1

Start

ALLTWN

Rhos

FFOREST GOCH

Google