



HUW TOM | upland walk PENMAENMAWR - ROWEN

- Historical quarrymen's walk
- Linear walk from Penmaenmawr to Rowen
- Coastal and valley views



This guide will take you on 'Huw Tom's Walk' from Penmaenmawr to Rowen. You will follow the route he walked each day from work at the famous Graiglwyd quarry, Penmaenmawr to home, the small village of Rowen. Along the route are eleven locations of interest. This guide will direct you to each location whilst providing you with facts about the surrounding area. Throughout the walk you will learn about the life of Huw Tom, from his very humble beginnings, to becoming the unofficial 'Prime Minister' of Wales.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

By car: Follow the A55 to Junction 16 for Penmaenmawr. Follow the main road to the town centre. At the crossroads turn left up Fernbrook Road (shown on the main map) and park in the library car park on your right.

By public transport: To get to the start of the walk there are bus and train services that run on a regular basis along the A55 to Penmaenmawr.

Public Transport Enquiry Line: 01492 575412 (Conwy County Borough Council)

Tel: Traveline Wales 0871 200 22 33

www.traveline-cymru.info

MORE WALKS IN CONWY

www.conwy.gov.uk/countryside

Email: cg.cs@conwy.gov.uk

Tel: 01492 575290

For a large print copy of this leaflet please call 01492 575290

Walk Information

The Huw Tom walk is a linear walk from Penmaenmawr on the coast, through the mountains to Rowen, a small village in the Conwy Valley, with spectacular views of the Conwy Valley, the Great Orme and across the coast and Liverpool Bay.

Terrain: Hill walking; there is a steep ascent from Penmaenmawr at sea level, to 300m into an upland environment, and a steep descent into Rowen. Gates and stiles are found throughout the walk including old stone stiles over high stone walls. One stream to cross (**not advisable after heavy rain**).

Distance: 9.6 kilometres, 6 miles.

Time: 4½ hours.

Paths: Pavement, grassy, stony/rocky paths and tracks, surfaced lanes. **Take care when walking along the lanes.**

Dogs: On open access land dogs must always be kept on a short lead between 1st March and 31st July and when close to farm animals. Dogs should be kept under close control at all times.

Start grid reference: SH717 762. New York Cottages, Penmaenmawr.

Finish grid reference: SH760 719 Rowen.

Map: Explorer OL17.

Refreshments: Available in Penmaenmawr and Rowen.

Parking: Library car park, Penmaenmawr and Rowen (see map).

Be prepared. Wear strong walking boots. Take warm, waterproof clothing and a packed lunch with you. It is advisable to take an OS Map and a compass with you.

Check the weather at:

www.mountainweatherwales.org

Be aware of changeable weather conditions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT:

Stori Pen Cyf

www.storipen.co.uk / 01492 623970

Penmaenmawr

www.penmaenmawr.com

Snowdonia National Park Authority

eryri-npa.gov.uk / 01766 770274

Open access land

www.ccw.gov.uk



Please follow The Countryside Code
Respect • Protect • Enjoy

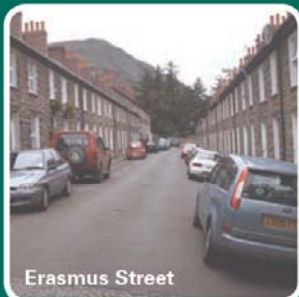




New York Cottages

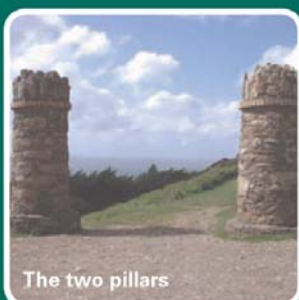
Start of walk (SH 717 762) to Location One: The Terraces SH 715 762

Walk through the village along Bangor Road, with the sea to your right. You will come to New York Cottages. This is the start of the walk.



Erasmus Street

With New York Cottages behind you take the first left up David's Lane. Continue up as the road bears leftwards to stop alongside the rows of terraced houses. **This is location one.**



The two pillars

Location One to Location Two: Jubilee Path, Foel Lus SH 731 759

Continue up past the terraced houses. Follow a footpath under the quarry conveyor, turning right up the hill as you exit the path. Go up the road up and round to the right to follow a steep section of Graiglwyd Road. As the road levels out, take a minute to admire the view. Continue along the road for about 600m to turn right up a narrow road which leads to Graiglwyd Fisheries (just past a right turn for Craiglwyd Caravan Park). Follow the track to the Fisheries, where you will find a path on the right. Follow this path around the outside of the reservoir to reach a stile.

Go over the stile and follow the field boundary on your left to go through a kissing gate onto Mountain Lane. Turn right to follow the steep lane for 540m until you arrive at the pillars at the start of Jubilee walk. **This is location two.**



The Jubilee Path

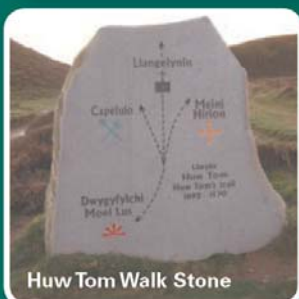
Location Two to Location Three: Afon Gyrach SH 738 750

With the two pillars and the sea behind you, continue along the track ahead of you. Go past two tracks that turn off to your left, you will come to the Huw Tom Walk Stone. Follow the two tracks running parallel for 50m. As the two tracks divide (the left track goes to the farm Ty'n y Ffridd), follow the grass path that runs between them.

At the stone wall go over a stile and follow the broader path to the left, down to The Afon (River) Gyrach and a footbridge. **This is location three.**



Afon Gyrach



Huw Tom Walk Stone

New York Cottages, Penmaenmawr.

The cottages were built in the 1840's to house quarry workers and were amongst the first houses to be built in Penmaenmawr for that purpose. They have now been restored and Number 4 is now a small museum documenting the quarrying industry and the growth of Penmaenmawr in the 19th Century.

For information and opening times, phone 01492 575571.

The terraced houses at location one were originally built for the workers of the Graiglwyd quarry which you can see behind the houses. Built in 1895, they provided much needed quality accommodation at a time when the quarry was expanding.

The two pillars were built to mark the start of the Jubilee Path around Foel Lus opened in 1888 to commemorate the 1887 Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The circular walk was created for visitors staying at the Victorian resort of Penmaenmawr to enjoy panoramic views over the sea and surrounding countryside. This walk takes about ¾ hour.

Foel Lus is made of rhyolite, a volcanic rock which creates acidic soils. The vegetation is recovering from a fire on the hill in 1976.

You are standing in the middle of Waen (moor) Gyrach (bog). This wide section of boggy moorland lies along The Afon Gyrach. The Victorians believed the stream was named after a hideous witch who lived at the source.

The bracken covered slopes that you see today used to be divided into long narrow fields during the middle ages. The remains of the field boundaries can be seen quite clearly when the bracken has died back and a low sun creates a shadow behind the old boundaries.

In 1906 at the age of 14 Huw Tom started his young working life at Graiglwyd Quarry in Penmaenmawr. You will follow the route that he and many other quarry workers would have followed on their way home from work to Rowen. It was a long daily walk, whatever the weather.

Huw Tom lived for a short time at a house in Erasmus Street in 1895. Huw Tom described it as 'a Palace' in comparison with his previous dwellings.

Huw Tom's Early Life moving around the area

Huw Tom Edwards was born in Pen y Ffridd, Rowen on the 19th of November 1892. You will see the ruins of the house at Location eight on the walk. He was the youngest of seven children whose father was a quarryman. The family didn't stay in Rowen for very long. By 1894 the family moved to Tai Coed, Graiglwyd, Penmaenmawr and by 1895 they had moved to another house in Penmaenmawr. In 1898 his mother was ill and the doctor advised her to move up the mountain to benefit from the fresh air, so the family moved to Ffridd y Foel to the south of Moel Lus. Huw Tom lost his mother in 1900 when he was only eight years old.

His father later remarried a policeman's daughter called Hannah. Huw Tom did not get on with his step mother.

Huw Tom attended Ysgol Pencae (British School) but his 'new mother' (he called her his 'mother in law') sent him to Ysgol Glanrafon (now demolished).

The family was once again on the move, this time back to Huw Tom's birth place, Pen y Ffridd, in Rowen. His father's desire to worship at Capel Bach in Rowen where he had been an active member was given as the reason for the move. Huw Tom attended Ysgol Rowen for the last year or so of his formal education. When Huw Tom left his headmaster, Mr. Morgan said 'We are losing a very good footballer but a very bad boy!'

Ysgol Rowen is still a thriving village school today.



Huw Tom, top right, holding the hammer. Taken at Penmaenbach quarry in 1927.

Graiglwyd Quarry's History

On the slopes of Graiglwyd over 5000 years ago, men created axes from the hard rock. These axes were used in many parts of Britain for tree felling and ceremonial purposes.

The present quarry at Penmaenmawr concentrates on producing aggregate for road construction and for railway ballast.

The quarrying has reduced the height of Penmaen Mawr Mountain by around 400 feet and in the process the whole prehistoric hill fort of Braich y Ddinas was consumed in an operation that paid only minimal attention to archaeological detail.

Huw Tom's working life at Graiglwyd

From the age of ten Huw Tom spent his summer holidays with his father at Graiglwyd Quarry. When he left school at the age of fourteen (1906) he began work there full time. Huw was a strong lad but rather small for his age. His father was concerned that the eight mile walk to and from work in addition to wielding a hammer for at least eight hours a day, was hindering his growth. Plans were made for Huw Tom to live with his brother Robert and his wife, but Robert was seriously injured in an accident in the quarry and all arrangements made were cancelled, ending Huw Tom's early career in the quarry.



Location Four

Location Three to Location Four: Waen Gyrach SH 740 749

From the footbridge continue along the path, past fields and an old settlement (Waen Gyrach) to your right. As you have almost passed Waen Gyrach you will see that the path divides in two. **This is location four.**

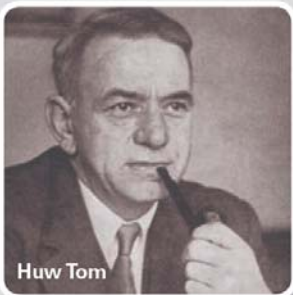
Waen Gyrach

cottage and the surrounding settlement built in the 1840's were finally abandoned in 1939 when the surrounding moorland became a military training ground.

Huw Tom's working life after Graiglwyd

Huw Tom left Graiglwyd quarry and became a farm labourer after being hired at a fair at Eglwysbach, in the Conwy Valley. He spent a few weeks at a farm at Llanbedr y Cennin, not far from Rowen, before moving to Talybont near Bangor.

Farm labouring was not for him and still at the age of fourteen he journeyed by train to South Wales to seek work in the coal mines near Aberfan.

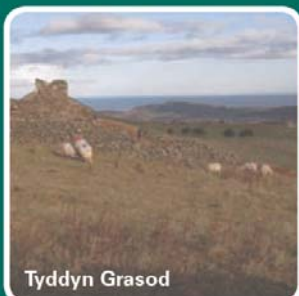


Huw Tom

During his time in South Wales Huw Tom worked in the pits. He took part in the rescue work at Senghenydd where 485 men were killed in a pit disaster. Huw also took up boxing and became a volunteer soldier. He was called up in 1914 and survived Mons, Ypres and other battles. It may well have been at this time that he discovered his gift of writing. He wrote many letters home especially to Rev. Gaianydd Williams ('Llywarch Hen') of Rowen, who adapted Huw's letters to write a weekly article in the North Wales Weekly News. Many people were puzzled how the articles were so up to date and informative.

This marked the beginning of Huw Tom showing his talent as a writer, and he later took an interest in both poetry and prose writing. He published two volumes of autobiography in Welsh – Dros y Tresi (It Was My Privilege (1956)) and Tro'r Drol (Hewn From The Rock (1963)) as well as three volumes of poetry.

Huw Tom was wounded and returned home in March 1918. In December that year he returned to live in Penmaenmawr.

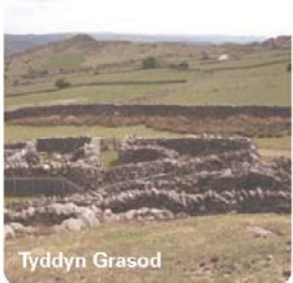


Tyddyn Grasod

Location Four to Location Five: Tyddyn Grasod SH 744 745

Continue straight ahead up the grassy track shown in the image of location 4 above. Walk up over the hill, crossing over a rutted track before heading down towards Tyddyn Grasod. As you reach the walls of Tyddyn Grasod there are tracks going off to your left and right, **this is location five.** On a clear day you will see spectacular views across the Conwy Valley, and down to the Great Orme at the coast.

There is a deserted farmstead and sheepfold at Tyddyn Grasod, which is an example of one of the numerous historical sites that can be found across Wales. By the eighteenth century the uplands of Wales were home to substantial communities of farmers who from their small holdings or 'tyddynnod' scratched a living from a harsh environment which is far removed from the silent landscapes to which we are accustomed to today. It is a fine example of the wealth of relatively unknown history that can be seen undisturbed in the locality.



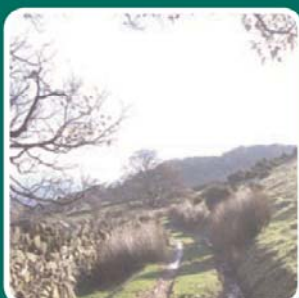
Tyddyn Grasod

Just beyond the deserted farmstead is a pattern of sheep pens in the form of a flower, where sheep that had been left to roam the uplands were brought together to be sorted and identified by their owners.

Huw Tom's Political Career

In 1921 Huw Tom married Margaret from Bethesda, a quarrying village near Bangor, owned by the Penrhyn Estate. For the next twelve years, like his parents before him he lived at a number of addresses in Penmaenmawr, Llanfairfechan and Llanddulas. One reason for his movement was his search for work. He worked at Penmaenmawr Quarries at first but was sacked following an inter-union dispute there in 1922. He tried to settle down in South Wales again, but soon returned to Penmaenmawr.

By 1923 he had become secretary of the Penmaenmawr section of Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). This was the beginning of his union/political career.



Location Six

Location Five to Location Six: Maen Amor SH 743 745

At the crossroads of the two tracks above Tyddyn Grasod take the vague grassy path that goes off to the right to skirt around the top of the sheep pens. The path joins a track with a dry stone wall to its left. Follow the track until it straightens out. **This is location six.**

In 1927 whilst unemployed Huw Tom was elected to represent the Capelulo Ward (Dwygyfylchi) of Penmaenmawr Urban District Council.

With his fellow socialist Idwal Davies he fought hard for better housing and water supply within the district.

Both men were a thorn in the sides of the establishment in Penmaenmawr. But despite many disputes with his fellow councillors most of whom were businessmen, Huw was elected chairman in 1932 whilst still out of work. His abilities as a union official were recognised and he was elected secretary of the Transport & General Workers Union (North Wales) which led him to leave his beloved Penmaenmawr to work in Shotton where he remained until 1953. From then onwards Huw Tom became a member of various public bodies.



Location Six to Seven: Caer Bach (Little Fort) SH 745 729

Continue along the track following it around to the right around Caer Bach for about 440m. At this point the track will divide into two. Take the less used track on the left (with the wall to your left) to a stream. Take care when you cross the stream. Looking ahead you are aiming to walk along the 'dip' between the two small hills ahead of you (see image left), Craig Celynnin being the hill to your left.

Walk up the hill with the wall to your right, keep aiming between the two small hills to leave the wall and pick up a clear track through the gorse (to your left at the base of Craig Celynnin). As the ground levels out the track will again divide into two; take the track on the right and continue ahead for 1.2km. The track will become very clear and will follow alongside a dry stone wall to your left. When you reach an area where the stone wall becomes ruins you are at **location seven**.



Location Seven

From **location seven** the Iron Age defended hill top of Caer Bach can be seen to your right. There is evidence that the site was an area of substantial occupation 2000 years ago.



Location Seven to Location Eight: Huw Tom's House SH 740 723

Continue along the track with the ruined stone wall to your left, until you go through a gate with an old stone stile to the right (see image left).

The wall on either side of the gate you are going through was built in the late 1850s by major landowners to enclose the mountain common thus depriving small farmers of free pasture and digging for peat for fuel. The gate was added later.



Continue along the track. After 200m turn left into the field at an old stone gate post (see image above). As you enter the field head towards the ruins of an old house to your right. This is **location eight**, Huw Tom's House.



View from Huw Tom's house, location eight.

Immediately below you is the village of Rowen and the River Conwy. In the distance the Clwydian Range can be seen. To the right is Dolgarrog and the River Conwy flowing down from Llanrwst.



Location Eight:

Here are the ruins of Pen y Ffridd farm, the childhood home of Huw Tom on two separate occasions. On the right is a photograph of the farm taken in 1956.

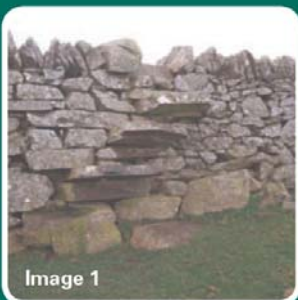


Image 1

Location Eight to Location Nine: The Cromlech SH 740 717

Go through a gate in the wall just above the house ruins. You will join a grassy track to go rightwards, across and down the field. You are aiming for a stone stile over the dry stone wall ahead (see image 1 above). The stile is part of the wall and hard to see. It is situated just to the left of an ivy bush on top of the wall. **Take care when going over the stile.**

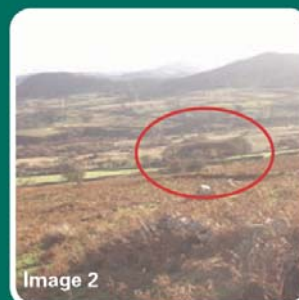


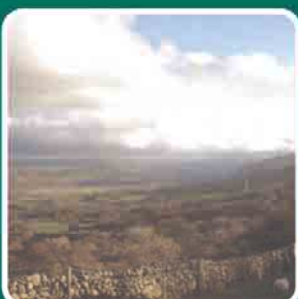
Image 2

You will now be looking at the view shown in image 2 above. From this point the path becomes less clear. You are aiming for the trees circled in image 2 which you will reach by continuing down the hill, following the same line as before, through the bracken and old stone walls. As you near the trees you will cross an old stone wall and a ditch before reaching the cromlech and track.



The Cromlech

Maen y Bardd (the rock of the bard) is a Neolithic burial chamber or cromlech situated below Pen y Ffridd and near an ancient trackway which later became a Roman road.



Views over the Conwy Valley on the descent into Rowen.

Location Nine to Location Ten: Rowen SH 760 719

Turn left to follow the track down, joining onto a steep road that descends into Rowen. At a junction in the village turn left to go past the Ty Gwyn pub. Across the road on the right is a plaque commemorating Huw Tom's life. This is **location ten**. To finish the walk, continue down through the village to reach the car park or the bus stop just further on.

Rowen Village

stands on the road previously used by drovers taking herds of cattle from Anglesey to markets in England. Rowen village today has a shop, pub and school, however, in the past there were several inns and 3 mills. It also had a Pandy, a mill used in the process of woollen clothmaking.



A Memorial Stone to Huw Tom stands at Rowen – erected in 1992 it is hoped in the future that there will also be a memorial in the centre of Penmaenmawr.

On the outskirts of the village stood Capel Bach (small chapel) which meant so much to Huw Tom's father.

