

WALK 1 - LLANBADOC AND ST MADOC'S CHURCH

SUMMARY	A Walk through woods and along a ridge, with views to West Gwent and Mynydd Maen in the distance with glimpses of the River Usk below.
DISTANCE	2.5 Miles
TIME	2 Hours
MAPS	OS Map 152 Newport and Pontypool
START AT	Llanbadoc Island Car park, behind St Madoc's Church OS Grid 376001
TERRAIN	Woodland and fields

St Madoc's Church, belonged to the nuns of Usk Priory. Today only the tower, a 13th century chancel and piscina survive. The north aisle was added and much of the church remodelled in the 1870s. The Bell Inn, recalling a church bell that also gave its name to Bell Pool in the nearby River Usk, stood on the side of the church until the realignment of the road in the 1930s. A second pub, The Bridge, on the southern corner of the lane to Coed-y-Paen was converted to a private house in the 1950s. There is a little bit of Italy and France in the churchyard. The cedar trees were planted in 1846 by Edward Trelawny, from cones he collected from Shelley's grave in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, whilst members of the French Marquis de la Pasture family are buried in the family tomb here.

From the car park, walk past St Madoc's church to the main road. Turn left and walk approximately 60 metres along the pavement. Turn right, to cross the main road and walk up the lane between Myrtle Villa and Ty Mawr Farm. Follow this lane uphill, past houses on your right and continue up the steep wooded footpath towards Pant-y-cwch wood.

As the path levels out the Usk Valley, with Wentwood Forest in the background can be seen to your left.

Continue on the path, along the side of the wood, through two gates to reach a field as the path begins to level out.

Follow the line of the old track, reputedly a Roman road, to the brow of the hill. As you approach the field boundary, turn left to follow the track down the field edge to the left.

Looking ahead, the Iron Age hill fort of Twm Barlwm can just be made out on the far side of Cwmbran.

Pass through a gate on this field boundary and continue downhill, passing the conifer wood of Cae-maen on your left. Bear right and walk down through the grass field to the gate onto the Usk to Coed-y-Paen road.

Go through the gate onto the road, turn right for a short distance and enter the field on the left. Head for the copse at the bottom right hand corner of the field. Follow

the waymarks over the brook and up the footpath through the trees to the driveway, which leads to Cefn Ila.

The Trelawny family, who scandalised locals with their odd habits including nude bathing in the River Usk, moved into the substantial country house then at Cefn Ila in 1846. Whilst living here Edward Trelawny wrote his reminiscences of adventures with Shelley and Byron in Greece. The property, which housed Trelawny's private library of over 1,000 volumes, was rebuilt in the 1860s. It was converted into a convalescent home in 1925 through a donation to the Pontypool and District Hospital by the local solicitor Walter Gustard, as a memorial to, his American wife, Kate. Many local residents know Cefn Ila as their birthplace, as the house served as a maternity hospital after World War II until it was closed in the early 1970s. The property remained unused for some time but was burned down in a mysterious fire, said by some to have been started by runaways from the nearby Borstal. The house has subsequently been razed to the ground, but the vestiges of its impressive gardens, including several large monkey puzzle trees, remain.

Cefn Ila was purchased by Coed Cadw/Woodland Trust in 2007. Since then 72 acres of grassland are gradually being planted with a new native woodland of broad leaf, deciduous trees.

The wood was designed with the help of the local community who helped plant many trees at the site together with children from local schools. Cefn Ila Wood was the first 'Plant' woodland. This partnership initiative between the Welsh Government and the Woodland Trust has from 2008 planted a new tree for every child born or adopted in Wales.

Cefn Ila has become a haven for wildlife and a great place to walk and explore all year round. More recently Cefn Ila has received lottery funding to improve access and waymarking and the site of the old manor house and the surrounding grounds with walled garden and aboretum is being cleared and restored.

Cross the road and climb the stile into the field. Cross this field to the left corner of a copse and the next stile. The path then follows the lower side of the trees. Lying in the bottom of the valley is Pant-y-Cwch Farm. The waymarked route takes you through the gate on your left into the next field and along the top edge of an overgrown pit on the right and continues up hill, diagonally to the left through two more fields to a stile and gate at the top of the hill. Pear Tree Cottage can be seen under the trees to your right.

Climb this stile and another to the right of a second gate on the brow of the hill. Bearing left follow the path towards the pair of electricity poles in this cultivated field and continue downhill to the boundary with the wood.

The broad vista of the Vale of Usk appears as you walk towards the wood. Glimpses of the restored Llanfawr Windmill, the sails and workings of which were destroyed by fire early this century can be seen on the valley floor. To the north west, is the mysterious Skirrid Fawr and over the tree line the Sugar Loaf in the Brecon Beacons beyond Abergavenny.

Here you have a choice of directions. To reach Usk Town Bridge, climb the stile into the wood and take great care down the steep wooded path to reach another stile into the field. Stay in the field and follow the right hand boundary to join the path, passing between houses, to the A472, Usk road by the bridge. Cross the bridge to visit Usk and its amenities or walk back along the river to Llanbadoc church.

Alternatively, turn right and follow the footpath along the top of the wood, over 2 more stiles. At the far end of the third field climb another stile and follow the footpath down the side of Twyn Bell back to Llanbadoc church.

The waymarked route eventually leads past Twyn Bell where Edward Trelawny came to live first in the 1840s. He purchased land high above Llanbadoc Church and built The Cot, also known as The Prospect and now called Twyn Bell. The house lies by the remains of ramparts and ditches of an early promontory camp.

Take care crossing the road as you walk back to the car park.