



## Brenig Archaeology Trail

### Walk Information:

**Maps:** OS Explorer 264

**Distance:** 2.5 miles / 4 kilometres

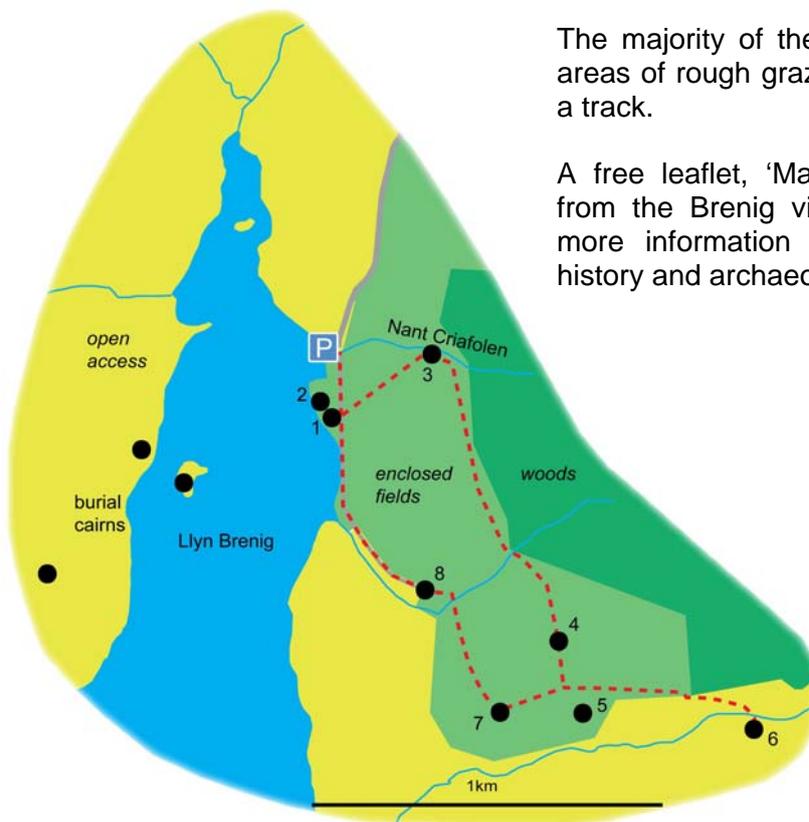
**Duration:** Allow 2.5 hours for the circular walk

**Difficulty:** easy. Well-marked trail over fields.

**Start and finish:** SH 98325741

### Walk summary

The walk follows the Brenig Archaeology Trail which has been developed by Welsh Water and Denbighshire Countryside Service. The well-marked trail visits a number of prehistoric burial and ritual sites, as well as the earthworks of Hen Ddinbych and a group of post-medieval summer dwellings.



The majority of the route crosses fields and areas of rough grazing before returning along a track.

A free leaflet, 'Man at Brenig', is available from the Brenig visitor centre and provides more information about the walk and the history and archaeology of the area.

## Introduction

The Brenig reservoir was built between 1973 and 1976 to provide water supplies to north-east Wales. The earthen dam is around 40m high and forms a reservoir 1.1km long, 150m across and up to 45m deep. The creation of the reservoir submerged a Bronze Age round barrow and several medieval and later farmsteads. The surrounding landscape is largely heather moorland but includes some fields of improved pasture, within which there is an important complex of Bronze Age burial and ritual sites as well as medieval and later summer houses, or 'hafotai', and farmsteads.



One of the waymarkers on the Brenig Archaeology Trail

Around 50 sites were excavated in advance of the reservoir, producing evidence for human activity over several thousand years. The excavations identified possible seasonal settlement by Mesolithic and Neolithic hunting parties between about 6500-3000 BC, and between about 2000-1500 BC the area became the focus for a complex of burial and ritual monuments, many of which have been reconstructed and now form part of the Brenig archaeological trail.

During the medieval period the uplands were used extensively for grazing sheep and the large enclosure at Hen Ddinbych dates from around 1300. Large banks enclose a number of platforms where roofed sheep shelters once stood, allowing flocks of sheep to be overwintered on the mountain. A small, possibly seasonal settlement later developed along the banks of the Nant-y-criafolen stream during the 15th/16th century and by the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were several small farmsteads, including Hafoty Sion Llwyd.

## The Walk

The walk starts from the carpark on the north-east side of Llyn Brenig, at the end of the tarmac road (SH 98325741). From the carpark go over the stile to an information board for the Archaeology Trail. Follow the track S for 180m to reach the large and impressive **Bronze Age ring cairn (1)** on the right of the track (SH 98345720). The cairn dates from around 2000-1500 BC and was originally built as a ceremonial monument consisting of a stone ring surrounded by a circle of posts. Later on a cremation was placed in the centre of the ring and two more on the side.



The Bronze Age ring cairn (1)

A short distance to the NW is a large artificial mound known as Boncyn Arian, which is a **Bronze Age burial mound (2)**. A central grave beneath the mound dates from around 2100-1500 BC while six cremations were later dug into the earthwork, two of

which were placed in pottery urns. The mound is a good vantage point from which to view the area, looking across the reservoir towards three more burial mounds, one of which is now on a small island near the western shore.

Return to the track and cross a stile by a gate to follow the waymarked trail uphill to the ENE, leading to the earthworks of seven summer houses, or **hafotai (3)**. The small rectangular huts are situated on either side of the Nant Criafolen stream. They were built in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, probably by farmers who brought their sheep and cattle up to graze on the high moor during the summer months. In winter the people and animals would retreat down to the valley to the home farm, or Hendre.



The largest of the hafotai (3)

From the hafotai the trail leads S, alongside the forestry. As you reach the highest point there are good views W towards Snowdon. As the route descends a series of large boundary banks are visible ahead, marking fields and enclosures which may date from the medieval period.

On reaching a track the path turns left, through a gate and up the hill before turning right to a **platform cairn (4)** (SH 98985656). The cairn dates from 1950-1650 BC and was originally built as a ring cairn with an open centre, the inner edge marked by small edge-set stones and with a large post in the centre. The burial of an adult and a child was found beneath the cairn towards the S side. The centre was later filled in with stone to form a flat, circular platform. Finally, a small semi-circular cairn was added to the outer edge of the cairn on the E side, covering a small pit containing an urn, but no burial.



The Bronze Age platform cairn (4)

The trail then heads S to an information board overlooking **Hen Ddinbych (5)** (Old Denbigh). From here it is possible to see the large banks which form a rectangular enclosure around 90m long and 80m wide externally. The site may date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was built to overwinter sheep. Inside there are the stone foundations of a long rectangular building and several platforms where sheep shelters may once have stood.

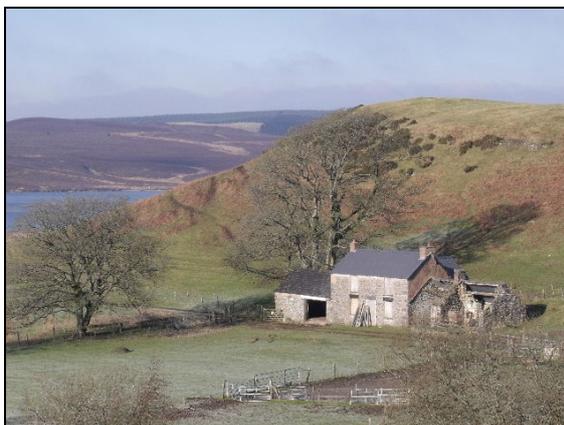
Follow along the N side of the enclosure and then alongside a fence to a stile. Around 220m beyond the stile is a small **Bronze Age kerb cairn (6)** (SH99535632), which was built over the site of what may have been a prehistoric hut, now marked by a series of posts. Nearby is Maen Cleddau, the Swords' Stone, a large glacial boulder with a broken fragment which, according to legend, was sliced off by a giant's sword.



The Bronze Age kerb cairn (6)

The trail then returns past Hen Ddinbych and heads W to another **Bronze Age burial cairn (7)** which is surrounded by a kerb of large boulders.

The route then joins a rough track which leads to **Hafotty Siôn Llwyd (8)**, one of a number of small farmsteads which may date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The house was rebuilt in 1881 and the date is inscribed on one of the window lintels. Follow the track to return to the car park.



Hafotty Siôn Llwyd



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Return to the track and cross a stile by a gate to follow the waymarked trail uphill to the ENE, leading to the earthworks of seven summer houses, or **hafotai (3)**. The small rectangular huts were built in the 15th or 16th centuries, probably by farmers who brought their sheep and cattle up to graze on the moor during the summer months.

From the hafotai the trail leads S, alongside the forestry. As the route descends a series of large boundary banks are visible ahead, marking fields and enclosures which may date from the medieval period.

For a fuller description of this walk see [www.cpat.org.uk/walks](http://www.cpat.org.uk/walks)

On reaching a track the path turns left, through a gate and up the hill before turning right to a **platform cairn (4)** (SH 98985656). The cairn dates from 1950-1650 BC and was originally built as a ring cairn with an open centre. The centre was later filled in with stone to form a flat, circular platform.

The trail then heads S to an information board overlooking **Hen Ddinbych (5)**. The large rectangular enclosure may date from the 13th century and was built to overwinter sheep. Inside there are the stone foundations of a long rectangular building.

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