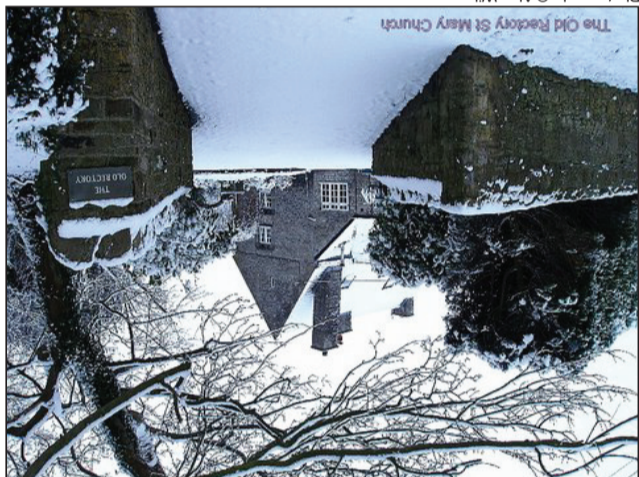


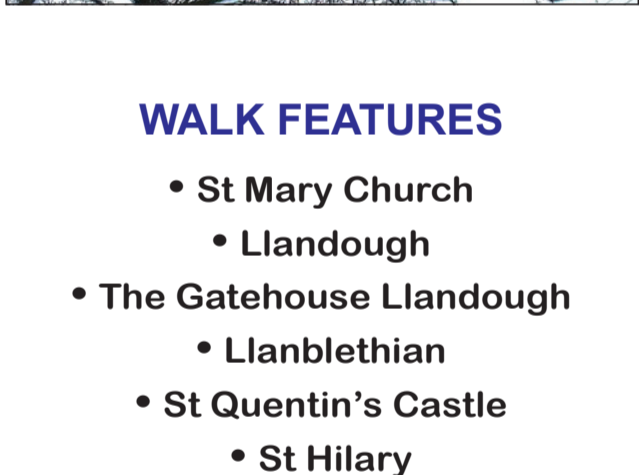
Photograph © Alan Wilson



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Photograph © Alan Wilson

Valeways has published a guide to the Millennium Heritage Trail. This colourful book describes the 16 sections which make up the Trail and comes in a package with 16 separate A3 maps. Information on purchasing the guide can be obtained by contacting Valeways.

Those who have never visited this part of Wales will enjoy walking through fertile, lowland countryside adjoining the spectacular Heritage Coast with its beautiful beaches. The route includes many fascinating historic features, from prehistoric burial chambers to magnificent castles, churches and mansions.

The Trail is split into 16 easy to follow sections, each of which can be walked within a few hours. The surroundings are diverse, often spectacular and steeped in history.

Valeways' Millennium Heritage Trail covers a distance of over 100km, spanning over 6,000 years of history. It winds its way through a variety of beautiful landscapes. At its northern edge there are panoramic vistas of the Blaenau Morgannwg, while in the south it skirts a spectacular cliffed coastline.



WALK LOCATION IN RELATION TO VALEWAYS' MILLENNIUM HERITAGE TRAIL



Photograph © G. Woosnam



Photograph © Vale of Glamorgan Council



Photograph © Alan Wilson

WALK FEATURES

- St Mary Church
- Llandough
- The Gatehouse Llandough
- Llanblethian
- St Quentin's Castle
- St Hilary
- Beaupre Castle



The Gatehouse: Llandough

Photograph © Alan Wilson

FOLLOW THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people



Valeways is a registered charity working in partnership with the community to reopen existing footpaths to create a network of enjoyable circular walks across the Vale of Glamorgan, linking towns and villages to the surrounding countryside and points of interest. We are indebted to the many volunteers who give up their time freely to provide this walk for your enjoyment.



Valeways Partnership - Many thanks to the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Countryside Council for Wales for their continued support.

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Registered Charity No. 1062031 Registered Company No. 3330088

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Walk No.9, Cowbridge Llanfair Walk St. Mary Church

Distance: 6¼ miles



St. Mary Church

Photograph © Alan Wilson



Registered Charity No. 1062031 Registered Company No. 3330088



Photograph © G. Woosnam

Walk No.9 Cowbridge

The Llanfair Walk / St. Mary Church

This walk follows a path through the mid valley of the River Thaw and links the three rural villages of St Mary Church, Llandough and St Hilary which lie within the Community of Llanfair. The undulating route, with an elevation ranging from 30 to 270 feet above sea level, provides splendid wide ranging views to the north and the south. A short section through St Hilary and near St Mary Church is along quiet country lanes but, in the main, the walk follows footpaths through tranquil pastures and patches of attractive deciduous woodland. Historic buildings on or near the route are many and varied and include three medieval churches, three castles and one of the best-known pubs in South Wales. There is an optional spur to Beaupre Castle.

Distances: Main walk is 6¼ miles. Add 1½ miles there and back if walking from Cowbridge. Add one mile for Beaupre Castle spur.

Map: Explorer 151 – Cardiff and Bridgend.

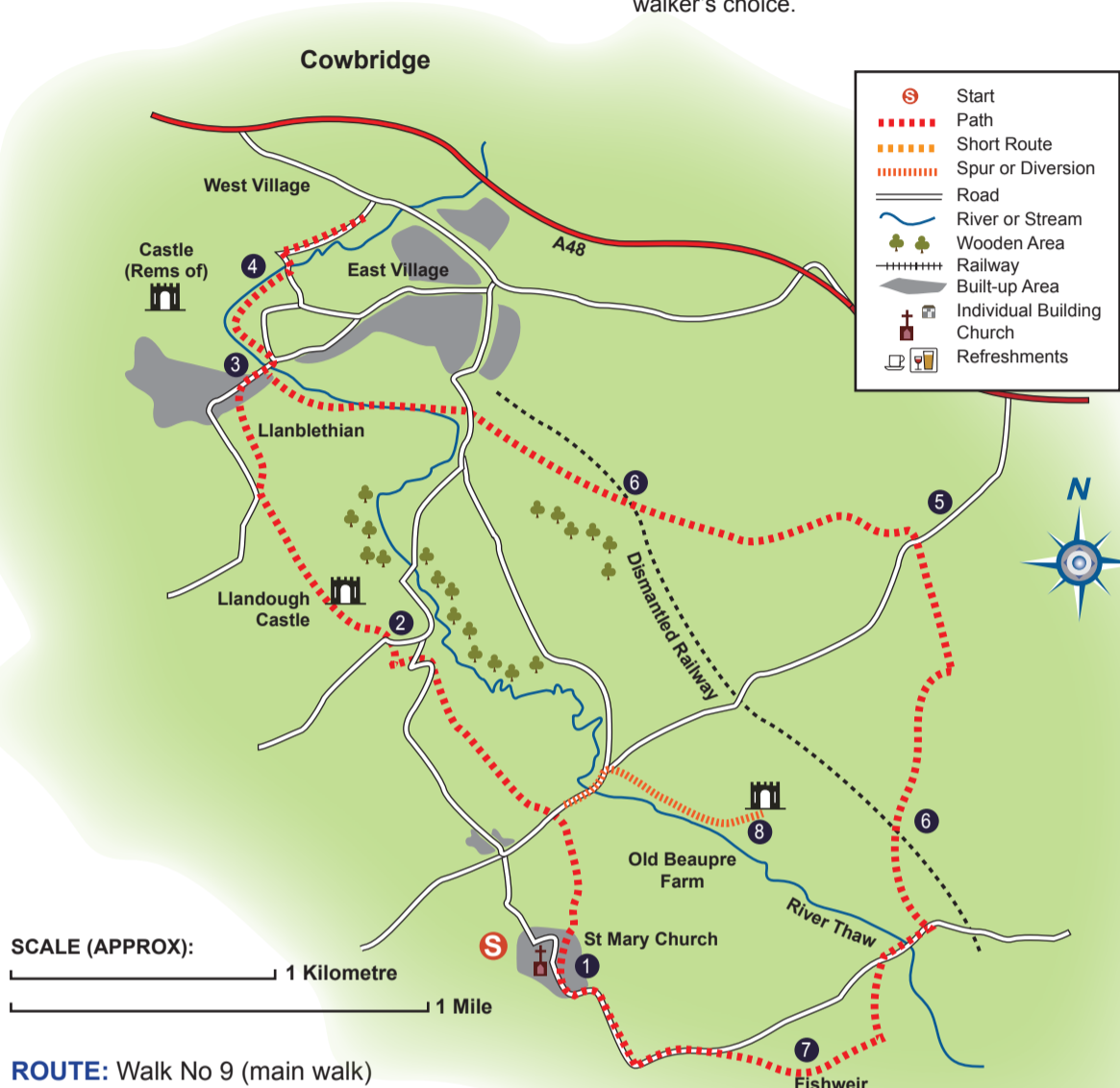
Parking: Some roadside in centre of St Mary Church (GR 002716), roadside in Llanblethian (GR 989739). Choice of car parks in Cowbridge.

Public Transport: St Mary Church and St Hilary are on bus route V2 (Cowbridge to Llantwit Major).

Accessing Llanblethian necessitates a ¾ mile walk from Cowbridge which is served by the Cardiff - Bridgend bus route.

Refreshments: The Bush Inn, St Hilary; a wealth of options in Cowbridge.

START: These route directions start from the centre of St Mary Church. Obviously as it is a circular walk, the start location can be the walker's choice.



ROUTE: Walk No 9 (main walk)

For the first 2 miles and the final mile of this walk navigation is made easy by following the distinctive waymarks of the Millennium Heritage Trail. Note also that this route crosses or otherwise makes use of minor country roads. These have blind spots, so take care!

① The route begins in the centre of **St Mary Church**. With the village notice board and bus-stop on your right, walk between a terrace of four stone-built houses and the wall of the Old Rectory garden. At the corner leave the public road, continue straight ahead between two houses then bear left. Go through a gate and just before a modern barn cross a stile into a field. Ahead of you to the north there are splendid views as far as the hills bordering the Rhondda. Go straight ahead along the hedge line to your left. Continue downhill over more stiles and pass through a narrow neck of woodland to reach a rough field. *Old Beaupre Castle is clearly visible over the fields to your right.* Carry on straight ahead over 2 stiles towards a solitary house. Cross the stile into the drive, turn left, follow the drive for a few yards then cross a stile on your right. Go straight ahead to find a small gate and a flight of concrete steps descending to a road.

Those wishing to take up the Beaupre Castle (8) option should follow this colour text paragraph below.

Cross to the stone stile opposite. Once over this stile make your way to a small footbridge. Cross it and ascend the bank into a small field. At the top of the slope cross a double stile and continue in a straight line ahead through a gate and over more stiles (at times when these fields are covered with long grass ready for mowing, it would be helpful if walking groups could keep in single file, helping to define the path line as well as protecting the crop). At the crest of the hill cross a further stile next to a crumbling, stone built dewpond. Now proceed downhill to a stile and steep steps leading down to a narrow road. Turn right, walking downhill to a stile on the left at a sharp bend in the road. Cross this stile soon to turn right over a footbridge and climb the steep slope to a stile in the field's right hand corner. Turn right, go along the road for a short distance then left up a residential lane as far as a stile on your left (from here you have the option of a short diversion continuing along the lane to view the Llandough Castle Gatehouse ②).

Cross the stile and soon go to the right around some derelict buildings. Just beyond the next stile the path turns left and passes through the corner of a recently planted wood. In the next field turn right and cross to a gate on a metalled drive. Cross this, slightly to the left and walk uphill to reach a stile at the crest where you continue straight ahead to a farm drive.

Cross the farm drive and bearing right descend through the following field and climb over a stone stile (from here there is a fine view of Llanblethian's church tower, the gatehouse of St Quentin's Castle and the Great House). Noting the remnants of the medieval strip system, follow the path down the right hand boundary of the field, go through a gateway, sometimes muddy, into a very small field. Climb a concrete-built stile and go between two houses to arrive the main road. Turn right along the road and just after the **Great House** ③, turn right off the road.

(Walkers wishing to view St Quentin's Castle ④ and/or walk into Cowbridge should walk on over the river bridge, and then turn left to walk up Castle Hill. For Cowbridge continue along Castle Hill then left down Constitution Hill)

The footpath leads via 3 stiles to the bank of the River Thaw. After ¼-mile, cross to the left a substantial footbridge into a long narrow field where you continue in the same direction as previously. Exit the field via a track serving the local sewage works. Cross the road and climb a stile into a small field. Bear right and exit the field over a double stile. Turn left and follow the flat straight drive for ¾ mile to arrive at New Beaupre (half way along the drive you cut through the obvious route of the dismantled Aberthaw to Cowbridge railway line ⑥). Just before the entrance to New Beaupre, go through a small gate on your left, cross a narrow field and find a stile into the wood (this is best seen late Spring when the ground is carpeted with wild garlic flowers.) Emerging from the wood turn left and follow the lane uphill to the centre of **St Hilary** ⑤. After passing the pub, church and a thatched house turn right. At the road junction go straight ahead between The Manor and a now incongruous relic of 20th Century warfare – a brick and concrete WWII pillbox. Continue ahead for ¼-mile, gently descending a quiet country lane to arrive at The Old Vicarage. On a clear day you can enjoy the view which extends down the lower Thaw valley and across the Bristol Channel to the hills of Somerset.

Turn right past the entrances to two houses into a narrow sunken lane which soon becomes a steep rough track. The gradient soon eases and the outlook becomes more open. Once again the route crosses the line of the old **Aberthaw railway** ⑥, here lost under farm fields. When you arrive at the public road turn right, cross the River Thaw bridge and after 200 yards turn left along a lane signposted to Flemingston. In 400 yards turn right to find a gateway and stile giving access to a narrow rough field. Aim straight ahead for the far corner where you will find a stile. Arriving at **Fishweir** ⑦, with the pond on your left bear right between the house and a tall barn, then immediately left between the rear of the main house and a cottage. Now go right across the grass to exit the grounds via a stile. Cross a farm track, maintaining roughly the same direction and height, head for the stile at the far side of the field. Now go uphill along the road for 300 yards then turn right along a lane leading to St Mary Church and the walk's end.

(Turn right and proceed along the road to reach Howe Mill Farm on your left. On the opposite side of the road there is a stile.)

Cross it and follow the path through three fields heading for Beaupre ⑧ Castle which you will see ahead of you. You have to return by the same route)

PLACES OF INTEREST

1. **St Mary Church.** The present day village consisting mainly of 20th century houses maintains an ancient circular layout round the small 13th century church of St Mary which was extensively restored in 1862. The adjacent Old Rectory, also originating from the 13th century, contains prominent Tudor features and is said to be the 2nd oldest inhabited rectory in Wales.
2. **Llandough** is scenically sited in a wooded steep-sided part of the Thaw valley where the meandering river has formed oxbow lakes. The large house known as Llandough Castle was built in the 15th century as a fortified manor house and an early turret and walling are still visible. The main building has been extensively rebuilt and modified at different times, particularly in the late 19th century but the adjacent gatehouse remains relatively unaltered. Notable features of the nearby 13/14th century church include two rare pre-reformation bells.
3. **Great House, Llanblethian** This is a Queen Anne Grade II listed building. Largely built in 1703 it is believed to have 16th century origins.
4. **St Quentin's Castle Building** was begun early in the 14th century by Gilbert de Clare who was killed at Bannockburn in 1314. The castle was damaged by Owain Glyndwr and later by Cromwell. The main surviving feature is the impressive gatehouse which has recently been restored by CADW
5. **St Hilary** One of two places in Britain with this name, this is a picturesque village with a fine medieval church dedicated to St Hilarius of Poitiers. The churchyard contains the tomb of the Basset family (of nearby Beaupre Castle) while within are effigies of the family. Among a number of striking thatched roof buildings is the 17th century Bush Inn.
6. **Aberthaw Railway** Opened in 1892 the line was intended mainly for the carriage of coal and limestone between Aberthaw and Pontyclun via Cowbridge. The St Mary Church Road station was in a remote location by the River Thaw a mile east of the village. The passenger service ceased in 1930: no trains ran after 1942 and the line was dismantled in 1947.
7. **Fishweir** was the residence of the eldest son of Richard Basset (of Beaupre). It is a 16th century farmhouse with later alterations. The adjacent 16th century eight bay barn is reputed to be the tallest in Wales.
8. **Beaupre Castle** This is a significant listed building which was a fortified manor house, the home of the Basset family. Parts of it date from the 14th century. Though now a roofless ruin, it still contains many fine features perhaps the most outstanding being the fine renaissance porch, dated 1600. One porch bears the motto 'Better death than dishonour'; later to become the motto of The Welch Regiment. The estate around had extensive formal gardens.