



Walled gardens at site of Dunraven Castle

Photograph © Vale of Glamorgan Council

Walk No. 3 Ogmore-by-Sea

Cliffs, Dunes and Common

The longer walk features the Glamorgan Heritage Coast and both walks cross the heathland of Ogmore Down, offering great views. The climbs are few and fairly short, and the paths are mainly well drained and free of mud all year round. For nature lovers, there may be an opportunity to see the rare but conspicuous Chough. The medieval landmarks of St Brides Church and Ogmore Castle are just off the routes, but be warned that the coastal areas can be very busy in the summer.

Distance Main walk 7 miles; Shorter(inland) walk 4 miles.

Map OS Explorer 151 Cardiff and Bridgend.

Parking Large car parks at Ogmore by Sea and Dunraven Bay (pay in the Summer). Street parking by village store in St Brides Major.

Public Transport Bus No. 303 Bridgend - Llantwit Major, where there are railway stations.

Refreshments & Toilets Pelican in Her Piety (Ogmore Village), The Farmer's Arms and The Fox (St Brides Major), The Three Golden Cups (Southerndown).

Public conveniences and occasional refreshment counters at Dunraven Bay and Ogmore-by-Sea car parks.

START Main walk from the car park at the mouth of the Ogmore River NGR SS 862 755 (parking charges apply). Shorter walk from The Fox in St Brides NGR SS 895 750. Both routes are described in a clockwise direction.

This route was reviewed in November 2020 and all direction notes were correct at that time.

Continuous improvement of the footpath network may lead to changes of footpath furniture and minor changes to the described route.



THE ROUTE

Main Walk

With the estuary on your left leave the car park and head inland along a level grassy area to pick up a narrow sandy path. Carry on in this direction choosing a fairly direct line between river and road towards an isolated house in front of large concrete bridge. On a clear day the Brynna Gilfach Goch wind farm can be seen on the distant skyline. Pass close to the right of the house to join a surfaced lane. Follow this to the main road, turn left and walk along the left-hand verge. Cross the road where you see a 'NO MOTOR VEHICLES' sign on the opposite side. Just before you reach the sign, turn left up a steep sandy path (* where the Shorter walk joins) which levels out and runs parallel with the river. To your left, beyond the Ogmore River you will see the rising dunes of Merthyr Mawr Warren **1**. Continue along the path, weaving between gorse bushes to join a tarmac lane immediately behind the unusually named pub, The Pelican in Her Piety. Descend left to the main road which you cross, then turn right and follow the grass verge for about 200 yards with Ogmore Castle **2** to your left. Re-cross the road to a pavement and continue until you reach a colourful sign reading 'OGWR OGMORE'. Climb a

steep metalled lane curving uphill to the right. This becomes a rough stony track leading to Ogmore Down **3**. As you approach the top of the hill you will see the wooden poles of a power transmission line to the left. Aim ahead for the one pole with a conspicuous box attached. Pass between this and a golf course green then immediately turn 90° right. Follow a well-used bridleway, separated from the golf course on your right by a continuous barrier of gorse. Maintain your direction for ¼ mile to arrive at a post marking a junction of bridleways. Turn 90° left and soon arrive at the corner of a hedge separating the open common from the fields beyond. Continue ahead with the hedge (soon to be superseded by a fence) on your right. Maintain the same direction past the point where the fence turns away to the right and bear very slightly left for your next target, a small cluster of white houses and a conspicuous evergreen tree. Ignoring any tracks leading to the right, arrive at the houses and descend a lane to the public road where you turn right. Follow the main road all the way through St Brides Major. Pass the picturesque pond and arrive at the Farmer's Arms. Cross the stone stile (engraved 'Seamouth')

opposite the Farmer's Arms car park. Go through a kissing gate and bear right for 100 yds keeping to the left-hand field boundary. Cross another stone stile (with metal gate alongside) into the field on your left. Follow the right-hand boundary of this and the next field. Exit the following field and bear left through a gateway then continue in the same direction as before. Descend through a wooded valley and follow the track straight on past the Heritage Coast Visitor Centre **4** at Dunraven Bay. (When you reach the beach car park there is the option of turning left through a gate and walking through the walled gardens **5** to the cliff top to enjoy one of the finest coastal views in Britain). Behind the beach buildings find the steps giving access to the footpath which ascends parallel to the steep exit road. At the cliff top car park bear left through a steel kissing gate to turn right along a straight grassy track. This passes a substantial stone wall, collapsed in places, on your right. Leave the open land at the second of two access points to the road, each marked by lines of short concrete posts (this point is at the head of a small steep valley marked by cliff warning signs).

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Shorter Walk

From The Fox, cross the road and head for St Brides Church **6**. Follow THE SHILLY to the right and continue uphill across a cattle grid. Veer left along a track leading to St Brides Court where you cross a stone stile to the left of the gate and follow the right-hand boundary of the field to the corner. Cross a second stile and keep to the left-hand boundary of the next two fields. Continue ahead across a final stile and a metalled track. Bearing slightly to the right go gently downhill following the line of fence on your right. Just after passing a broad level grassy track on your right descend to the right past limestone outcrops into a steep-sided sandy dry valley (Pant Mari Flanders **7**). Take the easiest line all the way down the valley bottom, bearing right to arrive at the roadside (B4524). Turn right up a steep sandy path which soon levels out and follow the main route directions (from the point marked * in the Main walk) to return to St Brides Major via Ogmore Castle.

PLACES OF INTEREST

1 Merthyr Mawr Warren

The sand forming these extensive dunes originated from glacial debris carried downstream by meltwater and was subsequently moved inland by the fierce tides and prevailing winds of the Bristol Channel. At its highest point the sand extends beyond the 70-metre contour of the bordering limestone ridge. Between the 12th and 16th centuries the nearby village of Kenfig, just a few miles away, was buried under the drifting sand.

2 Ogmore Castle

William de Londres established the first Norman earth and timber fortifications on this site in 1116 to guard a major fording place into the south of Wales. Construction of a permanent stone castle commenced a few years later. The rectangular great tower originally stood 40 feet high. There is public access to the impressive ruins which are in the care of CADW. The stepping stones across the Ewenny River are a well-known feature of the site.

3 Ogmore Down

The limestone heath of Ogmore Down together with the adjacent Old Castle Down is a very rare form of heathland. It is one of very few remaining sites in Wales for the High Brown Fritillary butterfly. This common land is a popular recreational area criss-crossed with bridleways and the northern part is used by the Southerndown Golf Club. There are two large working quarries extracting limestone from the western edge of the Down.

4 Heritage Coast Centre

Situated in Dunraven Park, this is the base for the Glamorgan Heritage Coast Project which was set up in the early 1970's and aims to conserve the unique character of this 14 mile stretch of coastline. A visit is strongly recommended for anyone wishing to know more about this coast.

5 Walled Gardens & Viewpoint

The walled garden dating from the 16th century and the castellated ice house in Dunraven Park were adjuncts of Dunraven Castle, the imposing 19th century mansion which dominated the site until it was demolished in 1962. At the cliff top immediately east of the garden is an information board which interprets the remarkable coastal view from this point.

6 St Brides Church

Built in the early part of the 12th century although most remaining architectural features are 14th or 15th century. One of several churches in south Wales dedicated to the 5th century Irish Saint Bride (Bridget). Contains several interesting effigies including an unusually well-preserved representation of 13th century military uniform.

7 Pant Mari Flanders

This is a small steep valley cut into the limestone of Ogmore Down, the bottom covered with deep deposits of sand. Whoever Mari Flanders was her local historical significance is forgotten. In the valley bottom is a sturdy renovated stone structure covering an ancient well which once provided drinking water for the locality.