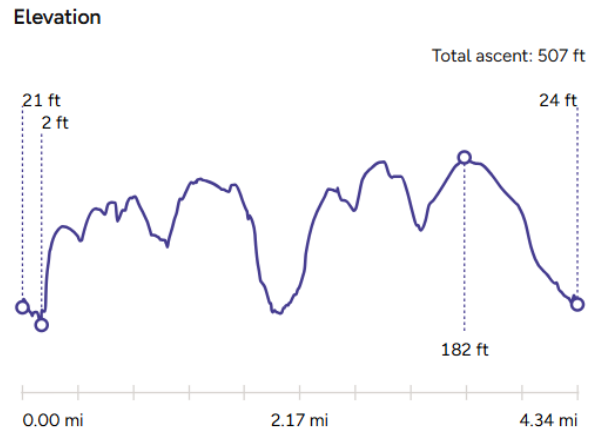


The Sloop Inn, Porthgain Pub Walk

History of Porthgain Harbour, and a walk to the Blue Lagoon at Abereiddi, 4.3 miles

OVERVIEW

From the Sloop Inn, the walk begins at Porthgain's harbour — a place whose quietness today hides the fact that it was once one of Pembrokeshire's busiest industrial ports. The old brick hoppers still stand above the quay like rust-red sentinels, reminders of the days when slate, stone and crushed roadstone were loaded here and shipped out along the coast. From the harbour head, join the Pembrokeshire Coast Path and follow it west.



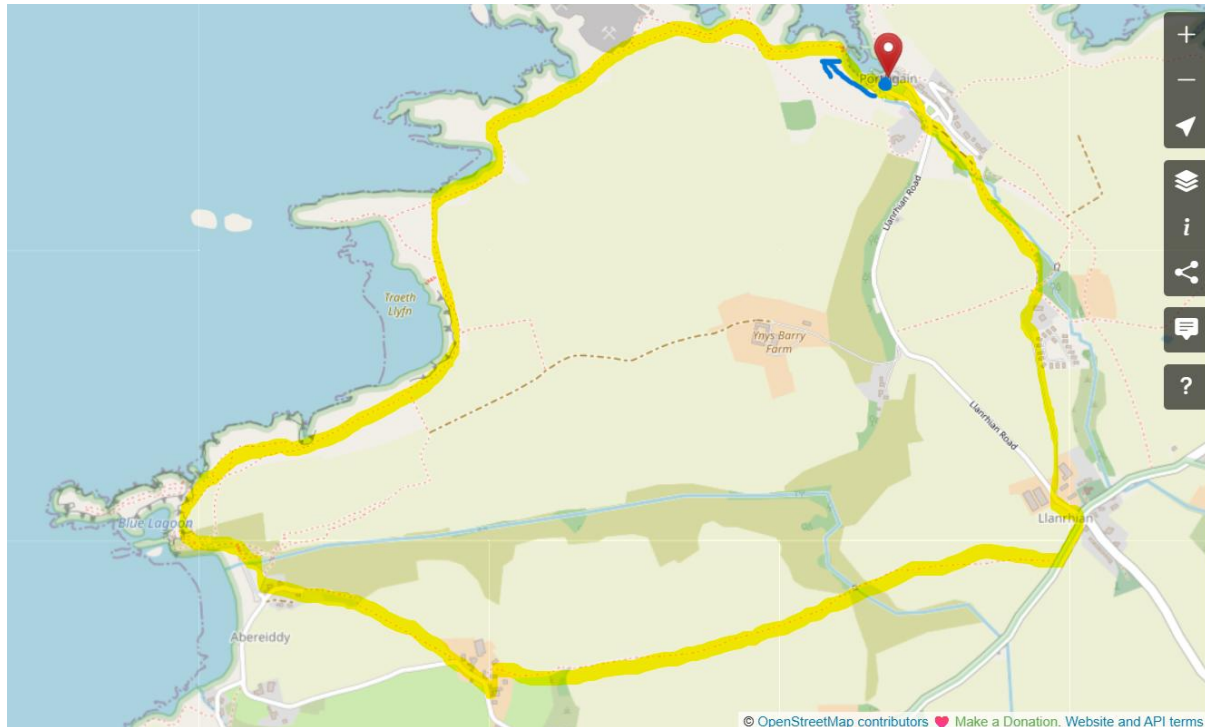
Before long you reach the Blue Lagoon — now a startling turquoise pool, but originally a slate quarry whose final cut was breached to the sea. What looks like a natural amphitheatre is entirely man-made, carved by quarrymen and later abandoned to the tides.

Continue on to Abereiddi beach, a shingle-and-slate cove framed by steep cliffs. From here the route leaves the coast, climbing gently through fields and quiet lanes to Llanrhian, before looping back to Porthgain.

Start/Finish	Sloop Inn, Llanrhian Road, Porthgain, SA62 5BN			
Parking	Village visitor public parking at the front of the pub. Additional spaces around the harbour, and along the road into the village.			
Grid Reference	SM 815 325			
What3Words	///trespass.routines.indoors			
Distance	4.3 miles / 6.9 km	Time	2 hrs	Ascent 500 ft / 160 m
Paths/Terrain	Coastal path walking, quiet lanes and fields.			
Difficulty	Generally, an easy route. There's a very steep set of steps at the start to exit the harbour, so you'll immediately know if this walk is for you. Some sections might be slightly overgrown.			
Public Transport	The 404 bus service visits Porthgain and stops outside the Sloop. It runs between Newport, Fishguard and St Davids.			
Toilets	To the Porthgain side of the beach at Abereiddi, and The Sloop.			

Other Pubs Nearby The Ship Inn at Trefin; and the Farmers Arms in Mathry.

DIRECTIONS



1. From the parking area near The Sloop proceed to the harbour. Head around to the left-hand side and make your way to the 'sea end', beyond the brick façade of the old works. You'll find the Coast Path guiding you up a steep flight of steps, the hardest climb on this relatively easy route.
2. At the top, simply follow footpath signs all the way to Abereddy to the west. There's an option to drop down to a beach, tide permitting, before you get there. You'll see a path leading down the cliff to Traeth Llyfn (smooth beach).
3. It's possible to miss the Blue Lagoon at Abereddy if you're not aware that it's there. Don't cut the corner to walk directly to the beach at Abereddy, but instead stick with the coast path and head in the direction of the turret - Abereddy Tower - on the cliffs. The lagoon is beneath it to the left-hand side.
4. The Blue Lagoon is a world-famous geothermal spa in Iceland, known for its milky-blue, mineral-rich waters and therapeutic bathing experience. The Blue Lagoon in Pembrokeshire is a flooded sea quarry – local fishermen blasted a channel between the quarry and the sea when the slate quarry closed. The contrast between the grey beach of Abereddy and the vibrant waters in the quarry is unique to the area, and it's a popular wild swimming and orienteering destination.
5. Make your way to the beach, and exit onto the road.

6. From the road, look for the footpath that runs past the front door of Beach Cottage, which is the first house to your left. Follow it past some of the holiday cottages as it heads up to a wooden gate into a field.
7. Proceed diagonally across the field as it heads gently uphill. Aim for the house chimneys of Porthydd that you'll see in front of you, and exit the field via a gate in front of a small building (it's a garage) with a tin roof.
8. Join the road ahead and just before it bends sharply to the right take the first road off on the left downhill next to cottages, by a footpath sign.
9. Continue ahead as the path curves and leads onto a farm track, passing through metal gates. The path becomes a little overgrown in places here, and is one of those routes that would leave your trousers and boots wet through if it had recently rained.
10. The route eventually opens out and leads into a field. This is cattle country, so there might be cows here. The route is straight across the field from the direction you entered it. Once you get to the brow, you'll spy the obvious gate to aim for and can course correct to get there.
11. When I passed through the footpath gate to exit the field I was faced with another short section – 10 metres – that was a little overgrown, but I was able to push through easily enough. It led me straight onto a short footbridge, then into another field of cows. All very docile.
12. Make your way up the field. There's a farm track some metres away from the hedge which is an easier trek than walking through the field grass. The footpath is at the top right-hand side. Pass through footpath gates to cross a farm track, and proceed to climb over a bank to join a road.
13. Turn left towards the tiny hamlet of Llanrhian, then shortly arrive at a junction, heading left in the direction of Porthgain. St Rhian's church is just along from this junction, opposite the old school house. The church's tower is the oldest part of the present building and is believed to date from the thirteenth century. It was probably originally built separately as a coastal watch tower and place of defence.
14. On the Porthgain road, proceed past Manor House Farm, and immediately afterwards, follow a concrete lane to the right alongside the farm. It becomes gravel and is the entrance driveway for a log cabin holiday park, and a series of holiday cottages further down.
15. Follow this route as it curves around the cottages. You'll see two footpath signs close together, to your left-hand side. Take the 2nd of them, just beyond the end of a field.
16. After a short grassy section, this route leads into a field via a metal kissing gate. Follow the field boundary to the right, then exit the field at the corner. The route into Porthgain is straightforward and clear from here.

NOTES – The industrial rise and fall of Porthgain

Porthgain wasn't a fishing village that happened to grow a harbour. It was built, quite deliberately, to serve an industry — three industries in fact, in succession, each one wearing the last one's infrastructure like a hand-me-down coat.

It started with slate.

Porthgain and neighbouring Abereiddi were both slate quarries from around the 1840s, and in 1851 proper harbour works — piers, a breakwater, a horse-drawn tramway from Abereiddi's quarry — were built to get the stone out by sea. The slate itself was never particularly good; compared to the famous North Wales product it was inferior, and for every usable ton hauled up, several more tons of waste went straight into the sea. Abereiddi's quarry was abandoned by the 1890s, and it's the flooded remains of that failed venture — breached to the sea by local fishermen once the pit was given up on — that you now know as the Blue Lagoon.

Porthgain itself didn't fail with it.

In 1889 the quarry company was bought by a Manchester businessman, Herbert Birch, who drove a 150-metre tunnel to move stone more efficiently and pivoted the whole operation towards brickmaking, using the waste slate that had been the original business's biggest problem. A brickworks with twin chimneys and a Hoffman kiln capable of 50,000 bricks a week dominated the village from 1889, most of its output shipped out to the growing towns of South Wales and the Bristol Channel — including, rather neatly, the bricks used to build the giant hoppers that still stand over the harbour today. Brickmaking itself ceased in 1912.

The final act was stone.

A narrow-gauge railway carried granite from the Pen Clegyr and St Bride's quarries down to Porthgain, where it was crushed and loaded straight into ships from those hoppers for use as roadstone across Britain — a trade robust enough to justify a major harbour rebuild in 1902–04. It lasted until 1931, when the company running it went into receivership; remaining stockpiles were shipped out until 1934, and after that the whole site was simply left to quietly decay, remote enough that nobody had much reason to clear it away.

Which is, in its own way, the best thing that could have happened to it. The buildings you see today — the hoppers, the brickworks machine house, the harbour itself — survive largely because Porthgain was too out-of-the-way to be worth redeveloping once the industry died.

The hoppers are now a Scheduled Monument, and as you may have seen, still used by local fishermen as informal storage, in one of those quiet ironies where genuine humble use has ended up preserving a site as effectively as any museum.

And in a smaller echo of a story that keeps turning up along this coast: once the harbour company itself gave up on Porthgain, the village didn't wait for a developer to take an interest. Local residents bought the harbour outright, for the reputedly princely sum of "£5 from G.R. Stein of Sheffield," now held in a village trust in partnership with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. A tin-roofed industrial ruin, bought back by the people living in its shadow, rather than left to fall into somebody else's hands.