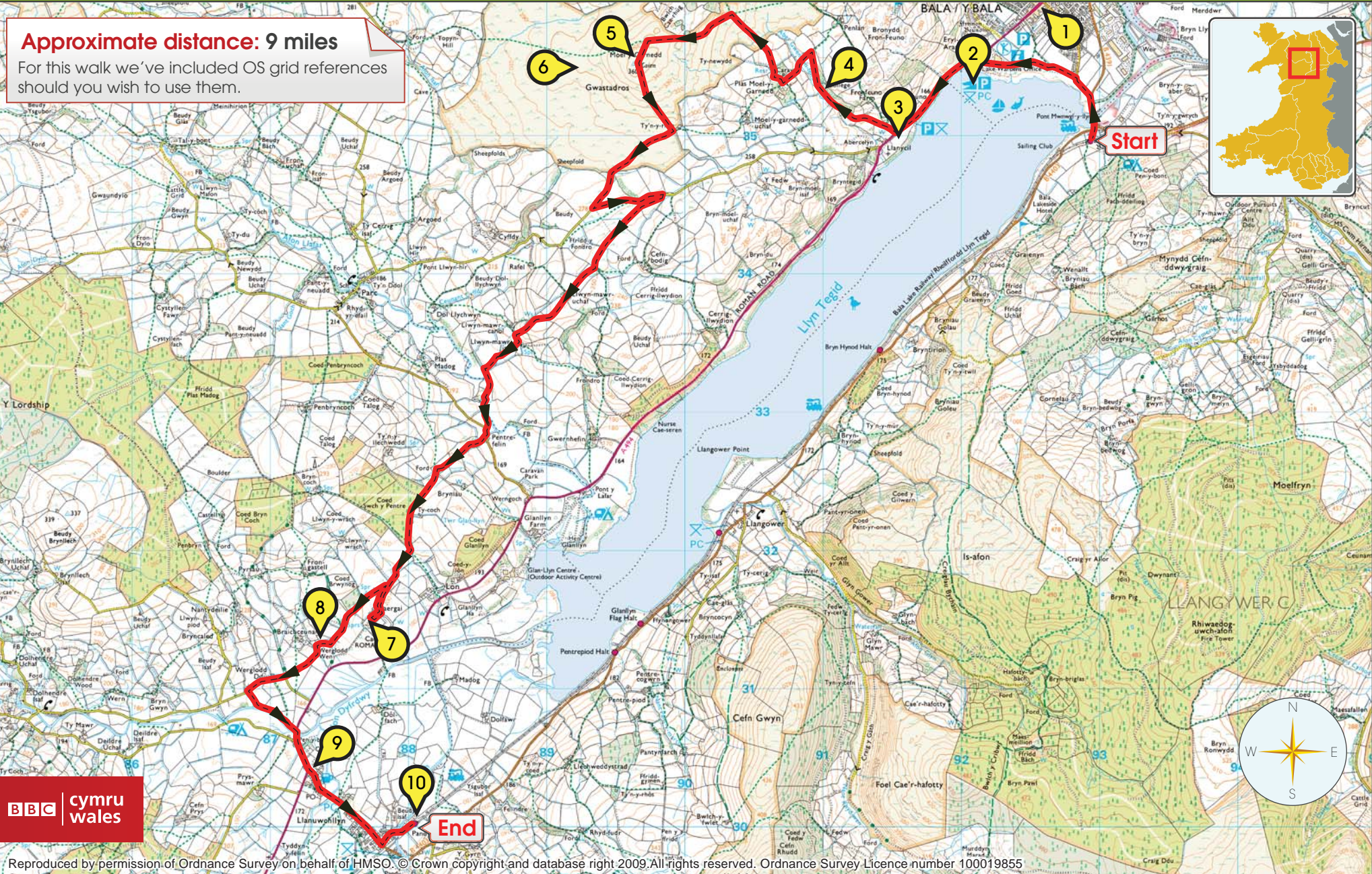


# Weatherman Walking

# Bala



The Weatherman Walking maps are intended as a guide to help you walk the route. We recommend using an OS map of the area in conjunction with this guide. Routes and conditions may have changed since this guide was written. The BBC takes no responsibility for any accident or injury that may occur while following the route. Always wear appropriate clothing and footwear and check weather conditions before heading out.

## Weatherman Walking

## Bala

**Start:** Either from the railway station at the Bala end of the Bala Lake Railway or the car park off the A494 at the Bala end of the lake.

**Starting ref:** SH 9293 3496

**Distance:** 8.84 miles

**Grade:** Moderate

**Walk time :** Allow 4.5 hours (4 hours + stops)

This is a delightful linear walk that unfolds to reveal its charm with each undulating twist and turn. On a clear day the 360° views from the summit of Moel y Garnedd are spectacular and rival any in the whole of Snowdonia.

Despite there not being many steep or lengthy climbs, this is quite a demanding walk. The terrain is very varied and includes sections of quiet country road, undulating farmland and boggy heathland. Needless to say, appropriate footwear should be worn particularly after periods of heavy rain.

Route finding can be tricky in places, but don't be put off - there are yellow painted marker posts with yellow arrows on gateways and stiles along the whole length of the route which should ensure that no-one gets lost. To be doubly safe of course, having a map and compass is also highly recommended.

As an added bonus the walk can be combined with a trip on the Bala Lake Railway. Trains run regularly throughout the summer months but less frequently at other times. So it's best to check the timetable to be sure that they are running, and also to check the time of the last train of the day if that's how you intend to return to the start of your walk.

You could of course leave a car at Llanuwchllyn and start the walk by catching the train to Bala thus avoiding the possibility of missing the last train.

There is also a bus service that runs between Bala and Llanuwchllyn throughout the year, but again it's best to check the timetable before you set off, otherwise it's another six miles of roadside walking back to Bala on top of the nine or so miles already walked!



The Arenig mountains from the summit of Moel y Garnedd



Bala Lake Railway's Bala station

# Weatherman Walking

## Bala

### Directions

If starting from the railway station, cross the bridge over the river Dee towards Bala town then bear left before the first houses and follow a footpath around the end of the lake. This leads to the car park with lakeside picnic tables and public toilets.

Just half a mile from the centre of the town, this is also an alternative place to leave a car and to start the walk.



Derek and his walk guide Linos at the start of the route beside Llyn Tegid

### 1 Bala Town

There are at least 15 of them around the world – in Thailand, India, South Africa, Senegal, Kansas and Pennsylvania to name but a few, and there's one here in Wales – a town called Bala! It's also a town where officially 'Walkers are Welcome'

During the 18th century, one of the main industries of the town was the knitted stocking trade. By the 1830s 32,000 dozen pairs of stockings and 5,500 dozen pairs of woollen mittens were sold annually!

Leave the car park through the main entrance and turn left onto the footpath beside the main road. There are lovely views of the lake on your left hand side.



Views of the lake from the path beside the main road

## Weatherman Walking

## Bala

### 2 Llyn Tegid

Llyn Tegid, Bala Lake, is well-known as the largest natural lake in Wales and for its quite stunning surroundings.

There are numerous legends associated with the lake. One features a monster called Tegi – Nessie’s cousin perhaps? Another tells the story of how the lake was formed as punishment for the misdemeanours of cruel prince Tegid Foel, Tegid the Bald, and it’s said that sometimes the remains of the drowned old settlement can still be seen in the lake today.

There are 14 species of fish in the lake, including the Gwyniad which is unique to Bala Lake - a species ‘stranded’ when ice melted at the end of the last Ice Age.

It would have been larger at one time – about 10,000 years ago when glacial moraine would have dammed the lake, before erosion reduced the level of water, and then silting has taken place at both ends. Bala town is built on an area that silted-up.

The name Bala actually means the outlet point of a lake.

**Follow the footpath for about half a mile to arrive at the old church of St. Beuno, which now houses the Mary Jones World.**

### 3 Mary Jones World (SH 914 348)

Mary Jones World is a new visitor and education centre that tells the story of Mari Jones and Thomas Charles, and the impact of world’s best-selling book.

The centre celebrates the story of 15-year-old Mari who, in 1800, walked 25 miles barefoot to Bala to buy a Bible from Thomas Charles, leading to the launch of the Bible Society four years later.

Reverend Thomas Charles, the clergyman who proposed the founding of Bible Society, is buried in the graveyard here. He was an influential preacher and pioneer of Sunday Schools during a period of spiritual revival in the 1790s.



Refurbishment of St Beuno’s church was still taking place during our filming but is now complete.

## Weatherman Walking

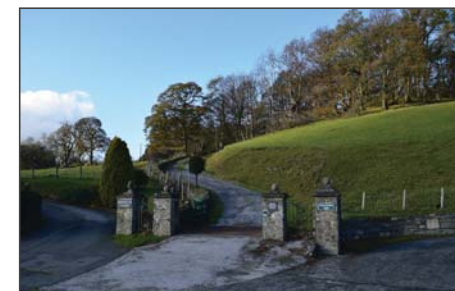
Bala

Just past the entrance to the car park of the Mary Jones World, carefully cross the busy road and follow the middle driveway – the one with a sign for Fron Feuno farm on the stone pillar and designated a bridleway.

Head up for about 300 yards then bear left at the right hand bend in the track, as indicated by the waymarker.

Walk around the top of the field to reach a stile, waymarked by the first of the many yellow painted posts along the route.

Cross over the stile onto a delightful woodland path. On the left hand side below the path is the sinister sounding Aber Gwenwyn-Feirch – Welsh for Stream of the Poisoned Horses.



The driveway opposite the Mary Jones World car park that leads uphill towards Aber Gwenwyn-Feirch



Yellow painted waymarker post and stile into woodland

### 4 Aber Gwenwyn-Feirch – Stream of the Poisoned Horses (SH 910 352)

In 1645, Rowland Fychan, a Royalist who lived in Caer Gai, a few miles further along our route, was being hunted down by Oliver Cromwell's men, who stopped by the stream for their horses to drink. Friends of Rowland threw the leaves, or needles, of yew trees – which are poisonous to horses – into the stream nearby. The horses drank from the stream and became ill, and so Rowland escaped.



Derek and Llinos on the delightful woodland path above Aber Gwenwyn-Feirch

## Weatherman Walking

## Bala

The route leaves the woodland over another stile into a field.

When Derek and the crew filmed here in mid-summer, this was a wonderful hay meadow full of wild flowers, butterflies and other insects. Follow the right hand side of the meadow to a wooden gate at the top of the field, but **DO NOT** go through this gate. Turn left and follow the direction shown by the waymarker across the top of the field and diagonally down to the stream at the left hand boundary of the field. Down in the dip you'll find a wooden bridge over the stream. Cross over the bridge and through a metal gate then directly up the slope towards the caravan park and a small metal gate into another small field, where there may be horses grazing. A larger metal gate leads into the caravan park and a track between two white painted cottages. After 50 yards, turn right uphill then bear left and follow the tarmac road around the caravan park to reach a gate out of the park between caravan plots 23 and 24.

Go through the gate then bear slightly right towards a tree at the top of the field. Near this tree is a stile next to a gate. Cross over the stile then head straight up over boggy ground to reach a drier rocky rib, which leads up towards trees.

Bear left below the trees, along a rather indistinct track up through the heathland. Keeping the fence line on your right, head uphill, eventually bearing right to a brow where views of the Arenig mountains open up ahead. Then bear left around a small outcrop of rock and straight on to reach the rounded summit and trig point.



Leaving the woodland, Derek and Llinos walk up through the meadow



The gate out of the caravan park leading to the heathland of Gwastadros and the summit of Moel y Garnedd

### 5 Moel y Garnedd (SH 8963 3551)

Despite being only 1,181ft above sea level the views from here are stunning. The surrounding mountains – Arenig, Aran, Cader Idris and Berwyn Mountain ranges – are all between 2,700 and 2,900 feet high. They were formed some 500 million years ago – the lower hills formed under the sea, the higher ones formed by volcanic action.



View of the Aran mountain from the summit of Moel y Garnedd

## Weatherman Walking

## Bala

From the summit head down a rather indistinct sheep track towards a few fir trees that shelter a dwelling, named Ty'n Rhos on the map.

This heathland may be very boggy so take great care especially after a period of prolonged rainfall.



The sheep track that indicates the way from the summit of Moel y Garnedd.



### Heathland surrounding Moel y Garnedd

Known as Gwastadros or Stadros by locals, which means level heathland, this is perfect habitat for birds such as skylark, curlew and Northern wheatear.

It has always been common land, which meant that local people had a right to bring their animals here to graze.

It's very wet and poor ground to keep livestock, and during the early 1800s this was the only land available for the poor people of the area to graze their animals. Life could often be very hard at that time.



The level heathland of Gwastadros with the Arenig mountains beyond

## Weatherman Walking

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About 100 yards from Ty'n Rhos, turn right and head for an isolated marker post which, on reaching it, has a blue Snowdonia National Park 'Bwrlwm Eryri #3' sign on it.

Continue in the same direction heading for a small plantation of pine trees.

Cross over a small wooden bridge and a stile, with yellow marker post, and walk around the perimeter of the wood. The map shows that the path goes straight through the plantation, however fallen trees make this very difficult.

About 200 yards beyond the trees is a metal kissing gate that brings you to a minor road. Turn left along the quiet road and follow it for about 500 yards to a public footpath sign and stile over the fence into the field.

Turn immediately right and head for the far side of the field, where there's another stile leading more or less in a straight line to wooden steps and stiles through several other fields to reach Llwyn Mawr Uchaf farm.

Following the marker posts, skirt around to the left of the farm and continue beyond it to a field with glorious views of the hills and mountains to the west.



The isolated waymarker post in the middle of Gwastadros



The roadside footpath sign showing the way towards Llwyn Mawr Uchaf farm



More glorious views to the west as Derek and Llinos head downhill



## Weatherman Walking

## Bala

Heading in more or less the same direction drop down to wooden steps over the fence, and then steeply down to the farm track.

During our filming Derek and his guide Llinos jogged down this steep slope, hurdling some tall thistles on the way, which might not be something for everyone to attempt!



Wooden steps that lead to the steep slope down to a farm track

Bear left on this bend (SH 8810 3239) along a narrow and rather overgrown path beside a small plantation to arrive at another stile into a field. Cross the field and turn left along a farm track.

Our path now turns right, but the farm track itself leads to Caer Gai, an impressive historic farmhouse with an interesting story.

However, please note that this is not a public right of way and the farmhouse is a private home therefore permission to look at the house should be obtained beforehand.



Turning off the vehicle track towards Caer Gai.



### 7 Caer Gai – former home of Rowland Fychan, ardent Royalist (SH 8774 3149)

Although Rowland escaped with his life when, in 1645, his pursuers' horses were poisoned at Aber Gwenwyn-Feirch, Cromwell's men went on to burn down his home. A large farmhouse was soon built in its place which is the building that still stands here today.

The history connected to this site goes way back before Cromwell's time. Originally, this was the site of an old Roman fort – a Roman road goes right by it and the remains of a Roman cemetery and baths were discovered nearby.



Caer Gai historic farmhouse

## Weatherman Walking

Bala

If you've taken the detour to **Caer Gai**, now retrace your steps back along the farm track to where the path turns off the track.

Follow the line of the fence along an increasingly boggy section of path to cross over a stile in a corner near the stream.

Continue along in the hollow to a stile over the fence and a wooden footbridge over the stream (SH 8748 3138) to reach another farm track.

Turn left down this track then right after a metal gate for 100 yards along a vehicle track which leads to the farmhouse of **Weirglodd Wen**.



Stile and wooden bridge leading to the farm track

### 8 Weirglodd Wen (SH 8734 3131)

This is the former home of Rev. Michael D Jones, a Welsh nationalist non-conformist preacher and principal of Bala Theological College who, in the mid-19th century, called for a new "little Wales beyond Wales" and played a major part in establishing a Welsh settlement in Patagonia in the 1860s.

Y Wladfa, the Welsh colony in Patagonia, was established in 1865, when more than 150 people from various parts of Wales sailed on the *Mimosa* to settle in the Chubut Valley, in Southern Argentina. Over the following 50 years, hundreds of Welsh people emigrated there, establishing towns such as Porth Madryn, Gaiman, Trelew, Dolavon and Trevelin in Cwm Hyfryd.

Many of their descendants also live in Esquel, at the foot of the Andes and many other provinces throughout Argentina.



Weirglodd Wen

## Weatherman Walking

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Continue straight on along the track that runs in front of Weirglodd Wen, turn left past old outbuildings and through a metal gate (SH 8702 3105) into the field. Keep to the fence line on the right which leads to a metal gate onto a minor road.

Turn right along the road for 100 yards then left through a metal gate into a field opposite a barn clad with corrugated iron.

Following the direction of the yellow arrow on the gatepost head straight down through three fields. Take great care not to disturb or startle any cattle that may be grazing here. A metal kissing gate brings you onto the riverside path which leads down to a rather busy main road.

Taking great care and facing oncoming traffic, walk over the bridge then cross over onto the pavement which leads to the village of Llanuwchllyn where you will soon reach the memorial to Sir O.M. Edwards and Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards on the left hand side.



Roadside gate leading to the path through fields and on to Llanuwchllyn



### Sir O.M. Edwards and Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards memorial (SH 8727 3041)

This is a monument to commemorate eminent father and son Sir O.M. and Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards, two illustrious men from this small rural village, who contributed a huge amount to Welsh life, culture and education.

Sir O.M. Edwards was an editor, writer and a passionate and prominent educator, who was eager to encourage pride in the Welsh language and traditions. In the 1890s he launched children's magazines called *Cymru* and *Cymru'r Plant* (The Children's Wales).

His son, Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards continued his father's good work, and founded the youth movement *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* in 1922 to give children and young people the chance to learn and socialise through the medium of Welsh.

Today there are about 50,000 Welsh children and young people who are members of the *Urdd*, which has 10,000 volunteers who are active in 900 branches throughout Wales.



Sir O.M. Edwards and Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards memorial

## Weatherman Walking

## Bala

Continue through the village, passing interesting old buildings including a pub and church. Continue over a bridge and straight on for a distance of half a mile beyond the Edwards' memorial.

Towards the far end of the village, at the brown tourist sign for the Bala Lake Railway, turn left down a side street and along a terraced row of pretty stone houses.

This leads to Llanuwchllyn railway station, from where you can enjoy a pleasant lakeside trip on the train back to Bala – if, of course, you didn't opt to leave your car here and take the train to the start of your walk!



Hen Dy'r Ysgol – The Old School House and village water pump.



### Bala Lake Railway (SH 8804 3002)

The train runs along the trackbed of the old Ruabon to Barmouth line of the Great Western Railway, which closed in 1965. After a lot of work to adapt the track, the line re-opened as a narrow gauge railway in 1972.



Llanuwchllyn station