



# Iolo Morganwg Heritage Walk

Cowbridge, Aberthin, St Hilary and Llanblethian  
(6.5 miles / 10.5 km)

Plus shorter option omitting St Hilary  
and Llanblethian (4.5 miles / 7 km)



## WALKING IN THE VALE

Walking in the Vale of Glamorgan combines a fascinating 60 km stretch of the Wales Coast Path with the picturesque, historic beauty of inland Vale. Along its rugged coastline walkers can discover the last manned lighthouse in Wales (automated as recently as 1998), a college unlike any other at St. Donats and 16th century walled gardens at Dunraven Bay, plus the seaside bustle of Barry and Penarth.

Inland, walkers will find the historic market towns of Cowbridge and Llantwit Major, as well as idyllic villages such as St. Nicholas and St. Brides Major, where the story of the Vale is told through monuments such as Tinkinswood burial chamber and local characters like Iolo Morganwg, one of the architects of the Welsh nation. Our series of 5 coastal and 5 inland Vale Trails will help you get to the very heart of this fascinating area.



This diverse walk takes in the historic market town of Cowbridge, its surrounding fields and wooded paths. The places of interest are linked to Iolo Morganwg to give a taste of the many different aspects of his life and character.

Born Edward Williams, but better known by his bardic name, he was a stonemason by trade but also a romantic poet, political radical and humanitarian. The first to propose that Wales should have its own National Institutions, one of his many legacies are the Gorsedd Stones. Walk in the footsteps of the most colourful Vale character to learn more about this extraordinary figure.

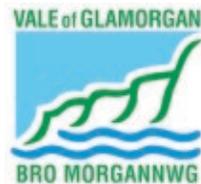
**TIP** More information on Iolo can be found in the Old Hall archway, near the standing stone.

### 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.

- 👉 Footpaths / Llwybrau
- 👉 Bridleway / Llwybr ceffyl
- 👉 Restricted Byway / Cilffordd gyfyngedig
- 👉 Byway / Cilffordd

Many thanks to Valeways and to Vale of Glamorgan Ramblers for their valuable contribution to Vale Trails and their continued support for these walks and leaflets.



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig: Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig  
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# THE ROUTE

 **690 kcal**  
Estimated calories:  
70kg walking at 3mph

 **820 kcal**  
Estimated calories:  
83kg walking at 3mph

 Family  
friendly

visitthevale.com



**Getting there** From Cardiff take the A48 west towards Cowbridge. Then take A4222 into Cowbridge and continue through the traffic lights into High Street. Turn right just before the town hall, on the right, to reach the main car park.

**Terrain** Reasonably gentle terrain, the route includes one fairly long moderate climb to reach Stalling Down and another up to The Clump. It includes stiles, kissing gates and stepping logs.

**Distance** 6.5 miles.

**Map** OS Explorer 151 Cardiff and Bridgend.

**Parking** Free car parking behind Cowbridge Town Hall.

**Public Transport** X2 bus, Cardiff to Bridgend.

For up to date travel information visit [www.traveline-cymru.info](http://www.traveline-cymru.info)

**Refreshments & Toilets** There are plenty of shops, cafes and pubs in the market town of Cowbridge and a number of refreshment stops along the route. Public toilets behind Cowbridge Town Hall.

## THE WALK *Grid ref: SS994747 Postcode: CF71 7AH* (6.5 miles)

*Start at the Old Hall Gardens, off High Street, Cowbridge.*

Start at the **Standing Stone** and take in the **Old Hall Gardens**, the **Physic Garden** and **Holy Cross Church (1-3)**. Walk along the main road to the **Town Hall (4)**, opposite **Costa Coffee**. Turn left into the car park behind the Town Hall. Head to the far right hand corner alongside the river. Cross the footbridge then take first left to pass under a viaduct. Continue along a wide gravel track to reach a kissing gate on the left. Go through the gate onto a boardwalk **(5)**.

*There is a possibility of livestock in some fields. Please keep dogs on a lead and follow the Countryside Code.*

The boardwalk continues as a path, a second boardwalk and finally a path that ends at a kissing gate. Enter the field, turn right and pass through the five bar gate at the far end. Cross the stile opposite the gate before crossing a bridge, then a short boardwalk. Continue in the same direction to go through a kissing gate, then cross another boardwalk, bridge and stepping logs.

Turn left to cross a stile at the end of the field, then turn right. Keep the hedge on the right until you reach a gap. Go through the gap and continue straight across the field, through a kissing gate into another field. Go through the second kissing gate in the far corner and continue with the hedge on the right, leading to a third gate to the village of Aberthin **(6)**.

Turn right on to the main road and cross over. Turn left where it bends right between the two village pubs on to Llanquian Road. A short distance along this road you will see a waymarked post on your right. Turn right and follow the path uphill **(7)** on to **Stalling Down**. Follow this footpath through bracken to reach the grassland at the top of the common and the standing stone. The path joins a wider track as it swings gradually right around the down in a horseshoe shape for approximately a mile. When you reach a clump of trees take the path to the left, passing through the trees and leading to a farm drive **(8)**. Turn right to reach a minor road. Continue left to reach the main road, the A48. Cross the road using the overpass on the right.

On the southern side take the slip road on the left, pass the restaurant and immediately turn right on a footpath that leads gently uphill to the top of the ridge, to **The Clump**. Once a viewing site for local hangings, today it is a scenic spot for excellent views of the Vale. (\*for a shorter walk turn right and take the old "road" to return to Cowbridge).

Follow the track straight down the hill **(9)** to a junction. Turn right to St. Hilary, passing the Church of St. Hilary **(10)**, then the **Bush Inn**. Follow the road down a tree-lined hill until you see the sign for New Beaupre Farm. Turn right at the 'No Public Access' sign **(11)** and follow the footpath through the wood. The path leads downhill to a stile leading to a field with stables on the left. Walk straight along the left of this field, to a gate and onto the flat drive **(12)**.

Turn right and walk along the drive to arrive at the Cowbridge – St Athan road. Cross and continue in the same general direction, crossing a stile to a track that leads to a sewage farm. Just before reaching the gate to the sewage farm turn right keeping the river on the left. Continue along the field before crossing the footbridge to continue over three stiles, keeping the river on the right to reach Llanblethian village.

Turn right, cross a river bridge and turn immediately left into Castle Hill and left again into Greenfield Way before turning right on to St. Quentin's Hill **(13)**. Take the footpath on the left through a kissing gate and walk a path that curves to the right through three fields with **St. Quentin's Castle (14)** just hidden from view on the right.



**TIP** Take a short detour up the hill to visit the massive twin-towered gatehouse of St. Quentin's Castle

After the third field, turn left at the road and walk downhill. The road bends to the right to eventually arrive at the **South Gate Arch (15)** of Cowbridge town. Go through it and continue straight ahead to the High Street. Turn left here to pass the Eagles Academy and the Bear Hotel to complete the walk.

## PLACES OF INTEREST

**Old Hall Gardens** The town walls in the heart of historic Cowbridge date from 1254. See information boards for more information.

**The Physic Garden** This garden is devoted to plants cultivated for medicinal use. Iolo relied on therapeutic herbs and medicines and became addicted to an opium drink derived from poppies. See his 'ode to Laudanum' verse on the left hand wall as you enter:

**Holy Cross Church** The memorial plaque in the chancel to the Walters may be Iolo's work.

**Costa Coffee** Iolo's shop, the first fair trade in Wales. He sold radical books and was watched by the secret police. Pop in to find out more and see the plaque and information board outside.

**Cowbridge Town Hall** The Hall is home to the Cowbridge Museum. Iolo drew striking designs for an extension to the hall.

**Stalling Down** The standing stone here celebrates Iolo's first meeting in 1795 of the Gorsedd of the Bards. Thanks to Iolo, the Gorsedd and its colourful ceremonies is integral to the National Eisteddfod – Wales' largest cultural festival.

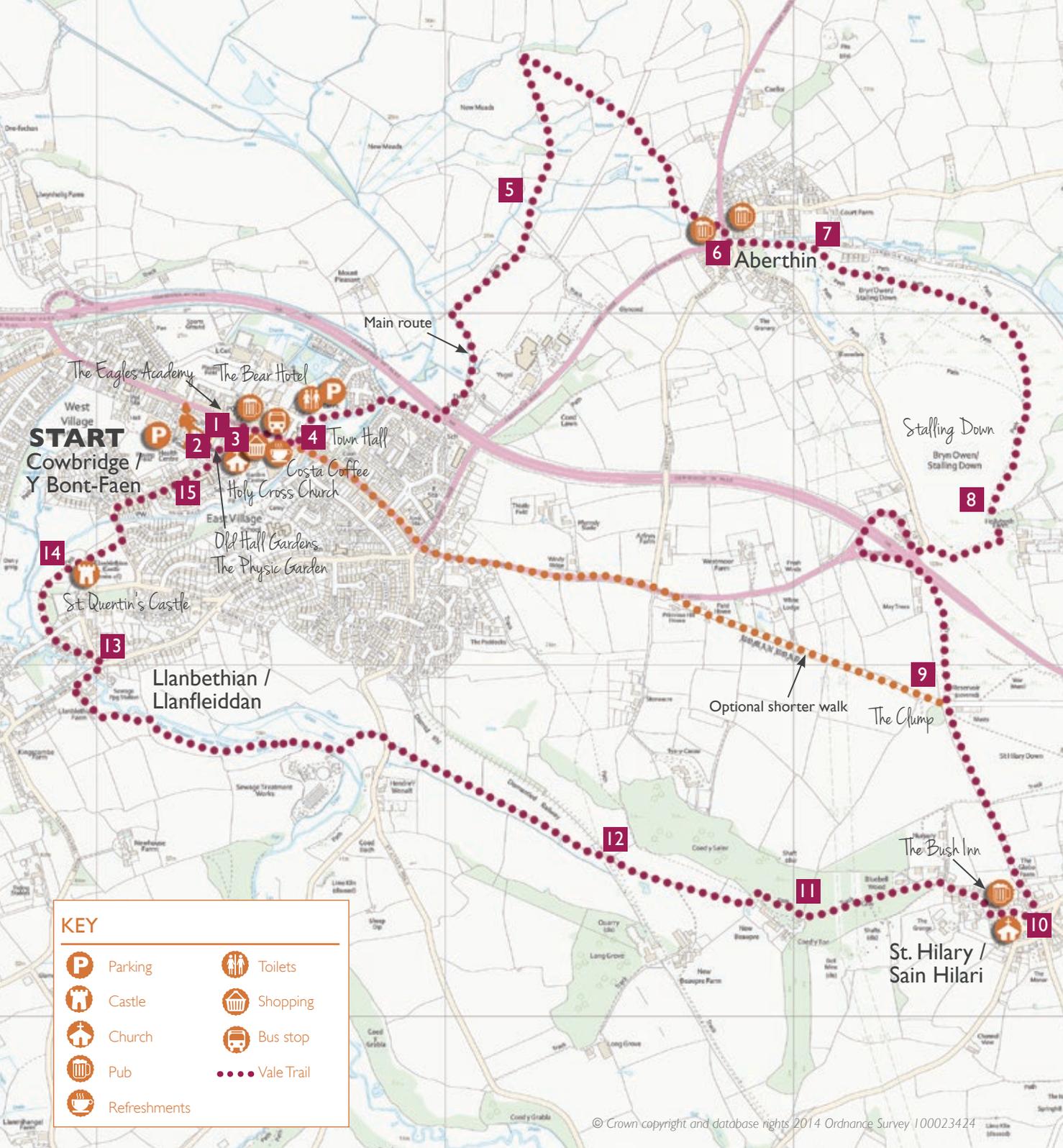
**The Clump** The viewing site for public hangings in Iolo's day.

**The Bush Inn** Iolo had a more profound knowledge of the Welsh bardic tradition than any of his contemporaries. A prolific poet, he was also a splendid literary forger.

**St. Quentin's Castle, Llanblethian** Use the audio guide in the Castle to discover its history.

**The Eagles Academy** Once a private school, Iolo's three children were educated here in the splendid upstairs assembly room.

**The Bear Hotel** This was Iolo's old meeting place and drinking hole before he renounced alcohol. He was the first collector of folk songs in Wales.



### KEY

- |  |              |  |            |
|--|--------------|--|------------|
|  | Parking      |  | Toilets    |
|  | Castle       |  | Shopping   |
|  | Church       |  | Bus stop   |
|  | Pub          |  | Vale Trail |
|  | Refreshments |  |            |



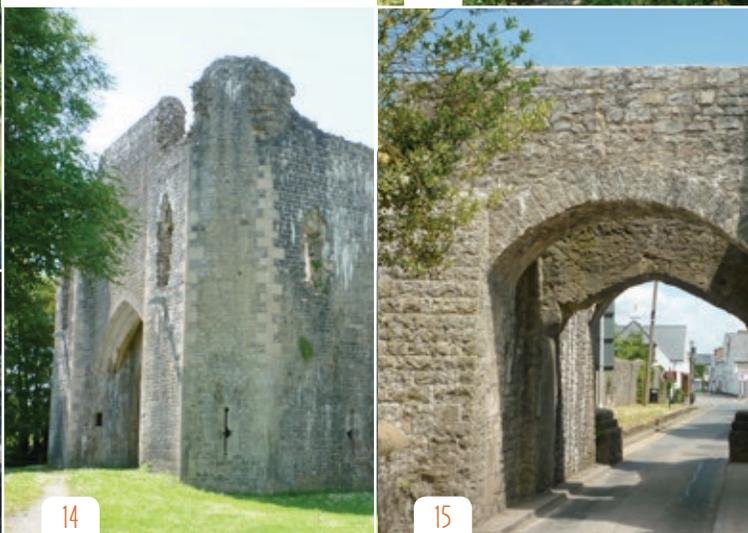
Inside the Physic Garden



Stile and field leading to Aberthin



The Bush Inn



VALE OF GLAMORGAN

### OTHER VALE TRAILS FOR YOU TO EXPLORE

#### COASTAL WALKS

- 1 Ogmore By Sea Walk  
St Brides Major
- 2 Coast and Lighthouse Walk  
Llantwit Major / Nash Point
- 3 Celtic Crosses & Coast Walk  
Llantwit Major
- 4 Park and Seaside Walk  
St Athan / Rhoose / Barry
- 5 Coast and Pier Walk  
Barry / Sully / Penarth

#### INLAND WALKS

- 6 Salmon Leaps Walk  
Dinas Powys
- 7 Haunted Field Walk  
St Nicholas
- 8 Magical Forest Walk  
Peterston-Super-Ely
- 9 Iolo Morganwg Heritage Walk  
Cowbridge
- 10 Ewenny & Spring Flowers Walk  
Llandow / Ewenny

### LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

[blueanchoraberthaw.com](http://blueanchoraberthaw.com) (The Blue Anchor Pub)

[valeways.org.uk](http://valeways.org.uk)

[coflein.gov.uk](http://coflein.gov.uk) (Cold Knap Roman Building)

[castlesuncovered.com/wales/barrycastle](http://castlesuncovered.com/wales/barrycastle)

[valeofglamorganramblers.co.uk](http://valeofglamorganramblers.co.uk)

[perfectpitchcamping.co.uk](http://perfectpitchcamping.co.uk)

For more information on Vale Trails, or for a full list of accommodation, attractions and activities nearby  
[visitthevale.com](http://visitthevale.com)