


## Bala Challenge - Route Description (Ver 18)

**Important:** if you need help or abandon the walk you must inform the organisers (see assistance phone nos below). Emergency: dial 999 or 112 ask for the Police if you require Mountain Rescue Service.

See also map provided and local information notes with references (IN-#). The route is marked in places by orange arrows  and orange tape. **Cut-off times** apply for the 14mile and 20mile routes (3.30 at Llanuwchllyn & 4.45 at the last-opt out, transport available for up to 30 mins. after these cut-off times).

**Dogs must be on a lead at all times. Please be courteous to landowners & farmers. Litter may be handed to marshals at road crossings and checkpoints. Observe all warning signs should forestry operations be encountered.**

ROUTE	LEG	DISTANCE		ASCENT		TIME	START	FINISH
		miles	km	ft	m	hours		
Bala Challenge	1,2,3	20	32	4,100	1,250	7½-10¼	Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre
Bala Lake Circuit	1,3	14	23	2,500	760	5-7	Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre
Bala Lake Scenic Walk	1	8	13	1,700	520	3-4¼	Leisure Centre	Llanuwchllyn

Penllyn Leisure Centre, Bala (SH 922355); Llanuwchllyn Railway Station (SH 880300)

**Assistance:** Start Desk 07888 722955 or 07971882154 or Leisure Centre 01678521222 (ask for Bala Challenge)

Map: OS Explorer OL23 (Cadair Idris & Llyn Tegid) best, OS Landranger 125 (Bala & Lake Vyrnwy) plus compass

**Abbreviations:** AH: ahead; TL: turn-left, TR: turn-right, BL: bear-left, BR: bear-right, RHS: right-hand side; LHS: left-hand side LS: ladder-stile ST: step-over stile; SP: signpost; GT: gate; KG: kissing gate; CG: cattle grid; WM: way-marking, thru: through; RoW: right-of-way; CB: compass bearing (magnetic), N, S, E, W: North, South, etc.

### Route:

**1. Leg 1 (8, 14 & 20 mile routes): Bala to Llanuwchllyn (Railway Station) on east side of Bala Lake (Llyn Tegid); dist: 8 miles (13 km), ascent: 1,700 ft (520 m)**

1.1. Leave Leisure Centre towards lake & TL along path which runs along the N end of lake (IN-1).

1.2. TR onto minor road keeping the lake on RHS. Join main road to Llangynog (B4391) (IN-2) (Classic view of the lake, Aran ridge & Cader Idris in distance). At junction with B4403 (to Llangower) continue on main road, noting the Railway Station for possible return transport (Bala Lake Scenic Walk only) (IN-3).

1.3. Pass Pen-y-Bont campsite, & immediately TR (WM) (SH 931349) down a lane.

1.4. After 90m @ SP, BL onto path rising thru trees (Ffridd Fach-ddeliog) (IN-4). Continue on path uphill thru wood, ignore forest-road (at hairpin-bend) and logging tracks, continue AH on path, muddy in places

1.5. Leave the wood using WM ST (SH 930343). Cross the corner of field to follow the fence on LHS (WM) uphill (IN-5) (IN-6). Views across the lake of the Arenig Mountains.

1.6. At the next fence-corner, TL, follow fence uphill, at the top corner TR for 10m to cross ST (WM). BR then AH across field to opposite corner & cross ST (WM). AH along fence on RHS and over ST.

1.7. BR onto rising path thru gorse, as ground levels BR following a grassy path. Cross open level-ish ground thru gorse clumps (S), go over the brow then descend toward the forest plantation with a green-painted house, coming into view on the left. The green house, a former chapel, is marked as Cefnddwyrraig on OS maps but has been renamed Encil-y-Coed. Note: loose chickens – control eager dogs.

1.8. Cross ST (WM) into plantation, then TR onto minor road (SH 930336) for ½-mile (450m). Ignore 1<sup>st</sup> track on left. At WM, BL to track, thru young trees, to T-junction. BL and at bend, TR to & over LS (WM).

1.9. Continue uphill with fence on RHS, ignore 1<sup>st</sup> ST. Before GT in cross-fence, TL uphill, after 100m TR to cross fence using ST.

1.10. Uphill directly on to old path (CB180), as ground levels BL (CB150) over grass-land then a rising path, to a rounded hill with outcrops of rock, keep to left of the rounded hill, to LS/ST at fence corner.

1.11. After LS, follow the path, which swings right, then left uphill over moorland. Continue on a rising path, BL with fence on the RHS, eventually to cross LS at fence corner. View of Bala & northern Arenigs.

1.12. AH across open moorland (CB130) over the brow (Craig-yr-Allor; Altar Rocks) with views to left of the Dee Valley (IN-7). Continue to ST (WM) at the forest corner (SH 928318).

*(Completed: 3.1 miles/5 km, ascent 1,115 ft/340m).*

1.13. Over ST, continue on path thru forest (IN-8). At WM post/junction continue AH.

1.14. At next WM post/junction **TR (important!)**. Follow the “path” downhill for ½mile (¾km) eventually to junction with bridleway (1.15). Firstly thru trees downhill, eventually the path rises slightly and is more open, continue downhill (WM) with old wall on left to bridleway.

- 1.15. TL onto bridleway, thru gap in the old-wall (old gate post with WM, blue on yellow) & follow track thru trees, at next WM post (blue on yellow) BR, over stream to pass a ruin (Hafotty-bach; SH 924311).
- 1.16. Join forestry road downhill. At the forestry road junction (SH 926308) TR (ignore forestry road on right) downhill on to a track which becomes a minor road & follow the Afon Glyn downstream NW (IN-9) for nearly 2 km along the track/minor road thru 2 road gates.
- 1.17. At road junction AH after 60m BL & cross footbridge (SH 910317) with a ford (Irish Crossing) on the downstream side (Afon Glyn). After footbridge TR, ignore track on left, go around gravel heap to follow lane uphill (SP) with trees on both sides to & thru narrow GT.  
*(For emergencies the escape route is to continue down the minor road to Llangower (public telephone)).*
- 1.18. Now following blue signs (SNPA Leisure Network). Continue thru 4 field GTs to farm (Ty-cerrig).
- 1.19. Pass to left of farm (IN-10) (SH 906318) thru a narrow-GT & uphill, pass fallen SP to & thru narrow gate on skyline.
- 1.20. AH across field on level path by remains of an old hedge (only one tree remaining) (IN-11) to WM. Cross stream, in ravine, TL & follow stream uphill thru GT & pass to left of house (Bryncocyn) (IN-12)
- 1.21. At SP TR to pass between house and outbuildings through 2 GTs onto vehicle track along field with fence/hedge on RHS. Ahead to GT & after TR on vehicle track downhill with trees on left.
- 1.22. At junction, thru GT, continue AH on track over CG for ½mile (0.8km) thru Pantymarch farm (SH 899305). Tents/huts are accommodation for farm experience holidays.
- 1.23. Leave farm thru 2 GTs, continue on the vehicle track, thru a ford, BR & after 60m TL, thru GT into field, then follow the track along hedge on RHS, TL at field corner (SP) AH, thru GT along track (**beware 3 drainage channels with incomplete grids**) to house (Ffridd-gymen) (IN-13) (SH 898302).
- 1.24. Pass the house & immediately TR (SP/WM) (before field GT) into garden. Follow the fence, on LHS, thru garden, thru GT (behind shed) then AH to GT (WM). Keep to fence on LHS, AH to narrow GT. AH thru field to GT & pass to right of 2 buildings (Ty'n-y-rhos) using narrow GT.
- 1.25. Continue on vehicle track to ST/field GT (close GT behind you) and downhill, pass to left of new barns to Llechweddystrad Farm (SH 891304) (IN-14).
- 1.26. Just before farm BL (WM), keep left of kennels/farm buildings to a large tree, then thru narrow GT then TR thru narrow GT & cross field downhill onto farm track, BL at SP towards the distant Railway Stn.
- 1.27. Thru field GT. As the farm track swings right, BL down the field to narrow GT, then down to GT onto road (B4403). End of blue SNPA leisure Network signs.
- 1.28. TL towards Llanuwchllyn on road (IN-15). **Beware of vehicle traffic, use the grass verge.**
- 1.29. Continue past entry to Werddon Fach/Tyddyn Goronwy, past old field barn (rusty roof). After 400-m TR thru narrow GT (WM), and past stream on RHS, BL to enter reeds, downhill to GT & bridge. After checking for trains, cross the railway line & TL for the station (**DO NOT WALK ON THE TRACK**). The Railway Station (SH 880300) Llanuwchllyn is the **Finish [ALPHA]** for the 8 mile **Bala Lake Scenic Walk** and **Check-point [BRAVO 14mile, CHARLIE 20mile]** (IN-16). **All participants please check-in** and advise whether "finishing or continuing". If finishing collect your certificate here.  
*(Completed Leg 1: 8 miles/13 km, ascent 1,700 ft/520m)*

Congratulations on completing the **Bala Lake Scenic Walk!** Return transport to Bala is available by train (discounted price £3) or provided by the organisers between trains in bad weather. **Train times: 11, 12.45, 2.20 & 3.55.**

**To Continue: For 20 miles route go to Leg 2 (below)**

**For 14 miles route go to Leg 3 (below)**

**Refreshments:** Bala Lake Railway Station café (Llanuwchllyn) Tel 01678 540 666

Eagles Inn (Llanuwchllyn) Tel: 01678 540 278 requires detour of 1 km (see below)

**Directions from Bala Lake Railway to the Eagles Inn:** Leave the railway station on Station access road, go over the Afon Twrch, at main road TR. After 700m you will see the Eagles Inn on the right.

**Directions from the Eagles Inn to continue the Circuit** TL onto the main road & retrace your steps towards the Railway Station for 300m. After crossing the Afon Dyfrdwy (River Dee) pass the public toilets and immediately TL towards house (Clydfan). Pass to the right of the house & immediately TL to go over ST into field behind house. Cross the field to & thru stone gate-posts (only 1 remains), AH to & thru 2 narrow GTs (with field GTs adjacent). After the 2<sup>nd</sup> GT, AH to the road, keeping hedge on LHS, then TL onto the access road to Dol-fach farm and continue the Bala Circuit/Challenge using the directions below (Leg 3).

### To continue the Bala Challenge, 20 miles

#### 2. Leg 2 (20 mile route only): Llanuwchllyn (Railway Station) to Moel Ffenigl & return, dist: 6.1 miles (9.8 km), ascent: 1,570 ft (480 m) no feeding station until back at the Railway Station

- 2.1. Leave the railway station, by the access road, over the Afon Twrch (IN-17) to main road, cross road & TL, use the pavement, pass the car park on opposite side (Mary Jones Walk info board).
- 2.2. At bridge (IN-25) TR, via GT (Crib yr Aran/Aran Ridge Path), onto tarmac minor road, pass building (IN-26), over CG, ignore LS (0.7 km from GT) with sign (Aran Ridge Path) - this is the **return route**.
- 2.3. Continue on minor road past Nant-y-Garth, thru GT just before Garth Ucha (IN-27) (SH 877286), continue on vehicle track for 1km, via GT/ST at derelict barn, to reach Plas Morgan (corrugated barn).
- 2.4. Pass to right of Plas Morgan (SH 880279) (IN-28) then immediately TR thru GT into field.
- 2.5. Bear right to cross field diagonally (CB290) pass to left of a solitary tree, to WM post in dip, then AH to WM post in remains of a hedge.
- 2.6. Over ST, AH to follow ditch (CB290), passing several scrubby trees, after 120m & ditch turns sharp-left continue slightly left & uphill (CB260) to WM post by old wall/hedge, then continue to fence.
- 2.7. Cross fence at ST (enter small wood), AH, then over a broken wall to exit the wood at WM post (Open Access), AH to 2<sup>nd</sup> WM post (go to 2.8). At this point the route leaves the WM path (RoW) to cross open moorland directly to Aran ridge path, just before fence 220m distant.
- 2.8. At 2<sup>nd</sup> WM post BL (CB240), uphill, on a poor path to climb over moorland, passing below an outcrop, maintain height towards distant cross-fence (W).
- 2.9. At fence (around SH 874279), TL onto the Aran ridge path S. (note the return route is directly downhill on Aran ridge path). Follow path uphill keep fence on RHS (at variable distances).
- 2.10. After 0.5 km cross LS, pass Moel Ddu (IN-29) (447m; SH 873272) on left and continue uphill.
- 2.11. After 1 km cross 2<sup>nd</sup> LS (SH 872 263), after 200m just before 3<sup>rd</sup> LS at dog-leg in fence (SH 872 261) TL to summit of Moel Ffenigl (IN-30) (603m; SH 872 260) - views of Cadair Idris, Snowdon & Tryfan
- Checkpoint (completed (of Leg 2): 3.3 miles/5.3 km, ascent 1,500 ft/454m; 1 hr 40 min, 2 hr 05 min)**
- 2.12. Return to the Railway Station (aim for lake, N), initially reversing the ascent route then directly following the Aran ridge path. At wall beware broken LS, detour over fence on LHS and return after wall. At 2<sup>nd</sup> wall BR thru GT. Path leaves fence on LHS to WM. Pass to LHS of small hill to & over LS. AH to & over 2<sup>nd</sup> LS. At 3<sup>rd</sup> (broken) LS use and close GT. AH to minor road at SH 878291 (used for ascent route)
- 2.13. After LS TL on minor road, downhill, after 100m pass underground bunker with satellite dish & BL follow wall/fence on LHS downhill, over double stile, keep wall on LHS downhill.
- 2.14. At fence/hedge, over ST, AH to next field corner.
- 2.15. At field corner (SP) **TR before LS**, keep former railway line on LHS to field corner.
- 2.16. TL thru KG, immediately TR to road, TL, after 40m TR signposted to Railway Station which is a **Checkpoint (important please check in)** - then follow the **Bala Lake Circuit** route (Leg 3) below  
(completed (Leg 2): 6 miles/9.8 km, ascent 1,580 ft/480m)  
(completed (Legs 1+2): 14.4 miles/23 km, ascent 3,300 ft/1,000m)

### To continue the Bala Lake Circuit (14 miles) & Bala Challenge (20 miles) after Leg 2 (Moel Ffenigl) Cut-off time: 3.30pm (last train 3.55 pm, other transport available until 4pm)

#### 3. Leg 3 (20 & 14 miles routes) Railway Stn to Bala dist: 6 miles (10 km), ascent: 790 ft (240 m)

- 3.1. Leave the railway station by the access road, over the Afon Twrch (IN-17) & TR along lane, after 150m BL to continue along the lane. Follow the lane to Dol-fach farm (SH 878 308) (IN-18).
- 3.2. Then follow the WM route passing to right of farm, thru GTs & over walkway - don't fall-in!
- 3.3. AH over fields (N), initially following the field boundary on RHS to double GT & AH to cross footbridge over the Afon Dyfrdwy (River Dee). AH to the main Dolgellau-Bala road (A494), AH to cross the road & go thru GT into field (**take care as this is a busy road**) (SH 878312).
- 3.4. After GT AH for 20m, BR thru hedge, then uphill diagonally across field & thru GT, TL onto the farm access road. (Note that this route is not a right-of-way and is by permission of Caergai Farm for the Bala Challenge, otherwise use road (A494) then farm access track). Continue to Caergai Farm (IN-19).
- 3.5. Keep right of farm & outbuildings, following a stone wall on RHS, thru GT & onto a vehicle track, still with wall on RHS, then more open.

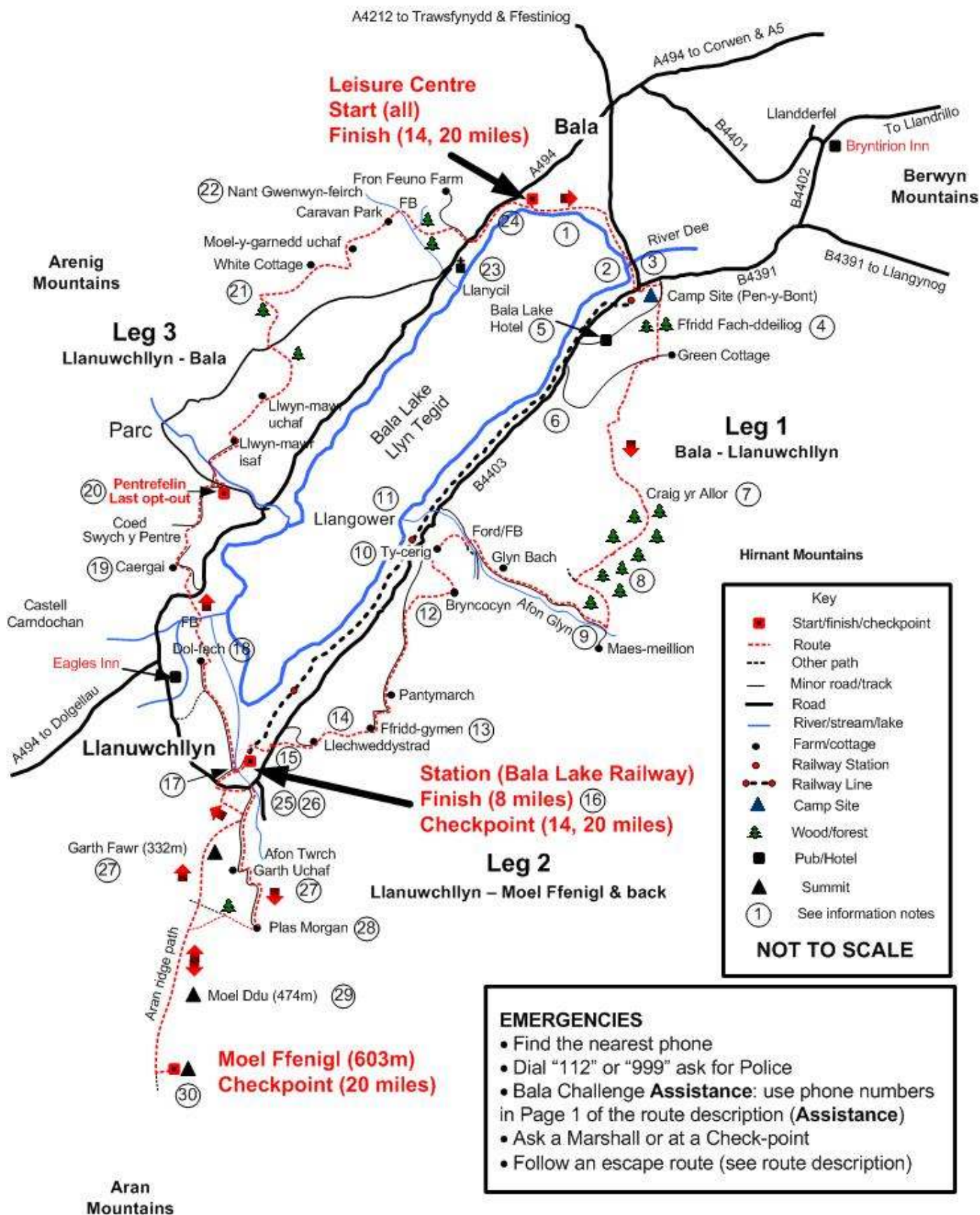
- 3.6. After approx. 200m from the farm, at SP, follow track thru GT (wet!), then leave the track to BR (CB000) across the field to cross ditch, where it has been filled in by stones, then BR (CB050) slightly uphill to the field corner (WM SP) at right-end of gorse bushes. Now following the blue signs again.
- 3.7. At field corner (SP) (SH 880320), thru metal GT into plantation which has been felled (Coed Swch y Pentre) then follow path over narrow bridge & along the right-hand boundary thru plantation (WM), leave by joining a vehicle track to R, then AH thru GT at 100m.
- 3.8. Pass livestock pens, go over a concrete bridge then BR (SP Leisure Network) on track downhill, to house on road. At house (**Pentre felin** SH 885328) TL on to the road (IN-20) & continue for 70m to GT.
- 3.9. TR thru GT on to the access road to Llwyn Mawr Isaf farm.
- Check-point & last opt-out (completed (Leg 3): 2.25 miles/3.6 km, ascent 215 ft/65m; 50 min, 1 hr)**  
**Cut-off time: 4.45pm (transport available until 5.15pm)**
- 3.10. Continue on access road to farm (Llwyn Mawr Isaf), pass farm & TL after barn TR at WM go thru GT to climb up a steep hill keeping the old hedge on RHS ("the hill of death").
- 3.11. At the top of field thru GT and BL (CB055) to the first electricity pole on the brow. Then aim for large tree (CB080). At the tree, thru GT onto a grassy vehicle-track following hedge/fence on LHS, to Llwyn-mawr-uchaf farm (SH 891338).
- 3.12. Pass to right of farm thru GT, AH with fence on LHS to corner (20m), then L along farmyard boundary to small GT (blue sign). Then AH aiming for GT between a large tree & a row of trees, then AH across field keeping left of fence to another GT in corner with trees to the right.
- 3.13. BL to cross field diagonally, uphill, initially to left of copse (CB000) then follow the fence uphill to the top right corner.
- 3.14. At the field corner, thru 2 GTs & cross the minor road (SH 893344) to SP. (Note that this route across the field is not a right-of-way and is by permission of Frondro Farm for the Bala Challenge) *(In an emergency, the escape route from this point is to turn right down the minor road to Llanycil then left onto the A494 to Bala, direct to the Leisure Centre)*
- 3.15. Go through KG, then AH keeping the fence & conifer plantation on LHS. Just before the cross-fence, TL to go between the conifer plantation & the cross-fence.
- 3.16. Thru GT & narrow-bridge (open access), at SP, TR, (E) (IN-21).
- 3.17. Follow a not very clear path over moorland, initially approx. parallel to fence on RHS (approx. NE) then diagonally to SP (Blue 3), then (CB066) to a clump of trees & white cottage (Ty'n-y-rhos SH 899350).
- 3.18. Just before white cottage pass thru GT, continue past cottage (ignoring track to R) keeping fence on LHS to go thru another GT in fence ahead (R).
- 3.19. Aim for shed at left of farm, with adjacent copse, thru GT to pass to left of farm (Moel Garnedd uchaf)
- 3.20. Then uphill & thru GT next to electricity pole. Over plank bridge, TR to & thru GT. Cross field to ramp with handrail, thru GT, AH over brow to aim for house in the Caravan Park, pass 2 electricity poles.
- 3.21. Into Caravan Park (Plas Moel Garnedd) thru GT (SP), TL on road, AH at cross-roads (SH 907353) to pass the Information & Games Room, go down a short lane between cottages, thru GT, cross the field to a narrow-GT (SP), AH downhill, BL before the stream to a narrow-GT, then cross the stream by a footbridge (Blue 2) (SH 908355), TR (downhill) with stream on RHS, continue AH downhill to the wood.
- 3.22. Cross a smaller stream and thru GT (SH 909353) to enter wood, AH on WM path through wood (Nurse College), with bluebells in the spring with the main stream (Aber Gwenwyn-feirch) on the RHS - this is the so called "poisoned stream" (IN-22).
- 3.23. Leave the woods and thru GT, at fence corner, AH downhill (WM) and onto the access road (SP) (SH 912351) which serves Fron Feuno Farm (IN-23).
- 3.24. At the bottom of the access road, cross the **busy road** (A494) & TL along road to Bala.
- 3.25. After  $\frac{3}{4}$  km reach the Loch Café (IN-24) to arrive at the Leisure Centre which is on the right.

Congratulations on completing the Bala Circuit/Challenge route. You may collect your certificate here.

*(Completed (Leg 3): 6 miles/10 km, ascent 790 ft/240m; 2 hrs, 3 hrs) for total distances, etc. see Table on Page 1*

# Bala Challenge Route Overview Map

To be used with Map: OS OL23 & route description



## THE BALA CHALLENGE CHARITY WALK - Information Notes

On the walk you will find names of farms/cottages, villages, mountains, etc in the original Welsh. The earliest written forms were on record in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and were certainly part of the spoken language for centuries before then. It is of interest that many of the older mountain or place names are associated with ancient legends or historical events: e.g. Llechwedd Ystrad = The hillside of the (Roman) Road – Ystrad derives from the Latin “strata” so we can fairly accurately date that place name to the 3rd Century.

The following vocabulary gives the English equivalent.

llyn: lake; afon: river; nant: stream; rhyd: ford; bala: lake-outlet; pont/bont: bridge; pant: hollow; coed: wood; bedw/fedw: birch; ffridd: hillside rough pasture; garth: enclosure; moel/foel: bare hill; bryn (bryniau pl.): hill; allt: hillside (usually wooded); cwm: long narrow valley; glyn: steep-sided deep valley; bwlch: pass; mawr/fawr: big; bach/fach: small; isa/isaf: lower/est; canol: middle; ucha/uchaf: higher/highest; pen: head/top or end; rhos: moor; gwaun/waen: heath; carn/garn: cairn; llan: church or parish; capel: chapel; tŷ: house; plas: mansion; caer: camp or fortress; pandy: a fulling mill; Aran: high place; Arenig: smaller form of Aran; Ffenigl: fennel (plant)

Notes on some points of interest en-route – Numbers correspond to those on the map: ①

1. Llyn Tegid (Bala Lake), the largest natural lake in Wales, approx. 3½ miles long and 150ft deep, lies on the Bala – Tallyllyn geological fault-line. The basin was probably created by glacial erosion during the Ice Age. Glacial debris were extensively deposited two miles lower down the valley where the ice melted. The whole area is rich in glacial features. The *Gwyniad*, a survivor of the Ice-Age, is a species of fish, similar in features to a herring, is unique to the lake.

Local legend relates that the lake was formed as punishment for the misdemeanours of Tegid Foel (Tegid the Bald) - a local prince. His mansion, with all its occupants, were reputedly drowned one night during a drunken orgy, after guards neglected replacing the cover on a magic well which would otherwise overflow at night. Only one survived – an itinerant harpist who was led out of danger by a small bird calling repeatedly, “*Vengeance has come...*”. When he awoke on the hillside in the morning he saw a huge lake filling the valley with his harp floating on its surface! More recent tales exist about a monster lurking in the dark depths of the lake. Could it be the ghost of Tegid Foel? Some testify to actually seeing it after consuming a couple of pints!

2. Pont Mwnwgl y Llyn: (The Bridge at the Neck of the Lake). This is the exit point of the river Dee. The name Bala means “the outlet point of a lake. The Welsh for Dee is Dyfrdwy (Holy Waters). The river was named in pre-Roman times when Celtic tribes worshipped lakes and rivers. The 1954 Dee Regulation Scheme involved constructing a deeper channel and new bridge. The lake level was substantially lowered to accommodate floodwaters and the old multi-arched bridge now stands high and dry.

3. Pen-y-bont (Bridge-head): The mound nearby is the remnant of a 13<sup>th</sup> century motte and bailey castle – probably constructed to guard the river crossing. It is known locally as Tomen Ronw (Gronw’s Mound). Gronw Befr was Prince of Penllyn and features as the seducer of Blodeuwedd (the maiden made from flowers) in “The Mabinogion” fables - part of the oldest surviving written Welsh literature. Adjacent is the Bala terminus of the lakeside narrow-gauge railway. Originally this was the site of the official Bala Station on the newly constructed Ruabon – Barmouth railway 1868, one of the most scenic routes in Britain, closed by the “Beeching axe” in 1964. Penybont Station was lowered in status to a Halt when the Bala-Blaenau Ffestiniog branch line opened and a new Bala Station and marshalling yards were constructed in 1880. A narrow-gauge railway was built on the old track between 1958 and 1964.

4. Ffridd Fach-ddeiliog: (*Ffridd* = enclosed hillside rough-pasture land; *fach* = a land-holding; *ddeiliog* = leafy or wooded)

5. Bala Lake Hotel: The original name “Fach-ddeiliog” is still retained. The mansion was originally built circa 1810 as a summer retreat by Richard Colt Hoare, gentleman, antiquarian and artist but is now owned by the John Lewis Partnership for use by their staff.

6. The route now gives you panoramic views of the lake and land to the North and West. Bryn (Hill) or Bryniau (*pl.*) features in several place-names also Coed (Trees or Woods). Bryniau Golau (The Lit-up Hills) derived from the fires of lime-kilns lighting up the area at night. The Bala geological lime-seam was particularly rich at this site. It composed mainly of a deposit of sea-shells laid down in sufficient quantity to be mined and reduced to lime for mortar making. The lime would then be transported over the hills in donkey panniers. The remains of several lime-kilns are still visible over the ridge to the East.

7. Craig yr Allor (Altar Rock): The path enters Forestry Commission land. The plantation is typical of the hundreds of acres planted during the 1950s – 60s when afforestation commenced on a commercial scale. These trees are mature and are on the point of being harvested for paper pulp, chipboard, fencing timber, etc.
8. Before afforestation this was open farmland. Wales lost many upland farms to the forest after the 1950s. Hill-farming was practically subsistence farming with most farms being self-sufficient. It depended entirely on hand labour and was devoid of today's services, luxuries and labour-saving devices. Modern machinery could not operate efficiently in such terrain. The family units became too small to be economical - many were amalgamated with larger units and the poorer land sold on to the Forestry Commission. Some of the original farmsteads survive, mostly bought and restored as holiday retreats. This area suffered severe depopulation after the Second World War. The name Hafotty (hafod + tŷ = summer homestead) reminds us of the ancient Welsh farming custom of "Hendre and Hafod" Hendre referred to the main homestead down near the valley floor – the winter base – whilst Hafod referred to the upland summer pastures where the animals would spend the summer with their minders. Other important summer tasks would be the cutting and drying of peat for winter fuel and making rushlights.
9. Glyn = steep-sided mountain valley. Again the word appears in several place names. The oak woodland on the NE. side used to be "common" to the landowners and tenants of Llangower parish. They had the right to enter and cut wood for farming needs.
10. Tŷ Cerrig (Stone-house) the existence of several other similarly named properties in Wales suggest they were originally built at a time when dressed stone replaced the old timber, wattle and daub method.
11. Below to the N. is the small hamlet of Llangower (The Church of St. Cywair). St. Cywair was probably a lady-saint. The site has served as a religious centre for the parish for over twelve hundred years. Sadly the church was closed on economic grounds in 2003 with only three regular worshippers attending.
12. Bryncocyn (hill of the stook - *harvested hay or corn*) which has good views. Below is Cae Glas: (Green Field) - Glas in modern Welsh is the colour blue but in old Welsh was also used for green. Nearer the lake is Ffynnon-gywer (St. Cywair's Well). Unfortunately the old well was destroyed by a road-widening project; the authorities at the time not realizing its historical significance.
13. Ffridd-gymen: (Cymen = neat, tidy or compact) – The 19<sup>th</sup>C farmhouse remains practically unchanged and is typical of the many smallholding cottages existing on the upper edge of cultivated land bordering the open mountain. Such places, in living memory, were home to large families with up to eight or ten children!
14. Near to the route is Rhyd-fudur. (Rhyd = ford and fudur = dirty or muddy) This section could well be part of the old Roman Road connecting Caersws in Mid-Wales with the fort at Caer-gai which you may see to the NW. directly across the valley. One important clue exists in the name Llechwedd-ystrad - (Llechwedd = steep hillside and ystrad derives from the Latin 'strata' = road, hence 'The steep hillside of the [Roman] Road.')
15. The path now re-joins the B4403 Bala-Llanuwchllyn road but only for a short distance. Felindre nearby suggests the site of mill and house. A mill would be an essential rural establishment up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.
16. This was the site of the old Llanuwchllyn GWR station sidings. The old station has been preserved and restored as the main terminus of the lakeside railway "Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid".
17. The bridge takes you over Afon Twrch. Twrch suggests a turbulent or excavating river and can certainly seem so during floods. As you turn first right into the narrow lane note a fine stone-built house named Glynllifon. This was the home of Richard Edwards a pioneer of hydro-electricity. In 1910 he prepared a scheme to light up the streets of Llanuwchllyn village by electricity. The initial source of power was the water wheel of the defunct tannery on this very site. He improved the supply in 1920 with a "Pelton Wheel" hydro power house half a mile upstream. The unit is still operating today and privately supplying the house of Glynllifon. (MANWEB and the grid system took over the area in the early 1960s.) Richard Edwards and his son built hundreds of small hydro-electric units to supply individual farmsteads all over North and Mid-Wales. A few metres further – on your left is a large house called Neuadd Wen (Whitehall) built in 1907 by Sir Owen M. Edwards, born 1858 a local tenant farmer's son. He progressed academically to become professor of history at Lincoln College Oxford before being appointed Chief H.M.I. of Schools for Wales. He was a prolific author of books, magazines and children's literature. Whilst at school he suffered the indignity of being regularly caned for speaking his native Welsh and, when he reached a position of authority, he worked relentlessly to banish such practices and to promote the use of Welsh throughout the educational system. He is still regarded as the most progressive Welshman of his time. In the car park, across the road, is an information board for the Mary Jones Walk - see also 23 below.

18. The farm lane now crosses the valley floor towards Dôl Fach (Small Meadow) and the upper Dee. To the west is the prominent crag of Carndochan and the ruins of a 12<sup>th</sup> century castle built by Prince Llywelyn the Great. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century gold deposits were discovered and a gold mine was worked for several years – Browns of Chester were owners for a time.

19. The old Roman Fort of Caergai (The Fort of Cai) The south-eastern wall of the old fort is still visible and the existing farmhouse was built in the north corner. Over the years several Roman artefacts have been excavated on the site and adjoining land. In its heyday it was occupied by the Roman XII Legion Nervii which had its main base at Chester (Deva) on the Dee estuary. Caergai was on a crossroad. The principal road from Penyffordd (Road's end) near Chester entered from the east and continued SW towards Brithdir, Dolgellau. The other road connected Caergai with Caersws in Mid-Wales and Tomen-y-Mur, near Trawsfynydd. Caergai has been a mansion for local gentry for centuries including Rowland Vaughan, an ardent Royalist during the Civil War. His house was burnt to the ground by Cromwell's Army and his lands temporarily confiscated. To the east of Caergai is the hamlet known as Y Lôn (The Street). It lies on the path of the old Roman Road from Chester. When the row of houses was built as part of a 1951 Festival of Britain Project Roman graves were discovered. One urn contained the cremated remains of a soldier. A Celtic arrow-head was embedded in one of the bones- a clue suggesting a fierce skirmish with the local tribe. Fear not - visitors are quite welcome here today!

20. Pentrefelin (Mill-hamlet): The old mill foundations and leat are barely visible near the bridge crossing Afon Llafar (Speaking waters) towards Llwyn Mawr Isaf and Llwyn Mawr Uchaf (Lower and Upper Grove of Trees)

21. Gwastadros (Flat, broad heathland); Ty'n-y-rhos (House on the heath); Moel y Garnedd (Hill of the Cairn).

22. The mountain stream, Nant Gwenwyn-feirch, is known locally as the "Poisoned Stream". Apparently after the battle of Naseby (1645), Oliver Cromwell instigated a hunt for Royalists - Rowland Vaughan, an ardent royalist, lived at Caer Gai, (See 19 above). Cromwell's men came camped by the stream near Llanycil Church on their way to Caer Gai. Local women threw Yew Tree leaves into the water upstream and the soldiers' horses were poisoned the delay giving Rowland Vaughan time to escape.

After Nurse College wood near Fron Feuno Farm the path is mostly downhill to the A494 main road near Llanycil (The Secluded Church). When founded by St. Beuno in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century it was most certainly a sheltered peaceful location on the lakeshore. Like St Cywair's across the lake this spot has been a constant place of Christian worship up to the end of 2003 when the doors were finally closed due to modern day maintenance costs, rules and bureaucracy. Llanycil Church is now owned by the Bible Society and is a heritage centre – Mary Jones World. Mary Jones walked bare-foot from Llanfihangel-y-Pennant to Bala, in 1800, to buy a bible – a return journey of over 52 miles. Thomas Charles had none left but gave her his own bible. This led to the formation of the Bible Society in 1804 to address the problem of a lack of affordable bibles in Welsh for Welsh-speaking Christians.

23. The walk ends at its starting point near the Loch Café. The small wooden cafe was erected by William Meredith one of the first and best-known local photographers. Examples of his portraits may be found at many of the long-standing local family homes.

#### **Notes for section: Llanuwchllyn to Moel Ffenigl**

24. Pont y Pandy: Bridge at "pandy"; pandy = a fulling mill for manufacturing woollen blankets. The southern part of the village of Llanuwchllyn is named Pandy after the old woollen mill the site was at Glandwr off the lane leading to the railway station. The old mill situated near the bridge was a corn mill.

25. 1920 Hydro Electric Power House: Built by the local engineer and millwright Richard Edwards to utilise water power to improve his 1910 pioneering scheme to provide electricity for the village of Llanuwchllyn – see 17 above.

26. Garth Fawr/Fach/Uchaf/Isaf: Garth is a hilly outcrop or promontory from Gaelic "gart" = head with the adjectives mawr and bach = larger and lesser. Subsequently the two adjacent farmsteads (upper and lower) are named accordingly

27. Plas Morgan: Morgan's Mansion. Four centuries ago the home farm of one of several small estates in the locality.

28. Moel Ddu: The black hill. Moel often refers to a grassed or bare hill free of trees

29. Moel Ffenigl: Hill of the Fennel: Ffenigl: Herbal. Welsh for the plant species fennel. The dried leaves were used to flavour fish-sauce!

*(Notes prepared by Penri Jones and Ray Hind)*