

## THE CAMBRIAN WALK

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There is a moral to this story—never trust Editors of magazines who creep up at P.Y.G. Dinner Meets, pour the contents of their gin and orange glass into your pint of best bitter and then leer with the suggestion that one spends the next week preparing an article describing a walk from South Wales to North Wales across the main ridges.

Such a walk was undertaken last year for the first time by Wynford Vaughan Thomas for a Daily T/V feature "Across the Roof of Wales." Somewhat naïvely I followed this route, W.V.T. having written to everyone *en route* paving the way for me. I started at Port Talbot and ended somewhat ingloriously at Glan Dena nine days later, having counted every one of the 138 miles.

The route was basically simple ; at Port Talbot turn one's back on the Bristol Channel and walk Northwards over the highest and wettest hill one could see. The complications arise when weather is taken into account. During the nine days it stopped raining for one afternoon only. Most of the hill routes were in dense mist, involving countless hours of compass work. This did at least keep me from talking to myself.

The B.B.C. P.R.O. was also very helpful but this had unfortunate results. I was descending to spend the night at the pub of a village in mid-Wales and was met by a rather agitated-looking inhabitant. "Good evening, I am Evan Evans. I am 75 years of age and have all my own teeth. My Great Great Grandfather was Church Warden. My trade is one of the oldest crafts in this Country, in fact there are only three surviving Reed Joggle Thwarters in the whole of Wales." There was a lull whilst he re-examined a sheet of notes and took a deep breath—but I escaped in time to the haven of the bar before he asked me to play a record for his entire lineage. Here I met an overflowing populace all eager to tell me about their local history, inventions and above all, their role in the complicated structure of rural craft society. By then it had dawned upon me that a ghastly misunderstanding had arisen ; they thought I was literally following W.V.T.'s footsteps, complete with microphone, recording units and, I suspect, free beer.

After this I varied the route somewhat. In particular I wished to travel through the "Desert of Wales"—a vast area between Lampeter, Llandovery, Builth Wells and Devil's Bridge. I was informed that I would see the very rare Kite in the Tywy Valley. There are apparently only twelve pairs in existence. I was rewarded by the sight of an obscure looking bird peering down at me from a

crag, blinking dejectedly through the rain-sodden mist. He seemed to carry his exclusiveness heavily. I dare not describe this creature in detail in case I set off a stream of objections from M.A.M. Ornithologists, all pointing out that I am confusing this with the Common Mealy-Mouthed Mollymawk. In fact I've kept quiet about birds in Glan Dena ever since I told the assembly I had seen Penguins in Mallaig Harbour (afterwards known as Guillemots). I was later invited to watch Killer-Whales in Llyn Ogwen.

The walk across the Desert was somewhat protracted in view of the terrain—an endless capillary of swollen streams and lakes surrounded in the North by a two thousand feet range of hills at the foot of Plynlimon. I had thirty-five miles to cover. At nightfall it was still pouring and I was soaked to the skin ; when I nearly walked into the same lake twice within half an hour, I gave up hope of reaching Eisteddfa Gurig that night. I spent the night in various degrees of uncomfotableness, standing on a clump of heather and listening to tons of water pour across the basin towards the Claerwen Dam. I was in fact in the Main Catchment Area and at the blackest hour had thoughts of emerging from a tap in Kingstanding. One of the biggest disillusionments about being benighted is the cheery anticipation of the Dawn—when the rain will suddenly cease as the first bar of golden light and warmth suddenly breaks through the gloom—the river will become peaceful and a curlew will rise from a clump of heather and burst into song. What actually happens ? The rain intensifies and a grey light shows ones position to be worse than supposed. Hundreds of more streams will have developed, one of which has a water-table all of its own, about four inches from the top of my boot.

I wore all week an outer suit of lightweight proofed nylon. Allowing for condensation this proved worthwhile. Its colour was the main disadvantage, however ; on the last day I staggered over the Glyders after a night at the P.Y.G., and was to be met by friends who were to whisk me back to Birmingham. It was the first day of the week ; they were all in excellent spirits, and incredibly fit. They had stagnated in an office all week ; I had been unfit for the past three days. They saw my red anorak coming down from Tryfan and with whoops of joy they ascended, Pan-like, to meet me . . . with a rope. " Just a few hours on rock to celebrate."

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For any other would-be Cambrian Marco Polos I give the itinerary below :

- Day 1. Margam Park, Mynydd Margam, Maesteg, Caerau Mt, PENDERYN.  
,, 2. Cwm Porth, Fann Nedd, Bwlch y Duwywt, TRECATTLE.  
,, 2. Mynydd Bwlch y Groes, Aber Cenfydd, Cwm Irfon, ABERGWESYN.  
,, 4. Nant yr Hwch, Strata Florida, EISTEDDFA GURIG.  
,, 5. Plynlimon, Mynydd Cil Cwm, Pennant Valley, LLANBRYNMAIR.  
,, 6. Nant Carfan, Arans, LLANWCHLLYN.  
,, 7. Feidiog, Cwm Prysgor, PONT Y AFON GAM.  
,, 8. Manod, Crimea, Cwm Fyn hadog Isaf, Bwlch Ehediad, PYG.  
,, 9. Glyders, Tryfan, GLAN DENA.

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