

## CEFNLLECOEDIQG

M. N. SHAW

Leave Birmingham, miles of built-up country, Wolverhampton, Shrewsbury (fish and chips), on through the night. Welshpool, Cann Office, more Welsh villages, Cemmaes Road at last. Turn right for Machynlleth, over the Dovey, on to Cwrt—where on earth's Cwrt? Navigators say turn right; signboard says No Entry W.D. Vehicles—no doubt the map is right. Not up here, surely? Gate is opened. Level crossing? Gate invisible anyway. Closer inspection reveals normal five-bar model. Back in the car, sloshing through mud and water—if this isn't the right track we're in for a night in the car. Headlights make a tunnel through the overhanging hedgerow, holly and brambles everywhere, mind the paintwork. This track must lead somewhere, or does it? Another gate, a barn, a whitewashed Welsh farmhouse. Two cars parked outside, and candles flickering inside. Cefnlllecoediog.

Such were the disjointed impressions gained during a rapid ride from Birmingham in the rain-filled darkness. But sleep is good for the *amour propre*, and Cefn can offer mattresses and blankets. By morning things returned into their proper perspective; the Meet Leader brought round cups of tea, breakfast was cooked on a Calor Gas stove, and the water was just warm enough to wash in.

After breakfast the peaceful scene was disturbed by the arrival of a large red lorry, full of men in overalls. We wondered if these were M.A.M. also and, whilst we were trying to pluck up enough courage to ask them whether they had booked, they revealed themselves as the North Wales Electricity Board, come to cater for pylon-worshippers.

The day was glorious and the colours on the hills scarcely less so, as we set out over the gentle hills behind the farmhouse. This is one of the few areas left where one can walk all day long without meeting a single soul; the hills are rounded and crags are hard to find. Despite this loneliness the hills are not neglected, as the little summits are cairned and the regular lines of fencing are well maintained. Sheep farming is still carried on, but the once distinct drove road from Towyn to Pennal is no longer obvious and in places seems to have disappeared entirely. Nant Gwernol was once the home of a thriving slate industry but this was closed down forty years ago, leaving behind it a huddle of derelict houses in the shadow of Taren Hendre. Forestry has now taken its place and the neat little rows of conifers that run alongside the Talylyn Railway have brought better conditions to the villages of Abergynolwyn and Bryn Crug. Now the forest is reaching higher and higher up the hills, on both north and south.

The Taren Hills form a fairly distinct ridge with several well defined summits on the ridge and a host of lesser summits on either side. Two of these, Taren Hendre and Taren y Gesail, are over 2,000 feet and there are a pleasing variety of ways of ascending them all, including the fine wooded valley leading from the Dolgoch Falls on the north side and from the Happy Valley and from Cwrt on the south. The entire ridge from Talyllyn to Aberdovey is a splendid walk, with fine views over Cader Idris and Plynlimon and, if taken in a westerly direction and in the late afternoon, with unparalleled views over Cardigan Bay.

A low ridge divides the Dovey Estuary from the Happy Valley and from this we descended to find Aberdovey quiet and peaceful, the tide out, and no tourists. We stoked up with tea and cakes before returning to Cwrt on the local bus.

Once back at the Farmhouse a vast supper was prepared and eaten and an even vaster log hoisted on to the fire. Dreams of a quiet evening were shattered when Cliff May produced balloons, which were duly burst to the accompaniment of music and other noises, which went on into the night.

A late start next morning meant a shortened day, but we went on the hills nevertheless, descending pleasantly down a wooded valley holding a reservoir. By now it was raining and we replenished the farmhouse fuel stocks in an uncalled-for downpour, dragging what seemed like half a tree, together with branches of assorted sizes, up the steep slope and into the barn. After this it was time to pack up, and eventually we made our return to the Midlands with more noise at the Mytton Mermaid *en route*.

To Mrs. Trevelyan, who allowed us the use of Cefnllceodiog for the week-end, our very grateful thanks.