

25) The Lleyn peninsula – north coast

The Coastline of the Lleyn Peninsula beyond Caernarfon is even today somewhat bleak, and has attracted only shabby and piecemeal holiday-camp type development. Apart from a little group of smithy, slate works and mill at Pont-y-Cim, there is no sign of any form of industrial activity until the village of Clynnog is reached, 12 miles south west of Caernarfon.

This is an area once important for granite quarrying; the other main centre of operations of the Penmaenmawr & Welsh Granite Co. The principal workings were around the summit of Yr Eifl mountain - prominent directly ahead when traveling down the coast road - but the first to be seen are on the hillside to the left; those of the Welsh Enderby Granite Quarries, closed as long ago as 1917. A tangible reminder is the concrete office block surviving beside the road, where a tramway used to cross on its way to a loading jetty on the seashore. The building (395476; photo right) carries bold blue enamel signs still advertising its wares - granite setts, kerbs and dry and tarred macadam - phone Clynnogfawr 4!



Situated near the village of Trevor (so named after one of the first quarry overseers) Yr Eifl quarries started production of granite setts in 1836-40. Under the guidance of Samuel Holland (the eminent Blaenau Ffestiniog slate proprietor) three companies operating on the mountain amalgamated to form the Welsh Granite Co. in 1844. 600 men were employed at the peak of operations in 1900-1920 and the company was as amalgamated yet again into the Penmaenmawr and Welsh Granite Company in 1911. The stone quay at Trevor (375474) was constructed in 1878 together with the railway and incline connecting it to the quarries; horses were used to pull the wagons at first, but they were soon replaced by locomotives.

Vast stone crushing mills were installed at the quarry and the quay to deal with the increasing requirement for granite chippings for road use, in production here since 1873. The offices and workshops of the company were at the foot of the main railway incline at West End, where also are to be found the stables for the horses, and a smithy. The incline was converted for use by lorries in 1959, but the quarry ceased production in 1972 - a severe blow to employment in a village that owed its origins and existence to the quarry company.

These two pictures by David Mills show abandoned tipper and coal wagons littered around the quay area in about 1971.....



Just below the incline stands the fine manager's house, Plas-yr-Eifl. In 1971 the death of C. S. Darbishire, manager from 1918-46 and a continuing inspiration thereafter, effectively closed a long

chapter in the history of Trevor. The diminutive hand-made locomotive “Redstone” (pictured right) which he helped to build here in 1905 was kept at the house for a long time but is now at the Dinorwic Quarry museum complex at Llanberis (below).....



On the far side of the mountain another self-contained complex of granite workings in Nant Gwytheryn can be visited from the car park at the end of a lane leading from Llithfaen village (354442). Even today the only means of access is on foot, via the steep and twisting footpath down the cliffs into a small valley. At the bottom is situated the “ghost village” of Porthynant, surrounded by its quarries. Until closure and abandonment in the 1930’s the inhabitants relied almost entirely on the sea for communication with the outside world.

The quarrymen’s houses, which were spacious and fairly well appointed examples of their type, are grouped in terraces around the village green (350448). At one end are the schoolroom and a chapel “Seilo 1878”. At the opposite corner, separated by its own walled garden, stands the manager’s house, set apart from the others and of course much grander.....





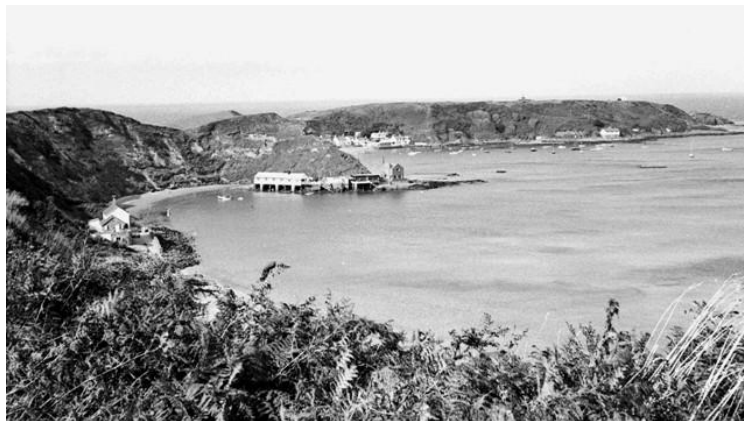
Below the village is a wooden jetty on the seashore, now somewhat collapsed (right)

On the hillsides all around there are three granite workings: Cae'r-Nant quarry, reached by a long inclined plane lies to the south; Porth-y-nant lies immediately behind the chapel, with some 3 ft gauge tramway track, wagons and other machinery surviving. Away at the opposite end of the bay the enormous crushing mill of Carreg-y-Llam quarry is prominent. The whole of this site is still owned by the Amalgamated Roadstone Corporation despite having been left abandoned for some 40-50 years.....



The village is soon to be restored and inhabited again as an “outdoor education centre”; this will inevitably result in the loss of some of its “ghost town” atmosphere that has made it a popular spot for exploration over the last few years.

Morfa Nefyn, the next settlement along the coast is a fishing village turned pleasant tourist retreat, but this would have been very different had William Maddocks' plan to create an Irish packet port in Porthdinllaen Bay succeeded in preference to Holyhead in 1844-5. Since as we have seen it did not, the hamlet of Porthdinllaen (pictured right) remains now as then, a fishing community inaccessible by road although popular with holidaymakers.



Its main feature the Ty Coch Inn was built in 1842 together with a small pier now demolished, in anticipation of the Irish trade that never materialized. The long straight section of the Pwllheli - Nefyn highway is also a present-day reminder that the mails were once intended to come this way.

Continuing westwards, the end of the peninsula becomes seemingly more imminent but is slow to arrive. The country that unfolds was never reached by industry in any form and is largely undiscovered by visitors even in this motor-borne age. At Ederyn the old corn mill still stands by the river bridge, with a pottery next door. Other corn mills are to be found at Mellteryn (238326), now an antique shop but retaining its 10 ft cast iron waterwheel, and Aberdaron (174264) which had a 15 ft wooden wheel fed from an overhead tank. Most of the mill mechanism here is intact but somewhat derelict.

Aberdaron is a small fishing village and also the traditional embarkation point for the ferry across to Bardsey Island. This is a place of pilgrimage and solitude situated just beyond the end of the Lleyn peninsula and no less than 55 miles down the coast from Bangor. The farmhouses on the island - two semi-detached pairs with walled enclosures for shelter - were modelled by Lord Newborough for his tenants in 1870-5.

Keith A. Jagers November 1978

Updates – February 2012

At **Pont y Cim** the corn mill building has been heavily restored as a private house, with the miller's cottage on the opposite side of the road. The old smithy is also now a residence, and the slate works across the river bridge remains derelict.

At **Welsh Enderby granite quarry** the concrete office building still stands beside the main road, amazingly unscathed by the recent dual carriageway widening works. The tramway which crossed the road here is now a muddy lane.

At **Trevor** the stone quay and wooden jetty survive, in use by pleasure craft; there is a car park adjacent on the foreshore. The former quarry tramway route may be followed on foot round to West End, where one or two bits of the old buildings remain. The main incline into the quarries is now an access road. The extensive quarry levels may be explored on foot or by all-terrain vehicle; a rock-climbing centre is based here, and there are extensive remains of the old buildings.

After a period as a hotel, **Plas yr Eifl** mansion suffered a serious fire in 2006 which reduced the structure to a roofless shell, in which state it may still be seen. The little "**Redstone**" locomotive is now at the Brecon Mountain Railway workshops at Pontsticill, where it is being restored for display in the visitor centre there.

Nant Gwytheryn quarry village has, as expected, been fully renovated as a Welsh Language cultural and heritage centre, under the auspices of the Nant Gwytheryn Trust. A road with passing

places and car park at the village was constructed, mainly along the serpentine route of the previous rough track down the cliffs, so that access is now far easier if still a little hair-raising for the uninitiated! All of the village buildings have been tastefully restored, and now incorporate a heritage centre, cafe, conference rooms and wedding venue, with accommodation.

Down by the seashore the old loading jetty has completely gone, and remaining buildings are ruinous. The quarries themselves may still be explored by a network of footpaths around the bay and along the shoreline.

Porth Dinllaen bay and hamlet remain largely unspoiled. There is a public car park close to the Ty Coch Inn.

At **Ederyn** the former corn mill buildings have been renovated and extended as a large residence and B&B establishment, "Hen Felin". The **Melin Mellteryn** site is now a restaurant, using some of the original buildings; the former waterwheel here is no longer in evidence. **Aberdaron corn mill** is derelict, heavily covered in ivy and the wheelpit area choked with vegetation. However the internal mechanism and bits of the waterwheel remain intact.

Bardsey Island is managed by Bardsey Island Trust as a national nature reserve. The farmhouses and several cottages are available as holiday lets, and boat trips are run to and around the island in season, provided the weather is favourable.