



The route starts at the Cregennen Lakes car-park (SH 657 143). This is accessed by following the Cadair Road from Dolgellau. A number of gates need to be negotiated to get to the car park and these would prove a nuisance to unaccompanied disabled drivers.

The route itself involves further gates, and makes use of B-roads and tracks that remain part of the high-ways network. As such you may legitimately expect to meet farm and off-road vehicles at any point.

In poor weather the route can be a pretty bleak place, and phone coverage can be intermittent. There are plenty of opportunities to cut the route short if required, and the Ffordd Ddu carries on across the hills if you fancy something longer.

The route is covered by 1:25000 Outdoor Leisure Map 23.

Getting Started:

Distance: 8.4 km
Notes: There are steep and rocky trails, and this route is not suitable for non-specialised wheelchairs.

This route is set on the plateau of craggy land hemmed in by the peaks of the Cadair Idris range on one side, and the steep sided and U-shaped glacial valley of the Mawddach Estuary on the other.

The minor road leading up from Dolgellau was once a principle route south from the town, and remained so until the building of the road cut into the base of the headland cliff just south of Fairbourne. Climbing up from Dolgellau, the tarmac ends just above Cregennen, once home to a significant settlement, but the ancient mountain route of the Ffordd Ddu (pronounced 'Forth Thee' meaning 'Black Road') continues across the windswept headland between Dolgellau and Llywngwrl.

In true mountain fashion, the shape of the land tends to funnel the weather into a headwind (whichever way you travel), and for those looking for an authentic mountain experience, the Ffordd Ddu can give a real sense of isolation, remoteness, and (on some days) a genuine experience of doing battle with the elements.

For further information about activities and facilities on the Estuary, see www.MawddachEstuary.co.uk

Introduction

5 At a corner on a steep section of the road, as the views over to the north of the estuary start to open out, turn Right onto a grassy track passing through an unexpectedly ornate wrought iron gate, and start heading back uphill. Just beyond the pretty stone "clapper" bridge to the Left of the track stand the hidden remains of Llys Bradwen (Bradwen's Court). Ednywain ab Bradwen, leader of one of the Fifteen Tribes of Gwynedd lived there early in the 12th century. The name 'Cregennen' (originally Crogenan) derives from 'crog-gangen' which translates as 'hanging branch'. Criminals who were convicted of crimes at Llys Bradwen were executed from the branch of a large nearby oak tree.



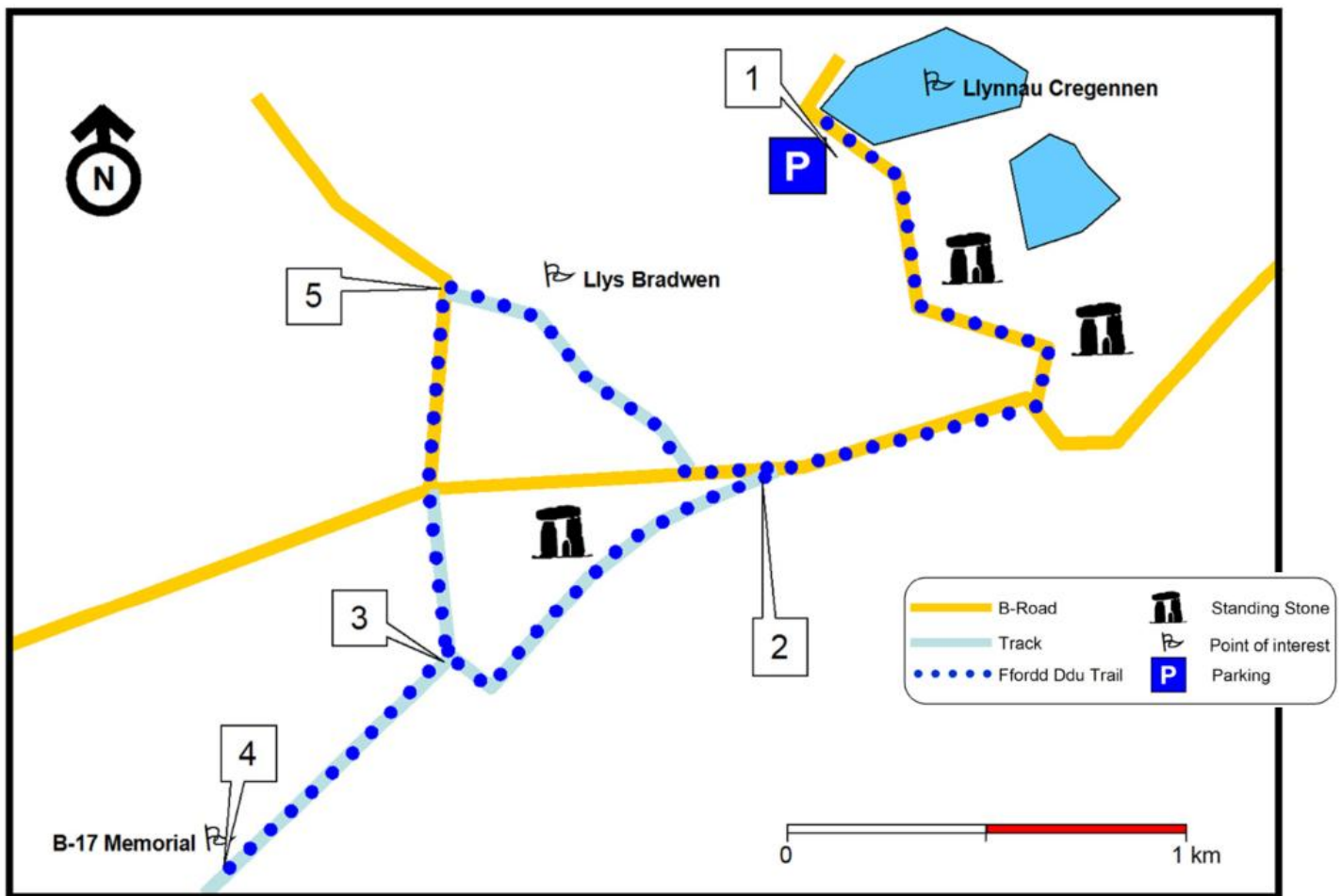
Cregennen & The Ffordd Ddu Off-Road Chair Route



Into the Wilds

See more Spoke 'n' History routes, including the Mawddach Trail at www.MawddachEstuary.co.uk

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① The views from Cregennen Lakes are worth making the trip for, even if you venture no further, and arguably these are some of the most photographed lakes in Wales. The land around the lakes was given to the National Trust in 1959 by Major C.L Wynne-Jones in memory of his two sons lost in the Second World War. Cregennen hosted a free township in the medieval period, and the shore areas are literally covered with archaeological sites including standing stones, cairns, hut circles and features from the prehistoric period.

② At the road junction, the Ffordd Ddu option looks like a continuation of the B-Road, but this rapidly deteriorates to a rough, gated track. The road is said to have originated in the Neolithic period (4000-2000 BC), and certainly the area either side of the track is littered with standing stones, hut circles and cairns that date back as far as the Bronze Age (2000-500 BC). As a principle route up the coast, it was part of the network of trails that permitted trade between disparate areas of Britain, and was important in the droving of livestock to the English markets.

③ At the top of a craggy shoulder there is the option to shortcut the route by turning Right and heading downhill. To continue along the Ffordd Ddu, bear Left along the main trail.



B-17 Memorial Plaque on the Ffordd Ddu

④ Set beneath the steep ramparts of Craig Cwm-llwyd, and overlooking Barmouth, a plaque set into the wall to the right of the track bears testimony to a tragic episode in the history of the estuary. In 1945, at the end of the war, a B-17G Flying Fortress crashed into the hillside on its way from RAF Polebrook in Northamptonshire to RAF Valley on Anglesey - the first leg of its journey back to the USA. All ten crew and a further ten passengers were killed in the impact.