



Ein Treftadaeth
Our Heritage

Quarries and Mining



Porth Ysgo Jetty

Quarries and Mines in Llŷn

The first industrial activity we have a record of is from five or six thousand years ago in the Neolithic period, with the Stone Axe Factory at Mynydd y Rhiw.

Early in the C19th manganese was discovered. It was mined at Nant y Gadwen, Rhiw and exported from Porth Ysgo and mined at Benallt, near Clip y Gylfinir and carried on an aerial ropeway for export from Porth Neigwl. There was great demand for manganese during the two World Wars but the workings closed in 1945.

Jasper was extracted at Mynydd Carreg near Porthorion and at Llanllawen, Uwchmynydd.

There are the remains of a jetty on Aberdaron beach, at Porth Simdde. It was built in the C19th for exporting barites (heavy crystal) ore from the workings at Gwaith Pompren in the early C20th. The pier is said to have never been used.

According to tradition, the Romans were mining for lead at Penrhyn Du in Llanengan parish, and we have definite evidence of it happening in the mid C17th. Copper was mined at Pant Gwyn for a short time, and lead at Penrhyn Du, and over towards the village of Llanengan. In the C19th there were 240 miners employed, the majority from Cornwall.

There was great demand for setts to pave the streets of the cities of England, and that brought work for the men of the Nefyn and Eifl areas. The granite came from the igneous rocks of Llŷn and the biggest quarries were on the Eifl mountains and Mynydd Nefyn. The Trwyn Dwmi Workings were opened at Porth y Pistyll, Uwchmynydd, and there were quarries at Mynydd Tir y Cwmwd, Llanbedrog and at Gimlet Rock/Carreg yr Imbyll in Pwllheli. But there's more than just granite in Llŷn.

The most unexpected mining was in the Rhoshirwaun and Llangwnnadr areas, when coal mining was attempted in the late C19th.

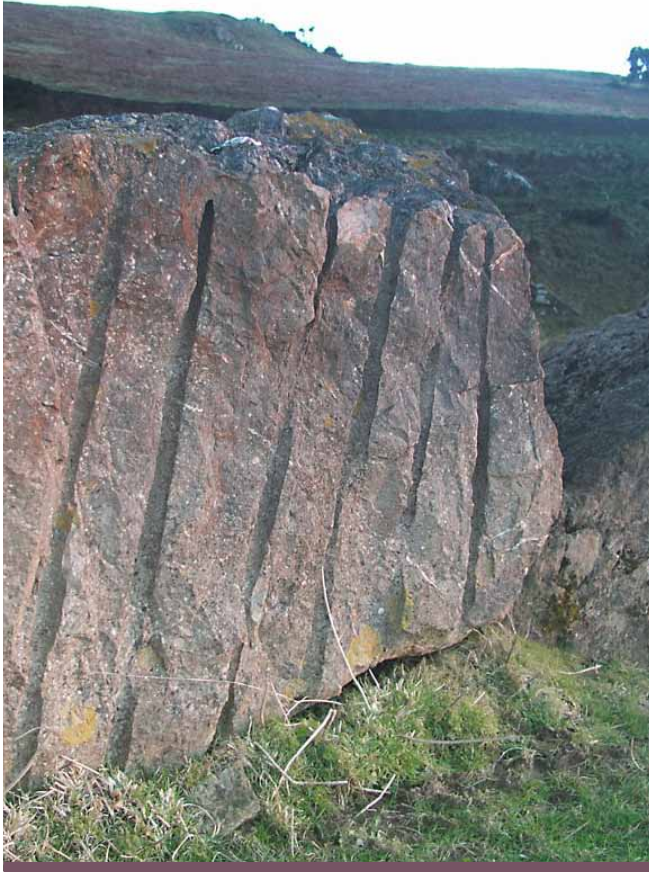


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government





Carreg Jasper Workings (SH 158291)



Directions: Park on the National Trust land at Carreg (near Mynydd Carreg) (SH 16262900) just off the coastal road from Llangwnnadr to Aberdaron.

We have very little information about quarrying here, but there are obvious signs of it on the coast between Porthor (SH 16682996) and Porth Orion (SH15602880).

There was considerable excavation work at the edge of Mynydd Carreg (SH 16102905) near Porthorion in the early C20th. It is said the quarry was opened in 1904. Jasper was a valuable mineral and a polished piece two inches square was quoted as being worth £60 at that time. It was used to add to the splendour of buildings in the big cities, such as Westminster Abbey and St. James' Palace in London.

About 1km away is a bridge, Pont Nant y Widdan, which collapsed when a massive piece of jasper was being transported over it. We might wonder whether that was the block in the photograph, shown then after it had reached Pwllheli, on a waggon pulled by a traction engine. Probably on its way to the railway station.

There are some signs of excavations for jasper near the farm, Llanllawen Fawr (SH 14682594) in Uwchmynydd but no details are available.

The Quarry at Trwyn Dwmi (SH 163251)



Directions: Take the Wales Coast Path from Aberdaron towards the south west, through Porth Meudwy (SH16302250) then above Porth y Gloch (SH 16302507) and to Craig Cwlwm (SH 16202490). The next place is Porth Pistyll (SH 16092464)

The remains can be seen clearly during the voyage to Ynys Enlli / Bardsey Island.

This is a quarry on the steep sea cliff at Porth Pistyll, known as the Trwyn Dwmi workings. It was opened in 1907 and it was very difficult for the quarrymen to get to their work and ladders had to be used to make it easier.

The setts from here were in 4", 6" and 8" sizes, and kerbs for pavements were produced.

A quarry was also opened at Craig y Cwlwm in 1908, and remains of the quay for exporting the produce are still to be seen. A bollard was carved from the natural rock, but it was a problem having to clear gravel and sand from the quay to allow ships to come in easily. The quay was also too low, and the sea would often wash over it, so it was expensive to maintain.

At the top of the cliff there was a machine for moving stone and goods up and down from sea level, 35m below.

The ambitious plans for this development included building a chapel, shop and houses but only one house was built, namely Môr Awelon or *Bynglo* Jackson (Jackson + bungalow) – named after the Manager.

In December one of the quarrymen, Robert Evans, Dynfra, lost his life. His son Griffith had a narrow escape.



The quarry was closed for a while then reopened in the 1930s with 45 workers, but it was closed by 1937/8 and never reopened. No setts were sold at all during this period. When a count was made in 1940 there were at least 600 setts and a cartload of kerbstones just left there.

Manganese Workings in Rhiw



Directions:

Nant y Gadwen Workings (SH 210266) . Take the coastal road from Rhiw towards Aberdaron and turn left for Llanfaelrhys. Park near the farm, Ysgo (SH 20742680) and walk south/east along the Wales Coast Path.

Or: After reaching the valley walk along the path towards Porth Ysgo. The entrances to underground workings can be seen on both sides and there are signs of machinery on the left.

Benallt Workings (SH 222280) Remains can be seen from the road coming from Rhiw – on the side of the mountain Mynydd y Rhiw under Clip Gylfinir and opposite Pysgah chapel.

Investigations on behalf of the Squire of Nanhoron in 1827 confirmed there was manganese ore at Nant y Gadwen. There were excavations here from time to time and in different places in Rhiw between 1858 and the early C20th.

At the beginning, the manganese was used to produce paint and glass but later there was a great demand for it in the two World Wars for hardening steel. When the work was at its peak 90% of Britain's manganese was produced here, employing about 200 workers.

When work restarted here in 1903 it was seen that it was very inconvenient using donkeys to carry the ore for loading onto ships at Porth Cadlan. It would also be difficult to take it to the railway at Pwllheli or to ships at Abersoch

or Porthdinllaen. The solution was to build a pier at Porth Ysgo (SH 20752650) and have a railway running down to it.

After the mines were opened at Benallt (SH 22202800) a pier was built at Garth (SH 239279) in Porth Neigwl. The manganese would be carried on a suspended cable over the village of Rhiw. But the Garth pier was destroyed during storms in the winter of 1910-11. Then the manganese had to be carried on a railway to Porth Ysgo to go to Ellesmere Port for the Brymbo steelworks.

The working conditions were very difficult when using carbide lamps. The demand for manganese reduced and the workings closed in 1945.

Mining at Gwaith y Bompren, Aberdaron (SH 167264)



The mine workings at *Gwaith y Bompren* were in the sea cliffs at Porth Simdde at the western end of Aberdaron beach, and barites (heavy crystal) were mined.

That was used in the process of producing paint and paper.

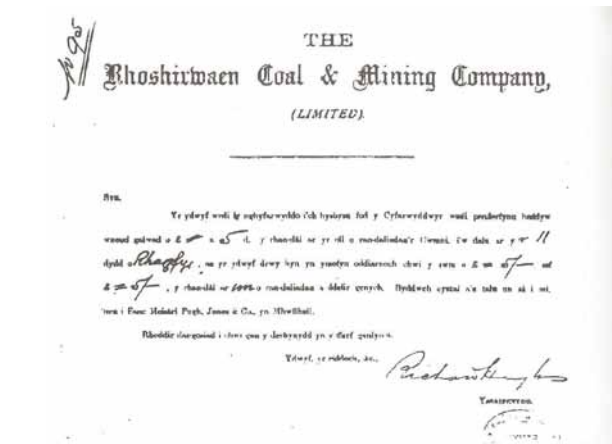
We have very little information about this site. There are letters from individuals in 1837 asking Lord Newborough for permission to extract barites in Aberdaron.

There is a record it was owned by Evan J Evans, Aberystwyth in 1908 and that there were two underground workings and one above ground. It was working, at least for a while, in 1914.

There are remains of a landing stage at Porth Simdde (SH 16752630) but it was said to have never been used at all.



Coal Mining (SH 200303)



Coal Company's Certificate

Coal was discovered in the Hebron area of Llangwnnadl and in Rhoshirwaen in the C19th and investigations were made. It was mined from the land of Brynhunog Fawr in 1837 and Rhos Cabli in 1844.

There was enough confidence in this enterprise to establish a company 'The Rhoshirwaen Coal & Mining Company' and sell shares in it. The company's name suggests it also hoped to find other minerals in the area.

We don't know how successful the mining was. But there is a document dated 11th December 1888 inviting people to invest. This suggests it was active for some decades.

There was mining in Rhoshirwaen (SH 19602970) in a field called 'Cleimant', one of a number of plots behind a terrace of houses on the B4413. Could the name have come from the English 'claim' and relate to the mining, or is it related to the enclosure of common lands in Rhoshirwaen in 1801?



Follow the Story..

Find out more about local industrial life by visiting Mynydd y Rhiw - Once the location to a Neolithic 'axe' factory.