

# Richard Pennant - improver

Richard Pennant was an extraordinary innovator. He can be credited with establishing Penrhyn Quarry, and transforming the fortunes of the Penrhyn Estate. He acquired the land when he married the heiress of Penrhyn in 1765. Pennant used the wealth from his family's West Indian sugar plantations to change not only the fortunes of the Penrhyn Estate but also the economy of the entire county. A contemporary account describes how 'the county was scarcely passable, the roads were not better than very bad horse-paths, the cottages wretched, the farmers poor'.



The Penrhyn Slate  
Quarry in 1832,  
by Henry Hawkins

## The beginnings of the Slate industry

Before Richard Pennant took over the estate, quarry working on Penrhyn lands had been little more than a cottage industry. The problem of transporting slate meant that it was typically only used close to the quarry workings although there were occasions when it was transported some distance. In 1713 for instance, 14 shiploads containing 415,000 slates were sent to Dublin. Pennant



Aerial view of  
Penrhyn Quarry

took over the existing small leases and set about creating an industry. He introduced many innovations that subsequently became the norm in the North Wales slate industry. By 1792, the quarry employed 500 men and 15,000 tons a year of slate was produced.

## THE SLATE TRAIL

Follow 'The Slate Trail' along Lôn Las Ogwen, where you can find a series of information boards recounting the unique story of Ogwen slate, Penrhyn Quarry and the people involved in its production.