

# Wrexham South Mine Trail



An 18 mile circular trail by car or bike, passing features relating to the local coal, lead and iron industries. Note that some of the places are on private land and this should be obvious. In such a case please first ask permission to visit. The trail starts at Bersham Colliery (now the Bersham Enterprise Centre) but you can join and leave it anywhere along the route. It mostly covers features to the west of Wrexham. Approximate cumulative mileages are given in brackets. More information can be found on the website below. Note that some of the places may be difficult for disabled persons to access but they should be able to see most of them. The trail should take about 3 hours to complete.

*To get to Bersham Colliery, follow the A483 towards Wrexham and turn off east along the A5152 signposted Rhostyllen. Pass a Little Chef on the left and then turn right, signposted to Bersham Enterprise Centre. Park in the car park next to the headgear.*

1	<b>BERSHAM COLLIERY (NGR SJ314482)</b>
---	--

The site was originally known as Glanrafon Colliery and sinking was started in 1864 by the Bersham Coal Company. The last coal was brought up in December 1986 when it was closed by British Coal as being uneconomic. There were two shafts which originally had steam winding engines but these were replaced by electric ones in later years.

The underground workings stretched as far as Erddig Hall and a large section of solid coal was left underneath it to prevent subsidence. Despite this, however, serious damage was caused, the kitchen roof having to be held up with girders. The National Coal Board had to pay out compensation for this.

## **WHAT TO SEE**

Today the most obvious remains are of No.2 Shaft, which still has its headgear and winding engine inside the tall red brick engine house. The mine tip across the road is one of only a few now left in the UK. The Bersham Enterprise Centre has used some of the old mine buildings. The red brick buildings by the road date from 1936 and were once the telephone exchange and electricity sub-station. The modern buildings date from 1954 and were, from left to right, the lamp room, office, boiler house, pithead baths and canteen.

*Turn left out of the gate and keep the spoil tip on your right. Follow a winding road that passes over a dual carriageway. Turn left at a T-junction (0.9) and turn right (1.2) under a height restriction bar into a car park.*

2	<b>HAFOD COLLIERY (NGR SJ311465)</b>
---	--

Sunk by the Ruabon Coal Co. In 1880, the company was purchased by the Ruabon Coal & Coke Company, whose Managing Director was the famous Henry Dennis. At its peak, Hafod employed nearly 2,000 workers and produced gas, household, coking and steam coal. The brickworks were owned by the same company as

the colliery, and produced bricks and tiles using methane gas extracted from Bersham Colliery for firing the kilns.

When the North Wales coal quota system was introduced in the early 1930s, Hafod was allocated 371,768 tons at a time when the colliery was actually producing 570,000 tons. As in so many other mines on the North Wales coalfield, this resulted in the introduction of short time working.

### **WHAT TO SEE**

Find the interpretation board in the car park. The mine was in front of you but all traces have been completely removed. If you walk along the blue route to the right, after 15 minutes it will lead you to the top of the tip where there is a memorial.

***Go out of the car park and turn right. After a short distance (1.4), you will pass the Dennis Brickworks on the right. At one time this was powered by methane from Bersham Colliery. Continue to a T-junction and turn right (1.8) onto the B5426 signposted for Johnstown. Turn right (2.5) at the traffic lights onto the B5605, then left (2.7) onto the B5426 to Rhosllannerchrugog, passing a winding wheel memorial on the left. At the top of the hill turn right (3.2) by a garage onto Queen Street and, where the road bends left, park at Hafod Colliery Social Club (3.4) on the right.***

<b>3</b>	<b>HAFOD COLLIERY SOCIAL CLUB (NGR SJ292465)</b>
----------	--

Refreshments and toilets are available here when the club is open.

### **WHAT TO SEE**

You can see several pictures on the walls and you can maybe chat to ex-miners in the notorious “departure lounge”.

***Leave your car here and walk to the right for a short distance to the tall building.***

<b>4</b>	<b>Y STIWT THEATRE (NGR SJ292465)</b>
----------	---

This wonderful building was erected in 1926 from a levy of 1d per ton of extracted coal. Miners paid 2d per week to use the theatre, cinema and library.

### **WHAT TO SEE**

Look out for an incredible stained glass window dedicated to the lives of miners and their families. Refreshments and toilets are available here when the theatre is open.

***Go back to the car park and turn right onto Broad Street. Turn right (3.5) at a roundabout onto the B5226 signposted Minera. Turn right (4.6) onto the B5426 signposted Pentre Bychan. Turn left (5.2) at the T-junction onto the B5605 signposted Wrexham. At the roundabout, turn left (5.8) onto the A483 and turn left (7.0) at the next junction onto the A525 towards Ruthin. Turn right (7.4) onto the B5101 signposted Brymbo and follow this to a roundabout (9.0) where you turn left. Go straight across the next roundabout (9.2) and look for a brown sign saying “Penrhos Engine House” where you can park (9.8).***

<b>5</b>	<b>PENRHOS ENGINE HOUSE (NGR SJ285532)</b>
----------	--

The Brymbo Colliery was opened by John Wilkinson in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and a pumping engine house was erected at Penrhos about 1794. It is believed to be the earliest surviving engine house in Wales.

## WHAT TO SEE

There is an interpretation board to explain the features. The building was later converted into a cottage and you can see traces of the fireplaces, oven and pigsty.

*Continue along the road to a crossroads by a white house (10.2) and go straight across. Park on the road opposite a house on the right with a standing chimney (10.3).*

6	<b>PENTRE SAISON IRON WORKS (NGR SJ277532)</b>
---	--

Little is known about this site but it is believed locally that English workers were brought here from Shropshire to set up the works. This could explain the word "Saison" since "Sais" was an old Celtic word for Saxons, ie English.

## WHAT TO SEE

The Works have been converted into a dwelling but several features have been retained such as the ruins of the chimney, furnace and various forge tools.

*Go back to the crossroads and turn left (10.4). Turn right along a minor road signposted Brymbo (10.9) and turn right along Waterside Way (11.2). Just past the pool, park in the lay-by on the left (11.3). Go through the gate and follow the path around the pool, noting the stub of a large chimney in front of you. Just before you reach another gate onto the road, turn left along a path that leads to Brymbo Bottle chimney.*

7	<b>BRYMBO LEAD SMELTER (NGR SJ285537)</b>
---	---

The chimney was connected to a lead smelter that was built in 1792 by John Wilkinson to smelt lead ore from his Minera mines. Fumes from the furnaces were condensed for re-smelting in chambers at the base of the 100ft chimney. Because of its unusual shape, it was known locally as the "Brymbo Bottle". By 1899, it had closed and become a carbon works. Across the road to the west was a colliery.

## WHAT TO SEE

The remains of the smelthouse are now "lumps and bumps" covered by the trees. The chimney was partly demolished in 1962 to leave only 25ft still standing. There is a doorway at the far side that gives access inside the chimney.

*Continue along the road and turn left (11.4) at a T-junction onto Brake Road. Turn right (11.6) at the next T-junction onto Blast Road and follow this until you come to the Brymbo Enterprise Centre on the right where you can park (11.9). Walk to the south side of the car park where there is a fence and look down on some buildings.*

8	<b>BRYMBO IRON WORKS (NGR SJ294536)</b>
---	---

John Wilkinson built a blast furnace here in 1793. Two further furnaces had been built by 1869 but from 1892 no more than two were used, and from 1912 only one. After Wilkinson's death, his estate was contested between his natural children and legitimate heirs and the iron works passed through various hands.

By 1841, it was owned by the Brymbo Iron Company, which was managed from 1846 by William and Charles Darby, who were grandsons of Abraham Darby III of Coalbrookdale. It became a branch of GKN Steel Co Ltd in the early 1960s and was nationalised in 1967, becoming a division of the British Steel Corporation. The steelworks closed in 1990.

## WHAT TO SEE

Current remains include the Agent's House, Blast Furnace, Casting House and Workshops. A fossil forest was also found nearby. If the cafe is open you can get refreshments or use the toilet.

**Turn right out of the car park and immediately right down a hill (12.0). Turn right (12.2) at the next T-junction. Pass under two bridges and turn right signposted Tanyfron (13.4). Turn immediately left signposted for the Climbing Centre, and follow the road around to the right to the car park (13.6).**

9	<b>PLAS POWER COLLIERY (NGR SJ299519)</b>
---	---

Sinking by the Old Broughton Coal Company began in 1875 and the pit began producing in 1877. It was always regarded as a modern pit and was the first in the country to have electricity underground. The generating station at the pit also supplied electricity to Gatewen and Vron Collieries. At its peak, the mine employed 1,099 men. In 1885 the local miners drove away Irishmen who were taking their jobs. The pit closed in 1938.

## WHAT TO SEE

At the far right is the East Winding House built of sandstone, with the remains of the Compressor House around the corner. Next to it is the red brick West Winding House. The shafts were to the rear and have been filled. The long single story building was the Workshops and the Fan House was behind.

To the left is the tall Power House, now the adventure centre. If the cafe here is open you can get refreshments and use the toilet.

**Go back to the T-junction and turn left (13.7). Turn right at the top of the hill (13.8) and right again at the T-junction. When you come to the A525, turn left signposted Wrexham (15.0). Go straight across the traffic lights (15.2) and then turn right onto the B5098 (15.4) with a brown signpost to Bersham. At the T-junction turn left (16.2) and park in the car park of the Bersham Heritage Centre on the right.**

10	<b>BERSHAM HERITAGE CENTRE (NGR SJ311491)</b>
----	---

This is a museum and there are toilets and refreshments here when open.

## WHAT TO SEE

There are a number of exhibits on the local coal and iron industries. The large wooden structure in front is a reconstructed "horse gin" which was a method of winding in shafts.

**Turn right out of the car park and take the first right down a narrow lane (16.3). Park in the pub car park at the bottom.**

11	<b>HOLE IN THE WALL INN (NGR SJ312491)</b>
----	--

Although the real name is the Black Lion, it is known locally as the Hole in the Wall. This was a popular pub for the local miners and apparently had a reputation for never closing so they could get a drink whatever shift they had just finished. There are toilets and refreshments here when open.

**Go back up the lane and turn left (16.4). Turn right (16.8) at the T-junction onto the B5097 and then turn left signposted Oswestry (16.9). Turn left at the T-junction signposted Wrexham (17.2) and straight across the roundabout (17.3). Turn right (17.6) signposted to Bersham Enterprise Centre and you will get back to your start point at Bersham Colliery (17.9).**

## Wrexham South Mine Trail



Brymbo Bottle



Bersham Colliery



Bersham Ironworks



Hafod Colliery



Pentros Engine House



Pentre Saison Ironworks



Plas Power Colliery



Y Stiwt Theatre

