

Bala Lake and Lake Vyrnwy



Bala Lake, known in Welsh as 'Llyn Tegid', meaning Lake of Serenity, was formed by the action of glaciers and is four miles long and a mile wide. Its waters contain pike, perch, trout, eel and a rare and protected whitefish called the Gwyniad, a relic of the last Ice Age.



The Bala Railway (Rheilffordd Llyn Tegid) runs for 4.5 miles along the lake's south east shore and originally connected Bala with Barmouth and Blaenau Ffestiniog using 1' 11½" gauge slate wagons

Llanycil Church is situated on the shores of the lake and was declared redundant in 2003. It is now a heritage centre run by the Bible Society. Nearby, the John Lewis Partnership has a private hotel for its employees, complete with a spa, 9 hole golf course, archery range and, of course, the views of Bala Lake





Lake Vyrnwy

Roughly 8 miles from Bala Lake, along a steep, poorly signposted and narrow lane is Lake Vyrnwy. Water from the lake is used in the manufacture of Bombay Sapphire gin.

The Victorian reservoir of Lake Vyrnwy with its stone-built dam, built in the 1880s, was the first of its kind in the world. The Nature Reserve and the area around it are jointly managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), and Severn Trent Water. It was built for the purpose of supplying Liverpool and Merseyside with fresh water. It flooded the head of the Vyrnwy Valley and submerged the small village of Llanwddyn.



The dam construction started in 1881 and was completed seven years later in 1888. It was the first large stone-built dam in the United Kingdom, and is built partly out of blocks of Welsh slate 144 ft from the bottom of the valley, 128 ft thick at the base, 1,171 ft long with a road bridge running along the top.

Approximately 3,300 ft from the dam is the reservoir's straining tower. Standing only (98 ft from the shore its purpose is to filter or strain out material in the water with a fine metal mesh, before the water flows along the aqueduct to Liverpool. Its architecture is Gothic and built during the same time as the dam. The tower as a whole is 207 ft tall, 49 ft of which is underwater. The other 157 ft is above water, and is topped with a pointed copper clad roof, which makes it look light green.



The sixty-eight miles of aqueduct bring water from Lake Vyrnwy delivering up to 50 million gallons per day into reservoirs at Prescott, east of Liverpool.



The Lake has a circumference of 11 miles with a road that goes all the way around it 311 streams, waterfalls and rivers flow into the lake and are named after the mountains or hillsides they flow from.

Parking close to the railway station at Bala Lake, it takes roughly 4 hours to complete the total cycle ride (a leisurely pace of 1 hr around Lake Bala, 1 hour in each direction from there to Lake Vyrnwy, then allow another hour to go around Lake Vyrnwy. Refreshments can be brought at the mid-way point in the tourist centre at Lake Vyrnwy. Throughout the ride, the views are spectacular.