

## FROM HOME TO BANGOR

Throughout the summer months a weekly bike ride from home in Harlech to work at Bangor has followed a journey of some 38 miles taking an average of just under 4 hours in each direction.

The journey is part of the national cycle route numbered 8 (its full length goes from Holyhead to Chepstow) and this particular section threads through a mixture of road and cycle tracks that offer country and sea views, fresh and not-so-fresh air.

### A LITTLE BIT ABOUT HARLECH

Harlech as a town is linked with Branwen, in a story contained in the Mabinogion.

The castle was built during the reign of Edward 1st, taken over by Owain Glyndwr and retaken by Harry of Monmouth, later Henry V.

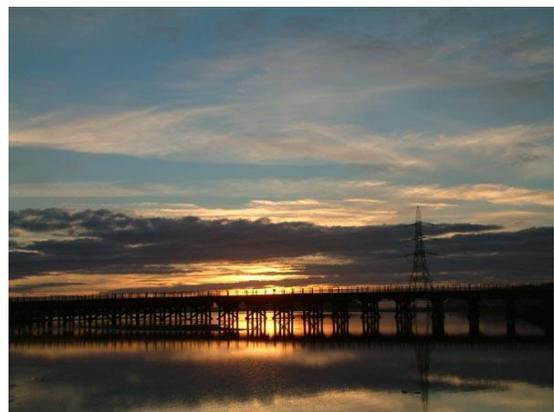
The castle was originally built by the sea and our home is constructed on what used to be the sea bed, reflected in the naming of our road, 'Castell Morfa', or 'Castle fen'



The route from Harlech to Bangor begins on the A 496 and goes through the villages of Ynys, Talsarnau and Llandecwyn, turning left onto a Toll road over Pont Briwet. This part of the journey is roughly 4 miles and takes about 20 minutes on a moderately busy, narrow road.

The Pont was built over 150 years ago and the cost of crossing is 40p for motor cars, 30p for motor bikes and 0p for me who crosses before the toll house opens. The bridge also carries the Cambrian railway to Pwllheli.

A few weeks ago the Welsh Assembly announced that a new road and rail crossing will be constructed in 2012, leaving the present bridge for people and cyclists.



There seems to be a lot of investment for motorists, whether this is a good thing or not depends whether you are stuck in traffic or want to preserve the natural landscape

Work has now begun on a by-pass road to ease traffic congestion in Porthmadog. The Road will begin roughly 1 mile from Pont Briwet at the village of Minffordd, close to Portmeirion. The road is intended to stop traffic congestion in Porthmadog so that vehicles can by-pass the town and rejoin the original road at Tremadog



This is the landscape that the bypass road will cut through and this is the cycle path across 'The Cob' towards Porthmadog. 'The cob' is a name given to the long sea wall at Porthmadog, constructed in the early 1800s by William Maddocks. Its effect created a sea port and the wall carried a railway track to bring slate from quarries in Blaenau Festtiniog. This created employment, homes and shops and is responsible for the creation of Porthmadog.



This view of the harbour at Porthmadog was taken from the A487, a journey of roughly 7 miles from home in Harlech that takes about 35 minutes, often far quicker than car journeys take during the holiday months of summer

Cycling just over a mile from Porthmadog on the A487 is the pretty village of Tremadog. This is where TE Lawrence, known as Lawrence of Arabia was born. The brass plaque above the window of his birthplace, now a B&B states he was born in this house in 1888.

In 1962 the film 'Lawrence of Arabia' was made Peter O'Toole portraying Lawrences' experience in Arabia during the 1<sup>st</sup> world war



The A487 from Tremadog to Bryncir is the toughest and most dangerous part of the cycle ride, 5 miles up a steep followed by a straight road that motorists speed along. Once at Bryncir the entrance to the Lon Eifion, a designated cycle path, can be found off a short driveway just past some cattle sheds.

Lon Eifion follows a pathway once used by horse drawn trams that pulled slate from quarries to Caernarfon harbour. In later years the route was used by the Nantlle Railway, the lines laid by the Stephensons. closed under the Beeching cull in 1964. The route was redesignated as a cycle path in the 1990s. As a reminder of bygone days the cycle path shadows part of the Welsh Highland railway which begins at Dinas.



This is the Bryncir entrance to Lon Eifion and this is the West Highland Railway depot at Dinas.

Lon Eifion is roughly 12 miles long and takes 40 minutes to cycle along. It ends at the West Highland railway station at Caernarfon.



This photo was taken on the way into work and shows the sun rising on Caernarfon Castle with the harbour in the foreground.

In bygone days this would have been where the trains reached their destination and slate taken to nearby ships for exporting.

The cycle route goes anti-clockwise around the castle following a roadway, joining the Los Menai cycle route out of Caernarfon



The Lon Las Menai cycle way runs 4 ½ miles from Doc Victoria at Caernarfon to Felinheli. The first picture is taken from the cycle path as it travels alongside the Menai Straits, past the former Ferodo factory site to Felinheli – where the second picture was taken. This is an easy journey, taking just over 10 minutes.



The route from Felinheli to Bangor follows the A4547 alongside the wall and entrances to the Faenol estate. The outer wall is 7 miles long!

The origins of the estate go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Bishops of Bangor sold this land to the Assheton-Smith family who had profited from slate quarrying.

The last part of the journey to work is made safe by cycling up the pavement next to the A487 (Penrhos hill).

Penrhos hill is not that steep but does go on for the best part of a mile and the stench of traffic fumes is not very pleasant.

Beyond Penrhos Hill the A487 levels off along the Treborth Road before dipping down to collect traffic at a roundabout coming from the A5 Menai Bridge to Bangor



Arriving at Bangor after cycling roughly 38 miles in an average time of 2¾ hours is good to do in mild, dry weather and not much fun in the wind or rain. The best part of the journey is the great views, fresh air and the traffic free cycling paths along the Cob, Lon Eifion and Lon Menai.