

The Preseli Calendar Ride - Notes

Main route:

Short Cut saves:

Detour adds:

Gwaun Valley (Cwm Gwaun)

Formed by glacial melt-water. The old religion still survives here, and New Year's Eve (Hen Galan) is still celebrated on 13th January (as in the old calendar).

Preseli Hills (Mynydd Preseli)

Formed by very hard volcanic igneous rocks. High point cairns on east end is probably the source of the Stonehenge bluestones (probably transported by Ice-Age glaciers rather than heaving Stone Age men). Its strategic trading position between Ireland and Britain, meant the Preselis emerged as one of the great centres of Celtic culture. The hills are littered with cairns and standing stones. Many of the old *Mabinogion* stories are centred here, and tales of King Arthur abound.

Rosebush

Local land-owner Sir Hugh Owen attempted to turn Rosebush into a Victorian spa town. The arrival of the Maenclochog Railway in 1876 led to a spate of developments. The slate quarries were extended, cottages were built, lakes dug, ornamental gardens laid out, and the corrugated *Preselly Hotel* (locally called *Ty-zinc*, now renamed *Tavern Sinc*) was built. But the tourists turned up their noses. The water proved to have no special properties; the railway failed because Brunel built a better railway around the mountain instead of over it; and the quarries closed. Barbara Cartland's grandfather invested the family fortune in the railway and lost it all - that is the reason why Barbara had to start writing to help support the rest of the family (who were now down to their last servant!). The old quarries are well worth a visit, especially the secluded pool and the hole in the ground we call *The Lost World* - private land so best to ask someone first.

Waldo's Stone

Memorial to a famous Welsh Bard. Opposite is a blue stone which was helicoptered down off the top of the hill.

Mynachlog-ddu

The Rebecca Riots started here in 1839, when downtrodden tenant farmers dressed as '*Rebecca & her sisters*', and burned the turnpike tollgate at Efailwen, 4 miles south. The leader lived at Carn-y-buwch cottage, on the common before the village. During the next 5 years riots broke out all across south and mid Wales. This was a success story, with the rioters leading the authorities a merry dance, and few of them being apprehended. It led to legislation in 1844 which removed many of their grievances. The Rebeccas were connected with the Chartists and the Co-operative Movement.

Gors Fawr (The great wasteland)

Prehistoric circle of 16 2-foot-high stones in a field of looks like tea cosies. Alignment of 2 larger outliers, 100 yards north, indicates a solar line giving sunrise on the longest day and sunset on the shortest day. A magic spot, where you can revive the ancient ritual of passing the Garibaldi biccies in a widdershins direction (anti-clockwise).

Pentre Ifan

Neolithic cromlech (chambered tomb), built c.2,000 BC. Capstone weighs 16 tons. Now denuded of soil, the original earth barrow was over 130 foot long, 65 feet wide, and 11 feet high.