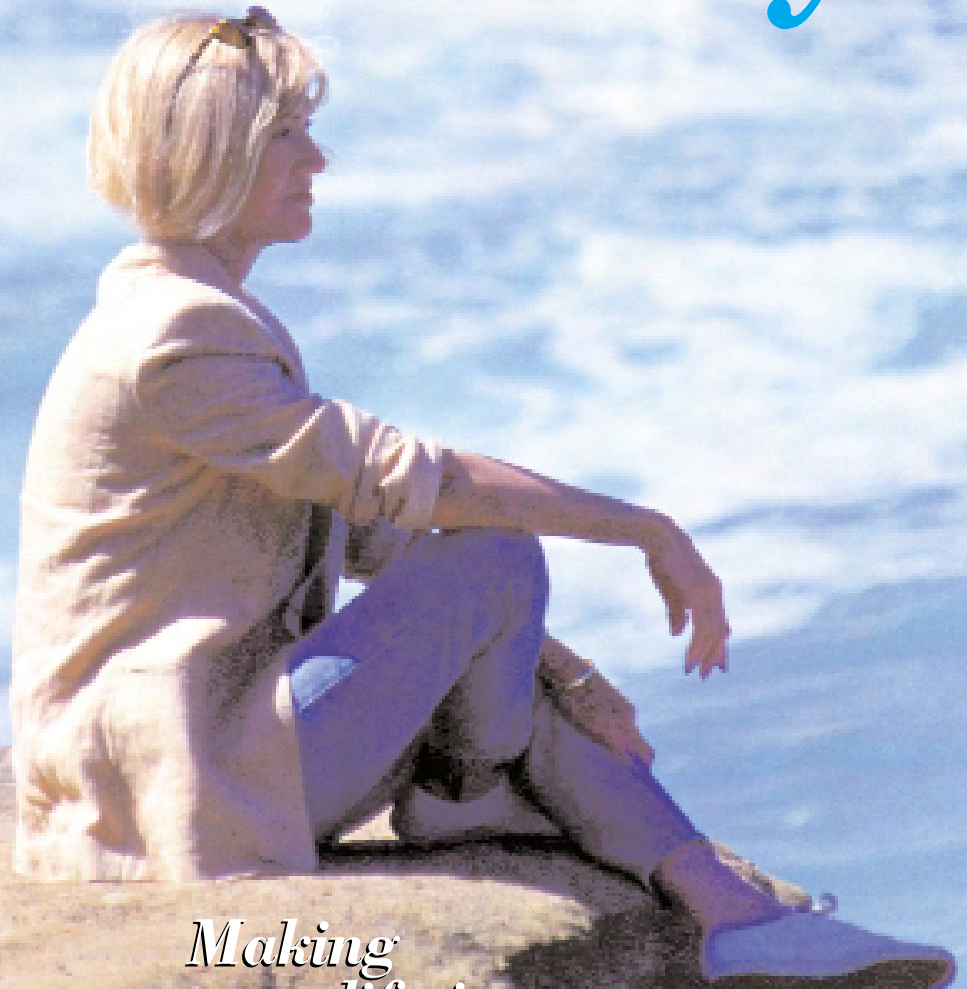


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# PUMMLUMON

## The birthplace of Tourism



*Kite courtesy of Forestry Commission Wales*



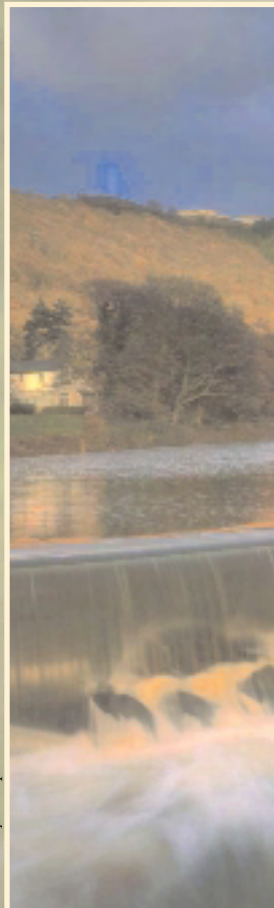
*P Hamm - Devil's Bridge*



*P Hamm - Llyuermog Silver-Lead Mine*



*P Hamm - Llyuermog Silver-Lead Mine*



*Felin Weir by kind permission Pentir Pummlumon*

Pummlumon: The birthplace of Tourism

Set amid the Cambrian Mountains in mid-Wales Philip Hann finds some of the most stunning scenery mid Wales has to offer.

Pumlumon (its name means five peaks) may not register in many people's minds as a holiday destination, however this wasn't always the case. In the early 19th century the area was a mecca for the early traveller and saw the birth of tourism in the United Kingdom. Artists, poets, writers and famous politicians including it is rumoured, Lloyd George were visitors. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty ranging from rolling hills to deep valleys, situated in one of the least known areas of Wales, but only a short distance from the resort town of Aberystwyth.

Like many people, I have previously found Wales difficult to explore by car, yet Pumlumon is really accessible. I travelled from the midlands, turning off the M5 and followed the A44 through Worcester and Leominster, which takes you through some stunning scenery before arriving at my hotel. Despite the ease of access Pumlumon preserves its feel of peaceful remoteness. The whole area is a paradise for walkers with a landscape that is quite breathtaking!

We based our visit at Devils Bridge, staying at the Hafod Arms Hotel. The hotel was originally built as a hunting lodge by Thomas Johnes, the squire of the nearby Hafod Estate but later became a hotel to accommodate visitors to the nearby falls. The hotel is located above the gorge and the magnificent water falls, adjacent to the legendary three bridges. On arrival I looked for three bridges but could only see one, it's only when I walked down towards the falls that I realised the three bridges have been built one on top of the other. On each side of the bridge there are walks to view the falls although the shorter walk is slightly easier it is not for those with any form of incapacity or fear of heights. The longer walk should only be attempted by those who are fairly fit and fearless. The special feature of the walk is 'Jacobs Ladder' 100 steps carved out of rock by monks centuries ago. However, do not let me put you off, if you are fit and stout hearted both the walks are well worth the effort. The longer walk brings you out immediately opposite the entrance to the hotel and afterwards a cream tea in the hotels tearooms is most welcome!

No trip to Pumlumon would be complete without a visit to the Hafod Estate only a short drive from Devils Bridge. The estate is virtually unknown today, however this was not always the case. It was once one of the most visited places in Wales, but by the middle of the 20th Century it was largely forgotten lying sadly neglected. The estate had many owners over the years but was originally the vision of one man Thomas Johnes (1748-1816). Sadly the house built by Johnes was destroyed in the 1940's with only the original stables remaining. After changing hands between various

organisations, too many to mention in this article, the Hafod Trust came into existence in the mid 90's. In the late 90's a grant was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund enabling staff to be employed and further restoration work to begin.

The 200-hectare landscape created by Johnes is recognised as one of the finest examples in Europe of a picturesque landscape. This remarkable estate has much to offer the visitor. Within the grounds there are 15km of walks available to visitors with some unique scenery. The walks include The Lady's Walk, The Garden Walk and for the more physically demanding Gentleman's Walk. The views are truly breathtaking and give the visitor a chance to appreciate the diversity the region has to offer.

Today when you look at what appears to be a completely natural landscape it is hard to appreciate that in the middle of the 19th century much of the area incorporated heavy industry. There had always been small-scale mining, dating back to the Bronze Age but from the 1830's lead and silver mining became big business. New villages grew up with a frontier (Klondike) character; reservoirs

were constructed to provide waterpower. The Vale of Rheidol narrow gauge railways was built from Devil's Bridge to the coast to carry minerals and timber. The narrow gauge steam railway is still in daily use yet it now transports visitors at a leisurely pace along the steep valley allowing plenty of time to enjoy the stunning views.

The last mine closed in the 1920's, however you can still experience the working life of a miner by visiting the Llywernog Lead and Silver Mining Museum. Visitors will be given a warm welcome and a walk around the original waterwheels with a chance to view the artefacts on the surface before experiencing a guided tour below ground. This gives the visitor a chance to learn about the daily life of the miners covering everything from superstitions to experiencing some of their working conditions.

Natural mountain lakes, old mine ponds, the reservoirs of the Rheidol hydro-electric scheme, along with rivers and streams, provide a wide choice of location for the angler and some of the best brown trout fishing in the country. With so many different habitats the whole Pumlumon area is a paradise for bird-watchers and visitors will quickly learn to spot the areas most special bird, the red kite. For close up views, you can attend the daily kite-feeding session at Bwlch Nant yr Arian.

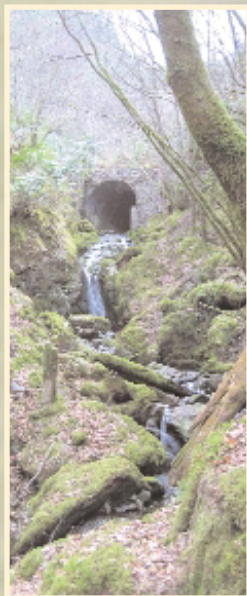
The combination of stunning countryside, culture and wildlife makes the region a destination with something for everyone. Pumlumon is as yet remains mainly undiscovered, now is the perfect time to make that introduction ■

**For further information contact; Pentir Pumlumon  
01974 282581 [www.pumlumon.org.uk](http://www.pumlumon.org.uk)**

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Courtesy of Pentir Pumlumon - Devil's Bridge



P Hann - Hafod Estate



P Hann - Hafod Estate



Courtesy of Pentir Pumlumon - Bwlch Nant yr Arian

