

# SAUNDERSFOOT BAY COAL INDUSTRY HIDDEN HERITAGE DISCOVERY TRAIL



DIWYDIANT GLO BAE  
SAUNDERSFOOT LLWYBR DARGANFOD  
TREFTADAETH GUDD

"My name is Tomos, I am 12 years old and I used to work down the coal mine at Bonville's Court on top of the hill in Saundersfoot. The work was very hard, we often worked for 12 hours a day crawling through the tunnels dragging a tram full of coal.

Come with me on the journey and we will find out about some of the history and heritage of Saundersfoot Bay. You can imagine what life was like for me 150 years ago. Our circular walk is about 9 miles. You can choose much shorter walks or add detours along the way. You will find a map of the walk(s) on the centre pages"



"Fy enw i yw Tomos, rydw i'n 12 mlwydd oed a bŴm yn arfer gweithio i lawr yn y pwll glo yng Nghwrt Bonville ar ben yr allt yn Saundersfoot. Roedd y gwaith yn galed iawn, roeddem yn gweithio am 12 awr y diwrnod yn aml yn cropan drwy'r twneli yn llusgo tram wedi'i llenwi â glo. Tyrd gyda mi ar y daith ac fe ddarganfyddwn ychydig am hanes a threftadaeth Bae Saundersfoot. Gallwch ddychmygu sut fu bywyd i mi 150 mlynedd yn ôl. Mae ein taith gylchol oddeutu 9 milltir. Gallwch ddewis teithiau cerdded llawer byrrach neu ychwanegu gwyradau ar hyd y ffordd. Fe welwch fap o'r daith (teithiau) ar y tudalennau canol."

"There have always been small mining developments owned by farmers in Saundersfoot Bay but from 1830 onwards, with the onset of the industrial revolution, coal was in great demand and due to the large quantities found in this area, over fifteen coalmines came into operation. Follow me to find out more and look out for signs with pictures of me to help you find your way.

Why not see if you can find the answers to the questions in Tomos's Teasers? (See last page)"

## Begin your walk at Saundersfoot Harbour

"A harbour of this size was not built for a few fishing boats to land their catch. So what was it built for? The answer is COAL. The coal boats would leave the harbour loaded with coal, returning with a range of materials used as ballast which they dumped on local beaches. You can still find interesting stones from this ballast including Connemara Marble."





# 1. Saundersfoot Harbour

## 1. Harbour Saundersfoot

The original well-sheltered harbour in **Saundersfoot**, was built in 1829, in response to the rapid growth of the thriving coal industry in the area which was developed by the **Vickerman family**. They lived in Hean Castle and later at St Issells' house - now the Captain's Table on the harbour. Before the harbour's development, coal was loaded into boats at Swallow Tree Bay and **Coppet Hall**, (thought to derive from 'coal pit haul').

Before the railway was built in the early 1830's, the coal carts were pulled to the beaches by horses and oxen from the pits around the church. The route became known as **Black Walk**. Slater's Directory of 1868 referred to Saundersfoot and the harbour as "a flourishing little port, connected by tramways with extensive collieries, the coals from which are excellent...". In 1840, 39,405 tons of coal were shipped from the harbour.

To find out about Charles Ranken Vickerman, a leading industrialist at the time, and boat building in the Strand (previously Railway Street) go to [www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk](http://www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk)



## 2. The Saundersfoot Coal Office

### 2. Swyddfa Lo Saundersfoot



The Coal Office in Saundersfoot stands proudly by the harbour. Together with the harbour, the Coal Office was the operations centre of the coal industry in the area.

It was built in 1860 and was the operations hub of the **Saundersfoot Railway and Harbour Company**. When the coal industry ceased, the Coal Office was utilised in many ways including some years as a Tourist Information Centre.

To find out more go to [www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk](http://www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk)

You can follow the route the miners took to the pits by walking up the Incline or down the Strand through the tunnels at Coppet Hall and onto Wiseman's Bridge. To find out more about the railway engines Rosalind and Bulldog that transported the miners and coal go to [www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk](http://www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk)



"You can detour here if you wish to see the Incline above the village ③

Follow the Blue Route from the Coal Office"



"Walk up to the Incline to see where the 'drams' (also known as trams) were hauled up the hill by a small Winding House at the summit. The 'Bulldog' engine was used to transport the drams to the pits at Bonville's Court Colliery and on to Thomas Chapel. I used to work down the pit at this colliery. I was a 'trammer'. I had to crawl through the tunnels dragging a tram full of coal. It weighed about the same as 4 grown ups. It was hard work and dangerous. My foot was crushed but now I have an easier job, showing visitors like you around!"

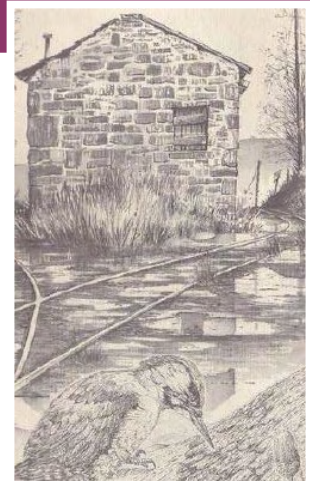
## 3. The Incline

### 3. Yr Incline

**Bonville's Court Colliery** was the largest in Pembrokeshire at the height of the mining era. The main line of the new railway was built to transport the mined coal from the pits that followed a route from Saundersfoot to **Thomas Chapel** – about 4 ½ miles.

A feature of the railway was a self-acting incline, 300 yds long at a gradient of 1 in 5. This was situated half a mile west from the harbour. At the foot was a siding and railwayman's hut, whilst at the summit, was a small winding house. This can be seen in the picture here.

The Incline (as it is now known) and the remains of the winding house can still be seen today.



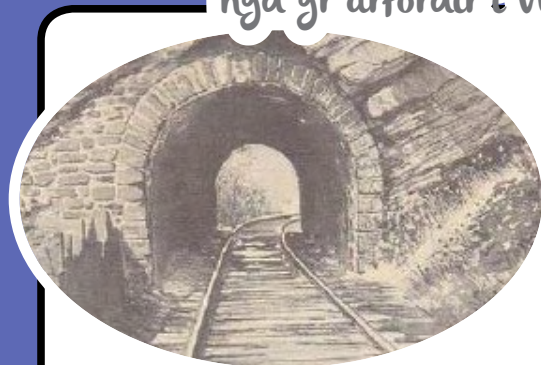
"From the Coal Office, walk into The Strand and follow it through the first of the tunnels at the end of the street. You will then reach the Car Park at Coppet Hall ④ "

"The Strand, as it is now called, was known as **Railway Street** in my time, because the railway ran along it from the harbour. Here there were lots of trades. My dad's mate worked at the busy ship-building yard down here. At the end of this street you will see the first of the tunnels hacked through the cliff side through which the railway ran. The '**Rosalind**' engine would take miners to work at Stepside - returning loaded up with coal"



## 4. The railway line running through a tunnel along the coast to Wiseman's Bridge

4. Y llinell reilffordd yn rhedeg drwy'r tunnel ar hyd yr arfordir i Wiseman's Bridge



"Cross the road at the car park entrance and follow the footpath (Black Walk) through an open field. Pass through the kissing gate and bear left up the track. Walk through the caravan park to St Issells Church.

If you are not doing the long walk and would like to visit St Issells Church, then you can detour here, up Black Walk to the church. If you are not doing the long circular walk, then continue following the footpath through the tunnels to no ⑨ "

“The footpath across the field is known as the Black Walk because the coal carts were pulled down through this walk to the beach by oxen and horses to the waiting boats on the beach. My dad remembers this when he was a boy. Coppet Hall was by far the busiest area before the harbour was built in Saundersfoot. The coal was mined further up the valley beyond St Issells Church”



To find out more about the coal industry in the area, and the value of the precious anthracite mined here go to [www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk](http://www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk)



This is what the Black Walk looked like in the mid 1800's.



“St Issells Church is where I used to go to school – you can find the old school house behind the church. The church marks the place where the original hamlet of Saundersfoot began”



"At the church turn right on to the road and walk up the road to the T junction - opposite Hean Castle Estate. Turn left here then left again for Sardis, keeping on the road"



**HEAN CASTLE** is an anglicised form of the original Welsh name, Hen Gastell or Old Castle. It is known that Hean Castle was at one time a property owned by the Wogan family. In 1863 it was bought by the influential London solicitor and industrialist Charles Ranken Vickerman, who was the main driving force behind the industries of the Saundersfoot district during the last half of the 19th century.

Vickerman died in 1897 and his son sold the mansion and Estate to Sir William Thomas Lewis, Lord Merthyr. The Lewis family still resides here and the house, gardens, parkland and Estate retain much of the character of a Victorian country estate. The local farms and cottages are owned by the Estate and identifiable by their colour scheme, as Estate properties are generally painted in cream and green. The mansion is now a listed building (not open to the public).

"As you enter Sardis there are two cottages known as Harry's Tump. This site is believed to be a burial mound of the Bronze Age, and the original Hean Castle is thought to be on the site of an Iron Age Fort"



"At the Post Box, signposted - No Through Road - turn right down this track and follow to a marked gate.

Keep to the edge of the field to a second gate, climb the stile, and follow the hedge on left to the bottom of field (towards the sea). Climb another stile and walk through a six bar metal gate.

You will pass through a farmyard and past a row of caravans on the right. Follow the footpath sign and climb another stile following the yellow arrow. There will be another stile to climb, following the fence with another stile and down a woodland path"



"When you come to the road, take a right to Tramway Cottage. At the cottage turn left. You are now on the old railway line which transported the coal from the Grove Colliery to Saundersfoot. Follow this flat well defined path to Mill House, and Harvest Mill (with old millstone in the garden). Turn left into the Ironworks. Just past these houses turn left into the Ironworks and take the steps up to see the remains of the old Grove Colliery **5** & **5a** "

"The path by Tramway Cottage is the old railway line that took miners to work in the Grove Colliery and Ironworks. Carts of coal would be returned to the harbour in Saundersfoot to be shipped. It is said that the quality of the anthracite in our area was thought of as being very special"



## 5. Ironworks Stepside

### 5. Gwaith Haearn Stepside

In order to use the iron ore dug from the mines, the Grove ironworks at Stepside was opened. In the 1840's, the Ironworks were in full operation. There was a row of lime kilns, two blast furnaces with blowing engines, coke ovens and a foundry. The Ironworks buildings are still impressive to this day.



# MAP



NOTE: The beach detour is only passable at low tide - check for times

## KEY

-  Main Walk
-  Short Walk
-  Detour
-  Beach Detour
-  Parking
-  Toilets

## EXPLORE LIVING HISTORY SAUNDERSFOOT BAY COAL INDUSTRY HIDDEN HERITAGE DISCOVERY TRAIL

Circular route - 23km

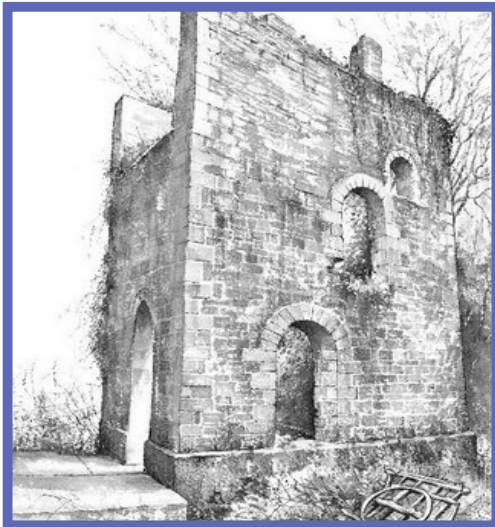


# 5a. Grove Colliery

## 5a. Pwll Glo Grove

The Grove Colliery in Stepside started operating in 1853. It was one of the deepest shafts at 182 meters. The aim was to reach the Kilgetty anthracite vein. It was finally linked up in 1858 at a cost of £30,000.

Coal from the Grove was carried both to the Saundersfoot Railway via Stepside and to a self-acting incline to the Ironworks below. Grove Colliery was later connected to Kilgetty Colliery via an underground tunnel some 795 metres long.



The Grove had its own smithy, carpenters' shop, stores and stables which housed the pit ponies. You can climb up to the colliery remains via steps to the right side of the Ironworks.

"Can you imagine what it was like working in a busy colliery and foundry like this? I knew lots of people who worked here. Stiflingly hot during 12 hour days and yet people would come from all around the area to get work"





"Retrace your steps to the entrance to the Ironworks, cross the road and turn left at the green footpath sign and walk through the grassed area to the footpath (Tomos) between the Mill House and Harvest Mill. Climbing up, ignore the second yellow arrow and continue the climb following a sharp right bend in the track. At the road turn left and then right continuing up the road to Green Plains Bungalow. Here follow the footpath sign to the left. At the next green sign, take a right down the path through a kissing gate.

Follow this path up to Cwmrath Farm, through a wooden gate and follow the track up to the main road. At the road turn right and then left by the Summerhill sign. By the entrance to a farmyard, follow the bridledways sign down a dirt track. (A small section of this path can get muddy - so go with caution).

Continue down this winding track to the bottom and turn right. You are now in Colby Woodland Gardens on Long Lane **6**

This is a good place to take a break across the gardens at the Bothy tea-rooms"





## 6. Colby Lodge and Woodland Gardens

### 6. Gerddi Coetir Colby Lodge

Coal mining thrived here for over 100 years. Colby has a number of capped mineshafts for you to discover. Many labourers lived in mud hovels. There were no proper beds, tables or chairs, just a covering of loose straw and filthy rugs. "In no part of the country have I witnessed such abject and wretched poverty"

- said an observer at the time of John Colby's ownership and management of the mines.

Today Colby's extensive, beautifully laid out woodland gardens are owned and managed by the National Trust and the site attracts over 25,000 visitors a year.





"John Colby Snr. lived close to his mines at Colby Lodge. The anthracite mined here was highly praised by Queen Victoria who, it was said, would use nothing else on her Royal Yacht. John Colby built his Lodge in 1803. It was a very hard life being a miner. The working conditions were very poor, and there were many accidents. Hunger and desperation to make a better life forced men, women and children to work in the mines. However they would often become ill and end up with nothing. Many would be sent to the workhouse near Narberth. This is what happened to Mary Prout, who lived near us at the time. You can read her story later on your journey. As you take the woodland walk along the anthracite pits that dot the hillside, picture the miners on their way home after a long hard day down the mines"



A young boy drags the cart, full of coal, up the narrow mine shaft



The mineshafts at Colby were small and narrow and children as young as five were sent down the pit. A child would be fitted with a girdle which was fastened round their body, and a chain between the legs, enabling them to drag the cart through the narrow shaft on all fours. It was hard and painful work. Children suffered with bleeding feet; raw skin on the head and on the back, causing outbreaks of boils. Asthma and bronchitis were common with the inhalation of coal dust. Stunted growth, spinal distortions and a short life span of about 45 years was common. "I have been down since aged eight, working from 6am to 6pm. My feet are blistered and raw because it is easier to pull the cart without shoes". Elias Jones (age 14). There was no Welfare State to help families in difficulty during the 1800's and early 1900's.

To find out more about the mining industry at Colby go to  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) › Visit › Wales ›  
Colby Woodland Garden



"Despite the fact that the area was growing and prospering, conditions for ordinary folk were far from good. For many of us life was hard and unhealthy. I was lucky to have some schooling before I was sent down the mines at 10 years old, when my father died. Many of my friends were much younger than me"

"From the Colby Car Park, you can detour to visit St Elidyr's Church and the grave of Mary Prout. (detour about 3kms **7**)"

## 7. The gravestone of Mary Prout at St Elidyr's Church

### 7. Carreg fedd Mary Prout yn Eglwys Sant Elidyr

Mary Prout (Rees) was born in 1842 and it was said that she became pregnant, whilst working as a maid in Saundersfoot. Her mother had died and her father disowned her and sent her to the workhouse.

Mary had a baby girl, Rhoda, and had to leave the workhouse. The baby was found down a mineshaft at Colby. Mary was charged with murder and sentenced to death by hanging, but received a reprieve from Queen Victoria and was committed to 20 years imprisonment in London. She served 10 years and returned to Saundersfoot, married and had two children. who clearly loved and cared for her.



The inscription on her grave at St Elidyr's Church Amroth says "Mary Rees (Prout) late of Saundersfoot. Dear mother, thy work is o'er. Thy loving hands shall toil no more. No more thy gentle eyes shall weep. Rest, dear Mother, gently sleep. Erected by her sorrowing children".



“To continue the main route, walk along Long Lane where there are numerous mine shafts on the hill side now covered in shrubs. (There are also several paths through the woods that you can explore).

At the end of Long Lane you will go through a five bar wooden gate. Take a left here down over the stream. Bear right and follow this path down into Amroth village. Note the Coal Authority secured site where an old mine shaft is behind some metal railings.

Proceed right into the village, (or detour left about two thirds of a mile to the start of the Pembrokeshire Coast Path by The New Inn).

In Amroth, there are several places to eat for you to take a break”.



## 8. A Coal Seam as it Appears in the Rocks on the Beach Between Wiseman's Bridge and Amroth

8. Gwrythien lo fel mae'n ymddangos yn y Creigiau ar y Traeth



Between Amroth and Wiseman's Bridge, coal seams can still be seen in the cliffs. This rock formation began 315 million years ago with mud, sand and gravel being laid down in the swamps and lakes of the coastal plain. Layers of decaying trees were slowly compressed through pressure and heat. As the climate changed, so did the land and coal was no longer formed.

Amroth Beach is home to a sunken forest which can be seen at very low tide. This forest was submerged over 5,000 years ago. Sometimes you can find pieces of coal as you walk along the spectacular Amroth Beach.





"I used to play on the beach between Wiseman's Bridge and Amroth. We used to swim there in the summer to wash off all the coal dust from our work. The bathing is very easy on all the beaches around here as they do not shelve steeply. If you walk along this stretch of beach at low tide, you can see the sunken forest. It shows you how far the sea has encroached on to the land over millions of years. The wood from these forests formed the coal that we are mining today."

"If the tide is well out, you can go on to the beach via the slipway by the toilets and see the sunken forest on the beach and the coal seams in the cliffs **8** Walk up from the beach at the next inlet - Wiseman's Bridge and join the road.

If the tide is in, retrace your steps to the toilets and take the footpath clearly marked up the cliff. This is part of the Coast Path. Follow this path over the top (magnificent views) down into Wiseman's Bridge, bearing left when you reach the road.

At the Inn follow the road through the hamlet over the bridge, turning left off the road, onto the old tramline (the old railway route), following the coast just above the beach. On the path you will see **9** "

## 9. Entrance to the Old Shafts Between Saundersfoot and Wiseman's Bridge

9. Mynediad i'r Hen Siafffiau rhwng Saundersfoot a Wiseman's Bridge



"Watch out for the mine shafts between Wiseman's Bridge and Saundersfoot as in the picture. This one is the entrance to one of the old shafts which are scattered along the cliffs and were called 'patches'. They lead directly to tunnels both inland and under the sea"

"Keep to this path through the long railway tunnel and into the Coppet Hall car park. Retrace your steps through the small tunnel and back via the Strand into Saundersfoot"



## Tomos's Teasers!

How good a detective are you? As you read the booklet, see if you can spot the answers to the questions below.

1. Why was The Strand once called Railway Street.
2. How many tunnels between Saundersfoot and Wisemans Bridge.
3. Were there one, two or three engines carrying miners and coal.
4. Why was the field at Coppet Hall called Black Walk.
5. Where did Tomos go to school.
6. How old were the youngest children to go down the mine.
7. How deep was the shaft at the Grove Colliery.
8. Which Queen chose local coal for her Royal Yacht.
9. Which beach has a sunken forest visible at very low tide.
10. Where on the walk can you see entrances to old coal shafts behind metal bars.



If you have enjoyed finding out about the area's industrial past, you might like to discover other interesting facts about Saundersfoot Bay. You will quickly appreciate that the area boasts a treasure of local history just waiting for you to discover it. These include:

- The Roman settlement near Amroth
- Oliver Cromwell's visit
- Allied forces D Day landings, Operation Jantzen

For further information the following websites are useful:

[www.pembrokeshireonline.co.uk](http://www.pembrokeshireonline.co.uk)      [www.visit-saundersfoot.com](http://www.visit-saundersfoot.com)  
[www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk](http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)      [www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk](http://www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk)

Os ydych wedi mwynhau cael dod i wybod am orffennol diwydiannol yr ardal, efallai hoffech ddarganfod ffeithiau diddorol eraill am Fae Saundersfoot.

Mewn dim o dro byddwch yn gwerthfawrogi fod yr ardal yn meddu ar drysor o hanes lleol sy'n disgwyl amdanoch chi i'w ddarganfod. Mae'r rhain yn cynnwys:

- Yr anheddiad Rhufeinig ger Llanrhath
- Ymweliad Oliver Cromwell
- Glaniadau D Day y lluoedd cynghreiriol, Operation Jantzen

Am ragor o wybodaeth mae'r gwefannau canlynol yn ddefnyddiol:

[www.pembrokeshireonline.co.uk](http://www.pembrokeshireonline.co.uk)      [www.visit-saundersfoot.com](http://www.visit-saundersfoot.com)  
[www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk](http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)      [www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk](http://www.saundersfoothistory.org.uk)

Thanks go to Graham Brace for his original drawing of Tomos, and to the Pembrokeshire County Council, Saundersfoot Chamber for Tourism, Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks Authority, Amroth Community Council and Saundersfoot Community Council for their help and support. Many thanks to PLANED in the production of this leaflet. The use of the Dorian Spencer-Davies pictures are courtesy of the Hean Castle Estate who own the copyright. A wall display of these pictures can be seen in the Coppet Hall Beach Centre. Further works of the artist can be found on 'dorienspencerdaviesart.com'

Diolch i Graham Brace am ei lun gwreiddiol o Tomos, ac i Cyngor Sir Penfro, Saundersfoot Siambr ar gyfer twristiaeth, Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro, Cyngor Cymuned Llanrhath a Chyngor Cymuned Saundersfoot am eu cymorth a'u cefnogaeth. Llauer o ddiolch i PLANED gyda'r gwaith o gynhyrchu'r bamffled hon. Mae defnydd o luniau Dorian Spencer-Davies drwy garedigrwydd Ystâd Castell Hean sydd yn berchen ar yr hawlfraint. Mae modd gweld arddangosiad wal o'r lluniau hyn yng Nghanolfan Traeth Neuadd Coppet. Mae rhagor o waith gan yr artist i'w weld ar 'dorienspencerdaviesart.com'

