

# Wayfarer Centenary



## **The West Arms, Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog**

**29-31 March 2019**

A weekend of cycle rides and lantern slides to mark a hundred years since Wayfarer's famous crossing of the Berwyn mountains in north-east Wales

Friday evening: Lantern-slides presented by Mark Hudson, Archivist of the Rough Stuff Fellowship.

Saturday daytime: rides to suit all appetites, all including riding the rough track to the Wayfarer monument at Pen Bwlch Llandrillo. Members of the Veteran Cycle Club will be riding on period cycles.

Saturday 6pm: Illustrated talk on Wayfarer by David Birchall of the Anfield Bicycle Club.

Saturday 7.30pm: "Over the Top" Centenary Dinner. Three courses, £25 per person excl. drinks (menu available separately). Booking is essential, directly with the West Arms on 01691 600665.

Sunday daytime: More rides.

All weekend: Exhibition of artefacts at the West Arms, curated by the Rough Stuff Fellowship.

The Ceiriog Valley is just off the A5 and the nearest train station is Chirk (11 miles away). There is a variety of accommodation available.

In Llanarmon, The West Arms (B&B from £65 per person, tel 01691 600665) and The Hand (B&B from £55 B&B, tel 01691 600666).

The Glyn Valley Hotel (B&B from £45, tel 01691 718896) is 5 miles away. For cottages and B&Bs in the valley see AirBnB and [bedandbreakfast.eu](http://bedandbreakfast.eu). Enter the postcode LL20 7LD.

Ceiriog Valley Park camping is 4 miles away (tel 01691 718681).

Any queries contact Jack Thurston [jackthurston@gmail.com](mailto:jackthurston@gmail.com)

To register for the Veteran Cycle Club rides for period cycles contact Stephen Costigan [s.costigan@valescorcher.plus.com](mailto:s.costigan@valescorcher.plus.com)



## Who was Wayfarer?

Many thousands of cyclists have made the crossing, now popularly known as 'the Wayfarer', over the Berwyn Mountains, and have signed the visitors' book placed there and looked after by the Rough Stuff Fellowship. Though many know the name, fewer are familiar with the story of the man himself or the reasons why he is so fondly remembered.

The story begins on the last Saturday of March 1919, when a group from the Anfield Bicycle Club met near Chester for a weekend ride. Their plan was to overnight at the West Arms in Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, and on Sunday to cross the Berwyns via the drover's track which climbs Nant Rhydwylym, going over the top at Pen Bwlch Llandrillo. That weekend, the hills were covered in deep snow, making the crossing especially arduous.

Several weeks later, in *Cycling* magazine, the experiences of that snowy weekend were chronicled in an article entitled *Over the Top* by 'Wayfarer', the pen-name of cycling journalist Walter MacGregor Robinson. Its title echoed the horrors of trench warfare. But the article's positive message gave hope to the generation of cyclists returning from the catastrophe of the war.

Wayfarer's special place in cycling history stems from this and many other evocative articles in cycling magazines, lantern-slide lectures and radio broadcasts. His articles celebrated the open road and championed cyclists' rights. He also packed in the crowds as cyclists flocked in large numbers to his lectures about cycle touring. His lyrical, and, some would say, evangelical approach to all aspects of cycling, fired the enthusiasm of countless riders.

W. M. Robinson was born in Birkenhead in 1877 and grew up within sight and sound of the docks and shipyard cranes on the River Mersey. In the the First World War, at the age of 40, he served on the Western Front as a rifleman in the Queen's Westminster Rifles. Within days, he was severely wounded and stretchered back to England. Recovery from his injuries was slow. He then devoted his energies to fund raising for the Cyclist Prisoners of War Fund, and to the creation of the Cyclists' War Memorial at Meriden.

David Birchall, President of the Anfield Bicycle Club

