

Capturing the **Clwydian** *Range*

Free

What lies beneath?

Archaeological secrets unearthed

Back where they Bee-long

The return of the Native Honeybee

Following Acorns

Exploring the Offa's Dyke Path is easier
than you might think



Welcome to 'Capturing the Clwydian Range'

The Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is not only nationally protected, but locally cherished. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are regarded as Britain's most treasured landscapes. Along with the National Parks their special character represents our finest and most precious landscapes.

The dramatic emergence of the Clwydian Range from sea level is seen from local towns and villages like Prestatyn, Mold and Ruthin, as well as being an impressive sight from the Wirral, Merseyside and Cheshire. The Clwydian Range forms a 35km north to south chain of undulating hills extending to 160 km² and rising to 554 metres at the summit of Moel Famau.

The Range stretches from the Vale of Clwyd in the west to the Dee Estuary in the east; from Prestatyn Hillside in the north to the Nant y Garth pass in the south. The open heather moorland of the high ridge dominates the small hedged fields and coppice woodland of the lower slopes. In places, limestone rock outcrops are exposed in attractive wooded escarpments and on the fringes of the area, highly fertile farmland gives a soft pastoral foreground to the hills.

People have visited the Range for 100's of years for its countryside, wildlife and views. Denbighshire Countryside Service in partnership with Flintshire, landowners and other professionals manage the AONB not just for conservation and heritage but also for the local people and visitors. Around ½ million people visit every year, particularly to the two Country Parks, Loggerheads and Moel Famau. The Offa's Dyke National Trail follows almost the entire length of the ridge offering walking routes to some of the wildest countryside. The superb quality of the landscape is complimented by the high quality accommodation, activities, food and welcome that together are the Clwydian Range experience.

In partnership we protect, improve and raise awareness of our rich biodiversity, stunning geological features and archaeological treasures. Our tourism vision is to preserve the quality of the Clwydian Range experience for future generations to enjoy and explore. This high quality comprises both environmental and spiritual aspects of a visit. From repairing well walked paths to promoting the exciting activities and locations that can suit any visitor's needs; from a three day adrenaline pumping adventure to a week of massage, meditation and visits to sacred places.

Hopefully this guide will give you a sense of what it is like in and around our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and will encourage you to indulge in what is on offer.

Vanessa Warrington, Countryside Officer

The AONB Team, Denbighshire Countryside Service, Loggerheads Country Park, Nr Mold, Denbighshire CH7 5LH

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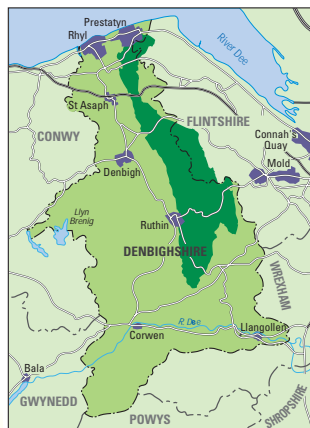
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Fire & Ice

Sculpturing the landscape of the Clwydian Range

Deep seas, crumpled and fractured by earthquakes; volcanoes erupting and hot ash falling over the land and sea; tropical seas teeming with life; huge deltas with swamps and giant mosses; vast hot, red-stained, sandy deserts with occasional flash floods washing life away and, most recently, an encasement of vast ice sheets sculptured the Clwydian Range.

These events and forces were operating as Wales moved northward across the globe over many millions of years, forming the variety of rock types that give the Clwydian Range its dramatic landscape.

Once upon a time.....

490 million years ago

Ordovician Period

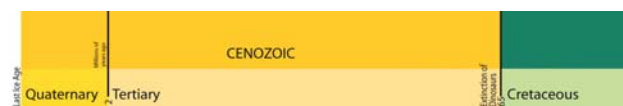
Far in the southern hemisphere, North Wales was covered by a deep sea. Animals like shellfish, squid-like creatures and strange - now extinct - tiny animals called graptolites drifted with the water currents. Occasional volcanic eruptions, in what is now Snowdonia, spewed out hot ash into the sea smothering many of the animals.

The oldest rocks and fossils in the Clwydian Range are from this time, many of which can be seen south of Llandegla.

420 million years ago

Silurian Period

The deep-sea mud was inhabited by strange and wonderful animals; coral reefs, shellfish and crinoids (sea lilies) with their numerous feathery feeding arms, waving to filter food from the surrounding water. The main spine of the Clwydian Range, including Pen y Cloddiau, Moel Arthur, Moel Famau and out to Dinas Bran, has rocks that were once part of this deep sea mud. How do we know? One of the best ways to age rocks is to look for fossil Graptolites. These animals evolved very rapidly and the changes in their bodies can be used to date rocks. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, pioneering women geologists spent years





working out the complex sequence of rocks in the Clwydian Range. Their professor considered the work 'suitable and appropriate work for females and required great patience and perseverance'! Vascular plants (land plants with tissues that carry food) are thought to have evolved during the Silurian Period. Some of the earliest fossil vascular plants were found in the 20th century by the same women geologists.

The Silurian and Ordovician rocks were squeezed by Earth movements to form the slates that are still extracted at the Horseshoe Pass and other parts of North Wales today.

350-290 million years ago **Carboniferous Period**

During the early part of the Carboniferous, Wales had drifted to the tropics, south of the equator, and was covered by a shallow, warm tropical sea, teeming with bug-like trilobites and shellfish. Over time the sea-level fell and vast rivers formed deltas along the coast with dunes which built up to form sandstones. Later, swamps and huge forests grew on the deltas. Over time these

forests died becoming buried and compacted forming Coal. The spectacular Eglwyseg Escarpment above Llangollen, Prestatyn Hillside, Graig Fawr, Melidan and Moel Hiraddug were formed during this period. In fact one of the abundant shellfish's is named after Llangollen.

200 million years ago

Permian - Triassic Periods

Wales was at the same latitude as North Africa and the red sandstones of the Vale of Clwyd were deposited as a huge desert. The Denbigh Moors were pulled apart from the Clwydian Range leaving the Vale of Clwyd between them as a small rift valley, similar to the Great East African Rift Valley. The very steep-angled Vale of Clwyd Fault forms the western side of the Clwydian Range.

2 million years ago

Quaternary Period

Great sheets of ice moved across Wales several times, carving the landscape. The

last glaciation, a thick ice sheet up to 1 kilometre thick covered the area smoothing out the hills and gouging out cwms and valleys. When the ice melted about 14,000 years ago, it left behind boulders (erratics), sands, gravels and muds that form a distinctive landscape typified by the Wheeler Valley, thought to be formed from a river flowing under the ice.

Geological processes are still shaping the Clwydian Range AONB, but very slowly. Although frost, snow and rain are acting on the landscape it is human beings that are having the greatest impact. Geology underlies the special features of the Clwydian Range and it must be managed to protect and enhance the landscape.

Jacqui Malpas, Geodiversity Officer for the Clwydian Range AONB will be running events throughout the year.

For details visit
www.denbighshire.gov.uk/country-side-or-email
jmalpas@geodiversity.co.uk



At the top of my 'list of things to do before I'm forty' was to abseil.

I've been visiting Loggerheads and Moel Famau since I was a child and now I take my children, dogs, wife, the grandparents and occasionally visitors. Anyone who's been there knows the amazing scenery, tranquillity and sense of space that you can get in both parks. So for a 120ft abseiling experience, where better than the familiar, but scarily named, Devils Gorge near Loggerheads Country Park.

My severe lack of balance and being terrified of heights didn't stop me. abseilUK.com, based at Loggerheads, organised the whole thing. I was impressed by their concern for safety, and needn't have been nervous. The scariest part was leaning backwards over the edge, with only a 120ft drop between me and very hard ground - it would probably be more than a bump if I fell!

"Gradually release yourself down on your rope" was the next thing I heard from instructor Frank. (I'll keep my initial response to that instruction out of this article!)

So, with the comforting thought that I was secured with a second rope from the top, I lent back. Further and further until at about 80 degrees I was told to "step down over the overhang".

What seemed like a lifetime later I was over that hurdle and was, to my surprise, lowering myself easily down the rope. I hardly needed my legs at all - which was great because they were still shaking! I descended, relaxed a little and began to enjoy the experience more and more. I could look away from the rock and moss in front of me now to the view of the surrounding caves and trees. I didn't want the experience to end and my grin got bigger and bigger.

At the bottom I was greeted with a round of applause. Talk about an Adrenalin Rush!

As I was the organiser I'd had to go first, so I had the pleasure of watching my mates follow me down the cliff. There were six of us all together, all colleagues, and professionals with a determination to achieve something challenging every couple of months. The rest of the team looked remarkably cool on their descents, but having spoken to them afterwards, most of them confessed to being terrified too.

Psychologically we got a huge boost from the Abseiling experience. Personally, I love the feeling of satisfaction when I've achieved something for the first time. I'm a great believer in setting personal goals and keeping them in mind everyday. I'd been trying to organise the Abseil for 18 months, and at times I thought it would never happen. It may take perseverance and careful planning, but it can and will happen with enough determination.

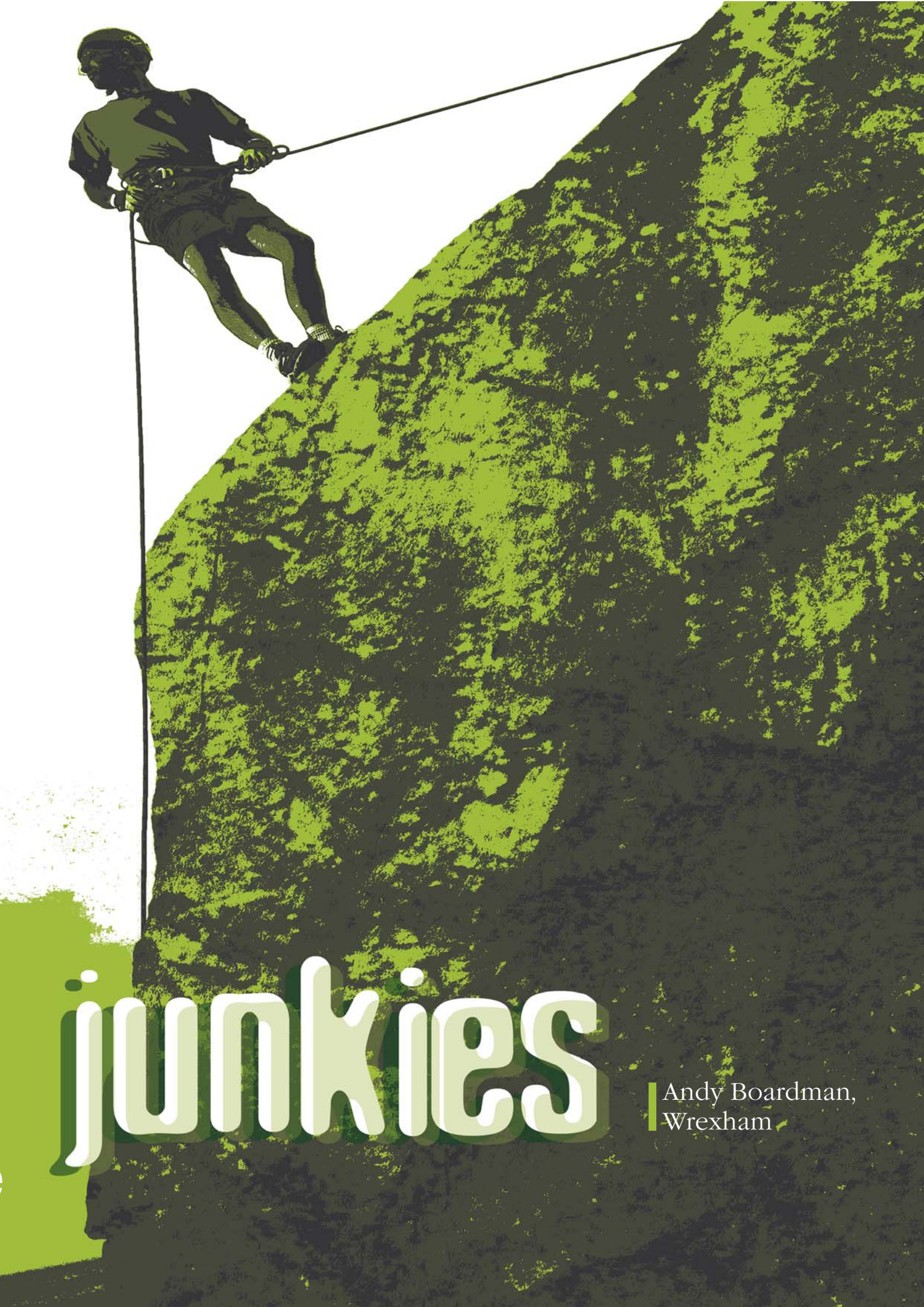
I'd certainly recommend abseiling to anyone

Visit www.abseilUK.com for details.



Adrenaline

Abseiling in the Clwydian Range



junkies

Andy Boardman,
Wrexham

I thought I knew Moel Famau

As I walked away from my car I felt like I was leaving more than just my car behind - I was also turning my back, for a few hours at least, on all the hustle and bustle of life. Only a couple of miles away bumper to bumper traffic and trolley to trolley supermarket queues add to the constant noise that is the sound track to modern life.

Yards from the car park I already felt in another world. The low autumn light cast long crisp shadows across the Vale of Clwyd giving all the fields and hedgerows, the trees and farm buildings an amazing sharpness and a wonderful golden glow.

In the couple of hours spare this afternoon I decided to take the relatively short but strenuous walk to the Jubilee Tower at the top of Moel Famau, the highest point of the Clwydian Range. I have walked this way many times before but it continues to reveal something different to me each time I return. The light, the wind, sometimes the rain, all these things combine to give Moel Famau its different flavours.

As I came to the top of the first hill I saw one of the Wardens, striding knee deep through the heather towards the path. When he reached me, and the well defined path that I was following, I noticed that his boots and the bottoms of his trousers were soaked and covered in heather seed. He was heading towards the summit so we walked part of the way together. Rhun told me he was the Warden for the moorland and the adjacent forest and was out that afternoon looking at recently cut areas of heather, looking at new areas to burn.

That sounded a bit drastic to me, but apparently the wardens have to cut or burn a proportion of the heather every year to allow for new growth. This new growth is good for the sheep (old woody heather is not as tempting!) and for the array of rare birds that nest in amongst the older heather but rely on young heather and bilberry for food.

I had seen the patchwork of cuts and burns in the heather before, but not registered what it was. Rhun said somebody once reported it as the result of UFO landings!

So, back to the rare birds that are being so well-provided for here? Rhun told me most of the work was carried out for red grouse and black grouse although other species such as hen harrier and merlin also benefit. I assumed that grouse were bred for shooting and that surely we could just breed some more and introduce them. Rhun explained that they are wild birds that depend on the right conditions of the moorland and forest edge to breed, but that

those conditions are disappearing nationally taking the grouse with them. Traditionally a lot of time and expense was put into making sure these





conditions were right by the game keepers of the large Victorian estates but as these efforts reduced so did the grouse numbers. At the end of the 20th century the Grouse were almost extinct in Wales.

Rhun pointed out more of the management work as we walked towards the Jubilee Tower. The long line of tall conifer trees that mark the edge of the forest had been pruned. All the lower branches were removed making it easier for the birds to move freely between the forest and the moorland. Large areas of the forest had also been completely cleared to extend the moorland areas into the conifer plantation. A series of large holes had been recently dug to collect rain water, to act as 'watering holes' for the birds and encourage the growth of wetland plants like cotton grass (grouse food).

The path became steeper as we got closer to the summit. Stopping to catch our breath we took advantage of the view. Ruthin far below and the Llantysilio and Berwyn Mountains in the distance appeared very close in the sharp autumn light. Either side, two imposing Iron Age Hillforts, Moel y Gaer and Foel Fenlli, framed the scene, with the steep ditches and banks of the fort ramparts almost glowing in the low afternoon light.

Behind us were five huge round bales perched on the edge of the slope. They were gathered as part of the heather cutting work. Talk about sustainability! - These bales were being used by Rhun and the volunteers to repair the side of the path, covering the erosion and reducing the path width. What a fantastic idea! Rhun showed me where they had used the thick mat of heather further up the path. It had reduced the width of the path by over half and on closer inspection I could see the young seedlings beginning to take root. It looked like hard work but the effect was really impressive. We reached the summit and Rhun went onto the forest path. From the Jubilee Tower I looked back along the ridge I had walked. I was looking at a different view than ever before. Rhun had given me a story of the mountain. I wasn't seeing the rugged wilderness I had always taken for granted - but a very fragile landscape, intensively managed and cared for. I never imagined that some of Wales' rarest birds and plants live here.

To visit Moel Famau Country Park follow the signs on the A494 (Mold - Ruthin) road. Leaflets are available from www.denbighshire.gov.uk/countryside or from Loggerheads Country Park.

■ Thomas Middleton, Mold



Following A

Exploring the Offa's Dyke Path is e



It was going to be a good day. I could feel it. The anticipation of a long walk, with panoramic views and a fine forecast always gets the blood pumping a little faster. I had promised sometime ago to take Glyn, my non-walking (but keen) buddy, on an Offa's Dyke Path 'epic' when the weather improved (the plan was hatched on a dark winter evening in the local).

So here we were, in a lay-by in Bodfari, in the north of the Clwydian Range, kitted up for the challenge ahead, having been deposited there by a bus 5 minutes ago. This was going to be a linear walk, south along the Offa's Dyke Path, crossing some of the best (and highest), bits of Clwydian Range. This part of the Path doesn't follow the original earthwork (built by the English king, Offa, in around 790AD to keep the Welsh at bay). The earthwork construction ends West of Wrexham and Chirk, but the Path continues following the best views. Our time challenge was six hours to complete our walk and meet the Clwydian Ranger bus at the Clwyd Gate

for a lift back to the car at Loggerheads. It should be plenty of time to complete our chosen section of the Path, a National Trail that runs a total of 171 miles along the border of England and Wales from Prestatyn to Chepstow. I'm told that over 5000 people every year walk the whole thing.

'So where do we go?' asked Glyn, looking around the lay-by. 'Find the acorns' I said. Glyn soon cottoned on. Over his shoulder was a wooden waymarker arrow with a green disc and white acorn symbol. We just follow the acorns, the logo of the National Trail. We can't get lost because it's really well waymarked.' We crossed a footbridge over the River Wheeler and began to climb the hill to Moel y Parc. We were soon on soft grass, surrounded by bracken and sheep and after 15 minutes were rewarded with great views of the Vale of Clwyd and the Town of Denbigh.

Closing a gate behind us, we started on the steady climb over open farmland to the

acorns

Rhys Huws,
Sychedyn

easier than you might think



summit of Pen y Cloddiau, one of four Iron Age hillforts on this part of the Range. It was amazing to think that people lived up here, 2500 years ago, in little round huts surrounded by large ramparts. It was good to see measures in place to protect the remains. A stone filled frame protects this ancient monument from the countless feet that cross the ramparts.

The Path now descends through Llangwyfan Forest, a coniferous plantation owned by Forestry Commission Wales. It looked like there had been a large fire there recently but amazingly the bracken, heather and other plants were coming up through the blackened surface. I hoped it wasn't a carelessly discarded walker's cigarette that started it. We entered the shade of the woods. The sun sent arrows of light through the trees illuminating the path and our acorns. What a contrast to the open tops of Pen y Cloddiau.

We crossed Star crossing, an old Drovers road (one of the routes over the Range used

by drovers to take animals to market in the east) and climbed a stile into Moel Famau Country Park. I was surprised that the Park extended this far north (it was still 3 miles to Moel Famau) and very different to the country park further south. A short, sharp climb put us on the top of Moel Arthur, another Iron Age hillfort. You could definitely see why they chose this location for a hillfort - steep drops on three sides and excellent views in all directions. The Offa's Dyke Path skirts around Moel Arthur but it is really worth the detour to the top. Glyn and I could clearly see Snowdonia in the distance as we looked over the Vale.

Dropping down from Moel Arthur we braved another steep climb to the top of Moel Llys y Coed where a feeling of being on top of the world washed over us. It was very open country, with heather moorland ahead for as far as we could see. Reaching the summit of Moel Famau, the highest point of the Clwydian Range, we stood on the remains of the Jubilee Tower (originally a 180ft tower built to commemorate the 50 years of George III reign) and ate our lunch. Snowdonia, Cader Idris and even the Catholic cathedral in Liverpool were easy to pick out. What a great reward for our efforts. Through the patchwork of cut heather (to

improve the habitat for Black Grouse) we could see the next stage of Offa's Dyke Path with families, couples and hardened walkers making the steady climb up from the main car park up to the Jubilee Tower.

The main car park at Bwlch Pen Barras was not the end of our journey. Another steep climb to, you've guessed it, another hillfort, brought us onto a path sweeping around the steep ramparts of Moel Fenlli. South of Fenlli, we left the bustle behind, and were greeted by a very pleasant descent over green farmland around Moel Eithinen to the Clwyd Gate. The path leads along the busy A494 Mold - Ruthin road to the Clwyd Gate, our final destination. With forty minutes spare, before the bus arrived, we enjoyed a well earned drink. Although tired, Glyn had a huge satisfied smile on his face, and we agreed - it had been a good day, following acorns!

For more information about walking the Offa's Dyke National Trail, including maps and guide books, visit the Countryside Centre at Loggerheads Country Park ☎ 01352 810586 (weekends & holidays) and 01352 810614 (office hours off season). www.nationaltrail.co.uk





What lies beneath

Archaeological secrets unearthed

A large part of the Clwydian Range is covered by stunning heather moorland. The remote hillsides and peaks are largely uninhabited, even today, but 2000 years or so ago, large family groups lived in simple roundhouses within impressive fortified hillforts on many of the wildest summits.

The Countryside Service and our partners have been working to develop a Heather



and Hillfort project. This will, hopefully, bring £1.5 million into the area, to protect and raise awareness of these amazing hillforts and the stunning heather landscape.

Taking a lesson from Channel 4's 'Time Team', this summer, we decided to invite archaeologists and members of the public

onto three hillforts to 'do some virtual digging' to uncover details of the hillforts covered by the earth.

The technical term for what we were doing is Geophysical Surveying. There are several different methods of geophysical techniques, all of which allow us to get a 'picture' of what is below the ground without having to dig the site up. At the hillforts two techniques were used.



ath?

Resistivity Survey measures the resistance in the ground, the drier the ground the more resistance, and Magnetometry which measures the magnetic properties of the ground. This technique particularly identifies burnt areas and metal but the operator has to make sure they aren't wearing anything with metal in (even metal eyes on shoes or glasses frames!)

We looked at two Iron Age hillforts in the Clwydian Range; Moel Fenli and Pen y Cloddiau and Caer Drewyn hillfort in Corwen. The 40 strong group, aged from 13 to 70, were led by professional archaeologists. Each day started with briefing followed by 3 hours surveying in some of the wettest and windiest weather ever! Finally we returned to our warm base and over tea the experts downloaded our findings onto the computer and we were able to see the results of our work and take copies home.

Foel Fenli - ©'d to the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales.

We took a group up Moel Fenli to record the surface structure and find out the extent of the Bronze Age Barrow beneath the surface.

"We found out that the barrow extends further than it looks on the surface. The weather was cold and very windy but we still succeeded in our task." Jonathan Tipping.

"For all archaeology buffs, Channel 4's Time Team programme is addictive viewing. However, when presented with a chance to become involved with the real thing, it's an opportunity not to be missed!... we eagerly enrolled for a place on the investigation ... and were not disappointed." Pauline Emery and Graham Humphreys, Pen y Cloddiau.

"At the end of the morning we had a three dimensional map of our part of the fort. After lunch we swapped over to do



geophysics. It was fun, and quick to do, everyone had a go with hardly any mistakes... we were all proud of what we achieved, since for most of us it was our first time doing any sort of surveying work." Sioned & Owen Petrie, Caer Drewyn.

"The biggest thing that sticks out about that day was the wind, but it was also great fun and informative - I like walking, and I learned a lot about geophysics that I didn't know. And there was a nice view." Phillip Skippon, on work experience at Caer Drewyn.

The events were a great success and the results formed part of the application which was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in January 2007. If this is successful we hope to run more of these activities so watch this space.....

For more information, or to follow the progression of the bid visit www.denbighshire.gov.uk/countryside.

■ Helen Mrowiec, Project Officer



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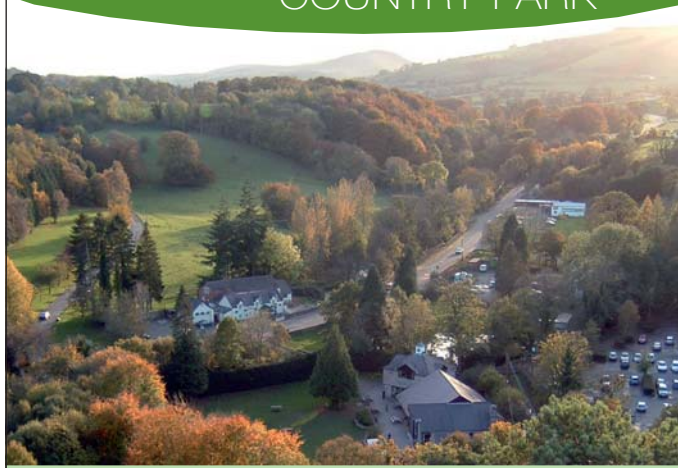

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Autumn Fresh

3 miles of breathtaking scenery rewarded with a pint

Autumn is my favourite season for walking. The dramatic colours and that crisp freshness of the autumn air. However the thought of a peaceful picnic during my ramble no longer inspires me as it did in the summer months. A welcoming pub, a real fire, a good pint and some warm comforting food after my effort is more enticing. The villages, within and surrounding, the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty offer a wonderful choice of pubs to compliment a walk.

Here's a taste of two local pubs and a walk to work up that appetite!

This walk is an exhilarating 6 miles in the north of the Clwydian Range, with breathtaking contrasting views of coast, sea, estuary, towns, hills and mountains. The route links the two ancient and picturesque settlements of Gwaenysgor and Llanasa, home to characterful country inns. Along the way you can see wonders such as a distant lighthouse, a wind farm, an Elizabethan mansion and a 17th century Dovecote.

One of the highlights of the walk is the easy climb to the ancient summit cairn on Gop Hill. Gop cairn is the second largest prehistoric mound in Britain (14 metres high and 100 metres wide). The mysteries of Gop Hill are a source of fascination and conjecture to archaeologists and historians alike. The site has even been rumoured to be the burial place of Queen Boadicea. What is known for certain is that in 1886 the skeletal remains of fourteen humans from the Neolithic and early Bronze Age were found in the caves below the summit.

No human remains were found in the actual cairn so it is possible that it was erected by early people as a memorial to those buried below. It has also been suggested that the cairn may have been used as a signalling station or beacon by the Romans during their occupation of this area in the first century A.D, although there is no direct evidence of this. Whatever the truth may be, Gop Hill is a fascinating place, tantalising and enigmatic.

The starting and finishing point of this walk, the ancient village of Gwaenysgor, is mentioned in the Domesday book and has a 12th century church with a tiny lepers' window. The church has the only unbroken parish records in Wales, dating from 1538.

At one time there were three pubs in the village but alas only one remains as a hostelry. **The Eagle & Child Inn** was initially built in the early 19th century as a farmhouse but has been listed as an inn since 1851 in census returns. The inn takes its name from the legend of a medieval nobleman who persuaded his wife to adopt his illegitimate child, alleging it had been found in an eagle's nest on his estate.

In the early days it consisted of one little bar with a small fire, linoleum floor and outside lavatory. But things have moved on, not only has the pub been extended in recent decades to include a dining room, but it has also added an award winning beer gardens. It is now a popular destination for lunch or dinner, with an impressive flora display of hanging baskets outside in the summer months, and a warm comfortable interior for the rest of the year. For further information on opening times or to make a table reservations ring 01745 856391



Autumn Fresh

3 miles of breathtaking scenery rewarded with a pint

Circular Walk

(This walk is included in Rural Walks in Flintshire.
You can Pick up a copy from Loggerheads Countryside Centre.)

Gwaenysgor - Llanasa circuit

Distance: 9.6 km/6 miles (with short cut 7km/4.4 miles)

Time: 3 - 3.5 hrs

Parking and start: Gwaenysgor view point car park (SJ 075 819) to the north of Gwaenysgor village or alternatively Llanasa (SJ 106 814).

Grade: Moderate, many stiles, small ascents/descents

Pubs: **The Eagle & Child**, Gwaenysgor
The Red Lion, Llanasa.

The Walk

1. From Gwaenysgor car park, turn L and descend 200m down road. At sharp L bend turn R onto path along woodland edge. Cross stile into field and follow LH boundary for 20m then cross stile. Follow LH field edge uphill. Turn R in corner and then L over stile. Continue half-L across field and over stile. Continue across field with transmitter on R. Cross stile and go half-L across arable field to cross stile onto track.

2. Cross track and climb over stile into field opposite. Bear L across field and follow LH boundary beside woodland. Cross stile and continue across next field. Cross 2 stiles close together at woodland edge and cross field ahead. Cross next stile' and follow narrow path skirting overgrown pond on R.

'For a short cut, omitting Llanasa, turn R before stile and follow fence past overgrown pond on L. Then cross stile on L and follow way markers downhill across fields to road.'

3. At path junction turn R, ignoring stile ahead. Continue along this path, bearing L beyond pond and follow for approx 1.4km (can be muddy). Turn R onto wide track and follow for 600m to road. At road turn R, passing 17thC Henblas Hall on L, and continue to road junction in centre of Llanasa.

The historic village of Llanasa lies cradled in a fold of hills 450 feet above sea level, a perfect example of a small Welsh community virtually untouched by the passage of



time. Llanasa means "church of Asa" and is believed to have been founded in the sixth century when Asaph, the second bishop of what is now St Asaph, built a church there. The present church, which has an unusual old bell cote with a single bell, dates to the late 15th and early 16th century. Its most remarkable feature is the magnificent stained glass contained in the two large east windows, originally from Basingwerk Abbey. The village is full of other historic buildings including a fine 17th century hall, tithe barn cottages and former Victorian school.

The village inn is also well worth a visit. *The 17th century Red Lion Country Inn* is a welcoming place to take refreshments during or after your walk. Its spacious interior contains 2 bars and a separate dining room. A cosy ambience is created by real fires in the stone fireplaces. It is very much a family run business that prides itself on good Real Ales, as well as an extensive menu of delicious bar meals and main courses using the freshest local ingredients. The menu includes vegetarian and children's options. Booking is advisable at weekends Tel. 01745 854291. If you fancy staying longer there are 5 ensuite rooms that are Welsh Tourist Board 3 star rated.

4. Turn R in front of Red Lion, signed Gwaenysgor/Trelawnyd, passing village pump and pond. Continue along road for 1.5km, passing lane on LHS and entrance to Talfryn Farm. At next road junction turn L. Where the lane bends L cross stile on R marked Gop Hill. Continue ahead up field and cross stile. Ignore first KG & stone stile on R heading into wood. Continue ahead to cross KG/stone stile in corner signed Gop Hill, ignoring more obvious KG/stile in front.

5. Follow permissive path (white arrow) bearing L along woodland edge. Path soon rises gently through wood, before rejoining boundary. (Snowdonia visible westwards). Continue along wood edge, soon swinging half-R thro' trees and follow path across summit cairn on Gop Hill (wide views).

Return down path and, after a few metres, drop down R to go thro' KG. Head diagonally L to descend slope. After 50m turn R to rocky outcrop with cave below. After visiting the cave retrace your steps and descend to faint green track across mid-slopes of Gop Hill. Follow this track R passing above farm buildings and stone dovecote, before swinging R to cross stile at bottom of wood. Go ahead over another stile, then down middle of large field, bearing L towards road, passing telegraph pole, to cross stile ahead. Cross next field and stile in corner onto road.

6. Follow road R into Gwaenysgor. (NB Busy Road!) Continue on road uphill out of village back to the car park.



Our native honeybee (*Apis Mellifera Mellifera*) has lived in the British Isles for the last ten thousand years. Many Colonies were destroyed in the early twentieth century by a disease known as the Isle of Wight Disease (from the outbreak location). Importation of bees, to increase honey production, had began fifty years earlier and to make up for these losses, people began importing even larger numbers from other countries; in particular Italy and Eastern Europe.

A tiny parasitic mite called 'Varroa Destructor' is the most prolific killer of our bees. Discovered in Devon in 1992, this mite has now spread across England and Wales, causing widespread colony losses.

Many researchers believed the native honeybee to be extinct, but it has been shown to still exist in isolated pockets in Wales, Yorkshire and particularly in Ireland.

Our native bee has distinct characteristics, in particular its colour. Although being described as black, it is in fact a dark leathery brown. It is well suited to our climate, able to survive long cold winters. The bees also have an affinity to the natural habitat of heather moorland, widespread across the Clwydian Range.

I am among many people in Britain and Ireland who are hoping to breed these black bees to ensure the survival of the species, and to reintroduce it into areas where it has disappeared. For three years I have been keeping hives of native black bees in Moel Famau Forest, within the Clwydian Range AONB.

It hasn't been easy! One of the obstacles to raising pure bred

Back where they Bee..long!

The return of the Native Honeybee



Geoff Critchley,
Chairman of South Clwyd
Beekeepers Association

honeybees is the mating behaviour of the queen bee. Mating takes place in the air, and the queen can mate with around fifteen drones (male bees) some of which may have flown 8 miles from their original colonies. Because of this, most mating results in cross breeding. Unfortunately this means that pure bred queens are not produced, and that undesirable characteristics, such as aggressive behaviour, can emerge.

There are two ways that we can avoid this cross breeding; artificial insemination, which is expensive and technical, or the setting up of mating colonies in isolated regions away from non-native colonies. Because we are a relatively small scale operation it is not cost-effective to use the first method. Local beekeepers in Denbighshire decided to use an isolated site on the Denbigh Moors for a more controlled mating. We bring hives onto the site from May to August to provide suitable drones, in sufficient numbers, to enable queens to be produced which have little or no cross-breeding. Our project enables other beekeepers in the area to use our queen bees, to further strengthen the native colonies.

Eventually we hope that the introduction of new bloodstock into the local bee population will lead to the re-establishment

of our native honeybee throughout the Clwydian Range and the Vale of Clwyd.

'Moel Famau honey' from the Clwydian Range AONB is available to buy from Loggerheads Countryside Centre, or direct from Geoff at the Celyn Farmers' Markets in Northop and Mold (www.celynfarmersmarket.co.uk).



Downloadable walks, events and information on Country Parks, biodiversity and history in Denbighshire's Countryside visit
www.denbighshire.gov.uk/countryside