

Capturing the

Free

Clwydian Range

PICK UP STICKS

Nordic Walking
in the Clwydian Range

LOGGERHEADS

Hoists their Green Flag

WHEN BUSINESSES UNITE

Success in Prestatyn

A Guide to the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)



CONTENTS

- 2 Welcome to Capturing the Clwydian Range
- 4 Hope for heather moorland
- 6 Nordic Walking
- 7 Loggerheads wins award
- 8 Going all new fangled & techno
- 10 Liverpool to Loggerheads
- 12 When businesses unite
- 14 Geodiversity walk
- 16 Clwydian Ranger bus service



Welcome to the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This stunning 62 square miles of undulating landscape is protected for its visual beauty, culture, heritage, geo and biodiversity.

The area was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1985 and is the most recently designated of the five AONBs in Wales. Together with the three National Parks they form the only landscapes that have statutory protection in Wales.

The Clwydian Range stretches from the coastal resort of Prestatyn in the North, to the deep wooded valley of Nant y Garth, near Llandegla in the south. The highest point is crowned by the Jubilee Tower on Moel Famau at 554 meters.

The landscape is characterised by sweeping moorland, purple-clad hills, limestone crags and intimate valleys. Most of the spectacular views can be enjoyed from the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail which crests the highest hills in the Range. Loggerheads and Moel Famau Country Parks form the heart of the AONB.

The Clwydian Range AONB is managed in partnership by Denbighshire and Flintshire County Councils. Denbighshire Countryside Service lead on the management of the Clwydian Range on behalf of the partnership with support and funding from many partner organisations such as the Countryside Council for Wales. We also have an amazing team of volunteers and conscientious local businesses who work to protect and enhance the AONB.

This magazine highlights why this incredible area is an ideal sustainable tourism destination for local people and visitors.

We hope you visit and enjoy your experience in the Clwydian Range.

The views expressed by the contributors are their own. Denbighshire County Council except no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

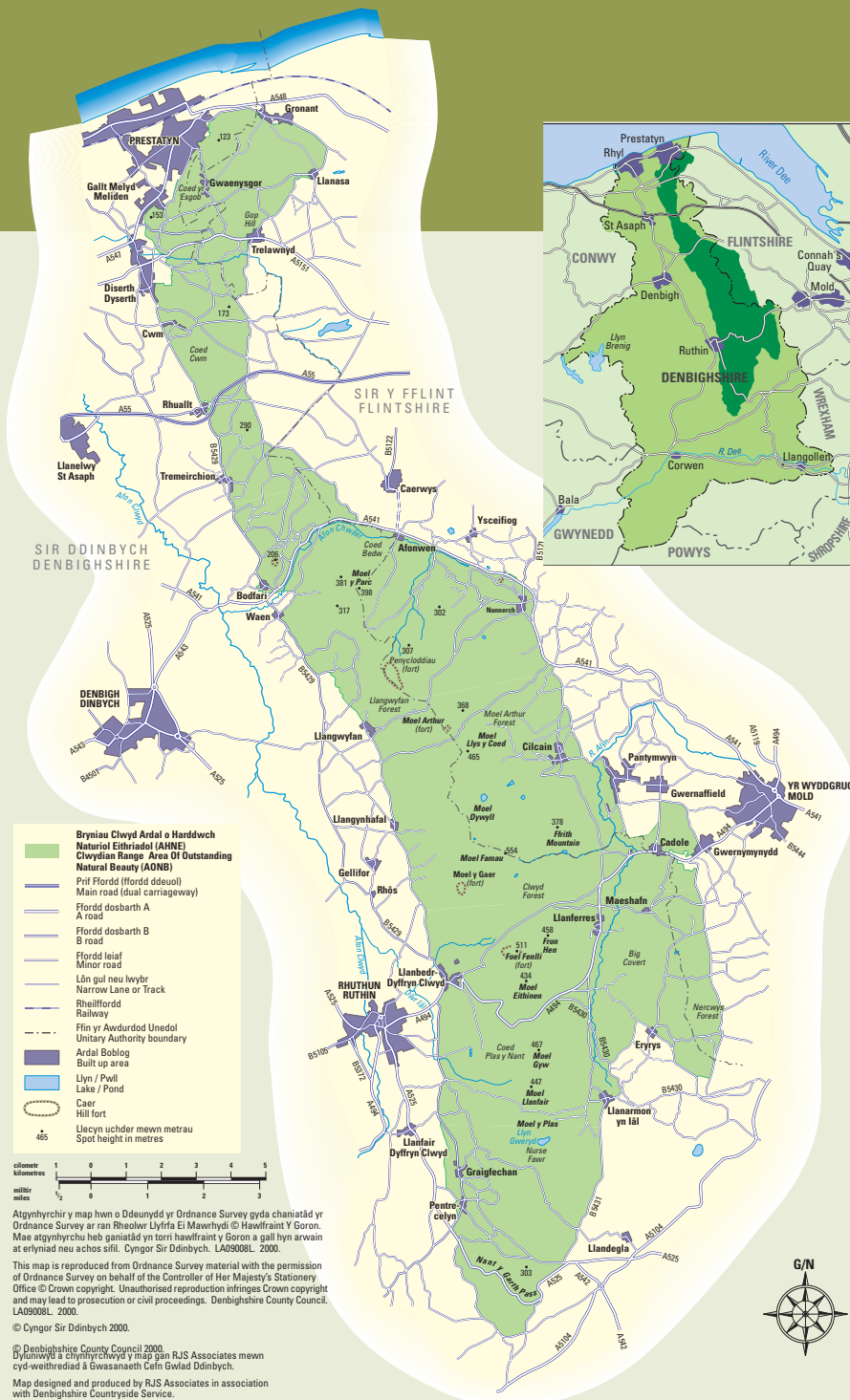
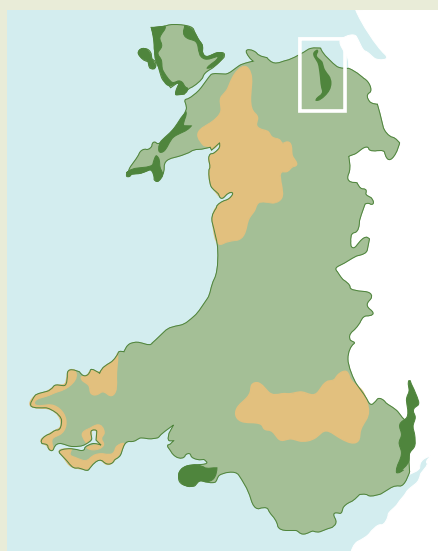
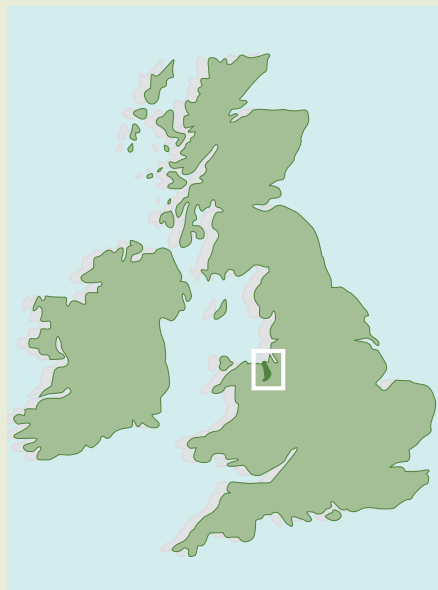


Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

WHERE ARE WE?



The AONB Team

Denbighshire Countryside Service, Denbighshire County Council

Loggerheads Country Park, Nr Mold, Denbighshire. CH7 5LH

01352 810614  clwydianrangeaonb@denbighshire.gov.uk

www.clwydianrangeaonb.org.uk

www.clwydiancountry.co.uk

www.denbighshire.gov.uk/countryside

www.flintshire.gov.uk/countryside

www.heatherandhillforts.co.uk

www.ridetheclwyds.com



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www.clwydianrangeaonb.org.uk

Hope for heather moorland.



Heather moorland is often viewed as an untouched wilderness, naturally occurring and requiring no management to keep it in perfect condition. This view, though, is far from the truth.

In the UK we are fortunate enough to have roughly half the world's remaining heather moorland. In Wales approximately 40% has been lost since the Second World War through agricultural improvement and afforestation. Perhaps the most worrying figure is that roughly 70% of our heather moorland is in poor condition and without management, it is in danger of being lost.

Heather established initially because of poor soils through a lack of agricultural improvement. It is traditionally burnt or cut to get rid of old vegetation and encourage fresh young shoots of heather and bilberry to regenerate.

This young growth is an excellent food source for sheep, who are the most effective managers of heather moorland. Sheep also eat young trees, and without this the area would soon revert to woodland and lead to the loss of more of this rare and important habitat.

Cutting and burning, and the age structure of heather these practices create, are vital for the survival of upland wildlife, especially ground nesting birds. The rare and elusive black grouse needs deep heather for shelter from predators but also bare open ground for display rituals and new vegetation for food.



Sheep are vital to our uplands but there is a worrying decline in their numbers as agricultural practices evolve. There are less farm labourers and more lowland farming, and with the increased time and labour needed to manage uplands it is less attractive to graze sheep here. This decrease in sheep stock and management has led to the deterioration of the habitat through the encroachment of bracken and trees, and the limited age structure of the heather. We end up with a vicious circle, as the area gets more difficult to farm, so the numbers of sheep reduce. Apart from increased management we can also support Welsh hill farmers by buying Welsh lamb. It takes lots of work to make our uplands productive, but the end product is well worth it – succulent lamb that has grazed on heather and bilberry.



Despite the intensive management needed, farmers and conservationists in the Clwydian Range are still committed to the management of the uplands. Moel Famau in-particular will benefit through the Tir-Gofal agri-environment scheme and Section 15 agreements with the Countryside Council for Wales will increase upland management on the Llantysilio Mountains. The condition of moorlands in the area is improving and they are once again becoming more agriculturally viable and a better habitat for wildlife.

Heather moorland is one of our most precious and stunningly beautiful habitats, and thanks to the hard work of farmers, Welsh Assembly Government Tir-Gofal staff, the Heather and Hillforts Project, Countryside Service staff, volunteers and conscientious visitors it will still be here in the future for all to enjoy.

www.heatherandhillforts.co.uk

Sustainable Tourism Award

The Clwydian Range AONB is celebrating the achievement of being awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The underlying aims are:

- To increase awareness of, and support for, Europe's protected areas as a fundamental part of our heritage, that should be preserved for, and enjoyed by, current and future generations.
- To improve the sustainable development and management of tourism in protected areas, which takes account of the needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors.

A five year sustainable tourism strategy and action plan is being supported by the Rural Development Plan providing a dedicated Sustainable Tourism Officer (employed by Cadwyn Clwyd) and a potential £550,000 to implement the plan.

A Clwydian Range AONB Sustainable Tourism Forum will steer the action plan and future strategy. If you own a tourism related business or have an involvement or interest in sustainable tourism in the Clwydian Range please contact 01352 810614.



PICK UP STICKS

Nordic Walking in the Clwydian Range



Nordic Walking is a summer training method for cross-country skiers which began in the 1930's. The use of poles ensures a complete body workout, burning up to 20% more calories than walking. It is one of the fastest growing recreational fitness activities across the world, with participants in nearly 40 countries. Research has proven that it improves upper body strength and uses 90% of your body muscle mass. It burns body fat and tones arms, chest, back, shoulders, abdomen, hips, bottom and thighs.

The facts:

- Exercises 90% of your muscles.
- Burns 20% more calories than ordinary walking at the same speed.
- A higher heart rate is achieved compared to ordinary walking.
- Exercise more with less effort.
- Reduces the load on your knees and other joints.
- Can reduce tension in the neck and shoulder muscles.
- Can reduce back pain and improve spinal mobility.
- Strengthens the bones of the lower and upper body, combating the effect of osteoporosis.

"I'm a Nordic Walking convert. I enjoy walking but I'm not as fit as I should be and suffer with a bad back. I've found the use of Nordic poles while walking releases my vertebrae and exercises my upper body muscles that are often static."

"I 'Nordic' walked up Moel Famau recently with friends and found that I could chat as I walked more easily than normal. Apparently this is because the spread of the use of muscles puts less stress on my lungs."

"I walked to Loggerheads along the Leete from Pantymwyn and as the sides of the route are steep in parts I used the poles to help my balance and that increased my confidence."

"The poles take the pressure off my joints so I don't suffer after a good walk like I used to."

"I joined a local Nordic Walking group and met lots of new people."



Nordic Walking poles are available for loan from Loggerheads Country Park. Training sessions are organised regularly to ensure that you use the poles correctly and get the most out of using them.

Please ring 01745 356197 or email loggerheads.countrypark@denbighshire.gov.uk for more details.

Loggerheads

hoists their Green Flag

Loggerheads Country Park celebrates being awarded the prestigious Green Flag Award.

Loggerheads is located in the counties of Denbighshire and Flintshire and is a hugely popular destination attracting over 200,000 visitors every year.

The Green Flag award scheme began in 1996 to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country. It is a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas.



“Loggerheads is a hugely popular destination attracting over **200,000** visitors every year.”

Each site is judged on its own merits and suitability to the community it serves. Awards are given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status. Country Park staff, Caffi Florence and the dedicated volunteers have worked tirelessly to ensure their application for the prestigious Green Flag Award was successful. Special thanks and congratulations to all involved.

GOING ALL NEW-FANGLED AND TECHNO.....

The Clwydian Range is up to date in its use of 21st Century technology to help you enhance your experience of the AONB. Whether it is walking, relaxing or action you're looking for, we are embracing new forms of technology to aid countryside exploration and enjoyment.

Hearing voices on Moel Famau

An audio tour is now available for the main route to the Jubilee Tower at the summit of Moel Famau from the top car park.

'I never expected it to be a Bronze Age burial mound!'

I've been waiting for a suitably hazy day during a rare heat wave to try the audio trail to the Jubilee Tower. I know a little about the history of the area so I was interested in how the trail was presented and what else I would discover.

There are six audio points along the way that you access by ringing the local number 01352 230123.

There is some useful guidance information and an introduction followed by the beginning of the walk. At each audio point, marked by a small disc in a wooden post, you ring the number and go through the options to the audio point you want. **Tip: At point 2 I realised that to avoid the introduction each time press 2 then 2 again followed by the number of the audio point you desire.**

What makes this audio trail different is how accessible it is. You don't need to buy a book or join a guided walk, you can enjoy the revealing stories at your own pace. And revealing is what they are. What you don't get from a book is a real life experience with the information. The physical evidence of what is discussed is there in front of you. I had always wondered what a mis-matched group of rocks was doing part way along the trail. I never expected it to be a Bronze Age burial mound!

I was also able to identify some birds by their songs as I had just heard them through my mobile phone. The whole experience felt like a gentle way of imparting knowledge to me. You don't want big panels of information ruining the landscape so I understood why they decided to go down this route.



As I travelled along the trail I realised that there was a good logic to the information too. I was moved along a timeline of human use of this landscape over thousands of years right up to the explanation of the 'UFOish' cuts and scrapes in the heather moorland, formed to help a range of wildlife to survive.

It was a very busy day with individuals, families, couples, people on lunch breaks, cyclist (pushing their bikes thankfully!) and over thirty footballers on a training run - now that looked tiring! Stopping to let the runners past allowed me to gather my breath ready for the thigh-burning final section up to the Jubilee Tower. My mind was taken off the hill somewhat by the audio continuing, surprising me with the age and importance of the dry stone wall I was passing. **Tip:** At this point I wished I had brought the headphones for my mobile, just to avoid holding the phone to my ear!

I gratefully reached the summit and relaxed at the base of the Jubilee Tower for a well deserved drink and snack before ringing the number the final time. Audio point number 6 was what I was hoping

for. What is the Jubilee Tower and why is it there? But it was more than just the facts that were provided, sound effects and personal experiences included in the trail really add to the whole story.



Tip: Bring headphones for your mobile, to avoid holding the phone to your ear!

This is a great addition to the Moel Famau experience. For people new to the area or those that return regularly this audio trail really gives you a sense of place, pauses you at key places and gently guides you through the stories that shape Moel Famau.

The beauty of this audio tour is that you can dip in and out when you see something that interests you. Calls are charged at a local call rate which is included in your free minutes if you are on a contract. Alternatively you can download the tour for free onto an MP3 player or iPod from www.heatherandhillforts.co.uk or you can listen to it at home before your walk.

Earthcaching

Earthcaching, a variation of Geocaching, is an innovative, GPS – based adventure game and treasure hunt, which guides participants to a series of caches (hidden treasures) within the landscape. They can be based on a trail, landmarks or sites. Earthcaching, in contrast to geocaching, has no physical presence on the ground. An Earthcache is a special place that people can visit to learn about a unique Earth Science feature or aspect of our Earth. Visitors to an Earthcache can see how our planet has been shaped without damaging the countryside. www.earthcache.org

Websites

Accessing websites can greatly enrich your experience of the countryside. This is especially true of the Clwydian Range.

www.clwydianrangeaonb.org.uk

This website includes a 360 degree view from the summit of Moel Famau – you can use your mouse to experience the view you would see from any angle. There is also an Itinerary function where you can plan your trip before leaving your house.

www.clwydiancountry.co.uk

Set up and run by local tourism businesses in the Clwydian Range this site is ideal for planning where to stay and what to do.

www.ridetheclwyds.com

Interactive cycle routes, downloadable route cards and all the information you require for an adrenaline packed visit.

www.heatherandhillforts.co.uk

The Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership Scheme aims to protect and raise awareness of the heather moorland habitat and the Iron Age hillfort heritage of the Clwydian Range AONB and Llantysilio Mountains. The site includes a fantastic interactive aerial photomap of the area that you can zoom in to and some great fun activities for all the family.

www.denbighshire.gov.uk/countryside

Leaflets available to download from this site include; 'Out & About in Denbighshire's Countryside' - an annual programme of fun family events, guided walks and practical activities. '23 countryside sites to visit' - details the main countryside hotspots to visit. 'Rural Walks in Denbighshire' - a free book bursting with a wide range of amazing walks.

'Liverpool to Loggerheads'

For generations the people of Merseyside have come to the Loggerheads and Moel Famau area.

Merseyside children took refuge here during the war years and later families and youngsters came to escape the city and to enjoy the open air. Generations of school children came to Colomendy, 'the lung of Liverpool', others came by bike or with the Scouts and Guides, on the Crosville buses, or with their tents and caravans. Some Merseysiders have returned to North Wales to work or in retirement and many Welsh people have moved to Liverpool to work or to study.

For the past year I have been lucky enough to work with staff from the Clwydian Range AONB on an exciting project to celebrate these close cultural links. Through local publisher, Alyn Books, who received a grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund, I was delighted to be commissioned to research these links in more detail and to produce a celebratory book.

The finished book is based on the memories of countless Merseysiders and Welsh folk who willingly shared their fascinating, and often moving, stories with us and is illustrated with a wonderful collection of their old photographs. Many people came along to the Memories Days we held in Loggerheads and Liverpool, I spoke to numerous other people following articles in the press and my research unearthed many more stories, that all added to the richness of the book.

It has been a heart-warming project to undertake due to the warmth and enthusiasm of the contributors and it was something of a personal journey for me as my parents both came from Liverpool. I have been overwhelmed by the level of interest in the project, which reflects the strength of the bond between the two areas.



Excerpt from the book....

“We used to play on the arcade machines in the little park.

A favourite was the electric shock machine. Such fun we had, paying a penny, to receive an electric shock!”

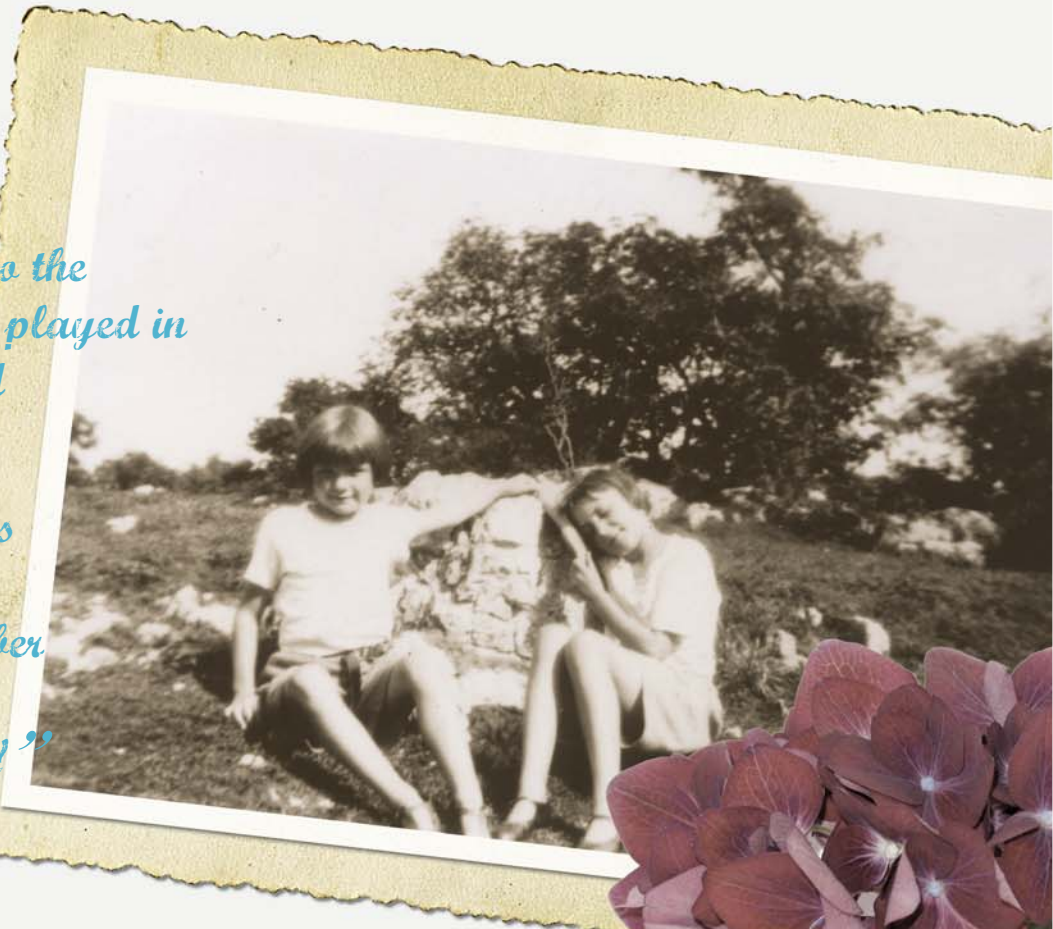
Gordon Jones



“We all loved going to the tea-gardens where we played in the river and climbed up to the crags.

There were swing-boats there and they were my favourite. I remember being told off for swinging too high!”

Betty Earps



Loggerheads to Liverpool by Lorna Jenner

ISBN 978-0-9559625-2-3 Price £11.95

Copies of the book are available from

Loggerheads Countryside Centre and local bookshops.



WHEN BUSINESSES UNITE....

Prestatyn began to establish itself as a popular visitor destination with the arrival of the railway in 1848. People still enjoy the long summer days, fresh air and many walks taking in the coast views. Businesses in Prestatyn are working together to attract more visitors by targeting the walking market.

Today it is the first day of the Prestatyn Walking Festival and despite the low cloud and fine rain, people fill the church hall, where walk registration is taking place. Many walks start from this central point - off the High Street, but the success of the festival has led to additional walks being led on the outskirts.

I head up to hillside gardens as one of the walks is taking in the launch of the first of a series of public artworks. I have an amazing and quite surreal view of three Roman soldiers leading an army of walkers up the high street towards me. Hillside Gardens have been a popular spot for visitors since 1911 when people took advantage of the views from the hill, which today marks the most northerly boundary of the Clwydian Range AONB.

There are strong Roman connections with the town and impressive bath house remains nearby. The Roman soldiers helped to unveil a huge Roman helmet sculpture in the gardens. The local press are present and I realise that it is really clever to unveil this art during the walking festival and is an example of how well the businesses, interested groups, local authority and residents are working together.

There are many local people in the crowd and they speak proudly of the recent investment and improvements in Prestatyn. Some are volunteer walk leaders and others are out admiring the Roman soldier's legs! But the overall impression is of a sense of ownership.

Prestatyn and District Business Association formed in 1995 to help improve the economy of Prestatyn. Working with Denbighshire County Council, Prestatyn Town Council and Clwydian Range AONB the group has contributed to the development of a Business Growth Action Plan.

The development of a strategy and action plan and the formation of a business group can be essential to access many of the funding grants available. Many funding bodies will not accept applications from individual businesses or the local authority so the formation of these groups opens up opportunities for bringing in essential money. There are other advantages too. People don't run successful businesses unless they've got some nous about them. Bringing these entrepreneurial people together can be exciting, leading to inspired ideas and improved working relationships.



Prestatyn has shown how successful joint working can be. The walking festival is in its fifth year and this year 1117 people participated. It is estimated that at least 10 people stayed overnight and many businesses benefited from increased spend. I spoke to a couple from Yorkshire who were staying in a local B&B for the whole weekend and had heard about the festival from the 'Walkers are Welcome' website. Another couple from Lancashire enjoyed it so much that they are planning to bring 20 walkers to next year's festival. Prestatyn and Meliden gained the Walkers are Welcome status in 2008 – the first community in Wales and third in the UK – securing their reputation as a town united and focussed on providing an excellent hub for walking. The national 'Walkers are Welcome' conference was held in Prestatyn in 2008 attracting 55 delegates from the UK and £3000 spend in the local area. Obtaining this status strengthens the town's reputation as a place for visitors to come to enjoy the outdoors, bringing useful benefits to the local economy. Situated at the beginning/end point of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail and close to the Clwydian Range AONB, Prestatyn is well placed to offer walkers and visitors a range of experiences along local paths and longer distance routes and opportunities to explore the many countryside sites in the area.



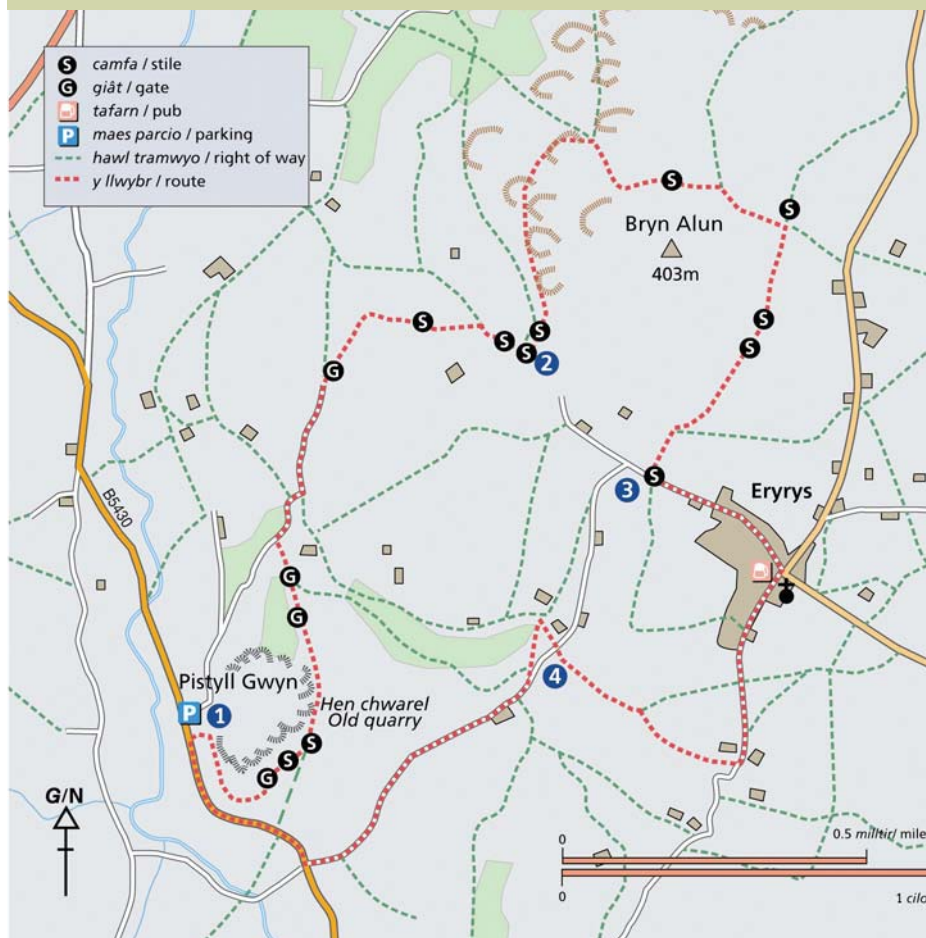
£1.5 million has been spent on Prestatyn in the last couple of years. This funding, drawn down from many sources, has transformed the town. The sea front has been brought back to life, the historic gardens have been given a makeover, the former Offa's Dyke Centre is now a Café and information point, magnificent pieces of art grace key places, the impressive Scala Cinema has been refurbished and key parts of the High Street are now lit with a warm glow on those cold winter evenings. There have been many more benefits to Prestatyn and one of the aims of the business group and partners was to maximise the opportunity of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. Brass acorns (the National Trail symbol) have been installed into the lamp columns leading down from Hillside Gardens, along the High Street to Central Beach. Other walking opportunities include the investment into the Wales Coast Path. If you are really keen you could walk the entire coastline of Wales then the Offa's Dyke Path achieving a whopping 1000 mile circular walk!

If you are a tourism business in Denbighshire or Flintshire there are lots of resources available from small grants to familiarisation trips to local Iron Age hillforts to IT training and advice. Call 01352 810614 and we'll point you in the right direction.

For more information about Prestatyn visit www.visitprestatyn.com www.prestatynwalkingfestival.co.uk and www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk.

A GEODIVERSITY SLANT ON AN OLD FAVOURITE

Bryn Alun 4 mile circular walk through spectacular landscape formed by the sea and sculpted by ice



Distance: 6.4m/4 miles

Time: Allow 2–2.5 hours

Parking and start:
Pistyll Gwyn car park

Grid Ref: SJ189573,
OS Explorer map 265

Grade: Moderate
(undulating with some indistinct paths)

Facilities: The Sun Inn,
Eryrys. Tel: 01824 780402

Advice: Take care on the
pavement as limestone is
slippery when wet

The Clwydian Range AONB has many joys, some better known than others. Bryn Alun is the largest limestone pavement in North Wales and this walk rewards visitors with an unrivalled opportunity to enjoy the geodiversity of the Clwydian Range and beyond...

Limestone pavements are rare and protected and take millions of years to form. They consist of a flat, or slightly tilted, incised surface of exposed limestone that resembles an artificial pavement. Starting at Pistyll Gwyn Quarry (1), which once provided stone for Sealand airbase, walk up past the

quarry where the layers of limestone can be seen. The trail takes us up onto the limestone upland past steep, scree slopes (2) where the stepped profile of Bryn Alun comes into view. We then drop down to the lane, which is in a dry, glacial valley, carved by ice about 20,000 years ago.



Climbing up again, on the right is a large, rounded boulder. This is a glacial erratic (literally, in the wrong place), brought here by the ice from Snowdonia during the last Ice-Age, and dumped 17,000 years ago when the ice melted. Walking up to the skyline onto the limestone pavement where you may find fossil shells in the rock. The limestone hosts specialized plants such as orchids, herb paris and maidenhair spleenwort.

There are also natural 'bonsai' plants in the grykes or joints, the result of grazing. From here, on a clear day, you can see as far as the Blackpool Tower, Liverpool cathedrals, The Peak District, Horseshoe Pass, the Berwyn Mountains, Snowdonia, Moel Famau and the Clwydian Range; stunning.

Drag yourself away and follow the track over the hill. We now walk past the remains of extensive lead mining. Lead, which is present in veins in the limestone, was a huge industry, which ended in the mid 19th century. The disturbed ground, spoil tips and ruined buildings are the remains of the Belgrave Mine. Look carefully and you might see some calcite crystals on the path.



The rest of the route passes other remains of lead mining including small quarries, capped shafts and the Westminster Nant, Grade II Listed Pumping Engine House (4) before ending back at the car park.

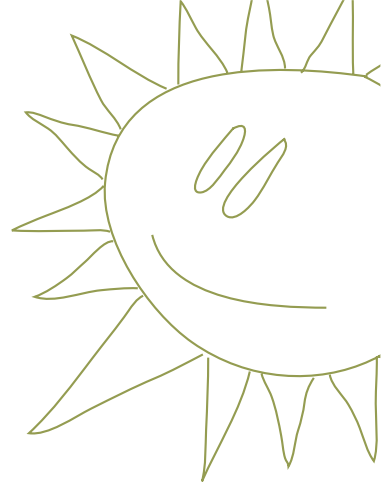
This walk is just a small taste of the influence of geology on the culture and heritage of the Clwydian Range AONB, its geodiversity.



This walk is included in 'Rural Walks in Denbighshire' and 'Rural Walks in Flintshire'.

Free copies are available at Loggerheads Countryside Centre, Tourist Information Centres and libraries. It is also downloadable from www.denbighshire.gov.uk/countryside www.flintshire.gov.uk/countryside - click on Rural Walks.

Why the Clwydian Ranger bus service is the best way to explore the Clwydian Range AONB...



Guides to the Clwydian Ranger are available from your local bus stations, Tourist Information Centres, libraries and Loggerheads Countryside Centre.

The Clwydian Ranger is a summer bus service that runs from early July to the end of September on Sundays and August Bank Holiday Monday. It links great walk starting points and villages in the Clwydian Range AONB with Chester, North Wales's towns and the railway network.

This year there are new links from Rhyl, Prestatyn and Llangollen to Moel Famau Country Park – famously crowned by the Jubilee Tower and Llandegla Forest – where you can hire a bike and enjoy amazing off-road cycling routes (www.coedllandegla.com).

Why use public transport instead of taking the car?

- It is better for the environment! This really has to be the best reason for travelling by bus, especially so in a protected area.
- It is better for you! Even if it is a short distance, walking to and from the bus stop contributes to your daily physical activity.
- It is kinder to your pockets! Depending on how far you are travelling, it can work out much better value for money when you don't have to pay for parking meters or petrol. If you purchase a Clwydian Ranger day ticket you have unlimited travel on many services!
- You can enjoy the scenery! If you are driving, you simply can't look around at the spectacular views of the Clwydian Range. On the bus you are free to do so and have a much better view from the height of a bus.
- There is no stress over parking! Isn't trying to find somewhere to park the most frustrating feeling? Well you don't have to worry if you travel by bus!

“This is a **stunning** place to visit and we need to protect it.

By supporting the Clwydian Ranger we are hoping to **encourage** some people to leave their cars behind and enjoy a relaxing **sustainable** visit to the Clwydian Range.”



For more information, phone Traveline cymru on 0871 2002233