

Walk this way Your guide to the best rambles in the region

LLANTYSILIO MOUNTAIN

Start: Begin the walk at the tiny hamlet of Rhewl, 5 kilometres/3 miles west of Llangollen on the northern banks of the River Dee/Afon Dyfrdwy. Park on a broad gravelled area opposite the little red brick chapel of Capel Hebron, in Rhewl. Map reference: SJ 183 449.

Distance: 9.5 kilometres/6 miles. **Duration:** Allow 4½-5 hours. **Difficulty:** Medium-Hard. Long climb from the Dee valley, with undulating paths along the open tops. Several steep ascents and descents along the ridge. Return over sheep slopes, field paths and farm tracks.

Food and Drink: Sun Inn, Rhewl. Real ale, bar food, real fires, games room, beer garden, call 01978 861043 for details.

Map: OS 1: 50,000 Landranger 116 Denbigh & Colwyn Bay, and 125 Bala & Lake Vyrnwy; OS 1:25,000 Explorer 256 Wrexham & Llangollen.

For a sense of space and panoramic views, the treeless whalebacks of Llantysilio Mountain are hard to beat.

This circuit climbs from the lush Dee Valley up through woodland and pasture to the slate quarries and heather moorland of the tops.

The walk:

1. Cross the road and follow the narrow lane which rises beside the chapel. Within 50 metres, bear right onto a short track with cottages on the right. A kissing gate behind the cottages leads onto a footpath which runs beside a stream. Fifty metres later, cross the stream on a narrow footbridge. Walk straight ahead, away from the stream, up the slope on a zig-zagging path that rises through the trees.

At the top of the bank, ignore a stile and path to the right; instead, bear left along the contours of the slope on a narrow path beneath the trees. The path continues along the top edge of a conifer plantation, now with the fence on your left, to emerge through a gap in the fence into a sloping grazing field. Bear uphill to the right, to a large metal gate at the top of a track rising from the left.

Immediately through the gate, turn left, uphill, on a waymarked farm track. Climb over a stile beside a second gate, and bear right, up the bank, to follow the waymarked right of way uphill alongside a sloping pine wood.

At the far end of the trees, a narrow footgate leads onto bracken-clad slopes; fine views of the Dee Valley open out below. Continue uphill, beside the fence, and then turn left along a broad grassy track.

Thirty metres later, turn right over a waymarked stile and rise diagonally right, up the hillside on a curving, grassy path. Follow the path as it rises alongside the pine wood, with gorse-clad slopes up to the left. When the wood ends, continue uphill on the clear grassy path over the moors.

As you break out onto the open moors, you increasingly benefit from the height gained. Below, the River Dee meanders through the lovely Glyndyfrdwy, surrounded by neat, sheep-grazed fields and small woods that rise gracefully to the heather-clad slopes of Llantysilio Mountain.

It was in this beautiful valley that Owain

Rolling ridge walk with wide views



Glyndwr lived until his rise to fame as the 15th century Welsh rebel leader and folk hero.

2. Just below the distinctive spoil heaps of the Berwyn Slate Quarries, turn left and follow a good path towards Moel y Gamelin, with the slate tips rising immediately to your right. Cross a boggy stream and continue, straight ahead through the heather and bilberries, on a steadily rising path to the summit of Moel y Gamelin.

From here on a clear day the panorama is one of the most extensive in northeast Wales. To the north, the Vale of Clwyd is

laid out like a vast green carpet, bordered to the east by the shapely, sheep grazed slopes of the Clwydian Range and on the west by the flat uplands of the Denbigh Moors. Further west, the pointed tops of Snowdonia are visible, while to the south the Berwyns rise above the Dee Valley. To the west, the view is dominated by the pale limestone crags of Eglwyseg Mountain, which rise steeply above the Vale of Llangollen.

From the summit cairn, a steep descent to the west takes you to a saddle crossed by several tracks, including the long-distance Clwydian Way.

To shorten your walk, turn left here onto a broad track, then fork right, on the lower path (not the upper, left-hand Clwydian Way) and follow the bridleway across the slopes above a wood, to join a lane by Ty'n-ymynydd.

Follow the lane on downhill to the Sun Inn at Rhewl.

The main route, however, continues along the ridge, rising to the low ramparts of the Iron Age hillfort on Moel-y-Gaer. From here, the well-used path undulates across the rounded slopes, before snaking uphill again to the white-painted concrete Ordnance Survey triangulation pillar on the summit of Moel Morfydd. Continue west from Moel Morfydd and make a further steep descent.

Where the path levels out at the bottom of the slope, two tracks merge in a triangle of paths; turn sharp left here to join a prominent track which contours the hillside below the summit.

About a kilometre later, the now grassy track levels out and bends sharply downhill to the right; continue straight ahead here on a slightly narrower, curving, grassy path, with Castell Dinas Bran soon clear on its hill ahead. At a sheep fence, turn right and follow the wire downslope to the field corner. Turn left over the stile, and then bear right, downhill again. Continue past a zig-zag in the fenceline, keeping the fence on your right.

At the bottom of the slope, look for a fourway wooden fingerpost beside a gate at the junction of four fences.

One finger points diagonally left across the sheep slopes. Head over the crest of the hill; roughly 200 metres to the right of the small conifer wood ahead, there is a

ABOVE: View from the high Llantysilio ridge above the Dee Valley.

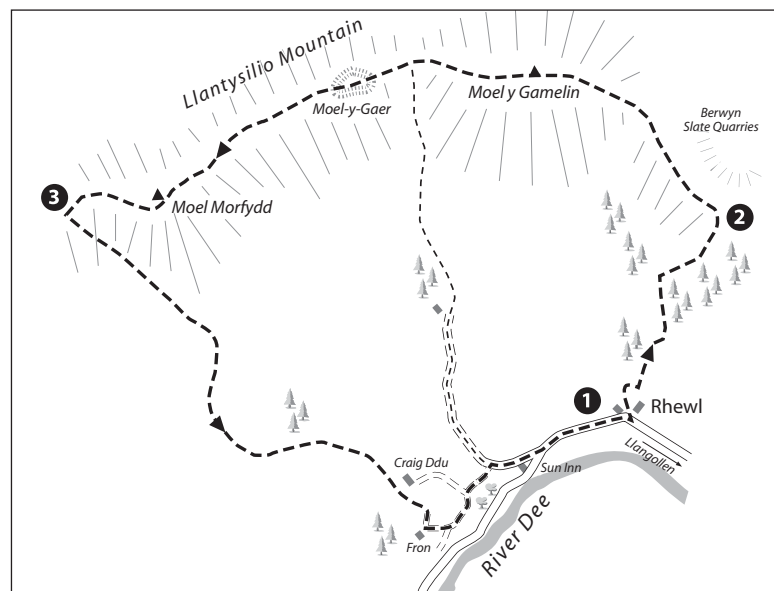
waymarked stile at a corner of the fence.

3. Once over the stile, cross a boggy stream and climb over a second stile. Turn immediately left here, downhill on a waymarked path through the bracken. It drops downhill, now with the stream on your left, before skirting the top edge of the wood. Beyond the wood, the path continues downhill alongside the fence and tumbled drystone wall.

Just beyond the working farm below Craig Ddu, drop down to join a broad farm track. Turn right, along the track. Roughly 60 metres later, turn left over a stile, and drop down the field to an overgrown track that follows the fenceline down to the right. At the bottom of the field, turn left over a waymarked stile, then right, over another stile. A short path leads to a grassy access drive to nearby Fron cottage. Turn left down the drive, which is a 'permissive path'.

The drive curves above a wood, then kinks left to join a farm access track. Turn right here, along the track, and after passing over a stream, rise to a T junction. Turn right, downhill, along the lane to the Sun Inn at Rhewl, a tiny but delightful old drovers' inn and a welcome pint. From the Sun Inn, continue along the lane back to point 1. At Rhewl to complete the walk.

● This walk is supplied by Carl Rogers and taken from his *Best Walks in North Wales* (ISBN 978-0-9553557-3-8), published by Northern Eye Books (www.northerneyebooks.com) price £8.99.



The Wild Side

A weekly look at the natural world with **SIMON FARR**

THE fantastic aerial display put on by flocking starlings each year is always entralling, and a true spectacle of our countryside. Their effortlessly synchronised movement makes them look like a giant wisp of smoke drifting in the sky. Starlings are native to the UK but in winter they are joined by companions that have fled the bitter Scandinavian climes, these European visitors can number up to 30 million birds. Their combined numbers swell the flocks and make winter's displays particularly striking.

Sadly, in recent years starling numbers have been in decline, possibly due to chemicals used on farms and lack of invertebrates for them to feed on. They are now on the red list of Birds of Conservation Concern. The flocks we see here today, whilst still a wonderful sight, are much smaller than they were in times gone by, and still are in other European countries, where flocks can be two million strong.

If you would like to take in a starling display this winter, try Talacre dunes, at Point of Ayr (grid ref: SJ123848). Go down just before dusk, anytime between now and March when numbers should

peak. Follow the A548 north from Holywell. Talacre village is signposted on the right hand side after approx three miles. Park on the beach or in the car-park beside The Smugglers Inn. For a map see; http://www.walkingnorthwales.co.uk/pdfs/Talacre_1078.pdf

If you would rather stay warm at home, starlings will come into your garden, and are not fussy eaters. They will munch on anything from invertebrates to scraps of bread, although they will only feed their young with protein packed invertebrates. It's perhaps a bit late for the Christmas turkey, but once you've finished with your roast chicken (free-range of course) you

could try tying the carcass up in your garden. Great tits, blue tits and long-tailed tits will relish this great source of protein at a lean time of year.

● The Wildlife Trust protects over 650 hectares of nature reserves in North Wales, campaigns for the protection of wildlife and invests in the future by helping people of all ages to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of nature. To find out how you can support your local Wildlife Trust call 01248 351541, e-mail: nwwt@wildlifetrustswales.org or visit www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/northwales

