

## WALK 1 .....

OS map OL13: Grid Ref: SO 30778 21712

Distance: 6 miles.

Difficulty: Moderate - mostly on tracks. About 800ft of ascent.

BRING WALKING BOOTS & CLOTHES SUITABLE FOR THE WEATHER

- 1 Park in the layby on the road below Llwyn Celyn **P1**. Visit the Information Room at Llwyn Celyn at the start or end of the walk. From the layby cross the road to the stile and follow the path to Llwyn Celyn.
- 2 Walk or drive the Cwm Coed-y-cerrig road to the Nature reserve (1.1 miles-**P2**); follow either path uphill to a stile.
- 3 Climb the stile cross a field and pass below the Pant buildings; go through a gate to the right of the drive and follow the path to a T-junction.
- 4 Turn left on the greenway which shortly meets the old Ffwyddog parish road.
- 5 Turn right passing 2 houses on your left.
- 6 Ignore the turn for Upper Gaer, and continue on the parish road to a gate.
- 7 Go through the gate and take the diagonal path on the right, turn right, up the path up to the Gaer and enjoy the views.
- 8 From the summit cairn go straight on, the path bears left and descends by a fence on the right to a gate.
- 9 Go through the gate; walk down the road, past Penrhiw, take the next right turn.
- 10 Follow the greenway to the turning to the Pant (4) passing Middle Gaer on your right; retrace your footsteps to your car.

## WALK 2 .....

Distance: 3½ miles.

Difficulty: Moderate - mostly on tracks. About 500 feet of ascent.

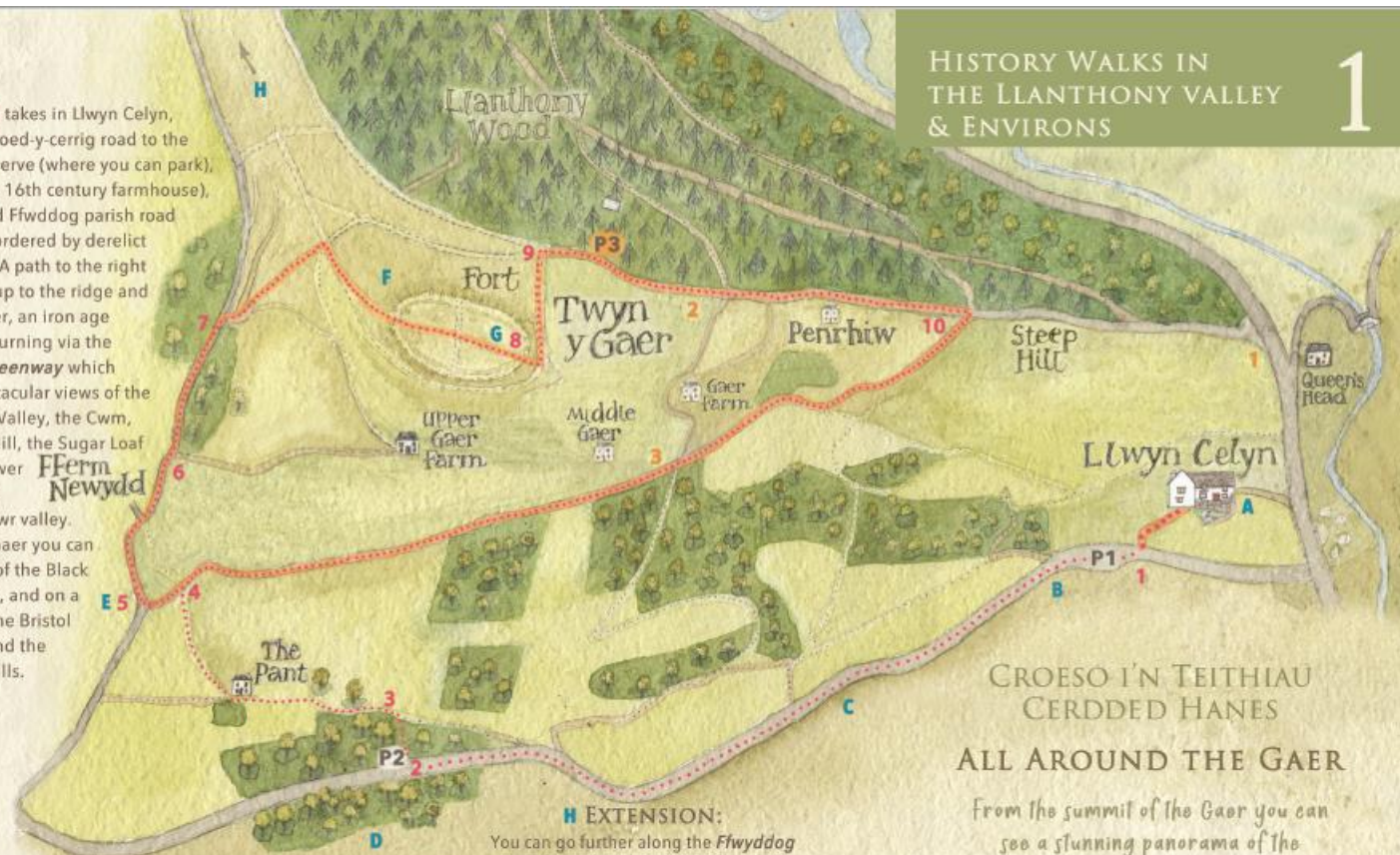
- 1 At the Queen's Head turn left up the hill and park in one of the spaces on the right of the road near the gate to the ridge path. **P3**
- 2 Walk down the road, pass Penrhiw, take the next right turn.
- 3 Follow the greenway to the old Ffwyddog parish road: **5** on Walk 1

**P** PARKING: Park in the layby opposite Llwyn Celyn **P1**. OR the Nature Reserve **P2** (Walk 1) or near the gate to the ridge path **P3** (Walk 2).

**WALK 1** takes in Llwyn Celyn, the Cwm Coed-y-cerrig road to the Nature Reserve (where you can park), the Pant (a 16th century farmhouse), and the old Ffwyddog parish road which is bordered by derelict buildings. A path to the right takes you up to the ridge and Twyn y Gaer, an iron age hillfort, returning via the ancient greenway which gives spectacular views of the Llanthony Valley, the Cwm, Bryn Arw Hill, the Sugar Loaf and the lower Fferm Newydd part of the Grwyne Fawr valley. From the Gaer you can see much of the Black Mountains, and on a clear day the Bristol Channel and the Malvern Hills.

**WALK 2** starts near the gate to the ridge path, descends to a turning to the greenway on the right then follows Walk 1 up to Twyn y Gaer ending at the gate to the ridge path.

[www.llanthonyhistory.wales](http://www.llanthonyhistory.wales)



## HISTORY WALKS IN THE LLANTHONY VALLEY & ENVIRONS

# 1

## GROESO I'N TEITHIAU CERDDED HANES ALL AROUND THE GAER

From the summit of the Gaer you can see a stunning panorama of the Llanthony and Grwyne Fawr valleys.

### H EXTENSION:

You can go further along the Ffwyddog parish road or along the ridge path to the Revenge Stone on either walk.

The stone is about 1 metre high and is said to mark the spot where, in 1135, a Norman knight, Richard de Clare, was ambushed and murdered by a band of Welshmen led by Morgan ap Owen.

Look out for the other walk leaflets in this series devised by the LV&D History Group.

Map and leaflet design by Lisa Hellier  
Words by Pip Bevan.





## ALLWYN CELYN

The original farmhouse was a hall house built of stone on Llanthony Priory land for a person of high status in about 1420, only five years after Owain Glyndwr's rebellion had been crushed. He might have been a prior (though the priory was in disarray throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century), a rich yeoman, the steward of a Marcher lord, or even a local archer who had ransomed French prisoners during the battle of Agincourt. In 1656 the copyhold lease was taken by William Watkins (Gent) who held other pieces of land in the valley.

In the 1690s, which was late for such changes, he inserted a ceiling and chimney stack in the open hall and added a rear kitchen, a beast house, threshing barn, and cider house. The Watkins remained at Llwyn Celyn for more than 100 years.

## THE GRWYNE FAWR RAILWAY

The construction of the Grwyne Fawr reservoir to provide water to Abertillery began in 1911 and was completed in 1928. Materials were transferred from Llanvihangel station to the Lower Cwmyoy Depot in the fields below Llwyn Celyn, along the road by traction engines or carts and horses or mules.

There were 1½ miles of track along the Cwm bottom to Pont Esgob where the track bent to the right as it started up the Grwyne Fawr valley. Work stopped during WW1 but by September 1919 rails again reached Blaen y Cwm village 2 miles below the dam and an extension line from Llanvihangel Yard to Lower Cwmyoy was in place. By 1920 four locomotives were operational. By 1925 Blaen y Cwm had more than 400 inhabitants and the railway line went up to the site of the dam.

## INTERESTING GEOLOGY

The Cwm Coed-y-cerrig valley is part of a major geological fault known as the 'Neath disturbance'. Looking downhill towards Bettws from the path up to Fferm Newydd you can see *kames*, glacial landforms made of mounds of sand and gravel. The Llanvihangel Crucorney *terminal moraine* can be seen from the east side of the Gaer.

## CHARCOAL INDUSTRY

Small-scale production of charcoal around Forest Coalpit took place for centuries, but demand from the iron industry increased production from the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The main production period included the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Production declined with the closing of the forge at Llangrwyne in about 1840 and ended around 1900. Charcoal brought in cash and the pattern of hearths on almost every farm suggests the work was carried out by farmers using additional local expert labour.

## HISTORY OF THE FFWDYDOG

The hamlet of the Ffwyddog occupied about 2000 acres of land in a narrow mile-wide strip along the eastern flank of the Grwyne Fawr valley for about six miles from the Nature Reserve to Blaen y Cwm. In addition to dwellings along the parish road the community had a blacksmith, and three inns at the southern end near the Gaer.



## FTWYN Y GAER

Built in the Iron Age (c750 to 43 BC), the fort was permanently occupied and used by the local *Silures* during their long resistance to the Roman invasion. Excavation in the 1960s found evidence of metalworking, platforms of turf and wattle huts. The fort was an elongated oval in plan defined by a rampart with a ditch and counterscarp bank, except on the south where the hill slopes are at their steepest. There is a single east-facing entrance. The interior is divided by two lines of east-facing ramparts and ditches, each with a central entrance.

## VIEWS FROM THE TOP OF THE GAER

The Ffwyddog ridge stretches away to the north west towards Chwarel y Fan, the highest point in Monmouthshire. To the north you can see Cwmyoy with its crooked church; and to the northeast the small valley of Cwm lau with the 17<sup>th</sup> century Ty-hunt-y-bwlch to the north and Perth-y-Crwn to the east, at the foot of the Hatterall ridge, at the end of which is the Pentwyn iron age fort. Look nearer to see Llwyn Celyn, and south east to Llanvihangel Crucorney village. The Grwyne Fawr valley lies to the west of Ffwyddog ridge; looking almost directly west you can see Tyn y Llwyn, built in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and beyond it the yew tree at the entrance to Partrishow church. Beyond are conifer plantations which replaced open farmland during the 1930s. Up the valley on the east side are Upper House and Coed Dias. To the south west the Grwyne Fawr river flows at the back of the Sugar Loaf to join the Usk beyond Glangrwyne.

- **Llwyn Celyn** was built in the 1420s and the area is full of historical interest.
- The road through **Cwm Coed-y-cerrig** was constructed in 1913 to ferry people and materials up the **Grwyne Fawr** valley to build the reservoir; a railway was added as the road was too steep for vehicles.
- **The Cwm** is part of a major geological fault going down to Neath.
- **Charcoal burning** was an important local industry for 250 years and you can see hearths in the Nature Reserve wood.
- **The Ffwyddog**, on the east side of the Grwyne Fawr valley, was an exclave of Herefordshire sandwiched between Monmouthshire and Breconshire.
- From the summit of **the Gaer** you can see stone farmhouses in the **Llanthony and Grwyne Fawr** valleys – many first built in the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*There are options for shorter or longer walks but the ancient greenway linking the Llanthony and Grwyne Fawr valleys (Penrhiw to Fferm Newydd on the map) should not be missed.*

[www.llanthonyhistory.wales](http://www.llanthonyhistory.wales)

Look out for the other walk leaflets in this series devised by the LV&D History Group.

Map and leaflet design by Lisa Hellier  
Words by Pip Bevan.