

WALK 3: LLANTHONY

OS map OL13: Grid Ref: SO 28711 27632

Approx. Distance: 2.5 miles

Duration about 2½ hours leisurely.

About 400 feet of ascent.

Difficulty: moderate - one steep climb

BRING WALKING BOOTS, AND CLOTHES SUITABLE FOR THE WEATHER

Llanthony or Llanddewi Nant Hodni

('the Church-of-St. David-by-the-Honddu-Brook')

is dominated by the ruins of Llanthony Priory.

In 1108 a church was consecrated on the site of St. David's 6th century 'Llan' which was dedicated to St. John the Baptist. In about 1118 Llanthony evolved as an Augustinian Priory but the buildings were not completed until 1230.

After the dissolution (1538) the Llanthony estate passed through a number of hands and the priory buildings deteriorated. From the late 18th century artists including Turner, came to paint the romantic ruins. At that time the buildings were known as Llanthony Abbey and later the hotel on the site was called the Abbey Hotel. Long standing locals still meet at 'the Abbey'.

In 1807 the poet WS Landor bought the estate and though he left for Italy bankrupted and in a huff in 1814, he planted 'a million trees' (chestnut, beech and larch), improved roads, built bridges, and tried to restore the Priory; although his plans to build a school were thwarted.



Walter Savage Landor
1775-1864

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

P PARKING: LLANTHONY PRIORY CAR PARK

The walk starts at the Priory, church and village and then follows the path across *Bugle Field* towards *Maes-y-beran*. A turn left uphill leads to cottages built by Landor for estate workers; the quarry which likely provided stones for the Priory, and the ruins at *Siarpal* where Landor built a house he called *the Grove*. The return to the carpark provides a new perspective on the priory including Landor's estate yard, *Court Farm* and the *Priory Gatehouse*.

1 Visit the Priory **A** and St. David's Church **B** opposite; then go down the road, viewing on your left the site of the canons' fishponds and the dovecote (over a little gate before the campsite).

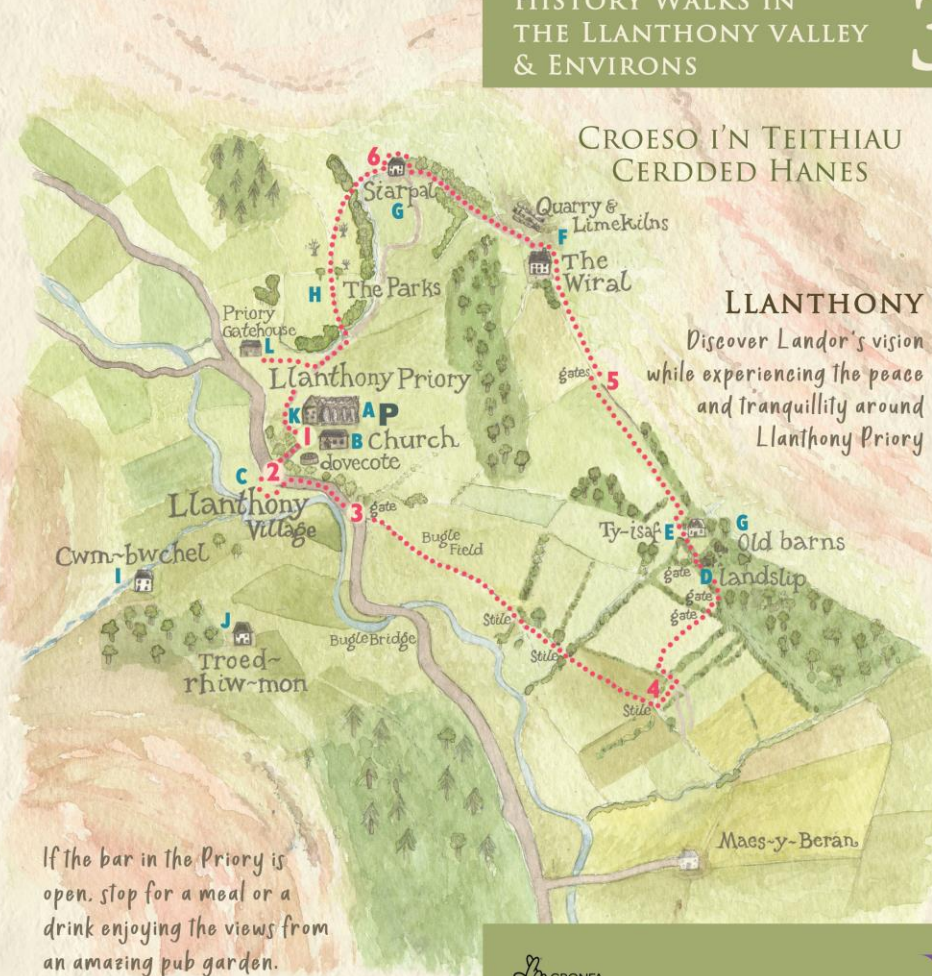
2 At the bottom of the road visit the village **C**.

3 From the village turn right and where the road bends to the right carry straight on along the path across **Bugle Field**. Climb the stile and bear left along a hedge to the signpost; follow the path to Cwmyoy passing some large oak trees on your left. Climb the second stile, walk straight ahead across the field and climb the third stile.

4 Find the map nailed to a post on the right and go left up the narrow field opposite. Go through the metal gate at the top, turn left, and shortly go through a wooden gate, turn right and follow the upward path to go through a gate at the top of the field. Bear left and up to another gate which opens on to a path. Turn left and follow the path until it peters out due to a recent landslip **D**; skirt below the slip until you see some old barns on your right, cross a stream, and go through a gate into a field. Head diagonally up to *Ty-Isaf* **E** and follow the line of the hedge hiding more old cottages built for Landor's workers.

5 Go through the gate, turn right and then go left along the Beacons Way path. Pass the *Wiral* **F**, and then the quarry and lime kilns on your right with the site of Landor's beech trees on your left. Carry on down the track to the ruins of the *Siarpal* **G** built by Landor.

6 Follow the path across the bridge to 'the Parks' **H** viewing the dead chestnut trees planted by Landor. Look across the valley to *Cwmbwchel* **I** and *Troed-rhiw-mon* **J**. Go through the gate into the Abbey field, cross the stream and walk down to the gate to the Warren. Look over the wall at Landor's workshop and Court Farm **K**. Walk to the far corner to look at the Warren Barn which was part of the Priory Gatehouse **L**. Head back to the Priory for a drink or a meal.



CROESO I'N TEITHIAU
CERDDED HANES

LLANTHONY

Discover Landor's vision
while experiencing the peace
and tranquillity around
Llanthony Priory



A LLANTHONY PRIORY

After the 6th century St. David's cell at Llanthony fell into ruin. In the 1090s a Norman knight came across the ruins; William de Lacy and followers built a church dedicated to John the Baptist and started an Augustinian priory (c1118), attracting gifts of money and land, enabling the building of the priory (completed 1230). After the dissolution in 1538 the priory was owned by the Arnolds, the Harleys, Colonel Wood, an Indian 'nabob' who made a fortune in India and who built a hunting lodge in the ruins, Walter Savage Landor the poet, and then his heirs. Today the ruins are a Cadw historic site and the hotel is owned by a local family. For centuries the Priory was known as Llanthony Abbey and long standing locals still go the 'the Abbey' today.



Photo © Jeremy Bolwell (cc-by-sa/2.0)

B ST DAVID'S CHURCH

was established after the dissolution in the remains of the Priory infirmary which it is said was built on St. David's monastic cell. Note the plain octagonal font, a very low brick arch at the west end that looks rather like a blocked chimney, and the 18th and 19th century wall monuments. The church altar is designed to point towards the rising sun on St. David's Day, March 1st.

C LLANTHONY VILLAGE

There are now five buildings: the mill, miller's house with barn, blacksmith's house attached to the forge, a building for estate workers during breaks, a school teacher's house; a sixth Pembroke has disappeared. In 1108 there was a corn or flax mill and 13 priory drains (underneath the smithy), and in medieval times a forge. In the 18th century the mill was used for flax fulling and later for sawing and corn.

D LANDSLIP AREA & LOCAL GEOLOGY

The Black Mountains are composed mostly of Old Red Sandstone rocks in sedimentary sequence: sandstones, mudstones, siltstones and numerous thin limestones. Glacial action in the Vale of Ewwas over-steepened the valley sides allowing landslips of mud and silt stones in places; there have recently been two in the area south of the Wiral.

E TY ISAF (LOWER HOUSE) & RUINED COTTAGES

The cottages were originally built by Landor for estate workers. See image below.



F WIRAL UCHAF, QUARRY & LIMEKILNS

The name the Wiral comes from chwaerel (quarry) the remains of which are just past the house. Wiral Isaf is a ruin. For many years the Wiral was the home of the Court farm shepherd and a smallholding. The slaked lime from the kilns was used as fertiliser and paint.



G THE SIARPAL

Landor wrote to Southey in 1811 that the house had 'a dining-room 28 by 22 feet and 14 feet high, drawing room and library 18 square; six family bedrooms & six servants...' The road arrived over the bridge to the north of the site to the stable and the coach-house building (now roofed over). Landor briefly occupied it in 1814; then the estate manager may have let it secretly before it was partly pulled down.

H THE PARKS, ABBEY FIELD & THE WARREN

There was a big wall around the Abbey field; look for signs of buried remnants of buildings. From the Warren look over the wall at Landor's estate yard.



I CWMBWCHEL

A late medieval house extended in the late C17 with a decorated door with date 1694 and an outside kitchen.

J TROED-RHIW-MON

Translation: foot of steep road to the mound or peat track. A 90 year old remembers the quarry on the hill above the house with two lines; one to bring the stone down, the other going up.

K COURT FARM



The main part was built in the 1600s and it was extensively re-built in the 18th century.

L THE PRIORY GATEHOUSE

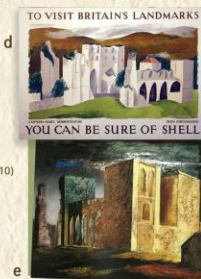
The Priory gatehouse was large; inside upstairs are the remnants of a large fireplace.



ARTISTS OF LLANTHONY ABBEY

The first image of 'Lantony Abby' (a) was dedicated to Edward Harley by the Buck brothers in 1732; subsequently more than 30 artists who painted the ruins have been identified by William Gibbs. The late 18th century saw a growing interest in landscape painting and the ruins of Llanthony Abbey became a popular subject for British artists. In the later 18th & 19th centuries they included:

- Paul Sandby (1773)
- William Hodges (1777)
- JMW Turner (1792 & 1794) (b) drawings and watercolours (1834) watercolour and oil
- Richard Colt Hoare (c) (1793/1801/1810)
- John Sell Cotman (1801)
- Thomas Hearne (1801)
- JT Barber (1803)
- Elizabeth Gibson (1815).



There were few new images until the 20th century. Denis Constanduros produced a Shell poster (d) c1938 & there were later paintings by John Piper (e) (oil, 1941), John Craxton (1942), Edgar Holloway (1945) Falcon Hildred (1988) Gwiliam Pritchard (2005) Michael Edmonds, & Robert McDonald (2012) among others.

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