

Llantysilio Mountain and Moel y Gaer Hillfort



Walk Information:

Maps: OS Explorer 256

Distance: 4.6 miles / 7.5 kilometres

Duration: 3.5 to 4 hours

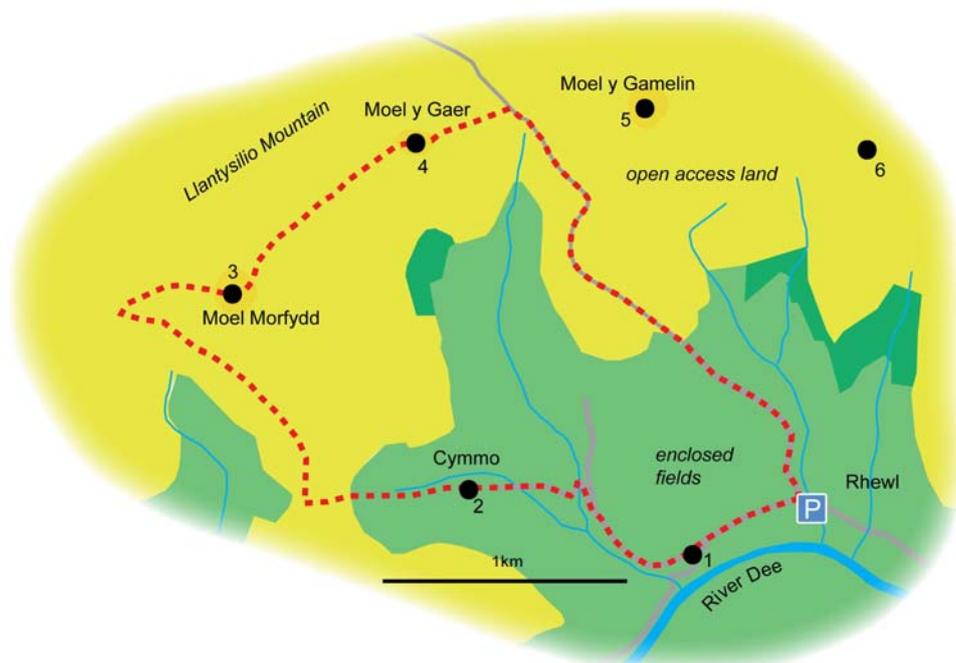
Difficulty: Moderate. Good paths or tracks but some steep gradients

Start and finish: SJ 1826 4494

Walk summary

The walk takes advantage of public footpaths, lanes and open access land, visiting the Iron Age hillfort on Moel y Gaer, as well as providing wonderful views of the surrounding area.

The route follows part of the Dee Valley Way along lanes and then a sunken trackway leading to open moorland. Leaving the waymarked route it follows a path and then an obvious track to the summits of Moel Morfydd and Moel y Gaer before descending to a lane to return to the start.



Introduction

Moel y Gaer is one of the summits of Llantysilio Mountain, on the north side of the Dee Valley and west of the Horseshoe Pass. This rugged upland landscape provides a stark contrast with the green fields and woods in the river valley below.

There is evidence for human activity here dating back to at least the Bronze Age (2,300 – 1,200 BC), with a large burial cairn on the summit of Moel y Gamelin. Several centuries later, during the Iron Age (1200 BC – 74 AD), Moel y Gaer was chosen as the site for a small hillfort.



The summit of Moel Morfydd with Moel y Gaer and Moel y Gamelin beyond

In more recent times these hills were transformed into an industrial landscape by extensive slate quarrying, mostly around the Horseshoe Pass, although with smaller quarries dotted around the hillsides. Many quarrymen lived in Rhewl and Llantysilio, walking the hillside tracks to the quarries each day. Today only the Berwyn Quarry remains open.

The moorland of Llantysilio Mountain is home to the rare black grouse, as well as other mountain birds such as the golden plover, ring ouzel and merlin.

The Walk

There is parking opposite the chapel in Rhewl (SJ 18264494), which is on the north side of the River Dee, between Glyndyfrdwy and Llangollen.

The walk follows the Dee Valley Way along the lane westwards for a short distance before taking the first turning on the right, past a phone box, near the Sun Inn **(1)** which is thought to have been a drovers inn dating back to the 14th century. Follow the lane as far as Cymmo (SJ 17004497), taking the signed route on the left which leads along an old sunken way **(2)** leading to open access land at SJ 16454494.



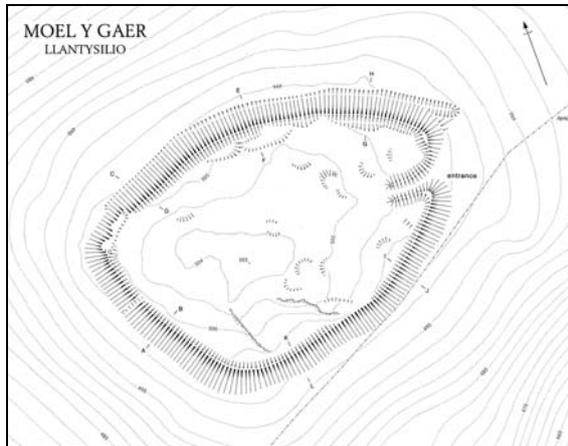
Creigiau Eglwyseg and Dinas Bran

Behind you to the east you can now see the impressive limestone cliffs of Creigiau Eglwyseg with the prominent hill of Dinas Bran to the right, which is crowned by the ruins of a medieval Welsh castle built within an Iron Age hillfort.

Cross the fence and continue ahead, keeping the sunken way on your left. At a signpost next to a gate (SJ 16264492) cross the fence on the right and turn right (N). At a corner with a stile (SJ 16274509) bear left across the field to a gate with a stile on the right. Cross the stile and continue along the obvious track which ascends to the NW. Ignore a fork on the left and continue ahead as far as a col at SJ 15494563.

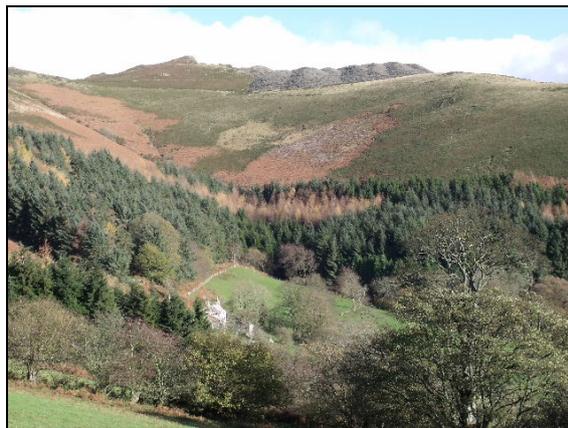
Turn right along a broad path which rises steeply to the summit of Moel Morfydd **(3)** (SJ 15974577; 549m). This is the highest point of the walk and give panoramic views: Snowdonia to the NW; the Vale of Clwyd and the Clwydian hills to the N; Moel y Gaer and Moel y Gamelin to the ENE; and the Dee Valley to the ESE.

From the summit the path descends NE to a col before rising steeply to cross the ramparts of Moel y Gaer hillfort **(4)**. This is one of several Iron Age hillforts which overlook the valleys of the Dee and Clwyd. Although it was not built on the highest point of Llantysilio Mountain it does occupy a good defensive position overlooking one of the ancient routes leading N from the Dee Valley. The hillfort is enclosed by an earth and stone rampart with a single entrance on the eastern side. In several places it is possible to see the levelled platforms where roundhuts once stood. Excavations in 2010 uncovered the remains of two roundhouses, each of which was about 6m in diameter. To the E is Moel y Gamelin, which has a large Bronze Age burial mound **(5)** on the summit.



Plan of Moel y Gaer hillfort

The path leads through the hillfort entrance and descends to a col below Moel y Gamelin. Turn right to follow a track which descends gradually to a gate at the edge of the open access land (SJ 17774555). To the NE are the obvious spoil tips of the Berwyn Slate Quarry **(6)**.



The spoil tips of Berwyn Slate Quarry

To return to the start, follow the lane SE which descends to the chapel at Rhewl.



