

OSWESTRY & BEYOND HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2020



HIDDEN NATURE

Put on your wellies, grab your coat and step into the outdoors - our theme for 2020 is Hidden Nature. This year, we are turning our focus onto the natural world – and we're asking you to join with us in celebrating our extraordinary natural heritage, from centuries-old trees to farmer's fields steeped in history, from clifftop walks to urban oases and everything in between.

Why Hidden Nature?

Uncovering stories, sites, places and people that traditional history has overlooked or forgotten has always been at the very heart of Heritage Open Days. Our natural world, and the impact we have upon it, is as much a part of this as the rise of cities, famous battles and technological developments. In the face of climate change, modern development and other threats, now more than ever does nature need to be cherished and championed. That's why this year we want to encourage HODs organisers, volunteers and visitors to celebrate nature, in its myriad forms, as part of the wider HODs festival.

What is Hidden Nature?

We want Hidden Nature to encompass the broadest possible spectrum of events, opening up areas of the countryside that aren't normally accessible to the public and revealing the hidden history of not just our natural landscapes, but also gardens, green spaces, urban parks, orchards, vineyards, farms and forests. Nature isn't just found in the great outdoors and our theme could also give you the opportunity to explore the Hidden Nature within our urban spaces and buildings - from the animals that live within our walls and under our feet to the origins of the timbers in our roofs, the possibilities to connect with our natural world are endless.

This booklet has been produced as part of Oswestry Town Museum's 2020 Heritage Open Days. It is list of Hidden Nature in Oswestry and its surrounding area, by no means is this a complete list. We hop you enjoy it and find it useful.

The Nature Reserves

Sweeney Fen

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

This tiny fen is one of the most exquisite flower meadows in Shropshire, it is 1 hectare in size and 3 miles south of Oswestry.

Best time to visit is from April to July, dogs are permitted but must be kept under control.

About the reserve

Water from the surrounding limestone hills seeps into the peat, making ideal ground conditions for several Shropshire rarities. Globeflower is found here, an Ice Age survivor at one of its most southerly points, clinging on in one or two wet places, its spherical flowers a soft, glowing yellow. In May the star-shaped flowers of bogbean appear, fringed petals opening white from dark pink buds. Thousands of fragrant orchids flower in early July; tall spikes of purple-pink, along with hundreds of dusky-petalled marsh helleborines, marsh orchids and wild angelica.

A footpath is marked out each summer so that people can enjoy the fen with minimal damage to its flowers. Dragonflies, frogs and a rare, tiny, whorled snail called *Vertigo lilljeborgi* also thrive in these boggy conditions.

Hay from Sweeney Fen has been spread on several nearby fields in the hope that the seeds of some of its extraordinary plants will grow and flourish beyond the nature reserve. Cattle graze the marshes for several months of the year to prevent the rushes overgrowing the meadow. It is a small reserve and fragile, so please tread carefully and stick to the path. The fen is approached over a stone-slab bridge and can be wet underfoot.



Craig Sychtyn Shropshire Wildlife Trust

A fine old wood with grand views across to the Tanat Valley and beyond to the Berwyn mountains. It is 5 hectares in size there are walking trails of steep footpaths and unfenced cliff top – so care is needed!

Best time to visit is from April to July and September to November, dogs are permitted.

About the reserve

The air blows fresh from Wales at Craig Sychtyn and there are grand views across to the Tanat Valley and beyond to the Berwyn Mountains from this fine old wood.

Pied flycatchers breed in this wood in nest-boxes supplied for them; listen for buzzards, ravens and woodpeckers. In spring look out for orchids and cowslips; in autumn for the bright orange berries of stinking iris; in summer for nettle-leaved bellflower, a local speciality also known as the blue foxglove.

The Oswestry uplands are dotted with old limestone quarry workings and here at Craig Sychtyn you will find lime kilns filled with leaves and a disused quarry – now a good place for limestone-loving flowers.

Bwlytai Wood Shropshire Wildlife Trust

A small wood awash with bluebells and wood anemones in spring. It is 2 hectares in size and 3 miles west of Oswestry, just south of Trefonen village. There are walking trails and a footpath leading to the reserve, please be sure to shut the gate of the reserve behind you.

Best time to visit is from April to July and September to November, dogs are permitted.

About the reserve

This is a small woodland of local interest, given to the Trust by Bridget Gledhill, a former resident of Trefonen. The bluebells and wood anemones that spill over the ground in spring testify that this is an ancient woodland site.

Clear felling some years ago resulted in an invasion of sycamores. Many of these were felled at the turn of the millennium and hundreds of ash, oak, rowan and other broadleaf trees planted. A curious beech tree with branches fused into a window can be found at the top of the wood. A great place to make dens!



Dolgoch Quarry Shropshire Wildlife Trust

An abandoned limestone quarry with wonderful wildflowers. It is 3 hectares in size and west of Llynclys crossroads. There is a footpath leading to the reserve, which is often wet and muddy.

Best time to visit is from April to August, dogs are permitted.

About the reserve

One of a string of abandoned limestone quarries in the area, Dolgoch on a sunny summer's day is a delight. A profusion of wildflowers grow on the limestone quarry floor, including yellow-wort, with its waxy, grey leaves, the upper ones cupped around the stem and star-like yellow flowers that shut in the afternoon. On the rock faces, look out for viper's bugloss, with its bristly spikes of cobalt blue flowers.

There are two ponds here, providing homes for frogs, toads, newts, damselflies and dragonflies. The rocks are interesting too; within the limestone strata you may see fossils of sea creatures such as corals and shellfish that lived when this landmass that was to become England lay in a shallow sub-tropical sea. Look out for the oyster-like fossil shells of *Gigantoproductus giganteus*, 150mm across and, as its names suggests, the giant of its day.

Jones' Rough Shropshire Wildlife Trust

The limestone scree provides perfect conditions for rock rose, wild thyme and marjoram and the scarce prickly sedge. It is 4 hectares in size and is 2 miles west of Llynclys, above the village of Nantmawr.

Best time to visit is from April to July and September to November, NO dogs permitted.

About the reserve

This small but beautiful, mixed reserve runs up a south west facing hill. On the way up the hill you will go through a range of habitats starting with mixed woodland, then coppice woodland to scree and open cliff. A small flock of Hebridean/Shropshire sheep graze it from time to time to keep the vegetation under control.

The woodland is dominated by yew, however other areas are more open with hazel ash, cherry, holly and rowan. The coppice woodland is predominantly hazel, allowing in light which encourages violet. These are important as the food plant source for the pearl bordered fritillary butterfly caterpillars, a species that has greatly declined over the last 150 years.

Llanymynech Rocks Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Old quarries with great botanical treasures. It is 10 hectares in size, sheep are present for several months a year.

Best time to visit is from April to August, dogs are permitted but ONLY on a lead.

About the reserve

From the Welshpool direction, the dramatic cliff face of the quarry confronts you miles before you get to Llanymynech, rising suddenly from the low-lying, flat fields around the Morda and Vyrnwy rivers. The hills here mark the beginning of the Oswestry uplands, a limestone outcrop that continues up into north-east Wales.

Mining and quarrying on a small scale were carried out here for more than 2000 years, right up until the First World War. Reminders of this ancient industry can be seen in the old stone tramways and a winding house. The old quarries were designated a nature reserve in 1972 and much of it has regenerated as woodland; ash trees twined in wild clematis, or old man's beard, as it is also known, on account of the smoky wreathes of seed-heads that turn bushes and trees white here in autumn.

But the greatest botanical treasures are found in the short grassland and old spoil heaps directly beneath the cliff. Bee and pyramidal orchids grow here, along with the bright yellow rock rose and a whole herb garden of aromatic herbs – thyme, marjoram and wild basil. Wild clematis becomes a problem here; only the determined efforts of the Trust's volunteers and a small flock of Hebridean sheep prevent it smothering the flower-rich swards.

New glades are being opened up and small-scale felling carried out to open up a corridor of light for butterflies. Pearl-bordered fritillaries, re-introduced on the Welsh side of the reserve have been seen on the Shropshire side. These butterflies need sunlight and violets, food plant of their caterpillars. A local group of keen volunteers called the Llimeys run work parties to help the trust manage the reserve.



Llynclys Common

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

A mosaic of habitats, fantastic place for wildlife and plants. It is 51 hectares in size and is 3 miles south of Oswestry.

Best time to visit is from April to November, dogs are permitted.

About the reserve

“Old hill, I love thy springy turf, Thy berried ash and wild-wood cherry, Thy bracken bronzed and gorse aflame. Thy rare, elusive spindleberry”.

From Musings on Llynclys Hill by J. Evans.

Llynclys Hill has everything – woods, meadows, scrub, screes, old quarries, sunny glades, a pond and big skies. It’s extraordinary variety of habitats make it a fantastic place for birds, plants, butterflies, moths and so, of course, for botanists, birdwatchers and all keen naturalists. It’s also wonderful for children, ideal for hide-and-seek, kite flying and picnics.

The vegetation here has changed radically over the last century. The entire hill was once clear pasture, grazed by sheep, ponies, cattle and pigs belonging to registered commoners. But as the grazing beasts were withdrawn, so the scrub and woodland moved in until barely a patch of its ancient, springy turf survived. It is thanks to the close involvement of the reserve wardens and dogged efforts by Trust volunteers that glades stayed open.

Today things are looking much brighter on the hill. Fencing has once again made it possible to graze animals here and the result is a wide swathe of herb-rich, closely nibbled grassland and big views. Woodpeckers peck ants from anthills, foxes sunbathe, and butterflies bask on their favourite flowers.

Limestone brings light to the eyes of botanists and nowhere more so than Llynclys Common. More than 300 plant species have been recorded here including fairy flax, eyebright, wild thyme, common rock-rose, cowslip, Devil’s-bit scabious, yellow-wort, salad burnet, lady’s bedstraw and numerous kinds of orchid.

The purchase of Crickheath Hill in 2004 added a further 12 hectares to the nature reserve. Here you find woodland with craggy limestone outcrops, trailing, twisted stems of honeysuckle dangling from the branches of ash and oak. There are several small meadows, with orchids and other wildflowers.



Ifton Meadows Local Nature Reserve

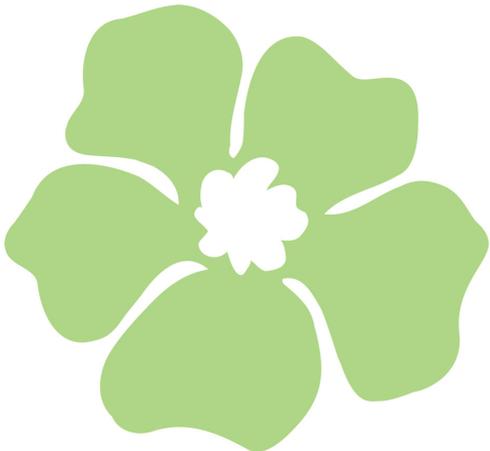
Shropshire Council

Ifton Meadows Local Nature Reserve is a former Colliery site which has since been re-clothed by nature to provide a diverse mosaic of habitats and notable species. From semi-natural ancient woodland with extensive swathes of British bluebell to skylarks nesting on the acid grassland with views across the wider countryside to the Welsh hills.

Ifton Colliery closed in 1968 and re-opened as a green space for local people in 1978. Its importance was recognised in 2005 when it was designated a Local Nature Reserve. Ifton Meadows and Price's Dingle cover 17.8 hectares and are managed by Shropshire Council who work closely with local people via Ifton Meadows Management Committee.

Ifton Meadows and Price's Dingle is an area where wildlife abounds, and which is accessible to the local community to enjoy quiet informal recreation in a tranquil and natural setting. In keeping with its Local Nature Reserve designation, the site is managed in a non-intensive, and where possible sustainable, manner aimed at maintaining and enhancing the site's biodiversity (habitats and species) and geodiversity (geological, industrial and archaeological heritage) whilst encouraging compatible access for recreation and education.

The vegetation here has changed radically over the last century. The entire hill was once clear pasture, grazed by sheep, ponies, cattle and pigs belonging to registered commoners. But as the grazing beasts were withdrawn, so the scrub and woodland moved in until barely a patch of its ancient, springy turf survived. It is thanks to the close involvement of the reserve wardens and efforts by Trust volunteers that the glades stayed open.



Shelf Bank Local Nature Reserve

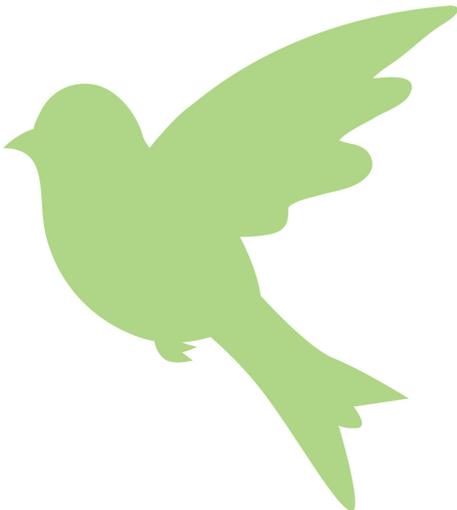
Shropshire Council

This wild knoll in the centre of Oswestry enables visitors to quickly escape the urban warren and enter woodland, sunny glades and grassy slopes with views across the town and the Shropshire countryside, all set to an orchestra of bird song and humming insects.

Located in the heart of Oswestry, Shelf Bank is a 3 hectare area of public open space consisting of acid grassland and naturally regenerated areas of woodland and scrub. The site occupies much of a glacial knoll which offers views across Oswestry town and the wider Shropshire countryside. The site features the remains of a Royal Observer Corps WWII lookout post and Cold War bunker on the summit. Along the southern edge of the site there can be found a section of Wat's Dyke, an earth bank structure dating back to the Dark Ages.

Shelf Bank is an area where wildlife is given every opportunity to flourish and which is accessible to the local community to enjoy quiet informal recreation in a tranquil and natural setting. The site is managed in a non-intensive, and where possible sustainable manner aimed at maintaining and enhancing the site's biodiversity, geological, industrial and archaeological heritage. Whilst encouraging compatible access for recreation and education.

Shelf Bank has a network of footpaths that provide an important pedestrian and mobility scooter link between eastern Oswestry and the town centre. Wheelchair and mobility scooter users can access the summit of the site. Benches are strategically placed to offer rest and views. Shelf Bank adjoins the Wilfred Owen Green, with its play area and other features.



Birch Road Pond

Ellesmere Town Council and Shropshire Wildlife Trust

A footpath runs right around the pond, with a boardwalk over the marshy areas. The viewing platform is accessible to wheelchairs.

Best time to visit is from April to July, dogs are permitted.

About the reserve

The site is owned by Ellesmere Town Council, and has been managed as a wildlife site by Shropshire Wildlife Trust since 2006. The Ellesmere branch of the trust has carried out a lot of work to clear the pond and install an access route around the site. The proximity of the site to the town makes it an ideal place for people to experience wildlife.

Once an area used as a rubbish dump, this pond and surrounding woodland have now been transformed into an area local people can enjoy. In summer the vegetation grows into a fantastic jungle; an ideal place for birds and other wildlife. Herons and house martins feed from and over the pool and common newts breed here. The open water attracts dragonflies and damselflies. Great spotted woodpeckers, bullfinches, goldfinches, nuthatch and willow warbler are among some of the bird species seen here. Willows here attract a lot of insects, such as the caterpillars of over 90 moth species.

Charles Sinker Fields

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

The site formerly known as “The Flooded Fields” are a birdwatching hotspot on the edge of Whixall Moss. It is 12 hectares in size, there are two gaps in the hedgerow to view the fields from the lane to Morris’s Bridge.

NO dogs permitted.

About the reserve

Charles Sinker was a founder member of Shropshire Wildlife Trust in 1962. Professionally, he was the first warden of Preston Montford Field Centre and the Field Studies Council first national director. In 1962 he published a paper highlighting the extraordinary ecology of the Meres & Mosses, which has formed the backbone of efforts to conserve them ever since.



Wood Lane

The Tudor Griffiths Group and Shropshire Wildlife Trust

A working quarry site owned by Tudor Griffiths, with managed pools which have become a haven for birds. It is 15 hectares in size and a permit is required to access the hides.

NO dogs. For access to the hides and information contact The Tudor Griffiths Group and the Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

About the reserve

One of the best bird-watching sites in Shropshire, Wood Lane Nature Reserve has been developed in recent years on worked-out industrial land, Tudor Griffiths Group's old sand and gravel workings near Ellesmere. Several large lagoons with islands and surrounding wetland make up the reserve, which is surrounded here by a working landscape with mountainous heaps of sand providing a backdrop – and also the perfect nesting opportunity for hundreds of pairs of sand martins.

More than 180 species of birds have been recorded at Wood Lane since the nature reserve was established in 1999. Pumps control the water levels, so that optimum amounts of mud and water are available for wading birds such as greenshank and curlew; islands have been created for safe roosting; hundreds of trees have been planted and scores of nest boxes installed.

The reserve is a rare and much valued haven for breeding lapwing, tree sparrow and yellow hammer, while little ringed plover is another speciality. The sand mountain provides an ideal nesting site for sand martin, of which 500 pairs have been known. Waders, such as greenshank, godwit and whimbrel, drop in to feed up on their migration journeys in spring and autumn. There are around 40 breeding bird species on the reserve.

There are two large hides facing the lagoons and school groups regularly visit. A permit is required to access the hides.



Holly Banks

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

A tranquil landscape with dense hedgerows and grand old ash and oak trees. It is 19 hectares in size and 14 miles west of Shrewsbury.

Best time to visit is from April to July, dogs are permitted but must be on a lead.

About the reserve

Floods in Shrewsbury and Ironbridge wreak havoc and misery. But floods in the flatlands upriver can be spectacular, transforming the landscape into a different world - and one which suits wildlife beautifully.

The Trust bought Holly Banks with two main aims: to show that this low-lying land could demonstrate alternative water management techniques helping to avoid flooding problems; and to help breeding lapwing. By slowing down the rush of water tumbling off the Welsh mountains, towns downstream may be spared some of the wretchedness of flooding, while wetland birds in the old floodplains where the rivers Severn and Vyrnwy meet might be given a chance of recovery.

The aim is to keep the ground wet through spring and summer, which will be good for lapwing and curlew; then allow the water to seep away in the autumn, so it's ready to soak up winter floodwater.

Ruewood

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Two wet meadows full of wild flowers. It is 3 hectares in size and is 1 mile south-west of Wem.

Best time to visit is from April to July. Dogs are permitted.

About the reserve

Two wet meadows full of wild flowers, traditionally managed by grazing livestock. In spring and summer damp ditches are full of plants such as marsh marigold, cuckoo flower and meadowsweet.

More than 140 different species grow here, including the plant that gives this reserve its name – meadow rue. This is a Shropshire rarity, growing in a tiny handful of places in the county. Once, when there was more wet alder woodland along the River Roden, meadow rue was more widespread. Today you can find it along the old parish boundary hedgerow, separating the two fields.

Wem Moss

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

An ancient piece of wilderness; an outstanding example of a lowland raised bog. It is 28 hectares in size, there are adders on the Moss and so it is essential to wear wellingtons or walking boots.

Best time to visit is from May to August. Dogs are permitted but must be on a lead, to avoid disturbance to ground nesting birds.

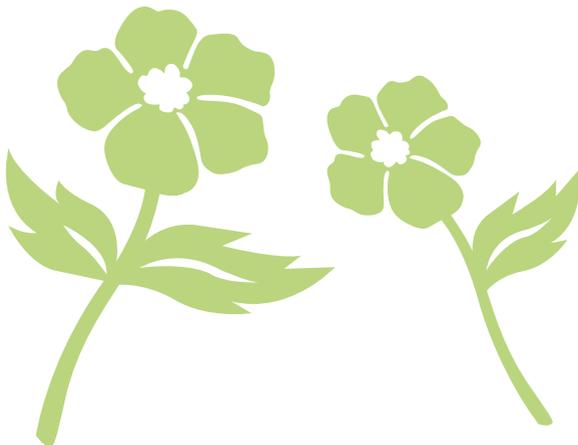
About the reserve

If you like big spiders this is the place for you! Here in this gorgeous peat bog lives the great raft spider, a six-inch monster that walks across water in search of prey. This is as ancient a piece of wilderness as you will find in Shropshire, a miraculous relic circled with trees beyond which the modern world gets on with intensive agricultural production.

Wem Moss is an outstanding example of a lowland raised bog, a wildlife habitat that exists in Britain today in just tiny remnant fragments. Ninety-four per cent of its former range has been destroyed or degraded by drainage, intensive peat cutting, grazing, forestry and pollution, leaving just 503 hectares of unspoilt raised bog in England. All three British species of sundew – fascinating carnivorous plants – are found here, along with the starry golden spikes of bog asphodel, the fragrant bog myrtle and bog rosemary.

The Trust wages a continuous battle with encroaching bushes and trees, which, if left unchecked, consume millions of gallons of water, causing the bog to dry out.

Warning! There are adders on the Moss and so it is essential to wear wellingtons or walking boots. It's rough walking and no place for a picnic!



Ty Brith

Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust

Flower-rich meadows. It is 5 hectares in size with grazing animals primarily Sheep. There are no set footpaths, the ground is largely flat but can be uneven and wet in places.

Best time to visit is from May to July. Dogs are permitted but must be on a lead, to avoid disturbance to grazing animals.

About the reserve

These four fields are probably the largest group of unimproved hay meadows in Montgomeryshire. For hundreds of years, the fields have been managed traditionally; the hay is cut after the flowers have set seed and then the fields are grazed until the grass stops growing. An area of species-rich wetland further enhances the second field, attracting wintering Snipe to the reserve.

There are over 100 different flowers and grasses at Ty Brith, including several species of orchid - in today's modern silage fields you are lucky to find 6 different flower species!

Prees Heath East

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Prees Heath East was purchased for Shropshire Wildlife Trust by local landowner John Baker, who was keen to protect this important heathland. It is 3 hectares in size and is an extension of the nationally important Prees Heath Common.

Best time to visit is Summer, dogs are permitted but must be kept on a lead.

About the reserve

Prees Heath East is an extension of the nationally important Prees Heath Common, which is owned and managed by Butterfly Conservation for the Silver-studded blue butterfly and was considered the last site in the West Midlands to find them. The extension has been purchased to act as a satellite site for the butterfly, supplying additional suitable habitat for them to thrive in.

Before the purchase, the site was used as an off-road biking trail, which caused erosion and degraded the condition of the site for butterflies. The plan now is to reduce the dominance of the bracken cover and to try to establish heather cut from Prees Heath which will further benefit the Silver-studded blues.

Darwin's Childhood Garden Shropshire Wildlife Trust

A fragment of the garden in which Charles Darwin spent much of his childhood. It is 1 hectare in size and is alongside the River Severn, below The Mount Road, Shrewsbury.

The Reserve can be accessed by walking down steep steps from the road, or alternatively accessed by walking along the river. The site is very steep, unsuitable for those with limited mobility. Access is by arrangement only, but the site can be viewed from the riverside walk. The garden is opened several times a year for guided walks. No dogs permitted.

About the reserve

"I often think of the garden at home as a Paradise: on a fine summer's evening, when the birds are singing, how I should like to appear like a Ghost amongst you," wrote Charles to his sister in 1833, while aboard *The Beagle*.

This fragment of the Darwin family garden was bought by Shropshire Wildlife Trust in 2013. While much of the formerly extensive grounds attached to The Mount, his birthplace and childhood home, have disappeared under housing, other parts survived in private gardens.

No other part of Darwin's childhood home is accessible to the public. Through the wood, alongside an ice house once used by the Darwins, runs a path with views down to the River Severn. It was here 200 years ago, that the young Darwin was sent every day before breakfast to walk the path at the bottom of the garden. It was known as the Thinking Path and provided a regular time for thought and reflection. The habit became ingrained in Darwin's daily routine and when he and his wife Emma bought Down House in Kent, they made their own Sandwalk through the grounds, carrying on the tradition of morning walks with their children.

This land was purchased with donations from Shropshire Wildlife Trust members and supporters and significant grants from the Jean Jackson Trust, Shropshire Horticultural Society, Shropshire Masonic Charitable Association and the Daniell Charitable Trust.



The Woodlands

Oliver's Wood

A Woodland Trust Wood

This wood was planted in 1995 as part of the 'Woods on Your Doorstep' project which created new community woods within walking distance of towns and villages. It is developing well and is already popular with local people as it sits close to several footpaths. There is a circular ride around the wood that links into one of the footpaths.

Henley Wood and Meadow

A Shropshire Council Wood

A community woodland known locally as Henley Woods. First planted in the 1990s, the woodland had been neglected for many years. However, this changed just before Christmas 2012 members of the newly formed 'Friends of Henley Woods' planted 13,000 spring flowering native bulbs, including British bluebells, wild garlic, British snowdrops, celandine and native daffodils. Selective tree felling has occurred in the wood in order to open the canopy, which in turn will attract other species of insect and birdlife. A stone footpath runs through the woodland.

It is also home to Oswestry Park Run, which is 5km run against the clock every Saturday at 9:00am. The course is run on a mixture of gravel paths, trail paths and grass. Some sections of the course may accumulate mud, leaves and puddles after rain.

Glentworth Woods

A Shropshire Council Wood

This small section of woodland has suffered in the past from antisocial behaviour such as fly tipping and BMX riding. In response, the local authority has created a smaller area for cyclists in the Morda teen play area and enhanced the paths through Glentworth woods.

Yell Wood

A Shropshire Council Wood

Yell Wood lies between the Shropshire Union Canal and a lake known as Cole Mere, which was formed at the end of the last Ice Age. A circular walk around Cole Mere takes visitors through the wood.

Bryn-Y-Castell Coppice

A Shropshire Council Wood

Bryn Y Castell is a woodland area behind the Playing Fields in Gobowen and is currently looked after by the Bryn-Y-Castell Conservation Group. It was originally owned by the Lovett family and was part of the Henlle Hall Estate.

It appears to have been an uncultivated wooded area due to its high-water table and poor drainage. An 1839 Tithe Map describes the area as a plantation, however whether the coppice was maintained is unlikely due to the drainage difficulties and a lack of any specific records confirming this.

Local recent accounts suggest that the coppice was known as 'Bluebell Woods' and that pigs were kept there. The earliest referral to the name Bryn Y Castell Coppice can be found on the 1954 Ordnance Survey Map.

In 1966 the playing fields and coppice were sold by the Forster family of Henlle Old Farm to the Selattyn & Gobowen Parish Council for recreational purposes and became known as Gobowen Playing Fields.

Coed Collfryn

A Woodland Trust Wood

This ancient woodland is dominated by oak with ash sycamore silver birch larch and cherry complements a carpet of bluebells honeysuckle wood anemone and bramble. Good public access and paths make this an enjoyable wood to visit.

Garden Terraces

A Shropshire Council Wood

The Mere at Ellesmere is a beautiful lake with gardens, woodland walks and historic parkland. The Castlefields section was once overlooked by a Norman castle. Climb the wildflower meadow banks to the garden terraces, a zig-zag of wooded walkways with wonderful elevated views across the water!

Pant yr Eos

A Woodland Trust Wood

Pant-yr-Eos is a mixed broadleaf and conifer plantation lying on a steep slope. Formerly agricultural land remnants of former field boundaries can be identified by the large old field boundary trees mainly oak and sycamore.

The Plantation

Plantation Wood Ellesmere Charity Number 1175383

The Plantation is a small patch of secondary woodland situated to the southeast of Ellesmere. The footpaths through the Plantation wood are the main route from the Canal via Castle Fields to the Mere. It also forms part of a number of circular walks from the Canal to the Mere, Castle Fields, the Arboretum etc and visa versa.

Parts of the Plantation have in the past been used by the people of Ellesmere as Allotments for many decades. Although these have since scrubbed over and form a naturalised stand of Gooseberry and Damson. The boundaries of the allotments are distinguishable by the rows of Sycamore and Holly, which run north-south. Abandoned allotments (last used during WW2), later becoming invaded by Sycamore a contrast of broadleaf woodland and scrub. The woodland was previously dominated by Sycamore which cast dense shade. A low diversity of woodland plant species, Semi-natural broadleaved woodland part of which is possibly a fragment of ancient woodland.

In 1951 the last of Lord Brownlow's Estate was sold, among the pieces of land in Ellesmere sold was the Planation wood on Sandy Road, this was bought by the Grosvenor Estates as part of their plan to diversify. The reserve is presently owned by the Grosvenor Estate, and was managed from 1985 by Shropshire Wildlife Trust. The Shropshire Wildlife Trust gave up the lease in September 2016.

Badger setts have been recorded on the reserve along with signs of Rabbits, Foxes and Grey Squirrels. Several common invertebrates have been recorded including the following Butterflies: Speckled Wood, Ringlet, Red Admiral, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Brimstone. Birds present include, Tawny Owls, Nuthatch, Willow Warblers, Redwings, Song Thrush, Blackbirds and, various tits.

Volunteers from the Ellesmere branch of Shropshire Wildlife Trust have in the past been regularly managing the site, removing Sycamores, creating new paths and planting new trees. A series of glades have been created to provide suitable habitats for Butterflies. The Plantation is used as an amenity woodland with marked walks around the site.

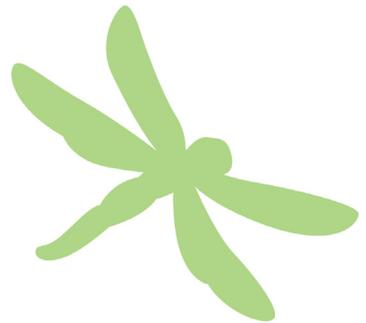


Llwyn Coppice

Known locally as “The Coppie”, The site contains steep pathways and uneven ground, so strong footwear is recommended. Good views of the Hillfort and across the North part of town.

A late 1830's tithe map shows the northern part of site as a plantation called Old Oswestry, which at that time was owned by William Ormsby Gore and is recorded as being 'in hand', i.e. not let to a tenant. The southern part of the site is recorded on the tithe map as being 'The Llwyn Coppice' and the land ownership is given as 'representatives of the late John Mytton'.

Archenfield Archaeology were commissioned to conduct a brief archaeological survey of the Coppice, Oswestry and to advise on the management of the site from an archaeological perspective. The survey confirmed that the southern part of the site is likely to have been the original coppiced area. The trees on the southern side of the former boundary show signs of having been previously coppiced. To the north of the former boundary the trees appear to have been deliberately planted, as there are discreet stands of mature trees that do not appear to have been coppiced. At the boundary of the wood there is a low bank which the boundary fence now stands on. This would appear to have been partly formed by the natural migration of soil down the slope, but there must have been a boundary hedge around the original coppice to keep stock and deer away from vulnerable young trees. The coppicing of woodland sites formed an important part of the rural economy within living memory. Charcoal burning, green woodturning and the collection of firewood were all income generating activities that involved large numbers of people. Such areas of coppiced woodland were therefore an important way of making otherwise relatively unproductive land more valuable.



Greenspaces

Broadlands Way

Broadlands Way is an area of greenspace along the eastern boundary of Oswestry. It is 1.7 hectares in size, with space to run about and an extensive children's play area leading into woodland. The site is popular with local children and regular walkers who utilise the continuous footpaths connecting neighbouring greenspace along Oswestry's Green Network.

The site is mixed in nature with woodland and playing fields, wildflower meadows and colourful summer wildflower beds and shrub borders. An extensive play area meanders through the woodland allowing children to develop their own imagination for natural play. The play area leads to a football pitch which offers visitors space to run about playing games or picnic. The site is very popular with dog walkers who utilise the circular tarmac path which runs through and connects with neighbouring areas of greenspace to the north, south and west along the Green Network.

The site is home to beds of brightly coloured cornfield annual wildflowers. The perennial wildflower meadows act as 'stepping stones' for our bees and proceed all the way into the town centre. Oswestry in Bloom has also benefited from these beds and provide many a colourful image to promote the town.

In 2012 the site was designated a Queen Elizabeth II Field in Trust; a plaque marking this achievement has been attached to a monolith of locally sourced oak near to the entrance of Broadlands Way road.

Gatacre Recreation Ground

A popular large open space on the northern edge of Oswestry favoured for sporting activities with associated changing and community facilities within Gatacre pavilion. Adjacent to and with good access to Oswestry Hillfort and Llwyn Coppice woodland, known locally as "The Coppie".

It is approximately 5 hectares in size with tarmac pathways, seating and areas managed for wildflowers, it is a popular destination for local walkers and families. The site is also popular for local football teams, rounders teams and is home to Cae Glas Cricket Club. Facilities include Gatacre pavilion with changing rooms, toilets and community facilities available for meetings, functions and events. The site is maintained to a high standard and in 2012 was awarded a Queen Elizabeth II Fields in Trust status.

Llanymynech Heritage Area

Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust

A site steeped in history spanning both sides of the English / Welsh border. 18th century Industrial archaeology has been preserved and interpreted and can be found within managed woodlands and meadows showing good diversity of flora and fauna together with views across the wider Shropshire countryside.

Llanymynech Heritage Area forms part of an extensive site known as Llanymynech Limeworks Heritage Area which is managed by a number of stakeholders including Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust both sides of the Welsh/ English border. The site represents a nationally significant 'industrial production line in the landscape' together with a rich history dating back to the Bronze Age.

Visitors to Llanymynech Heritage Area can expect to experience woodland, wildflower meadows and canal path walks together with extensive interpretation of the industrial archaeology, in particular the rare Hoffman Kiln on site. As one of only three remaining Hoffman Kilns in the country and the only one with the chimney still intact, this is a nationally significant industrial heritage area. The site forms part of the 'Limeworks' landscape, from rock extraction on the high cliffs of Llanymynech Rocks, down the inclined planes through to the kilns and beyond, transporting the finished lime via the Montgomery Canal and Railway.

Oswestry Old Racecourse Common

Shropshire Council, Oswestry Racecourse Management Association and FORCE – Friends of Oswestry Racecourse

Oswestry Racecourse is a gem of a site situated at 1000ft on a high plateau between the north Shropshire plains and Welsh hills, providing extensive views of surrounding countryside.

Oswestry Racecourse is a 22 hectare area of common land of the Oswestry uplands offering views into England and Wales. The figure of eight walking route around the site follows the 18th century racecourse (one of the first in the country). It guides visitors through open woodland, a patchwork of scrub, scattered trees, bracken and wildflower rich grassland supporting a wide range of birds and insects.

Trefonen Playing Fields

Shropshire Council, Trefonen Playing Field Association and Trefonen Football Club

Trefonen Playing Field is a large open space which serves three rural settlements, Trefonen, Treflach and Nantmawr, outside the market town of Oswestry.

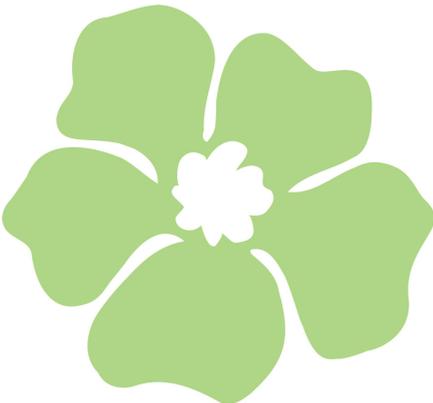
Trefonen Playing Fields is a 2.6 hectare area of greenspace in the delightful village of Trefonen just south of Oswestry. Home of Trefonen Football Club, comprised of a central games area, a new car park, a contemporary play area which utilises the pit mound and is designed to inspire children's imagination, a woodland area, part of the wildlife area, with an outdoor classroom used by the adjacent primary school Eco club. Improvements to the footpath network encircling the site include seating, picnic benches and outdoor fitness equipment as part of the trim trail. The industrial heritage of the site has been interpreted to include sculptures telling the story of local mining.

The site is very much the focus of local groups in the community, including the Wildlife Group and Heritage Group. Very well attended annual events ensure the site remains at the heart of village life. In 2012 the site received recognition in becoming a Queen Elizabeth II Field in Trust.

Brogyntyn Park

Oswestry Town Council

6 acres of parkland at the rear of Oswestry Fire Station. Gifted by the Harlech family, the area is popular as urban parkland. The site has been carefully managed by the Council to allow improved access. Extensive tree and shrub planting has also taken place.



Wilfred Owen Green

Wilfred Owen Green is a welcoming well-maintained site featuring play areas, footpaths and benches. The area of green space includes formal design at one end, gently blending into a more natural area of wildflower meadows, woodland, imaginative areas of mounds and hollows, log and boulder piles and one of the largest labyrinths worldwide.

Wilfred Owen Green was opened in 2010, the site was so named in remembrance of the great war poet, born in Oswestry. Who would have left for the Front from the adjacent railway station after basic training at Park Hall in nearby Whittington.

The Wilfred Owen Green incorporates well maintained formal grassland, flower beds, a footpath network and benches. Numerous trees have been planted throughout the site including a small arboretum containing some unusual specimens. Play areas have been incorporated through the site gently leading to the more natural space of adjacent Shelf Bank. Wildflower meadows meander around the boundaries blending with woodland along the scheduled ancient monument of Wat's Dyke. Towards the northern end of the space there can be found one of Europe's largest open air raised turf labyrinths which is a delight to observe from the elevated vantage point of Shelf Bank. The play value of the Labyrinth is also apparent, firing children's imagination to jump and run amongst its mounds and troughs.

The site forms a vital pedestrian route to the town centre and is central to Oswestry's important Green Network. Oswald's Trail, a 12.6 mile promoted circular walking route starts from Wilfred Owen Green and an information panel near to the medical centre car park offers additional information about the route. A 3D map of the site with brail situated at the southern end of the site near the railway crossing allows

In 2010 the site won Oswestry and District Civic Societies' Mary Hignett Environment Award. In 2012 a further protective recognition was received when Wilfred Owen Green became a Queen Elizabeth II Field in Trust and continues to be a favourite destination for many locals and visitors to the town.



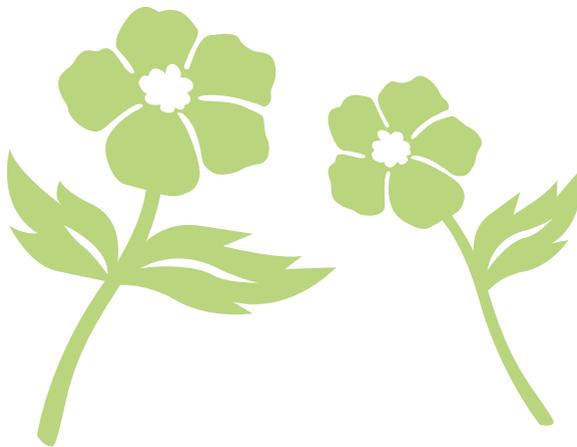
Cae Glas Park

Oswestry Town Council

Cae Glas Park celebrated its 110th birthday 23rd June 2020. Cae Glas Park was formally opened on Thursday 23rd June 1910. The park gets its name 'Cae Glas' from the old Cae Glas Mansion which existed on this site.

Mr. Charles Jones of Rossett who in November 1908 wrote to the Oswestry Corporation (now Oswestry Town Council), offering to sell the land, conditionally upon its conversion into a public park and pleasure ground. The conveyance included a covenant on the part of the Corporation that Cae Glas Park would "not be used for any purpose whatsoever other than a public walk or pleasure ground". The bowling green was acquired by gift in 1932 for the same purposes and two additional portions of land were added by purchase in 1951 and 1952.

Cae Glas Park is a feature park in the town centre of Oswestry. The 7 acre site is regarded as one of the town's major tourist attractions by locals and visitors alike. The site includes large areas of carefully maintained open space, the 'Sports Village', a bowling green, children's play area, the Memorial Gates and large areas of spring and summer bedding displays. In addition the Park has a traditional bandstand, public conveniences, a pavilion, greenhouses and a house which is rented out.



Prees Heath Common

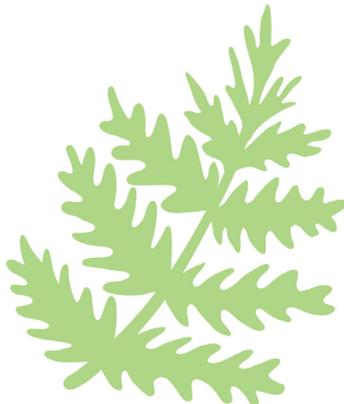
Butterfly Conservation, Cheshire and Shropshire Wildlife Trusts

For centuries Prees Heath was an open heathland common. It was used for warfare training during WWI and as a bomber airfield during WWII. The old aircraft control tower is still present and provides a reminder of part of the area's history.

The heathland was gradually destroyed during the decades following WWII. Fortunately, a small part was given protection as a Site of Special Interest in 1991. Thanks to the great efforts by Butterfly Conservation, Cheshire and Shropshire Wildlife Trusts and members of the public during the Prees Heath Appeal money was raised for Butterfly Conservation to purchase 148 acres of the heathland. Work towards restoring the heathland to its former glory has already commenced with funding received from Grantscape and Natural England.

Prees Heath is the last place in the West Midlands where the threatened Silver-studded Blue butterfly is found. The species has declined in Britain by 50 per cent since 1980. To survive the Silver-studded Blue butterfly requires the presence of ants together with open ground containing short heathland vegetation. The females are known to utilise bell and ling heather and bird's-foot trefoil, near to ants' nests, when laying their eggs. The chrysalis is formed underground within chambers of the ant's nest. The caterpillar is tended by the ants as it feeds on the leaves and shoots of its food plants. The benefit to the ant is a tasty honey-like dew excreted by the caterpillar which the ants find irresistible.

To see the Silver-studded Blue butterfly visit Prees Heath between mid-June and late July. The area also provides good bird watching opportunities throughout the year. The reserve is a popular place all visitors are asked to treat it and the creatures that live there with respect.



CROP (Cambrian Railway Orchard Project)

CROP has established a thriving fruit tree orchard on land between the Cambrian Railway line and Gobowen Road north of Oswestry. Home to over 200 indigenous fruit-bearing trees, it includes rare apple varieties from the Oswestry area, as well as cherry, plum and even hazelnut trees.

The 1 acre site is located between the railway line and Gobowen Road (B5069), an arterial route passing Oswestry's Iron Age Hill Fort. The project started in November 2011, with the foundations of a traditional orchard being built by the planting of half standard fruiting trees including local varieties (apple, pear, plum/gauge and cherry) alongside fencing and hedge laying. Followed by felling of dead elm trees, chipping, green composting, herb and soft fruit planting and wildlife habitat building. Since then the site has improved with the redevelopment of its entrance, the completion of a shelter, the planting of 50 more apple trees as cordons, 15 cherry trees to be grown as fans, construction of a soft fruit nursery bed of blackcurrant, redcurrant and gooseberry and the planting of herbs.

A hive of British honeybees was established in Autumn 2013 by a local beekeeper with the first honey being extracted in September 2014. Another hive was added in 2015. Courses and training have been run on the site for hedge laying, hedge planting and also the grafting, planting and pruning of fruit trees. Wassailing have been held as well as formal school visits and guided evening Herb Walks.

CROP has been awarded the Mary Hignett Environment Award by Oswestry and District Civic Society in 2012. 'Oswestry in Bloom' gave CROP the Outstanding Work by Young Persons award in 2013 and the Best Community Project award in 2014 and 2015. In 2015 CROP received the Chairman's Award for the Heart of England Britain in Bloom/RHS Scheme and were nominated as an Environmental Champion in the Shropshire Star Pride in Shropshire awards. In 2016 CROP was awarded a gold standard award by 'Oswestry in Bloom'. CROP has also played a central role to Oswestry's Apple Days held in the Market Square since 2013.

Historic Sites

Oswestry Hillfort (Old Oswestry)

Managed by English Heritage

The Old Oswestry Hill Fort, known as Caer Ogyrfan after King Arthur's father in law, is said to be the birthplace of Queen Ganhumara, or Guinevere. It is also believed to have been the site for the final battle of the Powys King Cynddylan, the last descendant of King Arthur to rule in Shropshire.

A 3,000-year-old hill fort marks the beginning of one of Britain's oldest settlements, Oswestry. It is on the outskirts of town and a short climb will reward you with views of both the town and the county of Shropshire, especially impressive when the spring bluebells are out.

Old Oswestry was built and occupied during the Iron Age (800 BC to AD 43) and is one of the best-preserved hillforts in Britain. During this period Britain was divided into numerous tribal territories, and the hillfort was probably a stronghold and principal settlement for one of these. A fine example of a 'multi-vallate' or multiple rampart hillfort, it is one of a dense band of hillforts in eastern Wales and the Marches. It remained in use for almost 1,000 years.

After the hillfort had been abandoned it was incorporated into an earthwork known as Wat's Dyke. During the First World War the hillfort was used as a military training area for troops based at the nearby Park Hall camp. Trenches were dug and the use of explosives created shallow craters that are sometimes mistaken for archaeological features. Much of the archaeology of the interior of the fort was damaged at this time.

Since 2015, housing developers have been trying to get planning permission for new homes near the slopes of the ancient monument. However, an ongoing campaign (backed by local residents and archaeologists) has stalled these proposals.



Castle Bank (Oswestry Castle)

Oswestry Town Council

Castle bank is all that remains of an imposing castle, which served to defend the town and formed an important link in the chain of Norman defence along the Welsh border. The motte is about 30 feet high and the ruins possibly date to the 13th century and are a Grade II Listed Building. There is a spectacular view of the town from the top.

The Norman Motte and Bailey castle of Oswestry is mentioned in the Domesday book, so must pre-date 1086. The castle is situated on a small steep-sided glacial mound which offers a commanding view of the Welsh hills to the West and the Shropshire plain to the East, which makes it an excellent defensive site with no need to build a Motte mound. The first castle here was probably a wooden structure, as most early castles were, and was replaced in stone.

The castle, town and associated estates came under the ownership of the FitzAlan family in the 12th century. Apart from a brief occupancy by Madoc ap Maredudd, Prince of Powys, the ownership remained in the FitzAlan family until the mid-16th century. The castle underwent some refortification in the 13th century as part of Edward I's war against the Welsh but seems to have declined in military importance in the period of relative stability which followed. It still had an administrative function and was the scene of a Parliament held by Richard II in 1398 and was used to muster troops for wars in France in the 14th and 15th centuries. After this time increasing encroachment on the Castle through urban expansion led to a gradual decay and demolition; a survey of the castle commissioned in 1602 by the Earl of Suffolk records that timber, iron and lead, and much of the castle walls had been removed.

During the Civil War the castle was garrisoned by Royalist forces but was besieged and taken by the Parliamentary forces in 1644. Colonel Mytton of the Parliamentary forces described the castle as the 'key that lets us into Wales'. The castle was finally destroyed under orders from Cromwell. The town was badly damaged during the siege leading to the castle being used as a ready source of building materials.

In 1850 it was acquired by some local gentlemen and landscaped as a pleasure garden. The site was gifted to the Town Corporation in 1885, who undertook further landscaping for Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations in 1887 and opened it as a public park. The castle and mound now enjoy the protection of Scheduled Ancient Monument status, maintained by Oswestry Town Council and is open to the public.

St. Oswald's Well Oswestry

According to legend, King Oswald was killed in battle against King Penda at the Battle of Maserfield. A great bird carried off his arm and dropped it at this site from whence a spring arose St Oswald's Well, Oswestry.

Reginald of Durham records the miracle, saying that his (King Oswald) right arm was taken by a bird (perhaps a raven) to an ash tree, which gave the tree ageless vigor; when the bird dropped the arm onto the ground, a spring emerged from the ground. Both the tree and the spring were, according to Reginald, subsequently associated with healing miracles.

St Oswald's Well is now a tranquil spot on Oswald's Well Lane. The spring bubbles out and the site is topped by the sculpture of a 'great bird' that watches over the well.

Offa's Dyke

Offa's Dyke covers 82 miles (132 km) of the total distance of 149 miles (240 km) between Prestatyn in the north to Sedbury in the south, the intervening gaps being filled by natural features such as slopes and rivers.

It consists of an earth bank, which in places still stands to a height of 12 feet (3.5 metres), fronted by a deep quarry-ditch with a total width of up to 60 feet (18 metres).

Offa's Dyke was constructed in the late eighth century on the orders of King Offa. The Dyke is the longest archaeological monument in Britain. The Dyke was originally constructed to mark the boundary between the Kingdom of Mercia and the Welsh Kingdoms to the west; probably intended to serve as a means of regulating access to and from Wales and today lengths of the Dyke form part of the National boundary between England and Wales.

Offa was the King of the Mercians, a warrior tribe from central England, from AD 747 to 796. He had seized power during a time of great unrest caused by friction between Wales and England in the border region. Offa was determined to quell the unruly Welsh and impose his authority, and this he did by building one of the most remarkable structures in Britain.

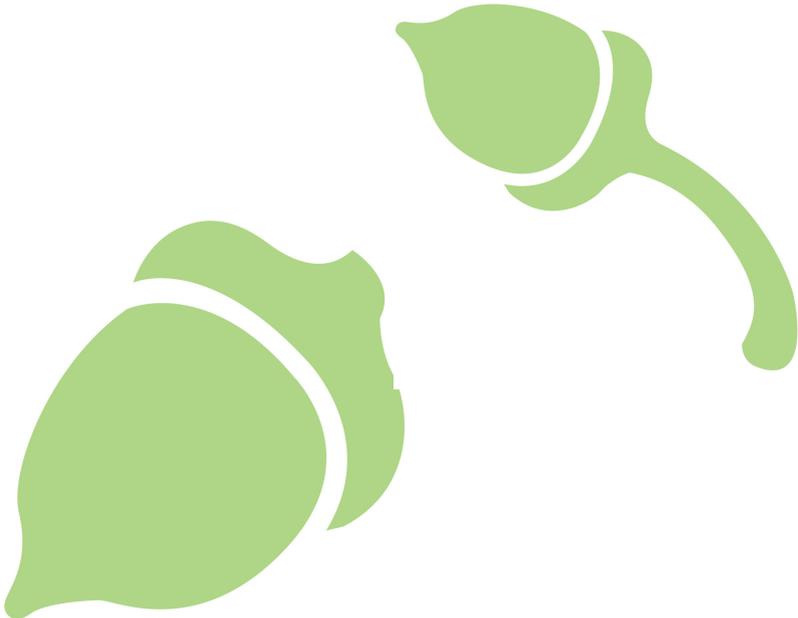
Various stages of Offa's Dyke can be seen and walked along in Oswestry and the surrounding area.

Wat's Dyke

Wat's Dyke is a linear earthwork boundary and defensive rampart. It runs for about 60km from Basingwerk, on the Dee estuary, southwards to Maesbury, near Oswestry. It consists of a large ditch, 5m wide and 2m deep, with a bank on the eastern side. The bank is 10m wide at the base, on average, and its original height was about 2.5m.

Wat's Dyke runs roughly parallel to Offa's Dyke which lies to the west, sometimes only 500m away. Both dykes run along the borders between England and Wales, and both dykes were constructed to defend land on the eastern side from incursions coming from the west. The date of construction has not been accurately determined, but it is considered that it was built at an earlier date than the parallel Offa's Dyke, although it fulfilled the same purpose.

Elements of Wat's Dyke can be spotted in several areas in and around Oswestry, the following for example; Shelf Bank, Ardmillan, south east of Henlle Home Farm, south west of Gobowen Station, east of Pentre-wern, immediately east of the Sewage Works, Maesbury Road, west of the junction between Preeshenlle Lane and St Martin's Road, immediately north and south of Preeshenlle Bridge, east of Oswestry Castle, east of Weston Farm, section at Bryn-y-Castell, two sections adjacent to Old Oswestry Hillfort, two sections parallel with Laburnum Drive and Oak Drive, Oswestry.



Chirk Castle

The National Trust

Magnificent medieval fortress of the Welsh Marches. A stark symbol of power, the construction of Chirk Castle began around 1295 during the reign of the conquering Edward I in order to subdue the last princes of Wales. Built on an outcrop above the meeting point of the rivers Dee and Ceiriog, the imposing silhouette of the castle was a brooding statement of English intent in these disputed lands.

With over 700 years of history, and as the last castle from this period still lived in today, Chirk Castle's many occupants have left behind lavish interiors and a beautiful and eclectic collection. The state rooms include a 17th-century Long Gallery, grand 18th-century saloon with rich tapestries, servants' hall, and the restored East Range, containing the library and 1920s style Bow Room showing off Chirk Castle's connections to high society.

The award-winning gardens cover 5.5 acres of manicured lawns, clipped yews, herbaceous borders, beautiful rose, shrub and rock gardens, and the wooded pleasure ground – perfect for a stroll. Don't miss the terrace overlooking the 18th century ha-ha at the bottom of the garden, with stunning views over the Cheshire and Salop plains. Chirk Castle has over 480 acres of estate parkland for you to explore, with wild ponies, sheep, veteran trees, and a beautifully preserved section of Offa's Dyke. The estate is located within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and has also been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest as an important habitat for rare invertebrates, bats, fungi, and wildflowers.

Erddig House

The National Trust

Sitting on a dramatic escarpment above the winding Clywedog river, Erddig tells the 250-year story of a gentry family's relationship with its servants. Explore a much-loved home, garden and estate filled with the stories of a family and their servants.

A large collection of servants' portraits and carefully preserved rooms capture their lives in the early 20th century. Outdoors lies a fully restored 18th-century garden, with trained fruit trees, exuberant annual herbaceous borders, avenues of pleached limes, formal hedges and a nationally important collection of ivies.

The 486-hectare (1,200-acre) landscape pleasure park is a haven of peace and natural beauty, perfect for riverside picnics. Discover the 'cup and saucer' cylindrical cascade or explore the earthworks of a Norman motte-and-bailey castle.

Powis Castle and Garden

The National Trust

Powis Castle, built around 1200 as a medieval fortress, sits high on a rock above its world-famous garden.

Laid out under the influence of Italian and French styles, the garden is overhung with clipped yews and shelters rare and tender plants. It retains original lead statues and features an orangery on the terraces.

Remodelled and embellished over more than 400 years, Powis reflects the changing ambitions of the Herbert family, who occupied the Castle from the 1570s. Each generation enlisted artists to grow the family's collection of paintings, sculpture, furniture and tapestries on view throughout the house.

Please note, due to the medieval deer park, no dogs are allowed.

Whittington Castle

Whittington Castle Preservation Fund

Whittington Castle near Oswestry is a strikingly picturesque and romantic ruins steeped in much history, tales of bitter border warfare, romance and legend.

The Whittington community acquired a 99-year lease to manage the Castle that sits in the centre of its village. In 2007 The Trust re-opened the Castle to visitors after a restoration with the assistance of a £950k grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The existing Castle is set in about 12 acres of ground and is the remains of a Norman home. In 2003, a historical and archaeological investigation identified that the outer bailey of the castle had been two elaborate gardens and surrounded by water in the 14th century. This discovery was significant in that it proved the advanced state (as compared to those of the French or Flemish) of English gardening habits. The "lavish" garden was installed by one of the FitzWarin family. The viewing mound in the centre may be the oldest of its type yet discovered in England.

One of the most prominent legends concerning the castle regards the Marian Chalice, thought by some to be the Holy Grail. A story from the 13th century states that the Grail was kept in a private chapel of the castle when Sir Fulk FitzWarin was there. According to this legend, Sir Fulk FitzWarin, was the great grandson of Payne Peveril, one of several guardians of the Grail and King Arthur. The coat of arms of Fulk FitzWarin are hung above the castle entrance archway.

The Gardens

Brynkinalt Hall and Gardens

The Trevor Family

Brynkinalt Estate has been home to the ancestral Trevor family since 942. Located in the beautiful surrounding of the Welsh/Shropshire border, the home is steeped in history but focused on the future.

Brynkinalt Hall has been home to the Trevor family since it was built in 1612, and since then generations of Trevor's and their families have worked hard to maintain the house. The house and its settings are now being used for a wide range of business activities, breathing new life into historic buildings and restoring landscapes, hopefully ensuring that the estate retains a viable place in the local community and nation's heritage long into the future.

The Gardens at Brynkinalt Estate consist of the Formal West Garden, the ornamental Shrubbery and a double walled garden which has an unusual tunnel access. Unfortunately, as a result of the Second World War and financial pressures over the last century, the number of gardeners employed by the estate reduced greatly and over time, the condition of the gardens deteriorated.

Over ten years ago, the family started a phase of restoration, aimed at returning the gardens back to their former glory. The West Garden has now been redesigned, replanted and is starting to mature and realise its full potential again. Most of the Shrubbery, redesigned by Rosamund, Wife of the 2nd Baron Trevor in 1905, was completely overgrown, but has now been cleared. Sympathetic replanting of the Shrubbery has seen recreation of an azalea and rhododendron bed. A new rhododendron woodland walk has been planted in the Shrubbery. Restoration continues with work on the ponds in the Shrubbery and with several other interesting architectural features, including two rockeries and a little well.

Both the West and Walled Gardens were originally laid out by Charlotte, Viscountess Dungannon in the early 19th Century. The Walled Garden is a structure which is infused with striking Gothic designs. Though it is currently in a derelict state with forestry planted in the outer garden. Restoration of the gardens are ongoing, together with other restoration projects of small gothic features located around the estate, the ice and summer houses and the various resting places set along woodside walks through the wider landscape of the estate. The gothic featured estate railings have been restored, as well as an extension of the herbaceous borders in the West Garden.

Brownhill House at Ruyton XI Towns Yoland and Roger Brown

An interesting house with a quirky life story, in the historic village of Ruyton XI Towns, set on a hill with beautiful views. It has been an established B&B for the last 40 years. The garden is 2 acres on a 45 degree slope down to the River Perry. Woodland walks, sculpture garden, formal terraces and large vegetable garden. A place of peace and beauty for everyone, especially gardeners.

The gardens of Brownhill House have been opening for the National Gardens Scheme for 36 years, but not so far in 2020. However, they hope to open again by appointment.

A unique 2-acre hillside garden with many steps and levels bordering River Perry. With over 450 different varieties of shrub and trees planted, there are many hundreds of wild and cultivated herbaceous plants. Visitors can enjoy a wide variety of plants and styles from formal terraces to woodland paths. The lower areas are for the sure-footed and mobile while the upper levels with a large kitchen garden have many places to sit and enjoy the views. Within the constraints of the steep slope, the garden has been laid out to provide as many different styles and features as possible, from the formality of paved terraces to a woodland path. It is not divided into rooms and neither is it open plan but there are attempts to subtly hide one area from the next.

Walled Garden at Derwen Garden Centre Derwen Garden Centre and Derwen College

Heart of England in Bloom award winning Walled Garden.

The Walled Garden was recognised during judging for the 2019 Heart of England in Bloom awards. It received an award in the It's Your Neighbourhood category. It's Your Neighbourhood is all about bringing members of the community together to make a positive change to the place they live, work or spend their leisure time.

The Walled Garden is open to visitors and also plays an important role in providing a work experience area for students of Derwen College. A visit may just provide you with some horticultural inspiration for your own garden. Also enjoy a stroll through the 750-meter, wheelchair accessible Woodland Walk.



Horatio's Garden Midlands - Oswestry

The Midland Centre for Spinal Injuries

The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital

An award-winning garden designer created thoughtful designs to transform the garden around the Midland Centre for Spinal Injuries into a beautiful sanctuary for patients and their loved ones.

The garden is the fourth of its kind to open in the UK. The garden wraps the spinal unit on two sides, with the planting in the existing courtyard areas being enhanced so that all patients' bedroom windows have a view of nature. The garden is all on one level, with smooth paths throughout ensuring that it is easily accessible to patients in beds and wheelchairs. The essential design features are a social space, private areas for patients to seek solitude or share with a family or friend, flowing water in a rill, a garden room, a garden therapy area, greenhouse, wheelchair skills area and children's play area.

The Horatio's Garden Midlands - Oswestry is open to visitors ONLY through pre-arranged booked tours.

Oswestry Gatacre Allotments and Gardens

Allotments Association, Gatacre Allotment Society and Oswestry Town Council

Sixty allotment gardens are provided in the Woodside and Gatacre areas for Oswestry Town residents

A thriving Allotment Association assists the administration of the gardens. The Council provides accommodation and supports the Association in its Annual Show. The Gatacre Allotments are managed on behalf of the Council by the Gatacre Allotment Society.

Willow Community Garden

Christ Church Oswestry and Oswestry Branch of Shropshire Wildlife Trust

The garden consists of bushes, willow maze and tunnel, a living wall at the side and rear of the garden, a wide range of bee-friendly, bulbs, herbaceous perennials, shrubs and climbers. Crocus's, narcissus's and tulips are just a few of the plants on show. A small picnic area is also available creating a peaceful setting to enjoy the garden.

The Canals

Montgomery Canal aka The Monty

Wildlife thrives along the Montgomery Canal. It's one of the most important canals in the country for nature, much of it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and the Welsh section is of international importance, designated a Special Area of Conservation for its aquatic plants.

Site of special scientific interest the 'Monty' is the best location in the world for floating water plantain. Otters and water voles have also been spotted along its length. Several nature reserves border the canal, filled with wildflowers and insects, including dragonflies and damselflies.

The canal from Frankton Junction on the Llangollen Canal, though Welshpool to Newtown was built to carry limestone quarried at Llanymynech to canalside kilns. There it was heated with coal from Chirk or the Oswestry area to create quicklime for spreading on fields to improve their yield of crops — and so increase the rental income to the landowners. The section from the junction to Carreghofa, just south of Llanymynech, was built by the Ellesmere Canal in the mid 1790s. The rest of it was the independent Montgomeryshire Canal which opened from Carreghofa to Garthmyl in 1797, but by then had exhausted its money. The final six miles into Newtown was separately financed under an Act of 1815 and opened in 1819.

Two-thirds of the traffic was limestone and its associated coal; other significant cargoes included timber, building stone and slates. With the more depressed state of agriculture in the second half of the 19th century, together with the increasing use of alternative fertilisers, traffic diminished, and by 1870 was barely covering the cost of maintenance. By then part of the Shropshire Union, the canal struggled on until 1936, when a breach near the aqueduct of the River Perry gave the opportunity to negotiate its closure. The one regular user was paid not to object, and closure was formalised in an Act of 1944.

The section north of Llanymynech dried out, but much of the rest was an integral part of the local land drainage so no active steps were taken to fill it in and sell the land. A plan in the late 1960s to use the line of the canal at Welshpool for a bypass led to well-organised protests and proposals for the canal's restoration. The inspector at the public inquiry recommended that the canal be retained 'as an important local amenity'. Over the next three decades the eleven mile section through Welshpool was restored with the active support of the Prince's of Wales Committee. At the northern end, Frankton Locks were reopened in 1987, the section to Queens Head in 1996 and to Gronwen in 2003.

While the canal was closed to boats for many years, it is now being reborn as a cruiseway through the picturesque Welsh Marches. One restored section connects to the Llangollen Canal, while the other is only accessible by a slipway at Welshpool. Work continues to join the two sections through volunteers and the work of the restoration partnership.

Walking or cycling along the towpath is an excellent way to experience the peace and tranquility of this rural canal. The canal towpath has recently been resurfaced between Newtown and Welshpool and work continues to the border at Llanymynech. This is also a popular canal for canoeing – paddling quietly through peaceful green surroundings is a great way to spot wildlife. The canal is home to 126 listed structures including the Llanymynech limeworks which includes the rare restored Hoffman Kiln and Chimney, both features of a forgotten industrial past that included quarries, limekilns and woollen industries.

Llangollen Canal

The Llangollen Canal crosses the border between England and Wales. Its combination of picturesque countryside and breath-taking engineering draws visitors from far and wide - many of whom probably don't realise how close this beautiful canal once came to closure.

The majestic Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, the tallest navigable aqueduct in Britain, which carries the canal over the River Dee, is a masterpiece of engineering and an icon of the Industrial Revolution. In 2009 along with 11 miles of canal and its associated structures, the aqueduct was awarded World Heritage Site status. The aqueduct stands 126 feet high and has 19 arches that span 1007 feet in total. Whether crossing on foot or by boat the drop is dramatic. The aqueduct is fed from the nearby Horseshoe Falls and holds an incredible 1.5 million litres of water. The Llangollen Canal and its surrounding area has attracted visitors for 200 years.



The Walks

Oswestry Hill Fort

Distance: 3 miles

This walk is for people who want a short walk but be rewarded by visiting an ancient monument and appreciating wonderful views.

The Route

This is a walk from Oswestry bus station to Oswestry's magnificent hill fort. The walk is mostly on pavement, then out onto a field to the hill fort. To get up to the hill fort you need to climb about 100 wide steps. Once you get to the top you will be rewarded with panoramic views down to south Shropshire and across into Wales and up north to the Cheshire plains. You should allow a couple of hours to do this at a leisurely pace and appreciate your surroundings.

Oswestry – High Fawr

Walk 2 of 5 short walks around Oswestry / Distance: 3.5 miles

The Route

This walk starts at the bus station and goes towards the north of town, past the fire station and up Mound Road. Half a mile up Mount Road turn left onto a footpath (this is a very interesting bit as you dog leg a few times and go over a stream). Then up into open fields, with lovely views and you can see Oswestry on your left below. Turn back into a beautiful old drover's lane into town (this is always muddy).

Oswestry – around the water works

Walk 3 of 5 short walks around Oswestry / Distance: 3.5 miles

The Route

This walk takes you up out of town by an ancient drover's route which will be muddy. Once up and out of town, enjoy the views and turn left across the fields with the water workd on your left. Turn back with the waterworks still on your left and go back into town, passing Oswald's Well on the way.



Oswestry – nearly to Llanforda

Walk 4 of 5 short walks around Oswestry / Distance: 4 miles

This walk is for people who want a short walk but be rewarded by visiting an ancient monument and appreciating wonderful views.

The Route

This walk takes you through town then up past Oswald's Well to the waterworks. Go across a field, cross the road and into the next field which follows the track of a driveway for the original house. Follow the track up and into the remains of the house remains. Double back on yourself, across the top of the field which gives lovely views of south Shropshire before returning into town.

Oswestry – nearly to Morda

Walk 5 of 5 short walks around Oswestry / Distance: 4 miles

The Route

This walks takes you to the south of town, through fields and along the river. It then goes up and back into town through the edge of fields and school playing fields. This walk will have lovely views and a chance to glimpse the industrial heritage of this area as you pass an old mill in the valley below.

Oswald's Trail

Distance: 12.6 miles

A 12.6 mile circular walk around Oswestry, highlighting the rich heritage including the Old Oswestry Hillfort.

The Route

Oswald's Trail is a complete circuit of Oswestry taking in many of the important historical points of interest along the way. Whilst the total route is 12.6 miles it has been divided into 5 easily accomplished sections so that the walk can be undertaken in stages.

Oswald's Trail was conceived by the Oswestry Group of the Ramblers as a permanent mark of the group having been in existence for 40 years (2013), with the support and help of The Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust, The Ramblers and Shropshire Council.



Llanymynech to Oswestry Racecourse Shropshire Way Route 24 - Distance: 8.5 miles

Spectacular landscapes on Offa. An 8.5 mile walk along the Shropshire Way from Llanymynech to Oswestry Racecourse. This walk shares some, but by no means all, of its route and signage with Offa's Dyke Path. The Welsh and English landscapes are both spectacular and rewardingly rich in history and nature whether your interest is general or specific.

The Route

The terrain has some steep uphill sections. You could well see a peregrine falcon near Llanymynech rocks, in addition, experience what that falcon sees in flight, such are the views on offer. You can physically enter the limestone landscape by wandering right into the old Welsh limestone quarry above Llanymynech, where the engineered terrain has now gone thoroughly native. Take a moment to rest on the 'Border Viewpoint' will give you a view of local landmarks near and far.

Oswestry Racecourse to Chirk Bank Shropshire Way Route 25 - Distance: 8.5 miles

Oswestry Racecourse to Chirk Bank This 8.5 mile walk along the Shropshire Way links Oswestry Racecourse, with its fabulous views over the town and the Shropshire Plain to Chirk Bank. In one day you will experience inspiring parts of Offa's Dyke Path, climb Selattyn Hill, be under the gaze of Chirk Castle before being awestruck by a magnificent aqueduct.

The Route

The terrain has some steep uphill sections. The landscape dramatically throws up different vistas to the east and north and is riddled with Welsh, Roman, Saxon, Viking and Norman history.

Pentre Wood lies between Pont Faen and Bronygarth. Woodland Trust volunteers have created a series of steps to ease your way on what can be a very slippery slope. Looking through the trees over the chattering River Ceiriog you should glimpse a view of one of Britain's first trout hatcheries, still in business after 130 years. Just below the bottom of Well Lane it is hard to miss an ancient Black Poplar of tremendous girth. Give it a hug as you pass.

Chirk Bank to Ellesmere

Shropshire Way Route 26 - Distance: 9.3 miles

A tantalising tow path trail. This 9 mile walk along the Shropshire Way takes you through a fascinating hinterland, mainly along the Llangollen branch of the Shropshire Union Canal. The Cheshire plain begins to undulate in a speculative manner as the landscape prepares itself for the Welsh Hills.

The Route

The terrain is level, mostly canal towpath. The path meets the Ceiriog and Maelor Ways at Chirk Bank, where the Chirk aqueduct and viaduct span the Ceiriog Valley. You will also see the working end of Ellesmere.

In between, the Shropshire Way crosses Wat's Dyke Way at Preeshennle Bridge and goes past the canal boat marina at Welsh Frankton and the Narrow Boat Inn. It also passes the coal mining village of St Martin's where production at the Ifton Pit continued right up until 1968. The six-mile signed St Martin's Shropshire Way Circular Walk will take you on an interesting panoramic tour.

Every canal bridge has a number and many have names whose derivation tells of a time long gone; Pollett's, Broom's, Sarn, Coachman's to name just a few. Hindford Bridge speaks for itself, being near the hamlet of Hindford and the Jack Mytton Pub with its canal-side gardens. This 'watering hole' is named after Mad Jack Mytton, a heavy drinking local squire who, in a lifetime of outrageous antics, once set fire to his shirt to cure a bout of hiccups.

Lower Frankton to Llanymynech

Shropshire Way Route 27 - Distance: 11 miles

A jaunt along the Monty. This level 11 mile walk on The Shropshire Way follows the towpath of the delightful northern section of the 34 mile Montgomery Branch of the Shropshire Union Canal. Much of this walk is alongside navigable waterway though there is a 'dry' section awaiting restoration.

The Route

Looking along even the straightest (and therefore most direct) stretch of canal it is impossible not to marvel at the sheer graft that created it, and equally to wonder what is round the next, albeit far bend.

The restoration work, much of it being done by volunteers, has involved the creation of Nature Reserves such the one at Aston Locks. Prepare to be enchanted by place names such as Cupid's Ramble, Queen's Head, Keeper's Bridge and Maesbury Marsh along the way.

Llanymynech Wharf to Vyrnwy Aqueduct

Distance: Two and a half miles

A heritage walk along the beautiful Montgomery Canal.

The Montgomery Canal is one of the most important canals in the country for nature and much of it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. This circular walk follows the canal towpath from Llanymynech Visitor Centre to the Vyrnwy Aqueduct and then returns across fields. Boots are essential as the final leg of the journey can be quite muddy.

The Hoffman Hike

Walk 1 Distance: 3 miles / Walk 2 Distance: 1 mile

This 3 mile walk following the Offa's Dyke Path and the Montgomery Canal takes in the remains of the area's once thriving limestone industry.

Walk 1 includes paths with fairly steep sections in places.

Walk 2 is mainly flat, can be muddy in places, suitable for pushchairs with help – steps and a kissing gate on the walk.

The Route

The Hoffman Hike derives its name from the Hoffman Kiln, one of only three remaining 20th century lime burning kilns in Britain. The kiln, chimney and the distinctive Llanymynech Hill provide the backdrop to some wonderful landscape views, industrial heritage and wildlife habitats. There are also two alternative routes to choose from: The main Walk 1 has an alternative return route on level ground and there is also a shorter Walk 2, which is a 1 mile circular walk.

Wat's Dyke Way

Llanymynech, Oswestry, St Martin's / Distance: 61 miles

A fascinating cross border route with lots of history.

The Route

The terrain is undulating on public footpaths and quiet country lanes. The trail follows the route of Wat's Dyke and goes between Llanymynech in Shropshire to Basingwerk Abbey, within a stone's throw of the River Dee estuary near Holywell in Flintshire.

From Llanymynech, the Wat's Dyke Way follows the Montgomery Canal to Maesbury.

Llanforda

Circular Walk 7 - Distance: 7.5 miles

A 7.5 mile walk out of Oswestry to the Offas Dyke National Trail in Candy Woods, and taking in the Old Racecourse and Brogyntyn Park.

The Route

A spectacular walk, offering wonderful views of the surrounding hills in both England and Wales. This walk takes you out of Oswestry into open countryside, across fields, over stiles, along Offa's dyke, through Candy Woods and up to the old Oswestry racecourse, before returning to Oswestry through Brogyntyn Park.

You will see all that remains of Llanforda Hall, which burned down in 1780, was rebuilt, fell to ruin and eventually demolished in 1948. It was the seat of the Williams-Wynn family which had a stake in Oswestry Racecourse. At the racecourse a short detour will bring you to the remains of the old grandstand and a panel explaining its history.

Offa's Dyke Path National Trail

Distance: 28 miles

Offa's Dyke Path National Trail runs from Chepstow to Prestatyn 177 mile (285 Km) long distance route running from the South Wales coast at Chepstow to the North Wales coast at Prestatyn, 28 miles goes through Shropshire. The terrain is undulating with some steep climbs.

The Route

The Hoffman Hike derives its name from the Hoffman Kiln, one of only three remaining 20th century lime burning kilns in Britain. The kiln, chimney and the distinctive Llanymynech Hill provide the backdrop to some wonderful landscape views, industrial heritage and wildlife habitats. There are also two alternative routes to choose from: The main Walk 1 has an alternative return route on level ground and there is also a shorter Walk 2, which is a 1 mile circular walk.

The Trail, which was opened in the summer of 1971, links Sedbury Cliffs near Chepstow on the banks of the Severn estuary with the coastal town of Prestatyn on the shores of the Irish Sea. It passes through no less than eight different counties and crosses the border between England and Wales over 20 times. The Trail explores the tranquil Marches (as the border region is known) and passes through the Brecon Beacons National Park on the spectacular Hatterrall Ridge, in addition it links no less than three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The whole route is waymarked with the National Trail acorn which is standard to all National Trails in England and Wales.

There are three sections of the Offa's Dyke Path running through Shropshire, from Knighton through the Shropshire Hills AONB to the Kerry Ridgeway near Bishops Castle, a short section, mostly in Shropshire, that passes by the old County Town of Montgomery and from Llanymynech crossing Oswestry Old Racecourse to Chirk Mill. The sections through Shropshire include some of the best preserved and impressive sections of the Offa's Dyke monument.

No sooner does the Offa's Dyke Path enter Shropshire and goes close to the Llanymynech Heritage Limeworks Area it then passes back into Powys and Wales only to briefly re-visit the Shropshire again. Its crossing back into Shropshire at the impressive Blodwel Rocks to then head over the Moelydd where spectacular panoramic view can be seen of the route travelled the way ahead. After passing the Village of Trefonen the National Trail climbs through Candy Wood to pass over the Old Oswestry Racecourse from where it heads up to Selattyn Hill and afterwards runs adjacent to the Dyke until Bronygarth and at Chirk Mill it continues north through the Welsh countryside to the coast.

Offa's Dyke: A Foot in Both Camps

Offa's Dyke Path Circular Walk 3 - Distance: 6.3 miles

Llanymynech Walk, a 6 ¼ mile, 3 ½ - 4 hour walk along the Montgomery Canal returning along a section of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail starting from Llanymynech Limeworks Heritage Area. The terrain is undulating with steep climbs.

The Route

A mixed terrain walk of 6 miles starting along the tranquil Montgomery Canal, before heading across fields to Llyncllys and the chance to look at the Cambrian Heritage Railways sidings. Llyncllys Common Nature Reserve is crossed after which a short section of Offa's Dyke and the National Trail is walked and at the Llanymynech Natures Reserves impressive view can be seen of the Marches Borders and the middle section of the County of Shropshire. Finally, the Llanymynech Limeworks Heritage Area is of interest to all completing the walk.



Offa's Dyke: March into Madness

Offa's Dyke Path Circular Walk 4 - Distance: 4.5 miles

Offa's Dyke Circular Walk Old Oswestry Racecourse Walk, a 4 ½ mile, 2 ½ - 3 hour walk starting from the Old Oswestry Racecourse and crossing fields and through beech woodland to return along a section of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail.

The Route

Using fairly easy terrain this 4 ½ mile, 2 ½ – 3 hour walk starts from the carpark and heads over the original racecourse after which it descends down across main grassed fields with amazing views across the northern plains of Shropshire and South Cheshire. The walk reaches Candy Wood at its southern end and then joins the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail that run parallel the actual monument passing the old stone alcove seat used by Quarryman/Miner. After passing through Racecourse Wood it is possible to go to the Old Grandstand for the Racecourse and admire further panoramic views and passing horse a sculpture before returning to the car park.

Offa's Dyke: Tower and Ramparts

Offa's Dyke Path Circular Walk 5 - Distance: 7 miles

Offa's Dyke Path Circular Selattyn to Bronygarth Walk, Tower and ramparts ramble, a 7 mile, 4 ½ - 5 hour undulating figure of eight walk with the option of making it either a 2 ¼ mile walk to Selattyn Tower or a 4 ¾ mile walk over to Bronygarth, starting from the roadside car park at Craignant.

The Route

The terrain is quite strenuous on the 7 mile, undulating figure of eight walk with the option of making it either a walk to Selattyn Tower or a walk to Bronygarth. The first loop gradually climbs up along the Offa's Dyke Path along an old lane to the woodland on top of Selattyn Hill where the Tower is located. Passing through old field systems and relics of farmsteads the walk meets the road back to near the carpark.

From here the walk heads north along the Offa's Dyke National Trail passing old limekilns and runs parallel to the Dyke giving views of the surrounding countryside and Chirk Castle, after dipping down through Nanteris Wood the walk leaves the National Trail and travels along an old track to pass through Pentre Newydd. The walk heads across fields and follows quiet roads climbing as it goes to final drop down the valley side of Morlas Brook back to the car park.

Ifton Meadows Nature Reserve

Walk Easy Access 5

Ifton Meadows is a Local Nature Reserve reclaimed from the spoil heaps of Ifton Colliery. The Meadows offer excellent access to superb views of the Dee Valley and Welsh Mountains.

The Route

Access from the roadside parking is very good but soon reaches a fairly steep and challenging gradient. The main path is broad and well surfaced. The path undulates to reach a viewpoint mosaic celebrating the site's mining past.

There are grassy paths from the main path, but these are uneven, rutted and have difficult cross-slope gradients. However, the surfaced path is suitable for robust mobility scooters and assisted wheelchair users. Well controlled dogs are welcome but must be on the lead during ground bird nesting season April to July



The Local Stories/Events

Oswestry Apple Day

Oswestry / October

This established annual event celebrates the apple and healthy eating with lots of interesting varieties of apples and advice on growing them.

Shropshire used to be a county full of little orchards. During the nineteenth century, just about every farm would have had it's own stand of apple trees and some landowners cultivated their own, specific varieties of apple. Some were for eating, some were for cooking, and some were for making into splendid Shropshire cider!

The Reverend John Netherton Parker, owner of Sweeney Hall, was just such a landowner. In 1807 his estate produced the "Sweeney Nonpareil". The Sweeney Nonpareil is only one of dozens of local Shropshire and Borderlands varieties that have been discovered by the Marcher Apple Network. The group is now actively growing some of these varieties, hoping to revitalise the growing of apples in small urban and rural plots, utilising marginal land. They have pioneered some really great Community Orchard projects, and Tom Adams (Oswestry's own local apple man) has been instrumental in getting Oswestry's own Community Orchard Project (CROP) going on land alongside the Cambrian Railway.

Wildflowers of Whittington

Whittington

Reverend William Walsham How was Rector of Whittington between 1851 and 1879. He wrote hymns, poetry and was a keen naturalist. In 1857 he was one of the founders of the Oswestry and Welshpool Naturalists' Field Club and Archaeological Society. His obituary in respect of his contribution to botany was published in the October 1897 issue of The Naturalist.

During his time as Rector, he kept a journal listing all the unusual wildflowers of Whittington and where they could be found. The discovery of his journal was made by local historian Lawrence Mortimer, while researching the history of the church in Whittington. He passed the list on to local gardener and horticulturalist Barbara Molesworth, who immediately realised the value of this piece of nineteenth century naturalism. Together with a group of local volunteers, Barbara set out to map all the locations mentioned by Reverend How, to see what wildflowers grew there now. The results were published as a booklet that tells an important part of Oswestry's regional environmental story. The list is now in the collections of Birmingham University, as a fascinating piece of history and science for researching our changing environment and helping to preserve our botanical heritage.

Oswestry in Bloom

Oswestry in Bloom is a Committee comprising of a limited number of individuals who work tirelessly to improve the visual appearance and quality of life of the locals and visitors to Oswestry.

2019 saw Oswestry in Bloom win Gold in the large Town Category. This marks the 15th Gold in the annual Heart of England in Bloom competition. The judges consider several factors in respect of their Judging and the town is marked against horticultural excellence, how the town looks, the towns conservation and environmental effects, and how it works in the community. Top Gold 'In Your Neighbourhood' Awards were also given to; Cae Glas Park, The Cambrian Railway Orchard Project and The Walled Garden at the Derwen College.

The annual competition which sees homes, businesses and schools display colourful creations with the aim of being crowned winners in various categories. These categories are Best Dressed Window, Best Industrial Premises, Best Public House/Hotel, Best Commercial – in the Town Centre, Best Commercial – outside the Town Centre, Best Kept School, Outstanding Work by Young People, Best Community Project/Premises, Best Bedded Out Front Garden, Best All Year Colour Front Garden, Best Evergreen Front Garden, Best Rear Garden, Bijou Front Garden – Small, Bijou Front Garden – Large, Patio, Best Balcony, Best Hay Basket, and Best Hanging Basket.

Oswestry Wildflowers Outside Oswestry Police Station

Due to Covid-19 lockdown, grassland outside Oswestry Police Station has grown into a beautiful wildflower meadow.

Usually mown every couple of weeks, the lawn has been untouched for over a month. Cowslips, pignut, ox-eye daises, bugle, germander speedwell, thyme-leaved speedwell, creeping cinquefoil and sweet vernal grass are flourishing as a result.

“This is very likely an old meadow, undisturbed - apart from mowing - for generations. These plants have now had a chance to flower, which is wonderful. I hope very much that they will be left for a few more weeks, so they can set seed and spread,” said Sarah Gibson, a local resident and spokesperson for Shropshire Wildlife Trust.

Across the UK, more than 98% of ancient flower meadow has been lost through agricultural intensification and building development. To find a little fragment of it right in the middle of Oswestry is wonderful.

This booklet would not of been possible without the information provided by the below groups, they hold more information on the places listed within this booklet.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust

Montgomery Wildlife Trust

Oswestry Town Council

Prees Heath Common Reserve

English Heritage

Shropshire's Great Outdoors

Historic England

Hidden Oswestry

Shropshire Archives

Oswestry Advertiser

The Oswestry Heritage Comics by John G, Swogger

Canal River Trust

Oswestry Borderland Tourism

Oswestry Town Museum

National Trust

**Designed and Published by Oswestry Town Museum
Sept 2020**

www.oswestrytownmuseum.co.uk