



Eglwyseg Mountain – a landscape of prehistoric cairns and later industry

Walk Information:

Maps: OS Explorer 256

Distance: 5.3 miles / 8.5 kilometres (linear) or up to 9.6 miles / 15.5 kilometres (circular)

Duration: Allow at least 7 hours for the circular walk

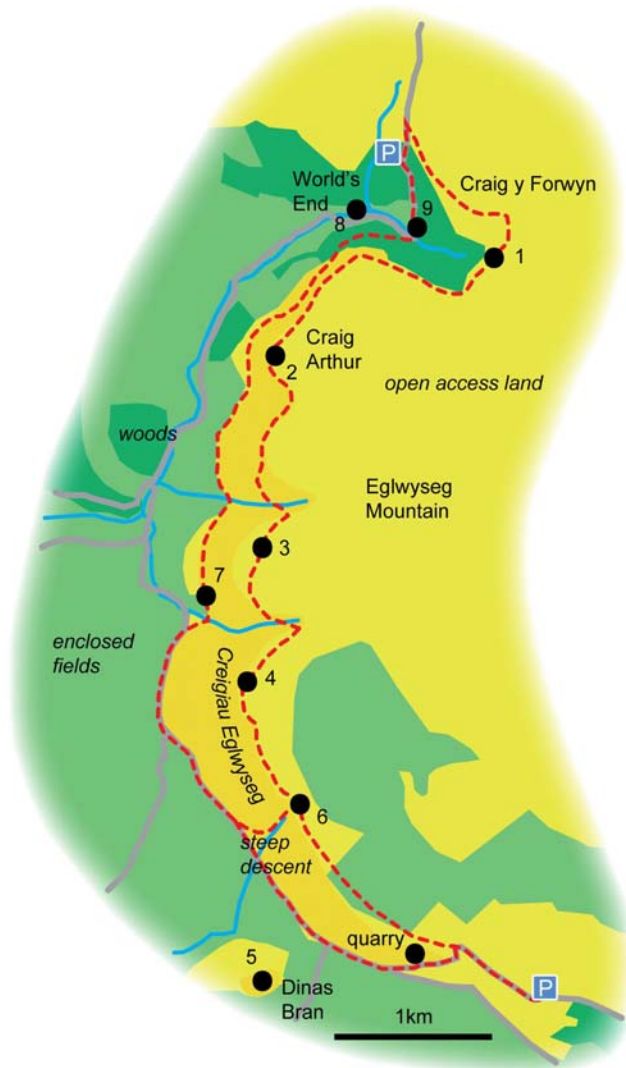
Difficulty: medium. Some moderate exposure to drops and one steep descent

Start and finish: The walk can be done as a linear route from the car park at World's End SJ 23214835 to the Panorama walk at SJ 24104295, or as a circular walk from World's End.

Walk summary

The walk takes advantage of public footpaths, waymarked permissive paths and open access land, visiting prehistoric burial cairns and the remains of past industrial activity, all within a spectacular landscape of limestone cliffs and open moorland.

The circular walk starts at World's End, following a waymarked path around Craig y Forwyn before leading along the top of the spectacular cliffs of Creigiau Eglwyseg and passing two prominent burial cairns. The views are extensive, across the Vale of Llangollen and to the Berwyns beyond and, on a clear day, as far as Snowdonia. The return route follows a tarmac road before taking the Offa's Dyke Path below the cliffs.



Introduction

The Vale of Llangollen presents a remarkable visual combination of stark natural landforms and ancient and modern man-made features. Geomorphologically the vale is a broad rift valley, dominated on the north by the towering limestone cliffs of Eglwyseg Mountain.



Vale of Llangollen, Dinas Brân and Eglwyseg Mountain

This area has a wealth of archaeological sites, the earliest of which are the numerous burial and ritual monuments dating from the Bronze Age (2,300 – 1,200 BC), which are scattered across the moor on ridge tops or on hill scarps. The most numerous are the stone-built burial cairns which are typical landscape features of the Welsh uplands and would have been erected over inhumations (usually single skeletons) and, sometimes, cremations. Others take the form of a stone ring-bank or stone circle. There is no associated settlement evidence of this period and it seems likely that the monuments are connected in some way with the exploitation of upland summer grazing.

Overlooking Llangollen from the NE are the imposing remains of Castell Dinas Brân, a medieval masonry castle located within the earthworks of an earlier, Iron Age, hillfort. The Cistercian abbey of Valle Crucis lies to the north of Llangollen, and was founded by Madog ap Gruffydd in 1201 as a colony of Strata Marcella Abbey, near Welshpool.

The landscape also bears the scars of an industrial past. The limestone cliffs of Eglwyseg have been quarried for centuries, both for building stone and as a source of lime. Extensive earthworks associated with lead mining are often encountered on the upland plateau. These are mostly in the form of shallow shafts and spoil heaps.

The heather moorland has been managed for grouse shooting intermittently since the 19th century, and administered from the Wynnstay estate's Mountain Lodge on the eastern side of the moor.

The Walk

From the car park at World's End turn left and walk along the road for a short distance, taking the first track on the right. Continue until it joins another track, where you turn right along a waymarked route. This passes the earthworks of 18th or 19th-century **lead mining (1)** (SJ 23794768), comprising small shafts surrounded by spoil which are part of a much wider mining landscape extending across Eglwyseg and Ruabon Mountains to Minera. Following the waymarked path, turn right, opposite the cliffs of Craig y Forwyn, which is popular with climbers. Follow the path alongside a fence and at



Old lead mining shaft

the corner take the waymarked path on the left. Below you will see Plas Uchaf, the manor house at World's End which you will pass later on.

Continue towards the rocky outcrop of Craig Arthur, with views west to the Horseshoe Pass and its slate workings visible on the skyline. On a clear day the mountains of eastern Snowdonia can be seen in the distance. At the waymark ignore the descending path and keep to the top of the crag.

At Craig Arthur there is a good view of the limestone cliffs to the south and the Berwyn Mountains on the skyline. A short detour ascends the limestone crags on the left (no path) to an impressive **burial cairn (2)** (SJ 22344708). This is one of many burial sites in the area which date from the Bronze Age (2300 – 1200 BC). The cairn has a kerb of larger stones around its edge and, although it has not been excavated, it is likely to cover a main burial, possibly within a stone cist (coffin). Nearby is a small **satellite cairn** which may cover a cremation.



Burial cairn on Craig Arthur

Return to the path continuing along the crest of the escarpment before descending into a steep valley, then rising to the top of the crag beyond. Pass a small stone-built **sheepfold (3)** (SJ 22304583) on the right, evidence of past landuse when the moorland was used extensively for grazing sheep. As the path descends a large burial cairn is visible on the skyline ahead (it is possible to shorten the walk at this point by following a path down the valley to Bryn Goleu). Follow the path up the valley, taking the waymarked path on the right to the large **Bronze Age burial cairn (4)** on the highest point of Creigiau Eglwyseg (SJ 22184495). An urn and cremation were discovered here in 1879, placed within in a small chamber.

Continue through the gate and follow the path along the top of cliffs, with spectacular views of Dinas Brân and the Vale of Llangollen beyond. This steep sided hill rises spectacularly out of the valley floor and is topped by the picturesque ruins of **Castell Dinas Brân (5)**, a medieval castle sited within the earthworks of an Iron Age hillfort. The castle was built during the 1260s, by Gruffudd ap Madog, lord of Powys Fadog, most probably at a period of alliance with the Welsh prince, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd. The castle was relatively short-lived and was burnt by its Welsh defenders in 1277 against an English attack. Although it was briefly held by English forces it was finally abandoned soon after the Edwardian conquest of 1282.



Castell Dinas Brân

The path curves into the head of a valley to a signpost **(6)** (SJ 22554420). At this point there are several options. To follow the walk as a linear route take the **Panorama Walk** as far as the road at SJ 23644324, then turn left and follow the road to the parking area at SJ 24104295. For the circular route either continue onwards along the **Panorama Walk** as far as the road at SJ 23644324. Alternatively, descend directly to the right from the signpost on a narrow path, keeping the wall on your left. This path descends steeply, is rough underfoot, and may be difficult in wet weather. As the valley narrows ignore a path leading left to a quarry and follow the path right, through gorse, to the road.



Limekiln near Bryn Goleu

Turn right at the road and follow it for some distance, below Creigiau Eglwyseg, before taking a track rising on the right, waymarked for the Offa's Dyke Path (SJ 21814530). As you pass Bryn Goleu house on the left a very short detour on the right leads to a well-preserved **limekiln (7)**. This area was once an important source of limestone, which was used as a building stone and also burnt for use in lime mortar and as an agricultural fertilizer. Large parts of the limestone cliffs of Creigiau Eglwyseg have been quarried for stone and there are several limekilns in varying states of decay along the base of the cliffs.

Continue to follow the Offa's Dyke Path along the base of the cliffs and below Craig Arthur. Take the left fork, signed for Offa's Dyke Path, which gives views of **Plas Uchaf (8)**. This impressive timber-framed manor house bears a date of 1563 and stands on the site of a hunting lodge of the princes of Powys, established by Bleddyn ap Cynfyn (d. 1073). Legend relates that here Owain ap Cadwgan abducted Nest of the kingdom of Dyfed.



Plas Uchaf manor house

Continue through a felled plantation to join the road on a corner with a ford. Cross the ford on stepping stones and follow the road back to the carpark, noting another **limekiln (9)** on the right.



Eglwyseg Mountain

Maps Ordnance Survey Explorer 256

Distance 5.3 miles / 8.5 kilometres (linear) or up to 9.6 miles / 15.5 kilometres (circular)

Duration Allow at least 7 hours for the circular walk

Difficulty Medium, with some moderate exposure to drops and one steep descent

Start/finish The walk can be done as a linear route from the car park at World's End SJ 23214835 to the Panorama walk at SJ 24104295, or as a circular walk from World's End.

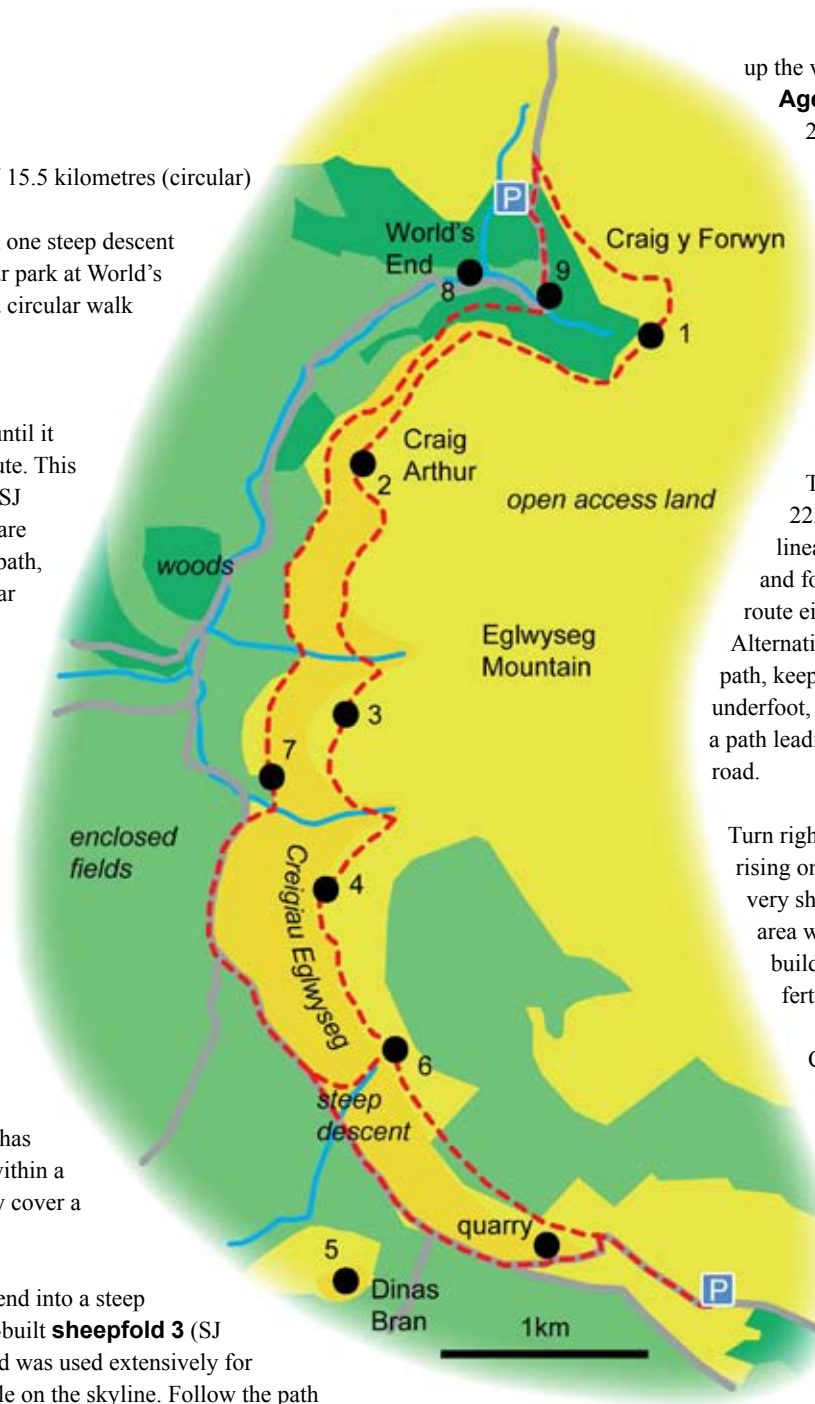
From car park turn left and take first track on right, continuing until it joins another track, where you turn right along a waymarked route. This passes the earthworks of 18th or 19th-century **lead mining 1** (SJ 23794768), comprising small shafts surrounded by spoil which are part of a much wider mining landscape. Following waymarked path, turn right, opposite the cliffs of Craig y Forwyn, which is popular with climbers.

Follow path alongside fence and at the corner take waymarked path on left. Below you will see Plas Uchaf, the manor house at World's End which you will pass later on.

Continue towards the rocky outcrop of Craig Arthur, with views west to the Horseshoe Pass and its slate workings visible on the skyline. At the waymark ignore descending path and keep to top of the crag.

At Craig Arthur there is a good view of the limestone cliffs to the south and the Berwyns on the skyline. A short detour ascends the limestone crags on the left to an impressive **burial cairn 2** (SJ 22344708). This is one of many burials sites in the area which date from the Bronze Age (2300 – 1200 BC). The cairn has a kerb of larger stones around its edge and although it has not been excavated it is likely to cover a main burial, possibly within a stone cist (coffin). Nearby is a small **satellite cairn** which may cover a cremation.

Return to the path, continue along crest of the escarpment, descend into a steep valley and rise to the top of the crag beyond. Pass a small stone-built **sheepfold 3** (SJ 22304583) on right, evidence of past landuse when the moorland was used extensively for grazing sheep. As the path descends a large burial cairn is visible on the skyline. Follow the path



up the valley and take the waymarked path on right to the large **Bronze Age burial cairn 4** on the highest point of Creigiau Eglwyseg (SJ 22184495). An urn and cremation were discovered here in 1879, placed within in a small chamber.

Continue through gate and follow path along top of cliffs, with spectacular views of Dinas Brân. This steep sided hill rises spectacularly out of the valley floor and is topped by the picturesque ruins of **Castell Dinas Brân 5**, a medieval castle sited within the earthworks of an Iron Age hillfort. The castle is thought to have been built by Gruffydd ap Madoc, son of the founder of Valle Crucis Abbey.

The path curves into the head of a valley to a signpost **6** (SJ 22554420). There are now several options. To follow the walk as a linear route take the **Panorama Walk** as far as the road, then turn left and follow the road to the parking area (SJ 24104295). For the circular route either continue along the Panorama Walk to the road (SJ 23644324). Alternatively, descend directly to the right from the signpost on a narrow path, keeping the wall on your left. This path descends steeply, is rough underfoot, and may be difficult in wet weather. As the valley narrows ignore a path leading left to a quarry and follow the path right, through gorse, to the road.

Turn right at road and follow it for some distance before taking a track rising on the right, waymarked for the Offa's Dyke Path (SJ 21814530). A very short detour on the right leads to a well-preserved **limekiln 7**. This area was once an important source of limestone, which was used as a building stone and also burnt for use in lime mortar and as an agricultural fertilizer.

Continue to follow the Offa's Dyke Path along the base of the cliffs and below Craig Arthur. Take left fork signed for Offa's Dyke Path, which gives views of **Plas Uchaf 8**. The impressive timber-framed manor house bears a date of 1563 and stands on the site of a hunting lodge of the princes of Powys, established by Bleddyn ap Cynfyn in the 11th century. Legend relates that here Owain ap Cadwgan abducted Nest of the kingdom of Dyfed.

Continue through a felled plantation to join the road on a corner with a ford. Cross the ford on stepping stones and follow the road back to the carpark, noting a **limekiln 9** on the right.