



© Crown copyright and database rights 2013 Ordnance Survey 100019741

## Bro Llangollen a Dyffryn Dyfrdwy – Disgrifiad cryno

Dyffryn trawiadol, dolennog, prydf berth a dwfn, canlyniad prosesau afon a ‘mynedfa’ i ogledd Cymru. Dyma fan newid: newid sydyn o wastadedd Swydd Amwythig i lethrau serth Cymru, newid dulliau a deunyddiau adeiladu, newid ffordd o fyw. Bron na allai Castell Dinas Brân ac Abaty Glyn y Groes fod wedi eu codi’n arbennig i roi ymdeimlad o hanes dwfn y dirwedd bwerus hon. Mae elfennau mwy cyfoes hefyd yn bwysig; mae dau gampwaith Thomas Telford, Camlas Llangollen a’r lôn bost o Lundain i Gaergybi (yr A5 heddiw) yn rhedeg ochr yn ochr am lawer o’r ffordd, ac yn rhannu’r dyffryn gyda’r rheilffordd stêm – gan wneud yr ardal yn wers-esiampl o systemau trafniadaeth y chwyldro diwydiannol. Mae’r rhan fwyaf o Safle Treftadaeth Byd Traphont Pontcysyllte o fewn yr ardal hon.

I’r gogledd o Langollen, mae clogwyni a marianau dramatig yn esgor ar beth o’n tirwedd carreg galch mwyaf trawiadol. Mae’r brynau cyfagos, i’r gogledd a’r de, yn llyfnach ac yn fwy cymedrol eu ffurf, ac yn aml yn rugog: gan ein hatgoffa, pe bai angen, mai tir uchel yw hwn. Mae’r dyffryn i’r gorllewin o Gorwen rhywfaint yn ddistawach ac yn fwy cymedrol, mewn manau: ond eto’n debyg o ran ansawdd ei golygfeydd.

Mae’r ardal hefyd yn enwog am ei chysylltiadau diwylliannol. Dyma dreftadaeth Owain Glyndŵr, ac yma y diweddodd Guto’r Glyn ei oes. Symudodd Sarah Ponsonby ac Eleanor Butler, ‘Merched Llangollen’ i’r ardal ym 1780 i ddechrau eu ‘hymddeoliad’ Rousseau-aid

hir: a olygodd, mewn gwirionedd, eu bod yn “sêr” rhyngwladol, aml eu hymwelwyr. Mae Eisteddfod Ryngwladol Llangollen, a lansiwyd ym 1947 i geisio iachau peth o’r chwerwder a’r senoffobia a achoswyd gan flynyddoedd y rhyfel, hefyd wedi rhoi’r ardal ar y map rhyngwladol. Yn yr haf, mae Llangollen dan ei sang gydag ymwelwyr o bob cyfandir pan gynhelir yr Eisteddfod, ac mae’r ardal yn ffenestr wirioneddol ar Gymru i’r byd. Efallai mai Pavarotti yn hytrach na Ponsonby yw’r enw y gall Llangollen ei frolio heddiw.

## Summary description

A dramatic, twisting and beautiful deep valley, a product of river processes and a ‘gateway’ to North Wales. Not only does the topography change very rapidly from the flat Shropshire Plain to this steep-sided Welsh valley, but so do house-styles, building materials and a whole way of life. Castell Dinas Brân and Valle Crucis Abbey could be almost stage-managed to add the sense of deep time to this powerful landscape. More modern elements are also important; Thomas Telford’s two masterworks, the Llangollen Canal and the London to Holyhead post road (the modern A5) run alongside each other for much of their routes, and share the valley with the steam railway – making the area an object-lesson in industrial revolution transport systems. The greater part of the Pont Cysyllte Aqueduct World Heritage Site lies within this area.

To the north of Llangollen, dramatic cliffs and screes result in some of our most impressive limestone scenery, whilst adjacent hills to the north and south have a gentler, smoother form, often heather clad, reminding us of the upland setting. The valley west of Corwen is somewhat quieter and in places more gentle, but exhibits many similar scenic qualities.

The area is also famous for its cultural associations: Sarah Ponsonby and Eleanor Butler, the ‘Ladies of Llangollen’, moved to the area in 1780 to begin their long Rousseau-esque ‘retirement’, which actually meant becoming internationally-recognised and sought-after celebrities. Llangollen’s International Eisteddfod, launched in 1947 in an attempt to heal some of the bitterness of the war years, has also placed the area on the international map. In the summer, Llangollen heaves with visitors from every continent whilst the Eisteddfod is on, and this area is truly the world’s window on Wales. Pavarotti rather than Ponsonby is the name of which Llangollen now boasts.

Key Characteristics
<b>A major river valley</b> – a distinctive, deeply cut, meandering valley containing the River Dee, fitting between upland areas: Llantysilio and Eglwyseg Mountains to the north and Y Berwyn to the south.
<b>A largely tranquil, rural landscape</b> - with gentler, quieter valley character up-river from Corwen and very enclosed, steep-sided valley character below Corwen.
<b>Distinctive and spectacular limestone rock outcrops</b> - north of Llangollen.
<b>River morphology</b> - alluvium, gravels and terraces give rise to a gently undulating valley floor and flood plain in places.
<b>Soils</b> - predominantly poorly drained / seasonally wet, silty soils overlaying the sandstones and shales, with areas of more freely draining loams and deep loams associated with the gravel deposits.
<b>Ecologically significant river habitats</b> – along the River Dee and the numerous small streams that flow into it.
<b>Field pattern</b> - predominantly geometric and of small to medium scale, with boundaries defined by stone walls or hedgerows and many hedgerow trees, extending up hillsides.
<b>Valley and hillside woodlands and pastures</b> – in places running down to the river and displaying a densely wooded character, with a mix of coniferous and deciduous



plantations. In other places, open valley floor grazing and steep hillside sheep grazing.
<b>An important transport corridor and ‘gateway’</b> - to reach upland Wales from England’s lowlands. An abrupt and dramatic landscape change for travellers by road, rail and canal, including Thomas Telford’s London-Holyhead road.
<b>The Llangollen Canal and Pont Cysyllte aqueduct</b> is a World Heritage Site.
<b>Settlement relates to this historic transport pattern</b> , which in turn relates to the valley and topography. The historic and popular tourist towns of Corwen and Llangollen are located by the River Dee at historic crossing points.
<b>Iconic cultural landscape</b> – centred on Llangollen, it’s International Eisteddfod, Valle Crusis Abbey, Castell Dinas Brân, the appeal of the picturesque landscape, the historic landscape, and the infrastructure of road, railway and canal.

## Visual and Sensory profile

In visual terms, the area broadly divides into two at the half-way point of Corwen. The eastern part runs through the Vale of Llangollen as a deeply incised and twisting major valley, eventually emerging onto the Cheshire Plain. The western part meanders more gently from Bala through the heartland of North Wales.

The Vale of Llangollen is characterised by dramatic and quickly-changing scenery. Although the railway, the canal and the historic A5 road all share this corridor, the impression is more of a beautiful landscape than a busy transport route – a perception strengthened by the slow movement of canal boats and the bucolic character of the steam railway. Castell Dinas Brân guards the entrance to the valley, as if it had been constructed as a romantic ruin. Llangollen, an attractive, but constricted town, by contrast, has a sense of bustle and noise, particularly during the summer months, and above all when the International Eisteddfod is in session. The town sits at a naturally scenic location beside the Dee, where the water flows across flat beds of rock and tumbles into deep pools as it flows under the Medieval stone bridge. Even more impressive than all this is what lies just beyond to the north. The entire hillside is comprised of towering limestone cliffs and screes, arranged in a series of sweeping convex curves, running up to a remote, tranquil and scenic side-valley head known as ‘World’s End’. These limestone exposures, Cregiau Eglwyseg, are by far the most dramatic in North East Wales, and the scenic ‘Panorama Drive’ at their foot is a popular way to take in these sights.



West of Corwen the valley becomes a quieter, gentler landscape of well-managed country, with farming and small villages, as seen here near Cynwyd. © John Briggs





The prominent incised twists and turns of the Dee below Corwen, and the interlocking spurs of hillsides. The dramatic rock exposures of Creigiau Eglwyseg are seen to the right of the image. © Getmapping 2006



Vale of Llangollen from the south, with the southern part of the Clwydian Range area in the background. The context of this valley becomes more clearly defined as being inland and closely surrounded by uplands, especially in winter © John Briggs





The very distinctive limestone cliffs and scree slopes of Creigiau Eglwyseg mountain, north of Llangollen. © John Briggs



River scenery: the Dee, the largest river in North Wales, cascading through the centre of Llangollen. © John Briggs





A number of secluded side valleys cut deep into the hills north of Llangollen. This one is overlooked by the Horseshoe Pass, so named after the circuitous route the road takes as it follows the contours around the various side valleys. © John Briggs



Pont Cysyllte Aquaduct World Heritage Site © John Briggs



## Geological Landscape influences

The most prominent influence on this area is river processes. From its outflow at Llyn Tegid, the Dee meanders along a relatively flat floodplain to Llangollen. The meanders are often small-scale in size on the valley floor, but occasionally they form significant features in the landscape such as at Rhewl, near Llangollen (GCR site). Here it loops around a large meander and is a good example of an incised, ingrown meander where the river has cut vertically into the bedrock in addition to eroding horizontally as the meanders continued to develop. The result is an asymmetrical valley with a steep outer flank and a gentle inner slope, which in some areas has terraces and cliffs marking former river levels and stages in the evolution of the valley. Other examples can be seen at Llantysilio and Pengwern, south of Llangollen.

The valley floor is predominantly flat and infilled with glacial and river deposits, but rises to elevations of more than 300m on the valley sides. Towards Bala, there is a small area of Ordovician rock, otherwise the underlying bedrock of this part of the Dee valley consists predominantly of Silurian sedimentary rocks. Later mountain-building events have compressed these rocks, faulting and tilting them. In some areas, such as the Horseshoe Pass, the mudstones have been compressed sufficiently to form slate, which is still quarried.

Although essentially a relatively flat-bottomed valley, there are some areas where the bedrock has a prominent impact on the landscape. For example, between Llandrillo and Corwen there is a prominent upland block which comprises Silurian grits on Mynydd Mynyllod, and closer to Corwen, the area around Hafod y Calch is underlain by Carboniferous Limestone. Both these areas have been influenced by the Bala lineament, which comprises a series of north east-trending sub-parallel faults and folds, which have influenced the landscape from Cardigan Bay, through North Wales and into the Permo-Triassic outcrop of the Cheshire Plain. Branches or splays off the Bala lineament, such as the Bryneglwys, Llangollen and Llantysilio faults have further influenced the landscape and have been exploited by the valley of the Dee. Key sites which highlight the geological diversity of this area include Dinas Bran (GCR site), Pant Glas Quarry and Hafod y Calch (GCR site).

## Landscape Habitats influences

The area is largely agricultural in the valley floor, but with a patchwork of small fields and broadleaved woodland blocks. The valley floor forms the only flat ground in the area and is intensively used. The steep slopes of the valley sides and tops of the surrounding plateau are largely rough grazings, with bracken, scrub and hanging woodlands in particular on the valley sides, with limited grazing for upland sheep flocks. Small areas of traditional agricultural practices have remained, being hay meadow typical of many in the uplands throughout Wales many years ago, now restricted to small pockets where improvements have been limited. They are typically species-rich and can include wet pasture. The hay meadows are typically dominated by sweet vernal-grass, heath grass and crested dog's tail, with extensive yellow rattle, whilst the wetter areas support purple moor-grass, heath spotted orchid and several sedges.

A similar area of unimproved neutral grassland in association with wet acid grassland occurs at Caeau Pen y Coed (SSSI), south of Llangollen, comprising 11 contiguous fields bordering on the urban area of the town itself. It supports a typical lowland hay meadow

community, with associated woodland, scrub and bracken, creating a diverse series of habitats overlooking the town.

Throughout its length the Dee SSSI is a significant habitat feature, important for migratory fish, salmon and otter, and as a corridor of movement for many other species. In limited places where the flat valley floor is wider, a more impeded drainage has given rise to areas of wetland habitats including valley mire with a range of conditions and plant associations, alder and willow carr, and supporting a wide variety of sedges and bog mosses.

Woodland is an important element in the area, with many miles of fringing woodlands on the valley sides, occasional conifer plantations on and above the valley sides, and some wet woodland and stream-side trees along the river courses. Much of the woodland, and parkland trees, are associated with many of the large estates in the area.

## Historic Landscape influences

The past strategic importance of the Vale and as a transport and communications corridor is visible in the landscape today. Castell Dinas Brân (and the Iron Age hill-fort on which it is built) occupies the elevated land above the south facing slopes overlooking the Vale. Gentry houses such as Trevor Hall (an early brick building) and Plas yn pentre indicate its prosperity in the early modern period.

Transport developments associated with the industrial revolution have had a profound expression on the character of the landscape. Thomas Telford's London to Holyhead post Road (now the A5) follows the valley as far as Druid, and heavily influenced the location and shape of settlement. Corwen grew in linear fashion from an earlier core, and the scale of buildings here indicate that it became a local centre of some importance. The canal, which is carried across the Vale by the Pont Cysyllte aqueduct extends to the west of Llangollen, a town which acquired a significant industrial base in the textile industry as a consequence. The valley floor railway of the 1860s, now reinstated as a heritage railway, led to the building of substantial houses for industrialists at Vivod and Llantysilio. The Pont Cysyllte aqueduct and its environs were recently inscribed as a World Heritage Site, the greater part of which is included within this area.

Other ancient monuments in the eastern part of the area which have had a significant aesthetic influence on the landscape, include the 9th century Eliseg pillar, and the ruins of the 12th century Cistercian Abbey at Valle Crucis. The few areas of settlement within the valley often relate to its past strategic importance, such as the compact linear, valley town of Llangollen which forms an historic crossing point, with its Medieval sandstone bridge.

## Cultural Landscape influences

This compelling 'gateway' to Wales might have been fashioned for the delectation of the many visitors which it has drawn since the 18th century. The historical and visual relationship between the enigmatic Eliseg pillar and the ruined abbey at Valle Crucis and the hill-top castle at Dinas Bran were a gift to savants, writers and painters of an antiquarian or romantic disposition – Richard Wilson's view of the castle depicts a Cambrian Mount Olympus. Rowlandson and Turner also visited the area. The arrival of the famous Anglo-Irish same-sex couple, Sarah Ponsonby and Eleanor Butler, in 1780 encouraged a taste for 'Picturesque' architecture here which was sustained well into the 19th century.



The town of Llangollen was granted its charter in 1284; its Medieval bridge is traditionally connected with Dr John Trefor, Bishop of St Asaph 1346-57. Its International Eisteddfod, launched 1947 as an annual forum for native music and dancing from many countries, represents one of the most successful and long-lasting attempts to heal the cultural divisions left by the Second World War and has made the town world-famous. It is complemented by the work of ECTARC (European Centre for Training and Regional Co-operation) at Llangollen.

The working landscape of the area has contributed to its cultural identity. The proximity of the Llangollen Canal, which extends into the area from the Deeside and Wrexham area, is a World Heritage Site, the Telford Road (one of the major works of one of Britain's greatest civil engineers), and the Llangollen railway, revived as a steam railway recreating the ambience of the 1950s, means that the area illustrates remarkably well the classic transport systems of the industrial revolution, and their revival and conservation offers the possibility of integration with each other.