

The Upper Ceiriog Trail

Route Description

Explained in an anticlockwise direction starting at Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog. Grid Reference SJ 157 328 (Lat 52.886482 Long -3.253547).

All distances and heights are approximate.

Assuming a start from Llanarmon DC, take the road heading south out of the village with The Hand Hotel on the left.

Follow road uphill for 1 mile (1.5 km). Shortly before you reach a road junction with white railings, turn left through a gate into a field. Follow track for 2 miles (3 km) to cross tracks. There are a few deep ruts, take care!

At cross tracks, carry straight on gently downhill to gate onto tarmac road. (Take care when coming out onto road as there is a blind bend to your left). After passing through gate, turn right and follow tarmac road for 1/3 mile (550 m). As road bears to the right, take turning on left. Almost immediately, turn right uphill following another tarmac road. After 1/2 mile (810 m), the road starts to bear left. As it straightens out, turn sharply right passing Cefn-y-braich-uchaf Farm. (Warning: At second hen house is a feed silo that could start up without notice and could startle your horse).

At fork, take left track going uphill. Follow track for 1/2 mile (810 m) to gate into open field. (Here you meet The Ceiriog Trail coming in from the other direction). Take the grass track diagonally across the field marked with reflector posts. 55 yds (50 m) before gate onto tarmac road, turn left onto the stony track. Follow stony track going downhill. At fork bear right, on track until it becomes a tarmac lane near bottom of hill. Just before bridge over the Rliver Ceiriog, turn right through gate onto the old Tramway. (Note: The Tramway is a permissive bridleway, if closed follow road to B4500. Turn right, continue until turning on left opposite the Pandy Mill Gallery). Follow tramway and 110 yds (100 m) after crossing bridge over river, take tarmac lane into Pandy with the Pandy Mill Gallery on the left-hand side.

Cross here taking care as it can be busy, taking tarmac lane signposted 'No Through Road'. After approximately 1/2 mile (810 m) as the lane starts to descend, take the track going uphill on right. Carry on up a steep stone track through conifer plantation until gate on right after stream. Go through gate following an old packhorse route that went across the Berwyns. At T-junction turn right and after 100 yds (90 m) carry straight on uphill ignoring major track as it bears left. At tarmac road turn left. After passing turning on right, follow road

downhill signposted 'No Through Road'. At bottom of the hill, turn left immediately before telephone and letter boxes passing Saron Presbyterian church. After 170 yds (150 m) where the tarmac lane bears 90° to right, carry straight on uphill on gated rough track. Follow through gates up onto open moorland. You are now travelling on 'Sarn Sws' ('The Kissing Way'), this is an ancient road that used to run from Caersws through to Chester. There are some sections with deep ruts due to vehicular damage, so take care but keep as close to the track as possible.

Carry on track over moor and through gate with forest on left. (As you progress towards Llanarmon, look high to your right to a quartz-topped hill which looks as if a bite has been taken out of it. This was once thought to be a Roman Camp, but is now established to be an Iron Age fort with earthwork fortifications). At Pen yr Allt the track becomes tarmaced. The next farm on your left, Pen-y-Bryn, was the home of John Ceiriog Hughes, the famous Welsh Bard. Continue on the tarmac road going downhill. After 160 yds (150 m) the road drops very steeply, take care as road is slippery in places: if necessary dismount and lead your horse. At bottom of hill carry straight on over bridge to the village of Llanarmon DC where you started.

A section of this route overlaps with the 'Ceiriog Trail' a leaflet on which is also available.

Local Background Notes

This 14 mile circuit generally follows the high ground which encloses the deeply cut Ceiriog Valley to the south of Pandy. The river level at Pandy is ~665 ft (203 m), and this rises rapidly upstream to almost 900 ft (274 m) at Llanarmon DC. To the east of the valley, the Trail rises to over 1400 ft (427 m), and to the west, to well over 1500 ft (457 m). The landscape is varied and superb – the views being magnificent. There are lush meadows, deep valleys and mixed woodlands at the lower levels and open windswept moorland above. Wildlife is plentiful, you can expect to see curlew, buzzard, raven and skylark as your companions. The lucky few will see falcons, red kites, and grouse too. South of Pandy the population of the valley is very sparse, with almost everyone living near river level, so expect to meet no-one on the higher sections of your journey!

The ridge at Cefn-hir-fynydd on the southern edge of the Trail is the great watershed between the catchments of the River Ceiriog and the River Tanat. Rainfall to the south will flow to Bristol and to the north will end up in Chester. This spot also defines the boundary between North Wales and Mid Wales. The Ceiriog valley itself is something of a rain shadow area, guarded from the wet south-westerlies by higher ground. Even if it's raining, it is comforting to know that it's heavier on the other side of the hill!

Parking and Stabling

Although the route description starts and ends at Llanarmon DC, it is also possible to 'park and start' at other points, these are shown on the map marked either P or PP (private parking). Where marked PP it is essential to telephone first to check availability. Some stabling is also available, shown S on the map. This, too, must be booked in advance. Parking is also available at Cefn Coch (Grid Reference SJ 241 330, Lat 52.889531 Long -3.128783).

Please check availability with providers before following out – see map for reference: -

Springhill Farm (01691) 718406
www.springhillfarm.co.uk

West Arms Hotel, Llanarmon (01691) 600665
<http://www.thewestarms.com/>

Distance

The trail is 14 miles long and should take from 3 to 4 hours to complete on horseback. The map shows all the minor roads and bridleways, just in case you wish to work out a route yourself. For walkers, the routes also link with an excellent network of footpaths

Conditions

The route follows unclassified country roads, minor roads and Bridleways. Some of the route is rutted and uses narrow paths so take extra care.

Waymarking

The trail is marked at every junction by a symbol (see route map key). The route is described in an anti-clockwise direction from the start / finish. All the Rights of Way are well waymarked and signposted.

Maps

For the general area, use Ordnance Survey Landranger sheets 125 and 126. For

more detail, see Explorer sheet 255.

Refreshments

There are public houses in Llanarmon DC (West Arms and the Hand Hotel) and Glyn Ceiriog (various hotels / shops)

Accommodation

There is a range of good Accommodation in the Ceiriog Valley. Refer to the enclosed leaflet for further details. Spend a few days here! There are other routes for horse riders, cyclists and walkers, and you won't find a better place to relax!

The Ceiriog Valley Country Code

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
Guard against all risk of fire
Keep open gates open and closed gates closed
Please keep dogs on leads at all times
Keep to public rights of way
Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
Take your litter home
Help to keep all water clean
Protect wildlife, plants and trees
Take special care on country roads
Make no unnecessary noise
A cow with calf can be dangerous
Take extra care at Lambing time (locally March & April)

Mobile Phones

Due to the terrain of the area, transmission and reception are not usually possible

Reporting problems with Rights of Way

Please contact Wrexham County Borough Council's Rights of Way Department on 01978 292000

Background Information

Original leaflet produced by the Chirk and Ceiriog Valley Partnership and the Wrexham and District Bridleways Association with valued assistance from volunteers, Wrexham County Borough Council and Groundwork Wrexham.

Text by Andrew Kelly

Some local history notes

The village of Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiroig takes its name from Saint Garmon, a 5th Century French Bishop. St. Garmon's churchyard contains a 'preaching mound' which may have been used by the Saint, and two nearby Yew trees have been certified as over 1000 years old.

"A spot of rarest beauty ... thus delectable heaven ... where so much is glorious, picturesque and photographically possible, it becomes a matter of utmost difficulty to choose a subject". The Amateur Photographer and Photographic News – August 21st 1916

Amongst the many border skirmishes, King Henry II was defeated in 1165, and his route of retreat became known as 'Sarn Saeson'. This ancient route is crossed twice by the Upper Ceiriog Trail. The section known as Cefn-hir-fynydd was almost certainly used by the King and his army during the skirmishes. It is part of a high ridge route that ran from Oswestry over the Berwyn Mountains and beyond.

"A more ideal retreat for the town dweller, who desires to rest both brain and body amid the lullaby of the bubbling streams and the soothing moods of joyous nature, is not to be found in the whole of North Wales". Liverpool Daily Post – Circa 1916

Pandy Mill Gallery (<http://www.pandymillgallery.com/>), formerly The Woolpack Inn, dates back to 1365 and was the first fulling mill in Wales, producing the famous Welsh flannel from local home-based weavers.

"Threading the Vale of the Ceiriog ... I obtained a view of a scene, not of cold grandeur, but of something which I like better, which richly compensated me for the slight trouble I had taken in stepping aside to visit the little bridge". George Borrow – Author of 'Wild Wales'

In 1922 the Warrington Water Corporation put forward ambitious plans to construct two large reservoirs in the Upper Ceiriog Valley. When it was first announced the local people were said to be bewildered and frightened, then they were exceedingly angry that this threat could be made upon their homes and livelihoods.

Two reservoirs would have been constructed either side of the village of Llanarmon DC. 'The Llanarmon Reservoir', was planned to embrace most of the cultivated land above Llanarmon. It would have extended for one and a half miles from a point little more than 1000 yards from the village. The Hendre Reservoir was to be even bigger! It was to be two miles long and would have submerged Tregeiriog. Notable losses would have included: -

1 Church, 5 Chapels, 2 Burial Grounds, 2 Post Offices, 2 Inns, 5 Shops, 1 Blacksmith's shop and 82 other properties of which 45 were farm houses and farm buildings.

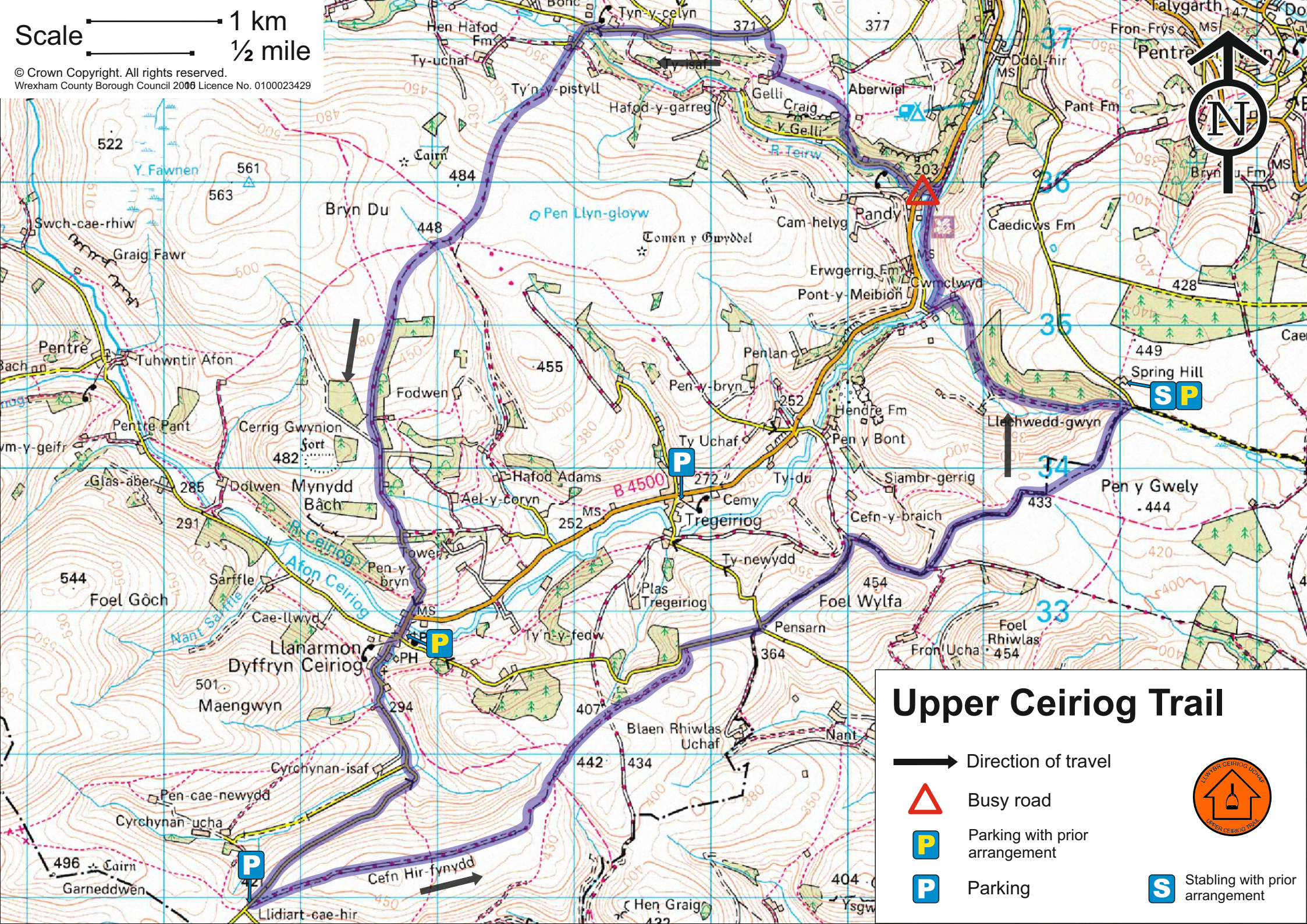
The hamlet of Pentre Bach would have disappeared, as would an old house known as Dolwen. It is said this property dates back to the 12th Century, and that it was built and occupied by the great Welsh Prince, Owen Gwynedd. In August 1923 the plans were finally rejected by Parliament, mainly due to robust opposition by Lloyd George.

"The forms and colours, the rocky heights and running waters, that give the Ceiriog Valley its character, its individuality, even amongst the Welsh valleys ... such cherished corners of earth should be held inviolable to the end". Ernest Rhys – Editor of *Everyman's Library*, December 1922.

A Cheese Factory was set up in Tregeiriog. The milk was obtained from the neighbouring farms, their products won prizes at local Agricultural Shows. Sadly, production ceased some years ago.

Scale 1 km
1/2 mile

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Upper Ceiriog Trail

- Direction of travel
- Busy road
- Parking with prior arrangement
- Parking
- Stabling with prior arrangement

