

Llysfaen Walks – Llysfaen East

Name: Llysfaen East

Route: Isallt Road, North Wales Path, Maidens Leap, Plas Farm, Dolwen Road

Start and finish: Old Bus terminus

OS Grid Ref: SH 892 768

Parking: room for a few cars; do not obstruct the bus turning.

By bus: 14 or 15

Distance: 5.3km (3.3miles)

Total ascent 202m (662 ft.)

Time: 1 hour 40 minutes

Terrain: public footpaths in open country, field paths, minor roads.

Grade: Easy; few slopes, but none steep. Few stiles including ladder stiles; kissing gates. Rarely muddy, some paths stony.

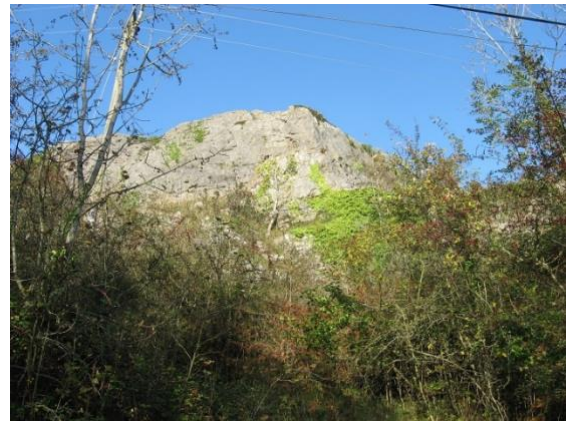
Summary: A walk in quiet open country with fine views over the Dolwen Valley and distant views of Clwydian Hills and Carneddau Mountains.

Description

From the bus shelter there are views south to Moelfre Uchaf (396m; 1299ft.)



With your back to the bus shelter, head diagonally left across the turning area to the top of Isallt Road. Go downhill passing Bryn Gollen on the left and shortly after, Islwyn and the farm and outbuildings of Tyddyn Elidir on the right. As you go down the road there are impressive cliffs of Carboniferous Limestone above on your left.



The road marks the approximate southern limit of the limestone; to the right, below the road the muddier fields lie on the Lower Carboniferous Ffernant Formation (formerly referred to as the Basement Beds) of red sandstones and mudstones. These are softer than the limestone and rarely seen in outcrop.



Continue past Isallt Farm down below on the right. *Isallt is a very old farm dating back to the 1600s or even earlier.*

The crags up on the left are in places smothered by masses of Cotoneaster.



Shortly after the turning to Betws yn Rhos on the right, fork left up a concrete drive, passing Tudor Cottage.



Follow the now stony track uphill with woods down on the right. This track is the continuation of Trawscoed Road and is occasionally a Satnav route!

Where the track takes a hairpin bend back left, go through the kissing gate on the right into a large field.



There may be some cars parked here; it is used by climbers who frequent the lower tier of

Craig y Forwyn below, on which there are some 100 rock climbs.

You have now joined the North Wales Path. Initially follow the farm track, but as this disappears, bear half left up the steep grassy slope to reach a kissing gate.

Pass through this and turn sharply and steeply up left to follow the obvious path across rough grazing with gorse bushes to reach a kissing gate in the stone wall. Ahead and above are the dramatic cliffs of the upper tier of Craig y Forwyn and lower down, views of the sea.

Head half left on a well-trodden path through the bracken, firstly down then steeply up, to reach a finger post.



Here there are a couple of paths heading downhill; take either and descend fairly steeply through bracken, then along the base of a scree slope descending from the cliffs above. Pass through a gate and continue down the scree, with the stones tinkling as you descend, to a grassy area, then steeply down to enter a beech wood on a delightful path.

Much of the land around Craig y Forwyn is part of the Llanddulas Limestone and [Gwrych Castle Wood](#) SSSI. The site is designated for its limestone grassland, heath and woodland communities. The site consists of a limestone plateau flanked by cliffs with scree and steep slopes below. Broad-leaved woodland is present below the screes, with thinner limestone soils on the plateau supporting

limestone grassland. The local deeper soils, often on glacial till, support bracken, gorse and locally heather. Craig y Forwyn woods are an ancient woodland site with silver birch, oak, ash, beech and sycamore. On the cliff faces there are yew, spindle, and the nationally scarce rock whitebeam. The shrub layer comprises hazel, hawthorn, wild privet, spurge laurel, spindle, yew and ash regeneration. Infestation by ivy is common and the invasive cotoneaster is common on scree slopes. The mosaic of habitats supports various butterflies including the scarce silver studded blue, pearl-bordered fritillary, silver-washed fritillary, white-letter hairstreak, green hairstreak, brown argus and moths such as the scarce plume moth, cistus forester and chalk carpet.



Follow the path through a couple of limestone cuttings – it was a tramway for horse-drawn carts – to a cross path. Head straight across, keeping level and passing further cuttings to just before a minor road.

Here turn back sharply left uphill on a stony vehicle track. Follow the nicely graded track up through the woods, unfortunately with accompanying litter, to turn left at the T junction; ahead is the old quarry/landfill site.

Continue on the gently rising path through bracken and gorse with scattered trees to climb a steep section – which can be bypassed by a winding path on the left – to a kissing gate in a stone wall.

Follow the path uphill across open grazing with the quarry fence on your right. At the top of the slope you may wish to head up left to

the top of Maiden’s Leap for the all-round views, but beware the unprotected cliff edge in front of you.

There are several variations on the origin of the name Maiden’s Leap, but all involve a young lass falling or jumping from the cliff to her death.

There are great views ahead down into the Dulas Valley, to the left out to sea and to the right and behind of the Snowdonia mountains. The Dulas Valley is partly of glacial origin; its formation would have been due to north-south faults which provided a zone of weakness. During the Ice Age this area was affected by the North Wales mountain glaciers heading northeast and by the Irish Sea Ice, which was heading south from the Lake District and Scottish highlands.



Across the steep-sided Dulas Valley to the southeast there is another limestone plateau; look closely and you can see a thin line of what looks like scree running across the plateau from southwest to northeast starting at the cliff edge.



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This is actually the northwestern rampart of the Iron Age [Pen y Corddyn Mawr](#) Hillfort. The impressive 10 hectare (25 acre) hillfort of Pen -y Corddyn Mawr (similar in size to the better-known Moel Fenlli in the Clwydian Hills near Ruthin) is defended by cliffs on three sides and by double banks and ditches on the fourth. It is deemed to be Iron Age, although finds of Roman coins and other artefacts, including statuettes of dogs, suggest re-use during Roman times.

Return to or follow the quarry fencing on the right across open pasture, with the landfill site down below on the right, to an old kissing gate.

This part of the quarry was an extension created in the 1980s which resulted in the destruction of the ?17th century farm of Pen y Geuffos which would have been roughly in the centre of the quarry extension.



Turn left through an old steel kissing gate, uphill through gorse and into open pasture. There are views south to the Carneddau Mountains.

The path swings down and right, still with the security fence on the right, and now with views ahead to Mynydd Marian with Telegraph House visible.

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Follow down through gorse and bracken to another kissing gate. Here the path turns to the left.

Now follow the enclosed wooded path around the edge of Plas yn Llysfaen's fields until you emerge at the gateway to "The Plas", with the houses of Rhoddfa Wen visible across the field to the right.

Where the path joins the drive to Plas Farm turn right and follow the stony track to reach the playground on Gadlas Road. *A shop is usually open off to the right for those in need of refreshment.* You can either follow Gadlas Road left to reach Dolwen Road or take the path on the left through the wood. *This latter was the original track through to Plas yn Llysfaen, before the housing estate was built.* In either case you reach Dolwen Road and turn left. Go past the bowling green on the right and along a short section of road with no pavement.

Follow Dolwen Road, passing the end of Trawscoed Road, back to the old bus terminus and the end of the walk.