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Gwersyllt and the River Alyn circular walk

Route – Gwersyllt Woods, Forts, Rivers and Trees (4 miles/ 2 ½ hours)

This walk starts at Alyn Waters Country Park, Mold Road, LL11 4AG (grid reference SJ 319, 546) or alternatively if you are a rail user you can start the walk from the railway station in Gwersyllt Village (grid reference SJ 318, 533).

Gwersyllt is one of Wrexham's largest villages, situated about 2 miles North West from the town centre. Gwersyllt grew rapidly due to the coal mining industry in the area. There were several collieries open at one time and the remains of these can still be seen around the area today.

The walk takes you through the village, across open farmland, crossing babbling rivers and streams, along through quiet wooded valleys, passing remnants of the area's varied and diverse history.

Parking: there is a small car park at Alyn Waters Country Park.

Buses: The buses that you can use are run by ARRIVA and the numbers are 26, 32 and 33. Please call 01978 266166 for bus information.

Railway: Please call National Rail Enquiries on 03457 48 49 50 for train times to and from Gwersyllt Station or visit the website www.nationalrail.co.uk for details.

Map: Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 256.

It should be noted that this route may be muddy in places and suitable footwear is recommended. There is also stiles, steep slopes and busy roads to negotiate.

The route is not suitable for wheelchairs, buggies or small children.

The Visitor Centre at Alyn Waters Country Park offers the visitor the chance to grab a bite to eat, purchase a drink, pop to the toilet, or pick up a leaflet about the Park or the surrounding area. One of the interesting facts you can discover is that the Park

contains one of the largest community woodlands in Wales, planted in the early 1990s.

Walk directions

With the Visitor Centre on your left and the play area on your right, follow the tarmac surfaced path, it bears to the right. Carry on along it, passing the gravel path on your right, with the fence on your left, you can look to the right and see an area of grassland managed for skylarks. Listen out for their call from February onwards. As you walk further along the path you'll see lots of birch trees to your left, this is the community woodland planted in the 1990s.

The soil is nutrient poor here, and is ideal for orchids. The Chinese were one of the first people to recognise the use of orchids in medicine, and some of the earliest paintings of orchids can be found on old Chinese vases. Today, one of our most popular flavourings Vanilla is derived from the seed pods of orchids.

Ahead you will see a black pedestrian barrier, walk through this, and carry on along the tarmac track in front of you. You'll pass the Air Cadets building on your right, and the cricket pitch on your left. Gwersyllt Park Cricket Club was established in 1883. When you arrive at the main road, turn right and walk along the pavement for approximately 100 metres. You will see a play area on your left, cross over the road, taking care whilst crossing, and head through the green gate in to the field.

These playing fields are known as 'The Wauns'. Keep the trees to your left and the football pitches to your right as you walk along the field. At the far end of the field head towards the houses in the top right corner. You will see a metal green palisade fence, walk to the left of that, heading downhill towards the road.

Cross over the road taking care as it is very busy, and then bear left, carrying on straight down the road. Follow the road as it first bears to the right and then to the left. Notice the different hedgerow plants growing along the pavement. When the hedgerow ends on the right hand side you'll notice a footpath, leave the road and follow this path.

You will pass garden fences on your left as you approach an old metal kissing gate. Pass through the gate and take the path to the left that goes around the base of the hill, keeping the garden fences on your left. As you pass the pond in the adjacent field to your left, look at the bluebells next to the path during the early summer months.

Continue to follow the field fence line and bear left slightly downhill where you'll pass through hawthorn and holly trees. Keep to the left as you reach another metal kissing gate. Go over the farm track you will notice a sweet chestnut tree to your right, it's the tree with the roots exposed. The sweet chestnut is not native to Britain but was probably first transported from the Mediterranean and Asia Minor by the Romans. The tree's distinctive leaves are tough and large about 20cm long, with prominent veins and serrated edges. Carry on immediately up the hill in front of you.

As you climb the slope in the summer months stop and listen to the gorse bushes, on a hot sunny day you should be able to hear the seed-cases of the horse burst open with a popping noise, scattering the small seeds up to 30 feet in all directions. Gorse flowers are bright yellow and they have a smell of coconut.

There is a large cherry tree (you can see the ripe cherries in July and August) and an oak tree next to each other on your left as you reach the top of the slope, turn slightly right here and drop down the hill through the gorse bushes. When you reach the bottom, bear left and keep to the lower side which follows an old hawthorn hedgerow, not much remains of it now as the smaller fields have been opened up into expansive grazing land.

On your right you'll see the remains of a brick structure with a large earth bank either side of it. This is the remains of a weir. The stream used to originate from a large 'fish' pond. There was also a sluice gate where the stream met the pond has been filled in and the land is a wet scrubby field. The stream still collects excess water from the surrounding fields.

At the end of the hedge line, in front of you there will be another metal kissing gate. Go through this and walk up the slope to meet the B5425 Llay New Road. Across the

road you will see the next footpath. ***Take care as you cross this very fast busy road that goes from Llay to Wrexham. *** Once on the other side of the road follow the path down to another kissing gate. Going through the gate you emerge into an open field.

Look across the field you will see a kissing gate about 50 metres ahead of you. Head towards it. As you walk downhill listen to the babbling brook on your right. Go through the kissing gate, over a little bridge, and onto a surfaced narrow lane. Turn right and then follow the lane round to the left.

With the stone wall on your left, head towards the buildings. On the drive in front of you there is a narrow metal stile to the right of a double metal field gate. Cross over the stile and carry on downhill towards another set of double metal field gates. There's a gap to the right of these gates next to the corner of the stone building. Go through the gap, and over a wooden stile, and then walk downhill in-between the fencing to the bottom.

You will see the remains of an old building on your right, these are the remains of the old mill. It was a corn mill and some of the water from the River Alyn was channelled to go through the mill, the flow was controlled by a sluice. There was also a weir here just north of the mill, this has gone today and the River Alyn is back on course. Step over a little stream and cross the large bridge in front of you. The bridge spans the River Alyn, a tributary of the River Dee. The Alyn starts its journey in Llandegla, Denbighshire and travels through Loggerheads, Mold and Gwersyllt before it joins the River Dee by the Trevalyn Meadows in Rossett.

Walk up the slope a little and to the right you will see a grassy track. Follow the track with the steep upwards slope to your left.

The grassy track bears to the left. As you pass the hawthorn bushes look out for the rabbit burrows beneath the gnarled roots of the big old beech tree. Carry on as it turns into a wider track. Take care in the winter here; it can get muddy and slippery.

On the left you will see an outcrop of sandstone. Sandstone is a sedimentary rock composed mainly of sand-size mineral or rock grains. It can be any colour but the most common colours are tan, brown, yellow, red, grey and white. Some sandstones are resistant to weathering, yet are easy to work, this makes sandstone a common building and paving material.

As you come out into an open field keep following the grassy track as it continues to bear to the left. With the river on your right, look left up to the top of the hill. At the top lies an Iron Age hill fort, Caer Alyn.

The Caer Alyn project is working on a wide range of heritage on the site. It includes an Iron Age promontory fort, a possible Bronze Age tumulus in an adjacent field and Wat's Dyke which follows the western side of the fort. For more information about the Fort or if you would like to become a volunteer with them, please see www.caeralyn.org.

Pass the river crossing on your right, and head towards the buildings in front of you. Come to a metal field gate with a wood stile to the right. Cross over the stile and continue up the track to a T junction. Turn right and continue along the hard surfaced track passing a vehicular bridge to your right, and an old stone building on your left. You are now joining the Wat's Dyke Way National Trail. Cross over the cattle grid, take care it's slippery in the wet. Carry on along the surfaced track. Be aware cars maybe using this route for access to the surrounding farms.

Look at the different species of tree in the field on the left. In late spring and early summer there is a splendid display of buttercups here. You will notice a building on your right across the field. This belongs to the Environment Agency and it measures the water level in the River Alyn.

At the end of the track before you join a road, go through the gate on the left next to the cattle grid. Be aware of vehicles using this road as you turn left and head up the lane. As the road bears to the right you will see a footpath and stile up a slope on your left. Cross the stile and carry on up the slope, across another stile then up some wooden steps, before emerging at the top into an open field.

Head diagonally across the field towards a stile in the fence line (passing a mature Yew tree). Cross the stile and carry on in a north westerly direction, through a gate, then on towards the corner of the field. Cross over the stile in the corner of the field onto the surfaced lane. The lane leads to The Fort mentioned earlier. Cross the surfaced track and go over the next stile into a field. Once in the next field head straight across it towards 2 electric telegraph posts. There you will find a metal kissing gate, go through it, and follow the path down to the main road. This leads to the B5425 Llay New Road that you crossed earlier.

Cross Llay New Road and take the footpath that is opposite. ***Please be careful crossing this road it is very fast moving and busy.***

You are still on the Wat's Dyke Way National Trail until the end of this path, where it then continues into the Llay side of Alyn Waters Country Park. Carry on along this path ignoring the stiles on the right until reaching the end of the chain link fence and crossing over a stile in front of you.

Cross over this stile and follow the wall on your left bearing left until reaching a stile which leads onto the surfaced lane. Although this is a quiet lane please be aware of vehicles, horse and cyclists using it.

Turn left on to the lane and as you pass a handful of houses, there is a junction on the left, take this and head downhill. As you follow the road to the right you can see the houses of Bradley on top of the hillside.

Pass the old farm buildings at the bottom of the slope, and cross over the stone bridge. This is the River Alyn again. Just after the bridge on the right you will see the entrance to Alyn Waters Country Park. Enter the Park and keep to the right hand path as it runs alongside the river.

Cross a little wooden bridge, look down and see the strange colour of the stones, it's like a terracotta colour. These are iron deposits leaching from the ground and are not

harmful. Listen out for birds singing as you walk along the path near the river's edge. There are a few places to stop and rest and take in the tranquillity.

Take care as you cross a boardwalk over a wet area. Look at the different plant species growing in this small area, all of them adapted to living in such wet conditions. Keep to the main path which follows the river, this eventually bears left and goes up a hill with a fence on one side. See where the rabbits have made their homes in the soft sandy banks.

As the gravel path becomes a tarmac one, follow it back round towards the Visitor Centre.

Follow the countryside code

Respect-Protect-Enjoy

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

If you experience any problems on this walk or if you would like to make any other comment please contact Public Rights of Way, telephone 01978 292057 or visit our website www.wrexham.gov.uk/rightsofway.