Country Walks Around Wrexham

Route 1- Offa's Dyke and Pentre-Bychan (3 miles)

Croesfoel – Cadwgan – Offa's Dyke – Talwrn – Pentrebychan – Packsaddle

There is much to attract the walker all year round on this route; it is rich in local history and wildlife. Allow 1½ – 2 hours.

Parking: There is room for one or two cars on the B5098 near its junction with the B5605 (Ruabon Road) by Croesfoel Farm (grid ref. SJ 308483). Do not park on the verges. Alternatively you could park on the B5428 (Smithy Lane) at Pentre Bychan (grid ref. SJ 301477) and start the walk by having a look at the dovecote. Join the 'Walk Directions' at the (*) below.

Public Transport: Many frequent bus services pass Croesfoel.

Walk Directions

Before starting the walk have a look at **Croesfoel (1)** and the plaque on the wall concerning the Davies family. Across the main road is the gateway of **Hafod-y-bŵch (2),** a beautifully renovated 15th century house best seen from the by-pass.

Take the signposted footpath that runs along the edge of a field by the hawthorn hedge. Before reaching the tumulus or burial mound (the prominent hump in the field) take the stile in the hedge on your right and head off diagonally, roughly parallel to the power lines. On the far side cross a stile but, before the road is reached, find a path on the left leading to another stile. Hidden amongst holly, willow and sycamore trees is the site of **Llyn Tro (3)**, a moated house.

Retrace your steps and continue to the road. Turn left diagonally across it to a stile giving access to a small field. Head straight across following the stream (passing Hazel, Dog roses and Lords and Ladies) to another road. Take the stile opposite to pass through the bottom corner of a field to another stile.

Follow the edge of this next field to the disused railway embankment. Cross this and continue in the same direction to a lane. Turn left and pass **Cadwgan Farm (4).** This is now a modern ranch style farmhouse but the outbuildings - some stone, some brick - are very old. A large old sycamore stands above the stream and behind the farm, by the roadside, is a huge **tumulus (5).**

Immediately after the tumulus turn left over a stile onto **Offa's Dyke (6)**. There are plenty of flowers along here - according to the time of year you may see primrose, bluebell, foxglove, plantain, thistle, harebell, knapweed and ragwort. Pass through the old railway bridge abutments and follow the edge of the field. Turn right at the road.

Just before the converted water grist mill, turn down the gated lane. At the bend take the kissing-gate on the left and head towards another kissing-gate in the far corner. To the right is **Esclusham Farm** (7), a 17th century Grade II listed building with a framework constructed from a ship's timbers. There are also some attractive old stone and brick outbuildings.

Cross the footbridge and walk up to another kissing-gate. Turn left onto the road. At the next road junction, turn left and after 30 metres go through the kissing gate on the right. **(* If you started the walk from Smithy Lane, join the Walk Directions here.)** There is a lovely place here to stop for a rest or picnic. Head across the meadow to the Dovecote.

This was part of the **Pentrebychan Estate (8).** The dovecote was rebuilt in 1721 and some of the oak trees may date from the same time. The field abounds in a white-flowered umbellifer with an edible tuber, pignut, together with creeping and meadow buttercups - the latter is taller with more finely cut leaves.

Retrace your steps back to the road and go through the kissing-gate opposite. Head diagonally across the field, aiming for a point between the offices on the right (partly hidden by trees) and the waterworks and the distant Bersham Colliery spoil heap on the left. You should arrive at a kissing gate and, a few metres further on, a gate leading to the road. Turn left passing the Water Company’s premises, back to your starting point.

Places Of Interest

(1) CROESFOEL or Groes Vael (Bare Cross) owes its name to a cross that used to stand nearby. The only reference to the cross dates from 1545. The original house Croesfoel was the most important building in the area, and the Jones family, of Plas Cadwgan and the Roberts family of Hafod-y-bŵch both had their roots here. The gates of Wrexham and Oswestry churches and Chirk Castle were made at Croesfoel Smithy, which stood nearby. The gatesmiths were Robert and John Davies, whose family possessed the Croesfoel estate in the mid-18th century. The present house was built in the early 19th century.

(2) HAFOD-Y-BŴCH has been largely rebuilt and altered but the rear of the house is original. In 1986 the owner won the Prince of Wales award for his restoration work. The north wall of the modernised west wing has a coat of arms dated 1590.

(3) LLYN TRO MOAT was 4-7 metres wide and 2 metres deep and provided a defence to the small farmhouse, which it surrounded. A Mr. Roger Roberts resided here in 1688. It was a two-bedroom house that was left derelict during the 1930's. The moat was fed by a small stream, which later flows into Glanyrafon Brook. Only a few stones and the partly filled-in moat remain.

(4) CADWGAN HALL (Plas Cadwgan) was the largest estate in the manor of Esclusham. It has a very exciting past, which began when the lands were held by a great Welsh clan who claimed to be descendants of Cynwig ap Rhiwallon. The Great Hall, which was built in the 14th century, measured approximately 13m x 11m. During the Civil War in 1642 it was a Royalist stronghold and later Oliver Cromwell's victorious Roundheads were barracked in the stables.

Plas Cadwgan's most famous resident was Edward Jones, a Welsh Roman Catholic, who was hung, drawn and quartered for treason on 21 September 1586. Jones helped his friend, Thomas Salisbury of Llewenni, to escape after his part in Babington's plot to free Mary Queen of Scots. The Crown confiscated Cadwgan Hall after Edward Jones was convicted.

The property was owned by the Myddeltons of Chirk Castle from 1620 until 1855 and in 1670 was taxed for 16 hearths. In 1855 it became part of the Plas Power Estate. Unfortunately, the house was demolished in 1967 but the oak framework of the medieval Great Hall was saved and taken to the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings at Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. On arrival at the museum it was found, except for a small area of rot, to be in perfect condition.

(5) CADWGAN TUMULUS is a Bronze Age burial mound sited on Offa's Dyke. In 1797 four complete sets of armour and a skeleton of a large horse were believed to have been excavated from the mound. There is an alternative story, which states that a 'cart-load of armour' was excavated in 1804 and taken to Chirk Castle. Although the armour remains untraceable, there is a hollow on the north side of the tumulus that indicates an excavation has taken place.

(6) OFFA'S DYKE was constructed by King Offa of Mercia (757-796 AD). It marked a boundary between England and Wales and stretched for 130km (80 miles). It had a 5-7 metre high bank with a ditch 2 metres deep on the west and a shallower one on the east.

(7) ESCLUSHAM FARM was the home of the Trevor family for many generations. Robert Trevor rebuilt it in 1677. In 1757 Mr. Richard Trevor's estate was so heavily mortgaged he was obliged to sell Esclusham Hall, tenements in Esclusham Below and approximately 110 acres of land to Mr. John Hughes of Cilnant, parish of Llangollen. He then went to live at Cae Glas till his death in 1790. In 1760 John Hughes Jnr. mortgaged Esclusham Hall to a Mr. Peter Ellames, a druggist of Chester, who died May 1769. The house ultimately passed to his son Pattison Ellames, of Flookersbrook, Chester. He was Sheriff of the city in 1768 and Mayor in 1781.

In 1864 there were proceedings in Chancery contesting the right to Mr. Ellames' property, which resulted in Esclusham Hall being awarded to Thomas Ellames Withington of Culcheth Hall and Warrington. In 1884 Mr. Withington sold about 16.5 acres (6.5 ha) of the estate to Edward Evans of Bronwylfa and the rest, including the house, was sold to Henry Meredith of Pentrebychan.

Recently the floor was renovated and remnants of crude broken glass were found indicating the possibility of glassworks on this site at some time.

There is an attractive stone barn dating from the first half of the 18th century. The centre section has a large door that provides easy access for hay or straw to be unloaded from a horse-drawn cart.

A 19th century brick barn still retains the charming feature of the cows' names still hanging above the original milking stalls.

(8) PENTREBYCHAN was at one time the principal estate of the area. Hugh Meredith acquired it in the 1620's and at that time the Hall was small. In the 1820's this was replaced by a large building. During World War II it housed refugees and in 1948 was purchased by Denbighshire County Council. Sadly it was demolished in 1963. The site is taken up by today's crematorium.