

Southern Henllys

Circular Walk

Torfaen South East Wales

Explore **our**
Countryside

Southern Henllys Circular Walk

A two and a half hour walk via Mynydd Maen and Henllys farmland

The name Henllys means 'old court' and refers to the place where the ruler held his court (llys) in the pre-Norman Commote of Machen, i.e. the upland portion of the Cantref of Gwynllwg. It was later moved to Machen. The spelling of Henllys has changed several times over the centuries from Henthles or Henllyse in the C13 to Henlis in the C16, Henllis in the C17 and Hentllys in the C18.

The Southern Henllys Circular Walk is fairly easy, crossing mainly gently sloping farmland (although there are approximately 16 stiles to climb). The walk is approximately 7 km. in length and will take about 2.5 to 3 hours to complete.

The route takes you to the Mynydd Maen (Stone Mountain), enabling the walker to experience breathtaking views. It then proceeds over farmland through Mill Wood to St. Peter's Church, Coed Twrch and follows Nant y Pandy to the Henllys old school where it joins the first leafleted Henllys walk which covers the northern section of Henllys. The two walks may be attempted in one day by the more adventurous walker.

Start at **Pentre Close, Coed Eva** and go west along Henllys Way. Cross the road at the pylon (100m west of Pentre Close) and turn into a lane marked with a footpath signpost, and head up the track. At the end of the track, climb the stile and cross the middle of the field, following the line of hedging on your left

Looking left take time to enjoy the panoramic views stretching over Torfaen and towards the Severn Estuary which can be seen from here.

On reaching the far end of the field, climb the stile in the middle of the hedgerow. Walk diagonally across the field, uphill, walking towards the green barn ahead of you. Climb the stile to the left of the gates and walk diagonally across the field, downhill, heading towards the big oak tree. Just

beyond this tree cross the stile into another field, walk diagonally across this field, downhill, and over the stile in the bottom corner to reach the road.

You may wish to leave the circular walk here to seek out the **Zoar Chapel**, which is listed grade 2, dated 1836. To do this, turn right and proceed 40m up the road. At the end of the road the Zoar Chapel is 20 m to the left and the **Castell y Bwch** to your right.

The Zoar chapel is a plain white- washed building, oblong with a hipped slate roof, with eaves. It has a gabled porch to the south end elevation and 3 pointed arch windows to each long elevation with forked glazing bars. The interior is not accessible.



The **Castell y Bwch** which translates into Buck's Castle - (referring to a buck deer) opposite is a regional style house built 1550-1610. Today it is a popular public house.

The views from the pub's garden which look across to Llanfrechfa and Llanhennock Fawr are spectacular. Cwmbran may be seen to the north, Llantarnam to the east and Malpas to the south east.

You may note the traditional field patterns and the frequency of ancient hedgerows. Hedgerows are an attractive part of the farmed landscape and provide an important habitat for wildlife. They are also vital in allowing the movement of species through the landscape, thereby acting as wildlife corridors.

Returning to the route, turn left, (after having climbed over the stile). Walk 100m down the lane then turn right over the ladder stile into **Henllys Vale Farmyard**.

The farmhouse at Henllys Vale is an example of a late 18th century Vale Farm House. It is of rough cast, slate roof with eaves gables and 4 rendered stacks.

Go through the farmyard, through another 2 farm gates and into a field, following the hedge line on your right. Crossing two fields, you come to a fence line in the third field on your left (having crossed a brook). Following the fence line, half way along climb the stile on your left at the large ash tree. Walk diagonally uphill across the field. Cross over the stile and walk towards Mill Wood which you will see ahead of you.

Looking westwards, **Twmbarlwm** may be seen in the distance.

The protruding mound on top of one end is the site of an iron age fort locally known as the 'tump'.

'Twmbarlwm' translated means the 'tomb of Bran'. It is ensconced in ancient legend, which dictates if any person disturbs Bran's tomb they will be attacked and killed by a swarm of killer bees. It also features in modern day myth. Popular stories include sightings of UFO's which follow the ridge of this mysterious mountain en route to who knows where.

Esoteric music similar to organ music is also a phenomenon which is said to emanate from the top of the mountain, although its actual source remains a mystery. It is true to say this particular mountain is steeped in legend, myth and mystery.

On reaching Mill Wood, go over the stile and walk through the wood, which is ancient re-planted woodland, keeping to the woodland track.

Once out of the wood carefully follow waymarks to cross a lane. Keeping St Peter's Church in view ahead of you, cross the fields, then a footbridge over the stream.

As you walk you may notice the smell of garlic, because you will be treading over ramsons, i.e. wild garlic, which grows in profusion here during spring and early summer.

Go over the footbridge and walk across the field until you reach a stile. Climb the stile onto another field. Walk around the corner of the farmhouse, then climb the stile onto the lane. **St Peter's Church** will be in front of you with Church Farm, which is a 17th century farmhouse of traditional West Monmouthshire type, to your left.

St Peter's church is mainly a perpendicular structure. Though probably of Norman origin, it has a listed 14th century tower which is of the 2-stage unbuttressed type, with single perpendicular bell-chamber windows and an embattled stair turret with mask gargoyles located at the parapet angles.

The remains of a medieval cross are present in the churchyard. They consist only of a stemp of a square shaft in a square socket on a base of four square steps, which is also listed.

The churchyard also has a good mix of well over fifty wildflower species. Going back over the previous stile, walk diagonally over the fields, towards your left, following the waymarks. Climb the stiles and turn right on to the lane. Walking past Church Cottage, (formerly Mill Cottage) turn left up a track and through a gate. Before turning, note the large white house further down the lane which is possibly the site of a watermill, extant 14th century, marked Melin (translation 'mill') on the ordnance survey map.

Woollen mills bear witness to the importance of wool to the country's economy in by-gone days. There is a long tradition of spinning and weaving dating back to the middle ages in South Wales and until the last century was one of the most important industries in the country. The industry's golden era lasted until the 1920's after which a gradual decline of many mills took place and were consequently closed.



Walk through the field, keeping the fenceline on your right. Cross over the stile and footbridge over a stream, at the farm side of the field. Head towards the overhead electricity lines and follow the hedge line turning left into Coed y Twrch at the waymark.

Translated this is the 'boar wood' or trees of the boar'.

The wood is predominantly ancient replanted woodland but some elements of ancient semi-natural woodland still exist.

On entering the wood turn left off the bridge and go up through the wood. Approximately 40m up from the wood you will pass by **Henllys Bog** approx. 10m to your left.

The Bog is valley mire surrounded in woodland. It is 2 acres (0.8 hec.) of wet natural grassland and fen surrounded by alder carr. The central area of the bog supports a species rich flora reflecting the mixture of acid peaty alluvial surface soils and basic flushes.

There is a good variety of woodland species of birds to be seen, including nuthatch, green and great spotted woodpecker and woodcock. The site is rich in invertebrates, and is the only known county location for the spider *Araneus quadratus*.

It is the only site in Gwent for marsh helleborine and has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.S.I).

Walking on, Pandy-Bach is on your left.

There are a number of springs to be found in this area whose source is Nant y Pandy, the brook on your right. **This area can become boggy underfoot in wet weather.**



The plethora of springs probably accounts for the location of the Mill and related activities, running water being an intrinsic part of the weaving and spinning process.

'Pandy' is the Welsh word to describe a place where the process for shrinking wool before it is spun takes place. 'Nant' is the Welsh word for brook. It is significant that Pandy Bach (meaning 'little pandy') and Pandy Maur (meaning 'big pandy') are in close proximity to each other. From this a picture may be drawn of days gone by when the brook and surrounding buildings were interdependant and linked to the woollen industry of the area.

Keeping Nant y Pandy (brook) to your right, follow the waymarks. Cross the footbridge up a slight gradient to another stile and footbridge. Go over the footbridge and then turn left following the footpath, keeping the stream on your left. Walk over the planks over the boggy area and then over another footbridge. Follow the waymarks through the field, keeping alongside the hedgeline on your left. At the far end of the field, go over the footbridge on the left and out on to the track past Pensarn Farm, turning right on to the road. Follow this road for 325 metres. On reaching the junction, turn right along the road passing **Henllys Nursery** which used to be the local village school.

The school which was founded in 1878, served to educate the children of the thriving Henllys community.

Continue on and you will reach the junction with Henllys Way. **Please be careful when using the road,** turn right and walk along Henllys Way.

You have now come down off the mountain, although the views from here bear witness you are still quite high, 160 m (500ft.) above sea level.

Across the road, Newport and the Severn Estuary are visible in the distance. After approximately 1km you will come to Pentre Close on your left. You have now completed the walk.

NB ⇨ This walk joins the leafleted northern Henllys Circular Walk. To join this walk, turn left at 'Pensarn', following the signposts which will take you up on to Mynydd Henllys where panoramic views feature.



Countryside Code

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work;
- Guard against all risk of fire;
- Leave all gates and property as you find them;
- Keep your dogs under close control, preferably on a lead as there may be other animals along the route;
- Keep to public paths;
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls;
- Leave livestock and machinery alone;
- Take your litter home;
- Help to keep all water clean;
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees;
- Take special care on country roads.

Advice for Walkers

To get the most enjoyment from walking and exploring Torfaen's varied countryside, making use of an Ordnance Survey map is strongly recommended. The countryside can change rapidly and way-markers can easily be missed.

Ensure that you wear appropriate clothing and sturdy footwear in case of muddy and slippery surfaces.

Some of the paths referred to are not Public Rights of Way but are permissive paths or are across common land which enjoys open access.

Healthy Living

Walking is the perfect activity to improve your physical health. If you complete this circular walk, you will burn approximately 500 calories.

Public Transport

Torfaen has a good network of public transport. To plan your journey visit www.traveline.org.uk.

Tourist Information Centre

Blaenavon Tourist Information Centre provides information on days out, attractions, accommodation, activities and route planning in the area.

Tel: 01495 792615, or visit: www.visitblaenavon.co.uk



Difficulty of walk - 3 (moderate)



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Os hoffech gopi o'r ffurflen yn Gymraeg, cysylltwch â'r
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