

WELCOME to *Dyserth*

Dyserth lies on the slopes of the limestone hill Moel Hiraddug. The village is several hundred feet above sea level and has long been known for its healthy, bracing air. Lying on the top of Moel Hiraddug is an ancient pre-Roman hill fort. With its commanding views of the sea, the countryside and the mountains of Snowdonia, Dyserth has been home to all kinds of settlers for thousands of years. The evidence of their story is all around.

Dyserth began in what we call today Lower Dyserth, which is all the area lying around the church and the waterfall. Upper Dyserth began to take shape probably some time in the 18th century when it was known as Ochr y Foel (Side of the Hill), although the centre of life was firmly in what is now Lower Dyserth.

Dyserth is an ancient place. It originally comprised several hamlets including Trecastell, Rhyd, and Llewellyd. Dyserth was once called Dissard which is an old word meaning the site of a hermit's cell. Dissard is probably derived from the Latin word *deserta* from which we have the word desert. Dissard is mentioned in the Domesday book in 1086, and curiously enough the name was still being used by some of the elderly inhabitants in the 1980's. Dyserth in the eleventh century had a population of just four including a priest and 'a foreign woman.'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet was put together by members of the Dyserth Environmental Group and produced with a grant from the AONB Sustainable Development Fund and Cadwyn Clywd. We would like to thank David Shiel of the AONB for his support and assistance.

Much of the material comes from the research and writings of Lucy and Ronald Davies, who were adamant that Dyserth "is not an ordinary village." They not only studied the history of Dyserth and its environs, they also talked to many of the older residents of the village in the 1980s and 1990s to get a feel for what life was like before the age of the motor car. A special thank you to Harry Thomas for the use of photographs from his personal collection and to John Northall for his help on Dyserth Castle.

The photographs and pictures were researched and taken by Peter J. Robinson except where credited.

Illustrations by Mike Unwin and Bill Smuts, design and DTP layout by Bill Smuts.

The text was written by Clive Cavendish Rassam and other members of Dyserth Environmental Group. Printed by Design & Print, Mold

For more information about our village visit www.dyserth.com



Carline Thistle
©www.florallimages.co.uk

Buzzard



People were originally drawn to Dyserth for its waters, its hunting and its safety. Thousands of years before the Romans came to this area New Stone Age families were hunting and keeping animals here: deer, sheep, oxen, pigs and horses. As well as meat, they ate cockles, mussels, oysters, wild plums and cherries. We know this from excavations in the area. All around Dyserth there are springs and wells that are rich in clear luminous water, which would have provided refreshment and succour as well as water for washing for the early people who lived here. And finally, the first settlers would have been secure from assault because Dyserth's high position has always made it a difficult place to attack. So for these people Dyserth would have been an ideal place to settle.

It is thought that many centuries later Iron Age people lived here. They would have developed fortifications to construct the hillfort at Dyserth which was one of several such hillforts strung out along the tops of the Clwydian Range. The Moel Hiraddug hillfort would have required very little defence on its western edge as one of the hill's geological faults resulted in an escarpment which could be relied upon to slow any attack to a halt. Yet there are lines of scree on the hillside which suggest that they may have started as lines of defence, placed there by the early settlers to ward off attack.

The hillfort, which underwent a series of excavations between 1954 and 1980, consisted of a set of defences on its eastern side. These were made of rubble and turf, but in vulnerable parts rammed earth and stone were used, revetted on either side with stonework. The thickness varied with the needs of the particular location, so that at the weakest point on the north-east the defences were eighteen feet wide. It was likely that there was a large wooden structure surmounting the hillfort to protect men on top of the rampart. Archaeologists working on the hillfort have unearthed a variety of objects including a store of sling stones, which when used expertly would have had a deadly effect on any attackers.

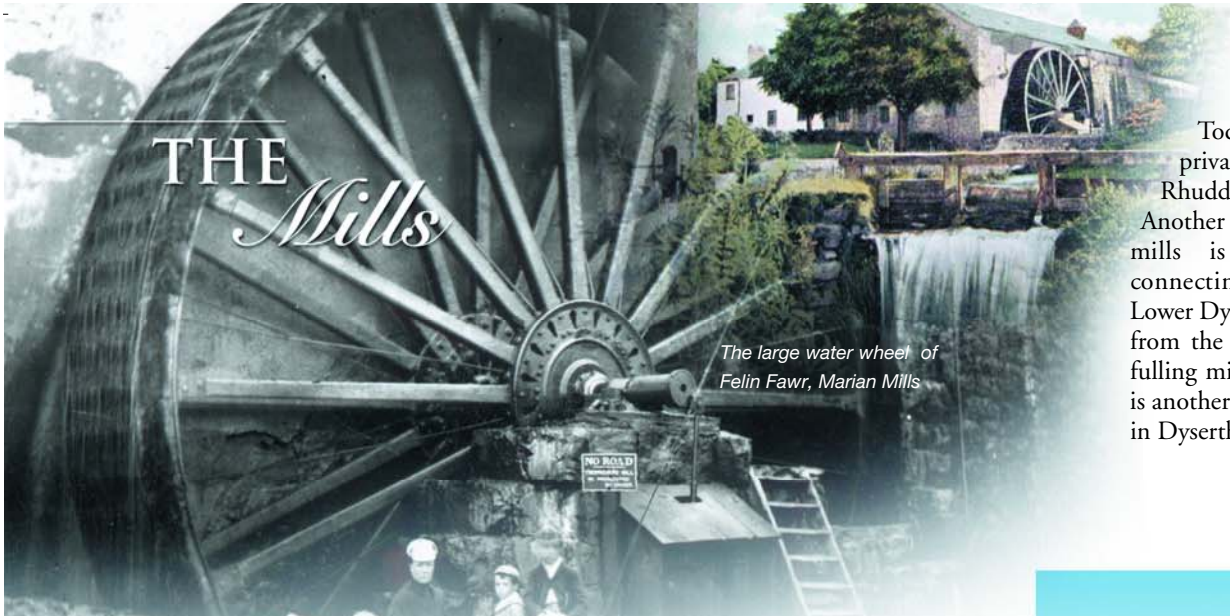
An excavation in the early 1960s discovered a bronze brooch dating from around 400BC. Probably used to secure clothing, such as a cloak, it is the first of its kind to be found in North Wales.

The Moel Hiraddug Brooch
National Museums & Galleries of Wales



Moel Hiraddug

THE Mills



The large water wheel of Felin Fawr, Marian Mills

The first recorded mill in Dyserth is in the Domesday Book and was probably sited near the waterfall. By the end of the 19th century there were apparently seven mills along the Afon Ffyddion within Dyserth parish, though not all were still in use. The majority of these were flour mills but two had been fulling mills where local cloth, soaked in water and fuller's earth, was pounded by wooden fulling hammers driven by a waterwheel.



The ruins of Grove Mill as it is today

One fulling mill, Pandy Mill, was situated behind what is now Grove Mill cottage. The present cottage once showed the date of 1794 and there are still some remains of the old mill to the rear.

Grove Mill, for flour, was erected nearby in 1815, the newest of the four mills in the Marian Mills area. This closed in 1912 and was reopened for three or four years in 1920.

Another mill was Llewellyd Mill, which was the grandest and the longest to last. Built in 1785 it had three mills for corn and operated from a pond which sometimes took two hours to fill from the river Ffyddion.

All that remains of the once grand water wheel of the Felin Fawr, Marian Mills



Today the mill is a private house near the Rhuddlan-Meliden road. Another reminder of the mills is Pandy Lane, connecting Upper and Lower Dyserth, which takes its name from the Welsh word pandy which meant a fulling mill. Weavers Lane off Waterfall Road is another reminder of the weaving and fulling in Dyserth.

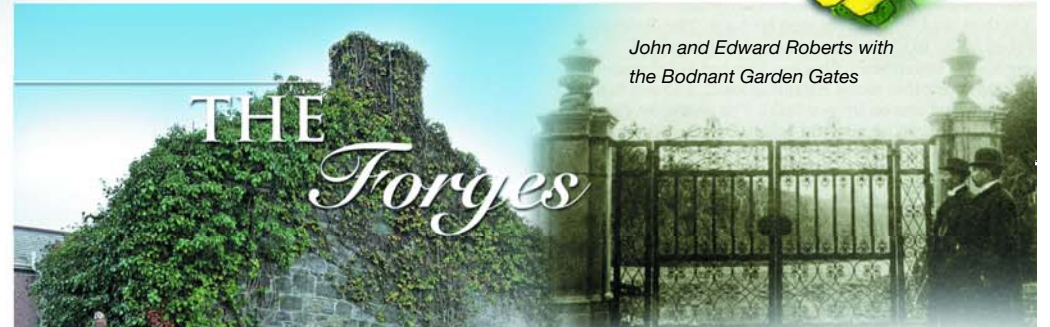


Grove Mill and its date stone



Marsh Marigold

THE Forges



John and Edward Roberts with the Bodnant Garden Gates

'Bodnant' Forge

Dyserth had two forges. One of these was near Dyserth Hall and built along the old Rhuddlan Meliden road before it was re-routed. It stands today near a crossroads behind a bungalow called Bodnant Forge. The last blacksmiths John and Edward Roberts were highly skilled at iron work and were given commissions for gates at Bodnant Gardens and the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Rhyl. Sadly both are gone having been melted down in the Second World War to help with the industrial war effort. The other forge was at the top of Station Hill in Upper Dyserth.





DYSERTH Church

There has been a church in Dyserth since at least the late 11th century. The Domesday Book in 1086 records there being a church and one priest. This eventually became known as Dyserth church which lies near the foot of the waterfall and is dedicated to St Bridget and St Cwyfan. The oldest part of the church is the nave which is Norman dating from the 11th century. Other ancient parts of the church are the splendid buttresses which frame the west door looking out towards the stream.

The church has been altered down the centuries to accommodate a growing congregation. The most extensive of these alterations took place in the 1870s - a high point of churchgoing and church building in Britain - when the church was largely rebuilt by Sir George Gilbert Scott, who renovated the cathedral at St Asaph at about the same time. Scott was a celebrated Victorian architect who designed many famous buildings including the Gothic-style London railway station hotel of St Pancras and the Albert Memorial in London. Dyserth church was one of the last of his 732 commissions. His grandson Sir Giles Gilbert Scott designed the Anglican cathedral in Liverpool for which some of the stone came from the main Dyserth quarry.

The interior of Dyserth church contains several gravestones, a number of which are inscribed with a sword to indicate the burial place of a gentleman. A number of wealthy families have been associated with the church over



Sir George Gilbert Scott



the years including the Hughes and Edwards, the Tates and the Conwys of nearby Bodryddan Hall. Lady Tate presented the choir stalls and over the exterior of the choir window on the south side the name of Sir John Conway, Knight, is inscribed, with the date 1636 - in the reign of Charles I. In the time of Queen Elizabeth I one of the great roof beams of the nave was probably restored for it bears the date 1579, with the initials ER15, DH and WH together with a Tudor rose.

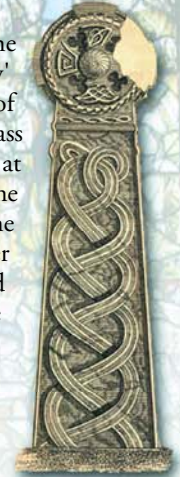
The chief glory of the church is the medieval stained glass 'Jesse window' behind the altar depicting the family tree of Christ. According to one tradition the glass was originally in the great abbey at

Basingwerk near Holywell and was brought to the church packed on the backs of mules. One mule is said to have stumbled and this resulted in the jumble of glass fragments at the bottom of the window. But another explanation is that the whole of the window was made for the church and that the muddled mass of broken glass is proof that the money for the

window ran out.

The two oldest artefacts in the church are the remains of two

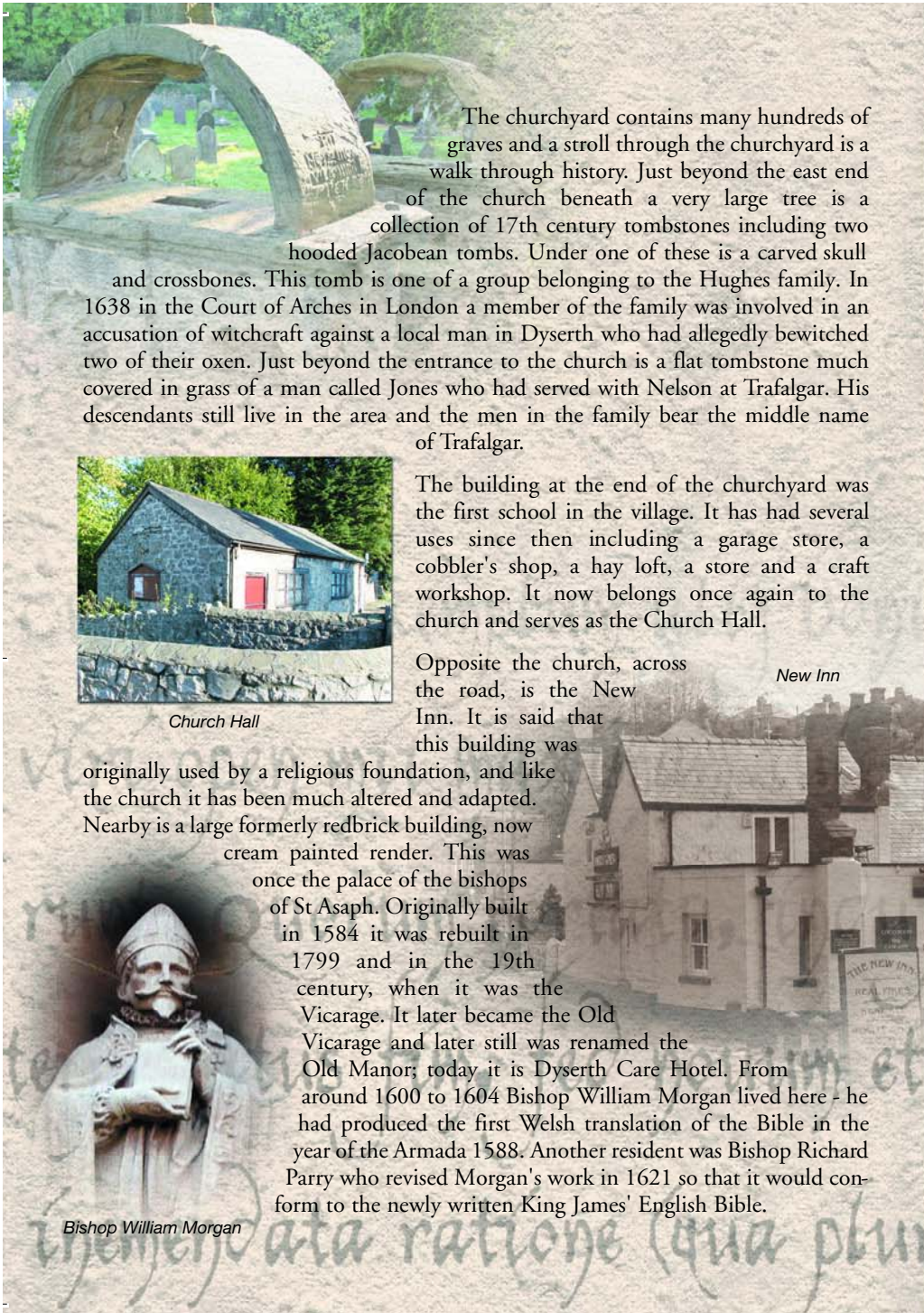
Celtic crosses at the west end which in fact predate the church. One is just the base of a cross but the other stands about two metres high. Both originally stood outside the church but were brought inside to avoid further deterioration and both are estimated to date from about the tenth century.



On the bank of the bubbling stream before the entrance to Maes Esgob is a small upright stone. This marks the grave of a beloved dog owned by the Vicar of the church, the Rev. John Owen, who died in 1908. The inscription is almost worn away but in 1963 the words were still legible and they read as follows:

*Blame not the tribute of a passing tear,
Here lies poor Addy to us all so dear.
Of dogs the noblest and the best,
Gone now for ever to his last long rest.*





The churchyard contains many hundreds of graves and a stroll through the churchyard is a walk through history. Just beyond the east end of the church beneath a very large tree is a collection of 17th century tombstones including two hooded Jacobean tombs. Under one of these is a carved skull and crossbones. This tomb is one of a group belonging to the Hughes family. In 1638 in the Court of Arches in London a member of the family was involved in an accusation of witchcraft against a local man in Dyserth who had allegedly bewitched two of their oxen. Just beyond the entrance to the church is a flat tombstone much covered in grass of a man called Jones who had served with Nelson at Trafalgar. His descendants still live in the area and the men in the family bear the middle name of Trafalgar.



Church Hall

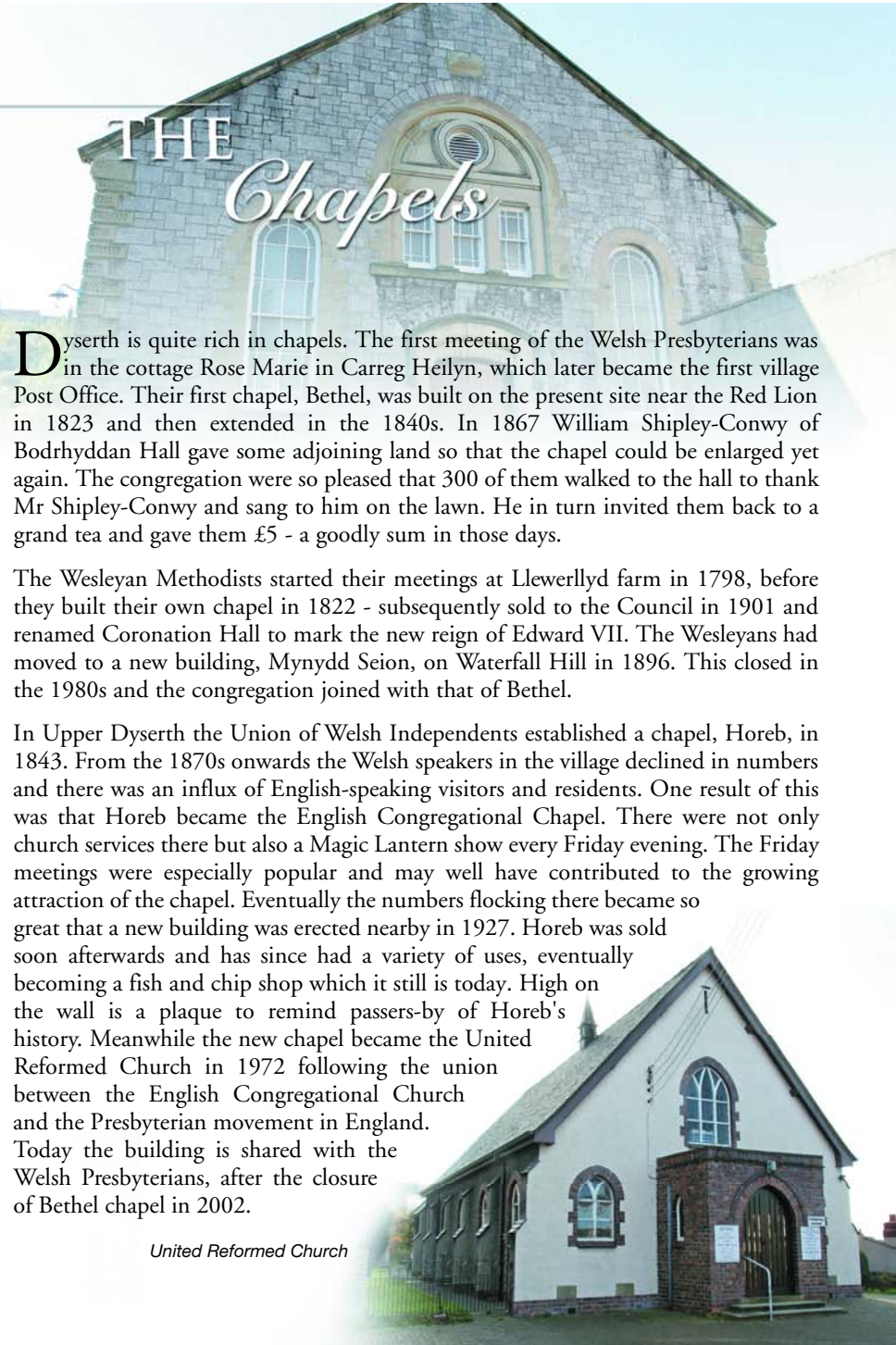
The building at the end of the churchyard was the first school in the village. It has had several uses since then including a garage store, a cobbler's shop, a hay loft, a store and a craft workshop. It now belongs once again to the church and serves as the Church Hall.

Opposite the church, across the road, is the New Inn. It is said that this building was

New Inn

originally used by a religious foundation, and like the church it has been much altered and adapted. Nearby is a large formerly redbrick building, now cream painted render. This was once the palace of the bishops of St Asaph. Originally built in 1584 it was rebuilt in 1799 and in the 19th century, when it was the Vicarage. It later became the Old Vicarage and later still was renamed the Old Manor; today it is Dyserth Care Hotel. From around 1600 to 1604 Bishop William Morgan lived here - he had produced the first Welsh translation of the Bible in the year of the Armada 1588. Another resident was Bishop Richard Parry who revised Morgan's work in 1621 so that it would conform to the newly written King James' English Bible.

Bishop William Morgan



THE Chapels

Dyserth is quite rich in chapels. The first meeting of the Welsh Presbyterians was in the cottage Rose Marie in Carreg Heilyn, which later became the first village Post Office. Their first chapel, Bethel, was built on the present site near the Red Lion in 1823 and then extended in the 1840s. In 1867 William Shipley-Conwy of Bodrhyddan Hall gave some adjoining land so that the chapel could be enlarged yet again. The congregation were so pleased that 300 of them walked to the hall to thank Mr Shipley-Conwy and sang to him on the lawn. He in turn invited them back to a grand tea and gave them £5 - a goodly sum in those days.

The Wesleyan Methodists started their meetings at Llewellyd farm in 1798, before they built their own chapel in 1822 - subsequently sold to the Council in 1901 and renamed Coronation Hall to mark the new reign of Edward VII. The Wesleyans had moved to a new building, Mynydd Seion, on Waterfall Hill in 1896. This closed in the 1980s and the congregation joined with that of Bethel.

In Upper Dyserth the Union of Welsh Independents established a chapel, Horeb, in 1843. From the 1870s onwards the Welsh speakers in the village declined in numbers and there was an influx of English-speaking visitors and residents. One result of this was that Horeb became the English Congregational Chapel. There were not only church services there but also a Magic Lantern show every Friday evening. The Friday meetings were especially popular and may well have contributed to the growing attraction of the chapel. Eventually the numbers flocking there became so great that a new building was erected nearby in 1927. Horeb was sold soon afterwards and has since had a variety of uses, eventually becoming a fish and chip shop which it still is today. High on the wall is a plaque to remind passers-by of Horeb's history. Meanwhile the new chapel became the United Reformed Church in 1972 following the union between the English Congregational Church and the Presbyterian movement in England. Today the building is shared with the Welsh Presbyterians, after the closure of Bethel chapel in 2002.

United Reformed Church



Bodrhyddan Hall

Dyserth over the years has attracted a number of wealthy landowners who have built family homes in and around the village. One of the first was the Hughes family which by 1407 owned Llewellyd and much of Trecastell. In the 17th century the Hughes were the most important family in Dyserth. Their main home was Dyserth Hall, which can be seen today from the Rhuddlan Meliden road.

In 1681 John Hughes leased the land that he owned in Trecastell and Llewellyd to Colonel Roger Whitley of Peel Hall in Cheshire, and in 1705 the land passed to his sister Elizabeth and her husband the 2nd Earl of Plymouth, who also had the title of Lord Windsor. The Earls of Plymouth already had extensive lands in England and Wales including the manor of Northop in Flintshire, Hewell Grange in Worcestershire and St Fagan's castle in Glamorgan and the Whitley marriage made them even richer especially as they now owned the Talargoch mine. But Dyserth Hall could not compete in their eyes with the charms of their other properties, nor was it as accessible in the family coach and four. Those were the days when it took three days to travel from London to York. So they were never to live in Dyserth.



Dyserth Hall today from the East

Dyserth Hall looking from the West



In 1819 the sister of the 6th Earl of Plymouth, Lady Harriet Windsor, married Robert Clive, son of the Earl of Powis and grandson of the more famous Robert Clive (Clive of India). The family name then became Windsor-Clive. There was once a local Dyserth inn,



The great fire of Dyserth Hall 10th December 1912

The Lady Windsor, named after her. None of Lady Windsor's descendants lived at Dyserth Hall even after the railway line came to nearby Prestatyn. Instead the house became tied to the post of mine captain (for the Talargoch mine and the Clive Engine House). Some years after the mine closed in 1884 a member of the Roberts family bought the Hall.

Another family is the Mostyns, who have been associated with North Wales for centuries. William Mostyn built the 17th century house Pentre Cwm, which can still be seen today on the road from Dyserth out to Cwm. Near the end of Upper Foel Road where it meets Cwm Road there is an ancient stone set into the wall marked with the letters RM, which refers to Roger Mostyn, William's ancestor and it probably identified the edge of his estate. The Mostyns were sponsors of the Eisteddfod at Caerwys in 1523 in the reign of Henry VIII, whose father himself was from Wales. In the 19th century the Mostyns were involved in mining and steel-making and more famously created the town of Llandudno which was meant to be Wales' answer to Regency Brighton.



About a mile from Pentre Cwm is Pwllhalog in the Parish of Cwm, another 17th century house, which was once owned by the Parry family, including Bishop Parry of St Asaph Cathedral. In 1624 three Parrys married three Mostyns. Thomas Mostyn, a widower married Gwen Parry a widow, and Thomas's son William married Gwen's daughter Anne, and Thomas's daughter Marie married Gwen's son Richard. This triple wedding on November 27th in Dyserth church in 1624 was re-enacted in 1958 by the Dyserth Women's Institute.

Pwllhalog





On the edge of Dyserth is Bodrhyddan Hall home originally to the Conwy family, which changed its name by marriage to Shipley-Conwy and then to Rowley-Conwy. The Rowley family possessed the barony of Langford in Ireland, which is why the present owner of Bodrhyddan Hall is known as Lord Langford. In medieval times the Conwy family helped to build Rhuddlan Castle and were lords of the manor of Prestatyn. Their descendants, Lord Langford and his family, still own Rhuddlan Castle with CADW, an agency of the National Assembly of Wales, "as guardians of its fabric."

Much of Bodrhyddan Hall is the work of the Victorian architect William Nesfield. He built in the style of neo-Queen Anne which was fashionable from the 1870s onwards.

The imposing front is all his work. But around the sides there are large remains of the earlier 17th century house and within there is an even older house dating from the 15th century. The house inside contains items that illustrate many aspects of British military, naval and social history. There is armoury there, portraits and furniture and other pieces that would have been acquired on the 18th century Grand Tour. There are even two Egyptian mummies brought back from the Nile in 1836. Outside, the gardens have been remodelled and enriched in the 20th century with a new summer house and Californian redwoods grown from seed. There is also a small 20th century folly designed jointly by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis and the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

The house is open Tuesday and Thursday afternoons 2-5.30 pm, June-September, and it is open at other times by appointment for parties of 30 or more. Visitors may check the website www.bodrhyddan.co.uk or phone 01745 590414.

PAST Visitors

Remains of
Siambr Wen

Travelling in the countryside for pleasure started in the 18th century. One of the earliest such travellers in Wales was Thomas Pennant, a zoologist and writer from Downing Hall, Whitford, near Holywell. His book *A Tour in Wales*, begun in 1773 when he was nearly 50, mentions Dyserth church set "in a picturesque and romantic bottom, beneath some rude rocks: the church overshadowed with great yews, and a singular figure of some of the tombs, form a most striking appearance." He also talks of a medieval manor house Siambr Wen, which then as now was a ruin. Sir Robert Pounderling, who was once constable of Dyserth Castle and who lost an eye in a tournament, may have lived there. Today a few ruined walls lie abandoned and overgrown in a field near the old railway line.



Thomas Pennant



Coat of arms of
Sir Robert
Pounderling

Visitors appear to have come in large numbers from the late-19th century onwards. The arrival of the railway to Prestatyn in the 1850s made it much easier for people to come to Dyserth. By 1896 there were so many visitors to the Waterfall that a dispute arose as to who actually owned the falls and the land around it. The Parish Council wanted to build some facilities for visitors which were eventually agreed upon in 1924 with Captain Conwy of Bodrhyddan Hall. (It was agreed that his estate owned the land between the mill and the falls, but he would let it to the Council for charitable purposes).

After the railway the rise of buses and coaches - some of which ran tours extending from the Potteries to Rhyl - boosted the growth of tourism in the area. The increase in the number of visitors to Dyserth led to an influx of English residents, and changed the community from a primarily Welsh speaking one to an English speaking one. This accelerated during the Second World War when children or whole families from Liverpool and Manchester came to Dyserth and Prestatyn to escape the bombing.



Roman Bath House in Prestatyn

ROMAN Occupation

The Iron Age People did not have any love for the Romans who colonised this part of Britain after 78 AD. The leading Celtic tribes, the Deceangli and the Ordovices, were eventually subdued by the Roman legion that was sent to quell the troublesome peoples of North Wales, and it looks as if the military conquest was achieved without resorting to the destruction of the hillfort. It is thought that the hillfort was eventually abandoned, and over time it fell into decay.

The Dyserth area was probably of interest to the Romans for three reasons: the existence of a metal-working settlement in what is now Meliden, the lead mines in the locality and the opportunity to build a safe harbour nearby. The skills of the local populace in mining and working with metals would also have been quite an attraction. Another factor was that Dyserth lay 25 miles from Chester, which archaeologists now believe was scheduled to be the northern capital of Roman Britain, and a staging post for the conquest of Scotland and Ireland. What the Romans did around Dyserth is still not clear. It is thought that they worked mines at Meliden and Prestatyn Hillside with the help of the local people, but what kind of metal work they were involved in has not been obvious to archaeologists. The only major relic of the Romans now visible is the remains of a bath house in Prestatyn.



Offa's Dyke National Trail

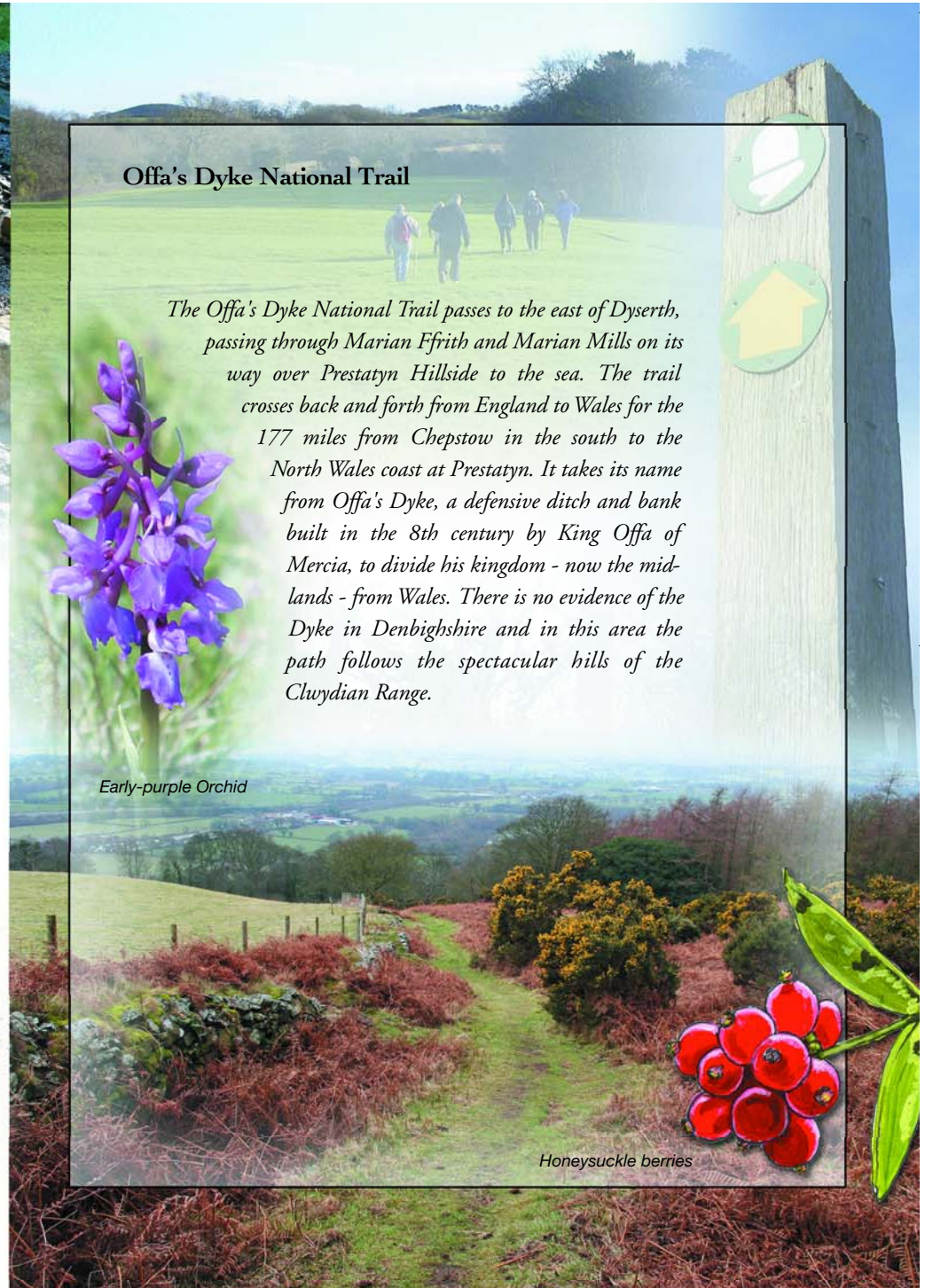
The Offa's Dyke National Trail passes to the east of Dyserth, passing through Marian Ffrith and Marian Mills on its way over Prestatyn Hillside to the sea. The trail crosses back and forth from England to Wales for the 177 miles from Chepstow in the south to the North Wales coast at Prestatyn. It takes its name from Offa's Dyke, a defensive ditch and bank built in the 8th century by King Offa of Mercia, to divide his kingdom - now the midlands - from Wales. There is no evidence of the Dyke in Denbighshire and in this area the path follows the spectacular hills of the Clwydian Range.



Early-purple Orchid



Honeysuckle berries



DYSERTH Castle

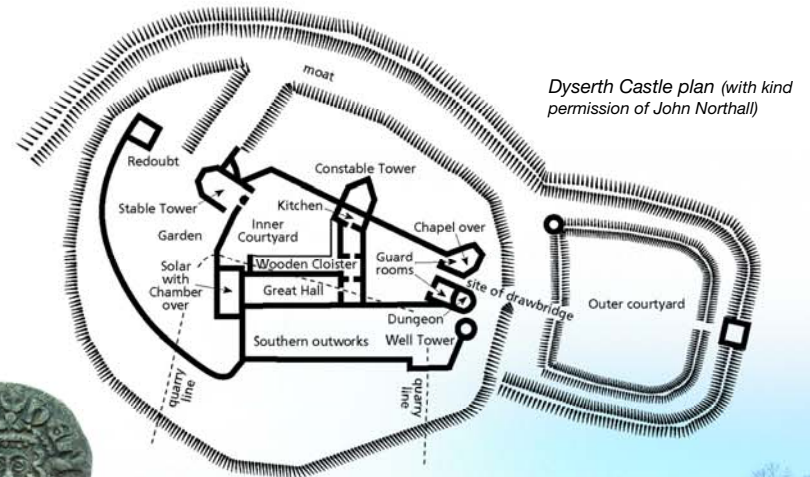


The Norman conquest of Britain in 1066 was to have a massive impact on Wales, but not without a struggle. It was a struggle that lasted centuries. Dyserth played an interesting part in this. William the Conqueror organised three large earldoms to act as buffers between England and Wales: Hereford, Shrewsbury and Chester. These earls then overran the lands of nearby Welsh lords. By 1240 the Earl of Chester had died without heirs and the Prince of Gwynedd had a disputed heir. So the Cheshire/North Wales region was suddenly vulnerable to attack. Henry III, the English king, acted swiftly and marched into the region taking possession of all the land between Chester and Conwy.

To hold this land Henry then decided to strengthen the defences of the motte and bailey at Rhuddlan and to build an impressive castle high in the hills above Dyserth. Dyserth castle was built on a large scale and historians say that it had much in common with the castle that was later built at Conwy by Edward I. However, the castle's high position was also its weakness. Isolated from any navigable water its soldiers could not easily be relieved in times of attack - and attacked it was in 1263 by the new Prince of Gwynedd. Henry's beaten troops never returned to Dyserth.

Fourteen years later Edward I built Rhuddlan castle, a short distance from the old motte and bailey, which became the key English fortress in this part of Wales.

Now almost nothing remains of Dyserth castle other than banks and ditch defences of the outer ward. Some of the walls existed until the early 20th century when the site was largely destroyed by quarrying.

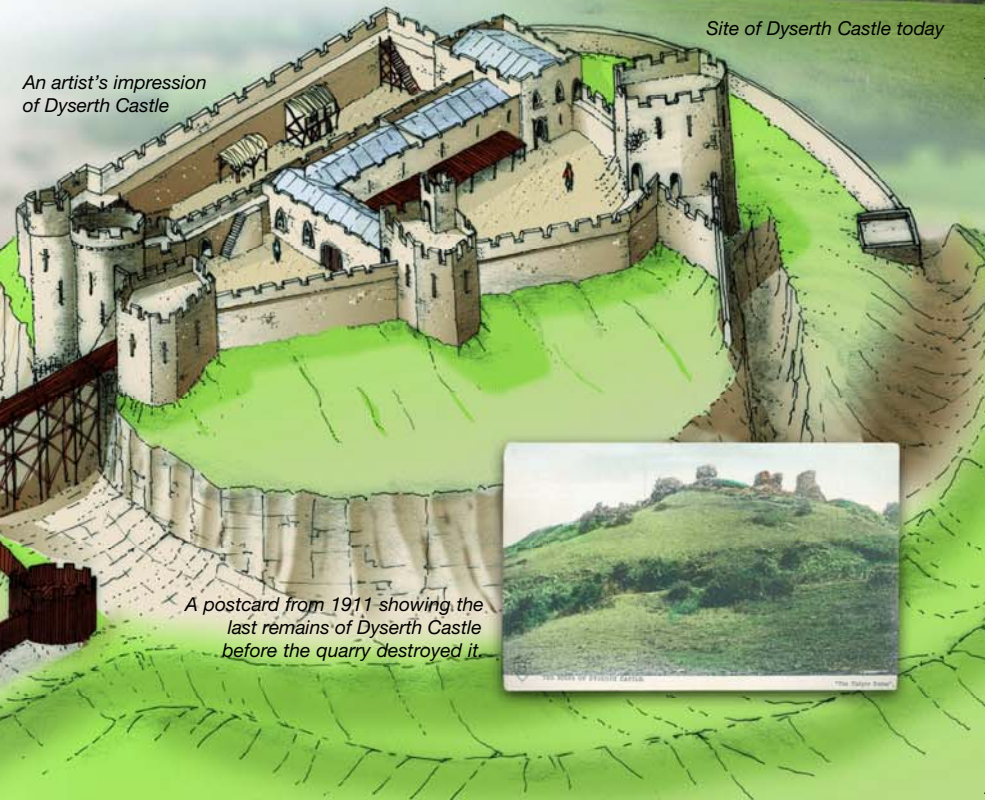


Dyserth Castle plan (with kind permission of John Northall)



A Long Cross Penny of Henry III

An artist's impression of Dyserth Castle



Site of Dyserth Castle today



A postcard from 1911 showing the last remains of Dyserth Castle before the quarry destroyed it.

Dyserth Castle (Site of)
Castell Dyserth

Dyserth Lime Works

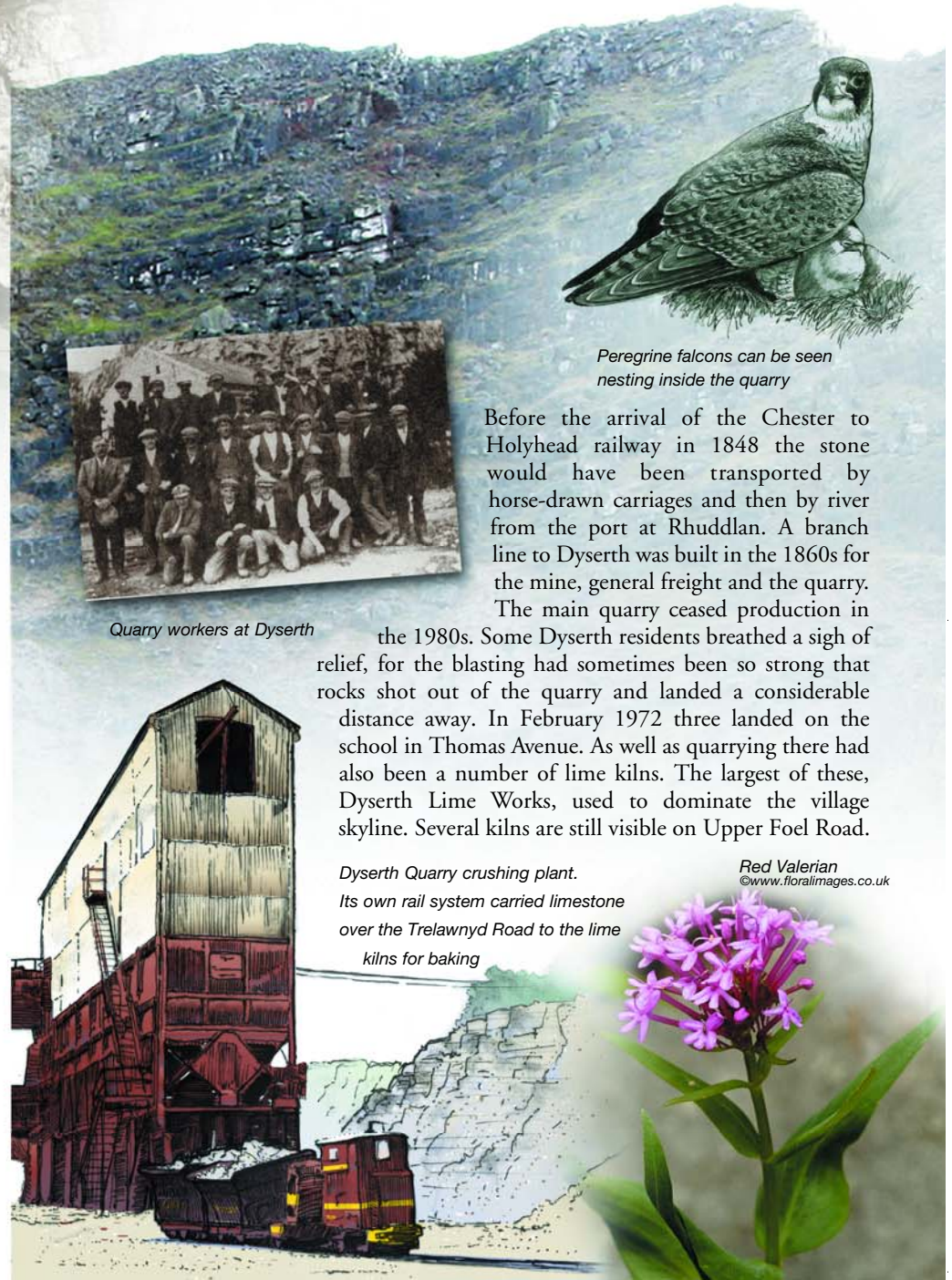
MINING & Quarrying

There has been mining and quarrying in the area for centuries. Lead mining was taking place even before the Roman occupation, and quarrying goes as far back as the 13th century at least, when some of the stone would have been used to build the castle. There is a line of small quarries along the Upper Foel Road and in the woods. Some of the stone was used for Rhuddlan castle and centuries later stone was quarried out for some of the Dyserth roads such as Ffordd Ffynnon and also for the Protestant Cathedral in Liverpool.

The main quarry near the foot of Moel Hiraddug expanded gradually and really came into its own in the 19th century as a supplier of limestone to industries along the North Wales coast and beyond. (The other quarry was Castle Quarry next to the old castle, which operated from 1903 to 1931). By 1900 customers for the main quarry included Mostyn Ironworks and Shotton Steel Works. Meanwhile drums of lime were also produced, some of which were exported to countries such as India, Kuwait and the West Indies.

Forty men worked the main quarry in the early 1900s then owned by W.L. Hobbs and managed by Mr T Johnson Humphreys. Hobbs' house, Greenfield, in Ffordd Ffynnon still stands.

The quarry bell rang time bells at 7.a.m., 9.a.m., 12 noon and 5p.m. On Saturday mornings the quarrymen collected their wages from the quarry office (now the surgery on the corner of Pandy Lane) and the villagers could buy a lump of limestone to whitewash their cottages.



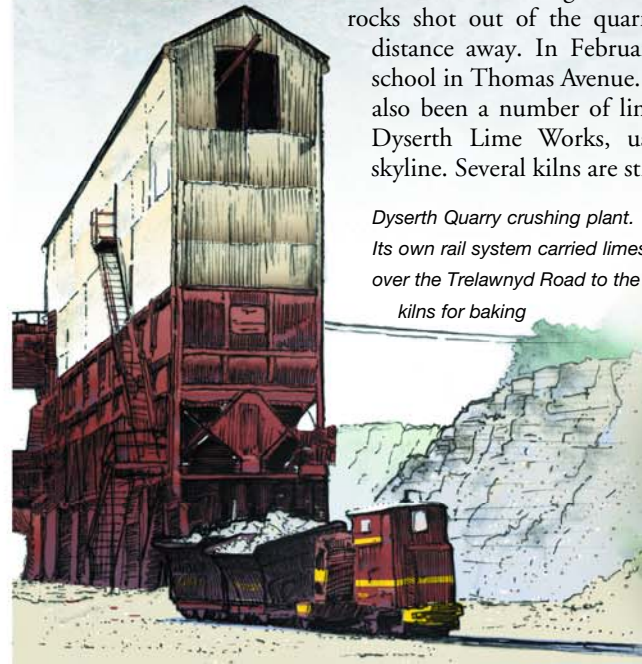
Peregrine falcons can be seen nesting inside the quarry



Quarry workers at Dyserth

Before the arrival of the Chester to Holyhead railway in 1848 the stone would have been transported by horse-drawn carriages and then by river from the port at Rhuddlan. A branch line to Dyserth was built in the 1860s for the mine, general freight and the quarry.

The main quarry ceased production in the 1980s. Some Dyserth residents breathed a sigh of relief, for the blasting had sometimes been so strong that rocks shot out of the quarry and landed a considerable distance away. In February 1972 three landed on the school in Thomas Avenue. As well as quarrying there had also been a number of lime kilns. The largest of these, Dyserth Lime Works, used to dominate the village skyline. Several kilns are still visible on Upper Foel Road.



Dyserth Quarry crushing plant.

Its own rail system carried limestone over the Trelawnyd Road to the lime kilns for baking

*Red Valerian
©www.floralimages.co.uk*



The first documented mining at Talargoch was in 1303 when four German miners unsuccessfully searched for copper. Serious development of the mines began in the 1600s and in the 1750s a leat was constructed to carry water from above Dyserth waterfall to Talargoch, this water source drove waterwheels for over 100 years. In the 1840s a hydraulic pumping engine was installed, together with a

new leat bringing water from near Marian Mills. By the mid 1800s there were thought to be some 1500 people dependent upon Talargoch. But in 1856 the 500 employees held a four-month strike, during which there were violent incidents. The strike ended after the arrival of 35 soldiers from Chester.

The next two decades were profitable and by 1874 there were two waterwheels and fifteen steam engines on the site; coal for their nineteen boilers being transported by the new railway. But profits declined from the mid 1870s and flooding had always caused problems. In 1884 underground working stopped and the mines were allowed to flood. The closure was keenly felt in the area; the population of Dyserth fell from 968 in 1881 to 735 in 1891, a reduction of a quarter.

Talargoch Mine. On the left is the 80 inch engine house (demolished in the 1960's) In the centre is the No.1 engine house and its chimney, with the roof of the mine office between them. To the right are the mine stables and Talargoch cottages

Clive Engine House

The principal reminder of the mine is the Clive Engine House which remains in a field alongside the Meliden road. Built in 1860 in another attempt to improve the drainage of the mine, it housed a 100-inch cylinder steam engine installed in 1862. Similar to engine houses used in Cornish mines at the time, it is today regarded as one of the best surviving examples of a Cornish engine house in Wales. The engine house served the Clive shaft, which took its name from the Windsor-Clive family who had owned the land over the mine.



FARMING in Dyserth

Pentre Cwm

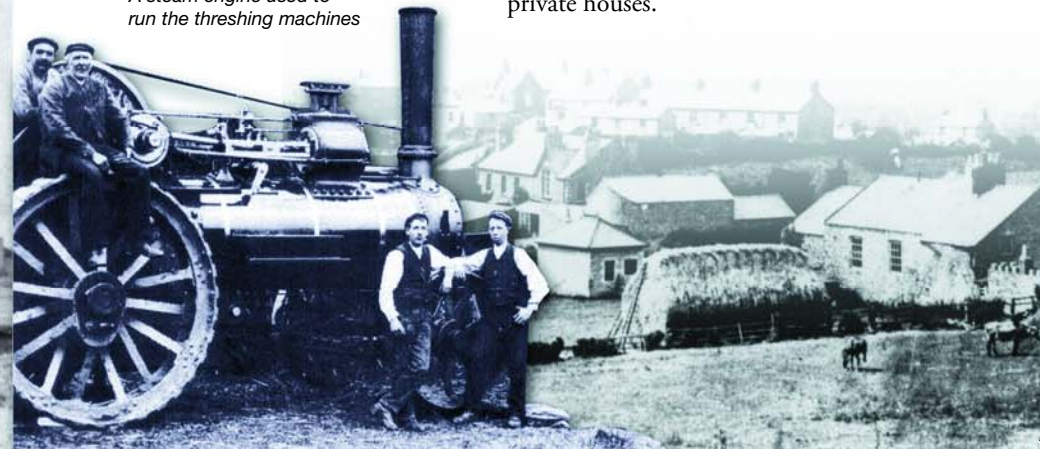


Farming has been another important occupation for Dyserth's villagers. Farms were rented out from landowners such as the Bodryhddan estate, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. In size they ranged from 60 to more than 200 acres. In 1900 there was a ring of farms around Dyserth - Dyserth Hall Farm, Llewellyd, Hottia, Ty Coch, Tan Llan, Pentre Cwm, Pendre, Trecastell, Ty Newydd, Rhyd, Pydew, Aberkinsey, Bron Berllan and Bryn Cnewyllyn. Pen-y-Bryn farm was in the middle of Upper Dyserth in what is now James Park behind the Bodunig Inn. Hottia and Llewellyd were the first to deliver milk, while Pydew and Rhyd made cheese, some of which was sent for sale in Denbigh.

A big excitement in the village used to be the arrival of the threshing machine at harvest time which used to go from farm to farm. When it passed by the top of Waterfall hill the children from the village school nearby would come out and watch perched on the school's stone wall like a row of sparrows. Other treats were watching the thatching of hay ricks and sheep-shearing.

Today there are no farms in Dyserth itself, although just outside Dyserth there are still farms such as Hottia, Bryn Cnewyllyn and Ty Newydd. Some of the old farmhouses in and around Dyserth, such as Pentre Cwm, remain having been converted into private houses.

A steam engine used to run the threshing machines



DYSERTH

Waterfall

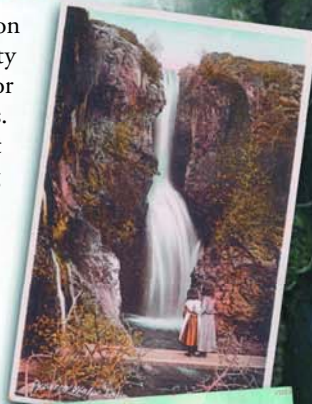


Dipper

In Lower Dyserth the Afon Ffyddion plunges seventy feet to create the waterfall for which the village is famous. In times of heavy rainfall it can turn into a raging torrent and the stream below has been known to overflow and flood parts of the lower village.

This waterfall has long been a source of fascination. Dr Johnson came to see it in 1774. He had probably been told about it by his friend and patron, Mrs Hester Lynch Thrale, who was born into a local family the Salusburys of Lleweni Hall. After Mr Thrale died she married an Italian music master, Gabriele Piozzi and together they built Brynbella, a large red brick house a few miles from Dyserth.

Dr Johnson was at first disappointed because when he arrived the waterfall was dry, for all the water that usually poured through it had been diverted for use at the Talargoch mine not far away. However, he was suitably impressed, when the waters were temporarily switched back to the waterfall declaring the sight "a very striking cataract."



Tourist postcards of the waterfall

The Waterfall Shop

Dr Johnson would have seen a number of buildings near the bottom of the waterfall, including a mill. All of these are now gone and have been replaced by 19th century houses and cottages, a few of which remain. The most prominent of these is now the Waterfall shop, which is thought to have once been a stable for the Red Lion.



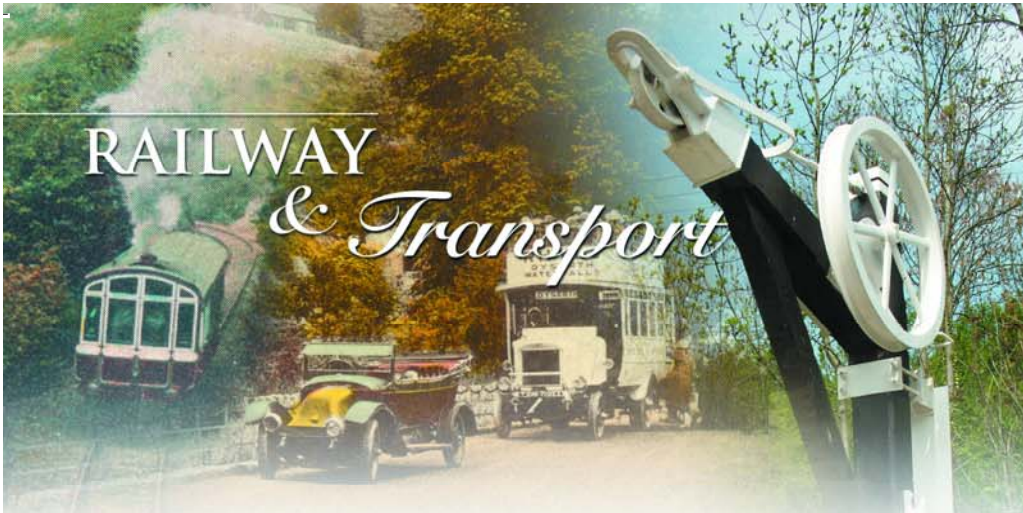
Old photographs show this as the Waterfall Cabin. It was bought by the landlord of the Red Lion, Henry Parker, for his son Walter in the 1920s. Walter laid on teas, cakes and ice-creams for the growing number of visitors who flocked to Dyserth often coming in one of the new local coaches. Some other Dyserth residents - usually quite young - not wanting to be outdone by Walter also offered things for sale to the eager tourists. Apparently these included flowers taken from people's front gardens and water from the waterfall. Other children would sometimes form a group and sing to the holidaymakers expecting a few pennies in return, which they usually got. The Waterfall shop and café is open March to October.

Walter Parker and the Waterfall Cabin



Harebell





RAILWAY & Transport

In 1869 the London and North Western Railway opened a branch line from Prestatyn to Dyserth, intended originally for the mines and the quarry. The people of Dyserth pressed for a passenger service for years, finally succeeding in 1905 when additional halts and stations were constructed. This was the route selected for the very first LNWR steam Railmotor vehicle. But by 1930 the service had closed, largely killed off by competition from the expanding coach and bus services. Initially it was hugely popular, taking tourists to Dyserth, shoppers to Prestatyn and young sweethearts going to the pictures to watch the new black and white films.

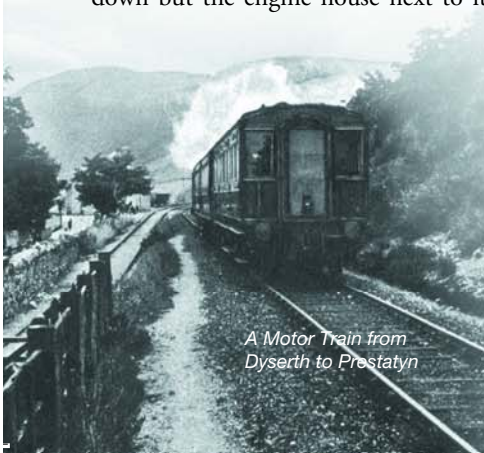
The line remained serving the quarry until 1973. Meliden station was taken down but the engine house next to it



Southworth's bus service, circa 1912



'The Brake' drawn by horses and owned by Edward Jones, carried passengers from Rhyl to Dyserth Waterfall

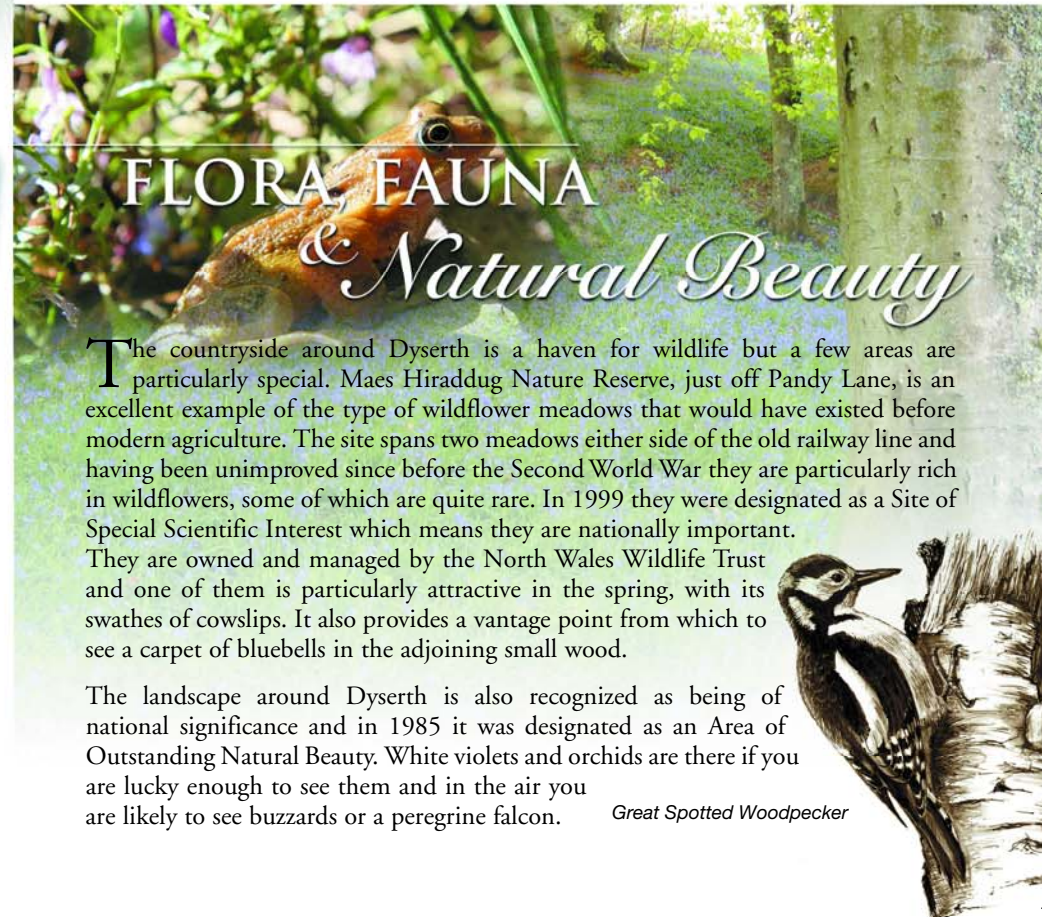


A Motor Train from Dyserth to Prestatyn

still stands. The track was taken up in 1980. Anglia Building & Decorating Contractors now occupy the original site of Dyserth station, of which little remains. In the 1990s the old railway line was converted into a pleasant footpath and cycleway which passes woods and farmland behind the Graig Park Hotel & Country Club, then slopes down to Meliden and round its golf course before emerging in Prestatyn.



White Rose buses at the Ochr y Foel Junction awaiting passengers



FLORA, FAUNA & Natural Beauty

The countryside around Dyserth is a haven for wildlife but a few areas are particularly special. Maes Hiraddug Nature Reserve, just off Pandy Lane, is an excellent example of the type of wildflower meadows that would have existed before modern agriculture. The site spans two meadows either side of the old railway line and having been unimproved since before the Second World War they are particularly rich in wildflowers, some of which are quite rare. In 1999 they were designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest which means they are nationally important. They are owned and managed by the North Wales Wildlife Trust and one of them is particularly attractive in the spring, with its swathes of cowslips. It also provides a vantage point from which to see a carpet of bluebells in the adjoining small wood.

The landscape around Dyserth is also recognized as being of national significance and in 1985 it was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. White violets and orchids are there if you are lucky enough to see them and in the air you are likely to see buzzards or a peregrine falcon.

Great Spotted Woodpecker

THE Villagers

Over the centuries village life has changed very slowly in Dyserth. The centre of the community lay around the church and later the chapels, the inns, the smithies and the waterfall. Villagers earned their living from farming, the mines, the quarries and from weaving. Dyserth was fairly self-contained and the villagers were mostly Welsh speaking. A census of 1891 shows that 428 people only spoke Welsh, 236 spoke Welsh and English and just 26 could only converse in English. There was no piped water, no sewerage and certainly no electricity and still no passenger railway. Wells and springs were the source of water. Cess-pits preceded sewerage while candles and paraffin provided light and heat. Transport was by horse or horse and cart; that was how farm produce was carried to and from Denbigh and how the mail was brought from Rhyl.

Yet despite this lack of modern amenities there was a flourishing business and social life in the 1890s. As well as the smithies there were four bakehouses, a laundry, a grocer's shop, a butcher's, a cobbler's, two shoemakers, a shop selling corn and feed for animals and another selling paraffin and hardware. There was also a post office, a dressmaker and a tailor. Many of these undertakings, including the laundry, were in Lower Dyserth.



The bakehouse in Bryn y Felin was very popular. The owner would blow a bugle when the oven was at its hottest and then a stream of villagers would bring their own dough to bake.

The laundry run by the Misses Lewis (the Lewis sisters) took on some of the washing for the village and for Bodrhyddan Hall,



and they carried this to and from their customers' houses including the great Hall itself. When they went inside the village houses they would have seen the walls white-washed inside as well as out with maybe a dash of sprinkled red lead or paint here and there to give them some colour. In the back yard they might have seen a pig because nearly every cottage kept one. Villagers would buy one to fatten up and sell or to eat in winter.

Football and singing were among the village pastimes. Before 1914 young men of the village used to gather on Sunday evenings after the Sunday service just above the waterfall and sing hymn tunes which rang out through the village. Many villagers turned out to hear them. The village had its own football team which played against other local teams.

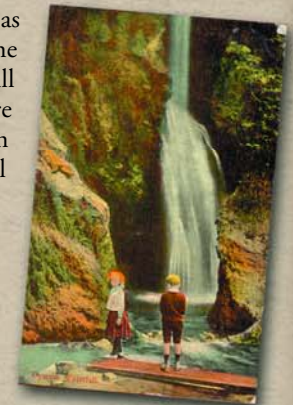


There was also a village school. The first one was in Lower Dyserth in the little building next to Dyserth Church by the waterfall. This was replaced by a larger one near the corner of the High Street and Waterfall Hill in 1863, which in turn was

succeeded by Ysgol Hiraddug in Thomas Avenue in 1951. Thomas Avenue is named after a local builder, T D Thomas.

Electricity was provided in 1924 and street lighting came in 1936. The council was considering bringing gas to the village in the 1930s but this was deferred and deferred again. Dyserth still has no gas provision. But piped water and sewerage did come to the village, as

did a bus service to replace the rail-link that was lost. The air is still as good as ever and the sunsets are said to be among the finest in North Wales, and the waterfall flows as it always has.





DYSERTH CIRCULAR WALK

Time: 3-4 HOURS

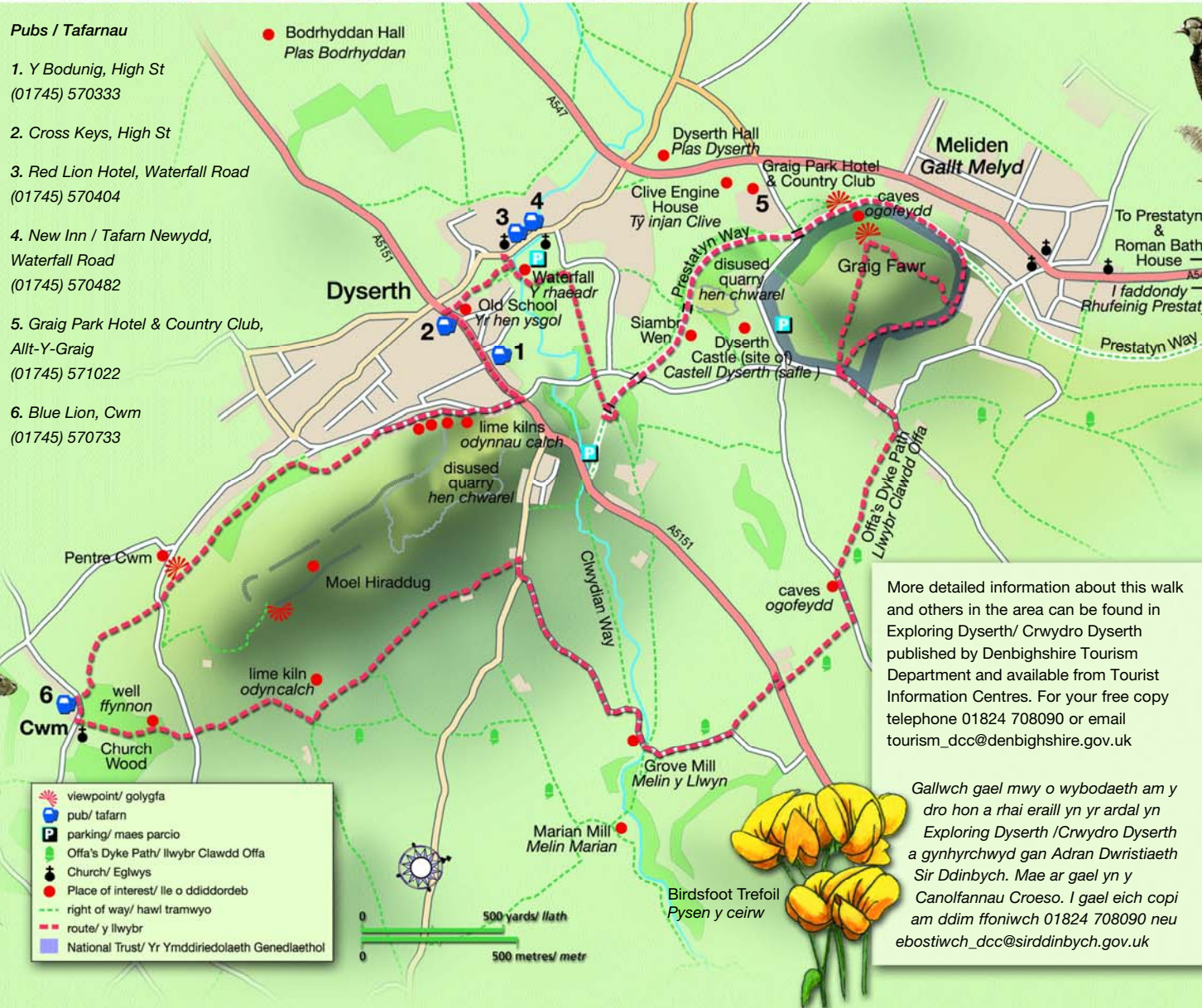
Length: 6.5 MILES

When walking, please remember the Country Code, fasten all gates, keep to public footpaths and use gates & stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls. Before setting out, ensure you are prepared and have the correct walking gear.

Refer to Ordnance Survey map Explorer 265 for more detail

Pubs / Tafarnau

1. Y Bodunig, High St (01745) 570333
2. Cross Keys, High St
3. Red Lion Hotel, Waterfall Road (01745) 570404
4. New Inn / Tafarn Newydd, Waterfall Road (01745) 570482
5. Graig Park Hotel & Country Club, Allt-Y-Graig (01745) 571022
6. Blue Lion, Cwm (01745) 570733



- viewpoint/ golygfa
- pub/ tafarn
- parking/ maes parcio
- Offa's Dyke Path/ llwybr Clawdd Offa
- Church/ Eglwys
- Place of interest/ lle o ddiddordeb
- right of way/ hawl tramwyo
- route/ y llwybr
- National Trust/ Yr Ymddiriedolaeth Genedlaethol



Pheasant Ffesant

TAITH GERDDED GYLCHOL DYSERTH

Amser 3-4 awr
Pellter = 6.5 milltir

Pan fyddwch allan yn cerdded, cofiwch am y Cod Cefn Gwlad gan gau'r giatiau, cadw at y llwybrau cyhoeddus a defnyddio giatiau neu gamfeydd i groesi ffensys, gwrychoedd a waliau. Paratowch cyn cychwyn a gwisgwch ddillad ac esgidiau addas.

I gael mwy o fanylion am y daith, defnyddiwch y map Archwiliad Ordans Explorer 265.

More detailed information about this walk and others in the area can be found in Exploring Dyserth/ Crwydro Dyserth published by Denbighshire Tourism Department and available from Tourist Information Centres. For your free copy telephone 01824 708090 or email tourism_dcc@denbighshire.gov.uk

Gallwch gael mwy o wybodaeth am y dro hon a rhai eraill yn yr ardal yn Exploring Dyserth /Crwydro Dyserth a gynhyrchwyd gan Adran Dwristiaeth Sir Ddinbych. Mae ar gael yn y Canolfannau Croeso. I gael eich copi am ddim ffoniwch 01824 708090 neu e-bostiwch dcc@sirddinbych.gov.uk



Otter Dyfrgi



Birdsfoot Trefoil Pysen y ceirw



Common Century Canri Goch
www.floralmages.co.uk