

SNOWDONIA: NORTH LOW-LEVEL AND EASY WALKS

**SNOWDON, THE OGWEN AND CONWY VALLEYS
AND THE COAST**

by Alex Kendall

CICERONE

JUNIPER HOUSE, MURLEY MOSS,
OXENHOLME ROAD, KENDAL, CUMBRIA LA9 7RL
www.cicerone.co.uk

© Alex Kendall 2019
First edition 2019
ISBN: 978 1 85284 984 9

Printed in China on behalf of Latitude Press Ltd
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.



© Crown copyright 2019 OS PU100012932

Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/984/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time. We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

Register your book: To sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at www.cicerone.co.uk.

Front cover: Heading towards Cwm Idwal from Idwal Cottage (Walk 13)



CONTENTS

Map key	5
Route summary table	6–7

INTRODUCTION	9
The walks	10
Landscape	11
History	12
Wildlife	15
When to go	18
Getting there	18
Accommodation	19
What to take	19
The Countryside Code	20
Maps and GPS	21
Understanding Welsh placenames	21
Safety	22
Using this guide	22

THE NORTH COAST AND LOWER CONWY VALLEY	23
Walk 1 Conwy Mountain/Mynydd y Dref	24
Walk 2 The Druid's Circle/Meini Hirion	30
Walk 3 Aber Falls/Rhaeadr Fawr	35
Walk 4 Craig y Dulyn	38
Walk 5 Trefriw	42

BETWS Y COED AND GWYDYR FOREST	49
Walk 6 Gwydyr Forest	50
Walk 7 The Fairy Glen and Conwy Falls	55
Walk 8 Pont Gethin	60
Walk 9 Dolwyddelan	63










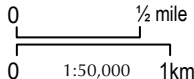
Walk 10	Lledr and Llugwy	67
Walk 11	Crafnant and Geirionydd	73

SNOWDON AND THE OGWEN VALLEY	79	
Walk 12	Capel Curig	80
Walk 13	Cwm Idwal	83
Walk 14	Bethesda and Penrhyn	87
Walk 15	Cwm Pen-Llafar	90
Walk 16	Moel y Ci	94
Walk 17	Llanberis and Dolbadarn	98
Walk 18	Llyn Padarn	102
Walk 19	The Miners' Track	108
Walk 20	Cwm Llan	112
Walk 21	Beddgelert to Pen-y-Gwryd	118

THE VALE OF FFESTINIOG AND THE WEST	125	
Walk 22	Nanmor and Aberglaslyn	126
Walk 23	Cwm Croesor	133
Walk 24	Blaenau Ffestiniog	138
Walk 25	The Vale of Ffestiniog	145
Walk 26	Coed Llyn y Garnedd	152
Walk 27	Coed Felinrhyd	156
Walk 28	Cwm Pennant	159
Walk 29	Tremadog	165
Walk 30	Moel-y-Gest	170

Appendix A	Useful contacts	175
-------------------	----------------------------------	------------

Route symbols on OS map extracts
(for OS legend see printed OS maps)

 route  alternative/link route  direction of walk	 start/finish point  start point  finish point	 
---	--	---

Tanygrisiau Reservoir, with the power station in the distance (Walk 24 and 25)

Walk no	Walk	Start	Distance	Ascent	Walking time	Page
The North Coast and Lower Conwy Valley						
1	Conwy Mountain/Mynydd y Dref	Conwy	10km (6 miles)	320m	3hr	24
2	The Druid's Circle/Meini Hirion	Penmaenmawr	8.5km (5¼ miles)	360m	2hr 45min	30
3	Aber Falls/Rhaeadr Fawr	near Abergwyngregyn	6.5km (4 miles)	140m	2hr	35
4	Craig y Dilyn	near Tal-y-bont	9km (5½ miles)	280m	3hr	38
5	Trefriw	Trefriw	9km (5½ miles)	150m	2hr 30min	42
Betws y Coed and Gwydyr Forest						
6	Gwydyr Forest	Betws-y-Coed	7km (4½ miles)	260m	2hr 15min	50
7	The Fairy Glen and Conwy Falls	Betws-y-Coed	11.5km (7¼ miles)	170m	3hr 15min	55
8	Pont Gethin	Pont-y-pant	5.6km (3½ miles)	60m	1hr 30min	60
9	Dolwyddelan	Dolwyddelan	10km (6 miles)	140m	3hr	63
10	Lledr and Llugwy	Dolwyddelan	18km (11¼ miles)	450m	5hr 15min	67
11	Crafnant and Geirionydd	Capel Curig	15.5km (9½ miles)	360m	4hr 30min	73
Snowdon and the Ogwen Valley						
12	Capel Curig	Capel Curig	5km (3 miles)	130m	1hr 30min	80
13	Cwm Idwal	Idwal Cottage	4.1km (2½ miles)	120m	1hr 15min	83
14	Bethesda and Penrhyn	Bethesda	5km (3 miles)	70m	1hr 30min	87
15	Cwm Pen-Llafar	Bethesda	11km (6¾ miles)	380m	3hr 15min	90
16	Moel y Ci	Tregarth	8km (5 miles)	390m	2hr 45min	94
17	Llanberis and Dolbadarn	Llanberis	6.7km (4½ miles)	190m	2hr	98
18	Llyn Padarn	Llanberis	8.5km (5½ miles)	270m	2hr 30min	102
19	The Miners' Track	Pen-y-Pass	9.5km (6 miles)	250m	2hr 45min	108
20	Cwm Llan	Bethania	7km (4½ miles)	270m	2hr 15min	112
21	Beddgelert to Pen-y-Gwryd	Beddgelert	13km (8 miles)	390m	4hr	118
The Vale of Ffestiniog and the West						
22	Nanmor and Aberglaslyn	Beddgelert	16km (10 miles)	230m	4hr 30min	126
23	Cwm Croesor	Croesor	7.7km (4¾ miles)	370m	2hr 30min	133
24	Blaenau Ffestiniog	Blaenau Ffestiniog	11.5 km (7¼ miles)	370m	3hr 30min	138
25	The Vale of Ffestiniog	Blaenau Ffestiniog	21.5km (13½ miles)	480m	6hr 15min	145
26	Coed Llyn y Garnedd	near Maentwrog	6km (3¾ miles)	250m	2hr	152
27	Coed Felinrhyd	near Maentwrog	4km (2½ miles)	190m	1hr 30min	156
28	Cwm Pennant	Cwm Pennant	11km (6¾ miles)	240m	3hr 15min	159
29	Tremadog	Tremadog	8.7km (5½ miles)	370m	2hr 45min	165
30	Moel-y-Gest	Porthmadog	13.7km (8½ miles)	380m	4hr	170



A bridge crosses a stream towards Cwm Idwal, with the Glyderau beyond (Walk 13)



Llyn Llydaw and Glaslyn underneath Snowdon are easily reached by the Miners' Track (Walk 19)

INTRODUCTION

Snowdonia is one of the most popular walking destinations in the UK. The soaring peaks, incredible views over the mountains and sea, and unique Welsh highland culture have inspired mountaineers and writers for generations. But alongside the routes that aim for the peaks are endless miles of low-level trails, which often provide far greater variety than the high-level routes without sacrificing the exhilarating views.

These low-level trails are the focus of this book. Here you'll find ancient woodland, mountain streams and sparkling lakes, sandy beaches and heather moorland. Some low hills are included, mostly outliers to the greater mountain ranges that can

too often be overlooked. It is on these low-level walks that you'll discover the marks of mankind's part in the history of North Wales. Neolithic settlements and Roman ruins stand beside the medieval castles of Welsh Princes, right up to the modern remnants of the mining industry. It is in these places that the human story of Snowdonia is best revealed, a story that is just as much a part of the land as the millions of years of rock and ice.

Wales is well known as the country with the most castles per head of population of any country in the world, but there must also be a greater concentration of myths and legends than most other places on Earth. Just in the area we'll visit on these walks

we meet King Arthur and Merlin on the slopes of Snowdon, visit the scene where heroes from the Mabinogion fought in the Vale of Ffestiniog, and hear about the terrifying Afanc, a monster who used to flood the Conwy valley. All the while, watch out for the Tylwyth Teg, the Welsh fairies who could easily transport human beings away to another realm.

This book focuses on the north of Snowdonia. To do this a line had to be drawn. From the northern reaches of the National Park, and sometimes just beyond it as with Walk 16 up Moel y Ci, this book covers the landscape dominated by Snowdon and the other high peaks of the Glyderau and Carneddau, and draws a southern boundary through the Vale of Ffestiniog. It includes the area around Porthmadog, up to Blaenau Ffestiniog, and over the Crimea Pass to Dolwyddelan. From the eastern edge of the Afon Conwy valley it goes west as far as Cwm Pennant.

Walking the valleys of a mountain range is a fulfilling exercise for any happy rambler. But this book is also a good resource for all sorts of situations – families with small children or elderly grandparents, walkers on bad weather days or in winter, and people with limited time who still want to experience the landscape. Whatever your reason for visiting, there'll be something for you here, with walks from about an hour to a full day, from the beach at Morfa Bychan to the remote valleys of the Carneddau.

THE WALKS

There is no strict definition of what constitutes 'low-level' in this book. In general the trails are short, easy to navigate and have no technical sections (you won't need to use your hands, except on the odd stile!). There are some routes that go higher than 500m (1640ft), but generally those routes start quite high too, and are often on good tracks. Equally there are one or two sections right in the base of the valleys where paths can be indistinct. What these routes provide is a varied exploration of a landscape from the perspective of someone who prefers wandering through the forests and lakeshores of a mountain range, rather than straining for the summits.

The book has been divided up into four sections, covering different parts of the National Park and the landscape surrounding it. The majority of walks are circular, and set out from villages and towns. This not only means you can roll out of bed and go for a walk, but it may mean less driving in general, and the opportunity to explore your local area rather than immediately heading for the honey-pot walks. If you want a more peaceful time, that's the way to do it, and if you want to do a walk a bit further away, then nearly all of them can be reached by public transport. In case you are driving to the start, the post-code of the start point (or the nearest car park) is included in the information box before each walk's route description.

LANDSCAPE

The shattered mountains and rough moors of North Wales have been in the making for hundreds of millions of years. The rocks that form the mountains in the north of Snowdonia are mostly volcanic and date from the Ordovician period, which ran from 485 to 443 million years ago, and was named after the Iron Age tribe whose lands included much of north-west Wales. This intense period saw the creation of the rhyolite (rock made from cooling magma) that came to form peaks such as Tryfan. Alongside this, the incredible amount of ash and rubble hurled out by the erupting volcanoes went on to form the tuffs, condensed debris that looks like lumps of badly mixed concrete.

In-between the layers of volcanic rock there are bands of sedimentary rock, showing that at times

this landscape lay under the sea. The most famous of these are the mudstones that were compressed over time to form slate, but there are also limestones, especially in the Moelwynion, and fossils have been found near the summit of Snowdon itself. In the Devonian period, 419 to 358 million years ago, long after these rocks had been laid down, immense pressure caused the whole area to uplift. The resulting mountain range was Himalayan in height, but as everything that goes up must come down, the whole range soon began to weather and erode. Over millions of years water, ice and wind have reduced the height of the mountains to their current stature.

The starring role in this process goes to the Ice Ages, of which we have had around 20 in the past 1.5 million years, the most recent ending

The path up to Cwm Idwal, with Tryfan in the background (Walk 13)





Snowdon from Llynnau Mymbyr (Walk 12)

10,000 years ago. It was the whole succession of these Ice Ages that created the cwms and arêtes that are now such a feature of the mountains. If you know where to look, the evidence is all around, and not just in the grand features of the mountains themselves, from glacial moraines now covered in vegetation, to upland lakes, to striations on larger rocks left by smaller rocks. As the ice melted and the pressure it exerted on the surrounding mountainsides released, shattered rocks fell to the ground underneath the crags, leaving characteristic boulder fields under some of the cliffs. This is a process still going on today.

After the end of the last Ice Age, vegetation made its way into Snowdonia, to colonise the available land. As global sea levels rose in response to the melting ice, the UK was cut off from mainland Europe, but not before humans had also made the journey across. In Snowdonia they encountered forests right up to

the peaks of the high mountains, and a drier climate than we experience today. Wolves roamed the land and eagles ruled the skies.

HISTORY

When the first people moved in to North Wales, they soon began to clear the forests for livestock and to provide land and timber for building, beginning the deforestation of the land that continued right up until the 20th century. These Neolithic people were displaced by the Celtic Iron Age tribes that swept into Wales from the east, and the main tribe here were the Ordovices, who built many of the hilltop forts whose outlines we can still see today. When the Romans arrived in Britain halfway through the first century CE they made several efforts to expand into Wales, with one campaign famously stalled because of Boudica's uprising further east. Despite the resistance of the Ordovices, the Romans completed

their conquest of north Wales in 78CE, and destroyed the power of the druids by taking Anglesey.

Roman power in Britain lasted until their withdrawal in 410CE and the power vacuum they left. In the next few centuries the Saxon invasion of England pushed the Britons west, into Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, and the Vikings began their raids around the coast. Several missionaries also came across from Ireland to set up churches in places such as Dolwyddelan (Walks 9 and 10) and Capel Curig (Walks 11 and 12), with the aim of restoring Christianity after the fall of the Roman Empire.

Beyond the Norman conquest in 1066 and into the middle ages Wales was not a united country but a series of independent princedoms, shifting size and influence under different leaders, who now and then almost succeeded in uniting Wales as a country. Snowdonia and the surrounding lands were often an important power base, becoming

the princedom of Gwynedd. In 1200 Llywelyn ap Iorwerth, better known as Llywelyn the Great, became ruler of Gwynedd, and over the next half a century expanded his influence to dominate most of Wales, building castles including at Dolbadarn (Walk 17) and Dolwyddelan. He made a treaty with the English King John, and married his daughter, but united with the barons in forcing John to seal the Magna Carta in 1215. Llywelyn's son Dafydd, and his grandson Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, continued the fight to keep Wales as a self-governing princedom, against the power of the King and the Marcher Lords. But in Edward I the Welsh Princes had met their match. After several campaigns, Wales was overrun by the English in 1283. Edward I set himself up in the former stronghold of the House of Gwynedd in Abergwyngregyn (Walk 3) on the flanks of the Carneddau, and the whole of North Wales was in the hands of the English King. Castles such as Conwy (Walk 1) were built at

this time to prevent the Welsh rebelling again.

This uneasy victory, alongside subsequent widespread persecution of the Welsh through the imposition of discriminatory laws, created the conditions that led, just 100 years later, to the rebellion of Owain Glyndŵr. Lasting 15 years, his rebellion was at first spectacularly successful, with defeats against the English, the taking of several castles, and alliances with France. He was often in the mountains of Snowdonia, using the wild terrain as the ultimate hideaway after the rebellion had come to an end.

The following centuries saw Wales and England more closely align, especially after a Welshman, Harri Tudur, became Tudor king of England as Henry VII in 1485. In the 16th century Henry VIII, great

grandson of Owain Tudur, passed the Laws in Wales Acts (1535 and 1542) fully incorporating Wales into the Kingdom of England. Yet, the Welsh retained their language and culture and Wales remained unknown to most English people for until the 19th or even 20th centuries.

In the latter half of the 17th century, the first tourists came to Snowdonia to study and record the plant life. They began the trickle of English visitors daring to make their way into this formidable mountain range. At the start of the 19th century, with the Napoleonic wars making much of Europe inaccessible to travellers, focus turned on journeys around Britain, and North Wales was high on the list. The trickle of botanists turned to a flood of diarists, each eager to tell their story of travelling

through the ‘British Alps’, and the first climbers. At this time, the slate mining industry in North Wales was growing rapidly, with the end of the wars with France meaning supply routes could be created to ship the slate around the world. Docks on the north coast and at Porthmadog (Walks 28 to 30) were central to this, and with slate bringing money and jobs to the area beyond the traditional sheep and cattle farming, roads were built and hotels established to meet the new demand.

In 1951, after the campaigns to allow access to, and protect, the countryside, the Snowdonia National Park was created, today one of 15 throughout the UK. The National Park Authority is the ultimate arbiter of planning in the Park, and does a lot to support local agriculture and tourism,

while balancing access with the need to conserve the landscape. The Welsh language, Cymraeg, has the highest concentration of speakers here, at 70% or more of the population of some villages. With the decline of the slate industry and the reliance of hill sheep farming on subsidies, tourism is now a major factor in the local economy.

WILDLIFE

The variety of habitats in the landscape of Snowdonia gives rise to some excellent opportunities to see wildlife. From the peaks of the high mountains down to the sandy bays of the estuaries you’ll definitely see something interesting if you take your time and look around.

Aside from foxes and badgers, which can be spotted from valleys



The National Trust owns large areas of land in the National Park (Walk 13)



Mountain flowers such as heather certainly brighten up walks (Walk 13)



The wet woodlands of Snowdonia are the perfect habitat for mosses (Walk 12)

right up onto the hills, the mammals you are most likely to catch sight of are wild Carneddau ponies, and feral goats, which you'll smell before you see them. Around the coast you can see grey seals basking on the rocks, or watching you from the waves. If you want a real challenge, look out for the elusive pine marten, once a common native and now nearly extinct in Wales.

There are many species of birds living in the Park. Beyond the woods you'll hear the ground-nesting pipits and skylarks on the hillsides and see the large, black shapes of ravens playing near the crags. A species you'll be lucky to see is the chough, with its characteristic red legs and bill. It is found in Snowdonia in higher numbers than in other parts of the UK, where it is relatively rare. And during the breeding season you may well surprise curlew and snipe up on the open grassland.

For the lover of plants, the different habitats encountered even on one walk will mean plenty to look at. Gnarled oaks in the wet Atlantic woodlands which cling on in the valleys host carpets of moss and ferns, while up on the slopes you'll find meadows of mountain flowers in the spring – from the purple heads of Devil's-bit scabious to the tiny yellow tormentil and the nodding white tufts of cotton grass. These mountains are towards the most southerly end of the range of several Arctic-Alpine flowers, and the summit plateaus are so harsh that they are essentially tundra.

Even in winter, the mosses of the woodlands persist, and the subtler colours of the hills become apparent, from dark heather shrubs to purple moor grass and the cheery yellow flowers of gorse that can flower year-round. Growing on the rocky mountainsides are often lonely trees, commonly hawthorn and rowan. Their precarious position allows them to escape the hungry mouths of sheep, and in the late summer they produce clusters of red berries, both useful for making jam.

A common feature of the woods are dozens of species of fungi, either growing from the forest floor or from within the dead and dying wood of trees. These mysterious organisms can appear in autumn overnight, and what you see is just the fruiting body of a much larger organism beneath. Most apparent on the rocks of the mountainsides are lichens, colourful crusts that are symbiotic relationships between fungi and algae. They can live for centuries, slowly digesting chemicals from the rocks beneath, and harvesting energy from the sun.

Please help protect the wildlife you see by leaving it alone. The lack of mammals and birds of prey is down to centuries of persecution, and it will take a long time for some populations to bounce back. If you want to help, consider donating to the North Wales Wildlife Trust: www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org.uk.

Walk 1

Conwy Mountain/Mynydd y Dref

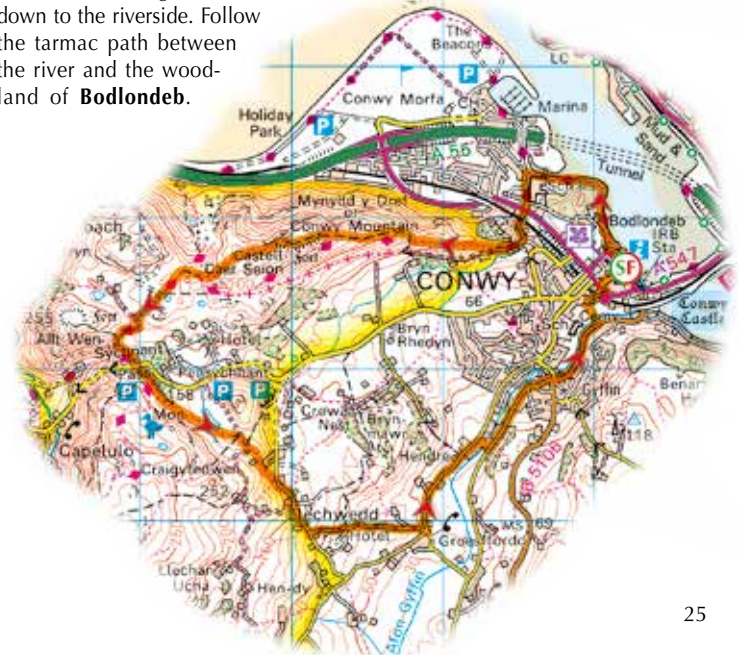
From the town, the majestic and dominating presence of Conwy Mountain begs to be walked. The ancient remains of a volcano, with the ruins of an Iron Age settlement on the top, it commands views over the sea, the Great Orme and down the Conwy Valley. The route up is a gradual ramp, starting with a stroll along the Conwy waterfront before heading for the summit through woodland and then open hillside. From here, the circular walk crosses the Sychnant Pass and enters moorland country past a nature reserve. The return leg into Conwy is mostly along quiet country roads and tracks, finishing with a wander through the park and back through the walls of the old town.



The path through the rough heather hillsides of Conwy Mountain

Start/finish	Conwy waterfront
Distance	10km (6 miles)
Ascent	320m
Time	3hr
Terrain	Upland grassy paths, lowland tracks and minor roads
Maps	OS Explorer OL17 Snowdon/Yr Wyddfa
Refreshments	Conwy has a good selection of pubs, cafés, and a Spar.
Access	There are several car parks in town. The largest is the Morfa Bach car park at LL32 8FZ. From here head into town and down to the river.

Facing the **River Conwy** on Conwy waterfront across from the Liverpool Arms, turn left and walk down the waterfront, past the ‘smallest house in Britain’ and through a gateway in the town walls. Go up the road for 50 metres and, at the road fork, turn right to head back down to the riverside. Follow the tarmac path between the river and the woodland of **Bodlondeb**.



The high headland of the Great Orme, rising above the coastline due north, soon appears ahead.

Continue following this path, and turn left on the road to pass the school. **Conwy Mountain** rises above the houses on the right. At the crossroads, cross straight over and go down the short street beyond. Cross the footbridge over the railway.

Follow the track on the other side, which soon becomes tarmac. At a T-junction, turn right and follow the road uphill. After 200 metres, at the fork in the track, go right. Almost immediately this track becomes a path. Go ahead, up the steps and over the stile next to the sign announcing Conwy Mountain. Follow the path ahead uphill through the woodland.

When the path eventually leaves the woods, it soon reaches a path fork with a large boulder between the two options. Take the right-hand option up a short rise to reach a path crossroads on the crest of the hill. The view is extensive over the sea, the Great Orme and back into the Conwy Valley.

Turn left at the path crossroads and head uphill on the grassy path. You are now on the wide grassy ridge of the hill. Go over a small rise and soon reach another path junction, with a set of rock slabs ahead. Turn right to follow the obvious grassy path heading around the right-hand side of the slabs.

Once around this corner, continue following the highest path along the crest of the hill. The final uphill section rises towards what appears as a rocky and heathery summit. This false summit is actually the start of a flatter section, leading to the main summit, which is a small rock outcrop near the hillfort of **Caer Seion**. Continue past the summit in the same direction as before, passing areas of shattered rock. In the distance to the west you can see the Isle of Anglesey (Ynys Môn).

IRON AGE HILLFORTS

Alongside a chain of ancient volcanoes through Snowdonia, Conwy Mountain and its surrounding peaks are the ash and lava remains of a volcano that erupted 450 million years ago. The dense erosion-resistant rock has lasted through the Ice Ages and the wide-ranging views and steep drops made it the perfect defensive site for early inhabitants of North Wales.

Although there are traces of a Bronze Age hut circle on the summit, the most conspicuous remains are from the Iron Age hillfort of Caer Seion that stood here from roughly 300BC to 78CE, able to accommodate around 50 huts. There is another fort on the summit of nearby Allt Wen, and many others throughout the area. They were defensive sites, built to protect the inhabitants who would farm the surrounding lowlands, but they were no match for the Romans, who eventually conquered Wales in 78CE.

From this point onward there is a network of paths, criss-crossing the hill. In general, keep in the same direction (WSW) towards the farm buildings and the peak of **Allt Wen** behind them. The main path tends to the right-hand side of the hill crest. **Looking right down the slope you may see remains of the millstone quarry dating back to the Napoleonic wars.**

Follow any one of the number of paths that lead towards the left-hand side of the farm buildings. Whichever one you take, you will soon arrive at a track running under the slopes of Allt Wen and leading to the farm. Turn left on this track, which also has a line of electricity pylons running parallel to it.

Follow the track as it winds its way down to the **Sychnant Pass**. Before the building of the A55 along the coast, this used to be one of the main routes into North Wales. At the pass, cross the road, go up the short grassy slope and through the gate into **Pensychnant Nature Reserve**. Continue straight ahead along the path, with the forest on the left.

Once past the forest, the path continues in the same direction, running parallel to a wall. There is a short uphill section with a good view left back at Conwy Mountain.

The path goes downhill. Cross the stile ahead and follow the path onwards, to the right of a small marshy pool called Gwern Engen. Just past the pool, the path reaches a track. Turn right and follow the track towards some buildings. After 100 metres, turn left at the track fork, and then at the gate to the house follow the path ahead downhill.

This path reaches a road. Turn right to follow the road past the houses, over a cattle grid and downhill for another 200 metres or so. Take the next track on the



The mountain pool of Gwern Engen



Following the road to Groesffordd

left at **Llechwedd**, which is quite wide and looks as though it was last tarmacked a long time ago. It has a wall on the right-hand side.

Follow this track for around 700 metres until it meets a road at **Groesffordd**. Turn left and follow the road past several groups of houses for nearly a kilometre, to beyond **Hendre**. Look out on the left-hand side of the road for a group of several bollards. Opposite these bollards is a path, heading between houses. The ground is stone shards and the left-hand wall above the path is a black wood and stone wall.

Follow this path across a footbridge over the **Afon Gyffin** and then continue up the other side to a road. Turn left on the road to follow it past a woodland and houses to a crossroads, now back in Conwy. There is an off-licence ahead, and a sign for Llanrwst Road. Turn left to cross the road bridge over the stream. After the bridge turn right, across the road towards a car park. Take the path round the left-hand side. Once past the playground, turn right at the path junction and follow this path along a stream through the park. The town walls are visible ahead.

A STRATEGIC CROSSING

'Famous for its imposing castle, built by Edward I in the 1280's as part of his invasion of Wales, Conwy has been an important strategic site for over 3000 years. Iron Age forts dot the local hillsides, and the Romans built a fort several miles downstream at what was then the main crossing point at



Conwy town walls from the Conwy Orchard

Canovium. On the eastern side of the river, the ruined castle at Deganwy changed hands several times during the wars between the English and the Welsh in the middle ages, and was eventually destroyed by Llywelyn the Last.

When Edward I decided to build Conwy Castle, he demolished Aberconwy Abbey, and a court house of Llywelyn the Great, part of which is incorporated within the town walls. As a natural barrier, the River Conwy provided an important defence for the inhabitants of North Wales. For most people throughout history it was crossed by ferry, and then by Thomas Telford's suspension bridge, which was built in 1826.

Today, the castle and town walls

are some of the most impressive and complete medieval structures in Europe. It is possible to walk nearly the full way along the top of the walls, which stretch to nearly a mile and contain 21 towers and three gateways.

When the path reaches a large car park, beside the gates to a school, turn left and cross the road, following the tarmac path across the field towards the town walls. Go through the gate ahead to enter Conwy Orchard where several varieties of apples and pears grow.

Climb the steps ahead. Once at the top, turn right through the gateway, back into the old town. Turn right at the road and follow this downhill, over the railway bridge. At the T-junction, turn left to arrive in Lancaster Square and the statue of Llywelyn the Great. Follow the cobbled high street all the way down to the waterfront.