

Newtown Mountain Forest Trail

Horse Riding Route, Penycae, Wrexham

Although primarily aimed at horse riders, ramblers and mountain bike riders are welcome to use this trail.

The Main Trail of approximately 9.5 km is described in a clockwise direction starting at Grid Ref. SJ 278 462 (Lat 53.008490 Long -3.077709), just north of Penycae near Wrexham. There is an opportunity to abbreviate the route by taking a short-cut, and an optional extension loop off the main trail around Ty Mawr Reservoir.

Trail Directions

The route begins at a lay-by on a lane just north of Yew Tree Isaf Farm. With the farm on your left, follow the lane south down the hill, over the stream and up to the bend at Pentre Farm. Turn right here onto Dark Lane [A], which opens out to an off-road section about 1/3 of the way up, through Yew Tree Dingle. When you meet the tarmac road turn left then take the second turning on the right towards Plas Du ruins [B] and the Top Reservoir [C]. Ignoring the turning on the right to Trefechan Farm, follow the lane that slopes downward to the left. Here you pass through a gate (smaller access gate to the right of the main locked gate). Continue up the track, past the Top Reservoir on the left to a further [locked] gate with smaller access gate. Past the gate, stay on the main track to the centre of the woods where it swings right, climbing through the trees and passing the ruins of Newtown hamlet [D] on the left amongst the trees, to the mountain gate and out onto the open moorland of Ruabon Mountain [E]. The path rises ahead passing an old quarry face [F] on the left. At the top of the rise turn left along the edge of the moor.

The path descends to the end of the Bridleway where it joins a minor road.

At this point you have the choice of staying on the Main Trail or returning to your starting point via a shorter route.

Short route (total length approx. 8km)

Turn right into the lane towards Tai-nant, passing Tai-Nant chapel (G) and Pen-y-Lan (H). After a further 200 metres the top entrance to Dark Lane will be seen on the left; turn down here and retrace your route back to your starting point.

Main trail (total length approx. 9.5km)

Turn left into the lane. Pant Glas Reservoir (I) is visible on the right, and on the left, over the cattle grid and in the trees, is Mountain Lodge (the Wynnstay Estate gamekeeper's cottage). Continue to follow the lane, passing Plas Drain (J), descending for 1.2 km to Godremynydd (red brick cottages). *At this point the optional Ty Mawr loop leaves the main trail.*

At Godremynydd follow the lane around to the right, passing Onen Fawr Farm, and turn off next right. Proceed straight ahead for about 0.75km, passing Ty Canol, to get back to your starting point.

Ty Mawr loop

After passing Godremynydd take a left turn at Onen Fawr farm. After 0.4km turn left (opposite 'New Buildings') onto an unmade track which loops around Ty Mawr Reservoir (K). Follows the track to the right around the reservoir with a spur off to Cae Llwyd Reservoir on the left. Turn right when rejoining the lane to complete the circuit and re-trace the route to Godremynydd. At the junction here turn left and next right (in about 100 metres) then follow this road for 0.8km (passing Ty Canol) back to the start of the trail.

How to get here

Use O.S. Explorer Map 256

Note – Larger vehicles and those with trailers should follow the directions from the North as the lane leading from Penycae is rather narrow.

From the North

Leave the Wrexham by-pass (A483) at the Rhostyllen exit and take the B5605 off the roundabout signed Johnstown / Rhosllanerchrugog. After 0.4 km turn off right just after the 40mph limit sign (Smithy Lane, signposted Crematorium) then proceed to the T-junction and turn left onto the A5097, signed Rhosllanerchrugog. After a further 3.2 km, just after the Coach and Horses pub on your right, take the next right turn (Mountain Street). After 50 metres turn right at the T junction opposite the Sun Inn. After a further 1.6 km turn left at the bend opposite Onnen Fawr Farm then proceed for about 0.8 km to park in the lay-by on the right. **Grid Ref. SJ 278 462 (Lat 53.008490 Long -3.077709)**

From the South

Leave the Wrexham by-pass (A483) at Ruabon following the signs for Llangollen (A539). then take the first exit at the roundabout. Go straight ahead at the next roundabout then after about 0.4 km take the first right turn [Plas Bennion Road]

for Penycae. Proceed for 2 km into Pen y Cae village then take the next right (Hill Street) 50 metres after passing the Black Horse pub on the right. Just before the bottom of the hill turn left into Lampit Street (no through road sign). Proceed for about 0.8 km, passing Yew Tree Isaf Farm, then park at the top of the hill in the lay-by on the left. **Grid Ref. SJ 278 462 (Lat 53.008490 Long -3.077709)**

Historical notes and places of interest

[A] DARK LANE – This is part of the original road which ran over the moors to Llandegla from Ruabon.

[B] PLAS DU – Originally a monastery, the monks offered overnight shelter here to pilgrims visiting Valle Crucis Abbey if they arrived too late to cross the mountain to Llangollen in daylight.

[C] TOP RESERVOIR – Built in 1902 by the Ruabon Water Company to hold 126 million litres of water to supply their brickworks. Renovation work was carried out in 1990.

[D] NEWTOWN HAMLET – In the centre of the woods are the ruins of the squatters' homes, built on common land under the ancient custom of '*Ty unos*' (one night houses). There had to be smoke coming from the chimney before nightfall to claim the plot.

[E] RUABON MOUNTAIN – Owned by the Wynnstay Estate since 1857, when it was bought from the Crown. There are grouse shoots run by the Estate on the moor and controlled burning of the heather is carried out to provide fresh growth for food and shelter for the birds. The heather was once harvested to make brooms, with fees paid to the Estate for collecting it. A company owned by George Jackson once manufactured and exported the brooms to Europe and America. The Ruabon Brick Company used the heather to pack around its tiles and bricks during transportation. In August 1940 the moor was set on fire by jettisoned bombs which attracted German bombers destined for Liverpool. They dropped a high proportion of the bombs meant for Liverpool here, believing that a munitions factory had been hit.

[F] SANDSTONE QUARRY – Provided stone for many local houses including Tai-Nant Chapel.

[G] TAI-NANT CHAPEL – Built in 1833. it was sold in 1990 and converted to a house.

[H] PEN-Y-LAN – Built in 1728 and originally three cottages, it became one house at the turn of the last century and for some years until the 1970's it was the

village shop. On one wall there is a terracotta moulding of a lion's head. This is an old insurance company's symbol, first used from about 1680 as a fire-mark. The firemen or 'watermen' were paid for attending all fires, but the buildings with the symbols were insured.

[I] PLAS GLAS RESERVOIR – it was built in 1935 to hold 18 million litres of water and is linked to Ty Mawr Reservoir by an underground tunnel. It was bombed during World War 2.

[J] PLAS DRAIN – Built in the sixteenth century, this Grade II listed house was sold in 1628 to the Yorke family of Erddig who owned it until 1906.

[K] TY MAWR RESERVOIR – Built in 1902.

[L] CAE LLWYD RESERVOIR – Built in 1860.