

Trip Report: Clwydian Hills**Date:** Dec 3rd, 2017**Group:** Steve (leader), Sarah, Lynn, Sue, Jim, Les, Mike A, Cate, Jeff, Debbie (+ Ellie & Spot)**Route:** A circuit in the northern Clwydian Hills**Total Distance:** 10.9 miles**Total Ascent:** 2614 ft

It was a rather misty morning and as we arrived in the parking area at the base of Moel Arthur the low cloud meant that we couldn't see the top. Not to worry, we started by walking downhill anyway. After a short distance down the road we turned onto a bridleway and soon experienced the outstanding feature of the day - copious mud. Our new member and "first timer" Cate must have been wondering what she had signed up for, although she dealt with the difficulties as well as everyone else and was polite enough not to complain as much as the rest of the group!

The conditions underfoot improved a little after we crossed a road and began to follow a byway. And fortunately we were there before the local motor bikers who also make use of this route. As the clouds started to break up there were fleeting glimpses of Denbigh across the Vale of Clwyd. At a major junction of tracks we joined Offa's Dyke Path and descended further to then follow the Clwydian Way on a attractive contouring path with views to the north and a wind farm offshore from Prestatyn.

From this lowest point on the route it was time to face the music and start climbing. A steady haul took us to the summit of Moel y Parc where, curiously, there is a cairn on top of a tumulus and a trig point that is slightly lower and is a short distance away across a fence. Maybe OS didn't want their trig point on the tumulus! The fence has the benefit of being a perfect navigational handrail - not that we needed one as the clouds had cleared by this time! - for descending to the path junction that we had passed through an hour earlier. Lunch was taken in an ideal sheltered spot on the remains of an old wall.

A gentle climb followed lunch as, back on Offa's Dyke, the path ascended onto Penycloddiau, the well known site of an iron age hillfort. Reaching a road and car park we were briefly detained while all reading a rather unusual hand-written notice that boldly included a mobile phone number. Unfortunately I can't remember the detail and failed to take a photo of it - did anyone else get it on camera?

To finish we had another climb, over the shoulder of Moel Arthur. This stretch of the path was notable for being very dog friendly as every stile had beside it a guillotine-style wooden gate to let our canine friends through without the need of lifting. Much appreciated by Ellie and Spot! The summit of Moel Arthur is a short distance from the main path and after a brief pause at the junction we decided that it was worth the small bit of extra effort to round-off the day with a visit to the top, now that it was clear of cloud.

After dropping down to the cars, and carefully removing muddy footwear, we were back at The Dysart before the start of happy hour.