

In Search of the Lost Leete.

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Route Summary



The path alongside the leete from Loggerheads to Devil's Gorge is frequently walked, but the leete carried on from Trial Hill to Rhydymwyn with large mine-works along the way. This walk explores the less well known (and sadly less well preserved) industrial archaeology of the Alyn Valley.

Route Overview



Category: Walking

Length: 8.500 km / 5.31 mi

Last Modified: 31st August 2020

Difficulty: Medium

Rating: Unrated

Surface: Moderate

Date Published: 21st August 2020

Description



The path alongside the leete from Loggerheads to Devil's Gorge is frequently walked, but the leete carried on from Trial Hill to Rhydymwyn with large mine-works (mostly for lead) along the way. This walk explores the

less well known (and sadly less well preserved) industrial archaeology of the Alyn Valley.

History

This leete (there are several other shorter leetes in the Alyn Valley) ran for approximately 3 miles from Loggerheads to and past (at a lower level) the dressing floors at the Pen-y-fron mine. It is about 6ft wide and 3.5ft deep. It formed one of a number of constructions undertaken by the Mold Mines company, one of their earliest and more significant efforts in this regard, having begun before January 1824.

The leete was necessary owing to the unreliability of the River Alyn which in dry summer months, loses its flow between Loggerheads and Pen-y-fron, to swallow holes in the limestone bedrock. The water enters the caves Ogof Hen Ffynhonnau and Ogof Hesp Alyn, which can be explored*. The leete appears to have been abandoned in 1837 when the mines ceased operation.

The Pen-y-fron mine's workings start where today you see the Leete Valley Caravan Park and extended north for about 1/3 mile with several mine shafts round about.

Nant Alyn Mill, the house at the northern end of the caravan park (SJ19706607) was powered by a waterwheel and rolled the lead into sheets. Evidence of lead dressing and the earthbanks of a reservoir remain at SJ19876639.

As you pass the caravan site and climb the path you will see three limestone walls that retain the levels of the dressing floor area with Pen-y-Fron cottage above. They remain in a very good state of preservation at SJ1985066230.

The Walk

From the White Horse Inn in Cilcain, turn right at the crossroads in the centre of the village and walk down Pentre Hill until you see a white bungalow (Hillside) on your right. Enter the Millennium Woods (Coed y Felin) on the left opposite the bungalow. Take the path into the woods forking right after about 75 yards. Follow the path to Trial Hill where you join the road, drop down to and cross the bridge. Walk up the hill towards Pantymwyn turning left after a white bungalow, "Leeteside." If you are using Viewranger you will see that the altitude is about 600ft. As you walk alongside the leete you will see that the altitude drops as the leete flows downwards.

At first, the leete is in good condition.



You will walk along the side of the leete and will see evidence of dams or sluice gates used to control the flow of water.



You come to a point where the leete appears to go into a tunnel (altitude 585ft) and the path goes up. It actually goes under the path you are standing on, to the left. There is a path that follows it marked "Dangerous, Private Land." It leads to the unprotected top of a disused quarry and is not a place for dogs or children, but you could follow the leete for a while, getting into it to walk if you wish. Eventually the leete is cut through, probably by the Lloyds Quarry workings and you need to return to the place where you turned left to carry on. Obviously I have to say "you should not explore this path."

Follow the route for 100 yards and look to your left to see the leete once more. The path goes upwards to the right for a short distance heading towards the road, but then turns sharp left and heads downhill. As you descend, after about 100 yards, Viewranger will give you a clue that the leete is near as you see the altitude drop to 570ft. The path crosses the leete, visible on both sides. After another 75 yards you come to a wider path. Go left for a few yards and look for the leete where it enters a tunnel. With your back to the leete and tunnel, turn right and walk up the hill for about 65 yards before taking a turn to the left.

I think the leete followed the contours, but sadly I suspect forestry has destroyed most of its route to "the levels." Follow the route down hill.

You should now have the Leete Valley caravan park on your left. Mill Cottage opposite the entrance to the caravan park was a lead rolling mill, built in the 1780s. Lead sheets were sent to Flint for export.

Carry on, noting a bridge across the river. You find the leete again on the right after a small quarry and can explore a 150 yard somewhat overgrown section (altitude 490ft). The work involved in creating the leete is evident. I suspect this is a second, lower level leete which would have collected the water after it had powered waterwheels near "the levels." This is probably the leete that carries on to Rhydymwyn.



A little further along the route there are three tall limestone retaining walls that retain "the levels" of the dressing floor area of the Pen-y-fron mine which worked from the early 1700s. In 1786 a smelting works was built. I think waste water from the levels dropped into the lower leete.



Pen-y-Fron cottage above is above the levels.



If you explore the area of "the levels" (it's very rough with wood waste to step over in many areas) and walk about 150 yards south, beyond the ruins, you will find a small section of the higher level of the leete we started on. Altitude about 540ft. Return to the path.

N.B. If you carry on along my route you come to an area devastated (2019/20) by forestry clearing.

Sadly, more parts of this historic leete system have been destroyed by the forestry action, tracks driven right across it. The route becomes very rough, you will be picking your way over branches and it will be muddy after wet weather. However, if you continue, you will be rewarded by the sight of well preserved parts of the leete, dropping down to 410ft near Rhydymwyn where is served a foundry.



A few years ago this was a delightful walk along paths through the woods. Such in life.



If you continue, you will see the last of the leete as you approach the limits of Rhydymwyn. Drop down to and cross the river which is usually dry in the summer, but may be impassible after wet periods, requiring a return to the bridge by the caravan park.

If you don't wish to continue on this rough section, go back to the bridge and turn right towards the driveway to Coed Du Hall where you will rejoin the route.

Continuing the walk.

At the driveway to Coed Du Hall take the road heading north-west. After about 100 yards look into the vegetation on your left.



Coed Du Hall had a Bath House, and ram pump supplying water to the hall. The building is situated on "Bath Hill" and dates back to the mid 1800's when Coed Du Hall was a private house. The house is still in use (as a hospital), but the bath house has long been abandoned and now has fencing around it so you can't explore.

Walk on for 200 yards until you see the old driveway to Coed Du Hall. There are two large stone gateposts. Walk up the old driveway and then ahead into a field. Walk south-west heading for the middle of the boundary fence where you will find a stile leading into woods. Turn left and follow the route.

You will pass a derelict cottage (feature photo) as you pass through the Hanson Woods. Leave the woods and make your way back to Cilcain on the minor road.

* Under your feet on this route are a maze of tunnels and caves. If you would like to see a little of what is there contact www.northwalescavingclub.org.uk/. It's worth doing at least once in your life, but you do need to be fit!

All proceeds from the sale of my walks (most cost 50p) goes to Nightingale House Hospice. I highly recommend installing Viewranger on your phone so that you always know precisely where you are on these routes. Thanks for looking.

Waypoints

Parking area

(53.17770; -3.21700)

Parking area

Dam

(53.17986; -3.21163)

Remains of what appears to be a dam or sluice gate.

Tunnel under path

(53.18162; -3.20661)

The path suddenly goes up and the leete appears to go into a tunnel. It actually goes to the left and you can follow it for a short distance by taking the path marked 'Dangerous, No Access.' The leete is on your right and parts of it can be walked in before it comes to an end where the ground has been cut away. The path leads to the top of an old quarry with a large drop, highly dangerous if you walk with your eyes shut.

Leete visible 50 yards on left

(53.18214; -3.20553)

Leete becomes visible again 50 yards on left

tunnel

(53.18316; -3.20458)

leete goes into a tunnel under roadway.

Leete crosses path. Derelict industrial buildings

(53.18567; -3.20215)

A short section of the leet is in reasonable condition, you can walk down it

in the leete

(53.18628; -3.20188)

A short section of the leet is in reasonable condition, you can walk down it

Explore the levels

(53.18695; -3.20112)

Explore the levels and find the last of the leete

Mineshaft

(53.18785; -3.20144)

Mineshaft with access ladder

join remains of leete

(53.18974; -3.20246)

join remains of leete, visible on both sides

(53.19084; -3.20448)

Coed Du had a bathing small indoor bathing pool

(53.19290; -3.20645)



turn left between the stone gate posts up the centre of the field to a stile

