



# Sŵn y Môr

Issue 14, Spring/Summer 2013

The magazine for the Isle of Anglesey AONB and Coastal Path



**Shifting Sands, Shifting Ideas**  
New thoughts on dune management

**Wild Food**  
The importance of our hedgerows

**'SEACAMS' Project**  
Discovering what lies  
beneath the depths



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# Isle of Anglesey AONB



## SŴN Y MÔR

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## The Isle of Anglesey Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are designated to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

The Isle of Anglesey has one of the most distinctive, attractive and varied landscapes in Britain. The AONB is predominantly a coastal designation,

covering most of the island's 201km coastline.

The Anglesey AONB is part of a family of similar areas throughout Wales, England and Northern Ireland; there are 47 AONB's in total. For further information visit the Anglesey AONB website: [www.anglesey.gov.uk/aonb](http://www.anglesey.gov.uk/aonb)



## Joint Advisory Committee

The role of the **JAC** is to oversee the work of the AONB and to provide advice and guidance when required. During 2012 the JAC met twice the first being at the David Hughes Village Hall in Cemaes as reported in the previous *Sŵn y Môr*. The second meeting was held in November at Plas Coch Holiday Village. At this meeting members were provided with a number of presentations ranging from seabed mapping along the Anglesey coast (School of Ocean Sciences, Bangor University), the history of the Plas Coch house (Anglesey Antiquarians), and the current thinking on Sand Dune mobilization

(CCW). The main focus of the morning however, was the discussion with staff from the National Grid who presented the options for overhead pylons through Anglesey and the crossing over the Menai Strait. The members were in agreement that the options presented did not represent the whole picture and that undergrounding or subsea cabling should also be part of the public consultation.

The membership of the JAC has also increased over the past year and we were pleased to welcome new members representing several organisations such as One Voice Wales and the Outdoor Partnership.



Cables across the Menai

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## Seascape Character Assessment

The Anglesey AONB is leading on a joint project with the Countryside Council for Wales and Snowdonia National Park Authority to assess the character of their coastlines. This work will help inform the management plans of both the AONB and the National Park and will help explore the connections between land and sea. The character assessment also comes at an important time with offshore development proposals increasing and the requirements for base line data which can aid decision makers.



Moelfre beach

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## Sustainable Development Fund

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) has again proved very popular over the last year with the allocation of £70,000 fully committed and an extra £10,000 secured from underspends in other AONBs in Wales. Some of the

highlights from 2012/13 include the transcribing of the William Bulkeley Diaries, improvements to Llanddona Village Hall, stone wall improvements and support for an Education Room at Swtan.



Swtan

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## Tidy Towns Funding

Four applications were submitted to last year's round and two of these were successful. The first was for a small community project in Aberffraw which will see the removal of fly tipping waste and then the creation of a public open space on the same site. The second application was for further work in controlling Himalayan Balsam (HB) in the catchments that had already been prioritised. The funding enabled partners in the group to target control in very specific areas and it is hoped that this can be repeated in following years. We would like to thank Keep Wales Tidy for the funding and also **Lois Roberts** and **Gareth Owen** for their co-operation during the project.



## Volunteering News

**Volunteers make a valuable contribution to the landscape of the AONB. Working with the Countryside and AONB Service volunteers regularly attend work days at various sites within the AONB and sites managed by the Countryside Service. Individuals and community groups who work with us help conserve and enhance the Special Qualities of the AONB and Countryside sites.**



**Volunteers removing rhododendron**

### Dry Stone Walling, Llanedwen

Work has begun on restoring traditional dry stone walls on a small holding at Llanedwen. Volunteers have re built sections of the wall which contains a mixture of rock types; this gave an interesting challenge to the building of the wall. If you are interested in learning the traditional skill of dry stone walling, or would just like to practice, contact the Countryside and AONB Service for more information and register onto the volunteer mailing list.

### Himalayan Balsam

Himalayan Balsam has been a continuous problem on Anglesey over the past few years and has spread rapidly. The Countryside and AONB Service along with volunteers and colleagues from partner organisations worked hard over the summer to remove the invasive plant. Grant funding from Tidy Towns was a huge help in the removal of Himalayan Balsam from some of Anglesey's main rivers and watercourses. There will be many more sessions over the summer months to reduce and control the spread of the invasive plant.

### Rhododendron Bashing

During a short window of fine weather in December, AONB staff and volunteers, Princes Trust, Probation Service, and staff

from Tidy Towns and Keep Wales Tidy spent two days removing Rhododendron from a broadleaf woodland near Llanfairpwllgwyngyll. Rhododendron is a very invasive shrub that can smother native plant species. This can have a detrimental effect on the health and succession of a native broadleaf woodland. For more information on Rhododendron and its removal, contact the Countryside and AONB Service.

### Beach litter

Beach litter is a persistent problem throughout the AONB with some beaches being affected more than others. Through close working with Keep Wales Tidy and the Friends Of the Anglesey Coastal Path, lots of volunteers have helped to remove litter from many of Anglesey's fine beaches.

### Why Volunteer?

Some may think that working for no money in return is a daft idea, but working voluntarily offers many rewards. Whether you're a student, out of work, or just enjoy being out, it is a great way to learn new skills, gain experience, meet new people and keep fit. The help of volunteers is greatly valued and is very important to the conservation and management of the countryside.



**Dry stone walling at Llanedwen**

If you would like to join the volunteer group or would like further information, please contact AONB Community Warden **Aled Lewis** on **01248 751877** or email

**AWLPL@anglesey.gov.uk**

You may also want to try out volunteering with The Dingle Volunteer Group (contact Gareth Evans **jgepl@anglesey.gov.uk**, **01248 752139**) or the Breakwater Country Park Volunteer Group (contact Will Stewert **01407 760530**, **wjssa@anglesey.gov.uk**).

## Youth Rangers Update

The Youth Rangers project has now entered into its second year with a new varied activities programme. The group will be visiting neighbouring protected landscapes such as the Snowdonia National Park. The AONB team is currently working closely with Europarc Atlantic Isles and other AONB's running Youth Ranger projects, to develop a good practice guide for other protected landscapes who wish to set up a Youth Rangers project. A meeting took place during the summer in the Mendip Hills AONB where two of the Youth Rangers shared their ideas and thoughts on the project.





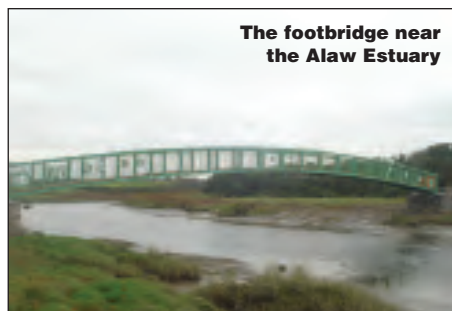
# Coastal Path News



Boardwalks being constructed at Plas Newydd



The footbridge near the Alaw Estuary



A new gate at Coed y Môr

The Coastal Path Team has been busy continuing with the Coastal Access Project, with some very exciting projects happening over the last months. Two new sections of footpath are well under way, with the end result being that we're very close to getting a complete route around the island!

## New footpath at Aber Alaw

In the last issue of *Sŵn y Môr*, a new section of footpath had been confirmed, bordering the Alaw Estuary, and linking the communities of Valley and Llanfachraeth. Works to get the route up to standard and ready for walkers have been happening since mid-summer, with improvements including the installation of a 35m footbridge. At time of writing, the route isn't open yet to walkers, and won't be until all works are complete, but keep an eye on the website for information – it's not too far away now! [www.angleseycoastalpath.co.uk](http://www.angleseycoastalpath.co.uk)

## Plas Newydd

Works are also progressing on the footpath past Plas Newydd and linking up with footpaths near Bryn Celli Ddu. Boardwalks are being constructed in fields to the north of the A4080, and work should be completed soon. Again, there will be a notice on the website to advertise when it is available to be used.

## Volunteers

The Silver Slashers have been very active over the last 6 months achieving major improvements to the footpath between Benllech and Traeth Bychan. This has involved drainage work, edging and the installation of metres of boardwalk and fencing. Their efforts will be very welcome, as this previously muddy section is now a pleasant walk between the two beaches. The path is ready in time for the spring, and the Slashers are more than ready for a different challenge!

## Other projects

Another batch of timber signs has been installed, a further 15 stiles and narrow gates have been replaced with wide kissing gates. Along with this, there are plans for a new footbridge in Dulas, surfacing improvements near Rhosneigr, South Stack and Newborough. Plenty of projects to keep the Coastal Path team very busy!



# When good enough is not good enough

## Are we doing enough to protect our designated special places?

John Ratcliffe, NRW

The protection of special places is the mainstay of conservation. National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) all represent the best that we have in the face of environmental decline, whether that decline be the homogenisation of our landscapes or the destruction or impoverishment of our wildlife. Special places are designated by legal processes which declare these places to be “good enough” to be designated as National Parks, AONBs and SSSIs. This is the gold standard, a Michelin star rating for landscapes and nature.

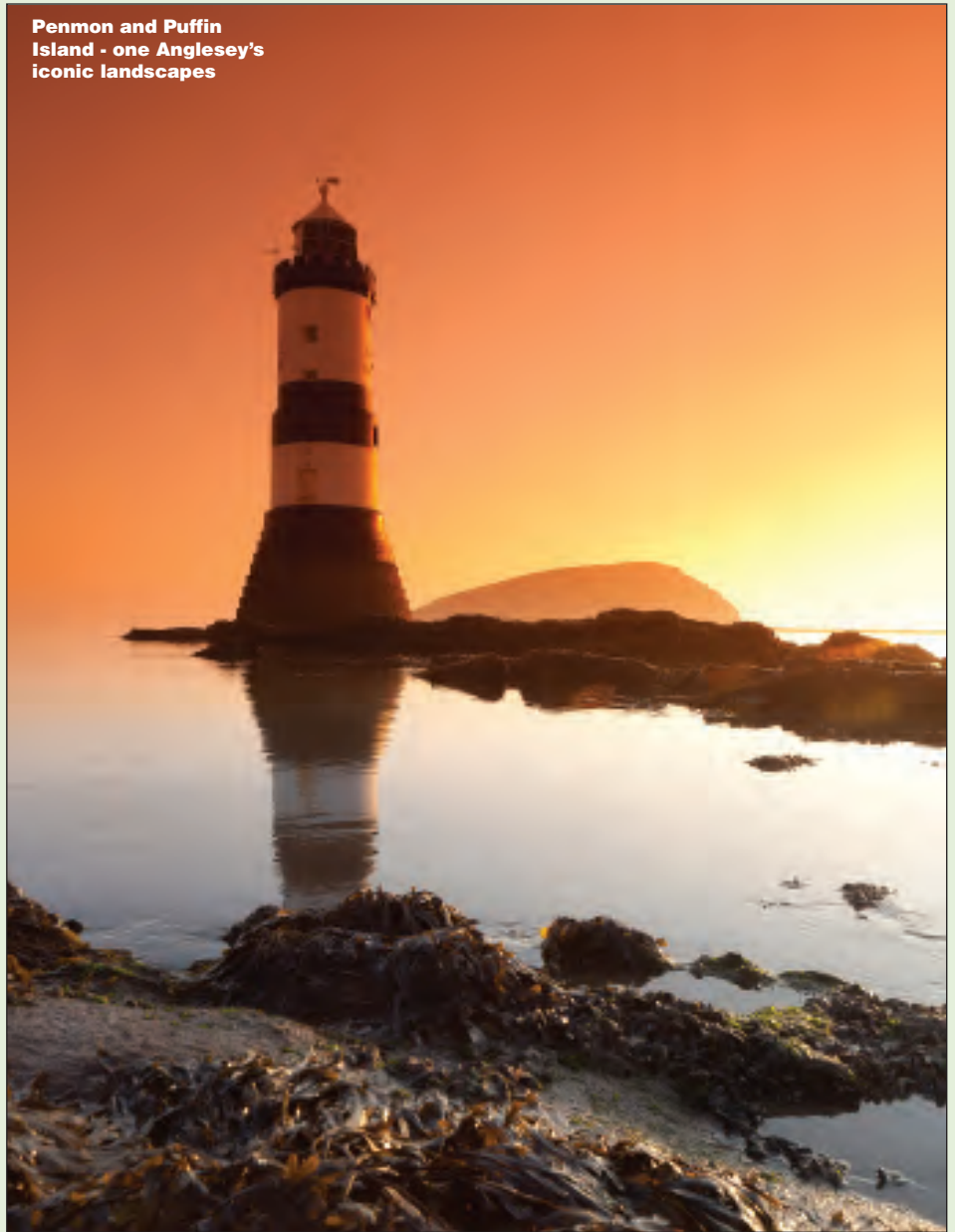
But is “good enough” good enough? We cherish these places because they have special qualities we value that have been lost elsewhere: coasts marred by concrete and caravans, woodlands fragmented, species in decline, architecture and cultural artefacts threatened by inappropriate development. We select them because they are rare and threatened and represent the best that is left. Often that means it is a remnant of some former whole, a fragment of forest or heath, a great view despite the pylons in the distance. In the face of pressure for development shouldn't we be content with our lot?

The EU Habitats Directive is instructive and surprisingly (for such dry legislation) inspiring. It values nature as a heritage of the community. It aspires to sustainable development but recognises the decline in European wildlife. It aims to promote the maintenance of biodiversity in line with the Rio Treaty obligations. It therefore seeks the restoration or maintenance of natural habitats and species of Community interest at a favourable conservation status, and it requires member states to manage for the ecological requirements of the designated habitats and species.

**“Conservation is sometimes associated with preventing change, yet the prevention of undesirable change is just the starting point; the objectives go far beyond.”**

The European Commission is not complacent about the status quo. It seeks a favourable conservation status which may involve restoration to a better state than now.

Penmon and Puffin Island - one Anglesey's iconic landscapes



In recognising that the habitats and species concerned are deteriorating and threatened, and therefore unlikely to be in favourable conservation status, it demands change.

Conservation is sometimes associated with preventing change, yet the prevention of undesirable change is just the starting point; the objectives of conservation go far beyond. Creating something better, more appropriate, more sustainable and nearer to favourable conservation status is the real challenge. That might mean changing something to a previous valued state or a future better state, removing an eyesore, restoring a habitat. Safeguarding Anglesey's Chough, undergrounding cables at South Stack or restoring dynamic coastal processes on dunes and shingle are examples. Or it might mean building something new such as the coastal footpath or offshore reefs for fish to inhabit and divers to explore. Conservation is about change, but

it demands that we evaluate that change against a set of objectives.

The Anglesey AONB Management Plan identifies the special qualities of the AONB such as tranquillity, expansive views, broadleaved woodlands, geology etc., and we are required to manage for these special qualities or features. We recognise that many of these qualities are threatened and declining in quality. So management means not just arresting the decline, but restoring quality. And that involves change.

We have been set a challenging task to implement changes on European conservation sites, sometimes involving radical actions to overcome deep seated problems of habitat loss, species decline and fragmentation. There is a similar task for landscape conservation ahead of us. Good enough to be an AONB or an SSSI does not necessarily mean good enough. We should aspire to better.



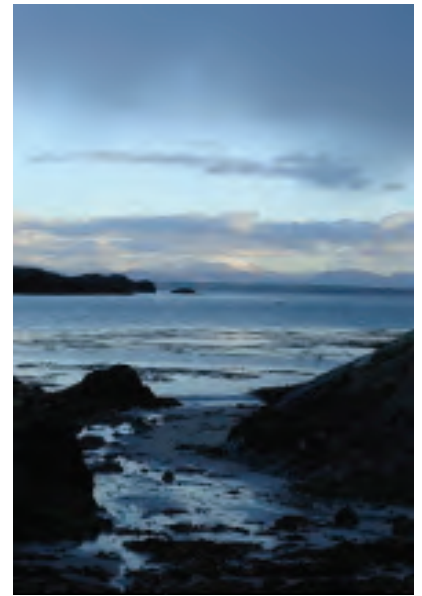
# 2012 AONB Photography Competition

**We had a wonderful selection of photos entered for the 2012 AONB photography competition. Here are the winners and the reasons why they were chosen...**

## The winning photo



## Third place



The 2012 AONB photography competition advertised in the last Issue of *Sŵn y Môr* came to an end in December. The 2012 competition, as in previous years, saw exceptional photographs taken of the AONB landscape. They demonstrate the world class scenery we are lucky enough to have on Anglesey.

AONB Community Warden, **Jacob Milner**, explained, "Anglesey's AONB is truly one of the most distinctive, attractive and varied landscapes in the British Isles. It covers around 221 square km - around a third of the Island - and is the second largest in Wales." "This year's photography competition was aimed at encouraging people to explore Anglesey's fantastic AONB and capture its beauty on camera; and we had a fantastic response."

The winners were chosen by the Daily Post head of images, **Hadyn Iball**. He said that he enjoyed looking at the photos "and would congratulate the winners as well as all who entered".

Unfortunately we don't have enough space to print the top 10 photos here but they are available to view on our website at [www.anglesey.gov.uk/aonbcompetition](http://www.anglesey.gov.uk/aonbcompetition). The top 3 photos are on display at the Holyhead Breakwater Country Park outdoor gallery.

The overall winning photo was taken on Llanddwyn beach by **Kris Williams** from Beaumaris. The photo, which is titled 'Ripples and Reflections', was chosen because it was



**Runner-up**

"technically shot with careful attention to detail. The sky is perfect and beautifully reflected in the still water". Kris received a voucher for an adventure kayak day at the Conway Center in Llanfairpwll for five people.

A delighted Kris, 38, said, "I decided to enter my picture of Llanddwyn into the AONB competition, as for me this beach is the real jewel in the crown of Anglesey's magnificent scenery. No matter what the weather - sun, rain or snow, there's always a spectacular

sight just waiting for you there."

The second position was won by **Ashley Jones**. The photo was taken at Amlwch and was chosen because of its composition. It is "shot with the sun low on the horizon, adding to the warmth of the light".

In third position is a photo taken at Rhoscolyn. It was taken by **Sioned Jones**. Hadyn chose it because "it demonstrates that Anglesey is an all year destination to explore and enjoy". And we couldn't agree more.

# Shifting Sands, Shifting Ideas

**One of the special qualities for which the Anglesey AONB was designated in 1967 was its “sandy bays... and miles of soft dunes”. Places such as Tywyn Llyn Rhosneigr, Tywyn Aberffraw and Newborough have long been valued as fine examples of west coast dune systems. But in 1967 they were very different landscapes to those seen today, with large areas of mobile dunes, bare sand and early stage habitats.** John Ratcliffe, NRW

The challenge of hot, dry dunes, intervening waterlogged “slacks”, poor soil and salt wind can only be tolerated by plants and animals adapted to these extreme conditions. Marram grass has waxy in-rolled leaves to survive the desert conditions, early sand grass employs winter growth and rapid spring flowering and seeding to use the brief moist growing season. The vernal sand bee nests in warm bare sandy banks, the sandhill rustic moth feeds only on sand couch grass, while the sand lizard, depends on open “hunting grounds” to catch its prey; all typical adaptations to this environment.

## Specialist wildlife

Just 1400ha of sand dune habitat on Anglesey, less than 2% the county, supports an extraordinary diversity of life. Over 1000 different species of beetles have been recorded on Newborough Warren. Tywyn Aberffraw is the richest site in Wales for rare mosses and liverworts of dunes. Pioneer dune habitats are important in supporting the majority of scarce dune plants and animals, providing warm, open substrates, reduced competition, germination sites and hunting grounds. In Wales 70% of specialist dune invertebrates, many of them rare, are associated with pioneer habitats.

## Shifting sands

Dunes are dynamic systems, constantly changing. They demonstrate geology in action: beach and dune forming processes are just as important as the resulting landforms. Sand blown to the strandline is colonised by marram grass, builds new ridges, is scoured by wind down to the water table and blown inland or eroded with the winter storms and returned to the sea. Beach profiles rise and fall, foredunes come and go between seasons and dunes can move several metres a year. Seen from the ground, the land is a chaos of hillocks; seen from the air, pattern is restored and the history of the landscape becomes clear.

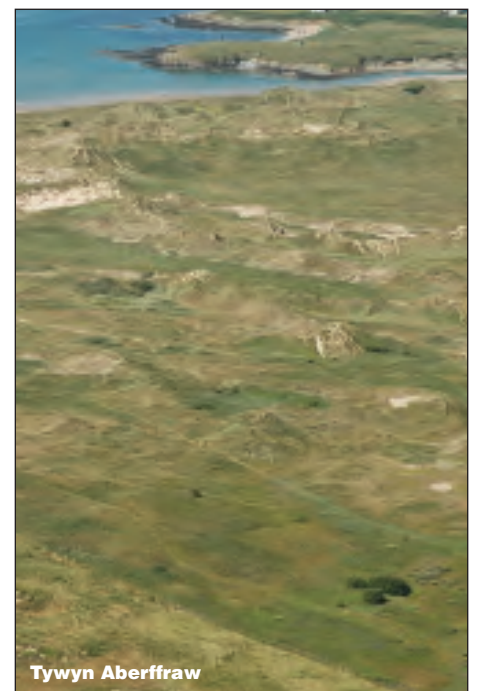
Each stage in the succession from embryo and mobile dunes to slack, grassland, scrub or heath carries a distinctive flora and fauna. But it is the early pioneer stages of mobile dunes that are key for a suite of species found in no other habitat.

Erosion is unpredictable and threatening. Landowners fear lost assets and in the past mobile sand blocked drains and covered roads. Managers plant marram grass, chestnut paling is erected and conifer brush used to preserve the status quo rather than allow unpredictable change. Nature is fenced off.

This is preservation, but maybe not conservation. Coupled with factors such as hard coast engineering, afforestation, loss of grazing, myxomatosis, CO2 and nitrogen pollution encouraging increased plant growth, it stabilised most Welsh (and European) dunes causing a decline in bare sand and early pioneer habitats and their distinctive biodiversity. Mobile dunes account for only 6% of the dune area in Wales, compared with over 70% in the 1950s, while the area of bare sand has fallen to less than 2% of dune habitats. Today, most Welsh dunes have only tiny areas of bare sand and the early pioneer habitats essential for this rich flora and fauna. At Newborough, nearly half the rare mosses and liverworts formerly recorded there have not been seen for over 30 years. Tywyn Aberffraw, formerly with 25% mobile dune, now has less than 4% bare sand and mobile dunes.



Sea holly *Eryngium maritimum*



Tywyn Aberffraw



Some human activity can benefit the dunes



### Changing ideas

The dune preservation policy was challenged in the 1980s by ecologists who argued for active intervention to remobilise dunes and restore pioneer habitats. Dutch coastal managers, who maintain the sea defences of much of the country, embraced this concept of dynamic ecosystem management. They work with natural processes, to roll the sand inshore and so strengthen their soft natural sea defences instead of holding a line. Dunes provide the chief area of natural space for the Dutch population, so the policy passed intense public scrutiny.

This is a sea-change in coastal management; to encourage natural forces to restore dynamism to dunes. We know how to stop dune erosion, the problem is how to start it and then maintain it! At Kenfig National Nature Reserve (Bridgend) managers have punched a hole in the coastal dune to channel the wind and encourage the movement of sand. At Talacre Warren (Prestatyn) sand dredged from the Dee estuary was pumped onto the beach to feed the frontal dunes. On some sites, footpaths constitute the only bare sand left; suggesting that orienteers and horse riders could assist dune management. Different locations require local solutions, but for now the challenge is to change our perception of dunes: from a green lawn to a dynamic mosaic of sand, grass, wetland, heath and scrub, for that is the essence of a healthy dune environment.

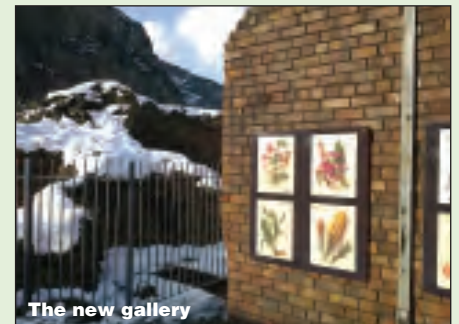
# Holyhead Breakwater Country Park Update

**A lot has happened at the Country Park since the last edition of Swn y Môr was published..**

- We retained Green Flag status for the third year running for managing a quality green space.
- The Breakwater Country Park Volunteer group was set up. This is open to anyone who wants to help out with practical tasks such as gorse clearance, footpath works and environmental projects ( for more information contact Wil Stewart **01407 760530**).
- The end of the summer saw the fittest of the fit compete in the first Ring o' Fire round Anglesey running race – a race so tough only 29 of the hundred starters finished it! In January the annual Endurance Life Trail series event, which the Park hosts, was affected by the exceptional heavy snow. Around 100 of the expected 500 runners ran a shortened course over and around a snow capped Holyhead Mountain.

photographs of iconic Holy Island landmarks such as Rhoscolyn and North Stack. There is even the front cover of a French graphic novel showing a stormy South Stack. The gallery is open to the elements so you may need a broly in the unlikely (!) event it rains when you visit.

- Another new addition to the Park is the recently opened café – Caffi'r Parc run by Agoriad. Drinks, Hot and cold food and snacks available. Why not pop in after visiting the gallery
- Also the Park's orienteering trail continues to be well used. Why not give it a go. Information and maps available online [www.anglesey.gov.uk/breakwaterparkorienteering](http://www.anglesey.gov.uk/breakwaterparkorienteering)



The new gallery



Opening of the new gallery

- In December the Brickshed gallery was completed and officially opened by Albert Owen MP along with the Chairman of the Council Robert Llewellyn and County Councillor J.V. Owen. Depictions of the local flora and fauna are on show, from C.F. Tunnicliffe's measured drawings to the Massey sisters' botanical studies of Angleseys' flowers, including the South Stack fleawort (found nowhere else on Earth!). Local artists Philip Snow and Andrew Southalls' interpretations of the Country Parks varied landscape add to the variety of art on show. Copies of wood engravings depicting the building of the breakwater along with black and white photographs of the Breakwater quarry can be viewed along with inspiring



'Ring of Fire' running race



# Wild Food On Our Doorstep

**Wild food grows all around us, it grows in our lawns that we walk and play on, in our hedgerows, on coastal paths and even in our concreted backyards. In the past, wild food was essential for our existence, the leaves, nuts, berries and roots of some of these plants are incredibly edible and nutritious.** Jules Cooper, The Wild Food Alchemist.

Most of the cultivated vegetables we favour today come from wild equivalents that we now refer to as “weeds”. However, some of these “weeds” contain much more in terms of nutritional value than the veg we buy in the shops. Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) for example is a powerhouse of nutrition containing high levels of iron, calcium, vitamin A and C. The wild plant ‘Fat hen’ (*Chenopodium album*) has far more Vitamin B than cabbage and more iron and protein than spinach. Some wild plants are also considered extremely medicinal. The Elder tree (*Sambucus Nigra*) is a very giving tree and readily shares her gifts with people. In the past she was known as the “medicine chest of the country people” owing to her amazing healing properties. Did you know that when Elder berries appear in the hedgerows it is a sign that summer is coming to an end and to start preparing ourselves for winter. Elder berries contain a component that is so powerful that when taken, it can stop flu viruses from infecting other cells!

Eating wild edible plants not only unites us with the origins of our food but it also helps us to reconnect with nature, giving us a greater respect for the environment. Eating seasonally too, is nature’s way of helping us to be healthy. For example Cleavers or Goose grass (*Galium aparine*) that arrives in early spring is a great way to cleanse our body following all the comfort food we naturally crave in winter.



Nettle and chickpea falafel



Anglesey wild plums

Foraging for a range of wild food in our hedgerows for example helps to sustain biodiversity. Hedgerows are rich in wild food all year round from edible flowers to nuts and berries; a vast source of food and medicine. However, they also provide a valuable habitat for wildlife and are extremely important within areas of extensive farming where species reliant on meadows and woodland edges are declining. Hedgerows are nature’s barriers



Jules Cooper

against polluting pesticides as they can act like filters and help to slow down soil erosion from fields. Hedgerows are also important for butterflies and flying insects that need warmth and shelter and indeed many of our protected species such as bats, use hedgerows to travel from one area of the countryside to another.

Viewing the hedgerows from a holistic stance means that we really value the importance of their role and the impact they have on our environment. They are educators of many varied subjects, telling stories that enrich our cultural heritage about the traditional rural crafts and farming practices.

And lastly where would we be without all the jams, jellies and chutneys, cordials, wines and that lovely comforting bowl of Blackberry and Apple pie... all foraged from the free and giving larder we call the hedgerow!

NB: Gathering wild food is exciting but we should follow a few safety rules. Always start with an easy to identify plant such as nettles (they sting and can be found in the dark!!) or dandelions with its lovely yellow flowers. Most importantly, if you are ever in doubt, **DON'T TOUCH IT** until speaking with an experienced forager or wild plant specialist.

[www.cornhelyg-permaculture.co.uk](http://www.cornhelyg-permaculture.co.uk)



Wild breakfast - nettle tea, porridge with yoghurt, wild blackberries and raspberries, rosehip and nettle seeds



# Coed Llwynonn

**On the 1<sup>st</sup> Jan, 2012, Syrcas Circus signed a 10 year lease on what was to be the most exciting venture they've had since its inauguration in 1996.**

James Carpenter

Originally working in the field of Community Performing Arts, but becoming more involved in Environmental Education, we were now embarking deeper into the world of woodland management.

Coed Llwynonn, opposite Plas Newydd near Llanfair. P.G., owned by the Marquis of Anglesey, became our base, to run volunteer led, educational courses to renovate and reinvigorate the dilapidated woodland areas and old sawmill buildings.

The woodland is separated into 3 distinct areas, each with its own interesting features.

The main section is adjacent to the old mansion, built around 1850, and consists of a paddock accessed through the livery buildings, and includes the original sawmill and other outbuildings, un-opened since last used in the mid- 1980s, when the foresters locked the door for their last working day. Within this 10 acre patch there are mature trees, mainly ash, beech and sycamore with a scattering of oak and birch, plus some rogue spruce and fir which may have escaped the chop from when the Estate ran a Christmas tree business mid last century. The woodland floor is carpeted, first by snowdrops, wild garlic and then bluebells. The area is fronted by a walled garden (complete with Lady Anglesey's peach tree) and the ancient orchard, with its sole surviving apple tree, a lowly Bramley, waiting to be used for grafting to reinstate the orchard to its former glory. Deeper into this section is the old field boundary wall and a spring fed, clay



Living roof hide and old pond

lined pond which once stood alone in the field, but is now surrounded by 120 year old trees.

The far end of this woodland is bordered by a tall mossy 'cock and hens' style wall and a public footpath, a gateway leads through to the larch plantation. According to the old diary in the sawmill, these 8 or so acres were planted with European Larch in march 1962, the trees however are fairly small considering their age, a result of the neglect in managing the thinning. This is the area most favoured by the red squirrels, which perch high up in the bright green larch tops. This woodland floor is a



Dead hedging and old boundary wall

swathe of wood sorrel.

The furthest wood is a separate 10 acre plot across a field, past the old stone pump houses, which gravity fed the mansion and Plas Newydd, before the advent of mains water. A stone's throw away is the 2,000 year old burial mound Bryn Celli Ddu and interestingly, a ruined dwelling named Bryn Celli Wen, is set amongst mature trees including some fine Sweet Chestnuts.

Since taking on the Woods we have run successful courses and volunteer events, including 2 Engagement Gateway, EU grants providing skills and certificates for long term unemployed in Woodland Management & Conservation and Sustainable Living Skills, which have involved a broad range of techniques including Green woodworking, Drystone walling, Horse Logging, chainsaw



Compost toilet

certificates, Blacksmithing, Bee keeping , coppice crafts and Alternative Technologies . Our affiliation with the Forest Education Initiative led to our collaboration with this year's Anglesey Woodland Festival which attracted 4000 visitors. As a result of this we have created many links with like-minded organisations and individuals.

An SDF AONB grant, towards the end of the year, enabled us to purchase a Bandsaw Mill to process timber felled as result of the Forestry Commission's thinning license, also funding Barbara Hadrill of Carnog Horses' return at the end of January to haul the timber. The Sawmill has already enabled two building projects – planking Larch crucks and cladding for our air drying timber store and the roof beams and fascia boards for rebuilding the old pig sty, which is now a snug shed complete with woodburner.

Alongside the on-going Volunteer programme, future plans include providing a 'foundation' course in woodland management, applying for an FEI grant to involve local schools and intergenerational groups to learn the importance of timber and forestry in our traditional, present and future building techniques, and are partners in a Heritage Lottery grant application to provide placements in 2014 to continue traditional forestry skills.

Plas Newydd Estate managers visited at the start of the New Year, and were impressed enough with our progress to offer many acres more woodland to manage, and to renovate and utilise the buildings in the main courtyard, originally used by the estate foresters from the late C19 to the mid 1980's. The fireplace is now lit and by the time you read this the bell in the belfry will be tolling to call the workers in for tea!



# 'Ymweld â Môn'



**The 'Ymweld â Môn' project at the Economic Development Unit, Anglesey County Council aims to harness the environmental quality of Anglesey, providing a visitor experience, which exceeds all expectations. This is done by focusing on developing a number of outdoor leisure based projects on the Island, which will be both financially and environmentally sustainable.** Sara Fôn Evans

Targeting the independent explorer, the project aims to further develop the walking, cycling, and geological offer on the island. The project also aims to further engage with the tourism industry on the island by developing private sector opportunities, working collaboratively with voluntary and public sectors, ensuring its long term success, and deliverability. This will provide the necessary blocks for the encouragement and involvement of young people in developing economic tourism opportunities through the outdoor sector, and thus helping them to stay in rural areas and communities.

It will contribute significantly to the Destination Management Agenda being driven by the North Wales Tourism strategy and its objectives will be to harness the unique characteristics of the Island's natural environment and support its sustainable development.

The project builds on the bedrock of the existing tourism related work on-going as part of the current business plan and evolves certain specific aspects which are key ingredients in a drive to promote Ynys Môn as a sustainable tourism destination. It is funded through the Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-2013 which is funded by the Welsh Government and the

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

### Holyhead Breakwater Country Park

The project has recently completed work at Holyhead Breakwater Country Park which includes infrastructure improvements to the nature trail, new gate and oak chicane, outdoor gallery, and the production and installation of new directional signage and improvements to interpretation along the coastal path.

### GeoMôn

Geomon 'Geo-Park' Development – Raising the visibility of Geomon to both residents and visitors alike through the provision of physical points of presence across the island.

Anglesey has geology of world significance, which has been recognised by the grant of Global Geoparks Network (GGN) membership to GeoMôn Anglesey Geopark, by virtue of its acceptance into membership of the European Geoparks Network (EGN). Global Geoparks are unified areas with geological heritage of international significance, where that heritage is being used to promote the sustainable development of local communities. Geoparks are not just about the geology however; their purpose is to explore, develop and celebrate the links between that geological heritage and all

other aspects of the area's natural, cultural and intangible heritages. As such, Geoparks make significant economic and community contributions to their localities.

To promote Anglesey as a Geopark, GeoMôn interpretation is planned on various sites such as Llanbadrig, Cemaes, Amlwch, Lligwy, Red Wharf Bay, Menai Bridge, Rhosneigr, Rhoscolyn, Parys Mountain, Llanddwyn, and Leiniog to provide information about Anglesey's geology to residents and visitors in 2013.

### Audio Trails

Having worked closely with the AONB team as well as individuals from Menter Môn, the RSPB and GeoMôn, scripts have been produced with regards to points of interest, history and wildlife for a number of locations around the Island in order to create a range of audio trails. Sites include Llanddwyn, Moelfre, Rhoscolyn, Holyhead Breakwater Park, Aberlleiniog, Amlwch Port, Cemaes, Cemlyn, Dingle and South Stack.

### Circular Walk Improvements

Infrastructure improvements to existing circular walks in locations such as Llanddona, Rhoscolyn and Brynrefail will be taking place during 2013.

All the above contribute towards:

- Enhancing rural tourism products, services and sectors to increase the Island's attractiveness as a destination for more discerning visitors with specialized interests. It will do this by targeting the walking, cycling and historical/cultural sectors.
- Capitalise on the potential of the Island's unique natural environment, built environment, cultural and agricultural heritage to create sustainable communities. By targeting sectors and activities that are not confined to the core summer season, it will lead to more sustainable employment and a less seasonal tourism industry, and more sustainable communities
- Develop products which generate national and global attention to raise the Island's profile. By supporting activities and development that support the Geomon Geopark (an internationally recognised designation) the project will raise the Island's profile and help generate positive attention.



Seating at the Dingle

Local artist Philip Snow whose artwork was used on the new map panel at Holyhead Breakwater Country Park





# 'SEACAMS' Project

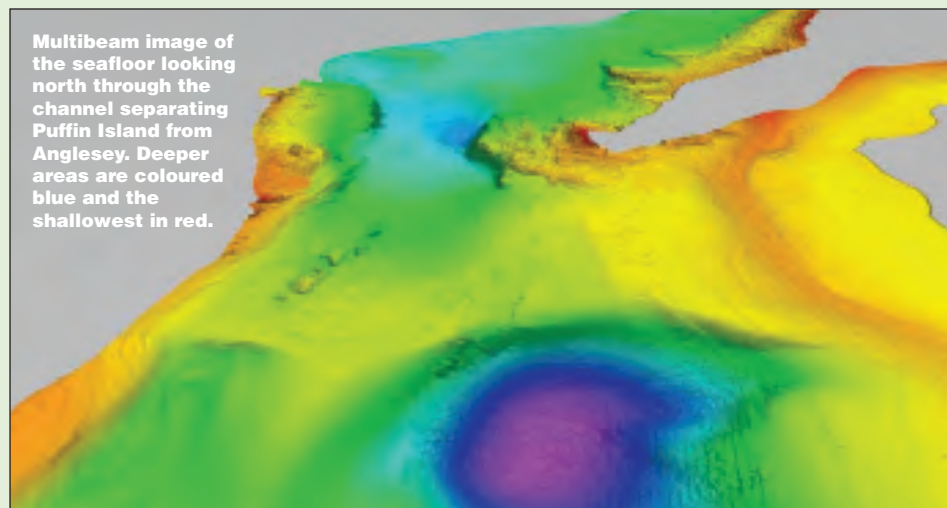
**An exciting and innovative marine related project is currently well underway within the Centre for Applied Marine Sciences at Bangor University. The Bangor-led SEACAMS (Sustainable Expansion of the Applied Coastal and Marine Sectors) project is designed to integrate research and business activities and opportunities in the marine sector in Wales.**

Dr Michael Roberts

SEACAMS is a partnership between Bangor, Swansea and Aberystwyth Universities, and the project provides marine sector companies in Wales with opportunities to access internationally renowned scientific knowledge and expertise and cutting edge marine science research facilities. The aims of the project are to help expand and develop the coastal and marine sector in Wales, which is entering a crucial phase in terms of increased marine related activity, whilst having to face the rigorous challenge of understanding and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

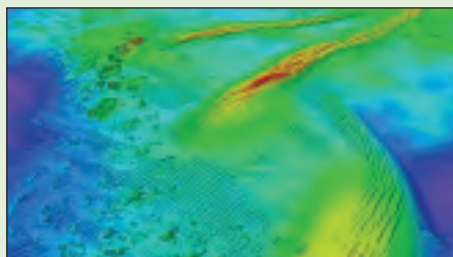
SEACAMS researchers are currently working closely with a team of specialist environmental consultants in order to undertake a seascape characterisation study within the AONB on Anglesey and also around much of the northwest coast of Wales. The SEACAMS team based in the School of Ocean Sciences at Menai Bridge are fortunate to be able to draw upon the assistance of highly experienced scientists, technical staff, a fleet of modern marine survey vessels, and the very latest in high tech marine survey equipment in order to undertake their work. This includes the University's own research vessel the Prince Madog and a brand new state of the art 'multibeam' sonar scanning system which is able to map the seabed to a very high degree of accuracy in 3D.

One of the first areas to be surveyed using this system was the Menai Strait and this work has produced images of the seafloor that until recently had never been seen before, like the region between Puffin Island and Ynys Môn as shown below.



**Multibeam image of the seafloor looking north through the channel separating Puffin Island from Anglesey. Deeper areas are coloured blue and the shallowest in red.**

**Sandbank formations north of Holyhead Harbour**



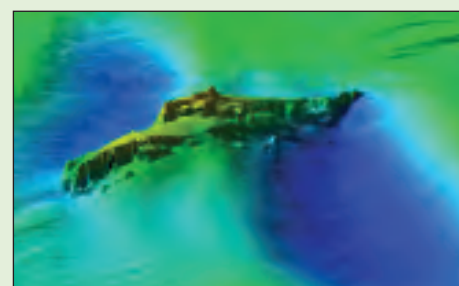
**The wreck of the 'Derbent' located 6 miles north northeast of Point Lynas**

Large areas off the coast of Ynys Môn as shown above and along other areas of the Welsh coast have and will be surveyed over the next two years during the lifetime of the project, and it is hoped that allowing companies and organisations to access this type of information will help them develop a better understanding of this normally invisible but crucial part of our environment.

This type of information helps scientists improve our understanding of the marine processes operating today and also how the important shelf sea regions have developed over thousands of years in response to natural climatic variations. This is crucial in helping predict not only what will happen in the future but also vital in terms of trying to understand the impact of our own activities whilst trying to combat against the potential impacts of climate change.

Another aspect of the work undertaken

**The SS Apapa approximately six miles north of Cemaes Bay**



provides new and exciting information on the cultural heritage and history of Wales from a maritime perspective, through identifying and surveying sites containing shipwrecks. The sea off Ynys Môn is littered with numerous wrecks dating from the early mediaeval period through to recent times and several projects are currently underway to try and locate, identify and solve the many mysteries associated with aspect of marine activity. One well known shipwreck dating from WW1 is located to the northeast of Point Lynas near Amlwch has already been surveyed (fig. 3.) and plans are in place to re-survey the wreck to a much higher degree of resolution.

The almost perfectly intact wreck of the 'Derbent', torpedoed with no resulting loss of life on the 30th November 1917 by the U96 (later made famous in Lothar-Günther Buchheim's book *Das Boot*), lies in around 40m of water approximately 6 miles north northeast of Point Lynas. The multibeam sonar image above shows how the ship is now lying on its side and has had only a moderate effect on the surrounding seabed. The wreck will be surveyed more closely in 2013 in order to obtain a more detailed picture of the structure and the surrounding sediments.

Another shipwreck in this region which has also been recently surveyed using multibeam sonar is the SS 'Apapa', located approximately six miles north of Cemaes Bay. This defensively armed passenger steamship was torpedoed by the U96 only two days before the 'Derbent' was lost but unfortunately in this case 77 lives were lost. The vessel effectively lies across the direction of tidal flow and as a consequence this has interestingly resulted in significant degree of 'scour' either side of the wreck.

Many surveys and activities are planned to take place over the next 18 months in relation to the SEACAMS project team would welcome enquiries from any eligible companies and organisations. For further information please visit their website at:

<http://www.seacams.ac.uk/>





Isle of Anglesey  
Walking Festival

**APRIL 27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> Earth Oven building Course, Carreglwyd Llanfaethlu.** Ever built an earth oven? Here is a great opportunity to have a go in constructing one from scratch. Earth ovens have been used for centuries all over the world, and are a great way of cooking and fun to build. For more info call 01248 751877. £20 - limited spaces.

**MAY 18<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bird Race** As part of a series of events organised to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of North Wales Wildlife Trust, we will be celebrating the wealth of birdlife to be seen on/from our reserves with a special 24hr sponsored bird race. Individuals and teams are invited to take part and can visit any NWWT reserves in one of 3 geographical regions during the course of the day – have some fun, help raise some money for the Trust, maybe win a prize, and hopefully see some fantastic birds!  
To get involved or find out more, please visit our website [www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org](http://www.northwaleswildlifetrust.org) or contact Ben Stammers on 01248 351541.

**MAY 25<sup>th</sup> - JUNE 7<sup>th</sup> Isle of Anglesey Walking Festival** A series of stunning coastal and countryside walks celebrating the natural beauty, history, culture, and wildlife of Anglesey. All of the events are led by professional, knowledgeable guides, who will help you get the most of your experience. Visit [www.angleseywalkingfestival.com](http://www.angleseywalkingfestival.com) or contact 01248 725700.

**JUNE 9<sup>th</sup>, 11am-4pm, RSPB South Stack Heathland Celebration** Join in our annual heathland celebration! Come meet our shepherd, Pete, and watch sheepdogs Sally and Fan herd sheep. We'll also have sheep shearing and traditional spinning and weaving

**Whilst every care has been taken in organising these events, no responsibility can be accepted for changes which may occur. Those attending should be aware that bad weather may cause events to be cancelled. We reserve the right to postpone or cancel any events.**



Isle of Anglesey  
Walking Festival

## Events in the AONB 2013

**Welcome to the AONB events programme for 2013. We have arranged a variety of walks, talks and events to celebrate the distinctiveness of the Anglesey coastline.**

Please read the information in the box regarding the AONB events. For further information, and to secure any places, please telephone the Countryside and AONB Service on **01248 751877** or email: [AONB@anglesey.gov.uk](mailto:AONB@anglesey.gov.uk). Most events are suitable for family groups, children must be accompanied by adults. Sorry no dogs allowed on these events.

demonstrations, as well as face painting, guided walks and other fun activities.

**JUNE 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, 10am-4.30pm RSPB South Stack BioBlitz** Do you always win 'I Spy'? Curious about what wildlife lives on Anglesey, or maybe just looking for a fun family day out? Come help us discover how many different species live at South Stack at our first biodiversity festival. We'll be leading surveys of birds, flowers, reptiles, moths and butterflies.

**SUNDAY JUNE 30<sup>th</sup> Birds of the AONB** Join Naturebites on a guided tour to some of the birding hotspots of the AONB. Whether you're a keen birder or a complete novice, this event offers a great opportunity to see some stunning scenery and (hopefully!) a large variety of bird species and other wildlife. Contact 01248 751877 for details and to register. £20 - limited spaces.

**SATURDAY JULY 20<sup>th</sup> Archaeology Walk, Mynydd Twr, Holyhead** Join us on this scenic walk from Holyhead Breakwater Country Park over the mountain to South Stack. We will be joined by a professional archaeologist as we look at some of the historic and prehistoric sites along the way, and then returning to the country park. **FREE EVENT.** Bring food, water, waterproof clothing and walking boots. Call 01248 751877 to register.

**AUGUST 24<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> Introduction to Rock Climbing** A great opportunity to have a go at rock climbing. A two day introduction facilitated by the Conway Centre near Llanfairpwll, there will be one day indoors on their indoor climbing wall and one day out on the rock. Bring packed lunch and water. Minimum age 16. Call 01248 751877 to book.

**Is there a cost?** Events are free, unless stated otherwise. Please be aware some cost may be unforeseen, eg parking.

**Do I need to book a place?** Events are popular and places are limited. To guarantee your place on the event please telephone the number above. Prior booking also enables us to organise our events more efficiently.

**Where do we meet?** The meeting point is usually stated in the event description, however if the event requires prior booking, this information will be given at the time of booking.

**What do I need to bring?** Generally suitable clothing, footwear and lunch are required, however extra items may be needed for certain events and will be stated in the description. Some items, such as walking boots and waterproofs, are available to borrow, free of charge - contact the number above.

**What happens if it is cancelled?** Circumstances are sometimes beyond our control and events must be cancelled. If this is the case we will make every effort to contact you, to provide as much notice as possible.

**How do I get there?** The AONB supports sustainable modes of transport. For Public transport information please telephone **0871 200 22 33** or go to [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info) Keep an eye out for additional events run throughout the year by visiting [www.anglesey.gov.uk](http://www.anglesey.gov.uk)

**SATURDAY 21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER, Beachwatch Big Weekend, Porth Cwyfan Aberffraw.** Join the AONB team as we take part in the UK's largest annual clean up. Meet at Llys Llywelyn, Aberffraw. Please contact 01248 751877 to register.

**WEDNESDAY 30<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, Spooky Lanterns – Holyhead Breakwater Country Park** Come along to the Holyhead Breakwater Country Park to make some Halloween willow lanterns. 1:00pm – 2:30pm or 3:00pm – 4:30pm. Free Event. **BOOKING ESSENTIAL**, Limited spaces. Contact 01248 751877.



Wild food forage



# Managing the RSPB South Stack Cliffs

**South Stack is one of the jewels in the Anglesey AONB crown, with hundreds of thousands of visitors exploring its cliff tops and watching its seabirds each year. As the tenant of 316 hectares of heathland and owner of 43 hectares of pasture, the RSPB manages South Stack for all nature and for people to enjoy the wonders of Anglesey's coast.** Megan Jones

To many visitors the heathland might seem like a hostile, desolate environment, but if you look closer you will discover a dynamic, vibrant community of plants, animals and insects that make a home in the teeth of the salty wind. Moreover, it might seem that humans have no impact on the plant and animal community, but actually a raft of management is undertaken every year both to maintain and enhance visitor access and to regenerate the heathland habitat. Historically, this habitat would have been managed by the farmers who grazed livestock and harvested heather for animal bedding. Today, the RSPB fills this ecological niche through a mixed management regime of cutting, grazing and controlled burning. The cutting and burning removes lanky older heath and the litter beneath to allow wildflowers and pioneer heath to flourish, whilst grazing sheep maintains open areas for basking reptiles. This varied approach keeps the heath at a patchwork of heights and maximises biodiversity, so more wildlife can call South Stack 'home'.

With the generous support of WREN, the RSPB continues to make fantastic progress with habitat management despite the challenging economic climate. The money is used to employ local contractors who

implement agreed management plans. Through this, we continue restoring the heath to a 'favourable condition,' as defined by the Countryside Council for Wales, to fit in with its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

## Your South Stack

Sheep shearing was a real hit at last year's Heathland Celebration, and is on the cards again this year. In addition to our seabird displays and viewing station at Ellin's Tower, we also held butterfly and moth events last summer to help visitors meet some of the reserve's other inhabitants. And of course, our Visitor Centre, Shop and Café, open every day except Christmas, give visitors a cosy access point to the heath even at the wet and wintry times of the year.

We'd love to see your photos of South Stack this year. Want to share that perfect shot of a basking adder, or a photo of evening light hitting the heather just so? What about photos you took years ago, perhaps even before the reserve was a reserve? You can post copies on Facebook or our blog, or even bring your photos round to the Visitor Centre and we can scan them while you enjoy a tasty treat at the café.

**Sheep shearing Spectacular**



**South Stack Fleawort**





# Aberffraw to Porth Cwyfan



**Enjoy fascinating geology and magnificent scenery on this beautiful walk on the west coast of Anglesey.** Dr John Conway (GeoMôn – Anglesey’s geopark & Royal Agricultural College)

Pictures: J. Conway, unless stated otherwise

**Length:** 4km each way

**Time:** 2-3 hours

**Difficulty:** easy

**Start/Parking:** The old Packhorse Bridge, Aberffraw SH 355 689.

**Starting point:** The old Packhorse Bridge, Aberffraw **1** This geotrail follows the coastal footpath all the way along the rocky shore to Porth Cwyfan. As you walk down the western bank look across the river to Tywyn Aberffraw **2**, a vast area of sand blown ashore during massive storms in 1331, fronted by Traeth Mawr, a beautiful sandy beach backed by the dunes.

On the headland, Tywyn Du **3**, flints and other remains have been found dating back over 8000 years to the Mesolithic period – in those days it would have overlooked a low coastal plain, its topography offering a chance to drive game against what is now the cliff line and into an ambush – this is seen even more clearly just along the coast at Porth Trecastell. All that is visible now is a very low circular feature from the Bronze Age.



**View across the Afon Ffraw towards Tywyn Aberffraw, the vast expanse of sand dunes**



Across the head of the first sandy cove, Porth Lleidiog **4** vegetation is colonising a shelf at the top of the beach, this is a small ‘raised beach’ – a feature created by the land rising slowly out of the seas after being depressed by the ice sheets though due to global warming means it is threatened by rising sea levels. At the far side of this cove, glacial deposits can be seen sitting directly on the ice eroded rock surface **5** – if you back and you will see large boulders lying on the shore – these are ‘erratics’ left exposed as the sea erodes the finer material from the glacial deposits. From here into Porth Cwyfan, if you look generally at the rock platform [ignoring

the erosion cutting into it] a smooth, gently curving surface can be determined, and in places, especially close to eroding soft deposits, it may have a smooth, even polished surface. This represents the ice-eroded rock surface that has been dissected by wave action into a jagged irregular surface. Follow the coastal path, admiring this smooth glacially eroded rock surface, and the excavation of deep inlets by the sea along faults and fractures in the rock. As you pass the headland with an offshore reef (Carreg-y-trai) look carefully into the next little bay **6** - before the headland with a rusty windlass - and note the transition from the Gwna green







schists you have been crossing to slightly more metamorphosed silvery grey mica schists.

**Porth Cwyfan**

Rounding the headland brings us into a large rocky cove unique in having a small church on an island in the middle of the bay. The glacial deposits that once filled the bay can still be seen as a low cliff at the head of the beach. Just beyond the track that comes down onto the beach, you can see deep, narrow V-shaped features **7** usually very pale in colour lined by an orange or rusty coloured rim; these are ice-wedge casts, features formed towards the end of the ice age when this area was permafrost. The soil here is a brown earth, a very fertile if somewhat stony soil, with gradual changes in appearance of soil properties down the profile. The topsoil is frequently

almost free of stones, the result of earthworms casting fine soil onto the surface and allowing the stones to be concentrated at the base of this layer. Further round, this glacial deposit thins as you approach the stream entering the bay **8**. There is a layer of rusty, black or reddish coloured material, often very hard and forming a protruding ledge near the base of the soil, this is an iron pan caused by “gleying” – a process whereby the very wet conditions cause an absence of oxygen which in turn affects the chemistry of iron (and manganese) creating nodules or leading to cemented layers. A little further on the top of this layer looks like a conglomeration of small spherical pebbles, these are actually concretions or nodules of manganese.

church originally stood on a promontory of boulder clay but subsequent erosion not only left it isolated on an island, but undermined the northern half of the church. What we see today is the result of 19th century remedial works, including the stone wall that surrounds the island. The bay beyond the causeway is known as Porth China, apparently a reference to mining boulder [“china”] clay, not suitable for china but it may have been used for bricks or pottery.



**View across ice carved rocks to Porth Cwyfan**

The origins of the church **9** are lost in the mists of time, reputedly founded in 605 by St Cwyfan (Kevin), but the current structure was built in the 11th century at twice its present size. The

You can retrace your steps along the coastline, or take the track up to Llangwyfan-isaf then turn right and follow the footpath back to Aberffraw, or follow the road.



**Stunning views from the Aberffraw coastline across to Pen Llyn**





# Moelfre Circular

**A beautiful walk from the centre of Moelfre, which takes you along quiet footpaths and country lanes via the ancient burial site of Din Lligwy to the spectacular Lligwy Beach. Return via the Coastal Path around the headland and past Swnt, back to the village.**

Start and end point is the centre of Moelfre village; there is plenty of parking at the public car park (Grid Reference: SH 511862)

**Approximately 6.5km/4miles**

**WALK**

- Head out of the car park through the pedestrian barriers and turn left. In about 250m, take a left in front of the school and follow the lane before turning right by Ty'n Coed. Soon bear left into a field, continue over the hill, then follow the river down until you reach a lane. Turn right here and follow the lane around first a right-hand and then a left-hand bend. Shortly on your left you will pass Lligwy burial chamber, Din Lligwy, and the ruins of Lligwy chapel.

*It is believed that Lligwy Burial chamber was erected around 2500-2000BC. The site was excavated in 1909 and a number of remains were found along with various items of pottery, dating from the Neolithic period. The present buildings are thought to date from Roman times. A very special and atmospheric site and well worth a detour.*

- Continue on down the lane past Din Lligwy to a cross-roads. Go straight across at the cross-roads and down to **Lligwy beach**.
- From Lligwy, follow the coastal path eastwards, heading past the small kiosk near the entrance to the carpark. The route is easy to follow, hugging the coast for the most part, apart from a section through open fields which then passes through a short enclosed section near the property of **Moryn**. Around 700m further on from this, on reaching Porth



Helaeth, you will pass a memorial to the **Royal Charter** overlooking the footpath.

*October 1859 saw witness to the shipwrecking of the 'Royal Charter' at Porth Helaeth. The ship was on a return voyage from Australia and heading for Liverpool; mainly carrying passengers, however a consignment of gold was also being carried as cargo. It encountered a terrific storm and came to grief within sight and reach of land.*

*In all, 454 lives were lost and the monument was constructed to mark this tragedy. Standing there on a peaceful day, it's almost impossible to imagine the terrifying scene that unfolded that stormy night.*

Continuing along the coast you will pass through a caravan site, and then head left into an enclosed section, before coming out at a headland overlooking **Y Swnt** and towards

**Ynys Moelfre**. Carry on along following the coast, soon reaching a surfaced path to the **Lifeboat Station**. Continue along this path, heading past **Moelfre Seawatch Centre** until you come out on the road. Turn left along the road (with care) and walk down past Porth Moelfre. If you take a path next to a stream by **Ann's Pantry**, you will come out on the road opposite the car park where you started.

