



LLANELLI AND CWM GWENDRAETH

Local Distinctiveness Toolkit



Main cover image: Kidwelly Quay



We hope you will find this Toolkit useful and full of good things

EXPERTS AND STORYTELLERS

Those of us who live and work in Carmarthenshire are familiar with many of its appealing characteristics and are happy to enthuse about our favourite places, the activities we love, the landscapes and natural habitats that stand out for us as stars of the show. Readers who use this toolkit will already have information and back stories galore, all of which have the capacity to inspire and enthral visitors. The message to all you experts out there is: 'Keep the stories flowing!'

PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS on how to spend the precious days of a holiday, where to eat, where to explore or picnic, how to find some hidden gems: all of this local knowledge is invaluable. What their hosts know and share with their guests can dramatically enhance a visitor's experience, and can do so without creating harm to the

environment or the special places in focus. Enthusiasm is not costly; it does not involve intrusive signage; it does not lead to fast food outlets at every corner. Stories and local interpretations are powerful players, and mercifully the only stage they need is the receptive mind of the visitor. Hosts who invest in knowing their area and sharing that knowledge are generally very careful to also safeguard the qualities that make it special – that must be sustainable tourism at its best.

LINKS TO MORE INFORMATION

This document is a pdf which can be printed as a booklet for handy reference, or used on line when some enquiry requires a spot of checking. You are invited to cut and paste any text which you would find useful in your own brochures or websites. Words in red are hyperlinks taking you to relevant websites for more information at a click.

PAGES TO KEEP, PAGES TO SHARE

20 pages of the toolkit are for you as tourism operators while 4 items at the back of the toolkit, **DIG DEEPER: LOVE CARMARTHENSHIRE**, can be printed as 'handouts' to share with visitors, possibly to have at a reception facility or to equip people if they are on their way out to an area where the topic is relevant.

LET PICTURES TELL YOUR STORY

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AS UPBEAT AS CHARLES WILLIAMS ...
You might like to match the enthusiasm of the editor of *WalesView* magazine:
"If you're coming to Carmarthenshire on holiday, then congratulations. You have great taste."





Fine dining at Sosban

Llanelli is one of the most famous rugby towns in the world and home to one of the most passionately supported rugby clubs, the Scarlets. But sportslovers or not, visitors would find it difficult not to be infected by the enthusiasm and good humour on match days – not just at the Stadium and in town but in the surrounding villages and throughout Cwm Gwendraeth.

The warmth and hospitality are not limited to match days. There's humour at the stalls in Llanelli market; there's patriotism and a love of culture at concerts and festivals; there's good food and drink to enjoy at country pubs – and did you know that the oldest brewery in Wales is in Felinfoel, just outside Llanelli?

Visitors who are exploring the Wales Coast Path will not be disappointed by the stretch of coastline on either side of



Burry Port harbour

Llanelli, particularly if they've brought their bikes or have buggies or wheelchairs to accommodate. The hard surfaces of the pathway are perfect for family cycling and bikes can be hired from the Discovery Centre. The views of the bay and across to the Gower Peninsula are spectacular. It's a view shared by birds from all over the world who have made the Wetland Centre at Penclacwydd a stopping point.

Inland, the villages in Cwm Gwendraeth have said goodbye to coal production back in the twentieth century but they retain the best features of those coalmining communities – neighbourliness, social enterprises of all kinds,



a strong choral tradition and a love of the Welsh language. A local paper is a good place to gauge the temperature of any area, and *The Llanelli Star* has been delivering local news since 1909. Its western version is *The Gwendraeth Star*. In Welsh, the community newspaper *Papur y Cwm* is a great favourite.

When you hear Côr Meibion Llanelli, the male voice choir, sing the National Anthem (as you can on [YouTube](#)), you will really get to the heart of this area and the generous spirit of it people.

You may wish to start with a checklist for your immediate vicinity, but being knowledgeable about places that warrant an excursion will be invaluable if you want to keep visitors in the area.



Cefn Sidan



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Handouts to print for visitors:
 At the Races or on the Green
 Pembrey Country Park
 Llanelli Wetland Centre
 Sosban Fach

Llanelli

Llanelli is a town built on the metal industries. A port for many hundreds of years, it developed as a centre for copper and iron in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The later growth in tinsplate production earned it the nickname Tinopolis, a name still used today by the largest independent TV production company in Wales which has its studios in Llanelli. So synonymous was the town with tinsplate that the local rugby club even adopted the sosban (saucepan) as its emblem.



Modern-day Llanelli has the St Elli shopping centre, street markets on Thursdays and Saturdays and a busy indoor market open six days a week. **Theatr Ffwrnes** is a state-of-the-art performing arts centre offering drama, comedy, music and children's theatre as well as The Cwtsh café-bar.

Llanelli Community Heritage is a fund of local knowledge. The society has mounted many blue plaques and panels throughout the town, giving visitors and residents invaluable information about the area and its famous sons and daughters including actress **Rachel Roberts**, artist **J D Innes**, and **John Chambers** who, in the 19th century,

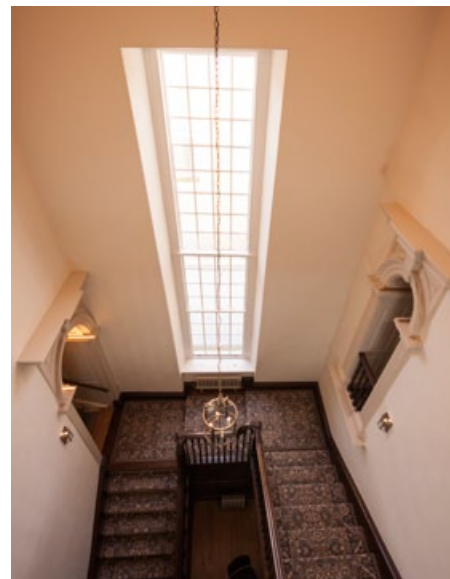
modernised the rules of boxing, athletics and rowing. Yes, it seems the Marquess of Queensbury rules of boxing were actually the work of Chambers, but were endorsed by his university friend after whom they became known.

GRANDEUR RESTORED

Llanelly House came to national notice when it featured in the BBC programme *Restoration* in 2003. It was championed by Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen and has since undergone an astonishing transformation. As he says,

"Llanelly house is Grade I listed for a good reason – it's the finest Georgian townhouse in Wales."

There are guided tours of the restored and dressed rooms and an opportunity to take part in a mock inquest exploring the sad circumstances surrounding the death of Mira Turner, a 22-year old maid who died at the house in 1851. There are plans, too, for a genealogy centre.



Llanelly House



HERITAGE TRAIL

Parc y Scarlets is the 21st century home of Llanelli RFC and the regional rugby team, The Scarlets. **Group tours** behind the scenes can be arranged. The move from Stradey Park did not mean abandoning old associations, though, and sosbans crown the tops of the goalposts at the new stadium. The Scarlets Heritage Trail traces the story from 1872, with audio and interactive software for fans to enjoy highlights - such as the day in 1972 when the pubs of the town ran dry. Why? Llanelli beat the mighty All Blacks 10-3 at Stradey Park.

DID YOU KNOW?

Llanelli takes its name from St Elli (or Ellyw) but there is argument over the identity and even the gender of the saint – a 6th century abbott or a daughter of Brychan, the 5th century King of Brycheiniog?



A GIFT FOR THE TOWN

For pottery fans, **Parc Howard Museum** in the centre of town houses a wonderful collection of Llanelli Pottery. The museum also tells the story of the house and the town to which it was given as a gift, by newlyweds Sir Stafford Howard and Meriel Stepney, who bought the house from the Buckley brewing family with the express intention of giving it to the town. A prominent couple whose wedding was filmed by the early filmmaker, William Haggart, they bestowed their gift on their 1st wedding anniversary in 1912.

Set in parkland with a bowling green, tennis courts, duckpond, bandstand, **gorsedd circle** and children's playground, the museum houses fascinating items in its displays. Brewery vessels sit cheek by jowl with those from the temperance movement, while

eisteddfodau memorabilia jostles for space with souvenirs of local industry. All seem to be brought together in the wonderful tinsplate teapot made to commemorate the National Eisteddfod held in Llanelli in 1930.

The exhibition tells of 'almost a pub on every corner' and shows, on a Band of Hope plate, the reaction of a man faced with the temptation of the demon drink, 'Never No Never'. Perhaps there was less division in

Visitors might like to hear some traditional music as they come into breakfast. **CDs of Côr Meibion Llanelli/ Llanelli Male Choir** are available to order online. They also welcome visitors to rehearsals on Monday and Thursday evenings at 7 o'clock in the Furnace Community Hall, Stradey Road.



attitudes to food – the Llanelli Pottery display shows the popularity of cockle dishes and rice pudding bowls!

DON'T FORGET YOUR STEPNEY

The Stepney Spare Wheel was a huge local success story in the early 1900s. Invented by Thomas Morris Davies, and manufactured with his brother Walter, it provided a solution to the problem of punctures. Motorists were able to clamp the wheel to a damaged one in order to get them home or to a garage. It proved so successful that the word 'stepney' is still widely used in some countries as a generic term for a spare tyre. Car manufacturers eventually began to provide spare wheels as a matter of course, but for a while the Davies brothers of Llanelli kept motorists all over the world on the road.



THE SWISS VALLEY TRAIL

The **Swiss Valley Trail** starts in Llanelli and runs along an old railway track taking walkers, cyclists and birdwatchers on a gentle climb to the Llidi reservoirs, just 4 kilometres away. It's a well-surfaced trail which originated more than two centuries ago as a horse-drawn tramway and is perfect for beginners or families. Coming back is even easier!

DID YOU KNOW?

Members of the protest group the Daughters of Rebecca were highly active in the Llanelli area in the mid-19th century and many of the fifteen tollgates around the town were targeted. At Tŷ'r Frân the gate was removed completely and dropped down a nearby pit shaft, although it was retrieved and fixed back in place a couple of days later.

The Millennium Coastal Park

An almost miraculous transformation has ensured that this corner of Carmarthenshire started the new millennium with a real success story. Creativity and imagination, together with generous funding from a number of bodies, has gone into creating the **Millennium Coastal Park** which stretches for 22 kilometres along the Loughor estuary.



The huge scope of the project meant ten years of hard work to create a stunning park with tourist facilities and wildlife havens from an area scarred by centuries of industry. The once industrial landscape now stands transformed into a prize-winning facility offering visitors scope to walk and cycle, enjoy the landscape and wildlife or simply relax with a picnic.

Running uninterrupted through the park, the cycle/footpath forms part of the Wales Coast Path. En route, cyclists and walkers can enjoy gentle exercise and a huge variety of sea views and landscapes.

The **Discovery Centre** lies at the heart of the park. Here visitors can find all the information they need about the park and its surroundings. It is also a place for indulging in coffee and cake or a light meal while taking in the stunning views. For those with no time to dally, an ice cream from the kiosk will see them on their way.

Further along the path is Pwll, once known for its weaving mills. Its pop factory, which started life as the **Pool Aerated Water Works** in the late 19th century, closed in the 1990s, but refreshment can still be found at the newly-built Pwll Pavilion café.

DIVERSE WILDLIFE

Although within a small area, the contrasting conditions of the many nature reserves within the park make for very different habitats. Compare the sea holly and grasses which thrive in the North Dock Dunes just near the Discovery Centre with the southern marsh orchid of the fenland at Pwll Lagoon. Similar diversity is found in the birdlife,



from skylarks (above) and linnets to redshanks and curlews. Insect life is also extremely varied with many species of bees, beetles and butterflies.

Fishermen (and fisherwomen!) will find many facilities in the park. Fishing from the shore is popular at Llanelli Beach while there is coarse fishing at Sandy Water Park and the woodland lake near Pwll.

DID YOU KNOW?

Stradey Castle just inland from Pwll is now open to the public. The home of the Mansel Lewis family, it is a Victorian house and garden where Tuesday afternoon heritage tours or garden tours are followed by tea in the dining room. (Pre-booking needed.)



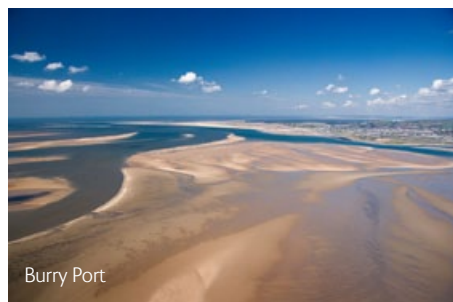
Cefn Sidan



National Wetlands Centre

GOLDEN SANDS

Also within the park are many sandy beaches. Llanelli Beach is a good spot for family picnics and donkey rides, while at Burry Port surfers take advantage of conditions which are just right for their sport. Be aware, however, that the swift waters of the estuary mean that swimming is not recommended and there are therefore no lifeguards on these beaches.



Burry Port

However, at the western end of the Millennium Coastal Park is Cefn Sidan. This is a wide sandy beach that comes within the **Pembrey Country Park** (see also handout page). Its many miles of sand are patrolled by lifeguards who make safe swimming possible, while its regular receipt of the Blue Flag over more than twenty years guarantees its water quality. The country park also offers wildlife trails and birdwatching hides, a dry ski slope and the longest toboggan run in Wales.

BIRDWATCHING, UP CLOSE

The eastern end of the coastal park is marked by the **National Wetland Centre Wales** where numerous hides give opportunities to get close to many different bird species. Canoe safaris during the summer holidays allow an even closer look!

MACHYNYS AND BWLCH-Y-GWYNT

The area of Machynys, once farmland, was developed in the 19th century first with brickworks and later with steel and tinplate manufacture. This was made possible after enclosure of the land and the building of flood defences to protect it from seawater at high tide. To house workers, terraces of houses were built including those at **Bwlch-y-gwynt** where a community thrived until the early 1970s. Former residents have fond memories of their lives here and regularly hold reunions at which they reminisce about the good old days when a close and lively community meant street parties, annual trips to Blackpool and nobody locking their front door.

Although the council ensured all residents had moved out by 1971, development of the land did not begin until after the turn of the 21st century. Since then the **Machynys Golf Club and Spa** has been built on the site, with a golf course created by the Nicklaus Design company, taking advantage of the old claypits as well as the wonderful location with its views across the estuary.



FINE DINING

Further industrial reclamation has created a restaurant offering fine dining on local Welsh produce in a Grade II listed building at Llanelli's North Dock. It is part-owned by former Scarlets and Wales rugby players, Stephen Jones and Dwayne Peel. It is not surprising, therefore, that the restaurant is called **Sosban**.

DID YOU KNOW?

Machynys is mentioned in one of Wales' earliest ecclesiastical works called 'The Book of Llandaff', compiled in the 12th century and now held at the National Library in Aberystwyth. The name Machynys is thought to mean Monk's Island (from Mynach = monk, and ynys = island). Regular flooding of the land at high tide would have created an island of sorts and it is possible that a monastery once existed here.



Burry Port and Pembrey

With its older neighbour at Pembrey, Burry Port forms part of a lively community on the banks of the Loughor estuary. Its harbour lies in the Millennium Coastal Park and has benefited hugely from rejuvenation under the project.



The Burry Port Lighthouse is a well-loved local landmark that sits on the outer harbour just beyond the new marina. Really a harbour light, it is a short, squat building, painted in red, white and black, and its distinctive design makes it a cheery mascot for the town. A walk around the marina, with its sailing boats tinkling at anchor and stunning views across to Gower, is a very pleasurable experience and, if visitors are tempted to put to sea, fishing and pleasure trips are available from Burry Port in season.

FLYING HIGH

Blue plaques and memorial stones in the area show a strong local rivalry between Burry Port and neighbouring Pwll over who can claim Amelia Earhart, the pioneering aviator, for their own. In 1928, Earhart and two male pilots crossed the Atlantic and set down in the estuary having run short of fuel on their flight to Southampton. A

blue plaque near Pwll commemorates Earhart landing nearby, while a much older memorial at the Amelia Earhart Gardens in Stepney Road states that the plane flew to Burry Port. It seems both places have a claim to fame – Pwll as the spot where the plane touched down and Burry Port as the crew's first landfall after the seaplane was towed to the harbour here. This confusion is nothing compared to that of Earhart and her companions who thought they were in Ireland! Although Earhart was just a passenger, the journey made history as the first time for a woman to cross the Atlantic by air. Four years later she made the flight solo, this time aiming for Paris, but landing in Northern Ireland – where there are presumably more memorials in her honour!

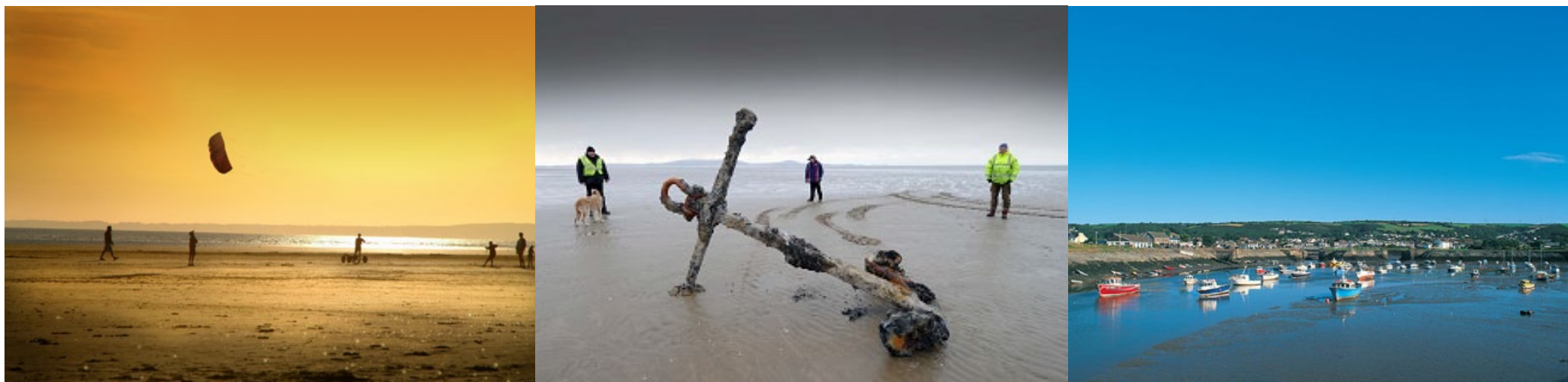


BRASSY AND BEAUTIFUL

Burry Port has a strong musical tradition and is rightly proud of its very own **Burry Port Town Band**. The traditional brass band has been highly successful, winning many awards and appearing with well-known soloists such as local boy and West End star, John Owen Jones. The band has adult, youth and junior sections and hosts an annual festival, The West Wales Solo and Ensemble Day. Visitors may enjoy listening to one of their CDs or even attending a rehearsal. The band meets on Sunday afternoons and occasional Tuesday evenings at the Old Copperworks School. (Find them on Facebook or Twitter @burryportband for more details.)

DID YOU KNOW?

A pedestrian bridge at the marina is named after Jack Mariti, a steelworker from Italy who lived in Burry Port. He was a well-loved character and is credited with saving over 200 lives along this stretch of coast in his role as a volunteer lifeguard.



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STORMS AND SHIPWRECKS

The coastline here has changed enormously over the centuries and is still subject to the power of wind and waves. One 19th-century casualty was the old harbour at Pembrey which became so silted up that all marine traffic moved to Burry Port just a short walk away. Pembrey Old Harbour, now listed, has also undergone a transformation as part of the **Millennium Coastal Park**.

Shifting sands and fast currents have led to hundreds of shipwrecks here, giving rise to stories of wreckers who deliberately lured ships into danger. Whether or not these tales are to be believed, many drowned seamen and passengers are buried at the ancient St Illtyd's church in Pembrey. A memorial stone tells of Adeline Coquelin who was just 12 years old when La Jeune Emma foundered nearby in 1828.

The inscription records that Adeline was a niece of Josephine, "consort of that renowned individual Napoleon Bonaparte".

Previously hidden wrecks continue to be exposed along the shore and items such as the anchor uncovered at Cefn Sidan in February 2014, twelve feet in length and weighing one tonne, can suddenly find themselves in daylight after centuries beneath the sand.

Not far from St Illtyd's church is Y Cwrt (known locally as Court Farm). This an Elizabethan house, the oldest of its kind still surviving in Carmarthenshire. It is said to have been a landmark for sailors who used its tall chimneys and the church tower as navigational aids. For many years the ruin stood neglected, but is now the subject of an enthusiastic campaign for restoration by **The Friends of Court Farm**.

ENJOYING THE WILDLIFE

The area offers ramblers a choice of many **inland and coastal footpaths**. Pembrey Mountain is well worth exploring, with Pen-y-mynydd picnic site a good starting point for woodland and hillside walks offering wonderful views – across three counties on a clear day. Birdwatchers will be delighted by the range of birdlife. Kestrels, buzzards, greenfinches and long-tailed tits are commonly sighted, while seasonal visitors include the brambling, redwing, whitethroat and sedge warbler. Industrial heritage is also evident in small pit workings, stone quarrying and a still visible tramway.

The Wales Coast Path continues along this stretch of the estuary, passing through the marina at Burry Port, the dunes south of Pembrey and above the long stretch of golden sand at Cefn Sidan, taking

walkers through **Pembrey Country Park** and **Pembrey Forest and Nature Reserve**. Below the actively growing sand dunes is a rich saltmarsh. Together they make up the **Pembrey Burrows and Saltings Local Nature Reserve**, rich in bird, insect and plant life.

For those who enjoy noisier pursuits and an adrenaline fest **Pembrey Motor Racing Circuit** might just fit the bill. One option is to test your own car to its limits, to discover its potential.

DID YOU KNOW?

The circular enclosure outside the church of St Illtyd's in Pembrey was used to house stray livestock.



Kidwelly

The ancient town of Kidwelly lies on the Gwendraeth estuary above Carmarthen Bay. It is dominated by the magnificent mediaeval **Kidwelly Castle** which rises above the Gwendraeth Fach. The castle is a superb example of the many built in Wales by the Normans to command the areas they had invaded, but where they still came under attack. It has survived the centuries well, despite many bitter battles and frequent capture and recapture by opposing sides in the long struggle against domination by the English crown.



DID YOU KNOW?

One of Gwenllïan's sons, who became known as The Lord Rhys, is credited with the establishment of the eisteddfod at the cultural heart of Wales. He held a great gathering of poets and musicians in 1176 and offered a chair at his table for the best poet. This tradition continues today with the annual churning of the bard at the National Eisteddfod.



HEROIC PRINCESS

The castle holds an important place in Welsh history as the target of Princess Gwenllïan's ill-fated attack in the 12th century. Near the gatehouse is a memorial to Gwenllïan, the warrior princess. At a time when succession to the English throne was being hotly disputed, Welshmen saw their chance to regain some of their lost lands from the Norman invaders. Gruffydd ap Rhys, Prince of Deheubarth, went north to seek help in this struggle from the family of his wife, Gwenllïan.

During her husband's absence, Gwenllïan took the initiative against a new Norman threat. She led a courageous attack against Kidwelly Castle, but was not successful and one of her sons was killed in the battle. Norman revenge was swift and brutal. Gwenllïan was beheaded for treason. Legend has it that a spring flows from the spot where she died at Maes Gwenllïan (Gwenllïan's Field).



DID YOU KNOW?

The 'dear old lady of Cydweli' who features in a well-known nursery rhyme could have been Lady Hawise de Londres who lived in Kidwelly Castle in the 13th century:



*Hen fenyw fach Cydweli yn gwerthu losin du,
Yn rhifo deg am ddime, ond unarddeg i mi.
Wel dyna'r newydd gore ddaeth i mi, i mi
Oedd rhifo deg am ddime, ond unarddeg i mi.*

Little old lady of Kidwelly selling treacle toffee
Counting ten a halfpenny, but eleven for me.
Well that's the best news that ever came to me,
Counting ten a halfpenny, but eleven for me.

Birdwatching at Kidwelly Quay



The oldest canal in Wales can also be found at Kidwelly. It is the Kymer canal, just three miles long and opened in 1768. It has now been partially restored together with a section of the old quay and has become a haven for birdlife, recognised by the RSPB.

For those interested in industrial heritage, the [Kidwelly Industrial Museum](#) tells the story of the tinplate works, second oldest in the UK and with remains still evident today. Opening times vary, so it's essential to check the website before visiting.



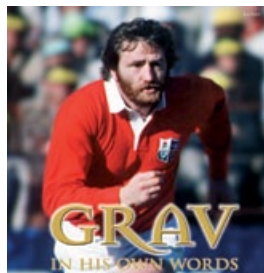
Kidwelly Industrial Museum

Mynydd-y-garreg

Just above Kidwelly is the village of Mynydd-y-garreg, meaning Mountain of the Stone, where an upland walk rewards visitors with stunning views across hillside and coast. Old quarries, now flooded, create a haven for wildlife, from gentle butterflies and dragonflies to more dramatic birds of prey. More evidence of past industry can be seen in old tramways and limekilns. The particular geology which lent itself to the creation of such industry has now given Mynydd-y-garreg its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

MAN OF THE MOUNTAIN

Ray Gravell, born in Kidwelly, was brought up in Mynydd-y-garreg and was its greatest ambassador, spreading his message "West is Best" throughout Wales. A giant of a man, he played rugby for Llanelli, Wales and the British Lions in the 1970s and 80s and was one of those who took part in Llanelli's historic defeat of the All Blacks in 1972. In later years, he became known as a broadcaster and actor in both Welsh and English. He was one of few to be equally well-known to audiences in both languages, identified throughout the principality and across both cultures simply as 'Grav'. In 1997 he was appointed to the role of sword bearer, a ceremonial position in the [Gorsedd](#) that he held with great pride, later taking the bardic name of Ray o'r Mynydd (Ray of the Mountain). He was also privileged to live in a street that was

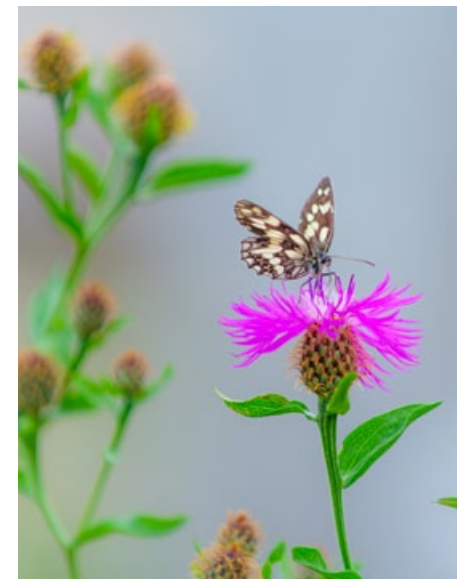


re-named in his honour during his lifetime making him Ray Gravell of Heol Ray Gravell, Mynydd-y-garreg.

His huge presence in both body and spirit made him an unforgettable character.

On his sudden death in 2007, there was a great outpouring of grief and his funeral service was held at Stradey Park in order to house the many thousands of mourners, among them sportsmen, politicians, poets and musicians. A memorial stone can be seen on the mountainside at Mynydd-y-garreg with lines composed by the poet Tudur Dylan. The verse describes him as '*enaid mawr y mynydd*', 'great soul of the mountain'.

Another memorial to Ray Gravell was erected at Parc y Scarlets in Llanelli. In acknowledgement of his great love for his home, the plinth was quarried from stone at Mynydd-y-garreg.



DID YOU KNOW?

A sword is used in gorsedd ceremonies, but – in order to demonstrate that bards meet in peace - the whole blade is never exposed. During the crowning and chairing of the bard ceremonies at the National Eisteddfod, the sword is held partially unsheathed over the head of the victorious poet while the archdruid cries, "*A oes heddwch?*" (Is there peace?) to which the assembled company replies: "*Heddwch!*" (Peace!) When not in use, the sword is displayed at the National History Museum in St Fagans near Cardiff.

Pontyberem

Visitors who explore the Gwendraeth valley may be surprised to see in Pontyberem and Bancffosfelen such large villages of terraced housing. The fact that this was an important coalmining area is often overlooked in the general story of the coal industry in south Wales, but the hard anthracite coal mined here was of very high quality. In 1913, the mines at Pontyberem employed some 1,300 colliers.

The names of the collieries remind us that this industrial revolution happened in the heart of the countryside – Glynhebog, the valley of the falcon; Pentremawr – large village, its size creating quite a stir; Pontyberem – the bridge where the stream, Nant Beran, meets the Gwendraeth river, the frothy current resembling a yeasty brew (*berem* is yeast).

MEMORIAL HALL AND INSTITUTE

As in other mining communities, the working families of Pontyberem felt a responsibility to provide amenities for recreation and self-improvement. Contributions of a penny a week, quite a sacrifice from miners bringing home small



Boxing Night at the hall

paypackets, ensured the building of The Memorial Hall and institute, opened in 1934. It comprised a large reading room, lecture hall, library, ladies' room, billiard room and games room, and a refreshment room. It also contained the Pontyberem Roll of Honour marking the deaths of the 43 servicemen lost in the First World War. The Art Deco influence on the building is still to be seen today in the symmetry and clean lines.

PERFORMING AT PONTYBEREM TODAY...

The hall is a popular venue for concerts and eisteddfodau. Visitors might well catch an event where internationally renowned musicians star – harpist Catrin Finch, tenor Rhys Meirion and Simfonia Cymru, a progressive chamber orchestra, are among those who have performed in recent times. But keep an eye on their programmes for more unusual events, such as the Boxing Night or Country Music.

IS THIS THE CWM?

The longstanding soap opera which runs on the Welsh-language television channel, S4C, is entitled *Pobl y Cwm*, the people of the valley. And yes, Ioan Gruffydd really did star in it for several years before he was exported to Hollywood! The exact location of the drama's fictional village, Cwmderi, is not specified, but it has to be Pontyberem, doesn't it? Watch the opening film sequence, look at the architecture, listen to the accents in the café. The real café in Pontyberem is called, appropriately, *Caffi Cynnes* (*cynnes* meaning 'warm' and relating to the welcome). It is owned by the community and its profits support community ventures – worth paying for a cuppa here, therefore.



DID YOU KNOW?

The renowned Pontyberem safety lamps were made by John Jones (1879–1976) who worked as Colliery Chief Mechanic at Pentremawr Colliery. They were made from thin brass, stood at just over 20cm high and bore the maker's name in raised brass foil: JOHN JONES MAKER PONTYBEREM. The examples that have been recorded were made between 1900 and 1923, when the Pontyberem collieries were thriving. After the Coal Mines Act was passed in 1911, regulations regarding safety lamps became stricter and that may be the reason why production stopped.

HISTORIC GATHERING

There are two reasons for taking a walk on Sylen mountain, just four miles from Pontyberem. Visitors can enjoy fine views of Cwm Gwendraeth, and out over Carmarthen Bay, which are uplifting all year round. What was once a coalfield has been reclaimed by nature, so the spoil heaps of Cynheidre colliery are now green hillocks.

The other reason, which will appeal particularly to historians, is that Sylen mountain was where the Great Meeting was held in 1843, one of the concluding events in the 'Riots' organized by protestors who called themselves Rebecca's Daughters. The previous action had consisted of attacks on tollgates, the very tangible symbol of how country folk were being oppressed. But by 1843 their approach had changed and open air meetings were held, calling for political action.



On August 25th, 1843, as many as three thousand people came to the Great Meeting on Sylen Mountain to hear speeches from the best orators among them. A reporter from *The Times*, Thomas Campbell Foster, attended, as well as a lithographer from *The London Illustrated News*. The coverage they gave to the protestors' cause finally led to a massive petition to be presented to Queen Victoria and ultimately to changes in the law. A blue plaque on Sylen Mountain is in honour of those who fought injustice and succeeded.

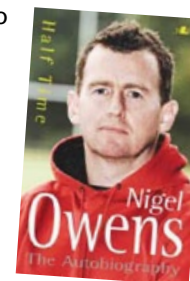


WELSH THROUGH AND THROUGH

In Pontyberem and the surrounding valley, visitors will come across the Welsh language at every turn, because these are the heartlands of the language. A community enterprise initiative, **Menter Cwm Gwendraeth**, is devoted to furthering the use of the language and the vigour of the communities. Posters advertising all kinds of activities demonstrate how central the Welsh language is to everyday life. The mascot created way back in 1991 when the organisation was formed is a figure made, appropriately, of coal – *glo* – and is called Glöyn. The book shop in the village is named after him!

PONTYBEREM BOY

Nigel Owens is one of the best referees in rugby union, respected and applauded throughout the world, and closely watched by his Pontyberem friends. In his popular **autobiography**, he writes of the personal crisis he faced before he “came out” as gay – among the first to do so in the macho world of professional rugby. He also has a great store of rugby anecdotes and is a favourite on television chatshows.



DID YOU KNOW?

Pontyberem has a glamorous 007 connection – tenuous, but interesting! In 1915 Dorothy Squires was born in a showman's caravan at a camp just outside Pontyberem. Apparently she yearned for a piano when she was a child but had to make do with an ukulele, which she put to good use at her first gigs at the Working Men's Club in Pontyberem. Dorothy lived a colourful life, with many court appearances, several of them arising from her marriage and subsequent divorce from Roger Moore, saint and spy.

COUNTRY MUSIC FAVOURITES

Gwenda Owen and her daughter Gaynor are much in demand at gigs and concerts throughout Wales, often collaborating with choirs and other singers at Welsh-language events which can nevertheless offer visitors the international language of music.



Cefneithin and Mynydd Mawr

This was the coalmining area of Carmarthenshire, the western end of the south Wales coalfield where hard anthracite was mined for over a hundred years. Today, it is hard to imagine the intensive industry but the very existence of villages such as Cross Hands and Tumble remind us of the working communities that grew up here. At one time, so prevalent were the coal tips that the area was known as 'the land of the pyramids'. Now Nature has reclaimed its territory.

For many Welsh rugby fans, Cefneithin is a place of pilgrimage. Two of the greatest figures in the history of the game came from this small rugby club, where the pride and enthusiasm can still be felt.

It was in 1971 that the British Lions won the series against the All Blacks, an amazing feat, and their only triumph against the home team out of all their tours. Locals will proudly tell you that the achievement was down to two men from the Gwendraeth Fawr, and they were both from the little industrial village of Cefneithin. Barry John was the genius fly-half – hellbent on winning. Carwyn James was the experienced, knowledgeable coach who knew how to get

the very best out of his players. When Barry John was a youngster, he idolised Carwyn James, who was a student at that time, playing fly-half for Llanelli and for Wales. Carwyn spent hours on Cefneithin rugby pitch practising moves, and Barry was like an apprentice to him, running for the ball and kicking it back to his master. Just over a decade later, the two of them would travel together to the Southern Hemisphere and come back victorious.



LOCALLY PRODUCED FOOD

Just a mile from Cefneithin is **Cwm Cerrig Farm Shop**, where visitors can stock up on food and drink products to take home, or just enjoy them on the spot in the large grill area. Welsh lamb, beef, chutneys and pickles, hampers, local beers, Welsh vodka ... something for every palate.



GOING TO THE PICTURES

For families who have never had experience of a traditional picture-house, they should check what's showing at **Cross Hands Public Hall**. How different from a multiplex cinema this Art Deco building is. They won't forget the old-fashioned style, no matter what film they see.

Far left: Carwyn James, inspirational coach, broadcaster and columnist for *The Guardian*. Left: Barry John, winner of 25 Welsh caps between 1966 and 1972

In days gone by, waggons full of anthracite coal would be pulled by steam trains from the villages of Pen-y-groes, Cross Hands, Cefneithin and Tumble to the docks in Llanelli. The activity was relentless. In the Gwendraeth valley, like in so many others, people were totally dependent on coal for their livelihood. When the coalmines closed, one by one, the railway they had used to take coal to the docks was no longer needed, but the route of the old Mynydd Mawr railway was a good one.

ROUTE 47

The track has a new life these days – it was used as a foundation for a new cycleway, developed by Sustrans, a group devoted to sustainable transport. So now **Route 47** of the National Cycle Network runs from the opening next to the cinema in Cross Hands over to Tumble, where it emerges near the Great Mountain Working Men's Club. It's an easy and pleasant ride, suitable for families.

Targn Pleiades/Shutterstock.com



The battle with the grime and blackness of coal dust is over now and wildlife is flourishing. The surveys undertaken show a huge diversity of nesting birds, small mammals and flowering plants. Because there are plenty of trees, cyclist should not



be surprised if a jay screeches as it races past. Strange to think that this unbroken countryside was once the site of major collieries. At Blaenhirwaun, one shaft was 200 metres deep and the men who worked there

– 585 men on the books in 1923 – worked on six separate seams, including *yr Wythien Fawr*, the Big Vein.

The Great Mountain Colliery, Tumble and the sidings where coal used to be loaded onto the wagons is now rich meadow land, part of Mynydd Mawr Woodland Park. There are several entrances to the park for vehicles and for pedestrians who come to enjoy the natural world and the peaceful environment. The village of Tumble is, as the name suggests, on a steep hill. Cyclists will find refreshments there before continuing towards Cynheidre and, if they're still full of stamina, onwards to the picturesque Lliedi reservoirs above Llanelli.

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

At Cynheidre, railway historians and volunteers are hard at work on a heritage venture. They are developing part of the former colliery site in order to have a working railway and tourist attraction. Visitors who have expertise or knowledge of comparable ventures elsewhere would be made most welcome at the **Llanelli and Mynydd Mawr Railway**.



2000 tons of coal a week was produced at Great Mountain Colliery in 1892 and by 1918 it was decided to open another drift. For about twenty years there were almost a thousand miners working on the site. The colliery was closed in 1962, with most of the miners being taken on at Cynheidre Colliery.



© Paul White

Llangennech

The sprawling village of Llangennech looks out over the Loughor estuary as it begins to widen and resemble a proper sea. It was essentially a coalmining settlement, with the Morlais Colliery as its centerpiece, though many of its inhabitants would have found work in the tinplate industry in Llanelli itself. Though the recent link road from the M4 has caused a parting down its middle, Llangennech is still a good place to explore. Down by the river Loughor, anglers try their luck at sea fishing, while further up the village, there are good walks along the river Morlais.

There are certainly atmospheric buildings. Photographer Paul White captured the ruined Tŷ Parc, Llangennech (left) perfectly in his book with poet Damian Walford Davies, *Ancestral Houses: Lost Mansions of Wales*.

IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS...

Actually, it's up to the woods. To the north of the link road, the A4138, Troserch Road leads eventually to a path (that is not currently signposted, unfortunately) into Troserch Woods. This is such a good place for wildlife it's a great pity that it is not better known. On the flickr website, [The Troserch Woodlands Society](#) has assembled excellent pictures of the butterflies and fungi that can be found there, which should be more than enough to tempt lovers of wildlife to track down this lovely place. Picnic tables and benches are provided. Be sure to tell visitors to wear wellingtons, unless a spell of dry weather has surprised us.



LLANGENNECH TALENT

How does the anchorman at BBC news introduce himself on Twitter? First and foremost as a Welshman who lives in London – ‘Cymro yn Llundain’ and ‘BBC presenter’. Then come the really important items: ‘Llanelli boy and Scarlets fan’. Yes, Huw Edwards attended Llanelli Grammar School from the age of eleven but he grew up in the village of Llangennech and his career is closely followed by friends and family in the area. He returns to Wales to support numerous organizations, not least [Shelter Cymru](#), for whom he is a president.

“No-one should have to face the threat of homelessness alone and that's why I am honoured to support this charity.”



Hywel Teifi Edwards, Huw's father, was an eminent professor who delighted in the history and culture of Wales, and he loved the village of Llangennech. People invariably queued to hear his lectures, to smile at the insults and exclamations he hurled, and to witness the absence of any paper or script. The man was a genius.

As soon as you begin to choose highlights, there's so much scope to offend. But as well as your own particular favourites, be sure to know about events at these great attractions.

From left to right: National Botanic Garden of Wales; The Boathouse, Laugharne; Castle Woods and Dinefwr Castle. Below: National Wool Museum; red kite



NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDEN OF WALES, LLANARTHNE

The Great Glasshouse and the central gardens area are full of beautiful plants all year round. Less well known are Waun Las National Nature Reserve and the magical wooded valley of Pont Felin Gât – perfect for roaming, picnics and birdwatching. A 'return free within 7 days' policy operates from Easter right through the summer, because it really is impossible to see absolutely everything in a day. Motor powered and manual wheelchairs are available. Visitors to the Botanic Garden on Fridays can take advantage of the free guided tours of the Great Glasshouse.

LAUGHARNE

As well as enjoying The Boathouse, visitors can visit the writing shed or walk the Birthday Walk, based on the poet's fine 'Poem on His Birthday'. Dylan's haunts include Browns Hotel, recently refurbished, and there are plenty of other eating

and drinking opportunities in the town. The castle overlooking the estuary is splendid. The Laugharne Weekend every April and other festivities attract visitors from near and far.

CASTLE WOODS AND DINEFWR PARK, LLANDEILO

Visitors can walk up to Dinefwr Castle through the woodland nature reserve called Castle Woods, free of charge. Entrance to Dinefwr Castle is also free. In the broadleaved woodlands, oak, ash, beech and sycamore are the commonest trees, and other wildlife such as lichens and ferns abound. Birds such as nuthatches, woodpeckers and treecreepers are common. In winter, woodcock use the woodlands. Wild fallow deer roam through the wooded ridges and in the parkland there are white park cattle. The National Trust owns Newton House and the beautiful parkland in which it stands, which was designed in part by Lancelot

'Capallity' Brown. There is an admission charge for the house and a parking fee if you come by car.

NATIONAL WOOL MUSEUM, DRE-FACH FELINDRE

Set in the village of Dre-fach Felindre in the beautiful Teifi valley, which was once the

centre of the thriving woollen industry in Wales. Shirts and shawls, blankets and bedcovers, woollen stockings and socks were all made here, and sold not only in Wales but to the rest of the world. Machines in the building that was the former Cambrian Mill are still working! Visitors can watch a demonstration and experienced staff are happy to answer questions. After tracing the process from fleece to fabric, visitors are usually keen on the café ...



RED KITE FEEDING CENTRE

What a display of aerobatics visitors get at the Red Kite Feeding Centre at Llanddeusant. Every day, at 2.00pm (in winter) or 3.00pm (in summer), visitors can watch them swoop and dive, and appreciate the fact that the kite population has recovered. This beautiful bird has been saved.





Fairs and Festivals

It's great to have somewhere to go where there's a party atmosphere, a sense of occasion, celebration and fun. Fairs and festivals are just what people need to confirm that they really are on holiday. Some extra festivals will no doubt come and go, but the following seem to be annual events which are evolving into traditions. **Discover Carmarthenshire** keeps the listings page up-to-date so it's worth checking it often.

April	The Laugharne Weekend – musicians, poets, writers, all mingling
May	Geopark Festival – talks, walks and explorations in the Black Mountain area
June	Carmarthen Riverside Festival – coracles and other craft on the Tywi Welsh Game Fair , Carmarthen – falconry, wildfowling, stunts and entertainment
July	Llandeilo Fawr Festival of Music and Jazz Festival – recitals by acclaimed classical performers, and all that jazz ... National Archaeology Day celebrations, Carmarthen Museum
August	Merlin Festival , Carmarthen – fancy dress, storytelling and circus tricks
September	Sheep Festival , Llandovery – expert shearing, vintage machinery, with castle as centre stage
November	Llandeilo Christmas Festival of Senses – shops and societies getting very Christmassy



Agricultural Shows can be a delight for city dwellers, so information about which ones visitors might aim for would be good to keep. There's plenty of choice, from Cothi Bridge Show (above) and St Clears YFC Show held in May (the latter at Carmarthen showground) to Llandyfaelog Show in September. July shows include Bancffosfelen, Cwmdru and Trap, while August is show time for Llangadog, Cynwyl Elfed and Llanddarog.

Events which can capture the imagination are held at various venues throughout the year so keep their programmes for reference and check their websites: **The National Botanic Garden of Wales**, the **Lyric Theatre**, Carmarthen, **Aberglasney House and Garden** (right), **Newton House and Dinefwr Park**, **National Wool Museum**, Dre-fach Felindre



And of course, there's always a Day at the Races to consider. **Ffos-las Racecourse** host events several times a month: afternoon racing; evening racing; family fun days. Their fixtures list is always up-to-date on line.

The **United Counties Showground** at Nantyci is home to all kinds of fairs and special events throughout the year, so it is worth keeping an eye on the website to know when the Antiques and Fleamarket or the Caravan and Motorhomes Show come round on the rota. Good to know also which Sundays are reserved for the straightforward – but very popular – carboot sales.



Have a go!

- Carmarthenshire is one of Wales's Welsh-language strongholds. Visitors will encounter the language on signs, in place-names, and in the communities and places they visit.
- The 2011 Census revealed that over 78,000 people in Carmarthenshire speak Welsh. So visitors will have no trouble hearing the language
- Give your visitors confidence – once they know the sounds all the consonants make, they'll be fine! Welsh is consistent, and every consonant you come to is pronounced. There are no silent letters. So 'Have a go', **say something in Welsh!**

DID YOU KNOW?

Welsh is the ancient language of Britain. In the seventh century you could have travelled (on horseback) from Edinburgh all the way to Cornwall, and spoken nothing but Welsh the whole way. Places along the route still show their Welsh origins: Melrose, *Moelrhos*, the bare headland; *Ecclefechan*, *Eglwys Fechan*, the little church.

Welsh is spoken today in Patagonia, South America. The Welsh emigrated in large numbers in the nineteenth century and established a community in Chubut. The **Welsh-Argentine community** is still flourishing and has many of Wales's passions: rugby, the eisteddfod, music.

SOUNDS OF CONSONANTS

Most consonants are as in English, so it's:
b, d, ff, h, l, m, n, p, s, t

The others follow these rules:

c	k sound
ch	ch as in 'loch'
dd	th as in 'the'
f	v sound
g	as in 'got', not 'general'
ng	ng as in 'sing'
ll	put your tongue ready for 'l' but blow ('Llanelli')
ph	ph as in 'phone'
th	th as in 'thin'

Here are some words you can share with visitors on a daily basis without causing any confusion.

SHWMAE – How are you – this is a local colloquial way of saying it (*shoo-ma-ee*)
 BORE DA – Good morning (*boreh dah*)
 PRYNHAWN DA – Good afternoon (*prun ha-oon dah*)
 NOS DA – Goodnight (*nohs dah*)
 DIOLCH – Thank you (*dee-olch*)
 HWYL – Bye (*Hoo-eel*)



Welsh place-names are easy to understand when you know how. They are descriptive, and echo a past when topography and landscape features were vitally important in navigation across land.

BRYN – hill (*brynne*)
 AFON – river (*ahv-on*)
 FAN – beacon / peak (*van*)
 MYNYDD – mountain (*mun-eeth*)
 CWM – valley (*cwmb* – the 'b' is silent)
 LLAN – church or settlement (*Llahn*)
 CAER – fort (*kyre*)
 CASTELL – castle (*cas-tell*)
 GARD – garden (*garth* – but 'th' as in 'the')
 Tŷ – house (*tee*)
 MAWR – large (*mah-oor*)
 BACH – small (as in J. S. Bach)
 ABER – mouth or confluence (*abber*)
 PONT – bridge (*pont*)



Perhaps you should warn guests that 'the little house', *tŷ bach*, is our polite way of referring to the toilet. Don't want them heading to the wrong place ...



At the Races or on the Green



Set in the rolling countryside of Carmarthenshire, at Trimsaran north of Llanelli, is the UK's youngest racecourse. Ffos Las tells a hugely successful tale of 21st-century rejuvenation of land once scarred by industry. It was created on the site of an opencast coal mine and opened in June 2009, the beauty of its setting belying its industrial past. Surrounded by green fields and with views of the Gwendraeth Valley and Carmarthen Bay, it must be one of the prettiest places to watch horseracing.

FFOS LAS RACECOURSE

This is the first National Hunt and Flat Turf racecourse to be built in the United Kingdom for 80 years and is suitable for all kinds of horse racing events. Jockey Willie Carson loved the place and was full of praise for the track, which is attracting race-goers from far and wide – including many who cross from Ireland to enjoy a day in the Welsh countryside. The racecourse offers events all year round with many feature races, family fun racedays and a range of daytime and evening meetings.

Ffos Las prides itself on its amenities and offers a variety of restaurant facilities and hospitality packages. If you're really celebrating, why not splash out on a



private box with waiter service and a private balcony? And no worries about transport – landing your helicopter can be arranged!

The racecourse is also home to a widely-used conference centre, so if horseracing is not your thing, look out for one of their many concerts, exhibitions, fayres or Saturday car boot sales instead.

GLYN ABBEY GOLF CLUB

Trimsaran, not content with a spanking new racecourse, also offers superb golfing facilities at the [Glyn Abbey Golf Club](#). Not far from Ffos Las, it shares the same wonderful views. Why not look into one of their Birdies and Bets offers, combining a round of golf with a visit to the races?

The 18-hole Abbey Course is of championship standard and designed to challenge and stimulate even the most experienced golfer. Greens are well maintained and visitors have commented on a great day's golf and a warm welcome received. To ensure there is something to suit players at all levels, the club also has a driving range, chipping and putting greens and the nine-hole Mission Course for beginners.

Their Capers Restaurant offers light snacks, a children's menu, a range of reasonably-priced dishes and a Sunday carvery, all amid the lovely setting of the Gwendraeth valley, so even if your view of golf is that 'it's a good walk spoiled', you will still find Glyn Abbey worth a visit!



Pembrey Country Park

Pembrey Country Park guarantees a wonderful day out for all the family. Whether your taste is for wildlife or sport, woodland or seaside, exercise or relaxation, the park has something for you.

Covering an area which stretches from the Pembrey Saltings to Pembrey Forest, extending north to the Celtic Trail cycle route and south to the sea at Cefn Sidan, the park takes in a wide area of countryside and it is hard to know where to begin in describing all it has to offer.

- Cefn Sidan is a truly magnificent eight-mile long stretch of sandy beach, a huge open space that guarantees you will never be crowded and making kiteflying here a joy. You may recognise it as a location for the BBC's *Atlantis* series. A consistent holder of the Blue Flag, its clear waters are

patrolled by lifeguards who ensure this is a safe place for swimming.

- Ski Pembrey is a dry ski slope with separate ski and snowboarding facilities open to all-comers, while the more experienced can take advantage of slalom runs and jumps. Thrillseekers will also delight in the Cobra, the longest toboggan ride in Wales.
- Other outlets for the energetic include pony trekking through the forest (courtesy of the park's equestrian centre), cycling (bikes available for hire), a giant adventure playground and plenty of scope for ball games in the many acres of parkland.
- For a more leisurely approach, there are woodland trails and a Corsican pine forest to explore and, for even quieter contemplation of the natural surroundings, the conservation pond and bird hides are ideal.



beautiful Gower peninsula, can make even a rug on the beach and the simplest of sandwiches seem like fine dining.

- During the summer months you may also come across a clown or a magician on your way through the park, so keep your eyes peeled. While you are about it, be on the lookout for birds of prey such as goshawks and sparrowhawks which are attracted to the forest area, a nature reserve forming part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- For dog owners, the park is a treat. Although only allowed on the sands during the winter months, dogs are welcomed in the rest of the park all year round – “but only when accompanied by well-behaved owners”!
- If even this sounds too energetic, take advantage of the miniature railway which runs at weekends from Easter to September and daily throughout the summer holidays. Hop on for a tour!
- The park has other facilities, too, notably cafes and a beach kiosk and of course plenty of space to settle down with a picnic. In fact all those miles of golden sand, and the accompanying view of the

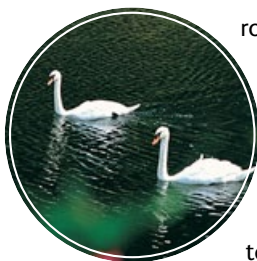


National Wetland Centre Wales

At the eastern gateway to the Millennium Coastal Park lies real treasure – a wildlife haven at the **National Wetland Centre Wales**.

Part of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, and spread over 450 acres, the freshwater lagoons and saltwater marshes are home or temporary lodging to hundreds of different species of birds and wetland animals. With easy access via a network of paths, a series of hides allows you to get really close to nature – and in the summer months a canoe safari can take you even closer!

Closed only on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the centre offers all-year-



round access to nature with many additional events planned for visitors. These vary with the seasons but can include minibeast hunts, birdbox workshops, den building, pond dipping and duckling nursery tours.

The Swan's Nest Maze and Water Vole City are just two of the additional facilities for children. Here they can explore to their hearts' content, crawling through tunnels and indulging their imaginations.



PADDLE YOUR OWN CANOE

During the school summer holidays, a fantastic experience is open to visitors. Two-person Canadian canoes are available to explore the narrow channels of the waterways. Imagine yourself as a pioneer, hearing only the call of the birds and the soft lapping of water as you gently paddle among the tall reedbeds.

ON YOUR BIKE

Cycling is not generally allowed at the centre, but in the summer holidays a fleet of 25 bikes is available for visitors, offering gentle exercise as you explore the wetland trail.

The centre also offers great facilities in its superb Estuary Café, shop and art gallery. The highly-rated café offers views of the beautiful Gower and allows you to indulge in home-cooked food while knowing that all profits help to fund the centre and, although you may not be able to take flight with the birds, a climb to the top of the tower will reward you with an all-round bird's eye view of this stunning place.

GUIDE IN THE HIDE

For those of us with little knowledge of birdlife, an expert at hand is just what's needed. At different times of the year, a guide is available in one of the hides to help you spot and identify birds. Check the display at the information desk to find out in which hide a guide may be working.

Please note: in order not to distress the wildlife, only assistant dogs are permitted on the site.

Keep an eye out for details of occasional out-of-hours activities such as a bat walk or dawn chorus event.



Sosban Fach

Long associated with Llanelli and its rugby teams, this little song is said to have originated in the spa town of Llanwrtyd Wells in the late 19th century.

Mae bys Meri Ann wedi brifo
A Dafydd y gwas ddim yn iach.
Mae'r baban yn y crud yn crio
A'r gath wedi scrapo Joni bach.

Sosban fach yn berwi ar y tân,
Sosban fawr yn berwi ar y llawr,
A'r gath wedi scrapo Joni bach

*Mary Ann has hurt her finger
And Dafydd the lad isn't well
The baby in the crib is crying
And the cat has scratched little Johnny.*

*Little saucepan boiling on the fire
Big saucepan boiling on the floor
And the cat has scratched little Johnny*

The song found its way to Llanelli and struck a chord with a population strongly linked to the tinsplate works and the making of sosbans (saucepans), becoming a firm favourite with Llanelli rugby fans. Although just a nonsense song, it is still heard today, roared by thousands at local and international rugby

matches with as much passion and fervour as the traditional hymn tunes of Calon Lân and Cwm Rhondda.

There seem to be as many versions as there are claims to authorship and additions continue to this day – in Welsh or English

– including Llanelli RFC's very own modest verses "Who beat the All Blacks?" and "Who beat the Walla-Wallabies?"

One commonly sung verse refers to 'Dai bach y sowldiwr' (Little Dai the soldier) 'a chwt ei grys e mas' (and his shirt tail

Saucepans and chaos seem to go together - it was Alice and a large saucepan that inspired Arthur Rackham in this famous illustration.



hanging out). Different theories have been put forward to explain these lines – perhaps from the name of a local farm, or a corruption of 'Dai bach y soldrwr' (the solderer) continuing the tinsplate connection? But another theory has a rather more serious meaning. It relates to a national railway strike in 1911 when troops brought into Llanelli were ordered to fire on the crowd, killing two men – the shirt-tail reference a gibe at the soldiers taken by surprise by the demonstrators and without enough time to dress properly before being deployed.

Whatever the truth behind the words, Sosban Fach now inspires a whole new generation. The popular male choir **Only Boys Aloud** took the National Eisteddfod by storm in 2010 when they ran on to the stage, in shirtsleeves with ties loosened, and gave a fantastically energetic and youthful performance of the song, complete with a punchy "Oy, Oy, Oy" at the end of each verse. And for quite another performance, go to **YouTube** to see the Max Boyce tribute band – called, yes, Boycezone – performing on matchday in Cardiff city centre.

DID YOU KNOW?

The poet Richard Davies (bardic name Mynyddog), who is credited with the original lines on which the first verse of Sosban Fach is based, also wrote the lyrics to Wales's most famous lovesong, *Myfanwy*.

Visitors to Wales love to discover what it is to be Welsh, and what makes each region of Wales so distinctive and special. They will appreciate hosts who are willing to share the inside stories and show a true Sense of Place.

This pack was created by Carmarthenshire Tourist Association to provide tourism businesses within the Llanelli and Cwm Gwendraeth areas with guidance on the distinctive features of this region.

- The **Carmarthenshire Tourist Association** offers the county's tourism and hospitality business operators a wide variety of support, advice, benefits and services to help run a successful and profitable business. The team welcomes enquiries from the trade.
- The **Tourism Department** of Carmarthenshire County Council promotes the county as a visitor destination in a range of ways, and invites traders to participate in these and also to use text and images that they have already created.
- **Visit Wales** is also an important resource, their image bank being called Wales on View.
- Contact **Carmarthenshire Tourist Association** about accessing any of the images in this pack which you would like to use in your business. Most of them will be available to tourism businesses. On line, make use of **Tywi Valley Trails** to suggest inland excursions, keeping visitors in Carmarthenshire for longer, and enticing them to return. As with the pages of this booklet, trails can be printed to give to visitors.

