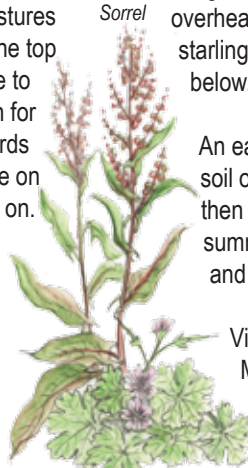




Set off down Llwyn Lane for about 400 metres. Leaving the lane where marked and skirting the farm's upland pastures a welcome bench is reached at the top of the second field. Take time here to sit and view the scenery and watch for birds of prey - red kites and buzzards are often in view. When rested, stride on to the hill top bench two fields further on. Grasses underfoot include rye grass, common bent and crested dog's-tail with flowers of red and white clover, common mouse-ear, sorrel, dove's-foot crane's-bill, dandelion and daisies.



Sorrel

Dove's-foot crane's-bill

Depending on the season, stock may be grazing the fields along the walk. The cattle are of varying breeds including; Charolais, Welsh Black, Hereford, Belgium Blue cross Friesian, Limousin and the rare breed of White Park. The herd of cows is run with a Charolais bull that will produce a mix of pure bred Charolais and cross bred calves. These calves are reared on the farm until they are sold for breeding or the beef market.



Welsh mule



White park

The farm's flock of sheep is mainly of a native breed - Welsh Hill type. Other hardy upland breeds include; Beulah and Speckled Faced Mountain, Badger Face and Swaledale. These female ewes are run with Blue Faced Leicester rams to produce the lowland flock of Welsh Mules. The lambs are born in the Spring between March and May and are reared on the farm. The female lambs are kept for future Autumn breeding ewe sales and the male lambs are sold for "Welsh Lamb" in the market.

The high view-point bench provides a 360° breathtaking panorama from which, with clear visibility, six counties can be seen - south to the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains, west to the Cambrian Mountains, and north to Cader Idris.

This exposed hill top has a heathy short-grass sward much liked by skylarks, meadow pipits and wheatears. Listen for the evocative song of skylarks in spring and summer. Ravens 'cronk' their call overhead and in winter big gatherings of fieldfares, redwings and starlings visit the fields and berried thorn trees of the farmland below.



Wheatear ♂

An easier walk follows - look for the badger sett mounds of soil on the bracken covered slopes of the dingle down to the left - then a short climb brings you to a small outcrop of rock at the very summit of the farm. Scribed on two sides by earthworks the banks and ditches here mark out the remains of an Iron Age fort.

Views to the east open up with Radnor Forest, once a Medieval hunting ground, on the far hills.

At the high point of the farm, lies a small Iron Age hillfort, dating from 800BC to the mid 1st Century. Hillforts were defended settlements with encircling earth or stone ramparts topped with timber palisades. Inside there were thatched roundhouses, raised granaries, smithies and industrial areas. Some were occupied permanently while others were used as retreats in times of turmoil. The defended enclosures of Mid Wales were constructed in order to defend people, livestock and food stores from Roman attack. This hillfort, known as 'Garth enclosure', overlooks a Roman marching camp in the valley below. It is not difficult to imagine the Iron Age people watching the advance of the Roman army from this windy hilltop.



Fieldfare

woodlands. Above the road a steep valley-side is clothed in western gorse, bracken and scattered hawthorn trees and further on there are high outcrops of exposed rock. Worn down by toweringly thick moving ice sheets during the Ice Age and weathered by the elements for millennia these sedimentary rocks were laid down in a tropical Silurian sea 450 million years ago. Some rare and interesting plants are found in such places and by the roadside, plants such as foxglove, wood sage and wall pennywort find the thin, poor soils and rocky places to their liking.

Birds on the gorse slopes include the pretty stonechat and its cousin, a summer visiting bird from Africa, the whinchat, which together nest on these heathy slopes.

The last section of the lane, before it meets the A44, has an open aspect with tall-grass verges alongside sparsely vegetated edges. Here a quite different range of flowers can be found including imperforate St. John's-wort, mouse-ear-hawkweed and creeping cinquefoil. This is a habitat especially good for butterflies and grasshoppers, as it is south facing and relatively warm. The observant trail follower will also find the ant-hills made by the miniscule yellow meadow ant.

Pass by the chapel, or take a look around the church yard. The old grave stones are covered in a tapestry of lichens and the berried yew trees provide shelter and food for thrushes in winter.



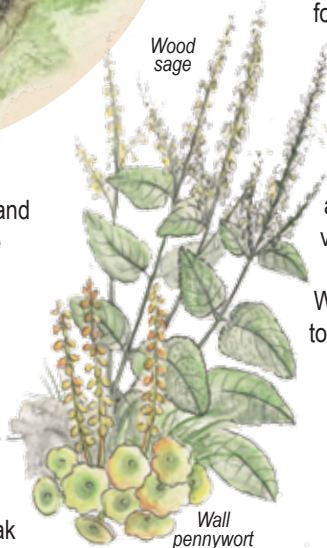
Stonechat ♂

Stride out again now, on up the Llwyn Lane. Contemplate the centuries of use this lane has seen. The rich mixture of hedgerow trees, shrubs, flowers and ferns along the way tells us this is an ancient route-way. It leads eventually to Abbey Cwm Hir and many very old dwellings, the Lôn Farm being one such place.

We do hope that you have enjoyed this walk and that it inspires you to walk the Lower Farm Trail - if you haven't already done so.

The next 4 km (2½ miles) are easy going and rewarding. Take the nearby gate onto the lane and turning right, after a short climb, start the gentle descent to Dolau Baptist Chapel.

This attractive, interesting and ancient narrow roadway is part wooded and has a feeling that strongly contrasts with that of the exposed hill top. Here one feels an intimacy, and a cosiness grows as one descends towards the homely village of Nantmel. Habitats along the way are varied with views below across pastures and oak



Wood sage

Wall pennywort