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Arfordir Gogledd Cymru – disgrifiad cryno

Am lawer o'r ffordd rhwng Pen y Gogarth a'r Parlwr Du, mae bryniau calchfaen yn gwahanu glan môr y gogledd rhag y cefnfro. Yn y gorllewin, mae eu clogwyni serth yn agos iawn at y lan, lle mae datblygu trefi gwyliau glan môr, a'r prif gysylltiadau trafniadaeth, wedi ymwasgu i hynny o dir gwastad cyfyng sydd ar gael, ac yn dechrau dringo rhai gelltydd. Yn y rhan ganol, mae'r bryniau'n cilio o'r glannau, gan ganiatáu i ddyffryn eang Clwyd, sy'n gwahanu Bryniau Clwyd a Mynydd Hiraethog, gyrraedd y môr rhwng Tywyn a'r Rhyl.

Mae llawer o'r glannau wedi'u datblygu ar gyfer twristiaeth, o drefi gwyliau cynlluniedig Fictoriaidd fel Llandudno, Bae Colwyn a'r Rhyl, i westai ac iechydfeydd gwledig, i ddatblygiadau, gwerysilloedd gwyliau a meysydd carafanau mwy diweddar a llai ffurfiol. Yma. Yn draddodiadol, y treuliau pobl gogledd-orllewin Lloegr eu gwyliau: ac er i natur gwyliau newid, mae'r ardal eto'n adnabyddus am ei chyrchfannau gwyliau glan môr: ac ymddengys bod rhai, Llandudno a Bae Colwyn yn neilltuol, yn goroesi ac yn ymaddasu yn ôl y gofyn.

Yn y cefnfro ceir ystadau a pharciau coediog Bodysgallen, Gloddaeth, Bodelwyddan, Cinnel, Castell Gwrych a Bodrhyddan. Yn hyn o lawer mae tirweddau Pen y Gogarth, canolbwynt anheddu ers miloedd o flynyddoedd, lle ceir tystiolaeth y bu pobl yn byw yno

ers dechrau Hen Oes y Cerrig (10,000CC a rhagor), a lle darganfuwyd cloddfeydd copr helaeth Oes y Pres, sydd bellach yn atyniad ymwelwyr.

Summary Description

Limestone hills back the northern coastline and hinterland for much of its length between the Great Orme and Point of Ayr. Their steep sides run close to the coast in the western half, where the development of seaside resorts and main transport links have squeezed into the limited available flat land, and started to spread up some hillsides. The hills run back from the coast in the central section, allowing the broad Vale of Clwyd to reach the sea, flanked to the east by the distinctive line of the Clwydian Range of hills, and finally issuing its river between Rhyl and Towyn. Much of the coastal strip has been developed for tourism, from planned Victorian seaside resorts, notably Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and Rhyl, through country hotels and sanatoria, to more recent and less formal sea-front developments, holiday camps and caravan parks. Traditionally this was where the folk of the north west of England took their holiday, and although the nature of holidays has changed, the area is still known for its seaside holiday destinations and some, notably Llandudno and Colwyn Bay, appear to be surviving and adapting accordingly.

Inland are the estates and wooded parklands of Bodysgallen, Gloddaeth, Bodelwyddan, Kinnel, Gwyrch Castle and Bodrhyddan. Far older are the landscapes of the Great Orme, a focus of settlement for millennia, with evidence for occupation extending back to the Upper Palaeolithic (10,000BC+) and where extensive underground, Bronze Age copper workings were discovered and opened as a visitor attraction.

Key Characteristics
Carboniferous limestone hills and coastal headlands - resulting in distinctive light-coloured rocky escarpments with cliffs and scree, including most prominently Great Orme's Head, with characteristic clints, grykes, stepped crags and scree slopes.
The mouth of the Vale of Clwyd – a broad flat coastal plain centred on Rhyl, including the small estuary of the River Clwyd, including a network of medium scale pastoral fields of regular pattern, with ditches and, to a lesser extent mixed, managed hedgerows, and occasionally interspersed with small stands of mixed farm woodland.
Seaside resort towns - urban development and arterial road and railway routes along coast, constricted in places by topography and rising hills. Much 19th century development with more recent suburbia. Some caravan parks and holiday camps between Llanddulas to Prestatyn coalesce settlements.
Steep sided hill back drop to coastal towns - wooded, or exposed limestone and sheep pasture.
A generally man-made coastal edge – promenades, sea walls, groynes, rock armour and other forms of protecting the coastal edge run for most of the length of the coastline.
Limestone quarrying – a number of old and active limestone quarries have left holes and scars, coastal quarries having used sea ships for transportation.
Hinterland away from the coast – with intervening hills makes for a quiet, sheltered, inland, rural feel, with some classic limestone outcrops, notably south of Llanddualas.
Ecological importance - Great Orme is ecologically important for its concentration of calcareous grassland, while elsewhere, there is a diversity of habitat types, including the coastal dunes at Gronant and remaining areas of coastal habitat such as sandbanks, marshland and tidal river flats.
Archaeology - Great Orme has a range of archaeological features illustrating a variety of historic land uses, including prehistoric caves, extensive evidence of underground, Bronze Age copper mining, ritual and funerary monuments, and hillforts.
Rhuddlan Castle is strategically sited at a crossing point over the Clwyd, at what was once the eastern boundary of the Medieval kingdom of Gwynedd.

A number of historic parklands - lie within the area, while the estate architecture of Gwrych Castle and wooded parkland is a locally prominent feature.

Iconic image of historic Llandudno and it's famed natural setting – between two rocky headlands, with its pier, grand sweeping promenade and Victorian building façades, arguably the finest of their type in Wales, the town is known as the 'Queen of resorts' and is known nationally for seaside holidays.

Visual and Sensory Profile

This distinct coastal landscape is characterised by activity and bustle, though there are more quiet and tranquil areas, even in and amongst the sea-side developments, for example, at Gronant in the east of the area, the dunes remain undeveloped. South of Prestatyn the foothills of the Clwydian Hills are steep-sided, from which panoramic views across the area are possible. Elsewhere, rocky limestone hills reach to the coastline with the result that resort developments and transport routes become squeezed into a tight corridor near the coast. Both the A55 Expressway and the Chester to Holyhead railway traverse the area, with much night lighting along the former, along the coastal edge, and from the towns. At Llandudno, the combination of the historic seaside resort town and its dramatic open limestone and coastal setting has created a very distinctive sense of place; the Great Orme and Little Orme reach the coastline abruptly, as bare, windswept, and highly craggy headlands. Generally, the hills and high ground that provide the backdrop for the resort towns are wooded and enclosed, but have areas of scrub and open ground, revealing limestone rock exposures.

Inland, the area is hilly, rural and tranquil in complete contrast to the busy coastal edge. Rolling hills, further limestone outcrops, and a number of small valleys provide much seclusion and shelter only a short distance from the coast. This inland landscape also provides a significant buffer and transition zone with the appreciably more rural and quieter landscape of the Rhos Hills to the south. The operational limestone quarries at Llanddulas are relatively hidden from view, though the loading jetty on the coast adjacent is a prominent feature.

This area remains a gateway to Wales for visitors from England; to descend Rhualt Hill along the A55 Expressway and to pass the marble church at Bodelwyddan is to leave Merseyside and the Dee estuary behind, and to experience the beginnings of a distinctively Welsh landscape, with the Vale of Clwyd to the south and Eryri in distant prospect.



Limestone hills and headlands: the Little Orme. © John Briggs



The Victorian resort town of Llandudno: a grand sweep of building facades in a grand natural setting between limestone headlands. © John Briggs



Urban edges as seen from near Penrhynside, looking inland the rural Rhos Hills area in the far distance. © John Briggs



One of a number of small valleys that run north to the sea, this one emerging at Colwyn Bay. © John Briggs



As the Vale of Clwyd meets the sea it opens into broad coastal levels, yet Rhydylan Castle (middle distance) has found a slightly elevated position adjacent to the River Clwyd. © John Briggs

Geological Landscape influences

The soft, low-lying coastal fringe is constrained in width by steeply rising limestone hills inland. These hills occasionally meet the coastline, most famously as the Great Orme headland, (207m in height), with a chain of coastal hills in the western half of the character area reaching 300m in height. The hills draw back in the central section, opening into the Vale of Clwyd with its extensive coastal levels. The main river is the Clwyd, issuing between Rhyl and Towyn, but others include the Gele and Dulas.

The most prominent rock today is Carboniferous limestone (350 million years old), deposited in shallow tropical seas. This rock characterises the Ormes and other hills around Llandudno, the cliffs at Llanddulas and the Prestatyn hillsides of the adjacent Clwydian Range in the east. The stepped topography of the Great Orme and other areas reflect cyclical changes in deposition from marine to shoreline.

Till deposited during the final phase of glaciation reflects the meeting of ice-sheets from Snowdonia and the Irish Sea. The respective tills differ in character and join more or less parallel along the coast from Llandudno to Prestatyn, producing drumlin and meltwater features. Of note is the Mochre meltwater diversion, the River Conwy being blocked by sea ice and diverted to issue near Penrhyn for a time.

Today's coastline is strongly influenced by both geology and human interventions. The Great and Little Orme headlands have high, steep, coastal cliffs, while the Silurian rocks at Colwyn Bay and the Permo-Triassic rocks at the mouth of the River Clwyd form low-lying coastal areas. Human influence on the coast is particularly evident at Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and Rhyl, with their long promenades and hard coastal defences. Even the high limestone cliffs have not escaped human influence with numerous quarries. The only significant area of natural coast where coastal processes are allowed to continue unhindered is to the east of Prestatyn where sand dunes extend towards Talacre and Point of Ayr. Metal mining has also been historically important with examples of Bronze Age mining on the Great Orme and small-scale lead/zinc mining near Abergele. The copper mining on the Great Orme in particular has left a legacy of spoil heaps and disused shafts, which pepper the landscape.

Landscape Habitats influences

The low lying soft coast and levels contrast with the hard, craggy limestone hills, providing the settings for very different soils and habitat types.

Large sections of the soft coastline have been heavily modified or developed. Behind the seawalls, remnants of sandbanks and dune habitats survive in places, and some interesting shingle ridge habitats have developed along the beach itself at Traeth Pensarn. The most extensive section of active sand dune habitats are at Gronant Dunes to the east, a remains of a once much larger system along this coastline. These dunes support a rich flora, including rare liverworts, and associated invertebrates, with five Red Data Book species of moths and bees. The shingle spits support the largest colony of breeding little terns in Wales.

Inland from the coast in the central section are levels. Once marshes and fen, these areas have been reclaimed to farmland, with large fields bounded by straight drainage ditches and much improvement.

The stepped, rocky limestone landscapes and coastal headlands of the Great Orme support calcareous grassland as well as acidic heath in places, and include a variety of rare plants, including the endemic wild cotoneaster (part of the Aber Afon Conwy SSSI).

The headland also supports a diverse invertebrate population, with a range of seabirds on their coastal cliffs. Limestone pavements in the west support rich scrub woodland flora. In addition to the Great Orme, there are a series of important limestone grassland habitats running through the western half of the area, which support calcareous grassland communities. These include the Little Orme, Gloddaeth, Bryn Euryn, Mynydd Marian, Pydew and the Llanddulas scarps and woods. Mynydd Marian also supports an important population of the dwarf race of silver-studded blue butterfly. Llanddulas is an area of both limestone rock and associated ancient broadleaved woodland near Abergele, important for a diverse range of plants, bryophytes, butterflies, moths and bats.

Lack of grazing is often a management concern on calcareous grassland, with consequent scrub encroachment, as evident in many places. However the Great Orme benefits from a resident population of feral goats, which help to maintain the grassland habitats.

Historic Landscape influences

Archaeological and historic sites in the area demonstrate a long history of human intervention and settlement spanning the last 12,000 years from the Upper Palaeolithic period to the recent past. The Great Orme is particularly notable for its sequence of early archaeological remains, including Upper Palaeolithic caves such as Kendrick's Cave, the Neolithic burial chamber at Llety'r Filiast, Bronze Age cairns and extensive copper mines, and the Iron Age hillfort at Pendinas. Mining for copper on the Great Orme continued during Roman, Medieval and later periods, while coal was mined near Prestatyn.

Ecclesiastical sites are represented by the site of the medieval chapel at Penrhyn Old Hall, but the main medieval settlement in the area was the town of Abergele, still an important sub-regional centre.

The pre-Victorian village of Llandudno lay some way up the slopes of the Great Orme, and was sustained by farming, mining and fishing. From 1846 the low-lying common land between the Great and the Little Orme was let out by the Mostyn estate on a system of controlled leasing, which led to the growth of what has become a classic (and very well-preserved) example of a British seaside resort town. Similar processes brought into being the other resort settlements along the coastal strip. The area is also rich in historic parks and designed landscapes – Gwrych, with its extraordinary towers perched on cliff-tops, Pwllcrochan, and Gloddaeth, now St David's College, as well as the urban parks in the resorts, of which Happy Valley in Llandudno is a notable example.

The steeply rising hills and resort nature of much development has resulted in a concentration of development along the coastline, with road and rail transport routes occupying key coastal positions in Colwyn Bay and routing along the old Mochre meltwater channel in the west.

Cultural Landscape influences

The cultural identity of this area remains closely tied to its development in the C19th and C20th as a holiday area, centred around Llandudno, Llandrillo ('Rhos-on-Sea'), Colwyn Bay, Rhyl and Prestatyn. In the mid-19th century, and with the spread of railways, the area became a fashionable place where people of influence from London came for sea-air: Gladstone sea-bathed at Rhyl, whilst Matthew Arnold pondered on the nature of Celtic identity at Llandudno. Llandudno remains the most prominent resort, helped with its well-conserved historic and spectacular natural setting.

The result was, and partly continues to be, opulent hotels (Llandudno), wide streets, promenades, piers, caravan parks, lidos, the Mountain Zoo and numerous other visitor attractions and infrastructure.

Llandudno is well known for its association with Alice in Wonderland (1865) but less so for Matthew Arnold's Oxford lecture of the same year, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', inspired by seeing an Eisteddfod being set up in the previous summer. Later published, its significance was that it opened the way to a wider appreciation of all things Celtic.

The area has also contributed to the expression of performing arts and events, with theatres and venues in resorts hosting many iconic shows and well-known stars, from large events, conferences and gatherings, to the small 'Punch and Judy' kiosk on Llandudno's North Shore promenade.

The area has many mentions in C20th literature, a few being: Arnold Bennett's 'The Card' (1911); Stanley Houghton's 'Hindle Wakes' (1912); Evelyn Waugh's 'Decline and Fall' (1928). Much earlier references in literature include: the Creuddyn Peninsula (the Llandudno area) forming the setting for the tales of Taliesin and Elphin; Mochdre is mentioned in the fourth branch of the Mabinogion, where the place-name element ('pig-township') is explained as the resting place of the magic swine of the story. Based more on fact than fiction, 'Y Drych Christianogawl' (a Roman Catholic tract) was secretly printed by Robert Puw of Perhyn Creuddyn, in a cave on the Little Orme in 1587.

Kinmel camp was the scene of a mutiny in 1919, when Canadian soldiers refused to obey orders, fearing that they were to be sent to fight the Bolsheviks.