

SUNDAY 17 JUNE 2018: LLANGATTOCK & CRAIG Y CILAU

On Sunday 17 June 2018, a group of keen Lower Wye Ramblers set off on a 15.6 km walk from Llangattock, a pretty village across the River Usk from Crickhowell. We began by walking alongside the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal for a while before starting the first climb of the day through some woods and then joining a field path contouring across the valley slope. Our efforts were rewarded with good views across the valley toward Pen Carrig Calch, Table Mountain, and Crickhowell.

A welcome break was enjoyed by a stream, under a stunning old tree, next to the remains of a farm/shepherd's building. Not long after our tea break, the 'covers' had to go on as it started drizzling. After a further climb, we left the Usk Valley Walk and continued upwards to a wide expanse of open moorland. We then followed a rough path to reach the headwaters of Nant Onneu, before tackling a very steep climb to an unfenced mountain road. Not far along the road we stopped in the shelter of a hill to get out of the brisk wind for a lunch stop overlooking the valley we had just walked through.

After lunch, we made our way to the Craig y Cilau National Nature Reserve, an area of spectacular limestone cliffs. The cliffs were extensively quarried in the nineteenth century, and a former tramroad provided easy walking along their base. On the way, we stopped to explore the entrance to Eglwys Faen (stone church), the most accessible of the many caves that pockmark the Craig y Cilau escarpment.

Soon after reaching the road at Pant-y-rhiw we began a steep descent along a rough, stony track, on the way passing an old chapel no longer used for church services that has been converted into a bat roost. After completing the descent, we continued across fields and a bridge over the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and then into a short stretch of forest before emerging alongside Parc Farm Campsite. Then, it was just a short distance along the road to our start point. Everyone agreed it had been a very interesting walk.