

Longtown



The stunning border country between England and Wales

This scenic loop uses a mixture of quiet country lanes and undulating field paths. Fields may be muddy after rain and also contain livestock. There are excellent views from both the castle keep and the long, elongated top of Mynydd Ferddin. A relaxing stroll along the banks of the Monnow and Olchon concludes the walk. If time allows, the church in Clodock is well worth a visit – as indeed is the Cornwall Arms next door.

Fact file

Distance: 6.9 miles / 11 km

Height gain: 258 metres

Start/finish: Obvious lay-by on east side of road in Longtown (SO 324 287)

Map: [OS Explorer OL13 Brecon Beacons National Park \(Eastern Area\)](#)

Viewranger: Click [here](#) for an interactive map.

Refreshments/facilities: During opening hours, food and drink are available from the Cornwall Arms in Clodock and the [Crown Inn](#) in Longtown. A Portaloo is available behind the south porch of [St Clydawg's Church](#) in Clodock.

Longtown Castle



Longtown Castle in the Black Mountains

Although now in Herefordshire, [Longtown](#) was a castle built to pacify and control a conquered Welsh territory. This was [Ewias or Ewyas](#), a small Welsh commote extending across the eastern valleys of the Black Mountains from Llanthony to the River Dore. The de Lacy family invaded Ewias shortly after the Norman conquest, constructing a series of earthwork castles across the commote. Most of these were small, temporary fortifications, but around 1175 a far larger motte-and-bailey (possibly using earthworks from an earlier Roman fort) was constructed at Longtown. This enclosed a settlement of civilian colonizers and early in the following century was rebuilt in stone.

The de Lacy lordship ended in the 1230s and by the mid-fifteenth century the castle had fallen into disuse. The settler community established by the de Lacys had also shrunk considerably and been largely absorbed into the local Welsh community. Indeed, although the greater part of Ewias was attached to Herefordshire following Henry VIII's abolition of marcher powers in 1536 (only Llanthony and Cwmyoy, in the Vale of Ewyas, were assigned to Monmouthshire), Welsh continued to be spoken in the Longtown district as late as the nineteenth century, leaving a lasting legacy on the area's [toponymy](#).

The walk

1. From the lay-by, walk up the main street of the village until Longtown Castle appears on your left. After visiting the castle, rejoin the road and turn right into Llanwonog Lane.
2. After leaving Longtown, the lane descends into a valley to cross the River Monnow. Climb past Llanwonog Farm to a house at the end of the lane and turn left over a stile into a field above the farm ([‘Monnow Valley Walk’](#)). Turn right along the top edge of the field.



Longtown is a village well worth a visit

3. Shortly, turn right through a metal field gate and continue with the field boundary to your left. Cross a stile ahead and pass through a stand of trees. Once clear of the trees, bear slightly right, aiming for a point just below the top corner at the far end of the field. Cross a stile and follow a short section of path through brambles and back into a field (if overgrown, the path between the fields can be bypassed to the right).
4. Head diagonally left to a field gate and turn right on to a concrete track. Climb to a T-junction with a road and turn left. After about 100 metres, take the first signed footpath on the right, crossing a field diagonally in the direction of a farm building.
5. Go through a gate and join an enclosed track. After passing a stone building, cut across the field corner on your right to a metal field gate. Cross a farm track to a stile and head straight across a field to a gate in the far corner. Join a lane and turn right.
6. At the bottom of the hill, cross the Escley Brook and turn right on to a track. Join a grass bank to the left of the track and pass above an old house (Ponty's Mill). Cross a stile into a field and follow the hedge uphill to the left. Bear right along the top edge of the field.
7. Cross a stile in the field corner and continue straight across the next field to a metal field gate (not immediately visible) some thirty metres or so below a metal barn. In the following field, ignore the obvious gate ahead, instead bearing left to a stile and field gate hidden in the corner. Go through the gate and cross a field towards Oldcourt Farm.
8. Go through a wooden gate and continue ahead through the farm grounds to a metal field gate. Take the field path straight ahead, negotiating a series of electric fences via makeshift stiles. Cross a final stile, hidden in the left-hand corner of a field, to emerge at the junction of a farm track and lane. Join the lane and turn right.
9. Follow the lane past Maes-y-fedw Wood to a T-junction with a slightly wider road. Turn left and then immediately right, following a footpath sign uphill into fields. Climb along the right-hand edge of a series of fields to the summit of Mynydd Ferddin.

10. At the top of the hill, leave the field boundary and bear right across the middle of a level field to a gate in the far corner. Keep ahead to the opposite corner of a second level field and join a track between fences. Re-emerge in a field and follow the fence to the right. Keeping the field boundary to your right, continue in the same direction as far as Upper Brooks Farm.

11. Cross a stile into a garden and bear left along the drive to a lane. Bear left again and follow the lane as far as a sharp left-hand bend. Bear right on to a track and enter a field.

12. Follow the left-hand field edge as far as a stile. Do not cross this, but turn right, across the middle of the field, to pick up the line of a hedge. Keeping this to your left, continue to a gate in the corner. Go through the gate and bear right towards a second field gate a short distance away. Continue ahead, now with the field boundary to your right, and begin to descend.

13. The gradient steepens towards the end of the field. Pick up a grassy track and follow it left, across a stony section between a line of trees. Enter a further field, bearing back to the right to rejoin the field boundary. Continue steeply downhill to a stile and then down a second field to a small metal gate near a ruined house (Garn-galed). Continue ahead through the gate, now with the field boundary to your left. Go through a second gate and descend towards a house.

14. Cross an access track to the left of the house and drop straight ahead to a rough track below the building. Bear left to a gate and continue on a rough, sunken track below trees. Drop steeply to a lane and cross to a track opposite. With a house ahead, bear right on to a narrow, paved path alongside a small stream. Follow the River Monnow upstream to a stone bridge.

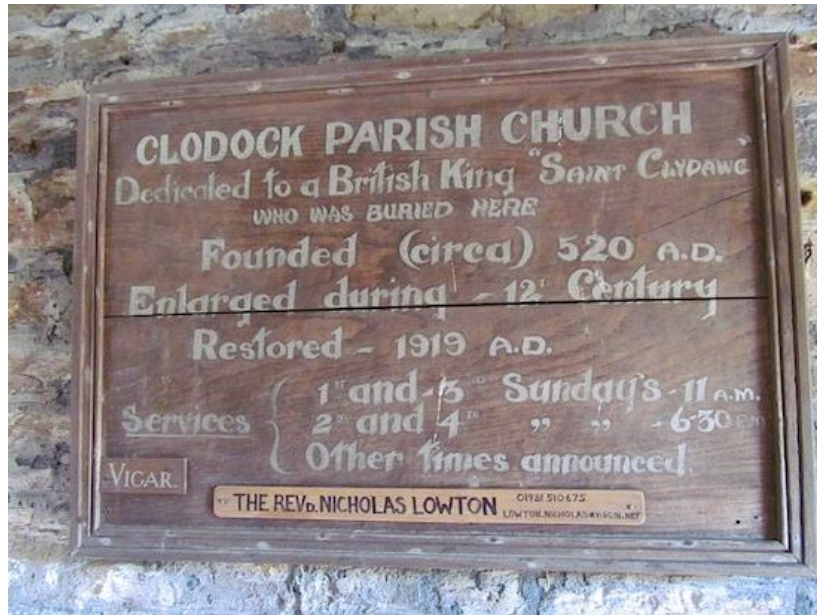
15. Turn left across the river and then immediately right, between the river and a line of cottages (a little further up the road is the Cornewall Arms). Follow the path through the churchyard and then between a garden and the river. The waymarked path continues through fields, eventually bearing left after a stone stile to reach a road opposite Middle Ponthendre.

16. Turn right, across the Olchon Brook, and then immediately left on to a signed field path. Keep ahead across the field, passing to the left of a garden and picking up a field boundary on the right. Cross a stile and continue with the hedge on your left. Keep ahead along a clear path through woodland. Rejoin the Olchon Brook and emerge on a lane.

17. Turn right up the lane towards the houses in Longtown. On reaching the main street, turn right for the Crown Inn or left to return to your starting place at the lay-by.

St Clydawg's Church, Clodock

Clodock's parish church is dedicated to a St Clydawg or Clydog, a sixth-century king reputed to have been killed by a jealous love rival while hunting. Oxen pulling his burial cart refused to ford the River Monnow and so Clydog was buried on the river's banks. A shrine and church developed around his burial place, which became known as Merthyr Clydog ('Clydog the martyr'), later anglicized to Clodock.



The church sign at Clodock

The present church is also the burial place of author and academic Raymond Williams (1921–88). Williams's ambitious story-sequence, *People of the Black Mountains*, provides a more sceptical interpretation of the Clydog legend.