


# Wildlife Walk – 3 miles

# Dinefwr Park, South Wales

Dinefwr's historic parkland is famed for its abundance of wildlife and stunning valley views. Some of the 'veteran' trees are thought to be over 700 years old and support such a high diversity of lichens and invertebrates that the park has been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest. In July 2007 it also became a National Nature Reserve – the only parkland NNR in Wales. This 3 mile walk takes in some of the estate's great wildlife-spotting places, as well as a fascinating medieval castle and 17<sup>th</sup> century mansion.

## Getting there, facilities and contact

Dinefwr Park is 1ml from the centre of Llandeilo in South Wales, just off the A40 and ½ml from Llandeilo . The estate has disabled parking, an information centre, café, toilets and a shop. → Go to [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dinefwr](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/dinefwr) for more details. Tel: 01558 824512.

## Points of interest

Fantastic wildlife-watching all year round: fallow deer, woodland birds and rare white park cattle can be spotted at Dinefwr in any season. Bluebells delight visitors in spring and, as the air warms, insect activity heightens around the trees, and dragonflies emerge in damp areas. In autumn witness deer rutting and see some impressive fungi such as the beefsteak fungus that lives on old oak trees. Over winter, migrant birds arrive and settle in the wet grassland and around the oxbow lakes. Without their leaves, the ancient trees take on striking eerie shapes at this time too.

- ✿ **Woodland:** there are almost 300 trees over 400 years old here which makes Dinefwr a nationally important parkland. Of note are the tall oaks at the western end of the deer park.
- ✿ **Birds:** all three British woodpeckers (the lesser, greater spotted and green) live in the woodlands. Wildfowl visitors in winter include teal, widgeon and tufted duck. The tree sparrows are very interesting too. Generally a rare and declining bird, they breed in the Tywi Valley and can be seen on this walk. The hedgerows are an important habitat for these small farmland birds which have been studied by National Trust volunteers for many years.
- ✿ **Animals:** with so many old buildings and mature trees, it is no surprise that Dinefwr has an excellent variety of bats - brown long-eared bats roost in the roof void of Newton House. In the parkland surrounding the mansion, white park cattle and fallow deer can easily be seen grazing.
- ✿ **Insects:** Dinefwr has become a hotspot in Wales for invertebrates, especially beetles, this is because many old trees and dead wood have been left in situ around the park, not cleared away. There are over 25 nationally scarce insect species on the estate. Look out for yellow meadow anthills in the deer park valley grassland, plus lots of dragon and damselflies in wetland areas.
- ✿ **Flora:** the deer park wall and mature trees are home to some of the 160 different varieties of lichens found at Dinefwr. Pretty yellow iris grows in great numbers in the coppiced woodland, flowering in early summer. Many other wetland plants can be spotted around the oxbow lakes.

## NT places nearby

Aberdeunant, Dolaucothi Gold Mines, Paxton's Tower, Henrhyd Falls



Fallen branches are deliberately left as they are an important habitat for saproxylic, or 'dead wood invertebrates' such as beetles that depend on rotting wood for food and shelter.

*NTPL/Andrew Butler*



Records show that the rare white park cattle that roam close to Newton House have been present in the park for over a thousand years.

*NTPL/Andrew Butler*



Fallow deer are best seen in the late afternoon and evening when they emerge into clearings. From Newton House, look down the deer park valley where you may see them wandering around the trees.

*NTPL/Peter Muhlv*

**“An important place in Welsh history for centuries, the timeless qualities of Dinefwr's landscape never fail to impress me. Our new National Nature Reserve status will help ensure both wildlife and people stay at the heart of the estate in the future too”**

Paul Faulkner, National Trust property manager

## Distance, terrain and accessibility

This 3ml (5km) circular walk is on mostly level ground. It can be muddy, especially on damp grassland. The Dragonfly Walk stretch of this walk is fully wheelchair and pushchair accessible. Other walk routes are highlighted with leaflets and way-marks on site.

## Route and directions

Turn right out of the Welcome Centre and follow the dragonfly way-marks (Dragonfly Walk) until you get to the pump house. Then, follow the heron way-marks (River Walk).

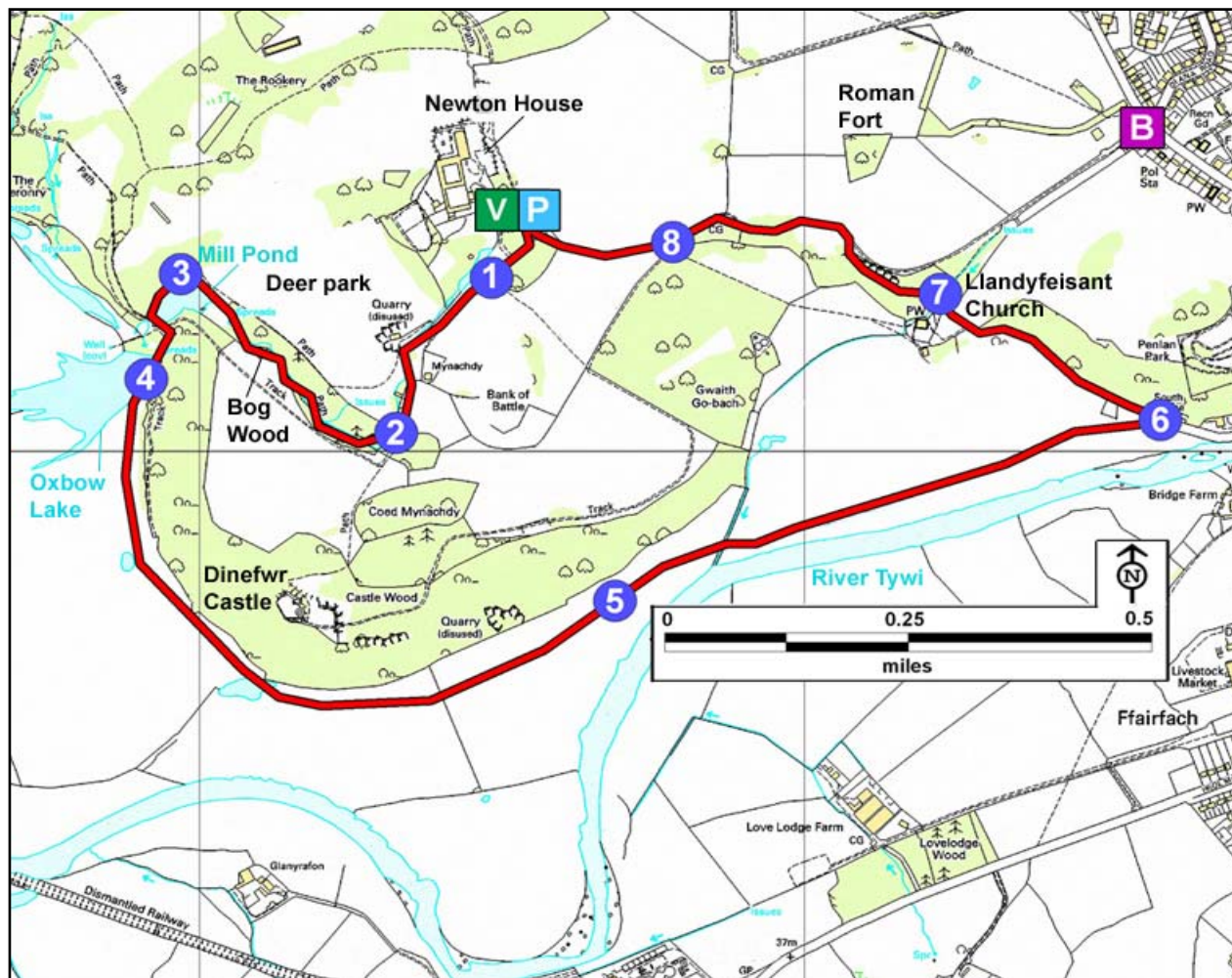
1. Head down hill past the pigeon house on your right – pigeons used to be a source of meat for the household. 'Mynachdy', an old gameskeeper's cottage, is soon passed on your left.
2. Beyond the slaughterhouse (still with its old winches for lifting deer and cattle carcasses inside), turn right through a gate into Bogwood and follow a boardwalk to the mill pond.

This historic coppiced woodland has a stream running through it and is mainly home to water-loving willow and alder. Lots of ancient trees also live here, including what is thought to be the oldest oak in the park, which started its life in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Fallow deer can be spotted if you're quiet. The original deer park wall is worth a look as it's covered in lichen and moss.

3. Walk around this man-made mill pond, a great place for dragon and damselflies in spring and summer. Spot newts, frogs and ducks, as well as an occasional kingfisher (if you're lucky)! At the pump house, take signs for the River Walk.
4. The river Tywi forms the oxbow lakes which mark the southern boundary of Dinefwr. Summer and winter are the best times for watching wetland birds here.

Follow the tree line on a path with the ruins of 12<sup>th</sup> century Dinefwr Castle towering above to your left.

5. With the river to your right, walk through the Twyi valley. Its hedgerows are home to a rare breeding population of tree sparrow (looks similar to the house sparrow but has a distinctive black patch on its cheek).



6. Turn left here on a path to Llandyfeisant Church.
7. An important feature in the designed landscape, this church was largely rebuilt in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but actually has medieval origins.
8. On the track back to the Welcome Centre, pass what

would have been a large Roman fort over the hill to your right. Archaeological surveys show us it existed, but nothing is visible above ground.

All that remains is for you to admire the long-horned white park cattle as you cross the parkland and return to your start point!

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Find out more at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)