



Willoxton Cwm and Ilston Valley Walk – Gower

Description:

A very much less walked but beautiful route which takes you through the forgotten willoxton cwm, Lunnon village and Ilston valley before returning through parkmill village. **For those of you not staying with us you are welcome to use this walk but as there are no rights of way through the grounds, Just parc at Green Cwm (free parking) and pick up the trail from there.**

Distance covered: 5 miles **Average time:** 2.5 hours **Terrain:** easy under foot, expect mud in the winter months.

Directions:

Walk down the tarmac driveway from the house until you reach the grassy valley of Green Cwm turn left through pass through the gate into the valley and then follow the fence on your right until you reach the wood. You will find a stile to cross on the edge of the water works boundary.

The next stile you reach will take you out of the woodland and into Willoxton Cwm, the path bears to the left following the middle of the valley, taking you up through the woodland before emerging onto the road at Lunnon next to the house called ash grove.



Follow the road to the right and after about 200yds take the first turning on the left. if you continue straight on this will take you to the village of Ilston (about three quarters of a mile). When you drop down into the village take the path into the church yard of Ilston church.

History of Ilston Church:

The Church at Ilston which you see today dedicated to St Illtyd but is just a token of the ecclesiastical history associated with this village and valley. In the 1640s fuelled by the newfound religious freedom of the civil war years and the breakdown in censorship the Baptist movement flourished. A little further down the valley you will come across the ruins of the first baptised church established in Wales . The church was established by John Miles on the 1 st of October 1649. a great deal of fascinating history is known about the area due to the survival of the 'Ilston Churchbook', now preserved in America . The book is an interesting commentary of the times, some funny tidbits are for instance how Miles apparently was rather disappointed that his first two converts at Ilston were women, though consoled himself by believing that the Lord was 'thereby teaching us not to despise the day of small things'! another entry during the 1650s describes how a handful of members were expelled from the church for drunkenness and sexual misconduct!

During the 1650s miles was very successful spreading the word through south Wales and influencing the foundation of further churches as far a field as Hay on Wye, Llantrisant, Carmarthen and Abergavenny. Ultimately due to the Restoration Miles's fortunes waned, he was ejected as minister of Ilston parish and ultimately emigrated to Rehoboth , Massachusetts , where founded the first Baptist church in that state. unfortunately he was expelled from Rehoboth in 1667, he moved on and founded a new town, which he named Swansea.

At the other end of the church you will find a gate through which you can pass taking you into Ilston valley. Don't take any of the paths which bear off to the left or right, just stay on the valley floor, roughly following the path of the river. The geology of this area is predominantly limestone and in true form the river in this valley often finds its way below ground into the many cracks and cave systems which have been worn by the water over thousands of years. In the winter the river flows the length of the valley to parkmill while in the summer the river often disappears leaving just a dry river bed shortly after the church.

At the parkmill end of the valley you will emerge into the Gower in pub car park. im sure you will have worked up enough of a thirst to be tempted in to try and ale and maybe some lunch?

That done turn right onto the main road, after about 100 yds you will see a turning on the left, cross the bridge, the road turns first left, then as it bears back to the right (only 20yds from the turning) you can take the footpath which takes you into the woods and follows the lower edge of the valley back until you reach a blue foot bridge on your right. Cross the bridge, you will emerge opposite shepherds shop, take the lane between the shop and the car park back to the ford and up the drive to Parc-Le-Breos.

Walking Map: Willoxton Cwm & Ilston Valley:



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