



Festival Fun!

Last year's European Geoparks Fortnight has become the Forest Fawr Geopark Festival in 2009. The festival celebrates the diversity of Forest Fawr Geopark – its people, its rocks, its history and its wildlife. With 20 events across the western half of the National Park, there should be something to interest everyone – visitor or resident.

This year sees walks arranged by the National Trust and Brecknock Wildlife Trust on the northern slopes of the central Beacons and in the Taff valley. Groups who have been involved previously such as the Brecon Beacons Park Society, Cymdeithas Edward Llwyd and Cardiff and Swansea Universities are busy again and of course National Park wardens and volunteers will again be delivering a range of high quality interpretive walks throughout the Geopark.

Highlights of this year's programme include the exhibition 'Space to Place' by environmental artist Sandra Masterson, at Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery and a talk by Cambridge academic Peter Raby at Theatr Brycheiniog on the life of that 'other Darwin' and locally born giant of Victorian science - Alfred Russel Wallace.

Check out the 'What's on' section of the website at www.fforestfawrgeopark.org.uk/ for details of these and other events, pick up an events brochure or phone 01874 623366. The Festival runs from Saturday 23rd May to Sunday 7th June.

Explosive times!

There is no shortage of teenagers visiting Waterfall Country, however the majority come to climb, cave and gorge-walk on organised adventurous activities. This age group can sometimes miss out on fascinating stories if the literature available is aimed at adults so the National Park Authority set out to engage with them. A focus group with the target audience helped shape the product which is targeted at 14-16 year olds.

The result was 'Explosive Times' - an innovative new graphic novel which aims to make the disused buildings of the Gunpowder Works near Pontneddfechan cool. It is equally intended to be an educational resource to support Industrial and Social History within the Welsh Curriculum.

The publication features Manga style illustrations and provides an insight into the process of gunpowder making whilst conveying a sense of what it would have been like to work there in the 1880's. Water safety was also incorporated - a key message for this age group.

Pick up a copy for free from any of the National Park Information centres within the area.



New look website for Geopark

The Geopark website has recently been redesigned. It now sports a new, fresher look and some additional content with more to come.

Visit the new Geopark pages on-line at www.fforestfawrgeopark.org.uk and see for yourself. There are sections on places to visit, events in the Geopark, geology and wildlife, history and archaeology. Phase 2 of the re-design later in 2009 will bring in interactive mapping with downloadable walks amongst other exciting new features.



A 'Black Mountain Map' was drawn which brought together many of the local places and stories which the community valued. Image by Alice Farnworth of Creu-ad.

Dig up the Black Mountain

March saw the Black Mountain Centre in Brynaman packed with local people, each of whom had come to 'dig up the Black Mountain'. This was the name of a whole day given over to delving into the area's history. With experts on hand to assist, people swapped stories about the mining heritage of the area and brought in artefacts ranging from old photos to - rather older - rocks.

Members of local history society, Treffadaeth Brynaman Heritage were kept busy scanning various items that had been brought in whilst staff from both Trysor and Dyfed Archaeological Trust talked about the extraordinary wealth of monuments which decorate the landscapes of the Black Mountain. Dr Tony Ramsay, scientific director of the Geopark revealed a long-standing interest of his as he explored before an audience the legend of Culhwch and Olwen, its local relevance and its European connections.

Lynne Denman who sings with Ffynnon, sang a traditional song accompanied by Jason Lawday on flute whilst local youth theatre group

Mess-up-the-Mess performed a spoken piece, both focussing on the Lady of the Lake story. Pleasingly, there were also impromptu singing and poetry recitals from members of the audience. The RSPB were in attendance whilst the Friends of Ynys Dawela Nature Reserve provided a small display on the wildlife interest of this site just to the west of Brynaman.

Speaking of the event, Colin Jones, chairman of Treffadeth Brynaman Heritage commented that 'It was a good day for the Black Mountain and all who live and work within its shadow'. Shelagh Hourahane of Creu-ad, the heritage interpretation consultants engaged to put the day together expressed her pleasure at working with such a vibrant community.

The day whilst successful in its own right is the start of a process and not the end. The National Park Authority and local community hope to be able to develop Geopark walks and displays based around what came out of 'digging up the Black Mountain'.



Ten years of Beacons Bus

Beacons Bus is with us again for the summer.

Running every Sunday and bank holiday Monday from 24th May through to the 27th September, there are several services which operate across the Geopark. Not the least of these is the B13 Geopark Circular which runs from Brecon via Craig-y-nos Country Park, the Waterfalls Centre at Pontneddfechan, Penderyn, Storey Arms and the National Park Visitor Centre at Libanus.

Take a look at www.travelbreconbeacons.info, ring 01873 853254 or pick up a brochure to find out more.

Other events

There are opportunities for the public to get to grips with the Geopark throughout the year.

The National Park Authority publishes a 'Visitor Guide' each year which includes details of events taking place both within the Geopark and elsewhere, many of which have a geological, archaeological, cultural or natural history content. Just look up 'guided walks' on the Authority's website at www.breconbeacons.org

Bags for Bugs

Down at Pontneddfechan, the National Park Authority's education team have developed Geo-rucksacks that can be hired from the Waterfalls Centre to encourage families and school groups to explore the Geopark.



The sacks, which are small enough to be carried by a young child, contain ID charts, binoculars, bug magnifiers and other

child friendly equipment to discover what plants and animals live in the woodland gorges surrounding the waterfalls. An explorer activity booklet containing games and activities for families and school groups will also be available, free of charge.

The gorges carved out in this area by the Mellte, Hepste and Nedd Fechan rivers are all protected as 'Special Areas for Conservation' on account of their lichens, mosses and liverworts which thrive in the damp conditions provided by the thick cover of sessile oak trees. There is in turn a rich insect life lurking amongst the ferns and wood fescue.

For more information contact the Centre on 01639 721795.

Rock & Pop-ups



The Geopark has recently acquired a new set of 'pop-up' displays promoting Forest Fawr.

These are available for exhibitions, fairs and other public occasions.

Please contact Alan Bowring, Geopark Development

Officer on 01874 620415 if you think you could use them at your event.

Here Be Goblins!

Waterfall Country is very popular with keen walkers and outdoor pursuit providers but can be a challenging place to visit, especially for those with young families or mobility impairments.



With these visitors in mind the National Park Authority has developed two audio trails which follow the old tramway to Sgwd Gwladus waterfall discovering the fascinating geology and industrial heritage along the way. There is one trail for adults and another, guided by the forgetful goblin Gwladus, specifically designed for children. Visitors wanting to find out about the wildlife and the area's conservation designations can download a podcast. Titled 'Waterfalls and Wildlife', it gives a useful introduction to the area.

These are the first downloadable audio trails for the Geopark and indeed for the whole National Park. You'll find them, in English and Welsh, on the web at www.breconbeacons.org

Exploring with ease

Recent visitors to the five main car parks in Waterfalls Country will have come across brand new 'Welcome Point' panels.



Constructed from Welsh oak and including carvings of waterfalls and wildlife found in the gorges, they aim to reflect local themes. Accompanying them are new waymarks guiding visitors around the numerous paths to each of the falls. The new leaflet to the area completes the package helping people to make the most of their visit without getting lost in the woods.

What is a Geopark?



A Geopark has a rich geological heritage, a local community which values that heritage and a strategy to make the most of it, for example through developing sustainable tourism.

Fforest Fawr met all those criteria in 2005 and so was accepted into both the European and Global Geoparks Networks over three years ago. Comprising the western half of the Brecon Beacons National Park, it is the first such area to be designated in Wales. There are currently 34 Geoparks in Europe and numerous others across the world from China to Brazil. Fforest Fawr is truly world-class!

Visit www.europeangeoparks.org

Welcome to the Isle of Anglesey

Fforest Fawr Geopark extends a big welcome to Geo Mon – Wales' second Geopark. Geo Mon became a member of the European and Global Geoparks Networks at the start of April and is the seventh area to be so designated in the UK.

The geology of Anglesey is internationally renowned and Geopark status will help local communities attract new visitors to the area and diversify their tourism economy. We look forward to working closely with the new Geopark to their benefit and ours.

Take a look at the website at www.geomon.org.uk



**Brecon Beacons
NATIONAL PARK**
One of Britain's breathing spaces

Plas y Ffynnon,
Cambrian Way, Brecon, Powys LD3 7HP
Telephone: 01874 624427 Fax: 01874 622574
Email: enquiries@breconbeacons.org
www.breconbeacons.org