Fforest Fawr Geopark

The rocks and landscapes of Fforest Fawr Geopark record significant events in the Earth’s history and help us to understand the geological evolution of Wales, the UK and Europe. Geoparks are internationally important areas that combine unique geological features with the culture and history of the communities that live in them. Fforest Fawr Geopark is a UNESCO Global Geopark and holds the title of Wales’ First European Geopark.

Where is Fforest Fawr?

Fforest Fawr has been known for centuries as Fforest Fawr – the ‘Great Forest’. This is not in fact a large area but a boundary - a line drawn on a map to indicate a part of Wales. The boundaries of the Geopark are drawn around the uplands of Fforest Fawr, the Black Mountain and the central Brecon Beacons.

What are Geoparks for?

Each of Europe’s Geoparks is a protected landscape. Fforest Fawr Geopark seeks to:

- celebrate Wales’ unique landscapes
- conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage
- seek opportunities to develop the area’s potential as a superb outdoor classroom and as a place for learning and research
- raise awareness of the area’s potential as a place of enjoyment for visitors
- work with local communities to develop and promote the area’s potential
- support the development of the European Geoparks Network

What are Geoparks for? (continued)

Each one of the growing international family of Geoparks is an area with an important and often unique geological history and features. Geoparks hold stories that bring the landscape to life. Geoparks are places of geological education, research, discovery and wonder.

It’s more than just rocks!

The Geopark is also about people and their stories. People have been making use of rocks here for thousands of years - from the mysterious standing stones of our distant ancestors to Iron Age hill forts and from Roman roads to Norman castles. The coming of the Industrial Revolution led man to exploit the coal, silica rock, ironstone and limestone found in the Geopark. The presence of quarries, mines and smelting works together with canals, tramways and railways for transporting these resources, began the process of industrial activity on a large scale. Hill farms, fields and towns expanded with a growing population.

The archaeological, industrial and agricultural monuments are an integral part of the Geopark’s landscape. Man and wildlife have lived alongside each other in the Geopark for more than 7,000 years. The plants and animals occupying the diverse habitats provided by waterfalls and woodland, moorland, scree and grass are also a part of the Geopark story. However, geology remains the foundation for the landscape in all its diversity.

The area is well served by public paths and access is possible throughout the year. The Geopark is here to be enjoyed but please treat these hills with respect and follow the Countryside Code.

Find out more

Visit these web sites:

- www.fforestfawrgeopark.org.uk

Visit these web sites for more information:

- www.geomon.co.uk

www.fforestfawrgeopark.org.uk/enjoying/be-safe

Enjoy Magnificent Mountains, Wonderful Wytch, Spectacular Caves, Glorious Wildlife…
A slice through the rocks of Fforest Fawr Geopark
along a line drawn southwards from the Black Mountain

**The Old Red Sandstone**

Recycled mountains

The 'Caledonian Mountains' were rapidly eroded. Huge quantities of mud, sand and pebbles were carried southwards by large rivers to be deposited in broad lowland areas and coastal plains. Collectively these mudstones, sandstones and conglomerates are known as the 'Old Red Sandstone'.

The upland beds of the 'ORS' are the 'Tilestones' and 'Plateau Beds', seen on the escarpment. A thin band of flaggy sandstones known as the 'Trews' have been quarried at Mynydd Mynach for aggregate and for lime-burning. The Farewell Rock marks the base of the 'Old Red Sandstone'.

Why are the rocks tilted?

The final retreat of the ice just over 11,000 years ago revealed a bleak and stony wilderness. The Farewell Rock is an example of this age.

The Old Red Sandstone recycles rocks from the 'Carboniferous Limestone' and other pre-Carboniferous sediments.