

Walk: WOC 13

Location: **Mountain walk starting above the Coach House opposite the castle and finishing off behind Dan Yr Ogof showcaves via Neck of Sleeping Giant**

Distance (miles): 100 yards, leave car in castle.

Time (hours): 2 minutes to cross road on foot

Length of Walk: 2 – 3 hours

Date Walked: 05/04/2008

Parking: Free

Pop in to: Nowhere where you are going

Description: Leave main car park of castle on foot, turning left along narrow footpath. By main car park entrance there is a lay-by adjacent to an outdoor riding school area. Opposite this and a few yards south, is the entrance to the mountain walk, waymarked and signed, through a gate.

Proceed up the hill for a few yards before doing a sharp right and almost doubling back on yourself to go up the steep mountain side. There are uneven steps all the way up. This is not a prammable walk. It is very steep but in summer you are rewarded with excellent views of the castle and Upper Swansea Valley. Once you have got up to the stone wall with wooden steps cum style arrangement going over the stone wall, you have done most of the climbing on this walk, or at least, the worst is over.

Cross over the stone wall and take a sharp right, keeping the stone wall to your right for a while. A post and rail and wire fence carries on from the stone wall, on your right. Follow the track, such as it is, along the fencing, carrying on into the mountain for some miles.

After a while you feel completely lost. You have to head up hill for a while, keeping the fence and stone walls on your right. After a while, you will find yourself descending steeply down the other side. At this point you should branch away to the left, aiming for a field gate in the stone and wire wall leading off to the left, some distance ahead of you. (If you were to carry down the slope, you would end up in most unpleasant boggy area – I have gone this route and it involves clambering over some fencing but it is an unnecessary unpleasantness that can be avoided – having gone downhill you would only have to climb up the other side so you gain nothing).

Branching off left before the land descends, means you are carrying along a sort of mountain ridge, with a valley dip on your right. Eventually you circumnavigate the dipped area, spotting your target, a lone field gate, in a stone and wire fence that stretches for miles in either direction. You are at this branching off stage, heading across open mountainside, on no particular path, heading more or less south by south west.

If you miss the gate, or go off course, no worries, as whatever happens you will eventually come on to the main footpath / farm tracks running from the Sleeping Giant's head on your left, east to West. Once you reach this path, turn right on to it, and it will take you to the aforementioned field gate.

Climb over the field gate and you will see a path leading out in front of you to some stony areas about a half mile away. The path is easy enough to follow here, and it curves around to the right, in the direction of the Show caves. You are now going

north but are about to lose the path again. Carry on in this direction for some time, edging north by north west.

At some point you will meet a barbed wire fence ahead of you. To the right it goes down the hill, as if back the way you came, and it stretches up the mountain to the left. Proceed left, up hill alongside the wire fence, which should now be on your left.

After a while you will come across a small waterfall. In summer it does not have much water in it but it is a big hole in the ground, which you will find a path going around it. Quite steep up hill here. Follow the path around to the left of the waterfall until you come out above it, turning right at the top and then continuing a little further to some rocks and the corner of the 'field'. There is a barbed wire fence ahead of you that you cross over.

Immediately after you cross the fence, turn right and head out across some volcanic like rock. This rock is full of air holes and quite light to pick up. Impress your friends picking up an unlikely large boulder and showing off your strength (till they realise how light the stone is).

The peak of the current mountain is off to your left now, with the Swansea Valley and caves off to your right, though from where you are it is very remote and you may feel you are pretty lost.

Head north west around the curve of the mountain, leaving the tallest area behind you on your left, then head due West (left), to eventually join the main footpath to the caves. Depending how you do, you will join this path at any point within a mile or two of the caves.

Once you reach the recognisable tractor tracks of the footpath turn right, and after about half an hour of descending you will come out above the caves. You will then join onto further foot paths through woodland behind the caves if you branch off to the left as you come down the steep hill, or some farm fields if you end up going a bit too much to the right. It is quite scenic up here and at one point you can look back and just about see the castle.

Not suitable for any mode of transport of other than your own feet. Steep start.

Pictures taken 05/04/2008:

Walking up path behind coach house – view of castle & valley looking back from above the coach house



View from higher up



Almost at top; cross wall (behind) at top and turn right



Follow line of wall (on left) across open mountain



View from wall; north aspect of Upper Swansea Valley



Follow narrow path alongside wall (steep on left)



As you descend, do not follow wall; bear left instead



You will eventually intersect with farm tracks



Some time later, you meet another wall; follow it up



Along wall, uphill to walk around small water fall



Looking back the way you came from near waterfall



Above small waterfall, cross at corner of 'field' over rocks, and turn left to walk over stony rocks area



Starting the descent – more good views



Eventually you will find the main path down mountain and you should end up at show caves camping area.



Leave the caves and turn right along A4069



After 100 yards, cross at style into country park



Follow path around the lake, onto duck board path, through fields and into main country park



If you do the country park walk, this is a view you will see regularly as you walk back from the Show Caves area of the parkland.



Walking along the riverside path, the River Tawe is on your right, the picnic paddock of the Country Park on your left. You can see the castle behind the trees (just) in the picture on the right.



Pictures taken on 06/09/2005:



These are very old pictures, but the scenery has not changed. Stones on right picture are very light, like pumice stone.



Pictures taken 17/09/2005 – this is a different route where you approach the top of the mountain above the coach house from Abercrave, walking over the neck of the Sleeping Giant:



Pictures taken on 20/11/2005:

A variation of the walk from the coach house will take you deeper into the mountains and the famous plane wreck. It is actually one of several and though it is a couple of hours walk to get here, you can see that the locals must come reasonably often to remember the war dead. Finding this place is a nightmare as once you are deeper into these mountains, they all seem to look the same. I have found it only once on my own, a year or so after I was guided to it the first time.

