



Chirk Circular I



Chirk viaduct

Route detail

A walk exploring a splendid estate surrounding Chirk Castle, including a seldom-seen part of Offa's Dyke. (Note that this route follows a path that can only be used from April to September.)

Distance:	5.6 miles / 9km
Start location:	Chirk Railway Station
Start Grid Ref:	SJ 28464 37801
Start What3Words:	accent.boards.amounting

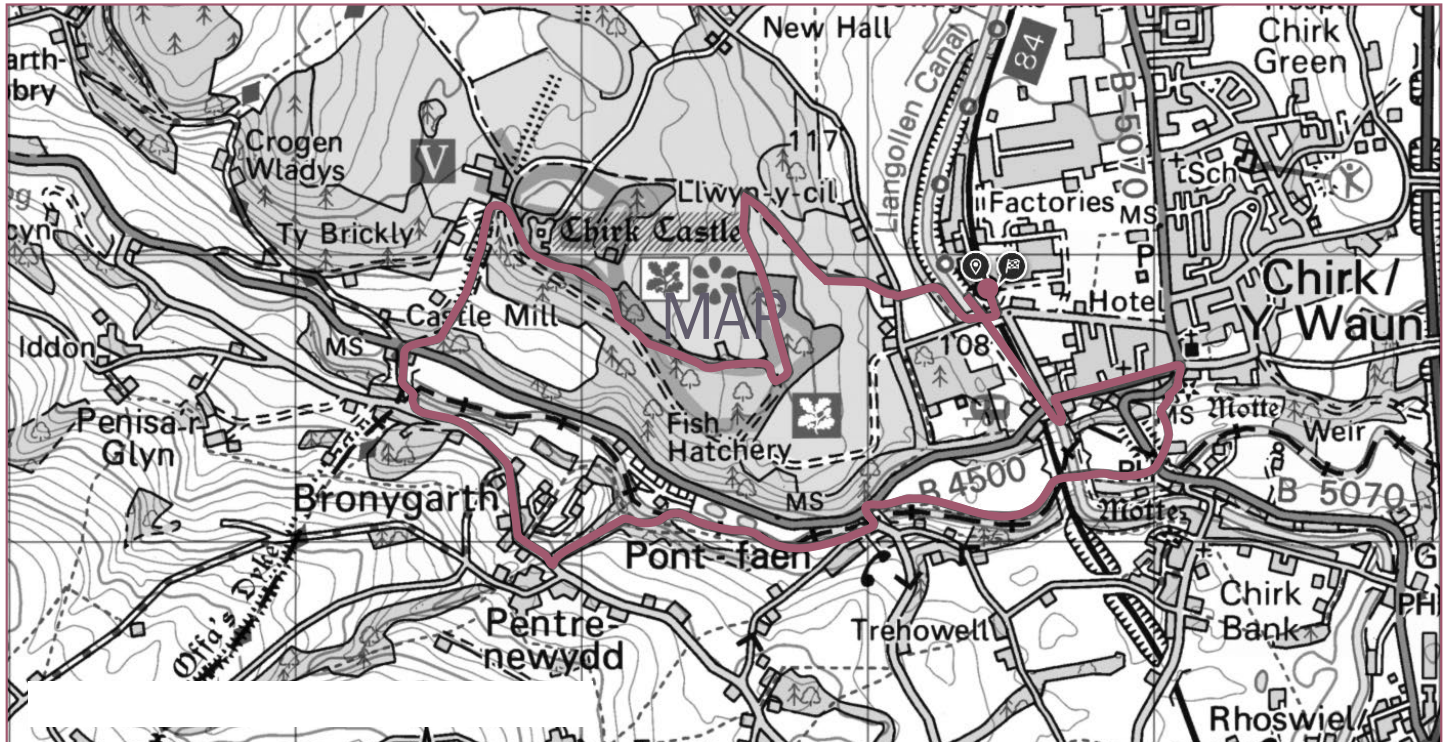
Start

Start at Chirk railway station by crossing the road bridge over the railway as signposted 'Castle'. Pass the access road for Canal Wood Industrial Estate then turn right through a small gate into woodland. (The road continues straight towards an ornate gateway for Chirk Castle.) Immediately on entering the woodland, turn left as

signposted for Chirk Castle and look over a tunnel mouth on the Llangollen Canal. Turn right along a woodland path and note that the path splits and re-joins several times. It is best to keep to the path furthest to the left in order to spot a kissing gate leading into a field, where a path leads straight to a road.

Turn right as signposted for Chirk Castle, then almost immediately turn left along a track. A National Trust noticeboard outlines a series of colour-coded paths. Go through a kissing gate and keep to the left side of a field, passing a substantial oak tree while noticing marker posts bearing green arrows. A gate is reached on the left, but a marker post nearby is ambiguous. Bear right away from the gate to follow a vague, grassy path just to the left of a towering oak tree. Go through a gate in a fence and keep looking ahead for more green marker arrows, eventually reaching another gate.

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Don't go through the gate, but turn left as indicated by a blue arrow on a marker post. Follow another vague path, looking for more marker posts bearing blue arrows. Go through a gate into mature, mixed woodland at Deershed Wood. Keep straight ahead at a path junction as marked, then turn right at the next path junction, heading downhill as marked. Go through a big gate and turn right, as indicated by a blue arrow. The path rises past wooded areas and fields, passing through a gate. Later, pass through a kissing gate beside a big gate in mature woodland. Walk straight ahead along a track, which later joins a tarmac road.

Instead of joining the tarmac road, turn right just beforehand up another track marked by a blue arrow. This avoids the road, running parallel to it at a higher level in the woods, passing a bird hide. The track later joins a road very close to Chirk Castle. This National Trust property was constructed in 1310 and from 1595 was the home of the Myddleton family for four centuries. Turn left down the road, reaching a junction with another road, crossing it to find a track leading downhill. (Please note that this track is only available to walkers from April to September.)

The track is signposted for Offa's Dyke, which will be seen very soon, but it is not part of the Offa's Dyke Path national trail. Walk down through a big gate into woodland, following yellow arrow markers. The dyke is a rather vague embankment to the right. Walk down the track, but don't go through a big gate into a field further down. Instead, turn right just beforehand and follow a narrow path to go through a small gate into the field. The course of the dyke is much more obvious as it continues downhill. Go through a kissing gate to reach a huge oak

tree in another wood. Go down a steep path that might be overgrown in places. Pass the 'Oak at the Gate of the Dead', reaching noticeboards that explain about the Battle of Crogen. This took place in 1165 when Henry II sent a multi-national force through dense wildwoods at this point, intent on 'the total annihilation of the Welsh race'. There were huge casualties on both sides, but the King's forces were ultimately forced to withdraw.

Cross over the B4500 road to pass between buildings at Castle Mill, now following the Offa's Dyke Path for a short time. Cross a bridge over the Afon Ceiriog, where a plaque commemorates the Battle of Crogen. While climbing a short, steep road, there is an unmarked point at which the border is crossed between Wales (Clwyd) and England (Shropshire). When a road junction is reached, the Offa's Dyke Path climbs straight up a flight of steps, but our route back to Chirk turns left instead, following a road used by the Ceiriog Valley Walk and Shropshire Way. A series of old limekilns are passed, followed by a few houses at Bronygarth. When the road descends, turn left through a gateway in a wall to follow a path down a flight of steps into Pentre Wood, which is a Woodland Trust property.

The path is obvious throughout its descent, with one muddy stretch covered by a boardwalk. Cross a step stile beside a big gate to leave the wood and continue through fields alongside the Afon Ceiriog. The riverside path becomes a track, which in turn leads to a big gate near some houses at Pont-faen. Turn left to cross a narrow, stone-built bridge from England back into Wales, then turn right through a kissing gate. Again, walk alongside the Afon Ceiriog through a field, approaching two remarkable features. First is a tall railway viaduct with ten

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arches, opened in 1848, closely followed by a shorter, but no less impressive canal aqueduct, again with ten arches, opened in 1801. These will be inspected more closely, but for the time being simply walk beneath them and continue along the riverside until forced up to the busy B5070 road.

Cross the road and start to go down an access road on the other side, but immediately switch to a path on the left. The path crosses an old, overgrown mill race that once served Chirk Mill. Follow the path uphill and it eventually joins the B5070 road close to a junction on the outskirts of Chirk. The plan is to cross the busy road and turn left along Castle Road, but if the traffic makes this difficult, then walk into Chirk and use a pedestrian crossing, then return to follow Castle Road. The road leads to a viewpoint overlooking both the canal and railway viaducts. (For a quick finish to the walk, avoiding Chirk Tunnel, turn right along Station Road to return to Chirk railway station.)

Follow a path down through a patch of woodland to get onto the towpath of the Llangollen Canal. By all means walk across the aqueduct, from Wales to England and back again, but to finish this walk you should follow the towpath into the 770ft (220m) long Chirk Tunnel. Locally, it's known as 'The Darkie' and obviously a torch is required, but the path is in good condition and there is a fence between it and the canal. Note that if a barge comes chugging through, the diesel fumes might be oppressive, but the exit is always in view ahead. After emerging from the tunnel, continue along the towpath a short way then double back sharply to the right to climb above the canal. When a road is reached, simply turn left to finish back at Chirk railway station.

Parking: Limited parking at Chirk railway station, or use a car park off Pwll y Waun in the centre of Chirk.

Bus: TrawsCymru buses serve Chirk from Wrexham, Welshpool and Machynlleth daily, except Sundays. Daily local buses serve Chirk from Wrexham and Oswestry.

Train: Daily trains serve Chirk from Chester and Shrewsbury, as well as long distance services from Cardiff and Holyhead.

