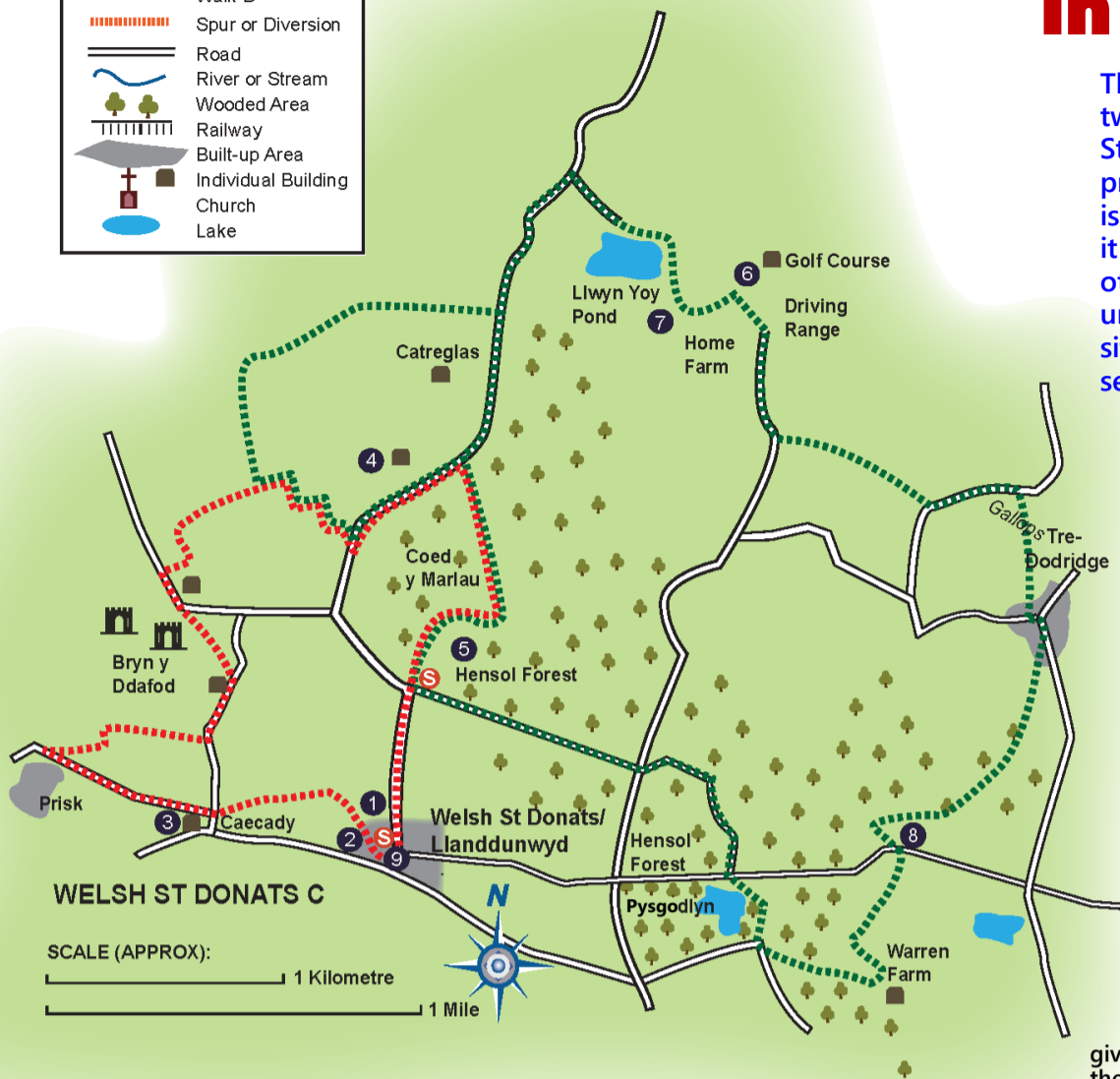
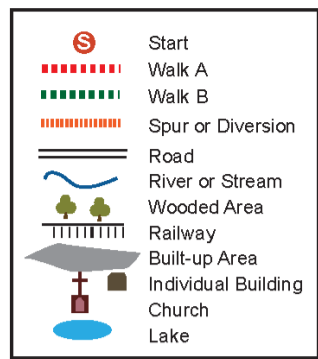


# Walk No. 2 Welsh St Donats

## In and About Hensol Forest



This leaflet departs from the format used in the Valeways series as it describes two walks centred around Hensol Forest and for the most part within the Welsh St Donats Community area. The settlement of Welsh St Donats has existed since pre-Norman times. It was called Welsh, some believe, because the soils where it is located were not in Norman times deemed suitable for arable farming, and so it remained in Welsh hands. The village has its church and village hall but no other amenities. It exists as a grouping of well-appointed residences in an unspoiled, attractive part of the Vale. The level nature of the land on which it is sited belies the fact that at almost 400 ft above sea level, it is one of the higher settlements in the Vale.

Distance Walk A 4 miles. Walk B 7½ miles.

Map OS Explorer 151 Cardiff and Bridgend.

Parking For Walk A, park roadside in Welsh St Donats. For Walk B park at Hensol Forest car park.

Public Transport There is no longer any public transport to Welsh St Donats.

Refreshments & Toilets None on either of the two routes.

START Walk A starts at St Donats Church NGR ST 028763.

Walk B starts at Hensol Forest car park NGR ST 031768.

This route was reviewed in December 2020, all direction notes were correct at that time. Continuous improvement of the footpath network may lead to changes in the footpath furniture and to minor changes to the described route.

### ROUTE FOR WALK A

Enter the churchyard via the main entrance and head with care to the stone stile on the churchyard's edge to the left of the church **1**. (The official route for the footpath is from a point just outside the north east corner of the churchyard by the village pond adjacent but locals rarely use this. Nearby Church Farm **2** is worth keeping an eye out for.) Follow the eastern and northern boundaries of the rather bumpy field to a stile in the far-right hand corner. Once over, turn immediately right to another stile next to a gap in the field boundary, and then turn left. Continue through the next two fields, keeping the hedge to your immediate left, then cross a third field, keeping to the right of a pylon, to a stile that leads you on to a road. Take the road directly ahead of you, passing the rear of Caecady House **3**, and a little later Duffryn House to reach a stile on the right. (Those who wish to may make a small walk extension by going on a few yards to take the left fork into the hamlet of Prisk).

Once over the stile, proceed gently downhill, keeping parallel to the field's left-hand boundary to a stile in the field's bottom left-hand corner. Now turn left along a broad track to soon turn right over a stile into a large field. Cross it and the next field heading just to the right of the pylon that you will see ahead of you. Just past this you reach a stile. Take it and maintaining direction cross two more fields, via a gap in the intervening boundary, to cross a stile onto a country lane. Turn left and follow this lane until just past Bryn y Ddafod House. Then take the stile on your left and climb directly up the field to a stile in the field's top boundary. Follow the road, which lies straight ahead, gently downhill to a gate on the right, just beyond Bwlch Gwyn Farm. Now follow a route that swings right round the fence of the electricity substation to a gap in the field boundary on its far side. Once through this bear right and walk up the slope towards the pylon in the extreme top right-hand corner of the field. Negotiate the gate here and turn right to walk along a narrow passageway between two fences. This takes a somewhat angular and sometimes wet course but eventually you will arrive at a stile leading you on to a road. Turn left to pass the entrance to Llwyn Ddu **4** before you reach a track into Hensol forest **5** on your right. Follow the track for about 600 yards to turn right at a meeting of paths. Follow this path downhill to the forestry car park and exit on to the road. Now take the road forward left, downhill then up to reach the Welsh St Donats road sign. Here turn right into a minor lane. Follow it around back to the church and your start. The Great House **9** can be seen on the other side of the road.

### ROUTE FOR WALK B

Facing away from the road take the left hand track out of the car park that heads slightly uphill into the forestry **5**. When you reach a crossing of tracks turn left along an almost flat, direct route that takes you on to a country lane. There is a choice here. To walk the full distance, turn left and walk on past the entrance to Llwyn Ddu **4** to reach, a little further on, a stile on the right. To shorten the walk a little turn right and follow the road gently downhill. Pass the entrance to Cartreglas to arrive at a stile inset from the road on your left. Now follow this route guide from the below. ▶

Those on the full route, cross the stile mentioned above and then follow a corridor pathway between metal fences. This path which has sharp angled bends runs through the grounds of Llwyn Ddu **4** which you may glimpse to your right at times. Some 50 yards short of a pylon that you will see ahead, you arrive at a kissing gate on your left. Negotiate this into a field, and turn right and walk on along the edge of this field to reach two adjacent gates. Take the first of these on your right and rejoin the angled corridor path. Continue along this with Llwyn Ddu to your right to reach a stile directly ahead of you. Cross it into an open field heading for a gap in the far-left corner. Once through this take the second gate on the right and proceed straight ahead through two more fields (Cartreglas Farm is up to your right) reach a stile that gives onto a country road. ▶

Turn left and continue downhill (good views of Talygarn Manor forward left) and as the road bottoms out you pass two stiles on your left and one on your right. As the road bends right, you reach a second stile on the right that you cross onto a path through woodland. You then reach a stile leading you into a field. Maintain direction through two more stiles/gaps to enter the Vale Resort Golf Course **6**. Turn right and follow the footpath along the course's perimeter (there is an attractive lake to the right) to reach a gap that takes you out of the course. Now bear left to skirt the boundary of Home Farm and its outbuilding developments. First you pass the entrance to the Coed Llwyn Rhyddid **7** heronry on your right, then the entrance to Ty Deg Cymru. Continue, curving right, to reach the Farm drive and then a country lane where you turn right.

Those wishing to acquaint themselves with the Hensol Vale Hotel Resort area should continue ahead for a short distance, passing the well-known golf buggy store to take the stile on the left. The Public Footpath continues to the left of the changing rooms through the lower area of the car park and on to the drive that bears off left through what was Hensol Hospital. N B changes to the route of the public footpath are liable to occur here.

On the main walk, after turning right, continue along the well-defined track to reach a slightly higher grade of country road. Turn right on this road and on your left after passing a redundant field gate you will reach a modern kissing gate

giving access to a field. Keeping to the left of the field you progress to a second field via a gap. Cross this field diagonally right to pass under transmission lines and reach a stile that gives onto another minor road. Turn left and walk gently downhill to reach a stile on the right that leads you into a field with its gallops, associated with the nearby racing stables. Cross the gallops via the gap provided and head downhill, bearing right with the gallops, to exit the field. (You are now in Tre Dodridge with Rose Cottage to your left).

Turn left to a road junction, and here turn right to soon arrive at a stile on the right. Take this and bear left (ignore stile down to the right) to climb, diagonally, to the top right-hand corner of a large field. Then cross the corner of the next field via two stiles and continue along a partly fenced track, turning left then right, towards Ty Fry Farm that you will see ahead. When you reach the farm drive proper, turn left along what is a permissive path to reach a minor road at Ty Fry Lodge **8**. Cross the road to a stile directly opposite. Now bear right across a large field to a new farm gate with a wicket gate inset, which leads you into a second field. Head downhill to the bottom right-hand corner passing through attractive, hummocky terrain. Take the stile or gate here and head uphill to the right of Warren Farm that you will see above you. Cross the stile here and turn left towards the farm. At the farm turn right and head to the right of a hollow and approach gradually towards the edge of the forestry that lies to your right. Here you will find a gate that leads you into the forestry along a well-marked but narrow path. You will emerge at a bend in the road near a house (Owl's Lodge, though still called Forester's House on many OS maps). Turn right into the forestry and keeping to the path on the right you will reach Pysgodlyn Lake on your left. Skirt around this lake, crossing a small dam en-route, as you bear gradually left. The route may be subject to a small change here so follow the signs. Continue to hug the north eastern bank of this lake until the footpath leads you gradually away from it, forward right. After a short distance you will arrive at a road. Cross this directly on to another forestry track. Follow this track and it will take you to another road that you will cross to reach yet another forestry track. You will follow this broad track all the way back to Hensol Forest car park where you started the walk.

### PLACES OF INTEREST

- 1 St Donats Church** This church dedicated to St Donat is over 800 years old. The earliest record of it was in 1153. It is Early English in style with a pre reformation sanctus bell. The church was restored in 1891.
- 2 Church Farm** This is one of the few long, low Welsh farmhouses still in occupation. It has early origins. It is built of local limestone and has an internal winding staircase.
- 3 Caecady House** A house of this name has existed here since medieval times, probably named after a family called Caddy. The existing house was built in the latter half of the 18th century by a Lewis Jenkins. He was the last male of the Jenkins line; a family who had lived here for centuries.
- 4 Llwyn Ddu** This owes what fame it has to the fact that the celebrity Tom Jones owned it for much of the 1990s. Because of security issues the footpaths crossing its land were diverted to a much more circuitous route that has proved difficult to maintain.
- 5 Hensol Forest** As on most Forestry Commission land this area was planted with quick growing conifers. Now however the trees are being replaced by what are deemed native species such as oak, birch, rowan and ash. This increases flora and fauna diversity. The southern part of this forest is now an open, on foot, access area.
- 6 Vale Resort and Golf Course** A leisure complex that has been developed on the site of the former Hensol Hospital. The complex contains two golf courses, a 4-star hotel with many other leisure facilities, a Grade 1 listed building (Hensol Castle) and is the training centre for the Wales RFU as well as The Blues and Cardiff City FC.
- 7 Coed Llwyn Rhyddid heronry** Bought in 1990 this is one of Wales's most important heronries. 28 heron pairs were reported in 2005. They nest on the Scots Pines. Entry is very restricted because of a long breeding period.
- 8 Ty Fry Lodge** This is a 19th century example of a lodge, in this case built for the country estate of the Insole family. It is Grade 2 listed because of its picturesque nature and architectural character.
- 9 Great House, Welsh St Donats** Built as a gentleman's residence, it was the home in the 18th century of the Llewellyn family, one of whom was a High Sheriff of Glamorgan. A noted agriculturalist, W. V. Huntley, lived here for much of the second half of the 19th century.

### Countryside Code

- Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- Park carefully so access to gateways and driveways are clear
- Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available
- Leave no trace of your visit and take all litter home
- Keep dogs under control
- Plan ahead and be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs