

THE GREAT ORME



Welcome to the audio trail around Marine Drive. This is a private road that runs all the way round the massive outcrop of limestone just north of the town of Llandudno – the Great Orme.

Marine Drive dates back to 1858 when Reginald Cust built a path around the Great Orme as tourism began to develop. Cust was a trustee of the Mostyn family, large landowners for centuries here in North Wales – but his path wasn't a great one.

In fact, the Prime Minister at the time, William Gladstone, once visited the Great Orme and attempted the path. But he found the sheer drops so terrifying that he had to be blindfolded and led round by a local guide!

It was rebuilt twenty years later in 1878 at the height of Llandudno's Victorian splendour, as the tourist industry boomed. This time it was designed as a road for carriages and renamed Marine Drive.

The Marine Drive audio trail is about five miles in total, and is accessible for wheelchair users and buggies.



Audio Trail

Sally Pidcock, Great Orme Country Park Warden, examines the conditions for plant life to thrive.



Dark Red Helleborine

Plants

The Great Orme is an internationally significant Special Area of Conservation. One of the reasons for this is the wide variety of plants, including over 400 species of wildflower, that can only exist because of the different habitats found on the Great Orme.

Plants with intriguing names like the *Dark Red Helleborine* and *Spotted Cat's Ear* grow among the grasses of the Great Orme and on the rugged sea cliffs.



Audio Trail

This guide accompanies the audio trail which can be downloaded from info points at the *Rest and Be Thankful Café*, the Visitor Centre, the North Shore Toll House and from:

www.greenlinks.org

SHIPWRECKS – THE JANE TUDOR

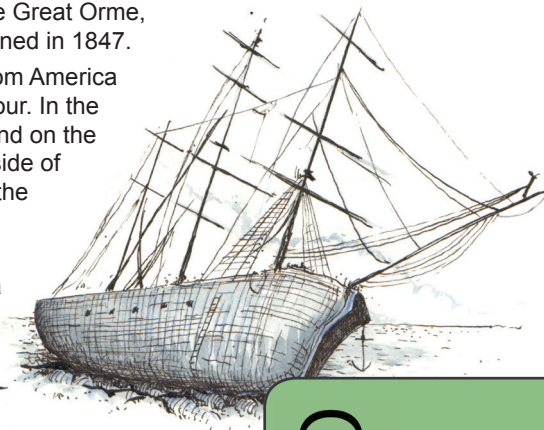


Of the many shipwrecks around the Great Orme, one of the more 'lucky' ones happened in 1847.

The *Jane Tudor* was on her way from America to Liverpool, laden with corn and flour. In the depths of midwinter, she ran aground on the treacherous rocks on the western side of the Orme known as 'Cerig Uthan', the 'Hell's Stones'.

To save themselves, the crew cut down the foremast and used it as a bridge to the mainland. The ship remained stranded on the rocks until a local merchant bought the wreck and hauled it into Conwy.

The *Jane Tudor* was then repaired and served as one of the main ships that carried building timber for the construction of Llandudno in Victorian times.



Audio Trail

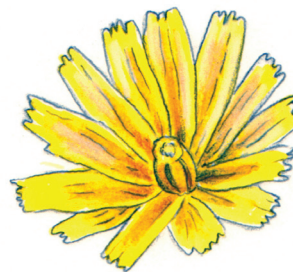
Debbie Wareham, local maritime history expert, tells the story of another famous shipwreck – the Hornby.

Geology

It's hard to imagine but, 330 million years ago, the land that is now Wales was actually in the southern hemisphere. Back then, 'Wales' enjoyed a warm tropical climate and the seas off its coast were similar to the Bahamas or Great Barrier Reef today – teeming with tropical life.

Primitive fish, sponges, corals and shellfish would have lived in the warm shallow waters. When they died, their skeletal remains sank to the sea bed.

Over millions of years, the land slowly travelled north to where it is today, and the remains of these organisms are visible as fossils in the limestone layers that make the Great Orme.



Spotted Cat's Ear



Ammonite Fossil



Audio Trail

Raymond Roberts and Kate Surry from Natural Resources Wales, explain the the Great Orme's geological past, and its impact on the present.

The Caves

The towering limestone cliffs of the Great Orme are full of fascinating caves.

Human activity in this area, and in these caves, dates back at least thirteen thousand years. We know this thanks to the discovery of a beautifully-decorated horse jaw found in a cave on the south side of the Great Orme. The jaw is currently on display in Llandudno Museum.

Recent excavations have unearthed human skeletons from the Bronze Age – between three and four thousand years ago. You will find many of the objects found with them, such as gold rings, copper axes and other metalwork, in the visitor centre at the Great Orme Mines.



The carved horse jaw
© British Museum



Look out for feral Kashmir goats

Kashmir Goats

If you climb further up the hillsides of the Great Orme, it won't take you long to find the famous feral Kashmir goats – you may even see them from Marine Drive.

There are around 130 goats here and they were originally brought to Britain for their wool, used to make shawls.

The male goat, or 'billy', has a long shaggy coat, thick wavy fringes and long ringed horns. You can spot the female 'nanny' goat because she has very small horns, and a short coat.

The goats are so at home here that birth control measures have been implemented to keep their population under control – the herd exceeded 200 at one point. In winter they were exhausting their own food supplies and wandering off into the centre of Llandudno, much to the delight of tourists but to the annoyance of the town's gardeners!

The Kashmir goats are the mascot for the the Royal Welsh Regiment.



Tom Parry, local historian, knows many tales about the Great Orme and its caves.

In Victorian times, a woman called Mary Jones yr Ogof (*Mary Jones of the Cave*) brought up her family of fourteen children in a cave near Gogarth. But in the middle of the 1800s, the family was moved and their cave destroyed to make way for the construction of Marine Drive.



Chris Woodall, Assistant Country Park Warden, explains how the elements are continually changing the landscape of the Great Orme.

Sea Life

Beneath the waves around the Great Orme is a rich habitat for marine mammals and fish.

You'll often see sea birds congregating in large numbers over schools of fish beneath the waves, diving to catch them for their young back on the sea cliffs.

If you're lucky you will also see grey seals fishing or playing just offshore and occasionally basking on one of the Great Orme's secluded beaches.

Porpoises and dolphins live here too. You may see dolphins jumping out of the water in groups as they catch fish.

And on a calm day, you might even spot a whale or basking shark a little further offshore in the deeper waters.



FIRST WORLD WAR



Story has it that in the First World War, three escaped German prisoners tried to rendezvous with a submarine off the northern coast of the Great Orme.

But the submarine surfaced on the wrong side of the headland. On each night that followed, as the weather got worse, they looked for the submarine on the opposite side of the headland, as the submarine surfaced again on the other!

Eventually the weather was so harsh the soldiers made their way towards Llandudno to seek shelter. The submarine disappeared beneath the waves and it didn't take long before the prisoners were all caught.

Coastal Artillery School

During the Second World War, the Coastal Artillery School moved from Shoeburyness in Essex to the safety of the Great Orme. Here, many hundreds of soldiers were trained how to defend the UK's ports and coastal towns.

Little remains except for a few slabs of concrete, now home to an array of wildlife.



Loading shells at the Coastal Artillery School, Great Orme
Image courtesy of John Crewdson



John Crewdson (pictured centre) tells us about his time as an instructor at the school – ironically a peaceful place during the war!

Bird Life

Here on the Great Orme you will find some of Britain's most interesting birds. The Great Orme is home to sea-birds, nesting heathland birds and migratory birds.

In the audio, you'll hear about one of Britain's rarest cliff-nesting birds that lives here – the chough. It is part of the crow family and you can identify it by its red feet and red bill, and all black feathers. You will certainly hear its distinctive loud, ringing *chee-ow* call, and hopefully see it perform spectacular aerobatics. Choughs need very specific conditions to thrive, and the grassland of the Great Orme is a perfect hunting ground for them.

Guillemots are sometimes mistaken for penguins on the cliffs of the Great Orme. They are clumsy flyers – seemingly far more comfortable *under* the sea swimming and hunting for fish. You'll probably see them splashing around just off the coast.



Audio Trail

Tom Gravett, a keen birdwatcher here on the Great Orme, explains the special conditions that enable the birdlife here to thrive.

Wind Turbines

As you look out from the northern coast of the Great Orme you will see almost 200 wind turbines.

These colossal white structures generate electricity for the UK's National Grid.



Audio Trail

Vince Read, Project Manager with RWE Innogy UK, explains the building of the turbines, how they generate very low-pollution energy and how they are maintained entirely by local engineers.

Building this marine wind farm, Gwynt y Môr, has taken years of planning, and the company behind it, RWE Innogy UK, has planned the process meticulously.

The construction of the turbines, and the ongoing maintenance regime, has had to be scheduled around the mating and migratory patterns of the local sea life.

CLIMBING >>

The Great Orme has become a playground for hundreds of climbers each year who come to scale the sea cliffs.

Traditionally, climbers have used fixed anchors secured into the rock face and protect themselves using ropes and harnesses attached to them.

But a style of climbing called *bouldering* is becoming popular – where climbers don't use ropes or harnesses at all. Instead they lay down cushioned mats to protect them if they fall.

Keep an eye out for climbers and boulderers practicing along Marine Drive.



Audio Trail

Elfy Jones, from the British Mountaineering Council, talks about the caves and limestone cliffs that are popular with climbers and boulderers.

Route back to Llandudno

When you reach the West Shore Toll House on the audio trail, you will have two options – either continue along the main road around to Llandudno, which is flat and paved, or climb up a short steep section with several steps, after which the path levels off, leading through Haulfre Gardens on what is known as 'Invalids Walk'. This is explained in more detail in the audio trail.

Find out more

There is still plenty to learn about the Great Orme.

The Visitor Centre on the summit of the Great Orme is easy to reach by foot, via cable car, or by the The Orme's famous Victorian tram, both beginning from Llandudno.

You'll also find more information in Llandudno Museum on Gloddaeth Street in the town. The museum tells the story of Llandudno and the Great Orme from the last Ice Age to the Second World War.

There is also the Great Orme Exploration Society that runs regular walks throughout the summer.

Visit: www.goes.org.uk for the timetable.

In addition, the Great Orme pages on the Conwy County Borough Council website provide up-to-date information on management and activities on the Great Orme.

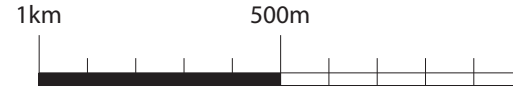
www.conwy.gov.uk/greatorme



Audio Trail

Join Emily La Trobe-Bateman, archaeologist with the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust, in uncovering the Great Orme's treasures.



















We hope you enjoy your visit and will come again soon.



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Key

-  Audio Trail
-  Country Park
-  Private Land
-  Other Footpaths
-  Tramway
-  Steep Slope
-  Town
-  Emergency Telephone
-  Mobility Vehicle Passing Place
-  Refreshments
-  Parking
-  Two-way Traffic
-  One-way Traffic
-  Audio Point
-  Cable Car
-  Visitor Centre
-  Toilets
-  Picnic Sites



Green Links is a joint tourism project between Conwy County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Council, funded by RWE Innogy UK and partners, through Gwynt y Môr Offshore Wind Farm.