



Coppice

Coppicing is an ancient woodland management system traditionally used to produce timber, but which also supports a wide variety of woodland flora and fauna - such as dormice, bluebells, wood anemones, speckled wood butterflies and tawny owls.

Woodland ecosystems have a structure, the tall canopy trees such as ash and oak, an understorey of shrubs like hazel and holly, and the ground flora such as wild garlic and bluebells. It is the understorey that is coppiced. Many British trees have the ability to produce lots of new stems when they are cut almost to the ground. Any tree species which has the ability to regenerate after being cut can be coppiced, but in the valley it is naturally occurring hazel that is mainly used. Light is very important when managing coppice. If too much light hits the ground then brambles take over and the ground flora suffers - too little and the cut trees cannot regenerate. To manage this, a number of tall canopy trees are left uncut to provide just the right amount of shade.

The coppiced stumps - known as stools are left to grow their many new shoots for a number of years until the required thickness is achieved. Then an area - known as a coupe will once again be cut, after five, ten or fifteen years. By having adjacent coupes of different age structure the wildlife of the valley gets most benefit and variety.

Pwll-Du Bay

Due to the difficult vehicular access to Pwlldu (or 'black pool') Bay it is one of the most secluded and quiet bays on Gower, accessible to the public only on foot, horseback or bicycle.

It is therefore difficult to believe that it was once a busy place, industrial even. For centuries the remoteness of the bay led to it being a favourite haunt of smugglers, who brought in tobacco and tea from Ireland and brandy from France.

Later limestone was quarried here on a huge scale, loaded into boats that were beached on the shore and transported across the Channel to north Devon, where it was burnt in kilns to make lime for use on the fields as fertilizer.

Up to 30 boats could be in the bay at any one time, and all of those men needed refreshment. At one time there were two pubs here, the Ship and the Beaufort, helping to provide this refreshment. As the lime industry declined both pubs converted to tea-rooms before finally becoming the private homes you can see today.

The rough tracks down the hills on either side of the bay were once a lot busier, smoother and more important. They were part of the only route between south Gower and Swansea and were used by farmers to get their produce to Swansea market.



Gower Coast Walks

Terrain: Some of the paths are steep, muddy, slippery or uneven. The section of path marked in red on the plan can be especially challenging as it runs along the riverbed. Most of the time the river flows underground beneath this section but it rises and floods the path after sustained rainfall.

Safety: Please take care when walking in the valley, enjoy and view the caves from outside their entrances it is extremely dangerous to enter any cave. Some of the paths run along river beds which may be impassable after periods of heavy rain. Mobile phone coverage is generally unavailable.



Highlights

There is so much to look out for in the valley, including historic features such as an Iron Age Promontory Fort and the Long Ash Silver / Lead Mine, caves and holes, such as Culver Pit, carved out in the limestone by water gushing through the valley down to the beautifully secluded Pwll Du Bay. There is also an abundance of wildlife, if you're quiet you may spot a kingfisher or an otter by the stream.



Useful Information

OS Explorer Map 164 Gower

Mobile phone coverage is generally good

Stout footwear is advisable

For local public transport information
www.traveline-cymru.info/

Swansea Tourist Information Centre
Tel: 01792 468321
E-mail: tourism@swansea.gov.uk
www.visitswanseabay.com

Mumbles Tourist Information Centre
Tel: 01792 361302
E-mail: info@mumblestic.co.uk
www.visitmumbles.co.uk

If you encounter any problems on this walk, or would like further information on public rights of way, please contact the Countryside Access Team

Countryside Access Team
Tel: 01792 635230 or 01792 635746
E-mail: countrysideaccess@swansea.gov.uk
www.swansea.gov.uk/countrysideaccess

Walking in the Valley

Using this leaflet all walkers, from the experienced to beginner can find routes to suit them through Bishopston Valley and on to the coast path at Pwll-Du Bay.

The walks can combine the hidden beauty of Bishopston Valley's woodlands and meadows with a visit to one of Gower's most remote and secluded beaches.

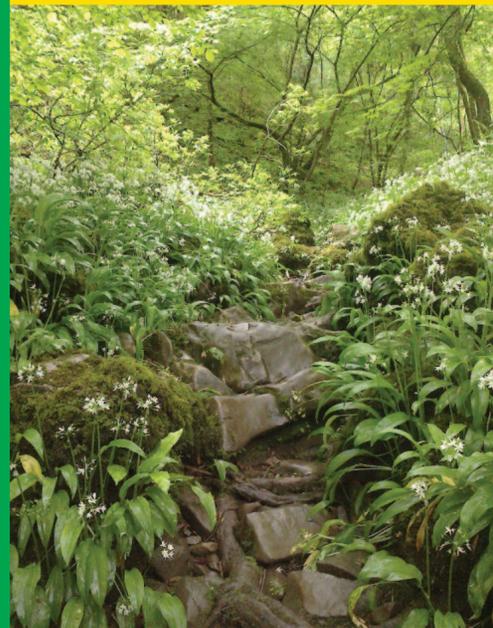
Rather than indicate a particular route for you to follow we have shown all the rights of way in the valley and some of the other paths around the valley so that you can choose your own route. There are also a number of circular walks you may like to take. There is signage throughout the valley.

The Wales Coast Path runs behind Pwll Du Bay. You can use it for longer circular walks via Pwll Du Head or Brandy Cove. The 870 mile Wales Coast Path runs around the entire coastline of Wales.

DesignPrint Tel: 01792 685565 Ref: 2027-14

GOWER COAST WALKS

Bishopston Valley & Pwll Du Bay



Bishopston Valley

Bishopston Valley is a hidden, steep-sided river valley with a long and secretive history, amazing geology and rare plants and wildlife. The National Trust who currently manage the site, acquired most of it in 1954 and the remainder in 1963 by Deed of Gift.

The valley, which runs from Kittle in the north to Pwll Du Bay in the south makes up part of the Pwll-Du Head and Bishopston Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The steep valley is mainly covered by ancient woodland. 'Ancient' means that this woodland was in existence before 1600 and is the nearest thing remaining to primaeval forest. The trees are mostly ash and oak with a hazel understorey; the rare wild-service tree and small leaved lime can also be found. Several areas of the valley are being brought back into coppice rotation to improve biodiversity.

In the north the valley sides and floor are strewn with mossy limestone boulders. Bishopston Pill runs underground through the top part of the valley and emerges half way down to run overground for the remainder. The stream is connected to the surface by a series of swallow holes or windows such as Guzzle Hole where water can be heard and seen all year round. After heavy rain the stream runs overground and disappears down a series of swallow holes ending at Daw Pit. In flood conditions Daw Pit can fill with water and overflow, with the stream flooding the whole of the valley.



The valley has an excellent diversity of both species and habitat with clearings, wet meadows, herb rich limestone grassland, stream sides and abundant dead wood which all provide homes for bats, owls, kingfishers, otters and brown trout. Dormice are also being encouraged to return.

The bedrock of this valley is Carboniferous Limestone, formed from shelly sands deposited approximately 350 million years ago in a shallow tropical sea.

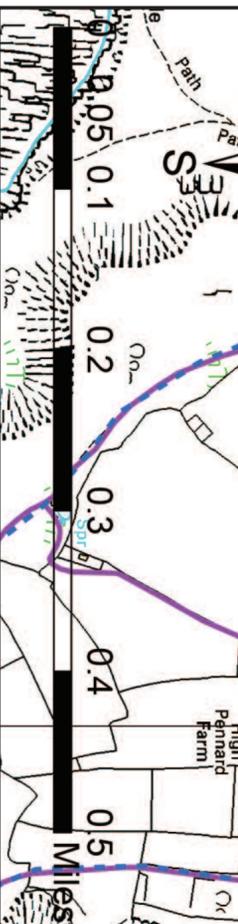
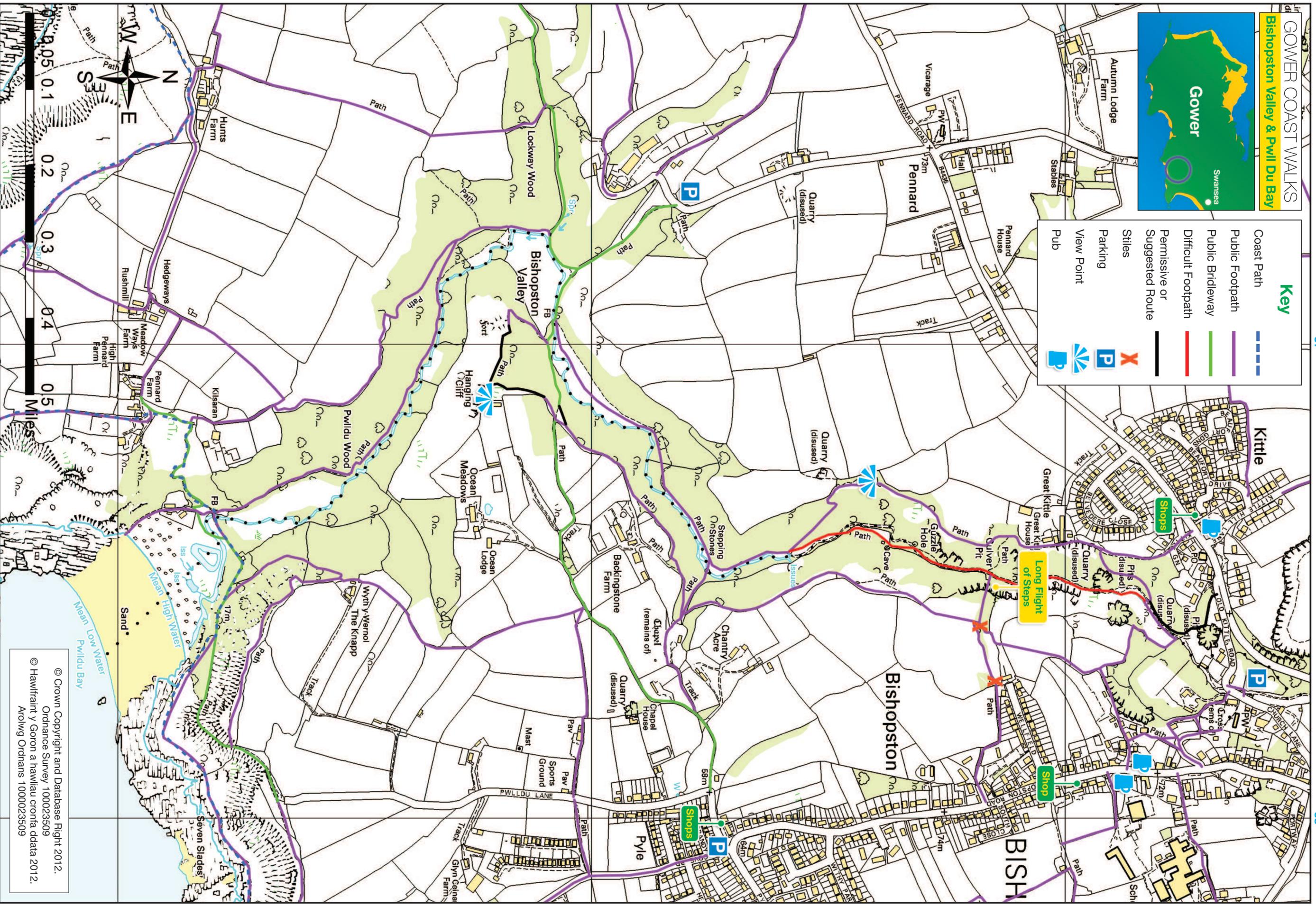
The valley is full of mystery and intrigue enhanced by its secluded nature. It has a colourful past, once used by smugglers, miners and quarry workers, visible evidence of which can be seen as you walk through the valley to Pwll Du Bay.





Key

- Coast Path
- Public Footpath
- Public Bridleway
- Difficult Footpath
- Permissive or Suggested Route
- Stiles
- Parking
- View Point
- Pub



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