

# Access Opportunities on the Defence Estate

## Sennybridge Powys



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Walks in and around the River Honddu Valley giving views across the wild plateau of Mynydd Epynt, and the Brecon Beacons to the south. The information on the Epynt Way, a 90km circular walk around the ranges, can be found on [www.defence-estates.mod.uk/epyntway](http://www.defence-estates.mod.uk/epyntway).

### Walk 1: Circular Route

**Distance:** 2½ miles (4km)

**Duration:** 2 hours

**Grade:** ▲▲

### Walk 2: Easy-going Trail

**Distance:** 1 mile (1.6km)

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Grade:** ▲

### OS map sheet(s)

OS Landranger Sheet 160 (1:50,000)

OS Explorer Sheet 188 (1:25,000)

**Starting Grid Reference:** GR 993 437

### Site description / history

Sennybridge Training Area (SENTA) covers an area of approximately 12,400 hectares of freehold land, and 2,500 hectares of land leased from Forest Enterprise. The Training Area was acquired by the Ministry of Defence in 1939 and is a major Field Firing Area for the infantry and artillery. There is an Impact Area where all live firing takes place, along with an extensive Dry Training Area available for use for exercises. While Sennybridge Camp is within the Brecon Beacons National Park, the Training Area is not, and lies to the north of the National Park.

The majority of SENTA is situated on the Mynydd Epynt, a wild plateau covered largely by blanket bog and grass, but intersected by several stream valleys containing woodland and meadows. Three Sites of Special Scientific Interest lie within SENTA, two of which are proposed Special Areas of Conservation. There are approximately 1,500 hectares of woodland on the Training Area, both commercially grown softwoods and ancient semi-natural woodland.

The area is also important for its archaeology, with medieval agricultural systems still evident in the landscape. Grazing of sheep under communal grazing and letting licences forms the current use.

### Walk description - Walk 1

The route begins at Disgwyflfa Conservation Centre on the B4519 Upper Chapel-Garth Road **A** (GR 993 437). The path is clearly waymarked from the start. Follow the track for approximately 500m slowly ascending the valley. (This is also the first section of the easy-going trail. At this point **B** (GR 997 437), signposts direct you left to follow a sheep track up and along a stream valley. Continue to follow the waymarkers across open moorland ascending the hill. At the top of the hill **C** (GR 996 443), there is a viewpoint giving spectacular views south across to the Black Mountains, the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountain.

From here **C**, descend slightly before ascending again towards a woodland plantation **D** (GR 997 444). The waymarkers direct you to the right of the plantation across open moorland, and then northwards towards another plantation **E** (GR 998 449).



At **E** you will come to a bridleway which can be seen on the ground. Turn left on to this and follow it northwards towards a woodland plantation **F** (GR 995 452), skirting around the southern end of it. Continue to follow the waymarkers towards another woodland plantation **G** (GR 991 452). Walk down the lefthand side of the woodland and skirt around the southern end of it. From **H** (GR 990 449) the route undulates across the moorland down the River Honddu Valley. Take care in this area during the winter as it can become very wet and boggy. The route takes you down to meet the B4519 **I** (GR 991 441). From here **I**, it is a short walk back along the road to the Conservation Centre.

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### Walk description - Walk 2

#### Easy-going Trail

This route also begins at the Disgwylfa Conservation Centre. From the B4519, the track gently ascends the valley and this section is suitable for access by wheelchair and pushchair users. There are two car parking lay-bys with picnic facilities **J & K** along the route. Section **K - L** of the track becomes steeper, and may be more difficult for wheelchair use, but access by car is feasible here allowing views across the Mynydd Epynt. Access by car is for disabled visitors only.

An optional able-bodied link to a viewpoint is possible by heading southwestwards up the slope to **M** (GR 998 433). This section, however, is not suitable for disabled visitors.

#### Points of interest

Information boards along the route describe the habitats and species found, along with the history of Sennybridge.

Red kites can frequently be seen soaring over the open areas. Other birds of prey to be found in the area include goshawk, peregrine falcon and merlin. snipe and curlew regularly breed in the area and skylark can be heard overhead. The pasture area at the start of the routes supports an exceptionally rich assortment of grassland fungi including over 20 different varieties of brightly coloured waxcap toadstools and fairy club fungi. The Epynt Ranges are an internationally important refuge for these very scarce fungi.

The area behind the Conservation Centre is home to the rare slender green feather moss drepanocladus (*Hamatocaulis*) *vernicosus*.

#### Restrictions / access times

Access to the walks can be gained at all times. Visitors are asked to comply at all times with the instructions and byelaws at the start of the walk.

Please keep to the path and take care not to damage any plants, particularly between the B4519 and the end of the easy-going trail **G**.

### Safety

The route is open at all times. However, as it is within the Dry Training Area, you may encounter military/personnel vehicles engaging in military activities. The majority of the circular walk is across rough upland moorland and good stout footwear is necessary. The path is marked at 50m intervals and is clearly visible in good weather. However, thick fog can come down very quickly in this area, making navigation difficult as the path is not well defined on the ground. **DO NOT ATTEMPT THIS WALK IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO SEE THE MARKER POSTS.** All land west of the B4519 is in the Impact Area. **DO NOT ENTER THIS AREA.**

### How to get there

The recommended walk is 10½ miles (16.8km) north of the town of Brecon, via the B4520 to Upper Chapel and then along the B4519 to Garth. Disgwylfa Conservation Centre, where the walk starts, is about 2½ miles (4 km) northwest from the junction of the B4520 and the B4519 at Upper Chapel.

Access to the start of the walks is only possible by car. There are currently no local bus services.



### Local facilities

There are parking, picnic and toilet facilities (including a disabled access toilet) at the Disgwylfa Conservation Centre **A**. Further parking and picnic facilities, for disabled visitors only, are available along the route of Walk 2 **J & K**.

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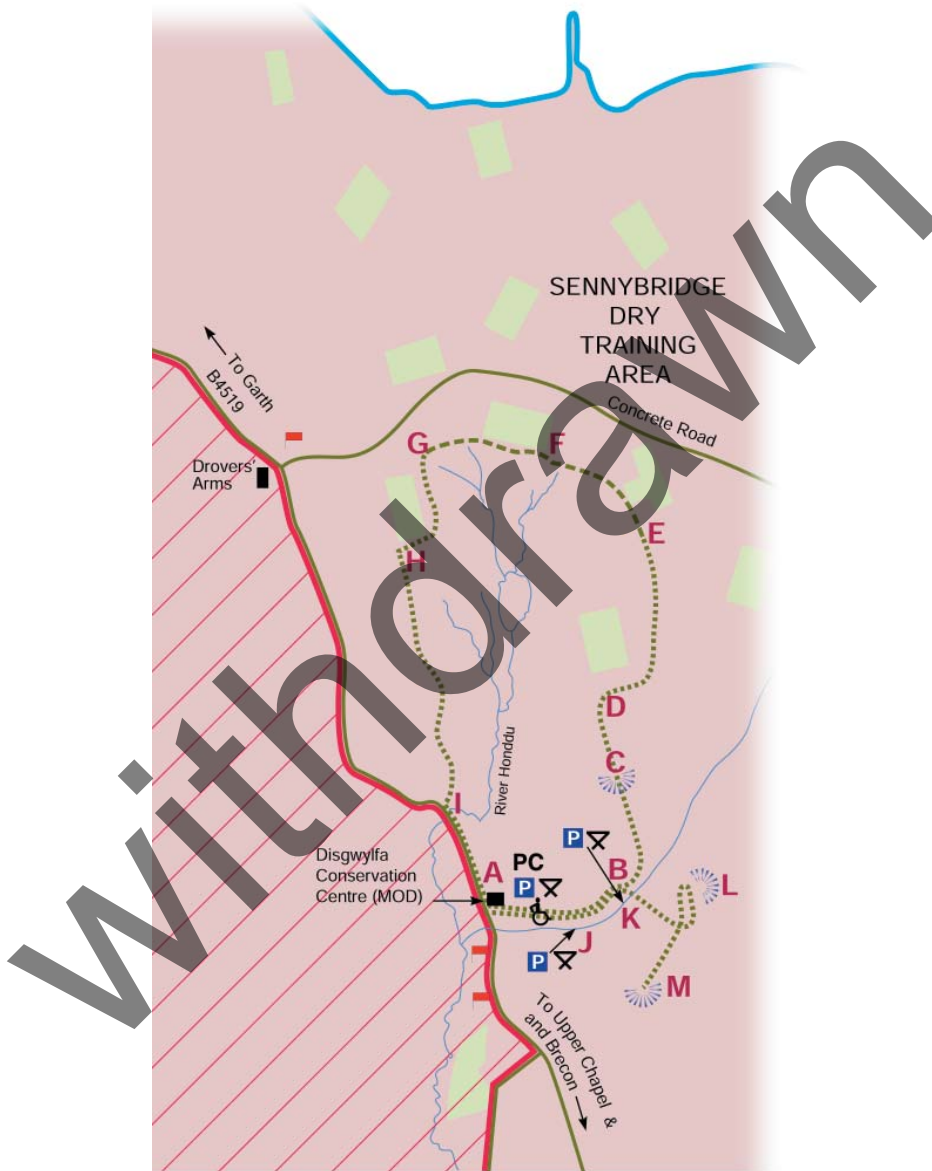


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The Disgwylfa Conservation Centre is open 8:00am - 4:30pm (winter) and 8:00am - 7:00pm (summer). Information about the habitats and species found on SENTA, along with the history of the Training Area is on display in the centre. There is also a meeting area.

### Useful contact details

Sennybridge Training Area 01874 635500 or 635460.



- |                            |                               |                                     |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>ACCESS AT ALL TIMES</b> | <b>MOD LANDS</b>              | View Points                         |
| Roads                      | Training Area                 | Car Park                            |
| Footpaths                  | Woodland Training Area        | Picnic Facilities                   |
| Bridleways                 | Live Firing Range Danger Area | Toilets (including Disabled Access) |
|                            | Training Area Boundary        | Easy-going Trail                    |
| <b>WARNING SIGNS</b>       |                               |                                     |
| FLAGS - Day                |                               |                                     |

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