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Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural

Beauty (AONB): An internationally important protected landscape, straddling the England-Wales border for 58 miles of the River Wye. The AONB Partnership works to conserve and enhance the beauty of this living, working landscape for present and future generations.

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- Front cover: Cider mill at The Anchor, Tintern. (Monmouth Museum)

wye valley



## Puddingstone and pubs

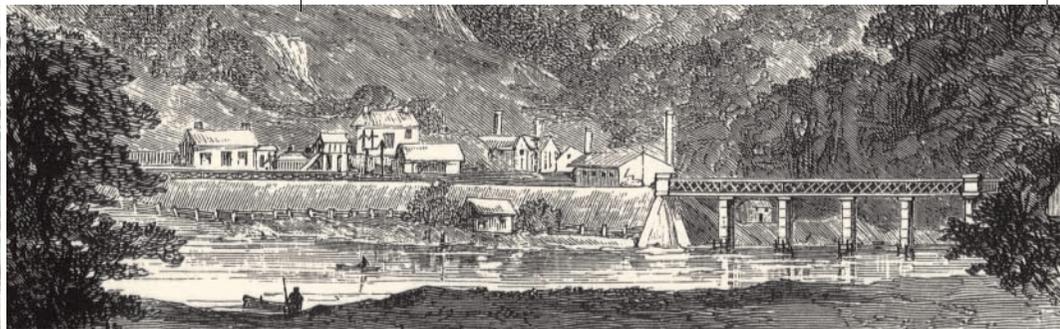


A walk uncovering Penallt's hidden millstone industry. With some steep steps, uphill sections and uneven paths. Best enjoyed in spring and early summer when the bluebells and wildflower meadows are at their peak. **3 HOUR, 3 MILE CIRCULAR WALK**

*No better cider does the world supply  
Than grows along thy borders, gentle Wye'*



☺ A work of art in moss and stone. (© Bob Trett)



☺ The bridge carried the Wye Valley Railway across the river at Redbrook. This view from 1876 shows the tinplate works in Redbrook.

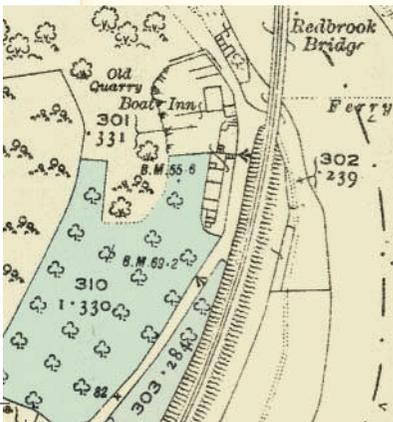
## The millstone industry of Penallt

Penallt was once famous for its millstones, which were made by local craftsmen. They worked a very hard rock, known as Puddingstone, which outcrops in this area. Like a natural concrete this quartz conglomerate is abrasive, making it ideal for millstones. Traditionally millstones ground corn, but this was an important cider producing area. Two hundred years ago local writer Charles Heath wrote of the 'rich orcharding and fruit trees, producing the best kinds of cider and perry' along the Wye. Apple and perry orchards once stretched along the river and lined Lone Lane nearly all the way up to Penallt. Most farms had a puddingstone cider press to make their own cider.

Leitch Ritchie, who took a boat tour down the Wye in 1839, described the local cider mills as *'consisting of a circular stone, about twelve hundred weight, set on its edge in a shallow circular trough, and drawn round by a horse. The apples are gradually introduced into the trough, and a quantity may be thus mashed... The expressed juice is put into casks, not quite filled, and in the open air; and as soon as the vinous fermentation takes place, it is racked.*

*When two years old it may be bottled, after which it will become rich and sparkling, and so remain for twenty or thirty years.'*

☺ Orchards once covered the hillside above The Boat as this early 20th century map shows. The old ferry crossing is also shown.



The Boat Inn, Lower Penallt (S0536 098) Park in Redbrook between the Wye and the A466. Cross the river via the old railway bridge to the starting point at the Boat Inn.



### ALTERNATE START:

The Inn at Penallt (S0522092) Park beside the 'new' barn adjacent to The Inn and Gwent Wildlife Trust's orchard.

(Numbers in the text also appear on the map.)

This walk takes you to a millstone quarry, to the riverside where millstones were loaded onto trows and passes two pubs where you can enjoy a glass of local cider! Be sure to check pub opening times before you start if you are planning a refreshment stop as they vary daily.

### 1 The Boat

Ferry boats traditionally linked the communities living on either side of the Wye. Many Penallt residents took the ferry to work in Redbrook's copper and tinplate industries. In 1800 there were twenty-five ferries between Chepstow and Ross carrying people, cargo and even animals.

Starting at The Boat (1) face the river and walk to your right towards the old railway bridge (2).

### 2 Trow and Trains

When the bridge was built in 1876 space was left on this side of the river to accommodate the tow path, which ran along the bank. Boats called trows navigated up and down the Wye, carrying cargoes which included millstones. Originally men pulled the trows over the shallows, but by the time the railway arrived this had become a horse towpath.



Take the bridleway under the old bridge and follow this path, which was once the riverside tow path. Keep walking (ignoring path to right beside wooden lodge) until you see a wooden pedestrian gate on the right with a Wye Valley Walk sign to it. Keep on the riverside bridleway but now look out for a large millstone below the footpath on the left, just where a gully takes a stream into the river.

3

### Millstone loading area

Millstones were loaded onto trows along the river bank. Some stones quite literally missed the boat and now lie in the river!

If you want to find more millstones take a 20 minute walk further along this path to the fisherman's hut where there are many stones on the bank and jutting out into the river.

Return along the footpath as far as the Wye Valley walk sign and the wooden gate on your left. Go through the gate and cross straight over the old railway line. Take the footpath up hill to the right, heading towards a house on the hillside.



- One of the earliest references to a millstone hewer in Penallt is George Younge in 1684. Noah Hudson (left) was probably the last millstone maker in Penallt, a job he combined with work at the tin plate works in Redbrook in the early 20th century. The Hudson family were stone masons for many generations working The Washings near the Old Church and Prisk Wood. (Photo: Phil Hudson)

Turn left at the footpath sign, just before the house. Walk up this steep section of steps. Keep right and continue uphill past the buildings on the right. Look out for a puddingstone gatepost on the left. At the road turn left. After a very short distance turn left into Prisk Wood, by the yellow salt bin (straight after the metal gates).

4

### Prisk Wood

Prisk Wood hides a maze of abandoned millstone quarry workings. You don't have to look far before you find evidence of this hidden industry. At the mouth of each of the deep quarry gullies cut into the hillside you will find flattened level areas, which were used as working platforms where the millstones were crafted. How did they move the millstones? It's thought a large piece of wood was put through the central hole to help control their movement as they were rolled down 'grooves' in the hillside to the river.

Follow the path through the wood passing abandoned workings to the right, until reaching a massive fallen beech tree, which blew down in 2008. Prisk Wood is owned by Gwent Wildlife Trust and they are leaving the tree to decay naturally to provide homes for wildlife. Retrace your steps to the road and turn left up Lone Lane. This is a steady uphill climb. As the road levels out after half a mile, look out for a salt bin on the left and take the track which leads off to the right and brings you to the Inn at Penallt (5).

5

### Inn at Penallt

Why not quench your thirst with a glass of local cider! You will find an old cider millstone in the pub's garden.

From The Inn turn right along the gravel track. Look out for the orchard on the right (6).



## 6 Orchard at Pentwyn Farm

Records from 1810 show a cider mill as part of this farm, Penteyne (Pentwyn), which is now owned by Gwent Wildlife Trust. This orchard is being replanted with traditional varieties. In the past orchards played a significant role in everyday life: farm workers were often paid in cider; babies were sometimes baptised in cider; and apples were even buried in churchyards to feed the dead!

Continue along the track until reaching a cottage on your right and a barn in front of you.

## 7 Pentwyn Farm and Wyeswood

This is Gwent Wildlife Trust's Pentwyn Farm reserve. Wyeswood is the first stage in a scheme aiming to provide connected habitats for wildlife from the river Wye to the river Usk, linking nearby reserves and wildlife friendly habitats. The views from these fields stretch across the Wye Valley towards the Kymin

Walk to the left of the medieval barn and through the gate into the field (beside the panel about Wyeswood).

Turn right and keeping the hedge to your right, walk down hill (ignoring gates on the right), until reaching a small gate in front of you. Go through this gate to an enclosed track with a hedgerow on the right and fence on the left. Continue downhill passing through two more gates. After the second gate go diagonally to the right across the field, heading towards a kissing gate. Go through this gate and continue on the same diagonal line to another kissing gate. Go downhill and through a final gate which comes out onto Glyn Road down some steep steps. Turn right and walk downhill along this lane until you reach the river Wye and the Boat Inn (1).

➤ Wildflower meadows at Pentwyn Farm. (GWT)

# Puddingstone and pub trail

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