



The Strata Florida Pilgrim Walking Festival 28th and 29th September 2024



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A Walking Festival in Strata Florida

Strata Florida, well-known as the site of the famous Cistercian Abbey of Strata Florida, is a spiritual site of immense presence in its landscape. It is also an important place for the history and cultural identity of Wales where many of its earliest literary manuscripts were produced and preserved.

The introduction of a walking festival at Strata Florida in 2024 will combine walks in the historic landscapes with the annual pilgrimage to the iconic sculpture of the Pilgrim above the medieval site. The festival is a collaborative event organised by the Strata Florida Trust and the Strata Florida Community Group, with walk leaders from local Rambler Groups.

The event is seen as a way of celebrating and experiencing the very special atmosphere of the place. Not only were the Cistercian monks of the 12th century captivated by its spiritual tranquility, but evidence in the surrounding landscape shows that the area has been spiritually significant from as far back as the early Bronze Age, over four thousand years ago.

The World Monument Fund: Our principal supporter

The World Monument Fund is a charity dedicated to the preservation of historic architecture and heritage sites around the world, working in collaboration with communities in 90 different countries. These include communities impacted by conflict, natural hazards and climate.

The ethos of the charity is to safeguard irreplaceable heritage and the partnership with the Strata Florida Trust has highlighted this. This began in 2016 and the Strata Florida project became their first in Wales.

It was also through a generous donation from a member of the WMF that the money, raised through crowd funding, was matched to enable the new pilgrim to be constructed. They are also supporting various aspects of this festival for which the organisers are immensely grateful.



The Pilgrim of Strata Florida



Photo credits: Dafydd Wyn Morgan





As part of the 2012 Sculpture Cymru exhibition shown during an open weekend event run by the Strata Florida Trust, the sculptor Glenn Morris created a pilgrim on the hill to the east of the abbey. The sculpture captured the hearts and minds of both the local community and visitors to Strata Florida, to such an extent that when the original pilgrim collapsed, in 2019, just before the covid pandemic, there was widespread dismay that the pilgrim was no longer on the skyline above the abbey.

It appears that the statue had become an icon for all. In many ways, as well symbolising the spirit of pilgrimage to the holy place of Strata Florida, it also epitomised the struggle of life in a rural environment and the need to battle against all manner of challenges facing it.

Consequently, through crowd funding and a generous donation from the World Monument Fund, the Strata Florida Community Group with the Trust's help, succeeded in enabling the Pilgrim's return. Glenn Morris, as a result, created his second Pilgrim which was completed in 2022. The following year a pilgrimage was made to the pilgrim attended by about 50 people.

As the sculpture is on private land it is only possible to get closer with the permission of the farmer, Iwan Arch, who is generously allowing us to walk up to the Pilgrim on the afternoon of the 29th of September 2024.

Grades and Guidance

	Easy walk Walk and Talk	On generally well-maintained level surfaces. Suitable for less confident walkers families with young children, or those simply looking for a short stroll.
	Leisurely	Mainly on gentle gradients but possibly including steps, stiles, unsurfaced paths
	Moderate walk	May include some steep paths, open country or longer distances
	Energetic walk Challenging	Suitable for experienced, fit walkers. May involve hills, rough country


All walkers should be aware of the following

- Follow the Countryside Code, particularly around farm stock.
- No dogs, please, apart from assistance dogs.
- As these are guided walks, please follow the leaders' instructions.
- Wear appropriate clothing, ideally a waterproof jacket and trousers.
- Wear walking boots.
- A rucksack is useful for carrying food and drink particularly for the longer walks.



Food and Drink

- There will be a catering van serving food at the main site, tea and coffee will be available in Y Beudy.
- A range of homemade cakes will be available prior to the talk on Saturday and after the Pilgrim walk on Sunday.
- We recommend bringing your own packed lunch and drinks for longer walks.


Programme

Saturday	Distances	Grades	Duration	Walk Leaders
Teifi Pools Full day walk Start: 9:30am	8.5 miles/ 13.5 km 1204 ft /367m ascent		6 hours	Jim Cowie Ian Tillotson Kay Davies
Rhos-gelli-gron Start: 10am	4.7 miles/ 7.6 km 935 ft / 285m ascent		3 hours	Peredur Evans Dafydd Johnston James Williams
Abbey precinct Walk and talk Start: 2:30pm	1 mile		2 hours	David Austin Dafydd Johnston

5.30pm a talk will be given by Caradoc Jones in St Mary's Church

Sunday	Distances	Grades	Duration	Walk Leaders
Pen-y-bannau Start: 9:30 am	3.3 miles/5.3 km 561 ft /171 m ascent		2.5/3 hours	Dafydd Johnston Peredur Evans James Williams
Abbey Woods Walk and talk Start: 10am	1 mile/1.6 km		1 hour	David Austin
Abbey Woods/ Coed y Bont Start: 10am	3 miles/5 km		2.5 to 3 hours	Jim Cowie Ian Tillotson Kay Davies

Service in St Mary's 2pm led by Rev Aled Lewis

Pilgrimage to the Pilgrim and Refreshments 3pm	1 mile/1.6km 345ft/105m ascent		1 hour	Jim Cowie and all other walk leaders
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The Strata Florida Community Group

The Group was formed to assist the Trust achieve its aims and act as a sounding board for local opinion. It is constituted, however, as an independent body with an active membership of local people. It provides volunteers for events, exhibitions and specific projects such as the installation of the Pilgrim and the making of the Pilgrim Observation Garden.

The Pilgrim Observation Garden

Following the unveiling of Glenn Morris' Pilgrim statue on Penbryn, the community group decided that it would be a good idea to create a special Observation Garden next to the Tŷ Pair. This was seen not only as a place from which the Pilgrim could be viewed, but also a place of contemplation.

The Garden celebrates the very special and spiritual atmosphere of Strata Florida felt by all who come. Here the experience can be solitary or somewhere to go with family and friends for a picnic.



The Monastic Tradition of Hospitality

Part of the legacy of great abbeys, like Strata Florida, was the tradition of providing resting places for travellers, including pilgrims. These places also provided refreshment (including monk-brewed beer) and medical assistance. The two public houses advertised below began their lives as part of this network of hospitality.

B&B



Bar Meals

The Red Lion Hotel

Bridge Street Pontrhydfendigaid

SY25 6BH

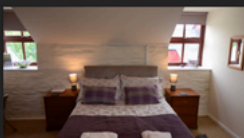
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The Strata Florida Trust

The Strata Florida Trust was established in 2006 as an independent element of an on-going archaeological research programme. Its intention was to purchase, restore and put to new use the historic complex of buildings of Mynachlog Fawr which began life as part of the Cistercian Abbey complex of Strata Florida, part of whose remains lie revealed next door as a monument in the care of Cadw.

In 2016, the Trust was able, with the very generous help of the World Monument Fund, to purchase the complex.

The aims of the Trust are to:

- set up a part-residential Strata Florida Centre to help people learn about heritage and conservation, environmental issues, and the language and cultures of Wales;
- preserve and restore all of the buildings, using sustainable methods and the best available technologies;
- give a warm welcome to visitors, residents and local people and help them enjoy the rich environment, history and culture of the area.

The Trust has a free to enter exhibition, runs an annual archaeological field school, holds courses, publishes books and holds a number of events. As part of the next stage of development the Trust will be providing training programmes in traditional heritage skills whilst undertaking conservation work on the grade II listed stables. The Trust has a number of strategic partners including the World Monuments Fund, The King's Foundation, Ceredigion County Council, UWTSD and Cadw.

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Supporters of the Walking Festival

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County Council

Blakemore Foundation

HSBC Pound for Pound Scheme

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WMS Firearms

Mynachlog Fawr Exhibition

In July 2021 the Trust opened the 'Mynachlog Fawr in 30 objects' exhibition to tell the story of the farm through the centuries.

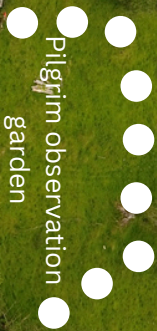
Its name (meaning 'cauldron house') describes part of its former use as a place where cooking was done, latterly the preparation of pig food. It was also a cart-shed which explains the original three arches of its entrances. The Trust was generously assisted in this work by the World Monuments Fund, the National Heritage Lottery Fund and the Sacred Landscapes Research Project.

Featuring a variety of objects and documents from the farmhouse and farm buildings, it provides the opportunity for visitors of all ages to explore the social and agricultural history of the house and the local area. It also contains our interactive Virtual Histories educational experience. This allows visitors to travel back to see a day in the life of Mynachlog Fawr farm 1947, and the Abbey in 1238.

The building is also a place for visitors to relax, with chairs next to the magnificent fireplace, self service refreshments (tea, coffee, hot chocolate, herbal teas and Tregroes toffee waffles), and a selection of second-hand and local history books available to read.



St Mary's Church and graveyard
Ruins of Strata Florida Abbey (Cadw)



Mynachlog Fawr
(no public access)

Exhibition

Y Beudy -
Registration

Archaeological
excavations
(no public access)

Road from Pontrhydfendgaid

