

My Favourite Ride 9

The Star Gazing Hare

A circular ride starting and finishing at Burger King Neath.

Distance 24 miles. Total accent 2,050 feet. Max elevation 1,300 feet.

Terrain: Lanes, B Roads, forestry roads. Moderate.

This ride starts at Halfords/Burger King Neath, SA10 7AY, 51.668543 -3.807700
Google Plus Code M59R+CW7 Neath

Something different from our usual programme of rides, this one is a MTB or gravel bike (fat tyre) ride that goes up through the forest from Crynant to the top of the mountain to see the carving of the Star Gazing Hare, and other carvings, and also the stone carving of the Roman Centurion Head on the side of Sarn Helen Roman road running along the top of the mountain between the Dulais and Neath valleys.

From the start at Neath we head through the village of Cadoxton and take a left before Aberdulais to climb up and through the village of Cilfrew, we continue to climb up on the lower slope of Mynydd March Hywel and pause at the top to admire the magnificent view of the Dulais valley below on the right. The road is a bit potholed up here but isn't every road these days? Take care on the descent into Crynant, we pass the fishing ponds on route, a short climb just before the final descent into the village. We follow the road to a T junction on the A4109 and turn right back toward Neath for about a mile then we turn left into the forest, we cross over or go around the barrier, study the display board of the roads and locations of the numerous wood carvings and viewpoints, select a low gear and up we go, and up, and up. There are some carvings to admire on the way up and views to admire before we reach an Owl carving on our right, we take a right turn here for a few hundred metres and the Star Gazing Hare is there, looking up of course and facing the Dulais valley. We are at the 9 mile point here and it is a grand picnic spot to pause for refreshments. There is only a short climb after this to the very top of the world and the Roman Road Sarn Helen.

When we reach Sarn Helen you may be surprised how good a condition it is! Don't be fooled, only about a quarter of a mile of it is used by the Forestry so in good condition, we turn right and soon we discover the part NOT used by the Forestry, we go on for a few hundred metres only as far as the carved head of the Roman Centurion. The first time I looked for this I passed it several times and couldn't see it because it was completely covered in moss; I used a knife in my toolkit to scrape the moss off to expose the head, I was half expecting a "Domino whoo whoo!" We retrace our route to the junction of the forestry road on our right and follow that road down to the Neath valley side of the mountain. It zigs and zags and undulates but is mainly downhill all the way to Pentreclwydau and the junction with the B4242, we turn right toward Neath and after about 3 miles we can stop for a coffee and bacon sandwich at the Riverside in Resolven. We go back to the B4242 and turn left toward Neath but we can pick up the canal path at Ynysbwlllog Aqueduct and follow this all the way back via Aberdulais to Neath. Not a long ride but very rewarding, that bacon sandwich was well earned.

The Info board at Crynant forest entrance.



Say hello to the Mole on the way up



The Owl which is our right turn signal



The Star Gazing Hare



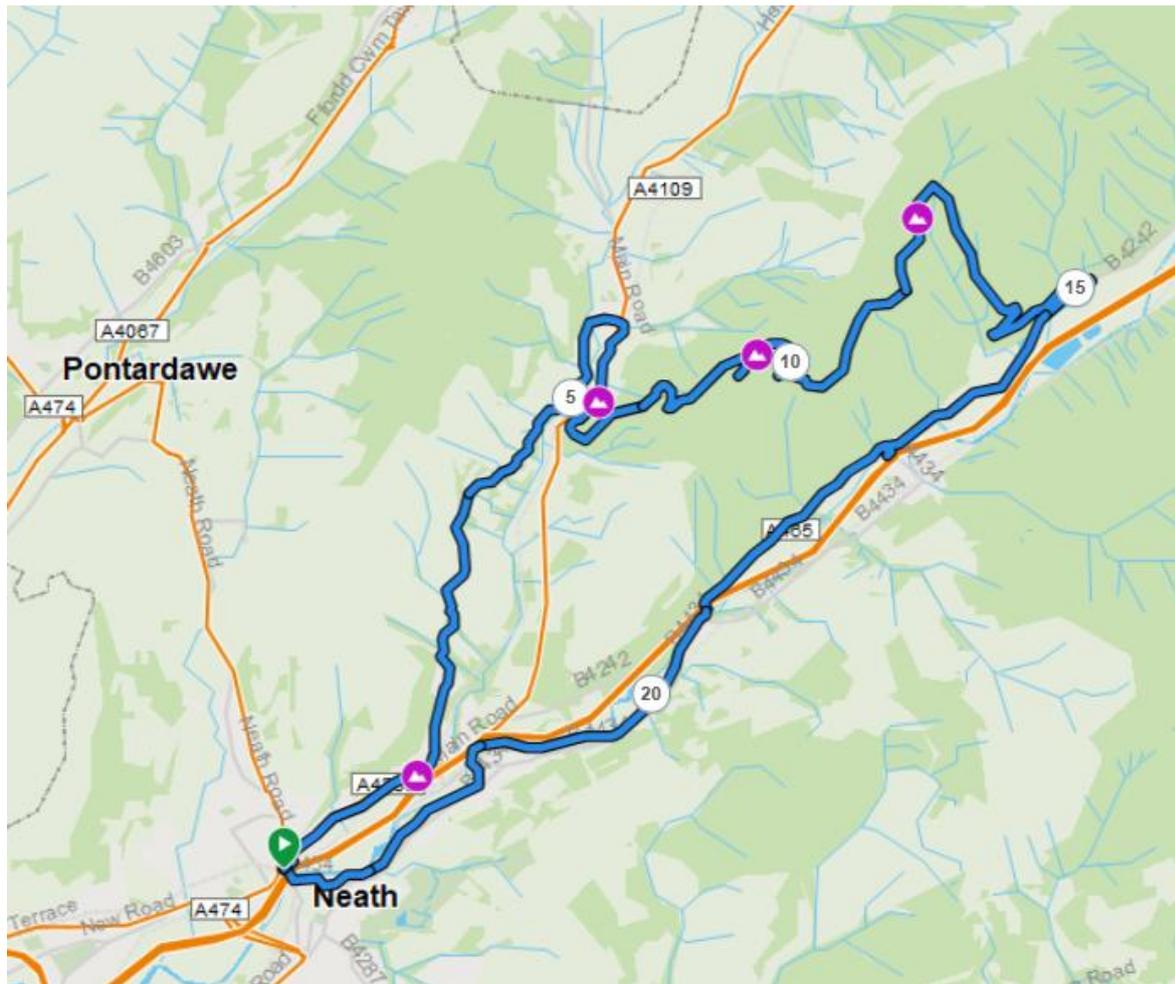
The roman Centurion Head



Sarn Helen as it is now



The route



To download this route - <http://routes.swansea-cycling.co.uk/events/event/the-star-gazing-hare-sarn-helen-from-burger-king-neath>