



RADNORSHDIRE REVEALED

A Conservation Trust coach tour: Thursday 4th May 2017

Leave Ludlow (Leisure Centre, Corve Street, Smithfield Car park) at 9.15 am for **Old Radnor** (arrive 10.45 am) for coffee at The Harp Inn. After coffee walk across the road to St Stephen's Church. Rebuilt in the 15th century (its predecessor was reputedly destroyed by Owain Glyndwr), it has been described as one of Wales' finest parish churches, with a magnificent rood screen and the UK's oldest organ case, as well as many monuments, Tudor roofs, medieval stained glass and a huge font, which might be of pre-Conquest date.

We leave Old Radnor at 11.45 am for **New Radnor**. Like Ludlow, it was a planned new town with a grid pattern of streets. It was given permission for town walls ('murae grants') to be built – in 1257, 1283 and 1290. There were once 4 gates. The banks of the former walls are still visible around much of the town. A charter for a fair was granted in 1306. Dominating the little town are the massive earthworks of the castle, probably built originally in the 1090s and rebuilt and strengthened in 1233. Excavations have revealed walls and stone buildings. It is a steep climb to the castle, but the views are superb. For a time, New Radnor was Radnorshire's county town, but by the early 18th century it had declined in importance and its population greatly reduced in numbers. Now it is no more than a large village and many of the burgage plots stand empty.

We leave New Radnor at 1.00 pm for **Llandrindod Wells** (Welsh for 'Church of the Trinity' and known throughout Wales as 'Llandod'). It became a major spa town in Victorian times and its almost suburban terraces of villas and houses look odd in the middle of rural Wales. Its saline springs were discovered in 1696 and chalybeate springs in 1740, when a hotel was built. It was proud to state 'Let England boast Bath's crowded springs; Llandrindod happier Cambria sings'. In 1865 what became, the Central Wales Railway was opened and the town quickly developed into a spa town and holiday destination.

Several hotels and grand houses were erected. The spa itself was situated in Rock Park and many of the Art Nouveau-style buildings survive, including what is now the Heritage Centre. As the spa declined, many of the hotels and other buildings were demolished, though several survive. The Automobile Palace (1906-11) is an amazing survival. A walk around the large lake is enjoyable: above it is Llandrindod's original Holy Trinity parish church (14th century), replaced by a new church (also Holy Trinity) in the town centre in 1871. Despite the efforts of Dr Beeching and governments of all parties, the Central Wales (now 'Heart of Wales') railway remains open: its small station dates from 1876, with platform canopies brought from the demolished Pump House Hotel.

We leave Llandrindod at 4.00 pm for Ludlow (arrive about 5.15-5.30 pm).

There are several cafes, restaurants etc at Llandrindod for lunch and afternoon tea at your own expense (but none in New Radnor). You may like to bring a sandwich to keep you going till we arrive at Llandrindod. Boots or stout shoes are recommended, especially if you wish to walk around the castle and town walls at New Radnor. Depending on the weather, waterproofs and umbrellas might be a good idea!

Andrew Pike

Tickets in advance only (limited seating): £15. Send your request for ticket(s) and cheque (made payable to CTSLL) to CTSLL, 2 College Street, Ludlow SY8 1AN.