

Ride: Elan Dams

Start/Finish: Rhayader

Distance: 27 miles.

Terraine: Flat apart from a gentle climb up to the reservoirs and a tough climb later.

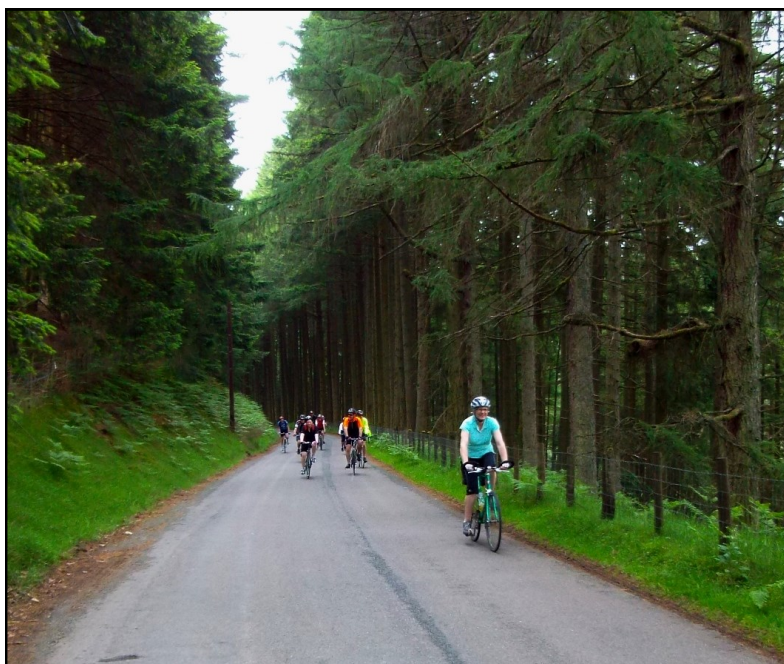
Map: OS 1:50,000 Sheet 147 *Elan Valley and Bulth Wells*.

Rhayader is two hours in the car or a day on the bike from Swansea.

Rhayader is a bustling mid Wales town – for me a favourite. It offers a choice of pubs to eat in and for accommodation several B&B's or a hostel a couple of miles to the east. There are magnificent walks and cycle rides from it in all directions. I am taking you on a wiggly route to the west which will take you to all four of the Elan Valley dams. Much of it is on flat cycle paths alongside the reservoirs, but, both for a splendid view and a bit more exercise, the ride ends with a stiff climb up to 488m followed by a four mile freewheel down to Rhayader.

From the town centre start off on the B4518 and after crossing the river go through an ornate wooden gate on your left to join a cycle path and follow it to the Elan Village. In the Visitor Centre there is a café and you can watch a video about the dams.

From the village backtrack to the B4518 and follow the cycle track up to the Caban Coch Dam. From there the path continues along the north side of the reservoir. After a mile leave it to cross the bridge which separates the Caban Coch and Craig Ddu Reservoirs. It is five miles on this road to the Claerwen Dam. It was built in 1952, more than half a century after the other dams. Note the magnificent conifers bordering this road (pictured).



Return to the bridge and re-join the path. Follow it to the north to the Pen-y-garreg Dam. From here continue along the path for a further two miles to Craig Goch Dam. This would be a good place to stop for a sandwich to fuel up for the climb ahead.

Cross the dam and follow the road on the west side of Craig Goch Reservoir for three miles to its junction with the Devil's Bridge – Rhayader mountain road. It's just over a mile from the bridge below this junction to the high point. It's a 170m climb, initially steep but then less so. Enjoy the view from the top followed by the long freewheel down to Rhayader.

Evening Post: 5 July 2014