

= Carmarthenshire =

Carmarthenshire (Welsh : Sir Gaerfyrddin or Sir Gâr) is a unitary authority in the south west of Wales and the largest of the thirteen historic counties . The three largest towns are Llanelli , Carmarthen and Ammanford . Carmarthen is the county town and administrative centre of Carmarthenshire but the most populous settlement is Llanelli .

Carmarthenshire has been inhabited since prehistoric times . The town of Carmarthen was founded by the Romans and the region was part of the Principality of Deheubarth during the High Middle Ages . It saw turbulent times during the invasion by the Normans in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries before it was subjugated , along with other parts of Wales , by Edward I of England . Further unrest occurred in the early fifteenth century when the Welsh rebelled under Owain Glyndŵr , and more strife occurred during the English Civil War in the seventeenth century .

Carmarthenshire is mainly an agricultural county , apart from the southeastern part which at one time was heavily @-@ industrialised with coal mining , steel @-@ making and tin @-@ plating . In the north of the county the woollen industry was very important in the eighteenth century . Nowadays the economy of the county depends on agriculture , forestry , fishing and tourism . With the decline in its industrial base and the low profitability of the livestock sector , Carmarthenshire is economically one of the worst @-@ performing regions in the United Kingdom .

As a tourist destination , Carmarthenshire is not as well known as some other parts of Wales , but does offer a wide range of outdoor activities . Much of the coast is fairly flat ; it includes the Millennium Coastal Park , which extends for ten miles to the west of Llanelli and the National Wetlands Centre , a championship golf course and the harbours of Burry Port and Pembrey . Further west are the sandy beaches at Llansteffan and Pendine , and Dylan Thomas ' boathouse at Laugharne . Further inland there are a number of medieval castles located in strategic positions , as well as hillforts and standing stones .

= = History = =

Humans have been living in Carmarthenshire since at least 40 @,@ 000 years ago as evidenced by stone tools found in Coygan Cave , near Laugharne . Before the Romans arrived in Britain , the land now forming the county of Carmarthenshire was part of the kingdom of the Demetae who gave their name to the county of Dyfed ; it contained one of their chief cities called Moridunum , and is now known as Carmarthen . The Romans established two forts in South Wales , one at Caerwent to control the southeast of the country , and one at Carmarthen to control the southwest . The fort at Carmarthen dates from around 75 AD , and there is a Roman amphitheatre nearby , so this probably makes Carmarthen the oldest , continually @-@ occupied town in Wales .

Carmarthenshire has its early roots in the region formerly known as Ystrad Tywi (Vale of [the river] Tywi) and part of the Principality of Deheubarth during the High Middle Ages , with the court at Dinefwr . After the Normans had subjugated England they tried to subdue Wales . Carmarthenshire was disputed between the Normans and the Welsh lords and many of the castles built around this time , first from wood and then stone , changed hands several times during the conflicts that followed . Following the Conquest of Wales by Edward I , the region was reorganized by the Statute of Rhuddlan in 1284 into Carmarthenshire . Edward I made Carmarthen the capital of the new county of Carmarthenshire , establishing his courts of chancery and his exchequer there , and holding the Court of Great Sessions in Wales in the town .

The Normans transformed Carmarthen into an international trading port , the only staple port in Wales . Merchants imported food and French wines and exported wool , pelts , leather , lead and tin . In the late medieval period the county 's fortunes varied as good and bad harvests occurred , increased taxes were levied from England , episodes of plague occurred and recruitment for wars removed the young men . Carmarthen was particularly susceptible to plague because the disease was brought in by flea @-@ infested rats on board ships from southern France .

In 1405 , Owain Glyndŵr captured Carmarthen Castle and several other strongholds in the neighbourhood . However , when his support dwindled , the principal men of the county returned

their allegiance to King Henry V. During the English Civil War , Parliamentary forces under Colonel Roland Laugharne besieged and captured Carmarthen Castle but later abandoned the cause , and joined the Royalists . In 1648 , Carmarthen Castle was recaptured by the Parliamentarians , and Oliver Cromwell ordered it to be dismantled .

The first industrial canal in Wales was built in 1768 to convey coal from the Gwendraeth Valley to the coast , and the following year , the earliest tramroad bridge was on the tramroad built alongside the canal . During the Napoleonic Wars (1799 ? 1815) there was increased demand for coal , iron and agricultural goods , and the county prospered . The landscape changed as much woodland was cleared to make way for more food production , and mills , power stations , mines and factories sprang up between Llanelli and Pembrey . Carmarthenshire was at the centre of the Rebecca Riots which took place around 1840 , when local farmers and agricultural workers dressed as women and rebelled against the imposition of higher taxes and tolls .

On 1 April 1974 , under the terms of the Local Government Act 1972 , Carmarthenshire alongside Cardiganshire and Pembrokeshire , was absorbed into the new county of Dyfed ; Carmarthenshire was divided into three districts , District of Carmarthen , District of Llanelli and Dinefwr Borough Council . Twenty @-@ two years later this procedure was reversed when the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 was enacted and the original county boundaries were replaced .

= = Geography = =

The county is bounded to the north by Ceredigion , to the east by Powys , Neath Port Talbot and Swansea , to the south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the west by Pembrokeshire . The surface generally is upland and mountainous . Fforest Fawr and Black Mountain extend into the east of the county and the Cambrian Mountains into the north . The south coast contains many fishing villages and sandy beaches . The highest point is Fan Brycheiniog , 2 @, @ 631 feet (802 m) (although the main summit is in Powys) . Carmarthenshire is the largest historic county by area in Wales .

The county is drained by several important rivers which flow southwards into the Bristol Channel , especially the River Towy , and its several tributaries , such as the River Cothi . The Towy is the longest river flowing entirely within Wales . Other rivers include the Loughor (which forms the eastern boundary with Glamorgan) , the River Gwendraeth and the River Taf . The River Teifi forms much of the border between Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion , and there are a number of towns in the Teifi Valley which have communities living on either side of the river and hence in different counties . Carmarthenshire has a long coastline which is deeply cut by the estuaries of the Loughor in the east and the Gwendraeth , Tywi and Taf , which enter the sea on the east side of Carmarthen Bay . The coastline includes notable beaches such as Pendine Sands and Cefn Sidan sands , and large areas of foreshore are uncovered at low tide along the Loughor and Towy estuaries .

The principal towns in the county are Ammanford , Burry Port , Carmarthen , Kidwelly , Llanelli , Llandeilo , Newcastle Emlyn , Llandovery , St Clears , and Whitland . The principal industries are agriculture , forestry , fishing and tourism . Although Llanelli is by far the largest town in the county , the county town remains Carmarthen , mainly due to its central location .

Carmarthenshire is predominantly an agricultural county , with only the southeastern area having any significant amount of industry . The best agricultural land is in the broad Tywi Valley , especially its lower reaches . With its fertile land and agricultural produce , Carmarthenshire is known as the " Garden of Wales " . The lowest bridge over the river is at Carmarthen , and the Towy Estuary cuts the southwesterly part of the county , including Llansteffan and Laugharne , off from the more urban southeastern region . This area is also bypassed by the main communication routes into Pembrokeshire . A passenger ferry service used to connect Ferryside with Llansteffan until the early part of the twentieth century .

= = Economy = =

Agriculture , and to a lesser extent forestry , are the main sources of income over most of the county of Carmarthenshire . On improved pastures , dairying is important and in the past , the

presence of the railway enabled milk to be transported to the urban areas of England . The creamery at Whitland is now closed but milk processing still takes place at Newcastle Emlyn where mozzarella cheese is made . On upland pastures and marginal land , livestock rearing of cattle and sheep is the main agricultural activity . The estuaries of the Loughor and Towy provide pickings for the cockle industry .

Llanelli , Ammanford and the upper parts of the Gwendraeth Valley are situated on the South Wales Coalfield . The opencast mining activities in this region have now ceased but the old mining settlements with terraced housing remain , often centred on their nonconformist chapels . Kidwelly had a tin @-@ plating industry in the eighteenth century , with Llanelli following not long after , so that by the end of the nineteenth century , Llanelli was the world @-@ centre of the industry . There is little trace of these industrial activities today . Llanelli and Burry Port served at one time for the export of coal , but trade declined , as it did from the ports of Kidwelly and Carmarthen as their estuaries silted up . Country towns in the more agricultural part of the county still hold regular markets where livestock is traded .

In the north of the county , in and around the Teifi Valley , there was a thriving woollen industry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries . Here water @-@ power provided the energy to drive the looms and other machinery at the mills . The village of Dre @-@ fach Felindre at one time contained twenty @-@ four mills and was known as the " Huddersfield of Wales " . The demand for woollen cloth declined in the twentieth century and so did the industry .

In 2014 , West Wales was identified as the worst @-@ performing region in the United Kingdom along with the South Wales Valleys . The gross value added economic indicator showed a figure of £ 14 @,@ 763 per head in these regions , as compared with a GVA of £ 22 @,@ 986 for Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan . The Welsh Assembly Government is aware of this , and helped by government initiatives and local actions , opportunities for farmers to diversify have emerged . These include farm tourism , rural crafts , specialist food shops , farmers ' markets and added @-@ value food products .

In 2015 , in an attempt to boost the local economy , Carmarthenshire County Council produced a fifteen @-@ year plan that highlighted six projects which it hoped would create five thousand new jobs . The sectors involved would be in the " creative industries , tourism , agri @-@ food , advanced manufacturing , energy and environment , and financial and professional services " .

= = Local government = =

Carmarthenshire became an administrative county with a county council taking over functions from the Quarter Sessions under the Local Government Act 1888 . Under the Local Government Act 1972 , the administrative county of Carmarthenshire was abolished on 1 April 1974 and the area of Carmarthenshire became three districts within the new county of Dyfed : Carmarthen , Dinefwr and Llanelli . Under the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 , Dyfed was abolished on 1 April 1996 and Carmarthenshire was re @-@ established as a county . The three districts united to form a unitary authority which had the same boundaries as the traditional county of Carmarthenshire . In 2003 , the Clynderwen community council area was transferred to the administrative county of Pembrokeshire .

= = Demography and the Welsh language = =

Before the Industrial Revolution , Carmarthen used to be the most populous town in Wales . In 1931 , the county 's population was 171 @,@ 445 and in 1951 , 164 @,@ 800 . At the census in 2011 , Carmarthenshire had a population of 183 @,@ 777 . Population levels have thus dipped and then increased again over the course of eighty years . The population density in Carmarthenshire is 0 @.@ 8 persons per hectare , as compared to 1 @.@ 5 persons for Wales and 3 @.@ 7 for England and Wales as a whole .

In terms of language however , the county has undergone a language shift in these decades from Welsh to English , Carmarthenshire having been the most populous of the five historic counties of

Wales to remain majority Welsh speaking throughout the twentieth century . According to the 1911 Census , 84 % of the county 's population were Welsh speaking with 20 % of the overall population being monoglot Welsh Speakers . Meanwhile , only 43 % of the population of Wales as a whole could speak Welsh In 1931 , 82 % could speak Welsh and in 1951 , 75 % . By the time of the 2001 census , only 50 % of people living in Carmarthenshire could speak Welsh , with 39 % being able to read and write the language as well . The 2011 census showed only further decline , with only 43 % speaking Welsh , making it a minority language in the county for the first time .

= = Landmarks = =

With its strategic location and history , the county is rich in archaeological remains such as forts , earthworks and standing stones . Carn Goch is one of the most impressive Iron Age forts and stands on a hilltop near Llandeilo . The Bronze Age is represented by chambered cairns and standing stones on Mynydd Llangyndeyrn , near Llangyndeyrn . Castles that can be easily accessed include Carreg Cennen , Dinefwr , Kidwelly , Laugharne , Llansteffan and Newcastle Emlyn Castle . There are the ruinous remains of Talley Abbey , and the coastal village of Laugharne is for ever associated with Dylan Thomas . Stately homes in the county include Aberglasney House and Gardens , Golden Grove and Newton House .

There are plenty of opportunities in the county for hiking , observing wildlife and admiring the scenery . These include Brechfa Forest , the Pembrey Country Park , the Millennium Coastal Park at Llanelli , the WWT Llanelli Wetlands Centre and the Carmel National Nature Reserve . There are large stretches of golden sands and the Wales Coast Path now provides a continuous walking route around the whole of Wales .

The National Botanic Garden of Wales displays plants from Wales and from all around the world , and the Carmarthenshire County Museum , the Kidwelly Industrial Museum , the National Wool Museum , the Parc Howard Museum , the Pendine Museum of Speed and the West Wales Museum of Childhood all provide opportunities to delve into the past . Dylan Thomas Boathouse where the author wrote many of his works can be visited , as can the Roman worked Dolaucothi Gold Mines .

There are two heritage railways , the Gwili Railway and the Teifi Valley Railway , both using the track of the Carmarthen and Cardigan Railway that at one time ran from Carmarthen to Newcastle Emlyn , but never reached Cardigan .

= = Sports and leisure = =

Activities available in the county include rambling , cycling , fishing , kayaking , canoeing , sailing , horse riding , caving , abseiling and coasteering . Carmarthen Town A.F.C. plays in the Welsh Premier League . They won the Welsh Football League Cup in the 1995 / 96 season , and since then have won the Welsh Cup once and the Welsh League Cup twice . Llanelli Town A.F.C. play in the Welsh Football League Division Two . The club won the Welsh premier league and Loosemores challenge cup in 2008 and won the Welsh Cup in 2011 , but after experiencing financial difficulties , were wound up and reformed under the present title in 2013 . Scarlets is the regional professional rugby union team that plays in the Pro12 , they play their home matches at their ground , Parc y Scarlets . Honours include winning the 2003 / 04 Pro12 . Llanelli RFC is a semi professional rugby union team that play in the Welsh Premier Division , also playing home matches at Parc y Scarlets . Among many honours , they have been WRU Challenge Cup winners on fourteen occasions and frequently taken part in the Heineken Cup .

Some sporting venues utilise disused industrial sites . Ffos Las racecourse was built on the site of an open cast coal mine after mining operations ceased . Opened in 2009 , it was the first racecourse built in the United Kingdom for eighty years and has regular race days . Machynys is a championship golf course opened in 2005 and built as part of the Llanelli Waterside regeneration plan . Pembrey Circuit is a motor racing circuit near Pembrey village , considered the home of Welsh

motorsport , providing racing for cars , motorcycles , karts and trucks . It was opened in 1989 on a former airfield , is popular for testing and has hosted many events including the British Touring Car Championship twice .

= = Transport = =

Carmarthenshire is served by a main line railway service operated by Arriva Trains Wales which links London Paddington , Cardiff Central and Swansea to the county . The main hub is Carmarthen railway station where some services from the east terminate . The line continues westwards with several branches which serve Pembroke Dock , Milford Haven and Fishguard Harbour . The Heart of Wales Line takes a scenic route through mid @-@ Wales and links Llanelli with Craven Arms , from where passengers can travel on the Welsh Marches Line to Shrewsbury .

The only motorway in the county is the M4 motorway from London and South Wales , which extends as far west as the Pont Abraham services before continuing northwest as the A48 to Carmarthen . Llanelli is linked to the motorway by the A4138 . The A40 links Carmarthen to Llandeilo , Llandovery and Brecon to the east , and with St Clears , Whitland and Haverfordwest to the west . The A484 links Llanelli with Carmarthen by a coastal route and continues northwards to Cardigan , and via the A486 and A487 to Aberystwyth , and the A485 links Carmarthen to Lampeter . There are local bus services between the main centres of population , and long distance services between Cardiff , Swansea , Carmarthen and beyond . A bus service known as " Bwcabus " operates in the north of the county , offering customised transport to rural dwellers .