

GUIDE TO RURAL WALES

NORTH WALES BORDERLANDS

PLACES OF INTEREST

ACCOMMODATION

FOOD & DRINK

SHOPPING

[illegible]

Accommodation, Food and Drink

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North Wales Borderlands

For centuries, this area of Wales was a crucible of conflict. In Roman times, the Celtic tribes were a perennial nuisance for the legions based at Chester Castle and their continued to harass their English neighbours for generations. Their resistance to English rule led Edward I in the 13th century to construct his Iron Ring of fortresses along the Dee estuary and the North Wales coast. Each was built a day's march from its neighbours with the first to be built at Flint in 1277. Beaumaris, Caernarfon, Denbigh, Rhuddlan and Chirk – these magnificent castles represented the cutting-edge military technology of its day. The remains of this massive project, the largest seen in Europe, are still mightily imposing.

Peace finally came to the area when a Welsh prince defeated Richard III in 1485 and ascended the throne as Henry VII. The Iron Ring of castles remains the most popular historical attraction but the area also boasts some fine country houses, such as Plas Newydd in Llangollen, ecclesiastical treasures such as St Winefride's Well and St Asaph Cathedral, and a wide choice of country parks and farm parks. There is also superb fishing for salmon and trout on the Rivers Dee and Clwyd, sea fishing in the Dee estuary, and trout or coarse fishing at numerous lake fisheries. This region of Wales also offers some of the best mountain biking in Britain, and among the most challenging rides are those in the Clwydian Range and through

Clocaenog Forest near Denbigh.

Though this northern gateway to the country is not extensive, it boasts all but one of the Seven Wonders of Wales, wonders while not quite as spectacular as the more familiar Seven Wonders of the World are nonetheless all interesting in their own right. They are listed in the famous 19th century rhyme:

*Pistyll Rhaeadr and Wrexham Steeple,
Snowdon's Mountain without its people,
Overton Yew Trees, St Winefride's Well,
Llangollen Bridge and Gresford Bells.*

The Borderlands offer an impressive variety of cultural events, most notably the annual International Music Eistedfodd in Llangollen, which has been graced by such eminent figures as Luciano Pavarotti. And wherever you travel in the country, you will never be far from a Welsh male voice choir, lustily maintaining Wales' claim to be the 'Land of Song'.



Errdig, Wrexham


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Mold

 St Mary's Parish Church  Mold Museum

 Bailey Hill  Loggerheads Country Park

 Daniel Owen  Richard Wilson

 Clwyd Theatr Cymru  Mold Carnival

A popular base for walkers in the nearby Clwydian Range, Mold is a pleasant little town with a market every Wednesday and Saturday. The town boasts a goodly number of inns and restaurants that in late September host the Mold Food and Drink Festival.

The town's most famous son is the novelist, tailor and Methodist preacher **Daniel Owen** (1836–1895) who is often hailed as Wales' greatest novelist. He wrote only in Welsh and his honest accounts of ordinary life were to gain him the title of the 'Welsh Dickens'. His most famous books were *Rhys Lewis* and *Enoc Hws*, which both feature local life with the chapel as its focus. Owen's statue stands outside the town library, which is also the home of **Mold Museum** where a room is dedicated to Owen's memory.

Although landscape painter **Richard Wilson** (1713–1782) was born in

Montgomeryshire, Mold claims him as its own. After pursuing a career in London, he returned to his native Wales and settled in Mold to concentrate on the dramatic scenes of mountainous Welsh countryside that became his trademark. He died in Colomendy, and his grave and memorial can be found near the north entrance to **St Mary's Parish Church**. Dating from the 15th century, the church was built by Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, to celebrate her son Henry VII's victory at Bosworth in 1485. The church has some interesting stained-glass windows and an oak roof, carved with Tudor roses, retained from an earlier church.











The church stands at the foot of **Bailey Hill**, the site of a Norman motte and bailey fortification that was built at this strategic point overlooking the River Alyn by Robert de Montalt, who may have given the town its English name. Little remains of the fortress and its site is now occupied by a bowling green. Bailey Hill may have given the town its Welsh name of Yr Wyddgrug, which means The Mound.

On the outskirts of Mold, **Clwyd Theatr Cymru** offers a wide range of entertainment including theatre, music and frequent exhibitions of art, sculpture and photography. It has 5 different performance venues including the Anthony Hopkins Theatre, which seats 580 people, and a 120-seater cinema. There's also a bar, coffee shop and bookshop. Every June the centre hosts the **Mold Carnival**.

The composer Felix Mendelssohn was said to have been inspired by the town's surroundings when writing his opus *Rinulet*, and



St Mary's Church, Mold

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Loggerheads Country Park

Loggerheads, nr Mold, Denbighshire CH5 5LH
Tel: 01352 810586

website: www.denbighshire.gov.uk
or www.loggerheads.biz
or www.fresh-air.info

Loggerheads Country Park is a popular visitor destination, attracting over 100,000 visitors every year. The New Interactive Countryside Centre gives visitors an insight in to the history and life within the Park and provides necessary information and an excellent learning opportunity. It has been described as "interactive, vibrant and fun and aimed at people of all ages, especially families."

This is an established Rural Country Park set in a limestone valley in the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and encompasses a mining and tourism history. The Park is also managed for conservation, with SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) designation and rich and varied natural habitats. A Discovery Trail gets visitors out and about in the park. They can see evidence of the history for themselves, along with abundant wildlife. Visitors also get the chance to become a Trail Detective and collect the secret symbols. New and improved bridges, signs, welcome board, and free events all year round, add to the experience, providing a fantastic day out for all the family.



the nearby limestone crags provide panoramic views over the surrounding countryside. One such scenic area lies four miles west of Mold on the A494 – **Loggerheads Country Park** (see panel above), which is situated on the edge of the Clwydian Range. Classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, this large park is an ideal environment for all the family, especially younger members, as there are various trails that are each about one-and-a-half miles long. The trails all start near the late 18th-century mill building. A regular bus service takes you to Loggerheads from both Mold and Chester.

Around 200 years ago, Loggerheads was a centre for lead mining, due to the plentiful supply of ore-bearing limestone, and many relics of those days can still be seen within the quiet woodland. There is a fine selection of

local arts, crafts and souvenirs on display in the Craft Shop at the **Loggerheads Countryside Centre**, where there is also a tearoom.

Around Mold

RHOESMOR

3 miles N of Mold on the B5123

Parish Church of St Paul Moel y Gaer

Wat's Dyke

Moel y Gaer, near this small village, was considered to be a fine example of an Iron Age hill fort until archaeological digs unearthed evidence that suggested this site had been inhabited from as far back as 2500BC.

To the west of Rhosesmor lie the remains of a short section of **Wat's Dyke**, a much

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shorter dyke than Offa's, which is thought to have been built by the Mercian King Aethelbald in the 8th century. Just under 40 miles long, the dyke ran southwards from the Dee estuary to Oswestry.

HALKYN

4½ miles N of Mold on the B5123

 Parish Church of St Mary  Halkyn Mountains

The village lies close to the long ridge of the **Halkyn Mountains**, which rise to some 964 feet at their highest point and are scarred by the remnants of ancient lead mines and quarries, some of, which date back to Roman times. In the 17th century, Derbyshire lead miners were brought here to work in the newly opened mines.

FLINT

5 miles N of Mold on the A5119

 Flint Castle











Standing on the south shore of the Dee Estuary, Flint can boast two historical firsts: it was the first associated borough in Wales to

receive a charter (in 1284) and it was also the site of the first of Edward I's Iron Ring fortresses. Dotted along the North Wales coast, a day's march apart, Edward I's ring of massive fortresses represented Europe's most ambitious and concentrated medieval building project. They were started after the Treaty of Aberconwy in 1277 and the last of them, Beaumaris, began in 1295. They were all designed by the master military architect, James of St George. The castles were always populated by English settlers – the Welsh were only allowed to enter the town during the day and were not permitted to trade or carry arms.

Flint Castle, now in ruins, stands on a low rock overlooking the coastal marshes of the Dee estuary and the Wirral peninsula. Originally surrounded by a water-filled moat, the remains of the Great Tower, or Donjon, are an impressive sight. Set apart from the main part of the castle, this tower, which is unique among British castles, was intended as a last retreat. It was designed to be completely self-sufficient, even having its own well.



Flint Castle








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During the Civil War, the town and castle remained in Royalist hands until 1647 when both were taken by General Mytton, who was also responsible for rendering the castle militarily useless but sparing the substantial ruins we see today.

HOLYWELL

7 miles N of Mold on the A5026

-  St Winefride's Chapel  St Winefride's Well
-  Parish Church of St James  Gutun Owain
-  Basingwerk Abbey  Gerard Manley Hopkins
-  Greenfield Valley Heritage and Country Park

This attractive town, with two market days on Thursday and Saturday, boasts more than 60 listed buildings dating from Georgian and Victorian times, as well as one of the Seven Wonders of Wales, **St Winefride's Well**, sometimes referred to as the 'Lourdes of Wales'. According to tradition, Winefride, the niece of St Beuno, was beheaded by Prince Caradoc after she rebuffed his advances. Caradoc was struck dead by lightning on the spot.

It is claimed that a spring gushed from the place where Winefride's head fell and that she returned to life after her uncle replaced her head. The well has been visited by pilgrims since the 7th century and still is, particularly on St Winefride's Day, the nearest Saturday to 22 June. People can bathe in the chilly waters as they have for centuries. When Dr Johnson visited in 1774 he was shocked by the lack of privacy – "the bath is completely and indecently open" he noted. "A woman bathed as we all looked on". Today, the well is housed

in the imposing **St Winefride's Chapel**, which was built by Margaret Beaufort (the mother of Henry VII) in around 1500 to enclose three sides of the well. The Victorian statue of St Winefride has a thin line round the neck showing where her head was cut off. To accommodate pilgrims visiting the well, the former Pilgrim's Hospice has been converted into St Winefride's Guesthouse and is run by an order of nuns.

St Winefride's Well, and the Vale of Clwyd, were beloved of the poet **Gerard Manley Hopkins**. He trained as a priest at St Beuno's College, Tremeirchion, and the area inspired him to write a verse tragedy, which contains many beautiful, evocative lines:

*The dry dene, now no longer dry nor dumb,
but moist and musical.*

*With the uproll and downcarol of day and night
delivering water.*











On Wales in general he was equally lyrical:

*Lovely the woods, water, meadows, combs, vales,
All the air things wear that build this
world of Wales.*

Basingwerk Abbey, to the east of Holywell, was built by Cistercian monks in



Basingwerk Abbey Ruins, Holywell

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Greenfield Valley Heritage Park

Greenfield, Holywell, Flintshire CH8 7GH
Tel: 01352 714172 Fax: 01352 714791
website: www.greenfieldvalley.com

Referred to as the Borderlands best kept secret, the Greenfield Valley Heritage Park is one and a half miles of woodlands, reservoirs, ancient monuments and industrial history. The park is freely accessible year round attracting over 100,000 visitors per year. Within the Park is a Farm and Museum Complex with an attractive collection of original and reconstructed local buildings. A 16th century farmhouse, early 19th century cottage, blacksmith's forge, Victorian schoolroom and farm buildings provide an atmospheric backdrop to agricultural displays and exhibits. The museum holds events most weekends throughout the season. The whole site is a fascinating insight into times past.

There are farm animals to see and feed, an adventure playground and an indoor activity area. Facilities include a Visitor Centre, Environment Centre, free coach and car parking, toilets, cafe and gift shop. The museum and associated facilities are open from the beginning of April to the end of October.



1132. The abbey functioned as a self-sufficient community, as the Cistercians lay great emphasis upon agricultural labour. Although this was an English house, Basingwerk absorbed Welsh culture and the Welsh bard, **Gutun Owain**, was associated with the abbey from where he wrote *The Chronicle of Princes*, which is also known as the *Black Book of Basingwerk*.

The abbey survived until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century. In a tranquil setting that contrasts with the busy roads not far away, this magnificent ruin contains an arch that, despite weather-beaten columns and a faded 'message of love', is a fine example of Norman ecclesiastical architecture.

Linking Holywell with the ruins of the abbey is the **Greenfield Valley Heritage and Country Park** (see panel above), a 70-acre area of pleasant woodland and lakeside walks with a wealth of monuments and agricultural and industrial history. There are animals to feed, an adventure playground and picnic areas.

NORTHOP

4 miles N of Mold on the A5119

Parish Church of St Peter and St Eurgain

Old Free Grammar School William Parry

A church existed in Northop as early as the 6th century. The present **Parish Church of St Peter and St Eurgain** was extensively rebuilt in the mid 19th century, and much of the medieval fabric was lost although some stone carvings and a Tudor doorway have survived. St Eurgain was the niece of St Asaph, the second bishop of St Asaph diocese. The church's tower is 98 feet high, and one of the landmarks of the area. The town's **Old Free Grammar School**, dating from the 16th century, still stands in the churchyard.



The town was the birthplace (date unknown) of **William Parry**, a leading Catholic who was supposedly involved in a plot to assassinate Elizabeth I. He was the son of Harry ap David, and his real name was William ap Harry. He was eventually hanged in 1585, but present-day historians believe that he was innocent.

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CONNAH'S QUAY

5 miles NE of Mold on the B5129


 Wepre Country Park  Ewloe Castle



This is the largest town in Flintshire, and is wholly industrial in nature, having three power stations, a steelworks and a port on the River Dee. The town is said to get its name from the former landlord of an inn that stands near the docks. To the south of the town is the 160-acre **Wepre Country Park**, where there are ancient woodlands, waymarked walks, a fishing pool and a visitor centre. Hidden in a steeply wooded glen within the park are the gaunt remains of **Ewloe Castle**, a fortification built by the Welsh. It was founded in 1257 by Llywelyn ap Gruffyd, known to the English as Llywelyn the Last, after he had retaken this part of Wales from the English.

HAWARDEN

5 miles E of Mold on the A550

 Hawarden Castle  Parish Church of St Deiniol

 Gladstone Memorial Chapel

 St Deiniol's Residential Library  Castle Park

Mentioned in the *Domesday Book*, this small village close to the English border has two castles, one a ruin dating from the 13th century and another that was once the home of the Victorian Prime Minister, William Gladstone. After his marriage in 1839, Gladstone lived at **Hawarden Castle** (private), for some 60 years. The castle was started in 1750 and enlarged and castellated in 1809. The remains of the older castle, chiefly the circular keep and the hall, still stand in **Castle Park**.

The **Parish Church of St Deiniol**, as well as having stained-glass windows by Burne-Jones, also houses the **Gladstone Memorial Chapel** where marble effigies of the

distinguished statesman and his wife, who are buried in Westminster Abbey, can be seen. The church was largely rebuilt after an arson attack in 1857. The parish was once a 'peculiar', which means that the rector was not answerable to any bishop. He therefore wielded considerable power and had his own ecclesiastical court. He could also issue marriage licences and prove wills.

The village's connections with Gladstone continue to this day as the former Prime Minister donated his collection of some 20,000 books to the famous **St Deiniol's Residential Library**, which stands next to the church. Gladstone had founded the Library in 1889 for the pursuit of divine learning. The magnificent Library building was erected as the national memorial to Gladstone and still attracts scholars, clergy and educators from all over the world. Some stay for only a day or two; others for several months.











CAERGWRLE

6 miles SE of Mold on the A541

 Caergwrle Castle  Waun-y-Llyn Country Park

 Hope Mountain

Once occupied by the Romans as an outpost station for nearby Chester, **Caergwrle Castle**, which stands on a high ridge, probably started life as a Bronze Age hill fort. It was Dafydd, brother of Llywelyn the Last, who constructed the fortification in 1277 more or less in its present form, and it was from here, in 1282, that Dafydd launched his last Welsh attack on the English King, Edward I. He had formerly been Edward's ally, but after being captured some time later, he was hung, drawn and quartered for treason at Shrewsbury. Shortly afterwards the castle was largely destroyed by fire and what remains is starkly impressive rather than romantic.

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To the west of the village is **Waun-y-Llyn Country Park**, at 74 acres one of the smallest in Wales. Close by is **Hope Mountain**, where there are spectacular views towards the Cheshire Plain.

CILCAIN

3½ miles W of Mold off the A541

 Jubilee Tower  Clwydian Range


 Moel Famau  Gwyl Cilcain

Set within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, this charming hamlet in the heart of the Clwydian Range has a medieval church with a double nave, a hammerbeam roof and some striking stained glass. Despite its small size, Cilcain has a reputation for culture and is well-known to arts and music lovers for its annual festival. **Gwyl Cilcain** takes place every October and welcomes both English and Welsh speakers.

Close to Cilcain, the smooth browned slopes of the **Clwydian Range** ascend from the broad and fertile planes of the Vale of Clwyd, with **Moel Famau** (The Mother of Mountains) being, at 1820 feet, the range's highest peak. It is well worth the climb to the summit as not only are there the remains of a **Jubilee Tower**, started in 1810 to commemorate George III's Golden Jubilee (later blown down in a storm in 1852), but also the panoramic views are breathtaking. Westwards lies the Vale of Clwyd with the river meandering towards the Irish Sea, while to the east the land rolls gently down to the Dee estuary.

CAERWYS

8½ miles NW of Mold on the B5122

 Thomas Wynne


Originally a Roman station, Caerwys grew to become a village of such significance that it

received a charter from Henry III, making it the smallest town in Britain with a royal charter. Once an important market town, Caerwys is credited with being the place where, in around 1100, Gruffydd ap Cynan established the first Eisteddfod. This cultural feast was revived in the 16th century by Henry VIII, who said that it was to be for 'craftsmen of music and poetry'. Elizabeth I, his daughter, declared in 1568 that it was to be the official home of a yearly Eisteddfod.

The town has a strong connection with the city of Philadelphia in the USA. The local barber-surgeon, **Thomas Wynne**, was a close friend of the Quaker leader, William Penn. In 1682 they sailed for Newfoundland where Charles II had granted Penn many thousands of acres of land. There they founded the 'City of Brotherly Love', a garden city in which the original street plan was based on that of Caerwys.

AFONWEN


8 miles NW of Mold on the A541



 Afonwen Craft and Antique Centre

Another small village in the Clwydian Range, Afonwen is home to one of the largest craft and antique centres in north Wales. **Afonwen Craft and Antique Centre** not only has a whole host of crafts, accessories and gifts for sale, including furniture, crystal, china and silver, but also holds regular exhibitions and demonstrations. The complex also includes a licensed cafe/restaurant.











WHITFORD

10 miles NW of Mold on the A5026

 Parish Church of St Mary and St Beuno

 Maen Achwyfaen  Thomas Pennant

Close to this village stands a curious monument, **Maen Achwyfaen** – The Stone










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of Lamentation – which is thought to have been erected during the Bronze Age. The cross, sculpted within the shape of a wheel, was added during the Christian period to invalidate its pagan significance. It is the tallest such cross in Britain.

The **Parish Church of St Mary and St Beuno** dates from a rebuild in 1845-46, though there are still

some medieval fragments. The renowned 18th-century writer **Thomas Pennant** is buried in the graveyard. He was born in 1726 in Downing Hall (no longer standing) and is best known for his book *A Tour in Wales*. He also wrote about tours through Scotland and England. He has been described as one of the greatest travel writers of his time, and also published books on the fauna and flora of Wales, as well as its antiquities. Though he travelled constantly through the country, he could speak no Welsh, and had to rely on others to translate the language into English for him.

Denbigh

 Denbigh Castle	 Catherine of Berain
 Humphrey Llwyd	 Town Walls
 Parish Church of St Marcella	
 Thomas Edwards	 Parish Church of St Dyfnog
 Henry Morton Stanley	 Back Row

One of the few towns in Wales approved by Dr Samuel Johnson during his travels through



Denbigh Castle

the Principality, Denbigh still retains a charm that is enhanced by buildings dating from the 16th century onwards, and most of the centre is now a conservation area. At the heart of the town is the High Street, which is set on a ledge half-way up the hill.

The hill is crowned by **Denbigh Castle**, which commands extensive views over the Vale of Clwyd. The castle was one of the biggest and most imposing fortifications in Wales, and its ruins are still an impressive sight. More than 3000 labourers worked on the castle and the town walls. The work was completed by 1311 and a large stretch of the **Town Walls** still exists and can be walked, providing a splendid historic view of the town, particularly the section that includes Countess Tower and the Goblin Tower.

By the time of the first Elizabethan era, Denbigh was one of the largest and richest towns in North Wales, as well as a centre of culture. Of particular interest is **Back Row**, where part of Denbigh's original medieval street pattern still exists and where several 15th century buildings, including the Golden

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PENTRE MAWR COUNTRY HOUSE

Llandyrnog, nr Denbigh, Denbighshire LL16 4LA

Tel: 01824 790732

e-mail: info@pentremawrcountryhouse.co.uk or info@bottubsafari.co.uk

website: www.pentremawrcountryhouse.co.uk or www.bottubsafari.co.uk

The glorious five star Pentre Mawr Country House is situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty and tucked away in an unspoilt corner of North Wales. It is ideally located for exploring Snowdonia National Park and situated in close proximity to Offa's Dyke and other places of interest.



The exquisite Georgian building is set within three acres of gardens, including two walled gardens. The property is part of a 190 acre farm which includes parkland, woodland and private fishing on the River Clwyd. The interior of the building also reflects the Georgian period, with open fires, period furniture and fine antiques.

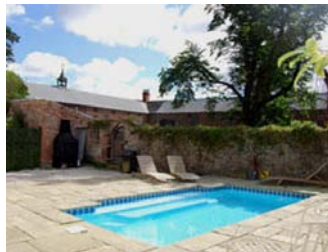
Outstanding hosts Graham and Bre have a stellar reputation for their hospitality and professionalism. The property has been in Graham's family for 400 years and since taking over, Graham and Bre have carried out extensive refurbishments. They have also injected some fantastically unique ideas into the business.

Pentre Mawr Country House is the first place in Britain to offer guests the chance to stay in African Safari Lodges, designed and made in Cape Town. These luxury canvas lodges offer contemporary comfort with a unique 'sleeping under the stars' experience. Each lodge is fully heated, equipped with spacious bathrooms and furnished with super king size leather beds and an African style sitting area. Each has its own private terrace with hot tub, making them perfect for a romantic couples retreat or honeymoon.

Guests can also choose to stay in conventional hotel accommodation in the main house, with a collection of beautifully well appointed rooms to choose from with high quality en-suite facilities and four poster beds. As well as luxury accommodation, guests can also enjoy a full Welsh breakfast with bucks fizz as well as yogurts, fruits, cereals and croissants.

Pentre Mawr Country House has a Michelin graded restaurant which is also open to non-residents when booked in advance. The menu is changed on a regular basis and all dishes are freshly prepared to order using produce grown in the vegetable garden. The food is of such a fantastic quality that the restaurant was recently given an AA Dining Award. Special diets and requests are catered for and there is a separate vegetarian menu.

From April to September guests can enjoy the salt water heated swimming pool. Children over the age of 12 are welcome and guests can bring their pets with them, as Pentre Mawr has its own resident cats and dogs.



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Lion Inn, still give a flavour of those times.

The **Parish Church of St Marcella** (also known as the Eglwys Wen, or the white church) is one of the most magnificent churches in Denbighshire. It was largely rebuilt in the 15th-century, incorporating a double knave – a well known feature in this part of Wales – and originally had a whitewashed exterior. Its interior is as inspiring as its exterior, with hammer-beamed roofs, stone sculptures and imposing monuments. One of the monuments is to **Humphrey Llwyd**, the physician, musician, antiquarian and Member of Parliament. He was born in Denbigh in 1527, and made the first accurate maps of Wales, which were published in an atlas of 1573 printed in Antwerp. He is sometimes known as the Father of Modern Geography. **Thomas Edwards** was another noted native of the town, and now lies in the churchyard. Born in 1739, he went on to become an actor and playwright under the name of Twm o'r Nant, and he was given the nickname the Welsh Shakespeare.

Denbigh was also the birthplace of **Henry Morton Stanley**. He was born John Rowlands in 1841, the illegitimate son of John Rowlands and Elizabeth Parry, and grew up partly in the care of relatives and partly in the workhouse in St Asaph. In his late teens he sailed from Liverpool to New Orleans as a cabin boy. There he was befriended by a merchant, Henry Hope Stanley, whose first and last names he took – the Morton came later. He spent the next few years as a soldier, sailor and journalist, and his several commissions for the *New York Herald* culminated in a quest to find the explorer David Livingstone, who had set out for Africa to search for the source of the Nile.

At the head of an American-financed

expedition, and keeping his intentions hidden from the British, he set out from Zanzibar and struggled to Ujiji where, in 1871 he found the explorer and addressed him with the immortal words, “Dr Livingstone, I presume”. The two became firm friends, and Livingstone continued his quest after being restocked with provisions. He died a year later. Stanley wrote about his expedition and returned to Africa to take up the exploration where Livingstone left off. He was involved in numerous adventures and enterprises, mainly with Belgian backing, and was instrumental in paving the way for the creation of the Congo Free State. On his return to Britain, he married, spent some years as a Member of Parliament and was knighted by Queen Victoria. He died in London in 1904 and was buried in the churchyard of St Michael in Pirbright; his rough granite headstone bears the inscription ‘Africa’.

Another child of Denbigh was the Elizabethan beauty **Catherine of Berain**, a distant relation of Elizabeth I who married four times and produced so many descendants that she was known as Mam Cymru, or Mother of Wales.

Three miles south of Denbigh, on the A525 Ruthin road at Llanrhaeadr-yng-Nghinmeirch, stands the 15th century **Parish Church of St Dyfnog** whose chief treasure is a marvellous Tree of Jesse window. The Tree of Jesse, most often seen depicted in church windows, details the family tree of Christ down from Jesse, the father of King David. It was made in 1553, and was saved from destruction during the Civil War by being buried in a dug-out chest, which can also be seen in the church. St Dyfnog lived during the 7th century, and founded the church because of a holy well that still exists in the woods behind the building. The saint would do penance by

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standing in a hair shirt under a waterfall above the well, thus transferring his virtues to the water. As late as the 1700s his “mighty spring was much resorted to” and it was then that the ‘bath’ was paved with marble that is still in place.

Around Denbigh

BODFARI

3 miles NE of Denbigh on the B5429


 The Parish Church of St Stephen



 St Deifar's Holy Well

Situated in the heart of the Vale of Clwyd, at the foot of the Clwydian Range, Bodfari marks the abrupt change in landscape from arable fields to heath and moorland. The **Parish Church of St Stephen** dates mainly from a rebuilding of 1865, though it has a fine east widow with good stained glass. Thought to have been the site of a Roman station, the village is famous for **St Deifar's Holy Well**, which can be found at the inn next to the church. Mothers used to dip their babies in the waters three times to prevent them crying in the night.

TREMEIRCHION

6 miles NE of Denbigh on the B5429

 Parish Church of Corpus Christi

 Bachegraig Gatehouse  Hester Lynch Piozzi

This rambling hillside village contains several buildings of interest. The 14th-century **Parish Church of Corpus Christi** is the only church in Britain with that dedication, which means body of Christ. It is a simple building with combined nave and chancel, but houses an interesting 14th-century canopied tomb containing the effigy of a vested priest while, in the chancel, a tablet commemorates **Hester**

Lynch Piozzi (1741–1821), a writer who is better known as Dr Johnson's friend Mrs Thrale. She was the wife of Henry Thrale, a Southwark brewer who died in 1781. While married to him, she had fallen in love with an Italian music master called Gabriel Piozzi who had been hired to give music lessons to her daughter. In 1784, she married Gabriel, a union that was not approved of by her family or friends, including Johnson and Boswell.

She had inherited the family house in Tremeirchion where she had grown up but, which was now dilapidated. The couple built a new hilltop house, Brynbella, and lived there happily until Piozzi's death. The house still stands and is lived in by a descendant of Mrs Piozzi but is not open to the public.

In 1567, Sir Richard Clough, a wealthy merchant, built a house, Bachegraig, near the village. Though the house is now demolished **Bachegraig Gatehouse** still stands. Its unusual architectural style so shocked the local inhabitants that they thought the devil must have been the architect and had also supplied the bricks. The local story has it that the devil baked the bricks in the fires of hell; to this day, a nearby stream is known as Nant y Cythraul or the Devil's Brook.











ST ASAPH

6 miles N of Denbigh on the A525

 St Asaph's Cathedral  Translator's Memorial

 Elwy Bridge  William Morgan

This small town on a ridge between the River Clwyd and Elwy has city status because of its cathedral. Standing on a hill and constructed on the site of a Norman building, **St Asaph's Cathedral** is not only Britain's smallest medieval cathedral but it has also had to endure a particularly stormy past. It was founded in AD560 by St Kentigern (also

 historic building  museum and heritage  historic site  scenic attraction  flora and fauna
 stories and anecdotes  famous people  art and craft  entertainment and sport  walks

known as St Mungo). Born in Scotland, St Kentigern left in AD553 after Christianity collapsed in the Kingdom of Strathclyde, and made his way to Wales, founding churches as he went. He eventually settled in Llanelwy (St Asaph's Welsh name, meaning church, or parish, of Elwy) and founded a monastery there. When he returned home in AD573 he left the monastery in the

hands of his favourite pupil, St Asaph.

The cathedral was sacked by Henry III's forces in 1245, and then destroyed during Edward I's conquest of Wales some 37 years later. Edward wished to rebuild at nearby Rhuddlan but Bishop Anian II insisted that the new cathedral remain at St Asaph. The building as we see it today was begun by Anian and completed by his two successors.

In 1402 the woodwork was burnt during Owain Glyndwr's rebellion (it was subsequently restored by Bishop Redman), and by the 17th century matters were so desperate that many of the possessions were sold and the Bishop's Palace became a tavern! However, St Asaph's Cathedral has survived and today it holds several treasures, including a first edition of the William Morgan Welsh Bible (dating from 1588) that was used at the Investiture of Charles as the Prince of Wales in 1969.

Bishop of St Asaph from 1601 to 1604, **William Morgan** began his mammoth task of translating the Bible into Welsh while he was a



rector. His work was not as well regarded then as it is now, and during his ministry over the parish of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant his congregation grew so upset with his neglect of his pastoral duties for his translation work that he had to be escorted by armed guards to the church. Not only was the finished work of importance to the Welsh churches, each one of, which received a copy, but it also set a standard for the Welsh language, which, without being codified, could have been lost forever. A special monument, the **Translator's Memorial**, commemorates and names those who, under Morgan's guidance, assisted him in translating the Bible.

In the centre of St Asaph is **Elwy Bridge** that is believed to date from the 17th century, although it was the fine renovation work by Joseph Turner in 1777 that allows it to carry today's heavy traffic. The River Elwy is linked with a particularly fishy tale about Bishop Asaph, after whom the town is named. One day, Queen Nest, the wife of Maelgwn Gwynedd, King of North Wales, lost a

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precious ring – the ancient and sacred ring of the Queens of the North – while bathing in the river. Upset and fearing her husband's anger, the Queen went to St Asaph to ask for his help in retrieving the ring. Comforting the lady, St Asaph invited the royal couple to dine with him the following evening where he told Maelgwn about the loss of the ring. The king's terrible rage could only just be contained by St Asaph and he suggested they begin their meal. As the king cut into the locally-caught salmon that started the feast, the sacred ring fell out on to his plate!



However, Glasgow – where Kentigern founded that city's cathedral – claims the events took place there, though the circumstances are slightly different.


RHUDDLAN

8 miles N of Denbigh on the A525

 Rhuddlan Castle  Parliament House

 Gillot's Tower  Dominican Friary

 Parish Church of St Mary  Twt Hill

 Statute of Rhuddlan

Rhuddlan today is a suburb of Rhyl but in its heyday it was an important port on the River Clwyd, a strategic site guarded by the mighty **Rhuddlan Castle**. This imposing fortress was

built in the late 1200s as part of Edward I's "Iron Ring" of castles designed to subjugate Welsh rebels. The impressive ruins include a massive twin-towered Gatehouse and an inner core of concentric 'walls within walls'. Close to the castle, a prominent earthen mound known as **Twt Hill** is the site of an early Norman stronghold.

Edward used the castle as his headquarters during his campaign and it was from here that Edward issued the **Statute of Rhuddlan** (in March 1284) that united the Principality of Wales with the Kingdom of England. He also gave the town a Royal Charter when his sovereignty was confirmed. The statute, which lasted until the Act of Union in 1536, was enacted on the site now occupied by **Parliament House** (the old court house) and there is a commemoration tablet on the wall that is said to be from the original building.











While the castle in its heyday was a magnificent example of medieval defensive building, the most impressive engineering feat in the area was the canalisation of the River Clwyd to give the castle access, by ship, to the sea some three miles away. The remains of the dockgate, **Gillot's Tower**, can still be seen. This was built by the master builder James of St George, who was also responsible for the

interesting concentric plan of the castle that allowed archers, stationed on both the inner and outer walls, to fire their arrows simultaneously.

At one time a **Dominican Friary** stood close to Twt Hill, though the remains are now on private property. The **Parish Church of St Mary** was founded in the 13th century, with an extra nave being added 200 years later.





Rhuddlan Castle

 historic building  museum and heritage  historic site  scenic attraction  flora and fauna
 stories and anecdotes  famous people  art and craft  entertainment and sport  walks

However, the original church may have been built about 1080. At one time it had been considered as the place to build a new cathedral for what is today the Diocese of St Asaph. There is the tombstone of an archbishop in the church – but an unusual one. He was William de Freney, Archbishop of Edessa in Syria. It was originally part of a Dominican friary, but was brought to the church in 1536.

DYSERTH

10 miles N of Denbigh on the A5151

 Parish Church of St Bridget  Bodrhyddan Hall

 Merseyside Children's Holiday Camp

 St Mary's Well  Dyserth Waterfall

The two main attractions of this village lying in the foothills of the Clwydian Range, are the 60-foot cascade known as the **Dyserth Waterfall**, and the charming 13th century **Parish Church of St Bridget** with its glorious stained glass window above the altar, which has been described as the finest example of a medieval Jesse Window in North Wales.

Just to the west of the village stands **Bodrhyddan Hall**, the impressive 17th-century manor house of the Conwy family who have had their home here since the early 15th century. The hall houses the Charter of Rhuddlan and visitors can also see, around the fireplaces in the white drawing room, panels that came from the chapel of a Spanish Armada ship that foundered off the coast of Anglesey. For the more ghoulish, one of the rooms contains an Egyptian mummy. Other notable items include Hepplewhite chairs, suits of armour and ancient weapons, and a family portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds. **Bodrhyddan Gardens** are also appealing, the main feature being a box-edged Victorian parterre designed



Dyserth Waterfall

by William Andrews Nesfield, father of the famous William Eden Nesfield, who remodelled the house in 1875. William E had a very varied life, being a soldier and a watercolour painter before taking up garden design when he was over 40. He worked on well over 200 estates, among the most notable being the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. A much older part of the garden at Bodrhyddan is centred around a well house (bearing the inscription 'Inigo Jones 1612') containing a spring, **St Mary's Well**, that may once have had pagan significance.

BODELWYDDAN

8 miles N of Denbigh off the A55

 Marble Church  Bodelwyddan Castle

St Margaret's Parish Church is known as the **Marble Church**, and was built between 1856 and 1860 by Lady Willoughby de Broke as a memorial to her husband. The landmark white spire is of local limestone, while inside is an

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arcade made of 14 different types of marble. In the churchyard are buried several Canadian soldiers from a nearby camp who were shot for mutiny in 1918.

Opposite the eye-catching church stands **Bodelwyddan Castle**, a magnificent Victorian country house and estate that occupies the site of a 15th-century house. The castle is the Welsh home of the National Portrait Gallery, and, as well as the wonderful collection of Victorian portraits on display, visitors can see furniture on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum and sculptures from the Royal Academy. Anyone tiring of the glorious pieces exhibited here can relax and play with one of several hands-on Victorian games and inventions in the gallery, while outside are picnic tables, an adventure playground, maze, terrace café and secret woodland walk. A hands-on science centre is the latest attraction.

18th and 19th-century landscaped parkland surrounds the castle and here, too, is an Arts and Crafts walled garden originally planted by TH Mawson, with some redesign work undertaken by H Moggridge in 1980. One of the many interesting features here is a 'centrally heated' garden wall – a high brick wall with built-in fireplaces and flues to keep frost at bay.

RUTHIN

7 miles SE of Denbigh on the A525

-  Parish Church of St Peter  Old Courthouse
-  Old Grammar School  Ruthin Gaol
-  Nant Clwyd House  Ruthin Castle
-  St Peter's Square  Maen Huail
-  Ruthin Craft Centre











Host to one of the largest sheep and cattle markets in Wales, this historic market town in the scenic Vale of Clwyd has a layout that

appears to have changed little from medieval days. In fact, a description of Ruthin made in Elizabethan times, where it is described as “the grandest market town in all the Vale, full of inhabitants and well replenished with buildings”, remains true today. **St Peter's Square** is a good place from which to view the town; it was here in 1679 that a Catholic priest was hung, drawn and quartered.

Approached through a magnificent set of 18th-century wrought iron gates stands the town's splendid **Parish Church of St Peter**. Founded in the late 13th century as a collegiate church, its notable features include an early 16th-century oak roof that consists of 408 carved panels, each with a different design. Behind the church there are some beautiful buildings in the collegiate close – 14th-century cloisters, the **Old Grammar School** founded in 1589, and 16th-century almshouses.

St Peter's Square itself is fringed with many lovely buildings, including the particularly eye-catching 15th-century Myddleton Arms with its unusual Dutch style of architecture and its seven dormer windows that have been dubbed the Eyes of Ruthin. At one time there were around 60 inns and pubs in Ruthin – one for every 10 men in the town – and nine of these were to be found around the square. On the south side of St Peter's Square stands the impressive wattle-and-daub **Old Courthouse**, which dates from 1404. It was a temporary resting place for prisoners, who were kept in the cells below the magnificent beamed courtroom. The building is now occupied by the NatWest bank but the beam once used as a gibbet still projects from the northeast wall.

On Clwyd Street stands **Ruthin Gaol**,

-  historic building  museum and heritage  historic site  scenic attraction  flora and fauna
-  stories and anecdotes  famous people  art and craft  entertainment and sport  walks



Lowest Level in Ruthin Gaol

through whose gates thousands of prisoners passed between 1654 and 1916. Visitors (all volunteers these days!) can see how prisoners lived their daily lives: what they ate, how they worked, the punishments they suffered. The cells, including the punishment, 'dark' and condemned cells, can be explored, and there are hands-on activities for children.

In Castle Street can be found one of the oldest town houses in North Wales. **Nant Clwyd House** is a fine example of Elizabethan architecture, although parts date back to 1435. During the reign of Elizabeth I it was the home of Dr Gabriel Goodman, an influential man who was the Dean of Westminster for 40 years. He established Ruthin School in 1595 and also founded the town's almshouses.

Ruthin is also renowned for **Maen Huail**, a stone that stands in the market place. According to legend, it marks the place where Huail was beheaded by King

Arthur because of rivalry in love.

Ruthin Castle, begun in 1277 by Edward I, was the home of Lord de Grey of Ruthin who, having proclaimed Owain Glyndwr a traitor to Henry IV, was given a large area of land originally held by the Welshman. After Glyndwr crowned himself Prince of Wales, de Grey was the first to suffer when Ruthin was attacked in 1400. Though the town was all but destroyed, the castle held out and survived the onslaught. During the

Civil War the castle again came under siege, this time surviving for 11 weeks in 1646 before eventually falling to General Mytton, who had the building destroyed. Partially restored and then owned by the Cornwallis-West family, Ruthin Castle played host, before and during World War I, to many famous and influential Edwardians including the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), the actress Mrs Patrick Campbell, and Lady Randolph Churchill, the mother of Winston Churchill. Today, the castle, with its charming grounds



Part of Ruthin Castle Walls


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and roaming peacocks, is a hotel that specialises in medieval banquets.

A more recent addition to the town's attractions is the **Ruthin Craft Centre**, a striking zinc and cast stone building with undulating roofs inspired by the surrounding Clwydian hills. The complex includes three galleries, six artist studios, a retail gallery, education and residency workshops, tourist information office and a cafe with courtyard terrace.

LLANARMON-YN LÂL


11 miles SE of Denbigh on the B5431

 Parish Church of St Garmon

The capital of the Lâl region and occupying an attractive position on the banks of the River Alun, at the southern end of the Clwydian Range, this small village is noted for the **Parish Church of St Garmon**. It has been considerably altered over the years, and now only one of the two naves is wholly medieval. The fine Llwd memorial dates from 1639 and there are two medieval effigies (one of a knight and one of a bishop) rescued from Valle Crucis Abbey. Up until Tudor times, pilgrims would flock to the shrine of St Garmon here.

LLANFIHANGEL GLYN MYFYR

11 miles SW of Denbigh on the B5103

 Llyn Brenig

 Llyn Alwen  Clocaenog Forest


This sleepy village lies in the fertile vale through which the River Alwen runs. Just to the north stretches the **Clocaenog Forest**, Wales' second largest commercial plantation that covers much of the southern moorland between the vales of Clwyd and Conwy. Managed by the Forestry Commission, it has


well-marked forest trails of varying lengths that lead walkers through the mixed plantations of larch, spruce, pine, beech, oak and ash.

On the edge of the forest lies **Llyn Brenig**, a massive man-made reservoir that was completed in 1976 to accompany the smaller **Llyn Alwen**, which dates from the early 1900s. Close to the dam, and reached along the B4501, is a Visitor Centre that explains the local history and ecology of this tranquil Welsh valley, as well as acting as a starting point for lakeside walks. By the lake, depending on the time of year, butterflies such as the Orange Tip and Tortoiseshell can be seen and, along with water sports on the lake, fishing is also available.

CERRIGYDRUDION

12½ miles SW of Denbigh on the B4501

 Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene

 Y Fwuch Frech

This village's name, often misspelt as 'Druidion', means 'Place of the Brave' and has no connection with Druids. There are many tales of fairy cattle to be found in Wales, creatures that are thought to have descended from the aurochs, the wild cattle that roamed Britain in prehistoric times. Cerrigydrudion has its own cow, **Y Fwuch Frech** (the freckled cow), who lived on nearby Hiraethog mountain. For years she supplied the area with milk and would always fill any receptacle brought to her. One day, a witch began to milk her into a sieve and continued until the cow went insane and drowned herself in Llyn Dau Ychen. The **Parish Church of St Mary Magdalene** is said to have been founded as early as AD440. The present building is medieval, and was mentioned in the Norwich Taxation

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documents of 1254. It was enlarged in 1503 and restored in 1874.

GWAENYNOG BACH

1½ miles W of Denbigh on the A543

Gwaenynog Hall

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries Beatrix Potter was a frequent visitor to the beautifully situated estate of

Gwaenynog Hall (not open to the public), which was owned by her uncle Fred Burton. It is thought that her sketches, dating from a visit in 1909, of the kitchen garden (which has now been restored) were the basis for *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* and also the working environment of the fictional Mr McGregor the gardener, who wanted to bake Peter Rabbit in a pie.




















The River Dee, Llangollen











Visitors from all over the world pour into this small town of just 3000 permanent residents for the annual **International Musical Eisteddfod**, which has been held here since 1947. For six days every July, musicians, choirs, folk singers and dancers from all over the world, many performing in their national costumes, converge on the town. The festivities are centred around the **Royal Pavilion** with between 2000 and 5000 competitors taking part. Total audiences of around 120,000 people are not unknown. Dylan Thomas visited and wrote about the Eisteddfod, and Luciano Pavarotti, Tiri Te Kanawa and Plácido Domingo have all taken part. This event should not be confused with the **National Eisteddfod**, the annual Welsh language cultural festival whose venue alternates between the north and south of the country.

The first recorded eisteddfod was held at Cardigan Castle in 1176, and the modern eisteddfod began as a competition between bards at the Owain Glyndwr hotel in Corwen in 1789; it became a truly national event at Llangollen in 1858, when thousands of people came to the town from all over the country.

Llangollen

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Parish Church of St Collen |  Plas Newydd |
|  Llangollen Bridge |  Pontcysylte Aqueduct |
|  Valle Crucis Abbey |  Llangollen Wharf |
|  World's End |  International Musical Eisteddfod |
|  Eliseg's Pillar |  Llangollen Motor Museum |
|  Castell Dinas Bran |  Horseshoe Pass |
|  Ladies of Llangollen |  Fynnon Collen |
|  Royal International Pavilion | |
|  National Eisteddfod | |
|  Canoe Centre and International Canoe Course | |

This stone-built town fringed by mountains and with the River Dee at its heart, has become one of the foremost centres of culture in Wales: And not just Welsh culture.

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  historic building |  museum and heritage |  historic site |  scenic attraction |  flora and fauna |
|  stories and anecdotes |  famous people |  art and craft |  entertainment and sport |  walks |

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Music, prose, drama and art are included in the festival, which culminates in the chairing and investiture of the winning poet.

Throughout the rest of the year there are many other attractions in Llangollen to keep visitors entertained. The **International Model Railway World** is the planet's largest permanent exhibition of model railways. The **Llangollen Motor Museum** (see panel below) features more than 60 cars, motor bikes and even pedal cars from the earliest days of motoring to the present day. Visitors young and old will find the Dapol Toy Factory, (where many of the models for the other two

exhibitions are made), a fascinating place to wander around. And the Royal Pavilion also hosts a Gardening Show, a Motorcycle Show, a Food Festival and a monthly antiques and collectables fair.

Also worth a visit is the **Parish Church of St Collen**, most of which is built in the Perpendicular style, though there is an Early English doorway. It is, like many churches in this part of Wales, double-naved, and its chief glories are the two late-medieval roofs.

Back in the town centre and spanning the River Dee is the eye-catching **Llangollen Bridge** dating from 1347 and originally

Llangollen Motor Museum

Pentre Felin, Llangollen LL20 8EE

Tel: 01798 860324

e-mail: llangollenmotormuseum@hotmail.com

website: www.llangollenmotormuseum.co.uk

The **Llangollen Motor Museum** is located near the town, nestling between the Llangollen Canal and the river. The building, dating back to the 1820s, was originally a slate dressing works and had many other uses before becoming a museum in 1985. The museum

demonstrates in an informative, yet informal, way the charm and character of our motoring past, and the collection comprises more than 60 vehicles, from cars and motor bikes to invalid carriages and pedal cars. There is a recreation of a 1950s village garage complete with petrol pumps and the owners' living quarters. Included in the museum's collection are a Model T Ford, a splendid 1925 Vauxhall 38/93, a 1925 Citroën Boulangere from the vineyards of France and many of the cars that grandad used to drive. Among the motor bikes are great British names, including Norton, Triumph, Ariel, Sunbeam and BSA. The Museum is owned and run by the Owen family, headed by Gwylim, who was involved in the design and construction of cars at Vauxhall, his wife Ann and one of his sons, Geoffrey, who is a car restorer. For those who like to repair and restore their own vehicles, the Museum keeps a large stock of spares for classic cars, mainly from the 1960s.

The Museum also has a small exhibition showing the history and development of the British canal network and life on the canals through models, paintings, pottery and other memorabilia. School parties are welcome, and for car clubs a private field is available for picnics or overnight camping. The Llangollen Motor Museum, which has a refreshment and souvenir shop, is open Tuesday to Sunday March to October; winter opening by arrangement.



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constructed by John Trevor, who went on to become the Bishop of St Asaph. One of the Seven Wonders of Wales, this four-arched bridge has been rebuilt and widened in places over the years and is still used by today's traffic. The **Canoe Centre and International Canoe Course** is on the banks of the Dee, to the west of the bridge. The river is used for slalom competitions, which are held in the winter months. Visitors can also take part in canoeing. On the north side of the river is **Llangollen Station**, home of the Llangollen Railway Society. Since taking over the disused line in 1975, the Society has restored 7½ miles of the railway track and journeys along the banks of the River Dee can be taken on this delightful steam railway. The station houses a museum with a collection of engines, coaches and rail memorabilia.

From **Llangollen Wharf** pleasure cruises along the Llangollen Canal have taken place since 1884. Some trips are horse-drawn, while others cross the astonishing **Pontcysyllte Aqueduct** in the narrow boat *Thomas Telford* whose name pays homage to the architect of this soaring structure. Nineteen massive pillars, 116 feet high, support the large cast iron trough, which is 11ft 10in wide and 1007 feet long. Those with a good head for heights can walk along the towpath where a lip only a few inches high stands between the walker and the river. Opened in 1805, the viaduct is now designated as a World Heritage Site. Although the remains of the Iron Age hill fort, **Castell Dinas Bran**, are not extensive, the climb is well worth the effort as the view over the town and the

Vale of Llangollen is quite breathtaking. **World's End**, on the north side of the town, has been known by that name for centuries and offers woodland walks plus a link with the past, as it is supposed to have associations with King Arthur. One of its peaks is called Craig Arthur, and Guinevere was supposed to have been held captive here when she was kidnapped.

In the early 19th century, Llangollen became famous as the home for 50 years of the **Ladies of Llangollen**, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby. These two eccentric Irish women ran away from their families in Ireland and set up home together in 1780 in a cottage above the town. As well as devoting their lives to "friendship, celibacy and the knitting of blue stockings", the ladies also undertook a great deal of improvements and alterations that turned a small, unpretentious cottage into the splendid house – **Plas Newydd** – seen today. The marvellous 'gothicisation' of the house was completed in 1814 and some of the elaborate oak panels and the glorious stained glass windows were donated to the couple by their famous visitors



historic building
 museum and heritage
 historic site
 scenic attraction
 flora and fauna
 stories and anecdotes
 famous people
 art and craft
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 walks

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who included Sir Walter Scott, William Wordsworth, the Duke of Gloucester and the Duke of Wellington. The ladies were both buried in the churchyard of St Collen, sharing a grave with their friend and housekeeper Mary Caryl. Inside the church is a monument put up in 1937 at the expense of the ladies' biographer, the feminist Mary Gordon. The models for the two relief portraits were Mary Gordon and the sculptor Violet Labouchere.

Although, after their deaths, some of the ladies' displays were dispersed, the work on the house was continued by another owner, General Yorke, and Plas Newydd is well worth visiting. A small museum contains relics of the Battle of Waterloo. The gardens are attractive and, while the formal layout to the front of the house was created after the ladies had died and the terraces have been altered since they lived here, they still reflect the peace and quiet the couple were seeking, as well as containing more interesting curios from those early Regency days.

The main route north out of Llangollen passes the impressive ruins of **Valle Crucis Abbey**. Situated in green fields and overshadowed by the surrounding steep-sided mountains, this was an ideal place for a remote ecclesiastical house, the perfect spot for Cistercians, medieval monks who always sought out lonely, secluded places. This abbey was founded in 1201 by Madog ap Gruffyd, the Prince of Powys, and was a very suitable location for the monks of this austere order. Despite a fire, the tower collapsing and the Dissolution in 1535, the ruins are in good condition and visitors can gain a real feel for how the monks lived and worked here. Notable surviving original features include the west front with its richly carved doorway and rose window, the east end of the abbey

and the chapter house with its superb fan-vaulted roof. Also to be seen are some mutilated tombs, which are thought to include that of Iolo Goch (Iolo the Red), who between 1320-1398 was a bard of Owain Glyndwr. Valle Crucis means Valley of the Cross and refers to **Eliseg's Pillar**, which stands about half a mile from the abbey and was erected in the early 9th century. The inscription on this Christian memorial cross is now badly weather-beaten, but fortunately a record was made in 1696 of the words. It was erected in memory of Eliseg, who annexed Powys from the Saxons, by his great-grandson Concenn. The pillar was broken by Cromwell's men and not re-erected until the 18th century.

A little further northward along this road stretches the spectacular **Horseshoe Pass**, which affords some remarkable views. From the top of the pass can be seen the Vale of Clwyd and the ridge of Eglwyseg Rocks where Offa's Dyke path runs.

Around Llangollen

JOHNSTOWN

6 miles NE of Llangollen on the B5605




Stryt Las Park

On the B5605 between Johnstown and Rhosllanerchrugog lies **Stryt Las Park**, a predominantly wetland area with a large lake and three small ponds. This Site of Special Scientific Interest is home to one of Europe's largest colonies of the Great Crested Newt. The park is open daily, the visitor centre daily in summer, weekends only in winter. In nearby Rhosllanerchrugog, the Stiwt is a forum for Welsh language choirs, stage performances and crafts.

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BERSHAM

7½ miles NE of Llangollen off the A483

-  Clywedog Valley and Trail
-  Davis Brothers
-  Bersham Ironworks

Bersham lies in part of the **Clywedog Valley and Trail** that skirts around the south and west of Wrexham and includes several places of industrial interest. It passes through Plas Power and Nant Mill, woods that stretch along the River Clywedog between Bersham and Coedpoeth. A well preserved section of Offa's Dyke cuts through Plas Power. The village was established around 1670 and was the home of the **Davis Brothers**. The fine workmanship of these two famous iron masters can be seen in the beautiful gates at Chirk Park and at St Giles' Church in Wrexham.

The master and owner of **Bersham Ironworks** from 1762, John 'Iron Mad' Wilkinson, was famous for the cannons he bored for use in the American War of Independence, and for the cylinders he produced for James Watt's steam engines. The ironworks are open in the summer, the Heritage Centre all year round.



Bersham Ironworks

WREXHAM











9½ miles NE of Llangollen off the A483

-  Parish Church of St Giles
-  Judge Jeffreys
-  Clywedog Valley and Trail
-  Elihu Yale
-  King's Mill
-  Wrexham Museum
-  Erddig
-  Wrexham Science Festival

In recent years, Wrexham, the largest town in North Wales, has undergone extensive refurbishment. Fortunately, this has not been at the expense of charming old streets such as Bank Street and Temple Row, or the traditional shopping arcades, all of which have retained their original character and charm. The town centre is now pedestrianised and offers a good mix of small independent shops and boutiques, along with the familiar High Street names. Altogether, the development has added 250,000 square feet to the town's shopping area. The town's origins as a market town are reflected in its three indoor markets, the monthly Farmer's Market and the occasional French and Continental markets. An interesting experience for city dwellers is the cattle market held on Saturdays when farmers from the surrounding area come to

socialise and oversee transactions and where visitors can wander around soaking up the rural atmosphere.

For those wishing to find out more about the town and its social, industrial and local history, then **Wrexham Museum**, housed in the County Buildings, which were originally constructed as the militia barracks in 1857, is a good place to

-  historic building
-  museum and heritage
-  historic site
-  scenic attraction
-  flora and fauna
-  stories and anecdotes
-  famous people
-  art and craft
-  entertainment and sport
-  walks

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start. The discovery of a skeleton nearby – it became known as Brymbo Man – traces the town's history back as far as the Bronze Age, while the Romans are also known to have settled in the Wrexham area. Both Roundhead and Cavalier troops were garrisoned in the town during the Civil War and, in 1882, Britain's first lager brewery was built here. The suburb of Acton was the birthplace of **Judge Jeffreys**, the notoriously harsh lawman who was nicknamed 'Bloody' for his lack of compassion and his belief in swift justice. More recently, Wrexham played a major role in the development of football in Wales and the museum houses the Welsh Football Collection.

Perhaps Wrexham's best known building, and one that's a particular favourite of American tourists, is the **Parish Church of St Giles** whose spire dominates the town's skyline. It is famous for being the burial place of **Elihu Yale**, the benefactor of Yale University, who was laid to rest here on his death in 1721. Elihu had prospered as a senior official of the British East India Company, rising to become Governor of Madras. He was approached by a small college in Connecticut seeking funds to expand. Elihu responded generously and the new institution took his name. Yale's tomb in St Giles was restored in 1968 by members of Yale University to mark the 250th anniversary of the benefaction and it can be found in the churchyard to the west of the tower.

The church itself is also well worth taking the time to look over; its 136-foot pinnacle tower is one of the Seven Wonders of Wales. Begun in 1506 and much restored, this Gothic tower still carries some of the original medieval carvings, in particular those of St Giles, which are recognisable by his attributes of an arrow and a deer. Elsewhere in the church are a


colourful ceiling of flying musical angels, two very early eagle lecterns, a Burne-Jones window and the Royal Welsh Fusiliers chapel.

Just to the south of Wrexham, and found in a glorious 2000-acre estate and country park, is **Erddig** (National Trust), one of the most fascinating houses in Britain. Its stunning state rooms have been restored to their original glory whilst, below stairs, visitors can see the living and working conditions of the many servants a house of this size and status required. The Servants Hall is particularly remarkable for its array of portraits of the servants commissioned by the owner. Within the exquisite grounds are restored outbuildings, a walled garden, a yew walk, woodland trails and the National Ivy Collection. Other attractions include a shop, restaurant and second-hand bookshop.

GRESFORD

13 miles NE of Llangollen on the B5445

 Parish Church of All Saints  Gresford Bells



 Gresford Colliery Disaster

This former coal mining town was the site of the **Gresford Colliery Disaster** in 1934, which killed 266 men. The colliery closed in 1973, but the wheel remains in memory of those who lost their lives in this terrible disaster. The town's **Parish Church of All Saints** is one of the finest in Wales with notable medieval screens, stained glass, font and misericords, and a memorial to the mining disaster; it is also home to the famous **Gresford Bells**, one of the Seven Wonders of Wales, which are still rung every Tuesday evening and on Sundays. Visitors approaching the church by the south gate pass some impressive yew trees. The oldest tree is said to be more than 1600 years old; the others were planted in 1726.

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HOLT

15 miles NE of Llangollen on the B5102

 Holt Bridge  Holt Castle

 H G Wells

 Parish Church of St Chad


The River Dee, which marks the boundary between Wales and England, runs through this village and its importance as a crossing point can be seen in the attractive 15th-century **Holt Bridge**. The village of Holt was also the site of a Roman pottery and tile factory that provided material for the fort at nearby Chester. For a short while, the town had a very famous inhabitant – **H G Wells**, who was an usher at Holt Academy. There are scant remains of **Holt Castle**, or *Castrum Leonis* as it was called, built by John de Warren in the 13th century. The **Parish Church of St Chad** originally dates from the late 14th century, though it was almost completely rebuilt between 1871 and 1873.

Remains of Holt Castle



OVERTON

10 miles E of Llangollen on the A539

 Parish Church of St Mary  Overton Yew Trees

This substantial border village is home to another of the Seven Wonders of Wales – the **Overton Yew Trees**, 21 trees that stand in the churchyard of the **Parish Church of St Mary**. Dating from medieval times, these tall, dark and handsome trees have a preservation order placed upon them. Within the church itself there are some interesting artefacts from the 13th century.

BANGOR-ON-DEE

11 miles E of Llangollen on the B5069

 Parish Church of St Dunawd  Racecourse

Bangor-on-Dee, also known as Bangor-is-y-coed (The Place of the Choir Below the Wood), is in the area known as the Maelor, where the Cheshire Plains meet the Welsh Hills. The village is well known to race-goers as it is home to a picturesque **racecourse**, situated on the banks of the River Dee, which stages several national hunt meetings annually. The village itself has a charming 17th-century 5-arched bridge said to have been built by Inigo Jones, and a handsome parish church that dates back to the 14th century.

CHIRK

5½ miles SE of Llangollen on the B5070

 Parish Church of St Mary  Chirk Castle

This attractive border town's origins lie in the 11th century castle of which, unfortunately, little remains except a small motte close to the town's **Church of St Mary**. This Norman relic should not be confused with **Chirk Castle** (National Trust), which lies a mile outside the town, and was built in the 1280s. It remains mightily impressive with its massive drum towers at each corner. The castle is still lived in by the Myddleton family whose antecedent Sir Thomas Myddleton, Lord Mayor of London, purchased the castle in



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1595 for £5000. The castle's treasures include elegant state rooms, some Adam-style furniture, tapestries and portraits. By contrast, the castle's dramatic dungeons evoke a less attractive side of medieval life. Outside, the magnificent iron gates were made and erected in 1701 by the Davis Brothers, and are one of the glories of the grounds, which also feature topiary yews, roses, flowering shrubs and a picturesque hawk house.

Just south of the town are two splendid constructions that span the Ceiriog valley: the first, an aqueduct built in 1801 by Thomas Telford, carries the Llangollen branch of the Shropshire Union Canal, while the other is a viaduct built in 1848 to carry the then new Chester to Shrewsbury railway line over the River Ceiriog.

GLYN CEIRIOG

2½ miles S of Llangollen off the B4500

 Ceiriog Forest  Chwarel Wynne Mine Museum



This former slate mining village is home to the **Chwarel Wynne Mine Museum**, which, as well as telling the story of the slate industry that used to support the village, gives visitors a guided tour of the caverns, some more than 50ft high, where the slate was mined. There is also a nature trail around the surrounding countryside. A narrow gauge tramway, just 2ft 4½ in wide, the Glyn Valley Railway, once linked the Shropshire Union Canal at Gledrid with the quarries and mines at Glyn Ceiriog. Opened in 1873 and originally horse-drawn, it was later converted to steam and diverted through Chirk Castle estate to meet the Great Western Railway at Chirk station. It carried slate, silica, chinastone and dolerite downstream, and returned with coal, flour and other

commodities. It also carried passengers, and, though it closed in 1935, the bed of the tramway can still be seen here and there. The Glyn Valley Tramway Group was founded in 1974 to recreate the "Little Bit of Heaven Railway" as it was in its heyday.

The village lies in the beautiful and secluded Vale of Ceiriog. Just to the west is the beautiful **Ceiriog Forest**, which offers surprisingly pastoral views and vistas along with forest walks and trails.

LLANARMON DYFFRYN CEIRIOG

6½ miles SW of Llangollen on the B4500

 Parish Church of St Garmon  Tomen Garmon

 Ceiriog  Ceiriog Trail

This peaceful village in the heart of the Vale of Ceiriog was the birthplace of the famous Welsh bard **Ceiriog**, whose real name was John Hughes (1832–1887). A collector of folk tales as well as a poet, he is sometimes called the Robert Burns of Wales. The 14-mile Upper **Ceiriog Trail** for walkers, mountain bikers and horse riders passes his home, Pen-y-Bryn. In the churchyard of the **Parish Church of St Garmon**, built in 1846, are yew trees, one of which may be more than 1000 years old. Also in the churchyard is a small tumulus, which may date from the Bronze Age. Local legend says it is **Tomen Garmon**, from which St Garmon preached and in which he was buried.

LLANTYSILIO

1 mile W of Llangollen off the A5

 Parish Church of St Tysilio  Horseshoe Weir

 Helena Faucit

Situated on the banks of the River Dee, the **Parish Church of St Tysilio** is a 14th century

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building whose treasures include a medieval roof, some 15th century glass and a medieval oak eagle lectern. Back in 1866, while holidaying in Llangollen, the poet Robert Browning worshipped, and a brass plaque placed by Lady Martin commemorates his visit. Lady Martin, also known as the actress **Helena Faucit**, lived in the house next to the church. She, too, is remembered at the church by a chapel that was built following her death in 1898. In 1885, she published a book called *On Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters*, which was popular in its day.

At the foot of the hill on which the church stands is Thomas Telford's **Horseshoe Weir**, which was built in 1806 to supply water to the Llangollen Canal.

GLYNDYFRDWY

4 miles W of Llangollen on the A5

-  Parish Church of St Thomas
-  Eos Griffiths
-  Owain Glyndwr's Mound

Once within the estate of Owain Glyndwr, this village lies on the historic and important A5 and between the Berwyn and Llantysilio mountains. A mound by the road, known as **Owain Glyndwr's Mound**, was once part of an impressive earthwork fortress that was later incorporated into part of the Welsh hero's manor house and estate. It was here, in 1400, that he declared himself to be Prince of Wales. Though it looks much older, the **Parish Church of St Thomas** dates only from 1858. Much more recently, Glyndyfrdwy has become known as the home of the Dutch Butterfly Man, **Eos Griffiths**, who is known worldwide for creating the bright and colourful ornamental butterflies that can be seen adorning homes from Scandinavia to Australia.

CORWEN

9 miles W of Llangollen on the A5

-  Parish Church of St Mael and St Sulien
-  Rug Chapel
-  Parish Church of All Saints, Llangar
-  Caer Derwyn
-  Owain Glyndwr

This market town, in a pleasant setting on the flank of the Berwyn Mountains and above the River Dee, has, for many years been known as the 'Crossroads of North Wales'. The town's origins can be traced back to the 6th century when the Breton-Welsh saints, Mael and Sulien, founded a religious community here. The **Parish Church of St Mael and St Sulien** still bears their name. This church dates back to the 12th century, though what can be seen nowadays dates mainly from the 13th to 15th centuries. In a lintel of the doorway there is an incised dagger that is known as **Glyndwr's Sword**. The mark was reputedly made by Glyndwr when he threw a dagger from the hill above the church in a fit of rage against the townsfolk. However, the dagger mark actually dates from the 7th to 9th century and there is another such mark on a 12th-century cross outside the southwest corner of the church.

The town was once the headquarters of Owain Glyndwr who gathered his forces here before entering into his various campaigns. Owain Glyndwr (c1354–c1416), the self-styled Prince of Wales, led the last major attempt to shake off the yoke of the English. A striking life-size statue of Owain on his battle horse stands on Corwen Square and was installed in 2007. There is no memorial to the novelist John Cooper Powys, who lived in Corwen from 1934 to 1955, but while he was here he wrote the historical novel *Owen Glendower* (1941).

GLYNDWR PLANTS

Tafarn Bric, Corwen, Denbighshire LL21 9BU

Tel: 01490 413313

e-mail: stubbs@tafarnbric.wanadoo.co.uk

website: www.glyndwrplants.co.uk

Glyndwr Plants was developed on the site of Tafarn Bric which was an unlicensed tavern on one of the ancient drovers' routes between North Wales and London. 'Bric' is a derivative of 'Pric' which is the Welsh word for stick. Since the premises were unlicensed, money for ale could not change hands so sticks were purchased and notched, indicating how much the stick was worth. These sticks were then exchanged for ale or porter. The owners of Glyndwr Plants, John and Myfanwy Stubbs, hasten to point out that they no longer carry on this tradition!

Established in 1997, the company grows and sells hardy plants, (nearly all grown on their own site) for all types of gardens and gardeners, so whether you are a novice or connoisseur, you can be sure there will be something for you. Knowledgeable staff are available at all times to give advice and many customers return year after year to browse the new additions to the trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, or to discover what's new for their hanging baskets and patio tubs.

After browsing the plant centre, why not relax in the friendly Coffee Shop where you'll find a wide range of home made, freshly produced, tasty foods, along with freshly ground coffee, teas and cold drinks.



It was in the Owain Glyndwr Hotel in 1789 that a local man, Thomas Jones, organised a bardic festival that laid the foundations for the modern eisteddfod. Across the River Dee from the town lies **Caer Derwyn**, a stone rampart around a hill that dates from Roman times.

To the west of Corwen, and set in pretty, landscaped grounds, is the simple, stone-built **Rug Chapel**. A rare example of a private chapel that has changed little over the years, Rug was founded in the 17th century by 'Old Blue Stockings', Colonel William Salisbury, in collaboration with Bishop William Morgan (the first translator of the Bible into Welsh), and its plain exterior gives no clues to its exquisitely decorated interior. It is

testimony to Salisbury's high church outlook, and is best described as a painted chapel. Few parts have been left unadorned. There is a beautifully carved rood screen (a Victorian addition) and the ceiling beams are painted with rose motifs. However, not all the decoration here is exuberant; there is also a



Rug Chapel, Corwen



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sombre wall painting of a skeleton as a reminder of mortality. The architect Sir Edwin Lutyens acknowledged that his work was influenced by this beautiful chapel and evidence of this can be seen in his most elaborate commission, the Viceroy's House, New Delhi, which was completed in 1930.

Another interesting religious building can be found just to the south of Rug, in the direction of Llandrillo. The **Parish Church of All Saints** at Llangar, overlooking the confluence of the Rivers Dee and Alwen, is medieval. Because it was superseded in the 19th century by a new church at Cynwyd, this small place still retains many of its original features. In particular, there are some extensive 15th-century wall paintings and a minstrels' gallery. Both Rug Chapel and Llangar church are now cared for by CADW – Welsh Historic Monuments.

LLANDRILLO

12 miles SW of Llangollen on the B4401

 Parish Church of St Trillo  Craig Berwyn

 Berwyn Mountains

The road to Llandrillo from the north, follows the Vale of Edeirion and the River Dee as it weaves its way below the northwest slopes of the **Berwyn Mountains**, another mountain range that is popular with walkers and visitors. This small village with its white-washed cottages is a good starting point for walks in the Berwyns and footpaths from the village

lead towards **Craig Berwyn**, whose summit is more than 2100 feet above sea level. The name means 'church of St Trillo', and the successor of the church he founded here, the **Parish Church of St Trillo**, was built in the mid-19th century on a site that had been occupied by a place of worship for centuries. The fine east window, depicting the entombment, resurrection and ascension of Christ, was gifted to the church by a Vicar who served there for 55 years.

BRYNEGLWYS

5 miles NW of Llangollen off the A5104

 Parish Church of St Tysilio  Plas-Yn-Yale

Standing on the slopes of Llantysilio Mountain, the large 13th-century **Parish Church of St Tysilio** in the heart of the village is, surprisingly, connected with the family who helped to found Yale University in the United States. Close to the village lies **Plas-Yn-Yale**, the former home of the Yale family and the birthplace of Elihu Yale's father. Elihu himself was born in 1647 in Boston, Massachusetts, and went on to become a governor of India before returning to England. Known for his philanthropy, Elihu was approached by an American College who, after receiving generous help, named their new college in Newhaven after him. In 1745, 24 years after his death, the whole establishment was named Yale University. Elihu Yale is buried in the Church of St Giles in Wrexham.

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