



a DRIVE to
expLORE

DISCOVER fLINTSHIRE BY ROAD

gateway to wales

Flintshire is a beautiful Welsh border county with a countryside and coast enriched by a fascinating past. Superb road and rail links and its location just west of historic Chester make it an easily accessible and rewarding destination.

There is so much to discover that we've devised a special car trail to help you. The Flintshire Leisure Drive transports you to delightful country villages, traditional market towns, medieval castles and some of the most stunning scenery in North Wales.

So whether you're a visitor to the "Gateway to Wales" or simply want to get to know your own county better, this booklet gives you a drive to explore.



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With support from the
Flintshire Rural Partnership



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FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH OF CILCAIN VILLAGE BY GEORGE PRITCHARD.

finding YOUR way

The Flintshire Leisure Drive is about 83 miles long and divided into nine diverse sections. This booklet contains a map for each section and a description of the key places of interest en route.

For maximum enjoyment, we recommend you start in Mold but, if you do begin elsewhere, it will be safer and simpler for you to travel the route **anticlockwise** - the same direction as the arrows on the map.

The route is well-signposted from start to finish: simply follow the signs with the Welsh dragon saying "Tour/Taith". Each sign is numbered - look out for the white-on-blue numbers on the route maps, which show the signs at the beginning and the end of each section. The text also includes references to particular signs to help you find your way.



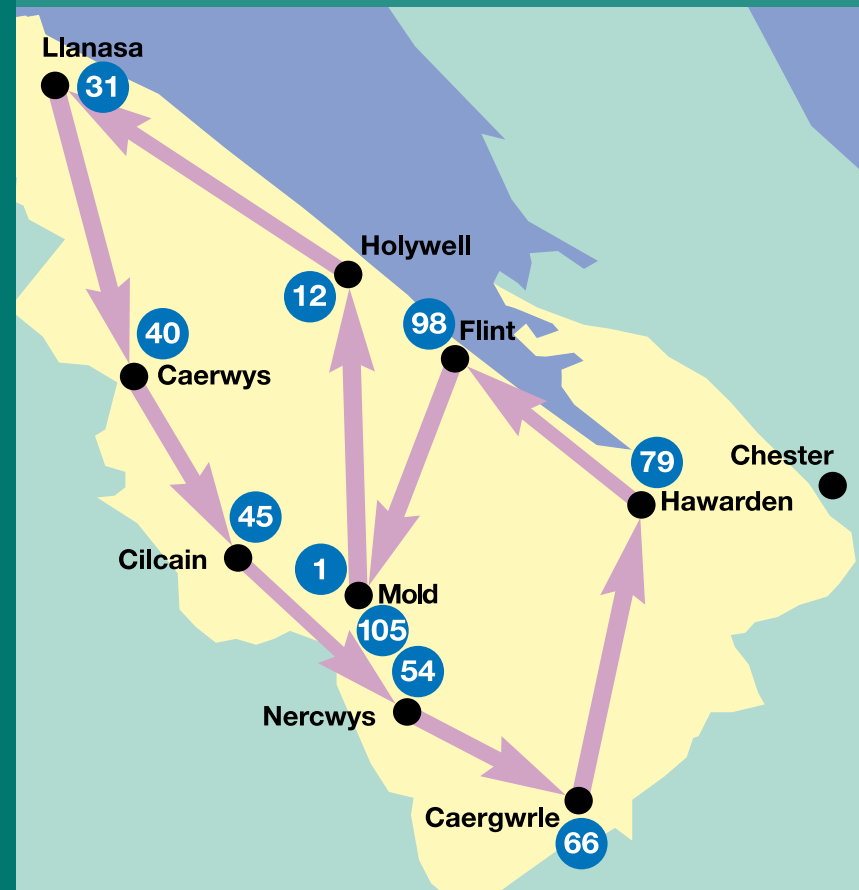
Do take time to stop and explore off the route. Some detours are suggested in the text but you'll find no shortage of other places that demand a closer look.

Flintshire has many high-quality tourist attractions that deliver a great experience for the whole family, together with a wide range of places to stay from four-star hotels to charming B&Bs and self-catering cottages.

Many of our characterful pubs are listed in the leading guides and the food in our restaurants, often sourced from fresh local ingredients, can be first-rate.

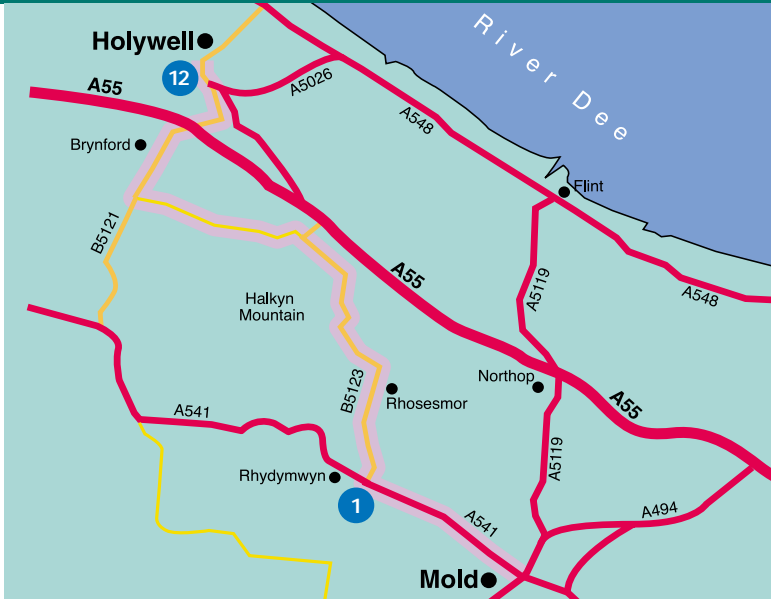
See page 30 for more information about what Flintshire has to offer.

Please drive carefully. The route takes you through spectacular scenery on some characteristic rural roads which can include sharp bends, steep hills or narrow bridges.



section 1: mold to holywell

distance: 11 miles



Beginning in the market town of Mold and passing through the historic industrial landscape of Halkyn Mountain, this section finishes in Holywell with its famous healing spring and heritage park.

Starting point

On A541 Denbigh Road, Mold, next to the Love Lane car park, facing west at the sign which reads "For Flintshire Leisure Drive, Follow Tour". See street map page 27.

Facilities en route

Mold: toilets, car parks, shops, refreshments, petrol, banks and cash machines, post office, Tourist Information Centre, museum and library.
Rhosesmor: post office.

Finish

Next to St Winefride's Well on the B5121 in Holywell, shortly after Leisure Drive Sign 12. See street map page 26.

Mold is a friendly market town where family-run businesses and leading High Street names rub shoulders. Street trading has been a feature of Mold life since the 17th century and continues today with a bustling street market every Wednesday and Saturday.

It has a wealth of history to do with its strategic importance on the England-Wales border. A motte and bailey Norman castle once stood on Bailey Hill at the top of the High Street, while in 1833 a fabulous gold ceremonial cape of beaten gold thought to date from around 2,000 BC was found on the skeleton of a man buried near Mold. There is a replica and many other Bronze Age treasures in Mold Museum in Earl Road, which also has a display devoted to Mold's most famous son and father of the Welsh novel, Daniel Owen.

Overlooking the High Street is the beautiful church of St Mary the Virgin. Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry Tudor, commissioned it as an offering to God for the victory of her son over Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485.

Leaving Mold on the Denbigh Road, turn right before the village of **Rhydymwyn**, from where the Leete Walk runs through a green and peaceful valley to Loggerheads Country Park. The composer

Mendlessohn was inspired to write "The Rivulet" while walking along the Leete.

As you pass through **Rhosesmor**, look out for the iron age hillfort of Moel y Gaer to the left before entering the vast landscape of industrial history that is **Halkyn Mountain**, with its stunning views across the Dee Estuary. Lead mining began here in Roman times and continued from the 13th century until the last mine closed in the 1970s. Halkyn Mountain is common land on which many local properties have the right to graze animals.

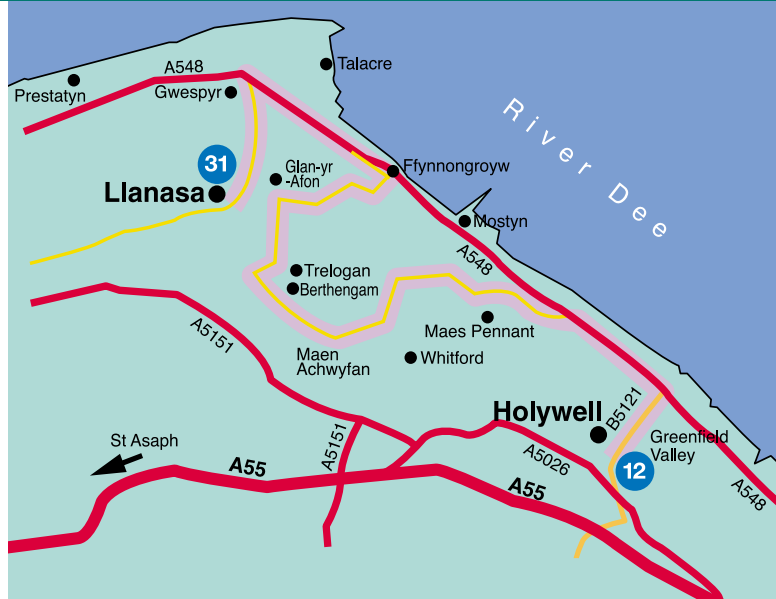
Brynford is set 750 feet above the sea, surrounded by several tumuli, cairns and earth circles. In the old village school, the famous explorer HM Stanley, of "Dr Livingstone, I presume?" fame, was a pupil teacher. From Brynford, you descend a steep hill to Holywell with superb views across the Dee Estuary.

Market day in Mold.



section 2: HOLYWELL to LLANASA

DISTANCE: 11.5 MILES



The route begins at an ancient place of pilgrimage, winding through country lanes offering views of the magnificent Dee Estuary to finish in one of Flintshire's prettiest villages.

Starting point

Next to St Winefride's Well on the B5121 in Holywell, facing south. See street map page 26.

Facilities en route

Holywell: post office, pedestrianised shopping, toilets, shops, refreshments, car parks, petrol, banks and cash machines, Tourism Information Point.

Ffynnongroyw: post office with shop.

Finish

In the centre of Llanasa village, with the church on the left and opposite Leisure Drive Sign 31.

The centre of the traditional Welsh market town of **Holywell** has changed little since Victorian days, containing more than 60 listed buildings, and every Thursday and Saturday hosts popular open-air markets.

Holywell, the "Lourdes of Wales", takes its name from world-famous St Winefride's Well, one of the Seven Wonders of Wales. Henry V walked here from Shrewsbury to give thanks for his victory at Agincourt and it was rebuilt in its present magnificent form around 1500 by Margaret Beaufort.

A little further down the B5121 is 70-acre Greenfield Valley Heritage Park, where you will find the remains of 18th century mills for spinning cotton, drawing wire, rolling copper and forming metal. There are also five lakes teeming with bird life, meandering woodland walks, a visitor centre, museum and farm. More ancient still is Basingwerk Abbey, founded in 1132 and for 400 years home to Cistercian monks.

Joining the A548 coast road, you travel for a short distance alongside the Dee Estuary before heading inland through the country lanes near **Mostyn**. The two families that made their mark here are the Pennants and Mostyns. Thomas Pennant, born in Whitford in 1726, was the greatest Welsh travel writer



St Winefride's Well, Holywell.

of his day, while the Mostyn line includes Vice Admiral Savage Mostyn (1712-1757), who introduced the uniform into the navy.

At Leisure Drive Sign 20, it's well worth a detour left to the pretty village of **Whitford** with its church built of sandstone from nearby Gwespyr. At Leisure Drive Sign 21, standing alone in a field beside the road, is mysterious Maen Achwyfan, one of the very finest early British sculptured stone crosses.

Curving back towards the coast, you pass **Trelogan**, where famous Welsh tenor David Lloyd was born, and the tiny village of **Glan Yr Afon**, boyhood home of the Welsh dramatist and actor Emlyn Williams, before reaching **Ffynnongroyw**. At Leisure Drive Sign 28, consider a detour right to the Gronant and Talacre Dunes Site of Special Scientific Interest, home of rare natterjack toads and little tern. From **Gwespyr**, you rise steeply inland to finish in lovely Llanasa.

section 3: Llanasa to caerwys

distance: 10 miles



From lovely Llanasa, take a trip into prehistory with the stunning cairn mound of Gop Hill before entering the tiny town of Caerwys.

Starting point

In the centre of Llanasa village, with the church on the left and opposite Leisure Drive Sign 31.

Facilities en route

Llanasa: refreshments.

Trelawnyd: post office, shop, petrol.

Finish

At the top of South Street B5122 in Caerwys, facing south at Leisure Drive Sign 40. See street map page 24.



Llanasa.

The historic village of **Llanasa** lies cradled in a fold of hills 450 feet above sea level, a perfect example of a small Welsh community virtually untouched by the passage of time. Llanasa means "church of Asa" and is believed to have been founded in the sixth century when Asaph, the second bishop of what is now St Asaph, built a church there. The present church, which has an unusual old bell cote with a single bell, dates to the late 15th and early 16th century. Its most remarkable feature is the magnificent stained glass contained in the two large east windows, originally from Basingwerk Abbey (see page 9). The village is full of other historical buildings including a fine 17th century hall, tithe barn cottages and former Victorian school. Llanasa is renowned for the quality of its gardens, many of which open under the National Gardens Scheme (pick up

a Yellow Book in a Tourist Information Centre for more details).

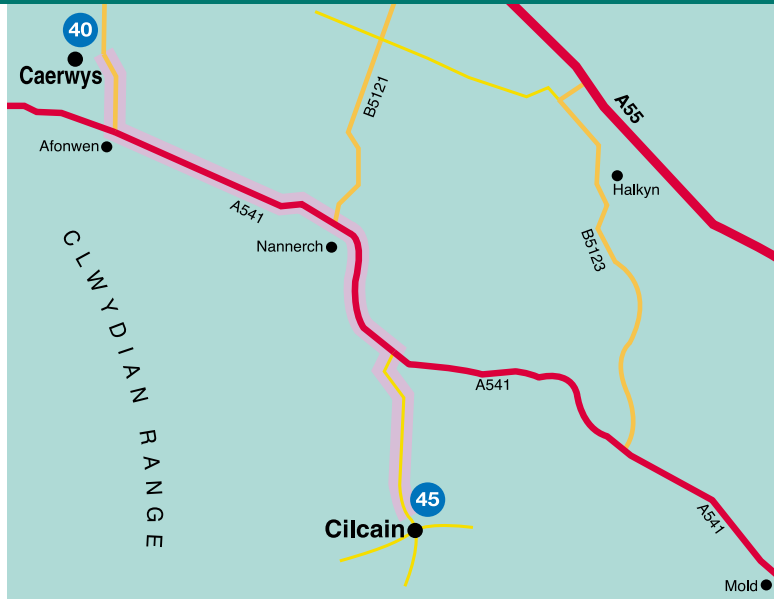
Detouring right at Leisure Drive Sign 32 brings you into the village of **Gwaenysgor**, with a viewing point which looks down on the holiday resort of Prestatyn and across to the distant mountains of Gwynedd. The village is mentioned in the Domesday book and has a 14th century church with a tiny lepers' window. The church has the only unbroken parish records in Wales, dating from 1538.

The area around **Trelawnyd** is dominated by Gop Hill, on top of which is a cairn mound - by far the biggest prehistoric monument in Wales and the second largest artificial mound in all Britain. It stands 14 metres (46 feet) tall and some 250 metres (820 feet) above sea level, commanding tremendous views in nearly every direction. It may have been an astronomical viewing platform, a focus for rituals connected with sun-worship, a monument to the dead or a massive burial mound. More romantically, local legend says it was the burial site of Queen Boadicea. It can be reached by a footpath from the centre of Trelawnyd.

The route then runs east along the A5151 before crossing the A55 and heading south to Caerwys.

section 4: caerwys to cilcain

distance: 7 miles



Between Caerwys, model for Philadelphia, and Cilcain nestling in the foothills of the Clwydian Range, why not make a detour through the limestone-built village of Nannerch?

Starting point

At the top of South Street B5122 in Caerwys, facing south at Leisure Drive Sign 40. See street map page 24.

Facilities en route

Caerwys: shops, toilets, refreshments, post office.

Finish

At the crossroads in the centre of Cilcain, next to Leisure Drive Sign 45. If you wish to stop in Cilcain, follow the Viewpoint sign a short distance after Leisure Drive Sign 44, about half-a-mile north of the village. This will divert you to a parking area on the western outskirts of Cilcain.

Caerwys is said to be the smallest town in the British Isles, owing its status to a charter granted in 1290 by Edward I. The very first Eisteddfod was held here in 1100 and it became the natural headquarters of the Welsh bards. Sir William Penn, architect of Philadelphia, based his street plan on that of Caerwys and the town attracts many visitors from the USA.

The 14th century church of St Michael is a fine example of the double-naved churches found in the area. It has two lych gates, the north-east one dating from the 18th century and the south-west from the late 15th or early 16th century (pre-Reformation lych gates are extremely rare). Other historical buildings in the town include Henlys, or the Old Court House, which was built some time between 1420 and 1480 and the nearby Bell House, which dates from the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.



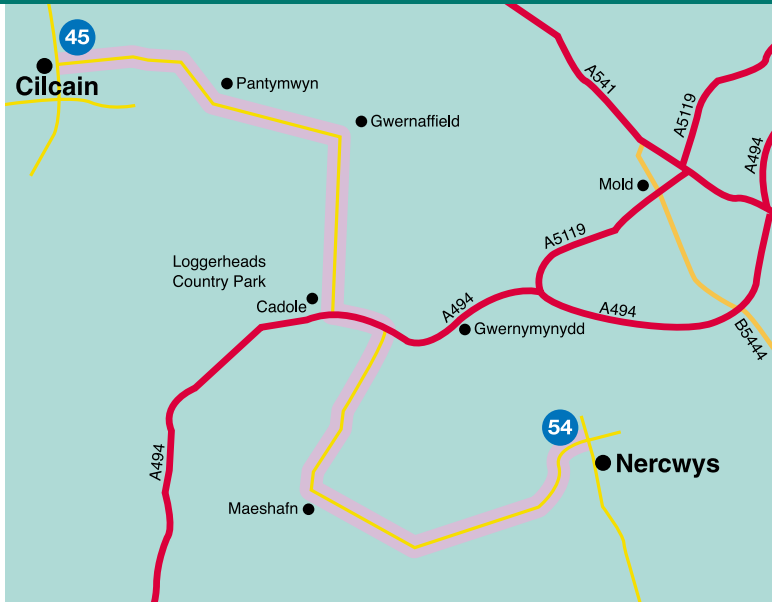
View from the Clwydian Hills.

After turning left onto the A541, continue for a couple of miles and consider a detour right into the peaceful village of **Nannerch**, which stands on a flat area of land with the river Wheeler flowing 70 feet below and the beautiful Clwydian Hills rising above. Nannerch sits on a bed of limestone, from which many of the local buildings have been built. The Iron Age hillforts of Penycloddiau, one of the largest in Wales, and Moel Arthur are to the south-west of the village.

Just before the turning to Cilcain off the A541 you can catch a glimpse of the Penbedw Circle in a field close to the road (on private land). This prehistoric stone circle, believed to date from the Bronze Age between 2000 and 1250 BC, is the only one of its kind in north-east Wales and was originally made up of 11 standing stones. Only five of these remain and trees have been planted where the six missing stones once stood.

section 5: cilcain to nercwys

distance: 9 miles



The route begins in Cilcain, a favourite starting point for walks to the summit of Moel Famau, and takes in some of the most stunning countryside in Flintshire.

Starting point

At the crossroads in the centre of Cilcain, next to Leisure Drive Sign 45. If you decide to explore Cilcain before beginning this section, you will find a parking area to the west of the village. Simply follow the Viewpoint signs.

Facilities en route

Cilcain: shop, toilets, refreshments, post office.

Finish

Next to Leisure Drive Sign 54, on the northern outskirts of Nercwys village.



Cilcain.

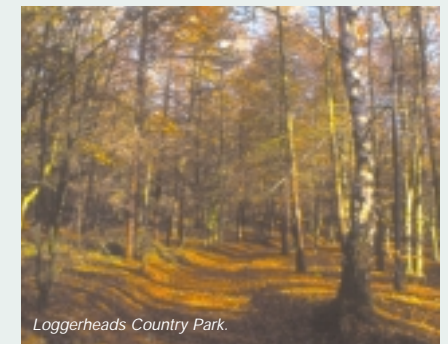
Cilcain lies above the valley of the River Alyn in the foothills of Moel Famau and is a popular starting point for walkers and hikers. The highest peak in the Clwydian Range at 1,820 feet, Moel Famau and its ruined Jubilee Tower of 1810 are clearly visible from the centre of the village.

This ancient settlement is listed in the Domesday Book and several cottages date back to the 16th and 17th century. The Church of St Mary has a very fine carved oak hammer beam roof dating from the 15th century, one of the finest in Wales, and is thought to have been brought from Basingwerk Abbey (see page 9) during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century. The churchyard is roughly circular, supposedly so that no demons could hide in the corners.

Driving from Cilcain takes you through some of the loveliest scenery in Flintshire, through the wooded valley and narrow stone bridge near Pantymwyn, right at the church in Gwernaffield and down to the hamlet of Cadole. Here a short detour right onto the A5119 at Leisure Drive Sign 49 brings you to Loggerheads Country Park, just across the border in Denbighshire, with its impressive limestone cliffs, woodland and riverside walks.

Back on the route, a right turn brings you to the village of Maeshafn. As you skirt left of the village, you will see Moel Findig towering above you. One of the lesser known Clwydian summits, Moel Findig is managed as a Local Nature Reserve and offers splendid views over Flintshire.

Equally fine is the vista that opens up, with Mold in the distance, as you approach Nercwys village.



Loggerheads Country Park.

section 6: NERCWYS to CAERGWRLE

DISTANCE: 10 miles



From the peaceful village of Nercwys, this section takes in part of Offa's Dyke near Treuddyn and passes through Ffrith with its Roman connections before finishing in the shadow of Caergwrle Castle.

Starting point

Next to Leisure Drive Sign 54, on the northern outskirts of Nercwys village.

Facilities en route

Nercwys: refreshments.
Llanfynydd: post office.

Finish

Opposite Caergwrle railway station, facing north, shortly after Leisure Drive Sign 66.

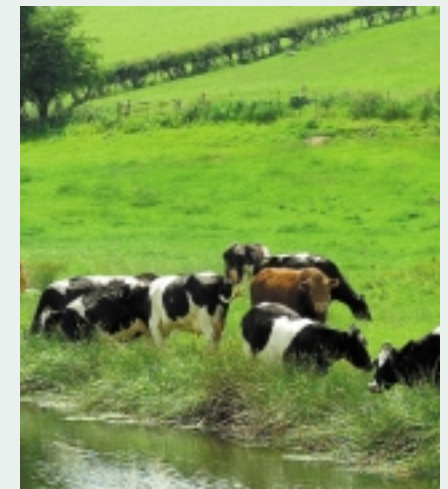
The ancient village of **Nercwys**, set on the lower slopes of Nercwys Mountain, was first mentioned in the tax list of 1291 and many of the farmhouses in the area date back as far as the 17th century. The tower of the Church of St Mary is probably Norman, while some parts of the wall date back to the "Decorated Period" around the late 13th or early 14th century. In the south sanctuary stands a richly carved, coloured and gilded chair, known popularly as "Cader Fair" or Mary's Seat.

In Victorian times, 450 men were employed in collieries at nearby **Treuddyn**, as the area was rich in coal and ironstone. On the outskirts of the village, just after turning right off the A5104 onto the B5101 at Leisure Drive Sign 59, is part of Offa's Dyke. This 1,200 year-old earthwork is the most impressive of its kind anywhere in Europe and runs along the England-Wales border to Sedbury Cliffs on the Severn Estuary. The Dyke consists of an earthen bank which can be up to eight metres high with a ditch to the west and is easily Britain's longest ancient monument.

Christ Church at **Llanfynydd**, badly damaged by fire in 1892, is a typical plain Welsh church with a bell-cote on the western end but lacking any tower or ornament.

At **Ffrith** the foundations of a Roman hypocaust - or vapour bath - were discovered quite by accident in the 16th century. Since then other treasures have been uncovered including gold rings, pins of ivory, glass and amber beads and coins of Nero, Agrippa, Agricola and Maximillian, proving the Romans were at Ffrith for more than three hundred years.

They were perhaps attracted by the lead reserves of the Nant-y-Ffrith valley and woods which lie to the west of the village. One of the old mining processes was "hooshing". This involved damming the stream to build a head of water and then allowing it to "hoosh" down the valley - removing the topsoil to expose seams of lead for mining and refining.



section 7: caerGwrlE to hawarden

distance: 8 miles



Hope Mountain dominates the landscape as you travel from historic CaergwrlE through the country lanes around Higher Kinnerton to finish in Hawarden, home of Victorian Prime Minister William Gladstone.

Starting point

Opposite CaergwrlE railway station, facing north.

Facilities en route

CaergwrlE: shops, petrol, car park, banks and cash machines, toilets, refreshments, post office.

Finish

At the T-junction in the centre of Hawarden, next to Gladstone's Fountain in the middle of the road at Leisure Drive Sign 79.



CaergwrlE Castle.

CaergwrlE is dominated by its castle, out of sight to the left of the railway station at the beginning of this section. Sometimes called "the very last Welsh-built castle", CaergwrlE was begun in 1277 by Dafydd ap Gruffudd, younger brother of Prince Llewellyn. From here Dafydd launched his victorious attack on the English castle at Hawarden in 1282. It was then taken by Edward I and shortly afterwards reduced to ruins by fire and was never rebuilt. The castle, which commands amazing views, stands in the corner of a much larger ancient hillfort on an isolated wooded hill. It can only be reached on foot via a steep path with steps; parts of the ruin are hazardous.

Within living memory, CaergwrlE was a thriving spa town. In its heyday thousands of visitors would arrive in trains at "CaergwrlE and Wells Station" to take the waters.

On the road out of the village, 1,080-foot Hope Mountain commands the landscape to the west. Otherwise known as Waun Y Llyn, this attractive heather-covered park provides extensive views of the Cheshire Plain and the Wirral coast. Visiting it involves a detour left in **Hope**, picking up the A541 north before quickly turning left towards Horeb.

The church of St Cynfarch and Cyngar in Hope was almost certainly founded in the early medieval period and the present building may date from the end of the 13th century, with a largely 16th century tower. The church is set in a raised circular enclosure.

Far-reaching views of the Cheshire Plain appear as you drop down towards **Kinnerton**, a village which straddles the England-Wales border. The road from Penymynydd to Hawarden winds through a wooded area known locally as Tinkersdale.

section 8: Hawarden to Flint

DISTANCE: 10.5 miles



Between the castles of Hawarden and Flint lies a modern landscape of industry and enterprise, symbolised by the iconic Flintshire Bridge across the River Dee.

Starting point

At the T-junction in the centre of Hawarden, at Leisure Drive Sign 79, facing west towards the war memorial.

Facilities en route

Hawarden: shops, refreshments, car park, bank, post office.
Queensferry: shops, refreshments, post office, petrol.

Finish

At the junction of the A548 and A5119 in Flint, at Leisure Drive Sign 98, with Flint Castle to the right. See street map on page 25.

The historic heart of **Hawarden** contains two castles. The ruins of 12th century Hawarden Castle now stand sentinel over the fine Georgian and Victorian castellated mansion which assumed its name, famous as the home of Prime Minister William Gladstone and still the private home of his descendants. Born in Liverpool, Gladstone married Catherine Glynné, daughter of the local squire.

In Church Lane you will find Grade I-listed St Deiniol's Library, Britain's finest residential library, founded by Gladstone in 1889. After his death in 1898, it became the nation's tribute to his life and work and includes 32,000 of his own books. St Deiniol's Library hosts a free permanent exhibition tracing the life and career of Gladstone. The church next door, also dedicated to St Deiniol, has a

St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden.



history of at least 1,000 years. It was badly damaged by arson in 1857 and rebuilt two years later.

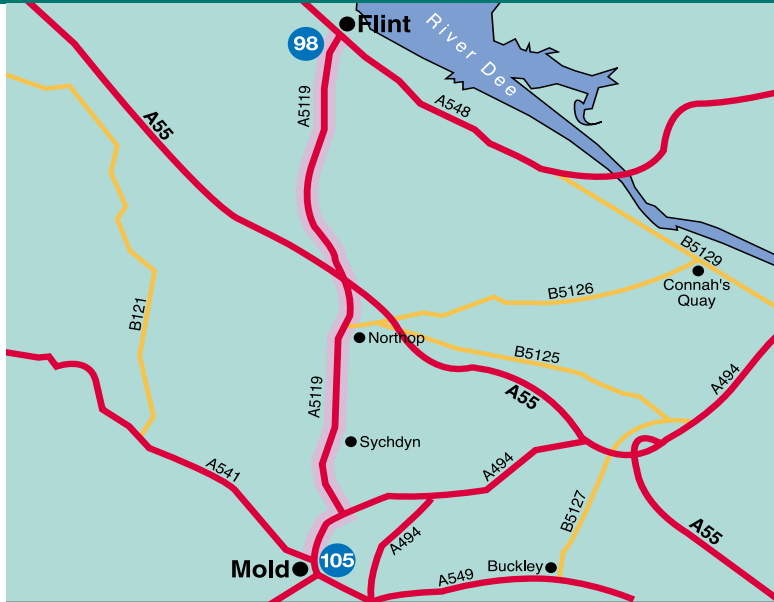
As you leave Hawarden, turning right at the war memorial, you will see an imposing statue of Gladstone to the right.

Passing along the main shopping street in **Queensferry** and over the "Blue Bridge" across the River Dee brings you shortly into Deeside Industrial Park. The biggest of its kind in Europe, it has played a vital role in the economic regeneration of Deeside since the 1980s. Symbol of this new prosperity is the £40 million Dee Crossing, otherwise known as Flintshire Bridge, opened by Her Majesty the Queen in 1997. The largest asymmetric cable-stayed bridge in Britain with a span of 200 metres, it looks out over the Irish Sea from an impressive industrial landscape.

On the far side of the bridge, consider a left detour to **Connah's Quay** and the 1,000 year old woodland of Wepre Country Park, which contains the ruins of Ewloe Castle, built around 1257 by Llewellyn the Last.

section 9: flint to mold

DISTANCE: 10.5 miles



The route starts near Edward I's Flint Castle and passes through Northop, once a welcome haven on the post road from London to Holyhead, before returning to the market town of Mold.

Starting point

At the junction of the A548 and A5119 in Flint, with Flint Castle to the right, at Leisure Drive Sign 98. See street map on page 25.

Facilities en route

Flint: shops, post office, petrol, car parks, refreshments, banks and cash machines, toilets.

Finish

On A541 Denbigh Road, Mold, next to the Love Lane car park and the sign which reads "End/Diwedd". See street map page 27.



Flint Castle.

Flint can trace its history back to a charter granted in 1278 by Edward I, shortly after the English king began a campaign to crush Prince Llewellyn and medieval Welsh independence. He built a great castle at Flint, positioned like all his strongholds to be supplied by sea, and even today Flint's streets still follow the grid pattern of Edward's fortified town.

In 1399 the castle witnessed the surrender of King Richard to Henry Bolingbroke, later Henry IV - a scene dramatically described by Shakespeare. It remains one of the most complete and atmospheric castles in the North Wales Borderlands. Entrance to the castle, in the care of CADW, is free and there are walks along the shoreline with excellent views over the Dee Estuary. In winter look out for the huge flocks of wading birds that

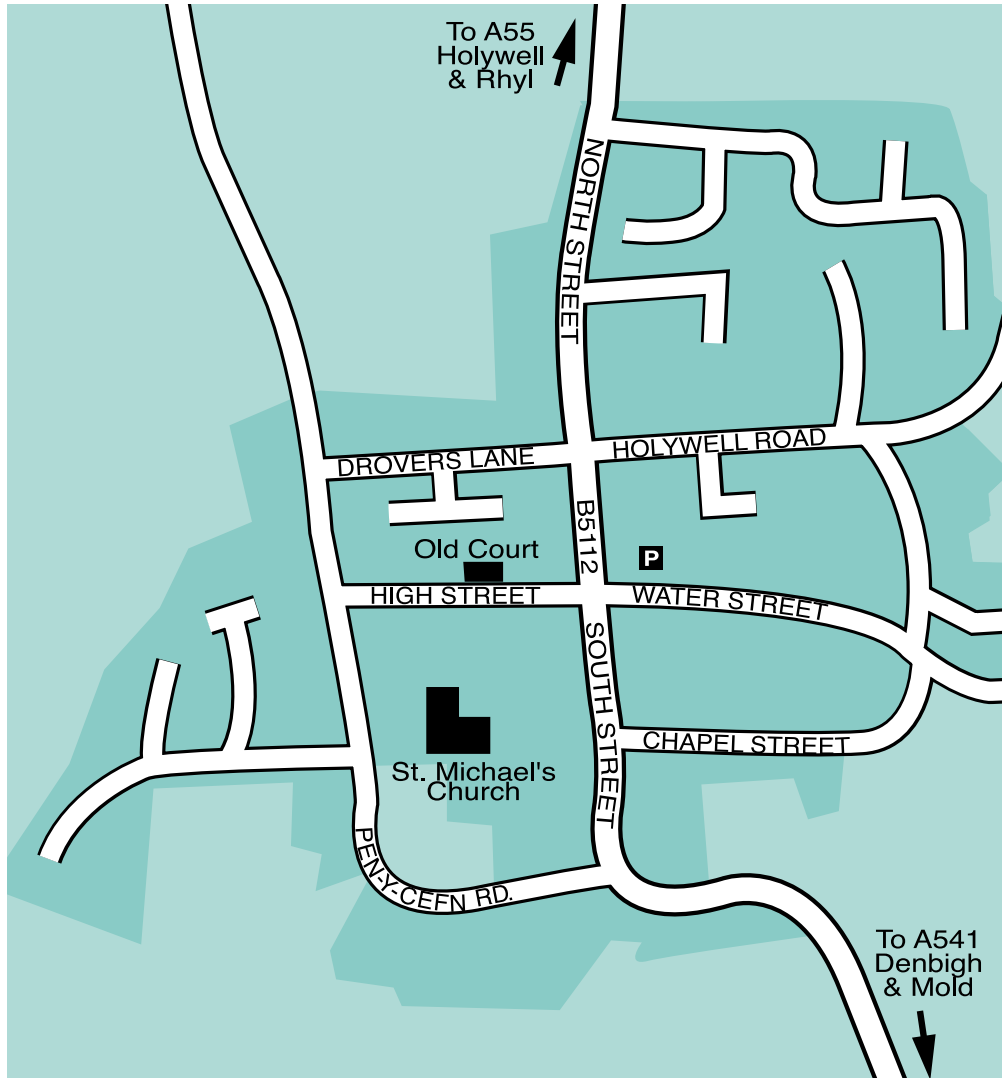
migrate to the Dee mud flats from colder climates.

In the 19th century Flint was a busy port, trading chiefly in lead ore and coal. Once the Chester to Holyhead rail line was opened, manufacturers came from all over to start factories along the Dee. Today Flint is a thriving shopping centre with an open-air market every Friday.

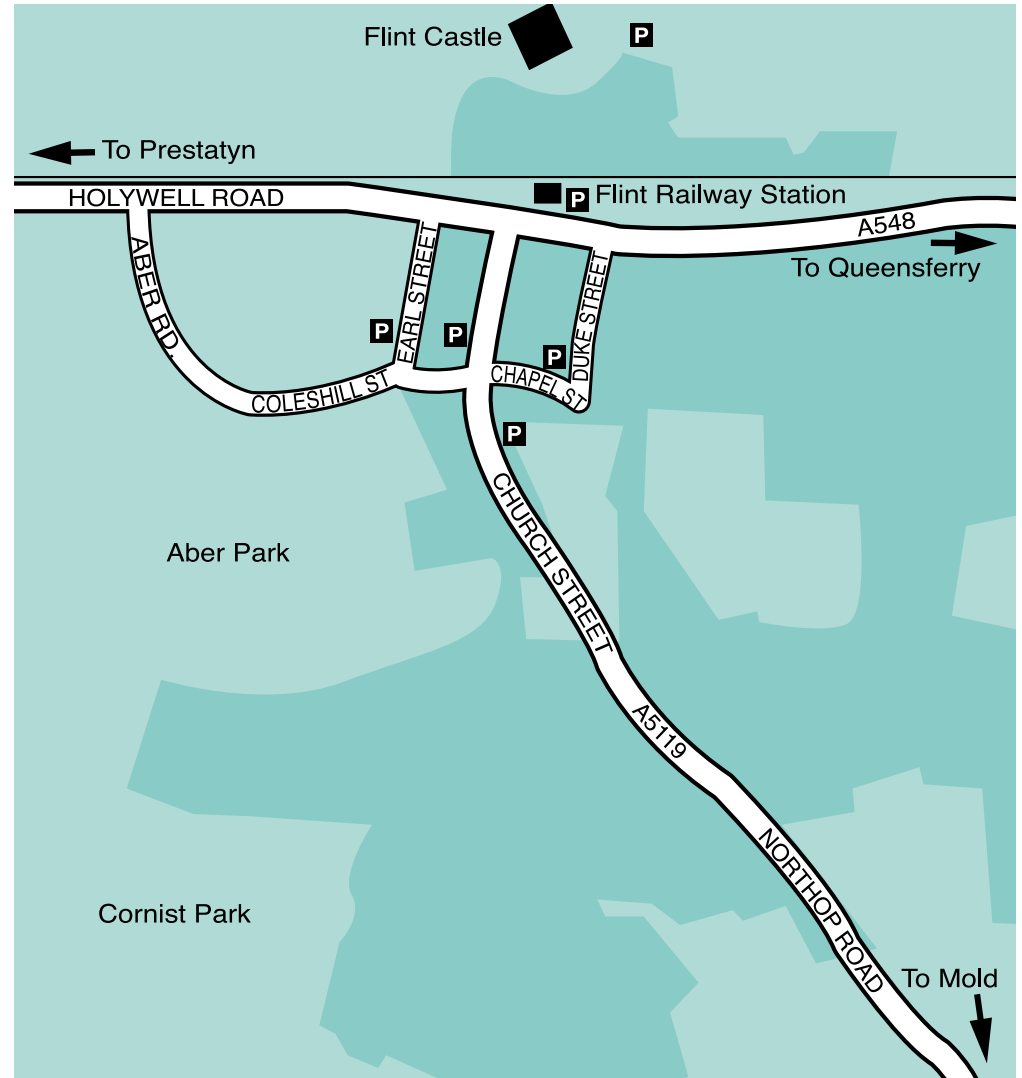
Two miles south of Flint is the village of **Northop**, once a welcome haven on one of the great historic roads of Britain - the London to Holyhead Post Road. In its heyday it contained at least six inns, of which just two remain. Northop has a fine old church originally built by Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. Its magnificent battlemented tower is 98 feet tall.

On top of a hill beyond **Sychdyn** on the outskirts of Mold is Theatr Clwyd Cymru, Wales' leading producing theatre with its bar, gallery, bookshop, recital room and restaurant. Many of Britain's finest actors, including Sir Anthony Hopkins, have trod the boards here in recent years. It is part of the County Hall complex, built on the same architectural lines as the American Embassy in London and containing a county hall, reference library and law courts.

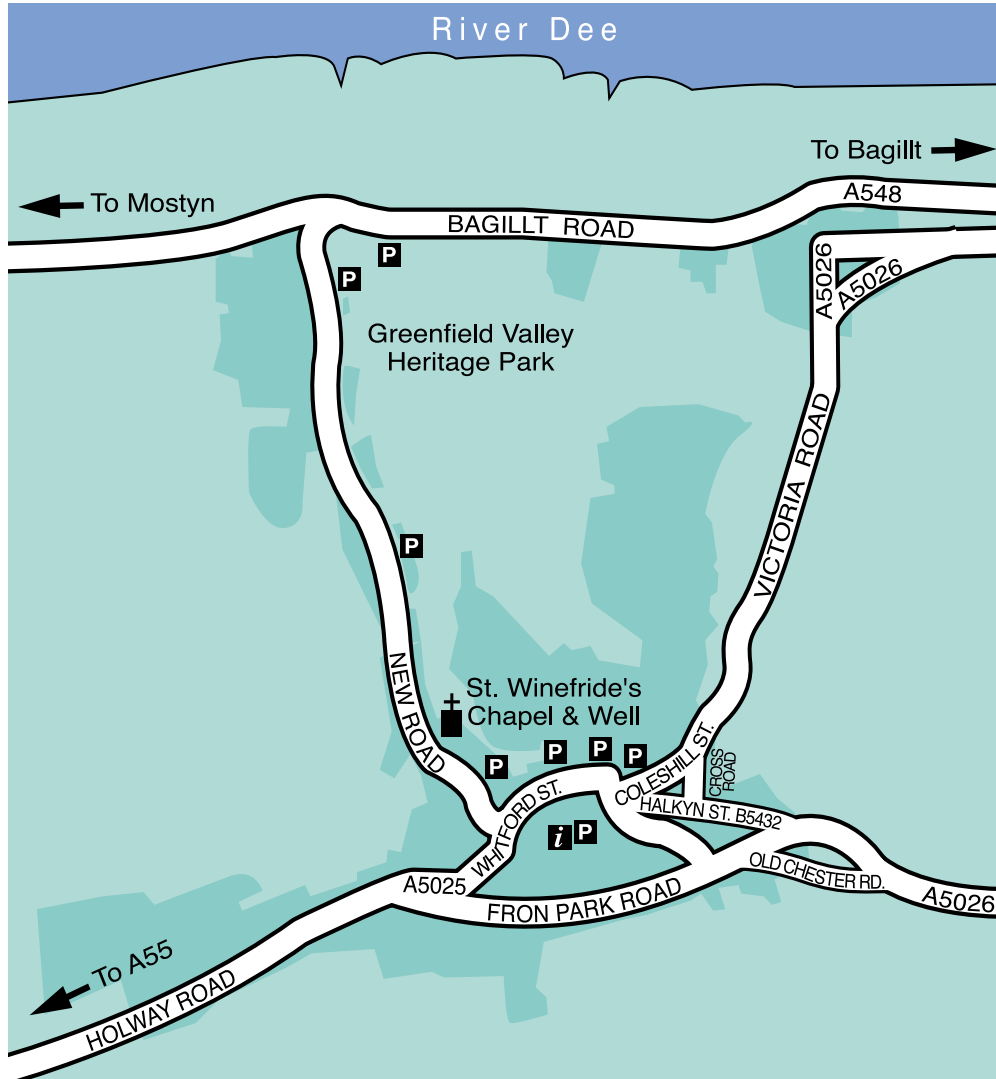
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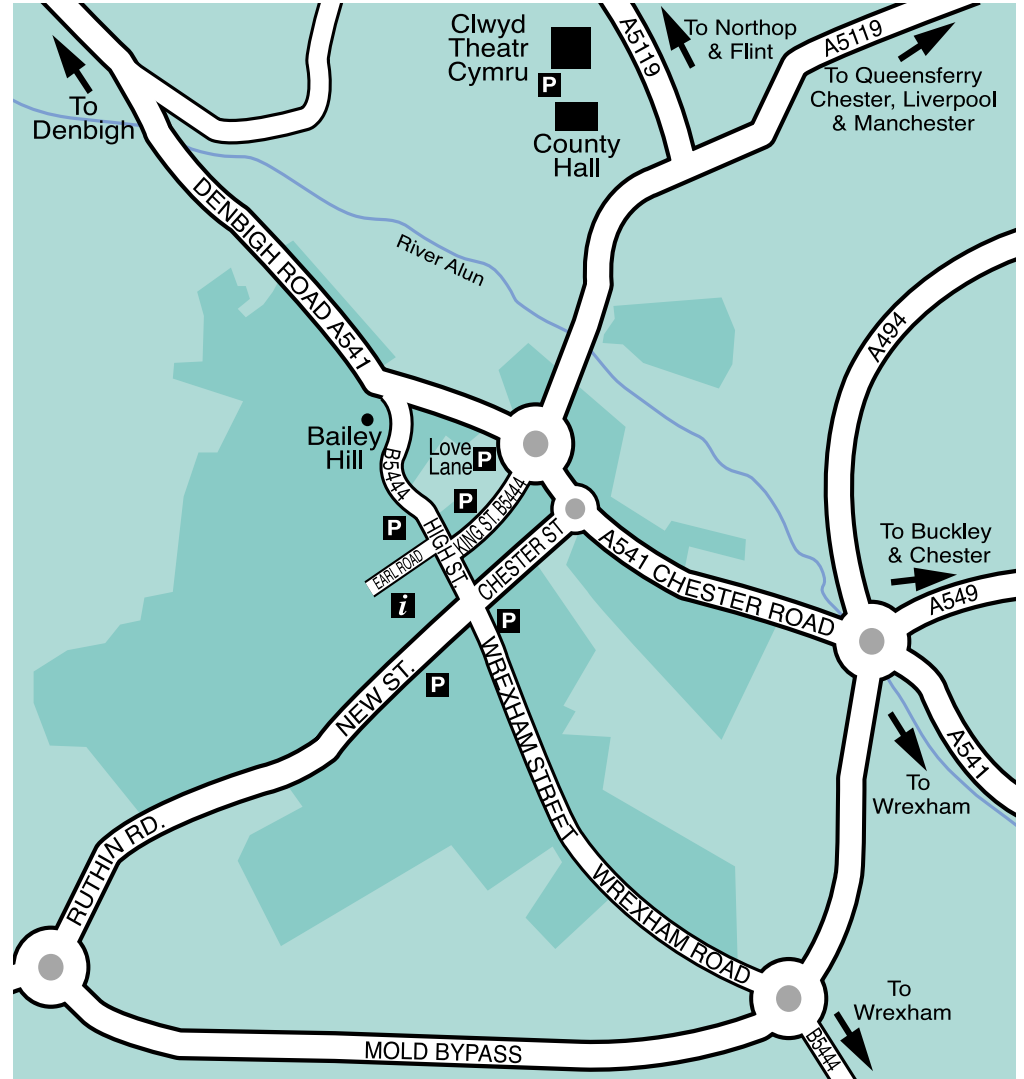
flint



holywell



mold



for more INFORMATION

This guide to the Flintshire Leisure Drive can only give a taste of what Flintshire has to offer.

To book a bed, find a place to eat or earmark a tourist attraction that demands a visit, try one of the following sources of information:

Tourist Information Centre

The Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in Mold offers a warm welcome and a wide range of services. You can book accommodation, theatre or concert tickets and seek advice on a wide range of subjects including places to eat and attractions to visit. It also has lots of free tourist literature on the shelves.

Mold TIC is inside the library on Earl Road. Pop in, call 01352 759331 or email mold@nwtic.com

www.visitflintshire.com

www.visitflintshire.com is the website of the Flintshire Tourism Association, a group of tourism operators including hotels, guest houses, caravan parks, pubs, restaurants and visitor attractions in the county. It contains information about the history and culture of Flintshire and lists of where to stay, where to dine and what to do.

North Wales Borderlands

Flintshire - along with Wrexham County and rural Denbighshire - is part of the North Wales Borderlands. Each year the North Wales Borderlands publishes a major guide to the area which includes listings of accommodation providers (all graded by the Wales Tourist Board, AA or RAC) and tourist attractions.

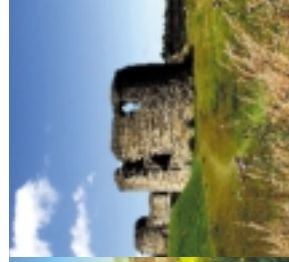
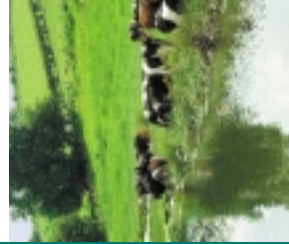
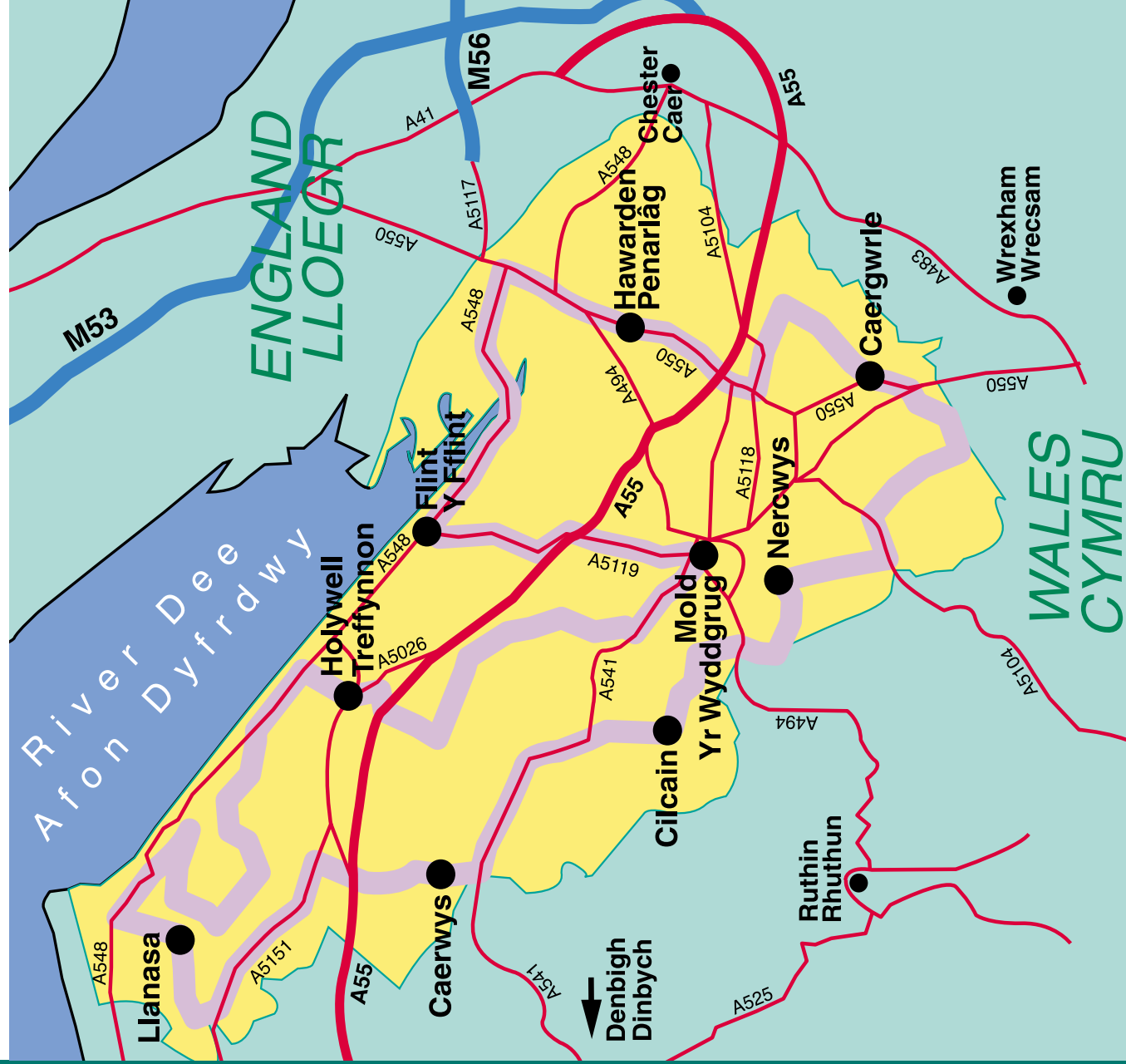
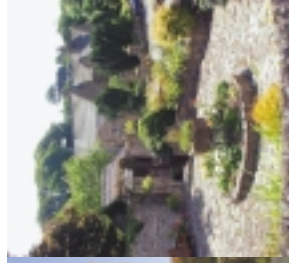
It also publishes a range of specialist booklets on topics including Walking, Countryside Activities, Golf, Castles and Sacred Places.

For copies of this literature, contact the Tourist Information Centre at Mold (see above) or visit www.borderlands.co.uk

acknowledgement

Much of the material in this guide is based on previous tourism literature for Flintshire and the surrounding area, some no longer in print. We would like to acknowledge among others the work of Dr Charles Kightly, Flintshire Tourism Association, Raymond Roberts, Lorna Jenner, Enid White, Michael Griffiths, Michael Durham, Anthony Jones and Jill Ponton.

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