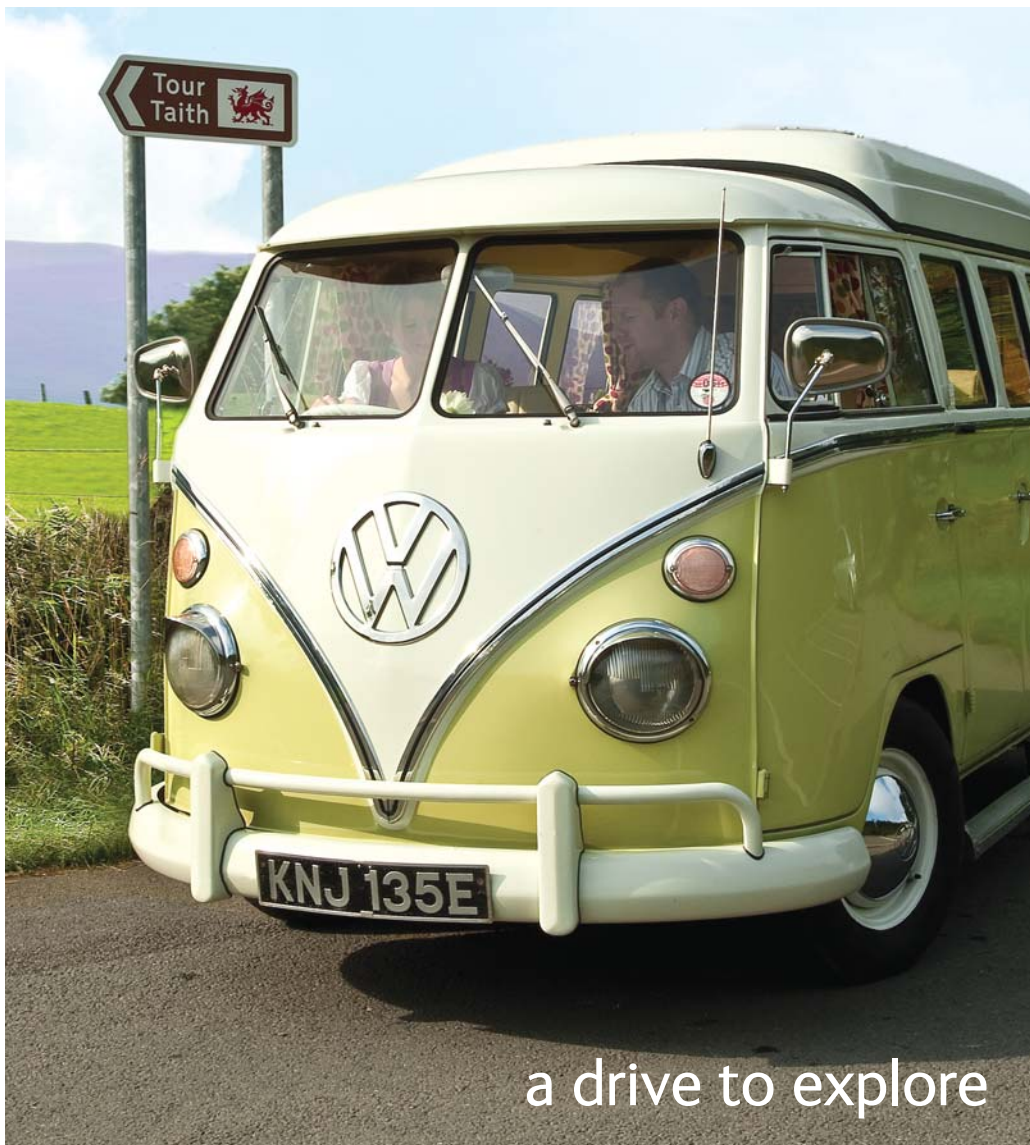


flintshire leisure tour



a drive to explore



Lighthouse at Point of Ayr

credits

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The European Agricultural Fund for
Rural Development: Europe Investing in
Rural Areas



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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flintshire



a drive to explore

Come and join us. It won't take you long. Flintshire is a beautiful Welsh border county that's very handily placed for a day out or short break.

And since you'll be here double quick, you'll have plenty of time to explore. We have rather a beguiling mix of countryside, coastline, market towns and historic attractions.

So many things, in fact, that you won't know where to start. Which is where the Flintshire Leisure Tour comes in.

You'll need a vehicle. One that you'll probably find yourself stopping and parking on a fairly regular basis - because there's a lot to see along the way.

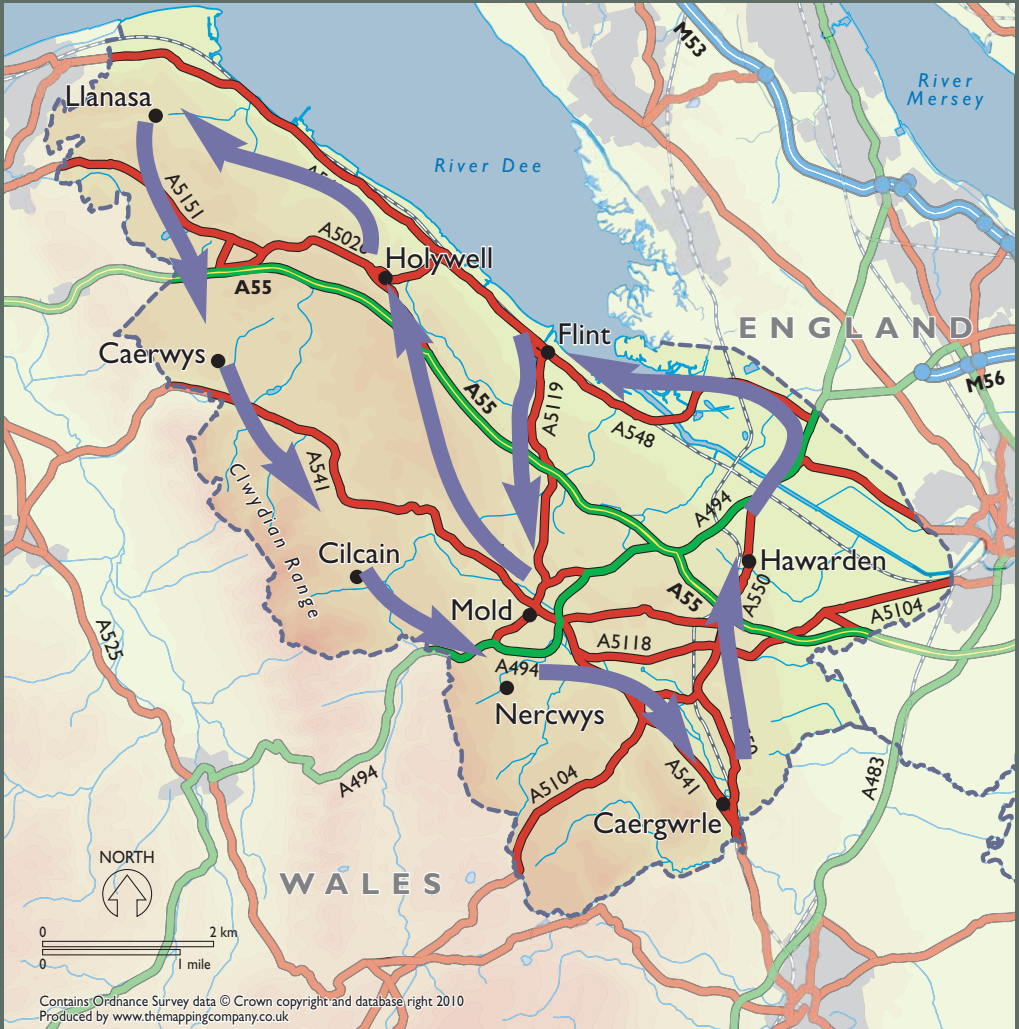
That's why we've broken the 83-mile tour into nine manageable sections. You may find you can only tackle one or two sections in a day. And that's if you stick to the route.

Once you've made the odd detour, done some shopping, had a good pub lunch, wandered around a castle or walked up a hillfort, you may not have made as much progress as you expected.

Shame. You'll just have to book a bed – or a pitch - for the night and start again in the morning. Unless you already live here, of course. The Flintshire Leisure Tour can be a voyage of discovery for residents, too.

For more information or to book a bed call **01352 759331** or email **tour@discoverflintshire.co.uk**

how it works





We recommend you start in Mold, next to this sign. But if you do decide to start elsewhere, it's safer and simpler to drive the route anticlockwise. The same direction as the arrows on the map opposite.



Look out for road signs like this – some people call it “following the dragon”. There are 104 of them in total and each has its own number. We refer to some of these numbers in the text to help you find places of interest or work out where to make a detour.



This booklet also contains maps to help you find your way. There's one for each of the nine sections of the tour. Plus a street plan of all four towns en route. Where you see a blue circle with a number in it, that refers to a particular road sign on the tour.



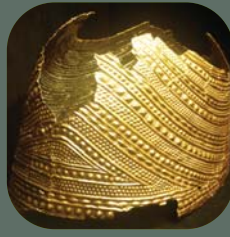
And where you see a red dotted line, that shows the route of the Flintshire Leisure Tour. There. Couldn't be simpler. All we ask is that you drive carefully along our sometimes narrow country roads and through our lovely villages. After all, you wouldn't want to miss anything.



The only way to see it all is to get out of your vehicle – and into your walking boots. Look out for this photograph. It shows where the tour connects with one of 25 Flintshire Rural Walks.

For more information or to book a bed call **01352 759331** or email **tour@discoverflintshire.co.uk**

profile | mold





Main pic: shopping in Mold. Facing pics (left to right): Bailey Hill, Mold market, Mold Gold Cape, St. Mary's Church.

The people of Mold believe slowness is a virtue. You may think they move pretty quickly when they're hunting down a bargain every Wednesday and Saturday in the open-air market.

But Mold wants to be a Slow Town. As part of the international Cittaslow movement, it refuses to join the global rat race that's making every town centre feel the same.

Instead it celebrates what's local and unique. The food and drink, for example, which is so good there's a whole festival devoted to it every September.

Or the history – 4,000 years of it. That's how long ago the fabulous Mold Gold Cape was

laboriously beaten from a single ingot weighing half a kilo.

The British Museum has the original. But you can see a replica of one of the world's great Bronze Age treasures in the museum in Earl Road.

And you can stroll a town trail which includes, at the top of the High Street, the remains of a Norman motte and bailey castle. From the turbulent days when life in Mold was just a little faster than it is now.

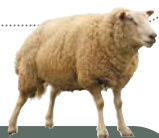
section 1 | mold to holywell

distance | 11 miles

Start: on A541 Denbigh Road, Mold, next to the Love Lane car park. See street plan page 8.
Sat nav: N53.17084°, W3.14102°.

Before you leave: have lunch or do a bit of shopping. Mold has a fine range of shops, restaurants and cafés. Or visit the world-leading Arthurian Collection of books at the County Hall complex (ring 01352 704400 for an appointment). It has more than 2,000 items about King Arthur and Avalon - which some think was on Halkyn Mountain.

En route: romantic wild uplands, shaped by centuries of industry, with stunning views over the Dee Estuary.



look out for:

The sheep on Halkyn common. They've been roaming freely there since medieval times.



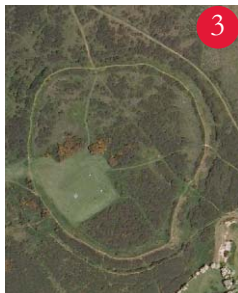
1

Daniel Owen is Wales's Charles Dickens and Mold's most famous son. His statue stands outside the library and museum. Pop inside to find out more about him - or borrow one of his books. See street plan on page 8.



2

If you can find the Valley Works in Rhydymwyn (detour at Tour Sign 1) you'll be doing better than enemy aircraft in World War Two. This chemical weapons factory, now a nature reserve, stayed top-secret throughout the war. Call 01352 741591 to book a visit.



3

The Iron Age hillfort of Moel y Gaer commands spectacular views over the Dee Estuary. So we built a fire beacon there more than 2,000 years later just in case Napoleon decided to invade.





4

The wild, open landscape of Halkyn Mountain Common has reverted to nature after the lead mining and quarrying booms of the 18th and 19th centuries. You can still see relics like shaft craters and horse-whim circles. But you're just as likely to notice the wildflowers and circling buzzards.
www.ccw.gov.uk

5



Flintshire Rural Walk 16 takes you all over Halkyn Mountain. Download it at www.discoverflintshire.co.uk/walks or call 01352 759331 for a copy.

6

Time for a sarnie. This sculpture in Brynford is a tribute to local quarrymen. And the importance of break times in their dusty, noisy day.





Main pic: St Winefride's Well. Facing pics (left to right): inside St Winefride's Well, shopping, historic buildings, High Street.

Never mind one of the Seven Wonders of Wales. St Winefride's Well, which gives Holywell its name, is quite simply unique in the world.

This reputedly healing spring has been a place of unbroken pilgrimage for 1,300 years. It was long-famous by the time King Henry V walked here from Shrewsbury to give thanks for his victory at Agincourt.

According to legend Winefride was beheaded in 660AD by a local chieftain after she spurned his advances – and a spring rose from the spot where her head fell.

All a bit gruesome but don't despair. She was restored to life thanks to the prayers of her

uncle St Beuno and lived another 22 years as a nun.

This being the "Lourdes of Wales", you can bathe in the pool beside the beautiful chapel built by Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII.

And if you haven't brought your swimsuit you can still follow an audio trail through the grounds or visit a museum containing many rare relics. People of all faiths, and no faith, are welcome.

www.holywell-town.co.uk

section 2 | holywell to llanasa

distance | 11.5 miles

Start: next to St Winefride's Well on the B5121 in Holywell. See street plan page 12.

Before you leave: count the listed Georgian and Victorian buildings in Holywell town centre. There are more than 60 of them. With nearly 100 mostly family-run shops. And a market every Thursday in the High Street.

En route: countryside immortalised by Wales's most famous naturalist and the tallest stone wheel cross in Britain, carved a millennium ago.

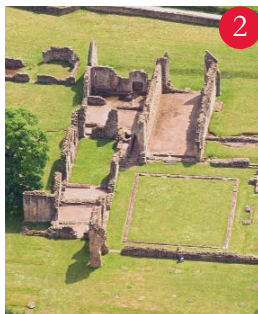
look out for:

The Keeper at Point of Ayr lighthouse. A stainless steel replica of a ghost who haunts the spot.



1

Within 70-acre Greenfield Valley Heritage Park is a very special farm museum. Not only does it contain real live animals. Its combine harvester is among the 10 most important in Britain. And that's official. www.greenfieldvalley.com



2

Basingwerk Abbey was founded in 1132 by Cistercian monks. Now it's a romantic ruin that you can see for free every day. www.cadw.wales.gov.uk



3

A detour at Tour Sign 28 brings you to Nonant and Talacre Dunes Site of Special Scientific Interest. Where you might see rare natterjack toads and Wales's only breeding colony of little terns. Or you could just build a sandcastle and work on your tan.





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4

Naturalist and traveller Thomas Pennant, born in Whitford, was famous enough to be painted by Gainsborough. Now you can retrace five of his local walks - the fourth features the ancient lead-smelting house of Gadlys. www.thomaspennantsociety.com



5

It's 12 feet tall and 1,000 years old. It's one of Britain's finest sculptured stone crosses. And Maen Achwyfan is just standing there in a field near Tour Sign 21.



6



Flintshire Rural Walks 2 and 3 start in Ffynnongroyw and take you through the ancient woodland of Coed y Garth. Download them at www.discoverflintshire.co.uk/walks or call 01352 759331 for a copy.

section 3 | Llanasa to caerwys

distance | 10 miles

Start: in the centre of Llanasa village with the church on the left, opposite Tour Sign 31.

Before you leave: soak up the atmosphere. Llanasa is a perfect example of a small Welsh community virtually untouched by time. It has a fine 17th century gabled house called Henblas, an 18th century inn, tithe barn cottages and a Victorian former school. And the old village pump still stands beside the pond.

En route: Gop Hill, site of Queen Boudica's last battle. Allegedly.



look out for:

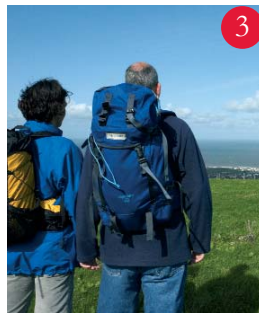
The flowers. Llanasa is famous for its gardens and opens them every year as part of the National Gardens Scheme.



Llanasa parish church contains two spectacular stained glass windows from Basingwerk Abbey. Not to mention the final resting place of Gruffydd Fychan, father of Welsh hero and freedom fighter Owain Glyndwr. Mind your feet. His sepulchral slab is set into the floor near the organ.



Lepers weren't entirely welcome at Gwaenysgor church in the 14th century. But they did have their own tiny window through which they could listen to the service and receive the sacrament. Take a detour at Tour Sign 32 to see it.



Gwaenysgor is 650 feet above sea level. Which is why the vista that opens up from the viewpoint just outside the village is quite so spectacular. It includes a glimpse of North Hoyle, Britain's first offshore wind farm.





4

On top of Gop Hill is a mysterious stone cairn. It may have been a monument to the dead. Or just somewhere to gaze at the stars. What we know for sure is that it's the second-largest prehistoric mound in Britain. And the views, if not the walk up to it, will take your breath away.

www.cpat.org.uk



5



Flintshire Rural Walk 25 takes you from Trelawnyd village, past Gop Hill and along Offa's Dyke Path. Download it at www.discoverflintshire.co.uk/walks or call 01352 759331 for a copy.

profile | caerwys





Main pic: Water Street. Facing pics (left to right): shopping, St Michael's Church, Chapel Street.

Caerwys may be small but it's perfectly formed. So small indeed that the Guinness Book of Records thought it the tiniest town in Great Britain.

And so perfectly formed, with its straight roads crossing each other at right angles, that it provided the model for Philadelphia in Pennsylvania, USA.

(Sir William Penn, founder of Philadelphia, was accompanied to America by Caerwys surgeon Thomas Wynne, who must have bent his ear about its attractions.)

We can thank King Edward I for the fact that Caerwys is a town at all. He granted it his Royal Charter in 1290. Seven hundred years later

Princess Margaret attended the town's anniversary celebrations on behalf of the Queen.

Other monarchs with a soft spot for Caerwys include both Henry VIII and his daughter Elizabeth I. Henry declared it a place for "craftsmen of poetry and music" and Elizabeth proclaimed it "home of the Eisteddfod".

By doing so she enabled local arty types to avoid being lumped together with tramps, footpads, beggars and buskers. And she made Caerwys the natural headquarters of the Welsh bards.

section 4 | caerwys to cilcain

distance | 7 miles

Start: at the top of South Street B5122 in Caerwys at Tour Sign 40. See street plan page 18.

Before you leave: have a pub meal, buy some freshly baked bread or get yourself a haircut. Caerwys promotes itself under the banner “convenient, character, community”. Which means you can expect a warm welcome and a little something for your journey into the bargain.

En route: a village made of limestone leading to one of the biggest Iron Age hillforts in Wales at Penycloddiau.

look out for:

The rare hazel dormice at Y Ddôl Uchaf nature reserve at Ddôl. Or more likely one or two of their nibbled nuts.



Flintshire Rural Walk 1 joins Caerwys with the fishing lakes of Ysceifiog, created by the Earl of Denbigh in 1904. Download it at www.discoverflintshire.co.uk/walks or call 01352 759331 for a copy.

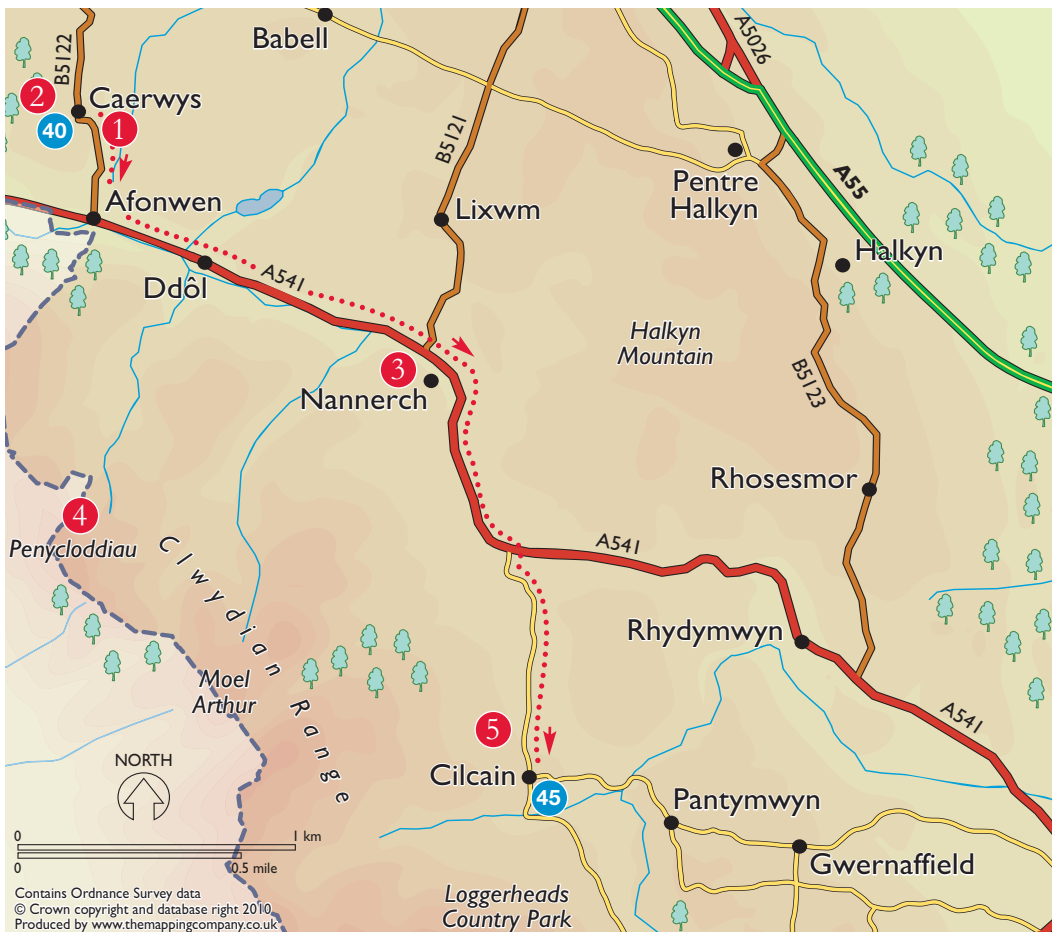


Not content with having two naves, St Michael's Church in Caerwys has a pair of lychgates, too. The south-western one still has an original pre-Reformation tie beam.



Nannerch sits on a bedrock of carboniferous limestone in the wooded valley of the River Wheeler. Which may explain why lots of its buildings are made of limestone. And why it blends so perfectly with its surroundings. Detour right two miles after Tour Sign 41.





The Iron Age hillfort of Penycloddiau is a mystical place. So it might not feel quite right to fish out your mobile phone. But dial into the audio trail there and you can hear voices from the distant past. You may even be inspired to climb Moel Arthur, the hillfort next door, as well. www.heatherandhillforts.co.uk



If you plan to stop in Cilcain, where parking is tight, make a detour to the viewpoint after Tour Sign 44. Ahead of you is Moel Famau - highest point of the Clwydian Range. If that's too daunting, just saunter down to the village.

section 5 | cilcain to nercwys

distance | 9 miles

Start: at the crossroads in the centre of Cilcain next to Tour Sign 45.

Before you leave: wander through the churchyard at Cilcain. You'll be quite safe – it's circular so that no demons could hide in the corners. Then go inside the church to see one of the finest carved oak hammer beam roofs in Wales. The door's open until sunset.

En route: a ruined shepherd's cottage and a mountain that cost nearly half a million pounds to save.

look out for:



The badgers in Cilcain's Millennium Woods. Don't worry, you won't startle them. They're carved from wood.



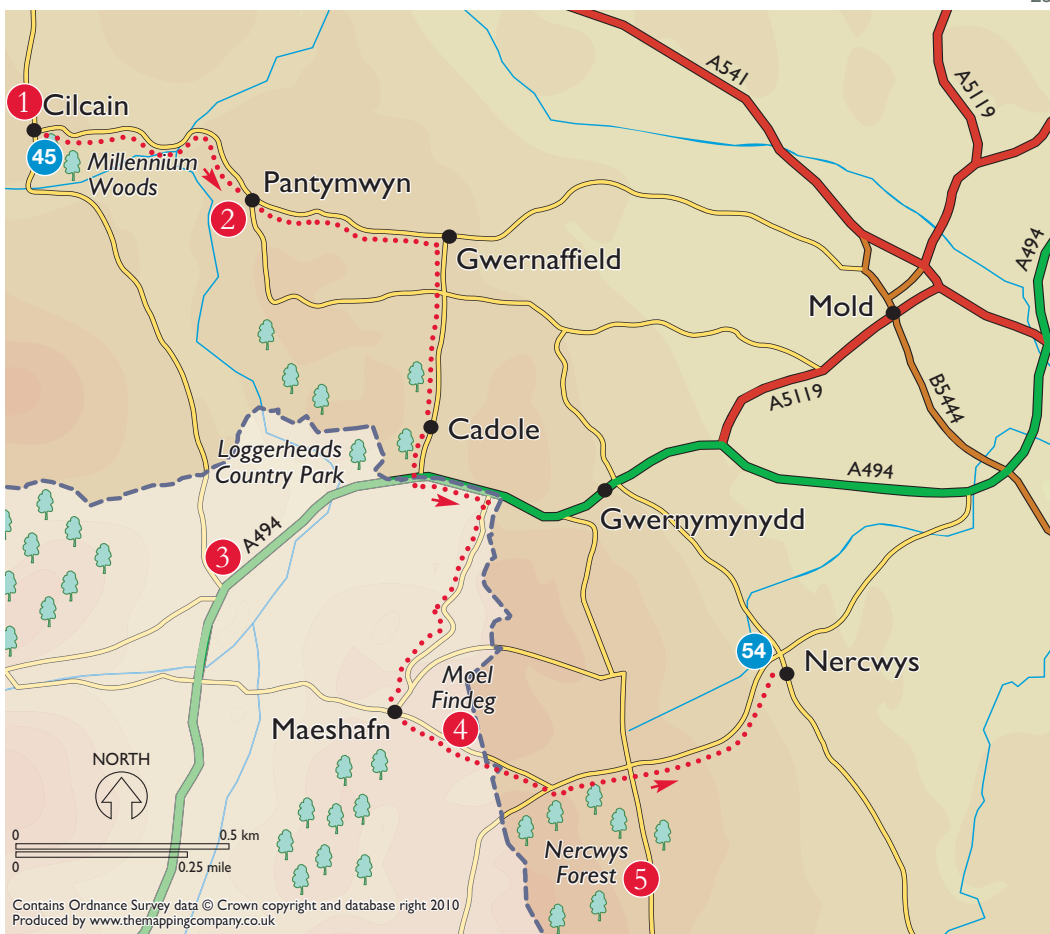
Could you run four very hilly miles in under half an hour? You might win the Moel Famau Mountain Race. It takes place every August Bank Holiday as part of the Cilcain Show, which attracts a crowd of thousands.
www.cilcainshow.org.uk



The clue's in the name. Abseiling 120 feet down the Devil's Gorge can be a fearsome prospect. You could always just watch from the footbridge – then take a stroll along the Leete Path and have a nice cup of tea at Loggerheads Country Park.
www.clwydianrangeaonb.org.uk

Flintshire Rural Walk 19 goes to Cilcain, Walk 20 to Moel Famau and Walk 21 to Moel Findeg. And they all start from Loggerheads Country Park (detour right at Tour Sign 49). Download them at www.discoverflintshire.co.uk/walks or call 01352 759331 for a copy.





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Everybody loves mountains. And the people of Maeshafn loved Moel Findeg enough to help raise £465,000 to buy it and save it from quarrying. Now it's a Local Nature Reserve. www.moelfindeg.co.uk



Detour right after Tour Sign 53 to Nercwys Forest and the evocative ruins of a shepherd's cottage hidden among the trees. The shepherd's long gone. But he would have appreciated the new hay meadow and restored dry stone walls.

section 6 | nercwys to caergrwle

distance | 10 miles

Start: next to Tour Sign 54 on the northern outskirts of Nercwys village.

Before you leave: walk through Nercwys Forest to see the pavement at Bryn Alyn. That's more exciting than it sounds when the pavement is very rare, made of deeply weathered limestone and the second-largest in Wales. So exciting, in fact, that it's a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

En route: a village where the Romans liked to take a hot bath after a hard day's lead mining. A hypocaust was discovered at Ffrith in 1870.



1

In the churchyard of St Mary's at Nercwys you'll find the great Nerquis Hall vault, which encases the remains of local bigwigs in a sarcophagus of white marble. Look out for the "elaborate heraldic cartouches", or carved scrolls to you and me. There's a 1768 sundial, too, in case you've forgotten your watch.

In Victorian times, 450 men were employed to mine coal and iron at Treuddyn (detour left at Tour Sign 56). You'll find reminders of this rich industrial heritage as you stroll nearby Coed Talon Bridleway, a former railway running through a 50-acre nature reserve.
www.treuddyn.org.uk

2



Flintshire Rural Walk 6 starts in Llanfynydd and takes in the remains of the pleasure grounds of now-demolished Nant y Ffrith Hall. Download it at www.discoverflintshire.co.uk/walks or call 01352 759331 for a copy.

3



look out for:

The road signs in Nercwys. A reminder of the day in 1956 when the village decided to stop calling itself Nerquis and revert to the original Welsh name.





Settled by the Romans, crossed by Offa's Dyke and a centre for 19th century lead mining, Ffrith is packed with archaeological treasures. Channel 4's Time Team has joined forces with the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust to create an interactive map of the village. www.cpat.org.uk



The rare packhorse bridge in Cymau Road dates from at least the mid-18th century and may even be medieval. At any rate it's a Scheduled Ancient Monument. And it's skewed. Which means it crosses the River Cegidog at an angle.

section 7 | caergwrle to hawarden

distance | 8 miles

Start: opposite Caergwrle railway station, shortly after Tour Sign 66.

Before you leave: walk across the 17th century packhorse bridge in Fellows Lane, Caergwrle. It was built with low walls to allow for the horses' bulging side packs. And don't worry if you see a horse coming. You can wait in one of the special V-shaped bays for it to pass.

En route: the oldest church in Flintshire and a village with curiously divided loyalties.

look out for:



Fly agaric, a toadstool which grows in the acidic soil around Caergwrle Castle. Don't touch it, though. It's poisonous and hallucinogenic.



1

Caergwrle Castle was begun in 1277 by Dafydd ap Gruffudd and used as a base for his war against Edward I. For his trouble he became the first nobleman to be hanged, drawn and quartered in England.

Within living memory, Caergwrle was a thriving spa town. In its heyday the now defunct spa at Rhyddyn Hall produced 14,000 bottles of saline fizz every day. Very good for "purging", apparently.

2



Flintshire Rural Walk 14 between Caergwrle and Hope includes part of Wat's Dyke Way, a 61-mile linear trail from Shropshire to Holywell. Download it at www.discoverflintshire.co.uk/walks or call 01352 759331 for a copy.

3





4

Hope Mountain may be 1,080 feet tall. But you can drive most of the way up and park at Waun y Llyn Country Park. A five-minute stroll and you can see as far as the mountains of Snowdonia. Detour left at Hope.



5



Hope Parish Church is the oldest in Flintshire, dating from 1180. And it was beginning to show its age. The £500,000 restoration in 2000 should keep it going for another millennium or so.

6

The villagers of Higher Kinnerton have to leave the country to visit Lower Kinnerton, a mile down the road in England. No passports are required.



section 8 | hawarden to flint

distance | 10.5 miles

Start: at the T-junction in the centre of Hawarden at Tour Sign 79.

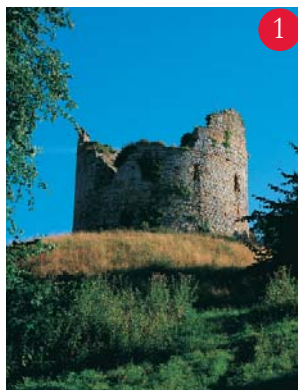
Before you leave: open the door in the mighty battlemented gate in the centre of Hawarden village and step through. Marvel at the views over Bilberry Wood. And take a short stroll, courtesy of the Gladstone family, for a glimpse of the ruined medieval castle on its prehistoric earthwork embankments.

En route: our record-breaking bridge. Who would have thought an inverted Y-pylon 118 metres tall could be so beautiful?



look out for:

The bats in Wepre Park. On certain dusky summer evenings you can join bat walks and use detectors to hear their sonic squeaks.



1

Hawarden has two castles. The Georgian mansion, private home of statesman William Gladstone and his descendants, is called the New Castle. And the 13th century ruin is, oddly enough, called the Old Castle.



2

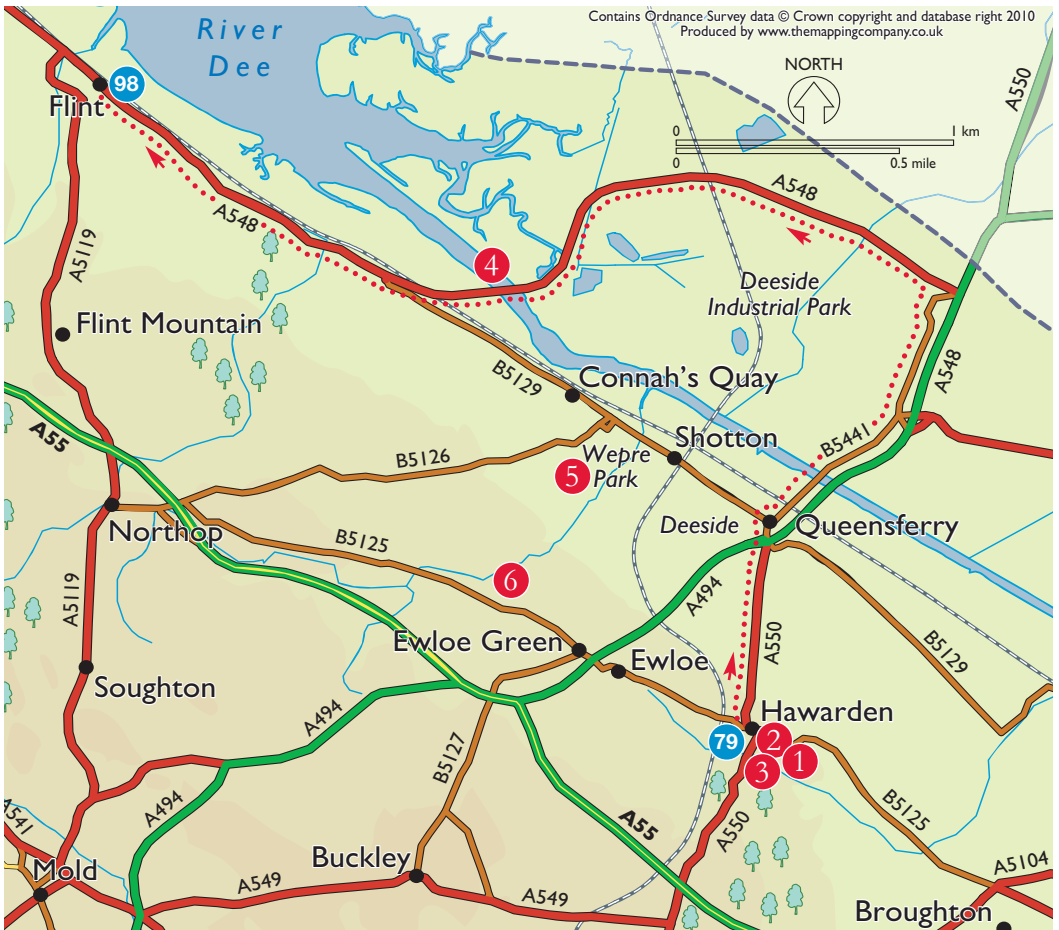
The Gladstone Library at Hawarden was founded by four-times Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone. With 32,000 of his own books. Now it's the National Memorial to his life and work. www.st-deiniols.com

Flintshire Rural Walk 4 is a five-mile circular route through Hawarden village and surrounding woodland. Download it at www.discoverflintshire.co.uk/walks or call 01352 759331 for a copy.



3





4

Welcome to the iconic image of Flintshire. With a span of 200 metres the £40 million Dee Crossing is the largest asymmetric cable-stayed bridge in Britain. And all around you is Deeside Industrial Park, one of the biggest in Europe.



5



Wepre Park has 160 acres of ancient woodland. It has pools, waterfalls and wildflower meadows. And it has a pet cemetery containing Rector the dog, who was shot because he "ate without stint lamb without mint". It's worth the detour at Tour Sign 96. www.flintshire.gov.uk/countryside

6

In 1257 Llewelyn the Last built "a castle in the corner of the wood". Ewloe Castle is still there. Still surrounded by trees. And less than a mile from the Wepre Park car park.



profile | flint





Main pic: cycling at Flint. Facing pics (left to right): riverside walk, Town Hall, the "Footplate" sculpture, Flint Castle.

This is where it all began. In 1277 medieval Europe's most ambitious building project started here at Flint.

King Edward I was known as Longshanks because he was so tall. The Welsh probably had a few other names for him when he began a campaign to crush their independence with an "iron ring" of castles along the North Wales coast.

It included the World Heritage Sites at Conwy, Caernarfon, Harlech and Beaumaris. But Flint Castle was the first.

It took 2,300 men just seven years to build. And it's still there, brooding spectacularly beside the Dee Estuary.

Brian Fell's sculpture entitled "Footplate" may not have quite the same gravitas. But it generated a little shock and awe of its own when it was installed in 1999 at the nearby railway station.

As you'd expect from a steel foot that's 11-foot high. A bike chain protruding from its hollow ankle, it celebrates Flint's vital place in the National Cycling Network. From one Longshanks to another, you might say.

section 9 | flint to mold

distance | 10.5 miles

Start: in Flint at Tour Sign 98 where Church Street joins the A548. See street plan page 30.

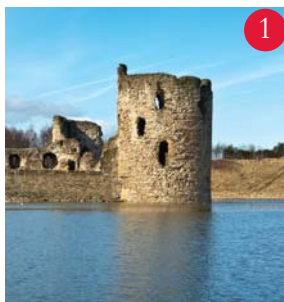
Before you leave: wander the streets of Flint. Even today they follow the grid pattern of the bastide, or fortified town, created by Edward I in the 13th century. It's a busy shopping centre now. With an open-air market every Friday in Market Square off Holywell Road.

En route: “the nearest thing to a National Theatre of Wales”, according to the Sunday Times. It's on a hilltop above Mold.



look out for:

Little egrets and spoonbills. Or at least an oystercatcher. The Dee Estuary is one of Britain's best spots for wading birds.



1

Flint Castle was built by Edward I, painted by Turner and described by Shakespeare. Fish out your camera and immortalise it some more.

Flint is slap bang on National Cycle Route 5. Which means you can ride east to Chester along the banks of the River Dee - or start pedalling west along the North Wales coast. Stop when you get to Holyhead, though, or you'll get very wet. www.sustrans.org.uk

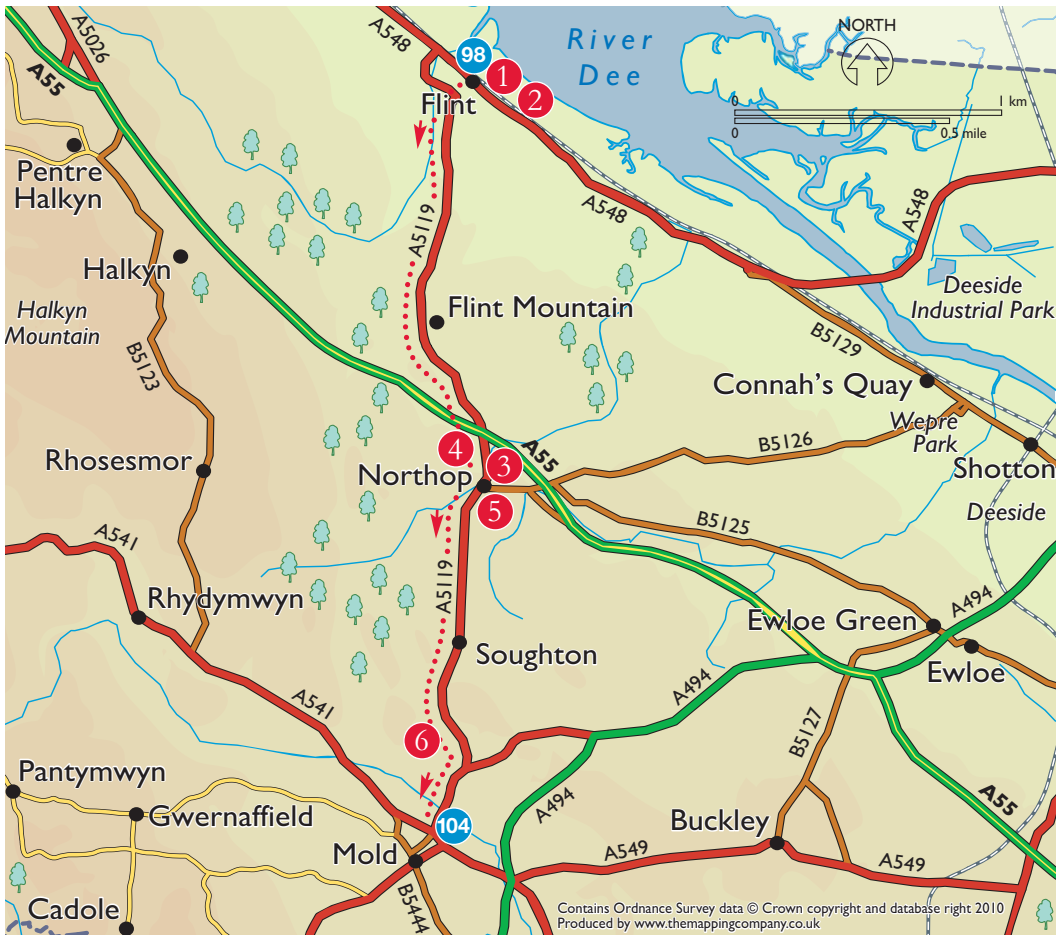
2



3

The battlemented tower of St Eurgain and St Peter's Church in Northop is 98-foot tall. That's about the height of seven double-decker buses. No wonder it's one of Flintshire's landmarks.





4

Northop used to have seven pubs when it was a staging post on the London to Holyhead mail route. Back then Plymouth House was called The Yacht. It's since featured on BBC2's House Detectives. And it's part of a heritage trail around the village. www.northop.org.uk

5



Flintshire Rural Walk 7 from Northop to Soughton offers glimpses of two historic houses – Gwsaney Hall and Soughton Hall. Download it at www.discoverflintshire.co.uk/walks or call 01352 759331 for a copy.

6

Clwyd Theatr Cymru is the leading producing theatre in Wales. It also has a cinema, art gallery, recital room, book shop and restaurant. Not to mention a bar with a view that's a performance in itself. www.clwyd-theatr-cymru.co.uk



directory

Tourist Information

You may not be able to see the whole of Flintshire in a day. But don't worry, it will still be there next morning. The Tourist Information Centre in Mold will help you book a bed. And answer just about any question you might have. 01352 759331, www.flintshire.gov.uk/tourism

Cycling

Pedal power is a great way to get around the county. From Flint you can ride to Chester on National Route 5 and come back along the banks of the River Dee on Regional Route 89. Or you can follow the North Wales coastline all the way to Holyhead. www.sustrans.org.uk

Offa's Dyke National Trail

This epic path passes through eight counties on its 177-mile journey from Sedbury Cliffs near Chepstow to Prestatyn. And one of them is Flintshire. www.nationaltrail.co.uk/offasdyke

Wat's Dyke Way

Sixth century Wat's Dyke is even older than Offa's Dyke but a little less famous. Possibly because no one knows who Wat was. This 61-mile trail follows his mysterious handiwork from Shropshire to Basingwerk Abbey at Holywell. www.watsdykeway.org

Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

One of just five AONBs in Wales, this landscape of heather-clad uplands crowned with a series of Iron Age hillforts is shared between Flintshire and neighbouring Denbighshire. www.clwydianrangeaonb.org.uk

Discover Flintshire

Flintshire's tourism website, hosted by Flintshire Tourism Association, tells you all you need to know about the history and culture of the county. And there are lists of where to stay, where to dine and what to do. www.discoverflintshire.co.uk

For more information or to book a bed call **01352 759331** or email **tour@discoverflintshire.co.uk**