

Discover

# Northop



# Welcome to Northop

This attractive village owes its development and prosperity to its strategic location in the borderlands of Wales and England, on high, flat land overlooking the coast, within easy reach of the city of Chester and the North Wales towns. It has been a place of some significance for well over a thousand years.

Tegeingl, as ancient Flintshire was known, was disputed territory for centuries, changing hands several times. Wat's Dyke runs through the parish and was probably built to mark the boundary between the Saxons and the Welsh-controlled lands to the west.

Later, Northop was the site of a Medieval Llys, a fortified palace and court of Welsh nobility. Most notable of these was King Edwin of Tegeingl who fought against the Norman invasion of Wales. It was once again at the forefront of battle during Edward I's campaign against the Welsh Princes to gain control of Wales, and later during Owain Glyndŵr's revolt and during the Civil Wars of the 17th century.

Since ancient times, important transport routes have run through the parish including a Roman Road linking Chester and St Asaph, pilgrims' routes, drovers' tracks and packhorse routes. The stream of travellers brought trade and wealth to the village. The opening of the London to Holyhead Post Road with Northop as a staging post brought

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further prosperity to the village and it grew considerably during the 17th century.

Little industry developed within the parish itself although some locals would have worked in nearby Halkyn mines and quarries or the brickworks and collieries of Buckley. Coal, metal ore and bricks would have been transported through the village until the railways opened and took trade away.

Wealthy local landowners have had a considerable influence on the village, particularly the Bankes family of Soughton Hall who were generous benefactors. The prosperity and importance of the village is reflected in the grandeur of Northop church, which has been lavishly endowed by local businessmen and gentry.

The parish has always been rural in character, mainly gently rolling farmland edged by thick hedgerows with pockets of woodland and elegant parkland with mature trees.

Northop continues to thrive today. The close proximity of the modern A55 trunk road ensures that it continues to be accessible to major cities to the east and the North Wales coast. Its historic village centre, now bypassed by the main roads, remains peaceful and picturesque. Several shops and local businesses are flourishing and its cricket club and silver band are renowned across North Wales and beyond.

This booklet has been produced by the local community to celebrate the rich cultural and natural heritage of the area. Many thanks to all who have provided photographs or shared their memories and knowledge.

The booklet can also be downloaded from [www.cadwynclwyd.co.uk](http://www.cadwynclwyd.co.uk) or [www.flintshire.gov.uk/tourism](http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/tourism)



# Through the ages

**48-400**

Roman soldiers marching from Chester into Wales probably came through Northop.



**1066**

King Edwin, a Welsh nobleman, lived at Llys Edwin, Northop and fought against the Norman invaders.



**Circa 550**

St Eurgain reputedly founded the first church at Northop.



**Circa 780**

Wat's Dyke built. Remnants of this earth bank that ran through Sychdyn and Northop can still be seen today.



**1300s**

The earliest parts of the present church date from this period.



**1608**

The old Grammar School built.

**1602**

Northop became an important staging post on the newly opened London to Holyhead Post Road.



**1714-27**

Soughton Hall built.



**1839-40**

Northop Church rebuilt.



**1823**

Northop National School opened.



**1892**

Northop Band established.

**1955**

First courses ran at Flintshire Horticultural Institute.

**1974**

New school, Ysgol Owen Jones, opened.

**1869**

Northop Cricket Club established.



**1932**

Edith Bankes Memorial Institute built.



**2000**

Millennium celebrations included the installation of an Analematic Dial in front of the Institute and publication of the 'The Pride of Northop'.



# Border country

The Northop area has had a turbulent past due to its location on the border of Wales and England. Successive waves of invaders from England sought to take Welsh lands and ownership of the area changed several times.

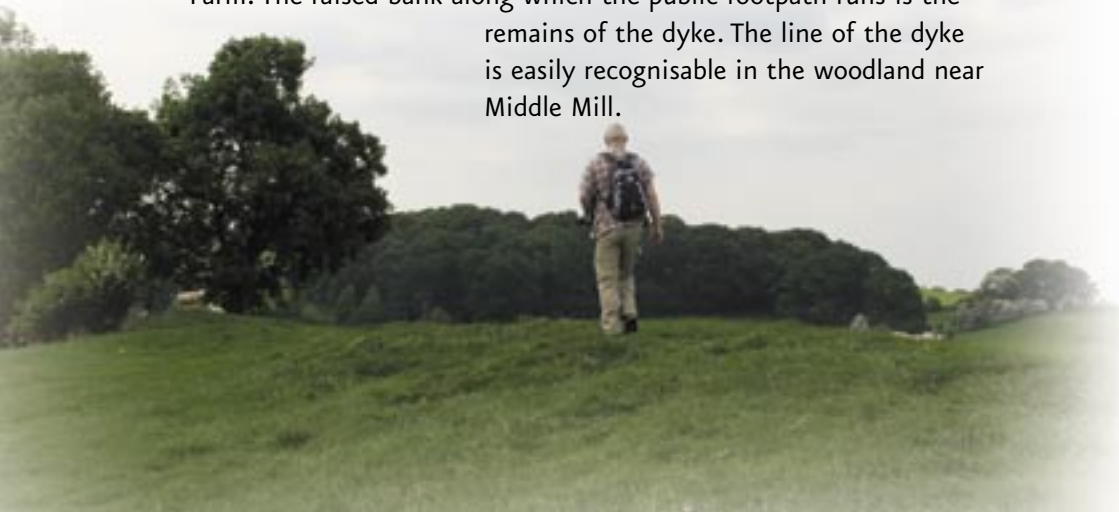
A powerful reminder of the area's early borderland history is Wat's Dyke. This tall bank, with a ditch on its western side, may have been dug in the 8th century for the Saxon rulers of Mercia, to protect their boundary with North Wales. The dyke ran from marshland south of Oswestry, to Wrexham, along the eastern side of the Alyn Valley to Basingwerk Abbey at Holywell. Construction of the dyke was no mean undertaking as it was, on average, a little over 8m wide at its base. It was mainly composed of soil strengthened with turf layers. Pete Lewis, author of the Wat's Dyke Way guidebook, suggests it may have taken one hundred men approximately a year to build the 65km dyke! A well-preserved section of the dyke remains to the north of Soughton Farm. The raised bank along which the public footpath runs is the remains of the dyke. The line of the dyke is easily recognisable in the woodland near Middle Mill.



Wat's Dyke Way Heritage Trail, a 61 mile (99km) walk, from Llanymynech in Shropshire, to Holywell, is based on the course of Wat's Dyke and passes through Sychdyn and Northop. ([www.watsdykeway.org](http://www.watsdykeway.org))

Llys Edwin, a Medieval Welsh palace, was located 1km west of the village. Little remains of it today but it was once an important fortified residence. At the time of the Norman Conquest it was the home of the influential King Edwin the First of Tegeingl who joined forces with the Cestrians fight against the invading Normans. By 1071 he was defeated and the Normans took control of the area. His descendants continued to fight and the land changed hands several times, with two major battles taking place within three miles of Llys Edwin. It was rebuilt in stone at the beginning of the 13th century and would have been far bigger than its sister castle at Ewloe. However, soon after it was besieged by English forces and was badly damaged and the family left the ruins to live in a smaller stone building nearby.

The end of the House of Edwin came during Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion. Lord of Llys Edwin, Hwyl Gwynedd, a cousin of Glyndŵr and in charge of the rebellion in Tegeingl, was ambushed and beheaded on Moel-y-Gaer at Rhosesmor.



# Travelling through

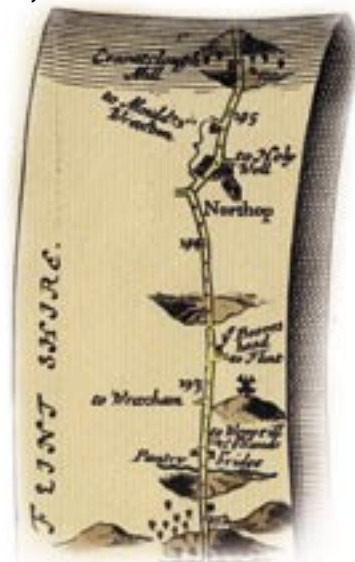
Northop has been a stopping point for travellers for centuries. Important east-west routes have crossed the parish since the earliest times. Numerous Medieval pilgrims would have passed through en route to St Winefride's Well at Holywell or further afield to Bardsey.

The village was a stopping point on an important Tudor trade route linking the River Dee at Chester to inland Wales. Pack-horse trains of between six and thirty mules, laden with heavy panniers, would have passed regularly through the village. A pack-horse bridge still remains in the woods below Middle Mill.

At the turn of the 17th century, this route became part of the London-Holyhead Post Road. At first, the Royal

Mail was carried by post boys on horseback, but these were later replaced by stagecoaches. Between 1785 and 1808, the Royal Mail coaches called daily at the Red Lion Inn, collecting the mail from the Post Master who lived next door, and giving passengers a brief refreshment stop. Speed was imperative; the guard was fined if the mail was delayed.

A consortium of innkeepers between Chester and Holyhead ran other passenger coaches, offering accommodation and refreshments along the route. Many also



rented teams of horses so that wealthy travellers could travel quickly. Plymouth House was formerly a coaching inn, known as The Yacht, which belonged to the consortium. Many others travelled on

foot, horseback or by horse and cart. There were seven inns in Northop serving the travellers. Those using The Boot watered their horses in Northop Brook, which runs behind the pub.

Most early roads became rutted and impassable in bad weather and they deteriorated further as the number of heavily laden, wheeled vehicles increased. In the 18th century, Turnpike Trusts were set up to improve and maintain important roads, charging users tolls to pay for road maintenance.

The Post Road lost importance in the early 1800s when the coastal route was replaced by Thomas Telford's new A5, which ran inland through Betws-y-coed. More recently, between the 1970s and 2000s, the A5 was extensively upgraded through to Holyhead becoming the major trunk road it is today. In 1989, as part of this work, the Northop by-pass was opened ensuring the village remained peaceful but highly accessible.



Northop churchyard toll-gate (the road was much narrower than it is today)

# Working the land

Until the late 20th century, much of the land was owned by one of the two large estates of Soughton Hall and Gwasaney and the farms were tenanted.

The Bankes family built four farmhouses, Parkgate, Ty'n-y-Caeau, Greenbank and Rhosychellis, in the mid 19th century. All are built from local sandstone and to a similar design. Parkgate farmhouse and barn originally stood where the village car park is now located but were carefully demolished stone by stone and rebuilt on their present site in 1863, possibly to make way for road improvements.

In the 19th century most farms were mixed, growing cereals and other crops, such as turnips, beans and potatoes, and keeping milking cows as well as sheep, a couple of pigs, and a few chickens. Each farm took their cereals to be ground at the local mills. Gradually farming patterns have changed as farms became mechanised and more specialised. Much of the estate land was sold off in the 20th century and many farmers became freeholders.

Until the Second World War, many local farms still used horses to pull machinery. The

blacksmith was an important figure in the village, essential not only for shoeing the farm horses but also for repairing farm machinery and sharpening tools. Work declined following the gradual replacement of working horses by tractors. The smithy closed in 1978, following the retirement of the last blacksmith, Bill Jones, but the old smithy is still clearly recognisable on the High Street.



For many years after the Second World War, the Norththop Agricultural Show was an important event in the village calendar. It was held on what is now the golf course and continued showing livestock until 1960s.

*"My father had a small dairy herd at our farm on Flint Mountain. We used to deliver our milk to Norththop and Flint in an old Morris 14 car with a board on the back to carry the milk crates. We started milking at 4.00am, then my father would set off to Norththop on the milk round while I finished milking."*

Harry Hughes

Norththop has a long association with horticultural education. In the 1940s, Flintshire County Council bought Celyn Farm on the outskirts of Norththop, and built a Horticultural Institute on part

of the land, running courses in horticulture and agriculture, farm and farmhouse crafts, and agricultural engineering. In 1972, it was renamed the Welsh College of Horticulture and pioneered floristry education. Landscape courses, environmental courses, green keeping, equine studies and animal care were also offered. It merged with Deeside College in 2009, making it part of one of the largest colleges in Wales. It is now known as Norththop College and includes part of Glyndŵr University.





# Church and chapel

**N**orthop church, dedicated to St Eurgain and Saint Peter, is Listed Grade 1 as an exceptionally fine Perpendicular church. Its beautiful tower is thought to be one of the finest late Medieval church towers in Wales, along with those of Mold, Gresford and Wrexham. Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, bequeathed money for the tower and her family crest adorns the church door.

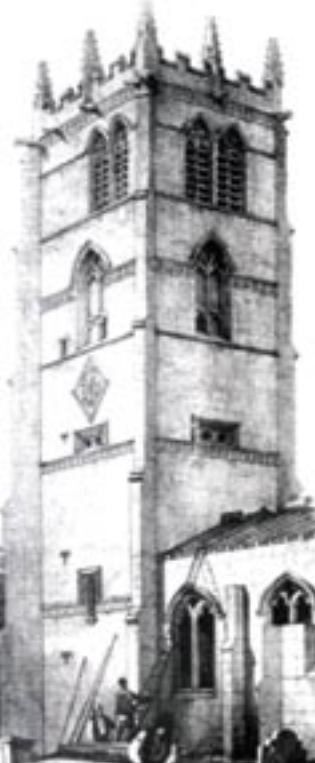
It may have early Christian origins, as St Eurgain, the niece of the Bishop of St Asaph, reputedly came here from Cilcain in the sixth century and established a Christian settlement. However, the earliest written references to the church are in taxation documents of 1254 and 1271. The church at that time was much smaller but was extended in the 14th century.

Four 14th century stone effigies thought to be from the coffins of Welsh gentry are preserved in special niches in the north wall. One is a lady and the others are knights in armour, including one known as the 'fat knight' for obvious reasons!

During the 18th century the church was neglected and deteriorated so badly that it was condemned in a surveyor's report of 1806. The nave and chancel were rebuilt in 1839-40, keeping to the style of the original building, and the interior was restored in 1877.

The church interior is lavishly endowed with superb stained glass windows, numerous brass and marble plaques and monuments to wealthy benefactors, particularly the Bankes family.

The church choir flourished in the 20th century, initially just for boys but later, open to all. It introduced numerous Northop youngsters to singing and is still going today and would welcome new members.



By the end of the 18th century not everyone was happy to worship in the parish church. Itinerant preachers were drawing large crowds and this simpler, Non-conformist worship appealed to many local people.

Richard Harrison's weaver's cottage was the original meeting place of the Methodist Society in Northop, formally registered in December 1799. Support grew and, in 1840, the Northop Wesleyan Chapel was built at Five Ways. The building was condemned before the Second World War and worshippers moved to the Congregational church. The original chapel has since been converted into houses.

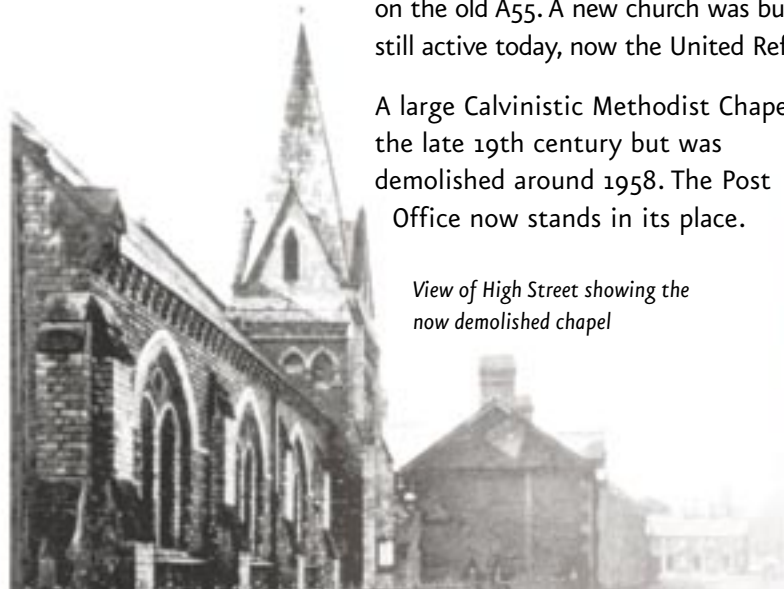


*The first Congregational Chapel*

The first English Congregational Chapel was built in 1879 but was demolished to make way for the by-pass on the old A55. A new church was built in 1932 and is still active today, now the United Reformed Church.

A large Calvinistic Methodist Chapel was built in the late 19th century but was demolished around 1958. The Post Office now stands in its place.

*View of High Street showing the now demolished chapel*



*"Singing in the church choir as a young boy gave me a lasting love of choral and church music."*

David Williams (Northop choir member)



*Richard Harrison's cottage.*

# Community spirit

The community have often worked together organising celebrations involving the whole village. National events, such as Royal Jubilees, weddings and coronations were commemorated with great enthusiasm along with annual carnivals and church fetes. The community continue to be active today, organising a range of well-attended events, including the annual Christmas Fair and pantomime.

As the community grew, many local clubs and groups formed, with something for all ages and interests. One of the oldest is the Northop Silver Band that formed in 1892. It was originally just for men but widened to include boys and is now a mixed band.

From the early days, the band was very successful and is now one of the top bands in Britain, regularly winning prizes, including the Brass Bands Competition at the 2007 National Eisteddfod in Mold. There are now three bands, including a junior band, based at the purpose-built band room alongside the village car park.

*"In Northop as a youngster, you first had a cricket bat thrust into your hand, followed, at 11 years of age, by a cornet. I am grateful for having had both."*

John Pemberton (born 1943)



*Pageant to celebrate the Festival of Britain, 1951*



Sport has also played a big part in village life since the late 19th century. Northop Cricket Club is one of the oldest in Flintshire, founded in 1869. It continues to thrive today, one of the top teams in North Wales with three adult teams and four junior teams. Football was also popular and old photographs show there was already a team in 1908. In the 1920s Sir John Eldon Bankes donated a games field for cricket and football and the two clubs shared the ground for many years with both sports attracting large crowds of supporters. Northop Cricket Club continues to use this ground today.

The Bowling Club behind the Institute continues to be well-supported, and golf enthusiasts are well-provided for at Northop Country Park Golf Club. For several decades, the former Westminster Working Men's Social Club on the High Street was a popular meeting place and a venue for concerts and dances. Many groups met in the Memorial Hall and it is still well-used today. Groups range from the Mother's Union, the Women's Institute, the British Legion and the Northop 2000 Committee to Guides, Brownies, Playgroup, Mother and Toddler group, badminton, keep fit, junior karate and yoga.



*Victorian Day, celebrating the centenary of the Northop Silver Band*





## Daily life

Before widespread car ownership, few people travelled far from their homes and the village was much more self-sufficient than it is today. Locals could buy everything they needed in the village, without having to go to Mold or Flint. A visit to the shops was also a social outing, meeting friends and catching up on village news.

*"My granny ran a general store and newsagents on the High Street that seemed to sell everything. It is now a private house called Ty Ann."*

Margaret Williams (née Pierce)

The High Street was a busy place, with the Co-op in the middle and numerous smaller shops along its length. It had a butchers, a general store, a hat shop and haberdashers, a chip shop, a cobblers, the Post Office and even a branch of the Midland Bank. The present antique shop was another general store and Brookfield Garage, on the opposite side of the road, has been running since the 1940s.

Many residents remember Jimmy the butcher who took over the shop from his father in 1943 and ran it for almost 50 years. He was renowned, not only for his banter with customers, but also his kindness. Customers who could not get to the pharmacy in Flint could collect prescriptions from his shop and he always gave every visiting child a sliver of ham!



## School days

The first school in the village was the Free Grammar School for boys that opened in 1609. It was the idea of George Smyth, Chancellor of St Asaph, who bequeathed money to support the running of the school. The small school, which was probably one of the first such schools in Flintshire, was built in the churchyard and the old building still stands today.

The building deteriorated and, as the population grew, it became too small. A new National School was built, opening in 1823, and the Grammar School closed soon afterwards. The new school was unusual for that period in being two storey, with girls taught on one floor and boys on the other. It took pupils up to the age of 14 until Flint Central School (now Flint High School)

and Mold Grammar School (now The Alun) opened in the 1930s.

The National School was situated beside the old A55 and, as traffic increased, it became increasingly dangerous for children to cross the road. A new school, Ysgol Owen Jones, was built and opened in 1974 and continues to thrive.

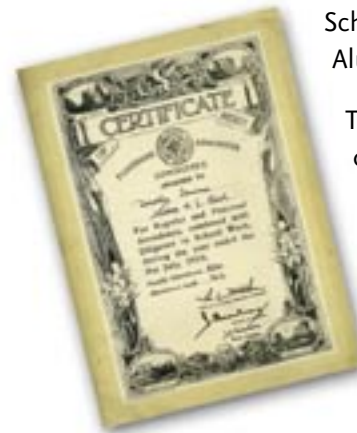


*"My father used to walk from the Coach and Horses on Flint Mountain to Northop School each day."*

Irene Lambert



Boys gardening at Northop National School



# Wealthy benefactors

Northop has been fortunate to have several generous benefactors over the centuries. In the late 16th century, Owen Jones was reputedly found as a baby wrapped in a blanket and tied to the bell rope in Northop church. The church paid for his adoption from parish funds. He prospered and became a successful Chester butcher but never forgot the kindness of Northop. In his will, he left a considerable sum to help the poor, including establishing the Owen Jones Charity



Owen Jones

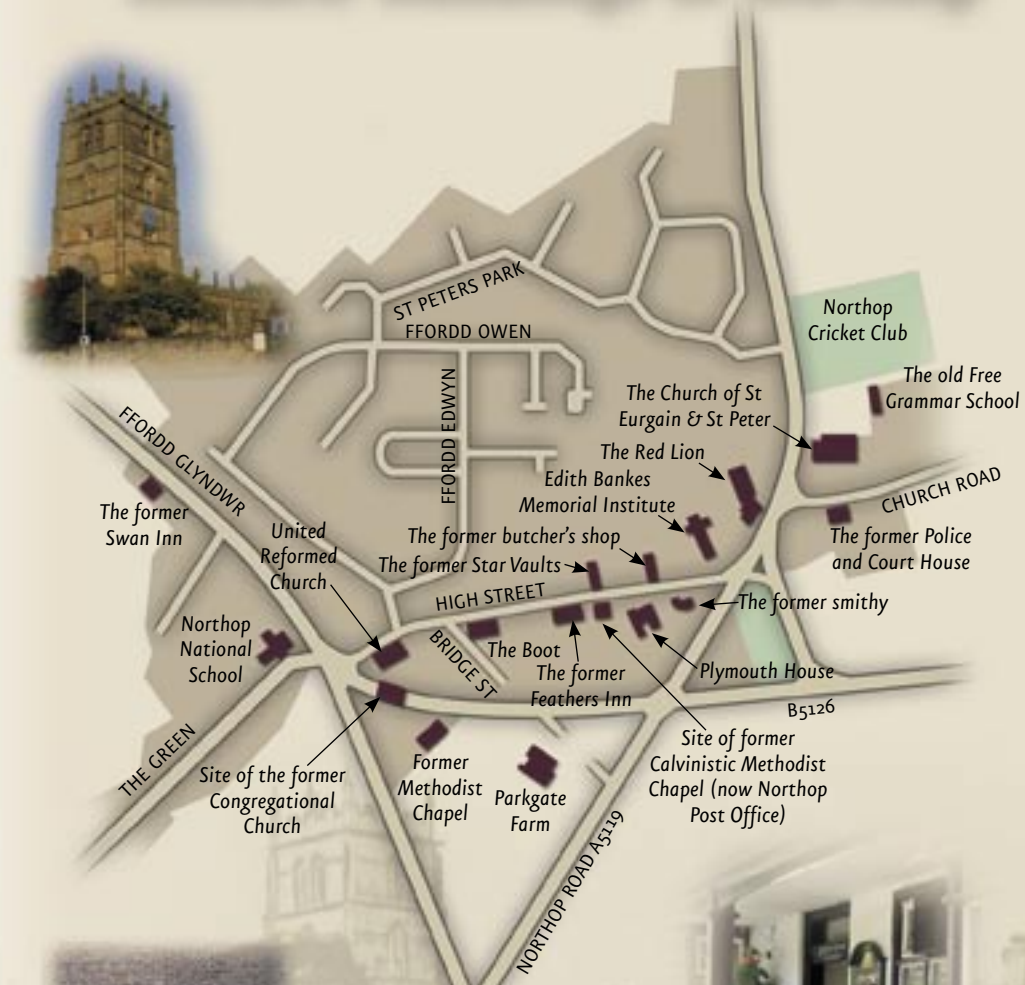
which supported local widows and their children, and provided education for the young. Youngsters in receipt of this funding were known as 'Bluecoats'. The charity still exists today providing help for local pensioners and giving a small grant to the village school.

*"I was a Blue Coat pupil, receiving £3 a year from the Owen Jones fund. To qualify we had to sing in the church choir, attend Sunday School and get a good school report."*

Keith Brown

Many of the wealthy landowners have played an important part in village life, most notably the Bankes family who owned Soughton Hall from the mid 18th century until the late 20th century. They funded the building of the National School and John Eldon Bankes built the Edith Bankes Memorial Institute in memory of his wife, following her death in 1931.

# Historic buildings of Northop



Plymouth House, which dates from 1673, was later a coaching inn known as *The Yacht*.



*The Boot*

Site of Llys Edwin  
Safle Llys Edwyn

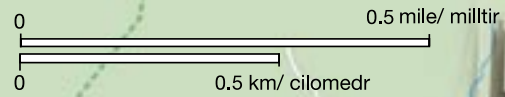
Glyndŵr University/  
Northop College  
Prifysgol Glyndŵr/  
Coleg Llaneurgain

# Northop

Northop  
Cricket Club  
Clwb Criced  
Llaneurgain

Red Lion

The Boot



The Boot (tel: 01352 840247)  
The Red Lion (tel: 01352 842011)  
The Stables Bar and Restaurant (tel: 01352 840811)

- Parking/ Parcio
- Pub/ Tafarn
- Building of interest/ Adeilad o ddiddordeb
- Church or chapel/ Capel neu Eglwys
- Northop Country Park Golf Club (tel: 01352 840440)
- Right of way/ Hawl tramwyo
- Rural Walks in Flintshire No 7/  
Cerdded yng Nghefn Gwlad Sir y Flint Rhif 7
- Flintshire Leisure Tour, Flint - Mold  
Taith foduro Sir Y Fflint, Y Flint - Yr Wyddgrug



Soughton Hall  
The Stables

Mold  
Yr Wyddgrug

Sychdyn

Chester  
Caer

