

# Medieval magic of Denbigh

**T**HE picturesque Medieval town of Denbigh is enviably located in the Vale of Clwyd

(inspiration to poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins), eight miles from Ruthin, and 13 from the coast, at Rhyl.

Records of the place date back to the 11th Century, where it was described as a small border town.

Denbigh means 'Little Fortress' in Welsh. The town grew steadily throughout the next 200 years to become a royal residence for Welsh Princes, and a focal point of Welsh power in North Wales.

The quiet ambiance of present day Denbigh belies its turbulent past. In 1262, Edward I conquered the town, putting it under English rule.

The town developed as the building of the castle was completed, protected by the town walls.

Striking Denbigh Castle's remains are perched on a steep hill above the town, commanding superb views of the pastoral Vale of Clwyd and the round backed hills of the Clwydian Range.

It was built by Henry de Lacey, one of Edward I's chief commanders - on the site of the former stronghold of Dafydd ap Gruffudd, brother of Llywelyn, the Welsh leader crushed by Edward in 1282!



The Vale of Clwyd Open Heritage Days give visitors the chance to explore a range of exciting historical buildings

Indeed, Denbigh was to be fiercely fought over by the Welsh and English over the next few centuries.

Open to the public, the castle offers many scenic walks nearby, including the woodland walk around the town walls. There is also an on-site exhibition and museum.

In 1563, Queen Elizabeth appointed Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, lordship of Denbigh and governor general of North Wales. And in 1643, Denbigh became a refuge for a royalist garrison during the Civil War. This ceased with the surrender in 1646, when the town walls were left to ruin.

Throughout these periods, the people of Denbigh had long since abandoned their fortress-borough, moving instead to reside outside the town walls.

Denbigh developed into one of the largest and richest towns in Elizabethan Wales, a powerhouse of Renaissance culture and enterprise, and a vibrant, prosperous market town. Indeed, later this year, the town's historical treasures are set to be scrutinised by curious time travellers at the Vale of Clwyd Open Heritage Days.

This popular annual event gives visitors the chance to



Standing proud on a steep hill, Denbigh Castle has superb views of the area Picture: RICHARD WILLIAMS

explore a range of exciting historical buildings, most of which are closed to the general public. For more details visit the website [www.valeofclwydheritage.org.uk](http://www.valeofclwydheritage.org.uk).

To get fully in the know on the fascinating subject of Denbighshire's past, get hold of a copy of the 'Enjoy Medieval Denbighshire' guide available at

[www.medieval.wales.com](http://www.medieval.wales.com). It includes 45 countywide locations with origins dating back prior to 1600.

Attractions include the impressive fifteenth century wall painting at Llanynys Church in the Vale of Clwyd, and the intriguing open air pulpit built into a churchyard yew tree at Nantglyn.

Another date for the diary is June 19 to 21, when Denbigh's Mid-Summer Festival gets under way. This celebration of music, drama, exhibitions and poetry is not to be missed. Call 01745 816080 to find out more.

Why not visit Denbigh today? The town has plenty to explore and will always give you a warm welcome.

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