

Deeside East Mine Trail



A 16 mile circular trail by car or bike, passing features relating to the local coal and lead industries. Note that some of the places are on private land and this should be obvious. In such a case please ask first for permission to visit. The trail starts at Petrolheads Cafe on the A548 between Bagillt and Holywell but you can join and leave it anywhere along the route. It covers features in a rough triangle bounded by Bagillt, Greenfield and Halkyn Mountain. Approximate cumulative mileages are given in brackets. More information and photographs for the sites can be found on the website below. Note that some of the places may be difficult for disabled persons to access but they should be able to see most of them. The complete trail should take about 3 hours to complete.

To get to Petrolheads Cafe (SJ212762), head for the junction of the A548 and A5026 at Holywell. Turn in to the petrol filling station opposite the Lyons Den Fitness Centre and the cafe is on the left. There are refreshments and toilets here.

From the Petrolheads Cafe, turn left on the A548 towards Flint. Go past the first "Bagillt" road sign and turn left (0.2) just after the second "Bagillt" sign down a lane. Go under the railway bridge and follow the lane round to the right past a scrapyard to a parking area. Note that the gates by the road are only open Mon to Fri 9.00am - 5.00pm and Sat 9.00am – 1.00pm

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BETTISFIELD COLLIERY (NGR SJ215759)

Coal mining started here in 1872 and there were two shafts sunk to a depth of 870ft. At its peak, there were 438 men working underground with around 100 on the surface. The workings extended under the Dee estuary and an average of 150,000 tons of coal was produced per year. Despite its proximity to sea level, flooding of the workings was never reported as a problem. Following the depression and strikes of the early 20th Century, the colliery closed in 1933, putting 415 men out of work.

WHAT TO SEE

The winding engine house is an obvious feature and is still in a reasonably good condition, also being a Listed Building. The smaller sandstone structure at one end surrounds the shaft and a wooden headgear once stood on it. You will see metal supports protruding from the walls of the engine house and this was where two of the headgear legs were attached. Immediately behind the building there are concrete plinths with metal bolts where the other two legs were fixed.

The smaller building was the old lamp room. There is also a wooden carved figure of a miner known locally as "Bettisfield Bob". This has been known to be mysteriously kidnapped at times but then returned.

Follow the path around the back of the engine house and, at a path junction, go straight on. As you follow this path, look for "glassy rock" on the ground which came from the nearby lead smelting works. Where water flows out to the River Dee on the right, drop down the bank and you will see an entrance.

2**MILWR TUNNEL
(NGR SJ214760)**

By the late 18th Century, many of the lead mines working in the area of Halkyn Mountain and further south were unable to go deeper due to the amount of water coming into the workings. In 1897, several mining companies combined to drive a drainage level from the River Dee at Bagillt to drain their mines. It was very successful and, in the event, it finally reached a distance of 10 miles in 1957, also discovering several new lead veins along its route. It is estimated that 23 million gallons of water per day are discharged from the entrance.

WHAT TO SEE

The main entrance is at the end of a cutting and the water falls a few feet to stream level where it flows into the River Dee. A little further along the path, a large water pipe can be seen in another cutting, heading north-west. This used to carry water to the Courtaulds factory in Greenfield. At the near end of this cutting is a grilled entrance which used to give access to the tunnel for maintenance. On the other side of the railway tunnel is a large red brick building that was the Pump House for water from the tunnel. It still pumps water but now it goes to the Kimberley Clarke factory in Flint, whenever they need it.

Return to the car, carefully cross the dual carriageway and turn right towards Prestatyn. Turn left (0.5) on the A5026 signposted "Holywell" and park on the left next to a long wooded bank opposite Lyons Den Fitness Centre.

3**DEE BANK LEAD SMELTER
(NGR SJ212759)**

Lead was smelted here from the mid-18th Century and the furnaces were to the left of the road with the lead works (where finished products like roofing sheets, pipes, etc were made) on the right.

WHAT TO SEE

The wooded bank on the left contains the overgrown flues, etc and a public footpath climbs to the top of the bank and along to the left. Care should be taken in this area as there is a danger of flues collapsing under your feet. On the opposite side of the road, remains of the old lead works have completely disappeared under new factories.

Continue along the road and turn left (0.8) opposite the "Boot and Ship" pub. Follow the road around to the right and up the hill. At the Victoria Hotel (2.3), follow the one-way system around to the left and then to the right. At the T-junction (2.4), turn left on the B5121 signposted "Brynford" and follow the road up the hill. Go straight across the traffic lights (2.6) and under the dual carriageway. Stop just before a crossroads, next to a grassy area on the right (3.6).

4**BRYNFORD MINING MEMORIAL
(NGR SJ178745)**

The sculpture of three resting miners was erected in 2010 and commemorates the men who worked in the local lead mines and quarries. It also acts as a sundial.

Turn left at the crossroads signposted "Pentre Halkyn" (3.7). You will now be driving across Holywell Common, which has many humps and bumps that are the remains of lead mining. At the T-junction, turn right (5.8) signposted "Halkyn" and then right again (5.9) signposted "Windmill". Turn left at a staggered crossroads (6.2) signposted "Windmill".

5**HALKYN MOUNTAIN
(NGR SJ1971)**

It is believed that the Romans first mined lead in this area, taking it to Flint to be smelted. Mining carried on during medieval times but this would only have been on a small scale. Aerial photographs make the area look pockmarked with their shafts. The mines were not fully developed until they were taken over by the Quaker Company during the 17th-18th Centuries. This company had many mines throughout the UK and were very technologically advanced for the times. They brought a number of miners from Derbyshire to introduce the new techniques and most of these stayed and married local girls. In 1850, the mines were producing 12% of all lead sold in this country but they had declined by the end of the 19th Century. A few small-scale mines continued until the 1960s when the last one closed.

WHAT TO SEE

On the right of the road after the junction is a row of white painted cottages that were once occupied by miners working at Billins Mine. Further on is the hamlet of Windmill, believed to have been named after a windmill erected to pump water out of the local mines. There is no trace of this now.

At the T-junction turn right signposted "Rhes-y-Cae" (7.1).

Quarries can be seen on the left, extracting sand and limestone. Further on, a building on the right is a limekiln with two openings. The shallow quarries to extract limestone for the kilns can be seen behind. Farmers used lime to neutralise the acidity of the soil.

In Rhes-y-Cae, turn right signposted "Pentre Halkyn" (8.0). After a short distance, look for a wide grassy track on the right (8.2).

From here you can see numerous spoil tips and stone cairns marking the top of mine shafts in every direction. It is worth spending some time walking around this area so you can appreciate the effort expended here by lead miners over the years. At one time, most of these shafts would have been separate mines worked by a few miners, although they were frequently linked up underground at a later stage to form bigger workings.

Many of the shafts are still open under the stone cairns (called beehives) and it is not advisable to climb on them.

Continue along the road, noting yet more mine shafts, and turn right signposted "Pentre Halkyn" (8.8). Turn left at the T-junction (9.3) and follow this under the A55 to a further T-junction (11.1) where you turn left again. Go straight across the traffic lights and turn right just before the Fire Station (12.2). Just after some pedestrian crossing lights, turn left (12.5) and follow the road down the hill. "St Winifred's Well" is on the right just past the church and there is a car park on the left just after this (12.8).

6**HOLYWELL BOAT LEVEL
(NGR SJ184764)**

This was driven in 1774 to drain the Holway Consols Mine. It was the main access to the mine for the workmen and was also used as a canal for bringing lead ore out by barge. There are accounts of the level being used as a tourist attraction from the 18th Century, with picnics being laid out in caverns. Miners pushed visitors up in boats for a fee.

WHAT TO SEE

The entrance to the boat level can be seen by walking up the track at the back of the car park. It is on the left and easily recognised with its stone arch and grilled door.

7**ST WINIFRED'S WELL
(NGR SJ185762)**

The healing waters of this well have been said to cause miraculous cures. The legend of St Winefride tells how in 660AD Caradoc, the son of a local prince, severed the head of the young Winefride after she spurned his advances. A spring rose from the ground at the spot where her head fell and she was later restored to life by her uncle, St. Beuno.

The well is known as "the Lourdes of Wales" and has been a pilgrimage site since the 7th century. Richard I visited the site in 1189 to pray for the success of his crusade, and Henry V was said to have travelled there on foot from Shrewsbury in 1416.

Water from the Holywell Boat Level was used to top up St Winifred's Well and, when the Milwr Tunnel was driven at the end of the 19th Century, it caused the water flow to stop and the well dried up. The mining company had to arrange for a supply of water to be pumped up to the boat level so that the well could be used again.

WHAT TO SEE

St Winifred's Well is across the road from the car park and you are welcome to have a dip in the cold water. It is more of a pool than the standard well but is surrounded by some magnificent buildings.

Turn left down the road and, just after a zebra crossing, turn right into the car park of Greenfield Heritage Park (13.7).

8**GREENFIELD HERITAGE PARK
(NGR SJ194773)**

This whole valley was active from the 18th Century, using the Holywell stream to operate waterwheels to power machinery. Several different companies were based here, producing various goods from lead to snuff. The site is now a museum for agricultural and industrial machinery from the area and is managed by a Trust.

WHAT TO SEE

Take the path from the car park up the hill and turn right at the top.

A line of mine trucks can be seen on the right behind a fence.

Carry on to a road and turn left up the hill, passing a waterwheel on the right. Turn right down some steps to a building where various machinery is displayed.

Among the exhibits are some items from Point of Ayr Colliery - two flat trucks, stub headgear from No.2 Shaft, cage from No.1 Shaft and a mine truck. The plan is to relocate the headgear to Ffynnongroyw as a mining memorial so it may not be there when you visit.

Turn right out of the car park and down the hill to Greenfield, where you turn right at the traffic lights (13.9) onto the A548 towards Flint. Go straight across a roundabout and turn left into the Petrolheads Cafe opposite the Lyons Den Fitness Centre (15.4). You can now enjoy a welcome cup of tea and use the facilities.

1. Bettisfield Colliery



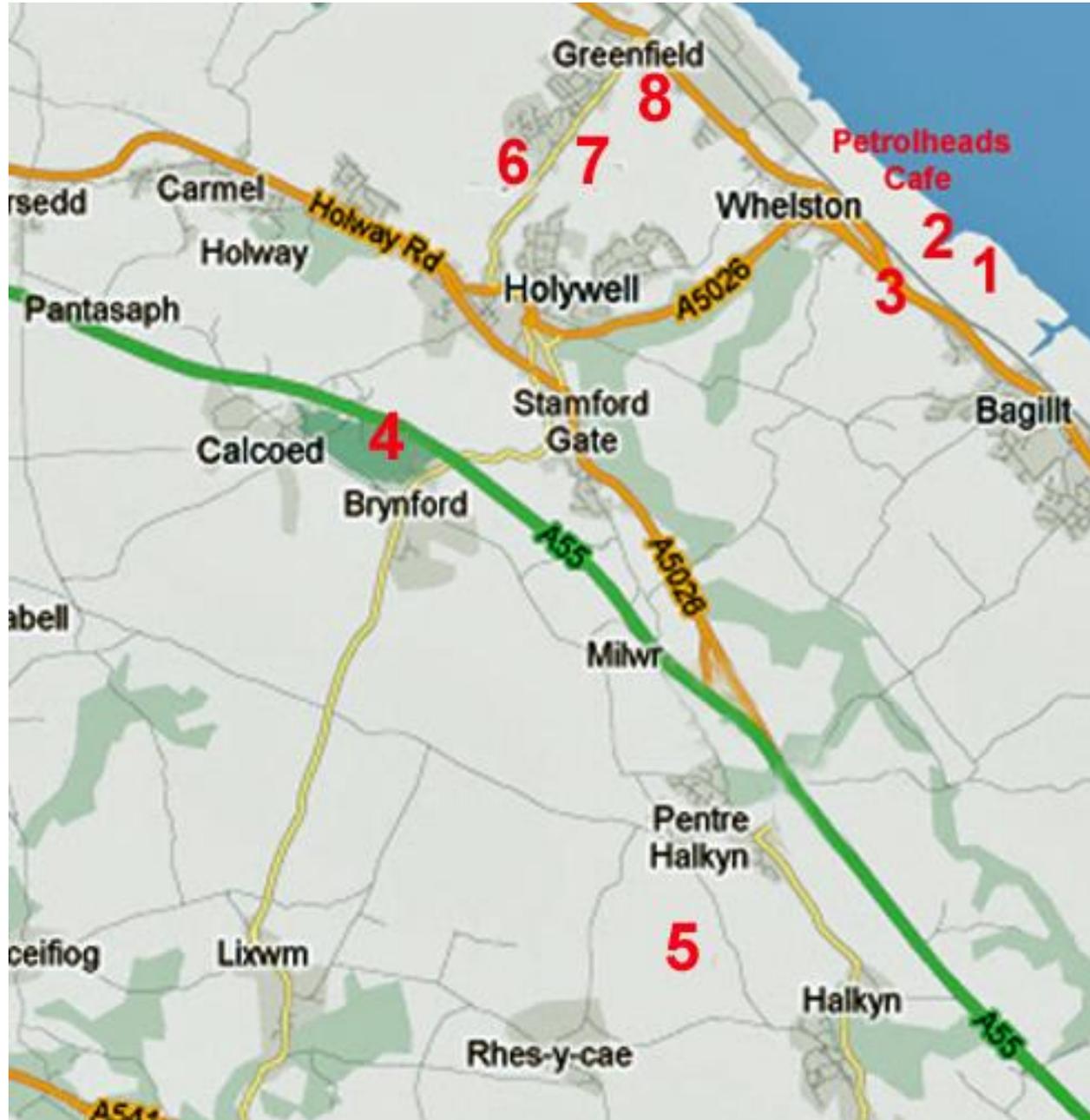
2. Milwr Tunnel



3. Dee Bank Smelter



4. Brynford Memorial



5. Halkyn Mountain



6. Holywell Boat Level



7. St Winifred's Well



8. Greenfield Heritage Park

