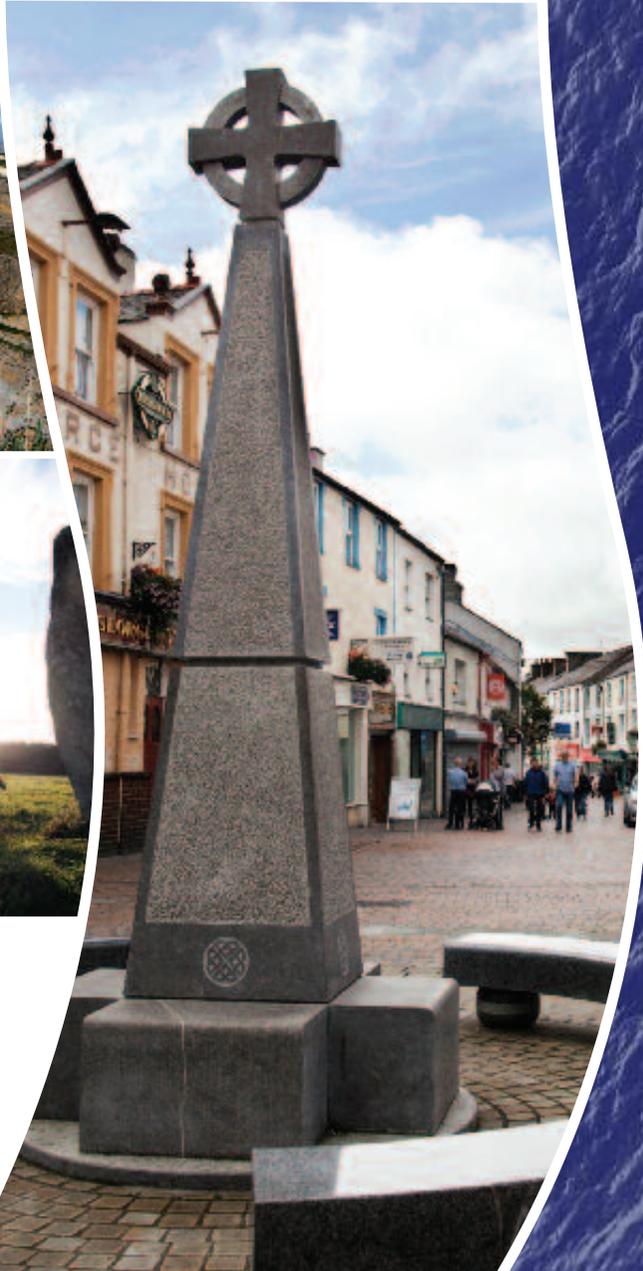


# HOLYHEAD

## Town Guide



2017-2019





# CAERGYBI - HOLYHEAD

## Rhaglen Adfywio Caergybi - Holyhead Regeneration Programme



- Adeiladu tai newydd
- Moderneiddio tai
- Gwella canol y dref
- Adnewyddu neuadd y Farchnad
- Cefnogi busnesau a swyddi
- Uwchraddio cyfleusterau hamdden a cymunedol
- Building new homes
- Modernising existing homes
- Improving the town centre
- Refurbishing the Market Hall
- Supporting businesses and jobs
- Upgrading leisure and community facilities

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Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in Holyhead Town Guide is correct and neither SB Publishing nor Holyhead Town Council accept responsibility for any loss or inconvenience arising from any errors which may have occurred.

*Additional photography and editorial contributions: Holy Island Experience Limited.*

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For details of Baptisms and Weddings, please contact Revd Kevin Ellis on 01407 861845 or [holyislandvicar@gmail.com](mailto:holyislandvicar@gmail.com)



# Foreword

Holyhead is perched on Holy Island, and is actually an island off an island!

Connected to the Isle of Anglesey by a causeway built in the Regency period of the 1820s by Thomas Telford, Holyhead, Holy Island is 12 square miles of history, rugged landscape, nature reserves and archaeological sites surrounded by towering cliffs and beautiful beaches. Over thousands of years people have travelled here to visit sacred places, enjoy the wildlife, the legends, and the peace to re-discover themselves, but today Holyhead, Holy Island is one of Wales' best kept secrets.

At a glance, Holyhead is the largest town on Anglesey, and a bustling ferry port which provides a gateway for tens of thousands of passengers each year. However, many of those who arrive at or pass through Holyhead are unaware that this town has a rich cultural heritage and is steeped in history. It is well worth taking time to stop and explore.

The town centre itself boasts the remains of a Roman fort, a 13th century church and a range of shops and amenities. Nearby you will find excellent golfing, a marina, first class fishing and sailing, historic and prehistoric sites, a maritime museum and fine beaches. The surrounding area has some of the most dramatic coastal scenery around Anglesey including Holyhead Mountain which rises 719 feet above sea level. At its foot lies the Holyhead Breakwater Country Park – home to a unique outdoor art gallery, the park offers coastal walks and easily found tracks to the must see iconic South Stack Lighthouse and Bird Sanctuary and breath-taking panoramic views.

A warm welcome awaits you, so put Holyhead on your list of places to be!

**Cliff Everett**



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# The Origins of the Name

## Caergybi / Holyhead

The town of Holyhead has had several names throughout its history:

Before 1283 the area was known as Llan y Gwyddel. Later, the name of St Cybi is mentioned for the first time, being called Cor Cuybi (Cor – circle of / seat of / place of).

In 1283 during his itinerary of North Wales, King Edward I sent despatches from “Castrum Cuby” and in 1315 the town was known as “Haliheved and in 1352 as “Caergybi”. In 1394 this changed again to “Le Holyhede”, and in the late 15th Century was known as “Insulae Eglwys y Bedd de St Ceby”. In 1536–39, John Leland records the name as being “Kaer Kybi”, “Holy Hed”, and “The Holy Hedde”.

In 1573, on the first map of Wales, the name is recorded as “Holy Head” or “Caer Cybi”, and these names have more or less continued down until the present day, with the first edition of the One Inch Ordnance Survey Map in the early 19th Century using the name that we are familiar with today – “Holyhead”. It is believed that “Holy Head” actually refers to the Mountain, which dominates the whole of Holy Island, whereas “Caergybi” is the name of the town itself, which sprung up around the walls of a Roman Fort in 550AD and enclosed the original settlement of St Cybi.



## Ancients Left Their Mark on Historic Town

It is believed that the name Anglesey means “isle of the straits”, deriving from the Norse word “ongull”, which means “strait”. However, the Vikings were only one of several civilisations which have left their mark on the island. Cremated remains of inhabitants from prehistoric times have been found and there is abundance of old churches, hut circles, hill forts, tumuli, cairns, cromlechs, and castles to be found across Anglesey.

Around 500 BC Celtic tribes established their ancient religion in Anglesey. Around 150BC the Druids began to exert their influence wider across to Europe. However, the all-conquering Romans would appear to have tired of this reactionary” religion and, in AD 61, invaded Anglesey, ostensibly to extend their territory, yet no doubt, determined to strike at the heart of Druidism.

It is said that the Roman invasion force, comprising of more than 10,000 men, stood rooted to the spot in trepidation as they espied the opposing army across the Strait. In his annals, Tacitus writes that Druids were to be seen “pouring out frightful curses with their hands raised high to the heavens.” However, this did not stop the Romans. They crossed the water using flat-bottomed boats and, despite brave resistance, put the Druids to flight. More attacks over the following years degraded the Druids’ infrastructure and established a period of Roman dominance which lasted for several centuries.

The Romans built a fort and naval base at Holyhead on which now stands the 13th Century church of St Cybi. The fort stands in the centre of the town, and was the focal point around which the town was originally created. The fort stands on a low cliff, just over 16 feet high, and has only three sides, being open to the sea on the eastern side. It is unique in that no other example of a three-sided landing place is known in Britain. On entering through one of the two present day entrances, from the town’s Market Square or Swift Square Car Park, it is possible to still see at close hand the herring bone pattern of the original stonework, with occasional levelling courses of thinner stones.





## Hut Circles and Hill Forts

Various hut circles and hill forts can still be seen on Holyhead Mountain and around the coast. On the slopes of Holyhead Mountain leading up to South Stack, you will find a group of Hut Circles. Over 50 huts spread over an area of 15-20 acres were recorded in the 1850's, but now only 26 remain. On the summit of Holyhead Mountain are the remains of an ancient hill fort, *Caer y Twr*, covering an area of 17 acres, which dates back to the Iron Age, between 600BC and 60AD. Many thousands of tons of rock were broken down to make the walls, which are hundreds of yards long. Within the hill fort, at the highest point of the summit, is a Roman Watchtower and Signal Station, (*Latin Pharos*), of which only the square base foundations remain. It is believed to have been built during the Roman occupation of Holyhead, due to the threat of marauding sea raiders from Ireland, and dates from the 4th Century AD.

The island's maritime history can also be sensed through its rugged landscape and sandy coves. The lighthouse on South Stack, a seal and seabird outcrop off Holyhead Mountain, was built in 1808 and has guided many a ship around the dangerous rocks. But, inevitably, several strayed off course to their doom.

From the Stone Age down through the ages, Holyhead, Hoy Island has held a fascination for raiders and romantics alike.

# Holyhead, Holy Island

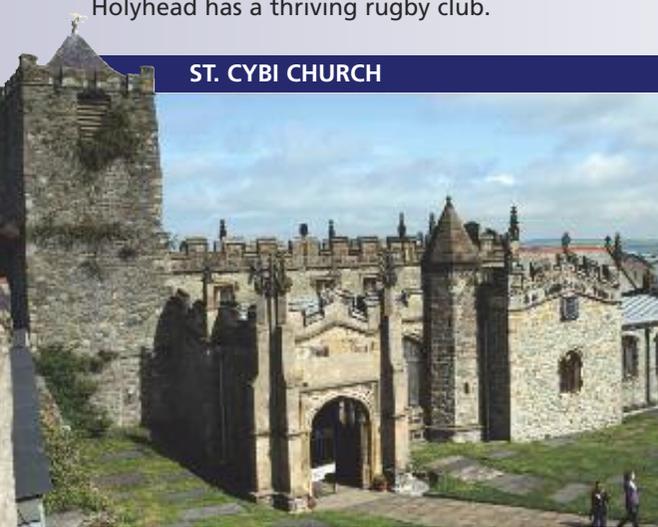
## Places of Interest

### HOLYHEAD TOWN CENTRE

The Town Centre, Winner of the Action for Market Towns Award 2012 is home to a range of small friendly locally owned shops and eateries. The local library, cinema with play centre and laser quaser, arts centre and theatre are all within walking distance of the centre. There is plenty to do to keep fit in the town with a first class weightlifting centre, indoor swimming pool and leisure centre nearby.

There is something to cater for all tastes from fighting the flab at Slimming World at the Gwelfor Centre, to Karate at the Town Hall – and, of course, being in Wales, Holyhead has a thriving rugby club.

### ST. CYBI CHURCH



The most striking building in town is the Church of St Cybi which dates from the 13th Century. St Cybi was a sixth Century saint of a Celtic church and he settled in Holyhead. The Church went through a period of restoration during the last Century and its interior reveals many wonderful treasures including a window by Burne-Jones.

Other treasures include "William Morris" windows

in St David's Chapel, which depict the Tree of Life, and other beautiful stained glass windows, which commemorate various prominent residents of the town of Holyhead. There are the Coats of Arms on the Stanley family pew, a recently restored Victorian organ which was previously used in the Library at Eaton Hall, Chester, and on the East wall, an exposed section of a 16th Century wall painting showing a Tudor Rose.

On the West wall is a Delft plaque, from the Church of the Netherlands, commemorating the town's care of the Servicemen who were posted to Holyhead in the 2nd World War. Next to the vestry is the Singer's Seat, which in former times was occupied by trained singers who would lead the congregation in their hymn singing before the days of hymn books. There is

also a Leper's window, which allowed lepers to look through, and take part in the Services whilst staying outside the Church.

Today the churchyard also marks the starting point of the Anglesey Coastal Path.

### UCHELDRE CENTRE (Community Arts Centre)

The Ucheldre Centre in Holyhead is housed in the converted chapel of a former Convent School. Even if one is not particularly interested in the arts, it is well worth a visit for its architectural features, landscaped grounds, and amphitheatre. The Ucheldre Kitchen is also worthy of mention with its tasty

home-cooked meals and snacks, which can be enjoyed in the tranquil walled garden, with its water feature and sculptures. If you are a coffee person, its Cimbali espresso machine will keep you alert for hours as, having been suitably refreshed, one takes time to wander around the grounds and building, taking in one of the 12 exhibitions on display each year.

The exhibitions cover all the major art forms, as well as the occasional general interest one, and range from international touring



to work by one of the many professional artists or craftspersons living and working on the Island. There is also a full programme of live weekly events, which cater for a wide range of tastes, covering opera to blues, rock to baroque, Shakespeare to Thomas, and Panto to Phantom.

There is an on-going programme of workshops and classes, a Saturday art club for kids, and a busy workshop programme of art, dance, drama and craft during the school holidays. It is also home to a good amateur Repertory Company, Jazz Club, Music Club, Clybod/Acoustic Club and Literary Society; all are open to visitor and resident alike and many are free, as is entry to the Centre's exhibitions and grounds.

The Centre also has 3 film screenings a week, in an interesting mixed programme of blockbusters and excellently made films which don't get much hype, but shouldn't be missed. Films are shown in the specially adapted Main Hall, with its very large screen and the latest digital dolby sound system. Information about about the Centre, its history and activity programme is available on [www.ucheldre.org](http://www.ucheldre.org) or by email [box@ucheldre.org](mailto:box@ucheldre.org) or tel 01407 763361

### THE HONOURABLE W.O. STANLEY

THE Honourable William Owen Stanley of Plas Penrhos, and his wife Ellen, were instrumental in helping to change the face of Holyhead in the mid-1800's, building houses by the score to house the workers, including the row called Laingoch in 1848. He also built a number of the most important landmarks in

the town, which can still be seen today. He became Lord Lieutenant of the County of Anglesey, and a Justice of the Peace for the county.

It is interesting to note that, up until the 1850's, Holyhead was classed as a "fishing village", and it was only from this time onwards, with the help of people like W.O. Stanley, who added greatly to the number of important buildings in the area, the construction of the Holyhead Breakwater, and the coming of the Railway, that it developed and grew into a "town". However, in 1850 it was recorded that the town had 37 taverns and public houses, and 29 retailers of beer – obviously something to keep travellers happy whilst waiting for their ship to sail to Ireland!

### THE STANLEY SAILORS HOME & READING ROOM

THIS sturdy stone building situated at Newry Beach, erected by W.O.Stanley, was opened in 1871 by the Bishop of Bangor, and was used to house shipwrecked sailors. Its maritime connection is still strong today, as it is now the headquarters of the Holyhead Prince of Wales Sea Cadets.

It is on the opposite side of the road, close to the Holyhead Maritime Museum and McKenzie Pier, from which the Cadets launch their vessels for 'pulling' (rowing) exercises, lifesaving, etc.



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### THE MARKET HALL & MARKET CROSS

In 1855 W. O. Stanley built the Market Hall accessed by a flight of steps from Stanley Street, where vendors could sell their wares from all over Anglesey. Up until this time, the Market had been held on Saturdays around the old Market Cross, flanked by two Public Houses, "The George" and "The Union" just outside the walls of the Roman fort enclosing St Cybi's Church.



The Market Cross was unceremoniously removed shortly after the Market Hall opened, as some traders refused to pay for stalls, and carried on trading around it. It was reported to have been taken to W. O. Stanley's mansion in Penrhos, but a new Celtic Cross has recently been reinstated on the same spot. This area today is still called the Market Square.

The original Market Cross consisted of a plinth of steps with a column surmounted by a carved stone, and can be seen on old prints of Holyhead from the 18th and 19th Centuries. Preachers had used it, balladeers sung their stories from it, and the villagers had danced around it – and it was also a place where people gathered to exchange local rumours or news, which could then be passed on.

In 1854, a year before the Market Hall was built, George Borrow describes the Market place around the Cross:-

"Leaving the pier I turned up a street to the south, and was not long before I arrived at a kind of market-place, where there were carts and stall, and on the ground, on cloths, apples and plums and abundance of greengages".

### RECORD BREAKER BREAKWATER



This was the longest breakwater in the world when it was built, and could shelter a hundred or more ships during a storm. Today it is still the longest breakwater in Europe.

In 1845 work commenced on the huge, 2.4 km long, breakwater designed by James Meadows Rendel. It was completed 28 years later.

Broad gauge railway lines were laid down to the quarries at the foot of the eastern side of Holyhead Mountain, in order to transport the rock that would be blasted out, to the site of the Breakwater.

On average 1,300 men were employed at any one time on this monumental task, and more than 40 men alone lost their lives whilst working on this project, between 1849 and 1852. In the fourteen and a half years between 1850 and 1864, some 6,990,862 tons of stone were carried from the quarries on the mountain for use in the breakwater's construction.

The end section of the breakwater is 150 feet long by 50 feet wide, and the masonry below low water was built by divers using helmets. At the end of the breakwater stands a lighthouse, which is square in design, to make the living quarters more comfortable. The first light to be used was red.

The breakwater was finally opened in August 1873 by Albert Edward the Prince of Wales. The total cost of its construction, including the purchase of land and preparation had cost £1,285,000, and the enclosed harbour it protects covers 667 acres.

### HOLYHEAD BREAKWATER COUNTRY PARK

THE Breakwater Country Park was opened in 1990, and is situated on the site of the quarries on Holyhead Mountain that were used to supply stone for the 28 year construction of the Breakwater. Local people still refer to it as "the Quarry", and the names of the various quarries are still in use, such as 'Scouts Glen', 'Number 1

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Quarry', 'Chwarel Gardner', 'Chwarel Ddu', (also known as the 'Black Quarry', because of the colour of the rock blasted from it), and 'Jersey Quarry'. Some 1,000 mineshafts were bored into the rock face, for packing the gunpowder, ready for blasting.

In later years, after the completion of the Breakwater, the quartzite was ground up and mixed with lime and treacle, to form bricks. These yellow bricks were then fired, and used to line blast furnaces as far away as Italy. The brickworks closed as recently as 1973, but some of remnants from the original buildings, artefacts and machinery are still on display. Next to the car park are the walls of the 'crusher', where the quarried rock was ground. Nearby stands the tall chimney and walls of the brickworks where can still be seen the kilns in which the bricks were fired.

Today the old brick shed has been transformed into an innovative open air art gallery portraying the cultural and natural history of Holy Island, along with its' stunning landscape. Depictions of the local flora and fauna are on show, from C. F. Tunnicliffes' measured drawings to the Massey sisters' botanical studies of Angleseys' flowers, including the South



Stack fleawort (found nowhere else on Earth!). Copies of wood engravings depicting the building of the breakwater along with black and white photographs of the Breakwater quarry can be viewed along with inspiring photographs of iconic Holy Island landmarks such as Rhoscolyn and North Stack. There is even the front cover of a French graphic novel showing a stormy South Stack. The gallery is open to the elements so you may need a broly in the unlikely (!) event it rains.

Opposite this building is the North Wales Wildlife Trust shop, which is open from Easter until September, and sells books on local history and natural history of all kinds, maps and gifts.

Further over there is a small lake and on Sunday and Wednesday afternoons, Holyhead Model Boat Club can be seen sailing their vessels. The lake, home to dabbling ducks, is well stocked with fish, and fishing permits are available from the Warden.

This is a very pleasant place to have a picnic. However, if you are not in the mood for a picnic you can pick up a cuppa in Caffi'r Parc a new venture set up by Mon Social Enterprises in 2013 and is open all year round.

The building where the information centre is based was once the 'Mess Hall' for those who worked in the quarries. It contains interesting displays, and a scale replica of the whole of the Mountain, with audio commentary. Here you can learn more about the history of the whole site, pick up a leaflet about the



mountain and coastal footpaths – and if the park’s enthusiastic Warden happens to be around, ask his advice about a route to suit your abilities.

The information centre is open throughout the year tel: 01248 752400.

## HOLYHEAD MOUNTAIN

From the Park there are several paths leading up onto Holyhead Mountain. The first starts off as quite a steep climb, not far from the car park, and leads up to North Stack, the Telegraph Station and to the summit with its Iron Age Hillfort and Roman Signal Station.



A short way along this path, you can see a memorial to the crew of the “Jigs Up”, a B24J Liberator. This American aircraft crashed into North Stack during World War II.

A second path, from Scouts Glen, has steps which lead you up to the Mountain Village, where many of the quarrymen used to live, then on to the entrance to the Hillfort, and then up to the summit.

A third path leads to Jersey Quarry, and from there, you can access the new length of the Coastal Footpath, which has recently been created along the side of the



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## MARK ISHERWOOD AM/AC

Assembly Member for **North Wales**  
Aelod Cynulliad dros **Gogledd Cymru**

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Canolfan Gelfyddydau  
Ucheldre Arts Centre



Ysgol  
School



Llwybr Arfordirol  
Coastal Path



Man Cychwyn Llwybr  
Arfordirol Ynys Môn  
Anglesey Coastal Path  
Starting Point



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Morglawdd  
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Marina



Amgueddfa Arforol  
Maritime Museum



Caer Rhufeinig  
Roman Fort



Pier y Morlys  
Admiralty Pier



Arhosfa Trên Bach  
Land Train Stop



Man Chwarae Plant  
Children's Play Area



Sinema / Ganolfan Chwarae  
Cinema / Play Centre



Cef Golofn Elin Stanley  
Ellin Stanley Monument



Eglwys St. Cybi  
St Cybi's Church



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i Ymwelwyr  
Tourist Information  
Centre



Obelsg Skinner  
Skinner's Monument



Parc Arfordirol Penrhos  
Penrhos Coastal Park



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Mountain, and leads to North Stack.

There is yet another path that will take you along the “Rocky Coast”, right the way back to the Breakwater itself, along which there are cliffs, gullies, secluded coves, and caves. Seals can often be spotted along this coastline, and are frequently seen in the harbour too.

THE summit of Holyhead Mountain is an important vantage point, being the highest point of Anglesey at 719 feet above sea level. On a clear day it is possible to see five kingdoms – the mountains of Ireland, the Isle of Man, Anglesey and the coast of Wales, including the majestic mountains of Snowdonia, the hills of Cumbria – which makes four – and the kingdom of heaven!

### MYNYDD TWR TELEGRAPH STATION

In 1810 a Signal Station was set up on the Mountain, over 500 feet above sea level, on the North Stack side, in order to send a signal to the harbour when the Irish packet was sighted, so that the Mail Coach could be detained in Holyhead. This consisted of a single mast, which was called a Packet Signal Pole, with a diagonal arm and a single white flag.

In 1827, the Liverpool to Holyhead Telegraph was created, by Barnard L. Watson, whereby a number of Telegraph Stations were built between these two points. It was then possible for messages to be sent and received between Holyhead and Liverpool within five minutes, which were mainly related to shipping. A house had already been built in 1810, but in 1841, a new Signal House and dwelling house were built close by, and a new two flag system used. In the 1850's, children would visit the Telegraph Station on Good Friday and Easter Monday as a special treat, when the Keepers would demonstrate the workings of the telegraph, and allow them to look through the telescopes.

The Telegraph Station on the Mountain ceased operation in 1858 and 1861 manual signalling systems were being replaced by electricity. Shortly thereafter, the Telegraph Station was relocated to a spare house on South Stack.

### SOUTH STACK

At the foot of Holyhead Mountain lies South Stack on which stands the lighthouse at the base of the 195 ft cliffs, not only keeping a close eye on matters maritime, but also standing guard to a nature reserve of breeding puffins, razorbills, peregrine falcons and guillemots. For information about bird watching, contact the RSPB visitor centre at Ellin's Tower Tel 01407 764973 or visit <http://www.rspb.org.uk/>



The original lighthouse was built in 1809, by Daniel Alexander, who also designed Dartmoor Prison, and it was made taller in 1874. Prior to 1826, when the first bridge was built across the chasm separating the mainland from South Stack, people and goods were transported across it by means of a basket, hauled

along a rope. The current bridge dates from 1987.

The lighthouse was electrified in 1938, and became automatic in 1984. It can be visited between Easter and September (tickets are available at the nearby South Stack Kitchen cafeteria.). Entry to the lighthouse is subject to a minimum height requirement of one metre. There are more than 400 steps leading down to the lighthouse, and then you cross the suspension bridge to South Stack itself. There is a guided tour and exhibition at the Lighthouse Visitor Centre, including a trip to the top of the lighthouse itself.

The white light flashes every ten seconds, and when it is foggy, a warning blast is sounded every thirty seconds. It is one of the most tranquil places to visit on a calm day, and most exciting during a storm!

(Also look out for the rare flower, the fleawort, which has chosen the rocky island at South Stack as the only place in the world to grow).

## MARITIME MUSEUM

THE Holyhead Maritime Museum is situated on the sea front at Newry Beach, Holyhead over looking the mile & half Breakwater. The museum is housed in what is said to be the oldest lifeboat house in Wales (circa 1847). It was built by the Admiralty at a cost of four hundred pounds and handed over to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution in 1858. Its first service was on the 10th March 1859 when the lifeboat assisted the schooner SCOTIA that was dragging her anchor in a South Westerly gale.



In 1888 the building was refurbished and extended to its present size to take two lifeboats the one on the landward end was on a carriage so that it could be horse drawn to the scene of the casualty. The coming of the steam lifeboat Duke of Northumberland and the motor lifeboat James Stevens saw the demise of the sailing and pulling lifeboat. The last service from the house was to the schooner Isabella on the 20th October 1928 when the pulling lifeboat Fanny Harriet rescued four of the crew off the vessel that was in difficulties in Holyhead Bay in a gale. From 1858–1928 the station rescued a total of five hundred and twenty five persons.

The building was later used for a variety of purposes including as a R N R drill shed, a roller skating rink and café. During the Second World War service personnel including the Royal Dutch Navy used it as their canteen. In 1985 it became the Zodiac Restaurant Bar which closed in 1993. The building was offered to the museum committee in 1995 and with the assistance of the Gwynedd County Council, Welsh Development Authority, The Council of Museums in Wales, Stena Line and the Heritage Lottery the current maritime museum was set up.

The museum houses a display of models, photographs and artefacts relating to the maritime history of Holyhead and district from Roman Times until the present.

The theme of the museum is "From Creek to H S S".

The museum is open from Easter to the end of September and has a bistro bar and shop selling books and souvenirs. The opening times of the museum are 1000 hrs to 1600 hrs Tuesdays to Sundays. During the closed season private parties are accommodated by contacting the secretary on (01407) 764374 or the museum on (01407) 769745 or for bistro information contact (01407) 763433.

John G Cave Hon. Sec. Tel No: 01407 764374. [www.holyheadmaritimemuseum.co.uk](http://www.holyheadmaritimemuseum.co.uk)



### ANGLESEY BEACHES AND ATTRACTIONS

McKenzie Pier is situated almost opposite the Sea Cadets Headquarters at Newry Beach, and is a short distance from Holyhead Maritime Museum. It is used for launching vessels, diving, and as a fishing pier, as well as a gentle stroll.

On the 9th of August 1958, H.R.H. Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh, accompanied by H.R.H. Prince Charles and H.R.H. Princess Anne, came ashore at McKenzie Pier, from the Royal Yacht, Britannia. This was a very historic occasion, as this was the first time that Prince Charles had set foot on Welsh soil, after being created Prince of Wales. A granite column bearing a bronze plaque, situated very close to McKenzie Pier, commemorating this auspicious occasion, was unveiled in May 1959, and can still be seen today.

On Boxing Day each year, crowds gather at the far end of McKenzie Pier to watch brave souls jump into the icy water to raise money for Charity. Young and old alike, some in Santa costume or fancy dress, others in wetsuits or swimming trunks, launch themselves off the end, displaying a variety of diving techniques. They and their supporters, are then invited back to the Maritime Museum, where hot refreshments are provided.

### HOLYHEAD PORT

FOR centuries the London to Holyhead Road was the most important in the realm – being England's principal maritime link with Ireland.

Following the 1801 Act of Union with Ireland, politicians called for improvements to the route to enable quicker, more convenient and safer journeys between London and Dublin.

A new, improved toll road (known now as the A5 and completed in 1826 by Thomas Telford) allowed horse-drawn Mail coaches to make the 460 kilometre (286 mile) journey from London to the waiting steam 'packets' at Holyhead in about 27 hours.

Originally, Holyhead Port was little more than a large tidal creek. The increase in frequency of travel and size of ships during the late 18th and early 19th centuries prompted calls for the construction of a proper harbour.



The inner harbour began with the building of Admiralty Pier, designed by another famous engineer called John Rennie and was completed in 1821.

In 1850 a rail link to the Welsh mainland was completed (under the direction of Robert Stephenson) and the London to Holyhead journey shortened to 9 1/2 hours, making it the fastest scheduled train in the world.

From then onwards a large port grew up, thriving on the passage of travellers, freight and mail.

## THE RAILWAY

THE Railway has played a very important part in Holyhead's more recent history, when it brought great prosperity to the town. The first train to Holyhead ran on the March 31, 1848, from Llanfair PG, Anglesey. At this time, there were no railway bridges over the Menai Strait, Mr. Stephenson put the last rivet in the Britannia Bridge on March 5, 1850, when it became the last link in the Chester to Holyhead Line.



The original Railway Station in Holyhead was adjacent to an area know as Rhosygaer – the position of the passenger Station was opposite to the entrance of what is now Holborn Road – at the time, it was built on open land. A map of 1856 shows that the innermost end of the creek had been filled in by that time, and the original old Black Bridge had disappeared.

Opposite the original Railway Station were "The 5 Sisters". These were five Public Houses standing next door to each other, in a row. They were "The Blossom", "The Globe", "The Sydney", "The Dublin Packet", and "The Holland". "The Sydney" is now part of the "Dublin Packet". Otherwise, the 5 Sisters are still intact to the present day.

## PENRHOS COASTAL PATH

This 200 acre park Country Park is on the site of the Penrhos estate which belonged to the Stanley family who were one of the town's most famous benefactors.

The sheltered flats of Beddmanarch Bay attract a wide variety of wildfowl, seabirds and waders. The park is a popular destination for walkers and families and there are clearly marked nature trails, public toilets and woodland glades where you can enjoy a picnic.

The octagonal tollhouse located at the entrance to the park once collected tolls from travellers on the adjoining A5. This road was completed in 1826 by the great Scottish engineer Thomas Telford.





## What's Going On

The **Town Hall, Newry Street** can give advice about Holyhead's activities and events.  
Tel: 01407 764608 (9am–4pm)

Notice boards in the **Holyhead Library** may also provide useful information. Exhibitions of the work of artists, craft workers, photographers and others are held in the library. Tel: 01407 762917.

There are many activities in the town for children including sports coaching, swimming, leisure and play activities at the Holyhead Leisure Centre – for details Tel: 01407 7646111 and youth organisations such as Girl Guiding – for further information Tel: 01407 740574.

The latest blockbusters can be seen at the refurbished **Empire Cinema** also **Fun Centre** located in the centre of Holyhead on Stanley Street [www.holyheadcinema.co.uk](http://www.holyheadcinema.co.uk) Tel: 01407 762414.

Holyhead's highest point is the site of the **Ucheldre Centre** which presents both visual and performing arts. There are classical and popular music concerts, talks, variety performances and films, together with Arts & Crafts exhibitions, and workshops and clubs for all ages. The shop stocks books, music, gifts and artwork, the licensed restaurant serves first class meals in pleasant surroundings, and there is a beautiful walled garden. The Centre opens daily (except at Christmas) 10am–5pm (from 2pm Sundays). Tel: 01407 763361

The **Holyhead Maritime Museum** organises special events. Look out for a programme of forthcoming activities. The Museum opens Spring to Autumn 1pm–5pm (closed Mondays, except Bank Holidays). Tel: 01407 769745

### ANNUAL EVENTS

In the eighteenth Century Holyhead was famous for its annual non-stop dancing competition, in which 'scores of girls jigged to the fiddle hour after hour until they all subsided in hilarious exhaustion!'

Today's cultural calendar includes many annual festivals:

**Holyhead Leisure Festival:** is a family festival centred on Holyhead held during the last weekend of July. The many attractions include crafts, exhibitions, children's

fun and evening entertainment.

**Lifeboat Days:** held at Trearddur Bay in June, and here as well as in Holyhead on the August Bank Holiday Sunday.

**Holyhead Arts Festival:** held during the last week of October and the first week of November, presents music and dance, lectures and exhibitions, including Welsh language events. **Tel: 01407 762090**

**Oyster & Shellfish Festival:** includes a food fair and cookery demonstrations and competitions, held during the second weekend of October. You can book an inclusive Friday to Sunday package, with accommodation, seafood dining, music and dancing. **Tel: 01248 752450**

**North Wales Old Gaffers Association:** Traditional boat sailing event held at the end of August/beginning of September each year.

A host of other events are arranged in Holyhead and elsewhere around Holy Island throughout the year. They include **August's Llaingoch Flower & Produce Show**.

Look out for sheepdog trials, local eisteddfodau (Welsh cultural events), craft displays and sporting events.

Further information on [www.holyheadtowncouncil.com](http://www.holyheadtowncouncil.com).

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## Anglesey Attractions

Road services to Holyhead are by the A55 North Wales Expressway with links to the M6 and M56 motorways and also the A5.

However, if you get fed up of driving everywhere then you can hire a bike from Cybi Bikes. This is a brand new cycle hire firm is open all year round and operates from 5 different 'hubs' located at key tourist spots on the wonderful Isle of Anglesey. Locations include the Port of Holyhead, Breakwater Country Park, Trearddur Bay, Valley and Blackthorn Caravan Park. Cybi Bikes cater for all ages and abilities and offers free breakdown cover as part of the service! For more information or to book a bike to start exploring on two wheels **Tel: 07717453806**.

Whilst Holyhead Town itself has many places of interest the town is also a perfect base to explore further afield:

**Beddmanarch Bay** and **Penrhos Coastal Park** are all musts on the tourist's list, while the beaches of Trearddur Bay are perfect for family fun. **Holyhead Golf Club**, with its 18-hole course, and the rugged landscape of the southern Holy Island, offer further alternatives for enjoyment.

**BEACHES** are a big attraction in Anglesey's 125 miles of coastline – indeed, many are award winners.

In 2006 five Anglesey beaches achieved the Blue Flag Award, 13 achieved the Green Coast Award, six achieved the Resort Seaside Award and 20 achieved the Rural Seaside Award. For more information regarding the beaches, slipways and other facilities, **Tel: 01248 752829**.

From the pebble beach of rugged **Trwyn Du** to the long, sandy expanse of **Rhosneigr**, there is something for everyone. A run down the list of beaches includes **Aberffraw**, which has attractive, dune-backed sands; **Rhoscolyn**, sandy again with good cliff walks, although parking is limited; **Trearddur Bay**, popular for waterskiing; **Cable Bay**, perfect for families and **Benllech**, very safe and another favourite with families. The award-winning **Llanddwyn** beach, which is backed by a forest; **Penmon Bay**, a shingle beach; and **Cemaes Bay**, which has five beaches – three sand and two pebble – are highly recommended. If messing about in

boats is more your style, there are several beaches which can be used for launching or canoeing.

Canoeing can be enjoyed at **Cemlyn Bay** where there is a natural lagoon and **Four Mile Bridge** is another popular location for this sport. Other places to note include **Porth Dafarch**, **Port Eilian** and **Moelfre** which is where the Royal Charter was wrecked in the middle of the last Century.

Windsurfers head for **Newry Beach** and **Penrhos Beach** at Holyhead (good for speed and slalom racing), the Inland Sea, which favours beginners, and **Lligwy Bay** where the more advanced enthusiasts get a chance to catch good waves. **Llanddwyn Bay** and **Rhoscolyn** also have plenty of followers, as does **Rhosneigr** which can become overcrowded at the height of the holiday months.

**Newry Beach** in Holyhead has a slipway into the harbour for launching and this is also a good fishing spot.

For full information about local or offshore weather and advice on maritime safety, call the Coastguard Service at Holyhead Tel **01407 762051** or [www.holyheadtowncouncil.com](http://www.holyheadtowncouncil.com) and follow links.

Wildlife also plays a major part in the life of Anglesey. Its variety sets it apart from most areas in Britain and there are a number of important reserves dotted around the island.

Twitchers, or bird watchers, will be in their element. At **South Stack**, the 800-acre reserve includes breeding grounds for **razorbills**, **terns**, **peregrines** and **guillemots**.




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The wild flowers in the summer and colourful heathland in the autumn rival the birds for the visitor's attention.

**Malltraeth** and the **Cefni Estuary** attract migrating **waders** and **wildfowl** which provide a spectacular sight in the autumn as they pass through. The **Skerries** is the nesting place for **Arctic terns** in summer and the Inland Sea also offers worthwhile watching in the winter.

**Seals** can be seen at **The Skerries** towards the end of the summer and **Ynys Dulas** is sometimes called **Seal Island** because it is often surrounded by the creatures.

Even the **Wylfa** Power Station has a variety of wildlife, plus a nature trail, while cod, **conger eels** and **whiting** swim in the waters in **Holyhead Bay**.

The **Foel Farm Park**, at **Brysiencyn**, is a family fun attraction and particularly appealing to the children who can feed the animals and enjoy free tractor rides. There is an adventure play area and indoor play den. More exotic fare is on offer at **Pili Palas** where butterflies, birds and creepy crawlies are the stars of the show.



The award-winning **Anglesey Sea Zoo**, at **Brysiencyn**, invites you to peer through underwater windows at a recreation of the undersea coastline with all manner of fishy residents on view. You can find out about pearls and explore a shipwreck. If the youngsters are still feeling energetic, the Pirates Playground will test them out, while mum and dad can relax over a coffee – albeit with piranhas for company!

Still on the animal theme, the **Anglesey Equestrian Centre** at **Bodedern** and **Gors Wen Riding Stables** in **Plas Road, Holyhead**, offers pony rides for children and riding lessons for grown-ups. You can adopt a pony for a day, hack around the country lanes or try your hand at a cross-country course.

The **Stone Science**, at **Pentraeth**, has been established since 1971 and takes you back through the ages to the time of the dinosaurs. Fossils, rocks, bones and carvings give you an idea of what the environment was like 650 million years ago.

Among other places of note are: the **Museum of Childhood**, the island's oldest independent attraction opened in 1973 – which is housed in nine rooms at **Beaumaris** and boasts 2,000 items, such as tin plate toys, a rocking horse and old dolls; **Beaumaris Gaol and Courthouse**, recalling cases of long ago (the gaol was built in 1829 and the courthouse some 200 years earlier); **Beaumaris Castle** is

regarded as the most technically perfect medieval castle in Britain. Started in 1295, it commanded the old ferry crossing to Anglesey. Most of the building was completed in 1298, but cash ran out and it was never completed. Designed by the Savoyard siege engineer, Master James of St George, it was very difficult to attack, although it was successfully besieged in 1403 by the army of Owain Glyndwr. Summer entertainments include medieval fairs; and **Anglesey Model Village and Gardens**, at **Newborough**, where all models are built to one twelfth of full size and include a working model railway.

Wales' only working **traditional windmill** can be found at **Llanddeusant**. It was built between September, 1775 and March, 1776 at a cost of £529 and a few shillings. Although it ceased milling in 1924, it was restored by Anglesey Borough Council and opened to the public in 1984 and is now in full working order. Wholemeal flour straight from the mill is now available, along with traditional Welsh cooking.

However, the biggest draw of all for visitors on Anglesey is **The Station at Llanfair PG**. otherwise known to the rest of the world as **Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwll-llantysiliogogoch**. The Victorians, for a lark, added everything from the first "gog" and the original lengthy sign from its famous railway station is now in a museum at **Penrhyn Castle**, near **Bangor**. You can sample Welsh delicacies such as bara brith or buy a souvenir to remind you of your visit.

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## Food Glorious Food

The island, as with the rest of Wales, is justly proud of its home-produced food and you will not be short of a suitable place to sample the fare. Restaurants abound, such as Bistro Maritime Museum, Stanley Arms and No. 79 Pub in Holyhead town centre and Trearddur Bay Hotel. Sea food, as to be expected, is a speciality of the island – and, of course, you can't beat the local fish and chips!



During October, there is the annual Oyster Fayre which is held in nearby Trearddur Bay, when concerts and choirs join in the fun as local oysters and beer are consumed in copious amounts.

If you want to catch your supper, Llyn Alaw could provide the answer. This is the largest lake on Anglesey and well known for its fine trout fishing, being well stocked with large rainbows and native wild browns; Alaw is also excellent for a family picnic and there are two bird hides to watch whatever wings its way around the lake.

Sea fishing is also available at Holyhead. Trips leave regularly.

## Holyhead Moving Forward

HOLYHEAD has grown over the years thanks in no small part to its proximity to the Irish coast. Since the formation of the Single European Market, the port has offered an ideal link from the Continent to Ireland.

The town's port area is owned by Stena Line and used by Stena and Irish Ferries. Today more than three million passengers pass through Holyhead each year. The port's future looks secure as investment and development increases.

Tourism and leisure are identified as growth sectors for the town and in particular Holyhead is now a growing cruise ship port of call. There are major opportunities on the horizon including the proposed new waterfront development by Stena/Conygar adjacent to Newry Beach and the new holiday village at Penrhos by Land & Lakes. Lateral power old Anglesey Aluminium site also a new Truck stop and road King.

Holyhead will benefit from V.V.P funding over the next 2 years, please contact the Town Clerk at the Town Hall for further information.

CAERGYBI ~ HOLYHEAD



# Holyhead Town Council

HOLYHEAD Town Hall which was opened on 31 August 1875 is the administrative centre for the Holyhead Town council and the first phase of the refurbishment program was completed in 2004. Phase two was completed in April 2007 with the completion of four new offices above the main hall.

The community of Holyhead elect 16 Councillors every four years to serve on the Town Council these councillors serve the community in their own time and do not get paid any allowances.

At the annual general meeting the Council elects the Town Mayor, who serves for one year until the next A.G.M.

The elected members also represent the Town Council on various outside committees which includes school governors, Holyhead VVP Project Board, Holyhead Joint Burial Board, Holyhead Project Board.

The Town Council employ 22 staff including:

A town clerk, who is responsible for the financial management of the council's budget, and also advises the council at council meetings and sub-committees in accordance with the local government acts.

A deputy clerk and a clerk/typist who is responsible for maintaining the council's data bases dealing with day to day enquiries in the Town Hall and taking minutes at council meetings.

A full-time caretaker is responsible for keeping the Town Hall clean and opening and closing the Town Hall.

A handyman and assistant handyman who maintain the Council's playing fields and also minor maintenance of the Town Hall.



The Town Council provides the following services to the community of Holyhead: Empire Complex Cinema and Fun Centre; CCTV for the town; Public Toilets in town; maintenance of 7 playing fields in the Holyhead area; the operation of the Town Hall and letting of its facilities; maintenance of Maeshyfyrd Cemetery and Plas Road Allotments; part responsibility for maintenance of the Town Clock; the War Memorial; the Dutch Navy Memorial; Bus Shelters; Town Trail Information Boards; Left Luggage Facility in the Port; Cleaning of the Celtic Gateway Bridge; and production of this Town Guide. Most recently, the Town Council is now also providing Lase Quaser, a dedicated activity for the youth of the town. This facility has created 2 new jobs for the Town and is also available for hire off site. More information can be found on the Town Council web site [www.holyheadtowncouncil.com](http://www.holyheadtowncouncil.com)





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