

Denbigh Town

Background

The medieval town of Denbigh is located in the Vale of Clwyd (pronounced *clew-id*), an area of outstanding natural beauty, and is the county town of Denbighshire in North-east Wales. It has about 9,000 inhabitants, and is twinned with Biebertal in Germany. The local landscape is very distinctive, with the 300-metre high Clwydian Hills to the east and the River Clwyd in the valley. The area has been inhabited since pre-historic times, with evidence of Roman activity. The town dates back to 1290 and was a successful market town during the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1, based around the glove-making industry. Denbigh retains much of its medieval character, including the castle and town defences, and is a good example of a walled town.

The Castle

The Welsh name for the town (*Dinbych*) means 'little fortress' and the remains of the historic Denbigh Castle dominate the skyline of the town. It is one of the castles built by King Edward I of England during his conquest of Wales. It stands on a rocky promontory above the town. The current stone castle was begun by Henry de Lacy, 3rd Earl of Lincoln, to whom King Edward had granted the territory, shortly after the defeat of the last native Welsh prince in 1282. The original plan of the castle consisted of a long span of curtain walls with irregularly spaced projecting, half-round towers with two gateways. These original walls now form the town walls. After an attack by the English in 1646 during the Civil War, the castle was damaged, and is now largely a ruin.

Famous people from Denbigh include the 19C explorer, Henry Morton Stanley (after whom one of the Howell's school boarding houses is named), who allegedly uttered the famous words "Dr Livingstone I presume?"; Mark Webster, World Darts Champion, 2008; and Shefali Chowdhury, who plays Parvati Patil in the *Harry Potter* movies.