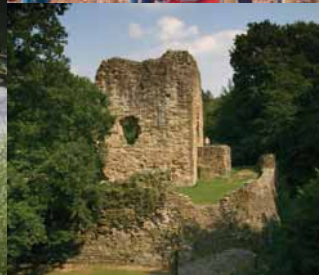


Discover Wepre Park



Flintshire Countryside Service

Gwasanathau Cefn Gwlad Sir y Fflint



Where to Walk
Explore Ewloe Castle
Wepre's
Historic Hall
An Oasis
for Wildlife



Welcome to Wepre Park

Wepre Park is an ancient woodland rich in wildlife and history. It is a greatly valued green space for the residents of Connah's Quay, and used by over 200,000 visitors from across the region annually. It's 160 acres are cared for on a daily basis by Flintshire Countryside Service so that everyone can enjoy its beautiful open spaces and facilities.

There are many features of interest in the park, most notably its fascinating history, geology and wildlife. These are described in more detail in this booklet, but as you would expect with any historic landscape, there are lots more interesting corners to explore!

The Name - The meaning of Wepre is thought to be derived from 'Gwy' - water, and 'bre' - hill, or Gwybre as it was perhaps once called. The name Wepre has changed many times in the last 800 years. Some variations are:- Gwybre, Weppra, Gwepre, Wepper, Wepra, Gweppra and Weppir.

The Visitor Centre - Built on the site of the Old Hall in 1989, what you see today is Mark 2 of the original after an arson attack in July 2003 that destroyed two thirds of the roof structure. You can still see the scorch marks on one of the pillars that support the roof.

Coal pits - The shallow depressions scattered throughout the woods are abandoned coal pits dug in the early 1880's and in the Depression of the 1930's.



Pont Aber - The little arched stone bridge that crosses Wepre Brook near the castle was built just after Wepre Hall in 1800. It was actually an older bridge, Pont Saeson, that was demolished further up the valley and rebuilt where you see it today.

Waterfall - The dam and waterfall were created by the Victorian residents of the Old Hall. Originally water was sent from here into a turbine that produced electricity for the Hall.

Old Hall Gardens - Behind the Visitor Centre you'll find the remains of what was once the well tended formal garden of Wepre Hall. Look closely and you'll see remains of the outhouses and extensive greenhouses that serviced them. Most of the original path network is still open, and leads you beneath a canopy of ornamental exotic trees, planted in the late 18th century. Look out for the Pet Cemetery, and 'Rector', one of the Fremes' family dogs, who was 'shot' in March 1890 because he 'ate without stint lamb without mint'!

Ghosts - There are many local stories about ghosts that roam the Park. One of the most infamous is of Nora the Nun, who seems to have had an unfortunate end. Local stories describe her as either having her head cut off after an affair with a monk, drowning in the Rosie Pool after dropping her illegitimate child in the water, or being hit by a bomb somewhere near the waterfall!

Guardian of the Woods - You will find him if you climb the steps beside the waterfall and walk along the top of the valley opposite the Visitor Centre. He was carved by Phil Bews in 1994 from the remains of a dead beech tree. It represents the wealth of wildlife that lives in the woodlands that need our protection and care.

Produced by Flintshire Countryside Service 2006.
Graphics & repro by Jane Searle. Mapping by Bill Smutts.
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The Red Rocks



Red Rocks is one of the more visible and dramatic features that you might see if you take a walk in Wepre Park, and it's easy to get to. It is just one of many stony outcrops in the Park, another of which has been used at the foundations of Ewloe Castle.

These rocks are a hard sandstone or millstone grit, named so because it was an ideal material for making millstones, for milling flour and sharpening steel blades. The hardness of the rock has also been valued for flagstones and building blocks in the past. Much of Ewloe Castle is constructed with it, as are the few original estate walls that can be seen near the Visitor Centre. The first manor building that once stood on the site of the Visitor Centre would also certainly have been sandstone.

Red Rocks are a sedimentary rock, which means that they were sorted and deposited by water. The Britain of 320 million years ago (Lower Carboniferous period) was covered by a massive tropical river delta, similar to the Ganges or Mississippi deltas today. Layer upon layer of sand, mud and gravels were constantly washed by the sea tides and river flow into shifting

banks. Look closely at the rock faces and you will see the clear sweeping curves of the shapes of these sandbanks that are now preserved in the rock record.

The rocks have a distinctive red colour, which is typical of many outcrops of sandstone in this region. One of the most common chemicals that form rocks is iron. The Earth itself is over 35% iron. Much of the iron in the original sands and gravels has oxidised, or rusted, in the warm and wet tropical conditions of all those millions of years ago, giving the rocks their characteristic colour.

These rocks are also a flag to geologists that there could be coal seams lower down in the rock sequence. Indeed, Wepre Park has many small surface pits, dug by hand before the heavy machinery of the Industrial Revolution was invented. To this day, there is still a rich seam of coal that exists below Wepre Park and stretches almost to the A494 at Queensferry, but it is very unlikely that this will ever be mined.

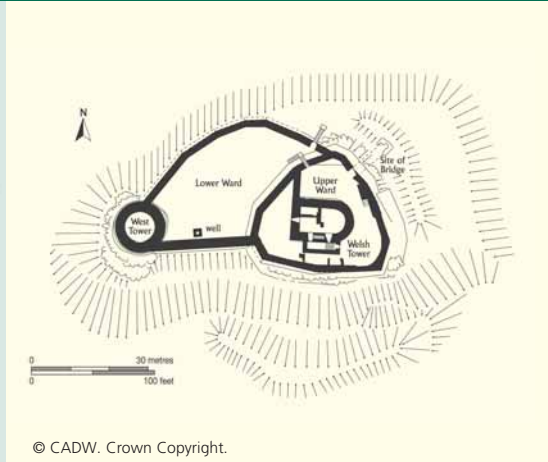
Turn to page 6 to find out where Red Rocks are and see them for yourselves. Red Rocks can be accessed by using the Main Trail which is suitable for buggies and wheelchairs.



Ewloe Castle



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Wars, skirmishes and beheadings

Wales of the early 11th Century was a well organised, peaceful patchwork of Welsh kingdoms. They lived within their own structure of laws and customs. They patronised the arts, built churches, founded abbeys and produced many fine poets.

After the Norman Invasion of England in 1066AD, the conquering Normans gave land as rewards to their supporters. When lands became scarce in England in 1070AD they turned their eyes to Wales. They set up bases at Chester and Shrewsbury from which their soldiers could fight the Welsh of Gwynedd and Powys. This resulted in battles and skirmishes over the lands between the Dee and Conwy rivers, including the area of Ewloe Castle.

By 1255, the powerful Welsh Prince Llewelyn ap Gruffydd had established himself as ruler of Gwynedd although his rule extended almost to Chester. In the same year, from the English side of the border, Roger de Mantalt added the manor

of Ewloe to his lordship of Hawarden. He enclosed Ewloe Forest as a private hunting park, an act which infuriated Llewelyn. He destroyed the park enclosure and reclaimed the land for the Welsh, pushing back the border between England and Wales. Two years afterwards, Llewelyn built "the castle in the corner of the wood", in defiance of the English Monarchy.

However, the castle and its surrounding forest fell to the English again only 20 years later. In 1277, after bringing prosperity and stability to England, Henry's son Edward I began his invasion of Wales. In just over a month the Earl of Warwick took Ewloe Castle and drove the Welsh out of Tegeingl, an area roughly the equivalent of Flintshire. Llewelyn was forced to submit.

Five years later, in 1282, the Welsh Princes rallied again against the English forces, but this time both Llewelyn and his brother Dafydd were caught and beheaded. It marked the end of the 200 year struggle by the Welsh against the forces of Norman England.



Ewloe Castle

The castle explained

Native Welsh castles, like Ewloe, differ in shape and function from the Norman fortresses built along the North Wales coast. Ewloe Castle was built as a deliberate statement to the English invaders that Ewloe Forest belonged to the Welsh.

Look at the defences of Ewloe and you will see its many weaknesses. It has low, insubstantial curtain walls. Its gatehouse was not built to be strong, and its internal spaces are irregular enclosed areas that would be hard to control during an attack. Ewloes' two towers would have only been two or three storeys high, and even at the top of them it would be almost impossible to see if an enemy was about to attack from the woodlands. The whole castle is overlooked from higher ground, and there are "blind spots" from the curtain walls! The Welsh never intended their castles to withstand a siege. Theirs instead was a guerrilla war.

What makes Ewloe Castle unique is the free standing apsidal or "D" shaped tower, known as the 'Welsh Tower'. This would have been the castle keep, which was the living quarters of the Lord of the castle, and a last stronghold of defence. Look out for the steps at either side of the original drawbridge entrance that would have accessed the 'wall walk'. You can also still see the holes in the keep wall that would have held the timber joists under the floorboards of the first floor living area of the castle.

For more information on this fascinating site, we recommend a booklet produced by CADW, titled, 'Flint Castle, Ewloe Castle', available from the Visitor Centre.



A Walk at Wepre

Wepre Park is much larger than you may expect. Its 160 acres of beautiful and ancient woodlands, pools and glades follow Wepre Brook along its course almost as far as the village of Ewloe, and are well worth exploring.

Features and Landmarks

1. Wepre Brook

2. Visitor Centre (see page 2)

3. Play Area - The most popular in the region. Active fun for tots and juniors.

4. Old Golf Course - Rolling meadows with superb views over the Dee and Wirral.

5. The Waterfall - Originally constructed to drive a turbine that generated electricity for the Old Hall.

6. Sports Pavillion - Football changing rooms. Contact Deeside Leisure Centre on 01244 814725.

7. Rosie Pool - Created in the late 18th century for sport and a domestic stock of fish for the Old Hall kitchens. Contact Connah's Quay Angling Club on 01244 813674.

8. Rosie Woods - Look out for tiny brown Tree creepers and blue Nuthatches clinging to the trunks of these tall conifers.

9. Old Hall Gardens - The original pleasure gardens of Wepre Old Hall. Landscaped in 1880, they have slipped from their former glory but retain many features, including a Pet Cemetery and a mature arboretum of Giant Redwoods and Monkey Puzzle trees. Look for the original garden wall beside the golf course.

10. The Dell - A grassy meadow that is cut once a year to encourage wildflowers.

11. The Ford - Popular spot for summer paddles!

12. Taylors Wood & Meadow - Worth the walk up to this side of the valley for its peace and quiet, and early morning sunshine. Alive with butterflies during the summer!

13. The Guardian of the Woods (see page 2).



14. The Boardwalk wet meadow - Look out here for birds that depend on the Brook. Dippers and Grey wagtails are regular visitors.

15. Red Rocks (see page 3).

16. Brewery Pond & Bridge - Very little remains now of the old Fox's Brewery (1844-c1950) that used the spring feeding this pool. Any older bottles that surface in the park will be from here.

17. Devils' Basin - A shallow pool at the furthest reaches of Wepre Brook.

18. Ewloe Castle - The easy walk to the castle is 1 kilometre from the car park, but finishes with a flight of steps (see page 4).

19. Pont Aber (see page 2)

Access - The path surfaces at the front of the park are suitable for buggies and wheelchairs. The rest of the walks are in a woodland setting and may be muddy or uneven. Flights of steps and steeper path sections are marked on the map. Please note that the only permitted method of access to Wepre Park is on foot.

'Respect, Protect, Enjoy' - Please use the Countryside Code when you are walking at Wepre or anywhere else in the outdoors. You can pick up a leaflet with the full code at the Visitor Centre, or at www.ccw.gov.uk

Dogs - Wepre Park is a popular dog walking area. We welcome responsible owners who know that it is their duty to make sure their dog is not a danger or a nuisance. Please keep your dog on a lead if you cannot rely on its obedience and always clean up after it.

Bylaws - Wepre Park is subject to local bylaws, which the Rangers will enforce. Wepre Park is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and any damage or disturbance to the site could result in a fine of up to £20,000. These are offences to which the police can be called. More information is available at the Visitor Centre.

Wepre Old Hall



Where the Visitor Centre stands today has been the site of at least two other buildings in the past. There was probably a Saxon dwelling here as long ago as the 7th century, a good 300 years before the Domesday Book of 1068AD talks of a "William" living on the estate, then owned by St. Werburgh's Abbey of Chester.

After a period of war and uncertainty as the Welsh Princes warred with the English it is certain that an older version of the hall stood on the site. By 1430, the sole heiress of this hall and the surrounding estate was Gwladys. Two hundred years later, during the Civil War of 1645, Edward Morgan, a Royalist, is recorded as staying at the older hall. He is probably the same Captain Morgan that commanded a battery of artillery during the siege of Chester. His remains were found in an unmarked grave at the edge of the marsh near Llanasa, where he was probably murdered.

In 1695, Wepre was owned by Basil Fitzherbert who managed to pass the ancient manor house down through four generations until his great grandson, Thomas, died leaving the house to his widow Mary Ann Fitzherbert. She quickly made plans to sell up but the ancient house was left empty for another four years until it was finally sold in 1788.

The classic Georgian Wepre Hall, pictured above, was built in 1788 by Edward Jones after demolishing the Fitzherberts' ancient manor house. Edward was just 41, but had become a rich man after lead was found on his land near Holywell. At the time, his new nine-bedroom Hall, built for himself plus his wife and eight children, would have been the height of luxury. He enlarged his estate by purchasing farms at Broadoak, Killins, Colomendy and Pen Gwladlys. He also owned land in Kelsterton, Flint, Northop, Shotton and Hawarden. Despite his riches, he died in debt in 1825 and much of his property was sold.



Wepre Old Hall



The Hall was then rented to various families until 1865 when John Rowden Freme bought the Hall from the family of Edward Jones. John Freme came from Worcestershire and had made his money from trading in Liverpool.

The Freme family lived at Wepre Hall for 55 years. Many older local people still have childhood memories of the family, of their everyday lives, and of the dances and parties that they used to hold here. Many photographs also remain of the these last great days of the estate before the onset of the First World War, some of which are reproduced below. The Old Hall Gardens are the only remaining evidence that you can see in the Park of what was a glorious Georgian home.

Wepre Hall estate changed hands again in 1920. It was bought by Mr Roberts of Wallasey. Much of the estate was then sold off as building land.

After the army and air force used the Hall during World War II, Connah's Quay Urban District Council acquired the Hall and what little remained of the estate for £10,000 in 1943. Thus began its sad decline. The Hall was converted into flats, but in 1960 the district council demolished the Hall.

Today the estate is owned by Flintshire County Council.



An Oasis for Wildlife



An adult badger can live up to 14 years, and weigh as much as 18kg.



Each Great Crested newt can be identified by a unique 'fingerprint' of black spots on its underside.

Wepre's woodlands are ancient and untouched by man. They are the last remnant of the great Ewloe Forest, which stretched down to the banks of the River Dee in the 11th century. Wepre's woodland floor has never been cultivated or built on, and its meadows and ponds have never been improved or drained.

Over the centuries this quiet stability has resulted in an exceptionally rich wildlife habitat. Wepre is now an outstanding oasis for native birds, plants and animals within Connah's Quay, including several rare and protected species. The Park is now identified and protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act as part of the 'Connahs Quay Ponds and Woodlands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)'. This protection ensures that Wepre's wildlife and habitats will remain undisturbed now and for the future.

Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*

Britain's biggest newt looks spectacularly like a miniature dragon, and thrives in most of Wepre's ponds. These amphibians have a lot in common with frogs and toads. At home on land or in water, newts still need constant damp conditions to protect their delicate skin. Look out for them on warm spring nights rising for air on the surface of their breeding pools. A full grown adult can measure up to 12cm long. The adult males are at their most spectacular in spring when they develop their distinctive jagged crest. **NATIONALLY RARE & PROTECTED BY LAW.**

Badgers *Meles meles*

Our largest native mammal lives in and around Wepre, using its powerful front feet and claws to dig a 'sett' of underground tunnels and chambers. Up to 12 badgers will live together, but just one female will breed and have her cubs in February. Badgers spend the night foraging for earthworms, insects, and fruit, but are often active during the day. The best way to see badgers in the wild is to join in with an organised event. Clwyd Badger Group (www.badgers.org.uk/clwydbadgergroup) and Flintshire Countryside Service can give you further details. **NATIONALLY PROTECTED BY LAW.**



An Oasis for Wildlife

Wildlife Challenge

There are many other plants and animals that rely on the protection of Wepre's woodlands for their survival. Check out the lists below and see just how much of the commoner wildlife you can see during a walk here.

Spring Flowers

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood anemones | <input type="checkbox"/> Wild daffodils (native) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snowdrops | <input type="checkbox"/> Bluebells (native) |

Trees

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oak | <input type="checkbox"/> Ash |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wild Cherry | <input type="checkbox"/> Rowan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Larch | <input type="checkbox"/> Scots pine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deodar cedar | <input type="checkbox"/> Monkey puzzle |

Mammals

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fox | <input type="checkbox"/> Badger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grey Squirrel | <input type="checkbox"/> Bat |

Birds

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blue tit | <input type="checkbox"/> Great tit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Long tailed tit | <input type="checkbox"/> Coal tit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nuthatch | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree creeper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jay | <input type="checkbox"/> Buzzard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blackbird | <input type="checkbox"/> Robin |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood pigeon | <input type="checkbox"/> Sparrow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wren | <input type="checkbox"/> Mallard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Coot | <input type="checkbox"/> Woodpecker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dipper | <input type="checkbox"/> Heron |

Insects

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speckled wood butterfly | <input type="checkbox"/> Peacock butterfly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Red Admiral butterfly | <input type="checkbox"/> Dragonfly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Damselfly | <input type="checkbox"/> Shield bug |

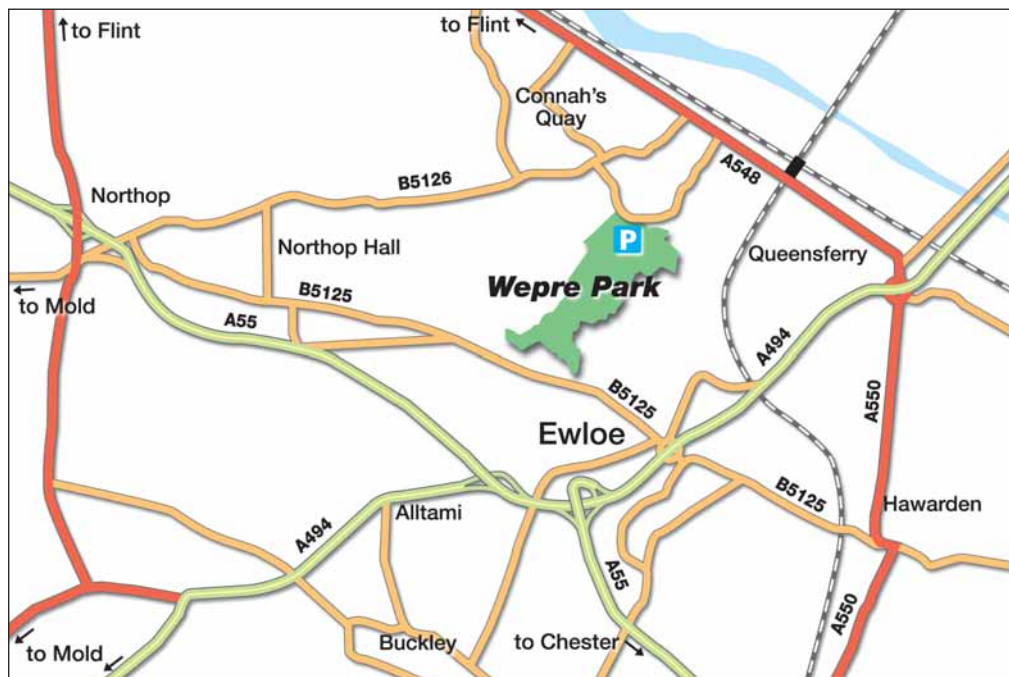
Amphibians

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Frog | <input type="checkbox"/> Toad |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|

You can help us to protect the wildlife in Wepre for everyone else to enjoy, now and in the future by following these two simple rules: Take your litter home with you. Do not pick flowers in the park or the woods.



How to find Wepre Park



Wepre Park facilities



Countryside Events Programme

The Rangers run a programme of inspirational walks, talks and events at Wepre Park and at other countryside sites across Flintshire. Pick up a brochure at the Visitor Centre for more details.

For even more information about what's on in the countryside across the region, visit www.fresh-air.info

Travel information

For public transport details of getting to and from Wepre Park, call Traveline on **0871 200 22 33** or visit the travel planner on www.traveline-cymru.org.uk.

Flintshire Countryside Service

Contact us at:
Wepre Visitor Centre, Wepre Park, Connah's Quay,
Flintshire CH5 4HL

t: 01244 814931

fx: 01244 816625

e: countryside@flintshire.gov.uk

www.flintshire.gov.uk/countryside

Mae fersiwn Cymraeg o'r cyhoeddiad hwn ar gael.

Please contact us if you require this leaflet in another format eg. large print.

