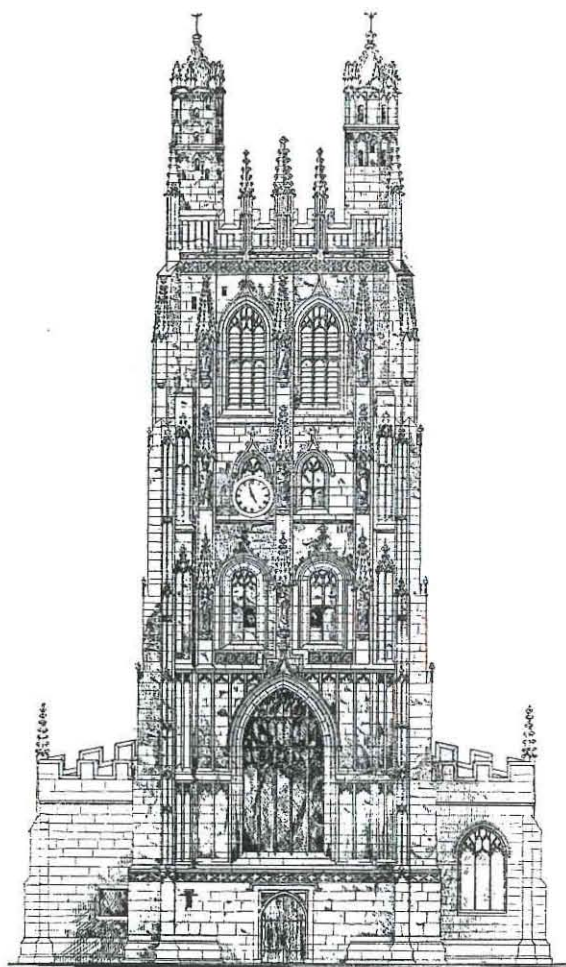


THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

WELSH HISTORIC CHURCHES PROJECT

THE HISTORIC CHURCHES OF FLINTSHIRE AND
WREXHAM COUNTY BOROUGH



The west tower at Wrexham

Report prepared for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

by Bob Silvester

CPAT Report No 324

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WREXHAM COUNTY BOROUGH**

CHURCH SURVEY

By BOB SILVESTER

June 1999

Report for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments

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WELSH HISTORIC CHURCHES PROJECT
A REGIONAL OVERVIEW OF FLINTSHIRE AND WREXHAM COUNTY BOROUGH

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report offers a summary and overview of the desk-top analysis and fieldwork on churches in the modern counties of Flintshire and Wrexham County Borough which were undertaken as part of the Cadw-funded Welsh Historic Churches Project during 1996, with additional information incorporated subsequently.

The scope of the project as defined by Cadw in their Project Brief of February 1995 was a survey of all pre-19th century churches vested in the Church in Wales, but excluding nineteenth-century Anglican churches on greenfield sites, nonconformist chapels, Roman Catholic churches, cemeteries and monastic houses. To this list of exclusions, cathedrals were added at a later date. Churches rebuilt in the 19th century were to be examined for the survival of earlier fabric and form. An overall aim of the programme was to achieve complete coverage of all historic churches throughout Wales within a span of the three or four years.

2 METHODOLOGY

The twin approach of desk-top analysis and fieldwork has created a body of evidence for each church which should allow the determination of the background history, the major visible constructional phases, the extent of surviving stonework of medieval and post-medieval origin, and the fixture and fittings that pre-date the 19th century.

The desk-top analysis utilised published sources, most notably: Edward Hubbard's volume on Clwyd (1976) in the *Buildings of Wales* series which provided the authoritative base for the initial work and has been cited heavily in the individual church reports; the early 20th-century *History of the Diocese of St Asaph* by Archdeacon Thomas which appeared in its three-volume second edition between 1908 and 1913, and described all of the churches here with the exception of Whitewell; and the national and regional archaeological journals which in the past have published such valuable papers as Sir Stephen Glynne's 19th-century notes on churches throughout Wales, and Fred Crossley's descriptions of church screens. For unpublished documentary information, the National Library was used. Its collection of 19th and 20th-century church faculties and some parish records provided the major source of data, together with further information held in the Diocesan Office at St Asaph. The Royal Commission's records housed in the National Monument Record at Aberystwyth were also consulted, as was the relevant Sites and Monuments Record.

Fieldwork initially involved a single trip to each church and churchyard, the duration of the time spent on site dictated by the complexity of the church. A small, simple church such as Berse Drelincourt required little more than an hour, a larger church with a complex structure and rich fittings such as Holt or Wrexham necessitated at least four hours and perhaps more. Pro forma sheets were used for recording the architectural and archaeological details of each cell of the building, both externally and internally, the fittings of pre 19th-century date, and the various attributes of the churchyard. Those churches that were entirely rebuilt during the Victorian era were recorded in outline detail. An existing plan of the church was used for annotated notes, but if no such plan was available as was often the case, a sketch was prepared. Photography, both colour slides and monochrome prints, was taken where appropriate. A second visit was paid to most churches in order to confirm some of the detail.

The results from fieldwork and the desk-top study were integrated in a computerised database. Free-text memo fields were used to produce prose descriptions of the history, architecture, furnishings and fittings, churchyard, bibliographic references, and brief general and architectural summaries, which could then be output as individual church reports. Other non-memo fields in the database carried other information collected during the study. The individual church reports have or will be printed and circulated separately. The archive comprising the original sheets and any secondary documentation collected during the survey, together with the photography, is retained by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust at Welshpool. The present overview was, of necessity, compiled after the individual church reports, and relied on a new and subsidiary database that held data on the significant attributes of each church.

3 THE RESOURCE

Thirty-three churches have been included in the survey of Flintshire and Wrexham County Borough, and as noted above these were classed as historic on the basis that the church or its predecessor had been in existence in 1800. This total does not of course include all the churches in the historic county of Flintshire, some of which have under the local government reorganisations of 1974 and 1996, been transferred to Denbighshire. Reference to these churches will be found in the companion report on that county (Silvester 1998).

The full list in alphabetical order is:

Bangor Is-y-coed	Hawarden	Northop
Berse Drelincourt	Holt	Overton
Caerwys	Holywell	Penley
Chirk	Hope	Ruabon
Cilcain	Isycoed	Trelawnyd
Erbistock	Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog	Treuddyn
Flint	Llanasa	Whitewell
Glyn Ceiriog	Marchwiel	Whitford
Gresford	Mold	Worthenbury
Gwaenysgor	Nannerch	Wrexham
Hanmer	Nercwys	Ysceifiog

Of the total, thirty-two churches are in the diocese of St Asaph, while Whitewell is anomalous in that it is the only church in Wales in the diocese of Chester. It is thus within the Church of England rather than within its Welsh counterpart.

4 CHURCH SITES: ORIGINS

4.1 Pre-Norman Ecclesiastical Sites

The identification of those churches whose origins, in whatever form, lie in the early medieval era depends largely on a combination of circumstantial evidence: the curvilinearity of churchyards (see section 7.1.1), dedications to British (i.e. Celtic) saints (see section 8.1.1) and specific topographic locations (see Edwards and Lane 1992, 3ff). Individually none of these criteria may be significant, but collectively they can assist in the determination of pre-Conquest (i.e. pre-1066) foundations. In Flintshire and Wrexham County Borough we can isolate thirteen certain and probable early medieval church sites and five possible ones. Gresford, Gwaenysgor, Hawarden, Llanasa and Whitford - are all recorded in Domesday Book (1086), but in the case of Gresford doubts have been thrown on whether the early church was in the same location as the present building.

Probable

Bangor Is-y-coed	Holywell	Nannerch
Cilcain	Hope	Northop
Gwaenysgor	Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog	Ruabon
Hanmer	Llanasa	Whitford
Hawarden		

Possible

Glyn Ceiriog	Mold	Wrexham
Gresford	Nercwys	

Two churches – Bangor Is-y-coed and Northop – have been claimed as early monastic sites (*classau* or mother churches), on the basis of later documentary references. The evidence for Bangor is strong, assuming of course that the present church is on the same site as its early medieval predecessor, but the case for Northop is based more on assumption.

Bangor Is-y-coed

Northop

Only two churches have inscribed stones of early medieval date. That in Whitford is known to have been brought from Caerwys by the antiquarian Thomas Pennant while the date of a round-headed cross built into the wall at Hope needs to be confirmed.

Caerwys

Hope

4.2 Medieval Ecclesiastical sites

Those churches that originated in the post-Conquest period are not always easy to define, but nine certain or probable examples are listed here. The evidence is strongest where a church was founded in a newly established settlement such as at Holt at the end of the 13th century, Overton which looks to be a foundation of the 12th century, and Flint which was one of Edward I's foundations. Chirk, too, has the appearance of a plantation town yet there was a *maerdref* here in the 12th century and an earlier origin for the church is not out of the question. For the churches in smaller settlements an attribution of a medieval origin is as likely to result from an absence of evidence to suggest anything earlier, as at Trelawnyd and Ysceifiog with their rectangular churchyards and English dedications.

The foundation dates for Marchwiell and Worthenbury are uncertain. Both were medieval chapelries and there is thus nothing to suggest an early medieval beginning, but in the case of the latter there are suspicions that it might have had an early origin.

Caerwys
Chirk
Erbistock
Flint

Holt
Marchwiell
Overton
Trelawnyd

Treuddyn
Worthenbury
Ysceifiog

4.3 Post-medieval Ecclesiastical Sites

Only three churches are known to have been built on new (greenfield) sites during the post-Reformation centuries. Penley was established as a chapel of ease in the 16th century, and Berse Drelincourt was founded in 1742. Whitewell's history is obscure for though a chapel of ease is recorded in 1570 that building may not have been on this site.

Berse Drelincourt

Penley

Whitewell

5 MEDIEVAL AND LATER CHURCHES

5.1 SURVIVAL

No church in the area has fabric which can be attributed to the pre-Conquest era, and medieval masonry survival is as might be expected variable. Furthermore no church in the region has remained completely unaltered since the medieval period, though Wrexham, Holt and Gresford are little changed. Listed below are

all the churches where medieval fabric and architectural details survive to give the building a largely authentic medieval appearance. Mold is included in this group despite the presence of its 18thC tower.

Caerwys	Holt	Mold
Chirk	Hope	Ruabon
Gresford	Llanasa	Wrexham
Gwaenysgor		

Some churches have seen partial rebuilding or reconstruction. Cilcain had its north aisle rebuilt in 1746, and Holywell has a medieval tower and possible remnants of the nave but with post-medieval aisles and an apse. Hawarden is atypical in that it has some medieval masonry but most of this was re-faced in the 19th century.

Cilcain	Holywell	Northop
Hanmer	Nercwys	Overton
Hawarden		

In two churches rebuilding in the 18th or 19th century has left little more than medieval masonry and perhaps one or two features. Whitford, for instance, has only its north aisle remaining and this is masked by render.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Whitford
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The survival of a medieval tower appended to a Victorian church does not occur as commonly as in Powys, the only example being Northop.

5.2 ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

5.2.1 Norman (or Romanesque) Only two churches in Flintshire and Wrexham County Borough appear to have architectural remains attributable to this period, and neither is absolutely certain. The small round-headed window in Chirk looks sound but must be re-set in a much later wall. The tower arch at Nercwys appears to be authentic but the puzzle is that in the 19th century Sir Stephen Glynne referred to it as a pointed arch.

Chirk	Nercwys
-------	---------

5.2.2 Early English None of the churches in the region has any features surviving from this period.

5.2.3 Decorated This period, variously dated from c.1250 to 1275 through to 1350 or later, is better represented than its predecessor. Certainly there are churches such as Cilcain and Nercwys which are believed to have been constructed during this phase though they do not retain any distinctive architectural elements.

Nine churches retain diagnostic features. Hawarden, Wrexham and Bangor have 14th-century arcades, the last of these also with renewed reticulated tracery in its east window. Caerwys has windows of this period, Gresford the lower part of the tower including the west door and perhaps a blocked window, Ruabon's tower also on the basis of the west door and its overall appearance, while Overton's tower is wholly Decorated.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Hawarden	Ruabon
Caerwys	Nercwys	Wrexham
Gresford	Overton	

5.2.4 Perpendicular A large number of the churches in this area witnessed extensive modification during the Perpendicular phase (late 14th, 15th and early 16th centuries). Nineteen are listed below and rebuilding in the 18th and 19th centuries has certainly accounted for others. Gresford and Wrexham, and to a lesser extent Chirk, Holt, Mold and Overton represent outstanding examples of Perpendicular architecture. For Gwaenysgor, Hanmer, Holywell, Llanasa, Mold, Northop and Whitford, this is the earliest period represented architecturally, though earlier but undiagnostic fabric may survive in churches such as Gwaenysgor.

More specific lists are provided after the general list.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Hawarden	Nercwys
Caerwys	Holt	Northop
Chirk	Holywell	Overton
Cilcain	Hope	Ruabon
Gresford	Llanasa	Whitford
Gwaenysgor	Mold	Wrexham
Hanmer		

Windows Square-headed windows are found in Caerwys, Gwaenysgor, and in the tower at Holywell, but four-centred windows are more common, occurring in Bangor where they are virtually the only surviving Perpendicular features in the church, Chirk, Gresford, Hanmer, Holt, the tower at Holywell, Mold, Nercwys, the tower at Northop, and Wrexham. East windows remain in Cilcain, Chirk, Gresford, Gwaenysgor, Hanmer, Holt, Llanasa, Mold and Wrexham, and there are clerestorey windows at Gresford, Mold and Wrexham.

At Caerwys and Hope the window dressings have been completely renewed though accompanying hoodmoulds are original, and these are listed. But at some churches, and Hawarden and Ruabon are examples, the windows in Perpendicular style were completely renewed or replaced in the 19th century. As it is not always possible to determine whether these are accurate replications of their predecessors, they are not included in the following list.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Hanmer	Mold
Caerwys	Holt	Nercwys
Chirk	Holywell	Northop
Cilcain	Hope	Overton
Gresford	Llanasa	Wrexham
Gwaenysgor		

Doorways The main doors at Chirk, Hanmer, Holt, Mold, Ruabon and Wrexham are Perpendicular, though those at Mold and Ruabon are of late date. The west doors in the towers at Gresford, Hanmer, Holt, Hope and Northop are also of this period as are the priest's doors at Bangor and Cilcain.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Hanmer	Northop
Chirk	Holt	Ruabon
Cilcain	Hope	Wrexham
Gresford	Mold	

Towers Complete or largely complete towers remain at Chirk, Hanmer, Holt, Hope, Northop and Wrexham, while the bottom stage of Cilcain, the upper stages of Gresford and Hawarden, and the fenestration at Holywell are of this period.

At Gresford, Hanmer, Hope and Northop the towers do not seem to have been completed until well into the Elizabethan era.

Chirk	Hawarden	Northop
Cilcain	Holt	Whitford
Gresford	Holywell	Wrexham
Hanmer	Hope	

Other features Perpendicular arcades are found at Chirk, Gresford, Hope, Mold, Northop, Overton and Whitford, and partial arcades at Cilcain and Holt. The arches supporting the central tower at Hawarden are also Perpendicular. The only Perpendicular porch is at Gresford.

Decorative friezes and string courses embellish the external wall faces at Gresford, Hanmer, Holt, Mold and Wrexham and the tower at Northop.

Chirk	Holt	Northop
Cilcain	Hope	Overton
Gresford	Mold	Whitford
Hanmer	Nercwys	Wrexham
Hawarden		

5.2.5 Post-medieval era Sixteen churches exhibit recognisable and sometimes documented alterations for the period from the later 16thC through to the beginning of the 19thC, ranging from the construction of the whole building to the addition of a window or door. Isycoed is included here for it is of Georgian build though built in the early part of the 19thC, but Overton where the chancel of 1710 was remodelled in the Victorian era is excluded.

New churches of the period that have survived in part or in toto are:

Berse Drelincourt (1742)	Isycoed (1829)	Trelawnyd (1724)
Glyn Ceiriog (late 18thC)	Marchwiell (1778/1789)	Worthenbury (1736-9)

Building or rebuilding, sometimes extensive, occasionally more in the way of modifications or additions, is evidenced at eight churches. The tower and south aisle at Bangor were rebuilt in 1727, a large part of the north aisle of Cilcain in 1746, the south porch at Gwaenysgor may be later than the 16thC date sometimes attributed to it, the chancel at Hanmer was added in 1720, the body of the church at Holywell was rebuilt in 1769/70, the arcade at Llanasa is of 1739 and the small tower, too, may be 17thC or later, the tower at Mold dates from 1768-73, the tower at Nercwys was partially rebuilt in 1723, and chapels were added at Ruabon in 1755 and 1769.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Holywell	Nercwys
Cilcain	Llanasa	Ruabon
Hanmer	Mold	

On an individual basis new windows have been recorded at only two churches:

Gwaenysgor (?)	Llanasa
----------------	---------

New doorways appear at:

Caerwys (1780)
Chirk (?)
Cilcain (1746)

Gresford (18thC)
Gwaenysgor

Llanasa (1750)
Nercwys (17thC?)

5.2.6 19th century

As in most other regions of east Wales, there was considerable rebuilding during the Victorian era, and virtually no church escaped the attention of the restorers. The scale, though, ranged from complete replacement to mild restoration. Externally only Caerwys and Chirk show few changes.

Complete and total replacement of the church occurred at eight sites, the most drastic being Flint. A major fire at Hanmer in 1889 led to extensive rebuilding, though the skeletal frame of the earlier church remained. Some churches were largely rebuilt leaving only a portion of the earlier structure: at Northop it was the Perpendicular tower, at Whitford the north aisle. More frequently smaller portions of the church were rebuilt: at Bangor it was the south aisle, at Nercwys the transepts, the north aisle and the chancel were appended at different times during the 19th century, Overton saw its aisles rebuilt, and at Holywell, Marchwiel and Mold apses were introduced. Porches were added at Bangor, Cilcain, Hanmer, Hawarden, Llanasa, Wrexham and perhaps Glyn Ceiriog, while vestries were built on to Hope and Overton.

Some churches were refenestrated, leaving a medieval (or later) frame with Victorian windows, as at Glyn Ceiriog, Hawarden, Ruabon and Trelawnyd.

Complete rebuilds

Erbistock
Flint
Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog

Nannerch
Penley
Treuddyn

Whitewell
Ysceifiog

Partial rebuilds

Bangor Is-y-coed
Hanmer
Holywell

Marchwiel
Mold
Nercwys

Northop
Whitford

Refenestration etc

Glyn Ceiriog
Hawarden

Ruabon

Trelawnyd

6 CHURCH BUILDINGS

6.1 Building Materials

An attempt was made to classify the masonry used in each church, though this was a subjective assessment on the part of the writer without the benefit of geological training. Two churches - Berse Drelincourt and the pre-19thC portion of Whitford - have their external faces rendered.

Local materials were commonly used in building. Thus the churches of Caerwys and Trelawnyd are constructed of limestone, sandstone was used at Gresford, Hanmer, Holt, Holywell, Hope, Nercwys, Northop,

and Overton, and the mixture of the two materials at Gwaenysgor may reflect re-use of earlier masonry during a later phase of construction. Shale appears at Chirk and Glyn Ceiriog; and at Cilcain and Ruabon the sandstone was accompanied by pebblestones. Brick was used for the Georgian churches of Isycoed and Worthenbury.

The use of sandstone ashlar appears to be of relatively late date at Hawarden, Holt, and 18th-century Marchwiell. But in the more affluent towns of Mold and Wrexham and possibly in Overton it was employed during the late medieval period.

6.2 Church Plans

The following lists cover only those churches with significant medieval and post-Reformation fabric survivals. Victorian churches are not included, even when there is some evidence of limited medieval masonry survival. In the latter instances, relevant details are included only in the tower section. For the purposes of sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 porches and towers are not taken into account in assessing the number of cells.

6.2.1 *Single and double-cell churches*

Simple single-cell churches where nave and chancel are undifferentiated externally, and are divided only by a screen, a step or a change in roof structure, are rare in this area and only the building at Gwaenysgor goes back to the medieval era. The other sites listed here are Georgian edifices.

Berse Drelincourt
Glyn Ceiriog

Gwaenysgor

Trelawnyd

The double cell church featuring the traditional pattern of nave and chancel of different widths is even more rare, the only example also Georgian, being Worthenbury.

6.2.2 *Multi-cellular churches*

In the absence of simpler planned churches, it is of no surprise that multi-cellular churches are relatively common with nineteen examples listed here. Within this group are five double-nave churches, a particularly common type in the adjacent Vale of Clwyd. Chirk, Cilcain, Hope, Llanasa and Northop all have their double naves showing as two parallel elements of the same length though not always of precisely the same width, though Chirk is exceptional in having its tower rising from the western end of one of the naves, a trait it shares with Caerwys.

Bangor Is-y-coed
Caerwys
Chirk
Cilcain
Gresford
Hanmer
Hawarden

Holt
Holywell
Hope
Llanasa
Marchwiell
Mold

Nercwys
Northop
Overton
Ruabon
Whitford
Wrexham

Aisles are found in most of the multi-cellular churches listed above. Bangor, Gresford, Hanmer, Hawarden, Holt, Holywell, Mold, Overton, Ruabon, Whitford and Wrexham all have two aisles, the remainder one.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Hawarden	Nercwys
Caerwys	Holt	Northop
Chirk	Holywell	Overton
Cilcain	Hope	Ruabon
Gresford	Llanasa	Whitford
Hanmer	Mold	Wrexham

Transepts Three churches have transepts but only the north transept at Overton is likely to be earlier than the 19th century.

Marchwiell	Nercwys	Overton
------------	---------	---------

No weeping chancels have been recognised.

6.2.3 Towers

Twenty of the churches in the Flintshire/Wrexham County Borough area have towers of which thirteen are wholly or partially medieval in age. With the exception of Hawarden where the tower rises above the crossing they are placed at the western ends of their churches. The remaining towers - Bangor, Glyn Ceiriog, Marchwiell, Mold and Worthenbury - are 18th-century features, while the towerlet at Llanasa might perhaps be 17th-century.

The earliest is thought to be Caerwys for its lowest stages have been dated to the 13th century, Overton and Ruabon are from the following century, and there is a larger number of the 15th and 16th centuries. Gresford, Holt and particularly Wrexham which was erected between c.1506 and 1520 are richly embellished structures.

Gargoyles appear on the churches at: Gresford, Hanmer, Holt, Holywell(?), Mold, Northop, Ruabon, Whitford (19th-century) and Wrexham.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Hawarden	Nercwys
Caerwys	Holt	Northop
Chirk	Holywell	Overton
Cilcain	Hope	Ruabon
Glyn Ceiriog	Llanasa	Worthenbury
Gresford	Marchwiell	Wrexham
Hanmer	Mold	

6.2.4 Bellcotes and bell-turrets

Only two churches in the region have bellcotes. That at Trelawnyd was remodelled in the 19th century but the Gwaenysgor bellcote is probably earlier, though no specific date can be attributed to it.

Gwaenysgor	Trelawnyd
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6.2.5 Porches

Six churches have porches surviving from before the 19th century, and of these the 17th-century example at Mold was largely remodelled and perhaps even rebuilt in 1911 and parts of the 1724 porch at Trelawnyd were replaced at the end of the 19th century.

The only medieval porches to survive are the 16th-century south porch at Gresford and the similarly late north porch at Wrexham, though this is not free-standing but an extension of the north aisle. The simple porch at Gwaenysgor could be 16th or 17th-century while that at Nercwys is known to have been standing in 1781.

Gresford	Mold	Trelawnyd
Gwaenysgor	Nercwys	Wrexham

6.2.6 Other elements

Two churches are known to have crypts: Gresford and Hope. Where there are apses they tend to be 19th-century (see para 5.2.6), except for Georgian Worthenbury. Wrexham has an ante-nave, a feature not encountered elsewhere. Clerestoreys occur at Gresford, Mold, Overton, Ruabon and Wrexham.

Gresford	Overton	Worthenbury
Hope	Ruabon	Wrexham
Mold		

6.3 Internal Architectural Features

6.3.1 Timber roofs and ceilings

Fifteen churches have roofs surviving from the medieval and immediate post-Reformation periods. Without exception these are attributed to the 15th or earlier 16th century, though corbels for an earlier roof remain in situ at Wrexham. At Trelawnyd and to a lesser extent at Whitford the roof is the only structural element to survive the 18th or 19th-century rebuilding.

Camberbeam roofs, some of exceptional richness, are found at Gresford, Holt, Mold, Northop and Wrexham. The remaining roofs are of open type with tie-beam or arch-braced collar trusses. These include the remarkable hammerbeam roof at Cilcain which was traditionally brought from Basingwerk and clearly is out of proportion to the church in which it now rests. Bangor has a canopied wagon roof over the sanctuary which is probably medieval.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Gwaenysgor	Nercwys
Caerwys	Holt	Northop
Chirk	Hope	Trelawnyd
Cilcain	Llanasa	Whitford
Gresford	Mold	Wrexham

Later roofs of the 18th century are hidden by ceilings at Berse Drelincourt, Holywell, Marchwiel (where the roof is reportedly of king-post construction) and Worthenbury, but there are open roofs with arch-braced collars of 18th-century date at Cilcain and Glyn Ceiriog.

Berse Drelincourt	Glyn Ceiriog	Marchwiel
Cilcain	Holywell	Worthenbury

6.3.2 Rood screens, lofts and stairs

Screens The only screen to survive intact is the late 15th-century example at Gresford which also has contemporary parclose screens of comparable character.

Rood lofts Gresford also has its rood loft in place.

Fragments The removal and destruction of rood screens and lofts was a feature of the post-Reformation era and continued into the Victorian period. Carvings and timber were on occasions saved and incorporated into other furniture and fittings as at Caerwys and Overton. Two beams from the screen lie at the back of Bangor church, but most remarkable is the sedile at Nercwys which was fashioned from the demolished screen.

Bangor Is-y-coed
Caerwys

Nercwys

Overton

Rood stairs Mold has a stair turret which was supposedly designed to give access to a rood loft that was in the end not constructed.

6.3.3 Galleries

A common feature of 18th-century churches, galleries of pre-19th century date have been retained only at Holywell and possibly Glyn Ceiriog. The remaining galleries on the list below are of 19th-century origin and are included here for the sake of completeness.

Chirk
Glyn Ceiriog

Holywell
Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog

Whitewell
Worthenbury

6.4 Furnishings and Fittings

6.4.1 Wall paintings

Wrexham and Ruabon have fine wall paintings, the former a 16th-century Last Judgement over the chancel arch, from the 16th century, the latter the Severn Works of Mercy of probably 15th-century date. Fragmentary mural paintings are to be seen in Hope and Bangor.

Bangor Is-y-coed
Hope

Ruabon

Wrexham

6.4.2 Stained glass

Thirteen churches retain pre 19th-century stained glass. The glass at Gresford from around 1500 is without doubt the most important collection in the region, but there are significant survivals at Cilcain, Hope, Llanasa, Mold and Treuddyn. Marchwiel carries the remarkable Erddig heraldic window from 1788.

Bangor Is-y-coed
Caerwys
Cilcain
Gresford
Hope

Llanasa
Marchwiel
Mold
Nannerch

Nercwys
Treuddyn
Worthenbury
Ysceifiog

6.4.3 Fonts

The font is normally the most durable of church fittings, though the survival level of medieval fonts in this region is rather lower than in other areas of what was Clwyd. Seventeen of the 33 churches have pre-19th-century fonts, and it is a fact that in a few Victorian churches such as Erbistock and Isycoed the font is virtually the only pre-Victorian church furnishing to survive, even if as at both these places it no longer retains its original function.

The broken font at Cilcain is attributed to the 12th century and that at Erbistock may be from the same century, while Gwaenysgor is thought to be early 13th century. Perpendicular fonts, some highly decorated, are found at Bangor, Gresford, Holt (from c.1493), Llanasa, and Wrexham. There are a number of Restoration fonts: that at Caerwys carries a date of 1661, that at Chirk from 1662, but Whitford with a date of 1649 is a little earlier. Eighteenth-century fonts are found at Isycoed (1725), Overton, Penley, Ruabon (1772) and Worthenbury (c.1745).

Bangor Is-y-coed	Gwaenysgor	Ruabon
Caerwys	Holt	Whitford
Chirk	Isycoed	Worthenbury
Cilcain	Llanasa	Wrexham
Erbistock	Overton	Ysceifiog
Gresford	Penley	

6.4.4 Stoups

No more than six of the churches retain stoups and those at Cilcain, Nercwys, Worthenbury and the unlocated stoup from Treuddyn are no longer in situ. That in the porch at Trelawnyd rests on a bench and there is a stoup-like furnishing at Hawarden where a bowl is set on a pedestal in the churchyard.

Cilcain	Nercwys	Treuddyn
Hawarden	Trelawnyd	Worthenbury

6.4.5 Piscinae

Piscinae can be found in seven churches. There is a double piscina at Hope, decorated niches at Gresford, Hawarden, Holt and Wrexham, and that at Holt is supported on a green-man corbel. Fragments of two piscinae are housed with a collection of other stonework at the back of Whitford church.

Gresford	Hope	Whitford
Hawarden	Mold	Wrexham
Holt		

6.4.6 Altar stones

No mensa is known to survive in the area.

6.4.7 Altar and Communion Tables

Sixteen churches have pre 19th-century tables. Many are assumed to be either altar or communion tables. Dated examples include Caerwys (1620), Flint (1660), Gwaenysgor (1637) and one of the two tables at Mold (1693).

Bangor Is-y-coed	Gwaenysgor	Nercwys
Berse Drelincourt	Hanmer	Treuddyn
Caerwys	Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog	Whitford
Chirk	Llanasa	Worthenbury
Flint	Mold	Wrexham
Gresford		

6.4.8 Altar rails

Pre 19th-century altar rails survive in only four churches. Those at Nercwys are thought to be 17th-century, the rest are believed to be of 18th-century origin.

Glyn Ceiriog	Nercwys	Worthenbury
Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog		

6.4.9 Pulpits

Most of those recorded here are 17th or 18th-century in date, though the Nercwys example is thought to have been erected at much the same time as the former rood screen in the late 15th century or early 16th century. The pulpit at Caerwys has the date 1628, that at Overton 1637 and the Ruabon pulpit was built in the 1730s. Most of those listed here are of wood but Hope's 17th-century pulpit is of stone. A 17th-century pulpit at Chirk was demolished, its panels being used in a new pulpit and in other furnishings.

Caerwys	Llanasa	Ruabon
Chirk	Nercwys	Worthenbury
Hope	Overton	

6.4.10 Chests

Chests of pre 19th-century date are relatively common appearing in fourteen of the churches in the region. Chirk, Nercwys and Ruabon have two chests, Wrexham three. Dated examples occur at Chirk (1675 and 1736), Nannerch (1652), Nercwys (1633) and Ruabon (c.1637 and 1709), and it can be assumed that most of the remaining undated examples are also of 17th and 18th-century construction. However, the large dugout chest at Whitford has been attributed to the medieval period, though generally dugout chests are rare: that at Bangor is the only other example listed.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Holywell	Ruabon
Chirk	Llanasa	Whitford
Hanmer	Nannerch	Worthenbury
Hawarden	Nercwys	Wrexham
Holt	Overton	

6.4.11 Seating

Gresford has eleven medieval stalls complete with misericords, a rare survival in north-east Wales. Box pews are now uncommon though many churches have retained pew panels as dados around their walls. Churches where box pews are still in use are Worthenbury, Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog and Whitewell though the last two are 19th-century. At Caerwys, Cilcain and Hawarden fragments of 17th-century and in the case of Hawarden 16th-century woodwork from seats have been incorporated in later furnishings.

Caerwys
Cilcain
Gresford

Hawarden
Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog

Nercwys
Worthenbury

Chairs often carved are found in nine churches, with some such as Caerwys, Hanmer and Llanasa having several. A few are dated. Caerwys has one carved with a coat of arms and the date 1661, Hanmer one of 1607, and one of the two in Overton has a painted coat of arms and the date 1753.

Caerwys
Cilcain
Flint

Hanmer
Holywell
Llanasa

Nannerch
Overton
Whitewell

6.4.12 *Other wooden furniture*

Other items of furniture include a cupboard dated to 1726 at Worthenbury, a cabinet at Nannerch and a poor box at Nercwys.

6.4.13 *Benefaction boards*

Benefaction boards remain in 13 churches though a number of these are 19th-century in date. Earlier ones are dated in the list below. Some churches have several boards: Bangor has two one of which is 19th-century, Gresford two, both from 1731, and of the four in Holywell only one pre-dates the 19th century, That at Whitford is an early 18th-century stone plaque over the lychgate, while the board in the church at Worthenbury records the land and other holdings of the church as recorded in the Chester Episcopal Register.

Bangor Is-y-coed
Cilcain
Gresford (1731)
Holywell

Hope (1723?)
Marchwiel
Mold
Nercwys

Overton (1750)
Whitford
Worthenbury (1796)
Wrexham

6.4.14 *Other fittings*

Miscellaneous fittings of wood and metal appear in a handful of churches. A wooden reredos of 1775 has been re-sited at Bangor, an 18th-century Creed Board survives at Berse Drelincourt, and there is a Decalogue Board, probably of the same century at Caerwys. One of the few fittings preserved at Hanmer is a board commemorating the construction of a gallery in 1638. Worthenbury houses an ancient wooden cross - the Emral cross - brought from a nearby chapel.

Metal chandeliers are not uncommon. They are frequently dated (as given in the list below), but in addition there are further 18th-century examples at Berse Drelincourt and Erbistock. Sanctuary rings survive at Caerwys and perhaps Trelawnyd. The wrought iron gates in the porch at Cilcain were originally part of the screen in Mold church and date from c.1720. The iron screen in Wrexham is still in situ and is believed to have been erected about 1707, but older still is the brass eagle lectern in the same church which carries a date of 1524.

Bangor Is-y-coed
Berse Drelincourt (1688)
Caerwys
Cilcain
Erbistock

Gresford (1747 and 1796)
Hanmer (1727)
Llanasa (1758)
Nercwys (1761)
Overton (1746)

Ruabon (1678 and 1781)
Whitford (1755 and 1756)
Worthenbury
Wrexham

6.4.15 Medieval monuments: crosses and effigies

Early medieval monuments housed in churches have been listed above (section 4.1). Medieval effigies, in varying condition, survive at Caerwys, Gresford (3), Holywell, Northop (4), Ruabon (3, including an alabaster tomb chest with effigies from c.1526) and Wrexham. Almost without exception these are of late 13th/14th-century date although there are divergent opinions about that at Holywell. Caerwys, Gresford and Northop have medieval tomb recesses.

Caerwys	Holywell	Ruabon
Gresford	Northop	Wrexham

6.4.16 Medieval monuments: sepulchral slabs

A number of these are recorded in the churches of the area although others have evidently been lost. Five, for instance, were recorded from Bangor yet there is now only one in the church and one other in the National Museum in Cardiff. Fragments from four different slabs and coffin lids are stored at Caerwys, from as many as ten at Cilcain, perhaps nine at Nercwys, and six in Whitford; fragments are also incorporated in the church walls at Hope and Trelawnyd. Almost all of these are attributed to the late 13th or 14th century.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Llanasa	Overton
Caerwys	Mold	Ruabon
Cilcain	Nercwys	Trelawnyd
Gresford	Northop	Whitford
Hope		

6.4.17 Post-Reformation monuments and memorials

Ten churches have monumental sculpture of post-Reformation date. Most notable are the Myddleton monuments in Chirk, the Trevor monuments in Gresford, the Grinling Gibbons monument in Nannerch and the Wynn memorials in Ruabon.

Chirk	Mold	Ruabon
Gresford	Nannerch	Wrexham
Hope		

Post-Reformation wall tablets and memorials (without figure sculpture) are common, and 26 of the 33 churches hold pre-19th-century examples. They range from very simple tablets to intricate memorials. Most are in marble, but occasional stone memorials are encountered. A small number of wooden memorials have also been recorded including an important group of five in Gresford from the period 1661-1689, and one in Wrexham of 1692. The earliest memorial is in stone to Bishop Wharton in Mold, and there are a number of 17th-century examples which are picked out below.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Holt	Penley
Berse Drelincourt	Holywell (1623; 1630; 1694)	Ruabon
Caerwys	Hope	Trelawnyd
Chirk (1676)	Llanasa	Whitewell (1696)
Cilcain	Marchwiell	Whitford (1619; 1647; 1683)
Erbistock	Mold (1558)	Worthenbury
Gresford (1659; 1680)	Nercwys	Wrexham (1668; 1676; 1690)
Gwaenysgor	Northop	Ysceifiog
Hawarden (1592; 1592; 1667; 1670; 1698)	Overton (1681)	

Brasses of pre-19th century date have been recorded in nineteen churches. Those of 17th-century date are noted in the list below. Notable is the Hawarden brass which was engraved on both sides but different times, and also the 17th-century brasses by Silvanus Crue at Holt and Wrexham.

Chirk (1678)	Holywell	Penley
Cilcain	Llanasa	Ruabon
Glyn Ceiriog	Marchwiell	Whitford
Hanmer	Mold (1602; 1613; 1629)	Worthenbury
Hawarden (1630/1684; 1683; 1686; 1691)	Nercwys	Wrexham (1665; 1665; 1673; 1673; 1673; 1674; 1687)
Holt (1666)	Northop	Ysceifiog
	Overton (1693)	

6.4.18 Hatchments

Only four churches have hatchments and with the exception of that at Mold which is from 1636, none has been precisely dated.

Gresford	Ruabon	Worthenbury
Mold		

6.4.19 Bells

Thirteen churches in the area are believed to have pre-19th century bells. Caerwys has a Sanctus bell of the 14th century, and there is an unconfirmed report that the bells of Ysceifiog are 16th-century. The ten bells in the tower at Wrexham were cast as a group in 1726.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Nercwys	Whitford
Caerwys	Northop	Worthenbury
Gresford	Overton	Wrexham
Hawarden	Ruabon	Ysceifiog
Holt		

7 CHURCHYARDS

7.1.1 Shape

Churchyard shape has been referred to above (section 4.1) as an element in determining the likely early medieval origins of a particular church site. The list that follows covers those churchyards with a curvilinear element of which there are only six, or less than 20% of the total which is a very low percentage compared with the other areas studied. However where curvilinearity is in evidence it is very marked as at Cilcain, Hope and Mold and even Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog.

Cilcain	Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog	Nannerch
Hope	Mold	Ruabon

7.1.2 Relict boundaries

Some churchyards exhibit traces of their earlier boundaries, usually in the form of relict banks, and there are a reasonably large number of these with thirteen listed below. Almost without exception, however, the

boundaries are those of an earlier yard which were shown on the Tithe map or the earliest editions of the Ordnance Survey map, reflecting the growth of population and the need for expansion of burial grounds in the later 19th century. Only in one or two places - Gresford and Ruabon for example - are there reported extensions in the early 19th century or before.

Caerwys	Isycoed	Northop
Gresford	Marchwiel	Ruabon
Gwaenysgor	Nannerch	Treuddyn
Hanmer	Nercwys	Whitewell
Hawarden		

7.1.3 Other earthworks

Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog has a 'preaching mound' traditionally associated with St Garmon, and the churchyard at Isycoed overlies medieval ridge and furrow cultivation.

7.2 Churchyard features

7.2.1 Prehistoric and early medieval stones

No churchyard in Flintshire or Wrexham County Borough has a recorded standing stone.

7.2.2 Wells

Holy wells are occasionally recorded in or close to churchyards but for this area the only one, albeit one of the most famous in Wales, is St Winefride's well at Holywell which is enclosed in its own chapel, just to the west of the church.

7.2.3 Crosses

Two outstanding decorated crosses, relics of the medieval churchyard, have been preserved, namely at Hanmer and Trelawnyd. Both are scheduled ancient monuments. Cross shafts survive at the other three churches listed below.

Cilcain	Overton	Ysceifiog
Hanmer	Trelawnyd	

7.2.4 Sundials

Twenty-two churchyards have either complete sundials or the surviving columns from which the dials and their gnomons have been removed. All the known sundials are recorded regardless of whether they are 19th-century or earlier. Where dials survive they often carry dates and these are given below, but the earliest date, of 1663, appears on the sandstone shaft of the sundial at Gwaenysgor where the dial itself has long gone. And the plinth at Holt carries an 18th-century date. The early dial from Holywell is now preserved inside the church while the pillar lies broken in the overgrown churchyard.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Hawarden	Nercwys (1768)
Caerwys (1830)	Holt (1766)	Penley
Chirk	Holywell (1732)	Ruabon
Cilcain	Hope	Trelawnyd
Erbistock	Isycoed	Treuddyn
Gresford (1732)	Llanasa (1762)	Wrexham (1809)
Gwaenysgor (1663)	Marchwiell	Ysceifiog
Hanmer (1821)		

7.2.5 Gravestones

Gravemarkers in the churchyards of the region were not examined sufficiently closely to obtain a clear picture of the patterns of burial and monument survival, but an attempt was made to distinguish the earliest legible gravestone or slab. Almost certainly the details could be refined by consultation of existing churchyard records prepared by the local family history group.

Almost every churchyard has gravestones or slabs at least as early as the end of the 18th century (listed below), and of the four that did not, one - Berse Drelincourt - does not have consecrated ground for burial. In places 17th-century markers have survived and the earliest dated examples from this century are given, although what is potentially the earliest, the so-called Founder's Tomb of c.1490 at Hanmer has not been authenticated. Some surviving monuments are particularly fine and a number of churches such as Gresford and Wrexham have stones that are referred to individually in the relevant schedule of listed buildings. There is a hooded tomb at Trelawnyd, while one at Llanasa has lost the hood element.

Bangor Is-y-coed	Holt	Northop (1659)
Caerwys	Holywell (1658)	Overton
Chirk	Hope	Penley
Cilcain	Isycoed	Ruabon
Erbistock	Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog	Trelawnyd (1651)
Flint	Llanasa (1605)	Whitford (1694)
Gresford (1696)	Marchwiell	Worthenbury
Gwaenysgor	Mold (1658)	Wrexham (1672)
Hanmer (1646)	Nannerch	Ysceifiog (1611)
Hawarden	Nercwys	

Churchyard clearance: at least nineteen churchyards reveal evidence of past gravemarker clearance. In many cases a proportion of the stones have been retained and have been set around the churchyard wall as at Mold or as used as flags for pathways as at Chirk. More drastic clearance is evinced in some churchyards such as Worthenbury where the memorials on the south side of the church have been dumped along the side of the churchyard wall and covered with soil, Northop where again the south side has been cleared, and Flint where virtually none have survived the 20th-century landscaping.

Caerwys	Holt	Overton
Chirk	Holywell	Ruabon
Cilcain	Llanasa	Whitford
Flint	Mold	Worthenbury
Glyn Ceiriog	Nercwys	Wrexham
Gresford	Northop	Ysceifiog
Hawarden		

7.2.6 Lychgates

The only pre 19th-century lychgates are at Caerwys which is thought to be either 15th or 16th-century, Llanasa which carries a datestone of 1735, and one of the two at Whitford which has a stone recording its initial construction in 1624.

Caerwys

Llanasa

Whitford

7.2.7 Yews

Mature and ancient yews were recorded in 16 churchyards, with Overton being particularly well known for its twenty ancient yews.

Chirk

Llanasa

Ruabon

Erbistock

Nannerch

Treuddyn

Gresford

Nercwys

Whitewell

Hanmer

Overton

Whitford

Hawarden

Penley

Ysceifiog

Hope

8 DEDICATIONS

8.1.1 British Dedications

Only thirteen churches have dedications to British saints, two of them jointly with English saints: Marchwiel where Marcella is linked with Deiniol, Northop where Eurgain and Peter appear together, and Whitford where Mary and Beuno are linked. The Bangor dedication to St Deiniol is mirrored in its chapelries at Marchwiel and Worthenbury, and indeed Marchwiel's Marcella has every sign of being a late addition. Likewise the dedication to St Mary appears to have been appended to the earlier dedication to St Beuno at Whitford. It has been mooted that the dedication of the church at Chirk was originally to St Tysilio, and to St Winefride at Holywell, while at Hope there was confusion between Cyngar and Cynfarch. There are two St Michael dedications, at Caerwys and Trelawnyd, and it is possible that in the case of the former this is a pre-Conquest dedication.

Bangor Is-y-coed

Hope

Northop

Caerwys

Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog

Trelawnyd

Chirk

Llanasa

Whitford

Glyn Ceiriog

Marchwiel

Worthenbury

Hawarden

9 POTENTIAL & INTEREST

9.1 Archaeological Potential

9.1.1 Survival of deposits

Establishing the degree of survival of the sub-surface deposits that are, or were, an inevitable component of the total archaeology of every historic church is, in the absence of full excavation, an impossible task.

Externally the lowering of the ground surface and the digging of drainage trenches around the church footings can have a detrimental effect on vital stratigraphy relating to the building and later renovation and maintenance of the structure. Inside the church, the excavation of vaults, the insertion of burials beneath the floor, the lowering of floor levels, the introduction of heating systems involving boiler houses and sub-surface ducts, and any restoration work that necessitated disturbance below ground level, will all have been damaging archaeologically.

Some of these activities are more easy to recognise than others. Underfloor heating usually leaves visible signs, even if the scale of work cannot be gauged. On the other hand the deliberate raising or lowering of the ground level within a church may be very difficult to assess, and even mention of such work in a faculty petition is no guarantee that it was actually carried out.

9.1.2 *External drainage*

Many churches now have drainage trenches around their footings. The following list covers only thirteen churches (many of them Victorian) where there is no *visible* evidence of such excavations, though with those churches that are asterisked there is some uncertainty as to whether drains do in fact exist.

Flint	Llanasa	Ruabon*
Hanmer	Mold*	Trelawnyd
Hawarden	Nannerch	Worthenbury*
Isycoed	Northop	Ysceifiog*
Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog		

9.1.3 *Underfloor heating*

A reasonably large number of churches - 21 - appear not to have or have had underfloor heating, although once again there is one case where the evidence is equivocal (*).

Berse Drelincourt	Gwaenysgor	Nannerch
Caerwys	Hawarden	Nercwys*
Chirk	Holt	Ruabon
Cilcain	Isycoed	Trelawnyd
Erbistock	Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog	Treuddyn
Flint	Llanasa	Whitewell
Glyn Ceiriog	Marchiel	Worthenbury

Fifteen churches appear not to be affected by either external drains or internal ducting though there are uncertainties over several of these. Some in the list are Victorian buildings and the only three medieval churches are asterisked.

Flint	Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog	Ruabon*
Hawarden*	Llanasa*	Trelawnyd
Isycoed	Nannerch	Worthenbury

9.1.4 *Underfloor vaults*

At least eight churches are known to have underfloor vaults, and two - Gresford and Hope - have crypts. This must be treated as a minimum number for other vaults certainly exist.

Chirk
Gresford
Hope
Llanasa

Mold
Nercwys
Northop

Overton
Whitford
Wrexham

9.1.5 Churches with 'lost' elements

Aside from those churches such as Flint and Nannerch where the whole medieval building has disappeared, documentary and fieldwork evidence reveals only one church where a part has been demolished and not replaced: in the 19th century the east end of Northop church was demolished.

The only site where a new Victorian church was constructed on a different site to its predecessor is Penley.

9.1.6 Church complexity

Most churches in the region display visible characteristics and anomalies which can be satisfactorily interpreted in terms of the building's development, even though it must be stressed that virtually every pre-Victorian church will have undergone changes and modifications in the past which have left no visible signature. There are, however, a small number of churches where the complexities of the sequence could not be fully resolved during the current programme of work.

Caerwys
Cilcain

Hope
Llanasa

Ruabon

9.2 Archaeological and architectural interest

Based on the lists given in sections 4, 5 and 6 certain facets and features stand out as being of particular interest in the churches of the region, and every effort should be made to ensure their continued survival. Brief comments are given below.

9.2.1 Overall interest

It is probably invidious to single out churches for special mention, but there is a handful which to the writer are outstanding for their architecture and their fittings: Gresford, Holt, Mold, Ruabon and Wrexham and, from the 18th century, Worthenbury.

9.2.2 Towers

Several churches have magnificent west towers. Wrexham is in a class of its own but amongst the others are Chirk, Gresford, Hanmer, Holt, Hope, Northop, Overton and Ruabon.

9.2.3 Church roofs

About half the churches in Flintshire and Wrexham County Borough have late medieval roofs, some of considerable elegance and richness (see section 6.3.1).

9.2.4 *Stained glass*

The region retains some fine stained glass with Gresford outstanding (see section 6.4.2).

9.2.5 *Wooden furnishings*

Like neighbouring Denbighshire the churches in this region retain some fine wooden furnishings, most of which are 17th-century or later: tables (6.4.7), pulpits (6.4.9), and chests (6.4.10).

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