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Pen Portrait

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This pen portrait of Montgomery was written by local resident **Nicholas Randall Smith** whose website devoted to the town claims to be 'one of the oldest websites in Wales' and has been continuously available since 1994.



"Montgomery today is a busy little town with an active community spirit and a diverse economy. The traditional agricultural base of the town still exists, but livestock is now sent to the huge Smithfield market in Welshpool (about 7 miles away).

There are more than a dozen shops including Bunnings and Country Works, and visitors to the town are an important source of income. There are 5 pubs, all of which serve food, The Dragon Hotel being known for its good accommodation, meals and beer!

Some years ago the local doctors' surgery was featured on national television in the UK several times as a centre for the trial of telemedicine where patients were seen by specialists via video-conferencing rather than traveling 50 miles to hospital. Indirectly this led to an institute for research into rural health care across the E.U. being established at the nearby University of Wales conference centre at Gregynog Hall.

Whilst in some ways still a quiet country backwater, Montgomery is increasingly using information technology as a way to remove some of the economic disadvantages of a rural (and beautiful) situation. Use of the internet is common and we have a computer club in the town which runs courses on everything from digital photography to word processing. Montgomery has a modern telephone exchange and full-speed ADSL broadband is supported.

Unemployment in Montgomery is currently around 1.9% of the population which is lower than the national average. Many residents travel to Welshpool, Newtown, Oswestry or Shrewsbury to work but businesses in Montgomery include the doctor's surgery, pubs and the hotel, the garage, hairdressers, a agricultural and hardware supplier, a veterinary practice, a catering business, building contractors, an employment training provider, art and crafts galleries, tea rooms, a florist, a fish and chip shop, a post office (with photocopying and internet facilities), two high street banks and a Spar (groceries, video hire, newsagent, off-license, and lottery). There is an ATM cashpoint at the Dragon Hotel.

Thursday is market day with the town hall hosting a greengrocer supplying his own locally grown fruit and vegetables produced to near organic standards, a fish monger and number of other stalls. On Saturdays the greengrocer is

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back in the town hall sharing it with the regular charity coffee morning and cake stall.

The Town Hall also hosts occasional concerts, dinners, parties, dances and discos. Montgomery has a thriving Girl Guide Unit, a Brownie Pack and a Rainbows group, I understand that a Beavers and Cub Scout unit is planned.

The local Civic Society is very active with its own award-winning museum which is open to the public during the summer. There is even a small astronomical society which meets infrequently to discuss celestial matters over beer (Stella Artois?) in The Dragon and there is a cinema club which has a varied programme of interesting movies throughout the year.

Montgomery Church in Wales School is a traditional village school providing primary education for around a hundred children between the ages of four and eleven years. Secondary school students usually travel to the excellent high school in Welshpool (9 miles) or the equally good Community College in Bishops Castle (12 miles). There are excellent sixth forms in both schools with Welshpool High School in particular going from strength to strength.

Coleg Powys is the local college of further education based in Newtown (10 miles) providing vocational training and some higher qualifications to first degree level in association with the University of Glamorgan. The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth is about 90 minutes drive to the west and the University of Wolverhampton is around an hour away to the east.

Montgomery also has a small branch public library which has some tourist information available.

The nearest main line railway stations are at Welshpool (8 miles), Newtown (10 miles), Craven Arms (19 miles) and Shrewsbury (23 miles). There is a light airfield near Welshpool (7 miles) and a glider station on the Long Mynd near Church Stretton (17 miles). Taxis are available in Newtown and Welshpool and there are bus services between Montgomery and Newtown, Welshpool and Shrewsbury.

For the really adventurous, you can always walk to Montgomery along the Offa's Dyke long distance footpath. There is a good bicycle shop in Welshpool. Petrol is available from Bunnors and Castle Garage.

There are two active churches in Montgomery. The parish church of St. Nicholas is Church in Wales (Anglican) and there is a Presbyterian Chapel.

In 2001 76.9% of Montgomery's population claimed to be Christians, 16.2% had no religion, 0.3% were Jewish, 0.2% were Buddhists and 6.4% would rather not say. Whilst not an typical example of multicultural Britain, Montgomery is actually quite a cosmopolitan place with a surprising number of its residents having worked abroad and/or traveled widely.

The Welsh language is not widely spoken with only around 5% of the population claiming fluency, but Montgomery definitely considers itself a Welsh town within the context of the Marches.

Because of the trend towards devolution and the

development of differing local government agendas in England and Wales, important issues are arising for the people of the Marches - particularly in the areas of education, healthcare and transport. Traditionally, services have been regularly provided across the border - be it Montgomery children being taught in Shropshire, Radnorshire patients being treated in Hereford or Salopians (people from Shropshire) using facilities in Welshpool. For many of us who live in the Marches, the border hold a special place in our hearts, a part of who we are even, we are neither Celt nor Saxon we are both and proud of it. If you cross a Celt with a Saxon do you get a Claxon? If you cross a Saxon with a Celt do you get Salt?

Montgomeryshire is now part of the new county of Powys which was established in 1974. This county covers a huge (110 miles by 50 miles) area of beautiful Mid Wales and has a very low population of around 126,354 people (indeed there are many times more sheep than people!). The crime rate in Powys is the lowest in England and Wales whilst the detection rate is the highest."

Article written by Nicholas Ramdallsmith

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your comments

Debbie Spencer Lands End.

Great description, thanks for painting this word picture! Any chance you could help me? Tracing family tree, have found Jane Morgan, servant in London 1881, who came from "Aberripart" (!!!!) Montgomery, Wales. Having no luck in ages finding anything like this place..any ideas? Best wishes, Debbie Spencer
Sun Jun 7 20:56:13 2009

Ffion Hughes

Sent in an email re my father,his name was Emlyn Hughes,he was the foreman stonemason in charge of Montgomery Castle back about 1964-1968.We lived in Braemar/Tan-y-mur.My brother sang in the local church choir with the Rev Semper.Happy Memories for me,I went on to train as a nurse in Shrewsbury.My mother kept B/B too.am trying to obtain a book written by Dr Weldon or Welton?Can you help.
Fri Jul 27 08:54:56 2007

Gavin from Ironbridge

Montgomery is a splendid little border town; the blackberries on the castle walls are worth collecting and the views are splendid.
Thu Jul 13 09:30:25 2006

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