

Trailgazers will measure socio-economic impacts from investing & promoting trails in areas of rich natural heritage. The project aims to create a trails dashboard, utilise tools to digitally target visitors and boost Tourist numbers.

TAFF TRAIL MERTHYR TYDFIL



Interreg
Atlantic Area
European Regional Development Fund

EUROPEAN UNION



Travelling north through Merthyr Town takes you across the spectacular Grade II listed Cefn Coed Viaduct.

The Taff Trail is just one of a series of trails running right through the County Borough. So if you want to take time to stop at one of our amazing adventure attractions, learn about our history, shop, eat, sleep or just take a moment to savour the breath-taking scenery - Merthyr has it all!

You'll pass through woodlands and nature reserves crossing the historic Pontsarn Viaduct as you climb gently to Pontsticill Reservoir and onwards to Brecon.

Reservoir and onwards to Brecon.

Trail Gazers Bid is co-financed by the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme through the European Regional Development Fund

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and horse riders.

It runs between Cardiff (Wales's Capital City) in the south, to the pretty market town of Brecon in the north.

The route runs right through Merthyr Tydfil, once the iron capital of the world.

Using the former tramways, railways, canals and towpaths you can enjoy all that Merthyr has to offer with large sections being designated traffic free.

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The 55-mile (88km) Taff Trail (National Cycle Network Route 8 & 46) is a multi-purpose route for runners, walkers, cyclists and horse riders.



"An Endless Trail of Possibilities"

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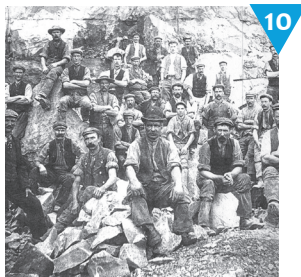
PONTSARN STATION & VIADUCT

This once busy station was built in 1866 as part of the Brecon & Merthyr Railway. It had its own Stationmaster, Porter and up to 21 services a day.

The spectacular viaduct is 455 ft. long, 92 ft. high, and is supported by seven majestic stone arches which connect the two sides of the gorge over the river Taf Fechan.

The railway brought many visitors, escaping the harsh working conditions in the iron and coal industries of the Valleys. This beautiful location became 'the rendezvous of thousands of tourists and pleasure seekers from all parts of the principality...'

Now an historic listed structure situated in an area of (SSSI) natural beauty set within ancient broadleaved woodlands.



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LIMESTONE QUARRYING VAYNOR QUARRY

For every one ton of iron-ore added to the blast furnace you would add two tons of limestone!

Vaynor Quarry was opened by the Crawshay family in 1847 to provide limestone for the Cyfarthfa Ironworks. Limestone was used to help purify the iron-ore and was used right through to the 20th century. This photo of quarry workers was taken at Vaynor in the 1890's.

There are many Limestone quarries in the area and their remains are visible along our trails and hillsides, including the Taff Trail at Trefechan

In 1957 the quarry produced 1000 tonnes of limestone per day, now used in the building industry. By 2010 production was wound down and the quarry is now dormant.

CEFN COED VIADUCT

This Grade 11 listed viaduct is 220 m long, the third largest viaduct in Wales!

Built in 1866 to carry the Brecon and Merthyr railway across the river Taff, this majestic viaduct has 15 arches - each one is 39ft 6ins wide. The last passenger train passed over the viaduct in 1964 after which it fell into disrepair.

It's now fully refurbished and part of the stunning Taff Trail Route 8 National Cycleway. It's said that the viaduct was constructed on a curve so that the railway line avoided property owned by the 'Iron King' ironmaster Robert Thompson Crawshay

Visit Cyfarthfa Castle to learn more about the Crawshay dynasty and the history of Merthyr Tydfil.



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CYFARTHFA IRON WORKS

Once the largest Ironworks in the world which helped to kick-start the Industrial Revolution



Founded by Anthony Bacon in 1766, but it was under the 'Iron King' Richard Crawshay's ownership that the works became an important iron producer. Britain's involvement in various naval battles during the time, saw demand for cannon greatly increase. It was critical to the success of the British Navy was it that the famous Admiral Lord Nelson visited in 1802.

The magnitude and scale of the works throughout its history is difficult to comprehend, with 50,000 tons of rails leaving just one ironworks in 1844, for the railways across Russia to Siberia. What remains are six massive blast furnaces and a huge brick arch.

'The largest and most complete range surviving anywhere on earth.'
Association of Industrial Archaeology.



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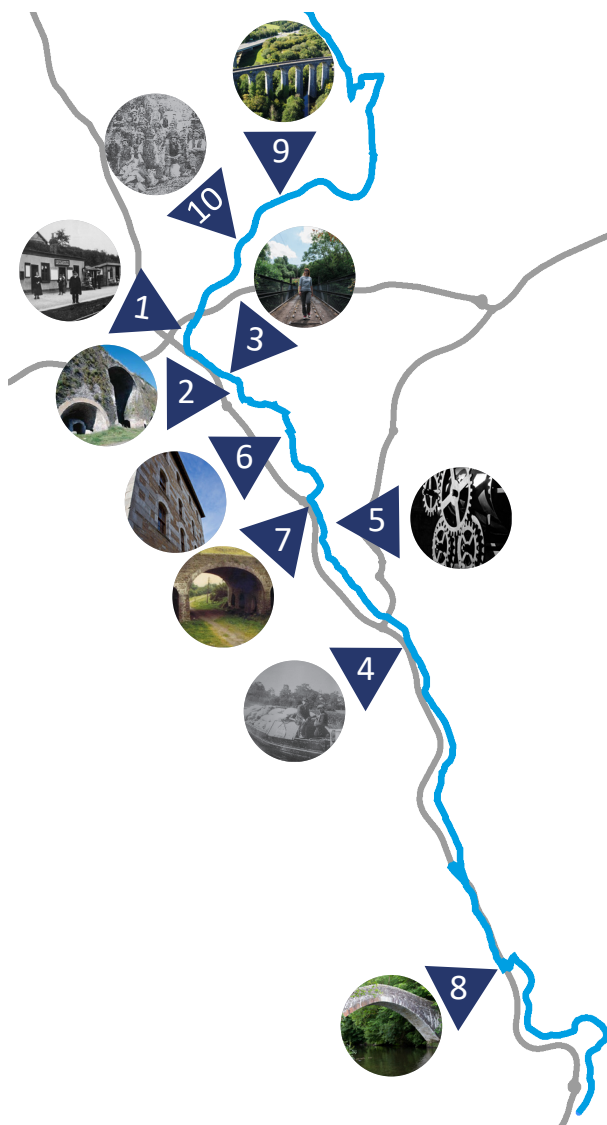
PONT-Y-CAFNAU BRIDGE & AQUADUCT

The world's oldest cast-iron tramroad bridge! It's a Scheduled Ancient Monument & Grade II listed structure.

Constructed in 1793 by Cyfarthfa Ironworks engineer, Watkin George, the Pont-y-Cafnau cast-iron tramroad bridge was built to carry water and supplies of limestone over the river Taff to Cyfarthfa Ironworks.

By 1796 an Aqueduct was added carrying two water troughs which fed the water wheel, built by George, which drove cold air into the blast furnaces. This great wheel was known as 'Aeolus' after the Greek god of the wind.

Pont-y-Cafnau (Bridge of Troughs) stands just off the Taff Trail and is used by pedestrians today.



3

YNYSFACH IRONWORKS

Using two blast furnaces of 53ft height, Ynysfach were the first to have a steam powered blast giving them much higher outputs.

There was a working forge at this site from 1769, but the Ironworks didn't take shape until the lease was passed to 'Iron King' Richard Crawshay in 1801. It was common for children to work in the ironworks and in 1842 government officials recorded their working conditions.

John Lewis, 10 yrs, labourer in smithy: "I fill the barrows with iron and run them into the forges; works every day and have done so for six months...been burned in the face and feet but never off work for many days. Was at the free Welsh school...Does not know a letter."

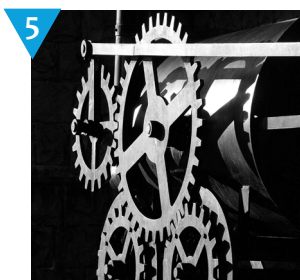
The blast furnaces at Ynysfach continued to produce iron until the strike of 1874.

TREVITHICK'S TUNNEL FROM PONTYGWAITH TO ABERCYNON

The start of the steam age on rails!



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5

On the 21st Feb 1804 the world's first steam locomotive to run on rails hauled a 10 tonne load of iron in 5 wagons along the nine miles of new tramroad that linked the Merthyr Tydfil ironworks to the Glamorganshire Canal at Abercynon.

This historic route is now a cycling/walking trail named after the locomotive engineer and inventor Richard Trevithick.

It's not known if the 500 guinea wager that kick started his high-pressured engine locomotive invention was ever paid out.

Constructed 1790 - 1794 the canal was designed by Thomas Dadford for Merthyr's Crawshay Ironmasters, to transport iron from Merthyr to Cardiff as quickly and as cheaply as possible. It covered over 25 miles with 51 locks having to be made to allow for the 543ft drop.

Today the old canal route is part of the Taff Trail and is used by walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders.

THE GLAMORGANSHIRE CANAL

Once one of the biggest waterways in Europe - they were the motorways of the time!



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PONTYGWAITH BRIDGE - TAFF AND TREVITHICK TRAIL

The bridge at Pont y Gwaith is a Grade II listed hump back bridge over the River Taff dating as far back as the 1540's.

The stone bridge that currently stands was built in 1811 but it was predated by a much earlier wooden bridge. The bridge was originally built to take traffic from the village and ironworks over the River Taff to join the old road to Cardiff.

Anthony Morley a Sussex Ironmaster set up a small ironworks at Pontygwaith, in 1583. It is believed to have been destroyed by a group of roundhead soldiers during the Civil War of the 17th Century.

Pontygwaith means "The Bridge of Works", referring to the iron works from 1583.



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BRUNEL BRIDGE, CANAL & PATH. (SKEW BRIDGE)

Isambard Kingdom Brunel, born 1806, is best known for creating the Great Western Railway and a number of Britain's greatest bridges.



Merthyr's impressive Brunel designed 'skew' bridge, as it's locally known, is a three arch bridge which carried the Vale of Neath railway over the Glamorganshire Canal in 1853. Construction on the canal itself began at Merthyr in 1790 and it opened in 1794.

The canal was built to move large volumes of iron and coal from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff docks. The Taff Trail has replaced the canal but the grade II listed skew bridge is a rare example of one of the early bridges on the Glamorganshire Canal.

The ironwork for many of Brunel's bridges came from Merthyr Tydfil and he continued to use the same iron for the Great Western Railway.