

# The Darby Trail

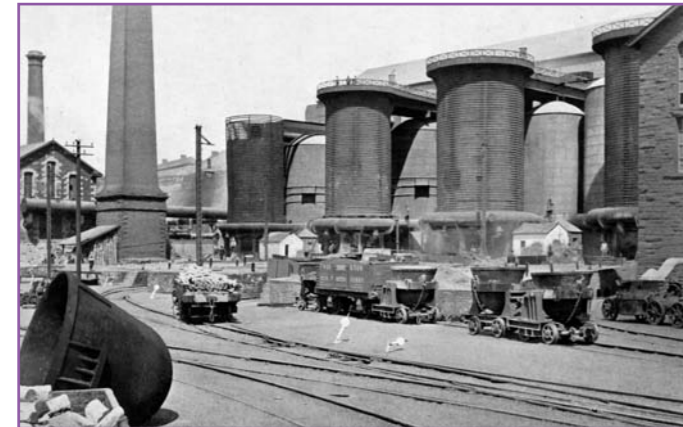


## Trail 4 The Darby Trail

Easy Walk, 2 Miles/3.5 Km (1 Hour)

**Start at The Badminton Club, Beaufort (SO189 109).**

**Cross over the roundabout following the signs for Newtown and Cwm Draw to join Newchurch Road** - this is the branch of the 1796 Trefil Railroad branch that took limestone from Trefil Quarries to the Ebbw Vale Ironworks.



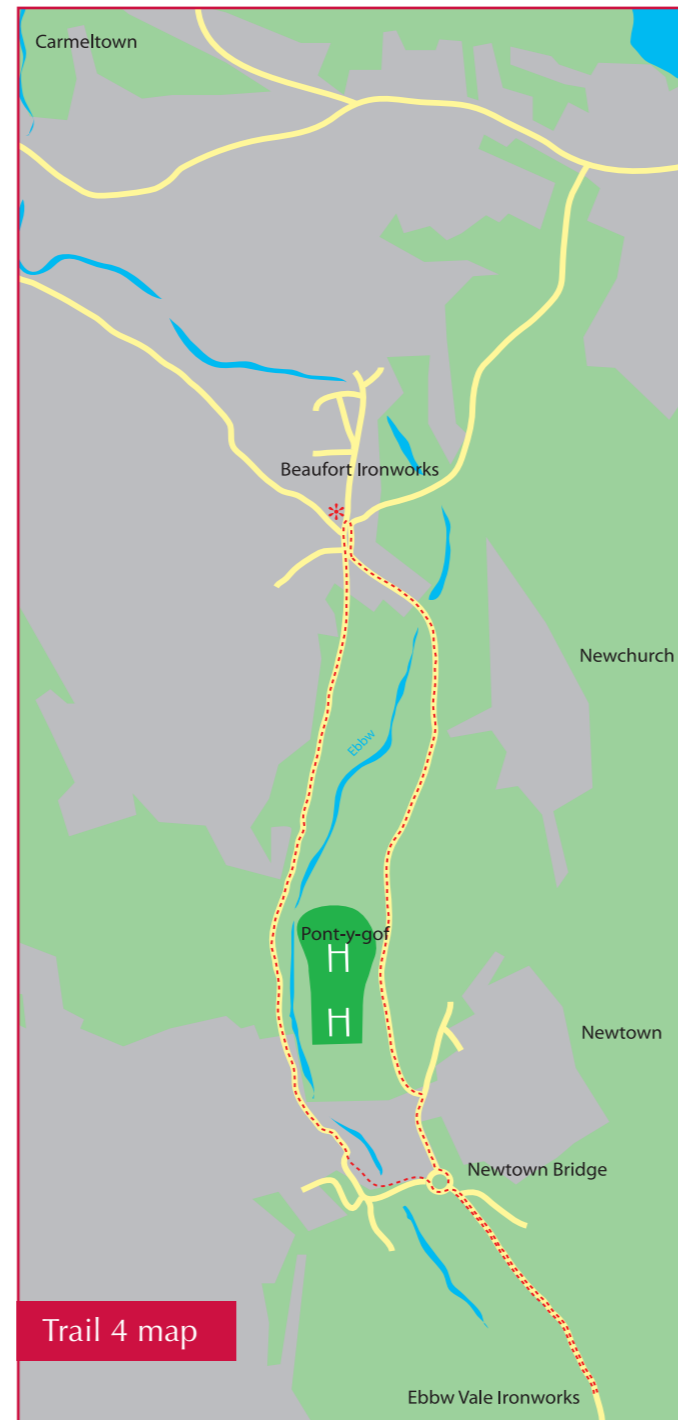
Ebbw Vale Ironworks

**Continue along for a further 1km to Newtown. Here, you will come to a T-junction just beyond the Kings Arms. Turn right and follow the road down to a roundabout in front of Providence Chapel (1860). Follow the road into the Cwm Draw Industrial Estate. After approximately 250m, you will be standing above the site of the Ebbw Vale Ironworks.**



General Offices Clock

Across the road lie the Ebbw Vale General Offices, built by the Ebbw Vale Steel Iron & Coal Co Ltd. in 1916. These fine brick buildings with stone facings are in the Jacobean style and have granite Tuscan columns set in the semi-circular entrance. The clock is dated 1915 and is inscribed:



Trail 4 map

*Take Time while Time is for Time will away  
Time flyeth away without delay*



The General Offices

Next to the General Offices once stood Ebbw Vale House, described in 1844 as one of 'Two Capital Houses, adapted for the residence of Partners or Managers'.

The Ebbw Vale Ironworks were established in 1791 by three partners, one of whom was Jeremiah Homfray. In 1792 he was joined by the Bristol Quakers - Harford, Partridge & Co. In 1796 Homfray left. A second furnace was built in 1805, a third furnace in 1823 and a fourth in 1839. In 1842 the Harford Company went bankrupt but the works was bought in 1844 by Abraham Darby. There was a total workforce of 1600 - a quarter of whom were women and children.



Ebbw Vale Truck Token



Victoria Foundry

To your left, in the bottom of the valley was the Victoria Ironworks, established in 1837. This had gone into production in 1839 and was bought by the Ebbw Vale company in 1849. There was now a line of ironworks running down the valley from Beaufort in the north to Victoria in the south. The Ebbw Vale company now went through a period of expansion. It bought Abersychan (British Ironworks) in 1852, Pentwyn in 1857 and Pontypool Ironworks in 1864. In 1865 it formed itself into a limited company and went into the steel making business.

Three Bessemer converters (for making steel) and a steel rail mill were in place by 1867 and by 1870 there were seven converters in a new Bessemer Works built midway between the rolling mills and Victoria.

When Darby retired in 1873 a new company was formed as the Ebbw Vale Steel, Iron and Coal Company. After 1873 there were always some furnaces in blast at both Ebbw Vale and Victoria until 1913. In 1936, a new steelworks was built with government encouragement by Richard Thomas & Co. These later changed into Richard Thomas & Baldwins Ltd (1939) and the British Steel Corporation (1970). The Victoria furnaces were blown out in 1975 but Open Hearth steel making continued to the end of that decade.

**From the furnace wall return to the roundabout. Turn left to continue across the Newtown Viaduct.** The original small arch spanning the river Ebbw was built in 1790, the main arch followed in 1813. They were both built by the Ebbw Vale Ironworks Company to carry a private, horse-drawn railway line connecting Sirhowy to Ebbw Vale over the Beaufort Tramroad. The western bridge was originally built of timber, but was rebuilt in stone in 1859: this collapsed, killing two men, and was rebuilt again in 1861. The viaduct now carries the road from the Ebbw Vale town centre to Newtown.



Victoria Blast Furnaces

**Return to the east side of the viaduct and take the footpath that runs down the north side of the approach embankment to the viaduct.** This brings you down into the valley at Pont-y-Gof close to some railway cottages built by the Monmouthshire Railway & Canal Company in the early 1850s.

**You are now in Steelworks Road and once again following the course of the Beaufort Tramroad (20). Make your way onto the main road that passes under the 1813 viaduct. Turn right onto Steelworks Road - passing some early workers' housing on your way to the oval roundabout at the Civic Centre. Here, bear right to continue along the line of the Beaufort Tramroad.**

**This level road will bring you back to 'Shop Row'.**

About 100m past the Beaufort Arms pub and on the opposite side of the road, you will pass a Great Western Railway marker showing the distance from Newport. This was placed here when the GWR took over the Monmouthshire Railway & Canal Company in 1880. Next to the Beaufort Arms, you will see a small park in which stands a large sandstone obelisk. This was set up in 1873 as a memorial to the Rev. John Emlyn Jones - a noted minister, poet and historian. The bilingual inscription is bleached but a modern brass plaque gives the full text.



Ebbw Vale Works Museum is located in the General Offices.

It opens Monday to Friday 10.00-4.30.

For further information call 01495 350941 or visit [www.evvat.co.uk](http://www.evvat.co.uk)

This trail is one of seven "In the Footsteps of the Iron-makers" series that is part of the Green Mines/Atlanterra project to promote our mining heritage through tourism.

To let us know if you enjoyed the walk or for further information please contact us on 01495 355937 / 07968 472812 or at [alyson.tippings@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:alyson.tippings@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

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