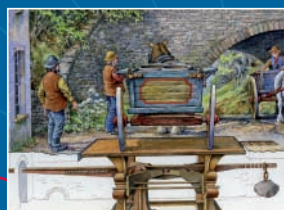


The Fothergill Trail



Trail 2 The Fothergill Trail

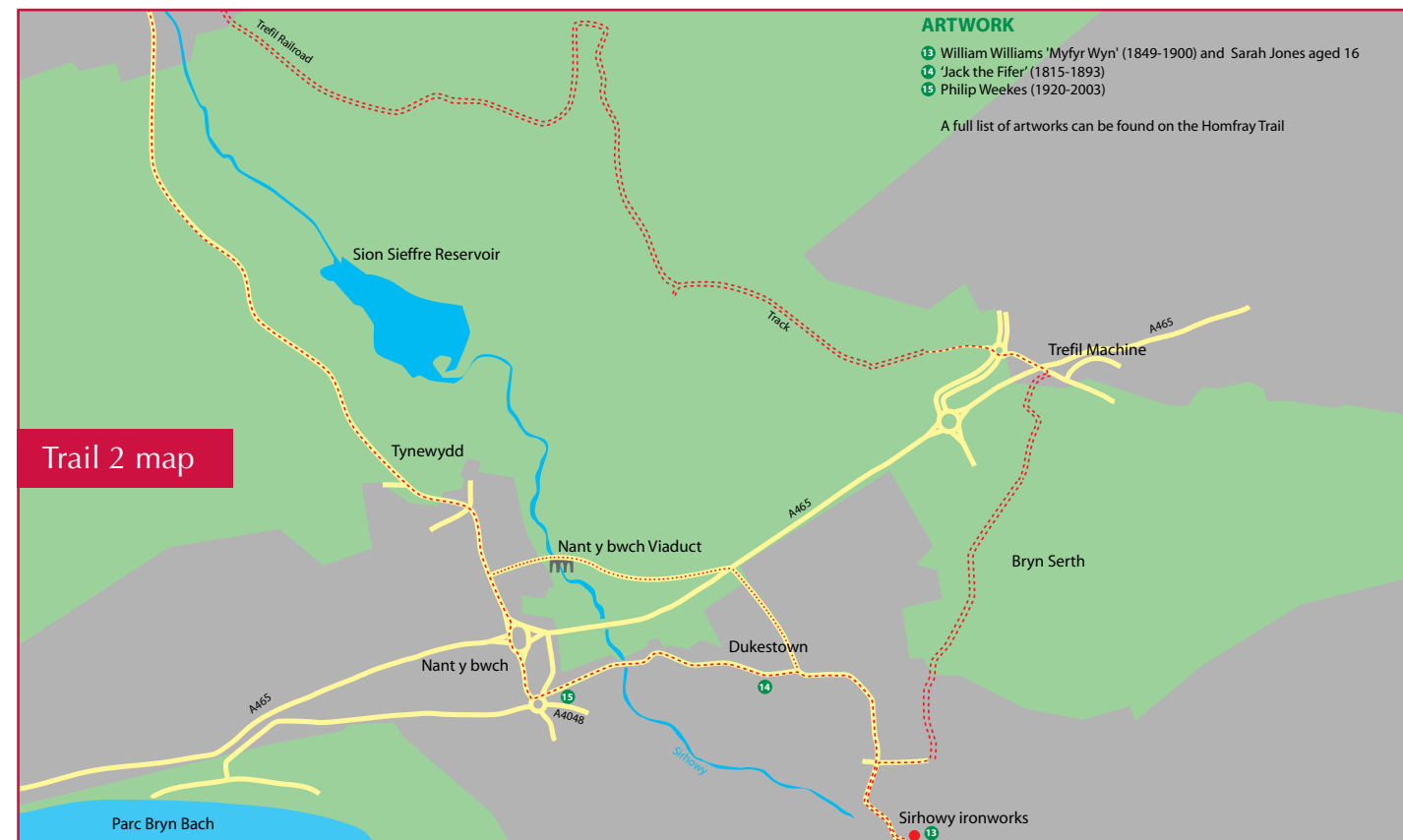
Moderate Walk, 6.5 Miles/10 Km (2.5 Hours)

Start at Sirhowy Ironworks (SO 143 100).



Sirhowy Ironworks

Sirhowy Ironworks was established in 1778. By 1796, Richard Fothergill was one of the partners. In 1818, the Ebbw Vale Company took over the works and by 1841, just under 1000 people worked there. In front of the arches you can see a "bear" – a large lump of iron and slag. This is all that is left of a huge furnace that towered above the arches. ¹³



Trail 2 map

Leave the site via the narrow lane to the north and follow Dukestown Road. After 150m you will pass the former Sihowy Truck Shop (now the Armoury Stores) on the right.

Turn right after the Truck Shop and continue uphill for 150m past six rows of houses on the left hand side. Take the track to the left that runs in front of the Ystrad Deri housing estate. This follows the line of the Trefil Railroad of 1796 that took limestone from Trefil to Sirhowy Ironworks.

After 300m, take the right fork in the path. After another 350m you will meet the route of three early railways – a line built in 1813 to take limestone from Trefil to the Ebbw Vale Ironworks, the Trefil Railroad and the Rassau Railroad also

built in 1796 to link Trefil and Sirhowy to Beaufort.

After 450m you will come to a sharp left bend which takes you towards the Heads of the Valleys Road (A465) - the A465 follows the course of the Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway. Established in 1859, the railway built the Nine Arches viaduct to carry the line across the river Sirhowy in 1864.

After 100m the track turns sharp right – take this and you will reach the road leading from Ebbw Vale to the Rassau Industrial Estate. Turn left to cross the bridge over the A465.

This was the site of the Trefil Machine built to weigh wagon-loads of limestone coming from the quarries to the ironworks at Sirhowy, Beaufort and Ebbw Vale.

After crossing the bridge over the A465 keep straight on to the roundabout. A bridleway marked "Beaufort Wells" lies directly on the other side. This is the Trefil Railroad which you can follow for nearly 3km up to Trefil Quarries.

After 1.4km you will come to large earthen viaduct. Here the 1796 railroad made a loop up the valley but when the line was changed to standard gauge railway in 1937, the viaduct was built to cut out the loop. The 18th-century railroad leaves the viaduct and heads north to the head of the valley where two small bridges cross the branches of Nant Milgatw. On the western side of the valley, a well-preserved causeway and bridge carries the railroad across a stream.

Continue to the quarries. As you approach you will join 'Railway Terrace'.

Ahead of you were the quarries that supplied the ironworks at Sirhowy, Beaufort and Ebbw Vale.



Milgatw Viaduct, 1937

Turn left downhill to join the bottom road, taking great care of the quarry lorries that use this stretch of road.

This was the lower quarry that supplied limestone to the ironworks at Tredegar and Rhymney. The road through the village is the line of the Tredegar Tramroad (1804) that took stone to Tredegar Ironworks and Hall's Trefil Tramroad (1815) that ran to Benjamin Hall's ironworks in Rhymney.

Turn right and continue as far as Tafarn Ty Uchaf (The Quarrymen's Arms).



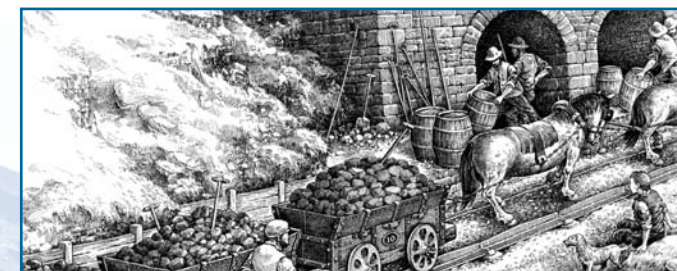
Trefil Quarry, 1938

Here, Hall's Trefil Tramroad divided. One branch ran up into the quarries and the other continued for 8 miles as the Brinore Tramroad (1814-15) down to the canal at Talybont on Usk. Hall's Trefil Tramroad can be seen as a track to the right of the red building around 200m beyond the pub. Silica sand deposits were worked here from about 1813. The main deposits lay north of Tafarn Ty Uchaf to the left of the road. Here the Nant Trefil was diverted to keep the workings dry.

From Tafarn Ty Uchaf return down the road. After 100m you will pass 'Rhymney Row' on the right built in 1837-8 by the Rhymney Company.

Continue along the road for the next 400m and cross the cattle grid. The Tredegar Tramroad can be seen bearing off to the left at the cattle grid. Hall's Trefil Tramroad took the straight course through the cutting.

Continue for just under a kilometre to Penrhyn Farm. Just before and on the right, you can see the bed of Hall's Trefil



Brinore Tramroad

Tramroad leaving the road in the direction of Rhymney. **Continue along the road.** As you enter the Nant y Bwch housing estate, the Tredegar Tramroad drops away slightly to the left but remains parallel to the road.

You can take an alternative route over the Nant y bwch Viaduct, rejoining the main route at Twyn Star or continue to the A465 junction, carefully crossing then passing in front of the petrol filling station, bringing you to the roundabout on the A4048. ¹⁵

The roundabout lies on the junction of the Tredegar Tramroad which comes down from Trefil and another tramroad running from the Rhymney Union Furnace.

At the roundabout on the A4048 turn left onto St Luke's Road. At Pont y Widw, cross the bridge and then turn left onto the footpath which runs up to the weir which supplied Sirhowy Ironworks. The viaduct built in 1864 to take the Merthyr, Tredegar & Abergavenny Railway across the valley can be reached by following the footpath ahead of you.

Follow St Lukes Road to Police Row and Twyn Star. Here you can see a memorial to those killed in the Chartist Uprising of 1839. The earliest Chartist lodge in Blaenau Gwent was formed towards the end of 1838 at the Star Inn. Zephaniah Williams lived nearby at 10, Police Row and his friend and fellow radical, John Morgan, was the innkeeper.

In May 1839, a huge rally gathered on the Star Field (now the Twyn Star Housing Estate) ¹⁴ with almost 5,000 people in attendance. Zephaniah Williams led the Blaenau Gwent



Sirhowy Ironworks

Chartists through the torrential rain on their ill-fated march to Newport on the night of November 3rd, 1839.

Further on, you will cross the Nant Melyn at The Oak . If you look over the right hand side of the bridge, you will see evidence of a weir that directed water into the leat that ran down to Sirhowy Ironworks.

Continue along the road passing the Truck Shop and take the lane back to the Sirhowy Ironworks.

A full list of artworks can be found on the Homfray Trail

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 alysn.tippings@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

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