

# HISTORY IN THE ROUGH

[Excerpt from the Golden Jubilee Booklet]  
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**HISTORY IN THE ROUGH** How many people who have played on Tredegar Park Golf Course know that they are on one of the earliest industrial sites in South Wales, dating back to the seventeenth century - part of the very cradle of the Industrial Revolution? Or that horse-drawn trams of iron and coal once travelled along the embankment you call the Causeway, whilst a beehive-shaped furnace stood near the point where the dock-feeder goes underground (alongside the 9th green), and a waterwheel provided power for a bellows to the blast for smelting iron?

Several clues put us on the trail of this long-forgotten piece of local history. First, the name, " Forge Lane ", and the presence of loose clinker and slag around the western end of the Causeway. Second, the Causeway itself - who would have constructed a perfectly level embankment across the park, with evenly-graded sides, too narrow for a carriage-road, heading towards the line of the famous Park Mile Tramroad? A small paradox was the bridge over the Ebbw. Its iron superstructure is dated 1870, cast by Jordan of Newport (the same founders who cast the famous Tredegar Town Clock), but the stone piers do not match the ironwork, and are much earlier. (The Tredegar coat of arms on the bridge has been vandalised over the past two months). For those intrepid enough to risk their necks looking at the other side of the two cast iron plaques on the bridge. they bear the Royal Coat of Arms.

At this point it is worth mentioning the great importance of the Pye Corner area in the early 1800's. In 1805, the Sirhowy Tramroad was built from Sirhowy and Tredegar to Nine Mile Point, where it connected with the Monmouthshire Canal Company's Tramroad, which ran down the Sirhowy and Ebbw Valleys to Newport Docks via Tredegar Park. The Tredegar Park section, called the Park Mile, was financed by Sir Charles Morgan. The horse-drawn trams ran on short flat-bottomed cast iron rails, anchored with iron dogs onto stone sleepers - and numerous sleepers with their securing-holes, some even with oak dowels remaining in them - can be seen in the buttresses of the underpass running beneath the existing railway line at the end of the Causeway. This tramroad provided an outlet to the sea for all the coal tinsplate and iron of the Sirhowy and Ebbw Valleys, and in 1826, the Old Rumney Railway (which eventually became the Brecon and Merthyr Tydfil Junction Railway) linked with it at Pye Corner, providing an outlet from the Rhymney Iron Works and intermediate coal tinsplate and iron operations in the Rhymney Valley.

However, the story of our own forge begins in 1690, when it was leased to John Morgan of London. It was worked in conjunction with the forges at Machen and Eglwysilian. In 1748 it was leased to Thomas Morgan, Hugh Jones, and Samuel Pratt, and in 1764 a further lease was granted to John Maybery.

In 1775, Maybery and his partner John Wilkins got into financial difficulties, and finally in 1781 the works were taken over by Messrs. Harford & Co. of Melingriffith (who later, in 1791, established their great iron-works at Ebbw Vale). The Harfords ran the Tredegar Park works until its final closure in 1822.

So much for the forge itself, but what about communications and water supply?  
Examination of

the 1844 Tithe Map shows the existing bridge, and also shows a leat following the line of the dock feeder, ending where the feeder goes underground. However, the 1 dock feeder was not built until 1868, so the water-course on the 1844 map must have been the supply to the forge, and this fixes the position of the water wheel. It appears to have drained into a long ornamental pond running parallel with the lower half of Forge lane, and then flowing back into the Ebbw.

Documentary proof of the tramroad's existence was much harder to find and came from a rather unlikely source. In late 1972, Newport Museum put on exhibition a hand-drawn map used at the trial of the Monmouthshire Chartists in 1839. This is really a road map of the Western Valley showing all the beer-houses, and showing Pye corner in some detail. A double dotted line following our embankment, curving northward over the Ebbw to intersect with the park Mile Tramroad (opposite the existing Clubhouse), is described as "Old Tramroad". Proof positive - it was "old" in 1839 because the works closed in 1822. The existing embankment in fact disappears under the 17th green.

So there the story ends for the moment. There are a lot of unanswered questions on which we are now working. In particular, what exactly did the forge produce, and from where did it obtain its raw materials, particularly prior to the opening of the Park Mile Tramroad in 1805? Are there any rails or stone sleepers buried in the embankment which might tell us the tramroad's gauge?

Finally, the most interesting hypothesis. Before the Park Mile was built, did the Forge Tram Road run up a modest incline to the Monmouthshire Canal at Alltyryn which was opened in February 1796?

With luck we should have all the answers in time for the Centenary Brochure.

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