

# THE BRICKWORKS OF TORFAEN

by Lawrence Skuse

## INTRODUCTION

The former county of Monmouthshire had a diverse selection of brick works, chiefly due to its geology. The same conditions that produced the coal and iron also produced the clays and sandstones needed in brick making. Up to the early 20th Century, brick making tended to centre on those areas where the raw materials were readily to hand. This was especially true of the Victorian building boom when huge quantities of bricks were needed to build both the factories of the Industrial Revolution, and the houses needed for the huge influxes of workers into the towns and cities. Consequently, many smaller brick works started up, commenced production and, when the clay ran out, sold up or moved on to another site. It was too expensive to haul in the raw materials by road or canal, although ultimately, the railways facilitated import of materials.

The bricks produced in Monmouthshire were either for building, or for the fire bricks needed in ever increasing quantities, for the burgeoning kilns, furnaces and forges feeding the Industrial Revolution. Fortuitously, the high grade fireclay necessary for these refractory products is usually found co-located with coal, and it is believed to be the soil in which the plants that formed the coal grew. A very good example of this is the Upper Cwmbran Brick Works. The Porthmawr Adit of the Cwmbran Colliery opened in 1837; very rapidly, a huge seam of extremely high quality fireclay was discovered, leading to the opening of a brick works on the slopes of the mountain adjacent to the mine, and served by its tramway system. This clay was assessed as being as good as the already established and highly regarded Stourbridge fireclay from the Midlands. Consequently the works was opened as the "Stourbridge Fireclay Company" and their bricks marked as such, to the confusion of later industrial archaeologists.

Of course, Newport, Ebbw Vale, Risca, Tredegar, Raglan and other towns of Monmouthshire had brick industries, but this work is confined to that part of the Eastern Valley now referred to as Torfaen. Brick making in Torfaen has disappeared, due mainly to the dominating expansion of the major concerns such as the London Brick Company and the huge Scottish refractory conglomerates (anecdotal evidence suggests they came armed with cases of Scotch whiskey to "sweeten" prospective customers!). During the 1960s-80s, these firms would target an area and flood it with cheap bricks to destroy the small local boys. This was especially true of the Scots who effectively saw off Southwood Jones of Pontypool and Risca by the end of the 1960s with a combination of savage undercutting and the fact that South Wales was generally unable to produce refractory items of sufficient quality for many of the modern processes.

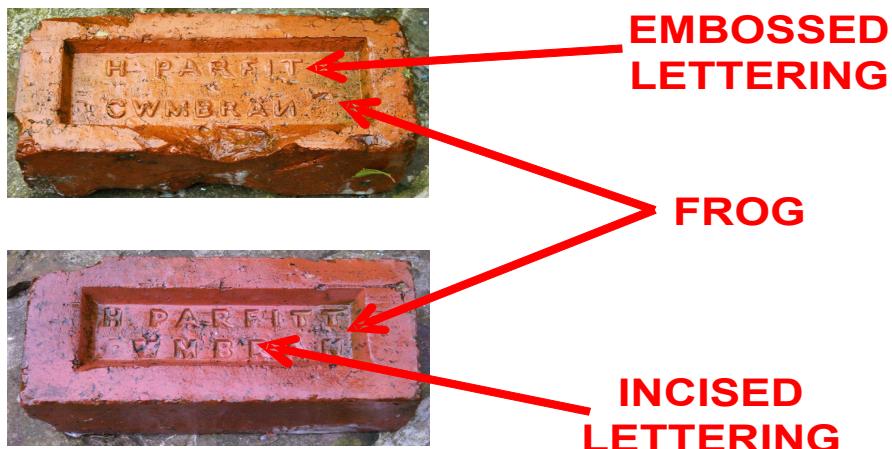
Now all that remains of the Torfaen brick industry, poor relation in history to the coal and iron industry, are the housing and industrial estates built on old works and their clay pits, and examples of their products liberally scattered around waste ground and streams and rivers, and of course, in those buildings still standing. These bricks and other items such as tiles and pipes, can perhaps be likened to modern fossils, vestiges of once thriving concerns which literally built the Industrial Revolution and beyond.

## Terminology

Technical references will be made concerning bricks, and these are described as follows:



The two large surfaces, the back and front, are referred to as "faces", the long sides as "stretchers", and the ends as "headers".



From about 1800, brick makers started moulding depressions in their bricks, on one or both faces, and these are referred to as "frogs". One theory for the use of this term is that the depression was considered similar to a horse's frog, but no one is quite sure how the expression came about. At the same time, an opportunity was seen to advertise the product by producing a die to stamp the brick with the firm's details and/or location. These dies were manufactured to have raised lettering - "embossed", or impressed lettering - "incised". Some of the early die sinking is extremely sloppy, with reversed letters and characters common. Early bricks were hand stamped, later ones machine stamped.

Note: traditionally house bricks are red. There are variations, the most common being light coloured bricks ranging from white to yellow. These are all usually referred to as "yellows".

## CWMBRAN

### Henllys (Oakfield) Brickworks

During its long life it was known as Hanson's, Henllis Works, Henllis Coal & Brick Works, Henllis Fire Brick & Retort Works, Henllys Fire Brick Works, Guest Keen & Nettlefold Ltd, Guest Keen & Nettlefold Refractories, and South Wales Refractories Ltd.

#### **Joshua and Cyrus Hanson**

The works, founded in 1840 by Joshua Hanson, was the longest running brick works in Cwmbran, changing hands several times until it ended up owned by GKN, closing down in the 1980s. A residential development, Gifford Close, was built on the site in the 1990s.

Joshua Hanson, a typical roving Victorian entrepreneur, finally fetched up in Henllys where he opened the Henllys Colliery and built the Hanson Tramway to take coal down to his wharf on the Monmouthshire-Brecon Canal. As well as a coal works at this basin and wharf, he built the brick works to exploit the rich seams of fire clay found in his colliery, much as Reginald Blewitt had done at his Porthmawr Adit in Upper Cwmbran. On his death in 1847, the business was taken over by his son Cyrus.

He expanded the works and it quickly built up a formidable reputation all over South Wales and the West of England for high quality fire bricks and gas retorts. Directory entries for Hanson are Mineral Statistics for 1858: Henblis (sic), Cyrus Hanson; Slater's 1859: Hanson, Cyrus (Fire), Henllis (sic) Works; Slater's 1868: Hanson, Cyrus (Fire Brick) Cwmbran; Kelly's 1871: Hanson, Cyrus, Llanvihangel-Llantarnam. Around 1874, JC Hill & Company purchased the Henllys Colliery and Brickworks. Curiously, although the Hanson/Hill works was primarily a fire brick producer, house bricks are more readily found than fire bricks.

#### **JC Hill & Company**

JC Hill and William Batt founded the Oakfield Wire Works adjacent to the Henllys brick works in 1857. Around 1874 Hill branched out into the coal and brick business and bought the Henllys Colliery and Brickworks, being listed in Worral's of 1875 as producing fire bricks at Cwmbran. In 1884, a trade advertisement appeared advertising Hill's Oakfield Wire Works and his Henllis Coal and Fire Brick Works. Interestingly, the advert quotes "The Acorn Brand". Hanson bricks exist stamped with and without an acorn logo (see plates). It would appear that Hill kept the Hanson dies, certainly for house bricks, but added his acorn logo. This use of a picture on bricks produced in Wales is fairly rare. Why he retained his predecessor's dies is not certain, but perhaps he wanted to exploit the good reputation Hanson products enjoyed, just adding his own personal touch.

The advert was perhaps wasted, as in 1885 Hill sold the colliery and brick works to the Patent Nut and Bolt Co.

**Patent Nut & Bolt Co**  
**Guest & Keen**  
**Guest, Keen & Nettlefold**  
**GKN-Dahl**

The Patent Nut and Bolt Co took over the works in 1885, in 1900 they became Guest & Keen, and in 1902 Guest, Keen & Nettlefold, or GKN. It will be remembered they had also acquired the Upper Cwmbran works and colliery from Henry Parfitt in 1896, but this was dismantled by 1915.

The Henllys works was however, apparently a much more viable concern to them; in 1920 they were importing clay by train from their own pit in Pontnewynydd, the Viaduct Level (Mineral Resources Great Britain); this pit also supplied the company's Glamorgan Dowlais works with clay. By the late 1970s/early 1980s, another company called Dahl had joined them, and bricks were incised "GKN-DAHL". The works closed down in the 1980s and in the 1990s, a residential development, Gifford Close, was built on the site. It would appear that by the works' demise, they were also acting as agents for other firms; the Dowlais Brook which runs alongside the site is littered with unused refractory bricks and blocks bearing names such as "DOURIE", "THISTLE", "DOUGAL" et. al. and I have also found in the brook, an unused refractory sleeve for a foundry ladle nozzle, produced in Sheffield. I suspect that when Gifford Close was being built, loose bricks etc were just pushed into the brook off the site.

### **Cwmbran Brick Company**

The Cwmbran Brick Company was located where Cwmbran Stadium now stands, and was just across Llantarnam Road from the Star Brick & Tile Company. Kelly's Directories of 1895 and 1906 show the manager as George W Williams. (Kelly's of 1891 shows George W Williams as the manager of the Star Brick & Tile Company). The works is not on the 1886 OS map, but appears on the 1902 map. By 1920, the site is marked on the OS map only as an old clay pit. It is possible that they were subsumed into the Star Brick & Tile Company Ltd, as on the closure of the latter in the 1960s, brand new tiles were found at the works embossed "Cwmbran Brick Co"; other tiles, possibly post WWII are also marked "Cwmbran Brick" and Cwmbran Brick Co".

### **Star Brick & Tile Company (Cwmbran)**

Star Brick & Tile, believed to have been established in 1887, were located alongside the Hereford and Newport railway line, on Llantarnam Road, where the Cooperative supermarket now stands. They had their own sandstone pit at the site, known locally as "The Eighties", allegedly from the depth of water that eventually filled it, forming the unofficial and dangerous "Cwmbran Lido". Later, this pit became a landfill site and was then built on. The works is not shown on the 1886 OS map, but it appears on the 1902 map.

Kelly's of 1891 shows George W Williams as the manager of the Star Brick & Tile Company Ltd. Williams also appeared in the 1895 and 1906 Kelly's as manager of the Cwmbran Brick Company. The 1895 Kelly's shows Charles Draycott as the manager and by 1906 Everett Hartley had taken over. The 1926 Kelly's shows Garnet Hartley as the manager. The 'Mineral Resources GB' for 1920 states that clay was being shipped in from the Varteg Deep Black Vein collieries by train, with sandstone from the previously mentioned "Eighties" being available on site. In the 1920s and 1930s, the firm is shown in various Kelly's as producing both house and fire bricks, but reference to fire bricks stops by the 1937 Kelly's.

Now the situation with Star Brick & Tile becomes more complicated. The 1957-8 'Directory of Quarries' (Monmouthshire) lists the following for Star Brick & Tile: Ponthir, Works: Penrhos Works Caerleon (this became the HQ of the group); Malpas Road, Newport; Altyryn (sic) Works,

Newport; Waunvawr (sic) Works, Risca; Llantarnam Works, Cwmbran. In the 1959-60 Directory of Quarries, the Altyryn Works is absent. Throughout the 1960s, further reference is made only to Star Brick & Tile Company Newport, and "National Star Newport" but these almost certainly cover all surviving Star works in Monmouthshire, including Cwmbran, although the 1969 Directory of Quarries publishes the list: Ponthir, Malpas Road, Waunfawr (now with an "F"), and the Llantarnam Works. The latter is shown only as making "bricks and salt glazed pipes". Anecdotal evidence from a former pipe moulder at Llantarnam states that the works was taken over by Hepworth's Pipes eventually being closed down, with production transferred to the Gwent Pipe & Fire Brick Works in Pontnewydd. The 1969 Directory of Quarries does however, list the Llantarnam Works as operating as part of the Star group. What is certain is that, like other local brick works such as the Oak Brick Company of Pontnewynydd, the Cwmbran Star Brick & Tile Works had fallen back on sanitary ware and pipes under the relentless pressure of the "Big Boys" such as London Brick Company who were squeezing local firms out from the 1960s.

Of interest is the lettering code on the "National Star Newport" bricks. Some of these have small identifying letters: C, L, RC; these are believed to be used to differentiate between different works: C - Caerleon, L - Llantarnam, RC - Risca, allowing the use of a generic die throughout the group. There were other non-Monmouthshire National Star Newport works, e.g. in Swansea and Bridgend; the letters "P" and "G" appear on National Star Newport bricks held at the National Museum of Wales National Collections in Nantgarw.

In the 1950s, Star Brick & Tile experimented at the Upper Race, just above Penyrheol Reservoir, with a breeze block manufacturing plant, using spoil from the colliery waste tips there. Star Newport house bricks, probably seconds, and misfires are found on the line of the old Thomas Dadford Jr tramway, as hardcore, and there is an area amongst the slag heaps where these bricks have been used as hardcore for the works site.

### **Whitehead-Hills Brickworks**

This works, whose bricks are stamped only "Whitehead", was situated over the Monmouthshire-Brecon Canal from the Hanson / Hill / GKN brick works and was often referred to as "The Llandowlais Works". It is not on the 1922 OS map, but the works was established by 1925. It is reported as having had two kilns, each of eighteen chambers, each chamber holding 19,000 bricks, giving a theoretical capability of producing 304,000 bricks per week. The works closed down in the 1970s, the last trade entry for it being in the 1973 Directory of Quarries. The Ty Coch Way Industrial Estate was built on the site.

### **Tamplin's Lock, Monmouthshire-Brecon Canal**

The 1882 and 1902 OS maps show a brick works alongside Tamplin's Lock, on the east of the Monmouthshire-Brecon Canal , and to the south of Pentre Lane. By the time the 1922 map appeared, it had disappeared. Today it is just a field with no evidence left. Nothing is known of these works.

### **William Jones**

William Jones is listed in the 1868 Slater's as a brick maker in Cwmbran.

## PONTNEWYDD

### Henry Parfitt

The above mentioned Henry Parfitt also ran a brickworks at Mount Pleasant in Pontnewydd, close to Holy Trinity Church, on the southern side of Mount Pleasant Road, shown on the 1882 OS map. This would have had good access to the Monmouthshire-Brecon canal. By 1901, the brick works had disappeared from the map, but there brick kilns are shown on the northern side of Mount Pleasant Road. This is by a terrace which appears to have been built close to the works, and which today is still standing and called Parfitt Terrace. Parfitt's residence, Ashley House, by the canal, was just down from the works.

It is known that in 1860 Parfitt rebuilt Cwmbran Furnace for Mr RS Roper, being presented by his obviously satisfied client with an engraved spirit level. Brick toppings to original gate posts in the Holy Trinity churchyard are made from red Parfitt bricks; Holy Trinity was opened in 1860. As we have seen, Parfitt moved into fire brick production in 1867, taking over the Upper Cwmbran works from John Lawrence. He has an entry in the 1871 Kelly's Directory, but the 1891 Kelly's shows him only in the firebrick section. As stated already, in 1896 Parfitt was in financial difficulties and the PNB took over the Upper Cwmbran works.

### Woodside Brick Works

The Woodside area of Pontnewydd was associated with brick making from at least 1859 (William Jenkins - see Jenkins) until 1925. A Patent Nut & Bolt deeds map of 1873 shows "Greenmeadow Brickyard Cottage" and "Woodside Brickyard Cottage", both just west of the canal at Woodside Road. The 1882 OS map shows the two works, marked as "Brick Works" and "Woodside Brick & Tile Works". The 1900 OS map shows these works as disused; the 1902 OS map shows a new brick works to the east of the canal, on land bounded today by Maendy Way to the north and Greenhill Road to the south. This works is still shown on the 1922 OS map. A tramway is marked as carried over the canal from clay pits on the western side (now the grassed area leading down from Petersen's Funeral Home to the canal). The area occupied by the present day Ty Box Road, and the southern edge of Church Wood were also clay pits.

The 1859 Slater's Directory gives William Jenkins as making bricks at Woodland Terrace; this was on the south of what is now Greenforge Way, close to the later marked brick works. Worral's Directory of 1875 lists the Woodside Brick Works, proprietor Hy B Sketch (Henry Bolt Sketch). The 1906 Kelly's lists "The Woodside Brick Company, Woodside Road, Cwmbran". The 1914 Kelly's lists the "Standard Brick Company" there but the 1926 Kelly's carries no entry for any brick works at Woodside Road, and it is believed the works closed in 1925. The field where the works were was long known locally as "the brick yard".

### Henry Bolt Sketch

As mentioned above, Henry Sketch was listed in the 1875 Worral's as the proprietor of the brick works at Woodside. The 1875 Kelly's also lists him as a builder. The 1884 Kelly's lists him as a brick maker .

## **WJ Scourse & Son**

The only directory entry I have found for Scourse is in the 1907 South Wales and Monmouthshire Directory and Buyers' Guide. This lists "IW Scourse and Son, Woodside Brick Works, Railway Station, Pontnewydd, Cwmbran. Manufacturers of best red and fancy bricks; also floor coverings and tiles. Tel 0192 Nat. Estb 1873". The only brick I have come across is marked "WJ SCOURSE".

## **Jenkins**

As mentioned previously, William Jenkins was listed in Slater's Directory for 1859 as being at Woodland Terrace close by the site of the Woodside Brick Works. The 1871 Kelly's quotes William Jenkins Snr as being at "Llanfrechfa Lower" (Pontnewydd). Mercer & Crocker's Directory of 1876 gives "William Jenkins, brick maker, Pontrhydrun" (in Pontnewydd), while Kelly's of 1884 cites "A. Jenkins of Llanfrechfa Lower".

## **Davies & Company**

Nothing is known of Davies & Co other than they produced bricks in Pontnewydd. The reverse face of their bricks, frogged, is incised "POINTNEWYDD" with the "N" reversed. As can be seen for AH James, this frog and incision is identical for the reverse of their bricks; perhaps one took over the other and retained the die for the reverse stamp. Unfortunately there is no indication of where the works was.

## **AH James & Company**

Similarly, nothing is known about AH James other than they also produced bricks in Pontnewydd, and may have been taken over by/taken over, Davies & Co (see above).

## **Clement Meacher Bailhache**

The 1884 Kelly's lists Bailhache as producing bricks at Pontnewydd, but where is not known. This appears to be the only directory entry for him. The only person I have traced with this unusual name is a distinguished barrister and KC, Clement Meacher Bailhache (a Huguenot surname). Early in a distinguished legal career, in 1884, he was working as a solicitor in Newport - did he invest in a short lived brick works whilst in South Wales? There is nothing to confirm a link between him and a brick works in Pontnewydd other than the coincidence of the highly unusual name.

## **Grove Park Brickworks**

The 1882 OS map shows an unnamed, disused brick works at what is now Grove Park, at the junction of Lowlands Crescent/Lowlands Road. This is the only reference anywhere to this works. It is possible, but not confirmed, that this might have been the Pontrhydrun works of William Jenkins (see above), this site being close to Pontrhydrun. Equally, could it have been associated with Davies/James?

## **Gwent Pipe & Fire Brick Company Ltd**

Gwent Pipe & Fire Brick Company was located across the Avon Llwyd from Pontnewydd (Lower) Railway Station, bounded in the east by Conway Terrace. Previously it had been the site of the Conway Tin Works and, in the early 20th Century, a Pitch and Benzol Works. Today it is a residential estate, Stonebridge Park; given the site's history, it is hoped a very thorough environmental survey was carried out before it was developed!

It is first listed in Kelly's of 1937, and the Directory of Quarries for the same year, which states it was producing glazed stoneware, sanitary pipes, fire bricks, fire clay refractory goods and chimney pots. It was still listed in the 1960 Industrial Directory for Wales and Monmouthshire, but in the 1960s it was taken over by Hepworth's Pipes who also took over the Llantarnam Star Brick & Tile works and transferred their pipe production to the Pontnewydd works which itself, was closed down in 1974.

## UPPER CWMBRAN

A James Richards was recorded as producing bricks in 1829 in Llanfrechfa Upper, but the location is not known. In 1837, Reginald Blewitt opened the Porthmawr Adit at Upper Cwmbran, and discovered a high grade fire clay seam which was assessed to be as good as the famous Stourbridge fire clay from the town of that name in Staffordshire. Blewitt decided to exploit this by starting up a brickworks close by the adit, served by the colliery's tramway system. Thus, in 1839, with Ebenezer Rogers as manager, Blewitt built a works just below the miners' cottages known as The Square, on a site which was later used in the 1930s for the filtration and pumping station for the Blaen Bran reservoir, which served Cwmbran from 1884 until Llandegveth Reservoir was opened in 1965. It is stated a small brick works already existed on the site, possibly that of James Richards?

Perhaps rather cynically, Blewitt called his brick company the "Stourbridge Fireclay Company", and this has confused modern day industrial archaeologists who, not unnaturally, assume that these bricks came from Stourbridge in Staffordshire. Examples of Stourbridge Fireclay Company bricks have turned up all over the Eastern Valley. Blewitt's Cwmbran works is shown in the Monmouthshire section of a report 'Mineral Statistics 1858' as producing "Fire bricks used for iron and tin works, coke ovens etc, 520,000 yearly".

By 1859 however, Blewitt was in serious financial trouble and the works passed to another local entrepreneur, John Lawrence. It is likely that the company then operated under the name "Cwmbran Fireclay Company", as examples have been found at the site bearing this stamp, and elsewhere, alongside both "Stourbridge" and "Parfit" bricks, described below.

In 1867, an already established Cwmbran house brick maker and builder Henry Parfitt took over the lease, and his bricks are stamped "H. PARFIT". Curiously, on his fire bricks, the name is spelt with one "T" although his name had two; all his house bricks, produced at his Mount Pleasant works in Pontnewydd, by the canal, are stamped "PARFITT".

In 1896 Parfitt was in financial difficulties, and he got out of brick making, the Patent Nut & Bolt Company (PNB), later Guest & Keen, taking over the works. In 1902 Nettlefold joined Guest & Keen to form GKN. By 1915, the works was closed and dismantled. This was possibly because GKN also owned the larger Henllys works at Oakfield in Cwmbran, originally founded by Joshua Hanson, and they felt they could produce enough bricks without using the Upper Cwmbran works which, by comparison, was in a remote location on the mountain; possibly the clay was running out anyway. I have found no bricks which can be linked to the GKN tenure of the site.

One by-product of the Upper Cwmbran works was the building of the Siloam Baptist Church opposite the brick works. Prior to 1837, in Upper Cwmbran, Baptist meetings were held in parishioners' houses, but the sudden increase in the population, caused by both the coal mine and the brick works, created the need for a dedicated place of worship, which opened in 1839. Today, there are still cottages, Brick Yard Cottages, built originally for the brick makers and their families, opposite the Siloam and alongside an incline from the works down to the main tramway which carried on to Caerleon via The Halfway Bridge in Cwmbran village.

## **PONTYPOOL**

### **Panteg Brickworks**

Little is known of this site which is shown on the 1882 OS map, but is absent from the 1901 map. It was situated between the School and later St Oswald's Church off Wern Road in Sebastopol. There is a tenuous reference on a genealogical site referring to someone working at the "Sebastopol Brick Yard" in 1878. No directory entries have been found for this brick works.

### **New Inn brickworks**

Slater's Directory of 1868 gives a W.G. Williams of New Inn, as a brick maker, no further details known.

### **Thomas Gameson**

Thomas Gameson is named in the Mineral Statistics of 1858 as being the manufacturer of "Fire bricks, used for iron and tin works, coke ovens etc, 200,000 yearly, at Blaena (sic)". He is listed in Slater's of 1859 as brick making at Sow Hill, Pontypool, and is also listed in Slater's Directory of 1868 as making bricks at Abersychan, where, is not known.

### **Blaendare brickworks**

#### **Blaendare Company**

There were two brick works associated with the Blaendare site, one at the Upper Race and the other at the Lower Race. The former was at an industrial site dating back to the early 18th century, with, at various times, an ironworks, coke ovens, brick works, and a drift colliery which operated until 1948. A house built for the site manager in 1810 from white bricks made at the works still stands overlooking where the brick works was located. Slater's Directory for 1868 lists "The Blaendare Co Ltd, Pontypool"; the same directory also gives Carty, Dennis as making fire bricks at Lower Race. Kelly's of 1871 lists the "Blaendare Colliery Co, The Race, Pontypool". Kelly's of 1901 refers to the "Blaendare Co. Limited, colliery proprietors & fire clay goods & brick makers (Edward M. Bythway, sec.), Lower & Upper Race". In 1906 Kelly's refers, in its fire brick section, to the "Blaendare Co Lim. HE Thatcher sec. Lower & Upper Race, Pontypool". 'Special Report on the Mineral Resources of Great Britain', HMSO, 1920, quotes The Blaendare Co as situated on Blaendare Slope, Upper Race, 1 mile south west of Pontypool. The Lower Race works is marked on the 1901 OS map as being disused; the Upper Race works is on OS maps up to 1954, it has then disappeared by the 1962 map.

#### **Pontypool Brick Company**

Kelly's Directory of 1906, gives the Pontypool Brick Co as being at The Race, Pontypool, the first mention of this firm. Cope's Directory for 1907 quotes the Pontypool Brick Co as being in Crane Street (Pontypool), obviously an office address. In Kelly's for 1926, the entry reads "Pontypool Brick Co Ltd (Rd. Rees sec.) Clarence Street, Pontypool & works, The Race, Pontypool". The last entry is in the Industrial Directory for Wales & Monmouthshire for 1948. The Lower Race works is marked on the 1901 OS map as being disused; the Upper Race works is on OS maps up to 1954, it has then disappeared by the publication of the 1962 map.

## **Little Mill Brickworks**

It would appear that brick making at Little Mill dates back to at least 1850. Some Burgoyne bricks are faintly embossed in small lettering with "Estb 1850", and another brick is incised "Little Mill, Estb 1850".

The works was alongside the Newport and Hereford line at Little Mill Junction, where a line branched off eastwards through Usk into Gloucestershire. A spur into the works was laid in 1869 when the owner was given as a CH Leigh.<sup>1</sup> The 1882 OS map, and subsequent editions until 1920, give the works as "Bryn Tovey Brick Works" (from the nearby Bryn Tovey Wood); from 1920 to 1988, it is marked the "Little Mill Brick Works".

### **John Burgoyne**

The 1881 Census lists John Burgoyne as a brick maker and the 1884, 1891 and 1895 Kelly's list John Burgoyne at the Little Mill brick kilns. He died in 1906, his estate going to Alfred Burgoyne and David John Louher. The latter apparently took over the works as his name is listed against it in the 1906 Kelly's.

### **Little Mill Brick Company**

Between 1910 and 1920, Louher changed the name to "Little Mill Brick Co" and later it became a limited company. Kelly's for 1926, and all directories subsequently, use the name Little Mill Brick Co Ltd". Louher himself died in 1948. The spur into the works was removed in 1966, doubtless a victim of the infamous Beeching Cuts. The firm continued into the 1980s, the last directory entry being the 1981 Industrial Directory of Wales. Today, the site is the Little Mill Go Kart Track.

## **PONTNEWYNYDD**

### **Cwmffrwdoer Brick Company**

No brick works are shown at Cwmffrwdoer on the 1886 OS map, but the works is on the 1901 map. It is then shown on all maps up to 1965. Kelly's of 1891 lists the Cwmffrwdoer Brick Company , Hy Bythway, Manager, Cwmffrwdoer, Pontypool. (Henry Bythway is also listed in the same Kelly's as manager of the Blaendare (Brick) Company, Lower Race, Pontypool).

### **Oak Brick Company**

Kelly's of 1901 and 1906 lists this company in both house and fire brick sections, with Alfred H Bailey as the manager. Cope's Directory of 1907 lists " Oak Brick Co Ltd. Telegrams: "Bailey Pontnewynydd". Telephone 13 (P.O.)". The 1920 report on the 'Mineral Resources of Great Britain', lists the works as producing "red and buff bricks made from local shale, the fire brick department being subsidiary. Fire clay is brought in from Messrs. J & W Jones, Snatchwood Slope, Pontnewynydd". The company is absent from the 1926 Kelly's house brick section, but does appear in the fire brick section, with EJ Bailey as manager. The same applies for the 1937 Kelly's, again with EJ Bailey as manager. The company is also listed in the 1937 Directory of Quarries. In the 1957/8, 1959/60 and 1969 Directory of Quarries, the company is shown as being "sanitary pipe makers"; their phone number was Pontypool 13.

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Private Owner Wagons - A Seventh Collection' Keith Turton, Lightmoor Press Lydney, 2008

As with for example, the Llantarnam branch of Star Brick & Tile Co, by the time the works closed, presumably in the early 1970s (although the Torfaen Museum Trust's 'The Story of Torfaen' gives the closure year as 1966), it was reduced to making sanitary pipes, having lost its brick customers to the national conglomerates.

### **Graig-ddu Brick Company**

The 'Mineral Statistics' for 1858 lists the Graig-ddu Company at the Graig-ddu Brick Works at Pontypool. They are quoted as producing "fire bricks and building bricks, 305,000 average yearly quantity". Slater's for 1868 lists them as at Cwmnantddu. Kelly's of 1876 lists the firm as making building bricks only; Kelly's of 1884 shows Graigddu Brick Works (David Davies c.e. man.) Cwmnantddu, Pontypool, in the fire brick section. Kelly's for 1891 shows Graigddu Brick Works, David Davies Manager, Cwmnantddu, Pontypool, in the house brick section only. Kelly's of 1895 gives the Graigddu Brickworks, David Davies, Manager, Cwmnantddu, Pontypool in the house brick section, but in the fire brick section the entry is thus: "Graigddu Fire Brick Works (Southwood Jones & Co) (D Davies Local Manager), Nr Pontypool". Thereafter, all references to the Graigddu Brick Company cease, the new company of Southwood Jones manufacturing only fire bricks.

The Graig-ddu Brick Works is shown on the 1880 OS map and maps thereafter until the 1962 map where it is shown as disused. Even after Southwood Jones acquired the works in 1895, it was still marked on maps as the "Graig-ddu Brick Works".

### **Southwood Jones**

The 1891 Kelly's shows E Southwood Jones as being the manager at the Henlis Firebrick & Retort Works (the former Hanson's works in Cwmbran.). In the 1895 Kelly's, Southwood Jones is listed at Machen, Risca under the house brick section, and also in the fire brick section, at the Graig Ddu works at Cwmnantddu, Pontnewynydd (see Graig Ddu above). Southwood Jones then ran two works, Dan y Graig at Risca, with bricks incised "RISCA", and the Pontnewynydd works with bricks incised "GRAIGDDU". Large numbers of Southwood Jones ("S J") bricks, both Risca and Graigddu, are to be found throughout the Eastern Valley and beyond. Many were also found at the archaeological dig at the "Copperopolis" site in Swansea, prior to its redevelopment, and there is anecdotal evidence that their bricks were used in the West Country as ballast for railway lines. Again, the company was squeezed out of the market by the Scottish conglomerates; although on the 1954 OS map, by 1962 it had disappeared from the map. The Directory of Quarries 1957/8 and 1959/60, lists only the Dan y Graig works in Risca. The family eventually emigrated to Australia.

### **ABERSYCHAN**

#### **Thomas Gameson**

See Pontypool.

### **The British**

There were brick works at The British, part of the iron works site, supplying bricks to the works there.

## Pentwyn brickworks

### J Gregory & Co

J Gregory & Co are listed in the 1906 Kelly's as being at Pentwyn, Abersychan, in both house and fire brick sections. Cope's Directory of 1907 lists Gregory, J & Co, Pentwyn Works. The 1886 OS map shows no works at the site, but it appears on the 1901 OS map. Kelly's of 1926 gives the Abersychan Brick Company as being at Pentwyn, Abersychan. As well as "Gregory Abersychan" bricks, there are also "Gregory & Co, Pontnewynydd" bricks. It is likely, given the location of Pentwyn in relation to Abersychan and Pontnewydd, they were produced at the same works.

### Abersychan Brick Company

The 1926 Kelly's lists the Abersychan Brick Company as being at the Pentwyn works, presumably having taken over the site from J Gregory. The 1948 Industrial Directory of South Wales and Monmouthshire names the firm as Abersychan Brick & Slag Co, and in 1960, the same publication lists it as the Abersychan Slag Ballast Co. The last reference to this company is in the 1964 Industrial Directory of South Wales and Monmouthshire. The works is absent from the 1886 OS map, but appears on the 1901 map; a works is shown on the 1965 map, but by 1978 all that is shown on the site is "tips - disused".

## BLAENAVON

There were three brick works in Blaenavon, supplying the Iron Works. At the site of the Upper Brick works, there is still a dry wall made up of tuyeres and other refractory items. The Upper Brick Works is believed to have started in 1788, and lasted until the 1920s. The 1960, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1978, and 1981 Industrial Directory for Wales and Monmouthshire lists Pickford & Holland as making fire bricks in Blaenavon. The Directory of Quarries, 1969 and 1973 lists "Pickford, Holland & Co Ltd, 381 Fullwood Road, Sheffield; Basic Brick Works, Blaenavon, Mon. Tel Blaenavon 271. (Silica, Chrome, Magnesite, Silimanite, Bricks and Cement)".

### Thanks to the following, in no particular order

- Millie Cadwell B.A., 'Upper Cwmbran - A Search into the Past', Torfaen Museum Trust 1979 Nigel Jones, [www.cwmbran.info](http://www.cwmbran.info)
- Heavy Industries Section, National Museum of Wales
- Clive Davies & Gwyn Tilley, 'The Iron Heart of Gwent', Landmark Publishing, 2007
- Dr Gareth D John & Graham H Lawrence, 'Cwmbran', Old Bakehouse Publications, 2007
- WG Lloyd, 'Days That Have Been - A Cwmbran History', J & P Davison, 2006 'Pontypool The Heart of The Valley', J & P Davison, 2009
- 'Cwmbran - Chapters in its History', Cwmbran Community Council, 1996
- Blaenavon Ironworks Guide Book, 2006
- 'The Story of Torfaen', Torfaen Museum Trust, 2008