

RHONDDA CYNON TAF
HERITAGE TRAILS

TOUR 1
THE TAFF VALLEY
& PONTYPRIDD



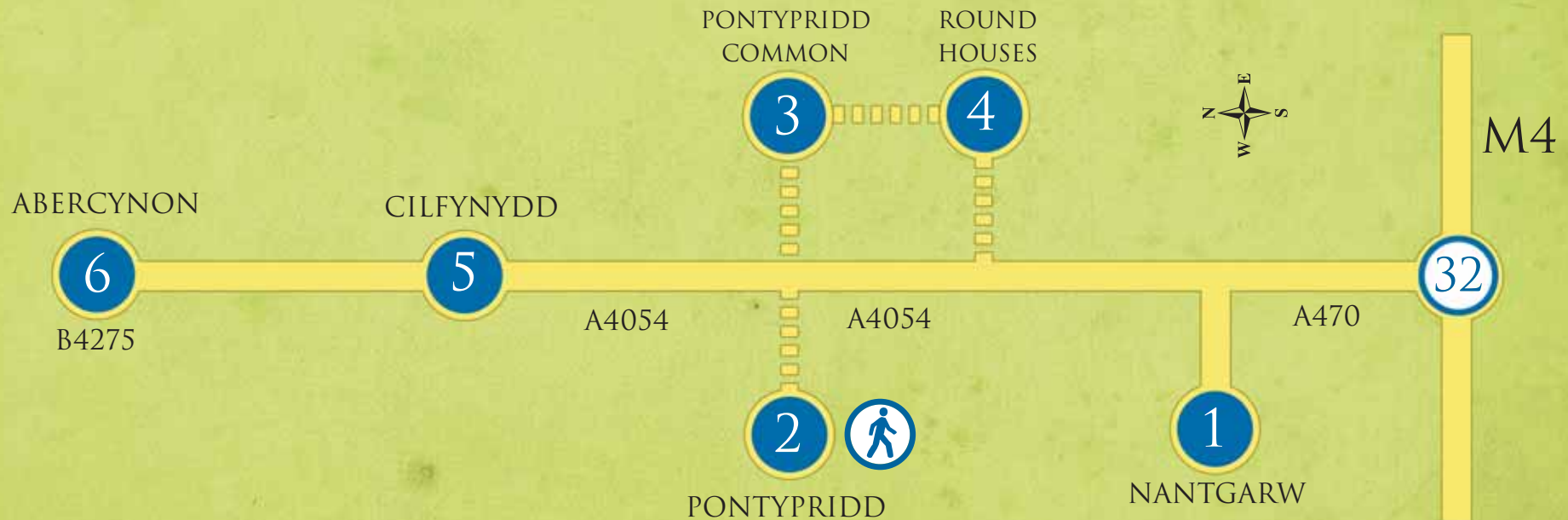
TOUR 1 - THE TAFF VALLEY AND PONTYPRIDD

SUMMARY

Follow the River Taff up from the M4 junction with the A470 to Pontypridd and then, having explored Pontypridd, on to Cilfynydd and the site of two major transport sites from the past to complete this tour.

Postcodes are shown for 'Sat Nav.' Users

- Start Point – A470 junction with M4 (Jct. 32)
- ① Nantgarw Chinaworks, CF15 7TB
 - ② Pontypridd – Town Walk (CF37 2DR – Goods Yard car park) (optional allow 1 hour – opportunities for lunch)
 - ③ Pontypridd Common CF37 4AL (optional walk – allow 20 minutes)
 - ④ Round Houses Blue Plaque CF37 4AR
 - ⑤ Plaque to Sir Geraint Evans – Cilfynydd CF37 4EH
 - ⑥ Navigation House & Trevithick Memorial CF45 4RR
- Tour ends (or continue on Tour 2 Cynon Valley trail)



TOUR 1 - ROUTE DESCRIPTION

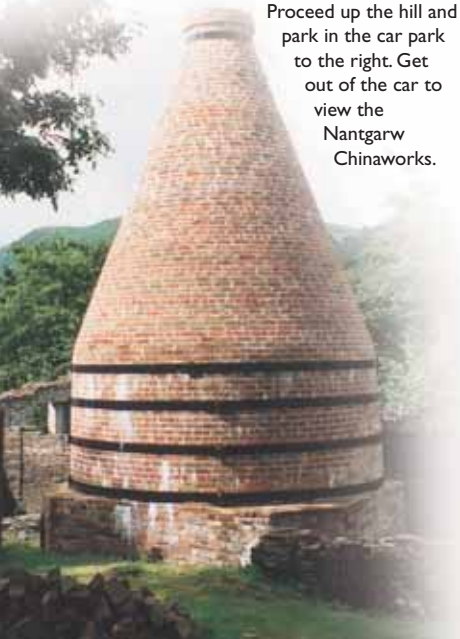
As you start this tour you will notice high up to the right, the late 19th century 'fairy tale-style' Castell Coch. This was designed for the third Marquis of Bute by the architect William Burgess and is worth a visit in its own right on another day.

From M4 junction 32 Head briefly north on the A470 and exit at its junction with A468 & A4054 signposted Caerphilly and Treforest. On the slip road take the Left hand lane and take the first exit off the roundabout signed A4054 Treforest & Taffs Well.

Proceed to the next roundabout where take the final exit and turn immediately right following the brown signs for

Nantgarw Chinaworks.

Proceed up the hill and park in the car park to the right. Get out of the car to view the Nantgarw Chinaworks.



A Blue Plaque here is placed on the house that fronts the works that date from 1813, The Nantgarw China was produced for only a short time and was the brainchild of William Billingsley, - meaning that the china that was made is now highly prized by collectors.

The works was served by the Glamorganshire Canal, and our tour today follows part of the route of this now largely disappeared Canal which was completed in 1794 and linked Merthyr Tydfil and its ironworks with the port at Cardiff.

Now retrace your steps to the A470 and at the roundabout on the junction, take the first exit signposted Merthyr Tydfil. After rejoining the A470 take the third exit signed A4058 Pontypridd and Rhondda Valleys. On the slip road approach the roundabout ignoring the filter lane following A4058 Rhondda Valleys.

At the roundabout take the 2nd exit and follow the road that runs parallel to the A470. At the next roundabout take the 1st exit onto A4223. Proceed downhill to a bridge over the River Taff and straight on at the traffic lights to almost immediately another set where turn sharp right and then first left behind the Bus Station to follow the signs for **P** Goods yard. At a slip road on the right head up the slope to enter the Goods Yard Car Park.

Pull up in the car park (pay and display) and take some time to explore Pontypridd. A heritage trail walk around the town can be found at www.heritagetrailsrct.co.uk to download, or there is a walk leaflet that can be obtained in advance by phoning 01443 490238 or e-mail tourismenquiries@rctcbc.gov.uk. Alternatively walk the short distance to Pontypridd Museum and pick up a leaflet there (open Monday to Saturday 10am – 5pm Tel. 01443 490748). Allow at least an hour to take this interesting walk,

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and longer if you wish to avail yourself of the cafes and hosteleries in town to have lunch or to visit the Museum.

Pontypridd is located at the junction of the rivers Rhondda and the Taff and from here flows down to the sea at Cardiff as the river Taff. During the 19th century Pontypridd was a boom town, a centre of heavy industry and coal mining. Its houses cling to the surrounding steep hillsides and the rich Victorian industrialists and mine owners funded the building of some impressive buildings.

The Welsh national anthem Hen Wlad fy Nhadau (Land of My Fathers) was composed here in 1856 by Evan James and his son James James. By following the heritage trail walk (see above) you will be able to visit the memorial to them in the fine Victorian Ynysangharad Park.

On returning to your vehicle, leave Goods Yard car park by its exit road turn left and continue through three sets of traffic lights and cross the river (note Edward's Bridge to the left as you do so.) following signs for A470.



At the roundabout at the junction with A470 take the second exit signed A4054 Cilfynydd. Proceed up a steep hill and at the crossroads go carefully straight across into Common Road. Continue uphill and shortly take a sharp right bend to enter Hospital Road. Continue for a short way and pull up near to the Pontypridd Hospital.

Here you may take an optional walk onto Pontypridd Common which can be accessed by a tarmac path that starts opposite the hospital.



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SHORT WALK

Pontypridd Common (Optional)

Starting opposite Pontypridd Hospital take the tarmac path and immediately notice the stone circle surrounding the large 'Rocking Stone' on the left. This circle was created in the 19th century and used by members of the druid 'Gorsedd' to address crowds and to hold open-air Eisteddfod. Dr William Price (see below for Blue Plaque) was a druid and frequent orator at this place.

The Rocking Stone is one of a number of 'erratics' or large boulders that were deposited here on the Common by the retreating ice fields of the last Ice Age over 10,000 years ago.

Proceed along the tarmac path with fine views of Pontypridd below and the surrounding hills.

After approx. 200 metres you will arrive at the war memorial for the 5th battalion Royal Welch Regiment. This obelisk overlooks Pontypridd and its surrounding area.

Return to your car either by retracing your steps or else circle back across the Common following one of a number of paths.



The Round Houses, Pontypridd

Having returned to your car, from this point continue ahead. The road narrows to a lane for a short distance and then as it widens note the houses to the left with round turrets.

Park safely beyond these houses and walk back uphill to see the Blue Plaque to Dr William Price who built these 'Round Houses' as a gatehouse to a mansion that was subsequently never built.

(Please respect the privacy of residents in these houses, which are privately owned)

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Returning to your car now continue ahead to shortly reach a right hand bend. Follow this round and downhill to a junction where turn right and immediately right again at a set of traffic lights to be heading north along the A4054 which runs parallel to the main A470.

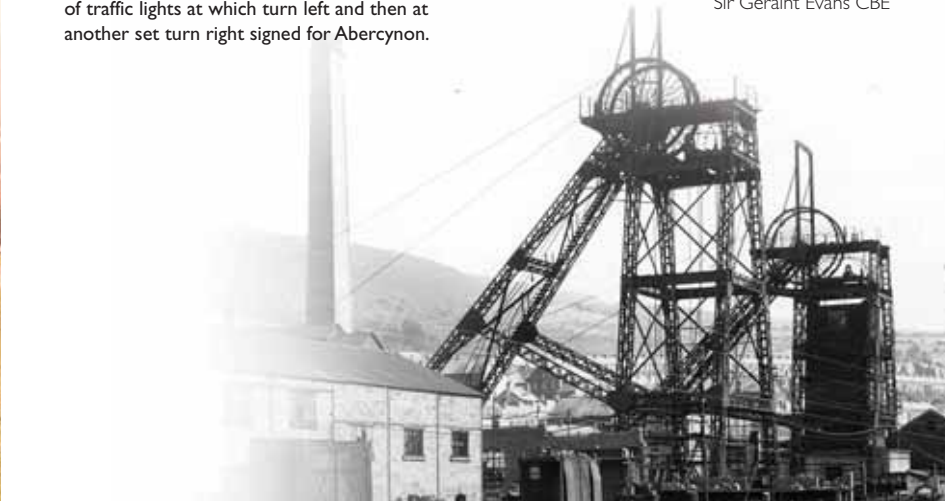
Continue now for approx. 3km (2 miles) into the village of Cilfynydd. Just before the Commercial Hotel, which you will see on your right, turn right into Cross Street and then take the second turning left into William Street to see at number 55 the Blue Plaque to Sir Geraint Evans, - the birthplace of one of the foremost opera singers of his generation.

Cilfynydd was also the site of the Albion Colliery disaster which claimed the lives of 290 men and boys in 1894 and was one of the worst ever mining tragedies in British history.

Continue along William Street to the end and turn left and return to the A4054. Turn right and continue to head north to eventually reach a set of traffic lights at which turn left and then at another set turn right signed for Abercynon.



Sir Geraint Evans CBE



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As you head down the hill you will see a large house on the right hand side. Pull up outside at Navigation House – now a public house (you may wish to avail yourself of its facilities!) This was built in 1792 and was once the headquarters of the Glamorganshire Canal Company, you will note the Blue Plaque at the entrance.

Just down the road from here was the terminus of Richard Trevithick's first steam railroad, marked by a memorial stone located in front of the Fire Station. In 1804 the very first rail journey of any length terminated here following a journey from Penydarren Ironworks, Merthyr Tydfil to this point (a distance of 9 miles) transporting passengers and iron to join the Glamorganshire Canal.

From here you may retrace your steps to the traffic lights up the hill, where turn left and then left at the next set. Continue to a traffic roundabout where turn left for another large



Navigation House

roundabout. Here you may wish to head south back along the A470 towards the M4 and Cardiff from whence you started, head north for Merthyr Tydfil or straight on to pick up the Cynon Heritage Trail.

