

RHONDDA CYNON TAF

HERITAGE TRAILS

TOUR 2

CYNON VALLEY



TOUR 2 - CYNON VALLEY



SUMMARY

This tour starts at the end point of Tour 1, - Abercynon and continues up the Cynon Valley to visit points around Aberdare. There is an optional heritage walk* around the town of Aberdare and/or a visit to Cynon valley Museum and Gallery, then the tour continues via other points of interest and terminates at Hirwaun, near to the border of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

- ① Navigation House & Trevithick Memorial, Abercynon CF45 4RR
- ② Statue of Guto Nythbran (Oxford Street car park, Mountain Ash CF45 3HD) (Optional)
- ③A Detour 1 – Abernant Y Groes, Cwmbach CF44 0LW & Dr Teddy Morgan, Abernant CF44 0SW
- ③B
- ③C Detour 2 – Arthur Linton, Aberaman CF44 6RG
- ④ Aberdare Town Centre (Duke Street Car Park, CF44 7ED) (Optional heritage walk & visit to museum)
- ⑤ Robertstown Bridge, Trecynon, CF44 8NH
- ⑥ Hen Dy Cwrdd Chapel, Trecynon CF44 8NT
- ⑦ Hirwaun Ironworks (Tudor Avenue CF44 9TY)

TOUR 2 - ROUTE DESCRIPTION

Going north past Pontypridd on the A470 we continue to the junction for the B4273 to Abercynon. At the roundabout at the end of the slip road, take the second exit and continue to soon reach a set of traffic lights. Continue straight on and as we descend the hill, on the right we see the Navigation House (now a pub) that was once the headquarters of the Glamorgan Canal Company and located where the Aberdare canal joined the Glamorgan Canal. In the late 1700's and 1800's this was an important transport junction that enabled the iron and coal industries to take their heavy goods to port at Cardiff. Note the Blue Plaque at the entrance to the pub and the date of 1792 when it was built.

Also here (see the plaque just down the road in front of the fire station) was the terminus of the first ever steam train journey. In February 1804 Richard Trevithick, an engineer at the Penydarren Ironworks in Merthyr Tydfil, ran his steam engine and wagons on rails between Penydarren and the canal basin here at Abercynon, covering the 9 miles in 4 hours and 5 minutes, twenty years before Stevenson's 'Rocket' performed a similar feat in England.

It would be the railways that ultimately brought about the demise of the canals as the major means of moving heavy goods, - being faster and capable of moving greater loads.

From here retrace your steps to the traffic lights up the hill, where turn left and then left at the next set. Ignore the turn to the left for A470 Cardiff and continue to a traffic roundabout where turn left for another large roundabout that is at the junction with the A470.

Here head straight on to the A4059 for Aberdare. You may wish to take a short detour into Mountain Ash on the way.



Richard Trevithick

Midway up the Valley, Mountain Ash is famous for the annual Nos Galan or 'New Year's Eve' races which are run around the streets of the town to commemorate the career of legendary runner 'Guto Nyth Bran'. Guto is buried high above the town three miles away in Llanwynno Churchyard (see route 4) and there is also a statue of him here in Mountain Ash on Oxford Street (park adjacent to the station).

Return to the A4059 and continue towards Aberdare. Continue to pass a new hospital on the left at a roundabout and then eventually arrive at another roundabout.

At this point there is a choice whether to take a route to see the site of the first deep mine in the Cynon valley and then to see the birthplace of a famous Rugby player follow (**Detour 1**). Alternatively you may visit the place where a world champion cyclist lived follow (**Detour 2**).

TOUR 2 - ROUTE DESCRIPTION

DETOUR 1

Abernant Y Groes & Dr Teddy Morgan

At the roundabout go straight on (signposted Abernant) and then take the second turn on the right to head uphill. Follow the road until a sharp left bend and then soon afterwards pull up at a fence on the left to reach the site of Abernant y Groes. Here, at this unlikely spot, was the site of the first deep mine in the Cynon Valley - dating from 1837. Step out and read the Blue Plaque and information which has been erected by the Cynon Valley History Society. Note also the site where the pit shaft descended and coal was extracted from the ground. This area would have looked very different in the heyday of coal and would have been transported by tramroad down to the canal and then by barge to where we started our tour at Abercynon Basin and on to Cardiff docks and then transferred to ships and the world!

From here continue ahead to return downhill and at a T junction turn right and continue to a roundabout. Here turn right for Abernant and head uphill for approx. 1km (1/2 mile) and turn right into 'Heol Y Parc' and pull up on the right next to a plinth and plaque to Dr Teddy Morgan.

Edward 'Teddy' Morgan who played international rugby on the wing for Wales, is famous for scoring the winning try for Wales against the world conquering New Zealand All Blacks in an epic encounter in 1905. Born here at 8 Agent's Row in 1880, he later moved to Number 10 and spent his early life in these cottages. He later became a surgeon at Guy's hospital, London and his club side was London Welsh

Rugby Club, which is the club for Welshmen 'exiled' to work in London.

Now retrace your route back down hill to the traffic roundabout. Here go straight on under the railway bridge to reach another roundabout. Here turn left to reach a large roundabout, where take the third exit (signed Aberdare Town Centre B4275) and then turn immediately right to pull in to Duke Street Car Park (pay and display).



Dr. Teddy Morgan

TOUR 2 - ROUTE DESCRIPTION

DETOUR 2

Arthur Linton

At the roundabout turn left (signed Aberdare A4059, Aberaman (B4275)) and continue to shortly reach another roundabout where take the first exit onto B4275 (signed Aberaman Ind. Est.). Soon you will reach a T junction where turn right along B4275 for Aberaman.

Follow the road ahead for about 1km passing St Margaret's Church on the left until reaching a branch of Sheppard's Chemists at 218 Cardiff Road, pull up safely to the RH side of this busy road. You may wish to get out of the car here to view the Blue Plaque above the chemist shop, where Arthur Linton, world champion cyclist lived. You will also see an interpretation board on 219 next door: Arthur Linton (1868–1896) lived here when it was a residential property.

Arthur won a number of races including the classic Bordeaux to Paris race in 1896.

Tragically he died of Typhoid Fever just a few weeks after this famous victory.

He was just 27 years old.

Return to the car and carefully pull out to carry on straight ahead for Aberdare. Staying on the main road, after

about 1.5km you will reach a roundabout, where take the first exit (signed Aberdare Town Centre B4275) and then immediately right for the Duke Street car park adjacent to the Bus Station.

Park up here (pay and display) for our walk around Aberdare.*



Arthur Linton

ABERDARE OVERVIEW

Aberdare has been referred to as 'The Queen of the Valleys', being set in a broad vale with an open aspect, unlike many other valley towns which often sit in narrow valleys with steep sides.

Highlights include the historic Market Hall, site of the first National Eisteddfod in 1861 and also of some of the first ever feature films produced by William Haggar, a pioneer in early film making.

St Elvan's Church, named after a second century early founder of Christianity, with its 180 foot spire is an impressive example of Victorian church building and there are a number of historic chapels in the town. Welsh choral traditions are celebrated by the statue of 'Caradog' and the cenotaph was built by Sir Edwin Lutyens who also built the cenotaph in London's Whitehall to a similar design.

Those wishing to explore the history of the area further may wish to visit Cynon Valley Museum and Gallery (also the site of the Gadlys Ironworks, which is included on a short extension to the heritage walk) where a fascinating museum tells the story of the local area. It also has an excellent café.

Having completed our walk return to the car park next to the Bus Station. Leaving the car park turn left and immediately left to the roundabout where take the first exit (signed Hirwaun A4059, Neath, Merthyr Tydfil (A465)) and continue straight ahead at the next two roundabouts. After passing a

Tesco store on the left, at the next roundabout turn left (unsigned) and pull up to park on the right on a hill for a short visit to look at the Robertstown Tramroad Bridge. Return down the hill on foot and left along a footpath for a short distance. Here a Blue Plaque and information panel signifies the Tram Road Bridge situated in front of you as it crosses the River Cynon. It was one of the first bridges of its kind and helped to transport coal from Hirwaun Ironworks to Aberdare Canal on horse drawn wagons being pulled on rails. This form of transport assisted the early development of the iron and coal industries.

The Aberdare Heritage Walk around the central area of the town includes a number of interesting sites. This 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. There are numerous cafes and hostellers in the town if you wish to have lunch.

TOUR 2 - ROUTE DESCRIPTION

Return to the car and now we take a short detour to view Hen Dy Cwrdd Chapel. Continue uphill along Meirion Street from here and take the first turn right into Bell Street and then first left into Alma Street. Hen Dy Cwrdd Chapel is situated on the right and is the oldest Nonconformist chapel in the Cynon Valley (note the Blue Plaque at the entrance). The ancient St John's Parish Church which we saw on our walk around Aberdare (founded 1189) and Hen Dy Cwrdd chapel were the only two places of worship to be built in the parish up to 1811.

The origin and establishment of Hen Dy Cwrdd can be traced back to 1751, and it was established on this site by dissenting members of the Cwm-Y-Glo Chapel on the Merthyr mountain.

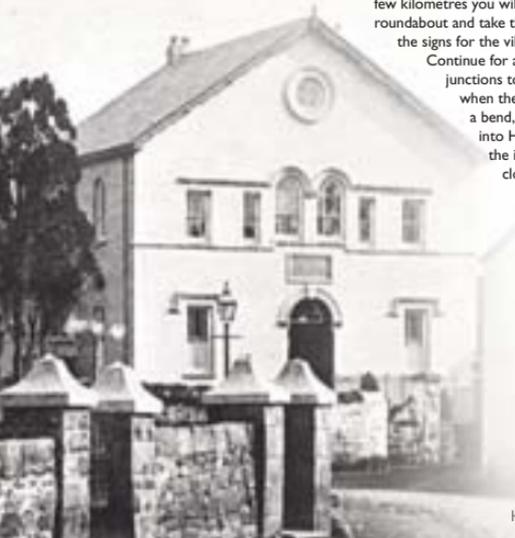
From here return to the A4059 by continuing ahead and turning left at the end of Alma Street into Mount Pleasant Street and then after a few metres turn left again into Meirion Street to continue back down to the roundabout where we stopped for the Robertstown Bridge. Turn left and continue north on the A4059 and keep on this road crossing two roundabouts following signs for Hirwaun. Eventually after a few kilometres you will reach the A465 at a roundabout and take the second exit following the signs for the village of Hirwaun.

Continue for almost 1km ignoring junctions to the right and left and when the road takes a sharp left at a bend, here turn sharp right into Hirwaun High Street. Pass the interesting war memorial clock tower on the left and look for the car park by the Library on the left and park up briefly here.

Hirwaun was the site of an ironworks dating from the late 18th century and a Blue Plaque marks the manager's house at Ty Mawr. This site is tucked away and so requires some finding. A useful orientation point is the Library (where, inside, there is some information about the Ironworks). From the car park adjacent to the Library turn right to pass in front of the white chapel and immediately reach a T junction. Here turn right down Station Road and then take the next left into Penyard Road and then next left again into Tudor Avenue. Continue to the end

of Tudor Avenue and park carefully as the road bends to the right. Look for the track below and walk a little way to find the way down the track, bearing right into the grounds of Ty Mawr, where see the Blue Plaque marking the former manager's house on the end of the wall.

(NB Private property, please respect privacy and do not venture beyond the Blue Plaque).



Hen Dy Cwrdd Chapel



TOUR 2 - ROUTE DESCRIPTION

A short footpath down the hill from the entrance into the grounds of Ty Mawr widens to a rough field where the view was very different in days gone by. The slope down to the River Cynon was a hive of activity with furnaces, chimneys and buildings containing the major ironworks. There are still remains of the ironworks under the bushes by the high wall now topped by houses on Tudor Avenue. This ironworks was linked to Aberdare Canal by the tramroad that crossed the bridge at Robertstown earlier in our journey. This was also one of the operations owned by the famous Crawshay family, who also had interests at Merthyr Tydfil and large ironworks there. Their grand Victorian 'castle' can be seen at Cyfarthfa Park in Merthyr Tydfil.

Our tour ends here. Retrace your steps into Hirwaun.

From Hirwaun you may wish to continue north to Penderyn – home of the Welsh Whisky distillery which can be visited (check for opening at www.penderyn-distillery.co.uk). The Brecon Beacons National Park lies to the north or else return south down the Cynon valley or take the route over the 'Rhigos' Mountain Road and descend into the Rhondda Valleys or the A465 trunk road to other destinations.