

Newsletter:

12th Edition Friday 12th June 2020

Summer Walks

After cancelling our proposed June walks, the revised programme for July & August is now as follows with further details to follow if we are able to proceed -.

- July 3rd. Blaenavon Stone Road. Meet near the Jolly Colliers
- July 10th. Ruperra Castle. Meet at Coed Craig Ruperra car park
- July 17th. Newport Ornamental Ironworks. Meet at car park alongside St Woolos Cathedral.
- July 24th. Pontymister - from Tramroad to Canal. Meet at railway station car park.
- July 31st. Trefil Railway (daytime walk). Meet at Top Road, Trefil at 2pm.
- Aug 7th The Tramroad Trail. Meet at Bute Town, Rhymney.
- Aug 14th Parallel Lines, tramroads & Inclines. Meet at South Blackvein Ind. Est. Crosskeys
- Aug 21st Industrial History of Crumlin Meet at Crumlin Square.
- Aug 28th Aerospace Bristol (daytime visit) Meet at Museum Entrance 11am.

The August 28th daytime visit to Aerospace Bristol remains on the programme and we will send further details if and when we get confirmation that the Museum will be open.

Annual South Wales and West of England I.A conference

Worcestershire I.A. Society have rearranged the Annual South Wales and West of England I.A conference to take place on Saturday 26th September 2020 .

How do you know where to find the oldest part of a town or village?

The seemingly perverse answer is – it's the district called Newtown!

A local example of this is in Crosskeys. The name Crosskeys only applied to the area following the Local Government Act of 1894 and the creation of the Risca Urban District Council following previous use of the name for a public house and then the adjacent railway station.

In 1846 this area had a few farms and some scattered cottages lying alongside the turnpike road, canal or tram road. The total population was only around 200.

Although already owning the Blackvein Colliery, United National Collieries Limited (as they later became) decided to sink a new colliery just a short distance away. Whilst sinking the new pit and putting up the colliery buildings, the company built five terraces of workers houses south of the pit on land in the fork of the Ebbw & Sirhowy rivers.

The first four terraces were named Tredegar Street and the single terrace near the Sirhowy, Llanover Street. The new colliery was, with great originality, called New Pits (later changed to Risca Colliery) and the terraces labelled Newtown. Although in the parish of Mynyddislwyn, the Risca Local Board took responsibility for this area and they designated it North Risca.

The colliery commenced production in 1878, the 1879 O.S. map shows the quarries and inclines that had been used to supply the stone used to build the colliery and Newtown.

Although the houses all looked identical, the first two terraces plus odd numbers up to No. 61 Tredegar Street had three bedrooms whilst the others only had two. It is believed that the original builder went bust and adjustments were made to enable the remaining houses to be completed at the same price.

At the 1881 census, Newtown itself had a population of around 600. Now the Tredegar Arms public house and a few houses had been built in Gladstone Street but, being West of the River Ebbw, these were considered to be part of Newtown.



The houses all had back gardens with a central path to the gate leading to a dirt lane. Either side of the path, at the bottom of the garden, were two small buildings, the outside toilet one side and the coal shed the other. Every so often there was a larger building serving as a wash-house for about 10 adjacent houses.

Between the houses and both rivers were allotments which were almost totally given over to vegetable cultivation. If miners grew fruit or flowers, these were usually consigned to the back garden of the house.



Gradually, tenants added to their two ground floor rooms with an individual 'back kitchen' usually of corrugated iron and wood which they built themselves. The wash-houses were abandoned as people installed water boilers in their back kitchens which later also included gas cookers (replacing the old kitchen range around the main coal fire) and immersion heaters.

The colliery expanded and terraced streets were constructed on the east side of the Ebbw in Crosskeys (Gladstone Street, Salisbury Street, Bright Street and Cobden Street) as well as building the village of Wattsville in the Sirhowy valley.

At the same time it was decided to extend Newtown and two blocks were added, one following the even number side of Tredegar Street and the other to Llanover Street which now became Tredegar Terrace (although the locals still called it River Row). These new houses were of higher quality, they all had small front gardens & bay windows downstairs and some had large two storey extensions to the rear.

This expansion left a square of rough ground between the new terraces and this became the main playground of Newtown children, known as 'The Patch'. In the 1970's accommodation for the elderly was built on this ground which also necessitated moving the allotment shed, used for storing bulk purchases for the many allotment holders.

As well as being used for bike riding and various children's games, the Patch also accommodated the annual bonfire. One November around 1960 the enthusiastic young constructors created a bonfire whose height matched that of the houses and a picture, with one of the local ruffians sat aloft, appeared on the front page of the Argus.

Initially everyone worked in the colliery and, even as late as the 1960's, that was still true for the majority of Newtown households. For about 100 years this community was totally dependent on coal but that was also what bound them together.

Malcolm's Merlin Musings

Malcolm has selected and had printed numerous interesting snippets from the Merlin, to help raise much needed funds. They are available at the Museum at £3.00 each

Here's a couple to whet your appetite; or better still reaching for your cash (*yes we will still take cash* 😊)



TO MILLERS, FARMERS, & OTHERS TO BE SOLD BY PRIVATE CONTRACT,

A LARGE IRON HORSE WHEEL., 18 feet in diameter, geared with wood, 2³/₄ inches pitch; Oak Shaft nine feet long; Yokes for two horses; Top and Bottom Bearings, with Brasses, &c. - Apply to Messrs. ALLFREY, at the Castle Brewery, Newport, Monmouthshire, who, from some alterations in their machinery have no further occasion for the wheel.

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**NEWPORT:-** The attention of this neighbourhood is now strongly drawn to the magnificent mansion which is emerging from the old ruined pile of Llantarnam Abbey. The happy mixture of Tudor towers and gables, of ornamented chimney shafts, crosses, and pinnacles, with the painted doors and windows, reflects the highest credit upon the architect, Mr Thomas Henry Wyatt, who, by the taste and talent he has displayed in this and other buildings, bids fair to attain the highest rank in his profession.

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DREADFUL ACCIDENT. - A fatal accident occurred on Monday last, at the Monmouthshire Iron and Coal Company's Works, Lower Ebbw Vale, to a poor man named Antipator Knapton, a haulier, in the employ of Messrs. Davies and Jones. Between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, in descending a sloping bridge leading from the Monmouthshire Canal Co.'s tram-road over the river Ebbw to the new town of Victoria, with a load of flour, he fell under the wheels of the tram, which, passing over his right leg, lacerated it and fractured the bones in a frightful manner, nearly severing the limb from the body immediately through the knee joint. Assistance being procured, he was conveyed to his lodgings, where Mr. Coles, surgeon to the Company's Works, amputated the limb above the knee; and, assisted by Messrs. Irving and Treacher, of Penycarn, adopted every means which skill and humanity could devise to relieve the poor fellow's sufferings; so extensive were the injuries he had received, however, that he expired about eight o'clock on Tuesday morning. An inquest was held on the body on Thursday, and the coroner having complimented the surgeon on his unremitting attention to the deceased, a verdict of "Accidental Death" was returned.

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GLAMORGANSHIRE COAL-FIELD:- Within the last few days, two new veins of coal have been struck in the hilly district, likely to furnish the market with a very abundant supply of superior coals. The one is of a bituminous and very cheerful quality, on the Llancaiach estate, the joint property of Lord Dynevor and J.M. Richards, Esq., which is worked by the under lessees of Sir Christopher Smith, Bart. The other is a coal which we also predict will be a great favourite, found by the spirited exertions of the Messrs. Wayne, of Aberdare, on the property of Mr. William David, at Abernant-y-groes, in that parish. The extent of both veins is very great, and they are generally considered to be of good quality as any in the Principality.- **Merthyr Guardian.**

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**ACCIDENT AT THE THAMES TUNNEL**

At a few minutes before four o'clock this morning (it being then nearly high water) a sudden irruption of the river took place and filled the tunnel. Every necessary precaution had been taken to secure the retreat of the workmen in case of any accident taking place; but, unfortunately, on calling over their names, one of the miners was found missing, and upon inquiry being made of his fellow-workmen it was ascertained that he was last seen returning to the shield instead of attending to the orders which had been given for all the men to ascend the shaft, and which was safely effected by about seventy other individuals.

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It's Quiz time!
(last weeks answers)

Photo 1



The picture is of Blackvein Road looking towards the river bridge; the entrance on the right is to Risca House (previously Risca Farm). Now, New Park Road/Waunfawr Park Road runs across the photo and the entrance to Waunfawr Park would be dead centre. The Meadows, featured in the previous week's photo is only a short distance behind the photographer.

2 Here's an easy one(?) and unfortunately topical, in what country did the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic start?

Although greatly debated, the often accepted answer is a military camp in Kansas, USA, the first known case was recorded here on 11th March 1918. In the following month 200,000+ US soldiers crossed to Europe. Wartime censorship stopped reporting in all the countries still at war but it was widely reported when it got to neutral Spain which got it named as Spanish Flu.

This weeks Quiz



1

This is the door of the despatch dept of a small manufacturing company in Central London (might be a clue there?).

It is a genuine door needed for the (bespoke) products but what are they actually making??

2 Nicholas Allen Jones lived in Wattsville in the 1990's, how is he better known?

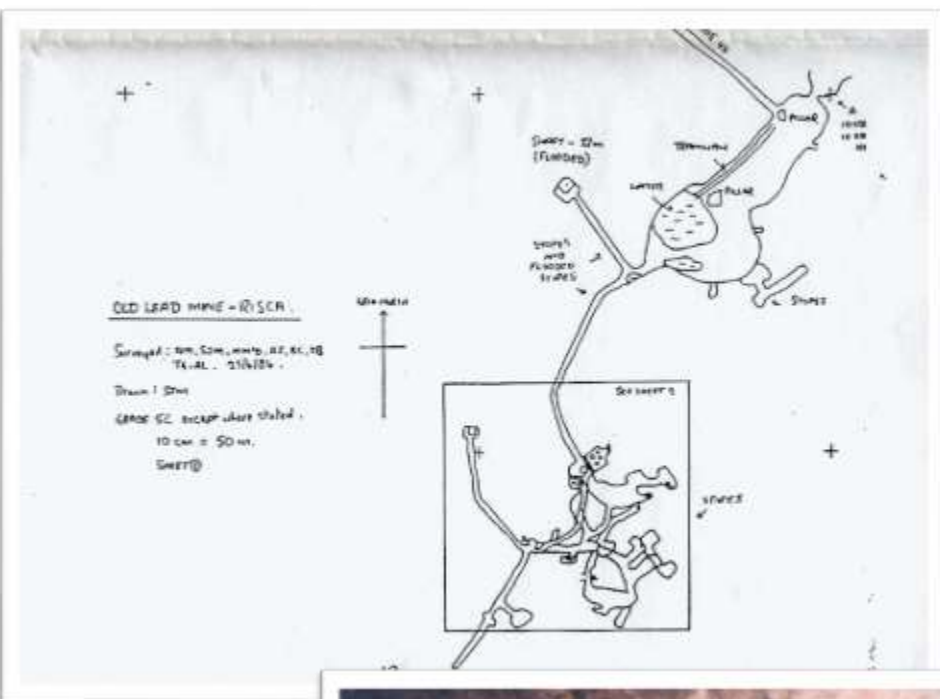
Jenkins' Jottings

See what you can galena from Phil's Archives this week:

Risca Lead Mine

Lead mining (and Copper, Silver and Iron mining) in the Southern ridge of Monmouthshire and Glamorgan go back to Roman times and Risca is no exception. The deposits were never great but they did sustain a few Victorian mine adventurers. Draethen and Rudry were the most commercial of the mines but Risca got a look-in too.

Risca's mine is said like most to originate with the Romans (following the discovery of a Roman mobile phone there). There's very scant evidence of Romans in Risca but the mine was certainly active in the 19th century. There seems no documentation on the mine but it was explored in 1986 just before the quarry was used as a landfill dump and plenty of photos taken and a couple of plans drawn up.



Now Flooded workings



Now Flooded workings



