

Memories of Croesyceiliog & Llanyrafon



To Commemorate the 75th Anniversary
of Cwmbrân New Town in 2024

Introduction

Cwmbrân New Town was formally established on the 4th November 1949. In the aftermath of World War II, our town was born out of both necessity and hope. It was one of several new towns established under the New Towns Act of 1946 aimed at easing urban overcrowding, creating jobs and providing modern housing for those in greatest need. In November 2024 our town celebrates its 75th anniversary.

While there have been a number of past publications about the history of Cwmbrân, the Croesyceiliog & Llanyrafon Community Council wanted to create something that focussed mainly on our area. As a result, this collection of photographs was put together to offer a small window into our past, chronicling our community's growth as part of Cwmbrân.

It would be wonderful if these images sparked memories for those residents who have lived here for many years and also kindled an appreciation for the history of the area for those who are new to this part of Cwmbrân. We hope you will enjoy this booklet and will keep it as a memento of both the 75th anniversary of the town and as a small pictorial record of our particular area.

The Croesyceiliog & Llanyrafon Community Council would like to thank local residents for supplying images and, to acknowledge the help provided by the staff at the Torfaen Museum Trust, with particular thanks to Nicole Dicker. Personally, I'd also like to express my gratitude to both Cllr Stewart Matthews and to the Clerk of the Council, Mrs Sian Davies, for their support in driving this small project forward.

*Cllr Seán Ó'Dobháin C&LCC.
Autumn 2024*

Industry and the Workplace

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Cwmbrân was an area of vast industrial development which was based around the coal, iron and tin-plate industries. It was home to large factories and industrial giants such as Guest, Keen and Nettlefolds (GKN).

The creation of a New Town in Cwmbrân was important for the workers and families of the factories that existed at the time. There would have been over 6000 people working employed in the factories, with more people working in other industries such as Weston's Biscuits, Panteg Steelworks and British Nylon Spinners (BNS).



GKN factory, Cwmbrân canal



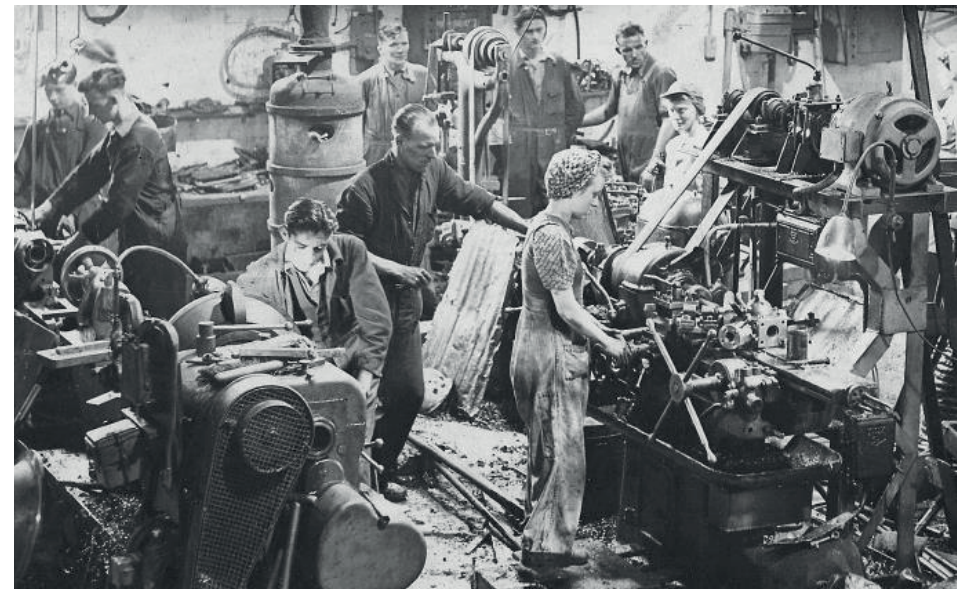
The Old Stores and Post Office, The Highway, c. 1930s - supplied by Paul Austin



Weston Biscuits Factory, c. 1930s



Saunders Valves, Cwmbrân, 1939



Workers inside the GKN Factory, Cwmbrân, 1939



Construction of Gwent Police HQ, 1969 - supplied by Paul Austin



County Hall, Croesyceiliog - supplied by Paul Austin

Streets & Housing

In 1951 a plan was submitted that outlined the creation of seven residential areas; each of these areas would have their own centre. There were also plans for a road to link these together, as well as bridges to improve access over the canal, river and railway lines.

These new residential areas were Pontnewydd, St. Dials, Greenmeadow, Oak-field, Coed Eva and Croesyceiliog North and South, with Croesyceiliog South later being renamed to Llanyravon.

The building of the New Town brought development and modernisation to existing housing such as 'Garw Row' in Croesyceiliog which was restored by the Cwmbrân Development Corporation in the 1970's.



Street in Llantarnam, c.1930s



Garw Row cottages c. 1960s pre renovation



The Highway, Croesyceiliog (with the Upper Cock pub on the right) - supplied by Paul Austin



Garw Row cottages after the renovation c. 1970s



Jim Crow's Cottage, Croesyceiliog c. 1960s

Pubs, Restaurants and Social Spaces

The Cwmbrân New Town Master Plan focused on the creation of public and social spaces for the locals to enjoy.

There were a number of spaces that were already in place when the New Town began construction such as the Greenhouse pub in Llantarnam which was opened in the 18th Century. There were also the Upper and Lower Cock pubs, whose history has connections with the chartists, the Upper Cock pub is still in use today.

The influx of people into the area during the 1950s and 1960s saw the building of new pubs and social centres such as the Six in Hand pub and the Woodland Road Social centre.



Meadow Lane, Croesyceiliog, c. 1950s - supplied by Paul Austin



Bronllys Place, Croesyceiliog, 1978



The Greenhouse Pub, Llantarnam, c. 1930s



The Cambrian Inn, Croesyceiliog, c.1960 - supplied by Paul Austin



Six in Hand, Edlogan Square, Croesyceiliog, c.1963 - supplied by Paul Austin



Woodland Road Social Centre, c.1960 - supplied by Paul Austin

***AA RAC ***



HOTEL COMMODORE

A modern purpose built hotel only $\frac{1}{3}$ mile from the centre of busy Cwmbran yet quietly secluded in 6 acres of natural woodland, the Commodore becomes an ideally situated hotel for the businessman and tourist alike.

The bedrooms include all modern amenities together with bathroom en suite and 24 hour porter service, for that late night snack, drink or even valet service.

Four bars including lounge, cocktail bar, private meeting rooms and conference room, make this an ideal venue to meet.

A choice of fast food snack lunches, gourmet restaurant or a comprehensive selection of Banqueting menus satisfy every discerning taste in food.

Bargain weekend breaks are the final temptation not to be resisted. Send for your free brochure and tariff now!

CWMBRAN-GWENT TEL.06333 4091/4 TELEX 497286



*The Commodore Hotel & Advert, Mill Lane, Llanyrafon
(demolished in 2015)*

Shopping

From the beginning, the plan was to make retail a central part of Cwmbran New Town as shown in the original master plan of 1949.

The discussions around the design of the central retail centre began in 1951, with construction beginning in 1959. The first areas to be completed were North Walk and Gwent Square. With this it became much easier to bring in a larger number of stores, such as the giant department store David Evans, which opened in 1964.

There are also a number of smaller shopping areas that were opened around different areas of Cwmbrân such as Llanyrafon shops and Edlogon Stores, with the latter completed in 1958 as part of the development of Croesyceiliog. These shopping areas were created to help provide quick and easy shopping experiences for the growing residential areas.



The Old Post Office and Blacksmith Shop, Croesyceiliog, c. 1930s - supplied by Paul Austin



Old Post Office, Cwmbrân, c. 1960s



Cwmbrân shops, c. 1960



Llanfyrfach shops, 1960s



Edlogon shops, Croesyceiliog, c. 1960s - supplied by Paul Austin

Schools and Education

There were plans made for there to be a junior and infant school in each residential neighbourhood. There were also plans for four new secondary schools in Llantarnam, Croesyceiliog, Greenmeadow and Springvale—with only the first three schools being built.

The new schools were built alongside pre-existing schools such as Croesyceiliog Board School which was opened from the early 1870s until 1955 with a brief re-opening in 1959 to help with the new influx of children with the opening of the New Town. The school was fully closed in the 1970s with the opening of a new school on North Road.

The secondary school in Croesyceiliog was grouped with the boys and girls grammar schools and the technical secondary school in order to create a large educational campus.

There were also plans to build a Further Education College in the south end of the town centre.



Chanticleer magazine made by students



Old Board School, The Highway, Croesyceiliog. Drawn by Milly Caldwell - supplied by Paul Austin



Llanfrechfa and Ponthir School, c. 1970



Demolition of Croesyceiliog School, c. 2020 - supplied by Paul Austin

Memorable Moments

The Stadium in Cwmbrân was famous for sporting events. It was particularly famous for hosting top UK athletic competitions.

The Stadium has also hosted a number of events such as carnivals, cavalcades and even beauty pageants. It was also responsible for hosting the television show 'It's a knockout!' in the 1970s.

With the Congress Theatre opening in 1972, residents and visitors were able to attend a host of shows and pantomimes as well as a number of holiday celebrations right on their doorstep.

There were a number of times when nature played a part in creating memories for residents, whether it was the rivers flooding residential areas, clearing the streets after a heavy fall of snow or the heat wave in the summer of 1976.



'It's a Knockout' TV programme being hosted at Cwmbrân Stadium in the 1970s



*Cwmbrân Carnival booklet dated
17th, 18th, 19th July - 1975*



*Snow in Croesyceiliog and Llanyrafon
c. January 1980*



*Grand Christmas Entertainment programme
dated 29th December - 3rd January*



*The Afon Llwyd bursting at Caernarvon
Crescent on December 27, 1979*

Religious Places

There are a number of churches, religious grounds and places of worship whose histories and communities contribute to the story of Cwmbrân and its surrounding areas.

One of the oldest religious sites in Cwmbrân, alongside Llantarnam Abbey, is St. Michael and All Angels church in Llantarnam which was built in the early 12th Century and has been added to over time. The church still stands today.

St. Mary's church in Croesyceiliog was built in the early 20th century and was initially built as a mission church to relieve the All Saints Church in Llanfrehfa.

Llanyrafon Methodist Church is one of the more modern places of worship. Being known as 'The Church with the Blue Cross', it has served its community for more than 60 years.



St. Mary's Church, Croesyceiliog, c. 1955 - supplied by Paul Austin



Pontrhydyrun Chapel, Chapel Lane, Croesyceiliog



Llanyrafon Methodist Church

Thank You



We would like to thank Promocorp in Cwmbran for the design and print work of this booklet. Also a thank you to Leaflet Ewe in Mamhilad for the distribution of the booklets into the community.

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Your area before development

