

**ERIH UK Winter Meeting, Cardiff  
14th February 2017**

# **Using former railways in South Wales as cycleways**

**John Palmer**

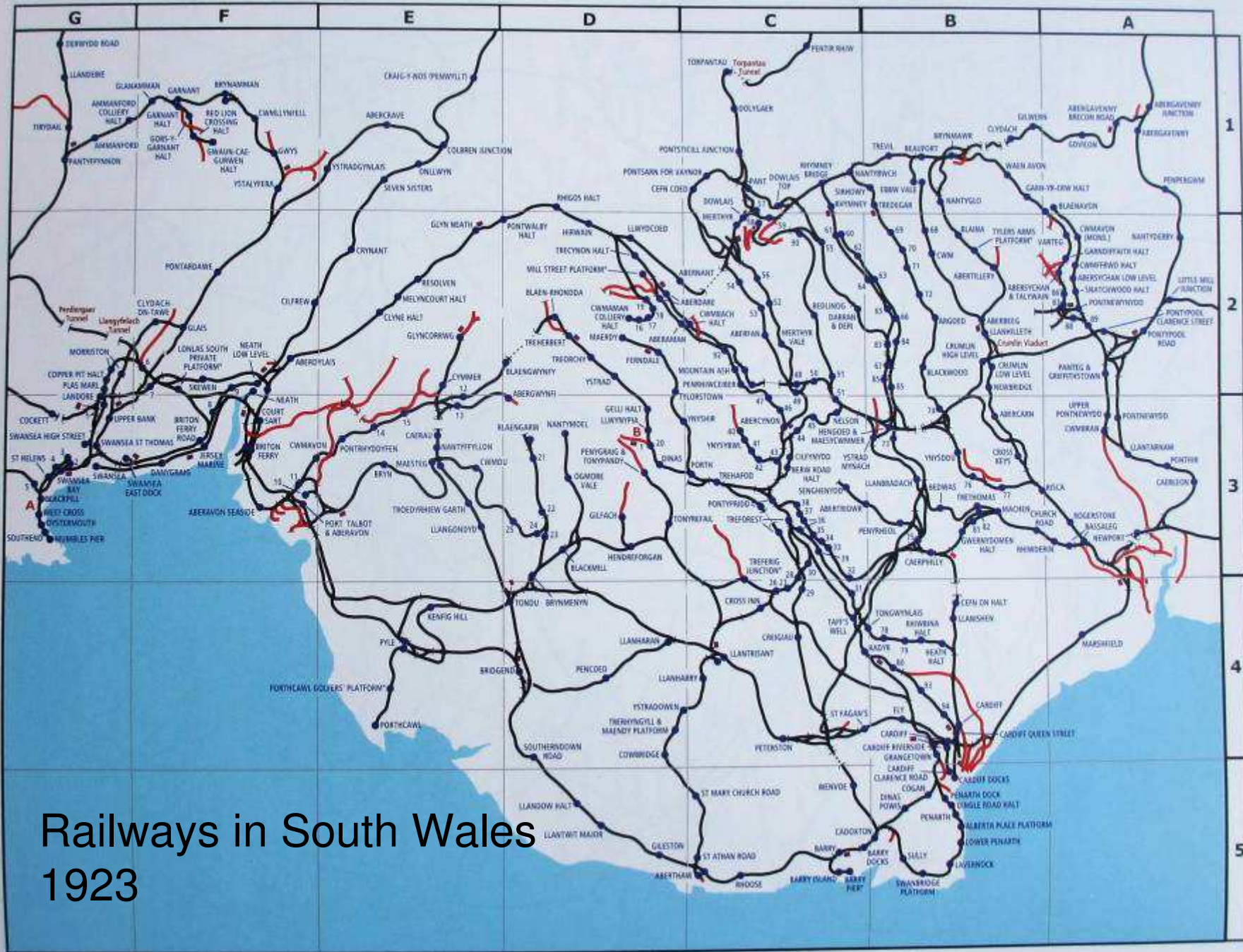
# Framework

- Establishment of Sustrans the sustainable transport charity in 1977 and National Cycle Network (NCN) vision. Role of sister company Railway Paths Ltd in land assembly and land management.
- Development of National Cycle Network in Wales – key landmarks
  1. Millennium Commission Grants programme
  2. EU ERDF Grants and Valleys tourism development
  3. Celtic Trail NCN core route development across South Wales
  4. Partnerships with local Authorities and Welsh Government
  5. Partnerships with Regional Transport consortia – Sewta and SWITCH
  6. Valleys Cycle Network programme 2009-2013
  7. Ongoing improvements, interpretation and maintenance work

# SOUTH WALES

NP 43

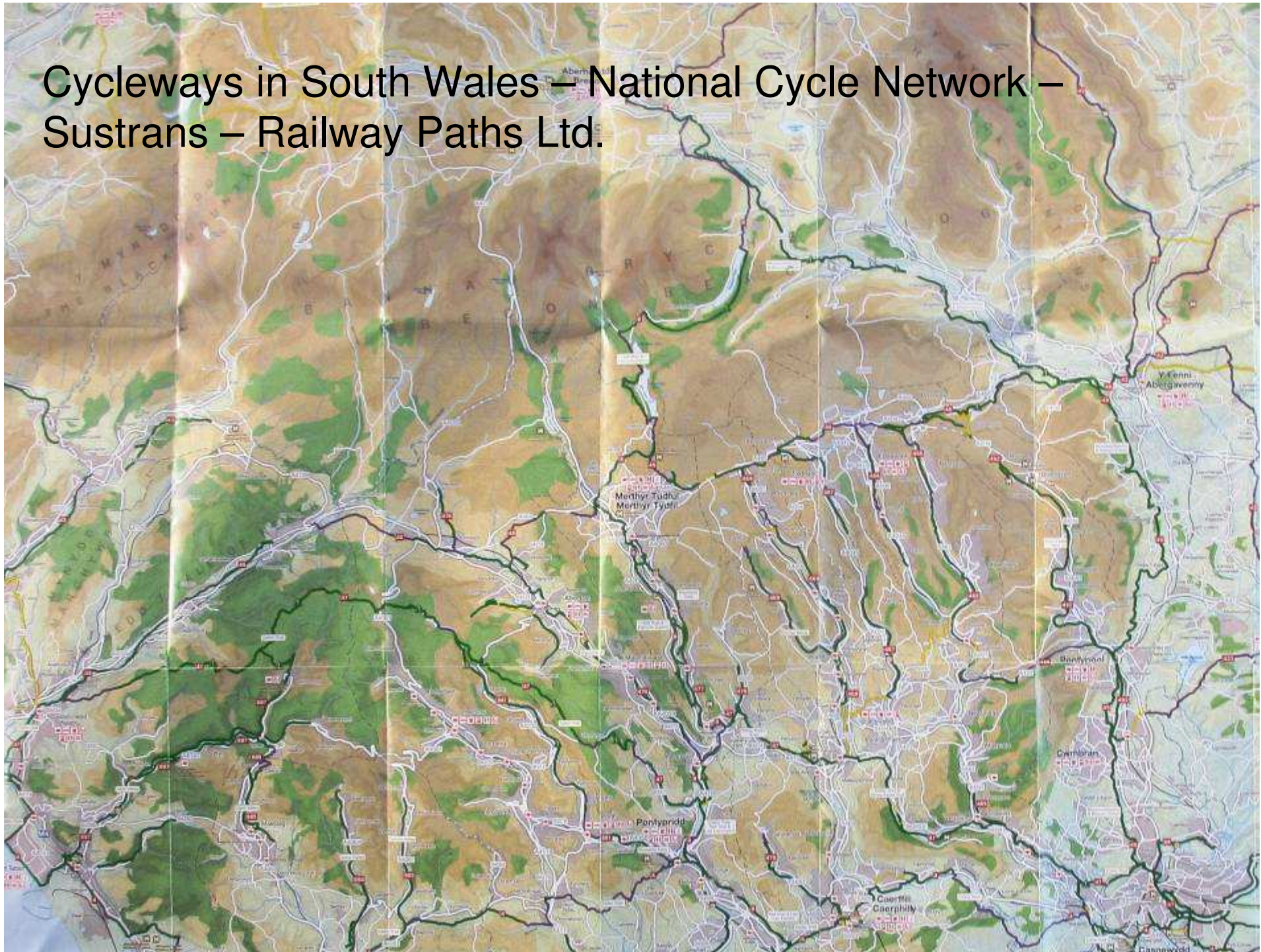
1 JANUARY 1923



Railways in South Wales  
1923



# Cycleways in South Wales – National Cycle Network – Sustrans – Railway Paths Ltd.





Gallwch gael gwybodaeth am ddigwyddiadau  
agor diweddaraf ein llwybrau, newyddion a  
digwyddiadau ar Facebook:

[facebook.com/sustrans.cymru](https://facebook.com/sustrans.cymru)

ac yn ein e-gylchgrawn, Cymudwr Egniöl

[sustrans.org.uk/activecommuter](https://sustrans.org.uk/activecommuter)

Funding Partnership  
for Valleys Cycle  
Network

**The Valleys**  
Heart and Soul of Wales



**Y Cymoedd**  
Calon ac Enaid Cymru



**Sewta**  
*Moving People Yn Symud Pobl*

CONSORTIWM CLUDIANT INTEGRREDIG DE ORLLEWIN CYMRU  
SOUTH WEST WALES INTEGRATED TRANSPORT CONSORTIUM



**SWITCH**

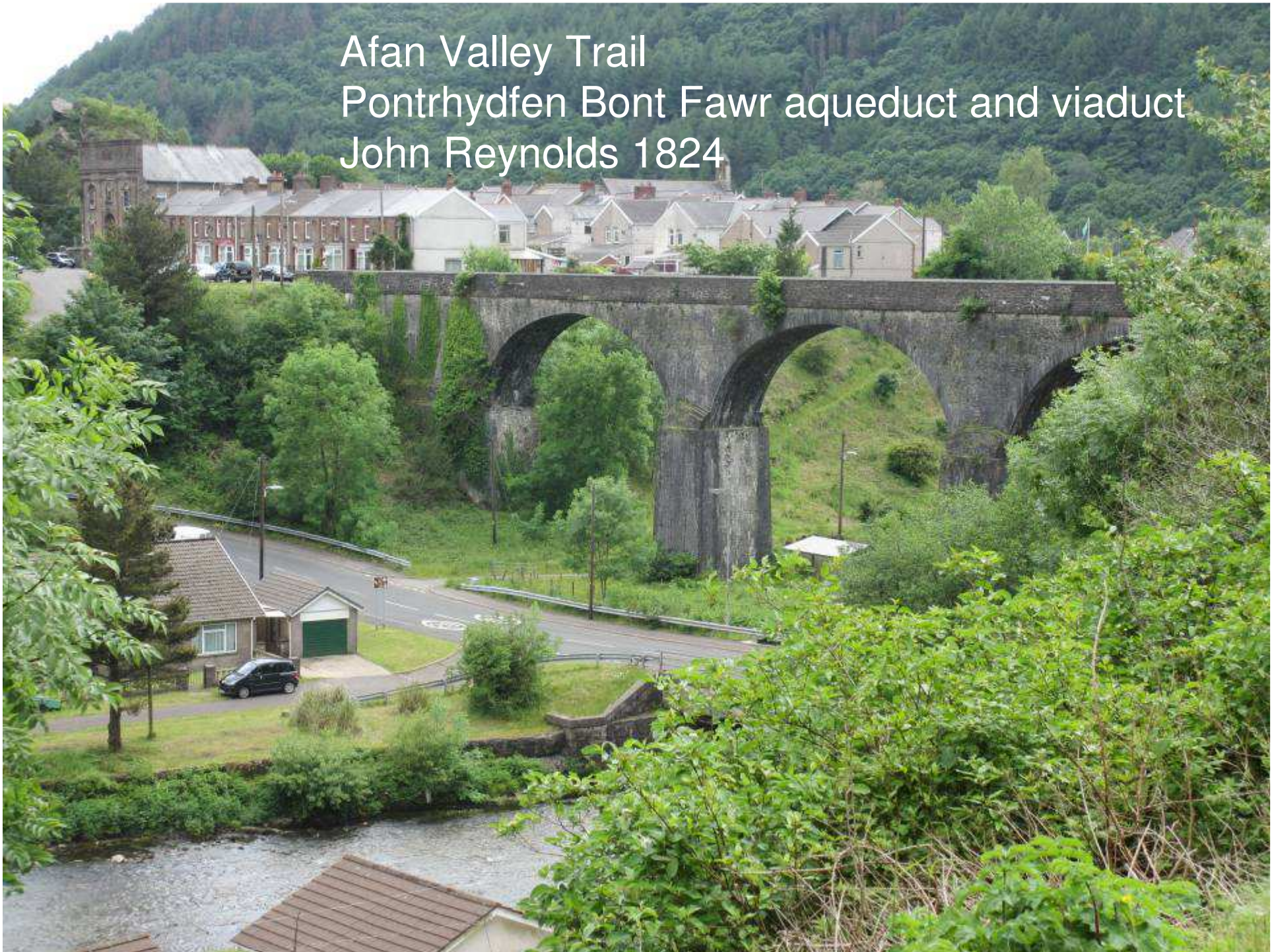




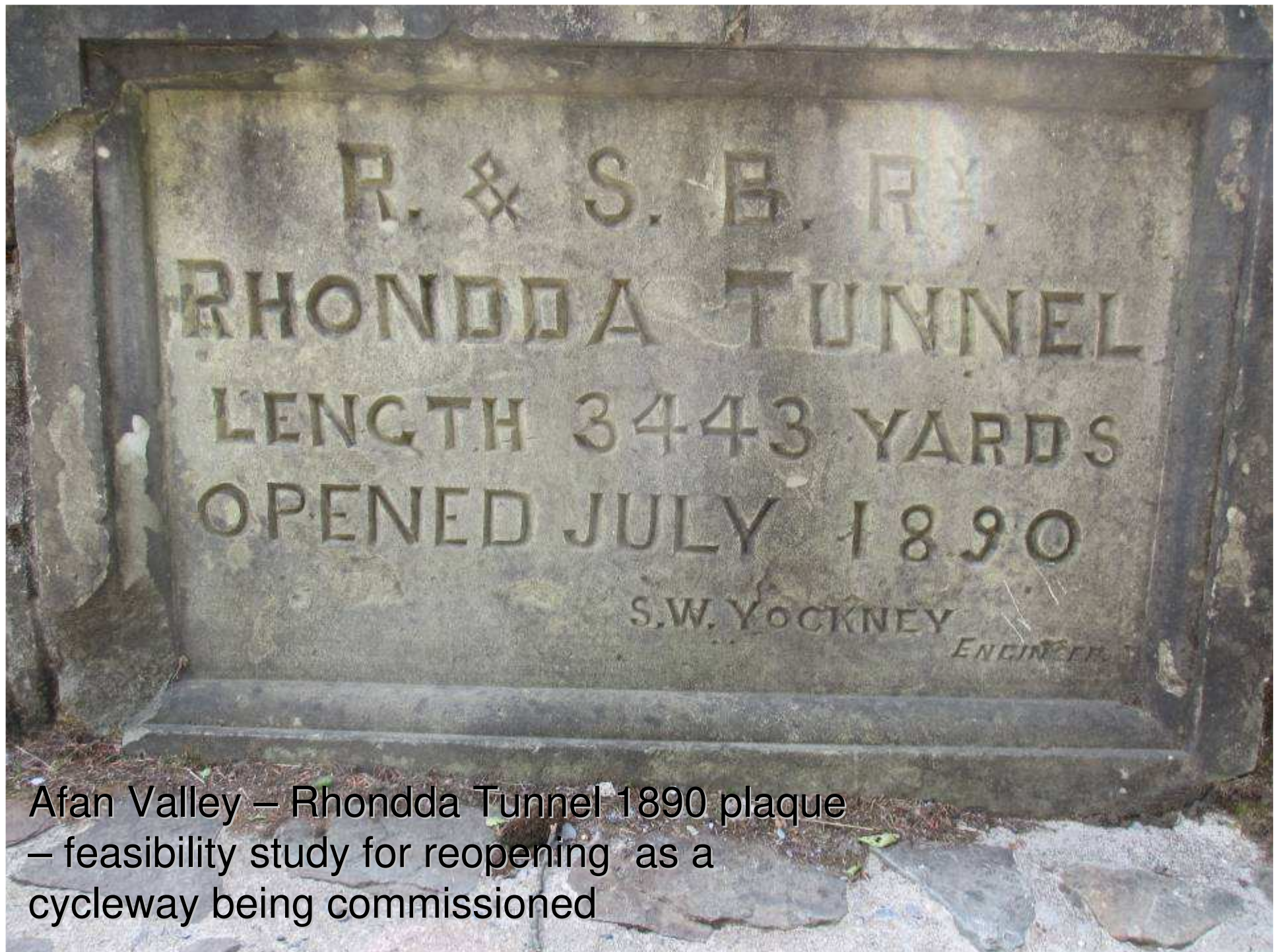
Afan Valley Trail NCN 887  
Old Station Cymmer



Afan Valley Trail  
Pontrhydfen Bont Fawr aqueduct and viaduct  
John Reynolds 1824







Afan Valley – Rhondda Tunnel 1890 plaque  
– feasibility study for reopening as a  
cycleway being commissioned

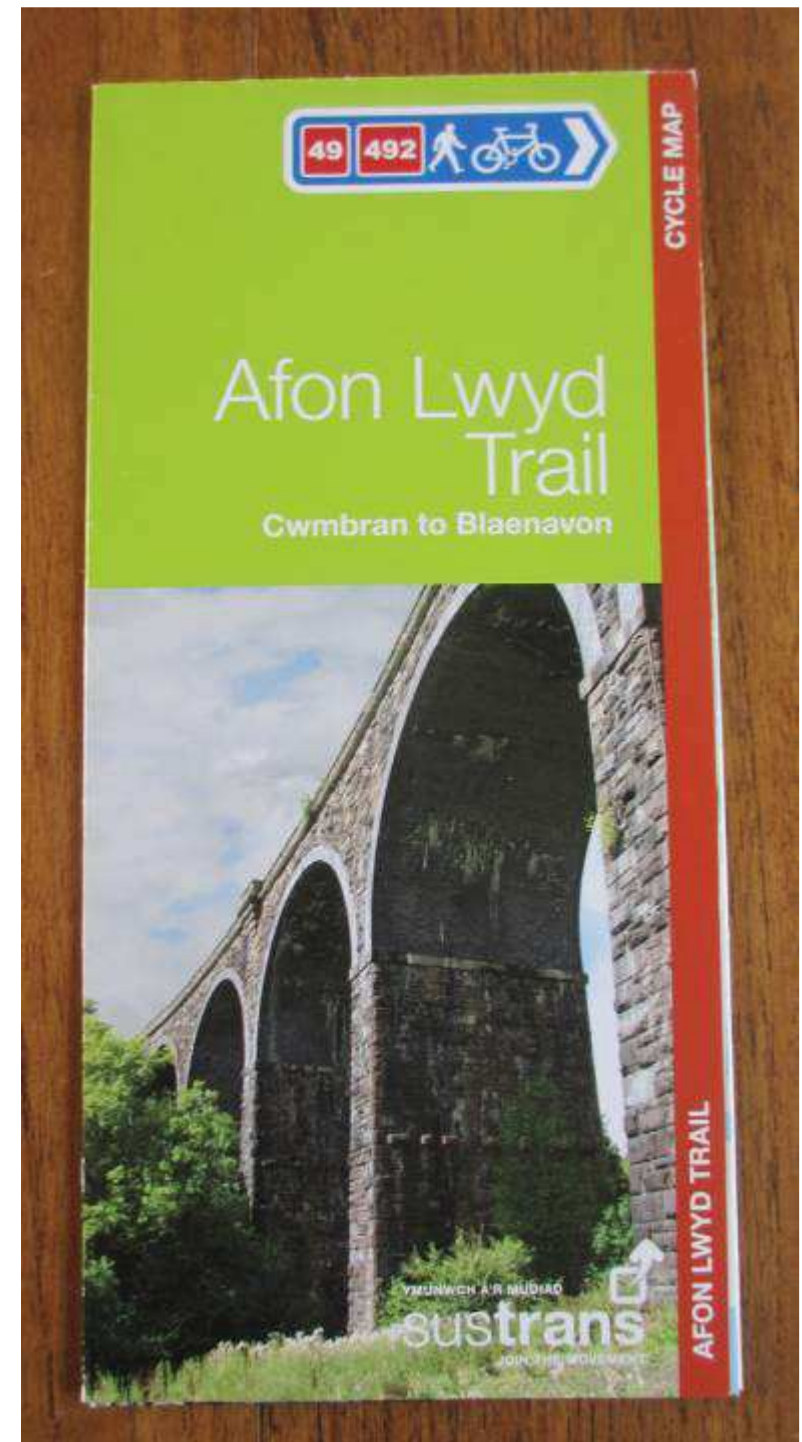


Bath Twin tunnels  
exemplar reopening  
project by Sustrans and  
partners





Afon Lwyd Trail NCN 492  
Cwmbran – Blaenavon leaflet  
Garndiffaith Viaduct  
John Gardner 1878





Afon Lwyd Trail NCN 492  
Coed y Cric bridges over  
Monmouth and Brecon  
Canal



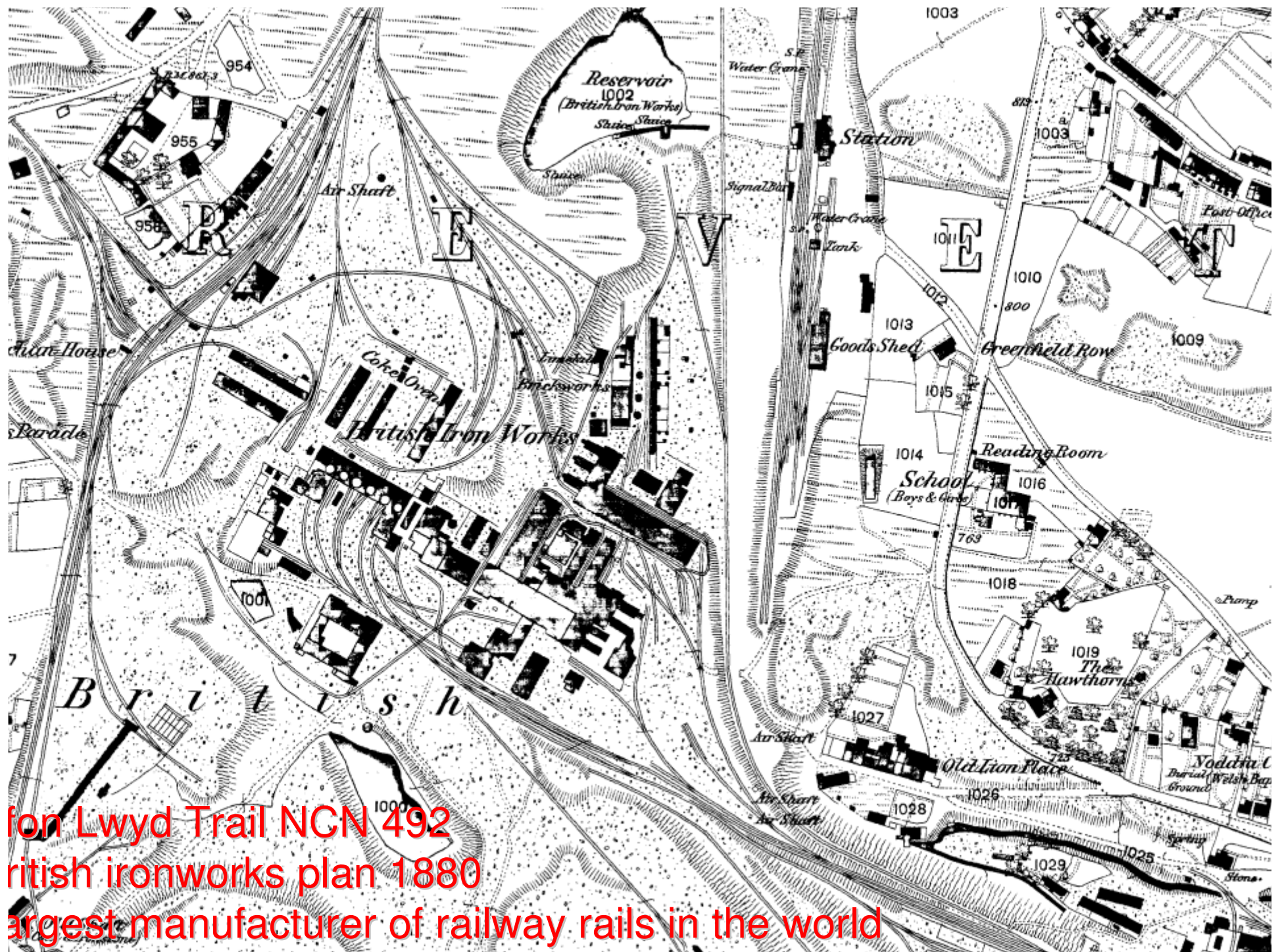




Afon Lwyd Trail NCN 492

Big Arch overbridge – entrance to British ironworks

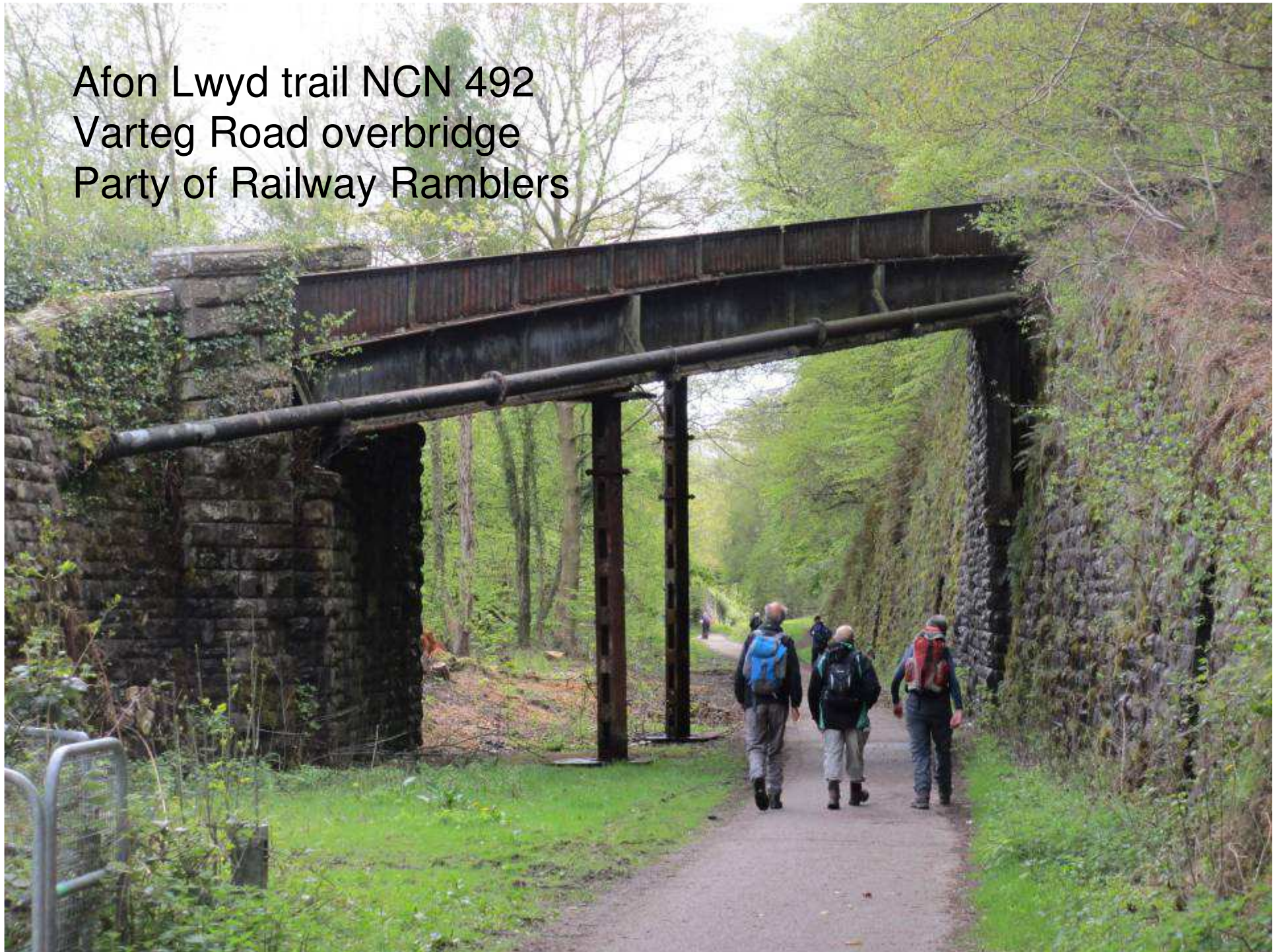




for Lwyd Trail NCN 492  
British ironworks plan 1880  
largest manufacturer of railway rails in the world



Afon Lwyd trail NCN 492  
Varteg Road overbridge  
Party of Railway Ramblers

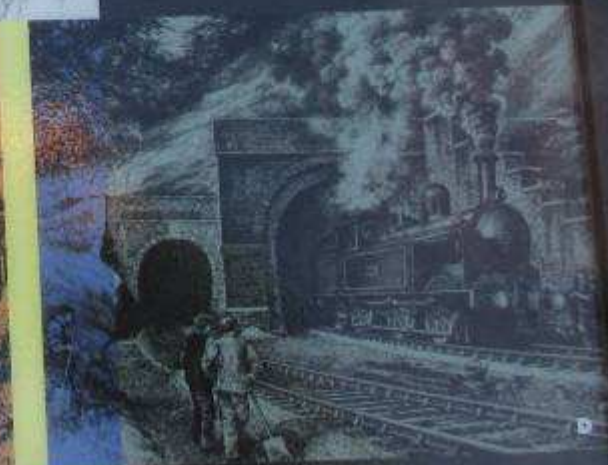
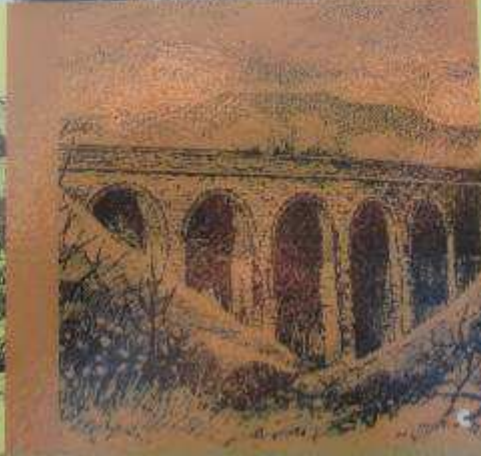




Clydach Gorge NCN 46  
Quarry, limeworks and viaduct –  
Blaenavon World Heritage Site  
interpretation panel



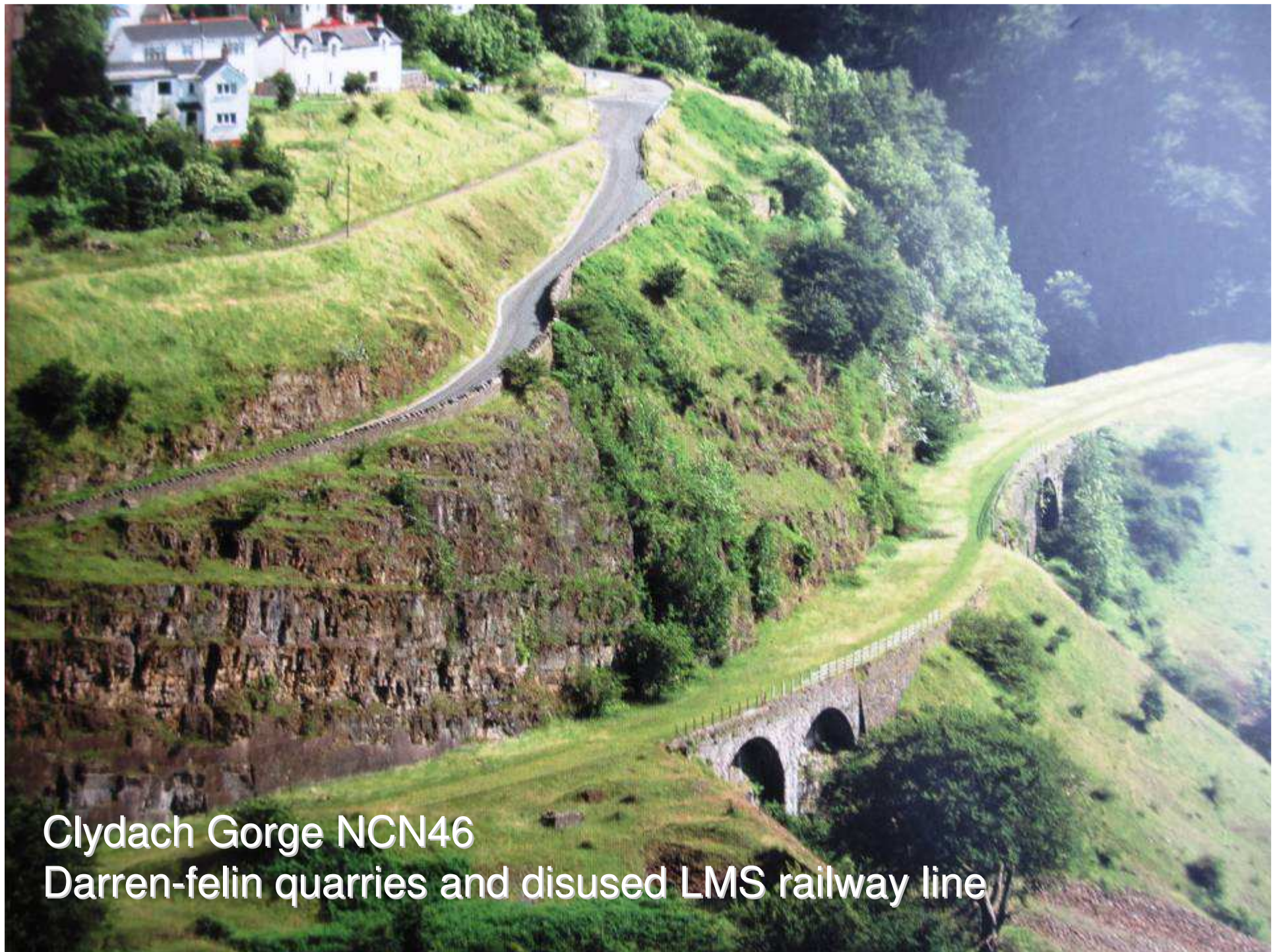
**BLAENAVON**  
WORLD HERITAGE SITE  
SAFLE TREFTADAETH BYD



WEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

RHWNG CRAIG A LLE CYFYNG





Clydach Gorge NCN46  
Darren-felin quarries and disused LMS railway line






Clydach Gorge NCN 46  
Darren-felin – cycle route through National Nature Reserve



A photograph of a stone arch bridge spanning a canal. On the left bank, there is a dirt path. The right bank is a steep, grassy embankment with some trees and a black metal fence. The bridge has a single large arch and a smaller arch above it. The water in the canal is calm, reflecting the sky and the bridge. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

Clydach Gorge NCN46  
Govilon cycle route  
Former LMS rail bridge overbridge Monmouth & Brecon Canal





Garw Valley – NCN884  
Route alongside colliery railway



Ebbw Valley – NCN 465 Cycleway  
Guardian of the Valleys sculpture at Nine Bells colliery site







Ebbw Valley – NCN 4 Bassaleg Viaduct, George Overton 1826  
Oldest in use on an operational railway  
Sustrans Volunteer Rangers



Ebbw Valley – NCN 466  
Llanhilleth  
Start of large retaining wall



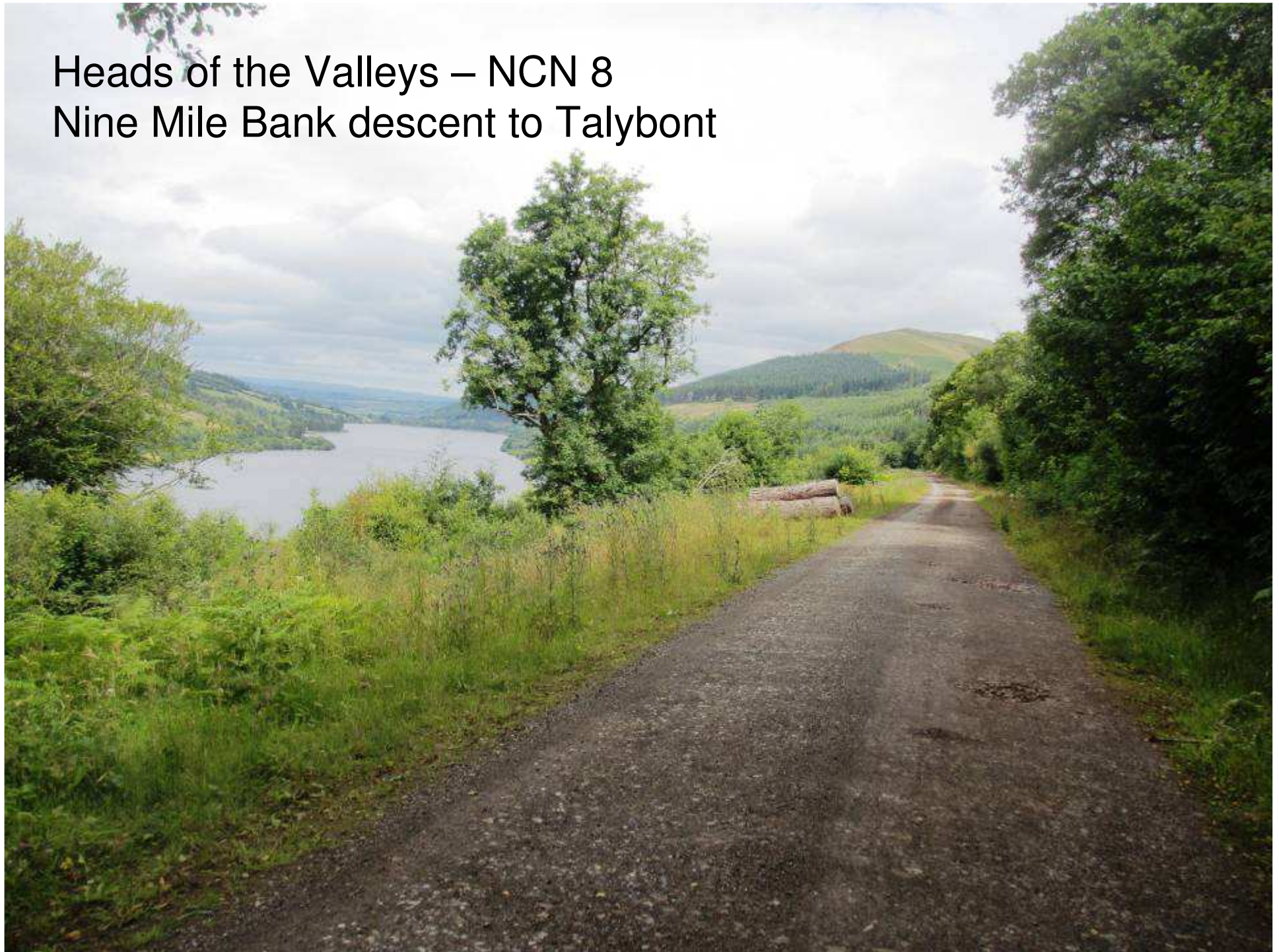




Heads of the Valleys – NCN 46  
Nine Arches Viaduct Tredegar  
John Gardiner 1864



# Heads of the Valleys – NCN 8 Nine Mile Bank descent to Talybont





a Fach Trail – NCN 881  
wn





Rhondda Fach Trail –  
NCN 881 Porth with new  
road bridge





Rhymney Valley – NCN4  
Bedwas Colliery and tips c1950





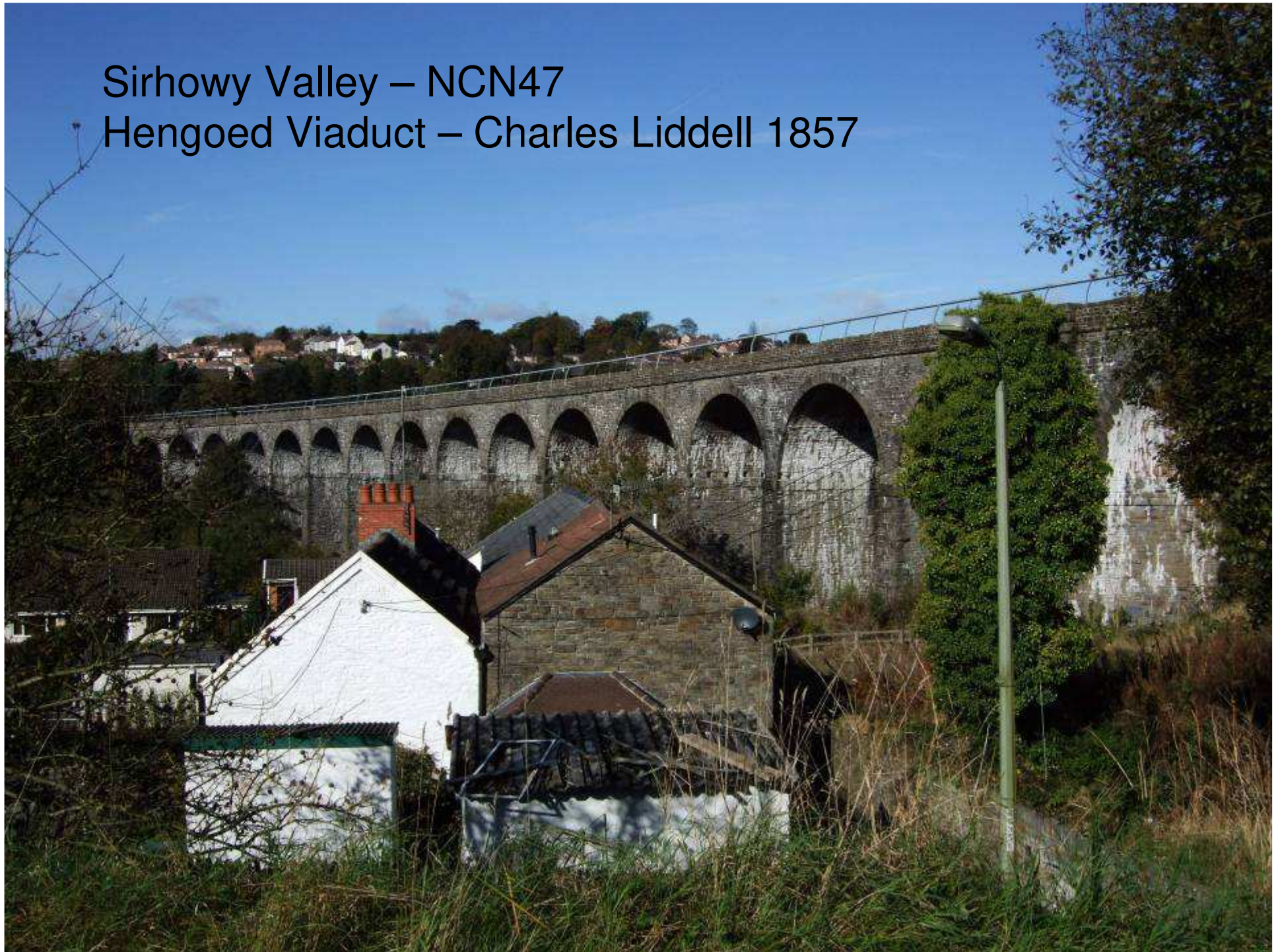
# Rhymney Valley – NCN 4

## Bedwas Colliery site reclaimed with cycleway





Sirhowy Valley – NCN47  
Hengoed Viaduct – Charles Liddell 1857








Sirhowy Valley – NCN47  
Hengoed Viaduct restored 2000



Sirhowy Valley – NCN47  
Hengoed Viaduct  
Wheel O Drams sculpture  
by Andy Hazell





A photograph of a dirt trail winding through a wooded area. The trail is composed of dark, loose soil and small stones. Along the left side of the trail, there is a series of rectangular stone blocks, which are the original 4' 2" gauge stone anchorage blocks mentioned in the text. The trail is flanked by trees and dense foliage, with some fallen leaves scattered on the ground. The lighting is natural, suggesting an overcast day.

Taff Trail – Penydarren Tramroad 1804  
Original 4' 2" inches gauge stone anchorage blocks





Taff Trail NCN 8  
Penydarren Tramroad, Pontygwaith Bridge 1802



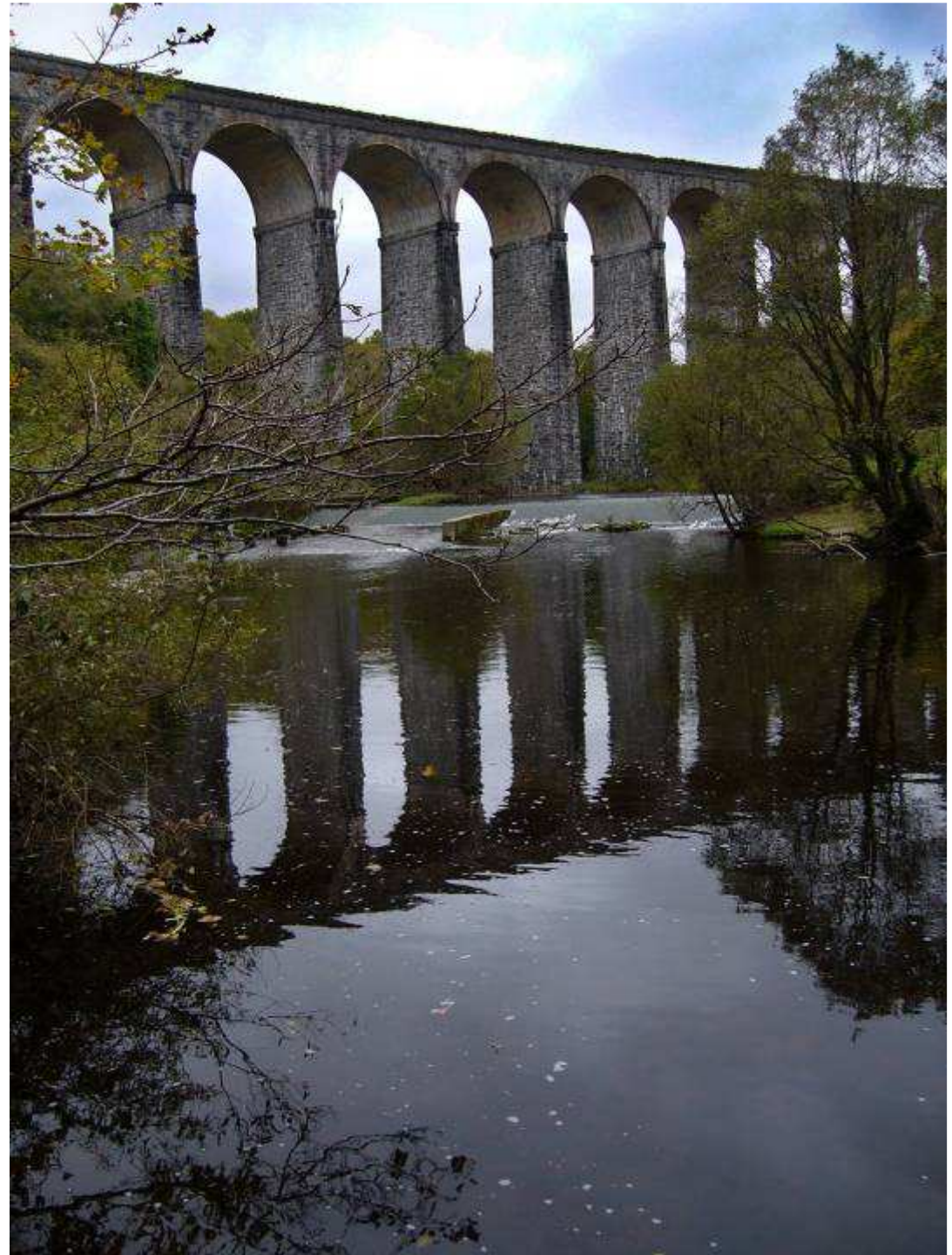
Taff trail – NCN 8 Merthyr

Rhydycar Bridge 1853 Brunel, Vale of Neath railway





NCN 8 Merthyr  
Cefn Coed Viaduct  
16 arches  
Alexander Sutherland &  
Henry Conybeare 1867





# Websites

- **[sustrans.org.uk](http://sustrans.org.uk)**
- **[railwaypaths.org.uk](http://railwaypaths.org.uk)**



## Conclusions:

Disused railways and tramway routes have provided an excellent basis for the creation of a close network of approx. 116km shared use surfaced paths for walkers and cyclists in the South Wales valleys probably unrivalled elsewhere in the UK.

There is still scope for a number of improvements especially the creation of missing links and avoidance of heavily trafficked roads and crossings.

There is considerable potential for more on-site, electronic and published multi-lingual interpretation material to reflect the European importance of industrial heritage along these routes