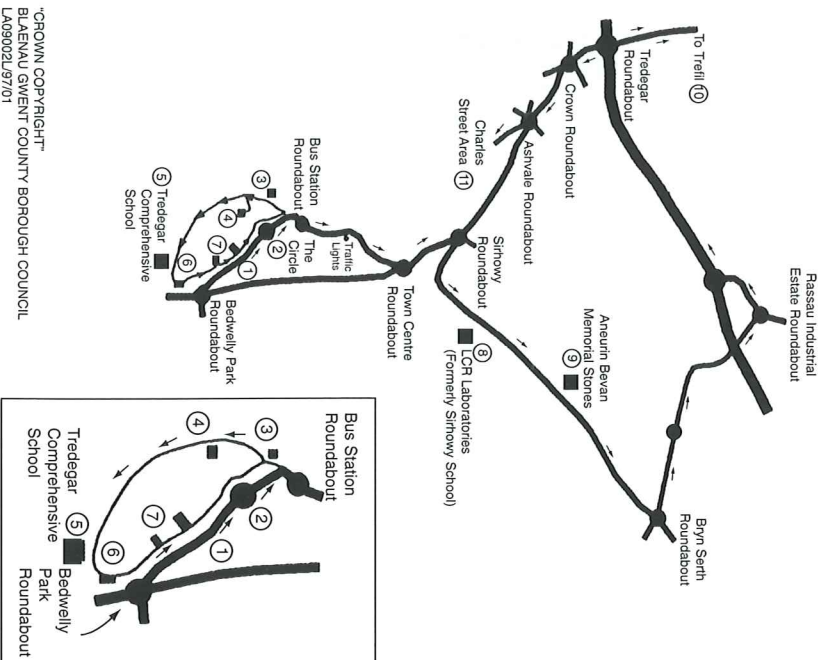


# ANEURIN BEVAN HERITAGE TRAIL



## LOCATION PLAN



"CROWN COPYRIGHT"  
BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
LA09002L97/01

A WALK AND CAR TRAIL  
IN THE TREDEGAR AREA -  
BIRTHPLACE OF THE  
FAMOUS POLITICIAN  
ANEURIN (NYE) BEVAN

1897 - 1960

LABOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
FOR EBBW VALE  
1929 - 1960

## HOW TO REACH TREDEGAR

### BY CAR:

The A465(T) links the Midlands and West Wales and offers excellent access to Tredegar. From the south, access to Tredegar from the M4 is via the A467 (J28) from Newport.

### BY BUS AND TRAIN:

For details of bus and train services, contact  
Traveline Cymru telephone 0870 608 2 608.

## STARTING POINT - CAR PARK, NEXT TO THE MASONIC HALL, MORGAN STREET, TREDEGAR.

Park your car in the walled car park next to the Masonic Hall.

(1) This was the site of the Workman's Hall and Library. As a boy Aneurin (being largely self educated) used the Library extensively with the encouragement of the Librarian, Mr. Bowditch. Nye remained committed to the Library, retaining his post as Chairman for many years. He was particularly interested in the junior section and is quoted as saying: "We have discovered that nearly all the successes at the secondary school are children who use our library." As a young man, Nye and a group of socialist friends formed the Query Club and held their meetings at the Hall.



*The Query Club*

The Club was a discussion group, but under Nye's direction it became dedicated to challenging the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company's influence in the town by gaining power on the various committees, ultimately winning seats on the Urban District Council which until this time had been subservient to the Company. On the opposite side of the road is the house where Michael Foot lived while M.P. for the district. A plaque has been erected on the site and it is a testimony to the esteem in which he held Nye that the inscription reads: "Michael Foot, Labour M.P. Ebbw Vale 1960 - 1983 Blaenau Gwent 1983 - 1992 Biographer of Aneurin Bevan, lived here" with no reference to his own achievements.

Walk up the road to the Circle (2). On your immediate left is the Tredegar Social Club, it is on the balcony of this building that Parliamentary "counts" were once announced. Look right, on the corner opposite the Library is the building which was the home of the Medical Aid Society. This was the forerunner of the National Health Service. It was started in 1890 by local miners and steelworkers who "clubbed" together to employ a doctor. Eventually most of the townspeople joined and they were able to employ five or six doctors. Inevitably, the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company had their nominees in positions of power within the Society and this was one of the situations the Query Club wished to remedy.

Walk around the Circle and up

Castle Street until you reach Barclays Bank, turn left (3). Nye's mother lived in the house opposite the bank (No. 2 Queens Square)

with her daughter, Arranwen Norris and this is the house used as a base by Aneurin Bevan when visiting Tredegar during his years as M.P. for the constituency.

Walk along Harcourt Terrace, take the third turning on your left (approx. 300yds) and then the first right. In the foyer of the Aneurin Bevan Medical Centre (4) you will find a portrait of the Nye by the famous photographer Karsh. (As this is a working hospital, please go no further than the foyer). Return to the main road and turn left.

Follow Park Row and bear left down Stable Lane. (5) Tredegar Comprehensive School is at the bottom of the hill. The school was built near the site of Ty Trist Colliery (the name means "House of Sadness"). Nye aged 14, and his brother William, began work at Ty Trist in November 1911. Later he wrote of life as a miner: "In other trades, there are a thousand diversions to break the monotony of work - the passing traffic, the morning newspaper, above all the sky, the sunshine, the wind and the rain. The miner has none of these. Everyday for eight hours he dies, gives up a slice of his life and buries himself."

Follow the road around to the left to the site of the LCR building (6) that was destroyed by fire in 2001. This was formerly the headquarters of the Tredegar Iron and Coal Co. The company was a powerful force in Tredegar owning all seven collieries and most of the land and housing in the town. The Company had representatives on the Council, Medical Aid Society, Hospital Committee and even the Workman's Institute, it influenced most, if not all of the decision-making in the town and it was this power that Nye and the Query Club sought to wrest from the company.

Enter Bedwellly Park through the side gate of the larger Main Gate. Bear right and follow the path to Bedwellly House (7), which housed the Council Chamber for Tredegar Urban District Council. Nye was elected to the Council in 1922. Michael Foot states in his biography that he "did not take his seat but erupted". He challenged the old conventions at every opportunity and was concerned with all aspects of life in Tredegar, housing in particular. The Weekly Argus quotes him later as saying "People were living in conditions not fit for criminals. No doubt horses, especially race horses were housed better than some of our citizens are being reared".

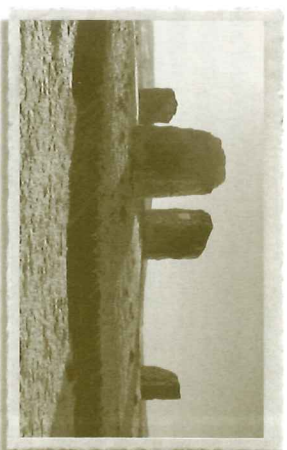


*Carnival Day in Tredegar*

In the Assembly Room hangs a portrait of Nye and also a bronze bust by Lambda. (The Council Chamber and Assembly Rooms can be viewed on a Monday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings by prior arrangement with the Town Clerk. Tel. No. 01495 722352 and at other times by contacting 01495 355972/355937). There is also a fine pictorial history of the town on display. Follow the path north from Bedwellly House to the Main Gate.

Return to your car and drive north, past the Town Clock, towards the town. Bear right at the top of the hill and left at the roundabout; turn right at the traffic lights, towards the Town bypass; turn left at the next roundabout and right at the following roundabout. Three hundred yards up the hill on your right, you will see the LCR Laboratories due to be redeveloped as a housing site (8), this building was formerly Sirhowy School. All the Bevan children attended school here. Mr. William Orchard, the headmaster and a local Tory Councillor, did not perceive anything special about Nye; in fact there seems to have been some antagonism between them culminating in 'physical combat' on one occasion, Mr. Orchard hit Nye on the chin and Nye retaliated by stamping on the teacher's coms. The sturter that plagued Nye's early years might have been exacerbated by this friction, along with the fact that he was naturally left-handed and was made to write with his right hand. When questions in later life about how he cured his stutter, he replied "by torturing my audiences". Nye hated school; referring to arithmetic much later he said: "Any fool can see that two and two make four but it takes real capacity to stretch it to five or, better still, six or seven"

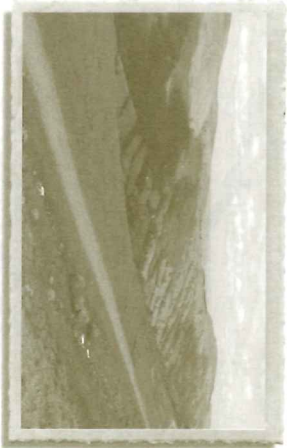
Drive to the crest of the hill and you will see the Aneurin Bevan Memorial Stones (9) to your left. The stones were erected in Nye's memory to mark the spot where he held open-air meetings to speak to his constituents - the center stone represents Aneurin Bevan and the others point towards Ebbw Vale, Rhymney and Tredegar, (the three settlements in his constituency). There is a brief account of his life in the Information Panel and a photograph of him speaking on the site. (The stones are also the starting point for the Sirhowy Valley Walk).



*Aneurin Bevan Memorial Stones*

On leaving the car park turn left and then left again at the roundabout. At the Rassau roundabout on the Heads of the Valley's

Road (A465) turn right and follow this road to the Tredegar roundabout and turn right. Drive through Waundeg and on to the village of Trefil. Nye used the Trefil Welfare Hall (now Trefil Rugby and Welfare Club) as another venue to speak to his constituents. Leaving Trefil you will be travelling towards Nye's beloved mountains. He loved to roam this area, walking as far as twenty miles in a day with his boyhood friends, especially Archie Lush, a lifelong friend and best man at his wedding to Jennie Lee. Nye and later Jennie Lee both requested that their ashes be scattered on the grassy slopes overlooking the spectacular wooded valley at the head of the Dyffryn Crawnnon(10).



*Dyffryn Crawnnon*

Return to the Tredegar roundabout on the A465, drive straight ahead, take the second turning at the next roundabout and the third turning at the next roundabout. Turn immediately left into Charles Street (11) Nye was born at No.32 Charles Street, on the 15th of November, 1897, the fourth son of ten children. His nonconformist parents were David and Phoebe Bevan. As the family grew they moved to No. 7 Charles Street which was quite a big house by the standards of the day, having seven rooms with another being added later by his father. His parents were a great influence on Nye's life. His father was a prolific reader and passed on his passion for books to his son. His mother was the driving force however, being an excellent house-keeper, cook and tailoress, who also kept a tight rein on the family purse. Nobody at No. 7 went hungry and the children were always well turned out. Unfortunately nothing remains today of the two houses. Maes-y-Derwen residential home No.32.

Nye became the Labour Member of Parliament for the Ebbw Vale Constituency in 1929, aged 31. At Westminster, he met and later married another Socialist Politician - Jennie Lee. He acted as editor of the



*Bevan in London waiting for the Jarrow Marchers*

left wing newspaper "Tribune" from 1942 - 45. He was elected to the National Executive of the Labour Party in 1944 and became Minister of Health in 1945. He played the leading role in the establishment of the National Health Service and set in motion the largest public housing programme ever launched in Britain. He became the most original spokesman on democratic socialism the world over.

Aneurin Bevan died on the 6th July, 1960, at Chesham in Buckinghamshire following a long illness. The memorial service held at Westminster Abbey was a public show of the respect and affection that the nation felt for him. His strength and power was much missed in the Labour Party and British politics as a whole.

Nye continues to be an inspiration to people of all walks of life. Michael Foot, in his definitive biography, spoke of his "rich personality and vitality", describing him as a man who "knew that his real treasure was his mind".

The Community Services Department,  
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council  
wishes to thank the

Rt. Hon. Michael Foot, Mr. Phillip Prosser and  
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*Cwmwr Bwrdeistref Sirol*  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
County Borough Council



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government