



The Rhondda Valley

How it became distinctively prosperous during the industrial revolution.



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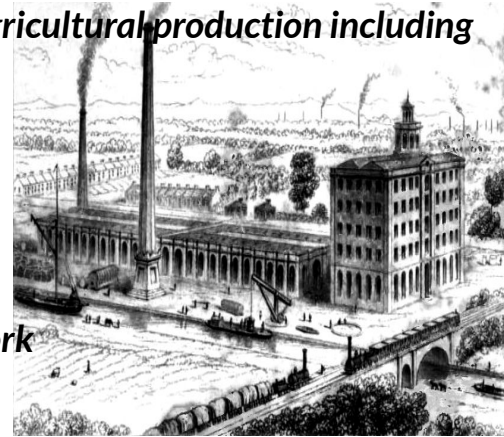
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The Agricultural revolution transitioning to the industrial revolution.

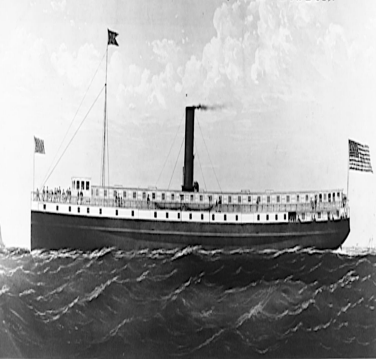


- in the early 1700's people generally worked and lived on small farms, 80% of the population lived off the agriculture and technology was minimal, people generally worked together as one, crops were minimal and they used the open farming system.
- Jethro Toll invented the seed drill, the first of many innovative ideas to increase agricultural production including the threshing machine, crop rotation and new tools.
- The enclosure act was enforced in 1750's enabling rich farmers to buy the land pushing the poor farmers out, radically changing the country life ending traditional rights.
- Mass production and efficiency from enclosed farming left many people out of work Pushing them to move to cities, generally finding work in the upcoming factories being built marking the start of the industrial revolution.
- The population had grown from 5.5 million to over 9 million due the wide availability of food and its relatively cheap purchase price.



Rhondda Valley during the industrial revolution

- Evidence shows humans have lived on the Rhondda valleys since 10000 BC, Rhondda was a rural agricultural country no one knew about until it was put on the map along with the rest of Wales as one of the first industrialised countries for their iron and coal production which grew side by side during this period, providing 35% of British coal by 1847 and produced 25% of the whole of American production.
- Rhondda became the most intensely mined area in Britain for a century starting in the mid 1800's and initially offered any man who found coal \$500, In 1851 William Clarke proved there were seams of steam coal near Treherbert, mining then commenced in 1855 before more seams of coal were uncovered at Ferndale in 1862
- By 1869 the Rhondda valleys had mined more than 1 million tonnes of coal and over 7 million tonnes by 1890 and had 66 mines in total and were producing 9 and a half million tonnes of coal per year fueling trains, factories and ships
- Progression and expansion happened so quickly, the former landscape of the Rhondda valleys soon had all the characteristics of industrialisation, mining took its toll on the valleys and left landscape dull, dirty and polluted .
- Rhondda valley population grew immensely from 1000 in 1840 to 4000 in 1860 and rose to a staggering 150,000 in 1913 rising by a further 13,000 by 1921.
- One third of the population worked in the mines and came from England, Ireland and all over Wales, they formed small villages and towns around the mining areas living in small terraced houses.



The coal industry in Rhondda Valley



Initially coal was transported by horse and cart on the canals this method worked but was time consuming and unreliable, within 5 years the railway from Rhondda to swansea and cardiff had been built, this enabled large amounts of coal to be transported from Rhondda to swansea or cardiff and then shipped all over the world to keep up with the increasing demand for coal to manufacture goods, power steam trains and railroad engines.

Rhondda valleys continued to mine the coal but at great risk to the workers, mining from $\frac{1}{4}$ mile underground, on average one miner died every 6 hours and some one had a serious accident every 12 minutes , even with these dangers widely known, men came in their hoards looking for work, they were living in poverty and needed work to feed their families, children worked down the mines from as young as 5 this resulted in poor health, disease and long term health issues such as blindness, stunted growth and poor eyesight.

The sales of coal from Rhondda made many people very rich, such as Archibold Hood and despite the dangerous working conditions, poor pay and general resistance from the miners working conditions did not improve and riots broke out such as the Tonypandy riots.



The fall of the Rhondda valley coal industry



During the first world war the demand for coal was slightly lower but Rhondda recovered and was still mining eight and a half million tonnes of coal per year to keep up with demands from the Royal Navy



Collier owners made mass profits but still refused to give the miners a pay rise Which resulted in the 10 day strike in 1915, by 1920 with wages at an all time low the global recession and the decline of the need for coal resulted in the Rhondda community Suffering greatly, wages dropped even lower, miners were laid off and families fell further into poverty and desperation

came the need for soldiers, thousands of miners were sent to war giving colliers no choice but to close mines down in south wales, between 1921 and 1936 241 mines closed and miners numbers fell from 270,000 to 130,000.

The government took control of the mines in 1942, wages increased as did working conditions, 24 million tonnes of coal were extracted in 1952, however this did not last long with gas and oil becoming more popular and the clean air act 1956, the demand for coal became less, between 1953 and 1959 14% of mines had closed and uneconomic small mines were shut down.

All was not lost, many men found jobs in the steelworks and were happy to have more secure job.

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