

# Great Archaeological Sites in Newport



## 6. MONMOUTHSHIRE CANAL AND FOURTEEN LOCKS



Although canals now seem like a tranquil window into a rural world, in their heyday they were the superhighways of the Industrial Revolution. The Monmouthshire canal was built to improve transport links between Blaenavon ironworks and Newport, from where its products could be shipped out into a wider world. An Act of Parliament needed to be passed before a canal could be built, and one was duly obtained in 1792 by a consortium consisting of Thomas Hill, the ironmaster at Blaenavon, local landowners Sir Charles Morgan of Tredegar and the Duke of Beaufort, London banking interests, and the potter Josiah Wedgwood who was also a canal promoter. The main arm of the canal ran from Newport to Pontnewynydd (Pontypool) where it linked up with a tramroad from Blaenavon, completed in 1796. The consortium also came to an agreement with the promoters of another scheme, the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal, to join the two waterways together. The engineer in charge of both projects was Thomas Dadford Junior, who resigned as engineer on the Neath canal in order to undertake this new work.

The Monmouthshire canal also included an eleven-mile link to the Ebbw valley, known as the Crumlin branch, which ran from a basin at Cwmcarn to join the main



section at Malpas just north of Newport. The most spectacular section along this branch is a flight of locks (ST2786988565 – ST 28582 88456) designed in pairs to provide a rise of 268 feet in half a mile (82m in 800), one of the steepest in Britain. Known as the Fourteen Locks, this stretch of the canal has been partly restored although not enough to allow boats to pass along. All in all, there were 32 locks between on the Crumlin branch, including another smaller flight at Allt-yr-yn.

The two sections of the Monmouthshire Canal were completed in 1799. The Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal was completed in 1812 when it joined the Monmouthshire Canal at Pontymoile.



The Fourteen Locks are at High Cross on the outskirts of Newport (NP10 9GQ). There is a visitor centre with a car park, and the nearest railway station is Pye Corner on the Cardiff – Ebbw Vale line. Maps: OS Landranger Series sheet 171, Explorer Series sheet 152.

**Timeline** (the asterisks indicate the time-span)



You can learn more about this site, and other similar archaeological sites in Wales, by going to <https://www.archwilio.org.uk/arch/>. Please read and observe the Conditions of Use. The Monmouthshire Canal has the PRN (Primary Record Number) 03263.0g, and the Fourteen Locks are 03263.01g – 03263.14g. You can search for other similar sites here too. You can contact us via social media or through the methods given at the bottom of the page.

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