

Methods

Working in pairs, participants in the workshop were asked to

- 1 Consider the relationship between early landscape and landownership patterns and the development of Tredegar
- 2 Analyse the site of the town, and the shape of the new settlement, including its relationship to Bedwellty House
- 3 Identify aspects of physical change within the Victorian and early 20th-century town.

After each activity, participants fed their ideas back to the whole group

Outputs

1 We began by looking at the pre-industrial landscape and pattern of settlement portrayed in the maps of 1760 and 1767, especially the Tredegar estate map. In particular we wanted to identify ways in which the development of Tredegar was influenced by this earlier landscape. We recognised that we were looking at an overwhelmingly rural landscape with a pastoral economy. Welsh field-names predominated, suggesting that most inhabitants were Welsh speakers. Existing watercourses influenced the siting of ironworks at Sirhowy and Tredegar, since good water supplies were essential for power and industrial processes. The critical factor in shaping the pattern of industrial development locally nonetheless appeared to be the pattern of landownership and the relationship between the Tredegar (Morgan) estate and the lands of the Duke of Beaufort, which included Sirhowy.

2 Next we explored the tithe map and its associated apportionment which lists local landowners. We looked harder at the siting of the town and at its layout. Tredegar was laid out in association with the new ironworks, located to avoid the worst of the pollution from the furnaces. These early maps emphasise the significance of the Circle and the way streets radiate from it – a renaissance-derived layout that indicates that Tredegar was carefully planned. It is quite unlike other industrial towns in Britain from this point of view. The tithe apportionment reveals the monopoly over local landownership held by the Morgans. This unified control of land was the context that enabled the town to be so carefully planned; where landownership in a community is fragmented, development is much more likely to be piecemeal. The siting of Bedwellty House stands out as being at a comfortable distance from the works and the homes of the workers.

3 Later maps, such as those of 1880 and 1902 enabled us to identify changes after the mid nineteenth century. Georgetown was developed to the SE of the original town, acquiring its own schools in 1877. St James' Church was opened in 1890. The town became more diverse in terms of commercial activity and local occupations. Census returns are excellent sources for the latter, enabling us to study household composition and social structure in depth from 1851 to 1901 (and soon 1911), while the later maps illustrate the expansion of the Victorian community and the growing complexity of its infrastructure – not only schools (notably the County School of 1897), churches and chapels, but a waterworks and reservoir, a railway station and cemeteries. The Cottage Hospital opened in 1903. Nonetheless the commercial, physical and social nucleus of Tredegar remains the Circle, graced by the extraordinary town clock of 1858, which was the bright idea of the wife of the ironworks manager.