

Nant Fawr Trail
Alternative Route
No footway



History of the NANT FAWR Trail

This leaflet is designed to provide information on the History of the Nant Fawr Corridor in Cardiff.

If you take a walk along the River you will still see many interesting buildings and features that give you clues into Cardiff's past. Click on the icons to find out more...

For further information about other opportunities to enjoy the countryside on your doorstep contact the Council's Countryside Team.

Telephone: 029 2087 3186 / 73719 / 73249

Email: countryside@cardiff.gov.uk

Websites: www.cardiff.gov.uk/countryside
www.cardiff.gov.uk/biodiversity
www.outdoorcardiff.com

Parc Cefn Onn

Cefn Onn Halt

Coed y Felin

Llanishen Reservoir & Dam

Llandennis Oval

Nant Fawr Meadow Farms

Roath Lake

Highfield Jewish Cemetery

Scott Memorial

Roath Park

Bridges over Roath Brook

Cathays Cemetery

St Andrew's Church

Roath Mill

Waterloo Gardens

St Margaret's Church



The Nant Fawr

The Nant Fawr was once a large brook covering large areas of land and translated it means 'The Big Brook'. It was reduced to a small stream with the erection of the Caerphilly Railway tunnel and the railway in Lisvane.

Its route though the heart of the city continues to provide a green corridor for people to enjoy. It now contains a diverse collection of open spaces and hides a rich history.

[Main Map](#)





Parc Cefn Onn

Parc Cefn Onn is a small informal Edwardian woodland park on the northern edge of Cardiff. The main feature of the park is the planting of ornamental trees and shrubs, in particular some fine conifers, rhododendrons and azaleas.

The Northern half of the park, known as The Dell, is the original garden owned and developed in the early twentieth century by Ernest Albert Prosser who was also the General Manager of the Taff Vale, Cardiff and Rhymney Railway Companies. The garden was to be part of a wider estate including a house but sadly both Mr Prosser and his only son passed away before the dream could be realised.

In 1944 Cardiff Council acquired The Dell along with the rest of the estate, which included the woodland to the south and the adjacent golf course and agricultural land. The southern woodland was planted as an ornamental woodland garden during the late 1940s and 1950s creating the park that exists today. Car parking, toilets and a good network of paths are provided at the site, and work is ongoing to restore the historic gardens with the help of the newly formed Friends of Parc Cefn Onn.

The park is Grade II listed on the Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales.

[Main Map](#)

Cefn Onn Halt

Hidden in a deep man made valley and located adjacent to Parc Cefn Onn lies what was formerly Cefn Onn Halt. Positioned near the entrance of the one mile tunnel that took the trains from Cardiff to Caerphilly, it was once a well used line. The word 'halt' in this sense means a small railway station, with few or no facilities and platforms only long enough for a couple of carriages.

Cefn Onn Halt was opened in 1910 to serve the Llanishen Golf Club which leased its land from E. A. Prosser. It also provided a useful means for Prosser to transporting materials for the creation of his garden at The Dingle, and for many years it served as the main means of public access to Parc Cefn Onn. The station closed in 1986 as only two people were using the stop! It has now been replaced by Lisvane and Thornhill station 500 meters to the south. Although the old halt remains, and can be viewed from the new platform – it is slowly being reclaimed by nature as can be seen from the photograph.





Llanishen Reservoir & Dam

When Cardiff Corporation assumed responsibility for the growing town's water supply in 1878, they commissioned a survey by their own engineer, John Avery Williams, to identify a suitable and sufficient water supply for the town. As a result of the survey four sites were earmarked, with Llanishen being the first to be built in 1884. Llanishen Reservoir was used as one of the main supplies of drinking water whilst the other three Taff valley reservoirs were being built.

The reservoir was transferred to Welsh Water in 1973 when the Welsh Water Authority was formed and it supplied water until the mid 1990s.

Llanishen Dam is grade II listed by Cadw as it was an integral part of the nineteenth century water-supply system for Cardiff. The Llanishen Reservoir represents a major Welsh civic engineering scheme which has survived virtually intact.

[Main Map](#)

Coed y Felin

The Nant Fawr brook was used to power the corn mill known as Llanishen Mill, and gave rise to the name Coed-y-Felin.

The first recording of Coed-y-Felin dates from before 1762 when a small sketch plan among the Homfray family documents show Llanishen Mill. The building was flooded in the early 1960s which made it uninhabitable and soon after it turned to ruins. The site of Llanishen Mill can still be seen today.

The adjacent Mill Pond varied in size over the years and at some stage became an ornamental garden pond of The Orchard, and it was still a garden feature in the 1960s. The woodlands are now managed by the Friends of Coed y Felin, in partnership with Cardiff Council.

[Main Map](#)



Nant Fawr Meadow Farms

Some 150 years ago, before the reservoirs and the Rhymney railway line were built, there were four farms whose fields and woods lay alongside this stretch of the Nant Fawr. The farms were called Rhydypenau, Rhydyblewyn, Fidlau and Celyn. It would have been a very rural scene with a small number of people living in the parish of Llanishen, (just 418 in the 1841 census) engaged in agriculture. Celyn Farm (as seen below) supported 17 people; the farmer, his wife, six children, six servants, one agricultural labourer and two others.

It was not until the post war housing boom of the 1960's that the urban area finally encroached on the farms. Celyn Farm was demolished in 1959 and now only Rhydyblewyn farm house remains; situated at the end of Blackoak Road.



Celyn (Holly) Farm , pictured above, was demolished in 1959, and was situated where Cardiff High School is today.

Llandennis Oval

Early in the 6th century a group of missionary monks, led by Teilo, came from their monastery near Hereford and established a religious settlement, or 'llan', on the banks of the river Taff, at the place now known as Llandaff. Later, other monks were send out from there to found new settlements; one of these was Isan, who chose a spot to found his 'llan', this giving rise to the name Llan Isan or Llanishen as it is called today. The spring and small pond at The Oval were an important source of water for this community, whose activities included farming and teaching, as well as giving religious instruction and performing sacraments of baptism and burial.

Isan also had a Latin name, Dionysius, which, corrupted to Dennis, is the likely derivation of the name Llan Dennis, hence Llandennis Oval. For many years the pond had the reputation as a healing well, particularly for conditions of the eye, and scurvy. The Ordnance Survey map of 1920, refers to it as 'Ffynnon Llandennis' (Well of the sacred settlement of Dennis). There is a mound, now covered with trees which could be the site of the old burial ground.

[Main Map](#)





Highfield Jewish Cemetery

The Entrance Gateway and flanking walls to the cemetery are Grade II listed due to the social-historic interest as a distinctive gateway leading into an early Jewish cemetery which is one of the very few examples in Wales.

Before the 2nd Marquess of Bute donated this land for Highfield Cemetery in 1841 the Jewish dead were taken to Bristol for burial. This new cemetery marked the beginning of an independent Jewish Community in Cardiff.

[Main Map](#)

Roath Park

Roath Park was the first public park in Cardiff and was ambitiously conceived to provide a wide range of recreational, sporting, and educational facilities for the residents of east Cardiff.

The park was built by William Harpur and planted by William Walter Pettigrew with its main phase of construction taking place between 1887 and 1894. The land for Roath Park was originally donated by the Marquess of Bute in 1887 and the park's atmosphere today still retains the Victorian elegance that was established when the park first opened.

It has been recognised as one of the finest late Victoria parks in Britain and is listed as Grade 1 on the Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales.

Roath Park is one of a growing number of sites in Cardiff awarded a Green Flag recognising the high quality of facilities and provision at the park.

[Main Map](#)



Roath Lake

Roath Park Lake is a grade II listed dam. The Lake was formed on what used to be boggy marshland, until the Marquess of Bute donated the land to the City in 1887.

The 30 acre lake forms the centre piece of Roath Park which still retains a traditional Victorian feel and is now designated as a Conservation Area.

The lake is also an important habitat for a diverse range of wildlife providing a safe place for wintering and breeding birds.



[Main Map](#)

Scott Memorial

The 'Captain Scott Memorial' is a clock tower unveiled in 1915 to commemorate the life of Captain Scott and his companions who died during their Antarctic expedition of 1910-12, having sailed from the port of Cardiff in the S.S Terra Nova to conquer the South Pole.

The clock tower donated by F.C. Bowering, a local coal exporter, resembles a lighthouse with the weather vane at the top depicting vessels from the era of Scott's exploration.



Bridges over Roath Brook

Roath Park Botanic Gardens contain three grade II listed footbridges.

The first two cast-iron bridges located near the conservatory and in between the conservatory and the lake were manufactured by Bristol engineers J. Lysaght Limited.

The third footbridge lies near to the south end of Roath Lake. Made of reinforced concrete, this Edwardian bridge is listed as it is an early example of a reinforced concrete footbridge.

All three bridges span Roath Brook which runs through the park.



[Main Map](#)



Cathays Cemetery

Cathays Cemetery is one of Britain's largest and most impressive cemeteries. It contains thousands of memorials dating from 1859 the first of which took place on the 10th July. These memorials now provide a valuable insight into the history of Cardiff.

The Gothic style chapels were completed in 1859 at a cost of £5,200 and, on first inspection, look identical. However, if you look closely you will notice that the right hand chapel is more ornate. This is because it is consecrated and the other chapel unconsecrated. Due to the high mortality rate in the late nineteenth century the chapels were heavily used during the week and often at weekends too. On Saturday 8th February 1896 16 services were listed, 10 of which were for children under 8 years of age.

Nowadays, the Cemetery retains most of its original layout and evergreen planting. The site, covering almost 35 hectares, is a peaceful location for walkers. A heritage trail has been produced to introduce some of the more outstanding features of the cemetery taking you past important memorials and ecological features. The accompanying guide can be downloaded [here](#).

Friends of Cathays Cemetery is a registered charity who aim to conserve and protect the flora, fauna, infrastructure, monuments and buildings of the cemetery. They also aim to educate the public in the history and heritage of the cemetery and to promote its importance as a conservation area. For bereavement services contact Thornhill Cemetery & Cardiff Crematorium on 029 2062 3294.

[Main Map](#)

St Andrew's Church

Built in 1897 in an elaborate Gothic style, the church stands out over Roath Recreation Grounds and is now a grade II listed building. The doorway of the building is a copy of the thirteenth century west door of Tintern Abbey and the window above a copy of the windows in Melrose Abbey, Scotland.

Originally called The Roath Park English Presbyterian Church and built to accommodate the growing following of Presbyterian's in Cardiff, plans for seating for 800-900 people was not considered excessive. When the church opened on 20th June 1900 it was packed and some worshippers even had to be turned away at the door.

In the 1970s the Congregational Church merged with the Presbyterian Church to become St. Andrew's United Reformed Church.

[Main Map](#)

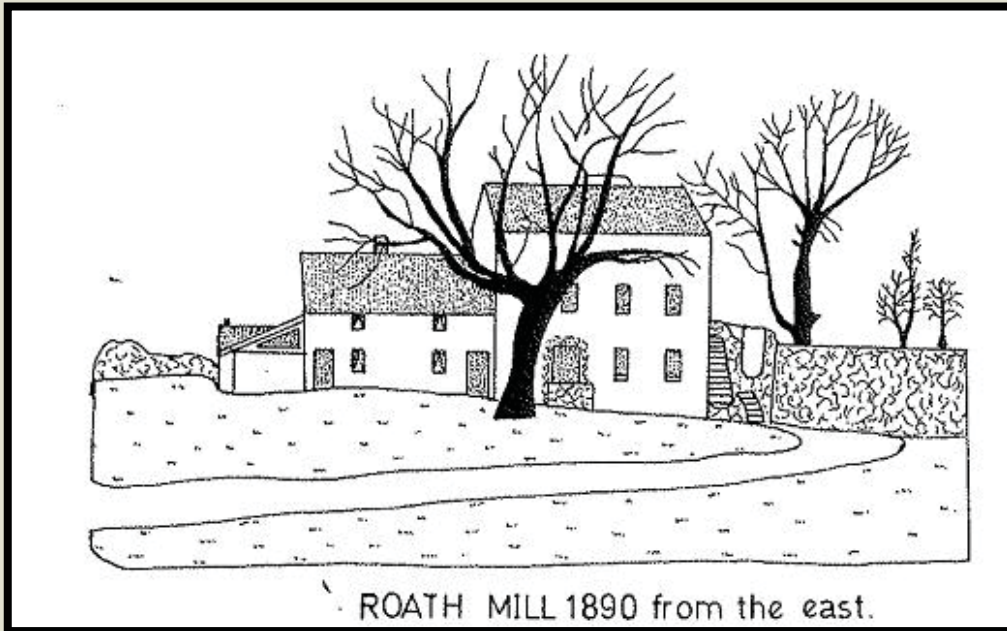


Roath Mill

The old water grist has long since disappeared but remains of its stonework can still be seen on the west bank of the stream, about 70 yards north of the Waterloo Road bridge.

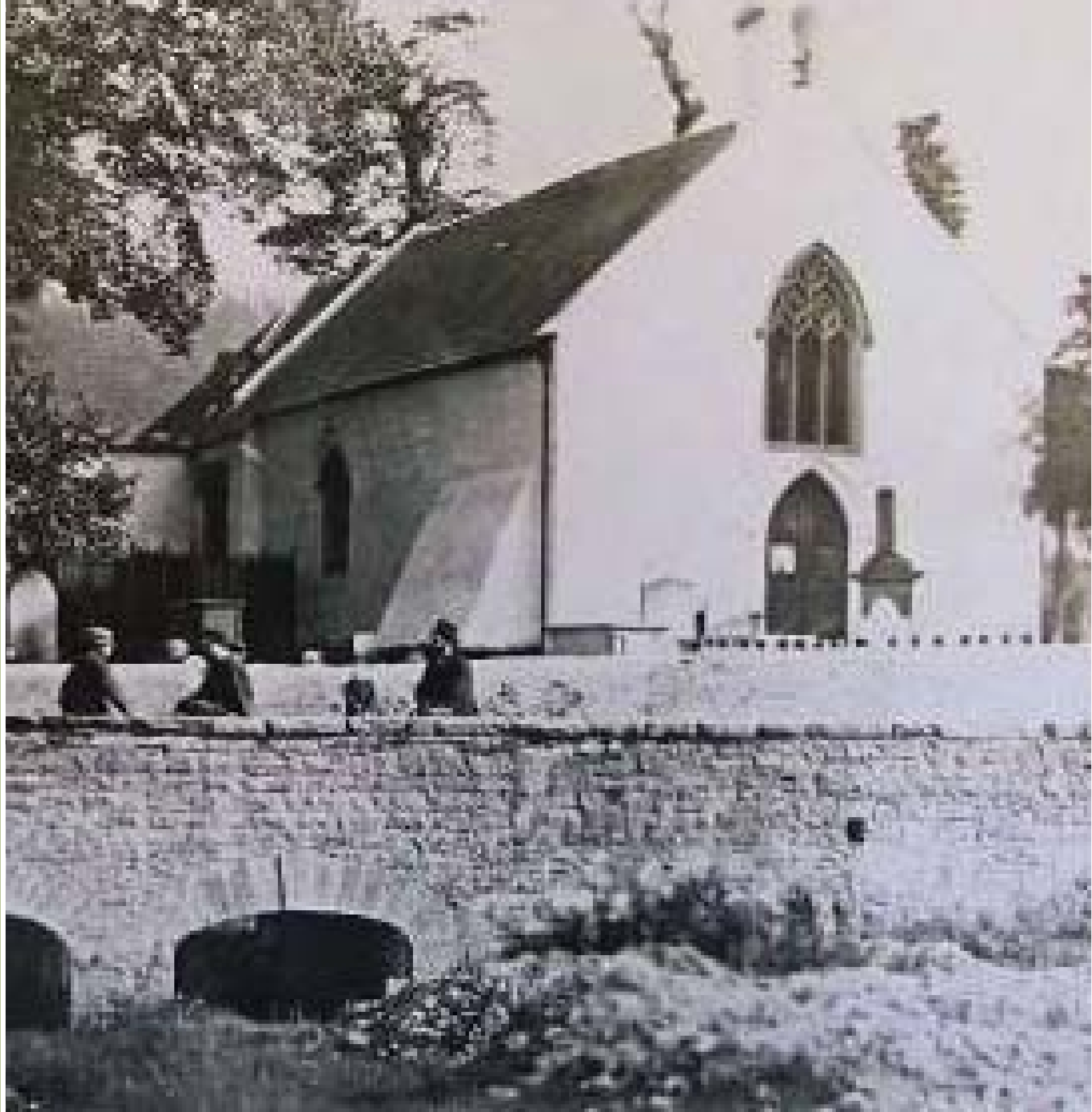
In the fifteenth century, Roath Mill ground corn (grain) for the local Lord of the manor who supplied flour to Cardiff Castle.

The mill was demolished in 1897 after being in use for many years.



St Margaret's Church

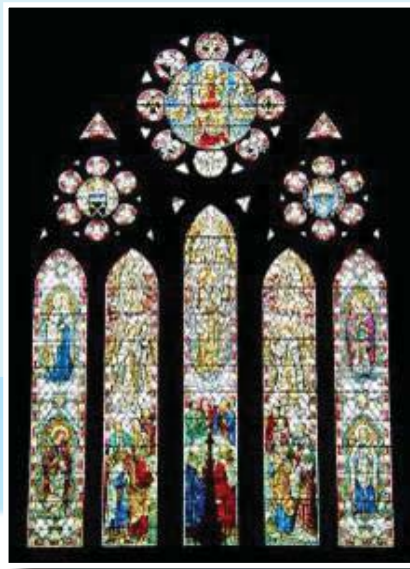
In 1766, John Stuart, (later the 1st Marquess of Bute) married Charlotte Jane Windsor, the heiress to the Welsh lands of the Herbert family. Through this marriage he acquired Cardiff Castle and vast tracts of land throughout Glamorgan. In 1792, he bought a parcel of land called the Friars Estate, which included the living of the Parish of Roath, and when his wife Charlotte died in 1800, he built a family burial chapel or mausoleum here, with space for 48 coffins. This was intended to be the resting place of his family for generations to come.

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St Margaret's Church

Due to the opening of Cardiff's first dock in 1839 by the 2nd Marquess of Bute, and the formation of the canal and railway, Cardiff's population boomed. As a result of this, the little church was too small to cater for the needs of the people and therefore all but the mausoleum was demolished in 1867. In 1868, the 3rd Marquess of Bute, aged 21 and a Roman Catholic, commissioned architect John Pritchard, restorer of Llandaff Cathedral, to build a state-of-the-art Gothic church in its place. The new church opened to great acclaim in 1870, though without Pritchard's planned tower and spire.

It is a grade I listed building due to its rich and well detailed interior and social significance of the Bute family mausoleum; the only such mausoleum in Wales.





Waterloo Gardens and Roath Mill Gardens

These two Victorian parks are located in a Conservation Area that seeks to preserve the distinct character of the park and surrounding Edwardian housing. Roath Brook runs through both gardens and has been designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) due to its importance for wildlife.

The parks were opened at the beginning of the 20th century after being given to Cardiff Corporation by Lord Tredegar.

Waterloo Gardens has both a rose garden and an ornamental garden and both are ideal for a peaceful stroll.

The gardens are jointly listed as Grade II in the Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales.

[Main Map](#)