

HISTORY OF THE RHYMNEY TRAIL

This leaflet is designed to provide information on the History of the Rhymney Trail 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. These include listed buildings with colourful histories and a church with links to the fifth century. Click on the icons to find out more...

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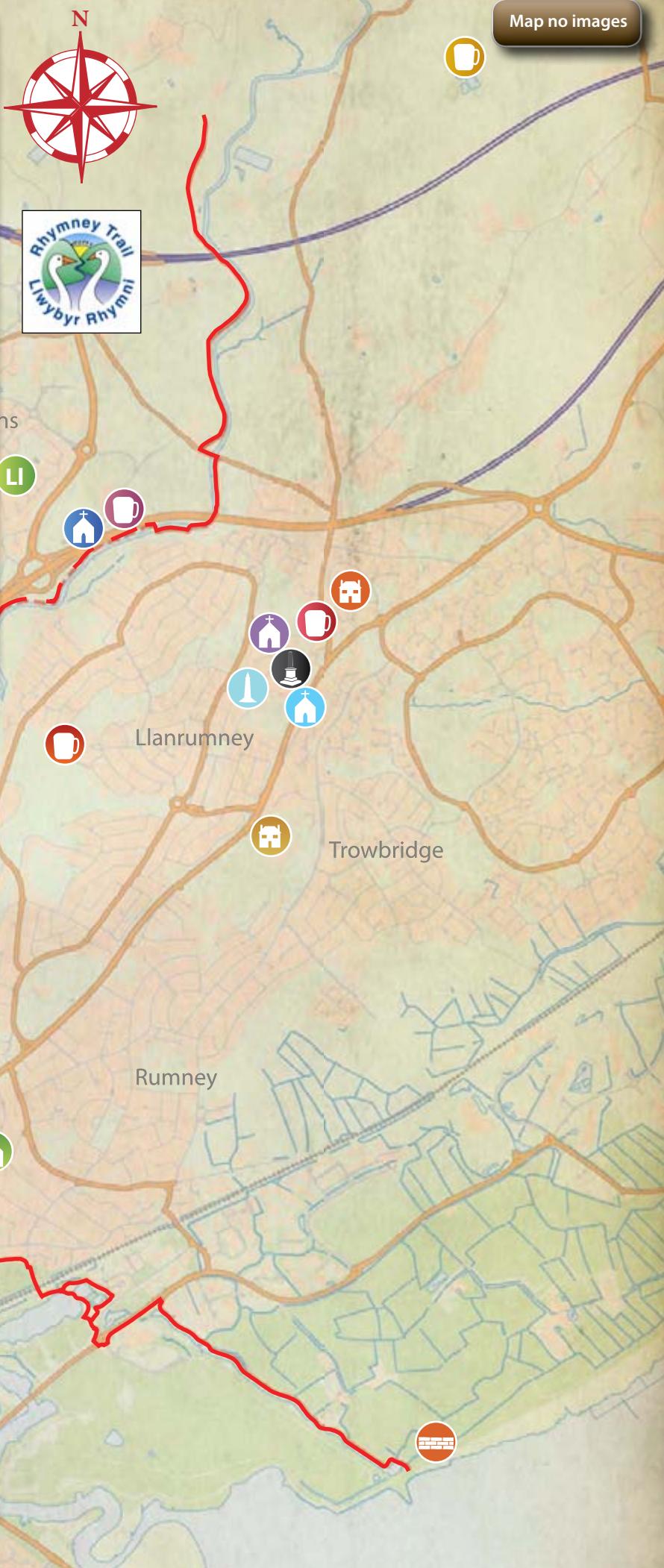
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KEY

- Rhymney Trail
- - - Proposed Route
- Cefn Mably Arms
- The Unicorn Inn
- Church of St Edeyrn
- St John's College
- Bluebell Inn/ Coach House
- Memorial to Joseph Hemingway
- St Mellons
- Church of St Mellons
- Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses
- Llanrumney Hall Public House
- Quarry Hill House
- St Mellons War Memorial
- River Rhymney
- Church of St Augustine
- Rumney Pottery
- Relict Seawall on Rumney Great Wharf





The Cefn Mably Arms

Nestled in the countryside between Cardiff and Newport, this traditional old country pub has a loyal following of customers from all over Wales. The building, which dates back over 450 years, became a public house in the mid-19th century and the Oak tree in the car park is thought to be one of the oldest in South East Wales.

The Cefn Mably Arms is open seven days a week serving hot and cold food and beverages.

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The Unicorn Inn Public House

Located next to the Church of St Edeyrn, parts of The Unicorn Inn date back to the seventeenth century. It is a grade II listed building as it incorporates an early core which has group value with the church.

The Inn was described in the late nineteenth century as "a comfortable old thatched house, with an inn-kitchen of the picturesque sort, open chimney, oak settle and flitches of bacon under the beams; and a native Welsh-speaking landlady". Nowadays the pub serves food and drink seven days a week and is just a short walk from the Rhymney Trail.

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Church of St Edeyrn

St Edeyrn's is located in the centre of Llanedeyrn and stands in the centre of a roughly triangular sloping churchyard. This medieval church, restored in 1888, is an early Christian site reputedly founded by St Edeyrn. He set up a religious community on the banks of the River Rhymney in the fifth century and when he died in 522 was supposedly buried in the church yard. The church is a grade II* listed building due to the fact that it is a small medieval church retaining much of its historic fabric.

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St John's College

Located in Old St Mellon's, this grade II* listed building was built in 1885-9 for Richard Allen of Spillers at a cost of £15,000. The house was originally known as Ty-to-Maen and on the site of a farm which shows a substantial complex on OS maps c.1880. Sir William Edgar Nicholls, manager of Spillers, was the subsequent owner of the mansion who presented it and its estate to the Cardiff Royal Infirmary for the use as a convalescent home in memory of Richard Allen. It was formally opened by Lady Nicholls on 24th April 1926. The mansion was built in the Tudor/Gothic Revival style and is listed as grade II* because it is considered the masterpiece of an important Welsh architect, especially for its decorative elements.

Today, much of the rich interior survives and many rooms have decorative plasterwork, large ornate fireplaces and dark stained heavily molded woodwork. It has been home to St John's College, an independent school for boys and girls aged 3-18, since 1987.

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The Bluebell Inn and The Coach House

These two 16th century Inns located near to Newport Road are grade II listed due to them being traditional village inns on an important thoroughfare and in a prominent position. The two Inns benefitted greatly from the fact that the Welsh Sunday Closing Act did not apply to Monmouthshire prior to 1921 so were much visited by Cardiff residents on a Sunday.

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Memorial to Joseph Benjamin Hemingway

Joseph Benjamin Hemingway built Quarry Hill House in 1850 and later died there in 1856. This grade II listed memorial situated in the grounds of the Church of St Mellons is to commemorate the life of Joseph Benjamin Hemingway. The memorial was built in the late 1850s.

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St Mellons

St Mellons began as a small commercial centre in the historic county of Monmouthshire, relying heavily on rural agriculture, farming and travel.

The Welsh translation of St Mellons is Llaneirwg which is made up of Llan, the Welsh word for "church", and Eurwg, the name of a mythical King of Gwent. Eurwg is said to have lived on the hill at St Mellons during the Romano-British era and he and his people converted to Christianity and baptised in the River Rhymney.

This new boundary was drawn up to encompass the majority of the oldest buildings and left the newer housing estate of St Mellons to the South. Old St Mellons has been deemed an area of special architectural or historical interest and lies in a conservation area.

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Church of St Mellons

The core of this grade I listed building is dated around C14. The Church is listed because it retains almost all of its medieval fabric with an unusual plan on the South side and internally an unusual double arch to chancel and nave.



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Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses

This grade II listed building, situated in St Mellons was originally built as a Soar Welsh Independent Chapel c 1840. The reason the building is listed is due to the fact that it was included as a small chapel in the early-mid C19 village centre of Old St Mellons.

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Llanrumney Hall Public House

Located near the River Rhymney, this Elizabethan mansion is listed as a grade II* building due to its importance in the history of South East Wales. The mansion, which was remodelled in 1825, was recorded as having a fireplace dating back to 1587 although this no longer exists within the house.

Until recently, Llanrumney Hall was the house of a 700 acre estate believed to be a monastery owned by the Kemys family of Cefn Mably.

Since then, the mansion has been inhabited by many others including Captain Henry Morgan who was a Welsh Admiral, a privateer and a pirate who made a name for himself, primarily raiding Spanish settlements. The Hall was later supposedly inhabited by Prince Llewellyn, the last Prince of an independent Wales. A legend emerged in the nineteenth century of 'an ancient block of masonry in the cellar encasing the headless body of Llewellyn the Last'. It is his ghost that locals believe haunts Llanrumney Hall.

Llanrumney Hall has been a Public House since the 1950s.



Quarry Hill House

Located in Rumney, this grade II listed building was built in 1850 by Joseph Benjamin Hemingway who died at Quarry Hill House in 1856. He is commemorated by a large monument in the churchyard of St Mellons. The house was later gutted by fire before late C20 conversion to a nursing home. None of the original C19 and early C20 features survived. It is a grade II listed building as it is an imposing mid C19 gentleman's residence retaining its external character.



St Mellons War Memorial

This grade II listed war memorial was originally built to commemorate those from St Mellons who lost their lives in the First World War. A plaque was later added to commemorate those who died in the Second. It is listed as it is an important local monument.



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The River Rhymney

The River Rhymney is the historic boundary between Glamorgan and Monmouthshire. It rises on the southern edge of the Brecon Beacons before descending steeply through the town of New Tredegar towards Ystrad Mynach and eventually entering the Severn Estuary to the east of Cardiff.

Covering a distance of 30 miles, the River forms what used to be part of the South Wales' coalfield and iron producing area which meant that the river used to flow black with coal dust. Over the last 40 years, following pit closures, the water quality has steadily improved and the Rhymney is now home to plenty of wildlife.



Church of St Augustine

The Church of St Augustine was initially built in 1108 and later enlarged in 1407. The large church yard appears to have been cleared in the mid nineteenth century as there are no tombstones earlier than this. The building is grade II* listed because it is a medieval church which retains much historic fabric including a late Norman door. The main entrance is through a stone-tiled lych-gate in the south east corner.

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Rumney Pottery

Since the 1830s, Rumney Pottery has been owned by seven generations of the Giles family. Located close to the river, clay for the pots would initially have been dug from the fields opposite. The Pottery has been successful for hundreds of years with nineteenth century censuses showing a substantial number of people employed there as potters. The works made domestic items such as water pitchers and bread crocks in the 18th and late 19th century and later produced more decorative pieces for the Victorian home.

The Pottery is in an important position close to the river and early maps show a quay which indicates a trading site; allegedly used for smuggling. Foundations of an early 19th century tollhouse can be found in the garden which would have taken money from people crossing the nearby bridge.

The building is grade II listed because of its regional pottery significance, its strong historic interest and that of its site.

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Relict Seawall on Rumney Great Wharf

The relict seawall on Rumney Great Wharf comprises a 560 meter length of wall located behind the modern seawall. Much of the surviving structure of clay bank may be original and documentary evidence points to a date as early as 1591 for the setting of the wall.

Roman and medieval objects such as pottery have been found in the area and are now on display at the National Museum Wales situated in Cathays Park.

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