

Wordsworth Walk

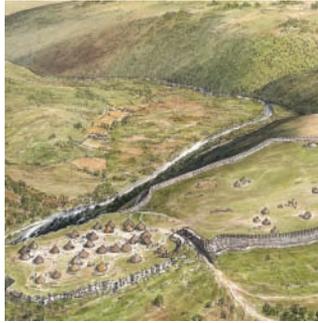


Circular walk around Llandogo

2 HOUR, 3 MILE WALK (with steep sections to viewpoint)

Through riverside meadows and along village tracks, climbing in the footsteps of William Wordsworth to the Bread and Cheese viewpoint and Cleddon Shoots waterfall.

Discover the heritage of the Wye Valley through our four themes

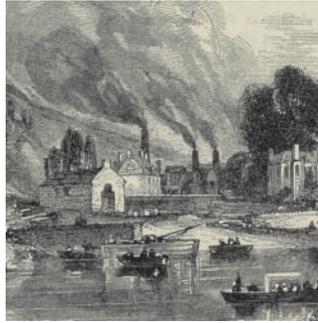


Hill Forts

'Upon the Little Doward, a hill of peculiarly fine outline..... are the interesting remains of a British camp. Three circular terraces wind up to the summit.'

Fosbroke, 1818

Considering what striking features they are in today's landscape these massive hillforts, constructed by Iron Age tribes, have guarded their history secretly. Only recently, through a series of archaeological digs, are we finding evidence about who lived here and what their lives were like. Their brooding presence, commanding wide vistas high above the Wye, reinforces the feeling that this area has been border country since time immemorial.



Hidden Industry

Echoing to the sound of hammers and forges and with fiery furnaces belching out fumes and smoke the Wye Valley was one of the earliest places in the UK to industrialise. Pioneering ironmasters took advantage of the wood and water all around, putting the Valley's metal-making industries at the cutting edge of industrial development. Today woodland and water provide a picturesque backdrop for this hidden industrial heritage.

'great iron-works... introduce noise and bustle into these regions of tranquillity'

William Gilpin, 1783

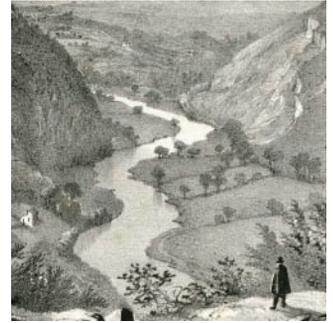


River Connections

'If you have never navigated the Wye, you have seen nothing.'

William Gilpin, 1783

Think of the Wye as a watery highway linking the riverside villages with the wider world and you'll begin to understand its importance in earlier times. Boatmen navigated flat bottomed boats called trows, laden with cargoes of hops, coal, iron ore, cider and oak bark, between the quays and wharves from Hereford to Chepstow. Tourists preferred to travel by boat too, choosing the more commodious Wye Tour boats which could be hired complete with boatmen in Ross, Monmouth and Chepstow.



Viewpoints

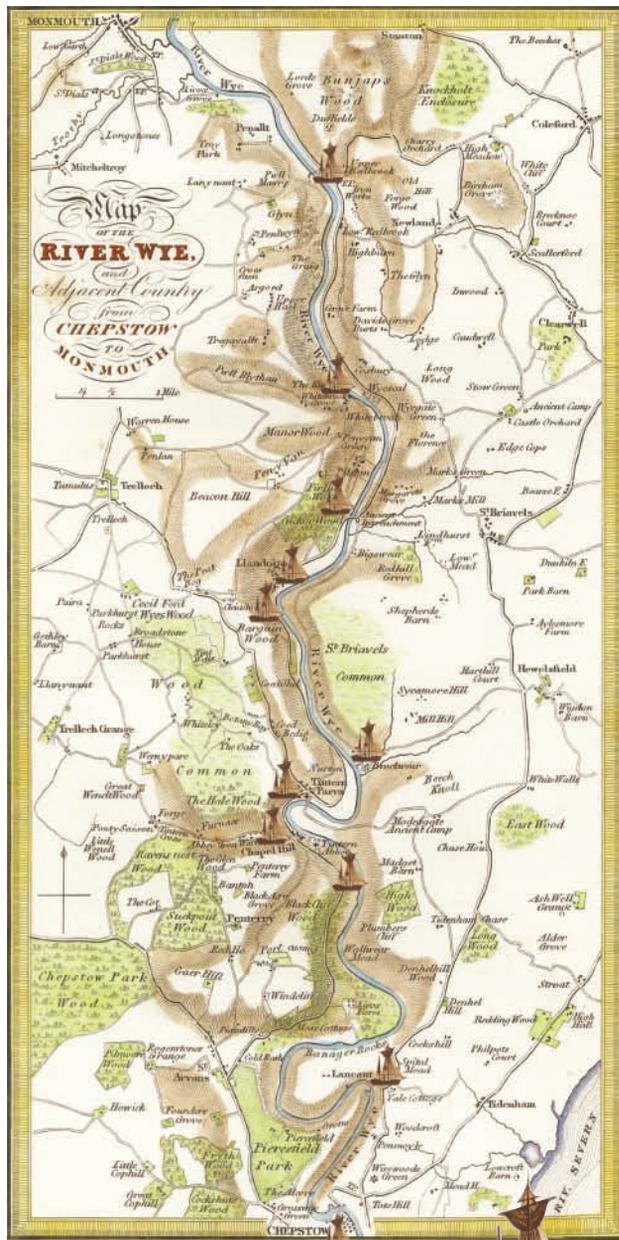
'so uncommonly excellent, that the most exact critic in landscape would scarcely wish to alter a position in the assemblage of woods, cliffs, ruins and water'

Wyndham, 1774

Tourists first discovered the beauty of the Wye Valley in the 18th century when it became fashionable to take a boat tour down the river to view its romantic scenery. One visitor, William Gilpin, wrote a book describing the most significant viewpoints and developed a set of rules for appreciating the scenery. Generations of artists, writers and poets were influenced and inspired by the views on Gilpin's Wye Tour. Today, as woodland and farmland are managed in different ways the views are changing; but don't worry, the old favourites remain for us to enjoy!



'All the little river-ports sent oak bark down to Chepstow, and Bristol was supplied with cider from Hereford, corn from Monmouth, hoops from Llandogo, poles from Bigsweir, and faggots from Brockweir.' (I. Waters,1978)



Waiting for the tide?

The Wye is still a tidal river at Llandogo allowing large flat-bottomed boats (called trows) to navigate this far inland. It was the highest port on the Wye that the big boats could reach. For centuries these trows were the life blood of Llandogo regularly making the trip to Bristol and further afield.

From the village quayside nimble footed donkeys carried goods up a maze of steps to cottages high above the river. One donkey called Turpin delivered bread, whilst Windsor carried coal, brought by boat from Lydbrook. Why not follow in the footsteps of Windsor and Turpin and take a walk around the village? You'll soon be imagining the river dotted with sails, trows moored along the quayside, and the watermen's favourite watering hole, the Ship Inn, full of characters of ill repute, waiting for the tide.

Make sure to notice if the tide is in or out!

- 🕒 Two trows on the riverside close to Holm Farm, shown on a map of c. 1770 - 1797. (© Gloucestershire Archives, Bigsweir Estate Survey.)
- 📖 Front cover: *The George and Mary*, a Llandogo trow. (© Neil Parkhouse Collection)

- 📍 Location of quays and wharves between Monmouth and Chepstow.





River Connections

Two hundred years ago the River Wye was the main trade route from Hereford to Chepstow and Bristol. It was a busy watery highway along which the flat-bottomed river trows carried goods from the riverside villages of the Wye. In an age before road and rail river connections were vital.

Brockweir was the main transfer point for the largest trows which were assisted up river by the tide. Here they unloaded their heavy cargoes to lighter vessels for the trip above the tidal reach, with smaller boats serving Monmouth, Ross and Hereford. Llandogo was the highest port that was still tidal – the last place the 50 ton trows could reach. The riverbank on the Gloucester side of the Wye provided the ideal place for the Llandogo trows to wait for the tide.

The regular trip for Llandogo's mariners and watermen was down the Wye, across the Severn and up the River Avon as far as Bristol's Welsh Back where cargoes were unloaded beside a pub called the Llandoger Trow. Trows carried coal and iron from the Forest of Dean, paper from Whitebrook and huge amounts of bark from Llandogo. Waste products from the ironworks along the Wye – iron 'dross' and copper 'shruff' – were taken upstream to Redbrook to be broken up into powder and then shipped downstream to Bristol to be used in the glass industry. The return trip's ballast was often waste glass, or even tea chests full of marbles!

The river was the focus of village life. Boats were built on the riverside, mariners repaired sails, women sang as they cleaned oak bark waiting to be shipped, and the watermen and bow hauliers whiled away time in the waterside inns.

☛ Brockweir quay, where cargoes were transferred to smaller boats to go upstream. (© Dean Heritage Museum Trust)

START

Brown's Village Stores, Llandogo
OS Grid Reference: S0526040

(Numbers in the text also appear on the map.)

1

Brown's Village Stores

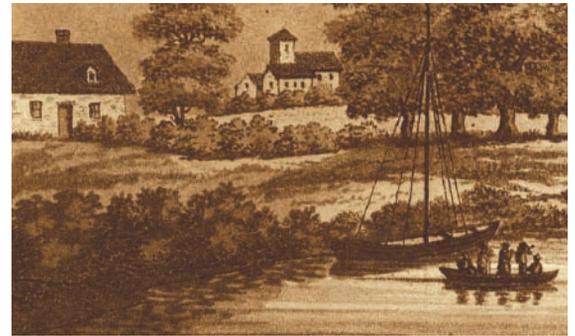
Generations of the Brown family have been associated with the river as watermen, mariners and shipwrights. William Brown was the last ferryman at Prospect House, where a private ferry provided access to the English bank. Next to Brown's is the village's former Baptist Chapel dating from 1882.

Cross the road and bear right, passing the old village school which opened in 1872. Turn left passing the church on the left.

2

St. Oudoceus Churchyard

Look out for graves of the Madley family and other mariners, who are buried in the churchyard. The Madley, Morgan, Luff, Miller, Reynolds and Brown families all have long associations with the river and its industries.



☛ St. Oudoceus Church in 1797. Detail from Samuel Ireland. (© Chepstow Museum)

3

St. Oudoceus Church

This church takes its name from Oudoceus the 6th century Bishop of Llandaff who lived here. The church was rebuilt in 1860, although the registers date back to 1694. The bell of the last Llandogo trow, the *William & Sarah*, hangs in the church.

After visiting the church turn left and just after The Sloop take the path on the left beside the stream and go through two gates. This is a level, barrier free route to the river side.

4

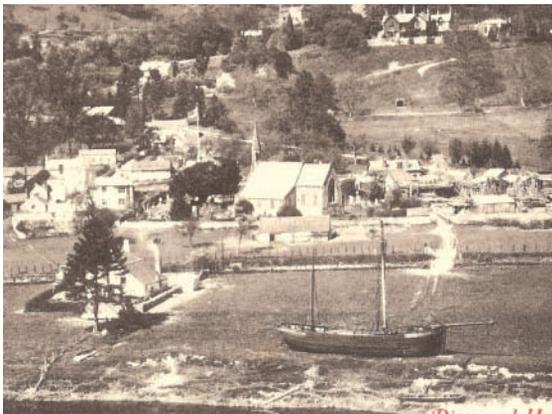
Route of Wye Valley Railway

This is the old railway line. The arrival of the railway in 1876 killed the river trade - and with it a way of life. Llandogo Halt, to your left, the smallest station on the Wye Valley line was only for foot passengers and light baggage. Goods and parcels went through Bigsweir Halt. Village children travelled to school on the train whilst hordes of holidaymakers arrived here for the Holiday Fellowship hotel at The Priory (19). A corrugated tin hut served as a waiting room.



↻ Llandogo Halt. (© Dean Heritage Trust Museum)

Bear right following the grassy footpath, with the river on your left.



↻ A large trow on the riverbank behind Holm Farm. (© Roger Brown)

5

Boat building beside the river

Before the railway this riverside area was the focus of village activity. Between the 1780s and the 1860s villagers owned twenty-eight ships, trows and barges. At least four trows were built on the riverbank, where repairs and maintenance work was also carried out.



↻ A bark rick stands on the right bank above the river in this engraving of 1861. Detail from Hall, 1861. (© Private Collection)

6

Bark stacks built here

Oak bark was a valuable local product. It was harvested between April and June and stored in massive bark ricks before loading onto trows bound for Irish tanneries where it was used to process leather. It was such an important local industry that in the 18th and early 19th centuries Chepstow regulated the price of oak bark for the whole UK.



↻ Barking irons, used to peel bark from trees. (© Monmouth Museum).

Cleaners, mostly women, worked beside the river, removing moss and lichen from the bark, often singing whilst they worked. The men who moved the bark were called bark carriers and wore on their head 'a cross between a life buoy and a horse-collar'.

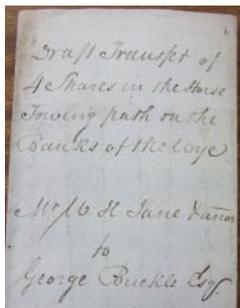


- ◀ A trow, moored next to a bark rick on the riverbank. (© Neil Parkhouse Collection)

7 Route of horse towing path

Stretches of shallow water above Llandogo made it difficult to sail upstream, so gangs of men called 'bow hauliers', wearing a type of wooden harness, dragged the boats through the shallows. The calls of the watermen – 'Yo ho' – as they hauled the boats along would have rung out across the Valley. Well into the 19th century men were still being used as 'horses', even after a towpath had been constructed along the riverbank in 1811. The Towpath company charged a toll (6d) per mile per horse to use their path, so it may have been cheaper to use men!

'Hauling a loaded barge upstream was no light task and at a rapid it was desperate work, the advance being only foot by foot. The men bent forward and sometimes, if the barge happened to sheer in a stream, they almost lay upon the ground and waited until she could recover herself.', wrote the Rev. Keene Mottram Pit recalling his childhood in the 1860s.



- ◀ Detail showing Bow Hauliers on the Wye. (© Monmouth Museum)
- ▶ Horse towing path share transfer certificate. (© Gwent Archives)

8 Windlass

Windlasses were also used to drag the boats up river. There was one on the riverbank here, as well as mooring posts.

Cross the foot bridge keeping on the path and go through a gate on the right.

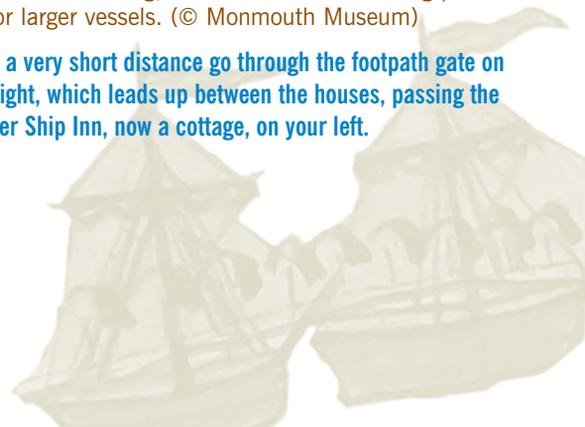
9 Wharf

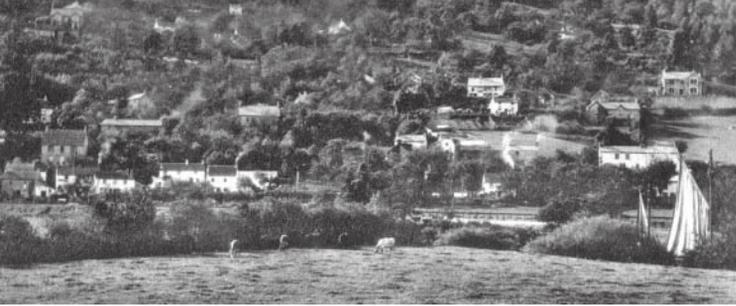
The wharf is further along the river bank after all the houses. It was one of several wharves serving the village where cargoes were loaded and unloaded.



- ◀ Quay Cottage bottom left, was cut off from the river by the railway line. Can you spot the ruins of the cottage today? The 'English' bank, where two trows are resting, was the favoured mooring place for larger vessels. (© Monmouth Museum)

After a very short distance go through the footpath gate on the right, which leads up between the houses, passing the former Ship Inn, now a cottage, on your left.





- ⦿ A very rare photograph showing a trow with its sails – and The Ship Inn, left, in the background. (© Neil Parkhouse Collection)

10 The Ship Inn

Along the Wye riverside taverns served the watermen, merchants, bow hauliers and travellers using the river. They were the motorway service stations of the day. When river levels were low the boatmen were often stuck for days on end and with little room for stocks of food on board the trows the waterside pubs had a captive audience.

The Ship was the watermen's favourite watering hole. Although life on the river might seem romantic today, it was a rough life and until the mid 19th century watermen had a very bad reputation. This was mostly due to the bow hauliers who worked in gangs of men, usually 8, but sometimes as many as 10 needed for the biggest and most heavily laden trows. The Ship was the first port of call for returning watermen and mariners.



- ⦿ Trowmen and mariners sat on these benches outside The Ship, waiting for the tide. (© Roger Brown)

Keep on the path between the houses until you meet the main road. Turn right along the road and walk for about 20 m until reaching Rosebank on your right.

11 Rosebank

Master Mariner William Williams (1850-1926) lived here with his wife Anne (nee Miller). The Miller family moved to Llandogo from Scotland in the mid 19th century. They ran a very successful fish business, stocking the Wye and supplying salmon to the top hotels and restaurants in London and to Billingsgate Fish Market.

12 The Myrtles

Another Mariner, George Williams lived here. When he died in 1883 he owned four trows: the *Good Hope*, the *Hannah Louisa*, the *Eagle* and the *George and Mary*.

Cross the road and walk up the steps straight in front of you. Keep climbing on this path following the fingerpost signs for 'Cleddon', crossing a cul de sac, and up more steps until reaching the Trellech road.

13 Former Lion Inn

This was a popular pub with locals and tourists, owned by the Cheltenham and Hereford Brewery. The Sloop was owned by the Stroud Brewery and when the two breweries amalgamated the Lion closed. It was policy to have only one pub in each village. At midnight on the last night many people sang 'Auld Lang Syne' outside – and cried!

14 Laurel Bush

Alfred Fryer Washbourn Williams (known as Fryer) was born in The Sloop in 1877. Fryer followed the family tradition of sea faring and was the last Sea Captain of trows out of Llandogo. He lived alone at Laurel Bush in later years until his death in 1953, when he was buried at St. Oudoceus. His collection of many chains and anchors from the old boats was found in an outhouse and sold for scrap!

Go straight across the road, taking the footpath to the left of Laurel Bush signed for Cleddon.

15 Great Hill

Called 'Great Hill' in the 19th century census returns, spare a thought for the donkeys who delivered coal up these steps to Mouse's Castle and other homes high on the hillside. Donkeys were also used by the village baker to deliver bread as far away as Pen-y-fan. When they were not working the donkeys were pastured in Freedom Meadow, part of the Gough family estate.

Continue up the steep steps until reaching a tarmac lane. Turn right, walking past Rose Cottage on your left. (To avoid the steepest section you can follow the short cut from this point back down into the village.)

To continue uphill immediately after the next house 'Misty Cottage' turn left at a fingerpost signed for 'Top of Cleddon Falls'. This is the steepest stretch which will get your heart racing but is worth it for the view. Keep on this path until reaching two large boulders – the Bread and Cheese stones.

16 Bread and Cheese stones and viewpoint

One famous visitor to Llandogo, William Wordsworth, wrote about the cottages on the hills and the wreaths of smoke sent up in silence, from among the trees. It is thought the village inspired his famous 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey'. He may even have sat on these stones!

This was traditionally a lookout for Cleddon residents, who could spot the trows coming up the river from Brockweir, and race down to the quay to get work unloading their cargoes.

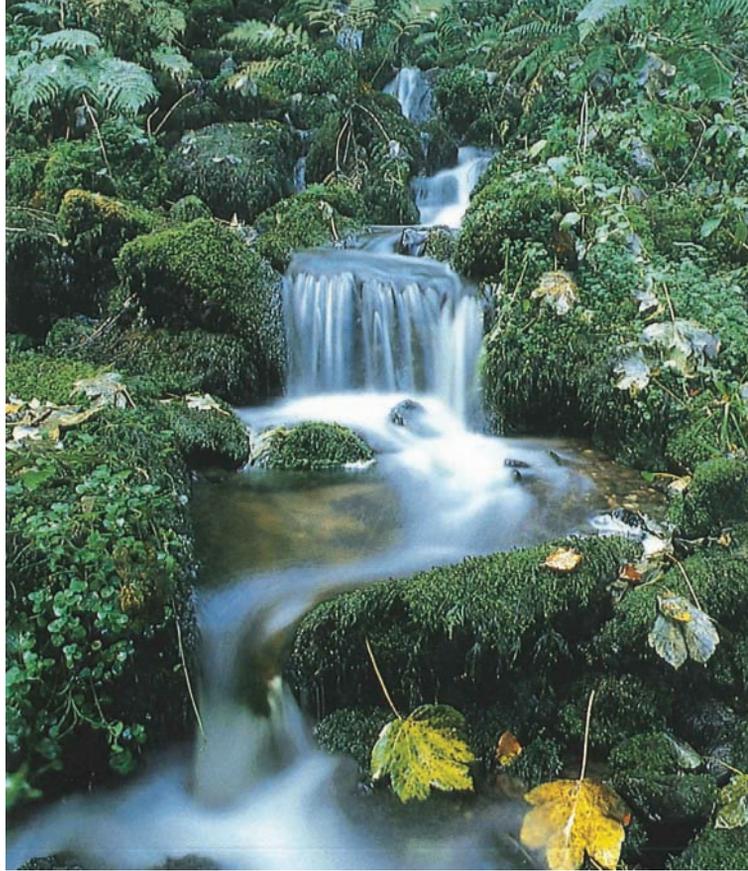


📍 The view from the Bread and Cheese Stones in the 1950s. (© Roger Brown)

17 Mouse's Castle

The ruins of an old house known as Mouse's Castle, litter the hillside here.

After the stones, continue uphill and turn right along the path. Turn right at the next fingerpost down a bridleway. Follow this track as far as Cleddon Falls. Cross the Falls and turn right immediately before the car parking area, going down the steps beside the waterfall.



📍 Cleddon Falls. (© Archie Miles)

18 Cleddon Falls

A favourite with visitors for hundreds of years, in the 1840s there was a pub here called The Three Pots. Cleddon Shoots is now a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), and this ancient woodland is important for liverworts, mosses and plants that enjoy the damp conditions beside the waterfall.

Continue on this path, and soon turn right when it rejoins the main track. The path now crosses sections of boardwalk and zig-zags down hill. Keep going down, passing a lookout point over Llandogo (keep right here on main track). Very soon the path arrives at a junction of paths on the edge of the ravine. Turn left here down a steep section of steps. Follow the path round as it bears right to cross the wooden footbridge. Keep on the path across a second footbridge, passing a bench on the left. Continue straight on downhill with the stream on your right until reaching the road.



- ‘Great quantities of hoops and poles, the produce of the surrounding woods, are shipped from thence to Bristol and other places’, wrote Charles Heath in the early 19th century. Detail from an engraving by Bartlett. (© Chepstow Museum)

19

The Priory

The Priory was built by the Gough family who owned and operated many sloops and trows. Several of the boat-owning families who made their money from the river trade invested in properties like The Priory, a substantial gabled and barge boarded villa built in 1838 by the architects Wyatt and Brandon, who were probably influenced by the Picturesque movement.

When the railway arrived river traffic declined. Some anticipated the change and sold their trows. Others hung on, a few managing to scrape a living from the water into the 20th century.



- Timber Auction Poster. (© Gloucestershire Archives)

The sound of axes hitting timber once echoed all around these woods. The largest timber was exported by boat for the building trade and ship building industry. Bark was exported to Ireland, whilst the smallest parts of the trees were processed in the village at the Lion saw mill into chair legs, broom handles and staves for coopering.



- Woodcutter, Anderson and Pyne. (© Herefordshire Heritage Services)

Take the second road on the left and head downhill to meet the main road in Llandogo. Turn left to enjoy a well-earned ice cream from Brown's store, or turn right to quench your thirst with a drink at The Sloop Inn.

20

The Sloop Inn

Named after a type of boat, The Sloop originally faced the river, from where its customers arrived. Can you spot the date of 1707 on the wall? In 1881 The Sloop was run by Alfred Williams 'Captain of Barques and Waterman' who also owned the *George & Mary*.



- The Sloop Inn, c.1930. (© Neil Parkhouse Collection)



Pleasure and Leisure

Vital for trade, the river was also the focus for leisure activities. In the eighteenth century Wye Tourists came to be inspired by the scenery and to paint, sketch and write. One famous visitor to Llandogo, William Wordsworth, wrote that, *'no poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this.'* And the village with its cottages hugging the hillside, left an impression on many. Richard Warner who visited in 1797 wrote of *'a lofty hill, whose indented side is mantled with deep woods, through which a multitude of small cottages, (are) sprinkled over the declivity in an artless, whimsical, and picturesque manner.'*

Trows were often used for social outings. There are reports of workers from the Whitebrook paper mills going by boat on an outing to Bristol Zoo. Trows were still being used in the early 20th century for pleasure trips from Llandogo:

'On Friday, August 17th, in connection with the Whitebrook Baptist Sunday School, the barge Mary Jane (kindly lent for the occasion by Mr William Pick) sailed for Beachley. Leaving the shore at Mr George Hodges yard, Llandogo at 8 am with about 150 on board, the order came to let go the ropes and the excursionists were soon gliding over the waters of the beautiful River Wye. The Whitelye Brass Band, who gave kindly their services for the day, commenced playing 'We are out on the ocean sailing'.

Monmouthshire Beacon, 25th August 1895

- ◀ A distinctive Wye Tour boat, with its canopy to protect tourists from the elements, passes trows moored at Llandogo. Detail from Samuel Ireland, 1797. (© Chepstow Museum)



- ◀ Trows were also used for pleasure trips, a favourite outing for church, Sunday school and the Whitebrook choir! (© Roger Brown)

*'Oh Sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer
through the woods, How often
has my spirit turned to thee!'*

William Wordsworth, 1798. Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey



Boats in the Blood

Llandogo was also a boat-building village, where men crafted the distinctive flat-bottomed trows. The heyday of boat building and ship owning was from 1786 until 1868 when the last boat was built. Trows built in Llandogo include:

Anne

Built in 1812

Joseph and Sarah

Built in 1832

The William and Sarah

Built here in 1860 for William Williams. (She eventually broke up on the Gloucester bank in 1925.)

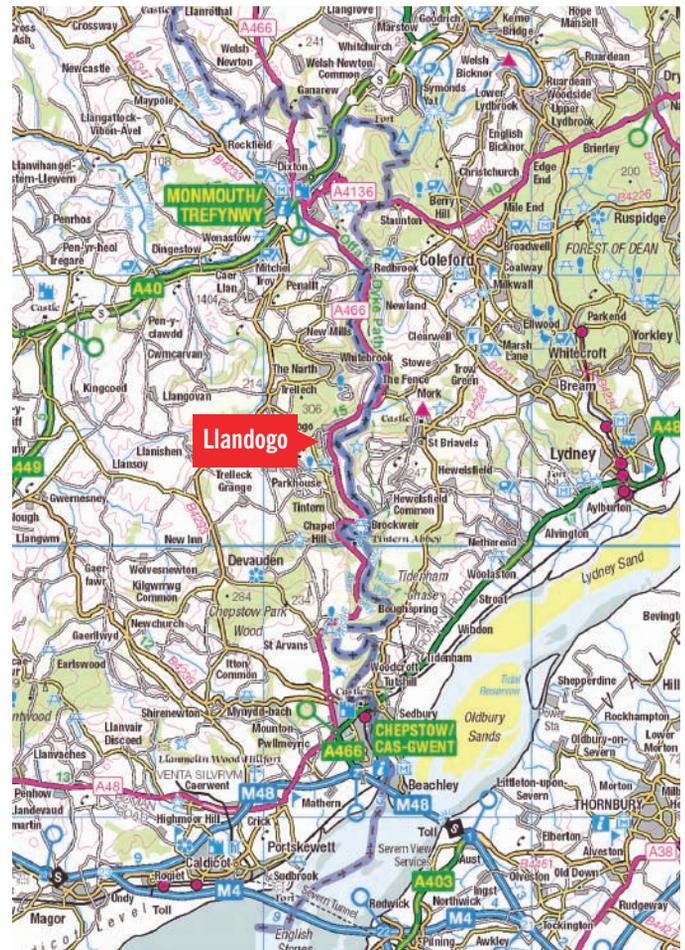
The Hannah Louisa

Built at Llandogo in 1868. She was a trow with two masts owned by George Williams, but was altered in 1875 to 72 tons with a continuous deck with box, to allow sea-going voyages. She was lost off Trevose Head on 4th August 1879.

George and Mary

Although built in Newport in 1851, the *George and Mary*, a trow of 46 tons, had a long connection with the village. Condemned in 1869 she was sold to George Williams of Llandogo, who altered her to 65 tons. As the river trade declined some trows (like the *George and Mary*) were boxed in, closing their previously open cargo space to holds, and building their bulwarks up to allow them to voyage out to sea, shipping bark to the tanning industries of Ireland.

🕒 A trow man waiting for the tide.
(Detail from Tintern Abbey, © E. M. Litt, 1813)



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Mae'r daflen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd. Cysylltwch â: www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): An internationally important protected landscape, straddling the England-Wales border for 58 miles of the River Wye. The AONB Partnership works to conserve and enhance the beauty of this living, working landscape for present and future generations.

Whilst all due care was taken in the preparation of the information contained in this leaflet, the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership does not accept any responsibility for any inaccuracies which might occur.



Wordsworth Walk

Circular walk around Llandogo
2 HOUR, 3 MILE WALK (with steep sections to viewpoint)

