

# *Crosskeys Inn*

## *A History of Usk*

The Roman Legionary Fortress of Burrium was founded on the site of Usk in 55 AD. It was the earliest legionary fortress in Wales. However, by 75AD the Romans had relocated their permanent base to Caerleon, seven miles away.

Usk continued to be occupied as a civilian settlement with evidence of iron working. By the twelfth Century the town had been turned into a stronghold with a hilltop castle and a medieval street plan. As well as this, during 1170 a Benedictine priory was founded and the remains of this are still retained in the church of Saint Mary. Richard de Clare the second Earl of Pembroke built Usk Castle as part of their family's plans to control the areas resources and people.

1402 saw the Welsh revolt during which much of the town was destroyed. Owain Glyndwr burned Usk to the ground in his quest to take control of much of South Wales from the English King Henry IV and his son King Henry V. The battle of Pwll Melyn in 1405 occurred north of Usk Castle, causing a substantial loss of life. After their defeat, 300 welsh prisoners were executed in front of the castle.

From 1431, William ap Thomas seized Usk. His son William Herbert carried out improvements at the castle including installing large windows and fireplaces. However, following the death of Herbert during the Battle of Edgecote, the castle began to decline.

In 1933, the Humphreys family purchased the castle for the sum of £525.00; with this they received one donkey and one flag. Today the family have created a place of beauty and tranquillity that is open for all to visit.

Around the year 1750, the construction of the first stone bridge in Usk commenced. The bridge was strengthened and widened during 1836 but during 1877 floods destroyed two of its arches which were later replaced.

From the eighteenth century onwards, Usk became renowned for the production of high quality Japanware. This process of decorating metals by applying a lacquer to tinplate put the town on the map until production ceased in 1860, on the site which is now William Bunnings of Usk Builders Merchants.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw Usk as a thriving market town. However, the second half of the century experienced an agricultural depression and so the population of the town fell significantly.

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## *A History of the CrossKeys Inn*

Pub names were chosen with an ecclesiastical twist. The CrossKeys refers to Saint Peter who holds the keys to Heaven, hence the name, the CrossKeys.

The main body of the property fronting the main road was constructed circa 1368 and records show that it became established as a public house during the 1830's. The lounge bar has a magnificent fireplace where the original mantle can still be seen on either side within the stone walls. The exposed beams in the bar and in several of the bedrooms are original ship timbers sourced from the nearby city of Newport. The bar server itself was once a large fireplace and the arch in the centre of it is what remains of the old chimney. The hallway leading on from the bar is home to a mullion in the wall which features iron bars. Now the cellar, this used to house condemned prisoners before they were taken to the gallows to be hung. The gallows were situated on the town bridge.

Today, the CrossKeys Inn is a family owned freehold public house located in the centre of Usk town, a designated conservation area. We offer modern facilities in our five En-suite bedrooms which have traditional features and are in-keeping with the character of the building. We offer good quality affordable food, drink and accommodation in a friendly and informal atmosphere. Our meals are homemade using locally sourced produce including meat from award winning local butchers N.S.James of Raglan, fresh vegetables from P.J.Jones of Goytre and dry goods from Hippo Campo in Crickhowell.

The town has been part of the "Wales in Bloom" competition since 1980. Having been triumphant twenty nine times between 1982 and 2011, the annual event is a big attraction for many. We are proud to share our award winning garden display, all of which is homegrown from seed.

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## *Places of Interest*

### *Fishing*

If you enjoy fishing then you can choose from the River Usk, the River Wye and Llandegfedd Reservoir. While the River Usk and Wye are famous for Trout and Salmon fishing, Llandegfedd Reservoir is a 434 acre stretch of water that offers Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout, Bream, Roach, Pike and Perch. There is also a variety of water sports on offer. As well as this, a short walk away from the CrossKeys Inn is the world famous 'Sweets Fishing Tackle Shop'. Here you can purchase all fishing licences, permits and accessories from the proprietor Jean Williams.

### *History*

If you are interested in local history then there are many castles to visit. A short walk away is our local Usk Castle and a short drive will take you to Raglan Castle, Caldicot Castle, Chepstow Castle, White Castle, Grosmont Castle or Skenfrith. Alternatively, you may prefer to visit Tintern Abbey which was once home to Cistercian monks. The local town of Caerleon is home to many Roman remains including an amphitheatre and barracks. Situated between Brecon and Abergavenny is Tretower Court and Castle, a thirteenth Century circular Keep within a Norman structure and a medieval house.

### *Museums*

Usk Rural Life Museum houses a collection of farmyard and farmhouse machinery and equipment which demonstrates the traditional agricultural life. For children there is a milkable 'Bessie the cow' and miniature horse and cart model. In Abergavenny, the museum tells the story of life in the town from prehistory to the present day. You can also visit Tithe Barn in Abergavenny. Here there are tapestry exhibitions, medieval games and you can make your own stained glass window.

### *Walking*

Usk Town Trails provides visitors with a variety of guided walks some of which follow the river and others of which take you around the historical landmarks in the town which are marked with blue information plaques. As well as this there are many mountain walks nearby. Approximately a thirty minute drive away is the Bloreng, the Skirrid and the Sugar Loaf mountains all of which offer a variety of walks and beautiful views. Near Monmouth you can also climb Kymin Hill. When you reach the top there is a Naval Temple and a Roundhouse.

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## *Golfing*

The nearby town of Newport is home to the Celtic Manor hotel. Host of the Ryder Cup 2010 course and the ISPS Handa Wales Open, they offer a variety of courses including The Montgomerie and Roman Road. There is a driving range, practice range, an indoor putting range and much more. Situated slightly closer at Chainbridge is Alice Springs Golf Course. Here you can play on a thirty-six hole course open to members and visitors all year around. Finally, there is the St Pierre country club in Chepstow. Having hosted many European tour events and the Solheim cup, St Pierre offers a variety of courses for golfers of all different abilities.

## *Cardiff*

Being the capital of Wales Cardiff has a lot to offer. Here you can visit the newly regenerated Cardiff Bay or the old Welsh village of Saint Fagans. Alternatively, the city centre offers a good days shopping. Whilst there visit Cardiff Castle set in the grounds of Bute Park or, take a tour of the Millennium Stadium which is host to many sporting events including the Six Nations Rugby as well as music concerts and shows. Cardiff museum offers free entry to exhibitions including the Evolution of Wales, Natural History and art exhibitions. Nearby you can also visit Castell Coch, a Victorian fantasy castle. One of its most impressive features is the fairy tale ceiling which depicts the tale of Aesops Fables.

## *Children*

Nearby in the town of Cwmbran is Green Meadow Community Farm. Here children can feed, pet and interact with a variety of domestic and farm animals and also enjoy a tractor and trailer ride. Tredegar House and Park in Newport is a seventeenth century mansion house set in ninety acres of parkland which includes a children's play area. Finally, you may like to visit 'Big Pit' in Blaenavon. Suitable for both children and adults, here you can experience an underground tour of an authentic coal mine and visit their interactive museum free of charge.

For a more leisurely day out you may wish to visit the nearby market towns of Abergavenny and Monmouth. Abergavenny is a picturesque small town set in the Brecon Beacons National Park and is host to a traditional indoor and livestock market. In Monmouth you can visit the Old Monnow Bridge and Gate, the last surviving medieval fortified river bridge where the gate tower still stands on the bridge, as well as the statue of Charles Henry Rolls, the co-founder of Rolls-Royce. You may also like to visit the market town of Chepstow which houses its own three and three-quarter mile racecourse which is open to all.