

Just before Caerleon we cross the narrow stone bridge over the river Usk



and those of you who are sitting on the offside of the bus can just about see some remains of the old wooden bridge's foundations and the Victorian wharf.

"Listen please. You can also see the Hanbury Arms, of which more in a little while. The stone bridge was built too low to allow the passage of sailing ships from the waters above Caerleon, where busy wharves acted as the major port on the river Usk. A whole range of goods, and in particular, tinplate from Ponthir, were delivered to the wider world. Rumour had it that the money for building the stone bridge was donated by a business man who had considerable interests in developing Newport docks, which are at the mouth of the Usk, and didn't want ships bypassing the docks to use Caerleon".

"Did it mean the end of Caerleon wharfs, " asks Alison.

I replied "Yes, they closed down over the next ten or twenty years as only a few rather undersized boats could now pass under the bridge to collect the goods which were now making their way to Newport instead".

"Those on the offside of the bus look out for the Hanbury Arms and remember,



when we return, if you sit on the same side of the bus as the outward journey you will be on the 'right' side to see what you might have just missed. Hope you all worked that one out! It was whilst staying here that Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote his 'Idylls of the King'. Who has read it"?

"I believe that I have" says Colin. If I remember correctly, it's about Arthur and his love for Guinevere and her tragic betrayal of him, and the rise and fall of Arthur's kingdom all wrapped up in a cycle of 12 narrative poems".

I, and the rest of the bus are impressed, and so is wife Linda sitting alongside him. She didn't know that Colin's prolific reading habits stretched that far.

"The upstairs square window of the pub is reputed to be in the room where he stayed; it had a good view along Caerleon High Street".

Our bus stop in Caerleon is just along the road, outside the post office. So I will count you off as we disembark, on time, at 10.44.



"All off now please".

All the ladies (bar one) accepting an arm as I help them disembark. Once more I check the bus, and spot the the usual ladies who sit at the back still nattering on,
"Come on LADIES PLEASE"

Having arrived on time, and now keeping together with Alison at the back to ensure we do not straggle, we walk back along the High Street about a 100 metres or so, for our coffee stop.

On the way we pause to view Mynde House noting the

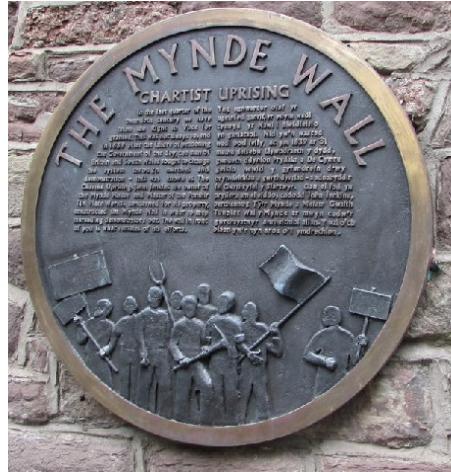


stout, high walls surrounding its gardens and the remains of the Norman castle.

"Why such walls" I ask.

"Burglars perhaps"

"Thank you Margaret, good answer but not quite the correct one, and not so far out actually".



"Well, John Jenkins, owner of Mynde House, was a magistrate and later Sheriff of Gwent, and had cause to fear that he was a marked man of the Newport Chartists. The threat however never materialised but he did keep the wall in place just in case".

We now look opposite at the somewhat garish looking entrance, which is the Ffwrwm.
 "Do any of you Welsh speakers know what it means"?
 "The name 'Ffwrwm', is derived from the Latin 'Forum', which is Welsh for 'a seat'" says Sue Biggins modestly, and not revealing that she is also a dab hand at Russian.
 So enlightened we enter through its arch, finding set in the 18th century walled garden, an art gallery, craft and a number of other very interesting shops,



but most importantly, our coffee stop, the Snug. We arrive at our expected time of 10.50 and the staff are very pleased to see us in these desperate times.



"As there are so many of us, some of you will need to take your coffee



and for some of you, a cake. As the sun is now shining, you can if you wish take it into the little outside seated area of the cafe".



"Of course you may wander the Ffwrrwm before coffee if you wish, view the sculptures,





and browse in the rather delightful shops, the traders will be pleased to see you.





You will have time enough to do them all and still be ready to meet at the gate for 11.40".

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It's now 11.40 but of course not everyone is at the gate, so I have to go and round up the stragglers before we can leave. It turns out that several of you are having a second coffee and cake in the Snug! So now having everyone I hope, at the gate, it is time to leave just about on time, 11.45.