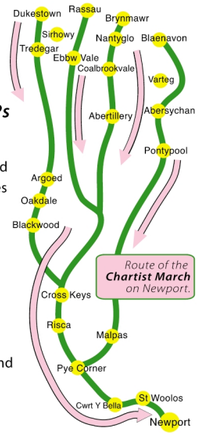
Did you know that 22 people were shot dead in the main street of Newport in 1839? They were Chartists. Did you know they were demonstrating for the freedoms we take for granted today?

The Chartists were a national movement trying to improve their living and working conditions by asking Parliament to approve *'The People's Charter'* which consisted of 6 points:

- ***Secret ballot***
- ***Votes for all men over 21***
- ***Payment for MPs***
- ***Equal size constituencies***
- ***No property qualification for MPs***
- ***Annual Parliamentary elections***



The Newport story starts in 1839 with five thousand ordinary working men gathering in the South Wales valleys and marching to Newport through a cold November night. The exact motives for the march are debatable. Some believe they were peacefully protesting about the injustices and asking for release of their fellow Chartists who had been arrested and taken prisoner. Others believe they were involved in an armed uprising.

This leaflet will tell you more about the Chartists and the terrible events in Newport in 1839. To find out more let's go back in time and retrace the route of the Chartist protestors.

For an easy downhill walk take a bus from the Bus Station to Newport Cathedral. Buses ***1, 3, 4, 151*** all stop outside the Cathedral.

www.newport.ac.uk/chartist
www.newport.gov.uk/visiting
Tourist Information Centre Tel: 01633 842962

This leaflet was produced by Accent Newport Trust © with support from:

Promoting Community Cohesion by Celebrating Newport's Rich Cultural Diversity and Unique Heritage

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Newport's Chartist Walk

City of Newport

The Old Post Office
John Frost was born here in Thomas Street, now demolished. The site is marked with a plaque. Further back along High Street was John Frost's draper's shop (former Lloyd's Bank).

Chartist Sculptures
Union, Prudence and Energy by Christopher Kelly, were erected in 1989 to commemorate the Chartist uprising.

The Westgate Hotel
Built in 1799 (rebuilt1886), it sits at the junction of Stow Hill and the old High Street. 22 Chartists died here and many more were wounded in their struggle for justice.

The Mayor's House
Mayor Thomas Phillips' house was at the bottom of Stow Hill facing the Westgate Hotel, on the site of which is now the Coral Bookmakers.

St Mary's Church
The church was under construction at the time and the marchers called on the workmen to join them. Some of the Chartists used the construction site to access the rear of the Westgate Hotel.

Newport Cathedral Churchyard
Ten unnamed Chartists were buried here in St Woolos by the military at the dead of night in unmarked graves. A memorial, erected in 1989, is located on the main path to the church.

St Woolos Square
A Chartist force of 3000 men led by John Frost and Zephaniah Williams met here on the morning of November 4th before marching down into the town.

The Union Workhouse
A company of the 45th Regiment of Foot Soldiers were billeted here. A detachment of 30 soldiers, under the command of Lieutenant Grey, were sent to take up positions inside the Westgate Hotel early in the morning of November 4th.

Chartist Mural
Designed by Kenneth Budd and installed in 1978. This has become a well loved Newport landmark.

John Frost Square
Named after the Chartist leader, John Frost. This area is earmarked for redevelopment in the future.

Newport Museum & Art Gallery
The Museum shows a comprehensive display about the history of Chartism and the events that took place in Newport.
The Tourist information Centre is located here.

The Parrot Inn
This is where Frost called the meeting of 30th October 1838 when an audience of 400 - 500 people adopted '***The People's Charter***'. It is now 'The Body Shop'.

Original Cottages
A terrace of cottages below the southern side of Newport Cathedral is the only evidence on Stow Hill of houses remaining from 1839.

The Six Bells
18 year-old Susan Stephens, giving testimony to Newport Magistrates said she "*...saw the prisoner Lovell passing her House the 6 Bells on Stow Hill with a mob with a gun in his hand*".

Friars House
This was the former home of Thomas Prothero who managed the lands in Newport for Lord Tredegar. He made his fortune from coal and was suspected of electoral corruption in the Monmouth elections of 1831. On becoming Mayor, John Frost instigated an investigation into Thomas Prothero who was by now the Town Clerk of Newport.

Scale: 1:200 Total walking distance 1.5 miles approx.

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1 The Union Workhouse

If you stand near the gates of St Woolos Hospital and look to the right, the red standstone building was the workhouse back in 1839. What would you do if you had been injured in your job back then? Who would look after you and your family? The NHS and Social Security didn't exist. You would have ended up in this cold Dickensian Workhouse where you would sew sacks all day in exchange for watery gruel as food. You would become a pauper.

2 Friars House

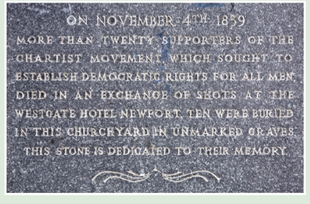
This was the house of Thomas Prothero who managed much of the land in Newport for Lord Tredegar. He got richer because he did not pay the workers a fair wage. He got richer and they got poorer and hungrier and sicker. The workers banded together under the Chartist flag to protect against these injustices. Thomas Prothero feared the Chartists so much that he and his family fled Newport during the Chartist March.

The Chartists were flying the flag for

- *Freedom*
- *Fairness & Justice*
- *Free Speech*
- *Truth*
- *Hope for the Future*
- *Democracy*

3 Newport Cathedral Churchyard.

What would you feel if one of your family was shot dead by the authorities and their body buried secretly?
This actually happened here in Newport. Somewhere in this graveyard lie the remains of 10 of the 22 Chartists shot dead that fateful day fighting for justice and freedom. The civil authorities buried the bodies in unmarked graves in the dead of night.



Each year on the 4th November, the anniversary of their deaths, local people commemorate the event with a simple twilight service. There is a commemorative plaque in the church grounds on the path leading to the main doors.

4 St. Woolos Square

What would you do if some of your friends had been arrested by special constables when they were behaving well at a peaceful meeting protesting against their working conditions? A number of the Chartists had been arrested and were being held by the police. Some historians think this was a trap to lure the Chartists into breaking the law.
John Frost had organised a huge band of Chartists to meet up and march to Newport to try to free their friends. Can you imagine John Frost shouting to the crowd of 5000 as they tried to march to the Workhouse but the road was blocked by many special policemen? Could he really make himself heard? But armed with courage they took the only route left, marching down Stow Hill to the Westgate Hotel where they hoped to set free their friends.

5 Six Bells Public House

The marchers rallied here near the Six Bells Public House before beginning their historic march down into Newport.
Nowadays on the anniversary of the Chartist March schoolchildren gather here to re-enact the event.

6 Workers Cottages

How would you fancy living in one of these cottages with 20 of your relatives in the same house? There was no toilet. It was cold in winter - you couldn't afford fuel for a fire. You had to send your children out to work just to get money for food. The Chartists tried to get elected to Parliament to make laws to improve people's living and working conditions but were prevented from doing this. So the Chartists protested and wanted to change the way elections to parliament were carried out.

The Chartists stood for a change to the law and seemed to be a threat to the authorities. Down Stow Hill the Chartist marchers continued, shouting, singing and chanting, down towards the Westgate Hotel.

7 St. Mary's Church

When the Chartists marched past this church it was still being built by Irish immigrant workers. The Chartists shouted to the workers up on the stone walls to join them.

8 The Mayor's House

What would you have done if you were mayor in 1839? The Mayor and the authorities still had memories of what had happened to those in power only a few years earlier during the French Revolution. The Mayor, Thomas Phillips, called in soldiers and had them garrisoned in the town to protect it from the Chartists. He spent the night before at the Westgate Hotel and at 8.30 on the morning of November 4th he was joined by 30 armed soldiers whom he hid behind the closed shutters of the windows.

9 Westgate Hotel

"Give us up the prisoners!" "Give us up the prisoners!" the Chartists shouted once they reached the Westgate Hotel, the centre of the town back then. There was a scuffle between some of the 5000 Chartists and the special constables.
The shutters flew open and the order was given to open fire. The soldiers fired volley after volley of shots into the crowd who were panicked and fled screaming.

Imagine the scene after the crowd had fled. The dead and dying Chartists littered the street and the sound of groaning broke the silence. 19 year old George Shell lay dying in the street but no-one was allowed to attend to him or even give him a sip of water. For hours he lay bleeding, groaning and dying. Eventually one man persuaded the soldiers to let him give George a sip of water, just before he died. He was able to see a note pinned inside George's jacket which read:
"Dear Parents, I hope this will find you as well as I am myself at present. I shall this night be engaged in a struggle for freedom and should it please God to spare my life, I shall see you soon; but if not, grieve not for me, I shall fall in a noble cause. My tools are at Mr. Cecil's, and likewise my clothes. Yours truly, George Shell"

10 Chartist Sculptures

These sculptures mark the site where at least 22 ordinary people died trying to find justice and freedom. The authorities had their bodies quickly removed and 10 were secretly buried in St. Woolos churchyard as the authorities feared another attack by the Chartists.

11 John Frost birthplace - High Street

John Frost 1784-1877 (Mayor of Newport 1836-7) was born in the Royal Oak, Thomas Street (now demolished). You can see a commemorative plaque on the side wall of the Post Office where it joins the new office building and multi-storey car park opposite the Kings Hotel. Further along High Street was Frost's draper's shop (site of former Lloyds Bank).

12 The Parrot Inn

Now the Body Shop, this is where Frost called the meeting of 30th October 1838 when an audience of 400 - 500 people adopted '***The People's Charter***'.

13 The Mural at John Frost Square

This tells the story of the Chartist March on Newport on 4th November 1839. What do the faces of the Chartist marchers tell us? Can you see the look of fear on some of their faces? Can you spot any who look angry? They were angry that their wages were kept at poverty levels. Are any happy to be marching with their friends and fellow workers?
Can you see the Mayor? What look does he have on his face? Who do you think the men in top hats are? Can you spot George Shell? Can you see on the banners what the Chartists stood for? Five of these have become part of the law that is the foundation of the freedoms in our country - our democracy. Can you tell which one has not?

14 John Frost Square

This square was named after the leader of the Chartists. He lived in Newport and had a draper's in High Street. Because he led the Chartists to the Westgate Hotel, John Frost was hunted down and arrested. He was charged with High Treason, was convicted and was sentenced to death. But more than 3 million people signed a petition for clemency and so he was sent to live as a convict in Tasmania instead. John Frost's memory and the memory of the Chartists live on in the respect and affection the city of Newport pays to them.

15 Newport Museum

In Newport Museum there are many interesting displays of Chartist materials where the story of the Chartists and Chartism continues? The Tourist Information Centre is located here and can direct visitors to other Chartist sites in Gwent and surrounding areas.

Tourist Information *Tel:* 01633 842962

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