



FAQ General history

How does the Museum fit into the history of Newtown?

The town dates back to the 1290s but during the Industrial Revolution became a very important centre for flannel production. The building was part of the boom in hand-loom weaving in the early 1800s, when production was being centralised in the towns. It is the best surviving example in Newtown of a 'flannel factory' with housing below and weaving on the top floors.

Why is the Museum where it is?

The early town was located south of the river Severn, with no space to expand, but a stronger and bigger bridge, built in 1827, allowed better access to the farm land in the area known as Penygloddfa which was developed for the hand-loom weaving industry and housing. The canal, new roads, and then the railway all helped the town to become a flourishing centre for the woollen industry.



Why did it develop particularly in Newtown?

Several factors played a part in the early development. There was plenty of wool from local sheep, and a good water supply in the river to drive the 'fulling mills', a key part of the production of high quality flannel. Also, there were three local entrepreneurs who were key to providing the finance and vision for the town. The Flannel Exchange was a key building in the woollen trade, built by the river, opened in 1832. In addition, high unemployment on the farms and an influx of soldiers returning from the Napoleonic Wars drove people to seek work in the towns.



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How does the museum fit with the rest of the commercial centre?

The bridge was pivotal in allowing development north of the river, where land was available. A large number of other hand-loom flannel factories were built all over the town. Subsequently, after 1850 large mechanical mills were built in Newtown. A map is available at Reception which shows the location of mills and flannel factories in Newtown



How does the museum fit with the canal/other buildings?

The canal finally reached Newtown in 1821, and while not directly linked with the woollen trade, boosted the growth in the town generally. When the mechanised mills were built, two of the largest were sited close to the canal so that coal coming in on barges did not have to be transported a great distance.

The large Pryce Jones buildings, erected in 1879 and 1895 by Sir Pryce Pryce Jones were a direct result of his success in promoting the woollen industry, and the growth of his vast mail-order company.

Social unrest - Chartism

Social unrest, and later, Chartism, with riots due to working conditions, began in Newtown as early as 1819, recurring in 1825, and then with the Chartists, again in the 1830s. Newtown and Llanidloes were at the forefront of agitation during the Chartist riots. Several of the leading Chartists in the area were arrested and subsequently transported to Australia to serve out their sentences.

An army garrison for maintaining law and order, was established in Frankwell Street, just over the road in 1839. Some of the soldiers sympathised with the weavers, supplying them with some of the military rations, which led to the dismissal of the commanding officer.