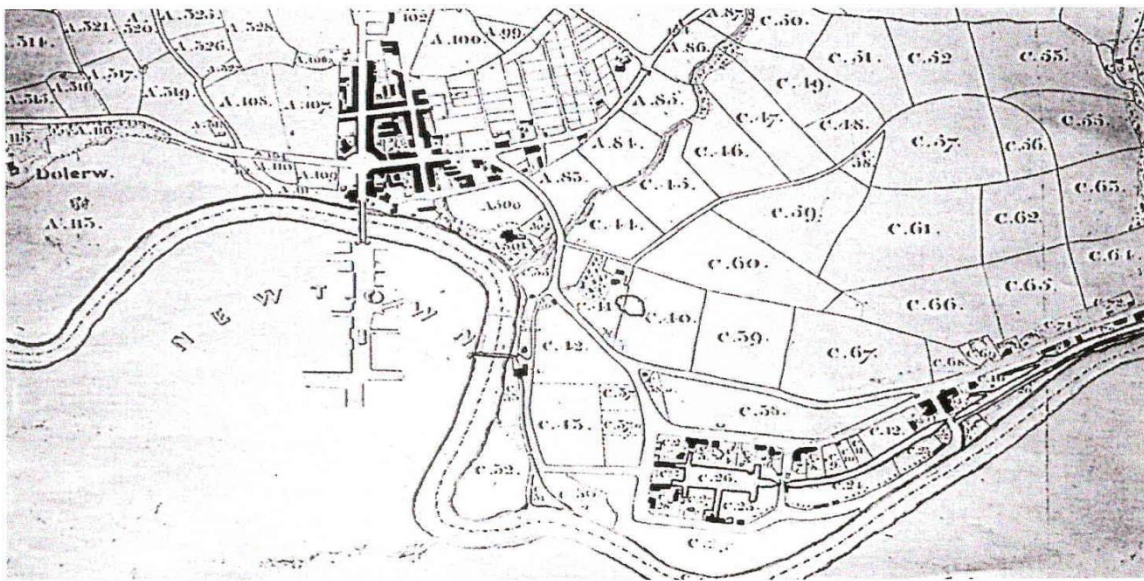


By the sixteenth century, control of this industry was in the hands of a powerful organisation called the Drapers' Company. Operating from their Drapers' Hall in Shrewsbury, they stifled any development in the industry for more than three centuries. But by the 1790s, the Company had lost its monopoly of the wool trade, allowing woollen manufacture to become concentrated in the towns of the Severn Valley, principally in Newtown. With the growing organisation of the woollen industry came the prospect of better housing and pay. This provided the migratory 'pull' which brought poor tenant farmers and labourers in from neighbouring Montgomeryshire parishes as well as from further west in Cardiganshire to try their luck in the fulling mills and weaving shops of Newtown.

Across the river from the old town of Newtown lay Penygloddfa, within the parish of Llanllwchaiarn. This was a small hamlet surrounded by fields and pasture. It was here that the new manufacturing district of Newtown would develop. The tithe map of 1848 (below), gives us our first glimpse of this growing area. Already the grid-like feature of Crescent St., Union St., Bryn St. and Commercial St. can be clearly identified. And it was on Commercial Street that the present building, which now houses the Textile Museum, was built some ten years previously.



***Next time, we'll look more closely at what was a more novel way of organising the production of Montgomeryshire flannel.***