

= Old Bridge , Pontypridd =

The Old Bridge (Welsh : Yr Hen Bont) , which is now also known as the William Edwards Bridge or Pontypridd Bridge , was originally known as the New Bridge or Newbridge , it is an arched single @-@ span footbridge that spans the River Taff at Pontypridd in Wales . The bridge was built by William Edwards and was completed in 1756 . The bridge now has statutory protection as a scheduled ancient monument and is grade I listed .

= = Pontypridd = =

In the early 18th century Pontypridd , then known as Pont @-@ y @-@ t? @-@ pridd (The bridge of the earthen house) , was a tiny hamlet . Pont @-@ y @-@ t? @-@ pridd took its name from the original bridge of the same name , however very little is known of that ancient ford with stepping stones , which ran alongside the current Old Bridge , and was used only when the river ran low . Possibly in 1744 or after the bridge was built , Pont @-@ y @-@ t? @-@ pridd became known as Newbridge or New Bridge after the William Edwards ' Bridge . By 1856 , Newbridge had been renamed Pontypridd .

In 1746 when William Edwards was just 27 years of age , he was commissioned by the Hundreds of Miskin and Caerphilly to build a three @-@ arch bridge across the River Taff . For this he was paid the sum of GB £ 500 , on condition that he would maintain it for seven years .

= = Construction = =

= = = The first bridge = = =

The first bridge to be constructed was a three @-@ arch stone bridge , which was built in 1746 . It was destroyed by a heavy storm which caused the River Taff to flood about two years later . A large amount of debris came down the river , which then become trapped against the two abutments supporting the bridge . The weight and force of the debris ultimately destroyed the bridge , which was then swept away down the river .

= = = The second bridge = = =

After the destruction of the first bridge over the fast flowing River Taff , William Edwards decided to design a much more radical 140 ft (43 m) single @-@ arch bridge that would eliminate the possibility of debris destroying the bridge due to the flooding of the River Taff . The second bridge was built from 1748 , however two reports differ as to what actually happened during this second attempt to build the bridge . Thomas Morgan , contemporary of Edwards , said that " ? when he (William Edwards) had almost finished the arch ; the centre timber work gave way and all fell to the bottom . " However , The National Library of Wales have a contemporary works known as the Plasybrain manuscript which says that , " Just after the first single arch was finished and before the centre was struck , a flood came and carried all away . " It is not clear which one of these two accounts is the accurate one , however it is clear that Edwards ' latest attempted to build a bridge cross the River Taff had yet again ended in failure .

= = = The third bridge = = =

The single @-@ arch bridge was rebuilt and was actually finished . It stood for a period of about six weeks before again it collapsed because the new bridge was not balanced , which forced the keystone out , which once again caused the bridge to collapse . In the Theory of Arches and Pontypridd , it states that " the weight of the bridge was either too great on the haunches or too little on the crown . " At this stage Edwards was either encouraged or forced to try again with extra

money being provided to cover his losses for the earlier attempts .

== The fourth bridge ==

The final design of the bridge included three cylindrical voids (holes) of 2 @ 7 m (8 @ 9 ft) , 1 @ 7 m (5 @ 6 ft) and 1 @ 1 m (3 @ 6 ft) on each side on the bridge . This reduced the weight and pressure on the crown and the bridge is still in operation today , however it can only be used by pedestrians . The Theory of Arches and Pontypridd , states that as a bridge , the bridge was a failure , as it was " only eleven feet wide between the parapets and so steep that wagons had to use a ' chain and drag ' to descend from the crown . "

The 140 ft Old Bridge surpassed the 130 ft (40 m) Old Walton Bridge as the longest single @-@ span bridge in Great Britain and remained the longest bridge for another 40 years . It was also one of the few bridges in Europe , and indeed worldwide , whose span exceeded the 40 m mark .

The whole project (including the three failed attempts) cost the architect a total of £ 1 @, @ 153 18s . 2d . (approximately £ 1 @, @ 153 @. @ 91) , and consequently he made a loss of over £ 600 . It was reported that Edwards ' attempts to build the bridge over the River Taff left him in a considerable amount of debt and Thomas Morgan reported that " ? the mason was considerably in debt and greatly discouraged . But the Lords Talbot and Windsor , who have estates in the neighbourhood pitied his case , and being willing to encourage such an enterprising genius , most generously promoted a subscription among the gentry in those parts . "

== Subsequent history ==

The problem with the Old Bridge was that it was so steep that it made it very difficult to get horse carts to go across it . By 1857 , a new bridge , the Victoria Bridge , was built next to the Old Bridge , which was paid for by the people of Pontypridd . The Victoria Bridge is a three @-@ arch bridge , that was built by Thomas Jenkins , this overcame many of the problems with the steepness of the Old Bridge .

Since the bridge was opened in 1756 , it has become the subject for many landscape artists , including Richard Wilson and Turner .

The Old Bridge is now a scheduled monument and is also depicted in two emblems of local rugby union teams ; Pontypridd RFC and Cilfynydd RFC . Artist Lulu Quinn was commissioned by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to illuminate the Old Bridge as part of a regeneration programme for Pontypridd called the Monument Illumination Scheme . Initial tests to illuminate the bridge took place on 19 August 2008 , and the project has subsequently been officially launched after the tests were successful .

== Bridge imagery ==

Representations of William Edwards ' Bridge can be seen in local heraldic and civic stationery , including the crest of Pontypridd Rugby Football Club , and Cilfynydd Rugby Football Club . The community @-@ to @-@ community organisation PONT (Partnerships Overseas Networking Trust) , also bases its logo upon the Bridge . Pontypridd High School in Cilfynydd incorporates the bridge design into the school shield , as does Pontypridd Town Council with its logo representing the south Wales Valleys and a section of the Old Bridge in the foreground . Pontypridd Male Voice Choir also incorporates the Old Bridge in the choir logo .