

HAMMER & TONGS ~ MORTHWYL A GEFEL

Wrexham's traditional industries – brewing, the tanneries and the wool trade – were all linked to farming. In the late 18th century, the town's first commercial brewery opened and John Peers founded a sheepskin factory, later known as the Cambrian Leather works.

To the west of Wrexham, the burgesses of Holt were mining coal from the 15th century. During the 17th century, the Grosvenors and Myddeltons moved into minerals – iron and lead.

John Wilkinson was the pioneer of the Industrial Revolution in Denbighshire. Based at the Bersham Ironworks, he perfected in the 1770s the manufacture of accurate cannon and cylinders using his patented boring machines. A series of wars, alongside Boulton and Watt's need for cylinders for their steam engines, made Wilkinson a very wealthy man.

A scandal about possible arms sales to France did not halt Wilkinson's dominance of local industry. He was a prime mover behind plans for a canal linking Ruabon, Bersham and his new ironworks at Brymbo to the rivers Dee, Mersey and Severn. The canal was never completed, but the aqueduct at Pontcysyllte (1805) remains as a monument to the ambitions of the industrialists of Wilkinson's time.

The Nag's Head Inn and brewery, Mount Street, Wrexham
Tafarn a bragdy'r Nag's Head, Stryt y Bryn, Wrecsam

Roedd diwydiannau traddodiadol Wrecsam - bragu, y taner dai a'r fasnach wlân - i gyd ynghlwm wrth ffermio. Ar ddiwedd y 18fed ganrif agorodd bragdy masnachol cyntaf y dref a sefydlodd John Peers ffatri croen defaid, a alwyd yn ddiweddarach yn weithfeydd Lledr Cambria.

I'r gorllewin o Wrecsam, roedd bwrdeiswyr Holt yn cloddio glo o'r 15fed ganrif. Yn ystod yr 17eg ganrif trodd teuluoedd y Grosvenor a'r Myddelton at fwynau - haearn a phlwm.

John Wilkinson oedd arloeswr y Chwyldro Diwydiannol yn Sir Ddinbych. Roedd wedi'i leoli yng ngweithfeydd haearn y Bers, ac yn y 1770au fe berffeithiodd y gwaith o gynhyrchu canonau cywir a sylindrau gan ddefnyddio'r peiriannau tyllu a ddyfeisiodd. O ganlyniad i gyfres o ryfeloedd a thrwy gynhyrchu silindrau ar gyfer injanau stêm i Boulton a Watt, daeth Wilkinson yn ŵr cyfoethog iawn.

Ni ataliwyd goruchafiaeth Wilkinson mewn diwydiant lleol gan y sgandal am y posibilrwydd o werthu arfau i Ffrainc. Ef oedd yn bennaf gyfrifol am y cynlluniau i gael camlas i gysylltu Rhiwabon, y Bers a'i weithfeydd haearn ym Mrymbo â'r afon Ddyfrdwy, y Ferswy a'r Hafren. Ni chwblhawyd y gamlas, ond mae'r draphont ddŵr ym Mhontcysyllte (1805) yn dal i'n hatgoffa o uchelgeisiau diwydianwyr ei gyfnod.

John 'Iron Mad' Wilkinson, industrialist and entrepreneur
John 'Iron Mad' Wilkinson, diwydiannwr ac entrepreneur



I understand Bersham furnace ceased this day blowing
with charcoal and went on blowing with cokes.

John Kelsall, diary, 3 December 1721
John Kelsall, dyddiadur, 3 Rhagfyr 1721



Wilkinson's Iron Works at Bersham, 1780.

Bersham Ironworks in the 18th century
Gwaith Haearn y Bers yn y 18fed ganrif

Ye workers of Bersham and Brymbo, draw near,
Sit down, take your pipes and my song you shall hear.
Fill up and without any further parade,
John Wilkinson, boys, that supporter of trade!

Local rhyme
Rhigwm lleol



"Pontcysyllte Aqueduct under construction" by Moses Griffith, c.1800 © National Library of Wales
"Draphont ddŵr Pontcysyllte yn cael ei hadelladu" gan Moses Griffith, tua 1800 © Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru

