

MEYSYDD BRWYDRO HANESYDDOL YNG NGHYMRU

Mae'r adroddiad canlynol, a gomisiynwyd gan Grŵp Llywio Meysydd Brwydro Cymru ac a ariennir gan Lywodraeth Cymru, yn ffurfio rhan o raglen archwilio fesul cam i daflu goleuni ar yr ystyriaeth o Gofrestr neu Restr o Feysydd Brwydro Hanesyddol yng Nghymru. Dechreuwyd gweithio ar hyn ym mis Rhagfyr 2007 dan gyfarwyddyd Cadw, gwasanaeth amgylchedd hanesyddol Llywodraeth Cymru, ac yr oedd yn dilyn cwblhau prosiect gan Gomisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru (RCAHMW) i bennu pa feysydd brwydro yng Nghymru a allai fod yn addas i'w nodi ar fapiau'r Arolwg Ordnans. Sefydlwyd y Grŵp Llywio Meysydd Brwydro, yn cynnwys aelodau o Cadw, Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru ac Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru, a rhwng 2009 a 2014 comisiynwyd ymchwil ar 47 o frwydrau a gwarchaeau. Mae hyn yn bennaf yn cynnwys ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol, ac mewn 10 achos, gwaith maes heb fod yn ymyrryd a gwaith a oedd yn ymyrryd.

O ganlyniad i'r gwaith hwn mae **Rhestr o Feysydd Brwydro Hanesyddol yng Nghymru** (<http://meysyddbrwydro.cbhc.gov.uk/>) yn cael ei datblygu, dan arweiniad Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru ar ran Cadw. Bydd yn adnodd deongliadol, addysgol ac ymchwil ar-lein, yn anelu at gynyddu gwybodaeth a chodi ymwybyddiaeth o feysydd brwydro yng Nghymru, yn ogystal ag ysgogi ymchwil bellach. Gobeithir ei lansio yn ystod gwanwyn 2017.

HISTORIC BATTLEFIELDS IN WALES

The following report, commissioned by the Welsh Battlefields Steering Group and funded by Welsh Government, forms part of a phased programme of investigation undertaken to inform the consideration of a Register or Inventory of Historic Battlefields in Wales. Work on this began in December 2007 under the direction of the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Service (Cadw), and followed the completion of a Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) project to determine which battlefields in Wales might be suitable for depiction on Ordnance Survey mapping. The Battlefields Steering Group was established, drawing its membership from Cadw, RCAHMW and National Museum Wales, and between 2009 and 2014 research on 47 battles and sieges was commissioned. This principally comprised documentary and historical research, and in 10 cases both non-invasive and invasive fieldwork.

As a result of this work **The Inventory of Historic Battlefields in Wales**

(<http://battlefields.rcahmw.gov.uk/>) is in development, led by the RCAHMW on behalf of Cadw. This will be an online interpretative, educational and research resource aimed at increasing knowledge and raising awareness of battlefields in Wales, as well as a prompt for further research. It is due to be launched in spring 2017.

Mae'r tabl isod yn rhestru'r brwydrau a'r gwarchaeau a ymchwiliwyd. Bydd adroddiadau ar gael i'w llwytho i lawr o'r Rhestr ar-ein yn ogystal ag o Coflein (<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>), y gronfa ddata ar-lein ar gyfer Cofnod Henebion Cenedlaethol Cymru (NMRW).

The table below lists the battles and sieges researched. Reports will be available to download from the online Inventory as well as from Coflein (<http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>), the online database for the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW).

ENW/NAME	DYDDIAD/ DATE	SIR HANESYDDOL/HI STORIC COUNTY	NPRN	YMCHWIL/RESEARCH
Aberllech	1096	Sir Frycheiniog Brecknockshire	404446	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pont Cychod (Menai ac Ynys Môn) Bridge of Boats (Menai and Anglesey)	1282	Ynys Môn Anglesey	404319	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Bryn Derwin	1255	Sir Gaernarfon Caernarfonshire	402322	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
Bryn Glas (Pillth)	1402	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	306352	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012) Cloddfa (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd

				<p>ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p> <p>Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)</p> <p>Excavation (Archaeology Wales, 2013)</p> <p>Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)</p>
Campston Hill	1404	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402328	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)</p>
Cilgerran	1258	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	405201	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)</p>
Coed Llathan	1257	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	403587	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)</p> <p>Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)</p> <p>Non-invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)</p>
Castell Coety (gwarchae) /Coity Castle (siege)	1404-05	Morgannwg Glamorgan	545701	<p>Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013)</p> <p>Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)</p>

Coleshill	1157	Sir y Fflint Flintshire	402325	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (2009) Documentary and historical research (2009)
Craig y Dorth	1404	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402327	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
Crug Mawr	1136	Sir Aberteifi Cardiganshire	402323	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
Castell Cymaron (gwarchaeau) / Cymaron Castle (sieges)	1144 1179 1195 1215	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	545328	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Cymerau	1257	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	404717	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013) Non-invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)

Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1282	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545687	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1294-5	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545613	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1460	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545718	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1468	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545720	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dinbych (gwarchae)/ Denbigh Castle (siege)	1646	Sir Ddinbych Denbighshire	545789	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Castell Dryslwyn (gwarchae) / Dryslwyn Castle (siege)	1287	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545605	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Carregwastad - Abergwaun (ymosodiad) / Carregwastad Point – Fishguard (invasion)	1797	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	308824	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
Gŵyr/ Gower	1136	Morgannwg	404856	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol

		Glamorgan		(Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Grosmont	1405	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402333	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)
Hyddgen	1401	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	402310	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Pont Irfon (Llanganten) / Irfon Bridge /	1282	Sir Frycheiniog Brecknockshire	403411	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Cydweli / Kidwelly	1258	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	404729	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Castell Talacharn (gwarchae) / Laugharne Castle (sieges)	1189 1215 1257-8 1644	Sir Gaerfyrddin	545245 545341 545436 545746	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)

Maes Gwenllian	1136	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	402324	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012)
Maes Moydog	1295	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	403416	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
Trefaldwyn / Montgomery	1644	Sir Drefaldwyn Montgomeryshire	405168	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Mynydd Carn	1081	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	300319	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009)
Castell Newydd Emlyn (gwarchae) / Newcastle Emlyn (siege)	1287-8	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545606	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)

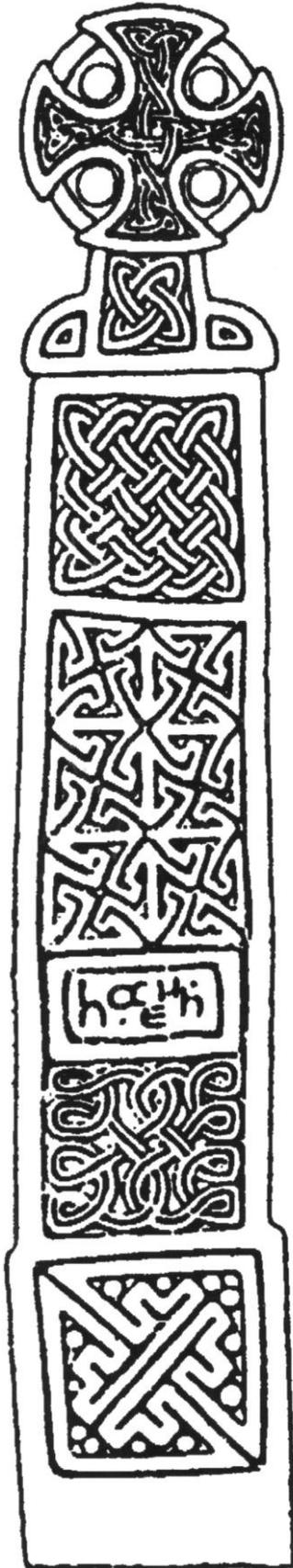
Castell Newydd Emlyn (gwarchae) / Newcastle Emlyn	1645	Sir Gaerfyrddin Carmarthenshire	545768	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Gwrthryfel y Siartwyr, Casnewydd / Newport Chartist Uprising	1839	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	405003	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Achaeology, 2009)
Painscastle	1198	Sir Faesyfed Radnorshire	402326	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012) Cloddfa (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012) Excavation (Archaeology Wales, 2013)
Pennal	1472/4	Meirionnydd Merioneth	403495	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Chapman, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Chapman, 2013)
Pentraeth	1170	Ynys Môn Anglesey	404315	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pwllgwdig	1078	Sir Benfro Pembrokeshire	405188	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013)

				Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Pwll Melyn	1405	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	402320	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2014) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2014)
Castell Rhaglan (gwarchae) / Raglan Castle (siege)	1646	Sir Fynwy Monmouthshire	545797	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Gildas Research, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Gildas Research, 2013)
Sain Ffagan / St Fagans	1648	Morgannwg Glamorgan	307776	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2012) Gwaith ymchwil heb fod yn ymyrryd ac a oedd yn ymyrryd (Archaeoleg Cymru, 2013) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology, 2009) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2012) Non-invasive and invasive fieldwork (Archaeology Wales, 2013)
Twthill	1461	Sir Gaernarfon Caernarfonshire	403421	Ymchwil ddogfennol a hanesyddol (Border Archaeology, 2009) Documentary and historical research (Border Archaeology,

				2009)
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Grŵp Llywio Meysydd Brwydro, Hydref 2016

Battlefields Steering Group, October 2016



Welsh Battlefields

Historical Research:

Newport Rising (1839)

(Order Number IJ/017430: November 2009)

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Battle Name: Newport Rising, (5th November, 1839)

Site of Battle

The Battle, the result of an uprising by militant Welsh industrial workers, took place on the 5th November, 1839; the battle-site can confidently be located at Westgate Hotel (ST 31050 88100) and in John Frost Square (ST 31242 87937).

1. Summary

Historical Context

The Newport Rising represents the last major armed civil insurrection on the British mainland and can also be viewed in the wider context of the industrial unrest in 19th century Britain, specifically against the backdrop of the Chartists' Movement, some of whose members took an active part in the organisation and orchestration of the march on Newport.

The Chartist movement campaigned for Universal Suffrage and Equal Representation for the burgeoning Working Classes, as well as improvements in pay and working conditions. Undoubtedly, this attracted a vast numbers of disillusioned and downtrodden men and women, particularly in the Industrial centres of England and Wales. The Chartist philosophy, while relatively uniform in its ultimate aims, was divided as to how the Charter (the name of the document which they wished introduced, and so a by-word for their beliefs) should be implemented; some advocated violence and the use of force to make those they perceived (with some good reason) unwilling to listen take heed, while others urged a more peaceful route to achieve their objectives, namely through the use of persistent petitioning and canvassing.

The Newport Rising was apparently intended to be a culmination of a carefully planned rebellion across much of the Industrial heartland of South Wales, which would result in the creation of a so-called 'Worker's Republic' (the Silurian Republic) with its frontier established along the Usk and the Severn.¹ The attack on Newport can also be seen in the broader context of an overall Chartist plan, which appears to have been contemplated for all of Britain, not just Wales; rather than an isolated attack on Newport by members of the South Wales Lodges, there were Chartist uprisings planned in concert across Britain, intended perhaps some 10 days later than the attack on the Westgate.² However, this may have been a long term concern, the Chartists' actions appearing to have been motivated by the arrest and imprisonment of Henry Vincent and other leading Chartists with their immediate objectives reflecting both anger at their detention and a desire to see them free.³

¹ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.184

² D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection of 1839*, p.114

³ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.24

Henry Vincent, a young and charismatic Chartist speaker, was arrested in May of 1839 and tried and imprisoned on the 2nd August, 1839.⁴ While the Chartists' aims appear to included Vincent's release, E. Dowling, utilising the first-hand testimony of John O'Dwyer, a Newport man who became one of the special constables that held the Westgate Hotel against the Chartists' assault, wrote that Vincent's arrest appeared to have had the desired effect, and that the Chartists' sermons and rallies were moderated and that no hostile action or unrest was witnessed in the immediate aftermath.⁵

2. Narrative of Battle

Prelude to the Battle

The march on Newport was meticulously and carefully planned, although the actual course of the descent from the valleys and the subsequent attack on the Westgate deviated somewhat from the agreed strategy as devised by Frost and his chief lieutenants. The plan appears to have been drawn up in collusion with other leading Chartists from around Britain, including a young Yorkshireman of medium height and build who may have been Charles Jones.⁶ He appears to have counselled a delay of up to 10 days in order that the assault on Newport might occur in concert with other attacks across the country that were originally planned for the 3rd-5th November, but were being similarly postponed.⁷ However, Frost, for reasons that are unclear, appears to have answered that the rest of the country could follow the example of South Wales.⁸

The original plan appears to have been as follows: all the Chartist Lodges were to canvass their subscription paying members for volunteers for an expedition (the ultimate target was kept secret) and then to assemble them armed and ready to march, equipped with food and provisions for up to two days, which they were to provide themselves.⁹ The Lodges were to provide the weapons for a small fee, although many made their own pikes from little more than a stick and a knife.¹⁰ Having assembled, officers or 'captains' were appointed over them¹¹ and then these men were either to join the Chartist columns that were making their way towards their target or be picked up by them, whichever the officers thought best.¹² Along the way, the rank and file, perhaps under orders from their officers, were to plunder any likely houses or buildings that might contain firearms and powder, as these were in short supply.¹³

While these were the orders for the rank and file of the Chartist marchers, there was a general strategy. There were to be three principal columns to which all the assembled

⁴ E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.36-7

⁵ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.24; E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.37

⁶ D. J. V. Jones, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.114

⁷ Ibid, p.114

⁸ Ibid, p.114

⁹ D. J. V. Jones, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.115; I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.184

¹⁰ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection*, p.126

¹¹ Ibid, p.115

¹² I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.186

¹³ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection*, p.119

'volunteers' were to join themselves; these were a column under Frost which was to set out from Blackwood, another under Zephaniah Williams marching from the Ebbw Valleys and a final smaller one under William Jones proceeding from Pontypool.¹⁴ They were to number 5000 each, with the column under William Jones numbering 2000, but this appear to have been notional figures.¹⁵

The plan itself fails to highlight the far-reaching levels of organisation and discipline that must have underpinned the campaign; while the majority of the Chartists were only told perhaps 48 hours in advance of the expedition (and so to them it would have appeared as a somewhat *ad hoc* affair), there was undoubtedly a high degree of planning that may have stretched back some months preceding the actual engagement in Newport, as there must have been preparation well in advance in order to manufacture the pikes.¹⁶

While the plan itself was, in the main, carried out according to its own design, there were a couple of deviations. Primarily, the smaller band under William Jones appears to have been delayed and never actually joined the combined column of Frost and Williams; rather, by 10am on the Monday morning, by which time the rioters who had assaulted the Westgate Hotel were in full retreat, Jones' men had only just reached Cefn.¹⁷ Additionally, there appears to have been some difficulty in assembling the numbers of men envisaged, and the Chartist leaders were forced to resort to press-ganging; an example of this can be seen in the case of William Howell, a gas-worker noted for his hostility to Chartism, who was impressed by a band of four armed men when he was walking to chapel with his wife on the Sunday.¹⁸ This type of affair appears to have been widespread, with men coercing, often at the end of a levelled pike or gun, those less willing, regardless of their political inclination.

The Battle and Its Aftermath

Having reached the outskirts of Newport, the rebel force (at this stage up to 5000 strong) met up with bands of Newport Chartists and impressed men and marched down Stow Hill, on towards the Westgate Hotel.¹⁹ At this point, it was some time before nine o'clock in the morning of Tuesday the 5th November, 1839,²⁰ the attack on the Westgate actually beginning at approximately ten past nine.²¹ It would appear that the original plan was for the Chartists, upon first reaching Stow Hill, were to fire off fireworks²² and that this would alert Chartists within Newport itself to go about their appointed tasks, which included tasks such as the seizure and occupation of the town homes of leading citizens.²³

The route taken by the rebels took them past the Union Workhouse, where the detachment from the 45th Foot (the Nottinghamshire Regiment) was stationed and where Captain Stack

¹⁴ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.24

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.27

¹⁶ W. N. Johns, *The Chartist Riots in Newport, November, 1839*, p.9

¹⁷ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.31

¹⁸ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection*, p.128-9

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.144-5

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.149

²¹ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.199

²² *Ibid*, p.198

²³ HO40/45: letter from T.J. Phillips, November, 1839

and a unit of soldiers were stationed to protect chiefly a small arsenal of muskets;²⁴ however, it would appear that the mob decided to ignore the soldiers²⁵ (who paraded as a show of strength in front of the main entrance)²⁶, although it would appear that there were Chartist plans to seize the weapons in the early hours of the assault.²⁷

Upon reaching the Westgate Hotel at ten past nine, the rioters were marshalled and formed up by Frost and (chiefly) John Rees (also known as Jack the Fifer),²⁸ a man who, in 1835, took part in the Texan War of Independence, participating in the assault of San Antonio;²⁹ this has some parallels with the attempted storming of the Westgate Hotel, as Rees was part of a group of civilian irregulars who seized control of the town from regular Mexican soldiers.

It is difficult to establish with a great deal of certainty the exact course of the engagement; equally, there is some doubt as to which side fired first, as both the Chartists and the military point the finger at the other. It would appear that one of the Chartist captains shouted something at the defenders of the Westgate, although it is unclear as to exactly what it was. Dowling suggests that it was '*Deliver up your prisoners*'³⁰ (these being the Chartist stragglers and those who had become separated from the main body of marchers who had been arrested by the patrols of the special constables); other witnesses agree with this, but others suggest that it was a demand for the defenders to surrender themselves as prisoners.³¹ Whatever the demand about prisoners, the answer was in the negative.

According to Dowling, this answer precipitated the engagement; in response to a shouted '*No, never!*', a Chartist gunman (possibly the spokesman who issued the demand) standing at the doorway levelled his weapon at the head of one of the special constables who was holding the door open and who slammed it against the gun, which promptly went off, providing the impetus for the rioters to open fire *en masse* on the defenders standing in the windows.³² It is not clear whether the gun was fired intentionally or not, nor is it certain that any answer was actually given.³³

The speed with which events unravelled took the defenders (and undoubtedly many of the attackers) by surprise.³⁴ After the shout for surrender and the scuffle that led to the first shot being fired, the Chartist mob opened fire on the hotel.³⁵ In response to this, it would appear that the Mayor, Thomas Phillips, ordered himself, Lieutenant Gray and Sergeant Daly to remove the shutters on the first floor that had been securely placed over all the windows³⁶ and then leant out into the square where the Chartists had drawn up with the

²⁴ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.198

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.198

²⁶ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.33

²⁷ HO40/45: letter from T.J. Phillips, November, 1839

²⁸ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection*, p.151

²⁹ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.186

³⁰ E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.41

³¹ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.33

³² E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.41-2

³³ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection*, p.151

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.152

³⁵ E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.42

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.42

intention of reading the Riot Act;³⁷ the Chartists then focused their fire on the upper floor windows, as is evidenced by the Mayor and Sergeant Daly being then wounded, to the hip and left arm and to the forehead ('with two slugs, made of lead apparently from a window frame').³⁸ Under the covering fire of the guns, the pikemen attempted to force entry into the hotel by way of the main hall and entrance, which was defended by the special constables, and also by way of the shuttered windows.³⁹ While this was going on, some of the Chartists detached themselves from the main force out front and attempted to break in through the rear entrance.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the shutters removed, the troops of the 45th secured the door to their room and opened fire on the mob to the front of the Hotel.⁴¹ Officially, the soldiers' fire only lasted a few minutes, with them filing past the open windows firing as they went;⁴² however, the Chartists and their sympathisers claimed that it lasted much longer than this, speaking of sustained 'target practice' on the hapless crowd.⁴³ Eventually, after heavy casualties, someone in the midst of the mob gave the command to retreat.⁴⁴ Despite the steady and disciplined fire on the mob outside its front, a number managed to break in through the front door and, despite forcing them back initially, became engaged in a fierce melee with the special constables with Mayor Phillips;⁴⁵ it would appear that Police Superintendent Hopkins, the man in charge of both the small Police and special constables, and a particular target of the mob himself,⁴⁶ fled home as soon as the mob broke in.⁴⁷

With the Chartists' outside the front dispersed, the soldiers then turned their attention to those inside as well as those breaking in through the back.⁴⁸ The scene inside was chaotic; on account of the gun-smoke, the Mayor was almost shot by one of the soldiers who mistook him for one of the enemy, and was only saved by one of the special constables pushing the musket away and pointing out who he was.⁴⁹ The situation cannot have been helped by the lack of uniform on the part of the special constables, making them indistinguishable at first glance to the rioters, and this type of episode may have been commonplace. The close confines of the inside of the hotel meant that the fire from the military was punishing⁵⁰ and the casualties inflicted on the Chartists caused the rest to falter and ultimately to retreat.⁵¹ The entire assault only lasted fifteen minutes.⁵²

The extent of the fire from the troops of the 45th is hard to establish; on the one hand, the Chartist casualties appear to have been comparatively light (contemporary newspapers give

³⁷ Ibid, p.42

³⁸ Ibid, p.42

³⁹ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection*, p.151

⁴⁰ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.199

⁴¹ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.34

⁴² D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection*, p.153

⁴³ Ibid, p.153

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.153

⁴⁵ E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.42-3

⁴⁶ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection*, p.151

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.151

⁴⁸ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.34

⁴⁹ E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.42-3

⁵⁰ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.35

⁵¹ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection*, p.199

⁵² E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.43

a figure of 22 killed, with many more wounded),⁵³ although there are examples of badly wounded individuals fleeing from Newport to their homes as far away as Brecon,⁵⁴ while on the other evidence given by Lieutenant (then Captain) Gray during the inquest into the riot (and, crucially, the military's reaction to it) states that the soldiers were issued with 22 rounds of ammunition each, but fired only, on average, only three.⁵⁵ Given that there were 30 soldiers (including Gray and the Sergeants) each firing three rounds, this would make their fire particularly devastating, even at close range. Other testimony suggests that the soldiers stripped the dead rioters of their ammunition (but did not use it)⁵⁶ and that a youth was sent to the Union Workhouse and came back with his pockets stuffed full of ammunition, which may suggest that the gunfire was more extensive than Gray admitted.⁵⁷

After they had dispersed the rioters, the soldiers may have prepared for another assault; this is suggested by the soldiers stripping the dead of their ammunition and by their preventing any wounded in the square receiving any medical aid,⁵⁸ which might be explained as their wishing to keep the area in front of the Hotel clear, ready for them to recommence fire. Whatever the reasoning behind it, it would appear that an unspecified number of Chartists lay wounded among the dead in the square.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the military and civilian wounded in the Hotel were treated by two Newport doctors.⁶⁰

While the assault party attempted to storm the Westgate Hotel, the rest of the Chartist column still stretched as far back as Stow Hill and, while some undoubtedly fled into the side streets,⁶¹ many fled back in the direction from where they had come, and these men spread their panic among the rest of the marchers; as a result, the entire Chartist column was put to flight before they could enter the battle or achieve their objectives.⁶²

Troops

The forces involved in this clash were very different, both numerically and in terms of military training and equipment. A Company of the 45th Regiment of Foot (the Nottinghamshire Regiment) was stationed in Newport under the command of Captain Stack;⁶³ interestingly, this Company in particular had experience of dealing with rioters, as Captain Stack and his men had driven off rioters in Bosenden Wood in Kent in 1838.⁶⁴ While it is uncertain as to the exact number that made up this 'Company' (at this time a Company in the British Army numbered 120 men, but was usually restricted to the command of a Major and it is unclear as to the importance that can be attached to Stack's rank in this regard), D. Jones suggests that the total number may have been 70 men,⁶⁵ while I. Wilks

⁵³ *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 5th November, 1839

⁵⁴ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rise of 1839*, p.200

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.199

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.199

⁵⁷ J. N. Johns, *The Chartist Riots at Newport*, p.42

⁵⁸ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Rising of 1839*, p.154

⁵⁹ E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.43

⁶⁰ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.36

⁶¹ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Rising of 1849*, p.154

⁶² J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.36

⁶³ Col P. H. Dalbiac, *History of the 45th: 1st Nottinghamshire Regiment (the Sherwood Foresters)*, p. 145

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p.147

⁶⁵ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection of 1839*, p.146

suggests that number was around 60.⁶⁶ It appears that 30 men, two of whom were Sergeants Daly and Armstrong, (although the *Monmouthshire Merlin* of the 5th November, 1839, claims that it was 30 privates and two Sergeants)⁶⁷ under the command of Lieutenant Gray were deployed at the Westgate Hotel.⁶⁸ The remainder of the detachment remained under the command of Captain Stack at the Union Workhouse, where a stand of 200 arms were deposited and were thought to be at risk.⁶⁹

In addition to the regular soldiers of the 45th Foot, there were a large number of Special Constables sworn in to meet the crisis; the exact number is unclear, but D. Jones suggests that 150 were sworn in on Saturday the 1st November, while a further 500, who had been sworn in over the previous 6 months, were recalled on the afternoon of Sunday the 2nd November.⁷⁰ These were stationed in Company strength (presumably consisting of 30 men) at various key points in the city, such as at the Union Workhouse, the residence of the Magistrate Lewis Edwards, who was at the Westgate Hotel, the Westgate Hotel itself and at the strategically crucial bridge over the Usk;⁷¹ yet more Special Constables were required to patrol the streets and apprehend any Chartists who had become isolated from the main body and to keep the lines of communication open between the police and military held buildings.⁷²

It is difficult to be certain about the numbers of the Rebels, although it is clear that they vastly outnumbered the 30 men of the 45th. E. Dowling gives no clear figure for the total number of combatants that attacked the Westgate Hotel, but states that they learned from an apprehended collier that one band parading at Tredegar Park numbered 4000.⁷³ Additionally, he states that the body of men that marched into Newport (and from which the assault party was drawn) was estimated at 5000 by an observer on Stow Hill.⁷⁴

In total, the number of Chartists that mustered and marched towards Newport was far greater than that which actually attempted to storm the Westgate Hotel. The original plan appears to have been that a group under Frost would proceed from Blackwood towards Newport via Cefn, where he was to be met by bands under Zephaniah Williams with the men from the area around Blaenau Gwent and William Jones with those from Abersychan and the east, numbering 5000 and 2000 respectively.⁷⁵ However, Jones' men never made the muster at Cefn and, while it is unclear as to the exact numbers in either group, Williams' and Frost's combined total appears to have been somewhere in the region of 4000-5000.⁷⁶ Of this number, only 200-300 actually formed the assault party that attempted to storm the Westgate Hotel.⁷⁷

⁶⁶ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.198

⁶⁷ *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 5th November, 1839

⁶⁸ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection of 1839*, p.147

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.146

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.146

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.147

⁷² *Ibid*, p.147

⁷³ E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.40

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.41

⁷⁵ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.27

⁷⁶ D. J. V. Jones, *The Last Rising: the Newport Insurrection of 1839*, p.147

⁷⁷ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.199

The Chartists, while comprising almost entirely miners and industrial workers from the collieries of South Wales (however, in addition to a number of ex-soldiers, one of the leaders appears to have been a deserter from the 45th Foot⁷⁸ and another, John Rees (better known as Jack the Fifer), who was appointed to lead the assault on Newport, took part in the storming of San Antonio during the Texan War of Independence in 1835),⁷⁹ appear to have had the semblance of military order and discipline. The Chartists appear to have been divided into units, the smallest of which was of 10 men under the command of a junior officer, called a Deacon or Corporal.⁸⁰ Above this there was a Company (of about 50 men) and Brigades (which appear to have consisted of approximately 500 men) under the command of an Officer;⁸¹ larger divisions seem to have been based upon these units.⁸²

The force that marched into Newport also appears to have been drawn up with a view to tactics, although the precise nature of the formation appears to differ in accordance with the witness; according to one of the gatekeepers of Tredegar Park, the force that marched through there (which numbered at this stage 3000-5000) marched with pikemen in the front with gunmen following them, and that *'they were very tidy together'*.⁸³ Further evidence of the possibility of their being relatively disciplined can be seen in the evidence of Lieutenant Gray, when he says that the Chartist marchers formed line from column *'very steadily'*.⁸⁴ The assault group, 200-300 men drawn from this body, appear to have been drawn up in ranks of eight, with a gunman on the flanks of six pikemen,⁸⁵ while another witness has them in ranks of five, with a gunman on the right of every other file.⁸⁶ Dowling suggests that the column was marching twelve abreast on their approach to the Westgate Hotel.⁸⁷

Armaments

The information and sources examined give no specific indication of the equipment and arms used by the 45th in this engagement; however, it is a fair estimate to assume that, as regular troops, they would all have been issued with the standard British muskets of the period. Lieutenant Grey would have been equipped with a light sabre and possibly a pistol. The equipment of the Special Constables is hard to gauge and may not have been uniform; however, there is no mention of their firing upon the Chartists, so it could be assumed that they were not issued with firearms. Indeed, Dowling mentions that they were armed with staves.⁸⁸

In keeping with their nature and make-up, the Chartist forces were equipped with a variety of weapons. Dowling writes that they were armed with *'weapons of every description – guns, pistols, blunderbusses, swords, bayonets, daggers, pikes (spears a foot long with two sharp hooks, attached to poles about two yards in length), bill-hooks, reaping hooks,*

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.190

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.186

⁸⁰ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.25

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.25

⁸² *Ibid*, p.25

⁸³ *Morning Chronicle*, 24th December, 1839: evidence of Thomas Evans

⁸⁴ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.199

⁸⁵ J. Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, p.25

⁸⁶ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.197

⁸⁷ E. Dowling, *The Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire*, p.41

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.40

hatchets, cleavers, axes, pitchforks, blades of knives, scythes and saws fixed in staves, pieces of iron two and three yards in length, sharpened at the one end, bludgeons of various length and size, hand and sledge-hammers, mandrils (a kind of light pickaxe), in fact, every weapon that could be at all made available'.⁸⁹

Casualties

The actual engagement appears to have lasted only 15 minutes, so the casualties in the engagement were relatively light, especially when the overwhelming numbers of the Chartists are considered. Of the 45th Foot, only Sergeant Daly was seriously wounded;⁹⁰ of the civilian defenders, only Mayor Thomas Phillips and two special constables were wounded.⁹¹ However, there were unconfirmed rumours (possibly of Chartist origin) that nine soldiers were killed and buried with full military honours.⁹² Despite the official casualties' number, it would appear that a number of soldiers were still recuperating in the Union Workhouse two weeks after the end of the conflict.⁹³

On the Chartists' side, the casualties were more severe. However, it is hard to be certain about the precise number of the dead as several of the more seriously wounded were able to travel great distances before being arrested; an example of this was the Sirhowy miner William Jones, who managed to make it back to Tallybont, near Brecon, before being apprehended.⁹⁴ However, the *Monmouthshire Merlin* records that 22 rioters were slain, with an unspecified (but large) number wounded.⁹⁵

3. Assessment

Battle Location

The Battle Location can be readily identified, courtesy of the engagement being well-documented. The rioters, upon marching down Stow Hill, attempted to storm the Westgate Hotel; unfortunately, the original building has been pulled down, but another building of the same name now stands on the site in John Frost Square, named in honour of the Chartist leader.

While the entire focus of the conflict appears to have taken place around the Westgate Hotel, a number of other landmarks appear to present themselves. Perhaps most notably is the Union Workhouse on Stow Hill, where the remainder of the contingent of troops from the 45th under Captain Stack were stationed and in front of which they deployed themselves in order to deter any of the Chartists from seizing the small arsenal of weapons and powder that was stored there.

Discussion of Primary Sources

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.41

⁹⁰ Col. P. H. Dalbiac, *History of the 45th: 1st Nottinghamshire Regiment (Sherwood Foresters)*, p.146

⁹¹ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839*, p.200

⁹² *Northern Star*, 7th December, 1839

⁹³ I. Wilks, *South Wales and the Rise of 1839*, p.200

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.200

⁹⁵ *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 5th November, 1839

The vast majority of the primary sources for this encounter take the form of testimonies extracted during the legal proceedings and investigations into the causes and course of the campaign that culminated in the attack on the Westgate Hotel. Perhaps the most influential source is the testimony of William Davies, a Chartist who was privy to many of the councils and meetings of Frost and his chief lieutenants (as well as a Chartist delegate from Bradford) in the immediate foreground of the march on Newport. As such, he provides valuable information on some of the day to day activities of the Chartists as well as their plans and strategies for the assault itself.⁹⁶ However, it should be remembered that Davies's testimony derives from a cross-examination carried out while he was in the custody of the authorities following the failure of the uprising; moreover his trustworthiness is further questioned by the fact that he failed to appear in court at his trial.

Another source of testimony that provides an insight into the build up to the Chartist rising is that of Morgan James, another Chartist who attended a number of meetings and rallies which appear to have been central to the organisation and implementation of the assault. Again, the partisan nature of this statement must be taken into account, as James was present with the marchers on the outskirts of Newport when the attack on the Westgate Hotel took place and was arrested shortly after.⁹⁷

The near-contemporary accounts include that of E. Dowling, a local printer writing in 1840, shortly after the uprising, whose account is based on the first-hand testimony of John O'Dwyer, one of the Special Constables who defended the Westgate Hotel (O'Dwyer seems to have been positioned in the main hall of the Hotel). While it is undoubtedly guilty of anti-Chartist bias, it nevertheless represents a valuable, near contemporary account based on the testimony of a participant in the events of 5th November 1839.

Discussion of Secondary Sources

The types of secondary sources consulted for the purposes of this document can be divided into two groups; those that are near-contemporary to the events they describe and those that are more recent in date.

W. N. Johns, who wrote in 1889, offers an interesting late-19th century perspective on the Newport Rising. Similar to E. Dowling, he appears to have been a Newport printer and, undoubtedly, wrote on a subject that was still very emotive and well-remembered. Despite a noticeable anti-Chartist bias, this source draws on a number of contemporary sources and local legend to produce an informative account of the Riots.

Another perspective on the Newport insurrection is provided by Colonel P.H. Dalbiac's regimental history of the 45th Foot, written in 1902. A former officer of the regiment, he compiled a detailed and informative account of the activities of the regiment during the rioting, which appears (at least in part) to be derived from the testimony of soldiers who were stationed at Newport during the rioting. Significantly, Dalbiac mentions that Captain

⁹⁶ Examination of William Davies, p.4

⁹⁷ Examination of Morgan James of Pillgwenlly, p.3

Stack and a detachment of the 45th Foot had formerly put down another episode of rioting at Bossenden Wood near Canterbury on 31st May 1838.

The two major modern scholarly studies of the Newport riots, by I. Wilks and D. J. V. Jones, contain extensive and valuable discussions of the primary sources relating to the uprising. Probably the most detailed and comprehensive of the two studies is Jones's *The Last Rising*, which contains a comprehensive account of the uprising and its aftermath, clearly placed within its wider political context with extensive references to the available primary sources.

Archaeology and Historic Terrain Assessment

The engagement took place in the centre of Newport (in what is now John Frost Square) and, as a consequence, the Historic Terrain is somewhat altered. While in 1839 the scene of the conflict was similarly urbanised (though, naturally, the degree is somewhat different), the buildings that would have stood witness have mostly disappeared; indeed, the Westgate Hotel itself was demolished in the latter part of the 19th century, although another building of the same name now stands on the site. The original Westgate Hotel was heavily fired upon and evidence of this (in the form of bullet holes) could be seen until its demolition. However, with its destruction, the focal point of the Chartists' wrath and the military's defence has disappeared. The churchyard of St Woolos' Church contains the mass burial of 10 men who are reputed to have been shot and killed outside the Westgate Hotel by the soldiers' fire.⁹⁸

Assessment of the Historic Significance of the Battle

The significance of the Newport Rising can be best be established by placing it within the broader context of Chartist agitation in Britain during the late 1830s. Had the Newport Rising been successful, there is the possibility that it would have precipitated further Chartist insurrections across Britain. Certainly, there is appears to be a dichotomy in the objectives and intentions of the Newport Rising. On the one hand, the Newport Rising was, in its first conception, intended as nothing more than one of many national Chartist rebellions, as is alluded to by the presence of the secretive Bradford delegate who urged Frost to postpone his actions for another 10 days, to bring it back in line with their other planned attacks.⁹⁹

On the other hand, there appears to be a more regional element to the Rising, as it could be suggested that the specific motive of the March on Newport was to protest at the arrest and detention of Vincent. However, the nature and extent of the planning and long-term organisation required to manufacture the arms for the thousands of workers that were mobilised hints at a greater motivation than merely securing Vincent's freedom.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the crime for which Vincent was arrested (his militant speeches to Chartist audiences seemingly urging them to fight) may be seen in the background of long-term Chartist

⁹⁸ Burial Register of St. Woolos Church, Newport, 1839

⁹⁹ Examination of William Davies of Blackwood, p.2

¹⁰⁰ W. N. Johns, *The Chartist Riots in Newport, November, 1839*, p.9

strategy. At the end of the day, Frost himself seems to have thought that their plans had gone beyond the point of no return and so decided to proceed with the attack, regardless of the readiness of the Chartist Movement as a whole to act.

As well as the impact on the local populace that the casualties would inevitably have had, the engagement undoubtedly had an impact on the nation in general; several detachments of soldiers, including hussars and two artillery pieces, were sent by the government to Newport to reinforce the garrison already stationed in the town as well as to deter further action.

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OS 2nd edition 25 inch map (Monmouthshire 28.16, 33.4) - 1902

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OS 3rd edition 25 inch map (Monmouthshire 28.16, 33.4) - 1921

OS 3rd edition 6 inch map (Monmouthshire 28 SE, 33 NE) - 1922

OS 4th edition 25 inch map (Monmouthshire 28.16, 33.4) - 1937

OS 4th edition 6 inch map (Monmouthshire 28 SE, 33 NE) - 1938



The Newport Rising
5 November 1839

1/The Westgate Hotel: The principal focus of the Chartists' attack. Held by special constables and a detachment of the 45th Foot at the time of the attack. The original building has since been demolished

2/Approximate area of fighting in the vicinity of the Westgate Hotel

3/Probable route taken by the Newport Chartists from Cwrt-y-Bella in their advance on the Westgate Hotel (route indicated in red)

4/Site of the Union Workhouse: Garrisoned by a company of the 45th Foot at the time of the uprising

5/Cwrt-y-Bella: Site of the assembly point of the Chartist forces immediately prior to the attack on the Westgate Hotel

Scale 1:10560
(Based on OS 4th edition map of Newport- 1938)