

TREVITHICK, RICHARD (1771 - 1833), engineer

Name: Richard Trevithick
Date of birth: 1771
Date of death: 1833
Parent: Anne Trevithick (née Teague)
Parent: Richard Trevithick
Gender: Male
Occupation: engineer
Area of activity: Engineering, Construction, Naval Architecture and Surveying
Author: Watkin William Price

Born 13 April 1771 at Illogan, Cornwall, only son of Richard Trevithick, engineer and manager of the Dolcoath and other mines, by his wife Anne. The son, after some schooling at Camborne, soon became an expert engineer in the Cornish mines and displayed a remarkable inventive ability in improving the various types of engines then in use for hauling ores or draining the mines. In 1796-7 he made three working models, two of locomotives and one of a stationary engine, and by Christmas Eve 1801 he had evolved his first road locomotive, which on that day conveyed the first load of passengers ever moved by the force of steam. He patented in 1802, 'an improvement on the low pressure engines of James Watt.' He produced a second road locomotive in 1802, which ran for some ten miles through the streets of London in 1803.

These road experiments were the prelude to the great triumph at Penydarren, Merthyr Tydfil, in 1804. Trevithick had been engaged as an engineer by **Samuel Homfray**, ironmaster of the Penydarren Iron-works, during the latter part of 1803, and very soon was engaged in making a steam locomotive with the aid of the Penydarren mechanics and fitters, which they hoped to utilise on the tramway, then recently erected to convey the manufactured iron from the Penydarren, Dowlais, and Plymouth Works to the Basin or Navigation (now called Abercynon) and so avoid the canal, then largely owned and controlled by their competitor, **Richard Crawshay** of Cyfarthfa. By 13 February 1804, the steam engine was completed, and Trevithick wrote, 'We put it on the tramway. It worked very well. ...' By 20 February he reported that the 'Tram Waggon' had been at work several times, and that it worked 'very well, and is much more manageable than horses.' This was the day before the advertised day of the great experiment which attracted an immense crowd of spectators. At Merthyr, on 19 March 1804, was unveiled a monument raised to his memory by the Trevithick Centenary Commemoration Committee. He died 22 April 1833 at Dartford.

Author

Watkin William Price, (1873 - 1967)

Sources

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Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Richard Trevithick](#)

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