

HANES



HANES

Issue Number 34

Spring 2006.

Newsletter of the Cynon Valley History Society Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Hanes Cwm Cynon.

EDITORIAL NOTES

2004-2005 A RETROSPECT.

IN MEMORIUM

During the course of the year members were saddened to learn of the death of the following members: -

The Rt. Hon Morys George Lyndhurst Bruce K.B.E., D.L., 4th. Baron Aberdare of Duffryn.

Mrs. Nest Evans, Abernant. Aberdare.

Mr. Bryn Davies, Oxford Street Aberdare, Committee Member and contributor to Cynon Coal.

Mrs. Margaret Keir, Llangorse Road, Cwmbach, Aberdare.

Life Membership.

On a happier note we are pleased to announce the appointment of two more Life Members for long and faithful service to the Society. They are, Mr. Elfed Bowen, Past Chairman and Sales Officer, and Mr. Ken Collins, Past Chairman and Treasurer. This brings the number of Life Members to six, the others being Messrs. Tom Evans, David Leslie Davies, John Mear and Douglas Williams.

Thanks.

Our thanks to the Officers and Staff of Rhondda Cynon Taff's, Aberdare Library. and Museum for their assistance and support during the past year.

It is perhaps unfair to single out individual members of the Committee for our thanks; they are after all a dedicated team. However we are all grateful to Haydn Williams for his work in finding (and persuading) a panel of guest speakers to visit us, (especially on dark wet winter evenings!) often from distant parts. We know how difficult a task this can be. Well- done Haydn!

Publications.

A new volume of *Old Aberdare* – the Tenth in the series will be published prior to Christmas 2006. The first volume of these successful journals came out in 1976, and it is proposed that the milestone Volume Ten will be the last in the series. Thereafter a new series devoted to the wider history of the Cynon Valley will be inaugurated (in 2007, it is hoped) – after all we are The Cynon Valley History Society, so the title to the previous volumes has been somewhat inappropriate. The new series is as yet untitled. The Chairman and Committee therefore invite Members and readers to suggest an appropriate, short, punchy Welsh or English name for our new Journal.

Contributions to this are invited. It is recommended that articles do not exceed 8000 words in length though longer contributions may be accepted at editorial discretion. There is a call for an article on the history of the Italian Cafes (“Bracchi’s”) that opened in the Cynon Valley in the early 1900’s. If anyone is interested in the project, or has any information concerning this subject would they please contact the editor?

The Society also proposes publishing a number of occasional booklets on subjects such as the Iron Industry, the old “Mansions” of the Cynon Valley (A history of ownership and tenants.) etc.

For those interested in statistics a total of some 10,500 copies of “*Old Aberdare*” have been sold. The ten volumes contained over 40 lengthy essays on wide ranging aspects of Aberdare’s history.

GETTING AROUND (1)

If you happened to be gentry or a prosperous farmer in Aberdare in the 18th or early 19th Century you journeyed on horseback. For example Eleanor Mathew of Aberaman rode to Brecon in 1745 to procure a new Parish Register returning that same day. The rest of the villagers walked, be it to Hirwaun, Merthyr or even Brecon.

There was only one cart in Aberdare in 1789. This belonged to Theophilus Richards, the drover.

John Bruce Bruce* of St.Nicholas, Nr.Cowbridge visited his Mountain Ash (Duffryn) estate (Ca.1790) in a whisky (a phaeton gig), which he had to leave at Ty Planca (Abercynon) completing the journey through the Cynon Valley on a sled-car having seats made of straw stuffed sacks. By 1814 the roads and bridges had much improved and Bruce was able to use his gig locally.

Dr.David Davies of Bryngolwg says that when he first came to Aberdare in 1847 "There was only one carriage of any description in the valley...an Irish gig owned by J.Bruce Pryce* The next vehicle that made its appearance was a phaeton (a light four wheeled open carriage usually drawn by two horses) owned by Thomas Wayne of Glandare."

The canal was opened in 1812 and the railways in 1846 and 1851 which made travel in and out of the valley easier. A number of drags (private stage coaches with seats inside and on the top) were in use in the town in 1859 on the occasion of an important church bazaar. In 1866 Evan Griffiths of Ty Mawr had a 2-wheeled spring cart called a Whitechapel. The Inventory of Llwydcoed House that same year lists 2 Phaetons and 2 carts, and another for Glandare House dated 1874 mentions a 4 wheeler Phaeton and a Coburg.

Local public transport became available in 1867 when the first licence for a hackney carriage to convey 5 persons was granted to Mr.Hosgood of the Iron Bridge Hotel. A number of local Inns were also posting houses and hired horses, traps carriages and brakes. In 1888 Isaac Thomas, a local undertaker advertised *that he kept 7 classes of hearses and mourning coaches...to meet the circumstances of the wealthy as well as the poorest of his customers*

By 1893 there were 32 carriages and 42 horse drawn omnibuses operating under licence for hire in Aberdare.

All these means of transport were probably built locally in workshops such as G.Scourfield's at Bond Street, W.Jones at the Gadlys Bridge Yard and Lanman and Vicary of 14-15 Dean Street. The latter's business is described in detail below. (See also plate 114 Aberdare Pictures From The Past Vol.Two.)

LANMAN AND VICARY, COACHBUILDERS AND WHEELWRIGHTS

"The coach-building trade is well represented in Aberdare by the energetically conducted establishment of Messrs Lanman & Vicary. Although established only five years, the business has acquired a position of assured success, abundantly testifying to the enterprising methods adopted in its management. The premises, which are situated in Dean Street, comprise substantially built and commodious two-storied works, affording every facility for successfully conducting the business. The various departments include a spacious smithy, and workshops equipped with the most improved appliances for smiths, wheelwrights, body-makers, painters, varnishers and trimmers. A large number of skilled hands are employed under the personal supervision of the principals, who are themselves thoroughly practical exponents of the trade. The firm undertakes the building of every description of vehicles, and are always prepared to submit designs and estimates. Lightness, gracefulness of outline, and expert and finished workmanship are the leading characteristics of all the vehicles built by them; while their charges will be found exceedingly moderate. They also undertake the production of heavy vehicles, such as trollies, wagons and railway vans. Particular attention is devoted to repairs, which are executed promptly, and in a thoroughly reliable style. The firm have always on hand a large stock of carriage lamps, whip sockets, and all carriage fittings of the best manufacture, while the excellence of their workmanship and their very moderate charges have gained for them the confidence and support of very widespread and influential connections". (A Descriptive Account of Aberdare. Illustrated-1892.)

* These men were one and the same. Born John Bruce Knight he adopted his mother's surname Bruce in place of his own, and the name of Pryce in 1837 on inheriting Duffryn (St.Nicholas Nr.Cowbridge) under the will of Thomas Pryce. Technically he was then John Bruce Bruce Pryce. Confusing?

A WALK TO SCHOOL IN 1848

How strange the Aberdare of today would have appeared to the children who trudged through all weathers from the lower end of the valley to their lessons in the new school. (The Park School – Ed.)* The children from, Abernant and Cwmbach would cross the Cynon by means of a narrow iron bridge, and after crossing the Aberdare Railway, would walk up the street with houses beginning to be erected on their left (the present Commercial Street). On their right, where we have the level streets of Maesydre, there were then wide fields where haymaking would be carried on in its season. At the top of Commercial Street they would have a narrow wooden bridge to cross the River Dare, which was then a beautiful clear open stream, crossing the little square (Welsh Harp) between the present Woolworth's shop and the rising ground covered with trees, on which St. Elvan's Church was built. The present Victoria Square was then occupied by gardens with narrow paths leading to the cottages on both sides, behind the present shops.

Luscious apples grew on a tree where Caradog's monument now stands. The present Wind Street and High Street were then the main thoroughfares, but very narrow. Near the present Post Office was the bridge to cross the Dare. On the right was the ancient corn mill, which had ground corn for centuries. Later it gave way to a Woollen factory (which was later converted into a clog and boot and shoe factory). On their left, they would pass the four Alms-Houses in Green Fach, built by Eleanor Mathews of Aberaman, about the year 1720, which stood in the space now leading to Williams's Garage

The present Town Hall was then the Market Hall. With the Wellington Inn opposite but with a narrow street between. The old Parish church would be seen on the left, surrounded by the unenclosed churchyard then rapidly filling up, while on their right would be the big shop or warehouse of Mr. Evan Griffiths (now Ty Mawr). Canon Street had not been built in 1848. At the place where Trinity Church now stands a few houses stood on the very spot along which the street now runs, facing an orchard. These were called "Tai y Berllan" or "Tai'r Berllan" (i.e. The Orchard Houses).

Crossing a little stream skirting the churchyard, they would wend their way (with no railway or Gadlys bridge to cross as at present), past the Company's shop then in the basement of the present Dover Terrace. This was one of the Truck Shops organised by the ironmasters (there being another at the foot of Llwydcoed hill, where the present Shop Houses stand). On their right would be green fields, now occupied by the Gadlys Central School, and beyond were the Gadlys Iron Works. At the foot of Gadlys Trip there were houses known as the Malt Houses (brewery) and called Tai Bragdy. They are the tall houses on Gadlys Road at the foot of Morgan Street.

Passing up the Gadlys trip which was then much steeper than at present they would pass several thatched cottages, walk under a bridge conveying iron-ore and coal, cross tram lines carrying trams of coal from the Gadlys Colliery to the coal-yard on their right (where we now have the entrance to Gospel Hall Terrace). Further along, on their left, they would pass a row of houses with wooden shutters on their windows, then called Watchmakers' Row, and soon would pass through the turnpike gate, and cross the open common to the little school just opened. Beyond their school, to the north, and between the present Mount Pleasant Street and Mill Street was a field called Cae Jacki.

* Founded 1848. Also known as Aberdare British School, Ysgol Y Comin, Park School and Comin Junior School..

Extract taken from W.W.Price. **Park Schools Centenary 1848-1948: Its History,** (Aberdare 1948)

ABERDARE 1854-1856.

(From D.T.Alexander's, *Glamorgan Reminiscences.*)

(Continued from HANES No.26)

Aberdare Half a Century Ago.

With the exception of this (Maes-y-dre. Ed.) and the streets I have mentioned practically all the other part of what is now Canon-street, and the subsidiary streets were at that time open ground. There were I remember, a few houses being built at Brynhyfryd, and the well known hostelries, the Boot and Black Lion, were then in existence.

These were followed by the erection of the Gloucester Arms and another public house, which was called the Hen and Chickens (now the Whitcombe- Ed.) on Maesydre.

A Rambling Village

There was a long, rambling village at Aberaman, running down to practically the Swan Hotel. There was a village at Cwmbach and another small village at Capcoch. Trecynon was separated from the town by the common, which is now the park, and there were a few houses at Robertstown. Gadlys House was occupied by Dr.Roberts, and Gadlys Cottage, which was in the fields without any surroundings, by Miss Wayne, Ynyscynon House was a modern residence occupied by the late Mr.David Williams.

Though a small community in those days, Aberdare was very prosperous. Quite a feature of it was its religious life. Church and Chapel were well attended. The leading lights among the clergy and ministers were the late Rector of Merthyr, the Revd.John Griffiths, who was then Vicar of Aberdare, the Rev.Isaac Jenkins, Vicar of Trecynon, the Rev.Dr.Thomas Price of Calfaria, Baptist minister, while the leading Calvinistic minister was the Rev.David Sanders.

There were also Wesleyan and Congregational Chapels and a small building, which was used as a Roman Catholic Church.

Many of the tradesmen were people of good standing. Prominent trades people were Messrs.Thomas and Pardoe, ironmongers; Messrs.Samuels, Dykes, Henry Lewis, Gabriel and Sarvis, Mrs.Wood and her sisters, drapers; Messrs Sherbourne and Evans, the jewellers; and Messrs Pegler, Philip John, John Lodge, and John Lewis, grocers: William Morris, the Post Office, and Morgan Williams, the saddler, who were both Cowbridge boys; and Larke, the well known tailor.

The leading builders included Messrs.Eustace Richards, Hugh Pritchard, and Bethuel Williams. (Hence Bethuel Street, between the Marquis and the now demolished Mardy House. Ed.)

There were three chemists, Messrs.John Jones, Watkin Thomas, and Thomas Evans.

Of the leading hostelries, the Boot was kept by a well-known lady, Mrs.Hancock. The Queen's Hotel was kept by Mr.Edward Watkins, and the Angel Hotel, in High Street, was kept by Mrs.Gabriel, a lady of considerable attainments. The Black Lion Hotel was kept by Mr.Robert Jones, and there was also mine host of the Free Masons' Tavern, Mr.John Jenkins, all well-known personages.

The local iron companies had shops at which their workpeople used to deal. There were four company shops- one at Llwydcoed, managed by Mr.David Thomas, where my old friend, Mr.James Roberts, who at present lives at Taff Vale House, Treforest was book-keeper; another at Aberdare, which was supervised by Mr.James Lewis; another at Aberaman, which was connected with Mr.Crawshay Bailey's works; and another in Cardiff-street, carried on by Messrs.Davies and Price and connected with the Blaengwawr Collieries. (To be continued).

*

Hon. Secretary Brynmor Evans, 45 E Oxford Street, Gadlys, Aberdare CF44 BBE (01685 875558)

Edited by Geoffrey Evans, 5 Plasdraw Place, Aberdare CF44 ONS. (01685 871840.)

E.Mail GMorgannwg@aol. com.)

Published by The Cynon Valley History Society.

Registered Charity No.51014.

Printed by Dial-A-Print, Mountain Ash. 01443 474822.