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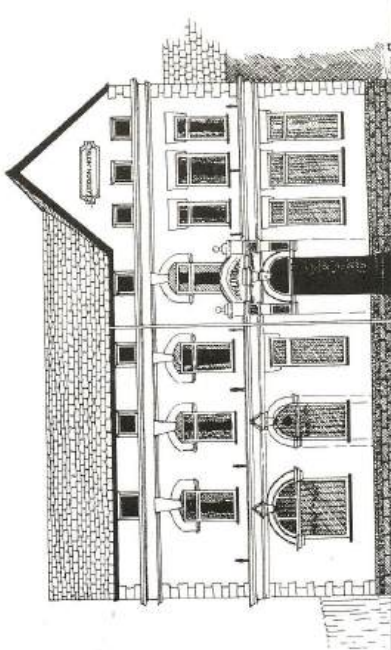
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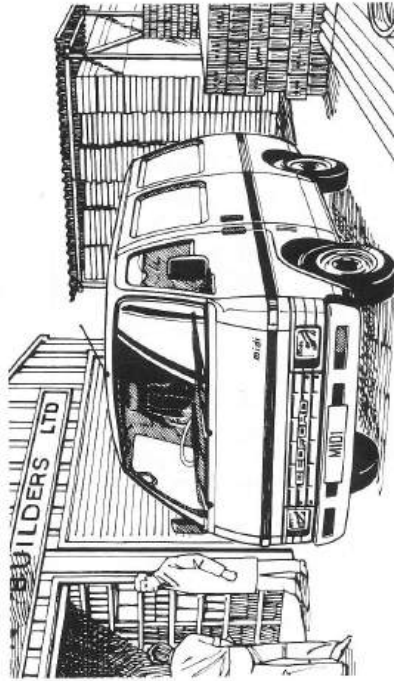
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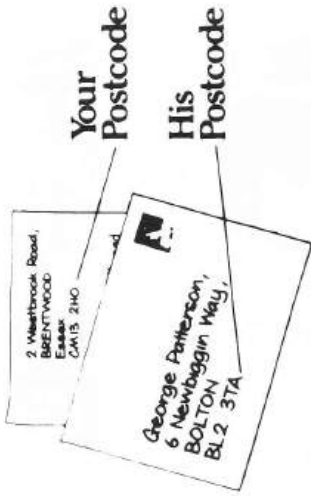
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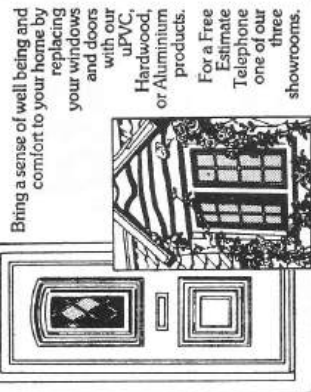


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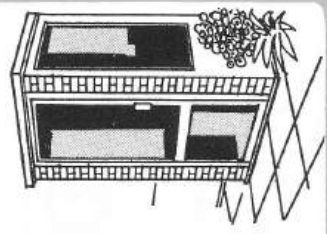
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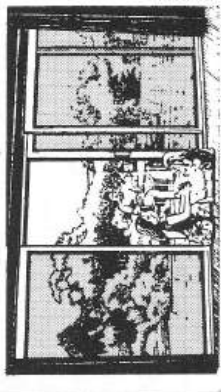
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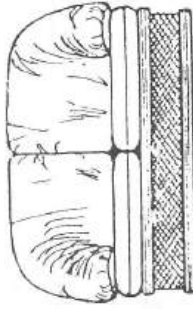
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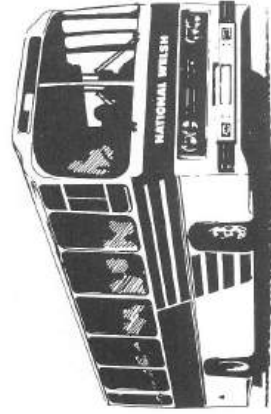
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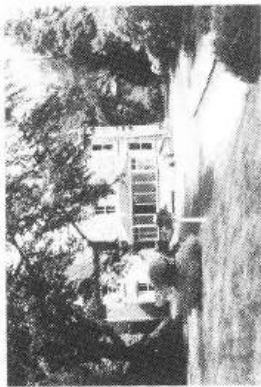
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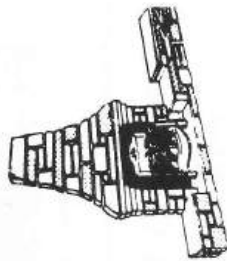
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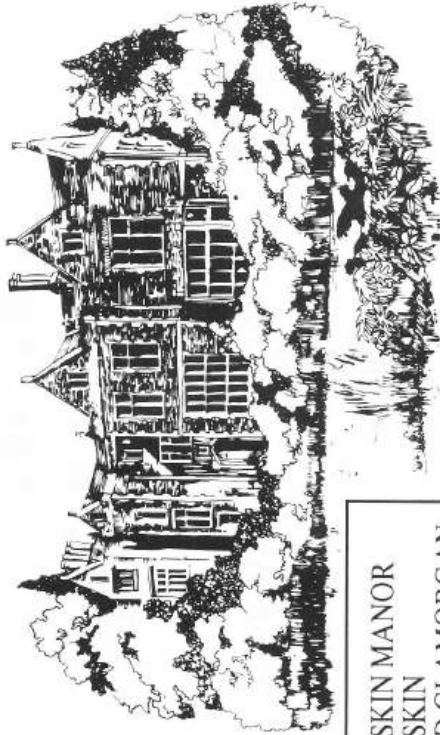
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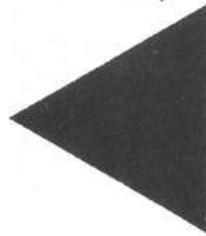
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Tribute

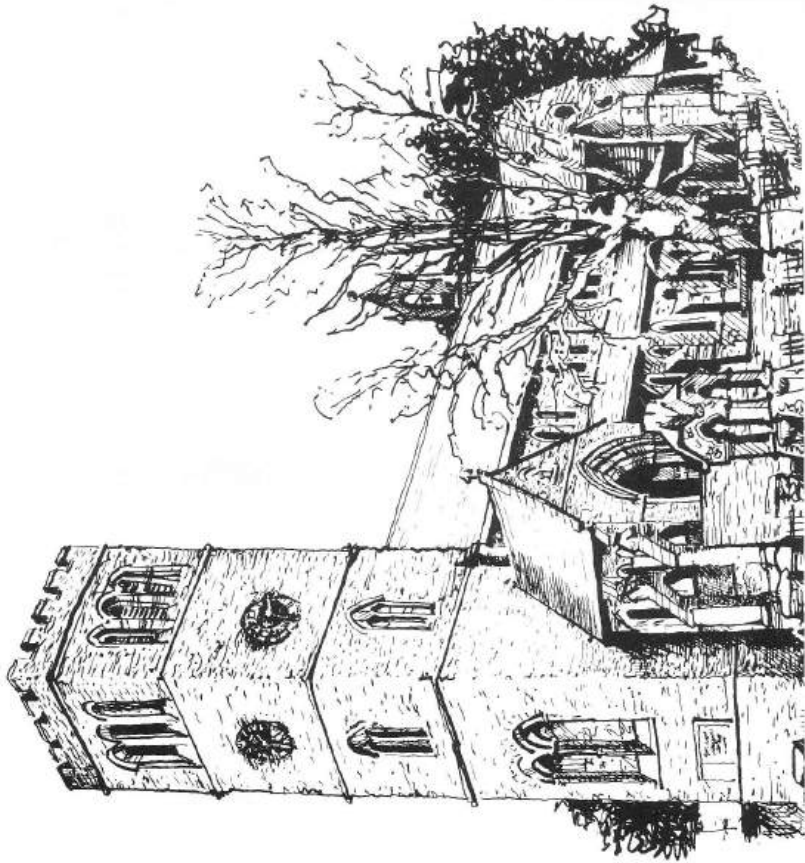
EXTRACT from the Minutes of a Meeting of the Rhondda Borough Council, dated 16th July 1986, arising from the closure of Maerdy Colliery—the last Colliery in Rhondda.

The Council, in reference to the sad demise of the coal era in Rhondda, reflected on the place of coal in the historical development of the Borough. Proud tribute was made to the toil and dedicated work of Rhondda's miners in the interests of coal; the premature bereavements, the sacrifices, sufferings and hardships which had been encountered by Rhondda families since the beginning of commercial coal mining and which, in turn, had forged so much of the character of the area and which would never be forgotten.

Foreword

Synonymous with the heyday of coal, the face of Rhondda has changed dramatically. The almost caricature position of coal tips and rows of terraced houses in juxtaposition is dead. Coal is no longer King and further insight into Rhondda will reveal an unexpected contrast, far removed from the popular image of Wales' most famous twin Valleys.

The Borough Council's active policy of regenerating economic and industrial growth is having positive results. Coupled with the increasing interest and potential of the area for recreation and tourism, the Rhondda is seemingly destined to become a Borough for all people—be they casual visitors or those wishing to make their home amongst our friendly hills.



Sketch of St. Peter's Church, Pentre.

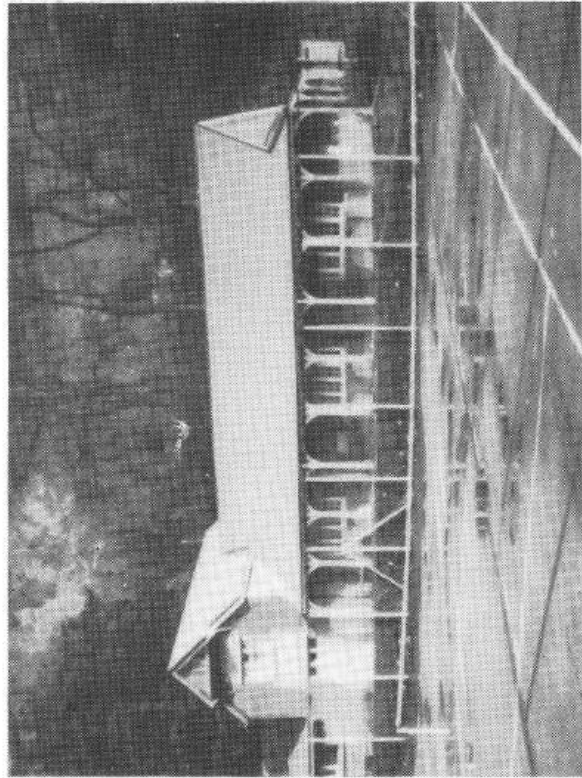
Rhagair

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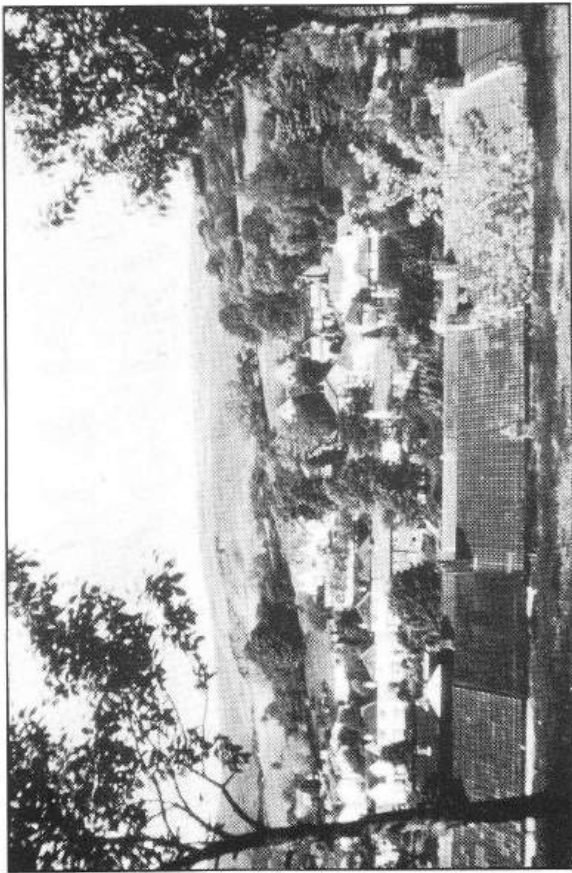
Introducing Rhondda

With a name that is known the world over, the Borough of Rhondda, in the South Wales county of Mid Glamorgan, extends across 37 square miles of the two valleys of the Rhondda Fawr (Great) and the Rhondda Fach (small). These two rivers join to flow south-east to Pontypridd where they run into the Taf that flows down to the sea at Cardiff. These two valleys have an unexpected and distinctive beauty all their own in the same way that the four valley towns of Porth, Tonypanydy, Treorchy and Ferndale, together with the many surrounding villages, have a character that is quite unmistakable — for there is no other place quite like Rhondda.

Although people have dwelt in and above the valleys for six thousand years it is only in the last century that Rhondda's name has echoed around the world. It was the mining of coal, on a massive and quite savage scale, that brought this fame and — for some — fortune. But the people who chose the Borough's motto (Fame Outlasts Wealth) chose well for the mining of coal, and the wealth that went with it, has now gone but Rhondda's fame lives on and, indeed, will gain a measure of immortality when the imaginative Rhondda Heritage Park is in being.

The 'Black Diamond' as the valleys were once called, are now slowly changing back to green through massive land reclamation schemes that are removing the scars of the past. The mountains, trees and fields of the Rhondda are regaining that natural beauty which, long before coal was ever discovered, made this one of the loveliest areas in Wales with its praises sung by many noted travellers and writers.

Today's Rhondda holds many surprises for visitors to the area, visitors that it greets with a warm and friendly welcome. Not only is the countryside regaining its mantle of green but the town centres are being brightened with new buildings and much with hanging baskets of flowers to bring colour to the scene. The famous and much loved Parc and Dare Hall at Treorchy has been carefully restored; a bright new covered shopping centre now improves the look of Tonypanydy's main street whilst a major shopping development is being built at Porth. New and busy industries have come in to the valleys and the creation of the Heritage Park, too, will create more and welcome new jobs.



Pleasant housing in a rural setting.

Road improvements have made Rhondda more accessible, the building of the Trehafod by-pass being a particular boon. It is now possible to reach the valleys from the M4 in less than a half hour. Rhondda's valley rail service from Pontypridd and Cardiff more than holds its own. It will soon see its ageing diesel units replaced by the new 'sprinters' and two new halts have been provided.

Everywhere, in fact, there is an air of resurgence in the Rhondda — most noticeable to anyone who is returning after a period of absence. The long years of rundown and decline are over and, as the chapters that follow will show, the Rhondda has a great deal to offer.

Rhondda's Towns And Villages

The Borough of Rhondda, the only authority in Wales to remain unchanged in area at the local government re-organisation in 1974, covers 37 square miles of the valleys of Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach with the mountain ridge between them and mountains on either side. The Borough's population of about 80,000 people is centred on the four towns of Porth, Tonypany, Treorchy and Ferndale and in the villages between and around them. This chapter sets the Rhondda scene.

Porth

The principal town at the eastern end of the Rhondda, Porth's very name derives from its natural position; it being the Welsh word for 'gateway'. Here the Rhondda Fawr and Rhondda Fach meet, the actual confluence of the rivers being at Cymmer, a name that means "the joining of two rivers of the same name". The river, from this point, flows east, together with the main road and railway through Trehafod to Pontypridd. The newly opened Trehafod by-pass has greatly eased road problems and its western extension, around Porth itself, will ease the traffic problem in that town.

Porth has one of the main shopping centres of the Rhondda, a centre that is soon to be augmented by the addition of a large supermarket that is now in course of construction. Together with a park for some 300 cars, this supermarket will be linked to the town centre by a bridge and will also have direct links to the new by-pass. This development is an example of the growth that is now taking place in and around Porth, a town that has few old buildings to remind one of its industrial past. At Cymmer, however, is the oldest nonconformist chapel in the Rhondda, a building erected in 1748.

Bronwydd Park, with its extensive sporting and recreational amenities, still retains its original natural beauty and is a reminder of the beauty of this part of the Rhondda before industrialisation.

South from Porth, the main road runs through the village of **Trebanog** and out of the Borough to Tonyrefail and on into the lovely Vale of Glamorgan. Trebanog itself lies immediately beneath the height of Mynydd Cymmer whose craggy slopes dominate the area.

East of Porth, **Trehafof** extends along the valley to the boundaries of Pontypridd with the river, railway, main road and new by-pass all sharing the narrow valley. This is to be the location of the Rhondda Heritage Park, a splendid scheme that is due for completion in the 1990s and which is described fully in a later chapter.

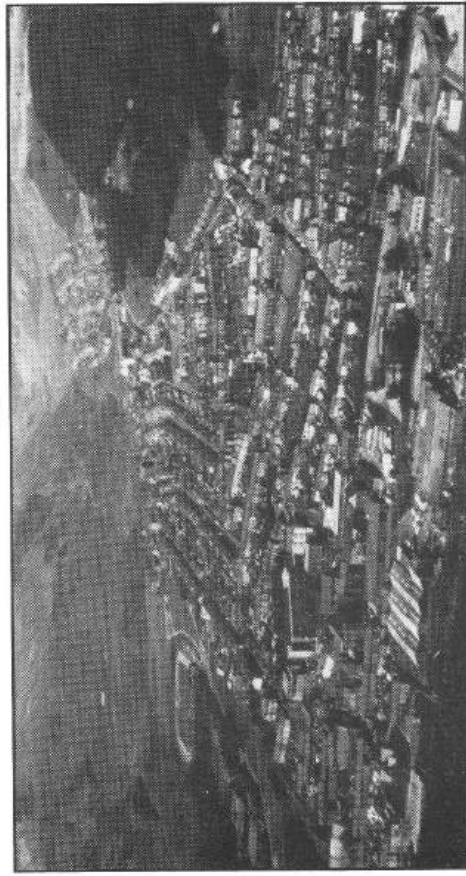
North from Porth extends the Rhondda Fach, a narrower valley than its western sister and one whose railway has long been used only as a freight line. The lowest valley village, **Ynysuir**, extends for a mile from Porth north to Wattstown and is mainly residential in aspect. Where the valley turns west is **Wattstown**, hemmed in by thousand foot mountains and, again, a largely residential village although with some new industries. Wattstown Park has more amenities than most with tennis courts, a bowling green, paddling pool, two children's playgrounds and general playing fields.

Tonypandy

Two miles west of Porth, Tonypandy occupies a strategic place in the centre of the Rhondda in whose industrial and political history it has long played an important part. It is the hub of the Rhondda's many and varied activities and its long hilly main street is a major shopping centre. Like Porth, Tonypandy is expanding and its centre is a commercial improvement area. A brand new covered shopping area has just been opened. It is the first of its kind in the Borough, and its shops, under cover of a transparent domed roof, bring a new air of luxury to shopping without the problems of uncertain weather.

A feature of Tonypandy is the Mid-Rhondda Athletic Ground which is widely used for educational and youth activities — including the yearly sports of the Mid-Glamorgan Secondary Schools Association.

Further development in the Tonypandy area is planned at **Clydach Vale**, a former mining village that extends west into the high mountains towards Rhondda's western boundary. An area of former colliery land here has been acquired by Barratt's who are to build a whole new community of houses for private buyers — a community that will include a school and whose amenities will include two man-made lakes. This is the largest land reclamation scheme in Wales.



Urban view of Tonypandy and Clydach Vale.

The northern 'half' of Tonypandy, beyond the railway station and the excavations for the new link road from the Tonyrefail by-pass, is **Trealaw**, a largely residential area and site of the Carnegie Welfare Centre which provides maternity and child welfare services. Here, too, is the Maes-yr-Haf Community Centre which has been established in the former Educational Settlement, an amenity that played a vital role in providing a cultural and social life for this part of the Rhondda.

Another road to Tonyrefail and the Vale of Glamorgan leads south from Tonypandy and passes through the extensive village of **Penygraig** where a 100 acre land reclamation scheme has brought a fresh greenness to the hillside. This land, used as playing fields and a new school, was formerly the tips of the Nantgwynn and Naval collieries.

On the east side of Penygraig are the smaller community of **Williamstown** and the large area of **Dinas**, a place whose name derives from the Welsh word for "city". Coal was discovered here at the turn of the 19th century and Dinas grew into the first modern settlement in the Rhondda. Walter Coffin was the man who exploited the coal at Dinas and his name is still remembered here. Dinas, today, is mostly residential although there are industrial estates here and at Penygraig and Williamstown. There are parks at Penygraig and Dinas whilst a privately-developed rugby ground with covered stands and floodlights has been provided on part of the former Naval colliery site.

Tonypandy's northern neighbour is **Llwynypia**, an area where extensive industrial development has taken place on the valley floor. The hillsides, however, retain their natural beauty and one can see a belt of oak woodland which covers the lower slopes of Craig Pont Rhondda. This is just a fragment of the dense deciduous forests that once filled all the Rhondda valleys. At Llwynypia, too, is the house and estate of Glyncornel, a much-valued amenity that is detailed later in this guide. Suffice here to say that it is home, amongst other things, of the Pentref Bowmen who have one of the finest archery centres in Europe.

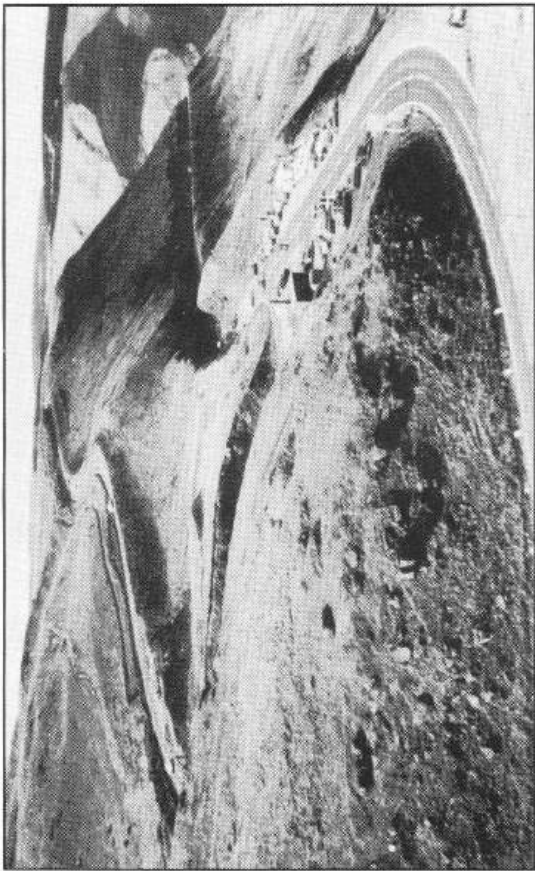
Llwynypia has other recreational amenities and it has, too, a nursery school (**Ynyscynon**) that was opened back in 1936. It was a pioneering school for, with one other at Bradford, it was one of the very first two schools of its kind to be opened in this country.

Treorchy

The most westerly of the Rhondda towns, Treorchy has a busy shopping centre and is the home of the famous Parc and Dare Hall, a building whose story is detailed later in this guide. This is now the only cinema in the Borough, all others having closed.

Treorchy has a strong cultural tradition and is the home of several bands and choirs including the Treorchy Royal Welsh Choir, the oldest in Wales. Following a command performance at Windsor Castle in 1885, the choir so impressed Queen Victoria that she granted it the right to call itself Royal. In 1928 the Royal Welsh National Eisteddfod was held at Treorchy and the Gorsedd Circle remains to mark that occasion.

In 1939 a large clothing factory was built in Treorchy and was the first change to the traditional coal-mining pattern of the Rhondda. Other factories have since followed including a number on former colliery sites. The town has, too, one of the most modern comprehensive schools in the valley and one whose facilities include an indoor swimming pool that is used by children from all over this end of the Rhondda.



Bwlch-y-Clawdd Road, Treorchy.

South of Treorchy, beyond the railway station, is the Pengelli-Ystradfechan recreational complex with playing fields, bowling green, tennis courts and an attractively arranged children's playground with a paddling pool. Beyond extends the residential village of **Cwmpare** with, above it, the mountain road that corkscrews over Bwlch-y-Clawdd Mountain to the Vale of Glamorgan and to Port Talbot.

Treorchy's eastern neighbour along the valley is **Pentre** where the Rhondda Borough Council has one of its offices (the other is at Porth) and where the Council hold its meetings. Pentre, too, has an attractive park and is the headquarters of the famous championship Cory Band. Factories at Pentre include a Remploy establishment where seriously disabled people are employed.

One of the Rhondda's most notable buildings is situated close to the Council Offices at Pentre. This is St. Peter's Church, a handsome building whose sturdy tower is a very prominent local feature. Built in 1880 in the Early English style of architecture, St. Peter's has been called the 'Cathedral of the Rhondda' and has recently been painstakingly restored. The tree-edged church grounds have also been restored, replanted and landscaped and the Church Hall, in a corner of this site, now plays an extensive part in the local community scene.

Across the valley from Pentre is **Ton Pentre** where the remains of prehistoric towns were discovered. Here is the football ground of Ton Pentre AFC, a club playing in the Welsh League's Premier Division.

Continuous with Pentre is **Ystrad** where, in the 6th century, the very first local place of Christian worship was dedicated to St. Dyfodwy. At nearby **Gelli** is an extensive industrial area whose 19 acres were created by a reclamation scheme on the site of the abandoned Gelli Colliery. Here, too, between Gelli and Ystrad, is Gelligaled Park, a delightful open space whose many amenities include tennis courts, a bowling green, paddling pool and, of course, the modern Rhondda Sports Centre. This million pound centre was opened in 1975 and is detailed later in the guide. Twenty years previously the park had been the setting for the presentation, by the Duke of Edinburgh, of the Borough's Charter of Incorporation.

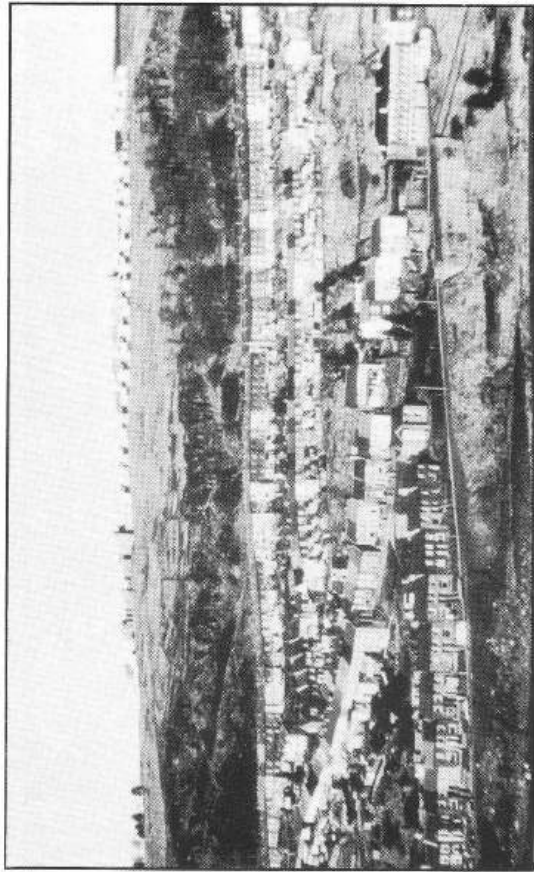
East of Ystrad and on the mountain road across into Rhondda Fach is **Penrhys**, site of the only golf club and course in the Borough — and one whose members enjoy superb views as they play.

Penrhys is said to take its name from the fact that Rhys ap Tewdwr, Prince of South Wales, was either taken prisoner or beheaded here. The great significance of Penrhys, however, is St. Mary's Well with its image of the Virgin Mary and its waters which are said to have had miraculous powers equal to those of Walsingham. The image of Mary was taken away and burnt by the order of Thomas Cromwell in 1538 and the present figure dates only from 1953. Pilgrimages to the well have, once again, been resumed.

Beyond Treorchy is the northern and highest extremity of Rhondda Fawr, an area of rugged beauty dominated by Pen Pych (The Sentinel), a commanding mountain. To the north a mountain road winds over the Rhigos Plateau and affords fine mountain views, especially of the lovely Brecon Beacons.

Treherbert, the largest village at this end of the valley, is the present terminus of the railway up from Pontypridd and Cardiff. The village, which is the headquarters of the Selsig Amateur Operatic Society, has an attractive park with bowling and tennis amenities, a children's paddling pool and one of Rhondda's three outdoor swimming pools.

On the north side of Treherbert is **Blaenrhondda**, a village that was designated a conservation area in 1976. It contains some of the best surviving examples of late 19th century housing built for miners at the local pits. The road up through the village peters out beneath the craggy slopes of Mynydd Blaenrhondda whilst another, and much smaller, village where the road runs only onto the mountainside is **Blaencwm** to the west of Treherbert. This is a quite remote area of mountains and forests with a fine beauty all its own. At one time passenger trains passed this way en route from Treherbert to Bridgend by way of the two mile long tunnel that pierced the mountains below Blaencwm. This route, however, is but a thing of the past.



Typical terraced housing at Tylorstown with Penrhys housing estate above.

Ferndale

The main town in Rhondda Fach, Ferndale lies in the upper part of that valley and nestles under the towering crags (which rise to 1,384 feet and more) of the mountains. Here, too, beneath the steep slopes is a natural lake used for fishing and boating. Darran Park, the town's main recreational area, includes an artificial playing field, bowling and tennis facilities and an outdoor swimming pool. Across the valley at the suburb of Blaenllechau is a smaller park and playing field.

Ferndale's shopping centre, the principal one in this valley, is now a commercial improvement area and changes are under way. Derelict land at Highfield has been reclaimed for housing and industry whilst the once vast shale tip known as Banana Tip has also been reclaimed for industrial and recreational use.

To the north of Ferndale at the head of the Rhondda Fach is **Maerdy** beyond which the mountain road climbs over the heights to Aberdare and the Cynon Valley. It was at Maerdy that the great depression of the 1920s and '30s began (and which quickly spread throughout the Rhondda) and yet, ironically, it was at Maerdy that the last colliery survived until July 1986 when the last coal was brought up in this valley. Coal is still mined at this pit but the coal now goes out into the Cynon Valley through a link with the Tower Colliery at Hirwaun.

Maerdy, which has its own small shopping centre, has a turf football field that is the home ground of Ferndale Athletic who play in the Premier Division of the Welsh League. At Maerdy Park, a pleasant open space, is a children's pool as well as tennis courts and a bowling green.

Down the narrow valley from Ferndale is **Tylorstown**, from where the mountain road crosses by way of Penrhys into Rhondda Fawr. A place with a strong community spirit, Tylorstown is the home of the Pendyrus Male Voice Choir which is well known in musical circles both here and overseas. It is at Tylorstown where a quite ambitious land reclamation scheme has provided space for industry, for a health centre and for recreational needs. Tylorstown merges, on its southern side, into **Pontygaith**, a village with a number of industries and which is mainly residential.



Llyn-y-Forwen, Darran Park, Ferndale.

Rhondda's History

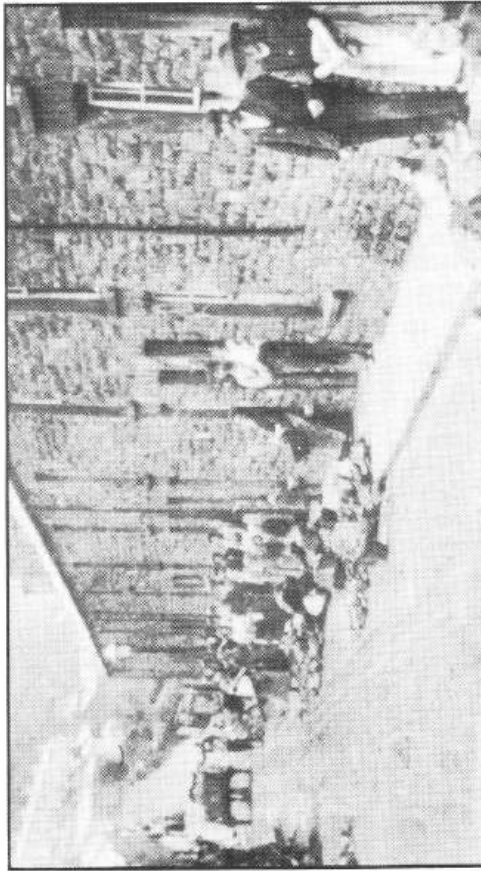
Rhondda Borough Council could hardly have adopted a more appropriate motto for its crest than the words "Hwy Clod Na Golud" (Fame Outlasts Wealth) for those words encapture all that Rhondda stands for. Long after the heyday of the coal industry, the Rhondda will be remembered; the miner may now have gone but the unique community spirit and cultural heritage lives on.

The name 'Rhondda' is a compound word that derives from *rhawdd* and the old Welsh adjective *gnou*. It is thought that 'rhawdd' is comparable to *ad-rawdd* which means to recite or relate; thus the river by its sound is speaking aloud. The second syllable, *gnou*, becomes *gnau* or *gno* (as in *Gwyddneu* or *Gwyddno*) and so, in this way, Rhodddneu becomes Rhodddna. It is not unusual in the Gwentian dialect to have 'dn' or 'ddn' metathesised into 'ndd' which gives a local plural and thus Rhodddna became Rhondda.

The industrial history of the Rhondda, which has covered the last 150 years has, to a great extent, overshadowed the earlier periods in the development of the valley communities. The story, in fact, began some six thousand years ago when the valley was inhabited by immigrants during the Mesolithic period, these first residents building sites for themselves on the mountain tops. Later, in the Bronze Age (some two thousand years ago), dense forests of oak, elm and alder filled the valleys and pine and birch woods extended up the mountain slopes. Then nomadic tribes built cairns on the hilltops and they built, too, standing stones and stone circles of which Hen Dre'r Gelli is an excellent example.

During the Iron Age — which extended from the 6th century BC through to the 1st century AD — the local inhabitants still lived on the mountain tops and not in the densely wooded valleys. It was during this period that great hillforts — like Maendy Camp — were built, later to be used in the defence of the area against the invading Romans. Excavations in the district have revealed the existence of early settlements at Maendy, Ton Pentre and Gelli — most of these are dated back to 1700 BC.

Excavations in 1909 to form a reservoir out of Llyn Fawr, revealed a long sword and cauldron which are now to be seen in the National Museum of Wales. The sword, believed to be the only one of its kind ever found in the British Isles, is similar to those forged in the Cap d'Or district of Burgundy; the cauldron is probably of Irish origin.



Coal delivery day in old Rhondda.

Up until the mid 19th century the Rhondda was almost unknown to the rest of the country. The whole area was sparsely populated, scattered farmsteads dotted the mountain sides and, in a few places, there were clusters of labourers cottages but hardly worthy of the name of villages. Forestry and the rearing of sheep and cattle were the principal occupations although corn and other cereals were grown in areas where the former forests had been cleared away. These cereals were ground at local watermills whilst the wool from the local sheep was spun and woven into cloth or flannel which was bleached at the Tonypany mill.

In those days the rivers were crossed by rather frail wooden bridges. The water was crystal clear and abounded with trout and salmon, the excellent fishing attracting anglers from as far afield as Aberdare and Merthyr. On all sides were thick hillside woods, mostly of mature oaks much used as timber for naval ships. The Rhondda scenery was, indeed, much praised by travellers. In 1578 Rhys Meyrick told us that "in this valley may be seen some of the finest touches of untouched nature" whilst B. H. Malkin, in 1803, described the Rhondda as the most beautiful of all the mountain districts in Wales with upper peaks as the 'Alps of Glamorgan'. Travelling in the valley in 1847 — by which time industrialisation was near — Charles Cliffe called the upper Rhondda Fawr as the 'gem of South Wales and hardly surpassed through the Alpine North'.

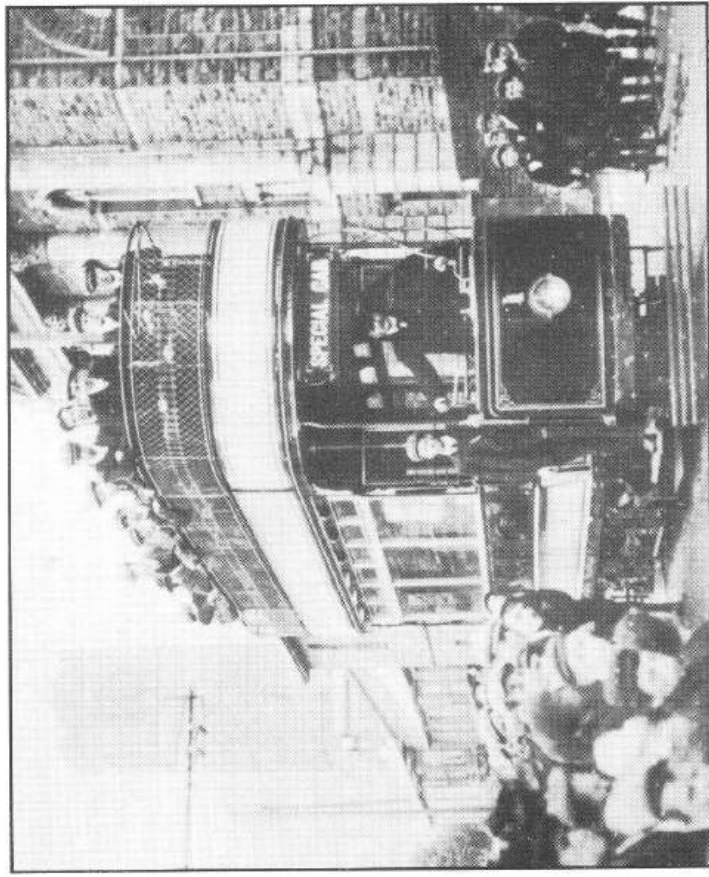
However, with the start of commercial coal-mining at Dinas at the turn of the 19th century, changes were on the way. The subsequent feverish development and expansion of this new-found wealth altered Rhondda's face almost overnight with the valleys disfigured by savage scars and with the very name Rhondda becoming synonymous with industrialism.

In the course of a single century the Rhondda became the most intensively mined area in Britain, probably in the world. The Dinas mine, near the eastern end of the valley, began work in 1809 and the railway company, aiming to expand as the coal was found, offered £500 to any man who could find coal in the Rhondda. In 1851 William Clark, Chief Agent to the Bute mineral estates, proved the existence of seams of steam coal near Treherbert and mining began in 1855. Seven years later more rich seams were found at Ferndale where production commenced in 1862.

These were only the beginnings. Output from the Rhondda collieries passed the million tons in 1869 and by 1890 it was seven million tons which was nearly half of all the South Wales output. At its peak the valleys had 66 mines in production with a yearly output of nine and a half million tons. Of the great mining achievements of those times little now remains but the often terrible disasters of the pits will always remain etched in the valley's history.

The disastrous effect of the First World War on the coal export trade (for until that time a vast tonnage of Rhondda coal was sent by the many rail routes down to the docks at Cardiff and Barry) was only the first of a series of blows which crippled production of coal. The free trade of the early days was replaced by economic nationalism. Oil emerged as a competitor and the collieries themselves showed signs of age with transport costs increasing as the workings extended. Wages fell and labour troubles culminated in the long-drawn-out strike of 1926. The Rhondda suffered a period of intense depression and although the outbreak of World War Two saw an upturn it saw, too, the virtual extinction of exports of coal.

The decline in coal mining continued through the 1960s and 1970s with the country's ever increasing dependence on oil. The last Rhondda colliery, that at Maerdy, finally closed in July 1986 with miners bringing sadly to the surface souvenir lumps of coal. The seams, as long as they hold out, are still being worked but the coal produced is now sent out through the Cynon Valley to the north. Elsewhere in the South Wales coalfield best quality coking coal is still produced but in the Rhondda coal no longer dominates the scene and a way of life has passed for ever.



Rhondda's first Tram, Pentre, July 1908.

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BARCLAYS

18

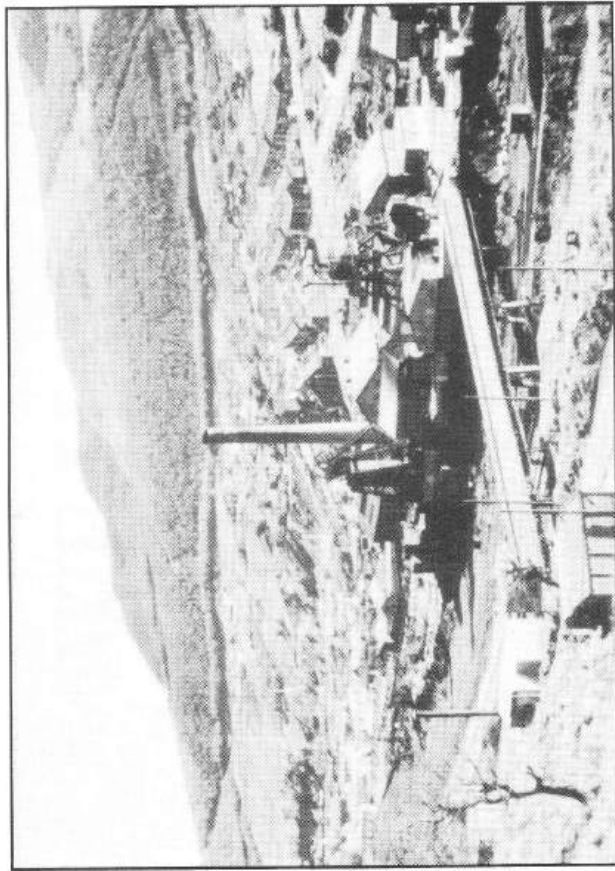
The Rhondda Heritage Park

Coal mining may have ceased in the Rhondda but the memory of it is ever alive—and will remain alive for generations to come in an ambitious scheme, the Rhondda Heritage Park. This scheme, which is to be developed on the sites of the former Lewis Merthyr and Ty Mawr collieries at the very eastern end of the Borough, is being planned by the Rhondda Borough Council in conjunction with the neighbouring Taff-Ely Borough Council, the Mid Glamorgan County Council, the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board.

This scheme, one of the most extensive and far reaching in its scope of any planned in this country, will be started by a Rhondda Festival in 1987 and will then be developed in stages through 1988 until final completion in the early 1990s. The main aim is to help in the regeneration of the Rhondda, to create jobs and renew confidence in the valley. The need for such a venture arises out of the sheer scale of dereliction caused by the rundown of coal mining and out of the need to move away from the common idea of Rhondda as an unattractive place of heavy industry.

The Heritage Park will occupy a strategic site at the mouth of the Rhondda valleys on either side of Trehafod village and between the towns of Porth and Pontypridd. It will thus form a major tourist 'gateway' to the valleys and will present, in a highly visual form, the two broad themes of heritage and countryside. It will form an important focus for tourists to South Wales, drawn here by the unique 'pulling power' of the name Rhondda. It can, too, be developed historically down the valley with Cardiff and its docks and linked with such existing heritage centres as Cardiff Castle, the Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museums, St. Fagan's Welsh Folk Museum and the 'Big Pit' near Pontypool. The ultimate aim is to establish the Rhondda Heritage Park on the tourist circuit alongside such places as Bath, York and Stratford-on-Avon.

It is proposed that the centre would depict life as it was in the Rhondda valleys in the 1850s and 1920s. The scheme envisages recreating the villages through which the grandfathers and great-grandfathers of the present valley communities once trod on the linked sites which once formed the Lewis Merthyr and Ty Mawr collieries. The result will be a mid 19th century village on the Ty Mawr site, showing the time at which the beginnings of mining were superimposing themselves on a traditional rural community, using people in period costumes to illustrate as many occupations and other aspects of valley life as possible. A mineral railway centre will also be created here with links to the proposed Wales Railway Centre at Cardiff. On the Lewis Merthyr site there will be a village to recreate an era of great historic drama using available materials and including the personal memories of the people who lived in the valleys in the 1920s. The story of coal will be centred on this site and world-famed choirs will perform at a purpose-built auditorium.



Lewis Merthyr colliery site.

The heritage centre would not be a place of study, rather a human experience for ordinary people, including children, in a living community. The emphasis would be on the enjoyment and enlightenment of people from all educational backgrounds. The most important new feature would be the emphasis on people and activities rather than buildings and objects.

The park will have six main aims which will be:—

1. To bring to life the social and cultural story of coal.
2. To provide 'live' performances of choirs, bands and orchestras and thus achieve for the Rhondda a similar reputation to that enjoyed by the Aldeburgh Festival in Suffolk.
3. To develop access to the sites by rail and through the sites by a transport system.
4. To develop, as family attractions, the themed village street and children's 'fun' park.
5. To provide heritage trails, souvenir shops, overnight accommodation, parking for a thousand cars and eating and drinking centres.

The development of the colliery sites will be carried out within an overall landscape scheme in sympathy with the greening of the valleys. Recent and planned road improvements will give easy access to the site which will be but 30 minutes from the M4 motorway. Rail access to Trehafod station, central to the site, will be improved when the new 'sprinter' trains are introduced shortly.

The fundamental aim of the Rhondda Heritage Park is to unify that section of the valley between Porth and Pontypridd with a riverside park running through Trehafod and including links up both sides of the valley onto the natural open ground on the mountains above.

Things To See And Do In The Rhondda

Although, as we have just seen, the Heritage Park is an exciting amenity being created, Rhondda has a surprising number of features to be explored as well as a wide range of leisure activities to be enjoyed. There are scenic walks and historic sites; the interesting Glyncornel House; sporting opportunities in plenty; the famous Parc and Dare Hall and a host of musical and choral societies.

Historic Sites

The most romantic of the Borough's ancient sites is the **Shrine of 'Our Lady of Penrhys'**, a site that also affords splendid views of the Rhondda Fawr. The legend of the site is lost in obscurity but many pilgrims came here to the well whose waters were said to have healing powers. In the early years of the 13th century, the Cistercian monks from Llantanarm Abbey in Monmouthshire built themselves a grange at Penrhys where some of them lived a simple agricultural life. The story goes that some of them, whilst working in the fields, discovered a highly ornate statue of the Holy Mother, a statue grafted between the branches of a massive oak tree standing near the well. The monks built a chapel and shrine to house the statue and Penrhys soon became a centre of devotion and the centre, too, for vast numbers of pilgrims who came to pay homage and to be healed. Although the shrine was destroyed at the Dissolution and the statue was burnt by Thomas Cromwell, pilgrims still continued to visit Penrhys. The present statue, carved from Portland stone, was erected in 1953 and the whole site, including the well, was renovated in 1977.

High on Mynydd Maendy, the **Maendy Camp Site** is a defensive enclosure of the Iron Age. It is protected by rocky slopes on three sides and by a marsh on the fourth; it has natural defences strengthened by drystone walls and its outer entrance, with its inturned walls, formed an easily defended passageway. During excavations in 1901, a Bronze Age cairn was found and contained flints, pottery and part of a bronze dagger.

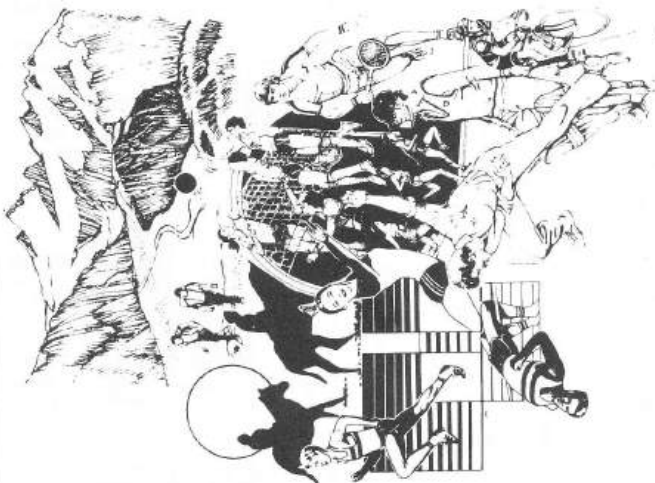
Of a similar period is **Hen Dre'r Gelli**, the site of a buried prehistoric town high on Mynydd y Gelli with superb views down into Rhondda Fawr. Here are remains of an Iron Age hut settlement and a Bronze Age stone circle and burial chamber which was excavated at the turn of the century.

Rather newer are the **Gorsedd Stones** which were erected for the National Eisteddfod held in Treorchy in 1928. They are close to the Treorchy to Ton-Pentre road and from the site one has panoramic views across the town of Treorchy.

RHONDDA

LEISURE & TOURISM

The Rhondda holds many surprises in store for both the residents and visitors alike and one thing that all can be assured of is a warm and friendly welcome. Most exciting of all the new projects is, quite naturally, the RHONDDA HERITAGE CENTRE based at the old Ty Mawr/Lewis Merthyr Colliery sites. This will be a tourist attraction of both regional and national importance, offering the opportunity of using the past to secure the future well-being of the Rhondda Valleys.



FACILITIES

- * ARCHERY. Field Archery Centre, Glyncoed Woods.
- * ATHLETICS. King George's Athletics Track.
- * ARTIFICIAL PITCHES. Two all-weather football Omniturf pitches.
- * BOWLS. 14 Outdoor Greens and one indoor.
- * COMMUNITY CENTRES. Penrhys and Maes-yr-Haf.
- * ENVIRONMENTAL CENTRE/YOUTH HOSTEL. Glyncoed, 62-bed hostel.
- * FISHING. Fresh and Coarse.
- * GOLF. 18-hole Mountain Course.
- * PARKS. 30 Mini Units.
- * SPORTS FIELDS. 18 Fields.
- * SPORTS CENTRE. Offers 'Sport for All' — 35 activities.
- * SCENIC WALKS. Splendid Mountain Walks with breathtaking views.
- * SITES OF INTEREST. Ancient historical sites and Holy Shrine.
- * SWIMMING. 3 Outdoor and 2 Indoor Pools.
- * THEATRE/CINEMA. Parc and Dare, Treorchy.
- * BANDS AND CHOIRS. World famous Brass Bands and Male Voice Choirs.

FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:
 IAN HILL, LEISURE SERVICES OFFICER,
 Rhondda Sports Centre, Ystrad, Rhondda, Mid Glamorgan
 Telephone: TONYPANDY 0443 434093

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INTERESTED? . . .

Look ahead to a future in Rhondda, an area which is a pleasure to live in. Rhondda needs industry and industrialists, in turn, need Rhondda with its many and varied attractions.

Don't Delay . . . Follow the Lead taken by others

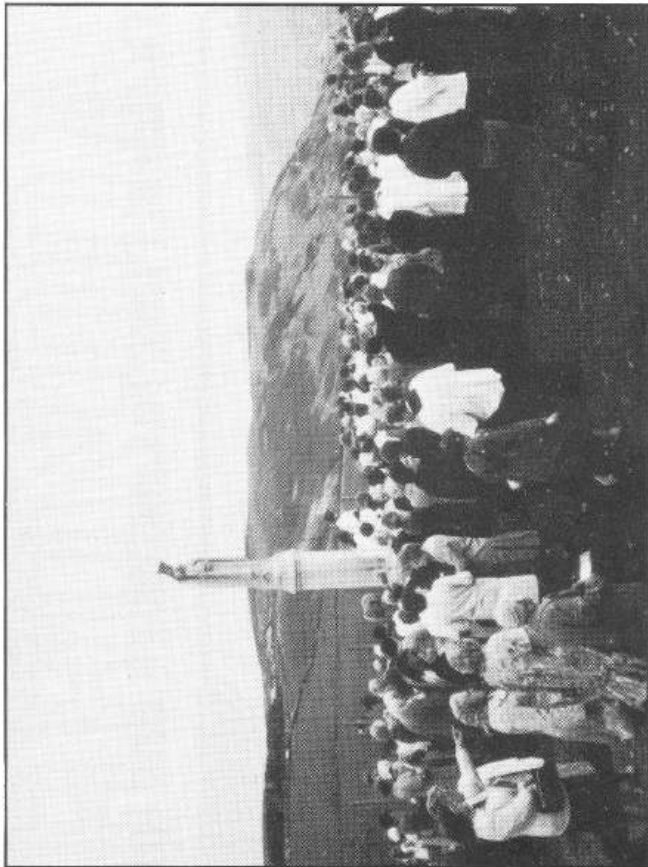
WHERE TO FIND US:

BY ROAD: Conveniently situated near the road network of fast dual carriageways serving Cardiff and the M4 Motorway. Rhondda is able to take full advantage of the rapid transit facilities linking the Welsh Capital and major British and International destinations.

BY RAIL: Inter-City 125 from London/Heathrow (Reading) to Cardiff in two hours. Birmingham to Cardiff in two and a half hours. Liverpool and Manchester to Cardiff in four hours.

For Further Information and Constructive Advice contact:

TONY B. ROBERTS,
 Borough Secretary/Deputy Chief Executive,
 Rhondda Borough Council,
 Municipal Offices, PENTRE, RHONDDA
 Tel: Tonypany (0443) 434551



Shrine of 'Our Lady of Penrhys'.

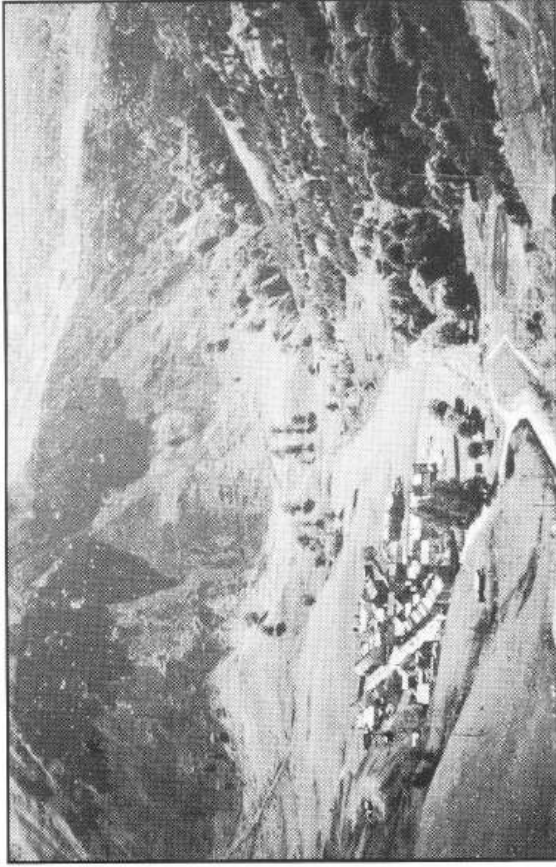
Scenic Walks

The visitor to the Rhondda can easily explore and enjoy the splendid countryside that is part of the Borough's rich heritage. The valleys, gouged out by glaciers long ago, are set deep amidst miles of rolling mountains and forests. Especially spectacular is the head of the Rhondda Fawr with its glaciated features such as the superb bowl shaped cirques as at Cwm Saerbren. These, the most southerly features of their kind in Britain, provide habitats for alpine flora. Also of interest at the head of Rhondda Fawr are the impressive waterfalls above Blaencwm and Blaenrhondda where streams flow over the sandstone outcrops, relics of past mines and ancient hill forts.

All of this beautiful country is criss-crossed by an almost unlimited number of routes suitable for walkers of all ages and abilities. Space in this guide precludes giving full details of all the walks available but examples can include the 2 mile Blaenrhondda Waterfalls Walk which visits three waterfalls and the stone huts and enclosures of Hen Dre'r Mynydd (the old town on the mountain); the 3 miles Craig-y-Llyn Ridge Walk which affords splendid views of Llyn Fawr, a natural lake that has been used as a reservoir since 1911; the two mile walk through Treherbert Forest and the Forest Walks, of similar length, through the Blaencwm and Nantgwyddon Forests; and three waymarked walks within the beautiful grounds of the Glyncomnel Centre. The loveliest of these is probably the Craig Pont Rhondda Walk whose five miles feature oak woodlands, sandstone outcrops, Iron and Bronze Age remains and extensive views along and across the Rhondda Valley.

Further details of all these walks can be obtained from the Project Officer at Glyncomnel Centre or from the Borough Council's Leisure Services Officer at the Rhondda Sports Centre.

The fact that several of the walks are, in fact, Forest Walks is a reminder that, since a small start in 1961, the Forestry Commission has been steadily acquiring poor mountain grazing land and planting trees. Some 8,000 acres have been planted and the forests, especially at Cwm Parc, Llwynypia and Trehafod, are now part of the Rhondda scene and are producing timber on a significant scale. Sitka spruce, ideal for high areas, is widely grown but other trees are also grown including Norway spruce, silver firs, Western hemlock, lodgepole pines and the rather lovely Japanese larch. Broadleaved trees, too, are grown including beech, red oak, birch and rowan. One of the most attractive areas is the Tyle Coch hillside west of Treorchy. As well as providing forest roads and miles of footpaths, the forests are also extensively used for orienteering, a recreational pursuit popular with youth organisations.



Dramatic view of Pen Pych (The Sentinel), Blaenrhondda.

Glyncomnel

Glyncomnel, situated in 75 acres of natural woodland on the mountainside at Llwynypia, is a place rich in history and bearing a name that, quite aptly, means "corner of the glen". The grounds themselves are of especial interest for the top section, mainly woods of sessile oak, is a site of special scientific interest.

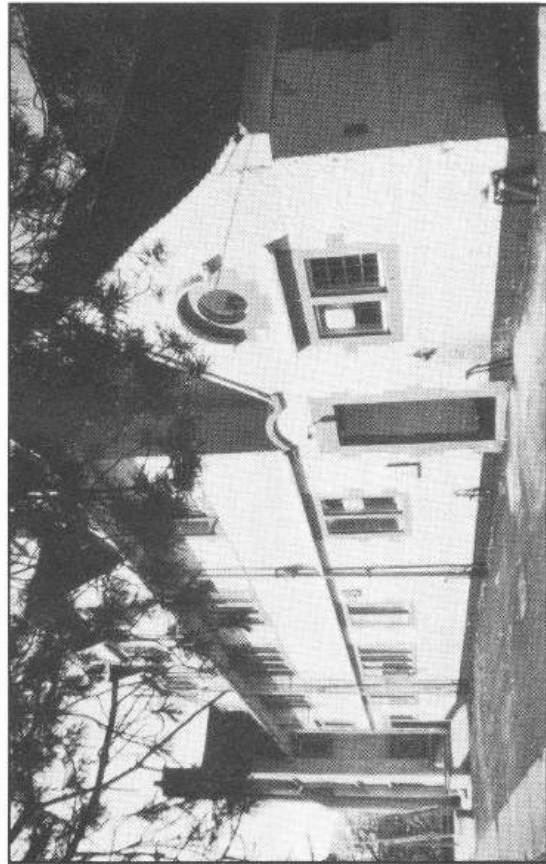
The story of Glyncomnel goes back to the middle of the 19th century when Hen (Old) Glyncomnel, to the right of the lodge as you enter the gates, was the home of Archibald Hood. He was said to be a "man of a progressive turn of mind" and in 1860 he came down from Scotland to mine for coal in the Rhondda. He sank the valley's chief colliery "The Glamorgan" which at its peak of production yielded 2,000 tons of coal a day. Many Scottish workers came with Hood and the colliery became known locally as the "Scotch" colliery. Hood built terraced houses with gardens for these workers and also erected buildings for social and educational purposes. Many of these buildings were given Scottish names — such as St. Andrew's Church, Inverleith Terrace, and Holyrood Terrace.

Glyncornel House itself was far grander than the "Hen Glyncornel". It was built somewhere between 1903 and 1909 of locally made bricks and became the home of Sir Leonard Llewellyn. From its courtyard one can see the remains of an orchard and extensive vegetable garden with, nearby, the former stables and site of a croquet and tennis lawn. The cobbled courtyard itself was covered with tarmacadam when the building became a hospital in 1959.

In 1979 the Rhondda Borough Council took over the house which has since been transformed and houses a wide range of organisations which work together to form a tourist and educational centre. On the ground floor an exhibition room is used by the Rhondda Museum Trust to show life in the Rhondda from the earliest coal mining days. Glyncornel House, which was opened by Viscount Tonypanddy, former speaker of the House of Commons, recently won a Prince of Wales Award.

The grounds, because of the sessile oak wood, have been declared a site of special scientific interest and, in connection with this, an Environmental Study Centre has been set up and is widely used by schools and interested adult groups.

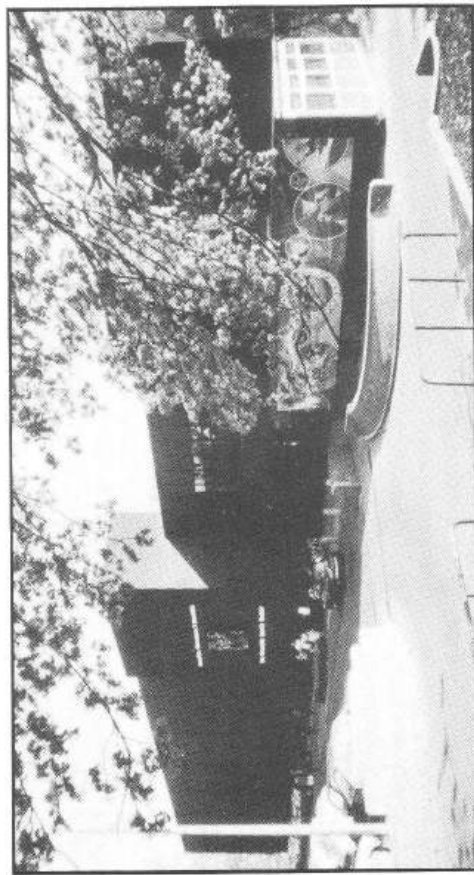
A 60 bed youth hostel has been established at Glyncornel and also within the grounds is a lake stocked for game fishing. It is always filled with trout during the season and much work is undertaken to maintain breeding pools. The Glyncornel Anglers have sole fishing rights although the public may walk along the lake's banks. The Pentref Bowmen have, in the grounds, one of the finest field archery sites in Great Britain and here the British and European Field Archery Competition has been held over the past four years.



Glyncornel Environmental Study Centre.

Sport

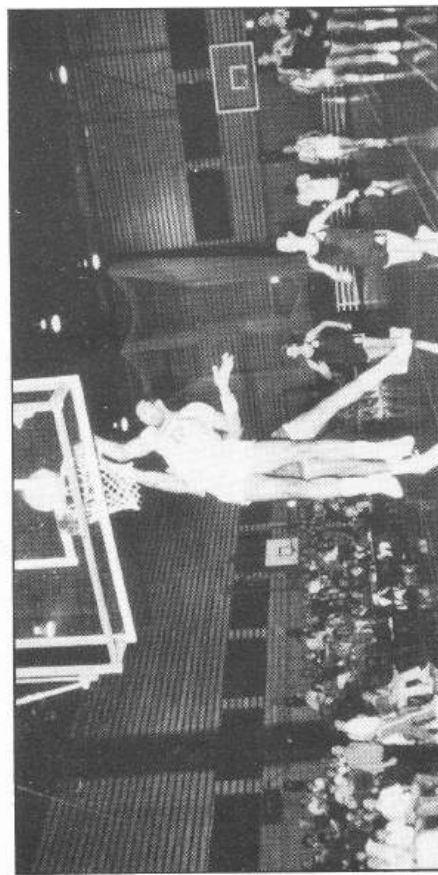
The Rhondda has long held a reputation for the quality of its sportsmen even though sporting facilities in the valleys were limited. The Borough Council has however, carried through an extensive programme of leisure provision and, as the following notes show, there are now excellent facilities for sport.



Rhondda Sports Centre.

Pride of place must go to the **Rhondda Sports Centre** at the Gelligaled Park at Ystrad. Since it was opened in 1975 this fine centre is used by over 400,000 people a year. Of handsome modern design the centre includes an indoor swimming pool, main sports hall, sauna and solarium suite, function rooms, lounge bar and cafeteria. It caters for all manner of sports ranging from swimming, five-a-side football, table tennis and squash through to ballroom dancing, athletics, netball, volleyball, and aikido — and taking in many other activities in between!

A crèche is available; an Evergreen Club is provided for older people; and the centre has excellent, and much used, facilities for the disabled. The centre caters as much for the casual user as the dedicated sportsman and such rooms as the lounge bar offer changes to socialise after or instead of exercising. The centre, however, does not only cater for sport — it provides pop concerts, orchestral evenings, choral concerts, dinner dances, wedding receptions and a wide range of other activities.



Basketball at the Rhondda Sports Centre.

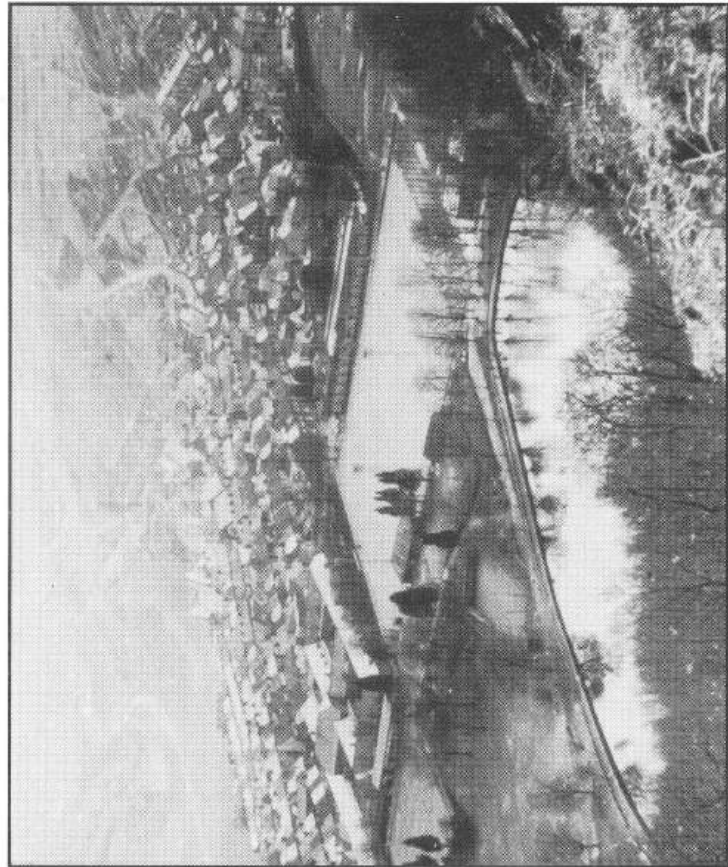
The Borough has now two **Outdoor All-Weather Playing Surfaces** — at Darran Park, Ferndale and the Pentre Recreation Ground. These grounds have new artificial playing surfaces and provide the first full size pitches of their kind in Wales. They offer, regardless of weather conditions, up to 60 hours usage each week with the added advantage of floodlights and changing rooms.

Rhondda has, in total, four **Swimming Pools** — the indoor pool at the Rhondda Sports Centre and outdoor pools at Treherbert Park, Darran Park (Ferndale) and the Bronwydd Park at Porth. These outdoor pools are, of course, seasonal but the Borough Council plans to cover them with transparent roofing which will enable year-round use to be enjoyed.

For children, paddling pools are also provided — at the Pengelli complex at Treorchy; at Pentre Park; Gelligaied Park; King George V Park; Ynyscynon Park; Penygraig Park; Wattstown Park and Penrhys Park.

Parks and Playing Fields are located throughout the valleys. Including the 75 acres of Glyncoedel, the Borough has a total of 24 parks and playing fields with facilities in them for football, rugby, cricket, bowls, tennis, athletics and coarse fishing and with children's playgrounds in several. Fuller details of the sports available can be obtained from the Leisure Services Department at the Rhondda Sports Centre.

High on the mountain ridge that separates the two valleys is the **Golf Course** of the Rhondda Golf Club. This 18 hole course at Penrhys has a recently improved clubhouse and welcomes visitors.



Outdoor all-weather playing surface at Darran Park, Ferndale.

Community Centres

The Borough has two community centres — at Penrhys and Trealaw. That at the Penrhys Housing Estate is a modern purpose-built centre whilst that serving Trealaw is the Maes-yr-Haf Hall. Both centres cater for small and intimate group activities.

The Parc and Dare Hall

This splendid building, the most prominent in the centre of Treorchy and with a name that is known throughout Wales, now belongs to the Rhondda Borough Council who have restored it to something of its former glory. At a time when so many places of entertainment are turning to bingo to survive, such a restoration is an act of faith in the continuing need for such a building.

The Station Road frontage of the hall was built in 1903 as a Working-men's Institute, construction being paid for by miners at the rate of a penny in every pound that they earned — and take-home wages were then less than £2 a week! The building gained in popularity as a meeting place, a warden was employed and the basement was used as the first place of worship by local Roman Catholics.

In 1913 the main building was erected. It was intended to be a music hall on the lines of those in other industrial towns but as the craze of 'moving pictures' was sweeping across the country from America it was decided to open the building as a cinema.

From the start the Parc and Dare was packing in audiences to see films starring Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, the Keystone Cops and Rudolph Valentino. Stage performances, too, were featured with a Semi-National Eisteddfod each Whitsuntide.

In 1926 the national coal strike severely affected the running of the theatre. Miners could no longer support it and, facing bankruptcy, they were forced to sell to the Ocean Coal Company who greedily snapped up a bargain. The year 1930 saw crowds flooding in to see the first 'talkies' and the 1930s also saw the first visits of 'swing' and dance bands. The first British band was that of Vic Oliver who returned year after year — so great was his local popularity that he was given the Freedom of the District by the Borough Council.

The nationalisation of the coal industry gave the miners the chance to re-purchase the Parc and Dare. The local lodge of the N.U.M. paid £35,000 for the hall in 1952 and throughout the 'fifties the popularity of programmes brought an annual profit of several million pounds. However, bad times were to follow as television claimed the former audiences and colliery closures added to a decline in patronage. Closure seemed inevitable and in 1975 the management donated the building to the Rhondda Borough Council who have, to date, spent almost half a million pounds in renovation and restoration.

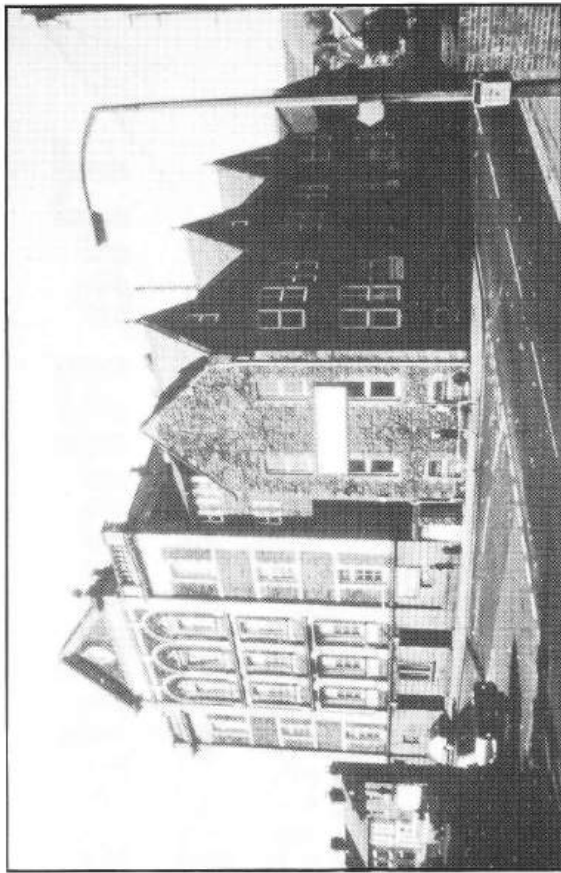
Today's Parc and Dare theatre, which is still undergoing certain improvements, has an auditorium that has been refitted with 900 new seats, new lighting and public address systems, modernised stereo cinema and an August Forster grand piano. It has, too, a re-equipped and refurbished lounge bar.

As well as presenting the latest films, the theatre stages productions by local amateur companies and by such major touring companies as Welsh National Opera, the London Festival Ballet and the Scottish Ballet. The four Rhondda championship brass bands also play here and male voice choirs also perform. The Borough Council have strong links with the South East Wales Arts Association and, as well as sponsoring many major events, the Council and Arts Council have built up a community dance programme and a community arts project — both have their offices at the Parc and Dare which can thus really be said to cater for all tastes.

The official Good Beer Guide in this area



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Parc and Dare Hall, Treorchy.

Choirs and Bands

The Rhondda has for many decades been a centre of cultural life and the home of writers, actors, musicians and splendid male voice choirs.

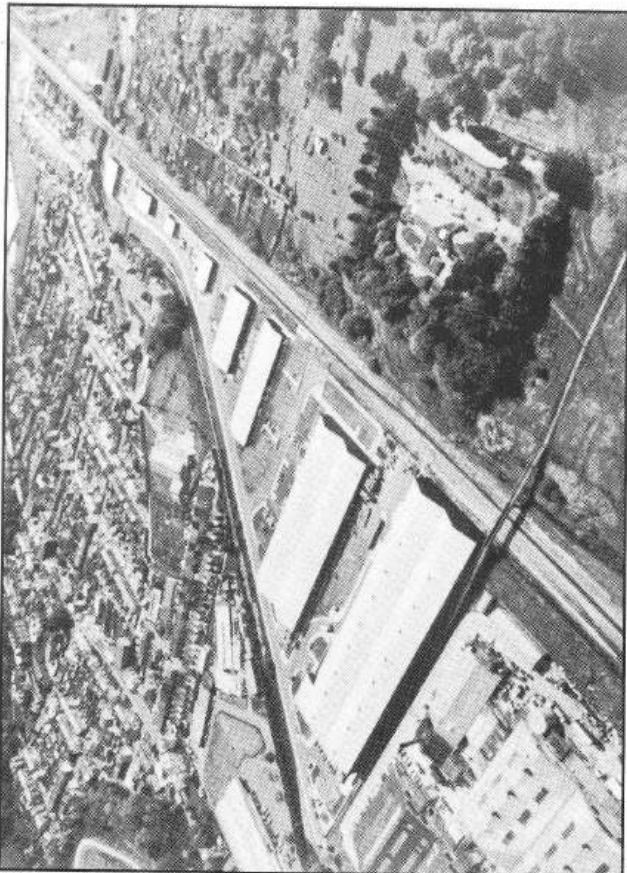
There are no less than four championships **Brass Bands** in the Borough including the Cory Band which has won both the National Championship of Great Britain and the European Championship. In all the Rhondda has seven brass bands — the Cory Band; Parc and Dare Band; Mid-Rhondda Band; Lewis Merthyr Band; Ynysuir & Tymawr Colliery Band; Tylorstown & Maerdy Colliery Band and the Treherbert and District Band. It has, too, one major **Orchestra** — the Rhondda Symphony Orchestra.

The Rhondda has been blessed, too, with some of the finest male voice **Choirs** in this, the land of song. The Treorchy and Pendyrus Male Voice Choirs are probably the most famous but the valleys have another eleven choirs — not all for the male voice however. They are the Maerdy Choral Society, the Ferndale Male Choir, the Cambrian Male Voice Choir, Cor Meibion Morlais, Treorchy Royal Welsh Choir, the Conway Singers, Ashford Ladies Choir, Treorchy & District Choral Society, Richard Williams Singers and the choirs of the Mid Rhondda Operatic Society and the Selsig Amateur Dramatic Society.

The **Theatre** is not neglected and there are five flourishing theatre groups in Rhondda. They are the Parc and Dare Theatre Company, the Little Theatre Company, the Rhondda Theatre Group, the Tonyrefail Theatre Group and the Treorchy Young Theatrical Society. Most of the productions of these groups are staged at the Parc and Dare Hall.

A fuller list of bands, choirs and theatre groups, with the secretaries' names and addresses, can be obtained from the Borough's Leisure Services Officer at Rhondda Sports Centre.

Rhondda is a Special Development Area and as such, industrialists either within Rhondda or those proposing to establish themselves in Rhondda, are eligible to receive maximum assistance. Such assistance involves grants towards the purchase of plant and machinery, loans, interest relief grants, removal grants, tax allowances, training assistance, help for transferred workers and a contracts preference scheme. The Rhondda Corporation Act provides for the loan of money by the Council to prospective and existing industrialists. Also, the Council, as a housing authority, is able to house certain 'key' workers.

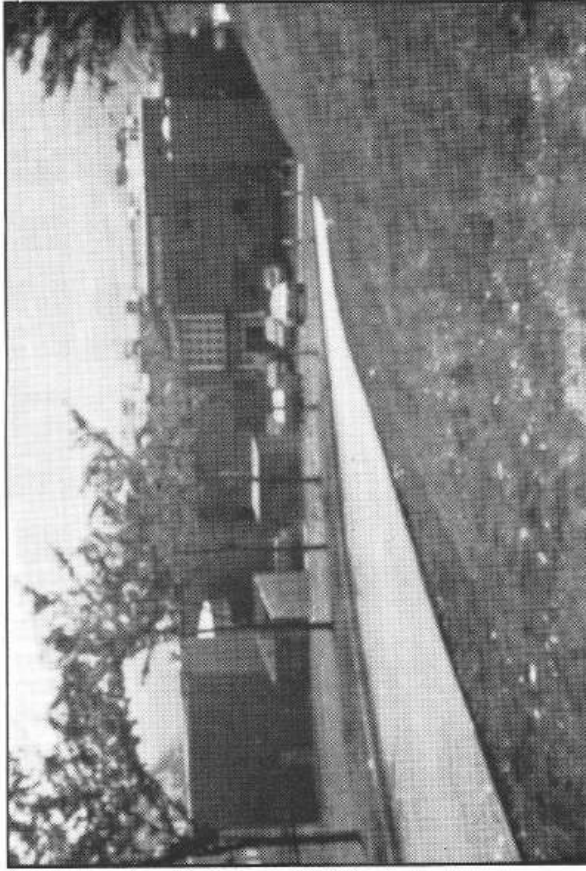


Caemwr industrial estate, Treorchy.

Communication between the Council and local industry, is made through the Association of Rhondda Industries and a Rhondda Industrial Development Committee. It remains one of the main objectives of both the Council and the Association to work closely together, and local industrialists are co-opted onto the Industrial Development Committee. The major purpose of this Committee is to promote Rhondda as a location for industrial development, through publicity, liaison with appropriate public and private bodies and direct contact with prospective industrialists. At the same time, the regular meetings of the Committee provide an open forum for the airing of problems faced by local industry.

The variety of products made in Rhondda shows the great adaptability of Rhondda people. It also reflects the patience, foresight and enterprise of those who came to the area with new skills, taught them, and turned them into a commercial success. What was, 25 years ago, almost wholly a coal mining area, now produces precision electronic components, safety belts and cargo harnesses, purpose-made joinery, mirrors and glassware, medical equipment, car springs, rubber and plastic mouldings, ribbons, steel tubing, furniture, men's and ladies' clothing, artificial flowers and Christmas trees, to mention but a few items.

Industrialists seeking to set up or expand business need look no further than Rhondda. They can follow the example of many who have come to the valley, have stayed and prospered. In addition to land, sites, grants and other incentives, Rhondda has abundant skilled and unskilled people available, greatly improved road communications, good schools and excellent shopping and recreational facilities. As a place in which to work it has everything to commend it.



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Rhondda is served by the Cardiff Wales Airport at Rhoose near Barry.

For details Telephone: Rhoose 710296.
23,886 acres — including mountain land.

Area of Borough

Bus Services

The National Welsh Bus Company provides services within the Borough and to neighbouring towns such as Pontypridd, Aberdare and Cardiff. Limited stop and express services also operate throughout South Wales. Details from the National Welsh offices at Aberrhondda Road, Porth. Telephone 682671.

Courts

Ystrad Magistrate's Court, Ton Pentre.
Porth Magistrate's Court, Porth.

Early Closing Day

Education

Thursday throughout the Rhondda.
Nursery, primary and comprehensive schools are provided by the Mid Glamorgan Education Authority whose district education office is at Crawshay Street, Ton Pentre.

Telephone 421888.

The Rhondda College of Further Education is located at Lhwynypia. Telephone 432187.

Electricity

Supplied by the South Wales Electricity Board whose district offices are at Glyntraff, Pontypridd. Telephone Pontypridd 405171.

Local service at Porth, Tonypany, Treorchy and Ferndale.

Employment Service

Local offices at:

69 High Street, Ferndale. Telephone 730647.

Bridge Street, Tonypany. Telephone 432232.

Oldway House, Bute Street, Treorchy. Telephone 772262.

Fire Service

Chief Fire Officer at
Llanelay Hall, Talbot Green. Telephone Llantrisant 222333.
(999 in emergency.)

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Gas

Supplied by the Wales Gas Board whose area offices are at Ferry Road, Grange town, Cardiff. Telephone Cardiff 42601 or 32931 for emergency service.
Service centres at Porth, Tonypany and Treorchy.

Health & Social Security Offices

Thisle House, Llwynypia Road, Tonypany. Telephone 433781.

Oldway House, Porth Street, Porth. Telephone 682911.

Health Services

Personal and school health services are provided by the Mid Glamorgan Health Authority whose administrative offices are at Tyntyla Hospital, Ystrad. Telephone 436723.

Hospitals

Llwynypia Hospital. Telephone 433081.

Pentwyn Cottage Hospital. Telephone 773243.

Porth & District Hospital. Telephone 682601.

Treherbert Hospital. Telephone 771202.

Tyntyla Hospital. Telephone 435247.

Libraries

Branch libraries are located in towns and villages throughout the Borough. The Borough Librarian is located at the Libraries Administrative Centre at Treorchy library. Telephone 773204.

Local Government

Rhondda Borough Council consists of 33 councillors and has its offices at Pentre and Porth.

The Chief Executive and Borough Secretary are located at the Municipal Offices, Pentre (Telephone 434551)

and the Borough Treasurer and Housing Manager, Borough Technical Officer, Chief Environmental Health Officer and Planning Officer are all at "Bronwydd", Porth. (Telephone 682944).

The Leisure Services Officer is located at the Rhondda Sports Centre. Telephone 434093.

The Borough has 15 councillors on the Mid Glamorgan County Council whose offices are at County Hall, Cardiff.

Telephone Cardiff 820820.

'Western Mail and South Wales Echo' (daily)

Offices at Thomson House, Cardiff. Telephone 33022.

'Rhondda Leader' (weekly)

Offices at the Merthyr Industrial Estate, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil. Telephone Merthyr Tydfil 3255.

Rhondda Constituency, whose boundaries are the same as those of the Borough, sends one member to Westminster.

The main police station is at Maindy Road, Ton Pentre. Telephone 434222 (999 in emergency).

80,000 approximately.

Parliamentary

Principal offices are in the town centres at Porth (Telephone 682746)

Tonypany (Telephone 432116) and Treorchy (Telephone 772203).

Police

80,000 approximately.

Population of Borough

Post Offices

Principal offices are in the town centres at Porth (Telephone 682746)

Tonypany (Telephone 432116) and Treorchy (Telephone 772203).

Rail Services

Rhondda is served by a branch of British Rail's Western Region — with stations at Trehafod, Porth, Dinas Rhondda, Tonypany, Llwynypia, Ystrad Rhondda, Ton Pentre, Treorchy, Ynyswen and Treherbert.

An hourly weekday service (every 2 hours on Sundays) is provided between these stations and on to Pontypridd and stations to Cardiff (Queen Street and Central Stations) and Barry.

Connections at Pontypridd for the Merthyr line and at Cardiff Central for Bridgend, Swansea and West Wales; Newport and London (Paddington); Bristol and South West and Southern England; and the Midlands and North.

London can be reached in less than two hours from Cardiff.

Details of passenger services from British Rail at Cardiff (Telephone Cardiff 28000); general enquiries to Cardiff 499811.

Sports Centre

Gelligaled Park, Ystrad. Telephone 434093.

Water

Provided by the Welsh Water Authority. Consumer services offices at Tonypany.

Telephone 432306.

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COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

As managing agents for the MSC sponsored Community Programme, various projects of community benefit are conducted. These include Building Renovation, Draught-proofing and Roof Insulation, Garden Clearance and minor House Repairs, Playgroups, Video News Programmes for Senior Citizens, etc.

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For further details of the above, contact:

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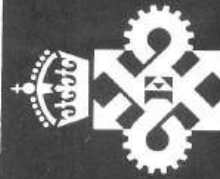
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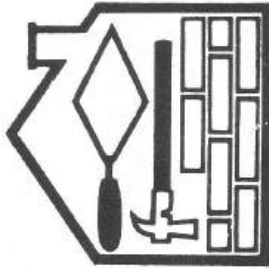
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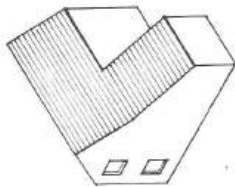
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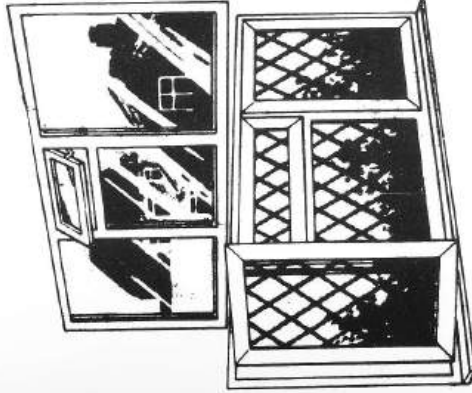
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