



Hanes

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

A Voice for Local History:

By
D.L. Davies
Editor.

This is the first issue of a newsletter by the Cynon Valley History Society. In producing it, the Society hopes to give its members a means of exchanging news, views and information. We also hope to project the Society outward in the direction of the local public and other local organizations, in order to show that the history of this district is interesting and valuable; and that the Society, as one of the main 'custodians' of that history, is worthy of widespread local support.

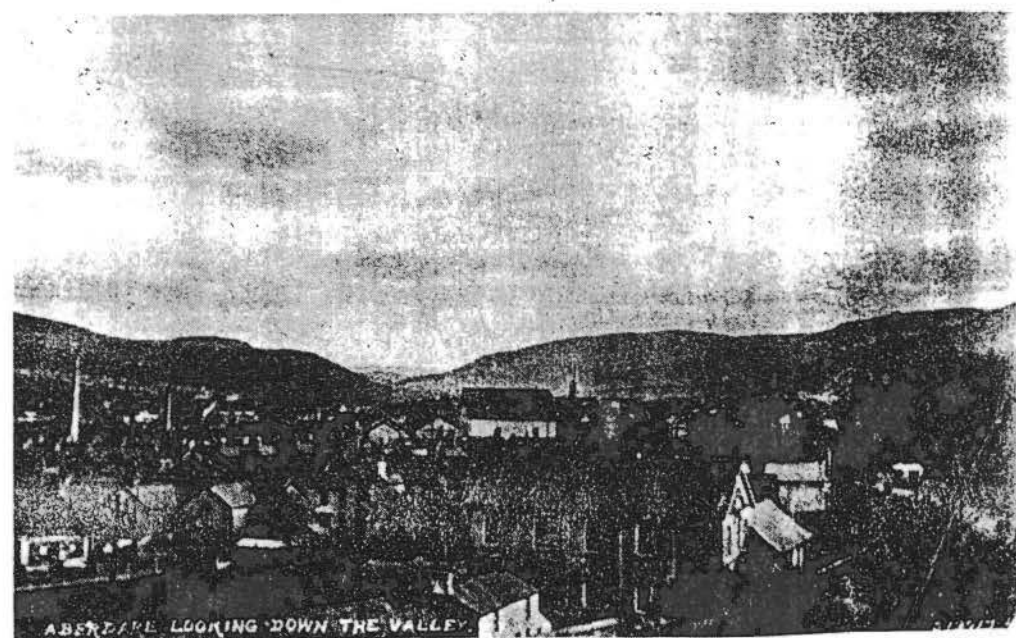
We hope this newsletter will appear once every six months. Publication may become more frequent at a future date; but

to begin with, and because of the commitments which members of the Committee have in researching their own historical interests, we feel it would be wiser to make a cautious start and perhaps grow in our achievements, rather than set too ambitious a schedule and thereafter lose ground.

As Editor of the newsletter, may I make a standing appeal to all members and friends of the Society to support our new scheme: by buying 'Hanes'; by sending us your views on it and on any other historical topics of concern; by joining the Society, and by encouraging others to join. I look forward to hearing from YOU.

OLD PHOTOGRAPHS (NO.1):

This is a photograph of a part of Trecynon, looking towards Aberdare town, taken from a window in Park School. It dates from before 1934, when the stack at the Old Boys Grammar School was taken down. The reverse side is designed as a postcard, and carries the legend "We have to gain the Victory. That is our task." This probably dates it further to 1914 - 1918. (Source: Mr John Mear.)



ABERDARE LOOKING DOWN THE VALLEY

How well do you know this Valley?

Test yourself by answering the following questions.
(Answers at the bottom of the page.)

- (1) What was the real name of 'Caradog' ? _____
- (2) Where in Aberdare town-centre was 'Commercial Place' ? _____
- (3) When was the parish church of St John the Baptist built (to the century)? _____
- (4) Which is the oldest nonconformist chapel in the Cynon Valley ? _____
- (5) Who was known as 'the father of local government' in Aberdare ? _____
- (6) When did the first railway station open at Aberdare ? _____
- (7) Where & when was the first local colliery sunk ? _____
- (8) When was the first history of Aberdare published ? _____
- (9) In which parish was Mountain Ash traditionally located ? _____
- (10) What link was there between Hirwaun & the Crawshay family ? _____

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HOW DID YOU SCORE ?

(not to be taken too seriously !)

- 10 points : First-class! You deserve a lap of honour in the mayor's car!
- 8-9 points : Very good! You are obviously an informed citizen. Proceed to the top of the class.
- 5-7 points : Fair; but could do better! How ? By joining the Cynon Valley History Society immediately, and by reading 'Old Aberdare' and 'Hanes'.
- 3-4 points : Greater effort needed next term!
- 1-2 points : Very disappointing. (Are you, perhaps, a history graduate ?).
- 0 points : You deserve to be exiled in Merthyr Tydfil!

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ANSWERS:

(1) Griffith Rhys Jones (1834-1897); (2) At Victoria Square, before the present name was given in 1897, to mark the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria; (3) During the late 12th century - authorities on church architecture suggest sometime between 1175-1225; (4) The 'Hen Dy Cwrd' Unitarian chapel, Treynon, built in 1751, though the present building dates from 1863; (5) Rhys Hopkin Rhys, of Llydcoed; (6) In August, 1846, at the 'Low Level' station; (7) At Abernant-y-groes, Cumbach, in 1837; (8) In 'Gardd Aberdar', in 1854; (9) Llanwynno; (10) They owned Hirwaun Ironworks between 1818 and 1859.

Third Society volume "hits the streets."

By
Ann Jones,
Chairman,
1983~1984.

The third in the series of occasional publications entitled "Old Aberdare", published by the C.V.H.S., appeared earlier this year. It has already sold well; and this is due, no doubt, to the widely varying contents of the volume.

Mr Philip Walters gives a short history of rugby-football at Aberdare and Aberaman, and traces the history of the Aberdare club until it folded in 1936. The Aberaman club continued to play except during the war years; and Mr Walters traces its history down to the present day. A resume of rugby in schools and youth clubs is given; and mention is made of famous players such as Dr E T Morgan, Keith Rowlands, Dai Morris, and also of E J Excell. This is a must for all sports fans!

Chris Taylor provides an outline of some independent bus operators, from J M Williams who applied for a horse-brake & cab licence in 1890 down to the 1950's. He takes us from horse-brakes, taxis, charabancs and buses to the eventual demise of some of the operators, or their being swallowed up in the fleets of the larger companies such as the Red & White; Imperial; Western Welsh, and others.

Prof. Brynley Roberts, an Aberdare man, writes on printing & publishing at Aberdare. He quotes **Ieuan Gwynedd Jones** who says, "When Aberdare claimed in 1867 that 'what we think today, Wales will think tomorrow', she was not idly boasting. Aberdare had become a provincial capital... by reason of (her) presses and opinion-forming newspapers."

The well-known Mr Tom Evans, B.Sc., previously of the Boys' Grammar School, writes a short biography of the late Revd. Ifor Parry, an eminent local historian, as an introduction to Mr Parry's article on early industrial relations at Aberdare. Tom's list of Mr Parry's published works, and his inclusion of very useful notes & references will add greatly to our knowledge in this field.

"Old Aberdare" nos. 1 & 2 were sold out very quickly. It is advisable to buy a copy of no.3 soon if you wish to avoid disappointment. Copies are available from Mr Doug Williams, 29, Tudor Tce (877398); or from Pryse and Ewington's shops in the town-centre. The price is £2.50 for 118pp.



Our Emblem:

~ by ~
Doug Williams,
Publications Secretary.

The centre consists of a quartered shield. Top-left is the lamb & flag of St John to represent Aberdare. Top-right is the emblem of the old county of Breconshire, part of which has always been in the Cynon Valley, including the site of the first local ironworks (Hirwaun 1757). Bottom-left are the three red chevrons on a yellow field symbolising the old county of Glamorgan. Bottom-right is the roan leaf symbolic of Mountain Ash. Supporting the shield are two roan horses: these are the 'brocks' of Hirwaun - wild horses which roamed the Common, and mentioned by John Leland in the 16th C. Encircling the shield is a broad band of unity, and two leeks indicative of our Welshness. Above the shield is a smaller shield containing a miner's lamp. This signifies the main industry of the district in previous times, & also the world-famous Thomas & Williams No.4 safety lamp made locally. The lamp also stands for the light of learning. The whole rests on the Robertstown Bridge, built at Abernant in 1811 - perhaps the oldest tramway bridge in the world. The motto contains the title of the Society. (ALL DESIGNED BY D.W. :ED.).

HOW TO JOIN THE C.V.H.S.: By contacting any of the officers below, or any current member of the Society known to you. **CHAIRMAN:** Mrs Ann Jones, 3, Underhill Villas, Aberaman (873728); **SECRETARY:** Mr John Mear, 7, Tudor Tce., Gadlys (878349); **NEWSLETTER EDITOR:** Mr D I Davies, 5, Milton Street, Cwmaman, Aberdare (873226).

A Museum ~ the struggle continues.

by John Mear,
Secretary.

In a book published in 1908, it is stated with regard to Aberdare that "in a museum in connection with the Aberdare Naturalists' Society, there is a splendid collection of specimens illustrating the geology, botany & natural history of the district."

Where is that collection today ? Because of the lack of a permanent home, it has almost certainly been dispersed and lost, together with many other collections of items of local interest which have been built up over the years. As the years pass, the number of items which could find a place in a local museum decreases. Some are destroyed accidentally; others are thrown away when the death occurs of the last person to realise their historical value.

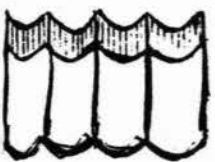
There was a temporary museum at Aberdare in 1930, organised as part of the town's "Big Week" by John Davies ('Pendar') & W W Price. Writing in the "Leader" at the time, Mr Davies said, "We have gathered together a priceless collection of pictures, paintings, photo groups, articles of various descriptions, and relics of all kinds: all relating to the history of our dear old town. Most of the things collected WOULD BE WILLINGLY GIVEN TO THE MUSEUM IF THE DONORS WERE ASSURED THAT THEIR GIFTS WOULD BE PRESERVED IN A SUITABLE BUILDING. Now then, let the Council provide a very small sum to maintain a suitable room for these things before we close down and the articles are returned, to be lost forever as far as the town is concerned. We have lost

a most valuable building for a public library in the past, chiefly because no-one took personal responsibility to push things through. Now that we have the opportunity of getting a worthy municipal institution for the town again, is this going to be lost for want of foresight and good-will ?"

This was 54 years ago, and the answer to the last question was 'Yes'. When the matter of a museum was raised again in 1976, the answer was 'No Money'. The same answer was given in 1983. When will any authority have enough money to create a museum ? The answer is 'Never'. It is really a matter of will, and of arranging priorities to ensure that Aberdare and the Cynon Valley as a whole have what any self-respecting district has: a museum and interpretive centre to record & **display** the way of life of our forefathers, who by their blood and sweat literally put the Cynon Valley on the map of the world.

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(EDITOR'S NOTE): Towards the end of 1983, the borough council received a report on the feasibility of establishing a museum for the Cynon Valley. The principle was accepted; but the actual scheme proposed was set aside for 'financial reasons'. The Society believes that the suggested scheme was probably not the best way to proceed in any case; and we are about to send to the local authority a statement of aims and of purpose which we feel is a more practical approach altogether. Rhondda, Pontypridd, Torfaen, Merthyr, Brecon & many other authorities have already made progress in this field - with an eye to both the educational value and tourist potential of displaying their local heritage. Presumably they face the same economic conditions as the Cynon Valley; but they have the will to proceed. Does our Council ? As John Mear says, it is really a matter of commitment.



Your Local History
Library: by D. Davies.

BOOK REVIEW: "Environmental Studies in the Cynon Valley"; a collection of 27 essays by 25 different contributors on aspects of history & geography of the Cynon Valley. This volume of 247pp. has just been published by Mid-Glamorgan County Council at the amazingly low price of £3.60. It is intended primarily to be an example to senior pupils in Cynon Valley schools of **how** to go about writing on the various themes of the history & environment of their home district. It is likely to be of great interest and value to the general or lay reader also, as so many different aspects of our area's history are presented and discussed in an easy-to-follow format. The volume would be particularly interesting to a newcomer to local history simply because there is so much within its covers. Old-hands will still find plenty to interest them also. Copies may be ordered through the editor of this newsletter (see bottom of p.3 for details).

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