

BRYNMAWR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS UPDATE

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Blimey, October already and I hear some people are looking for their frozen turkeys and Christmas Trees ready for the BIG occasion! There are some interesting works going on in Brynmawr, they are demolishing some old buildings and renovating others. There's a new complex being built on Lower Bailey Street where the clinic used to be and Cosy Flats are getting a face lift as well ready for some new dwellers. What would be good is if the building companies put up some form of plaque to remind all what used to be on the site. In Lower Bailey Street it would have been the first Drill Hall in the town before it became the clinic, Cosy Flats occupy the site of the old Cosy Cinema. Our Society would help out in finding suitable photographs and information to be included on the plaques. That would be a good thing to remind the up and coming generation the history of this great town of Brynmawr? I did mentioned this to a member who happens to be a Borough Councillor and Tai Calon have agreed that it would support the idea. Of course there's more to be commemorated, there are proposals to erect a house on the top of Queen Street. This was the site of the original Brynmawr Church, and then it became the site of the Church School before becoming a nursery. The Board School site on King Street opened in 1876, a very important step in the growth of education in the town and then the extension opened in 1903, both built on waste ground. I'm sure you can think of many more so any ideas you have, let the society know and maybe we can do something about commemorating these places.

There's more about the early church in Brynmawr on the society's website so do have a look under Brynmawr's New Church.

It's been 8 months or possibly more since we've been able to enjoy a chat and a cup of tea or coffee at the museum on a Thursday

morning. The building is of course the Carnegie Library, opened in 1905 on land donated by the Duke of Beaufort. The opening ceremony took place on Wednesday, October 18th by Mr. Ll. Thomas J.P. who was the chairman of the Brynmawr District Council and also of the Library Committee. The town had been gifted £1,250 by the steel king himself, Andrew Carnegie on the condition that the town would raise £300. A grand sum of £400 was achieved by private subscriptions, sports events and entertainment and the Duke of Beaufort had also promised £200.

The cost of erecting the library would be around £1,300 which meant the money collected secured the building. It was then decided to form a committee to look at the possibility of erecting an institute alongside the library to provide other means of recreation at an estimated cost of £1,000 making a grand total of £2,350. There was some concern whether this was achievable but a certain amount of revenue would be gained from the institute.

The project went ahead and originally the library as you walked in would have on the left hand the borrowing library and on the right hand a large reading room. There's a wide staircase to the first floor where there was a reference library, a storeroom for books and papers and a magazine room. All would be well lighted naturally by the windows at the end and in front. The builder was a local contractor, John Jenkins and he also did the fittings and furniture and the entire work being from designs by Mr. F. Bates from Newport. (*Mr. J. Jenkins also had the contract to build Brynmawr's St Mary's Church*). Initially the library was stocked from the local day school teachers collection and added to that were over 100 volumes left over from a library and reading room venture some fifteen years

previously. *(There's more about the reading room venture on the website).* Several residents offered papers and periodicals to get the new library as well equipped as possible.

The library was opened by the people of Brynmawr donating books, papers and magazines and so it is with the museum today as so many of the objects have been donated by Brynmawr residents and of course their support at the Tea/Coffee mornings which we all miss. Make sure you call in when the museum re-opens.

Thanks to the web master our website has been given a bit of a makeover and it's now easier to navigate around the sites. Many thanks for the hard work so please do all visit and pay your compliments to what's been done. There are also some new documents nearly ready to go up on the site so keep visiting just in case you miss something.

I was quite disappointed to see the Rhyd y Blew Inn demolished as I'm sure many of you were. Historically this was quite an important building, it was at one time a Drover's inn sited at the end of the toll road from Merthyr Tydfil. Here the animals had good pasture and water from the River Ebbw. This was also the crossing point, the word rhyd means a ford and blew refers to the animals so it becomes the Animal's Ford. I suppose the old sign that hung by the roadside gave a good clue to the meaning of the name. The inn was properly the hunting lodge of the Duke of Beaufort who carried out an annual rough shoot of the area but for the rest of the year a drover's inn. When the brothers Joseph and Crawshay Bailey took over the Beaufort Iron Works the person they put in charge was their sister's son, William Partridge. The senior managers of the iron works, including William lodged at the Rhyd y Blew, that is, if they were unmarried. William was soon smitten by the daughter of the innkeeper, Charlotte Bevan and he married her. He was to remain in charge of the iron works until his death in 1862, he was 62 years old. Soon after the works closed.

Still in lockdown, let's hope we can meet up in 2021. We will keep you informed as and when the society will be able to meet again. In the meantime we will keep sending you the News Update to keep you going.



This photograph of "The Blaina Savages" is not as you might think from one of Blaina's annual fairs' fancy dress competition. They were in fact extras in the film "Things to come" based on the book by H. G. Wells and filmed partly at the Blaina South Griffin colliery.

I was aware that there had been a Cymmrodorion Society in Brynmawr but I was surprised that the guest speaker at a meeting in March 1884 was none other than Dr. William Price from Llantrisant. He appeared in his quaint costume and had been escorted from the railway station by a large crowd of admirers. Mr Wain from the Griffin Hotel was the chairman for the night. Following numerous toasts and songs Dr. Price was asked to give a toast but he decided he would sing a song that he had discovered in the Louvre in Paris and was probably composed 3,700 years ago. He had been trying to decipher the song for over 12 years and would be pleased to teach it to anyone as long as they were Welsh.

Dr Price sang the song using the music score that was all in hieroglyphics which no one could understand. There followed numerous other toasts and lots of singing and a most enjoyable evening was spent.

It sounds to me that the society was quite a drinking one.

Vol 2 also available.