

BRYNMAWR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWS UPDATE

December 2020/January 2021.

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May I start by wishing you all a peaceful Christmas and a 2021 without COVID 19. As you'd expect there won't be an A.G.M. in January, in fact it looks like we won't be able to re-start the society until April at the earliest. We will of course keep you informed. As to the A.G.M., all the officers and committee have agreed to continue in post throughout 2021 and the officers' reports will be sent by email or posted through your door.

Some of you will have read the article on our website about Celia May Gardner who was the first lady Mayor of Brynmawr UDC. I have been exchanging emails with Celia's granddaughter (who wrote the article) and she tells me the family were very musical. One of Celia's brothers, possibly named Beulah married Daisy Parry and they had two children, June and Gerald. Gerald at one time was a lead violinist with the Philharmonic Orchestra whilst June was a music teacher at the Brynmawr Board School. She married a solicitor from Blaenafon named "Tubby" Warren Green and they moved to Cheltenham where their twin boys were born, Christopher and Nigel Warren Green. In later years Christopher became a lead violinist and concertmaster of the Philharmonic Orchestra. Christopher was also a friend of Prince Charles and at Charles' request, he conducted the orchestra celebrating the marriage of the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall. He also conducted the orchestra at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

Nigel Warren Green has played the cello on numerous records by stars like Mike Oldfield, Chris De Burgh, Phil Collins, Manfred Mann and was an honorary member of the Dubliners, touring with them in early 1980s. He has numerous records to his name either as performer or producer and instigated a charity single for UNICEF. He later became a film producer; being one of the executive producers on "Mrs Brown" starring Judi Dench and Billy Connolly.

When the Warren Green twins were young their parents divorced and their mother returned to Brynmawr with the boys and lived here until they moved to Cardiff. (Information from the internet and Celia's granddaughter).

If you know of any other talented persons who have or had strong links to Brynmawr, then do let me know and I can pass it on in our next News Update.

We've had some terrible weather recently here in Brynmawr but take comfort in this story which I came across in the Brecon and Radnor Express dated 10<sup>th</sup> August 1916. The Griffin Hotel (which is today the Brynmawr Social Club and our meeting place) was the chief stopping place for the mail coach running from Abergavenny to Merthyr and for many years before the "missing link" was established buses were run to and from Nant y Glo railway station. Originally these would be horse drawn coaches before becoming the Griffin Buses some of you may remember. During the great storm of 1881 the demands of so many commercial travellers for sleeping

accommodation were great. So many in fact that even though the Griffin Hotel had 30 beds they had to utilise the hotel's billiard tables and couches and every available space for that purpose. Unbelievably, Brynmawr was cut off entirely from the outside world for three days.

Now that's what I call a lockdown.

By 1916 the Griffin Hotel had surrendered its licence and the solicitor for the Rhymney Brewery surrendered the license was a Mr W. H. Trump. I wonder if he would be related to a Mr Trump we hear so much about these days?

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Due to lockdown, Hope Church Gilwern has been unable to hold their usual charity fundraising events this year and have instead produced a Christmas charity single. A new tune to an old carol ("Away in a manger") has been written and played by old Brynmawr pupil Ted Edwards and sang by Abergavenny's own Elvis, Keith Davies. The single is available for download at [hopechurchgilwern.org](http://hopechurchgilwern.org) and Hope Church would be grateful for a minimum donation of £4. Every penny goes to the orphanage they support in Uganda, so you'll see that the words of "Away in a Manger" have a particular relevance here.

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Because of COVID 19 the annual Chartist Convention was not held this year though there are a series of online talks being given for free. To find out more visit:

<http://thechartists.org/magazine.html>

Details of the talks are on the site and you can also catch up with the Chartist Magazine, even better register to get the magazine sent straight to your computer. There is no charge. In the meantime what happened to the Brynmawr Chartists? We know that at least two were killed outside the Westgate Hotel, there's a plaque commemorating their death on the wall of the old slaughter house. David Lewis, landlord of the King Crispin Inn and the leader of the Brynmawr Chartists was arrested and sent to Milbank prison in London. He was not the only one arrested in Brynmawr. Quite a few ran away on the night

of November 3<sup>rd</sup> as they had no intention of taking part in the march. Many went to Abergavenny on the Sunday and the inhabitants of Abergavenny were very much alarmed by numbers of men from Llanelli, Brynmawr, Nantyglo, Blaina, &c. flocking into the town in great numbers. They said that a large body of men, consisting of some thousands, were patrolling the hills to collect all the men they possibly could to go to Newport so they escaped out of their way. About eight o'clock, a young man went round the town to inform the inhabitants that the magistrates were waiting to swear in as special constables as many as would attend; the streets were soon full of persons acknowledging the summons and a vast number were sworn in. A number of the inhabitants paraded the streets the whole of the night, although it was exceedingly wet. On Monday morning the magistrates were again at their posts and the number of special constables was upwards of 500. Vast numbers of persons from the neighbouring hills, as well as the inhabitants, were seen in groups in different parts of the town in a state of great excitement discussing the probable consequences. Taken from "The Glamorgan Monmouth and Brecon Gazette and Merthyr Guardian. 9th November 1839"

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And finally, Brynmawr Library is open for business in that you can reserve a book and pick it up once you've arranged a time slot. If you haven't yet read it I can recommend "The Thursday Murder Club" by Richard Osman, (he's the chap that helps Alexander Armstrong on the show "Pointless"). Another book, (sadly only available to read in the library because it's in the reference section) is a dissertation by Keith H. Edwards titled "William Williams, Grocer and Draper at Brynmawr". The early history of Brynmawr and the growth of the town are documented with maps and charts and are well worth reading. The appendix also lists when and where buildings and houses were built around the town as it grew.  
Eifion (Secretary)