

BRYNMAWR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS UPDATE

September 2018

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OFFICERS of the society.

CHAIRMAN 2018:	Hywel Axford
<u>Vice Chairperson</u>	Nicholas Beswick
<u>Secretary</u>	Eifion Lloyd Davies
<u>Treasurer</u>	John Child

Committee Members are as follows:

Ann Axford	Merryl Caleb
.Roy Fowler	John Hill
David Morgan	

Plus two auditors	Current Auditors:
	June Evans
	Carol Morgan

It's been some months since the last Newsletter but as was stated at the end of the previous copy ...***and finally, if you have any news for the Update then please e-mail them or hand them to the secretary at the next meeting.*** Nothing came through so please let me have some of your historical news and snippets. The News Update is also available on our web site: (See above).

The Chartist Tree.

Most Brynmawr people will have heard of the Chartist Tree which grew at Twyncynghordy, but what was the story behind the tree and who planted it? A log from the tree was presented to the Brynmawr Museum some years ago. As often happens, while researching something completely different I came across a story about a presentation to a Mr William Powell from Twyncynghordy. During the

presentation the chairman in his speech referred to a Mr William Lewis. He was a descendent of the family who had lived at Twyncynghordy for over 300 years. Old Mr William Lewis and his family did a lot of work for Crawshay Bailey in particular at the Winches Pit. One of the sons, Rees Lewis was trained at the Normal College at Swansea and he became a teacher in Brynmawr. He was also a gifted musician and composed numerous pieces which were performed at the assemblies of Zion Baptist Chapel. Old Mr Lewis' ground stretched from the Heathcock Pond as far as the Big Pond in Nant y Glô and the field near the pond was known as William Lewis field. During the 1830s there was great excitement in Brynmawr due to the Chartist movement; meetings were held behind the pub known as The King Crispin and half a crown (2/6 or 25p today) tickets were sold in support of the movement. Following the Chartist march on Newport old Mr Lewis decided to plant the tree in Twyncynghordy to commemorate the march. Sadly it was cut down in the 1960s. I gather that William Powell was a descendent of William Lewis.

Don't forget our annual Christmas Buffet following the December meeting. The talk on the history of Hirwaen and Aberdare starts at 6.30.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

Annual Lunch at The Hall Inn Gwehelog
November 7th. Names etc to Treasurer.

NB. This is limited to 50 people.

Luncheon Club. Wednesday, during April 2019.

Hopefully during 2019 our visits will continue as normal including the **Luncheon club**. This has always proved very successful in the past. For the next Luncheon Club we are looking at possibly The Royal Mint. All we need now is find a decent place to eat. Watch this space. For our day visit we are looking at two sites but coach cost may well make the decision for us. Again watch this space.



I came across the above plates some years ago, (the Brynmawr Museum have a selection of the small, dinner and serving plates) but I have been unable to find any information about the lodge and where they met. This is Brynmawr in Blaenau Gwent as the American town would be spelt Bryn Mawr. If any readers of this Newsletter know anything about the lodge would you please contact the society.

The Rechabites in Brynmawr

The Independent Order of Rechabites was a Friendly Society established in 1835 as part of the wider British temperance movement to promote total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. Always well connected in upper society and involved in financial matters, it gradually transformed into a financial institution which still exists today and still promotes abstinence.

From the late 18th century a number of Friendly Societies had been set up to help working class people with such things as health insurance, death benefits, etc. Generally these held their meetings in public houses. In the 1830s a group of Manchester Methodists became concerned that by encouraging working men to attend public houses to pay their friendly society dues, then the societies were harming the men's health and financial situation and threatening their moral welfare, rather than helping them. To counter this they set up a new Friendly Society called the Independent Order of Rechabites, named after the nomadic, abstaining Rechabites of the Old Testament. (Wikipedia).

This was a very popular movement and there were many Rechabite Halls around the valleys though sadly many have now been demolished or changed into private houses. There is one in New Tredegar still standing though I am unsure if it is still used as a Rechabite Hall. I often wondered if Brynmawr also had a Rechabite Society and if so where was the Hall situated. I knew there was one in Tredegar and also in Ebbw Vale. It seemed unlikely Brynmawr with its numerous public houses and beer houses, something like 65 in the late 1890 to early 1900 didn't have a strong temperance movement.

In fact there was a very strong temperance movement in Brynmawr and the Rechabites were not the only ones opposed to the evil drink. The town had the Brynmawr United Temperance Association and the British Women's Temperance League. There was the Independent Order of Good Templars, the tenth annual session of the English Grand Lodge of Wales of the Good Templars was held in Brynmawr when over one hundred delegates and visitors met at the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel and Libanus Chapel and in the evening a reception soiree held under the presidency of Mr J. F. Neat.

In Brynmawr the Rechabites met at Neat's Assembly Rooms. Neat had shops on Beaufort Street and probably the Assembly rooms were part of the shops. Neat was a prominent business man in the town with a few shops and quite a standing in the community and his shops occupied what used to be Alan's Furniture which is now The Bridal Shop and Furniture Shop.

(There will be more about J. F. Neat in B.G. Heritage Forum Journal or on our website)