

CHARTIST MEETING AT COALBROOK VALE.

13th July 1839, Monmouthshire Merlin.

Some excitement had been for a few days raised amongst the Iron Works bordering upon the counties of Monmouth and Brecon, by a report that a large Chartist meeting would be held at Nantyglo or Coalbrook Vale, on the 1st of July, at which Mr. Frost, and one of the other great guns of the day, were to preside. Early in the day great crowds of strangers began to crowd in from Merthyr, Sirhowy, Pontypool, and Blackwood, and were observed to hang about Brynmawr, Nantyglo, and Coalbrook Vale.

At about 12 o'clock, a party were seen; with a cart in front, containing two harpers, flags and banners accompanying them the people, men and women, walking five abreast, on their way from Coalbrook Vale to Brynmawr; and amidst, or almost immediately preceding them, a curious looking object, seemingly unnoticed, or uncared for, but by a party of masons and carpenters, who walked with it, on a board covered with shavings, raised on their shoulders. On a nearer approach, it proved to be in unfortunate man who had just fallen off an engine-house, at Blaina, and was being carried home by his companions as they thought, dying.

The procession had, as nearly as could be observed, about ten or twelve flags and banners, three-fourths of which were calico: the banners, all-the flags, chiefly so.:

- 1) Small white flag-" The People's Charter."
- 2) Great calico banner, about two feet .square; on a deal frame "The Queen and Charter. Peace, Law, Order."
- 3) Tri-coloured silk flags.
- 4) Great white calico banner, with letters of red paper, or calico, stuck or sewed on. We have forgotten the inscription, but this really was a most ludicrous thing. It was, perhaps, to show that the Chartists were not over proud.
- 5) Plain white silk flag, with red calico borders.
- 6) Great white calico banner, as above, but rather better in appearance, "Long live the People." Motto, "Order."
- 7) Flag, three or four colours, Peace, Law, Order Union is Strength."

- 8) Green calico banner, about two feet square, Pontypool Workingmen's Association, established 3rd July, 1837."
- 9) Large green calico banner, "Universal suffrage, Annual Parliaments, Vote by Ballot, no Property Qualification, Payment of Members."
- 10) Banner, Peace, Truth, Justice."

About half-past three o'clock in the afternoon; they returned in the same manner as they went up though greatly augmented in their numbers from Brynmawr, to hold their meeting at Coalbrook Vale.

Coalbrook Vale was where George Brewer lived, the iron master of Coalbrook Iron Works. He had established the works in 1820 and was possibly related to the Darby's of Coalbrook Dale which is why he named the works Coalbrook Vale though as we all know Coalbrook is a translation of Nant y Glo. He died in 1845 and his son Tom Llewellyn Brewer took charge until the works were sold in 1855.

George Brewer was a very active member of the anti-Chartist group which was formed at Coalbrook House; in fact it was he who proposed the idea. On Monday, the 29th April, 1839, the inaugural meeting of the Anti-Chartist meeting was held, Crawshay Bailey was the Chairman but it was George Brewer who addressed the 5,000 (allegedly) gathered. He addressed the meeting in both English and Welsh. His proposal was:

"That we, her Majesty's loyal subjects, viewing the efforts that are now being made by disaffected men, in this and other parts of the kingdom, to subvert the peace and good order of society, consider it our duty to come forward and publicly declare our firm attachment to our beloved Sovereign and our unshaken confidence in our glorious constitution and are determined to do all in our power to support her crown and dignity."

Following the disastrous march to Newport on the 4th of November, active Chartists were being arrested and Zephaniah Williams (from Nant y Glo) had made his escape. The Anti Chartist movement offered the reward of £100 for his capture though the money was put up by Crawshay Bailey.

There will be more on the anti Chartist movement in a later edition.