

BRYNMAWR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWS UPDATE

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Yet more bites of local history to keep you going through the dark nights of winter which I believe started about a month ago or that's how it feels to me.

Following the short piece about the Rhyd y Blew being demolished in the Vol 1 of News Update I was contacted by Carol Morgan, one of our committee members who told me that behind the Rhyd y Blew there is another building known as The Little Rhyd. The building had been converted into three cottages and she was born and lived in the middle one. This building was also an Inn on the road side and a place for horses to be refreshed. There were stables attached where the horses could be left with fresh ones replacing them. A foot bridge had been erected over the River Ebbw thanks to Councillor Thomas Watkins and called The Jubilee Bridge by the Rassau people. There was another wooden bridge built by a local man who wanted to get to the Inn without getting his feet wet. Thank you for the input Carol and please if any reader has something to share that could be put into the News Update then do contact me.

Back in the July issue I mentioned Roy Francis, a great Rugby League player from Brynmawr who changed the game for the better. Now it seems that others are also looking at the career of Roy Francis and Wales Online did a feature on him, go to:

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/sport/rugby/roy-francis-rugby-trailblazer-wales-19057200>

There are some photographs of Roy attached to the article, I'm grateful to Ian Haywood from Blaenafon who has done quite a bit of research on Roy Thomas and he has promised an article for our website about him, something to look

forward to so watch this space. There is also a growing movement to get some form of memorial to Roy Francis or at the very least a plaque somewhere in Brynmawr.

Talking rugby when was the Brynmawr Rugby team first started? Many years ago I did a project about the club with my class at the Board School and we did have a lot of fun. We visited the Rugby Club and had a talk and a tour with Mr Beynon who also let the children try on some of the international jerseys he had. (Something children in school today would miss out on). We found out that in 1900 Brynmawr should have played Abergavenny at home but Y Fenni failed to turn up. The Brynmawr team was well established by 1896 and we think they played on a field where ASDA now dominates. I'm sure that in their early days the team met and changed in the pub named the Bear which would have been on the alley leading up from Bailey Street Chapel towards The Royal Exchange, but please, if you know better then let me know.

I wonder how many of you have heard of Mr. John Jayne. The name Jayne was quite common at one time in Brynmawr, I remember the garage on the old Rock called Jayne's Garage and one of our members (now sadly dead) married a Jayne.. Whether any had any relation to John Jayne I do not know. John Jayne lived in Pant y Bailey house in Llanelli, (*that's Llanelli near Clydach*) but was often referred to as "from Brynmawr". He certainly was very involved with the town as a J.P. sitting on numerous public offices and of course the local magistrates. He was a big part of the Literary and Scientific Institution in

Brynmawr, occasionally delivering talks to them. He was Sheriff of Breconshire in 1872-1873 but sadly died just before ending his time as sheriff. He was born in Blaenafon in 1804 and at an early age he entered the services of Messer's Twining and Co. Bankers and Tea Merchants in London, later he ran the provision stores of the Clydach Iron Company for many years before he left to take up a similar job at the Nant y Glo Iron Works. Eventually he became connected with the coal and iron trade and he opened and owned the Milfrain Pit, The Cornish Pit and some collieries in Abertillery, collieries connected to the Clydach iron Works and other great concerns. Breathing new life into the Clydach Iron Works was largely due to his energy and liberality. Accordingly he was said to be respected as a master and his word relied on. He was one of the promoters and a Director of the MTA railway alongside Crawshay Bailey and others and he was also instrumental in introducing the London and North Western Railway Company to this area. He donated to various churches and chapels, the restoration of his parish church was chiefly due to his generosity. He also contributed handsomely to the restoration of the Priory Church in Brecon. (*His son, also named John was appointed Principal of St David's College in 1879. He'd been educated at Rugby School and entered Oxford on an Open Scholarship. He eventually became a Fellow at Jesus College Oxford, became Dean at Keble College and a preacher. He preached a sermon at the opening of the Brynmawr New Church in 1880*). John Jayne was buried at Llanelly Church, his coffin was carried by a selection of workers from his different works and various collieries and the esteem in which the deceased gentleman was held was testified by the hundreds of persons who thronged the way from Pant y Bailey to the church.

Sources: *The Western mail 3rd February 1891*
The Western Mail. 24th February 1879
South Wales Daily News. 24th January 1873

John Jayne was the father of Basil Jayne who at one time was the owner of the Milfrain Colliery. He came up against John Thomas, the clerk to the Brynmawr Urban District Council. Basil Jayne (a traditional Liberal) was very much against donating money for free schools

for the children, something we take for granted today.

There will be an article about John Thomas and how he managed to change Basil Jayne's mind on our website in the coming months.

In May 1904 The Brynmawr Council were determined to prohibit the use of ladies' teasers at the forthcoming fair! Someone produced the following poem to mock their decision.

*Pray, have you, friends, the tidings heard?
Brynmawr has to its depths been stirred,
And lo! the Council puts-a squeezer
Upon the old-time Ladies' Teazer.
Oh ye who hurry to the Fair.
Expecting in the fun to share,
Remember that the squirt's tabooed,
It most old-fashioned is and rude;
And should you use one—presto, pop!
The Council will upon you drop,
And goodness knows what awful fate
Will follow, so don't speculate.
Oh, blest Brynmawr without restriction
When Teazers are your worst affliction!*

Now, what I want to know is what exactly a Ladies Teazer was. If any of our readers have the answer then please let me know and I'll pass it on in our next News Update. Not sure if there's a clue in the two words "squirt" and "rude".

(From the Evening Express, 19th May 1904)

On the 2nd March 1867 the Ancient Order of Shepherds inaugurated a new sanctuary at the Clarence Hotel in Brynmawr. Members of the order had walked from Tredegar to help set up the new sanctuary. The Nant y Glo Brass Band was in attendance and altogether the meeting was a huge success.

The Order of Shepherds still exists today with over 100,000 members though it is more of a UK friendly society and has become one of the oldest mutual insurers in the world.

And finally please don't expect two volumes of the next News Update, I've exhausted myself and need a break. The next (single) issue will be the November/December News Update.