

BRYNMAWR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWS UPDATE

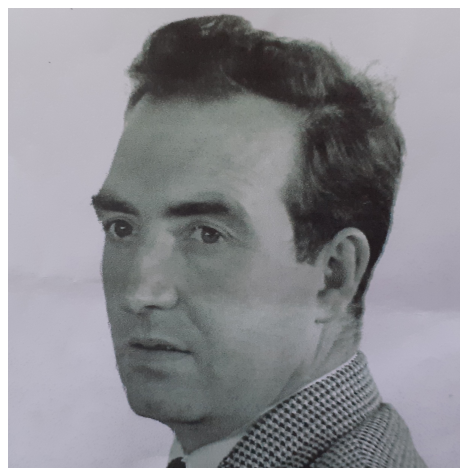
**February/March 2021 supplement.**

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In the February/March News Update I asked if anyone has a story to tell and I had a phone call from Bette Sheen and the tale of her brother Austin Matthews. Austin was born in Brynmawr on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1933. He had a strong work ethic from a very young age when he delivered newspapers and collected the money seven days a week. He attended Brynmawr Grammar School until the age of sixteen and it was here that his love of chemistry was nurtured. The chemistry lab at Richard, Thomas and Baldwin at Ebbw Vale was his first place of work after leaving school. He was in his element there working in a discipline for which he had a high level of aptitude. His abilities were recognised and he was chosen to go to their research centre. Austin undertook National Service for two years where he was commissioned to the bomb disposal squad and he also played rugby and cricket whilst in the forces. He achieved a doctorate in chemistry at Cambridge whilst working for the steel company and went on to work at British Steel in Port Talbot, Panteg, Llanwern and Ebbw vale. His job took him to many parts of the world including America, Mexico, Norway, Sweden and Japan. On retiring from British Steel, Austin continued to use his skills and knowledge by being a consultant and worked until he was seventy years of age, only then did he finish, doing so with some reluctance, such was his strong work ethics. Even then he continued to write chemistry papers, many of which were published in a leading chemistry magazine. In April 2009, Austin received a top award, The T.B. Marsden Award for services to chemistry over the past twenty years. The award took

place at The Boiler House, a new science and engineering centre at Grantham. Lincolnshire. He had a great passion for wanting to promote and nurture science education in young people and wrote a book called "Willy and Wally" which was written with the purpose



of stimulating an interest in the industrial past of Blaenau Gwent. He had a genuine concern for the teaching and the future of science in the country.

Austin was a member of Probus, Abergavenny where he took part in one of his favourite pastimes of active and challenging debates. He joined in 1996. He was always an active member in discussions and presented many papers on scientific and topical subjects He was a team leader and held the positions of Chairman, Vice Chairman, and committee member. He also became a member if the Ebbw Vale Metallurgical Society in 1985 and continued as an active member until ill health in 2009 made it impossible for him to attend. Austin had been an active member and committee member of the society throughout

this period. He also represented the society on the regional committee. He held the office of Chairman for the years 1993-1994 and 2002 – 2003.

Austin never lost his love for Brynmawr and when he died in 2010 at his request, he was buried with his dear wife Rose in Brynmawr overlooking the Milfrain and of course the rugby ground. Rugby and cricket were his true sporting passions. Many thanks to Bette and Judith for providing the above information.

I wonder how many of you saw the film “The Heroes of Telemark” a 1965 British war film directed by Anthony Mann based on the true story of the Norwegian heavy water sabotage during the Second World War. It was to try and stop the Nazi attempts to create the atomic bomb. It was based on a real commando raid named Operation Gunnerside but there was a previous attempt codenamed Operation Freshman. Two gliders were towed and released for the commandoes to infiltrate and destroy the site. Sadly the attempt was a failure due to weather conditions. All those taking part were either killed when their plane or glider crashed or were captured and shot. Among them was Sapper Howell Bevan who was born probably in Beaufort. His father Lewis was originally from Cwm Nant Gam and his mother was Elizabeth. After marrying they lived in Beaufort possibly on the Hill. Howell was born in 1920 and had four siblings: Glyn Bevan (1914-1992), Irvine Bevan (1921-1995), Elvira Bevan (1924-1994) and Roy Bevan (1928-1977). I’m sure there is some family still around in the Beaufort area and if you know of any then please contact the society.

**The above (abridged) was taken from an email the society received from Dr Bruce A. Tocher who is working on a book about the operation and would like to contact members of the family.**

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#### **Another song for Crawshay Bailey.**

The hon. member for the boroughs was entertained, by his friends and supporters, at a sumptuous dinner at Monmouth Town Hall. Mr. R. M. Toogood, of Newport sang the following parody of “The Old English Gentleman” at a dinner to Crawshay Bailey

congratulating him on becoming the M.P. for the borough.

I'll sing you a fine new song,  
Made by a Risca pate,  
Of a fine old English Gentleman,  
Who's made M P. of late.  
Who keeps his Town and Country House  
And proved 'twas fortune's fate,  
That he should keep bold Lindsay out,  
From swamping Church and State,  
Like a fine old English Gentleman,  
Of noble heart and mien.

His works, so great, are stamped around,  
With every' sign that shows  
He has a kindly heart to soothe  
His workmen's cares and woes  
'Tis there, the widow's tear and sigh  
Have ne'er appealed in vain  
He's dried the first, and stayed the last,  
And he'll do the same again,  
Like a fine old English Gentleman,  
Of noble heart and mien.

When winter's cold brings frost and snow,  
And pinching wants befall,  
No idle hands are there to mourn—  
He finds good work for all  
Nor does the lonely orphan creep  
Un-helped from Bailey's Hall;  
For whilst he cheereth all the great,  
He thinks of poor, and all,  
Like a fine old English Gentleman,  
Of noble heart and mien.

But Time, though' sweet, is strong in flight—  
The Session's rolling by  
And soon Lord Derby must proclaim  
To all his friends" good bye"  
And when our guest fulfils his trust,  
What'll be our boroughs' strain?—  
Why Crawshay Bailey's done so well,  
We'll send him back again,  
Like a fine old English Gentleman,  
Of noble heart and mien.

Now, surely this is better, far  
Than all the proud parade,  
Of Lindsay's fifty giant ships,  
Or the fortune he has made  
And much more creditable, far,  
"Till all his bills are paid  
Then you can guess with me,  
I think, who's the better man for Trade,  
And a fine old English Gentleman,  
Of noble heart and mien