

BRYNMAWR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# NEWS UPDATE

May 2021. Issue 20 (The late issue)

[www.brynmawrhistoricalssociety.org.uk](http://www.brynmawrhistoricalssociety.org.uk)

email [brynmawrhistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:brynmawrhistsoc@gmail.com)

First of all may I apologise for the late appearance of this issue of the News Update but at the same time may I congratulate you for getting through the lockdown? I have at times found it very difficult, there were days when I really wasn't sure what day it was, no routine as normal and non contact and conversations with friends were few and far between except on the telephone and sometimes with family on ZOOM or WhatsApp which gave us face to face and let's face it with barbers/hairdressers closed sometimes face to face is not what you want. The good news is the committee have arranged to meet up to discuss the way forward and to look at possibly re-starting the society in September. The committee have a lot to discuss so watch this space.

---

Looking through old newspapers became quite enjoyable during lockdown and it was fascinating to come across some stories of a local nature such as this one: The Monmouthshire Merlin on the 21st June 1862 reported that "Last week, a locomotive engine, belonging to Crawshay Bailey, Esq., of Nantyglo, which was left standing at the bottom of Glamorgan Street, with the steam turned off, while the men were at their dinner, suddenly started off at a furious rate towards Beaufort, where its career was brought to a close.

A person seeing it coming without any person with it turned the switches to prevent it going over the incline. This directed it into one of the railway cuttings whence it was got out after much time though without much damage. Luckily no person was injured".

Also during the lockdown I was lucky enough to be given a wonderful collection (copies) of old maps and survey plans about Brynmawr. One map caught my interest as it showed a stream which I think must be the one running through or under Brook Street. It flows past what was Bryn Farm and its name is the River Cynnor. I am assuming that it would be this stream that flowed into the swimming baths and that would explain why the water in the baths was always so cold, Brrr! This would give the name Twyn Cynnor or as it is today Twyn Cyngordy. Maybe we should try and make sure the correct names are used and marked as Twyn Cyngordy gives a false meaning, as shown in different articles that refer to Twyn Cyngordy as "A meeting place of the council" which is nonsense. The Twyn was named after the stream. Maybe Brook Street could be named Nant Cynnor in Welsh.

---

In the February/March news Update I said that I would put together a "Who was

Crawshay Bailey". As I worked through the various newspapers and books available it became quite obvious the News Update sheet would not have enough room. The final essay (if I can call it that) has now been placed on our website. It was certainly an eye opener for me but can you trust what you read in the newspapers? I'm sure the papers of the day would have praised Crawshay and left any unseemly incidents unreported, but by reading the various newspapers reports it became quite obvious that Crawshay did a lot for the town of Brynmawr and probably Wales in general.

---

How many of you remember the Cosy Cinema and if you did and have a story to tell then please contact the society. Tai Calon are currently updating the Cosy Flats on King Street and they have agreed to place a plaque on the wall to note that it was the site of the Cosy Cinema and famous for its "courting seats". There are many buildings in Brynmawr that could have a "blue plaque" to remind residents and visitors of the town's history. There are also some characters from the town's past that deserve to be commemorated. There are streets named after Crawshay Bailey and there's Bailey Buildings and there was Bailey Sidings but no memorial to the man. There is possibly a memorial being erected to Roy Francis, the rugby league player who was born in Brynmawr; there is an attempt to get a memorial to David Davies and his son who were Chartists from Brynmawr but shot dead outside the Westgate Hotel in Newport during the Uprising of 1839. If you feel a person or even a building should be commemorated then please get in touch. I always think that the Swimming Baths should have some sort of information

board to tell the story of how and why it was created.

---

I did a short talk on BBC Radio Cymru about walking the Gilwern Canal. Did you know that the original name for Gilwern was Aber Clydach and it was referred to as Aber Clydach when the plans for the canal were drawn up? There was talk of building the canal as early as 1792 and the original idea was for a canal from Newbridge on Usk (where the Usk was tidal) to Aber Clydach so that coal could be brought to places in South Monmouthshire. The coal would have been obtained from Waen Dew which is the area of land between Brynmawr and Beaufort. The first section of the canal to be built was the aqueduct over the River Clydach where the Gilwern wharf is today. The canal proved to be very useful as not only coal could be transported but also iron from the works at Clydach, Nant y Glo and Beaufort and also limestone. There were numerous kilns built alongside the canal where the limestone could be burnt to produce quicklime that could be used by the farmers of the Usk valley to sweeten the soil or used as mortar

The top of the kiln at Llangattock has been turned into a picnic area with tables and benches. But best of all they've made them look like the drams that would have carried the limestone to the kiln. Try the walk from Gilwern Wharf (there's a car park by the canal off Church Road) to Llangattock and back and have a picnic on top of the lime kiln.

Stay safe. [The Secretary](#).