

Presentation at Brynmawr: Chartist days recalled.

(This address was given on the 25th of September, 1911 and reported in the newspaper of the day).

At the Red Lion Brynmawr on the occasion of his marriage to Miss. E. J. Harris, Graig Terrace, Dowlais, daughter of the late Mr. W. Harris, Dowlais, Mr. Rhys Lewis colliery proprietor, Twyncynghordy, Brynmawr was presented with a pair of silver candlesticks and a silver cigarette case. Mr. John Parry presided and there were present a large number of Mr. Lewis' friends and well wishers.

In making the presentation, the chairman in the course of an interesting address said the grandfather of the guest of the evening was named William Lewis and was the descendant of a family that had dwelt at Twyncynghordy for nearly 300 years. The English of the name Twyn-cynghordy⁽¹⁾ was the mound of the council house and centuries ago the Britons held their councils in the neighbourhood.

(1)This is what was thought but the name should probably read Twyn cynnordy, cynnordy being where hunting dogs were kept.

In 1811, Mr. Crawshay Bailey purchased the Nant y Glo Iron Works from Messrs Hill, Harford and Co who held them under a lease from the Blaenafon Co granted in 1795⁽²⁾. That date was still visible on the elliptic arch of the old Market Row near the Bush Hotel, Nant y Glo.

(2)The works was actually bought from Hill by Matthew Wayne and Joseph Bailey, Crawshay's brother. The works had been closed after a disagreement with Harford, Partridge and Co. Hill had later re-opened the Nant y Glo works.

Mr. Bailey's soon made the works profitable and the Old Forge was built in 1831, the Upper New Forge in 1825, the Plate Mill in 1833 and the Sims Mill in 1844. Old Mr. William Lewis and his son did a considerable amount of work for Mr. Bailey especially at the Winches Pit. One son, Mr. Rees Lewis was trained at the Normal College, Swansea under the celebrated Dr. Evan Davies and subsequently became a useful schoolmaster of the British Schools, New Town Brynmawr. He was exceedingly clever as a musician and composed several gems which were frequently heard at the assemblies of Zion Baptist Church. The Lewis's were the founders of the church. In 1846, Mr. Crawshay Bailey lent £100 free of interest to assist his workmen in building

Zion Chapel and a few years ago the late Lord Glanusk⁽³⁾, a descendent of Mr. Crawshay Bailey wiped off the debt.

⁽³⁾Lord Glanusk was Joseph Bailey, the older brother of Crawshay Bailey.

Before the Winches water balance pit was sunk, there were two old continuous shafts worked by an antiquated Cornish Steam engines and the building in which they were housed was subsequently used as a smithy for sharpening colliers tools. Old Mr. Lewis's ground extended from the site of the present Heathcock Pond ⁽⁴⁾ down to Big Pond, Nant y Glo near which, later on in the sixties an old field was known as William Lewis's field. In the thirties there was great excitement in Brynmawr consequent to the Chartist Movement. Meetings were frequently held at the back of the King Crispin Inn, Boundary Street and 2/6^d tickets were sold in support of the movement. To commemorate the memorable Chartist March to Newport in the month of November 1839, Mr William Lewis planted the Chartist Tree in Twyncynghordy.

⁽⁴⁾ The Heathcock Pond was drained in the 1930s to become the Welfare Park.

It would no doubt be interesting to many to know that the wages paid in the thirties were:

Colliers and Miners:	21/s to 24/s per week
Furnacemen:	30/s
Puddler and Heaters:	35/s
Rollers:	50/s to 60/s
Fitters, Smiths and Pattern makers:	25/s
Carpenters:	21/s
Moulders:	24/s
Labourers:	2/s to 2/4 ^d per day.

The speaker said that the Twyncynghordy family had always been known for their uprightness, sincerity and generous hospitality and he wished Mr Lewis and Mrs Lewis every happiness and all prosperity.

Eifion Lloyd Davies.