

CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY

CYMDEITHAS HANES CWM CYNON

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY
CYLCHLYTHYR CYMDEITHAS HANES CWM CYNON

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SPORTING ABERDARE

A NOVEL MATCH

On Monday next, July 15th, at 4 o'clock
A WHEELING MATCH will take place, near
The Royal Oak, Mill-street, when a silver watch will
be contested for, the competitors, blindfolded, to wheel a
barrow towards a mark at 100 yards distance; the nearest
to the mark to be the winner of the prize.
Competitors to pay 1/- each.
For further particulars apply at the Royal Oak.

ABERDARE TIMES, July, 13th, 1861.

Notes: Mill-street = Trecynon. The Royal Oak was situated on the old tram road. A basic silver watch at that time could be bought for 2 guineas, and the promoter, presumably the landlord of the house, would have made a profit from his outlay through entry fees and the sale of drinks and refreshments.

BLACK LION HOTEL, ABERDARE
ARTHUR JONES
RESPECTFULLY INFORMS HIS FRIENDS THAT HIS
ANNUAL HUNT DINNER
WILL TAKE PLACE
ON THURSDAY, NOV. 28th, 1861
DINNER ON THE TABLE AT HALF-PAST FOUR PRECISELY
TICKETS 2s 6d EACH

THE COURT HOUNDS WILL THROW OFF AT TEN

Aberdare Times, November, 23rd, 1861.

ABERAMAN — SPORTING GEESE. — The banks of the Cynon opposite Treaman [Aberaman] station were the scene of a laughable but rather

annoying blunder on Friday morning. It seems that five beautiful white swans the property of Crawshay Bailey Esq. MP, Aberaman Park, took to their wings on the day named, and were enjoying a pleasant flight to and fro along the valley, when, among the many who saw them, were a policeman belonging to the TVR Co., and a flunky belonging to an esteemed neighbouring family. Both these sages took the royal birds to be wild geese, and immediately went for fire-arms, and gave chase. After succeeding in getting within four or five yards of them both 'Peeler' and 'Buttons' fired, killing three. High words ensued as to which had killed the two — both claiming the honour of having done so, upon which a third person came forward — a tall, lanky fellow, with a brand new shot pouch slung across his shoulders, looking sportsmanlike. He claimed a share of the booty, having assisted in the capture by getting the carcasses out of the river. In the midst of this hubbub as to sharing the spoil, several persons arrived on the ground, and, to the great consternation of the would-be-sportsmen, informed them that they had killed Mr. Bailey's swans! Immediately their countenance changed into an ashy colour, their feet trembled under them, as their imagination involuntarily depicted a compulsory visit to Cardiff, and the sporty quill-driver, who had decorated himself so conspicuously with the somewhat flashy shot pouch, soon unbuckled it, and threw it amongst the bushes, denying any anticipation in the affair, while 'Buttons', who showed fight a few minutes before, on his claim to the *two* being questioned, offered number three to poor 'Peeler,' who took to his heels, leaving gun, game, and all behind.

Merthyr Telegraph and General Advertiser etc.,
November 26th, 1859.

* * * * *

CRICKET

An article on the history of local cricket would be interesting. Here's a start: In 1864 a correspondent, calling himself *a would-be knight of the willow*, wrote as follows to the *Aberdare Times*: Permit me through the medium of your paper to draw the attention of your readers — the younger portion in particular — now that the weather has fairly set in, to a matter which appears to me to be worthy of notice, namely the want of a good cricket club in the town. I need not dwell on the benefits resulting from such a means of recreation, and I believe mere mention of the subject will be sufficient to induce someone to take steps towards the establishment of a club in the neighbourhood. Neighbouring towns can boast of thriving clubs, so why should Aberdare be behind in this particular? Will not some old veteran in the game take the hint? Assuredly he will not fail to find a sufficient number to rally around him, and to supply a want which I am confident is much wanted by a large number of the young men of Aberdare.

Aberdare Times, May 28th, 1864

Note: There had been a cricket club in Aberdare around 1854. Its grounds were on a meadow opposite Ynyscynon [House]. Members included Gwilym and Gomer Williams (see under Aberdare Races) and Lewis and Fred Davies, Blaengwawr House. (D T Alexander: *Glamorgan Reminisces*, (Reprint), p. 48)

Lord Aberdare and the Mountain Ash Cricket Club — As is his wont, Lord Aberdare is ever ready to further every public movement inaugurated in the

town. As another instance of the great interest with which he views everything having a tendency to benefit his neighbours, whether it be in the shape of recreation for the people, or otherwise, his Lordship has accepted the chairmanship of the cricket club. Everything augurs well for the success of the club, which was recently formed in the district, and doubtless, his Lordship's patronage will give the young folk renewed impulse to go forward.

Aberdare Times, May 29th, 1875

LADY CYCLISTS AT ABERDARE.

The Ladies of Aberdare are taking well to cycling, and it is not an uncommon sight to see several of the fair sex skimming along most gracefully on wheels through the streets, or over the roads in the vicinity. Amongst the ladies out on wheels lately a Merthyr Tydfil reporter noticed Miss Lewis, Mardy, and Miss Rees, Blaengwawr, both of whom looked extremely well. We may also mention that Miss Lewis, Trecynon, has taken to cycling, and a beautiful *Gladiator* lady's cycle was brought home for her from Paris the other day by Mr. J Michael [Jimmy Michael*]. Lastly we may mention that Miss Maggie Michael, sister of 'the Champion', has taken to cycling, and we may reasonably expect her to prove a future champion. (**Merthyr Express**, April, 2nd, 1896.)



Cycling costumes of 1897.

*See further: Cooke, Stephen: *Triumph and Tragedy – The Aberaman Cyclists*. Old Aberdare, Vol. 5, 1988.

A SMART TURN OUT

On Friday the Aberaman Cycling Club held their first run of the season. A start was made from the Square at 11 am. The rendezvous was Penderyn. The cyclists wore their club caps for the first time. The caps are of a dark blue colour with a bold peak. Each cap is adorned with a small shield with 'Aberaman Cycling Club' lettered thereon. On arrival at Penderyn a ham and eggs spread was provided for the members and friends. No doubt but that these periodical runs will be much appreciated, and that the club will have a thoroughly successful season.

Merthyr Times and Dowlais Times and Aberdare Express, April 9th, 1896.

JAPANESE LANTERN PROCESSION

Under the auspices of the Aberdare Cyclists' Club, on Tuesday night, a procession of cyclists, decorated with Japanese and Chinese lanterns, and umbrellas, mounted upon various machines, headed by Mr Jno Jones, captain, riding a Rudge rotary tricycle, left the headquarters, Swan Hotel, Aberaman,

and proceeded up Cardiff Road, via Lewis Street to Aberdare, through the principal streets of which they paraded and were viewed by crowds of admiring onlookers. There were upwards of fifty riders, representing Aberdare, Aberaman, Mountain Ash, Cwmaman, Cwmbach and Cap Coch. Especially attractive was the ordinary bicycle of Mr Charles Evans, who, with an open umbrella formed a canopy, but the artistic cake must be awarded to Mr Jno H Howells, sec. Messrs Jno Jones, M Hood and son (tandem).

Aberdare Times, November 2nd, 1889.

This same issue contains a report of a member's proposal that the local Board of Health should support a move to tax bicycles.

FLYING SQUAD

Several members of the Aberdare Constabulary are able to cycle. This is an acquisition and enables the preservers of law and order to cover the district in a short space of time. At the meeting of the Glamorganshire Joint Standing Committee on Monday the chief constable (Mr Lindsay) recommended that as many police forces were now providing themselves with bicycles, he thought they would be very valuable to the Glamorgan Constabulary. He did not recommend that bicycles should be purchased, but that an allowance of 2d per mile should be allowed to men using bicycles to perform any urgent duty. This, he thought, would encourage the men to keep private bicycles, and also tend to increase the efficiency of the force without saddling the county with any great expense. After a short discussion a resolution was passed that 1d per mile each way should be allowed. This arrangement to continue for six months.

(Aberdare Times, December 12th, 1896.)

A DAY AT THE RACES — Horse Racing at Aberdare??!

Sporting gentleman wouldn't associate an iron and coal mining area such as Aberdare with the 'Sport of Kings', yet around the year 1863 a number of local 'men of the turf' set up a racecourse at Ynyscynon; prominent amongst them was Alaw Goch's son, Gwilym Williams, and William Dyke owner of the *Boot Hotel*.

The course, as described by the *Aberdare Times*, presented a scene of the most animated character, the field in which the grandstand and winning-post stood being full of people — all tidily dressed and all orderly — and the surrounding hills were fringed with lookers-on. As far round as the eye could sweep, even at the tops of the neighbouring mountains, people might have been perceived sitting and leisurely conning the movements of the motley and excited crowd below.

The grand stand, which was commodious and substantial, was well loaded with visitors; well-stocked refreshment booths in the hands of Messrs E Hosgood, M Evans, T H Evans, and J Naysmith*, afforded the supply of creature comforts, and odds and ends, of which there is mostly such a plenitude at races, were everywhere obtainable.

The first race was *The Open Steeple Race*, a Handicap of 70 sovereigns added to sweepstakes of £5 each; seven horses entered, but through mishaps, only three ran including Gomer Williams' [Gwilym Williams' brother] *Gaylad*. This horse failed at the water-jump. This event was followed by *The Hurdle Race*

(Prize sweepstakes of £3 each with £25 added). The course was 2 miles over 6 flights of hurdles. The next race was a *Commercial Steeple Chase* for a sweepstakes of £3 each, with £25 added by the commercial gentlemen visiting Aberdare. Gwilym Williams entered *Cockamroo* (late *Gamecock*), and Gomer, *Gaylad*, the latter was the favourite but it fell at the last fence, and came second.

There was then a *Pony Race*, five ran. The final race was a *Consolation Stakes* of 10 Sovereigns, added to a sweepstakes of £1 each.

Some 20,000 people attended the races including hundreds of working men, and the event concluded with a Stewards' Ordinary held at the Boot, and a Race Dinner at the *Black Lion*.

The Aberdare Times, April 29th, 1865.

*Landlords of *The Eagle*, *Three Generals*, *Cardiff Castle Hotel*, and *The Rock*.

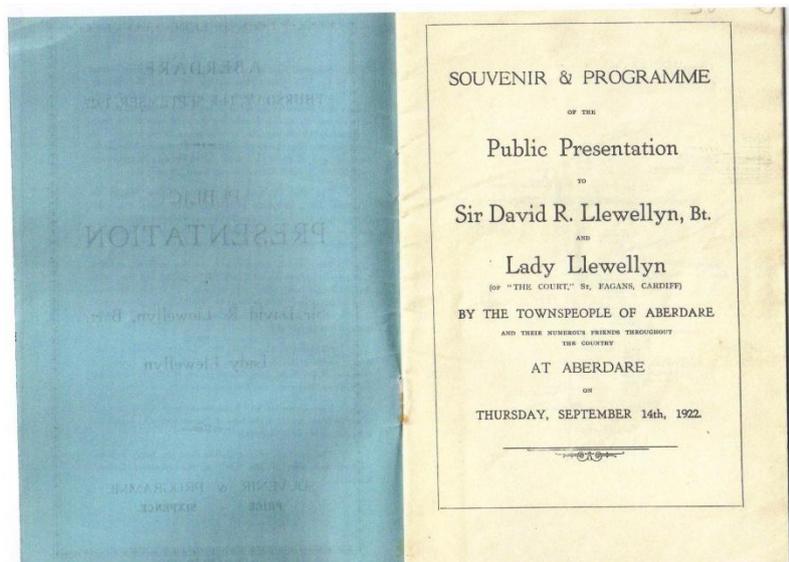
THE NOBLE ART.

The boxing term 'meeting the canvass' took on a whole new meaning at Aberdare in 1902.

On Saturday evening a boxing match for a purse of gold took place at Mr. J Stokes' Pavilion, Market Place, Aberdare. The combatants were George Jones (*Punch*), Aberaman, and Con Sheen, Merthyr. When the fourth round was in progress a catastrophe occurred which brought the contest to a somewhat abrupt termination. The marquee suddenly collapsed and some of the spectators were so irritated by the course of events that they challenged the proprietor of the Pavilion, and a lively altercation between them superseded the abortive boxing competition which the referee declared to be a draw.

Aberdare Leader, August 23rd, 1902.

THE GRAND SPORTS, FETE AND GALA DAY



On the 14th September 1922 Aberdare was en fête. One of its famous sons, David Richard Llewellyn of Bwlfa had been created a baronet in the January 1922 New Year's Honours list, and the town was determined to mark the occasion and celebrate the event. This it did by presenting Sir David with an oil painting of himself wearing the robes of the High Constable of Misken Higher, an office he held in 1920, and Lady Llewellyn with a painting of her

children; and the holding of festive cultural and sporting events. The noted Edwardian painter Sir William Orpen was commissioned to paint the portraits.

The cultural events consisted of an eisteddfod with choir competitions, brass band competitions, and a grand sports meeting and fête and gala. The sports Events were made up of foot racing for valuable cash prizes, and a Tug of War. 80 yards boys' handicap (6 heats), an 80 yards girls' handicap (2 heats), an 80 yards Boy Scouts' handicap, an 80 yards hurdle race (4 heats), an 80 yards foot handicap (12 heats). These events with their semi-finals and finals were interspersed with professional entertainments viz. Comedy Knockabouts, an Ariel Gymnast, Acrobatic Comedians, 'Great Scott on the Tottering Ladder', 'The Rollo', 'King of the Air', 'Dick and Fred, Laughter Makers', 'The Two Arleys, Acrobatic Eccentrics'. The events took place at the Foot Ball Field, the New Recreation Grounds and on the Ynys Meadow (Cow Field). The day ended with a firework display held at the park. The athletics and the fireworks were arranged by J W Wilder of Birmingham.

Source: *Public Presentation to Sir David R Llewellyn, Bt., and Lady Llewellyn: Souvenir and Programme*. I am grateful to David Leslie Davies for bringing this event to my notice and providing me with a copy of the programme.

APRÉS SPORT

One of the greatest problems in mid nineteenth-early twentieth century Aberdare must have been that of keeping person and clothes clean. Rammell's report of 1853 deals with the lack of water in the town, and the smell of inadequately washed bodies and clothes in crowded chapels and theatre galleries can only be imagined.

The well off middle class housewife would have employed domestic servants to do their washing, or have sent their laundry out to washerwomen for cleansing. The poorer classes however had to do the best they could to keep clothes reasonably clean.

During the Cholera epidemic of 1849 there had been a number of deaths of washerwomen which a local newspaper attributed to the washing of clothes. So strong was the belief that the paper, *The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* printed a warning that read

CHOLERA

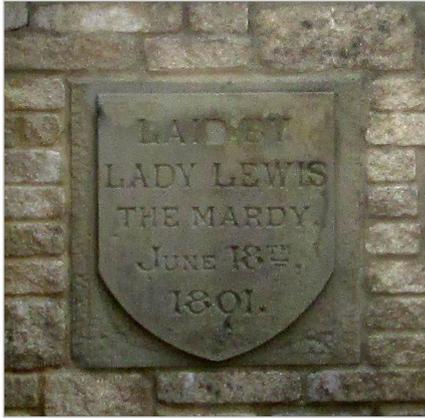
NOTICE IT IS THE OPINION OF MEDICAL MEN THAT THERE IS LESS DANGER IN WASHING IN COLD WATER THAN IN HOT, the clothes, bed linen &c., which has been used by persons while they were ill, and who have died of cholera. The Cholera Committee, therefore, beg to urge on all parties the great desirability of washing all such things in COLD WATER.

BY ORDER.....Merthyr Tydfil, July 3 1849

There was the choice of hand washing in the river or a stream, or at home by means of boiling clothes over a fire or in a copper, and then pounding them in a tub with a "Dolly". Scrubbing on a wash board, was another method, using propriety soaps such as those with The magical cleansing properties of Sinclair's soaps for all waters, and then starching with Reckitt's Blue, or Stiff's of Bristol. These products were widely advertised on the front pages of local newspapers.

Hudson's is the soap to buy,
As everybody knows –
It quickly drives the dirt away,
But won't wear out the clothes.

After mangling and drying, the garments then had to be pressed using heavy flat irons that were heated on the kitchen fire-grate.



The on-site preserved foundation stone dated June 18th, 1891, and right, The Laundry on Abernant Road.

By the turn of the century the town was able to turn to the **Aberdare Valley Steam Laundry Co.** on Abernant Road. This offered a service "of best work and promptitude, with the use of the most up to date machinery and competent labour. Both quality and price", they boasted "will suit. Washing collected and delivered by arrangement. Special calls on receipt of a post card. Full prices and particulars will be sent on application to Miss Shand, Manageress, or to the Secretary T.D. Williams, 10 Canon Street."

ABERDARE STEAM LAUNDRY.

OPENING OF A NEW INDUSTRY AT ABERDARE.

On Thursday afternoon a large and representative company assembled at the new steam laundry situate in Abernant-road, Aberdare, for the purpose of witnessing the formal opening ceremony by Mrs. James Lewis, Plasdraw. Amongst those present were:—Lady Lewis, The Mardy, and the Misses Lewis, Mr. David Davies, J.P., Mr. W. J. Thomas; Major Thomas Phillips, Mr. L. N. Williams, Mr. James Williams, Mr. F. W. Mander, and Mr. David Williams, directors; Dr. Ewan Jones, Messrs. C. M. Lewis, L. Acomb, D. P. Davies, J. H. Morris, David Hughes, J. W. McEwen, William Hodges, John Morgan (contractor), and David James (secretary), and a large number of ladies. The building, a very pretty structure, has been well constructed by Mr. John Morgan, from plans prepared by Mr. Thomas Roderick, and the whole of the machinery was supplied and fitted by the well-known firm of James Armstrong and Co. (Limited), London.—Mr. David Davies, J.P. (chairman of the board), observed that the foundation stone was laid in June last by Lady Lewis, and the estimated outlay was about £2,500. As illustrating the need of such an industry in the town, he might mention that during the five weeks in which work had been carried on there had been a steady, satisfactory increase, the total number of articles turned out last week being 2,000, and there were already 110 customers on the books. (Applause.)—Mrs. James Lewis having set the machinery in motion, the chairman presented her with a massive silver ink-stand, shaped as a flat-iron, bearing a suitable inscription.—In acknowledging the souvenir, Mrs. Lewis remarked that she was surprised to find such a compact industry in their midst, and, as they all knew the difficulty of having that kind of work done in some small houses with but little drying ground, it was easy to predict a successful issue to the undertaking. (Cheers.)—In the evening a dinner took place at the Boot Hotel, under the presidency of Mr. David Davies, J.P., the catering of Host Hughes being most satisfactory. The whole of the employees were also entertained at the Cardiff Castle Coffee Tavern.—Our engraving is from a photograph by Mr. Benjamin Thomas, Aberdare.

Western Mail, March 11th, 1892.

Even this service however would have been unaffordable by those with large families and small incomes.

The invention of the electric washing machine in 1906 and the means of mass production were to change the lives of many local housewives. In December 1914, for instance, the *Aberdare Leader* under the heading **Swift Vacuum Clothes Washer**, reported:—

The office of Mr. Roger Price, Rhyl, above Messrs. Miles and Son, Victoria Square where demonstrations of the wonderful labour-saving and effective Swift Vacuum Clothes Washer are held twice daily, is largely attended by ladies residing in Aberdare, who have all expressed themselves highly delighted with the results.

*Many have purchased the Vacuums, and have expressed how very effective they are, and how they economise time, labour and soap. The same paper also contained a puff for this machine that stated **Labour Saving Invention. The Vacuum Clothes Washer. Free Demonstration to be given twice daily** [time and venue given] *showing how a tub of clothes may be washed perfectly clean in four minutes with the minimum of labour. All invited.* The Agent announced that he had some hundreds of letters, which could be seen in his office, from clients who have bought the washer and are highly pleased with it.*

How many readers remember the Chinese Laundry in Duke Street in 1940/50?

* Quoted in Thomas, Tydfil: **Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil Union in Victorian Times**, pp.54-55 (Cardiff 1992)

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