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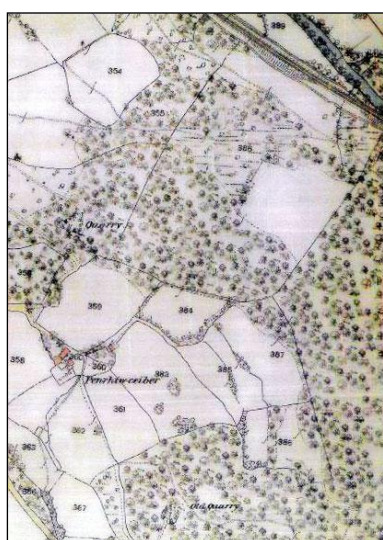
Autumn 2016

THE HISTORY OF PENRHIWCEIBER PART ONE

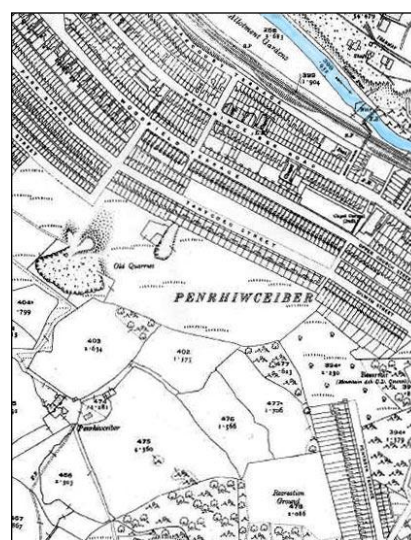
In this issue we look at the history of Penrhiwceiber, especially its collieries. I had hoped to put all my research about this village into this issue but as I have so much information, the remainder including the Institutes and the notable people will have to go into the winter issue. We also report on the Re-opening of the Cynon Valley Museum. As this October is the 50th Anniversary or should I say commemoration of the Aberfan Disaster, we retell the events that took place in Aberfan, and how the people of the Cynon Valley helped. John Davey our Treasurer was one of them along with 16 senior scouts. Some members sent me their Ilford evacuee reminiscences, which I have reproduced.

Penrhiwceiber in 1874 was named after one farm in the middle of a heavily wooded area as can be seen by this Ordnance Survey map. Then look at the 1919 map to see the difference. The coalmines have transformed the area.

(Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey maps.)



Penrhiwceiber 1874



Penrhiwceiber 1919

Both maps show the River Cynon and Taff Vale Railway top right
with Penrhiwceiber Farm and Quarry middle left

Penrhiwceiber: its meaning

According to Thomas Morgan in his 1887 book "The Place Names of Wales", it should be spelt Pen- Rhiw-Cae-Byr – "the top of the slope of the little field.

Penrhiw means top of the hill or slope in English.

Other thoughts refer to the word "ceiber", which means joist, beam or rafter and may suggest a place where timber was plentiful, which would certainly describe the area, which was heavily wooded before the coming of the coal trade.

Penrhiwceiber Colliery



Early Years

Surprisingly it was a farmer's son who was responsible for the sinking of this colliery. John Glasbrook was reared in Penybedw, near Swansea and was familiar with agricultural and malting pursuits. His education was of the ordinary of his day, such as was given by the "winter" schools, namely two months in the year. Later he acted as overseer at Llangyfelach and ultimately became an Alderman and a Justice of the Peace at Swansea. But I am going ahead of myself.

His earliest interest in coal mining was by contact with a Mr Edward Martin of Abercynon colliery. With his brother-in-law, Mr P. Richards, he began in a small way at Haven Hill Colliery.

His brother David, William Cory and another able Swansea man Mr Yeo leased the mineral rights of the area around Penrhiwceiber and formed the Penrhiw Navigation Coal Company. Did an English clerk not know how to spell Penrhiwceiber! Mr David Thomas of Cwmbach was in charge of the sinking operations, which started in 1872. Sinking the shafts proved to be a most hazardous operation: three sinkers died falling down the shafts during 1875-76. Also great difficulties were encountered by running sand and water. Several inrushes caused hold-ups and on occasions Glasbrook who had proved no faint-hearted colliery speculator in the Swansea valley, was tempted to abandon the undertaking altogether. These difficulties necessitated the installation of a large Cornish beam-type pump operated by steam power, with Will Thomas (Will Llansamlet) as pumpsman. The sinking proceeded through a mixture of sandstones and shales of the Pennant system until the Nine feet seam of the lower coal series was won in 1878 at a depth of 584 yards. The sinking of No.2 shaft was continued to the Gellideg seam at a depth of 653 yards from the surface. It had taken seven long years before the colliery was ready for production in 1879 and at a cost of £130,000.

The first commercial coal came out of the pit raised by a crude wooden headgear with a single rope.

Mr William Bevan became the manager in April 1879. (He is the author of "The History of Mountain Ash".)

The earliest winding engineman was very well known – the be-whiskered David Gethin – who came in 1876 and retired in 1913.

The colliery proved to be John Glasbrook's biggest mining venture and it is recorded that it produced an

output of over 1,000 tons daily of best quality steam coal. The output for the year 1887 was 397,534 tons. By 1890, the Cory Brothers had bought the pit.

The Pit Fire of 1919

On 30th October, there was a near disaster. There were between 250-300 men underground when a fire broke out at the bottom of a shaft caused by an electric motor overheating. The fire was discovered by a pit lad who raised the alarm. Most miners escaped but 30 men were overcome by fumes and were unable to escape. They collapsed and were moments from dying. Firemen came and rescued them but one man died: Robert Barrow.

In the peak years of the 1920s, the mine employed nearly 2000 men. For most of this period and well into the 1930s, the pit produced an average 350,000 tons of good steam coal each year.

Powell Duffryn Ownership

Cory Bros seemed to be quite a "gentle" owner if any coal owner can be called that. There were only stoppages for non-unionism. This was to change radically when Powell Duffryn bought the colliery in 1942. Gone was the "nice paternalism", now came "Poverty and Death," as PD was soon to become known. They brought a change in the manner of paying the colliers from the tonnage system to the yardage system, which forced 25 colliers to go below the minimum wage. On the 20th August 1943, the pit went on strike with three other pits in the valley coming out with them. PD refused to budge so the Government's Regional Coal Controller was brought in and ruled in the men's favour.

1963-1985

In 1963-4, there was a £1million reorganisation of streamlining the loading and conveying underground and now the 800-man pit produced an annual 180,000 tons - principally for the Phurnacite and domestic fuel markets

Twenty years later an investment of over £1m was made to open a new face in an area of plentiful reserves.

A year later in 1985, the colliery employed 569 men including men transferred from Deep Duffryn Colliery, Mountain Ash following its closure in 1979.

The NCB in 1985 announced that they would close the colliery for the following reasons:

The colliery lost £67 per tonne of coal mined in the last three months, April-June 1985.

The new £1m coalface had failed to reach 50% of production target.

Yet a study for the NUM by Andrew Glyn of Oxford University attempted to estimate the total costs/benefits of pit closures to the national Exchequer. It estimated that there would be a net benefit of keeping the colliery open of a total of £4.7million per annum.

When the NCB announced that they would close the pit there was a great outcry. The miners along with Cynon Valley and Mid-Glamorgan County Councils and many people of the valley tried their best to stop the closure. But the 517 miners of the colliery were threatened to lose thousands of pounds in benefits if they carried on with their fight so they sadly gave up their brave struggle.

Penrikyber colliery closed on 8th October 1985.

This material was taken from

The History of Penrikyber Colliery by G.F. Bond, 1964, *The Collieries in the Cynon Valley* by Ray Lawrence and *Cynon Coal*, 2001 published by our society.

Some interesting information is also on the internet including a YouTube video of its closing.

Cwm Cynon Colliery



This colliery was situated across the river Cynon from Harcourt Terrace. It was sunk between 1889 and 1896 by John Nixon's Navigation Coal Company. The smokeless steam coal was used by many foreign countries for their navies.

In 1929, it was taken over by D.R. Llewellyn. Later, in 1935, his company employed 170 men on the surface and 1,270 men underground, and they produced 400,000 tons of coal in that year.

The NCB closed the pit on 7th January 1949. It is now the site of an industrial estate.

From *The Collieries in the Cynon Valley*, by Ray Lawrence

Iford Evacuees stories

It was lovely to find out that there was romance between an Iford school evacuee and an Aberdare pupil.

Mrs Celia Thomas our Vice-Chairman has told me this story.

Henry Greatorex was one of the many Iford evacuees who came to Aberdare. He stayed with the Newcombe family in Cardiff Road, Aberaman. Later he was transferred to a Mrs Condon whose son fought in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil war. He made friends with Patricia Thomas (Celia's sister). He went back to Iford but they kept on writing to one another. They wrote to one another for years but they both had boy/girl friends.

On one occasion Henry cycled all the way from Iford to Aberdare to see her but when he arrived at Aberdare he found that she was on holiday at Port Eynon, so he cycled there the next day to see her. This was real love!

Patricia was a vivacious attractive young lady. She went to Barry College to train to be a teacher. Henry was very bright, he went to the London School of Economics, then while doing his National Service he was sent to Eritrea. Patricia, once she had qualified as a teacher, went to Romford in Essex to teach at a school there, which was two miles from Iford, (why did she go there I wonder ??). Several times she visited Henry's mother. After finishing his National Service, he came home. One day Patricia found Henry waiting outside her school for her. Their romance, which had blossomed by letter writing, blossomed even more and in August 1953, they married.

Patricia was a deputy headmistress at the young age of 28. She gave all that up to bring up her boys David and Ian. Henry went on to do great things in the Civil Service. He tracked down millionaires who did not pay their taxes and saved the UK millions of pounds and, as a reward, he was given the Imperial Service Order. There are only twelve in existence.

So, this story of an Iford evacuee coming to Aberdare had a happy ending!

John Samuel from Kent writes

I was born in Moss House, Abernant in 1941 and was admitted to Abernant School, aged 3½ in April 1945. In September 1945, we moved house to Park View Terrace, Abernant. My mother walked me to and from school. I soon realised that she was the only parent doing this as all the other children got to and from school under their own steam. She told me, "The main road (!) is too dangerous for you to

walk down alone". I therefore asked her if she would approve of my going home via Forge Pondfield and down to my aunt's house in Fothergill Street, where she would meet me. She agreed. I therefore proudly told my classmates about my plans. At lunchtime, an older boy, Kenny Davies approached me saying, "I hear that you are going home via the Pondfield after School." I confirmed my intention, to which he replied, "Well don't. We are going to fight the evacuees in the Pondfield after school and I don't want you to get hurt!" Very considerate, as I was not yet 4 years old.

I don't know who won the fight, but I went to Fothergill Street, via the main road, without telling my mother. (So much for the evacuees and local children getting on well ! Ed.)

Audrey Cooper née Holt from Thorpe Bay, Essex writes:

I was billeted with Mr & Mrs Polson and their daughter Vivien at 3, Cledwyn Terrace, Trecynon. My mother and younger sister went to the village shop "Morgans", managed by Mr John Williams and his wife Grace.

We stayed at Trecynon for three years, and how I missed it all when we came home, especially the singing! I come from a very musical family. My father was a Baptist church organist and Choirmaster, and the Sunday services at "Noddfa" chapel, I will never forget. I remember the children sitting in the front row, each one ready to stand up and say a Welsh text, and the evacuees tried to do the same!

It is 73 years since we returned to Ilford but I still look back on my time in Trecynon with great affection.

ABERFAN DISASTER: the 50th Anniversary

An avalanche of colliery waste 30 feet high hurtling down from an 800-foot high colliery spoil tip, containing boulders, trees, trams, bricks, slurry and water making the sound of a jet plane, smashed into two schools and eighteen houses. This man-made disaster happened at 9.15 am on Friday 21st October 1966 in Aberfan. 144 men, women and children died, 116 of the victims were children, most of them between the ages of 7 and 10, 109 of them perishing inside Pantglas Junior School. Of the 28 adults who died, five were teachers in that school. In the school, one master was found dead with three children whom he had tried to protect as the school was hit. A clerical worker died as she took the children's dinner money, her body shielded five children who lived.

More children could have been killed as the Secondary School was situated very near Pantglas Junior. However, their lessons did not start until 9.30 a.m., so the older pupils were on their way to school so they thankfully escaped death.

Jeff Edwards was one of lucky ones who escaped. When he woke up, he found he had a girl on resting his shoulder, who appeared to be dead. He said that he had escaped death by three inches. He had nightmares about it for years. He slowly recovered and became Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil in 2005.

The NCB had known that there were problems with coal tips but had done nothing about them but there had been many warning signs in the area:

In 1939 on 5th December, a large slide of a tip of 180,000 tons of waste from the Albion Colliery (owned by the Powell Duffryn Company) occurred at Cilfynydd, five miles from Aberfan. It slid over 700 feet onto the main Cardiff-Merthyr road. The road was blocked to a depth of twenty feet and considering how busy that road was, it was amazing that no one was killed. A Powell Duffryn memorandum was written about the dangers of tips but it was put into a drawer and forgotten.

A large portion of the Aberfan Tip 4 slid 1,800 feet down the mountainside on 27th October 1944, and another tip slide occurred on 21st November but stopped only some 500 feet from the canal bank carrying away trees and four feet of subsoil. These were vivid reminders that tip slides travel long distances and were very dangerous. Colliery officials did a few trivial repairs but the tipping continued.

Even in 1950, the NCB blandly told Merthyr Council, "We are constantly checking the position of all these tips." They were not!

In November 1963, another warning happened on Tip No 7, which three years later would cause the disaster but once again, it was ignored. The slip debris travelled some hundreds of feet. The Pit heap

was giving warnings but nobody was taking a blind bit of notice.

In March 1965, there was an alarming incident at Tymawr Colliery, Hopkinstown that was due to a tip slide. The main road was flooded but nobody was hurt. When the Divisional Chief Engineer saw what had happened he was greatly concerned, and he recalled the Powell Duffryn Memorandum and added to it. It was recommended that all tips in South Wales be inspected so an official of Merthyr Vale Colliery inspected the Aberfan tips, (they were "produced" by Merthyr Vale Colliery), and said they were stable without making a proper examination of No.7 Tip. An official of Merthyr Vale Colliery inspected the Aberfan tips and said they were stable without making a proper examination of No.7 Tip.

The NCB should have made the Mines Inspectorate have statutory responsibility for coal tips but they sadly they did not.

In the last three to four months before the disaster the top of Tip 7 advanced downwards by some 20-30 feet but still the NCB ignored these last warning signs.

The stage was set for the "manslaughter of innocent human beings!"

An Inquiry was set up to look into this disaster, the Chairman appointed was Sir Herbert Edmund Davies from Mountain Ash; it lasted 76 days.

The following Tuesday after the disaster Lord Robens, the Chairman of the NCB, made a television appearance in which he stated that no one could have known that there was a spring on the mountain under the tip, that was turning it into slush, which caused the disaster. Several Aberfan miners knew this was untrue and told Edmund Davies so. Robens also said that the tip slide was caused by a "critical geological environment", which was poppycock!

From the start of the Inquiry, the NCB denied all responsibility for causing the disaster. After 50 days, they at long last admitted responsibility. Had they admitted responsibility at the start much of the Inquiry would have been unnecessary. It was their ineptitude and bungling that had caused this disaster.

Nine officials who in varying degrees were responsible for some part of the disaster were named in the Report but no legal action was taken against them, none was even demoted!

The Mayor of Merthyr launched an appeal to help the people of Aberfan. The generosity of the public of Britain and of the world was so great that when the fund closed in January 1967 the total amount reached was £1,750,000. When there was an appeal for toys for the remaining children, the kindness of the British public was so overwhelming that it took four buildings to store the donated toys.

Out of the Disaster Fund each bereaved parent received £5000. The parents of injured children received £500.

In May 1967, Lord Robens met the Committee of the Aberfan Parents and Residents Association who asked for the complete removal of the tips. He said, "No," as it would cost £3 million. He would only

St. John helped

Dr. Howell Pierce, Aberdare District Commissioner with the St. John Ambulance Brigade, told me that although no organised contingent of St. John personnel had gone over from Aberdare, numerous individual members had gone over to help.

"On Saturday morning I rang the Merthyr police to let them know that we were able to send over a contingent of St. John personnel from Aberdare and Mountain Ash if and when the need arose. We were not called upon to send people over, however, although I do know that many of our members went over by themselves or in small groups to help."

CLOTHING STORED

Dr. Pierce added that supplies of clothing had been arriving at Mountain Ash from various parts of South Wales, and was now stored in the Miskin Inn, St. Tello's Hall, and the Ambulance Brigade headquarters in Mountain Ash. He added, "This clothing has been coming in from the general public, which shows just how much they have been shaken by what has happened. Indeed, we've got more clothing than they will need in Aberfan."

Mr. Les Davies, Assistant District Commissioner, said, "We were in touch with the St. John headquarters at Cardiff, but as it turned out they had sufficient personnel in Aberfan and, although we were standing by from Friday on, we were not called upon to go over."

"Merthyr did ask us to send over stretchers from Aberdare, and naturally this was done."

Numerous members of the Trecynon St. John Division, under Superintendent Hiram Davies, travelled over to assist in Aberfan over the week-end, although they had not been officially requested to do so.

Those who helped in Aberfan in addition to Mr. Davies were Brynley Davies, Mansel Morgan, William Jones, David L. Davies, John Morgan Howells, Graham Llewellyn, H. O. R. Lewis, Leonard Preece, Vivian Davies, John Hopkins, Tudor Lewis, David Venn and John I. John.

concede reducing the height of the tips and landscaping them at a cost of £750,000. The association were not satisfied. They set up a Tip Removal Committee.

On 7th February 1968, a deputation of twelve went to the Welsh Office to meet with Lord Robens and two government ministers who urged them to accept the landscaping scheme, saying that the experts said that the tips were perfectly safe, but the Committee and the Aberfan people could never be persuaded that the tips were safe.

The Committee wrote to George Thomas, the Secretary of State for Wales, saying that if they did not receive an up-to-date report by 24th June, various forms of militant action would be considered. An unsatisfactory letter from George Thomas was received.

On 1st July, the weather took a hand in the struggle: there was a torrential rainstorm that flooded Aberfan. S.O. Davies the Merthyr M.P. therefore wrote to George Thomas, telling him how streams rushed down from the tips and removed tons of slurry, which were deposited in Aberfan, and that the tips were still unsafe. At a meeting on 20th July, Robens again told the Committee that experts said that the tips were safe. He gave many “empty” promises and assurances, which made the villagers angry. At a further meeting with George Thomas, one of the villagers flung a handful of slurry on the table in front of him. The people of Aberfan were becoming understandably more impatient and angry.

Thankfully, on 26th July, a Cabinet meeting resolved that the tips should be completely removed. The villagers burst into song in true Welsh fashion. George Thomas and Harold Wilson had changed their minds. But there was a sting in the tail. The government said that £250,000 should be found by “local interests”; this could only mean the Disaster Fund. There was a storm of protest. By much arguing this was reduced to £150,000, (£1.8m at 2003 prices). Under unbearable pressure from the government, the trustees of the Disaster Fund gave the money to the NCB for the removal of the tips. This was unquestionably unlawful under charity law. Later, Labour politicians paid back the money with interest.

On the day of the disaster, while hundreds of miners and other members of the public including Cledwyn Hughes, (the Minister of State for Wales, who in grimy shirt sleeves was directing recovery operations), were frantically trying to rescue the 144, Lord Robens wearing his new immaculate robes went to the University of Surrey to be installed as Chancellor!

Most of the material above was taken from the Report of the Aberfan Disaster Tribunal, and, “Aberfan: a disaster and its aftermath,” by Joan Miller.

There were several TV programmes about the Aberfan Disaster in October, Aberfan: the fight for Justice with Huw Edwards, (BBC1); Surviving Aberfan (BBC1); Aberfan, the green hollow: a film poem written by Owen Sheers and performed by many Welsh actors (BBC1). They are all available on the iPlayer and Catch Up.

From October 2016 to January 2017 at Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, there is an exhibition of excerpts from local newspaper articles of the first 10 days of the disaster.



Rescuers search through the rubble and waste



A gravestone of siblings

Short Bros big effort

MILLIONS of television viewers who watched rescue operations in progress over the week-end were able to see for themselves the amount of plant and drivers that had been provided for the rescue bid by Messrs. Short Brothers, Hirwaun.

Within minutes of receiving a call for equipment on Friday morning, tractors and lorries were sent by Short Brothers over to Aberfan, and most of their 150 drivers went over without any mention of payment to drive them. Some of the drivers worked for 36 hours without a break.

Short Brothers vehicles were

By MICHAEL PROSSER

responsible for removing many thousands of tons of the black slime that had entombed so many, and the cost of their activities over there from Friday morning onwards runs into thousands of pounds.

Mr. Gabriel Short, director, told me. "We were able to provide much of the plant and trained operators needed for work of this kind. Indeed, some of our men were working at the time in the nearby colliery, and have been doing work like that which they were doing in Aberfan for years.

"On Friday morning we sent

over 15 tractor shovels and one bulldozer, and by lunch-time we sent over 30 drivers as well. We kept on sending over more and more equipment all over the week-end, and indeed some of our jobs elsewhere came to an absolute stop as a result.

"Some of the men who went over on Friday worked, without stop for 36 hours, and even then had to be dragged from their machines. We had other of our drivers telephoning from all over South Wales volunteering to go over and relieve them; and we even had outsiders ringing up and volunteering to drive our vehicles.

WITH POLICE

"Some of our drivers were picked up by police cars in various parts of South Wales and driven to Aberfan, and much of our plant was rushed over there with a police escort."

Mr. Short, together with his brother Vernon, Plant Manager Michael Williams, and outside representatives David Howells and Mervyn Owens, was responsible for directing the operations of the men and plant over much of the week-end.

He added, "Our tractor drivers, lorry drivers and fitters were really marvellous. No question of payment was made, although obviously we are under a moral obligation to pay them, and this will be done. Our operations over in Aberfan must have cost us several thousands of pounds. The men were superb. I've never seen anything like it."

Scouts help with traffic and digging

A party of 16 senior scouts from the Aberdare district worked with picks and shovels at Aberfan throughout Friday night.

Arriving at Aberfan at 9 p.m. they left for home at 5 a.m. when further large bands of volunteers arrived to take over from them and the hundreds of other men who had toiled through the night.

At 7 o'clock on Sunday morning the Scouts turned out again to await transport to convey them to Aberfan.

Within the hour they were back on the job — and they kept at it until 3.30 p.m.

OTHER HELP

This time only a section of the party were engaged in digging work — the others were detailed to carry sandbags up the mountain and to assist in the work of diverting water from the tip away from the village.

One or two others were asked to help with traffic control later in the day — doing a valuable job in easing the entry and exit of the endless stream of lorries at the site where the waste being carried from the school was being tipped.

In charge of the party on both days was the Assistant District Commissioner, John Davey.

Another member of the party, Scoutmaster Tom Burrows (Penywaun) who has

charge of the Aberdare troop of scouts, interviewed by a "Leader" reporter, said that working near the Scouts on Friday and again on Sunday were a party of Scotsmen who had travelled down to Wales to see Saturday's international. Instead of going on to Cardiff they turned in to Aberfan, where they stayed until Sunday afternoon.

"There must have been thousands there on Friday night, all of them ready to work," added Mr. Burrows. "I have never seen so many people in so small a space."

"I can say this—they shifted a tremendous amount of stuff before the bulldozers and grabs took over."

BULLDOZER STUCK

One of the jobs the Aberdare Scout party tackled, "in between things" during Friday night's long shift was that of trying to release one of the bulldozers sent over by Messrs. Shorts, of Rhigos, when it became bogged down in the quagmire.

"The lads ran down to the streets below and within a short time they were coming back up carrying large pieces of timber to put under the bulldozer," he said. "Unfortunately the conditions were so

bad that the bulldozer was still bogged down in the mud and slime when the time came for us to give way to fresh parties of volunteers."

Nothing much had been said about that, but hundreds had come up from Cardiff, said Mr. Burrows. It was not merely a Valleys effort.

He added one other word which he felt needed saying: "There was a lot of talk about men standing by watching. Actually the vast majority of them were there waiting for a shovel. Once someone began to dig and put down a shovel or pick, there was a person at hand to grab it and carry on the work."

Mount sent vehicles

The Clerk and Surveyor spoke at a special meeting of Mountain Ash Council this week of efforts made by the Mountain Ash authority at the time of the disaster.

"We were very strongly represented at the scene — which will live in the memories of everyone who was there for the rest of their lives," said the Clerk, Mr. G. W. Hosgood.

Mr. Hosgood injured a foot while taking part in the digging operations at Aberfan.

The Surveyor, Mr. J. H. Farnell, said that 102 men

from his department and nine vehicles took part in the operations.

"I must also mention the part played by five young ladies on the staff of the public library who were taken over to Aberfan where they worked for many hours with the W.R.V.S.," he said.

In paying tribute to the men of the Surveyor's department he said, "Every man did his bit and I was very proud to see many of them in the forefront of the rescue work," he said.

Both newspaper cuttings are from The Aberdare Leader's coverage of the tragedy.

Re-opening of the Cynon Valley Museum

Saturday, 3rd September 2016 was a red-letter day for the valley when the museum was finally reopened.



Dinah Pye, Trust Chair, with CVHS Vice-President Mrs Tydfil Thomas



CVHS President, Lord Aberdare



Roy Noble, re-opening the museum



Roy Noble and Charlotte Morgan, Development Manager for the Cynon Valley Museum

The museum closed its doors in 2014 due to RCT council's austerity cuts, despite protest marches and petitions against the closing. Thankfully, The Cynon Valley Museum Trust saved the building by signing the lease from the council, which took two long years of protracted meetings with RCT council to take over its running.

In a ceremony at the museum, Dinah Pye, the Chair of the trust thanked the trust members, the local community and RCT council and her band of dedicated volunteers.

Charlotte Morgan, the Development Manager said she was most encouraged to see so many visitors on the opening day (despite the torrential rain). Our senior Vice President, Mrs Tydfil Thomas, gave a short speech, and presented some of the CVHS books to the Trust for sale in the museum shop.

Also in attendance were our President, Lord Aberdare; Coun. Ann Crimmings; Mrs Anne Watts; Vikki Howells, A.M. Cynon Valley; and our M.P., Ann Clwyd. They all said how delighted they were at the museum's re-opening and wished it every success.

Broadcaster Roy Noble opened the museum officially and regaled us with tales of our local history.

Currently, there is a fascinating exhibition in the museum about the world-class cyclists from Aberaman: the Linton brothers and Jimmy Michael.

The museum will now be open from Wednesdays to Saturdays from 11 am to 4pm each day.

SOCIETY NEWS

At the AGM in September, Mr Alun Watts was welcomed on to the committee.

Jeremy Morgan has been appointed Correspondence Secretary and Valerie Manning has been appointed Speakers Secretary.

Mr Geoffrey Evans who has written several local history books and has held various positions on our committee has been elected a Member of the Royal Historical Society in recognition of his contribution to historical research.

HISTORY BOOK

Miners at war 1914–1919 – South Wales Miners in the Tunnelling Companies on the Western Front by Ritchie Wood. Price £35.00.

RECENT TV HISTORY PROGRAMMES

Victoria: 8 parts on ITV. A partly fictitious account of her reign, which starts at her coronation and ends at the birth of her first baby. It focuses on her relationships with Lord Melbourne, Sir Robert Peel and of course her husband Prince Albert. The official companion book to the TV drama is "The Victoria Letters." A second series is planned.

Tutankhamun 4 parts on ITV. A drama based on the story of Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon.

Monarchy by David Starkey (repeats on the Yesterday channel)

Secrets of Great British Castles presented by Dan Snow. One of the six castles featured is Cardiff Castle.

APOLOGY

In the summer issue, I wrongly printed "the late Eric Rose". He is very much alive and I apologise for any offence that this may have caused.

FEEDBACK

It was good to receive reminiscences about the Ilford evacuees and I am always happy to receive feedback. With the Aberfan disaster, you may wish to send me your own memories about it.

Acknowledgement: Image of the gravestone of siblings courtesy of FreePhoto.com

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