

Aberdare Park Notes

Aberdare Park

The park opened on July 27, 1869 and in 1870, the local board of health borrowed £5,000 to wall, drain and plant the park. Since its opening, it has been maintained first by the Board of Health (1866-94),

It also has impressive gardens; which were laid by William Barron (1805 – 1891) who was responsible for many a park layout in England;

In 1950, the first Aberdare Park Bike meeting took place and attracted a crowd of around 15,000 spectators. On the 18th July 1955, Aberdare Park saw the first ever live television coverage of motorcycling racing anywhere in the country.

In 1956. Wales' National Eisteddfod Would be held in the park; (Aberdare was its first venue back in 1860) with the Gorsedd circle's erection completed to highlight this.

The Old Clock Tower, Hirwaun Road, Aberdare. Located opposite Aberdare Park. The Old Clock Tower, now a private residence, is a castellated stone building with restored working clock tower. Built in 1896 as part of Aberdare Boys Grammar School.

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/lifestyle/welsh-homes/old-clock-tower-aberdare-knocks-10222186>

William Lewis, 1st Baron Merthyr - a Welsh coal mining magnate.

William Lewis was born in 1837 in Merthyr Tydfil,

In 1855 Lewis was appointed as an assistant to W. S. Clark, the chief mining engineer of John Crichton-Stuart, 3rd Marquess of Bute (1847–1890). He spent ten years in that post before succeeding Clark in 1864. Lewis was given the occupancy of Mardy House as part of his job, which became his long-term residence in Aberdare.

He at first worked for the Bute coal mining pits in southern Wales, but between 1870 and 1880 he acquired his own pits in Rhondda, which became known as Lewis Merthyr Consolidated Collieries Limited. Aged only 27 he became the Chief Mineral Engineer to the Marquis of Bute.

He would go on to be one of the major figures in the development of the South Wales Coal Industry. Alongside managing Bute's numerous business interests, from Rhondda pits to the docks in Cardiff, after the 1870s he began acquiring collieries around Trehafod and Porth in the Rhondda. It became known as the Lewis Merthyr Consolidated Collieries Ltd and it employed 5,000 men producing nearly a million tonnes of coal a year. It is now the home of the Rhondda Heritage Park. He continued to expand his business with the Lady Lewis Colliery, Ynyshir, and in 1905 acquired the Universal Colliery, Senghenydd ,

where on October 14th 1913, the worst colliery disaster in British history would claim the lives of 439 miners.

Senghenydd colliery disaster:

One of the pits owned by Lewis was the Senghenydd Colliery. Following a failure to implement a safety plan in early 1913, an explosion in the mine on 14 October of that year killed 439 miners and one rescuer. This remains the worst mining accident in the United Kingdom. Lord Merthyr, together with the colliery manager, was subsequently fined a total of £24

The sculptor was **Sir Thomas Brock (b.1847, Worcester-1922)**

His most famous work is the Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace, London

The Victoria Memorial is a monument to Queen Victoria, located at the end of The Mall in London by the sculptor Sir Thomas Brock. Designed in 1901, it was unveiled on 16 May 1911, though it was not completed until 1924.

He also sculpted the Titanic memorial outside Belfast City Hall.

Same statue by Brock (a copy) at Merthyr Tydfil – I wonder if the Aberdare one is a copy.

Spirit of industry statue

Originally a drinking fountain, it was presented in 1905 by Mr Isaac George, High Constable of Mountain Ash before the end of his term of office.

As to the **Fountain**, he felt sure it would be used by hundreds of school-children, as remarked by Mr. D. P. Davies. He would guarantee that the water would be excellent, better even than Cardiff water (Laughter and Applause). They may safely drink from that **fountain**—take their glasses empty, and bring them away overflowing (Applause). His term of office was drawing to

NEW FOUNTAIN FOR ABERDARE.

Mr. **Isaac George**, high-constable of Aberdare, has presented to the town a magnificent fountain, and this was unveiled at the Aberdare Public Park on Friday afternoon by Mr. Rhys Llewellyn, J.P., the chairman of the district council. The high-constable was escorted to the scene of the interesting ceremony by a posse of police, and he was accompanied by the Mayor and Mayoress of Cardiff (Alderman and Mrs. Robert Hughes) and the ex-Mayor of Cardiff (Alderman John Jenkins). The fountain is a massive structure of red granite, surmounted by an imposing and appropriate figure representing "Industry."

Miskin Higher—was to remove these squatters and rase their cabins to the ground. This Park forms part of the Hirwain Common. The late R. H. Rhys, chairman for many years of the Local Board of Health and Urban District Council, advocated its being laid out as a Public Park, and on June 7th, 1864, the first resolution reads:—"That preliminary steps be taken to form a portion of the Hirwain Common, which has been allotted to the inhabitants of Aberdare, into a Public Park." The project was bitterly opposed by a large section of the residents, and heated correspondence filled ~~the~~ *Aberdare Times*, the *Gwladgarwr*, and other local papers, but Mr Rhys persevered in his motion. On July 26th, 1869, the Park was opened, the proceedings being graced by the presence of the members for the borough, Messrs Richard Fothergill and Henry Richards.

The unveiling ceremony was witnessed by a large crowd of people. The High Constable in the course of an interesting address, said: Standing here in this beautiful Public Park, the pride of sweet 'Berdar and the envy of the neighbouring towns, I cannot help looking back across the years to recall the changes which have occurred, and which have made such alterations in this spot. I will not worry you with any details of the sanguinary engagements which took place on Hirwain Common, echoes of which are still to be heard in many of the place-names in the neighbourhood, such as Gadlys, Nantyrochain, &c. I will however, ask you, to come back with me in imagination to a period when another fight was taking place here against the cotters or squatters who had enclosed portions of the Hirwain Common, and had erected thereon their "Tai Un-nos," which gave them at least a prescriptive right to dwell thereon. Some difficulty was experienced in getting rid of these, and one of the first duties of the Glamorgan Police, soon after they were appointed to take the place of the Parish constables—who I may point out were under the control of the High Constable of

Coronation Fountain

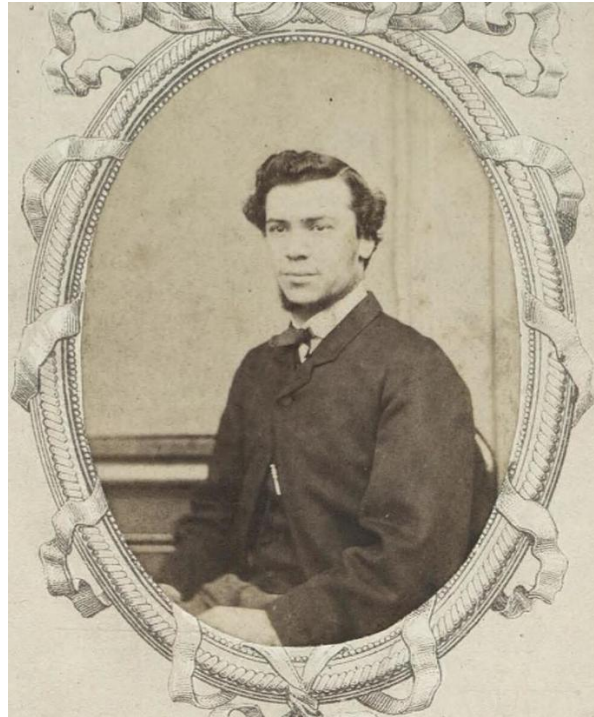
In 1911, Lord Merthyr donated to the inhabitants of Aberdare an elaborate cast iron fountain to commemorate the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary.

The fountain, which is painted, consists of a circular pool, with a sloping edge decorated with rosettes and stars, in the middle of which is a circular plinth decorated with four dolphins and cherubs. On top is a large splayed bowl above which are pelicans holding up a small bowl. The whole is topped by a draped female figure.

This fountain was renovated in 2017/18 and is now fully functional after being out of action for 30 years.

Coronation Fountain, which is one of just three in the world - it's identical to the one situated outside the famous Raffles hotel in Singapore.

Dan Isaac Davies (1839 - 1887) - Schoolmaster



A pioneer of the teaching of Welsh in schools.

Zealous and devoted supporter of the bilingual movement.

Born in Llandovery, Carmarthenshire.

Father - Isaac Davies was a hatter who had a shop in the town, and his mother Rachel.

In 1858 became schoolmaster in Aberdare, where he encouraged his assistants to use Welsh as the medium of education. The plaque on his old school in Aberdare – visible from Aberdare Park.



In 1867 he moved to a school in Swansea.

in 1868 being made Assistant Inspector of Schools, moving first to Cheltenham (in 1870), then to Bristol (in 1877).

His exile had deepened his love for Welsh, and he now sought to have it taught (not merely used) in the schools.

Davies spoke on the subject at the Liverpool national eisteddfod (1884), read a paper on it before the Cymmrodorion in London (1885), and contributed to the Baner in that year a series of articles which were reprinted (1885, 1886) under the title Tair Miliwn o Gymry Dwyieithawg.

In 1883 he returned to Wales, to a position in the Merthyr Tydfil district (though he lived in Cardiff).

He may be recognised, at the National Eisteddfod in Aberdare (1885), as one of the founders of the ' Society for the Utilization of the Welsh Language , ' today known as ' The Welsh Language Society. Cymdeithas y Iaith Welsh.

During his sojourn in England he buried the wife of his youth. In 1880 he was married to Mademoiselle Mirault, a cultured French lady, and a member of a respectable Huguenot family. The marriage ceremony was solemnized at St. Denisles-Rebais Seine-et-Marne, France, where the bridegroom had first met the bride as his sister's French teacher.

He prepared a memorandum on bilingualism, for presentation to the 1886 royal commission on elementary education in Wales, and gave evidence before the commission. The recommendations of the memorandum were largely adopted by the commission in its report (1888), but before that Davies had died, 28 May 1887.

On October 26, 1883, soon after settling with his family in No. 7, East Grove, the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire was opened at Cardiff,

They later lived at 12 Richmond Terrace (now called Museum Place), off Park Place where he died after contracting an illness.