

Ystrad Mynach Notes

Meaning - Ystrad - a flat valley floor. Mynach - Monk. But there was no monastery recorded but lots of stories of monks rescuing damsels, fighting Welsh Princes and killing Normans.

An unusual crossroads in the valleys - set in the Rhymney valley - north towards Rhymney, South towards Caerphilly, West towards Nelson, Abercynon and the Taff Valley, east towards Newbridge and the Ebbw Valley.

Church built 1855. Designed by [architect John Norton](#) - heavily influenced by Augustus Pugin (co-designer of House of Westminster). Norton mainly designed country mansions. Also designed Gwyn Hall - the Civic building in Neath.

1920 - the Church in Wales was disestablished from the Church of England. New constitution drawn up by [John Sankey from Roath](#).

Disestablishmentarianism - describes a person who supports the separation of church and state.
Antidischmentarianism - the movement against the separation of church and state.

[Andy Fairweather Low](#). Born in Ystrad Mynach. Moved to Llanrumney in Cardiff and went to Llanrumney High School. Now lives in Rhiwbina. He was a founding member and lead singer of 1960s pop band Amen Corner. Strong solo career - Wide-eyed and Legless. Then in bands with Eric Clapton and many other famous musicians. Looked upon as a very talented guitarist and songwriter.

Untruth - he used to attend Sunday school at Holy Trinity and when told off for misbehaving they had to go and stand in the corner, known as the Amen Corner.

[Lauren Price - boxer](#)

Born in Newport but grew up here in Ystrad Mynach where she lived with her grandparents (opp the Viceroy of India). Started as a kick-boxer. Also played football for Cardiff City. Won an Olympic Gold Medal in 2000 in Tokyo - first Welsh boxer to ever do so. Welsh Sports Personality of the Year. Awarded an MBE. Now turned professional - won all three bouts so far. Fighting on Saturday night - live on Sky.

Untruth - Claims that she is the first female Welsh Boxer champion are untrue as Daisy from Tonyrefael won best in class at Crufts in 1984.

[Greville Wynne - \(b. 1919 d. 1990\) Spy](#)

The businessman who became one of Britain's top spies at the time of the Cuban Crisis. He played a pivotal role in preventing America and Russia from nuking each other off the face of the earth.

Not your typical British Spy, recruited whilst at Cambridge University. In this instance they wanted a courier, someone who could visit Russia without raising suspicion, and bring back documents from Oleg Penkovsky, a Russian disillusioned with the threat of atomic war.

He was just a businessman who regularly travelled to eastern Europe as part of his job.

Grew up in Ystrad Mynach. Lived in No. 1, Tredomen Villas, up the road from the station.

His father was foreman at the Tredomen Engineering Works, owned by Powell Duffryn and made equipment for the mine.

He was a committee member of the Young Britons, a Conservative Party sponsored youth group held in the old church hall.

who helped Oleg Penkovsky, the "spy who saved the world" Wynne was sentenced to eight years and Oleg Penkovsky was given the death sentence and stripped of his rank as Colonel and his medals.

He left school at 14 and took a labouring job. One source suggests that this was at Tredomen Works where his father was a foreman, but another stated it was with an electrical contractor in Caerphilly. Later he became an apprentice to a telephone company in Nottingham. Most biographies then say he extended his qualifications there and attended Nottingham University, studying electrical engineering. All this resulted in his entering business in the field of engineering sales which took him eventually to the Soviet Union, and the rest is history.

17 months into his sentence he was exchanged for Soviet spy Gordon Lonsdale. On his release, Wynne was in a poor state of health. He had lost a lot of weight and doctors said his time in prison had left him "emotionally and mentally exhausted". Wynne went on to write about his time as a spy in a book entitled *The Man from Odessa*, which was one of the early examples of a book being published about secret work that the government never expected to be made public.

'Wynne was not some loveable rogue or bar-room scoundrel who deserved a little generosity of spirit. We now know that he was indeed a fantasist incapable of distinguishing fact from fiction who peddled an entirely bogus tale of self-importance, and on the way short-changed his co-author. He was also an alcoholic bully who beat up his second wife, Hermione.'

Wynne struggled with depression and alcoholism in the aftermath of imprisonment. He separated from his wife, estranged from his son, re-married and possibly abusive to his wife.

Benedict Cumberbatch plays him in the film ['The Courier'](#)

Untruth: Penkovsky and Greville Wynne had a lot of trouble setting up their document exchange. They were ordered to use code words. The first was 'Vladivostok' but Wynne struggled as there was no K or V in the Welsh alphabet. They then tried Ystrad Mynach and even Pontllanfraeth but this caused Penkovsky no end of problems. In the end they just used 'Iechyd Da' and 'Nah zda-rov-h-yeh' but got into trouble one day when in a Russian bar they said that and found it was also occupied by the Treorchy Male Voice Choir on tour who all also joined in the toast.

Artie Moore

The wireless operator who heard a distress signal from Titanic on April 15th 1912 before news of the disaster arrived in the UK.

The self taught engineer built his first wireless set near his home in South Wales.

Born in 1887, Artie lived in a 17th Century water mill at Gelli Groes, outskirts of Pontllanfraeth..

As a young boy in the same mill, Artie was involved in an accident that meant his leg had to be amputated.

He intercepted the message. The first message read: "CQD Titanic 41.44N 50.24W".

After the messages stopped Artie ran to the local police station to relay the news. "They laughed at him. They thought he was nuts. They said it was unsinkable."

Not long after the disaster Artie came to the attention of the Monmouthshire Education Committee who offered him a scholarship to the British School of Telegraphy in London.

Soon after this in the last few months of 1912 Artie was invited to join the Marconi Wireless Telegraphy Company as a draughtsman.

At the outbreak of war in 1914 Artie left Marconi to take up a position as a wireless technician with the Admiralty where he was responsible for designing wireless equipment for Britain's warships.

Untruth: One reason he wasn't believed in the police station is that just a few months previously he had rushed in and said he had just heard who had won the 4.30 at Chepstow. They laughed and pointed out it was only 3 o'clock.

Brian Josephson

Nobel prize winning physicist. From Cardiff - went to Cardiff High School. Parents taught in Howardian High School. Lived in Ystrad Mynach, next door to the Non-political Club from age 6 months to 6 years old.

Royal Oak - Oak leaf in the middle of the roundabout

King Charles II hid in an oak tree to hide from the Roundhead soldiers after the Battle of Worcester in 1651.

Ystrad Mynach

Steve Joyce artwork - 1998, based on items found during the redevelopment of the stores behind. Bristol based - works around Gloucestershire, Somerset and the Forest of Dean.

Rachel Fenner - Celtic font & Christian imagery - benches, railings, floor brick mosaic paving - vandalised and repaired but not as it was originally.

[Penallta pit](#)

A late sinking - 1905. Jewell in the crown of the Powell Duffryn empire of 70 pits in South Wales. A show-pit to foreigners. Employed 3200 at its peak. Kept being modernised. Survived beyond the strikes of the 1980s. Eventually closed in 1991. Last shift came up from underground and marched out with a brass band at the head. Some redevelopment has taken place but the Powerhouse is still waiting - and a listed building.

[Andrew Rowe - Corten steel panels](#)

The idea for these pieces came from a site visit by the artist to the old colliery where a docket had been left and some of the pages had been ripped out and were blowing in the wind across the site. Rather than depicting names or figures as in the original document, local school children were involved in creating images on these 'pages' which tell the story of the park through their eyes with designs of animals and other features of current life within the park etched into the steel.

[Mick Petts - Sultan the Pony](#)

Sultan the Pit Pony is a breathtaking 200-meter-long raised-earth sculpture in Parc Penalta, South Wales. This sculpture, created by Wales-based artist Mick Petts, is the largest earth sculpture in United Kingdom. It has become a significant visitor destination, with paths and scenic viewpoints offering beautiful views of the surrounding landscape.

It all began in 1996, when Petts was commissioned to design a landform to shelter the events area of Parc Penallta from prevailing winds. It took 3 years and 60,000 tons of coal shale to construct this landform, which symbolizes the final release of the pit ponies used in the local mining industry.

Pit ponies were used by the local mining industry for two centuries to haul tubs of coal. The last animal-miner retired in 1999. As soon as the sculpture was completed, locals nicknamed it "Sultan" after a prize-winning pony from Penallta Pit

He designed a brick mosaic in Pengam park - Cardiff - don't know if it still there.

[Malcolm Robertson - High Point Observatory](#)

Scottish based artist

An eye-catching structure that commands very good views over the surrounding hills. The five arms each point to one of the communities which collaborated in the creation – Nelson, Ystrad Mynach, Maesycwmmmer, Hengoed, Llanbradach and Gelligaer – directing our attention out to them rather than up to the sky. The 'wings' and benches that stem off from each arm incorporate images of local heritage, natural wildlife and recreation that have been developed by children from the local schools.