

**GLYNNEATH AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY.**  
**CYMDEITHAS HANESYDDOL GLYNNEDD A'R CYLCH.**

**1974 TO 2010**

**THE EARLY YEARS**

A meeting was held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1974 at Cwmnedd Primary School to discuss ways of contributing to the 'CYMOEDD 74' year of the Valleys movement. This movement had started at Aberfan and had slowly spread through the valleys of Glamorgan. Councillor Cliff Jones chaired the meeting. The meeting decided, that as a way of participating in the spirit of the movement, the local Historical Society would be re-established.

The society was to be named -

The Glynneath & District Historical Society  
Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Glynnedd A'r Cylch.

Officers elected were

Chairman – Mr Henry Jenkins  
Treasurer – Mrs. Susan Davies  
Secretary – Mrs Mary Foster Thomas  
Librarian Archivist – Mrs Mair Potts.

Committee members elected were

Mr Henry Lewis, Nurse M Powell,  
Mr Idris Phillips, Mrs V David,  
Mr Harry Hughes, Cllr. Lewis Adams,  
Mrs Gwladys Jones, Mr Malcolm Griffiths,  
Mrs Dorothy Lewis, Mr John Harries,  
Mrs B Brown, Cllr. Mrs B M Jones and  
Mrs Gwyneth German.

A further meeting was held on 17 May 1974 when everything decided at the inaugural meeting was confirmed. It was also decided that a major project would be adopted – the setting up of a Scrap Book. Future meetings would take place on the second Friday of each month from October to May. The membership fee would be 25p annually but financial help would be sought from the local Council. The Secretary was asked to contact lecturers to create the first programme.

At a meeting on 11 July 1974 it was reported that the local Council had donated £50 to the Society and an account was opened at Barclays Bank, Glynneath. The Secretary reported experiencing difficulty in obtaining speakers but was confident that a programme would be arranged. A sub committee was formed to collect and edit material for the Scrap Book project.

There is no mention in meeting minutes of a speakers programme for 1974 but in a meeting held on 7 March 1975 the first list of speakers appeared. Also reported was the receipt of a letter from the Neath and Tennant Preservation Society regarding a proposal for a country park at Glynneath suggesting a joint venture with our Historical Society. Interestingly nothing seems to have come of that proposal.

By 1976 – 77 the Society seems to have become established with a full programme of speakers and with a social evening held at Plas y Felin, a popular venue at that time. Photographs of Plas y Felin appeared in the Society's 2009 exhibition. However the venue for members meetings was by no means settled yet as the Society would move its meetings around from Cwmnedd Primary School to Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwmnedd to Glynneath Town Hall and finally to the OAP Hall in Whitting Street where almost 35 years later the Society still holds it's meetings.

## 1980 ONWARDS

June 1980 saw the Society's Chairman Henry Jenkins resign due to ill health and Mr Idris Phillips was elected Chairman. By now most of the speakers at meetings came from the extra mural department of the University College of Swansea. The Society's Secretary had also become the Mayor of Glynneath at this time.

The 1981 – 82 season went well it seems as Society's members enjoyed a full lecture programme, several social evenings and a trip to Warwick Castle and Stratford Upon Avon. Minutes of committee meetings do not exist for 1982 or 1985, the reasons are not known. However in a meeting held 8 June 1984 the Secretary reported it had become too expensive to continue to engage lecturers from Swansea University and it was proposed to invite local speakers to meetings to save costs. Trips continued to take place though with members visiting Llanharan House, Dyffryn Gardens and Tredegar House.

At the AGM held on 7 June 1985, Mr DG Walters was elected Chairman, Mrs Susan Davies continued as Treasurer and Mrs Mary Foster Thomas remained Secretary. Membership fees were increased, the amount was not recorded but the Society's finances remained tight.

During 1986 and 1987 the Society held discussions on opencast coal mining, local litter problems and tourism. Letters were sent to the Borough Council about these issues. An excursion to Powys Castle was organised. In 1988 the heating in the Town Hall proved unreliable and it was decided to move meetings to the OAP Hall in Whitting Street, Glynneath. Meetings have continued to be held there in the 22 years that have elapsed since. The outing in 1988 was to Castell Coch and St Fagans. The annual membership subscription by now had increased to the princely sum of £1.

1989 saw Mrs Elaine Reynolds take over as Secretary. Mrs Mary Foster Thomas had resigned earlier in that year as she and her husband left Glynneath to live in Killay, Swansea. Mrs Thomas had given loyal service since 1974 and a presentation evening was held for her in appreciation. At this point it was decided to hold raffles at meetings to aid funds, with prizes being donated by members, as there was only £68 in the Society's bank account. This was the first time that the amount in the Society's account had been reported. It was also decided to keep a record of all speakers and subjects as a reference for the future.

## THE SETTLED YEARS FROM 1990 – 1999.

Minutes of the 1990 AGM report a grant of £25 had been received from Glynneath Town Council and the balance in the Society's bank account had increased to £123.65. It was decided to advertise the monthly meeting in the Community Centre.

In 1991 the Society's officers remained as Chairman Mr. D. Walters, Secretary Mrs Elaine Reynolds and Treasurer Mrs Susan Davies. The annual trip in 1991 was to Caerleon.

Throughout the 1990s the annual outings continued and the same officers remained in their posts. In 1995 a 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary dinner for members of the Society took place at the White Horse Inn at Pontneddfechan. However the year was not without sadness as three loyal members passed away – Mrs. Walters, Mrs. German and Mr. Hawkes.

1997 saw the day for the monthly meetings of members change from Fridays to the first Thursday of each month and to this day this is unchanged. The situation was a settled one for the Society in the mid to late 1990s with regular numbers of members and fairly static levels of income and expenditure. But the situation was to change dramatically after 1999.

## 2000, A CRITICAL YEAR

Mr. D. Walters and Mrs. Elaine Reynolds, having given 15 and 11 years respectively of loyal and committed service as officers of the Society, both decided to retire at the AGM held on 4 May 2000. The Society reached a crisis point as a replacement Chairman and Secretary could not be found from the membership. A special meeting chaired by Graham Morris was called on 2 November 2000 to discuss the crisis. Graham agreed to take over as Secretary and organise a programme of speakers for 2000/01 and Susan Davies continued to act as the Treasurer but a Chairperson could still not be found.

At a subsequent meeting held on 4 January 2001 Mrs Sylvia Traylor agreed to become Chairperson. At that meeting a plea was made to members to come forward and form a committee and indeed a number did so and this meant the Society in subsequent years grew stronger with regular committee meetings. The committee members at this time were Mrs Sylvia Traylor, Mrs Susan Davies, Graham Morris, Ian Currie, Glyn Davies, Brian Davies, Terry Williams and Mrs Menna Walters. Finances also improved in time with various grants being received. This committee worked hard to improve levels of membership, raise funds and to provide varied and interesting speakers for meetings of members. Detailed minutes of committee meetings were now being kept.

By March 2001 the Society's membership had grown to 36 and Ian Currie led a walk along the Neath canal from Maesgwyn on the evening of 21 June that year. Former Society members were contacted and asked to consider rejoining the Society. By 2002 the annual membership fee had increased to £5 and the committee decided to begin building up an archive of old photographs and postcards depicting Glynneath and district.

Susan Davies was appointed President of the Society in 2002 in recognition of her long standing service as Society Treasurer for the previous 28 years, by any standards an enormous contribution.

At the Annual General Meeting held on 2 May 2002 the following members & former members were awarded Life Membership of the Society,

Mrs Susan Davies	Mrs Elaine Reynolds
Mr Roy Davies	Mrs Mary Foster Thomas
Mrs Olivia Howells	Mr David Walters
Mrs Dorothy Lawrence	Mrs Menna Walters.

Ian Currie led members on a guided tour of Neath Abbey on 20 June 2002.

As an example of a lecture programme, this was the one for 2002/03,

5 September 2002	- Ian Currie & Glyn Davies - " Old photographs and views of Glynneath and Cwmgwrach".
3 October 2002	- Dr. Bill Jones " Welsh emigration to the USA".
7 November 2002	- Captain D C Jones " The enemy we killed, my friend".
5 December 2002	- Mr Phillip Cockwell " The old Welsh Christmas".
16 January 2003	- Mr John Coughlan " Construction of the Glynneath bypass".
6 February 2003	- Mr Thomas Lloyd " County Houses of South Wales".
6 March 2003	- Mr John Collier "Terracotta Warriors".

- 3 April 2003                   - Mr Glyn Powell  
                                      “ Save our Senni”.
- 1 May 2003                    - AGM followed by Mr Gerald Gabb  
                                      “ Swansea 100 years ago”.

On 25 September 2002 Keith Edwards and the late Mrs. Sylvia Sharpe joined the committee and the balance in the Society's bank account had, with grants received, grown significantly. On 30 November 2002 a special dinner was held at Glynneath Rugby Club and the eight Life Members presented with awards in recognition of the service they had all given to the Society.

2003 saw Graham Morris and Mrs. Sylvia Traylor resign as Secretary and Chairperson respectively. The Secretary's role was then split and at the AGM that Mrs. Sylvia Traylor became Business Secretary and Glyn Davies became Programme Secretary. Ian Currie became the Society Chairman, a position he held until 6 September 2007 when Keith Edwards took over on a temporary basis. Mr Mervyn Jones and Mrs Gwyneth Edwards were appointed to the committee at the 2006 AGM.

Mrs. Sylvia Traylor resigned as Business Secretary from 6 September 2007. Graham Morris who had rejoined the committee in early 2007 thereafter took over as Business Secretary. During 2008 Mr Mervyn Jones took over as the present Chairman from Keith Edwards. At the 2008 AGM Tony Peck and Delyth Evans joined the committee. Delyth then became the Programme Secretary.

### 36 YEARS ON, WHAT NOW?

Society membership levels remain strong and finances are very healthy. Meetings continue to take place every first Thursday each month at the OAP Hall, Whitting Street, Glynneath from September to May. The annual programme of speakers continues to be well received by members.

To celebrate the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society in 2009 a photographic exhibition ‘ The Way We Were’ was organised using material held in the Society's archives. The exhibition took place at the Fane Arts Centre in Glynneath Training Centre from 19th October to 20th November 2009. The exhibition later moved on to Glynneath Library for a month. The exhibition could be seen on display at Cwmnedd Primary School from March – June 2010 and was greatly enjoyed by school pupils, teachers and parents. Setting up the photographic exhibition was a real challenge for committee members and required a lot of hard work but around 700 people enjoyed the results.

New information regarding an earlier Historical Society in Glynneath came to light as the Society photographic exhibition opened. A souvenir programme printed to celebrate the Glynneath and District Miners Welfare Association's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1924 to 1949 was discovered. Within that Programme is a reference to Cymdeithas Cwm Nedd – Vale of Neath Society that had been inaugurated on 18 November 1948! So it seems there had been a Historical Society in Glynneath as far back as 1948 and many of the objectives of the early Vale of Neath Society are now being developed by the present Glynneath and District Historical Society. Local history it would appear has interested people for many generations!

The Society's committee in 2010 is  
Chairman – Mr. Mervyn Jones  
Vice Chairman – Mr. Keith Edwards  
Treasurer – Mrs Susan Davies (now 36 years sterling service!)  
Business Secretary – Mr. Graham Morris  
Programme Secretary -- Mr. Glyn Davies  
Mr Dennis Broome  
Mr Roy Davies

Ms Delyth Evans  
Mr Clive Mason  
Mr Tony Peck.

Mrs Menna Walters, one of the original members of the Society, retired from the committee in early 2009. We are very grateful to Mrs Walters for all the dedicated service and support she has given the Society during the over 35 years and we all wish her well for the future. Mrs Gwyneth Edwards resigned from the committee in 2010 and again the Society thanks Mrs Edwards for her contribution and offers her best wishes in retirement.

We hope that having read this history of Glynneath & District Historical Society you will think about coming along to one of our meetings of members and joining the Society. Annual membership is now only £7. A warm welcome awaits! We welcome casual visitors to our meetings, admission is £2 per adult per meeting, so if you are visiting the area then please do come along if you can! If you wish to know more about the Society, it's objectives, current and future plans please see the development section on this website. The Business Secretary Graham Morris can be contacted by phone on 01639 722105 or by e mail [grahamghs@aol.com](mailto:grahamghs@aol.com) .

Finally we need your help! If you have some photographs or postcards, or indeed any material of local historical interest that you wish to loan or donate to the Society for its archives then please get in touch with any member of the committee know. It is so easy for old photographs etc. to be thrown away and lost forever and not saved for future generations. Please help us in our quest to safeguard our heritage and history!

The Society is grateful to Keith Edwards and Graham Morris for researching and writing this article from old records and minutes of committee meetings. We hope you have enjoyed reading it.