



## In this Newsletter

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## Website link below

<https://gwrachtimeline.co.uk>

Here is the website link so you can find the site easily.

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## Get Involved

We are looking for people to get involved with the project by providing:

- \* old photos of the village
- \* their memories of the village
- \* War records of their relatives
- \* history of associations, e.g. scouts, cubs, cadets, marching bands etc.

## Weather Report:

As we have been having some terrible weather over the last few weeks, 3 named storms in one week, I thought I would list some of the worst weather events of the last century to effect the village.

### Some of the most recent events that people should remember are:

Who can forget the Big Freeze of **1963**, from Boxing day to the 6th March the whole of Wales had the coldest spell since 1740. The River Neath completely froze over and the water pipes in peoples houses and the school froze, which meant we could not go to school for weeks on end, hooray.

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What about the driest period we have experienced, this happened in **1976** when we had blistering sunny weather for 3 months. It was the warmest three months in living memory with continuing sunshine that seemed to never end. It was the worst drought in 150 years.

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Then in **1982** we had the worst blizzards of the 20th century, it started on a Thursday night on the 7th January and did not stop for more than 36 hours. The snow was powdery and with a gale force Easterly wind it formed huge snow drifts up to 6 metres high.

Communities in South Wales were cut off, animals froze to death in the fields, schools closed for 2 weeks, the M4 was closed to traffic and the roof of Sophia Gardens pavilion in Cardiff collapsed under the weight of the snow.

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There were just as many weather incidences in the 19th Century, I have outlined 2 of these events on page 2 below.

On the **18th December 1863** the following incident was reported in the Glamorgan & Merthyr Guardian. (British Newspaper Archive)

**BLAENGWRACH.**—About a fortnight ago, a man servant employed at Ynisrallor Farm, while endeavouring to cross the Neath river with a horse and cart, was carried away by the stream and drowned. There was a little “fresh” or flood at the time, and being a stranger he could not have known the danger. At this part, near Maesgwyn, where the parish road intersects the valley, and crosses over by a ford, the river is exceedingly rapid. His body has not yet been discovered, as the late continued rains have prevented proper search from being made. We are told that he was a native of Pembroke-shire, and about 20 years old. He had engaged himself at the hiring fair at Neath in November last.

And how about this for an almost Biblical storm that was reported in the Morning Post on the **17th August 1852**. (British Newspaper Archive)

**VALE OF NEATH.**—On Monday afternoon a storm passed over some portions of this valley, which was accompanied by some very marked, if not altogether unusual phenomena. About three o'clock p.m., a dark thunder cloud was observed gathering on the hills on the eastern side of Glyn Neath station. Flashes of lightning were immediately succeeded by heavy peals of thunder, and in an instant a deluge of rain fell on the hill tops, as if, says our informant, a cloud had burst. The rush of water must have been terrific, as it carried before it on its passage to the valley below, large masses of earth and stones. A little above the Glyn Neath station the force

**Editors note: “As they say it never rains but it pours”.**



The photo above shows the river Neath frozen over in 1963



Digging my car out of the snow in 1982, outside Mike Hughes house were I had lost it.



The snow is nearly up to the window cill in 32 Graig Nedd in 1982. My father and sister at the window.

## Latest Timeline Website News:

The next article to be posted will be an article on Maes Gwyn. Maybe not quite as well known as Aberpergwm Manor House but nevertheless an historical building in it's own right.

Originally a large farmhouse probably from the 16th century or maybe even before, it was converted into a Gentleman's residence in 1838 by Rees Williams.



The drawing opposite is probably dated circa 1838 when it had just been converted to the building we once new. I found a copy of this drawing in my father's collection, I am not sure were he had it from though.

In researching the history of Maes Gwyn I have come across a few other interesting stories which I will capture separately. One is about a famous Poet Robert Southey who nearly leased the house in 1803, and the second is about a Welsh Bidding wedding which took place in 1798 in the area.

## Tit Bit's

"Blaen" in the mountainous district is a common word:—"Blanllechau," "Blaengwrach," "Blaen-aman," and "Blaenrhondda." Indeed, the mountain district is called "Y Blaenau." It means the extreme point, or the foremost part, and the sources of rivers. "Blaengwrach" is the source of Gwrach, a stream of that name—"Ach," water and "Gor" above.

### A KICK AND A SORE.

At Neath County Police-court on Friday Andrew Pabini, an Italian chip potato vendor, of Aberdare, was summoned by Inspector Bowyer, of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, for ill-treating a pony at Blaengwrach, by kicking it under the belly.

Evidence was given by Police-constable Davies and the inspector, and defendant was fined 20s. and costs.



## What's Next:

Now that the Covid restrictions are hopefully behind us I would like to try and organise the Timeline monthly meetings again. Even though we have made a great start on the Timeline and the Website there is still a lot to be done. If I was to roughly estimate on how much has been done to date, I would say we have only completed about 5% of the history of the village, if that.

One of the targets of the team was to make the history of the village more visual and I am working on how we can achieve that, I have tried some methods, like landscape drawings, schematic drawings, visual timelines, Blog's and photos etc. but I would like to try some other methods as well. I have been toying with trying to make videos of the village history but am having some technical difficulties in making them interesting to watch. I have also toyed with model making and am planning a visit to Swansea Railway Society to see how it's done.

It would be good if we could get more audio recordings done, as I thought that worked very well with Gary Jones and Glyn Davies talking about Gary's work experiences and their memories of the shops in the village.

**If you would like to record your memories of living / working / growing up in the village, let us know and we will set something up.**

Once the monthly meetings are up and running, there are also a few projects we can look at, but more on that at a later date.

**The more everyone can get involved the better the project will become, so if you would like to contribute in any way, then please get in touch.**

***If you have landscape drawing Skills!  
If you like Model making!***

***The Timeline Team  
Needs You***