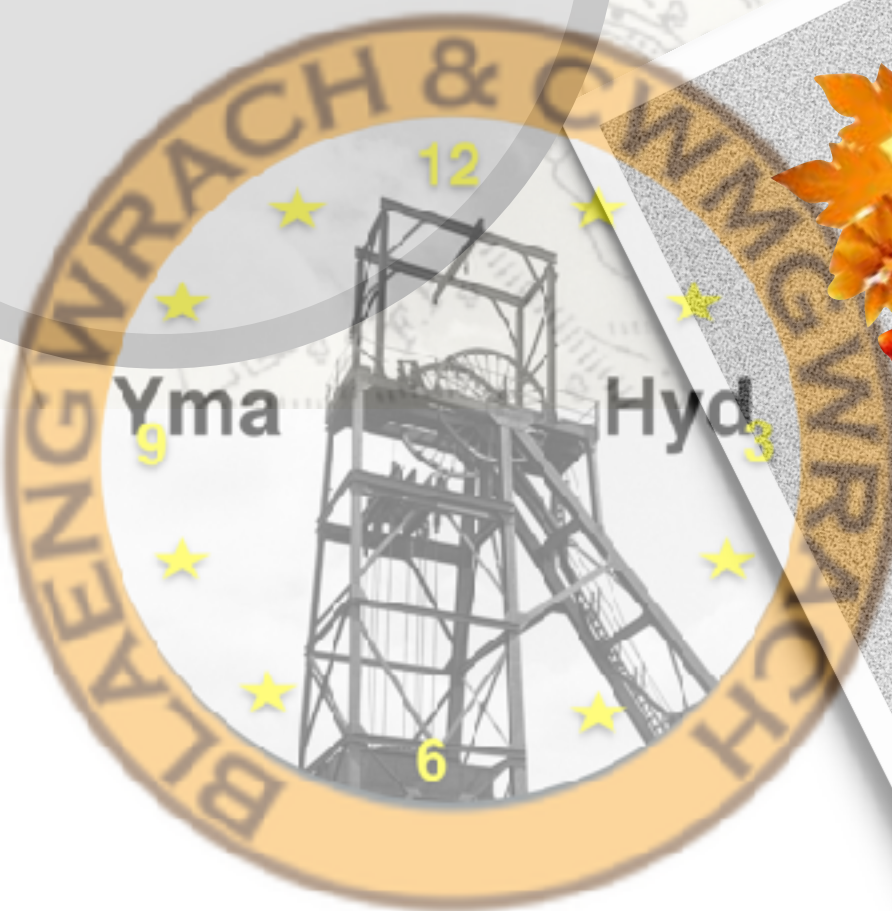


In the magazine:

- Page 1** ~ Front cover.
Page 2 ~ Update on articles in website and Facebook posts.
Page 3 ~ Historic sites within 10 miles of the village.
Page 4 / 5 ~ Old and New Autumn customs.
Page 6 ~ What's in a name?
Page 7 ~ Call to Arms and list of ideas.

Blaengwrach and Cwmgwrach Timeline Project



Welcome to the spooky
Autumn edition of the
Gwrachtime
newsletter.

**"be afraid be very
afraid".**

How can you help!

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

- * Old photographs of the village.
- * Their memories of the village.
- * War records of their relatives.



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2916966968347470>

Update on articles on the website and posts on the Facebook page:

Since the publication of the last Newsletter in early August two article have been added to the history website:

- ~ the first was, <https://gwrachtimeline.co.uk/homing-pigeons-in-the-village>.
- ~ the second was, <https://gwrachtimeline.co.uk/bicycle-tour-of-holland-susan-and-roy-1983>, a more personal blog of a cycling trip to Holland taken by my wife Susan and myself in 1983, but I hope you found it interesting.

Next up will be:

- ~ an article on 'The games we played as children', and thank you all for your input into capturing your memories of the games you played.
- ~ also if I can find enough information and photographs a weather related article on the 'Beast from the East' in 2018.

On the history Facebook page there were:

- ~ A tutorial video on how to use Google My Maps to see all the historic sites within 10 miles of the village.
- ~ A 1982/3 Glynneath carnival video I made from photos I found in my father's negative collection.
- ~ A number of 'On this Day' posts, e.g. the flood that washed the river bank away; the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the Intercity 125 train; the first passenger train on the Vale of Neath railway line; a video on the outbreak of 2nd World War and last but not least the opening of the Vale of Neath Medical Centre.

What's next for the Gwrach Timeline History Team:

As it stands at the moment, the team is trying to set up presentation evenings. We have bought a projector screen and I have borrowed my sons projector, so sometime in the not to distant future I will let you know when we will have our first presentation.

We have no plans at the moment for any events for the rest of 2026 but we will definitely be supporting the *Cwmgwrach Village Community Events* in anything they plan to do.



Historic sites within 10 miles of the village:

One of the articles I am most proud of is the Google My Maps of the Historical sites within 10 miles of the village. In this article, <https://gwrachtimeline.co.uk/historic-places-within-10-miles>, you can see Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and old tracks close to the village.

Below I have taken some screen shots of the sites to whet your appetite, have a look, you will be surprised how much history lies so close to the village, there is even a time period named after the Llyn Fawr hoard that was found in the Llyn Fawr lake/reservoir in the early 1900's.



Bronze Age sites:



Iron Age sites:



Roman sites:



Old track sites:



Old Autumn custom's in Wales:

There are a number of Autumn customs linked to Wales, I have listed a few of them below.

Nos Galon Gaeaf and Calan Gaeaf (Spirit Night):

Nos Galon Gaeaf (Spirit Night) is the liminal time when the veil between the physical world and the afterlife is blurred. Calan Gaeaf is the first day of winter the 1st November. Two of the haunting entities on this night are:

Yr Hwch Ddu Gwta (The tailless Black Sow): This is a terrifying ghostly black sow who is said to guard the dying embers of communal bonfires, As the fire fades, villagers would run away shouting, "Adref, adref, am y cyntaf, lladrad yr Hwch Ddu Gwta!" (Home, home, at the double, the tailless black sow takes the hindmost!)

Y Lady Wen (The White Lady): A ghostly apparition often seen guarding or haunting crossroads and stiles, She was sometimes accompanied by Yr Hwch Ddu to ward off wandering mortals.

Other Welsh Autumn customs are:

Matrimonial Divination: Single youths engaged in rituals to glimpse their future spouses, including peeling an apple in one continuous strip (*Twco Fala*) and throwing the skin over their shoulder to see what initial it formed.

Stwmp Naw Rhyw (Mash of Nine Sorts): A traditional supper consisting of nine chopped autumn vegetables cooked together with milk and butter. A wedding ring was hidden inside the mash, and whoever scooped it up was prophesied to be the next to marry.

Gwrachod (The Witches): Bands of men disguised in sheepskins, old women's rags, or scary masks who roamed from house to house begging for coppers, fruit, or ale to repel evil forces.

Y Gaseg Fedi (The Harvest Mare): In September (*Medi*), reapers competed to cut the very last standing sheaf of corn, which was plaited into a "mare" or "hag" shape. The winner had to secretly smuggle this dry sheaf into the farmhouse without getting drenched by the women of the house wielding buckets of water. Success guaranteed the guest of honour seat at the Harvest Supper.



New Autumn custom's in the UK:

More recent customs in the UK during autumn are:

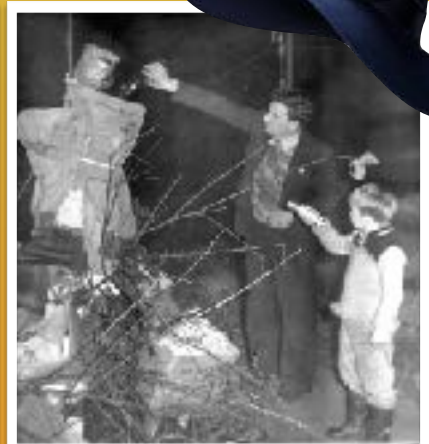
Halloween: Halloween is celebrated on October 31st and blends ancient Celtic pagan roots, Christian traditions and modern secular customs. It was originally called Samhain an ancient over 2,000 year old Celtic festival which marked the end of the harvest and the start of winter. The Celts believed the boundary between the living and the spirit world grew thin on this night. As Christianity spread, the church captured this festival into their own All Hallows' Night / All Saints Day on November 1st. This night has now grown into a big money making event creating more turnover than Christmas.

During Halloween night people now dress up in spooky costumes and go 'trick or treating', visiting neighbouring homes to collect sweets, a practice rooted in historical custom. Carving spooky faces into pumpkins with a lighted candle inside is also part of the festival. It was also the night people would participate in 'ducking apples', but this tradition unfortunately now seems to have died out.



Bonfire Night: A night to celebrate the death of Guy Fawkes who in tried in 1605 to blow up the House of Lords and was sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered but jumped from the scaffold and broke his neck. Traditionally bonfires are lit on this night and fireworks are let off. I'm sure there are many people in the village who remember these bonfires and fireworks well. Although bonfires seems to have died out and "Penny for the Guy" also seems to be consigned to history.

Two photos of bonfires held in our garden in Craig Nedd when I was a small boy. In the first photo you can see my cousin Howard Jenkins and myself building the bonfire. In the second photo is my father's brother Bertie Bowen lighting an earlier bonfire with me holding the torch.



What's in a name:

I've always been fascinated by the name Venallt and how it should be spelt. As we know there is no V in the Welsh language so how did the 'old' Venallt get its name and why wasn't it called Wenallt like it is today.

I looked the name up on AI and this is what it says: Venallt is an anglicised variant of Wenallt. Venallt is made up from 'gwyn' meaning white, and 'gallt' meaning wooded slope or hillside which translates into English as "white wooded slope".

One reason could be that when the first maps were draughted, they used English speaking map makers to map the country and name all the places within the maps. These map makers would ask the local gentry or local vicars what the name of local places were and this could have been when the V was first introduced.

There are a number of Venallt's in Wales and both variants of the name can be found in local place names.

Old Map:



New Map:



We are hoping the *Cwmgwrach Village Community Team*, organise another Christmas Fayre this year and if so we will be selling the *"Reflections of a Bygone Age"* book there. But, if you want a book sooner then get in touch with us and we will deliver a book to your door, or if you live further away we can post a book to you, they are good value at only **£10**.



CALL TO ARMS

We have created a huge list of potential ideas we can work on, far too many for our small band of three people to work on, so if you would like to get involved, from the comfort of your own living room, then please let us know.

I have listed some of the ideas below:

- * Compile a database of all the Welsh field and place names with English translations. An ideal task for a Welsh speaker.
- * From the above information compile a small book with place names, history and small tithe map of the area.
- * Compile a book of all the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen in the village that fought in WW1 and WW2.
- * Compile a database of all house names in the village.
- * Compile a database of all the shops that have been in the village, (there are over 50).

