

Open Saturday and Sunday afternoons
Winter 12noon - 3pm, Summer 1-4pm

www.ClydachHeritageCentre.com

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Newsletter No. 12 October 2024

Letter from the Chairman

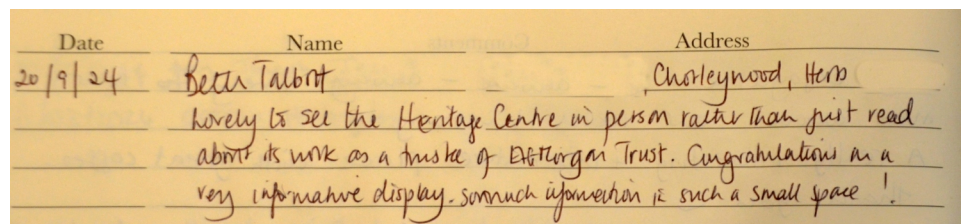
Clydach Heritage Centre continues to welcome visitors and in September we welcomed our 30,000th visitors. Annemarie and Patrick were given a voucher for a meal for two generously donated by the Old Glais Inn.



Patrick and Annemarie receive their gift token from Sue Evans (centre)

The Centre opened October 2011, and although most of the visitors have been local some have come from further afield, with friends, or family who live nearby. Quite a few visitors are cyclists using the cycle track on the canal towpath, some, perhaps, were led to us by a mention in an article in the Times newspaper in August describing the Swansea Valley Trail.

A grant from the Ethel and Gwynne Morgan Trust has enabled us to enhance the interpretation of the material in the caged area alongside the Centre. Some family trust members visited the Centre recently and left this comment in our visitors' book:



Two very well attended bat evenings and the unveiling of the latest exhibit, an audio display lectern providing information on the three figures between the Centre and Swansea Canal, provided a fitting end to another successful year for the Friends of Clydach Heritage Centre!

Thanks to all the volunteers and members who continue to support the Centre.

Susan Evans

What do we know?

Over the years we have acquired many books which tell us about the village and the valley where we live. Most recently we have, on long term loan, 'The Mond Nickel Company' published by the company in 1914. The owner's grandfather was given the book when he worked at the refinery and it tells us what the company was doing twelve years after it opened in 1902. Other acquisitions have included 'The Swansea Canal and its early Railways' and 'The Swansea Vale Railway - A Midland Railway Outpost'.

We can't provide you with a research facility but you are welcome to come to the Centre and browse. A full list of the books we have is available on our website.



2025: A Coming Year of Anniversaries

Clydach Hospital

On 29 July 1925 Clydach's War Memorial Hospital was officially opened by the Lord Dawson of Penn, and 2025 will see the centenary of that opening.

The Hospital was to be the village's memorial to those people who died in the Great War 1914-18. All the money to build the hospital was raised within the community and later the employees of the works in the area contributed from their wages towards the cost of maintaining it, initially they paid 1d (one old penny) a week rising to 4d in 1945 before it became part of the National Health Service.



*Official Opening Ceremony of Clydach Hospital 29 July 1925
© Clydach Historical Society*

After the Hospital closed in 2015 the Community Council obtained all the memorial plaques which had been placed in the hospital over the years and these are now on display in the Heritage Centre. These plaques express

thanks to all those who supported the hospital in so many ways while it was open.

Many people have memories of their time in the hospital, and Audrey Watts in particular; she told us of her being rushed to the hospital when she was about three years of age. Here is part of her story:

"At around three years of age I was suddenly taken very ill. My mother sent for the doctor. Doctor Morgan came and examined me. He whipped me straight down to Clydach Hospital in his car. He told my parents "follow down after me and we'll discuss everything when you get to the hospital". By the time my mother and father got to the hospital I'd already been operated on. The first thing Dr Morgan said was "I'm going to have to apologise to you I couldn't wait for you to come to sign the paper because Audrey had peritonitis and she wouldn't have lived if I'd waited for you to come down". My parents didn't say anything they were just very grateful; people in those days didn't make a fuss did they?"

This is only a small part of her story, you can read the rest

Clydach Baths

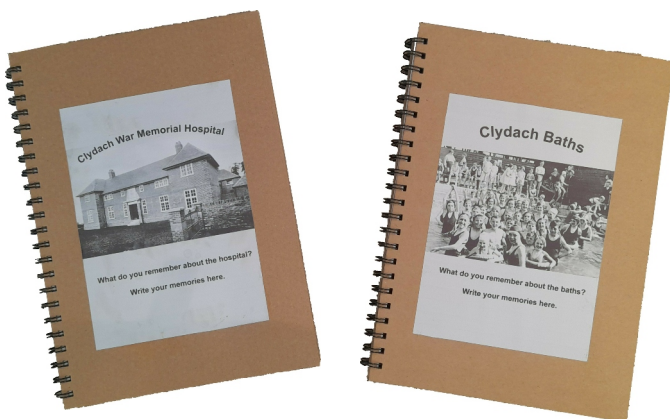


*Local children enjoying their first dip in the Baths on the opening day.
© Clydach Historical Society*

Ten years later, in 1935, Rhyndwyclydach Parish Council opened Clydach Baths, the first parish council in Britain to do so. The pool eventually closed in the early 1990s but, again, people have very strong memories of visiting the pool, like Liz Diment (née Griffiths):

"I went to Clydach Junior School and the main memory for me was going to the open air baths, and Danny. If you didn't go in (the water) he just stuck a rope around you and ducked you in; it was sink or swim!"

Memory Books



The Hospital and Baths Memory Books in the Heritage Centre

We have Memory Books for both these well-loved buildings in the Heritage Centre. Could you add your own memories to those we already have? You can also write them on our Facebook page or email at info@clydachheritagecentre.com

Lectern unveiling

The three figures standing beside the canal towpath in Coedgwylm Park have intrigued passers-by for many years. Who are they? Why are they there?

The three characters were chosen by local people as part of the Sustrans cycle track project which opened in 2011.

The figures are, Derek Bevan, international rugby referee, Harry Grindell-Matthews, inventor, and Lilian Smith, community midwife.

Lilian was much-loved by the community and delivered over 1,000 babies in her career. She volunteered at Clydach Heritage Centre and would quite often greet visitors with: "You were 6lb 4 you know, and your mother was 7lb!!".

A retired local GP says this of her, "Lilian was a wonderful person with whom I worked for a number of years. As a Community Midwife she was known throughout the Valley as a lovely caring person who always put other people before herself. It was a privilege to have known and worked with her. She was always there to give me advice when needed (which was fairly frequent!)"

Unfortunately Lilian died in December 2021, but she left the Heritage Centre a bequest in her will. This has been used to create a display lectern explaining who the three characters are.

When the Centre opened, in 2011, both Lilian and Derek gave interviews and talked about their lives both in Clydach and professionally. These recordings have been used to add something more personal to the display. Unfortunately, Harry Grindell-Matthews died in 1941 and there are no known recordings of his voice. "Ted" Partington, a Gloucestershire man, recorded a potted biography of Harry's life. He left this comment in our visitors' book:

28/9/22 Edward Partington Newton S'Sea
I have been invited to the official opening of the inventor Harry Grindell Matthews Statue as a voice over. Harry was a Gloucestershire man as myself. I was very honoured to do this, such a lovely spot concept

On 28th September, a beautiful sunny day sandwiched between very wet days, Derek Bevan unveiled the lectern in front of a group of Heritage Centre volunteers and former colleagues of Lilian.



above: Derek Bevan and Sue Evans(Chair) unveil the lectern.
below: Ted Partington, the voice of Harry Grindell-Matthews
© Black Planet Photography



Bat Evenings

Last year's bat evening had to be called off at the last minute when the weather turned bad, bats won't fly in the wind and rain!

This year we decided to have a fallback date a week later. The weather gods smiled on us and we had two very successful evenings of bat spotting. Mark Winder (formerly Ecologist for Swansea Council) gave a presentation on bats before we went to the canal side with bat detectors.

The most common bats "seen" were pipistrelles which seem to roost under the canal bridge near the Centre.

Everybody who attended was very pleased with their experience.

We also thank Len Moran who provided the various detectors.

Infrared image of a bat hunting at night
iStock credit Paul Colley

Paying Subscriptions



Each year we have to pay for insurance and licences to allow us to run the Centre. These basic running costs are met by subscription and the sale of goods at the Heritage Centre.

Membership runs from 1st October to 30th September and the membership fee is £5.00 per year.

We have set up a facility to pay subscriptions annually using PayPal. This is much easier for both you and us. To pay using PayPal go to the website www.clydachheritagecentre.com and click on the Support Us tab.

If you pay tax on any income you receive then please consider stating 'Yes' in the GiftAid box. GiftAid increases the value of subscriptions and donations by 25%. So for every £1 that you give GiftAided the Heritage Centre will actually receive £1.25 and at no cost to yourself.

I would like to become a Friend of Clydach Heritage Centre.

I enclose my subscription for the year

*Name:

*Address:

.....

.....

*Post Code:

*Tel:

*Email:

Age (if under 18):

Membership Fee: £5/year

I would like to make a donation of £.....
making a total of £.....

giftaid it

If you pay income tax or capital gains tax we can claim 25p for every pound you give to us - at no extra cost to you.

If you are happy for us to claim Gift Aid on your contribution from 6th April this year please tick here.

☐

Signed:

Date:/...../.....

* The Friends will only use the information provided on this form for the purposes of contacting you about FCHC business.

Our engagement with you

Early this year our Facebook page was hacked by, would you believe it, a Philippine gambling group?! We were without a Facebook presence for almost six months while we resolved this issue. We still haven't managed to regain our 1,000+ Likes, and hence our range, but we are getting there.

Please Like our page [clydachheritagecentre](https://www.facebook.com/clydachheritagecentre) to be kept informed of our activities.

We are also in the process of updating our webpage: www.ClydachHeritageCentre.com

Could you help us?

A small group of volunteers keeps Clydach Heritage Centre running and developing its displays.

Do you think you could offer up a few hours a month to help us out?

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CLYDACH
heritage centre

JOIN OUR VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

Could you spare a few hours a month to volunteer at Clydach Heritage Centre?

We Need Help For:

- Manning the Heritage Centre during opening hours
- Visitor interaction
- Sharing local knowledge

We are open every
SAT & SUN
Winter - 12 pm - 3pm
Summer - 1pm - 4pm

Contact Us
0330 111 4249
www.facebook.com/clydachheritagecentre

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