

# SAMPLE

## BLAENAU GWENT HERITAGE

### FORUM JOURNAL

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#### EDITORIAL

*“We are not rich people but we have a type of wealth in knowing our past”<sup>1</sup>.*

The above is a statement by the owner of a rare surviving three hundred year old traditional teahouse in Sichuan province in China. For me and I suspect all other members of the Heritage Forum, it is the ‘wealth’ of better knowing the past of Blaenau Gwent which together with the tribute we owe to parents and predecessors that now drives our involvement.

The contents of this journal derive both from individuals following their particular interests and from community action, and the Editor urges others to send him any material relating to Blaenau Gwent heritage whether they think it to be of value or not

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2018/nov/06/tea-history-china-chengdu-centuries-old-teahouse-sichuan-province>

# **THE HIDDEN LANDSCAPES COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT**

**Frank Olding**

The Aberystroth History and Archaeology Society (AHAS), in partnership with Blaenau Gwent Council, has secured Heritage Lottery Funding for a four year community archaeology project entitled the Hidden Landscapes Project. The project is already into its second year and the study area concentrates on the Cwm Celyn Valley near Blaina in Blaenau Gwent. Cwm Celyn is an important survival of the pre-industrial landscape of the south Wales Valleys. It remains largely untouched by the widespread industrial activity of the 18th and 19th centuries and therefore retains important Medieval and Prehistoric landscape features that have not survived in other parts of the Valleys. The Cwm Celyn valley also has a rich folklore, first recorded in the 1770s by a local minister<sup>2</sup>, and the potential for important oral history projects.

To date, ad hoc research has identified prehistoric hut circles and flint scatters, Bronze Age burial cairns and standing stones, medieval house platforms and field systems, post-medieval deserted rural settlements, early 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial sites, an early 19<sup>th</sup> century bridge and a World War I rifle range. There is also a previously unrecorded drift mine complex known as the Blaina Red Ash East Colliery.

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<sup>2</sup>Edmund Jones (1702-1793): The History of Aberystroth Parish, 1779. Edmund Jones was an independent minister born at Pen-Llwyn, a small holding in Aberystroth Parish near what was to become the Nant-y-Glo Railway Station. He was still preaching at 87 years of age in 1789, when he preached 405 times in that year!



### AHAS Members Recording Test Pits

The central aim of the project is to identify and record the wealth of archaeological sites within the Cwm Celyn Valley. The project team is drawn from the volunteers of AHAS with Frank Olding, Heritage Officer for Blaenau Gwent Council, acting as archaeological advisor and mentor. The volunteers, who are based at Blaina Library, are working hard to engage local people with their heritage and the project offers free training and experience in archaeological fieldwork techniques and historical research. The results of this research will be widely disseminated to a variety of audiences via a dedicated website, guided walks, pop-up exhibitions and school visits. The local scout troop will also be taking part.

To date the fieldwork has concentrated on the remains of the Blaina Red Ash East Colliery. The colliery sits high on the mountainside to the east of Blaina and opened in 1925 after a prolonged legal battle by rival coal companies to prevent

it starting work. The colliery closed in 1938 but does not appear on any Ordnance Survey map and has never been previously researched or recorded. The group has carried out test pits, measured surveys and evaluation excavations. The most recent discovery is the site of the weigh-checker's office (shown in the picture below) next to the main level entrance.



“Our volunteers have worked incredibly hard over the last year or so, but it’s been great fun,” says AHAS Secretary and Project Manager Ian Fewings. “We have been away on an archaeological field school down in Kent and the group has been out in all weathers surveying and evaluating the sites. The whole team seems to have huge stores of energy and enthusiasm and new volunteers are always warmly welcomed.” .....

## **JONES THE FLANNEL**

### **Eifion Lloyd Davies**

Some years ago David Sims who had a haberdashery shop at 30 Beaufort Street, Brynmawr was interviewed on the BBC programme “Hidden Towns” about the beginnings of his shop. Some of the following information is taken from that interview.

The shop stood at the bottom of Beaufort Street in Brynmawr where today in 2018 you’ll find “Greggs”. In the shop David had kept an old remnant of how the itinerant traders or pack men would carry out their business years ago. The pack men were a very common sight in the area before shops became established. Many came from West Wales but there were also Scottish Packmen plying their trade, in fact the Scottish Packmen paid for the building of the now demolished Bailey Street Chapel which stood on the corner of Bailey Street and Warwick Road; it was often called the Packman’s Chapel.

David’s father, Phillip Sims worked for an old Welsh Flannel business run by William Jones. William came from Cardiganshire and he had walked all the way looking for an area where he could set up his business.

William Jones started a credit system covering Brynmawr, Nant y Glô, Clydach and Gilwern and all the other towns and villages nearby. This was again commonly done by packmen, they would visit the farms and villages, to sell their goods but payment would be stretched over many weeks allowing the customer to pay as they could afford it. They would take so much per week from their customers until the goods were paid for, an early form of Hire Purchase. Eventually William had quite a few men working for him travelling up and down the valley expanding the area of the business. This was ‘Jones the Flannel’ as he was known by all. William Jones had two sons, William and John who also worked as Packmen and they were also each known as ‘Jones the Flannel.’ ....



57	D <sup>r</sup> Morgans Draper, Bryngers House, Robert St Ynnyrbwl	839
156	David Lewis, Draper, Lather Buildings, Brynmawr	228
730	W <sup>m</sup> Jones, Draper & Outfitter, Beaufort St Brynmawr	819
225	Thos Evans, Draper, Yard Shop, Brynmawr	408
297	Jones & Morgan, Drapers, Beaufort St, Brynmawr	285
327	John Edwards, Draper, 22 Richard St, Lillfynydd	239
402	Mrs M. A. Morris, Draper, 16 Richard St, Lillfynydd	578
457	John Evans & Co. Drapers, Pontypridd	130
644	John Jones & Co. Drapers, Church St Pontypridd	475
648	Hughes & Co. Drapers, Market Square, Pontypridd	705
432	Ben Jones, Outfitter, Taff St Pontypridd	
447	R. V. James, Draper, High St. Pontypridd	697
203	D. E. Hughes & Co. Drapers, 22 The Avenue, Pontypridd	745
305	Fowler & Co. Drapers, Lion House, Pontypool	875
711	D. W. Jones, Draper, Osborne Road, Pontypool	765
41	M. Rae, Draper Osborne Road, Pontypool	436

William Jones's Brynmawr Shop third in the above list of the nineteenth century Accounts of the Cambrian Mills, Felindre, Llandysul<sup>3</sup>

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These snippets of a couple of articles are intended to give readers an idea of the style and content of Journal 23. You can continue reading these articles, and others, by downloading the complete Journal for £3.00.

<sup>3</sup> The National Wool Museum, located in Drefach Felindre, Llandysul, Carmarthenshire is part of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales which is on the site of the former Cambrian woollen Mills