

# **A Guide to Local Genealogical Sources in the Cynon Valley**

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## **Part One      A Guide to Local Genealogical Sources.**

In a leaflet such as this no attempt can be made to describe in detail the techniques of genealogical study. The potential researcher is advised to read one of numerous books on the subject available commercially and to follow the standard guidelines described therein. The purpose of this leaflet is chiefly to outline the main resources available at Aberdare Central Library and to mention relevant resources held elsewhere.

### **1. Family Sources.**

Before consulting external records any researcher should make as much use as possible of sources within his or her family: for example, oral traditions, family Bibles, correspondence, wills, photograph albums and deeds. Careful use of such sources will almost always make searching in other quarters much easier. In suggesting family sources such as those already mentioned one should not overlook what may be the easiest and most valuable of all to use - living elderly relatives. No matter where such relatives reside, it takes no more than the price of a telephone call or postage stamp to retrieve aspects of your family history which might otherwise take you years (and much money) to uncover.

### **2. Main Official Sources.**

#### **(i) The census.**

The most basic and useful source for researching family history is probably the *population census of Wales and England* which first took place in 1801 and subsequently occurred every ten years down to the present day (except for 1941). The detailed returns for each of these decennial censuses are subject to a 100 year privacy rule so that the most recent which may be consulted are the returns of 1891. The only exception involves people who can provide evidence of descent from an individual named in the 1901 census, or who need access to the 1911 census to prove a legal entitlement such as an inheritance. Biographical data may be issued to a descendant from these census only and from no other. A written application from the descendant personally should be sent to the Office of National Statistics (not the Public Record Office). A fee is charged for this exceptional provision. Part 2 has a short list of relevant addresses. It should be borne in mind that this and other official fees are regularly revised and prepayment is always required.

Censuses conducted between 1801 and 1831 are of little use to the genealogist as they contain only numerical summaries. The 1841 census is the first to record detailed personal information and such information is expanded gradually as the series proceeds. A word of warning, however, is that addresses in the Cynon Valley for the period between 1841 and 1891 are sometimes very vague and unhelpful as street-naming and house-numbering had not kept pace with the tremendous urban growth that was then occurring in this district. In relation to the 1841 returns in particular it should be pointed out that entries may well appear to be rather faint. This is because they were made in pencil. Subsequently enumerators recorded their entries in ink, but the problem of handwriting remains. Some is very accomplished while some can seem like code. A special word of warning may be useful regarding Welsh personal and

(especially) place names. Enumerators in the Cynon Valley as elsewhere were sometimes Englishmen with no knowledge of the Welsh language. They sometimes tended to enter in their enumeration books an attempt to spell a word they had only heard (the first censuses being written up from verbal questioning). Thus it may be advisable to check an uncertain place name with a competent party.

All census returns for Wales and England currently available for consultation are held at the Family Records Centre, 1 Myddelton Street, London, EC1R 1UW. Local material for the parishes/districts of Aberdare, Llanwynno and Penderyn in 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1881 is held on microfilm at Aberdare Library. Information from the census of 1891 is available there on microfiche. When visiting either the Family Records Centre or Aberdare Library it is highly advisable to book a microfilm-reading machine beforehand by telephone. Finding-aids to census material at Aberdare Library include lists of enumeration districts and street indexes for the parishes of Aberdare, Penderyn and Llanwynno (which includes the Mountain Ash area). Census material for the entire county of Glamorgan is held at the County Record Office, Cardiff.

A number of surname indexes have been compiled from the census returns and are useful to anyone undertaking local genealogical research. These include: indexes of the 1841 census for the registration districts of Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil; indexes of the 1851 census for much of Glamorgan, prepared by the Glamorgan Family History Society; indexes of the 1861 census for the Aberdare and Llanwynno parishes, recently compiled by the local branch of the above society and an index of the 1881 census which has been compiled for the whole of Wales, England and Scotland by the Genealogical Society of Utah and British FHS members. A CD-ROM of this surname index covering all of Britain is now available in the library.

Below is a list of the census material currently available in Aberdare Library:

<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Area(s) covered</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Format</b>
1841-1881	Aberdare & Llanwynno	Census return	Film
1891	Aberdare & Llanwynno	Census return	Fiche
1901	Aberdare & Llanwynno	Census Return	Film
1841	Merthyr Tydfil & Cardiff Registration Districts	Surname index	Fiche
1851	Aberdare, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cadoxton, Cardiff, Gelligaer, Gower, Llangyfelach, Llantrisant, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath, Swansea	Surname index	Fiche
1861	Aberdare & Llanwynno	Surname index	Print
1881	All the counties of Wales, Cheshire, Cornwall, Devonshire, Dorsetshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Lancashire, Shropshire, Somersetshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Worcestershire	Surname index	Fiche

The best of the early censuses is that for 1851. Apart from more precise addresses, the parish in which each person was born is also noted for the first time. This is most important as it leads the researcher to the district in which the people in whom he/she is interested had their origins and where new avenues of enquiry may be taken up. Ages are also recorded more precisely in 1851 than before.

### **(ii) Registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths.**

Census returns are an official public record. In a similar category are the *records of the General Register Office concerning births, marriages and deaths*, which commence in July 1837. The original registers are not available to the public. However, national quarterly indexes exist which list alphabetically the names of those who were born, married or have died since 1837. Postal queries for copy certificates need to be addressed to the General Register Office (see part 2). Alternatively, copies of birth, marriage and death certificates may be purchased in person at the G.R.O. searchroom in the Family Records Centre or at the appropriate district registry (in our case Pontypridd). Fees always have to be paid to obtain copies of these certificates and it is advisable to obtain information on current fees before application. The 1851 and following census returns often supply details of dates and places that can direct one towards obtaining an appropriate copy certificate. Such certificates of civil registration are obviously important in confirming dates, parentage, points of origin and so on.

### **(iii) Electoral Registers.**

Reference to main official sources may be expanded by mentioning a series of local *electoral registers* commencing in the 1870s. Though incomplete, these are often very useful indeed in tracing individuals, families and places of domicile.

The following is a résumé of Cynon Valley Borough Libraries' current collection of electoral registers:

<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Parishes Covered</b>
1879, 1889	Bound Vols.	Central Lib.	Aberdare.
1890, 1895, 1900, 1904	Microfilm	Central Lib.	Aberdare, Llanwynno Merthyr, Vaynor.
1915, 1919	Bound Vols.	Central Lib.	Aberdare & Llanwynno
1930, 1932, 1934, 1935	Bound Vols.	Central Lib.	Aberdare
1935	Bound Vols.	Mt. Ash Lib.	Llanwynno
1936	Bound Vols.	Central Lib.	Aberdare & Llanwynno
1938, 1939, 1945 - 1947, 1949 - 1966	Bound Vols.	Central Lib	Aberdare

1962 - 1968	Bound Vols. Mt. Ash Lib.	Llanwynno
1969 - 1974	Bound Vols. Central Lib.	Aberdare
1970 - 1973, 1975 - 1976	Bound Vols. Mt. Ash Lib.	Llanwynno
1975 to date	Bound Vols. Central Lib	Cynon Valley Borough

#### **(iv) Records of the Clerk of the Peace.**

Before 1832 and 1868 the number of local people who had the vote was comparatively small and information would be best sought among the records of the Clerk of the Peace at the Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff. Particularly useful within this category are *Land Tax Assessments* for the Hundred of Miskin (including the parishes of Aberdare and Llanwynno) for the period 1782-1832. During this time these were used to record the entitlement to vote of anyone who paid land tax on freehold property worth £2 or more annually (the famous 'forty-shilling freeholder').

A further useful series of records within the compass of the Clerk of the Peace is the *Register of Victuallers and Alehousekeepers* to be maintained on an annual basis from 1753.

Other official or "semi-official" records held by the Glamorgan Record Office at Cardiff but directly concerning this locality include: *Vestry Minutes* that detail the administration of Poor Law provision to named individuals and their dependants, which commence in 1818; *Minutes of the Local Board of Health* with effect from 1854; a sequence of *school log books* for many local schools, beginning in 1870; and those *records of the Quarter sessions* in which details of local cases feature from time to time.

### **3. Religious sources.**

#### **(i) Parish Registers**

The first obligation on Anglican clergymen to keep in their parishes *registers of baptisms, marriages and burials* dates from 1538. Not many surviving registers in Wales are that old. The Aberdare registers run from 1734; those for Llanwynno date from 1717 and those for Penderyn from 1754. Unfortunately, short gaps occur in the sequence of these registers from time to time. The originals of the Llanwynno (to c.1900) and Penderyn (to c.1812/13) registers are deposited in the National Library of Wales, while those of Aberdare (to c.1918) are held in the Glamorgan Record Office. It is increasingly the case that registers are made available to researchers only on microfilm, in order to protect the originals. Be sure to note that a date quoted in a baptismal register is the date of a baptism (christening). It is *not* a date of birth. Prior to 1725 it is likely register entries will be in Latin.

A transcript of entries for the parish of Aberdare (but not Penderyn and Llanwynno) from 1734 to the 1890s has been made and is located in Aberdare Library. Registers in current use are held by the appropriate clergyman to whom any application to view should be addressed.

## **(ii) Bishop's Transcripts.**

*Bishop's transcripts* of the Aberdare and Llanwynno registers exist from 1717 and those of Penderyn from 1713. These are all to be found at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, but unfortunately they again have some breaks in their sequence. The Aberdare bishop's transcripts for 1717-1851 are now on microfilm at Aberdare Library. Although these transcripts were meant to be accurate copies of the registers themselves they often contain different or additional information and are well worth consulting.

## **(iii) Other Anglican Sources.**

From 1851/52 the original parish of Aberdare began "shedding" entire districts where rapid industrial development was taking place in order to form new urban parishes (e.g. St. Fagan's, Trecynon; St. Lleurwg's, Hirwaun and St. Margaret's, Aberaman). The geographic area covered by the Aberdare registers following 1851 and 1884 is thus nowhere near as large as it was between 1717 and 1851. The same is true of Llanwynno parish. Aberdare Library has copies of *parish magazines* produced in the various local parishes with effect from 1882. Such magazines often contain a lot of biographical information about people active in church life.

*Marriage Licenses*, issued by the local bishop's registry (in this case that at Llandaff) in respect of marriages to be conducted in special circumstances, may be a source of additional information to those whose forebears may have been leading nonconformists or (in their own estimation) somewhat above the labouring class. Such licenses for the whole of Wales are held among the records of the Church in Wales at the National Library, Aberystwyth.

## **(iv) Wills & Inventories, etc.**

*Wills, inventories and letters of administration* may not appear at first to be religious sources. However, it should be borne in mind that before 1858 probate jurisdiction in such matters lay with church courts and that such documents are to be found amongst the Church in Wales deposit at Aberystwyth. Only from 1858 did jurisdiction over the estate of a deceased person become a civil matter. Therefore, the Principal Registry of the Family Division ("Somerset House") in London will have information only with effect from 1858. If at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, it will be useful to remember that this institution holds a complete set of the Principal Registry's own digests of probate grants.

A word of caution in relation to wills and inventories, especially regarding the period before 1858, may not be amiss here. Where such documents exist in respect of an established forebear they can provide a unique wealth of background-detail concerning that forebear's circumstances and relatives. However, most people's ancestors were simply not sufficiently well off even to contemplate leaving a will. Prior to the mid-19th century it would be exceptional for anyone other than members of the gentry or professions, businessmen, owners of freehold property or the most substantial of tenants and leaseholders to leave behind them documents such as these.

## **(v) Nonconformist Sources.**

The 19th century saw a popular turning towards religious nonconformity in Wales as a whole. Nowhere was this more evident than in the Aberdare and Merthyr districts. One consequence of this mass defection from Anglicanism was the erosion of the value of Anglican parish registers as sources of genealogical information by virtue of the fact that far fewer people made use of them from 1800 onwards.

The various nonconformist denominations had differing ways of composing and preserving *registers of baptism, marriage and burial* (especially of baptism) and this variety of practice, together with the decline of religious observance in recent years, has meant that the records of dissolved congregations have been disposed of in a variety of ways: some to central repositories (such as the Public Record Office, or the National Library); some to local record offices (as in Glamorgan); some into private hands; some into denominational archives, whilst others have been simply destroyed or lost. Research concerned with families belonging to dissenting congregations (i.e. the majority during the period 1845-1945) is often more difficult than in the case of families which remained within the Anglican Church largely because of a significantly greater loss of records.

The most likely sources of information relating to nonconformists in the Cynon Valley are: (1) the pre-1837 registers at the P.R.O.; (2) an extensive general collection at the N.L.W., especially of Presbyterian and Welsh language chapel records; (3) a collection at the Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff and West Glamorgan Record Office, Swansea especially of English language records; and (4) a very small deposit at Aberdare Library. There is a large number of *published chapel histories* at Aberdare which can be very useful in a general sense. These and most nonconformist records are usually in Welsh while Anglican records are almost exclusively in English.

## **4. Newspapers.**

*Old newspapers* are an invaluable historical and genealogical archive. Aberdare was a significant centre for printing and publishing in the 19th century and this included the printing of local newspapers. These contain a wealth of historical and biographical information.

Files of *regional dailies*, namely the "*Western Mail*" (1868 to date), the "*South Wales Daily News*" (1885?- 1928) and the "*South Wales Echo*" (1884 to date) can be consulted at Cardiff Central Library or at the National Library. As to *weeklies*, the first to cover the Aberdare area in some detail was the "*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian*" (under that and related names from 1832 to 1874) which is available at Cardiff Central Library and (on microfilm) at Aberdare. Individual issues of the paper (particularly during its earliest period) may be missing from the sequence of a given year. "*The Cambrian*", published at Swansea (1804-1930), also circulated in this district and carried news of local people and of everyday life here. It is available (with a most useful index) at Swansea Central Library and again at the National Library, Aberystwyth. Another 19th century newspaper published outside the locality but of great relevance to the wider Aberdare district is the "*Merthyr Telegraph*". Copies of this are available for the period 1855-1881 at Merthyr Tydfil Central Library.

Aberdare's own *local press* dates from the mid-19th century. The most important titles in English are the "*Aberdare Times*" (1861-1902) and the "*Aberdare Leader*" (1902 to date). Since 1991 the latter has been known as the "*Cynon Valley Leader*". These can be consulted on microfilm at Aberdare Library. Photocopies of articles in the "*Aberdare Times*", "*Aberdare/Cynon Valley Leader*" and any other newspaper on microfilm can be produced as the library has its own reader-printer. The reader must expect to find issues missing in the early runs of these titles. One or two shorter-lived papers in the English language were also launched (e.g. the "*Aberdare Weekly Post*", the "*Aberdare Saturday Journal*" and the "*Cynon Chronicle*"); but these are not as important as the two former titles or the "*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian*" and "*Merthyr Telegraph*". One of these shorter-lived local titles, the "*Mountain Ash Post*" (1912-1920) is now on microfilm at Aberdare.

The following Welsh-language papers were also printed and published locally and contain a vast store of detailed news reports, biographies, social and industrial history, obituary notices and so on: "*Y Gwron*" (1854-1860); "*Y Gwladgarwr*" (1858-1883); "*Y Gweithiwr*" (1858-1860); "*Y Twr*" (1870-1873); and "*Tarian-y-Gweithiwr*", later known as "*Y Darian*" (1875-1934). There were also a number of shorter-lived Welsh newspapers published in Aberdare (e.g. "*Gwreichion*" and "*Y Gweithiwr Cymraeg*"); but these are secondary to the titles already listed. Of these Welsh language papers "*Y Gwron (Cymreig)*" and "*Tarian-Y-Gweithiwr/Y-Darian*" are currently available on microfilm at Aberdare Library. It is hoped to extend this collection in future; otherwise, only odd copies/volumes exist locally. Most of the Welsh local papers can be consulted in original or microfilm form at the National Library or at Cardiff Central Library (where an excellent collection exists). Since December 1987 a new Welsh language paper, "*Clochdar*" has been produced locally. This also carries much family and biographical information particularly (but not solely) in relation to the Welsh-speaking community of the district. Aberdare Central Library has copies of this title.

The following is a summary of those newspapers currently available on microfilm at Aberdare:

Y Gwron Cymreig	1852 - 1856
Y Gwron	1856 - 1860
Tarian Y Gweithiwr	1875 - 1913
Y Darian	1914 - 1934
Clochdar	1987 -
Mountain Ash Post	1912 - 1920
Glamorgan, Monmouth & Brecon Gazette	1833 - 1841
Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian	1842 - 1874
Aberdare Times	1861 - 1902
Aberdare/Mountain Ash/ Cynon Valley Leader	1902 to date

## 5. Monumental Sources.

Several local Anglican and nonconformist places of worship used their own *burial grounds* before the Aberdare public cemetery was opened in 1859 and continued to do so until about 1914 for relatives of those buried during the earlier period. If a researcher has sure knowledge of a burial at such a graveyard then a personal visit to the site may be advisable as systematic transcripts of monumental

inscriptions at most of these older churches and chapels have not yet been made. However, the Glamorgan Family History Society has an ambitious and continuing programme of attempting to record all such “private” cemeteries within the historic county of Glamorgan. Some of these older burial grounds are still reasonably well maintained; others are not.

However, *transcripts* from some of the most important local burial grounds have been made from time to time and these are mostly available at Aberdare Central Library. This is true of inscriptions from the churchyard of Aberdare’s twelfth century parish church of St. John the Baptist at the centre of what was once a pre-industrial village; and also of inscriptions at St. Fagan’s (Anglican) churchyard, Trecynon and at the burial ground of the Hen Dy Cwrdd (Unitarian) cause also at Trecynon. No other locality has been as fortunate as Trecynon in having such an extensive set of transcripts made. A great many inscriptions (probably a majority from 1840-1940) will be in Welsh.

The following are the main local nonconformist chapels which still have attached to them *unrecorded burial grounds* in varying states of maintenance: Siloa, Aberdare (Independent); Salem, Robertstown (Independent); Saron, Aberaman (Independent); Heol-y-Felin, Trecynon (Baptist); Nebo, Hirwaun (Independent); Ramoth, Hirwaun (Baptist); and Siloam, Penderyn (Baptist). All these chapels still function apart from Ramoth, Hirwaun, which closed in 1986. The old burial ground of Gwawr Baptist chapel at Regent street Aberaman, was cleared in 1967 without a full record of inscriptions having been kept. Finally, it must be noted that no complete transcription of monumental inscriptions at the large and important churchyards of Llanwynno and Penderyn has ever been made. All these sites are in urgent need of the recorders’ attention.

A *register of burials* (not transcripts of texts) is maintained by the appropriate department of the local authority in respect of persons buried at the municipal cemeteries. The graves of such persons can be located and identified if the name and approximate date of death are known. Applications for assistance in this connection should be made to the local council borough offices at the Exchange Buildings, Monk Street, Aberdare. Municipal cemeteries currently within the purview of the borough council include the following sites: the Old, New and Lawn cemeteries at Aberdare; Maes-yr-Arian and Aberffrwd cemeteries at Mountain Ash; Bryn-y Gaer at Hirwaun and local facilities at Abercynon and Ynysybwl. All these sites will contain inscriptions of considerable family interest if an interment can indeed be located at them. Such “monuments of mortality” can be useful “social documents”, and can sometimes provide an insight into the economic or social background of a given family.

Unlike the ancient churchyard at St. John’s, Aberdare, the old parish cemeteries at Llanwynno and Penderyn are still used for interment. Enquiries concerning early or recent events of this kind should be addressed in the first instance to the incumbents of the parishes concerned: (a) Ynysybwl and Llanwynno; and (b) Penderyn with Ystradfellte.

## 6. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (The Mormons).

It is now probably impossible to study the history of one's own family or that of anyone else without at least being aware of the presence of the Mormon Church in the field of genealogy. There is a purely religious explanation of this in that Mormons can be baptised not only for their own sakes but also on behalf of named ancestors in order to offer such ancestors the opportunity of salvation according to the teachings of the faith. The result of this belief has been the energetic and highly systematic pursuit of family history by all committed Mormons and by their church officially.

The Mormon Church has assembled on microfilm or fiche a vast array of records relating to most aspects of genealogical research. These include copies of parish registers, bishop's transcripts, dissenter records and census returns here in Britain and their equivalents abroad. It also includes a wealth of records dating to the 1840's generated by the Church itself, e.g. emigrant passenger lists. Some other churches take a dim view of the Mormon belief in baptism for the dead and are increasingly reluctant to provide them with yet more records to copy. For their part, the Mormons are usually very happy to provide almost open access to those records they already hold and this can be a real help to the genealogist while serving as a quiet "advertisement" for the church.

There are two main ways in which the work of the Mormons in assembling records may prove useful to the genealogist. The first of these is the branch research library attached to most substantial Mormon churches. Such a library will be able to offer written guidance to the Church's archives (stored near Salt Lake City, Utah USA) and often some individual advice. A real advantage is that the research library will be able to order on your behalf (and at a reasonable fee) a microfilm copy of any British or American record not otherwise easily available. This copy may then be consulted at the local church library at a mutually convenient time. There are two Mormon *Family History Libraries* (as they are often called) near Aberdare. The first is at Merthyr Tydfil and the second at Rhiwbina in Cardiff (see Part 2 for addresses). Enquiries should be sent to the church librarian before your first visit as each library is open only on certain evenings of the week (and some of these can be quite busy).

The second way in which the Mormon connection may prove useful concerns their *International Genealogical Index* (or I.G.I.). Basically, this is an alphabetical amalgam of names that appear in those registers, censuses and wills already copied by the Mormon Church. It is regularly updated, and to facilitate a search it is arranged alphabetically by county, by surname and then by first name. Welsh counties appear together.

The I.G.I. also notes the parish of origin, the place of current abode and (if possible) the parentage of a named individual. This source, like so many others, presents particular difficulties to those working on any of the more familiar Welsh surnames in that being confronted with lengthy lists of Davieses, Joneses or Thomases, even if linked to specific parishes or years, is of limited value when compared to more exceptional Welsh surnames or to the more varied array of English surnames. At such times unusual first names used by a family in one or more generations can become especially important in helping to trace or identify individuals and particular families.

Aberdare Central Library has a full copy of the 1992 Wales and Monmouth edition of the I.G.I., plus the 1992 edition for London. Like the 1891 census returns the I.G.I is on microfiche, not film.

## **7. The W.W. Price and R. Ivor Parry Collections.**

These are two large and very varied collections of papers deposited at Aberdare Library on behalf of those whose names they bear. The larger and more important of the two is the W. W. Price Collection - which has been added to extensively since W. W. Price's death in 1967. No attempt can be made here even to outline the extent and contents of these collections. A *general index* to both may be consulted at the library. As this pamphlet is primarily concerned with genealogical sources it will suffice to point out only a few categories within the W. W. Price collection which will be of greatest relevance. Such observations may be taken to apply to the R. Ivor Parry collection also, though less copiously.

The most substantial feature of the W. W. Price deposit is his 30-volume *biographical index*. This has been compiled and bound by the National Library based on a collection of some 40,000 cards and cuttings on which W. W. Price detailed the lives of almost anyone who was of wider note in this district. The entries are arranged alphabetically. The index may also be consulted at Aberystwyth. Within the many categories of documents in the W. W. Price collection particular attention should be paid to the biography section. There are currently 158 *separate biographical files* available. These frequently focus on the leading landed and industrial figures of the area, but not exclusively. People of some note in commerce, religion, education, farming, trade unionism and so on also feature.

*Other categories* of particular interest are local government, parish records, transcripts and sale catalogues in which useful supplementary information may be found. In the latter case, for example, those catalogues noting the sale by the Marquis of Bute in 1919 of his Aberdare town-centre estate include lists of each property's lessees from 1822 on.

## **8. Further Sources.**

### **(i) Trade Directories.**

The first of these is a collection of *trade directories*, either for South Wales as a whole or (later) the Cardiff and Merthyr districts, in which individuals and businesses of note are listed according to their geographic or sometimes social setting. From the mid-19th century this locality is described either under "Aberdare" or, frequently, "Merthyr Tydfil". A small but very useful collection of such directories is located at Aberdare Library while a fuller collection can be found at the Glamorgan Record Office.

### **(ii) Political Records.**

There is no extensive political archive as such at Aberdare, but the Library has some *political material* gathered over the years: election addresses, press cuttings, personal papers and so forth which can be biographically useful. For anyone who ever held political or public office at Aberdare up to and including the 1920s, the long series of Aberdare Almanacks at the Library should have a mention or summary of their career.

### **(iii) Local Publications.**

There is also a good, but by no means complete, collection of *books and pamphlets written by local authors*, from the early 19th century to date. Such works, frequently in Welsh, sometimes contain biographical essays, personal details of the author, or references to others with whom he was associated. There is a *card catalogue* to these, but work is currently being carried out to transfer these details to the *computer catalogue*.

### **(iv) Miner's Records.**

There is a small deposit of *miners' lodge records* (mostly from Cwmaman and Rhigos); a very patchy and disappointing collection of records emanating from the Miners' Institutes of the district and some important transcripts of coal company documents. Most of this material was composed or rescued by W. W. Price to whom we should be grateful, but it does not amount to a great deal bearing in mind how completely the coal industry once dominated the economic and social life of the valley.

The *South Wales Miners' Library*, attached to the University of Wales Swansea, has a fuller archive of material useful to anyone researching a forebear who worked in the mining industry in the Cynon Valley as elsewhere. This *Archive of the South Wales Coalfield* contains (among other things): a valuable oral history deposit; colliery records; some lists of men employed at various mines at various times; miners' lodge and institute records; retrospective accounts of (mostly 20th century) strikes; and recollections of trade union and political activity. The Library is well worth a visit by anyone researching a mining family in this locality, but preferably by prior arrangement.

### **(v) Tithe Records.**

It is possible to consult at Aberdare Library the *tithe maps and schedules* of the parishes of Penderyn (1840), Llanwynno (1842) and Aberdare (1844). These documents display the extent and use of each parcel of land within each parish at that time and list the owners and lessees of each farming property (but not usually the occupiers of individual houses). It is often a rewarding task, if the researcher has traced the mid-19th century people in whom he/she is interested, to use these tithe records in conjunction with the census returns of 1841 and (especially) 1851. These two different sources mutually enhance their respective worth by allowing us to discover who lived where and to "see" something of the property at which they lived.

### **(vi) Maps**

In addition to the tithe maps and schedules, it is possible to consult at Aberdare Library a superb set of old *Ordnance Survey 25" plans* covering most of the old parishes of Aberdare and Llanwynno (Mountain Ash) as they were in 1870/75. They show in magnificent detail many old houses, streets, farms, public houses, chapels, collieries and other sites of a wider genealogical relevance which no longer exist.

### **(vii) Other Records.**

Information about the owners and occupiers of land affected by proposed *canal or railway schemes* is contained in the *Schedule to deposited plans* in the Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff. Aberdare Library also has copies of *Hearth Tax returns* relating to the late 17th century in which the most prominent members of the local community could be expected to appear. Also available at Aberdare are details for this entire district arising out of the *religious census of March 1851* (the complete Welsh returns having been published by the University of Wales Press in two convenient volumes). Late 18th and early 19th century *militia lists* for the county of Glamorgan are also available in published form (see Bryn Owen, *'The Glamorgan Militia'*, Cardiff 1990), and these too include information of local interest.

### **(viii) Company Records.**

If a researcher believes that those in whom he/she is interested were involved actively or financially in the affairs of a public company which operated within the Cynon Valley at any time since 1844 (when the registration of companies was first required), some incidental information may be found at Aberdare Library - particularly in published yearbooks or histories which focus on the fortunes of the South Wales coalfield. Beyond this, however, enquiries should be addressed to Companies House, Cardiff (see part 2), where the files of current and of "recently" dissolved companies are maintained.

After 20 years dissolved *company records* are transferred to the care of the Public Record Office, Kew. It should be borne in mind that making postal enquiries and orders for documents is an expensive way of proceeding: at least twice as costly as going to Cardiff and doing the work yourself. A list of companies registered between 1856 and 1920 whose names begin with "Aberdare", "Hirwaun" or "Cwmaman" and for which there is some information at Kew was published in "*Hanes*", the occasional bulletin of the Cynon Valley History Society, no. 2 (December 1984).

### **(ix) Manorial & Estate records.**

There are other categories of record of more particular application which an introductory leaflet such as this cannot discuss in detail. The most important of these, without doubt, are *manorial and estate records and papers*.

The lord of the manor at Aberdare and Llanwynno was (and still is) the Marquis of Bute (the manor being that of Meisgyn). As well as having specifically manorial rights (mostly concerning certain fees, rents and common land), *the Bute family* owned extensive lands at Aberdare itself and in the Hirwaun, Llwydcoed, Abernant and Cwmbach areas. The family's papers are divided between deposits at the National Library on the one hand and the Glamorgan Record Office on the other. *Schedules* to the collections may be consulted at both places. The deposits date back to medieval times (particularly at the N.L.W) and the earliest are often in Latin. Their value to family history lies chiefly in their being one of the earliest means of identifying agricultural properties and of discovering something of their history through the ages (unexpected name-changes permitting!) - including, quite often, some particulars of tenancies. There are extensive transcripts of *Bute documents* (including manorial rentals) within the W. W. Price collection at Aberdare.

The other major landed estate in the Cynon Valley was that of *the Bruce family*, later ennobled as *Lords Aberdare*. The Aberdare estate was concentrated within Llanwynno parish and at Cwmaman, Cwmbach and Cefnpennar. Their estate papers are deposited largely at the Glamorgan Record Office where a detailed *Schedule* to the collection is available. Again, some information concerning tenements and their occupants (particularly from the late 18th century) may be discerned in this quarter.

Other estates with deposits at the Glamorgan Record Office of relevance to the Cynon Valley include the following: *Briton Ferry* (at Penderyn); *Kemeys-Tynte* (Aberdare and Llanwynno); *Lanelay* (Llanwynno); *Penlline* (Llanwynno); *Plymouth* (Aberdare and Llanwynno); *Penmaillard* (Penderyn). Further enquiries are best pursued directly at the appropriate repository.

#### **(x) The Land Registry.**

An increasingly useful and important source of information concerning the ownership of land in the modern era is the *Welsh District Office of the Land Registry* (see part 2). The compulsory registration of private land and property began in 1937, and in 1990 the national register was made available for public inspection (upon payment of a fee). It is estimated the Registry has assembled details of more than 13 million land titles since 1937, more than half a million of these being in Wales. There is an obvious potential interest to the family historian in this.

#### **(xi) Other Specialist Sources.**

There are yet other specialist sources to be considered - especially if one has a confirmed relationship with a distinguished (or landed) Welsh family of the medieval or early-modern period. Prime among these are a very large collection of pedigree books and manuscripts at the National Library. They date from the 12th to the 17th centuries and are the basis of a considerable number of published works. Of special interest and value to this district is G.T. Clark's "Limbus Patrum Morganiae . . ." (1886) which contains useful background material to a number of the most eminent local families. Mention should also be made of the wider work in this field of Peter Bartrum (including more than 26 volumes of his "Welsh Genealogies"); and of the definitive work on Welsh Heraldry by Michael Powell Siddons currently being published in three volumes by the National Library.

It must be said that these latter sources are unlikely to concern the great majority of contemporary family historians. They represent the "Heights of Abraham" in Welsh genealogy whereas most of us must settle happily for tilling the plains of Ishmael.

#### **(xii) I.T. Sources**

In conclusion it should be borne in mind that more and more institutions are transferring not just their indices, catalogues and other finding aids to computer-based systems but, increasingly, digitised copies of original documents (such as maps) as well. Every major institution or repository is now likely to be on-line and linked to the internet, and such systems of investigating and retrieving information are likely to become ever more important in the future. Aberdare library is able to offer internet access on a limited basis and making prior arrangements is always advisable.

## Part Two

## Relevant Addresses.

### 1. In Wales.

The Reference Librarian.  
Central Library,  
Green Street,  
Aberdare,  
Rhondda Cynon Taff.  
Tel. 01685 880053.

Mrs E Llewellyn  
Secretary Cynon Valley Branch,  
Glamorgan Family History Soc.,  
14 Greenfield Terrace.,  
Abercynon.  
Rhondda Cynon Taff.

The Reference Librarian.  
Pontypridd Library,  
Library Road,  
Pontypridd,  
Rhondda Cynon Taff.  
Tel. 01685 486850.

The Reference Librarian.  
Treorchy Library,  
Station Street,  
Treorchy,  
Rhondda Cynon Taff.  
Tel. 01685 773204.

The Superintendent Registrar.  
The Register Office,  
Court House Street,  
Pontypridd,  
Rhondda Cynon Taff.  
Tel. 01685 486870.

The Burial Clerk,  
Exchange Buildings,  
Monk Street,  
Aberdare.  
CF44 7PA.  
Tel: 01685 885345

The Archivist.  
Glamorgan Record Office,  
The Glamorgan Building,  
King Edward VII Avenue,  
Cathays Park,  
Cardiff.  
CF1 3NE.  
Tel. 029 2078 0282.

The Archivist.  
West Glamorgan Record Office,  
County Hall,  
Oystermouth Road,  
Swansea.  
SA1 3SN  
Tel. 01792 471589

The Librarian.  
National Library of Wales,  
Aberystwyth,  
Ceredigion.  
SY23 3BU  
Tel. 01970 623800

The Librarian.  
South Wales Coalfield Archive,  
University of Wales Swansea,  
Singleton Park,  
Swansea.  
SA2 8PP  
Tel. 01792 295697

Cardiff Central Library.  
St. David's Link,  
Frederick Street,  
Cardiff.  
CF10 4DT  
Tel. 029 2038 2116  
Swansea District Land Registry,  
Ty Bryn Glas,

Merthyr Tydfil Central Library,  
High Street,  
Merthyr Tydfil.  
CF47 8AF.  
Tel. 01685 723057.

Companies House,  
Crown Way,

High Street,  
Swansea.  
Tel. 01792 458877.

Cardiff.  
CF14 3UZ.  
Tel. 029 2038 8588.

The National Monuments Record of Wales,  
Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Wales,  
Crown Building,  
Plascrug,  
Aberystwyth,  
Ceredigion.  
SY23 1NJ.  
Tel. 01970 621200

## **2. In England.**

The Family Records Centre,  
1 Myddleton Street,  
London.  
EC1R 1UW.  
Tel. 0181 392 5300.

General Register Office,  
PO Box 2,  
Southport,  
Merseyside,  
PR8 2JD.  
Tel. 0151 471 4800

Principal Registry of the Family  
Division,  
Somerset House,  
Strand,  
London.  
WC2R 1LP.  
Tel. 0171 936 6939

The Public Record Office,  
Ruskin Avenue,  
Kew,  
Richmond,  
Surrey.  
TW9 4DU.  
Tel. 0181 392 5000

Newspaper Library,  
British Library,  
Colindale Avenue,  
London,  
NW9 5HE.  
Tel. 020 7412 7552.

Office for National Statistics,  
Room 4324,  
Segensworth Road,  
Titchfield,  
Hants.  
PO15 5RR.

## Part Three      **Select Bibliography of Titles Available in Aberdare Library.**

AL = Aberdare Lending; AR = Aberdare Reference;  
LC = Local collection.

Bevan, Amanda. Tracing your ancestors in the public record office (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Public Record Office, 1999. Class No. 929.30942 BEV. AR.

Clark, George T. Limbus patrum Morganie et Glamorganie (The Genealogies of Morgan and Glamorgan). Wyman & Sons, 1886. Class No 929.1. LC.

Crowe, Elizabeth Powell. Genealogy online millennium edition. McGraw-Hill, 1999. Class No. 929.1. AR

Fitzhugh, Terrick V H. How to write a family history. Alphabooks Ltd., 1988. Class NO. 929.2. AR.

Gardner, David E & Smith, Frank. Genealogical research in England and Wales (3 volumes). Bookcraft. Class No. 929.1. AR.

Hamilton-Edwards, Gerald. In search of Welsh ancestry. Phillimore, 1986. Class No. 929.1 HAM. AR.

Herber, Mark D. Ancestral trails. Sutton Publishing, 1997. Class No. 929.107204 HER. AL, AR.

Hey, David. The Oxford dictionary of local & family history. Oxford University Press, 1997. Class No. 929.1072. AR.

Hey, David. The Oxford guide to Family History. Oxford University Press, 1993. Class No. 929.1. AR. AL.

Humphery-Smith, Cecil R (ed). The Phillimore atlas and index of parish registers. Phillimore & Co., 1984. Class No. 016.929. AR.

Ifans, Dafydd. Nonconformist registers of Wales. National Library of Wales and Welsh County Archivists' Group, 1994. Class No. 929.3. AR

Istance, Jean & Cann, E. E. Researching family history in Wales. Federation of family history societies, 1996. Class No. 929 INS. AR.

Jones, Ieuan Gwynedd & Williams, David (ed). The religious census of 1851: Volume 1 South Wales. University of Wales press, 1976. Class No. 301.58. AR.

Lumas, Susan. Making use of the census. PRO Publications, 1997. Class No. 929.3. AR.

Morgan, T J & Morgan, Prys. Welsh Surnames. University of Wales Press, 1985. Class No. 929.42.

Parkinson, Elizabeth. The Glamorgan hearth tax assessment of 1670. South Wales Record Society, 1994. Class No. 929.3. AR

Rogers, Colin D. The family tree detective (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Manchester University Press, 1997. Class No. 929.1072 ROG. AR

Rawlins, Bert J. The parish churches and nonconformist chapels of Wales: Their records and where to find them. Volume One: Cardigan-Carmarthen-Pembroke. Celtic Heritage Research, 1987. Class No. 929.3 RAW. AR.

Rowlands, John (ed.). Welsh family history: A guide to research. Association of Family History Societies of Wales, 1993. Class No. 929.3. AL, AR.

Rowlands, John & Sheila (ed.). The surnames of Wales for family historians and others. Federation of Family History Societies (Publications) Ltd, 1996. Class No. 929.42. AL, AR.

Rowlands, John & Sheila (ed.). Second stages in researching Welsh ancestry. Federation of Family History Societies (Publications) Ltd., 1999. Class No. 929.1 ROW AR.

Shaw, Gareth & Tipper, Allison. British directories: A bibliography and guide to directories published in England and Wales 1850-1950, Scotland 1773-1950 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Mansell Publishing, 1997. Class No. 016.9141. AR.

Williams, C J & Watts-Williams J. Parish registers of Wales. National Library of Wales and Welsh County Archivists' Group, 1986. Class No. 929.3. AR.