

Llwynypia Notes

Llwynypia - The Welsh name means "the grove of the Magpie"

Coal Miner and His Family Sculpture – Robert Thomas

unveiled in October 1993. A miner in his working clothes, stands with his feet apart, holding a lamp in his right hand. His left arm is outstretched downwards, and his fist clenched. She holds a baby, wrapped in a Welsh shawl, in her right arm. Both figures look away down the valley (Rhondda Fawr).

'This sculpture of a coal miner with his family / was erected by the / Rhondda Civic Society / to commemorate / The Mining Communities of Rhondda / Unveiled by Rt Hon Viscount Tony Pandy P.C. D.C.L. / 14 October 1993'

Nye Bevan has been here in Queen Street since 1987. Three others in Queen Street: 'The Miner', 'Mother and Son' and 'the Family', commissioned by Cardiff Council as part of the 2005 anniversary celebration to celebrate Cardiff's Centenary as a City and its half century as capital of Wales.

Also The Girl in Gorsedd Gardens, Lady Diana and in St David's Hall and Gwyn Thomas in the foyer of the New Theatre. Plus Captain Cat from Dylan Thomas's Under Milk Wood in Swansea Marina.

And what of the man himself; sculptor Robert John Roydon Thomas? He was born in Cwmparc in the Rhondda Valley in 1926 to Thomas Thomas, a miner, originally from Ystrad and Miriam Thomas née Wattle, originally from Treorchy. Robert left Pentre Grammar School in 1944 and did war service as a mining electrician before entering Cardiff College of Art in 1947. After that he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art in London. He then got a job as a lecturer at Ealing Technical College in West London (1953–71) whilst at the same time seeking to further his career as a sculptor.

The other interesting angle of Robert Thomas's life that I picked up on was that he was part of the 'Rhondda School' of artists. This wasn't a group of artists that follow or establish any particular style as art 'schools' tend to but rather a group of students from Cardiff College of Art that used to travel down the Rhondda Valley each day on the steam train too get to their classes at Cardiff College of Art. They used to spread their work out on the table in their train compartment and discuss the merits.

Untruth: As a sculptor, Robert Thomas couldn't spread his work out on the train so he used to give the train driver a crucible to melt some bronze in the engine fire box which he would then cast on arriving at Queen Street station

[More information on Robert Thomas and his sculptures](#)

George Thomas, 1st Viscount Tonypany, PC (29 January 1909 – 22 September 1997)

Born in Port Talbot, South Wales, he initially worked as a teacher in both London and Cardiff. A MP from 1945 to 1983, Speaker of the House of Commons from 1976 to 1983. Thomas was raised by his mother in the village of Treallaw in South Wales, just across the Rhondda Fawr river from the town of Tonypany.

Thomas was an outspoken critic of the European Union. Thomas's opposition to Welsh nationalism was finally expressed in hostility to the Blair government's devolution proposals of 1997. After Lord Tonypany's death, former Welsh Labour MP Leo Abse revealed that Thomas had been homosexual and had been blackmailed because of it. He was twice engaged to be married but he never did, so there was no heir to the viscountcy, which became extinct. He is buried at Treallaw Cemetery.

Untruth: He was one banned from his local Indian restaurant for going in and shouting Order Order Order.

Archibald Hood

Born Kilmarnock June 1823. Died Cardiff 27/10/1902

He was employed at the age of 13 at the colliery in Scotland where his father was a foreman. I believe Archibald worked over ground working 12 hrs a day in charge of a surface engine. He was to qualify as a mining engineer. He was soon masterminding the development of collieries and iron works in Ayrshire. He developed brick and tile works using his coal in the manufacturing process, and also gas works and oil works.

Hood developed the village of Rosewell for his workers with well built houses with gardens which could be used as smallholdings. He encouraged the establishment of a Co-operative Retail Society so that his workers would not have to owe money 'on tick' to unscrupulous shop-owners and provided sports facilities such as bowling greens ; bowls being a sport he enjoyed. He apparently owned and built all the village apart from the schools and churches. He employed the "Gothenburg" system whereby any profits from the sale of alcohol went into the creation of parks, libraries and other community facilities.

It seems Hood first came to South Wales in 1860 purportedly to spy out the land for fellow Scots wishing to get involved in the rapidly developing S Wales coalfield. He obviously liked what he saw and decided he would like a piece of the action for himself. He joined the Ely Valley Coal Company as a Director.

Llwynypia complex which became the centre of his operations in the Rhondda with 6 pits and 3500 workmen. His company was the Glamorgan Coal Company.

He did much to expand the market for Welsh steam coal in particular by an agreement with the Admiralty to supply coal to the ships of the Royal Navy.

Hood used new technology in his mines such as electricity and the use of compressed air and was a leading light in the development of mining engineering in Europe. He made a number of contributions to the science of mining including a paper on the Explosive Character of Coal Dust.

He moved permanently to South Wales in 1867 and built what has been described as a mansion called Sherwood on Newport Road in 1876 in Cardiff next door to the site of St James' Church.

A large number of Scottish workers followed him to Llwynypia and the houses he built for his workers as in Scotland had a garden and some at least were known as the Scotch Houses. Many of the terraces in Llwynypia and its surrounding area had Scottish place names or were named after Scottish or other people who had played an important part in Hood's life. Some also had a rear lane access. Hood ensured that an education system existed for the workers' children, built a miner's institute which housed a library. He also provided a swimming baths and a number of bowling greens.

Coming back to Archibald Hood. He is buried in Cathays cemetery near to and to the left of the main entrance gates. The monument on the grave takes the shape of a tall obelisk.

The statue is a 7ft 6 in tall cast bronze figure of Sir Archibald Hood leaning on a stick and pointing to the left towards the site of his central mineworks complex, brickworks and Scotch Terraces. It was erected in the grounds of Llwynypia Library/ Institute.

Involved with the development of Barry. There is a Hood Road in Barry,

Untruth: One of his daughters had bright auburn hair and owned a pony which she used to like to race. One day someone asked her mother who that was leading the race and she said, oh that's Little Red Riding Hood.

Tonypandy

Untruth: Rumor has it the town is named after Andy's brother Anthony.

In 1738 a mill was built to perform the process of "fulling" the wool: first the greasy cloth was scoured and then thickened by being beaten with hammers powered by the mill wheel before being suspended by hooks on a frame called a tenter – hence "tenterhooks" - and stretched to make it strong.

"Tonypandy" is Welsh for the pasture (ton) of the (y) fulling mill (pandy), and so it was wool processing that gave the town its name. The mill itself once stood beyond the houses across the main road, at the confluence of the Nant Clydach and the River Rhondda Fawr whose waters turned the mill wheel.

However, with the development of the rail network after 1860 it became cheaper to send the unprocessed wool to bigger factories elsewhere, and the mill finally closed in 1912.

Tonypandy Riots

The Tonypandy Riots, 1910-1911, saw miners involved in a battle over wages with the Cambrian Combine Collieries. The strike was defeated but the struggle established the demand for a minimum wage in 1912.

The Miners Strike of 1910-11 was an attempt by miners and their families to improve wages and living conditions in severely deprived parts of South Wales, where wages had been kept deliberately low for many years by a cartel of mine owners. Churchill, then Home Secretary, agreed to the use of military force in November 1910 upon the request of local police chief Lionel Lindsay.

Miners were striking across South Wales and there was widespread disruption and aggression between police and protesters.

A week or so into November, the strike had spread to all 12,000 colliers operated by Cambrian Combine, which shut all but one of its pits.

In Tonypandy, rioting took place over the weekend of 9 November. Miners wrecked shops in the town centre and attacked property belonging to pit owners. In Tonypandy, rioting took place over the weekend of 9 November. Miners wrecked shops in the town centre and attacked property belonging to pit owners.

After initially sending a detachment of Metropolitan Police to help bolster the local presence – then, constabularies in South Wales were small – Churchill eventually deployed a squadron of 18th Hussars to quash the violence. He was reportedly reluctant to do so.

Churchill's reputation in South Wales suffered as a result. There is no hard evidence shots were fired in Tonypandy or elsewhere, according to the BBC, though claims were made at the time that the use of ammunition had been authorised.

The conflict arose when the Naval Colliery Company opened a new coal seam at the Ely Pit in Penygraig. After a short test period to determine what would be the future rate of extraction, owners claimed that the miners deliberately worked more slowly than possible. The roughly-70 miners at the seam argued that the new seam was more difficult to work than others because of a stone band that ran through it

Although no authentic record exists of casualties since many miners would have refused treatment for fear of prosecution for their part in the riots, nearly 80 police and over 500 citizens were injured

A few shops remained untouched, notably that of the chemist Willie Llewellyn, which was rumoured to have been spared because he had been a famous Welsh international rugby footballer. Purported eyewitness accounts of alleged shootings persisted and were relayed by word of mouth. In some instances, it was said that there were many shots and fatalities. There are no records of any shots being fired by troops. The only recorded death was Samuel Rhys.

Untruth: Even to this day nobody in Tonypandy takes out insurance with Churchill or owns a bull dog.