

Maesteg Notes

Railway

[The Dyffryn Llynfi & Porthcawl Railway c.1825-1860](#)



Background – Built between 1825 and 1829, The Dyffryn Llynfi & Porthcawl Railway connected a new harbour built at Porthcawl with iron works that had sprung up further inland at Cefn Cribbwr, Aberkenfig and Maesteg. The railway covered a total distance of 16¾ miles descending some 490 feet from its starting point near Caerau, Maesteg. Designed for horse-drawn traffic it was a single track line with passing places and was built to a 4ft 6inch gauge with the rails fixed to stone blocks rather than wooden sleepers so as to leave a clear path between which horses and handlers could walk along.





A time-table dating from 1855 shows that it took 6¼ hours to travel from the terminus in the valley to Porthcawl and that the return trip was about 2¼ hours longer. The trains brought iron and coal to the coast for export to worldwide destinations and on the return trip stopped at South Cornelly to collect lime for use at the iron works. As lime was an effective fertilizer, several farmers in the Maesteg area with arrangement with the railway company, operated their own trams on the line to collect supplies for their own use.



Passengers – Passenger traffic started on the line as early as 1836 and became increasingly important when the track was converted to use by steam trains in 1861 making Porthcawl a popular destination for day trippers and holiday makers alike. This section of line from Porthcawl to Cefn Cribbwr junction remained operational until the 1960's when it was closed as a result of the Beeching Act.



At south Cornelly where a lane crossed the railway by a manned level crossing – the former gate keeper's house still survives as a modernised private dwelling whilst opposite it stands the former local public house known as The Three Horse Shoes (Originally called The Horse and Tram). The public house fronted onto the railway and offered welcome refreshment for hauliers working the line before setting off on the long return journey back to Maesteg. This public house is now a private residence

The line was replaced as a broad-gauge railway in 1861, designed by Brunel and completed after his death. The railway line to Nantyffyllon, formerly part of the Llynfi Valley line, closed to passengers in 1970 and to freight in 1993, with tracks removed north of Maesteg by 2004 for housing. A long campaign in the late 1980s and early 90s, resulted in the reopening of the line in 1992 as far as Maesteg by British Rail. Maesteg, which is currently the terminus for Transport for Wales services from Cardiff/Bridgend. The line beyond Maesteg is no longer operational.

Untruth. On the way down to Porthcawl the line was downhill so some of the ponies used to hitch a ride in the drams. When the line was replaced with steam locos the ponies were released onto the beach at Porthcawl and have been doing donkey rides ever since.

Keeper of the Collieries 2016

Oak sculpture. A nine foot high sculpture of a coal miner leaning against a shovel and looking out across Maesteg in the Llynfi valley. The sculpture is on the site of the former Coegnant Colliery and Maesteg Washery and commemorates the miners of the valley. The sculpture was designed with sustainability in mind, carved from Welsh trees that had naturally fallen. Commissioned by Natural Resources Wales, with funding from Welsh Government and Ford Motor Company.

Untruth: Nobody knows the name of the miner but I call him Bradley i.e. Brad Pitt.

Artist: Chris Wood

Hi I'm Chris Wood AKA Wood Art Works, I've been working professionally as an artist since I established WAW in 1999.

Prior to 1999 I worked for ten years as a fabricator welder, during that time I also took A level art and spent six years in life drawing classes exploring the human form in every media available to me, after getting made redundant from my job, I realised there was only one thing I wanted to do, become a professional artist.

Since starting WAW I've worked on hundreds of projects each one different to the next, from children's workshops making masks or lanterns etc, to giant chainsaw sculptures, or shop displays on Oxford street. I've also worked in Spain, the Canaries and Abu Dhabi as well as all over the UK, for various festivals, schools, councils and other associations. [View our client list.](#)

The diversity in my work has given me valuable and unique experience, that has constantly pushed me to new levels and has been very rewarding.

Poem:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uw_mnigjOUM

I am the Keeper of the Collieries

*I am men who toiled through rock and mud
For coal as black as dragon's blood;
I am their days in halls of stone,
the hearths and hearts that called them home*

*In long-closed shafts below these hills
Their picks and laughter echo still;
I am blistered hands and
caverns carved
by arms so strong
they left mountains scarred . . .*

*Now a new generation's blistered hands
are planting hopes and greening lands;
I am flower and fruit in the orchard trees
The wings of birds and returning bees*

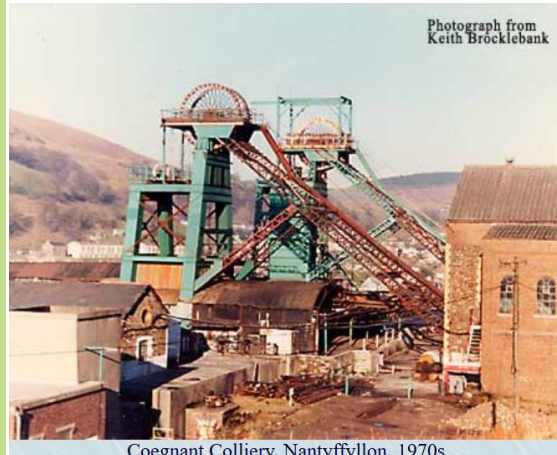
*I am fledgling forests growing strong,
a new verse in a valley's song;
old as coal and fresh as summer rain
I am the Spirit of Llynfi,*

born again

Daniel Lock



Cognant Colliery, 1908.



Maesteg Town Hall

This building has been a Maesteg landmark since the early 1880s, when its construction was partly funded by local coal miners donating a day's wages. Originally it included a market hall and rooms for public events including wrestling matches, dog and poultry shows, musical recitals, eisteddfodau and early trade union meetings.

Wednesday 20 November 2024 marked an historic day for the people of Maesteg and the wider Llynfi Valley, as Maesteg Town Hall [officially opened its doors to the public](#), following a highly ambitious, multi-million-pound redevelopment project delivered by the council and its partners at Awen Cultural Trust.

The Grade II listed building, originally built in 1881, has been returned to its former glory and now boasts additional features including a new glass atrium, library and heritage centre, studio theatre and cinema space, along with a café and mezzanine bar.

The main auditorium has been fully restored to become a multi-functional performing arts venue, including a stage lift, dressing rooms and a bar. The balcony has also been retained and refurbished. The two areas of the building are linked by a modern glazed atrium and foyer fronting Talbot Street.

People from Maesteg

Maesteg Town Hall is currently hosting some amazing paper sculptures, created by the theatre design students from the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. The sculptures are inspired by paintings by Maesteg artist Christopher Williams, including two paintings that have their home in Maesteg Town Hall. [Christopher Williams – Artist](#)



Dr William Hopkin Thomas (JP, MD, MRCS)

1841 - 1899

William Thomas was the son of a local grocer. He trained to be a doctor at King's College Hospital, London, and started practicing medicine in the Llynfi Valley in 1867. He was the chief surgeon for the Garth and Oakwood collieries, and the Llwydarth Tinplate Works. He was also a local magistrate, a local Council Member, and a patron of the National Eisteddfod.

Dr Thomas died on 13 April 1899 in Maesteg, aged 58. Over 15,000 people joined the funeral procession to Llangynwyd Churchyard. All collieries stopped production that day, and white blinds were hung on windows across the whole town. A fountain was erected in his memory in front of the Town Hall in 1900, paid for by public subscriptions. The inscription on the monument reads: 'a man valued by all for his professional skill, respected for his integrity and uprightness, beloved for his geniality and kindness of heart.'



Christopher Williams © Carmarthenshire Museum



Dr. Thomas memorial fountain © Llynfi Valley Historical Society



T.L. Thomas



Raymond 'Chico' Hopkins



Norah Isaac



Siân Lloyd



Dave Bowen



Christopher Williams



Howell Evans



Dr William Hopkin Thomas (JP, MD, MRCS)



Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris



Idris Cox



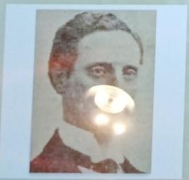
Henry Bracy



Marie Novello



J.J. Williams



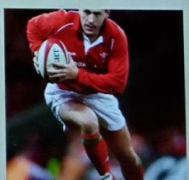
Sir William Beddoe Rees



'Cadrawd' Thomas Christopher Evans




Gwenyth Petty



Allan Bateman



Vernon Hartshorn O.B.E.
1872-1931



Vernon Hartshorn was born in Pont-y-waun near Cross Keys on the 16th of March, 1872. As a young boy, he began work as a miner before becoming a clerk in one of the dock offices in Cardiff. He returned to mining and in 1905 was appointed chief agent of the miners in the Maesteg district. By 1911 he was an Executive Member of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and from 1922 to 1924 was President of the Miners' Union of South Wales.

He was elected Member of Parliament for Ogmore in 1918, became Postmaster General in 1924 and subsequently a member of the Privy Council. Following the General Election of 1927 he became Lord Privy Seal. He died at Hillcrest, Maesteg on the 13th March, 1931 and was buried in Langynwyd churchyard.

Ganed Vernon Hartshorn ym Mhont-y-waun ger Cross Keys ar yr 16eg o Fawrth 1872. Yn llaric, dechreuodd weithio fel glowr cyn dyfod yn glerc yn un o swyddfeydd dociau Caerdydd. Dychwelodd i'r diwydiant glo ac yn 1905 cafodd ei benodi'n brif asiant y glowyr yn ardal Maesteg. Erbyn 1911 roedd yn Aelod Gweithredol o Ffederasiwn Glowyr Prydain Fawr ac o 1922 i 1924 yn Ulywydd Undeb Glowyr De Cymru.

Fe'i etholwyd yn Aelod Seneddol dros Ogwr yn 1918, daeth yn Bostfeistr Cyffredinol yn 1924 ac, yn y man, yn aelod o'r Gyfrin Gyngor. Yn dilyn Etholiad Cyffredinol 1927, daeth yn Arglwydd y Sâl Gyfrin. Bu farw yn Hillcrest, Maesteg ar y 13eg o Fawrth a'i gladdu ym mynwent Langynwyd.