

HERITAGE NEWS

BLAENAVON WORLD HERITAGE SITE NEWSLETTER ISSUE 1 - MAY 2005

The countdown begins...

The date has been set for the next **Blaenavon World Heritage Day: 25th June 2005**, "This year it's going to be bigger and better" say event organisers. The day will begin with the craft fair at the Workmen's Hall at 10.30am with street entertainers roaming the town from 11 o'clock onwards, including an Antiques Road Show in Bethlehem Chapel, so bring along your antiques and have them valued by an expert. There will of course be the traditional heritage parade (this year children from Ironbridge WHS will be taking part), children's rides, bouncy castle as well as lots of street entertainment to keep the whole family amused.

Included in this year's line up is 'ABBALIKE' a fantastic tribute to Sweden's greatest export. All of Abba's greatest hits will be played including Chiquitita – Winner Takes It All – Fernando and I Have A Dream.



JOIN IN ON THE FUN – help make the day a big success!

The organisers of Blaenavon World Heritage Day this summer are urging the townspeople to help make it an even bigger success by stepping back in time.

The Broad Street Heritage Costume parade is a spectacular part of a great day out - but the majority of participants to date have been children. Now, adults and groups are being called on to show the same community spirit and have a go themselves.

This year's parade will take place on Saturday 25th June at 1.30pm from the top of Broad Street/King Street and wind its way down through the town centre before finishing back up in the Lion Street car park.

The costume PRIZE classes are:

- Children under 11yr old
- Senior Citizens
- Child Youth 11yrs to 16yrs
- Male Adults
- Family Group
- Female Adults
- Groups

It's a great day out for all the family. It's an opportunity for the local community to get together and enjoy one big town party.

Contact Cath Thomas on 01633 648002 for further information.



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FORGESIDE...a new beginning

Forgeside Tenants and Residents Association, Torfaen Voluntary Alliance and Torfaen County Borough Council & Garnsychan Partnership have worked together to improve the access and parking to Varteg Road Cemetery. The works carried out has improved the appearance of the entrance and frontage to the cemetery and helps to emphasise the 'Gateway' to Forgeside and its heritage through a new



community art installation. The funding of £75,193 for the project was provided by The Blaenavon Town Council, Welsh Development Agency, Torfaen County Borough Council, New Opportunities Fund and the Enfy Partnership.

'Gateways' to the Landscape

Work has begun on the new 'Gateways' to the landscape of the World Heritage Site which will provide visitors with improved car parking facilities and information relating to the area. The 'Gateways' are small car parks around the World Heritage Site which will act as setting out points for visitors wishing to explore the World Heritage Site on foot or by bicycle. Many of them will be connected to the newly launched Iron Mountain Tail footpath.



Twelve sites have been chosen throughout the World Heritage Site. The first two Gateways completed in May 2004 were Riflegreen carpark in Blaenavon and Llanfoist Crossing in Llanfoist. The car park has been resurfaced, the entrance upgraded, high quality signage installed, new paving laid and walls erected.



Branding and environmental improvement works to Llanfoist Crossing car park

FIRST DEDICATED WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE IN THE UK

Torfaen County Borough Council is leading the Heritage Lottery Funded project to convert the former St Peter's Schools into a visitor centre to explain the fascinating story of the World Heritage Site.

The displays and interactive exhibitions will bring Blaenavon's rich history to life which is acknowledged by the United Nations as being of outstanding international importance. "Nowhere else is there a landscape so evocative of the early years of the Industrial Revolution and early iron and coal production." The Centre is expected to open in the summer of 2006.

Work started on site in January 2005. Contractors Davlan have begun the exterior works that will restore the buildings to their former glory. The construction of the new link building is expected to start September 2005 which will house a café and retail area.

Haley Sharpe Design of Leicester has been appointed to design the interior of the interpretation centre. Haley Sharpe was responsible for the exhibition work at Big Pit, one of Britains' top visitor attractions Haley Sharpe have also worked on prestige projects across the UK including the National Transport Museum and the National Space Centre.



Future Blaenavon

A voluntary group has been set up in Blaenavon of local residents to improve the quality of life and promote education, social welfare and recreation for Blaenavon residents. The Future Blaenavon group hope to achieve this through working in partnership with the Local Authority and other organisations to get things done through community effort.

Meetings are held monthly in the Workmen's Hall starting at 7.00pm. All new members welcome. To find out more information and the date of the next meeting please contact Peter Kennedy on 01495 756646.

Montenegro Hears About Blaenavon

Heritage organisations and voluntary organisations in Montenegro (part of the former Yugoslavia) learnt about Blaenavon when John Rodger, Blaenavon Project Director presented a paper at a conference organised by the British Council in Serbia Montenegro to help the area make the most of its great natural and built heritage following the wars of the 1990's. Historically Blaenavon's iron and coal reached countries all over the globe, Blaenavon is once again gaining world wide recognition, this time for its exceptional industrial heritage.

St Peters Church 200 Years old

In 1805 Thomas Hill & Samuel Hopkins the first Ironmasters of Blaenavon built St Peters Church for the residents of the town. The church has recently been restored with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund. On Sunday 20th March the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Rowan Williams conducted a Palm Sunday service at a packed St Peters Church to celebrate its 200 year birthday. It was a memorable day enjoyed by all who shared in the occasion.



The Church is also holding a number of events from 20th March through to 11th December this year. A listing of all these events can be obtained from the Church.

Booktown Blaenavon - Second Annual Book Festival

Last year Blaenavon's Booktown held a small festival, this year the scale of the festival was vastly increased. It is hoped that from its humble beginnings this event will grow over the years to be widely recognised. Several nationally known authors gave talks and there were a number of musical events. It is hoped

residents of the town will become increasingly involved in making the annual festival a success and encourage trade and interest in the town. Any ideas for improving the festival will be greatly received. For more information please visit www.booktownfestival.com or contact James Hanna on 01495 793093.

Flushed with success!

At Last! The new toilets in Lion Street are finished and ready for the summer. No self respecting tourist destination should be without them.

They include toilets for the disabled and mother and baby changing facilities. Opening hours will be Mon to Saturday 9am to 4pm and Sun at 9am to 2pm.



Blaenavon Town Council and Torfaen County Borough Council through their Blaenavon Regeneration Partnership funded the new toilets costing just under £100,000.

Take another look at your town

Work has got underway on two of the most unsightly blocks of commercial and residential premises in 2004 at an estimated cost of £1.2million. They included 32 to 39 Broad Street (Phase 1) and 79 to 87 Broad Street (Phase 2).

Properties 32 to 39 Broad Street have undergone major renovations as well as some new construction work carried out by the local company P & P Builders. This first phase is now nearing completion. The difference that the renovations have made to the properties is amazing and four new shops have now set up new businesses in these premises.

The renovations include new shop fronts carefully designed to be in keeping with those that would have been in place in the early 1900.

Work on Phase 2, renovating properties 79 to 87 Broad Street and Boot Lane started on site April 2005 with a completion date of December 2006.



November 2004



April 2005



79 to 87 Broad St. and Boot Lane April 2005

World Heritage Site Warden Service

Alvin Nicholas has been appointed as the World Heritage Site Warden, a position which is funded by the Boundless Parks European initiative.

Alvin has been busy consulting with local interest groups and landowners over the past year, running outdoor events and establishing a Ranger Volunteer Group. There are several local volunteers who have already undertaken a number of practical projects including footpath improvements, dry stone walling and way-marking.

Anyone interested in helping to protect and promote Blaenavon's heritage landscape should contact Alvin on 01633 648045 or mobile: 07980 682749





Guided walks around Blaenavon World Heritage Site 2005

Sunday 22nd May – Blorenges Bird Safari

(5 km/3 miles/Easy walk)

Leaders Steve Smith/Alvin Nicholas

Forget the Serengeti – explore the natural diversity of the Blorenges Site of Special Scientific Interest and hear about the work of bird researcher / national park warden Steve Smith. Bring binoculars if you have them. From the entrance to Blaenavon Community Woodland on the Llanover Road SO 265 082. Starts 10.30 am – 1.30pm

Thursday 28th July – The Making of a World Heritage Site

(5km/3 miles/Moderate walk)

Leaders Alvin Nicholas/Clive Williams

A walk looking at archaeological features in the landscape and the reasoning behind their development – geology, location and the interaction of people with nature. Try to find and identify some of the 300 million year old fossils scattered throughout the landscape! From the Ironworks Car Park SO 248 091. Starts 2.00 pm -5.00pm

Sunday August 14th – Beginners Guide to Map and Compass

(8km/5 miles/Moderate walk)

Leaders Clive Williams/Alvin Nicholas

Learn how to use a map and compass correctly. This walk / activity will be fun and easygoing. Maps/compasses supplied. Booking is essential. From Foxhunters Car Park SO 264 108. Starts 10.30 am – 2.30pm

Saturday 3rd September – Caves, Tunnels and Bats

(1.6 km/1 mile/Moderate walk)

Leaders Alvin Nicholas/Ian Rabjohns

Join bat expert Ian Rabjohns and warden Alvin Nicholas on an evening excursion to detect bats around the canal and beech woodland of Llanfoist incline. Hear about how bats have used the caves beneath the World Heritage Site for thousands of years, and how they have more recently been using tunnels resulting from industrial activity in the area. Bring a torch and dress warmly. From Llanfoist Crossing Car Park SO 280 138. Starts 7.15pm – 9.30pm

For further information please contact Alvin Nicholas on 01633 648045 or 07980 682749

Coming Events

St Peters Church Bi-Centenary Celebration Gala Concert

19 June 2005

For tickets and further details contact Rev Dr Jason Bray 01495 790292, Mr D Watkins 01495 790167, Mrs J Meryfield 01495 790951 or Mr O Leek 01495 790679

The Floral Arts Society Flower Festival Friday 24th – Sunday 26th June 2005

Evening preview at 7pm on Thursday 23 June
St Peters Church, Church Road.

Blaenavon World Heritage Day

25th June 2005, Blaenavon Town Centre

For further details Tel: 01633 648002

Garn Lakes Country Craft and Recreation Fair 26th June 2005, 10:30am – 5:00pm

For further details telephone 01633 648066

Kite Flying

Sunday 10th July, 10:30-12:00pm

Booking essential, Tel: 01633 648066

Halloween Event

31st October 2005, Blaenavon Ironworks

(More details to follow nearer the time)

Blaenavon set to become a walking centre

The launch of the "Iron Mountain Trail" took place on the 12th May 2005 and was officially opened by Andrew Davies AM, Minister for Economic Development and Transport. This new circular footpath takes in many of the important historical and natural features on the World Heritage Site. The trail is 16km with a loop around the Blorenges which links Llanfoist and the canal over the mountain to the Garn Lakes area. The route utilises the former tramway routes that once carried iron, coal and limestone off the mountain.

Historically accurate replica trams and interpretation boards have been placed at Llanfoist Wharf to help show visitors how these materials started their journey of transportation around the world.

A pack of new walk leaflets have been developed to encourage people to use the landscape. They will be for sale in the local shops and from the Tourist Information Centre.

