

OUR VALLEYS HERITAGE

People and places in the
Rhondda



**LOTTERY FUNDED
ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI**

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People and Places in the Rhondda

Our Valleys Heritage focuses on the heritage of the Rhondda. The scheme enables communities to record and interpret their heritage - examining the layout of their valley towns, streets and green spaces, identifying interesting buildings and places and documenting the significance they possess for Rhondda people today.

The project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and administered by the Civic Trust for Wales. A £50,000 grant over 2 years will enable the project to work with people and groups to explore and interpret the built environment.

The main aim of the project is to work with groups and individuals to identify the value that communities recognise of significance. Memories and archives will be captured through photography (still and video), drawing, painting, modelling, writing, oral history/audio recording.

Individual groups may work valley wide or as locally as a street, a school, a park or townscape and will welcome all ages and abilities.

Here you will find information about the projects and groups we are working with and how you, as an individual or a group, can get involved. Accompanying the Information Pack is an Activity Pack for young people, containing activities that can be used by the whole family to explore and learn about local history, heritage and the past in the present.

HERITAGE AND OUR VALLEYS

Why Heritage Matters

The term heritage refers to much more than castles, listed buildings and objects in museums. When we go about our everyday activities, we are surrounded by heritage. The achievements and lives of past generations are evident in the buildings and places we pass. Heritage is what has been handed down to us from past generations, and equally importantly, what we will decide to preserve for future generations.

Streets, townscapes and landscapes are similar to jigsaw puzzles, assembled through time forming rich and varied backdrops to our lives. Within our villages and towns you will see buildings dating from varying periods and have held different significance for different people through time. Deconstructing the puzzle is important in understanding where we have come from and what has shaped our surroundings and our culture.

History is what gives a place character, what makes it special and unique. This contributes to our sense of belonging, of place and of cultural identity.

Our valleys heritage can be traced several thousand years. The historical landscape includes Bronze Age burials and Iron Age hillforts in the uplands and the remnants of medieval boundary ditches and farm buildings that provide clues about how our valleys may have looked before the industrial mining of coal took place.

However, it is the industrial heritage that most of us recognise as significantly shaping the character of our surroundings. The impact of industrial activity, the sinking of pits and attendant urban development has created a townscape that is instantly recognisable and which has become a symbol of Wales throughout the world.

For many, heritage is defined by the everyday, the streetscapes, familiar landscapes, place names and legends. In the Rhondda, chapels, workingmen's institutes, terraced houses, theatres and cinemas are all important parts of the Valleys townscape. These do not necessarily have legal protection through listing or scheduling, but are nonetheless a vital part of who we are and where we come from.



Image © Ryan www.geograph.org.uk

RECORDING OUR PAST for the future

We would like to work with people to help them broaden their knowledge of the Rhondda townscapes in a way that can be used to influence future planning and urban design decisions. An important aspect is to develop ways in which communities can record their perceptions of the significance and value of their surroundings.

Heritage should not be considered a barrier to development. Every generation has a right to add their signature to the rich backdrop against which they live their lives. After the industrial decline of the 1980's, our landscapes have begun changing again and development and regeneration is needed to shape the future. The challenge is to identify an appropriate balance between development and preservation to ensure that communities have their views and values acknowledged in this process.

Our Valleys Heritage aims to enable people to express their own opinion about what is important to them. By developing a list of buildings and places, the scheme will work with communities to channel their views and values. The list will be an important tool for Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council in the planning process.

An online version of the list will provide an opportunity to discuss and develop information about places and buildings in the future.

As part of the process, ^{ecE}we are inviting people living in the area to record and describe buildings, places and spaces that are of particular interest or importance to them. In addition to hearing about architectural and historical information, we would like to know *why* these places are important to you.

Everyone, regardless of background, age or local knowledge, can participate in the recording process and we hope to have a wide variety of building types represented on the list, reflecting the rich and diverse heritage of the Rhondda.

We have developed a form based on the format of the local list to be used in the recording. You will find the form enclosed in this information pack or to download on our website. If you have any questions or suggestions, please get in touch.

We would be grateful if you could answer our enclosed questionnaire, which will give us an idea about the opinion of people in the Rhondda.

SHARING MEMORIES

sharing stories

Places come alive through the stories about the people who lived, and live in them. By gathering people's knowledge, we can share our memories of the way things used to be and provide present and future generations with insights into local history.

As part of Our Valleys Heritage, online slideshows and exhibitions will highlight aspects of the heritage and local history. These will include artwork and photography by the public in addition to stories about buildings, events and people in the Rhondda. If you have a story to share, a photo or piece of artwork related to the built heritage in the Rhondda, please get in touch.

Events will be held across the Rhondda to enable people to get together and share their opinions and stories. These will include building recording and oral history workshops, photo evenings, activities for children and talks about Rhondda heritage. Events will be advertised locally and in the Rhondda Leader.



Image © Rhondda Cynon Taf Digital Archive

PEOPLE AND PROJECTS in your area

We work with a number of groups involved in a variety of projects. Some of these are listed below.

Keep an eye on our website www.ourvalleyheritage.org.uk for updates on what is happening in your area and for project news.

Celebrating Fernhill and Blaenrhondda

As the title suggests, the project celebrates Fernhill and Blaenrhondda through a range of community events and activities. The project will bring together people of all ages and backgrounds to share their stories, photos and memories. Through history talks and the establishment of a digital photographic and oral archive, the stories will be a vital resource both to those interested in the history of the area and as expressions of value, sense of belonging and identity.

You can read more about the project and the first of several events taking place on the 8th of June at Blaenrhondda Social Club on our website.

50+ Older People's Forum

Based on the successful Memory Lane events, Our Valleys Heritage are joining forces with 50+ Older People's Forum to hold memory events at nursing homes and other venues across the Rhondda Valleys. The events include poetry reading; a quiz and invitation to residents to bring photos and share their stories. These will be published in booklets and online.

If you would like to book one of these events (free of charge) then please get in touch with Our Valleys Heritage on 02920 484606.

Ynyshir History Society

Ynyshir History Society will work with people in the area to record residents' memories of life in Ynyshir in the past. The aim is to publish these both online and as a printed booklet. There will also be Oral History Workshops looking at how to create an Oral History Project and the many ways you can publish and tell others about the results. Visit our website for more information about the latest developments!

If you are interested in finding out more about Ynyshir History Society or this particular project, please get in touch with Eleanor Aubrey on 01443 683883. The society meets once a month for talks on a variety of history topics and also has a book lending facility.

IDEAS AND SOME TIME TO SPARE? how to get involved

Do you belong to a group you think should be involved in Our Valleys Heritage? We would like to hear from groups working with heritage projects, whether you are gathering historical information, creating artwork that relates to the built heritage or whether you would simply like to discuss some ideas.

There are a number of ways of exploring your surroundings and heritage. For instance, you can look at:

- Places of music, sport, poetry and literature
- Statues, monuments, plaques and sculptures
- An entire street or village
- Individual buildings like chapels, schools, pubs or workingmen's institutes
- Parks

Other things to consider are

How much time are you able to work on the project?

What outcome would you like to see at the end of the project?

Where do you go to find the information you need?

Would this involve any extra costs for the group?

We are happy to meet you to discuss potential projects and will ensure we follow up and support all projects with which we are involved with.

Please get in touch if you have any ideas or would like to find out more about the work of Our Valleys Heritage

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RECORDING FORM

Please return form to: Our Valleys Heritage, Civic Trust for Wales, 3rd Floor Empire House,
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Site Name	Community	
OS Grid Reference/Location		
Description (<i>Date of construction, architectural details, ammendments or damage, measurements</i>)		
Historical Information (<i>the use of the building, people, events, legends etc.</i>)		
Why do you think this building is important?		
Description of photos and return address for these:		Relation to other registers (CADW or similar?)
Recorded By:	Recorded Date	Entered Database