

Henry Austin Bruce, the Duffryn Estate and the Development of  
an Industrial Society: Mountain Ash 1845 – 1895

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## Summary

Henry Austin Bruce gained recognition as an important figure in Welsh and British political life during the latter half of the nineteenth century. He was particularly active in the fields of education and social policy, being a proponent of progressive moves towards increased provision of these public services for working people. After a period in London, he returned to his ancestral estate at Duffryn to help superintend his father's properties in that area. As a landowner in industrial Glamorgan, he was well placed to observe the impact of industrialisation on those communities and to appreciate the consequences of the inaction of the elite, alongside understanding the efforts that were successful in improving conditions. His actions at Mountain Ash were those from which he gained the experience he applied elsewhere. Henceforth, his career saw him undertake efforts to improve the condition of the people in ever widening spheres. Nevertheless, he did not have total freedom of action even at his home, Duffryn was a place with experience of socio-economic change and much of that was outside his influence. At Mountain Ash, he was able to influence practical change in the evolution of the shape of development and the evolution of public services for this nascent community. It was in the questions where he had most personal interest, as shown in numerous public addresses he gave, that he sought to exert the greatest influence. These were in the facilitation of the provision of religion, education and 'well-ordered amusement.' In these activities he had the support of an equally interested family, particularly, Norah his wife, his agents and a growing socially aware class, which he encouraged. Bruce played a role as an industrial landowner that has often been overlooked in the wider literature of the history of South Wales, this thesis helps address that oversight.

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## vi Abbreviations

<i>Aber. Obs.</i>	<i>Aberystwyth Observer</i>
ACVMS	Archives Cynon Valley Museum Service
<i>AL</i>	<i>Aberdare Leader</i>
<i>AT</i>	<i>Aberdare Times</i>
<i>CMG</i>	<i>Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian</i>
<i>CT</i>	<i>Cardiff Times</i>
CVHS	Cynon Valley History Society
<i>EE</i>	<i>Evening Express</i>
GA	Glamorgan Archives
GFHS	Glamorgan Family History Society
GWR	Great Western Railway
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
<i>.MExp`</i>	<i>Merthyr Express</i>
<i>MTel</i>	<i>Merthyr Telegraph</i>
<i>MTim</i>	<i>Merthyr Times</i>
<i>MM</i>	<i>Monmouthshire Merlin</i>
NTC&C	Nixon, Taylor, Cory and Company
<i>Pont Chron</i>	<i>Pontypridd Chronicle</i>
PDSCC	Powell Duffryn Steam Coal Company
RCHAMW	Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales
<i>SWDN</i>	<i>South Wales Daily News</i>
<i>SWDP</i>	<i>South Wales Daily Post</i>
SWR	South Wales Railway
<i>SWStar</i>	<i>South Wales Star</i>
TVR	Taff Vale Railway
VoN	Vale of Neath Railway
<i>WM</i>	<i>Western Mail</i>
<i>WklyM</i>	<i>Weekly Mail</i>

Note on Welsh usage – All Welsh place names use the current spelling as shown on the Ordnance Survey Maps of the area except in quoting contemporary sources who use a different form. The exception is Dyffryn/Duffryn, where for the sake of consistency the Duffryn form is adopted, as this is what is used in contemporary sources for the house, estate and places associated with it.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Introduction.

Henry Austin Bruce was born at Duffryn House, in the parish of Aberdare, on 16 April 1815.<sup>1</sup> When he was elevated to the peerage in 1873,<sup>2</sup> he took his title from these two elements connected to his birth, becoming the first Baron Aberdare of Duffryn. The award of a peerage recognised the work he had undertaken during his national political career to confront the social problems of the nation. These he had vividly encountered in northern Glamorgan and the practical experience gained here was the basis of his later achievements. The district around his birthplace and the development of the communities that grew on it, particularly Mountain Ash, were the root of his experience, and the origin of many of his opinions. The simple Celtic cross that marks his burial place stands as an emblematic sentinel overlooking the town he had done so much to help form, and as he had done in person throughout his life.

This thesis is not an analysis of the whole life, public career or wider impact of Henry Bruce. Instead, it will concentrate on a specific element of what he accomplished in his role as a landowner in the Glamorgan uplands. While the iron industry had been the instigator of significant change at the northern boundary of the South Wales mineral basin, these had been peripheral to the home estate of the Bruce family.<sup>3</sup> As the nineteenth century progressed and the economy steadily refocused from iron to deep-mined steam coal, there were new communities that rapidly grew around his father's Duffryn property. When the Bruce family purchased the estate in 1750, they could scarcely have been aware of the excellent quality coal that lay in thick beds below the sparse unproductive earth. As an understanding of the potential of this resource evolved, coal entrepreneurs were keen to gain access to this mineral wealth. In the case of Duffryn, these resources were leased to these agents of industry by a relatively early date.<sup>4</sup> Henry Bruce, as a landowner of a large mineral property, was not operating in a vacuum in the way he reacted to the new landscape that coal created, as the Duffryn estate was one of many belonging to great landowning magnates as well as those of smaller freeholders.<sup>5</sup> It was unique in this period that he was,

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<sup>1</sup> M E Grant Duff, *Letters of the Rt. Hon. Henry Austin Bruce GCB lord Aberdare of Duffryn. With Biographical Introduction and Notes.* (Volume I), (Oxford, 1902), p. 1. H C G Matthew & B Harrison (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004), pp. 298 – 302.

<sup>2</sup> T. R. Roberts, *Eminent Welshmen: A Short Biographical Dictionary of Welshmen*, (Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil, 1908), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> T. Boyns, D. Thomas & C. Baber, *The Iron, Steel and Tinplate Industries, 1750 - 1914, Glamorgan County History. Volume V Industrial Glamorgan from 1700 - 1970*, pp. 97 – 121.

<sup>4</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Her Majesty's Stationary Office, *Returns of Owners and Lands, Glamorgan 1873*. Volume II (London, 1875).

and chose to remain, resident on his valley property, when even the industrialists who had made their fortunes in the area chose to move elsewhere when they had achieved sufficient affluence.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, to place his actions in context it will be necessary to give an outline of his life and career as this runs parallel with his activities in Mountain Ash.

By the end of his life, it is reasonable to assert that Henry Bruce was one of the most significant Welshman of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Certainly no Welshman and few others of his generation can be shown to have had so varied a range of interests, and so large an influence, in so many different spheres. He is not widely remembered today and where he is, it is in relation to two episodes in his life. The first of these is a personal defeat, the second a success in which, it is considered, he played the part of figurehead and guiding hand.<sup>8</sup> The former episode being the parliamentary election at Merthyr Tydfil in 1868, where the radical, Welsh, nonconformist Henry Richard, beat the establishment, landowning, Anglican Henry Bruce. This is rightly, interpreted as a landmark event in the rising political consciousness of a newly enfranchised, relatively prosperous, dissenting, element of the working class. There is a substantial body of historiographical work on this election, and this study does not seek to address some of the issues within that work.<sup>9</sup> The latter episode, which necessarily has received some recognition, was his role as chairman of the Departmental Committee on Intermediate and Higher Education in Wales and Monmouthshire, whose investigations were conducted, 1880 - 1881. This produced the eponymous Aberdare Report on Welsh Education and the information in this became the basis of the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889. An analysis of his influence on this important document is also not within the scope of this study, neither will it seek to explore his impact in the broader Welsh, British or international setting.

The thesis will argue that an important element of the history of the South Wales coalfield has been overlooked, namely the contribution of the landowners. Through the study of Henry Bruce and Mountain Ash it will be shown that while he operated in the context of the

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<sup>6</sup> R. Griffiths, *The Entrepreneurial Society of the Rhondda Valleys, 1840 – 1920. Power and Influence in the Porth – Pontypridd Region*, (Cardiff, 2010), pp. 271 - 273.

<sup>7</sup> *Evening Express*, 4 March 1895; J. V. Morgan, (ed.), *Welsh Political and Educational Leaders in the Victorian Era*, (London, 1908), pp. 217 - 250.

<sup>8</sup> J. G. Williams, *The University Movement in Wales*, (Cardiff, 1993), pp. 63 - 88.

<sup>9</sup> e.g. I G Jones, 'The Election of 1868 in Merthyr Tydfil', *Explorations and Explanations: Essays in the Social History of Victorian Wales*, (Llandysul, 1981), pp. 193 – 214; I. G. Jones, Politics in Merthyr Tydfil, *Glamorgan Historian*, Volume Ten, 1974, pp. 50 – 64; I G Jones, 'Merthyr Tydfil: The Politics of Survival', *Explorations and Explanations: Essays in the Social History of Victorian Wales*, (Llandysul, 1987), pp. 241 – 262, also pp. 'Dr Thomas Price and the Election of 1868 in Merthyr Tydfil. A Study in Nonconformist Politics,' pp. 263 – 321 in the same publication; G. Griffiths, *Henry Richard. Apostle of Peace and Welsh Patriot*, (London, 2012), pp. 131 – 139; E. D. Evans, *A History of Wales. 1660 – 1815*, (Cardiff, 1993), pp. 288 -290.

existing historic and contemporary environment, his own responses were contingent on his personality and philosophy. The analysis is an approach to individual action in the light of large-scale socio-economic change that focusses on one man, albeit one uniquely positioned to play a peculiar part. The exceptional nature of Henry Bruce in relation to Mountain Ash is what makes his case important and invites comparison with other members of the traditional elite. That there has been little analysis of the role of landowners in the formation of industrial communities and societies in South Wales is partly a reflection of their own locational isolation. This is odd as they were the people who controlled the shape and evolution of those communities through the landscapes they dictated via indenture and prejudice.

Nearly all of the histories of the town of Mountain Ash start with the difficulty of defining what is meant by that appellation.<sup>10</sup> This is more problematic than may be assumed, due to the impediment that the modern built up area is not contiguous with any pre-modern boundaries. The administrative limits have also frequently altered, particularly in the nineteenth century. These drawbacks exacerbated for the purposes of this work, by the fact that the Duffryn estate's limits never corresponded with parish, town or district. The town of Mountain Ash straddled several established boundaries; nonetheless, as an urban settlement, it did form a coherent entity. There is always the problem of establishing a definitive limit when looking at industrial communities in South Wales, as the needs of commerce, the practicalities of mineral exploitation and individual bias do not neatly correspond with bureaucratic lines of administration. Of those bodies that existed during the period and are relevant, there were the ecclesiastical and civil parishes of Aberdare and Llanwonno, the Merthyr Tydfil and the Pontypridd Poor Law Unions, the Aberdare and Mountain Ash Boards of Health, and the Duffryn, Aberdare and Llanwonno School Boards. These separate authorities acted against efficient local government until some rationalisation occurred with the foundation of the Mountain Ash Urban District Council in 1894.<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of this study, the definition of Mountain Ash will be essentially the area corresponding to the sixteenth century hamlets of southern Cefnpennar and Cwm Cynon, the former in the parish of Aberdare and the latter in the parish of Llanwonno.

The role of Henry Bruce in the development of the Duffryn estate, or as a significant part of it became, the industrial town of Mountain Ash is the kernel of the thesis. As he did not come into possession of an arid wilderness without a prior history, the study will look at the

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<sup>10</sup> W. Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. by A. V. Jones, *A Translation from the Welsh of William Bevan's 'History of Mountain Ash, 1896' with additional notes and illustrations*, (Aberdare, 1990), p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 75.

earlier development of the Duffryn estate and trace the difficulties that the owners continually faced in keeping what was in effect a marginal property profitable. It will look at how these owners had to respond and innovate in the face of changing economic, political, social and technical change. There are similarities between events and their consequences in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and those that occurred in the nineteenth. In the earlier period, at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was an improvement in the prosperity of the estate, due to the exploitation of the natural resources of the area.<sup>12</sup> These improved circumstances allowed the owners of the estate to respond in a way that was comparable to that of their nineteenth century successors, albeit earlier developments were on a much smaller scale.

The response to the changing, and at least in financial terms, improving fortunes of the estate in the nineteenth century will form a major part of this study. The altering environment at this time did not only affect the Duffryn properties, as other landowners found that while their wealth was increasing they had to manage new and often difficult processes. While there are similarities in how these estates reacted, in one important respect, Bruce was unusual. The distinctiveness is rooted in the fact that, by the mid-nineteenth century, of the traditional landowning elite in northern Glamorgan only he was still resident on his estate, in close proximity to the evolving situation and the people involved. The positional location and the intimacy it afforded, to the owner and his family, was amplified by Duffryn House being virtually centrally placed on the estate, therefore, with the exception of the Aman valley properties, all parts were visible from the precinct of his demesne.

This study also examines how Henry Bruce responded to the opportunities and challenges of industrialisation and urbanisation. It assesses if these responses were comparable to those of the other major landowners in the Glamorgan uplands, or whether these responses were informed by his own personality and attitudes. It was, of course, the commercial and industrial developments of the later eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries that allowed the urban development of the estate. Henry Bruce was not a passive observer of these changes and he shaped what their impact on the estate was. He too was shaped by those reverberating revolutions in industry and society, resounding around his old and beloved peaceful repose. The financial rewards available through the exploitation of the resources of his lands must have mitigated his feelings of the sense of loss he personally felt over the

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<sup>12</sup> W. Llewelyn, Sussex Ironmasters in Glamorganshire, *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Volume IX, Number 34, (April 1863), pp. 81 – 119; J. O. Morley, Reflections on the Role of the Sussex Ironmasters in Elizabethan Glamorgan, *Morgannwg*, Volume LIV, 2010, pp. 5 – 43.

changed nature of the estate.<sup>13</sup> The increasing population of the district of Mountain Ash meant that housing was required, which necessitated construction on the fields and woods of his land. The increase in population showed that existing administrative structures were inadequate. Provision for the welfare of the people was encouraged, these promoted through new civic institutions and the sponsorship of social amenities in the town. The amount that Henry Bruce did in this regard was not solely dictated by the exigencies of the situation, but also by his own personal feelings regarding his role as a landowner.<sup>14</sup>

In a more general way outside the formal needs of administration and utility, his impact on the development of education, religion and in the pastoral care of the community will be analysed. Henry Bruce's interest in education was a key theme throughout his long period of public service and he sought to establish a systematic scheme for elementary education at Mountain Ash that is related to his wider work in both industry and government.<sup>15</sup> As a member of the Anglican Communion, he sought to provide for the needs of the established church, but he also helped and supported other denominations, including nonconformist and Roman Catholic congregations.<sup>16</sup> His pastoral concern for Mountain Ash is a theme, which is apparent throughout his correspondence and speeches and noted in detail in the South Wales press.<sup>17</sup> It might be suggested that his patriarchal attitude to his land and its people, is a pre-industrial patrician hangover in an industrialised environment.

Stemming from this point is the question of the relationship between Bruce and philanthropy. The thesis argues that the role of Henry Bruce in the development of Mountain Ash does give an important insight into his wider political philosophy and his broader social aims. As his son William Napier Bruce explained,

Wales was the country of his birth. Wales was his home through life, in Wales he gained the early knowledge and experience of the social and industrial problems on which his political career was built, and it was by contact with Welsh working men that he fostered the disinterested zeal for bettering the condition of those about him which inspired all his

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<sup>13</sup> GA DBR E 47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926; Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 279.

<sup>14</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), pp. 12 – 13.

<sup>15</sup> L W Evans, *Education in Industrial Wales. 1700 – 1900. A Study of the Works Schools System in Wales During the Industrial Revolution*, (Cardiff, 1971); A. Impey, Board Schools v. Intermediate Schools, *Morgannwg*, Volume XXV, 1981, pp. 182 – 195; G. W. Roderick, The Coalowners' and Mining Education. South Wales, 1850 – 1914, *Morgannwg*, Volume XLIII, 1999, pp. 36 – 62; C. C. Jones, *Works Schools in the Cynon Valley in the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, Cardiff University, 1986; E. G. Longster, *Henry Austin Bruce and Elementary Education*, unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, Cardiff University, 1985.

<sup>16</sup> A. V. Jones, *Chapels of the Cynon Valley*, (Aberdare, 2004); A. V. Jones, *Churches of the Cynon Valley*, (Aberdare, 2012). *Cardiff Times* 9 March 1895.

<sup>17</sup> e.g. *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* 6 January 1865; *Cardiff Times* 26 April 1879; *Weekly Mail* 24 April 1880; *CT* 11 January 1890.

work.<sup>18</sup>

Wales in this context is also a synonym for Mountain Ash and its immediate area. It was on Henry Bruce's Duffryn estate that he was able to apply the practical actions to the issues on which he frequently spoke, at local meetings,<sup>19</sup> to learned societies<sup>20</sup> and in parliament.<sup>21</sup> He could carry out the endeavours at home that would otherwise leave his utterances open to be considered the pieties of a philosopher or the posturing platitudes of the politician. This contradicting that most famous allegation espoused against men of his generation, that of hypocrisy. Through his actions on his own property, he could bring practical experience to the issues faced by his country.

The exploration of his impact on the development of his Mountain Ash estate will be the major part of this study and will seek to show that while he acted in ways that were compatible with those of his peers, due to his own atypical attributes he principally responded in a way that was unique to him. The study will use this opportunity to address a gap in the historiography of the South Wales valleys. There has been, with a few notable exceptions, little work undertaken on the influence of the traditional landed elite of Glamorgan in the development of the industrial societies that coal fostered in the upland valleys during the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup> The social aspects of life in colliery communities and in particular the radical tradition of that society,<sup>23</sup> has been a notable thread in the historiography of the area, alongside historical studies concentrating on the colliery owners and the evolution of the industry.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Morgan, *Welsh Leaders*, pp. 219 – 220.

<sup>19</sup> H. A. Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses by the Right Hon. Henry Austin Bruce, First Lord Aberdare, G.C.B., D.C.L.*, (London, 1917).

<sup>20</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*.

<sup>21</sup> Parliamentary Debates. 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 30<sup>o</sup> & 31<sup>o</sup> Victoriæ, 1868, Vol. CXC, Col. 1816 – 1826.

<sup>22</sup> e.g. T. M. Campbell, C. R. M. Talbot (1803 – 1890): A Welsh Landholder in Politics and Industry, *Morgannwg*, Volume XLIV, 2000, pp. 66 – 104; J. Davies, *Cardiff and the Marquesses of Bute*, (Cardiff, 1981) P. Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class. The Glamorgan Gentry 1640 – 1790*, (Cambridge, 1983); J. Davies, The Second Marquess of Bute, *Glamorgan Historian*, Volume 8, s. n., pp. 29 – 35; G. R. Orrin, The Role of the Talbot Family in Church Building and Restoration in Victorian Glamorgan, 1837 – 1901, *Morgannwg*, Volume XLVI, 2002, pp. 57 – 70.

<sup>23</sup> Cynon Valley History Society, *Cynon Coal. History of a Mining Valley*, (Aberdare, 2001); H. Francis & D. Smith, *The Fed. A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century*, (London, 1980); I. G. Jones, *Communities. Essays in the Social History of Victorian Wales*, (Llandysul, 1987); Jones, Politics in Merthyr Tydfil, pp. 50 – 64; P. Morgan (ed.), G. Williams (Gen. ed.), *Glamorgan County History. Volume VI Glamorgan Society 1780 – 1980*, (Cardiff, 1988); C. Williams, *Capitalism, Community and Conflict. The South Wales Coalfield 1898 – 1947*, (Cardiff, 1988); G. A. Williams, *The Merthyr Rising*, (Cardiff, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> A. P. Barnett, & D. Wilson-Lloyd, (ed.), *The South Wales Coalfield*, (Cardiff, 1921); Griffiths, *Entrepreneurial Society*; A. H. John & G. Williams (eds.), *Glamorgan County History. Volume V Industrial Glamorgan from 1700 - 1970*, (Cardiff, 1980); A. H. John, *The Industrial Development of South Wales, 1750 – 1850*, (Cardiff, 1950); E. Jones, *A History of GKN. Volume I. Innovation and Enterprise, 1757 – 1918*, (London, 1987); E. D. Lewis, *Pioneers of the Cardiff Coal Trade, Glamorgan Historian*, Volume Eleven, s. n., pp. 22 – 52; W. E. Minchinton (ed.), *Industrial South Wales, 1750 –*

Colliery proprietors were the holders of a lease on the land on which their collieries and associated facilities stood. For the minerals extracted from this ground, the coal proprietor usually paid a royalty fee to the landholder, although the terms of these contracts could differ even on the same estate.<sup>25</sup> While some colliery proprietors did become landowners themselves, and some estate owners could operate their own collieries, they were, generally, separate parties. As far as the development of the communities that grew around these enterprises is concerned, it was the landowners who had the greater say on the shape this would take. In most districts, urban and commercial developments were assumed by industrialists or by small-scale entrepreneurs. The extent to which the landowner was involved was a matter of their own interest and inclination. It was the personal interventions of the landowner that were important for the shape and character of community development.<sup>26</sup>

Understandably, most attention has concentrated on the people of these colliery communities. The working class societies, which grew to serve these works, expanded rapidly and it was usual for an area in the coal mining districts to be transformed from an agrarian to an industrial community within the span of one lifetime, and sometimes within a generation.<sup>27</sup> These new and fast growing communities had little say on how their environment altered and developed. The landowning elite and the industrialists had the major responsibility on how the process operated. This could sometimes lead to large settlements devoid of the facilities expected in a centre of comparable magnitude.<sup>28</sup> The geographical proximity of landowner and capitalist was often an important element in shaping the character of these communities.<sup>29</sup>

The Glamorgan gentry who survived into the nineteenth century were as much absentee landlords to their upland mineral properties as the greater aristocratic estates. They were

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1914, (London, 1969); J. H. Morris & L. J. Williams, *The South Wales Coal Industry, 1841 – 1875*, (s.n., 1958); W. Owen, *Birth of an Industry, Annals of the Merthyr and Aberdare Valleys 1800 – 1850*, (Merthyr Tydfil, 2010); E. Phillips, *A History of the Pioneers of the Welsh Coalfield*, (Cardiff, 1925); W. W. Price, *The History of Powell Duffryn in the Aberdare Valley. With a Memoir and Bibliography of its Author by David Leslie Davies, Old Aberdare*, Volume 4, 1985; L. M. Shore, *Peerless Powell Duffryn of the South Wales Coalfield*, (Lydney, 2012); R. Walters, *The Economics and Business History of the South Wales Steam Coal Industry, 1840 - 1914*, (New York, 1977); J. E. Vincent, *John Nixon. Pioneer of the Steam Coal Trade in South Wales. A Memoir*, (London, 1900).

<sup>25</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, pp. 48 – 49.

<sup>26</sup> P. N. Jones, *Colliery Settlement in the South Wales Coalfield, 1850 -1926*, (Hull, 1970).

<sup>27</sup> A. J. Meats, *Llanwynno. A Treasury of Memories. An Adaptation of the Writing of William Thomas ('Y Glanffrwd')*, (Hextable, 2012).

<sup>28</sup> H. Carter & S. Wheatley, *Merthyr Tydfil in 1851. A Study of the Spatial Structure of a Welsh Industrial Town*, (Cardiff, 1982); K. Strange, *Merthyr Tydfil, Iron Metropolis*, (Stroud, 2005); T. Thomas, *Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil Union in Victorian Times* (Cardiff, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 17.

distant from the industrial and urban turmoil that their indentures had precipitated. The role of Henry Bruce is therefore fascinating. The Bruce estate and the town of Mountain Ash make an interesting case study when analysing the role of landowners and their relationship with the new industrial communities. This is because, although the Bruce family could be considered a standard example of the gentry, when measured by their position in the county hierarchy and by their relative wealth, they were only a few generations from being middle class, previously occupied in banking and brokerage activities. Their antecedents were that of the class that hovered between genteel respectability and commerce.

The purchase of land and marriage into the established county elite elevated the Bruce family in social terms if not in financial prosperity. With the purchase and expansion of the Duffryn estate, the family became involved in the fortunes of what was then a poor and inaccessible upland region.<sup>30</sup> Yet within a hundred years of that purchase, the wealth generated by the exploitation of the minerals that lay underground, allowed them to step up from county gentry to aristocratic associates of the royal family. This economic and social advancement in nineteenth century South Wales was not unique, yet the close responsibility they still felt towards their obscure possession was a clear differentiating factor. This link was, in fact, to last into the post-industrial late twentieth century, when they sold most of their remaining properties. While John Bruce Pryce may be described as the progenitor of Mountain Ash, as it was he who was responsible for the naming and early development of the town, it was his son, Henry Bruce, who was the tutor who fostered that development in a highly personal way. Yet his role as the head of that estate, who was involved in the transformation of two hamlets, alongside a canal and turnpike road, into an important mining centre, of around twenty thousand people by his death, meant that the continuities between older patterns of patrician landownership should have been increasingly anachronistic.

The sources required for this study are relatively plentiful. The papers of the Duffryn estate, although not complete, are available at the Glamorgan Archives in Cardiff. This includes some of the early documents and deeds predating the Bruce purchase of the land in 1750. From comments recorded in the press during the lifetime of Henry Bruce,<sup>31</sup> there may have been among those records, or at least the family may have had access to, older material relating to the Duffryn properties. There are excellent estate maps dating from the 1790s to the nineteenth century, as well as account books and correspondence relating to the

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<sup>30</sup> J. P. Jenkins, Glamorgan Politics 1789 – 1868, *Glamorgan County History, Volume VI, Glamorgan Society 1780 – 1980*, pp. 1 – 18.

<sup>31</sup> *EE*, 28 February 1895.

land and to Henry Bruce.<sup>32</sup> There are further letters, from and to him, held at a number of institutional libraries, including the National Library of Wales, the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge. All of these were easily accessible; unfortunately, some of his extant letters are held in the United States and could not be consulted. In 1902, two volumes of letters were privately published. These letters include Lord Aberdare's expanded Dictionary of National Biography entry, and included additional notes by, Sir M E Grant Duff.<sup>33</sup> This is a highly significant source as the author was close to Henry Bruce, a collaborator in some of his activities, a frequent visitor to Duffryn and subsequently succeeded him as President of the Royal Historical Society.<sup>34</sup> It appears that this could have been intended as the basis of an abortive biography of Bruce, it is worth noting here that there is no substantial biography or body of study regarding his life and career. These letters includes good details on estate management, his attitude to industrial landownership and anecdotes of the life around the estate and at Mountain Ash, which were useful to this study. There is a volume of collected speeches and addresses, which was printed for general circulation in 1917, although this too was initially published privately.<sup>35</sup> Some of his speeches were published during his lifetime in pamphlet form.<sup>36</sup>

Other primary source material consulted was found in the archives of the Pembrokeshire Archives Service and relate to the Harrison Allen estate. This family's landholdings are principally in West Wales, yet they also owned Troedyrhiw Farm and other property in the Mountain Ash area amounting to around nine hundred acres.<sup>37</sup> Their mineral property, let to John Nixon, under the extremely large mineral district he acquired united Bruce and Allen properties in a clear and early policy of rationalising his workings to the greatest possible extent.<sup>38</sup> At its height, his company employed more than seven thousand men at its various undertakings. The other important element that relates to the development of Mountain Ash was the local Board of Health. Their records are held at the Glamorgan Archives, as are those of its successor organisation, the Mountain Ash Urban District Council.<sup>39</sup> The material held is extensive and their assessment was supplemented with the regular reporting of the committee meetings in the local press.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> GA DBR 1 – 203.

<sup>33</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*.

<sup>34</sup> M E Grant Duff, *Address to the Royal Historical Society, February 18, 1892* (London, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*.

<sup>36</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare (Vol. I)*, p. 92.

<sup>37</sup> HMSO, *Returns of the Owners and Lands, Glamorgan, 1873. Volume II* (London, 1875).

<sup>38</sup> *CMG*, 12 May 1860.

<sup>39</sup> GA LBMA 1 - 35; GA UDMA.

<sup>40</sup> *CT*, 18 May 1867; *AT*, 21 December 1872; *CT*, 31 July 1886; *WklyM*, 7 January 1893.

An invaluable source of detailed material originated in the vibrant local press of the period. Aberdare was a major printing centre in nineteenth century Wales,<sup>41</sup> and the newspapers have many articles on contemporary events. Henry Bruce features prominently in these, as the local Stipendiary Magistrate, Member of Parliament, and finally as Lord Aberdare, the principal resident of the district. In Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff, important regional papers were published, such as the *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, *Evening Express* and *Western Mail*. These reported the news of the district in some detail, and included extensive descriptions of Henry Bruce's activities and speeches.<sup>42</sup>

The coverage of him tended to be positive, with a number of notable exceptions, particularly those during the vituperative reporting by some elements of the radical and partisan press of the 1868 election. Nevertheless, the reporting of Henry Bruce was generally along the spectrum of neutral recording of the facts to positive commentary. After 1868, there was seldom any outright hostility towards him. This brings the issue of a proper and balanced analysis of him to the fore. It is clear that he was considered a genuine man who sought to do his best, even if his policies were considered misplaced. Moreover, the level and scope of his activities in the local area, suggests a benevolent attitude beyond that of even the occasionally eulogistic copy. Perhaps true confirmation of his efforts can be measured in courses of brick and stone, certificates of education and pounds expended.

Several official publications were studied to help understand and illuminate the development of the Duffryn estate. These include specific Acts of Parliament relating to the Cynon valley, particularly, those concerned with canal, turnpike, proposed railway projects and local government. Returns of the surveys of property carried out for taxation purposes, especially, the tithe map assessments of the 1840s, and the Returns of the Owners of Land in the County of Glamorgan of 1875. A useful representation of the changing nature of communities is found in the Ordnance Survey Maps of the era, which can be highly detailed regarding the progress of an estate from being sparsely populated countryside to an urban environment, although it must be remembered that these are, like photographic evidence, a snapshot of a certain point in time. The author of this thesis has undertaken an extensive survey of the area. Coal production and census data will be analysed, in conjunction with other data, to illuminate the causes behind some of the change in the area.

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<sup>41</sup> B. Roberts, Printing in Aberdare, *Old Aberdare*, Vol. 3, 1984, pp. 56 - 83.

<sup>42</sup> *CMG*, 29 March 1851; *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 8 September 1866; *CT*, 24 April 1874; *Western Mail*, 13 December 1879; *WklyM*, 8 May 1886.

Although there are few biographical studies relating to Henry Bruce, in the two decades after his death some material was published. The most important were the *Letters* (1902) and *Lectures and Addresses* (1917), mentioned above. Other sources reference him in the context of his role in the development of education in Wales and as a parliamentarian.<sup>43</sup> To supplement these, printed letters and reminiscences will be used, including those by Bishop Copleston,<sup>44</sup> Dr F Smith,<sup>45</sup> the Rev. William Thomas<sup>46</sup> and Joseph Keating,<sup>47</sup> who all considered the nature of life in Mountain Ash at different points in its development. The latter two, bemoaned the special character of the area that had been lost to industrialisation and the despoliation it had caused in the decades from the 1860s to the death of Lord Aberdare in 1895. Keating in particular has some interesting observations on the practical realities of the actions of that landowner. Lists of Glamorgan sheriffs,<sup>48</sup> Justices of the Peace,<sup>49</sup> Lords and Deputy Lieutenants as well as the Hearth Tax Returns of the 1670s<sup>50</sup> are used. Glamorgan Family History publications relating to parish records have been useful reference works.<sup>51</sup>

Turning to the sphere of Bruce's activities, specifically those examined in this study, local representations were useful in ascribing these traditions within the framework of the wider historiography. The Cynon valley area has a rich historiographical tradition, including works submitted to local eisteddfodau that relate a version of the history of the area, to more recent publications on a very large range of subjects.<sup>52</sup> The early histories were in the Welsh language and were produced for a local audience, who knew the background to these

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<sup>43</sup> T. Marchant Williams, *The Welsh Members of Parliament* (Cardiff, 1894). Morgan, *Welsh Leaders*. Roberts, *Eminent Welshmen*.

<sup>44</sup> R. L. Brown, ed., *The Letters of Edward Copleston, Bishop of Llandaf, 1828 – 1849* (Cardiff, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> F. M. Smith, *The Surgery at Aberffraw* (Hythe, 1981).

<sup>46</sup> A. J. Meats, *Llanwynno. A Treasury of Memories. An Adaptation of the Writing of William Thomas ('Y Glanffraw')* (Hextable, 2012).

<sup>47</sup> J. Keating, *My Struggle for Life* (Dublin, 2005).

<sup>48</sup> P. Moore, (ed.); *Glamorgan Sheriffs. Biographical Notes and Lists of Sheriffs from the Twelfth Century to the Present Day* (Cardiff, 1995).

<sup>49</sup> J. R. S. Phillips, *The Justices of the Peace in Wales and Monmouthshire, 1541 – 1689* (Cardiff, 1975).

<sup>50</sup> E. Parkinson, (ed.), *The Glamorgan Hearth Tax Assessment of 1670* (Cardiff, 1994).

<sup>51</sup> Glamorgan Family History Society, *Aberdare, Glamorgan. Parish Church of St John the Baptist. Baptists, Burials, Marriages, Four Volumes* (No place, 1996). GFHS, *Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorgan, Register of Electors, c. 1840 - 1845* (No place, 2005). GFHS, *Mountain Ash, Glamorgan. Parish Church of St Margaret. Baptisms 1859 – 1931, Marriages 1865 – 1933. Eight Volumes* (No place, 1997). GFHS, *Aberffraw Cemetery, Mountain Ash. Monumental Inscriptions, 2004*. GFHS, *1891 Census Transactions, 2004*.

<sup>52</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans Jones. CVHS, *Old Aberdare*, Vols. I - X (Aberdare, 1976 - 2008). G. Evans, *A History of St. John's Church. Aberdare* (Aberdare, 1982). T. Evans, *History of Miskin Higher, Aberdare and Llanwonno* (Abercynon, 1965). R. Grant, *Cynon Valley in the Age of Iron* (Aberdare, 1991). A. G. Grosvenor & G. E. Williams, *The Parish of Mountain Ash and its Churches* (Mountain Ash, s. n.). Jones, *Chapels of the Cynon Valley*. J. F. Mears, *Aberdare. The Railways and Tramroads* (Aberdare, 1999). R. R. Powell, *A Miner's Hospital. An Illustrated History of Mountain Ash General Hospital* (Mountain Ash, 1997). E. Richards, *The Mountain Ash Rugby Football Club. 'The Old Firm'. Volume I: 1875 – 1950* (Mountain Ash, No Date).

histories and the names of geographical features and residents who have passed from memory.<sup>53</sup> Some of this literature has since been translated into English, republished with additional notes on their wider historical relevance. Unfortunately, of the large amount of material produced for these events, little remains. For instance, for the first National Eisteddfod held in Mountain Ash in 1905, a prize was offered for the best composition on the subject of ‘The late Lord Aberdare,’ yet no record of this in Welsh or English appears to survive.<sup>54</sup> The most significant and interesting work relating to Mountain Ash was that written by William Bevan for the 1898 Mountain Ash local eisteddfod. A good translation of this essay was produced in 1990, with additional illustrations and notes. Other modern histories of Mountain Ash, or parts of the town, have been written since the late 1940s, and while some of these are little more than compilations of early photographs, they are still valuable in the pictorial representation that helps explain parts of the written record.<sup>55</sup>

Monographs on aspects of the history of various organisations were consulted for the insight these give into the developing religious and social life of the community. Those works relating to industry and transport, especially the collieries, railways and the Aberdare Canal have been used,<sup>56</sup> as these background sources explain the foundations on which the wealth of the Bruce family and of the town of Mountain Ash were built. While the canal, tramroads and railways were the vital arteries that carried the coal wealth, the collieries were the thrumming heart that powered it. Other works consulted were those on the Anglican churches,<sup>57</sup> the nonconformist congregations<sup>58</sup> and the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>59</sup> There are also histories of the hospitals,<sup>60</sup> the schools<sup>61</sup> and the sports clubs<sup>62</sup> of Mountain

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<sup>53</sup> D. L. Davies, Translations of the First Essay with an Introduction, of Thomas Dafydd Llewelyn ‘History of the Parish of Aberdare (1853); Gardd Aberdar, *Old Aberdare*, Volume 2, 1982, pp. 6 – 85.

<sup>54</sup> G. Evans, The 1905 National, *Hanes*, Issue 31, Summer 2005, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> B. Baldwin, *Mountain Ash Remembered, Incorporating the Story of the Nos Galan Road Races, 1958 – 1973* (Mountain Ash, 1984). B. Baldwin, *Mountain Ash and Penrhiwceiber Remembered in Pictures* (Mountain Ash, 1986). B. Baldwin, & H. Rogers, *Mountain Ash, Penrhiwceiber and Abercynon* (Bath, 1994).

<sup>56</sup> e.g. CVHS, *Cynon Coal. History of a Mining Valley* (Aberdare, 2001). E. R. Mountford, & R. W. Kidner, *The Aberdare Railway* (Headington, 1994). S. Rowson & I. L. Wright, *The Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals. Vol. 1 Merthyr Tydfil & Aberdare to Pontypridd* (Witney, 2001) & *Vol. 2 Pontypridd to Cardiff. Two Welsh Waterways and their Industries* (Witney, 2004). L. M. Shore, *Peerless Powell Duffryn of the South Wales Coalfield* (Lydney, 2012).

<sup>57</sup> G. Evans, *St. Elvan’s Church. A Short History* (Aberdare, 1980). Grosvenor & Williams, *Parish of Mountain Ash*. Jones, *Churches of the Cynon Valley*. D. Yeoman, *The Parish of Mountain Ash. An Illustrated Guide* (Mountain Ash, 1987).

<sup>58</sup> Jones, *Chapels of the Cynon Valley*. A. V. Jones, *Providence United Reformed Church (Founded 1869). The History of a Nonconformist Church in Mountain Ash* (Aberdare, 1987).

<sup>59</sup> Jones, *Churches of the Cynon Valley*. J. H. Volan Evans, *Our Lady of Lourdes Centenary Celebration* (Mountain Ash, 1999).

<sup>60</sup> R. R. Powell, *A Miner’s Hospital. An Illustrated History of Mountain Ash General Hospital* (Mountain Ash, 1997).

<sup>61</sup> T. Evans, *History of the Navigation School, Abercynon, 1875 – 1945* (Cardiff 1946).

Ash. These all mention Henry Bruce and his family, as patrons, supporters, or benefactors. Several articles and publications on aspects of Welsh life were used where these pertain to Henry Bruce and the development of Mountain Ash.

### **A Brief Biography of H. A. Bruce**<sup>63</sup>

Before proceeding to analyse the Bruce estate it is necessary to survey briefly his personal beliefs, life and career in order to contextualise his endeavours at Mountain Ash. To view Henry Bruce as a minor footnote in nineteenth century Welsh history would be a mistake. There was no one else who performed the duties he carried out across such a wide spectrum of activities. While the first thirty years of his life passed in relative obscurity, thereafter he successively involved himself in local government and administration, industry, national politics, education, social reform, the arts and colonial affairs and governance. Despite the Scottish surname, he was born at Duffryn, to an established Glamorgan family. His great-grandmother Jane was a member of the Lewis family, who had been important landowners in Glamorgan for many generations and traced their ancestry to the ancient Welsh rulers of the county.<sup>64</sup> William Bruce, his great grandfather, bought the Duffryn estate in 1750.<sup>65</sup> The property lay at the heart of the Glamorgan uplands, in the Cynon valley, and Duffryn was the place that Henry Bruce sought sanctuary from the stresses of public office.

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<sup>62</sup> Mountain Ash Golf Club, *Mountain Ash Golf Club 1908 – 2008. The First Hundred Years* (Mountain Ash, 2008). E. Richards, *The Mountain Ash Rugby Football Club. 'The Old Firm'. Volume I: 1875 – 1950* (Mountain Ash, No Date).

<sup>63</sup> Portrait from the author's collection.

<sup>64</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), pp. 338 – 339.

<sup>65</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 11.



Illustration 1: Henry Austin Bruce.  
First Lord Aberdare of Duffryn, circa. 1875.

Following a period employed as an undistinguished barrister in London, where he specialised in conveyance law,<sup>66</sup> he returned to South Wales, where his education in that discipline was useful. He became Stipendiary Magistrate for Merthyr Tydfil in 1847, and became the major public official in the district when this municipality was the most populous, radical and restless in Wales.<sup>67</sup> On the death of Josiah John Guest, for whom he had campaigned,<sup>68</sup> he was elected, unopposed, as Member of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil in 1852.<sup>69</sup> He also became a joint trustee to the huge Dowlais Iron Company in 1855, and held this post until he had to stand down from this and other local business and community functions in 1863 on his appointment as a junior government minister.<sup>70</sup> His co-trustee, friend and distant cousin by marriage, G. T. Clark stated after the death of Henry Bruce, that he was essential in saving that company from the financial crisis it was then suffering and thereby the livelihoods of fifteen thousand people.<sup>71</sup> He was also a director, vice-

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<sup>66</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare* (Vol. I), pp. 17 – 18.

<sup>67</sup> Strange, *Iron Metropolis*, passim, but esp. pp. 78 - 91.

<sup>68</sup> Jones, *Communities*.

<sup>69</sup> E. Davies, *Members of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil (Rhymney, Aberdare (Cynon Valley). 1832 - 2015* (Aberdare, 2015), pp. 6–8.

<sup>70</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare* (Vol. I), p. 19.

<sup>71</sup> *EE*, 9 May 1895.

chairman, and then chairman, between 1859 and 1863, of the Vale of Neath Railway,<sup>72</sup> which led him to criticise Isambard Kingdom Brunel for the slow progress of that project and its unnecessary expense.<sup>73</sup> The extension to this line connected with the Newport, Abergavenny, & Hereford Railway, later the West Midland Railway, at Middle Duffryn, and this ran through the Duffryn estate, along the western side of the Aberdare Canal, and that company had a station at Mountain Ash. He was a director of the South Wales Railway Company from 1858 until 1861, and the Great Western Railway between 1857 and 1863.<sup>74</sup> He had stewardship of his father's estates in the coalfield, until inheriting them in 1872.<sup>75</sup> He was Chairman of the Board of Justices of the Peace, and in 1846 appointed Deputy Lieutenant for Glamorgan.<sup>76</sup> His impact in this region was significant even before he began his wider political life.

In Parliament, he served on numerous committees, and worked his way through junior ministerial positions, particularly, those interested in education, social policy and law and order. He was Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, 1862 to 1864, and Vice President of the Committee on Education, from 1864 until 1866, in essence acting as the minister responsible for that branch of government.<sup>77</sup> Although he lost his parliamentary seat at Merthyr Tydfil in 1868, Gladstone named him as Home Secretary in his government of that year. He found a new constituency in Renfrewshire in 1869 and this allowed him to re-enter parliament. Gladstone stated that he was a 'heaven made Home Secretary.'<sup>78</sup>

Henry Bruce was one of only three Welshmen in the nineteenth century to achieve cabinet rank,<sup>79</sup> although his time in office was considered to have achieved mixed results. While some of his opinions and actions could not be seen as radical, he was at the time viewed as too liberal by some sections of the press.<sup>80</sup> He was in the context of his time, but using a modern term, a progressive, while in no way a revolutionary. Famously, his Licensing Reform legislation of 1872 managed to alienate both the extreme elements of the temperance movement, those concerned with government encroachment on personal liberties and, most obviously, the alcohol interests. The result of this had a larger significance than may be assumed, as the brewers, who had been important proponents of

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<sup>72</sup> G. B. Jones & D. Dunstone, *The Vale of Neath Line. Neath to Pontypool Road*, p. 25.

<sup>73</sup> Jones & Dunstone, *V. of N. Line*, p.34.

<sup>74</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare* (Vol. I), p. 112.

<sup>75</sup> *CT*, 19 October 1872.

<sup>76</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare* (Vol. I), p. 22.

<sup>77</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol I), pp. 103 – 108.

<sup>78</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol I), p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> J. Davies; N. Jenkins; M. Baines; & P. L. Lynch; *The Welsh Academy Encyclopaedia of Wales*, (Cardiff, 2008), pp. 92 - 93.

<sup>80</sup> *CMG*, 23 January 1869; *WM*, 3 November 1871; *CT*, 24 August 1872.

free-trade liberalism, gradually moved their support to the Conservative Party, taking other industrialists with them.<sup>81</sup> The search to find a middle ground is indicative of his character, as he seems always to have sought a conciliatory line, often to the dissatisfaction of all parties. His more successful work included those on mines and factory regulations, and reform of trade union legislation that effectively made them legal bodies outside of company law, thereby exempting their members from being chargeable for costs due to industrial action.<sup>82</sup> Again, these notable changes to improve worker rights were countered by his Criminal Law Amendment Act, which compromised effective industrial demonstrations. He often faced criticism from the press due to his liberal attitude in justice issues, something he had been known for as stipendiary magistrate at Merthyr Tydfil, and in responding to these attacks, he gave an important speech to the Social Sciences Association that was published and widely disseminated.<sup>83</sup>

The Gladstone administration had internal political difficulties reflecting the tensions between old style Whigs and the Radical factions, so to help maintain a balance in the cabinet and party, Henry Bruce needed to be moved, and so was offered a number of options. These were the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, the Viceroyalty of the Dominion of Canada, and the Lord Presidency of the Council.<sup>84</sup> He accepted the latter and was elevated to the peerage as Baron Aberdare of Duffryn in 1873.<sup>85</sup> Other important positions that he declined included the Governorship of Madras in 1860,<sup>86</sup> Financial Member to the Indian Council in 1862,<sup>87</sup> and following the British occupation of Egypt in 1883, the position of Agent and Consul General, the *de facto* ruler of that country.<sup>88</sup>

After the fall of the Gladstone government in 1874, Bruce never again held senior government office. In some ways this was the start of his most important work, particularly that concerning Wales. Henry Bruce was recognised as an excellent chair of committees where his relaxed and friendly personality and good nature allowed him to steer these bodies and to publish some significant reports. Today it is the Aberdare Report on Intermediate Education in Wales and Monmouthshire that is most remembered as his greatest achievement. He was described by the principal of Cardiff College, John Viriamu Jones as the, ‘Commander-in-Chief of the Welsh Education army. We marched under his

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<sup>81</sup> R. Ensor; *England 1870 – 1914* (Oxford, 1986), p. 21 n. 1.

<sup>82</sup> C. Arnold – Baker; *The Companion to British History* (Bottle, 2008), p. 1238 - 9 .

<sup>83</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 211 – 286.

<sup>84</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol I), p. 9.

<sup>85</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, Vol. I, pp. 4 – 9.

<sup>86</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, Vol. I, p. 102.

<sup>87</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, Vol. I, p. 104.

<sup>88</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, Vol. II, p. 6.

guidance, confident in his wisdom, and helped at all turns by the influence he so rightly possessed.<sup>89</sup> His role as the head of these committees has sometimes been viewed as a titular position,<sup>90</sup> but beyond his suitability as a peer and a former cabinet minister, as well as being approachable and conciliatory, it was his friendships and access to the highest level of government and society that allowed him, and the organisations he represented, to succeed. He also promoted inclusiveness when taking evidence, insisting on gaining the widest possible range of opinions<sup>91</sup> and treating all contributors with consideration, whatever their background.<sup>92</sup>

Some of the major non- or semi-political appointments that he held included President of the Royal Historical Society; President of the Social Sciences Association; President of the Royal Society on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; President of the British and Foreign Schools Society; President of the Somerville College, Oxford fundraising committee; President of the Girls Day Schools Trust; and President of the Royal Horticultural Society. Henry Bruce was, uniquely, President of the Royal Geographical Society twice. The Aberdare Mountains, named in his honour, are the last major colonial era district in Africa to commemorate a Welshman. He reluctantly accepted an appointment as Chairman of the National African Company in 1882, offered to him due to his connection to the Royal Geographical Society. He helped to motivate a lethargic government to react to French colonial expansion in West Africa, was the first Governor of the Royal Niger Company in 1886 and continued in this post until his death.<sup>93</sup> In all of these works, it was the quiet lobbying in the corridors of power and the clubs of London that helped enable success and this may explain why his true impact is underestimated.<sup>94</sup>

His interest in Wales, its people, and language has also often been misunderstood.<sup>95</sup> He was after all the first president, on the first day of the revived National Eisteddfod of Wales, held at Aberdare in 1861<sup>96</sup> and could speak and write in Welsh. He spoke and adjudicated at many eisteddfodau, both nationally and locally.<sup>97</sup> In 1895, Henry Bruce was briefly the first Chancellor of the University of Wales and had held the position of President of the

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<sup>89</sup> Morgan *Welsh Leaders*, p. 247.

<sup>90</sup> Williams, *University Movement in Wales*, p. 185.

<sup>91</sup> Williams, *University Movement in Wales*, p. 50.

<sup>92</sup> *EE*, 4 March 1895.

<sup>93</sup> T. Packenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, (London, 2011), pp. 230 – 257.

<sup>94</sup> M. E. Chamberlain; Lord Aberdare and the Royal Niger Company, *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 3, Nos. 1–4 1966, pp. 45 – 62.

<sup>95</sup> Williams, *University Movement in Wales*, p. 50.

<sup>96</sup> *CT*, 23 August 1861.

<sup>97</sup> *Merthyr Telegraph*, 13 June 1857; *Aberdare Times*, 11 November 1865; *CT*, 11 August 1883; *North Wales Express*, 28 August 1885.

University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, since 1874, and President of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire, at Cardiff, from 1883.<sup>98</sup> There are fine statues of him at both of these institutions. Exactly two weeks before he died, reflecting on his appointment as the Chancellor of the University of Wales, he wrote to his daughter,

Nothing could be kinder or more cordial than the manner in which the Chancellorship was conferred on me. I feel too old for it, but urged the argument in vain. But as I could not reasonably expect to be chosen Archbishop to disestablished Wales, nor to succeed Prince Llewelyn in his temporarily suspended dignity, I feel that Wales could bestow on me no greater honour.<sup>99</sup>

Perhaps one way of judging Henry Bruce's true significance is to note that after his death the Prince of Wales and other members of the royal family succeeded him in many of his honorary positions. Indeed, Lord Aberdare, had long and close links with the royal family dating to his time as a representative for the Great Exhibition of 1851, a journal stating: 'The Queen took kindly to him, for his views on education, social science, and everything else, were in exact correspondence with Prince Albert's. This was only a coincidence.'<sup>100</sup> He visited and received gifts from the Prince of Wales;<sup>101</sup> Queen Victoria seemed to be fond of him;<sup>102</sup> he also appears to have been on close personal terms with the Dowager Empress of Germany, who sent a wreath to his grave.<sup>103</sup> Among his other friends included members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Matthew Arnold, Holman Hunt, Edward Lear, and other writers, poets, and artists. He accepted an honorary doctorate of law from Oxford University, was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and appointed to the Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath (G. C. B.). This honour is below only that of the Garter.

With all these interests and responsibilities, he never neglected his estate at Duffryn and it was his refuge from his other work. He managed his estates in the Aberdare Valley closely and had a keen interest in its wellbeing. This particularly close proximity to the working people who occupied his property was perhaps the unique circumstance that differentiated him the other great landowners. While he certainly had the financial means to live anywhere he chose, and travelled widely throughout the British Isles and continental Europe, it was to Duffryn that he returned, out of choice and inclination. He was a wealthy patrician landowner, who nevertheless undertook much good work that he did not have to

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<sup>98</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare* (Vol. II), p. 7.

<sup>99</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare* (Vol. II), p. 337.

<sup>100</sup> *Truth*, 20 April 1882, p. 550.

<sup>101</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare* (Vol. II), pp. 326 – 327.

<sup>102</sup> GA DBR 159/9.

<sup>103</sup> *EE*, 2 March 1895.

do. Importantly, the role he played in the development of Mountain Ash has parallels with what he accomplished more widely.

It is clear that Henry Bruce was not the sole initiator of local efforts to aid the population of Mountain Ash. He necessarily had to spend a large amount of time in London in a variety of official positions as well as travelling extensively throughout the Britain Isles, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. His second wife and younger children also spent part of the year away from Duffryn. Yet the eternal *loci* of his and their lives, was Mountain Ash. Moreover, it is impossible to judge where the personal interests of Henry and Norah Bruce converged and separated. Henry Bruce seems to have been fortunate in finding a partner whose ethical and locational interest so closely corresponded with his own. The townspeople early on, made a good impression on the new chatelaine of Duffryn. When the newly married couple were welcomed at the railway station soon after their marriage, they presented a fond address to the new Mrs Bruce.<sup>104</sup> This early cordiality must have made a favourable impression on Norah Bruce. She was a daughter of the historian-soldier General Sir William Napier, niece to General Sir Charles Napier, the conqueror of Scinde and after whom Napier in New Zealand is named. His own classical education was probably a little too lacking to have ever signalled '*peccavi*' to the Queen, but Mrs Bruce may have been amused that it was instead the notion of a Victorian schoolgirl, as she was a strong supporter of female education. All were a cadet branch of the Dukes of Richmond and impeccably aristocratic, her three times great grandmother being a daughter of King Charles II. It was her deeply felt and thoughtful Anglican religiosity, which was the essence of her actions at her new home and those inculcated into their children. Indeed, for many decades the local press contained reports on their charitable activities in the Mountain Ash district (see Chapter 4).

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<sup>104</sup> *CMG*, 6 October 1854.



Illustration 2. The Bruce family outside Duffryn House. This photograph was probably taken for the wedding of Charles Bruce in 1894, ‘... the last of many September gatherings in the old home,’<sup>105</sup> and, therefore, the last known representation of Henry Bruce. From left to right, back row: Rachel, daughter; Henry Whately; Alice, daughter; Pamela, daughter; Charles Bruce, son; Douglas Richmond; Caroline, daughter. Seated: William N Bruce, son; Emily, wife of William; Norah Whately, daughter; H A Bruce, Lord Aberdare; Finetta, wife of Charles; Norah, Lady Aberdare, wife; Margaret Richmond, daughter.<sup>106</sup>

The following chapters will explore the role that Henry Bruce played as a coal owner resident on an industrialising and urbanising estate. It will study his personal relationship with the estate and its people, along with philosophical ideals regarding the improvement of the condition of the people. Chapter 1 will analyse the earlier developments on the Duffryn estate, which places the actions of Henry Bruce in the context of continuity and progress. Chapter 2 will describe and explore the evolving situation in South Wales and within which the estate developed and the impact this had. Chapter 3 will argue that the close proximity and interest of Henry Bruce shaped the landscape in which this change occurred. The emphasis in Chapter 4 is directed towards the social interplay between Henry Bruce and the people of his estate. It shows how, at Mountain Ash, he proceeded to carry through his societal ambitions and how this closely resemble his public pronouncements on the condition of the working classes and the means of improving their lives, which remained consistent over almost fifty years.

<sup>105</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare* (Vol. II), p. 16.

<sup>106</sup> B. Baldwin, *Mountain Ash and Penrhiwceiber Remembered in Pictures* (Mountain Ash, 1986), plate 71.

**Chapter One**  
**The Duffryn Estate before 1845.**

There are three historical elements intrinsic to the nature of this study: the person, Henry Austin Bruce; the nature of landownership; and the place, Mountain Ash. Henry Bruce was not born to succeed at Duffryn and the circumstances of his attainment of the property and the influence he wielded there necessarily need to be explored. This chapter will set the historical background to place his later activities in context. On 13 January 1843, Henry Bruce wrote to his friend J. Ormsby,

My thoughts are now bent upon ... retiring to Aberdare, laying out picturesque walks in Cwm Pennar, draining marshy and irrigating arid soils, learning Welsh enough to lecture the natives, and dispensing justice 'with honour to myself and advantage to my country.' With my legal education, how soon should I become 'the wisest Justice on the banks of the Taff!' ... I would not have dealt at such length upon this picture of rural felicity, did not I think that there was some chance of it becoming in part ... realised. The Aberdare mines are turning out so well that I might be of service on the spot, and I should have less delicacy in depending upon my father for a few hundred a year.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, this decision to return to Duffryn was a result of a combination of poor health and a dislike of being a London barrister.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, throughout his early life, until he became Stipendiary Magistrate for Merthyr Tydfil in 1847, financial self-sufficiency was a continuing concern. He had trained at his uncle's chambers since leaving Swansea Grammar School in 1832. It appears that the competitive nature of the London bar along with life in the capital disagreed with him; the family doctor found him suffering from debilitating headaches and recommended an immediate return home.<sup>3</sup> His legal and social milieu at this time was similar to that expounded by Dickens in such novels as *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*; an aspiring professional man of talent but little means, struggling to maintain a lifestyle that he could not properly afford. Whether this weariness at his life in London was rooted in a more serious nervous problem is not clear. It is significant that his mother Sarah had died in France the year before, just after Henry Bruce had left her to return to Britain after time spent on the continent.<sup>4</sup> In any case, he again left the country for an extended period, spending time in Italy, before returning rejuvenated by this break to Duffryn in June 1845. Here he began a career that was to take him back to

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<sup>1</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Truth*, 20 April 1882, p. 550.

<sup>4</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 20.

London, while always maintaining a firm anchorage at Mountain Ash.<sup>5</sup> It was no longer to be the quiet rural refuge that he had known in his early childhood and youth, not one he had anticipated in his letter nor that the generations of owners of Duffryn had experienced either.

This chapter will explain the context in which the estate at Duffryn developed in the three centuries before Henry Bruce assumed responsibility. While the scale of the changes that occurred in the nineteenth century were unprecedented, there were similarities between these and an early period of industrial activity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He also did not enter into a position and place where his family had no previous experience or history. The Bruce's had already been in occupation of the estate for a hundred years by the time he took up residence in his own right at Duffryn and they had developed an intimate knowledge and experience of the land and its potential. Hirwaun Ironworks was established only a few years after William Bruce, Henry's forebear, arrived in the Cynon Valley and from the 1790s onwards, they had a growing relationship with industrial and communication developments in the district. He was not a pioneer of a new frontier, instead the position was an evolving one that both pre- and post-dated his tenure of Duffryn.

Of the necessary requirements for a prosperous estate in the pre-modern era, Duffryn was lacking in virtually every respect. The landscape defined by valley floors prone to flooding, steep sided slopes carpeted with dense woodland and the ridge summits, whose soils were peaty and boggy, where they were not spare and stony. In addition, communication links were very poor even by the standards of the time. The rivers were violent, unpredictable and unnavigable, and the roads often less than tracks. Not a great prospect for an owner of Duffryn, yet landownership gave prestige and power even in these unpromising situations. The valley floors could be drained and improved, the timber of the forests slopes could be a valuable resource, and animals, particularly sheep could prosper on the hills. The water that hindered and destroyed could be utilised if properly channelled.<sup>6</sup>

The land on which the Duffryn House Estate was, and Mountain Ash is built, is situated in the Cynon or Aberdare Valley district of Glamorgan, about twenty miles north of Cardiff. It has the familiar topographical profile of the industrial valleys of this county and of neighbouring Monmouthshire. Due to glacial action, the valley broadens conspicuously towards the northern end of the estate until it merges with the wide vale of Hirwaun

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<sup>5</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> D. L. Davies & G. Evans, eds., *The Land Your Fathers Possessed. An Anthology of the Cynon Valley from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, (Aberdare, 2011), pp. 26 – 27.

Common and on to the Brecon Beacons, however, to the southern end of the estate the valley becomes much narrower. This landscape was an especially important component in the development of the estate. Here narrow valleys flanked by steep, high slopes, cut by numerous subsidiary streams are prevalent, until the river arrives at the coastal plain around Cardiff. Following the retreat of the ice-sheet, the valleys were covered by large, dense, deciduous forests that further limited their accessibility. This difficult topography defined the development in the area for most of its history.

The earliest history of the Duffryn estate and its environs is not clear. The name Duffryn, as recounted by Henry Bruce, was not the original appellation of the house, which was Aberpennar. The original form stems from its location at the mouth of the Pennar stream where it joined the river Cynon. Eventually, Duffryn became current due to local usage, the inhabitants of Aberdare, when heading down the valley, used the Welsh phrase ‘myned i lawr i’r dyffryn,’ and as the only significant property in the area it came to be synonymous with that dwelling.<sup>7</sup> This idea is reinforced, by estate documents that name the estate ‘Dyffryn alias Aberpennar.’<sup>8</sup> At the first National Eisteddfod to be held at Mountain Ash in 1905, it was felt that a more appropriately Welsh name should be adopted rather than that of Mountain Ash and Aberpennar was chosen.<sup>9</sup>

Archaeology from the Bronze Age, through the Roman occupation, and the earliest Christian periods have all been discovered at, or around the estate.<sup>10</sup> It is located at the angle where three parishes meet and often expanded to straddle these boundaries. The house is often referred to as ‘Duffryn, Aberdare’ indicating its parochial location, however, the church of Saint Gwynno at Llanwonno is about four miles to the south-west of the house, and therefore as near to Duffryn as Aberdare, while Merthyr Tydfil is also not too far distant over the mountain ridge to the north. There must obviously have been a large degree of interaction between these areas. Llanwonno parish is thought to be the location of the abortive religious settlement of Pen Dar, granted by a local Welsh ruler to Margam Abbey in the twelfth century.<sup>11</sup> This may have been intended as a sister house, based around the land of Penrhiw Caradog Farm and is relevant as this property has a long association with

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<sup>7</sup> *EE*, 28 February 1895 (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition).

<sup>8</sup> GA DBR 2. For discussion of etymology of the Mountain Ash area see: D. John, *Cynon Valley Place-names* (Llanrwst, 1998), pp. 24 – 26; W O Owen & R Morgan, *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales* (Llandysul, 2008), pp. 330 - 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Aberdare Leader*, 23 July 1904.

<sup>10</sup> D. L. Davies, Translation of the First Essay with Introduction, of Thomas Dafydd Llewelyn ‘History of the Parish of Aberdare (1853); Gardd Aberdar, *Old Aberdare*, Volume 2, 1982, pp. 37 – 42. Also various editions of Arch. Cambren.

<sup>11</sup> J. Burton & K. Stober, *Abbeys and Priors of Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 2015), pp. 137 – 138.

the estate, located three-quarters of a mile from the main house and clearly visible from there.<sup>12</sup> One of the boundaries mentioned in the document that grants this land to the Abbey is the Ffrwd stream, which also marks the demesne of Duffryn's traditional southeastern boundary. Other earlier sources, however, indicate that this monastic grange could have been in the area of Cefnpennar, near Duffryn.<sup>13</sup>

The debate is complicated by the uncertain parochial histories of Llanwonno and Aberdare before the thirteenth century. Problems over ecclesiastical boundaries led to an agreement in 1203 that aimed to settle the disputes between the Abbeys at Llantarnam and Margam, and possibly the founding of St. John's church at Aberdare.<sup>14</sup> Essentially these developments were an outward indication of the increasing hegemony of the Norman state or its agents, in the area and to some degree the supplanting of the traditional Welsh rulers and their traditional administrative structures. There is little in the written record to suggest how the development of landownership in the district progressed, and whether the Duffryn estate was a monastic property, or remained in the possession of the descendants of the native Welsh rulers of upland Glamorgan. These rulers retained some autonomy into the fourteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

The house at Duffryn has been variously dated to the reign of Edward II (r. 1307 – 1327),<sup>16</sup> or to around 1400.<sup>17</sup> These are speculative as no extant records indicate either date. There has not been any recent archaeological examination of the site to assess the pedigree of the property. The location of the estate suggests it would have some value to early settlers. It is sited in the lee of a mountain ridge, sheltering the area from the prevailing northwesterly weather systems. On gently sloping land, yet above the flood plain of the river Cynon; watered by the Pennar and Ffrwd brooks; and orientated in such a way that the sun, from when it rises in the south-east to when it sets over the mountain ridge to the west constantly warms the ground of the demesne. The first known documentary evidence is from 1570, but the house then may have been little more than a farm.<sup>18</sup> From early in the history of the property there has been a mill on the site, as well as forges<sup>19</sup> and taverns, though these were not always in operation at the same time. The old parish road also passed through the lands

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<sup>12</sup> Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales, *Glamorgan. Volume IV. Part II. Medieval Non-Defensive Secular Monuments*, (Cardiff, 1982), p. 285.

<sup>13</sup> RCHAMW, *Glamorgan Secular Monuments*, 295 – 296.

<sup>14</sup> Evans, *St. John's Church*, 1982), pp. 11 - 24.

<sup>15</sup> J Barry Davies, *A Revision of G. T. Clark's 'Limbus Patrum or Genealogies of Glamorgan, 1886'*, 2015, pp. 265 - 267.

<sup>16</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Volume I), p. 1. Also *CT*, 19 October 1872.

<sup>17</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 106.

<sup>18</sup> GA MSS D/D BR. 1 - 132

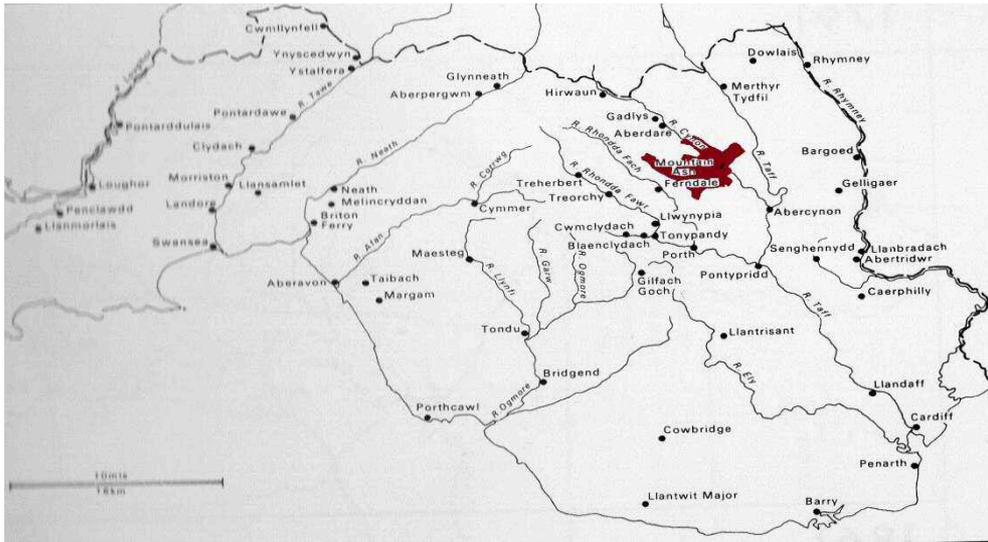
<sup>19</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 5.

of Duffryn, before climbing over the Cefnpennar ridge and dropping down towards Aberdare. The strategic position of the estate across the central portion of the Cynon valley, controlling the routes to the north and towards the coast to the south, was always an important asset to its owners. In a narrow valley environment, this was a signal advantage and commended by the agents of the Bute estate in their recommendation to purchase a property in the Rhondda Fawr and thereby secure a similarly advantageous position in that district.<sup>20</sup>

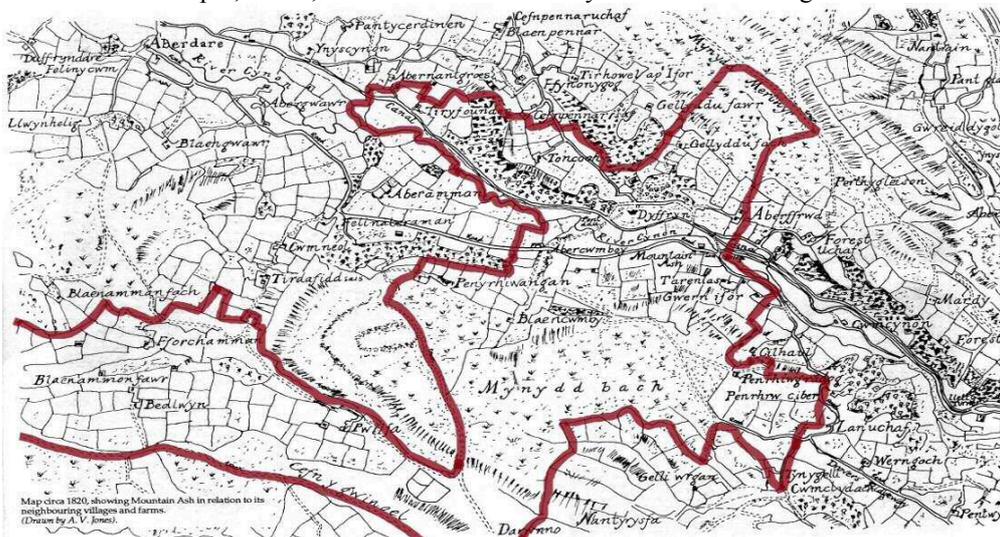
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<sup>20</sup> Davies, *Cardiff and the Marquesses of Bute*, p. 219.

## The Duffryn Estate<sup>21</sup>



Map 1, above, the location of the Duffryn Estate in Glamorgan.



Map 2, above, the location of the Duffryn Estate in the Cynon Valley.

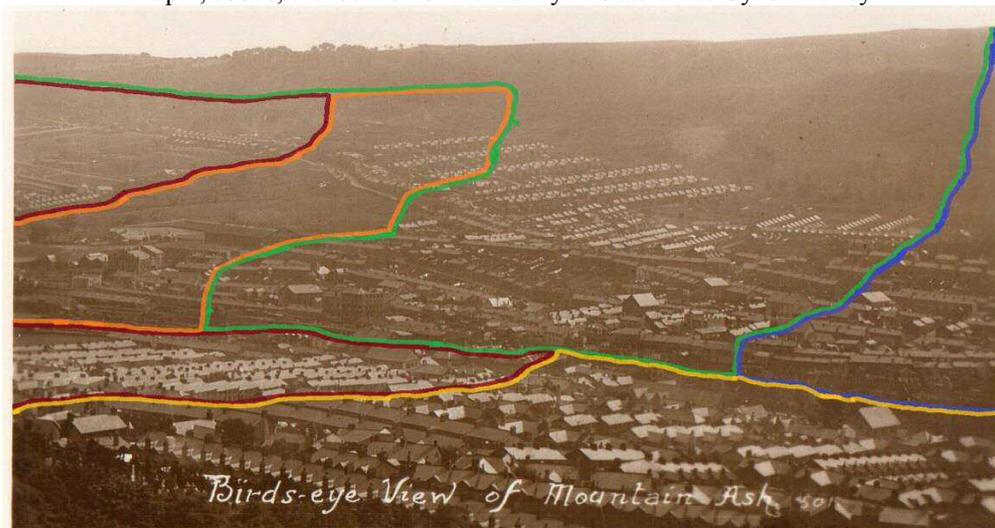


Illustration 3, above, Mountain Ash, circa 1920. Red line - estate boundary; Gold line - Gwernifor Farm; Green line – Darren Las Farm; Blue line – Abercwmboi Isaf Farm; Yellow Line – Aberffrwad Farm.

<sup>21</sup> Maps and photograph adapted by the author from: John & Williams (eds.), *Glamorgan County History. Industrial Glamorgan*, p. following 671; Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, pp. 62 - 63; Postcard in author's collection.

It is noteworthy that in the mid-Tudor period the area suddenly took on an importance that its previous inaccessibility had denied it. This had parallels with developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As with later developments, the ready availability of natural resources was the catalyst. The enacting of legislation limiting the area that could be exploited for the production of iron in the counties of Sussex and Kent, encouraged merchants from these counties to seek new sources of iron in South Wales. In addition, the supplies of ore and the reduction in the extent of the forests of the Weald meant that industrial opportunities were declining in that area.<sup>22</sup> The movement of these families to the Glamorgan uplands would have been stimulated by the availability of monastic land in this county, particularly following the dissolution of the Cistercian abbeys at Margam and Llantarnam in 1536.<sup>23</sup> This would have provided them with the necessary land and resources they required to pursue their interests in South Wales.<sup>24</sup> The innate attributes that the Sussex ironmasters needed and found in Glamorgan included iron ore, numerous sinewy streams to provide the necessary motive power and the nearly impenetrable forests that now became an asset in this new industrial environment as a ready source of charcoal. This commodity was required in large quantities, as it took thirty-two and a half tons of wood to produce one ton of iron.<sup>25</sup>

The full details of what was happening are obscure. The lower part of the Cynon Valley, known as the hamlet of Glyn Cynon in the parish of Llanwonno, and particularly the farm at Cwm Cynon, were important centres of iron production or refining. Cwm Cynon Farm is a mile south of Duffryn, while two miles to the north-west are the remains of a furnace at Cwmaman, although this is later in date.<sup>26</sup> All this activity is around the periphery of the property, whose boundaries at this time are in any case unknown. It seems certain that Duffryn itself was the site of iron working around the last third of the sixteenth century as there was substantial iron works slag found at the site. Archaeological surveys in the 1860s, the uncovering of significant amounts of iron works waste during railway construction at the same period, local observations and traditions, together with contemporary written sources, add to a strong case for iron production or processing at this site.<sup>27</sup> Other financial benefits would nevertheless have accrued to the owners of the property, whether they were actually producing iron on their lands or not. This came through the demand for the wood to make charcoal. The estate must have prospered with the inflow of new skilled labour and

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<sup>22</sup> Morley, *Sussex Ironmasters*, pp. 5 – 43.

<sup>23</sup> J. Newman, *The Buildings of Glamorgan* (London, 1995). p. 42.

<sup>24</sup> Morley, *Sussex Ironmasters*, pp 5 - 8.

<sup>25</sup> Morley, *Sussex Ironmasters*, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Morley, *Sussex Ironmasters*, pp 30 – 37.

<sup>27</sup> Davies, 'Translation of 'Gardd Aberdar', ' Old Aberdare 2, p. 44.

support workers all of whom needed shelter and sustenance, and the requirements of draught animals needed for transport purposes.

The house itself, as represented in several depictions undertaken in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries suggests a major rebuilding in a style common in Glamorgan in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>28</sup> The storeyed porch that is the most distinctive external architectural feature is typical of gentry houses of this period in Glamorgan. For instance, there is a close resemblance between pictorial representations of the old Duffryn House and Gilfach Fargoed along with Llancaiach Fawr, particularly before the latter added an extra storey and which, it is thought, dates to the early sixteenth century.<sup>29</sup> When describing the character of the old house to a visitor in the 1890s, Henry Bruce explained that the walls of the porch were six feet thick and those of the kitchen twelve.<sup>30</sup> Even allowing for a large fireplace, ovens and intermural staircase these were extremely thick, suggesting, despite the later romanticism of its depiction, that defence from attack was a necessary consideration, thick walls and their foundations were expensive and not constructed without reason.



Illustration 4, Duffryn House, 1827/1828.<sup>31</sup>

The returns of the 1670 Hearth Tax offers evidence of what may have been happening sometime around this period. Duffryn is listed as having seven hearths,<sup>32</sup> which was not a

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<sup>28</sup> RCAHMW, *Domestic Architecture from the Restoration to industrial Revolution*, p. 62

<sup>29</sup> J Kember, *The Gentry Houses of Gelligaer and their Inhabitants* (n.s., 2012), pp. 3 – 24.

<sup>30</sup> *WM*, 29 September 1893; *WklyM*, 7 October 1893.

<sup>31</sup> ACVMS, Bacon Sisters Collection.

<sup>32</sup> Parkinson (ed.), *The Glamorgan Hearth Tax 1670*, p. 7.

large amount when compared to most of the greater houses of the Glamorgan gentry.<sup>33</sup> The actual relevance of this in the context of the Glamorgan uplands is more striking. Within a half-day journey from Duffryn House, in the adjoining parishes of Merthyr Tydfil, Llanwonno, and Ystradyfodwg, as well as Aberdare, there was no other property that could boast more. In the parish of Aberdare, in particular, this is significant as 92.6% of its properties could claim only one hearth. The nearby Aberaman House<sup>34</sup> had six hearths and one property in Ystradyfodwg, possibly Ty Newydd at Treherbert,<sup>35</sup> had seven. Adverts in the *Cambrian* newspaper that marketed Duffryn as being available to let while the family was abroad, give a fair idea of the house in these earlier times.<sup>36</sup>

Other evidence strongly suggests that there was a large increase in wealth at the lower end of the Cynon Valley, and that this was not restricted to the houses of the greater landowners. The records show that properties in Glyn Cynon had a larger number of hearths than was normal in the adjoining areas. The prosperity brought by iron production seems to have spread among the local population, and they used this to improve their homes. Indeed, when comparing houses eligible to pay the tax with the number of assessed hearths, in Aberdare, or the northern portion of the Cynon Valley, only 10.7% had more than one; while in Glyn Cynon, or the lower portion, 28.9% boasted a greater number than this. Coupled with the extremely high proportion of vacant properties in Glyn Cynon and the known suppression of the iron industry after about 1649, the evidence for important iron production in the area of Duffryn is persuasive.<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, the nature of upland farming in this area was difficult, with low returns per acre. Some analysis of the differences between Glamorgan parishes using the Glamorgan lay tax returns of 1543 has shown that while in the Aberdare and Llanwonno parishes there was one taxpayer for every 200 - 299 acres; in some Vale parishes such as Gileston and Bonvilston there was one taxpayer for every 29 - 35 acres. While the tax yield per acre in Aberdare and Llanwonno was 0.01 – 0.04, in the vale parish of Llancarfan it was 0.2+.<sup>38</sup> The poor agricultural land does not explain a sudden influx of capital necessary to undertake such works and the subsequent desertion of a large number of dwellings, even if the estate was adding property to its holdings.

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<sup>33</sup> Parkinson (ed.), *The Glamorgan Hearth Tax 1670*, p. xxxv.

<sup>34</sup> Parkinson (ed.), *The Glamorgan Hearth Tax 1670*, p.73

<sup>35</sup> Walters & Ames, *Yates' Map of the County of Glamorgan*.

<sup>36</sup> *Cambrian*, 21 July 1821 & 6 April 1822.

<sup>37</sup> Parkinson, *Hearth Tax Assessment 1670*, pp 70 – 74.

<sup>38</sup> RCAHMW, *Domestic Architecture from the Restoration to industrial Revolution*, pp. 7 – 21.

It is reasonable to assume that the property at Duffryn became important enough at this stage to be termed a manor through revenues derived from industry. The industrial developments that accompanied the improvements in the area around Duffryn had a number of similarities to events that occurred nearly two and a half centuries later. Again, built on the foundations of the exploitation of local resources, namely coal, Duffryn House was rebuilt in a grand modern style. With the expansion of industry around the property, there was an in-migration of workers. Accommodation was constructed for the newcomers, and gradually better provision made for their broader requirements. When crisis in the form of political, technological and economic changes led to a rapid decline in that industry, in 1926 Duffryn House was sold, the estate broken up, and the population around the estate waned.

In 1590, Dafydd Shon Efan Ddu, also known as Dafydd ap Efan Ddu, leased the Duffryn estate for the sum of £5 from a 'gentleman' resident at Bristol. The estate then comprised the five messuages of the demesne of Duffryn, specifically, Aberffrwd, Gelli Ddu Isaf, Toncoch and Thy'r Bwbach as well as the main house, its lands and gardens.<sup>39</sup> There is, however, no mention of any industrial property or works in these transactions. The fact that the estate was in the possession of someone at Bristol is interesting and may add some evidence that the estate had been utilised by the Sussex ironmasters. A clutch of legal disputes between the owners of the ironworks and their widows were reaching a conclusion around this time and ready cash was often required.<sup>40</sup> While Cardiff, the Council of the Marches at Ludlow and Gloucester all had prominent roles in the administration of the area, the financial and business centre of south-west Britain was Bristol.

Dafydd ap Efan Ddu was a timber haulier, from Melin Ifan. This occupation was one that may have brought him into close contact with the iron industry, allowed him knowledge of the local conditions and required skill in the difficult terrain of the Glamorgan valleys where the only roads were little more than packhorse tracks. By repute, he is a descendant of the poet Ieuan Ddu ab Dafydd ab Owain who is said to have owned the estate in the 1420s, although there is little evidence to support this.<sup>41</sup> After 'a season', Dafydd ap Efan Ddu informed his landlord that the property was less productive than anticipated and told him he would have to vacate it if they could not reach a mutually satisfactory outcome. The 'Bristol gentleman' accepted an offer and sold the whole estate to Dafydd ap Efan Ddu for £100.<sup>42</sup> This sum of money is consistent with land values noted in other assessments at this

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<sup>39</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 28.

<sup>40</sup> Morley, *Sussex Ironmasters*, pp. 5 – 43.

<sup>41</sup> G. Evans, *Jones of Duffryn*, (Unpublished article), p. 1 & *CMG*, 29 March 1851.

<sup>42</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 29.

time.<sup>43</sup> The relatively small amounts of money involved in the lease and purchase of the Duffryn estate are, however, surprising given the large sums of money that court papers said were being generated by the iron industry at this time and the alleged value of the land associated with it. This may be a reflection of the denuded nature of the estate's assets, as explained by a plaintiff in a court case, who noted the seizure and despoliation of his inheritance, or of its as yet unexploited nature.<sup>44</sup> The supposed offences occurred in the parish of Llanwonno and could relate to Cwm Cynon Farm or one very much like it. A similar, although more business-like arrangement may have happened at Duffryn, although in 1593 Evan Ddu was prosecuted in the Court of Star Chamber for taking a band of armed men to Aberdare and assaulting the servants of Robert Martyn.<sup>45</sup> This was not to be the only case of 'riotous and evilly disposed persons' heading from the environs of Duffryn to Aberdare to settle scores on behalf of the owners of that property (see Chapter 3). In any case, others too were not pleased with the result of this period of industrialisation, whatever the legality of the action, as noted in a contemporary poem.<sup>46</sup>

Those lines of verse, an elegy by an unknown Welsh poet, express a viewpoint that would be familiar to subsequent generations of inhabitants of Glyn Cynon, lamenting the despoliation of their homeland. While the ironworkers were indeed English, local landowners seem in the main happy to be complicit in these developments. It can be argued that Dafydd ap Efan Ddu purchased the estate prior to the development of the ironworks on this site, knowing the industrial activity further down the valley. In this case, the development of the iron industry at Duffryn and the reconstruction of the house can be dated between 1590 and the commencement of the Civil War after 1642. Otherwise, the first industrial developments must predate the earlier date and correspond to the mid-sixteenth century.

The estate that the Jones family possessed, was expanded and developed under their ownership. The increased amount of property purchased, and the money and influence this afforded them, allowed the family to advance socially and undertake public offices throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth. The son of Dafydd ap Efan Ddu, Shon, or John, succeeded his father. In 1633, he married Margaret Mathew a daughter of Aberaman House and this union was a step up in the social hierarchy of the county. The marriage settlement, where he is described as a 'gentleman', certainly an advance on his

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<sup>43</sup> Davies, *Revision of 'Limbus Patrum'*, pp. 268 – 269.

<sup>44</sup> Morley, *Sussex Ironmasters*, p.12.

<sup>45</sup> Evans, *Jones of Duffryn*, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> Davies & Evans, *The Land your Fathers Possessed*, pp. 21 – 22.

father's place in society, noted that as well as the Duffryn estate, he owned properties in Llanwonno and Llantrisant parishes.<sup>47</sup> His son Shams, undertook major improvements to the estate, including the planting of apple orchards and other fruit trees. He carried out repairs to the property and generally developed the agricultural resources on his land. While these were carried out to improve the financial viability of the estate, they necessitated a large outlay of capital, this on an estate income of £100 a year. Others noticed that he had also anglicised his name to James Jones, the family previously following the Welsh patronymic tradition.<sup>48</sup>

The finances of the estates of the blaenau were always precarious, and especially those of Duffryn, although the central properties remained unencumbered despite mortgages raised on those lands owned in Llanwonno and Llantrisant.<sup>49</sup> While the national economy grew and the population reached a level unseen since the fourteenth century, the upland estates prospered on this increase in demand. This was a tenuous existence, however, lived on marginal lands, with poor links connecting the estate to major markets. For these reasons, the profitability of the estate fluctuated. Many of the estates of the blaenau underwent a complex process of 'fusion and fragmentation', where parts of properties were sold or acquired as fortunes fluctuated.<sup>50</sup> The Duffryn estate was one of these.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Jones' appeared to be an established county family. In the Hearth Tax returns of 1670, James Jones is listed as 'Mr', not quite the 'gentleman' that his father claimed, but still a mark of distinction.<sup>51</sup> The turmoil of the 1640s and 1650s appear to have left the family relatively unscathed. There is no evidence that the family played any part in the battle of St Fagan's, although it was around this period that large numbers of properties seem to have been abandoned and during improvement work to St Gwynno's church Llanwonno in the 1880s a large number of bodies were found under the nave, laid 'like sardines in a can.' The circumstances of this mass burial are attributed to a local skirmish, perhaps related to the suppression of the ironworks.<sup>52</sup> Royalist sympathies within the family can be postulated, as on 25 June 1674, a J. Jones was listed as an additional Justice of the Peace for the county of Glamorganshire, and again listed in 1677.<sup>53</sup> This is probably the 'Justice Jones' mentioned in historical

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<sup>47</sup> H. M. Thomas, 'Duffryn Aberdare', *Morgannwg*, Vol. XXI (1977), p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 28 – 29.

<sup>49</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 57.

<sup>50</sup> RCAHMW, *Domestic Architecture from the Restoration to industrial Revolution*, p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> Parkinson (ed.), *The Glamorgan Hearth Tax 1670*, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> Jones, *Churches of the Cynon Valley*, pp. 11 – 12.

<sup>53</sup> Phillips, *Justices of the Peace*, pp. 305 – 306.

literature of the nineteenth century<sup>54</sup> and listed as a ‘gentleman’ in other references<sup>55</sup> The demesne of Duffryn itself was worth £100 in 1691,<sup>56</sup> without counting the other farms and the mill associated with the property. In 1716, his son John Jones, served as Sheriff of the County of Glamorgan,<sup>57</sup> and his son also named John Jones, served as Under Sheriff to his father.<sup>58</sup> This was a notable accomplishment. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the eastern Glamorgan upland was underrepresented in the position of Justice of the Peace; in 1689 there was one in this region out of thirty-two in the county as a whole; in 1710 it was one of twenty nine; while there were two out of thirty five in 1726.<sup>59</sup>

The outward successes masked a decline in the family’s financial situation, which in itself is surprising given the opportunities for graft that public office holders of this sort, in this period, were able to exploit. In any case, the Jones family were experiencing problems that were common to many gentry families. While John Jones had bought the Darran Las and Penrhiw Caradog Farms adjoining his estate, in the early eighteenth century, the family also allowed the establishment of a tavern on the old parish road over Cefnpennar. This in addition to the old mill, a forge and, most interestingly, coal was excavated in 1715 at Mynydd Coed Duffryn and a little later in 1735 from a seam outcropping on the opposite side of the ridge, sited below the present day Mountain Ash Golf Club.<sup>60</sup> These were probably outcrops of the Rhondda No. 3 seam. By 1725, his son, also John, was forced to sell the latter two farms and the other enterprises were mostly short lived. Moreover, in 1730 Duffryn House itself, together with the farm at Toncoch were leased for £48 a year with the family retaining some privileges that included a room at their old home, stables, grazing rights, some fields and gardens, a forge and a house.<sup>61</sup> Further actions were necessary and in 1731, John Jones mortgaged the estate for £300,<sup>62</sup> but again further sums were taken out on the property.

The mortgage was acquired by Thomas Mathew in 1745, for the sum of £1,190, with additional charges on the estate of £110.<sup>63</sup> As was often the case among landowning families, the ambition needed to gain influence at the county level may have led the family to overreach their pecuniary capabilities, or as also happened, a feckless heir, or heirs, failed

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<sup>54</sup> Davies, ‘Translation of ‘Gardd Aberdare’,’ p.44.

<sup>55</sup> Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class*, Table p. 273; Thomas, Duffryn, Aberdare, pp13-14.

<sup>56</sup> GA MSS D/D BR 2. Post-nuptial Settlement.

<sup>57</sup> Moore, *Glamorgan Sheriffs*, p. 91.

<sup>58</sup> Moore, *Glamorgan Sheriffs*, p. 112.

<sup>59</sup> Jenkins, *Making of a Ruling Class*, p. 87.

<sup>60</sup> Davies & Evans, *The Land your Fathers Possessed*, 28 – 29.

<sup>61</sup> GA MSS D/D DBR 5.

<sup>62</sup> GA MSS D/D DBR 6 - 10.

<sup>63</sup> GA MSS D/D DBR 10.

to pass on a sound endowment to his successors. The latter would appear to have been the case with Duffryn. John Jones had been a lawyer<sup>64</sup> as well as a landowner, but his descent was complete, as in 1768, according to the Diaries of William Thomas a schoolteacher and sometime county official, ‘Was buried in Aberdare, Mr. Jones of Duffryn in do. This four months past, of about 56 years of age. A ruinous sort of a man, who parted with his wife those years past, and mortgaged his estate by vicious living to Rbt. (sic.) Bruce Esq. dec’d.’<sup>65</sup>

The Bruce family entered Glamorgan society at this stage. The estate at Duffryn was suggested to William Bruce, Henry Bruce’s great-grandfather, by his wife’s uncle Thomas Lewis of Newhouse, who was a lawyer and would have been well aware of Jones’ predicament.<sup>66</sup> The Lewis family traced its ancestry to the last Welsh Lords of Senghenydd and they were a prominent family in county business and politics. Jane Bruce, the wife of William Bruce, had a brother, also called Thomas Lewis, of Llanishen, who was a founder member of the Dowlais Iron Company in 1759 and who brought John Guest to that works in 1767.<sup>67</sup> This is an interesting connection that may have brought dividends to the Bruce family a hundred years later, but it also shows the traditional landowners keen to advance industrial interests if it suited their requirements, as had been evident in the sixteenth century.

That an established family such as the Jones, who had been so prominent a generation before, were in trouble, would have been well known to the close knit social and business elite of Glamorgan. Potential purchasers of Duffryn would also soon be aware of the problems with the property. The income of the estate was meagre; it needed costly remedial work carried out on the house and farms; and was located in an inaccessible district.<sup>68</sup> There were benefits to its owners. There was a good, if rather run down house, pleasantly situated in a quiet valley. The property gave social status to its owner and a sizeable acreage of land that was acquired at a discounted rate when compared with similarly sized properties in the Vale of Glamorgan, and certainly when compared to good quality English land.<sup>69</sup> If the owner was content with a quiet life the demesne was virtually self-sufficient in the day-to-day needs of a modest genteel household. There was scope to expand the holding by purchasing additional land, while also being able to improve the

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<sup>64</sup> Evans, *Jones of Duffryn*, p. 4.

<sup>65</sup> G. Evans, (ed.), *Hanes*, No. 48, Autumn 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas, *Duffryn, Aberdare*, pp13 - 14.

<sup>67</sup> Jones, *History of GKN. Vol I*, pp. 3 – 25.

<sup>68</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 129.

<sup>69</sup> A. Nicholson, *The Gentry. Stories of the English* (London, 2011), p. 213

practices and methods used on the existing estate. The failsafe of selling timber at appropriate times was also available to the possessor and demand for this commodity was due to rise markedly. There were other intangible assets that accrued through owning Duffryn, for instance, political leverage in parochial, county and national elections, as well as the prestige of being ‘a big fish in a small pond.’ These attributes were as relevant in the 1840s to Henry Bruce as they were to his ancestor and in a diminished form continued through his life and into the twentieth century.

After some negotiation through the agency of Thomas Lewis, William Bruce purchased the estate of Duffryn on 17th January 1750 for £1800.<sup>70</sup> The estate then comprised the familiar lands of Duffryn itself, Abercwmboi Isaf, Aberffrwd, Gelliddu Isaf and Ton Coch. He had delayed the purchase from the previous year as John Jones had already collected that year’s rents. With an income assessed at £74,<sup>71</sup> Bruce was managing a return on his investment of over 4% and the 840 acres were valued at £640, an average of fifteen shillings an acre. As William Bruce was not going to move to the property, it was let to a tenant for one year, and this was none other than John Jones, its previous owner. This was a poignant end to that family’s long association with the estate, although there was to be an interesting epilogue to this, as will be noted in a later chapter.

William Bruce was actively seeking to expand his property; in April 1750 he bought the farm of Pwllfa, around two miles north-west of Duffryn and situated above the Aman valley, a subsidiary stream of the River Cynon, for £210.<sup>72</sup> Bruce further expanded his holdings in this area in May 1751 with the acquisition of Bedlwyn Farm for £400, together with interest and other charges. These were a block of properties slightly isolated from the core lands of the estate, nevertheless, easily manageable from that property. William Bruce had spent £2525 purchasing Duffryn House and its lands as well as six other properties, making a sizeable estate in the parish of Aberdare. All the properties that he bought were known to be for sale, mortgaged and available to purchase through three entirely separate transactions. This was a clever piece of business carried out by Bruce and Lewis, as the three different concerns were potentially worth more together than individually. Close family and business connections were essential to the success of these manoeuvrings. Bruce himself did eventually move to Glamorgan from London when he bought the Great House estate of the Wilkins family in Llanblethian for £2250 in November 1751.<sup>73</sup> John

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<sup>70</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 11.

<sup>71</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 129.

<sup>72</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 35.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas, Duffryn, Aberdare, pp. 19 – 20.

Wilkins of Llanblethian had been the collector responsible for carrying out the Hearth Tax assessment in 1670.<sup>74</sup> William Bruce had further advanced his standing in the county when he subsequently married Mary Turberville, of the old Glamorgan family of that name, after the death of his first wife. The Bruce family, in the space of two years, had managed to thrust themselves to the forefront of Glamorgan society and William was Sheriff in 1756. Moreover, several of his relatives and family associates were Sheriff at this time suggesting the existence of a political faction linked by familial and business ties. Included among these were sheriffs Richard Turberville, 1740; Thomas Lewis, 1745; their other Thomas Lewis relation in 1757; Thomas Popkin, 1755; Edward Mathew of Aberaman, 1758; and Thomas Pryse of Duffryn St Nicholas, 1759.<sup>75</sup>

William Bruce managed Duffryn and its properties from his Llanblethian home, making occasional visits to his mountain estate. The estate had long employed a woodward to ensure that this valuable asset was well maintained, and usually this employee was one of the tenants of the estate's farms. Whenever money was required, this resource could be readily realised for the benefit of the owner. The timber on the estate was at least as important as the farms in terms of the money it could generate and William Bruce was not slow in utilising this when need be.<sup>76</sup>

When William Bruce died in 1768, both estates passed to his son Thomas, the vicar of St. Nicholas, in the Vale of Glamorgan, the advowson of this parish being owned by his Price cousins. Thomas too was interested in arboriculture, sourcing trees and seeds whenever he could and experimenting with new varieties on his upland estate. Some of these attempts failed due to their unsuitability for the conditions encountered at Duffryn, poor weather or the attentions of fauna, but some were successful and the grounds around Duffryn were noted for their fine trees and shrubs.<sup>77</sup> The part of the estate known as Duffryn Grove, laid out at this time, was utilised by the family and local people for more than a hundred and fifty years.<sup>78</sup> This timber was to become very important to the estate when developments underway in the 1750s reached fruition in the latter part of the century.

An ironworks had been established at Hirwaun in 1757,<sup>79</sup> this was located seven miles further up the Cynon Valley; and at Merthyr Tydfil from 1759,<sup>80</sup> and these were a ready

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<sup>74</sup> Parkinson, *The Glamorgan Hearth Tax*, pp. 132 – 145.

<sup>75</sup> Moore, *Glamorgan Sheriffs*, p. 92.

<sup>76</sup> *Cambrian*, 11 April 1829; cf. *Cambrian*, 8 March 1828.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas, *Duffryn*, Aberdare, pp. 21 - 24.

<sup>78</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 28.

<sup>79</sup> Grant, *Cynon Valley in the Age of Iron*, p. 13.

market for the timber grown at Duffryn. Thomas Bruce was not permanently resident on the estate, but was a frequent visitor, treating the lands as a hobby estate for a reverend gentleman farmer. Duffryn House was kept well maintained throughout his tenure, with periodic redecoration undertaken and whenever he was away, he corresponded frequently with his agents dealing with his business in the area.<sup>81</sup> He was also active in purchasing valuable additional property. In 1786, he bought Gwernifor farm for £600.<sup>82</sup> This was a sound transaction as he secured the money for the purchase through mortgaging the farms at Pwllfa and Bedlwyn. Yet Gwernifor was nearer the core part of the estate and the land was of good quality. If for some reason the mortgage could not be repaid and the two outlying properties lost, there was still the benefit of Gwernifor, which was a better asset to hold as it consolidated the estate into a more practical holding. From the main door of Duffryn, all of these lands could be observed at a glance.

Thomas Bruce died in 1790 and the estate passed in trust to his sister Margaret's son, John Bruce Knight. The Llanblethian house and estate were sold to provide money, also to be held in trust, for his other nieces and nephews. Margaret Bruce had married John Knight, originally from near Barnstable and he managed the Duffryn estate until his son came of age.<sup>83</sup> Thomas Bruce had stipulated that any investments made by the trust and for the benefit of the trustees should be in interest bearing government bonds, company shares or land. This shrewd clergyman enhanced the Duffryn property in a farsighted way through experimentation in the growing of new crops, especially trees and through increasing the acreage of the estate through sound purchases.<sup>84</sup>

The activities of the owners of the Duffryn estate remained that of the traditional landowning families of the region. The effective landowner of Duffryn would seek to run his estate in an efficient and sometimes innovative way, with judicious purchases of land to consolidate or augment their holdings. The ultimate objective of these actions was to pass on the land to their heirs in at least as good a position as they attained it. This was not to change, of course, but a new vision and aptitude was required in the rapidly changing environment of upland Glamorgan. The growth of the iron industry in the district and with it the associated infrastructure to support it, was to give landowners a 'once and for all' opportunity to change the fortunes of their estates and of building personal wealth that previously was almost unimagined.

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<sup>80</sup> Strange, *Iron Metropolis*, p. 10.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas, Duffryn, Aberdare, pp. 21 – 24.

<sup>82</sup> GA DBR E 431.

<sup>83</sup> *CT*, 19 October 1872.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas, Duffryn, Aberdare, pp. 21 – 24.

John Knight had overall supervision of the estate during his son's minority and continued the policy recommended to him by Thomas Bruce. The adjoining farm to Abercwmboi Isaf, Blaencwmboi, was purchased in 1797, along with Penrhiwanga and Tir y Founder, these lay to the west of Ton Coch. The cost of these three farms was £590 and added an extra 362 acres of land around the principal part of the estate.<sup>85</sup> The range of the estate was much larger than it had ever been up to this point. The property had previously been limited in any expansion to the north, as the ownership of these lands lay with the Mathew family of the Aberaman House Estate. When the male line died out, yet another example of the crisis of the gentry in Glamorgan in the eighteenth century, and the property was split to provide for the three female heirs, opportunities for expansion opened in this area. The land holding of the Bruce family in the Cynon Valley extended to two thousand and fifty nine acres and as an agricultural estate was a better prospect than it had been in its history. Knight also commissioned a series of plans of the farms he owned, which were of obvious value to estate management, particularly if he was absent from the property. This series of records of the farms for which he was trustee were drawn up perhaps because he was concerned that if anything happened to him, the property of his son, as a minor could have been liable to encroachment. Later the maps served as guides to delineate title to land, of immense importance when what was located below the surface became immeasurably more valuable than what grew upon it.<sup>86</sup>

The estate sought to invest in the new opportunities presented to them by the actions of the industrialists to the north. One of the significant and constant difficulties that owners of the estate faced was the poor communications infrastructure in the area. In the early nineteenth century, John Bruce Pryce remembered a horse having to drag a sledge, rather than pull a cart or carriage, to convey him up the valley, over the rough packhorse tracks to the small village of Aberdare.<sup>87</sup> This problem became urgently pressing with the increase in the flow of materials to, and especially from the ironworks. The ironmasters and landowners determined to solve these difficulties and in 1793, two significant proposals were placed before Parliament. The first was the application to construct a turnpike road between Navigation, now Abercynon, and Aberdare.<sup>88</sup> The second was the construction of a canal from the same place, to a point near Aberdare.<sup>89</sup> The former was to be called the Aberdare Turnpike, the latter the Aberdare Canal. Although both Bills were passed by Parliament, it took more than a decade for them to progress due to a decline in the iron trade in the

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<sup>85</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 1.

<sup>86</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 80 – 81.

<sup>87</sup> *CMG*, 8 August 1846.

<sup>88</sup> 1793 (33 Geo. 3) c.133, 'The Glamorganshire Turnpikes Act'.

<sup>89</sup> 1793 (33 Geo. 3) c. 95, 'The Aberdare Canal Act'.

locality, although the action may also have been a blocking measure to prevent others from intervening in the district. Both the canal and the road opened at about the same time, the canal in 1812,<sup>90</sup> and the turnpike in about 1810,<sup>91</sup> just as John Bruce Pryce reached his majority. John Knight had invested £1000 of the £22000 required by these concerns, which suggests he too was an astute businessman.<sup>92</sup>

Any attempt to construct a major transport project from the south through the Cynon Valley would have to pass through John Bruce Pryce's estate. The turnpike crossed the Cynon at the southern boundary of the property and proceeded on its western bank for a mile and a half over his lands. The canal was cut along the eastern side of the valley and would continue through the Duffryn estate for almost two miles, indeed, passing along the limits of Duffryn's grounds. There was, significantly, one lock along this stretch of canal between Cwmbach and Abercynon and that lay a little to the south of those gardens.<sup>93</sup> The importance of this is seen in the articles set out in the Bill enabling the canal. They included provision for landowners along that waterway to move goods and animals relating to the agricultural management of their estate free of charge as long as they did not pass a lock. They were also allowed to operate pleasure vessels under the same terms.<sup>94</sup>

Knight had ensured that he could transport items by canal around the estate free of charge and if required, with a transshipment at Duffryn or Cwmbach all the way from Aberdare to the flight of locks at Navigation, in all a distance of six and three-quarter miles. He maintained a wharf at the canal head at Aberdare<sup>95</sup> and limekilns were built at Duffryn lock alongside tramroads to the property's Duffryn or Cwmpennar Quarry.<sup>96</sup> Lime was used as a fertiliser to improve the soils of the farms of the estate, apparently with great success.<sup>97</sup> Later it was important in the construction industry. Whether the canal company proprietors allowed such a broad definition as to include lime as an agricultural product is not known, but as a fellow shareholder, perhaps the question never arose. Certainly, the estate was delivering building stone by canal free of royalty at least until the 1850s.<sup>98</sup> With the growth of industry around Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare, the agricultural produce of the estate was

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<sup>90</sup> Rowson & Wright, *Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals. Vol. 1*, p. 111.

<sup>91</sup> Rowson & Wright, *Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals. Vol. 1*, p. 117.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas, Duffryn, Aberdare, p. 25.

<sup>93</sup> Rowson & Wright, *The Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals. Vol. 1*, 110 – 152.

<sup>94</sup> The Aberdare Canal Act, 1793 (33 Geo. 3, cap. 95), 2314.

<sup>95</sup> Rowson & Wright, *The Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals. Vol. 1*, p. 119.

<sup>96</sup> Rowson & Wright, *The Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals. Vol. 1*, p. 138 – 139.

<sup>97</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Volume I), pp. 165 – 166.

<sup>98</sup> *CMG*, 23 March 1850.

now of greater value as well, particularly the timber, and John Knight was a careful custodian, closely managing the estates for the benefit of his son.

John Bruce Knight changed his name to John Bruce Bruce in 1805, at his coming of age and as suggested in his uncle's will. He was later to change his surname again to John Bruce Pryce, on succeeding to the Duffryn St Nicholas estate in 1837. The crisis of the Glamorgan landowning families was an ill wind that brought great bounty to John Bruce Knight. As his country residence, John Bruce Bruce took an increasingly active interest in the management of the Duffryn Aberdare estate, undertaking remedial works and some improvements. Although he did not live permanently on the estate until the latter part of 1810, perhaps with the construction of the new turnpike road, the previously inaccessible property became more practicable for a county gentleman. Since the Jones' final departure in 1751, Duffryn House was only an occasional residence for the Bruce family and the property had deteriorated as it had been let to a succession of tenants. They owned or resided at other Glamorgan houses, such as Llanblethian and Newhouse, and were a part of the great social circus of Georgian Britain, Thomas Bruce having died at Bath. Duffryn was a trophy but a poor source of income and it was seldom a home. John Bruce Bruce married Sarah Austin in 1807, and following a period of time when they were resident at Llanblethian, they began to improve the property at Duffryn to make it an acceptable family home once more.<sup>99</sup>

The move to reside permanently at Duffryn allowed John Bruce Bruce to adopt a more active role in estate administration. Moreover, through one seemingly minor decision he was to make a significant lasting impact. In 1810, Bruce and his wife were the central protagonists in the naming of an inn on the estate. Dafydd Shon Rhys had made an enquiry into the possibility of constructing a house and tavern on estate land near where the old parish road crossed the river Cynon, and along the line of the new turnpike way to Aberdare from Navigation. As the new canal was also a short distance away there was utility in this proposal as it made sense to cater for the increased trade that would be stimulated by these enterprises. The site suggested was situated half way between Navigation and Aberdare, the only other places where rest and refreshment were then obtainable. Rhys, Bruce, Sarah and the estate foreman Rhys Evans met to confer over the location of the buildings, and after the practicalities of the conveyance were discussed, the subject of the name of the inn was broached. Bruce expressed the opinion that it should be the 'Bruce Arms', following a long tradition of these premises being named after the family that owned the property. His

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<sup>99</sup> Thomas, Duffryn, Aberdare, *Morgannwg*, pp. 26 – 28.

wife, who was standing next to a tree, asked what it was called, and was told by Rhys Evans that it was ‘y gerddinen’, the rowan in English, or the mountain ash. At this, Sarah Bruce asked if the inn could be named in honour of the tree that was to be forfeited for the hostelry. John Bruce deferred and the place was called the Mountain Ash Inn.<sup>100</sup> The houses that grew up near the inn were described on the 1814 Ordnance Survey map as Mountain Ash and the whole district became known by that name. The two new lessees marked the indenture with crosses as their mark. John Bruce Bruce got his way with the next tavern to be built and this was named the ‘Bruce Arms.’<sup>101</sup>

In 1811, John Bruce Bruce bought the latterly very important property of Darran Las Farm for £1000. This, together with Penrhiw Caradog, which he bought for £2000 in 1813, extended the estate to the southwest and hereby added 483 acres to its total. This was a useful purchase as the lands of the two farms were adjacent to the other properties held in the parish of Llanwonno and bridged the gap in estate land between Abercwmboi Isaf and Gwernifor. Unfortunately, the finances available to Bruce were not sufficient to fund this clearly useful expansion. By astute legal and financial manoeuvrings, he accessed the necessary funds through the sale of £10,700 of timber. The purchase was finally completed in 1818.<sup>102</sup> The carbon bounty reaped, would benefit the estate once again, this time to fund expansion rather than restore or maintain the estate. It was an investment that was to realise rich rewards within his lifetime.

Further opportunities to expand in the north were not fully satisfied as estate finances may have been stretched at this stage. While Tir y Llaithty was acquired from the Aberaman estate, the greater portion of the property went elsewhere, despite the entreaties of John Bruce Bruce, to his brother to attempt the purchase.<sup>103</sup> When Crawshay Bailey bought the bulk of the remaining Aberaman estate in 1836, he purchased a significant agricultural holding, but also the rights to a large mineral property that was to become the centre of the even larger industrial concern of Powell Duffryn (PDSCC). Bruce remained active in taking opportunities to enhance his estate; among these was the purchase in 1829 of the Cross Keys public house in Aberdare for £155;<sup>104</sup> the building 1838 – 1840 of a second

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<sup>100</sup> e.g. B. Baldwin, *Mountain Ash Remembered, Incorporating the Story of the Nos Galan Road Races, 1958 – 1973*, (Mountain Ash, 1984), p. 34; John, *Cynon Valley Place-names*, pp.24 - 26; Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, pp. 16 – 17; G. O. Pierce, *Place Names in Glamorgan*, (Cardiff, 2002), pp. 13 – 14.

<sup>101</sup> GA MSS D/D Br.

<sup>102</sup> GA DBR. 64 – 68.

<sup>103</sup> GA DBR 143.

<sup>104</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 29.

public house at Duffryn named the Bruce Arms,<sup>105</sup> the New Inn of about 1845<sup>106</sup> and the Duffryn Arms at Cwmbach.<sup>107</sup>

John Bruce Bruce also carried on the traditional roles of the landowner, undertaking public office and even attempting to attain a parliamentary seat in 1837. During the Napoleonic War, he served as a captain in the Royal Glamorganshire Light Infantry Militia; he was a magistrate and in 1829 appointed the first Stipendiary Magistrate for Merthyr Tydfil at a salary of £300, this sum raised through a levy on the district's blast furnaces. He served in this capacity during the 'Merthyr Rising' of 1831 and retained the post until acceding to Duffryn St Nicholas and financial security in 1837.<sup>108</sup> He sat in judgement of cases at the Mountain Ash Inn, which sometimes meant that that suspects had to be escorted over the mountain from as far away as Dowlais as well as undertaking other public duties there.<sup>109</sup> As a Tory election candidate, he sought election in the borough constituency of Merthyr Tydfil, where J. J. Guest defeated him.<sup>110</sup> He was sheriff for Glamorgan in 1844<sup>111</sup> and a Deputy Lieutenant for the county.<sup>112</sup>

Bishop Copleston of Llandaf gives an interesting observation of the Duffryn estate in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In a report of his visit there in 1834 he writes,

In the course of my circuit, we met with warm-hearted hospitality everywhere, but nowhere I think, was the domestic scene more interesting than at Duffryn, Aberdare. I shall set down the three entire days spent there as among the happiest of my life. It realised my ideal picture of a Highland Chief among his vassals. All looking up to him with affection and veneration. Mr. Bruce's fine, intelligent countenance, his clear, loud cheerful voice, his animated eye, his activity of mind and body, seem to form him for ruling *volentes per populous*. Every countenance that met him beamed with pleasure. The wild mountain scenery gave charm to the kind hospitality and hearty good humour, which pervaded the whole family. A more interesting and affectionate family I have never seen – and am not likely again to see.<sup>113</sup>

Bishop Copleston was not the only distinguished visitor to Duffryn in these years; the Marquess of Bute in his regular tours around South Wales would also stay there for a few

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<sup>105</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 108, n. 76 (ii).

<sup>106</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 108, n. 76 (iv).

<sup>107</sup> GA DBR E 47, p. 36.

<sup>108</sup> *CT*, 19 October 1872.

<sup>109</sup> *CMG*, 1 September 1838.

<sup>110</sup> *CT*, 19 October 1872.

<sup>111</sup> Moore, *Glamorgan Sheriffs*, p. 94.

<sup>112</sup> *CT*, 19 October 1872.

<sup>113</sup> Brown, *Letters of Copleston*, pp. 182 – 183.

days.<sup>114</sup> More than sixty years later, after the death of Henry Bruce, the Ven. J. H. Protheroe, Archdeacon of Cardigan and Aberystwyth, a past vicar of Mountain Ash, stated that this description of Duffryn, its owner and the people around it during Lord Aberdare's father's time was 'a home very like in character and spirit to that home of which I have some personal knowledge,' where, '... the greatest consideration for dependants was repaid by an attachment and devotion which were exceptional.'<sup>115</sup> The experience of Bishop Copleston was almost the last chance to see the area in that way. In 1837, on inheriting the Duffryn St Nicholas estate, the newly renamed John Bruce Pryce moved to be nearer the social hub of Glamorgan life. In 1840, Thomas Powell leased land at Tir Founder Farm to sink a colliery,<sup>116</sup> and after his death, the successor company linked his surname to the estate to form Powell Duffryn Steam Coal Company. In 1845, as we have seen, Henry Bruce returned to act as his father's agent and a new age for the Duffryn estate was to begin.

The history of the Duffryn estate was familiar to Henry Bruce and in the aftermath of meetings of the Duffryn School's Board and the Mountain Ash Local Board of Health he was wont to rehearse the theme. This can be seen as an old elite instilling their ancient rights and roles as landowners on relative newcomers. It is also the linking, through storytelling, that connects the earlier history of a place to the new community that has grown there, instilling in them a feeling of place rather than class or nationality. The select audience, primarily the principal citizens of the town, would then disseminate the stories outward. The knowledge of the history of the place had a practical value when it came to the important matter of farm boundaries, ownership of watersheds and ancient contacts with other landowning families. The errant heir who wastes his long nurtured inheritance on dissolution was one that was well-understood among the elite, and satirised in the serial artwork, *A Rakes Progress*, by William Hogarth of 1732 - 33, a parable sadly wasted on the Jones family. The idea was well understood by John Bruce Pryce, however, as he ensured that his own properties were protected for future generations from the activities of one ne'er-do-well, through the instrument of the entail. Consequently, Henry Bruce did not have the financial or practical freedom of action that his status might suggest. While it was political change in the twentieth century that was to diminish the great landed estate's power, influence and wealth, the entail was a sound device to offer some protection for the future and one that helped some to survive. The example of the past at Duffryn clearly

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<sup>114</sup> *CT*, 19 October 1872.

<sup>115</sup> *EE*, 4 March 1895.

<sup>116</sup> GA MSS D/D Br. 130.

showed that indolent or distracted landownership was not a means of maintaining privilege and power and other avenues had to be continually explored.

The marginal economic nature of the Duffryn estate was a difficulty for many of the owners who were in possession of it. Those who ran the estate successfully were individuals who either owned other more valuable lands elsewhere, preferably with other sources of income, for example, William and Thomas Bruce. Alternatively, there were those that were able to exploit the resources of the estate to enhance and expand their property and their social status; for example, the owners of the estate in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and the Bruce family from the mid-nineteenth century. John Bruce Pryce was especially fortunate in that he was included in both of these groups. The element that was the catalyst for this prosperity was always carbon, in the form of timber, charcoal and coal. This allowed the lands of the estate to be developed profitably through the construction of industrial and commercial premises, housing and transport infrastructure. This in turn allowed the rebuilding of Duffryn House in a grander style, and the advancement of the family in social and political circles. There was a price to pay for this, in the forms of environmental degradation, which was to scar the earlier pastoral idyll. There was a precarious aspect to an estate dependent on a single industry, be it iron smelting or coal mining. Landownership in the Glamorgan uplands was usually a tenuous and poor prospect, unless gilded by the circumstances that bestowed on the owners great wealth.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Landownership in a Mutable Environment**

The circumstances that directly motivated Henry Bruce to return to Duffryn in 1845 relate to personal adversity. The changing environment around the estate was undoubtedly an additional motivation, which promised a means of securing his financial and professional future. It is unlikely he envisaged what the full consequences of this action would be or how the revolutionary changes were to affect his beloved mountain landscape. Then, even the most visionary of industrialists of the 1840s would have been awed by the changes wrought in the period 1845 – 1895. Bruce's evolving response to the situation was undertaken against the background of change, although it was one similar to that occurring throughout the coalfield and across large parts of Great Britain. There was no need for him to seek new expedients, indeed, his scope of action was limited by greater shifts in the socio-economic milieu and by his father's earlier decisions. This chapter examines to what extent Henry Bruce had an idiosyncratic approach to landownership in the context of wider environmental change and how, or if, his actions were consistent with those of contemporaries. The decisive factor that necessitated his responses was the development of the sale coal industry in South Wales generally, and especially that of the Cynon Valley.

The progress of coal production and its consequences were not constant across the timeframe or geographically throughout the district. The industrialisation of the Cynon Valley spread downstream from Hirwaun towards Mountain Ash, the first encroachments only affecting Duffryn's own environment from 1840. From this time there was a rapid rate of development and it will be shown that the actions of Henry Bruce, his family and agents were important in providing the essential facilities required by the growing community. It will be argued that Bruce was, however, constrained in his ability to act with freedom by forces beyond his control and these issues will be explored in this chapter.

Within this broad description, there are three distinct periods in the nineteenth century evolution of Mountain Ash. The first, during the early years of the century until the 1840s, saw some development of the infrastructure, mainly sponsored by and for the benefit of the iron industry in the area around Aberdare and as detailed in Chapter 1. Smaller scale industrial and commercial premises were instigated at Mountain Ash in this period and an embryonic urban settlement began to emerge. The middle decades of the century are an important catalyst period that saw the foundation of a large number of steam coal collieries in the central portion of the Cynon Valley, particularly in the sections of the Duffryn estate

in the Aman valley and at Cwmbach, as well as at Mountain Ash itself.<sup>1</sup> The stimulus to develop steam coal collieries in the valley was predominantly directed by enterprising industrialists, for instance, Thomas Powell, David Williams and John Nixon. These men were often working at the limits of their financial capabilities and at the edge of technological knowledge and were innovative and dogged in their pursuit of the mineral deposits that they sought.<sup>2</sup> The final period, the latter three decades of the century, witnessed the establishment of a small number of large collieries at the southern limit of the district that lay beyond the estate, yet within the Mountain Ash local government district.<sup>3</sup> This pattern of colliery development drove all the subsequent advances.

Coal output was inevitably the driver for other forms of urban and industrial progress in the South Wales valleys below the iron-producing belt located at the northern margins of the coal basin. From the 1840s until 1865 there was a spectacular increase in the total amount of coal produced in the Cynon valley, driven by the demand for the steam coal available in the Four Foot seam, which in the central area of the district, was at a comparatively accessible depth. A relative decline in the output of coal from the valley, experienced between the years 1866 – 1880, was a result of strengthening competition, particularly, from the Rhondda valleys and because the local industry faced the impact of increasing maturity. Rapid growth returned with the development of the deep seams at the southern portion of the valley, as well as with the utilisation of the lower measures at older sites that had previously been impracticable.<sup>4</sup> Until the outbreak of the First World War, output grew continually, except for those periods of industrial dispute when production inevitably dipped, reaching a peak in the valley of 6,800,000 tons in 1913.<sup>5</sup> These structural changes affected all involved in the coal industry including the landowners, who sought to mitigate their exposure to fluctuations of trade in a variety of ways.

In significant aspects of their behaviour, the reaction of the owners of the Duffryn estate to the changing circumstances that both beset and benefitted them is consistent with that of the other traditional landholders in the South Wales valleys. Ingénue speculators and developers also followed a similar path as that trodden by the established elites. There was, however, one very substantial dividing line between Henry Bruce and the other major landowners in the industrial valleys. As we have already established, absentee aristocrats

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<sup>1</sup> Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, pp. 104 – 109. Walters, *Economic and Business History of the South Wales Steam Coal Industry*, pp. 18 – 25.

<sup>2</sup> Phillips, *History of the Pioneers of the Welsh Coalfield*.

<sup>3</sup> Walters, *Economic and Business History of South Wales Steam Coal Industry*, pp. 14, 22 – 23.

<sup>4</sup> Walters, *Economic and Business History of South Wales Steam Coal Industry*, p. 352.

<sup>5</sup> CVHS, *Cynon Coal*. p. 273.

and gentry preferred to reside elsewhere, the more bucolic Vale of Glamorgan being a favoured option, and the industrialists and prosperous business people eventually followed suit.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Bruce and his immediate successors continued to live on their estate in the historic manor of Duffryn and later at Cefnpennar House.<sup>7</sup> Another important point allied to this is that there was continuity in the management of the property through an equally stable and resident family of agents to the estate, the Morgan family of Maesydderwen, Mountain Ash. This sustained intimacy and connexion led to a consistent approach in the management of their lands over the span of more than a century, although there were some unexpected fissures in this apparently consistent landowning landscape.

The appearance of this seemingly steady transition of the estate from one generation to the next, in an unbroken and seamless transfer is misleading. The fact that Henry Bruce was in a position to be the guardian of Duffryn is in itself an admixture of accident and manoeuvre. William Bruce passed Duffryn to his only son Thomas, but as he died without issue, the estate passed to his nephew John Bruce Knight, eventually named Bruce Pryce. He followed the general trend among the Glamorgan landowners and greater industrialists and in later years preferred his Duffryn St Nicholas property as a residence. Instead of the straightforward and generally expected transfer to the eldest son, John Wyndham Bruce, Duffryn Mountain Ash, went to his second, Henry Bruce, who had chosen to reside there since 1845 and in this, the estate, as an entity and its residents may have been fortunate. John Bruce predeceased his father and his heirs inherited the St Nicholas estate, although they later preferred a move to the socially superior environment of Cheltenham to Glamorgan. This decision led to a gradual alienation from their patrimony. Henry Bruce was succeeded in the ownership of the estate by his eldest son Henry Campbell Bruce, whose own heir Henry Lyndhurst Bruce was killed in action in 1914, the second son Clarence Napier Bruce succeeding to the estate and becoming the third Lord Aberdare.<sup>8</sup>

The family maintained their association, yet the natural line of succession, when considered under the prevailing aristocratic ideology of primogeniture, is broken at several points. This did not loosen the affinity of the holder of the title and land for his property, as they all retained a close interest in their Mountain Ash inheritance. From the 1870s, John Bruce Pryce had entailed the estate into trust for the benefit of his heirs, but somewhat protected from the worst actions of a dissolute successor, which given some of the activities of his descendants was a prescient precaution. Some of the important data recounted in this study

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<sup>6</sup> Griffiths, *Entrepreneurial Society of the Rhondda Valleys*, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> *South Wales Echo*, 22 April 1969.

<sup>8</sup> C. Mosler, *Burkes Peerage and Baronetage. Volume I, Abdy – Langrishe. 106<sup>th</sup> Edition*, (London, 1998), p. 8.

stem from the necessary legal documents that derive from this act.<sup>9</sup> The evolution of the Duffryn estate in response to the growth of the coal industry was contingent on the personality and concepts of the beneficiary of that title.

The development of the South Wales coal industry was similarly not straightforward, and while the basic elements for the exploitation of the intrinsic resources of the area were always present, the specific course that this followed was shaped by individual judgements. South Wales was uniquely fortunate in that it had a variety of types of coal available, from the anthracite and semi-anthracite of the west, to the dry steam and smokeless coal of the central area, and the bituminous variety of the extreme south and east of the coalfield. As the geology of the coalfield adopts the form of a basin, this distinction did not preclude a mixture of coal types in the same district. For instance, in the Dinas area of the lower Rhondda Fawr, a number of bituminous collieries were sunk several decades before the more significant steam coal industry developed. The Duffryn estate, situated at the junction of the dry steam and smokeless steam regions, also contained bituminous coal deposits outcropping on the hillsides, or at shallow depth further to the south. Moreover, Mountain Ash is located near the geographic centre of the distribution of steam coal in South Wales.<sup>10</sup> The deep valleys that are the standard feature of the ancient Glamorgan upland plateau allow ready access to the upper coal measures and allow their exploitation through the utilisation of adits rather than shafts. The shape of the coalfield dictated the early development of its resources.

Experience in industrial processes was important to the later development of the South Wales coal trade. Coal excavation in South Wales began from, at the latest, the medieval period, particularly along the southern outcrop of the coalfield near the coasts of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Glamorgan. The trade in minerals across the Bristol Channel was particularly beneficial. Coal from the western section of the coalfield exported by sea to the mineral rich counties of Cornwall and Devon, complimented the metal ores, which were the return cargo. The imported ores needed coal for the smelting and refining processes and the economics of transport dictated the optimum location was nearer the coal than the ores. Moreover, manufacturers required coal to process the metal into saleable products and this led to the subsequent development of secondary industries.<sup>11</sup> From the seventeenth century, especially in the Neath and Swansea valleys and around Llanelli, where the seams were shallow and demand by the non-ferrous metal industries was

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<sup>9</sup> GA DBR E Series.

<sup>10</sup> Walters, *Economic and Business History of South Wales Steam Coal Industry*, p. xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, p. 2.

strong, production grew during the eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The refining of metallurgical ores was to continue to be an important factor in the Welsh coal industry throughout its history and especially with the development of the north Glamorgan iron industry.

The congress between iron ore, limestone and coal at the northern fringe of the Glamorgan and Monmouthshire mineral basin gestated into the significant iron industry that was to dominate the early industrial history of these localities. The iron industry situated at the northern extremities of the coalfield benefitted from the proximity of resources, but was handicapped by the extremely poor transport system, occasioned by the difficult geography. The tramway, canal and railway links<sup>13</sup> these companies constructed from their works to the coast were to be essential in securing the prosperity of the nascent steam coal trade.<sup>14</sup> The iron companies were large-scale users of coal in their industrial processes and this was an important product of their often large and lucrative mineral properties.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the iron companies increasingly turned their attention to the sale coal business. The sale coal firms saw this competition as unhelpful. The iron making companies with reserves of resources, human, mineral and capital, had the ability to switch coal production between sale and process uses. The iron companies could also utilise the small coal, which was of little value to the steam coal extractors. This was because customers specified large coal in contracts, and this gave the iron companies an additional advantage. Iron companies could also afford to pay their colliers a lower wage rate, due to their regular employment when compared to their sale coal counterparts. Another important incentive was their ability to offer accommodation in established communities with all the facilities this entailed, when compared with the dreadful conditions of the early colliery settlements.<sup>15</sup> The evolving process undertaken by the ironmasters, of moving into the sale coal trade was, however, often slow; the Dowlais Company only truly began to exploit its coal reserves for external sale after the death of J. J. Guest in 1852, under the trusteeship of G. T. Clark and Henry Bruce.<sup>16</sup>

The Glamorgan coal industry increased its annual output every year from 1858 – 1914 with the exceptions of 1868, 1885, 1897 and 1911.<sup>17</sup> The number employed in collieries in South Wales increased every year from 1872 – 1914 except 1875 - 78, 1886 and 1896,

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<sup>12</sup> R O Roberts, 'The Smelting of Non-Ferrous Metals since 1750,' in G Williams (ed.), *Glamorgan County History. Volume V. Industrial Glamorgan from 1700 – 1970*, (Cardiff, 1980), pp. 48 – 51.

<sup>13</sup> Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, p. 98.

<sup>15</sup> Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, pp. 82 – 91.

<sup>16</sup> Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, p. 86.

<sup>17</sup> Walters, *Economic and Business History of South Wales Steam Coal Industry*, pp. 348 – 349.

rising from 26,000 in 1841 to 234,000 in 1914.<sup>18</sup> There was a consequent increase of population in Glamorgan with a half million being added between 1841 – 1891 to 660,000; and a further half million, 1891 – 1911 to 1,100,000.<sup>19</sup> This general pattern of expansion does mask local differences in the evolution of the industry. While coal output grew in the Cynon valley from 1,450,000 tons in 1856 to 4,850,000 tons in 1897, its proportion of total production fell from a peak of 33% in 1862, to 11% in 1881, although the figure remained generally in the range 14% - 19% of the total 1871 – 1897. This change is explained by the rapid growth that occurred in the Rhondda valleys and the exploitation of areas previously untouched by industrialisation. Herein is a signal truth regarding the development of the coal industry in the Cynon valley. As an area that had developed initially as an iron-producing district around Aberdare, it benefitted from transport infrastructure, an entrepreneurial class with the expertise in industry and capital generation and a skilled industrial workforce. As the coal industry expanded and iron production declined, portions of the workforce transferred from one trade to another. An example of this is David Williams of Ynyscynon, who started as a sawyer in the Aberdare iron industry before venturing into the coal industry in the 1840s.<sup>20</sup>

The role of the owners of the land was also an important factor. Landlords were accustomed to dealing with industrialists and both parties had an understanding, albeit partial and incomplete, of the potential of the coal industry in the district. Mineral leases tended to be granted early in the mid and upper Cynon Valley and in the case of the Duffryn estate, the whole mineral property had been let by the 1850s. This range of factors was not present in less developed parts of the coalfield in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Once the benefits of South Wales steam coal over its northeast of England competitors was resolved, especially through the extensive trials carried out on behalf of the British Admiralty, and a successful export trade initiated with France, through the actions of enterprising individuals like John Nixon,<sup>21</sup> the industry enjoyed new investment. The importance of the early pioneers to the development of the industry as a whole, and their concentration of activity, to a large part, in the area around the Duffryn estate was a substantial driver to how the area developed.<sup>22</sup>

Initially the coal proprietors were individual entrepreneurs like Thomas Powell, or small groups of mining engineers, professional or businessmen, such as the business of Nixon,

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<sup>18</sup> J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics. Volume 1*, (Cardiff, 1985), pp. 353 – 354.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics. Vol. 1*, p. 41.

<sup>20</sup> Davies & Evans, *The Land your Fathers Possessed*, pp. 115 – 140.

<sup>21</sup> Vincent, *John Nixon*.

<sup>22</sup> A P Barnett & B Wilson Lloyd (ed.), *The South Wales Coalfield* (Cardiff, 1921), p. 11.

Taylor, Cory and Company (NTC&C). These were owners of a number of collieries, but it was common for these early examples of coal proprietors to be single unit organisations. The owners of collieries frequently had links to allied industries, for example, ship owners and shipping brokers, infrastructure contractors, bankers and manufacturers, and these were important investors in the South Wales coal industry. The early developers of the industry tended, at first, to live in close vicinity to their collieries; their workmen and their families were their neighbours and often members of the same congregation.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Griffiths, *The Entrepreneurial Society of the Rhondda Valleys*, pp. 61 – 64.

## The Development of Mountain Ash pre-1840 – 1863



Illustration 5. Above, is a view of the area that was to become Mountain Ash in the early nineteenth century. Duffryn House is located just to the right of centre. The canal and river bridge are visible, as well as smoke from a forge known to have been in operation in this period. Around the bridge and canal the embryonic settlement is beginning to form.



Illustration 6. Above, this representation of the 1860s shows the effect of the sinking of Deep Duffryn Colliery (right centre, with Duffryn House just above), on the development of the locality. The bridge has been substantially remodelled to accommodate the Taff Vale Railway. In the background are the chimneys of Aberaman Ironworks.

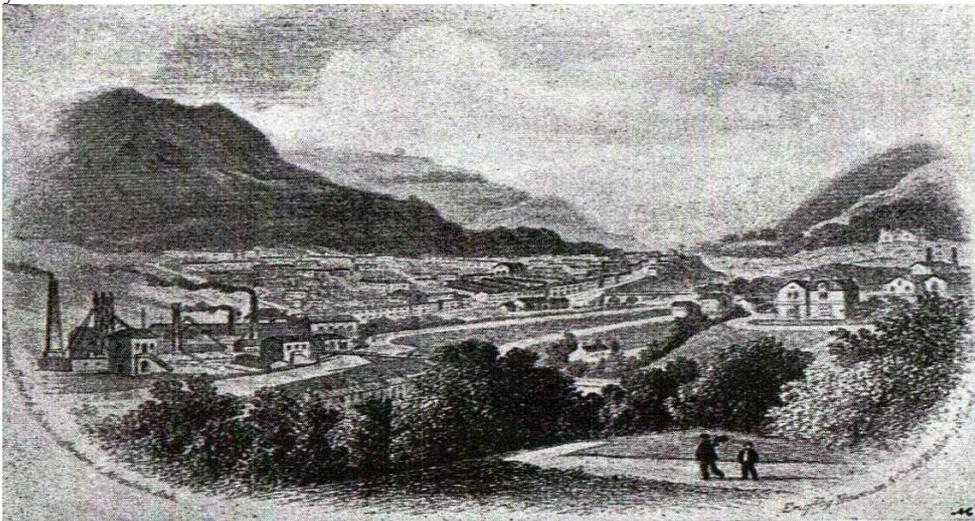


Illustration 7. Above, this view of the expanded township clearly shows Nixon's Navigation Colliery on the left. The large house to the right is Troedyrhiw, the Mountain Ash home of John Nixon. A collier and his son appear to be shown in the right hand corner.

In contrast to the iron industry, the pioneers of the coal trade tended to be conspicuous for their Welsh origins and their strong link to that culture. It also became increasingly common that individuals had extensive interests in a number of different concerns. Over the century, as the industry grew, a complex process of expansion, amalgamation and consolidation occurred that saw a number of large companies dominate the industry. By 1913, two of the three largest coal companies in South Wales were those of Powell Duffryn and Nixon's Navigation, whose origins and continued centre of operations were located on and around the Duffryn property.<sup>24</sup> The estate through its early leasing of its mineral reserves, generally in large sections, helped found the fortunes of these companies. Throughout the period, a process of disengagement happened where ownership steadily retreated from the location of production and sympathy with the communities that had formed around them lessened.<sup>25</sup>

In Chapter 1 it was shown that the Duffryn estate had benefitted from the earlier periods of industrialisation that occurred to the north around Hirwaun and Aberdare. The construction of the canal had allowed a slow but steady development around the Mountain Ash area. Crawshay Bailey's purchase and development of the Aberaman estate brought that industrialisation to within sight of the demesne. It was with Bailey's promotion of the Aberdare Railway that fundamental alterations began in the economic prospects of the district. Until then, while development had occurred, it had been minor in scope and compatible with the established rural nature of Mountain Ash. Alongside these important elements, it was the success of the Thomas family's coal pits at Abercanaid and, more importantly, the Wayne family's instigation of the sinking of a shaft to the coal measures at their colliery at Abernant y Groes that proved the inherent possibilities of the industry. This latter colliery was sunk in 1837, it bordered the Duffryn estate and marked a profound change in the potential of that property.<sup>26</sup>

As is clear from his correspondence quoted at the beginning of Chapter 1, Henry Bruce saw an opportunity to forge a new living for himself in administering this change.<sup>27</sup> The winning of coal at Abernant y Groes, was the catalyst that initiated the rapid expansion of the industry in the middle portion of the Cynon Valley. This area, located to the south of the old village of Aberdare, and including the subsidiary Aman valley, extended to the northern edge of the Duffryn lands. The main objective of these early enterprises was the

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<sup>24</sup> J Williams, *The Coal Industry, 1750 – 1914, Glamorgan County History. Volume V. Industrial Glamorgan from 1700 – 1970*, 1980, p. 195.

<sup>25</sup> Griffiths, *Entrepreneurial Society of the Rhondda Valleys*, pp. 24 – 25.

<sup>26</sup> CVHS, *Cynon Coal*, 23 – 27.

<sup>27</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 43

good quality steam coal of the Four Foot seam. The first deep colliery sunk on Bruce property was that of the redoubtable Thomas Powell at Tirfounder Farm in 1840.<sup>28</sup> This colliery, also known as Old Duffryn Pit, was one of a cluster of collieries locally to bear the name of the estate on which it stood. Further collieries started in the 1840s, of relevance here, were those at Lletty Shenkin, Ynyscynon and Middle Duffryn (1843); Upper Duffryn (1844); Aberaman (1845); Treaman and Werfa (1846); Cwmneol (1848); Cwmaman (1849) and Abercwmboi (1851).<sup>29</sup> Most of these pits were not on the estate itself, but are evidence of the prospects for exploiting the coal under the property. Between 1844 and 1850, the production of coal in the Cynon valley increased from 176,953 tons to 477,208 tons.<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting that, as a rough guide, throughout the period studied the average output per colliery worker per annum was between 250 and 350 tons, and this, when compared with occupation levels helps suggest output levels and therefore, revenue totals for the estate.<sup>31</sup> Increasing demand for Aberdare coal meant that entrepreneurs were attracted to the area and these were willing to create new pits to supply the growing market. A demand that had been fostered by one of their number.

Within the South Wales coal trade the story of how John Nixon took the high quality Aberdare steam coal to France and successfully marketed it there, was once well known. The less considered element of this story is that the coal he sold was from Thomas Powell's Old Duffryn colliery at Cwmbach. The notorious Powell refused to pay Nixon his agreed nine pence per ton commission on the coal sold, although he did later accede to pay a portion of the sum that he owed. The success Nixon achieved in developing an export trade of South Wales steam coal to France rested on the output from Powell's Tirfounder colliery on Duffryn lands.<sup>32</sup> The ready availability of rail, tramway and canal transport to the ports of the South Wales coastline, particularly Cardiff, facilitated the export of Aberdare steam coal in increasing quantities. Markets developed within the British Isles, on the continent and beyond, although South Wales steam coal, despite its general desirability was always subject to normal market rules. The superiority of the coal for raising steam for ship boilers was particularly valued, although for many years the competition between South Wales and the coalfields of northeast England remained intense<sup>33</sup> and Henry Bruce lobbied for his home country and estate's coal in the House of Commons.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, it was John Nixon

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<sup>28</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, p. 47.

<sup>29</sup> CVHS, *Cynon Coal*, pp. 200 – 244.

<sup>30</sup> CVHS, *Cynon Coal*, p. 273.

<sup>31</sup> CVHS, *Cynon Coal*, pp. 200 – 244.

<sup>32</sup> Vincent, *John Nixon*, pp. 121 – 153.

<sup>33</sup> Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, pp. 33 – 43.

<sup>34</sup> Parliamentary Debates, Series 3, Vol. 154 (1859), Col. 1010 (July 11, 1859).

and George Elliot, two industrialists from the Newcastle area, who were to play an important part in the development of the coal industry at Mountain Ash.

When Henry Bruce returned to Duffryn to live, the environment to the north of the estate was changing, yet the scene had not altered enough to destroy the aspect he had known since childhood. He was able to write to Mrs Ormsby, his friend's mother, 'We are no longer the inaccessible people we were, being within half a mile of a railroad station, a great convenience which does not at all interfere with the scenery.'<sup>35</sup> The line to which he referred was the Aberdare Railway, of which, his father appears to have been a shareholder, as he was present at the first Annual and General Meeting of the proprietors in August 1846.<sup>36</sup> The intention, from its conception, was that the Taff Vale Railway would operate the Aberdare Railway; the lease to that company for twenty-one years began on 1 January 1847. The terms of the lease were generous for the proprietors of the Aberdare Railway as they received a guaranteed 7% dividend in the first year, rising to 10% by the fourth and subsequent years. The lease term was, in 1849, increased to 999 years.<sup>37</sup> The apparent generosity of these terms is indicative of the profits that the Taff Vale Company anticipated. While the new railway was not an objectionable intervention on the landscape as seen from Duffryn, the consequences of its arrival would prove a different matter.

The railway was not primarily a convenience for the local travelling public. The line, as built, had only two stations along its seven and three quarter mile length. These were at Mountain Ash and Aberdare, although another was provided near Aberaman House, and this was for the use of Crawshay Bailey.<sup>38</sup> The station at Mountain Ash was sited halfway between the junction of the Aberdare Railway with the Taff Vale Railway at Navigation House, and Aberdare. This route connected to the Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil mainline, was essential to the development of the coal industry in the Cynon valley.<sup>39</sup> The railway company paid the Duffryn estate £20.0.0 a year for the land on which the second Mountain Ash station stood,<sup>40</sup> but it is unclear if the line through the estate was paid for in either cash or shares. Sometime later a short branch line was constructed to Powell's collieries in the Cwmbach area and the Duffryn estate received £681.17s.0d for just over eleven acres of land, this indenture dated 19 April 1848.<sup>41</sup> This suggests that Powell was still sending his Aberdare coal down the canal to Cardiff until this line was completed. As was the case

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<sup>35</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), pp. 86 – 87.

<sup>36</sup> *CMG*, 8 August 1846.

<sup>37</sup> Mountford & Kidner, *The Aberdare Railway*, pp. 19 -21.

<sup>38</sup> Mountford & Kidner, *The Aberdare Railway*, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Mountford & Kidner, *The Aberdare Railway*, p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup> GA DBR 55.

with both the canal and turnpike road Mountain Ash was a convenient position, where other transport links coincided. The district at this time had a population of approximately four hundred. As well as the canal warehouse, there was a foundry,<sup>42</sup> four inns<sup>43</sup> and a Welsh Baptist chapel<sup>44</sup> among the numerous farms and cottages. Before 1850, there were at least twenty-six properties, excluding farms, on the Duffryn estate itself and others in close proximity.<sup>45</sup> The industrialists who were the main originators of the railway were interested more in the use of the line to transport bulk commodities such as iron and coal, the latter becoming increasingly important as the century progressed.

Railway locomotion was originally little more efficient than the canal and many coal proprietors remained loyal to the still water rather than the iron rail. Technological developments rapidly made the economics of moving coal by rail incontrovertible and as more collieries opened and output grew, additional companies sought to enter the area to compete for this lucrative trade. Following the establishment of the Aberdare Railway, the Vale of Neath Company intruded on the valley in the north-west at Rhigos, on its way to burrow through to Merthyr Tydfil to the east. The Aberdare section of this line, initially conceived as a branch, later became the principal route. This was because the West Midland Railway, and its progenitor companies, had reached the Cynon Valley from the south-east. The connection of the West Midland Railway with the Taff Vale was just below Mountain Ash Bridge. An additional railway station, built by the West Midland Railway, on Cardiff Road opened in about 1863, was only marginally outside the southern boundary of the Duffryn property and immediately opposite the Taff Vale Railway station across the river Cynon. The more important strategic junction, however, was between the Vale of Neath Railway and the West Midland Railway at Middle Duffryn, half a mile to the north of Duffryn House. This allowed an east – west route through the South Wales coalfield without the need to use the South Wales Railway mainline section of the Great Western Railway. The area around the Duffryn estate became an important transshipment point as it benefitted from both north – south as well as east – west rail links. The South Wales, the Vale of Neath and the West Midland railways were later absorbed by the Great Western Railway and Henry Bruce had important connections to all of these concerns.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, this sort of tradeable stock investment, generally rewarding solid returns to the investor, were exactly those suggested by the sage clergyman, Thomas Bruce, over fifty years before.

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<sup>42</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 108.

<sup>44</sup> Jones, *Chapels of the Cynon Valley*, p. 52.

<sup>45</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926.

<sup>46</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare* (Vol. I), p. 112.

As was noted in the Introduction, Henry Bruce, until political office prevented his continued holding of commercial directorships, was intimately involved in South Wales industry. These commercial interests in some of the largest and most significant industrial concerns in Glamorgan gave him an influence base beyond that of his home estate and its immediate surroundings. His occupation in these roles also suggests that he was considered a competent man of business, in addition to being handily placed in the county and Parliament to support their commercial objectives. The railway companies were some of the largest and most complicated industrial concerns of the nineteenth century and the people involved were, generally, wealthy and well-placed men of standing, therefore, their acceptance of him as a senior officer in these companies can be seen as an expression of their regard for him. Indeed, as Chairman of the Vale of Neath Railway, Bruce severely criticised their engineer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, over the cost of the line and the unnecessary technical innovations he was employing, at the company's expense, which at least conveys a confidence in his own opinions.<sup>47</sup> This experience allowed him the knowledge to speak with authority on issues affecting his own estate and its development.

It is also interesting to note that after a shooting accident on a friend's estate in Mid Wales, the North West Railway provided him with a personal invalid railway carriage to convey him home to Duffryn,<sup>48</sup> while the Great Western Railway provided a temporary station for the wedding of one of Henry Bruce's daughters at his Mountain Ash house.<sup>49</sup> While the main public transport and goods points were the two Mountain Ash stations at Cardiff Road and Oxford Street, two smaller facilities were later constructed closer to Duffryn House. Within the boundaries of the estate at Pwll Ddu Lodge, a small halt was established on the Taff Vale line, known as Duffryn Crossing Platform, while across the valley on the Great Western Railway, a second small station was erected and this was named Duffryn Crossing Halt, the differentiation in nomenclature followed the distinctive practice of the respective companies involved. There was a wider social benefit to these stations, as indicated by the later renaming of Duffryn Crossing Platform as Abercwmboi Halt, however, their utility to the Duffryn property is obvious and their close proximity to the house, both just outside the demesne boundary, is worth noting.<sup>50</sup>

While the family was closely involved in investments in canal, turnpike and railway development, there is no evidence of them doing so in the coal industry. An important

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<sup>47</sup> Mears, *Aberdare. The Railways and Tramroads*, pp. 130 – 132 & S. K. Jones, *Brunel in South Wales. Volume II: Communications and Coal* (Stroud, 2006), p. 197.

<sup>48</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), p. 215.

<sup>49</sup> *MTel*, 18 September 1869.

<sup>50</sup> Mears, *Aberdare. The Railways and Tramroads*, p. 96.

question to consider is why the Bruce estate itself did not develop the mineral reserves that it owned. An obvious factor was that they lacked the necessary skills to undertake the work. This was of course true, yet landowners were prepared to employ specialists in a variety of fields to carry out tasks that they were either unable or unwilling to do themselves. For instance, every reasonably large estate employed an agent to collect rents, surveyors to assess and map their lands, together with solicitors and bankers to carry out their particular professions. The Bruce family were not that far removed from 'trade' themselves to be overly precious on this count, their Lewis relatives being notable developers of industrial concerns and the Bruce fortune itself originally gained through financial services. They previously had no expertise in road building, canal navigation and locomotive engineering.

Mining engineers were after all just another profession to improve the economic wellbeing of the landed estates. Both the Bute and Windsor properties, significantly grander in status and larger in extent, operated collieries on their properties to either prove the viability of coal extraction or when the assets of a colliery company reverted to the estate. Examples of this include the promotion of the Lady Windsor Colliery at Ynysybwl by the St Fagan's estate and the re-absorption of the River Level Pit at Abernant, Aberdare by the Cardiff Castle property.<sup>51</sup> In general, these tended to be unusual ventures or short-term expedients for a specific aim. In the case of default or failure by a coal proprietor or company, estates reserved the right to take possession of their property. The Bruce family had ensured that they included just such a provision in their indentures, all assets of lessees reverting to the estate. Evidence of this sort of clause is found in an indenture between the estate and John Nixon and probably applied to the other coal proprietors.<sup>52</sup> At Duffryn, these were never activated and the family remained removed from the practicalities of coal mining, so other motives must apply for their distance from this occupation.

There are several convincing reasons why an estate like Duffryn did not undertake the work itself. The expense involved in the development of a colliery, the uncertain outcome of the project, and the relative infancy of the sale coal industry were major factors. The estate was not wealthy and as the first responsibility of a landowner was the successful transmission of their property to their heir; if a colliery project failed, it could be damaging enough to overwhelm the finances of the whole estate. Moreover, within the entailment provisions of many estates, the extraction of mineral wealth was precluded, as it could cause irreparable

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<sup>51</sup> CVHS, *Cynon Coal*, pp. 200 – 244.

<sup>52</sup> David Morgan, *Unclassified Memorandum Book*. Held at Aberdare Reference Library.

damage to the land and, in addition, meant that one beneficiary profited at the expense of subsequent generations, although this does not seem to apply in the case of Duffryn.

Even the wealthiest landowners tended to live to the extent of their income, often above that.<sup>53</sup> There was seldom the spare capital to invest in large-scale entrepreneurial activities and the entailment of landed estates limited the prospects of raising substantial loans on those assets. A key issue is that large transport schemes primarily financed themselves through joint stock companies, where there was limited liability on the shareholder; the shares in the asset were also readily tradeable at a fixable market value. The earliest form of coal mining enterprise was that of the sole proprietor, or as a partnership, or unusually, in the case of NTC&C, through a device called the Cost Book System. In all these business models, the risk lay with the entrepreneur solely, in the one type, or jointly in the other two and liability was unlimited.<sup>54</sup> The example of Deep Duffryn colliery demonstrates some of the difficulties encountered in sinking a pit at this time.

The experienced coal entrepreneur David Williams, also well known by his bardic name ‘Alaw Goch,’ began sinking a colliery on Duffryn land in February 1850.<sup>55</sup> This first attempt quickly encountered significant difficulties, as the ground was very soft and unstable. This setback was unexpected, for although the enterprise was close to the river Cynon on the floor of the valley, he had previously succeeded with his Ynyscynon colliery in a similar relationship to that watercourse, two miles upstream. The first shaft abandoned, Williams attempted a second endeavour to the east of the original site. This concern too ran into geological problems, particularly that of ‘running sand,’ a constant and continued difficulty to engineers in the Mountain Ash area. This obstacle they eventually solved, although it still took five years to reach the coal measures and for the first coal to be brought to the surface. David Williams estimated that the 286 yard deep colliery cost him a guinea an inch or £10,810 16s.<sup>56</sup> Williams was an experienced coal proprietor and knew a great deal about the local mining environment. The Bruce family were able to benefit from industrialisation without the high risks inherent in the coal industry. That they did not achieve the high rate of return that was possible from a successful enterprise was another element in the equation.

Deep Duffryn was still not an easy colliery to work, with serious ventilation problems that had led the Home Secretary to issue a warning to David Williams that any disaster would be

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<sup>53</sup> D Cannadine, (ed.), *Patricians, Power and Politics in Nineteenth Century Towns* (Leicester, 1982).

<sup>54</sup> Walters, *Economic and Business History of South Wales Steam Coal Industry*, p. 98.

<sup>55</sup> CVHS, *Cynon Coal*, pp. 265 -266.

<sup>56</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, pp. 108 – 109.

his fault and liability rest with him. The colliery was raising a hundred and fifty tons of coal a day in 1856 but Williams saw the ventilation difficulties as insurmountable and placed the pit for sale. John Nixon, in 1855, had initiated the development of his Navigation colliery slightly lower down the valley and at the southern edge of Mountain Ash on the Duffryn estate's Gwernifor Farm. NTC&C purchased the latter pit from Williams for £42,000.<sup>57</sup> Williams made a large profit that enabled him to purchase land in the Rhondda valleys and elsewhere. He developed further collieries in those valleys and the communities of Trealaw and Williamstown are named in his memory.<sup>58</sup> Nixon, meanwhile, had devised a new ventilation system for Deep Duffryn that he deployed to work at his new colliery and with the addition of more powerful winding gear, raised output to a thousand tons per day.<sup>59</sup> Thomas Powell's Lower Duffryn pit took four years to produce its first coal. The developments on the Allen land at Forest Farm saw two 'mines' and their proprietor, and a drift with another entrepreneur, fail. In 1851, the Lower Forest level began operation but closed permanently in 1891, and in 1857 the Upper Forest level began and this closed in 1876.<sup>60</sup> These figures are consistent with data, which suggests that of the fifty-three colliery companies incorporated in the coal industry in South Wales between 1856 and 1867, only seven were still active in 1875, or thirteen percent.<sup>61</sup> These setbacks, the capital sums laid out and the technical innovations that were required for them to succeed would have stretched the capacity of the Duffryn estate to its limit.

There is no evidence then that the estate ever considered the possibility of mining its own coal. The principle of allowing land for rent or lease was an ancient custom and coal prospectors were only another type of tenant from whom contracted dues were expected. The potential profits that were possible from coal were uncertain and only fully appreciated later. The estate lands had been apportioned to the various coal masters relatively early in the history of the industry and although some renegotiations did occur, this was usually to the benefit of the proprietors rather than the landowner. Thomas Powell, John Nixon and their associates had greater wealth, ability to access funds and experience available to them than the Bruce family could achieve. Table 1 gives details of the coal lease dates for the Duffryn estate. Where the dates are later in the century, this is as a result of earlier collieries having to extend their surface areas for additional tipping purposes, railway sidings or other ancillary uses.

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<sup>57</sup> Vincent, *John Nixon*, pp. 168 – 169.

<sup>58</sup> CVHS, *Cynon Coal*, pp. 265 -266.

<sup>59</sup> Vincent, *John Nixon*, pp. 168 – 169.

<sup>60</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, pp. 36 -37 & CVHS, *Cynon Coal*, p. 216.

<sup>61</sup> D. Egan, *Coal Society. A History of the South Wales Mining Valleys. 1840 – 1980*, (Swansea, 1987), p. 38.

**Table 1**  
**Duffryn Estate Coal Rentals and Dates of Contract<sup>62</sup>**

Colliery	Original Proprietor	Year	Dead Rents Payable		
			£	s	d
Navigation	Nixon	1868 & 1889	850	0	0
Navigation	Nixon	1885	30	8	0
Navigation	Nixon	1885		10	0
Deep Duffryn	David Williams later Nixon	1849	800	0	0
Deep Duffryn	David Williams later Nixon	1885	5	19	0
Deep Duffryn	David Williams later Nixon	1885	48	8	3
Lower Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1853	200	0	0
Lower Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1850	32	7	3
Lower Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1850		8	0½
Lower Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1850		8	0½
Lower Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1850	52	0	2
Middle Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1840 & 1903	470	0	0
Middle Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1840 & 1903	130	0	0
Middle Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1840	9	8	3
Middle Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1840		15	0
Old Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1840	9	1	6
Old Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1840	1	16	3
Old Duffryn	Thomas Powell	1840	1	0	0
Fforchaman	Powell Duffryn	1889	0	0	0
Fforchaman	Powell Duffryn	1908	556	0	0
Fforchaman	Powell Duffryn	1893	46	3	0
Fforchaman	Powell Duffryn	1907	6	2	0
Fforchaman	Powell Duffryn	1907	14	3	2
Fforchaman	Powell Duffryn	1907	4	8	4
Cwmaman	Cwmaman Coal Company	1898	43	12	0
Cwmaman	Cwmaman Coal Company	1898	300	0	0
Cwmaman	Cwmaman Coal Company	1913	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>			<b>3612</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>

By 1850, the development of new collieries had progressively intruded on the Mountain Ash area, although they had not yet wrought any severe changes to the overall aspect.<sup>63</sup> This year was the watershed moment, however, as a clutch of new enterprises commenced. A list of the projects attempted at this time gives an example of the scale of the change and the precipitous hunger to advance the potential of the industry. In 1850, David Williams attempted the Deep Duffryn colliery at a point just below Duffryn Lock on the Aberdare Canal; Thomas Powell started his Cwmpennar or Lower Duffryn enterprise on land around three hundred yards to the north of Duffryn House itself. Further down the valley, on the lands of Forest Farm, the property of the Allen family of Cresselly House in Pembrokeshire,

<sup>62</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, p. 47.

<sup>63</sup> CMG, 12 May 1860.

a series of drifts were initiated; and at Miskin on the opposite side of the valley to the Forest workings, a relatively shallow deep mine was originated, this benefitted from its location adjacent to the Taff Vale Railway.<sup>64</sup> The two former coalmines were on Bruce land, and sought to win the steam coal measures, while the latter were not and worked bituminous coal. The next important colliery to be developed was on the southernmost portion of the estate's land at Gwernifor Farm. The name chosen was the Navigation Colliery, designated to advertise its produce to shipping companies, who were its intended market.

The example of Nixon's Navigation Colliery is instructive, as when this concern finally reached the Four Foot seam at 370 yards in 1860, the achievement was the cause for large-scale celebration among the people of Mountain Ash. Parties, speeches and dinners were given by the company and the community to mark the event. Although Henry Bruce was not present at these, a toast was drunk in his honour, his agent David Morgan attended<sup>65</sup> and Bruce's wife presided over a children's party at the Duffryn School, while his daughters waited on the workmen's children along with other ladies of local society.<sup>66</sup> At one of these, Nixon gave a revealing speech into his motives and methods when attempting the scheme that also indicate why the Cynon valley was so important in the initial phases of the industry. The new colliery, it was alleged, was the largest in the world at that time<sup>67</sup> and had cost £113,772. This was by far the most money expended on a South Wales pit at that time and over ten times the cost of the nearby Deep Duffryn, which was located 400 yards towards the north and was already producing coal from the same seam.<sup>68</sup> An abridged text of his oration is given in Appendix I.

It explains that sinking a colliery, even at this early stage, was a considered and calculated enterprise. The Duffryn estate, although it was the leading property, was not, at least in this case, the dictator of terms. The indenture was the result of negotiations for a long-term contract, agreed over a large swathe of land, in effect limiting the estates own freedom of action, albeit at great financial worth. While Nixon is somewhat playing to his audience in his comments in the speech, his statement clearly shows how carefully he judged his choice of location. The difficulties in geology encountered were worse than those found at Deep Duffryn, and this indicates how difficult the South Wales coalfield could be to develop, with its wide-ranging difference in the strata encountered. Most significant of all to this study is his approach to negotiating the lease for the property. The Allen estate extended to

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<sup>64</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, pp. 36 -39.

<sup>65</sup> *CMG*, 12 May 1860.

<sup>66</sup> *CMG*, 19 May 1860.

<sup>67</sup> *CMG*, 12 May 1860.

<sup>68</sup> Walters, *Economic and Business History of South Wales Steam Coal Industry*, pp. 90 - 91.

some 926 acres along the east side of the Cynon from the Ffrwd stream boundary of the Duffryn estate to just short of the Taff at what was to become Abercynon.<sup>69</sup> The coal property Nixon had negotiated also included an area of common land belonging to three farms, one third of the share belonging to the Duffryn estate. From this, it can be calculated that the extent of Bruce land to be worked by Nixon, was approximately between 2000 to 3000 acres. The Four Feet seam was the goal of the colliery developers, although below this lay even greater beds of the mineral.

In essence, the area Nixon wanted to exploit was that immediately around his pits at Deep Duffryn and Navigation. The early collieries worked the easiest coal first, that nearest the shaft bottom, before working outwards to the more distant reserves. For this reason the operating costs of collieries in South Wales inevitably rose as time progressed. The southern area of Nixon's 'take' was accessed through another later colliery that he sank in 1889 at Cwmcynon. This was located between Mountain Ash and Penrhiwceiber Colliery. Interestingly, the last colliery to be sunk by this company, before it was absorbed into ever-larger industrial concerns, was as late as 1919, at the Abergorki Colliery between Navigation and Cwm Cynon, but here the aim was the bituminous coal seams largely left behind by the early rush for the steam coal measures. The list of collieries that were in operation in the Mountain Ash area, listed below, gives an indication of the scale of the industry in this district.

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<sup>69</sup> HMSO, *Returns of Owners and Lands, Glamorgan*.

**Table 2**  
**Collieries Associated With the Duffryn Estate and Mountain Ash<sup>70</sup>**

Colliery Name	Year Opened	Year Closed	Mountain Ash#	Duffryn Estate
Aberffrwd Colliery	N/K	N/K	Yes	Yes
Abercwmboi Colliery	1851	1923		
Abercynon Colliery	1889	1988	Yes	
Abergorki Colliery	1919	1968	Yes	
Abernant y Groes Colliery	1837	1896		Yes*
Bedlwyn Level	1865	1901		Yes
Bush Level	c. 1917	1917	Yes	
Carne Park Colliery	1864	c. 1960s	Yes	
Craig y Duffryn Levels (West)	c. 1715	NK	Yes	Yes
Craig y Duffryn Levels (East)	c. 1745	NK	Yes	Yes
Cwmaman Collieries and Levels	1849	1935		Yes
Cwmcynon Colliery	1889	1949	Yes	
Cwmneol Colliery	1848	1948		Yes*
Deep Duffryn Colliery	1850	1979	Yes	Yes
Forest Level (Abandoned)	1850	1850	Yes	
Forest Level Lower	1851	1891	Yes	
Forest Level Upper	1857	1876	Yes	
George Pit	1881	1905	Yes	
Glyngwyn Level	1893	1925	Yes	Yes
Level Fach	1857	c. 1880	Yes	
Lower Duffryn Colliery and Level	1850	1927	Yes	Yes
Middle Duffryn	1843	1893		Yes
Miskin Colliery	1850	1914	Yes	
Nantfedw Levels	1912	1972	Yes	
Navigation Collieries and Levels	1855	1940	Yes	Yes
Old Duffryn Colliery	1840	1901		Yes
Penrikyber (sic) Colliery	1872	1985	Yes	
Pentwyn Merthyr Colliery	1916	1949	Yes	
Pontcynon Level	1850	1868	Yes	
Tirfounder Level	1884	1901		Yes
Upper Duffryn Colliery	1844	1875		Yes*

\* Colliery or level that mined coal from under the Duffryn estate but was not on its land.

# Collieries and levels in the Mountain Ash Urban District Council area, excluding those in Clydach valley.

<sup>70</sup> CVHS, *Cynon Coal*, pp. 199 – 247.

The progress of colliery development outlined above, surveys the chronology of colliery development in the Mountain Ash area and under the lands of the Duffryn estate. The table shows that after the initial burst of energy to develop collieries in the 1840s and 1850s, no new deep pits were attempted in Mountain Ash, until Penrhiwceiber Colliery in 1872. The cost and difficulties encountered, particularly at the severe depth at which the coal lay, were enough of a deterrent to investors, particularly when other areas offered the opportunity to attain the coal at less effort. Later, a small number of large collieries, developed to considerable depths and at great expense at the southern end of the valley. A number of drift mines also operated, mainly to exploit the upper bituminous coal seams used as house coal or for industrial purposes in the local area.

As well as the rent that the estate gained from the collieries, physical occupation of the land and their rights to extract the coal, the estate took a royalty on all coal mined and, in addition, way-leaves for its transport both over and below ground. To bring the coal from the Allen property, out of the Navigation pit, it had to travel under Bruce land and a payment of 1d was normal, however, Nixon had an agreement with the estate that gave them £75 per annum instead.<sup>71</sup> One of the major factors in the location of the colliery was that it was close to the boundary of both properties, virtually equidistant from the boundaries of the lease held by NTC&C. Royalties were paid at differing rates across all leases and coal seams, and this reflected the prevailing conditions in the individual collieries. Table 3 shows a list of mineral royalties payable to the Duffryn estate.

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<sup>71</sup> Morgan, Memorandum book.

**Table 3**  
**Mineral Royalties Payable to the Duffryn Estate<sup>72</sup>**

Seam	Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2' 9"	Large	5d	5d	5d	6d	6d	8d	6d	6d
	Small	5d	5d	5d	4d	3d	4d	3d	3d
4'	Large	9d	9d	9d	8d	6d	8d	6d	6d
	Small	6d	6d	6d	4d	3d	4d	3d	3d
6'	Large	9d	7d	8d	8d	6d	8d	6d	6d
	Small	6d	6d	4d	4d	3d	4d	3d	3d
9'	Large	9d	7d	8d	8d	6d	8d	6d	6d
	Small	6d	6d	4d	4d	3d	4d	3d	3d
Other Coal	Large	6d	6d	6d	6d	6d	8d	6d	6d
	Small	4d	4d	4d	4d	3d	4d	3d	3d
Ironstone		1s	1s		1s	6d	8d	6d	8d
Fireclay		6d	6d		4d	3d	4d	3d	4d
Building Stone		6d	6d		4d			2d	2d
Paving Stone		1d	1d						
Brasses					8d				
Blackband					1s				1s

Column 1 - PDSCC, for Tyllwyd.

Column 2 - PDSCC, for Ton Coch, parts of Duffryn and Gwainedd Bach.

Column 3 – PDSCC, for Gellyddufach.

Column 4 – PDSCC, for Bedlwyn and Tyllaithdy.

Column 5 – PDSCC, for parts of Pwllfa.

Column 6 – David Williams, later NTC&C, for parts of Gellyddufach, Aberffrw, Duffryn, Graigisaf and Abercwmboi Isaf.

Column 7 –NTC&C, for Abercwmboi Isaf, Aberffrw, Craig Isaf, Darran Las, Gwernifor, Penrhiw Caradog and parts of Pwllfa, together with a third share Troedfeddi.

Column 8 – Cwmaman Coal Co., for parts of Bedlwyn and marked areas of the Aman valley.

Mineral royalties were a fixed charge on the output of coal and other minerals from the colliery, from under a certain property. References to building and paving stone relate to surface quarries on the land rented by the colliery company. It would have been uneconomic to bring these materials from the pit shaft due to haulage and winding capacity constraints, against competition from surface worked stone. There is some evidence that ironstone was worked systematically by the colliery companies on a formal basis, especially where it was in the Blackband seam, and iron nodules were collected by workmen, as they happened to find them spread throughout the colliery workings.<sup>73</sup>

Royalties were paid at a set rate regardless of the price of coal at any given time. When the price of coal was rising, the royalty decreased as a proportion of the sale price, while if the price fell the proportion relative to the cost rose. Generally, the level of royalty payment set, according to the South Wales Coalowners' Association, was between 3.6% and 8.9% of the sale total, with a tendency for the proportion to be higher in the early years of the

<sup>72</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, pp. 48 – 49.

<sup>73</sup> Keating, *My Struggle for Life*, pp. 54 – 55.

industry.<sup>74</sup> Royalty payments were a cause of complaint by mine proprietors and workmen alike.<sup>75</sup> Nixon noted that his company had paid £79,807 9s 0d in royalties and other dues to the Duffryn estate between 1856 and 1878.<sup>76</sup> This amounted to in excess of £3,600 a year from that company alone. The rent component was a steady income for the estate as long as the company was in operation, but as Henry Bruce noted in his reply to the Returns of the Owners of Land in 1873, these figures could vary widely.<sup>77</sup> This is because the income of the estate was dependent on the revenues from coal and while trade fluctuations were the primary decider of revenue, other factors were also important and will be discussed further in the next section.

The personal relationship that existed between the coal proprietors and Henry Bruce, and their opinions of one another is seldom explicitly stated. That they occupied different positions in the social hierarchy of the area is obvious. While Bruce was a son of the manor and had benefitted from his family's influence, he had achieved eminence in his own right and could be considered the pinnacle of local society. The early coal proprietors who instigated the development of these collieries were driven men whose prosperity relied on the success or failure of their ventures. They were struggling with highly technical mining matters and juggling with large sums of capital and could be single minded in their pursuit of success. Yet the practicalities of the coal industry often strained the resources and resourcefulness of even the most competent of mine entrepreneurs. The quartet who were most important at Mountain Ash are David Williams, Thomas Powell, George Elliot and John Nixon.

Nixon was the son of a yeoman farmer from Northumberland who had sufficient means to support his son in education at an academy in Newcastle, whose alumni included Robert Stephenson and George Elliot. Nevertheless, he was certainly a self-made man of considerable engineering and business acumen and great drive.<sup>78</sup> Thomas Powell was the son of a Newport merchant, although his early training and career is uncertain. He had gained experience through shipping timber and coal from that town. Powell developed his own collieries in Monmouthshire before beginning his enterprises in the Aberdare valley, probably as a result the success of the Thomas family at Abercanaid and the Aberdare Coal

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<sup>74</sup> Walters, *Economic and Business History of South Wales Steam Coal Industry*, p. 258.

<sup>75</sup> Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, pp. 116 – 118. Grant Duff, *Letters of the Rt. Hon. Henry Austin Bruce*, (Vol. II), p. 252.

<sup>76</sup> Egan, *Coal Society*, p. 33,

<sup>77</sup> B. L. James, 'The Great Landowners of Wales', *National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. XIV/3, (Summer, 1966).

<sup>78</sup> Vincent, *John Nixon*, pp. 1 – 32.

Company at Abernant y Groes.<sup>79</sup> George Elliot had a similar background and experience to Nixon and came to be a principal at Powell Duffryn, as he had valued the assets of Thomas Powell after his death and, with a consortium, bought out these interests.<sup>80</sup> The career of David Williams has been outlined above.

The character of the coal proprietors, as outlined in their biographies and articles on their careers,<sup>81</sup> implies that they did not incline to natural subservience to the landowning class. Yet such was the position of Bruce in society that the necessity of maintaining a proper business relationship with him was nonetheless necessary. There is little indication that Bruce stood on his own dignity and expected others to be submissive to his position, indeed the contrary seems the case.<sup>82</sup> Henry Bruce appears to have been on good terms with David Williams. As a devotee of Welsh culture, Williams was instrumental in the promotion and financial support of the first National Eisteddfod of the modern era at Aberdare in 1861, while Bruce was the inaugural President on the first day of that significant event.<sup>83</sup> After the sale of Deep Duffryn, Williams did not have a direct business link with Bruce or the estate but they continued to collaborate in charitable and public works, while he was also a prominent supporter of Bruce's candidature as Member of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil in 1852.<sup>84</sup> Williams' son, Judge Gwilym Williams, expressed his deep gratitude to Bruce for his help in establishing his legal career and was visibly upset when speaking of his death.<sup>85</sup> Judge Williams was later a primary force in the movement to commemorate his career, which was to be finally memorialised in the statue to Lord Aberdare in Cathays Park, Cardiff.<sup>86</sup>

Not all Henry Bruce's relationships with the coal-masters were as close. John Nixon, in particular, was a different matter. While they agreed on many issues including, for example, the double shift system and temperance,<sup>87</sup> he bitterly complained of the royalties that he had to pay the estate for the coal he mined.<sup>88</sup> Bruce was antipathetic to some of the business practices of the coal proprietors, particularly where they had an impact on the principles of free trade liberalism. A particular complaint of the workmen was the coal

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<sup>79</sup> Phillips, *History of the Pioneers of the Welsh Coalfield*, p. 127 & Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, pp. 126.

<sup>80</sup> Morris & Williams, *South Wales Coal Industry*, pp. 126, 159 – 162.

<sup>81</sup> Phillips, *History of Pioneers of Welsh Coalfield*.

<sup>82</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 90.

<sup>83</sup> *CMG* 24 August 1861.

<sup>84</sup> *Welshman*, 17 December 1852; *MM*, 24 August 1861.

<sup>85</sup> *EE*, 27 February 1895.

<sup>86</sup> *EE*, 10 May 1895.

<sup>87</sup> *CMG*, 12 May 1860

<sup>88</sup> Egan, *Coal Society*, p. 33.

proprietors use of the 'blacklist' and Bruce supported the colliers in their complaint against this.<sup>89</sup> Bruce was also very active in the alleviation of distress during strikes, soliciting funds for the relief of colliers' families, and this will be explored in a later chapter.<sup>90</sup>

Perhaps the most telling indication of the relationship between Henry Bruce and Nixon is found after the death of both men. Nixon's widow funded the installation of a new east window at St Margaret's Church in Mountain Ash, in memory of her husband, who had died in 1899. This church, after the death of Henry Bruce in 1895, had been substantially extended and improved. According to local tradition, the second Lord Aberdare, Henry Campbell Bruce gave £259 to fund the erection of an attractive reredos to remember a previous incumbent at St Margaret's Church.<sup>91</sup> When installed it was observed that this fine Italian marble screen hid Nixon's portrait in the stained glass, and it is said that the second Lord Aberdare quipped that this was because he could no longer bear to have Nixon glaring at him during services. Nevertheless, both Henry Bruce and John Nixon, are buried at Aberffrw'd Cemetery in Mountain Ash within a few yards of one another, adjacent in death in a closer physical proximity, than perhaps they ever shared personally in life. Whatever the personal feelings between the families, Nixon's reputation as an industrious and innovative entrepreneur somewhat mitigated the worst aspects of his industrial policies. Other coal proprietors, despite their business successes were viewed less favourably, for instance, Thomas Powell.

Thomas Powell was the first to recognise the potential of the Duffryn estate and took the first major coal lease on its land in 1838.<sup>92</sup> He was also a man who was not renowned for his generosity in spirit or in business; with workers or fellow capitalists. Powell had reneged on a deal with Nixon, regarding the sale of coal in France and when Nixon complained, the older man boasted that he could break any contract he wished.<sup>93</sup> An explosion at the Lower Duffryn Colliery, owned by Powell, caused Bruce to write to his wife, 'What a dreadful accident at Cwmpennar! I was in hopes that we should escape these wholesale calamities henceforth. We must do what we can for the families of the sufferers, and try to keep Messrs. Powell up to a proper mark.'<sup>94</sup> In the journal of David Morgan, Land Agent to the estate, he describes a meeting with Powell at Navigation Station, and comments: '3<sup>rd</sup> January 1863. I thought we had made agreements with him to what he

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<sup>89</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare, (Vol. I)*, p. 289.

<sup>90</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare, (Vol. I)*, pp. 58 – 59, 60 & 289.

<sup>91</sup> A G Grosvenor & Rev G E Williams, *The Parish of Mountain Ash and its Churches*, (Mountain Ash, 1962), pp. 2 - 5. Also personal information.

<sup>92</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, p. 47.

<sup>93</sup> Vincent, *John Nixon*, pp. 151 – 153.

<sup>94</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare, (Vol. II)*, p. 179.

wanted at a fair valuation but he wanted to put his own price upon everything, I also told him that I would not take £5 for coming down under such circumstances.<sup>95</sup> It is unlikely that Bruce would have viewed this sort of behaviour by Powell, towards the estate's Land Agent as acceptable, particularly as the offer of £5 could be construed as an attempted bribe or inducement. Thomas Powell died later that year, still at work the day before his death, at the age of approximately 83.<sup>96</sup> George Elliott then led a consortium of engineers and businessmen in purchasing Powell's collieries in the Aberdare valley and Bruce seemed to have had a cordial relationship with him and they co-operated in charitable and community activities.<sup>97</sup>

The connection between the coal-owner and colliery proprietor was only one aspect of the complex web of interwoven relationships within the coalfield. Another is that of the congruence of interest, between the landowners and the people who came to live on their property. The landowner, small-scale entrepreneur and colliery workers and their families had similar economic goals that were at variance with those of the coal proprietors and to some extent the professional classes. The concern of the estate, due to the nature of the dead rent and fixed royalty was to make the most advantage of their mineral reserves in a way that provided a steady and efficient utilisation of the resource and an income, effectively returned, over the lifetime of the indenture. Many estates, for accounting purposes, treated this depletion as a depreciation in the value of the property. Property owners did not want the lessee to remove the most valuable and cheaply gained reserves at the expense of long-term viability. They did not want periods of inactivity caused by industrial disputes, explosions, floods, fires or bankruptcy. The colliery workers required a good, steady wage, for as long as was practicable and in as safe an environment as could be realised in a coal pit. The small-scale entrepreneur depended for their living on the wages of the workers, and they too wanted a continual, predictable and regular income, without the disruptions outlined above. While the colliery proprietors were essential in the achievement of these goals, these aims were not their own.

The proprietors who had invested very large sums of money sought to realise their investment as soon as possible. The precarious nature of deep mining and the risks involved meant that during the early years no return was possible. When the coal was struck, it was inevitable that the easiest and therefore cheapest sections were attained first, and consequently the most profitable. The unpredictable fluctuations in the price of coal,

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<sup>95</sup> D. Morgan, *Memorandum book*, 3 January 1863.

<sup>96</sup> Phillips, *A History of the Pioneers of the Welsh Coalfield*, pp. 126 – 129.

<sup>97</sup> *AT*, 26 July 1880; Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), p. 60.

caused by supply inelasticity, caused primarily by the friability of the mineral, meaning effective stockpiling was virtually impossible, necessitated that when prices were low collieries had to be kept operational, even if they were losing money; while in periods of rising demand and prices it was difficult to increase production quickly and effectively. These latter periods could lead to very high returns on investment, the goal after all of the coal proprietors and investors.

To achieve the high returns, colliery companies sought to utilise their lease to their maximum benefit as early as possible, where the safety of the colliers and the effective utilisation of the mineral were of secondary importance. An underground explosion could devastate and impoverish a community, it would also leave that section of coal unworkable. This was a tragedy for individuals and the wider public, and a loss to the landowner. The professional classes were less vulnerable to the effects of fluctuating economic circumstances. Engineers, lawyers, accountants or doctors all had skills that were in demand and were readily transferable. Their income was dependent more on the proprietor's success than that of the wider community, with profit related bonuses inclining them to short-term against the long-term sustainability of the general society. As ownership of the collieries retreated away from the source of production, so the coal proprietors interest in the communities around their works waned. The great combines that gradually became normal in the South Wales coalfield, centralised headquarters and specialised services functions and the professional bourgeoisie tended to followed them as well.

Some of Henry Bruce's wider actions need to be assessed against the background criticism of personal or economic self-interest. In 1851, as Stipendiary Magistrate, Bruce made a judgement against the Aberdare Iron Company and its owner Richard Fothergill, declaring that an innovative attempt to impose Truck was illegal.<sup>98</sup> This was widely celebrated as beneficial to the working man but could also be interpreted as the actions of the landlord, supporting the small-scale entrepreneur, who paid the landowners ground rent for their premises. If the workers were not paying inflated truck prices to their employer, they had more money available to spend in independent commercial premises and for rent, allowing the landowner to ultimately achieve higher returns. Bruce's negative reaction to the importation of strike-breakers, that they were dangerous to themselves and fellow workmen,<sup>99</sup> can be construed as a concern for his personal interest in maintaining effective working procedures at collieries. He was responsible for introducing coalmines and factory regulation as Home Secretary, which forced a level of professionalism on colliery managers

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<sup>98</sup> *CMG*, 12 April 1851 & *CMG*, 24 May 1851.

<sup>99</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 159.

and made safety a consideration. It also made sure that the landowner's interests were not compromised by dangerous and ineffectual mining practices.<sup>100</sup> The distinction between economic and personal interest will be examined further in later chapters in the context of his social and philanthropic activities at Mountain Ash.

The changing economic environment, driven by the growth of the coal industry, altered fundamentally the nature of landownership in the Glamorgan uplands. The Duffryn estate was able to benefit from earlier periods of industrialisation as entrepreneurs utilised pre-existing transport, technical knowledge and human factors to develop the coal resources of the area. The estate did not attempt to retard this development, nor did they seek to pursue these opportunities themselves, instead, within the framework of existing landowning practice and entirely in keeping with the actions of other landowning families they leased their lands and minerals to experienced colliery developers. While economic gain was the motive force of these actions by all participants, this did not mean that the interests of the coal proprietors and their Bruce landlords were always closely aligned. As a landowner, Bruce was operating on a different timescale, whose frame of reference was the perpetual, or at least long-term, continuance of his patrimony and not just to the end of the mineral lease. The place and the people who lived there were a larger consideration, which meant that his and the coal proprietors interests were often in opposition to one another. The patrician attitude of a resident landowner, whose personal views were liberal towards his lesser, non-industrial tenants, were to lead to interventions that are to be explored further in the two remaining chapters.

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<sup>100</sup> 1872 (35 & 36 Vict.) c. 76, 'Coal Mines Regulation Act'.

### Chapter Three

#### Landownership in a Mutable Landscape

The changes in the wider environment of South Wales were forces that Henry Bruce had to adapt to, and take advantage of wherever possible, yet were essentially beyond his control. At Duffryn, he could adopt a more nuanced and idiosyncratic approach to how these factors affected the nature of the lands that he controlled. This chapter will argue that his control of the development of Mountain Ash, while broadly compatible with similar patterns observable on other estates, were more often specific responses that were peculiar to him. In the earlier part of the period, his scope for action at Duffryn was constrained only by the general limitations placed on him as essentially the representative of his father and by the financial and practical exigencies of a rapidly changing situation. Gradually encroaching on his own freedom to act, were the growing influence of central government, in which of course he himself played a part, and the increasing self-confidence of the society around him. As Mountain Ash grew away from its traditional core around the bridge and centred on the estate, that influence necessarily declined. Even so, up until his death he was certainly the premier resident of the district and one who was used to, and expected to play his part in the community, especially as their intermediary with higher levels of government and commerce. The shape and identity of the community formed at this time, it will be argued in this chapter, was to a significant degree moulded by Henry Bruce. Bruce was involved in wider work during his time at Duffryn and while he himself remained close to the inhabitants, he required capable lieutenants on the ground he could trust. This function was fulfilled by a dynasty of agents, who in their own right were significant local figures.

As Henry Bruce was necessarily absent from his estate on parliamentary, ministerial and committee work, the role of the estate land agent was essential in the effective running of those properties. David Morgan was the agent until his death in 1881,<sup>1</sup> although the exact date of his commencing this post is unknown. After the peculiar accident that caused his demise (he was thrown from a carriage of Henry Bruce and broke his spine), his son, Morgan Morgan, succeeded him as agent to the estate and members of the family continued in this role up to the 1980s when the post became effectively redundant.<sup>2</sup> The Bruce owners of the estate for over a century, therefore, employed a resident dynasty to mediate on their behalf with the growing community, ensuring a certain consistency of knowledge, policy and practice.

David Morgan was employed by the Duffryn estate, as an extant journal of his suggests, as agent from at least 1863. He was at this time only 29 years of age, which suggests a degree of competence in a relatively young man. Land Agent to the Duffryn estate was a duty that required proficiency in a number of disciplines. As well as being responsible for the traditional agricultural practices of the estate

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<sup>1</sup> *AT*, 12 February 1881.

<sup>2</sup> GA DBR Duffryn Estate Records.

and the development of the urban property, he was also expected to assess the activities of the colliery companies. In this role, he was the first point of contact between industrialists and colliery managers with the Bruce family. He also had technical functions to undertake that were essential in the effective operation of the estate, measuring the quantities of coal raised and therefore the dues to be paid. This meant that he measured the width of grills to gauge quantities of large and small coal extracted, ensured that the weights were accurate, evaluated the extent of underground working and the condition of the coal seams that were encountered.<sup>3</sup>

As coal production grew and the extent of workings extended these tasks became more onerous. These responsibilities were later undertaken by a firm of specialist mineral agents, ‘William Llewellyn and Nephew’ of Pontypool.<sup>4</sup> In Chapter 1, it was noted that there was a close relationship among the gentry and the professional classes in industrial South Wales; it is an additional curiosity that Llewellyn was involved at Duffryn. His wife was a descendant of John Jones, the last of that line to own the Duffryn estate, while her sister was married to Thomas Wayne, the ironmaster, who was a principal in the Aberdare Coal Company. This group sank the Abernant y Groes Colliery that proved the Four Foot seam, on which the prosperity of the Duffryn estate was predicated. While these were prosperous families, there may have been wry observations on the ‘what might have been,’ as the thousands of pounds in mineral royalties were assessed for the benefit of their successors at Duffryn.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the Morgan family were the *de facto* representatives of Henry Bruce and their activities closely followed the interests of their employer. Indeed, it is the case that it is difficult to ascertain where their personal preferences began and professional responsibilities ended. During the lifetime of John Bruce Pryce, David Morgan maintained a regular correspondence with both the father and the son. This entailed writing to both men on the same subjects at least two or three times a week, keeping them updated on all aspects of estate administration and both men were close observers of the changes taking place on this property.<sup>6</sup> Some of this interchange shows the large changes happening on the estate. A principal responsibility of the agent was the collection of half-yearly rents. As the sums collected increased, the problems of managing large sums of cash became apparent. In the 1850s, farm rents amounted to around £400 and ground rents to £75; by 1860, the latter were in excess of £400. By 1866, David Morgan was depositing £1190, in cash annually at the estate’s Cardiff bank. The regular transit of this amount of money worried him and he wrote to John Bruce Pryce expressing his concerns. John Bruce Pryce humorously responded that he would lend him an old blunderbuss to protect himself, before supplying a more helpful suggestion.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Morgan, *Memorandum book*, 1863.

<sup>4</sup> H M Thomas, Duffryn, Aberdare, *Morgannwg*, Volume XXI, 1977, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Owen, *Birth of an Industry*, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> Morgan, *Memorandum Book*.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, Duffryn, Aberdare, pp. 35 – 36.

The interchange between them, however, does show the changing nature of the estate and the relationship between landowner and agent. Table 4 gives a summary account of the increase in ground rents due to the estate.

**Table 4**  
**Estate Income from Residential and Small Commercial Property Ground Rents<sup>8</sup>**

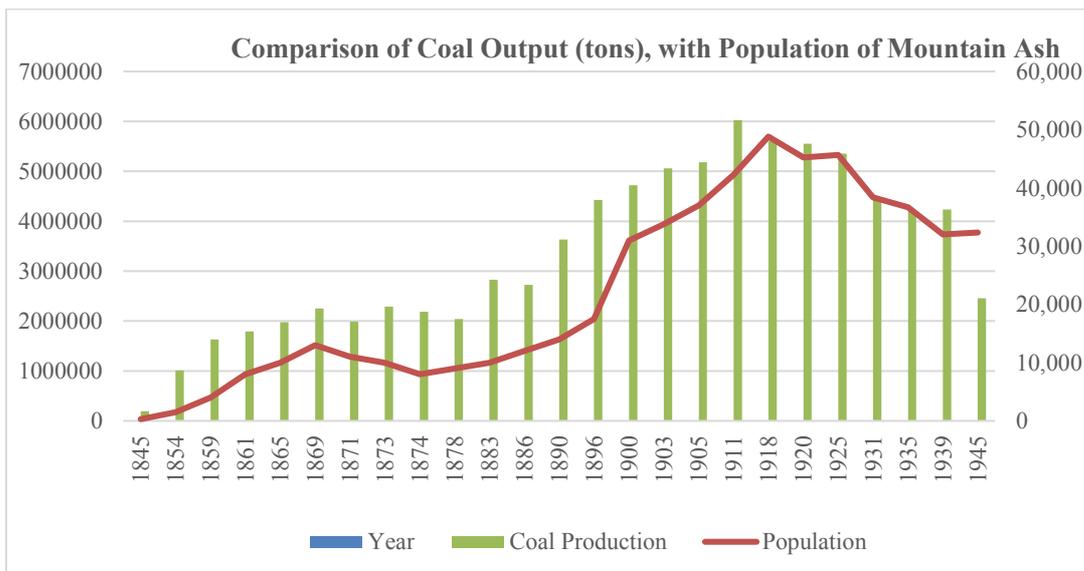
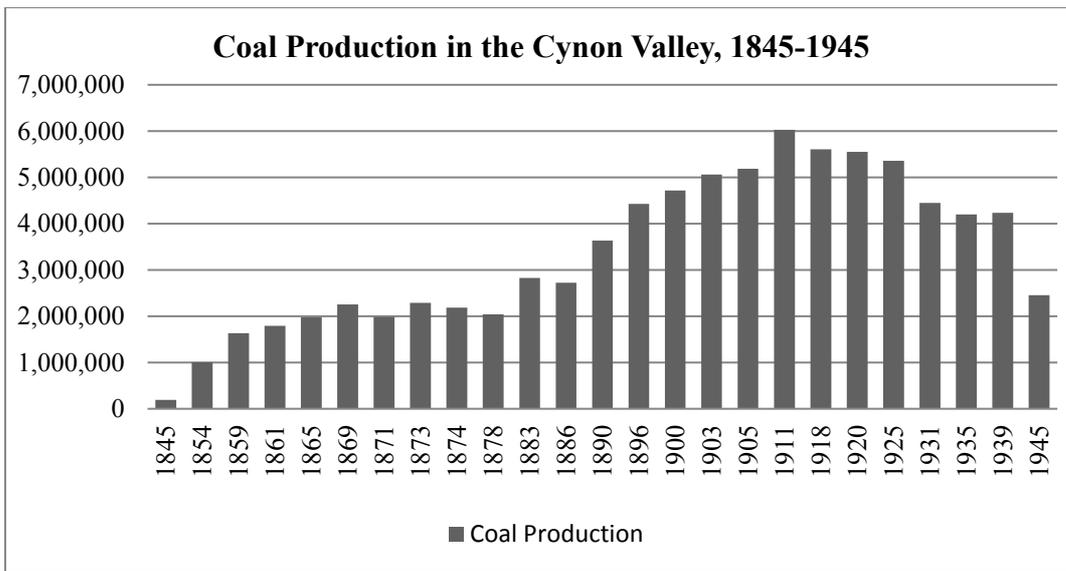
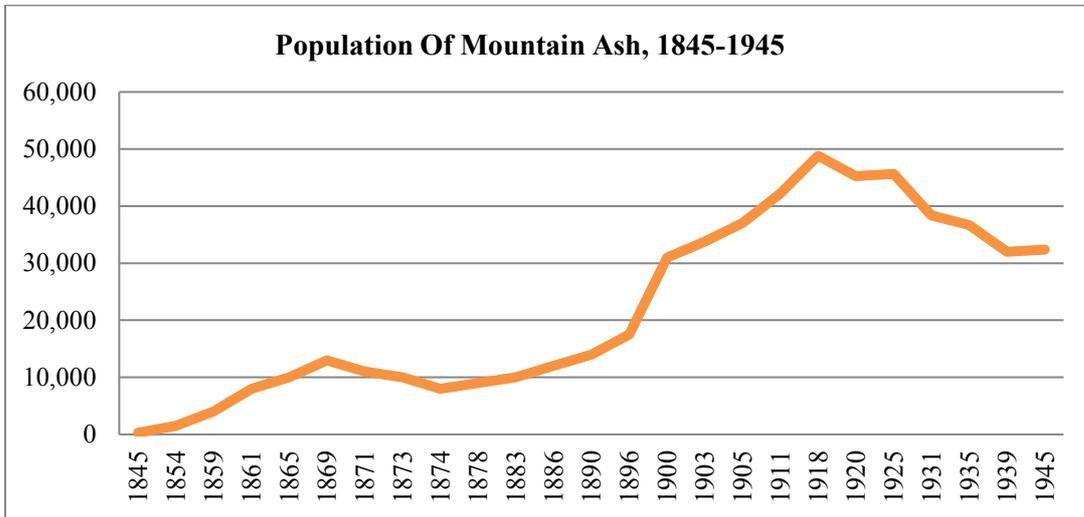
Years	Mountain Ash			Cwmbach			Cwmaman			Other			Total		
	£	s	d	£	S	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Before 1850	28	3	0	8	5	0	2	0	0	15	6	10	53	14	10
1851 – 1855	99	12	4	12	13	6	20	17	3	12	8	10	145	11	11
1856 – 1860	253	11	8	1	10	0	8	18	11				264	0	7
1861 – 1865	88	19	10	11	6	3							100	6	1
1866 – 1870	94	9	9	8	12	0	5	3	0				108	4	9
1871 – 1875	75	4	10	13	0	0	58	15	8				147	0	6
1876 – 1880	40	16	6	4	0	0	27	18	6				72	15	0
1881 – 1885	103	15	5	4	3	10							107	19	3
1886 – 1890	137	18	5				30	0	3				167	18	8
1891 – 1895	189	11	9	6	15	9	44	15	3	1	10	0	242	12	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1112</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1410</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

The population of the area grew in response to the demand for workers at the collieries.<sup>9</sup> Unlike less developed areas of the coalfield Mountain Ash benefitted from its proximity to the iron making centres of Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare, where there was an experienced industrial workforce with mining expertise. As demand for workers remained strong in these towns and natural demographic growth was insufficient to cope with the demand, immigration was necessary to fill the gap. While the railways facilitated this movement, most new residents came on foot from the poorer agricultural counties of Wales to the north and the west, and from western counties of England.<sup>10</sup> The population of Mountain Ash grew dramatically in the 1850s and 1860s then stabilised in the 1870s and early 1880s before rapidly expanding again until the 1920s. There is a straight-line correlation between population statistics and coal production data for Mountain Ash. This expansion in population necessitated the provision of the requisite facilities.

<sup>8</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, pp. 2 - 47.

<sup>9</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 108, n. 75.

<sup>10</sup> M L Williams, Observations in the Population Changes in Glamorgan, 1800 – 1900, *Glamorgan Historian*, Volume One, 1963, pp. 109 – 120. T Boyns & C Baber, The Supply of Labour, in G Williams (ed.), *Glamorgan County History. Volume V. Industrial Glamorgan from 1700 – 1970*, (Cardiff, 1980), pp. 339 – 348. Williams, *Digest Welsh Historical Statistics. Vol I*, p. 63.



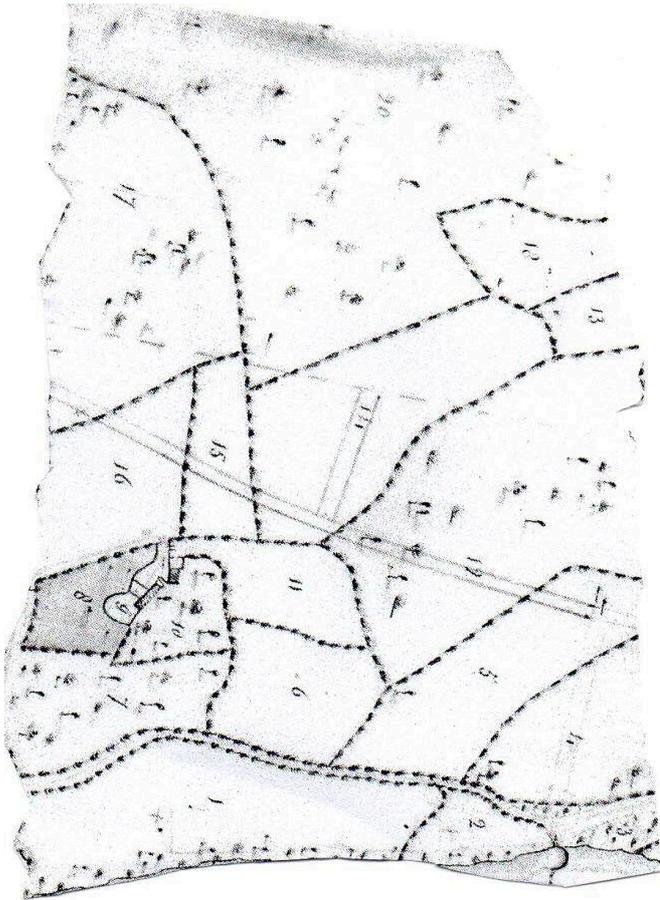
On Henry Bruce's treasured rambles around his property the requirement for better housing and the need to provide essential amenities for the district would have been apparent. Bruce's relationship to the estate was close in as far as the physical aspect of understanding the landscape and its form was concerned. Even during his long absences due to other work, he maintained close contact with his family, the agent and one must assume with the leading figures of the area. He would, therefore, be advised on the situation around the property and if necessary pass on his opinion or judgement. This communication between Duffryn and wherever else Bruce happened to be, is most apparent in his correspondence with his wife and children. Here a piece of news is sent to him and he authorises or suggests an action to be taken.<sup>11</sup> The letters that survive, and were printed in the form of a collection have an inevitably wider relevance than estate administration, those concerning these mundane matters of drainage or street form and composition generally have not. In the case of new developments, the response to the growth of the community was to apportion certain areas of the property that were made available to be settled and early estate maps show the pencil markings indicating the future location of the streets.<sup>12</sup>

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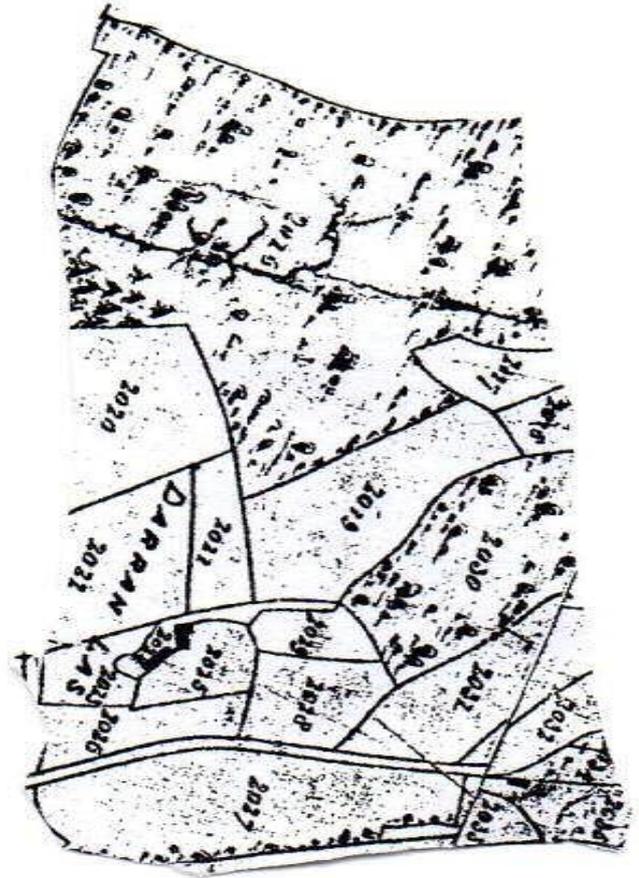
<sup>11</sup> Morgan, *Memorandum Book, 1863*.

<sup>12</sup> GA DBR/80 – 82.

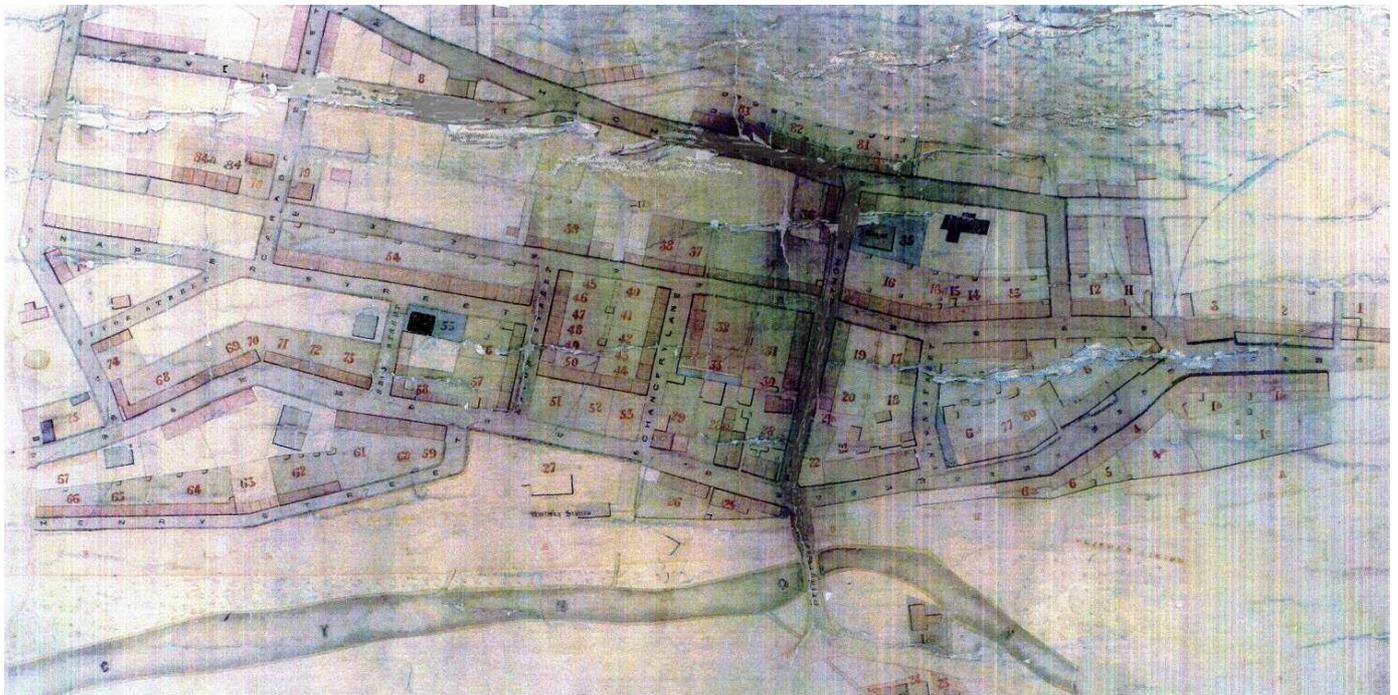
The Development of Darren Las Farm. 1811 – 1920.



Map 3



Map 4



Map 5

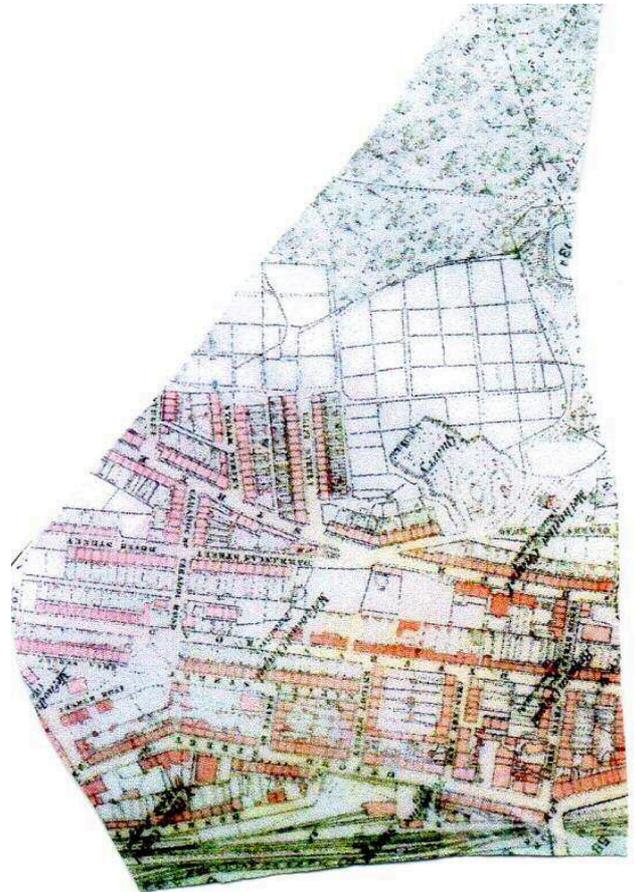
The Duffryn estate was surveyed in a series of farm plans from the 1790s onwards. Map 3 shows the farm and lands of Darran Las from 1811. In the right corner an arch signifies the point where the newly erected turnpike road crosses the river Cynon. The road leading to the right is that to Aberdare, that to the left heads southwards down the valley. Darran Las farmhouse and its attendant buildings is shown near the left margin. At some point, someone has drawn in pencil some lines that indicate the future development of the property.

Map 4 shows Darran Las Farm on the 1842 Tithe Map for the Llanwonno Parish. In the thirty years since the previous survey, there has been little development beyond a few properties at the head of the bridge. There are no signs of the streets indicated on Map 1.

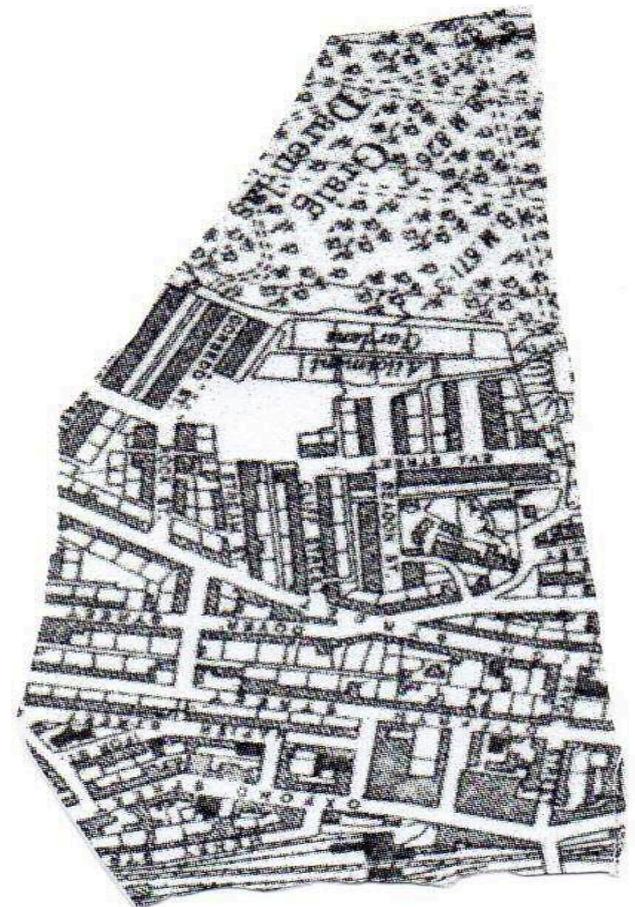
Map 5 is an estate plan from 1850 showing the first phases of development of Darran Las. Indeed, it may have been used as a plot guide for future development. The wear shown on the original suggest this plan was in frequent use. It is clear that the street plan indicated on Map 1 has now been undertaken. The estate has also allocated plot numbers to the buildings developed, however, this numbering system was at some point replaced by another as indicated in the estate Vesting Deed of 1926. Those premises indicated in black were built after the original survey had been undertaken and added, presumably, by David Morgan. To the right is the police station of 1863, that to the left is a chapel. Plot 27 is the Taff Vale Railway station.

Map 6 is an Ordnance Survey Map of 1871. It shows how the development has progressed particularly along the main transport routes and the infilling of areas left undeveloped on the previous plan. Note the large number of allotments at the top of the plan indicating the provision of this amenity by Henry Bruce.

Map 7 is a revised Ordnance Survey map of 1920. While some of the allotment gardens have now been developed as housing others remain, the main section of allotments has shifted to Abercwmbol Isaf Farm located to the right of this map. Infilling has left the property almost entirely urbanised except for the higher slopes, which remain wooded. Parts of Darran Las that were never developed, principally woodland and rough pasture, were transferred to Penrhiwcaradog Farm. As this map shows the maximum limit of urban development in this area, the layout remains virtually unchanged today. The only major changes that have occurred since are the demolition of a large number of chapels and the redevelopment of the station area as shops and car parks in the early 1970s.



Map 6



Map 7

The basic emphasis of the early development was on the lands of Darran Las Farm and the southern portion of Abercwmboi Isaf. As may be expected, the development pattern was piecemeal and initially followed the line of pre-industrial transport infrastructure. The initial development centred on the crossroads marking the location where the turnpike road crossed the river Cynon and the routes that linked into this. The focal point of this crossroads remains the centre of the community today, but in 1850, this location was already the site of the first railway station, the canal depot and a chapel, with a number of inns and public houses. The line of the turnpike road saw the construction of the first cottages on the Duffryn and Allen estates and some of these earlier houses are still visible in Commercial Street and Cardiff Road. Where the properties still survive, they are identifiable as they lack the regularity that was imposed in the design of later building projects. Other examples of the style of property that was built in this early phase can be seen in the lower section of Oxford Street and the roads running at right angles to the axis of Commercial Street and Oxford Street. The layout of the development, as planned by the estate, was a simplified grid pattern, with account taken of the prevalent topography, with the additional element of a transverse road, the High Street-Llanwonno Road axis. This essentially followed the line of the original parish road, which led over the mountain ridge to the Clydach valley and acted as a secondary route through the town. In essence, the main street lines of this period run parallel to the main roads and railway, whose own course is dictated by that of the river. Off these streets run a number of others at right angles to them and above that, further linear roads that essentially follow the contour line. Table 4 and 5 show the construction of houses on the Duffryn estate by five-year period, while Table 7 compares buildings constructed on the estate with those built in the Mountain Ash authority district. Given the initial impetus for housing was mainly located on the Duffryn estate, the earlier periods, for which there is no information, would have seen the Bruce properties dominate the proportion of total houses constructed. The dominance of property on the estate over that outside, would have been in the 60% – 70% range, although generally diminishing as the nineteenth century progressed and development progressively moved to the southern edge of the district.

**Table 5**  
**Properties built on the Duffryn estate<sup>13</sup>**

Five Year Period	Number of Houses: Leases granted in Mountain Ash	Number of Houses: Leases granted in Cwmbach	Number of Houses: Leases granted in Cwmaman	Other Properties
Before 1850	26	14	2	14
1851 – 1855	97	18	28	34
1856 – 1860	268	2	13	
1861 – 1865	114	14		
1866 – 1870	97	9	8	
1871 – 1875	64	13	60	1
1876 – 1880	32	1	26	
1881 – 1885	52	3		
1886 – 1890	85		38	1
1891 – 1895	141	5	67	
After 1896	735	20	179	
Others (Date not specified)				14

**Table 6**  
**Summary of Table IV.<sup>14</sup>**

	Total Mountain Ash	Total Cwmbach	Total Cwmaman	Total Others	Total
<b>Before 1895</b>	976	79	242	50	<b>1347</b>
<b>After 1895</b>	735	20	179		<b>934</b>
<b>Not Known</b>				14	<b>14</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1711</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>2295</b>

**Table 7**  
**Comparison of houses built on the Duffryn estate, with those approved in the Mountain Ash administrative districts.<sup>15</sup>**

Five Year Period	Number of Houses: Leases granted by the Duffryn estate in Mountain Ash.	Number of house: plans approved by Mountain Ash L. B. and U. D.	Proportion of houses built on Duffryn estate compared with Mountain Ash. (%)
Before 1850	26		
1851 – 1855	97		
1856 – 1860	268		
1861 – 1865	114		
1866 – 1870	97	84*	-
1871 – 1875	64	206	31
1876 – 1880	32	106	30
1881 – 1885	52	410	13
1886 – 1890	85	315	27
1891 – 1895	141	1187	12
After 1896	735~	3715#	
(Not specified)			

\* From 1867. # To 1914. ~ To 1925.

<sup>13</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, pp. 2 – 47.

<sup>14</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, pp. 2 – 47.

<sup>15</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, pp. 2 – 47. Williams, *Digest Welsh Historical Statistics. Vol II*, p. 79.

On the opposite side of the river, in Caegarw, in an area originally known as Allenstown,<sup>16</sup> commemorating the landowners on whose land this district was built, a different approach was taken. Here the predominant feature is that the streets, while also set as a grid system, ascend the slopes in a straight line at a right angle to the main routes. There are advantages to this plan, as opposed to that encountered to the west of the valley on the Duffryn estate. While the streets on the lower slopes are comparatively shallow, as they proceed up the hillside they become increasingly steep, for instance, Phillip Street. Yet for the residents this layout has its benefits, as the land on which the houses and gardens are built are flat, as they run with the contour not against the gradient. The additional benefit to the householder in this part of Mountain Ash is that, due to the topography, the gardens receive more sunshine than most of their counterparts on the opposite bank of the river. The construction of this type of house is more expensive than the linear type constructed on the Bruce property, as it requires a complicated building method. The farms affected by this development were those of Troedyrhiw and Forest Uchaf and these had been leased to NTC&C.

The early properties were classic examples of workers' housing of the era, which can be seen throughout the South Wales coalfield. They are single or double fronted, with each type having four rooms. They are constructed as lines of terraces of varying lengths. What appears a uniform plan, does in practice, allow differentiation in the composition of properties in each section. Duffryn Street, which runs parallel to Oxford Street, is a good example of the different forms that are present within each section. In the early phase, the estate was able to act as its own planning authority and allowed builders to construct houses, within certain limits, to suit their own requirements. The uniform nature to these structures shown in early prints of the town,<sup>17</sup> which show rows of houses, like ranks of soldiers marching down the hill, their chimneys stubby rifles punctuating the monotonous lines of slate roofs, was more variegated in practice. It is important to notice that in fairness to the estate, it did try to maintain a certain quality of accommodation, and while there are certainly better examples of workers' housing of the period, the estate's houses are well above the standard of the worst. As there was a considerable requirement for houses as the population rapidly increased (note the large number constructed between 1856 – 1860 in Tables 5 and 7), it must be borne in mind that usually these cottages, particularly in the early stages of development held more than one family unit as well as a number of lodgers.

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<sup>16</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 108, n. 77.

<sup>17</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 23.

The estate housing policy appears to have been to ascertain the next area to be developed, and offer the land to private builders. From the estate records, these developers could range in scale from the owner of a single premise, to some who developed multiple units. One man leasing twenty-two plots to build on would have made a substantial investment, as would another who leased the plots for twenty, although these may have acted as representatives for a building club or consortium. In these cases and given the very early stage in the development of the area, they were more likely to be speculative builders, perhaps supported by a third party or agency. From the estate Vesting Deed the ideal for most developers who had some spare capital or the ability to borrow, was to lease a plot for a family home and one or two others to let either to family members or for rental income purposes.<sup>18</sup> Local building clubs do not appear until the latter period of development, however, a very common form of building club was that of ‘terminating membership.’ These were sometimes formal, occasionally informal groups, who joined with one another to build houses for themselves and upon completion, the clubs or societies were wound up.<sup>19</sup>

There is some evidence that the estate encouraged some architectural differentiation even in the earliest ‘shanty’ period of building. Where a street running at right angles to the main line of construction meets a line of terraced houses, the house facing that street could include a ‘blind window’ which is inserted in the front of the facing house to add to its symmetry, for example, at the junction of High Street and Pryce Street. Some other features that can still be identified in the original street layout include the cutting of the corners of end houses where they meet a street, to give a more interesting and distinguished feel to what are still in effect identical properties to their neighbours. This is seen most effectively at the junction of High Street and Kingcraft Street, where two former commercial premises retain this feature and at the junction of Union Street with Duffryn Street.

Earlier stone details that may have been present are now hidden due to the later application of render. The current appearance of these early streets is today much more variegated than their original aspect would have been. The design norm, however, was predominantly that dictated by expediency. Duffryn Street, Pryce Street and Fountain Street have other peculiarities in their housing type and later usage. Here, due to their proximity to the two main commercial thoroughfares of Commercial Street and Oxford Street, a number of ancillary businesses were established, including at one time, two slaughterhouses, a

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<sup>18</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, p. 4 & 7

<sup>19</sup> Jones, *Communities*, p. 110.

blacksmith's forge, stonemasons and carpenters yards.<sup>20</sup> The density of these concerns suggests that this was an intended locational decision to let these properties for secondary business-related purposes.

The names of the streets on the Duffryn estate comprise four basic forms: The first is that describing the natural environment, for instance, Woodland Street, Stream Street or Cliff Street; secondly, it uses older local names, for instance, Llanwonno Road or Duffryn Street; thirdly, standard descriptive names used in the era, such as, Commercial Street or High Street; finally the fourth, but by far the most common element in Mountain Ash throughout all phases of development, are names recording family, relations and wider social affinities. Examples of the latter include Henry Street, Bruce Street, Knight Street and Pryce Street. Some of these may be less obvious today but are still relevant to the Bruce family, such as Chancery Lane, which was the address of Henry Bruce's uncle's legal practice, and where he trained as a barrister. There may be an element of mischievous humour in this and in Oxford Street, recalling London thoroughfares of a somewhat grander form than their humbler Mountain Ash namesakes. Coplestone Street and Conybeare Street recall two Anglican bishops who were associated with the family. The former was named to honour Bishop Copleston of Llandaf, a close family friend and a mentor of Henry Bruce, although modern usage has led to an inaccuracy in the form of the spelling, the second Henry Bruce's brother-in-law.

The estate and the industrialists, it is worth recalling the differences noted in the previous chapter, had differing interests in the process of the development of the land for housing. While the estate acted to enable the construction of cottages and other premises on their property, the industrialists actively promoted the building of houses.<sup>21</sup> The estate wished to encourage the supply of housing to meet the needs of a growing population while maintaining revenues for the estate and protecting their non-industrial and non-urban concerns. Their ultimate plans had a longer timescale than those of the colliery proprietors. The coal lessees, however, saw the provision of good quality cheap accommodation as advantageous to their primary enterprise. An adequate supply of houses was required to attract workers to their new enterprises, the more plentiful and inexpensive these were to construct, the lower the rents charged and lower wages needed to be paid. Lower wages in a competitive industry meant higher profits for these companies. In the speech noted earlier, contained in Appendix II, where Nixon commemorated the opening of the Navigation Colliery, he extols the virtues and potential of the area for private investors.

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<sup>20</sup> *Slater's Directory. South Wales, Monmouthshire and City of Bristol*, (Manchester, 1880), p. 15 passim.

<sup>21</sup> *CMG*, 23 March 1850.

Importantly he offered support to those sober and respectable persons who were themselves prepared to invest in further developments. NTC&C advertised in the local press for the construction of houses at Mountain Ash. They also offered to provide building materials and funds to the builders at a mortgage of 5% per annum.<sup>22</sup> The confidence in the prosperity of Mountain Ash and the profits achievable on the development of cottage property was widely shared. Advertisements in local newspapers exhorted investors with examples of the potential of this rapidly growing district, although as commercial agents and auctioneers this is to be expected.<sup>23</sup>

As the demand for houses increased, the estate benefitted, although not through constructing houses itself. The estate gained financially through allowing the speculative builder and householder to construct on their property. The estate generally leased an area of about 120 square yards for a single cottage, although this could vary with the condition of the terrain, the quality of the housing planned and the position of the property in respect of other local developments.<sup>24</sup> An example of a lease from the 1880s is indicative of estate policy. The deed is a professionally printed, four-page sheet produced in London, with sections to be completed for each individual plot. The document is dated 6 December 1888, and it includes the name of the lessee, his occupation and the detail of the plot. The ground cost £150 to secure and the lessee would thereafter fund the additional costs to build the property, plus pay an annual ground rent of £1.19.0, due half yearly. It was essential that the estate retained the freehold, as this conferred the rights to the minerals below the surface. A number of conditions were attached to the deed stipulating that the property could only be used as a dwelling house. The indenture did not allow for the excavation of coal, stone, clay or any other resources that may be found. This clause was widely flouted, where the ground suffered from a gradient, it was common practice in the area to use the stone excavated in the preparation of the site in the building of the property and its limits. There was an outline of the site in one corner of the deed, the footprint of the structure allowed given, and the boundaries set out. The lessee was responsible, along with neighbouring properties, for the provision of sewerage, drainage, water supply, and the laying of pavements and roads. The lease is signed by the lessee, the agent to the estate and by Lord Aberdare. The freehold was purchased in 1939 for £50, when the provisions of the 1938 Coal Act meant that coal royalties were no longer dependent on the ownership of the

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<sup>22</sup> *AT*, 29 March 1860 & *CMG*, 31 March 1860.

<sup>23</sup> *AT*, 17 June 1865.

<sup>24</sup> *CMG*, 2 July 1864,

surface property.<sup>25</sup> Compensation under this Act was paid to the landowners and this must have included the Bruce family, although no details of this have been found.

Henry Bruce received his training as a barrister in conveyance law, so he was able to closely follow the technicalities of estate ownership and management. This is borne out by a letter he wrote to his daughter Sarah in 1877,

I was much interested in the account of your conversation with the collier. Cottages cost much more than formerly, £130 or £140, instead of £70. This is partly due to the higher wages paid to masons and carpenters, partly to the cottages being somewhat larger. It is an expensive property, for the owner (besides ground rent to the landlord, probably fifteen shillings a year) must keep the cottage in repair. I forgot to say that the exigencies of the Local Board as to drainage, pavement, etc. add to the cost. A cottage owner expects to get at least £7 10s per cent for his money, or about £10 or £10 10s a year. In your informant's case, if he paid lower rent, he got lower wages in the North. The two things probably balance themselves, or nearly so. Have you come to the chapter on 'Strikes' yet? It would be interesting for you and Lina to read now that we have once more a strike in the Aberdare valley.<sup>26</sup>

Ground rent is a fixed fee on the land that did not, in general, rise and fall with the value of the property, or the rental value achievable. The level of ground rent levied by the estate varied throughout the century yet there is a clear upward trend. This reflected the impact of demand, general inflation, the rising wages of workmen, larger and better laid out plots and the improvement in the size and quality of the housing stock. In general, where the price of houses sold can be related to the ground rent applied, the estate appears to charge approximately seven percent of rental value in ground rent. As with royalties, however, this fixed charge did not vary with increasing or decreasing house prices or rents achievable. Table 8, shows the general upward trend in the average yield, some anomalies occur in this where a few better quality houses distort the general pattern.

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<sup>25</sup> Deed of Ownership in Private Hands.

<sup>26</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), pp. 54 – 55.

**Table 8**  
**Average yield of ground rent per property.<sup>27</sup>**

Years	Mountain Ash			Cwmbach			Cwmaman			Average		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Before 1850		15	11½		11	9	1	0	0		15	10
1851 – 1855		14	1		14	1		14	10		14	4
1856 – 1860		15	7		15	0		13	9		14	9
1861 – 1865		14	2		19	5	-	-	-		16	9
1866 – 1870		19	8		19	1		15	4		18	0
1871 – 1875	1	2	1	1	1	1		19	7	1	0	11
1876 – 1880	1	1	0	4	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	8
1881 – 1885	1	19	8	1	7	9	-	-	-	1	13	8
1886 – 1890	1	12	9	-	-	-	1	4	3	1	8	6
1891 – 1895	1	4	7	1	7	1		13	4	1	1	8
<b>Average</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

A notable feature of the development of the town was that it progressed vertically up the slopes, rather than horizontally along the valley, which was more typical of nineteenth century urban growth in the South Wales coalfield. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the estate seems to protect its own environment by limiting urban growth north of Duffryn School. Secondly, the lease for Gwernifor Farm, to NTC&C, who used the area for both industrial and agricultural purposes rather than for residential property, limited the spread of the urban area to the south. This company purchased Glyn Gwyn Farm for £20,000 and developed this area as housing later in the century. Here the streets took on names honouring members of the royal family, such as, Victoria Street, Albert Street and Clarence Street.<sup>28</sup> From Darran Road along Miskin Road, and running next to the railway as far as the Bailey's Arms, a distance of approximately six hundred yards remained undeveloped.

Thirdly, the pause in colliery opening south of Miskin meant that the population was centred in this one district and the services they required also developed here, leading an academic to comment that at Mountain Ash, 'the larger number of collieries has resulted in a swollen size of settlement.'<sup>29</sup> There was an advantage to this, in that the formation of a homogenous community was encouraged and the shape of development had more in common with traditional forms of urban districts, albeit with high and steep sided streets. This is in contrast to the development pattern that prevailed elsewhere in the South Wales coalfield.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, pp. 2 – 47.

<sup>28</sup> Walters, *Economic and Business History of South Wales Steam Coal Industry*, p. 99.

<sup>29</sup> Jones, *Colliery Settlements in the South Wales Coalfield*, p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Jones, *Colliery Settlements in South Wales*, p. 32.

Later construction to the south of Miskin did take on some of this more familiar form. The large-scale of the colliery at Penrhiwceiber meant that the worker's housing here became a southern continuation of Mountain Ash, later progressing past the colliery site and on to Tyntetown and parts of Ynysyboeth. Abercynon became a township in its own right, the connection not fully completed until new housing and industrial estates were constructed in the mid-twentieth century. There were, however, isolated rows of cottages scattered between these points, mostly to provide labour for some small bituminous coal drift mines in the area. Nevertheless, as the coal reserves were leased to the large Penrhiwceiber and Dowlais concerns rather than a number of smaller works, there was none of the continuous rows of houses along the lower slopes of the valley that distinguishes areas like the two Rhondda valleys. Mountain Ash, took on the aspect of a nodal development with an accreted suburb extending a mile further down the valley from Miskin.

A slight fall in the population numbers in the 1870s and early 1880s, allowed an improvement in the living conditions of some of the people, as the pressure on housing was less intense. A period or periods of stagnation was not unusual in the development of coal mining communities<sup>31</sup> and at Mountain Ash, this was caused by the increased competition from other parts of South Wales and by the technological challenges encountered locally. There was a continuation of house and other construction during this time, albeit at a much reduced rate. A mile and a half to the south of the town a major colliery project began at Penrhiwceiber in 1872. It is clear from the 1884 Ordnance Survey map that this district was still covered by extensive woodland at this date and housing construction only followed some time later. The Penrhiwceiber Company itself built 400 houses in this area to supply housing for the workers at this new colliery.<sup>32</sup> The workmen preferred to live as near to their place of employment as they could, but when necessary were prepared to travel reasonably long distances for this purpose. Colliers trains were provided from the Cwmbach area to Penrhiwceiber<sup>33</sup> and colliers from Mountain Ash walked to this colliery for work as well as to other pits.<sup>34</sup>

The period from the 1870s of stagnation was a blessing as the town was able to consolidate after a turbulent period of expansion. The built up area, centred with an identifiable core, allowed the development of a specific community ethos. It did not coalesce with nearby townships to the north and south as occurred in the Aberdare area. Here there was a continuous line of development from Trecynon to the Aman valley, while there was an even

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<sup>31</sup> Jones, *Colliery Settlements in South Wales*, p. 64

<sup>32</sup> J B Hilling, *Cardiff and the Valleys*, (London, 1973), p. 107 (note17).

<sup>33</sup> Jones, *Colliery Settlements in South Wales*, p. 25 - 31.

<sup>34</sup> Keating, *My Struggle for Life*, p. 67 - 70.

more noticeable continuation of urban development in other industrial valleys in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire.<sup>35</sup> Another factor that enhanced community cohesion was through the succession of industrial disputes that occurred throughout the 1870s. These, while they caused great distress and suffering, moulded a group of disparate people, predominantly originating from different locations and traditions into a homogenous community. Group solidarity in conflict and suffering were the hard firing that proved a nascent and transient people into a collective with a shared identity.<sup>36</sup>

There was a renewed impetus in the growth of the town from the later 1880s onwards as the coal output and the population grew significantly once again. The estate saw a renewed increase in house building. As well as those on Darran Las Farm, the lands of Aberffrwd were also developed. The standard of housing improved markedly in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, even for the poorest workmen's cottages. A broad diversity of property types are seen, where a bay window, sometimes with a projecting canopy over the front door, together with a small forecourt became common. Increasing numbers of houses were constructed and these were often semi-detached residences rather than a unit in a terrace. Houses became larger, with cottages containing five and six rooms and greater headroom. There was little over enthusiastic elaboration, however, and stone rubble, with the ubiquitous black mortar was still dominant. Some door and window surrounds use the more expensive brick, and exceptionally applied attractive render moulding. The houses were of standard architectural layout for the period and of the type that can be seen throughout the South Wales area, as even the smallest developer of land could utilise the standard floor plans shown in architectural stylebooks.<sup>37</sup> The plan of these properties usually included a front sitting room, with a parlour or 'middle room', with a kitchen to the rear and a washhouse behind. There were also three bedrooms to the first floor with some larger properties having an additional small nursery or box room to the front, and much less frequently an attic room or rooms. Three storey cottages were necessary where the gradient was severe. Those better quality larger houses are often termed 'villas' and are found in the higher streets above the older terraces of the earlier phase of development and in the newer streets behind Duffryn Road in the Caegarw area of Mountain Ash.

The northern part of Caegarw was the most notable new development on the estate during Henry Bruce's later stewardship of the property and situated on Aberffrwd Farm. Here the streets and houses tend to be of a superior standard of construction and design, with a

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<sup>35</sup> Hilling, *Cardiff and the Valleys*, pp. 97 – 103.

<sup>36</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, pp.98 – 100.

<sup>37</sup> T. Yorke, *The Victorian House Explained*, (Newbury, 2012), pp. 50 – 52.

relatively greater proportion of detached upper middle class houses, most showing interesting architectural details and conceived as a show of individual success and respectability. The vicarage and the agent to the estate's houses are located in this leafy area. These were, in addition to the better quality lower status houses in the area, a sign of improved prosperity and expectation. Moreover, this part of the estate lacks trade and commercial premises, which is normal elsewhere in Mountain Ash. There are no public houses found in this district or even the corner and 'front room' shops that were otherwise ubiquitous. Although there is a church and chapel on the Duffryn Road axis along the western side, there are no premises that would attract people from outside to wander through these streets to get somewhere else. The two exceptions to this rule were Aberffrd cemetery and from 1894, the cottage hospital. This part of the estate seems to have been planned and operated as a more respectable and agreeable place to live than other parts of the Duffryn estate's property, and continued to be considered in this way. This is entirely explicable, as it was also the area nearest to Duffryn House. The streets here are given names that overwhelmingly reflect members of Henry Bruce's extended family and traditional estate properties. The houses are also much more likely to be named rather than numbered.<sup>38</sup> It is clear that better housing also equals greater returns for the landowner in lease income. The analysis of estate income, outlined in Table 8, clearly shows this, as the return per house increases over the timeframe studied and as these properties were developed.<sup>39</sup>

An obvious question, given the above outline, is how effective was the estate in utilising its assets and turning them into profit? A comparison of the Duffryn estate in the context of wider landownership in Glamorgan is possible, due to the undertaking of a government survey carried out in the early 1870s.<sup>40</sup> Table 9, below, outlines the evidence that suggests that the Bruce family were highly effective in developing their estate. This shows that despite being in the second rank when acreage is considered (Column I), by measuring income generated from Duffryn, the estate's relative prosperity rises considerably (Column V). An analysis of utilisation of their assets, when calculated by return per acre, gives a clear impression that they were efficient in running their estate (Column VII). There is another factor to add to the figures and that is, those estates that attained better returns, were all significant landowners along the coastal strip based around the rivers Taff, Neath and Tawe, and the significant communities that grew up at their mouths. While all the great landowners owned disparate estates that extended broadly throughout the county, their

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<sup>38</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, pp. 28 – 32.

<sup>39</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926.

<sup>40</sup> HMSO, *Returns of Owners and Lands, Glamorgan, 1873*.

primary assets lay at the coastal fringe around the old port-boroughs of Cardiff, Neath and Swansea and along the Great Western Railway. For instance, the Marquess of Bute estate at Cardiff, the Earl of Jersey at Swansea and Neath and Lord Dynevor at Swansea. Interestingly, the main seats of all these aristocrats were outside Glamorgan and descended to them through marriages to heiresses of older Glamorgan families. The notable exception was Sir Ivor Bertie Guest, whose estates were based around the giant Dowlais industrial complex, yet whose antecedents, on his mother's side, were nonetheless those of an English aristocrat. Alan Bruce was Henry Bruce's nephew and inherited Duffryn St Nicholas, while the putative figure for John Bruce Pryce, who died the year before the survey, is given for comparison purposes.

**Table 9**  
**The Great Landowners in Glamorgan by extent of land, gross rental income and return per acre<sup>41</sup>**

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Land Rank	Owner	Acreage	Rental Income (£s)	Rental Income Rank	Return Per Acre	Return Per Acre Rank
1.	C. R. M. Talbot	33920	44057	2.	£1.6s	= 12.
2.	Earl of Dunraven	23706	23934	7.	£1	= 15.
3.	Marquess of Bute	21402	150280	1.	£7	1.
4.	Lord Windsor	12016	28068	5.	£2.6s	9.
5.	Earl of Jersey	7110	36928	3.	£5.4s	2.
6.	Edward Rees Wingfield	6463	19428	9.	£3	= 7.
7.	Lord Tredegar	6157	29843	4.	£4.16s	4.
8.	Major Vaughan Lee	6128	7112	12.	£1.4s	14.
9.	Mrs Blandy Jenkins	6084	3023	23.	10s	25
10.	Col. C. Kemeys Tynte	5933	19519	8.	£3.6s	6.
11.	Sir Ivor Bertie Guest	5640	27979	6.	£5	3.
12.	Thomas Penrice	5411	5022	15.	18s	= 17.
13.	Mrs Chatwode	5399	4820	16.	18s	= 17.
14.	R. F. L. Jenner	5381	4570	18.	16s	= 19.
15.	Crawshay Bailey	5343	4533	19.	16s	= 19.
16.	John D. Llewellyn	5000	3560	20.	14s	22.
17.	J. C. Nicholl	4894	6565	14.	£1.6s	= 12.
18.	Henry Miers	4451	2815	24.	12s	= 23.
<b>19.</b>	<b>Lord Aberdare</b>	<b>3959</b>	<b>12113</b>	<b>10.</b>	<b>£3</b>	<b>= 7.</b>
20.	J. T. D. Llewellyn	3792	3128	22.	16s	= 19.
21.	Major Treharne	3620	6622	13.	£1.16s	10.
<b>22.</b>	<b>Alan Bruce</b>	<b>3398</b>	<b>3544</b>	<b>21.</b>	<b>£1</b>	<b>= 15.</b>
23.	Lord Dynevor	3299	11298	11.	£3.8s	5.
24.	Major D. B. Tuberville	3274	4811	17.	£1.10s	11.
25.	R. D. Gough	3234	1813	25.	12s	= 23.

5.	John Bruce Pryce	7357	15657	9.	£2.2s	10.
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<sup>41</sup> HMSO, *Returns of Owners and Lands, Glamorgan 1873*. Volume II (London, 1875).

The grandest and most imposing building extant in Oxford Street is the Duffryn Hotel with its obvious connotations. Excepting industrial and religious buildings, public houses and inns were generally the largest properties in the town during the lifetime of Henry Bruce. These developed along the main transport routes with a large number appearing in the first half of the nineteenth century. At this time and proportional to its size, Mountain Ash was similar to places such as Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil in the density of public houses per head.<sup>42</sup> The provision of new licensed premises was limited thereafter, with only exceptional cases allowed and few were ever built in the side streets. When compared to Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Mountain Ash allowed the establishment of relatively few public houses in proportion to its population. While a directory of 1881 catalogues nineteen public and beer houses for Mountain Ash, for Aberdare some 195 were registered, excluding those at Hirwaun. There is a remarkable difference in frequency, even given the difference in population in 1881, that of Aberdare being 33,804, while Mountain Ash, in its Local Board form rather than its larger Urban District incarnation, was 10,925.<sup>43</sup> The estate, particularly after the death of John Bruce Pryce in 1872, allowed no new licensed premises to be built on their property.<sup>44</sup> The names of inns and public houses follow the same pattern as those relating to streets. On estate land the Bruce Arms and Napier's Arms related to family connections, others related to local factors, for instance, the Navigation Hotel and the Glancynon Inn, while another is purely descriptive as the New Inn. Table 10 lists the public houses in Mountain Ash and on the Duffryn estate with their year of construction.

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<sup>42</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 115.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, Vol I, p. 63.

<sup>44</sup> *CMG*, 12 May 1860.

**Table 10**  
**Construction of Licensed Premises<sup>45</sup>**

<b>Name of Premises</b>	<b>Year</b>
Mountain Ash Inn	1809/10*
Colliers Arms Tavern	1840
New Inn	1845*
Glancynon Inn	1845*
White Horse	1847*
Duffryn Arms	1848*
Royal Oak	c. 1850
Allen's Arms	1850s
Carpenter's Arms	1850s
The Rampaging Bull	1850s
Cardiff Road Ale House	1850s
Cresselly Inn	1850s
Bruce Arms	1851*
Crown Inn	1851*
Jeffrey's Arms	1852 – 1854
Ivy Bush Inn	1854
Aberdare Hotel	1855*
Bush Inn	1856
Harp Inn	1860
Butcher's Arms	1860s
Miskin Inn	c. 1860
Navigation Hotel	1860*
The Old Thorn	c. 1860
Bailey's Arms	1864
Mount Pleasant Inn	c. 1870
Napier's Hotel	1871*
Duffryn Hotel	1898*
Victoria Hotel	1900*

\* Denotes on the Duffryn estate.

The control of licensed premises reflects Henry Bruce's clear policy based on his prejudices, where personal philosophy takes precedence over material prosperity. Bruce was a committed campaigner against the malign effects that alcohol had on society and his time as Stipendiary Magistrate at Merthyr Tydfil reinforced his strong views against the evils that this brought.<sup>46</sup> In the following chapter, an exploration of the social actions he undertook in countering the attractions of the public houses will be given, here the focus will be limited to the physical restraints on the alcohol trade. Bruce's antipathy towards Friendly Societies and preference for Saving Clubs was partly a reaction to the former

<sup>45</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 115. GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, pp. 2 – 47.

<sup>46</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 3 – 7.

meeting in public houses and as Bruce saw it dissipating their resources on drink.<sup>47</sup> As Home Secretary, as we have seen, he was responsible for the introduction of the Licensing Act of 1872.<sup>48</sup> It is worth mentioning that in the election riots of 1880, mobs in Aberdare and Mountain Ash singled out public houses as centres of Conservative support.<sup>49</sup> On his own property, his principles outbid the revenues achievable from granting land for breweries, pubs and beer houses. Analysis of Ordnance Survey maps show that there were a cluster of these properties around the fringes of his lands, indicating a pent up demand for this product from residents on the Duffryn estate that other landowners were prepared to foster, see Map 8.

At Mountain Ash, commercial developments occurred before industrialisation. The canal and turnpike road brought some prosperity to the area and opened up the district to imported merchandise, while allowing the export of agricultural produce to the industrial towns of Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil. A canal warehouse was constructed and this can be seen in a print of the 1840s.<sup>50</sup> The premises would have primarily served the farms and cottages present at that time. The turnpike road also encouraged the development of an embryonic commercial community as merchants and the public used the new route. To support these travellers, shops and public houses developed around the bridge, which crossed the Cynon at this point. When the first collieries were sunk, the number of tradesmen grew to service the increasing needs of the growing population and the Commercial Street – Oxford Street axis developed as the main shopping area. The estate made available the land for the typical terraces along many of the principal roads, and these were, over time, transformed into business premises. An important, although abortive, action by the estate occurred to the south of Mountain Ash bridge. Here a market square was established and this is seen on estate maps of the 1850s (see Map 5, Plots 51 – 53), although it disappears shortly thereafter but was still referenced as ‘the square’ in local terminology long after its use as such had discontinued.<sup>51</sup>

The market square did have the potential to be a distinguished commercial and social hub for the town, yet a line of properties was erected along the front of the original buildings and the elongated street pattern prevalent elsewhere was asserted. The area remains the heart of the commercial district and the original line of one side of the square is still present,

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<sup>47</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 367 – 370.

<sup>48</sup> Licensing Act, 1872 (35 & 36 Vict. cap. 94).

<sup>49</sup> C Davies & G Evans, *Justice Denied. The Election Disturbances in Aberdare and Mountain Ash in 1880*, *Old Aberdare*, Volume X, 2008, pp.135 – 165.

<sup>50</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 23.

<sup>51</sup> *WklyM*, 2 October 1897.

and can be viewed from side streets such as Chancery Lane. This change of design is regrettable; if the original layout had remained, it would have left the town with a good-sized, flat, open space at its core, an unusual feature in a valley's town. As more traders settled in the area, and they opened new businesses along Oxford Street and Commercial Street, the need for an open market space diminished. There was also the problem of disorder, while resident businessmen would have preferred not to be undercut by transient visitors without their fixed costs and whose produce was less liable to inspection and, therefore, potentially of a lower standard. The two streets soon became predominantly commercial and, except for Rhos Chapel, dominated by business premises and hotels. The Taff Vale Railway re-sited its station along the east side of the square on a large plot, with a goods yards and livestock pens adjacent.<sup>52</sup>



Illustration 8: Oxford Street in the early twentieth century. The three low shop premises on the left (Plots 72 and 73 on map 5) are an example of the earliest phase of development during the 1850s when they would have been houses. The larger commercial properties represent subsequent phases of reconstruction, culminating in the Duffryn Hotel, a building of grandiose pretensions that would have been fit to grace Queen or St Mary's Streets in Cardiff. The big chimney in the background belonged to Deep Duffryn Colliery.<sup>53</sup>

The central commercial streets of the town saw further changes in its aspect as the century progressed. Larger premises were constructed for more varied and specialist tradesmen. An increasing number of professional services were provided, with the associated grander buildings that these required. These include well-designed banks, imposing hotels, larger shops and offices. Among this class were lawyers, doctors, architects, surveyors and

<sup>52</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, 1 Dec. 1926, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Postcard in the author's collection.

general financial agents. The latter provided a variety of services, from representatives for building societies and insurance companies, to accountancy and valuation services.

As well as the main business area, there were a number of smaller, satellite commercial districts at Caegarw, Darran Las, Miskin and Penrhiwceiber. It was common for most streets of the town to have a small shop, cobbler or barber in the front room of a dwelling, or a small bake house, stable or workshop to the rear.<sup>54</sup> In general, the estate appeared to be tolerant of such activities. Another regular and popular feature of society at this time was the fairs and travelling shows that frequented the town. These occupied estate land at the southern end of the town, centred on Navigation Fields, part of Gwernifor Farm, until this was also redeveloped for commercial use. Surprisingly, despite these attractions having a generally poor reputation, the estate seems to have raised no barriers to their operation.

The commercial shopocracy were another section of society that was increasingly powerful in Mountain Ash during the nineteenth century and with whom Bruce had an evolving relationship. Mountain Ash was a developing society and the better off tradesmen had great ambitions for themselves and the town. These were represented in the form of an impressive hotel and intended market, while a little later a Grand Pavilion was erected, which hosted the 1905 National Eisteddfod. The commercial class of the town were not outside the orbit of the Bruce family or great industrialists and commonly interacted with the family at events ranging from the Local and School Boards, as well as charitable and social occasions. While they comprised a separate section of society, they were in no way alienated from Henry Bruce and his family. Morgan Morgan is frequently mentioned as the surveyor or architect to these business ventures, for instance, the Pavilion, Duffryn Hotel and the new steam laundry.<sup>55</sup> This aspiring and enterprising, middle class section of the Mountain Ash community were particularly prominent in advancing the interests of the town and themselves. This attitude was noted by their fellow residents and explicitly indicated by the apparently humorous, perhaps, more appropriately sardonic, appellation given to them of 'the Forty Thieves.'<sup>56</sup>

The Workman's Hall was, contrary to later practice, a private concern to provide social facilities for the town and undertaken by a consortium whose first meeting was held on 25 March 1863. The purpose of this facility was, 'For the use of holding public meetings, concerts, Eisteddfodau and public meetings in general, and also to have a reading room,

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<sup>54</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, pp. 2 – 47.

<sup>55</sup> *Mountain Ash Almanac*, 1899, 1901 – 1903 (Mountain Ash)

<sup>56</sup> Baldwin, *Mountain Ash Remembered*, p.94.

smoking room, coffee room and other accommodation.<sup>57</sup> In this sense it was akin to the Assembly Room, commonly found in some established towns and marked a transitional stage between this type of building and the true Workingmen's Institute that later emerged throughout South Wales. Henry Bruce was the principle shareholder in this venture subscribing £150, along with members of the local business community and David Morgan was the Secretary. Henry Bruce announced the Workman's Hall and the new Mountain Ash Water Works open on the same day in 1865.<sup>58</sup> Later the Mountain Ash Urban District Council bought this building for £1000, demolished it and constructed a new town hall on the site. The estate had, in 1866, given three and a half acres of land for a public cemetery on Aberffrwd Farm land in a pleasant and peaceful location above the town and the local colliery proprietors paid for the construction of a perimeter wall.<sup>59</sup>

The rapid expansion of the area did lead to serious problems and evidence suggests that the estate attempted to deal with these. The local Board of Health was that of Aberdare, and a view expressed is that they were happy to take the rates but spent little on any improvement in the Mountain Ash area.<sup>60</sup> This issue was further complicated by the role of traditional parochial boundaries. The bulk of the built up area of Mountain Ash, and as denominated by the St Margaret's Ecclesiastical District, lay in Llanwonno where there was no specific local government provision. The estate does appear to have made efforts to improve the situation where it could and the journal of David Morgan shows the wide-ranging scope of his responsibilities. In the six-month period during early 1863, for instance, he recommended the estate provide stone and funds for culverts in areas prone to flood.<sup>61</sup> The lack of made streets was a great difficulty, drainage problems were a persistent problem and the estate indentures specifically required the residents to undertake this work. As the town grew, potable water also became a pressing need especially as waves of cholera and typhoid swept through the district leading to high levels of mortality. Henry Bruce was at the forefront in organising the response to these epidemics.<sup>62</sup> The estate provided the first reservoir and Morgan, again as their agent, laid out the grounds and water catchment for this facility.<sup>63</sup> The estate later leased this to NTC&C, who also provided similar but smaller facilities in Newtown and Caegarw. When there was a shortage, however, the colliery company issued a notice of 'stop water' and the collieries requirements took precedence over the sustenance of the population. The provision of gas to Mountain Ash was another

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<sup>57</sup> Morgan, Memorandum book, 25 March 1863.

<sup>58</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 211. *CMG*, 6 January 1865.

<sup>59</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p.80.

<sup>60</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 74.

<sup>61</sup> Morgan, Memorandum book.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas, *Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil*, p. 56.

<sup>63</sup> Morgan, Memorandum book, 1 August 1863.

of the multiple concerns of Nixon's company. This system persisted until the Local Board took control of water and gas supply in 1880.<sup>64</sup> Morgan also refers to the surveying of the plot of land for the police station, the Workman's Hall and a new school in Cwmaman, among his other activities in this year. The police station in High Street was on estate land, as was the Workman's Hall.<sup>65</sup>

### **Bruce, the Duffryn Estate and Local Government**

Within the context of urban development, the ability of a community to raise and spend money to benefit its own inhabitants was widely recognised. For Mountain Ash to achieve Local Board status it had to separate a portion of its area from that of Aberdare as well as a portion of territory from the parish of Llanwonno. The attitude of Henry Bruce towards such a course of action was important due to his local, county and national influence. Henry Bruce had been a member of the Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare Local Boards of Health in his capacity as Stipendiary Magistrate. This meant that he did not need to stand for election for these authorities, nevertheless, it can be assumed that if he had desired, at least in the case of the latter organisation, he would have easily secured himself a place. Mountain Ash as a new and entirely coherent urban area, as has been discussed above, was split by the ancient parochial boundaries that left part of the town in the Aberdare Local Board District, analogous to that parish, and the other section in the Llanwonno area. The situation was unsatisfactory to the Mountain Ash community and Bruce seems to have been in agreement with them, he may even have been the instigator of the movement for separation from the Aberdare Board.

The activities of the estate mask the appalling conditions that prevailed in the district. The roads, under the administration of the Turnpike Trust, the parish or the individual proprietors, were appalling. Sewerage and privy provision was inadequate and insanitary. Until Nixon took on the task, for a price, the lighting of public roads was non-existent. There was little refuse collection unless paid for by the residents directly and builders' waste and dead animals were seen in the streets.<sup>66</sup> There clearly needed to be an overarching authority to administer the existing district and its population, and direct the expected consequences of future growth once the collieries reached their potential. There were three possible options available: extend the Aberdare Local Board to cover the whole Mountain Ash area; establish a new local board to cover the Llanwonno parish including

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<sup>64</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 82.

<sup>65</sup> Morgan, Memorandum book, 2 January 1863, 10 January 1863, 16 February 1863.

<sup>66</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 96.

Mountain Ash but spreading as far as Pontypridd and including parts of the Rhondda valleys; or grant Local Board status to Mountain Ash. In the latter case, the proposal was that it would follow the boundaries established by the St Margaret's Ecclesiastical District and detach an area of 3345 acres from the original ancient parishes of Llanwonno and Aberdare. The first option was anathema to the principal residents of Mountain Ash. The second found no favour, due to the extensive and difficult geography of the Llanwonno parish and its largely undeveloped nature at this period. The Aberdare Local Board deplored the third option, that desired by the Mountain Ash faction. If, as outlined by the Mountain Ash declaration, it covered the whole St. Margaret's Ecclesiastical district, Aberdare stood to lose the rates from four large collieries and those relating to many miles of rail and canal routes, as well as from farmland and two hundred and thirty-one individual householders a total rateable value of £28,036 15s.<sup>67</sup> The northern boundaries of the St Margaret's parish were contiguous with those of the Duffryn estate, as they had been the primary facilitators in its foundation. The opinion of Henry Bruce and the coal proprietors in this matter was the key to its satisfactory resolution.

On 2 December 1865, a meeting was held at Mountain Ash Workingmen's Hall to discuss the establishment of a new Local Board of Health. There were two major points of contention in a caucus that was essentially of one mind. The first was the lack of public spending on utilities and infrastructure by Aberdare Local Board of Health in the southern part of that district, when compared to the rates paid. This, they thought, was the cause of the higher than average mortality rates from cholera and typhoid fever in the district and this problem would be best ameliorated by local enfranchisement. The second major issue was that three-quarters of the area of the St Margaret's Ecclesiastical District, essentially the built up portion of Mountain Ash proper, lay outside the Aberdare area altogether and was bereft of any modern local government at all. The meeting resolved to compile a list of major citizens to petition the Home Secretary, Sir George Grey. Henry Bruce was not present at the meeting as business matters kept him away, yet the assembly felt confident enough of his views to ascribe his name at the head of the petition. Other signatories in support of the measure included representatives of the PDSCC and NTC&C, local businesses and the incumbent at St. Margaret's Church. The ubiquitous David Morgan, in his role as Churchwarden, was to submit it to the Home Department.<sup>68</sup>

The Aberdare Local Board were necessarily concerned by these moves for, to use a word particularly current at that time and loaded with meaning, 'Secession.' They moved to do

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<sup>67</sup> *AT*, 6 June 1866.

<sup>68</sup> *AT*, 2 December 1865.

all they could to prevent the claims of Mountain Ash and if not frustrate their plans, to at least moderate their losses in revenue by limiting the boundaries of the proposed new Local Board. A meeting was held to this effect, where they swore to campaign against this ‘aggression of our Mountain Ash neighbours.’<sup>69</sup> A contingent of their representatives waited on Henry Bruce at Duffryn House where they presented him with a petition of four hundred ratepayers from Aberdare, and thought that as their Member of Parliament, he consented to consider their views. In the meantime, the Home Secretary had appointed Mr Arnold Taylor to hold an inquiry at Mountain Ash into the proposed changes. With the date set for 2 January 1866, the Aberdare Local Board attempted to win the services of an eminent Swansea lawyer with experience in local government legislation. He prevaricated, and then withdrew from the brief at short notice leaving them to scramble for a new advocate.<sup>70</sup>

The hearing was held at the Bruce Arms in Mountain Ash at the appointed date and as well as formal representation from Aberdare and Mountain Ash, large number of people attended. Llanwonno parochial district affected no dissent, while some support for Mountain Ash came from the Hirwaun area, whose residents felt a similar grievance.<sup>71</sup> After some preliminary comments by Taylor, some general statements were made regarding the facts relating to the issue, when the counsel for Aberdare claimed the whole proceeding was out of order, as two of the signatories were ineligible to attest their support to the petition. At this point Henry Bruce intervened and took control of the inquiry, from which point it was clear there was only going to be one outcome. During his intervention he stated that, ‘He had taken great interest in the condition of Mountain Ash, and he was particularly interested to provide for the public wants of the place in all respects.’<sup>72</sup> He also mentioned his family’s efforts to improve the town and that they, together with the two major colliery companies, contributed six-sevenths of the rates of the proposed new Local Board. In addition, the Aberdare Local Board received £700 - £800 in rates, yet spent only £50 on Mountain Ash. A pause in the proceedings was called and Aberdare, realising the battle was lost, accepted arbitration as to the new boundaries of the Mountain Ash Local Board of Health and the meeting closed.<sup>73</sup>

From the Palaces of Westminster and Whitehall to the local public house, the whole affair was an exemplary exercise in patrician power. Henry Bruce had previously served with Sir

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<sup>69</sup> *AT*, 9 December 1865.

<sup>70</sup> *MTel*, 10 February 1866.

<sup>71</sup> *AT*, 2 December 1865.

<sup>72</sup> *AT*, 6 January 1866.

<sup>73</sup> *AT*, 6 January 1866.

George Grey as Under Secretary of State for the Home Department, 1862 – 64, and the pair were on close and friendly terms. There was an overt signal of proprietorial ownership in the choice of venue for the inquiry and his role and importance in the area. As well as the established Workingmen’s Hall, there were a number of other suitable venues throughout the town that were available, including nearly twenty other hotels and public houses, the Drill Hall, the Duffryn Schools and several chapels or their vestries. It was made clear from the statement that Henry Bruce gave in the preliminary stages of the inquiry that his family had both the right and established interest to be the major interlocutors on this issue and when the Aberdare party tried to stymie the proceedings through legal procedure, he stepped in to take charge. With the judgement a foregone conclusion, a commission of four people were appointed to ascertain the district limits, comprising two men from Aberdare and two from Mountain Ash. The Mountain Ash contingent contained a nominee of NTC&C and Henry Bruce. In a report to the Aberdare Local Board, their representatives stated, ‘In concluding their report the committee expressed their belief, that no attempt at separation from the Board would have been made by the petitioners, unless they had first secured the support of Mr Bruce in furtherance of their views.’<sup>74</sup>

The Mountain Ash Local Board of Health was formally adopted in 1867. They held their first meeting on 20 February 1867, the whole process taking a remarkably short space of time.<sup>75</sup> This organisation continued until 1894, when the Mountain Ash Urban District Council superseded it. As local government legislation evolved over the century and the scope of their activities were extended, Mountain Ash became a hub of a variety of other administrative functions. For example, in 1875 a Sanitary District was established, under the provisions of the Public Health Act,<sup>76</sup> while Mountain Ash was also the headquarters of the Llanwonno Parish Vestry, Duffryn Schools Board and the Llanwonno Schools Board, whose remit extended to Pontypridd and Rhondda Fach.<sup>77</sup> Henry Bruce, as Lord Aberdare, was a member of the latter up to his death.<sup>78</sup> In a wider South Wales context, Mountain Ash was the first of the solely coal mining districts to be incorporated, all previous examples being primarily metal smelting locations and in this way, as noted by other interpreters, Mountain Ash was the prototype of a Welsh coal mining community.<sup>79</sup> The establishment of a Local Board of Health also created a wider degree of middle class, educated professionals, such as, teachers, clerks, surveyors and medical officers, adding to

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<sup>74</sup> *M Tel*, 10 February 1866.

<sup>75</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, p. 75.

<sup>76</sup> Jones, *Colliery Settlements in South Wales*, p. 37

<sup>77</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. Jones, pp. 75 - 76.

<sup>78</sup> *M Tim*, 10 January 1895.

<sup>79</sup> Jones, *Colliery Settlements in South Wales* p. 57.

the numbers already in existence with employment in the collieries, railways, those in commerce and the various ministers of religion. Mountain Ash, through the interaction of an older elite and newer industrial influence, had a nascent middle class element that gave additional impetus to a sense of distinctiveness.

Henry Bruce's involvement with local government did not cease with the establishment of the new body. While not a regular attendee at the fortnightly meeting of the Local Board, which would scarcely be possible due to his government and other commitments, he did attend occasionally. As may be expected, David Morgan was a member and attended diligently until his death, serving periods as Chairman.<sup>80</sup> Following his early demise, his son Morgan Morgan subsequently succeeded him in this, as in other roles, continuing on the council into the inter-war years. While prominent citizens in their own right, it seems clear that estate affinity added to their prestige. It is inevitable that they acted as intermediaries between estate and corporation and must certainly have acted as spokesman and representative, even if in an informal way. As both David and Morgan Morgan were chairmen of the respective Board and Council, where their loyalties lay in a serious conflict of interest is a matter of conjecture. Bruce was, by all accounts, a fair-minded man, yet how he would have reacted if a decision was made against his interest is unknown, as there is no evidence of this happening. His authority was explicitly stated at a meeting of the Mountain Ash Local Board on 16 October 1877. Due to the resignation of a member, the remaining representatives were discussing a suitable candidate to co-opt. It was noted that the manager of Powell Duffryn's Lower Duffryn Colliery was unsuitable: 'The Chairman reminded the Board of an arrangement that was come to when the Board was first formed to the effect that the two companies were to have two representatives each at the Board and Lord Aberdare two. Mr Griffiths said there was an understanding of the kind.'<sup>81</sup> Powell Duffryn's allocation being taken, another candidate was chosen. That this arrangement existed is less remarkable than the fact that it is openly stated and then reported in the local press. It appears that the Penrhiwceiber Colliery Company had the same courtesy extended to them when they were established, as a partner in the business and the colliery manager William Bevan, were later prominent members.<sup>82</sup> Perhaps most astonishing was the occasion on 17 December 1872, when Henry Bruce attended a meeting of the Mountain Ash Local Board and was invited to be its chair, as he was at that time also Home

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<sup>80</sup> *AT*, 12 January 1881.

<sup>81</sup> *AT*, 20 October 1877.

<sup>82</sup> *AT*, 2 February 1879.

Secretary.<sup>83</sup> In fact, it appears that he retained this right *sine die*, even if he chose not to utilise it.

Henry Bruce's actions in the establishment of Mountain Ash Local Board were to have wider ramifications. The Aberdare Local Board and its members were an influential clique in that district and were unimpressed by their elected Member of Parliament's behaviour throughout this episode. The Aberdare Local Board and, therefore, the town were stripped of a large income from the rates of the Mountain Ash area and some resentment was inevitable.<sup>84</sup> This attitude may have been made explicit in the election of the next year. While the parliamentary election for Merthyr Tydfil in 1868 has received a great deal of attention and the democratic and denominational aspects of that competition have been well rehearsed, less consideration has been paid to the personal and the parochial question. Henry Richard's electoral success was carried on a wave of overwhelming popular support,<sup>85</sup> the competition was always between the two other Liberal candidates of Bruce and Richard Fothergill.<sup>86</sup> Although Fothergill had huge iron making interests in the Merthyr Tydfil portion of the constituency, he was an Aberdare man. His industrial works in the town were extensive, and he had a close relationship with influential members of the nonconformist community. He had been labelled the 'Lord of Abernant,'<sup>87</sup> for his ironworks were located at that place and his mansion with its beautiful grounds located nearby. He had sat on the Aberdare Local Board and was its first Chairman, until electoral impropriety caused him to stand down. Bruce and Fothergill also had an uneasy history, as the former, while Stipendiary Magistrate for Merthyr Tydfil, had given a damning verdict on the latter's use of Truck at his Aberdare works. Additionally, the Dowlais Iron Company had decided to assert their influence in support of the ironmaster Fothergill, as a better representative of their interests. G. T. Clark later regretted this decision, although the feeling was that if Bruce held high public office, as he was likely to do, independent action on their behalf was unlikely. In any case, to the surprise and 'inexpressible disappointment' of many, Bruce came third on the ballot.<sup>88</sup> Alienating the prosperous and partisan middle class element of the electorate at Aberdare could not have helped his cause in any way.

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<sup>83</sup> *AT*, 21 December 1872.

<sup>84</sup> *MTel*, 10 February 1866.

<sup>85</sup> D G Evans, *A History of Wales 1815 – 1906*, (Cardiff, 1989), pp. 288 – 289.

<sup>86</sup> I G Jones, Dr Thomas Price and the Election of 1868 in Merthyr Tydfil, Part I, *Welsh Historical Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (1964), 147 – 172; I G Jones, Dr Thomas Price and the Election of 1868 in Merthyr Tydfil, Part II, *Welsh Historical Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (1965), 251 – 270.

<sup>87</sup> *Pontypool Free Press*, 14 September 1867.

<sup>88</sup> *AT*, 6 September 1873.

## Landscape and the changing aspect of Mountain Ash

The growth of industry and an urban population and the despoliation of the simple Arcadian scene that charmed visitors earlier in the nineteenth century is a common theme; during the nineteenth century, affluence and effluence flowed in symbiotic sympathy. Joseph Keating, later an author, playwright, politician and Chairman of the Mountain Ash Urban District Council,<sup>89</sup> was born in perhaps the worst district of Mountain Ash,<sup>90</sup> in Newtown on the Allen estate, and into an Irish community, that was often viewed with suspicion and prejudice in South Wales.<sup>91</sup> Yet he remembered the town of his youth, in the 1870s and 1880s, with fondness, brought up in a ‘charming pastoral village’.<sup>92</sup> Swimming in the canal and river, playing in the streets and on the green hills around his home and watching teams of packhorses crossing the mountain ridges, are all examples of the reminiscences of his childhood.<sup>93</sup> Mountain Ash was, as he describes, a small inaccessible village, but as its population was then almost ten thousand and the collieries and railways were all present, his recollections may not be entirely accurate. In the early twentieth century, he lamented the loss of that apparently better time in the history of the town and regretted the now continuous industry, businesses and housing that stretched along the valley and the dirt and grime that accompanied it.<sup>94</sup> This view was confirmed by other observers.<sup>95</sup> Since his formative years, the population had more than trebled, and the aspect become clouded in smog, smut and steam, the river running black molasses thick with detritus.

This increasing industrial and environmental degradation and the growth of the urban area should not mask the durability of customary estate activities. There is a continuity of management and practice on the estate, which persisted into the twentieth century, but was militated through the new reality. The most obvious losses were seen in the disappearance of farming from the lower slopes of the estate. Some of the original properties of Duffryn had changed from agricultural holdings to urban properties. Aberffrwd and Darran Las Farms were extensively developed for housing and commerce during the nineteenth century. Gwernifor Farm was leased to NTC&C, and was used for pit workings, colliery waste tipping and among these activities, agriculture. The agrarian portion of the Duffryn

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<sup>89</sup> Keating, *My Struggle for Life*, pp. ix – xxix.

<sup>90</sup> *MTim*, 25 January 1868.

<sup>91</sup> e.g. *MTel*, 18 September 1869; *WM*, 11 July 1882; *CT*, 9 June 1900.

<sup>92</sup> Keating, *My Struggle for Life*, p. 1.

<sup>93</sup> Keating, *My Struggle for Life*, pp. 15 – 27.

<sup>94</sup> Keating, *My Struggle for Life*, pp. 269 – 270.

<sup>95</sup> Meats, *Llanwynno. A Treasury of Memories*, pp. 9 – 10.

demesne itself diminished; while Ton Coch was used as pastureland for sheep and later converted into golf fairways.<sup>96</sup>

Other estate farms did prosper in this new environment. Some increased in size as they absorbed farmland previously used by other, now urbanised properties, for instance, Penrhiw Caradog Farm occupying land previously used by Darran Las. The farms that remained undeveloped catered for the increasing urban population and the requirements of industry. A short distance from drifts and collieries, fields of oats and barley were still cultivated. Milk and cheese production were important sources of revenue for farmers and some carried on milk deliveries and slaughtered their livestock, for their own butcher's shop in Mountain Ash, into the latter part of the twentieth century. The large number of horses in the pits and around the district more generally, required substantial amounts of hay and straw and the local farms benefitted from this. In return, they had a substantial amount of manure to improve their fields. The estate derived a good income from this agricultural activity, although it was marginal when compared to its other sources of revenue, see Table 11 below.

**Table 11**  
**Duffryn Estate Farm Rental Income<sup>97</sup>**

Farm Name	Date of Lease	Annual Rent		
		£	s	d
Abercwmbol Isaf	1888	49	0	0
Penrhiwcaradog	Annual Tenancy	92	0	0
Penrhiwangen	Annual Tenancy	56	0	0
Blaencwmbol	Annual Tenancy	190	0	0
Troedyfeddi	Annual Tenancy	32	0	0
Pwllfa	Annual Tenancy	45	0	0
Bedlwyn	Annual Tenancy	48	0	0
Tirlraithdy	Annual Tenancy	19	0	0
Fforchaman	Annual Tenancy	50	0	0
Tyllwyd	Annual Tenancy	46	10	0
Tirfounder	1840	17	16	10½
<b>Total</b>		<b>645</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10½</b>

Other annual rents due to the estate, £799.14.11½.

<sup>96</sup> Mountain Ash Golf Club, *Mountain Ash Golf Club. The First Hundred Years*, (Mountain Ash, 2007), pp. 25 – 27.

<sup>97</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, pp. 45 – 46.

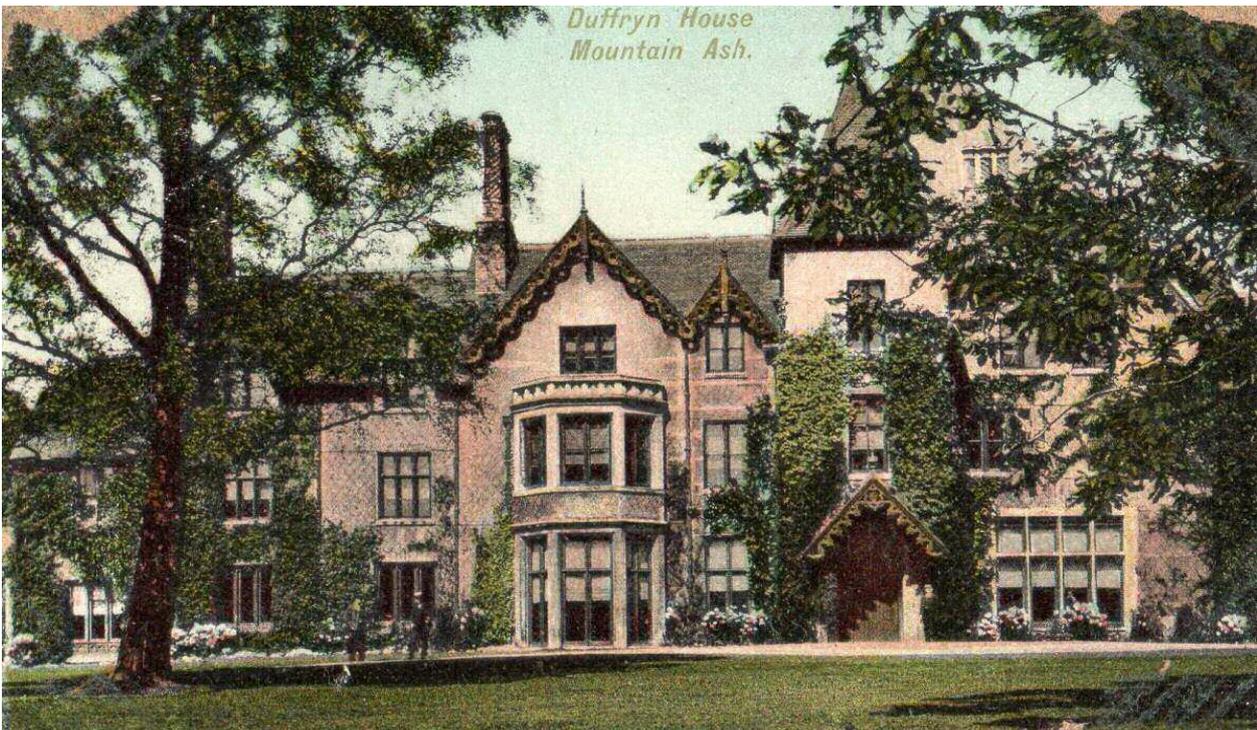


Illustration 9. Duffryn House as remodelled in 1870-1, from a late nineteenth century postcard.<sup>98</sup>

Duffryn House was remodelled and extended in the fashionable gothic style (see Illustration 9), yet it retained some of its original Jacobean authenticity and at its core was the earlier building. At the same time, a number of attractive lodges were added and the grounds improved and beautified. This could do little to hide the encroaching signs of industrialisation and urbanisation, as the location of collieries around the estate appears to show that there was little concern over their environmental impact on the demesne. The site itself was constrained by railway lines and the canal, while the vast chimney of Deep Duffryn Colliery was ever visible above the trees, while spoil tips grew and extended their grey presence. Grant Duff, a frequent visitor to Duffryn, noted the contrast between the older condition of the estate and the new reality,

All the time the mine-workings were being extended, population was rapidly growing, streets were being carried further up the mountainside, and new schools and churches and chapels were springing up. Happily the hill-tops remained open and undefiled by smoke or grime, and Duffryn itself though surrounded by chimneys, and within sound of the pant of the pumping engines always remained a quiet green place, with its view into a garden full of beauty and beyond to the wild slopes of Abercwmboi.<sup>99</sup>

When Bruce left his front door, he was a ten-minute walk from the pithead of four collieries, Abercwmboi, Lower Duffryn, Middle Duffryn and Deep Duffryn. Unlike the coal and iron masters whose mansions tended to look out over their works and workers, on Nant Pennar the colliery and colliers overlooked the landscaped lawns of the local lord (see Illustration 10 below).<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Postcard from the author's collection.

<sup>99</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), p. 17.

<sup>100</sup> Postcard from the author's collection.

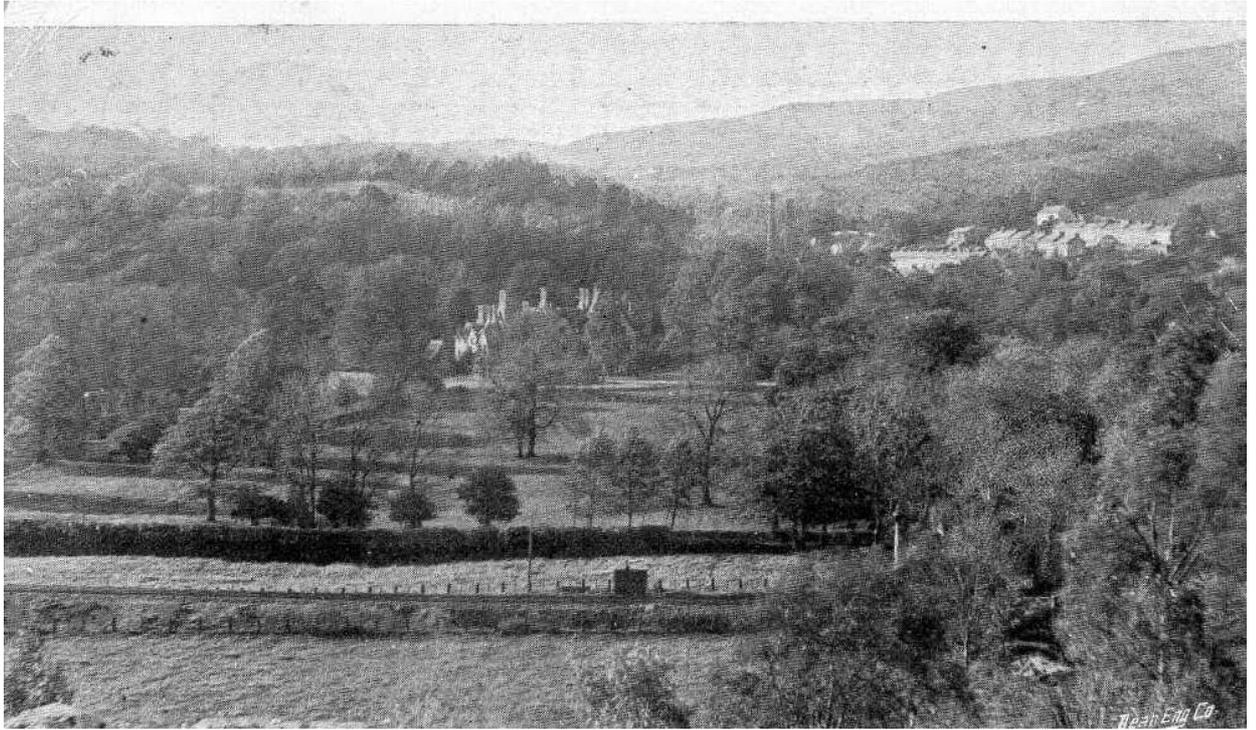


Illustration 10. Duffryn House, showing the proximity of industry to Henry Bruce's home. The bare patch of ground immediately above the property is a tip of Lower Duffryn Colliery (PDSCC), whose chimneys are visible to the right with the small community of Cwmpennar alongside. Deep Duffryn Colliery (NTC&C) is just out of camera shot to the right and Middle Duffryn (PDSCC) to the left. The Great Western Railway line is in the foreground and above it the line of the Aberdare Canal. The river Cynon and Taff Vale Railway are behind the photographer. Yet from its main elevation the house did front onto gardens and fields as described by Grant Duff.<sup>101</sup>

The traditional practices of a landed estate continued throughout the period and were managed by the agents, David and Morgan Morgan. This continuity marked by the preservation of old practices, such as the twice-yearly tenants dinner and meeting with the agent at his house, Maesydderwin, on due rent days. The agent was expected to listen to any grievances, supply a good meal and drinks for the tenants<sup>102</sup> and pass on information to John Bruce Pryce and Henry Bruce about any concerns they may have had. These events were considered important enough locally to be noted in the press, alongside the price of coal at Cardiff Docks.<sup>103</sup> In this respect continuity in the management of the estate was an important aspect in the retention of ancient relationships in new conditions. The last poignant gesture representing the juxtaposition of the past into the modern age, is shown when principal estate tenants carried the body of Henry Bruce to his grave, set overlooking the industries and streets of Mountain Ash at Aberffrw'd cemetery.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Postcard from the author's collection.

<sup>102</sup> Morgan, Memorandum book, 8 January 1863.

<sup>103</sup> *AT*, 17 January 1885.

<sup>104</sup> *EE*, 2 March 1895.

The traditional elements of estate ownership were still important to Henry Bruce. It comprised a relatively insignificant amount in terms of estate income, yet they still concerned themselves with the yields of a particular field and the best way to improve the soil. John Bruce Pryce wrote to his son commending the beneficial practice of putting lime on the soil or of running the waters of the Pennar over Caedrawnant.<sup>105</sup> In 1894 in a letter to his grandson, Henry Bruce complains of the destructive attacks of the sparrows on his oat fields, and explains how his gamekeeper shot over four hundred of the pests, nevertheless, and as was perhaps fitting for an ex-President of the RSPCA, he baulks at removing the ivy from Duffryn House that was their roost.<sup>106</sup> David Morgan again, among his other duties, is instructed to acquire manure from the collieries stables for the estate fields<sup>107</sup> and a cow to replace those he had sold at Aberdare market.<sup>108</sup> The estate allowed access to its land for the local population and maintained the footpaths to facilitate this access.

One of Henry Bruce's favourite activities at Duffryn was shooting, and the extensive woodlands and moors of his estate provided ample game for this pastime. The corollary of this, in an extensively urbanised district, where poverty and criminality were rife was the attentions of poachers on the same prey. Charles Granville Bruce, Henry Bruce's youngest son and later a noted Himalayan explorer, recounts tales of night-time expeditions with his father's gamekeepers pursuing poachers over the hills to Abercanaid in the Taff valley. Later while on leave from the Indian Army, he brought two Ghurkha soldier attendants from his regiment to Duffryn, who also did battle with the local delinquents.<sup>109</sup> He recalled his time at Duffryn fondly and later retired to the Cynon Valley, 'I spent all my time running about the hills, and sucked in from my earliest times a love and understanding of mountain country without appreciating it at the time, my father being a most complete lover of his own valleys and hills.'<sup>110</sup>

The coal proprietors also used their leasehold properties for agricultural purposes. There is an annual sale of cattle, sheep and horses held on the NTC&C property, leased from Henry Bruce, at Gwernifor from the 1850s into the 1880s.<sup>111</sup> This land lay between the central area of Mountain Ash and their Glyn Gwyn property. PDSCC also held occasional livestock sales at Aberaman House, the headquarters of this company and home to George

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<sup>105</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 165.

<sup>106</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), p. 235.

<sup>107</sup> Morgan, Memorandum book, 24 February 1863.

<sup>108</sup> Morgan, Memorandum book, 1 April 1863.

<sup>109</sup> C G Bruce, *Himalayan Wanderer*, (New Delhi, 1996), pp. 10 – 11 & 74- 75.

<sup>110</sup> Bruce, *Himalayan Wanderer*, pp. 7 – 8.

<sup>111</sup> CMG, 13 October 1860.

Elliot.<sup>112</sup> This company leased the ancient farm of Edward Evan at Ton Coch and they employed two shepherds here.<sup>113</sup> Nixon's nephews, the Grays maintained the woodland of the Forest Farm, and indeed all the land of the Allen estate on the eastern side of the valley for shooting and they too employed a gamekeeper.<sup>114</sup> When David Morgan was sent to secure manure for his employer's land, the Nixon company collieries informed him that it was required for their own use.<sup>115</sup> While there is some profit in farming surplus land, and Nixon was after all the son of a yeoman farmer, it must have been a curious and marginal side issue for these great industrial concerns.

Although Henry Bruce did not see the worst effects of industrialisation, industry was ever encroached into his lands. He patently cared for his properties and their people, an affection shown to visitors, as his friend Grant Duff again recalled,

In the Autumn he liked to have his family about him, with their friends at Duffryn, which, remained, through all the distractions of his public life, his constant centre of interest – and interest not limited to his love of wife and children and for the home he had made, but extending to all his servants and neighbours, and to the wellbeing of Mountain Ash and the whole countryside. His greatest delight, to the last, was to take his children or grandchildren or friends over 'the loved hillside,' up Abercwmboidy or Gellyddu, or, if the rain kept visitors at home, he would take them for a rainy walk upon the 'coal tips,' and show them how the bare heaps of refuse were being covered by trees and creeping plants, converted from grey desolation into fresh life and colour. The letters show plainly enough his interest in Mountain Ash when he was not there, but as most of them were written away, they cannot show the life he lived when he was there, his loving care of home and grounds, his busy hours in the library, his shooting expeditions, his entertainment of friends young and old, his vivid interest in local affairs, and above all his kindly human intercourse with the people of every degree, who counted him and his wife among their best friends.<sup>116</sup>

The change of Mountain Ash, from a remote and picturesque, yet unremunerative country estate, into a hotbed of industrial and urban change was the continued thread through the story of Henry Bruce. The conflicting interests of an evolving community and a traditional estate were ones that the estate sought to closely manage and they were fortunate in having a dynasty of competent agents to act as their proxies when they were absent. That, despite the wealth, prestige and social presence that he attained, Henry Bruce and his family chose to remain and be intimately concerned with the welfare of the town and people who now resided alongside them, is a statement of patrician concern in an industrial environment, which is notable in its extent.

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<sup>112</sup> *AT*, 24 September 1887.

<sup>113</sup> Mountain Ash Golf Club, *Mountain Ash Golf Club*, pp. 25 – 27.

<sup>114</sup> *CT*, 19 September 1885.

<sup>115</sup> Morgan, Memorandum book, 24 February 1863.

<sup>116</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), pp. 12 – 13.

The society that formed at Mountain Ash can be seen as being less like a pyramid with Henry Bruce and his family at the apex and more like the silhouette of the Pyramids at Giza, where there are a variety of interests whose bases interlock, the most important being PDSCC and NTC&C. The role of the landowner was not always in sympathy with the industrialists and Bruce's liberal political and moral posture can lead to some idiosyncratic and sometimes contradictory stances. Most notably his support for Mountain Ash 'secession,' and a peculiar resistance to the ballot based on an outdated assumption, cost him the second seat at Merthyr Tydfil and industrial South Wales its first cabinet minister. His constant view was that while progress was required, it was best undertaken at a steady and certain pace.<sup>117</sup> This is clearly visible in the way he sought to shape the physical and administrative development of Mountain Ash.

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<sup>117</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 66 – 70.

## Chapter Four

### Political Philosophical and Practical Philanthropy

The previous chapters have successively analysed how the evolution of the estate formed the bedrock of Henry Bruce's inheritance, how the evolving industrial growth in Glamorgan was the setting on which he founded his actions at Mountain Ash and, finally, how he directed the development of the physical structures that were the essential prerequisites of the common landscape. This chapter will assess his activities with regard to the, broadly stated, social structures of the town. There are three spheres where he thought useful and attainable results could be achieved to help counter the social evils of nineteenth century concern. These were through the improving effects of religion, education and what he saw as 'innocent amusements'. It is clear that his Christian faith was an overwhelming feature of his life and he promoted its extension where he could. His motivation in carrying out these labours will be evaluated by studying his own stated philosophy against the things he achieved. The impact he had on the provision of education and aid to religious dominations in Mountain Ash will be considered. Finally the chapter will study, in the case of the real collective life of the people, how he strived to turn back 'the tide of gin and beer,'<sup>1</sup> by providing good quality and enjoyable pastimes for the inhabitants of his hometown.

It is clear that his attitudes to how his estate should develop in the face of industrialisation and urbanisation, were shaped by his personal opinions, experiences in public life and observations from trips both within the United Kingdom and abroad. His actions in a wider national sphere cannot be divorced from his endeavours at Mountain Ash. In an introductory section to Lord Aberdare's letters, Grant Duff writes,

He was like all the most serious and thoughtful people of his time, becoming profoundly stirred by the question of the 'condition of the people', and his work as Stipendiary Magistrate quickened his interest while it also gave him exceptional opportunity of studying the problems at first hand. The rapid growth of the mining population in the wild mountain valleys about his home, though a serious problem in itself, gave him at the same time a field for trying various ways of ameliorating the condition of the poor, unhampered by the obstacles which thwart the reformer amid more settled populations.<sup>2</sup>

Due to limitations of space in this chapter, it is not possible to explore in detail the wider political philosophy of Henry Bruce. In certain key matters, it is clear that his political and social opinions were expressed in a physical manifestation and through his interactions with the community of Mountain Ash.

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<sup>1</sup> Ensor, *England 1870 – 1914*, p.21, n.1.

<sup>2</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), pp. 23-24.

Henry Bruce was able, through his wealth and influence, to practice what he preached. He remained remarkably consistent in his thoughts and actions on social policy throughout a public career lasting for almost half a century. While never intended as a thorough programme of lectures on social policy, a series of addresses given at Merthyr Tydfil in the 1850s, clearly presage his policies as an industrial landowner at Mountain Ash and later actions in national public policy.<sup>3</sup> In these activities, he followed an agenda consistent with his views and in some ways used the town of Mountain Ash as an experimental community to show the benefits of active social intervention. This is not to suggest that he did these things purely as an academic exercise; his opinions were so consistent, over so long a period because they were deeply felt. The capstone of this ideological edifice was his Christian faith. Although education and morally improving recreation were important public rudiments in themselves, he believed they were effective as aids to the broader understanding of religious thought, the true basis of personal salvation and social harmony.<sup>4</sup> When studying Henry Bruce, the man, his philosophical outlook, his work and the place are all of a kind.

The interventions that Henry Bruce made at Mountain Ash were part of his wider ambition to improve the condition of the people more generally. The basis for this feeling, in Bruce's case, is in essence a manifestation of Protestant Liberalism. This strong religious feeling was centred on the established Church of England and his contributions to its cause were very significant. He was not, however, a partisan. He believed the impact of Christianity was generally beneficial whatever the sect and Bruce supported other congregations extensively throughout his estate (see Table 12 below). Another key aspect of his policy of social improvement was the education of the working classes and his parliamentary activities regarding elementary, intermediate and higher education show this clearly.<sup>5</sup>

He adopted a pragmatic view regarding the school leaving age. Given the requirement for most working families to maximise their sources of income he accepted that some children were sent to work. To help counteract this evil he supported the need for continual education throughout life, for all, regardless of class or gender. To this end, he supported workmen's halls and institutes, evening classes at the Duffryn schools, public libraries and lectures, sometimes taking these talks himself. He considered religion and education alone insufficient to keep the interest of the general population and to these, he believed, must be added edifying amusements and places at which these could be undertaken, particularly, to

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<sup>3</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 1 – 71.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 335 – 360; Longster, 'Henry Austin Bruce and Elementary Education.'

counteract the attractions of the public house. He, therefore, supported and subsidised the erection of edifices on a suitably grand scale to match his ideal, that they should be 'Athenaeums' for the people.<sup>6</sup>

### **Principles and Social Philosophy**

The issue of whether Henry Bruce's actions were merely reactions to the rising power and militancy of an increasingly self-aware, Welsh industrial working class movement need to be considered. It would be difficult to argue that he was a freethinking outrider of radical reform, because he certainly was not. His views were those of orthodox economic liberalism, melded with Christian ideals of individual free will and self-determination. In this, he closely resembles the ideal description of later Weberian Protestantism.<sup>7</sup> His attitude in supporting personal and financial rectitude through religion, education, hard work and thrift was evident throughout his speeches and actions.<sup>8</sup>

The apparently peculiar and irrational statement he used in one of his speeches, that in the colliery districts high wages were an evil and that the working class were better off when remittances were lower, is useful in explaining his general concepts.<sup>9</sup> He began by noting that it was a general observation in the coalfield that colliers worked longer hours in a declining market than in an improving one. When viewed on an industry wide scale this was dangerously counterproductive, as it exaggerated variations in the price of coal; while to the individual collier seeking to satisfy his individual requirements, this was entirely explicable behaviour. His view, when assessed in a purely economic dialogue, is one that clearly places him as an ally of the employers. He would, and did, explain that this objection was both moral and economic common sense. His observations, as a Stipendiary Magistrate, were that the workers would seek to limit their working environment to suit their private preferences. If they could secure a sufficient income through working five, four or even three days a week they would do so. Using the extra time and money gained in 'base' pursuits, for instance, drinking and gambling. The crime statistics showed that offences associated with excessive drinking were always higher during times of prosperity.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. *New Introduction and Translation by Stephen Kalberg* (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 1 – 71, 335 – 360, 367 – 370.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 52 – 53.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 259.

In the long-term, this prosperity never lasted and the worker was left with little to show for the better conditions that had previously prevailed, and in the worst cases with no resources to carry them through the equally inevitable slump. The analysis of these views must take into consideration the existing economic orthodoxy that, whether rightly or wrongly, stated the most beneficial economic structure for all classes was that of economic liberalism alongside the virtues listed above. Bruce railed against the mentality that the working classes would not seek to maximise their income, cover the needs of their family without ostentation and prudently save for hardship and old age.

Henry Bruce did make due allowance for this profligacy, as he saw it, caused by a want of education, moral instruction and the facilities necessary for self-improvement. It was in this sphere that he decided to intervene and encourage those qualities he believed were appropriate. While no pioneer, he was often in the vanguard of progressive opinion, particularly on education issues.<sup>11</sup> He often referred to education provision in class terms.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, he supported the gifted children of poor working people through the provision of endowments, for example, to the Mountain Ash Higher Grade School, and similarly for gifted young adults to attend university.<sup>13</sup> He was a very strong proponent of female education at all grades and from a relatively early stage of this movement.<sup>14</sup>

As discussed in a previous chapter, it can be argued that his actions were primarily motivated by class interest. Where he was munificent in charitable giving, this was playing to the role of indispensable landowner distributing largesse to the impoverished, their impoverishment caused by the actions and inactions of the industrialists. An example to counter this criticism is his attack on the role of the ironmasters in absolving themselves of social responsibility at Merthyr Tydfil.<sup>15</sup> An attack on the strong support he gave to temperance could be formed around the argument over alcohols disinhibiting effects. A drunken proletariat made for a less effective workforce, more likely to act out their drunken resentments and grievances in action, than was a sober and respectable one. Through supporting property owning, albeit on a small and leasehold basis, and penny savings accounts he made the proletariat complicit in their own subservience, by making them tiny parts of an economic system principally operating to benefit and maintain the elite. The

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<sup>11</sup> Longster, 'Henry Austin Bruce and Elementary Education,' p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> e.g. *AT*, 10 December 1864; *Cambrian*, 27 September 1878; *Cambrian*, 22 September 1882; *AT*, 7 January 1890.

<sup>13</sup> *CT*, 11 January 1890; *Ponypridd Chronicle*, 24 January 1890; *CT*, 17 September 1892; *CT*, 20 January 1894

<sup>14</sup> *Aberystwyth Observer*, 28 March 1885.

<sup>15</sup> E. T. Davies, *Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales*, (Cardiff, 1965), p. 102.

promotion of religion meanwhile, was an illusion to displace people's energy towards heavenly grace, rather than them concentrating on their present plight.<sup>16</sup>

These criticisms of the activities of Henry Bruce are unsupportable in the sifting of the masses of data that exists, in the contemporary press and in the reflections of those who knew him. This evidence suggests that an argument can be cogently constructed that signifies that these analyses do not explain the essence of the man. As has been commented elsewhere, 'Historians have long been aware that many of the generalisations of history break down when examined at a local level,'<sup>17</sup> and Henry Bruce, and particularly his activities at Mountain Ash is a good case in point. While it is true that he sought to preserve, advance and handover his estate to his successors, that is in the nature of human biogenetics, as argued by evolutionary psychology, and this argument cannot also fully encompass his complex range of motivations.

He, and here his wife Norah and the extended family must be fully included, proceeded in ways that were not always to be seen as fully to his advantage. If he had sought political power and social prestige without care for moral consideration, he could have followed the long established Tory affiliations of his family and still attained a high position. It was his ability, rather than his doctrinal soundness, that led to him being offered jobs such as Financial Secretary to the Indian Council. Indeed, with his acknowledged social and administrative gifts along with family contacts, there is no reason to believe he could not have reached the House of Lords by this route. The attractions of social position and privilege were at best a partial concern, as shown by a letter he wrote to his wife comparing 'Society' life in London with that at Duffryn.

I have answered that you are not going to Court on the 5<sup>th</sup>. I had just been reading to Isabel Iden's delightful speech in *Henry VI* –

Lord! Who would live turmoiled in the Court,  
And may enjoy such quiet walks as these?  
This small inheritance my father left me  
Contenteth me, and worth a monarchy.

And indeed the day is so lovely, and the scenery so beautiful, that the thought of a Court, and the ceremony ... are odious to me. The wind has got round to the south, and it is deliciously warm and soft.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, this attitude is confirmed in a recollection of a contemporary of his,

Bruce's character was in some respects one of the finest with which I have ever

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<sup>16</sup> G. Hands, *Marx* (London, 2015), p. 172.

<sup>17</sup> Impey, *Board Schools v. Intermediate Schools*, p. 182.

<sup>18</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), p. 207.

been acquainted in public life. I could see no self-seeking in him anywhere. He was not without ambition and he liked office; but he accepted his exclusion, when it came, without a murmur ... The fact that he was omitted from the Cabinet of 1880, and that his official life was closed, seemed to make no difference to him at all.<sup>19</sup>

If financial advancement was his motivation, he could have stayed comfortably on the backbenches of the House of Commons, retaining his company directorships and importantly the Trusteeship of the Dowlais Iron Company. His friend G. T. Clark did this and was able to live a very agreeable life as a country gentleman in the Vale of Glamorgan, at the very fine manor he built at Talygarn.<sup>20</sup> William Menelaus, the general manager for the Dowlais Iron Company gave £10,000 worth of artworks to Cardiff library, a small part of his collection, as well as leaving property worth over £250,000.<sup>21</sup> Then again, if power, prestige and money were Bruce's ultimate objectives, he would not have become involved in Dowlais at all. Financial ruin, parliamentary exclusion and public disgrace could have been the end outcome. The argument that his activities were crudely class orientated or self-motivated seem to deny the very essence of humanity itself. It was partly a fundamental love of his home, concern for the people around him, but not totally exclusive of private and family interest, alongside, and most importantly, his deep religiosity that best explains his actions. It would be legitimate, however, to argue that for someone who held strong Christian values and beliefs and the hope of eternal salvation, there could be no act more selfish than total unselfishness.

When elected as the Member of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil in 1853, Henry Bruce was careful to proclaim himself to be, an 'Independent Liberal',<sup>22</sup> this partly to disassociate himself from claims of an innate Tory interest, an understandable prejudice given his family's traditional loyalty; or potential Whig bias, plausible given his landowning background. Moreover, this was to show that he was to represent the peculiar interests of the electors of his new constituency. That he was the nominee of the ironmasters is beyond contention. Prior to his election, and before the death of the then incumbent member Sir J. J. Guest, he had given two important speeches at Merthyr Tydfil that were to state the basis of his overarching liberal principles, while also being openly censorious of certain aspects of the industrial society of South Wales.<sup>23</sup> Throughout his public career, he would be critical of the actions of capitalists and proletariat, where he thought they were deserved, yet always sympathetic to the plight of those who needed help.

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<sup>19</sup> Morgan, *Welsh Leaders*, p. 238.

<sup>20</sup> *EE*, 2 February 1898.

<sup>21</sup> *CT*, 1 April 1882.

<sup>22</sup> *CMG*, 18 December 1852.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 1 – 70.

He had been a strong promoter of the campaign to erect a workhouse in Merthyr Tydfil, as he argued, on both sound humanitarian and financial grounds. This effort evoked a lot of opposition from the ratepayers of the district, eventually he and his confederates won the day by one vote. Nevertheless, the equally important, as he saw it, issue of founding an industrial school to separate the children from the other poorhouse inmates was defeated by one vote.<sup>24</sup> This is a classic example of his progressive attempts to improve the condition of the people, particularly children, only being partly attained through the vagaries of political processes.

While the ideas explored in the two lectures given at Merthyr Tydfil in 1851 were the basis of a philosophical stance that was maintained throughout almost fifty years of public life, this is not meant to suggest that he remained dogmatically loyal to opinions formed early in his career, indeed, his viewpoint on key issues, that he firmly held in the 1850s and 1860s, such as the ballot and Welsh Church disestablishment,<sup>25</sup> were later publicly reversed. The major cause, he believed, of the moral and economic destitution that surrounded him in the industrial valleys of South Wales was not economic, but lay in the paucity of enlightened provision for the benefit of the working people. Alcohol and the public house were the particular founts of evils that led to disaster for so many of the people. To him, and always, education was the key to advancement.<sup>26</sup>

His concern regarding education is interesting and it is worthwhile deliberating on whether his own fragmented, and for his class and later position, incomplete studies, played a part in his educational efforts on behalf of others. He had been six when his family moved to France. He stayed there for another six years, before they returned to Duffryn and he attended the good, although not elite, Swansea Grammar School, followed by legal training at the Inns of Court. His elder and one younger brother went to Oxford University, while his father was an alumnus of Cowbridge Grammar School, Sherborne and Oxford.<sup>27</sup> He was by nature a studious man and it can be postulated that he would have found satisfaction as an Oxford don; one of his favourite pastimes was the translation of Latin verse.<sup>28</sup>

Henry Bruce did not pretend to be a huge innovator in the field of social policy. His speeches, throughout his public life are infused with references to the reflections of others,

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil*

<sup>25</sup> *CT*, 4 February 1888.

<sup>26</sup> *AT*, 2 January 1864; *MM*, 12 January 1877; *AT*, 9 February 1878; *WM*, 30 September 1882; *AT*, 12 August 1893.

<sup>27</sup> *CT*, 19 October 1872.

<sup>28</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. iv – v.

their reactions to the problems they encountered and additionally contained extensive statistical data gathered by them.<sup>29</sup> The basis of his political career is perhaps best explainable as a progressive reaction to deprivation in ever widening spheres. He could see the degradation that existed; he examined the statistics and literature relating to these problems; where he was able to personally proceed, particularly at Mountain Ash, he acted on these problems and gained a measure of practical expertise; once promoted to higher public office, this experience expressed itself in the national sphere. The three fundamentals of religion, education and useful recreation were always at their core.

Do not for an instant suppose ... that I consider amusements as capable of supplying the place of intellectual and religious education. Far from it. My desire is to see innocent pleasure made the handmaidens of education.<sup>30</sup>

The religious welfare and pastoral care, along with the development of the necessary infrastructure for the people living on and near the estate was a concern of Henry Bruce and his family. While the physical evolution of the property could be manipulated through his role as the owner of the land, the moral well-being of the inhabitants could also be influenced through his interventions. Henry Bruce considered this the role he had to pursue in the development of the new industrial community at his gates. He had seen the relative prosperity of the people of Merthyr Tydfil, and particularly the very great wealth that the industrialists of that town had accumulated, and he decried the neglect in physical and moral terms that existed there.<sup>31</sup> At Mountain Ash, from the very beginning, he was determined to act differently and when local government was non-existent or ineffectual, he and his agents filled the void. In the period between the inauguration of major collieries in the district, from the 1840s onwards, and the foundation of the Mountain Ash Local Board of Health in 1867, Henry Bruce was the facilitator and instigator of social organisation. In 1850, as the collieries were excavated he was already considering the educational and spiritual requirements of the new community, the provision of social amenities and the limitation of unnecessary temptation in this nascent society.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, pp. 37 – 70.

<sup>30</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p.14.

<sup>31</sup> Davies, *Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales*, p. 102.

<sup>32</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), pp. 90 – 91.

## Religion

In a country whose religious affiliation was primarily to dissenting denominations, Henry Bruce was an unrepentant Anglican. In the particularly febrile national and religious atmosphere that existed after the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales in 1847, being nonconformist was regarded as synonymous with being Welsh. To be Anglican was sermonised to be in opposition to this, and the contributions of the vicar of Aberdare to the report, were viewed with particular distaste.<sup>33</sup> The Bruce family were, however, longstanding and faithful members of the Anglican communion, their minister being the aforesaid vicar, to whose new church they had subscribed.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the Anglican church can be said to have been a major family occupation. Beyond the general-purpose term ‘gentry,’ it was as members of the clergy that many family members gained their living and livings. There were two bishops, two archdeacons, a Dean of Llandaff and numerous other clergymen in the extended family tree. As would be expected of an Anglican, Henry Bruce was a generous patron to the established church.<sup>35</sup> While he was a very great promoters of that religion, Bruce was very aware of the shortcomings of previous church administration in the Diocese of Llandaf. One of the earliest county committees that he was associated with on his return to Duffryn was the Diocesan Committee for the Provision of Church Accommodation.<sup>36</sup> The family were the instigators of St. Margaret’s church in Mountain Ash in 1862, one of many similar foundations.<sup>37</sup>

The latter church was the estate’s great early establishment, the living being conferred on the Bishops of Llandaff, rather than retained as a family advowson. The peculiar dedication to the royal saint of Scotland probably represents both the family’s ancient association with that place, along with the namesake grandmother of John Bruce Pryce. Over the next fifty years, Bruce was involved in the construction of at least eight further Church of England places of worship on his estate and in the Mountain Ash area. Their main contribution was to express themselves in support of the need for a suitable building, where applicable supplying the necessary plot of land for the erection of the premises, together with donations of money to facilitate their construction and enhancement. The new church at

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<sup>33</sup> J E Lloyd & R T Jenkins; *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940* (London, 1959), p. 294.

<sup>34</sup> *CMG*, 2 October 1852; *CMG*, 29 September 1854; For donations to church at Hirwaun see, *CMG*, 16 April 1853.

<sup>35</sup> *CT* 15 August 1862; *WklyM*, 8 May 1886; *EE*, 4 March 1895.

<sup>36</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Grosvenor & Williams, *The Parish of Mountain Ash and it’s Churches*, p. 2.

Aberdare, St Elvan's, was built of Duffryn stone<sup>38</sup> and as it is known they transferred stone free of royalty on the Aberdare canal,<sup>39</sup> and charged at least a third cheaper rate for this stone than the commercial price in certain circumstances, it can be assumed other gifts in kind of this sort, were provided.<sup>40</sup>

A Welsh language church for Mountain Ash, named St David's, was built in 1877, although this was at first a simple structure of metal sheeting<sup>41</sup> placed in the angle between two streets at Darran Las. This inadequate structure was replaced in 1887, by a stone built church on Miskin Road, between the later Nixon's Workmen's Institute and the second Roman Catholic Church and school site, which was located further to the south on the property of Gwernifor Farm. Henry Bruce gave the quarter acre site to the church free of charge.<sup>42</sup>

A curious incident involving the curate of this church and Bruce is reported in the local press, which shows the peer in a more robustly public-spirited role than is usually the case. The curate was sitting in the garden of his house in Mountain Ash with some friends when they noticed a man had entered the garden. When approached by the curate, the man asked if he could have a lettuce, when told to leave, he became aggressive and swung a pair of hob-nailed boots at the clergyman, damaging his hat and cutting his head. The attacker, an Irishman from Merthyr Tydfil, then escaped along the old mountain road towards his hometown, with the curate following. Some distance along, the clergyman noticed Bruce walking, and shouted to alert him, showing him his injuries. Henry Bruce then, according to the report of the magistrates hearing, 'collared' the escaping assailant and had him conveyed to Mountain Ash, from here he was sent for trial. The Deputy Chief Constable attended the hearing, an unusual event it would be thought for a minor assault in the valleys of Glamorgan, but the combination of the assault on a clergyman and the fact that the accused was apprehended by Lord Aberdare, must have galvanised the local forces of law and order.<sup>43</sup> It is worth noting that Henry Bruce was generally described by contemporaries, even in his later years, as being tall and athletic, around six feet, which together with a tall hat would have made him an impressive physical presence among the colliers and working people of the town.

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<sup>38</sup> Jones, *Churches of the Cynon Valley*, p. 112.

<sup>39</sup> *CMG*, 23 March 1850.

<sup>40</sup> *AT*, 18 May 1878.

<sup>41</sup> Jones, *Churches of the Cynon Valley*, p. 53.

<sup>42</sup> *CT*, 20 November 1886.

<sup>43</sup> *MM*, 3 October 1879.

Additional Anglican chapels of ease were constructed in some of the town's growing suburbs. It was noted, that in forty years £14,000 had been spent on providing Anglican places of worship in the parish of St. Margaret's.<sup>44</sup> If the distance to the mother church was considered a barrier to attendance and, no doubt to help counter the prolific chapel building of the nonconformists, extra provision was afforded. At Mountain Ash, four were constructed outside the estate boundary, at Penrhiwceiber in 1883, Newtown in 1887, Miskin in 1890 and Cefnpennar in 1893. The reports of the opening of these places usually refer to the generosity of Lord and Lady Aberdare in delivering aspects of their construction and providing certain fittings, unfortunately, the full scope of their contributions were seldom explicitly stated. Further help was given to the churches established at Cwmbach and Cwmaman, at both places Lady Aberdare laid the foundation stone.<sup>45</sup> In both these areas, the estate had extensive property interests. Table XII gives the date of the establishment of churches and chapels in Mountain Ash.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Pont Chron*, 11 February 1898.

<sup>45</sup> Jones, *Churches of the Cynon Valley*, p. 83 & 100.

<sup>46</sup> GA DBR/E/47. Vesting Deed, pp. 2 – 47; Jones, *Churches of the Cynon Valley*, pp. 31 – 75; Jones, *Chapels of the Cynon Valley*, pp. 25 – 60.

**Table 12**  
**Construction of Religious Buildings in Mountain Ash**

<b>Chapel or Church</b>	<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Members 1896</b>	<b>%</b>
Nazareth	English Baptist WB Rhos	1841	985	13%
Bethania	Welsh Independents	1853	939	12%
Bethlehem	Calvinistic Methodist	1857	500	6%
Ebenezer	Primitive Methodist	1858	400	5%
Capel Bryn Moriah	Welsh Congregationalist	1860s		
Darran Road	English Wesleyan Methodist	1862	250	3%
St. Margaret's Church	Church of England	1862	360	24%
Rhos	Welsh Baptist	1863	900	12%
Welsh Baptist	Welsh Baptist (Newtown)	1863		
Bryn Seion	Welsh Wesleyan Methodist	1863	350	4%
Providence	English Calvinist Methodist	1869	350	4%
St. David's Church (1 <sup>st</sup> )	Welsh, Church of England	1877	N/A	
St. Mary's Church	Roman Catholic	1877	450	6%
Zion	Primitive Methodist	1880	250	3%
Carmel	Welsh Independent	1880	80	1%
Duffryn Street	English Calvinist Methodist	1883	400	5%
Peneul	Welsh (later English) Presbyterian	1883		
St. Winifred's Church	Church of England	1883		
Bethesda	English Baptist	1885		
Jerusalem	Welsh Baptist	1885		
Salvation Army Hall	Salvation Army	1886	200	2%
St. David's Church (2 <sup>nd</sup> )	Welsh, Church of England	1887	101	
St. Dyfrig's Church	Church of England	1887	60	
Moriah	Calvinist Methodist	c. 1890		
St. Teilo's Church	Church of England	1890	137	
Bethesda	English Methodists	1891	100	1%
St. Illtyd's Church	Church of England	1893	47	
Ffrwd Ysgoldy	Welsh Baptist M. R.	1893		
St. Illtyd's Church	Church of England	1894		
Ton Coch Chapel	English Baptist	1894		
Schoolroom	Welsh Independent	1894		
Hermon	Welsh Calvinist Methodist	1894		
Bethel	Welsh Wesleyan Methodist	1894		
Chapel	English Baptist	1896		
Our Lady of Lourdes	Roman Catholic	1899		
Ffrwd Chapel	Welsh Baptist	1899		
Miskin Baptist	English Baptist	c. 1900		
Bethel	Welsh Independent	1903		
Canaan	English Congregational	1903		
Noddfa	Welsh Calvinistic Methodist	1905		
Gospel Hall	Independent	1905		
Bryngolwg	Evangelical Free Church	1907		
St John the Baptist	Church of England	1908		
Hope	Primitive Methodist	1907		
Zoar (Soar)	Welsh Independent	1908		
<i>Schoolroom</i>	<i>Welsh Congregationalist</i>	<i>1908</i>		
Brotherhood	Labour Church-Unitarian	1912		
Hall	Christadelphian	1912		
St. John's	Spiritualist Chapel-Gospel Hall	Post 1918		

The largest single denomination in Mountain Ash was the Church of England, although they only made up around a quarter of all members cited.<sup>47</sup> Many of the nonconformist places of worship built in the outlying districts were often daughter institutions of the original Mountain Ash cause, who often provided funds for their establishment. The 1880s and 1890s saw a spectacular rate of chapel establishment, with over one church and chapel constructed every year for twenty years, particularly in the Miskin and Penrhiwceiber areas. As well as new foundations, many earlier chapels were rebuilt, especially in response to the religious revival of 1904 – 1905. As with other data, there is a strong correlation between the opening of places of worship, the development of new collieries and the increase in population.

In the 1830s, the nearest place of worship for the people of the lower Cynon Valley lay many miles distant from their houses and farms at Llanwonno. By 1895, there were thirty-three different churches and chapels available to them. The building of chapels on the Bruce estate was intensive. There were more than one established for the twelve streets in the triangle of land bounded by the Oxford Street-Commercial Street axis, Darran Road and High Street, the earliest phase of development at Mountain Ash. Within this area, there were the following religious causes: Welsh language Anglican; Roman Catholic; Salvation Army; Welsh Baptist; English Congregationalist; Calvinist Methodist; Labour Church/Unitarian Chapel; Welsh Wesleyan Methodist; Primitive Methodist/Presbyterian; English Calvinist Methodist; English Wesleyan Methodist; Welsh Calvinist Methodist; Welsh Independent; and a Gospel Hall/Spiritualist Chapel. Sectarian interest on the part of the estate seems to be absent, as virtually all religious prejudices are accommodated, although there is a preponderance of the various Methodist denominations. Other parts of the estate in Mountain Ash contained a further six churches and chapels.<sup>48</sup> One chapel minister's eulogy after Bruce's death stated, 'There was not a place of worship in the town that has not been benefitted by his generosity.'<sup>49</sup>

To juxtapose this, it is worth noting that in the same area there were six public houses, all the leases being granted during his father's tenure of the estate. In the early years of the twentieth century an immigrant English doctor noticed this disparity in accommodation and commented,

The chapels and the pubs were about equal in number, the balance tilting now in favour of one, now of the other. Whenever a few hundred souls had been added to

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<sup>47</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. by A. V. Jones, p. 57.

<sup>48</sup> Jones, *Chapels of the Cynon Valley*, pp. 25 – 60 & Jones, *Churches of the Cynon Valley*, pp. 31 – 70.

<sup>49</sup> *CT*, 9 March 1895.



An example of the tolerance of other denominations by Henry Bruce and the facility with which their spiritual accommodation was allowed, is shown in the chain of events that led to the foundation of one chapel. When in 1863, the Welsh Wesleyan congregation requested a plot of land from the estate to build a chapel, David Morgan wrote to Henry Bruce to request permission for a site. The reply does not appear to survive, yet in 1864, the chapel had been constructed on Bruce property and had opened along one of the more important roads in the town.

The policy of the estate in most cases seems to have been to provide the land free of charge, yet apply normal leasehold rates. As the estate was entailed it was not possible for Henry Bruce to give the land freehold, as this would harm the interests of future owners, however, he could defray the income that was due to him personally through granting the lease without payment for the plot. For some large church and chapel parcels, this could amount to several hundred pounds of lost payments. Furthermore, Henry Bruce was the patron of chapel celebrations and donated money to funds in their support.<sup>51</sup> He opened Duffryn House's parks and gardens for their use, particularly by the children of nonconformist denominational Sunday Schools. Other fundraising events also show the family's hospitality towards faiths other than their own. To the chagrin of his co-religionists, Henry Bruce also moved to the position of accepting the need for church disestablishment in Wales.<sup>52</sup>

Henry Bruce was a long-standing supporter of Irish church disestablishment and sympathised with the plight of the people of that country. As government policy towards Ireland evolved, he remained a staunch supporter of the policies of Gladstone's governments. It has been indicated that Henry Bruce provided land for a church at Napier Street, along with an adjoining plot for a cottage, later used as a small schoolhouse.<sup>53</sup> While he normally accepted the need for non-denominational education in Wales, mainly due to the fractured nature of religious adherence, in the case of the Roman Catholic faith he made an exception.<sup>54</sup> This was based on his observations while travelling in Ireland, his contact with senior Catholic clerics and his experience of the situation of Irish immigrants, particularly while Stipendiary Magistrate at Merthyr Tydfil. This led him to believe that the Irish Catholic did best where the familiar structures of their native communities were replicated. Given this point of view, the church and its priests were essential. He also believed that there was a special and unique requirement for a separate school, as he feared

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<sup>51</sup> *CT*, 15 September 1860; *AT*, 28 March 1863; *AT*, 16 May 1874; *South Wales Star*, 25 September 1891

<sup>52</sup> *CT*, 16 November 1867; *CT*, 4 February 1888.

<sup>53</sup> *AT*, 4 October 1879.

<sup>54</sup> Morgan, *Welsh Leaders*, p. 233.

that Roman Catholic parents of school age children would not encourage them to attend education where they received some religious instruction that would be contrary to the doctrines of their faith.<sup>55</sup>

These actions had several consequences. They alienated, to an important extent, the children of Irish Catholic families from the mainstream education of the general population, thereby emphasising their separateness.<sup>56</sup> There was already an undercurrent of anti-Catholic feeling in the valleys and an act intended to improve their situation may have made it worse in the short term.<sup>57</sup> By the turn of the century, the Duffryn estate was to provide the Roman Catholic community of Mountain Ash with a uniquely large site on Miskin Road, where a new church, school, presbytery and social hall were built, filling in the last break in development between Mountain Ash and Miskin.<sup>58</sup> On this occasion, there was the possibility to combine religious provision with social amenity, but most importantly in terms of his wider impact, with education.

## **Education**

Henry Bruce is remembered best, when at all, for his interest in Welsh education. It is clear that he valued education highly and this is exemplified in his oft-stated opinion that the best way of advancing individual and national development was through the education of all people, regardless of class, gender or religion.<sup>59</sup> He had first-hand knowledge of the problems of the new industrial societies through his twelve-year residence in London and his work as Stipendiary Magistrate and he believed that most of the malign issues he observed could be mitigated by a systematic approach to the education of the poor.<sup>60</sup> As a trustee of the British School partly sponsored by the Marquess of Bute at Trecynon,<sup>61</sup> near Aberdare, and through close collaboration with the Guest family of Dowlais, where he was aware of their works school system,<sup>62</sup> he had gained an understanding of what was possible in the cause of educating the working classes in a Welsh industrial environment.

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<sup>55</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 282.

<sup>56</sup> P. O'Leary, *Immigration and Intergration. The Irish in Wales, 1798 – 1922* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 150 – 1.

<sup>57</sup> P. O'Leary, Anti-Irish Riots in Wales, *Llafur*, Volume 5, Number 4, 1991, pp. 27 – 36. J. Parry, The Tredegar Anti-Irish Riots of 1882, *Llafur*, Volume 3, Number 4, 1983, pp. 20 – 23. C B Turner, Religious Revivalism and Welsh Industrial Society: Aberdare 1859, *Llafur*, Volume 4, Number 1, 1984, p. 9. *MTel*, 18 September 1869; *WM*, 11 July 1882; *CT*, 9 June 1900. For the situation in Mountain Ash, c.f. O'Leary, *Immigration and Intergration*, pp. 150 – 1.

<sup>58</sup> *WklyM*, 2 October 1897; *EE*, 28 April 1899..

<sup>59</sup> *Merthyr Express*, 13 October 1866; *MM*, 23 June 1876.

<sup>60</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 259.

<sup>61</sup> *CMG*, 14 October 1848.

<sup>62</sup> Evans, *Education in Industrial Wales*.

In Parliament and as a government minister he spent a large amount of time and energy on educational matters. The 1870 Education Act was based on a programme that he and Robert Lowe had formulated in late 1867 - 8,<sup>63</sup> although it is mostly attributed to Forster, he is credited on the back cover page for his work as Vice President of the Committee on Education between 1864 and 1866. Later still he was instrumental in developing the most important piece of education legislation for Wales introduced in the nineteenth century, namely the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889. This was the result of an inquiry of a committee headed by, as he had then become, Lord Aberdare. This laid the basis of secondary and tertiary education in Wales and indicated his belief that education was a means to improvement for all.

These are all fine words and action at an elevated level, but how were these concerns realised in a place where he was most able to influence events, namely on his estate and at Mountain Ash? Henry Bruce had been concerned with the provision of an Anglican place of worship in Mountain Ash since the rapid expansion of the district from the late 1840s onwards. He had written to his father in 1850 on this matter and proposed a solution that could help in two ways. His suggestion was the building of suitable premises that could be used as both an Anglican chapel of ease and as a school for the district.<sup>64</sup> This was realised with the construction and opening of Duffryn School in 1857. His role as a Trustee of the Dowlais ironworks had given him an insight into the school system operated there. Although a committed Anglican, he supported the need for non-denominational education in environments where there was no overall agreement on dogma, agreeing that the Dowlais works schools should adopt the non-sectarian British schools system, to encourage the greatest attendance possible.<sup>65</sup> The new school at Mountain Ash was established on the National School principle, but had no denominational doctrine applied. He was adamant throughout his life that education should not be a factional interest but be open to everyone, therefore, religious allegiance should not limit the educational opportunities available to the people. He was just as ardent on this issue on the formation of higher educational colleges for Wales, often against the strident opinions and desires of his fellow Anglicans.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 30° and 31° Victoriæ, 1867, Vol. CLXXXVIII, House of Commons, 'Education of the Poor Bill', cc. 1317 – 66.

<sup>64</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), pp. 90 – 91.

<sup>65</sup> Parliamentary Debates, 30° and 31° Victoriæ, 1867, Vol. CLXXXVIII, House of Commons, 'Education of the Poor Bill', cc. 1317 – 66

<sup>66</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), pp. 32 – 33.

The Duffryn schools were established to serve the colliery communities in the central portion of the Cynon Valley. Aberdare had already seen the foundation of two schools at Trecynon and at the town centre. While the motivating force behind this project was Henry Bruce, the actual funds for its construction came from his father, John Bruce Pryce, and the coal masters Thomas Powell and John Nixon. The estate and the colliery owners were essentially the providers of the land and the buildings, and underwrote the financial viability of the venture. General supply of funds came from the workmen's pence subscription, primarily, although not exclusively, provided by the colliers, and from government grants secured through inspection. The Duffryn schools were run independently from the two parochial School Boards of Aberdare and Llanwonno, and despite the best efforts of Henry Bruce, he was unable to secure a separate parochial dispensation to allow them to be operated by the locality. This was an important issue as if it had been successful it would have allowed them to access funds from local ratepayers. From 1884, the Aberdare and Llanwonno Joint Schools Board were the principle organisation responsible for the administration of the scheme.

This change occurred because the coal proprietors had expressed concern over the cost and utility of their continued involvement. Nixon and the PDSCC had wanted to stop the collection of the collier's contributions at source, as well as overall financial responsibility for the schools. Henry Bruce was able to persuade them to continue the practice of collecting the workmen's subscriptions, however, he could not prevent them from absolving themselves of financial liability for the schools. These decisions were partly the repercussions of the industrial conflicts of the 1870s, which had seen widespread financial hardship in the area and a reduction in population.<sup>67</sup> The Board consequently lost money from both the workers and from the government, the latter loss was caused by to the school's reduced numbers and an overall fall in effectiveness. Bruce and the colliery companies had to step in to help balance the books. The colliery companies and the estate also provided all the coal and wood to heat the schools free of charge.<sup>68</sup> From 1895, the Duffryn Schools came under the authority of the Llanwonno Schools Board and was run essentially as an adjunct of the Mountain Ash Urban District Council. Throughout their history and until his death, Henry Bruce was the Chairman of these successive authorities.<sup>69</sup> Equally as predictably, perhaps, their clerks were successively David Morgan and after his death, his son Morgan Morgan.

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<sup>67</sup> *CT*, 8 February 1879.

<sup>68</sup> *AT*, 13 January 1877.

<sup>69</sup> *MT*, 17 January 1895.

The Duffryn Schools organisation, as has been noted, had much in common with those established at Dowlais and they were the most extensive of their kind in the district.<sup>70</sup> The area covered included Aberaman, Cwmaman, Abercwmboi and Penrhiwceiber, as well as Mountain Ash. Duffryn School was the main and senior portion of the system, there were also subsidiary infant schools established at Cwmpennar, paid for by PDSCC; Newtown, paid for by NTC&C; Miskin, jointly paid for by Bruce, PDSCC and NTC&C; and at Penrhiwceiber. This was more than a matter of administrative organisation and convenience, but in and of itself an act of humanity. It avoided the need for the smaller children to walk reasonably long distances to the main school. Additionally, it avoided them negotiating the perilous industrial landscape in which they lived. Most railway and tramway routes at this time were not enclosed and in 1861, a boy had been killed on the tramway from Lower Duffryn Colliery to the Deep Duffryn site.<sup>71</sup> Falls into the canal were frequent and there was the macabre story, related by Joseph Keating, of a boy, who while being truant from school and playing in a canal boat was decapitated by a tram running down a quarry incline. As local men carried the body home, the teachers told the young children of the nearby Newtown school to stand on their chairs and observe the sad scene, so as to teach them the perils of not attending classes.<sup>72</sup> Other horrendous accidents to children navigating and playing in the concentrated industrial environment around Mountain Ash are frequently reported in the contemporary press.

Duffryn School also provided evening classes in a variety of more advanced subjects, including Magnetism, Geology, Electricity, Applied Mechanics, Drawing, Carving and a number of others.<sup>73</sup> One of the tutors of these lessons in the 1890s was the distinguished Welsh sculptor Goscombe John, who was later to model the First World War memorial at Duffryn Woods. The tutor for geology was Morgan Morgan, agent to the estate.<sup>74</sup> As Grant Duff writes of Bruce, 'he looked to the provision of good schools and innocent amusements for the people as important elements in the well-being of the community.'<sup>75</sup> As with churches and chapels, the establishment of schools is a relatively reliable reflection of the development of various parts of the district. Table 13 shows the development of schools in the Mountain Ash area within the territory of the Mountain Ash Urban District Council. The general pattern was that in the earlier period, the different communities were provided with an infant's school or mixed elementary where the population dictated, with

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<sup>70</sup> Evans, *Education in Industrial Wales*.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *PontChron*, 12 May 1893; *AT*, 4 October 1884.

<sup>72</sup> Keating, *My Struggle for Life*, p. 17

<sup>73</sup> *AT*, 12 November 1887.

<sup>74</sup> *AT*, 12 November 1887.

<sup>75</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 24.

older pupils travelling to Duffryn School for continued education. As the population grew, schools would then add boys and girls sections of their own, negating the need to travel to the Duffryn site itself.

It is a notable feature of Henry Bruce's life that while he was pursuing his government career, including his concern with national education policy, he was also performing the duties of a local provider of these public amenities. On the promotion of Henry Bruce to the position of Vice President of the Committee of the Council on Education, the *Aberdare Times* of 30 April 1864 stated,

From the earliest period of his public life until the present moment, Mr Bruce has evinced the greatest anxiety and thoughtfulness on the subject of education, and in the beautiful schools at Mountain Ash we have demonstrative proof of the sincerity with which he has espoused the educational cause. These schools stand out as the living witnesses of his heartiness in the great matter over which he has now been called upon to exercise a greater influence than is any other man in the kingdom.<sup>76</sup>

Shortly before his death, he had accepted an invitation to join the Llanwonno Schools Board, continuing his half-century association with local education.<sup>77</sup> To him this involvement was not merely an honorary perquisite for a local dignitary but part of a lifetime interest in the cause of education in the valleys of northern Glamorgan. The minute books of the schools record that no detail of administration proceeded without his approval and no member of staff employed without his consent.<sup>78</sup> The family more generally, were liberal benefactors of schools throughout the valley and were often called on to carry out the setting of the foundation stones. For the Duffryn Schools in particular, this interest was a highly personal responsibility that he and his family took seriously.

The annual report and prize giving at Duffryn School were an opportunity for him to give a set-piece speech, which was widely reported throughout South Wales and beyond. While the main business of the annual event was the formal setting out of the financial and academic position of the schools and the presentation of numerous prizes to the deserving recipients, which Henry Bruce himself provided, he often used it as an opportunity to express his views on wider issues. Indeed, as a speaker or writer, he was never afraid to confront concerns relating to the actions of his audience, be they good or bad. The general impression given by these orations is one of a fatherly concern, often laced with a humour lacking in his more formal pronouncements. Some of these also show an intimate concern

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<sup>76</sup> *AT*, 30 April 1864.

<sup>77</sup> *EE*, 28 February 1895.

<sup>78</sup> Evans, *Education in Industrial Wales*.

for the practicalities that confounded the opportunities of the children of the working class. In 1879, Bruce told the children and their parents at Duffryn School, ‘... the power of reading, which I commend to my young friends here, who may relieve sufferings by their reading of an interesting book, and if they have any difficulty in getting an interesting book if they come to Duffryn my children will be happy to supply them.’<sup>79</sup>

Eventually, after the Duffryn Schools administration had been annexed to the Joint Schools Board, compulsory education enacted by government and funding secured through the rates, it was decided to discontinue the giving of prizes. Instead, Henry Bruce stated that the money previously applied for this purpose would go towards the establishment of a new library for the town.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, the colliery workmen of NTC&C had come to a similar decision and the poundage system that had previously been used to pay for their children’s education was instead to be applied to the construction of a new workmen’s hall and institute.<sup>81</sup> At the end of Henry Bruce’s last presentation of prizes at Duffryn School and after the obligatory vote of thanks had been given, he summed up his overall feelings for his neighbours, ‘It had been the greatest pleasure of his life to do all he could for the education of the children of his poorer neighbours,’ he continued, ‘It would give himself and his family the greatest pleasure always to do all they could for Mountain Ash.’<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *CT*, 8 February 1879.

<sup>80</sup> *AT*, 26 April 1884.

<sup>81</sup> *WM*, 1 March 1884.

<sup>82</sup> *WklyM*, 24 April 1880.

**Table 13**  
**Mountain Ash Local Education Authority: List of Schools<sup>83</sup>**

<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Date Opened</b>
Duffryn (Boys)	1857
Duffryn (Girls)	1862
Duffryn (Infants)	1862
Ynysybwll	1867
Newtown (Mixed)	1871
Cwmpennar (Mixed)	1874
Miskin (Mixed)	1875
Miskin (Infants)	1875
Roman Catholic School (Old)	1880
Penrhiwceiber (Infants)	1881
Trerobart (Boys)	1886
Trerobart (Infants)	1888
Newtown (Infants)	1889
Caegarw (Infants)	1893
Abercynon (Infants)	1893
Trerobart (Girls)	1894
Penrhiwceiber (Boys)	1895
Penrhiwceiber (Girls)	1895
Cefnpennar (Infants)	1895
Abercynon (Boys)	1896
Abercynon (Girls)	1896
Ynysboeth (Infants)	1896
Cribbinddu (Infants)	1897
Ynysboeth (Mixed)	1899
Penguelan (Infants)	1901
Darranlas (Infants)	1901
Carnetown (Infants)	1904
Abertaf (Infants)	1904
Roman Catholic School (New)	1905
Abertaf (Junior)	1906
Penguelan (Mixed)	1906
Caegarw (Boys)	1906
Caegarw (Girls)	1906
Darranlas (Mixed)	1907
Carnetown (Junior)	1909
Abercynon (Higher Standard)	1911
Miskin (Central)	1911
Clarence Street (Infants)	1911
York Street (Mixed)	1915
Penrhiwceiber (Senior)	1926

Given his influence on the establishment of intermediate education in Wales, it is not surprising that he laid the foundation stone for the new Aberdare Intermediate School in

<sup>83</sup> Evans, *History of the Navigation School*.

1893. In fact, he played an important part in facilitating this venture. He was the largest single benefactor, subscribing £250 to the cost of the project, importantly he was instrumental in securing the land on which the school was to be built.<sup>84</sup> The committee responsible for promoting the scheme for an intermediate school at Aberdare had already secured an exemption from providing the two acres of land that was normally required. The one-acre plot they proposed to use had other problems attached to it, due to its previous incarnation as part of Hirwaun Common. When this had been enclosed, part was laid out as an impressive public park, other sections were apportioned to the major local landowners, notably the Marquis of Bute, the Lord of the Manor of Miskin. To utilise this location, an agreement had to be reached with the Charity Commissioners and this required an appropriate piece of land worth at least £350 to be provided elsewhere for the recreation of the people of the parish of Aberdare, as denoted by the ancient parochial boundary. Henry Bruce stepped in to intervene with the Marquess of Bute and the Charity Commissioners and supplied seven and a half acres of land to replace that needed for the school.<sup>85</sup>

In doing this, he provided the new area, as required by the Commissioners, within the old parochial limits but actually sited at Mountain Ash, on the boundary of Abercwmboi Isaf and Darran Las farms. The only stipulation he applied to the grant was that this area be under the supervision of the Mountain Ash Local Board of Health and subsequent successors to this authority. Moreover, the grant was considerably more generous than was required. As well as being greater in extent than was needed, it was in a section of the town that was seeing substantial investment in house building, for both workmen's and higher status properties. It was located between the waterworks, previously provided by his father and the north-western extension of the main urban area. Bruce's apparent desire was to provide a space for public recreational use at Mountain Ash; while also preserving the semi-rural aspect as seen from Duffryn House.

Mountain Ash children then had to travel to Aberdare for advanced education, until in 1907 the Mountain Ash County School was constructed on Gwernifor Farm land, granted by his son Henry Campbell Bruce, who later in 1926 sold Duffryn House itself and its park to the Glamorgan Education Authority for use as a rather grand county, later grammar school. It is worth noting, and as stated in the 1889 report, that these were initially perceived as schools for the children of the middle class. A different type of education for the gifted children of the working class was delivered through the Higher Grade Schools. In the early 1890s the Llanwonno School Board, built the first of this type of school in the Cynon

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<sup>84</sup> [http://www.abgs.org.uk/history/F\\_Stone/stone.htm](http://www.abgs.org.uk/history/F_Stone/stone.htm)

<sup>85</sup> *AT*, 12 August 1883 & *CT*, 15 April 1899.

Valley at Miskin, Mountain Ash. Henry Bruce provided two £10 scholarships of three years duration, NTC&C also providing two of these at £10, while the Nixon's collieries workmen provided five scholarships at £2. These were available to all qualifying students whether they were boys or girls.<sup>86</sup> It is a particularly notable feature of Henry Bruce's public life that the cause of female education was so important to him.

The availability of education for girls was a longstanding concern of Henry Bruce and of his family, particularly his wife, Norah. As well as elementary education, where he noted that the girls achieved a higher standard of competency in the English language and reading than most of the older boys did,<sup>87</sup> he supported further advances in the scope of education for women. He encouraged women student teacher at the Duffryn Schools and particularly emphasised their superior ability as teachers of younger children of both genders.<sup>88</sup> His own daughters were educated at home by a succession of German governesses, a fashion among the pre-First World War aristocracy, attended the informal women's tutorials at Oxford University, one studying at Queen's College, Dublin. His daughters travelled extensively with their father on his overseas trips and attended their father on his school visits. Throughout their lives, they retained their connection with educational interest, particularly at Somerville College, Oxford and the Aberdare Hall at Cardiff.<sup>89</sup> Lady Aberdare was the patroness after whom this institution was named and a member of the University College Council and Court of Governors. Their daughter, Pamela being first principal and another daughter Alice was subsequently appointed President of the Council of Aberdare Hall. The exact financial involvement of the family in this venture is unknown, although Lady Aberdare was instrumental in securing money from the Pfizer Trust towards some of the cost and Morgan Morgan was sent to survey and lay out the tennis courts for the new hall. Henry Bruce was a supporter of women's education generally and was President of the Girls Day Schools Trust and of the fundraising committee of Somerville College, Oxford, where Alice Bruce was an honorary Fellow.

As may be expected from his activities in support of Welsh higher education he took an interest in local working men's attainment and attendance at these institutions. One striking example quoted in a letter to his daughter Rachael in 1893, perhaps exemplifies his ideal of the potential for working men to progress and improve themselves. In it, he explains the touching story of two Mountain Ash brothers who reached the University College at

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<sup>86</sup> *PontChron*, 24 January 1890.

<sup>87</sup> *CT*, 8 February 1879.

<sup>88</sup> *Cambrian*, 14 April 1876.

<sup>89</sup> *EE*, 28 January 1897; *EE*, 1 May 1897; *PontChron*, 11 February 1898; Matthew & Harrison (eds.); *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: Alice Bruce*, p. 282.

Cardiff, through each sibling in turn working in the colliery to allow the other to pass their entrance examinations. The story exemplified a type of self-help that Bruce valued as the ideal of working class advancement.<sup>90</sup> Unfortunately, Joseph Keating supplies an unhappy postscript to the story of these commendable brothers.<sup>91</sup> It is unclear to which period this reminiscence relates and whether Henry Bruce lived to see the denouement of this melancholy story. Even the best intentions and hopes of the philanthropist could be brought to nought by the hard realities of the life working people had to lead, despite their own best efforts to improve themselves.

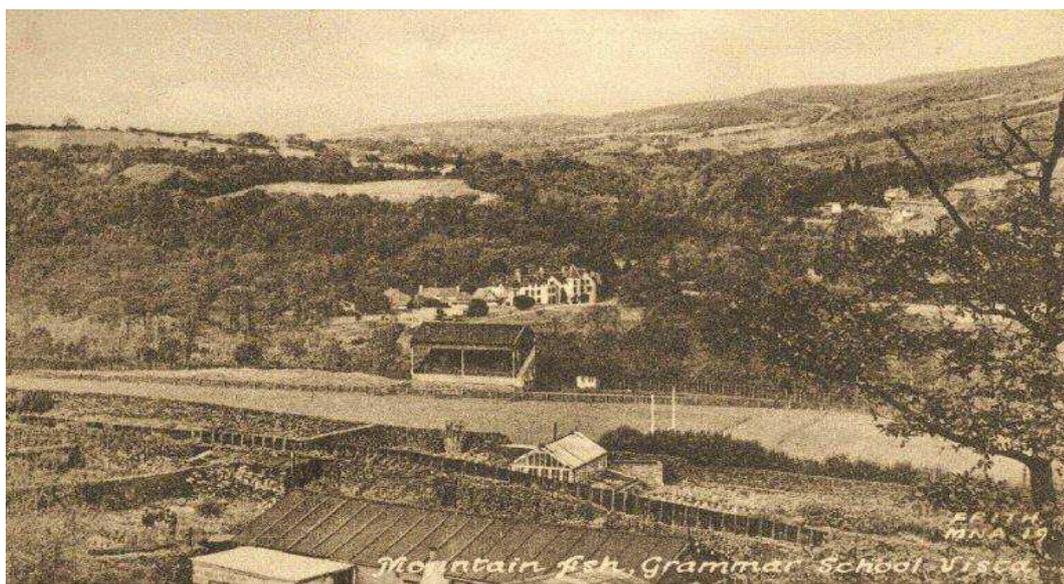


Illustration 11. The location of this photograph is two hundred yards west and uphill of Illustration 10. In the centre of this photograph, circa 1930, is Duffryn House in its later institutional incarnation as a County school. In the foreground are allotment gardens and above them the 'Recreation Ground,' home of Mountain Ash RFC. Both are examples of Henry Bruce's encouragement of 'innocent amusements.'<sup>92</sup>

### **'Well-ordered Amusements'**

Henry Bruce had a strong belief that religion and education were the means by which the people could improve their lives and situation. He also understood that for most people the high ideals that lead to better understanding of the means of improving themselves were often lost among the effort of hard lives, where the only source of succour was the public house. It is fair to say that Henry Bruce saw the sale and consumption of alcohol as an evil to be countered and supplanted. He, therefore, sought to offer interesting and enjoyable alternatives to the, as he saw it, superficial attractions of these venues. He articulated the importance he gave to this at the National Eisteddfod at Cardiff in 1883,

<sup>90</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), p.321.

<sup>91</sup> Keating, *My Struggle for Life*, pp. 153 -54.

<sup>92</sup> [HTTP://www.coflein.gov.uk/images/1/Duffryn%20mountainash/2/](http://www.coflein.gov.uk/images/1/Duffryn%20mountainash/2/)

It is not often one can catch so large and intelligent an audience obliged, in ordinary politeness, to listen to all ones lucubrations on a favourite subject. But I hope that I may not be thought insensible to the worth, the real, solid, inappreciable worth of innocent and healthy amusement. Would to Heaven, my friends, we could furnish a due portion of this sweet leaven of busy life to all classes of society! Next to the deep-pervading sentiment of religion, I know nothing of more importance to the well-being of a people than well-ordered amusements.<sup>93</sup>

These ‘amusements’ required suitable premises for them to be conducted. He disagreed with some temperance campaigners and religious ministers, who saw the activity associated with the premises as part of the evil that led to dissolution.<sup>94</sup> Instead, Henry Bruce, thought it was the propensity of these activities to be carried on at public houses that was the problem, not the recreations in and of themselves. His opinion applied to both artistic and athletic activities. One of the earliest local manifestations of this counter to the public house was the promotion of the Mountain Ash Workmen’s Hall, although slightly earlier he had supported the provision of structures like the Temperance Hall at Aberdare<sup>95</sup> for cultural activities. Henry Bruce was a significant shareowner in the first Workingmen’s Hall at Mountain Ash, holding £150 of the £250 of bonds,<sup>96</sup> although it does not appear to have ever been a particularly remunerative venture. On his part, it must be viewed as an investment in the social well-being of the community, rather than an enhancement to his income. The Workmen’s Hall was intended to be a home for cultural activities and he sustained that institution as the home of those pursuits. He opened the Hall in January 1865,<sup>97</sup> presided over and was patron of numerous events, be they on an educational or recreational subject.<sup>98</sup> His involvement in these activities closely matches the reports he had read of philanthropic ventures in the north of England in the first half of the century. Here, he observed, the presence of the ‘master’ was an important element in their success.<sup>99</sup> The Hall was sold in 1880 to the Local Board for £1000.<sup>100</sup>

A similar impulse lay behind the establishment of the Drill Hall. This was located a short distance from the gates of Duffryn House’s land, was another venue used for social and improving functions. It was built to house the local volunteer detachment and contained a large covered space suitable for a variety of uses, as well as offices, storerooms and an underground brick lined arsenal. Henry Bruce was a captain in the 5<sup>th</sup> Glamorgan

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<sup>93</sup> *CT*, 11 August 1883.

<sup>94</sup> G. Williams, *1905 and All That. Essays on Rugby Football, Sport and Welsh Society*, (Llandysul, 1991), pp. 75 – 78; Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 64.

<sup>95</sup> *CT*, 28 November 1862.

<sup>96</sup> *CMG*, 6 January 1865.

<sup>97</sup> *AT*, 7 January 1865.

<sup>98</sup> e.g. *AT*, 12 November 1887; *CT*, 17 September 1892.

<sup>99</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 17.

<sup>100</sup> Bevan, *Hanes Mountain Ash*, trans. by A. V. Jones, p. 101, n. 5.

Volunteer Corps, based at Mountain Ash, until his resignation of the position on attaining ministerial office in 1864.<sup>101</sup> The Volunteers drilled at the grounds of Duffryn House and their band was in frequent attendance at public events in the town. They also provided entertainment at Duffryn House, be they personal guests of Bruce or general public fetes and parties.<sup>102</sup> David Morgan notes his own role in the corps and he was eventually succeeded by his son Morgan Morgan, who had command of the two companies formed at Mountain Ash, rising to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel during the First World War. Henry Bruce sons were young lieutenants in the companies and Charles was later to follow a distinguished career in the Indian Army and as an explorer of the Himalayas.<sup>103</sup> The Drill Hall was a suitable venue for recreational events as it was larger in size than the meeting room at the Workmen's Hall. As well as hosting charity balls and concerts, organised under the patronage of the Bruce family, Henry Bruce chaired a series of lectures on aspects of scientific interest, providing his own observations on the subject being discussed.<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps Henry Bruce's most extravagant establishment to supply facilities for the betterment of the people of the town was his founding of the Aberdare Arms Coffee Tavern at Mountain Ash. This was opened in 1878 and the description of this building, as expressed in the local press, suggests a rather grand edifice, particularly given the early date and location. The exact cost to Bruce was never stated but on the opening of a similar venture in Aberdare, he explained that it had increased its turnover ever since it had opened.<sup>105</sup> He was an early supporter of coffee taverns as an alternative to the attractions of licensed premises, being responsible for the creation of a similar facility in the notorious Seven Dials area of London.<sup>106</sup> There are several reasons why the coffee tavern at Mountain Ash was undertaken at what must have been a considerable outlay. Despite Bruce's claim that the tavern was not set up to compete with the public houses, everything about the venture suggests otherwise. The two large rooms it contained were decorated with marble-topped tables, large mirrors and framed maps on the walls; other up-to-date facilities were provided, including a well-equipped kitchen, zinc covered counters and an ornate lift. Patrons were able to play games such as draughts and chess and could bring their own food to eat there.<sup>107</sup> The premises were an attractive venue for those types of organisation who would usually have had to utilise other facilities, particularly the long-rooms of public houses. Chapel congregations without their own place of worship were

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<sup>101</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p.101.

<sup>102</sup> e.g. *WklyM*, 22 August 1882; *EE*, 23 August 1892.

<sup>103</sup> Bruce, *Himalayan Wanderer*.

<sup>104</sup> *CT*, 17 September 1892.

<sup>105</sup> *AberObs*, 19 November 1881.

<sup>106</sup> *MT*, 29 November 1878; *WM*, 13 December 1879.

<sup>107</sup> *MTel*, 29 November 1878.

now able to use a site more appropriate than the other alternatives.<sup>108</sup> Sporting and cultural groups were also based here, including the temperance counterparts to the local rugby and cricket teams, whose own social activities were centred at licensed premises and whose officers often included publicans.<sup>109</sup>

The Duffryn School Board, of which Bruce was Chairman, and its successors held their meetings at the Coffee Tavern until responsibility for education passed to the Mountain Ash Urban District Council in 1894.<sup>110</sup> The growth of the responsibilities of local government had eventually led to a squeeze on the delivery of social activities at the Workmen's Hall and this may have been part of the reason, which led Bruce to divert his attention to this new enterprise. An amusing indication of how power was shifting from the old elite to public bodies is indicated in the Surveyor's report on an application by Lord Aberdare, to the Local Board, for permission to construct new urinals and a water closet at his coffee tavern. It was approved.<sup>111</sup>

Healthy recreation was always an important element in the active social provision that Henry Bruce preferred. Activities that were encouraged as an alternative to indolence were sports and other vigorous leisure pursuits. The family were physically active themselves and they supported the cricket team, Henry Bruce being fond of the game and a member of the Marylebone Cricket Club, as well as patron of his local side.<sup>112</sup> Henry Bruce's son William was one of those responsible for the formation of Mountain Ash RFC in 1875.<sup>113</sup> On the opening of a new rugby field at Newtown, at the south-eastern side of the town, Bruce kicked off to start the game between Mountain Ash and Swansea and he was also a patron of this organisation.<sup>114</sup> Duffryn Grove was the home of many of the town's sports clubs and the Church of England Temperance Association held an annual athletics meeting at that place, where the prizes were provided and presented by members of the family.<sup>115</sup> Although Duffryn Grove was freely made available for groups that wished to use it, for instance, the local horticultural society,<sup>116</sup> no formal park was established at the town until the gift of land relating to the establishment of Aberdare Intermediate School in 1893.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Jones, *Providence Church*; *AT*, 26 April 1879.

<sup>109</sup> I Edwards, *The First 100 Years. The History of Mountain Ash Rugby Union Football Club. 1875 – 1975* (Mountain Ash, 1975).

<sup>110</sup> ACVMS, Reports of the meetings of the Aberdare and Llanwonno Joint Schools Board.

<sup>111</sup> *AT*, 17 April 1880.

<sup>112</sup> *AT*, 29 May 1875.

<sup>113</sup> M. Ham, *The Old Firm's Proud Past, 1875 – 1940* (Mountain Ash, 2015), pp. 1 – 2.

<sup>114</sup> Richards, *Mountain Ash Rugby Football Club*.

<sup>115</sup> *CT*, 30 August 1884.

<sup>116</sup> *EE*, 23 August 1892.

<sup>117</sup> *CT*, 15 April 1899.

This period also saw the beginning of the movement for a cottage hospital for Mountain Ash, and Henry Bruce allocated land for this on Granville Terrace, Caegarw.<sup>118</sup> He had previously supported and provided land for an isolation hospital at Llanwonno Road<sup>119</sup> but it was apparent that more was needed. At this period, Bruce seems to have been broadening his interest into these other spheres of activity, however, his death in early 1895 curtailed further developments for a number of years.

### **A Philanthropic Family**

While Henry Bruce was not resident at Duffryn it has been shown that he was able to rely on his agents to keep him informed of events in Mountain Ash. Closer to home his family were also important interlocutors on his behalf. Indeed, his wife Norah and daughters in particular were essential in maintaining the family presence and therefore reinforced his impact in the locality. It is not possible to fully explore the totality of Mrs Bruce, later Lady Aberdare's actions here, but a brief outline of some of her activities will give an indication of their scope. A report of her charitable activity is given in the English provincial press. 'It might do some of our ladies of Mayfair good to see Lady Aberdare trudging along the muddy lanes of Mountain Ash engaged upon a work which in an unassuming manner and a kind heart make to look as little as possible like charity.'<sup>120</sup> The *Western Mail* of 28 October 1891, also describes the charitable works of the couple:

Since Sir William Temple retired to cultivate roses I do not suppose that the English history presents so interesting a spectacle as that of ex-Home Secretary Bruce superintending the serving out of soup in an obscure part of South Wales. Lord Aberdare has given up to Mountain Ash what was meant for mankind, and those administrative talents which excited such admiration and envy when exercised in high places are now devoted to the organisation of local charity. But Lord Aberdare plays only the second part in the good works. It is Lady Aberdare who is the heart and soul of the movement which has eased hunger pangs in many homes.<sup>121</sup>

The actual form this philanthropy took was often of a distinctly dismal nature. During the waves of epidemics that frequently swept the area she provided moral and practical assistance. The Mountain Ash Medical Officer, in his report to the Local Board of Health, wrote of her replacing items for people whose own had been burned by official order and supplying food and money.<sup>122</sup> The whole family visiting the sick in hospital and providing

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<sup>118</sup> *AT*, 20 April 1895; *AT*, 2 February 1895.

<sup>119</sup> *CT*, 5 October 1889.

<sup>120</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle etc.*, 23 January 1878. Quoted in *Hanes*, Number 53, Winter 2010, p. 1.

<sup>121</sup> *Hanes*, Number 53, Winter 2010, p. 1.

<sup>122</sup> *AT*, 3 September 1873.

ice for those afflicted with typhoid fever;<sup>123</sup> Duffryn having its own icehouse.<sup>124</sup> She was frequently in correspondence with her husband regarding the impact of local disasters that required their attention. The Church and temperance were an important part of her life, and it is clear that she and her husband were closely aligned in their social conscience. Charity was not only a matter of material giving for them, instead, for her and the Bruce daughters, always referred to as the ‘Misses Bruce’ in the local newspapers, it required personal physical service to benefit the community, especially on the part of children. At numerous events, at the schools or at Duffryn and its grounds, they were to be seen serving the children and people of the district tea and cake, and administering to their needs.<sup>125</sup> There are also numerous reports of the daughters of Duffryn giving charitable concerts, plays and amusements to advance one worthy cause or another. These invariably involved them personally performing, alongside the daughters of the respectable classes of the town, concerts, plays and other entertainments in Mountain Ash’s Working Men’s Hall, the Drill Hall or the Aberdare Temperance Hall.<sup>126</sup> These good works could become onerous, Lord Aberdare himself writing of the pressures these caused them.<sup>127</sup> While a member of the Aberdare Local Board of Health, and a longstanding colleague, friend and ally of Henry Bruce, Rees Hopkin Rhys stated, ‘Lady Aberdare was an excellent lady, who like her husband had always associated herself with every useful public movement. She was really too generous.’<sup>128</sup>

Some of the activities of Henry Bruce throughout his life show distinctly the survival of traditional landowning functions in an urban and industrial setting. In the proto-industrial environment of Mountain Ash in the central decades of the nineteenth century, many of the activities of the Bruce family present a distinctly pre-modern aspect. Indeed, for the celebration of the marriage of the Prince of Wales in 1863, the whole proceedings had a distinctly feudal air. The schoolchildren and other residents, between 2000 – 2500 people in all, paraded to Duffryn house where they were presented to the family and gave Mrs Bruce a Bible and a silver salver. The procession then left Duffryn, led by the young William ‘Willie’ Bruce on his pony, followed by the Volunteer Brass Band, the volunteers themselves and the schoolchildren and others. This pseudo-martial cavalcade, in celebration of the heir to the throne’s nuptials, show the sort of role the family thought was

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<sup>123</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 29 November 1887; Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), p. 230.

<sup>124</sup> Talk given to Cynon Valley History Society by Mr B. Davies.

<sup>125</sup> *CMG*, 12 May 1860.

<sup>126</sup> *WklyM*, 6 September 1884.

<sup>127</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p. 301.

<sup>128</sup> *AT*, 2 March 1895.

still appropriate for them in a colliery community.<sup>129</sup> It was not young Willie, however, who was to lead his father's tenants to war, that task would fall to William's nephew, Henry Lyndhurst Bruce, who was killed in late 1914 alongside another Mountain Ash man. As the local newspaper commentated, 'Of the Duffryn heir and the Mountain Ash miner, it can truly be said that they were gallant and brave in life, and in death not divided.'<sup>130</sup>

In some of the reporting of the activities of the family in many South Wales newspapers there is the sort of attention, or sycophancy depending on interpretation, paid to them that is today reserved for members of the royal family. The celebrations of family weddings were generally treated as a local public holiday, with the streets being decorated with flags and ornamental arches and cannons fired in celebration.<sup>131</sup> Even commerce and industry joined in with locomotives driven backwards and forwards to set off fog signals and the collieries stopped and shops shut. The Great Western Railway going as far as to construct and decorate a temporary platform at Duffryn, for the wedding of Sarah Bruce, the Mountain Ash Stationmaster, the District Superintendent and other railway officials accompanying the private train to Newport, where the newly married couple's saloon car was attached to the London express.<sup>132</sup> For the marriage of William Bruce in 1882, a fireworks display was provided by Henry Bruce for the local people and 2500 children were treated with tea and 10cwts of cake, the family visiting the local schools in succession. In the evening, the schoolteachers and their friends were given a ball at the Duffryn schools.<sup>133</sup> At formal events, like the Horticultural Show held in Aberdare in 1877 and the laying of the foundation stone for the Aberdare Intermediate School, the procession of the family's carriages was met with due ceremony.<sup>134</sup>

The survival of these celebrations of local power, privilege and prestige is strangely at odds with the perception of these industrial communities as radical sources of change and shows the complex nature of society in these apparently socially monotone societies. The family were well aware of the realities of life in the colliery district in which they lived. On a visit to the Lower Duffryn Colliery, this danger was made very real to them when a fall of stone killed a man near where they were standing.<sup>135</sup> There are several reports of their visits to collieries and taking guests at Duffryn to see the working of coal. Whether this was considered an entertaining diversion or exhilarating thrill for their guests, similar to the

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<sup>129</sup> *AT*, 28 March 1863.

<sup>130</sup> *AL*, 24 December 1914.

<sup>131</sup> *CT*, 14 September 1872.

<sup>132</sup> *AT*, 25 August 1888.

<sup>133</sup> *MExp*, 6 January 1883.

<sup>134</sup> *WM*, 11 August 1893.

<sup>135</sup> *Welshman*, 21 August 1863.

local choir singing in the hall, or if it had a more serious purpose, cannot be ascertained. Henry Lyndhurst Bruce certainly descended a colliery and mined some of his father's mineral wealth, yet this could not be considered any more than an excursion, as it hardly qualifies as experiencing the reality of a collier's life.<sup>136</sup>

This should not imply there was no empathy between the family and their less fortunate neighbours. There are numerous examples of the pastoral care that Henry Bruce carried out within the community. These include his actions in response to natural disasters, mining tragedies, economic downturns, local industrial action and the general hardship always abundant in such a place. Local knowledge allowed him sympathy for the people that he often already knew. Again, a memorable description is given in the report of Keating on help provided to his family during a strike in the 1870s.<sup>137</sup> The activities of the family during the strikes of that time were particularly notable. In 1880, the *Aberystwyth Observer* reported, 'In the adversity of the people seeds have been sown which must eventually produce excellent results. For example nearly five hundred women were employed in sewing, mending and patching at Duffryn House, and thus double service was rendered. The poor found employment and clothes were made for the destitute.'<sup>138</sup> Similarly, aid was given to flood victims after some spectacular deluges that left Duffryn an isolated island amongst the floodwater and debris.<sup>139</sup> While there are many examples of this sort of help in letters and personal recollections, much more must have gone on than was ever reported in the press. For Henry Bruce this aspect of his activities was as important and instinctive as his efforts to do with the physical and administrative development of Mountain Ash.

Henry Bruce sponsored Welsh cultural events and supported local and national eisteddfodau. In 1878, he called '... the eisteddfod ... an amusement which could be used for instruction, and also to elevate national character.'<sup>140</sup> He could speak Welsh and translated poems from that language into English.<sup>141</sup> He was proud of his nationality and sought to support Welsh language and culture as part of a wider philosophy of encouraging higher pursuits for the people. He also retained and supported local bards and harpists and sponsored choral music, holding functions where these performances were held.<sup>142</sup> On the traditional music of Wales, he opined 'I do say that it is right that Welsh music should be particularly cultivated among us; for if Welsh music is not cultivated among the Welsh

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<sup>136</sup> *EE*, 17 April 1895.

<sup>137</sup> Keating, *My Struggle for Life*, pp. 17 – 18.

<sup>138</sup> *Aber Obs*, 24 April 1880, *EE*, 28 April 1897.

<sup>139</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), p. 47 – 48.

<sup>140</sup> *Cambrian*, 27 September 1878.

<sup>141</sup> *CT*, 11 August 1883.

<sup>142</sup> *CT*, 26 September 1885.

where can we expect that it will be?’<sup>143</sup> His cultural interest in the life of the local people is shown in his day-to-day contact with them. There does appear to have been a close affinity for each to the other.

He was singularly well suited to be a great owner of coal property. No one could have heard him converse with the colliers whom he chanced to meet, without being struck by his excellent manner towards them, by the way he seemed to raise them at once to his level, never lowering himself to theirs. His confidence in them was met by genuine affection on their part.<sup>144</sup>

This may be considered a romanticised view of an elite observer of a relationship that must have been artificial. At an address presented to Bruce by the inhabitants of Mountain Ash to commemorate his promotion to a junior ministerial position, a local paper reported the statement,

It is impossible that your generous, energetic, and unwearied efforts to improve the social, moral and intellectual condition of those amongst whom your lot is cast, should pass unnoticed or unappreciated, or that we should be blind to the fact that to you mainly we owe the many improvements which are going on around us, and which are so intimately connected with the comfort and prosperity of this place.<sup>145</sup>

Having examined the attitude and actions of the Bruce family towards the estate and Mountain Ash, the question remains of how the people of this community regarded them. There is no evidence of the private thoughts and opinions of the working people towards Henry Bruce. On the proposal to erect a memorial to Henry Bruce at Mountain Ash, a local newspaper stated, ‘It transpires that the workmen of the various collieries were heartily in sympathy with the movement.’<sup>146</sup> In the 1870s, during a period of great industrial and social upheaval, Mountain Ash was the centre of the collier’s union activity and the coal-masters attempts to curtail it.<sup>147</sup> At a meeting of representatives of men from 169 collieries held at the Workmen’s Hall, a motion was passed to resist alterations to the Masters and Servants Act and the Coal Mines Regulation Act that members of the legislature were trying to make, to the detriment of the workers. Letters were addressed to William Gladstone, the Prime Minister, and to Henry Bruce, the Home Secretary, asking them to resist these changes. It is an interesting episode that can be interpreted as a show of force at the very heart of Bruce’s own district. It could have been that it was a merely a happy coincidence that the strategic rail routes heading east-west and north-south met at Mountain

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<sup>143</sup> Bruce, *Lectures and Addresses*, p. 210.

<sup>144</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. I), p.14.

<sup>145</sup> *AT*, 21 March 1863.

<sup>146</sup> *MT*, 27 June 1895.

<sup>147</sup> e.g. *WM*, 18 August 1871; *CT*, 4 May 1872; *SWDN*, 19 June 1872; *SWDN*, 7 August 1872

Ash. On the other hand, at another large meeting of workers at the Workmen's Hall, a vote of thanks was passed to Henry Bruce for his actions on behalf of the colliers.<sup>148</sup>

The reports of the reaction at Mountain Ash after news of his defeat in 1868 arrived there give a very interesting impression of how that population felt regarding their deposed Member of Parliament. Early in the day, celebratory cannon were fired and excited crowds thronged the flag bedecked streets in anticipation of a victory for Bruce and Richards. When the result became apparent, a meeting at the Workmen's Hall labelled Fothergill a 'tyrant', his supporters' houses in the town were smashed open and looted and an effigy of the new junior member for the borough was beaten around the streets. A large mob marched out towards Aberdare, where the authorities had prudently stationed a large contingent of police who turned them back. Henry Bruce was escorted through Aberaman by a large torch lit procession of his supporters, and when a large crowd ventured towards Cwmaman, in opposition to these shows of support for Bruce, there was conflict and they were turned away.<sup>149</sup> Similarly, during the 1880 election, there were riots in both Aberdare and Mountain Ash that saw public houses' windows shattered and the homes of prominent Conservatives attacked. This may have been partly the repercussions of Bruce's Licensing Act, that saw the brewers and alcohol trade move to a more Conservative political stance.<sup>150</sup> These actions certainly suggest a loyalty to someone they viewed as 'their' man.

Henry Bruce died on 25 February 1895, at his Princes Gardens house in London and within a few weeks of his eightieth birthday. At the news of his death, there was a considerable outpouring of affectionate and sympathetic obituaries. The Glamorgan newspapers, in particular, reported his illness, deterioration, and demise in bulletins across their editions.<sup>151</sup> His wife wanted the funeral to be a private ceremony, a memorial service was to be held in London for those who wished to commemorate him there, however, representations were made at Duffryn House and it was agreed that envoys of local groups would be allowed to attend. The recording of the corpse's transportation from London to Mountain Ash are an example of late Victorian sentimental journalism. Yet there is no reason to suppose from any contemporary or subsequent opinion that this coverage was overdone in any way. There appears to have been a genuine feeling of sadness at his death, especially in Mountain Ash, where a lifelong concern and affection in the interest of the community was reciprocated. There was extensive coverage of the funeral and all of these state the good opinion in which he was held by all sections of society and particularly the people of

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<sup>148</sup> *CT*, 10 August 1872.

<sup>149</sup> *CT*, 21 November 1868.

<sup>150</sup> Ensor; *England 1870 – 1914*, p. 21 n. 1.

<sup>151</sup> *EE*, late February editions.

Mountain Ash,<sup>152</sup> some expending considerable column inches on the sombre and touching aspects of the response of the local working people to his passing.<sup>153</sup>

The cortege left London quietly in a railway carriage provided by the Great Western Railway. As news of the funerary train's progress spread, crowds grew at stops along the way. A small crowd at Pontypridd, became larger at each subsequent location. By Penrhiwceiber, assemblies of colliers and their families lined the slopes along the railway track. There were large crowds waiting at Mountain Ash, Oxford Street Station and the body was taken to a mortuary chapel at Aberffrwd Cemetery, watched overnight by the local Inspector of Police. Here, the next day, he was buried, overlooking the town of Mountain Ash after a service at St Margaret's Church. There was no large vault or brick lined tomb, later a modest Portland stone Celtic cross memorial was erected to mark the site.

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<sup>152</sup> *South Wales Daily Press*, 2 March 1895; EE, 5 April 1895.

<sup>153</sup> *Cambrian*, 9 March 1895; AT, 8 March 1895; SWDP 1 March 1895; MTim, 7 March 1895.



## Conclusion

It was typical of Henry Bruce that he had travelled from Duffryn two weeks before his death to complete the report of the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, of which he was the Chairman.<sup>1</sup> It was considered that the exertions that he had made in this endeavour had foreshortened his life, however, he had been unwell for some time.<sup>2</sup> That said, in addition to this work of national importance, he was obviously not too concerned over his own wellbeing, as he confirmed, in the week before he left Duffryn for London, that he would be a member of the new Llanwonno Schools Board<sup>3</sup> and the Swansea Training College,<sup>4</sup> committing himself again to the service of the community in educational matters.

Soon after his death, a campaign to commemorate his life through the erection of public monuments was begun. These movements were supported by representative figures of the community, county and country. Memorial statues were erected in his honour at Cathays Park in Cardiff and at Aberystwyth University. Mountain Ash marked his life through the substantial reconstruction and embellishment of the family church, St Margaret's. Mountain Ash Urban District Council and the local colliers supported the project but the dowager Lady Aberdare's idea that the new tower for the church should contain another statue to her late husband was considered inappropriate.<sup>5</sup> The eventual cost of this work, all raised locally, was £3500. This expression of emotion and affection went beyond the generally polite action of friends, acquaintances and neighbours. Henry Bruce's death marked the end of an era in Welsh history, his life had seen the country and particularly the valleys of Glamorgan transformed. As such, he was the living embodiment of the nation's nineteenth century history and progress. The lifespan of his father, John Bruce Pryce, Henry Bruce himself and his son Henry Campbell Bruce saw the growth, zenith and eclipse of South Wales's industrial power.

Following his death, his son Henry Campbell Bruce succeeded him and there was a remarkable continuity in the running of the estate. Morgan remained land agent and continued in his role as the representative of the family in the community; he was also Churchwarden, a member of the Mountain Ash Urban District Council and commander of the Mountain Ash Volunteer Force, among his many other roles. The second Lord Aberdare, despite his Eaton Square house and another country property near his wife's

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<sup>1</sup> *EE*, 3 April 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *Cambrian*, 1 March 1895; *EE*, 3 April 1895.

<sup>3</sup> *EE*, 28 February 1895; *MTim*, 10 and 17 January 1895.

<sup>4</sup> *EE*, 28 February 1895.

<sup>5</sup> *EE*, 5 April 1895.

family home, at Longwood House in Hampshire, was still active locally and in Welsh affairs. He was President of both the University of Wales and the National Museum of Wales, donating various works of art to the latter. He had long been a Justice of the Peace in Glamorgan, a Deputy Lieutenant and Vice Lord Lieutenant of the county.<sup>6</sup> He sat on the Glamorgan County Council until at least the end of the First World War and was usually elected unopposed for the constituency covering Mountain Ash. One exception to this was in 1904, when he beat the Labour candidate in the county election of that year, securing 60% of the vote.<sup>7</sup> It is worth stating that the electoral district for Mountain Ash was called Duffryn, as if to signify the proprietorial interest. Subsequently, the third and fourth Lord Aberdare were all closely involved in Welsh and county affairs. Both were county justices and Deputy Lieutenant, although neither sought elected public office, as hereditary peers they continued to take a keen interest in local and Welsh affairs.<sup>8</sup>

This thesis has argued that Henry Bruce and the development of the Duffryn estate into the industrial town of Mountain Ash in the latter nineteenth century cannot be understood without reference to its earlier evolution. As owners of a moderately sized and not particularly remunerative landed property in the Glamorgan uplands, Bruce and his family reacted in ways that were predictable given the activities of those in a similar position in that period. Like many other places, the town's name derived from the local public house named by the owners, if not commemorating them. As was common in industrialised Glamorgan, the street and public houses have names following established family and estate relationships. Henry Bruce invested and was active in infrastructure developments but not in the coal industry itself, being content to keep the leasehold returns on land, agricultural and industrial rents and traditional dues, such as wayleaves, galleage and royalties on minerals extracted and transported. With few exceptions, this was the established practice of the propertied elite throughout industrial Glamorgan. Henry Bruce was intimately involved in county and local administration and justice, these activities and the very nature of local government in the nineteenth century, was the preserve of local landowners and the greater tradesmen.<sup>9</sup>

Bruce also, as was common in most of South Wales, strongly supported the established church, by adding to or embellishing older ecclesiastical buildings, as well as constructing new churches. Glamorgan landowners and industrialists, particularly from the 1850s

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<sup>6</sup> C. Mosler, *Burkes Peerage and Baronetage. Volume I, Abdy – Langrishe. 106<sup>th</sup> Edition* (London, 1998), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> *AL*, 16 April 1904.

<sup>8</sup> Mosler, *Burkes Peerage, Vol. I*, pp. 8 - 9.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 2, above.

onwards, supported the provision of schools on their lands, especially where the school's religious teaching corresponded closely with their own beliefs. The provision of parks and sponsorship of certain charitable and socially benevolent concerns was widely encouraged. Yet in all these responses, there was a closer and more intimate relationship between Henry Bruce and his immediate locality than was normal.

By the mid nineteenth century, except for the Bruce family, there were few, if any, of the old gentry families extant and in residence in the uplands of Glamorgan. The older established families had either died out in the male line, their estates amalgamated through marriage into the larger properties of greater landholders, had been sold to new industrial wealth or broken up entirely. Their continued residence at Duffryn was therefore exceptional. Even given this, with the bequest of the Duffryn St Nicholas estate to Henry Bruce's father, the Duffryn Aberdare estate could have suffered a similar fate given the father's preference for the Vale property. It was the close personal attachment of Henry Bruce for Duffryn Aberdare, that led him to choose to settle at that place; and it was his humane concern for this growing settlement, rooted in his Christian faith and Liberal politics alongside wider experiences, that led him to so closely steer its development. His occupation and continued residence in the midst of the source of his industrial wealth was extremely unusual, as even those contemporaries who had made their fortunes in the valley's industries, for instance, David Williams at Miskin Manor, G. T. Clark at Talygarn and John Nixon at London and Brighton, moved to more pleasant environs in later years. This was a personal decision rather than economic necessity, although it should be noted that Henry Bruce owned a succession of London houses and travelled widely in the United Kingdom and abroad. His activities around the estate were predicated on the success of the coal industry and the money it generated, but until 1872, it was still the possession of his father and after his death, the estate was entailed for subsequent generations. Henry Bruce's total freedom of action was, therefore, limited and the money he earned through his other activities was always an important consideration. These things judged, he still had an extraordinary impact on the development of Mountain Ash.

As this thesis has sought to show, Henry Bruce guided the development and shape of the estate and town of Mountain Ash throughout his lifetime. As in public service more generally, he maintained his interest in the affairs of the community, particularly in education.<sup>10</sup> It is clear that his time in London and as Stipendiary Magistrate for Merthyr Tydfil had given him an insight into the social and economic problems of his time; he

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<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 4, above.

studied the condition of the poor in Britain and abroad, and made observations of his own. He analysed contemporary activities to ameliorate the ills prevalent in society and followed these practiced ideas on his estate, before carrying them through into the national stage as a government minister. This thesis has also argued that these processes show a close relationship between his philosophy, his experience and their application more widely. As was noted in the Introduction, above, Gladstone's description of Bruce as a 'Heaven made Home Secretary' was in fact incorrect, his usefulness had been founded in decades of experience and study and tried in the practical circumstances of north Glamorgan, especially on his estate, at the developing town of Mountain Ash. On licensing issues, education, the improvement of the condition in which the working classes lived and in their private activities, his first practical experiences and efforts to improve conditions were carried out locally, before he ever had the chance to bring them to effect nationally. He limited public houses while encouraging religion building, he was closely involved in education and all charitable activities to an extent and efficacy impossible without proximity to the people it concerned. The establishment of separate local government for Mountain Ash was important as it allowed the development of a middle class in the town and professional element in society. This fed into a vibrant and enterprising commercial class that he considered to be important, as an example of the success that effort and thrift could supply.

Henry Bruce's personal relationships with Mountain Ash and his locational empathy sustained the developing community, moreover, it gave an influential voice to local preoccupations. When new magistrates were required for the district, or there were boundary disputes between authorities, local people lobbied the estate and colliery concerns to achieve their required outcome. Except for the case of a separate parochial school board, these representations were successful. There was, despite mythologies of antipathy and conflict, a remarkable degree of collaboration between landowner, capitalist, bourgeoisie and proletariat. This can be seen in the combined efforts in the development and sustenance of the Duffryn schools system and the progress of schemes such as that for the Nixon's Institute. During periods of social conflict, for instance, through the hauliers strike of 1893 and later in the 'Block Strike', the military officers sent to supplement the civil authorities were headquartered at Duffryn,<sup>11</sup> their men being the emblems of the fundamental differences that did exist. While incidents like these were a real and important part of the history of the valleys, they are not the history of the valleys. That miners lobbied Bruce over industrial concerns, Bruce supported the colliers families during times of distress and

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<sup>11</sup> Grant Duff, *Letters Lord Aberdare*, (Vol. II), pp. 312 – 314.

secured funds to this end from the principals of these companies for charitable purposes, suggests a complex web of interrelatedness. Henry Bruce was most often the agency for aspects of social improvement in Mountain Ash, but other power and interest groups were inevitable in what was in fact a complicated set of associations.<sup>12</sup> Throughout all his later work on parliamentary committees, he never lost his affinity and close affection for his home. This makes him noteworthy in a valleys setting, in Glamorgan and Wales as well as nationally.

Henry Bruce remained concerned with the condition of the poorest and most disadvantaged members of society until a month before his eightieth birthday. If nothing else, it shows a sincerity and consistency in his actions to carry out those things he had espoused for many decades. He was a man of firm religious belief who considered his social endeavours were rooted in a higher ideal. He was not, however, a blind partisan for his faith. He insisted that the school his family established at Mountain Ash was non-denominational, as he did with the Dowlais Work's schools and the university colleges in Wales. He supported nonconformist and Roman Catholic denominations, this following his belief that religion was the best source for encouraging social improvement regardless of personal sectarian interest. He gave generously in money and land to such varied causes as the new intermediate and technical schools at Aberdare (1893), the Nixon's Workingmen's Hall Mountain Ash (1892), and he helped extensively during periods of economic distress in the area. He was certainly a patrician landowner in this respect, but his efforts did nevertheless achieve much good work that he did not have to do. He never neglected his estate at Duffryn, it was his refuge from his other work and it seems he sought to make it a better place for his neighbours as well.

Finally, this thesis suggests that the history of the communities of the Glamorgan valleys requires a wider approach than that which has generally prevailed. Elements of the history that created these communities have been subsumed, for instance that of the estates, which leaves us with only a partial understanding of the dynamics at work. The analysis of nineteenth century history has become dominated by class defined interpretation, while the increase in national consciousness that emerged as the twentieth century progressed left the role and impact of an anglicised, Anglican, landowning, industrialist, no matter how liberal, as antipathetic to the tone of the time and the themes being explored. An analysis of the estate papers, particularly, allied to census, directory, newspaper and local authority records, would allow the construction of a nuanced and detailed explanation of the evolving

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<sup>12</sup> See Chapters 2 and 4, above.

nature of this particular South Wales community. Other estates have left similar archives and many are held at publicly accessible record offices. A detailed study of the role and impact of the women associated with Duffryn would advance the historical understanding of the impact of aristocratic women in the period, in an unlikely setting. Henry Bruce was a product of his time and class, yet throughout his life, he followed his own course. It was in Henry Bruce's relationship with the community of Mountain Ash, around his ancestral valley home, that separated him from his peer peers and his actions there and on behalf of Mountain Ash that shows him to be atypical in the way he approached public life and service.

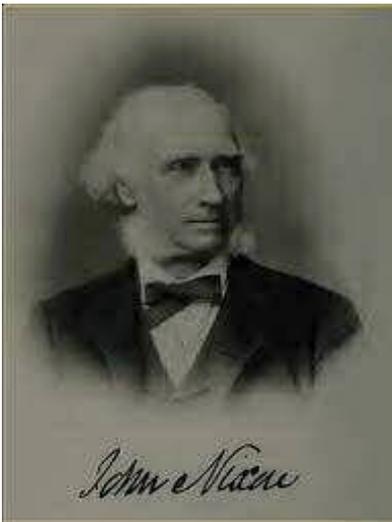
## Appendices

### Appendix I

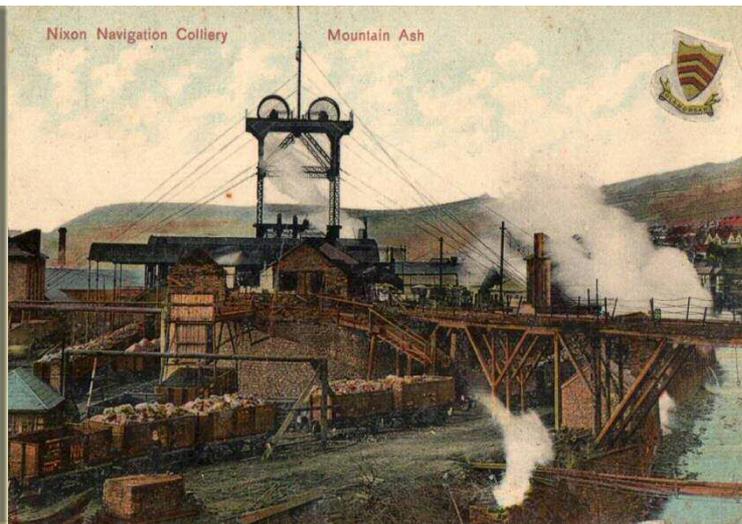
I ... well knew at the outset that it was a very serious matter we were entering upon; but at the same time I must say that the difficulties we had to encounter have been much greater than we originally expected, in fact, the large increased depth of rock we have had to sink through in this part of the valley has been beyond precedent. The ground is of a most difficult nature; the layers often extending 15 feet without a bed, crack, fissure, or any opening whatsoever. The rock had all to be blasted with powder, for scarcely the size of a nut could be got from the rock with the severest blow. Before undertaking the sinking of this pit I made myself acquainted as to what the probabilities of finding the 4 feet coal east and west of the Aberdare Valley were likely to be. In the Rhondda valley a colliery had been sunk at that time, and I found that the 4-foot coal was not workable. That is to the west of us; whilst I knew from having been in Dowlais Colliery that to the east the four foot vein had declined to two feet 6 inches and going further eastwards I found the four-foot to be an unworkable seam. This is proved by Mr Powell's pit at Tredegar being cut up and rendered worthless. It was but right for me to see accurately that the sinking of Navigation Colliery would answer, because if it was true that parties could sink their pits with less outlay, and put them in a fair way of working I should not be justified in sinking the Navigation Colliery at a larger outlay, with an uncertainty of it not turning out profitable. All this I had to ascertain, and made my calculations; therefore, it is with satisfaction that I find I have not been at all deceived in my expectations. In the next place I determined that unless I got a large property, I would not undertake the sinking of so large a pit. With that view I made application to Mr Bruce Pryce, and Messrs Allen, and said, without I can have two properties, I would not have one, as it would not answer my purpose. And now we have a property all the way from River Taff up to Cwm Neol, a distance of about 7 miles and from the mountain here on our side, to half-way across to Rhondda - a distance of about 3 miles. Thus we have the largest and most extensive, and unworked four foot of any colliery in the district, And you are aware that the 4 foot coal is the best coal. That at the upper part of the valley is fast exhausting, and nearly all other collieries are obliged to mix their other coal with their four foot coal. It must, indeed, I am certain, be a matter of congratulation to you all, that there is no fear of exhaustion here, and that there is a sufficiency of coal to last to the expiration of our lease, which is rather a long one - one I fancy that will last rather longer than you or I. The lease is for a term of 99 years. So we have four foot coal that will last to the end of the chapter. I believe I am right when I say that we have here from 4000 to 5000 acres of coal to be worked.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CMG, 12 May 1860.



John Nixon



Nixon's Navigation colliery from the south

## Appendix II

... I look to Mountain Ash surviving Aberdare in prosperity; while at the same time it is a fact that the progress of Aberdare is on the wane. No doubt some of you are of the same opinion, or else you would not have come here with your £100 and £200 to lay out in establishing businesses, in building houses and cottages, and investing your all in Mountain Ash. I believe you are right in doing so, and I believe we shall go on increasing in productiveness and prosperity. We have already advertised for the erection of from 200 to 300 cottages. When I leased this property Mountain Ash had only a few straggling cottages, now we have from 400 to 500 with a population of about 5000 and I believe in the course of a year and a half or two years, the population will be 7000. That indeed, will be a large amount of people to be brought together in so short a space of time. Having a superior coal, being most favourably situated for transport, and having a long lease, no man here need complain of being unfavourably placed as to employment ... There is not one of you whom I see before me, if you had the determination and strength of mind, but what could within ten years have a cottage of your own. If any of you choose to build cottages I will take them off you, indeed I will go even further. I will go to the expense of assisting those who are willing to assist themselves in erecting cottages.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*, 12 May 1860.

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