



**Above** Cefn Golau Cholera Cemetery. The first burials date to 1832. Such was the stigma attached to the disease, that some families buried their dead at night-time on the mountainside.

**Right** Bedwellty House, home of the Tredegar ironmasters.

It is also home to the biggest lump of coal in the world, cut for the Great Exhibition of 1851 and weighing in at a thumping 15 tons.

In September 2008, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council secured £3.8 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £1 million from the Welsh Assembly Government and £125,000 from Cadw to restore both the house and garden. The conservation and refurbishment of the house and park, due to start this summer, will transform a dilapidated historic building, as well as assist in regenerating one of the most deprived communities in Wales. Bedwellty House will also include the new Registry Office to keep a record of future generations hatched, matched and despatched in Tredgar.

### Cefn Golau Cholera Cemetery

At the other end of the social scale is the forlorn cemetery at Cefn Golau. This isolated site, set on the bleak moorland to the west of Tredegar, is one of the most evocative places in the South Wales valleys. With its few remaining gravestones set against the lowering skies, the site serves as a

unique introduction to one of the most painful chapters in the history of the area. Here rest the mortal remains of at least 200 people, victims of the ‘King of Terrors’—cholera. There were two major cholera epidemics in Tredegar, the first in 1832-1833 and another 17 years later in 1849. A third, less severe, outbreak struck again in 1866.

Today, the site has little more than 26 standing gravestones, surrounded by the broken fragments of many others. Many have had their inscriptions erased by the harsh weather conditions. However, the remaining stones and their inscriptions provide a wealth of information about the early industrial history of the area and some of its social experiences. A list of burials hastily written on the flyleaf of the Bedwellty parish register shows the isolated cemetery was first used to bury the victims of the outbreak of 1832-1833, then those of 1849 and 1866.

The gravestones of 1832 are few in number but are distinctive from the later stones. Their headstones are smaller and the kerbs and



PHOTOS: Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council