

DAVIS family, of Hirwaun, Aberdare, and Ferndale, coalowners.

DAVIS, DAVID, sen. (1797 - 1866),

son of William David Jeffrey and Margaret (Lewis), was born in 1797 at Llanddeusant, Carmarthenshire. After serving as apprentice to his maternal uncle, Lewis Lewis, a grocer and draper at Merthyr Tydfil, he opened a shop of his own at Hirwaun, and soon afterwards married Mary Lewis, who seems to have been a daughter of Thomas Lewis, another uncle of his. They did well, built larger premises, reared five sons and five daughters, and were the mainstays of the young Welsh Wesleyan cause at Hirwaun. As the family grew up, Davis was able to leave the shop to the care of his wife and children, and to tap another source of income by opening a small coal level on Cefn Rhigos; this colliery (with its wharf at Briton Ferry) was sold in 1847, but long before that, Davis had taken a lease of valuable steam-coal seams on the Blaen-gwawr estate at Aberaman, and began sinking a pit there in 1843, using first (1845) the canal and, afterwards (1847), the new Taff Vale Railway to get his coal down to Cardiff. Leaving the Hirwaun shop in charge of his second son, Lewis (below), he now placed his eldest son, David (below), in a shop at Trecynon (Aberdare); and as a number of his workmen had now migrated from Hirwaun to work at Blaen-gwawr, he promoted the erection, in 1850, of the present Welsh Wesleyan chapel at Aberdare. So far, he himself had continued to live at Hirwaun; but about 1851 he began sinking a new pit at Aber-cwmboi, lower down the Aberdare valley. He thereupon ceased to live at Hirwaun, and built himself a house at Blaen-gwawr, also giving up the Trecynon shop, and building a house ('Maes-y-ffynnon') for his son, David, who now joined him in the supervision of the collieries; soon, too, the Hirwaun shop was sold, and Lewis Davis was placed at Cardiff as sales agent for the coal.

David Davis, sen., now turned his attention to the Rhondda Fach valley, hitherto not only unexploited, but almost trackless. After costly but at first unsuccessful sinkings, he finally struck a good seam at the place which is now called Ferndale - the colliery plant and machinery had to be horse-hauled over the intervening ridge from Aberdare. In 1865, Davis and other coalowners, in protest against the heavy charges levied at the Bute (Cardiff) Docks, opened a new dock at Penarth. At the beginning of 1866 he brought his sons, David, Lewis, Frederick, and William, into the partnership 'Davis and Sons.' He died 19 May 1866, aged 69, and was buried in S. John's churchyard at Aberdare; his widow died 11 September 1877.

After Davis's death the firm opened more pits at Ferndale. In 1867 William Davis retired and, in 1876, Frederick Davis died. The two surviving brothers carried the business on.

DAVID DAVIS, jun. (1821 - 1884),

was more of a public figure than his father had been. He took a prominent part in inducing **Henry Richard** to seek election as Member of Parliament for the Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare district (1868) and, like his brother, Lewis, was invited to contest the second seat there when **Richard Fothergill** ('III') retired in 1880. A good employer, he kept the Davis collieries open throughout the 'lock-out' of 1875, and subsequently became vice-chairman of the Conciliation Board, under **H. H. Vivian**. He had quarrying ventures in Merioneth, a county of which he became high sheriff - it was at his Merioneth residence at Arthog that his wife died in 1880. At Aberdare he took a leading part in local affairs, especially in education. He was a generous supporter of the University Colleges at Aberystwyth and Cardiff. Unlike his father, who adhered throughout his life to the main Wesleyan connexion, the younger David Davis was drawn into the schism which led, in the Aberdare district, to the short-lived emergence of the 'Wesleyan Reform' connexion (see under **William Jones**, 1814? - 1895), and built the 'Reformers' a chapel at Aberdare which, eventually, became Congregationalist. Of his daughters, the eldest, Mary, married the then vicar of Aberdare, the later **dean H. T. Edwards**, and the second, Catherine, married **Sir Francis Edwards**.

LEWIS DAVIS (1829 - 1888)

was intended for the law, but (as has been said) was soon drawn into his father's concerns. In 1867 he settled down at Ferndale. He was a deeply religious man, and a pillar of Wesleyanism at Ferndale and at Cardiff - see his biography, *A Noble Life*, by **David Young**. With his brother, and with **David Davies** (1818 - 1890) of Llandinam, he promoted the construction of the Barry Dock and Railway (Act passed in 1884, Dock opened in 1889) to break the monopoly of the Bute Docks and of the Taff Vale Railway. He had, latterly, retired to Mumbles, where he died on 1 January 1888. He was succeeded in the direction of his collieries by his son, FREDERICK LEWIS DAVIS (1863 - 1920).

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Watkin William Price, (1873 - 1967)

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