

**Primrose Hill, Merthyr Tydfil**

**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Primrose Hill is located at the north-east end of Church Street, at the point that the road turns southwards and becomes Brynteg Terrace. It is within the ‘*Thomastown Conservation Area*’ which was originally designated in 1978, in recognition of its historical and architectural quality. This Conservation Area is located to the east of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, on a steep slope, with impressive views across the town and the valley. The Thomastown area is named after Dr William Thomas (1794-1858), who was a local magistrate in the early 1800s and owner of the land on which this middle-class residential area was built.

To the south-east of the site is Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue, set dramatically against a dense section of woodland, with Brynteg Terrace and housing such as Springhill Villa, Bryn Heulog and Sunny Bank Villas to the south. To the east and north of the site is Thomastown Park. To the north are the attached rear buildings, garden and Primrose Cottages beyond; with Union Street (Upper) to the north-west and the sloping hill of Church Street to the west, leading down to the Town Centre.

Until the mid-18th century, Merthyr Tydfil had been sparsely populated with farming and livestock forming the main economy. Then abundant deposits of iron ore, coal and limestone were discovered, making it an ideal location for the relatively new iron industry that was leading Britain’s Industrial Revolution. The industrial explosion in Merthyr Tydfil created pockets of wealth amongst the higher classes of society. This was reflected in the development of middle-class residential areas such as Thomastown; believed to contain one of the largest groups of late Georgian and early Victorian style buildings in Wales and to be one of the first purpose-built residential suburbs in Merthyr Tydfil. The richest residents commissioned individually designed detached and semi-detached Villas in the spacious and wooded surroundings of eastern Thomastown.

Primrose Hill is grade II listed and located just within the ‘*Thomastown Villas*’ character area of the ‘*Thomastown Conservation Area*’, on the border with the ‘*Georgian Thomastown*’ character area. The Classical front elevation of Primrose Hill sits comfortably alongside the Georgian-style terraced houses of Church Street, Thomas Street and Union Street to the west, as well as the elegant individually designed detached and semi-detached Villas to the south-east. Primrose Hill is referred to as a “key building” within the ‘*Thomastown Villas*’ character area.

Primrose Hill was built between 1850 and early 1852, although its architect is not known. Historic map research showed that the building did not exist on the 1850 Tithe Map, with a reference to Primrose Hill first being found in the ‘*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian – Saturday 06 March 1852*’. The newspaper featured an advert for “**MERTHYR GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PRIMROSE HILL, CONDUCTED BY MR. JAS. KERNICK.**”. The advert was for a fee-paying establishment for “Young Gentlemen”, where they would receive “a good Practical Education”, and that boarders were accepted. A build date of 1850 to early 1852 makes sense given the spate of construction work taking place in that part of Thomastown during that period.

The building can be seen on the ‘*1873 Ordnance Survey Town Plan (published 1875)*’ and ‘*1868-75 Ordnance Survey Map 6-inch (published 1885)*’ under the name ‘**Primrosehill House**’. The detail on the 1873 Town Plan shows us that the building was L-shaped and consisted of three attached rectangular buildings, one building to the front running east to west, with two attached buildings at right angles to this front building. To the north of these rear buildings were several smaller outbuildings, some connected to these main buildings. Further north was a large garden, and beyond that, two additional attached buildings marked up as Primrose Cottage.

The sale by auction details in the ‘*Merthyr Telegraph – Saturday 28 May 1859*’ for ‘**Primrose Hill Academy**’, as the school was then known, said:

“All that newly built and well arranged Leasehold Detached MESSUAGE or DWELLING-HOUSE, SCHOOLROOM, and PLAYGROUND, known by the name of ‘**Primrose Hill Academy**,’ in the occupation of Mr. James Kernick, the Proprietor, containing Parlour, Drawing Room, Library, Kitchen, Back Kitchen, China Pantry, and several Bedrooms.

“The House stands in a most healthy situation; the Rooms are lofty and spacious, replete with every convenience and finished in a very substantial manner, both internally and externally, the proprietor having spared no pains in making these premises well adapted for a superior Boarding School.

“Also, TWO COTTAGES in the rear of the above, and at the extreme end of the Playground, in a forward state of completion, and nearly ready for occupation.

“This Property is held under a lease for 99 years from the 1st day of November, 1851, at the moderate Ground Rent of £10 19s. per annum.”

The building started life as a school for boys with many changes of name and headmaster between 1852-98. Subsequently it was a private residence, becoming a Modern Guest House in 1940. In the mid-20th century, ownership of these three attached rectangular buildings must have been broken up and the buildings converted into flats. Our site, Primrose Hill, being only the front rectangular building with entrance facade looking south onto Church Street. The site is currently subdivided into five flats.

In 1946, **Primrose Hill Guest House** had been offered for sale by public auction. The advert in the ‘*Merthyr Express – 23 March 1946*’ described the property as:

“This is a large double-fronted house with lawn in front, having the following accommodation: Large lounge, dining-room, 2 reception room (now used as bedrooms), kitchen and larder on ground floor; 4 bedrooms and 2 bed-sitting-rooms, with 2 bathrooms and 2 lavatories on first floor, 4 bedrooms on second floor. Also attached to house (with separate entrance) is a large room, now used as a storeroom. There are 2 staircases (main) one at front of house and servants’ staircase at rear. Large gardens, etc., mostly cultivated, at rear and side of house (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre of land), electric light throughout.

“VACANT POSSESSION ON COMPLETION.

N.B. – This Guest House is now run by the Misses Grant and Farmer and gives an excellent opportunity to purchasers who wish to obtain a successfully run Guest House, and if desired the Furniture be purchased at valuation. The property could also be used as a Residence, a Social Centre or converted Into Flats.”

These changes of use will have involved many internal adaptations. Our site, Primrose Hill now consists of three full storeys plus a half lower ground floor / basement. However, its principal front elevation onto Church Street still retains its original Classical-style façade in keeping with the housing style of the original area. This elevation has an attractive, pale, smooth rendered, symmetrical appearance with large timber sash windows and central, simplified pilastered doorcase. The building has an enclosed front forecourt with right hand gate piers and benefits from a backdrop of mature trees.

Few, if any, original internal features remain within Primrose Hill, due to the many changes of use over the time. It is possible that the lobby and entrance corridor, accessed via the front door, retain their original layout. It is also possible that the staircase is the original front staircase; the 1946 sales details referring to “2 staircases (main) one at front of house and servants’ staircase at rear”.

Whilst Primrose Hill has changed use over the years, and many original internal features have been lost, it still looks much as it did externally when first built, especially when viewed from the front. Any changes have not destroyed its history and value. Through education, it has influenced lives and contributed to the economy of Merthyr Tydfil. It has a role to play in illustrating life in a fashionable residential suburb during the Victorian and Edwardian eras in industrial Wales; it helps demonstrate how industrialisation brought dramatic changes to small Welsh towns like Merthyr Tydfil; and how a previously smart and prosperous neighbourhood declined along with their industries.

Primrose Hill would have been a source of social, economic and spiritual value as well as emotional links and shared memories during its time as a school, private residence, guest house and flats; borne by its pupils, headmaster, teachers, parents, residents, servants and visitors. Also, to the community who lived nearby and experienced the building as part of their day-to-day life, maybe walking past on their way home or to Thomastown Park.

As a result, Primrose Hill is considered to possess:

- Medium Historical Value;
- Medium Evidential Value;
- Medium Aesthetic Value, insofar as the exterior is concerned, and Medium to Low Aesthetic Value insofar as the interior is concerned;
- Medium Communal Value.

**I.0 Introduction and Objectives of Report**

This Heritage Impact Statement is written by GWP Architecture on behalf of the owners of the site and the heritage assets, the Foundation for Jewish Heritage, to inform, and subsequently in justification of, proposals for Planning Consent and Listed Building Consent applications to be submitted by GWP Architecture.

The ‘proposed development site’ is Primrose Hill, Church Street, Merthyr Tydfil; located at the top (north-east end) of Church Street, at the point that the road turns southwards and becomes Brynteg Terrace. The original ‘Primrosehill House’ was made up of 3 attached rectangular buildings, forming an L-shape. The ‘proposed development site’ being the front rectangular building with its longer elevation running east to west, facing south onto the front garden and Church Street. Immediately to the north are the two attached rectangular buildings, at right angles to this front building, their longer elevations running north to south.

To the south-east of the site is the former Synagogue, set dramatically against a dense section of woodland, with housing such as Springhill Villa, Bryn Heulog and Sunny Bank Villas further south. To the east of the site is Thomastown Park. To the north-east of the site is a new property with decking and wooden summer houses; to the north are the attached buildings, then garden and Primrose Cottages beyond; and to the north-west is Union Street (Upper). To the west of the site is the sloping hill of Church Street leading down to the Town Centre, and to the south is Brynteg Terrace.

Based on historic map research, ‘Primrosehill House’ was built between 1850 to early 1852, as a “Leasehold Detached MESSUAGE or DWELLING-HOUSE, SCHOOLROOM, and PLAYGROUND” with “TWO COTTAGES in the rear of the above, and at the extreme end of the Playground”. The front building, which is our site, consists of three full storeys plus a half lower ground floor / basement. Its principal elevation – an attractive smooth rendered symmetrical Classical-style facade with large timber sash windows looks out onto the road (and the Synagogue).

This Statement seeks to establish the historic development and heritage significance of the site, in order to inform the development of an appropriate heritage-led scheme for the site.

**I.1 Authorship**

This document has been produced by Ashley Davies, an RIBA-accredited Specialist Conservation Architect, following visits to, and appraisal of, the site between 2018 and 2024.

Ashley is also a Chartered Architect, a member of the RIBA Conservation Register National Steering Group; a Supporter of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation; has twice been the conservation specialist on the RIBA Regional Architecture awards panel; has lectured in ‘Conservation Principles’ at University; has presented at conferences on the theme of building conservation; and has appeared on several television programmes talking about his passion for restoring historic buildings. He has undertaken several Building Conservation courses, including at SPAB and the RIBA. He has delivered dozens of heritage-led projects over his career involving the repair, restoration and adaptation of many grade I, II\* and II listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments.

In addition – and usually, in parallel - Ashley has researched and written over 140no. Historic Building Reports for over 90no. historic buildings and sites, including over 70no. Heritage Impact Statements.

**I.2 Who was Consulted**

The following organisations and groups were consulted on the development of the Heritage Assessment:

- Foundation for Jewish Heritage
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Neil Richardson (Project Manager)
- Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
- Holocaust Educational Trust
- Dr Chris Clifford, Historian
- Dr Cai Parry-Jones, Author
- Architectural Heritage Fund
- Cultural Associates Oxford
- Headland Design Associates
- The Creative Core
- Almond Tree Consulting
- The Funding Centre
- Greenwood Projects
- Bronwen Thomas Landscape Architect
- Mann Williams
- Hydrock
- MEP Building Services Consultants
- Auditive
- IDACS



## 2.0 The Synagogue

### 2.1 Location & Setting

The development site's address is:

Primrose Hill  
Church Street  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 0EE

Primrose Hill is located at the north-east end of Church Street, at the point that the road turns southwards and becomes Brynteg Terrace. The original 'Primrosehill House' was made up of 3 attached rectangular buildings, forming an L-shape. Our site is the front rectangular building with its longer elevation running east to west, facing south onto the front garden and Church Street. Immediately to the north are the two attached rectangular buildings, at right angles to this front building, their longer elevations running north to south.

To the south-east of the site is the former Synagogue, set dramatically against a dense section of woodland, with housing such as Springhill Villa, Bryn Heulog and Sunny Bank Villas further south. To the east and north of the site is Thomastown Park. Immediately to the north-east of the site is a new property with decking and wooden summer houses; to the north are the attached buildings, then garden and Primrose Cottages beyond; and to the north-west is Union Street (Upper). To the west of the site is the sloping hill of Church Street leading down to the Town Centre, and to the south is Brynteg Terrace.

Primrose Hill was built between 1850 to early 1852, is Grade II listed and located within the 'Thomastown Villas' character area of the Thomastown Conservation Area. Thomastown Villas character area "is dominated by detached and semi-detached houses in spacious and wooded surroundings" and "is the easternmost extent and most elevated part of the Conservation Area". Primrose Hill is identified as a "key building" within this character area, whilst "Probably the most significant is the former Synagogue situated at the end of (and top of) Church Street with commanding views down to the town centre."

The front building, which is our site, consists of three full storeys plus a half lower ground floor / basement. Its principal elevation – an attractive smooth rendered symmetrical Classical-style facade with large timber sash windows looks out onto the road (and the Synagogue).

Primrose Hill has a latitude of 51.7471 / 51°44'49"N and a longitude of -3.3748 / 3°22'29"W, with OS Eastings of 305183, OS Northings of 206267 and an OS Grid reference of SO051062.

***Aerial view of Merthyr Tydfil,  
with Primrose Hill identified with a red dot  
and the adjacent Synagogue identified with an orange dot,  
courtesy of GoogleEarth***





## 2.2 Use

Below is a summary of the uses to which Primrose Hill has been put between its construction, in 1850-1852, to the current day:

- 1850 - early 1852 – Built
- 1852 - c.1898 – School
- c.1895 - 1939 – Private residence
- 1940 - c.1950 – Guest House
- c.1950 onwards – Flats for rent

## 2.3 Age

Based on historic map research, 'Primrosehill House' was built between 1850 to early 1852.

## 2.4 Statutory Designations

### 2.4.1 Listing

Primrose Hill is protected by a grade II listing which was designated on 22 August 1975 and was last amended on 13 January 1988.

The listing for Primrose Hill (with a Cadw ID No. of 11425 and OS Eastings of 305183, OS Northings of 206267 and an OS Grid reference of SO051062) states:

### *History*

Early to mid C19.

### *Exterior*

3-storey, 3-bay cement-rendered elevation, ground-floor rusticated. Hipped tiled roof. Smaller pivot windows without glazing bars to second-floor; sashes with glazing bars to lower floors. Simplified pilastered doorcase with modern door and fanlight. Small enclosed forecourt with right-hand gatepiers.

### *Bibliography*

'britishlistedbuildings.co.uk' website.  
'britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk' website.

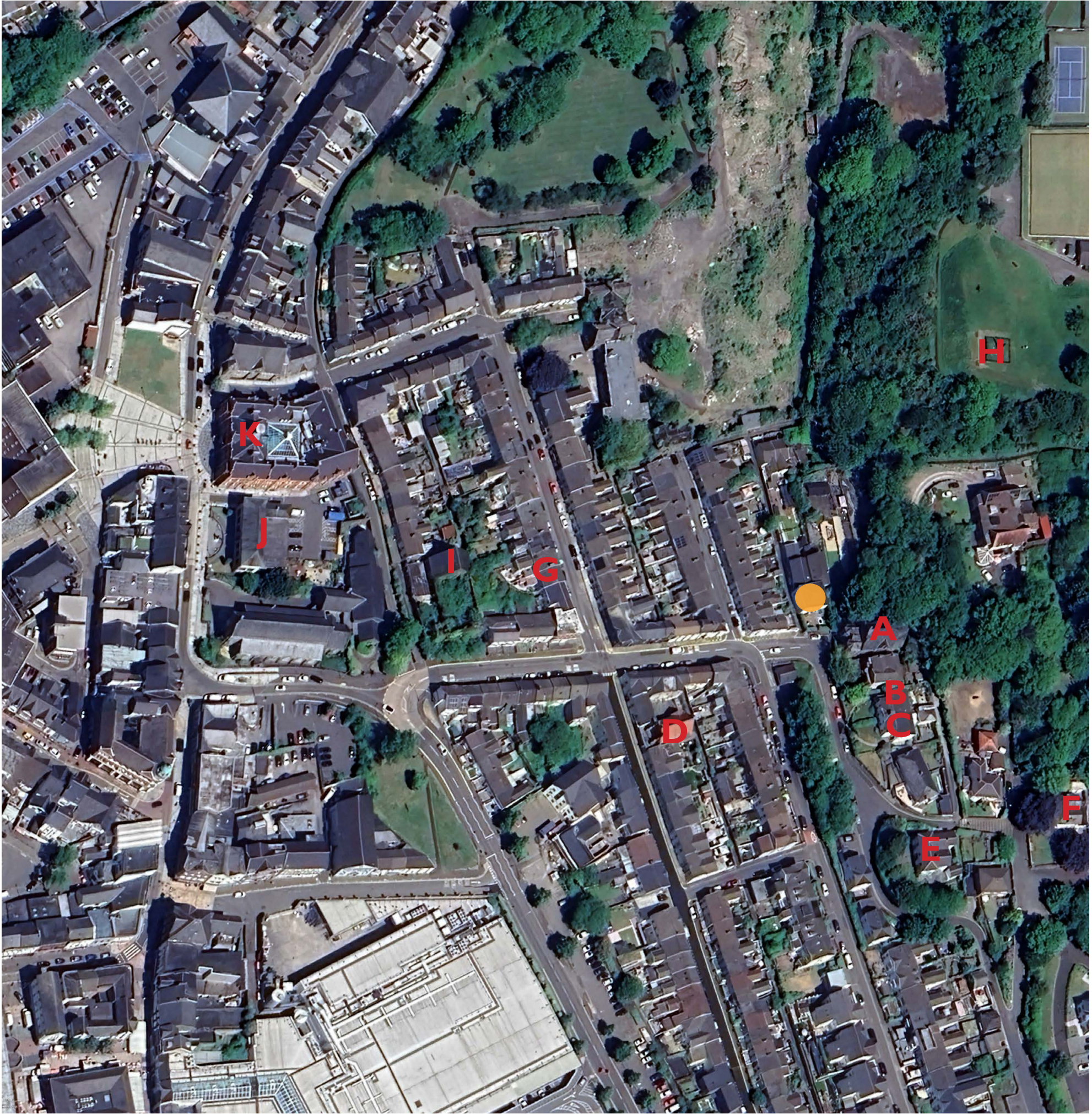




2.4.2 Listed Buildings Nearby

There are a number of significant (grade II and II\* listed) buildings in close proximity to the Merthyr Synagogue. These include the following – please refer to GoogleEarth Map below with these sites identified relative to the Primrose Hill (identified as an orange dot).

Within Thomastown Conservation Area:		
A	Merthyr Christian Centre	Grade II listed
B	Bryn Heulog	Grade II listed
C	Sunny Bank	Grade II listed
D	Former Unitarian Chapel	Grade II listed
E	The Rectory	Grade II listed
F	Springfield Villa	Grade II listed
G	Newton House	Grade II listed
H	Boer War Memorial & Railings	Grade II listed
I	Former Miner's Welfare Hall	Grade II listed
Within Town Centre Conservation Area:		
J	Carnegie Library	Grade II listed
K	Town Hall	Grade II* listed



Aerial view of Merthyr Tydfil,  
with Primros Hill identified with a orange dot  
courtesy of GoogleEarth



## 2.4.2 Listed Buildings Nearby



**Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue** (source: own)



**Bryn Heulog, 2018** (source: 'britishlistedbuildings.co.uk')



**Sunny Bank, 2018** (source: 'britishlistedbuildings.co.uk')



**Newton House, 2018** (source: 'britishlistedbuildings.co.uk')



**The Rectory, 2018** (source: 'britishlistedbuildings.co.uk')



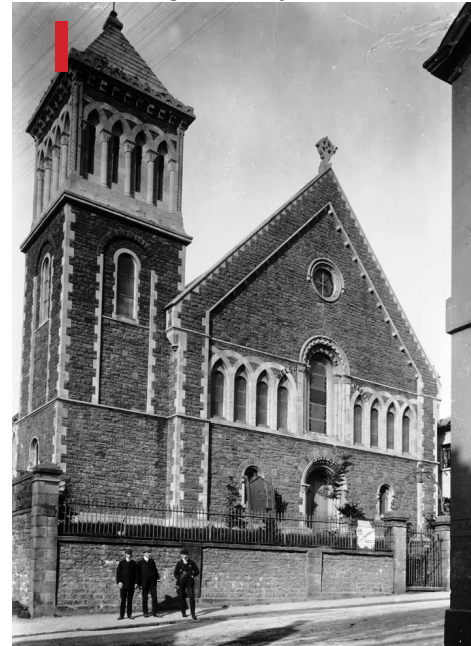
**Springfield Villa, 2018** (source: 'britishlistedbuildings.co.uk')



**Former Unitarian Chapel**  
(source: 'churches-uk-ireland.org')



**Boer War Memorial & Railings,**  
(source: 'warmemorialsonline.orh')



**Former Miner's Hall**  
(source: 'merthyr-history.com')



**Former Miner's Hall, 1986**  
(source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')



**Old Town Hall** (source: own)



2.4.3 Other Statutory Protection

Primrose Hill is located within the ‘**Thomastown Conservation Area**’ which was originally designated in 1978, in recognition of its historical and architectural quality. This Conservation Area is located to the east of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, on a steep slope, with impressive views across the town and the valley. The Thomastown area is named after Dr William Thomas (1794-1858) who was a local magistrate in the early 1800s and owner of the land on which this first known example of a middle-class residential area was built.

Character Appraisals of the Thomastown Conservation Area were undertaken in 2003 and 2007 which identified three character areas: 1) Georgian Tramroadside Cottages; 2) Victorian Residential Area; and 3) High Ground to the East.

The updated ‘**Character Appraisal and Management Plan**’, adopted in July 2014, identified five character areas within the Conservation Area: 1) Church Street Commercial; 2) Tramroadside North; 3) Georgian Thomastown; 4) Victorian Terraced Streets; and 5) Thomastown Villas.

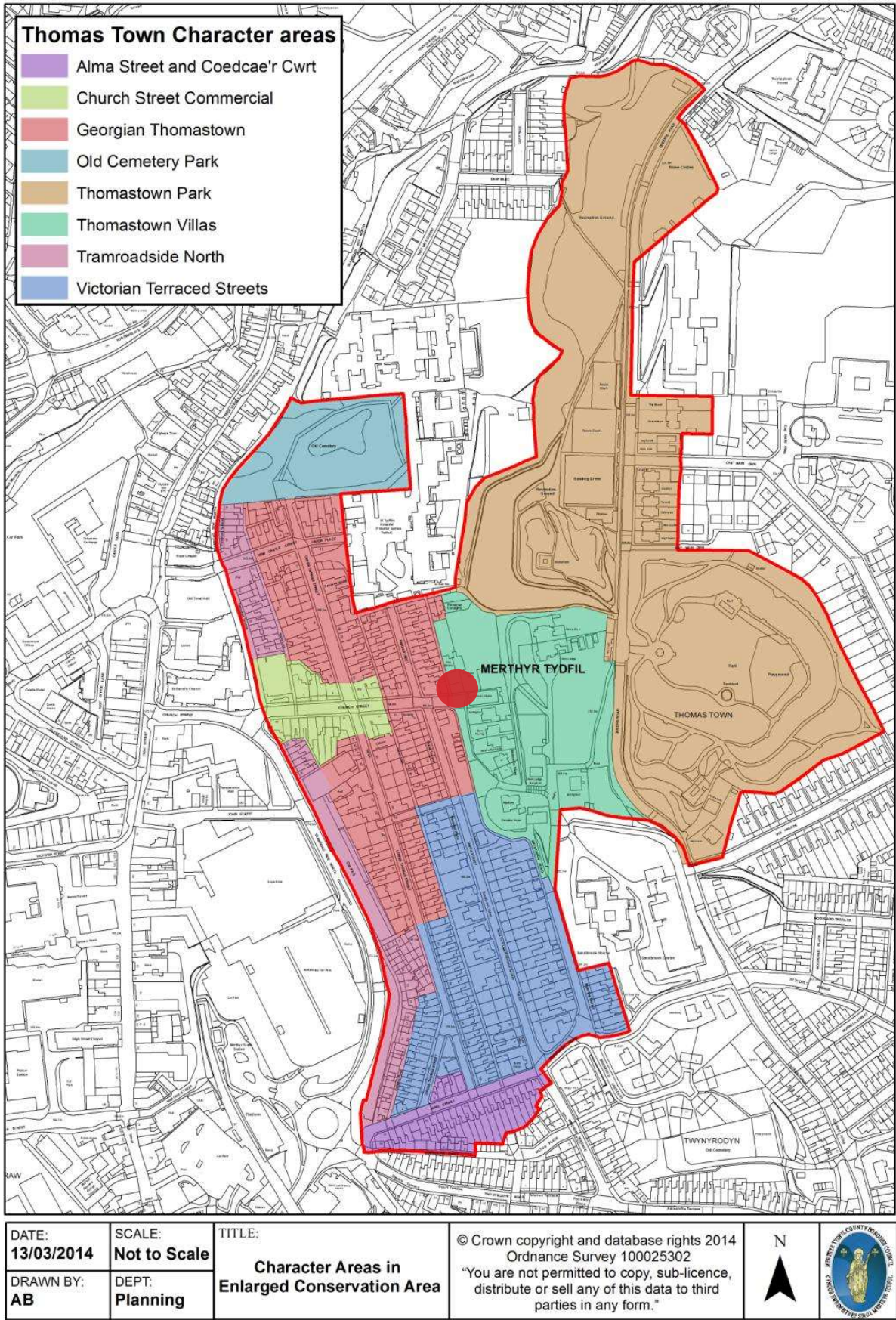
The 2014 ‘**Character Appraisal and Management Plan**’ also proposed an extension to the boundary of the Conservation Area, to include Alma Street and Coedcae'r Cwrt, Old Cemetery Park, Thomastown Park, and Thomastown Park Recreational ground and woodland. This proposal appears to have been adopted. This boundary extension created the following additional character areas: 1) Alma Street and Coedcae'r Cwrt; 2) Old Cemetery Park; and 3) Thomastown Park.

Primrose Hill is just within the ‘**Thomastown Villas**’ character area, lying alongside the ‘**Georgian Thomastown**’ character area. The 2014 ‘**Character Appraisal and Management Plan**’ describes both areas as follows:

“**Thomastown Villas**

“This area is dominated by detached and semi-detached houses in spacious and wooded surroundings. The area is the easternmost extent and most elevated part of the Conservation Area. It is also an area where the formal layout of rectangular streets dissipates into shorter curved streets, back lanes and streets without footways. This area also contains many listed and locally listed buildings. Probably the most significant is the former Synagogue situated at the end of (and top of) Church Street with commanding views down to the town centre. The area is sparsely populated and is bounded by Thomastown Park to the east and north, and the grounds to the Sandbrook House to the south. The individual buildings have their own character and differ to the other character areas. This area has less of a sense of uniformity than the other character areas thanks to the individually designed buildings constructed at different times. However, they are all generally large in scale, especially compared to the other dwellings in the Conservation Area and some have extensive grounds.

“Key buildings in this area include the former Synagogue, Primrose Hill House, Bryn Heulog and Sunny Bank Villa. The stepped lane between Bryntirion Villas and The Rectory also adds to the physical character of the area.”



Map of Character Areas within enlarged Thomastown Conservation Area with Primrose Hill identified with a red dot (source: Character Appraisal & Management Plan (adopted July 2014) from ‘merthyr.gov.uk’)

“**Georgian Thomastown**

“This character area is dominated by Georgian-style terraced dwelling houses. It is likely that most of these dwellings were built in the early Victorian period but are characterised as having a ‘Georgian’ style designs. For example the vast majority of houses in this area do not benefit from bay windows and are built immediately on the back of the highway and have heavy-set detailing around the doorways. This area including Church Street is considered to be the first wave of purpose-built suburban housing in the area. Some of the properties are double fronted and most of them contain similar door-surround moulding features which is distinctive to this area of Merthyr Tydfil. The majority of the properties are finished with coloured render, usually pastel shades, creams and whites. ...”

“This area also includes Primrose Cottages. 2 semi-detached properties tucked behind Union Street and only accessible via a narrow footpath which leads one uphill into Thomastown Park.”

Please refer to **Appendix A** for further information from the ‘**Thomastown Conservation Area – Character Appraisal and Management Plan** (adopted July 2014)’.



## 2.5 Historic Map Appraisal

The earliest map reviewed was the '1610 Map of Glamorgan Shyre' by John Speed, which shows the area as predominantly rural, made up of scattered farmsteads with enclosed fields on the lower slopes and open grazing beyond.

The '1830 Parish Map of Merthyr Tydfil' shows that the general landscape had changed from green and rural to more industrial and urban, with four ironworks being largely responsible for this: Dowlais (1759), Cyfarthfa (1765), Plymouth (1763) and Penydarren (1784). However, with no valuable outcrops of raw materials in the east of the town, that area was not subjected to excavation and remained as fields. High Street had developed as the commercial centre of the town, linking the residential areas to the north-west, north-east and south which were associated with the various ironworks.

The '1850 Tithe Map' shows the future site of Primrose Hill within Field Number 2009 under the Farm Name 'The Court'. The land being owned and occupied by William Thomas and used for pasture. The land to its north, south, east and immediate west also being undeveloped pastureland. Slightly further west, Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre had become more developed, High Street running north to south with a Market Hall and spacious Market Square directly off it. This area being important in the economic, social and political life of 19th century Merthyr Tydfil. The Taff Vale Railway (TVR) had also made it to Merthyr Tydfil, with a station to the south of St Tydfil's Parish Church.

The '1868-75 Ordnance Survey Map 6-inch (published 1885)' - shown to the right - shows the town in much more detail. The sustained development between the 1830s and 1850s, and especially in the 1850s, being clearly visible. The residential areas which had developed near the various ironworks had now expanded and become more densely packed, reflecting the growth in population as Merthyr Tydfil became 'the Iron Capital of the World'. Two railway stations can now be seen on this map, the earlier Taff Vale Station to the south of the town centre and the later Vale of Neath Station to the east of the Market Square.

To the east we see Thomas Town, named after its landowner William Thomas (1794-1858). 'Primrosehill House' can be seen named at the top of Church Street, on the north side of the street. Several other spacious villas built at Thomas Town in the mid-1800s are named on this map, such as Brynheulog Villas, Springfield Villa and Bryn-teg House. Several of the other spacious villas built at Thomas Town in the mid-1800s are named on this map, such as Brynheulog Villas, Springfield Villa and Bryn-teg House. We also see the terraced streets commissioned by groups of professionals such as Thomas Street in 1840 and Union Street shortly afterwards. The cross-shaped Workhouse with Infirmary can be seen at the northern end of Union Street, built in 1853, and Upper Union Street consisting of a terrace of eleven Union Club owned houses built to complement the Union Workhouse. The future site of the synagogue at the eastern end of Church Street, between Primrosehill House and Brynheulog Villas, remains undeveloped at this time.



1868-75 Surveyed 1885 Published - OS Six-inch Map (source: 'maps.nls.uk') with Primrose Hill identified within a red box



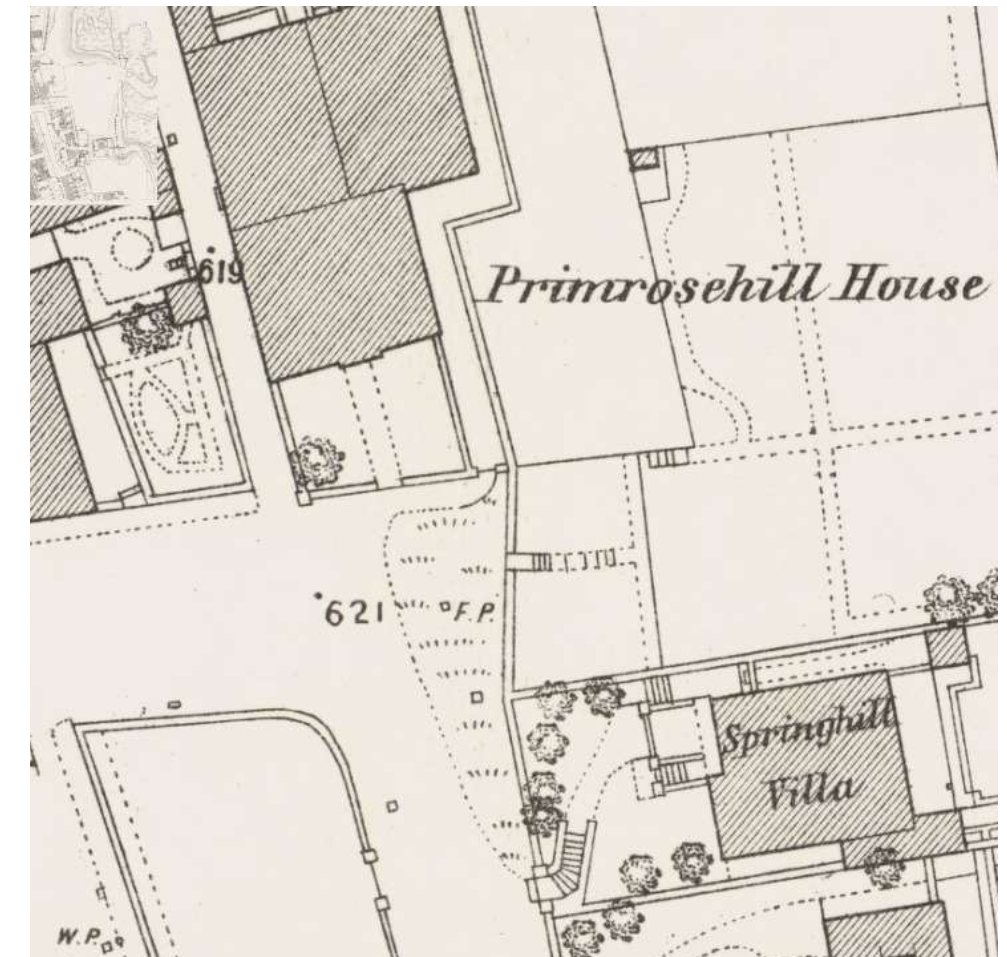
The '1873 Ordnance Survey Town Plan (published 1875)' shows everything in greater detail, with each individual page covering only a small portion of the town. The level of detail on this plan includes individual trees, curved garden paths and garden steps; all hinting at the beautiful, landscaped gardens from which the residents of the spacious, elevated villas in Thomastown would have looked out onto the town and valley below. At the eastern end of Church Street, on the north side of the street, the shape and form of Primrose Hill House can be seen clearly.

Primrose Hill House is L-shaped and consists of 3 attached rectangular buildings. The front rectangular building has its longer side running east to west, looking onto the front garden and Church Street, this entrance facade facing south. Behind it are two attached rectangular buildings at right angles to this front building, their longer sides running north to south. The longer side of the rear building to the west faces onto the alley which runs along the back gardens of Upper Union Street. The rear building to the east projects out further than the front rectangle creating the L-shape, its longer side facing east onto the perimeter wall and fields beyond. To the north of these two rear buildings are several smaller outbuildings, some connected to these main buildings. Further north is a large garden, and beyond that, two additional attached buildings marked up as Primrose Cottage.

As the town grew, so did the number of places of worship. Various churches and chapels can be seen throughout Thomas Town, the Town Centre and beyond. In 1873, the synagogue site between Primrose Hill House and Springhill Villa, was undeveloped.



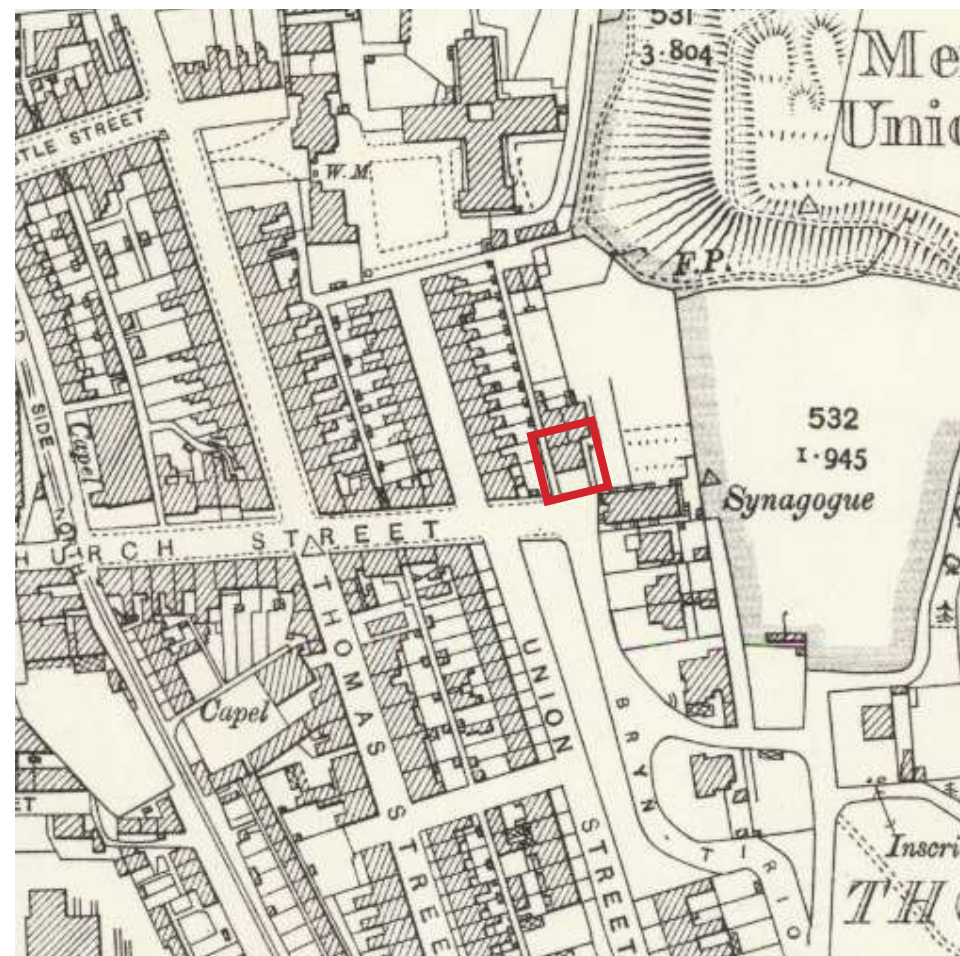
1873 Surveyed 1875 Published - Town Plan (source: 'maps.nls.uk') with Primrose Hill identified within red box. Close up to right.



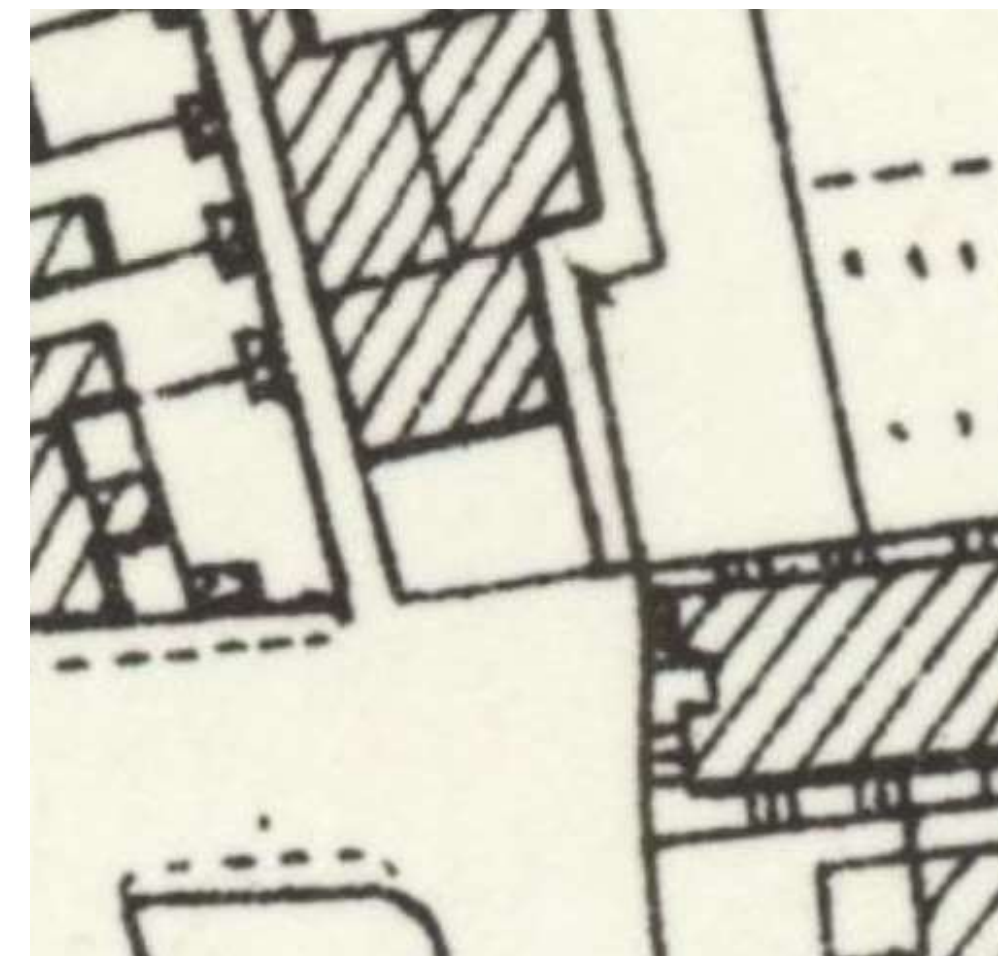
The '1897-98 Ordnance Survey Map 25-Inch (published 1904)' shows buildings in greater detail than the 1897-98 Ordnance Survey Map 6-inch Map (published 1901) which was also available. Primrose Hill, built sometime between 1850-52, can be seen at the eastern end of Church Street to the north side of the road, but is not named. The building looks much as it did on the 1873 Town Plan: L-shaped consisting of 3 attached buildings with a large garden to the north. Further north are 2 attached buildings being Primrose Cottage, also not named on this map.

What had previously been an undeveloped site between Primrose Hill and Springhill Villa, is now the rectangular synagogue building, marked up as "Synagogue" on this map. The synagogue is to the south-east of Primrose Hill, the synagogue's western front elevation looking down onto Church Street and the town below.

The town of Merthyr Tydfil became an Urban District Council in 1894. An important expression of this new status was the building of a Town Hall in 1896-97 which can be seen to the north-west of Primrose Hill with its front west-facing elevation on High Street, with New Castle Street to its north and Tramroad Side to its east, although not referenced on the map.



1897-98 Revised 1904 Published - OS 25-inch Map (source: 'maps.nls.uk') with Primrose Hill identified within red box. Close up to right.





The '1897-1911 Ordnance Survey Map 25-Inch (published c.1912)' is essentially the 1897-98 map, just partially revised in 1911 for Inland Revenue purposes. It shows Primrose Hill as unchanged. To the north-east of Primrose Hill and the synagogue, we can now see the outline of a new large building, being 2 semi-detached houses, on what had previously been undeveloped land. The most significant change to the surrounding area being the creation of Thomastown Park to the east of Primrose Hill and the synagogue on what had been the site of an old quarry and waste tips. The park opened in 1903 at a cost of £5,000 and was the first public park in Merthyr Tydfil.

The '1914-15 Ordnance Survey Map 25-Inch (published 1919)' shows no noticeable changes to Primrose Hill and surrounding area compared to the previous 1897-1911 map.

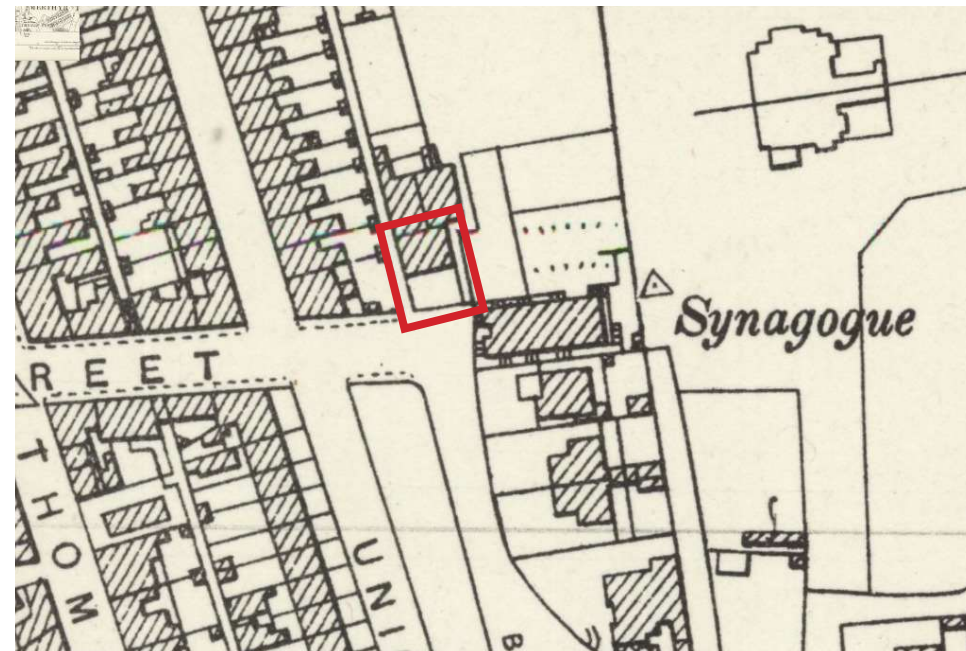
Only the '1938 Ordnance Survey Map 6-Inch (published c.1946)' was available which shows buildings in far less detail than the 25-inch maps in earlier years. Primrose Hill is shown only as one L-shaped building, without the markings which show that it is actually three attached rectangular buildings which form the L-shape. However, there are no noticeable changes to Primrose Hill and surrounding area between 1914-15 to 1938.

Once again, there are no noticeable changes to Primrose Hill and surrounding area on the '1948 Ordnance Survey Map 6-inch (published 1951)' compared to the previous 1938 map.

The '1945 Google Earth images' are very blurry. However, you can see that the areas immediately to the north (rear), east (side) and south (front garden) of Primrose Hill are very dark, presumably trees and woodland.

The '2001, 2013 and 2023 Google Earth images' show the tree canopy becoming denser as the trees continue to grow. The 2013 image shows Primrose Cottage, to the north, with larger extensions across the south elevation of both cottages. The 2023 image suggests the extensions to the rear of Primrose Hill are now larger than they were in 2013. Additional development can be seen to the north-east of Primrose Hill. A rectangular property has been built, with extensive landscaping, in the area between Primrose Cottage, Primrose Hill and the boundary with the synagogue.

Please refer to **Appendix B** for a more detailed 'Historic Map Appraisal'.



1897-1911 Revised c.1912 Published (source: 'maps.nls.uk')



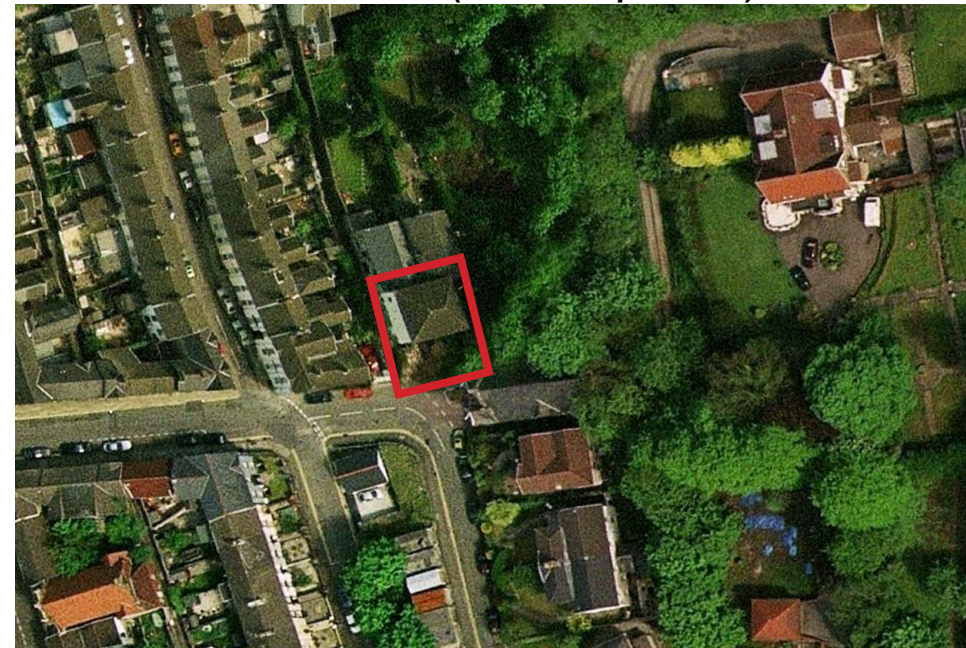
1914-15 Revised 1919 Published (source: 'maps.nls.uk')



1938 Revised c.1946 Published (source: 'maps.nls.uk')



1945 Aerial Photo (source: GoogleEarth)



2001 Aerial Photo (source: GoogleEarth)



2023 Aerial Photo (source: GoogleEarth)



## 2.6 Outline History & Heritage of Merthyr Tydfil

Every place has its own unique history which creates its historic character; historic character being at the heart of local distinctiveness and sense of place.

A place is shaped by the activities of people over tens, hundreds, or even thousands of years. Many of the distinctive qualities of a place result from its history in the same way that the character of a person is formed over time. These can include its origins and significant periods in its history – how and why it developed and changed. It can also include particular activities and traditions, communities and people, or events associated with a place. These elements all contribute to historic character: we can see them in the form and fabric of a place as well as in the names, stories, art and culture associated with it.

### 2.6.1 How Merthyr Tydfil Got Its Name

Merthyr Tydfil is said to be named after Saint Tydfil, the daughter of King Brychan of Brycheiniog, who according to legend was slain at Merthyr by pagans around 480 AD. A church was built to keep sacred the spot where Tydfil was believed to have been martyred because of her Christian beliefs. St Tydfil's Church, at the lower end of the High Street, was built in 1894 to replace the one built in 1808. However, it is thought that some form of church has stood on this spot for nearly 1,500 years.

Originally a medieval parish, Merthyr Tydfil developed into a major industrial town during the 19th century.

### 2.6.2 The Industrial History of Merthyr Tydfil

Until the mid-18th century, Merthyr Tydfil was sparsely populated with farming and livestock forming the main economy. Then abundant deposits of iron ore, coal and limestone were discovered, making it an ideal location for the relatively new ironwork industry that was leading Britain's Industrial Revolution.

In 1759, the first major ironworks, Dowlais, was founded. Other works, including Plymouth, Cyfarthfa and Penydarren followed in quick succession and Merthyr Tydfil changed beyond recognition. Under the ownership of John Josiah Guest between 1807 and 1852, Dowlais rose to international fame as the largest ironworks worldwide employing 8,800 workers and producing 88,000 tonnes of iron a year. Merthyr Tydfil became the largest town in Wales and the centre of the world's iron making industry.

The demand for iron was stimulated by the wartime need for iron during the Seven Years' War (1756-63) and the American War of Independence (1775-83). Followed by the proliferation of railways, both in Britain and around the world, from the mid-1830s which ensured a hugely increased market for Merthyr iron until the end of the century. As a result of rapid expansion in industrial production and mining activities, the population of Merthyr Tydfil increased dramatically. The first national census in 1801 recorded a population of 7,000; increasing to 24,000 in 1831; 46,000 in 1851; 70,000 in 1861; and almost 90,000 by 1910.

Industry brought both prosperity and hardship to the town. Conditions in the homes of the working classes were a far cry from the luxury enjoyed by the families of the ironmasters such as the Guests and Crawshays. The working classes lived 'cheek by jowl', in dirt and squalor, where disease was rife and life expectancy low, in slums which became known as 'Little Hell'.

The Merthyr Tydfil Rising of 1831 was the violent climax to many years of simmering unrest amongst the working-class population of Merthyr Tydfil and its surrounding areas. For the first time, workers united under the red flag and effectively took control of the town for many days. It required hundreds of professional troops to restore order, with mass arrests and deaths, but the budding trade union movement had already taken a firm foothold in South Wales.

By 1870 the iron industry was under threat from two directions: local raw materials were either running out or becoming harder and more expensive to reach, and the development of Henry Bessemer's revolutionary steel-making process. Merthyr's ironmasters initially resisted the transition from iron to steel, much to their cost. Dowlais made the transition to steel production in 1865, and Cyfarthfa re-opened as a steel works in 1884, merging with the Guest, Keen & Co.'s works at Dowlais in 1902.

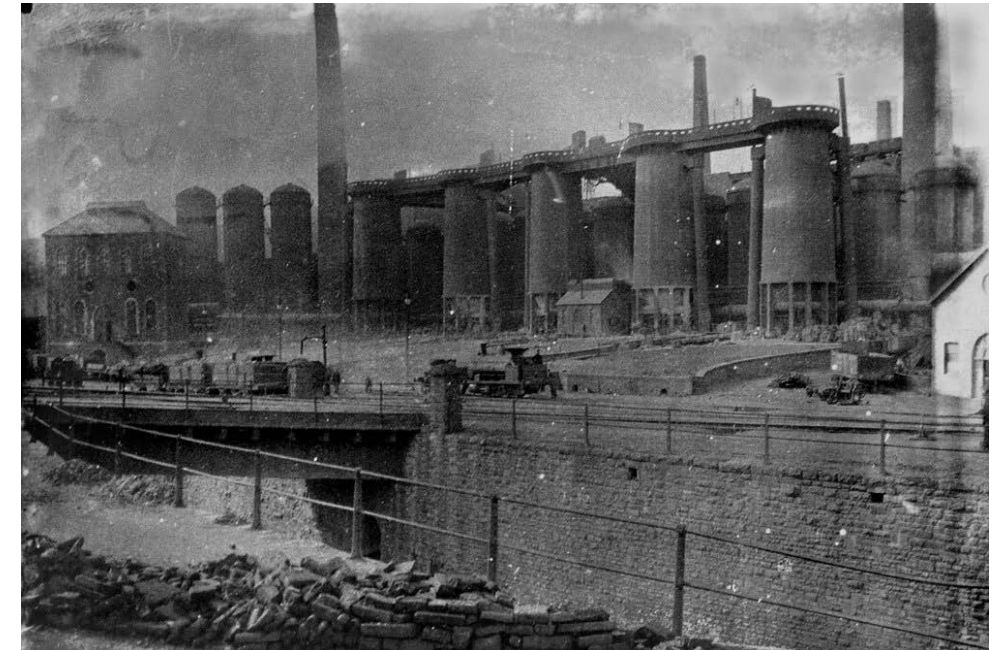
However, the mineral estates associated with the ironworks were also a valuable source of coal, and in the late 19th century it was the exploitation of coal that came to the fore and dominated the local industrial economy into the 20th century.

During the 20th century, the need for direct access to the coast became ever more important, and Guest, Keen & Nettlefolds (as the firm became known in 1902) built coastal works at East Moors in Cardiff, and then at Port Talbot, finally abandoning steel production in the Merthyr area in 1936.

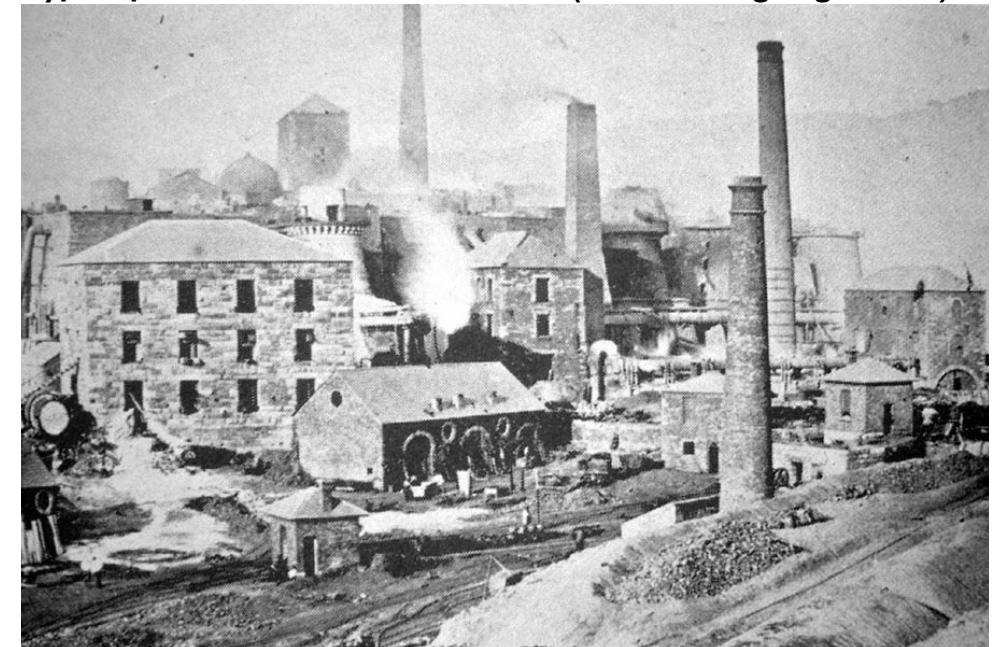
Together with the Great Depression of 1929, unemployment in Merthyr Tydfil had reached 50% by 1930, and was 62.3% by 1932. The population dropped from 80,000 in 1921 to 63,000 in 1937. In 1939, there was even a Parliamentary Report recommending that Merthyr Tydfil be abandoned, its remaining inhabitants be relocated and a reservoir built on the site of the town.

After the Second World War, a climate of renewal developed, and new light industries were established in Merthyr Tydfil such as Hoover (1948), Thom Electrical Industries (1951) and the College of Further Education (1950-2). This transformed the town's dependence on a single industry and enabled it to flourish again.

Museums, such as the Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, keep Merthyr Tydfil's industrial heritage alive.



**Cyfarthfa Works Blast Furnaces c.1900 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**



**Dowlais Works Blast Furnace Site c.1865 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**



**Dowlais Steelworks from the air, undated (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**



### 2.6.3 The Development of Merthyr Tydfil into a Town

Merthyr Tydfil originally grew up and around St Tydfil's church. However, as the value and abundance of the area's natural resources became apparent, the town expanded and developed. Industry had first call on available space with housing fitting in where it could in the pockets between land mined for its iron ore, coal and limestone, and the land used for the dumping of its waste.

As such, settlements were limited to the east bank of the river Taff; expansion to the west was restricted by Cyfarthfa Ironworks, and to the south and east by Dowlais, Plymouth and Penydarren Ironworks. These ironworks resulted in a large and growing labour force which needed to be housed close to their place of work. The ironworks became a nucleus for settlement, with the ironmasters often providing housing for key workers. Distinct residential areas developed close to individual ironworks: notably Williamstown and Georgetown for Cyfarthfa; Pentrebach for Plymouth; High Street and Church Street at Penydarren, together with a cluster of housing at Penyard, associated with the Penydarren Ironworks. Each residential area had a strong social identity, often with strong associations to particular immigrant communities.

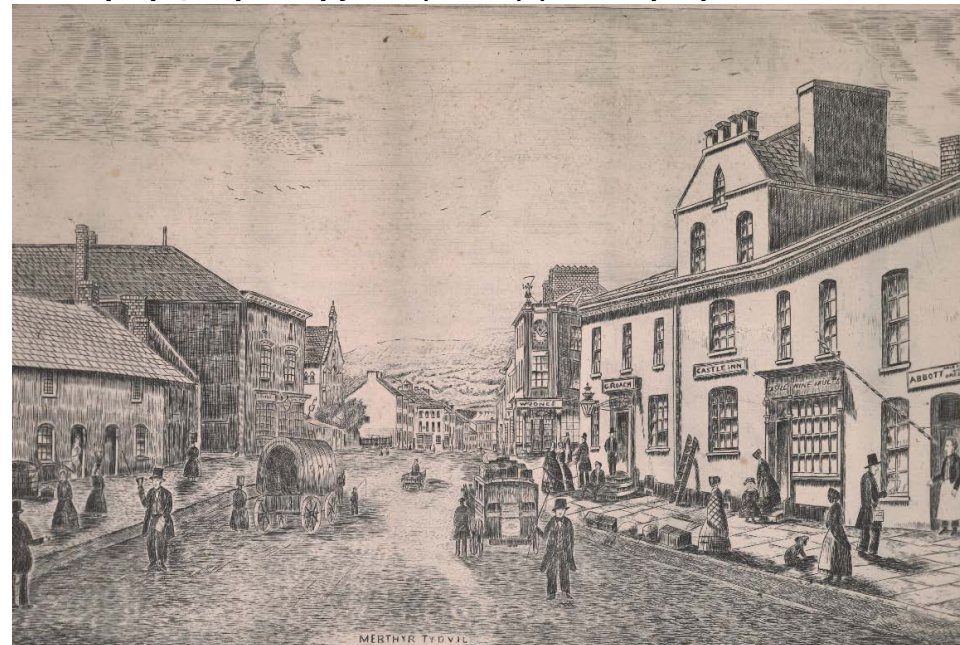
The conscious creation of a town centre took a major step forward in 1838 when the Market Hall was built overlooking a spacious square; this square became a significant meeting place. By the mid-19th century, High Street had become firmly established as the main axis in the town, dominated by shops and offices, connecting different residential districts. The town centre also boasted two railway stations, one to the east and one to the south. There was also an expanding number of churches and chapels in the town centre and surrounding residential areas.

In response to a growing population, a Board of Health was established in 1850, responsible for paving, lighting, drainage and water supply. From 1860, the Board also required building plans to be submitted for approval which would have influenced the layout and characteristics of buildings.

Merthyr Tydfil became an Urban District Council in 1894, with the building of its Town Hall in 1896-7 being an expression of its Civic Pride. It received Borough status in 1905, and County Borough status three years later. By this time, its responsibilities extended to education, planning, housing, libraries, parks, baths and public health. An important civic initiative being the creation of Thomastown Park in 1900.



**'Merthyr Tydfil' by Penry Jones (c.1825) (source: 'peoplescollection.wales')**



**High Street, c.1850 Thomas E. Clarke (source: National Library of Wales)**



**Merthyr Tydfil High Street c.1905 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**



**Market Square, Merthyr (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**



**Merthyr Tydfil High Street c.1905 (source: 'peoplescollection.wales')**



**Carnegie Free Library & Town Hall, Merthyr (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**<sub>14</sub>



### 2.6.4 The Development of Thomastown

Thomastown is located to the east of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre on a steep slope overlooking the town and valley beyond. It is an important example of planned development from the middle of the 19th century. It is believed to be one of the largest groups of late Georgian and early Victorian style buildings in Wales and one of the first purpose-built residential suburbs in Merthyr Tydfil.

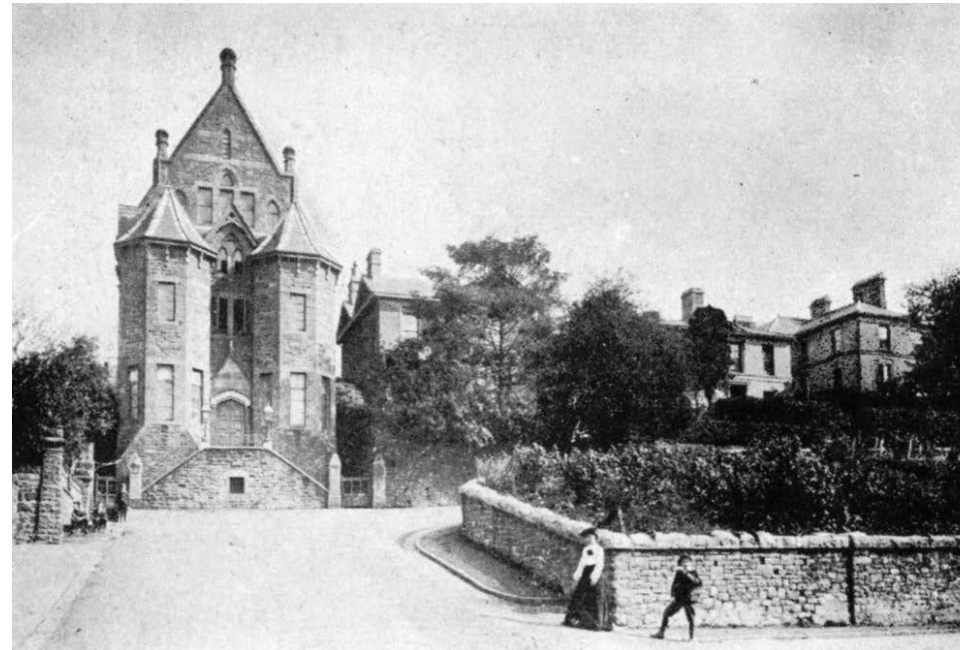
The area is named after Dr William Thomas (1794-1858), a doctor and surgeon who became a local magistrate. He owned the land on which Thomastown was built; having married the wealthy widow of Rees Davies Esq. and becoming the proprietor of the Court and Maerdy estates through this marriage.

Prior to development, the area had been made up of parcelled fields as no mineable natural resources were present.

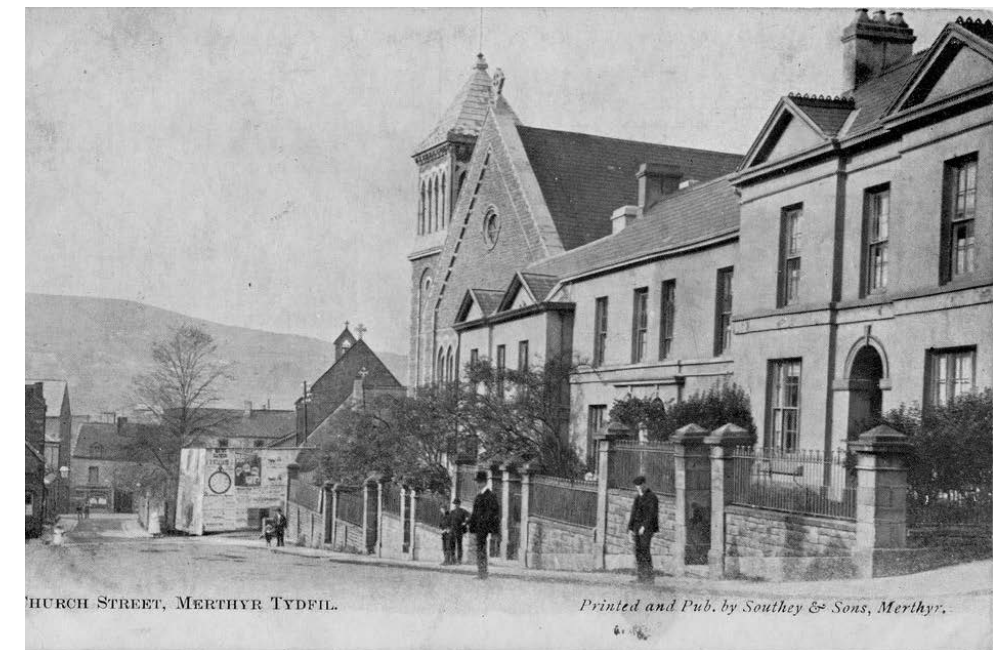
Tramroadside was the first area to be developed around 1800; closest to the town centre and characterised by workers cottages built alongside the Penydarren Tramroad. The central section was built in the mid-1800s as a middle-class residential area, dominated by larger terraced dwellings. The easternmost part followed, dominated by larger detached dwellings set among what were rural lanes overlooking the town. This included spacious villas such as The Rectory (originally known as Courtland House), Springfield Villa, Bryntirion (since demolished), Brynheulog and Sunnybank Villa all dating from the mid-1800s.

Religious buildings added a further dimension to the character of the area. These included Shiloh Welsh Wesleyan Chapel (now the Former Miners' Welfare Hall) on Church Street which is attributed to Isambard Kingdom Brunel. With Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue being built at the top of Church Street in the late 1870s.

Please refer to **Appendix C** for further information on the '**History & Heritage of Merthyr Tydfil**'.



**Synagogue, Church Street & Villas c.1904 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**



**Church Street, Merthyr Tydfil (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**



**Church Street from Merthyr Synagogue c.1930 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**



**Church Street from Merthyr Synagogue c.1930 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')**



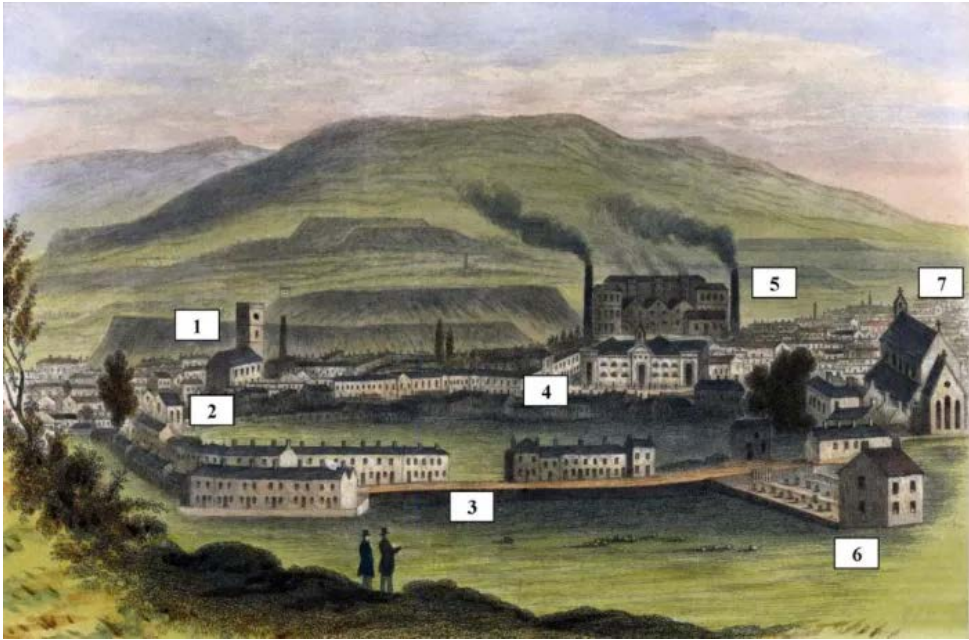
2.7 History & Heritage of Primrose Hill

Primrose Hill is situated in Thomastown, a Conservation Area, and is located just within the ‘**Thomastown Villas**’ character area, characterised by detached and semi-detached houses in spacious and wooded surroundings; and right on the border with the ‘**Georgian Thomastown**’ character area, characterised by Georgian-style terraced dwelling houses.

Very little appears to have been written specifically about the history and heritage of Primrose Hill. The best source of information has been historic newspapers stored in ‘**The British Newspaper Archive**’ and accessed through their website ‘*britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*’.

2.7.1 Merthyr in the 1850s

‘**The Melting Pot**’ website at ‘*merthyr-history.com*’, on the heritage and culture of Merthyr Tydfil, contained a brief article entitled “*Merthyr in the 1850’s*” accompanied by a lithograph illustrating the view c.1850 from the present-day Thomastown looking down over the town, with some important landmarks labelled.



- |                                 |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. St Tydfil's Church           | 5. Ynysfach Ironworks |
| 2. Twynnyrobyn Unitarian Chapel | 6. Adulam Chapel      |
| 3. Tramroadside North           | 7. St David's Church  |
| 4. Old Market Hall              |                       |

1850 Lithograph of Merthyr Tydfil (source: ‘*merthyr-history.com*’)

This would have been the view from the large front windows of Courtland House, the villa built in 1851 by Mr. Rice Lewis and known as The Rectory from 1921. Courtland House was the first of the large villas to be built in the pleasant area above Merthyr town which became known as Thomastown. Rice Lewis had established a prosperous drapery business in Merthyr under the name ‘London House’. The house was built on prime land in Adulam Fields, leased from Dr William Thomas of Court House, the landowner after whom the area was later named. The area sometimes being referred to as the ‘New Town’.

Further villas followed in quick succession, such as Springfield Villa, built for Mr. George Lyndon and which became the home of Charles Wilkins, the Merthyr historian; and Brynteg House, which later became known as Sandbrook House. Each villa was well-built and situated in its own grounds. This flurry of construction in the early 1850s was commented on in the ‘*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian – Saturday 10 May 1851*’ saying:

“**MERTHYR AND NEIGHBOURHOOD.**  
“**BUILDINGS.** – Notwithstanding the badness of trade, there appears to be no cessation from the building exertions we have noted on previous occasions. The new town, at the back of the new church, is progressing steadily and rapidly. Mr. Rice Lewis’s pretty villa is approaching towards completion, and two others are being built by the Rev. Thomas Davies, and Mr. Lyndon. The present summer will probably see those fields presenting a completely metamorphosed appearance; as in addition to the houses already finished, and those now in the course of building, we observe that others are availing themselves of the fine weather, and that foundations are being cut in various parts of the ground for other habitations. Verily, when this place is covered with building, and when the new workhouse rears aloft its stately head, we shall scarcely recognise our old friend, Cae Twmpin.”

However, transforming the fields above Merthyr Town into a residential area was not without its risks as demonstrated by an article in the ‘*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian – Saturday 12 July 1851*’ where snakes had been spotted:

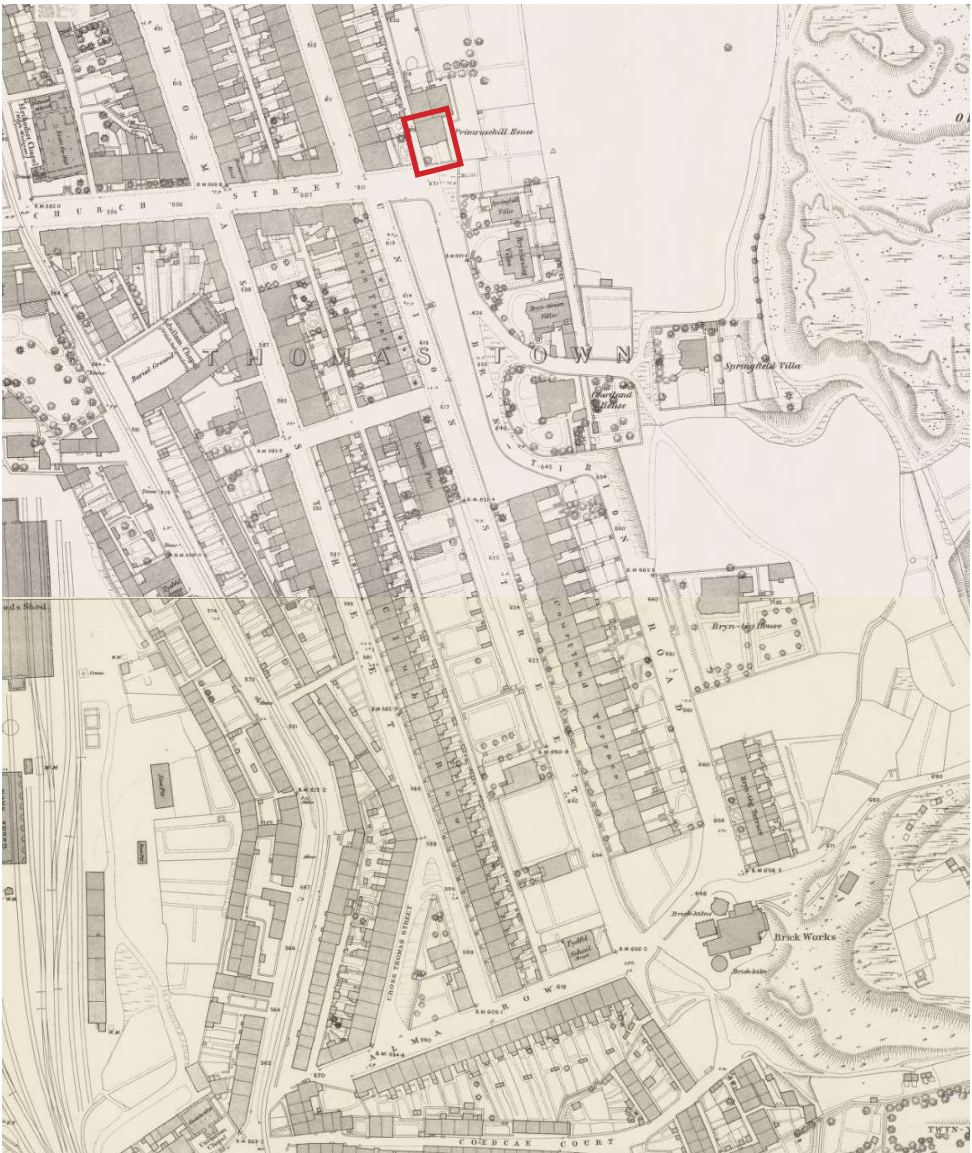
“**A GENERATION OF VIPERS.** – In the neighbourhood of the new villa now in the course of erection by Mr. Geo. Lyndon, several snakes have recently made their appearance, and are supposed to have emanated from an adjoining hedge.”

In 1852 Mr. Lyndon’s Springfield Villa was put up for sale by public auction, the property described as “newly-erected and well-finished” and “commanding a delightful panoramic view”. An extract from the sale advert in the ‘*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian – Saturday 21 August 1852*’ stated:

“ALL that newly-erected and well-finished villa, admirably situated at Thomas’s Town, overlooking the whole of Merthyr, Taff Vale Railway Terminus, and intended Terminus of the Vale of Neath Railway, and commanding a delightful panoramic view of Cyfarthfa Castle and Penydarran Parks, with their Fishponds and Plantations; also an extensive view of Dowlais, Cefn-Coed-y Cymmer, the Breconshire Beacons and the surrounding Hills.

“**SPRINGFIELD VILLA** contains an Entrance Hall, Dining and Drawing Rooms, two Kitchens, Pantry, an Underground Cellar; five airy Bedrooms, an Out Kitchen, which may converted into a Coach-house and Stable; a Forcing Pump, abundantly supplied with Spring Water; Pleasure Ground, Kitchen Garden, both of which have been planted with the choicest Shrubs, Flowers, and Fruit Trees: all of which are enclosed with a Wall Fence, the front of which is of Rock-work, with an Iron Gate.

“The said Premises are held under a Lease granted by William Thomas, Esq., Court House, Merthyr, for the term of 99 years, commencing from the 1st day of November last passed, at a low Yearly Ground Rent.”



1873 Surveyed 1875 Published - Town Plan - Villas (source: ‘*maps.nls.uk*’) with Primrose Hill House identified with a red box

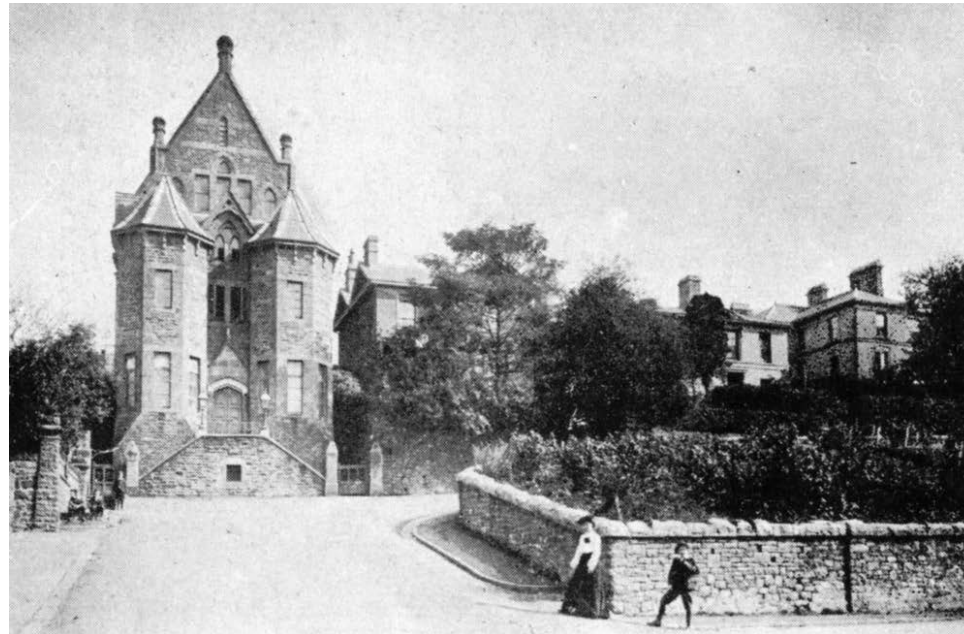


However, it was not just spacious detached villas for wealthy individuals that were being built; but also elegant, terraced streets commissioned by groups of professionals. These developments were commended in an article from the 'Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian – Saturday 28 August 1852' which said:

“this much is already certain: the principle of associative enterprise, is now acknowledged to be sound, and comes to us recommended by the results of experience. We have been led to make these remarks, by the contemplation of Union-street, in what is henceforth to be called New Town or Thomas Town, in honour of the landlord, William Thomas, Esq., of the Court House. The houses recently built in this locality are remarkable for the taste which has been displayed in their erection, and which has caused tenants to flock to habitations so comfortable in themselves, and so pleasantly located as to command landscape views of various beauty; but we wish more particularly to call attention to what are termed ‘the club-houses,’ forming Union-street, so called from being in a line with the Union-workhouse. These have been erected by an association of small proprietors, paying certain instalments every month. The result hitherto has been most satisfactory. Already have eleven excellent houses been erected; and we believe that all are already occupied. The success of the society has enabled it to carry on the enterprise; and we are happy to perceive that they have another lot of houses now in the course of erection. Other buildings are being erected with equal spirit by individual proprietors; and we shall probably see here a large town, within a few years. Thomas-street will be by far the handsomest part of Merthyr, - the most elegant in architecture, and the most pleasant in situation.”

The metamorphosis that took place in Merthyr, at Thomas Town, during the 1850s is summed up in the article below from the 'Merthyr Telegraph – Saturday 15 January 1859' which said:

“**THOMAS TOWN.** – The authorities seem determined to make this neighbourhood as great a contrast to its old condition as is possible. We, and a host of others, remember it a green field, where cows and horses grazed quietly; since then, it has been the scene of many a labourer's toil, and the once pleasant field is now almost covered with superior dwellings. During the progress of these buildings, the streets have necessarily been most defective, but now, we are glad to observe a change in this respect. Union Street is being formed; a fine retaining wall has been built on one side, and what was once an offensive and dangerous rubbish heap, will shortly be sloped and planted with shrubs. Opposite Courtland Terrace there is still a greater change. A most agreeable fence, which will shortly be planted with ‘quick thorns,’ is being raised, and which will give to this elegant terrace and the neighbourhood generally, a most attractive appearance. These improvements have been carried out by the order of the joint-heirs of the Court estate; and we are sure that every resident in that locality must feel grateful for the liberal manner with which they have met the desires of their tenantry. In connection with those improvements, what is now needed, is an additional number of gas lights, and as the inhabitants have memorialized the Board on the subject, we have no doubt their request will have the deserved attention.”



Villas, Synagogue & garden wall of Primrose Hill to the left c.1904 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')



Sandbrook House, Thomastown undated (source: 'merthyr-history.com')



Lower Thomas Street, Thomastown 1898 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')



Courtland Terrace, Thomastown (undated) (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')



Church Street, Thomastown - view from Merthyr Synagogue c.1930 (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk')



Union Street, Thomastown - Coronation Party 1937 (source: 'merthyr-history.com')



2.7.2 Primrose Hill - Built between 1850 and early 1852

Based on research, Primrose Hill was built between 1850 and early 1852. The building didn't exist on the 1850 Tithe Map, and a reference to Primrose Hill was first found in the 'Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian – Saturday 06 March 1852'. The newspaper featured an advert for "MERTHYR GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PRIMROSE HILL, CONDUCTED BY MR. JAS. KERNICK.". The advert being for a fee paying establishment for "Young Gentlemen" where they would receive "a good Practical Education" and that boarders were accepted. A build date of 1850 to early 1852 makes sense given the spate of construction work taking place in that part of Thomastown during that period.

Another advert from 1852 in the 'Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian – Saturday 10 July 1852' said "MERTHYR GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PRIMROSE HILL, PRINCIPAL MR. JAS. KERNICK. In this Establishment Young Gentlemen receive a very superior Education, and are prepared for the University."

MERTHYR GRAMMAR SCHOOL,  
PRIMROSE HILL,  
CONDUCTED BY MR. JAS. KERNICK.

IN this Establishment Young Gentlemen receive a good Practical Education.

TERMS FOR BOARDING, &c.

Pupils under 10 years of age ..	16	Guineas	per Annum.
Above 10 and under 14 .....	18	"	"
Above 14 .....	20	"	"
Daily Pupils .....	4	"	"
Classics .....	2	"	Extra

A Quarter's Notice is required before the removal of a Pupil.—An Articled Pupil wanted.

COURSE OF INSTRUCTION :—Writing, Arithmetic, Mathematics, Grammar, Composition, Classics, History (Ancient and Modern), Geography, Use of the Globes, Natural History, Natural Philosophy, Mental and Moral Philosophy.

Merthyr Grammar School, PRIMROSE HILL,  
Feb. 24th, 1852.

1852 03.06 - Merthyr Grammar School, Primrose Hill, Advert (source: 'Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian, Sat 06 Mar 1852')

MERTHYR GRAMMAR SCHOOL,  
PRIMROSE HILL.  
PRINCIPAL, MR. JAS. KERNICK.

IN this Establishment Young Gentlemen receive a very superior Education, and are prepared for the University. Terms for Boarders, 16, 18, and 20 Guineas per annum ; Day Pupils, 4 ditto ; Classics, 2 Guineas per annum extra. A Quarter's Notice is required before the removal of a Pupil. The duties will be resumed on the 19th inst.

Merthyr Grammar School,  
Primrose Hill, July 1st, 1852.

1852 07.10 - Merthyr Grammar School, Primrose Hill, Advert (source: 'Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian, Sat 10 Jul 1852')

PRIMROSE HILL ACADEMY, MERTHYR.  
CONDUCTED BY MR. JAS. KERNICK.

THIS ESTABLISHMENT for the EDUCATION of YOUNG GENTLEMEN, will RE-OPEN on MONDAY, JULY 18th, 1859.

TERMS PER ANNUM :

Boarders under 12 Years of age .....	20	Guineas.
" above 12 .....	22	"
Day Pupils .....	4	"
Classics & Mathematics.....	2	each extra.

A Quarter's Notice, or the payment of a Quarter, is required before the Removal of a Pupil.

Primrose Hill, June 22, 1859.

1857 07.09 - Primrose Hill Academy, Advert (source: 'Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian - Thursday 09 July 1857')

MERTHYR-TYDFIL.  
ELIGIBLE INVESTMENT.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, by Mr. H. W. HARRIS, at the ANGEL HOTEL, Merthyr Tydfil, on THURSDAY, the 16th day of June next, at Seven o'Clock in the Evening, (subject to conditions then to be produced.)

All that newly built and well arranged Leasehold Detached MESSUAGE or DWELLING-HOUSE, SCHOOLROOM, and PLAYGROUND, known by the name of "PRIMROSE Hill Academy," in the occupation of Mr. James Kernick, the Proprietor, containing Parlour, Drawing Room, Library, Kitchen, Back Kirchen, China Pantry, and several Bedrooms.

The House stands in a most healthy situation; the Rooms are lofty and spacious, replete with every convenience and finished in a very substantial manner, both internally and externally, the proprietor having spared no pains in making these premises well adapted for a superior Boarding School.

Also, TWO COTTAGES in the rear of the above, and at the extreme end of the Playground, in a forward state of completion, and nearly ready for occupation.

This Property is held under a lease for 99 years from the 1st day of November, 1851, at the moderate Ground Rent of £10 19s. per annum.

For further particulars apply to Messrs. MORGAN & SMITH, Solicitors, Merthyr Tydfil; or to the Auctioneer, at his Office, 143, High-street, Merthyr.

Auctioneer's Office, May 25, 1859.

Greater detail on the accommodation and layout of Primrose Hill was found in the 'Merthyr Telegraph – Saturday 28 May 1859' in an advert for its upcoming sale by auction, with the school now known as "Primrose Hill Academy". The school appears to have operated under this new name from around 1857. We can see that the property consisted of a house, schoolroom and playground with two additional cottages in the course of construction at the far end of the playground. The property having been "well adapted for a superior Boarding School". The full advert reads as follows:

"MERTHYTYDFIL.  
ELIGIBLE INVESTMENT.

"TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, by Mr. H.W. HARRIS, at the ANGEL HOTEL, Merthyr Tydfil, on THURSDAY, the 16th day of June next, at Seven o'clock in the Evening, (subject to conditions then to be produced).

"All that newly built and well arranged Leasehold Detached MESSUAGE or DWELLING-HOUSE, SCHOOLROOM, and PLAYGROUND, known by the name of 'Primrose Hill Academy,' in the occupation of Mr. James Kernick, the Proprietor, containing Parlour, Drawing Room, Library, Kitchen, Back Kitchen, China Pantry, and several Bedrooms.

"The House stands in a most healthy situation; the Rooms are lofty and spacious, replete with every convenience and finished in a very substantial manner, both internally and externally, the proprietor having spared no pains in making these premises well adapted for a superior Boarding School.

"Also, TWO COTTAGES in the rear of the above, and at the extreme end of the Playground, in a forward state of completion, and nearly ready for occupation.

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"For further particulars, apply to Messrs. MORGAN & SMITH, Solicitors, Merthyr Tydfil; or to the Auctioneer, at his Office, 143, High-street, Merthyr.

"Auctioneer's Office, May 25, 1859."

1859 05.28 - Eligible Investment to be sold by Auction 'Primrose Hill Academy' Advert - (source: 'Merthyr Telegraph, Sat 28 May 1859')



2.7.3 Primrose Hill as a School

Adverts for ‘Merthyr Grammar School, Primrose Hill’ and then ‘Primrose Hill Academy’ under the supervision of James Kernick, appeared in newspapers from early 1852 until 1860. At the end of 1860 James Kernick was to retire from the school and be succeeded by Thomas Lloyd, this being announced in the newspapers. In June 1861, James Kernick appears to still be living at Primrose Hill as a newspaper advert in the ‘Merthyr Telegraph – 29 June 1861’ for a property to be let near the Taff Brewery said: “Apply to Mr. James Kernick, Primrose Hill, Merthyr.”

James Kernick appears to have had a love of cricket, with many newspaper articles over the years commenting on cricket matches between “the pupils of Mr. Kernick’s, Primrose Hill, Merthyr” and other teams.

It is unclear whether Thomas Lloyd took over the school at Primrose Hill in 1861 as planned, as by mid-1862 adverts appeared for ‘Tydfil School, Merthyr’ with Evan Williams as Head Master saying: “The School is now held at Primrose Hill, lately occupied by Mr. Kernick”.

The full advert in the ‘Merthyr Telegraph – 28 June 1862’ & ‘Merthyr Telegraph – 05 July 1862’ read:

“TYDFIL SCHOOL, MERTHYR.  
“Head Master, EVAN WILLIAMS, M.A.

“COURSE of Instruction:– Classics, Mathematics, and Commercial, including French. Special arrangements are made for Pupils reading for the Universities, the Civil Service Examinations, or any of the Learned Professions.

“Scrupulous attention is given to each pupil by himself, and his daily conduct and progress fully reported to his parents; punctuality, diligence, and thoroughness in all the work done are strictly enforced, so that the course of training cannot fail to ensure the cultivation of studious habits and sound mental progress.

“The School is now held at Primrose Hill, lately occupied by Mr. Kernick, where there is a commodious, well-ventilated school-room with a playground (100ft. by 30) attached, a sitting-room for the entire use of the Boarders, and all the requisites for such an establishment.

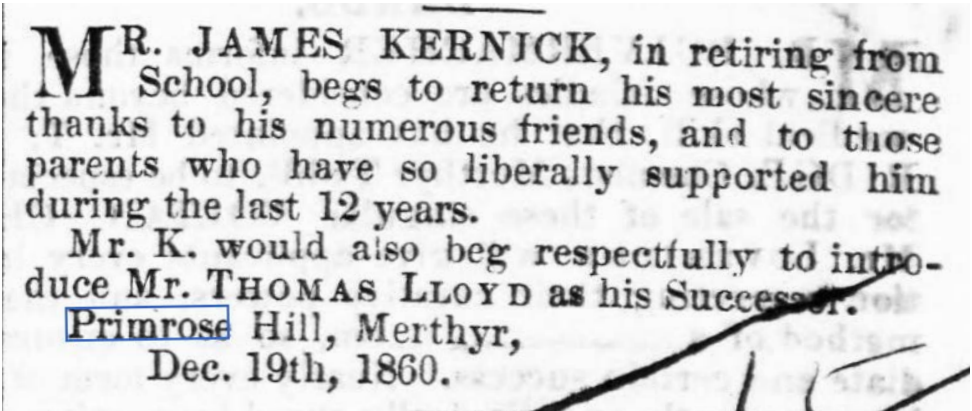
“Testimonials from University Professors, Examiners of the School, &c., with Terms, References, &c., to be had on application.

“Studies resumed on MONDAY, July 21st, 1862.”

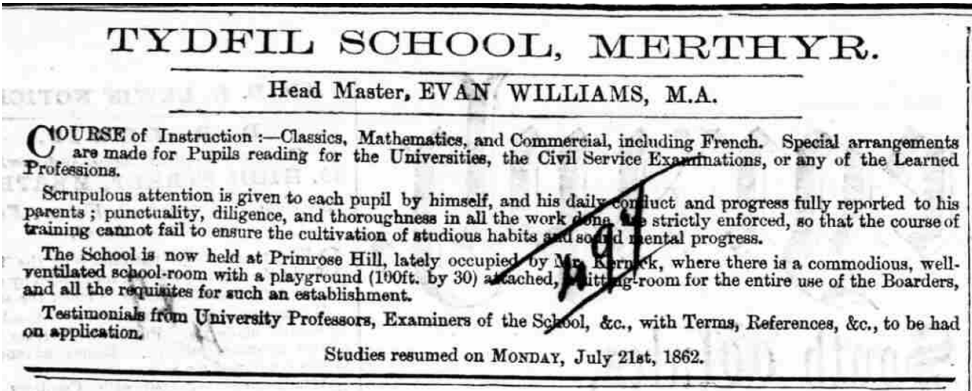
Subsequent newspaper adverts for “Tydfil School. Classical and Commercial Day and Boarding School. Head Master – Evan Williams, M. A.” did not specify an address, or nothing more specific than “Tydfil School, Merthyr”.

A notice of Death in the ‘Merthyr Telegraph – 17 March 1866’ for “the infant daughter of Mr. Evan Williams, M.A., Tydfil-school, Thomas-Town, Merthyr” was slightly more specific, but still didn’t mention the words Primrose Hill.

It is not known when Tydfil School left Primrose Hill, however, there is a ‘Tydfil School’ on Alma Row in Thomastown, near the Brick Works, on the 1868-75 OS Six-inch Map and also the 1873 Town Plan.



1860 12.22 - Retirement of James Kernick from Primrose Hill, Merthyr, School - (source: ‘Merthyr Telegraph, Sat 22 Dec 1860’)



1862 07.05 - Tydfil School, Merthyr - Advert (source: ‘Merthyr Telegraph - Saturday 05 July 1862’)



1868-75 Surveyed 1885 Published - OS 6-inch Map (source: ‘maps.nls.uk’) (see Primrosehill House, Tydfil School for Boys & Twyn-yr-odyn School)

RETURN CRICKET MATCH.			
(Between the Pupils of Mr. Fuller, of Newton House Academy, and Mr. Kernick's, Primrose Hill, Merthyr.)			
This return match, between Mr. Fuller's pupils and Mr. Kernick's, resulting in a second victory to the latter over the former, came off on the ground of the senior Cricket Club, on Wednesday week; the day being fine, excellent play was exhibited on both sides, each exerting themselves nobly, and displaying skill, both in batting and bowling, which we have seen wanting in older hands. The principals of both schools were present, and acted as umpires; the best of feeling prevailed between them, which contributed to enhance the sports of their pupils. The following is the score:—			
MR. KERNICK'S SCHOOL, PRIMROSE HILL.			
1st Innings.		2nd Innings.	
Jos. Gabe, run out .....	9	b. Kyle .....	0
Morgan Llewellyn, b W. Kyle	0	b Craig .....	1
Wm. Gabe, b Craig.....	2	run out .....	18
Morgan John, c Beard .....	11	b Kyle .....	7
Evan John, run out .....	0	b Craig .....	0
R. M. Evans, not out....	6	not out .....	1
John Lewis, c McCloud .....	0	b Kyle .....	7
Thos. F. Thomas, b Craig .....	0	b Kyle .....	2
Jas. Ferrent, c Beard .....	13	b Craig .....	0
Byes 4, wides 1 .....	5	b Craig .....	5
Total .....	48	Total .....	41
MR. FULLER'S SCHOOL, NEWTON HOUSE.			
1st Innings.		2nd Innings.	
A. Kyle, b Ferrent .....	7	b Ferrent .....	1
Jas. Craig, b W. Gabe .....	1	c Ferrent .....	1
J. Kyle, run out .....	2	c W. Gabe .....	1
McCloud, c Llewellyn .....	6	not out .....	15
Quin Forrester, run out.....	15	c. W. Gabe .....	2
W. Beard, st. out, W. Gabe ...	2	run out .....	2
W. Keppel, not out .....	14	st. out W. Gabe .....	5
J. Frederick, run out .....	5	b Ferrent .....	0
J. Craig, c. Lewis .....	0	b W. Gabe .....	3
Bye .....	1	Byes 2, wide 1 .....	3
Total .....	53	Total .....	33
Total of both Innings of Mr. Kernick's pupils ...		87	
Ditto, ditto, of Mr. Fuller's pupils .....		86	
Majority to Mr. Kernick's pupils .....		1	

1856 10.04 - Cricket match (source: ‘Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian - Saturday 04 October 1856’)



Primrose Hill appears to have been available for rent at the end of 1866, with an advert in the 'Merthyr Telegraph - Saturday 29 December 1866' stating "TO BE LET IMMEDIATELY, this desirable and detached residence, situated in Thomas Town, Merthyr Tydfil, comprising every convenience for a family, with good garden ground."

Research shows that the school was taken over by a new Principal, and given a new name, in April 1867. An advert in the 'Merthyr Telegraph - 13 April 1867' said: "MERTHYR TYDFIL GRAMMAR AND MIDDLE CLASS SCHOOLS, WILL BE OPENED APRIL 15th, 1867. PRINCIPAL JOHN SMITH, M.A., M.E.I.S.". John Smith had previously been Head Master of a school in London and relocated to Merthyr Tydfil, along with his wife. Below this advert, his wife had an advert which said: "MRS. SMITH (of London), RESPECTFULLY announces that she has succeeded to the LADIES' SCHOOL lately the establishment of Miss Turner, at No. 1, Courtland Terrace". The location of the school was confirmed as "Primrose Hill, Church-street" in an advert in the 'Merthyr Telegraph - 06 July 1867'. Mr. and Mrs. Smith do not appear to have lived at Primrose Hill as their home address in the adverts is given as "1, Courtland-terrace, Merthyr".

Adverts for 'Merthyr Tydfil Grammar and Middle Class Schools' at Primrose Hill, Church-street with John Smith as Principal ceased in January 1868. However, adverts for Mrs. Smith's 'Establishment for Young Ladies' at 1, Courtland Terrace continued until January 1870; by July 1870 the adverts read "MISS CUGNY, (Late Mrs. Smith)".

In 1868, the Rev. M.A. Bruton appears to have been living in Primrose Hill House, based on an article in the 'Merthyr Telegraph - 25 April 1868' which read: "MERTHYR TYDFIL. MOUNT CARMEL ART UNION PRIZE DRAWING. WINNING NUMBERS. ... Applications for the Prizes to be addressed to the Rev. M.A. Bruton, Primrose Hill House, Thomas Town, Merthyr Tydfil."

PRIMROSE HILL,  
MERTHYR TYDFIL.

TO BE LET IMMEDIATELY, this desirable and detached RESIDENCE, situated in Thomas Town, Merthyr Tydfil, comprising every convenience for a family, with good Garden Ground. — Applications to be addressed to Mrs. HERBERT JAMES, Navigation House, Pontypridd. [5914]

1866 12.29 - Primrose Hill, Thomas Town - House to let, Advert (source: 'Merthyr Telegraph, Sat 29 Dec 1866')

EDUCATION.  
MERTHYR TYDFIL GRAMMAR AND MIDDLE CLASS SCHOOLS,  
WILL BE OPENED APRIL 15th, 1867.  
PRINCIPAL  
JOHN SMITH, M.A., M.E.I.S.,  
Late Head Master of the New Grove Grammar School,  
Bow-road, London, assisted by competent masters.

PUPILS are prepared for Commercial Pursuits, the Learned Professions, the Civil Service, and the Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations. The course of studies embraces English Reading, English Grammar, Physical and Descriptive Geography, History, Arithmetic, Writing, and the principles of the Physical Sciences. The more advanced pupils will receive instruction in Greek, Latin, and French, Algebra, Geometry, and Mathematics, applied to the elementary principles of Natural Philosophy.  
For Prospectus, apply to Mr. SMITH, 1, Courtland-terrace, Merthyr. 339

EDUCATION.  
No. 1, COURTLAND TERRACE, MERTHYR.  
MRS. SMITH (of London),  
RESPECTFULLY announces that she has succeeded to the LADIES' SCHOOL lately the establishment of Miss Turner, at No. 1, Courtland Terrace. The course of studies will embrace English, Writing, Arithmetic, use of the Globes, French, and Drawing, &c. From the many years' experience that Mrs. Smith has enjoyed in some of the highest scholastic establishments in this kingdom she is enabled to offer to parents advantages rarely obtained in provincial towns.  
For Terms, which are exceedingly moderate, apply to Mrs. SMITH, at the above address. [350]

1867 04.13 - Merthyr Tydfil Grammar and Middle Class School - Principal John Smith (source: 'Merthyr Telegraph - 13 Apr 1867')

EDUCATION.  
MERTHYR TYDFIL GRAMMAR AND MIDDLE CLASS SCHOOL,  
Primrose Hill, Church Street,  
Will be Re-opened on MONDAY, July 22nd, 1867.  
PRINCIPAL JOHN SMITH, M.A., M.E.I.S., late Head Master of the New Grove Grammar School, Bow-road, London.

PUPILS are prepared for Commercial Pursuits, the Learned Professions, the Civil Service, and the Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations. The course of studies embraces English Reading, English Grammar, Physical and Descriptive Geography, History, Arithmetic, Writing, and the principles of the Physical Sciences. The more advanced pupils will receive instruction in Greek, Latin, and French, Algebra, Geometry, and Mathematics, applied to the elementary principles of Natural Philosophy.  
For Prospectus apply to Mr. SMITH's residence—1, Courtland-terrace, Merthyr. 613

1867 07.06 - Merthyr Tydfil Grammar & Middle Class School, Primrose Hill, Church Street - Principal John Smith (Merthyr Telegraph - 06 Jul 1867)



An article in the 'Merthyr Telegraph - 31 July 1874' tells us that Principal Mr T. Lloyd relocated his school to "healthy and convenient premises" and renamed it "Primrose Hill School, Thomas Town". An article from the 'Merthyr Telegraph - 06 August 1875' describing the school as "built specifically for the purpose, and has a large enclosed Playground attached". It seems reasonable to assume that these new premises were our site at Primrose Hill. Newspaper adverts as early as 1862 were found on Mr. T. Lloyd's school, under the name 'Mathematical and Commercial School', at other premises in Thomas Town.

The full article on the renamed 'Primrose Hill School' from the 'Merthyr Telegraph - 31 July 1874' reads:

**"PRIMROSE HILL SCHOOL, THOMAS TOWN, MERTHYR TYDFIL.**  
**"PRINCIPAL: MR. T. LLOYD.**  
**"ASSISTANT: MR. C. C. NUTTALL.**

"THIS SCHOOL, which has recently been removed to the above healthy and convenient premises, and which have been expressly erected with a view to the convenience of a large Scholastic Establishment, will be opened on Monday, August 10th, 1874.

"The delay in the period of commencing this Session has been unavoidable, in consequence of structural alterations and other improvements in the school premises, but which alterations when completed, will make them the most suitable, healthy, and convenient in the entire district."

**Mathematical and Commercial School.**

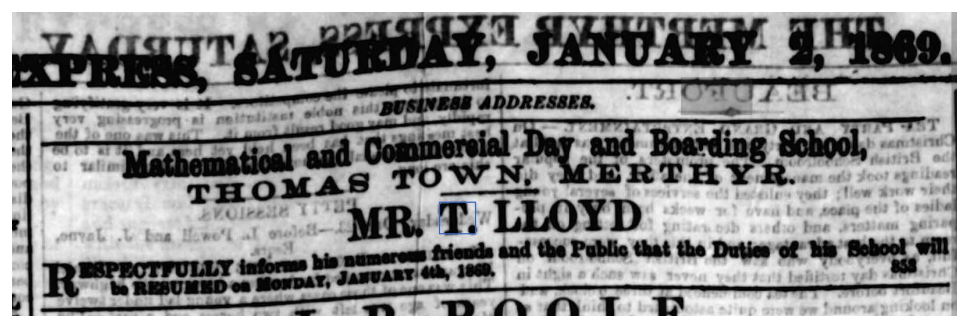
REMOVED TO  
**UPPER THOMAS STREET, MERTHYR,**  
 CONDUCTED BY **MR. T. LLOYD.**

**TERMS:—**Four Guineas per annum. A Quarter's Notice required previous to the removal of a Pupil.

**COURSE OF INSTRUCTION:—**Elementary Branches of Education, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Mensuration, Plane and Spherical Trigonometry, &c.; Surface and Underground Surveying; Mechanical Drawing; Engineering; Geology; Geography, and Use of the Globes; History; Grammar, Writing, &c.

\* \* Removed to a highly commodious building recently occupied by the English Calvinistic Methodists.

1862 04.26 - Mathematical and Commercial School, Mr T. Lloyd  
 (source: 'Merthyr Telegraph - 26 April 1862')



1869 01.02 - Mathematical and Commercial Day and Boarding School, Mr T. Lloyd (source: 'Merthyr Express - 02 Jan 1869')

**PRIMROSE HILL SCHOOL, THOMAS TOWN, MERTHYR TYDFIL.**

**PRINCIPAL: MR. T. LLOYD.**  
**ASSISTANT: MR. C. C. NUTTALL.**

**T**HIS SCHOOL, which has recently been removed to the above healthy and convenient premises, and which have been expressly erected with a view to the convenience of a large Scholastic Establishment, will be opened on Monday, August 10th, 1874.

The delay in the period of commencing this Session has been unavoidable, in consequence of structural alterations and other improvements in the school premises, but which alterations when completed, will make them the most suitable, healthy, and convenient in the entire district. 6591

1874 07.31 - Primrose Hill School, T. Lloyd relocated  
 (source: 'Merthyr Telegraph - Friday 31 July 1874')

**PRIMROSE HILL SCHOOL, MERTHYR.**

**PRINCIPAL—MR. T. LLOYD.**  
**SECOND MASTER—MR. H. J. FAULKNER.**

**T**HE above well established and successful Seminary was re-opened after the Midsummer Vacation, on Monday, July 26th, 1875.

This School is situate in the most healthy position in Merthyr, was built specially for the purpose, and has a large enclosed Playground attached.

For Terms, &c., apply to the Principal.

1875 08.06 - Primrose Hill School, reference to playground  
 (source: 'Merthyr Telegraph - Friday 06 August 1875')

Newspaper adverts for 'Primrose Hill School' from 1877 tell us that it catered to

"Young Gentlemen preparing for professional, commercial, engineering, or scientific pursuits". Towards the end of 1878, we read that "Mr. Thomas Lloyd (Who intends opening a Mining and Mechanical School at Pontypridd) ... has determined on relinquishing the above School at Christmas next in favour of Mr. J. Beavis."

John Beavis took over the school in 1879 as planned, with newspaper adverts still referring to it as 'Primrose Hill School, Merthyr Tydfil'. By 1880 the school's name had changed to 'Primrose Hill Grammar and Science School, Merthyr Tydfil' with an advert in the 'Merthyr Express - 23 October 1880' saying that the school would offer "Evening classes in General Subjects, Science and Short-hand during Winter."

A further advert in the 'Merthyr Express - 13 November 1880' read:

"PRIMROSE HILL SCHOOL. - Evening classes have just commenced at this school for the teaching of science and general subjects, in addition to which a practical shorthand writer has been engaged to give lessons in Pitman's Phonography."

John Beavis was still Headmaster of the school in 1886.

**PRIMROSE HILL SCHOOL, MERTHYR TYDFIL.**

**MR. THOMAS LLOYD**  
 (Who intends opening a Mining and Mechanical School at Pontypridd)

**R**ESPECTFULLY informs the Public and his Friends generally that he has determined on relinquishing the above School at Christmas next in favour of Mr. J. Beavis.

Whilst tendering his sincere thanks to his Friends for the liberal support offered to the Primrose Hill School for so many years, he hopes the same kind patronage will be accorded his Successor, whom he can cordially recommend as an excellent Teacher, and in every respect worthy of the confidence of Parents.

**MR. JOHN BEAVIS**

**B**EGS to inform his Friends and the Public that he will at Christmas next succeed Mr. Thos. Lloyd in the proprietorship of Primrose Hill School, Merthyr Tydfil so long and successfully carried on by him.

He will be assisted by Mr. James Forbes, M.A. (Aberdeen), and other Masters.

Subjects:—English, Classics, French, Mathematics, and all the requisites for a sound Commercial Education.

Pupils prepared for the Preliminary Examinations in Law and Medicine, and also for the College of Preceptors.

Candidates prepared for the Preliminary Examination required for Admission into the Dissenting Colleges.

The Domestic arrangements will be on a most liberal scale, and under careful management.

**TERMS PER QUARTER:—**

Boarders (under Ten)	•	•	Seven Guineas.
Ditto (above Ten)	•	•	Eight to Ten Guineas.
Day Pupils	•	•	One to Two Guineas.

Primrose Hill School, Merthyr Tydfil,  
 October 23rd, 1878.

1878 11.01 - Thomas Lloyd relinquishing the school  
 (source: 'Merthyr Telegraph - 01 Nov 1878')



**Primrose Hill, School,**  
**MERTHYR TYDFIL.**  
(Formerly Mr. T. LLOYD, Principal.)  
**MR. JOHN BEAVIS**  
**B**EGS to inform his friends and the public that he now conducts the **Primrose Hill School, Merthyr Tydfil**, so long and successfully carried on by his predecessor.  
He will be assisted by **Mr. W. GORDON, M.A.** and other Masters.  
**SUBJECTS** :—English, Classics, French, Mathematics, and all the requisites for a sound Commercial Education.  
Pupils prepared for the preliminary examinations in Law and Medicine, and also for the College of Preceptors.  
Candidates prepared for the Preliminary Examination required for admission into Dissenting Colleges.  
The Domestic arrangements are on a most liberal scale, and under the careful management of **Mrs. BEAVIS.**

**TERMS PER QUARTER:—**  
Boarders (under Ten) ... .. Seven Guineas  
Ditto (above Ten) ... .. Eight to Ten Guineas  
Day Pupils ... .. One to Two Guineas  
The School duties after the Summer Vacation will be resumed on **THURSDAY, JULY 31, 1879.**

1879 08.09 - Primrose Hill School, Advert  
(source: 'The Merthyr Express, Sat 09 Aug 1879')

**Primrose Hill Grammar and Science School,**  
**MERTHYR TYDFIL.**  
**MR. JOHN BEAVIS**  
**C**ONDUCTS the above old-established School, where instruction is given in English, Classics, French, Mathematics, and all the requisites for a sound Commercial Education.  
Pupils prepared for the preliminary examinations in Law and Medicine, the College of Preceptors, and also for the Oxford and Cambridge Middle Class Examinations.  
A limited number of Boarders taken. The Domestic arrangements are on a most liberal scale, and under careful management.  
Evening Classes in General Subjects, Science, and Short-hand during Winter.  
First Winter Quarter commenced Sept. 29th, 1880.  
The Terms, which are moderate, may be had on application.

1880 10.23 - Primrose Hill Grammar and Science School, Advert  
(source: 'The Merthyr Express, Sat 23 Oct 1880')

**PRIMROSE HILL SCHOOL.** — Evening classes have just commenced at this school for the teaching of science and general subjects, in addition to which a practical shorthand writer has been engaged to give lessons in Pitman's Phonography.

1880 11.13 - Primrose Hill School, Advert  
(source: 'The Merthyr Express, Sat 13 Nov 1880')

Things changed by the Autumn Term of 1887 with an advert for 'Primrose Hill School, Merthyr Tydfil' in the 'Merthyr Express' — 03 September 1887 showing it was under new ownership "now occupied by the Misses GOODFELLOW" and starting life as a private school for girls "as a Seminary for Young Ladies" after having been a school for boys since it was first built in 1850-52.

The "Seminary for Young Ladies" at Primrose Hill was not there long; by February 1889 adverts appeared for a different school at Primrose Hill; 'Merthyr High School' which would open after Easter; a school for boys with Harry Dewdney as Headmaster. The full advert in the 'Merthyr Express' — 16 February 1889 reads:

**"MERTHYR HIGH SCHOOL.**  
"A SCHOOL for the sons of Middle and Upper Class families will open after Easter at Primrose Hill.  
"Master: Mr. HARRY DEWDNEY, B.A.  
"For particulars apply to the Grammar School, Chepstow, Mon."

Another school, 'Merthyr Grammar School' opened on Church Street in January 1889 with William Wardhaugh as Headmaster. An advert in the 'Merthyr Express' — 15 December 1888 said the school was to open on 8th January 1889.

Newspaper adverts for 'Merthyr High School' at Primrose Hill appeared from February 1889 until late 1898. Whilst running the school, Harry Dewdney and his family lived at 5 Courtland-terrace. An advert in the 'Merthyr Times' — 23 December 1898 told us that the school had moved to new, larger premises near Merthyr. The full article reads:

**"THE HIGH SCHOOL, MERTHYR TYDFIL.**  
"Owing to increase in number of pupils Mr. Harry Dewdney, B.A., headmaster of this well-established school, has moved to more commodious and convenient premises. The new address is Plas-yr-Ywen, Cefn, near Merthyr. The house is large and excellently adapted for boarders. Buses run to and fro every quarter of an hour, and stop in Cefn a few yards from the school; special cheap season tickets are issued to school boys."

Further proof that Harry Dewdney's 'Merthyr High School' was our site was found in an article in the 'Merthyr Express' — 19 May 1959 on the death of his wife in 1951. The article said "her husband conducted a private school at Primrose Hill, near Church-street, Merthyr, for many years."

**PRIMROSE HILL SCHOOL,**  
**MERTHYR TYDFIL.**  
**T**HE above eligible and well-ventilated premises are now occupied by the Misses GOODFELLOW as a Seminary for Young Ladies. The Autumn Term will commence on **THURSDAY, September 15th, 1887.** Particulars may be obtained at Somerset House, Merthyr.

1887 09.03 - Primrose Hill School, Advert - Seminary for Young Ladies -  
(source: 'The Merthyr Express, 03 Sept 1887')

**MERTHYR HIGH SCHOOL.**  
**A** SCHOOL for the sons of Middle and Upper Class families will open after Easter at Primrose Hill.  
**Master: Mr. HARRY DEWDNEY, B.A.**  
For particulars apply to the Grammar School, Chepstow, Mon.

**MERTHYR GRAMMAR SCHOOL,**  
**CHURCH STREET.**  
**HEADMASTER:—WM. WARDHAUGH, C.M.**  
**QUARTER COMMENCES TUESDAY,**  
8th January, 1889.  
**M**R. WARDHAUGH has had great experience in preparing Pupils for Commercial Life, the Oxford and Cambridge Local, Theological and Training Colleges, the Medical, Legal, and Pharmaceutical Preliminary, Civil Service, &c., Examinations.

1889 02.16 - Merthyr High School at Primrose Hill  
(source: 'Merthyr Express - 16 February 1889')

**THE HIGH SCHOOL, MERTHYR TYDFIL.**  
Owing to increase in number of pupils Mr. Harry Dewdney, B.A., headmaster of this well-established school, has moved to more commodious and convenient premises. The new address is Plas-yr-Ywen, Cefn, near Merthyr. The house is large and excellently adapted for boarders. Buses run to and fro every quarter of an hour, and stop in Cefn a few yards from the school; special cheap season tickets are issued to school boys.

1898 12.23 - Merthyr High School moved to Plas-yr-Ywen  
(source: 'Merthyr Times - 23 Dec 1898')



## 2.7.4 Primrose Hill as a Residence

Back in 1859 when Primrose Hill was for sale by auction, we learnt from an advert in the *'Merthyr Telegraph – Saturday 28 May 1859'* that the property consisted of a "DWELLING-HOUSE, SCHOOLROOM, and PLAYGROUND". The dwelling-house would have been the front property directly onto Church Street.

We know that the property operated as a school from early-1852 through to late-1898, based on the newspaper research already discussed. We also know that several of the headmasters did not live on the school premises. Therefore, it is possible that the front dwelling-house was either used for boarding pupils or rented out separately from the school as a private residence. This theory is supported by newspaper articles referring to various families residing at Primrose Hill.

### **The family of Mr. Bert Marshall:**

An article in the *'Merthyr Times – 10 January 1895'* about "the annual Children's Fancy Dress Ball in aid of the Merthyr General Hospital" held in the Drill Hall, included within the names of those present "Miss Marshall, Primrose Hill".

An article in the *'Merthyr Times – 22 January 1897'* on "The Non-Commissioned Officer's Ball at Merthyr" held in the Drill Hall, included in its list of guests "Mr. Bert Marshall, Primrose-hill".

An article in the *'Merthyr Times – 11 February 1898'* about "the football dance promoted by the Merthyr Thursday's Football Club" held in the Drill Hall, included within the list of guests "Mrs. Marshall, Primrose Hill; the Misses Ada and Alice Marshall, and Mr. Bert Marshall".

### **The family of Mr. R.T. Jones**

(Messrs. R.T. Jones & Co., drapers, outfitters and furnisers):

An article within the *'Merthyr Express – 09 July 1904'* on donations of literature to the Workhouse included "Mrs. R.T. Jones, Primrose Hill" as a donor.

An article within the "GOSSIP" section of the *'Merthyr Express – 04 June 1910'* included "The other day a Thomastown boy, Master Ivor Jones, son of Mr. R.T. Jones, draper, Primrose Hill Villa, found a bag containing £10, in Pontmorlais. ... he knew the money must have been lost, and did the only thing an honest boy could have done, he handed the bag over to the police."

An advert for "SERVANTS WANTED" in the *'Merthyr Express – 11 November 1922'* said "Wanted, capable woman to wash (Mondays). – Mrs. R.T. Jones, Primrose Hill, Merthyr."

An advert for "SERVANTS WANTED" in the *'Merthyr Express – 16 December 1922'* said "Wanted, cook-general, housemaid kept. – Mrs. R.T. Jones, Primrose Hill, Merthyr."

An advert for "SERVANTS WANTED" in the *'Merthyr Express – 16 August 1924'* said "Wanted, capable housemaid. – Mrs. R.T. Jones, Primrose Hill, Merthyr."

Articles in the *'Merthyr Express – 05 September 1925'* included under "MARRIAGES ... Jones-Richards ... Ivor Llewellyn, second surviving son of Mr. R.T. Jones, Primrose Hill, Merthyr" and a longer item on "A Merthyr Wedding" where "the bridegroom was Mr. Ivor Llewellyn Jones, second son of Mr. R.T. Jones (Messrs. R.T. Jones and Co., the well known drapers and furnisers). This would have been little boy from the article in 1910 who found the £10 and handed in to the police, now gown up and getting married.

An article in the *'Merthyr Express – 04 September 1926'* on the wedding of the Rev. and Mrs. V. G. Jones included "After the ceremony, with the pealing of the bells, the wedding party returned to Primrose Hill, where a reception was held, and among others present besides already named were Mr. and Mrs. Jones, Mr. and Mrs. T. Jones (father and mother of the bridegroom)"

A notice in the *'Merthyr Express – 31 October 1931'* announced the death of: "Jones. – On October 22nd. Primrose Hill, Merthyr Tydfil, Richard T. Jones, dearly loved husband of Edith L. Jones, age 68. Interred on Monday, October 26th, at Cefn Cemetery."

During the review of historic newspapers, it was often difficult to identify the relevant articles. Firstly, due to the many references to Primrose Hill which actually related to Primrose Hill, Twynrodyn which is not our site. Secondly, the identification of relevant articles relies on spellings within the online transcript of articles, these transcripts being full of spelling errors.

**1925 09.05 - Marriage Jones-Richards, son of Mr R.T. Jones of Primrose Hill**  
(source: *'Merthyr Express 05 Sept 1925'*)

## A MERTHYR WEDDING.

### JONES—RICHARDS.

A pretty wedding was solemnised at St. David's Church on Sunday morning, the Rector (Rev. J. Richards Pugh) and the Rev. V. J. Jones, officiating. The bridegroom was Mr. Ivor Llewellyn Jones, second son of Mr. R. T. Jones (Messrs. R. T. Jones and Co., the well known drapers and furnisers), and the bride Miss Gladys Maud Richards, youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Palmer Richards, of the New Inn Hotel, High-street. The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a pretty dress of beige georgette, trimmed with lace, and a hat to match, with Paradise plume, and



THE BRIDE AND BRIDEGROOM.

carried a lovely bouquet of tea roses. She was attended by two bridesmaids, Miss Phyllis Jones, sister of the bridegroom, who wore a dress of crepe-de-chine, and Miss Mary Davies, niece of the bride, whose dress was of fuchsia georgette, trimmed with silver beads. They both carried bouquets of carnations. The best man was Mr. Arthur Jones, brother of the bridegroom.

Later in the day the happy couple left for London and Bournemouth, where the honeymoon is being spent. The bride's going-away dress was of blue and white material, with hat to match, and white fox fur.



2.7.5 Sales of Primrose Hill

An advert appeared in the 'Merthyr Express – 09 December 1922' for the "Court Estate Sale No. 10 – Important sale by private treaty of Freehold Ground Rents" which included both Primrose Hill Villa and Primrose Cottages. It must be assumed that Primrose Hill was bought by Mr R.T. Jones as the family continued to live there well after this date, with Mr. R.T. Thomas dying there in 1931. See to the right.

An advert appeared in the 'Merthyr Express – 02 September 1939' on the "Important Sale of Freehold and Leasehold Premises." Which included "Merthyr Tydfil: Primrose Hill, Thomastown. Residential House (Freehold) and Land." See below.



1939 09.02 Important Sale of Freehold and Leasehold Premises - Primrose Hill, Thomastown (source: 'Merthyr Express, 02 Sept 1939')



1922 12.09 - Merthyr Court Estate Sale - Freehold Ground Rents - Primrose Hill Villa (source: 'Merthyr Express, 09 Dec 1922')

2.7.6 Primrose Hill as a Guest House

Following the sale advert in September 1939, the 'Merthyr Express – 06 April 1940' advertised that "A Modern Guest House will shortly be opened at Primrose Hill (Top of Church St Merthyr) ... Under the personal care of Miss Farmer and Miss Grant." See below.



1940 04.06 A Modern Guest House - at Primrose Hill (Top of Church St) (source: 'Merthyr Express, 06 Apr 1940')



In 1946 Primrose Hill Guest House was offered for sale by public auction, with a preliminary announcement placed in the *'Merthyr Express – 16 March 1946'*. This was followed by a full advert in the *'Merthyr Express – 23 March 1946'* which read:

**“Merthyr Tydfil**

**“SALE OF A RESIDENCE WITH VACANT POSSESSION SITUATED NEAR THE CENTRE OF THE TOWN WHICH IS NOW USED AS A GUEST HOUSE.**

**“MESSRS. F. A. PHILLIPS & SON (F.A.I.)**

“HAVE received instructions to Sell by PUBLIC AUCTION at the BELLE VUE HOTEL, MERTHYR TYDFIL, on WEDNESDAY, 3rd APRIL, 1946, at 7.30 p.m., the well-built Freehold Residence known as PRIMROSE HILL GUEST HOUSE (at the top end of Church-Street) MERTHYR TYDFIL.

“This is a large double-fronted house with lawn in front, having the following accommodation: Large lounge, dining-room, 2 reception room (now used as bedrooms), kitchen and larder on ground floor; 4 bedrooms and 2 bed-sitting-rooms, with 2 bathrooms and 2 lavatories on first floor, 4 bedrooms on second floor. Also attached to house (with separate entrance) is a large room, now used as a storeroom. There are 2 staircases (main) one at front of house and servants' staircase at rear. Large gardens, etc., mostly cultivated, at rear and side of house (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre of land), electric light throughout.

**“VACANT POSSESSION ON COMPLETION.**

N.B. – This Guest House is now run by the Misses Grant and Farmer and gives an excellent opportunity to purchasers who wish to obtain a successfully run Guest House, and if desired the Furniture be purchased at valuation. The property could also be used as a Residence, a Social Centre or converted Into Flats.

“For further particulars apply to W. F. T. James Esq., Solicitor, Church-street, Merthyr Tydfil (Tel. 94), or to the Auctioneers at Post Office Buildings, Merthyr Tydfil (Tel. 215), and 36, Union-street, Dowlais (Tel. 39).”

Primrose Hill was still being run as a guest house at the end of 1947, confirmed by an article in the *'Merthyr Express – 22 November 1947'* which read: “Later Sunday Bus from Cardiff? The need for a later bus from Cardiff to Merthyr on the weekends was stressed at a meeting of Merthyr Corporation omnibus committee last week, when a letter was read from residents of Primrose Hill Guest House, Merthyr, stating they ‘would be much obliged’ if a late bus – approximately 10.15 p.m. – could be provided to run from Cardiff on Saturdays and Sundays. The letter pointed out that a number of persons attended cinemas and Sunday concerts which did not finish until 10 p.m.”

An article in the *'Merthyr Express – 20 May 1950'* on “the dismissal by the Merthyr Corporation of Mr. Trystan Edwards, its Town Planning Consultant” makes reference to the fact that “Is it not true that owing to the lack of accommodation, and in order that he might facilitate his work for Merthyr, Mr. Edwards rented at his own expense a large room at the back of the Guest House, Church Street?”. This Guest House quite probably being Primrose Hill.

**Merthyr Tydfil**

**SALE OF A RESIDENCE WITH VACANT POSSESSION SITUATED NEAR THE CENTRE OF THE TOWN WHICH IS NOW USED AS A GUEST HOUSE.**

**MESSRS. F. A. PHILLIPS & SON (F.A.I.)**

**HAVE** received instructions to Sell by PUBLIC AUCTION at the BELLE VUE HOTEL MERTHYR TYDFIL, on WEDNESDAY, 3rd APRIL, 1946, at 7.30 p.m., the Well-built

**Freehold Residence**

known as **PRIMROSE HILL GUEST HOUSE** (at the top end of Church Street, MERTHYR TYDFIL. This is a large double-fronted house with lawn in front, having the following accommodation: Large lounge, dining-room, 2 reception room (now used as bedrooms), kitchen and larder on ground floor: 4 bedrooms and 2 bed-sitting-rooms, with 2 bathrooms and 2 lavatories on first floor, 4 bedrooms on second floor. Also attached to house (with separate entrance) is a large room: now used as a storeroom. There are 2 staircases (main one at front of house and servants' staircase at rear. Large gardens, etc., mostly cultivated, at rear and side of house (about  $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre of land), electric light throughout.

**VACANT POSSESSION ON COMPLETION.**

**N.B.—This Guest House is now run by the Misses Grant and Farmer and gives an excellent opportunity to purchasers who wish to obtain a successfully run Guest House, and if desired the Furniture may be purchased at valuation. The property could also be used as a Residence, a Social Centre or converted into Flats.**

**For further particulars apply to W. F. T. James Esq., Solicitor, Church-street, Merthyr Tydfil (Tel. 94), or to the Auctioneers at Post Office Buildings, Merthyr Tydfil (Tel. 215), and 36, Union-street, Dowlais (Tel. 39).**

### 2.7.7 Primrose Hill as Flats

Primrose Hill is currently subdivided into five flats. However, it has not been possible to identify when the property transitioned from a Guest House into Flats.

The research above has confirmed that the property was still operating as a Guest House in 1947 and most likely still in 1950. Therefore, any conversion into Flats took place after this date.

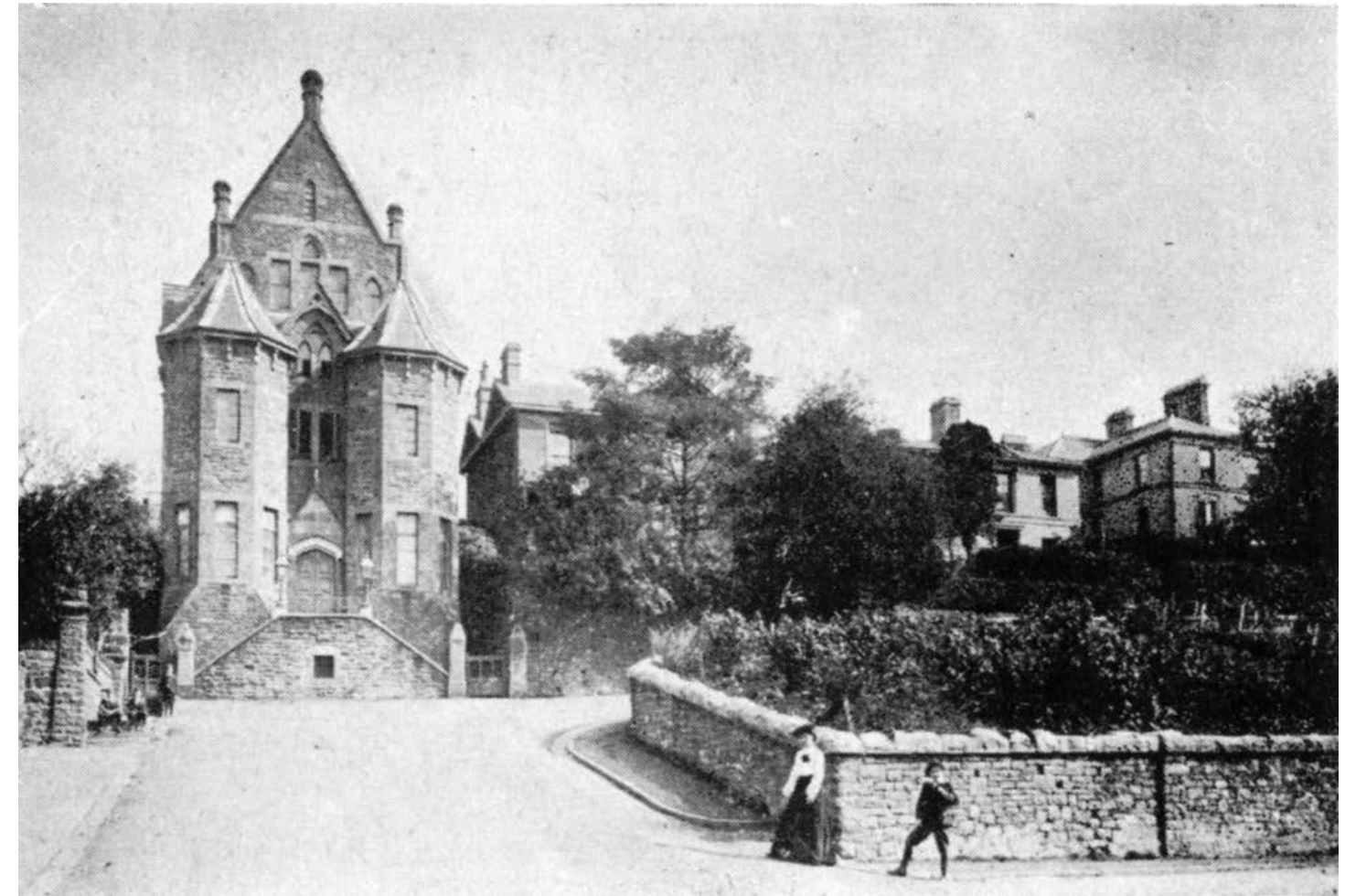
1946 03.23 Sale Primrose Hill Guest House  
(source: *'Merthyr Express, 23 Mar 1946'*)



**2.8 Historic Images of Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue with Primrose Hill always to left; however, sadly always off the image; to show the historic context for Primrose Hill**



**Pre-1910 view of Synagogue Front (source: National Library of Israel)**



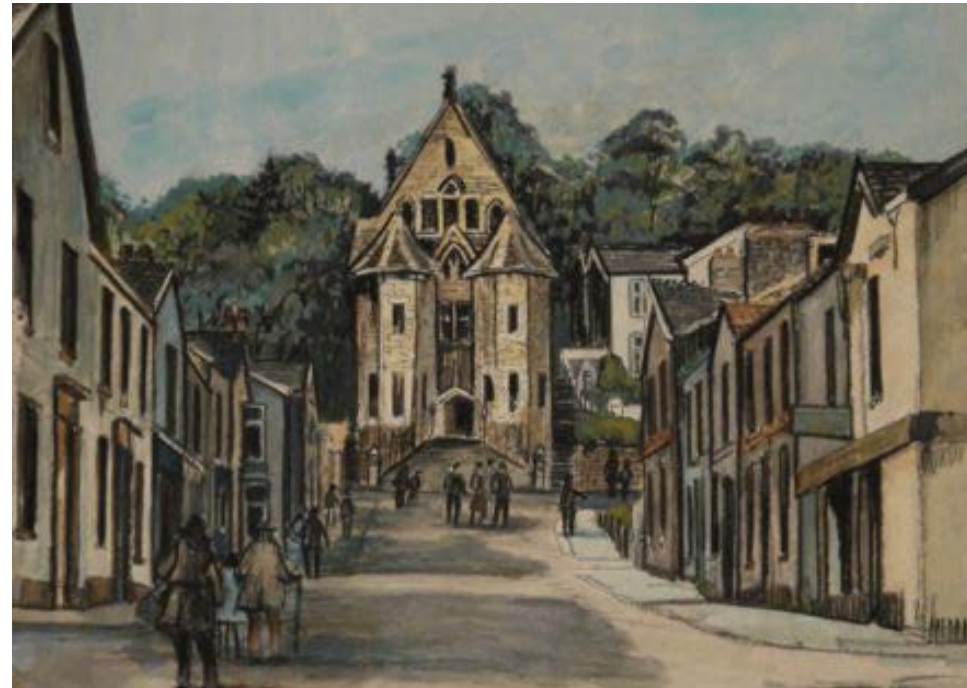
**c.1904 view of Synagogue Front (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk' website)**



**Historic view of Synagogue Front (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk' website)**



**2.8 Historic Images of Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue with Primrose Hill always to left; however, sadly always off the image; to show the historic context for Primrose Hill**



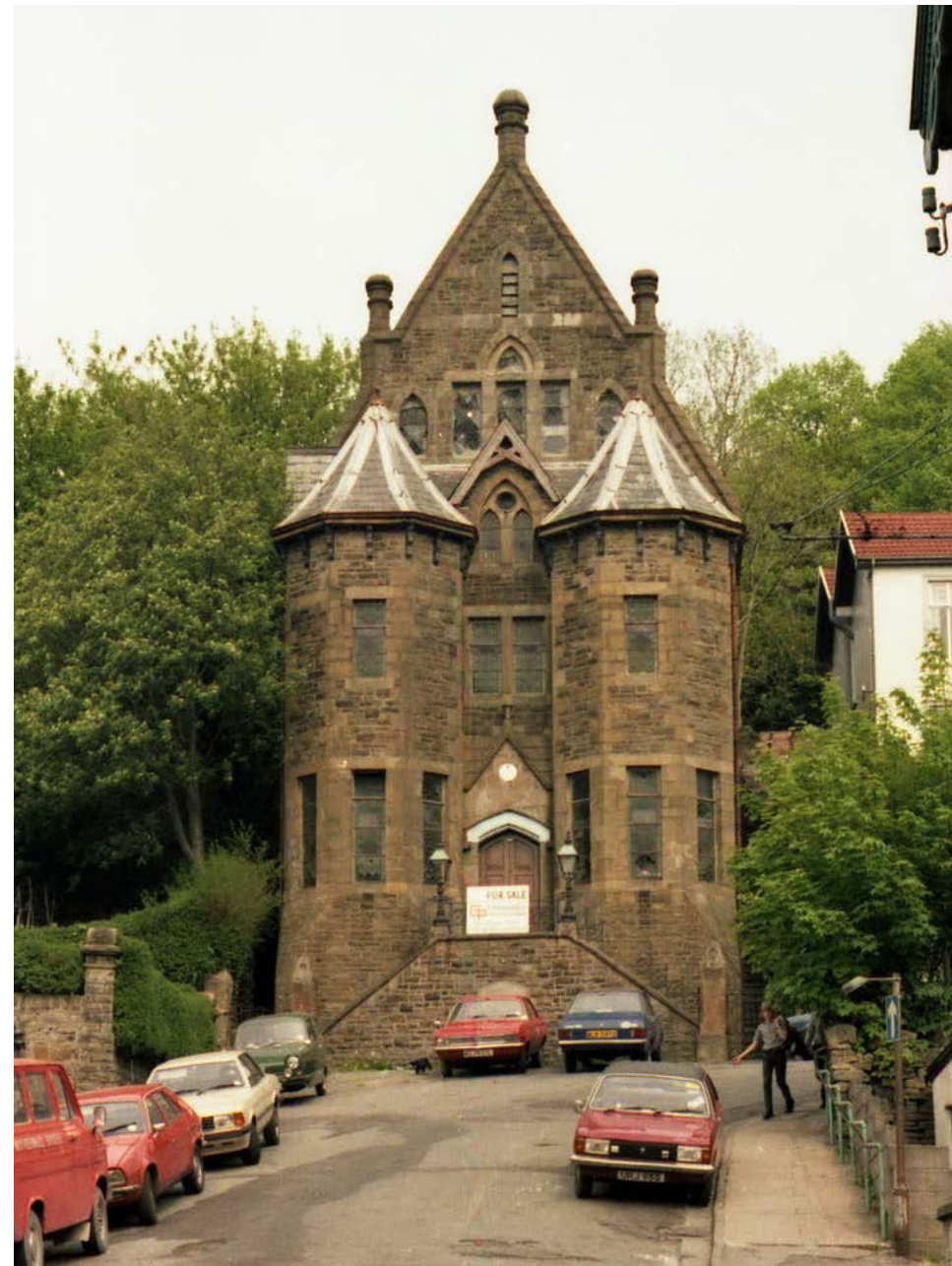
Painting by Olwen Hughes (source: 'merthyr-history.com' website)



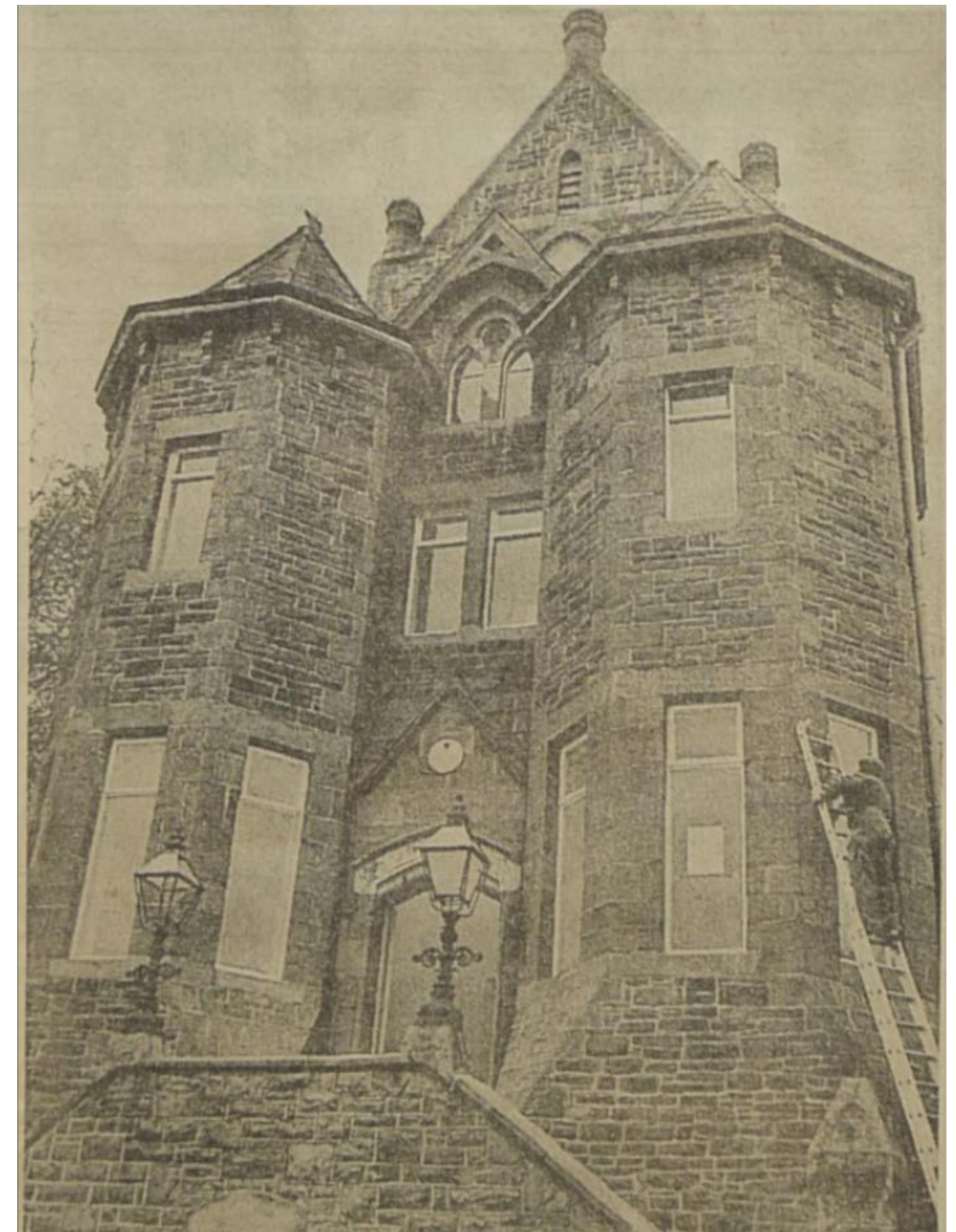
May 1978 (source: 'casgliadywerin.cymru' website)



May 1978 (source: 'casgliadywerin.cymru' website)



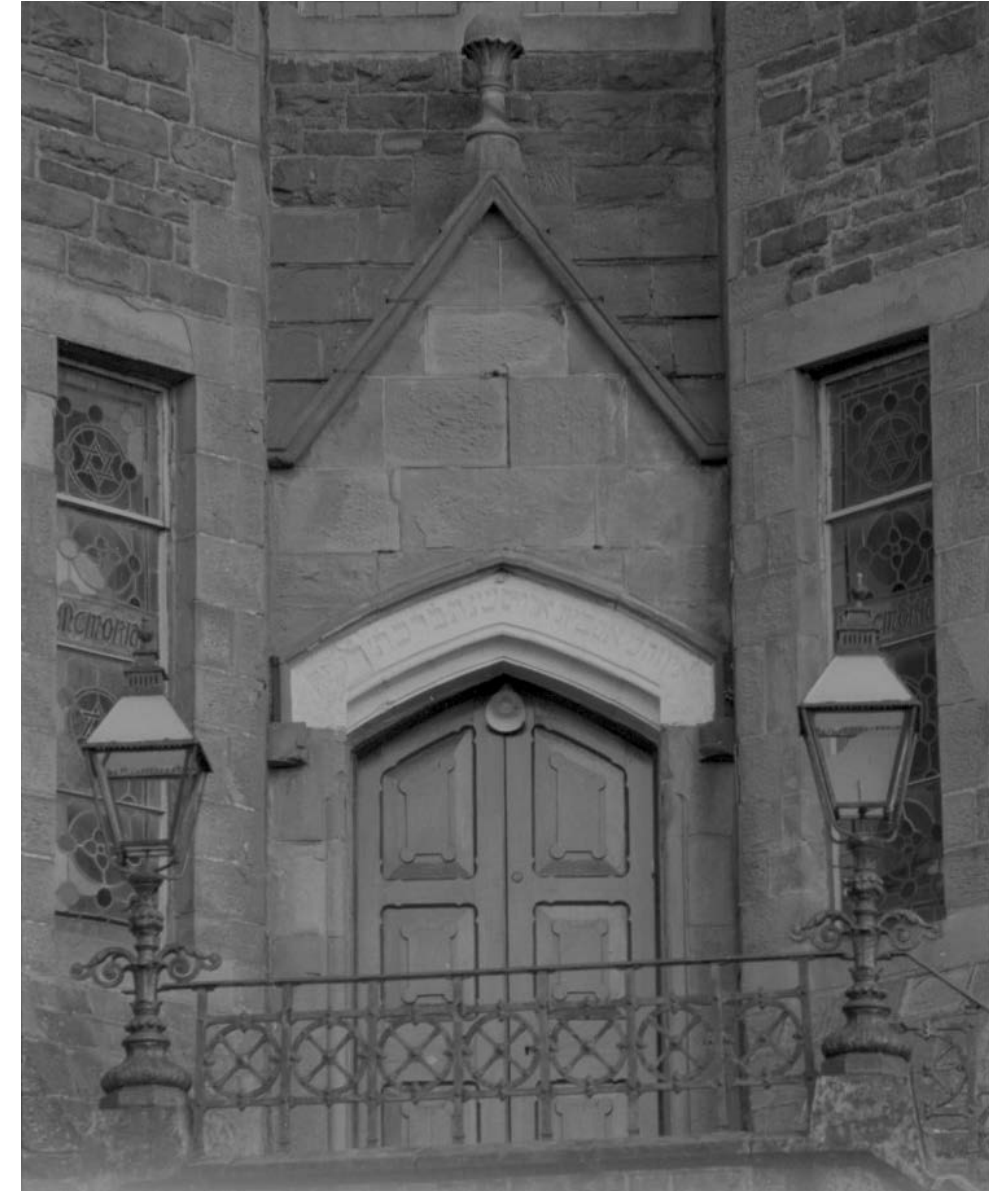
c.1978 (source 'alangeorge.co.uk' website)



1984, South Wales Echo 8 Nov 1984 (source: 'peoplescollection.wales')



**2.8 1978-9 External Photos of Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue with Primrose Hill always to left; however, sadly always off the image; to show the historic context for Primrose Hill (source: Foundation for Jewish Heritage)**





## 2.9 Character, Architectural Design & Materials of Primrose Hill

The original Primrose Hill House or Villa was built in the mid-19th century, between 1850 to early 1852. The building consisted of dwelling-house and schoolroom, with playground behind. The building was L-shaped and consisted of three attached rectangular buildings.

Our site, Primrose Hill, is the front rectangular building with entrance facade facing south which looks onto the front garden and Church Street. Behind it are two attached rectangular buildings at right angles to this front building, which are not part of our site. This front range of Primrose Hill was originally built as one dwelling house but is now divided into five flats.

The building is of three full storeys plus a half lower ground floor / basement. Its principal front elevation has an attractive, symmetrical, Classical-style façade of the Georgian era, albeit built in the early Victorian period; smooth rendered, symmetrical, Classical-style facade with large timber sash windows and simplified pilastered doorcase.

The building has an enclosed front forecourt with right hand gate piers. This elevation looks out onto the road and Synagogue, which is at right angles, and benefits from a backdrop of mature trees.

Primrose Hill is within the '**Thomastown Villas**' character area of the **Thomastown Conservation Area**; an area "dominated by detached and semi-detached houses in spacious and wooded surroundings". Each building has its own character, as they were all individually designed and constructed at different times, generally large in scale and often having extensive grounds. Primrose Hill is identified as a key building within this character area.

Primrose Hill is protected by a grade II listing which was designated on 22 August 1975. However, prior to this, in 1951, the building was identified as being of special architectural or historic interest. An extract from an article in the '*Merthyr Express* – 04 August 1951' states:

"BUILDINGS LISTED AS HISTORIC  
"MINISTRY OF PLANNING ANNOUNCEMENT

"A list of buildings and other property in the county borough of Merthyr considered to be of special architectural or historic interest, has been issued by the Ministry of Local Government and Planning. ...

"Buildings on the supplementary list are ... Primrose Hill. Spring Hill. Brynheulog and Sunny Bank, Springfield House, the Rectory; ..."

**Refer to 'Primrose Hill, Merthyr Tydfil - Record of Building and Condition Assessment Report, with Repair Proposals' for further information on the nature of the building fabric.**

### 2.9.1 Primrose Hill – Exterior

#### Front Elevation:

The principal front elevation has an attractive, symmetrical, Classical-style façade. It has been applied with a cementitious render, sometimes known as 'stucco' painted in a pale off-white colour. To the upper two floors, the render has been incised to emulate coursed finished stone. Below the flat deep band underneath the first-floor window cills, the render has been rusticated.

All of the windows to the front elevation are of 6-over-6 timber sashes, painted off-white. The glazing panes are sealed double-glazed units. However, it appears as though, rather than each glass pane being individual, each sash is a full glass pane, and the timber glazing bars are planted on, externally and internally. All 8no. windows appear to be modern and are likely to have been fairly recently installed.

The front door sits within a simplified pilastered doorcase. The front door is a 6-panelled timber door and does not appear to be original, although, the 6-paned glazed over-panel is older than the door.



#### Side (West) Elevation:

To this side elevation, the render is roughcast, also painted off-white. It is not known whether this is cementitious; however, it is assumed to be.

The 3no. 6-over-6 timber sash windows at the base of this elevation, and the 2no. central-pivoted windows down the side, at ground and first floor, are all timber windows, painted off-white. The panes to all 5no. windows are single-glazed.





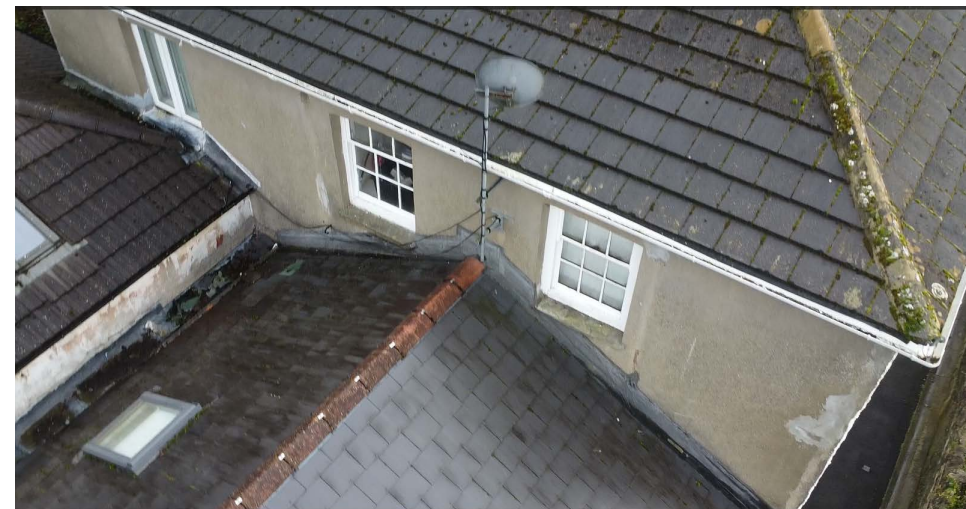
**Side (East) Elevation:**

To this side elevation, the render is also roughcast; however, here it is a mixture of off-white and light grey with dark grey and green environmental and organic staining. It is not known whether this is cementitious; however, it is assumed to be.

The 3no. windows on this elevation are timber-framed and all incorporate double-glazed panes. There is a sash window to the ground floor and two part-top-hung casements part-fixed windows to the first floor.

**Rear (North) Elevation:**

The majority of the north external wall is internal, apart from the top section. The view of the top section of this rear elevation is so limited that no assessment can be made on it.

**The Roof:**

The roof is a simple rectangular hipped roof, covered in concrete tiles and rounded concrete ridge and hip tiles. The surface of the tiles is heavily mossed on the ridge and some hips. It is noticeable that there are no chimneys penetrating the roof.

**Front and Side Walls:**

To the west and south of the front garden is a pennant rubble stone enclosure wall, part retaining on the west. On the corner is a square, tall gatepost.

**Front Garden:**

The front garden is turfed on both sides of a terracotta and black diamond-pattern quarry tiled path, running from the opening in the front wall to the entrance door.

**Side Path:**

The side path has a concrete surface with a timber boarded fence between the path and the front garden to Primrose Hill. This path constitutes a 'Right of Way' to the property behind and to the north of Primrose Hill, which is accessed via a timber boarded gate.

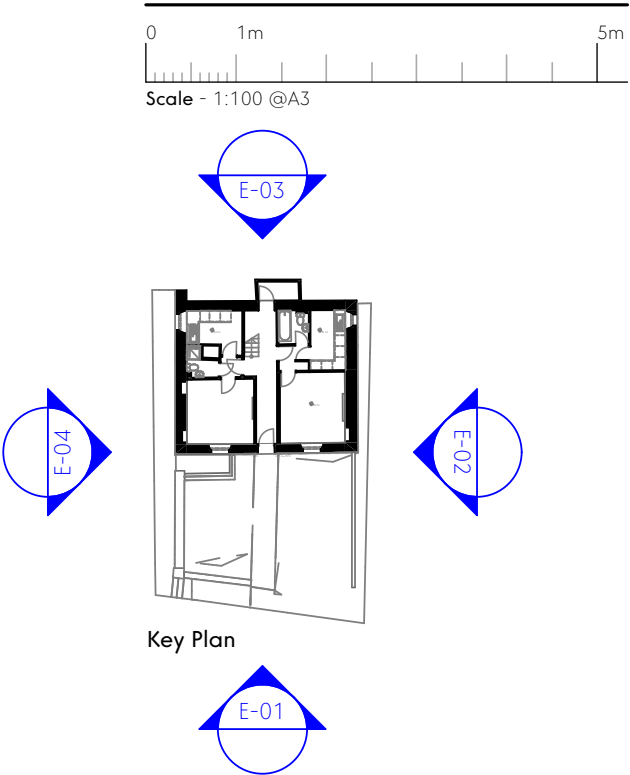
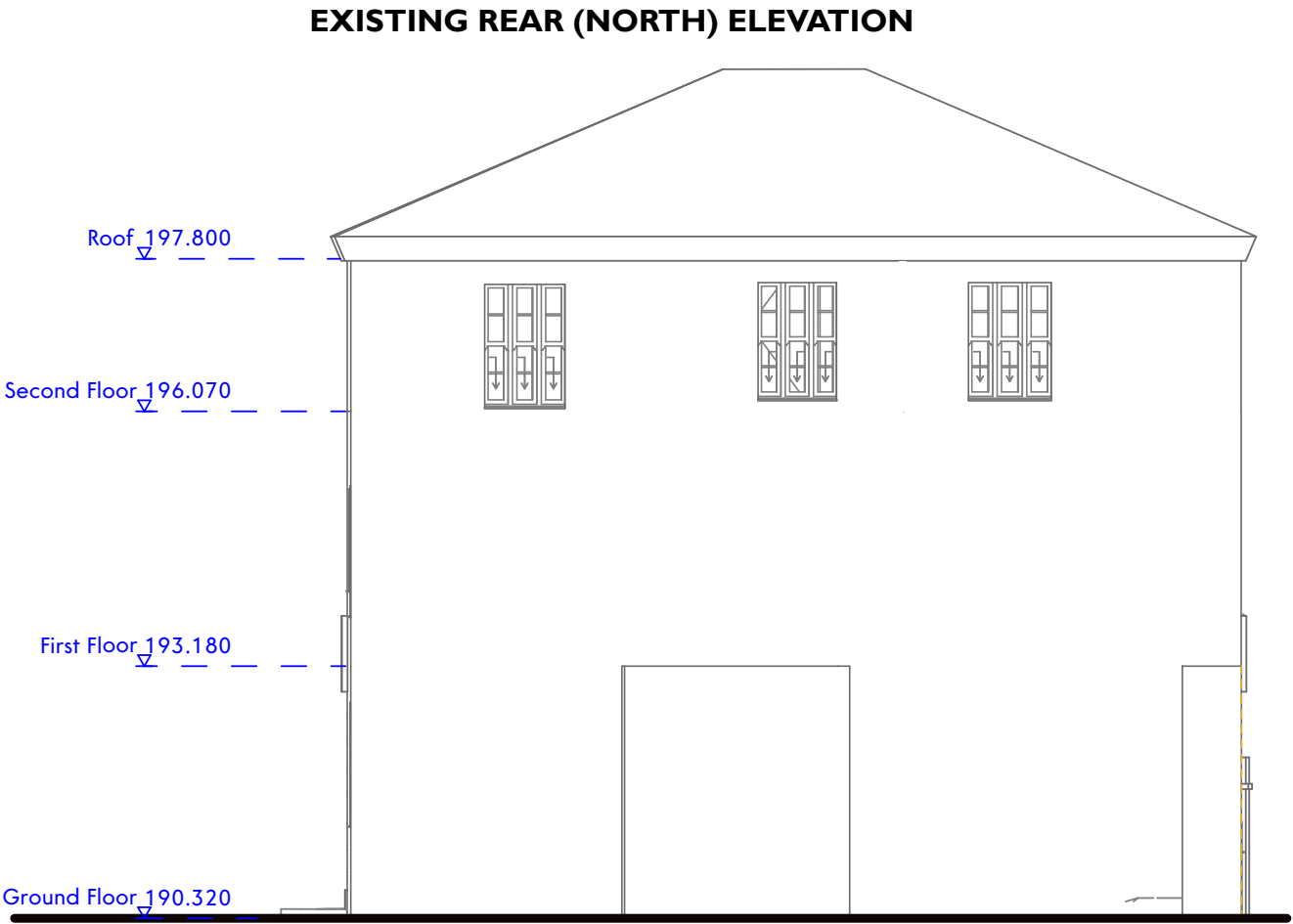
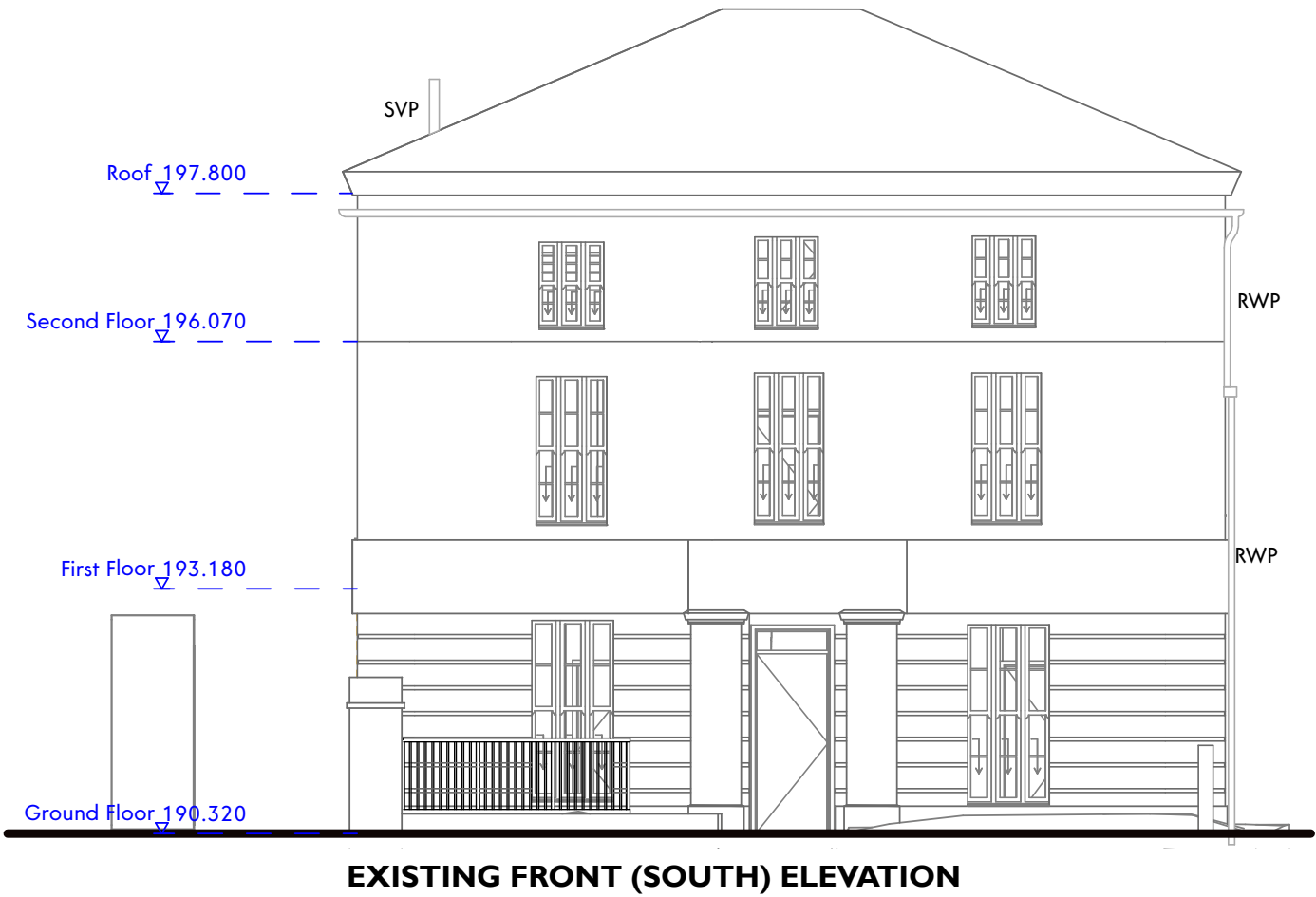
**Retaining Wall:**

To the side of the path, east of Primrose Hill, is a retaining wall, approximately 3m high, made of rubble stonework. This wall is covered by ivy and other vegetation.



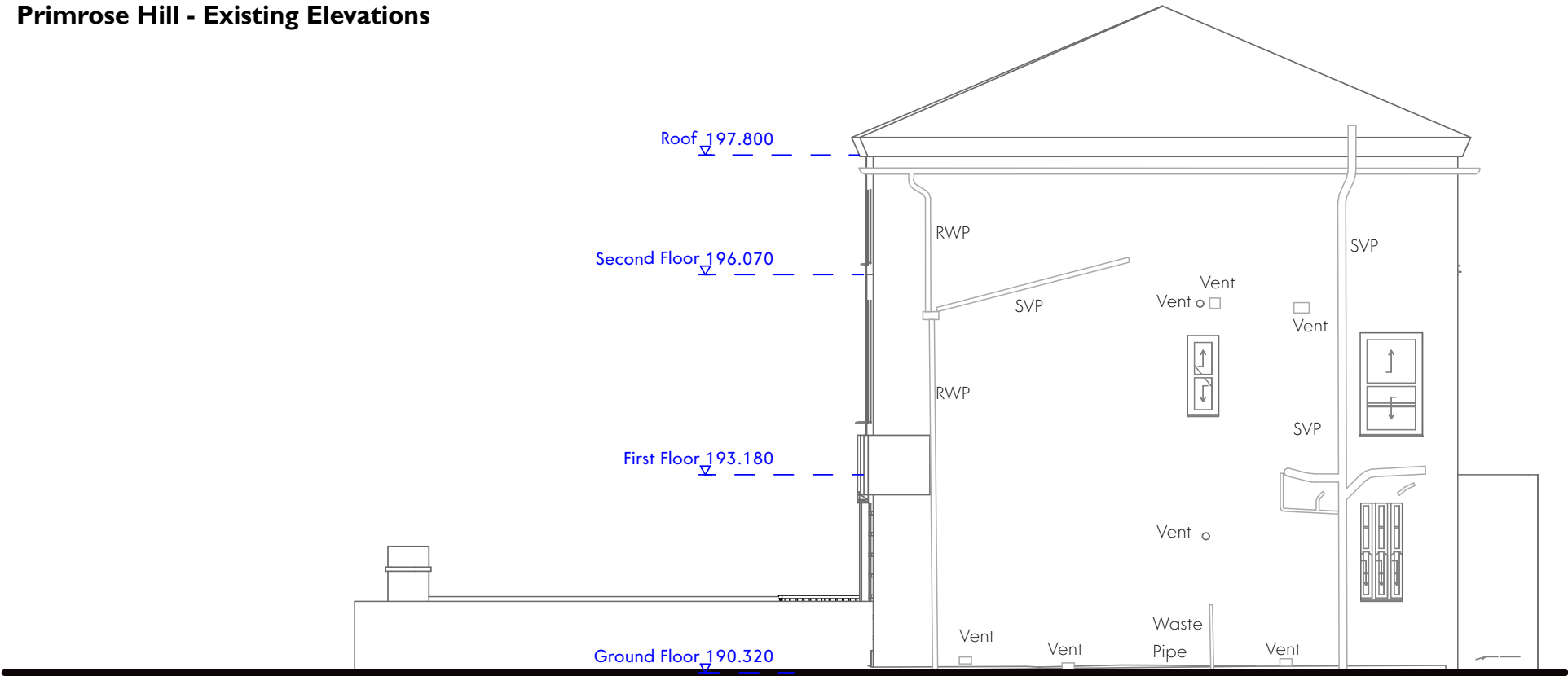


2.9.2 Primrose Hill - Existing Elevations

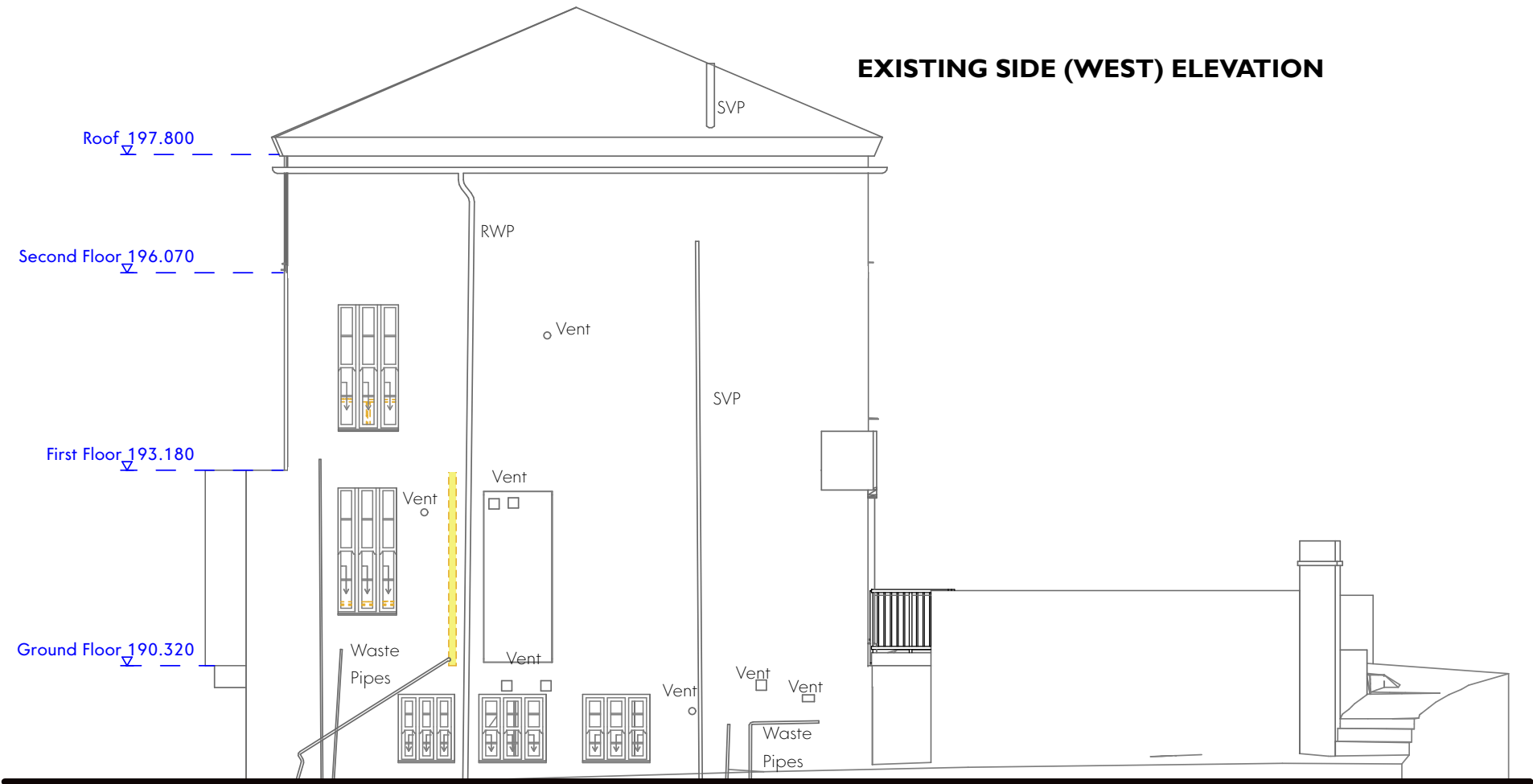




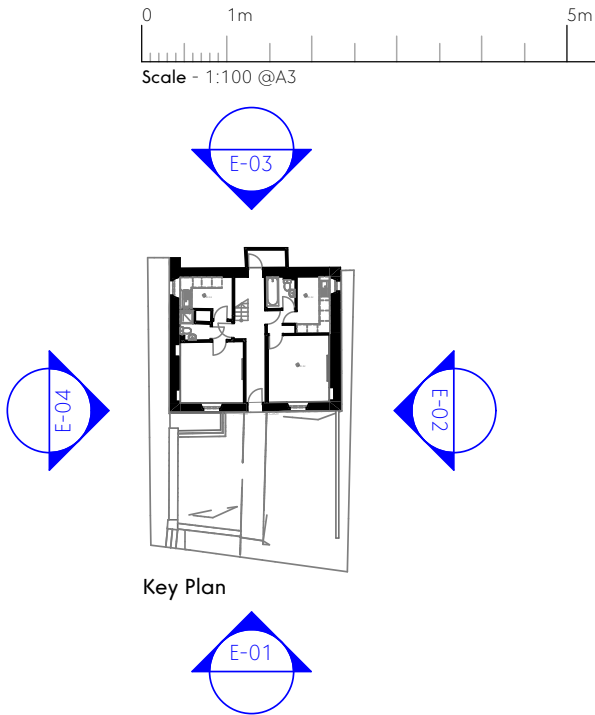
2.9.3 Primrose Hill - Existing Elevations



EXISTING SIDE (EAST) ELEVATION



EXISTING SIDE (WEST) ELEVATION





## 2.9.4 Primrose Hill – Interior with Floor Plans

The building is made up of four separate floors, as follows:

### Ground Floor:

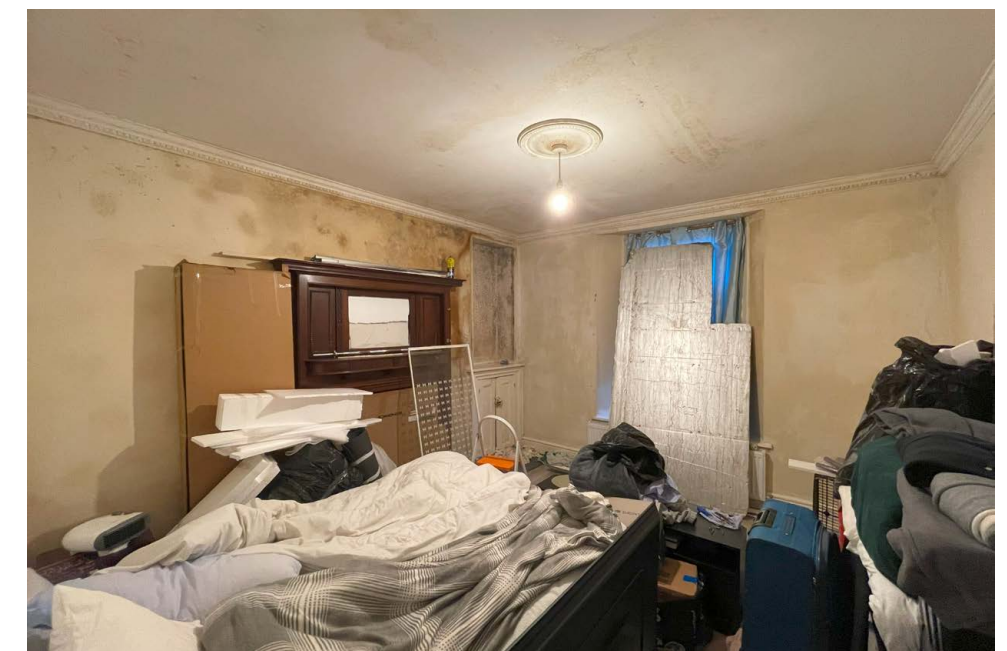
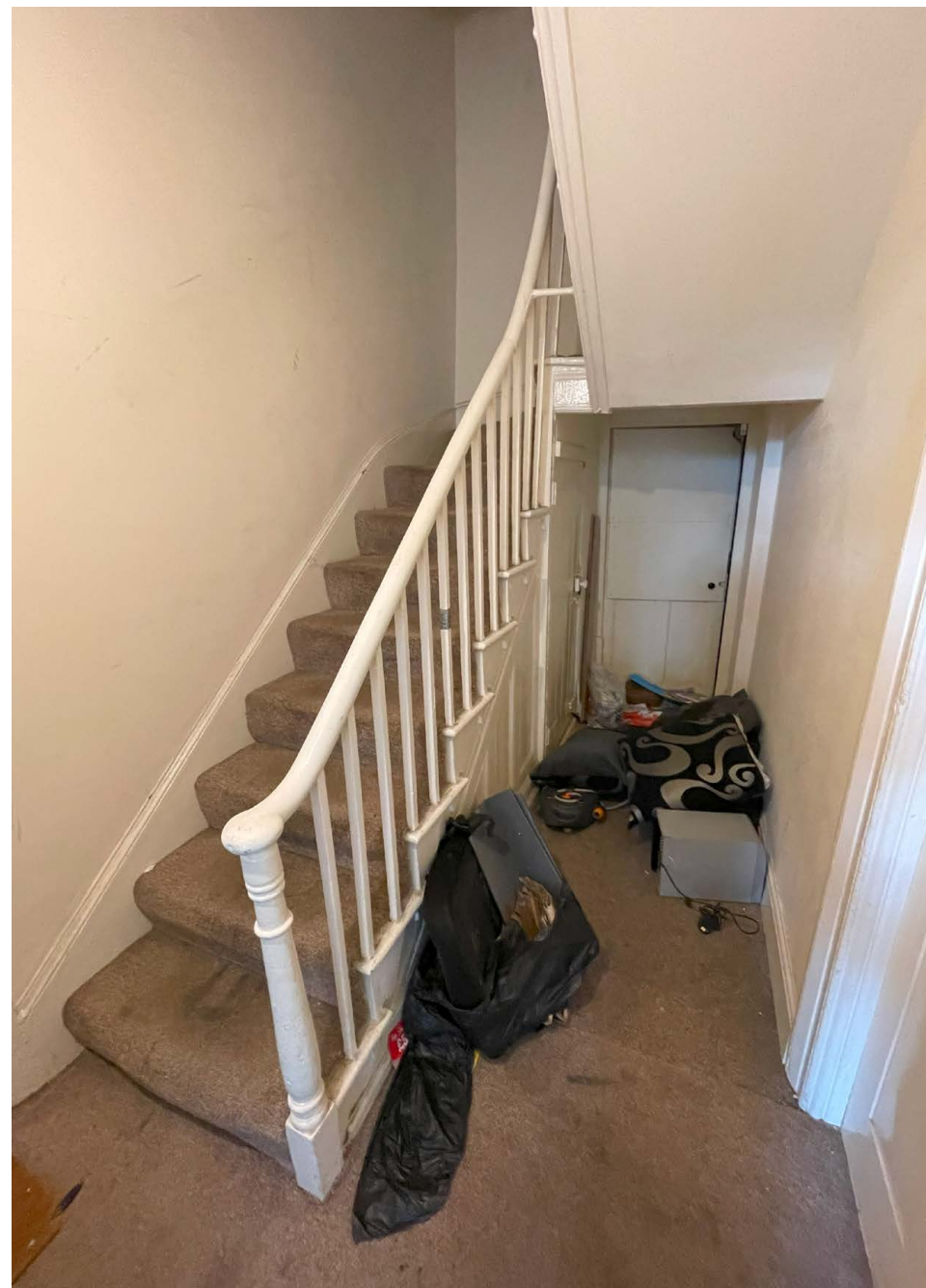
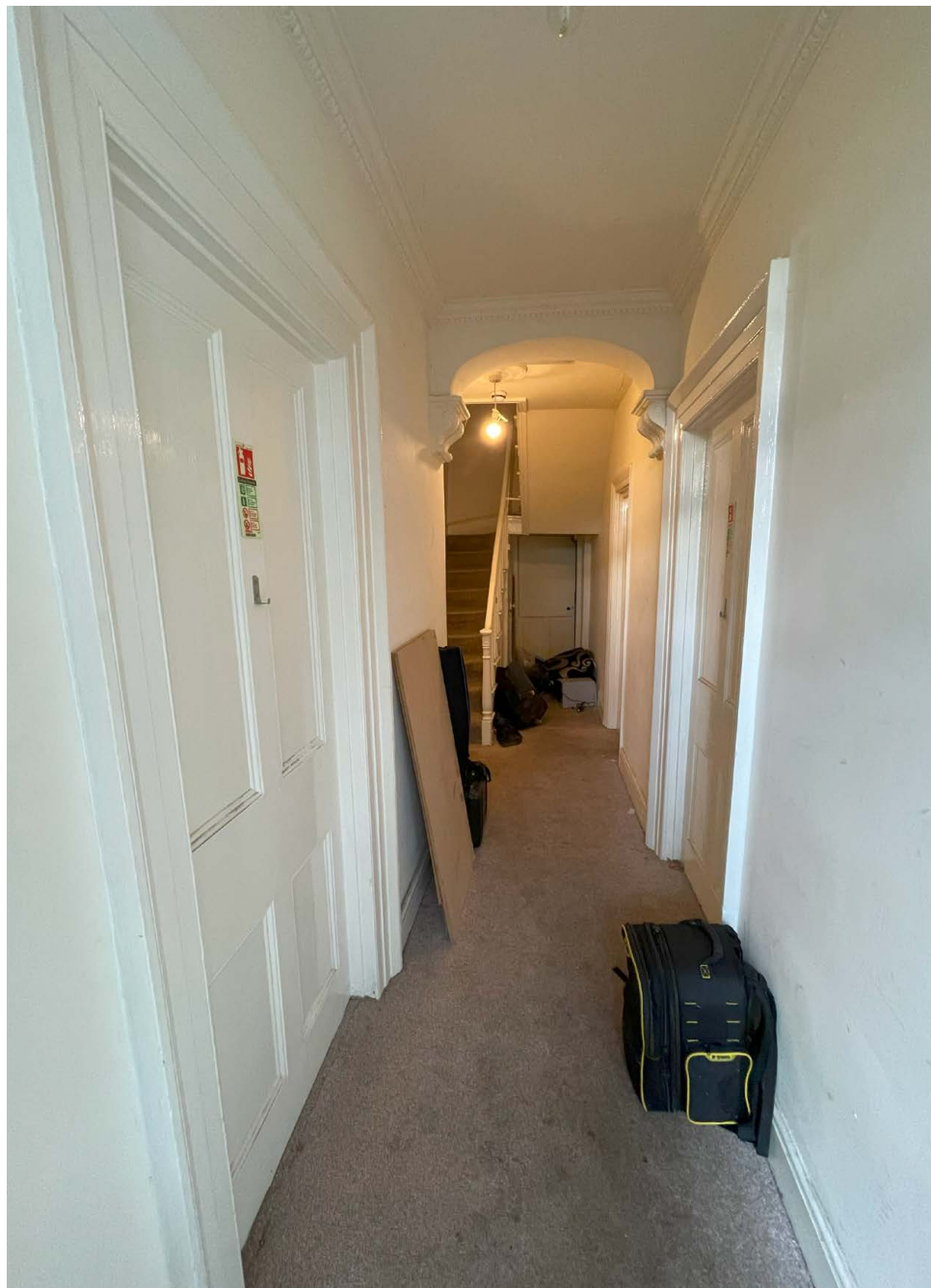
The ground floor has an attractive entrance corridor / lobby accessed via the front door. The walls and ceiling are plastered and painted cream, with an egg-and-dart cornice at the wall / ceiling junction and a decorated lighting rose in the centre. Where the entrance corridor becomes the stair lobby, there is an interesting arch which flies over the junction, springing from twinned swirled corbels. The egg-and-dart cornice continues over the top.

There is a timber staircase from which you can access the first and second floors. The staircase is carpeted, with an ovular handrail, square balusters and turned round newel posts; all painted white.

The ground floor is made up of two flats and a rear storeroom. The masonry enclosure storeroom at the back of the corridor is 'landlocked' with the building behind and the matching store above. A lack of ventilation and heating having caused damp and mould growth within.

The West Flat consists of a lobby from which you access the front room, bathroom and kitchen. The front room is of painted plastered walls and ceilings with an egg-and-dart cornice and a ceiling rose. All other rooms have painted plastered walls and ceilings with no cornice. All in a reasonable condition.

The East Flat consists of a lobby from which you access the front room, bathroom and kitchen but with a different layout to the West Flat. The front room is of painted plastered walls and ceilings with an egg-and-dart cornice and a ceiling rose. All other rooms have painted plastered walls and ceilings with no cornice. However, there is staining and wet to walls and ceiling and large areas of mould growth.





**First Floor:**

The first floor is made up of one flat. The flat consists of a hall space, front south-west room, front central room and front south-east room; all with painted plastered walls and ceiling with a moulded cornice and a ceiling rose. The south-west room is in a reasonable condition, whilst the central and south-east rooms have areas of damp.

To the rear is a kitchen, rear east room and bathroom; all with painted plastered walls and ceiling with no cornice. The condition of these rooms is reasonable.

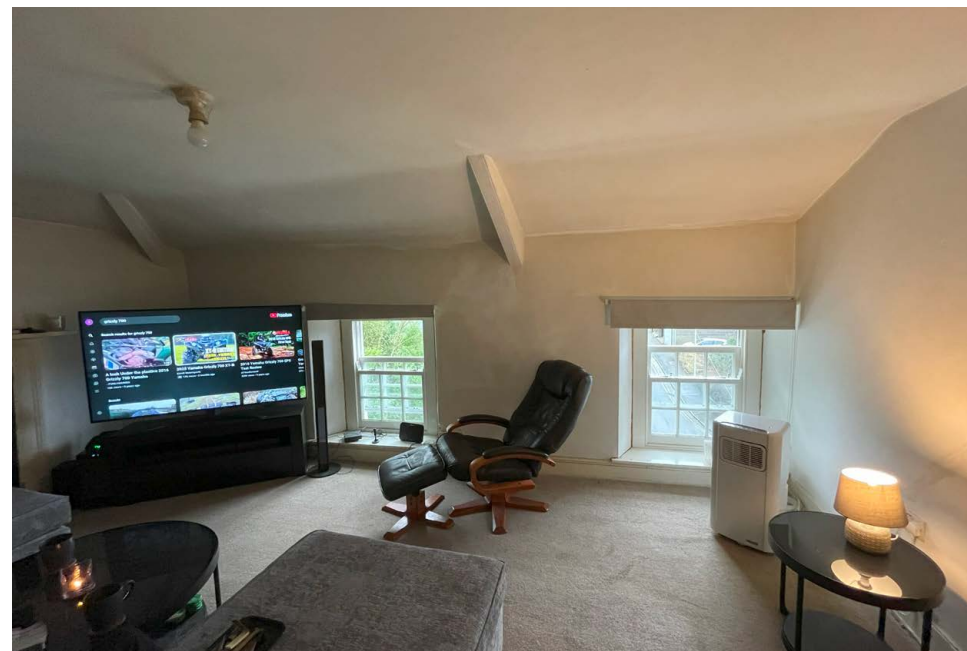
**Second Floor:**

The second floor is made up of one flat. The flat consists of a corridor and lobby, front kitchen, front south-east room, rear north-east room, rear north-west room and bathroom. All rooms have painted plastered walls and ceiling with no cornice. The ceilings slope around the external edge, with the roof pitch. There is some staining on the walls and ceiling in a few rooms.

**Lower Ground Floor:**

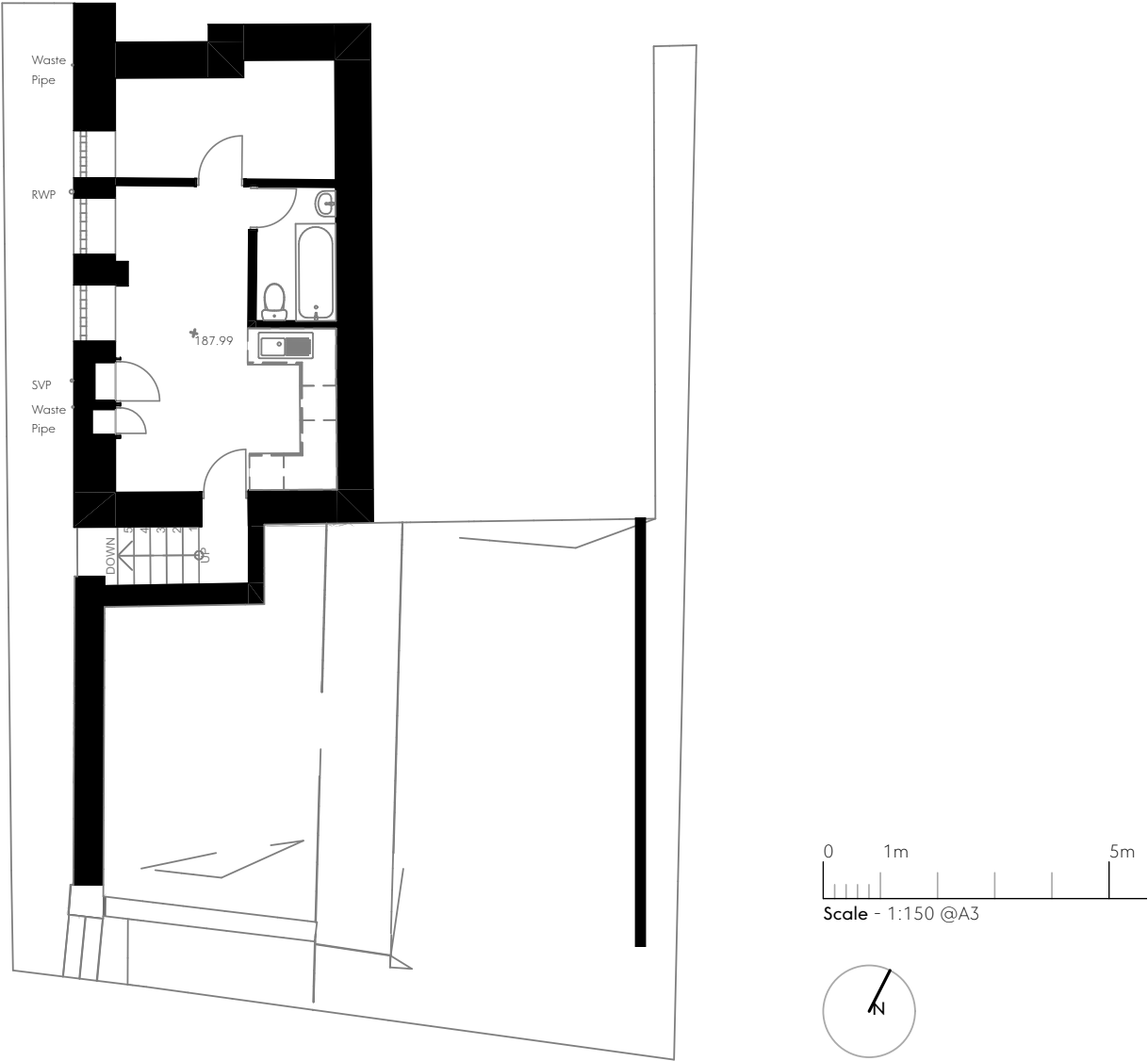
The lower ground floor is made up of one flat. The flat is entered from the side lane, down a series of four concrete steps, with cement rendered walls either side. An attractive metal gate is at the top of the steps.

The main space is an open-plan kitchen / dining room / lounge, with painted plaster walls and ceiling, with no cornice. The external wall to the east is retaining. That to the west is part retaining, as is the one to the north. There is also a separate bedroom and bathroom. The rooms are in a reasonable condition.

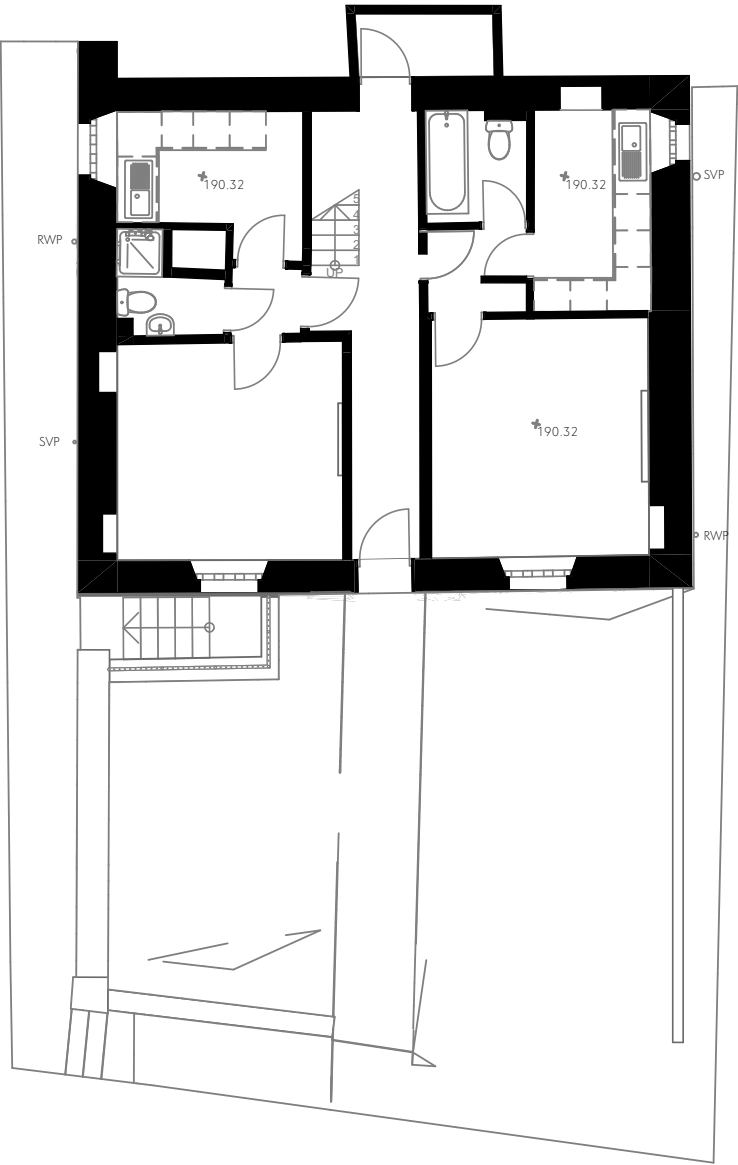




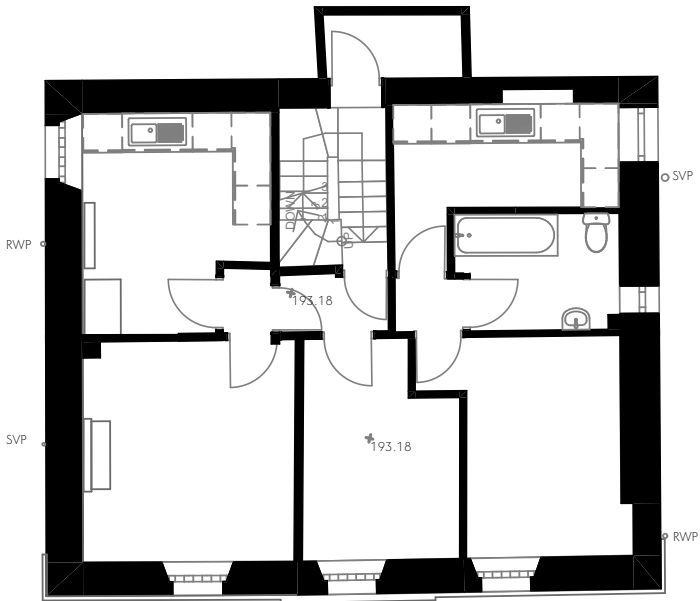
2.9.5 Primrose Hill - Existing Plans



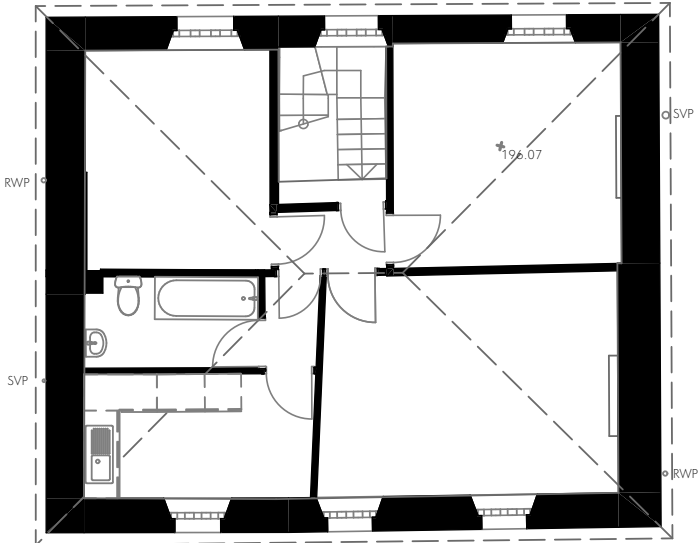
EXISTING LOWER GROUND FLOOR PLAN



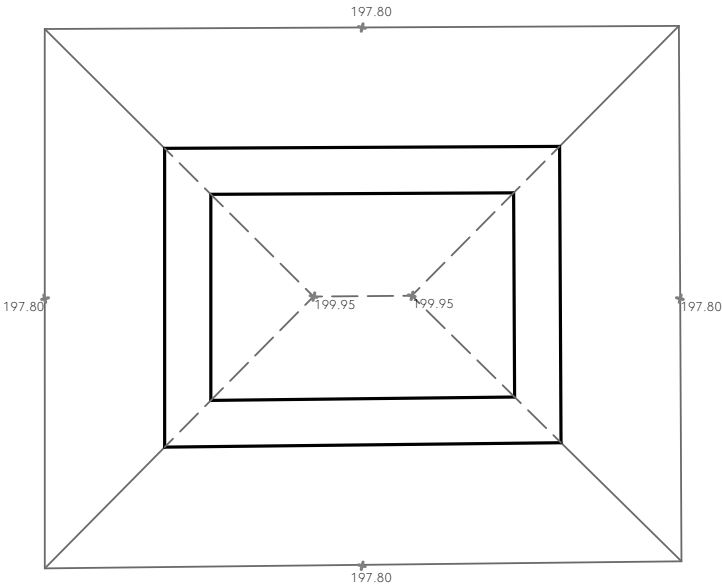
EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN



EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN



EXISTING SECOND FLOOR PLAN



EXISTING ROOF PLAN



## 2.9.6 Primrose Hill – Changes it has Undergone

It goes without saying that Primrose Hill has undergone many changes throughout its life.

The building started life in 1852 as an establishment for “Young Gentlemen” known as Merthyr Grammar School.

When it was put up for sale in 1859 it consisted of a house, schoolroom and playground with two additional cottages (now Primrose Cottages) in the course of construction at the far end of the playground. The property was described as having been “well adapted for a superior Boarding School”. The school had many changes of name and headmaster over the years, with its use as a school seeming to end around 1898.

From the mid to late 1890s the building transitioned into residential use, which would undoubtedly have involved many changes; particularly when it was the home of Mr. R.T. Jones from the early 1900s to the 1930s. He was a wealthy man who owned a successful drapers and furnishers in Merthyr. Servants were employed at the house and the house was the venue for a child's wedding reception. It must have looked very different as a Villa home compared to when it was a boy's boarding school.

In 1940 the property transitioned again, this time into a “Modern Guest House”. This would have involved several adaptations, particularly turning ground-floor rooms into bedrooms, and upstairs rooms into bed-sitting-rooms. Also, additional bathroom facilities might have been installed.

An idea of how the building has changed over time can be gleaned from sale advert in 1859 compared to the one from 1946.

The 1859 advert in the ‘*Merthyr Telegraph* – 28 May 1859’ for the upcoming sale by auction of the school, known as Primrose Hill Academy, described the accommodation as:

“All that newly built and well arranged Leasehold Detached MESSUAGE or DWELLING-HOUSE, SCHOOLROOM, and PLAYGROUND, known by the name of ‘Primrose Hill Academy,’ in the occupation of Mr. James Kernick, the Proprietor, containing Parlour, Drawing Room, Library, Kitchen, Back Kitchen, China Pantry, and several Bedrooms.

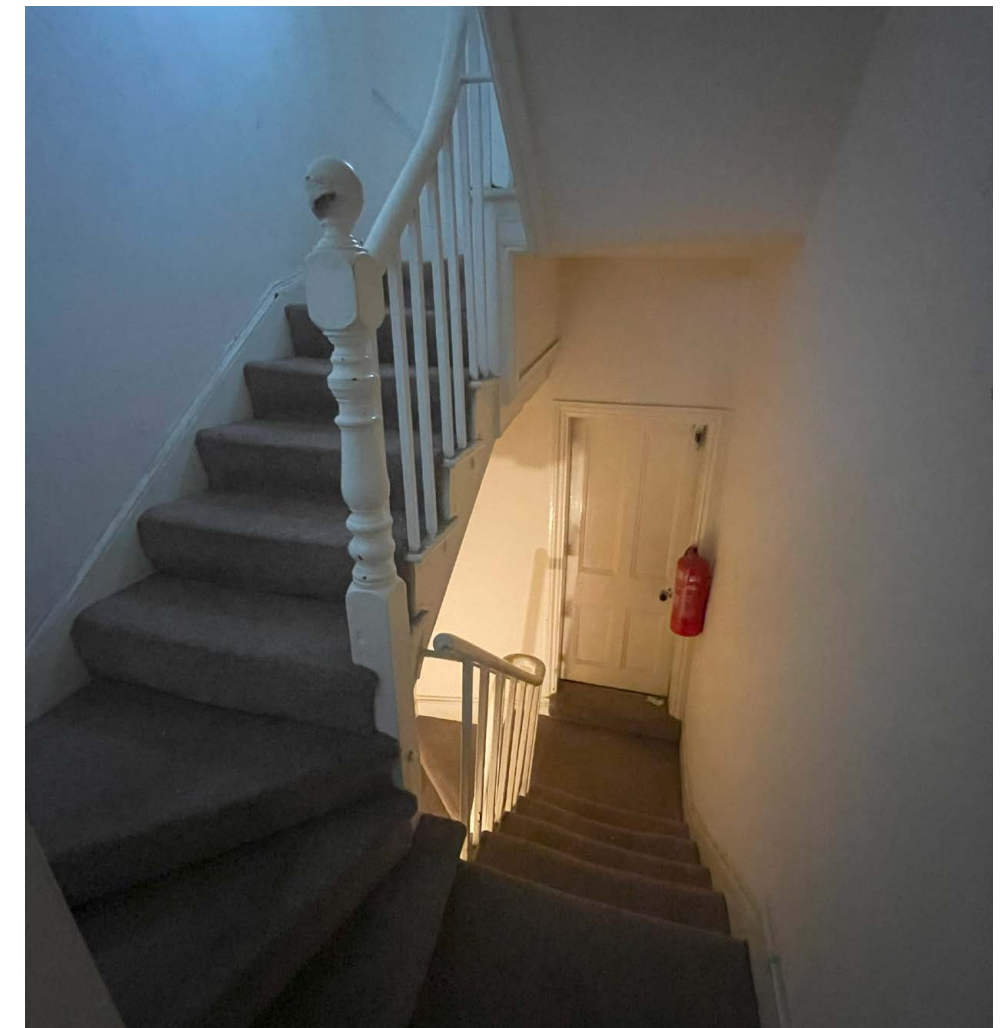
“The House stands in a most healthy situation; the Rooms are lofty and spacious, replete with every convenience and finished in a very substantial manner, both internally and externally, the proprietor having spared no pains in making these premises well adapted for a superior Boarding School.”

Whilst the 1946 advert in the ‘*Merthyr Express* – 23 March 1946’ for the sale by public auction of Primrose Hill Guest House, described the accommodation as:

“This is a large double-fronted house with lawn in front, having the following accommodation: Large lounge, dining-room, 2 reception room (now used as bedrooms), kitchen and larder on ground floor; 4 bedrooms and 2 bed-sitting-rooms, with 2 bathrooms and 2 lavatories on first floor; 4 bedrooms on second floor. Also attached to house (with separate entrance) is a large room, now used as a storeroom. There are 2 staircases (main) one at front of house and servants’ staircase at rear. Large gardens, etc., mostly cultivated, at rear and side of house (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre of land), electric light throughout.”

Sometime after 1947 the property transitioned into flats. At some point, the whole property was split up into multiple ownership.

What we now know as Primrose Hill, the front building of what had been three attached buildings under one ownership, was subsequently turned into five independent flats.





## 2.10 People Associated with Primrose Hill

Many different people will have been associated with Primrose Hill throughout its life as a school, private residence, guest house and flats. Headmasters, teachers and pupils; local businessmen and their families; residents of Merthyr Tydfil and beyond.

One of the more famous pupils believed to have passed through those doors is JAMES GOMER BERRY, 1st Viscount KEMSLEY the newspaper proprietor. This belief is based on an article in the *'Merthyr Express - 19 May 1959'* on the death of Mrs. H. Dewdney which said: "Her husband conducted a private school at Primrose Hill, near Church-street, Merthyr, for many years. Among those who attended this school was Viscount Kemsley." However, this fact has not been corroborated.

### MRS. H. DEWDNEY'S DEATH

Mrs. Harry Dewdney, who died recently was formerly Miss M. French-Williams and was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. French-Williams, Courtland-terrace, Merthyr, who carried on business as chandlers in the town for a long time.

Mrs. Dewdney was a member of the old Merthyr Tennis Club. Her husband conducted a private school at **Primrose Hill**, near Church-street, Merthyr, for many years. Among those who attended this school was Viscount Kemsley. They moved to Cornwall, where Mr. Dewdney took Holy Orders and became Vicar of Burnham Beeches (Buckinghamshire).

1951 05.19 Mrs Dewdney's Death  
(source: 'Merthyr Express, 19 May 1959')

## James Gomer Berry, 1st Viscount Kemsley, GBE (1883-1968)

Berry was the youngest son of John Mathias and Mary Ann (née Rowe) Berry of 11 Church Street, Merthyr Tydfil. Rarely can one family be said to have produced three illustrious members in one generation, but that is exactly what happened to John and Mary Ann Berry. Their three sons – Henry Seymour (1877-1928), William Ewert (1879-1954) and James Gomer (1883-1968) – became respectively 1st Baron Buckland, 1st Viscount Camrose and 1st Viscount Kemsley, making millions in the process. Henry was an industrialist, whilst William was a press baron like James Gomer.

James Gomer went to London when he was 18 years old, at the request of his older brother William who had started an entirely new periodical, *Advertising World*, in 1901. He asked his younger brother to assist him with the second issue, thus starting a partnership which lasted over 35 years. They acquired many newspapers over the years, the first being *The Sunday Times* when it wasn't profitable. They founded *Allied Newspapers* in 1924 with Sir E. M. Iliffe (1877-1960), purchased the *Amalgamated Press* in 1926, bought *Edward Lloyd Ltd* one of the largest paper mills in the world, and subsequently the *Daily Telegraph*.



C2 James Gomer Berry, 1st Viscount Kemsley, 1938 (source: 'npg.org.uk')

In 1937 the three partners divided the business and went their own ways. James Gomer Berry became chairman of *Allied Newspapers*, renamed *Kemsley Newspapers* in 1943. The group owned 26 papers, making him the largest newspaper owner in the United Kingdom. In 1959 he sold all his holdings in *Kemsley Newspapers* to Roy Thomson and went to live in Monte Carlo.

He always maintained a connection with his native town. He succeeded his eldest brother as president of *Merthyr General Hospital* 1928-49, received the freedom of *Merthyr Tydfil* in 1955, was president of the *Football Association of Wales* 1946-60, and of the *University College at Cardiff* 1945-50.

He was created Baronet in 1928, first Baron Kemsley of Farnham Royal in 1936, first Viscount Kemsley of Dropmore in 1945, and a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire (G.B.E.) for "political and public service" in 1959. He died in Monte Carlo, in February 1968.



James Gomer Berry, 1st Viscount Kemsley, 1938 (source: 'wikipedia.org')



## 2.11 Setting & Context of Primrose Hill

Located to the east of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, on a steep slope at the top (north-east end) of Church Street, at the point that the road turns southwards and becomes Brynteg Terrace. The front facade of the building facing south onto Church Street.

At right angles, to the south-east of the building is the Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue, set dramatically against a dense section of woodland, with original Villa housing such as Springhill Villa, Bryn Heulog and Sunny Bank Villas further south. To the east of the site is Thomastown Park. To the north-east of the site is a new property with decking and wooden summer houses; to the north are the attached buildings, then garden and Primrose Cottages beyond; and to the north-west is Union Street (Upper). To the west of the site is the sloping hill of Church Street leading down to the Town Centre, and to the south is Brynteg Terrace.

Primrose Hill is located within the 'Thomastown Villas' character area of the 'Thomastown Conservation Area' (the area being the easternmost extent and most elevated part of the Conservation Area), which is recognised for its historical and architectural quality, with the local area "dominated by detached and semi-detached houses in spacious and wooded surroundings". "It is also an area where the formal layout of rectangular streets dissipates into shorter curved streets, back lanes and streets without footways. . . . The area is sparsely populated and . . . the individual buildings have their own character and differ to the other character areas. This area has less of a sense of uniformity than the other character areas thanks to the individually designed buildings constructed at different times. However, they are all generally large in scale, especially compared to the other dwellings in the Conservation Area and some have extensive grounds."



*Aerial view of Primrose Hill with the Synagogue to the right (source: Mann Williams)*



*Aerial view of the area with the Synagogue identified with a red dot (source: GoogleEarth)*



*Aerial view of Merthyr Synagogue with Primrose Hill to right (source: Foundation for Jewish Heritage)*



**2.12 Condition of the Primrose Hill**

REFER TO SEPARATE DOCUMENT ENTITLED:

**PRIMROSE HILL, MERTHYR TYDFIL - RECORD OF BUILDING AND CONDITION ASSESSMENT REPORT, WITH REPAIR PROPOSALS**



### 3.0 Bibliography

Much of the information within this section has been established thanks to various sources, particularly:

- 'britishlistedbuildings.co.uk' website;
- 'britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk' website;
- 'cadw.gov.wales' website;
- 'coflein.gov.uk' website;
- 'maps.nls.uk' website;
- 'merthyr.gov.uk' website;
- 'merthyr-history.com' website;
- 'Merthyr Tydfil: Understanding Urban Character' document by Cadw from 'cadw.gov.wales' website;
- 'places.library.wales' website – The National Library of Wales;
- 'The Buildings of Wales – Glamorgan – Pevsner Architectural Guides' book by John Newman (1995);
- 'wikipedia.org' website;

Many of the photographs within this section are also included courtesy of these websites.

