

Memorial plaque to remember those lost in Abermule train collision on 100th anniversary

January 26, 2021



A memorial plaque to remember the 17 people who died in the Abermule train collision, which happened 100 years ago today, has been unveiled.

On 26 January 1921, two trains collided head-on on the Cambrian line, killing 17 people in what remains one of the biggest rail collisions in the UK.

To mark the centenary, wreaths have been laid in the village on behalf of Network Rail, Abermule with Llandyssil Community Council, Powys County Council and Machynlleth Town Council.

A commemorative plaque, sponsored by Network Rail, Transport for Wales & Abermule with Llandyssil Community Council, has also been donated to the community, remembering those who lost their lives.

The plaque, made by local stonemason M.E & A Hughes Monumental Masons, is the first permanent and physical reminder of the collision in the town.

A memorial gathering had been planned by the community council and events were due to be held at the local school, however, due to the coronavirus pandemic, this could not go ahead and will be rearranged for a later date.

Instead, representatives from Network Rail and Abermule Community Council attended the site, near to the old Abermule Station to lay the wreaths, in compliance with social distancing measures and government guidance.

Railway Mission's Chaplain for Wales, Andy Hall, also recorded a ceremonial reading in memory of the victims.

Bill Kelly, route director for Network Rail Wales and Borders, said: "It's so important we pause and reflect on those events at Abermule a century ago - when 17 people lost their lives.

"Learning from past accidents is fundamental to the way we operate the railway today and it's vital we remind ourselves of what happened in the past - how far we've come - and areas where we could still improve.

"This new, permanent memorial in the community of Abermule will serve as a reminder to future generations of those who tragically lost their lives."

James Price, Transport for Wales CEO, said: "The events of 26 January 1921 are a reminder of the fragility of life and the vital importance of safety on the railway.

"Our thoughts remain with the people of Abermule and the relatives of those involved 100 years on from this tragic event."

Councillor Gareth Pugh, on behalf of Powys County Council, said: "As part of the Abermule community, I would like to express both my personal condolences and the deepest condolences of the local authority, Powys County Council, to both the victims and families of the railway disaster.

"It is part of our history and entirely appropriate that 100 years on we mark that tragic event in which 17 people lost their lives."

Jane Rees Chair of Abermule with Llandyssil Community Council, said: "The Community Council welcomes the joint venture with Network Rail and Transport for Wales to create a lasting memorial to the 17 passengers and railway workers, who lost their lives in the train crash near Maeshafren on 26th January, 1921.

"Our thoughts are with their surviving relatives, many of whom were local to Montgomeryshire.

"It is a shame that we could not have a memorial event due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The memorial plaque will be sited in the village at a later date, when we can arrange an event with the opportunity to view the project work by the local school children."

Terry Wain, a Trustee of Abermule Community Centre said: “We are all very grateful to Network Rail, Transport for Wales and Abermule with Llandyssil Community Council for jointly funding the memorial plaque.

“The events of 100 years ago were tragic in the extreme and sympathy for the victims is still very real.

“After all, they had survived World War 1 and the 1918 global pandemic only to perish in such a devastating and completely avoidable disaster.

“This plaque will serve permanently as Abermule’s memorial to the victims.”

Wales Chaplain Special Reading

Wrapped up in that fateful moment Lives ended,

lives changed; In the blink of an eye.

Through grief, loss and mourning: Scarred memories transcend

The how, where, and why.

Etched for all time,

On landscape and mind,

The tragic event Unfolds and unwinds,

As we seek to remember a long century on

the 36 injured

And 17 gone.

Note: The plaque, donated by Network Rail, TfW and the community council, will be stored in a safe place in the village before it is installed in a permanent location (TBA).

Photo credit: Network Rail