

Fresh air and exercise

In June 1881 a number of carriage drives were opened up on the slopes of the Sugar Loaf and it was announced in the Abergavenny Chronicle:

'Up to within the last twelve months it was considered quite a feat for a lady to ascend the Sugar Loaf. But now it is possible for a lady to walk up - no climbing as of old - right to the very top of the great Pen-y-fal. Not only is this the case but roads have been constructed by means of which visitors can drive up to within a few minutes walk of the top.'

'The official opening of these drives took place on Whit-Monday 6th June 1881. At 11 .00 am a procession was formed on the Monmouth Road, close to the Bellevue Hotel, consisting of the Road Committee (on horseback), the Commissioners and officers in two breaks, the Abergavenny Band in a break, visitors in a break and Press Reporters in a break. The cavalcade moved off to the strains of the band through the town, which wore a very holiday appearance, the shops being closed and the pavements filled with spectators. From every available point flags were fluttering in the breeze - flags of every description, and a few nondescripts as well. Then there were banners bearing inscriptions, such as 'May our paths be prosperous: others again having expressions of 'Welcome' etc. Amongst those on horseback were many of the leading tradesmen and professional men of the town. As the cavalcade passed on by way of Triley Court, the people from the farms and neighbouring houses came flocking to the roadside and were loud in their expressions of delight at seeing such a show. On arriving at about 1,500 or 1,600 feet above the level of the town, it was found that the Chairman of the Commissioners had provided refreshments for all comers, free of charge, sundries, biscuits, bread, cheese, wines, bottled beers etc. The top and sides of the peak itself were covered with people, some going by way of the new paths, and others going along the old climbing way, up the face of the mountain.'



Sugar Loaf carriage drive constructed in 1883

Taken from "Abergavenny – Historic Market Town" Blorenge Books 2011; by kind permission of the author, Chris Barber.