

Industrial Action [not Collieries]

“Merthyr Express” 11 January 1873

The Strike: Rhymney The all-absorbing topic here at present is the great strike. All the colliers and firemen are out for a second week. The furnaces are at half blast, and a few tradesmen remain at work. Unless something is settled soon, all will be at a standstill.

The Great Strike at the Iron Works: The Situation The great strike which now exists at all the seats of the Iron industry in South Wales may be said to have commenced last Thursday, when it was concurrently resolved at the colliers meeting at the Drill Hall of this town, and at a delegate meeting held at the same time at the Lord Ragland, to resist the notice and bring the tools out of the pits. No work has been done by nine-tenths of the men since last Saturday week, but it was only on Thursday that the final resolution to strike was taken. The result is that the whole of the large iron works in the two counties of Glamorgan and Monmouth is closed, and the men and boys at home doing nothing, or running through the County in search of work. There never has been such a conflict in the Principality on such a tremendous scale as at present. There have been strikes and lock-outs, but chiefly limited to one or two works at a time, and generally in the same town. But the struggle now begun embraces every large establishment in South Wales, from Blaenavon on the east to Cwmavon on the west. It is gigantic in its dimensions. The total number of hands employed in the collieries and at the iron works is estimated at 70,000, but after allowing for the most liberal deductions, not less than 60,000 will be affected by the untoward movement. Of the numbers, rather more than one third are in this town of Merthyr. The Dowlais works alone give employment to about 11,000 persons; Cyfarthfa about 5,000; and Plymouth about 5,000; and the amount paid weekly in wages rather exceeds rather than falls short of £20,000, of which one half is paid at the Dowlais office. The situation at present is most discouraging. Both sides manifest the greatest firmness in their determination not to yield. The workmen meet frequently to discuss their position, and neither colliers nor iron workers evince the slightest inclination to abandon their demand for a court of arbitration or an unconditional withdrawal of the notice. The colliers are confident in the power of their organization to sustain them. The Iron workers have, however, no Union, and how they are going to abide the contest we do not know, and neither do they appear to know themselves. But they are not the less resolute, if we may be guided by the tone of their meeting, in their determination not to go to work at a reduction of wages.

“Merthyr Express” 8 February 1873

The Great Strike: Second Arrival of Strike Pay A second installment of strike pay arrived on Friday last and amounted to between £7,000 and £8,000. All the “in benefit” members of the colliers union received the full allowance.

“Merthyr Express” 8 March 1873

The Great Strike The great strike is over. Work will begin on Monday.

“Merthyr Express” 13 March 1875

Terrorism at Dowlais At the request of the Dowlais Iron Company, we print the following letter:-

Dowlais, March 6, 1875

Sir, - As the Dowlais overmen are so cowardly and so childish as to cut coal, to assist the tyrant masters in the present struggle, it is settled, resolved, sworn and signed by a band of upward of 500 men, that Vochriw pump engine and cab engine must go to sleep at once. Therefore take notice, that unless you will timely inform the engineers of the said engines to leave their work on Monday or Tuesday, you, as well as them, shall be a subject to the most cruel action that enemies can enact on. Do not trust yourselves to the police force, for every member of the said band are armed with deadly weapons, viz. hatchets, mandril wires, spears, and 50 pistols, all in good order. No mercy shall be given to any of the said enginemen from Tuesday out. Let all the overmen, firemen, shovelers, flummen and everyone it concerns to know the contents of this notice, and should the police interfere in the affairs he or they shall not escape alive. War is a war. So let it, and where it may, mind, you shall be hunted out of your life, must pay for the insult. Then it

Will be too late for mice to squail

When pussy got her head and tail.

Remember that one pair of feet is far better than two pairs of hands.

To Mr. Thomas Jenkins, Chief Engineer, Vochriw From the said band, DRAGON
MERCYLESS

“Merthyr Express” 27 March 1875

The Employment of the Locked-Out Workmen Mr. Frank James, Clerk to the Board of Guardians, waited upon the Board and stated that he did so at the request of the guardians, to know whether the Board could assist them in any way in the more profitable application of the labour thrown upon their hands by the lock-out. What the Guardians suggested was that men might be employed in the making of new roads or the improvement of old roads, and be paid for by them, the Board of Health paying for the work at a fair valuation.

The Surveyor said he had, in accordance with the instructions of a committee held on Tuesday, taken the subject into consideration, and the result was that he believed he could set somewhat over 500 men to work on the highways at once, very advantageously. First there was the new road now being made from Rhaslas to Big Winch, in connection with the Gelligaer parish roads; there were about 150 men employed on that road now and about another 150 might be put on at the other end. The Aberfan road in the neighbourhood of the new cemetery for that part of the parish required widening and extending. The portions running through Mr. Rowland Griffiths's property might be gone on with at once, as he was willing to let them have the land for widening it, but further on it was in Lord Dynevor and Miss Richard's property, and their agents would have to be communicated with. But about 100 men would be put on at once. About 40 men could be put upon the Twynywain road to improve the gradient of that road, and another 100 could be put upon the road from Gwaslodygarth to the Pant About 40 men could be put upon the Pontycapel road; and 50 in the improvement of the road from Pant to Panscallog, and another lot on the Heolgerrig road, altogether 540 men could be so employed. The only question was as to the terms, and the Board generally thought they ought to be allowed a fair consideration for doing the work at the present moment which they would not perhaps in the ordinary course do for years. The Chairman suggested that they should have a discount of 20 per cent below the fair rate, and this was agreed to. Mr. W. Harris then proposed that the Board should employ 540 men on these conditions: The men be under the supervision of the Board of Guardians and to be paid and found tools by them; the Board of Health to have the work set out and to direct generally how it was to be done; and the work to be then valued by Mr. Harpur upon the scale paid for such work in December last, such price less 20% discount to be the price paid by the Board to the Guardians, and the payments to be made at a rate not exceeding £500 every four months. Mr. Henry Davies seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously. Mr. James then asked the Board whether they were doing anything with the road to Gelligaer, for which the commoners of the parish had paid £700 towards the cost. The Surveyor said it was now in hand, and half a mile of it finished. The Surveyor said that if the landlord's consent could be got, 600 or 700 men could be put upon the Cwmfelin and Aberfan to Pantygwaith roads alone.

“Merthyr Express” 10 April 1875

A Letter of Thanks The Rev. Thomas Theophilus, Rev. J. P. Williams and Rev. Thomas Williams, waited on E. D. Williams Esq., a few days ago, to present him with a letter of thanks for his kindness in giving the means of employment to so many of the men who were locked-out. The letter was read by the vicar of Pontlottyn which is as follows: To E. D. Williams, Esq., Maesyryddud. We the undersigned clergy and ministers of the various denominations residing in Pontlottyn, beg to express to you, our sincerest thanks for having so generously given a piece of your land for the purpose of forming a new road between Pontlottyn and Merthyr. The new road will be a great boon to the district at large; we more particularly desire to give this expression of our feeling, inasmuch as the construction of the new road has given employment to a great number of men living in Pontlottyn, and thereby, to a very considerable extent averting the destruction and want which would otherwise have been felt in the place. We have also to express our thanks to you for giving employment to the men who are now engaged at Penwaungoch level, and in doing so relieved the

inhabitants in a considerable degree from feeling the severity of the weather through which we have recently passed. We remain, yours respectfully, Thos. Theophilus, vicar of Pontlottyn; J. P. Williams, Baptist minister; Thos. Williams, curate, Newton; A. Davies, Methodist minister; R. Herbert, Methodist minister; J. R. Williams, Independent minister.

“Merthyr Express” 24 April 1875

Surveyor’s Report to the Chairman of the Merthyr Local Board of Health “Gentlemen, - I beg to report that there are now employed by the Board of Guardians in the formation and improvement of roads within your district under my direction 616, who have applied for relief owing to the strike men and lock-out, distributed as follows, On the Gelligaer road - 58; On the Twynywain road - 106; On the Penrhiw Camran road - 110; On the Penybryn road - 99; On the Pontycapel road - 47; On the Heolgerrig road - 60; On the Aberfan road - 106.

“Merthyr Express” 22 May 1875

The Strike: Bargoed, Wednesday As a result of the ballot taken at Deri on Saturday last, work has been resumed at all the collieries in the Rhymney-Bargoed Valley, with the exception of the non-associated colliery known as the Deri, which has been closed for the past three weeks. The other collieries in the valley are the Vochriw (steam coal) belonging to the Dowlais Iron Company; the Cwm and Cilhaul, belonging to the Bargoed Coal Company; the Darren, belonging to the Rhymney Iron Company; and the Wingfield, belonging to Messrs. Bevan and Price, all of which are now being worked by the old hands. The men have agreed to an extra 5% reduction in wages.