



Newsletter of the Cynon Valley History Society Cylchlythyr Cymdeithas Hanes Cwm Cynon.

A GIRL GROWING UP Ca.1898-1909.
(CONCLUSION)

In our last issue (Spring 2005) we published the first part of the childhood reminiscences of Harriette Filipa Jane Evans. Hanes now concludes the article. Both parts of the story provide us with a small but important window through which we glimpse how this remarkable young lady perceived growing up in Aberdare during the latter part of Queen Victoria's reign, and the early Edwardian age.

Mrs. Evans died on the 28th. October 1997.

Her grandfather J. Lendon Berry, a Devonian, settled here and traded (under the name of Joseph Berry) as a self-employed basket maker at 7 Cardiff Road, before taking up the newly emerging profession of photographer. His work has left us a most valuable collection of images of the town taken during the period covered by this article.

Family Ties.

Yes we were close knit. We generally played with each other in home or garden. One neighbour in particular was important to the family. The family was important to us and all the Berry family kept in touch with each other. My uncle and aunt in Tomatin never married and we kept in touch with them until their death.

Outings and Treats.

All three children's birthdays were usually celebrated at the time of my birthday in June when, joined by friends, we would walk out into the fields and countryside for a picnic, when I think our friends brought their own food. I cannot remember any special entertaining of guests at home.

Reading.

A favourite book was a prize I received from school but I can't remember its name although I can picture scenes from it in my mind. It was read until it fell apart. My parents bought weekly *The Peoples' Friend*, *The Family Herald Journal*, *The Aberdare Leader*; daily *The Western Mail*. I borrowed books from the library in the Memorial Hall, library later removed to a building at the junction of Seymour Street and High Street. Yes, we had books at home. I remember Jim's *Wizard*, and similar type books. Titles I remember reading are Farrar's *Eric, or Little by Little* (About school life), and *The Lamplighter* (? Dickens), a book I enjoyed even though it made me cry. My father often read aloud to us (we had to knit or sew while listening) His favourite books were those set in Scotland. Generally I would say that, except for my father, we read whatever came into the house, father preferring "facts not fiction", and if he felt anything was unsuitable reading it usually lit the fire.

Holidays.

We didn't go on holiday. During the summer holidays when living at Robertstown, the three of us enjoyed playing on the river bank, having many a row for getting ourselves wet and muddy.

Games and Leisure Activities.

Skipping, hopscotch, whip and top, bowling hoops, cat and doggy, ball, hide and seek, touch, bat and ball, playing house. Usually played outside home if weather was good. As the roadway was unmade, in wet weather the surface was very muddy. Sewing, knitting lace, a little embroidery, drawing and writing.

Entertainments.

Going to the Market Hall (6) to see a concert performed by pupils of Ynysllwyd School. I must have been about 12 years old. The fair visited Aberdare twice yearly in April and November. (7) An uncle took us to the fair at each visit. It was usually held in the Market Yard. I can remember going to the pictures at Haggar's tent (8) in the Market Yard, at about the same time, but this was a rare occasion. The only street entertainer I can remember was the man who wheeled around a gramophone and played popular light music. We used to attend at tea concerts and dances held in the Memorial Hall. It was called by an unusual name, something like "Conversazione". (9)

Class Divisions.

The rich people I remember were the Thomas's of Ysguborwen House, (10) (afterwards the Hann family moved there) who sometimes joined us at Worship in St. John The Evangelist Church, Robertstown. (11) Our

own society was the best as Robertstown was "alone" until the bridge over the railway was built (12) Yes, there was class distinction but I can't remember it affecting me very much.

About my Grandparents

I saw my maternal grandparents very often but never met my father's family. For a couple of years I lived at Coombe Martin, Devon, with my grandparents Berry. I can't remember anything unusual in their likes or dislikes.

Church Attendance

I attended regularly. I was taken by my mother. I went willingly and have continued to do so until age and infirmity have prevented me. Only on rare occasions have I felt class distinction in my Church. Each night we knelt at the bedside to say our prayers. When the weather was cold we said our prayers downstairs in the kitchen. Both my parents were religious. My father was a Scottish Presbyterian and was very strict about our behaviour on the Sabbath. We were not allowed to hang clothes outside to dry, chop firewood or play outside, and were often reminded, "Today is the Lord's Day". We did receive visitors on Sundays although they weren't welcome if they delayed or prevented us attending Church. When we children were older, after Evensong we would visit an uncle's home where we enjoyed musical evenings, many of the family being instrumentalists.

Family Health.

Yes, a doctor was called in case of illness. Twin sisters died within a few months of birth. I can remember being dosed with Senna tea and my mother's own make cough mixture.

Special Memories.

Wearing a big black bow in my hair when a family member died, and on the death of Queen Victoria (13) On that occasion shop windows were draped in black. King Edward VII's coronation having to be postponed because he had appendicitis. Recall the Volunteers training in the back garden of 40 Cardiff Road, home of my Uncle Tom, Colour Sergeant T.G.Chivers. (14) The outbreak of the First World War. No, my father did not join the forces. The ritual of white blinds, usually hired from the "laying out lady" being hung in front windows of houses where a death had occurred.

My Clothing.

Anything that could be knitted was made by my mother, who also made our underclothing. Very little was bought ready-made. Good use was made of hand-me-downs. Aunts in Scotland and Devon sent us parcels of what we considered "special" clothing as gifts, about twice a year.

Further Education.

I left school when I was 14. I started learning a trade as a dressmaker with Miss Carrie Organ of 18 Thomas Street, Robertstown. There was a charge for the first year of £4, but no charge for training in the second year. Work started at 9 a.m., finishing at 5.30 p.m. after which work was put away and the room left in a clean and tidy condition. We had two half hour breaks during the day. After my 16th birthday I went out sewing and had to carry my sewing machine with me. I generally received meals wherever I went and was paid 2/6d per day, the hours generally being 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. At the age of 18 I went into service as a sewing maid in the household of Archdeacon C.A.H.Green at Jesmond, Stow Park Circle, Newport (he had at one time been Vicar of Aberdare). (15) receiving £1.6.8d. Per calendar month. While at home I paid all my earnings to my mother who gave me as and when I needed it, provided she could afford it. While in service I kept 3d. a week for collection at Church, a small amount to repay an aunt for materials bought to make clothing necessary for my new situation, plus a small amount for writing paper, postage stamps etc. The greater part of my earnings was sent home. I don't really remember what I expected when I left school. All I wanted to do was sew and this I did.

NOTES TO THE TEXT.

6. The present indoor Market. Built 1904. Used for concerts, eisteddfods and as a skating rink.
7. The traditional dates of the fair. The amusement caterers would have been. Dooner's, Wadbrook's or Studt's.
8. Known as Haggar's Royal Electric Bioscope, and Haggar's Coliseum. Constructed of canvass and wood.
9. From the Italian "Conversazione". An evening assembly for conversation and recreation. These were popular events. A soiree.
10. See note 5. in Part One, Hanes No.30. D.A.Thomas, succeeded by John H.Thomas J.P.
11. Built in 1890. Now an Islamic Mosque.
12. Built in July 1892. It connected Robertstown with the Gadlys at Tudor Terrace. Dr.Roberts, formerly of Gadlys Uchaf, gave £200 towards its erection.
13. On the 22nd.January 1901.
14. T.G.Chivers, 40 Cardiff Road. Yeast Merchant in 1912. Drill Instructor, Rifle Volunteers.
15. Charles A.H.Green. D.D., D.C.L., Curate at Aberdare 1888-1893. Vicar 1893 1914. Archdeacon of Monmouth 1914-1921. Bishop of Monmouth 1921-1928, Translated to Bangor 1928. Archbishop of Wales 1934-1944.

A Note on Mr. J. Lendon Berry, Artistic Photographer, 47 Cardiff Street.

"The photographic art is very ably represented in Aberdare by Mr. J. Lendon Berry, who enjoys a reputation second to none in South Wales. The business was founded in 1870 by Mr. Berry, the present proprietor, who has continued to personally superintend it until the present time, although recently he has been ably seconded in the management by his son, Mr. Richard Lewis Berry. The establishment, which is conveniently situated in Cardiff Street, is admirably adapted to the purposes to which it is put. The waiting and dressing rooms are all very comfortably furnished, and at the rear of the house is a spacious double studio. One portion of the studio is arranged for the production of pictures with rustic and out-door effects, and Mr. Berry has a large number of "properties" in the way of artistic growing trees, grass, ferns, ivy, rocks, stumps of trees, gates &c. By these means, and by carefully painted screens, very realistic landscapes are produced in a photograph; and the background may be arranged to suit the character of the subject portrayed. Clearness of outline, definition and faithfulness of likeness to the original are the leading characteristics of all work produced by Mr. Berry, and every picture is finished in the most masterly style. At the same time the charges made at the establishment are extremely moderate. Extensive alterations are at present being made in Mr. Berry's premises at the completion of which his establishment will be one of the best-arranged and most comfortable devoted to photography in South Wales".

Source: *A Descriptive Account of Aberdare (Illustrated) 1892.*

HANES PART TWO – MOUNTAIN ASH EDITION.

GETTING STARTED

"I believe I am right when I say that we have here from 4000 to 5000 acres of coal to be worked. I look to Mountain Ash surviving Aberdare in prosperity...I will tell you the cause of my coming down here...In the year 1840 I went to London from the North of England, and I happened to go on board one of those boats now called the penny boats...I saw the stoker throw continuously coal into the furnace, and when I looked at the funnel I saw no smoke. This was a wonder to me, as in the North I had been used to see smoke...I asked him to allow me to look at the coal and said "I will give you a shilling, and if you will let me feed the fire I will give you another"...I threw some coal on the fire...but there was no smoke...I then asked him where he got the coal, and he replied from Meartheere in Wales. He could not say Merthyr...I at once made it my business to come down here...at that time there was no railway to Aberdare, and the coal had to be conveyed down by the canal. I went to Mr. Powell, and told him that if he wanted a market for his coal at Duffryn, I was willing to ...introduce his coal into France.

The year 1840 was a great epoch in this district, as that was the year when the first cargo of coal was shipped foreign from Cardiff. That cargo was taken to Nantes, and given away to the consumer...that same year we entered into a contract to supply them with 3000 tons."

The Merthyr Guardian 12 May 1860.

(An extract from a speech given by John Nixon.)

John Nixon (1815-1899) sank Werfa Colliery, Aberdare, followed by Navigation, Mountain Ash. He purchased Deep Duffryn Colliery from David Williams, and was instrumental in introducing the "long wall" system of mining, the double shift and for making great improvements in colliery ventilation methods. He is buried at Mountain Ash.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The names given to some of the older streets of the locality often embody elements of local history. For instance street names to be found in Aberdare, Mountain Ash and other local towns and villages bear the names of landowners, industrialists, and contain references to industry and other features (e.g. streams, mills and canals.)

The opening of the ironworks and the sinking of collieries caused people to flock into the industrial valleys in search of work. These workers and their families required houses so local landowners allocated fields on their estates for this purpose. Building plots were granted to individuals or speculative builders under leases usually for a term of 99 years at annual ground rents of £1 - £1.10s.

This occasional article will highlight a few associations in the Mountain Ash and Aberdare areas. The lists are not comprehensive, and perhaps members would like to compile their own and submit them to Hanes for publication.

A complete list of street names with links to the past would be interesting and valuable. If members have any specific queries please write to the Editor who will try to throw light on the matter. If readers would prefer to draw up their own lists, use local street plans, or the Post Office schedule of postcodes for individual street names, or clusters of names. Here follows our first list: -

MOUNTAIN ASH.

The principal landowner in this area (and Cwmaman) was the Bruce Pryce Family, and the town has many streets bearing names associated with this important family.

Austin Street (Henry Austin Bruce. Also his mother's maiden name Sarah Austin.)

Beadon Street (Henry Austin Bruce's first wife was Annabella Beadon (died 1852) of Bristol)

Campbell Street (Henry Campbell Bruce, 2nd.Baron Aberdare.)

Bruce Street (See footnote)

Chancery Lane (a strange name to discover in Mountain Ash, or anywhere else outside London. However Henry Austin Bruce's uncle was Lord Justice Sir James Lewis Knight Bruce, so it is our belief (guess!) that the naming of this street was a tongue in cheek tribute to the learned Judge.)

Coplestone Street (Edward Copleston – no last e – was Bishop of Llandaff from 1827-1849. Another uncle of H.A.B. was the Revd.Wm.Bruce Knight [died 1845] who was Dean of Llandaff. This may be the connection and the dates fit.)

Duffryn Street (After the Bruce's estate and mansion)

Granville Terrace (Charles Granville Bruce, [Charlie "Bruiser" Bruce] the explorer and mountaineer, youngest son of H.A.B.)

Knight Street (See footnote)

Lyndhurst Street (The Hon. Henry Lyndhurst Bruce eldest son of H.C.B. See under Campbell Street. killed in the Great War)

Napier Street/Arms (Maiden name of H.A.B.'s second wife, and of Clarence Napier Bruce, the 3rd.Baron Aberdare.)

Oxford Street (Various members of the family were educated at its University.)

Pamela Street (Pamela Georgiana Bruce 9th -unmarried –child of H.A.B.)

Pryce Street (See footnote)

(These street names have been selected and are not a comprehensive list.)

FOOTNOTE. John Bruce Knight adopted his mother' surname Bruce in place of his own, and the name of Pryce in 1837 Technically he was then John Bruce Knight Bruce-Pryce. Confusing? His son dropped the name of Pryce becoming Henry Austin Bruce, 1st.Baron Aberdare of Duffryn. (1815-1895).

Another Mountain Ash landowner was **Seymour Allen**, hence Allen Street, Seymour Street, The Cresselly Hotel, Allen's Arms Hotel and Cresselly Villas (Cresselly was the Pembrokeshire home of the Allen family).

ABERDARE (Trecynon)

Clusters of names here recall the Windsor-Clive family (Earls of Plymouth.). They owned much of Trecynon.

Harriet Street (Harriet Windsor -Clive, Countess of Plymouth.)

Windsor Street and the former Windsor House.

Clive Street.

Stag Street (One of the crests of the Earl of Plymouth. The vicarage in Trecynon bears the Coat of Arms of the family.)

St.Fagan's Church (after St.Fagan's Church, Castle and. village, Nr.Fairwater, Cardiff, the Glamorganshire seat of the Plymouth family.)

NIXON'S HALL, MOUNTAIN ASH

Various acts of vandalism over the past few decades have deprived us of a number of interesting buildings such as Brunel's station on the Vale of Neath Railway, the Aberaman Hall and Nixon's Hall at Mountain Ash. The following notes relate to the last named.

John Newman writing in "Glamorgan", one of the Buildings of Wales series, described it as "One of the most splendid of all the institutions in the valleys, and surely worth saving... Built 1898-1899 for £8000 to designs of Dan Lloyd of Aberbeeg. In essence in Wren-style. Constructed of variations of yellow brick, with Doric pilasters of red brick with, a triglyph frieze across the façade which continues without it around the sides. Segment headed windows below long round headed ones for piano mobile, and a bull's eye window in its pedimented gable. The central pedimented doorway is a real showpiece enriched with terracotta glazed and unglazed red yellow and even blue. It was erected at the expense of the colliers of Nixon's Navigation collieries for their mental and physical recreation. It contains a library, reading and lecture rooms, and a 1500 seat theatre, billiards and other games rooms, and a gymnasium and swimming pool (16.4 meters long) in the basement. .

HALL FOR HIRE.

The Programme for the 1905 Mountain Ash National Eisteddfod contains a number of interesting advertisements. One relates to the hiring of this (then) newly erected hall.

WORKMEN'S INSTITUTE, LIBRARY AND PUBLIC HALL, MOUNTAIN ASH.

Seating Accommodation 1,250 Adults. Stage 36ft. by 21 ft.
Population within a radius of 1½ miles 30,000

TERMS

Monday £3.0.0	Thursday £3 .0. 0
Tuesday £2.10.0.	Friday £2. 10. 0.
Wednesday. 0.0. (Sic)	Saturday £3. 0.0

Afternoon or Children's Performance 25% of takings.

Three or more nights in succession 5s per night off. ONE WEEK £12.

The above Fees include Electric Light. Should gas be required in addition to be paid for according to meter.

DEPOSIT REQUIRED 20/-

Any damage done to the Hall must be made good by the parties engaging it.
COMPANIES TO PAY NIGHTLY WHEN REQUESTED.

SCENERY AND PIANO FOR HIRE.

E Williams, chairman.
J.Hammer Vice Chairman. J.Morris, Treasurer.
J.Powell, Secretary. J.Curnow, Caretaker.

THE 1905 NATIONAL.

(Another Anniversary)

One hundred years ago, from the seventh to the eleventh of August 1905 The Royal National Eisteddfod was held at Mountain Ash. Its venue was the Pavilion, or Eisteddfod Hall, which is still standing today. The proceedings consisted of five Eisteddfod Meetings and three concerts.

A Season (or Course) ticket could be bought for £1.10.0d in the reserved and numbered seats, and for £1 in the second seats. The Archdruid was Hwfa Mon, and Chairing Day was Thursday August the 10th.

There was an Arts and Industries Exhibition at The New Public Hall (Nixon's) displaying a collection of priceless art treasures on loan from London's Victoria and Albert Museum that included oil and watercolour paintings, Corporate and College plate, as well as ancient and modern musical instruments. This was followed by another which exhibited Nantgarw and Swansea porcelain (loaned by the Cardiff Art Gallery and Museum), and oil paintings from the South Wales Arts Society Collection.

Each of the five Meetings was opened and addressed by Presidents of the Day consisting of "the great and the good". The roll of these is impressive:

Day one. Lord Tredegar and H.E.Gray J.P.
Day two Lord Aberdare and H.Seymour Allen
Day three Sir W.T.Lewis and Glyn Vivian.
Day four Lord Windsor and Sir T.Marchant Williams.
Day five D.A.Thomas M.P.

Unfortunately constraints of space will not allow us to list the many and varied musical events and competitions that took place during the week. Suffice it to say there were the usual competitions for Brass, Drum and fife bands, solo brass, woodwind and stringed instruments, besides choirs of various categories and sizes, and vocal soloists. There were a large number of entries in these events. We noticed, and would draw attention to, the following choirs which took part, The Bristol Glee Society, The Bethesda (Bristol), and Cinderford Choral Societies, a choir from Portsmouth, and the renowned London Welsh.

Hanes will focus instead on other, perhaps more unusual and practical competitions which had been set, and for which prizes were awarded, particularly,

For **Photography**.

For **Drawing and Designs** of (1) a pair of modern high class winding engines with drums (2) A three throw high lift mine-pump suitable for driving by an electric motor by ropes (electric motor not to be shown) and a large air compressing cylinder showing all valves etc.

An interesting contemporary insight was the award of a prize of £1.1.0d for the best exhibition of **shorthand typing** (work to be done at the Eisteddfod.)

A set of **Plans** ¼ inch scale for a pair of semi detached villas (costing £500 each)

For a ten minute **speech** on "The Valley of the Cynon"

For the **best collection** of skeleton leaves showing venation only.

For a **map** (drawn to scale) illustrating an actual school journey.

For a **Handbook** of Popular Glamorgan Worthies 1750-1850 (in English or Welsh.)

For a **piece of tweed** for a gentleman's shooting suit.

For the **Best Collection of Fossils** made by a coal miner, of 12 coal measure fossils which must be named and must not be less than 6 varieties. First Prize £1.1.0d.

For a **Biography** of The late Lord Aberdare with special reference to his services to Wales (in English or Welsh) the prize £10. (e.g. Henry Austin Bruce, The First Lord Aberdare, died 1895. Ed.)

For a **Medallion** in relief, in any stone, of the late Lord Aberdare. Prize £10.

(Source: The Official Programme of The Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales, Mountain Ash 1905.)

Published by Cynon Valley History Society.

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