

CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY

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SOME SPORTSMEN AND VALLEY LIFE 100 YEARS AGO

In this issue we look at an amazing football match, a rough, tough boxer Georgie Pwnc, and one of the valley's most picturesque characters Amos Brown, a black slave from USA who came to Wales and became a miner, boxer, cyclist, runner and even a magician! What was life like 100 years ago in 1917 during World War 1? Looking at a local newspaper, we see the opening of Aberdare General Hospital, some reminiscences about Cwmbach, and other news.

A Charity Football Match



The Liberal team

Middle row, standing, Lord Rhondda (in white overcoat), —, F.J. Caldicott, M. Berryman, Ted Rather, Watcyn Davies, Jenkin Howell, Tom Gerrish, Bernie Lewis.

In front: E. Morris, —, —, W.J. Williams.

Morgan Watkins (The Grove) is also stated to be in the Liberal XI., but Dai has not succeeded in identifying him.



The I.L.P

Back row of players, Tom Davies, Idris Davies, John Prowle (goalkeeper), Ike Griffiths, Evan Parker, T. Robert Edwards.

Middle row: Second figure, Abel Richards (referee), Chris Williams (Aberaman), Gomer Key, Jack Bentoft, C.B. Stanton, Syd Stephens, W. Lawrence.

In front, W.J. Williams, E. Morris, —, —.

On Easter Tuesday 1908 a charity football match took place at the New Athletic Ground in the Ynys fields between the Liberal Club and the I.L.P. "Old Crocks".

There was a very good attendance. Both teams were photographed before the match. Mr D. A. Thomas M.P., (later Lord Rhondda), being in the Liberal group. Much amusement was caused by the appearance of an ambulance staff led by Mr Morris and Billie Williams. The referee was Mr Abel Richards.

The Liberals won the toss, and Mr D. A. Thomas kicked off for the I.L.P. The Liberals attacked well for the first half hour, but were well held by the opposing defence. The ILP nearly scored when the Liberal goalkeeper Watkin Davies was talking to the spectators! Charlie Stanton, (ILP) put in a splendid shot, which Watkin Davies put over the bar in splendid style. Syd Stephens (ILP) scored after Liberal goalkeeper Davies had repulsed several onslaughts by I.L.P. forwards.

Play was now transferred to the other end and John Prowle (ILP) saved very pluckily, but the Liberal forwards were not to be denied and Caldicott (Lib) scored with a stinging shot which gave Prowle no chance. They were all short of breath now. Syd Stephens (ILP) was laid out and the ambulance was called, their efforts to revive him delighted the crowd who cheered heartily. Jenkin Howell (ILP) burst through on his own, but was fouled inside the penalty area. The resulting kick proved futile. Charlie Stanton had bad luck in not scoring at the other end although his wind was getting short. A free kick taken by Gwilym Davies (Lib) was marvellously saved by Prowle. The game ended in a draw of one goal each. The two goalkeepers played very well, Prowle's lengthy kicking being often applauded. Stanton and Evan Parker were shining lights for the I.L.P., and Caldicott and G. Davies were prominent for the Libs.

After Dinner Speeches

The players were entertained by Mr D.A. Thomas to luncheon at Messrs Miles Restaurant. After disposing of an excellent spread, Mr Thomas in his speech said he was astonished to find what a youthful lot of men the "Old Crocks" were. He was also astonished to see how Mr Stanton carried himself right up to the end. (Laughter). He was of the opinion that there was a closer relationship between the I.L.P. and the Radicals than between the Radicals and the Whigs. He was not a Socialist but he need hardly tell them that between Mr Keir Hardie and himself there existed the most cordial friendship. He helped to get Mr Hardie elected eight years ago, and he helped him, in his quiet way two years ago and no doubt Mr Hardie did the same to him. In nine times out of ten he found himself in the same lobby in the House of Commons as Mr Hardie (Applause).

Mr John Prowle, in responding to the toast, said he preferred being a Guardian of the Poor to being guardian of the goal!

Mr John Davies, the School Attendance Officer (Whipper-in), moved a hearty vote of thanks to Mr Thomas for his kindness in kicking-off, and also for his generosity in entertaining them to lunch. Whatever political differences they had, those differences had been buried for that day. There was more to be gained by working together than by working at cross-purposes. However his opinion was that the principles of Socialism would survive all opposition. (Applause)

Sources:

Aberdare Leader, 25th April 1908 and 28th May 1938

Georgie Pwnch — bare knuckle boxer

Following the death of boxer 'Georgie Pwnch,' the *Aberdare Leader* published two articles in its edition of 21 May 1938.

Never Had a Black Eye.
(BY C. HILLMAN)

The death of Mr. George W. Jones, 28 John Street, Abercwmboi, briefly reported in last week's issue, brings back lively memories of "old timers" of the days of bare-fist fighting in the open air, on Llanwynno Mountain and elsewhere.

"George Pwnch" as he was familiarly known even up to his death, started fighting at the early age of 16 years. He created a great reputation for himself under the able training of Morgan ("Mwcyn") Anthony and David (Dai) Harris.

Listening to his old trainers I heard mentioned such names as Tom Roberts, Aberaman, with whom he fought 39 rounds for £50 a side; Jack Northy, of Rhondda, 72 rounds for £50 (fought at the Finger Post, Merthyr); Jack Hitchens, Rhondda; Ned Loche, Caerphilly, 23 rounds; Bryn Davies, Aberaman, 33 rounds; Will Bird, Mountain Ash, 22 rounds, all for £50 a side.

Then came the battle with the three [black] fighters of those far-off days, Coffee Cooler, Phil Scott, and Tom Lancaster, whom he fought at Edinburgh for a large purse.

These fights were spoken of with much interest, and many other names were mentioned. When I interrupted these old warriors to make further inquiries they told of his fight with Tom Morris, champion of England, who was beaten by our hero in the fourth round at 9st.4lb. After this victory George and his trainers issued a "challenge to the world" which was not accepted.

The number of rounds fought ranged from 22 to 72, and Mwcyn and Dai vouched that in all his 250 battles, George never had a black eye, which is really a record, "and that's saying something, mind you," said Mwcyn, "but it's true," and Dai in all seriousness nodded in melancholy agreement.

The funeral is reported in our obituary columns.

Fights of 'Georgie Pwnc'h'

ONE WAS OVER 72 ROUNDS, BARE FISTS.

Outstanding Battles Recalled.

WHAT WOULD PRESENT-DAY "STARS" OF THE FISTIC ART LIKE BLONDE TOMMY FARR, DUSKY JOE LOUIS, OR BLACK-BROWED NAZI MAX SCHMELING, WHO HAVE AMASSED HUGE FORTUNES IN THE RING, SAY TO FIGHTING 72-ROUND CONTESTS, WITH BARE FISTS AT THAT?

They would be very averse to signing on the dotted line. Yet George Jones, better known as Georgie 'Pwnc'h,' who died at Abercwmboi last week at the age of 67, and who was given the nickname "Punch" because of the terrible blow he carried in his right fist, once fought a bloody battle over that "distance."

"Georgie" was born, I believe, at Cwmanan, and his father was the head mechanical engineer of the Aberaman P.D. Yard Department—at that time one of the largest in the country.

When a lad he was a choir boy at St. Margaret's Church, Aberaman, and undoubtedly the love for sport of Curate Thursby, who then officiated in the parish, had much to do with his introduction to the "noble art."

Afterwards Georgie worked as a blacksmith's striker under paternal supervision, and this calling considerably helped him to become the sturdy, steel-muscled young man he was; a veritable piece of "human dynamite."

In passing, it is noteworthy that as in the case of the world-renowned Bob Fitzsimmons, the blacksmith shops of the Aberdare Valley were the "alma mater" of several fistic fighters who won fame in the rings of the Principality.

At an early age Jones showed much promise, and he received valuable training in the boxing booths of Messrs Bill Samuels, Stokes, and Scarratt, which periodically came to Cwmanan.

Old Bill Samuels once asserted that the village possessed a galaxy of fistic talent superior to any in the Principality.

HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

"Punch" was a contemporary of such famous ring-craftsmen as Dai St. John, Tom James, better known as "The Bum," Jack Owen, Ezer Thomas, Rothwell the fighting barber, Young Dai Rees (who was fatally injured whilst fighting in the old Slaughter House, Aberdare), and many others too numerous to mention.

Georgie took part in over 250 contests, and of these the majority were with the "raw 'uns."

One that is outstanding in his career was that with Jack Northey, of Penygraig. This took place in the Finger Post Quarry, situated on the mountain between Aberdare and Merthyr.

It was for £50 side stakes, and, by agreement, both fighters were to be accompanied by only 11 supporters.

The fight lasted 72 rounds, and it is said that the 200 supporters of Northey who turned up, completely overawed the Darian's contingent of 11, and insisted on the Rhondda man taking the spoils!

That the better man was undoubtedly "Punch" was proved subsequently when he easily won in four rounds when they met in the long room of the Horse and Groom at Pontypridd.

The issue was definitely decided in a third encounter which took place in the old "Bonky" Fforchneol Field, adjoining what is now known as Brynmair Road, Cwmanan. "Punch" again was victor, this time in 14 rounds.

Incidentally, on this occasion, four ounce gloves were used, which were little more than kid gloves, with the fingers cut off.

Space will not permit me to recall several other noteworthy mountain and indoor fights of this "pugilistic box of tricks."

He was only 8-stone in weight on an average, and was of very small stature.

As a ring craftsman with bare knuckles he was unbeatable, but in a rough and tumble he had to take sec-

ond place on several occasions. However, he will always be remembered by the older generation as one whose very name used to occasion awe, but who was one of the most sociable, optimistic and genial of fellows.

The writer can vouch for this by direct association with him, both as a shop-mate, and also down in the mine, and whenever during recent years they met it was a happy occasion at which many by-gone exploits were recollected.

Some three or four years ago, when "Punch" was in his 64th year, he again came into the limelight, when he publicly refuted a claim by his old opponent Northey, that the latter once obtained a verdict over him in a mountain fight.

As a result of this "slander," "Punch" issued a challenge to fight Northey for £100 a side with the "knucks," and was even willing for the event to be staged in the Rhondda.

There was no response to this challenge by the veteran, and he afterwards extended it to every 65-year-old man in the country, who did not weigh more than nine stone.

There were no responses. The last time I saw him the light of battle re-kindled in his eyes when we once again went over old-time "battles."

MAB Y MYNYDD.

Aberdare Leader, 21 May 1938.

Amos Brown: cotton-field slave, boxer, cyclist and runner

Valley's most picturesque character

Amos Brown (now 93) was cotton-field slave BECAME WELSH BOXER, CYCLIST AND RUNNER

THE truly remarkable story reaches us from our reporter Tom H. of facts which read like fiction concerning the life of Mr. Amos W. Brown, a coloured resident of Ynysboeth for the past 36 years.

A one-time slave on the cotton and tobacco plantations of Florida and Alabama, he was the son and grandson of slaves; was shanghaied and brought to Wales, and has figured prominently as a professional illusionist, boxer, cyclist and sprinter, throughout South Wales. He has been a miner in many South Wales collieries and had a remarkable escape from death in Tondy Colliery explosion.

These and other exceptional experiences are revealed in the following interview with Mr. Brown, who is undoubtedly the best known figure in the district in which he lives.

Residing with Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Thomas and family, 83, Avondale Street, Ynysboeth, Amos is loved by all local children and is regarded by residents of more mature age as "a kindly old gentleman, industrious and with a heart of gold."

He is affectionately known as "Mr. Brown the Black," because he is a coloured man who first saw the light of day in Appalachicola, Florida, U.S.A., 93 years ago.

SQUAW MARRIED AN IRISHMAN

The story opens in the remote past, when a Red Indian squaw—cook to slaves in Georgia, U.S.A.—married Jerry Wambell, of Snede Station, Georgia, an Irishman in charge of slaves on a cotton plantation. Their daughters were Henrietta and Lucenda Wambell. The latter became Mrs. "Doc" Brown, and Henrietta married Rasmus Bull in Charlcooch, Florida.

Their two children were Ida Bull (whose whereabouts are unknown) and Pessi (Percy) Bull, of Appalachicola. Pessi adopted the names of his uncles "Doc" Brown and Amos Bull, and became Amos Brown, the name he now bears.

Rasmus Bull (father of Amos) adopted his name after John Bull, an African slave imported to the States.

Amos cannot recall the surname of his grandmother, Rachel (mother of Rasmus Bull), but she was also an imported slave (country of origin unknown), and all her sons, Rasmus, Petra, Jasper, Amos and Matthew Bull (uncles of Amos W. Brown) were also all slaves.

Rasmus Bull was killed in the four years American Civil War, and Amos was able to give the year of

Rasmus Bull was killed in the four years American Civil War, and Amos was able to give the year of his birth with certainty by recalling that he was five years old when the war commenced (1861), and his father was killed two years later. His mother died at the close of the civil war.

One can imagine Amos, a slave, living among slaves and working on the plantations of Snede Station, Georgia.

Bereft of parents, the little chap ran away in search of his grandmother Rachel and her family in Appalachicola, many miles away. He rode the log rafts of pitchpine down the river and ultimately joined his grandmother and her sons, with whom he worked on the cotton plantations. He spent some time in Appalachicola shrimping and fishing (with no pay), and met the captain of a river yacht, "The Geechi."

SHANGHAIED!

He sailed on this boat to Key West and to Mobile, Alabama. His first job was the scaling of the boat's boiler. Later he worked on the captain's flower garden in Mobile. He received no pay, but was provided with food and clothes.

Amos entered a Mobile boarding house, where a sailor invited him to take a trip up the river to fetch timber. Amos went, and the Russian sailing ship, "Neto," sailed for the open sea.

Amos had been shanghaied and was made to serve as cook. The "Neto" arrived, at Brest, France, but Amos could not speak Russian or French. He dreamed of running away but feared to do so, and eventually the ship docked at Cardiff.

Amos knew a little English and escaped from the "Neto" at Cardiff. He sought police aid, and was directed to the home of an aged lady, Mrs. Mary Reynolds, of West Church Street, Cardiff. There he associated with a Jerry Spicer (a coloured man), who took Amos to Tondy, Aberkenfig (1886).

He worked at Parc Slip Colliery until after the explosion. While employed there, he responded to an urge to visit John Scarrott's boxing booth at St. Maryhill Fair.

This urge saved his life, because his mate, Jack Jarvis, 2, Beck Street, Tondy, who took Amos's place at the coal-face that day, was killed by the explosion.

He worked in Mardy Pit immediately following the explosion there, and at the Llys Pit (a house coal pit situated between Brynmenif and Pontyrall). He left the mine and was on his way home when an explosion occurred there.

Amos has worked also at Blaengarw, Ogmors, Rhondda, Ammanford, Penallta, Cwmpennar, Pentre, Cilfynydd Collieries and Nantysedw Lewis, Ynysboeth. He became actively interested in athletics.

As a boxer, he entered the ring as "Knock-out Brown." He fought frequently at the late Mr. Jack Scarrott's booth and at other booths.

One encounter of which Mr. John Scarrott told me some years before his death was confirmed by Brown. It was a novel contest for a racing bicycle, which would be won by the last contestant to remain standing in the ring. The contest, at Pentre in 1907, was open to all comers and was commenced by "Knock-out Brown" (Amos) and Taff Rogers, of Merthyr, who threw down the gloves in the fourth round.

Brown continued taking all comers and in all fought 16 men in succession. The 16th opponent, a big, burly man, confronted the all but exhausted Brown and delivered a right cross to the head, which Brown saw coming but was too exhausted to stop.

The blow connected and Brown received his first K.O. and lost the bicycle he fought so hard to possess.

But this knock-out was exceptional, for Brown remained unconscious for four whole days. Mr. Scarrott called it "a wick" (a week), but Brown said it was only four days, and that was long enough!

As a cyclist, Mr. Brown was known as A. W. Brown, of Cardiff. He was then considered the best quarter-mile sprinter on grass tracks in South Wales. His competitors in those days were such men as Tom Linton (Aberaman), Jimmy Michael, Tom James (Mountain Ash), Syd Jenkins and Tom Williams (Trehafod, Rhondda). Williams was the first man to beat Brown in the quarter-mile.

As a foot runner, Amos was known as "Deerfoot"; was a well-known 120 yards performer and claims to have never lost a heat over the 100 yards' course.

The illusionist, "Massetta Sou-senior," who travelled with Pooles Myorama throughout South Wales was none other than Amos W. Brown (1907/8/9).

He came to Ynysboeth from Pontycymmer in 1912 and has been twice married.

His first wife was Janet Elizabeth Wilson, of Maesteg. There was a son, Amos W. Brown, who at the age of 17 years, was suffocated in his stall in Mardy Colliery in 1917. A fall of roof prevented the passage of air.

His second wife was Lottie Thomas, of Penallta, Maescymmer. There were two daughters and a son. A son and daughter still survive. Mrs. Brown is still at Maescymmer.

Mr. Brown's active interest in athletics extended from 1885 to 1904.

"There are many more things I could tell you," said Mr. Brown at the close of the interview, "but I suppose they can wait for another time."

Aberdare Leader, 22 Jan 1949

Amos had an amazing life but there are a few omissions in the article and some corrections to be mentioned. He said that he was born in 1856 but according to BMD records he was born on 2nd April, 1864.

He said his first wife was Janet Elizabeth Wilson but she was actually Jennet Elizabeth Wilcox. He was 37 when he married her in 1902. As well as having a son, Amos, they

had two daughters and another son—Doris, Beatrice and George. Jennet died aged 39 in 1922.

In 1927, when Amos was 62, he married his second wife Lettie, (Letaress Elizabeth Thomas), who was aged 34.

Naturally, he omitted a crime that he committed in 1910. In May of that year Brown was charged with stealing a quantity of goods including hams, cheese, butter and other provisions, boots and drapery from a railway truck at Treorchy railway goods station. Edward Richards, collier, John Street, Pentre, with whom the accused lodged was charged with receiving part of the goods, while Edward Richards, his son was also charged with stealing two serviettes, the property of the Taff Vale Railway. It was stated that the prisoner Brown described himself as "Professor Brown" and that he sold a Cymric compound of herbs for purifying the blood, and described himself as "the celebrated cough tablet manufacturer, herbalist and strength missionary".

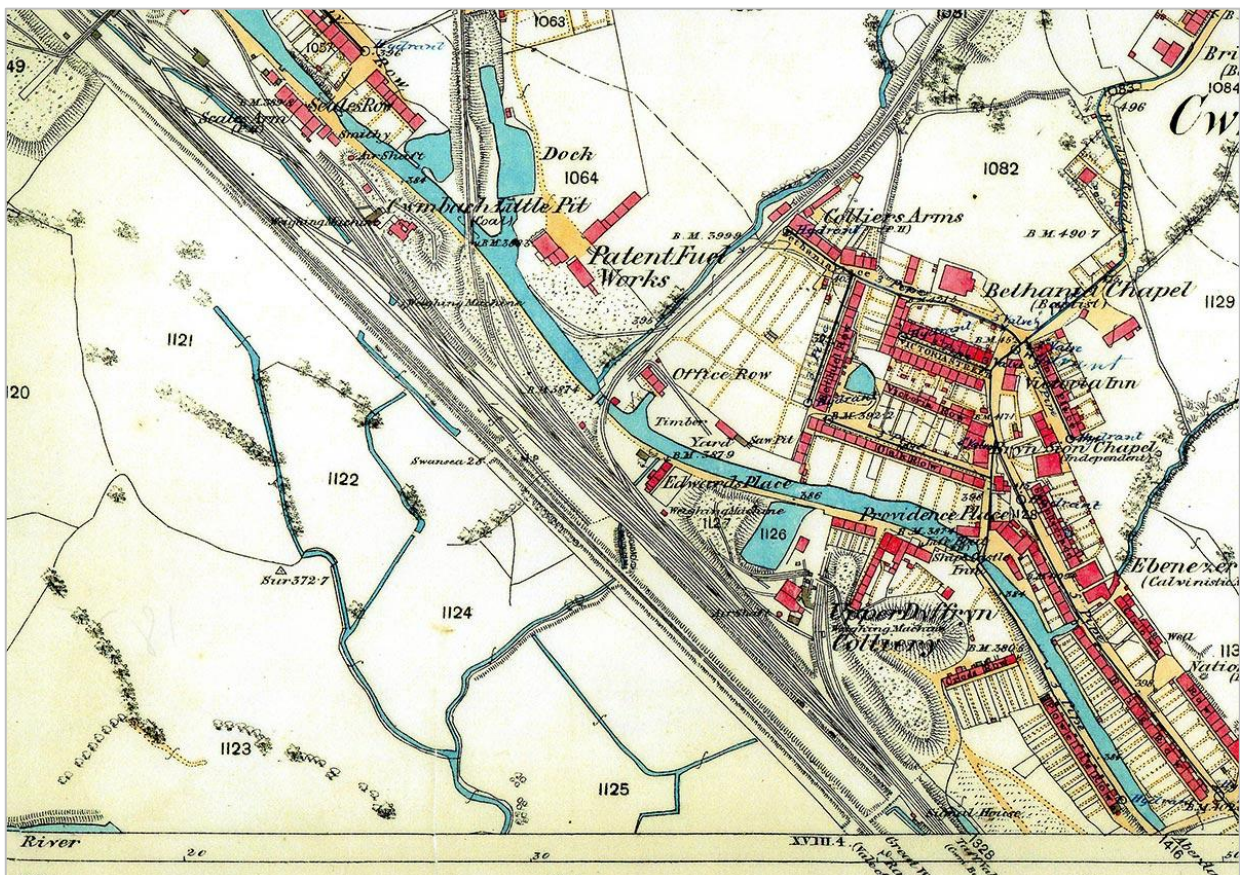
A quantity of goods had been missed from the yard with the result that on 25th May 1910, P.C. Phillips and Detective Edwards kept watch. The former noticed a light in one of the trucks and afterwards saw Brown inside in a crouching position. Brown ran away, but the officers succeed in capturing him. Brown pleaded guilty and was sentenced to six months imprisonment.

From then on, he kept on the straight and narrow. Later in his life, he had a large piggery and every Sunday after lunch, he would collect leftovers of the lunches from his neighbours, and would pay a penny per bucket of food to feed the pigs. The pigs would be fattened up then killed, gutted, skinned and sold to local people.

Amos died on 17th April 1956. His death certificate records he was 80 years old at this time so it is doubtful that he was 100—but you never know!

The Canal and the Co-operative at Cwmbach

By Delyth Wilson



My grandfather, William Pardoe, who lived in Cwmbach for many years until his death in 1970, was a deacon and Treasurer of Bethania Welsh Baptist Chapel. He gave talks in the chapel — the following was given as a talk to the Sisterhood in about 1952 when he was nearing 70.

Around 1890, Cwmbach had 11 coal mines working, now, when I write this, there are only three.

My first memory is of standing near the canal, which played an important part in Cwmbach. Now you cannot imagine there was such a thing here when looking at the "New Road". Many barges came up from Cardiff to our Co-operative store here at Cwmbach and up to Aberdare to the large warehouse at the top of the canal where the merchants of Aberdare stored their goods.

The stores of our Co-op were on the "New Road" — where the bus shelter is at present. Here is where the Co-op kept the flour and potatoes and other things that were brought up by canal. When we were children we used to carry bars of salt about half a yard in length and 10 inches wide from the stores here to the shop when Mr Henry Williams was manager. His reward to us was a couple of biscuits.

Here was the Ship Bridge — that's what we called the place. The canal was a big factor in the life of the area at that time and if you had not fallen into the canal at some time or other you could not be regarded as a citizen. The children played on the banks of the canal. The boys would go down over the bank to meet the barges coming up from Mountain Ash so that we could have a ride. When the barge reached the White Horse the boatmen would go in to wet their whistles and we would lead the barge into the lock. When the barge went under Dyffryn Bridge the rope came loose, so the horse could wander on past the lock as far as the length of the rope allowed. We would shut the lower gate, open the small door in the other gate, the lock would fill with water, and when it was full, it was easy to open the big gate. Then the boatmen would come out of the pub and go on to the end of the journey, either to the Co-op or to Aberdare. There were nine bridges between Dyffryn and Monfa (a house at the bottom end of Cwmbach belonging to the Baptists.) Four were named for public houses. How would you like to go on a Sunday school trip on one of these barges? Ours did once.

How many of you remember the fair that was held every year at the bottom of this hill near the Ship Inn, [Ship and Castle Inn. Ed.], as we knew it then, where Mrs Short lives now. There were Aunt Sallies, 3 balls a penny, coconuts and many other things including races. One race was running from Ship bridge to Crown bridge. You were not allowed to come back over the bridge, you could go by road but that was a long way, so after going over the bridge they would jump into the garden of the lowest house in Big Row, from the garden to the canal, up the bank and run back to Ship Bridge — and the prize? A cask of beer.

The Co-operative

When I was young, there were two large factors in our life — the Co-op and Bethania. One was to look after the body and one to look after the soul. At that time the Co-op held a particular place in the life of the people of the village. There was the bank to keep the money, if you had any. How many tears were lost when it was necessary to raise the dividend. The old "Co-operators" never went anywhere else to buy their food, furniture, clothes etc. But now, the Co-op sells food, fuel, spectacles, plans holidays for you and at the end of your life, buries you.

How many of you know how the Co-op started? It began when men working in Llettyshenkin Pit sent their best scholar out of the works to buy food and things like that while the rest of them did a share each of his work that is, filling his drams in the pit. He wasn't paid in the shop but in the pit. I remember my father working in the Co-op—it was

more than 8 hours a day at that time. How many of you remember the time of the turn-books* when people got a cask of butter, a sack of flour, a bar of salt — enough for a quarter.

The Co-operative movement started in Lancashire where it soon flourished. I read about a boy in that county asking the midwife from where his little brother had come. She answered that the stork had brought him that morning after his father had gone to work. The boy replied, "By gum, won't dad be off because he has not come through the Co-op!"

* A turn-book day was a day at the end of a month when a shop gave a larger advance than was usual, based upon the pay of the month to follow. Shops would open very early on the morning of the turn-book day, and women would form queues from about 2 a.m. outside these shops.

The Cynon Valley 100 years ago

The Death of Councillor John Powell of Mountain Ash

Mr Powell's health had been failing for a number of years. John Powell had been a representative of the miners for many years: a checkweigher at one of the local pits, he was also secretary of the Taff and Cynon district of the Miners' Federation. Also he was a trustee of the local Workmen's Institute and we understand been connected with the Duffryn Co-operative Society. He was the first to be elected on to the Mountain Ash District Council in the Labour cause.

At a Council meeting held on 24th July, the Chairman Noah Bowles referred to the lamented death of John Powell who had been a member of the council continuously for 23 years, and as a colleague in the Miskin ward, he personally felt the loss as being very great. He moved that an expression of the Council's deepest sympathy be sent to the family in their great loss.

Seconding the motion Councillor Bruce Jones said Mr Powell was a very excellent member and one of the ablest on the Council. He had fought hard against ill-health. He deeply regretted that Mr Powell's sons, who were serving their country, were unable to be home for the funeral.

The Sunday school pupils of Mr Powell were today in important positions of trust, added Mr William Davies.

Mr George Hall alluded in his tribute to Mr Powell's many services for a quarter a century as the primary Labour leader of the district. Mr Pincombe (Clerk to the Council) stated that, "No straighter man ever lived than the late Councillor John Powell."

The vote of condolence was carried in silence, the members standing.

***Aberdare & Mountain Ash Express*, 28th July 1917**

Opening of the Aberdare General Hospital



Aberdare General Hospital before the 1929 fire

Thursday last (19th July) was a notable one in the development of Aberdare by the formal opening of the Aberdare and District General Hospital. The event was favoured with fine weather and the whole town kept holiday, and the schools were granted a half-holiday and the pits were closed in order to make this auspicious event a perfect success. The principal streets were gaily decorated for the occasion. The opening was preceded by a luncheon given at the Memorial Hall. Later the opening ceremony was performed by the chairman of the Powell Duffryn Company, Joseph Shaw, K.C.

Opening the proceedings the High Constable Mr Charles Kenshole said that there were some who still remember Mr Richard Fothergill, once the member of Parliament for the Merthyr boroughs, and owner of the Abernant Ironworks, which were then with the Gadlys ironworks, and were at that time the chief source of industry. In 1885, those works closed down and the outlook was exceedingly gloomy for the prosperity of Aberdare. The population then was 37,704, now the population was over 50,000. Yet with all this great development of the town, there had never been a hospital. Now, however, they had one worthy of the town and equipped with the best that science could find. He felt sure that no one was more proud of the event they were celebrating than Dr Evan Jones, who had for many years been in charge of the Bute Hospital, the closure of which had convinced the public that something would have to be done. A committee was formed and approached Lord Bute for the purchase of Abernant House, (the former home of Richard Fothergill). Lord Bute consented to sell for £1,000, which, he (the speaker) considered as a most generous gift. He then mentioned the donations towards the building fund, the two highest were Powell Duffryn Co., £5000, and Bwllfa Dare Co., £3000.

Mr Edmund Stonelake, on behalf of the workmen, said that he considered the closing of the old Bute Hospital as a blessing in disguise, and he was glad that the Committee had not spared any expenses in making everything in connection with this hospital good, thorough, and efficient for easing suffering as much as possible. The institution would be a Godsend to the families of the working class, inasmuch as they would be able to send any member of their families — who happened to be injured — directly to the hospital to be dressed and properly treated, instead of being sent home.

Mr Charles Stanton, M.P., said that such a hospital removed a reflection, [a bad one! Ed], which Aberdare had borne too long. He felt sure it would nobly fulfil its humane functions. It is worthy of note that the contract was in the hands of Messrs E.J. Davies and Co. builders, of Bargoed, at £7000 and Mr George Kenshole (brother of Charles Kenshole) of Bargoed was the architect. The hospital provides accommodation for 34 beds and six cots, but the number may be almost doubled by utilising the upper storey.

Aberdare & Mountain Ash Express, 28th July 1917

Honour to a Gunner

Mrs Tom Evans on behalf of the members of Bethania C.M. Church, Aberdare, presented a cheque to Gunner Willie Rowlands, son of Mr & Mrs Rowlands of Catherine Street, who is home on leave. Rev. W. Davies, the pastor, paid a high tribute to the recipient who had been a member of Bethania. Gunner Rowlands had, he said, seen a great deal of fighting, having been out for over two years and a half. He fought at Neuve Chapelle, at the first and second battles of Ypres, and was in the Somme offensive where he was gassed. Gunner Rowlands will return to France on Monday.

On Furlough

Mr T. Marchant Harries, solicitor, is spending six days' leave at his home in Aberdare. His many friends were pleased to see him looking so well. He joined the R.N.A.S., (Royal Naval Air Service), nearly 12 months ago, and for some months was stationed at Crystal Palace.

Girl Guides

Miss Bessie M. Richards, Wenallt, Aberdare, has been appointed District Commissioner of Aberdare and Merthyr in connection with the Baden Powell Girl Guides.

"Blighty Boys" Concert at Penrhiwceiber

The second presentation meeting and concert was held in connection with the Penrhiwceiber and District "Blighty Boys" Welcome Home Fund at Cwm Cynon Hall on Monday evening. The Chairman, Coun. George Hall said he was pleased to preside at a function so worthy of support. Last week six soldiers had been presented at their homes whilst there were seven to be presented that evening. Miss Harris the well-known violinist of Newtown delighted the audience with one of her best efforts. Mrs Hopkins then presented Gunner James Body, R.F.A., with a beautiful wrist watch. Mrs Frank Rathmell then presented Driver J. Perrett with a similar wrist watch and wished him a safe return. Both recipients briefly acknowledged the kindness. Mr Jack Harris, the well-known whistler, was loudly applauded and roars of laughter were caused by the entertainment of Mr Will Watkins, the comedian.

Mr John Picton, in presenting Sgt John Taylor, R.M.F., with a wallet, said that the record of the gallant sergeant was worthy of praise. He had been wounded four times and had been blown up by a trench mortar and buried for 13 and a half hours. The sergeant had been in the same engagements as the late P.S. Dick Thomas, an old Mountain Ash footballer who was unfortunately killed. With his comrades, he had been 33 days in the trenches without a change of clothes, and was in that terrible engagement which will always be recorded in the military history of our country as the Battle of Givenchy. Mr. Picton also mentioned that the recipient had written some 15 verses upon the Lusitania outrage. For gallantry on the field he had been offered a commission, but for private reasons had refused it. In responding, Sgt Taylor expressed his gratitude to all for the kindness he had been shown and hoped every lad would receive equal treatment. The remaining soldiers were presented with watches, and then the meeting closed with the customary votes of thanks.

From the ***Aberdare and Mountain Ash Express***, 18th August

Passchendaele, a Juvenile Eisteddfod and a Bird Show

The battle of Passchendaele (Third battle of Ypres) would start from 31st July. After three and a half months, the brutal fighting accounted for 450,000 casualties (wounded, missing or dead on both sides), while the "gentle" life went on in the Cynon valley as usual in July of that year. There was an annual eisteddfod under the auspices of the Mountain Ash Juvenile Choir held at the Drill Hall, Mountain Ash. The competitions included pianoforte solo under 13, Children's recitation under-13, and Duets for children.

Poultry, cage birds and rabbits were shown at the Mountain Ash Fur and Feather Society at the Grand Pavilion, Mountain Ash. Exhibits came from North and South Wales, and the west of England. The high quality of the entries was a record for Wales.

From the ***Aberdare and Mountain Ash Express*** of 28th July and 11th August.

Dr Shah Imtiaz dies

Shah Imtiaz, who was a doctor and Councillor for 35 years, has died aged 76. He entered local politics in 1973 representing Aberdare East Ward and since then he won nine local government elections. He said that the proudest moment of his life was when he was elected the first Asian mayor in Wales in 1988. In 2009 he was honoured by the Labour Party and was presented with a Merit Award to honour his lifetime's service and commitment. Dr Imtiaz insisted he was not a political animal; he said, "I am a socialist by conscience". Ann Clwyd in a tribute said how greatly she admired him.

CVHS Lecture Programme 2017-2018

21 Sep 2017	AGM followed by an illustrated lecture by Steven Graham on the 1956 National Eisteddfod at Aberdare
19 Oct 2017	Mr. Geoffrey Evans "A slice of Bacon"
16 Nov 2017	Mrs. Polly Davies "Alcatraz"
21 Dec 2017	Chair's Christmas Party at the Cynon Valley Museum, Aberdare
18 Jan 2018	Mr. Howard Mortimer "Paul Robeson"
15 Feb 2018	Mr. Brian Davies "History of Welsh saints"
15 Mar 2018	Mrs. Anne Watts "Henry VII"
19 Apr 2018	Prof. Gareth Williams "Flesh and blood archives-George Ewart Evans"
17 May 2018	Mr. Mike Clubb "Bridgend Arsenal"
21 Jun 2018	Mr. Glyn Williams "The mysteries of the Brunel family"

All the meetings start at 7:15 pm and will be held at the Green Street Chapel Vestry except for the December meeting that will be held at the Cynon Valley Museum, Aberdare.

New Historical Books

- *Koh-I-Noor : The History of the World's Most Infamous Diamond*, by William Dalrymple and Anita Anand.
- *St Petersburg: Three Centuries of Murderous Desire*, by Jonathan Miles.
- *A Bold and Dangerous Family: The Rossellis and the Fight Against Mussolini*, by Caroline Moorehead.
- *The Women Who Flew for Hitler: The True Story of Hitler's Valkyries*, by Clare Mulley. This is about two courageous German women pilots who hated each other.
- *Avenging Angels: Soviet women snipers on the Eastern front (1941-45)*, by Lyuba Vinogradova.
- *Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How it Changed the World*, by Laura Spinney. (This epidemic probably killed more people than the two world wars combined.)
- *The Husband Hunters: Social Climbing in London and New York*, by Anne de Courcy. This book is "an acidly funny account of the unholy alliance between eye-wateringly rich and socially ambitious American women and a clutch of impoverished British peers between 1874 to 1914."

Recent Historical Television Programmes

Bute : the Scot who spent a Welsh fortune, BBC2, the story of John Patrick Crichton Stuart, the 3rd Marquess of Bute, one of the richest men in the late 19-century British Empire, and who rebuilt Cardiff Castle in a fantastical gothic style.

Saving the Coal Exchange: Following Lawrence Kenwright's battle to restore one of Cardiff's most historic buildings. BBC2.

Feedback and Next Issue

I am always happy to receive feedback about the articles in this issue. In the next issue we shall look at the history of The Little Theatre in Aberdare.

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