

MERTHYR TYDFIL 1955-75

ATGOFION O GERDDORIAETH BOBLOGAIDD
MEMORIES OF POPULAR MUSIC

BANDIAU DAWNS MERTHYR TUDFUL DANCE BANDS OF MERTHYR TYDFIL



The Pathfinders yn aduniad Ysgol Cyfarthfa 1949 (Trwy ganiatâd Old Merthyr Tydfil).

The Pathfinders at the Cyfarthfa School reunion 1949 (Courtesy Old Merthyr Tydfil).



The Skymasters yn Neuadd y Glowyr (Cyril Cerana, (3ydd trwmpeid), Bernard Thomas (drymiau), Terry Lyons (Sax ar y dde) (Trwy ganiatâd Janet Thomas).

The Skymasters at the Miners Hall (Cyril Carana (3rd Trumpet), Bernard Thomas (Drums), Terry Lyons (Sax on right) (Courtesy Janet Thomas).



The Quartet Band (Trwy ganiatâd Steve Brewer).

The Quartet Band (Courtesy Steve Brewer).



Bill Evans a'i Fand yn chwarae yn y 60au cynnar (Trwy ganiatâd Old Merthyr Tydfil).

Bill Evans and his Band performing in the early 60s (Courtesy of Old Merthyr Tydfil).

Roedd y 1950au cynnar yn gyfnod o adloniant torfol ym Merthyr Tudful lle gwelwyd cymysgedd o sinema, adloniant 'variety' a gwahanol fath o gerddoriaeth byw gan artistiaid a oedd yn adnabyddus yn genedlaethol fel Ted Heath ac Eric Winstone. Gwelwyd hefyd bandiau lleol a grwpiau ensemble yn perfformio'n rheolaidd yn y dref.

Y ddau fand lleol amlycaf yn ystod y 1950au cynnar oedd The Skymasters Dance Orchestra a The Pathfinders a fu'n perfformio'n rheolaidd yn y dref fel un o fandiau preswyl Neuadd y Glowyr a'r New Drill Hall. Roedd The Skymasters yn perfformio bob nos Fercher a nos Sadwrn yn Neuadd y Glowyr o'r 1950au cynnar ymlaen. Fe'u disgrifiwyd yn y Merthyr Express fel 'The New Merthyr Band Sensation' dan arweiniad Ken Rees – 'Wales' youngest bandleader.' Yn yr un modd cyfeiriwyd at The Pathfinders (gyda lleiswyr) yn y New Drill Hall fel 'Merthyr's Premier Dance Orchestra' a phris mynediad yn 2 swllt. Yn ogystal â'r bandiau lleol, ymwelodd nifer o 'selebs' â Merthyr yn y 1950au cynnar gan ddefnyddio sinemâu lleol fel lleoliadau perfformio. Er enghraifft, ar ddydd Sul 23ain Tachwedd 1952, chwaraeodd un o arweinwyr band enwocaf y 1930au, Geraldo and his Orchestra, yn y Theatre Royal, ynghyd â'r drymiwr Eric Delaney. Defnyddiwyd y Neuadd Ddirwest hefyd ar gyfer nifer o eitemau 'variety' o'r 1950au cynnar – fel Mabel a Stanley Somers, y 'Ventertainer' Harry Benet, yr actor Archie Glen a The Rexanos. Ar 13eg Tachwedd 1950, perfformiwyd Opportunity Knocks, Hughie Green (rhaglen radio yn unig ar y pryd) yno, yn ogystal ag Aled Afrique a nododd gyda balchder ei fod 'from the London Palladium'.

Er bod tipyn o gystadleuaeth i ddenu bandiau i chwarae'n lleol, perfformiodd y cerddorion nodedig Ted Heath and his Orchestra yn Sinema'r Castell ar ddydd Sul 17eg Chwefror 1952 ac yna gwelwyd Eric Winstone yn chwarae am yr ail waith mewn dwy flynedd ar ddydd Sul 13eg Ebrill 1952. O'r pwynt hwn dechreuwyd ei ddefnyddio'n gyson fel man perfformio dros dro. Roedd Harry Roy a'i fand, a chwaraeodd yno ar 27 Ebrill 1952, yn enghraifft arall o artist adnabyddus yn ymweld â'r dref.

Yma, gwelir detholiad o fandiau dawns yn chwarae ym Merthyr rhwng blynyddoedd olaf y 40au hyd at y 60au cynnar.

The early 1950s was a time of mass entertainment in Merthyr Tydfil, a mix of cinema, variety entertainment and live music of various types, featuring nationally known visiting artists such as Ted Heath and Eric Winstone, but also local bands and ensembles performing regularly in the town.

The two most prominent local bands during the early to mid 1950s were The Skymasters Dance Orchestra and The Pathfinders, both of who are seen to be performing regularly in the town, having residencies at The Miners Hall and New Drill Hall respectively. The Skymasters can be seen to be performing in The Miners Hall every Wednesday and Saturday night from the very early 1950s, featured in the Merthyr Express as 'The New Merthyr Band Sensation', led by Ken Rees, described as "Wales' youngest bandleader". Likewise, in an edition of the Merthyr Express in October 1950, Merthyr can be seen to feature The Pathfinders (with vocalists) at The New Drill Hall, billed as "Merthyr's Premier Dance Orchestra", costing 2 shilling to get in and billed as playing "every Saturday night". In addition to the local bands, a number of 'celebrities' visited Merthyr in the early 1950s, all using local cinemas as venues. For example on Sunday Nov 23rd 1952, one of the most famous bandleaders from the 1930s, Geraldo and his Orchestra played at The Theatre Royal – featuring drummer Eric Delaney. Although not used specifically as a popular music venue, The Temperance Hall is also seen to feature 'variety' acts from the early 1950s – such as Mabel and Stanley Somers, the 'Ventertainer' Harry Benet, actor Archie Glen and The Rexanos. On 13th November 1950 Hughie Green's Opportunity Knocks (then just a radio show) also performed there, as did Alex Afrique, who is proudly associated as being "from the London Palladium".

Despite a 'tug and war' battle with other venues outside of Merthyr to attract local bands, the widely acclaimed Ted Heath and his Orchestra played at The Castle Cinema on Sunday February 17th, 1952, followed by Eric Winstone playing there for the 2nd time in two years on Sunday April 13th 1952. This was obviously the start of the venue being used as a 'temporary' performance venue. For example Harry Roy and his band played there on April 27th 1952. Billed as a 'Dixieland group', this was another instance of a well known 'pre rock 'n' roll' artist frequenting the town.

Shown here are a selection of local dance bands playing in Merthyr during the late 40s, through the 50s into the early 60s.