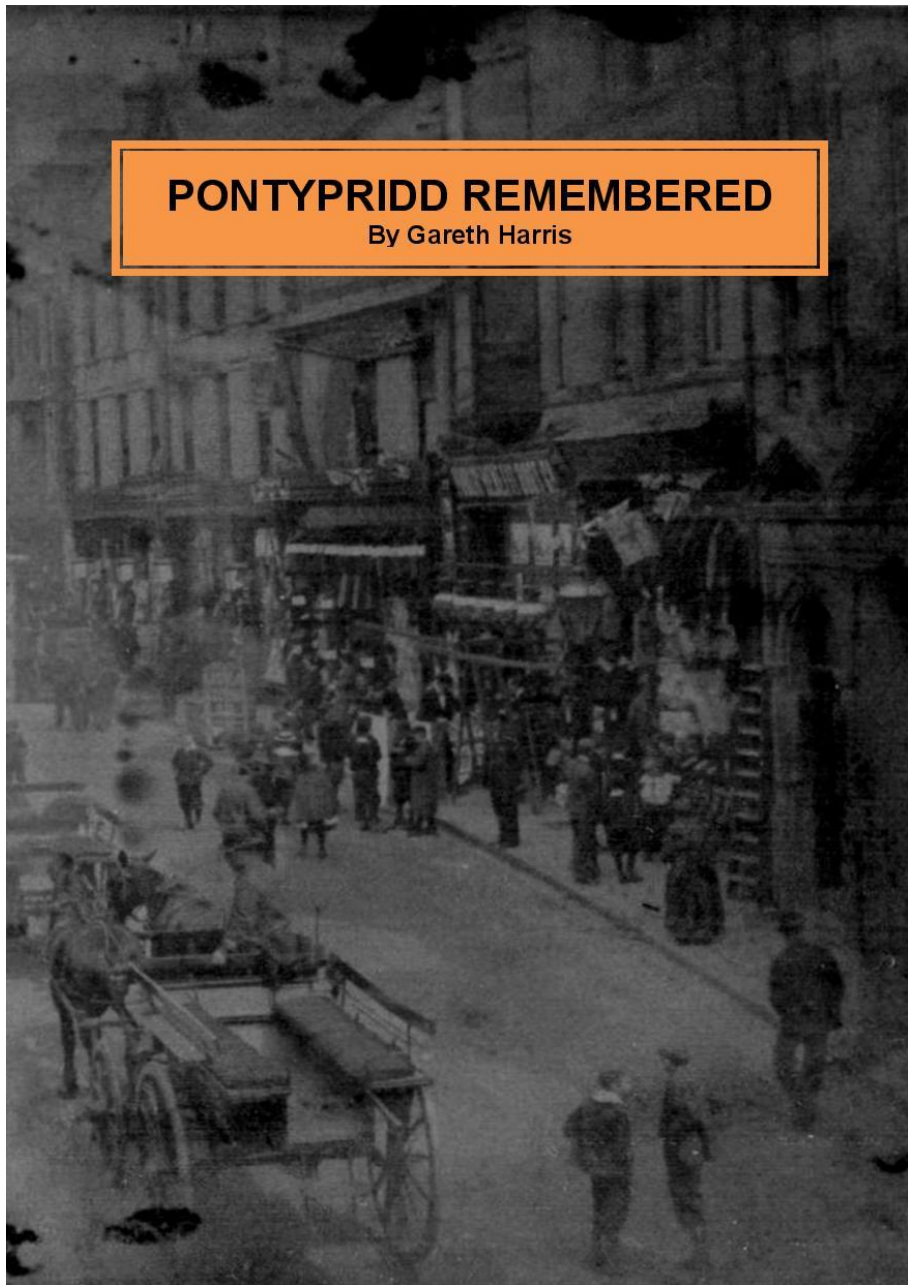


# PONTYPRIDD REMEMBERED

By Gareth Harris



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Within this book you will find stories told in local newspapers by residents of Pontypridd who recall the town in its early years. Some, told over 100 years ago might prove controversial, such as the name of town and when it was actually changed from Newbridge; and even the story of the writing of the Welsh National Anthem. However, each article is printed as it appeared at the time and is open to individual interpretation as sometimes people's memories can play tricks with them.

Along with the stories are interesting newspaper cuttings of important moments in the town's history, such as the opening of the Victoria Bridge (next to the Old Bridge) or the beginning of the first gas lights in the district. Other stories are of a social nature and are insignificant but nevertheless interesting. Some show that crime was just as widespread then as it is today. For Pontypridd and district residents I hope this book gives a glimpse into a past that has long gone.

## Chapter one

In 1800 Newbridge, or Pontypridd as it would later become known, comprised just a few small cottages, and in no way compared to somewhere as large as the nearby village of Llantrisant. With a new canal passing through town came the heavier industries such as coalmining and Iron working and Pontypridd was soon to see an amazing growth in population. A huge influx of workmen and their families came into the district, and the growth of the town would see Taff Street, Mills Street and Market Street become busy thoroughfares. This was a prosperous time for Pontypridd, however, many of these events, good and bad, have been forgotten but were often remembered years later in local newspapers, and it is these tales that take us back to the early years of our town.

### Finding the 'Old Bridge'

A story which was printed in the *'Pontypridd Chronicle'* of August 7th 1891 was a pen portrait of local and national celebrity Gwilym Morganwg, but what is interesting is what it tells of early Pontypridd. The article reads: - Most people think that Pontypridd (loosely translated as 'Bridge of the turf house'), is named after the famous 'Old Bridge' in the town centre, but this is incorrect. Before William Edwards built the 'Old Bridge' in 1756, the town was already known as Pont-y-ty-pridd, and there had been previous bridges in the town, and some believe that the bridge referred to was not over the River Taff, but probably over the River Rhondda. This river flows into the River Taff near the new bridge into Ynysangharad Park.

It is thought that people travelling up the valley from the little town of Cardiff, who wished to make for the wilds of the Rhondda valley, would travel northward through Treforest and into Pontypridd (known by the English speakers as Newbridge) having to cross over the River Rhondda by a bridge that would be very close to the present bridge in Pwllgwaun. Of course, others dispute this, stating that the public could have hugged the left bank of the Rhondda all the way up to Porth, without having to cross it. However, the following article, printed much closer to the event than today, carries another theory: -



Among the celebrated men of modern times, who selected Pont-y-ty-pridd as their home we find Gwilym Morganwg, the druid, the bard, the archaeologist, and the superior reader, a man well-known all over the Principality in the beginning of the present century. Before we go into the particulars of the history of genius of the subject of our sketch, we are inclined to take a retrospect of the place in its ancient form, when it was only a small village, when the Menai Bridge was forged and constructed here to unite Caernarfon and Anglesey, and remains today the most stupendous structure.

As our hero was attracted here by marrying the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richards of the New Inn, it is natural for us to begin here. The village of Pont-y-ty-pridd was small and had no market place in it although it was situated in a prosperous farming district. Llantrisant was then the market town. The landowner of the New Inn with some of his neighbouring friends conceived the idea that Pont-y-ty-pridd was conveniently situated for holding a weekly market; not that Llantrisant should be deprived of their long established market, but to maintain the two without injuring either. The landlord at that time was Mr. Griffiths (Dr. Richard Griffiths), Glyncoch, or 'Griffiths, Gelli.' An application was made to him for a suitable building with this object, but no encouragement could be had, for he had no confidence in the success of the undertaking. But Mr. Richards was not to be disheartened by this, in such an agricultural district as the village was situated. Hence the market was held at the taproom of the New Inn weekly for twelve months. It was chiefly a corn market.

At last the land owner was convinced when he saw the amount of business transacted in that small place, and erected a small building for the purpose, on the spot where the mouth of the arcade stands at present, in close proximity with the New Inn. The lower part of the building was used as a shop by Mr. Thomas Morris, and the upper part with steps leading into it, was the market building. So successful did the enterprise prove that the place became too small and another building was erected. This was chiefly for the sale of oats. Perhaps the inhabitants were as fond of their oatmeal as the people of the present day are of tea and coffee; and in this they were quite as wise as their generation. The position of this additional market was where Mr. Key's shop stands at present. For a long time Pont-y-ty-pridd was a prosperous and popular corn-market town.

There is one thing mentioned in this connection which does not reflect any credit on the then landowner. When he saw the success of the market speculation by Mr. Richards, he rewarded him by increasing his rent double of what it was before. Landowners are not always using the best means to promote the prosperity of their estates.

Before we enter on the main subject of our narrative we are inclined to linger about the old rustic village, not the present Pontypridd, but the old Pont-y-ty-pridd. This was the original name and it is a great pity that this should ever have been changed for the meaningless word that now designates the town. Why sacrifice sense to euphony for the mere gratification of the English ears? The old name, Pont-y-ty-pridd, is indicative of the origin of the place. It means the bridge of the turf house. This turf house was a kind of hut, and was called in those early days Ty'r Dywoden. This name indicated the nature of the soil used in its erection. It was a hut built with clods of turf at the entrance of the old bridge then used to cross the river – not the present one-arched bridges of the eminent Edwards the builder.

These houses were numerous in Wales in olden times, and there are some of them still remaining. They are sometimes called L'yunos. It appears to have been an old custom in Wales, before the existence of the land grabber called 'Lord of the Manor' for individuals to take possession of a plot of ground on a common, the land of the people – and if they could erect the building in one night they established their claim to a freehold turf house with extensive garden. The appropriator, however, was very careful to remain indoors for some time for fear of an usurper. (Displacer). The Ty Pridd or Ty'r Dywoden by the bridge belonged to Mr. Griffiths, Glyncoch. This turf-house was inhabited 100 years ago (1791). The old people of the town remember an eccentric woman who was born in this very house; her name was Martha Morgan or Martha Trap. She was a well known character and very strange in her manners. A pint of beer and a long pipe disclosed her marvellous elegance. Even the cattle would feel its power and deem obedience a point of discretion.

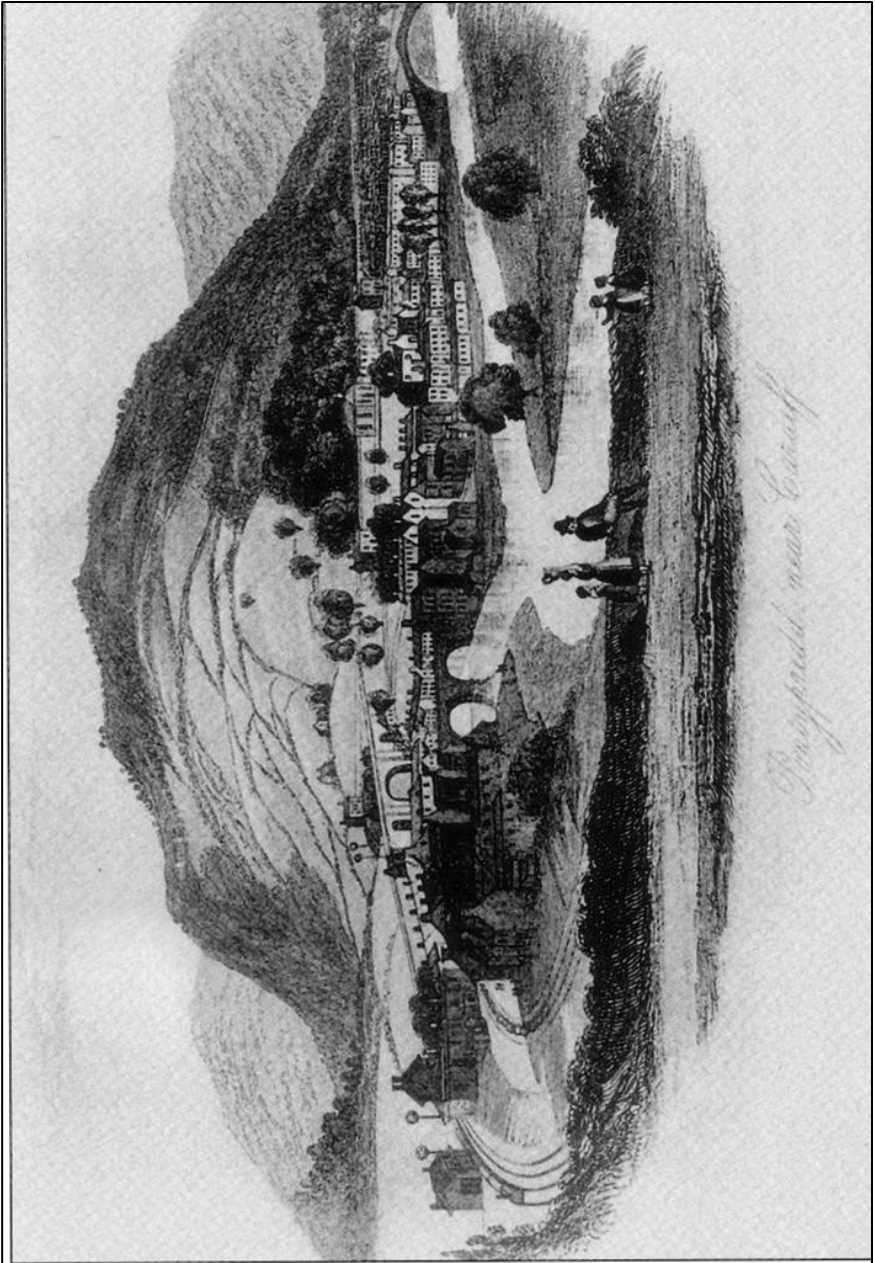
Where was this old bridge turf house which gave name to the town? And what kind of bridge was it? The Taff had very few bridges in those early days. The bridge was not situated where the present old bridge now

stands, but lower down. The turf-house was on the spot where the present brewery stands, and the bridge was across the river on that spot. The turf-house at the entrance to the bridge was probably the only house in the place, for there was not a village here for shelter or habitation.

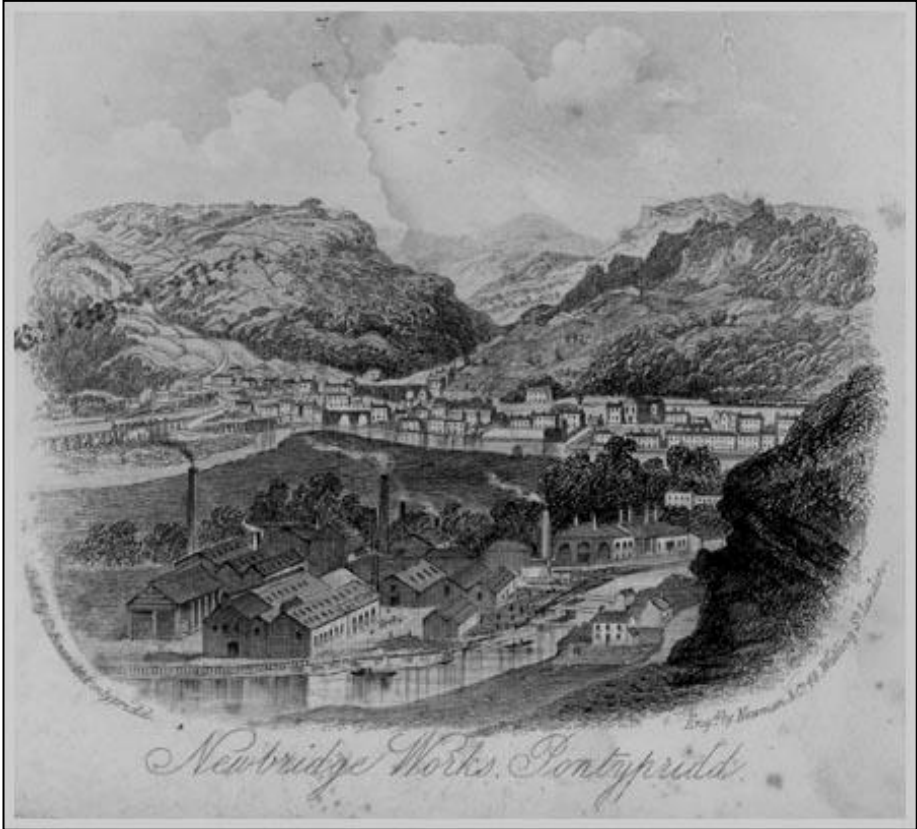
In this solitary position this bridge was the only chance to cross the River Taff. The turf-house on Pont-y-ty-pridd being the only halfway-house, many a pilgrim had here a night's lodging in the lonely days of our forefathers. Little did they dream of a vast increase of the place a mere century after they would be removed from the scene. Mrs. Stevens, an old inhabitant of the town, tells me that her grandmother had many a night's lodging at Ty'r Dywoden. It was a characteristic in those days, to entertain freely and kindly a stranger for the night. In this solitary position the Pont-y-ty-pridd is very significant as a halfway house for a tired traveller, as safe shelter for the agricultural servant or master on his return after delivering loads of corn. At a later period this building formed a storehouse for Mr. Griffiths, the Maltster of Gelli. Hither the farmers brought their grain and here the merchants met with them with the money. It was the Pont-y-ty-pridd exchange of the end of the eighteenth century.

The bridge remains to be discovered. The readers must not raise their expectations too high. This structure was only an old unsightly bridge crossing from the turf-house to the Ynysangharad side. The foundations of the bridge were seen by people who were old inhabitants of the town, when they had their play-days and swimming pranks some sixty years ago. The river in this place was running in three separate branches. Sir Benjamin Hall righted the streams by building dams on the side to draw the water into one central channel, and to avoid the intrusion of the ferocious Taff. The old bridge was supported by abutments at each end and wooden props on the dry land between the streams. There were times when the river overflowed its banks and carried away the bridge and its supports.

This suggested the idea of the one-arched bridge to avoid the catastrophe often witnessed by the parishioners in stormy winters. We should like to give our reminiscences of Graig Anna and take our stand on Ty Draw farm, Clarence (Hotel) at present, and notice that the barn on one of the fields, the only building from Ty Draw Cychy, was near Treforest. Here Anna and



Engraver's print of Pontypridd C.1865



**A print of the Newbridge (chain) works C.1865. This was without doubt a major influence in turning Ponty-y-ty-pridd from a hamlet into a bustling town.**

her cattle occupied the same premises as for residents. The idea would shock some of the thousands now living in comfortable mansions on Anna's land all over the Graig. We should also like to describe the ironworks on the Mill Field, called formerly Cae'rgwaith, but space will not permit.

To this town of Pont-y-ty-pridd Gwilym Morganwg was attracted. Readers of the present day will ask: - "Who is Gwilym Morganwg?" This question would not be asked in the first decades of the century, for the whole country was well acquainted with the name, and genius and mental energy of the celebrated Druid of the New Inn, Pontypridd. His name will indicate that he was a native of Glamorgan, but this was not the case. He was born at Melin Callan, Llanthetty, Breconshire. About 1807 Gwilym Morganwg moved to Pontypridd. He married, as was mentioned before, Miss Richards, New Inn, and after a few changes in life, he settled here as the landlord of the present Butcher's Arms, then called the Mason's Arms. After the death of his wife he removed from the Mason's Arms to the New Inn.

#### The New Inn

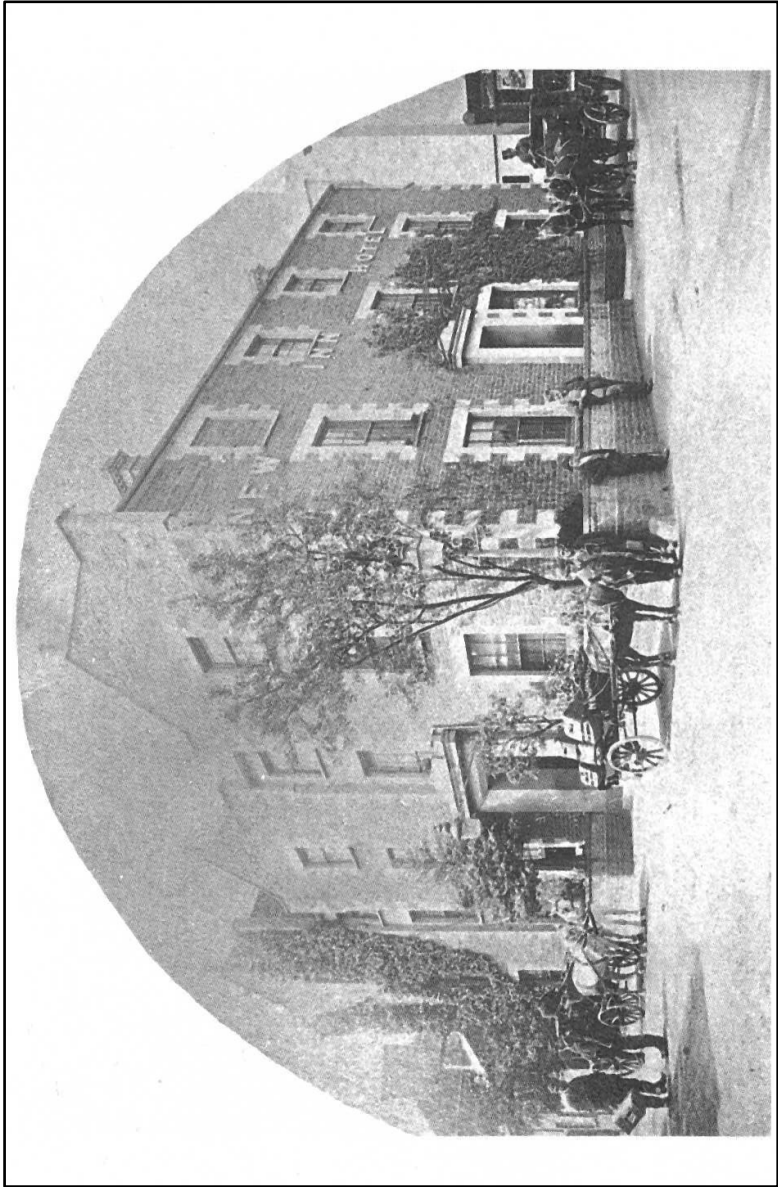
For many of the younger generation of Pontypridd in 2016, the New Inn, Taff Street, is probably unknown. It stood at the New Inn Precinct where W. H. Smith now has its shop. The hotel, until it was demolished in 1981, was for many years the premier place to stay when visiting Pontypridd, and hosted all sorts of events, including receptions given to the New Zealand (All Blacks) and Australian rugby union and rugby league teams. A local man writing in a local newspaper in 1892 told the following intriguing story: - The first in importance in the list of Inns and Hotels in the district is the New Inn. The origin of the New Inn was a building with a thatched roof. At that time Pontypridd was the chief Corn Market of a wide district, and Wednesday, market day, was the only day that sufficient business was done to enable tradesmen to pay their rents and keep their places open for the rest of the week. This thatched building gave way to a more pretentious looking structure, which from its comparatively huge dimension, and as marking a step in the historical development of infantile Pontypridd was called the New Inn. It was then, and is now, the aim of the ground landlord to make the New Inn the premier hotel of the town, and there is no doubt that it has always been considered the principal Inn and

commercial house of the district. In 1852 the tenant of the New Inn was one Catherine Davies, of whom little is known. In May 1857, the New Inn received as its tenant the late Mr. John George Cousins, a native of Suffolk, but who came to Pontypridd from Gloucester. He had two children, one, Miss Cousins, who afterwards became the wife of Mr. Thomas, solicitor, who with the exception of Mr. E. C. Spickett was the oldest practicing solicitor in the role of the legal profession in Pontypridd.

The son was of a bright, fair complexion, a curly-haired lad, who developed into Mr. Harry Cousins, solicitor, Cardiff, and who is nearly if not quite at the head of the profession in that thriving town. Mr. Cousins proved to be an admirable landlord and although he knew nothing of the Welsh language at a time when Welsh was more general than it is now, was much liked by the old farmers who visited the house.

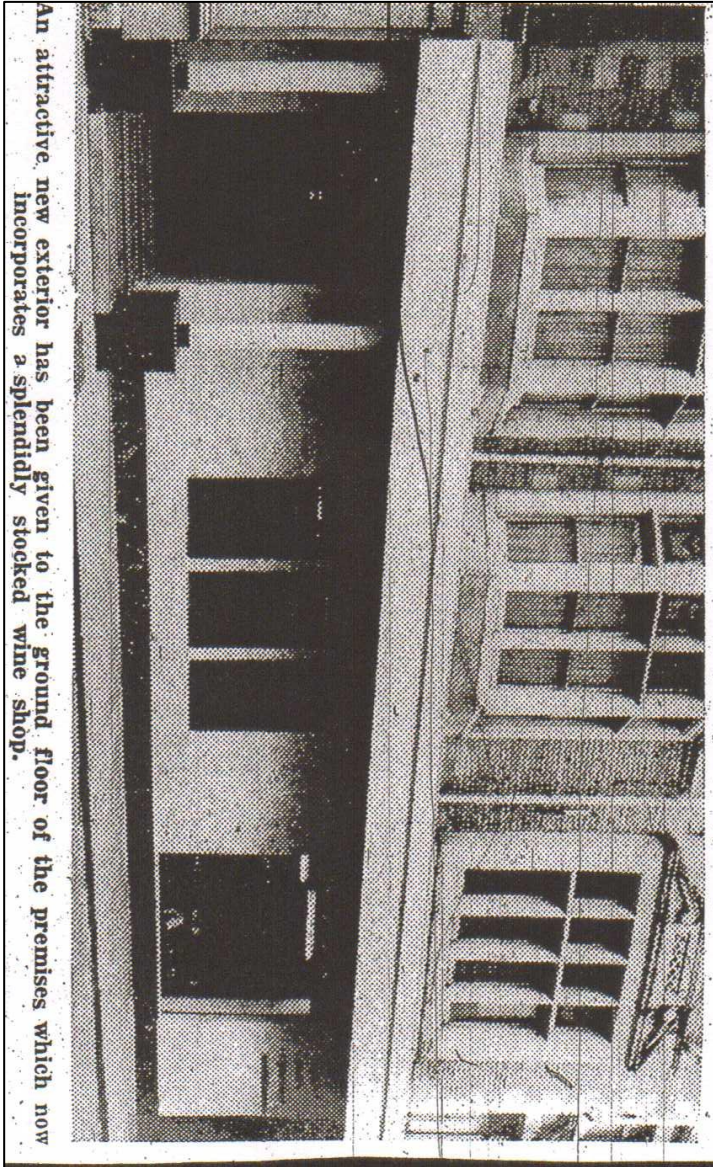
At this time the smoke-room was well patronized every evening, and at the end of the table sat the genial landlord. Around the table were a collection of church wardens with a brass tobacco box containing tobacco which was supposed to be opened by dropping a halfpenny into a slit, or slot as it is now called in connection with automatic machines. Ways were found of opening the hatch and withdrawing the half penny, and of taking from the box more than the regulation pipe full. This was of course done by men who would have blushed to the roots of their hair had they been detected in this act of petty and dishonest meanness. The result was that the box was ultimately withdrawn and a customer impecunious in the matter of tobacco had to order a "screw" and pay for it.

The first bacchanalian (follower of Bacchus; participate in drunken, riotous celebration) club that was established in the New Inn was the Cowhide Club. This was after Mr. Cousins' advent. The first tenant of the Glyntaff Cemetery was a 'cowhide.' Alas for the witticisms and jokes and irrepressible merriment which marked the eventful history of the jovial spirits which made the room roar with their mirth, even the chamber in which they held high-jinx is wiped-out. The old Smoke room at the New Inn is but a dream of the past, and the place that once knew it, now knows it no more. During Mr. Cousin's time the bar was altered from a snuggerly to a kind of open parlour.



**Not the original building, but an early photograph of the New Inn when Taff Street still had trees growing in it.**





An attractive, new exterior has been given to the ground floor of the premises which now incorporates a splendidly stocked wine shop.

Exterior of the New Inn in 1963

Attached to the New Inn was what was known as the Long Room, in which concerts, meetings and other gatherings of a public character were held. Looking at the room from a modern point of view it was a small chamber. Under the hands of the builders it was deemed necessary to meet the growth of the times and this room was rebuilt, giving one with a greater length and greater width than the one it displaced. A change of name was demanded also, and so the "Long Room" dropped into fitting oblivion, and the "Assembly Room" reigned in its stead. In this room and the one attached to the White Hart Hotel, the petty sessions of the district were held. The sessions of Llanwonno and Ystradyfodwg in the New Inn were held with Mr. Lewis of Merthyr the magistrate's clerk. Those in the White Hart Hotel were where Mr. Stockwood was clerk to the magistrates. Mr. Lewis was a most painstaking clerk and most unassuming and amiable man. He has passed the great divide for many years now. Mr. Stockwood still acts, and though in his 16<sup>th</sup> lustrum (80<sup>th</sup> year) a wonderful illustration of vigorous health and patent industry, under a load of work which of that of the town I speak is but feeble in comparison, though then in the hands of two officials.

The New Inn, however, and with it the Long Room, would ever be connected in memory with the most remarkable event that ever stirred local society to its depths. I mean the murder of Miss Jane Lewis, of Tyntyla Farm, Ystrad Rhondda in 1861. The occurrence created a profound sensation and in its incidence brought out the central clannish nature of the Celtic character.

The scene as portrayed then was worthy of the special attention of the pencil of Rembrandt. The prisoner, after a remarkable defence from Mr. Verity created an immense sensation by falling helpless with the swish of his handkerchief into the arms of a policeman and was committed for trial. For want of an important link in the damnatory evidence the grand jury threw out the bill. His return to the valley was hailed with vociferous acclamations by the many who believing him innocent, and had liberally subscribed to his defence. Well, the town was making progress, though that progress was but slow.

The arrangements of the New Inn needed overhauling. First came the Assembly Room, then the New Bar, then as a distinct advantage in

Pontypridd's civilization, a Billiard Room; and then a storey of bedrooms to accommodate the increasing commercial element. This advance was considered equal to any prospective emergency, and matters went smoothly on until Mr. Cousins' death. The obsequies of the popular landlord of the New Inn were attended by a large number of mourners from within and without the town. He lies in Glyntaff Churchyard, leaving the memory behind him of a fair, straightforward, honest spoken man, who always meant what he said and said what he meant.

After the death of Mr. Cousins, the widow decided about relinquishing further connection with the duties of a landlady to a public hostelry, which duties she had so excellently discharged for many years. As a matter of fact, the New Inn was on the market. The competitors, anxious to fill the role of "mine host," of the principal hotel in the town, were many. Ultimately, Mr. Williams Morris, the Welsh Harp (Hotel), entered into possession. Now, Mr. W. Morris had a successful business career in Aberdare that gives its name title to a local peer, and when he took of the reins of government, a new era was anticipated, an era more in accordance with the unblushing democratic creed that is growing rampant.

The old snuggeries of the cosy Inn were fast being swept away; the quiet smoke-room where congenial souls could smoke the calumet (pipe) of peace; where the surroundings were not adverse to gentle arguments on current topics; where profanity of language did not raise its repulsive head, and where foul words would have died on the lips in the very act of being formulated; the snuggeries and the rooms of the old Inn this time were rapidly disappearing before the blossom of an age of progress in the form of the American Bar, otherwise called vaults. It is a matter of little doubt that these vaults, or American Bars, have, in their tendencies of associations, rapidly demoralized rather than elevated those who frequent them. Without going into the moral aspect of the question of bars versus smoke-rooms, I have to call attention to the fact that when Mr. Morris became landlord of the New Inn, there was still a 'smoke-room' and a 'coffee room.' The new occupant with his Aberdare experience saw that by means of vaults valuable auxiliary could be found in aid of additional revenue.

To the surprise of not a few, the smoke-room was remorselessly swept away, and behold in its place, but covering wider ground 'Vaults.' Females

eagerly availed themselves of a separate compartment in these vaults, to unsex themselves to their hearts content, and the facilities thus offered increased the unfortunate constituency, until drunken women on the street in the eye of night, no longer brought a blush of shame to every manly countenance. Of course I do not wish to say that no drunken women had disfigured our streets before, but I feel strongly that these vaults gave an impetus to the downward progress of many a woman, who, had it not been for the facilities offered by these bars with their private compartments 'for females only,' would have themselves been saved from ruin, and their families from misery and disgrace. When these vaults were first opened many of the habitués felt that an act of desecration had been committed, and they would read on the wall over the vaults, the words "Ichabod!" (The glory has departed).

By and by the vaults settled down into an institution of the town, and imitators spread on all sides, until the American Bar had completely displaced the domestic and comfortable arrangements of the old regime. As may be opined from what I have already said, Mr. Morris had a keen eye to business sentiment with him was mercilessly sacrificed to hard metallic fact. He had profound faith in the "almighty Dollar" and its potentialities. Like the Roman proconsuls who had their provinces for a period, and made the best of the time to amass a competency, Mr. Morris had the New Inn for a set number of years, and he prudently availed himself of every possible means to make hay while the sun shone. He also rented the Clarence Hotel, and to encourage custom, established a collection of monkeys in the bar of that Inn. The Clarence turned out to be a "white elephant," and for the monkeys there was an exodus. One or two strayed into the vaults, but the manners and customs of the anthropoids were too pronounced for the atmosphere of the vaults, and they were abolished.

When Mr. Morris lost his wife he lost practically more than his other self. The New Inn, which the owners always desired should be the first commercial house in the town, was rapidly losing its well-won reputation for the want of a quick eye of the woman to overlook, and the deft hand of a woman to direct everything. When he in the fullness of time had to resign his direction of the destiny of the hotel, it was then seen how acutely he had suffered for the want of his late partner, a most amiable woman and affectionate mother.

But a day was now coming when the superiority of a woman as a hostess of a large establishment was to receive a conclusive and unquestionable demonstration over the pretensions of a man as host. The New Inn was evidently suffering from premature decay. Its prestige was waning; its traditions were dimmed; and its future seemed in the rapid structural changes made by similar edifices and rivals in the town, to be hopeless.

But the New Inn, like a Phoenix from its ashes, rose to a newer and more vigorous life, to retake its place as the premier hotel of advancing Pontypridd, under the benignant (kind) yet vigorous way of that most genial and most attractive of hostesses – Mrs. Miles. Times have changed and the New Inn is changed with it. If the original dispenser of refreshment to man and beast under the thatched roof of the primeval New Inn were to rise and gaze at the commodious structure, externally and internally at the New Inn today, he would if he would cry – strange! Wonderful! In concluding the reminiscences of the New Inn, I express to beg a wish that many years may yet be in reserve for the admirable lady of that hostelry in which to reap the rich harvest fairly due to her for her indomitable enterprise, and for her true conception of the onerous duties she so excellently discharges.

### Stalwarts of the Butchers Arms Hotel

In 1892 this following article also appeared in a local newspaper about another hotel that had been established amongst the first in the town: - At the entrance to the Pontypridd Park on the town side, almost adjacent to the New Inn, lay the Butchers Arm Hotel, one of the oldest sites of any building in Pontypridd. The beginning of the Hotel are difficult to discover, but no doubt there was a public house there before 1800. Indeed, it might come as a surprise to learn that it was originally called the Mason's Arms, from when it must have been one of the small cottages in Pont-y-ty-pridd that sold ale and later was rebuilt several times to a bigger size. (The Butcher's Arms Hotel can still be seen set in stone lettering just below the gable roof of the HSBC Bank now facing Taff St).

Iolo Morganwg (real name Edward Williams), a druid famous throughout Wales, was for a time the landlord of what would later become the Butchers Arms.

When exactly the 'Mason's' became the 'Butchers' is unknown, but already there was a small market taking place behind it (where the rear of B & M's now stands), that at the time rivalled the small cattle and corn market that was running alongside the New Inn opposite.

To get the flavour of this particular public house we have to refer to another writer. The following is a superb account of the Butchers Arms between 1857 and 1892, written by someone in December 1892 under the pseudonym of 'Mahatma.'

"Standing isolated and nearly opposite the New Inn was some years ago a long row of buildings known to farmers and the country around as the Butchers Arms. Why this hostelry was christened the Butchers Arms is some matter of surmise. It could not be because most of its frequenters were Butchers. As a matter of fact when Pontypridd was regarded as the market town of the district, the somewhat ancient looking structure was the headquarters of rustic interest, the stables being crowded with all kinds of steeds of varying temper and spirit, removed for the day from crowds of vehicles mostly of strong build, which surrounded the hotel like bees around honey. From this fact the title seemingly more appropriate and fitting for the Butchers' was the 'Farmers' Hotel. Welsh farmers are a thrifty as well as a hardworking class, and their headquarters the Butchers' was selected probably for two reasons over its more potential rival, the New Inn. First the Wednesday ordinary beer was cheaper, and secondly every member of the establishment spoke Welsh.

I have stated that the Butchers' was an isolated building. At the time of which I speak the assembly room and the vaults under it at one end had no existence; while the London & Provincial Bank building had not yet been erected by the West of England & South Wales Bank directors. The site of that structure was an open space crudely fenced off from the main road, and which led to the cattle market in the rear of the hotel. The leafy glade, one of the prettiest bits of greenery in and around Pontypridd, which runs along the opposite bank of the River Taff had not yet been planted.

The landlady of the Butchers' was a widow called Mrs. Jones, a Welsh woman with the Cymric prejudices of her nationality and sex combined. Mrs. Jones prior to taking the Butchers' was landlady of the Colliers' Arms in Mill Street. During her widowhood John Jones, a ganger or gaffer on the

Rhondda Vach railway line, used to make the house his headquarters. Mr. Jones came from Caerleon on Usk, and often in subsequent days used to boast that he was the principal hand in carrying out the construction of the line from Porth to Ferndale. Being a neat and tidy-looking man and a widower to boot, he soon won the heart of the widow and on his marrying took up his residence at, but not the control of, the business of the Butchers'. The house (around 1852) acquired a high reputation for the capital fare provided for its customers on market days, while the reasonableness of the tariff made the fare acceptable, especially to those hungry souls who wanted as much as could be had for as little as could be paid for it.

The only rooms available for customers were the taproom and kitchen. On Saturday nights, however, the members of a money club and friends who were invited, used to sit, smoke and discuss in a narrow ill-ventilated clubroom upstairs, converted into bedrooms after the building of the new Assembly Room. The room now next to the vaults was seldom used even for the favoured customers. As time rolled on, the attitude of Mrs. Jones towards strange customers became distinctly hostile, she was wedded to all faces and all languages, and treated with scant courtesy the invading sais (English) who came from abroad and ignored "yr hen Cymraeg" (the old Welsh).

This attitude of hostility was still more accentuated when Mrs. Jones found herself, from gradual paralysis to be propelled to have recourse to a kind of carriage by mean of which she could go from one room to the other. Every evening in the present bar, quite a different room then, was to be seen the crippled landlady sitting in her wheelchair at a round table partly covered with coppers, the contributions levied upon thirsty customers. As the rear-engine, the source of supply was in the same room, where there was no possible chance, of any of the girls, had they been so minded, appropriating the price of a pint to themselves or, in a spirit of lost lofty liberality, giving a pint to their swains, and evading successfully payment for the same. The government of the Butchers' in the hands of Mrs. Jones, was a sort of irregular tyranny. Some of her vagaries were irresistibly comical. When her temper was ruffled, she would suddenly order all the customers in the house to quit, have the gas extinguished, and send the astonished servants summarily to bed, at the untimely hour of eight in the evening! Her

autocratic demands were invariably obeyed. And yet she was, in spite of her eccentricities which her helplessness probably did much to foster, a kind enough woman in her way. In her early days she was a very smart and active woman, the beau ideal of cleanliness and as bright as a new pin. No doubt her inability to get about as was her want to do, soured her temper which the negligence and gross slatternliness (untidiness) did not improve. She had in every way outgrown her time, and exhausted the patience of her customers who naturally objected to being made the victim of her petulant outbursts of temper. She eventually died.

It is but fair to Mr. Jones to state that during Mrs. Jones' unfortunate incapacity from business that he treated his wife with every consideration and respect, and ceased to remonstrate only when he found interposition useless. When Mr. Jones now had free scope as landlord of the Butchers' a change was apparent and immediate. Alteration of the room with its inevitable round table and coppers, to the bar as it is now, the taproom and in other directions placed at the disposal of the frequenters of the house, resulted in a much larger amount of accommodation. The kitchen was converted into a capital smokeroom, while the taproom was made more comfortable, although at the sacrifice of space. A room beyond the staircase and pantry was available on Wednesdays, and the side room next to the vaults was more frequently utilized as a private room for select visitors than it had ever been before. The enclosed space at the rear of the hotel had been converted into a cattle and sheep market, with every prospect of success, until the town hall and Market Co's scheme interposed and bought up the landlord's propriety rights.

Among the regular visitors at the Butcher's Arms after Mrs. Jones, was a strong contingent from Llantrisant, the principal figure being Mr. William T. Evans, the father of the present Lord Mayor of London. William Evans was a humorist after the Mark Twain type, and his sallies and dry comments kept the room in a continual uproar, without leaving to the victim a sting behind to rankle and annoy. There were Tom Fowler and his brother Bill, two sturdy types from the North-country, brought to this part of Wales with the necessities of railway construction. Both were exceptionally quiet whose thinking powers were as active as those of the phlegmatic Dutch, who smoked their pipes and sipped their gin and water with continuity marvellous to behold.



On all questions of railway contracting they were fully recognized as authorities, whose ruling was indisputable. The only appeal from the dictum (pronouncements) of one brother was to the unquestionable decision of the other. Whatever Tom would say Bill would endorse. Bill in his turn received where necessary a verbal certificate of approval from Tom. They were a remarkable pair these Fowler brothers, big of bone, slow of thought, sparing of speech, and dogmatic in opinion. I see them now as it were, sitting on Wednesdays in the smokeroom, which was sacred only to market days, occasionally the subject of Mr. W. Evans and his wit, though totally unconscious of the principal of selection which drew to them the harmless, stingless, albeit comical hints of the stalwart joker from the old borough of the three saints.

Another importer from the North was John Calvert, a railway proprietor, and afterwards a colliery proprietor (founder of the Gyfellion collieries). He was a man of strong impulses, strong temper, strong feeling and strong language. The Fowler brothers were from Lincolnshire, Jake Harwood was from Yorkshire, and the three were intimately connected in Pontypridd as pioneers of the coal trade (the Fowler Brothers at one time owning the Maritime Colliery).

Another well known figure was Lemuel Howard, the then district surveyor who had in his charge at that time the parishes of Gelligaer, Garth, Glynrhymney, Llanwonno, Ystradfordwg and Rhigos; an enormous area to supervise and he had to keep a horse to do it on a salary of £118 per annum! I remember him as the genial and imperturbable man whose quiet wit sufficiently rippled on the surface to enable his friends to see and enjoy.

Others I could name who made this room a kind of discussion Forum, and conferred a kind of historic renown in the records of the Butcher's Arms. Among those who figured conspicuously in the war of words, and not the least among the intelligent giants who contended in the dialectic arena was Mr. Jacob Morgan. On the subject of geology, chemistry and logic, Mr. Jacob Morgan was considered unapproachable even as one against many. He had a fluent command of words, and a very hot temper, which was effectively used as a formidable weapon of warfare against the few who did not presume to know something about the above triad (group of three). As a rule there was always something in what he said, though to get at that

something was like starting for Cardiff from Treherbert, Aberdare and Merthyr! If he was not witty in himself, he was certainly many a Wednesday night in the long ago, the cause of wit. Dear old Jacob, god bless him, is, everyone who knows him will be happy to hear, although in his 80<sup>th</sup> year, both mentally and physically active and is ready for an argument on the three points now strengthened by a fourth, on the laws of England, as ever he was.

Most of the members of the Pontypridd “discussion forum” as the meeting place may fittingly be called, have passed over. However varied memories associated with this smoking room, in the cause of free speech and interchange of ideas, the process had about it a singular irregularity as compared with the more grave, systematic and dignified proceedings of a Debating Society whose members met and discussions took place in the spacious and commodious Assembly Room over the existing vaults. The operations of this society continued for three successive years under the same presidency, that of Mr. Archibald Allan McLucas (who later founded the Pontypridd Herald newspaper), and the muster roll must have numbered about 100 members, including amongst them the highest intelligence of the town. Such a society had never found its equal prior to its formation and has never seen its equal since its dissolution. As a potent engine for good, it is impossible to form an opinion of the benefits of it conferred upon its members, and upon the town generally. That some influence was the result of its operations is admitted by the wish occasionally expressed that the old Debating Society was revived.

The first paper that opened the first debate of the first session was on the subject of “Hydrophobia” (fear of water) and the attempt to read it was after some time successfully achieved by the presumed author, Mr. John Calvert. This is the same gentleman to whom reference has already been made. Not only the matter from its importance, and the manner of the author, from its easy disregard of meanings, created a sensation, the train of surrounding circumstances adding to the intensity of interest which concentrated itself on the initial paper of the session. Mr. Calvert had the paper printed in pamphlet form, and as no responsible reader had been engaged to ensure correction and revision, the document was open to considerable criticism. Notwithstanding, with all its fault and sound imperfection, a copy was forwarded to reach a cabinet minister, and also to

the Bishop of the diocese, Dr. Sullivan, who acknowledged the receipt on a postcard, and which was at once by the enthusiastic author of the paper placed in the hands of Mr. Forrest, Treforest, the photographer, who was instructed to strike off as many photos as there were members of the society, so that each member might be the happy possessor of a copy of his Lordship's reply.

It is sad to reflect upon the perversity of some minds and their unwillingness to do justice to genuine merit. Some carping critics whispered after a time that Mr. Calvert had purchased an encyclopedia for the purpose of looking for Hydrophobia under the letter "H" and had bodily copied the whole article and had read as his own! This was a cruel exposure, the more cruel, inasmuch as there was an undoubted proof that plagiarism on a magnificent scale had been practiced possibly with more profitable results to the members who were present than it had been treated to by the remarks native and original by Mr. Calvert himself on this important subject.

And so the story ends, the Butchers Arms was again renamed in 1897, as the Park Hotel, by which time Billiard tables were beginning to appear and made their first appearance in the town at that establishment. The story of the Butchers Arms is a large one, too much for us to record, but it will forever be remembered for one thing. Note: - The inaugural meeting of the Pontypridd R. F. C. took place on the premises, though the exact date is unknown, so even today we have something to thank the Butchers Arms for!

### Glamorgan Reminiscences

In 1915, D. T. Alexander, in a book of the name above published in the same year wrote this small item: - In the earlier part of the time of which I have spoken it only consisted of a few streets, the principal of which were Mill St.; Taff Street, Market Square, and High Street, running up to the railways station. In the market square stood the old market place. It is not where the present market is, but immediately adjoining the stable yard of the New Inn Hotel. The market building itself consisted of a square erection with a kind of arched roof. On the ground floor was held the market, and from here steps ascended at each side to the dais above,

whence you entered a large room which was used for general purposes, and which was covered by a stone-tiled roof. This old building was in the course of time superseded by the present new market buildings, built higher up the street, and as a consequence, the other buildings were pulled down and the shops now forming the frontage of the arcade were erected on the site. I happened to be the fortunate individual to be privileged to have that site leased to me, to pull down the old buildings and to erect the new shops which were placed in substitution.

As I am referring to the old market at Pontypridd, I may as well relate a curious story in connection with it. The late Dr. William Cook, of Pontypridd, was always considered a wonderful horseman. In the course of conversation on one occasion at the New Inn Hotel (in the 1850s) the proprietor of which at that time was host Cousins – Dr. Cook undertook to ride his horse up one side of the steps at the old Pontypridd market hall and down the other side. The wager was made and of course it was felt that it was impossible for anyone to accomplish this feat.

Dr. Cook undertook to do the thing he felt in condition to perform the task, but upon the understanding that no intimation should be given to the general public. One market day, much to the surprise of everyone, Dr. Cook appeared on the scene and commenced to ascend the steps on his horse. Attempts were made to stop him, it being thought that he had temporarily lost his senses. In defiance of this, however, Dr. Cook rode his horse to the dais (platform) at the stop of the steps, politely took his hat off and bowed to the lookers on and then descended again on the other side without any mishap, and so won his wager.

An Early history of the Rhondda Valley  
Pontypridd Baptist centenary 1810-1910

In the above book written by the Rev. B. D. Johns, Pontypridd, in 1899 he gives a brief account of Newbridge: -

The Rhondda Valley in olden times was pasture solitudes, flanked by wooded heights. About the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, coal was worked in the Pontypridd District, but on a very small scale. Such coal was carried in a wheelbarrow to Cardiff by “Will Rhyd Helyg,” Pontypridd.

Coal was worked at the time in the form of levels and sometimes in the form of a small pit by a winch. The mineral was sent to Cardiff on donkeys and mules. This was a step in the advancements on the sacks and the wheelbarrows of “Will Rhyd Helyg” a century ago. About 1810 there were only a few houses in the part of the village of Pontypridd, situated in the Parish of Llanwonno (the Mill St. area). They were Ynysgyfilon, Tifica, the Butchers Arms, the New Inn, Tommy Morris’ shop, and the old Mill. In the part of the village situated in the parish of Eglwysilan was the old Ynysangharad Road, the old ‘White Horse Inn’ (afterwards called the Queens Hotel), Coedpenmaen Farmhouse, and a few other dwellings. The population was small and scattered both in the village and the district.

Then, there was not sufficient coal – fifteen tons a week – raised in the whole of the Rhondda valley to supply the Ynysangharad Works at Pontypridd (Brown & Lenox) and an addition quantity of coal was brought from Maesmawr, Craig-yr-Allt and Merthyr. Some coal was brought from the mountain about halfway to Gelliwion, and was carried on asses’ backs.

Pontypridd was still just about a village in 1843; Tommy Morris kept the general store and also supplied all the local villagers. There was a wagon to Cardiff daily. A coach ran from Cardiff to Merthyr. There was no Post Office at Pontypridd, the postal centre being at Treforest, where the Pontypridd letters had to be posted before eight o’clock in the morning. The market was then at Llantrisant, and it was there that the people of Pontypridd and district made their principal purchase in the pre-colliery days.

### **More reminiscences**

The ‘*Pontypridd Observer*’ over the years has carried many reports about ‘Old’ Pontypridd, and these give great insight into the town between 1860 and 1900. Here are just a few of these stories: -

#### **When they fished trout in the River Taff and Old Bridge was cobbled**

The ‘*Pontypridd Observer*’ of Aug 15<sup>th</sup> 1936 reported: - The days when trout used to be fished for in the River Taff, and when Pontypridd had three toll

gates and when the Barry railway was being constructed were recalled by Mr. Arthur Bull, an old Pontypridd resident, who is on a visit to his home town from South Africa, when interviewed by an *Observer* representative this week. Mr. Bull, who left Pontypridd for South Africa in 1902 was in a reminiscent mood and talked of many things which will be of interest to the younger generation who are not aware of what Pontypridd was like fifty years ago. When he was a boy, Mr. Bull stated, the Old Bridge was cobbled and had no steps to go over it, while on either side of the bridge (Victoria bridge) alongside it, were stone walls instead of the iron railings that are now there. Oftentimes he used to climb on the walls and watch the trout swimming in the river.

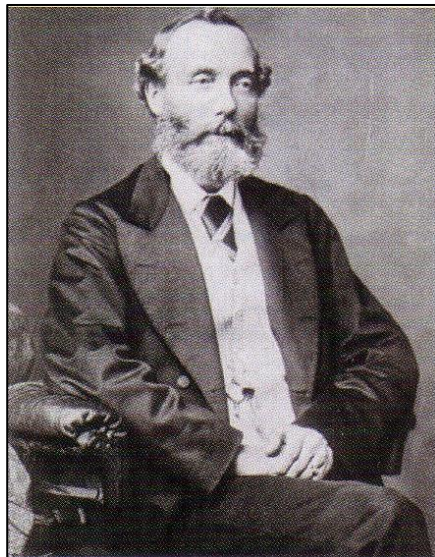
The Taff in those days was quite clear as there were few collieries in the Merthyr and Aberdare areas. Industrialization, however, had made greater progress in the Rhondda and the river from that Valley was even then fairly polluted. A toll gate, where the Tredegar Arms is situated, was kept by the wife of "Fred the crier," a noted character and the town crier of those days. Where the Queens Hotel is in Trallwn, there was another toll gate, through which the people going in the direction of Merthyr had to pass. And on the other side of the road there was a toll gate on the road to Cardiff. The Tyfica - Gelliwasted Road district was a field and a man named Fowler used to live in the house at the back of the present town library. The Wesleyan Chapel of those days was a small building in a corner of Chapel St. and was the reason for the name of the street. A wall ran from the chapel down to Crossbrook House and a brook flowed alongside the wall. Where the council offices now stand was a field surrounded by a high wall and entrance to the field was through a pair of big wooden gates. The Jewish synagogue was near the fountain, while Market Street was a corn market. The cattle market was where the greengrocery part of the Pontypridd market is now.

#### Town's first electric light

The first electric light in Pontypridd was installed by a Mr. Evans, an Ironmonger, who generated his own supply in his work rooms at the back of his shop in Taff St. It was the earliest type of electricity and although it provided a brilliant light it flickered a great deal. As a lad, Mr. Bull was taken by his father to see St. Mary Street, Cardiff, when it was first lit by electricity. It was one of the sights of south Wales and thousands of people

went to Cardiff to see it. For Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, Pontypridd was beautifully illuminated by gas.

As a boy Mr. Bull attended Mill St. School, which was then an Elementary School under the control of the old Llanwonno School Board. The headmaster of the school was the late Mr. J. D. Jones, father of Misses Clara and Florrie Jones, who are on the present staff of the Mill St. Central School. Leaving school at twelve years of age Mr. Bull was given work by Mr. Monk, who was a printer in the town at that time. After a little while he was an apprentice painter to Mr. Phillip Cadwgan, and later started work as a cleaner on the Barry Railway, the construction of which he had often watched while at school. He subsequently became a locomotive fireman on a passenger train and was transferred to the goods depot in Barry. Mr. Bull lived in Morgan Street with his parents for several years.



**Charles Bassett, the man credited with changes 'Newbridge' into Pontypridd when he was the Pontypridd postmaster.**

## Chapter two

In 1893 the following article was published in the '*Western Mail*' newspaper that not only talks about the building of the famous Old Bridge and William Edwards, but also of Pontypridd in the year 1837:

**The Old Bridge at Pontypridd - Pontypridd of days gone by**  
Reminiscences of Daniel Owen - Life story of great Welsh bridge builder

Mr. Daniel Owen, Ash Hall, writes: - Some time back a correspondence respecting the Old Bridge appeared in the '*Western Mail*,' but I have reason to doubt one or two of the statements then made. One of the doubtful statements made in the correspondence in question was that the bridge had been built four times. This is not so. The present bridge is the third erection. These allusions to the Old Bridge bring back to my mind my boyish capers. At the time when those capers were cut the waters of the Taff and Rhondda Rivers were clear as crystal, except at periods of heavy floods. Both rivers abounded with trout and salmon. An old weaver lived at Ty'r Berw, on the bank of the River Rhondda, about a mile up the valley from Pontypridd and close to Berw Rhondda. "Berw" means a waterfall, and the scene is vividly present to my mind. There were huge rocks across the river, and in the centre of them was a crevice in which the aged weaver used to fix his basket overnight. Frequently in the morning he took out six or seven salmon, which he usually sold for about sixpence a pound. He often made more by his basket than he did with his loom. Now, alas! trout, salmon, and clear water have all disappeared, but to re-appear again in 400 or 500 years hence, when the minerals are exhausted in the valley.

Nearly 60 years ago the ascent and descent of the approaches to the Old Bridge were deeper and steeper than they are now. Heavy wagons, generally laden with paving-stones from Penrhiw and Penycoedcae quarries, reached the top of the bridge with great difficulty. Even then the trouble was by no means over, for it was a matter that required care and patience to get down the other side. To counteract the velocity of the down speed there was attached a long chain and a drag loaded with stones or some other heavy material. On this I rode many and many a time. When the water in the river was shallow the drivers preferred fording the stream with their heavy wagons and landing at the back of the Maltsters' Arms, on their way up the lane to the canal bank.



There was not a railway in the Principality in those days. When a boy I often watched my comrades walk on the parapet of the bridge from one end to the other. A single false step meant certain death. I never had the courage to attempt the reckless feat, but I can recall many occasions on which I went with other boys to the cylindrical hole - one of three holes in the end of the bridge which was nearest the New Inn Hotel. These little excursions were taken so that we might witness the Baptists of Carmel Chapel baptizing their converts by immersion. I often saw this done in the depth of winter, when the ice had to be broken before immersion could take place. My heart was moved to pity as I saw the people, usually female, wet and shivering, making their way to the nearest house for a change of clothes and the comfort of warmth. I have not seen the ceremony performed from that time to this, but I am told that in these days of progress things are better ordered than in the primitive days of old.

At the time of which I am speaking Pontypridd was called Newbridge. The postmark was Newbridge, but when the late Mr. Charles Basset was appointed postmaster, 47 or 48 years ago, he brought about a change. There were so many places bearing the name of Newbridge that much confusion was caused. The old Welsh name of the particular Newbridge which contained Mr. Bassett and his post office was the Pont-y-ty-pridd. Mr. Bassett thought that it was too long, so he altered it to Pontypridd. I well remember the first day on which the postmark on the letters appeared as Pontypridd.

At that time the nearest building to the old bridge was Crossbrook house, adjoining which was Ynysgyfeilon Farm. All that is now built upon. The first house I can remember being erected there was the house in which my old schoolfellow, Captain Williams, lives, and which for a short period was the Tredegar Arms Inn. Soon after the Wesleyan Chapel was put up.

Still dwelling in the same period, it is interesting to re-call that the turnpike road from Pontypridd to Llantrisant went close to the doors of the present



**Sketch of the Old Bridge by J.R. Roberts in 1839.**

Half Moon Inn, which was then simply a cottage, and was occupied by Richard and Shewan. Opposite the cottage was a turnpike gate, and the Red Lion Inn was occupied by the late Mr. Lewis, of whose sudden death I heard in Bristol 41 years ago, when I was on my way to Australia. In front of the Red Lion there was a flight of steps leading up to the Taff Vale Railway Station, then built of wood. Here were issued flimsy tickets, of the nature and quality of tissue paper. One day Billy Ystradowen was rushing wildly up the steps. He was puffing and blowing like Crawshay Bailey's engine, and when he was almost at the end of his breath a friend called out, "Billy, you are too late. The train is going." Billy stopped short, and, with a look made up of misery and bravado, he replied between his gasps from breath, "Let her went." This is the origin of a phrase that has been current in the district for many years.

After the construction of the railway the turnpike gate was removed to the place where the Clarence Hotel is now. There it remained for some years till it was ultimately removed to a spot between the Tredegar Arms and the old bridge. When "Morien" was fourteen years of age, and in the employ of the late Charles Bassett, he lived at this turnpike house with old Mrs. David. I could say a great deal about "Morien's" antics in those days, but charity suggests silence and I refrain. There was then not a single house from where the Clarence Hotel is now to Aston's house, between the Rolling Mill and Treforest, and where the White Hart, Greyhound, Lamb, and Boot in are now, I frequently used to pick blackberries and nuts.

My first acquaintance with the old bridge was in 1836. This was the year in which the Taff Vale Railway Company got their bill passed through Parliament to enable them to construct the first railway ever laid down in the Principality. Operations were commenced in the following year. The work continued through 1838 and 1839; the first train came to Pontypridd in May, 1840. I was on the platform when it steamed in. All that is herein related is drawn from memory, and if I err I hope someone will put me right.

In August 1836, I went to school - the only school there was in Pontypridd at the time. It was kept by Mr. Daniel Macfarlan, an Irish veteran, who fought in the Battle of Waterloo. He was tall and thin, but straight as an arrow. As befitted a soldier, he was a strict disciplinarian, and we boys

stood in wholesome dread of him. Mr. Macfarlan, however, was a good master. When a boy transgressed the master would say, "Come her, 'Manwyl' " ("my dear"), and he would then produce a leather strap two inches wide and with the end split up into five or six thongs a foot or eighteen inches long. I can almost imagine my hand smarting even now from the effects of that terrible instrument of torture. Despite his severity - or it may be that severity was an essential part of his system - the master was anxious about the welfare of his pupils, and always did all he could to assist them.

Boys in those days were as lively as they are now. On winter nights we would light squibs and place them in the keyholes of the doors of the various houses. We treated the schoolmaster's door in the same manner. And when we had no squibs we kicked the door and ran away. One night it came to my turn to kick. This I did with all my might. That very instant the door flew open, and I felt a grab at my collar. It was the head of my old schoolmaster. I was very much terrified, but he let me off with a reprimand. I was suspicious, however, and my old master never alluded to the incident of the night before. This is an instance of the many little kindnesses which endeared us to him, and it may be taken for granted that with me it was almost a matter of conscience never to kick his door any more.

On one occasion my comrades and I were bathing in the River Taff opposite the rolling Mill. We undressed on large boulders of rock (which Morien tells me are there still), and swam across to the other side. It was a beautiful sunny day - one of many, and there had been a great drought. On that day a water-spout had burst near Merthyr. We knew nothing of this, and light heartedly I started to swim back. When in the middle of the stream I was caught up by the flood, which extended from bank to bank. (In passing I may say that the sanitary arrangements of Merthyr, Aberdare, and Pontypridd at that time were nil.) The water was black as ink, and the force of the flood carried me some distance, but I managed to clutch and hold to one of the boulders. It was a narrow escape, and it is wonder that I am alive to tell the tale. When I perceived the flood I shouted to my companions, "Don't attempt to cross. You can't do it. Go across the Ynysangharad Fields and over the old bridge. I will look after your clothes." I heard one of them say, "Dyma ddiawl o gontact" - ("what a hell of a

contact”) and then off they went, scampering, naked and ashamed, through the town. They had a mile to traverse, and as their way through the main streets of the town the men rushed to the doors and the women craned their necks and peered at the windows, all wondering what was the cause of the unwonted spectacle.

‘*Morien*’ the famous ‘*Western Mail*’ reporter in the next edition of the same newspaper reported: - Now, there was once a road through the Taff River from the East to the West, close to where William Edwards’s celebrated bridge was afterwards completed in 1755 from time immemorial. It ran down behind the old Maltsters near the entrance the field, where stands today the magnificent pavilion for the National Eisteddfod to be opened August 1<sup>st</sup>. After crossing the river the road passed up between the Tredegar Arms and Mr. Smyth’s shop, which had been built by Mr. Edwin Phillips on the site of the old toll-house. But there was a foot-bridge over the Berw under Graig-Yr-Hesg, and in the itinerary of Leland (AD 1550) we find the bridge was named Ponty-Yr-Hesg. He described it as a strong bridge made of timber. On the way from that bridge to where Pontypridd now stands was a neat cottage called Gellidawel (quiet grove), showing the desolate character of the locality within living memory. Mr. John Morris, late of Glyncoch, tells me that he recollects, when a boy, coming that way early one morning and seeing a ‘daughter of Eve,’ perfectly nude, rushing across the parish road from that cottage, and the plunging into the then pure waters of the Taff for her morning bath. He at the time thought the apparition was a fairy, and ran away from the strange scene calling out “O, mam anwyl.”

The ‘*Western Mail*’ of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1877 carried the following article which seems to confirm that Pont-y-ty-pridd was so called ‘before’ the Old Bridge was built: -

### **Death of an old inhabitant**

On Monday afternoon a large concourse of the inhabitants of Pontypridd gathered together to show a last token of respect to the memory of Lewis Evans, commonly known as “Lewis y Sair,” who was literally the oldest inhabitant of Pontypridd and neighbourhood, having nearly attended the patriarchal age of 93, nearly 60 of whom had been spent in the town, and

most of which time he was employed at Messrs. Brown Lenox & Co.'s chain and anchor Works. No man in the town was better known than "Old Lewis," and he was regarded with peculiar affection by all classes. To within a short time of his death he continued to work daily at the chain and anchor works, and he was always the first at the gates of the works when the "hooter" proclaimed 6 o'clock. He was full of anecdotes of events that happened in the locality many years ago. He remembered a "Gorsedd" held by the celebrated Iolo Morgannwg on the local stone, within the circle, on the Common, in 1814, when according to old Lewis, a procession of Bards was formed in the town, at the head of whom was the great Welsh antiquarian, and in front of whom a banner was carried, and in that order the procession walked to the rocking stone.

Another anecdote worth preserving is as to the origin of the name Pontypridd – the old form of the word. It signifies in its old form, "the Bridge of the Clod House." According to Lewis this unpoetical name was not given to the wonderful bridge for which the town is celebrated, but to an old wooden bridge with hand rails for foot travellers, which was fixed upon poles across the Taff River, opposite where the Butcher's Arms is now situated. This bridge had been erected early in the last century as a speculation, by a man who charged a small toll for everyone that passed over it. There was no house near the bridge in which the speculator could lodge, and he in consequence erected a cabin made with clods at one end of the bridge, hence the name "Pont-y-typridd" which some years ago, for the convenience of the Post Office and the town's of strangers, was shortened to Pontypridd.

Lewis was passionately fond of the chase, and even in recent years he had been known to wander on foot after the celebrated 'Glog' house. Not recently he said to the writer, speaking in Welsh, "I well that I remember some 70 years ago, while I was walking up the Llantrisant Road one fine morning with my basket of tools on my back, I heard the music of the 'Glog' hounds in Graig-yr-hesg, on the other side of the town, where the town is now situated. I concealed my basket in a bush, and off I went. A fox was soon on foot, and a splendid run was had, and he ran as far as Pontypool, where he was killed." The deceased was a native of Coychurch, near Bridgend, where he was born. His remains were interred near Penuel

Church; a nephew preached the funeral sermon. He was married to his wife, who survives him, nearly 60 years ago.

Note: - So what exact date did the town become known as Pontypridd? When the County Court was established at Pontypridd, Judge Falconer made a special official request, that the County Court district should be called "Pontypridd" instead of being the district of "Newbridge," and the request was complied with. By an order made in Council, the Queen being present, the town was called "Pontypridd."

The '*Cambrian*' newspaper of 15<sup>th</sup> August 1845 reported: - The name of Newbridge, Glamorganshire, is to be altered to Pont-y-pridd. This is at the suggestion of the the Post-office. The letters' stamp is now altered to the above. There were numerous mistakes in sending letters to Newbridge, near Pontypool. It is contemplated to alter the name of Newport, Monmouthshire, to Uskport. There are no less than six towns in Great Britain bearing the name of Newport. — *Cambrian*

Meanwhile, the '*Monmouthshire Merlin*' of 8<sup>th</sup> July 1848, three years later reported: - "The inhabitants of Pontypridd are much pleased at the Lords of the treasury altering the name of their town from Newbridge to the ancient Welsh name, which will prevent letters being sent to places of the same name in other counties."

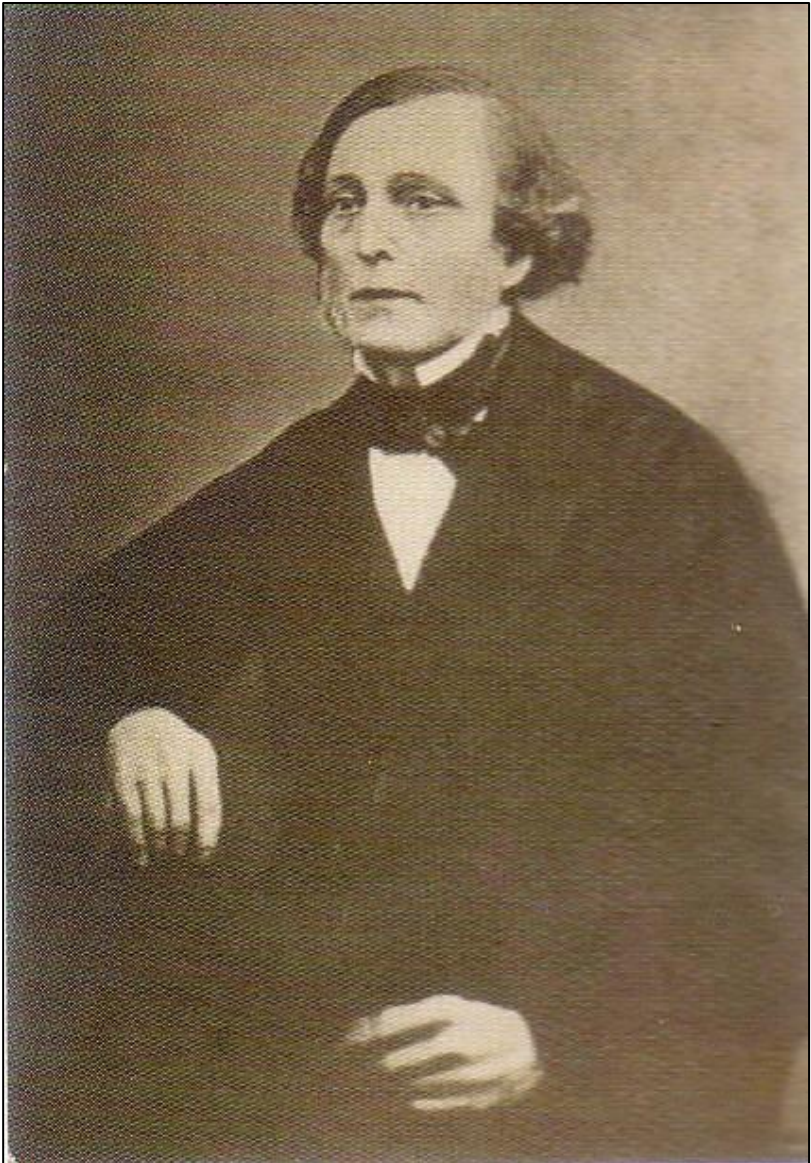
### **The Welsh Anthem - Birth of 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau' in 1856**

The true story

Pontypridd is always rightly associated with the Welsh National Anthem, and in 1930 a statue was erected in Ynysangharad Park to commemorate the composers Evan and James James. In the *Western Mail* of September 11<sup>th</sup> 1930, Lewis Davies wrote this story of how it was written: -

Wales did honour unto herself, and Pontypridd mounted another step on the ladder of fame when on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July this year there was unveiled at Ynysangharad Park the artistic memorial to the authors of our National Anthem, "Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau."

No one who was present will ever forget that summer afternoon, when to the accompaniment of the 5<sup>th</sup> Welch, the surrounding hills reverberated to



**James James, the composer of the music for 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau.' Son of Evan Kames (over), he was born on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1832 at Argoed, in the parish of Bedwelty. He assisted his father in the weaving trade at Pontypridd and later became landlord of the Colliers Arms, Mountain Ash. He died at Aberdare on 11 January 1902.**





**Evan James, author of the words of 'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau,' was born at Caerphilly in 1809. A weaver and a coal merchant by trade, he moved to Newbridge (Pontypridd) in 1844 and became the owner of a small woollen factory in Mill Street where he resided until his death in 1878.**

the music and words of that brilliant conception, rendered by some 18,000 voices. That sealed forever the fact that it was, and was to be in very truth, the medium by which our national aspirations and hopes were to find united expression. It was also the retort courteous to that zealous, but misguided Welshman of the New World who offered the authorities of the Llanelly National Eisteddfod a substantial money prize for a new National Anthem, and which, to their eternal honour, they declined.

One thing struck me as especially appealing. Although the anthem had only been composed 74 years, there were members of the fifth generation present. It was a delight to see and hear Mr. Taliesin James, an old Royal Academician, play the soul-stirring melody, and to me it would have been the fitting crown of an historic event had a member of the fourth generation, with her liquid voice, been privileged to lead that mighty throng in the singing of her forebears composition. But who, in this world, has ever met with pleasure without alloy!

#### Memories of the past

During the ceremony there came to me happy memories of days long past. As a boy, not yet in my teens, I had a vision of Mr. Taliesin James, fresh from the Academy, and not yet out of his teens, playing at a concert at Mountain Ash in the old town hall. Here was a pleasant link binding the past and the present. It was reminiscences of this kind that formed the theme of some pleasant hours at his home a few weeks ago. In talking over the very beautiful tribute to the memory of his father (whom I well remember) and of his grandfather, I ventured to say that it seemed to me passing strange that nothing definite was known as to the genesis of "Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau."

I had read an official account of it, but it left me absolutely bewildered. It ran as follows: - *"The question is sometimes raised as to whether the words of the music or the anthem were composed first. It is clear that the inspiration came in the course of a walk on the banks of the Rhondda on a Sunday evening in January 1856. Either the father came home elated by his composition of a patriotic lyric which stirred his soul, or the son came humming a haunting tune which he hoped would inspire his father to break into song. We know, however, both father and son, in obedience to some*

*overpowering influence, struggled at the words and music ‘till dawn next morning. . .’*

After reading these words I felt something the same as the man faced with the eternal conundrum: “Which came first, the hen or the egg?” People often express themselves as disappointed about the circumstances under which, in the far-off days, Homer or Virgil, or Shakespeare wrote their poems and plays. And here we were, regarding an important work composed only a few generations ago, left absolutely in the air. I mentioned this fact to Mr. James, and he promised me that he would tell me the true story, which he had heard hundreds of times *from his father and grandfather.*

### The Genesis

So one day, after a cup of tea, and in the presence of his harp, whose gold gleamed in the afternoon sunshine, he told me his tale: -

“My father had been seriously ill with rheumatic fever, and was convalescing, when on a Sunday morning in January 1856, he thought he would take a short stroll along the Rhondda road. There to the rippling of the river, which flowed close by, he conceived a melody – which because of the place of its birth, he called it ‘Glan Rhondda.’ On reaching home he sang his melody to his father at the Factory House, and said that, as he very much liked the music, he would be glad if he would compose some patriotic verses for it.

‘Fetch your harp,’ said his father, ‘and play it over to me.’ The harp was brought from next door, where my father lived, and he did so. My grandfather then sat down and composed the first and second verses. While they were busily engaged on the work my grandmother – who was a very zealous and strict Baptist – came home from the service at Carmel, and soundly rapped them both for desecrating the Sabbath. But her son (my father) neatly turned the tables on her by bringing forward the example of David playing his harp on the Sabbath Day!

## Llangollen Eisteddfod Prize

At this time there was a very well known harper living at Mountain Ash named Thomas Llewelyn. One day he called to see my father, who happened to be working at the loom in the factory. He said to him: - "There is a big eisteddfod to be held soon (in 1858) at Llangollen, and a prize is being offered for the best collection of unpublished Welsh airs. Do you know of any James?" "No," replied my father, "but there is a song I composed, and for which my father has written a lyric, which seems to be known to almost everybody in Pontypridd." "Let me hear it," said Llewelyn. My father then sang the melody to him, and he copied it down. He added this melody to the airs he had already brought together, and this collection won the prize.

"Owain Alaw (organist of one of the Chester churches) was the adjudicator; and he later, thinking it was a very old Welsh melody, and half forgotten, published it in his first volume of 'Gems of Welsh Melody,' under the title 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau.' Some years afterwards Owain Alaw and Talhaiarn toured South Wales giving concerts, one of which was at the Assembly rooms, New Inn, Pontypridd. In the course of the concert this song was sung. Now it so happens that my father and grandfather were present. At the close my father approached Owain Alaw, and explained to him that he was the composer of the music and his father the words. Consequently in all further editions of this first volume he acknowledged the facts. And so they have remained.

### Prolific output

There seems to have been a popular opinion that Evan James was a man of one lyric and James James the composer of but one melody. Far from this being the case their output was a fairly prolific one, and there was a good deal of collaboration. Mr. Taliesin James collected into a book a large number of the former's lyrics, which he presented to the Welsh National Museum, along with the original of 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau.'

Another very interesting thing – quite new to me as it may be to many a reader – he also pointed out, that the question of the memorial had been under active consideration for over twenty years, the war intervening and

cancelling all active progress. One of its most ardent spirits was the veteran nationalist Lord Pontypridd. It was his desire that the unveiling should be accompanied by the publication of some of the joint works of Evan and James James. For this purpose Mr. Taliesin James collected some dozen and a half specimens, for which he either made, or elaborated, the harp accompaniments. But Lord Pontypridd passed away ere he saw the fruition of his labours and the desire of his heart.

What happened to those manuscripts Mr. James did not know. He assumed that they had been dispersed along with his lordship's effects. As their monetary value is small, but their sentimental value incalculable, perhaps any reader of these lines into whom they have chanced to come would rejoice the heart of the son of a historic house by communicating the fact either to him direct or to the Editor of the *Western Mail*.

As I came away from the peace of Penylan, to the accompaniment of August sunshine, I felt it was a great privilege to have spent a few happy hours in the company of one whom a nation delights to honour, and whose joint music will go ringing down the corridors of time. And I remembered the light of the filial devotion that spread across his countenance as, at our parting, he said it would be a great delight to him to know that the true story of 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau,' should find a final form at last.

### **Coalfield pioneers - The early leaders at Pontypridd**

By David Phillips

In the Pontypridd Observer of Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> 1924 David Phillips wrote the following story of the early pioneers of the coal industry which would bring so much wealth to the town: -

Pontypridd, now fairly aspiring to be the coal metropolis of Wales, was at the beginning of the last century a very small and insignificant village, and consisted of a few cottages, a public house, and a general store. Among the residents at that time were the Griffiths family, and a member of this family was the first pioneer of the coal industry in that neighbourhood. Doctor Richard Griffiths, to whom this distinction belongs, was the son of Mr. William Griffiths, and his wife Elizabeth, whose marriage took place on August 5<sup>th</sup> 1746. Both were descendants of old Welsh families.

Dr. Griffiths was a very celebrated character, who won large sums of money, often by a simple stratagem, such as a race between two snails across the table, when he pretended to prick his own snail with a pin, saying that everyone had the right to spur on his own 'horse.' His opponent thought he would be up with him, pricked his own snail, and it drew in its horns and lost the race. He also made a bet that he would pick out the longest wheat stalk from a stack of wheat in a rick-yard. He won the bet. Some of his enemies held that he had measured it beforehand, and marked the place on the corn stack. But Dr. Griffiths cared as little about what his enemies said as what he did himself on occasions of the sort.

#### Law case between two of the early pioneers

On one occasion, however, Dr. Griffiths got in trouble with another of the early pioneers in the coalfield, and as a report of the case gives a picture of social life of over 100 years ago it perhaps worth quoting here. The case was tried at Hereford on Saturday, July 31<sup>st</sup> 1780, and was between Dr. Richard Griffiths and Mr. Samuel Homfray, the pioneer of Penydarren, Merthyr, and Tredegar.

From the evidence it appears it appears that Dr. Griffiths, Mr. Samuel Homfray and other gentlemen dined at Cardiff, each gentleman having had his pint-and-a-half of Homfray of wine, and being somewhat excited thereby, resolved to have a game of cards, so they sat down to play at 'Lazurus' for small stakes. The luck soon ran against Homfray, and, as the stakes were increased from a small amount to a large amount, he soon found himself loser to Dr. Griffiths to the amount of 251 guineas.

The game ended in an altercation, and broad hints were thrown out of 'sharp play.' Homfray thought he had been cheated, hence the indictment of Dr. Griffiths for, in the first place, 'fraud,' and in the second, illegally winning above £10 sterling. Several gentlemen of high repute in Cardiff at that time were called to give Dr. Griffiths a character, and, after a lengthy hearing, the jury returned a verdict of 'Not guilty.'

The first Level was at Havod. It was one of the great ambitions of Dr. Griffiths to develop a great business at the lower part of the Rhondda Valley, near Pontypridd, and he induced Mr. Evan Morgan, Havod, the husband of his sister Catherine, some years before his death in 1850, to grant him a lease of all the minerals under Havod Uchaf lands for 99 years and on his land he opened the first coal level in the Rhondda. But in the midst of this mineral speculation the Doctor died in 1826 having survived his brother-in-law, Mr. Evan Morgan, by 24 years. There was no railroad in those early days, but easy access was available to Cardiff by the Glamorganshire Canal, which was opened at Pontypridd in 1794.

Before his death Dr. Griffiths had connected the Havod Level with the canal by means of a tramroad, and many years afterwards Mr. Walter Coffin constructed a further tramway from Havod to Dinas. This was the only means of transport until the Taff Vale Railway Company constructed their line first to Merthyr and afterwards to Aberdare and then to Treherbert.

#### Mr. John Calvert and the Great Western Colliery

After Dr. Richard Griffiths, the next pioneer in the immediate vicinity of Pontypridd was Mr. John Calvert, although within a few miles of the town Mr. Walter Coffin had developed the coal industry at Dinas, before Mr. Calvert appeared upon the scene. It must be clearly understood, however, that all these attempts at Pontypridd and in the lower Rhondda to work the coal did not touch the lower, or steam coal measures.

The only seams worked by these early pioneers were known as the 'Rhondda House Coal seams.' Mr. John Calvert was born at Kettlewell, County of York, on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1812. He died in a cottage near Llantwit Vardre on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1890, therefore on his 78<sup>th</sup> birthday.

He came to Pontypridd at the time the Taff Vale Railway from Cardiff was being constructed (1841), and undertook a contract for some portion of that undertaking. 'Morien,' who was well acquainted with him, says he was a man of great energy, but hardly any education. His chief characteristic was strong headedness. Once having made up his mind to do anything he would go at it with eyes shut and head down. He was generous to a fault, and believed that the members of the established church were not the

aristocracy of the saints. He made a fortune and lost it, and after his death his only son, Mr. George Calvert, earned his livelihood by manual labour at the colliery first owned by his father.

### The Newbridge Colliery

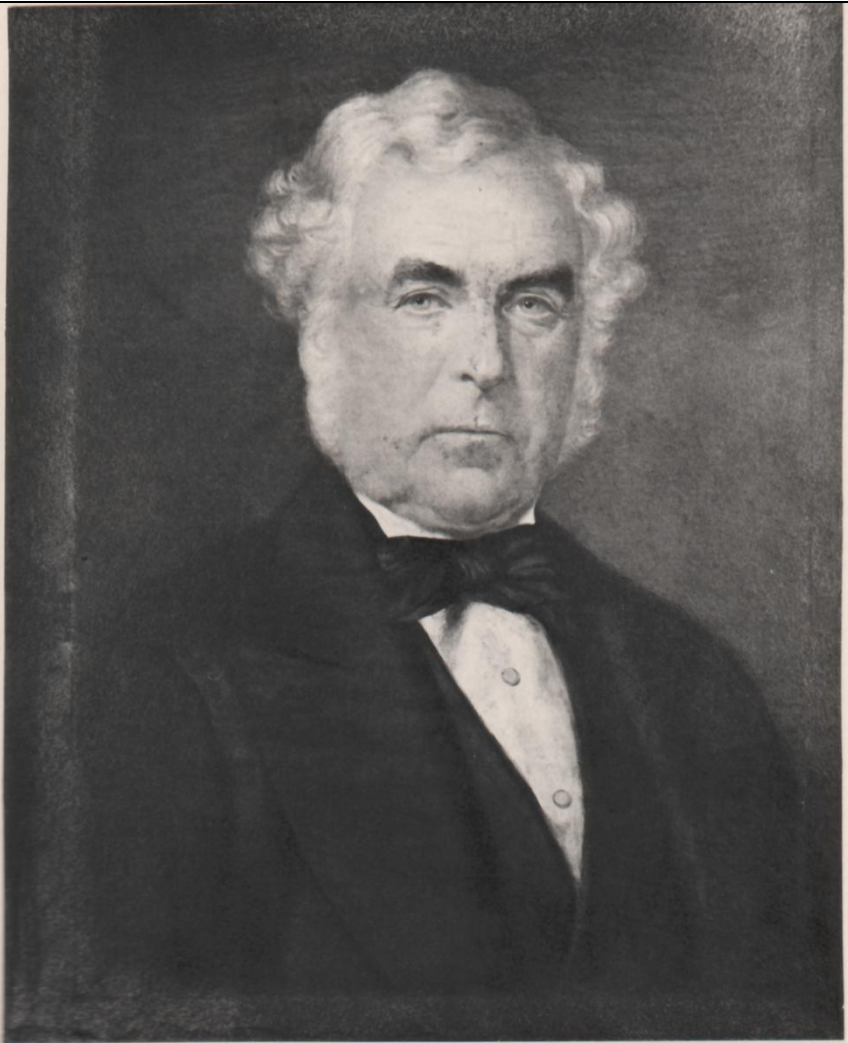
Mr. John Calvert's mining career dates from March 1844, when he obtained at agreement from the Rev. George Thomas and his brother, to work coal under their extensive landed property, known as Gellywion. The two owners of the land, one of Pencerrig Farm in Penarth, the other of Llandaff Court, agreed to let, and John Calvert agreed to take, as much of that vein of coal, called John Edmunds' Vein, as laying under part of the Gellywion and Lan Farms in the parish of Llantrisant, for a term of 20 years, dating from January 1<sup>st</sup> 1845.

The tenants were to pay £400 in cash to work 6,857 tons per annum without further payment, but beyond that 1s–2d per ton for large and 7d per ton for small. The colliery, afterwards, known as the Newbridge Colliery, was duly sunk, and the No. 3 Rhondda seam was found at a depth of 54 yards. This undertaking proved a success. Mr. Calvert's next venture was started in 1848 where the Great Western Collieries are now, a couple of miles above Pontypridd in the Rhondda Valley. This is on the Havod Estate, the lease of where minerals were held by representatives of Dr. Richard Griffiths. Here he struck coal in May 1851, at a depth of 149 yards, and in order to celebrate the event a great feast was given to the workmen and the principal inhabitants of the town. This colliery was purchased by the great Western Railway Company for £31,000, and subsequently passed into the hands of a Limited Company, which has since been reformed, and of late years a considerable addition has been made in its area. Of course the steam-coal measures have long been worked at the Colliery, and its present owners are the Great Western Colliery Co Ltd; and the output is something over 1 million tons a year.

### Eccentric conduct

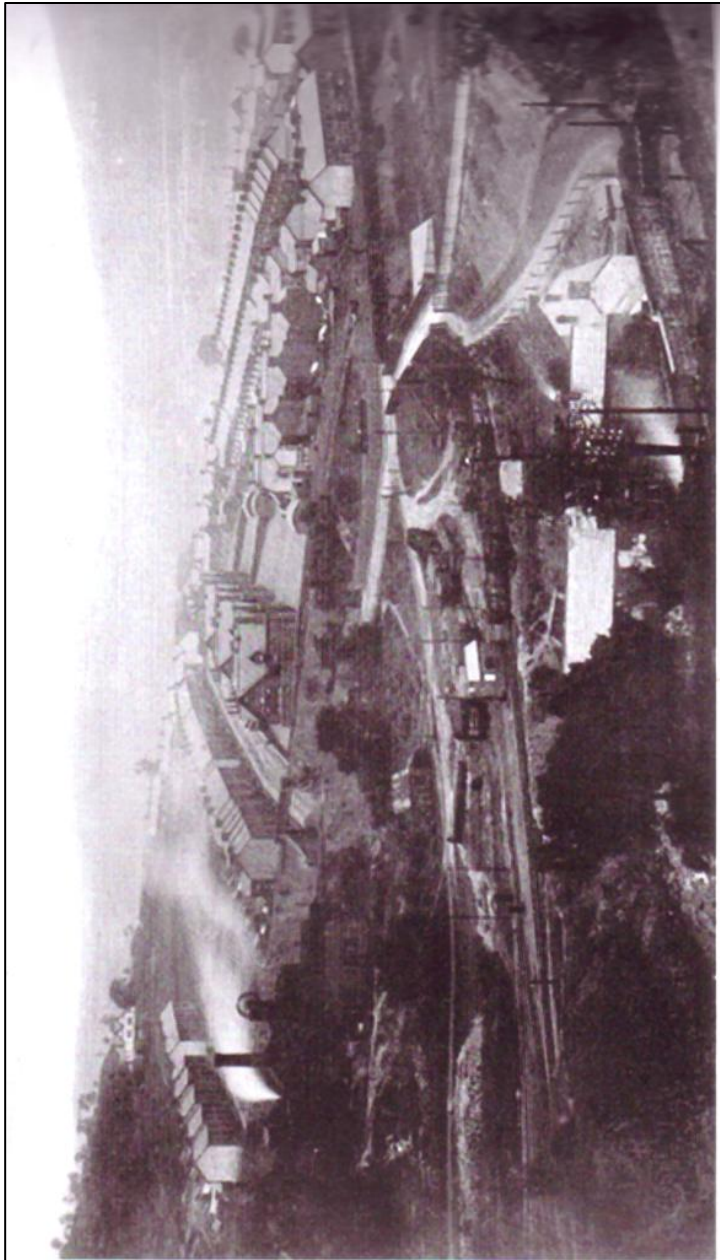
It is recorded that after sinking the pit on the Havod estate Mr. Calvert begun to spend money recklessly. All the buildings around the new shaft were constructed with dressed stone, and he would quite unnecessarily





— John Calvert Esq. —

Sunk Gyfeillon Pits to N<sup>o</sup> 3 Rhondda seam 1851  
Original proprietor of the Great Western Colliery who sold the Colliery  
to the Great Western Railway C<sup>o</sup> in 1854, afterwards buying the  
Colliery back in 1864 and finally sold to the Great Western  
Colliery Company L<sup>td</sup> in 1866.



**John Calvert's Newbridge Colliery (top left) date unknown**

order special trains to bring himself alone from Cardiff. He also indulged in many other eccentricities. At last the inevitable crash came, and Mr. John Calvert had to leave Gelliwastad House, then the principal residence in the district. During many years after that he was in indigent circumstances, but later it turned out that he had retained a latent interest in one of the lower seams of the Great Western Colliery, for which he received £3,000 from the company that succeeded him. This again he spent in building a large house, which he afterwards sold for £1,500. He died a poor man.

### The Maritime Colliery

The Maritime Collieries Pontypridd commenced on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1872 by Mr. Thomas Fowler and his brother. The enterprise was an early success and steam coal was struck at a depth of 222 yards on Tuesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1873. This event caused much satisfaction in the town and neighbourhood, but Mr. Thomas Fowler died a week before the success of the undertaking became assured. The collieries are still working and have an output of £225,000 tons per annum.

### **Pontypridd sixty years ago**

A Stationmaster's Memories - Mr. W. C. John interviewed

The '*Glamorgan Free Press and Rhondda Leader*,' of July 1928 carried the following interesting reports: - Reminiscences of extreme interest regarding the early history of Pontypridd were given to a reporter of this newspaper by Mr. W. C. John, who has just retired from the post of stationmaster at Pontypridd. Mr. John during his career has taken a keen interest in the historic associations of the neighbourhood. His remarks this week, dealing with the early days on the railroad, afford a revealing picture of the transformation that has occurred in the 52½ years of his service on the line. Next week he will speak on the town, as it was a century ago. Mr. John said:

"Yes, Pontypridd has changed very much since I first remember it - that would be about 1870. Perhaps my chief memories would be of the railways of Pontypridd, which, up to the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, I have 52½ years service. I joined in the latter part of 1875 as a telegraph learner and messenger boy at Pontypridd. Those were the days when trains were few

and far between. Only a few trains would run into Cardiff, and then not at very high speed. This though, is not surprising when one considers that the only means of stopping the train was by a hand-brake applied by the fireman on the engine, and the guard and brakeman in the brake vans. The facilities for the return journey, too, were not at all good, the last train returning from Cardiff at 6.30 p.m.

The old Pontypridd railways station was not the platform it is today, with its seven platforms, with a total length of over a quarter of a mile. It was a very small place. The downside station comprised the station master's house and the booking office. The means of ascending from the road level was by a broad flight of steps near where the Half Moon public house stands. At that time next to it, was the old Red Lion. Opposite was the up platform and booking office together with the exit gates, coming out opposite the Horse and Groom Hotel.

The platform was only twelve inches above the rail level, and on the left-hand side was what was known as the "Rhondda Bay," which was the terminus for Rhondda trains. There was not the number of mineral trains travelling at that period as there were in the pre-war days. The last mineral train used to pass through about 9 p.m; and on Saturdays, if the last mineral train hadn't come down by 7 p.m; then something had happened! Some few years afterwards, a late passenger train was put on, leaving Cardiff at 9 p.m. This was considered a great concession.

#### How the passengers fared

I have mentioned that trains were stopped by means of hand-brakes. For instance, on the Rhondda passenger train the men in charge had to apply the hand-brakes at Hopkinstown in order to stop the train at Pontypridd. It was about 1877 that the steam-brake was introduced. I would mention that the train usually consisted of about six small coaches of five compartments each. The accommodation was not so good as it is today either; for the third-class had a hard seat, the second class had a cushion seat and a cushion at the back. The first-class were more luxurious - they had a cushion on the back and the seat with a carpet as well. The carriages were dimly lit with oil lamps, which sometimes dripped their oil into the

class covering or globes, or they would be all black and full of smoke. So very different from the well appointed coaches of today.

### Signalman "Bobbies"

It would be interesting to hear how the trains were operated and their movements controlled. The only means a signalman had to know when a train was approaching was the whistle on the engine. After hearing it, the signals were moved, which were done by means of leavers from a ground frame. But in the case of passenger trains the "book line time" was religiously considered, and no mineral trains allowed to precede it for twenty minutes. This was before the advent of the telephone and the block telegraph system. These instruments were not then invented and everything depended on the alertness of the signalman.

These signalman's stations were armed with a baton on which a crown was displayed, as it was also on the buttons of their clothes. They were "sworn" men, hence they became known as "Bobbies," and up to quite recent times were recognized as such. I well remember the first experiment with the automatic brake which now allows trains to travel at higher speeds. Later came the elevated box for the signalman, and the superior system of interlocking, mechanically and electronically. That system has since been elaborated to such an extent as to render accidents almost impossible. The stationmaster in Pontypridd in 1875 was the late Mr. Morgan Price; there may be a few remaining in Pontypridd who will remember him. He was succeeded by Mr. W. Felton, who was followed by Mr. O. Hurford, my predecessor.

### Exciting times

Perhaps the most exciting times for stationmaster and staff was the Easter Monday Fair, which is today respectable, compared to what it was in the 1870s. On that occasion and on Saturday nights' we saw the "noble art" fully exercised in the station yard, oftentimes developing into a "free fight." Another red-letter day was the Foresters' Fete held at Ynysangharad Field. This entailed very heavy passenger traffic, and taxed the whole station's resources to clear the passengers and keep the peace. Market days were different to what they are today. It was then a market in which farmers'

produce was brought in from the country, and proprietors of small sweet shops replenished their stores, from places so far distant as Ystrad and Llwynypia.

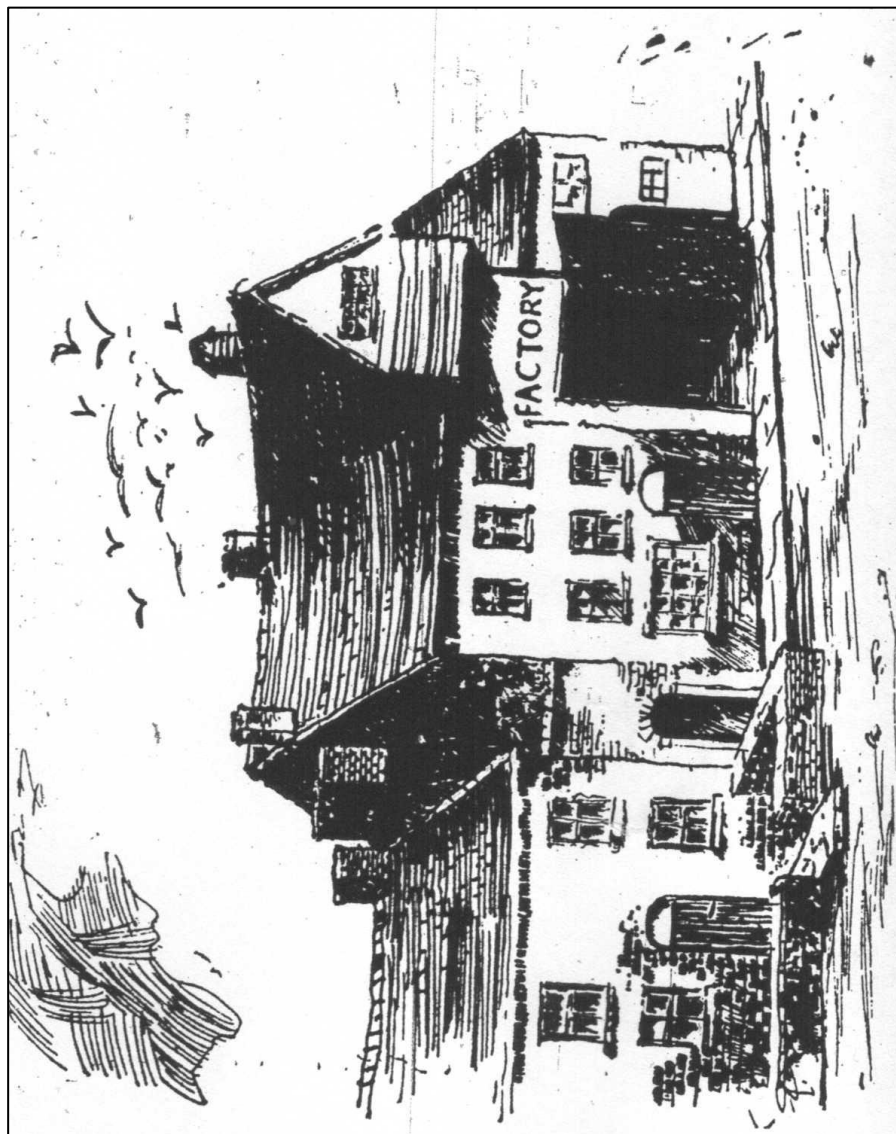
### Station alterations

Then came improved trade, the colliers developed a call for a larger service of passenger and mineral trains. Pontypridd station took its share of the traffic with the result that the down-line side station, which I have stated, stood near the present Half Moon, was removed to the new station site, by joining the south-side at Sardis Chapel graveyard. It was at this time, about 1876, that the platforms were raised to their present height. Entrance to the new station was by an inclined road instead of steps, which enabled road vehicles to ascend to the station. The down-platform was also extended. Today, about 180 passenger trains and about 200 goods and mineral trains are dealt with. This, however, is considerably less than in 1912. The length of the platform today is 502 yards, the fourth largest in Great Britain.

There have been two serious accidents in the district during my period of service. One on October 19<sup>th</sup> 1878, in what is known as the "Rhondda Cutting," when the coaches of the Cowbridge train ran into the down Rhondda, which was packed with passengers, being a Saturday afternoon. Thirteen were killed and fourteen injured in that crash. The other was at Pontypridd station on a Saturday in the summer of 1891, when fifteen people were injured through a train over-running the signals. There was another accident in Treforest in 1893, when twelve people were killed." The following week the same newspaper continued Mr. John's story of old Pontypridd:-

### Some more interesting memories

Some interesting particulars of the industries that once flourished in Pontypridd were given this week by Mr. W. C. John, ex-stationmaster in an interview. These "vanished industries" played an important part in the life of the town. Doubtless many of our older readers have recollections of the factories, etc; spoken of by Mr. John who said: -



The flannel factory in Mill Street where Evan James and James James wrote the Welsh National anthem.

“There have been many changes in the town of Pontypridd from what I knew of it. I might commence by saying I was born in 1873, at the White Hart Hotel, one of the three sons of Mr. William John. Perhaps better known as William John, “Tregolwen,” formerly one of the largest merchants in Pontypridd. His other sons were Llewelin John, mining engineer, and Mr. J. W. John, J.P; who now lives at Wood Road. My earliest education was undertaken by an old lady, Mrs. Woolley, who kept a small school, the sight of which now is occupied by the premises of Mr. Jones, grocer, near the YMCA; and afterwards at the Wesleyan School, under Mr. Tulley, who is well known to the older people.

Later the Board School was erected in Mill Street. At that time Taff Street was a roughly made road, the stones simply laid down and worn level by the traffic; the day of the steamroller had not arrived. On the left-hand side, near where Mr. Forrest’s shop now is, stood a large tree, which I well recollect formed part of the decorated arch at the visit of the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Thomas White, who came here for the presentation which was made to the rescuers in the Tynewydd mine disaster, which occurred on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1877. Perhaps some details of the old Pontypridd of the 70s may be interesting, especially when one considers the disappeared industries that once existed here, and which were looked upon, outside the collieries as being the mainstay of the trade of the town.

#### Versatile flannel makers

Perhaps I had better commence with the woollen factories. The most prominent of these was Mr. James, the author of the Welsh national anthem. He was better known as Iago Ap Ieuan. His factory was at Mill Street, the site of which is as present occupied by the County Hotel buildings. I have a very vivid recollection of this and of Mr. James. My parents at that time lived in Mill Street, and I was often taken to the house, where I sat on the old man’s knee, and was allowed sometimes to be taken into the factory, where women were working on their spinning wheels and the men on the looms. The power for the factory was obtained from the river.

The next one was owned by Mr. Tom Williams, the father of Madame Muriel Williams-Penn, on the premises now occupied by the Salvation Army Barracks, in Temperance Place. He, by the way, although it is not



generally known, was the author of the words and music of the ever popular duet, "Larboard Watch" which has become famous the world over, and is sung "from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand." I have it on good authority that this song was a favourite with the members of one of the recent Polar expeditions, and I know it often forms part of the programme of the regimental concerts among the soldiers in India, so that this quotation is quite apt. There was also a flannel factory on the Graig, owned by Mr. Jones, and known as the Penrhiw factory.

### The old flour mills

Then we had two chemical works, here, that of Messrs. Holloway and Smith, at Gyfeillon, and one owned by a Mr. Chivers, at Pontshonorton. I well remember cogwood being taken on the back of donkeys and mules from the surrounding woods to these works, a most picturesque scene, and occasionally a humorous one. The animals would sometimes lie down with their loads and required a lot of persuading to get them going again. Foundries, too, on a small scale, were found here.

One, owned by Mr. Williams, was at Coedpenmaen, the other known as Thomas Lewis's Foundry, was near Tymawr, Hopkinstown. The town was not without its chandler's shops. There were two, one owned by Mr. Richards, and the other by Mr. Chick, both of them situated in Taff Street, nearly opposite the Tredegar Arms, and either could be located without the aid of eyesight! There were all two skin-preparing yards, one at the Berw, occupied by Mr. Lougher, father of the present Mr. D. L. Lougher in Market Square, and another in the Mill Field, under the Rhondda viaduct, owned by Mr. Jenkins. These yards, too, in hot weather, savoured of something less favourable than violets!

There were several timber yards, the largest of which was worked by Mr. Jones, and occupied the site of the present cattle pens in Pontypridd station. I was only a little boy, but I can well remember the conversion from hand to steam sawing which gave these works the name of the "steam sawmills." There was another, owned by Mr. Aston at Coedpenmaen. The old town had its flour mills, too, corn was brought from the mountain farms to be ground. These were situated - the largest on the site of Mr. Crockett's shop in the High Street. The Mill-race, can still

be traced, as also the one used by Mr. James's factory opposite. This was owned by Mr. William Francis. Another one was nearly under the main-line viaduct of the railway, and was owned by Mr. John Williams. Hence the name: Mill Field, given at present to the site of the PUDC works and yard.

### Malt-houses and breweries

There were two malt-houses in Pontypridd that I can remember. One was where Ceridwen Terrace stands, near the arched bridge. The other occupied the site of the up and down relief lines of Pontypridd station. Still more interesting were the Pontypridd breweries. The oldest was in Taff Street, which was known as Capt. Williams' Brewery. The building is now used as a bottling store for the present brewery. Another was in Courthouse Street, owned by Mr. Hopkins, and the third was that of Mr. D. Leyshon, on the Graig. The products of these were greatly appreciated too. The temperance party, also, was not overlooked. There were three aerated-water factories in the town. One was where Mr. Elliott's premises which were in Taff Street. The proprietor of the other was Mr. Evans, who formerly kept the Boot Hotel (on the tramroad). Mr. Trentchard, father of the Mr. Trentchard of the New Theatre, was the owner of the third.

### Steel and iron

The iron age too, was well represented at Pontypridd, having a rail works at Treforest, and a steel works, known as the Park Works, also at Treforest. Perhaps on a smaller scale, but equally important to the town were the nail works owned by the grandfather of the present Messrs Roberts, the ironmongers. As a lad, I often watched through the open door, the nail makers at their little forges, and working their foot sledges, making nails. I must not overlook the Pontypridd Chainworks, which with the Dee works at Chester, supplied the admiralty with all their cables and anchors. It was a very common sight to see the dock inside the works filled with barges, as well as a number waiting outside.

### The busy canal

Speaking of the canal, it was then a very busy highway. It was not an unusual sight to see a complete block of boats at Trallwn, waiting their turn

to pass through the locks, either up or down. At this time large consignments of rails from Merthyr were being brought down the canal. Below Treforest the coal from the small collieries in the district was tipped into barges at the Doctor's Canal. So great was the demand for barges that there were two barge building docks at Coedpenmaen. One owned by Mr. Aston, and the other by Mr. Davies. I must not omit to mention the tar making establishment of Mr. Lewis, on the tramroad, on the sight of the abattoir. More than one fire have I seen through the tar becoming ignited.

### Early Collieries

A word, perhaps the early collieries - I would mention that there were several levels, one known as Simon Davies,' others at Darran Ddu. Also three pits, one known as the Newbridge-Rhondda, another called Rowland's, and Briscoe's, known as Typica, which was managed by the late Mr. Iago Daniels. The coal from the levels was taken down the tramway, passing through Station Square to the old Doctor's Canal at Treforest. Apart from the Newbridge-Rhondda the others were brought down the tramway and tipped by the method of a primitive chute on the small-siding at the north side of the Pontypridd station. The only pit in which steam coal was worked was the present Great Western Colliery."

### When the old Bridge was used for traffic

Mr. John continues: "I have so far dwelt on the industries of the town, and should like to tell you something about its earlier history. I remember my mother describing to me what Pontypridd looked like in the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. I am speaking from memory of course. I never put in writing what she told me. As you approached the town from Penycodcae, which was the usual way to approach from the vale, you first passed a few scattered houses, then known as Llanganna (Graig). Here was met the first turnpike gate before coming into the town. This place became known as the Graig. Then came the old Malt house near the station. You crossed the River Rhondda by a two-arched bridge, so narrow that pedestrians, when vehicular traffic was passing, had to take refuge in manholes erected in the side of the parapet. You then passed along hedges and waste ground alongside the river until you came to the little blacksmith's shop of Mr. Evans, grandfather of Mr. Richard Evans, late Ironmonger. Opposite, over

some rough ground, was a thatched public house, the only one in the vicinity, and having been recently erected was known as the New Inn. The road then skirted a copse standing where market square now is, right away to the present premises of Mr. Hopkin Morgan, backed by the fields and park of Gelliwasted. Continuing from Mr. Evan's old forge, Taff St was still lined with hedges, here and there a field till you reached the entrance of the Ford Road, now know as River Street. Here was situated the northern pike gate.

### The Old Bridge and Ford

“During floods, the old arched bridge had to be negotiated. The way they had of getting the carts over the bridge was ingenious. As a counter poise to the ascending vehicles there was a small trolley filled with stones. This was attached by chains to the cart coming up. The trolley was then started down the slope in the opposite direction, thus leaving the ascent of the vehicle on the other side. Passing the bridge, cottages were now more frequent, forming the Trallwn, where lived the employees of the chainworks, which was started in 1818.” These are just a few of the notes given me by my mother.

This week Mr. John concludes his interesting reminiscences of Pontypridd with some remarks on the social life and amusements of the town's people. The fair days of the benefit societies were notable events in the years that have gone, and the Common Fair apparently achieved some notoriety. When speaking of the Taff River, my earliest recollections of it were of clear water, and that of trout fishing and otter hunting. Many times I have seen as many as six otters in the deep pool among the rocks near the present abattoir. My mother related to me how she used to watch the salmon trying to jump the falls at Gyfeillon, on the Rhondda, and of the salmon leap on the Berw-Taff. Also the poaching that took place there, the men attracting the fish with lighted torches. Ynysangharad Park, opposite, was grass-land, and one of the pleasantest sites of my earliest boyhood was to see these fields mowed by scythes, men and women taking part in the work.

## Noake's and Warren's Theatres

In these days of cinemas and wireless, nobody need be without amusement; but in the days of my boyhood things were very different, as you can well imagine. There was in the yard attached to the market, which is now used for a fish market, a wooden structure, canvas-covered, known as Hoard's Theatre, which remained in the town during the winter. I can well remember some of the bills that announced the performances, which were changed nightly. Occasionally it was patronized by the 'elite' of the town, and if the patrons were the officers of the old Nineteenth Volunteers, their band used to give a performance, the officers' names, and the occasional elaborate advertisement.

Some years later another Theatre of similar construction was erected there. This was known as Warren's Theater. After this came the one known as John Noakes'. The performances were something alike, but the scenery was very much better at Noakes.' He had a scenic artist with the name of St. Clare, whose work might have shown to advantage in larger theatres. If my memory serves me rightly, several of his painting were won by Pontypridd local people for singing and clog dancing, which was one of the turns occasionally presented. On the departure of the theatres there sometimes came a company of entertainers to the Assembly Rooms in the New Inn. The famous 'Pepper's Ghost' was a great draw, and David Devant, the illusionist, visited the town too.

## Foresters' Fete

I must not conclude this interview without mentioning, perhaps in more detail than before, The Foresters' Fete. This was one of the biggest days in Pontypridd, when the Order paraded through the town in their picturesque costumes and Foresters' carrying banners and accompanied by bands and bugles. The principal officers were mounted. Several tableaux, representing 'widows & orphans,' 'sickness,' etc; were in the procession. They were headed by the band of the Volunteers. It attracted thousands of people to the sports that were held in the Ynysangharad fields on this day, the second Monday in July. There were usually a good number of sporting events there, and dancing, and I am afraid that a very great number came from those whose gait was not so steady as when they entered! The

licensed victuallers were very much in demand, having special licenses to dispose of their beverages in large booths on the field. Caterers of eatables were equally in evidence. I am very sorry that these processions, not only of the Forester's, but those of the Ivorites and other societies, have ceased. They afforded us considerable excitement, especially the bands. They all terminated with the usual supper, at either of the public houses where the lodges were held. I have particularly in mind the Greenmeadow, the Butchers' Arms, and the Llanover. On these occasions these houses were decorated with evergreens and flags.

### The Butchers' Arms

Speaking of the Butchers' Arms, I used to sometimes peek in behind the old doors and look at the August company which was too be seen there in the evenings, with their 'church warden' pipes. Each had his own particular seat. I cannot remember the name of them all, but amongst them used to be Mr. Wayne Morgan, Mr. Sprague; Dr. Hunter, and others of the leading businessmen. It was the only means at that time of distributing news and of indulging in innocence gossip. Pontypridd did not then possess its own newspaper.

### A notorious fair

Another noted day, now relegated to the limbo of forgetfulness, and perhaps it is a fair good thing too, was the old Common Fair, of which used to be said that there a man could get a drink, an argument and a black-eye, all for fourpence! Before it was stopped it had become very notorious and to counteract its evils the Sunday Schools of Pontypridd were influenced to hold their outings on that day. The Fair, as I said, earned such a bad reputation that in the end it was suppressed, somewhere about sixty years ago.

### **What the Lenox family did for their workmen and the town**

In the '*Glamorgan Free Press*' of 28<sup>th</sup> August 1926, during the miners' strike of that year, Mr. William Jones J. P., gave his recollections of the Brown & Lenox chainworks:

During the present days of industrial strife it must be very refreshing to contrast the much happier relationship that prevailed between employer and employee locally some sixty years or more ago.

The largest industry in those days in Pontypridd was the Newbridge Chain, Anchor and Engineering Works. These works were established more than a century ago and were carried on by a firm whose name had become worldwide; viz. the firm of Messrs Brown, Lenox and Co. The founders of this firm were a Captain Brown R.N. (Patentee of a certain anchor largely used by the Navy of that day), and Mr. Samuel Lenox, the latter being the principal proprietor. The chains, anchors, bridges, engines, boilers, &co., manufactured by the firm were acknowledged to be the best and most reliable in this or any country, and the stamp of Brown & Lenox and Co., was recognised always as a guarantee of best material and first-class workmanship. The relationship between Mr. George W. Lenox and his employees was of the most happy and trustful character. There are very few today who can recall the many interesting events associated with the Lenox family during their long residence at Ynysangharad House. During the winter the family resided in their London home but invariably spent the summer at Ynysangharad. They were always interested in the well-being of the employees and their families; visiting them in their homes, providing schools for the children and in various ways contributing largely to their comfort, happiness and welfare.

Ynysangharad House was not only a place of hospitality to the gentry of that day, but to the humblest resident of the neighbourhood. All were welcomed and encouraged in any good object or pursuit. The boys and girls of Trallwn had a happy time when the sons, George, Gordon and Malcolm with their sisters spent their holiday in Ynysangharad. They were invited into the beautiful grounds to participate in the bounty of its fruit and the beauty of its surroundings. It was a great day in the autumn of every year when Mr. George W. Lenox, with his gracious wife, came to the entrance gates with large baskets full of apples and pears, each passing child receiving a share of fruit. Then, at the close of the day, the great scramble for what remained in the baskets was most heartily enjoyed by the donors. The beautiful grounds and rose gardens were on special occasions, opened to the residents of the town.



**Gordon L. Lenox J.P. A very influential man in the development of Pontypridd and largest employer through the Newbridge chainworks. (Brown & Lenox).**



Mr. George W. Lenox met with a serious accident in London in 1861. The workmen and inhabitants (of Pontypridd) resolved to express their sympathy with him, so upon his first visit to the town afterwards they formed a large procession, consisting of their agents, workmen, friendly societies and residents and proceeded as far as Taffs Well to escort him to Ynysangharad where music and sports characterised the rejoicing of all for his recovery and presence amongst them again. During the proceedings a beautiful address was presented to him expressive of the love and admiration of the workmen and residents of the town for the proprietor of the chief industry of that day. The address, which was dated August 8<sup>th</sup> 1861, was signed by the following on behalf of the workmen and the inhabitants: Charles Bassett (chairman of the committee), Rev. J. Griffiths, George J. Penn, Ebenezer Williams, Edwin Jordon, J. S. Maddocks, E. J. Bishop, Moses Cule, John Jenkins, Walter Morgan, Osiah Hughes, J. C. Cousins, Even Lewis, W. Jones, John Williams, Edward Evans, Thomas Morris, William Thomas, John Morgan, Hezekiah Hughes and Thomas Evans.

Mr. George W. Lenox was the patron of many young men who aspired to improve their positions in life, and among the many was Mr. Tom Forrest, who was founder of the well-known firm of photographers, Messrs Thomas Forest and Sons. He was engaged at the works as a chain maker, but became interested in photography. When his employer was informed of the young man's ambition he invited him to Ynysangharad House, presented him with his first complete apparatus, and with it, I believe, he produced the photograph which was placed at the foot of the above address.

When the eldest son, George, attained his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and became a member of the firm there were grand times at Ynysangharad. The workmen with their families, together with the tradesmen of the town were regaled with a substantial dinner (a bullock being roasted in one of the large furnaces in the works), and all kinds of refreshments and sports. There are souvenirs of this great event in the homes of the elder workmen in Pontypridd and elsewhere valued and highly appreciated even today. As an indication of their interest in the social well-being of the people it may be mentioned that they were deeply interested in the friendly societies of the town. The eldest daughter, Rosa Harriette, became the patron of the



Recent references to the huge chains made at Messrs Brown, Lenox's Chainworks in Pontypridd have prompted Mrs I. Davies, 19 Duffryn Crescent, Rhydyfelin, to send us this photo. Printed on a card beneath the photo was the caption: Record Cable In 1906. Four-inch chain for Japan. Weight of each common link 200 lbs. and each end link 300 lbs. Weight of shackles 563 lbs. each. Manufactured by Brown Lenox & Co., Pontypridd.

first lodge of the Ancient Foresters in the town, and was always at the head of the annual procession on horseback wearing the green scarf and horn, the emblems of the Ancient Order.

When the enclosure Act of 1867 was passed Mr. George W. Lenox rendered the town a great and invaluable service. Under this Act the greatest part of the Pontypridd Common, which then included as far as Norton Bridge including that portion between Coedpenmaen and Merthyr Road was enclosed by the neighbouring land owners, and were it not for the intervention of Mr. George Lenox with the Government authorities there would not have been a Pontypridd Common today. He succeeded after much effort and expense in securing that delightful open space for the town for all time.

The present generation can well recall the great services rendered in so many ways by his son Gordon, who was one of our leading citizens for so many years. He was foremost with his noble wife in all the improvements for the uplift and well being of our town, beloved and highly esteemed by all. It was a source of sincere regret to all when he left the town to spend the remainder of his days on the Gower coast. He has since passed away and we have no representative of the family in the town today, but the name of Lenox will always remain fragrant to those who were in any way privileged to be associated with the family. What a great asset it would be in the present day if the happy relationship between capital and labour were prevalent in our great industries. The *'Pontypridd Observer and Leader'* of December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1947 added: -

### **130 years of chain making**

A long and romantic history

By Margaret W. Price

In 1818 Newbridge / Pontypridd was a demure little village when Messrs. Brown, Lenox and Company opened their famous Chainworks on the banks of the Glamorganshire Canal, and for the next two decades – until the Dinas Colliery commenced working – the village depended entirely on the Chainworks for its livelihood. Today, 130 years later, Pontypridd could no longer be painted as a pleasant pastoral scene. It has grown into a busy industrial town, with collieries, factories, and new industries springing up



**Samuel Brown (1776-1852) and his cousin Samuel Lenox established the Brown Lenox Chainworks in Pontypridd in 1818. The main product of the works was chain anchor cable, supplying all of the anchor cable for the Royal navy until 1916, as well as chain for the great passenger ships such as the *Mauretania* and the *Aquitania*. The works also made the chain for suspension bridges, including the *Menai Bridge*, the *Hammersmith Bridge*, and the *Chain Pier* at *Brighton*. The works also made colliery engines and other items.**

everywhere, but the Chainworks still stands supreme, and the intervening years have only served to strengthen its world famous reputation in chain, anchor and cable making.

People in Pontypridd, generally speaking, do not realise the importance of this immense industry. They think of the Chainworks as a rather drab looking building from which issues a great deal of noise and smoke. Yet behind those blackened walls, silhouetted against the leaping flames of the furnaces are men hard at work on chains, cables, anchors, forging yet another link in the long and romantic history of the firm. These men and their fathers and grandfathers before them, are the people who made the cables for such famous liners as the Great Eastern, the Aquitania, the Rodney, the Nelson, the Mauritania, and more recently the Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mary.

Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this company has carried out all the principal chain cables and anchor contracts for the British. Ever since the time Napoleon was on the rampage through Europe, when Wellington entered Spain, and the British defeated the French at Vincera, down to the present moment, Brown Lenox and Company have continuously been contractors to the Admiralty.

#### Began in 1808

This company claims to be the oldest ship chain makers in the country. It all began in 1808 when Samuel Brown, a young Lieutenant in the Navy, and a fellow officer of the famous Nelson, had the revolutionary idea of abolishing the old-fashion hempen rope cables used for mooring vessels and substituting chains made of iron links. After much pressure the Admiralty permitted a trial to be made at Lieutenant Brown's expense, and the "Penelope," a 400 ton sailing vessel, was accordingly sent out on a voyage under the command of Brown himself. The cables were severely tried and found to give great satisfaction. It is solely due to his enterprise and perseverance that chain cables were introduced to the British admiralty for the use in the Royal Navy.

## Very hard work

In the year 1812, Brown opened works at Millwall, on the River Thames, and some years later persuaded his cousin Samuel Lenox to join him in partnership. It was in 1818, the works in Millwall having become too small, that Messrs. Brown, Lenox and Company decided to extend their activities and so came to Pontypridd. There is no doubt at all that the chain making is very hard work, and the job requires great skill. It is most interesting to watch. A half moon of metal is picked from the forge, added to the chain, and beaten into shape. A new link is added to it before the previous one has cooled and so the chains grow. A skilled worker knows exactly how hard to hit the metal. There is a real art in it.

## Fifty years in same job

While going around the works I stopped to chat with Mr. W. J. Pearson, who has been employed there for fifty years and has a fine record of service. He started work with Brown, Lenox when only eleven years of age, and when I asked him what changes had occurred he told me that the method of making chains is much the same now as it was in the beginning. He worked in the Smith's shop for six years but the rest of the time he has spent on chain making. He was a brother of Mr. Arthur Pearson, M.P. for Pontypridd, who was himself a former employee of the Chainworks. There are two big electrical furnaces where the scrap metal is melted. The melting is caused by an electrical current "jumping" in the form of an arc from the carbon electrodes which enter the furnace from the top of the steep scrap on the base of the bowl.

When the metal has become molten the furnace is tipped by a special motor and the metal is pored into large ladles, which in turn are tipped into moulds underneath. When the castings cool off they are taken out of the moulds and sent down to the dressing shop to be finished off for despatch. In the electric steel foundry men are engaged in making steel chains and other types of castings for colliery work. Here too, parts are made for trolley buses, also mooring screws and anchors.



**Another great cable made at the Newbridge Chainworks of Brown and Lenox in 1906.**

## Four small hands

On the door of yard foreman's office I noticed four small hands cast in steel, and Mr. George Richardson, the managing director, who took me around the works, said that when the old iron foundry was opened over 100 years ago, Mrs. Lenox and her three children, put their hands in the sand and impressions were taken. That happened more than a century ago, yet the impressions are as clear as the day they were taken, and form a unique and rather touching memorial. Cables of varying sizes are made and some of them are very thick. Each new link, in half moon shape is picked red hot from the fire and carried in tongs to the forge. It is added to the chain and the opening in the half moon is closed. Then, the new link is re-heated, held in the tongs, and beaten until the metal meets and merges and the half moon becomes a complete oval.

One of the oldest employees at the works is Mr. Ioan Davies, of Treforest, who has been there for 55 years. He started work when he was about 14, and is now foreman for the testing department. There are many stories he could tell about the history of the Chainworks, but as he said, it would take a very long time to tell all he can remember. I saw an electric magnet picking up long iron pipes which were conveyed from one part of the yard to another. The magnet was of huge dimensions and could pick up metal weighing two tons. It worked on exactly the same principal as the small magnet which is used for picking up pins, and with which most people are familiar.

## Over 600 men employed

At present over 600 men are employed at the Chainworks. During the war years general casting for the Admiralty was done there. The various departments comprising: Drawing and designing offices, forges, smith's shops, engineering works, cast iron and steel foundries, and fitting and machine shops.

There have been many interesting milestones in the firm's progress. In 1856, the "Great Eastern," then the largest vessel ever floated was launched. The engineer of the mighty ship put the designing and manufacture of her chain cables in the hands of Brown, Lenox and Co. The



size of the cables 2 5/8 iron, was, in those days, unheard of, but the 800 fathoms of this large chain was successfully made at the Chainworks. And when the ship encountered a terrible hurricane off Holyhead the cables of the "Great Eastern" enabled her to ride the gale safely out.

#### For the "Mauritania"

Cables for the "Mauritania" were also made at Pontypridd, and it is interesting to note that these were made from the scrap of some of Nelson's ships that were broken up at Penarth. There is no doubt that for nearly 150 years millions of floating tonnage has depended for its safety on Brown, Lenox Cables and anchors. From the date of its establishment the firm has been famous for the superior standard of excellence maintain in every class of its productions, which have a high world-wide reputation for fine workmanship, quality and finish. New chapters are still being added to the intriguing story of this industry, which started so long ago in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and now, as then, the firm of Messrs. Brown, Lenox & Co. holds the world's record in chain and cable making – a fact of which Pontypridd should be justifiably proud.

### Chapter three Mill Street now and then

How a rough-shod track became important shopping centre

The *'Pontypridd Observer'* of 28<sup>th</sup> June 1952 reported: - The old corn mill by the River Rhondda which supplied many people in the village of Newbridge with flour, has long disappeared, but the street named in its honour of the mill is still one of the most important shopping centres in the town of Pontypridd. In medieval times, however, Mill Street was merely a rough-shod track leading to the village of Llanwonno. The only houses in the locality were probably a few scattered farmhouses and crossing the River Rhondda and River Taff were two timber bridges. Judging from the name of the farm of Gelli Fynaches a nunnery appears seems to have flourished on the hill overlooking Gelliwastad ("Level of the slope").

John Leland, commissioned by Henry VIII to make a survey of the antiquities of England and Wales between 1536 and 1542, records: - "There is another bridge – two miles below Cymmer (a confluence), and a quarter of a mile above where the Rhondda flows into "the Taav."

#### Thickly wooded

This appeared to have been the Rhondda Bridge, which existed on the site of the Girder shop-cum-bridge opposite Ynysangharad Park. The original structure was undoubtedly of timber, but before 1792 a narrow stone bridge of of two arches was built. Some sort of footbridge crossed the Taff between Ynysangharad and Mill Street and an old inhabitant of Pontypridd told the well-know journalist "Morien," in 1902: -

"I am 80 years of age and my parents lived until near a 100 years of age, and they remembered this bridge in use." In the 17<sup>th</sup> century a squirrel could have a clear Path through the trees overhead from the junction of the Taff with the Rhondda to Treherbert in the Rhondda Valley. Mr. G. W. Manby, of Clifton, stayed in the vicinity of Pontypridd in 1801 and in his "Picturesque Guide," published the same year, refers to a fisherman's cottage at the mouth of the thickly wooded Rhondda Valley, "stationed in the most convenient manner for the fisherman's vocations."

With the coming of industry to the Rhondda and the Taff, coal levels were started in Dinas in 1806, and a Chain and Cable Works was opened in Ynysangharad, in 1818 – the fisherman’s cottage was joined by other habitations. Many of the newcomers were Baptists and ground was leased to them by Mr. Evan Griffiths for the purpose of building a chapel. The chapel was opened in 1810 and was called “Carmel.”

### The first houses

In 1840 the Taff Vale Railway came into being and bridged the River Rhondda half a mile upstream from the junction with the River Taff. One of the arches of the bridge – of the northernmost bank of the Rhondda – provided the “Gateway” to the valley. All road traffic to and from the Rhondda has to pass through this archway.

Between the “Gateway” and the town of Newbridge – later renamed Pontypridd in order to avoid confusion with Newbridge, Monmouthshire – a street of houses came into being. Most of the houses supported cottage industries and in these the hand loom was a necessary part of the furniture and fittings. In the shadow of the “Gateway” stood the old corn mill and to drive the wooden waterwheel which turned the grinding machinery that produced the flour, water was diverted from the river into a feeder and further down the street was Ty’r Factory, the woollen factory of Evan James, where the Welsh national Anthem was composed in 1856.

### Myvyr Morganwg

In 1844 Mr. Evan Davies (“Myvyr Morganwg”) settled in Pontypridd and set up a business as a watchmaker. An ardent student of Glamorgan he won the chair for the Welsh ode on the subject of “The sacred Circles of the Bards,” at Pontypridd in 1853. Universally known as “The Archdruid” Mr. Davies succeeded “Taliesin ap Iolo Morganwg,” to the position in 1847. He erected the stone serpent and circle (not to be confused with the rocking stone – a genuine ancient monument), on the Common, and from 1853 to 1878 held four services a year there. “Myvyr Morganwg” died in a house in Mill Street, directly opposite St. Catherine’s Street, in 1888.

## Memories of Mr. Pollard

Seventy-five years ago Mr. F. W. Pollard, 23 Henry Street, Hopkinstown, lived in Colliers Row, at the top end of Mill Street. Mr. Pollard told a reporter that the row has long since been demolished. It adjoined the Colliers Arms Hotel. The gentle gradient in the road at that point, he said, was known as Collier's Hill. Mr. Pollard was educated at the Mill Street School and one of his playmates in the 1800s was David Williams, the youngest son of the Mill Street miller. Declares Mr. Pollard: - "I used to spend many happy hours playing round the old mill."

### "Fleet Street"

Leaving school at the age of 10 years Mr. Pollard went into the newspaper trade and in the 1880s Mill Street was by way of being the "Fleet Street" of Pontypridd. Both the weekly newspapers circulating in Pontypridd were published in Mill Street and every Thursday and Friday evenings Mr. Pollard collected dozens of each newspaper and plied them between Pontypridd and Trehafod. At the corner of St. Catherins' Street the Conservative organ the "*Pontypridd and District Herald*," was printed, and within a hundred yards the Liberal organ, the "*Pontypridd Chronicle*," was set up. The 'Herald' was owned by a gentleman named MaLucas and the "*Pontypridd Chronicle*," the by Rev. Benjamin Davies. Both the "*Chronicle*" and the "*Herald*," were set-up and printed – by hand.

Even in the 1870s and 1880s Mill street was a busy shopping centre. Saddlers and shoemakers jostled with grocers and chemists, and grocery and chemist shops were first established in the premises at present occupied by Mr. Tom Davies and Mr. Oswal Davies respectively. Mr. Pollard's father, the late F. A. Pollard, was a builder in business at Pontypridd and when the line for horse trams was laid between Porth and Mill Street, he was one of the contractors employed. The line was leased to the Cardiff Businessman, Mr. Solomon Andres and Mr. F. W. Pollard accompanied his father on the first horse tram from Mill Street terminus outside Mill Street School, to Porth. He was 14 years of age at the time and he recalls that the trams were hauled by two horses apiece, but an extra tug horse had to be stationed at Sant's Hill, Trehafod, to bring the trams to the top. The service was discontinued following an outbreak of disease at

the horse stables at Porth, for all the horses had to be destroyed to keep the disease in check.

### County Hotel

The James' woollen factory went into disuse at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was taken down to make way for the County Hotel. A number of other changes were effected in Mill Street as a result of a project known as the "Mill Street Improvement Scheme." A popular show touring the halls at the turn of the century was publicised under the name of "Myrio Rama" and was an early attempt to reproduce life in foreign parts in a series of pictures. One of the proprietors of the show, Mr. Charles Poole, was "mine host" for a time of the old Welsh Harp, Mill Street. He was one of the prime movers of the "People's Park," a popular venue for many years for sporting enthusiasts in the town. The People's Park was situated on the site of the Pontypridd U. D. C. depot, and for many years sporting activities of all kinds were organised there on "Mabon's Day" – the first Monday of every month and dedicated to the miners' leader, the Rt. Hon. William Abraham ("Mabon").

In 1902 a new grocer's shop was opened in Mill Street by the late Mr. Tom Jeremy, and in 1904 work was commenced on the Mill Street viaduct. The viaduct was to accommodate the proposed Pontypridd electric tramway from Pontypridd to Trehafod, and to make way for it many old landmarks had to be taken down. These included the "Welsh Harp," which was re-erected in palatial style above the viaduct.

### Electric Tramway

The first electric tramway in Pontypridd was inaugurated in 1905 between Treforest and Cilfynydd and the Pontypridd to Trehafod route was inaugurated in 1907. The terminus of the Trehafod branch was in the middle of the road at the Junction of Taff Street and Mill Street, and road traffic was obliged to pass on either side of the double tram lines. At Trehafod a connection could be obtained for Porth being run by the Rhondda Transport Company, but on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1917, the two tramways were joined together as one service and was jointly operated by the Pontypridd UDC and the Rhondda Transport. In the early thirties electric

tramways were condemned as old fashioned and impractical in progressive Pontypridd and the last electric tram in the town ran between Pontypridd and Porth in 1931 – “En route” to the scrap yard. A new era of road transport had begun in Mill Street. A new age of salesmanship for the shopkeepers of Pontypridd

### **Flashback to the Pontypridd of long ago**

When boys slid down the cobbles in Ma’s frying pan!

In the ‘*Pontypridd Observer*,’ of 4<sup>th</sup> March 1961 a 77 year-old man, Mr. Herbert Starkey, of 7 Forest Road, Treforest, looked back over the seven decades he had lived in the town. The energetic gentleman, small of stature, sprightly of gait and rosily complexioned, is a remarkable personality, and all the more so, for he has been blind since the 1920’s. Mr. Starkey remembers the days when the world champion boxer Bob Fitzsimmons gave an exhibition of the “noble art” at the Variety Theatre; when a few coppers secured a dish of peas and faggots in the market, and a seat in the ‘gods’ at the old Clarence Theatre, and when small boys slid down the cobbles of Turnpike Road in their mother’s frying pans! A West Country boy, Bristol born, son of a carpenter, Mr. Starkey came to Pontypridd at the age of six, because his father was attracted by the promise of work in the rapidly expanding town.

#### **‘Jumping the rapids’**

He remembers well the rough, stone road running parallel to Coedpenmaen Road, and leading through green pastures to the farm just below Norton Bridge. The original St. Matthews Church was a zinc building. On the site of the present Trallwn Workmen’s Club was the Albion Colliery Workmen’s Library, a place of enormous value to those who could afford to have time to study and so better themselves. At that time there was no Berw Road Bridge, and boys used to “jump the rapids” from stone to stone across the river, often falling right in and getting soaked. When the bridge was built it was (in 1909) the first structure to be made of ferro-concrete in South Wales.

Then began the era of the horse-drawn tram, and Mr. Starkey stresses the importance this had on the growth of the town. The roads had to be

widened, and in many cases trees which lined them had to be cut down. The narrow, one-arched bridges spanning the canal at various points were replaced with iron bridges – these can still be seen at Norton Bridge and by the Corn Stores.

### Dickensian Street

Taff Street has retained its original shape, shop frontages have been modernised, bottlenecks have been cleared to some extent and the garden which used to grace the front of the New Inn Hotel has long since gone. He remembers the Palladium Cinema being built – the first luxury cinema in the town (the other in existence being the Park Hall). The building of the Palladium (which incidentally, is now being demolished to be replaced by the Fine Fare supermarket) necessitated some clever engineering, for the rear of the cinema was fitted into the coach house which stood where Morgan Street now stands. To do this glass roofs were needed to allow light through the coach house into the cinema. Mr. Starkey can just remember the construction of the Old Bank Chambers. Mill Street was a Dickensian row of small shops with tiny latticed windows, where plump ladies sold toffees and other goodies.

### Origins of ‘Tumble’

He explained the origin of the place name, Tumble (Station Square). At one time there was a single track leading here from the pit at Pwllgwaun, which was sunk in 1873 by Mr. Daniel Thomas, and affectionally known afterwards as “Dan’s Muck Hole.” The pit consisted of a small shaft and a single wheel. Not many men were employed there, but the pit produced some excellent house coal, which was transported by horse drawn truck from Pwllgwaun to station square, to a position outside the Greyhound Hotel, then tumbled out of the truck – hence the name Tumble.

### Amusements for the young?

How did the young and old amuse themselves back in the old days? For the young it was usually a matter of invention. There was plenty one could do and many places where one could play, and all the youngsters had in mind was making the most of one’s youth before it was prematurely

captured by the coal mine at the age of 11. At that time nearly every family had a piano and on cold evenings the neighbours would gather round and enjoy a singsong. There were various functions connected with the chapels, and these sometimes included outings to Barry Island. During the holiday seasons the circus, the booths, the travelling cinemas, the waxworks and perhaps something as exciting as Poole's Myriorama – an ingenious device resembling a magic lantern and giving out a fantastically realistic picture – all came to town. The highlight of the circus was the procession when a lion perched on a moving structure would roar defiance at the spectators.

### Many friends

These are the reminiscences of this grand old man. His memory is as fresh as if all these things happened only yesterday. His blindness, he presumes, the result of going to work underground at the age of 12 and for five and a half days of the week being shut of completely from the light outside. But he does not complain; he has many friends, and they spend their time spinning yarns together at the Institute for the Blind in Merthyr Road, where he is chairman of the social club.

### **The early days of Pontypridd's 'Petticoat Lane'**

#### Oldest stallholders look back

During the summer of 1950 the *'Pontypridd Observer'* carried the following articles about the Pontypridd Market around and before 1900: -

Pontypridd Market has now become an institution in the town. Not only does it attract the residents in the immediate valleys but visitors from far and wide travel to this 'Petticoat Lane' anxious to secure bargains and listen to the competitive shouting of the stallholders. But those plying their wares in Market Square are comparative strangers to Pontypridd compared with those who have stalls in the inside market. There are many who have watched the market grow from small beginnings and the people who were among the first stallholders are Mr. Benjamin Rees Gibbon, of Ifail-yr-Hooper Farm, Ystradowen, and his sister Miss Owen Gibbon.



## Fifty-eight years ago

Although Mr. Gibbon is now 71 years of age he still remembers clearly the day he first started in the market 58 years ago. In 1882 he came to the market for the first time with his mother to help sell the farm produce, butter, bacon, eggs and meat. “Things were very different in those days, Mr. Gibbon told a staff reporter. “The market itself was half its present size. There was just an open market space where the meat market is today. In centre was a patch of ground where the stallholders brought their horse and carts to unload their goods onto the stalls. The stalls were around the open space.” He eyes grey hazy with memories as he spoke of the handful of stallholders who gathered there every Wednesday. “Most of them,” said Mr. Gibbon, were nice, tidy farmers, selling the best produce from their farms. Butter was one shilling a pound, eggs eight-pence a dozen, cheese sixpence pound and the best smoked bacon nine-pence a pound. Everything was of the best quality and there was as much as you wanted.”

## Faggots and peas

His sister, who can remember the market 58 years ago said: - “Do you remember the dear old lady who used to make faggots and peas?” Mr. Gibbon started to chuckle. “She used to cook them on a home-made fire and the black smoke used to rise up in clouds.” He continued, “There were not many other stalls. There were a few selling meat, and quite a number selling sweets – at the ration of one-pence a quarter-pound. There was also a stall selling Welsh-flannel at one-shilling per yard, made in the factory on the Graig.

Oh! I remember there was also a Singer’s sewing machine stall too. There was no Town Hall Theatre in those days. The butter and poultry market was built on the site where cattle and sheep were sold. I can remember the carpenters making the stalls for the butter market. I can remember, too, the first time the market opened on a Saturday. Until then it was opened only on Wednesdays. After the first Saturday opening, one man actually said it would never come to much,” Mr. Gibbon added with a smile.

## Fun at Christmas

Miss Gibbon carried on with the reminiscences. "We used to have fun every Christmas. A prize was offered for the best dressed stall and my mother won it several times. I used to make the butter and put small rolls of it on the willow-pattern plate." "Oh yes," sighed Mr. Gibbon, "those good old days have gone. There is a complete change now in the market. It has grown and grown. There were no stalls in the street in those days, and there are many more people visiting the market now." As I left I agreed that the 'good old days' had gone. How I wish they would return to that. Mr. Gibbon and his sister would be able to sell once their best smoked ham and bacon, fresh eggs and butter. Instead of the garden produce they are selling today.

Mrs. Roberts has sold toys for a half-century but hoops are no longer in fashion.

Fifty years ago Mrs. Francis Roberts leaned over her toy and basket stall at Pontypridd Market, and handed an article from one of the shelves behind her to a little girl in long petticoats, with full skirt and starched white pinafore, who was seriously inspecting the selection before eventually making up her mind about her purchase. When I called at the same stall in the market this week (writes Rosemary Preece) Mrs. Roberts, now living in Zion Street, was still handing over toys to youthful customers for inspection. This time, however, her customer was a serious looking boy, who might easily have been the grandson of the little girl of fifty years ago. In the time which has elapsed Mrs. Roberts has seen more changes than she cares to remember. "In those days children wore such a lot of clothes, and you would never see a little girl without a clean, stiffly starched pinafore. "I suppose they still ask for the same type of toys," I said. "Oh yes, every little girl will love a doll," replied Mrs. Roberts. "We do not get any requests for hoops these day now however," she added with a laugh. "At one time hoops used to be a great favourite with boys and girls and we sold both wooden and iron ones." Another little girl came to the stall and gazed wide-eyed at the selection of playthings.

## Better selection

“Is there a better selection to offer the children of today?” I was prompted to ask. Oh! yes, toys today are far more attractive,” she assured me. “Playthings were mostly made of wood, but today toys are mainly mechanical and are therefore much more interesting. The workmanship, I think, was better in past years and of course toys were much cheaper in those days. Today you have to pay a couple of pounds for a really nice doll, but when I first had my stall there was no need to pay more than about eight-shillings and eleven-pence.” I asked her about the baskets which were hanging from hooks behind the stalls, making a colourful array. These have changed in shape and size during the years,” Mrs. Roberts declared. “In my bygone days they were large and plain but the makers gradually realised that a smaller, less cumbersome basket was far easier to carry and would be more popular. They are decorated in pretty colours now and the basket is used far more than it need to be. The very large hawkers’ baskets in which tradesmen used to deliver their goods are used no more. “When I first came to the market,” she continued with a smile, “we did not sell pram baskets or baskets for bicycles. I don’t suppose they could put one on the old penny-farthing.

## A big part

The market certainly plays a big part in Mrs. Roberts’ life, and she, undoubtedly, is an important person in the market, after 50 years spent amongst the criers and bartering of the stallholders. When she first started, Mr. Roberts joined her sister at the stall. A little lower down her brother Mr. D. Williams, had his fruit and vegetable stall. Mrs. Roberts is the only one left of the three and she carries on with her toy and general store with the help of her two sons, Edward and Brynley Gower. No doubt, to the thousands of children she has served during those 50 years she is the most popular figure in the whole of the market.

We sold a cup and saucer for a penny  
Started stall seventy years ago

Mrs Mellor sighs for the ‘good old china’ days. Many people remember the day, many years ago, when lustrous colourful Swansea and Nantgarw china

was sold in Pontypridd Market and cheaply too. Mrs Margaret Mellor stood at her china stall in the market when I saw her on Wednesday and sadly thought of the beautiful china she used to sell fifty years ago.

My brother, Mr. George Mellor, first started this china stall near seventy years ago. Then my husband, Walter, took it over and I joined him when I was married. It is now my daughter's stall, but she has been in poor health and is unable to come to the market these days. "I think she must have been the youngest person serving, laughed Mrs Mellor, for she used to run around here when she was only six years of age." Mrs Mellor looked at the china which ladens her stall today. Her glance was a trifle wistful and I could quite understand why, having seen some Swansea china. "We used to have the china straight from the factory in those days and beautiful stuff it was too.

The colours were lovely, not like this plain sort we have to sell today." Mrs Mellor half-closed her eyes as if to shut out the sight of plain serviceable utility china, and to imagine instead in its place rows of beautiful sets are undoubtedly unobtainable today. This is why Mr Mellor knew good china when she saw it, for his father owned a small pottery. Needless to say, only the best was sold at the stall – which, incidentally, was one of the first to open in the market. Young people today probably don't realise what good china is," continued Mrs Mellor, with a touch of regret in her voice. There is no doubt that everything is far inferior, both in quality and design.

#### Public taste changed

I asked Mrs Mellor if public tastes had changed with the passing years and she answered with a definite 'yes.' "We used to sell great cartwheel cheese dishes in those days, which we used for whole cheeses," she added with a laugh. "Housewives would use large earthenware pans for kneading bread and making their cake mixture. "They don't do that these days, do they?"

#### Cooked in tins

As I agreed, Mrs Mellor picked up a cake tin and holding it in her hand, said: "These were not used when the stall was first opened. Women cooked

their cakes in large tins, and Welsh cakes baked on an iron flatstone were the favourites. We used to sell many number of 'water jacks' made of clay. What were they used for? Well, few houses had water in those days and the women used to collect it and store it in the 'Jacks.' There were also water fountains. These were used for fowls and chickens, who used to drink the water which spurted out as the 'fountain' was turned upside-down. My eyes turned to the ornaments that filled the shelves at the back of the stall. "I suppose those have always been popular?" I commented. Oh, dear me no, Mrs Mellor hastily corrected me. "There were no 'whistling boys' and 'coy girls' in those days. There were ornaments I agree, but they were mostly painted glass in sets of three, a centre piece and a vase each side. Very nice they were too. We also sold pairs of china dogs with golden chains around their necks. I expect there are a few people in Pontypridd who still have our china dogs."

'Isn't it awful?'

Our talk was interrupted by someone asking the price of a cup and saucer. Mrs Mellor satisfied the curiosity of the potential customer and then turned back to me. "Isn't it awful?" She asked in a whisper. I remember the day when we sold a cup and a saucer for a penny, now they are one-shilling. It is the same with dinner plates. We used to get our vases from Germany because they were far cheaper. Very often we would sell them to the gypsies who used to peddle them from door to door. Of course, we can't get German vases today. "People had larger families in those days," smiled Mrs Mellor and so bought far more than they do now." "Of course" She added after a moments thought "it might well be that prices are dearer today." As I left Mrs Mellor I wondered if our lives had become more dreary and colourless, because we can no longer buy that lovely Swansea and Nantgarw china. But perhaps it would seem a little incongruous with the bread and butter we eat today in place of that great, rich, fruity cake the housewives baked in those days.

Grannie Cockles, Tom Thumb, Cheap Jack and the Cough Candy Man  
Old characters come alive again

"Do you remember?" What a host of memories are conjured up by the phrase, and how plentiful are those memories if one takes a journey into

the past history of Pontypridd Market, writes Rosemary Preece. I often wonder if the older residents of the town walking through the market each week, see in their mind-eye, not the slick, swift-talking stallholders of today but the colourful salesmen of long ago. No doubt the 'outside market' did not hold many stalls as it does today, but the visiting crowd was just as large, anxious to see everything and everyone and enjoy their day out.

Dear little lady

A touch of the old traditional Welsh style was brought to Pontypridd by a dear little lady who from her wares and her appearance earned herself the title of 'Granny Cockles.' She wore the real Welsh costume with a small turnover (shawl), a black and white checked flannel apron and elastic-sided boots. In winter she donned black mittens. For some unknown reason, however, she did not wear the tall, black Welsh hat, but a close fitting black straw bonnet with a white frill framing her face. Each market day she sat on her 'pitch' at the central door of the market, two or three doors from the shop now occupied by Messrs. Scudamore the butchers.

Woollen stockings

Stockings were in great demand even in those days, but requests were made not for nylons or fully fashioned pure silk. No, the women of those days were after the real Welsh wool grey stockings, which were so popular with the agricultural workers of seventy or eighty years ago. When mining gradually took the place of farming the colliery workers also found the warmth and strength of these stockings invaluable. Unfortunately the machine-knitted stockings eventually superseded the hand worked article, and abolished this old country trade.

The well-known figure of the 'stocking man' would walk slowly through the market crowds. On his shoulder he carried two pieces of wood, fixed together in a T shape, and on the horizontal bar would hang the stockings. After picking a good 'pitch' he would take the stick from his shoulders and hold it by one hand to the ground. He would address the crowd in Welsh, a language never heard in the market today!

## The Cough Candy man

Unless you were very observant you might miss the 'Cough Candy Man,' for his diminutive stature made people call him 'Tom Thumb.' You would eventually find him near the corner of the New Inn Hotel. He was a real character in the market, clad in a white apron and top hat, and was only just as tall as his large basket. But oh, the complaints he could cure! Coughs, colds, asthma and bronchitis – but he modestly confessed he could only relieve consumption, adding only an undertaker could cure that mysterious decease! I am sure there must have been hundreds who went home hopefully hugging 'Tom Thumb's' curatives.

### A few tears

Next to the 'Cough Candy' man you would probably find a small crowd of people, many of whom would be surreptitiously wiping away a few tears. They would be watching a disabled miner, complete with pick, pacing up and down in front of a canvas painted black. This was supposed to depict a coalmine and showed the cage descending, and miner at work at the bottom. As the pennies tickled into his cap on the ground the miner would sing the most melancholy tunes, guaranteed to produce a few tears.

Running well out into the road, from the shop window of Mr. Gwilym Evans' shop towards the arcade, was a long plank supported with barrels. It was perched high above the heads of the people and along it ran the 'cheap Jack,' selling his pots and pans. His favourite cry was "Only a few left now," but there always seemed sufficient to meet the demands of his customers.

### Faggots and peas

Some people used to tilt their noses heavenward, in scorn, when passing the 'trolley,' selling hot faggots and peas. But I am sure the delicious smell of the savoury soon 'won them over,' and no doubt, even the most fastidious were among the people who crowded every available inch of the counter on a 'nippy' night. These old characters have gradually disappeared from the marketplace to be replaced by new faces. A great change has taken place in the type of goods sold and no longer can we call at the

'faggots and peas' stall for a warming feast on a cold night. The tradition goes on, certainly, but I wonder which were the better times?

He picked up chairs with his teeth  
Another peep into the Old Market Days

I wonder how many mothers in the days of long ago were are alarmed to see their young sons trying, with grim determination, to lift a chair with their teeth. You could depend on it that the lads were not training for any acrobatic career, but were trying to emulate one of the market stall holders. Every Wednesday this man, called a "quack" by many, collected a large audience on whom he would impress the importance of good teeth. Of course he had the goods guaranteed to ensure these necessities and to demonstrate the infallibility of his wares, he would lift a wooden chair in his teeth and swing it before the amazed crowd. Maybe this long-haired character who took up his stand every market day near the 'Jug and bottle' entrance of the New Inn Hotel, was the cause of many a gap in a young lad's set of teeth!

#### Imposing figure

Many a time some of the market-goers paused a moment from their shopping to watch an imposing looking man with a strong handsome face, aquiline nose and flowing beard striding through the square. He would be dressed in a green suit (made in material of beautiful quality) with white shoulder drapery and red braid trimmings. A cap made from a fox with a tail hanging carelessly over one shoulder, betrayed the man's identity immediately. Yes it was the famous Dr. William Price of Llantrisant, who would be visiting some of his patients living near the square. More often than not he would stop at one of the shops and select a small delicacy to take home to his family. Very often the eccentric character would purchase a fish or two, and carry them home unwrapped and uncovered on a small twig which was hanging at his side.

He was a regular visitor to the chemists shop near the market, which stood where Lipton's store is today. The chemist would supply many of the ingredients for the famous doctor's prescriptions, and some of the old



characters, request were very unusual! Dr. Price, however, suddenly discontinued to patronise the small shop. One day he asked the chemist to display in his window photograph of the naked body of his child. Naturally considering public disapproval, the chemist refused, and so infuriated was Dr. Price that he never entered the shop again!

Pontypridd could certainly claim the famous amongst its shopkeepers. The market goers would always make for one small shop which sold pens, pencils, and notepaper. This was owned by a famous Bard, 'Dewi Alaw', but the poet relied on market day mostly for the sale of leaflets and booklets containing his works. If wonder if any of the poems of Dewi Alaw are hidden in some some dark cupboard of a Pontypridd house today.

### The Corsican brothers

I expect there are still residents who remember the Corsican brothers – the name given by the local lads to two tailors who had a shop where Broom's pie shop stood. Nobody knows why the boys named them – probably because the brothers were inseparable – but a mystery seems to surround them. They were always dressed alike, adopting a garb resembling that of a minister, with dark suits, white collars and black-bow ties, and they never went out without those small round hats which are never seen today. Every night at the same time they would walk to the library's reading room, where one could always read the 'Times' – nothing-else – and the other, a morose character it appeared, would sit with his chin cupped in his hands, never uttering a word. They would leave every night as the clock struck ten, the quiet brother walking about a yard behind the other.

### Old curiosity shop

I am sure the children of today would love to spend a few hours amongst the toys of yesteryear. What a joy to those youngsters years ago was a stall owned by a very well known Pontypridd family. It looked very much like Dickens' old curiosity shop with its flight of steps and wide widows. Oh, the toys of that day! Spinning tops of all colours, sailing ships, coloured Indian rubber balls which hung in large nets, prams, cradles, dolls' houses, rocking horses, midget sized furniture and tea sets, sauce-pans, and scales. And the dolls! What exquisite creations with beautiful wax faces delicately

tinted pink, real curly hair and beautiful frocks, and all that for a few shillings. Any sum from 3d to one shilling would buy a jointed wooden doll and for baby there was always the rag doll, and rubber playthings – which I am told were very popular at teething time.

### Marbles

But the pride and joy of all boys in those days was their collection of marbles. In every toy shop you would find bowls and bowls of them of every colour and every size – and how seriously the boys would count their winnings! A game of marbles would be played with grim concentration and very often a group of girls would be eagerly watching and counting the shots for the winner.

Perhaps one player's bag would fill more rapidly than his opponents and then the storm clouds would gather! A dispute would be followed by a fight in some quiet nook away from the sight of the older and more respectable folk. A good scrap would generally result in a bleeding nose and then the young aggressors would make for the pump in the alleyway at the top of Penuel Lane, near the entrance to the town hall.

### Made it up

Alas, this old relic has now disappeared but I am sure many a young lad has washed clean his 'war wounds' there made up many a quarrel before facing his well-respecting parents. There are, no doubt, many 'boys of Pontypridd' who remember that feeling of regret when putting away childish habits and starting work, they have handed over their cherished marbles to younger brothers.

A shop where you could buy almost anything  
Memories of days when tempting dishes were very cheap

Many relics of the old market days in Pontypridd have unfortunately disappeared from sight. Not only have the old characters given up their stalls in the square, but numbers of 'landmarks' have been taken away and hidden from sight. I wonder how many people remember the lovely teapot which used to hang over the imposing frontage of Mr. Richard Rogers'

shop? This well-known resident had a provision and grocery store, one of the largest in town, where the Pontypridd Ironmongery stands today, and every market day it was a hive of activity.

### A month's goods

The huge teapot attracted everyone's attention and on a sunny day it would appear luminous, glinting in the sun. What a shop! There was very little you could not buy there and through its doors would pass the stallholders, townspeople and farmers' wives, all going to purchase their weekly provisions. All day long the genial owner would greet his customers and have a chat, and it was a regular sight to see the women, many of them greeting each other in Welsh, leaving the store with their baskets laden. Many of the women would have travelled from distant farms and collected their goods for the month. They would often have a long 'trek' home as buses and trains were very infrequent, so they were warmly attired in Welsh flannel dresses and strong shoes. Very often they would travel to Pontypridd on horseback with their lidded baskets, and something like donkey – or mule, - panniers.

### Thrill for the children

The children especially loved – for a particular reason. Near the doorway stood large scales used to weight the large bags of flour and potatoes, and very often the chief manager would lift children up and place them on these scales in place of the sacks! This spot of amusement compensated for the task of collecting a jug of treacle. The grown-ups would rarely understand why this was an unpleasant task for the children – I wonder if it was because treacle was mostly associated with spring medicine!

### Cost only a few pence

A visit to Pontypridd for residents living a distance away would have always meant a visit to the Cambrian Restaurant at the other end of Market Square. A sight of its windows has made many a mouth water, and probably the older residents still dream today of the tempting dishes. York hams, especially when 'frosted' over with breadcrumbs, would be daintily filled with white and pink tissue paper. Lovely old dishes would hold

sirloins of beef, decorated in a similar fashion. There would also be platefuls of tarts, made from delicious pastry, which would melt in your mouth. And you would buy a good supply of anything for a few pence! The shop was owned and managed by a family – the parents and their daughters, and inside you would find a blazing fire to cheer and warm you on a cold day. The china glistened and cutlery shone, and a peaceful atmosphere greeted the diner. The marble tops of the tables would be spotless and every round table had three legs, bearing a replica of the majestic figure of Britannia, complete with trident.

#### Eccentric squire

A familiar figure riding his horse through Market Square was ‘The squire of Fairfield’ – on his way to court. He would stable his horse in the New Inn Yard, but those that knew him well could always tell if he was in town by looking at the pavements. “The Squire” (Rev. W. Williams ) evidently loved raisins and would always be eating them, sometimes dropping a few on his way up to court. He was was an eccentric character, but was so well-known and respected by the farmers that on his gravestone at Glyntaff are engraved the words “The farmers’ friend.” Some who saw him travelling home for the last time after passing judgement at the court, said he carried a huge frying pan, with no wrapping, fixed to his horse’s saddle.

#### The old Town Hall

When the day’s shopping was over, the market place would again be all bustle while people waited for the old Town Hall to open. Once all the youngsters gathered in excitement when they learned that ‘Muldoon’s Picnic’ was to be produced and a real live donkey (with a barrel laden with carrots, no doubt for the obstinate animal) would appear on the stage. Alas, as room was limited and no children were allowed in the hall, but one of the more adventurous warily crept up the back stairs, and clambered on all-fours to the wings on top. A beautiful grandstand view was the reward, but unfortunately one of the members of the orchestra spotted the eager face and the adventurer was unceremoniously ‘bundled’ off the premises.

Lacking then!

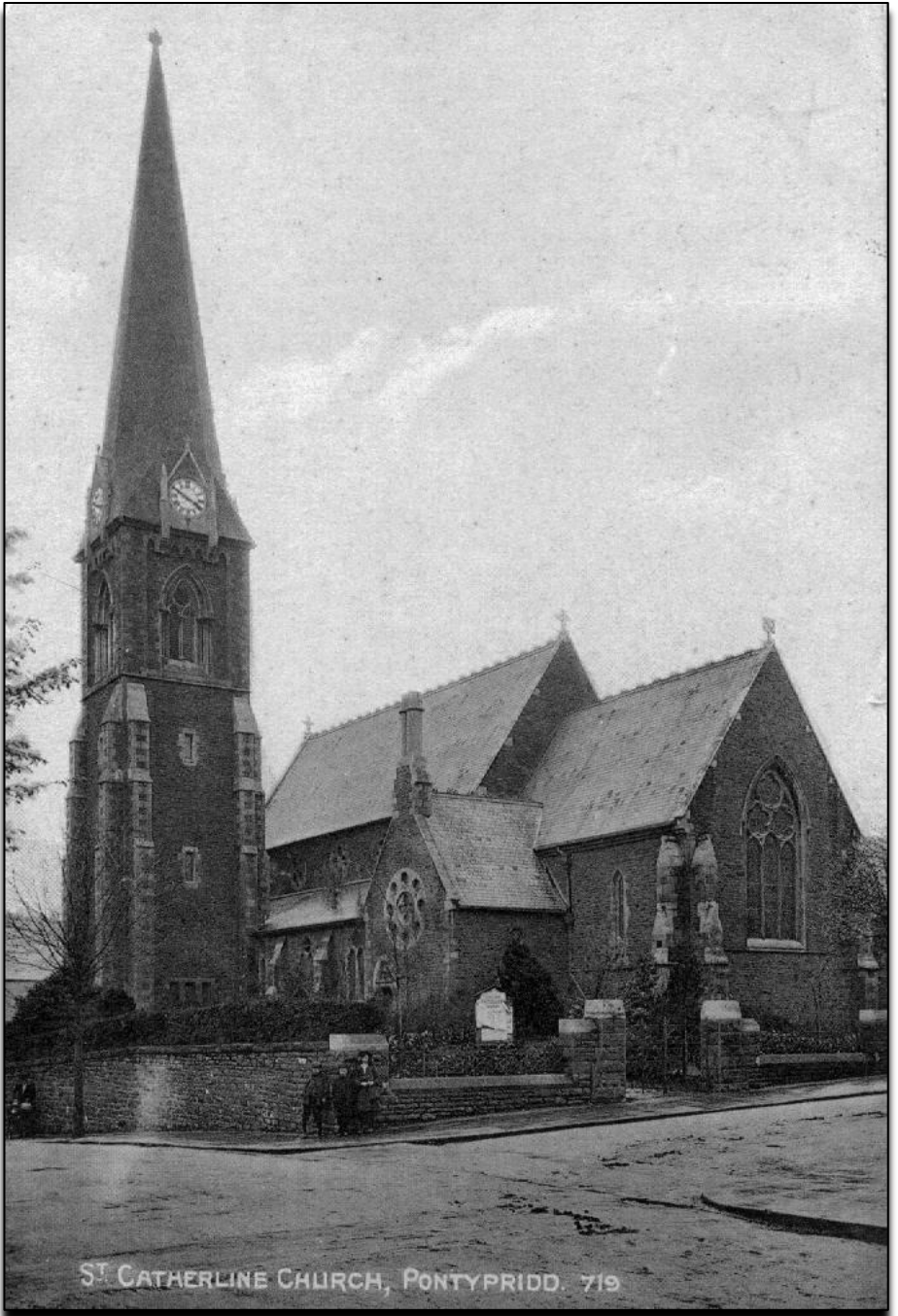
The children of those days also suffered by the lack of playing fields, nor did they have a park, but they did not seem to worry! Many used to have rollicking fun playing hide-and-seek up and down the steps leading from Market Square to Taff Street, running around the block near the New Inn and through Market Square again. In summer there would be lovely walks and picnics and amongst the beautiful scenery of the Berw and on the Berw rocks. There was a favourite spot, the boys playing cricket, or fishing and swimming in the Berw Pool. Others would fly their kites – a favourite sport – from the side of Graig-yr-Hesg. Many of the old residents of today will agree that 1950 can provide nothing to equal the whiteness of the rocks, the beauty of the foam, and the sight of the large variety of birds in the Berw area of long ago.

### **St. Catherine's Church, Pontypridd - Its early history**

by W. M. Morris

The *Glamorgan Free Press & Rhondda Leader* of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1928 reported: - Jubilee services to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> year of the opening of this church were held this week and I venture to give a brief account of the early history of the same. I am rather surprised that the present officials of St. Catherine's have no true record either of the foundation and the opening services, or data relating to its early history. As one who has present at the opening service in 1869 - and who had previously attended the services held in a small school room in Temperance Place, by the side of the river, and as an alto singer in St. Catherine's choir for many years after, I may be allowed to offer a few facts to the present workers and which may be preserved by the church for future references.

It was in 1866 that the church people of Pontypridd were able through the generosity of the owners of the Thomas's estate to secure the present site, there was a great rejoicing in the town when the foundation stone was laid on Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup> 1866 by Miss Clara Thomas, Ystrad Mynach, in the presence of Albert Allipant, Bishop of Llandaff; John Griffiths, incumbent of Glyntaff, and D. T. Davies, curator in charge, and all the gentry and church-people of the surrounding neighbourhood. Underneath the stone was placed a document enumerating these facts and including



ST. CATHERINE CHURCH, PONTYPRIDD. 719

the names of all the founders of the church, altogether with two photographs taken by Mr. Thomas Forrest, photographer, of the interior and exterior of the old church-room in Temperance Place. No doubt these details are locked up in the mother church at Glyntaff, but, it seems strange a copy of this document was not preserved in the archives of the church.

Where are the ecclesiastical beneficiaries who should have obtained and preserved these records? After the ceremony, 150 guests were entertained to banquet by Mr. Cousins at the New Inn Hotel. The contractor was Mr. William Morgan, grandson of Mr. Charles Morgan, at present living in Gelliwasted Rd., and the contract was originally £4,000, but with the boundary walls and other extras, it ultimately came to be £5,000. The architect was Mr. J. Norton, of London. The North Aisle was added afterwards in 1885.

Most of the recent chroniclers' of the events at Pontypridd have given the date of the opening of St. Catherine's as 1868, and to confirm this they point to the rain-water boxes all around the roof of the church, which have 1868 cast upon them, but the church spire was a difficulty and took a long time to complete, and the correct date of the opening of the church was Tuesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1869, so that the Jubilee of the opening would be September 7<sup>th</sup> 1929.

Excursions were run on the Taff Vale Railway from Aberdare, Merthyr, Cardiff and Rhondda to bring the numerous gentry and friends to the opening and all the shops in the town were closed. One of the oldest and most respected tradesmen in the town had got into the habit of entering in a small pocket book the takings for each day, and I think the date, Sept. 7<sup>th</sup> was marked: - "Opening of St. Catherine's Church - Nil." This book has been preserved by the family to the present day and is now in the town library. In the morning the Reverend John Griffiths conducted the service, assisted by the Reverend Price Jones (curate), and the offertory amounted to just £100. The Lord Bishop of Llandaff preached the sermon, and his text was the first three verses from the 51<sup>st</sup> chapter of Isaiah.

The Welsh service was held in the evening and Archdeacon Deloffe preached the sermon. The fine organ was afterwards installed, and shortly afterwards a grand performance of "The Messiah" was given before a

crowded congregation. In conclusion, it is my intention in the near future to publish a history of Pontypridd, but the present trade depression is my chief reason for holding back publication. Meanwhile, I should be grateful to anyone who can send me copies or particulars of data of any interesting events in Pontypridd and neighbourhood happening fifty or more years ago, and I should be pleased to call and inspect any old relics and documents at any time on receipt of a letter with details of appointment, addressed to me at 13 Colum Road, Cardiff.

### **Education cost this veteran tuppence a week**

A veteran who has seen Pontypridd change from the predominantly agricultural town of late Victorian times, with cattle pens outside the hotel and a centre of small picturesque shops, is 88 year-old Mr. Walter Weeks, of Haul-y-bryn, Pantygraigwen, in the Pontypridd Observer of 13th July 1963. Mr. Weeks was born in 1875 at Trallwn Gardens, Pontypridd, in the days when there were very few houses at Trallwn, just fields and allotments. He lived at Davies' Place, which was behind the old White Horse Hotel, and near a cockle shop and the Crown Inn. He recalls that a Mr. Henry Valentine owned the cockle shop, which also sold oysters. "The cockles and oysters were brought from Swansea," said Mr. Weeks. "A plate of cockles would cost a penny."

#### Coedpenmaen School

Mr. Weeks attended the Coedpenmaen school, where boys were taught by schoolmaster Mr. Tom Jones, and girls by his schoolmistress sister. "You started there as a child and you went up to standard six," said Mr. Weeks, who added with a grin, that he finished school at standard four. "I was wicked," he explained, with somewhat school boyish whimsy. The fee for attending the school was twopence per week "when the schoolmaster and mistress received it." Mr. Weeks said that parents would give children the coppers to take to school and pay their tutors, but very often something would take the children's fancy and they spent the school fees! These days, as Mr. Week's interprets them, drawing on his comfortable pipe and looking back down the years, sound right out of 'How green was my valley.' After leaving school, the Pontypridd man carried groceries for Mr. Isaac Williams, who had a shop near the town YMCA.



## Lamp filler

Then at 13 years of age he obtained a job at the Great Western Colliery, Hopkinstown, in the lamproom where he filled the lamps of miners and boy apprentices with oil. "I used to fill about 1,500 lamps per day," he said, adding that a year later he went to work underground at what he termed 'dooring.' This consisted of opening mine ventilation doors for a horse-drawn tram to pass, and then closing them afterwards. "It was an easy job," said Mr. Weeks. Official histories of the mining industry tend to think of this work done by boys, as brutally tedious.

Subsequently, Mr. Weeks was employed "on the coal" underground until he was 19, when wages varied from 15 shillings to 30 shillings a week. Afterwards he worked in the colliery's coal washing, where he became foreman, a job in which he remained until 1926, with its disruption. He then worked at the Cwm Colliery for 18 months, and afterwards earned money gardening.

## Tollgates

His earliest memories of Pontypridd, which include those of the town buttressed by at least three tollgates, are certainly enlightening. He recalls that stepping stones were used to cross the river at the northern end of Taff Street. People would descend on the town side of the river near where Hill's, the fruiterers, used to be, or at the Tredegar Hotel. The stepping stones which he says can still be seen from the bridge, were about a yard square, and quite flat. People having crossed would ascend near the old Malsters' Hotel.

He says that the shops in the old town were small and picturesque, and had steps leading up to them. Some of these shops had mounting blocks outside. These were used by farmers, who came shopping to Pontypridd on horseback. "One gentleman, Mr. Fred Johnson, known as 'Fred the Crier,' said Mr. Weeks, "had a small sweet shop right in the centre of town. He also used to look after the tollgate which led from the old bridge into the town." Mr. Weeks recalls that a penny might be charged for a horse and cart to pass through the tollgate, and the money was used by the town council to help defray rates. Certainly there was none of the viciousness of

the tollgates of the Rebecca riots, of that far earlier age, and even in Mr. Weeks' days, tollgates seemed to have a sentimental value. He recalls that there was yet another on the Graig, which levied a toll on the gentlemen of Penyrcoedcae who wished to bring their conveyances into Pontypridd, and yet another at Treforest, near the river falls, which took a small fee from people entering the town from the area below Treforest.

He says that before a railway bridge was built across the Berw river, a small, wooden bridge existed, with stone pillars at the centre. There were hand rails to help people across the plank platform. He said that cattle were sold at the front of the Butchers' Arms (now Park building) and when it was not market day, the front of the hotel would be used as a cab stand. The hotel also had loose chain draped across the windows to protect them from milling cattle. "It was kept by Mr. Treharne," said Mr. Weeks, "and where the Park Cinema used to be, was a yard used as a fairground. He said that one place which had not changed with the years is Carmel Church, the same then as it is today with its enduring qualities. The New Inn used to have fir trees on its Taff Street side, and they were quite attractive.

Next to Protheroe's grocer shop, where the Roath Furniture store now stands, there were three small white-washed cottages, with flower beds at the front in neat little gardens. Where the Ruperra Hotel now stands, a Mr. Cook had his cowshed. He was a farmer who let out the park in Berw Road, then one of his fields, to circuses. Mr. Weeks also remembers some of the more picturesquely named inns in Pontypridd which have disappeared, the Rockingstone Inn, on the Common; the Lamb and Flag on the main road from Merthyr to Cardiff, the Cable and Anchor in Chain Works Road. The Kings' Head, also in the same road, and the Prince of Wales and the Castle on the Tumble. Mr. Weeks is a townsman in the real sense of the word.

### **The history of Maesycoed**

A white - washed farm stood alone here once

The '*Pontypridd Observer*' of May 17th 1952 reported: - The name of the suburb, Maesycoed i. e. "The field in the wood" is well applied. Not until the twentieth century was the locality converted into a "built up area." During the reign of George III, the white-washed walls of Maesycoed farm stood alone. The only means of communication with the outside world was

a narrow lane leading from Llanganna (nowadays called the Graig), bridging the rippling waters of the Gelliwion stream. The five-feet thick walls of the farm went back hundreds of years and were surrounded by pasture land cut out from the heavily wooded mountainside.

Indeed, the London newspaper "The Star" dated January 26th 1804, advertised the sale by private contract of valuable timber suitable for the "navy and other works" including one lot of 422 oak timber trees growing in Pwllgwaun, in the parish of Llantrisant.

About this time an enterprising gentleman named Dr. Richard Griffiths discovered coal in Trehafod and proceeded to construct a tram-road, linking his mine with the Glamorganshire canal at Treforest. He prospered and in later years his nephews, the Rev. George Thomas, Radnor, and Mr. Thomas Thomas, Llandaff Court, became the owners of the upper part of Cwm Gelliwion. The lower portion - in the vicinity of Maesycoed Farm - was owned by a Colonel Vaughan Lee, of Pwllgwaun.

#### Sank a pit

In 1841 John Edmunds, Groeswen, sank a pit a short distance from Maesycoed Farm and found No. 3 house coal within fifty yards of the surface. The colliery he found became known in time as the Maritime and the agent he employed, Mr. Simon Davies, later started a level bearing the name "Simon" in Hopkinstown.

In 1844 a 32 year old Yorkshireman John Calvert, sank a pit a few hundred yards higher up the valley, and found the same quality coal at 54 yards. The colliery he founded was called "Newbridge" and was taken over in 1878 by Messrs. Fowler Bros. Messrs. Brown and Lenox supplied this colliery with the first beam engine in Pontypridd and this continued to work until 1918.

In the side of the Llan mountain Seaton's Level was cut, providing work for a score or more years for about 30 men. The clay soil taken from the workings was utilised at a brick works on the site of what later became a glass factory. Here women and men were engaged in moulding and stacking the bricks fired in the several kilns.

From Pembroke came Samuel Jones to establish a tiny woollen factory beside the Gelliwion stream. The machinery for which was driven by a huge water wheel fed by a pond nearby. Although most of the operations, including the spinning and weaving were performed by hand, only about ten men and women were employed. One of the survivors of this little band recollected: - "The old bell used to ring a 7 a. m. every morning to call us to work."

### Famous for flannel

Jones' factory was famed far and wide for white flannel, plain black and blue serge for men's suits, stocking yarns, and Welsh flannel aprons and petticoats. Before the flannel left the factory it was washed and hung up to dry around the pond, 100 yards at a time. Later it was put into the press and rolled up prior to being transported to Jones' flannel stall at Pontypridd Market. In the late 1890's Mr. Jones retired from the business and the factory was closed, the surrounding land being acquired by the Maritime Colliery for tipping purposes and the construction of washeries. On May 15th, 1889 the Barry railway, from Cadoxton to Trehafod via Pontypridd (Graig) was opened to passenger and goods traffic. The railway ran parallel to the old tram road from Trehafod to Maesycloed and took a short cut from there over the Gelliwion stream and under the Graig mountain.

The clashing symbols of industry had come to disturb the quite meditation of the countryside. However, Maesycloed was still a favourite playground, the most prominent feature of the landscape being a huge oak tree overlooking the lane from the factory to the farm. In the shadow of this tree was the home ground of the Maritime Football Club, regarded as one of the best rugby teams in south Wales. Guided by Mr. Quinton Humphreys (secretary), until the amalgamation with the Pontypridd R. F. C. In 1892, the club used the Rose and Crown Hotel, Graig, as its headquarters. The president, a Major Higg, was agent of the Maritime, and players included Harry Stead, a third reserve at forward for Wales, and Harry Williams, subsequently a halfback or centre for Neath. Among the opposition were the following teams, Cardiff Harlequins, Cardiff, St. David's, Penarth, Aberavon, Neath, Llanelly, Swansea Seconds, Mountain Ash and Newport Seconds, and the players Dai Fitzgerald and Dickie Garrett, Penarth and Wales. The 'local Derby' between Penygraig and the Maritime used to

attract large crowds, but a big crowd in those days amounted to three or four hundred at the most. Of the last eight fixtures between Maritime and Penygraig, one was drawn, but the Maritime, lead by that energetic forward, Tom Hemsworth, won the other seven.

### Sole survivor

The Sole survivor of the Maritime XV is 83 year-old James Connelly, 4 Maritime Terrace, Pontypridd. He says: - "I was a forward with them in times of 'First there, first down in the scrum." In later years Mr. Connelly went north to seek employment in Yorkshire and represented Yorkshire and represented them twice against his native Glamorgan. At first Mr. Connelly played as an amateur but 12 months after the inauguration of rugby league football his team, Leeds Parish Church, decided to become professional.

Chosen to play to play in the final trial for Wales in the late 1890's, Mr. Connelly played a whole season for Yorkshire in 1896, when they won the county championship. Although he did not succeed in getting a cap for Wales Mr. Connelly helped Yorkshire defeat the Rest of England, who were assisted by six internationals for the game and that year England had given Wales quite a beating. Turning professional Mr. Connelly continued to play Rugby League until 1909 and in those days Rugby League was very much the same as Rugby Union for only later was the number in the team reduced from 15 to 13.

### Spickett's Hill

In the 1880s Maesycoed Farm was kept by Mr. William Davies and 84-year-old Mrs M. Buttle, Weston-Super-Mare, remembered coming to the farm every day in her youth to buy milk. The inhabitants of the farm had their first neighbours about 1881, when Maesycoed House was built for Mr. E. C. Spickett, first Registrar of the Pontypridd County Court, and the hill leading from Pwllgwaun to the house became known as Spickett's Hill. During the six months' strike in 1895, the horse lines of the troops stationed in the area were established in the fields adjoining Maesycoed farm. At the turn of the century attention was focused on the area as a potential building site. Rosser Street was named after a contractor who discovered that a

tump formerly used for viewing matches on the Maritime ground consisted of sand and sea-shells. Much of the sand from this relic of a prehistoric era was utilised in the building of the many streets of houses now given the unifying term of Maesycoed. The first few houses – in Mound Road and Woodland Terrace were completed about 1908.

In 1912 Maesycoed House was acquired by the Pontypridd Board of Guardians to be converted into a children's home, and this was later taken over by the Glamorgan County Council.

The late William James, a well known judge and exhibitor in horticultural shows in East Glamorgan, was head gardener at "The House" for the last private owners, the Wayne Morgan family, the Board of Guardians and County Council. His son Mr. Percy James, 35 Mound Road, who had lived in Maesycoed most of his life told a reporter: - "I am probably the oldest inhabitant from the point of view of the number of years I have lived here. I was six years old at the time we moved into the farm and in those days Maesycoed was just the house and farm. Mr. James cast his eyes around him, taking in at a glance terrace after terrace of houses. "I seem to have taken part in a great transformation," he said.

### **The history of Treforest and Pontypridd**

The '*Pontypridd Observer*' August and September 1930 carried this very interesting history of the above written by R. T. Richards: - I have often wished to give a description of Treforest and Pontypridd. The Treforest Estate belonged to the James' the predecessors of the James,' Merthyr, well-know solicitors. They built a corn mill near the Castle Inn Bridge. The out-let of the water stream came out below the wier. The Castle Inn Bridge was built at the time that the corn mill was erected. The masons at that time were paid 1/6d per day. Women attended the masons at 4d per day. Mary, known as Mary 'Ty yn coed,' also Mary the wife of John the blacksmith, were the two pioneers of the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel. The original market place was at Treforest and through a marriage it was transferred to Pontypridd. Mr. Crawshay bought the Treforest Estate from the James's. I do not know the figure that was given for the estate. Fothergill started the little works and with the tinworks, Treforest, was very prosperous.

Mr. Fothergill usually drove a pair of horses when he went to Cardiff. I well remember a man by the name of Godfrey who was Mr. Fothergill's coachman coming back from Cardiff. Instead of coming home he drove his horses and carriage into the River Taff at Upper Boat for cleaning purposes. The horses got entangled in the harnesses and got drowned. The coachman, Godfrey, was offered assistance by a postman named Dobbins and offered his walking stick. Godfrey said "I would rather die with my horses." Dobbins kept a barber's shop and did the work of shaving and hair-cutting in the night after the delivery of the letters which he delivered daily along the road and up to White Cross.

Pontypridd was a very small place indeed, in fact I usually rode to school and placed the pony in Bill James' shed, now the entrance to the arcade. I merely shut the door of the wooden shanty, and the pony was still there by the time I came from school. Dr. Price was the only doctor at Treforest. I well remember an accident at Fothergill Road. An Irishman was the unfortunate man. He was placed upon a stretcher. People began to congregate, the doctor thought the old man was nearly dead and advised some women to get some brandy as soon as possible. The old man said "I would prefer whiskey!"

I well remember the bailiffs taking off the roof of Dr. Price's house and when they got through, they only found Dr. Price's wife seated on a chair. Dr. Price decamped and avoided the Customs and went to France. The fair at the Common was an annual one, drinking booths were there in numbers. You could get a black-eye for nothing! The Sunday Schools implored upon us mind not to go there. Very few people know what that stone is doing on the Common. It was the burial stone of a man by the name of Price, and was removed from Glyntaff Churchyard one night and placed where it now stands. I have several illustrations of what transpired when I was a boy.

At one time Wood Road was covered with massive oak trees. A man by the name of William Bew lived there and built his own house, doing the whole of the carpentry and masonry work himself. He was a most ingenious person and built a 'Dandy Horse' worked by hand levers and sliding cranks. This 'horse' would go to Cardiff carrying the rider and passenger in one and half hours. At that time, considering the great difficulties the inventor had to contend with, that was considered a marvellous speed. The roads in

those days were not constructed as they are today. All the stones were hand broken, measuring about two inches. There was another local character, John Price, the chemist. He too, was an ingenious man who invented the 'Dovetail safe.' by means of which the placing of a chisel between frame of the safe and the door would tighten the construction. I often saw him making this invention. Wanting money, he sold his rights to the big makers of safes for the sum of £20. Even today a safe is not safe without this intervention.

At Fothergill's works, Treforest, rails were made for Italy, France and Russia, who sent inspectors to examine the rails and stamp them. This they did by means of a dye that they always carried about with them. These inspectors resided at the Bridgewater Hotel, then a licensed premise. The rails were loaded into barges and sent to Cardiff for shipment. The canal wharf was a very busy place in those days indeed. It was not safe to walk along the canal bank. Coal was brought down from Dinas and loaded into boats on the Doctor's Canal. This coal was weighed up at the Machine house, where the Roman Catholic Church now stands.

Mr. Anthony Hill was the pioneer of the iron industry at Merthyr. His friend, Mr. Fothergill, lived at Hensol Castle. Mr. Hill wrote to Mr. Fothergill that he had two nice pups he would like to give him. He made an arrangement with an old man named John Jones, to bring the dogs down in a sack. On his way down, John Jones called at the Bridgewater Arms for his bread and cheese, and arrived at Hensol in the evening. Mr. Fothergill saw him coming and asked if he had the dogs. "Yes, sir," replied John, "they are fine dogs." On taking the sack down to the lawn and emptying same they turned out to be two pigs! "Indeed, sir, they were dogs when I left," said John. The animals had been changed at the Bridgewater Arms. This hotel was a half-way house for the changing of horses in the old coaching days.

Just below was the school of the Aldsworth Charity, where the young girls of the neighbourhood were educated free of charge. Mrs. Grover, was the governess at Gwernygerwn. Where the tramway's building now stands, John Wesley once preached. In the winter months penny readings were held there every Thursday and it was a great pleasure to attend the evening entertainments where the wonderful artists gave their talents for the benefits of the people of Pontypridd district.



The town of Pontypridd was governed by Guardians. Very few of the old inhabitants would seek relief, unless they were absolutely poverty striven. There was a certain amount of dignity amongst them about maintenance. Every district advertised for tenders for roads. There was keen competition as to who should be the successful contractors, and the tenders varied from £80 to £100 per annum. The stone was supplied from Llantrisant and Taffs Well. It was brought along the road and was broken by the successful contractor. The number of schools was very few, just the church school and Wesleyans. Every Monday morning we had to pay 2d and 3d according to the class of the child. There were also a few private schools, mostly under the supervision of an old lady. The way to get a holiday was to lock in the master in his house by tying the front door and refusing to open it until he granted a holiday.

There was a number of Toll gates scattered around the district. If I remember correctly there were four from here to Cardiff. Each drawn vehicle was charged 4d, those who rode 1½d. If this was adopted now it would bring great revenue to local authorities and would greatly reduce the rates. The fast travelling now in vogue would be greatly reduced, as drivers would be obliged to show their tickets. I question that many people never think what a wonderful piece of engineering the construction of the Glamorganshire Canal was, with its numerous locks between Cardiff and Merthyr. It needed skilled engineers to construct it and get a good flow of water. On the western side of the valley a viaduct was made by the Berw Bridge, bringing water to the chain works along Feeder Row and entering the canal. Warehouses were constructed on the route. Merchandise, loaded the previous night, would be discharged the following morning. The means of obtaining water (for drinking) was by springs. Wells were sunk in many quarters. What a boon to the district was the formation of the Waterworks. It was many years before everyone was supplied.

The means of lighting before the gas became general was a candle, called three-halfpenny-dips, eight to the pound. Many of the older people would not have gas at any price, being afraid of an explosion. Paraffin lamps very rarely became popular because of the expense of the lamp. We had to be satisfied with ordinary 'dips' (candles). What a strain on the eyesight they were. How thankful the present generation should be at the great changes

that have taken place. What a variety of trades were carried on; malting, nail making, lime burning, boat building, candle making, saw-mills and man-made blacking and ink. The farming was not on a big scale locally. The standard price for pigs was 8/6d to 10s a score (dead weight). Eggs 6d a dozen; a fowl could be attained for about 1/6d, and a duck at the same price. House maids were paid about 8/- per month and farm labourers about 10/- and their food. The Guardians' tax was 1/6d in the pound. It rose to 2/- thirty years ago. The assessments were very low. Life was a pleasure at that time when everybody was so comfortable. I often wonder whether if our forefathers rose and saw the present rate they could really stand such a burden.

It is many years now since the Fothergill's works were dismantled. It was the only works working barring the Chainworks. The pay was a monthly one. Any of the workmen could have a sub. Usually the payment was made by an order to company shops. Pay day was an exciting time. The public houses were full and the shopkeepers had to be for their lives to prevent their windows being broken, stones were used in all directions. A large number of Irish lived at Treforest at that time, and the children ran about the streets bare-footed. On one occasion there was a great fight amongst them and one of them called to his mother "Hold me, otherwise I will surely kill him!" The trade with Ireland was a big one in potatoes and butter. I have known as many as 150 casks coming in just before the winter, very heavily salted for keeping and storage. I wonder very much if people today could put up with it, the taste of the public has changed and must now have it very mild. I remember American bacon coming into the country. The price was about 4½d per pound. The whole trade was carried on at Bristol and Cardiff in a very small way at the time.

The commercial travellers used to stay at the New Inn for a week at the time. I had an occasion to go to Bristol. It was done via the 'new passage,' that was some years before the tunnel was thought of. It was called the 'new passage, the old one was via Gloucester, nearly a day's journey. A flourishing trade was carried out by Powell's, Llantwit, in house coal. There was no thought of steam coal. He had a son, Tom Powell, who had a balloon made and took it to a foreign part and in flying a serious accident occurred in which he was killed. His death caused quite a gloom throughout the district. Treforest tinworks were started by a Merthyr

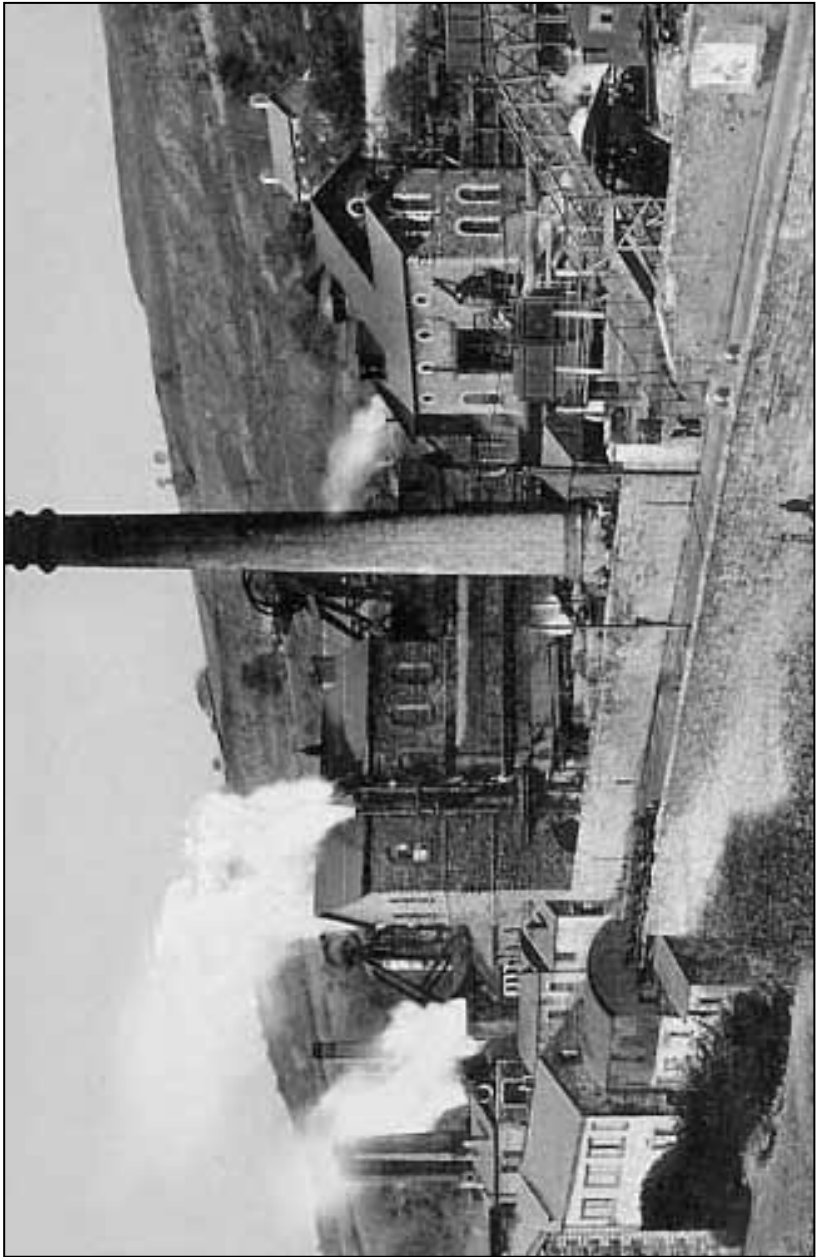
company and they did a very extensive trade. However, depression set in by its competitors underselling. Swansea was the chief place for this trade.

The Cymmer explosion occurred at this time a number of men being killed. A person by the name of Robert Mills started the Hafod pit. He failed in the undertaking and unable to remain among his friends went to Australia and took his family with him. One of his sons, Edward Mills, being of a studious nature, educated himself and became a surveyor. He eventually became the owner of a number of gold mines called Charter's Towers, and died a very wealthy man. He was one of the most unassuming of men and stayed with us for some weeks. I believe some of the old Pontypridd boys could relate many interesting things of old Pontypridd.

I have often been asked who built the tower houses at Glyntaff. They were built by Doctor Price, but through a law case they became the property of the ground landlord. It was from this house that the doctor was married. The marriage ceremony consisted of jumping over a broomstick. He was a man of great importance and loved by all for his gentle manner to his patients. I well remember when there were no break vans on trains, and the man in charge of the train had to stand on a square buffer on the last truck. Should they wish to turn a train onto another line or siding the porter was responsible. All this was done away with the Acts of Parliament. The average time taken from Pontypridd to Cardiff was 45 minutes and if you wished to send a parcel it had to be booked 30 minutes before the departure of the train. The same writer in the same newspaper the following week wrote: - "One of our readers objects very strongly about the reference to the Irish made last week. We are sure the writer had no desire to hurt the feeling of the present residents of Treforest who come from the 'green isle' and much regrets hurting their feelings."

### **The Great Western Colliery disaster remembered**

On April 11<sup>th</sup> 1893, 63 men and boys lost their lives after an explosion at the Great Western Colliery, Hopkinstown. For those who were trapped or



**The Great Western Colliery**

within the mine when the disaster took place the memory of that day would live in their minds forever and as the years passed the horrors subsided and perhaps those left alive had a stirring story to tell their grandchildren or the occasional newspaper reporter. Over the years, these accounts of that day in 1893 appeared in local newspapers: - *The 'Pontypridd Observer'* of 5<sup>th</sup> April 1947 reported:

Friday next, April 11<sup>th</sup> will be the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fire at the Great Western Colliery, Pontypridd, in which 58 miners lost their lives. These men were at work in the East Level of the Hetty Pit on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1893 when the haulage engine burst into flames and caused the disaster. About 62 miners were saved after being trapped in the Main Deep for 4½ hours and being almost suffocated by the terrific volumes of smoke. Four of the known survivors alive today are Mr. Daniel Matthew Evans, Swansea; John Evans, Treforest; Jones of Hopkinstown and W. J. Young of Tynant. Recalling his grim experience that day Mr. Young writes; "I recall the kindly advice and heroic courage in that great ordeal of that grand old man John (Wesleyan) Evans. When eventually he told us to be prepared to meet our maker, all went silent. Then I think of the two brothers, Tommy and Billy Rosser, they were firemen in that district, Tommy by day and Billy by night.

Tommy carried out his duties and saved us from panicking. Then when hopes of rescue were being given up the answer to our praying came through. Billy Rosser had broken through the cordon of men drawn up around where the fire had originated. The flames had spread a few hundred yards by this time, but Billy was determined to get through to us, and his brother, Tom, who was among those trapped. Billy successfully forced his way through the raging fire and it was a joy to see the two brothers meet. They trailed their arms around one another, and kissed each other. Billy gave us instructions on how best to get to safety and led us out through the smoke and under the fire. There was 62 of us then, but I believe we are only 4 now. As years have passed, they have not forgotten those words: "Prepare to meet thy maker." No-one will forget Billy Rosser or his brother.

## More recollections of Great Western pit fire

The '*Pontypridd Observer*' of April 19<sup>th</sup> 1947 carried these two reports: - Mr. Edward Evans, 15 Rosser St; Maesycoed, Pontypridd, is yet another survivor of the fire which caused the death of 63 miners at the Hetty Pit of the Great Western Colliery, 54 years ago last Friday. Mr. Evans said: "I have a vivid recollection of the sad disaster. At this time I was a spare-hand in engine driver, and on that day was working instead of Dan Jenkins, who was ill, at the engine on the West side. It was called the Middle Parting Range feeding the "Eight Hours District. What struck me the most was the hurry and fluster the men got into. We tried to persuade them to keep cool, as the air current was all right. There was no smoke or fumes coming into the West Side, as the ventilation was separate from the East Side. But run they would. The traffic men and rider asked me to bring two journeys of men out from the Eight Hours District, which we did with care. Then we made our way to the pit bottom and came to the surface. It reflects credit on the management that no gas explosion occurred. I can remember the two brothers, Tom and Billy Rosser. The men failed to keep Billy back when he went to the aid of Tom. Between them, they got at least 32 men out safely. The next few days were busy, but sad. Several colliery managers and students came to the pit, and the way in which the fire was eventually overcome was by running water into the compressed air pipes."

### Graphic story

Another account of the disaster is supplied by Mr. Arthur Williams, of 51 Llantrisant Rd, Pontypridd. He says that as one of the survivors, it affected two districts where Tom Rosser was fireman. 53 were saved, also the horses, due to Tom Rosser when he asked for two volunteers to go through the full force of smoke and fumes to open the doors shown in my rough diagram, so that it eased the men inside. I was working as a collier boy on the Far End Bottom Bogey Dip. This is the area in which 63 men lost their lives.

The men saved went through the return air-way into Ty Mawr four-foot landing, as the fire burned in for a mile on the far end level and Ty Mawr was our only escape. All overcome by the smoke lost their lives. Many lost their lives by trying to get out the way they came in, but it was impossible,

and a number died on the landing as it was slow progress getting to the cage. There was no signal-knocker on the landing and we had to shout up to the hitcher on the Ty Mawr pit bottom, which was thirty yards below, to make our position known.

Nothing could live on the far end when the smoke and the fumes overtook them. The fire was started by sparks coming off the wooden blocks fixed on the steel band of the brake on the hauling engine when letting down usually about twenty trams of coal down the steep hard-heading which always produced sparks by the strain to hold the journey, and the brattice cloth sheets which were around the engine caught fire. On this particular day the usual engine driver was absent and he always kept a bucket of water at hand, but the substitute driver did not, and when the fire started he ran down to the stables at the bottom of the hard heading, but during the time he was away, the fire got a firm hold. Rescuers fought, as you mentioned, for four and a half hours and saved the Main-Deep, but the fire went on for about a mile from the far end. I know about six or seven survivors in Pontypridd today, all of whom escaped from the far end through the Ty Mawr Pit. My brother with whom I worked, is alive now getting on 80 years of age. So I will now conclude and I think all the survivors that I know will agree to my version of the terrible disaster.

We have since received information that several other survivors still reside in the district. They include: Mr. William Mazey, 8 Willow St, Rhydyfelen; Mr. William Atkins, Queen St, Treforest. Mr. Alfred Felin, 96 Berw, Rd, Pontypridd.

#### Edward Morgan's account

In the '*Rhondda Leader*' of 1955, 76 year old Edward Morgan, of Glen View, Pwllgwaun, Pontypridd, had just completed a short history of the fire of the Great Western Colliery. Mr. Morgan was working at the colliery at the day of the accident. Then a boy, he was waiting with a group of miners for coal to be brought up to the top of the Hetty Pit on the afternoon the fire broke out underground. His cousin, Mr. David Palmer, and a friend came up from the pit not wearing their caps. For the Welsh miner to be without his "Dai" cap in those days meant that something really serious must be happening, and the pair told the worried onlookers that they had escaped from a fire

by going through the Tymawr Pit, and they believed that men were suffocating in smoke filled caverns underground. Later it was found that men who had crawled to the Four Feet landing in the Tymawr Pit, had not the strength to go any further and had died. Others were so overcome by the smoke that they could not even get that far. Explained Mr. Morgan: "There were many instances of bravery on the landing, but they went unsung because the dead cannot talk."

Another of Mr. Morgan's cousins, Mr. William Williams, survived suffocation only to discover that his father was last seen in distress in the doomed pit. He plunged back in the smoky hell and his body was discovered later not far from that of his father. Hundreds of people gathered in the colliery yard as the dead bodies were brought up, and there was great excitement when it was announced that 62 men and boys had been rescued after being trapped for four hours and almost being choked to death by smoke. As the men came out of the cage, they had strange and bewildered looks on their faces. Their faces were black, but their lips were white, stressed Mr. Morgan. Mr. Morgan who lectures to local organizations on the musical history of Pontypridd as well as that eccentric and colourful Welshman, Dr. William Price of Llantrisant, rightly feels that the price paid by past generations of the area's miners in the quest for coal is one that should never ever be forgotten.

#### The last survivor

A footnote to the Arthur Williams account of the disaster above appeared in the '*Pontypridd Observer*' of April 14<sup>th</sup> 1962: - Eighty year old Mr. Arthur Williams is probably the last survivor of the Great Western Colliery fire. At that time Mr. Williams was 15 years of age and employed as a collier's helpmate. "I did not think when we were racing for our lives through the mine airways that I would have to write about it 70 years later," he commented. Mr. Williams sent a plan showing his escape route to this newspaper. "My memory of that terrible morning is as clear as if the disaster had only occurred yesterday," he added. Through the years he kept in touch with other survivors of the fire, but now time has claimed them all and attempts to trace anyone who escaped have failed. Mr. Williams is convinced that he is the last survivor of the disaster.



## Survivor's epic story of Albion Explosion

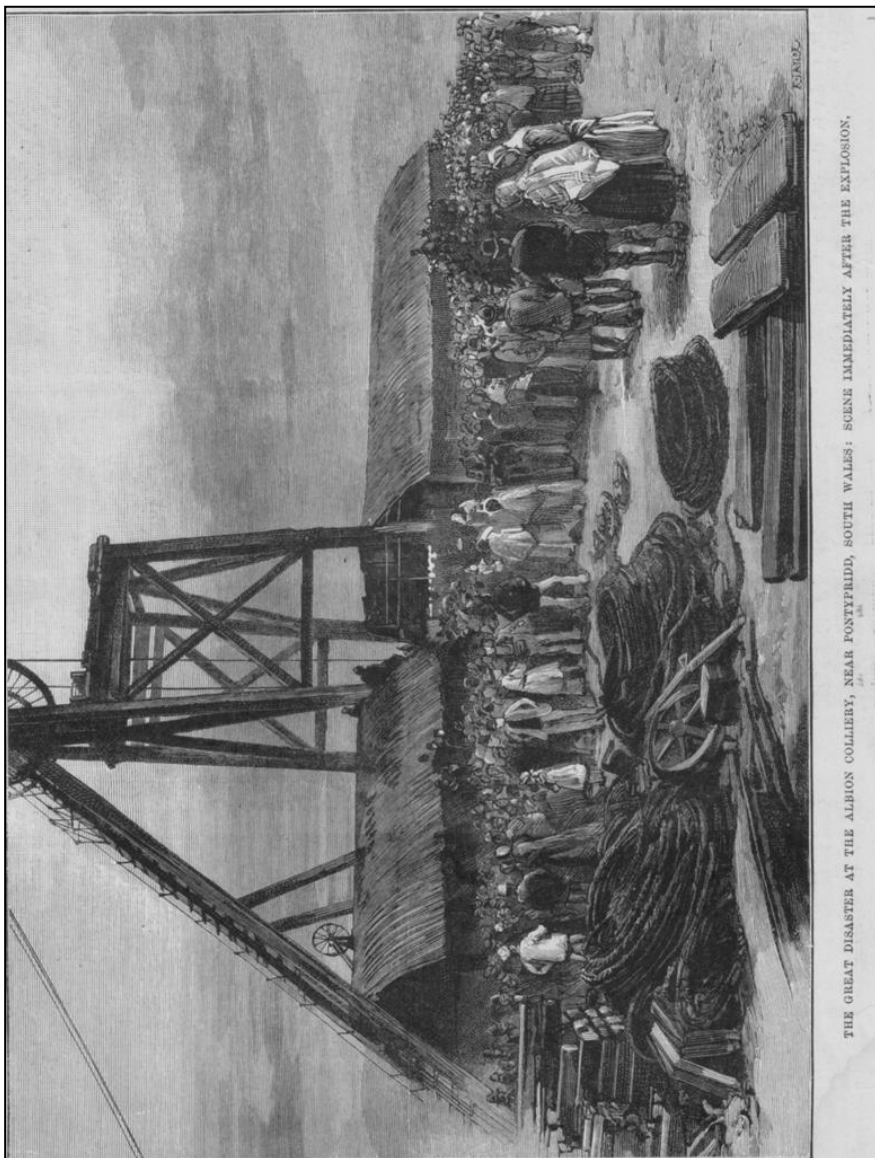
On Saturday, June 23rd 1894 an explosion took place at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, in which 290 men and boys lost their lives. In 1959 the *'Pontypridd Observer'* of 21<sup>st</sup> March, carried, as if from the grave, the story of one of the survivors, Mr. Griffith Evans Bunford, late of Oakland Terrace, Cilfynydd, who, before he died in September 1928, had dictated a vivid story of the Cilfynydd pit disaster for a magazine edition, dated March 12th 1910: -

There were five men beside Mr. Bunford cutting out old timber in the mine, and he and Mr. Hugh Pugh were working together. Neither of them had thought of any danger when there was a terrible clap like thunder, followed after a short interval by another. Instinctively Mr. Bunford snatched up his lamp ready to run, and by its feeble light, could see Mr. Pugh's face transfixed with horror. "We stood there reading terror in each other's faces," said Mr. Bunford. "It was an explosion, we both knew - but where? Was it only a puff of little importance, or a great catastrophe? Was it between us and the pit bottom, or did it lie further afield?" "Suddenly, there came a crash as the doors banged between us and the double parting in the engine-deep. Simultaneously, a roaring wind bore down upon us, driving before it tons of fine dust, which instantly extinguished our lights. The violence of the wind, which beat upon us like a tornado, left no doubt in either of our minds that a great explosion had occurred. The wind itself was harmless, but it would certainly be followed by a rush of flame, and woe beside us if it caught up with us."

"Dropping our useless lamps, we bent our heads to the blast, which cut like whipcord, and struggled on closely together. Presently we were joined by four others, who had also lost their lights. I knew every inch of the Albion workings so well that I felt confident of finding the road to the shaft, by which alone we could escape, and the others willingly relied upon my leadership."

Queer blue light

"After making some headway, one of the party of workmen screamed hoarsely to the others: 'Look, mates, look!' In an agony of apprehension,



THE GREAT DISASTER AT THE ALBION COLLIERY, NEAR PONTYFRIDD, SOUTH WALES: SCENE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE EXPLOSION.

The scene at the pit-head at the Albion Colliery after the disaster in 1894

the men saw that the velvety blackness of the mine had given place to a queer blue light, which grew every moment in intensity. The effect was weird, and would have seemed fantastically beautiful to the workmen, but for what they knew it heralded. It was firedamp, ignited by the explosion!" "Irresistibly, it seemed to sweep through every passage in the mine. The workmen knew that within a few minutes it would be upon them roasting the skin off their living bodies. 'God have mercy on us,' cried one of the men. We were cooped up like rats in a trap," said Mr. Bunford. "We stared at the approaching flames knowing that we were powerless to avoid them. Sometimes the blue flame travelled high, and sometimes low. What would it do this time? The answer to that question spelt like of death to us and to scores of others too."

#### Tortures of the damned

"Stuffing our caps into our mouths, or else pressing our palms against them, we threw ourselves prostrate on the ground and waited for our fate. I remember how I hunched my shoulders and tucked in my head to protect it from the searing flames. I remember that I held my breath until my lungs seemed bursting, and pressed my hands over my eyes and mouth. These things and the roasting heat which poured a great wave over me are graven on my memory. From head to heel, the sea of flame toasted me as it wept past, and the tortures of the damned wracked my limbs. Being naked to the waist, my back and arms felt the full force of the flames. How long the blazing gas took to pass over me, I cannot say, but as soon as it was gone, the instinct of self preservation brought me to my feet."

"Run for your lives lads," Mr. Bunford cried hoarsely to the other workmen, and heard the sounds of scrambling as they obeyed. He went on, "Close on the heels of the fire the deadly after-damp invariably follows, as every miner knows. There was not a moment to be wasted in discussing plans. Spurred on by terror, I raced forward, soon, however, to be pulled up short. Roof and walls had fallen in and further headway seemed impossible. If so, then death was certain. With frantic energy, I fell upon the barrier, and dragging away great blocks of coal and stone, tearing my nails and lacerating my fingers to the bone. Beside me worked Hugh Pugh, who with myself, was all left of the group of men who had originally stood together a

short time previously. What had become of the others, I did not stop to think, but afterwards, the four charred bodies were discovered in the workings. Without a glimmer of light to guide us, we tugged at the barricade, and somehow managed to surmount it. Then, panting for breath, we ran on side by side.”

### Crawled over bodies

As Griffiths and his companion made their way through galleries which had been ravaged by the full fury of the explosion, they crawled over bodies of workmates who had been killed outright by the first shock of the explosion, or mangled or maimed. They were conscious of the need for speed, that they were just keeping ahead of the life destroying after-damp fumes, which would rapidly asphyxiate them. “Presently we began to feel that the air was growing heavy with poisonous gases,” said the Cilfynydd miner. “It took us four hours to travel four hundred yards.”

For years afterwards Mr. Bunford was filled with a cold fear whenever he thought of that grim battle in the dark, with the deadly gases growing stronger every minute. “Whenever we stumbled or fell, we deeply inhaled fumes which clung to the floor. It was just as if we were being chloroformed,” stressed Mr. Bunford. “Every minute a growing lethargy stole over us so that we could hardly draw one foot behind the other.” Hopeless! “This is the end,” Mr. Bunford thought as he fell heavily to the ground. Nevertheless, he somehow scrambled to his feet and staggered on. Then it was Hugh Pugh’s turn. With a moan of despair he stumbled and lay still. “I cannot go any further,” Hugh murmured.

For a minute Mr. Bunford stood by him and made an effort to lift him to his feet, but he himself was as weak as a kitten, and it was hopeless. With a sob he left poor Hugh to his fate, and resumed his weary journey in solitude. Mr. Bunford emphasized: - “Had I been a bachelor I should have given up the struggle and lay down beside Hugh Pugh. It needed enormous resolution to fight against that deadly weariness. It would have been so easy to lay down quietly and died, but for the sake of my family I determined to fight on while an ounce of my strength remained.

Fortunately there were no more falls to be encountered for a time and I managed to drag myself so far as the air bridge. Then my strength gave out and I knew I could go no further.” He continued: “My strength was slipping from me; in a few moments I should be able to stand upright no longer. Then I should topple headlong as my butty had done and the deadly fumes would stifle me.”

#### Collapsed unconscious

After scrambling on a little way Mr. Bunford collapsed unconscious, the result of the after-damp fumes. But he was not to die because when rescuers descended the pit they found Mr. Bunford lying on his back upon a wall which he had managed to climb. He was taken up the pit and was able to walk home unaided. “Never shall I forget that terrible time,” he emphasised, “thick black smoke poured in dense volume from the pit mouth and huge tongues of flame shot high in the sky. To those on the surface, who had looked down the pit shaft it had appeared impossible anybody could have lived through it.” Yet miracles of which Mr. Bunford was a living testimony did happen sometimes in mining accidents. So much so that colliers wives were always slow to abandon hope and so they did at the Albion explosion.

Never would Mr. Bunford forget the scene which met him at the pit head. “From every part of the Rhondda valley 30,000 miners had come pouring into Cilfynydd to do what they could to help. About the pit mouth cluster a group of anxious women hoping against hope each time the cage came up, that their dear ones had been found still surviving. The disaster seemed a blight on the countryside, nearly 300 killed in one afternoon, enough to fill a churchyard.” “Nearly 300 of my mates, men of my own age who I had grown up with me, and young fellows who I had known since they were babies, never saw the light of day. They were gone in a moment, and nearly every house in the valley had lost a bread-winner.” Mr. Bunford, who died at 73 years of age in September 1928 was buried at Glyntaff left behind an epic story of human courage and endurance in the face of overwhelming horror which must rank with the most notable chapters in the history of coal mining.

## He escaped two mining disasters

The *'Pontypridd Observer'* of Saturday, 3rd June 1961 reported: - Twinkling-eyed Mr. James Henry Huggins, of Coedpenmaen Road, Pontypridd, who celebrated his 84<sup>th</sup> birthday on Friday, worked at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd, and the Great Western Colliery, Hopkinstown, during the time that the major disasters occurred at both mines. But by a marvellous stroke of luck, he managed to escape the two of them! Mr. Huggins had come up the shaft of the Albion mine on that dreadful day in 1894 when nearly 300 lost their lives in an explosion, and was walking home along the canal bank his shift having been completed. When he arrived home he heard the terrible blast and was told there had been an explosion at the mine. He was also working at the Great Western Colliery when the fire broke out, the smoke suffocating men in mine galleries. Here again, Mr. Huggins' held good. He went untouched by the death-dealing smoke and flames. He recalls that he earned 1s – 6d for every ton of coal he hued at the Albion Colliery. "I was was earning good money," he says, "but I really had to work for it."

He also worked for some time at the Pontypridd Chainworks, where he gained fame as a sprinter. "Nearly everyone employed at the Chainworks in those days was a sprinter or a cycle rider," he said, "I enjoyed running very much, and used to sprint at the old running ground in Treforest, near the old Bailey's Arms. There was some great races there."

### **The turbulent turn of the century** Pontypridd man's vivid recollections

The day when Dragoon Guards came to Pontypridd to enforce order during the South Wales coalfield strike in 1898 is recalled by a Pontypridd man who has many vivid memories of the town at the turbulent turn of the century. He is 66-year-old Mr. John Hobbs, of Llanwern Road, Maesycod, who in a letter to this newspaper says: - "We read quite a bit about the industrial depression of the 1920's, but I wonder how many readers remember the South Wales coal strike of 1898? Poverty was terrible. People were poor before the strike and when it happened it left them with nothing."

## Soup kitchens

He continued: - "There was no Welfare State and very little strike pay – if any. Soup kitchens were opened, and there all the miners' families were given jugs of soup and loaves of bread according to the number of the family. Tradesmen of the town gave credit to the very limit and many of them never recovered their losses." Mr. Hobbs adds that the late Mr. Hopkin Morgan, of Pontypridd, never refused anyone a loaf of bread during the whole strike.

Soon after the strike began soldiers arrived to keep order. But there was not a moment's trouble, and the soldiers certainly brought considerable entertainment to the town. Most of the townspeople had never seen a Calvary Regiment before, and the horses were stabled in various parts of the town. Young boys were ever ready to help soldiers with the harness and care for the animals.

## Drilling at Maesycoed

"About twice a week during their stay the soldiers would turn out for drill on the Maesycoed Field in front of Maesycoed Farm, where the post office is now situated. I shall never forget those soldiers. They were the Sixth Dragoon Guards who were badly cut up a few years later in the Boer War. The Pontypridd man also reflects on the years of Queen Victoria's rule when recruits entered the army to receive the "Queens Shilling." He says: - I wonder how many people remember the the old recruiting office in Taff Street? The recruiting officer was Colour Sergeant Major Perkins. I well remember him marching along Taff Street talking to a couple of lads and telling them the joys of army life. Before they knew what they were doing they had taken the Queen's Shilling and provided they passed the medical examination, were in the army."

## **If walls could speak would the "Old Duke" have a ghost story to tell us?**

The Duke of Bridgewater Arms was one of the oldest, if not the oldest in Pontypridd until it was demolished when the A470 was built through the town. It's history is vague, but this story printed in The *'Pontypridd Observer'* of 1952 tells a little of its history: -

If the walls of the long rambling building on Pentrebach Road, Pontypridd, sub-divided into "The Old Duke," 33 and 33a, could speak, they would tell a story . . . a story which goes back further than the memory of the oldest inhabitant of Pontypridd. Only the undefiled Georgian architecture proudly presented in the form of a portico doorway, and the ghosts of men and women long departed from our midst, can testify to the glories of the past.

'Tis said, for instance, that the ghost of the beloved "Bee of Gwent," the late Lady Llanover, descends the main staircase – unchanged in design since her demise about a century ago – each midsummer's eve in saddened meditation. It truth, she had a great affection for this part of her estate and would not hear plans for either demolition or alteration following the closure of "The Duke," or to give it its full name "The Duke of Bridgewater Arms," as the principal coaching station on the Cardiff to Merthyr route. Indeed, as long as she was able to do so, her ladyship would come occasionally to stay a few days at "The Duke," which had been placed in the care of a caretaker.

#### Sleep walking "ghost"

The well-known historian "Morien," remarks in his history of Pontypridd, "No-one knows the reason for her Ladyship's great attachment for the ancient hostel. Perhaps some memories associated with her marriage to Sir Benjamin Hall, owner of this part of the Llanover landed estate endeared its very walls to her."

Often mistaken for the "Ghost of Lady Llanover" was an unfortunate woman once living in the vicinity, who was subject to bouts of sleep-walking. She was wont to walk by night down Pentrebach Road in her evening attire and to sit in the porch of "The Duke" for long periods much to the consternation of passers-by.

Two hundred and fifty years ago the only road from Cardiff to Merthyr Tydfil was the old road over the mountain through Gelligaer and Caerphilly. Mr. Anthony Bacon, Cyfarthfa, secured a contract for cannons; these were taken from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff on mules and pack horses down the valley of the Taff. Finding himself unable in this way to meet the demand for more and more cannons, Mr. Bacon subscribed substantially to the local



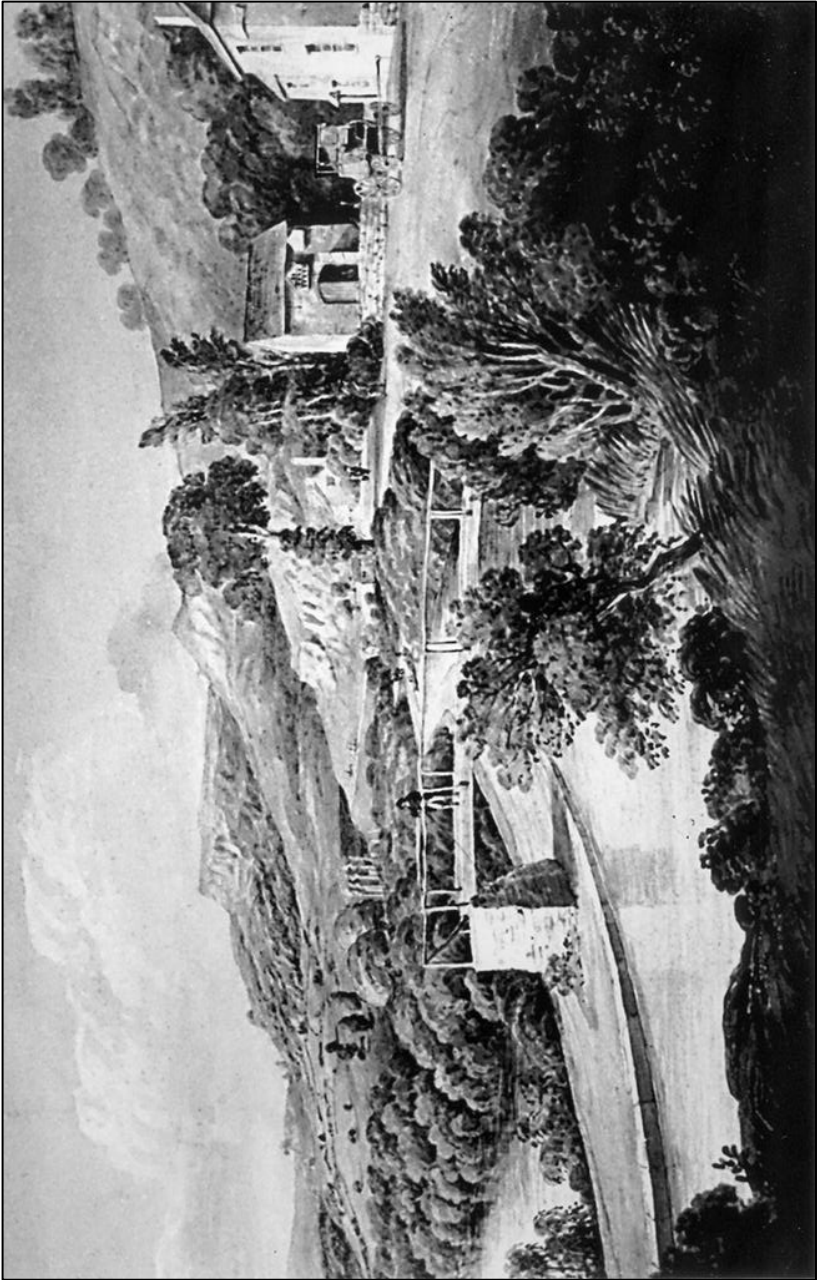
Turnpike Trust with the result that a new road was constructed direct from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff. The road was completed about 1767 and the cannons were transported to Cardiff on wagons drawn by four horses and carrying about two tons apiece.

### Ham and eggs

In 1798 mail coaches commenced using the road and continued to do so until two years after the Taff Vale Railway was opened in 1840. Horses were changed at "The Duke," where passengers for Pontypridd alighted as the coach could not go into the town owing to the steepness of the Old Bridge. "The Duke" was also a posting house and was last used as such by a Thomas Purnell, who is said to have had a stable of 25 to 30 horses in 1850. English tourists came by coach from Cardiff occasionally to see the wonderful Old Bridge and Berw, making "The Duke," their headquarters. "The Duke," had a fine table and was famed far and wide for its ham and eggs. Visitors appreciating this fact were said to have included the notorious highwayman, Dick Turpin. (Note: - Dick Turpin actually died 1739 long before this establishment was built). Every year, too, "The Duke," was the venue of farmers from many miles around for the Hunt Ball. "The Duke" had its own jetty on the Glamorganshire canal and barrels of beer were unloaded here for rolling down a chute into the cellars.

### Lived there 30 years

Ghosts linger on; legend dies hard, yet Mrs Teresa Smith, who has lived on Pentrebach Road all her life and for 30 years has made her home at "The Duke," says: - "I have been there all hours of the night and never seen a sign of any ghost." "However, she recalls; "Over 40 years ago in my childhood I remember my playmates and myself running past "The Duke," as fast as our legs could carry us at night because we were scared of seeing a ghost." In those days "The Duke," was occupied by relatives of Mrs. Smith, and was separated from the road by a high wall. This wall was taken down by the Pontypridd U.D.C. in road widening schemes and a small honeysuckle scented lane leading from "The Duke," to the former hotel gardens, converted into a footpath. Despite these changes "The Duke" is unperturbed. Every day heavy traffic races within a matter of yards but the solid foundations remain undisturbed.



**The Duke of Bridgewater Arms (right) on Pentrebach Road alongside the canal. Painting from 1819.**



**The Duke of Bridgewater Arms just before demolition in early 1970s.**

## Chapter four

The following are various interesting newspaper reports published throughout the years in chronological order showing important and minor events in and around Pontypridd: -

**1833**

### **NEWBRIDGE, GLAMORGANSHIRE.**

The '*Brecon Gazette*' of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1833 reported: - Pont-y-ty-Pridd, or Newbridge, over the River Taff, lies twelve miles from Cardiff, is a most romantic country and the river in summer is extremely low, scarce covering its pebbly bed, but after heavy rain swells to a deep irresistible torrent. The bridge, for its extraordinary lightness and the width of its span, stands unrivalled not only by any bridge in England, but even in Europe, and perhaps the whole world, exceeding the area of the Rialto, at Venice, by 59 feet, and that of the centre of Black friars by 49 feet. It is in figure the segment of a circle; its chord measures 140 feet; and the height of the keystone, reckoned from the spring of the arch, is 34 feet.

This bridge is a proof that extraordinary genius will rise superior to every impediment or disadvantage. Both the mason who designed and executed it, and the workman who formed the centre, were common country artificers, unpatronized by the Great, and neither graduated in any University, nor Fellows of any Academy and so far were they from having visited Italy, in order to avail themselves of the knowledge of the ancients, or to view the works of the moderns, that they probably were hardly ever out of their native country; were perhaps, strangers to the names of Vitruvius and Palladio, and never heard of the Rialto. In compensation, however, for these deficiencies, they possessed good sense.

The name of the mason is William Edward; he contracted with the hundreds of Caerphilly and Miskin for a certain sum of money, to build them a bridge which should stand at least six years and accordingly built one of three arches, but a flood happening (not a uncommon event in this mountainous country) it was carried away by the impetuosity of the river. He next conceived the design of constructing his bridge of one single arch,

and accordingly completed it but here he was again foiled for the pressure of the abutment not being in equilibrio with that of the crown of the arch, squeezed it out at the top. Not disheartened at this, and seeing wherein he had failed, he set about contriving a remedy, and hit upon the present method, by making three cylindrical apertures through each side, thereby not only considerably lessening the weight of lateral pressure, but adding greatly to the picturesque form and elegance of the bridge, which bids fair to transmit his fame to future generations. The name of the artist who formed the centre, is Thomas Williams, a millwright. The appearance of this beautiful bridge is much hurt by the rude workmanship of its parapet; but when it is considered how great a loss the constructor suffered by the failure of his two other bridges, it is not to be wondered at that he should finish every part in as cheap a manner as possible. Beneath this arch a number of stalactites hang like icicles, perhaps formed by the mortar which the vast pressure has caused to exude through the interstices of the stones. As the ramp or ascent of this bridge is very steep, pieces of wood are laid across the way to give a firm foot-hold to the horses who pass over it. A plate is engraved in the "Antiquarian Repertory." from which the fore-going account has been taken, from a drawing by Major Hayman Rooke, Anno. 1774.

The '*Bristol Mercury*' of May 12<sup>th</sup> 1849 reported: - The celebrated bridge over the River Taff at Pontypridd is being widened to twice its old width. When it was formed not ninety years ago, it is said there was not a four-wheeled vehicle in the county of Glamorgan.

**1837**

### **The forming of the Taff Vale Railway**

Of all the great British engineers of the last two centuries, the best known is Isambard Kingdom Brunel; who designed the famous Clifton suspension Bridge. But earlier, in 1837, he had come to South Wales in search of Ironwork. The Merthyr Ironmasters recognised his skills and he was engaged to build the Taff Vale Railway. The need for a railway was now self-evident to the local Ironmasters and was to become the forerunner of the Great Western Railway in the Welsh valleys.

The Taff Vale Railway Company was formed after a meeting at the Castle Inn, Merthyr, in 1835. The Chairman was Sir John Guest, Chairman of the Dowlais Ironworks, and Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Engineer to the Great Western Railway, who became involved in making a survey of the railroad, because of his association with Anthony Hill, owner of the Plymouth Ironworks in Merthyr, and who would later supply ironwork for the building of the Clifton Suspension Bridge. Brunel was persuaded to construct the railway, which was to be "a small jewel in his crown, alongside many greater ones." The Taff Vale Railway project was officially launched in August in August 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's accession, with the laying of a foundation stone at the viaduct at Pontypridd by Lady Charlotte Guest, wife of the company chairman. Contrary to his practice elsewhere, Brunel did not favour timber bridges for the T.V.R., constructing instead substantial stone viaducts. The two best examples were said to be at Quaker's Yard (now demolished) and Pontypridd, the latter having a skew stone arch of one hundred and ten foot span over the River Rhondda, which still remains in operation. The '*Merthyr Guardian*' of 19th August 1837 reported: -

**Ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the Bridge  
across the Rhondda for the Taff Vale Railway at Newbridge.**

"On Wed. last, 16 August 1837, a vast concourse of people assembled at Newbridge to witness the ceremony of the laying of the first stone of the Rhondda Bridge which commences this important undertaking. The proceedings were opened in a very appropriate speech by J. J. Guest Esq. M. P. He concluded by reading the following inscription which was legibly written on parchment: "The first stone of the Taff Vale Railway was laid by Lady Charlotte Guest on Wednesday the 16th of August in the first year of the reign of our Sovereign Lady, Queen Victoria, in the year of our Lord 1837." The parchment was then sealed in a bottle and deposited by her ladyship under the stone. The labours having been performed by the fair mason in a very workmanlike manner, she addressed the meeting in a very neat speech .....etc. Three cheers were then given for Lady Charlotte, three for the Railway and three for the Engineers and Contractors.

Mr. Waring then mounted the stone etc. He concluded by proposing three cheers for the ladies; which was instantly responded to with one cheer

more. The meeting then adjourned to the Bridgewater Arms, where a cold repast was provided for the company. The company separated about 5 o'clock much pleased with the proceedings of the day.

### **Proclamation of Queen Victoria at Newbridge**

On Tuesday, the 4th July, 1837 a large congregation assembled at the New Inn, Newbridge, about three o'clock P.M., when they formed into procession (Melin Griffith band having previously assembled) in the following order:—

Police.

Rev. David Griffith, as Herald, on Horseback.

The youngest son of Gwilym Morganwg, bearing a splendid white flag, with  
"God save the Queen."

Mr. J. Jenkins, Newbridge, Conductor of the Procession.

Magistrates.

Coal Merchants and Tradesmen of Newbridge.

The Union Jack

Band of Music.

The Inhabitants of Newbridge (three abreast)

The Royal Standard of England

The Visitors (three abreast).

Flag—the Queen's Arms.

In this manner the procession commenced proclaiming at the Market-place, and then proceeded through and by Trallwn, Bridgewater Arms, Treforest, Taff Vale Works, Tumble, and Bridge Street, and in each place Proclamation was made amidst the firing of cannon (32-pounders) from the adjoining common. After the procession ended, upwards of sixty of the most respectable inhabitants sat down to an excellent dinner, provided for the occasion by the good hostess of the New Inn, where Charles and William Price, Esqs., of Moat Abbey, presided as Chairman and Vice; the health of the Queen — Royal Family — Ladies — Mr. Daniel Jones and the Tradesmen of Newbridge — our worthy Chairman and Vice — Lewis Morgan, Esq. of Havod — David Davies, Esq., of Cwm Rhondda - John Edmunds, Esq., Coal Merchant - Charles S. Irvine, Esq.—E. Davies, Esq., Surgeon — and all those who were connected with the affairs of the day, were drank in the most appropriate and loyal manner. Most of the

gentlemen returned thanks in appropriate speeches on the subject of the meeting. — Beer was given to all who attended in the procession, at the different public- houses of the place. - **Cambrian, July 8<sup>th</sup> 1837.**

### **Unchecked vice**

Pontypridd was seeing a rapid expansion at this period and not everyone was happy with some of the things they were witnessing. At the beginning of August 1837 the following letter appeared in the 'Merthyr Gazette and Guardian.': -

To the Editor – Sir, allow me through the medium of your valuable paper to put a few hints which I hope will be taken into serious consideration by the Magistrates and clergymen of the neighbourhood of Newbridge. Having resided for the past five year in the above neighbourhood, I have noticed with pleasure the rapid increase of the population and commerce of the place, but with regret, the still greater increase of immorality, which is allowed to reign in almost every form unchecked, especially Sabbath breaking and drunkenness.

On Sundays the public houses are kept open every hour of the day, not excepting church hours, and at all times of the night. Only a few Sundays ago, by going from Newbridge to Treforest to a place of worship, I found the edge on both sides of the tram road lined with drunken men, some of them, from the quantity of intoxicating liquor they had taken, were unable to move; others were fighting and making use of language not to be repeated, to those who were passing to their places of worship. The whole scene was a disgrace to a civilized neighbourhood and called loudly for the interference of the civil authority.

To such an extent does does drunkenness prevail that a female dares not return from a place of worship on a Sunday evening unprotected. I do not mean to insinuate, by the above, that the clergymen of the neighbourhood neglect their duty, for from it; no persons could render themselves more useful; in their sacred office, or display more zeal to suppress vice and promote piety and virtue, or set a brighter example of morality to the world than they do, but, from their living a considerable distance from Newbridge, and being fully engaged in the official duties on Sunday, they



may not be aware that drunkenness and Sabbath breaking prevail to such an extent. After they are aware of it, I have, no doubt they will use every means in their power to stop the progress of drunkenness, by compelling the landlords of the beer shops to close their houses during church hours, and not draw beer at such unreasonable hours as twelve o'clock and one o'clock at night. I remain, Sir, yours respectfully, **W. Jones, Treforest, August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1837.**

**1840**

### **Opening of the Taff Vale Railway**

The '*Cambrian*' of October 17th 1840 reported: - The public opening of the completed portion of this interesting and valuable line between Cardiff and the Navigation House took place on Thursday, 8th October 1840, and was celebrated by the inhabitants of Cardiff, Newbridge and other places in its neighbourhood in a manner which showed that they were fully alive to the local and commercial importance of the undertaking. It had been arranged by the Directors, in order to avoid confusion and to prevent interference with the ordinary traffic, as well as to afford shareholders an opportunity of deliberately inspecting their line, that the special train should leave Cardiff at 12 o'clock, and accordingly, long before that hour, the immediate neighbourhood of the station, and, indeed, every point from a view of the proceedings could be obtained, was densely crowded with spectators.

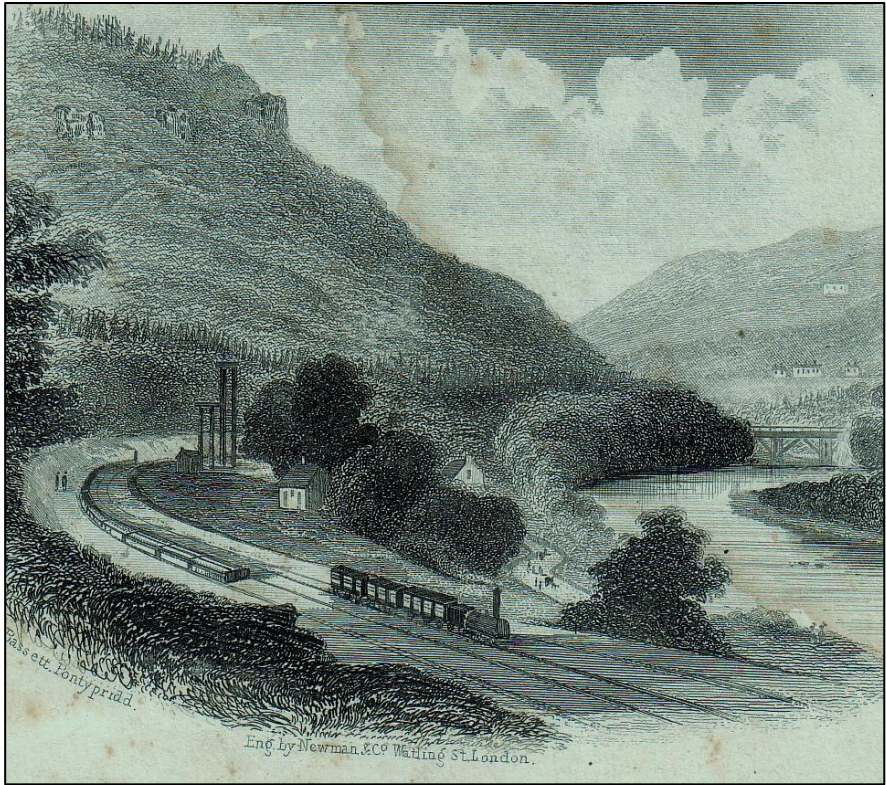
Never did Cardiff present a more gay and animated appearance. All classes of the inhabitants seemed to vie with each other in a demonstration of joy and satisfaction. The bells rang merry peals, flags streamed from the castle steeples, and the house of the inhabitants as were located in the neighbourhood of the station. Cannon were fired continuously throughout the day, and a very excellent band of the Glamorganshire Militia, which was stationed at the terminus, contributed to the holiday by performing a variety of marches, quadrilles Etc.

At a few minutes before 12 o'clock eight carriages were appended to 'The Taff' locomotive engine, and shortly afterwards the company, to the number of 180 took their seats. All the rank, fashion and beauty of the neighbourhood were there. The shrill tones of the steam whistle soon gave

notice to the spectators that the carriages were about to start, and in a minute afterwards the whole train moved slowly forward and majestically for some yards, greeted by loud cheers, salutes of artillery, and accompanied by the lively peals from St. John's belfry, which latter commenced in the morning with the rising sun, and continued at intervals till night.

Shortly after the start some portion of the distance was performed at the rate of forty miles per hour. The speed was then necessarily decreased, so as to cause the arrival of the train at Newbridge, a distance of 12 miles, precisely in 31 minutes. At Newbridge a small portion of the passengers alighted, but by far the greatest part proceeded as far as the extremity of the railway, near the Navigation house, where the numerous Band of Francis Crawshay Esq. was drawn up and received the approaching train with 'God save the Queen,' and 'Rule Britannia.' Descending from the carriages, the passengers, preceded by Sir John Guest, entered the temporary wooden house erected by the proprietors, who very spiritedly supplied the party with Champagne and other wines and viands in abundance.

After a lapse of a few minutes, it was announced by an individual who ascended the table, that all persons who wished to proceed to the tunnel at 'Cefn Glas,' would be allowed half-an-hour to walk there and consequently a large party set forth, preceded by Sir John Guest, Lady Charlotte and the Crawshay band. Upon their arrival at the tunnel, everybody was amazed at the glittering novelty, for it had been most tastefully illuminated to the whole extent, upwards of 300 yards. After remaining there and being highly gratified for some time, and enjoying an advantageous view of the six arched bridge beyond the party returned, and as soon as all were seated in the carriages, they advanced slowly to Newbridge, whence they arrived in Cardiff in 28 minutes, the weather having been most propitious during the whole day.



**Early engraving of the Taff Vale Railway at the far end of Berw Road. C.1856**

**1843**

### **The toll grievance**

The *'Bristol Mercury'* of Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1843 reported: - On Monday week, a very numerous meeting was held at Newbridge, Glamorganshire, for the purpose of taking into consideration the toll grievance, of the pressure of which this town and neighbourhood have great reason to complain. It appears that there are here three gates within 400 yards of each other. There is a gate at each end of the town, and one in the middle, besides another at the distance of only quarter of a mile. These, however, are not the only gates felt oppressive, but they are most flagrant; at one of them the charge for a horse and cart is no less than nine-

pence. This is, indeed, intolerable. The course about to be adopted by the people of Newbridge is one which reflects much credit upon them, as they prefer appealing to the constituted authorities and the law, instead of adopting the violent and illegal course which other aggrieved parties in other parts have pursued. (Reference here to the Rebecca riots in Merthyr). They will attempt to ask the magistrates of the district to cause the removal of the obnoxious and illegal gates, and if these gentlemen have not the power to relieve the people, they are determined to petition Parliament on the subject. – Merlin.

On Thursday evening week as a child of a respectable shopkeeper in Mill-street, Newbridge, about five years of age, was standing near the fire, its clothes caught the flames, and before it could be extinguished the poor little creature was so shockingly burnt that it died before the next morning – Brecon Gazette 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1843

## **1844**

### **Frightful event**

A fatal and most lamentable event occurred at Newbridge, Glamorganshire, on Friday week, which has cast a gloom over the neighbourhood. On the afternoon of the day mentioned as Mr. Calvert, brother of the proprietor of the Upper Newbridge Colliery and a collier, named Francis, were ascending to the pit's mouth on the top of a heavily loaded tram, the rope gave way, and both were in an instant dashed into eternity. The lifeless bodies were soon brought to their agonized relations. The inquest was held on the remains of the unfortunate men on Saturday, and a verdict of accidental death recorded. - Bristol Mercury October 26<sup>th</sup> 1844

## **1849**

### **The Pontypridd Old Bridge**

This celebrated bridge over the River Taff, at Pontypridd, is being widened to twice its old width. When it was formed, not ninety years ago, it is said that there was not a four-wheeled vehicle in the county of Glamorgan. - **Bristol Mercury 12<sup>th</sup> May 1849.**

### Opening of the Pontypridd Gas and Coke works

Great was the pleasurable excitement which prevailed in Pontypridd on Wednesday evening on January 22nd 1851, upon the occasion of lighting the town for the first time with gas. Notwithstanding the extremely dirty condition of the streets, the whole population seemed have turned out to witness the effect of the new lights and admire the stars and garters and plumes of feathers, and crowns, and other devices which shone brilliantly from various places in honour of the joyous event. Young and old, rich and poor, gay and grave, entered with equal interest upon a voyage of discovery through the town, the only drawback to their amusement being the abominable state of the streets, which absolutely beggared description. It was mud, mud, mud, from beginning to end. One great improvement has already taken place the introduction of gas; let us hope that another - street cleansing - will speedily follow. If we had the honour of the surveyor's acquaintance we should whisper in his ear "man alive, how can you exist with such mud about the doors of your neighbours?"

The promoters of the Pontypridd Gas and Coke Works were the Rev. George Thomas; C. C. Williams; Lewis Morgan, John Calvert, Montague Grover and others - gentlemen associated with Pontypridd and Cardiff - who formed themselves into a company - capital £6,000, to be raised in 600 shares of £10 each. Those gentlemen applied to parliament for affect which they received the royal warrant on the 15th of July 1850.

The plans, which had been prepared by Mr. Bowen, engineer, to the Cardiff Gas Company Co., were approved of by the directors, and arrangements were made for carrying out the undertaking as speedily as was practicable. With that view the work was commenced on the 12th of August 1850, and completed in the most satisfactory manner, a stone having been introduced later, the masonry with this inscription in connection with the circumstances: -

PONTYPRIDD GAS LIGHT AND COKE Co.  
 Incorporated by an act of Parliament  
 AND THEIR WORKS, ERECTED a. d. 1850

## M. H. Bowen, engineer

The following description of the building may prove interesting. On entering the works to the right is a neatly fixed up office, intended to be the room in which the directors are to hold their meetings; opposite to which is to be a showroom for gas fittings. Adjacent to these rooms there is also a gas fitter's shop and a Smith's shop, complete with every convenience. To the left of the entrance is a very good residence for the manager, containing three rooms downstairs, three bedrooms, with a good yard, all separate from the works.

The retort house, where the first part of the manufacture is carried out, adjoining the River Taff, is nearly 80 feet square. The floor is of wrought iron and slated. There are four arches or ovens, which will contain three retorts in each. The chimney, a square one, is built to the level of the retort house of Pontypridd stone; and carried up to its height with Bridgewater bricks, with a stone cap on the top. On each side of the retort-house is a shed for coal and coke - very conveniently arranged for the workmen.

The gas when produced passes from the retort-house to "condensers," which are placed in the open air to keep them as cool as possible; they consist of upright pipes of five inches diameter, connected at the top by a pipe in similar form to a letter H, and as the bottom two pipes are inserted in a square box into which tar, etc; is deposited, whence it is conveyed into the tar well by a pipe from each box.

Next to the "condensers" is the purifying shed which contains two purifiers about six feet long, each arranged for working one or both. The gas being purified is passed through a station meter, which is fixed to a separate building. The gas-holder is 35 feet in diameter, and is regulated by four cast iron columns placed on stone piers to which are attached the chains and counterbalance weights.

The tank, which is of cast-iron, is 36 feet 9 inches in diameter and 13 feet 6 inches deep; it stands five feet above the level of the yard, is cast in three tiers of plates, each plate has two brackets, cast in the centre, on which a wrought-iron band is fixed to strengthen the plates. From the gas-holder

the gas passes through a regulator or governor and from thence into the town.

The length of main pipes at present laid is about a mile and a half; when completed about three miles will be required. The main that will supply that part near the canal and chain works runs through the river.

From the commencement of operations, the directors requested that the work should be carried on in the most efficient manner; and under the superintendence their intelligent engineer, Mr. Bowen - who arranged the plan entirely - we believe their instructions have been most judiciously carried out, as we believe that the works are complete in every respect, most satisfactory to the directors, and highly creditable to the engineer. In fact, we do not err when we say they may be taken as "a modern establishment."

A meeting of the directors was held on Tuesday, and among other resolutions that were entered into was one fixing the price of gas for the present, at seven shillings per one thousand cubic feet; and Mr. Elias Bassett, of Pontypridd, was unanimously elected clerk and collector of rents under the company, on the proposition of Mr. Calvert.

We have already alluded to the "life" which prevailed in the town on Wednesday evening, and can only say further that it was kept up till midnight - the hour of our departure for Cardiff by special train. Some of the devices were exceedingly beautiful, and were much admired:

Over Gelliwasted entrance gate - the hospitable mansion of Mr. Calvert - was a magnificent "plume of feathers" (formed by lighted gas) and cannons were discharged in the grounds at frequent intervals in honour of the event. At the gasworks was a brilliant star. At the front of the New Inn, the letters V. R. divided by a crown, had a very pretty effect. Mr. Bassett's, post office, had a remarkably handsome star; as also had the Butcher's Arms Inn.

We walked - we beg pardon - we *waded* through the puddles of the streets for upwards of an hour, pleased with the good-humoured countenances of the people and amused with the remarks of the juveniles; and then went to

the New Inn to record the proceedings of "the dinner" which was appointed to take place there.

Anxious to do honour to an occasion of so much interest, the landlady of this establishment had produced with the greatest liberality for the reception of her guests and laid out her spacious dining-room with much taste. Over the Chairman's seat was an emblem of royalty - this crown, and at the other end a plume of feathers, in honour of ancient Cambria. In the center, was a lyre, and stretching across the apartment were rows of variegated lamps, which with numerous devices, admirably shown by the strong glare of gaslight, gave the whole scene an exceedingly pretty effect. With the gas-fittings - the taste and attention which had evidently been expanded in making the arrangements - the dinner - the wines - and another little necessary *etceteras* - we say emphatically that all present must have been pleased.

The chair was taken by Lewis Morgan, Hafod, and the vice-chair by John Calvert, Gelliwastad. There were also present: -

Rev. J. Griffiths, Glyntaff; John Leigh, Esq; Llanvabon; Richard Booker, Esq, Velindre; Mr. H. Spencer, Taff's Well; Mr. Vallance, Bristol; Mr. William Jones' Park. Mr. A. Cleugh, Mr. G. J. Penn and Mr. E. Hood, of the Newbridge works. Evan Davies, W. Cook, E. C. Spickett, Master George Calvert, and Messrs. Richard Rowlands, Ebenezer Williams, W. Jones, D. Goodman, D. Griffiths, John Jones, Lewis Davies, A. Cule, C. Bassett, John Phillips - all of Newbridge. Messrs. Morgan Lisle, Cooper; D. Andrews, Neil, Davies, H. Bowen, - all of Cardiff

The "creature comforts" having been disposed of, and a plentiful dessert placed before the company, the chairman gave in succession several toasts, which were followed by several speeches. The Chairman (Lewis Morgan) observed that it was getting late - (it was then about nine p.m.) - and as they had several toasts to propose he should do so with as little delay as possible. If the company would allow him he would propose as the next toast - "Success in the Pontypridd Gas and Coke Company" (loud cheers). And with that toast he associated the name of Mr. Calvert, who had been a most active and intelligent promoter of the undertaking (much cheering).

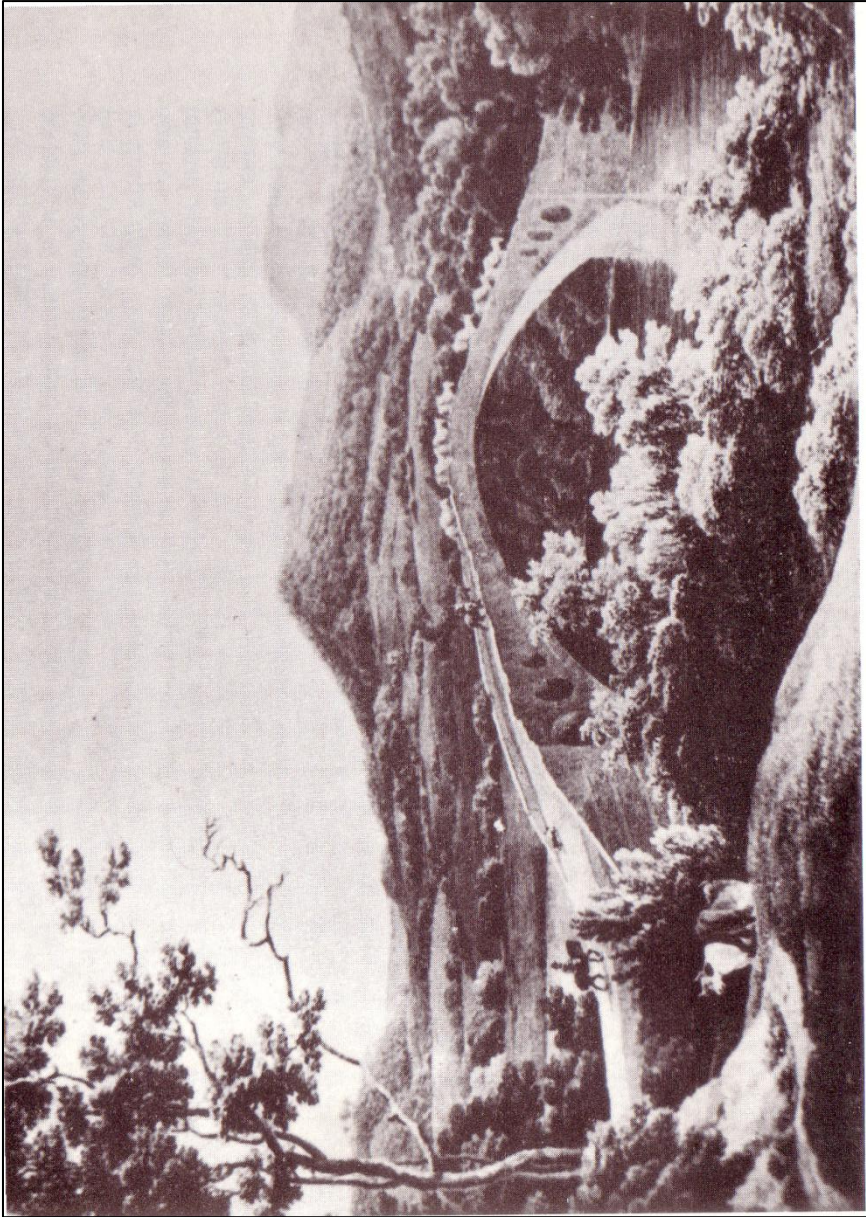


The Vice-Chairman (John Calvert) on rising was hailed with enthusiastic cheering. Having allowed this manifestation of good feeling to subside he said that he should have been proud if the task of responding to the toast had fallen into abler hands than his, and if some other person had been requested to return thanks on behalf of the Pontypridd Gas and Coke Company; but inasmuch as he was connected with that undertaking, in which he felt a warm interest (cheers) - he would endeavour, briefly, to explain its merits and the claims its promoters had to public sympathy and support (hear, hear). The notion of establishing gasworks at Pontypridd originated with him (Mr. Calvert), Mr. Groves; Mr. Morgan, of Hafod (the Chairman), and other gentlemen, who saw the necessity of providing for the rising and rapidly extending town of Pontypridd the means of adding to the comfort of its inhabitants, and of affording to its enterprising tradesmen those accessories which persons in business in neighbouring places had long enjoyed.

Their measures were matured - a company was formed - an act of parliament was applied for and obtained, and the works were commenced under favourable circumstances. The promoters of the company associated as men of business, and proceeded with energy to carry out the object of their undertaking. Their act having been obtained under circumstances well calculated to inspire confidence the works were finished in a workmanlike manner - well and efficiently executed; and he would take the public opportunity of expressing his approbation of the admirable manner in which the contractor, Mr. James, had performed the duties which he had been engaged to fulfill (applause).

The company was very much indebted to him for the rapidity with which he proceeded, having by exemplary attention greatly facilitated operations, thereby enabling the company to open at a remarkably early date (applause). The proprietors in the Pontypridd Gas Company were anxious - very anxious - to supply gas to the consumers as cheap as they could, compatible with a fair return for the outlay of capital that had been incurred.

All the company wanted was a moderate dividend; and he (Mr. Calvert) had every reason to believe that they would be enabled to satisfy public requirements upon terms which would be satisfactory to consumers of gas;



178 The 'New Bridge', Pontypridd. Painting by Michael Rooker in 1795

**The 'New Bridge' Pontypridd, painted by Michael Rooker in 1795**

and also to secure a remunerative dividend to themselves; from calculations that had been made, he repeated, he was convinced that the company would light the town of Pontypridd as economically as any other town was lighted, in the course of a short period at the same time, although they were anxious to meet the wants of the period in the which they lived upon reasonable terms, still they did not profess to have any dislike nor repugnance to the receipt of a good dividend (laughter).

They were going to take gas down to the thriving locality of Treforest, as Mr. Francis Crawshay had offered to take a hundred lights - (cheers). - and a great number of the inhabitants had intimated their readiness to avail themselves of the company's operations - Mr. Calvert concluded by thanking those who were assembled, and resumed his seat amid much applause.

The Chairman, who was most complimentary received, assured the company that he felt that he was placed in a very good and interesting situation. He had resided in this neighbourhood for many years, and had seen very great changes and improvements in it, and if he lived a few years longer there could be no doubt he should see greater still. Some of those changes that had taken place had been the means of introducing a great many strangers into the neighbourhood; and he (the Chairman) was happy to see that they had had that effect. He hoped many more would follow (applause). He thanked the company most cordially for drinking his health; and observed that he was at all times most happy to take his friends in the neighbourhood in demonstration of the kind (cheers).

Mr. Bassett, on the part of his brother tradesmen and himself, said he augured from the kind manner in which the toast had been received that his conduct, since his residence in Pontypridd, had been satisfactory. He had lived there 10 years, and had ever received kindness, civility, and respect from all classes. During his residence here the place had increased three-fold - in size and in the number of inhabitants; and he trusted he should live to see it increase three-fold more yet (cheers). The establishment of the Pontypridd Gas and Coke Company formed an important era in the history of the town, as it had been for many years an object of anxious desire for many that such a company should be formed.

He (Mr. Bassett) was thankful that he had been induced to take an interest in it; and as far as his humble abilities went he should ever feel it a pleasure and a duty to endeavour to promote the prosperity of Pontypridd and its vicinity (applause). For the last six or eight months trade had not been so brisk in that neighbourhood as it had been in former years. He would not introduce politics; but, still he would observe, that the low state of agriculture had, to a considerable extent, a depressing influence on the trade of Pontypridd on market days (hear, hear).

The Vice-Chairman (who was again received with enthusiastic remarks of good will) said he was much obliged to Mr. Davies for the kind manner in which he had introduced his name to the company, and to the company for the flattering reception they had given to it. He had not the least idea why they called on him. As an individual coal proprietor, he was proud to see the produce of coal - gas - burning so brightly and so well before them in that room (applause). A collier's occupation was a very arduous one; and the position of a coal proprietor was a most responsible one - often of great difficulty. A coal proprietor had frequently to encounter serious and perplexing difficulties.

They were subject, particularly in deep mines, to firedamp and in such situations the want of efficient ventilation - to afford which baffled all the resources of mineral surveyors - causing a most alarming sacrifice of life and property. The first object coal proprietors have, or should have, was to protect the lives of their men, next, to protect their property (hear, hear). Whenever a coal-pit explosion occurred, their first inquiry was "Are many Killed?" Or, "Is there any loss of life?" The next inquiry was "What is the damage to the property?" All those painful casualties were incidental to the life of a proprietor; and reflections on them were seldom from his mind.

Then there was another subject for anxious inquiry - the price at which mineral produce could be sold in the market. And frequently the price was so low and the expenses were so great that the sum received was scarcely remunerative - scarcely sufficient to cover the expenses - not merely the interest on capital invested, but wages, rent, and various other items. He believed that his lot was cast among the inhabitants of Pontypridd - (cheers) - and he should always be happy to render them all the assistance

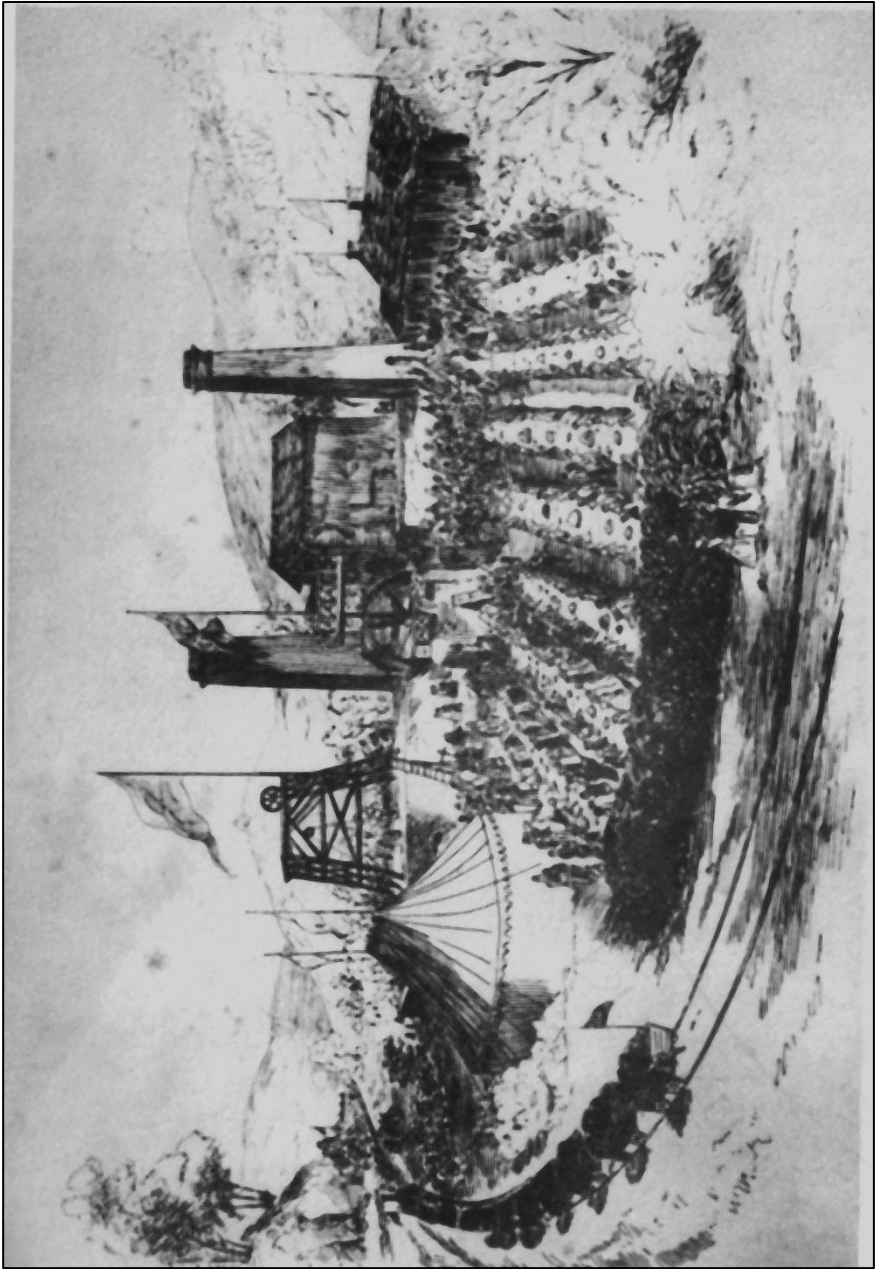
in his power (cheers). He congratulated the company on the addition which several friends from Cardiff made to their meeting, who had attended on purpose to see the Pontypridd Gas Works opened, from motives of respect and good will for the inhabitants of Pontypridd. He (Mr. Calvert) was glad to see them; and he thanked them for coming up (cheers).

### **Famous colliery opens**

The coming of the coal trade would change Pontypridd / Newbridge forever, and the opening of the Gyfeillon Colliery in August 1851, later to be called the Great Western Colliery, was duly celebrated by the owner and invited guests, and the locality generally:

#### **GREAT FESTIVITIES IN THE RHONDDA VALLEY AT THE IMPORTANT COAL WORKS OF JOHN CALVERT ESQ.**

The energy, intelligence and public spirit which the gentleman, whose name graces the head of this report, brings to bear on the various operations in which he is engaged, for the purpose of developing the mineral riches of this highly favoured district, are only surpassed by the manly courtesy with which he treats his friends and the good feeling which he exhibits in his intercourse with all classes of society. He has recently succeeded in obtaining coal of a most valuable description in a pit which he sank, and, pleased with his success, he resolved that others should share in the joyous feelings which the event, naturally enough, excited in his mind; and as he is one of those "who never do things by halves" he was determined to commemorate the auspicious circumstance just mentioned in such a manner as to make the whole district participate in his triumph over which many had deemed insurmountable. With that view he took measures for regaling all his workmen, their families, and a very large number of friends at a banquet, which should possess some rare and novel features. By his instructions, Mr. Spencer, Taffs Well, purchased a Hereford ox - one that had won a prize at Sir Charles Morgan's show - which weighed upwards of forty-four score pounds, and which was roasted whole in an immense oven built expressly for the occasion upon a principle suggested by Mr. Calvert to his bricklayers.



**The opening of the Gyfeillon Colliery in August 1851**

The town of Pontypridd entered warmly into Mr. Calvert's views, and a committee comprising the most respectable and influential inhabitants, was formed to assist in carrying out matters of detail, to testify the high respect in which he and the amiable family of Gellywastad are held by the community.

We believe all the shops were closed in Pontypridd, and the inhabitants, generally, entered with commendable ardour upon the business of the day. About one o'clock a procession was formed at Gelliwastad (Mr. Calvert's hospitable residence), and marched in order to the gentleman's actual works:

MR. CALVERT  
(ACCOMPANIED BY SEVERAL FRIENDS)

PONTYPRIDD TRADESMEN, WITH RED ROSETTES.

TWO UNION JACKS

THE CARDIFF BAND

(LED BY MR. QUELCH, AND PLAYING THE MOST SPIRITED  
AND ENLIVENED AIR)

MASTER CALVERT

In a gaily-decorated chair, borne on the shoulders of eight workmen.

Tradesman and other residents in the district

A. Banner

A. Banner

Workmen - three abreast

Workmen with emblems

As the procession passed along, the discharges of cannon from various points reverberated through the valley, men cheered with unparalleled enthusiasm, "the fair" waved their "lily hands;" and "all went merry as a marriage bell." Admirable order was kept throughout the day by a party of police under the command of Superintendent Thomas.

On reaching the coal works we found a spacious marquee erected for Mr. Calvert and his friends, capable of containing about two hundred persons; and in an open space we saw rows of tables covered with white cloths, for the workmen and their families. All the arrangements were complete.

Near to the pit were displayed a great many huge blocks of the "black diamond." The pit, we are told, is 140 yards deep, and the vein that has been struck is the No. 3 vein - so celebrated for coking purposes. The engine-house and other buildings are of the most substantial character, and remarkably well finished. To attempt to enumerate the parties present would be useless. There were some thousands around, for whose entertainment liberal provision had been made. And when the "monster party" had sat down - when those who were privileged to take their places under the canvass walls of the marquee had assembled, we could not avoid the impression that we were spectators of a banquet where a great feudal chief was regaling his retainers. Wines of delicious quality - namely, champagne, port, sherry, &c. - were supplied in abundance. After the plates had been removed, Mr. Calvert gave the usual loyal and constitutional toasts, which were exceedingly well received. Captain Hewitt, Mr. Lewis Morgan, returned thanks, before Mr. Calvert returned his sincere thanks to his friends for the compliment they had paid him on that occasion - a compliment, he was sure, he had not the least idea that it would have originated with a magistrate of the county. Since he had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Morgan, he had regarded him as an exceedingly fine friend.

This was an occasion devoted to social converse, harmony, and good fellowship, and from his heart he wished that all who entered the field might avail themselves of the circumstances by which they were surrounded (cheers). The appearance of "Old King Coal" should inspire the whole neighbourhood with feelings of pleasurable anticipation, for in their immediate vicinity the company might see some fine specimens which had been brought up out of the recently excavated works (cheers). He felt proud in thinking of the success which he had achieved, and he was sure that his neighbours were actuated by similar feelings (cheers). He had been labouring for three years to find this coal, and he had found it under circumstances well calculated to inspire him with hope. During the progress of the works various opinions were advanced respecting the result



- some were inclined to despair, but others held different opinions. He persevered:

He did not look to A or to B  
But went down to examine and see  
(Great laughter and cheering)

Those who were engaged in the search had found what they sought, and the object was then before the company, fully enabling them to pronounce a verdict upon the case which he submitted (cheers). Their decision, he perceived, was favourable (renewed cheering). They had partaken of the beef which had been cooked with the coal; and he hoped they had enjoyed themselves, as it was his anxious wish that they should spend the day happily and satisfactorily

Mr. Calvert came to reflections of a more interesting character - the extension of mining operations in the district. How were they to provide for the rising generation? He saw a great number around him; and, he was well aware of the danger of permitting the youth of the district to grow up in idleness and in habits of profligacy. How were these social evils to be counteracted? Tares spring up among corn; and bad men were too often amidst an industrious and orderly community. They should all try to train the rising generation in the way they should go. He proceeded to make some excellent remarks illustrative of the sentiment:

'Tis education that forms the common mind, -  
Just as the twig is bent the tree is inclined.

And then went on to say that he and others should endeavour to make the young people become useful members of society. On the other hand they should be thankful to Providence for having such excellent coal in their neighbourhood, by working which employment would be furnished' he trusted, for many years to come to large numbers (cheers). To prepare the young for entering properly upon their duties should be the great object of the influential members of the community; and he (Mr. Calvert) rejoiced to find that in Pontypridd and that valley he had so many kind neighbours, who were most willing and even anxious to assist in bringing up the young

in such a manner as would fit them to do their duty in that state of life into which, by God's presence, they had been called (applause).

Since he had the pleasure of knowing Welshmen he had received great kindness from them. Amidst all the vicissitudes which were inseparable from a life of commercial activity, he invariably strived to cultivate the acquaintance of his workmen, and to live upon terms of good fellowship with them (cheers). He found that his men always listened to reason, and he had no grounds for complaint against them (cheers). He had men who had been working for him ever since he came into Wales; and he hoped they would continue to work for him much longer; till their heads should become grey with indications of advancing years.

He was not an advocate for unnecessary changes; for if he had men who were not as good as they ought to be, or might be, his role was to endeavour to allure them to brighter paths, and, thereby, to effect a permanent improvement in their character (cheers). It was a very difficult task to suppress his feelings to the company at that moment, - seeing as he did such a highly respectable company in that tent. He was sure that it gave him the greatest satisfaction to see his friends; and he trusted they would enjoy themselves. He wishes to return his sincerest thanks for their kindness. He was proud to see them, and he hoped they were all happy - women - children wives and sweethearts - one and all (cheers).

Glamorganshire men were a persevering hardworking race, who need not be ashamed to go into any market to compete in work requiring ingenuity, skill, or patience. In any works conducive to the welfare of the nation they would be found able and intelligent assistants (cheers). Thank God, we had now a great many advantages to which those who preceded us were strangers. The trade of these valleys had been aided to a remarkable extent by the noble and splendid docks formed at Cardiff by the late Marquis of Bute; and he (Mr. Calvert) had no doubt that in the course of time the facilities for shipment, which coal proprietors now enjoyed at Cardiff, would be increased as soon as the extension of the trade required it, by which not only the town of Cardiff, but a very wide district, would be greatly benefited (cheers).

The proprietors of the Glamorganshire Canal were fully alive to the importance of keeping pace with the times, as Mr. Crawshay and other gentlemen of influence were anxious that something should be done by them to increase the accommodation for shipping at the Sea Lock - either by the formation of a new dock or by some other means, so that if the Marquis of Bute's trustees made a new dock, and the Canal Company also - by which there would be two new docks formed - with ample railway accommodation, this district could supply all the principal markets in the world, as its mineral riches were inexhaustible (cheers).

He thanked the company again and again for their kindness, and hoped they would all return to their respective homes in safety; and that they would be enabled to report favourably of the sample of coal they had seen, the discovery of which had led to the festivities at which he was happy to see those whom he was addressing. Whatever they may say, he asked them to tell the truth. And he would impress this maxim on the minds of the young - never swerve from the truth. Invariably adhere to the truth in all things (loud cheers). With a few general remarks of a complimentary nature, Mr. Calvert concluded a speech that was listened to with marked attention amid prolonged and vehement cheering from the dense crowd who were assembled.

Captain Hewett, in a brief but appropriate speech, proposed as the next toast, "Prosperity to the coal trade." with which toast was associated the name of Mr. D. W. James, of Merthyr (much cheering).

D. W. James, Esq; responded to the compliment in an eloquent speech; but, we regret to find, we have only room for a mere outline. He said that nothing gave him greater pleasure than to be present on that occasion to pay proper respect to his friend Mr. Calvert, for the manner in which he had conducted his affairs since he came into this country, but more especially for the kindness with which he had ever treated him, since he had, to some extent, become an opponent of his (Mr. Calvert's) in that valley. Mr. James hoped he would become as successful as Mr. Calvert had. He (Mr. James) had received numerous acts of kindness at the hands of their hospitable entertainer, for whenever he had been in difficulties in proceeding with his works, he had only to contact him, and ask him how he overcame obstacles of a similar nature, and received in reply the friendliest counsel (cheers).

He believed that he and Mr. Calvert had opened the ground for “the sea vein” at the same time, and although he had a greater depth to penetrate than he (Mr. James) had, they both struck coal on the same day - a circumstance which formed a curious coincidence; and Mr. Calvert was the first man to compliment him on his success. And when the notion first occurred to that gentleman to give his friends, his workmen and their families, that entertainment, he had sent to him (Mr. James) and had expressed his anxiety to promote kindly feeling between master and man, observing further: -

“Mr. James, we have had those difficulties together. I hope you will allow your men to come and sit down with me and my men and partake of the fare I have provided” (Cheers). “If, said Mr. James, he had offered me £10,000, I could not have felt more impressed with his generous kindness. It showed that he never felt any jealousy. He showed that he was equally glad with myself that he had succeeded” (cheers). - Mr. James spoke of the coal trade of Great Britain as a branch of our commerce which would ever be enabling this country ‘to go ahead’ and to ‘master the world.’ He hoped and trusted that the trustees appointed by that lamented and estimable nobleman - the late Marquis of Bute - that name which should never be mentioned in this county without feelings of respect, he repeated that he hoped the Trustees of the Bute estate would provide an extension of dock accommodation, as the trade of the district might require additional facilities (cheers).

There could be no doubt that the Taff Vale Railway Company would also extend the works to meet the requirements of the times, by which their own interests would be promoted while, at the same time, they would be benefitting the public - Mr. Jones concluded his able and practicable speech by thanking the company for the exceedingly kind reception they had given to his name.

Mr. Lewis Morgan, in a few friendly remarks proposed the health of Mr. Rowland, - Mr. Calvert's brother-in-law - and from the warmth with which the toast was received; we inferred that the gentleman named was an established favourite in the locality among all classes.

Mr. Rowland returned thanks; but as he stood a considerable distance from us, very few of his observations reached us. We understood him to acknowledge the compliment in a few manly terms, and to speak highly of the honourable character of Mr. Calvert.

Mr. Calvert proposed the health of the Rev. George Thomas - a gentleman who is largely interested in the property of the district, and who is the proprietor (we believe) of the large tract of country which Mr. Calvert has taken on lease, with the view of working the minerals. Mr. Calvert spoke in feeling terms of the benevolence and kindness which invariably characterized Mr. Thomas, and eulogized his conduct as a magistrate, a land proprietor, and a neighbour. The toast was drunk with prolonged cheering. Mr. A. Davies handed to Mr. Calvert the rough sketch of the plan of the colliery drawn by him before the works were commenced, but which had not been deviated from, - thereby forming a proof of the accuracy of his (Mr. Davies') judgment.

## 1852

Sometimes the general public took the law into their own hands with regard to toll gates. The 'Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian' of 20<sup>th</sup> March 1852 reported: -

### **A Brutal outrage**

The man who keeps the Gwern-y-Gerwyn turnpike gate, was found on Sunday night in state of insensibility. It appears that a fellow who was passing through the gate felled him to the ground by the means of sum heavy weapon and a deep wound was inflicted on his head. The party is known and the police are in pursuit.

### **Emigration to Australia**

Monmouthshire Merlin, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1852

The mania for emigration to the gold mines of Australia is raging in this place to a great extent. Several young men from this locality have this day (Monday), crossed over to Bristol, to pay their deposit-money towards the passage in the Deborah, which will sail in about 14 days, and which will

waft them to these shores where we hope they will make their fortunes, and where, there is little doubt, they can do much better than they could expect to do in their native land, the times are so precarious in Pontypridd that it is with difficulty, and only by dint of great exertion, that the youths of the place can earn a bare subsistence. Those who are possessed of the necessary means, in our opinion, do well in emigrating to the modern El Dorado. We understand that hundreds of miners and others about the hills, are striving to get together a sufficient sum to defray their expenses to the New World and the antipodes.

#### Pugilistic encounters

The '*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian*,' of 24<sup>th</sup> June 1852 reported: - This place (Pontypridd) has, of late, been the scene of several disreputable exhibitions, in consequence of the feuds and feeling of rivalry existing between the colliers on the one hand, and the men employed in the Chain Works on the other. It was arranged on Monday that the quarrel should be decided by personal combat, the men selected as the champions of each party being the combatants. By the statements of the few who witnessed the fight, it was a disgusting sight to view. The men belaboured each other until the ring presented the appearance of the floor of a slaughterhouse. The chain man was eventually declared to be the conqueror. It is to be hoped there will be no repetition of such an exhibition.

The following week the same newspaper reported the following correspondence: - : To the Editor of the '*Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*.' Sir — Observing a paragraph in your paper of the 20<sup>th</sup> instant, headed "Pugilistic Encounters." which would lead the public to believe that one of the brutal combatants was employed in the Chain Works. I am to assure you that no such character is employed in the works, or has been for many years, or would any such person be admitted at any time.—I remain, sir, one interested in the Newbridge works.

1853

**Native of Pontypridd**

Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1853

A young man, named Evan Jones, a native of Pontypridd, reached Australia in April last. He wrote, on the 20th Dec. to his mother and brother; they received the letter on Saturday last, with a cheque for £270, He says he has got about £600 more, and expects in a few months to make up £1000, and then will return. The sufferings and privations at the diggings are beyond description, he writes. All his companions, who went out with him, are doing as equally well as himself.

**Pugilism at Pontypridd**

Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian, 24<sup>rd</sup> June 1853

**To the Editor of the Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian.** SIR, — It appears that pugilism has become rather prevalent at Pontypridd of late. On Sunday week last, that den of the lowest of the low, called Llangana (Graig), presented a most shameful scene; the thoroughfare was blockaded throughout the day with people who delighted in the use of their fists. Fighting was kept up without interruption from morning till night. Surely a stop ought to be put to such disgraceful proceedings; but on Tuesday evening last we saw a repetition of the same, and the absence of the proper authorities, so that the ruffians who inhabit the place think themselves at perfect liberty to turn out and satisfy their desire as occasion shall require. Indeed it reflects no great credit upon those in whose hands it is to prevent such. I sincerely hope that a vigorous look-out will be kept upon the place, to prevent such degrading scenes be re-enacted henceforward. I remain, Mr. Editor, your obedient servant, June 22nd, 1853. VERITAS.

1854

**Goal diggings - A Welshman's Funeral**

The '*Monmouthshire Merlin*' of 14<sup>th</sup> April 1854, reported the demise of a Pontypridd man in a far off land: - Intelligence by letter from the Ballarat diggings, Australia, has been received here, which states that Mr. David

Morgan, formerly of Darran Ddu Colliery, has departed this life. Mr. Morgan left this place about two years ago, and was for a time fortunate, being able to remit a large sum of money to his wife, after a short period of his arrival in the gold regions. His death was attributed to severe cold and slow fever, from frequent exposures, which all diggers are liable to. His grave was dug by one of his old townsmen and companion, Mr. Evan Jones, formerly a sawyer in this place. Twenty Welshmen followed him to that rude spot designed by Providence to be his last resting place, far from his native land. He was an enterprising man, a warm-hearted friend, and an affectionate husband.

**1856**

**Pontypridd fatal accident**

Monmouthshire Merlin, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1856

An inquest was held at the Bridge End, on Monday last, before J. Morgan, Esq., deputy coroner, on the body of Lodwick Evans, aged 25. The deceased was a collier, and being an excellent swimmer and an expert diver, he got upon the middle arch of the aqueduct to jump into the pool, called Pwll-y-Berw, at which place the water is about twelve or fifteen feet deep. His foot slipped just as he was going to jump, and, consequently, he was unable to give a sufficient spring to clear the foundation of the bridge, and his head coming against a stone, he rolled into the pool, and was seen to rise no more. His body was got out in about an hour and a half afterwards. His skull was found to be fractured very considerably." - Verdict, Accidental death. Note: - This was the first of many who have drowned at the Berw Pool over the years.

**Fatal accident**

(Cardiff Times, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1856)

An accident occurred at the Taff Vale Rail Iron-works, on Friday last, to Abraham Morgan, a boatman. A boat-load of rails was being taken from the boat, when one of the rails which he was receiving struck him in the abdomen. He was conveyed to his residence, and expired on Sunday from the injury received.



**Taff Vale Ironworks**  
(Cardiff Times, 16<sup>th</sup> October 1856)

The Taff Vale Iron Works are in full operation executing a large Russian order, and **at** the chain and cable works every thing is going on prosperously. The contractors (Messrs. Rennie and Logan,) are going on briskly with their viaduct of the Rhondda Junction of the Taff Vale Railway. The bridge will consist of seven arches, each arch forty feet span - it will be an additional ornament to the place.

**Excursion for Treforest workmen**

On Saturday September 27<sup>th</sup> 1856, a body of colliers and others connected with Mr. Crawshay's works at Pontypridd and neighbourhood, to the number of 700, arrived in Swansea by excursion train. From the railway station they walked in procession through the principal streets, headed by the Cyfarthfa Fife and Drum band. The men were accompanied by their surgeon, Dr. Price, of Pontypridd, fully set forth in his Welsh costume of Green, with fox-skin cap. Through the weather being fine the excursionists were enabled to enjoy themselves by visiting the various points of interest in the town and immediate neighbourhood.

**1857**

**Inauguration of the new bridge at Newbridge**

While the 'Old Bridge rightly takes pride of place in present day Pontypridd, it really wasn't practical for entry into the town and the when less heralded bridge next to it, which few people know the name of was opening, there was great rejoicing in the district. The '*Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*,' Saturday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> 1857 reported: - Friday last will long be remembered by the good people of Newbridge, for on that day they were doing what they had for years hoped for - a bridge to be crossed without fear of breaking horses' knees or endangering their own necks, and available for the traffic of the rapidly-increasing town. When Newbridge was but an insignificant village, the inhabitants were glad of the Old Bridge, though conveyances had to be pushed up on one side of it and gradually "let down" the other. But the opening of the Taff Vale Railway caused a great impetus of commerce and trade. Messrs. Crawshay, with their adjoining works at

Treforest, and the chain and cable works created a rapid improvement and a desire for a bridge more commensurate with the wants of the town.

A company was formed and (having for its zealous chairman Dr. Davies), composed of Messrs C. Bassett, D. Davies, Richard Rowlands, Ebenezer Williams, Aaron Cule, John Griffiths, Edward Evans, Roger Jones, J. Jones, (Butchers' Arms), Daniel Hutchings, and Robert Williams; Mr. Spickett consented to act as secretary. Mr. Robert Hughes, as architect, made a design for a new bridge, which was so highly approved by the Rev. George Thomas, that that gentleman promised to make a donation towards the undertaking of £500. From the munificence of this gentleman, forward in every good work, together with a handsome sum of £100 from Mr. Charles Morgan, aided by liberal subscriptions by Mr. J. Spruce-Price; Messrs Brown Lenox & Co; and others the work was commenced earlier this year by Mr. Thomas Jenkins, builder and contractor under the superintendence of the district surveyor. On Friday the bridge was inaugurated by the Rev. G. Thomas. About 12 o'clock a procession was formed opposite the New Inn, in order to meet the Rev. Thomas on the Merthyr Rd., in the following order: -

Police Superintendent Thomas; Brass Band; Mr. Cousins' omnibus, containing Dr. Davies and Messrs Ebenezer Williams, A. Cule, D. Davies, R. Jones, E. Llewellyn, D. J. Hutchings, etc; Carriage with Mr. C. Bassett and Messrs Spickett, Grover (Cardiff), Rowlands and Hughes The following were in carriages and other conveyances: Mr. Williams Jnr (brewer) and Miss Mary Williams, Mr. D. Davies (Cwm) and Mrs. Davies. Mr. Jones (Butchers' Arms) and Mrs. Jones. Mr. Davies (surveyor) and the Rev. J. Griffiths (Glyntaff), and Rev. T. Davies (Glyntaff). Mr. & Mrs. Hicks, with an immense garland crown. Mr. Langley (Bridgewater Arms), and Miss Griffiths. Drum & Fife band. Wagons belong to Mr. F. Crawshay, with a puncheon of rum. Two drays, with barrels of beer from the Pontypridd Brewery. These, together with punchion, were tapped on the bridge for the men. The Rev. R. H. Thomas, of Pentyrch, on horseback, Mr. J. B. Woods, of Cardiff, and others riding and about twenty carriages and horsemen. Messrs. Davies and Bassett having briefly addressed Mr. Thomas, requested him to open the bridge, and carriages containing the Reverent gentleman and his lady and the Mrs. Thomas, crossed the bridge amid the cheers of some

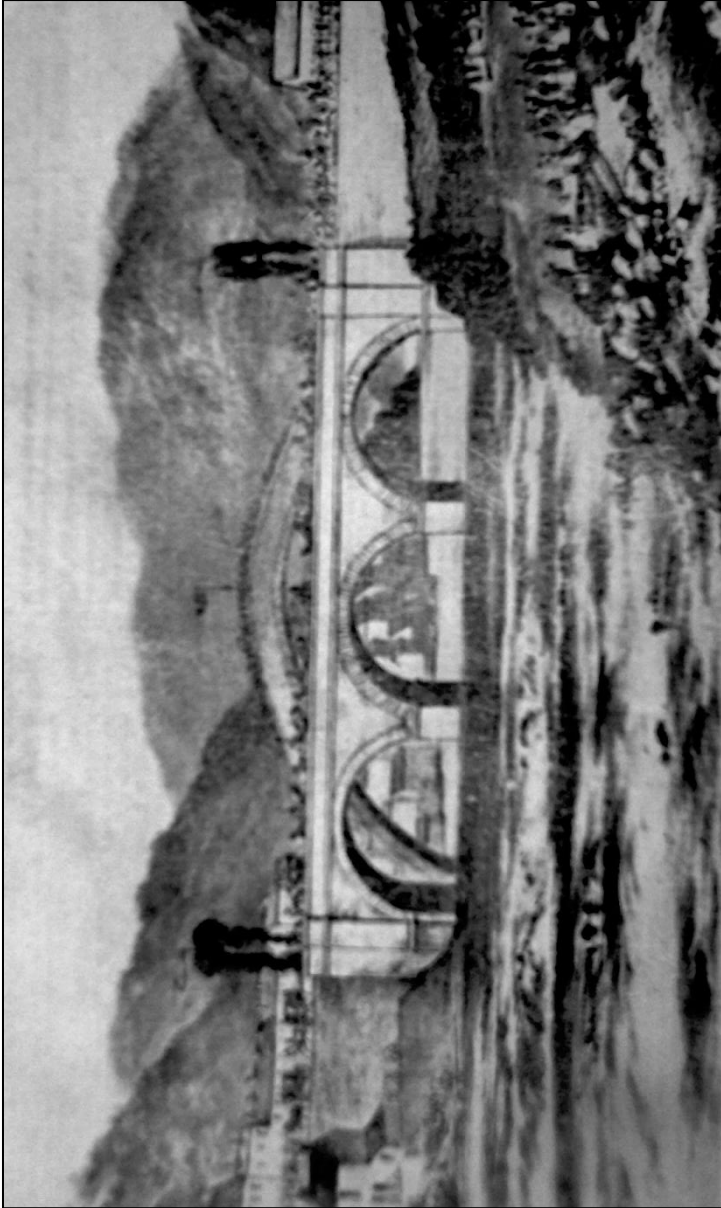
thousands of spectators, and the procession having also passed, it was dedicated to the public service.

The luncheon was served at one o'clock in the large room at the New Inn, and reflected great credit on the skill and management of Mr. & Mrs. Cousins, comprising all the delicacies of the season. The Rev. G. Thomas said that they were assembled at the close of the year 1857 to witness the completion of what he hoped would prove a very useful bridge, and he considered that the celebrations of such an event ought to be done with great modesty and humility.

Civilization had advanced with such rapid strides that the works of art were now to be seen, by which not a river but arms of the sea were spanned by a bridge. As instances of such rapid progress he might notice the bridges at the Menai Straights and at Plymouth, as well as the Crumlin Viaduct.

Still, they would agree with him, in awarding proper mead of praise to the man who erected more than a hundred years ago, the bridge passed over this day. (Hear, hear). If one-tenth of the appliances we now possessed had been in the hands of William Edwards, what would he not have accomplished? But he little thought that we of this generation should be able, by the aid of scientific appliances, to make a picture instantaneously, as had been affected while the procession was on the bridge; that a message could be transmitted hundreds of miles in a minute; or that the metropolis of the kingdom could be reached from any part in a few hours.

The brilliant and splendid arc of heaven which shined this morning reminded him (Mr. Thomas) how insignificant was the work of mortal hands; but those gentlemen comprised the committee who had made the arrangements and conducted the steps of erecting this bridge, were entitled to the greatest praise and commendation. Before the erection he did not know any place of similar size so spent up as Pontypridd - (hear, hear) - and he might mention the paying of two tolls to get into the Merthyr road. They had but one road, and hitherto but one bridge, rather ornamental, but very impassible. The public had had, however, the gratification of seeing such a curious arch. He would not detain them any longer on this subject, but proceeded at once to propose the health of the committee, who had so kindly and successfully carried out the undertaking.



A newspaper print of the opening of the Victoria Bridge in 1857.

He would not do otherwise than include in the toast the landlords who had been generous enough to grant the use of the land, for without land they could have had no bridge. If anyone said the bridge was not good enough, let them be reminded that they have the use of it for nothing. He had great pleasure in proposing the health of the committee, and of Dr. Davies, as the chairman. Note: - The new bridge was named the 'Victoria Bridge' some 40 years later.

**Doctor's horse 'disappears'**  
(Merthyr Telegraph, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1857)

An awkward mistake occurred here a few days since. A young gentleman came up from Cardiff by rail, for the purpose of visiting a friend, a few miles out of town. He called at the White Hart Inn, Pontypridd, for the purpose of engaging a horse, which was intended to be furnished to him. Dr. Davies having to attend a patient a few doors off left his horse in charge of a lad. The gentleman impatient for his journey seeing the lad walking a horse up and down stopped him and asked if the horse was for him, "Yes Sir" was the reply, and he gave the lad sixpence and then mounted and departed. The Dr. soon after came and found his horse had gone. He was informed that some one was seen mounted and driving off. The police were immediately set to work, and proceeded in search of the supposed thief, and after about a two miles drive found the missing person set for the night at an Inn. They brought back the horse and driver, and after the matter had been explained the parties separated amidst considerable laughter.

**1859**

Newbridge – The pleasure Fair

The common fair took place on Monday last, and as usual, the rude sports got up for the occasion drew together a vast number of persons- and a considerable amount of drunkenness and other immorality was the result. In order to draw the children from such scenes the more respectable portion of the inhabitants annually subscribe to treat them with tea and plum cake, and on this occasion upwards of 300 of the Sunday scholars of Glyntaff Church took tea together, and the remainder of the evening was spent in a rational manner beneath the wide-spreading oaks of the Rev. J.

Griffith's field. Having enjoyed themselves heartily, the happy party separated about ten o'clock, first giving three cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Griffith and family.

### Llanwonno National School

On the afternoon of Thursday, July 7th, 1859, all the children connected with this school, numbering about 180, were regaled with an excellent repast of tea and cake, through the liberality of a few friends of the school, who willingly and cheerfully defrayed all the expenses connected therewith. Precisely at 2 o'clock, all the children neatly dressed and remarkably clean (reflecting infinite credit on their parents and teachers) emerged from the school-room, headed by the clergymen of the parish, the Rev. W. Davies and the Rev. D. Evans, and bearing small flags with the following suitable inscriptions, "Llanwonno National Schools;" "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages;" and "Success to the Great Western Colliery," walked in procession, making the picturesque Valley of Rhondda ring with their sweet singing and melodious voices.

Leaving the grass crowned banks of the Rhondda to the right, they entered the town of Pontypridd, and having reached the square, formed themselves into a circle. Here they sang some of their choicest songs, and displayed their musical powers to the best advantage, and were heartily cheered by the good people of the town. After parading through the main streets, singing as they walked, they arrived at the long-looked for grounds of Gelliwastad, which Mr. John Calvert, with his usual kindness and well-known urbanity, had consented to open for the occasion. A large and most convenient marquee had been erected especially for the purpose, and with its splendid display of flags of all nations flying and floating in the breeze, looked exceedingly gay. Here all felt happy, pleased with themselves and with everybody. The children, having first walked to the front of Gelliwastad House, were placed under the cooling canopy of the spacious tent, shaded from the scorching rays of the burning sun. Grace being said, each and all partook liberally of the excellent spread of tea and cake, with which the tables were loaded. Tea being over, some nicely bound books, given by Mrs. Rea, were distributed to the most deserving boys and girls, for which she received the sincere and heartfelt thanks of the recipients.

The children then played at several games of rustic sports, and enjoyed themselves to their hearts' desire. Amongst those present we noticed, the Rev. W. Davies, incumbent, and the Rev. D. Evans, curate of Llanwonno, R. R. Rea, Esq., the much-esteemed manager of the Great Western Colliery, and Mrs. Rea; Mrs. Calvert, of Gelliwastad House, Mrs. Davies, the Parsonage, Mrs. and Misses Morgan and Master Thomas, the Hafod, Mrs. and Miss Evans, the Bank, Mrs. and Miss Cooke, Mrs. and the Misses Bassett, of Pontypridd, Mr. Saunders, Mr. Gooch, Drs. Leigh and Lewis, Mr. Cousins, the New Inn, Mr. and Miss Ellis, Miss Grover, Mr. W. Williams, Mr. Thomas Davies, Mrs. Sharpe, the White Hart, Miss Rees, and Miss John, &c., &c.

After hearing some interesting addresses the children, ably assisted by the singers of St. David's Church choir, sung several school songs and appropriate hymns, selected for the occasion, and so well did they acquit themselves that we have every reason to believe that much proficiency has been made in the art of singing as well as in that of learning, under the able tuition of their teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, to whom much praise is due for the very efficient manner in which the school is conducted.

Everything seemed to conspire to render this interesting treat delightful. The weather was brilliant; the preparations well made, and arranged to the best advantage. The tea and cake (prepared by Mr. and Mrs. John, of Pontypridd) all that could be desired; in fact everything passed off remarkably well, and it would be quite impossible to describe the joy depicted on the smiling countenances of the juveniles at their treat. Votes of thanks, accompanied with several hearty cheers, were given to Mr. and Mrs. Calvert, of Gelliwastad House, for their kindness in throwing open their beautiful grounds for the occasion to the ladies for honouring the children with their presence, and to all who had taken an active part in the proceedings of the day.

The children, being formed into a procession, left in the same orderly manner as they came, singing heartily the well-known national anthem "God save the Queen." - most creditable. - **Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian**  
**16th July 1859.**

**1860**

A picnic party  
(Cardiff Times, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1860)

A picnic party was got up by some of the young people of this town, which came off on Tuesday last, and was held in a field near Glyncoch Mill. About forty couples attended, and it was pleasing to see such a number enjoying themselves in the manner they did. Nothing of an unpleasant nature occurred to mar their enjoyment. When the shades of evening approached, they adjourned to the Tredegar Arms, where they partook of the "cup that cheers but not inebriates." Mr. Bryant, harpist of Gellygaer, and the Newbridge brass band attended to enliven the company with their soft strains. The whole of the arrangements reflected great credit on the promoters of the party.

**Treforest, Boy killed**  
(Same date as above)

An accident, fatal in its result happened on Tuesday last to a fine little boy, ten years old, the son of Mr. Thomas, of the Greyhound Inn, who, in returning from school at Pontypridd, got on a laden tram which was proceeding towards Treforest. It appears that the little fellow dropped his pocket handkerchief, in trying to save which he lost his balance, and was crushed to death between the trams.

**1861**

The Rhondda branch of the Taff Vale Railway opens  
(Cardiff Times, 1st February 1861)

Next Monday (Feb 4<sup>th</sup>) the long-expected event of running passenger trains on the above-mentioned branch will take place. This is an important branch of the Taff Vale Railway, as may be seen by the number of collieries dotted on the map. It is a branch having two spurs, so to speak. After leaving the Newbridge Junction, the line runs to what is called the Porth station, at which point the Rhondda Fach and the Rhondda Fawr spurs commence. The first is much the shorter of the two, and is connected with only three



collieries. Passenger trains will not be run up that portion now. Along the other portion, passenger trains will run as far as Ystradyfodwg, a distance of nearly nine miles from Newbridge. Along the route which is intended to be traversed by passenger trains, are a large number of collieries—something like twenty and of course a corresponding number of people live in the valley.

To them, easy access to the market town is a matter of great importance and in fact, in every point of view, the opening up of this valley by running these passenger trains will be of the greatest service to all connected with the commercial enterprise of the neighbourhood. On Saturday last, Mr. D. Davies, of Blaengwawr was fortunate enough to come upon a four-foot vein of steam coal, the first which has been discovered in the Rhondda Vale. Mr. Davies's works are in the Rhondda Fach. The people of Newbridge are looking forward to the opening with considerable satisfaction, and there will be some kind of a demonstration, we believe; but what, we are not in a position to state. The contiguity of Newbridge as a market town, makes the opening now contemplated a matter of great interest to the colliers and their families who live in the valley. By reference to our Time Tables, it will be seen that the Company will run three trains per day, each way, in connection with their through trains.

The South Wales newspapers of this time, mostly published in Swansea or Bristol, always carried the worse side of Pontypridd life and these are just a few of those stories: -

### **Post Office Robbery**

At the end of July 1861 John Jones, Mary Jones and Mary Jenkins, were charged with burglariously entering the Post Office at Pontypridd, and stealing there from a number of postage stamps, a tobacco pipe, pouch, and other articles. William Howell Key, a clerk in Mr. Bassett's employment at the Post Office was the last person to leave the premises on the night of 10th July. Next morning the office was found to have been entered, and the articles already named taken away.

In a few days subsequently the prisoners offered stamps for sale to Mr. Wilkins, at the Post Office, Merthyr. Mr. Wilkins had heard of the robbery, detained the stamps, and desired the prisoners to call again. They never

did so. The male prisoner's landlady stated that on the night in question he was from the home, and next day he returned with a bundle tied up in a red handkerchief. The bundle contained a pipe and other things. Mr. Superintendent Wrenn of Merthyr, produced the bundle and its contents - the missing property - which were identified by the owner and his assistant Key. The superintendent of the Pontypridd police had seen the male prisoner in a crowd on the night of the robbery. The female prisoners denied the robbery, but admitted attempting a sale of the postage stamps. The jury brought a verdict of burglary and larceny against the male prisoner, who was sent to goal for ten months hard labour. The other prisoners were found guilty of feloniously receiving the stamps, and a previous conviction was proved against Mary Jenkins, who was sentenced to six months, and Mary Jones four months imprisonment with hard labour.

### **Mill Street Burglary**

On a Monday morning, just before Christmas 1861, supposedly between four and five o'clock (a.m.), the shop owned by Mr. Aaron Cule, draper and grocer, Mill Street, was entered by thieves. The admission was gained from a back window in the rear of the shop, and it was effected by cutting the shutter with a knife, and lifting up the bars of iron which crossed the shutters inside. The thieves did not remain long on the premises, from the fact that a candle which was found had been lighted, and it was only diminished about an inch-and-a-half. They broke open a desk and took a cash box, which fortunately only contained about sixteen shillings; but a pile of silk handkerchiefs about £40s worth were missing.

A large bludgeon was found on the counter, which they had left, and a long knife used in the shop, was placed near it. It appears that on obtaining the cash box they thought a booty was secured. They therefore decamped to examine it and the contents, but they must have been sadly disappointed by the small amount. The box was found in a field called Gelliwastad, the property of J. Calvert Esq.; and a bunch of skeleton keys in the New Inn field, under a stone. Several papers taken from the desk were lying there scattered about. These circumstances leave no doubt that the robbers were professionals.

### Capture of gang of burglars

The '*Bridgend Chronicle*' of January 18th 1862 reported that on Sunday, January 7th 1862, as P. C. Austin of the Cardiff Police Force, was on duty at the Taff Vale Railway station, Cardiff (now Queen Street station) he saw three suspicious characters taking tickets for Pontypridd. Feeling assured they meant no good, he told the guard to inform Sgts. Thomas of the Pontypridd Constabulary Force of the "distinguished" visitors. On alighting at their destination, Sgt. Thomas, and some of the inhabitants, received the information and went in search.

The Sgt's "assistants" traced them around the town to near the pillar letterbox by the bridge, where they found one of them standing by the house of Oziah Hughes. They secured him and sent for P. C. Thomas, who detained him and made "acquaintance with his pockets." The inhabitants then went to Mr. Hughes's house where they discovered the other two in the act of ransacking it. They secured one, but the other cleared away with a "jemmy" and got into the streets. A hue and cry was raised, and a chase ensued. The burglar finding the scene was too strong, flung his jemmy and a lot of skeleton keys over a wall into a garden, and started off with renewed vigour, being, however, eventually caught and lodged with his companions in the custody of the police. On the following Thursday they were committed for trial. They gave the name of Moses Levi, William Francis, hatter, of Brighton, and John Smith, tailor, of Liverpool. Much praise was due to P. C. Austin for his promptness in communication with the police at Pontypridd, and likewise Sgt. Thomas for the effective means which he took for securing the offenders.

### Robbery at Market Square

John Jones alias John Kelly or Charles Green, carpenter, was charged with burglariously breaking and entering the dwelling-house of John Griffiths, with intent to steal, at Newbridge, on the 7th of January 1862 at the Glamorgan Spring Assizes in mid-March 1863 before Baron Wilde. Mr. Bowen prosecuted, the prisoner being undefended.

Alexander Menhinnick of the country constabulary formerly stationed at Newbridge, now at Treforest, sworn said: - "On the night of the 6<sup>th</sup> I was on duty at Pontypridd. I visited the premises of Mr. Griffiths, draper, of Market Square. I saw something to create my suspicion. I turned my lantern on, and saw a man standing in the doorway. I asked him what he did there. He never spoke, and I immediately collared him. At the same moment I saw the prisoner coming out of the kitchen, feet foremost. He ran into me, and struck me on the cheek, so that I fell to the ground. I still had hold of the other man on the ground. The prisoner kicked me very violently on the side. I got up, and while holding the other man with one hand, I collared the prisoner with the other. I pulled them both from the back lane leading into Market Square. In going out they knocked me down a second time. One of them got on me, while the other stuffed my mouth full of either a wet pocket-handkerchief, or a handful of dirt, I cannot say which. I still held both of them until I was almost stifled. I then let them go, and they ran away. One of them turned up by the top market, and got in our Welsh burying ground, and there I lost him. The other, who is the prisoner Jones, got away. I gave an alarm. I and Sgt. John then went in search of the prisoner. We met P. C. Hopkins with the prisoner in his custody. I am sure he is the man that assaulted me."

P. C. Joseph Hopkins, sworn, said: "I met the prisoner about two o'clock in the morning. I met him about 300 yards from where the burglary was, on the road. He said 'Good morning.' I heard someone cry out 'Stop thief!' The prisoner threw his coat down and ran off. I took hold of him. He said that he had not done anything. I asked him what had made him run. He said that he had been fighting with three or four Welsh chaps, and he thought they were coming after him. Sgt. John and the other constable then came up to me and the prisoner was taken to the station."

Sgt. William John, sworn, said: - "On the 7<sup>th</sup> of January I was on duty at Newbridge, near the market. My attention was attracted by hearing a noise. I went in the direction, and saw a man running away. I joined in the pursuit, and lost sight of the man (the prisoner). I then returned to Mr. Griffiths' house, and found the lower sash up, and two pieces of shutter holding it up, the windows being broken near the fastening. I then saw P. C. Hopkins and took the prisoner in charge. I told him he was charged with

committing a burglary. I then retraced, and found a coat near the garden. In the pockets were two knives, one open, the other shut. Also a piece of mainspring. After the prisoner was in custody he said the coat belonged to him."

John Griffiths, sworn, said: - "I am the draper living in Market Square, Newbridge. About half-past-eleven on the night in question, I and my wife were the last up. I was disturbed in the night by hearing a noise. I came down soon after, and found the kitchen window open. It was closed when I went to bed. I found a piece of mainspring on the ground."

His Lordship summed up, and the jury, after a short deliberation, returned a verdict of guilty. Several previous convictions were proved, and one or two sentences of penal servitude against the prisoner, and he was sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude. The officer Menhinnick was recalled, and the judge offered £5 reward to be paid to him.

## 1863

### The new workhouse

Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1863 - For some time it has been a question somewhat difficult to decide as to where the New Workhouse should be situated. It was pretty clear to all parties that there were plenty of places suitable as sites if they were to be obtained. That was, however, another question. Among the various places suggested as suitable the favourite spot seemed to be a portion of a piece of ground beyond the Court House, the property of Messrs. Rickards. On Wednesday morning a number of Guardians accompanied by the chairman, met Mr. Corbett, the agent for Messrs. Rickards, and visited the piece of ground referred to. The piece which apparently met with the approval of the guardians was a meadow, having a rising mound, near the west side, and abutting on the high road to Llantrisant, just below the toll bar on the western side. It is well protected by hills with an open south aspect, and doubtless from the streams running from it apparently well supplied with water. Other pieces of ground were noticed, but no other seemed so suitable.

## The lost mail bag

These days a lot of people complain about the postal service we receive from the Royal Mail, and some say it was always better in the old days, but this true story of early Pontypridd, shows that there have always been problems with the mail.

In 1863 the letters from Pontypridd to the Rhondda were conveyed by a carrier on horseback to Dinas, the postman en route leaving a bag at Hafod, Gyfellion and Cymmer. On July 15th of that year the regular rider was off sick, so a temporary worker, Evan Rowlands, was brought in to deliver the four bags. On his way from the Pontypridd Post Office in Taff Street the Gyfellion bag was accidentally dropped. Rowlands had arrived at the Gyfellion branch post office and discovered that he had but only three bags. He had returned to Pontypridd, but could not find the other. The bag missing was of leather, with a brass plate affixed and the words "Pontypridd and Gyfellion" engraved upon it. The day after, placards were issued offering a reward of two shillings and sixpence for its recovery, while the town crier called out this news throughout the town.

However, for two weeks nothing was heard of the bag, so Charles Bassett, the Post Master at Pontypridd, communicating with the Post Office authorities who issued by order a reward of £2, a considerable amount in what were hard times.

On July 15th Walter Charles, as far as we know, a law abiding citizen, who worked in a quarry between Pontypridd and Gyfellion, was walking to work when he came across the missing bag. He picked it up and took it and on reaching home opened it before throwing it under the table, and perhaps forgot about it. Two weeks later, on August 1st he heard about the reward being offered, and retrieving the bag he went to the Post Office in Pontypridd and asked 'what the reward was about.' Mr. Bassett referred him to the police station and the superintendent of police, who found the bag seal was broken and the string cut. Opening the bag he found 29 letters and three newspapers, which had not been opened.

One must ask yourself, was Walter Charles of limited intelligence? Did he honestly forget about the bag, or did he retain it hoping there would be a reward? If he really was dishonest would he have given his name to the postmaster and then carried the bag to the police station? Whatever the case, he was surely to regret returning the missing bag.

At the police station Charles was arrested. Early in October at a Special Petty Session, in the Long Room of the New Inn Hotel, Taff St. Pontypridd, Walter Charles was charged by Her Majesty's Postmaster General with unlawfully and fraudulently detaining or retaining a certain post letter bag of H. M. Post Office. Mr. Robert Thomas appeared for the prisoner, and said that he would not detain the bench with a speech, as he knew the case must be heard by another tribunal. The magistrate said that whatever Mr. Thomas might say would not alter his decision, as the case would be heard at the Quarter Sessions, to be held at Cardiff. Bail was accepted, the defendant in £30 and two sureties of £15 each. Bail was immediately found.

So Charles now found himself going to trial at Cardiff on October 22nd 1863. Mr. Bown addressed the court on behalf of the prisoner and submitted that the prisoner had no felonious intentions. The chairman having summed up, the jury expressed a wish to retire, and did not return for more than an hour, when they returned a verdict of guilty, with a recommendation of mercy. The judge then sentenced the poor prisoner to a month's imprisonment. There was no parole in those days, so Walter Charles, intentionally or not, had broken the law and would serve a full term.

### **The New Inn Field** Prosecution of Pontypridd lad

Sometimes we forget that even in the mid-1860s Pontypridd was still largely a farming community. This is highlighted by this story from October 1863. Where the precinct that now includes W. H. Smith etc.; once stood the New Inn Hotel, built around 1800. Its modern version, demolished in 1981, will be well remembered by many older readers of the *Pontypridd Observer*. We always think of this area as 'the centre of town' but this story shows that in 1863 there will still a field at the 'town centre.'

On Oct. 29th, a young (unnamed) lad appeared before the magistrates at the Assembly Rooms, New Inn Hotel, Pontypridd, when Mr. J. G. Cousins, proprietor of the New Inn Hotel, Pontypridd, applied for a summons against the boy for trespass on his field, and throwing stones at his horses, and although the case was common place in itself, was one deserving of special notice (wrote the *Cardiff Times*). The boy, it was decided, had a case to answer and was sent to the County Assizes a few weeks later.

It seems that in connection with the New Inn Hotel, at the rear of the buildings, was a small field, about half an acre in extent, which was highly valued by Mr. Cousins, the worthy landlord of the hotel, as a place of recreation and rest for his hard-working horses. At the upper portion of the field was a path, which, no doubt, the public had a perfect right to use, from the length of time it had been walked over by the public.

At the lower part of the field were the back windows of the cottages forming a part of Mill Street. On several occasions Mr. Cousins felt the need to appear at court and prosecute people of the locality for willful trespass and damage. The public had most decidedly a right of passage to and fro through this field, as being a shorter cut for those residing above the railway bridge, but as the Bench in the trial most properly observed, the interest of the tenant had to be protected. Several of the most respected inhabitants of the town had noticed young urchins of the locality pelting stones and other missiles at the horses which grazed on the field, while some dozens of poultry spend their time in scratching up and injuring the grass. The '*Cardiff Times*' commented: - "It might first appear a trifling subject to call to the attention of our Pontypridd residents to; but certainly where a man pays heavy rents and expends large capital he deserves public support, and not censure and foul language."

What became of the lad was not recorded, but one wonders what Mr. Cousins would have thought of the concrete car park and market stalls that now occupy the site and the elevated traffic and bus stops that now run more or less on the spot where that troublesome path once ran all those years ago.



**The new courthouse at Pontypridd**  
(Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian 18<sup>th</sup> September 1863)

On Monday last, the first sitting of the County Court, for the district of Pontypridd, was held in the new Court House. When the district was first formed, there was no proper accommodation for the court. The court was then held in a long, close room, at the White Hart Inn, ill ventilated, the atmosphere oppressive and even dangerous to those who were compelled to be there. Subsequently the sittings of the court were removed to a very respectable hotel, and were held in a room very unsuited to the transaction of business. There was a skylight, ill made, which was above the desk of the registrar, and rain and flakes of snow were to be seen on occasions of wet and wintry weather falling on the books of the court, and in front of, and close to, the Judge. The variations of temperature and the confinement of this room were also almost dangerous to those who attended the court. Many negotiations took place with the late Rev. George Thomas, to obtain the site of a court house, and he promised to facilitate its acquisition. When these negotiations were pending he died. There was, however, after the Government had for many months assented to assist in the building of a court house, a new room of great convenience and size built in the hotel, and in this room the court has been held for some time.

The trustees of the Rev. George Thomas declined to grant a site for a courthouse. It was when their final decision was made that an application was sanctioned for a site on the land of Mr. Rickards. To that an assent was given, and the new building above the railway station was commenced. It is now completed and is an ornament to the town of Pontypridd, and there can be no doubt that it is at all times most important that the administration of the law should not be carried on in any hotel or public house. When a court house is not separated from the place where beer or spirits are sold, it is impossible to suppress conduct which it is deplorable to witness in the investigation of evidence, scandalous in the sight of bystanders, and most painful to those who have to control the proceedings. The chief feature in the new building is the hall. Externally it is simple and plain but the internal arrangements are excellent. The common practice in Glamorganshire has been to build a good room and then to leave

carpenters to fill up as large an amount of space as possible with needless woodwork, so as to render the greater part of the space useless. This is especially the case at Swansea. In the new hall all the space is available. To access the witness box is easy and convenient to witnesses, and they come so near to the Judge as to be easily heard. The seats for suitors are convenient and well placed, and in case of pressure of attendance there is a gallery which commands an easy view of the proceeding. For future buildings for magistrates in this county there are many arrangements in the new building deserving notice, which facilitate the transaction of business, and enable the court so to regulate it that the proceedings may be orderly and free from the disturbances which have been hitherto noticed, and which have largely increased the labour connected with the disposal and the hearing of causes.

### **The bridge and weir at Newbridge**

Pontypridd and it's the proper name

The '*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian*' of October 9<sup>th</sup> 1863 reported: - For some time a commotion has existed among the ratepayers of Llanwonno, the hamlets of Eglwysilan, Park, Hendredenny, and Glyntaff, respecting the repairs of the bridge across the Taff at Pontypridd, excepting the old span immediately above it, and which can only be regarded as an ornament to the locality, no other bridge exists by which the inhabitants to the south of the river can enter the town.

The bridge (later named the Victoria Bridge) is therefore of immense importance, and in consequence it is highly necessary to keep it in proper repair. Some time since it was found necessary to repair the weir in connection with the bridge, which was done, the cost being paid by the Upper or Pontypridd Highway Board, with the expectation that the Llandaff Highway Board would contribute its share. It was ultimately suggested that each hamlet should call a vestry meeting to consider the amount to be borne by each towards the repairs. A meeting of the ratepayers of Glyntaff was held a short time since, when it was resolved that the hamlet should pay its quota of the expense provided the other hamlets also consented to do the same. The hamlets of Rhydybeithan and Park also consented to do so, but the ratepayers of Eglwysilan and Hendredenny objected. At the meeting of the Board of Guardians, on Wednesday last Mr. Frank James,

the clerk of the Merthyr Board, attended for the purpose of bringing the subject more prominently before the notice of the Board.

He spoke in very warm terms of the necessity of the repairs—the advantage of the bridge to the whole neighbourhood, and of the petty meanness of the hamlets who objected to pay their quota towards the expense of repairs. It was not, he said, the amount of outlay, but it was upon principle, that Llanwonno must refuse to bear the burden of repairs. Mr. Penn wished the subject to be adjourned, and in the meantime another effort would be made by calling another meeting of the ratepayers of the hamlets objecting to pay. The remarks of Mr. James were perfectly correct in characterising the spirit of those ratepayers who object to pay as mean. The bridge is one of the utmost public utility, and the cost of repair about £30, is a perfect trifle when divided among so many hamlets, compared with the advantages which the bridge affords them.

Talk of the two bridges at Pontypridd brought this letter the following week: -

### **Pontypridd – What a silly name!**

To the editor of the Guardian

Sir, — The beautiful old bridge at Pont-y-ty-pridd. I am induced, as one of the few men now living who remember this beautiful structure for seventy years, to call the attention of my countrymen and the public to the very absurd name of Pontypridd, which has of late been obtained by that very rising and populous town. They who understand the Welsh language will at once see the absurdity of this name (the only translation of the words being the “Bridge of the *Earth*,” a material quite unheard of in bridge architecture). I admit that the real and ancient name of the bridge (and its adjoining village) involves one more syllable, but why save the syllable at the expense of sense?

When this bridge was commenced by William Edwards in 1750, after two had fallen, there was a wood-collier's TURF cabin at the Llanwonno side of it, which I, can remember still standing; the bridge then got and retained till about twenty years back or thereabouts, the name of Pont-y-ty-pridd (the

Bridge of the House of Earth, or the Turf Cabin). If people wish to save their breath, let them still call it Pontypridd (the Bridge of Earth); but in all writings the old name should, I respectfully suggest, be used. The discussion on the 7th instant, at the Board of Guardians for Pont-y-ty-pridd, has led to this letter, which will at all events be a true record of the real, original, and intelligible name of the town. **Your obedient Servant. Senex - Oct. 12th, 1863.** Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian October 16<sup>th</sup> 1863

**1864**

### **Festivities at Newbridge – presentation to G. C. Lenox Lenox, Esq.**

The '*Cardiff Times*' of 22nd July 1864 reported: - A series of festivities - or a better term would be, of "good old British hospitalities," commenced on Wednesday evening in the environs of the above town, the rejoicings being in commemoration of the majority of George Edward Lennox Lenox, Esq., son of the spirited proprietor of the extensive anchor and chain works, the useful productions of which have won for the factory and its owners a world-wide fame. Many of our readers may remember that in February last we recorded the celebration of the 21st anniversary of the nativity of "the hero" on the present occasion, at the town residence of G. W. Lenox, Esq., (his father) in Portland-place, London, and made mention of an elaborately-chased goblet which had been presented by the operatives employed at the Millwall works, in commemoration of the event. The Welsh employees were immediately burning with an enthusiastic ardour, warm as the glowing furnaces around them, not to be surpassed by their metropolitan friends in so pleasing a testimonial of respect, and the result of a voluntary subscription was the production of the magnificent vase and cover we last week described as the work of our fellow townsman Mr. Barry, silversmith, of Duke-street, Cardiff.

The presentation of this magnificent testimonial was very judiciously postponed until the family took up its annual summer residence at Ynysangharad House, and when G. W. Lenox, Esq., was made acquainted with the intentions of the numerous operatives, with that spontaneous liberality for which he is remarkable, and almost unapproachable, he resolved upon inviting nearly 400 workmen and their friends to a fete, which it was decided would also be a fitting opportunity for the presentation. The "house party" on the occasion was confined entirely to

the members of the family, and the festival may be said to have in reality commenced on Wednesday evening, when between fifty and sixty joints of prime beef, mutton &c., were distributed to the wives and families of the poorer workmen by Mrs. Lenox and family.

At 6 a.m. on Thursday a salvo of twenty-one pieces of artillery gave note of preparation: numerous workmen began their "labour of love," and in a few minutes the white canvas of spacious pavilions, marquees, and tents dotted the meadow ground attached to the residence. A raised central platform was prepared for the family and its friends, and right and left of this numerous seats had been raised for the members of the committee.

At eight o'clock, another cannonade spoke to the heavens, - The heavens to earth. And the echoes of the hill had scarcely died away, ere distant reverberations were repeated, which we afterwards ascertained came from the Newbridge Colliery Works, where R. Rowland, Esq., in a neat, neighbourly spirit, had enabled his delvers to reciprocate the kindly sentiments entertained at the Chainworks. At twelve o'clock a procession made its appearance, but at this moment a pitiless storm came down, and the fairer and more effeminate portions of the company were driven to the tents for shelter.

The 19th Glamorgan Rifle Volunteer band headed the marshalled workmen and immediately after the gay uniforms walked six of the oldest journeymen connected with the works, who had probably watched from boyhood to matured age the overcoming of engineering and mechanical difficulties which in their early days had been pronounced impossible. Between them they bore the presentation - cup on a neatly -framed hand-carriage. Directly in front of the principal platform a roughly constructed baize-covered pedestal had been prepared for the reception of the elegant vase and around the meadow might be seen skeleton-looking devices prepared for a pyrotechnic display in the evening.

At 8 o'clock another discharge of twenty-one guns was the signal for hoisting numerous flags about the grounds and throughout the district; festoons of evergreens spanned the entrance to the works and the streets of the town, the Anchor being a conspicuous and appropriate ornament connected with each and every decoration. Above the principal platform

were stretched the sentiments Health and Happiness to George Charles Lennox Lenox - May Prosperity attend him - Long life and happiness to Mr. Lenox and Family - A Happy Meeting," &c. Some little delay in the filling of numerous mugs with "home brewed" having been borne with most exemplary patience by the assembled hundreds, Mr. Penn (whose exertions were conspicuous and remarkable throughout the entire day) stepped forward and said: -

Mr. Lenox,—The weather having turned out so exceedingly unfavourable, I shall not detain the company with any remarks of my own but proceed at once to read the address to George Lennox Lenox, Esq.

**Dear Sir,** - It is with exceeding pleasure we bid you a hearty welcome amongst us, to commemorate your having attained your majority on the 8th February, 1864. The 21st birthday in a man's life is considered an important epoch, as he then enters upon the weighty cares of manhood; in your case, Sir, you have the blessing and privilege of having a good father to guide you onward, and we earnestly hope and trust he will be spared to you and his family for many years to come, and that you will thereby be enabled to fortify your mind for the period when you may be called upon to act in his stead, and occupy that position which he has done for so many years with that sterling uprightness and justice which has always been his aim.

We now, Sir, have the pleasure of offering to you this silver vase, as the humble testimony of our good feeling and respect towards you; we, many of us have known you from infancy upwards, and in this presentation we are enabled to testify to you the deep impression your amiable conduct has engrafted your interests in our affections, and we hope that the long connection which has existed between us and your kind father, may be continued between you and us, and our children. In begging your acceptance of this token of our regard, we have only to hope that it may be handed down as an heir-loom in your family, and we doubt not but that it will be equally prized by them as by yourself. We, one and all, unite in wishing you a long life of usefulness, prosperity and happiness. **George James Penn, Chairman of Committee**



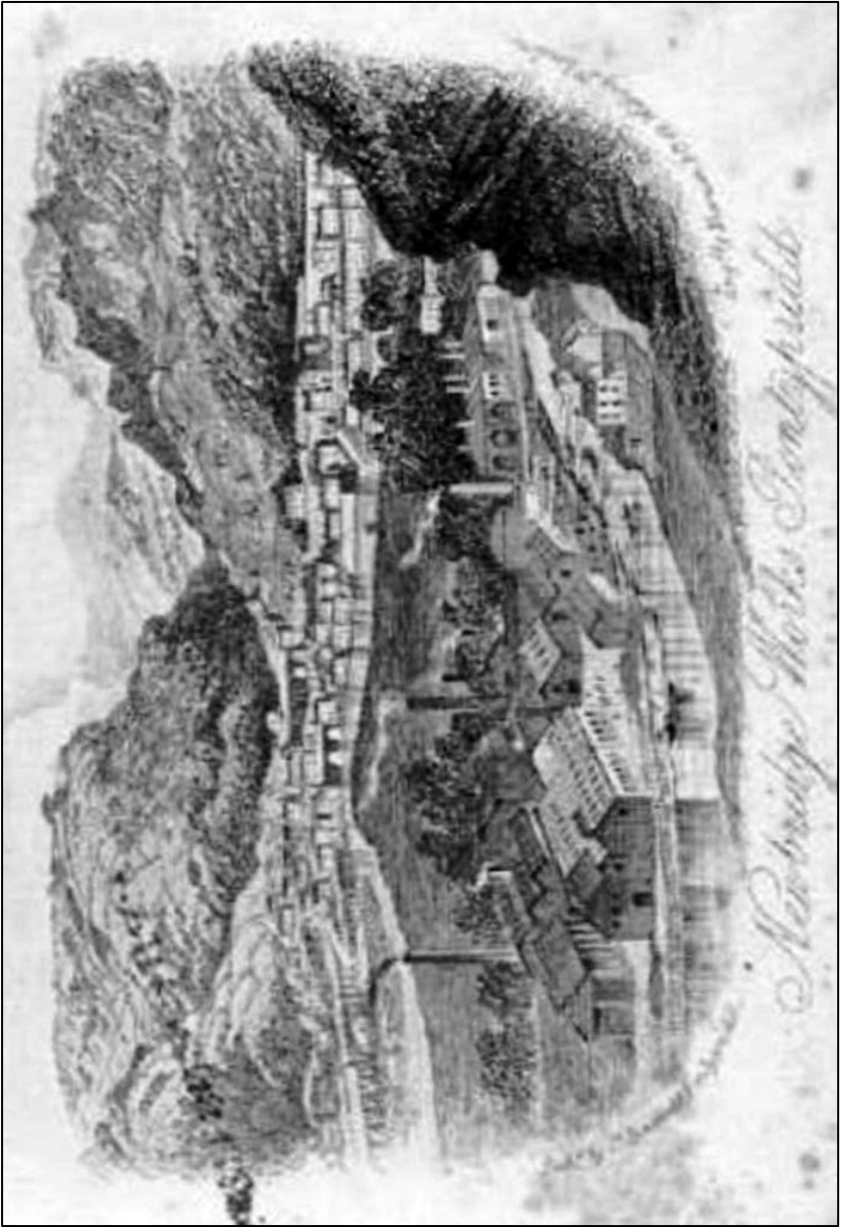
**The Newbridge Works (Brown & Lenox).**

Mr. Penn added: — Mr. George Lenox, I have much pleasure in presenting you with this vase in the name of the workmen employed on these works. The health of Mr. Lenox was then drunk by the assembled multitude with vociferous approbation. Mr. G. C. Lenox could only assure them that it was with feelings of the greatest pleasure he attempted to return his sincere thanks for the great kindness which all had displayed in presenting him with so handsome a vase as to its being handed down to posterity, they need have no fear, and he only hoped that whoever might hereafter become possessed of it, they would value it as much as he valued it (applause). It had always been a great pleasure to him to come down amongst them year after year, but it was a greater pleasure to find that the time he had been with them had not been wasted, that he had secured their friendship and esteem towards him.

Perhaps he should shortly have the opportunity of being with them longer than he had yet been (applause) but he supposed his father had thought if a boy came down to these parts he would get too fond of the gun and the fishing rod, and would not attend to the works (hear and applause.) He trusted, whenever he might be called upon to conduct the works, he might be endowed with sufficient ability to manage them with the same integrity and prosperity his father had hitherto done, for the good of all around (cheers.) In conclusion, he could only regret the unfortunate change of the weather, and wish them long life and every prosperity.

Mr. G. W. Lenox then stepped forward and said it had become his turn to address them, and to thank them for their good wishes towards his son, and the kindness he had himself received from them some two or three years since. He did not think that a great multitude of words was necessary to constitute wisdom, or to convey gratitude: they all knew his meaning when he bid them welcome and wished them enjoyment of the preparations that had been made for them (cheers.)





The Newbridge Works (Brown & Lenox) from Postcard c.1856

They had his good wishes, and he hoped if the old house was kept up by his son it would please God to let his son go on and stand as well in the estimation of those who worked for him as he felt was at that moment the case. (applause.) Some glee and chorus singing having been executed in good harmony, with well-timed effect, the saturated audience repaired to the refreshment pavilion, it being declared that the photographic apparatus which had been prepared for sun-prints of the happy groups, had been disarranged by the unexpected deluge. In the marquee Mr. Penn readily complied with the expressed wish of several ladies and again read the address, which had been tastily printed on white satin and fringed with the national colour. The vase and cup of which we have made mention were constituted conspicuous adornments on the refreshment table, and many encomiums were passed upon their rare workmanship, and elegant design.

At two o'clock upwards of 400 persons were comfortably seated in a spacious marquee (140 ft. by 40 ft), and although the "weight of the feast" must have been somewhat excessive, the tables were sufficiently substantial to endure their temporary burdens. "The Roast Beef of Old England" was heard approaching, and Mr. G. W. Lenox, Esq., preceded the Newbridge band, and four lusty servitors had placed their equally-shared load upon the raised dais, a lusty cheer for "the Baron" was set up; but grace was said, and a portion of the "Old Hundredth" sung in perfectly good order before knives and forks were heard rattling their sweet music. The feast over, G. W. Lenox, Esq., proposed the health of her Majesty in loyal terms, and the Rev. W. Williams (of Fairfield), having interpreted his remarks in the Welsh language, immense applause followed.

G. W. Lenox, Esq. then alluded to the indefatigable perseverance and exertions of the manager of the works in connection with the entertainment, and called upon those around him to drink the health of Mr. George Penn (cheers). Mr. Penn returned thanks. He said: - Mr. Lenox, ladies and gentlemen - friends and fellow workmen: I am happy to meet you on this occasion to celebrate the coming of age of Mr. George Lenox (cheers). You all know my desires in this, and I am proud to say you all unite with me, as one person, to do honour to Mr. George Lenox, in celebration of his twenty-first birthday (cheers). Mr. and Mrs. Lenox, I am proud to see you standing in the position you now do to receive the home

of your united workmen and permit me to add that I am proud to stand in the position I now occupy in connection with this day. My father worked for you - I have been in your service 42 years, and I trust my children will serve you with the same earnestness that they may go on as one family for years to come - be united as one person, and, thank God for all he gives us.

With great warmth and expressive gratitude on behalf of his family and fellow workmen he concluded an energetic speech, which appeared to be most humorously translated by the Rev. W. Williams. Mr. Penn could not permit that assemblage to break up, without proposing one more toast which, as his experience amongst them enabled him to know, would be peculiarly acceptable and pleasing to every man's heart in that tent. It was the health of one who was always ready to do service to the poor of the neighbourhood, and who was open-hearted enough to say to all Come, and welcome. He was sure they would gladly drink the health of Mrs. Lenox—loud and enthusiastic shouts prevented the conclusion of the sentence. The speaker vainly insisted upon "order."

They willingly obeyed him in the works, and he hoped they would now obey him in the tent (cheers); when he called "order," he wanted them to keep silent! (renewed cheering). He was very fond of enthusiasm and he liked cheering (hurrah), but he only wanted one good cheer from them at that moment.—(A voice:- "I beg your pardon"—Mr. Penn: "Now, Jones, if you don't sit down, I must. As I said, all I want is a good hearty cheer for Mrs. Lenox and family (Enthusiasm and Long life to 'em!) "

In the midst of this excitement G. W. Lenox, Esq., came forward and said:—"My friends, there is rebellion in the camp — here's the manager of the works, not content with managing them, but he wants to manage the master I don't mean to submit to him. As soon as ever this fellow gets legs, and begins to speak, his tongue is like the pump in the yard —when it begins to work it is difficult to stop it! [immense cheering]. But understand what I mean —there's no mistake as to the quality of the water only I am determined not to be swamped by him [laughter and applause). Like the water, he can't be controlled (cheers). Now, this good fellow wants to depute my very excellent brother, the clergyman, to return thanks for my wife and family he would dare say, do it a good deal better, and with more sanctity than I shall; but I defy any man to return thanks for the

compliment you have paid my wife with more sincerity than I am able to express myself (cheers.) The pavilion was then cleared for a succession party, and those who had regaled betook themselves to the various sports arranged by the committee. During the afternoon balloons were cast adrift, and fireworks concluded this happy and pleasant re-union of employers and employees.

### **Salmon Fishing in the Taff**

At an adjourned meeting relative to the above question, held at the King's Head, Ynysangharad Road, Pontypridd, on Tuesday January 12th 1864, a committee of persons representing the district was appointed to approach the home secretary, with a view to getting the provisions of the new Fisheries Act applied to the River Taff. From the statement of a large number of old anglers present it appeared that the Taff was at one time well stocked with salmon; but the weirs at Treforest and Mellagriffith had proved to be great impediments to the fish getting up the river. If, however, ladders were placed at these weirs the salmon would take their course as in previous years. The committee appointed will at once proceed to action. The 'fish run' at Treforest was eventually completed around 2003!

**1866**

### **Saturday market for Pontypridd**

Merthyr Express 15<sup>th</sup> September 1866 - For several weeks past an attempt has been made to establish a Saturday's market at Pontypridd, but this having only partially succeeded a meeting **of** the tradesmen was held **at** the New Inn Hotel, on Friday evening, the 7th inst. with reference to the matter. Upwards of thirty of the principal tradesmen attended, and Mr. C. Basset having been called to the chair, it was unanimously resolved "That in the opinion of this meeting the requirements of the town were such as to render the establishment of a Saturday's market highly desirable."

## Public baths

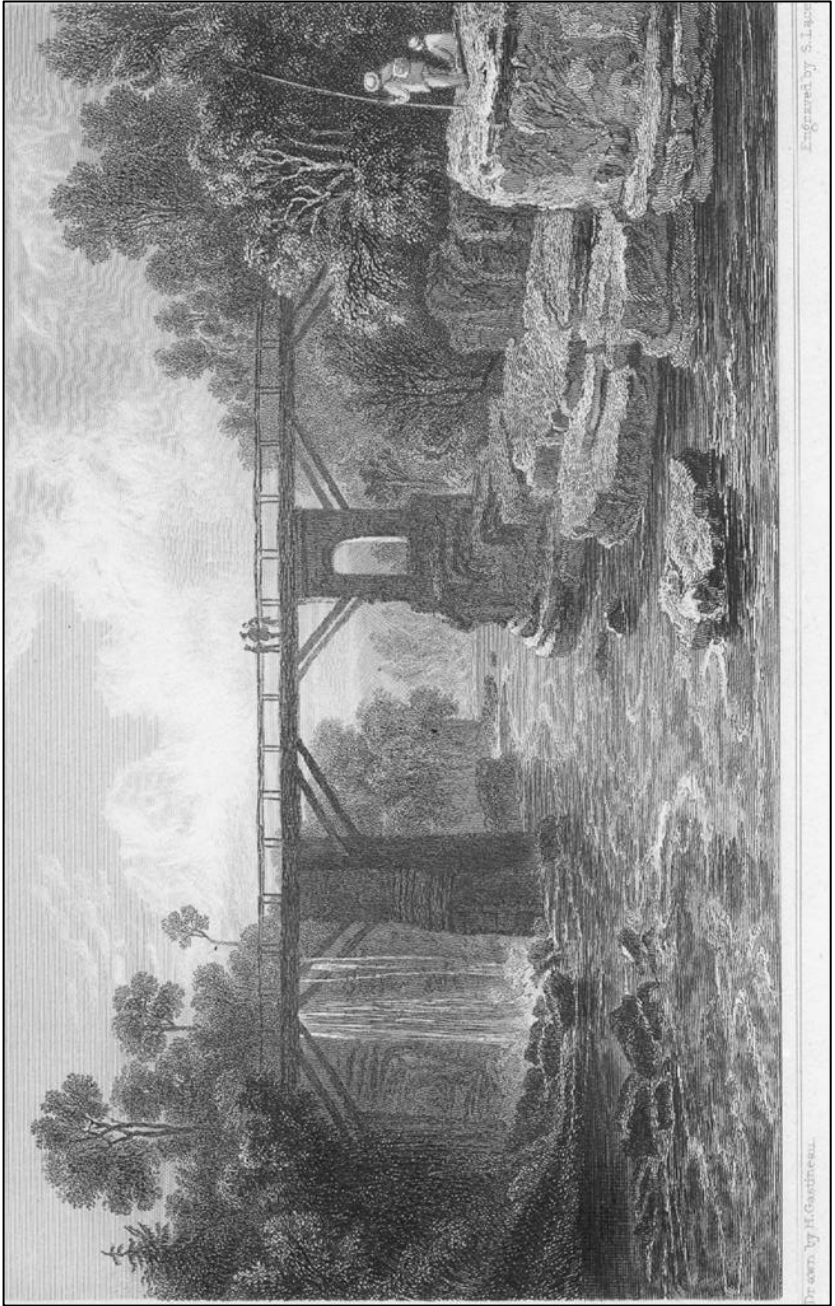
Pontypridd unfortunately cannot boast of having public baths. Why? Surely not because they are not needed. No town in South Wales feels the want of accommodation of this kind more, and with a little perseverance no doubt the difficulty might be overcome. In suggesting the establishment of public baths at Pontypridd, we do so because the requirements of the place are such that they are sadly needed, and with a trifling expense, compared to other towns, they might be here erected. The present reservoir would amply supply the water, and a swimming bath sufficient in size, might be made somewhere near at a very trifling cost. Our townsmen will, it is to be hoped, take up the matter, and shortly we shall expect to have the pleasure of recording the opening of a public bath or baths at Pontypridd. (The public baths in Pontypridd open shortly afterwards, in 1927!).

THE BERW - There appears to be a universal feeling of dissatisfaction in the town at the present unlimited scale upon which men and boys bathe near the Taff Berw Bridge. The public position of the spot prevents many of the inhabitants of the town enjoying their afternoon or evening walk. This being one of the prettiest spots at Pontypridd, and of frequent resort, it would be desirable that the present extensive system of bathing should be discontinued. Other places may be found in the neighbourhood not quite so public, and it is therefore hoped that those parties who at present bathe at the Berw will in future discontinue the practice, and endeavour to find a more suitable place where they will not interfere with the general enjoyment of the inhabitants of the town. **Cardiff Times – 27<sup>th</sup> July 1866**

**1868**

## The Common

The '*Cardiff Times*' of 16<sup>th</sup> May 1868 reported: - It is always a source of happiness to see efforts made to render things answerable to the end for which they were intended, and particularly if that end tends to the promotion of healthy humanity. It is, therefore, with much pleasure we remark the progress made by persons who are and have been for some time providing for the amusement of the youth and inhabitants generally



The Berw Road aqueduct C. 1830

of this town, and though the progress be slow, yet is it none the less commendable and exemplary.

The Common has been placed in the hands of a committee for the use of the residents in this town and neighbourhood during the last ten years, and through-out that time they have been zealous in their intentions and energetic in their efforts to render that large and romantic tract of ground, consisting of some 28 or 30 acres, suitable to the purpose for which it was allotted to them, namely, a recreation ground. But before this could be done, that most necessary thing, money, was wanted.

There were no funds, nor was there any forthcoming. How then were they to be raised? Meeting after meeting was held by the committee, and the question was fully and thoroughly discussed and ultimately a step by no means unjust or improper was taken. Every summer it is customary to hold a large fair on the common, and the committee came to the decision that they would be justified legally and morally in levying a small toll on those persons who had booths and stalls, or otherwise occupied positions for the purpose of vending their wares on the ground, and by this means somewhere about £7 was raised. This was certainly not a very considerable sum, yet it has been very economically expended, and much good has been done with it.

A large portion of the ground has been levelled, and a vast number of rough and peaky stones has been removed, so that shortly the youth of the town will have every facility of indulging in their healthful amusement, and invigorating sports. A road is also being made to facilitate the access of vehicles to the common, and when the fair will be held next, which will be in July, a toll will again be levied in order to raise funds for the further improvement of the ground. The committee afterwards intend to hold a meeting, and to solicit the aid of a few of the more influential residents in the neighbourhood. A subscription will be set on foot in order to raise funds adequate to the requirements. They hope that a suitable, well-planned recreation ground will be made, and such a one as will not only reflect credit on its promoters, but on the town generally. There will be a cricket ground, race courses, and pleasure walks. This is a most object, and one that cannot fail to elicit the approbation and support of all persons. When it is attained the promoters of it may congratulate themselves upon

having done a good and charitable work, and its memory will live in future generations.

You have a fine workhouse says the stranger. Yes replies the native and what is more it's all but full. But where is your infirmary, or have you none? Oh dear yes, the building above the garden under the hill. Well, replies the stranger, that we took for the washhouse. This is however to be remedied, or rather to be extended. The New Inn field with its bygone recollections of quoits, bottled ale, and pleasant summer evenings has become a street with a noble police-station, good parish offices and last but not worst of all some small cottages instead of good substantial buildings. The space once occupied by the old market-house is still idle and unsightly, but it is expected that this summer will see a very elegant block of buildings erected. Another space between the upper and lower roads is in a very filthy and dilapidated condition, and it appears to be now the only site left for a Mechanics Institute, or Town Hall. If not for this, better as it is, than unsightly buildings, as there are sufficient of those already in the town. The church of St. Catherine is now beginning to exhibit some architectural beauty it will really be a magnificent structure, and one worthy of the lovely spot on which it is being built.

On passing by the new bridge (Victoria, next to Old Bridge) it is very observable that the foundations are being injured by the under current. The weir below is in a bad state of repair, and if to be remedied at all, this summer will be the time.

The beauties of the Berw are being fast removed, the will of the owner is being carried out, and the noble fir trees, the shaded walks, and all pleasant recollections with them are being quickly removed. Our young Pontypridd friends who frequent this lover's grove will deeply regret with us that this walk is ruined and that the bridge across the waterfall has been boarded up. If Mr. Crawshay knew the disappointment his orders have occasioned, he would we are quite certain alter his decision. One gentleman to our knowledge offered to maintain the repairs of the bridge, if kept open. It is understood the colliers will not strike and that the good times promised will not be long before they dawn upon us.



## Picnic and bathing parties

Cardiff Times 11<sup>th</sup> July 1868 - In the summer season there are very numerous ways in which the phantom Pleasure may be pursued, and many of those are the most innocent and less extravagant. Perhaps one of the principal pleasures of a hot, sunny day is to bathe in one of the cool and translucent pools of a picturesque river or stream and than this neighbourhood there are few places that offer greater conveniences for the indulgence of this pleasure to the fullest extent. The Berw, with its romantic rockery, thundering waterfalls, and its broad and sheltered pool, deep, pure, and placid like a miniature bay, cannot fail to be the delight of the diver and the swimmer; and morning, noon, and evening, the plunging and splashing, and joyous shouting of both old and young are heard ascending on the sunny air from the deep and cavernous hollow.

The Clydach, too, meandering far away through a beautiful, wooded glen, has its store of joys as well for the picnicker and the bather. Now it ripples joyously, with the sunbeams dancing on its bosom, over the bright and rounded pebbles, or glides imperceptibly adown its smooth and floor-like rocky bed then over some stubborn crag that has withstood its headlong force, and through storm and sunshine, for a thousand years; it leaps madly into some deep-worn, shaded hollow, dashing its flaky foam high up into the sunny air, then rests awhile in a tranquil and crystal mass. And here, in the midst of the most magnificent scenery, the picturesque rocks outstretching far, arch-like and ivy-clad, over the limpid stream, and the dense foliage of the surrounding woods, many a pleasant hour maybe, and is spent. During this season several gypsy parties, "camping out," and picnic and bathing parties have been held.

On Thursday evening a party of this description was formed by a large number of young men of the town, and a most pleasant evening was spent. On the bank of the stream and near a beautiful pool, a fire was kindled, and after the greater number of the party had bathed, all were provided with tea, and cake, and fruit and after all had regaled themselves with these, some athletic sports were indulged in, and light amusements, until the shades of evening prevailed, and night walked supremely over the heavens, lighted by the silver lamp of the moon; then the party all returned homewards in order, highly delighted with the innocent enjoyments they

had experienced in the first few hours, and doubtless many more of those parties will be got up before the season closes.

**1870**

### **A discreditable trick**

A correspondent informs us that a tradesman in this town has recently been exhibiting what he affirmed was a native snake, killed by the aid of his own hand in a field at Tynywern Farm, near Nantgarw, and measuring some 9 feet long and 8 or 10 inches in girth. A charge was made for admission to the stable (of the Butchers' Arms), where the reptile was shown, and there is no doubt a considerable amount was realised. It has since transpired that the whole affair is a hoax, and the indignation of the public is not a little aroused to find that such a low, disreputable juggle has been played upon them. There is every reason to believe that the snake was a dead one which was thrown on to the hedge side from a passing menagerie, which had been at Treorki Fair a short time previous.

**1873**

### **Geese stealing**

The '*Cardiff and Merthyr Express*' of January 4<sup>th</sup> 1873 carried this report that shows how rural the Pontypridd district still was at this time: - John Davies, Builth, and James Lewis, Pontypridd, were charged with stealing a number of geese from Lawn Farm at Gelliwion. It appears that a few days before Christmas Day a number of farmers in the district had been robbed of their geese. The police went to work, and it was soon ascertained that a man suspected was in the habit of going into the defendant Lewis's house near Rowland's Pit (later renamed Maritime Colliery). The superintendent entered the house and discovered in an upstairs room a number of wings of geese. He then came down and charged Lewis with being in possession of geese, which he strongly denied. He (the superintendent) upon this, entered a bedroom in which Mrs. Lewis was in bed, and fancying that the room was the place in which the lost geese were concealed, he ordered the lady to "get up and dress herself." He then retired. The lady in a short time

made her appearance, and, addressing her husband said: "Why don't you tell him the truth about the geese and from whom you bought them?"

The superintendent upon this entered the bedroom and under the bed discovered a quantity of feathers, and upon turning down the bed clothes found there four fat geese. The man then said he had bought them off John Davies. Lewis was then taken into custody and a general search was made for Davies and after much trouble were found in Bridgend. Both were charged and at the trial Lewis's son deposed that on the morning the geese were found Davies came to their stable about four o'clock in the morning with a sack in which were six dead geese. He saw them subsequently in the house. It was stated that as many as sixty geese and turkeys had been lost from various farmhouses in the district. The two prisoners were remanded.

### **The 'Terror of Llanganna'**

Llanganna, now known as Graig, was even at this early date inhabited by many unsavory characters, many of whom were of Irish origin. The '*Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian*' of March 1<sup>st</sup> 1873 carried this report on one notorious such person: Honora Heiley, the "terror of Llanganna" was charged with being drunk and riotous, and breaking a window at Llanganna. Defendant told the Bench she was always "put upon" and that on the present occasion three woman and a man were beating her. She was ordered to pay five shillings and costs for each offence and two shillings for the damage to the window. The defendant stated: "I'm willing to pay the fine, but will not pay for the window, it was not worth the money." She was sent to goal for seven days.

### **Gross parental neglect**

The '*Cardiff Times*' 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1873 reported: - Our correspondent writing on Monday says: - Adjoining the King's Head public house, Ynysangharad, is a building evidently designed as a human habitation, and actually occupied as one. The "parlour," which is entered at once from an enclosure in front is a low, heavy-looking room, lighted by a window with twelve panes, only two of which have escaped the wreck which had befallen the rest, and of

these two one was cracked. The walls and floor were encrusted with a kind of dirt-paste so filthy that the last contact with cleansing materials must have taken place at a very remote period indeed.

The furniture in the room comprised an oak table, with drawers filled with rubbish, a smaller table and a few broken chairs. The dirty walls of the rooms were relieved by a tattered and torn almanac. From this room in the rear was a small back room, with the door completely severed from its hinges and resting against the lintels. This apartment was a trifle filthier than the parlour. From this back room rose a flight of dilapidated stone steps, which took the inmates to the bedroom above. There were no banisters, but this seemed to be counterbalanced by the short distance a child would have to fall should he tumble off the steps. If the parlour was filthy and the back room filthier, the bedroom was by a long way the filthiest of the three rooms. The rafters of the roof were bare - but this is not very unusual in cottages here - and the slates were broken, while the gaps in the pine-end afforded ample inlet to the descending rain, the stains of which were visible on the unsightly walls.

On the floor were two heaps of something which did duty for beds. One appeared to be sacks in an advanced stage of filth, with a coal sack for a pillow a very close inspection - that is as close as the circumstances of the case permitted—revealed the fact that it really was bed ticking. Over this was a coverlet which could scarcely be more filthy under any amount of pressure. It will not, therefore be surprising when it is stated that the “bedding” was covered with vermin. In this bed slept three children, two girls and a boy, ranging from eleven to three years of age. In a corner of the apartment, the floor of which seems never to have been touched with water, except rainwater, lay extended the bed and bedding, upon which reposed the weary limbs of the affectionate father of these little ones. In the window, five out of nine panes were destroyed, and how the motherless infants ever survived the inclement winter, seems to be a problem which is inscrutable.

In this filthy wreck of a cottage lived a man and his three children. Day after day the little ones have been left with but a sixpenny loaf, fireless, and almost naked, and they would have starved but for the mother living thereabouts. On the night we visited the place we found the youngest

child fast asleep in a broken arm-chair, scantily clothed and without a shoe or stocking on its feet. The children, it is said, had been given nothing to eat for several hours, and a damaged frying-pan was produced, in which were plainly seen the finger-marks of the child scraping the cold gravy of a previous night's cooking to appease its hunger. The Superintendent is certainly to be commended for the interest he has shown in this pitiable case, and it may be hoped that there is some mode of reminding the inhuman father that he grossly and shamefully neglects his duties. In the interest of the community at large it is desirable that men of this stamp should not have it in their power, by recklessly ignoring their duties, to make their sons the Ishmaels of the community and their daughters its scourge.

### **Lucky Lad**

The rail tracks of the time were already full with coal trucks going down to Cardiff, and they were like a magnet to the children and youngsters of the town. The '*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian*' of June 7<sup>th</sup> 1873 reported: - James Beasant, a lad, was summoned by Mr. Mayrick, Inspector of the Taff Vale Railway for trespass on the line at Treforest on the 16<sup>th</sup> inst. Sergeant Rees saw the defendant on a coal wagon. He slipped down, it appeared, and actually lay extended along the permanent way while some five or six wagons passed over him. The boy was fined five shillings and costs.

### **The meeting of the Druids**

The '*Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian*' of September 27<sup>th</sup> 1873 reported: - The autumnal meeting of the bards took place at the Rocking Stone - the Common, near Pontypridd - on Monday last. The meeting was numerously attended by people of both sexes. The principal attraction was the speech of the chief bard, the archdruid Myfyr Morganwg, who mounted the druid stone, with a druidical emblem in his hand, which was adorned with ribbons resplendent in the three bardic colours of blue, white and green. After his druidical address the aged man sang a Gorsinedd hymn, and speeches were delivered by Mr. Tom, Evans, Pontypridd. Songs were sung between the speeches. The meeting terminated by the archdruid and announced the next meeting in a year and a day.

## **A man killed at Gyfellion**

The *Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian* of October 11<sup>th</sup> 1873 reported: - On Tuesday a lad named James Gowrie was working in sinking a shaft for the steam coal under the Gyfellion colliery; better known as the Great Western Colliery. He was in the act of stepping out of the bucket after being drawn up the bank, when his foot slipped and he fell down the shaft upon some men remaining at the bottom awaiting their turn to come up. Gowrie on being pulled up was found to be dead, while one of the men at the bottom was seriously injured.

## **Death rate still high**

The *Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian* of November 29<sup>th</sup> 1873 reported: - At the monthly meeting of the Pontypridd Sanitary Board Dr. Henry Naunton Davies, the Medical Officer, said that the rate of death in the Pontypridd and Rhondda district, taking the number of population in 1871, was 44 per 1,000, which was greater than Liverpool. But, allowing for the increase in population between then and the beginning of 1873, the rate of death was now 32 per 1,000, which was still a very large number. He attributed this large number of deaths to the great mortality among the infants.

He was clearly of the opinion that this was attributable to the use of feeding bottles and the neglect to wash them frequently enough. Milk was placed in feed bottles and left in them for 24 hours, and by that time it had often gone putrid, and in that condition it was given to the infants, with the inevitable result, producing dysentery, and very often death. He declared emphatically that he had traced the cause of death so often to the use of the bottle that, whenever he saw it in the room of a child, he felt most indignant and the custom was a public misfortune. He also said that consumption was prevalent and this was attributed to living in small rooms, badly ventilated, with large fires.

## Chapter five

1874

### Exciting otter hunt

On Saturday morning the River Taff echoed with the music of the hounds on the trail of that terrible fish destroyer, the otter. (Reported the *'Cardiff Times'* of 13 June 1874). It seems that an otter having been sighted on the bank of the river above the Berw, the fact was communicated to Mr. T. Williams, Lan, the energetic master of the Glog pack. The hounds had been hunting above Ferndale for three successive days after Reynard, who had committed grievous depredations among the lambs of the neighbouring farmers. Although only one day's rest had been given the animals, the readiness of Mr. Williams to indulge the sporting proclivities of the local gentlemen was only equalled by the courtesy with which his consent was given. At six o'clock on Saturday morning the meet started at the Berw bridge, near Pontypridd, and the dogs, with the music so dear to the heart of a sportsman, excitedly examined the banks of the river up stream until they came to Ynyscaedudwg brook. There they took up the scent, and went on to Glyn Coch Mill, to a pool about a mile above, by a tree whose trunk lay along the river, where the party halted.

Striking the tree, the otter made his appearance, and a splendid fellow he seemed to be. Into the deep pool he dashed, his track being marked by the air bubbles rising on the surface of the pool. For nearly two hours the pool, which is about 200 or 300 yards long, was the scene of the utmost excitement, heightened by the deep mouthing of the hounds. Men were stationed at either end of this pool to prevent the otter from escaping. He made a dash from the water to the woods on its brush, but the dogs proved themselves too much for him, and he at once betook himself to his familiar element.

On the Pontypridd side of this deep pool there is a fall into another pool as large, but shallow. Beneath the eyes of the watchers stationed here he escaped into the shallow pool, where the dogs following attacked him to greater advantage for some twenty minutes or half an hour. The animal,

surrounded by the maddened dogs, made a most gallant and determined fight. He was, however, rescued, and allowed to make another effort for his life, and with a tenacity which secured for him the respect of the hunters, he succumbed, fighting to the death. It was a most exciting chase and determined resistance throughout. The otter was a fine specimen of his race, weighing 25lbs., and measuring about 4 feet — one of the finest killed in this district for years. )

### **The Lord Mayor's visit**

On Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup> 1877 the Tynewydd Colliery, Porth, became inundated with water resulting in the death of five men and a rescue operation that would last ten days. The rescue captured the imagination of the United Kingdom and Queen Victoria granted that Albert Medals, previously only awarded to military personnel, could be awarded to the rescuers and rescued who had shown great bravery. The awards were to be presented at the Pontypridd Common (proper name Coedpenmaen Common) by the Lord Mayor of London on August 4<sup>th</sup> 1877, and would see the biggest crowd ever witnessed in the town, calculated to be between 30,000 and 50,000 strong. This is the story of that day: -

**Saturday, August 4<sup>th</sup> 1877**

**Presentation of the Albert Medals**

Pontypridd and the decorations

Arrangements having been made for the presentation of the Queen's medal, the Mansion House and other "Funds," at Pontypridd on Saturday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1877, the day was proclaimed a holiday throughout the Rhondda Valley. The Lord Mayor of London came to Wales on Wednesday, and was splendidly received and honoured by the Mayor and Corporation of Swansea. The people of Pontypridd feeling the national importance of the occasion out-did expectation in the luxuriance and beauty of their welcome to the distinguished visitors of the day. To record the many and profuse decorations is a task of no great ease. The town was so completely 'en fete,' that a great distinguishing faculty is necessary in order to pick and choose from the efforts of the inhabitants, to show how cordial their welcome to the Lord Mayor was.



The visitor was first attracted by the gay appearance of the Taff Vale Railway station. The officials of the company had evidently been seized with that spirit of emulation which was manifested amongst the inhabitants, and the result was that the station was neatly, though not profusely, decorated. The station is exceedingly open, and therefore, not as well adapted for curtain and carpet embellishments as other stations less exposed would be. The Taff Vale Railway officials evidently were of this opinion, and, with considerable taste, chose certain spots which, when attired in gay and festive colours and greenery, would catch the eye, and have the best effect. The iron bridge crossing the railway was adorned with evergreens, flowers, and banners, with the British crown in the centre, arches of greenery being erected at the foot of the steps at each side of the bridge. The colours, which were varied and pretty, had an imposing effect. A foot bridge was laid down for the occasion across the rails for the Lord Mayor, on his arrival, to cross.

At the outlet from the station there was an archway of greenery and flags. The bunting in the approach to the station had quite a grand effect, the archway at the entrance evidently having been taken pains with, and set off with the Unicorn and the Prince of Wales's leathers, with the word "Honour" in the centre. Great credit is due to the Taff Vale officials, and amongst those who helped in the decorations may be mentioned Messrs David Lewis, Jenkins, Price, and Jones.

Leaving the railway station we notice a banner flying from the window of Mr. Thomas's the Bluebell Inn, with "Welcome to the Lord Mayor." Up the roadway, towards the police court, many banners were floating, and not a few windows are festooned with flowers and, &c., amongst which can be mentioned those of the Half Moon public-house, and of Mr. West, grocer. Proceeding down High Street attention was attracted by a number of gaily decked banners floating from the windows of Mr. Roger Jones's grocery establishment. Turning off into the Tramroad Street, the inhabitants here had done their best. Mr. Watkins, Greyhound Inn, floated flags from his windows and the words "Welcome to Town." The establishments of Mr. Miles, draper and grocers; Mr. Wm. Davies, of the Lamb Inn, whose house was festooned with greenery, were also set off with bunting. From the Hannan Spirit Vaults a banner wishing the Lord Mayor "Welcome to south

Wales" occupied a prominent position. Mr. Barnhouse, of the Prince of Wales Inn, caused his place to look unusually lively by decorating it with greenery and floating a banner bearing the words "Welcome to the civic chief."

And now we come to the chief decorations, which were in the High Street; all down the street, however, they were in such a maze that it was impossible to notice all of them. The assistants at Mr. E. H. McMillan's drapery establishment had evidently taken great pains, and as a result, their decorations were very successful. A coloured text on a white ground, and the variety of ribbon streamers of almost every hue, had a pretty effect.

Mr. Davies, chemist, and Mr. Palmer, of the Spirit Vaults, added to the scene by floating banners from their windows. Then came a grand triumphal archway crossing the High Street from the Clarence Hotel to Loxton's Hotel. This was a very handsome structure, arranged with evergreens, flowers, and coloured flags, surmounted with the city shield. Below the latter were the words, "Pontypridd salutes you," in blue letters on a white ground, and also "Croesoe i Bontvpridd" (Welcome to Pontypridd). At the offside was "Farewell, with thanks," and "Diolch Rhwydd hynt" (thanks to you). Messrs Davies and Francis, butchers, decorated their establishment, and banners were floated from Pegler's tea warehouse.

At the Ivy Bush (Mr. Evans) and the Staffordshire Warehouse tokens of welcome to the Lord Mayor were exhibited, and from the establishments of Messrs. Phillips and Evans, and Messrs. T. Evans and Co. (Temple of fashion), flags, banners, and streamers floated across the road. This was also the case from the shop of Mr. John Crockett, jeweller, to the Butchers' Arms (Mr. Jones), the entrance to the hostelry being gaily adorned with evergreens, flowers, and small flags. The New Inn, Mr. Bassett's chemist shop, Mr. Evans's ironmonger shop, Williams's tailoring establishment, Taff-street, were all bedecked with bunting and evergreens, and in several places streamers were run across the street, flying merrily in the breeze. The shops of Mr. G. H. Williams, saddler, J. and J. and Protheroe, grocers, were not behind their neighbours, and across the road hung "A welcome to

the Lord Mayor of London," in crimson letters on a white ground. Passing along, the adornments all of which express a hearty welcome to the distinguished visitor, became still more numerous, and the remainder of those who assisted in the decorations in the High Street, were Mr. Morgan, Seedsman; Mr. Gronow, boot maker; Mr. Lewis, at the boot establishment; Mr. Elliott, Aerated water establishment; Mr. James, Tredegar Arms Inn, Mr. Morgan, painter, and Mr. Roberts, grocer.

Across the street, near Mr. Lewis's establishment, had been placed a beautiful crimson banner, bearing in white letters the sentiment "Welcome to Cambria, thou Civic Chief." Turning from High-street on to Bridge Parade, which runs over the spacious Taff Vale Bridge, on which was erected a splendid triumphal archway, decorated in a beautiful manner, surmounted with the shield of London, and bearing the motto "A good deed worthily done." On the other side was a "Farewell to the Lord Mayor," and the expression "Take with you the blessings of the widows and orphans." Mr. Hall, of the Maltsters' Arms, erected banners across the road from his house wishing "A hearty Welcome to the Lord Mayor of London," and on the opposite side bearing the words "Thanks come again." In front of Messrs. Brown, Lenox and Co.'s chain and anchor manufactory another triumphal archway had been erected by the employees, and decorated with greenery, relieved by dahlias and mountain ash berries, having a pretty rustic effect. The word "Welcome" had been worked in bold letters with the berries.

The last decorations on the way to the Rocking Stone were those placed by Mr. R. Williams, grocer, and Mr. Thomas White, White Horse Inn, Llanover Street. As the Lord Mayor returned from the ground by way of Market-street, banners and streamers were hung out by, amongst others, Mr. Forrest, artist; Mr. Jones Powell, auctioneer; Messrs. Alexander Bros.; Mr. Williams, ironmonger; Mr. Griffiths, Mill-street; and Messrs. Jones and Co., of the London-house Establishment. "Long live the Lord Mayor," "Welcome to Wales," and "Welcome Guests," were amongst the sentiments placed on the banners. Dr. Hopkins, of Penuel Square, placed a pretty device in his garden, which was accompanied with an appropriate welcome to the Lord Mayor. Taking the decorations altogether they were a credit to Pontypridd, and thanks are due to Messrs L. Gordon Lenox,

Tudor Crawshay, W. H. Jenkins. D. Morris and W. Cooper Penn, and the decoration committee.

### The arrival at Pontypridd

The morning train sensibly swelled the great multitude which had gathered in Pontypridd, dotting the far-off hillside, thronging the streets, clustering on the bridges, and choking up the entrance to the station. Soon after noon the Lord Mayor and party arrived from Margam, where they had spent the night, at the residence of Mr. Talbot. M.P. As the special train ran on to the main line at the junction his Lordship was loudly cheered by the people who had lined the railway embankment. The arrangements for the special train and those at the railway station were carried out entirely under the personal superintendence of Mr. Hurmann, the traffic manager. The train was brought up to the station on the down line, but shunted on to the up line, and his Lordship and those who accompanied him alighted on the up platform, where the Rev. D. W. Williams, Fairfield, the chairman and the following members of the Pontypridd committee of management were waiting to receive him: - Messrs. L. Gordon Lenox, Tudor Crawshay. G. J. Penn, C. W. Bassett. C, J. Alexander, W. Williams, W. Cooper Penn, R. Williams, Captain Williams, Dr. Leckie, Jabez Evans, W. H. Jenkins, H. S. Davies, D. Leyshon. W. Merchant, Phillip Williams, M. W. Morgan, H. Hopkins, J. Evans, D. Morris, J. Evans (surveyor), J. Briscoe, J. Jones, T. Williams and Caradog, Dr. L. Morgan, and Mr. A. A. McLucas, sec. The Lord Mayor was accompanied by Mr. White, junior., his Secretary,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Soulsby, Mr. C. R. M. Talbot, the Lord Lieutenant of the county; Mr. Vivian, M.P., Mr. G. Williams, Miskin Manor; Alderman and Mrs Nottage and party; Sir Alexander Wood and Mr. Richard Bassett, directors of the Great Western Railway; Major Duncan, Knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem; the Hon. H. Bruce, Admiral Jones, Rheola; Rev Dr. M'Auslane, Mr. Scott Russell, Captain Tyler, R. N., Miss Talbot, Mrs Williams, and a number of ladies. On stepping from the carriage, the Rev D. W. Williams approached the Lord Mayor, and read the following address: -

“My Lord, we, the inhabitants of Pontypridd and, its neighbourhood, beg to take the earliest opportunity of publicly thanking your Lordship for your kindness in coming amongst us on an occasion of so much interest, not

only to ourselves and to this county, but to the mining population of the empire, who will feel that they, too, have a share in the sympathy with their fortunes thus conspicuously displayed by your Lordship's presence on this day. The life of a collier is one of constant peril, bravely encountered and resolutely endured; and when, as not infrequently happens, death and disaster do visit them, they are submitted to more patiently in the assurance that they invariably call forth the sympathy and benevolence of their Sovereign and countrymen. Never have these kind feelings been more reverently displayed than on the occurrence of the recent disaster at the Tynewydd Colliery. There was one universal outburst of sorrow for the sufferers, of anxiety for the fate of the imperilled, of admiration for the heroism displayed in their deliverance, which found vent in generous efforts to reward the gallant band of rescuers, to relieve the rescued, and to provide for the widows and orphans of those who had perished.

With the impulsive promptitude ever displayed by the holders of your high office, but never surpassed by any of them, your Lordship invited subscriptions for all these objects, and when they had flowed in with generous abundance, not only bestowed your time and invaluable advice in the difficult and invidious task of apportioning the collected funds, but have crowned your work of kindness by undertaking to distribute them among the selected recipients. For these reasons we once again welcome your Lordship among us. We venture to believe that you will appreciate the reception which will be given you by the grateful hearts and cordial voices of the colliers of Cwm Rhondda, and that as they will assuredly never forget the honour of this visit of kindness and sympathy from the Lord Mayor of the city of London, so your Lordship will ever remember with pleasure the part you have taken in this interesting ceremony."

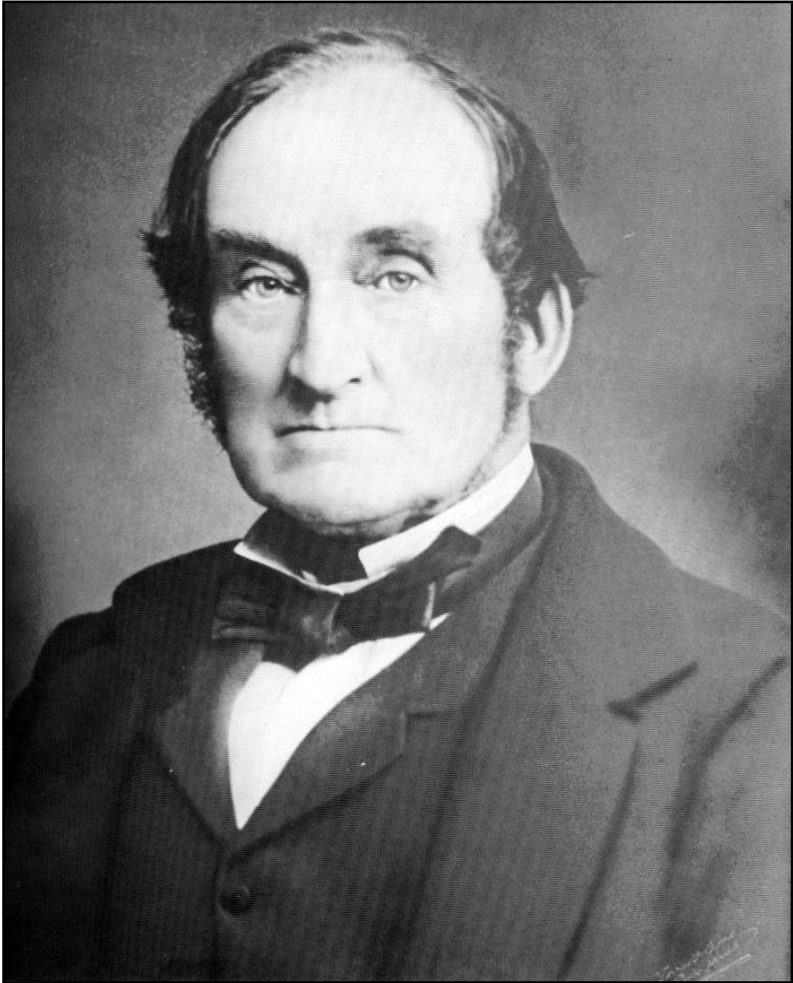
The address, which was very handsomely illuminated, was then handed by the reverent gentleman to the Lord Mayor amid loud cheers from those who were able to witness the ceremony, and by the thousands of other persons outside who took up the cheering, and which for some minutes could be heard dying away in the distance as those far off gathered from the action of those nearer what had been done. On the Common where the distribution of prizes was to take place, salvos of artillery from time to time served to increase the enthusiasm of an enthusiastic people.

After a few minutes, the Lord Mayor, in acknowledging the presentation said that no one could regret more than he the unhappy circumstances which had led to his appearance amongst them, and no one could now be more grateful for his warm reception. (Applause.) So assisted had he and his committee been by their much esteemed friend Mr. Vivian, that to him he was deeply thankful. Under the most trying and difficult circumstances, he (the speaker) and his committee had endeavoured to do their duty, and when he returned to his citizens he was certain he should be able to say that the same kindness and good feeling had followed him from place to place, and that it was here the same as it was at Swansea. (Loud cheers.) He assured them that if he had thought for one moment such kindness and consideration awaited him, he should not have hesitated very much before he came into their midst. He should have felt how far short he came of the deserts to which they seemed fit to think him entitled.

Certainly he had been received in a way he should never forget. He thanked them from the bottom of his heart, and asked them to believe that it would be the greatest satisfaction to him, when he arrived at yonder hill, to see the brave fellows who had endured so much, and to see the people manifested as they did one unanimous feeling of regard for their fellow-creatures. It was a credit to Wales. He could not tell them how much he thanked them for his reception. Words failed him. He assured them his happiest recollection had been to know that Wales had set such a noble example, which could not be forgotten, and all would do well to endeavour to follow. (Loud cheers.) With this the ceremony at the station terminated.

### **The procession to the Common**

The local committee were now marshalled outside the station, prepared to escort the distinguished visitors to the scene of the day's ceremony, but suddenly it was discovered that the carriage had not arrived. There was a little delay, and a great deal of bustle and action. Just as everybody was beginning to grow desperate, and the word to advance had been given, the missing chariot, drawn by four high-mettled horses, guided by postillions in scarlet, dashed up the hill, and the Lord Mayor and his friends took their seats, a handsomely-appointed brake following with the remainder of the



**The Rev. D. W. Williams, Pontypridd, the much criticised man who had to recommend to the Lord Mayor who was to be awarded the Albert medal, and who was not.**

party. The procession now began to move forward in the following order:—

Mounted Police.  
Miners in working dress with their tools;  
Band of the 19th Glamorgan Volunteers.  
Friendly Society with insignia, and regalia, of every society  
headed by the Chairman and Secretary, viz;  
Oddfellows, Manchester Unity.  
Ivorites, Druids, Brass Band; Ancient Order of Foresters,  
Philanthropics, Ancient Britons, Shepherds.  
The Committee of management  
Carriages of Lord Mayor and Mansion House Committee.  
Tradesmen and Townspeople.  
Police.

In the front and rear of the principal carriage rode two police officials, viz., Superintendents Matthews and Thomas and Inspectors Thorney and Rodman, while on each side walked a strong staff of constables. As the procession descended the hilly street leading from the station the scene was one of an inspiring character. Far as the eye could reach along the single street was a long line of well-dressed people, eagerly looking for the approach of the men who had come to represent English generosity and to reward Welsh bravery. On the walls, and in the windows too, the people congregated, the pleasant faces of ladies forming a pleasant feature, and the bright eyes of girls eagerly scanning the scene below.

Away to the front was a long and brilliant vista of coloured flags and streamers, with here and there triumphal arches. Through such a scene as this, with an extended procession in front, with silken banners flaunting in the breeze, with the strain of martial music ringing in the ears, and with the hum of animated conversation and comment by a thousand tongues in the vernacular, did the Lord Mayor make his way through the crowded streets of Pontypridd, every face, every action, every surrounding circumstances be speaking that welcome which all alike extended. There was little or no cheering—the Welsh people are not given to cheering; but there was no lack of manifestation of the admiration which was felt at the arrival of the



greatest of civic potentates, who, dressed in gorgeous apparel of crimson and velvet, and decorated with his magnificent gold chain of office, studded with costly stones, brought vividly before the popular imagination the reality of that which to thousands of people in the Rhondda Valley had hitherto been a mere tradition.

Passing the Bank, where one of the windows was filled with a very pretty group of children, the procession was enlivened at Penuel Chapel by the voices of school choirs singing a Welsh air, another pleasant surprise of a similar character being provided near the Tabernacle Chapel. From this point the scene was grand. Above, the hillsides were dotted over with spectators; while slowly wending their way up the ascent were the various Orders forming the procession, resplendent with banners and regalia. Looking downwards upon the approaching procession, the town bright with colour, filled by an animated crowd, and the hills reverberating with music, there was as pretty a pageant and as much to do to delight both the eye and the ear as any man could desire. At the summit of the hill, the procession opened out, and the Lord Mayor passed through long ranks of Foresters and Oddfellows, Ivorites, Philanthropics, Shepherds, and Druids, resplendent in their white robes and mysterious in their signs and symbols, until he at length reached the summit, where Carradoc and his choir made the hills resound with the stately music of "The men of Harlech," The Lord Mayor was then conducted to

#### The scene of the distribution

While the procession was marching through Pontypridd, and the bands filled the air with martial strains, the seated enclosure in which the presentations were to be made gradually filled. Many ladies in fashionable costume occupied the front seats, chatting agreeable, and occasionally listening to the music floating pleasantly from the valley below. Nearer came the procession, louder blew the brass instruments, and at this exciting moment the mists which seemed to over hang the Rhondda Valley temporarily disappeared in a burst of sunlight, tinting the hill with a golden hue, and warming up the faces of

Fair woman and brave men  
A Thousand hearts beat rapidly; and when  
Music arose with its long voluptuous swell,  
Soft eyes looked love to eyes to which spake again.  
And all went merrily as a marriage bell.

From this elevated position, 500 feet above the level of the sea, could be surveyed a succession of bold, rounded hills, beautiful forests, and romantic valleys. From the platform sloping up to the mountain top, stretched away a vast multitude of people, rising rank above rank, estimated at 50,000 in number. All around were thousands of those Welsh colliers who Mr. Wales described as the best and bravest of their class. In front was a fringe of aristocracy proud to do honour to the colliers' goodness and bravery; on the platform were those who had been rescued from a living tomb; the men before whose sturdy stroke the rocks crumbled and fell and gave up their prisoners were there also.

Hard by stood the widows and children. The prominent figure amidst all was the greatest functionary of the greatest city in the world. At the moment when Sir. Thomas White alighted from the carriage, the cheering was something to be remembered, in response to which he bowed gracefully, and as he ascended the wooden platform, the processionists crossed towards the back part of the vast assemblage—the masses round the flags and banners reproducing for all the world the camp scene in Balfe's posthumous opera, as exacted at Drury- Lane; and, as if to complete the illusion, one of the bands played *The Village boy*, vividly recalling the lines-

The minstrel to the war has gone  
In the rank of death you will find him.

The following among others had seats either on the platform or within the enclosure: - Lord and Lady Aberdare, the Hon Mr. and Misses Bruce, Mr. C. R. M. Talbot, M.P. (Lord Lieutenant), and Miss Talbot; Mr. H. H. Vivian, Mr. and Mrs Vivian; Mr. and Mrs Gwilym Williams, Miskin Manor; Rev. Mr. M'Auslane, London Mr. and Mrs Williams, Aberpergwm; the Rev D. W. Williams, Fairfield; Mr. and Mrs Stacey, Llandough Castle; Major and Mrs

Turberville; Major Herbert; Major Duncan. R.A., Woolwich; Mrs Wyndham Lewis, Mr. and Mrs F. R. Crawshay; Mr. and Mrs Tudor Crawshay; Sir Alexander Wood, Mr. Scott Russell. London; Captain Spencer Nicholl; Alderman Nottage, London; Mrs and Miss Nottage; Mr. James Lewis, Plasdraw, Aberdare; Mr. and Mrs J. E. Price, Pontypridd; Mr. George Martin, Dowlais; Mr. Frank James, Merthyr: the Rev John Griffith, Rector of Merthyr; the Rev. G. C. F. Harries, Gelligaer; Mr. Henry Lewis, Greenmeadow; the Rev W. Gwynne Jones, Vicar of Aberdare; Colonel Tyler; Mr. T. W. Booker, Velindre; Rev. Jones, Ystradowen; Major Powell, Aberdare; Captain Howell. Aberdare; Dr. Davies, Aberdare; Mr. and Mrs E. C. Spickett; Mr. and Mrs C. Bassett; Mr. T. E. Wales, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines; Col. Page, Cardiff; &c., &c., &c.

Caradog's choir having awakened the echoes with another song., Mr. C. R. M. Talbot, MP., Lord Lieutenant of the county, and President for the day, came forward and gracefully introduced the Lord Mayor to the company amidst rounds of cheering. Lord Aberdare, Mr. Talbot, and Mr. Vivian having been cheered as they ascended the platform and were recognised. Mr. Talbot was received with all the cordiality of an old friend and an old favourite. When he stepped to the front a murmur ran through the crowd, gradually swelling to a roar of hearty cheering. Beginning with the distribution of the *Daily Telegraph* Fund.

"First of all it will be my duty to present the cups which have been given by the generous proprietors of the *Daily Telegraph*. When that ceremony had been gone through, I shall call upon the gallant officer of the Royal Artillery who represents here the Ancient Order of the Knights of Jerusalem, who will present certain medals which have been voted by the association not to the colliers, but to those to whom money could not so well be offered. After that my hon. colleague, Mr. Vivian, will distribute 28 watches, which have been voted by myself and brother members of Parliament in token of their appreciation of the same services. (Hear, hear, and applause.) When that has been done the chief officer of the largest and richest corporation in the world will distribute the Mansion House fund, according to the distribution of it which has been agreed to by the committee sitting at the Mansion House. (Renewed applause.) I need not tell you that a person in the position of the Lord Mayor, from the time he takes his office until the

time he lays it down, has scarcely 10 minutes he can call his own. His services are required by the Corporation of London, and very arduous services they are. We therefore ought to take it as a great compliment that he has found time to come down here, and with his own hands to administer these funds." (Loud applause.)

"When that has been done Lord Aberdare has received the gracious commands of Her Majesty to distribute the Albert Medal. On this subject I will say no more than that it is the highest compliment that has ever been paid by a Crowned Head to a subject. Now, gentlemen, I call before me, Mr. Williams, who will be kind enough to bring them forward, one by one, the recipients of the cups voted by the proprietors of the *Daily Telegraph*. You all know the character of that paper, that it has the largest circulation in the world" — (laughter) — and that it has generously used its circulation for the purpose of receiving money which without that circulation could never have been got together. The money which has been raised by the *Daily Telegraph* proprietors has already been distributed, but the cups, to those whom cups will be more valuable than money have now to be distributed by myself. (Cheers.) The crowd laughed when Mr. Talbot referred to the boasted large circulation of the *Telegraph*, but they cheered heartily when he felicitously observed that without a "good circulation" the money given away by the proprietors of the *Daily Telegraph* could never have been got together." The following received cups :—**James Thomas**, manager of the Tynwydd collieries; **William Davies**, Coedcae; **Isiaah Thomas**, Brythweunydd; **Thomas N. Davies**, Treorky; **Thomas Thomas**, Ynyshir; **William Thomas**, Resolven; **David Evans**, Ferndale; **Edmund Thomas**, Llwynceilyn; **David Jones**, Cymmer level; **William Henry Mathias**, Porth; **David Davies**, Cilely; **Henry Lewis**, Energlyn; **Daniel Thomas**, Brythweunydd; **William Beith**, Navigation; **Thomas James Thomas**, Caerphilly. The next feature in the programme was the distribution by Major Duncan, of the Royal Artillery, of

The medals of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem

Major Duncan said: - "Mr. Chairman, my Lord Mayor, ladies and gentlemen, the Duke of Manchester, Prior of our noble and ancient Order, an Order purely of philanthropy, un-sectarian and non-political in its

sympathies, hoped to have been here himself today to deliver the medals and diplomas which it has fallen to me to distribute. In this hope he postponed his acceptance of the invitation until the last moment, when he was called away on an urgent journey he had to make to the Continent, and his last words to me were to say how very much he regretted being unable to be present today to swell the chorus of honour to such brave men. (Cheers.) Unworthy as I may be in many respects, yet there seems to me to be fitting circumstances in a soldier, such as I am, whose duty and whose glory it is to court danger for England, being made the channel of conveying the recognition of a badge which was once purely military, to men who have encountered dangers far worse than those of battle—(cheers)—without whose adventitious aids which enable a soldier to undergo trials through the pomp, circumstance, excitement and passions of battle which we enjoy. (Renewed cheers.) In the name of our ancient Order, always first is ameliorating suffering, I ask your leave to say a few words now.

My Lord Mayor, ladies, and gentlemen, I trust the medals which I am about to present are given to men who are merely typical Englishmen—(hear, hear)—but who have had given to them an opportunity almost unprecedented, which they have availed themselves of with high honour and glory. These men have done something better than saving life; something better than winning renown, for they have silenced the pessimists who would despair of England, and for a few days they held the nation so united that even class and political distinctions seemed to have disappeared. (Cheers.) Ladies and gentlemen, it is something to have lived to have seen in the same decade of years two such scenes as, first, a whole nation kept in suspense as a widowed Queen watched by the possibly dying bed of her eldest son, and again the same nation remaining in breathless suspense while a few imprisoned miners were being rescued by their comrades. On both these occasions the first question as man met man, whether peer or peasant, was not anything about money, not anything about politics, not anything about war or domestic jealousy, but, in the one case, "Is the patient conquering his fever?" In the other case, "Are the miners saved yet?" "Are any more feats of that terrible wall between life and death falling before the brawny arms of the rescuers?" (Cheers.) In the old days of our Order, knights used to be encouraged to

the tilt by the cry that bright eyes beheld their deeds. But these eyes were often bright with jealousy.

The eyes on the occasion which we now come to celebrate were bright from Queen to milk-maid—bright with tears. (Renewed cheering). It is said that nations are created by similarity of tongue; by identity of interest; by mountain ranges, or by fretful seas. It may be so, but I take it that nations are welded like regiments, by community of danger, and sympathy with it. (Loud cheers.) In the name of our Ancient Order, I now call for Mr. Wales and his comrades to come forward and receive the medals and diploma entrusted to me.

And I say, with all the pride of a nineteenth century man that never beneath the cuirass of a belted knight did beat a braver heart than beats in the breasts of each one of these men. When the time comes, and it must, when they will find themselves in the presence of the Immortal Source of all that is good, and noble, and true, I pray that their children and their children's children, as they handle those relics with flushed cheeks, and lips quivering with pride, will talk of the grand deeds of their fathers, which made all the world wonder, and will resolve to emulate them if they need. (Cheers.) The gallant Major, who, we may remark, was a candidate for the borough of Morpeth at the last general election, whose pointed periods combined with his eloquence and brilliant style, stamped him as one of the leading speakers at the demonstration, was warmly applauded, especially when he compared the excitement and incidental daring in battle to the daring and heroism, without excitement, in the bowels of the earth. The recipients of the medals wore their miner's dress, and carried their picks and safety lamps.

As they crossed the platform they were received with the wildest demonstrations of applause, especially when Isaac Pride, with a significant look, held aloft his pick, not only as the most eloquent speech he could make, but as a priest would hold aloft the symbol of salvation, which in this case it was in very sober truth and earnest. The diplomas and medals were given to Isaac Pride, John William Howell, Mr. Wales, Government mines inspector, and Mr. William Beith, Navigation.

## The House of Commons' testimonial

Mr. H. H. Vivian, M.P., next came forward, to present the watches subscribed for by members of the House of Commons and he was received with tremendous cheering. Addressing the immense multitude, he said: — "My Lords, ladies, and gentlemen, I have been deputed by the House of Commons' Committee to present to those who have been deemed worthy of the honour, the testimonial which had been subscribed by that ancient body, in recollection of the great and brave deeds which they performed in rescuing those entombed men for whom we felt so much anxiety. Now, I think I ought, in the first instance, to give a slight history of how this fund was created. A few gentlemen found themselves together one night in the House of Commons, and every one felt the deepest interest in the rescue of the entombed men. They knew that a gallant body of men was struggling against physical difficulties in cutting through the immense barrier of coal, so as to release those living men from their living tomb. They said among themselves, "We think that these men are deserving some recognition from the members of the House of Commons—not as a motion of that body; but not as a motion of the House of Commons—but as a proof of the sympathy of that august house."

"The idea was not to form a great fund representing a large amount, but their idea was to convey to those men their sympathy and heartfelt support. They agreed that the amount subscribed by each individual member should not be a large one, because I think they rightly considered that the honour did not lie in the amount subscribed, but in the spirit which induced members of Parliament to come forward and give this testimonial. (Loud cheers.) I think I ought to venture to remind this assembly that in these gifts they must consider that the recipients have a testimonial not from the 300 or 400 members who subscribed towards the fund, but that these members are representatives of great constituencies, and that they have thus come forward and said that they admire the bravery these men displayed in endeavouring to release their fellow-workmen from a living tomb. (Applause). It was not the individual voice of a Member of Parliament that spoke, but it was rather the voices of those whom he represented, and therefore in presenting these testimonials they came not

alone from the members of Parliament, who subscribed for them, but from those who returned those members to Parliament. (Loud cheering.)

It is unnecessary, I think, that I should allude to the moving incidents of this occasion. Individually, I feel proud, very, very proud—that I represented these brave men. (Cheers.) I assure you the deepest sympathy was felt by every Member of Parliament. I scarcely was ever five minutes in the House of Commons before some member came up to me and said "What have you heard? What is the most recent news from Tynewydd?" I constantly received telegrams, and immediately circulated them to the best of my ability, and afterwards placed them on the doors of the House, where they were read by anxious crowds. I can hardly express to you the deep feelings which animated the members of the House of Commons generally in regard to this most moving incident—possibly the words just spoken by the gallant officer who presented the medals on behalf of the Ancient Order of St. John of Jerusalem, have abundantly explained what the feelings of every man must be in regard to the courage exhibited on that occasion.

I am glad that he—Major Duncan—who is a soldier, has come forward and anticipated the remarks I intended to make on the point. He, a soldier, had told them that he could not too deeply admire the courage exhibited by these colliers. In battle, he had reminded them, great bravery was shown, and gallant deeds performed, but these the men were labouring under the excitement of the battlefield. Here, however, in the deep, dark depths, these colliers faced dangers which were unknown. That required moral courage, and they did not do so for only a single day, or for only a few hours, but from day to day for ten live-long days. That does require courage. I think we are rightly met together to celebrate that courage. That great danger was encountered there can be no doubt—the fact that one poor man sacrificed his life in hastening the rescue of his fellow-workmen is sufficient proof, if proof were wanting. Therefore I have no patience with those who say that no danger existed. (Applause.)

Those who, like myself, live much in these districts where our coal industries are prosecuted, know very well that that this is not a single instance of men facing danger and displaying courage. Unfortunately there are constantly recurring instances, and, indeed, I have known instances



where men have faced greater dangers—in my opinion—than those encountered on the occasion of the Tynewydd disaster; but they do not rouse the public as the public was roused on this occasion. I rejoice that the public have come forward to recognise the courage of these men, and that they have recognised it in a fitting manner. The public had come forward, as the Lord Mayor had said, from Her Gracious Majesty downwards. (Loud cheers.) I trust we shall raise the standard of courage by this movement, and that when dangers are run into in the future, they will be recognised by the public at large more than heretofore.

Now I need hardly address the men who are to receive the watches on this occasion, and the other mementos of the courage they displayed—will become the dearest possessions which they have. I need hardly charge them to hand them down to those who come after them, as the most precious heirlooms ever in their power to hand down. I have nothing further to say, excepting that the possession of these testimonials ought to make the recipients proud that they are able to hand down to those who follow them such mementos of the courage they have displayed in endeavouring to save the life of their fellow men. I have only to say, in conclusion, that these watches will, I am sure, be an honour to them during their lives, and they will, I trust, incite their children to equal the gallant deeds their fathers performed.” (Loud and continued cheering.)

The numerous happy references made by Mr. Vivian were eagerly taken up by the crowd. When he described, in vivid language, the eager anxiety of the House of Commons, day after day, to read the telegrams posted on the doors of the House, telling the progress of the dire struggle going on for life and death in the depths of the Tynewydd Colliery and how the people of the great city, by means of telegrams and newspapers, watched the desperate conflict waged far away in the hills of Wales and amongst the bowels of the earth, the crowd listened with breathless earnestness; while a hearty outburst of acclamation followed the expression of the generous sentiment of pride which he declared animated him at the thought that he had the honour to represent the men who carried on that dire struggle, and who waged that war with unseen and insidious foes “in the lowest depths, in a place of darkness, and in the deep.” During the distribution of the watches one old collier, familiarly known as “Dan Rees,” offered his

grimy hand to Mr. Vivian, and that hon. gentleman promptly seized and shook it, amid the uproarious delight of the spectators. The precedent thus set was good-humouredly followed in regard to the other recipients, Mr. Vivian shaking each heartily by the hand, the crowd, Mr. Vivian, and gallant rescuers laughing heartily, and in concert, at the sudden and novel turn which matters had taken. Mr. Williams, stipendiary magistrate, during this and the succeeding presentations, did yeoman service, talking kindly in Welsh to the men as they came on the platform, and giving them, in a word, a timely hint.

The watches subscribed for by the members of the House of Commons were awarded to: - Isaac Pride, Job Williams, Gwilym Thomas, Charles Beynham, George Ablett, Rees Thomas, Edward Davies, Richard Hopkins, John William Howell, Charles Oatridge, Abraham Dodd, Thomas Jones, David Davies, Thomas Griffiths, John Griffiths, John Williams, Thomas R. Thomas, William Morgan, Thomas Rees, John Morgan, David Rees, Richard Howells, Thomas Evans, David Minton and Robert Williams.

#### The Mansion House Fund – Reception of the Lord Mayor

Mr. Talbot here rose and said: - “I will now call upon the Lord Mayor of London to address you, requesting you to give him a hearty reception. It is solely by his permission that we are enabled to distribute the magnificent sum of nearly £5,000.” The Lord Mayor, on coming to the front, was received with repeated outbursts of cheering. Again and again were the plaudits renewed, the audience rising, cheering, and waving their hats and handkerchiefs with the utmost enthusiasm. As a demonstration of gratitude to the city and the municipality of London, and to the generous people of England who had subscribed so munificent a sum to reward and to relieve sudden and complete destitution, it was complete and perfect, and the Lord Mayor was evidently much impressed by it.

After the cheering had subsided, the Lord Mayor said: — “Lord Aberdare, ladies and gentlemen, I will ask you not to pass a verdict upon that which I have to say to you from the funds provided, but rather in the sincerity of its meaning. (Cheers.) First of all it is my duty to thank the directors of the Great Western Railway Company, three of whom I have the honour of

seeing amongst us, for the safety in which they have conveyed myself and my staff in order that I might have this honourable opportunity and pleasure today. (Cheers.) Secondly, let me give my thanks for the assistance which I have had as a member of my committee from your Lord-Lieutenant, Mr. Talbot, and your excellent representative, as also from Mr. Vivian, your representative, and also from my Lord Aberdare, who lives, as it were, in your midst, and to whom you cannot be too grateful for the very valuable assistance which they have rendered me in this most arduous and difficult task. (Loud applause).

My Lords, ladies and gentlemen, our first and dearest consideration is the widows and orphans at my back, that has guided us. In the belief of our ability to help them, having before our eyes their necessitous requirements, the loss which, through God's mercy and wishes, they have unfortunately suffered in the removal of those who in all right they had to look upon for support and attention, they fell back then on our committee, and with the knowledge that we were English-men, and, I hope, gentlemen, who were aware of the difficulties that were placed before us, but who were not less determined, throughout all those difficulties, to do to the best of our ability. If we are in any degree to measure by your voice that you are satisfied with our conclusions, then today is another evidence of it which I have had the advantage of deriving since I have had the honour of being in the Principality of Wales.

Wherever we have been, and whatever we have done, we have been met with that degree of kindness and consideration which must always be dominant in our memory, and ever in our grateful recall (Applause.) I do not wish, nor, believe me do my committee, to take one single expression or wish of thanks to ourselves. In these poor men who have so rescued, and these noble fellows by whom they have rescued them what we are about this day to do, I think you will, I assure, in fact, you will see, that a work so happily begun has been satisfactorily concluded. Ladies and gentlemen I must say I have the honour to distribute in money of £3,700 or £3,800 - (cheers) - and the rest as you see, in the valuable testimonials behind me.

Let me not forget the Rev. Mr. Williams. (Loud cheers.) His energy, and the untiring labours he has exercised, my Lord, ladies, and gentlemen, have been indeed unceasing. (Hear, hear.) The valuable aid which has been thus afforded to us we are unable to eliminate to its fullest extent, but believe me, that to him, and to all of you, ladies and gentlemen, my city, the city of London, will feel highly complemented at the reception and satisfaction which you have shown towards myself. (Applause.) Now I thank you all, and I wish I could find words in which to express the deep and lasting obligation I shall ever feel under to you one and all. I hope, however, that such an occasion as the one on which I have the honour of addressing you may certainly never again occur in any shape or form. And I hope, ladies and gentlemen, that you will, at the conclusion of our proceedings today, be enabled to see that all who have been acting with my committee—however short we may have fallen of pleasing everyone, may have the inward satisfaction of knowing our endeavours to do our best have, at least, met with the concurrence and general acknowledgment of the majority of you. (Applause.)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I have a cheque here for £1,100 and let me, as briefly as possible, explain its meaning. To three widows we have had the satisfaction of awarding £250 each; ten children, £30 each; one widow, whose son died, £50; making altogether £1,100.

Please let us have your unanimous and express concurrence for what we are about to do with this. (Cheers.) We are told that for £250 these unfortunate widows could very soon get another husband. (Laughter.) And fearing there might possibly be—probably, I may say—some little truth in it, we felt the greater degree of safety in placing those £1,100 in the hands of your Lord Lieutenant, Mr. Talbot, and Mr. Vivian, in order that they might have a conference with each and every one of them to do the best, most equitable, and safest thing in securing, not an expenditure unnecessary and unjustifiable, but rather one of permanent and endearing benefit. (Applause.) And now, with your permission, to that esteemed and honoured gentleman (Mr. Talbot) I will pass the responsibility of this cheque. (Handing it to Mr. Talbot.) The safeguard adopted of placing the cheques for the widows in the hands of the Lord-Lieutenant was thoroughly approved, as it was felt that there was much truth in the little

pleasantry respecting the money being entirely to serve as an allurement to catch a mate who might be anything but a helpmeet to the women.

The distribution of the Mansion House Fund now proceeded apace. Long lines of men appeared at one end of the stage in answer to their names, and disappeared at the other end the happy possessors of cheques, tankards, salvers, and other pieces of plate. The five rescued men were objects of great interest. They have improved wonderfully in health, and were loudly applauded, and seemed highly pleased with their reception. The boy, David Hughes, was a great favourite. As he came to the front he appeared to be a frank, nice-mannered genial youth. His features beamed with pleasant smiles as the Rev. D. W. Williams slapped him kindly on the shoulder in passing; and when the Lord Mayor, placing his arm affectionally around the young David's neck, led him with a fatherly air to the front of the platform, there was something in the modest, yet self-possessed, gentlemanly manners, and the intelligent countenance, which strongly impressed the spectators in his favour. Hearty cheering followed the announcement that £50 was placed in the hands of Mr. Talbot, M.P., to provide for the lad's education, and a general hope was expressed that the lad would be a credit to Cambria.

The rescuers as they were called up received from the audience a hearty mead of praise, and nothing could have been more genial than the demeanour of the Lord Mayor, who gave each man besides his cheque a kindly pat on the back, and a shake of the hand. The pat on the back produced results scarcely contemplated, for the men being in their working dress, the hearty slap of the Lord Mayor produced quite a little cloud of coal dust. A laughable incident occurred when the nurses came up for their rewards. The Lord Mayor handed to the first lady her cheque, and then to her evident surprise his Lordship proposed to bestow upon her a chaste kiss on the cheek. The damsel, with natural modesty, objected; the Lord Mayor pressed his suit, which she stoutly resisted, but in the end was vanquished, and received the civic salute amidst prolonged peals of laughter from the crowd at her discomfiture, and their cheers at the success of his Lordship's gallant efforts. The next young lady who came forward was kinder, and gracefully presented a pretty, blushing cheek, upon which, amidst thunders of applause, the lips of the Lord Mayor were

imprinted. In presenting the awards, the Lord Mayor addressed suitable words of congratulation to each recipient. Referring to Mr. Beith, who was received with a burst of cheering, he said his name must be familiar to them all for the aid he had rendered in this unfortunate catastrophe. His Lordship also caused great laughter by expressing a hope that those who received tankards would always be able to fill them.

Dr. Henry Naunton Davies, of Cymmer, came in too for a cordial greeting from the audience and a special word of recognition from the Lord Mayor, who remarked on the length of time he had been underground, and on his valuable services as a medical man. To Mr. Wales the Lord Mayor said: - "The committee, after due and careful attention, had awarded a candelabra for his bravery and the determined spirit he had shown from the beginning to the end, and the invaluable service he had rendered to the committee. The committee felt that he was one of those who deserved at least the most favourable consideration at their hands, because upon all his deeds they could only place the most favourable construction. Therefore he was presented with these candelabra, which was of the value of one hundred guineas."

Turning next to Mr. Williams, his Lordship said: - "The most modest recipient of anything at our hands is your esteemed friend and neighbour, Mr. Williams (Tremendous cheering.) It may be difficult to reconcile you to the fact that we had the greatest possible difficulty in inducing Mr. Williams to accept of the most trifling acknowledgment of services so rendered, so conspicuously rendered, and I may so conspicuously appreciated. (Cheers.) Mr. Williams desires no remarks from my hands, either to enhance him in your estimation, or the reverse. He can well afford, for the remaining portion of his days, to lay the flattering unction to his soul that he at least has in this great and dire catastrophe done his duty, not only as a man but as a neighbour. I am sure you will recognise him as such. I feel it a very great honour to have him as an acquaintance, and trust I may be permitted to enjoy that acquaintance for a very long period of time. (Prolonged cheering.) Mr. Williams simply expressed his acknowledgments in the brief phrase, "Thank you."

By this time the table had been cleared of the glittering display of plate, candelabra, tankards, and watches, the cheque-books had been emptied, property and money to the value of thousands of pounds had passed into the hands of those for whom they were intended, and the arduous task of distributing the Mansion House Fund was over. The Lord Mayor retired from the front and said: - "I shall leave Wales to-morrow deeply impressed with the universal kindness which I have received from one and all of you." The official list of the recipients of the Mansion House awards is appended:—

The three widows, £250 each; 10 children, £30 each; one widow whose son died, £50 making a total of £1,100. To the rescued men—David Jenkins, £150; Moses Powell, £150; John Thomas, £150; George Jenkins, £150; David Hughes (the boy), £50 (besides that already presented to him). To those men who were rescued after the first inundation were awarded—Thomas Morgan, £25; Edward Williams, £25; William Casher, £25. To the rescuers were awarded Isaac Pride 100 guineas and a book "The Death of Saul" presented by the author John W. Howell £80 and a similar book; Charles Oatridge, £80 and a book ; Mr. William Beith, £105.

The remaining awards were as follows — David Rees, £38 11s 6d; Richard Howells, £38 11s 6d Thomas Jones, £34 14s 4d; Thomas Rees, £30 17s 2d; Wm. Rollins, £23 2s 11d; David Davies, £30 17s 2d; John Morgan, £30 17 2d; David Minton, £30 17s 2d; Job Williams, £11 11s 6d; Thomas Evans, £19 5s 9d; Thomas Rees Thomas, £27; David Davies, £27; Rees Thomas, £23 2s 11d; Robert Williams, £7 14s 4d; John Griffiths, £23 2s 11d; Thomas Griffiths, £23 2s 11d; Charley Beynham, £7 14s 4d; Wm. Morgan £23 2s 11d; Richard Hopkins, £27; John Williams, £23 2s 11d; Edward David, £7 14s 4d ;George Ablett, £3 17s 2d; Thomas Ash, £3 17s 2d; John Jenkins, £3 17s 2d; Matthew Williams, £2 14s 6d; James Jeremiah, £2 14s 6d; Matthew Lane, £2 14s 6d; Miles Griffiths, £2 14s 6d; Daniel Rees, £2 14s 6d; Jenkin Williams, £2 5s 5d John Daniel, £2 5s 5d; William Williams, £2 5s 5d; George Jones, £2 5s 5d; William Rees, £1 16s 4d; William Davies, £1 16s 4d; Thomas Rees, £1 16s 4d; William Leyshon, £1 16s 4d; Evan Jenkins, £1 16s 4d; Jenkin Thomas, £1 16s 4d; Thomas Roblin, £1 7s 3d; John Hughes (Cymmer), £1 7s 3d; E. Oatridge, £1 7s 3d; Daniel Dodd, £1 7s 3d; Jacob Rogers, £1 7s 3d; Morgan Morgan, £7 7s 3d; David Davies, £1 7s 3d; John

John, £1 7s 3d; David Thomas, £1 7s 3d; James Edwards, £1 7s 3d; William E. Richards, 13s 8d; Evan Thomas, 13s 8d; Joseph Lewis, 13s 8d; Elias Rees, 13s 8d; Jonathan Morgan, 13s 8d; Taliesin Lewis, 13s 8d; Thomas Henry, 13s 4d; R. J. Richards 13s 4d; D. H. Howells, 13s 4d; Wm. Dd. Thomas, 13s 4d; David Hopkins, 13s 4d.

Pump-men.—Lewis Baxter, £11 8s 7d; Wm. Baxter, £11 8s 7d; John Baxter, £10 7s 718d; John Davies, £10 7s 10d; Joseph Roberts, £2 1s 10d; John James Thomas, £10 7s 10d; Thomas Lewis, £3 2s 5d; Joseph Moore, £10 7s 10d; Frank Francis, £10 7s 10d; Eleaser Moore, £10 7s 10d; Roger Vaughan, £10 7s 10d; Edmund Thomas, £10 7s 10d; William Daglon £10 7s 10d; Maesinef Moore, £10 7s 10d; Evan Thomas (mechanic), £10 7s 10d; John H. Rhoda £10 7s 10; Henry Lloyd, £10 7s 10d; Thomas Cheen, £10 7s 10d; Thomas Moon, £10 7s 10d; Howell M. Williams, £8 6s 10d; Evan Thomas (Pentyrch), £9 7s 10d; George Warlow, £10 7s 10d.

The divers: Frank Davies, £50; Mr. G. F. Adams, (Cardiff) £30. The nurses: - Mary Williams, £10; Mary Thomas, £10. Mr. Wales, Government Mines Inspector, a handsome silver candelabra, value 100 guineas; Dr. Davies, a piece of plate, value 100 guineas; Drs. Edward Duke and Washington David, gold mediaeval watches, each of the value of £35; Rev D.W. Williams, (Fairfield), a piece of plate value £30; Mr. Owen Morgan, £10 and a salver; Dr's Ivor Lewis, Rees Hopkins, E. W. S Davis, Iris Davies, William Parry, and Lloyd were awarded pieces of plate of the value of £10. Edward William Stephen Davis, of Duffryn Ffrwd, Mountain Ash, received a silver inkstand, value of £10.

The following were presented with pieces of plate, value £15 :— Messrs. Frank Bell, T. H. Riches, Henry Lewis, P. G. Adams, W. Lawrence, Mr. M'Murtrie, E. T. Richards, T. J. Thomas, W. H. Mathias, Wm. Thomas, David Evans, T. S. Davies, and John Edwards (who selected a watch). Pieces of plate, value £10 were awarded to Messrs W. H. Lewis, Thomas Curnew, James Edwards, and John Jones. Mr. Thomas Thomas was awarded a piece of plate of the value of £30.

The Albert medals



Lord Aberdare's coming forward was the signal for loud and continued cheering. Upon its subsidence, his Lordship said: - "My Lord Mayor, ladies, and gentlemen,— If there ever was an occasion when I should have wished to possess a voice loud as a trumpet of silver sound, now is that occasion. But, unfortunately, the state of my throat is such that I cannot, without pain to myself, and without positive injury, venture to address you more than a very few words. I have therefore asked my valued friend, Mr. Gwilym Williams, of Miskin, to read to you those observations which I should have been glad to have made myself. I selected him not only because he was justly esteemed and lived in this neighbourhood, but because he shares with me the responsibility of having selected the fit recipients for the Albert Medal. The only other word I can now with safety add is this that I feel most deeply the honour conferred upon me by the Queen of being the medium of presenting those brave and deserving men with the honour which was created expressly for them. (Loud cheers.) I now call upon Mr. Williams."

Mr. Williams was warmly cheered, and he read as follows: — "I have been charged by the Queen with the honourable duty of presenting, on Her Majesty's behalf, the Albert Medals to those who displayed gallantry in saving life on the occasion of the accident at the Tynewydd Colliery. I need not recall to you the deep and incessant anxiety of which the Queen gave so proofs, during a memorable period of painful anxiety; and it will also be fresh in your recollections how, when our fears were happily relieved, Her Majesty, desirous of bestowing some mark of that public honour of which, according to the laws of our country, she is the sole fountain, on those who had eminently distinguished themselves in the rescue of the imprisoned colliers, finding no means of doing so immediately at hand, determined to create them. This was done by extending the Royal Warrant, under which medals of the first and second class were conferred upon mariners and others who had performed "daring and heroic actions in saving the lives of those who were in dagger of perishing by reason of wrecks and perils of the sea," to actions of similar heroism performed in saving life on land. This earnest desire of Her Majesty to give honour where honour was due, excited, I need hardly say, universal satisfaction; and it is to me, as I doubt not it is to those who hear me, a matter of just pride and congratulation, that those whose courageous self-devotion suggested this new badge of

honour, and those will have the privilege of being first to wear it, were found among the coal-owners, agents, and colliers of Glamorganshire. The task of selecting the proper recipients of such an honour was, I need hardly say, not only a responsible but a difficult one. Those charged with the duty performed to the best of their ability, and, I make bold to say, with entire impartiality. They arrived at unanimous conclusions, and it is satisfactory to them to know that Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to approve of their recommendations. Before announcing the names of those thus selected for this honour, it is very expedient that I should remind you that the decorations I am about to present are not conferred on those who, during the operations for the rescue of the imprisoned men, exerted themselves in devising and executing the means of deliverance, unless they were also exposed to extreme personal danger, and in such danger exhibited courage and daring.

The time taken in enacting the rescue was nine days from the 11th to the 19th April inclusive; but, with the exception of a very short period on the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup>, when the first band of four imprisoned men were saved, the whole period of danger was included in the interval between one o'clock on Thursday afternoon and about six or seven o'clock on Friday morning. Admirable, disinterested, unflagging effort was made by many who neglected their own engagements in order to labour with head and hand in the work of rescue; and I am rejoiced to know, and to have had the opportunity of seeing, that the public sympathy and liberality have been extended to all those who, in their various degrees, and according to their several opportunities, took part in this glorious work. But the Albert Medal, whether of the first or second-class, was as I have said, strictly limited to case of personal danger, encountered with courage and the saving of life. And it is absolutely necessary that if such distinctions are, in the terms of the Royal Warrant, to be "highly prized and eagerly sought after," they should be bestowed with the utmost discrimination.

With these precautionary remarks I proceed to announce the names of those who have been specially selected. They amount to twenty-five in number, and illustrate in a very interesting and remarkable manner the extent to which all classes of those engaged in colliery operations

contributed, at the risk of their lives, to this memorable rescue. Four are colliery proprietors, viz.: -

Mr. David Davies, of Penrhiwfer Colliery.  
Mr. David Jones, of Maindee, Ynyshir.  
Mr. Daniel Thomas, of Brithweunydd,  
Mr. Edmond Thomas, of Llwyncelein

Seven are managing agents of collieries, viz.; -

Mr. Thomas G. Davies, of Tylacoch.  
Mr. David Evans, of Ferndale.  
Mr. David James, of Cymmer Level  
Mr. Henry Lewis, of Energlyn  
Mr. Isaiaah Thomas, of Brithweunydd.  
Mr. Thomas Thomas, of Ynyshir.  
Mr. William Thomas, of Resolven.

One is a mechanical engineer, viz.: - Mr. William Beith, of Treharris's Navigation Pit.

Two are overmen or firemen, viz.: - Mr. Richard Howell, of Tynewydd, overman. Mr. David Rees of Tynewydd, fireman.

Eleven are working colliers. viz.: —

George Ablett	Charles Oatridge
Charles Raynham	Isaac Pride
Edward David	Rees Thomas
Richard Hopkins	Job Williams
John William Howell	Robert Williams
William Morgan	

All these brave men, encountered, under circumstances terrible enough to try the most dauntless hearts, and when many stout hearts quailed, the accumulated dangers of explosive gas and of pent-up air and water, the

escape of which, only intercepted by a frail and ever-decreasing barrier of coal, would have swept them to inevitable death. These dangers were met and endured by all with equal fortitude, although all were not present during the same number of hours or on the same occasions. Were there in the deeds and bearing of any of these men, all of whom bore themselves so nobly, circumstances which justified the making of any distinction between them? It was thought that such circumstances did present themselves in the case of four of them, viz.:—

In that of Mr. Daniel Thomas, who was not only always to the front during the periods when the danger was greatest, setting an example of undaunted courage and inspiring others with his spirit, but who was unanimously chosen at the most perilous crisis to conduct the most critical operations. In that of Mr. William Beith, who, besides exposing himself with the boldest wherever danger was to be braved, and animated all by exhortation and example, at one especial period—when the band of deliverers had been driven from the working by gas, when the water had shown no signs of falling, and the condensed air had not been drained away, when in fact the work of rescue seemed baffled, and the only possible chance of delivering the poor captives appeared to rest in opening the barrier at all hazards, exclaimed that he believed that the destruction of those who executed such a plan was certain, but he would never ask others to do what he was not ready himself to do, and that he was ready to devote himself.

In Isaac Pride, who took part in the deliverance of the 12th as well as in that of the 19th, and also on occasions when even the boldest held his breath for a while, repeatedly volunteered to face the greatest dangers, and to work in the most perilous posts. And in John William Howell, who more than once, when men shrank from offering themselves, set a similar example of devotion and heroism. To me who, highly as I value my birthright as a Welshman, am still more proud of our common designation of Briton, it is a matter of great satisfaction that these chief honours have been won by representatives of the three ancient nationalities of which Great Britain is composed; and that, of the four men so distinguished, two (Daniel Thomas and J. W. Howell) are Welshmen, one (Isaac Pride) is an Englishman, and one (William Beith) a Scotsman. To these four, therefore,

are assigned medals of the first class, confined to "cases of extreme and heroic daring," while to the remaining 21 are presented medals of the second class. It must not, however, be assumed that these were the only persons connected with the rescue who exhibited courage and self-devotion. Others there were, and many, who so distinguished themselves, although they did not fall within the cases contemplated by the Royal Warrant.

Indeed in one instance, that of Mr. James Thomas, of the Tynewydd Colliery, I am permitted to say that he was recommended for a medal of the second class, but that his case, for reasons which you will readily imagine, has been reserved for future consideration. And there are names which I am not empowered to mention so specially deserving public honour. First amongst them is that of Mr. Wales, Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines, who, had he not been one of those appointed to inquire into the proper recipients of the Albert medal, would, for the courage and cheerfulness with which he faced danger at the time, for his calm self-possession during the most trying hours, when his counsel was continually sought and acted upon, has been entitled, in the opinion of his colleagues in that inquiry, to that distinction in addition to those honours which I rejoice to know have flowed in upon him from other sources.

I cannot, too, refrain from expressing the regret, shared in by all my colleagues, at our inability to include in our recommendation Mr. William Davies, manager of the Coedcae Colliery, whose exertions had been incessant up to mid-day on Thursday, and who continued in the pit during the remaining hours of danger, though he was too exhausted by his previous efforts to take part in those operations which alone involved serious risk. Nor should Gwilym Thomas be forgotten, who, when fresh men were wanted on the Friday morning, volunteered to go below and work at the barrier, and did so, at a time when he believed the danger to be as great as ever, although, in fact, it had almost ceased. I gladly, too, avail myself of the same permission, to make honourable mention of the following gentlemen, who were all underground during more or less of the period of danger, were all usefully engaged, and were all ready to go whenever they might be required, viz. :—Mr. G. F. Adams, mining engineer, Cardiff; Mr. Frank Doll, mining engineer, Cardiff; Mr. Lawrence, (mining

engineer), Cardiff; Mr. W. H. Lewis, mechanical engineer, Treherbert; Mr. E. Richards, colliery manager, Cwm Clydach. In the same class, too, I may fairly include Mr. Dukes, assistant surgeon to Dr. Naunton Davies, who went to the barrier at half-past five a.m., on Friday, when the danger from pressure was at its highest in order to convey food to the imprisoned miners.

I have now completed my task. I am convinced that you will join me in humble and hearty thanks to our gracious Queen for having added one more worthy motive, one more honourable incentive, to those which on all occasions have impelled brave and true-hearted men to imperil their lives for the sake of saving those of others. I earnestly trust that the proceedings connected with this memorable and affecting disaster may not have introduced a new motive of baser alloy, far from the thoughts and the intentions of the generous men whose liberality has been so abundantly showered on the heroes of this day; and that hopes of pecuniary reward may never hereafter mingle with those emotions of pity, those aspirations for honourable fame, which have hitherto been the sole animating principles of our colliers when the lives of their fellow workmen were at stake." (Applause.) Lord Aberdare, at the conclusion of the address stepped forward and personally delivered to the gallant fellows who approached the Royal insignia of honour which the Sovereign had conferred upon them.

His Lordship shook every member of the brave band warmly by the hand. Lord Aberdare observed that he had already said what he thought of Mr. Daniel Thomas, and would not make him blush by repeating the same to his face. To Mr. Beith his Lordship made a similar remark. The distribution was over.

The distribution over, the Lord Mayor said: - "It is my privilege and pleasure to ask you to do, an act of justice to those who have done so much for your countrymen—to display with those manifestations to which you are so thoroughly well accustomed your approbation of the proceedings of the Lord-Lieutenant as chairman to-day. You will be good enough, if you please, and without further comment, to display one universal disposition of satisfaction by raising with one voice your approbation in favour of the

Lord-Lieutenant. (Enthusiastic cheers.) To Lord Aberdare the same. (Repeated cheering.) And Mr. Vivian. (Prolonged applause.) Ringing cheers were then given for the Queen and the Lord Mayor. Mr. Talbot: - "Ladies and gentlemen it has given me very great pleasure to preside over this meeting. Of all meetings I have ever presided over in my life I never presided over a large meeting of such a character, conducted in such orderly fashion as this has been. In language often used in another place, language only too familiar to us during the last fortnight—(laughter)—I beg now to move that we ask for leave to report progress. (Cheers.) Three cheers were given for the Queen, the National Anthem was sung, and a telegram was despatched to Her Majesty, announcing that the medals had been duly distributed. Mr. Talbot then jocosely moved to "report progress."

#### Description of the awards

The Albert medal – awarding as coming from her Majesty the Queen – is an oval shape, surmounted with a crown. Into its face is sunk the monogram "V. A." (Albert and Victoria), while on the reverse is an engraved inscription, the name of the recipient, and for what awarded. Twenty-five of these were awarded. The medals of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem are about the size of a florin, with the following embossed – "For the service in the cause of humanity," and, "Awarded by the order of St. John of Jerusalem in England." The tankards presented by the Lord Lieutenant on behalf the '*Daily Telegraph*', like all the plate presented, were of silver, with flowery devices. Those presented by the Lord Mayor were of a similar size and patterned as those presented by the '*Daily Telegraph*.'

Dr. Henry Naunton Davies and Mr. Beith had each presented to him splendid candelabra of silver. Dr. Davies, Mountain Ash, was presented with a massive silver inkstand. Several silver salvers were presented, and gold keyless watches were presented to Mr. Dukes and Mr. Washington Davies. All the articles bore the inscription, "Presented to (giving the recipients name) out of the Mansion House Welsh Miner's Fund in recognition of the bravery in saving life at the inundation of Tynewydd Colliery, 1877." The Rev. D. W. Williams was presented with a massive salver, bearing a suitable inscription, in recognition of his services.

## The Banquet

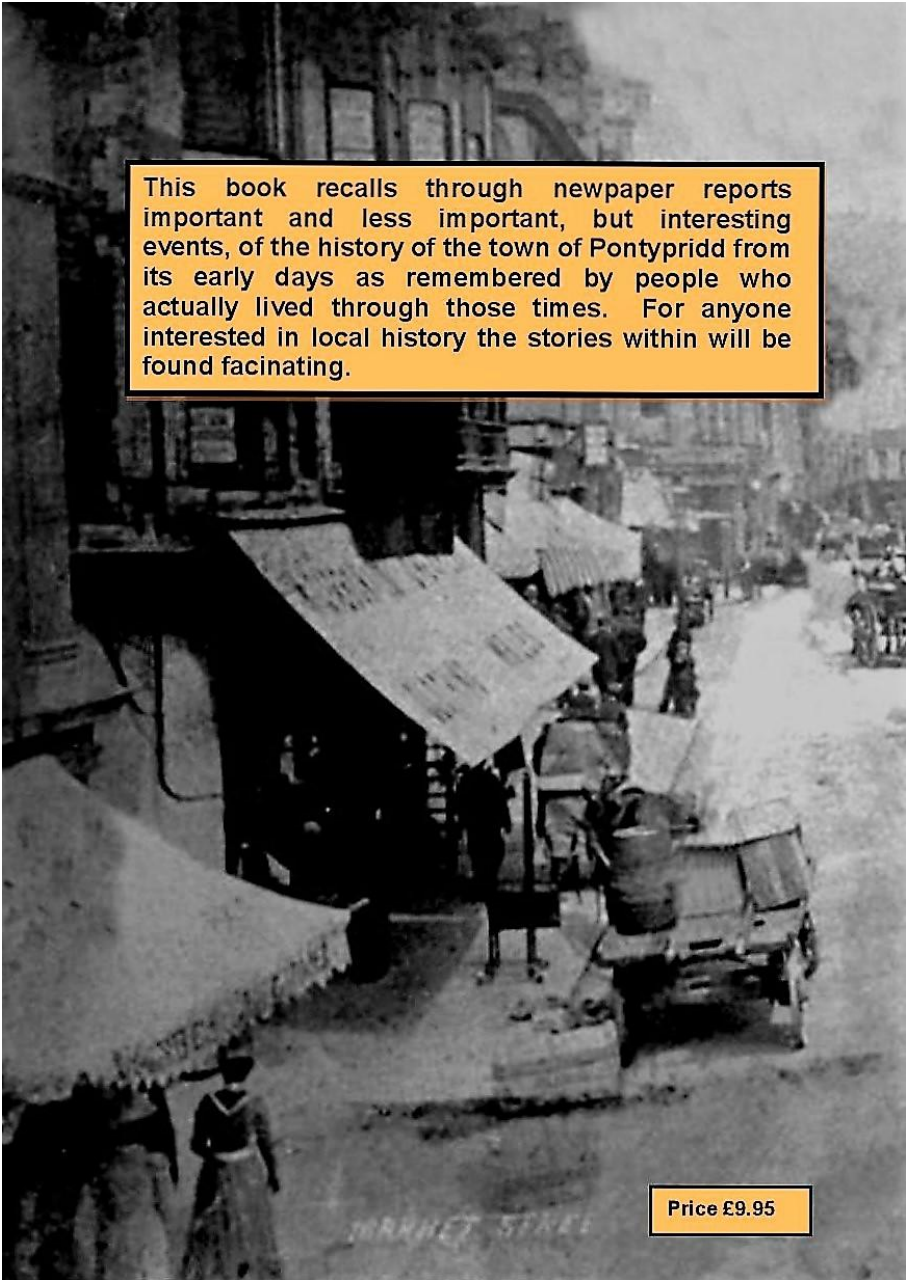
The procession re-formed and marched to the Market House, where a magnificent banquet had been spread, to which a large number of visitors were invited by the Rev. D. W. Williams, Fairfield, who presided over the gathering. The repast, which was superbly got up, was supplied by Mr. C. Chalk, Cardiff and County Club. The ordinary appearance of the hall was completely transformed by the extensive decoration it had undergone. Festooned with evergreens, flags, and mottoes, and gilded shields adorning the pillars, hardly anything was visible but the profuse ornamentation. The Chairman, the Lord Mayor, and a distinguished party with him occupied seats at a raised dais. About 500 persons were present.

## The Illuminations

The illuminations at night were very pretty and general regret was expressed that the Lord Mayor was not in the town to witness them. The streets were crowded with people, and the whole place presented an unusually animated appearance. The first illumination which attracted attention was at the New Inn Hotel. It consisted of a crown and a "V.R." and was illuminated with jets of gas, placed in the centre of street facing Market Street, while at the same time in the window of the spacious building contained twenty night-lights, the whole producing a brilliant effect. At the Church Street corner at Market Place an illumination in the shape of the Prince of Wales's plume lighted up the market Square. In Taff Street a star-shaped illumination showed down both streets a rich light. The illumination of the Old Bridge across which was thrown a triumphal arch, was the admired of the admired. It was made by bright jets of light projecting from the evergreens used in the decorations around the entire arch, and shone with a brilliancy that made the motto 'A good deed worthwhile done,' distinguishable a very long distance off. Numbers of people continued to throng the streets until a late hour. Order and quiet prevailed, and no accident of any kind has been heard of.

And so perhaps the most famous day in the history of Pontypridd was over, some said it would never be forgotten, but they have proved wrong. How many people knew of that day before reading this book?





This book recalls through newspaper reports important and less important, but interesting events, of the history of the town of Pontypridd from its early days as remembered by people who actually lived through those times. For anyone interested in local history the stories within will be found fascinating.

Price £9.95