



# ***GELIGAER TIMES***

**NEWSLETTER OF GELIGAER HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Issue No. 45 JUNE 2020**

## **MESSAGE TO READERS OF *GELIGAER TIMES* FROM GHS CHAIR**

Hope you are all keeping safe and finding interesting things to keep you occupied during these unusual times. In the absence of a newsletter editor, this newsletter, with further news of GHS President's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations, other news, report on GHS 2019-20, some reminiscences sent in response to GHS May newsletter, and a collection of items associated with fairs and markets is a substitute for GHS June 2020 meeting. I hope it has something to interest you, and, perhaps, some of you will respond with comments and/or questions as you would at a normal GHS meeting. Please contact [chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) or [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) if you would like to contribute to any future issue.



## **PRESIDENT NESTA'S 100<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY (continued)**

On behalf of GHS, Clive's Bakery, Aberbargoed, delivered a birthday cake to Nesta which, as noted in GHS May newsletter, was delicious. Nesta's family has kindly sent us a photograph of the cake.



## NEWS

Some GHS members are using some of their lockdown time to get on with research for GHS Diamond Jubilee Project, while others have spent time sorting out boxes of family photographs and memorabilia. GHS will be pleased to know if you have done anything interesting while confined to your home more than usual.

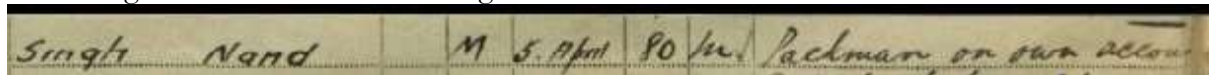
If you want to do some local or family history research, while you cannot visit libraries and archives, there is much source material available online (as listed in previous issues of *Gelligaer Times*). And, your family photographs may include scenes and people of local interest. GHS is especially interested in photographs of places of worship, schools, clubs and other public buildings and of the people connected with them in the pre-WWI era.

Currently, GHS is preparing *Gelligaer* volume 27 and (printing firm permitting) it will be published in September 2020. The deadline for submissions is **1 August 2020**, although there is a little flexibility for short pieces -- i.e. even as short as one paragraph or one photograph -- which will be very welcome.

The deadline for submissions for the Diamond Jubilee publication is **31 December 2020** (to give plenty of time for editing and preparation for the printer as we currently aim for publication in September 2021).

GHS continues to receive queries and comments about local and family history during the current lockdown. One of the most recent was from a grandchild of **Nand Singh**, an Indian gentleman remembered by some in Ystrad Mynach and Tirphil as a kind and generous person.

Nand Singh was listed on the 1939 Register thus:



A male, born on 5 April 1880, and earning a living as *Packman on own account*, Nand Singh was a lodger in Hill Street, Ystrad Mynach in 1939. Some local people recall that he also lodged in Griffiths Street and other places in Ystrad Mynach, before moving to Colliers Row, Tirphil. When he left Tirphil, he returned to his native India.

His grandchildren are researching their family history and trying to build up a picture of the life and work of Nand Singh while he was in the United Kingdom. If you remember him, however little you can recall, they will be very pleased to hear from you. GHS is happy to pass on your stories and/or put you in touch with the family, so please contact

[chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) or [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

**It is unclear when GHS will be able to resume face-to-face meetings, but GHS Officers and Committee will continue to review the situation in the light of developments, and post information on GHS website [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) and in future newsletters. In the meantime, thank you for your support for GHS.**

### CHAIR'S REPORT ON GELLIGAER HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2019-20 PUBLISHED IN GHS NEWSLETTER, *GELLIGAER TIMES*, JUNE 2020

I open my report by noting that 2019-20 started with considerable promise but, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, ended in a very different way from what officers, committee, members and friends expected. There was much anticipation in September 2019: Judith had prepared an interesting programme of talks for 2019-20; *Gelligaer* volume 26 was launched; GHS welcomed several new

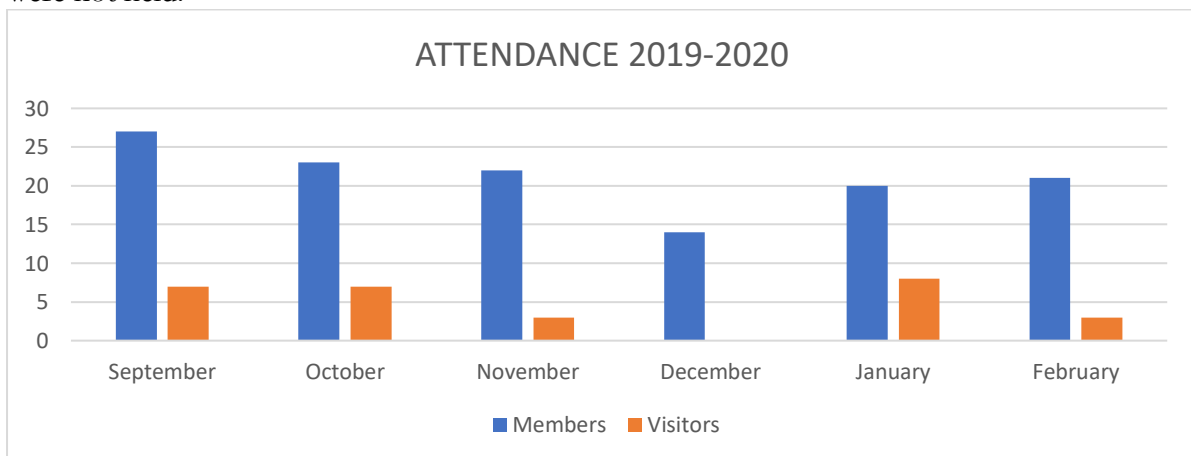
members; research on the Diamond Jubilee project, the parish of Gelligaer in the nineteenth century, was gaining momentum; the March 2020 Conference was planned; and, the highlight, plans were being formulated for a great celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of our gracious president, Nesta Jones, in spring 2020. The programme proceeded as planned through the autumn and winter until Covid-19 made its unwelcome presence felt in UK.

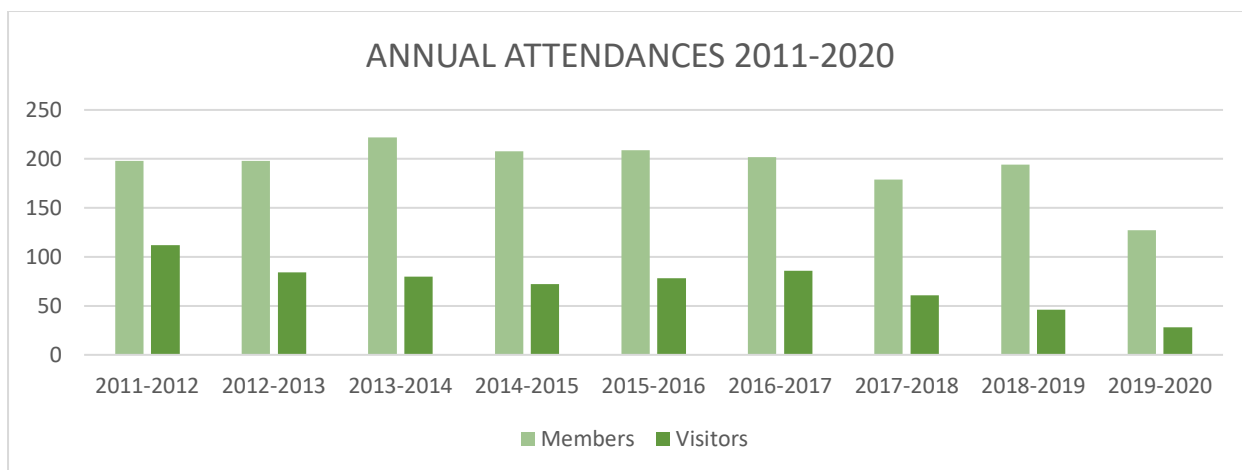
What follows should be read in conjunction with relevant reports in *Gelligaer Times* 2019-20.

1. **Membership** is the most important part of the Society. I thank those who renewed their membership and am pleased to note that several new members joined the Society in 2019-20. The following details about attendance at meetings are based on the open register of attendees at meetings.

Attendance at Gelligaer Historical Society monthly meetings 2019-2020			NOTES
Month	Members	Visitors	You may be interested to know that monthly totals for September 2018 - February 2019 (inclusive) were very similar to those for the similar period in 2019-20 when there were 132 member attendance and 31 visitor attendances. The difference is largely December: December 2018 meeting was attended by 23 members and 6 visitors, and, as you can see here, December. 2019, 14 and 0. The reason(s) for the disappointing attendance in December 2019 are unclear. Comments from members are welcome.
September	27	7	
October	23	7	
November	22	3	
December	14	0	
January	20	8	
February	21	3	
March	NO MEETINGS		
April			
May			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>28</b>	

The first of the following two graphs shows attendance at meetings from September 2019 to February 2020 (inclusive), while the second graph is a summary of annual attendances from 2011-12 to 2019-20, with the bars for 2019-20 reflecting the fact that March, April and May meetings were not held.





## 2. Committee and Volunteers

- a. During 2019-20, GHS Committee, comprising four officers (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Webmaster) plus elected and co-opted members, met once (30 October 2019), and communicated frequently by email and telephone. The committee meeting planned for 25 March 2020 could not be held. The main business in committee meetings has, as in recent years, concerned monthly meetings, conference, Society research projects and publications, finance, and relationships with outside bodies. In addition, the Committee discussed how the Society would celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of its president.
- b. I thank Committee members for their patience and understanding and for the contribution each of them has made during the year. Thanks are also extended to other GHS members who volunteer to help in specific areas to ensure smooth-running of the Society. As it is not possible to hold GHS AGM in June 2020, committee and volunteers have been asked via email if they are willing to continue to serve during 2020-21 and the list of those who have agreed to continue is at the end of this report. The Society sends good wishes to those who, for various reasons, will not continue with an active role in 2020-21.
- c. Ian Williams was co-opted on to GHS Committee during winter 2020. It is hoped that more members, including those new to the Society, will consider offering their services to help the Society in the coming session. If so, may I suggest that help would be especially appreciated in areas:
  - Publicity of Society events – especially monthly meetings and recruiting new members.
  - Editing the Society newsletter.
  - Assist in manning GHS stand at various events.

## 3. GHS Finances

- a. With his usual meticulous attention to detail, GHS Treasurer has prepared the balance sheet for GHS 2019-20.

## 4. Monthly meetings and Conference

- a. The reports on **monthly meetings (apart from February 2020)** appear in *Gelligaer Times* issues 41, 42 and 43. The speaker at the February 2020 meeting was Daryl Leeworthy, and his talk was entitled *The life and times of Elaine Morgan*. This is one of many websites [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine\\_Morgan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elaine_Morgan) with information on this interesting south

Wales lady. Look out for the biography scheduled to be published to coincide with the centenary of her birth.

- b. The conference planned for Saturday 21 March 2020 at Llancaiach Fawr was postponed, and rearrangements, hopefully, with the same four speakers, will be made when possible. GHS thanks those people who have left their conference fees in the Society account for the rearranged conference, donations or for next year's subscription.

## 5. Research and publications

- a. GHS publications continue to attract interest and, sold at Society meetings, in local outlets and online, they make, as the Treasurer's report shows, an important contribution to the Society's finances. During the past year:-
  - i. ***Gelligaer 26*** was published, and number 27 is being prepared for publication (pandemic permitting) in September 2020. The deadline for submissions is **1 August 2020**.
  - ii. The Society's newsletter, ***Gelligaer Times***, is sent to those on the mailing list and is available to all on the Society's website. If you want to be added to the emailing list, please send a request with your email address to the Society website. Issues 43 and 44 included supplements in an attempt to compensate for the cancelled April and May meetings. This report appears in issue 45 which also includes a supplement. Further issues with supplements are planned for the coming months, and any contribution, from GHS members and others, will be welcome. Issue 44 also included a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday tribute to Nesta, GHS president.
- b. The Society's **World War One Project** has closed but the database of names on local war memorials will remain on the website for some time, and additional information is being added as and when received.
- c. The Society's **Diamond Jubilee Project on the parish of Gelligaer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century** was launched at the AGM June 2016 with a target date for publication in Diamond Jubilee year, 2021-22. Several volunteers are researching, but more volunteers for active roles (however small) within the project will be welcomed. Fortunately, there is much relevant material available online as the pandemic means that libraries and archive offices are closed. The deadline for submissions for the publication is **31 December 2020**.

## 6. Links with other organisations

- a. GHS Treasurer accepted a cheque from Chair of **Gelligaer Community Council** at a special presentation event held at Llancaiach Fawr November 2019.
- b. The Society has continued its **links with other organisations** (including GAVO, and Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council's Heritage Forum) which help the Society project a positive image. In addition, some Society members:-
  - i. continue to **accept invitations to speak to other groups and organisations**, some of which focus on history while others are groups with more general interests,
  - ii. have represented the Society at **events with a history and heritage theme** organised by other groups. Events to 31 January 2020 have been reported in *Gelligaer Times*. Since then, the Society was represented at Huw Williams's talk on Richard Trevithick in The Redhouse, Merthyr Tydfil on the afternoon of 21 February 2020.

- c. The Society has answered numerous **telephone and email queries** relating to local and family history, showing not only that GHS website is effective, but also, interest in local and family history relating to this area continues to thrive.

## 6. Publicity

- a. GHS is not as strong on publicity (especially of monthly meetings) as it could be. GHS events and publications are advertised:-
- i. on the **Society's website**, which has many and regular visitors
  - ii. in the online calendar of forthcoming events in and around Merthyr Tydfil.
  - iii. and, from time to time, on **Twitter** and **Facebook**, but the effectiveness of social media is unclear.
  - iv. and some members spread the word among interested relatives and friends
- b. But more needs to be done.

### **THE FUTURE FOR GHS**

1. It is currently unclear when **GHS monthly programme** will resume. Information will appear in future issues of *Gelligaer Times* and be posted on the Society website.
  2. Information and delegate booking forms for the rearranged conference will be available when arrangements are made.
  3. If anyone is interested in **organising a visit** to a place of historical/heritage interest, please feel free to discuss the possibility with a member of GHS Committee.
  4. It is hoped that the Society will continue to develop its **links with other organisations**.
  5. The Society intends to **continue researching** the history and heritage of the area with current focus on the parish-wide **Diamond Jubilee (19<sup>th</sup> century) Project**.
6. **Society publications:-**
- a. will continue to be on sale at some monthly meetings, at other events where the Society is represented, and through the Society website, Amazon and ebay and some local outlets.
  - b. and plans for the future include:-
    - i. ***Gelligaer***, Volume 27, in autumn 2020, with further issues when sufficient articles are available.
    - ii. GHS Diamond Jubilee celebration during 2021-22. It is hoped that the publication will be launched in September 2021 and that the programme for the year will, as in Golden Jubilee year 2011-12, be made up of talks and events linked with the history and heritage of Gelligaer parish. Please get in touch if you know of any speakers on topics relating to Gelligaer parish.
    - iii. Until GHS is able to resume meetings, GHS Committee hopes to continue with regular issues of *Gelligaer Times* with supplements.
  - c. If you have a suitable **contribution for the journal or for the newsletter**, please draw it to the attention of a member of the Society Committee.

7. **Publicity** is an important issue and one with potential for improvement.
- a. GHS should try to inform local people about the existence of this Society as well as encouraging members and non-members to attend events and purchase publications.
  - b. Individual members can help publicise the Society by word-of-mouth among friends and acquaintances, and in other organisations to which they belong.
  - c. It will also be appreciated if members on social media such as Facebook and Twitter would advertise Society events and activities.
  - d. GHS should develop links with local press and increase its poster presence locally.
  - e. Any practical help and suggestions from members will be welcome.

**FINALLY**, I conclude by thanking all Committee members for their efforts during 2019-20, and members and the various speakers and visitors, for their contribution to Gelligaer Historical Society, and hope that, after these *unprecedented times*, GHS will be able to resume with new enthusiasm and strength as the Society moves to its Diamond Jubilee.

Thank you to all who have read this report, your support is appreciated.

<b>OFFICERS FOR 2020-21</b>	
<b>Office</b>	
Chair	Annie Owen
Vice chair	Judith Jones
Treasurer	Roy Smith
Webmaster	Greg Buick
Committee	Clive Andrewartha
	David Mills
	Ann Pinch
	Susan Price
	Dr. David Williams
	Ian Williams
<b>Volunteer</b>	
Programme Secretary	Judith Jones
Conference Secretary	Judith Jones
Minute Secretary	Judith Jones
Editor <i>Gelligaer</i> (journal)	Greg Buick
Publications co-ordinator	Greg Buick
Publications liaison with outlets	Ann Pinch
	Susan Price
Assist Treasurer re Fees	Enfys Hawthorne
GHS watching brief re Roman Fort Project and Horeb Chapel	Clive Andrewartha
Editor <i>Gelligaer Times</i>	Vacant
Publicity	Vacant

Please contact [chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) with any queries or comments on this report, or any other Society issues. Matters may be discussed when the Society meets, or left on the table to an AGM in June 2021.

## SOME REMINISCENCES SENT IN RESPONSE TO GHS MAY NEWSLETTER

Thanks to two *Gelligaer Times* readers who, in response to the last newsletter, have sent these reminiscences. GHS Committee hope to receive further reminiscences or items relating to history and heritage (especially photographs) for inclusion in future issues.

### NOSTALGIA - It's a tricky thing

During the last few months for various reasons and not just because of "THE LOCKDOWN" I have found myself wandering down memory lane. Possibly this will happen more and more as I get older.

One somewhat strange but fond memory is of a childhood spent amongst the tips. To the uninitiated a tip was the word used for huge mounds of colliery waste that dominated the landscapes of many towns in the mining valleys of the south Wales coalfield. I had the honour of being brought up within a hundred yards or so of what we children believed to be the largest coal tip not only in Britain but the whole world - at least that is what we were told and we believed it implicitly. My parents' house was in Pengam Road, Aberbargoed and, as I said, no more than 100 yards from the tip created by waste from Bargoed Colliery.

The tip was the playground for children. You could climb it and then slide down whilst sitting on cardboard or pieces of metal sheet; it was the Cresta run of the area. Like its counterpart near the town of St. Moritz, Switzerland, it also caused many accidents as we careered down the slopes at break-neck speed. This thrill was accentuated after a snowfall when the ditches that had been cut into the surface by water were filled with snow. I still have a vivid memory of sliding down a ditch on my back and being unable to stop because I was wearing a leather jacket which acted as a toboggan with no brakes.

A photograph of "THE TIP" taken from the west. The ditches down which I slid can be seen as black lines/scars which fortunately for me did not run from top to bottom.



The eastern side of the tip literally abutted the gardens of part of Commercial Street, Aberbargoed. Locally the houses were known as *long row*, possibly on account of the very long gardens which created a barrier between the tip and the houses. In that area, at the base of the tip, the waste material which contained a lot of coal occasionally caught fire. This was not a deliberate act by



anyone, but happened because of the pressure on the material by the thousands of tons of material above the base. The fires were not flames shooting up into the air, but more like a fire that just smouldered, in the wet weather steam could be seen rising from these hot spots. Just another delight for us children to play with.

Another hazardous pastime was to ride/hang on “the buckets”. A bucket was a metal chest that was attached to an aerial ropeway and used to convey the waste from the colliery to the “new” tip which was created when there was no more room to tip on “the biggest tip in the world”. The new tip ran from east of Church Street, Aberbargoed, and finished at the boundary wall of the graveyard of the church at Bedwellty. At some points during the journey of the ropeway whilst it travelled across the new tip, the buckets were only a foot or so above the surface. The idea was to hold onto them as they travelled further to reach parts of the ropeway that were often 15 or 20 feet above the surface, and then hold on long enough until the surface became nearer again. There were workmen on the tip who did their best to stop this pastime, but they were few and far between, and often turned a blind eye to those of us intent to set “world records” for hanging on to buckets. A much more educational pastime on the tips allowed me to find numerous fossils that were inside the lumps of waste, low quality coal. Fossils of ferns and tree bark could be found with ease. The tips were also a rich source for finding minerals mainly quartz crystals. Over the years I built up a collection of fossils and minerals, each labelled and in boxes with a note of where they had been found - where they are now, I know not.

The Bargoed tip became so famous that the artist L.S. Lowry painted a view of it, see photograph.

I do not recall seeing any children from Bargoed enjoying the “delights” of the tip. But then again those of us brought up on the *rive gauche* of the Rhymney river were kindred spirits to our adventurous and Bohemian Parisian counterparts.



THEY WERE HAPPY DAYS

*David Mills May 2020*

### **A Stroll Down Memory Lane**

Despite the hardships of rationing, I have very happy memories of the tight-knit community that was Brithdir in the late 1940s and 1950s. 1 Wellington Terrace was special, for it was my grandmother Nana’s home, and it was a place that throughout my childhood remained much the same. There was Nana, mam, aunty Barbara, uncles Granville, Clifton, Leon, Geoffrey, John and me, the baby of the household, all living together.

We only had a cold water tap inside the house, bath time was in a tin tub in front of the fire, and the toilet was outside with squares of newspaper on a string behind the door. The kitchen was the main room where it all happened. The iron grate with its brass fender and its coal fire effectively the only form of heating. Open fires were inviting, especially on cold winter days when we stood to warm our bum, but they were dirty and a lot of work. Banked up with small coal for the night, it needed help to start back to life in the morning, usually with a piece of tin and sheet of paper held across the front to create a draught through the grate, which helped the fire to 'draw'. You could hear the fire roaring away behind the sheet, although, surprisingly, when removed, the fire seemed quite tame. I remember sending a letter to Santa up the flue, not sure why we did that, perhaps an elf was sitting on the roof waiting to catch it?

I remember the chores of clearing the ashes from the open fire and black-leading the grate. Laying a new fire was a skill, which most people in the 1940s knew and understood because it was so commonplace. You had to start with a few sheets of crumpled newspaper, next came thin shavings of wood, known as 'kindling', stacked loosely up round the paper so that enough air would be drawn though it by the heat of the flame. After the kindling came the coal. Once lit, the fire was soon back in production. The small warming oven was my favourite part of the old stove. Out of it came tasty treats – especially Sundays, pancakes served with butter sprinkled with sugar made

with Nan's loving hands. Toast on a coal fire is the best, we used to hang slices of bread on forks and hold them in front of the fire.

Another task well remembered is the coal delivered by the load and dumped on the road outside the front door. The difficulty of the job would depend on the approach to the coal shed - for many this meant laying newspapers to keep the mess to a minimum. The terrace houses of Wellington and Nelson, being the only three-storey buildings in the village had a trapdoor in the passage, through which we dropped big lumps into the coal-cwttch (cellar) below. Nan's home, being end of terrace, had the added advantage of a side gate, which gave us entry to the back yard, and the coal shed where we deposited the small-coal carried by the bucket load.

There was a railway siding, where the coal trucks from the old Elliots Colliery used to stock the coal waiting for the main line train to take them to Cardiff docks. I used to spend hours watching the trucks being shunted back and forth by the little loco train. The driver's name was Jack, he used to give us kids rides on the footplate. Health & Safety hadn't been invented back then, and we never saw the danger as we rode the 'buckets' of colliery waste to the tip (Spion Kop) on top of Cefn Brithdir mountain. Near to the village, the ropeway and buckets dropped close enough for us to reach up and cling onto a bucket before being lifted skywards, as shown behind Pat MacDonald in the photograph. Some of us held on long enough to reach the top but no time to admire the view as Tal Williams or Derek John, two NCB workers, would chase us off the tip. A hazardous pastime, but I do not recall a single accident.



Our entertainment was mostly homemade, and we spent a lot more time outdoors: playing games like football in the street, making bows and arrows, slingshots, and messing around with homemade carts we called Bogeys made from old pram wheels and bits of scrap wood for the chassis, steered with a bit of rope. Another pastime for us boys was rolling hoops (bicycle wheels minus the spokes) chased after, and struck by a stick or piece of metal to keep it moving - pastimes that did not require any expensive equipment.

Like many boys my age, I grew up watching westerns on Black and White television, but in the days before having a telly at home; a group of us boys regularly watched Hopalong Cassidy on his white steed, Topper, in Alwyn Harris's house in James Street. From a young age my favourite was Roy Rogers, was there ever a more exciting sight than watching Roy and Trigger riding majestically across the television screen. Roy Rogers was the most popular brand with children of the 1950s; I vividly remember wearing a Roy Rogers cowboy outfit, and a pair of holstered six-shooters, riding my cousin's horse Paddy in a Brithdir carnival. An entire generation grew up wanting to be Roy Rogers. Gene Autry on Champion would ride into town, help someone in distress, and then end each episode with a song before riding off into the sunset once again. On a fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty "Hi Ho Silver!" came the Lone Ranger with his faithful Indian companion Tonto alongside on Scout. These 1950s heroes sorted the baddies out and not a 'swear' word to be heard.

During my teenage years, Rock 'n' Roll came to T.V. with *Six-Five Special* and *Oh Boy*, but the one I remember most was *Disc-a-Gogo* mainly because, with a coach load of friends, we had the privilege of mingling with the stars for three episodes shot at Bristol studios. Another show I enjoyed was the Black and White Minstrel Show – not allowed today.

Looking back, I had a great childhood, I did not realize until years after that we were not well off, but I would not change a thing. They are what people refer to as the "good old days"..... I am inclined to agree.

*Royston Smith May 2020*

## SUPPLEMENT --- MARKETS AND FAIRS

The main focus of this supplement is **Nelson Market**, operating from the time of World War I and well-remembered by many local farmers and others not only as an important link in the local agricultural economy but also as a social event where they met fellow farmers, and caught up on farming community news. But fairs and markets have a long history, and, while markets were often held weekly, fairs were more likely to be annual events and associated with saints' days, many of which were celebrated not only as rare days off work but also as important landmarks in the farming calendar.

Glamorganshire markets and fairs in the later sixteenth century as in <b>Rice Merrick's <i>Morganiae Archaiographia, A Book of the Antiquities of Glamorganshire</i>:</b>		
<b>Markets</b>		
Tuesday		Cowbridge
Wednesday		Cardiff
Saturday		Cardiff
		Cowbridge
		Bridgend
		Swansea
Thursday (May to Christmas)		Caerphilly
Monday (May to Christmas)		Merthyr Tydfil.
<b>Fairs</b>		
Llandaff	St. Teilo's Day	9 February
	Whitsun Monday	After the seventh Sunday after Easter
Bridgend	Ascension Day	Fortieth day of Easter
	St. Leonard's Day	6 November
Neath	Corpus Christi Day	First Thursday after Trinity Sunday
	St. Margaret's Day	20 July
Cowbridge	Midsummer Day	24 June
	Holy Rood Day	14 September
Cardiff	St. Peter's Day	29 June
	Nativity of our Lady	7 September
	St. Andrew's Day	30 November
Ely Bridge	Mary Magdalen's Day	22 July
Llantrisant	Lammas Day	1 August
	May Day	1 May
	St. Luke's Day	18 October
Worlton (near St. Nicholas)	St. Lawrence's Day	10 August
St. Mary Hill	Assumption of our Lady	15 August
Boverton	St. Bartholomew's Day	24 August
Ogmore	St. Michael the Archangel Day	29 September (for seven days)
St. Nicholas	Sr. Nicholas Day	6 December
Swansea	Visitation of Our Lady, three days after St. Peter's	2 July
	Assumption of our Lady	15 August
		18 October
Penrice	St. Andrew's Day	30 November
Loughor	St. Michael's Day	29 September
Llangyfelach	St. David's Day	1 March

Rice Merrick described the Cardiff markets and fairs thus:

*In the south part of the guildhall, in the middle of four cross ways, is built a fair cross, quadrant, with joists, covered over with lead; under which, and near abouts, is the corn market twice kept weekly, viz. on Wednesday and Saturday.*

*In the High Street, which extendeth from the guildhall northward toward the castle, being a fair and wide street, is kept market for all other necessities to be sold, as aforesaid.*

*Within this town and the liberties thereof are two great fairs kept; viz. the first on St Peter and Paul's Day, the other on the Nativity of St Mary and St Andrew's Day.*

and, in Bridgend, is kept every Saturday a great market therein is sold corn [and] victuals, and often cattle and other merchandise are to be sold.

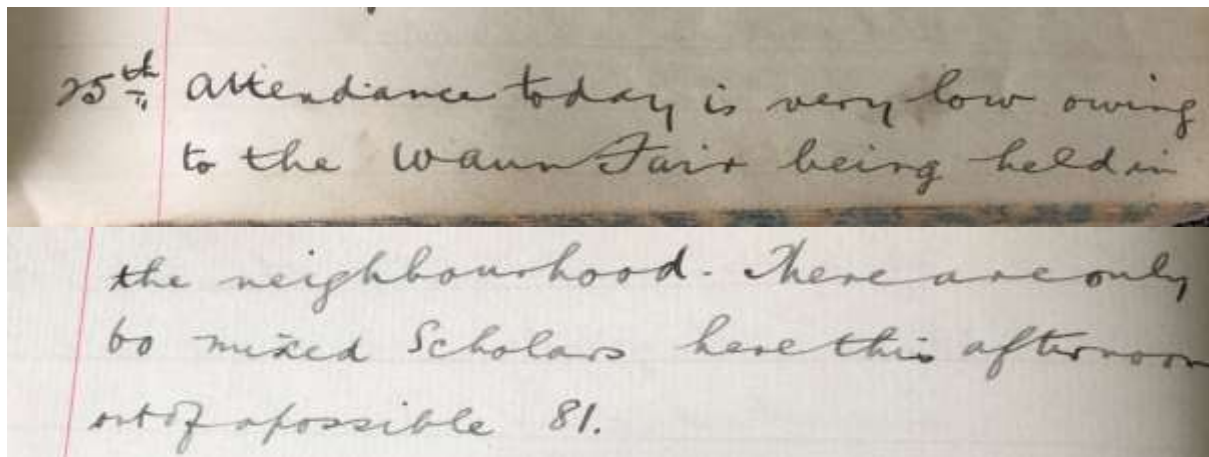
The diary of schoolmaster and clerk, **William Thomas, of Michaelston-super-Ely** (near St. Fagans), provides a rare glimpse into aspects of later eighteenth century life in south east Glamorganshire and beyond. While some entries refer to people he knew, this entry, of 24 June 1762, is about Cowbridge fair:-

*A fair in Cowbridge, one of the greatest fairs usually in our parts for selling cattle, when no more than 40 fat cattle were sold. Of them Mr. Lee, the cattle drover, bought from 26 to 30. Anybody did ask the price of store cattle, for no grass of the dryness of the earth to be had. The hay no more than common grass these few years past. The corn in and about Denis [sic] Powis, and in all thin ground and on stony clay, burn up by patches by degrees, which makes me say that this is the curse of God on mankind, especially on farmers and renters, for few of them shall have much profit from their land these years. But blessed be God, choice wheat and barley on fat, moist, low ground.*

### Waun Fair

One of the best known, and earliest, fairs in the Gelligaer area was **Waun Fair**. What is known about Waun Fair, the centuries-old tracks leading to it, and the dealers (coming from all directions, from west and mid Wales, as well as the marcher lands and south west England, and sometimes from further afield) who visited it, sheds light on local links with the wider agricultural community. For a detailed account of the history and importance of this fair see Judith Jones' *Twynywaun and its fair to the end of the nineteenth century* (Merthyr Historian volume 27).

By the later eighteenth century, Waun Fairs were more than livestock markets: they were hiring fairs and, over the following decades, the widening range of market stalls and entertainments attracted many local people for social rather than commercial reasons. It was not uncommon for teachers in charge of local schools to note Waun Fair, as a reason for low attendance as witnessed by this extract from Bute Town school log book on 25 September 1899.



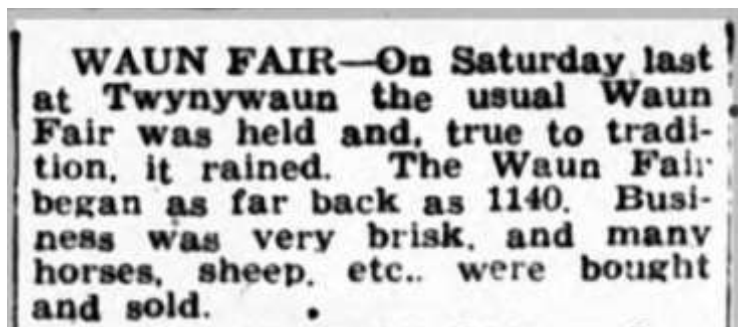
Schools were not the only places where attendance was affected by Waun Fair as, on Tuesday 13 May 1766, Charles Wood made this entry in his journal:

*It rains. Absent David John, John Richard, Edward Jo., Wm John, Thomas Lloyd, Walter Wm, Richard John, Morgan Evan Jenkins, Morgan Evans, Masons. There is a new Mason come Thos. Samuel. This being the Waim [sic] Fair several Labourers absent. .... Two smiths have worked all this day notwithstanding the Wane [sic] Fair. ....*

and, throughout his diary, Charles Wood seems to have accepted many workers would be absent on the days of Waun Fair.

The diaries and notes of Charles Wood (1702-74) shed light on several of the enterprises on which he worked. His entries of 1766-7, made while he was supervising the building of what became Cyfarthfa Ironworks, show not only the process of constructing an early coke-fired blast furnace but also aspects of life in a remote upland area about to be transformed by industrialisation. Charles

Wood was the resident agent at the works and his detailed daily record of work, negotiations with landowners and other ironmasters, daily lists of workmen and work undertaken, was the basis for his regular progress reports to partners, William Brownrigg and Anthony Bacon.

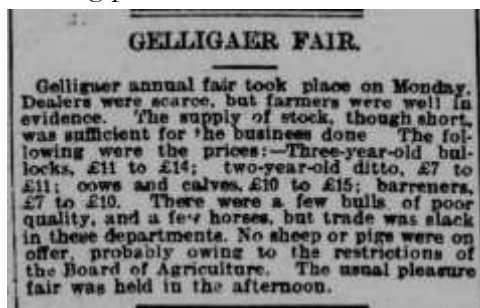


This extract is from *Merthyr Express* 9 September 1944 (page 8). Maybe some *Gelligaer Times* readers attended this or other Waun Fairs held during WW2. If so, GHS will be pleased to hear your memories.

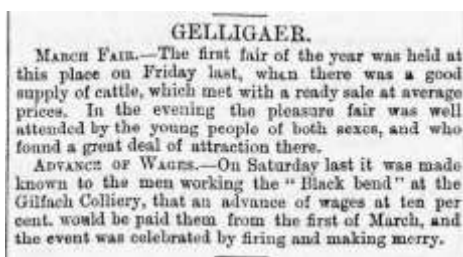
### Gelligaer Fair

The origins of **Gelligaer Fair** are unclear, but some nineteenth century local newspapers shed light on the nature of this annual event. The earliest reference to the fair in sources studied to date is the announcement (in *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian* on 21 February 1857) that Gelligaer fair would take place on Wednesday 25 March 1857.

This extract from *Cardiff Times*, 2 April 1870 (page 3), mentions not only the cattle sale at Gelligaer, but also the evening pleasure fair.

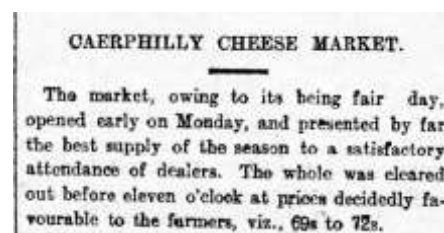


By the turn of the century, the stock offered for sale and the number of dealers present had declined. Further research may shed light on the nature of the Board of Agriculture restrictions mentioned in this report taken from *Western Mail* 27 March 1900 (page 3), and reveal information about the demise of Gelligaer Fair.



### Caerphilly Cheese Market

No account of local fairs and markets is complete without a reference to Caerphilly Cheese Market which, according to this extract from *South Wales Daily News* 31 July 1896 (page 6), came into being in the mid eighteenth century. The extract from *Glamorgan Free Press* 14 October 1899 (page 2) shows that trade was good at the end of the century.



### Nelson Market

In 1958 *Merthyr Express* included this informative item entitled **MODERN MART BEGAN IN BACK YARD**, by D. T. Lewis

*Nelson Fat Stock Market, now regarded as one of the most important in South Wales, came into existence during World War 1, and was started by the Llanfabon Branch of the National Farmers Union.*

*From very humble beginnings in the back yard of the Nelson Inn, it has developed into a modern market place, equipped with every up-to-date device for the convenience of vendors and buyers.*

*Veteran farmer 84-year-old John Morgan, Maesmabon Farm, who was chairman of the Llanfabon Branch NFU when the Cattle Market Association (as it was then known) was formed, told me that the pioneer members were all well-known figures in agricultural circles. They included Messrs. J. J. Parry (Pengraigfargoed), Sam Evans (Llancaiach Fawr), William Roberts (Ty Llwyd), James Edwards (Ty Draw), Henry Thomas (Berthgron), Daniel Jenkins (Gellibir), William Edwards (Top Hill), Tom Jenkins (Bryndu), E. Edmunds (Maesybryn) and the Evans Brothers (Cefn Forest).*

**First Secretary**

*Mr. J. J. Parry was the first secretary and under his dynamic leadership, Nelson soon became widely known in the Merthyr, Aberdare, Rhymney and Rhondda valleys and in West Monmouthshire as a grading centre. From the yard of the Lord Nelson the mart was eventually transferred to the Caerphilly Council's yard to the rear of the High Street and here the animals were weighed.*

*The association was now put on a firmer foundation by members and friends taking up £5 shares in it, and a lease was secured on the Old Crown Fields (the present site). The first pens were purchased from the Ely Mart by Messrs John Morgan and Edmond Edmunds and very soon the Nelson Fat Stock Market opened for business once a fortnight.*

### **New Pens**

*Now into the picture steps the firm of Messrs Seth Phillips and Son, auctioneers etc. of Pontllanfraith. Mr. W. T. Phillips (the son) was appointed auctioneer and under his direction the mart continued to make grand progress. Assisting him at the rostrum was his young clerk, Mr. W. Trevor Davies who, upon the death of Mr. Phillips, took over the reins and worthily maintained the high tradition of the firm. Mr. Davies, now an F. A. I. is also secretary of the Mynyddishwyn Ploughing and Hedging Society and the mainspring behind the great annual Bedwelly Agricultural Show at Blackwood.*

*The new Market Place was officially opened in 1923 by the late Mr. J. R. Thomas, J.P., the Llechwen, but there is a great difference in its appearance today. A few years ago the association sold out its interest in it to Mr. Seth Phillips and Son, and the firm immediately put in hand a scheme to bring it in line with the best markets in the country. The site has been fitted out with new pens, where the animals are graded before going under the hammer. Special emphasis has been laid on hygienic conditions in order that the mart shall meet all TT requirements.*

*From being held once fortnightly, the mart is now held every Monday and attracts butchers and dealers from all parts of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire. There are also special events at Christmas and Easter, when the auctioneers offer prizes for the best entries.*

*Gone are the days when cattle, sheep and pigs had to hoof it to the mart; today they arrive and depart in huge lorries and in motor-propelled farm vehicles.*

### **Progress**

*Mr. Tom Jenkins, Bryndu Farm, who was secretary of the Nelson Cattle Market Association for many years still takes an active interest in its activities so also do Mr. William Edwards, Mr. Elias Evans and Mr. John Morgan, the only three survivors of the original founders, with Mr. Jenkins.*

*So rapidly has the mart progressed and so extensive is the amount of livestock dealt with each week that the firm has now acquired more land adjoining the Crown Fields and this will in due course provide added facilities.*

*There is no questioning the fact that Nelson is ideally situated for serving a very wide area, Standing midway between Merthyr and Pontypridd it is a typical Welsh village, its original name being Ffos-y-Gerddinan (The Bog of the Mountain Ash). It derived its present name as a result of a visit paid by Admiral Lord Nelson in 1800, who was on his way to Merthyr,*

*The Admiral and his party stopped for lunch in the old inn in Commercial Street which was then nameless, and some time later the villagers named the inn after him. Soon afterwards the name of the village was also changed to Nelson. And so history was made, for it was in the yard of the 300-year-old inn that Nelson Fat Stock Mart had its humble origin. It is also interesting to note that one of the founders, the late Samuel Evans, lived in the famous old semi-fortified Tudor mansion house known as Llancaiach Fawr, now scheduled as a place of historical interest by the National Trust. Llancaiach Fawr was once the home of Col. Edward Pritchard, High Sheriff of Glamorgan and governor of Cardiff Castle.*

### **Activity**

*It was during his tenure that Llancaiach had a brief moment of glory when in 1633 King Charles halted there for lunch while on his way to Brecon. The old mansion, now the home of Mr. K. J. Williams, a farmer, is situated about one mile from the fat stock market and, like the Lord Nelson, is an interesting link between the past and present.*

*The Nelson Fat Stock Market may not rival those at Hereford, Carmarthen etc., for size, yet it is proving equally as important in its service to the hillside farmers, And every Monday morning there are scenes of great activity as the stock moves in and out and farmers meet to discuss topics of the day affecting their welfare.*

### **Judith's memories of Nelson market.**

*My earliest memories are of some Monday mornings in autumn when my father would ask me to get up early to help with the milking before going to school so that he could go to Nelson Market with lambs. As a farmer myself, I remember similar Monday mornings, but this time it was my*

children who were taken down early to catch the school bus just outside Bedlinog so that I could get back to load the lambs for market.

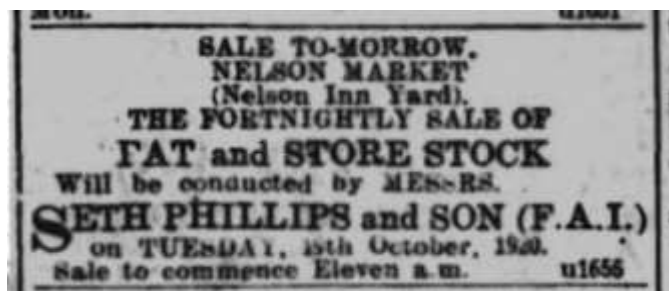
At this time, early to late 1980s, although known as the *cattle market*, there was only very occasionally a cow for sale there; most weeks there were only that year's wether lambs which were ready for slaughter. The company, *Seth Phillips and Son* still ran the market but the owner and auctioneer by this time was Alan Webb.

Special annual markets were also held. In September and October were the Nelson ewe sale and then a fortnight later, the ram sale (rams still sold in guineas). These had been established as the main events for a South Wales sheep breed now known as "Nelson" type (although Alan Webb also ran additional sales at Hafodyrnyns) and have always attracted buyers from all parts of Wales and west and south west England. The Christmas market was held on about the second Monday in December and was followed by a charity auction (after a visit to local hostelrys) - although this latter event was eventually moved to an evening at Nelson Rugby Club.

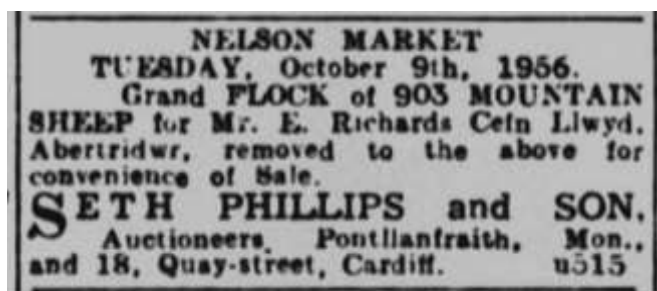
The tradition of the annual ewe and ram sales has continued, as has the Christmas farmer's charity auction. All are now held by auctioneer (and Farmer's Union of Wales representative) Glyn Davies, although the sales venue has changed to Coed Top Hill, Gelligaer. These are what are left of what must have been a thriving stock market at Nelson through much of the twentieth century. The stock market site is now a housing estate. Similarly other South Wales fatstock markets have moved out of their town centre sites, or closed altogether – Abergavenny market, for example has relocated to a site near Raglan. Newport market has closed, although Penderyn still retains its original site close to The Lamb public house.

A different type of memory of the Nelson Market site occurred after visiting Senghennydd with Gelligaer History Society in June 1981. On our return (in a minibus driven by David Mills), a group of us called to see the Gelligaer and District Sheep Shearing Society's shearing match which was being held in Nelson Market. I remember this occasion so vividly because I stayed on at the shearing match - and missed my only opportunity of going up into the tower at Gelligaer Parish Church, which is where the other G.H.S. members went!

*Western Mail* 18 October 1920 -- a front page advertisement of the fortnightly livestock sale of in Nelson Market. Today's front pages are very different. Do any readers of *Gelligaer Times* remember reading newspapers with advertisements on the front page? And do you know why it was customary for advertisements to appear on the front page of newspapers?



The advertisement right is taken from the front page of *Merthyr Express* 22 October 1938.



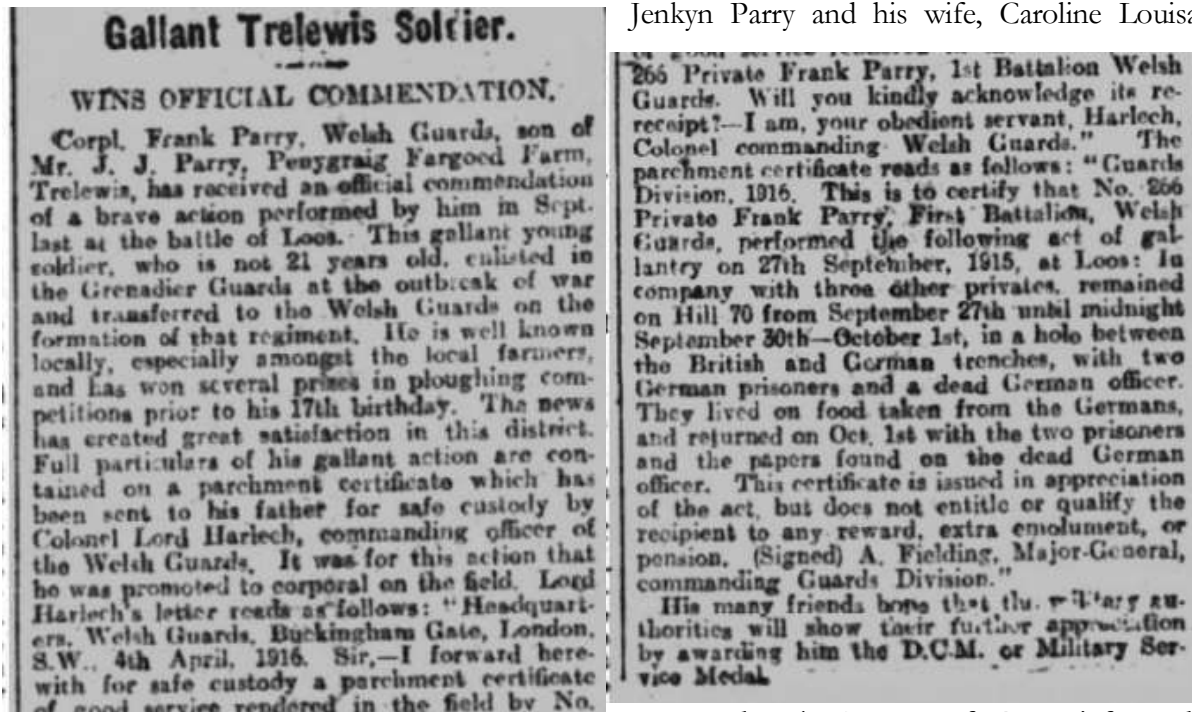
The advertisement above for a flock sale is taken from *Western Mail* 15 September 1956, and, by then, advertisements had moved from the front page (this was on page 8).

By the 1950s, it was less common for people to post local or regional newspapers to family members or friends who had left their native area for work elsewhere (in places such as the South Wales Valleys). It was not unusual for the front page to be damaged in transit and so advertisements (on the front page) rather than interesting items of local news (on inside pages) may have become unreadable.

### The people associated with Nelson Market

There are many references in sources such as local newspapers, to the life and work of some of the people associated with the establishment and operation of Nelson Market over the decades, and further research is recommended. What follows relates to John Jenkyn Parry of Pencraigfargoed, the Market's first secretary, and, then, a relative newcomer to Gelligaer parish.

This extract from *Merthyr Express* 15 April 1916, is about Francis (Frank) Goring Parry, son of John Jenkyn Parry and his wife, Caroline Louisa



Raymond, née James, of Pencraigfargoed, Trelewis. Sadly, this commendation was followed, not by further honours, but death, on 22 September 1916, from wounds suffered in conflict. He was buried in grave IV. H. 2. in Heilly Station Cemetery, Mericourt L'Abbe, Somme, and is commemorated on Trelewis war memorial. John Jenkyn Parry and his wife were natives of south west Wales, and Frank was just an infant when the family arrived in Gelligaer parish. It is not clear why John Jenkyn Parry made the move, but his involvement with local activities, including Nelson Market, show that he settled well into his new environment. When the 1901 census was taken, the family was at Brynrhe (near Deri), but they had moved to Pencraigfargoed (near Trelewis) before that of 1911. Like many other local farmers in the early twentieth century, the Parry family was engaged in dairy farming and, according to the census return, his oldest daughter was responsible for the dairy work. While Frank and his older sister, and their parents, spoke both English and Welsh, the younger children spoke English only. Thus, English, the language of education, was the language of the Parry household, while the Welsh language was moving on a path that was to see its survival threatened. There are numerous references to John Jenkyn Parry and his farming activities in local newspapers which merit further study.

**IF YOU HAVE COMMENTS AND/OR QUESTIONS ON THIS NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENT, OR HAVE SOME INTERESTING FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS OR STORIES FOR INCLUSION IN A FUTURE SUPPLEMENT PLEASE CONTACT**

[www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) or [chairmen@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairmen@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)