



GELLIGAER TIMES

NEWSLETTER OF GELLIGAER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Issue No. 47 August 2020

MESSAGE TO READERS OF GELLIGAER TIMES FROM GHS CHAIR

Hope you are all keeping safe and finding interesting things to keep you occupied as the country gradually moves out of lockdown. In the absence of a newsletter editor, this newsletter, with some news, an essay on Llancaiach Colliery, and a collection of items associated with the theme of **SUMMER** has been prepared by GHS committee. I hope it has something to interest you, and, perhaps, some of you will respond with comments and/or questions, or even indicate that you would like to edit a future issue. If so, please contact chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk or www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk

NEWS

Thank you to those readers who responded to July's *Gelligaer Times* with your opinion about attending a GHS meeting in Llancaiach Fawr in September 2020 and in subsequent months. At the time of writing, Welsh Government COVID 19 Regulations **do NOT allow meetings such as those of GHS**. GHS Officers and Committee will continue to review the situation in the light of developments, and update GHS website www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk and issue a newsletter when face-to-face meetings can be resumed.

You may like to keep up-to-date with the position in Llancaiach Fawr and with Welsh Government COVID 19 Regulations by checking their websites:

<https://your.caerphilly.gov.uk/llancaiachfawr/content/welcome-llancaiach-fawr>
<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>

And a date for your diary – we hope that the situation will have improved by March 2021 as Llancaiach Fawr has reserved **Saturday 20 March 2021** for the conference that was postponed in March 2020. Booking forms will be available in January 2021. Thank you to those who left their fee in GHS. You will be contacted in January 2021.

As you will read in this newsletter, ***Gelligaer Volume 27*** will be published shortly. Normally this would be available for purchase at GHS September (and later) meeting, but as this will not be possible, **GHS members (2019-20) who wish to have a copy posted, please send your postal address (including post code) to GHS website www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk or chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk**

If you wish to make a **payment to GHS**, you can

- Post cheque to the Treasurer (who will send the address to those who ask)
- BACs payment (Treasurer will supply GHS bank details to those who ask)
- Set up a direct debit/standing order (Treasurer will supply details to those who ask)

RESEARCH -- a useful link to online resources for Welsh history created by Professor Martin Johnes, Swansea University <https://martinjohnes.com/2020/03/19/digital-resources-on-welsh-history-1847-1947/>

REMINDER -- Deadline for submissions for the Diamond Jubilee publication is 31 December 2020.

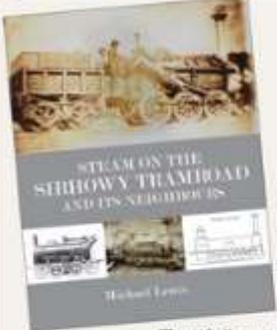
GHS continues to receive a variety of **QUERIES RELATING TO THE HISTORY AND HERITAGE OF GELLIGAER PARISH AND NEIGHBOURING AREAS**. One recent query was from the research team of BBC Wales' Weatherman Walking and concerned a 20th century Gelligaer resident of West Indian origins.

PUBLICATIONS THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST TO YOU If any readers have information about any other publications that may be of interest, please send details so they can be included in a future newsletter.

Llanilltud Fawr - the story of a Celtic Christian Community by Philip Morris (President, Llantwit Major History Society, published by Y Lolfa, and can be purchased from bookshops, from the publishers at www.ylolfa.com, and all the on-line booksellers such as Amazon and Book Depository. (<https://www.ylolfa.com/articles/one-of-british-historys-greatest-untold-stories-told-for-first-time> for more details)

The Roman Villa of Llantwit Major by Dr David Rogers, a member of Llantwit Major Local History Society, describes in detail the three excavations carried out on the villa remains, and portrays the people involved and their relationships with the local populace and the wider academic community. Published in paperback by Carreg Gwalch and available from the publishers at £8.95. ISBN 978-1-84524-307-4

NEW PUBLICATION from the RCHS
A significant treatise on the birth of early railways



Steam on the Sirhowy Tramroad and its Neighbours
BY
MICHAEL LEWIS

176 pages
122 illustrations including maps, many in colour
HARDBACK
£25 post free to the UK

To be published on 7 September 2020

THE 4ft 4in gauge Sirhowy Tramroad in South Wales was, when opened, the longest railway anywhere in the world. Carrying iron and coal from Tredegar to Newport between 1804 and 1860, it was soon joined by several other lines to form the largest connected system of plateways that ever existed. They had an astonishing number of some eighty locomotives – often highly idiosyncratic in design and construction.

THIS book is not only an important study of these pioneer locomotives but also a human story. It relates how a happy-go-lucky workforce learnt by much trial and error how to run a railway on which new-fangled steam power was awkwardly intermingled with old-fangled horse traction. At the same time it is the story of ordinary members of the public coming to terms with a new element in their lives, whether suffering innocently from its presence or deliberately exploiting it at the risk of life and limb. The text is profusely illustrated and many of the images are hitherto unpublished.

DR MICHAEL LEWIS, an eminent industrial archaeologist, is acknowledged as one of the leading authorities on early railways. One of his previous works, *How Ffestiniog got its Railway*, was the first book to be published by the RCHS in 1965.

To order this book please go online to www.rchs.org.uk or write to RCHS Books, 28 Christ Church Close, Stamford PE9 1HS enclosing a cheque payable to 'RCHS'

Elaine Morgan: A Life Behind The Screen by Dr. Daryl Leeworthy (last person to speak at GHS meeting before lockdown) is due to be published (by Seren Books) 2 November 2020 to mark the centenary of Elaine Morgan's birth. £9.99 ISBN: 978-1-781-72604-4

Daryl has informed GHS that he is currently working on a biography of Gwyn Thomas, so that will be something to look out for in the future.

Morgan Jones: Man of Conscience by Wayne David, published 2019, Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press. In 2006, Wayne David M.P. published a study of Ness Edwards, who, like Morgan Jones was one of his predecessors as Labour M.P. for Caerphilly Division.

Some readers may recall that the daughter and grandson of Morgan Jones M.P. travelled from Bath to hear Wayne David, M.P., speak on Morgan Jones at GHS conference in October 2012. *Gelligaer* volume 21 carried Wayne David's article *Morgan Jones and the First World War*.

Morgan Phillips: Labour Party Secretary, his reminiscences edited by his son, Morgan D. Phillips, published 2018, Nottingham: Spokesman Press.

Morgan Phillips (1902-63) was a Welsh-speaking ex-miner, who became General Secretary of the British Labour Party 1944-62 and occupied a similar position in the Socialist International movement 1952-57. He was born in Aberdare, but was young when his father, a coal miner, took the family to Bargoed, and when the 1911 census was taken, he was listed in the family home, 20 Francis Street, Bargoed. While in Bargoed, Morgan Phillips attended the local Wesleyan Methodist chapel and grew interested in Labour politics. In spite of his parents' opposition, he left school aged 14, and found employment in the local colliery.

As you can see from this cover of GHS journal *Gelligaer* Volume 27, it includes a variety of articles and contributors hope that you will find something of interest in it.

Gelligaer Historical Society
Founded 1961
 The Society aims to study local history in the area of the old parish / urban district of Gelligaer which includes the modern communities of Pontlottyn, Tirphil, Brithdir, Bargoed, Hengoed, Ystrad Mynach, Trelewis, Beddimg, Fochriw and Deri as well as the village of Gelligaer itself.

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GELLIGAER HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 ESTABLISHED 1961

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www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk

LLANCAIACH COLLIERY

Greg Buick

Although, in general, the Llancaiach estate is well documented with deeds going back to the 16th century and farm leases to the 17th century, there seems to be a gap in the early 19th century. The information about the early history of the colliery on Llancaiach Fawr therefore comes primarily from the newspaper cuttings shown below.

Another colliery, on rather an extensive scale, is about to be opened on the Llancaiach Estate, (Gelligaer), the joint property of Lord Dynevor and J. M. Richards, Esq. Sir Christopher Smith, Bart. of Worcestershire, is said to be concerned in this new company. Considerable progress has been made in sinking.

Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian, Glamorgan, Monmouth and Brecon Gazette
20 September 1836

GLAMORGANSHIRE COAL-FIELD.—Within the last few days, two new veins of coal have been struck in the hilly district, likely to furnish the market with a very abundant supply of superior coals. The one is of a bituminous and very cheerful quality, on the Llancaiach estate, the joint property of Lord Dynevor and J. M. Richards, Esq., which is worked by the under lessees of Sir Christopher Smith, Bart. Monmouthshire Merlin 16 December 1837

Messrs. Duncan and Co, the proprietors of Llancaiach Collieries, kindly distributed amongst the poor at Cardiff the first boat load of coals brought to that town which at this season of the year, proved a most welcome donation. We understand these excellent collieries will soon be in full work, and we wish the spirited proprietors every success.

The Glamorgan Monmouth and Brecon Gazette and Merthyr Guardian
24 February 1838

Sir Christopher Smith was the son of Sir William Smith, of Eardiston, Worcestershire, who had built the Llganvabon Tramroad¹ around 1810. This tramroad was vital to any coal mining in the area around Llancaiach Fawr as it enabled the coal to be transported to the Glamorganshire Canal and thus to Cardiff for sale. Although Sir Christopher Smith is said to be the lessee, there is no evidence of this except in the newspapers. The colliery proprietor was listed as Messrs Duncan and Co. and but the papers provide no evidence as to who the partners were.

The first load of coal arrived in Cardiff in February 1838, and Duncan and Co. did what Thomas Powell had done seven years earlier in distributing a load of coal amongst the poor at Cardiff – whether this was something that had

been started by Thomas Powell and become a tradition or was just coincidence is not known, but in both cases it was successful in getting publicity.

Newspaper reports show that in 1838 Duncan and Co. shipped 6,300 tons of coal on the Glamorganshire Canal and this is presumed to have been their first year's production. In 1839 they shipped 13,386 tons, and in 1840 22,285 tons. In 1842 they started shipping coal by the Llancaiach Branch of the Taff Vale Railway Company. (Llancaiach station was actually at Nelson). Annual production figures are not available again until 1853 when Gelligaer parish rates show they raised 38,991 tons. For subsequent years tonnage see below.

The mine was visited by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Children's Employment which reported in 1842. At the time of the visit, 56 males were employed, 40 of whom were adults, 10 were between 13 and 18 years of age, and 6 were under 13 years old. The mine was mentioned as having *steam power, 24 horses, winding engine raises coal 60 yards to a level 24 yards below the surface, coal brought from the workings to the pit bottom by horses.* The level 24 yards below the surface would have allowed the coal to be transported out to the tramroad which took the coal to the Llanvabon tramway without having to be raised an extra 24 yards.

Mr. Richard Andrews, *overseer* at the mine, was reported as having said

Colliers take their children to work below ground at very early ages. There is one little fellow, by the name John Davis, helping his father, who is certainly not more than five years old. It is not infrequent for colliers here to take them down, even in petticoats, to claim a dram. The effect of taking children down so young has a very bad influence

¹ See The Glamorganshire and Aberdare Canals, Stephen Rowson & Ian L. Wright, Black Dwarf Publications, 2001, pp 167-180.

on their health. In the first place they are half starved below, as they never can get their meat like other people and they never grow like other children. As to education, it is quite out of the question. No lad can be thoroughly useful till he is 13 or 14 years of age and it is poverty or dissipation which causes men thus to deprive their children of light and air. At this work nearly half the men can read Welsh but very few of them can read English which keeps them all dark and the wives and daughters are excessively ignorant. The girls are sent to work in farm houses at 10 and 12 years of age. They get their food for their labour for two and three years and afterwards from 40s. to 60s. a year. I see no difference between the agriculturists and the colliers of this quarter, There may indeed, be a shade of difference in the intelligence of the two classes in favour of the colliers. There are very few cases of bastardy or desertion as it is customary amongst the men to marry when the subject to asthmatic complaints and to rheumatism arising from the quantity of water in the pits most of them have large families.²

In 1824 Richard Andrews had been Sir Christopher Smith's agent at Llanvabon Colliery, and in 1835 he had been working for Thomas Powell at the Gellygaer/Gelliargwellt Colliery. The *Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian Glamorgan Monmouth and Brecon Gazette*, 5 November 1859, reported that Mr. Richard Andrews, aged 81, had died October 26, and *He was for upwards of twenty years coal agent to Messrs. Duncan & Co., Llancaiach Colliery, Gelligaer. His character was unimpeachable, and his loss will be deeply felt at the colliery for many years.*



Monmouthshire Merlin, 12 May 1849, mentions Jonathan Worthington as the proprietor of Llancaiach Colliery, However Duncan and Co. continue to be shown as the owners. Jonathan Worthington was born in Stourport, Worcestershire, in 1796 into what would appear to be a "gentry" family. In 1841 he was recorded as a carrier living in Stourport with his wife and 4 children. By 1851 he was a *Colliery Proprietor* living at 'Llancaiach Works' with his

wife and 17-year-old daughter – this was probably Llancaiach House, shown left in a modern photograph. He was also a director of Rhymney Railway.

On 26 July 1853, the *London Gazette* reported the dissolution of Duncan and Co as shown below. It is interesting to note that Duncan and Co. also had an interest in Gilfachmaen-isaf. This farm is adjacent to two Llancaiach estate-owned farms which are adjacent north-west to Llancaiach Fawr. It is not obvious how the coal would have been shipped to Cardiff unless it was mined from the Llancaiach Colliery.

NOTICE is hereby given, that the Partnership heretofore subsisting between us the undersigned, John Garmston and Jonathan Worthington, carrying on business in copartnership together at the Llancaiach and Gilfach Mainisha Collieries, and also at Cardiff, in South Wales and elsewhere, under the name or style of Duncan and Company, has been this day dissolved by mutual consent. All accounts due and owing to the said partnership will be received and paid by the said Jonathan Worthington, who will carry on the business henceforth on his own account. —Dated the 19th day of July, 1853.

John Garmston.

London Gazette 26 July 1853 *Jonn. Worthington.*

Worcestershire newspapers show that, in the 1830s, John Garmston and Jonathan Worthington had a business association with an Archibald Duncan. The latter died in 1839 and in his will wrote: *I also give and bequeath unto the said John Garmston my five fifteenth shares in the Llancaiach Colliery and my remaining fifteenth share therein I give and bequeath unto my friend Jonathan Worthington of Stourport.* There is no indication as to who held the other nine fifteenth shares but Duncan & Co. was likely a partnership of Worcestershire investors.

Another Worcestershire connection to Llancaiach Colliery is provided by Benjamin Wood and Co., who, in 1867, had 6 coke ovens at the colliery. This had increased to 17 by 1873, and they continued to be recorded until 1880. Benjamin Wood & Co. was also the proprietor of Deri Newydd colliery from 1872-75. When Benjamin Wood appeared before court, under the

² Copy of unpublished draft as transcribed by Ian Winstanley.

Bankruptcy Act, 1869, in March 1876, he was described as carrying on business as *Wood and Co., and lately at the Deri and Cefn Glaes Collieries, in the respective parishes of Gellygaer and Merthyr Tydfil, and the Yew Tree and Kedings Collieries, and The Haughton Colliery, all in the parish of Kingswinford, in the county of Stafford, Coke Manufacturer and Coal Master, , and residing at Oldswinford in the county of Worcester.*

A lease of 1876 indicates that in 1859 a new lease was granted by Llancaiach estate. The reason for this is not known. The mine's ownership continued to be shown as Duncan and Co. in Gelligaer parish rates until 1861.

Jonathan Worthington died, aged 67, 12 April 1860. George Samuel Worthington, Jonathan's second son, became the proprietor of Llancaiach Colliery, and in 1861, aged 32, he lived at Llancaiach House. He continued living at Llancaiach House as proprietor of the mine until 1873. Although at the time of the 1871 census he was visiting Charles H. Williams at Roath Park.

In 1873 George Worthington agreed to sell the mine to a company of investors from the north-east of England who traded under the name of Powell's Gellygaer Colliery Company. They appear to have had no Welsh connection. At the same time the Company also agreed to buy the neighbouring Gellygaer/Gelliargwellt Colliery from Thomas Powell's heirs. In 1874 their partnership was incorporated under the name Powell's Gellygaer Colliery Company Limited, with the collieries valued at £90,000 and the original partners as shareholders. According to a Memorandum of Agreement of 4 June 1874 they, *in the year 1873, agreed to purchase the Leasehold Collieries known as the Gellygaer Colliery and the Llancaiach Colliery, , and they were let into possession respectively on the Thirtieth day of July, 1873, and carried on and worked the said Collieries* They were legally assigned the collieries on 30 November and 2 December 1873 respectively.³ In the case of the Llancaiach Colliery, the previous lease of 1859 was surrendered and Llancaiach estate granted a new lease of lands in Gelligaer and Llanfabon.⁴

The enterprise was not a success, and operations ceased in 1880. In fact they surrendered their lease of the Llancaiach estate lands 18 August 1879 and the lands were granted to Harris Navigation Coal Co. Ltd. The latter was sinking a deep mine at what was to become Treharris, and subsequent mining under the land would have been from that colliery. As was required by law, plans of the abandoned mines were filed with the Home Office 8 August 1881.

However, that was not the end of mining at Llancaiach Fawr, as, in 1891, W. C. Beddoe & Co. reopened a mine to exploit the Mynyddislwyn Rider vein of coal. The Beddoe family had been carrying on such mining endeavours for many years. On 5 October 1894 the company was incorporated as Llancaiach Collieries Company Limited⁵, and they continued to mine at Llancaiach until 1905. The plans of the abandoned mine were deposited for the final time 11 July 1905.

Table showing the coal raised at Llancaiach Colliery upon which Gelligaer parish rates were calculated⁶

Date	Tons	Source	Date	Tons	Source	Date	Tons	Source	Date	Tons	Source
1855	26,516	GA P2-13	1864	51,403	as below	1872	37,597	BGS 1872	1880	48,241	BGS 1880
1856	25,537	GA P2-14	1865	45,706	DG-D-1-19	1873	35,500	BGS 1873			
1858	41,138	GA P2-99	1866	50,242	GA P2-38	1874	35,684	BGS 1874	1891	3,869	GA P2-89
1859	46,695	GA P2-101	1967	50,382	as below	1875	17,654	BGS 1875	1892	5,741	GA P2-91
1860	59,909	as below	1868	41,396	BGS 1868	1876	24,906	BGS 1876	1893	9,511	GA P2-93
1861	54,215	DG-D-1-19	1869	47,837	BGS 1869	1877	25,633	BGS 1877			
1862	41,823	GA P2-25	1870	46,654	BGS 1870	1878	22,135	BGS 1878			
1863	46,845	GA P2-26	1871	53,244	BGS 1871	1879	40,772	BGS 1879			

³ National Archives BT 31/1983/8483 – incorporation of Powell's Gellygaer Colliery Company Limited.

⁴ Glamorgan Archives DWP.

⁵ National Archives BT 31/5974/42128 – incorporation of Llancaiach Collieries Company Limited.

⁶ Other coal may have been mined from under the neighbouring parish of Llanfabon.

SUPPLEMENT --- SUMMER

This supplement focuses on the theme of **SUMMER**, which we usually expect to be the warmest season of the year. It runs from June to September in the Northern Hemisphere, and astronomical summer is from Midsummer Day to Michaelmas, while meteorological summer is from 1 June to 31 August. During summer, many people tend to spend more time out-of-doors, in their gardens, town parks or at the beach in UK or in more distant places. To the time of writing, Summer 2020 has been different from most summers in living memory as it has been shaped by the COVID 19 pandemic.

For centuries, people associated summer with farm tasks like shearing and haymaking, while members of more recent generations often think of summer as being the time of important examinations, cricket matches and athletics meets, as well as gardening tasks and the outdoor life. But, the unthinkable happened in 2020: not only have important examinations been cancelled, and schools closed to the majority of pupils, but also major sporting events have been affected. When the cricket season finally started, test matches were held behind closed-doors. Major events, such as the Tokyo Olympic Games, have been postponed for a year. And, for many, gardening became even more important than in previous years. Perhaps *Gelligaer Times* readers have been keeping a diary showing the ways in which the pandemic impacted on them and their families and friends.

What follows are some items relating to summer selected by GHS members.

Monmouthshire Merlin 1 July 1843 (page 4)

The delights of Summer are innumerable and cannot fail to awaken in a contemplative mind the purest sentiments of gratitude and praise.

All is loveliness and joy under the benignant reign of this charming season. The lover of Nature beholds her approach with joy, and discovers fresh beauties in her train. Her influence matures the plants and beauteously varied flowers, and all the useful fruits of the earth. She clothes the trees with grateful foliage, and perfects the ripening sustenance of man.

Cardiff Times 12 June 1863 (page 3)

From Dafydd ab Gwilym's *Address to the Summer*, requesting it to visit Glamorganshire, with its choicest blessings. Poem composed nearly 560 years before this newspaper appeared.

*Thou Summer! Father of delight,
With thy dense spray and thickets deep;
Gemm'd monarch, with thy rapt'tous light,
Rousing thy subject glens from sleep;*

THE YEAR WITHOUT A SUMMER

The eruption of Mount Tambora (in present day Indonesia) in April 1815 was followed by severe climate abnormalities and *the year without a summer*. The winter of 1815-6 saw average global temperatures fall by 0.4–0.7 °C (0.72–1.26 °F), and 1816 summer temperatures in Europe were the coldest on record between 1766 and 2000. The result was poor harvests and major food shortages across the Northern Hemisphere.

Farmers in Wales, many of whom were tenants on the big estates, were affected as poor harvests meant poor livestock and little or no income. They knew failure to pay their rent could mean eviction from the farm (their livelihood and their home). It was a traumatic time for them, and many of them talked about the hardships of *the year without a summer* for many years afterwards. Some of the stories passed down through the generations. For example, there are tales of farmers who did *women's work* in the household so that their womenfolk could spend the time knitting stockings for sale in the local market to earn cash to pay the rent. While I didn't hear any such specific stories relating to my Montgomeryshire farming ancestors, I recall my father passing on

comments about the general hardships his great grandparents and their neighbours had faced in south west Montgomeryshire during *the year without a summer*. His grandmother, who died in the 1920s when my father was a teenager, was born in the late 1820s, at a time when the memory of the hardships was still raw with her parents and many neighbouring farmers.

Annie Owen

EXTRACTS FROM A. G. STREET'S *COUNTRY CALENDAR*

This *Country Calendar* by Arthur George Street, farmer, journalist and broadcaster, sheds light on some August farming practices in Wiltshire in 1935.

Harvest is in full swing. Where wheat crops are good this year they are very good, and in some places they have been badly laid by thunderstorms. On one farm to-day I saw a field in which various methods of reaping were in evidence. There were a tractor binder, a horse binder, a grass mower, and three men with scythes, all busy.

A. G. Street continued, writing about harvesting the one small field of wheat on his farm. *It was a good upstanding piece of wheat, and I gave orders for the tractor and binder to drive straight round it without having first mown and cleared a path for the engine. "I'd be ashamed fer to do sich wickedness," said old Jim, when he found out what was going to happen. "I tell 'ee, 'tis brong."*⁷

To one who has a tidy eye and no thought of making farming pay, cutting round a piece of corn with the scythe and hand-tying the swath is a very nice thing to do, but from a fairly extensive experience of harvesting corn both in this country and in Canada, I know that it does not pay. A. G. Street criticised Jim's stooking as he leans the sheaves against each other, which makes a poor stook which will not stand up to the slightest puff of wind. The right way and the only way to stook is to drive the butt of each sheaf firmly into the ground.

I feel that I can speak with some authority in this matter of stoking, for I stoked two hundred acres of grain single-handed for four consecutive harvests in Western Canada. When a man has to keep up with an eight-foot binder and cook his own grub, and also stick up on Sundays any stooks which have fallen down, he puts them up firmly the first time

What a firm hold the glory of the corn harvest has in all our minds, no matter whether we be townsfolk or countryfolk! Corn-growing in this island today is a very minor branch of our farming industry, and its success or failure makes little or no difference to the lives of our huge town population. Yet you very rarely, practically never, hear a townsman ask his farmer friends how the cows are milking or how the hens are laying, but you often hear him asking about the well-being of the corn harvest. And the farmer, even such an inveterate grass-farmer as I, even if his corn harvest is an infinitesimal proportion of his business, obtains more joy and satisfaction from it than from the larger and more prosaic though more profitable branches of his farming.

.... I called on a neighbour to-day about some business, and found him up in the harvest field where he was carrying some winter oats, a nice crop. Here again was a horseless field, for the sheaves were being conveyed to the foot of the elevator by motor-car sweeps, and, as usual, the elevator was being driven by a small oil engine instead of by the horse gear of my youth.

And again the same effect of most recent farming changes was to be seen – a cheaper method of doing the job, but a resultant destruction of charm. It seemed wrong somehow to see a crop of corn being ricked without a sight of a wagon piled high with sheaves trundling slowly towards the rick, and I said as much to my friend. "We've destroyed all the romance and beauty in our calling," I remarked. "and we don't make half the money our fathers did." "True," he said, "but neither your father nor mine would be able to keep their farms, much less make a decent living out of them, if they carried on to-day with the old-time methods. And let me tell you that both of them would be doing just the same as we do if they were alive to-day, for they were hustlers during harvest as you and I well know."

To-day and yesterday we have been carrying wheat, and to-night about seven o'clock saw everything safely ricked, so another corn harvest in my life has come and gone. Jim began thatching the wheat ricks to-day, and this morning I drove up to find out how many more bundles of thatch he would require. Coming home I could not help noticing what a shaven look the countryside had.

Extracts selected by Judith Jones

⁷ A. G. Street writes elsewhere *It is difficult to write dialect just as it is spoken, but the Wiltshire version ... beginning with an R necessitates the prefixing of an H in order to obtain a little of the local flavour in the written form.*

SUNDAY SCHOOL OUTINGS

This, taken from chapter VIII (*Off to Barry Island*) in **W. Haydn Davies's** *The Right Place – The Right Time* (1972) captures an important event in the Bedlinog of his youth, the Sunday School outing to Barry Island:

... the Sunday School outing was enough to make our tongues start wagging and our minds juggling with the possibilities, The Saturday morning railway trip was about all the travelling the women did, We boys were seldom away from the village, and, as our fathers were at work most of the time, it was natural enough that an event such as a Sunday School outing should represent something akin to the great landmarks of history, such as the departure of the Pilgrim Fathers, the whole community being vitally effected. It was the highlight of the year, for on such an occasion whole families would feel bound to "shut shop", "pack up", lock the door, and then "off to go" to board the train that was to "whisk" them out of their valley stronghold to the wide open sandy spaces "ar lan y môr" (by the sea).

In those days places of worship dominated community life ---- and the Sunday School was of considerable educational significance. ---- but we lads were not anxious scholars. The carrot that kept a number plodding along the road of religious learning was companionship and a tangible reward such as the annual free trip "i ddŵr y môr (to the waters of the sea).

Wales has always been entirely democratic, and even for such an event as the Sunday School outing it was necessary for everything about the forthcoming trip to be discussed by all in the fullest possible detail. In the end it was nearly always Barry Island!

The scene at the station! It would have taken a Breughal or a Lowry to get it down on canvas. Soon after we young lads conglomerated in an argumentative band near the platforms, our parents would come rolling along, all sharp eyed and ready for an early emergency. The small children pattered along, their tiny hands grasping at mother's skirts. Babies were swaddled in shawls, because there were few prams about at that time. And take the fathers! They were the lords of creation this morning in their strong navy-blue suits, black bowler hats and beetle-shining boots. The younger "single men" might "sport" a boater with dangling black cords, But, mostly it is the noise of the pre-departure that I can still hear. The chatter and the counter-chatter, the shrieks and the cryings, the demands and the refusals – it all rose to muffle even the shrill whistle of the arriving train. The sight itself was enough to call forth three cheers, as though this was the only train that ever was.

The piling out of our village at Barry as soon as the train stopped meant the total sabotage of all those warnings uttered in the chapel vestry. We became a human avalanche ----

The Barry Island of that time was sand with the station representing a kind of oasis in the middle of it. There was no big dipper, no car park, no sidewalks, only the dunes, spread about like so many balding heads crowned with tough grass.

What would you have seen had you been there on Barry beach all those years ago? Frankly, pale faced miners attired in funeral sacks as though they were spirits assembling to cross the River of Jordan. It did not seem to matter to us what we looked like as we rushed past the startled horses, which drew the bathing machines down to the edge of the sea, and started showing off our special kind of butterfly stroke, the clumsy overarm and even the dog-paddle. We were all self-taught swimmers, our schools being the colliery feeders. If these were barred to us we made a swimming pool by damming the river with stone and clod.

*W. Haydn Davies continued his description of the day until *All aboard, Bedlinog train!*". So the train laboured up the incline, and in every carriage the smaller children were stowed on the racks, asleep like bugs in rugs. ... As the puffing grew increasingly laboured and we came in sight of home, there was a resurgence of energy among us ready to make an impression on the stay-at-homes by stories of our day's activities. ... it would be another twelve months before we enjoyed another [day] like it.*

*Now the day is over, night is drawing nigh
Shadows of the evening steal across the sky.*

The following GWR receipts for annual outings of **Bargoed United Sunday Schools** in the 1930s are from GHS member, Pat Davies, and show the numbers of children and adults as well as the cost.

(964 Mod.)

Messrs. *The Bargoed United*
Mr. *Sunday Schools*

Month *August* 193*9*

Dr. to **The Great Western Railway Company.**

In any communication in regard to this account, please quote:
Account issued by **BARGOED, G.W.15.** Station.

It will facilitate the Company's account-keeping if you will kindly remit the amount of this account to:-
**GOODS AGENT,
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY,
STATION.**

Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed and made payable to the order of the Great Western Railway Company

The only valid receipt is the Company's adhesive form.

Date	Pkg. No.	Station		Description of Goods and Mails	Weight				Rate	Amount of Paid on			Total Amount due on Consignment		
		From	To		Tons	Cwt	qrs	lbs		£	s	d	£	s	d
<i>July 29</i>		<i>Bargoed</i>	<i>Burry Island</i>	<i>3 Free tickets in coaches 2/8</i>											<i>8.0</i>

Consignments not exceeding 3 cwt. in weight are subject to the Scale and Regulations for small parcels by Merchandise Trains, contained in the General Handbook for Merchants. Consignments over 3 cwt. are charged not less than the charge for 3 cwt. at the Small Parcel Scale.

(964 Mod.)

Messrs. *The Bargoed*
United Sunday Schools.

Month *August* 193*9*

Dr. to **The Great Western Railway Company.**

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It will facilitate the Company's account-keeping if you will kindly remit the amount of this account to:-
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STATION.**

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The only valid receipt is the Company's adhesive form.

Date	Pkg. No.	Station		Description of Goods and Mails	Weight				Rate	Amount of Paid on			Total Amount due on Consignment		
		From	To		Tons	Cwt	qrs	lbs		£	s	d	£	s	d
<i>29</i>		<i>Bargoed</i>	<i>Burry Island</i>	<i>301 tickets</i>					<i>2/8</i>						<i>40.28</i>
				<i>44 children</i>					<i>1/4</i>						<i>29.80</i>
															<i>Total 69.08</i>

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.
BARGOED, G.W.15.
No. 47 *221.9*
Received as Account for the
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY
The sum of
£ 69 : 10 : 8
AMMogan Collector

Consignments not exceeding 3 cwt. in weight are subject to the Scale and Regulations for small parcels by Merchandise Trains, contained in the General Handbook for Merchants. Consignments over 3 cwt. are charged not less than the charge for 3 cwt. at the Small Parcel Scale.

(964 Med.)

Messrs United Schools
Mr. Bargoed

Month Aug 21 1938

Dr. to The Great Western Railway Company.

In any communication in regard to this account, please quote:
Account issued by BARGOED, G.W. 15 Station.

It will facilitate the Company's account-keeping if you will kindly remit the amount of this account to:—
GOODS AGENT,
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY,
BARGOED, G.W. STATION.

Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed and made payable to the order of the Great Western Railway Company.

The only valid receipt is the Company's adhesive form.

Date	Ptn No.	Station		Name of Consignor	Description of Goods and Marks	Weight				Rate	Amount of Paid on			Total Amount due on Consignment		
		From	To			Tons	cwt.	qrs.	lbs.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
<u>July 23</u>		<u>Bargoed</u>	<u>Bury 2</u>		<u>127 Articles</u>					<u>3/</u>			<u>18</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	
					<u>157 Children</u>					<u>1/6</u>			<u>11</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>6</u>	
													<u>29</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>	

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.
BARGOED STATION.
No. 41
Aug 21
Received on Account for the
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY
The Sum of
£ 29 : 18 : 6
Collector: W. Moffatt

Consignments not exceeding 3 cwt. in weight are subject to the Scale and Regulations for small parcels by Merchandise Trains, contained in the General Classification of Merchandise; Consignments over 3 cwt. are charged not less than the charge for 3 cwt. at the Small Parcel Scale.
221,035—R.M.G.F. 1155—S. 146. 3.

(964 Med.)

Messrs The Bargoed
Mr. Simdy Schools

Month August 7 1937

Dr. to The Great Western Railway Company.

In any communication in regard to this account, please quote:
Account issued by BARGOED, G.W. 15 Station.

It will facilitate the Company's account-keeping if you will kindly remit the amount of this account to:—
GOODS AGENT,
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY,
STATION.

Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed and made payable to the order of the Great Western Railway Company.

The only valid receipt is the Company's adhesive form.

Date	Ptn No.	Station		Name of Consignor	Description of Goods and Marks	Weight				Rate	Amount of Paid on			Total Amount due on Consignment		
		From	To			Tons	cwt.	qrs.	lbs.		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
<u>July 24</u>		<u>Bargoed</u>	<u>Bury Island</u>		<u>327 Adults</u>					<u>2/6</u>			<u>40</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>6</u>	
					<u>474 Children</u>					<u>1/3</u>			<u>30</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>6</u>	
													<u>Total</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>0</u>

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.
BARGOED, G.W. 15 STATION.
No. 30
7-8
Received on Account for the
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY
The Sum of
£ 71 : 15 : 0
Collector: W. Moffatt

Consignments not exceeding 3 cwt. in weight are subject to the Scale and Regulations for small parcels by Merchandise Trains, contained in the General Classification of Merchandise; Consignments over 3 cwt. are charged not less than the charge for 3 cwt. at the Small Parcel Scale.
221,022—R.M.G.F. 1155—S. 147. 3.

(964 Mod.)

Messrs. *The Bargoed United Sunday Schools, Bargoed.*
 Mr. _____

Month *August 7* 19*35*.

Dr. to **The Great Western Railway Company.**

It will facilitate the Company's account-keeping if you will kindly remit the amount of this account to:
 GOODS AGENT,
 GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY,
 _____ STATION.

Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed and made payable to the order of the Great Western Railway Company.

The only valid receipt is the Company's adhesive form.

In any communication in regard to this account, please quote: _____

Account issued by _____ Station.

Date	Proc. No.	Station		Name of Consignor	Description of Goods and Marks	Weight				Rate	Amount of Paid on			Total Amount due on Consignment				
		From	To			Tons	cwt	qrs	lbs.		£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s
<i>July 27</i>		<i>Bargoed</i>	<i>Barry Island</i>		<i>544 Adults</i>					<i>2/6</i>			<i>68 00</i>					
					<i>724 Children</i>					<i>1/3</i>			<i>45 50</i>					
													<i>113 50</i>					
					<i>Loss 25 Adults allowed</i>					<i>2/6</i>			<i>3 26</i>					
													<i>Total £110 26</i>					

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.
BARGOED, G.W. 15 STATION.
 No. 52 *August 7 1935*
 Receipt of Account for the
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY
 The Sum of
 £ *110* : *2* : *6*
W. J. Morgan Collector.

Goods exceeding 2 cwt in weight are subject to the Scale and Regulations for small parcels by Merchandise Trains, contained in the General

Keep your Holiday Health

YOUR summer holiday has given you a precious store of good health upon which to draw during the trying months ahead. Sunbathing, fresh air and exercise have strengthened the nerves and muscles and have renewed physical and mental energies alike.

But autumn, with its rain, fog and chilling winds, is approaching. The health you have gained will not last long unless those sources of vitality and strength are maintained and added to from day to day.

Only nourishment will do this. Freshness and energy can such a wealth of nourishment be obtained as from delicious "Ovaltine." It contains, in scientifically correct proportions, all the nutritive elements essential to health.

"Ovaltine" is prepared from milk, milk and eggs - Nature's best foods.

Make "Ovaltine" the daily beverage in your house. Drink it for breakfast, in the middle of the morning, and late in the evening. Its regular use will ensure the continuation of abundant energy and glowing health with which to face the weather and to ward off colds and chills.

"Ovaltine" is sold at prices that place its use within the reach of all. There is nothing comparable to "Ovaltine" - it is the richest in nourishment - the cheapest in cost - the most economical in use.

OVALTINE
 TONIC FOOD BEVERAGE
 The Best Safeguard against Autumn Chills
 Sold in tins of 12, 24, and 37
 It is manufactured by Nestlé, the largest milk firm.

Advertisement taken from *Merthyr Express* 27 September 1930 (page 22)

And, summer service on G.W.R. as announced in *Merthyr Express* 23 June 1934 (page 3)

The chief feature of the summer train service are announced by the Great Western Railway. The service will come into operation on July 9 and will continue until September 30 - four weeks longer than last year.

The new service will be outstanding in many respects. The unrestricted holiday travel afforded by the summer ticket has necessitated a considerably augmented express service for holiday makers at week-ends. Consequently 167 main line and through express trains will make their appearance giving the holiday maker a wider choice and an earlier departure in many cases, if desired, so that distant resorts may be reached earlier in the day.

Another outstanding feature is the provision on Mondays to Fridays of new express morning and evening business trains.

In the speeding-up of main line expresses, departure times have been made later, in many cases, without altering the arrival times.

There will be additional Sunday services throughout the system as well as the retention of those introduced last year.

DROUGHT – A BRITISH SUMMER HAZARD

Gelligaer Times readers who do not remember the 1976 drought, may like to read *THE 1976 DROUGHT RECALLED*, an article by **Mary and Terry McCarthy**, in *Gelligaer* volume 16 (2007).

South Wales Daily News 15 August 1887 (page 4)

Letter about the *WATER FAMINE AT HENGOED* to the Editor from *HOME RULER*
SIR, -- The inhabitants of Hengoed have a very pressing grievance; will you assist us to redress it by means of your powerful paper? We are a population of some four hundred souls, and summer after summer we have to endure with what patience we can very great inconvenience in providing ourselves with water. But this year our troubles are increased a hundred fold. After desperately endeavouring to tide another summer, we are now at our wits' end; our wells are dry, and in the absence of an immediate rainfall dire consequences will, I fear, ensue. What makes the matter worse, the district sanitary authority (save the mark!) are cognizant of our state, yet they persistently and culpably neglect to do anything for us, save levying and collecting the rates. Time and again has the medical officer (Dr. Dyke), in his annual report emphasised thereon, but apparently to no purpose. My object in writing is to advise my neighbours not to despond, but to take the matter up with renewed earnestness and fight their own battle. I would strongly recommend them to at once communicate with the Local Government Board in London and lay the facts before them, and ask that an officer be sent down to examine and report. The local authority may then have an opportunity of explaining their conduct. I would suggest that a public meeting be held, say on Saturday next, at a convenient house, for all to consider and agree what is best to do.

South Wales Daily News 7 November 1898 (page 6) Report on meeting of Gelligaer District Council

At a meeting of the above Council at Merthyr on Saturday, Mr David Hopkins, J.P., stated that Mr Lewis Evans, Mr Bevan, and himself had met with regard to the question of the Vochrin [sic] water supply. The village was well supplied with water for the greater part of the year, but during the drought a very limited supply only was obtainable. They recommended that the Merthyr District Council should supply Vochrin with water. Mr F. T. James said the Rhymney and Aber Gas and Water Company now possessed the power to supply the district with water, and had scheduled with the Act their agreement with the Gelligaer Council. The company could therefore give them notice to purchase all their works and proceed with the supply. It was agreed to write to the company pointing out the requirements of Vochrin. A report upon the Bedlinog sewerage scheme was made by Mr Lewis Evans, Mr J. Aurelius, and Mr J. Edwards. Certain land (10 acres) on the Cwmnantygarth Farm was recommended to be acquired. This was agreed upon.

Gelligaer, Ystrad Mynach & Pontlottyn Parochial Magazine, June, 1892

People should be very careful now that the water is scarce, to see that it is boiled first, and then be permitted to cool before drinking it. Typhoid fever often results from drinking impure water. We hear that measles [sic] and scarlet fever have broken out in the parish. We should ever be prepared to help neighbours in sickness, but crowding into a fever stricken patient's room for no other reason than to see how he is, is wrong.

South Wales Daily News 24 August 1899 (page 4) The following report appeared under a heading *THE DROUGHT*

RHYMNEY WATER AND SEWERAGE

The Rhymney Iron Company's water supply to the Rhymney Urban District and Pontlottyn lower in the Valley has now been ordered to be shut off every other day instead of a daily service of four hours. It is stated, however, that there is nearly another 14 days supply in the reservoir above Rhymney Bridge station at the top of the valley. The filter beds are at Newtown, nearer Rhymney, and should the supply run short at the reservoir the company would be able to utilise the water on their Newtown pond close by. At Pontlottyn, many of the higher parts of which are not touched by the service, the scarcity has been keenly felt, and all day long young and old of both sexes may be seen going to and from with domestic utensils to the spring supplies between Pontlottyn and Tirphil, a distance of nearly

two miles in many instances. Some time ago there was an agitation afoot with a view to the company improving their service, particularly with regard to replacing the badly corroded pipes, but nothing has been done in this direction, probably on account of the negotiations between the Rhymney Iron Company and the Rhymney and Aber Valleys Gas and Water Company. The latter propose to acquire the water rights, and should they do so they doubtless immediately overhaul; and extend the service.

With regard to sewage, the Rhymney river, which is practically the main sewer for the Valley, is in a sad state. Passengers on the Rhymney Railway between Rhymney Bridge and Rhymney are not long in discovering their close proximity to this open drain, and just below the Rhymney Brewery the odour is of a very high order. The Rhymney District Council have approved of the septic tank system, but as sufficient land cannot be obtained to meet the requirements of the Local Government Board this matter is at present in abeyance. Endeavours have also been made to secure land for a sewage farm, but suitable sites are difficult to obtain on account of the demand for building purposes.

NEW TREDEGAR AND TIRPHIL

New Tredegar and Tirphil continue to be constantly supplied from the Tredegar District Council's works, and those of the New Tredegar Gas and Water Company. Formerly this locality was dependent upon the latter company's works, but an arrangement was made about a year ago whereby the local supply was supplemented from the Tredegar Works by the Bedwellty District Council, whose district is provided from that source. The several pits of the Powell-Duffryn Company are so far well provided for from their own sources of supply.

SUMMER IN THE GARDEN

GHS Treasurer, Roy Smith, has sent these photographs taken in his garden:





And ***IN SEPTEMBER***, from GHS member, Dic Felstead:

I'm not cheating, really.

September sits at the tail-end of summer and we often get the so-called Indian summer during that month. I would like to share with GHS members what I consider to be one of the most beautiful love poems in the Anglo-Welsh literary canon – *In September* by John Ormond:

Again the golden month, still
Favourite, is renewed;
Once more I'd wind it in a ring
About your finger, pledge myself
Again, my love, my shelter,
My good roof over me,
My strong wall against winter.

Be bread upon my table still
And red wine in my glass; be fire
Upon my hearth. Continue,
My true storm door, continue
To be sweet lock to my key;
Be wife to me, remain
The soft silk on my bed.

Be morning to my pillow,
Multiply my joy. Be my rare coin
For counting, my luck, my

Granary, my promising fair
Sky, my star, the meaning
Of my journey. Be, this year too,
My twelve months long desire.

John and I became friends in the late 1970s. He was a poet and distinguished BBC film/documentary maker whose programme series *The Colliers' Crusade – Wales and the Spanish Civil War* is considered a classic of the genre. It was because of my grandfather's involvement in the conflict that we met. I consider his friendship to have been one of the greatest privileges of my life.

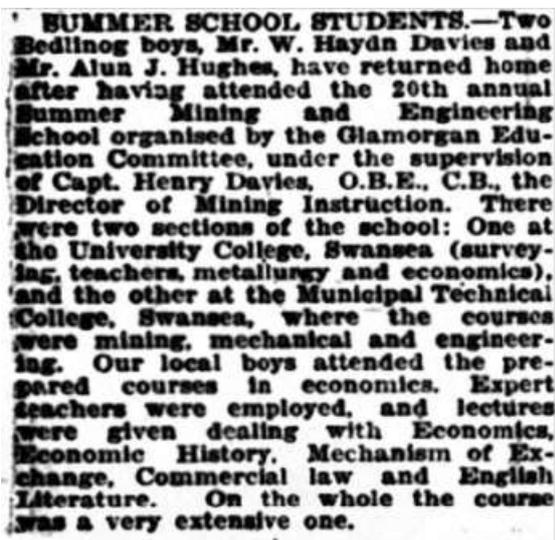
In September was written in 1970 on the occasion of his twenty-fourth wedding anniversary. He had forgotten to buy a present and card for his wife, Glenys, and upon realising his oversight, John retreated to his study and in a frantic, late-night sitting composed the tribute to her.

John engrossed himself in his creative work to such an extent that Glenys shielded him from the minutiae and burdens of everyday domestic life. His gratitude to her is expressed in the poem by an accumulation of imagery which suggest the ways in which Glenys provided him with security and home comforts. *In September* is a thanksgiving to the love of his life.

The poem has a special place in our family's hearts. My daughter, Rhian, was born in September. She married in September and I recited John's words at her wedding. Her eldest daughter was born in September. And now, as we approach the golden month, I would like to thank her for being our true storm door during the COVID lockdown. *dic felstead*

SUMMER IN BEDLINOG

These extracts from local newspapers are all connected with summer in Bedlinog.



Merthyr Express 29 August 1925 (page 20) -- two local young men who attended Glamorgan Education Committee's Summer School in 1925.

Glamorgan Education Committee, eager to be in the forefront of educational progress, started its annual summer schools in 1905, and, apart from during war years, they were a regular feature for many decades. GHS will be pleased to hear from any readers of *Gelligaer Times* who attended summer school courses (perhaps in Barry).

Aged thirteen, W. Haydn Davies started eight years of work at the local colliery. And, during those years in the colliery, he developed his

lifelong passion for education, something that those who knew him as headmaster of BGTS and/or as member (and chairman) of GHS, will remember.

Merthyr Express 22 September 1934 (page 4) -- not only were the sports reports of that era not on the newspaper's back pages, but also, then, as in many other years, the winter sports season started in summery weather.

Merthyr Express 11 September 1937 (page 20) -- summer camp in Kidwelly.

OFF TO CAMP.—On Friday a number of unemployed men left for Kidwelly, where they will camp for two weeks. This is the third contingent from Bedlinog to secure a holiday this summer. The men are being entertained by students of the British Universities.

Favoured with summer weather a good crowd attended the Recreation Ground on Saturday for the first home match of the season, when Bedlinog met Bedwas Stars in the return Welsh Amateur League game. On the previous Saturday Bedlinog won by 3-2.

Early in the first half Bedlinog had the better of the play, but their forwards failed to take advantage of several scoring opportunities. However, at last, they were rewarded with a goal. Bedwas then played better and had as much of the game as the home team. The visitors eventually scored and obtained the lead near the interval.

On resuming, after some 15 minutes' play M. Jones equalised the score. Towards the end Bedlinog again scored and thus won by 3-2.

During the first half Bedlinog were undoubtedly the better team, but the play of the forwards was not by any means good, and their win by one goal was no more than they were worth on the day's form. They were best served by their backs and goalkeeper.

The teams were as follows:
Bedwas Stars: E. Jones; D. Jenkins, E. Weeks; T. Jenkins; D. Jones, R. Jayne; Cane, Williams, Hinton, Shaddock, and M. Davies.

Bedlinog Welfare: A. Howells; B. Osborne, T. Phillips; R. and P. Jones, D. J. Hughes; K. Williams, M. James, W. G. Price, D. Jenkins, H. Thomas, Referee: Mr. D. Bow, Dowlais.

And, in *Ups and Downs* (1975), W. Haydn Davies, wrote of summer 1914 thus:

August 4th, 1914, was a momentous day in the annals of the British nation, for that was the day our soldiers took up arms against the German military juggernaut.

The schools were in any case closed for summer holidays. I had risen in the morning alert to the possibilities of a sunny day, knowing it would be spent with my pals from the Woodlands, and we ourselves feeling no involvement in the adult strain of that anxious period. This was merely another holiday month spent in the general easing of the tensions of village life. Thrifty miners were already enjoying the sea breezes at Aberystwyth, Porthcawl, or Swansea, or at the inland spas of Llandrindod Wells and Builth. The breezes of the former resorts helped loosen the breath-restricting dust particles clinging mercilessly to the lung tissues of the holidaying miners as the tonic waters of the spas washed away the dust from other parts of the body. And the stronger draughts to be absorbed by mouth stimulated the mood for holiday 'hnyl'!

In those days 'holidays with pay' were only allotted to colliery officials. Such miners as were venturesome enough to take time off without pay to enjoy their holidays were obliged to count their coppers carefully in advance.

A seaside holiday for the entire family was virtually an impossibility, but a kind of 'family exchange' system was in operation. In such cases families with relatives in seaside or country area, or even in nearby mining villages, operated a rota system of free hospitality, periods during which visiting relatives from the mining valleys would, at the seaside assist with domestic chores, their relatives during the summer months, also keeping paying guests. The families of the miners helped with the haymaking if relatives lived in the country areas. Sometimes no such reciprocal services were involved and relatives 'o'r wlad' (from the country) sought a change of environment in 'out of season' periods by staying with their kith and kin in mining areas, and bringing with them a liberal share of farm produce as part-payment. But this free 'board and lodge' often proved a strain on a household where resources were already stretched to the limit.

Yet Welsh people were characterised by their spirit of hospitality, and as far as the children were concerned, those with no relatives from 'away' willing to oblige sometime stayed awhile with relatives of friends in their own village in a kind of desperate effort to capture the holiday spirit even in such a fashion.

In such cases, friends and haunts were the old familiar ones and the normal holiday exuberance found outlets such as playing on the common, in the disused quarry, in the woods, or in swimming in the river and in colliery feeders.

Also, there was always the Saturday morning or afternoon treat to round off the week – the children’s matinee at the local cinema.

For me there were three sources of free hospitality: with my mother’s people at Aberaman, in the Aberdare valley, or with my father’s family in nearby Trelewis or with a family of one my schoolteachers, Mr. Ben Jones, who lived in Cefn Coed, near Merthyr. Yet on this occasion these sources were not for the time being available, and for the present the holidays were to be spent on home ground and enlivened with the usual games and pranks of childhood. Yet it was this one day that was to be remembered above all others in the month of August, 1914.

I recall going out to the sunshine to join my pals. We had a choice of two games to while away the time until Wendel Wynne arrived on the scene to outline his plans for the day. A born leader was this Wendel with a resourcefulness and aptitude for conjuring up existing possibilities from the most commonplace of material.

This was a cricketer’s day and we knew that Wendel’s uncle ‘from off’ had presented him with a cricket bat with three springs, a set of wickets and bails and a cork ball. To play in ‘professional’ style would be a rare treat; to use our usual makeshift gear of roughly shaped timber bat, stone ‘dabs’ for wickets and empty cotton reels swathed in rags for a cricket ball, was now out of the question. Meantime we made do with the games of ‘Catty-doggy’ and ‘Dic stones.’

Extracts selected by Judith Jones

LOCAL HISTORY RESEARCH

While it is often useful to see sites in winter when the vegetation has died down to reveal the remains of past workings or habitation, there is little more pleasant than a summer visit as shown by these two photographs from GHS member, David Mills. Accompanied by his granddaughter, Leoni, who took these photographs, David recently visited the site of **Wingfield Colliery**.

The first photograph, looking down the dingle where the tramroad descended to the valley bottom, shows Groesfaen Terrace.

The second photograph, taken in the car park opposite Groesfaen Terrace, is interesting as it shows a bee. Bees feed on nectar and pollen, and play an important role in pollinating plants (wild and cultivated flowers) in gardens, parks and the wider countryside. Bees are a sign of how healthy, or otherwise, our environment is. In the last century or so, the UK has lost 13 species of bees, and 35 more are considered under threat of extinction. This is



because of a combination of changes in land use, habitat loss, disease, pesticides, farming practices, pollution, invasive non-native plant and animal species, and climate change, and the outlook for bees is quite bleak.

A popular English language saying is *to have a bee in your bonnet* about something. Can you think of any other similar sayings about bees or other insects?

Bees are sometimes used as symbols in literary works, both in prose and poetry. One such example is the reference to the industriousness of the bee in the third section of *On Capitalism* (1867), by Karl Marx, the German philosopher and the first to expound communist theories. Can you think of any other literary references to bees in works in English.

Gwenynen (plural gwenyn) is the word for bee in Welsh language. GHS will be pleased to hear of any Welsh sayings or literary references to bees. Most readers of *Gelligaer Times* will recall *Gwenynen Gwent* (the bee of Gwent) as the bardic name of the person at the heart of the talk given by Dr. Marion Loeffler, Cardiff University Lady *Llanofor's international friends: Indian nabobs, Polish princes and German scholars in Wales* at GHS conference in March 2019 (and reported on in *GELLIGAER TIMES* Spring 2019 issue 40).

SUMMER IS NOT ALWAYS PLEASANT -- as witnessed by these extracts from local newspapers

The first extract is taken from the Rhymney/Pontlottyn news column in *Merthyr Telegraph* 28 April 1866 (page 2)

STREET IMPROVEMENTS – *We are glad to see that the two gentlemen who have charge of the roads, have done some good in the way of channelling and paving them. During the very hot weather we had last summer the stench was anything but pleasant, and therefore it is wise on their part to do what they can in the shape of drainage before another summer visits us.*

While the second, relating to Tredegar, is from *Merthyr Telegraph* 13 July 1867 (page 3)

STAGNANT WATER – *Some people are so fond of “drains” that it never occurs that repairs are requisite. Now and then the “drain” in Charles-street is a “standing” disgrace to the locality (we wish it was a “running” one), No one seems to have any authority, in fact, we begin to think the drain has no owner whatever. The late extreme heat and scarcity of moisture have caused a most offensive effluvia to hover over this stagnant and open-surface drain. Unless some dormant power gets up and performs a transformation on the scene, any disease or epidemic will find snug quarters in any part of Charles-street.*

Farming was heavily dependent upon the weather, and a harsh season could threaten livelihoods. Under a heading *SUICIDE AT LLANFABON*, and with the strapline *A Bad Harvest Drives a Farmer to Self-destruction*, *South Wales Echo* 7 September 1888 (page 4) reported on the death of 63-year-old John Rees, of Twyn Farm, Ystrad Mynach, who *was found drowned on Tuesday evening in the old coal pit at Penlan, on the upper part of Twyn Farm*. The district coroner, Mr Rhys, and jury (chairman, R. J. Bull, see *Gelligaer* Volume 27 for some information about him) heard John Rees's niece describe the events of that Tuesday, before John Thomas (farm worker employed by John Rees for more than six years) told them of the search for his employer in the evening. Questioned by the jury, John Thomas said that *he had heard his master complain that he could not sleep at night. He had seemed very much troubled of late owing to the wet hay harvest, as the hay was spoiling, and he had some fields of hay still out*. In his summing up, Mr Rhys *pointed out that no doubt many farmers had been very sadly tried and vexed during the present season, seeing their crops were being spoilt by the wet weather. No doubt this had had some effect upon the deceased*. The jury returned a verdict that *deceased drowned himself while in a state of temporary insanity*.

SUMMER WEDDINGS

Over the decades, summer has been a popular time for weddings. The Deri column in *Merthyr Express* 8 August 1931 (page 21) reported on several local weddings.

1. Two well-known members of the teaching profession, Bert Godfrey, of Herbert Street, Brithdir, and certificated assistant at Bedlinog Boys' School, married Jenny, daughter of Mr and

Mrs Ben Williams, of Deri-Newydd, Deri, member of staff of Deri Mixed School, in St. Gwladys' Church, Bargoed. The bride was *charmingly attired in floral crepe-de-chine, with waistcoat effect and hat of beige crinoline, and carried a bouquet of roses and wore a pearl necklace, the gift of the bridegroom.* The report went on to name the three attendant bridesmaids and describe their clothes, as well as the best man and groomsmen, and many of those attending the wedding breakfast at Deri Newydd were listed. *The happy pair afterwards left for Torquay where the honeymoon is being spent. Valuable presents were received, including a time-piece from staff of Deri Mixed School, and a silver egg-stand from the scholars.*

2. What was described in the press as *a pretty wedding*, took place at St. Mary's Church, Fochriw, when Will, eldest son of Mr and Mrs G. Watkins of Glynmarch, Deri, married Gwenllys, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs J. Davies, New Road, Deri. The bride, *charmingly attired in a dress of figured blue georgette, with hat to tone*, was attended by her niece and the bridegroom's sister. Following the reception, held in the bride's home (list of those attending included in the report), the couple left for their honeymoon in Shrewsbury. Their presents included a chiming oak clock from the bridegroom's workmates at Ogilvie Colliery.
3. David, eldest son of Mr and Mrs Albert Walters of Pleasant View, Fochriw, married Annie, only daughter of Mr and late Mrs Evan Roberts of Bargoed House, Deri, at Wood Street, Wesleyan Chapel, Bargoed. *The bride made a charming picture in a dress of grey crepe-de-chine with a black picture hat.* The bridesmaids and best man were named in the report.
4. William, eldest son of Mr and Mrs Gibbs of James Street, Brithdir, married Lily, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs W. Adams, Ogilvie Terrace, Deri, in St. Gwladys' Church, Bargoed. The bride, wearing *a dress of blue jap suede, with a picture hat to match*, was attended by two bridesmaids.

PONTLOTTYN SUMMER 1887

The following, taken from *Merthyr Express* 9 July 1887 (page 7), illustrates some aspects of summer in Pontlottyn 1887:

CRICKET CLUB -- We are pleased to see that the Pontlottyn Cricket Club is turning the fine weather to the best account by attending practice. They have elected Mr. W. John captain and on Saturday last played a match with the Lower Rhymney Club.

HAY HARVEST -- The farmers around this district have commenced their hay harvest, and are busy cutting and carrying their crops (especially the Rhymney Iron Company's servants). The crops appear to be fairly good, considering the long drought. The hay is being harvested in splendid condition.

THE GRAND DAY -- On Monday last the grandest day of the year -- locally -- was spent, it being the occasion of the annual Sunday School treats. The weather was delightful, and the children dressed so nicely made a procession that pleased everyone. The number of schools that walked was five, one less than usual, Zoar Sunday School having held their treat at Hengoed on Whit-Monday. The number of scholars fell far short of those usually seen in the procession, there being so many off at haymaking, while Zoar accounted for 500 absentees. It was but little more than half its usual dimensions. The schools present were: Nazareth (Independent), 168; Bethel (English Baptist), 101; Bethlehem (Calvinistic Methodist), 136; Mount Zion (Primitive Methodist), 124; and Salem (Wesleyan), 41. After parading the streets they proceeded to the Square, where they joined in singing that old hymn "Draw ar gopa bryn Golgotha" to the tune "Dusseldorf". Mr. John Evans led the singing, and Mr. Joseph Coop then led the English choir in a hymn appropriate to the occasion. The schools then separated each returning to its own place of worship to partake of tea and cake which awaited them. After tea they all proceeded to the mountain and enjoyed themselves in various exhilarating games. Later in the evening entertainments were held at all the chapels. Everybody spent a happy day, and everything passed off agreeably.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF GHS.
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**

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