

# GELLIGAER TIMES

Winter 2017 (issue 37)

Newsletter of Gelligaer Historical Society

[www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

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Editor David Mills



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Belated good wishes for 2017.

Now, half way through its 2016-2017 programme, GHS is enjoying another year of well-attended meetings, and members and others continue with interesting research into local and family history topics relating to the area. As GHS publications continue to sell well and a wealth of interesting contributions have been submitted, plans are underway for publications in 2017 and 2018.

It is pleasing to read (<http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/News/News-Bulletin/January-2017/Morgan-Jones-remembered-at-Bargoed-Park>) that not only, at last, Morgan Jones, WWI conscientious objector and, later, MP



for Caerphilly, has been recognised locally, with a plaque at Bargoed Park (photograph courtesy GHS member, Pat Davies), but also to know that Mrs Margaret Sheaff (his daughter) and two of his grandchildren were present to witness the plaque's unveiling. Some readers may recall meeting Mrs Sheaff at the conference when Wayne David MP spoke on Morgan Jones, The Society was also in contact with her when *Morgan Jones and the First World War* by Wayne David MP appeared in *Gelligaer* Volume 21 Great War edition 2014.

Currently, some GHS members, researching the history of selected local communities, are uncovering surprising stories connected with people born and/or educated locally who, like Morgan Jones, went on to make their mark in a wide range of different fields both in UK and beyond. Although some of these people have received prestigious awards, they are virtually unknown in this area. While GHS can (and will) publish material connected with the achievements of local people, should the Society be doing more to help raise public awareness of these inspirational sons and daughters of the area?

Hope to see you at a meeting soon, or perhaps at the Conference on Saturday March 25 2017, when we have some interesting talks lined up (as shown on the poster on the next page).

And advance notice of an event jointly organised by GHS and Friends of Llancaiach – on Wednesday May 17 2017 (7 pm start) at Llancaiach Fawr [CF46 6ER] – Harriet Earis will give a concert talk *History of the Harp*. Tickets (£5 each) will be available soon. The website <http://harrietaryis.com/> has information about Harriet, a professional harper.

Best wishes from *Annie*



# GELLIGAER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

[Established 1961]



## HISTORY CONFERENCE

Saturday 25 March 2017

Llancaiach Fawr Manor, Nelson [CF46 6ER]

Registration from 9.15 am. Conference closes 4.00 pm

### ***RENDER THE CHARTISTS DEFENCELESS: THE TRANSPORTATION OF FROST, WILLIAMS AND JONES***

Les James, co-editor *CHARTISM e-magazine*

### ***THE LITTLE MAN SPEAKS OUT: LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN RURAL GLAMORGAN***

Professor Keir Waddington, Cardiff University

### ***EXPLORING THE HIGH GROUND OF SOUTH WALES***

David Leighton, Senior Investigator RCAHMW

### ***SAMSON IN TREHARRIS: REVISITING THE LAND OF SONG 1870-1914***

Professor Gareth Williams, University of South Wales

**£15** per delegate

(includes light buffet lunch and afternoon tea/coffee)

Delegate applications

(with cheques payable to **Gelligaer Historical Society**) to  
GHS Conference Secretary, 4 Cwrt Nant Llwynog, Bedlinog,  
Treharris, Merthyr Tydfil, CF46 6TJ

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Society has enjoyed some excellent talks (thanks to Judith's programming).

September 2016 – Brian Davies gave a very interesting talk on the first Russian colour photographer Sergey Prokudin-Gorsky with some amazingly good colour photographs from the first three decades of the last century. The photographs are now held in the American Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/empire/gorskii.html> . Below an early view of Moscow and the Volga River in 1910.



October and November talks, delivered by GHS members, Carwyn Hughes and Peter Walker, were on WW1 topics and attracted sizeable audiences. There were some penetrating post talk discussions, always a good sign that the talks had been of interest to the audience.

December meeting opened with a short Extraordinary General Meeting when members present voted unanimously in support of the Committee's recommendation re GHS Constitution amendment, and that was followed by three short presentations, which were *Neolithic Period* by Andrew Wilkinson, Senior Environmental Ranger from CCBC, an *Update on the Society's Diamond Jubilee Project* and (after the break) *Metal Detecting and Local Finds*. During the social break members and visitors enjoyed tea/coffee and mince pies, and the raffles, organised by Judith, took place, The *members-only* raffle was won by the one and only -- Clwyd, Judith's husband

January meeting, following the practice of recent years, started at 11 a.m. and, after time to place lunch orders, the large audience was fascinated by Diane Walker's comprehensive talk on developments at Llancaiach Fawr. These photographs show just a small sample of the work done, but to appreciate all the marvellous improvements a visit to the house is highly recommended.



About 20 people enjoyed lunch and conversation before returning to the Barn where Audrey Griffiths related an entertaining and evocative story she wrote for her grandson. It is based on a young boy and his experiences at the 1831 riots in Merthyr Tydfil.

## GHS PUBLICATIONS

Although the Society's first publication, *Selected Lectures and Visits, 1961-1964*, appeared in August 1964, three annual *transactions* had been produced on a duplicator before that and, if any reader has a copy or copies of these, please contact the Society. The aim of the first journal was, in the words of President of the Society at that time, E. John Saunders, expressed in his foreword *to continue the work commenced in the publication "The Gelligaer Story" by the local authority by noting new facts on our history as they come to light in the course of our activities.*

*Gelligaer* Volumes II, III and IV were subsequently published in 1965, 1966 and 1967 with Messrs V.A. Williams and D. Gethin Thomas as joint editors; the latter then took over as sole editor of Volumes V, VI, and VIII (1968–1971). Following Gethin Thomas' resignation as editor, an editorial board was responsible for volume IX in 1972. Gethin Thomas returned as editor to produce Volumes X (1973-74) and XI (1976-77), but sadly he died in 1980. Volume XII of 1982 was published with Christopher Jones-Jenkins as editor and his assistant John Davies. There



was then a gap until an editorial committee produced Volume XIII in 1990. There was an even longer gap, due mainly to the high cost of printing, until 2004 when Volume XIV was published with David Mills as editor. Since then, the Journal has become a regular feature of the Society, with the latest being Volume XXIII, Great War edition 2016, this means that a journal has been published every year since 2012. The publishing of WW1 editions has proved to be such a success that plans are underway to produce a third commemorative edition in 2018. The Society will be pleased to hear from anyone interested in getting involved with the production of this edition.

Over the years, successive journals are the result of the commitment of researchers who write up their findings and of those who patiently devote long hours to prepare drafts for the printers. The preparation of a draft to send to a printer is a time consuming task. In this respect, mention must be made of the sterling work done by Fred and John Holley who laboured long and hard in the *old days* when computers were in their infancy. Nowadays, although societies like GHS benefit from technological advances that mean books can be printed relatively quickly and at a low cost, getting the draft in a suitable format to send to the printer is a time-consuming task, demanding patient attention to detail. The Society owes a debt of gratitude to Greg Buick, who has taken on that role for the past few years. Greg also deals with any requests to purchase via the Society's web site and/or Amazon. In the past, journals have been sent to such distant destinations as New Zealand, Canada and the research library at Salt Lake City, U.S.A. The normal print run for the journals is 125 or 150 with 100 being sold quite quickly. In 2014, the Society published Volume XXI, a WWI commemorative volume, this was a success with over 200 copies being sold.

Somehow or other Greg has also found time to write and publish a series of five books, one for each of the hamlets (districts) in the former parish of Gelligaer. The series, entitled *Parish of Gelligaer - The farms and their families 1540-1840*, can be regarded as Greg's *Opus Magnus*. As the series title implies, the volumes contain detailed histories of farms in the old parish and each has proved popular not only with local and family historians but also across the local farming community.

To celebrate its Golden Anniversary in November 2011, the Society published a 336 page hard backed book *Bargoed and Gilfach - A Local History*. A research team of members and friends of the Society, co-ordinated by Annie Owen, spent three years gathering information. Their labours proved fruitful because over 750 of a print run of 1000 have been sold, with copies literally being sent around the world, and, so important for a small society like GHS in the present economic climate, it was a financial success.

Members of the Society have recently decided on a similar project as part of the celebrations to mark the Society's Diamond Anniversary in 2021. The following brief note explains the project. Today, although the area that was the old Gelligaer parish comprises a number of separate and diverse communities of various sizes and characteristics, with different historical backgrounds; it is united in that it witnessed dramatic changes in the not-too-distant past – i.e., since about 1800. The project, concentrating on the nineteenth century changes, may be interpreted as a re-write/update of the nineteenth century sections in *The Gelligaer Story*, as it is an opportunity to use sources, research and methods that were not available to the pioneer researchers in the 1950s. When the nineteenth century opened, this part of north east Glamorgan was rural and rather isolated, but that changed dramatically in the following century and, while some aspects of such changes in parts of the parish have previously been studied (and results published) by GHS members as well as others outside the Society, there are still many gaps. This project aims to fill some of those gaps to reveal a fuller parish story for the nineteenth century.

Finally, Society publications frequently appear on e-bay or other internet sites or in second-hand book shops, but before purchasing from such outlets, please contact any member of the committee or send an enquiry to our web site. There are still bargains to be had, in particular *Bargoed and Gilfach -- a local history* which is currently available at £5 plus postage and packing.

Please visit [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) for details of GHS publications

*Clive Andrewartha & David Mills*

#### NOTICES OF OTHER PUBLICATIONS

The following publications (the first two of which expand on articles in *Gelligaer* volume 23) have been brought to the attention of GHS and may be of interest to readers. If anyone has information on any other recent publications of interest, please contact GHS.

***Grandad's War*** celebrates the centenary of the escape of prisoner of war, Private Robert Phillips. Written by his granddaughter Lynda, it is available --£10, from author at 21 Cefn Road, Hengoed CF82 7NB, or 01443 813848

***World War 1 Memorials at St. Sannan's Church, Bedwellty.*** This is a 23 page (at A4) publication containing research carried out by John Watkins and David Mills on the memorials inside the church and some headstones in the graveyard. It is on sale at the Church with all the proceeds going towards the restoration costs of the

memorial stained glass window. Anyone interested in stained glass windows should visit [www.stainedglasswales](http://www.stainedglasswales) or the excellent web site run by Dr Martin Crampin, [www.martincrampin.co.uk](http://www.martincrampin.co.uk)

***The Lewises of the Fan*** by Wilf Owen, showing how family members over the generations adapted to changes and increased their estate, until, on the absence of a male heir, it passed, by a daughter's marriage, to another family.

**J. O. Francis (1882-1956)** by Mary Owen, an account of the life and work of a distinguished Merthyr born dramatist.

**Evan, Lord Tredegar**, published in 2015 (with another volume containing *fresh* information published in 2016) by author Will Cross. They both contain selected letters, prose, and quotes by Evan Morgan. The sizeable quotations about Evan, in both volumes, will both amuse and provoke. There are letters to the dissolute Welsh artist, Augustus John, and letters by Evan to Frances Stevenson, David Lloyd George's private secretary and mistress who described Evan as *a hopeless liar and thoroughly degenerate*



2015



2016

Both books are available, in limited numbers, from William Cross, 58 Sutton Road Newport NP19 7JF. Price £7 per book with £2.25 for postage and packing. If both books are purchased together postage is FREE. Cheques/PO payable to William Cross

**Handball The story of Wales' first national sport.** Kevin Dicks (of Ystrad Mynach) has recently written the above book due to be published in March by Y Llofa. The folk sport of handball is still played in Nelson (Kevin is still an active player). The book has extensive coverage of Nelson, Gelligaer, Bargoed, Pontlottyn, Tirphil, New Tredegar and Caerphilly. There should be a definite date for the book release in March by the Welsh Books Council. If interested please contact Kevin at [kevinjohndicks@gmail.com](mailto:kevinjohndicks@gmail.com).

### PRESERVING OLD DOCUMENTS

From time to time the society has the opportunity to pass on interesting documents or photographs to Glamorgan Archives. GHS has done so twice in the last year.

In July 2016 -- some 19<sup>th</sup> century documents from GHS member Audrey Griffiths were passed to Glamorgan Archives and are now catalogued as P2CW/46. Of particular interest among these are tax assessments from 1843. Unlike assessments up to 1831 in which only farms were assessed, in 1843 Public Houses and Collieries were assessed. In Hengoed hamlet, the public houses were Plough & Harrow, Cross Keys and Masons Arms and the collieries mentioned were Carngethin, Union, Gilfach, Glanrhymney and Fair Oak. Can any readers help -- where was Fair Oak colliery?

Earlier in the summer, Patricia Evans of Salisbury contacted GHS not only about a 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph of pupils at Lewis School Pengam, but also to ask if GHS could find anything more of her great-uncle David L Hughes who was in the picture. As it happens, my grandfather had been a pupil at that school, and so I was happy to go along to Glamorgan Archives and see what could be found. Her great uncle had arrived, from Barry, when not even 10 years old, as a boarder at Lewis School in August 1890 (the term after my grandfather left) together with his 12 year old brother. They both continued at the school for only two years. The photograph (shown below and now catalogued as item D1297/1 in Glamorgan Archives) was included in Arthur Wright's 1929 *The History of Lewis' School, Pengam*.

David L Hughes is the small child sitting on the ground in the middle. Patricia Evans could not see his brother (maybe he was the child who moved his head).

If you have any old documents or other writings relating to Glamorganshire, GHS is happy to act as a bridge between you and Glamorgan Archives. Almost any 19<sup>th</sup> century documents are worth preserving, as they often provide a different perspective from that of the records of Government. *Greg Buick*

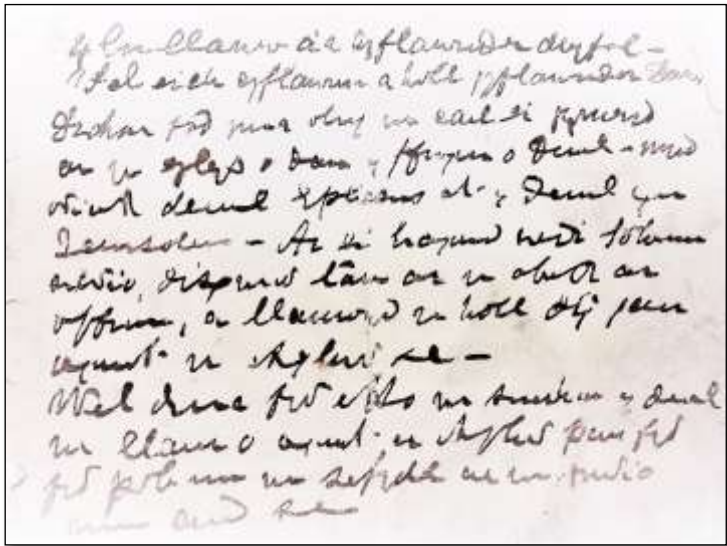
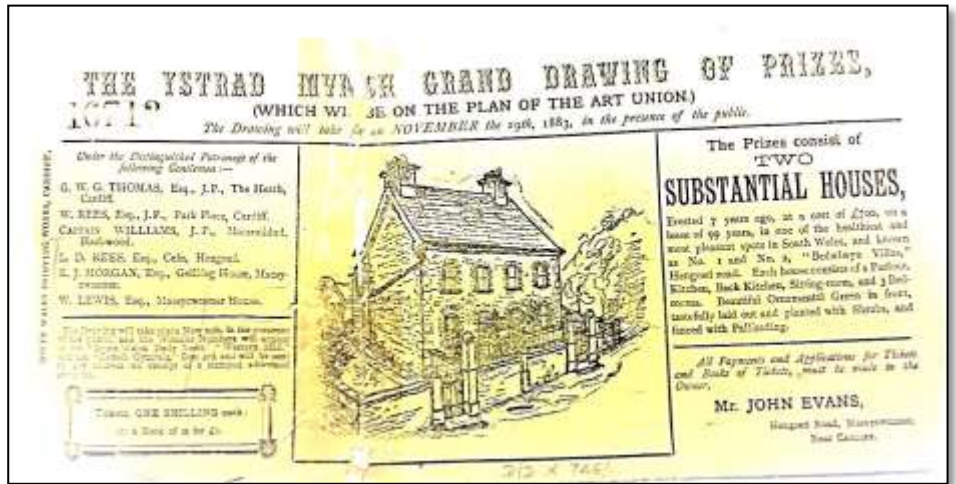




**YSTRAD MYNACH RAFFLE 1883**

Also in the Glamorgan Archives (ref D/D X746/1 *Reproduced right by permission of Glamorgan Archives*) is this interesting raffle ticket from 1883. Two prizes consisting of two substantial houses, price of ticket 1/-. The houses are described as *1 and 2 Bedwlyn Villas, Hengoed Road.*

Some years ago, Annie Owen looked at this advertisement, and found that the 1881 census return shows John Evans occupied one of the houses, while John Price was in the other. Both John Evans and John Price were described as colliery proprietors. They were partners in Gilfach Fargoed Colliery, or Gilfach Fargoed Level. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, someone will follow this story through and also provide details of the Patrons named on the ticket. Newspaper advertisements at the time stated that the result would be published in the local press, but, as yet, no result has been found. On the reverse of the raffle ticket someone wrote in the Welsh language. Despite consulting fluent Welsh speakers among members and friends of GHS, it has not been possible to obtain a full translation of what is written. If anyone can help with this then both GHS and Glamorgan Archives will be grateful.



**AUSTIN MOTOR COMPANY FACTORY at Glan y Nant (Pengam)**

One of the many benefits of having a well-run website is that our webmaster (Greg Buick) gets enquiries asking for information/help on matters relating to the area. A recent email, from Edwin Channell-Napier, asked *if any part of the above named factory building remains and will the 70th year since its opening on July 5 1949 be commemorated in 2019.* He very kindly sent photographs of his Austin Pathfinder, built at the factory.



Clive Andrewartha has given some initial feedback. The Chairman of Austin Motor Company had the idea of producing pedal cars for children, using off cuts of metal from full size cars. The employees at the factory were to be disabled miners. The Pathfinder was the first pedal car produced, followed by the J40. Production of the cars ceased in September 1971 and thereafter the factory produced minor parts for the motor industry until it closed in the 1980s.

If any reader knows of anyone who worked at the factory it would be good to obtain any memories they may have. Similarly, if there any photographs/newspaper articles about the factory they would be useful to have in order that a more detailed history of the project is available to this Society. It may well form part of, and add to details of an article on Glan y Nant village that have been acquired by the Society and which will appear in a future journal.

For more see <http://www.austinmemories.com/styled-25/index.html> from where this poster is taken.



### GHS AT YSTRAD MYNACH LIBRARY

On Friday November 11 2016 GHS honoured a commitment to deliver a talk, *Great War and Ystrad Mynach*, in the newly refurbished Ystrad Mynach Library. It proved a pleasant venue but, although Caerphilly County Borough Council Library Service produced advertising posters and put some posts on Facebook and Twitter, the response was very disappointing as the audience comprised few beyond GHS members and friends/acquaintances of GHS



### GELLIGAER COMMUNITY COUNCIL'S PRESENTATION OF GRANTS AND AWARDS

On Saturday November 12 2016, Judith Jones, Dr David Williams and Audrey Griffiths represented GHS at Gelligaer Community Council's Presentation of Grants and Awards event at Llancaiach Fawr. Thanks to everyone concerned at Gelligaer Community Council for inviting GHS to the event and for the very generous grant awarded to GHS (which was accepted on behalf of GHS by Judith).

### A FAMILY PLAGUED BY BOILERS

Gelligaer Historical Society Journal Volume XVIII, published in 2010, contained an article *1825 - Gelligaer Man transported to Australia* written by Colin Lewis and Greg Buick, and an updated version of the article appeared in Greg Buick's *Ysgnyddgwyn Hamlet*, volume 3 in his series on the Farms and Their Families in the Parish of Gelligaer (September 2012).

The story revolves around Joseph Davies (tenant of Ysgwyddgwyn Isaf farm), his wife Mary, his daughter Martha, and letters that Joseph wrote to his wife, and later his daughter, following his conviction for shooting, but not killing, his neighbour Henry Harris, in a dispute about occupation of a farm. Joseph was found guilty and sentenced to death, but this was commuted to transportation for life following a petition (signed by 150 local inhabitants plus 15 ministers of the Gospel, curates of the parishes of Gelligaer, Bedwelty and Mynyddislwyn, 2 magistrates and John Basset, Sheriff of Glamorgan) was presented to the King.

Joseph Davies had married Margaret Lewis at Bedwelty Parish Church on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1822 and the birth of their daughter Martha, on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1823, is recorded in the birth register of Hengoed Baptist Chapel. What is not revealed in the articles by Colin Lewis and Greg Buick, is that Margaret Lewis was from Gellidawel Farm, just north of Blackwood. Margaret's brother, Daniel Lewis became a shopkeeper in the emerging town of Blackwood, and married Mary Lewis of Cefn Fforest Farm. The 1841 census records Daniel as age 45 and Mary as 35<sup>1</sup> with their **eight** children, whose ages ranged from 20 years down to 2 months. However, the family grave at Hengoed Baptist Chapel contains the names of a further **nine** children born to Daniel and Mary Lewis who died in their infancy. Two children died on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1836 so maybe there was some infectious disease rampant in the area at the time.

Tragically, as reported in *Monmouthshire Merlin* 6<sup>th</sup> May 1843, Daniel Lewis (brother-in-law of Joseph Davies) died on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1843 from wounds received when a boiler of a railway locomotive, parked outside the George Hotel, Blackwood, exploded. The newspaper accounts say the railway engine was a *Vulcan*. The photograph shows a railway engine produced at the Vulcan works during the period of the accident.



Daniel was talking to two friends when the boiler exploded. Regrettably they were killed, and, although medical opinion was that Daniel would survive, he only survived for a week. A newspaper account stated that the usual precaution of easing the engine by releasing steam had been neglected. It goes on to say *the momentary absence of the engineer from the engine preserved his life, which might have fallen a victim to this indiscretion*. The fact that the engine was parked outside a public house seems to have been ignored: it is highly probable that the engineer was inside the pub when the boiler exploded.

Before the death of his brother-in-law, Daniel Lewis, Joseph Davies, in New South Wales, sought a pardon and on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1841, this was granted. However, it was a condition that he continued to reside in either Australia or New Zealand. On 8<sup>th</sup> May 1845, Joseph married Isabella Sinclair, and later they moved to New Zealand.

Some twenty-three years after the death of his brother-in-law, Joseph Davies' name appeared in *New Zealand Herald* report on a terrific explosion of a boiler as part of it had landed in the garden of Joseph Davies, by then living in

<sup>1</sup> Mary was born/christened in 1803. Therefore, she was age 38/39 when the census was taken. However, in the 1841 census, ages of those 15 and over were supposed to be rounded down to the nearest multiple of five, so she is shown as 35, whereas her true age was 3-4 years older.

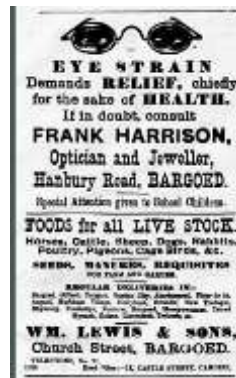


Auckland. It is likely that Joseph was aware of his brother-in-law's death all those years before because it is clear, from the letters Joseph wrote to his first wife, and later to his daughter, back in Wales, and which appear in the GHS publications, that he kept abreast of family matters. I wonder if, when the boiler landed in his garden, he recalled the fate of late brother-in-law.

David Mills

### OLD NEWSPAPERS

The last newsletter contained some extracts from old newspapers. The following are now added to that collection. Sorry if they might cause you to strain your eyes!



In the last round of talks to GHS, Brian Davies spoke about the Llanfabon Chartists. The notice of reward, reproduced here, is interesting and anyone with drawing skills is invited to submit photo fits based on the graphic descriptions of these *desperados*. Depending on what method is used, the reward on offer, per Chartist, was at least £4000 at today's value. Earlier in this newsletter, you would have read about the Society's project to research and produce a book on the parish during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Chartist period falls within that time scale and would be an interesting topic to research.

**£100 REWARD.**

**WHEREAS THOMAS GILES, of LLANYABON, in the County of GLAMORGAN, Collier, and WILLIAM OWEN, of the LLANCAIACH COLLIERY, in the same County, Collier, stand charged with HIGH TREASON, a REWARD OF £50 is hereby offered by Her Majesty's Government, to any Person or Persons who shall give such information and evidence as shall lead to the Apprehension of either of the above named Persons.**

**THOMAS GILES, is about 53 or 54 Years of Age; Height, 5 feet 6 inches or 5 feet 7 inches; rather slender figure, long and thin face high nose, long chin pale complexion, dark eyes, dark short hair. Usual Dress, white flannel jacket and trowsers; is a Carmarthenshire man; speaks English, and Broad Welsh; has resided at Llanvabon, and worked at the Gelligaer Colliery, and well known in the neighbourhood of Llechwann.**

**WILLIAM OWEN, is about 44 or 45 Years of Age; Height, 5 feet 6 inches; stout made, round face, reddish whiskers, dark eyes, sandy coloured hair, and bald on the crown; swarthy complexion, with high colour, as if caused by habits of drinking; has been a Soldier; is a native of Breconshire; speaks good English; worked as a Collier at the Llancaiach Colliery, and was lately known there as the "Chartist Llancaiach."**

**BY ORDER OF THE MAGISTRATES.**  
Newbridge, Glamorganshire, Dec. 16, 1839.



## WHERE IN GELLIGAER

A



B



C



D



E



Answers to *Where in Gelligaer* featured in the last newsletter

A Llancaiach Fawr B Bontnewydd, Trelewis C Gelligaer Church D Bargoed Square

E Plough & Harrow, Penpedairheol (This has been the subject of some debate, so any suggestions would be welcome)

