



Glamorgan Family History Society
Cymdeithas Hanes Teuluol
Morgannwg



The Boxing Field, by Kevin Sinnott

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IMAGES

Front Cover: This painting by renowned artist Kevin Sinnott, shown with his permission, depicts one of the regular boxing bouts that took place on the mountainsides of the South Wales valleys - this one is above Pontycymer, in the artist's home valley. For more accounts of these events see article by Clive Davies in *Journal 150*, June 2023, and for more boxing, see article in *Journal 137*, March 2020 and previous journals, as well as inside this one.

Above: Memorial in Cathays Cemetery to famous Welsh boxer Jim Driscoll, 15/12/1880-30/1/1925, who "fought his way out of poverty". More than 100,000 people lined the streets for his cortege.

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Society's Objectives

The Glamorgan Family History Society is a registered charity. Its main objectives are to: encourage and stimulate research into genealogy and allied subjects with particular reference to the historic county of Glamorgan: to assist members in their private research; encourage the transcription and preservation of records of family history and the deposit of original documents of value in approved repositories; publish papers of genealogical value and interests; establish, to mutual advantage, relations with other organisations interested in genealogy and allied subjects; maintain a library and regularly publish a journal.

The journal is the official publication of the Glamorgan Family History Society. Articles appearing in the journal may not be reproduced without the written permission of the editor. Views expressed in articles and letters are not necessarily those of the GFHS.

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Please only telephone for confirmation of meetings dates, venues and times – all other enquiries please write by email or snail mail

EDITORIAL

Croeso! Welcome to Spring and the first of the 2025 Journals. This one has a wide coverage of many different lives, and contains several Jenkinses and at least two Mary Anns - no relations, I believe!

Since we printed Clive Davies' account of the Mormons William Jenkins and Dan Jones in journals 155 and 156, there has been considerable correspondence about other members' families who have made the same life-choices that they did, and this edition of the journal includes part 1 of an account of Martin Owen's family, surnamed Jenkins; in his article Martin summarises the appeal of Mormonism for the South Wales populace and provides useful tips for members with similar origins. This is followed by a brief account of more Jenkinses, again no relations, who in the 1870s also followed the call to America and the Church of the Latter Day Saints. A further Jenkins' story tells of John Thomas Jones who started life in Glamorgan but ended up on a little-known uninhabited South Seas island.

To go with our front-cover picture are two boxing stories: a largely forgotten Johnny Walsh from Cardiff, and a boxing hero from Briton Ferry. Some items found from a newspaper search by Janet Neilson are featured, a politician from Scotland who became a successful MP for Swansea, a Cefn Cribwr miner, and an account by Mr Don Lacassa of how his grandfather escaped from an orphanage in Italy and ended up in the Rhondda Valley. It is sad to relate that this article was written shortly before Don's death early in the New Year. It is included by permission of his family, and our thanks and sincere condolences go to all his family and friends.

March 8th is International Women's Day, and to mark the date I have chosen to look at the book entitled 'Struggle or Starve', a reminder of what the women in the South Wales valleys went through between the wars.

We will shortly be releasing a booklet to commemorate 50 years of the Society, so a timely request is made that we take a moment to think about the next 50 years and how you would like the journal to look. A Suggestion Box if you like - all ideas welcome, but we will carry on with the present format until, or if you decide on anything different. Also needed: ideas for topics - all reasonable and practical subjects considered!

I hope you find the contents as fascinating as I have, and let us all hope for some good months ahead – good weather, good health, and good research.

Jean Fowlds, editor@glamfhs.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

This will be my last report as Chairman in the journal as I shall be stepping down at the AGM in March. I should like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has supported me, particularly Nancy Thomas and Meic Jones, who have both acted as Vice Chair on the two separate occasions when I have held the role. A Society cannot run effectively without committed and enthusiastic volunteers so I would also like to thank our current Executive Committee and the various teams of volunteers that organise and run our branches and undertake our finance and membership administration. After serving as Vice Chairman (2020-2021) and Chairman (2012-2016) and (2022-2025) it is time for me to step back and allow someone else to take up the reins. At the time of going to print we do not have any nominations for the role but hope that it will not be long before someone comes forward.

Nominations for Society Officers and Trustees have been received as follows:

Treasurer: Guy Bevan

Secretary: Penny Williams

Executive Committee: Ian Black, Jean Fowlds, Billie McNamara, Anouska Osborne, Nancy Thomas

There are currently vacancies for Chairman and Vice Chairman.

A postal voting form is included in the Centre Insert and should be returned to Hon Secretary, Penny Williams by the 20th February.

There will be a 50th Anniversary 'tea' on Saturday 5th April at Aberkenfig. We hope to see as many members as possible on that day and thank the Bridgend and ARC teams for organising this event. Jean Fowlds is putting finishing touches to our 50th Anniversary publication and we also thank her for her hard work in producing an additional edition to commemorate our anniversary.

We have unfortunately lost a number of our elder members this year. Gwyn Rhys, a former Chairman and our first elected President passed away in November. J Barry Davies, an early member and Editor, David Shewring, a Pontypridd Branch Vice Chairman, together with a number of other members – to all of whose families we have sent the Society's condolences.

Sue Hamer, Chairman, January 2025,
chairman@glamfhs.org.uk

Don't miss the 'Cut-Off Dates'

Material for possible publication should reach the Editor before the following dates:

March Issue	20 Jan	June Issue	20 April
Sept issue	20 July	Dec Issue	20 Oct

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Plans are on-going for the on-line AGM in March. We have a speaker from 'The List of Historic Place Names of Wales' who will be explaining the project to record place names across Wales, including farm and field names. The Society is hoping that some of our volunteers will decide to get involved in recording local place names as Glamorgan is rather under-represented in the survey so far. (See notice on page 41 for information on the AGM, talk and the place names project).

Nominations for committee members and Society Officials were due in by 1st January but there are still some significant vacancies. If anyone would like to get involved please get in touch.

We are looking into purchasing more merchandise to promote the Society at fairs and other events. We are also looking into producing more bi-lingual resources as we realise that this a vital part of the Society's agenda to promote genealogical research. If anyone is a fluent Welsh speaker and has time to do some small scale translations please do get in touch with one of the Society Officers.

Research queries are being sent in. Some involve requests to put people in touch with living relatives which obviously we decline to get involved with. It is also important to remind these 'enquirers' that all of the research/look ups are done by volunteers.

Fairs across the country are slowly picking up again and the Society is considering working with the adjacent county societies to hold an event in the future rather than running our own event. As volunteers are not forthcoming and these events need numerous hands it might be a more practical way forward.

Penny Williams, secretary2@glamfhs.org.uk

GWYN RHYS - Obituary

Gwyn was Vice Chairman (1998-1999), Chairman (1999-2002), made an Honorary member for his services to the Society and also our first President. He was Vice Chairman when we celebrated our 25th Anniversary in 1999 but, as the role of Chairman was vacant, he was the person that oversaw the teams organising events. He was also one of the instigators of the setting up of the Resource Centre in 2002. For many years Gwyn, and wife Kathleen, were the volunteers undertaking Society 'Look-ups', both via post and email, and also face to face at various events including the annual fair at Merthyr.

We send our condolences to Kathleen and his daughters and family.

OUR MORMON FAMILY HISTORY

#10900 Martin Owen

Part 1

In researching my family history I discovered that two great-great-aunts and a great-great-uncle were from a Mormon family in Fishguard and had been part of the Mormon emigration to Salt Lake City. Thanks to the 'Welsh Saints Project' I was able to identify the ships that took them to America and much about their journey, including from an essay by CHARLES DICKENS. On-line genealogical sources enabled me to follow their lives in Utah. I hope this family history will be of particular interest and inspiration to Members with Mormon emigrant ancestors.

My mother's grandmother was Martha JENKINS (1841-1900), one of five children of William Randolph Jenkins (1816-1848), a tailor of Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, and his wife Mary (née GRIFFITHS) (1816-1860): Catherine (born 1839), Martha (1841), Mary Ann (1843), Alice (1845), and William Rudolph (1847). All were born in Shut (or Shwt) Street, near the centre of Fishguard. It was a Welsh-speaking family.

William Randolph senior died of typhus on 7 November 1848, aged only 32. Mary had to move from Shut Street, but the family stayed in Fishguard, with Mary working as an earthenware dealer. Mary died in 1860, aged 44, in High Street, Fishguard. The children were now orphans, aged between 21 and 12.

In the 1861 census, Martha and Alice had made their way to Cardiff, both working as servants. They were to marry, bring up families and die in Cardiff. Mary Ann was probably the 17 year old kitchen girl, Mary Ann Jenkins, recorded on a 15 acre farm at Llanstinan, Scleddau, just south of Fishguard.

A year later, on 23 April 1862, aged 18½, Mary Ann sailed from Liverpool on the *John J Boyd*, arriving in New York on 1 June 1862. It does not seem as if there were any relatives with her, but many of the party were from Wales so she probably travelled with friends or acquaintances.

In June 1863, Catherine and William Rudolph also emigrated and spent the rest of their lives in Utah.

The Mormon Phenomenon in the UK and Wales

Mormonism, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints ('the LDS Church'), was founded in 1830 in the United States by Joseph SMITH.

Mormon conversions began in the UK in the 1830s. Conversions in Wales got off to a slow start but were energised by a Welsh-speaking Welshman Dan JONES. He had emigrated to the USA from Flintshire at the age of 16, worked as a steamship captain on the Mississippi, and converted to the

Mormon church in Illinois. The story is that when the Smith brothers, founders of the Church, were arrested in 1844, Jones accompanied them to jail to offer support and protection. One night Joseph Smith asked Jones if he was afraid to die. Jones said "Not if for the cause", to which Smith is said to have replied "You will yet see Wales and fulfil the mission appointed you before you die". The next day the Smith brothers were killed by a mob in jail and Jones by chance avoided death himself at the hands of another mob.

Jones was asked to return to Wales. In about five years, with Jones as leader of the mission in Wales, converts increased from 200 to nearly 5000, especially in nonconformist areas. Jones established a Welsh language printing press and wrote books, pamphlets and periodicals in Welsh. He returned to the USA in 1849, but made another mission to Wales in the 1850s, converting some 2000 to the Church and oversaw the publication of a Welsh language version of the Book of Mormon before returning again to Utah.

Mormonism attracted a lot of hostility. In a memoir written in the 1920s towards the end of his life, Mary Ann's future husband recalled what being a Mormon was like in Fishguard:

'I was not nine years old (ie in about 1848) when two elders of the LDS Church came to our town to preach. Mother was busy washing, but she hastily changed her dress and apron, took me by the hand, and we went to hear the strangers and find out what they had to say. She received the word of God from those very humble elders, servants of the Lord who had been sent forth without purse or scrip.

One night my mother's sister, Mary, appeared to her as she lay in bed and said, "Elizabeth, this year the Lord has something to do for you". It came to pass, surely.

In 1849 my father embraced the gospel. He fed and sheltered the many missionaries willingly and gladly, and did all he could to defend them against the bitter assaults of the members of other churches.

I well remember the mobs - how they followed us with jeers and insults, and at one time broke every piece of glass in our house while Elder SYKES was preaching.

My parents gave freely of cash, clothes, and food to the elders. I remember going with mother to a meeting conducted by the Mormons when all of a sudden a howling, jeering, hissing mob came in to disturb the sermon. They acted in a most degenerate way, and yet they were called Christians. President PHILLIPS arose to his feet, then raising his hands and pointing toward the howling crowd he shouted, "Ye people of Fishguard, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to be still at your peril". A quiet calm

followed, and Brother JENKINS continued his sermon without further trouble. Those who came to mock remained to pray.'

We do not know when the Jenkins family became Mormons, or how many of the family were converted but it is quite possible that the 'Brother Jenkins' referred to by Joseph REES was Mary Ann's father.

Joseph Smith taught the concept of a 'gathering' of members of the Church to a central place, a communal 'Zion'. The result was the development of Salt Lake City and the Mormon temple there as 'Zion', and the migration of Mormon church members outside to the USA. This theological reason for migration was reinforced by a belief that there would be a better life in the USA and a less hostile environment in a land of committed Mormons.

Emigration was promoted by Mormon missionaries; wealthier Mormons were encouraged to pay the passages of poorer Mormons; and in due course a central fund was established to subsidise fares on a repayment basis (sometimes in kind through the provision of skills that met shortages in Utah).

There were 228 recorded Mormon voyages to the USA between 1840 and 1870.

The majority of Welsh Mormons had emigrated by 1873. It is estimated that 20% of the population of Utah is of Welsh descent. A group of Welsh converts, directed by a Welshman, John PARRY, formed the choir that became the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

Emigration Arrangements

To protect members from exploitation by agents, boarding housekeepers etc, the Church established its own organisation to arrange voyages and onward travel in the USA. Most Mormons travelled in parties of 'Saints', stayed in designated hotels before boarding, and had transfers, ticketing and route planning co-ordinated for them. On board, the party would have an appointed leader with assistants (a President and Counsellors) who organised daily prayers, meetings and singing during the voyage. There were rotas for cooking and guards to protect women from sailors. Single men slept at the bow, single women at the stern and married couples in the middle. Marriages were performed on board and births and deaths also inevitably occurred, with bodies usually put overboard immediately without ceremony to minimise disease.

On arrival in the USA, Mormon agents arranged onward passages to Utah (over 2,000 miles from New York) by some or all of steamers, ox trek companies or rail companies. Most Saints paid a fare through to Salt Lake City. Some had to stay in eg New York for a year to earn the money for the final stage.

In the 1860s 'down-and-back' wagon trains were introduced. By offering credits against the usual required tithes to the Church, the congregations were persuaded to donate oxen, wagons, supplies and manpower to form a wagon train to go from Utah to Nebraska, collect the emigrants and bring them back. The scale of the exercise was enormous – the pilot involved four companies with 203 wagons, 217 'teamsters', 1,699 oxen and 18 guards. They transported 136,000 pounds of flour to deposit at four stations on the way for use on the trip back. The journey took two to three months each way. Supplies purchased for the journey back included 13,000 pounds of sugar, 3,000 pounds of apples, 3,300 pounds of ham and 15,000 pounds of bacon. Sometimes berries could be picked, game shot, rabbits caught or other supplementary supplies obtained on the way. At Florence, many of the emigrant heads of families signed loan notes, agreeing to pay later for food, supplies and wagon fares. Each passenger could take 50 lbs of baggage free with a charge for every extra pound. There were 6-12 people per wagon.

Many of the down-and-back drivers were older boys and young men who volunteered. As one historian commented, volunteering by these "Utah Boys" *'got them out of farm work at home, let them drive all summer (macho even then) and allowed them to meet the arriving emigrant girls first before other Utah males did'*.

An average of 400 wagons a year carried some 16,000 emigrants between 1861 and 1868.

Part 2 will relate Mary Ann's later life and journey to Salt Lake City, and the adventures that her older sister and brother underwent when they joined her.

MESSAGE FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP TEAM

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THOMAS AND ANN EVANS JENKINS

#464 Kel York

Thomas Jenkins was born on August 23rd, 1831, in Llanharry, Glamorgan, the first son and first child of Thomas and Margaret (nee Griffiths), a well-to-do family. When Thomas was 23 he married Ann Evans, born September 30th 1830, a daughter of William and Mary (nee Llewellyn). She was born in Pendoylan, Glamorgan. His parents were displeased, thinking he had married beneath him, she coming from the working classes.

Thomas worked in the mines after he got married and some weeks he never saw the sun. He would go to work in the dark and come home after the sun had gone down.

Thomas was active in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and held many cottage meetings in his home in Wales. Sunday was definitely a day of rest for him. On Friday they cleaned house and on Saturday they cooked enough food for two days so that they could rest on Sunday.

They were blessed with seven sons and one daughter: Thomas Jr, Lewis, William Evans, David, Henry, Eston, (Eustance) Evans, Mary Ann and Daniel. When Daniel was just 4 days old, on June 12th 1869, Ann died. The grandparents wanted to take the children but Thomas refused to split the family. He hired a housekeeper, Emma Lewis, who stayed with them for years, eventually marrying her before they set off for America. At that time Mary Ann was 10 years of age.

Thomas brought all but two of his children to America; Thomas and Lewis and Lewis' wife stayed behind after they changed their minds at the last minute and these three spent the rest of their lives in Wales. The family, including Mary Ann, left from Liverpool on June 15th 1878 on the steamship *Montana* with the company of 191 led by Elder Theodore Braendli, and arrived in New York on June 26th 1878 and in Utah on July 3rd 1878. The Transcontinental Railroad from New York to San Francisco was completed in May 1869, with the driving of the Golden Spike in Utah, so the journey would have taken approximately 7 days, unlike the earlier perilous expeditions with horse and cart which often took months.

The family first settled in North Ogden and then moved onto several acres in Samaria, Idaho, where there were many people they had known in Wales. After they settled in the Valley Thomas joined the Reorganised LDS Church because he felt it was more like the LDS Church he had attended in Wales. He lived there until Emma died and he lived with his children until his death on January 13th 1915. He is buried in the Samaria cemetery.

ELIAS EVANS - Briton Ferry Boxing Hero

#8653 Barrie Jones

When researching my maternal grandfather's army boxing career, Michael LEAHAN, (1888-1929) (see my article in Journal 137, March 2020) I came across three bouts between Michael and Elias (Li) EVANS in 1910¹. Often my researches go off on a tangent and here was no exception and so I needed to find out more on 'Li' and the following is what I discovered about the "Briton Ferry Boxer Hero."

Elias Evans, the son of William and Susannah EVANS was born on 20th May 1888, in Treboeth, Swansea², and competed in an estimated twenty-one professional contests between 1910–1924³. The three bouts with my grandfather give an insight of Li's boxing ability but I have found nothing memorable about his overall boxing career. His first encounter with my grandfather was a three round contest organised by my grandfather's regiment, the 2nd Battalion, Welch Regiment, as part of its preparation for the regimental boxing team's participation in the Army and Navy Annual Championship held at Aldershot Barracks in October 1910. An evening of warm-up bouts was held in the gymnasium at Llanion Barracks, Pembroke Dock, between the team members and local boxers. Li was described as a '*Milford lad*' but he had been living in Briton Ferry from an early age.

The bout was reported as a splendid contest, and that both men showed plenty of stamina and skill. My Grandfather won the bout, and, being a harder puncher, had slightly the better of the exchanges, '*but in the point of skill there was little in it, and if anything, Evans's footwork was superior.*' Li was described as a very pretty and clean boxer. Such was the quality of the contest that 'Professor' Alf HARRIS acting as Li's backer challenged my Grandfather to a fifteen rounds contest for ten pounds a-side, and this was accepted⁴.

Returning to Pembroke from Aldershot after reaching the semi-final stage of the Army and Navy championship my Grandfather had his second bout with Li. My Grandfather '*had an advantage of 10lb in weight, and this in the course of the fifteen rounds told against his opponent, who, despite his*

¹ Barrie Jones, Army Boxing, Glamorgan Family History Society, Journal no.137, March 2020, pp. 17-20.

² 1891 Census RG12/4460, p.5, 9 Church Street, Briton Ferry and 1939 National Register, XJSH, Neath M.B. 592/2, 27, Shelone Terrace, Briton Ferry.

³ www.boxinghistory.org.uk

⁴ "Boxing Contests at Pembroke Dock, Some Spirited Bouts," Pembroke County Guardian & Cardigan Reporter, (PCG), 28th October 1910, p. 3, Welsh Newspapers Online.

cleverness, received some severe punishment in the earlier rounds. Evans was the more scientific boxer, but Leahan was the harder hitter, and at the end of the fifteen rounds was awarded the verdict on point⁵.

'Professor' Harris must have thought that he had a good money earner with these two opponents and on 26th November promoted another bout over twenty rounds for twenty pounds a side at his pavilion in Milford Haven⁶. 'The building was packed to its utmost capacity. Leahan scaled 13lb heavier than Evans, who was knocked down in the eighth round and again in the eleventh round, but rose before the call of time on each occasion. The whole twenty rounds were fought, and Leahan was returned the winner on points'⁷.

The overall impression of Li's boxing ability from the three bouts with my Grandfather was that he was the more dogged, smarter, and better boxer beaten by a heavier and harder hitting opponent. At this time Li may already have been pursuing a career as a boxer and in April 1911, we find him boarding at 52 Ruth Street, Bargoed, with Alfred HARRY a proprietor of a boxing booth and a well-known local boxing promoter⁸.

Li's dogged character and cleverness must have been noticed by his commanding officers during his service in the First World War (WW1). He had enlisted in the 8th Battalion of the Princess Charlotte of Wales's (Royal Berkshire) Regiment in Neath in January 1915, and by August of that year he was serving in France. While in France he secured rapid promotion over the coming months reaching the rank of lance serjeant by November that year. In February 1916 he was transferred to the 173rd Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers, retaining his rank of lance serjeant.

As early as February 1915 eight tunnelling companies were formed and by mid-1916 over 25,000 "tunnellers" were employed with an estimated double that number of attached infantrymen acting as labourers supporting the tunnellers. The tunnelling companies' primary function was to dig attacking tunnels under enemy lines due to the stalemate that existed at that stage of the war. Other functions included constructing subterranean systems for accommodation, headquarters, dressing stations and subways, as well as removing explosives from enemy mines and booby traps in opposing tunnels. Naturally, most men transferred into these companies as tunnellers were miners. However, Li was a steel smelter when he enlisted in 1915 and may

⁵ "Boxing," PCG, 18th November 1910, p. 3, Welsh Newspapers Online.

⁶ "Boxing, Welsh Soldier's Victory," PCG, 2nd December 1910, p. 3, Welsh Newspapers Online.

⁷ "Milford Haven, Boxing," Pembrokeshire Herald and General Advertiser, 2nd December 1910, p. 3. Welsh Newspapers Online.

⁸ 1911 Census RG14/32417, 590/1/16.

only have been transferred because of his association with Welsh miners and his obvious command abilities.

On 3rd March 1916 Li was to write to his mother living at 29 Regent Street East, Briton Ferry: *"I have just written you a letter, so I am writing you another to let you know that I have won the DCM. I expect that you will be surprised, but it is right, for bravery when the Germans blew a mine and buried a lot of soldiers, and I had the DCM for digging them out under fire from the Germans"*⁹. The official citation read as follows:

Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM) - For conspicuous gallantry in organising with Serjeant E CHAMBERLAIN rescue parties of their men after the explosion of an enemy mine and rescuing, after three hours of work in full view of the enemy and under enfilade fire, many men who had been buried¹⁰.

That same month, (March 1916), a group of local dignitaries in Briton Ferry had decided to set up "The Ferry Boys at the Front Fund," a relief fund to bring comfort both financial and pastoral to local families and to their loved ones serving at the front. On hearing that Li was the first Briton Ferry man to be awarded the DCM, and who was soon to be home on leave, the Fund Committee decided to make an award to him. The Fund made similar awards to gallantry winners over the following three years. The main body of their work, however, would be to support the increasing number of widows and families who had lost their principal earners, either killed or wounded in the war¹¹.

May Li was rewarded by a procession paraded through Briton Ferry headed by the police, followed by the Town Silver Band, who played en-route, officers and soldiers home on furlough, Ambulance Brigade, Boy Scouts, Fire Brigade and members of the general public, followed by a motor car containing Li, his mother and sister (Elizabeth), and Mr Herbert ECCLES, JP, president of the fund. After the parade, a presentation ceremony was held at the Public Hall. Presenting Li with a gold inscribed watch Mr Eccles said: "he was proud of the honour conferred upon serjeant Evans, especially as he had joined the colours from the Old Steel Works. This DCM is not got for nothing; it is something to be proud of." After receiving the presentation, Li is reported saying in thanks:

"I am a man of few words", he said. A women's voice shouted: "But you are a man of action" to cheers from the crowd – "and I would rather kill a German t

⁹ 'Honour for Well-Known Local Boxer,' The Cambria Daily Leader (CL), 6th March 1916, p.6., Welsh Newspapers Online.

¹⁰ UK Citations of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, 1914-1920.

¹¹ Jonathan Skidmore, Neath and Briton Ferry in the First World War, 2018, pp.32-33.

than speak". He was pleased with their presentation; his heart was too full for words¹².

Li survived the war unscathed returning to Briton Ferry and resumed his boxing career. In April 1920 he married Edith May JOHN (1892-1974) in Neath and continued to live in Briton Ferry until his death in April 1974. Both he and Edith are buried in Ynysmaerdy Cemetery, Briton Ferry.

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www.glamfhs.org.uk/how-to-join

¹² 'Briton Ferry Boxer Hero,' CL, 11th May 1916, p. 3., Welsh Newspapers Online.

JOHNNY WALSH: PIECING TOGETHER A FORGOTTEN LIFE

#21135 Marcus Payne

Anyone who embarks on researching their family history is always secretly hoping to find someone who made a memorable impact during their lifetime. One such person in my family was Johnny WALSH, my maternal grand-uncle. He was well-known and highly regarded, but he seems to me to have been largely forgotten in the nearly seventy years since his death.

Johnny Walsh was the manager of the Criterion Hotel pub in Church Street, Cardiff from 1928 until his death in 1958. Johnny's other claim to fame was that he was a friend and colleague of Jack PETERSEN, the outstanding Cardiff-born Welsh boxer of the 1930s, who won numerous fights and titles.

Johnny's death in June 1958 merited an obituary in the South Wales Echo by Bert ALLEN, the paper's boxing correspondent. He referred to him as "a well-known Cardiff sporting personality who was 'mine host' of the Criterion Hotel, Cardiff for the past quarter of a century." Bert went on to state that "Johnny was associated with Jack Petersen throughout the former British heavy-weight champion's boxing career, and both as an amateur and professional was one of Petersen's seconds at all of his championship fights." Bert also secured a tribute from Jack: "He was an excellent second, and a very good all round sportsman, and as likeable a personality as you could wish to meet."

Johnny's involvement with Jack can probably be explained by Bert going on to state that he was "an amateur boxer of some repute both before and during his service in the 1914-18 war. Johnny won many prizes but never reached championship heights". In my researches so far I have not been able to track down details of which regiment he served in, but imagine it could have been the Welsh Regiment. His 1921 census return entry states that he was a "docks labourer, ex-army." No luck either yet on his boxing achievements. I will doubtless have to undertake the tedious task of ploughing through the pages of the local papers to try to find any entries relating to that and his army service.

In his articles Bert mentions that Johnny was "also a good rugby footballer. Johnny played as forward for St Albans in the early 1900s, and in season 1912-13 dropped a goal to win the Mallett Cup for them. He was also in the side that won the Cardiff and District Rugby League Championship in 1913-1914, and a charity cup competition in 1913". For me these last sentences have proved you can't always believe what is stated in newspapers! In correspondence with the Welsh rugby historian Gwyn PRESCOTT, he was able to inform me that St Albans was not a strong side at this time and didn't win the Mallett Cup in 1912-13. Nor did they win the District League in 1913-1914, or the Charity Cup in 1913. However, the team that did win all those

competitions at that time was St David's, who were the oldest Catholic club in Cardiff. He went on to say he had found a match report in December 1913, which listed a 'J Welsh' appearing for St Davids; although the line-up did suggest he was a wing quarter not a forward as his obituary stated. If this is the right person, then he was probably also a member of the Mallett Cup & League winning teams. Gwyn also suggested that perhaps he had earlier attended St David's School, and played rugby for them. All very plausible, but I will have to again wade through local newspapers held at Cathays Branch & Heritage Library, to see if I can find any more references to his rugby career.

I have managed to track down an intriguing photo in Volume 3 of the impressive 'Cardiff Yesterday' series featuring a team photo of 'St David's, 1911-1912, Mallett Cup and Welsh League Shield Winners.' To be honest it is difficult to tell if Johnny is in the photo, as he would have been much younger here than in other photos I have of him. Frustratingly, the caption goes on to name only the Captain, Peter CONWAY, and the Vice-captain, D O'BRIEN.

Johnny was actually born as John Patrick WELSH on 16th March 1892, in 13 Ivor Street, Cardiff, second son of George & Ellen Welsh. His younger sister, Margaret, born in January 1903, was my maternal grandmother. He married Catherine TOBIN on 29th March 1914, and they had daughters, Kathleen born 1920, and Sheila Mary, born in 1925. Sheila was tragically killed by a terrorist bomb in Cairo, Egypt, in May 1946, and is buried there.

Confusingly, Johnny changed his surname to Walsh around 1928, when he took over the running of the Criterion Hotel. In the last year I have been busily gathering together pieces of the jigsaw that make up his life story through, documents, certificates, press reports and images; and have managed to pull together a bulky Johnny Walsh info file. But there is so much more I need to make a more complete and rounded picture of this remarkable man.

The only article that I can find that mentions him since 1958, is by Brian LEE, again of the South Wales Echo, who writes a regular nostalgia series called 'Cardiff Remembered.' It came out in October 2019, entitled 'Landlords of closed city centre pub had been in boxing ring,' in which he refers to Clive WILLIAMS saying: "One pub in particular that has disappeared has fond memories for me – the Criterion in Church Street. During the early 1960s it was run at different times by Feeny JOHN and Dennis REARDON." Brian added that that "One well-known sporting personality who kept the pub from 1930 to 1960 was Johnny Walsh who was a good friend of Jack Petersen. Johnny was also a boxer himself and during the First World War had won many army boxing competitions." So with Brian Lee we have someone who does remember Johnny. But what most intrigued me in this article was a fascinating photograph with the caption "Landlord Johnny Walsh..... of the Criterion Hotel looks up at the pennies collected by regulars for the Blind."

Brian has reproduced a better quality version of this photo in his 'Yesterday's Cardiff Revisited' book. I am intrigued because it is the only photo that I have seen of the interior of the Criterion, and is a good picture of Johnny. But most tantalising for me are two background photos displayed on the rear walls. One shows a boxer standing in a pugilistic pose with hands held up; and the other is the left-hand side of a photograph of a rugby or football team. Could these be old photos showing Johnny in his sporting boxing and rugby prime? Unfortunately neither is clear enough to make out details to be more certain. For the record, the Criterion was later turned into a basement steak-bar of the same name in the 70s/80s before being demolished.

In my researches I also found out that a Bob LONKHURST had written a detailed biography of Jack Petersen entitled 'Gentleman of the Ring: The Life and Career of Jack Petersen.' I eagerly read it from cover to cover in the hope of finding references to Johnny. To my great disappointment, there was not a single mention in the text of Johnny. But what I did find were three photographs that appeared to have him in the background or partly obscured, and not captioned. That makes some sense as he was one of the back-room boys.

I wrote to Bob explaining my research, and my surprise that there was no mention in his biography of a man who was a friend and boxing colleague, with a long background in the sport. Bob was honest in his response, saying that unfortunately he had never heard of him, and saw/found no references to him during his extensive research into the life and career of Jack Petersen. He was sorry to say he was unable to help me in my research. It was at that point that I ruefully reflected that Johnny had largely been forgotten, with the honourable exception of Brian Lee, although I know there must be others out there who remember him.

One happier outcome was that I was able to track down his grave. A death notice in the South Wales Echo for Johnny said: "Funeral Wednesday leaving the Criterion, Church St. 9.40am. Requiem mass St David's 10am prior to internment Western Cemetery". I contacted the splendid Cardiff Bereavement Services, who are part of the Council, asking for details of the burials of a number of my ancestors in Cathays and Western Cemeteries. They quickly and efficiently sent me document maps, which helped me pinpoint and visit their graves. The only gravestone that still exists is that for Johnny Walsh, which can be found in a somewhat weather-worn but upright and just readable state in Western Cemetery on the side of one of the main pathways. The not-easy-to-read inscription goes :

Sweet Jesus have mercy
on the soul of
John Patrick Walsh
Beloved Husband of Catherine
Died June 22nd 1958 Aged 66
Sadly Missed By His
Devoted Daughter Kathleen
RIP

I am grateful that this at least has survived to commemorate him and his family. I have made a few attempts to contact his family, to share my findings, but with no success.

So that is where I am in my pursuit of my ancestral relative. I'm hoping this article will help to bring his name back out of the shadows, as he deserves. To finish with a plea: is there anyone in the GFHS, or beyond, who might have any recollections of him, or any information or photographs relating to him, his family, or the Criterion. Please get back to me through the Editor.

DID YOU KNOW? The Glamorgan FHS Logo

The shield with its chevrons is similar to that of Iestyn ap Gwrgant, the last native ruler of Glamorgan in the 11th century. The 9th century Celtic cross is based upon the one found at Llantiwt Major, known as the Cross of Houelt (Hywel ap Rhys) – see page 48. The combination of the two symbols links Church and State, and the way in which we, as family historians, use both Ecclesiastical and Civil records when researching our ancestors.



(Maura Bennett)

Right: Houelt Celtic Cross at St Illtud's Church, Llantiwt Major (featured on recent 'Digging for Britain' programme, series 12 episode 5)



READ ALL ABOUT IT!

#8289 Janet Neilson

Nearly everyone reading this article will have searched online for BMDs and Census returns, but there are many other sources available.

Recently, I decided to ascertain if there were any mention of my ancestors in newspaper reports available online (I use *Find My Past*) and the search proved fruitful and surprising, in some cases!

Fortunately, I have some unusual surnames in my family in Swansea (as that is how I decided to narrow down the search). I started with BURMAN.

I knew that my great grandfather, Rees Hopkins BURMAN (1853-1927), was a keen RECHABITE and often spoke at their meetings.

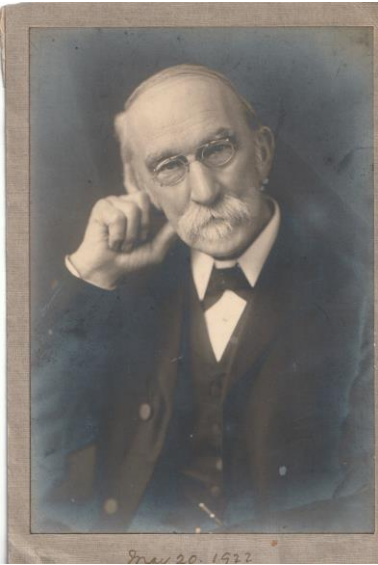


This leads one to ask what are/were Rechabites. Originally they were a family group in ancient Israel, who lived in tents and abstained from drinking wine. The Independent Order of Rechabites (IOR) was founded in England in 1835, to promote total abstinence. It was named after the biblical tribe and was part of the wider temperance movement. It was a fraternal organisation that provided an alternative lifestyle for non-drinkers. Members were required to take a pledge of abstinence and abide by a lengthy list of rules. The IOR also organised social events such as tea parties, day trips and concerts.

In 1902, “the Ragged School was again comfortably filled on the occasion of the weekly temperance meeting of the Swansea Total Abstinence Society. Mr Rees Burman, who presided, urged the necessity of doing away with the drink traffic, which was a source of ruin to the country.....” (*The Cambrian Daily Leader*, Monday June 2nd 1902)

Rees BURMAN'S wife, Mrs Rees (Elizabeth Ann) BURMAN (photo above), worked with her husband. In 1895, the annual tea and concert of the Independent Order of Rechabites took place. Dr John Adams RAWLINGS (below left), was a very well-known name in Swansea in temperance circles; both he and Rees Burman who were Wesleyan Methodists, “confessed that it was the duty of every medical officer of a Rechabite Tent to do his utmost to #

promote the cause of total abstinence....” (*Swansea Journal and South Wales Liberal*, Saturday March 30th, 1895).



Between speeches there were musical items. Tea was provided by the organising committee, who “performed their duties with ardour..... The tables were under the care of some of the following ladies – Mrs James JENKIN, Mrs Norman MANSFIELD, Miss Emily Smith, Mrs Ambrose HOSKINS, Mrs Rees Burman and Miss MCKENZIE (also a relative of mine).” (Note the use of husbands’ names for married women!!!!)

Ernest BURMAN (1915–1961) (grandson of Rees BURMAN) in the 1950s was a pigeon fancier and racer. *SOME LOST PIGEONS FOUND IN WALES* read the headline (*Birmingham Post* June 10th, 1954). “Some of the 8,000 pigeons which are believed to have been lost in a storm while flying home

to Northern Ireland from Milford Haven..... were picked up in various parts of South Wales yesterday.”

“Six were found at Swansea and Mr Ernest BURMAN, chairman of the Welsh National Tippler Society, said ‘they were in a very poor condition.’ He said ‘My opinion is that they have flown themselves right out. I would say they hit fog over the Channel, turned and came back over Swansea Bay.’ He appealed to the public to be on the lookout for exhausted pigeons. (I wonder if his grandfather would have approved of his hobby?)

I also learned that Ernest had been a gunner in the 11th Light Battery, RA and was stationed in India. He was a keen sportsman, a fine runner and captain of the barracks water polo team. Ernest Hopkins BURMAN (1880–1940), son of Rees H BURMAN, had been secretary of the Swansea branch of the National Association of Operative Plasterers, who had to resign when he became unwell. *FUNERAL OF SWANSEA TRADE UNION WORKER* read the headline report of his funeral (*Evening Post* Friday February 9th 1940).

Today, local newspapers don’t report on funerals, sadly, as they are a vital source for genealogists. They are a treasure trove as they list family members and often their relationship to the deceased.

Ernest H Burman's funeral listed: Mrs Henrietta Burman (widow); Messers Rees, Tom and Ernest (sons); Mrs G JONES, Mrs M JOHN and Mrs E MORGAN (daughters); Messers Ivor, Rhys, William and Frank (brothers); Mrs Rhys Burman (daughter-in-law); Messers Garfield Jones, Meredith John and Ellis Morgan (sons-in-law); Charles LINSEY and Evan GRIFFITHS (my maternal grandfather) (brothers-in-law).

Among the general public attending were Mr Llew Morgan (Independent Order of Rechabites); Mr J MAHONEY (Swansea Shipwrights' Society) (some members of the Burman family had been pattern makers). There were also representatives from Swansea Corporation; Norton Lime Works; NAO Plasterers. These representatives show me that he was held in high regard. The report also lists all those who gave floral tributes.

I then looked into a family member with an unusual first name – MOZART EVANS.

What I learned from the second article was a great shock, as not only me, but none of the rest of the family knew about this. 20 MILES IN TUG TO PATIENT read the headline (*The Western Morning News and Mercury*; Thursday July 14th, 1927). Several newspapers reported this event.



"A wireless call from the steamer ROTHLEY, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, bound from that part to Bermudas, caused Dr R MCCULLOUGH, of Grimsby, to go out 20 miles in a tug last evening. He found Mozart EVANS, a seaman, of Chaddesley Terrace, Swansea, with bones broken in each arm, a broken nose and facial injuries. Evans, who had fallen down the hold was taken to Grimsby Hospital."

A report in 1924 is titled PRETTY WEDDING AT ST MARY'S CHURCH, SWANSEA (*South Wales Evening Post*, Wednesday September 17th, 1924). "Mozart EVANS (late Scout Leader, YMCA – which is another source of information as to Mozart's involvement in life in Swansea) was married to Miss Doris Hastings RICE, eldest daughter of Captain J RICE (sea pilot) and Mrs (Harriet) RICE.

The report continues, giving great detail of the bride's gown and lists the five bridesmaids. It even tells us what the mother of the bride was wearing... "the

bride's mother was attired in a gown of rainbow marocain and a hat to match with embroidered veil!"

In 1919, another family member, Oswald BEDDOES, aged 33 "appeared before the magistrates charged with 'being a person solely trusted with certain property belonging to the Swansea Harbour Trustees, the sum of £513 16s 2d, in order that he may retain in safe custody, or apply, or pay, or deliver the same to a person or persons, did fraudulently convert the same to his own use and benefit between the 14th and 21st February, 1919."

The headline read - SWANSEA PAY CLERK remanded on embezzlement charge (*South Wales Daily Post*, Thursday February 27th, 1919). "Detective Superintendent Hayse, said 'he received BEDDOES from the custody of the Marylebone Police, London, on Wednesday.' When charged, he replied, 'The amount in that warranty is not correct. I wish to reserve my defence until another time.'



"Mr Conway Lewis asked for a remand as he had only just been instructed to represent the defendant. Mr Rupert Lewis, on behalf of the police, raised no objection and BEDDOES was consequently remanded for a fortnight, bail being allowed in the sum of £100 and two sureties of £50. "The accused was asked (at his next court appearance) if he wanted to cross examine Mr ROBINSON (Beddoes conducted his own defence), replied, 'No, my Lord, I wish to withdraw my plea of not guilty.' The prosecutor accepted the plea, and the Commissioner said that the prisoner had taken the right course. The judge said 'The accused had been guilty of breaking the rule of common honesty, and he could not help thinking that it was a class of case that, in a commercial community, was one of the most serious crimes. I can do no less than to pass sentence of fifteen months imprisonment, with hard labour."

In 1919, hard labour included working the treadmill, oakum picking, herring net making, knitting stockings or sewing, shoemaking, tailoring, joinery. This list is a general list and is not specific to Swansea Gaol.

The family story is, though I have no written proof, that when he was released from jail, he returned to the same job!

JOHN THOMAS JONES

#1801 Clive Davies

My great-great grandfather, Evan JENKINS, was born in 1809 at Leckwith, then a hamlet of a hundred souls on the western outskirts of Cardiff. Evan married a widow, Mary CULE, nee WATKIN (1808-52) in 1846 and I am descended from the only child of this marriage, Jane Jenkins (1847-1884).

I was able to chart the lives of two of his daughters from his second marriage in 1856 to Amelia LEWIS (1820-68) but not the third daughter, Elizabeth Jenkins. She was born in 1863 at Dinas Powis. Recently her 1893 Cardiff marriage to Thomas JONES, a widower with six children, was found, and I delved further.

1901 census, 26 Hewell Street, Cogan, Glamorgan

Thomas Jones*, Head, Mar, 50, Coal Dealer, born Cardiff

Elizabeth Jones, Wife, Mar, 38, born Cardiff

and children: Henry, 20, Coal Hawker, William 19, Railway Porter, Sidney 10.

All born Cardiff. Margaret Jones, 5 & **John T Jones, 1**, both born Penarth.

*Thomas was neither a Jones nor born in Wales. He was baptized on 15th January 1852 at Yetminster, Dorset, as Thomas, the illegitimate son of Ann VARDY b.1817 at Nether Compton, five miles north of Yetminster. Ann Vardy married Charles COOPER (1816-1894) in 1853 at Yeovil, Somerset. Their son, also Charles, was born in 1855. She gave birth to a third son, Henry, born about 1860, probably at Lliswerry near Newport. He was likely fathered by an unknown Jones. Ann and her sons adopted that surname.

1871 census, 1 Evans Terrace, Canton, Cardiff

Ann Jones, Head, Widow, 54, Dog's Meat Vendor, b. Dorset, Yetminster

and her three sons, Tom Jones, 18, Labourer, b. Dorset, Yetminster,

Charles 16, Labourer, b. Somerset, Henry, 10, b. Newport, Monmouthshire.

1911 census, 1 Hewell Street, Cogan, Glamorgan

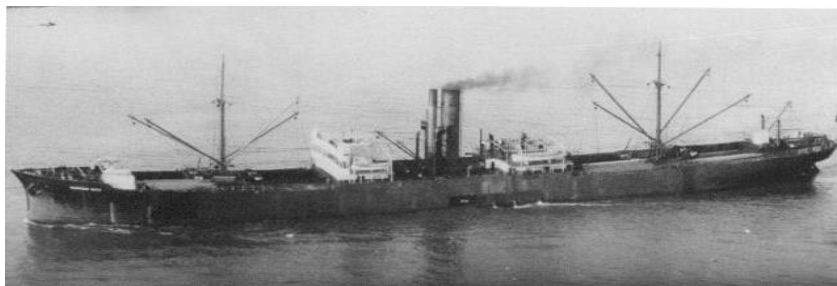
*Thomas Jones, Head, Marr, 60, Coal Dealer, born Dorset, Yetminster

Elizabeth Jones, Wife, Marr, 18 years, 8 children, 2 dead, born Glamorgan,

Penarth and children: Charles, 25 Railway Servant; Sidney, 20 Haulier; Both born Cardiff. Margaret 15, **John Jones* 11**, Both born Penarth.

*John Thomas Jones was born on 24th July 1899 at 26 Hewell Street, Cogan and baptized six weeks later in Cogan's parish church at Llandough-juxta-Penarth. The entry in *Ancestry.com* for his place of death was startling: 30th November 1929, Nikumaroro Island. It seemed a long way from Barry Island. And it was. Nikumaroro, formerly known as Gardner Island, is a remote atoll in mid-Pacific, 690 miles (1,040k) north of Samoa. Nikumaroro is a narrow ring of land around a lagoon, fringed by a coral reef. It is only 4.7 miles

(7.4k) long and 2.6 miles (1.6k) wide with little potable water. Its sole inhabitants are rats and large, aggressive coconut crabs.



SS Norwich City, 4,215 gross tons,
tramp steamer of the Reardon Smith Line of Cardiff. Built 1911

Norwich City at Vancouver, April 1928
Photographer: *Stuart Thomson 1881-1960*



On 1st November 1929 the SS Norwich City berthed at Port Melbourne with a cargo of coal for the Metropolitan Gas Company. On 16th November the vessel left the port in ballast bound for Vancouver via Honolulu. Her previous visit to Vancouver had ended disastrously. In April 1928 the Norwich City collided with the Second Narrows Bridge and was severely damaged. She lost both her masts and funnel and her superstructure also required extensive repairs. She spent three months in Vancouver's Burrard Dry Dock.

Cyclonic weather and unknown currents drove the Norwich City off course as she made for Honolulu. Near midnight on 29th November she ran aground on the coral reef off Nikumaroro Island. Initial inspections found she was taking water in two holds. This was followed by a fire and explosions in the engine room. The captain gave the order to abandon ship and the lifeboats were launched. The radio officer was able to send distress calls which were picked

up in Apia, Samoa. Two vessels, the Norwegian tanker, Lincoln Ellsworth, and the British freighter, Trongate, were dispatched from Apia to Nikumaroro.

The Norwich City had a crew of 35 including a steward, John Thomas Jones. John Jones became a seaman at an early age with service during World I. Her master, Capt Daniel HAMER (1891-1939), was a native of Barry, a mere six miles from the Jones family at Cogan. Daniel had gone to sea in 1906 as a 15 year-old apprentice with another Cardiff shipping company, W & CT Jones. That company ceased trading in 1924.

Daniel Hamer had married Gwladys MORGAN (1898-1991) in 1921 at Cardiff. They had no children. Daniel died in Llandough Hospital near Penarth in 1939. Gwladys remarried a year later to Barry's Deputy Clerk, a widower, William Henry WAITE (1887-1983). I am tenuously related by marriages to Gwladys through her mother, Mary NUGENT (1867-1966).

1901 census, 92 Graving Dock Street, Barry, Glamorgan

John Hamer, Head, Marr, 37 Carpenter & Joiner, b. Cardiganshire, Aberayron
Henrietta Hamer, Wife, Marr, 31, b. Somersetshire, Pill

Daniel Hamer, Son, 9, b. Glamorgan, Barry

Emily Hamer, Dau, 8, b. Glamorgan, Barry

Out of those who perished at Nikumaroro Island four were buried on the beach:

John James Leslie, aged 56, **John Thomas Jones**, 30, and two Yemeni crew, Redman Yousef, 23, and one unnamed. Eight other crew members were missing after the shipwreck.

<https://ameliaearhartarchaeology.blogspot.com/2019/01/lost-norwich-city-crewmembers-potential.htm>

The survivors were marooned for five days on Nikumaroro/Gardner Island until rescued by the SS Trongate. The Yemenis were formerly residents of a boarding house in South Shields. They were taken to Apia, Samoa.

Capt Daniel Hamer gave this testimony to a Board of Trade Inquiry set up in Apia, Western Samoa after the rescue:

.....My part in the proceedings ended about 4.30 am. After seeing the starboard lifeboat safely lowered to the rail, the Chief Officer and I crossed over to attend to the port boat. This being the weather and outside boat, was only to be used in case of necessity. The boat was swung out and before lowering I heard water running over the side. Not wanting the boat filled I approached the side to ascertain the cause when the vessel was struck by a heavy sea and shaken violently. The Chief Officer luckily was thrown inboard but I hit the water some 40 ft below, just missing a grip on the boat deck in passing. I was swept out clear of the ship about 50 yards by the backwash

from the seas. I called out for someone to lower a rope over the side. They heard me twice and then lost sight of me and gave me up for lost. I was trying to swim back to the ship but was being taken by the current past the bow and was at one time about 150 yards from where I fell and about 50 yards from the surf.

I was getting fatigued by this time so I decided to lie on my back. Next thing I knew I was near the surf. I tried to get away but I was swept in with the rollers and after what appeared hours landed on the reef or ledge of the island as it turned out to be. Dawn was now breaking and I could see the island about 200 yards away, so I made for it, very thankful to find the water no more than waist high up to the beach.

The most regrettable incident was to follow. When the lifeboat with all hands was leaving the ship it was drawn up into the tremendous surf and capsized throwing most of the crew into the sea, eleven of them losing their lives. Four were imprisoned under the boat, one of them was found drowned when the bottom was cut out of the boat. The other three had managed to keep their heads above until help came.

Most of the survivors in their efforts to reach safety had discarded as much of their clothing as possible, some were without boots, some without clothes and most of them were cut about the body by the sharp coral and rocks. All were in a very dejected state but thankful to have reached safety.

The steward (John Thomas Jones), poor chap, was the most unfortunate of all. He had practically reached safety when he collapsed and was drowned before anyone could give him assistance. He was brought up on the beach, artificial respiration was tried for about an hour without avail, and we were all

reluctant to give up. He was a very popular fellow and everyone expressed their sympathy for his relatives in their sad bereavement. Later we all paid him our last respects, gave him a Christian burial and placed a cross of coral at his head.



c1937 Wreck of SS Norwich City on Nikumaroro/Gardner Island

Did you miss St Dwynwen's day?

ST DWYNWEN, Welsh patron saint of lovers.

It is very difficult to ignore St David's Day on March 1st in Wales, but did you miss St Dwynwen's day, January 25th???

There are many versions of the life of Dwynwen, celebrated in poetry and song over the Celtic mists of time; some ring true, others maybe not! St Dwynwen was one of the many daughters of the 5th Century King Brychan, the Irish ruler of Brycheiniog, or Breconshire, and legend has it that she was betrothed by her father to a man she did not love. The man she wanted was Maelon, and she asked an angel for help, but the angel gave her a potion to help her forget him. Instead, it turned him into a block of ice.

Thwarted in love, she asked God for 3 wishes- one that Maelon be brought back to life, the second that God be kind to all lovers, and the third that she be allowed to serve God for the rest of her life if she couldn't have him.

This last wish was granted, as she founded a convent on a remote promontory in Ynys Môn (Anglesey) and spent her whole life there, dying in around 465. The convent ruins can still be seen in Ynys Llanddwyn, named after her, and ever since Wales has recognised her as the patron saint of lovers, the equivalent of St Valentine. Her saint's day is January 25th, when not just lovers exchange gifts and tokens, but families and friends too.

January 25th is also Burns Night, for the Scots amongst us!

Other saints' days over this period of course are **St Patrick's** on March 17th and **St George's** on April 23rd.

DID YOU KNOW?

John Harvey Kellogg was a Chicago scientist and vegetarian health food advocate who invented cornflakes in the late 19th century as the ideal breakfast food. Needing to advertise his product he asked a lady friend, who had emigrated from Wales, what would be a good symbol or picture to get the product noticed. She suggested the cockerel, as it's bright and full of life first thing in the morning, and as the Welsh for cockerel was 'ceiliog' it sounded very close to Dr Kellogg's own name, so that is why the cockerel was adopted to be shown on the cereal boxes!

MICHELE, aka
MICHAEL GIOVANNI DELACASSA
#10992 Don Delacassa

This is quite a complicated story of my grandfather, who was born in the Albaro district (we believe) of Genova in Italy.

We have often thought he was an orphan; he told my grandmother that when in Italy he'd been driven in a coach with four horses to a big house with a long drive, and he lived in this house where there was an American governess. We understand that in Genova there was an orphanage hospital named Della Casagrande, meaning 'the Big House', and we wondered if this could be the big house of which he spoke. He went on to say that he'd escaped from this house by climbing down an orange tree.

Since getting in touch with the authorities in Italy I was told that there was a Giovanni Batista Dellacasa who was called up for military service but who failed to respond for duty. We believe that he may then have travelled on a coal boat from Genova to possibly Cardiff.

My grandmother told me that he changed names on the voyage with another person, hence the name and spelling changes.

There are no details of how he ended up in the Rhondda Valley, but he became a coal hewer there in a mine in Stanleytown in the Rhondda Fach. He was reputed to have dug a coal shaft on his own, but there might have been more Italians there with him as the place is still marked today as 'Italians' Deep'.

Michele, by now known as Michael, became a naturalised British subject in or around 1880.

He married twice, and my grandmother, Mary Elizabeth WATTS, from Blakeney in Gloucestershire, was his second wife, whom he married in Merthyr Registry Office in August 1905. They went on to have 10 children, but 5 of them died within the first year of their births.

Sometime in 1914 a few officials came to Stanleytown to inform him that he had received an inheritance in Italy, but he declined to accept this, as he was married with a home and family in Stanleytown.

He died on October 20th 1918 at 11 Lower Terrace, Stanleytown, of influenza and heart failure.

NEIL MCBRIDE MP, Part 1

#11208 John P Lethbridge

Introduction. In previous articles I looked at David WILLIAMS Swansea East's first Labour MP and his wife, Elizabeth. David Llewellyn MORT replaced him in 1940 after an uncontested wartime by-election, and held Swansea East until 1963 when Mort died of cancer. My article about Mort will hopefully appear in the 2025 *Swansea Historian*. In this two-part article I look at Swansea East's third Labour MP, Neil MCBRIDE.

Family Background and Early Life. Neil McBride was born at 1 Low Broadlie, Neilston, in Renfrewshire in Scotland on 13 April 1910. His parents, Neil McBride, a carter, and Catherine McBride, nee SLAVEN, had married on 31 December 1907 at Our Lady and St Thomas's Roman Catholic Church in Neilston. They were to have at least four children – Charles, Catherine, Elizabeth and Mary.

The 1911 census shows Neil McBride junior, eleven months, at 1 Low Broadlie in Neilston with his parents Neil and Catherine McBride, their mother-in-law and head of the household Catherine Slaven senior and two of the baby's maternal aunts – Ellen Slaven, twenty three, and William Slaven twenty one.

The 1921 census shows Neil McBride senior, thirty-five, at 5 Kirkhill in Neilston with his wife, Catherine, thirty-four, Neil McBride junior, eleven and four other children. Neilston was an industrial village dominated by textile mills about ten miles southwest of Glasgow. With the decline of the textile industry it is today a Glasgow dormitory town.

Neil McBride was educated at St Thomas's, a Neilston Catholic School. According to his *Times* obituary he then went to Paisley Grammar School in Paisley, a large industrial town near Glasgow, then to Continuation Classes at the National Council of Labour Colleges for which he also taught. He worked as a brass finisher at John Brown's Shipyard in Clydebank near Glasgow.

On 12 June 1937 Neil McBride, a journeyman brass finisher, twenty eight, of 26 Main Street Barrhead, married Bridget MALONEY of Smithhills Street, Paisley, a thread-mill worker, twenty-seven. Neil McBride senior was described as a stableman. Bridget Maloney's father, James Maloney, was a labourer in the Roads Department, ie a public employee. The service was held in St Mirin's Catholic Chapel in Paisley. Neil and Bridget McBride's marriage was childless. Bridget McBride was usually known as Delia. According to his *Swansea Evening Post* obituary *she was always at his side*.

Neil McBride joined the AEU, ie the Amalgamated Engineering Union, in 1937. As its name implies it was the product of a series of mergers and he

was probably already a shipbuilding trade union member. In 1940 he joined the Labour Party.

According to his obituaries Neil McBride was once a Paisley Borough Councillor. I could not discover when this was. Paisley Archives were very helpful over other matters but the Paisley Council Yearbooks are stored in Paisley Museum which is currently (September 2024) under refurbishment.

Neil McBride belonged to Paisley Co-operative Manufacturing Society for seventeen years. He was a Co-operative Party member, ie Co-op Labour; he chaired Paisley Constituency Labour Party 1950 to 1962, was a District Secretary of the National Council of Labour Colleges, and did welfare work, for instance, making hospital radio broadcasts for the blind.

Paisley Council. On Tuesday 10 April 1951 the *Paisley Daily Express* reported that Neil McBride of 4 Hannay Street in Paisley had been nominated as a council candidate for Paisley Fourth Ward for the election to be held on Tuesday May 1st, 1951. The Reverend Robert MORRISON, a Presbyterian Minister, of 57 Oakshaw Street in Paisley, stood there as an Independent. He was also a keen cyclist and was known as the Cycling Minister, and died in 1998 aged eighty-eight.

The campaign was vigorous. The Reverend Morrison obtained 1,442 votes and Neil McBride 1,012 votes; the turnout was 48%. 1951 was a bad year for Labour.

Perth and East Perthshire 1951. Labour had won the 1950 General Election but with a greatly reduced majority, so a further election was called for October 25th 1951. Neil McBride was the Labour candidate for Perth and East Perthshire in central Scotland. The Conservative candidate, Colonel Alan GOMME-DUNCAN, the sitting MP, had won the Military Cross in the First World War and served in the Second World War.

The Scottish Nationalist Party (the SNP) stood a medical doctor, Robert Douglas MACINTYRE. He had been elected the first ever SNP MP in April 1945 winning the Motherwell, near Glasgow, by-election. He had lost the seat at the July 1945 General Election.

At the 1951 General Election Colonel Alan Gomme-Duncan held Perth and East Perthshire getting 25,798 votes. Neil McBride obtained 11,167 and Dr Robert Douglas Macintyre 6,479 votes.

Nationally the Conservatives won 321 seats, Labour 295, and the Liberals 6. Helped by the Ulster Unionists, Winston Churchill's Conservatives had a small but workable majority. Labour won over half the votes but did so by piling up huge majorities in the industrial areas that had suffered high unemployment in the 1930s.

High Peak 1955. High Peak is a northwest Derbyshire parliamentary constituency. It contains the towns of Buxton (the highest town in England), Glossop, and New Mills. It is a semi-marginal seat.

A General Election was held on 26 May 1955. Neil McBride, the High Peak Labour candidate, obtained 13,652 votes, the sitting Conservative MP, Arthur Hugh Elsdale MOLSON, a barrister, held the seat with 19,984 and the Honourable Stephen Robert CAWLEY, the Liberal candidate, 6,712 votes.

Nationally the Conservatives won 345 seats; Labour 277; and the Liberals 6. The Conservative government had phased out rationing and continued the 1945-1951 Labour government policy of forcing companies that wanted to open factories in the South, the Home Counties or the Midlands, to open them in the areas that had suffered very high unemployment in the 1930s.

St Helens by-election 1958. St Helen's is a Lancashire town made famous by Pilkington's glassworks. Since 1945 it had been represented by its Labour MP, Sir Hartley William SHAWCROSS, the Attorney General under the 1945-1951 Labour government. He resigned as MP in 1958 being made a Life Peer in 1959. He died in 2002 aged 101.

At the by-election the Labour Party shortlisted six men: Neil McBride; Councillor Thomas Richard O'BRIEN, the Chair of St Helen's Labour Party; Austin Francis CURRAN, a fireman; Francis Christopher CAULFIELD, a London school teacher with strong St Helen's family connections; Charles William LOUGHLIN, a Birmingham trade union official; and Leslie SPRIGGS, a Thornton, Lancashire, railway goods guard, who the St Helen's Labour Party picked as their candidate.

St Helen's Conservatives selected the barrister, Mark CARLISLE, a Manchester cotton merchant's son, as their candidate. They rejected Brian Robert Osborne BELL, a Sales Development Manager, and Edwin BURROWS, a headmaster, who had recently left the Liberals and joined the Conservatives. The Liberals did not stand a candidate at this by-election.

Leslie Spriggs held St Helen's for Labour, getting 26,405 votes. He held it until 1983 and died in 1990 aged 80. Mark Carlisle got 14,411 votes. He was Runcorn Conservative MP 1964-1983 and for Warrington South 1983-1987 when he became a life peer. Some older readers may remember him as Margaret Thatcher's Secretary of State for education 1979-1981. He died in 2005 aged 86.

Swansea at Last. David Llewellyn Mort, the Swansea East Labour MP 1940 to 1963, knew when he was dying that he would not be standing at the General Election due in 1964 (he died in January 1963). The party therefore selected Neil McBride who was nominated by the AEU as their prospective

parliamentary candidate. A Swansea East by-election was held on 28 March 1963 with Neil McBride standing for Labour.

Swansea East Liberals stood Richard Manning Sims OWENS, a Swansea architect and planning officer. He was already the prospective Brecon and Radnor Liberal candidate. He was born in 1922, was married with two children, and died in 2008 aged 86.

Leon ATKIN stood for his People's Party. He was born in 1902, was an Independent Protestant Nonconformist Social Gospel Minister and former Swansea Labour Councillor. He had worked hard to help the unemployed and disadvantaged. He was married with two children, and was a drinking companion of Dylan Thomas. He died in 1976 aged 74.

The Swansea East Conservatives stood a barrister, Ann Pamela THOMAS, a vicar's daughter. She died in 2007 aged 79.

Plaid Cymru stood Edward Christopher (Chris) REES. He was born in Swansea in 1931; he learned Welsh in adult life, refused to do National Service in 1951 and was sentenced to a year in gaol, and was Plaid Cymru candidate at Gower at the 1955 General Election. He stood for Swansea East again at the 1964 and 1966 General Elections, and for Merthyr Tydfil in 1970. He was Plaid Cymru's Vice President and Policy Director; he ran Cardiff University Centre for Teaching Welsh to adults; and died in 2001 aged 70.

The Communists stood Herbert (Bert) PEARCE. He was born at Pembroke Dock in 1919, a teacher's son. He was a Labour Exchange clerk, and in 1938 moved to Birmingham and joined the Communists. In 1941 became a full time Communist organiser; from 1953 to 1960 he was their Birmingham Secretary, then their Perry Barr Birmingham candidate at the 1955 and 1960 General Elections and at various Birmingham local elections. He was married with two children.

In 1960 Bert Pearce was appointed Welsh Communist Party Secretary. He stood for them at Neath at the 1970 General Election and at Cardiff local elections. He campaigned against apartheid and for Welsh Devolution. In 1998 when Nelson Mandela was given the Freedom of the City of Cardiff he singled out Bert Pearce for special praise.

The following apocryphal story was told me by a former Birmingham communist. Once, after leafleting, Bert Pearce and some mates went to a pub. He told them it was illegal for him to buy them drinks because of the laws against treating at elections; however there was no law against them buying HIM a drink. He died in 2002 aged 83.

Neil McBride held Swansea East for Labour by obtaining 18,909 votes, more than 61.1% of the total. Richard Manning Sims Owens the Liberal got 4,895 votes, 15.8%, and saved his deposit.

Leon Atkin got 2,462 votes, 8% of the total. Ann Pamela Thomas, the Conservative, got 2,262 votes, 7.3%. Chris Rees for Plaid Cymru got 1,620 votes, 5.2%. Bert Pearce got 773 votes, 2.5% of the total. All these four candidates lost their £150 deposits. In 1963 this was a large sum of money.

Conclusion. Part Two of this article will look at Neil McBride's subsequent career as Swansea East MP; and his victories at four subsequent General Elections.

LIFE AND DEATH OF A CASWILL COAL MINER, Part 1 Chris Caswill

Superintendent Registrar's District <u>Bridgend</u>										
Registrar's District <u>Bridgend</u>										
18 <u>66</u> BIRTHS in the District of <u>Bridgend</u> in the County of <u>Glamorgan</u>										
No.	When Born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and Surname of Father	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother	Rank or Profession of Father	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant	When Registered	Signature of Registrar	Baptismal Name if added after Registration of Birth
5	<u>Twenty ninth July 1866</u> <u>Cefn Cribwr</u>	<u>William John</u>	<u>Boy</u>	<u>William Caswill</u>	<u>Eliza Caswill formerly Chapple</u>	<u>Cooper (Jewellery maker)</u>	<u>W. Caswill</u> <u>Father</u> <u>Cefn Cribwr</u>	<u>Tenth August 1866</u>	<u>Richard Lupton</u> <u>Registrar</u>	

William John CASWILL was born on 29 July 1866 in Cefn Cribwr, a South Wales mining village on a grit ridge about 5 miles north east of Bridgend. He was one of six children of William Pinn Caswill and Eliza, 'incomers' from the north Somerset village of Stockland Bristol – and also my first cousin three times removed. His father was born in 1823¹ in Aisholt in the Somerset Quantocks. Shortly after that his family moved down to Stockland Bristol, near Combswich a port on the River Parrett. He and his siblings had all been given Pinn as their second forename, in memory of their grandmother, Jane PINN, who had married John Caswill in Aisholt in 1767. William Pinn married Eliza CHAPPLE in Stockland on 8 November 1856 and learned the cooper's trade at the side of his brother, John Pinn, who set up a successful cooperage business in Stockland.

¹ Baptised there on 7 June

Local memory² had it that William Pinn and Eliza and their young daughter, Elizabeth, migrated to Cefn Cribwr and the nearby hamlet of Stormy at William's invitation from John ROWE, the then manager of the Stormy lime works. They probably arrived around 1859 when the lime works got their licence³. Eventually the Caswills settled in one of the new houses being built on the Cefn Road⁴. Their first son Henry James Stoaate⁵ Caswill was born on 12 June 1860, Sarah Jane in 1863, William John in 1866, Edwin Alfred in 1869 and Albert Edward in 1872. Quite soon William John became known familiarly as Bill, probably to avoid confusion with his father.

Cefn Cribwr was mainly a coal mining village, though there were also iron and brick works for a time. It was no doubt a rough and tough childhood for the children in the 1860s and 70s. Bill's youngest brother, Albert, died in 1874, aged 2. The previously widespread practice of employing young boys⁶ in coal mines as 'air door keepers' and 'drammers'⁷ had been significantly reduced by the 1860 and 1872 Mining Acts. The latter prohibited the full-time employment of children under 12, and those between 10 and 13 were now required to attend school as well as work in a mine⁸, so that Bill's brother Henry was 10 on the 1871 Census but still at school. His older sister, Eliza, was a 13 year old live-in nursemaid in the Marlas Farm household of Robert MORGAN. Though nearby, she would probably only have had a day or two a year to visit her family.

However there wasn't much schooling at that time. Such as it was, it was delivered in Cefn by the Siloam Chapel on Bedford Road. That said Bill was able to write and sign his name on census returns and birth certificates, so he must have learnt to write and probably read.

By the time of the 3 April 1881 Census 14 year old Bill and his brother, Henry, aged 20 were working as colliers. Their father was again working as a cooper, claiming to be only 50 when he was 57. At that time, William Pinn

² Letter from local author Neville Granville to this author, dated 23 February 1985. The information was attributed to Mrs Louisa Ellen Davies, who was born in 1877

³ Neville Granville (1980) 'Cefn Cribwr: Chronicle of a Village', Stewart Williams, Barry. p.107

⁴ Granville p. 112

⁵ Stoaate was in memory of William Pinn's grandmother Elizabeth, born a Stoaate in Selworthy, Somerset.

⁶ An 1842 Mines Act banned girls from working below ground. Ceri Thompson (2014) 'From Cradle to the Coalmine', University of Wales Press

⁷ Thompson p. 18. Drammers pulled sleds of coal along narrow passages with low roofs, for which unpleasant and often dangerous work young boys were seen as ideal.

⁸ Thompson, p. 35

would likely have heard that his older brother, John Pinn, had died back in Stockland Bristol on 17 January of heart disease, age 62, no doubt triggering some family reminiscences of their Somerset background.

The Caswill family were then still living on the Cefn Road near the Farmers Arms, along with young Edwin, 11, not yet in work. The 1880s would be a time of change – and loss. On 4th December 1886 23 years old Sarah Jane married William SPANSWICK, a very recent Wiltshire ‘incomer’⁹, in Tythegston Parish Church. William was listed as a labourer, and made his mark¹⁰. It seems theirs was a whirlwind courtship, consistent perhaps with the reputation of the Caswills and Spanswicks for ‘dancing and the high life’¹¹. Bill and Sarah’s sister, Elizabeth Mary, was one of the two witnesses to the marriage, so she had returned to Cefn from her service on the Malras farm.

Bill’s younger brother Edwin began work in the 1880s and became a timekeeper at the iron works at the foot of Bedford Road. Sadly he contracted pulmonary phthisis (also known then as consumption and nowadays TB) and died on 30 December 1889, aged only 20. He had been ill for 15 months, according to his death certificate. Bill’s brother-in-law, William Spanswick, was the informant, present at the death, which may suggest that Edwin stayed with the Spanswicks as part of the families’ coping with his illness, possibly with serious consequences, see below. Phthisis is contagious and was poorly understood and incurable at that time. Edwin was buried in St James churchyard in Pyle on 2nd January 1890.

Bill’s brother, Henry James, then married Dinah JOHN on 22 November 1890 in the Ruhamah Welsh Baptist Chapel in Bridgend. The event was recorded in the Glamorgan Gazette. Dinah was heavily pregnant at the time, and their daughter, Miriam, was born very soon after on 5 December.

The Caswills had been neighbours of Dinah on the Cefn Road, where she lived with her brother Richard. The Johns were chapel-goers and it seems Henry adopted their beliefs. By the time of the April 5th 1891 Census Henry, Dinah and Miriam had moved in with Richard, who was then an engine driver in a local mine. In that year Dinah was one of the female attendants at the Nebo Chapel Sunday School tea party so the circumstances of her wedding were clearly not a barrier to her Chapel involvement.

⁹ The Spanswicks, including William, were one of several with that name living in Burbage Wiltshire in 1881.

¹⁰ Sarah’s father William was also, once again, listed as a labourer.

¹¹ As also reported to Neville Granville by Mrs Louisa Ellen Davies – see Note 2 above.

The April 5th 1891 Census therefore found Bill Caswill age 34, working as a collier and living with his parents - William Pinn (now admitting to 67, and working as a labourer), Eliza, 62 and Bill's sister Elizabeth, 33, 'a general servant'. Four months later Elizabeth married a George FLEW on 29 August, in Cefn¹² George was born in Dunster in north Somerset in 1863, and was 6 years younger than Elizabeth. He was listed as a scholar in the 1871 Census and a farm labourer in 1881, when his family were living in Venns Cottage in Timberscombe. By April 1891 he had come over to Wales, working as a coal miner in Ebbw Vale, and boarding in 25 Park View Street with his married older sister Jane BAKER. Some time between the April 5 Census and August George had travelled the 40 miles or so to Cefn Cribwr and married Elizabeth Caswill. One possible explanation for this short 'courtship' is that they met through one of the popular periodicals of the Victorian era, several of which specialised in 'matrimonial advertising'¹³.

Bill no doubt attended the wedding. George and Elizabeth then lived at 11 Cefn Road, leaving Bill a 35 year old bachelor living alone with his parents – a big change from the earlier crowded Caswill household. But he and his brother, Henry, and their two brothers-in-law, William Spanswick and George Flew, were all miners, living on the Cefn Road so that some or all of them would have walked down the Bedford Road hill together on their way to the various mines north of the village. On the way back they could call at the White Lion on Bedford Road for a beer or two.

Luckily for Bill and his wider family, none were working in the Park Slip mine near Aberkenfig on Friday August 26 1892, when a huge blast in the mine killed 112 men and boys working on the morning shift¹⁴. The number of those from Cefn who died seems not to be recorded but "*to many homes in Cefn Cribwr the events of that weekend came as a terrible hammer blow*"¹⁵. Among those who died were three STENNER brothers, sons of the family who migrated from Somerset earlier in the century. Lewis DAVIES from the White Lion Inn also died, aged only 22. The disaster was national news, and

¹² The records include significant variations in George's surname. For example 'Flue' in his marriage record.

¹³ For example The Matrimonial News, first published in 1870. The Morning Post also carried matrimonial advertising. The 1870s has been described as 'the height of the matrimonial advertising craze' in 'Victorian girls gone wild', by Jennifer Phegley, Victorian Review, vo.39, no.2 pp. 129-146 Also see <https://www.mimimatthews.com/2016/01/04/alternative-courtship-matrimonial-advertisements-in-the-19th-century/>

¹⁴ A detailed account of the disaster and the Inquiry can be found in Granville, op.cit., pp 144-150.

¹⁵ Granville, p. 150.

there was an official Inquiry. It seems most likely that the explosion was caused by an unshielded miner's lamp.

The effect on the village must have been immense, but for the Caswills worse was to come in February 1893. Bill's new brother-in-law, George Flew, was working as a labourer in the Cefn Colliery on the 7 am shift on Sunday 19th, when he was hit by one of the trams (wagons) used to carry the coal, and crushed to death against a wall. He was 30 years old, and had only been working there for five weeks. William Spanswick identified his body and was the informant on the death certificate, and his brother, George, attested to the coroner that no alcohol had been consumed on that shift. George Flew was buried in St James in Pyle on Wednesday 22nd. *"The works had been stopped at 12 o'clock to allow the deceased's fellow workmen to attend the funeral. The procession was a very large and sympathetic one...."*¹⁶

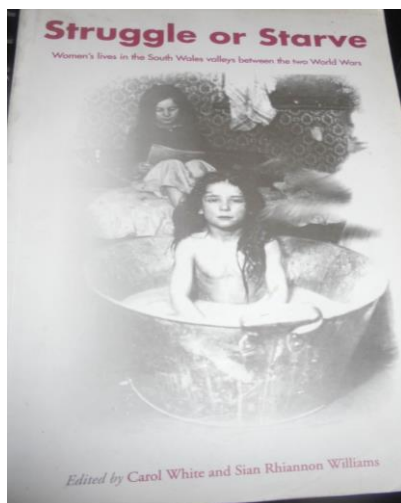
Bill Caswill's life changed dramatically in 1894, when he married Catherine Davies from the White Lion Inn on 27 November. The unusual circumstances of that wedding, and the years that followed, will be covered in a future issue.

BOOK REVIEWS

STRUGGLE OR STARVE:

Women's Lives in the South Wales Valleys between the two World Wars

I was given this book by a charity shop hunter-for-bargains friend, and despite its title, found it to be by no means one of the 'Misery Memoirs' that its title might suggest and which have flooded the bookshelves of recent years. It is an anthology of memories, reminiscences, and extracts from larger works, made by working class women at a time of hardship and struggle, and worth reading for the Prologue alone, which was written by Elaine Morgan, the acclaimed writer and broadcaster. I found myself frequently laughing out loud at some of the experiences described, and likewise



¹⁶ Central Glamorgan Gazette, Friday 24 February 1893; Bridgend and Neath Chronicle, Friday March 2 1893

feeling the sadness of some of these lives.

To quote the back cover: “The critical introduction places these women’s lives within the wider social and political context of a period of mass unemployment and labour unrest, when the only real choice open to women was to struggle or starve”.

It is divided into 12 chapters, each titled with an aspect of life that was relevant to the writers that contributed, such as Childhood, Uncles and Lodgers, School, Love and Marriage, Poverty and Strikes, and under these headings are the first-hand accounts of the women who went through these experiences, 4-6 writers in each chapter. I would venture to say that many of the GFHS members can relate to the scenes described, as could I.

The editors and compilers are both involved in various aspects of women’s history: Sian Rhiannon Williams at the time of this book’s publication was a Senior Lecturer in History Education at the University of Wales, Cardiff, and she has written several journal articles and chapters in books on various aspects of Welsh women’s history and the history of South Wales. Carol White is a founder member of Red Flannel, the women’s film and video workshop, and has directed several films for television related to women’s issues and interests.

The book was originally published in 1998, then reprinted with help from the Arts Council of Wales. ISBN is 1-870206-25-8, and available from, amongst others, outlets such as World of Books and Amazon.

NB As there is more than one work with this title, make sure you obtain the one with the sub-heading relating to women in South Wales.

Jean Fowlds

LETTERS/EMAILS to the EDITOR

A quiet period for enquiries, due to the festive season no doubt, but there has been considerable correspondence concerning your Mormon ancestors, and we will be featuring some stories in this and forthcoming issues.

There is also a heartfelt plea from Marcus Payne regarding the largely unrecognised boxing and rugby player Johnny Walsh of Cardiff. Please read his account of Johnny’s life and see if you can assist him with more information.

If anyone can help, then please contact the editor who will pass on all answers and relevant correspondence.

Jean Fowlds, editor@glamfhs.org.uk

SOCIETY NEWS & REPORTS

Annual General Meeting

Online Via Zoom

1 pm Saturday 1st March

AGM Documents can be downloaded from our website.
www.glamfhs.org.uk

2 pm Talk: Place Names of Wales Project

Our Speaker at the AGM will be **James January-McCann**, the project manager of the groundbreaking project to record hundreds of thousands of place names across Wales. Using a wide range of sources, some dating back to the 2nd century AD, in various languages, including Breton, Latin and Low German, the website will protect and ensure the continuing use of Welsh place names. These give an invaluable insight into topographical features and land usage which can add detail to family research.

The project organisers are keen to add more details about the historical county of Glamorgan and this will be a useful introduction to the project and how members of the GFHS can get involved in recording their local areas.

Register for the AGM and talk on Eventbrite. Registration will close on the morning of the AGM when the Zoom link will be sent by email

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/d/online/glamorgan-family-history-society>

*Saturday 5th April at
Aberkenfig*

*50th Anniversary Celebration
ARC Open 11-1
Afternoon Tea 1-3*



ABERDARE/CYNON VALLEY

2024 was a busy year for our branch, we had an outing to our resource centre in Aberkenfig, visited Glamorgan Archives and had a guided walk/talk on some of the famous people buried in Aberdare cemetery. We have continued to help with research enquiries.

Our AGM was held in October Pat Rees was elected as our Branch Trustee for the coming year, and all previous committee members were re-elected. After the AGM Rob Jones gave us a talk on The History and Restoration of the Iron Tramway Bridge, Robertstown, Aberdare.

November: We held a research session, a new visitor attended our meeting, members helped him to put his research in order, unfortunately he did not come back in January.

December: Some of our branch members went out for a Christmas Lunch, a good time was had by all who attended.

January: We had a change to our planned schedule owing to our speaker being unwell, the meeting was changed to a research session.

Future Events

A few branch outings have been suggested for the summer months, these are currently being planned.

Projects

2 members are shortly starting a new project on transcribing parish marriage records for St Margeret's Church, Aberaman.

Aberdare obituaries are on hold due to members ill health.

ABERKENFIG RESOURCE CENTRE

By the time you are reading this the ARC would have been opening on a TUESDAY for a couple of months. This change is an attempt to see if a different opening day would be more suitable for visitors. We have been opening on a Wednesday for many years, so this change is a trial for a few months. We hope you will find it more convenient.

The ARC continues to welcome both members and non-members. Visitors are always welcome and if possible, a little advance notice of both your visit and what you are looking for help with would enable us to better focus the help on offer. Group visits can also be accommodated, but once again a little notice is needed as the ARC is a relatively small area. Also, remember we

can open at other days/times but will need a week or two's notice to ensure we can have two or three volunteers there to help.

This year as well as a change in opening day/time we hope to have a presence at some Family History Fairs. This does take some advance planning to be able to organise books, publications etc to be available for visitors to browse. But such events are well worth the effort in terms of meeting more people, helping with research queries and attracting new members. If anyone feels they could help us with this, please feel free to get in touch.

The Bridgend branch committee will also open the ARC once a month on a Saturday for two hours, dates to follow. They will be offering a warm cuppa and help with research the same as is available on the Tuesdays.

Please keep an eye on the GFHS Website and our Social Media pages for news and information/dates of all the above, as changes can happen and new event/activities may become available.

Or alternatively contact us on: arc2@glamfhs.org.uk

BRIDGEND BRANCH REPORT

The Branch has been reasonably quiet over the winter with fewer members attending meetings, possibly because of the weather. We held a social meeting in January with a quiz on sweet names from the past (this is only being mentioning because I won!) We are planning to hold one Branch meeting on a Saturday to see if this has a positive impact on numbers. We will be avoiding classes with the Six Nations of course.

We are looking into the possibility of working on a joint project with the recently re-opened Maesteg town hall. If you are in the area do visit the Hall - the coffee shop is excellent, there is an amazing theatre and a small cinema. They hold musical events and have a very helpful heritage research team to help with queries. A lot of their collection is uncatalogued so hopefully some of our volunteers can help in some capacity.

The Branch and the ARC are planning a 50th birthday event on Saturday 5th April so please save the day and if you have a group who would like to set up a table with some displays please get in touch. All branches are welcome to come along. We are hoping that some of the local Bridgend area history groups will be attending.

There are a number of speakers in the pipeline but no-one has yet confirmed. We will publicise this as soon as possible. As the weather improves we are also hoping to do some visits.

Two of the Committee have attended a meeting with a number of local history groups organised by Awen Heritage to share ideas and suggestions for building membership and involving the local community more. The same Committee members also attended an event organised by Bridgend Council to put societies in touch with organisations which might give grants for future projects, such as developing and re-vamping the ARC. So far we have not received any cash but we live in hope.

Penny Williams, secretary2@glamfhs.org.uk

CARDIFF & VALE BRANCH REPORT

Since the AGM in October the branch has continued to meet every other month in Glamorgan Archives. At our November meeting archivist Heather Mountjoy presented a variety of wartime records, including the one and only bomb map of Cardiff that is held there, and some poignant get-well letters, written to a little girl from her schoolfriends while she and her family waited for their house to be repaired after a bomb had hit it.

At our first meeting of 2025 in January there was a wonderful array of documents relating specifically to Cardiff and Barry to study. Of great interest to the members attending was a beautiful map of Barry Manor, surveyed by Evans Mouse in 1622 and a reference book for this map, and those of the manors of Penmark, Fonmon, Llancadle and West Orchard. There were registers of baptisms, marriages and burials for all denominations in Cardiff and Barry, a school logbook, Land Tax assessments, reports of Rhiwbina Garden Village and our old favourite: the Cardiff Police fingerprint and photographic register 1910-1914. Our thanks again to Rhian Diggins, senior archivist for finding so much interesting material.

At this meeting we discussed possible future topics with Rhian as we have covered most of the obvious ones. The next meeting will be on 4th March 4th: the subject "Solicitors' Records" inspired by the talk following the Branch AGM.

We welcome all members to come to the next meeting. As well as seeing fascinating documents, it is a chance to exchange news about your own research.

Karen Prior, cardiff@glamfhs.org.uk

MERTHYR TYDFIL BRANCH REPORT

There are no changes in the committee and running of the Merthyr Branch. The members who attend the monthly meetings are very happy in Soar, as it is the Welsh Centre we all even try to speak a few words in Welsh.

In September Christine Trevett gave a fascinating talk on the nature and origin of first names with an emphasis on WWI. It was amazing to discover how many people were named Ypres or Verdun.

Barrie Jones gave a talk in October cleverly tying sport to his own Merthyr Tydfil ancestry and showing some fascinating old family photographs. He asked the question as to whether an ability and interest in a sport comes about from birth inheritance or nurture. Barrie also writes articles for the Merthyr Historian, the annual book produced by the Merthyr Tydfil and District Historical Society. Each volume of this useful publication has around 20 articles and many of the subjects are relevant and useful for family historians. The Society has a new website listing the subjects covered, which include many individuals and families, such as for example the 'Martin Family of Dowlais', 'Child Emigration from Merthyr Tydfil Workhouse', 'Evacuation to Merthyr Tydfil', 'The female drunkard in the mid nineteenth century' and numerous other fascinating topics. **It is a source very worthwhile looking into.**

See: <https://mtdhs.org.uk/resources.html#/>

Carolyn Jacob, merthyr@glamfhs.org.uk

SWANSEA BRANCH REPORT

GFHS SWANSEA BRANCH AGM 8th Oct at 1.45pm, West Glam Archives.

The following officers were re-elected for 2024/25:

Chairperson – still vacant

Branch Rep on Executive Committee – Janet Neilson

Treasurer – Julie Edmunds

Secretary – Janet Neilson, assisted by Cherry King

Rep to the ARC meetings – Julie Edmunds

Committee members – Pauline Vaughan, Jeff Harrison, Barbara

Powell, Janet Neilson, Julie Edmunds, Cherry King

The proposed date of next AGM – 14th October 2025

Secretary's Report – the branch continues to meet at the West Glamorgan Archives on the second Tuesday of each month (except in August) with an average of 8-10 people attending. We have continued to have a varied series of talks from the archivists on more records which are available, including the story of how a postcard was lost in the post from 1903 until 2024, when it suddenly appeared at the address to which it was posted: 11 Cradock Street,

Swansea. This caused great interest and was on BBC Wales news. We also learned about the Women's Peace Petition and looked at a fascinating book of large scale maps of Swansea. Janet Neilson also spoke about researching Norwegian ancestors and the resources which are available. We thank the Archives and the archivists for their willingness to continue with this series of talks in 2025.

We have not, as a branch, attended any local family history fairs due to lack of volunteers. Janet Neilson helped at the GFHS tent at the National Eisteddford in Pontypridd, where the weather was absolutely glorious (on the two days she attended!!!).

The number of people now transcribing and checking records has increased from two to four. We also have a spare laptop and will be seeking two other volunteers to join us. People have already approached Andrew Dully (new Chief Archivist) willing to help, but they will need training. It would be helpful if they lived in Swansea or nearby and can travel to the archives at the Civic Centre on Friday mornings once a month. Anyone interested please contact Janet Neilson. The archives has recently received more chapel records which will need transcribing.

Treasurer's Report: The Report was accepted as a true record of branch accounts. Proposed by Cherry King, seconded by Janet Neilson.

Cherry King and Janet Neilson, swansea@glamfhs.org.uk

NEWS FROM GLAMORGAN ARCHIVES

October-December 2024

Access and Community Engagement

- Our talk in November from Prof Martin Johnes on 'Welsh Not - Elementary Education and the Anglicisation of Wales' proved very popular and was fully booked.
- On Monday 3 February at 6pm Dr Ben Curtis will be speaking on 'The Final Battle: The South Wales Miners, 1979-1985'. And on Wednesday 26 March at 2pm we will have a talk on Cathays Cemetery.
- The Wales Broadcast Archive Clip Corner launched in October. The screen and computer terminals are located in our reception area and can be used to search and view audio-visual archive material from BBC Wales, ITV Wales and S4C held at the National Screen and Sound Archive in Aberystwyth. The terminals are available during building opening hours Monday-Friday and do not need to be booked in advance. In January we welcomed Catrin Cooke from the Wales Broadcast Archive to speak about their content and how it can be accessed.
- School visits continued with two classes from St Philip Evans RC Primary in Llanedeyrn and two classes from Radyr Primary attending for our

Second World War workshop, along with two classes from Llanishen Fach Primary and one class from Pentyrch Primary for our Coal and the Docks workshop. A group of pupils from Fitzalan High School visited in December to explore items relating to the First World War.

- Masters' students from the Welsh School of Architecture and Cardiff University's School of Welsh visited for tours behind the scenes and an introduction to our services and collections.
- The second issue of the Glamorgan Archives newsletter was circulated in December. It will continue to be published on a quarterly basis. You can sign up to receive it by email by subscribing to our blog:
<https://glamarchives.wordpress.com/>.
- Our blog has featured articles commemorating 40 years of the Miners' Strike of 1984/85.
- We continue to post regularly on Facebook and Instagram. We took the decision at the end of 2024 to no longer share content on X (formerly Twitter).
- The monthly 'Ask the Experts' family history sessions continue, with volunteers from GFHS supporting visitors with their research.
- Members of GFHS Cardiff & Vale Branch visited the Archives for their November and January meetings. In November we looked at wartime records, and in January we explored records relating specifically to Cardiff and Barry.

Collections

- A successful collections week was held in November. Work on cataloguing the records of our current local authorities was progressed, with a focus on committee papers of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. Cataloguing of two deposits of records from the Cardiff Reform Synagogue was also completed. Over the course of the week, a total of 384 descriptions were added to the catalogues of the synagogue and council records and much additional sorting took place.
- During collections week the Records Assistants continued to progress the stocktake of the strongrooms and started work on consolidating storage of the Ordnance Survey National Grid maps.
- Notable accessions received recently include:

Huw Thomas of Cardiff Records (D800)

This is a well-timed deposit as the 40th anniversary of the 1984-85 strike is marked. The depositor was active in collecting food for miners on strike during 1984-85. Records deposited include Cardiff Miners Support Committee Bulletin and Committee minutes, Rhymney Valley Miners Support Group Christmas cards and an NUM Poster identifying 'Collection Point for Food for Miners on Strike'.

Logbook from Sunnyside smallholding, Welsh St Donats (D1254)

Gwyn James Hughes lived at Sunnyside on Heol-Y-Mynydd in Welsh St Donats with his mother Elizabeth Ann Hughes. The logbook was used for multiple purposes including recording sales of livestock, breeding of pigs, recipe for a condition powder for horses. In the rear of the volume quantities of eggs laid, manure hauled, fowls, geese and gander sold.

Glamorgan County Nursing Association, Aberdare (D2059)

The minute book of the Aberdare Branch of the Glamorgan County Nursing Association covers the period 1936-1942 when the main focus of the newly formed branch was to employ a District Nurse to work throughout the Aberdare area. When the first Nurse was appointed she was to be 'preferably Welsh speaking and able to cycle'. Those who wanted to access the care of the Nurse had to pay a weekly subscription of one penny. The minutes were taken by Elizabeth Amy Rhydderch, Secretary of the Association and the minute book was donated by her grandson.

Ogmore Club (D2065)

The Ogmore Club, was established in 1883 and continued to operate until 2004. The club was open to businessmen from Ogmore town and the surrounding area. Records include minutes, a history of the club, copies of the club rules, dinner programmes and correspondence.

St John's Ambulance Brigade, Bargoed (D2069)

We hold many records relating to the St John's Ambulance Brigade in Glamorgan, this is our first from the Bargoed Brigade. The large group of uniformed men are gathered together in a group with fifteen trophies and two large shields arranged in front of them.

Preservation Jazz Society Records (D2082)

The Preservation Jazz Society was formed in 1989 to promote Traditional New Orleans Jazz. They arranged live traditional jazz bands to play every Tuesday evening, initially at the Bottleneck Bar at the Philharmonic Pub, then at the Golden Cross Pub, Custom House Street, Cardiff. They moved to the Four Bars Inn at The Globe once it had been established. When the Four Bars Inn closed in 1995, the Society moved to Cafe Jazz at the Sandringham Hotel. Cafe Jazz closed in 2020. The scrapbooks record jazz events in the local area and contain correspondence regarding traditional jazz, along with minutes and correspondence of the society, and flyers, tickets and photographs relating to jazz events.

Rhian Diggins

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Please contact the Branches for up to date information about all meetings.

ABERDARE BRANCH

aberdare@glamfhs.org.uk

Cynon Valley Museum at 2pm on the second Thursday each month

March 13th Jennifer George - "Cynon Valley Hall of Fame

April 10th - Research Session

May 8th Keith Jones - "Children Evacuees in Wales during the Second World War".

June 12th -Research Session

July 10th Guest Speaker TBC

Aug - No meeting.

BRIDGEND BRANCH

bridgend@glamfhs.org.uk

Len Evans Hall (next to the ARC) at 7.30 pm third Monday each month

Meeting dates

Saturday 15 February 10 – 2

Jennifer Evans, Gwent Archives

who will be introducing the Branch to a potential photography project.

Monday 17 March 7pm: Ian Price,

Bridgend History Society & St John's House Bridgend "

Caroline Williams and her blue plaque in the town".

CARDIFF & VALE BRANCH

cardiffandvale@glamfhs.org.uk

First Tuesday 2 pm at Glamorgan Archives

4 March – Solicitors' Records

6 May – Topic TBC

MERTHYR TYDFIL BRANCH

merthyr@glamfhs.org.uk

2nd Tuesday of each month,

2pm at Soar Welsh Centre, Pontmorlais

11 March: Steve Brewer, *The 1874 Train Crash at Merthyr Station*

8 April: Edwyn Parry, *Guto Nyth Bran*

13 May: Lisa Powell, *Living conditions in 1840s*

Merthyr Tydfil and the Public Health Act

10th June: TBA (visit or historic walk)

PONTYPRIDD & RHONDDA BRANCH

rhondda@glamfhs.org.uk

7 pm at Pontypridd Museum

18 March

15 April

20 May

SWANSEA BRANCH

swansea@glamfhs.org.uk

2pm at West Glamorgan Archives,
Oystermouth Road, Swansea, SA1 3SN

11 March

18 April

13 May

Talks will be given by archives staff
on the different collections which are available for research.

There will also be time to help people
who are new to researching their family history.

ARLEIN BRANCH

See Website and Eventbrite for details of meetings

arlein@glamfhs.org.uk

For more information and register for our online talks on Eventbrite:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/d/online/glamorgan-family-history-society>

Further updates on Branch Meetings and Events are
posted on our website and social media www.glamfhs.org.uk/events

ARC Focus (See images back cover):

Did you know the ARC has an extensive book collection? This covers a wide range of topics. Obviously, family history but local information on areas around Glamorgan and some further afield, occupations, a few biographies of notable people and much more.

We also have some very interesting collections that have been donated, in particular the Gareth Hicks collection which he built up over many years and it has been a very useful addition.

There is also a small collection of book and research aids that are available to purchase while you are with us. So, even if you are not searching for Glamorgan ancestors if you have some time and enjoy browsing come, have a read and a cuppa with us.

ARC OPENING DATES

2nd & 4th

TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

10 am – 2 pm

Other days/times available by appointment

2025 ARC OPENING DATES

January: 14th & 28th

February: 11th & 25th

March: 11th & 25th

April: 8th & 22nd

May: 13th & 27th

June: 10th & 24th

July: 8th & 22nd

August: 12th & 26th

September: 9th & 23rd

October: 14th & 28th

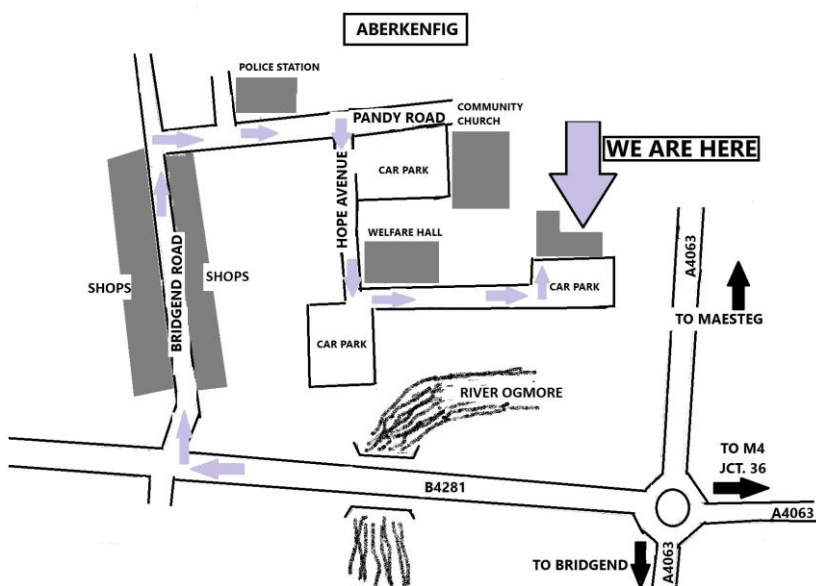
November: 11th & 25th

December: 9th & **CLOSED 23RD**
NADOLIG LLAWEN

SATURDAY OPENING BY BRIDGEND BRANCH

10 – 12: Once a month – see Website & Facebook for dates

Contact: arc2@glamfhs.org.uk
www.glamfhs.org.uk



If undelivered, please return to :
63 Clos Pwll Clai, Tondur, Bridgend, CF32 9BZ