

CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY

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HANES

NEWSLETTER OF THE CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY
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ABERDARE CHRISTMAS SHOW

The show of meat, poultry, and game at the Aberdare Market House on Friday was highly creditable, and some fine meat was displayed. Mrs. Rowlands, as usual, had an exceptionally good display of really first-class beef, and carried off the chief prizes. None the less fortunate was Mr. Walters, whose beef and mutton was also of a high order. A number of prizes were awarded to the best exhibits, the Judges being Mr. W. Little and Dr. Davies. After the judging there was a cold luncheon at the Cowbridge Arms (now the Market Tavern. Ed.), when the High Constable (Mr. W.D.Williams*) presided. A number of the leading gentry sat down to the good things.

There follows a list of the prizes awarded. The entries included such items as six dressed geese with giblets, do without giblets, two couples of fat ducks, a couple of hares, cask of Welsh butter, best Caerphilly cheese &c.

Western Mail, 23 December, 1882

* solicitor, Canon Street.

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NOTE THE ADDRESS:--

C.A.HARRIES,
12 & 13 CARDIFF STREET, ABERDARE.

The Aberdare Leader, 13 December, 1902

1955. On 26 December the curtain went up on Aberdare Little Theatre's fourth annual Christmas Pantomime, 'Humpty Dumpty'; the programme announced a "cast of keen young players, blended with some well-established and experienced Little players". Remember these familiar names? Peter French (Yellow Dwarf-a nasty man), Audrey Evans (Prince Humpty, An Egg, the Prince), Colyn Jones (Dame), Rod Thomas, Glyn Voyle and Bill

Thomas (Royal Nurse, a silly girl). The 'Vocaltones' took part and the pages and dancers included Jill Escott. This successful production was to run until 7 January 1956.



A WHITE CHRISTMAS AT ABERDARE. (1878)

Christmas-tide in this town was in every respect of a most seasonable character, and although snow fell pretty heavily throughout the day, a large number of persons found their way thither to participate in the various events which were going on. Skating on the pond in the *Aberdare Park*, as well as upon the other sheets of water in the neighbourhood, was very largely indulged in both on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the inhabitants seeming determined to make the most of the present exceptional propitious season for the enjoyment of this healthy pastime. On Christmas Eve there was an eisteddfod on a small scale at the *Crown Hotel*, the Aberdare town band, in their new hussar uniform, *paraded the streets* and played a selection of music, and at eleven at night there was a performance of the solemn Mass of "Aurora" at the *Catholic Church*, with a sermon by the Revd. Aruv. Hamlin. On Christmas Day there was service in the *Church of St. Elvan's*, which was decorated in an exceedingly tasteful manner by a number of the members of the congregation. A three-arched screen of evergreens had been erected in the front of the chancel, the pillars were thoroughly wreathed with various foliage, the gasaliers were similarly treated; and the font was likewise nicely decorated, it being surmounted by a floral cross, and covered by a white powder to imitate snow. Amongst other decorations which combined to present a most festive appearance in the church were the texts "Hail, Incarnate Deity," "On earth peace, goodwill towards men," "God sent forth His Son!" &c. The principal public events of the day, however was the concerts of The Aberdare Choral Union, and an eisteddfod at *Calfaria Chapel*, under the presidency of the Revd. Dr. Price. As the eisteddfod was not over until a late hour, we must defer our report of the adjudications until tomorrow.* The concerts of the Choral Union were given in the afternoon and evening at the *Temperance Hall*; and on each occasion there was a large and appreciative audience. The pieces produced on the present occasion were both of the greatest merit, being Dr. Macfarren's oratorio of "Joseph," and Dr. Parry's now celebrated opera of "Blodwen." The artists engaged were Madam Frances Hodson and Miss James, sopranos, Miss Harris, contralto; Dr. D. Howells UCW, tenor; Mr. James Savage R.A.M., baritone; and Mr. John George, bass. Mr. Rees Evans again successfully led the Aberdare Choral Union, which is a strong body of vocalists, the leader of the Gloucester String Band being Mr. E.G. Woodward, and the accompanists Miss A.N. James RAM, and Miss Lee. The concerts were most successful notwithstanding that snow fell throughout the day, and proved quite as enjoyable as those which have been previously given by the Aberdare Choral Union. The children at the *Aberdare Industrial School*, 117 in number, were treated to an exceedingly substantial dinner of roast beef and plum pudding, and throughout the festive day every effort for their thorough enjoyment was made by Mr. and Mrs. Williams, the superintendents. A large number of excursionists came into the *town* during the day, the Taff Vale trains running as on weekdays, and a number of special trains being arranged by the Great Western Railway Company. The whole district is covered with a thick fall of snow, but the weather is most seasonable.

Western Mail, 26 December, 1878.

Note. Locations have been highlighted in bold italics by the Editor

* See page three.

Who wore the first shell suit?

Humpty Dumpty.

CHRISTMAS EISTEDDFOD AT ABERDARE 1878



One of the events noted in an earlier article, *A White Christmas at Aberdare*, was an eisteddfod held at Calfaria Chapel under the presidency of Dr. Thomas Price; the report mentioned that the writer was unable to list the adjudications as the proceedings had gone on until a late hour. The deferred results appeared in the following day's edition of *The Western Mail*, (28 December, 1878) and are listed below. NOTES. The adjudicator of prose and poetry was the Rev. W. Hughes, Dinas Rhondda, and for music G.R.Jones (Caradog). The figures in brackets represent the number of competitors. The range of subjects and the effort that competitors must have put into the one-day event is truly astonishing. The names of the winners are given in square brackets.

- Recitation upon Christmas (11). Prize shared [H.Evans and "Brutus"].
Mental Arithmetic (3). [A. Thomas].
Reading for child under 12 (4). [J.Thomas].
Bass solo "*How Willing my Paternal Love*" (Samson) (6). [R.Hopkins].
Spelling (23). [W.Evans].
For the best two stanzas on "*The Dove*" (17). [Gurnos Jones].
For the best making of a white shirt. (2). [Mary Davies].
For the best antimacassar (2). [Prize shared between, Lizzie Hughes, Trap-road and M.A.Morris, Mountain Ash].
Best singing of Dr. Parry's "*The Trumpet Shall Sound*" (Two choirs). [Zoar Band of Hope, Cwmaman].
Pianoforte solo "*The Fairy Queen*" (2). [Prize shared between, John Howell and W.F.Botting].
Best singing "*The Dying Year*" for girls under 15 (4). [Prize shared between, M.Jones and S.J.Lewis].
Singing the Congregational tune "*Clifford*" (3 choirs). [Rhos Choir, Mountain Ash].
Singing any duet (3). [Prize shared between Evan Rees and Esther Lloyd].
For the best writing on the 1st Psalm. [J.Jones, pupil teacher at Ynyslwyd Board Schools].
For the best pair of home spun stockings (6). [Prize shared, Sarah Leyshon and Miss A.Lewis].
For the best speech on Cyprus (7). [Prize shared between, Wm.Davies and George Morris].
Freehand drawing (8). [Miss Pugh Llwydcoed].
Piano solo, any given piece at sight (2). [Annie Evans].
Best four stanzas upon Mr.Gladstone. ["Vivian Grey"].
Best singing of "*The King's Departure*" from Brinley Richards's, *Songs of Wales* (3). [H.Evans].
For the best map of the Mediterranean (18 competing). [T.N.Leyshon].
For the best essay on "Joseph" (15). [Prize shared by "Gwr o'r Allt" and "Omri"]
Best pencil drawing of Calfaria Chapel and Hall (5). [Mrs.Fairbairn, Canon-street].
Singing the anthem "*The Death of the Just*" by J.A.Lloyd (2 choirs). [Rhos Choir, Mountain Ash].
Welsh Grammar (only one entry). [James Williams].
Recitation "*Boxer, the leading horse*" (11). [Prize shared between Thos. Nicholas and John Thomas].
Singing any Glee (four parties competing). [John Thomas and party].
English Grammar (4). [Joseph Evans].
Pianoforte solo "*The Fairy Wedding*" (2). [Maggie Thomas, Market Street].
Reading for persons under 19. [John Jones].
Tenor solo "If with all your hearts", *Elijah* (7). [William Hughes, Trap Road].
For the best essay on the Apostle Paul. [Prize divided between Morgan Thomas and William T. Morgan, Rhigos].
For the best 100 lines on the loss of the Princess Alice.* [T. Cynfelyn Benjamin, Dinas].
Reading for persons of any age (27). [Evan Owen, Aberaman].

For the best impromptu speech. [None were considered worthy of the prize].

Best poem on the defeat of the Turk. (7). [Prize of £2.10s, John Bull].

For the best rendering of the part song "The Welsh Feather" by Brinley Roberts. (Only one choir entry). [Rhos Choir].

* The Princess Alice, a paddle steamer, collided with an empty coal ship on the River Thames on 3 September 1878 whilst returning from an excursion and sank with the loss of 600 lives.

ABERDARE 1889



CHRISTMAS IN THE TOWN

The early frost on Wednesday, unfortunately soon changed into a rapid thaw, and the streets were thick with mud, although no rain fell. Streams of visitors came in by the early trains particularly the specials from Merthyr and the Rhondda valleys, the result being that pedestrians had much difficulty in moving along. Chief among the attractions was the performance of "The Elijah" (sic) which was given in the Temperance Hall by the Aberdare Choral Union as the selection for their sixteenth annual concert. There was a chorus of 150 voices and an orchestra of 25. The conductor was Rees Evans.

Upon the invitation of Sir W.T.Lewis the deaf mutes in the district, covered by the mission of the Revd E. Rowland, had their annual reunion in the town. Upon arriving a very interesting service was held at St.David's hall, afterwards a most seasonal dinner was provided in the armoury, the catering being carried out most satisfactorily by Mrs Oxenham of the Railway Bar.

Lady Lewis, and Miss Lewis, Revd R.B. Jenkins (vicar), Miss Green and Miss Jones (Ty Mawr), Mr & Mrs.Pardoe, Revd H.R.Johnson, John Morgan (High Constable), F.W.Mander and others were in attendance. Each guest was presented by Lady Lewis with a card marked "A Silent Wish", and bearing the characters "A Happy Christmas to You"; D.A.Thomas MP has kindly undertaken to provide a similar treat next year. During the afternoon the deaf-mutes enjoyed games and tea was served at five o'clock. Notwithstanding the much crowded state of the streets, it was creditable to find that the number of drunken people was far below the record of former years. (Abridged)

AND IN THE WORKHOUSE (1879)

It is Christmas Day in the workhouse,
And the cold, bare walls are bright
With garlands of green and holly,
And the place is a pleasant sight;
For with clean-washed hands and faces,
In a long and hungry line
The paupers sit at the table,
For this is the hour they dine.

And the guardians and their ladies,
Although the wind is east,
Have come in their furs and wrappers,
To watch their charges feast;
To smile and be condescending,
Put pudding on pauper plates,
To be hosts at the workhouse banquet
They've paid for - **with the rates***.

PLUM PUDDING AND SNUFF - CHRISTMAS DINNER AT THE WORKHOUSE.

The inmates of the workhouse, 221 in number, were regaled with a dinner of roast beef and vegetables, followed by plum pudding, the master and matron and the other officers ministering to their wants with the utmost solicitude. The Guardians have declined to accept the gift of a barrel of beer, and coffee was substituted for the "nut brown October." The old men who indulge in "the weed" had tobacco supplied to them after dinner, and snuff was given to the old people of the other sex, sweets and oranges being distributed among the children.

Both news extracts are from the *Western Mail*, 26 December, 1889.

Notes: The Merthyr Tydfil Union Workhouse was responsible for the paupers of Merthyr and Aberdare.
*The verses, 2 of 21, quoted above are from the famous and much parodied dramatic monologue, *In the Workhouse: Christmas Day* (1879) by George R. Sims (1847-1922).



CHRISTMAS PARTY

YNYSLWYD MIXED SCHOOL.

A most enjoyable Christmas party was organised for the children of the senior standards of the above school on the eve of breaking-up day. A very interesting programme had been drawn up, and the scholars showed with enthusiasm that they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

The first part of the programme was tea. The children sat down to a very substantial meal, in readiness for the more boisterous part of the programme which was to follow. Five sketches were then presented in the following order:-

“The Inattentive Girl.”

“Finding it out.”

“Pulling the tooth out.”

“Bullying Bob.”

“What do you think of it?”

In the interval carols were sung by the scholars.....Then followed the games: - “One little finger keeps moving”, Musical chairs, Musical Arms for boys, Musical Arms for girls. Jelly eating competition, Standard V1. Aiming the target (blindfolded).

These were followed by many other games and the draws for the lucky numbers.

The singing of “Auld Lang Syne” by close on a hundred scholars, teachers and friends brought to an end a most interesting and enjoyable party.

The Aberdare Leader, 31 December, 1927.

Note: Names of participants have been omitted in order to preserve space.

Christmas Festivities – the Aberdare tradesmen, whether in anticipation of good times or contempt for bad ones has not been explained, have enjoyed their Christmas in right good earnest. Party after party have been held, with scarcely any interruption for the last three weeks, each one vying with his neighbour in liberality and good cheer. They were brought to a close on Thursday evening at the Black Lion Hotel, when the landlord of that hostelry acquitted himself in his usual creditable manner.

The Western Mail, 15 January, 1870

1882. Hundreds of strangers visited the town on Christmas day notwithstanding the unfavourable weather. The only attraction was the performance in the Temperance-hall of Haydn’s oratorio, “The Creation” by The Aberdare Choral Union, led by Mr. Rees Evans. The artistes were Madame Lizzie Williams, soprano, Mr. Tom Williams, tenor, and Mr. Lucas Williams, bass. The orchestral portion of this work was performed by the Cyfarthfa String Band, led by Mr. G. C. Bowden. Mr. R. Howells presided at the piano, and Mr. W. J. Evans at the harmonium. In the evening there was a miscellaneous concert, which was also well attended.

The Western Mail, 26 December, 1882.

What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?
It’s Christmas Eve!

Merry Christmas

CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

IN MEMORIAM

We regret to announce the death of Associate Member Desmond Edwards of Uckfield, East Sussex. Mr. Edwards was born in Cwmdare in 1924, and lived there until 1953 when he moved to Birmingham.

Officers (2009-2010) D.L.Davies (Chairman), Alan Abraham (Hon. Acting Secretary), John Davey (Hon. Treasurer), Ken Collins (Minute Secretary), Haydn Williams (Speaker Secretary), D.L.Davies and Geoffrey Evans (Joint Editors), Dr. Colin Rees (Webmaster); Committee Members, Elfed Bowen, A.V.Jones, Mrs. Celia Thomas and Hywel Vaughan. We welcome Mrs. Thomas to the Committee and are delighted that we again have female representation.

CHAIRMAN'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE, DECEMBER 2009

It seems only a short while ago that I wrote previously as chairman to extend greetings of the Season to members and friends on behalf of the officers and committee of the Society. It's hard to believe that an entire year has gone by, but it has. It therefore falls to me now to write in a similar vein on this occasion.

As a student at Bangor many moons ago, my attention was often drawn to a globe set on a plinth in the Quad of *Top Coll* (the university's original building). Around it was the inscription (as I recall from 40 years ago) '*Ehed Amser Meddi. Na! Dyn A Hed, Erys Amser*' ('*Time Flies You Say. No! Man Flies, Time Remains*').

With age, I've come to appreciate the significance of this inscription more and more. It's one reason why I think the work of the CVHS so important in this district today as *social patterns*, rather than time, pass swiftly from the world of coal into a world of computers. As historians, we are *not* concerned with the mere passage of time, but with the story of humanity in a given setting over a given period.

According to its resources, the CVHS has continued to be concerned during 2009 with 'the story of humanity' in *our* setting and *our* era.

The *Blue Plaque Scheme* has reached the point whereby six of ten plaques are in place and plans are afoot to erect the others. We have produced a leaflet to mark the unveiling of those plaques in or near Aberdare town-centre. We have formally launched our website and have maintained an unbroken series of monthly lectures. Members have helped two churches (Green St., Aberdare and Seion, Cwmaman) mark 150th anniversaries. The Society's editors are preparing a new volume to celebrate our own 40th anniversary in fifteen months time and we intend in 2010 publishing a commemorative calendar for our anniversary year (2011). We have also been approached to help others organise two further projects: the 150th anniversary (1860-2010) of the first Co-operative Society in Wales at Cwmbach and an exhibition on the coal trade between the Cynon Valley and France - of which, more to follow.

Such work is undertaken voluntarily by members and officers of the Society. We are most grateful to all concerned for the time and effort they have and continue to contribute. Yet 'new blood' is the future of any organisation; and the committee invite all members and friends to participate as fully as they can in our activities and to recruit new members whenever possible. Our basic arrangement is simple. ***We meet at 7.15 pm on the third Thursday of each month at Green St. Vestry, Aberdare. New members are always welcome.*** Please pass on the message.

We invite everyone to act as ambassadors and recruitment officers for the Society during the coming year. These are rôles we can all undertake. Before the dawn of 2010, however, it is my pleasant duty as chairman to wish every member and friend, whether living in the Cynon Valley or beyond, a most merry Christmas and a very healthy and happy New Year. *Cofion a dymunadau gorau i bob un ohonoch ar gyfer y Nadolig a'r Flwyddyn Newydd!*

DLD

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www.cynonvalleyhistorysociety.org

Hon. Acting Secretary, Alan Abraham, 54, Potter's Field, Trecynon, Aberdare (01685 876353)

Edited by Geoffrey Evans, 5 Plasdraw Place, Aberdare CF44 0NS (01685 871840)

Ebost / Email: GMorgannwg@aol.com

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