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DIAMOND JUBILEE HANES

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How those curiosities would be quite forgot, did not such idle fellows as I am put them down.
(John Aubrey, antiquary, 1626-1697)

In this Jubilee year *Hanes* looks back at some other celebrations of Royal events that have taken place in the Cynon valley.

RUSTIC SPORTS 1858

Rustic Sports and other rejoicings were held in the town on the occasion of the marriage of the Princess Royal to the Emperor Frederick III of Germany. [Victoria, eldest daughter of Queen Victoria. On marriage Princess Victoria, "Vicky", became Empress of Germany and Queen of Prussia.]

MOUNTAIN ASH CELEBRATES THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE 1887

In order that the employees of the Powell Duffryn Company might illuminate their dwellings on Jubilee night, they were presented by the company with an immense number of candles. It is said that an order was given to Mr. J. Watkins Thomas for 45,000. The majority of the public houses of the place were illuminated; so also were very many of the private houses. A great many people on Tuesday night climbed one of the highest mountains in the neighbourhood, where they had a view of no less than thirty-seven bonfires.

Western Mail, June 23 1887.

LOOKING BACK 1837-1887.

The *Western Mail* invited some well Glamorganshire figures to comment on the changes in the social conditions of the people during the fifty years Queen Victoria had been on the throne. Two local people contributed Gwilym Williams, the eldest son of David Williams (Alaw Goch), and R J Jones the popular minister of Hen-dy-Cwrdd, Trecynon.

I am of opinion that intermediate education has been the leading feature of the Queen's reign.

Judge Gwilym Williams

The improvement of the condition in the working classes is very evident. They are better housed, better fed. In 1837 and long after the working miner seldom saw a bit of meat on his table except on Sundays, and that generally was only a bit of bacon. His bread, then mostly home grown, was costly and often in bad condition. Today few people know what 'bara widi robino' means. His salt then cost much more than his sugar does now, and his tea, when he got it, cost pro rata 6d per lb. Other things were proportionately high. His children were mostly uneducated, and the eldest boy, at the age of six or seven, had to be carried to the work by his father for the sake of the extra tram that could be got thereby. His literature was limited to the Bible and the almanac. The newspaper had not yet come within his purview. The 'Gwron', the 'Gweithiwr', the 'Gwladgarw', the 'Tarian' came on the scene much later. His comforts have multiplied tenfold, and, if only more thrifty, he ought to be altogether a happier man in 1897 than he was in 1837.*

Rev. Rees Jenkin Jones (Unitarian Minister, Aberdare)
Western Mail, 23 June 1897

* Discoloured bread of inferior quality or perhaps mouldy, old, stale or even unfit to eat by our standards. My thanks to my colleague D.L.D. for this translation.

BUNS, BONFIRES AND POLITICS AT YSGUBORWEN 1887.

.....Early in the afternoon I had passed through the sunshine from Aberdare to Ysguborwen, the fine residence of Mrs. Thomas. While passing up through the fields strains of music fell upon the ears, and on looking in the direction whence it came one beheld an exceedingly pretty sight - namely a procession of about 2,000 children, ministers, and teachers, preceded by brass band, wending their way slowly up the fields, carrying banners, in the direction of the house. There Mrs Thomas, Miss M. Thomas, Mrs. David Thomas, Miss Joseph (London), the Misses Joseph (two), Park Place, Cardiff, and the children of Major and Mrs Howell, Pembroke, seated under the trees of the lawn, watched the very pretty procession passing before them. Afterwards all were regaled with tea and cake, each child being presented with a Jubilee mug, suitably inscribed. The adults were entertained in a long upper room, while the ladies attended to the little ones standing at tables placed in the granary, 500 being entertained at a time. All the local school children were present. After the repast all adjourned to a neighbouring field, where they spent some hours enjoying themselves. When they took their departure each was presented with a bun. Then ministers and others of the adults proceeded to the front of the mansion and sang, in the presence of Mrs. Thomas, family and guests 'God Save the Queen,' followed by 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau.'

At nine-o'clock the ascent of the mountain to the place of the bonfire was commenced. The pile was 33 feet in height, and 15 feet in diameter, and the summit of cairn Davydd was reached at ten o'clock. There was a large company present, including most of the Ysguborwen family. At ten o'clock precisely the pile was lit, and it went off well. The immense pile was made up of timber and pitch and saturated with petroleum. The tremendous blaze shot with the wind in huge rolling tongues of flames, which were indescribably grand, lighting the whole mountain, and making the darkness of the valleys visible. Here all present, with heads uncovered, sang the National Anthem in English, followed by the ever-popular Welsh hymn, 'Bydd myrdd o ryfeddodau,' &c. The effect was enhanced by the associations of the place. Speeches in Welsh and in English followed, and all present covenanted in the presence of the sacred flame, by lifting up their hands to spare no effort at the next election of members of Parliament, to return Mr. David Thomas, Ysguborwen to the House of Commons. At midnight the laborious descent was commenced, which after several romantic episodes, was safely accomplished. The bonfires continued to burn long after 'Hu Gadarn' had re-appeared above the hills. Among others of the company were Mrs. Hutchings and the Misses Joseph, Neath Valley.

Morien, *Western Mail*, 23 June 1887.

MOUNTAIN ASH REJOICINGS 1897

The commemoration [The Queen's Diamond Jubilee] was duly celebrated at Mountain Ash. In the early morning, the town was gaily decorated with bunting, and fog signals were freely let off. The Volunteer Brass Band also played through the streets. The first public function was the laying of the foundation stone of the Victoria Pleasure Grounds. A silver trowel and mallet were presented to Dr. R. D. Morgan J.P., who formally laid the stone.

An elaborate luncheon was given by the chairman of the district council at the Town-hall council-chamber. The school children were entertained at the various schools to a tea, after which they formed a huge procession, headed by the brass band, and marched to the Dyffryn Grove, where a display of daylight fireworks was given, and the local Volunteers under the command of Capt. Morgan, fired a feu de joie [a running fire of guns]. In the evening another display of fireworks was given.

Notes:

Capt. Morgan = Morgan Morgan, Land Agent to Lord Aberdare.

SIMILAR CELEBRATIONS AT ABERDARE.

The decorations throughout the town were singularly pretty and universal, the event being ushered in with a peal of bells from St. Elvan's Church. More than 8,000 children were entertained to tea at the elementary schools. At Sir W. T. Lewis's residence [Mardy House] there was a magnificent display of bunting, the other principal appearances being the public offices [The Town Hall], Brynawel, and the Conservative Club. All the children were massed in Commercial-place, and sang the National Anthem. Every pauper in the parishes of Aberdare, Penderyn and Rhigos were presented with a new shilling, and a sixpence for each child.

At night there was a magnificent firework display both in the Ynys meadow and on the Graig Mountain. During the day the Dumfries Park, the gift of the Marquis of Bute was opened with much ceremony. Mr. Rhys (chair of the council) declared the park opened, and dedicated it to the use of the inhabitants of the town.

Western Mail, 23 June 1897.

A ROYAL VISIT. 1912

..... The King and Queen next went by motor car over the hills into the Aberdare valley [from the Rhondda] It was now raining heavily, but there were again large and demonstrative crowds to greet them.

King George V and Queen Mary visited the town in June 1912 as part of their Coronation tour of South Wales. They were taken to Aberdare park and while a choir of 10,000 school children were singing before their Majesties a woman Suffragist who had fastened herself to a railing shouted at Mr. McKenna* who was accompanying the Royal party as Minister in attendance. Constables pulled her away and packed her off by the next train.



THE QUEEN IN A MINER'S COTTAGE.

The King and Queen proceeded from the park to the square [Victoria Square], and the most charming incident of a memorable day followed. The Queen had expressed a wish to see a miner's cottage, and the one chosen for the visit was that of Thomas Jones, in Bute Street, because of its proximity to the square. A carpet was laid from the Royal carriage to the cottage, and the King and Queen were heartily cheered as they as they walked to the door. They first entered the front room and found on the table a Welsh family bible. Mrs. Jones, whose husband

had worked underground for 19 years, invited their Majesties into the kitchen, the real living room of the family. There was a fire in the grate and a kettle on the hob. The Queen took a cup of tea with Mrs. Jones, looked at the pictures which included portraits of their Majesties and of Mr. Gladstone, and was amused at the toys of the miner's little girl – a Teddy bear without legs and a doll without a face. Her Majesty also went upstairs and saw the bedrooms.

The whole cottage was beautifully spick and span, and its appearance was very little different from that which it must present on any other day. For example, it was a drying day, and the clothes of the family were hanging from the ceiling. Before leaving, the Queen accepted a china jug which was over 100 years old as a memento of the visit, and readily agreed to Mrs. Jones' request that the cottage should in future be known as Queen Mary's Cottage.

Their Majesties then returned to Cardiff and went aboard the Royal yacht.

The Times, June 28th 1912.

*Home Secretary under H. H. Asquith.

I was attending school on the day that King George VI died (6 February 1952). The headmaster told us the news and we were immediately sent home. When we returned to school a few days later we all wore black ties. I also recall that on the 7th February the town clerk (Gordon James), wearing his solicitor's, gown and bands, read the Proclamation of the Accession of Queen Elizabeth from the balcony of the portico of the Boot Hotel. The Proclamation had to be read out in every town in the country. Victoria Square was crowded and traffic came to a standstill; the Proclamation began *Whereas it hath pleased Almighty God to call to his Mercy our late Sovereign Lord King George VI of Blessed and Glorious Memory by whose decease the Crown is solely and rightfully come to the High and Mighty Princess Elizabeth Alexandra Mary*. After months of mourning and preparation the Coronation of the new Queen took place on the 2nd June 1953.

Editor.

1953 CORONATION FESTIVITIES



In what has been labelled an Epitaph for the Eighties, Margaret Thatcher commented, *as you know there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families.* (Interview for *Women's Own* magazine, October 31st 1987.)

Looking back at the *Aberdare Leader* for June 1953 it is amazing to see what a 'Big Society' there was at that time. It came together in local celebrations for the 1953 Coronation. The community embraced the event with great patriotic fervour, and the occasion was observed by every street and district in the valley. It is astonishing to read reports of the various street parties and rejoicings, and to marvel at the pulling together and colossal amount of hard work and organisation that went into the day.

The issues of the *Leader* of both the 30 May and 6th June are almost entirely devoted to reports of Coronation street parties, processions, fetes, galas and carnivals.

There was great anticipation of events, which proved to be a great success, and on the 8th June, the *Aberdare Leader* banner headline proclaimed:

GAY STREETS AND HAPPY PARTIES MADE THE WHOLE VALLEY A PLAYGROUND ON CORONATION DAY.

An Aberdare Coronation Committee had been formed to oversee the celebrations. On the 30th May the *Leader* reported 'almost every street has organised a tea and entertainment.'

The windows of the shops in town were a riot of red, white and blue, and stallholders at the market had festooned the market-hall with Union Jacks, bunting, pennants, and red white and blue streamers and framed portraits of the Queen. As most of the market stalls were also selling Coronation souvenirs the whole interior was a riot of colour. Local streets too were colourfully festooned with flags and bunting.

The Aberdare Urban District Council allocated expenditure of the sum of £202 on flags on municipal buildings and at the entrance to the park.

Fittingly all the churches and chapels held services to pray for the new Queen. A special Civic Service was held at St Elvan's Church on the Sunday afternoon at which a radiogram was used to relay the voice of the Queen delivering a special message, and a commentary on the religious significance of the Coronation by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Several items of appropriate church music connected with the Coronation were also relayed.

That same evening there was massed community singing led by seven choirs (Cwmbach Male Voice, Bethania Women, Cecilian Girls, Cwmbach Sunbeams, Dare Singers and Trecynon Ladies, and the Llwydcoed and Cwmaman Silver Bands).

Street parties however pre-dominated, these had been planned months before and at a time when Rationing was still in force and money short. (The rationing of sweets ended in February 1953, sugar in September 1953 and restrictions ended for all other products in July 1954).

Some of the longer streets, such as Pembroke Street, off the town centre, held its party in blocks perhaps for administrative purposes or as the result of rivalry. Pembroke Street's 'Middle Block' held its party at the Memorial Hall, and they had hats and balloons printed with the words Pembroke Street, Middle Block. This group had intended to toast the health of the Queen with champagne and had in fact ordered 6 bottles; when the price was known they had to be content with Port wine! This particular function seems to have been an all day affair, with 70 adults and 18 children sitting down to dinner and tea. The top end of Dean Street upstaged other celebrations by having the High Constable (Gwilym Ff. Williams) to open its party.

At Fothergill Street residents erected a concert stage on the street, all the children were presented with Crown Pieces (5/- or 25 new pence), and in a speech the event's organiser urged 'Let's all be good Elizabethans'

Gadlys Street held a best dressed house competition and the Rachel and Elizabeth Street parties enjoyed a cake given by Dr Jack Wilson.

Fancy dress parades were high on the agenda and most districts elected a Carnival Queen; there was, for example, 46 entrants for the Miss Hirwaun crown. The town of Abercynon held a series of Jazz Band Parades, and Penrhiwceiber was reported to be en fête.

Many of the street parties opened with a prayer or scripture readings as at Henry Street.

The Public Houses of the district were granted an extension of hours to sell drinks between 11.30 am and 11.00 pm. The Pensioners of Aberaman had no need to visit their local as they received a gift of 36 gallons of ale via W P Phillips JP.

At Llwydcoed the householders of Horeb Terrace, Merthyr Road, Corner House Street and Exhibition Row held a tea party in the vestry of Horeb Chapel. Festivities ended with a bonfire, fireworks and midnight dancing.

Residents of the lower part of Llwydcoed held their party in the garage of Y Wern.

The entire village was in festive mood and a three ton bonfire was set up on Cae Belgium, the green fronting New Scales Houses, and was set alight with accompanying fireworks.

Local Boy Scouts built a 20 foot high mountain beacon at Blaenant on the Merthyr Mountain.

Aberdare General Hospital staff staged a carnival in the hospital grounds for the benefit of the patients, and a women's comic football match was held at Aberdare Park.

The Aberdare Urban District Council organised a spectacular Coronation Carnival and Procession which was held on the 6th June (See advert). This five hour event was held at the Park and the entertainment provided included Marionette shows, gymnastic displays, country dancing, a grandmothers beauty competition, a grandfathers race, knobbly knees competitions together with four hours of continuous music provided by local choirs and silver bands. There was also a comic cricket match, ambulance displays and children's sports. Some twenty attractive sideshows were manned by employees of the Dunlop factory and members of Toc H.

Several local cinemas announced that they had already booked colour films of the Coronation procession and ceremony.

There was an increase in the sale of television sets in the run up to Coronation Day. A potential buyer could pop into Victor Freed's and pick up a Decca TV for 83 guineas and a modest 14 inch HMV set, with automatic picture control for £57. Black and white of course, but terms were available. Aberdare Hospital was presented with eight sets on the eve of the Coronation by a Hospital TV Committee, chaired by the Rev Ivor Parry, which had worked hard to raise funds to purchase these, and the children and staff of Barnardo's Home at Glandare House were presented with a set by Sobell's and the tenant firms of the Hirwaun Industrial Estate.

On a wider canvass, 19-year-old Trooper David Lawrence Lloyd of Martin Terrace, Abercynon a trooper in the Royal Horse Guards was one of the Queen's escorts to Westminster Abbey. Later in the week, the High Constable, Gwilym Ff Williams and his wife Mrs Marion Williams were guests at the Queen's Coronation Garden Party, and a number of Aberdare valley police officers were awarded the Queen's Coronation Medal.



Children from Glan Road, Aberdare celebrate the 1953 Coronation with paper crowns and a splendid cake. Some of the party hats are emblazoned 'Cow and Gate Milk.'

Photo: Rhondda Cynon Taff Library Service's Digital Archive

IMAGES FROM THE NEWSPAPER



Patriotic sentiments abound in this 1953 advertisement for a high-class tailoring establishment in Aberdare's Market Street. The firm was established in 1904 and was in business until the 1970s. The firm was founded by John Lewis, a master tailor, who had trained as a tailor and cutter in London's Drury Lane in the early 1880's. Garments were made-up by hand on the premises by a staff of some eight men and women.

At the time of this advert, the business was run by Mr. Herbert (Bertie) Lewis, a son of the founder, John Lewis. An interesting account of the life of John Lewis, by Walter T. Morgan of the National Library of Wales, can be read in *Hanes*, Number 7 (November 1989).

TOGETHERNESS

Money for street parties was raised by weekly house-to-house collections.

Many corner shop owners lent their premises for the day to facilitate bread cutting and tea making.

Aberdare Urban District Council

Coronation Carnival
and Procession
ABERDARE PARK
SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 1953

ENTRIES are still invited for the various classes in the procession, which include: **TRADE, INDUSTRIAL, SPORTING, and other Tableaux; DRESSED VEHICLES, MOTOR-CYCLES, and CYCLES; FANCY-DRESS or COMIC CHARACTERS, adults or children; COMIC or CHARACTER BANDS, adults or children.**

A further class recently added is of interest to organisers of Coronation Street Parties. **Prizes totalling £25 will be awarded for Street Party Entries.**

★ **OVER £200 IN PRIZES** ★

Full details are on the Entry Forms, which may be obtained from: Rates Dept., Finance Dept., High Street, Aberdare.

Entries will now, be accepted until Noon, Friday, June 5, 1953

* **THERE IS NO ENTRY FEE** *

"... a health unto Her Majesty"

THE CORONATION OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

JUNE 2, 1953

We join with all loyal citizens in extending our felicitations and greetings on this memorable occasion

EMRYS EVANS & SON
9-10 VICTORIA SQUARE
ABERDARE

We can provide very readily the wherewithal for the loyal toast

★ **CHAMPAGNE**
PORT
SHERRY
WHISKY
GIN
BRANDY
RUM
LIQUEURS ★

Also all British Empire and Foreign Wines

This Emrys Evans & Son advert headed *...a health unto Her Majesty* recommends a variety of drinks for the loyal toast.

* * * * *

Similar accounts of the celebration of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 could be given when once again the valley was en fête and street tea parties abounded.

* * * * *

Readers will be interested to note that for the present Diamond Jubilee there were only sixty-one applications for street closures for parties in the whole of the Rhondda Cynon Taf authority. Nine of the sixty-one were requested by residents in the Cynon Valley; only two Aberdare streets appear in the list of closures - Lambert Terrace on the Gadlys and Mary Street (off Monk Street). The only other local closures were at Tramway, Hirwaun and Erw Las, Penywaun. Perhaps the Rt. Hon. Baroness Thatcher LG, OM, PC, FRS. was right after all!