

# CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY

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## HANES

ISSUE No. 43

SUMMER 2008

NEWSLETTER OF THE CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY  
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### HANES ON SERVICES HOME BREW

The well-known antiquary, Benjamin Heath Malkin, visited Aberdare in 1803 on his travels through South Wales and observed that the local ale, "*where they have any, is worse than none!*" **Hanes** is unable to tell you where he drank, but can record that nearly all the local inns at that time would have brewed their own beer.

In **1808**, particulars of a forthcoming auction of **The Corner House Inn**, Llwydcoed refer to "*The dwelling house now occupied and well established as a Tavern or Public House with the Brew house, garden and appurtenances thereto belonging*".

In **1861** Dyllas Farm was offered for sale together with various livestock and other items including, "*The whole of the brewing utensils which are in good order*": This farm had since **1848** "doubled" as an inn named **The Fox and Hounds**, probably to satisfy the needs of passing travellers, and those working on the nearby iron-ore patches.

As industry expanded and the population increased, so did the opening of new pubs and the consumption of alcohol, and breweries began to spring up to satisfy the demand for beer. In **1840** there was a Maltster trading in the village, (Llewellyn Llewellyn of the Malt House, Gadlys\*) and the first brewery appears to have opened that same year. This was an enterprise started by Lewis Roberts (who was also a surgeon!) of Gadlys Uchaf. His *Stag Brewery*\*\* stood in Stag Street, Trecynon. In **1846** he had a competitor, John Lindsey & Co. (Brewer and Miller of High Street), followed by another, William Jones of the Gadlys in **1852**. The well known **George Brewery** was opened in **1855**. Other Breweries were established and brief details of these are given:

#### **1875** (Worall's Directory)

1. Arthur Jones, Black Lion Brewery (Opened 1850.).
2. Edward Jones, Gloster Brewery, Dean Street.
3. John Jones, Trecynon Brewery, Mill Street.
4. Thomas Jones (Brewer and Maltster), Dean Street.
5. Edward Roberts & Co. Rock Brewery, High Street.

#### **1880** (Slater's Directory) (additional to the above.)

1. Charlotte Jones, Abergwawr. (Opened Ca.1855)
2. Thomas Jones, 21 Commercial Street and Dean Street.

(By this year ownership of The Rock Brewery had passed to Richard Lewis.)

#### **1889**

In 1889, The Black Lion Brewery employed 13 people. The Dean Street Brewery of Thomas Jones was known by the name of the *George Brewery*.

The following Breweries were still operational in **1896** but under new ownership. New names, where known, are given: *Abergwawr Brewery Company Ltd.* (Chairman D.T. Alexander; Secretary John Alexander; Manager Taliesyn James\*\*\*). Black Lion Brewery, E. Arnott, Danygraig, (Chairman); A.S. Please (Managing Director). In **1913** The Rock was in the hands of F.L. Elliot.

\* According to W.W. Price the Malt Houses (Brewery), Gadlys were called "Tai'r Bragdy". These are the tall, houses on Gadlys Road, at the foot of Morgan Street.

\*\* The Essay, *Gardd Aberdâr* records that "In the year 1837 there was built a brewery by Lewis Roberts Esq., near his own house [Gadlys-Uchaf] bearing the name **The Gadlys Brewery**". We believe that the name Stag Brewery, the public house of this name and Stag Street is derived from one of the crests of The Earl of Plymouth, on whose estate these properties stood.

\*\*\*son of James James and grandson of Evan James, they wrote the music and lyrics of 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau'.

# HANES ON BANKING

The rural society and economy of this area around the year 1790 was described by a reliable observer, as one in which "*labour was of little value and money so scarce*" (letters published in the C & M.G. in June & July 1853. The writer, who signed himself "An Old Mountaineer", is believed to be John Bruce Pryce.

Such local surplus as there was taken to market by drovers, such as Theophilus Richards, who returned cash to the districts from which they came. The drovers established themselves as businessmen often financing the droves themselves. A number set up their own banks such as The Black Ox Bank (1799 Llandoverly) and The Black Sheep Bank (Tregaron and Aberystwyth), issuing bank notes bearing imprints of those cattle.

The growth of the iron-industry brought about the need for local urban banks. Initially Aberdare had to look to Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff for its facilities. D. Williams, a local grocer, set up a small bank in Merthyr Tydfil as early as 1770. The Brecon (Old) Bank of Wilkins & Co. opened a branch in Merthyr in 1778, (The family had an interest in the Hirwaun Iron Works), and this Bank provided much of the capital for the industrial development of South Wales.

Another firm, Taitt, Wood and Co. set up their bank in Cardiff in 1772 (Wm. Taitt was a partner in the Dowlais Iron Co). In 1800 William Crawshay issued £1 notes at Merthyr Tydfil, and by 1835 Guest Lewis & Co. had a bank at Dowlais. Newspaper reports (mostly relating to crime) confirm that working class people from Aberdare resorted to that town for banking.

In the early years of the iron industry workers were paid in tokens which could only be exchanged for goods at Company Shops. There were four of these in Aberdare, one at Shop Houses, Llwydcoed, the others were at Dover House, Gadlys, The Trap at Abernant and near the Band Club, Aberaman.

With the increase in population and the advance of trade and commerce, branches of established banks opened in Aberdare. Details are given below.

**The Aberdare Savings Bank\*** (a branch of The Cardiff Savings Bank). In 1858-1859 its Actuary was the Vicar of Aberdare, John Griffith, and the Manager in 1865 was The Rev'd Evan Lewis, another vicar of Aberdare.

**The West of England and South Wales Bank** (by 1858) at Cardiff Street (drawing on Glyn Mills & Co. of London. Manager 1865 Thos. Davies.)

**Wilkins & Co.** (drawing on Barnett, Hoare & Co. of London) at Canon Street, (Manager T.B. Powell 1858-1880). This bank had become Lloyds by 1888, (Manager then Leonard Acomb).

By 1880 The West of England had been replaced by The National Bank of Wales, (later The Midland). In 1900 Aberdare had branches of Lloyds (which had absorbed Wilkins Brecon Bank), The Metropolitan Bank at Cardiff Street, and The London and Provincial Bank of England and Wales at Victoria Square. (All these were still functioning in 1912.)

The Aberdare Post Office granted and paid Money Orders, had a savings bank, and took part in other banking activities, e.g.

**1863**

**VICTORIA REGINA  
NOTICE TO PUBLIC.**

The public are hereby informed that Mr. William Morris, Post Master, Aberdare will collect the old copper coins in Aberdare and its neighbourhood in exchange for new bronze coin or cash from all persons who bring the same to him.

**Signed Thomas Graham, Master of Mint, London 28<sup>th</sup> August 1863.**

\* This bank can be seen in plate 13 *Old Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil in Pictures*.

# TEETH

TYNNIR DANEDO YN DDIBOEN. PRISIAU RHESYMBOL\*.

Have you noticed the genuine nineteenth-century wrought iron sign hanging outside a dental surgery in Whitcombe Street? It reads TEETH and portrays a great sense of period. Prior to the advent of the clinical specialist in this field there were a number of different trades that extracted, or “pulled” to use the contemporary word, teeth. They included Apothecaries, barbers and hairdressers, blacksmiths, cobblers, farriers, jewellers, watchmakers and wood turners, and plain old fashioned “Tooth drawers” that attended local fairs. These “operators” extracted teeth by using pliers and special keys, and it is supposed they were in the business just because they had tools capable of performing the process.

One of London’s weekly Bills of Mortality published during the time of the great plague notes that 111 people had died of Teeth in just one week!

The earliest method of teeth drawing was by means of pliers or keys with claws that engaged over the crown, and were rapidly twisted to dislocate the tooth from the socket. An instrument called a “Pelican” which had claws resembling that bird’s beak dragged teeth out sideways. There were also other tools which by twisting the teeth around sharply dragged out the root. Clumsy operators however, were known to dislocate the patient’s jaw, or even bring part of it away. Rough use of the Pelican could result in good teeth being drawn with the decayed. If the patient complained he would be told to shut up, or he would be charged for taking out three instead of one!

One of the earliest recorded professional dentists in Aberdare was George Beavis, A Surgeon-Dentist and “Late assistant to Alfred Canton, Esq., MRCS (England) and LDS, MDS, also two years assistant to R.B. Boulton Esq. of Cardiff”. He could be consulted daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at his residence, 2 Whitcombe Place [sic], Aberdare. By 1882 a famous local name appears, that of Daniel Tudor Williams. (Skilled operators & mechanics.) He later became a Chemist at Medical Hall, (the premises now occupied by A & J.M Sheppard Ltd), and was famous for his renowned “Balsam of Honey” cough mixture.

The town also had visits from itinerant dentists such as a. Mr. Inder of the practice of Dr.H.W. Griffiths LDS, Newport, Mon. He could be consulted at Able Dance’s Confectionary shop, 2 Cardiff Street, every Monday from March 19th 1887.

In 1889 the British-American Dental Association of London announced its intention of visiting Aberdare every Tuesday to supply artificial teeth of “Exquisite beauty and true to nature in appearance, comfort and mastication. Prices place these benefits within reach of all.”

Artificial teeth were made from a variety of material. In two periods of history, after Waterloo and during the American Civil War of the 1860’s, large quantities (barrel-loads, it is said) of teeth were imported from the battlefields for “transplants” in England and Wales.

A bizarre display of dental skill filled the Temperance Hall in 1893 when The Electric Artificial Teeth Company, exhibited “The Electric Chair” that enabled the Company’s practitioner to perform dental operations without pain!

In 1896 Weeks & Smart, Surgeon Dentists of Bristol also attended Aberdare to perform “painless operations under Nitrous Oxide gas (laughing gas), Chloroform, Cocaine, Anestile etc when operations were necessary”

J.H. Todd, M.B., had a practice at 1 Maindee Place [sic] in 1903. A Medical Botanist and Manufacture of Artificial Teeth, he boasted that he had the “Largest factory for making teeth in the world. No Quack!” he advertised, “£1.1.0d sets made”.

In 1916 D. Ernest Williams had a surgery at 1 Canon Street, and branches at Commercial Street, Mountain Ash, Abercynon, Ynysybwl, Cwmaman and Hirwaun.

Preston’s Dental Rooms at 24 Canon Street (above the Penny Bazaar) had appeared by July 1918. This surgery was open from 9 am to 8 p.m. seven days a week. That same year Mr.J. Hanbury had a surgery at 27 Victoria Square (over Miles’ Butchers). He advertised that he was prepared to take weekly payments! and could supply full upper or lower sets of teeth for £2.10.0d.

Yet another name for our list is Grooms’ (formerly McCormack’s) Dental Surgery. This was above Jones & Sons, (Jewellers), and at 17 Canon Street.

In the 1920’s a Mr. Knight had a surgery above Lipton’s.

Familiar names from the more recent past, which should be mentioned, are Messrs Percy Rake of Gadlys, Trevor Flocks (Gloucester Buildings) with his Hudson Terraplane Motor car, and pet monkey, which, it is said, he took to surgery with him. R.H. Chiverton (at 25 Whitcombe Street), and one of our Associate Members Mr. Dafydd Roberts. He practiced first from his home at Broniestyn Terrace, and then opened a surgery at 18a Whitcombe Street. B.T. Evans at 1 Canon Street and K. Hurstfield of Gloster House. Finally there was an A.M. Barraby at 319 Cardiff Road, Aberaman. Dental skills apart it is remembered that he owned a magnificent, and unforgettable for Aberdare, gold coloured 1955 (Barker) Daimler Conquest motorcar.

Any reader able to add to this “Directory” should contact the Editor.

\*Painless Extractions. Fees Strictly Moderate. (From a nineteenth-century Welsh language dentistry advert).

# THE FUNERAL TRADE

As G.T. Clark, the antiquary, once observed, "*The Welshman likes to be buried decently*".

The title Funeral Director is a fairly modern term; originally burial functions were carried out by local craftsmen, carpenters, cabinet-makers, upholsters, joiners, plumbers and even drapers. They would undertake to furnish a funeral, hence the origin of the word Undertaker. When Anthony Bacon, the Second, died at Aberaman House in 1827, his body was taken to Speen (Newbury) in Berkshire for burial. How was this achieved at that early date? Apart from the logistics of that task, several different trades would have been involved. His remains would probably have been placed first in a lead shell, and his rank in society would have demanded the finest oak coffin.

One of the first "Undertakers" in Aberdare was **William Sarvis**, draper of Cardiff Street and later Commercial Place, his hearses and mourning coaches were purchased by **Isaac Thomas** in the early part of 1876. Although there were other local undertakers in the district in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Isaac Thomas led the trade, describing himself as "*The cheapest Undertaker in Wales*"; he promoted an aggressive advertising campaign in the local press. In 1880, for instance, when it was still the local custom to carry the body from the house to the place of interment, he put forward a proposal that if every workman in the valley agreed to hire one of his hearses he would reduce his charges for these by 7/6d in the pound. This was at a time when he had four hearses and four mourning coaches to hand, and another hearse "nearing completion". It would appear that few of these were in use at any one time in any event! "I make this offer" he stated "At the request of many of my Aberdare friends". His coffins cost from 6/- (for a child of 6 months) to 100 guineas. One of his many adverts drew attention to his "*Beautifully ornamented new hearse, to be drawn by 2 horses, constructed on an improved plan, so as to carry six persons inside, and two out, in addition to the corpse*". (A Shillibeer - Ed.). In 1876 he announced that he was prepared to send hearses with feather plumes, or mourning coaches to any part of Wales, the whole being of the best description that can be provided. In 1888 he was able to offer seven classes of hearses...so as to enable him to meet the circumstances of the wealthy, as well as the poorest of his customers.

After his death his business, at 24-25 Seymour Street, Aberdare was taken over by Messrs. **George and Jones**.

Other undertakers that should be noted are **David Collier** of 22 Lewis Street, Aberaman, who claimed to have made some ten to twelve thousand coffins over a period of 20 years. **John Morgan & Son** (Established in 1868. "*Our glass-panelled hearse defies description*". 1906) of Station Street, and **John Zachariah**, Ynyslwyd and High Streets (fl.1922)

Allied trades were the monumental masons (there were five in the valley in 1876) such as **Dawkin K Williams**, Gloucester Street "Memorial sculptors in marble, granite and stone. Inscriptions made up in imperishable letters", and **Parker's** at High Street (on the site later occupied by the Rex Cinema.)

We should not forget the role of the local publicans that out of respect closed their doors as "walking funerals" passed on their way to the cemetery, but flung them open for the return journey, to cater for the crowds of thirsty bearers and mourners. There were many complaints of this practice in *The Aberdare Times*. (See for example the Editorial in the issue of 2<sup>nd</sup>. June 1861). In fact many of the working class funerals of the 1860s appear to have been Hogarthian-style social events, rather than solemn ceremonies. Pendar recollects a "big" funeral from Cwmbach, in which some 300-400 people took part. The "mourners" included a crowd of women from the Brickyards. Described as a real day out for the people of Capcoch, Cwmaman and Aberaman, the women would show off their silks and satins, and the occasion provided an opportunity to call in at the Llwyncelyn, The Cross Inn, Welsh Harp, Red Lion, Three Generals, or The George, where the singing of ballads and step-dancing would be indulged in. Funeral "Generals" conducted the processions. Shon-y-bugail (John the shepherd) was the Commander-in-chief. He carried a knobbly walking stick, and mounted high tumps to have vantage points to observe if all the bearers were in their proper places. "But now, mun", commented Pendar, in his very personal style, "only a hearse, and a few mourning coaches, with no pleasure at all!"

In conclusion the historian of British funerals (Julian Litten) has written, "*The Victorian celebration of death was not so much a golden age of effective psychological support as a bonanza of commercial exploitation*".

Editor's Note. A photograph of Isaac Thomas is shown in *Pictures from the Past*, Vol. One (Pl. No. 98a).

\*  
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Registered Charity No.51014.  
Printed by Dial-A-Print, Mountain Ash. 01443 474822.  
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6/08