



PRESIDENT: THE LORD ABERDARE

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

TRIBUTE TO DOUGLAS WILLIAMS

It is with great sadness that we record the death, on the 31st May 2006, of Douglas [Williams. As acting Chairman at the June Meeting I had to say a few words about his passing. I regret that I did not do the occasion justice. I was not up to it. Perhaps this was meant to be as my words, however well chosen, would have been transient. In writing they will endure, even in such a small journal as this.

His death has affected us all deeply, and he will be sorely missed as a friend, and as a member of a Society that he cherished greatly and served so well over a great number of years. If I wanted, as I often did, information on a particular subject, or a translation from the Welsh language, as like as not Doug was on my doorstep, with my requirements, within a few hours.

He was generous with his time, and always most willing to share his knowledge with others. His interest was wide ranging, from the Celtic Church and monasticism to eisteddfodau, the iron industry and important local figures particularly David Williams (Alaw Goch)

As a mark of respect the Committee Meeting held the day following his death was adjourned after all those present had voiced their thoughts concerning his personality. Each was unique and heart-felt. It is a great pity these could not have been recorded.

Even now I find that I have to resort to the words of another to express the loss that I'm sure we all feel at this time.

"I know not his fellow...for where is the man of that gentleness, lowliness, and affability. (He was indeed)... a man for all seasons" (Robert Whittinton 1520)

Douglas was all of these; and more. We shall not look upon his like again.

Here follows part of the eulogy written and spoken by Past President, Mr. Elfed Bowen at the funeral service held at Ebenezer Chapel, Trecynon on the 6th June.

" Mr. Douglas Williams became a member of the Cynon Valley History Society shortly after its formation in 1971. He soon became a Committee Member and served as such until his passing. He was a very keen and knowledgeable local historian, eager to share his knowledge with anyone who showed interest, and his slide shows relating to earlier Aberdare were much sought after. He served as Chairman on two occasions, and four years ago took over the responsibility for postal sales from Mr. Tom Evans. He took charge of visual aids for the Society, often supplying projector and screen, and acting as projectionist. He designed the Society's "Court of Arms", which appears on our official letters, and the Old Aberdare series of books. Formerly a Surveyor with the Electricity Board, Doug's expertise with maps and photographs served us well; the important map showing colliery locations in Cynon Coal is an example. Many photographs in our publications were put forward by Doug.

He was originally a Hirwaun man with a great interest in the Hirwaun and other iron works, and had contributed an article on Cynon Valley Iron Works in Merthyr Historian (Vol.15, 2003). In a wider field he served as Committee Member and also Chairman of the Standing Conference of the History of the South Wales Valleys (A body which was in existence from 1978 to 1994). Doug made a number of appearances on television in relation to local history matters, including Trevor Fishlock's programmes. His slide shows, with commentary in Welsh and English, it is fair to say, had become one of the popular and regular features over the years, with many local organisations and societies. He was loath to accept any payment for these, deriving satisfaction from pleasing others, and encouraging interest in local history.

Doug was a proud Welsh speaking, Welshman and I'm sure that he would be pleased, along with his two lovely daughters, that something in Her "Hen iaith" was included in this tribute (There followed a section in Welsh).

Doug gave 100% effort and enthusiasm when involved in anything. A very pleasant and sociable man, he was Mr. Reliability and will be sadly missed"

ABERDARE 1854-1856

(From D. T. Alexander's *Glamorgan Reminiscences*.)

(Continued from HANES No.34.)

Welsh Tall Hats.

I should like to record one or two curious features of the town at that time. It may seem strange, but it was none the less a fact, that the greater number of the servant girls employed at Aberdare in the fifties were Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire girls, and nearly every one of them wore the old Welsh tall hat. The reason for West Wales girls coming was doubtless the fact that most of the local girls found employment at the ironworks.

The latter only did the lighter duties at the works. They used to dress in fustian trousers with short skirts down to the knee, and these were made of a rough canvass material, with jackets something like a short coat put over the shoulders, and with large leather pads strapped on to their backs for pushing backwards the trams along the tramways. On their heads they wore flat straw bonnets or hats which were very like those worn by cockle women. These they wore not only at the works, but about the streets also.

"Good-bye, Now, Whatevarr"

It will be interesting probably to some of your readers to know that the common expression "Good-bye now, whatevarr" originated at Aberdare. A draper by the name of Miles Gabriel, who kept a shop in Commercial-place, had determined to emigrate to Australia and had disposed of his business in Commercial-place to Mr. Henry Lewis*, but before giving up possession he had to resort to the usual method of selling off as much of his stock as possible before the business passed over to his successor. Thereupon on a Monday morning his shop windows were placarded with selling-off posters with the following announcement: "*Indeed to goodness, I be now going Goodbye, now, whatevarr.*" **

A large number of Vale of Glamorgan people, who had emigrated to Aberdare, opened business (sic) there, and to these the farmers in the Upper Rhondda, the Rhondda Fach, now known as Ferndale, and the upper portion of the Neath Valley, Glyn Neath, and Pont Neath Vaughan, and the Penderyn and Ystradfellte districts came to make their purchases. It was almost impossible in business to get on without being able to speak Welsh. I soon found as an Anglicised Vale of Glamorgan boy that one of the first things I had to do was to tackle and to endeavour to speak the language of which I knew very little before. This I was soon able to accomplish, and I make mention of it now because I think it may be found useful to others, and from that I have found during the course of my professional career that it has been of the greatest possible use and service to me. Often stranded and unable to get information when trying to talk English, especially in outlying districts, information which I had sought was readily accorded to me when I made it known that I was able to converse with the persons from whom I sought information in their native tongue.

* See Hanes On Streets, Hanes No.32.

** In my experience the Welsh are often "Put-down", and imitated (especially on B.B.C. programmes) for using the expression *Look You!* Shakespeare however frequently uses this phrase in his plays. It appears, for example, in a beautiful speech in Hamlet "...this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy the air, *look you*, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire..." (Act Two, scene 2.) Other examples are to be found in the same text, and elsewhere in his plays.

EMIGRATION

Dr. Bill Jones's recent lecture on *Writing Back: Welsh Emigrants and their Correspondence in the 19th Century* attracted one of the largest attendances we have seen for some time. Readers may be interested in learning how people started out on such a perilous adventure in the first place. Part of the answer to this question is that local businessmen specialised in this trade in human resources. Take for example one in particular, Thomas H Evans of the Cardiff Castle Hotel, Cardiff Street, publican, auctioneer, appraiser and music hall proprietor. In the early 1860's he was able to add to his lengthy list of functions, the rather grand title of "Agent for Queensland Emigration, for Aberdare"

In September 1863, he published an announcement in **The Aberdare Times** informing people "Assisted passages are now granted to a limited number of eligible persons, at £8 per head (Adult); female domestic servants £4. The class of persons alone eligible are Ploughmen, Road makers, Quarrymen, Professed Gardeners, and a few Miners, Carpenters, Masons, Bricklayers, Blacksmiths, Wheelwrights, Shipwrights, and female domestic servants of good conduct"

In 1866, another local auctioneer, George Rosser of Canon Street, advertised two passages a month from Liverpool to New York on "splendid ships" of the Black Ball Line of Packets.

Other Newspapers, too, such as **The Cambrian** carried regular adverts informing certain groups of people (miners, mechanics and artificers) of the excellent opportunities to be had in such places as Adelaide, in South Australia. Sailings could be obtained on ships such as the first class Brig, "Appleton", of 400 tons berthen, embarking from Swansea, and calling at Bristol. (2nd October 1846). In 1852, you could sail direct to New York from Port Talbot, on the American clipper "Barque".

In 1860 "The Matoaka", described by **The Cambrian**, as a noble-ship, that had previously made the journey to Wellington in only 89 days, sailed to Canterbury, New Zealand from Bristol. Among the virtues of this vessel, the paper stated, was the fact she had recently been entirely re-decorated, and was fitted with every possible comfort and convenience... a model passenger ship. She also had a magnificent Poop.

Your safe arrival however could never be guaranteed. **The Cambrian**, in 1850, reporting the loss of "another Emigrant ship", the American, "Adeline" that had sailed from Liverpool bound for New Orleans, with 500 passengers aboard, described how she went to pieces after striking a shoal. Fortunately all those aboard were rescued

There were other ways, too, of getting to the colonies as readers who recently saw ITV 1's, "The Incredible Journey of Mary Bryant", will be aware. Such was the fate of 40 year old, Sarah Morgan of Aberdare in 1848, who after pleading guilty to stealing a basket, a blanket, two sheets, an ironing box, a tobacco box, and a 1lb of cheese, the property of Thomas Morgan, a local beer house keeper, was sent to the Quarter Sessions for sentencing on account of a previous conviction for felony. There, in October 1848, she was ordered to be transported to Van Diemen's Land, (now Tasmania), for a period of seven years. She made the journey on a ship named "Stately". (See The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian, and Deirdre Beddoe "Welsh Convict Women".)

Late News. Hanes also records the death of Mrs. Liz Jones of Harlech Place, Aberdare. Both Mrs. Jones and her husband Syd regularly attended our Lectures and other events until her illness made this impossible. Mr. & Mrs. Jones were involved with many local organisations, and were active members of the Ramblers' Society. For many years they used to distribute the Notices of our monthly Meetings in the Monk Street area. We extend our sympathy to Syd at this sad time.

ABERDARE'S BOY SOLDIER

In our Christmas 2004 Edition of *Hanes*, (No.29) we looked back ninety years to see how this area responded to the first Christmas of the Great War.

Despite all the subsequent conflicts there is still a great interest in "*The Great War for Civilisation*", and every year an increasing number of people, young and old, make pilgrimages to Flanders and the Somme, to visit the war cemeteries and the battle fields.

The fate of boy soldiers, and the execution of other shell-shocked men, for the now alleged offence of Cowardice in the Face of the Enemy, are still being written about, and researched by present-day military historians.

Here is one reference to the death of a boy soldier from this area. The Obituary is taken from *The South Wales Daily News* of 30th August 1916. A photograph of this young man accompanies the Obituary.

ABERDARE BOY SOLDIER.

"He was a splendid soldier", writes Capt.C.J.Cowley of the Welsh Regiment in a letter to Mr. and Mrs.Rogers of 2, Little Wind Street, Aberdare, conveying the news of the death in action of their son, Private J.I.Rogers. Private Rogers enlisted at the outbreak of war, when he was only 16½ years of age. Prior to joining the colours he worked at the Blaengwawr Colliery, Aberdare. In his letter to the boy-soldier's parents, Capt.Cowley says "He died bravely for his Country's cause, and the Officers and Men of his Company associate themselves in tendering to you our deepest sympathy"

Research carried out by *Hanes* reveals that the boy- soldier's full name was John Ivor Rogers. His Service Number was 8901. He was killed on the 15th.August 1916 whilst serving with the 4th.Btn. The Royal Welsh Fusiliers. His death is recorded on the Thiepval Memorial (Pier and Face 4A). That means he was killed at the Somme, but has no known grave. The similar fate of 73,000 men who died on the Somme between July 1915 and March 1918 are also recorded there. This great monument was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. At the time his name was placed on the memorial at Thiepval his parents, John and Gwen Rogers, had moved to 8a Richmond Terrace, Abernant.

The fate of young John Rogers brings to mind lines from three famous War Poems.

"... And each slow dusk a drawing- down of blinds", (*Anthem For Doomed Youth* by Wilfred Owen).

"The old lie: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*", (*Dulce et Decorum est* by Wilfred Owen.)

"To save your world you asked this man to die;
Would this man, could he see you now, ask why?" (*Epitaph for an Unknown Soldier* by W.H.Auden).

(Lines taken from poems contained in *Up the Line to Death -The War Poets 1914-1918*. Methuen, London 1964).

* It is a fine and seemly thing to die for one's country. (Quintus Horatius Flaccus Horace 65-68 B.C.)

ABERDARE FAIR

Mr.J.STUDT has arrived at Aberdare from Glo'ster, with three Special trains containing his four abreast Galloping Horses &c., &c.,

These Galloping Horses were exhibited at the Royal Exhibition 1896 and were patronised by the Elite of the country.

Also the **GRAND ORCHESTRAPHONE** which Was purchased by Mr.Studt at an outlay of £800 at The Amsterdam Exhibition 1895. Mr.Studt was the Pioneer of the **Orchestraophone** in England and Wales Having introduced it 12 months before any others.

THIS MAGNIFICENT ORGAN is worked By pneumatic machinery and is a complete Brass and Reed Band. It will play from 7.p.m. to 10 p.m. Selections from Maritana, Zampa Overture, Barber of Seville, Bohemian Overture, Rip Van Winkle, and Hallelujah Chorus, also Scotch, Irish and Welsh Selections, including "Erin" "Hen Wlad fy Nhadau" "In Friendship's name" and "A song that will for ever," &c.

THE ORCHESTRAPHONE is worth coming miles to hear. You should not miss this treat.

Also, do not fail to see Studt's Oriental Exhibition Gondolas, patronised by the elite.



Commencing Friday, Nov. 12th, and during the Fair.

(The Aberdare Times 1897.)

HANES

If you have not received a copy of Hanes No.35, or know of someone who didn't, would you please notify the Editor or any member of the Committee.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Will members please note that annual subscriptions are due on the 21st September next, the date of the Annual General Meeting. We would like to thank all those who continue to pay their membership fees regularly and punctually year by year.

NEWSLETTER

The Society's President.

It is a pleasure to announce that Lord Aberdare has agreed to become the first President of the Cynon Valley History Society. The present Lord Aberdare, Alistair John Lyndhurst Bruce is the 5th Baron Aberdare (of Duffryn). His family acquired the Duffryn, Mountain Ash Estate in 1755. The title was created in 1873.

The 1st Baron was of course Henry Austin Bruce GCB. (1815-1895) He was succeeded by Henry Campbell Bruce (1851-1929); The 3rd Baron was Clarence Napier Bruce GBE. (1885-1957), and the 4th, Sir Morys George Lyndhurst Bruce KCB, PC., DL. (1919-2005.)

For the early history of the family, and Duffryn Aberdare, see Hilary Thomas "Duffryn Aberdare" in *Morgannwg* Vol. XX1 1977.

For Henry Austin Bruce see (1) *The Dictionary of National Biography*, (2) *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography*,

Letters of ... Lord Aberdare. Ed. Anon 2 Vols. Oxford 1902.

M. E. Chamberlain "Lord Aberdare and The Royal Niger Company". (*Welsh History Review* Vol.3 June 1966.)

Register of Members' Interests.

The Editor would be most grateful if anyone researching or writing articles on the history of the Cynon Valley, would inform the Society of the fact. This may prevent the re-occurrence of a recent event where two members were, unknowingly, working on identical projects. The second writer, although not the first in the field, had his article published. Had he known he would gladly have stepped aside in favour of the lady concerned. Furthermore our readers may have knowledge of sources, or other information, which could assist with projects.

Old Aberdare Vol.10.

Good progress is being made in the preparation of this, the final Journal in the series. The contents will include accounts of:

Private Adventure Schools (Dames' Schools) in the Parish of Aberdare.

Riots that broke out in Mountain Ash and Aberdare following the 1880 General Election.

The Aberdare Background to the South Wales Choral Union ("Y Cor Mawr"),

A Facsimile of *Webster's 1865 Postal and Commercial Directory of Aberdare and Mountain Ash*.

Extracts From the Daily Notebooks of John Evans, The Inspector of Nuisances for Aberdare. (1877-1893.)

Museum Accessions.

The Society has been partly instrumental in securing two items of local interest for the Museum. The first is an inscribed trowel used to lay one of the foundation stones of Noddfa Chapel, Trecynon. This was used by Ald. Rhys Llewellyn of Bwllfa, the second is an inscribed key presented to his daughter, Miss Elizabeth Llewellyn, when she ceremonially opened the Cwmdare Pavilion (Welfare Hall) in May 1926.

Naming of New Journal.

We have received only two suggestions for a name for the proposed new journal of the history of the Cynon Valley. We look forward to receiving your entry.

The Jazz Bands

We have received an addition to our list of Jazz Bands (Hanes No.35) from Mr. Tom Evans. The band name is the Abernart Zulus. Do you have any names to add to our list?

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