

HANES Bach July 2020 (issue 3)



Dear Members, we wish you well during and after this Covid 19. HANES 91 (Summer) will be issued in August along with general update and membership forms for 2020/21. Hanes Bach will resume for a limited period September onwards. All contributors are self-editors. Compilation is agreed with the CVHS committee.

A Short History of The Ynys

Geoffrey Evans

The Ynys meadows lie between the river Cynon and the former Vale of Neath Railway line. Along part of the Bute Estate the lands are shown as meadow on the 1844 Tithe schedule, as being part of Tydraw farm and named Trap meadow, canal feeder, canal middle field and lower meadow. (Enclosure, 1175)

Ynys translates as the 'river meadow'; Ivor Parry in his essay *Religion in Aberdare Before the Reformation* says that the recreation ground known as Ynys Meadow is possibly a corruption of Ynys Medwy or Ynys Meudwy, Medwy was St. Elvan's companion on his visit to Rome in 179 AD, Meudwy is a hermit's cell or clas. This contention gives the land very early Christian connections. (Old Aberdare, Vol.6 p29).

The land has a long association with community activities in the town, especially sporting events going back to the mid 1870s. The diversity of these is interesting, the field having been used as a drill area for the local Rifle Volunteers, Fetes and Galas, horse racing, athletics, foot racing, cycle racing, quoits and agricultural and horse shows. It was also used by the great international travelling shows that visited the town, Anderton and Haslam's Menagerie (1897), Ada Alexandra's Hippodrome (1903), Buffalo Bill's Wild West in July, 1903 and it was for very many years the venue for Aberdare Fair famed for its flannel when the land became known as the Fair Ground.

In another period, part of the Ynys Meadow became known as the Cow Field. (*Programme*, Presentation to Sir D R Llewelyn, 14th September 1922)

The Ynys Field has always been the town's 'playground', within memory of the oldest among us it has been the home of association football (This account was written in 1930).

The Aberdare town FC was backed by the coal owner, W M Llewelyn, and in 1920 he purchased the Ynys sports field. The club prospered and entered the Third Division of The English Football League. WM transformed the Ynys into one of the finest athletic grounds in the country; he erected a fine grandstand and installed up to date and commodious dressing rooms and baths. The complex was destroyed by fire in 1924. (Mear: *The Story of Cwmdare*, and J L Rowlands, *History of Sport in Aberdare*, Official Souvenir Programme, Aberdare's Big Week, November 1930.)

In the 1940s, early 50s Greyhound racing events took place on the Ynys.

An abattoir was sited near the iron bridge. Later development consisted of a municipal swimming pool and the Sir Michael Sobell Sports centre – a gift from the industrialist.



Above left, aerial photograph of the Ynys stadium and right, Plan of the grounds from the Sir D R Llewellyn Presentation Programme

One of the most prominent and prestigious positions in the Cynon Valley in the second half of the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th Century was that of the High Constable of Miskin Higher or, also, known as the High Constable of Aberdare.

In this article, I will expand on the detail in the Society's web page regarding the position of High Constable. The office of High Constable or Constable of the Hundred is derived from the old French Cunestable, which, in turn, was derived from the Latin, 'Comes-stabuli', meaning the Count or Officer of the Stable. It was introduced into England during the Norman period.

The first Act of Parliament dealing with the appointment of High Constables was passed in 1285 during the reign of Edward I. This mandated the election of two officers, (constables or lieutenants), to make inspection of the armies. This was later amended to appointing parish constables to keep the 'Sovereign peace' in their parishes.

During Henry VIII's reign, in 1543, this Act was extended to Wales and it provided for two "substantial gentlemen or yeomen" to be appointed in the Hundred, in which they lived. These appointments were made by the local Justices of the Peace.

The occupants of the office were the head of the Parish or petty constables within the Hundred, i.e. the head of the local police force. In 1829, Sir Robert Peel founded the London Police Force and two years after Queen Victoria's accession, Parliament passed the 1839 Act appointing police constables throughout England and Wales.

In 1869, a further Act of Parliament was passed abolishing the Office of High Constable as the main duties of the office had diminished. However, Mr. R. H. Rhys, J.P. of Aberdare and Mr G.T. Clark of Merthyr Tydfil made representation to Parliament that as Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil were not corporate towns, the office should not be abolished. That representation was so effective that it was agreed that the office should continue only in Aberdare, Merthyr Tydfil and in the City of Westminster.

Prior to 1855, there is very little information regarding the holders of the post in Miskin Higher, except there is some evidence that the farmers of Ystradyfodwg appointed individuals to the office.

In 1855, Mr Thomas Evans, a jeweller from Pontypridd, held the post and insisted that he had been appointed by a Treherbert farmer, whose name always escaped him!

From 1856, appointments were made by J.P.s, their first appointee was Mr Evan Thomas, an ironmonger, and consequently, Aberdare County Court was established. There was no insignia for the office until 1894 when a Chain of Office was purchased for the sum of £37 7s 6d.

Many High Sheriffs were either local tradesmen or local coal owners and their term of office was for a year. Nevertheless, Mr D. Davies, Dr. Evan Thomas and Mr. David Williams were elected two years in succession while Mr. Evan Thomas, who was an ironmonger, was elected in 1856 and 1872.

In 1857, Mr. Watkin Jones Thomas, a Chemist, was appointed to the post. However, his term of office was blighted by a serious economic depression in the town due to reduction of wages. A strike ensued and the military was ordered into the town to suppress the strike.

The last official functions of the High Constable relating to juries and rates were abolished in 1922 and 1925, respectively. Interestingly, it was not until 1968 that the office of The High Constable of Miskin Higher, (Aberdare), was officially abolished.

Aberdare Cables Ltd. No.3 Operations during the Second World War.

Alan Abraham

At the start of the Second World War, the availability of many raw materials were in very short supply, especially iron and steel that was needed to manufacture military hardware. Many manufactured items were either embargoed or had manufacturing specifications changed to eliminate the use of iron and steel and/or other scarce commodities in their construction. A War Emergency British Standard was published so that "emergency electric power cable" could be manufactured without the use of steel wire armour.

To overcome the loss of armouring cable production, Aberdare Cables added the manufacturing of internal electrical wiring and control cable to its portfolio. These new products were needed by the War Ministry for installing in projects such as the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) on the new trading estates at Hirwain, Aberdare and at Bridgend, airfields, other military establishments together for use in the wiring of both naval boats and aircraft.

A rapid development by the General Post Office to improve the communication infrastructure of the state needed thousands of tons of hard drawn copper wire and much of this was manufactured at Aberdare. In 1941 factory floor space was increased by erecting a third factory bay for a new venture into military shell manufacture. This unit was staffed by both current and new employees including 200 female workers. This new factory bay manufactured military equipment, which was supported by Ministry of Supply expertise and operated from 1941 to 1945. The operation consisted of two production lines comprising special purpose lathes, hydraulic presses, furnaces and shot blasting equipment and maintained a weekly production schedule of 1500 units. This schedule included 25 pounder, 6 pounder and 40mm shell casings. In addition to these items, smoke bombs were manufactured together with the machining of naval mine castings in the original cable making buildings.

Later, during the war an addition building was constructed on adjacent land for a joint project with the Admiralty to manufacture torpedoes. This operation involved the training of personnel in precision steel fabrication and welding. The production was under the close attention of Mr. F. G. Penny (Managing Director of Aberdare Cables Ltd. and General Manager of International Combustion, Derby) ably supported by Sir George Usher (Chairman of Aberdare Cables Ltd. who was, at that time, appointed to the Ministry of Aircraft Production where he became Director General of material production), the Right Honourable George Hall (a Director of Aberdare Cables Ltd. and First Lord of the Admiralty) and Mr. T. Elder (the General Manager, Aberdare Cables Ltd.) was responsible for the day to day operation. Although these military items were necessary for the war effort, continuation of machining mine castings continued until 1960 on the adjacent Aberdare Engineering site.

In 1941, investment went beyond the Aberdare site and the company acquired a small liquidated company, Whitehead Switchgear and Inventions on the Treforest Industrial Estate and operated it under the name South Wales Switchgear. The newly acquired company accepted the Ministry of Supply's outstanding orders which included the supply of switchgear.

With a rapid increase in the number of employees on the Aberdare Cables site, the use of the Trecynon railway halt, on the G.W.R.'s Swansea to/from Pontypool Road railway service, sited adjacent to the factory, was used by many employees as was the Rhigos railway halt for employees working at the Hirwain Royal Ordnance Factory.

Quiz/Puzzle No. 3.

This puzzle requires answers to the questions and then, taking the first letter of each answer, use these seven letters (anagram) to find a spring activity on a farm. *All eight answers will be found in the next edition (4) of Hanes Bach.*

1. The forename of a Welsh bass baritone born in Cilfynydd famous for his presentations of Falstaff and Figaro. (7)
2. Originally, the location of the offices of the Glamorgan Canal Co. 1792. (10 and 5)
3. He wrote the poem "The Mountain over Aberdare" from a mountain quarry near his home. (4 and 5)
4. What was made at Castyll Coryn, Cwmaman in the 16th century? (4)
5. Due to a gale in 1861, a special event in Aberdare Park was moved to this venue in Aberdare. (6 and 4)
6. Early international cycling brothers, born in Aberaman. (6)
7. The Celtic languages are divided into two sub groups, namely the Goidelic and the Brythonic. The Brythonic consists of Welsh, Cornish, xxxxxx, and the extinct Gaulish; what is xxxxxx's called? (6)

Solution to Quiz/Puzzle Number 2.

Answers:– 1 Henry the Seventh. 2 Englyn. 3 Lacrosse. 4 Ann Griffiths. 5 Wye. Anagram:– WHALE.

Welsh Disestablishment: Comments and chronology.

Hywel J Davies

When the Church of Ireland celebrated its 150 anniversary in November 2019 it was done with aplomb and public participation. It has been the misfortune of the Church in Wales that when it sought to celebrate its centenary in 2020, its plans have been, like so many this year, laid low by the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the record, the Church in Wales had a programme ready to go. In April 2020 the Archbishop of Canterbury was to visit Wales, as he did Ireland in 2019, to highlight the celebrations.

On June 7th all six of the Welsh cathedrals were to host a liturgical celebration. At the National Eisteddfod, to

be held in Tregaron this year, there were plans for a panel discussion, including the First Minister, Mark Drakeford, and two of the bishops. More imaginatively, perhaps, was the idea of an Arts Festival Award, focusing on the plight of refugees, climate change and reconciliation. All these have been postponed because of the pandemic.

Other ventures were not so adversely affected – such as the production of a number of celebratory films, available on YouTube, including a digitised version of the original enthronement ceremony of the first Archbishop of Wales on June 1st 1920. Similarly, a Centenary Appeal has already been launched, aiming to raise £100,000 in aid of 2 charities, Housing Justice Cymru and the work of Christian Aid in South Sudan. Finally, a *'New History of the Church in Wales'* has been published, edited by Norman Doe of Cardiff University. To this list of church-organised events might be added the excellent BBC Radio Wales programme, *'All Things Considered'*, broadcast in January, which considered the disestablishment campaign and its effect on the Church today.

Unfortunately, however, the creation of an independent Welsh province of the worldwide Anglican Communion in 1920, is likely to go un-noticed by many. This is hugely ironical when one reflects on the rancour and animosity connected with the campaign. Disestablishment was at least as divisive as the Brexit debate in our own time – and lasted for much longer.

On the evening of 18 September 1914, Sir David Brynmor Jones, Liberal MP for Swansea District since 1895, was in a celebratory mood. Together with other Welsh members, gathered in the lobby of the House of Commons, he eagerly joined in the singing of *'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau'*. For him and many more, the enactment of the Welsh Disestablishment Bill earlier that evening had marked the end of a long and often fractious campaign. As the son of a Congregationalist minister and brother of John Viriamu Jones, the first principal of Cardiff University, David Brynmor conveniently embodies three of the most important strands in that campaign: political radicalism, the ascendancy of Welsh nonconformity and the contentious issue of public education.

From the middle of the 19th century, the matter of the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales was an enduring feature of Welsh life. Since 1870 as many as five disestablishment motions were tabled in the House of Commons (in 1870, 1886, 1889, 1891 and 1892) followed by four Disestablishment Bills (in April 1894, March 1895, April 1909 and April 1912). The final Bill, itself delayed by a Royal Commission 1906–1910, was assailed by amendments from friend and foe alike – and only just made it to the Statute Book in 1914. Its operation was then postponed until after the First World War. Finally, in June 1920 a new, independent Anglican province was created in Wales, with its own Archbishop.

Looking back on the campaign for disestablishment, two things in particular seem remarkable. Firstly, that so much time and energy should have been spent on an issue that, today, might be described as arcane. When last was any section of the British electorate divided and energised by a matter of religion? Secondly, that something that in another age might have been called “the settled will” of the Welsh people should have received such short shrift at Westminster. Although disestablishment had its champions beyond Offa`s Dyke, its numerical strength in Wales over a consistent period of time made it a supremely Welsh affair. Not until the 1965 Tryweryn debacle would Westminster display again the same nonchalant disregard for Welsh democratic representation. Remarkable, also – in the eyes of some – were the events of Tuesday, June 1st 1920, as Archbishop A. G. Edwards (1848–1937) and the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George (1863–1945) conducted themselves for all the world as if they had served as brothers-in-arms during the struggle of the past half-century. Indeed, earlier that day Lloyd George had received communion at the Archbishop`s hands – an “astonishing action” in the view of the *'Church Times'*. The truth is that on almost every aspect of the Welsh disestablishment debate these two men were on opposite sides – Lloyd George, the Particular Baptist from Cricieth, champion of nonconformist rights and, after 1890, MP for Caernarfon Boroughs; and Edwards, Bishop of St Asaph since 1889 and the moving force behind the Church Defence League. Interestingly, it is said that Edwards was once described by a rather irate nonconformist as “the worst liar in Wales”. Nonetheless, he assured his audience, “we have a man in David Lloyd George who is more than a match for him”!

This is an extract from a longer article by the author marking the centenary of the Church in Wales.