



GELLIGAER TIMES ~ NUMBER 67 ~ JANUARY 2023

THE NEWSLETTER OF GELLIGAER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Editor's Note:

In the previous newsletter (66) I mentioned that in the parlance of Bingo Halls this newsletter, 67, would be called *stairway to heaven*. Later in this edition I have written about four pubs and a chapel on the hill from Bargoed to Aberbargoed. Writing that article, I reminded myself of the many times I used the steps that went up from Bargoed colliery to emerge opposite the railway station. I trod those steps daily for about two years on my way to my first place of employment in Bargoed (1966), but cannot remember how many steps there were; they were my stairway to heaven, but I did not realise so at the time.

David Mills

In this newsletter you will find

Annual Conference

The Metropole Lodging House in Bargoed

Thomas Lewis, the last Lewis of the Van, Glamorgan

Four pubs and a chapel

Book Reviews which include notes by Annie Owen as an addition to her comprehensive review of Merthyr Historian Volume 32.

Old Maps-a link

Forthcoming Events

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Final arrangements for our annual conference are now in hand. It will take place at Llancaiach Fawr on **Saturday 4th March 2023** with registration from **9.15** with the first talk at 10.05: The speakers are:

David Maddox ~Workers Hero? William Abraham “Mabon”

Roger Morgan ~ Medical Knights Hospitaller

LUNCH 12.10 to 13.30

Dr. Gethin Mathews ~ Seeing the First World War in Wales

TEA/COFFEE 14.30 to 15.00

Will Davies ~The Castles of the Glamorgan and Gwent Uplands

Cost will be £15.00 per person to include a light buffet lunch and afternoon tea/coffee. It has been decided to maintain this pre-covid charge. Please support this event as the success, or otherwise, will decide what happens in the future. For £15 you not only get four quality speakers but also the chance to chat and intermingle with other local history enthusiasts.

The Metropole Lodging House, Bargoed

The Society recently received an email from Emily Janes, a community reporter at the *Caerphilly Observer*, asking if members of the Society could assist in finding further details to supplement an article that she had written. You can read her article by following this link

<https://caerphilly.observer/news/1013633/bargoed-bed-token-mystery-calls-for-local-detectives-to-get-on-the-case/>

Fortunately, and almost predictably, Annie Owens was soon on the case and sent me some details about the Metropole that she had uncovered some years back. The *Bargoed Journal* of 9th February 1911 provided a number of interesting details, including: it was built in Baldwin Street by W.B. Lloyd & Co., and could accommodate about 100 lodgers. It was said there was room enough at the kitchen table for 125 to sit down together. There were two hot and cold-water baths, plus 12 wash up basins. Outside were 6 conveniences. The proprietors were: W.B. Lloyd, Harry Bosanko and Mr. A. Hayter. The building costs were estimated at £2000.

Perhaps not unexpectedly the Metropole got its name into at least two newspaper accounts about two court cases. The Monmouth Guardian and Bargoed and Caerphilly Observer of 27th March 1914 reported a case at Bargoed Police Court when William Davies, of no address was charged with doing grievous bodily harm to John Davies at the Metropole.

On 13th June 1919 the same newspaper carried an account of an attempted murder at the Metropole. It stated that at the lodging house in question there were forty beds in one spacious room. John Steele, a plasterer age 49, got out of bed about 5.30 in the morning and attacked Michael Dunn aged 70. A lodger, James Hale, rushed to Dunn's assistance and Steele turned upon him, Hale received a nasty gash about 5 inches long across his throat.

Further research may reveal more interesting details so if any readers wish to pursue this topic, then their work can appear either in this newsletter or our next journal. It would also be interesting to find out if anyone has personal memories or stories that they can share rather than just rely on newspaper accounts. In fact, the topic of lodging houses in other towns and the way in which they were monitored by the local authority could prove to be another area for research.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS GRATEFULLY RECEIVED! *David Mills*

Thomas Lewis, the last Lewis of the Van, Glamorgan

Introduction

When I left Lewis school, Pengam in 1955, I thought that was the end of my association with the greater Lewis Family. However, this was not to be. Whilst working in Hampshire, we first lived in the rural area between the villages of Soberton, in the Meon Valley, and Hambleton, the birthplace of cricket. On entering Saint Peter's church in Soberton, one cannot help but notice on a wall, a large memorial to Thomas Lewis. At the top of this is a white lion rampant. This aroused my interest because for seven years I had worn such a lion badge on my school blazer.



The inscription at the base of the memorial appears below.

HERE LIES INTERRED THE BODY OF THOMAS LEWIS, ESQR., SON
OF RICHARD LEWIS, ESQ., GRANDSON OF SR EDWARD LEWIS, OF AN
ANCIENT FAMILY OF THE VAN IN GLAMORGANSHIRE.

<p>By his first Wife Anna Maria Daughter and Sole Heiress of Sr. Walter Curl, Lord of this Mannor, he had no issue By his Second, Elizabeth, only Daughter of the Revd Mr. Edward Turnour, Rector of</p>	<p>Stapleford Tawney, in Essex, married MDCCIX he had issue, only one Daughter, Elizabeth married MDCCXXX to Other, Earl of Plimouth, who dying MDCCXXXII and She MDCCXXXIII left only one Son Other Lewis, the present Earl of Plimouth.</p>
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He was a Zealous Asserter of the Religion & Liberties of his
Country
Beneficent to all Men, Generous to his Friends, an affectionate
Husband

An indulgent Father, an easy Master.
His mournful Widow, to perpetuate the Memory of so many
Virtues

erected this Monument MDCCXLVII
He dyed November 22d MDCCXXXVI In the fifty eighth Year
of his age †.

You will note that some of the spellings vary from those of today.



This close up photograph of the stone shows the Lewis lion rampant as appears on the school's badge.

Thomas Lewis 1676 – 1736

Thomas was the son of Richard Lewis and grandson of Sir Edward Lewis, Jnr. and great grandson of Sir Edward Lewis, Snr. Thomas, had been Lord of the Manor of Soberton and was also second cousin to Edward Lewis, founder of Lewis School, Gelligaer and later Pengam.



Thomas' father, Richards Lewis was the Member of Parliament for Edington and Corsham in Wiltshire. Thomas attended the Salisbury School and in 1706, succeeded his father and inherited the estates in Corsham and in Glamorgan.

Marriages

Thomas' first wife was Anna Maria Curil, daughter of Sir Walter Curil, the first Baronet of Soberton in Hampshire. On her death in 1709 he inherited the Soberton Estate which he continued to enlarge as time went on. Eventually, as Lord of the Manor he owned most of the land in the parish.

His second marriage was to Elizabeth Turnour of St. Martin's in the Field, with whom he had a daughter, Elizabeth, who in turn married the Earl of Plymouth.

Political life

Thomas Lewis had a very active political life and represented numerous constituencies over the years. There were frequent General Elections as his following career shows.

1708 MP for Whitchurch, Hampshire

1710 MP for Winchester

1713 MP for Hampshire

1715 MP for Southampton

1722 Re-elected MP for Southampton

1726 He switched his political allegiance from Tory to Whig and supported Walpole.

1727 MP for Salisbury

1734 MP for Portsmouth

The Estate of Thomas Lewis

Thomas Lewis died in 1736 and his estate went to his daughter Elizabeth.

He was the last owner of St. Fagan's and the the large Glamorgan estate, that had been accumulated by his Welsh ancestors during the previous three centuries, with the surname Lewis. Elizabeth, as already mentioned was married to the Third Earl of Plymouth, named Other Windsor. In addition to the Soberton Estate she also inherited St. Fagan's Castle and the many estates in Glamorgan. £10,000 was gifted to Sir Robert Walpole, amongst others but there was no mention of gifts to the Lewis' of Gilfach Fargoed.

The estate was so encumbered with debts that the interest being paid on loans exceeded the value of the rentals. It required three Acts of Parliament before the estate could be released to Elizabeth. Eventually, the estate was sold to the Trustees of the Marriage Settlement of Elizabeth Lewis (Plymouth) for the sum of £47,000. In 1974 this would have been worth £1,000,000 and today's valuation would be about £13,000,000. With the legalities complete, Elizabeth made St Fagan's Castle the seat of the Windsor family.

Sources

The History of Lewis School, Pengam. Arthur Wright

The Victoria County History of Hampshire Vol 3

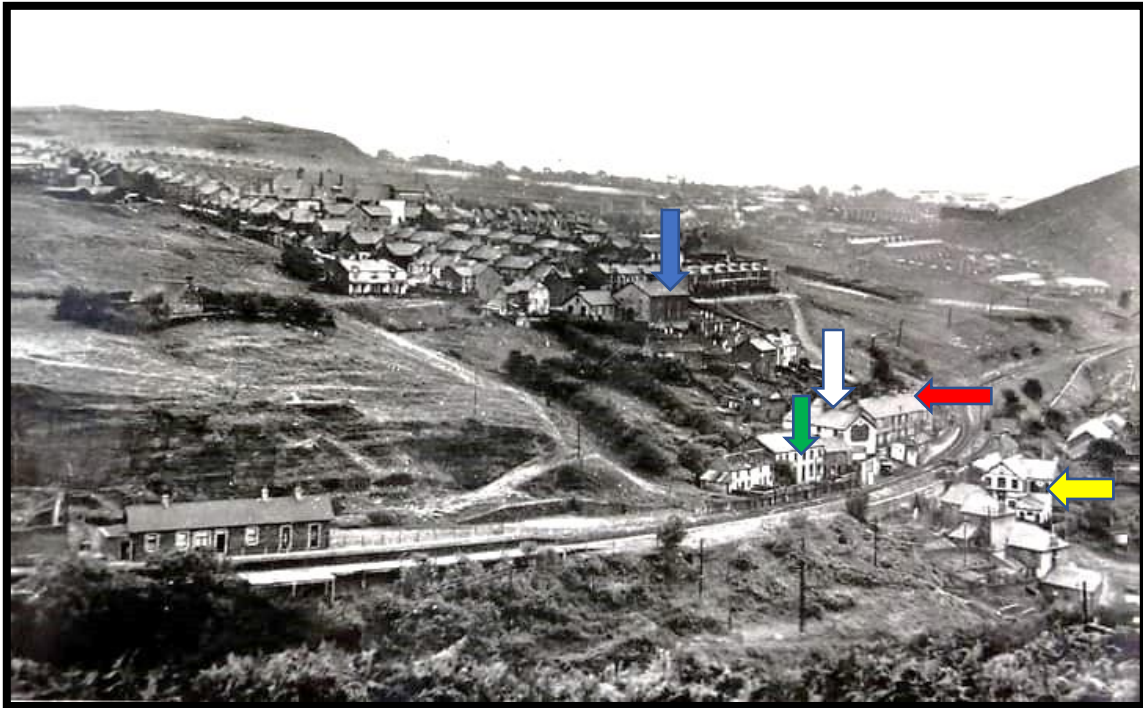
The History of Parliament 1679- 1726 on line

Plymouth Estate Records 1301 – 1844 National Library of Wales

The Complexity of Medieval Soberton Carolyn Hughes

Carwyn Hughes

Four Pubs and a Chapel



Legend: Blue arrow=Caersalem Chapel, White =Traveller's Rest, Red = Smith's Arms, Green=Quarryman's Arms, Yellow=Greyhound

This photograph shows the cluster of public houses (is there a collective noun? if not suggestions welcomed) on the hill from Bargoed to Aberbargoed. Just to balance things Caersalem Chapel, first built in 1839, is also identified. The pubs surrounded the Aberbargoed railway station which I remember being a few yards to the front of the Smith's Arms. However, on the bottom left of the photo can be seen a railway building and a platform. I am told that this was the "new" Aberbargoed station. Nevertheless, it fell into disuse, for whatever reason, because I always used the station at the Smith's Arms in the late 1950s and 60s.

Not far away, just a few minutes' walk downhill from the four pubs was the Old Mill pub. The area was a veritable haven for drinkers. I am not really sure of the exact detail, but was always told that the licensing hours for the four pubs on the hill (Monmouthshire) differed from the Old Mill licensing hours (Glamorganshire). Basically, this meant that the Monmouthshire pubs opened later than the Old Mill, but as a result they closed later. It may well have been the other way around. This enabled hardened drinkers to gain extra drinking time with the pubs mentioned being within a few minutes' walk of the county boundary.

Although this short article is about the "other" side of the river it is worth noting that the area was inexorably linked to the old settlement of Pontaberbargoed, this comment is reinforced by an article in *Gelligaer 28* which contains *Memories of a childhood in Bargoed* by the Rev. Gwilym Thomas 1870-1964. He starts by saying *Bargoed was a little village with a population of about 500. It was situated on both sides of the river separating Glamorganshire from Monmouthshire, the east side of the river was in the parish of Bedwellty.* There is also a short

but interesting description of Pontaberbargoed to be found in *Parish of Gelligaer-The Farms and Their Families 1540-1840, Volume 2, Brithdir Hamlet* by Greg Buick. Please use <https://gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk/publications/>

This dual address of two names and counties existed for some time as demonstrated by the following: -

1751/2 at Aberbargoed Bridge in Gelligaer a Griffith Jones "Welsh" Charity school at which 41 children attended. In 1747/48 and 1748/49 the school was said to be at Aberbargoed Bridge in Bedwellty (extract from Buick's book, pages 150/51).

In January 1861 a notice appeared in the press about the bankruptcy of David Jones of Pontaberbargoed, otherwise Bargoed, in the parish of Gelligaer in the county of Glamorgan

In 1863 a letter was addressed to Martha Davies, to the care of Lewis Lewis shopkeeper, Pontaberbargoed, Blackwood, Monmouthshire

In April 1868 an advertisement appeared relating to a sale of shop premises, stables and slaughterhouse situated at Pontaberbargoed in the parish of Bedwellty in the county of Monmouthshire

David Mills

Book Reviews:

The Commonplace Book of John Gwin of Llangwm (c.1615 – c.1680). edited with an introduction by Madeline Gray, Tony Hopkins and Alun Withey. South Wales Record Society publication no. 35 2022, xii + 212 pp., Hardback, Illustrated, £18, available [South Wales Record Society](https://www.southwalesrecordsociety.co.uk/)

Edited and presented to the same high standard seen in previous SWRS publications, this book sheds light on aspects of seventeenth century rural Monmouthshire. After a brief editorial note, there are 55 pages, plus ten pages of endnotes, of discussion, and that is followed by a transcription of the full text with endnotes, a useful glossary, biographical notes on some of the people mentioned, as well as a comprehensive bibliography, before the book concludes with an index.

The discussion includes a description of the manuscript, its provenance, the nature and purpose of a Commonplace Book, information about the Gwin family, their acquaintances as well as their properties and their beliefs. John Gwin was in the service of the Marquess of Worcester and was related by marriage to Walter Craddock, a leading Independent at Llanfaches.

There is little specific to Gelligaer parish or the county of Glamorgan, perhaps the nearest link is Thomas Quarrell, one-time leader of the Independent cause in Bedwas. However, those interested in Gelligaer parish in the seventeenth century may find it adds to their knowledge and understanding of the culture of south-east Wales in a century of religious and political upheaval as well as shedding light on fruit cultivation, especially grafting techniques and planting methods and giving insights into contemporary medicinal practice.

Annie Owen

NOTE: See details in the events section which appears later in this newsletter. 23 February 2023 at 3 pm, Maddy Gray and Tony Hopkins will give a Microsoft Teams talk on this book, booking via enquiries@gwentarchives.com.uk

MERTHYR HISTORIAN VOLUME 32 THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY VOLUME 32. TROEDYRHIW SOUTHWARD & TAFF BARGOED glimpses of histories and communities. Merthyr Tydfil & District Historical Society, 2022. 463 pp. Hbk. Illustrated. £15 available merthyr.history@gmail.com

Designed to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the recently re-named Merthyr Tydfil & District Historical Society, the thirty-second *Merthyr Historian* comprises articles about the southern part of the county borough researched and written by society members and invited guest contributors. Its aim has been achieved in fine style across the 463 pages enclosed within sparkling white covers printed with black and gold. It is a volume that will be read with interest by and grace the coffee tables and bookshelves of all those interested in the history and heritage of this part of south Wales.

The journal opens with a list of the society's officers headed by President Dr. T. Fred Holley and including long-standing members such as Clive Thomas and Ann Lewis, as well as more recent additions. The table of contents shows that the main body of the journal comprises nine chapters, some of which are the work of several contributors, before a useful list of the content of journals 1-31 published 1974-2021, and the biographies of the contributors to this journal. In his Foreword, Lord Ted Rowlands, whose time as Merthyr's MP started in the year this society was formed, comments on the area's industrial and transport history as well as its dramatic human story across several centuries. He concludes by noting how, for fifty years, this society *sought to lift those shadows and shine a light upon Merthyr Tydfil and District's distinguished and fascinating past.*

In their welcome to readers the co-editors, Professor Emerita Christine Trevett and Huw Williams, refer to Covid 19 as well as more positive factors that have influenced Merthyr Tydfil Historical Society over its fifty years, and look forward to the future of the newly-named Merthyr Tydfil & District Historical Society.

The following comments on the chapters in this book focus on matters, and there are many, that might be of interest to *Gelligaer Times* readers. Inevitably, most are connected with the areas where GHS's area of interest lies closest to Merthyr Tydfil County Borough, and especially the communities of Bedlinog and Trelewis that are now in the enviable position of being studied by two active local history societies.

Chapter I, headed *THE ROAD THAT RUNS THROUGH IT*, is the work of one contributor, Clive Thomas, whose *The construction of the new A470 from Abercynon to Abercanaid. A photographic account with commentary* includes a number of photographs taken by the author in the early 1980s. This is a chapter of interest to the myriads of people, whether local or not, who travel this road regularly or infrequently.

Chapter II, *PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE*, comprises four sections.

In the first, *The Idiot of Cefn Fforest farm: learning disability, lunacy and the law in 17th century Merthyr parish*, Professor Emerita Christine Trevett sheds light on later seventeenth century thinking about people with learning difficulties or neurological disorders. Based on a wide range of previously published material as well as documents prepared for a case in the Court of Chancery and now in The National Archives, this immaculately footnoted article deals with the Erbury family. The young daughter of Mordecai Erbury of Tir Cefn y Fforest married into the Morgan family of Llanrhymney. After Mordecai Erbury died in 1679 his surviving sister and the children of his deceased sister sought to prove that the Morgan family had tried to take advantage of Mordecai Erbury's vulnerability in order to extend Morgan freehold estates in the area. John Jacob of Gelligaer was one of many local people whose opinions about Mordecai Erbury were sought. (N.B. *Gelligaer Times* 26 carries Sue Allen's report on Cardiff

University's Dr. Lloyd Bowen's talk about the Erbury family delivered to October 2012 GHS conference.)

That is followed by a transcript of *Visit to the Merthyr Sewage Farm* which appeared in *South Wales Daily News*, 19th July 1872, p.3, that gives some details of the Farm and of a visit by some dignitaries who had travelled by train from Royal Agricultural Society's show in Cardiff to see the new sewage farm.

Then comes *A North South divide and the Troedyrhiw Sewerage Farm: a case study in local history* in which Huw Williams considers the divide between the iron communities in Merthyr Tydfil and Dowlais and the emerging suburbs to the south that were dependent upon coal. The second half of the nineteenth century saw some pioneering developments such as the Taf Fechan reservoir started upstream of Merthyr in the 1860s, and the sewage works downstream at Troedyrhiw. Of particular interest to *Gelligaer Times* readers is the fact that GHS stalwart W. Haydn Davies is mentioned on page 94, and there are also references to Trelewis and Gelligaer.

The chapter concludes with Bleddyn Hancock's *Fighting for breath, fighting for justice: How a small Welsh Trade Union took on the British Government on behalf of tens of thousands of coal miners suffering and dying from chest diseases*. It is a personal story that runs from 1972 into the twenty-first century. The author refers to his role as Plaid Cymru councillor in 1974, as Colliery Deputy (and a member of NACODS) at Merthyr Vale in 1979, and as NACODS General Secretary in 1987. Bleddyn Hancock concludes this David v. Goliath story *We fought. We fought alone.*

We won. Nobody begged.

Chapter III, *WAR, COMMEMORATION AND PEACEMAKING* has three articles.

The first, *Treharris remembers – Treharris yn cofio* opens with a tribute to the late Eirlys Emery before dealing with the projects she spearheaded, namely research into the names on the WWI memorial in her chapel, Tabernacl Welsh Independent, and the dedication of a WWII Book of Remembrance in St. Matthias Church.

The second article, the work of Dr. Gethin Matthews of Swansea University, is entitled *'Honour to whom honour is due': reports of First World War unveilings in the Merthyr Express, with special reference to those in the south of the Borough*. Using more than one hundred press reports, Dr. Matthews set out to identify patterns across time and geographical area and show how communities felt the shock of war and tried to comprehend the aftermath. There are a number of references to people and places in Gelligaer parish, for example a Welcome Home meeting in Carmel Fochriw in December 1917, chapel memorials in Fochriw, Brithdir, Hengoed and Trelewis, rolls of honour in Ystrad Mynach church and Trelewis school, and the unveiling of a memorial to former master Eddie Davies in Hengoed School in December 1919. The unveiling of community memorials, Trelewis (when, in 1925, local schoolmaster John Davies spoke about preventing future wars), Bedlinog unveiled November 1925, Troedrhifwuch September 1933 and Ystrad Mynach and Hengoed July 1932, are mentioned, as well as Col. H.E.M. Lindsay's unveiling of the Pengam memorial (on the Monmouthshire side of the river) in May 1930. The language used at local unveiling and dedication ceremonies is unclear but Welsh hymns were sung at the memorial unveiling in Pontlottyn in June 1922.

Craig Owen contributes this chapter's final part, *Born of Bedlinog – the man who united nations. The Rev. Gwilym Davies, world peacemaker*. In the centenary year of the *Welsh League of Nations Union*, Craig Owen draws attention to the work of Gwilym Davies (1879-1955). Son of a minister of Bedlinog's Salem Baptist chapel, he lived in the village and was a pupil-teacher in the local school before the family left the area. The fact that there are so many websites referenced in the footnotes is a reminder of the wealth of valuable online sources available nowadays. Readers of *Gelligaer Times* may recall issues 55 and 56 (May and June

2021) in which GHS member and native of Bedlinog, Carwyn Hughes, wrote about Rev. Gwilym Davies.

Chapter IV is entitled *PRESERVING AND PROCLAIMING OUR COMMUNITIES' HISTORIES: TWO LOCAL PROJECTS*.

The Gateway to Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Plinths project is about Afon Taf High School's award-winning community project which has helped publicise the area's proud industrial heritage. W. Mansell Richards outlines how he grew to understand the ten coal mining communities in the lower part of the county borough before explaining how this history project was born and developed. Both Bedlinog and Trelewis, within GHS's area of study, were part of this project.

David Collins opens *The Saron graveyard project, Troedyrhiw* with a brief history of the Independent cause in Troedyrhiw from the 1820s onwards. Closed in 1983, Saron chapel building deteriorated and it was demolished in 1990. Against a background of fly-tipping and mindless vandalism including damage to gravestones, a community group, Friends of Saron, was formed in 2009. The group embarked on a challenging and long term project and, by 2022, Saron Memorial and Wildlife Garden has come into being. It has not yet achieved sustainability but promises much for the future. The group's historical research is reflected in the stories behind some of the monumental inscriptions on the gravestones.

Chapter V, *LOCAL POLITICS AND WORKERS' EDUCATION*, consists of two parts.

In *Aspects of Socialism south of Merthyr and in Taff Bargoed in the 1890s: a window on Labour's pre-history*, Dr. Martin Wright describes Treharris as the birthplace of Independent Labour politics in the valley communities of south Wales. The spread of socialism and organization of Independent Labour politics was well under way in south Wales by the 1890s, and by the middle of the decade the ILP began to put down roots with Treharris at the forefront as ideas spread via the printed word, especially newspapers, and oral debates. The region's first formal socialist organization was established there in 1895 and the ideas were an irreversible part of local society, economy and culture by the end of the 1898 strike. Bedlinog was included in the tours of talks from Treharris and it is likely that people from elsewhere in Gelligaer parish were among those inspired by such activity, and may have attended meetings when prominent national figures spoke in Treharris. Two names mentioned in recent GHS publications appear in this article: photographer Daniel Osborne (see *PARISH OF GELLIGAER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY* p. 142) and Joseph Sparkes (see *Gelligaer* 28 p. 138).

Dr. Daryl Leeworthy's *Workers' Education in the lower County Borough: a brief history of an enduring idea* considers workers' education and adult learning and the associated politics, libraries and classes that enabled working men to participate in political and trade union activity and facilitated the functioning of social democracy. The foundations were laid by the nineteenth century Chartists and through the libraries and lectures in Mechanics' Institutes with branches such as that at South Pit No. 1 (Fochriw). In the twentieth century, the W.E.A. built on this and, after Merthyr Settlement opened in 1930, it made its local headquarters there. Following the 1944 Butler Education Act, it worked with the LEA to deliver a range of classes tutored, from the 1960s onwards, by such future well-known national politicians as Allan Rogers, Rhodri Morgan, Neil Kinnock and Wayne David.

Chapter VI, headed *BALLADMONGERS AND MUSIC MAKERS*, comprises three articles.

Stephen Brewer's title *Idloes Owen, founder of Welsh National Opera* stands above a biographical account of a Merthyr Vale musician whose given name reflects his family's origins near Llanidloes, and whose foresight, dedication and hard work was behind the formation of Welsh National Opera, a national institution that won worldwide praise.

Getting your timing right at Glantaff Stores – growing up in Troedyrhiw and what happened next is the personal story of the author, musician Professor Dr. Alun Francis. Born in the

Midlands, Alun Francis grew up in Troedyrhiw where he heard, among other things, the gossip in the corner shops, while television provided his link with the outside world. Aged 17, he began studies in Royal Manchester College of Music. During his adult life, he lived and worked in many places across the world. As a horn player, he played with the Halle Orchestra and with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra before becoming a conductor and composer.

The chapter is rounded off with a contribution from another man who grew up in Troedyrhiw, a member of the fifth generation of a family that had arrived there in the 1850s, namely Professor E. Wyn James. This article is about extant small ballad leaflets printed by local jobbing printers, Jones family of Troedyrhiw, in the 1870s and 80s and published to meet consumer demand. These ballad leaflets have been found in National Library of Wales and in other repositories. The term ballad can refer to an individual song or to the collection in the leaflet. As the majority of early incomers to Troedyrhiw came from other parts of Wales, Welsh language and culture dominated life in the community to at least the 1870s and these leaflets, appearing at a time of language shift, provide one piece in the jigsaw of Welsh language and culture in the local area.

Chapter VII, *SPORT AND OUR COMMUNITIES*, has two sections.

In *1950s football rivalry between Merthyr Town and the Troedyrhiw-Treharris clubs*, Alun Morgan looks at the post-World War II era when although life centred on the local area there was a growing awareness of the wider world. In the summer of 1945, competitive sport, which in the Merthyr area was primarily football, recommenced with the three clubs competing in Welsh League South First Division. The author provides some insight into the back history of these clubs and, using press reports, takes the reader through their progress from 1945 to 1952. Troedyrhiw's home defeat by Bargoed was a low point, while one of the highs was Treharris's Welsh Amateur Cup success that qualified them for the Festival of Britain match against Pegasus, holders of the English Amateur Cup. Gwyn Manning, one of the better-known players mentioned, played for all three clubs at various times as well as for the Welsh amateur international team in their famous 3-2 victory over England at Shrewsbury in 1948 after which he captained Matt Busby's Great Britain Olympic squad. By 1952 life was changing and, like similar clubs across the country, the three clubs faced problems especially as they lost the large loyal following previously enjoyed.

Ivor J. Jones's *A community and its sport, a short history of Bedlinog Rugby Football Club* opens with a brief account of Bedlinog's history and geography before naming some well-known sportspeople with Bedlinog connections, including one who later lived in Trelewis, and then dealing with the post-1971 Bedlinog Rugby Football Club (BRFC). There is evidence of local rugby in the 1890s but events 1969-71 led to the present BRFC being founded in 1971. Although its 2021 golden jubilee celebrations were blighted by Covid 19, the club is proud of its progress over five decades. Initially BRFC was based at Station Hotel before moving to the Legion Club, and then purchasing a single-storey, one-roomed detached building on The Square which has been not only BRFC headquarters ever since but also a well-recognised part of village life. BRFC is a community club that has, over the years, made links that have kept it in the public eye. The words of some of those involved in the club show that many local people, male and female and across the age spectrum, are committed and actively involved in club life, whether playing at the various levels or undertaking the range of other tasks necessary to keep a village club operational. Many of them live in the village and the current patron is a lifelong resident of Pentwyn, just across the Common. When the local collieries were open, their teams were based in BRFC. The club has played against local clubs such as Penallta RFC in GHS area of study. Plaques on the clubhouse walls reflect BRFC tours to other areas including overseas, as well as their fine tradition of entertaining visitors. The article concludes with *Further sources on Bedlinog* that includes the books of GHS's Walter Haydn Davies and

the chapter by Carwyn Hughes in *PARISH OF GELLIGAER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*.

Chapter VIII, *AND THIS ANNIVERSARY VOLUME WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE WITHOUT*, is the work of J.D. and T.F. Holley, *Troedyrhiw Horticultural Society (1876-)*. The 1870s was an age of social deference, of brass bands and horse-traffic, when the bicycle was still new, and when many working men had time on their hands for horticulture. Merthyr Horticultural Society had failed and Mary Agnes Williams (née Leigh) of Troedyrhiw (wife of then deputy coroner, later coroner) set out to revive local interest in horticulture. Formed by a few determined and hard-working people in 1876, the society held its first show in the same year. Based on their careful research using detailed newspaper reports of the time, the co-authors are able to narrate the progress of Troedyrhiw Horticultural Society from 1876 onwards, carefully footnoting references that show how it developed over the decades. Initially, the flower and vegetable competitions for local people aimed to encourage local miners to enjoy the outdoors and grow food for their families. After a promising start, there was only one show 1880-87 but it was revived and extended, for example, in 1904 it included tradesmen's turnouts of horses and carts and a parade of cyclists, and in 1907 the range of competitions extended to include horses and poultry. Towards the end of this article, it is noted that Dr. Jackson proposed a toast to the visitors at the society's 1910 dinner. This is the Dr. Jackson who left Troedyrhiw for private practice in Ystrad Mynach, as described in *Gelligaer Times* 44 May 2020.

Chapter IX, *OUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY: SOME HISTORY* is made up of two parts.

In Before heritage began to matter. Only the beginnings, Clive Thomas recounts and explains in some detail how and why Merthyr Tydfil Historical Society came into being when it did. Mentioning many well-known names and places of the Merthyr of fifty years ago, he takes the story up to 1976 and publication of the first *Merthyr Historian*, to which he was a contributor. The strength of the post-1976 Merthyr Tydfil Historical Society is reflected in the journals that followed, the contents of which are listed over 25 pages near the end of volume 32. From its golden jubilee in 2022, the society, now renamed Merthyr Tydfil & District Historical Society, moves to a new challenge as it enters its sixth decade.

The chapter concludes with *The Society's Archivist: an interview*, a transcript of the editor's illuminating interview with Ann Lewis, a long-standing and hardworking member of the society.

Annie Owen

Additional notes that may be of interest to *Gelligaer Times* readers:

GHS is ten years senior to the Merthyr Tydfil society, but the two have much in common. As noted in the review above, there are many connections between the events and the people across the long border between their respective areas of study. In spite of local government boundary changes in the 1970s and 1990s, GHS still studies the history and heritage of the former Gelligaer Urban District Council which was almost co-terminus with the old parish of Gelligaer.

GHS's links with history and heritage in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough is not confined to the content of the research but extends to include some of the historians who contributed to this journal (listed below in the order they appear in *Merthyr Historian* volume 32).

- Dr. T. Fred Holley is not only Merthyr Tydfil's President and life member as well as past editor of and regular contributor to *Merthyr Historian* but also one-time President of GHS who has contributed numerous articles to *Gelligaer*, served on GHS editorial board for some years before becoming editor. Now he is a respected mentor and valued life member of GHS.

- Dr. Gethin Matthews of Swansea University has contributed to GHS journals and conferences during the last decade and a half. *Gelligaer Times* 19 carries a short report on the October 2010 conference when he spoke about his work for the project *Welsh Voices of the Great War*, while Ann Pinch's more detailed report on his talk entitled *WWI Chapel Memorials in Glamorgan* appears within the March 2016 conference report in *Gelligaer Times* 36. That talk was followed by an in-depth study of *Hengoed/Bryn Seion Roll of Honour* in *Gelligaer* 23 (2016). One of the speakers for the 2020 conference (postponed due to Covid 19 restrictions), Dr. Matthews is booked to speak about his more recent research when it takes place in March 2023.
- Dr. Daryl Leeworthy was the last speaker to address GHS before the Covid 19 restrictions when, in February 2020, he spoke on *The life and times of Elaine Morgan*. He returned in November 2022 to speak about the subject of his recent publication *Fury of Past Time: a life of Gwyn Thomas*.
- Stephen Brewer has made one visit to GHS, in January 2020 when he spoke on *Lost buildings of Merthyr*.
- Some GHS members may recall that, as reported in *Gelligaer Times* 28, E. Wyn James spoke on *Morgan John Rhys and his American Diary* at GHS's Heritage Day in Hengoed Baptist Chapel in May 2013.
- Alun Morgan's address to GHS conference in March 2018 on *Welsh Rugby and the 1905 Religious Revival* was reported by Ceri Creffield in *Gelligaer Times* issue 39.
- John Holley, assistant editor of *Gelligaer* 2004-09, co-authored, with Dr. T.F. Holley, *Treharris Brass Band* in issue 28 (2022), and he has advised GHS on computer technology on numerous occasions.

Growing up in near parallel, the two societies have a mutual respect for each other, and their research and publications have enhanced not only their own and each other's work, but also contributed much to better understanding of the history and heritage of this part of south-east Wales. **Long may that continue**

Annie Owen

Old Maps

If you enjoy looking at old maps, which in many cases do not necessarily contain too much detail, you should find the link below of interest. Cartophilia is a non-profit site devoted to the presentation of high and medium resolution images of English and Welsh maps from their beginnings to the early 20th Century. At present it contains over 4,500 images free to download and intended for academic, educational, genealogical, aesthetic and local history purposes. When the link opens there is a note saying you are going outside facebook, for those of you who may have some doubts about what this means do not worry and press "**follow link**"

<https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~ge.../genealogy/cartophilia/>

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

At Blackwood Library

Digwyddiadau Events

**'Pan ddaeth
Siartiaeth i
Goed Duon'**

**Mae Llyfrsall Goed
Duon yn cynnal
trafodaeth gyhoeddus
gan David Mills am
ddau, ar 'Pan ddaeth
Siartiaeth i Goed
Duon' ar ddydd
Mercher, 22 Chwefror,
2023 am 2.30pm.**

**'When
Chartism came
to Blackwood'**

**Blackwood Library
is hosting a free
public talk by David
Mills on 'When
Chartism came to
Blackwood' on
Wednesday, 22
February 2023 at
2.30pm.**

Mwy o wybodaeth
Find out more



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To book your place or discuss any additional requirements please email us at enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk

N.B. All talks will take place online via Microsoft Teams, and cost £5 per person per talk

Thursday 26th January 2023 2pm-3pm

Arrivederci Bardi, Croeso i Coedduon! - Steam Pies, coffee, & ice cream—Lyn Pask (This lecture will be delivered in English)

The story of how nine Italian families, nearly all from Bardi in the Ceno valley, came to live in Blackwood between 1900 and 1939. We will discover why and how they chose the hills of Wales, how they adapted to life in a Welsh valley-town, the influence that their native culture had on the town and vice-versa, plus the culinary delights they introduced to the local population.

Thursday 23rd Feb. 2023 3pm - 4pm

Medicine, farming and society in seventeenth-century Monmouthshire: the commonplace book of John Gwin of Llangwm—Maddy Gray and Tony Hopkins (This lecture will be delivered in English)

John Gwin was insatiably curious, a keen fruit farmer, interested in scientific and medical developments, a devoted family man and an energetic churchwarden. All this is reflected in his commonplace book, in which he jotted down things he wanted to remember. It offers us an unparalleled in-sight into the cultural and intellectual world of south-east Wales in a period of civil war and continuing religious and political upheaval. His notebook has been published by the South Wales Record Society, edited by Maddy Gray, Tony Hopkins and Alun Withey, and in this talk the editors tell us all about it!