



# GELLIGAER TIMES

Newsletter of Gelligaer Historical Society  
JANUARY 2022 number 60

## DIAMOND JUBILEE YEAR 2021-22

### MESSAGE FROM EDITOR

This newsletter includes:

- GHS news (December meeting report and news of January meeting)
- News and review of *PARISH OF GELLIGAER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*
- “Fly on the wall”
- Welsh Government notice about our President’s book, *History Grounded/Hanes yn y tir*
- Caerphilly C.B.C’s Rural Development Programmes officer about another publication on its way.
- Closure of Ysgwyddgwyn Chapel,
- Bargoed’s Choral traditions,
- Chartist matters -- review of *The Chartist Rambler* and report on 2021 Chartist Convention,
- News from other history/heritage groups,
- 1921 census
- Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, including first indication of how CCBC plans to mark the event.

**I hope you find something of interest in this newsletter. I will be pleased to receive your feedback as well as ideas for items to include in future issues. Please send your comments and contributions to [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) or [chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)**

Due to a lack of foresight by me, the newsletter coinciding with the launch of GHS’s Diamond Jubilee publication, was numbered 59. Had I thought about it, a newsletter with the number 60 would have been far more appropriate, but alas I missed the opportunity.

But why is a diamond used to celebrate a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary ? It started in 1897 with Queen Victoria’s celebrations to mark her accession to the throne in 1837. Prior to that a diamond was used to celebrate a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The word *diamond* stems from the Greek word ADAMAS which means unconquerable and enduring. The English word adamant is also derived from the same source. However, any etymologists are more than welcome to add to this note.



And local historians may find this link to *Digital Resources on Welsh History 1847-1947* <https://martinjohnes.com/2020/03/19/digital-resources-on-welsh-history-1847-1947/> leads them to many useful sources.

David Mills

### GHS NEWS

The Society’s **December meeting** was not our typical Christmas event; not even typical of the ‘usual’ Llancaiach Fawr and zoom ones which the Society has become accustomed to since March 2021. It is still under debate whether Carwyn and Menna Hughes in Hampshire, or GHS members at Llancaiach and on zoom were the more disappointed when Carwyn and Menna’s internet failed and their much-anticipated talks on *11+ or the Scholarship of 1948* and *Reminiscences 1951 – 2021* had to be suspended, although the IT had



worked perfectly during the earlier trial-run! I hope that they will be able to treat us to their talks at an extra evening meeting before the end of March.

However, our chairman, Annie Owen saved the day – or the evening – and gave a very interesting talk about Daniel Lewis, a nineteenth century man of Lower Ystrad Mynach. Born during the second decade of the century, when the area was little changed from what it had been during Tudor times, he lived to 1900, the last year of the nineteenth century. He saw some significant changes in the local area, but not the later and greater, revolutionary economic and social changes following the sinking of Penallta Colliery in the early twentieth century. Annie described Daniel Lewis's background and family, the area in which he lived at the start of the Victorian era and how it had changed by the 1870s. To do this, she used information from successive census returns as well as some Bethania Chapel records including a transcript of the monumental inscriptions in Bethania chapel graveyard.

Thank you, Annie, for giving such an interesting and illuminating talk – and at such short notice.

No Christmas quiz, but the members-only raffles were held; the Llancaiach Fawr voucher won by Mrs Katherine Benson-Dugdale and the GHS voucher by Mrs Carolyn Jacob. Tea, coffee, and mince pies were enjoyed by those at Llancaiach, and I hope that we can all gather together there in December 2022 – if not before! The Diamond Jubilee book: *PARISH OF GELLIGAER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY Including histories of Gelligaer Village, Pontlottyn, Bute Town, Tirphil, Darran Valley, Bedlinog and Trelewis* was available for sale, and members present all purchased at least one copy. The editorial team hope that you enjoyed the book and please remember, copies can still be purchased from officers and local outlets and will be on sale at our next meeting too

**GHS's next meeting**, which will be held at Llancaiach and on zoom is on **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January starting at 11am** when Annie Owen will be speaking on *Ruddle Davies and Ystrad Mynach*. Lunch will be served from 12:15 for those who wish to purchase it and then after lunch, Dr. Elin Jones will talk about *Gelligaer, or Gelligâr or Gelligær, some features of the local dialect*.

Please contact Sandy Halliday on [sandyhawick@outlook.com](mailto:sandyhawick@outlook.com) if you wish to attend the meeting via Zoom.

I have previously notified members saying that we would be limited to only 18 who could buy lunch at Llancaiach. This has now changed. Hopefully, everyone who wants to buy lunch will be able to do so – but please order before the meeting starts. However, social distancing will still be maintained so please could everyone who intends buying lunch at Llancaiach on the 26<sup>th</sup> let me know as soon as possible so that we have at least approximate numbers, and the staff can arrange the table layout. Thank you.

*Judith Jones*

### **GHS Diamond Jubilee publication *PARISH OF GELLIGAER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY***

Including histories of Gelligaer village, Pontlottyn, Bute Town, Tirphil, Darran valley, Bedlinog and Trelewis, as well as the southeast of the parish.

Review by Ann Lightman (interested in Welsh, local and family history, and resident in Leeds, W. Yorkshire)

This publication, by Gelligaer Historical Society, is a thorough and well-researched book on this former Glamorgan parish, sandwiched between the upper reaches of the Rhymney and Bargoed Taff rivers, and bordered to the north by the A465 (Heads of the Valley's Road) and to the south by the A472. It was on the Glamorgan/Monmouth border, and the nearby larger towns of Merthyr Tydfil, Rhymney, Treharris and Tredegar were outside its boundaries. Bargoed, within its boundaries, is excluded as having been covered in a previous Society publication, *BARGOED AND GILFACH A LOCAL HISTORY*. For the same reason, other smaller communities were excluded, having been covered in *BRITHDIR YESTERYEAR IN AN UPPER RHYMNEY VALLEY COMMUNITY*, and shorter studies in *Gelligaer* journal volumes 22, 24 and 26.

At first, I was disappointed the parish did not contain more prominent towns but looking back, I am grateful – the building and inhabitants of say four terraces is interesting, forty would be tedious, and in this parish the small-town developments were individual and not merely as suburbs of a larger community. I felt that although this was a study of a specific area, much of what emerged could apply throughout the South Wales Coalfield ... and indeed further afield. It was fascinating to read how a rural landscape and people, with a smattering of non-agricultural occupations for instance in a woollen mill, inn, or smithy, was transformed into first, an iron working, and later, a coal mining area. Much might be as one would expect, but there certainly



were instances I found myself thinking “I never knew that” or “I’d not thought of that”. How for instance a good supply of water was needed not just for washing and drinking, but to operate an efficient sewerage system.

The publication was divided into two – the first, with headings which encompassed themes throughout the parish – rural, coal, transport, religion, education, and government -- and the second, tracing the developments of separate areas within the parish. I had thought that I had a good idea of the parish and its development at the end of the first section – but rather to my surprise, I really enjoyed reading about the development of the individual areas – who wouldn’t enjoy reading about Sodom and Gomorrah (Pontlottyn) for instance?

Most of the community studies were researched and written by individuals obviously passionate about their allotted areas – and the current Society chair, Annie Owen had undertaken several community studies as well as some of the thematic chapters. The book, giving a comprehensive picture of the parish in the nineteenth century, a century of change, is the result of several years of research using a wide range of sources. It has been put together with thought and care. I didn’t notice any silly errors, so proof-reading had been done!

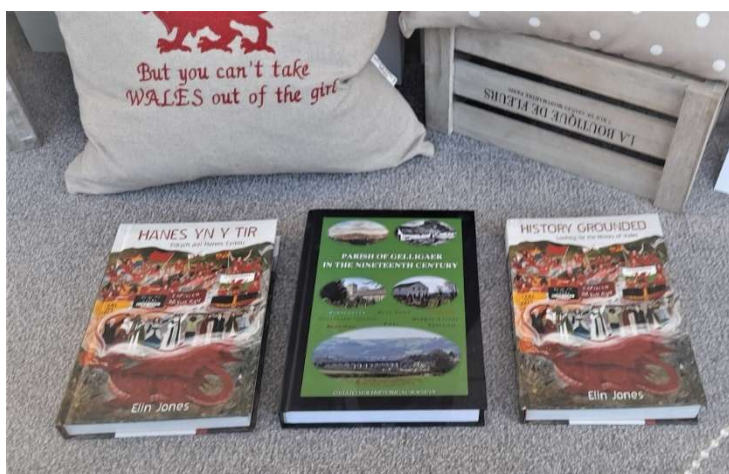
To say the book is thorough is not to imply it is not readable – it is, and I suspect would be dipped into long after one has read it. Throughout the book there were enough human-interest stories to leaven the statistics and detail – for instance, in the chapter on coal, we got to know not only how and by whom the enterprises were developed, but also about the accidents that happened. I also suspect that different people will take different things from it. For instance, I really enjoyed the part in the rural chapter which looked at field names – not because I knew the fields, but because the author had translated the component parts into English and these apply to farm and village names, which your English-speaking readers (for instance descendants of the families outlined here, now living around the world) would find so interesting and descriptive of the area their ancestors inhabited.

With its (coal) black and (grass/rural) green hard cover, enlivened by ovals of photographs of contrasting images of the built environment (from a primitive farmyard, via a chapel, a church, and a viaduct to smoking chimneys) it would make a very handsome addition to any bookshelf. At only £10 (a price not actually on the copy), it is a bargain, as it is likely to remain the definitive study of this area in this period for many decades. I thoroughly recommend what I thought was a very good and informative read.

*Ann Lightman*

GHS sales team report that sales of the book have been promising and the Society is grateful for the cooperation given by the staff at Bargoed and Ystrad Mynach libraries and the proprietors of Ashburne, Ystrad Mynach who have sold several books; but more are still available at those venues !

The photographs show the display at Ystrad Mynach library and the window display at Ashburne gift shop Ystrad Mynach, the latter with GHS’s book flanked by English and Welsh versions of GHS President’s recent publication.





For readers of this newsletter who have yet to buy a copy, the following “taster” is from the chapter on Pontlottyn by Dr. Stuart Broomfield-page 151:

Heol Evan Wynne/ Pontlottyn was often referred to as Gomorrah in these years. The poet Dafydd Morgannwg wrote about Pontlottyn in his Glamorgan Gazetteer Hanes Morgannwg in 1874:

Sodom and Gomorrah was the name generally used for the time of building, but at a later date it was changed to more innocuous Welsh name of Pontlottyn.

Sodom and Gomorrah had been from the beginning the principal residence of Rhymney's Irish and through their drunkenness and fights with the Welsh the place acquired a bad name. For a long period around 1860 some of the Irish were taken almost every week to Merthyr's magistrate courts to be tried for drunk and disorderly behavior[sic]. And as there was a tendency for the name Sodom and Gomorrah to convey an image of evil places .... it was decided to change the name to Pontlottyn instead. And by that name it is known at present.

Dafydd Morgannwg was unjust in placing all the blame on the Irish. There is plenty of evidence of Welsh people being tried in Merthyr magistrates' court for drunkenness and assault. .... Merthyr's stipendiary magistrate, John Coke Fowler, tried many such cases and was keen to see that the use of the term Gomorrah eradicated. Following a case of assault in 1856, he drew the court's attention to the use of the names Sodom and Gomorrah which he considered to be of a disgrace and a scandal as They were associated with the vilest and foulest of crimes and were a disgrace to any place.

Not everything made it into the book, and perhaps you would like to see some of these *leftovers*. This is a photograph, but what is shown, and from near which well-known historic Gelligaer parish building was it taken?

More leftovers will appear in future issues of *Gelligaer Times*.

(Answers are to be found at the end of this newsletter)



The name Pontlottyn eventually superseded Sodom and Gomorrah. However, the following article submitted by “Fly on the wall”, a regular contributor to this newsletter, shows that the “antics” that took place in the area were still being reported on by the press.



### FLY ON THE WALL PADDY AND HIS PITCH PLAISTER based on a report in *Merthyr Telegraph* 8 June 1861 page 3

Here I am, buzzing around in Merthyr Police Court on Saturday 1 June 1861 while the stipendiary magistrate, John Coke Fowler, hears the cases. Perhaps you will be amused by the antics of Jerry Regan, a rag and bone collector who some describe as a wild Irishman on account of his straggling hair, flesh and linen innocent of soap and water, and a costume more lively than fashionable.

This is how the case went.

Stipendiary magistrate: *What do you complain of?*

Jerry Regan: *Och! Its meself that was going through Gomorrah, scraching rags and bones, whin out comes dis woman [Honora Brien of Pontlottyn], an widout rhyme or rason, she hits me wid a blacksmith's tongs, till the back av me is in a jily.*

Stipendiary magistrate: *You mean to say that you know no reason for her having done so?*

Jerry Regan: *Divil a ha'porth yer worship.*

I stopped buzzing about, as there was so much laughter in the court.

Homora Brien: *I am the lawful mother of sivin children, who I am delighted to kape dacent, but I am unable to do so for the likes of this Jerry, who comes through the place a blowing a horn and enticing the children*



to exchange anything they can take from the house for rock. On this occasion, two of my little boys took two of their pinafores and exchanged them. When I missed them, I went looking for Jerry, and when I found him, I searched his basket and found the two pinafores. Then, I merely gave him a push: I did not strike him with a tongs. These are the pinafores.

Honora Brien held up the pinafores which everyone in the court could see were nicely made and clean.

Jerry Regan: *I did not take the pinafores from the children. There was no witness on either side.*

Stipendiary magistrate: *Is there any mark on your back?*

Jerry Regan: *Och faith there is, yer worship; it's the colour of a ..... I'll show ye.*

And Jerry prepared to take off his dirty shirt to show the court the large plaister.

Stipendiary magistrate: *Not in here. Sergeant Howlett, please take Jerry Regan out of the court, examine his back, and report back to the court.*

On their return to the court room a few minutes later:

Stipendiary magistrate: *Sergeant Howlett, please describe to the court the state of Jerry Regan's back.*

Sergeant Howlett: *There is a pitch plaister on Jerry Regan's back, about a foot and a half square. On lifting it, I saw there is not the slightest mark on his skin, except of dirt.*

As everyone in the court roared with laughter, I stopped my buzzing again.

Stipendiary magistrate: *Honora Brien, you received great provocation. And, as you, Jerry Regan, tried to deceive me about the condition of your back, I dismiss the case.*

*Fly on the wall*

### **HISTORY GROUNDED/HANES YN Y TIR**

GHS Newsletter 58, October 2021 contained details of a book launch for *History Grounded/Hanes yn y tir* written by GHS President Elin Jones. Since then, her book has gone from strength to strength as evidenced by the following announcement issued by Welsh Government on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021

*The illustrated book, by Dr Elin Jones, a former teacher, will be provided to schools in both Welsh and English. The book provides a visual history of Wales over 5,000 years, covering Wales's history from early settlement and society up to the present day, taking in important points throughout our past and across communities, with maps and illustrations. The book explains the way in which the landscape of Wales has been shaped by its history. The book will be provided to schools in early 2022, as part of a range of actions from the Welsh Government to support the teaching of Wales's history in the new Curriculum, to be taught from the start of the 2022/23 academic year. Improving the teaching of Welsh history is one of the commitments outlined in the Co-operation Agreement between Plaid Cymru and the Welsh Government, with plans to develop new teaching resources to explain Wales' diversity and the complexity.*

Jeremy Miles, the Minister for Education, and the Welsh Language, said: *"We want to ensure all pupils leave school with an understanding of our nation's history – not just the major events, but through the lives and experiences of people and communities from all over Wales. "History Grounded really helps bring Wales's rich history to life and will be a fantastic teaching resource for our new curriculum."*

Elin Jones said: *"The new curriculum gives proper importance to pupils' cynefin, their local area and Welsh history in all its diversity. The aim of the book is for young people to understand how history has shaped the landscape of Wales and how the clues to the history of their cynefin can be found around them in things like buildings and local place names. "I hope both children and teachers alike enjoy the book and that it helps bring the complex history of Wales to life, inside and outside the classroom."*

Sian Gwenllian, Plaid Cymru's lead designated member for the Co-operation Agreement, said: *"As the national story of Wales becomes a compulsory part of the curriculum, the provision of Dr Elin Jones' seminal work for every school in Wales is a positive development. The teaching of Welsh history is an integral part of ensuring that young people in Wales understand their nation's past, present and future. This additional resource will help ensure the Welsh curriculum is comprehensive and that teachers are adequately supported in its delivery.*



## ANOTHER PUBLICATION By OUR PRESIDENT IN THE PIPELINE

Details of a new publication have been received from the Rural Development Programme officer at Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) *Phill Loveless*:

In January 2020 an information board was unveiled in Gelligaer showing how the village would have looked in 1318, the time of Llywelyn Bren, our forgotten hero! (See report in *Gelligaer Times* 42, February 2020). The board was the result of an article by Dr Elin Jones, GHS's President, in *CwmNi* (Welsh language local community newsletter) challenging CCBC to erect some kind of memorial to him in the county. Cwm a Mynydd, CCBC's Rural Development Programme (RDP) took up that challenge.

Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Cwm a Mynydd RDP, administered by CCBC, is part of the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 which is jointly funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government

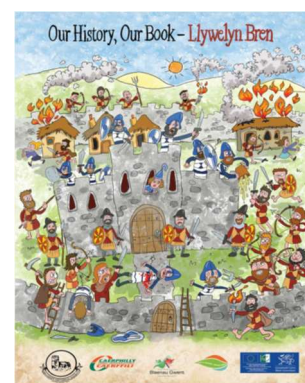
On behalf of GHS, Cwm a Mynydd obtained a RDP grant to place the information board in the village and commission Chris Jones-Jenkins FSA to use his expert vision to take us back to the time of Llywelyn Bren.

At the unveiling Elin, in her own unwavering style, approached Cwm a Mynydd and suggested that now a book should be produced so that schools in the area could teach the history of this incredible man. And so, a book was conceived.

Funds were secured once again from the RDP on behalf of the society and with Elin writing the text and Graham 'Picasso' Griffiths, an extremely talented cartoonist/artist from Cardiff, doing the illustrations, the book was on its way.

In order to ensure that the book was fit for purpose local schools were involved from the beginning. Elin and Picasso took workshops (virtually at first as we were in the midst of the first wave of the pandemic) with 3 local schools, Greenhill Primary, Llancaeath Primary and Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau, who devised drawings of their own and discussed how the book should read. To make sure we kept things really local, we have had the book printed in Bedwas by Tower Print.

The result, we think, is a fantastic new educational resource telling the story of one of our heroes. This is our history; this is our book!



*Phill Loveless*

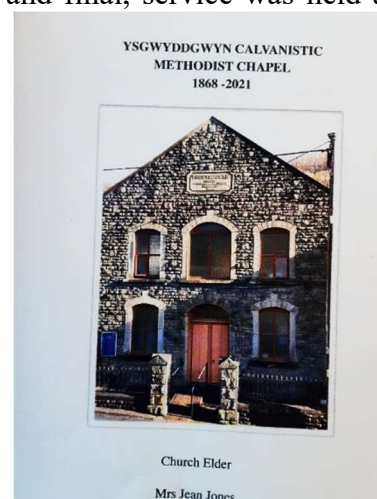
Editor's note -- This is the second publication by our President Elin Jones in a matter of months, could it be that she will achieve a hat trick soon?

## YSGWYDDGWYN CALVINISTIC METHODIST (PRESBYTERIAN) CHAPEL, DERI

A little piece of history was created on 2 December 2021 when a special, and final, service was held at Ysgwyddgwyn Chapel, Deri. Calvinistic Methodists built their first place of worship in the village in 1808 but their activities were not sustained there. It was not until the first development of coal mining and the settlement of four miners from the Rock area, near Blackwood, Monmouthshire, that, in 1868, the present chapel was built with financial help from the congregation at Hermon, Dowlais.

One hundred and fifty-three years later its final service (front cover of Order of Service booklet shown) was conducted by the Moderator of south east Wales Presbytery, aided by Revds. Alvin Clarke and Wayne Adams with local organist, Rosemary Rowe Bishop. John Owen, a member of the church for all of his 71 years, related his recollections of the chapel and a little of its history. Proving the validity of the concept of never to work with pets or children however, the highlight of the service was *Carols and Recollections*, the singing, and speeches by children from Deri Primary School.

Deri's chapels, Beulah (English Baptist), Tabernacle (Welsh Baptist), Wesleyan Methodist, Nazareth (Annibynwyr) and now Ysgwyddgwyn (Calvinistic Methodist) have all closed; Gospel Hall and St. Peter's Church the only places of worship still open in the village.



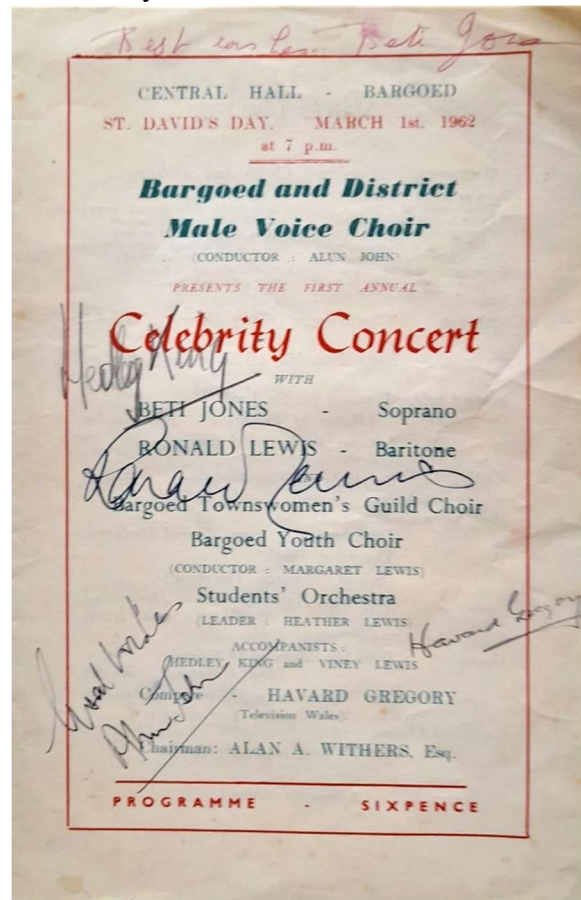
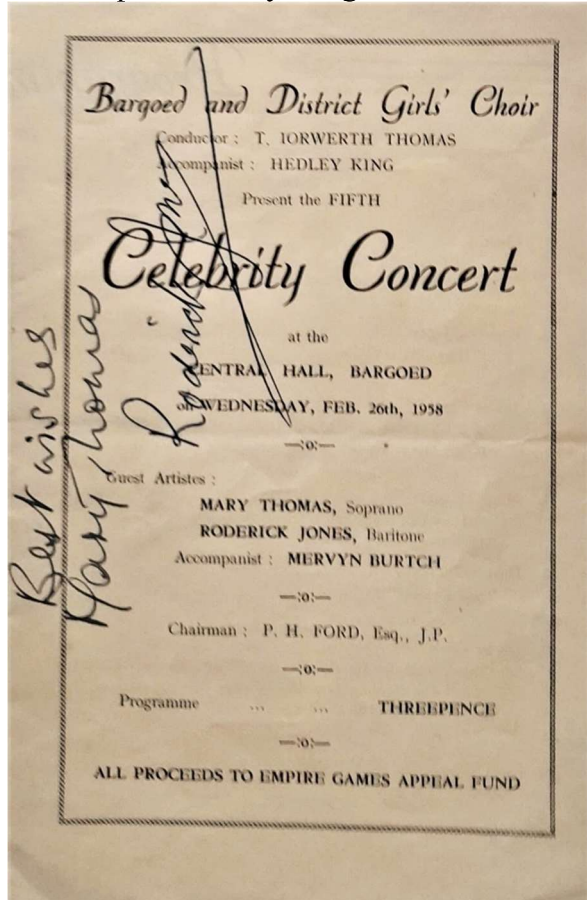
*Judith Jones*





## BARGOED'S CHORAL TRADITION

GHS member Pat Davies has kindly loaned the originals of these programmes, and the front covers appear below, it is hoped that they bring back memories which readers may wish to share:



## CHARTIST MATTERS

### *Chartist Rambler: William Edwards of Newport 1796-1849, David Osmond*

*Gelligaer Times* 58, October 2021, contained initial details about this book, now, having had time to read it, a review follows.

The layout of the book is particularly pleasing to the eye with the chapters preceded by quotes made by William Edwards, and it is well illustrated by using prints of Newport buildings and scenery at the height of his "fame". The last chapter, entitled *Mad Baker or Man of Freedom?* however starts with a surprisingly complimentary quote from *Monmouthshire Merlin* of 7 May 1842, a newspaper that had previously devoted much time and energy doing its best to denigrate Edwards. The *Merlin* quote is *Having adopted certain principles, he has firmness enough to manfully promulgate them, and fearlessly to stand by them.* But true to form by the time of Edwards's death in 1849 the *Merlin* had reverted to its former attitude when reporting on a court case brought against Edwards who was charged with selling a scandalous and libellous publication, *Sam Sly*. David Osmond writes *The Merlin spluttered its moral outrage.*

William Edwards is not unknown to historians, but much of what has been written about him in the past is confined to a short period of his life when he became well known for his part in the campaign to get The People's Charter on the statute books when addressing mass meetings in the Monmouthshire valleys. Because of his popularity amongst the lower paid working classes, he was seen as a threat by the government and both the Whig and Tory parties. As a result, there was a definite campaign by the established press to make him out as a disreputable character. David Osmond succinctly explains this when dealing with quotes from the *Merlin* when he comments, "thereby succeeding in accusing him of buffoonery, madness and dishonesty all within a few paragraphs". Other allegations were made in the press about Edwards also consuming large quantities of beer.

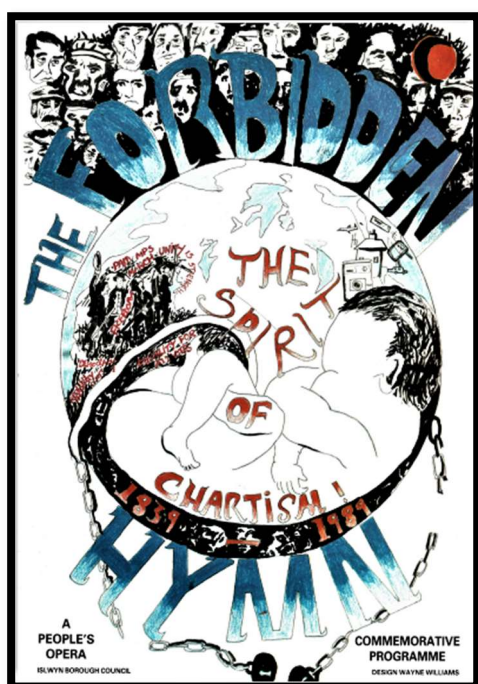


The sobriquet Mad Edwards the Baker lived on for many years, in fact in 1989 David Osmond attended a performance of *The Forbidden Hymn* a “peoples opera” held at the Miner’s Institute, Blackwood when Leon Gardner, who went on to become a Mayor of CCBC, was billed as “Mad Edwards the Baker”. David recalls Gardner dressed in a white baker’s overalls and a tall chef’s hat. (By coincidence my aunt recently gave me the original programme of that event and copies of the front page and cast list appear below this review.)

David Osmond has, however, gone beyond the short period (1839-1840) when Edwards was in the vanguard of the established press who related his “blustering speeches and inflammatory comments”. He has researched the story of Edwards’s life which starts with his birth at Llanguilan farm, Itton, near Chepstow, in 1796, and ends with his death in 1849 at his home in Commercial Street, Newport. The facts unearthed will enable readers to come to far different, but more accurate, conclusions than they may have gained by reading the biased newspaper accounts of his activities. All in all, this is a well-researched biography and demonstrates how necessary it is to keep challenging the “accepted” biographies or versions of historical events.

The book is available from: [sixpointscardiff.com](http://sixpointscardiff.com) (price £10 which includes postage within U.K.) and from Waterstones, Newport branch.

David Mills



The Forbidden Hymn	
Cast List: In order of appearance	
ACT 1	
Tommy Warner:	Steve Botcher
Dead Chartists:	Alexis Meehan Thelma Wiltshire Jean Weller Gwen Wasley Roger Hurn Lydia Meehan Ruth Baker
Dance:	Islwyn Youth Dance
Preacher:	Tom Powell
Man:	Roger Hurn
Woman:	Daphne Woodward
Street Scene:	Oakdale Youth Choir Pontllanfraith Youth Group
Migrators:	Blackwood Operatics
Comedian:	Peter Williams
Banker:	Dawn Price
1989 Couple:	David Meehan Anita Potts
Donovans:	Mother Anita George Father Elvet Morgan
	Miner's Son: Viv Hobbs
	Policeman's Son: Paul Newman
Dance:	Islwyn Adult Dance Group
French Fop:	Huw Jones
Mad Edwards:	Leon Gardner

## 2021 CHARTIST CONVENTION, ST. WOOLOS, NEWPORT

This annual event to commemorate the Chartist March on Newport on 4 November 1839, is always looked forward to with eager anticipation by the community of historians and enthusiasts for the history of Chartism in the Newport area and beyond. The event was chaired by our own President Elin Jones whose comments on each talk were astute and apposite.

Two radical Bristol local historians, Roger Ball and Mark Steeds opened the convention with a topical talk entitled the *Rise and Fall of Edward Colston* which put the recent toppling of his statue into Bristol Harbour into context. Along with John Cabot and Isambard Kingdom Brunel, he has been seen as an iconic Bristolian, much praised for his philanthropy with schools, alms-houses, churches, and apprenticeships attributed to him and streets named after him. As a one-time Deputy Governor of the Royal African Company, he was second in charge of the English Slave Trade.

Whilst many institutions in Bristol have defended his legacy, in recent years the campaign to counter this has gathered pace with place names and schools named after him being changed. What is now called for is a permanent memorial in a museum to be established giving a fair and honest portrayal of the man rather than glorifying him.

The second talk by Dr. Joan Allen was about *Legality and Injustice in the Age of the Chartists*. She spoke about the deliberate campaign by the government to crush protest in the period 1838-1850. Across the country





500 local Chartist leaders were imprisoned and given unjust and prejudicial treatment in an attempt to undermine the leadership of protest movements. Using arbitrary powers, dissidents could be sent to prisons miles away from their homes and families. Although they were technically political prisoners, they were treated as felons and subjected to physical and psychological hardship such as the silent system, starvation rations with no protein, hard labour for eight hours a day, on the treadmill for four hours a day, limited fresh air and exercise, no visitors, and no correspondence. The state claimed that all of this was within the law. It was not.

William Lovett of London and John Collins, two moral force Chartists were imprisoned for 12 months in Warwick Gaol in 1839, which was notorious for its punitive discipline and harsh conditions. Their supporters appealed for improvements in conditions on grounds of class and status but were met with the response that the powers that be could not interfere with the internal discipline of the prison.

When Feargus O'Connor, a barrister and a landowner, was imprisoned for eighteen months for seditious libel in 1840, he declared, 'I am worse than dead'. He endured a poor diet, prison clothes, no access to writing materials. There was a public outcry at him being treated as a felon. The government capitulated because of his higher status and things improved regarding food, coal, candles, a private yard, unlimited visitors and reading and writing materials.

The 21 Chartists charged with high treason in 1839 faced a hostile press which denounced the insurrection and talked about 'The mania of Chartism' and how people were led astray by demagogues. 200 witnesses were called for the prosecution. The jury at Monmouth was packed with local farmers who have been described by some as 'unfit to serve their country' and noted for 'their ignorance and stupidity'. They were determined to convict in record time. Evidence was shunned, there were procedural flaws and punishments were made unduly harsh.

**Les James** followed with a talk about *Zephaniah Williams*. He began by talking about a new publishing venture 'Six Points' aimed at publishing books about 19<sup>th</sup> century radicalism and the back story of leading Chartists such as Jenkin Morgan, Henry Vincent and William Edwards. David Osmond has recently published 'The Chartist Rambler' about William Edwards, sometimes referred to as 'The mad baker of Newport' who had an important role in bringing Henry Vincent, editor of the *Western Vindicator*, into the valleys to spread the message of Chartism.

A book by **Les James and Sue Allen** is to follow about the life story of Zephaniah Williams. The title will be *Coal, Beer and Chartism: The World of Zephaniah and Joan Williams*. Using the techniques of family historians, the story of Zephaniah and his extended family has been unravelled which details the life of his father Thomas Williams a onetime partner in the Union Ironworks, Rhymney, to his father's second marriage on the death of Zephaniah's mother. His family of nine children were united with those of his second wife's eight children. Thomas Williams was an expert on mineral extraction and had a coalmining business which went bankrupt in 1811. He recovered and, on his death, in 1825, his inventory revealed the full extent of his coalmining enterprises. The long economic depression after 1816 was so severe that some members of his family emigrated. Far from nothing being known about Zephaniah as some writers have alleged, there are records which show he took an active part in the community long before his involvement with Chartism. He was skilled in the management of men. Politically, as a coal contractor, he came up against the Scotch Cattle, a clandestine and illegal organisation which was prevalent in the area where he lived, victimising truck shop keepers and those men who accepted lower rates of pay. But ultimately, the Scotch Cattle came to dominate the Chartist Movement leading to the outbreak of violence on the Chartist March and the deaths of 22 men.

**David Steele** talked about *The Kennington Chartist meeting of 1848: Triumph or Capitulation*. This was a mass meeting prior to the delivery of the third Chartist Petition - the so-called Monster Petition - to the Houses of Parliament. 1848 was the 'Year of Revolutions' in Europe, and the authorities were fearful of violence breaking out. There was a ban on meetings. The troops were called out and supplies (biscuits, spirits, and salt pork) were ordered for 5,000 men. Foot soldiers and cavalry were posted at key locations like the Tower of London. Artillery was posted at the Bank of England, and it was sandbagged. 4000 off-duty policemen were engaged to keep the Chartists south of the River Thames. 70,000 special constables were enrolled. The Chartists were not allowed to take the petition across the river at first but then it rained, and the meeting broke up and a small group was allowed to deliver the petition to Westminster.



It was estimated at the time that there were 20 to 15 thousand at the gathering. However, Steele's analysis of the iconic photo taken of the meeting shows that the numbers were exaggerated. The Chartists were outnumbered. The revolutionary wave in Europe had made the government paranoid and the government had over-reacted. Apart from the calls for resistance from William Cuffey, it was a peaceful demonstration.

**Ray Stroud** paid *tribute to the historian David J. V. Jones 1941-1994, author of 'The Last Rising'*. This was accompanied by a recording of an old *Timewatch* programme about Chartism in the Tredegar area which included a visit to the Chartist cave where weapons were stored. Pikes and musket balls were forged in Tredegar. The extremists in the movement turned Chartism into an underground movement. They communicated in Welsh so the English-speaking authorities wouldn't know what was going on. Police forces were weak. The ultimate objective was to change the constitution through revolution such as had happened in the USA and France. Frost was pushed into the decision to march. There was intimidation on the night of the 3 to 4 November whereby people were pressganged into marching, houses were broken into and lots were drawn as to who was to kill whom. In the end, the troops started firing into the crowd. 50 Chartists and soldiers were wounded and 22 died.

**Pete Strong** delivered a talk on *The links between Henry Vincent and The Tolpuddle Martyrs*. The early 1830s saw a spate of state repression against the Bristol Rioters, Swing Rioters and the sentence of transportation against the Tolpuddle Martyrs. They were facing starvation wages and had formed a trade union to combat this. In 1834 they were sentenced for swearing illegal oaths to become members of the Trade Union. The magistrate responsible for this was James Frampton who was later instrumental in refusing poor relief for the wives of the martyrs. After a public campaign for their release, the Martyrs returned home between 1837 and 1839. By then the Chartist Movement had been formed and members were making links between lack of political rights and lack of trade union rights. This could only be changed by legislation in Parliament.

In 1838 Henry Vincent was made responsible for building support for Chartism in South Wales and the Southwest. He saw the poverty-stricken state of the area where labourers earned 5 to 7 shillings a week. Tradesmen were ruined because of the low wages of workmen. Vincent made links with radicals in the area including the Chartist solicitor W.P. Roberts who pointed out that 'Millions who made bread, could not eat it, Millions who made cloth could not wear it'.

By 1839 Henry Vincent was in prison in Monmouth Gaol. Sentenced to two years in prison, he missed the Chartist March and avoided transportation. But he had established the link between the need for parliamentary representation and the strengthening of Trade Union rights. It was partly through the work of Joseph Arch of the Agricultural Labourers Union that the vote was granted to Agricultural Labourers in 1884-5.

Sue Allen

## NEWS FROM OTHER HISTORY/HERITAGE GROUPS

**Blaenau Gwent Heritage forum** -- Recently published journal issue 25, the first by new editor, Roger Burchell. For further details contact: <https://blaenau-gwent-heritage-forum.co.uk/journals/>

**Ruperra Zoom Talks** The third in a series of zoom talks organised by Pat and Chris Jones-Jenkins, starting at 7.30 pm on Thursday 3 February 2022 and fortnightly every other Thursday until 24 March. They are not organised by Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust, but most talks relate to aspects of the natural and built heritage of the scheduled monument

The talks (all on Thursdays and start at 7.30 pm) are free, and readers of *Gelligaer Times* who wish to take part need to register by replying to [patjonesjenkins@googlemail.com](mailto:patjonesjenkins@googlemail.com) confirming that you would wish to join a zoom meeting.

Thursday 3 February	<i>Protected species in the Ruperra</i>	Alex Wilson
Thursday 17 February	<i>The Morgan Family Hatchments at Lower Machen Church</i>	Wayne Barnett
Thursday 17 March	<i>Archaeology at Coed Graig Ruperra</i>	Stephen Clarke
Thursday 31 March	<i>Ruperra Castle: A Personal History</i>	Paul Busby

**Merthyr Tydfil Historical Society** -- Monday 7 February at 2 pm at Canolfan Soar: Chris Parry's talk *The Life of Robert Thompson Crawshay: God Forgive who?* Non-members - £2 per lecture. Further details [Email: The Merthyr Tydfil Historical Society](mailto:Email: The Merthyr Tydfil Historical Society)



**Cynon Valley History Society** -- Thursday 20 January at 7 pm Zoom talk by Chris Turner *The Welsh Religious Revival 1904-05, a social history* For further details [Email: The Cynon Valley History Society Secretary](mailto:Secretary@CynonValleyHistorySociety.co.uk)

## A FEW INITIAL COMMENTS ON THE 1921 CENSUS

The 1921 census is now available for research at The National Archives (Kew), National Library of Wales (Aberystwyth) and Manchester Central Library, but as it is likely that, at least initially, those *Gelligaer Times* readers who want to access it will do so online, on Findmypast website [1921 Census of England & Wales is Available Now | findmypast.co.uk](https://www.findmypast.co.uk) the following relates mainly to the online source.

The idea of a census of the population is not new, as witnessed by the case of Mary and Joseph travelling to Bethlehem for the census before the birth of Jesus, or the Domesday Book commissioned by William the Conqueror. The nature of any census reflects the information the contemporary government wanted to find out. Although today many people use census returns to research the history of individuals, often family members, it is important to remember why and how the census (or indeed, any other source used) was created. In her chapter *RURAL GELLIGAER in PARISH OF GELLIGAER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*, Judith Jones explains (page 17) how and why the census came into being in 1801 and how it subsequently developed. She and the other contributors to that book made considerable use of the parish's nineteenth century returns. Some *Gelligaer Times* readers may wish to find out more about the roles of Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) and John Rickman (1771-1840) in the context of census history.

The following are a few initial comments about the 1921 census:

- Scheduled for 24 April 1921, it was delayed due to fears that the widespread industrial unrest would disrupt an April census. Thus, carried out on 19 June 1921, it is our only summer census. Although it took place before most people's main annual holiday period, those on holiday inflated populations numbers in some resorts. If you ancestor was not at home on census night, it may be worth checking likely holiday places. As many local people were still on strike when the census was taken, it is likely that they were uncertain how to answer the question about employment, and that an entry *out of work* may mean *on strike* rather than *unemployed*. In time, local researchers will be able to elaborate on this.
- An advertisement for *Sunday Illustrated* (a new newspaper that was launched in July 1921) issued with the census papers aroused much anger in the press and among some sections of the public.
- The 1921 census captures England and Wales when society in general as well as local communities and families were reeling from World War One. For example, there were more women than men in the country, and many children had lost their birth father. Again, in time, local researchers will be able to elaborate on this.
- While there was a census in 1931, the records were burned in a 1942 fire. The 1939 Register (already available) provides some useful information on people and their residences. There was no census in 1941 (because of World War Two), and so the next census that will be available for research is that of 1951 which is due for release in January 1952.
- While previous censuses had asked questions about people's occupation/profession, that of 1921 was the first to ask for name and business of employer as well as address of employment. This is likely to be useful in taking GHS's researches forward, for example, will it shed light on those employed in specific local coal enterprises? or in local shops such as Bargoed's Emporium, and local hotels like Bargoed's Hanbury?
- The questions about family structure and relationships were different in 1921 from those in previous censuses.
  - 1921 census is the first census to list *divorced* as an option for marital status; divorce rates had risen dramatically during and immediately after the First World War.
  - The *dependency* question asked in 1921, if answered correctly, will shed light on the children dependent upon married men as well as widowed men and women, whether or not they were living in the household.
  - Unlike earlier censuses, the 1921 census asked for the age of children in years and months. And, following the introduction of the 1918 Education Act which made elementary education compulsory to the age of 14, it asked for the educational status of children aged 15 and younger for the first time.





- From 1851, there was a question about disabilities. This is not in 1921 census because the authorities considered that asking people with no medical knowledge (ie most heads of household) was not the best way of securing information.
- There are separate books for institutions such as prisons and hospitals.
- Use a person search to find Army and RAF personnel at bases home, abroad and in Ireland, and Royal and Merchant Navy personnel. Any family members living on a military base were enumerated separately.
- The census can be searched by name of the person or address, and there is an advanced research facility. When you find a relevant entry, you can purchase transcript for £2.50 or original for £3.50 (discount for subscribers to Findmypast). Look at all the extras that come with your purchase. You can download and print the material, and, once having paid for it, you are able to return to it on Findmypast website.
- To cite a 1921 census reference in a publication, use RG15 and the piece number, but The National Archives has not yet finalised how the rest of the reference should appear (it is complex and demands some consideration by TNA) so anyone producing more than a private family history story may need to check that out later.
- As in some earlier censuses, the number of rooms is shown on the return, but while this does not generally include kitchen and bathroom, the understanding of a room was confused especially if the kitchen also served as the family's main living room.
- As far as empty dwellings are concerned, they can be identified in 1901 and earlier census enumerators' books, and the 1911 summaries listed all addresses. Summaries like those of 1911 were completed in 1921 but TNA is not aware of extant summaries and so it does not seem that there is a quick and easy way to identify empty dwellings in 1921 census.
- In 1921, homeless people were enumerated as they were in 1911, ie by the police on special schedules that were passed to the enumerators for inclusion. Human nature means that it is likely that some escaped the census.

*Annie Owen*

Editor's note --- To date, the only specific comment on using the 1921 census is that sent to *Gelligaer Times* editor by Annie Owen who searched for entries for her parents. She found the entry for her mother easily but finding that for her father proved more challenging as the initial letter of his surname was mis-transcribed. Both entries confirmed what Annie had previously assumed: they did not contain any surprises nor suggest any new lines of enquiry.

I look forward to hearing how other readers fare with using the 1921 census. **Please contact GHS with your finds for inclusion in future issues of *Gelligaer Times*.**

*Gelligaer Times* readers may find the following links useful.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/>

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/census-records/>

[Online events - The National Archives](#)

[nationalarchives.gov.uk/contact-us/](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/contact-us/)

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog/familyrecords/taking-1921-census>

<https://www.findmypast.co.uk/help/search?query=1921>

## 2022 PLATINUM JUBILEE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

GHS has been invited to contribute to an exhibition planned by CCBC to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The following may stimulate some ideas about how GHS may mark the jubilee in its newsletter, journal, and contribution to CCBC's exhibition. Please contact [chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) or [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) with any of your ideas including memories, details of memorabilia and photographs.

**THE ACCESSION** A few *Gelligaer Times* readers may recall the announcement of the sudden death of George VI issued, at 10.45 a.m. on Wednesday 6 February 1952:

*The King, who retired last night in his usual health, passed peacefully away in his sleep at Sandringham early this morning.*

The following is based on reports in *Western Mail* in the following days.



On 7 February, the portraits of George VI and his Queen, as well as of their older daughter, the new Queen, appeared on the newspaper's front page together with reports about the royal death. The new Queen and her Consort, the Duke of Edinburgh, were at the Royal Lodge, Nyeri, Kenya, as part of a Commonwealth tour and *it was expected last night that the Royal Aircraft [bringing them back to London] would arrive at London Airport this afternoon, a week after the King, standing bareheaded on the wind-swept aerodrome, waved her Godspeed on her journey.* It was reported that the plane would be met by:

Duke of Gloucester

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister

Lord Woolton, Lord President of the Council

Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary

Captain H.F.C. Crookshank, Leader of the House of Commons

Marquis of Salisbury, Leader of the House of Lords

C.R. Attlee, Leader of the Opposition

Clement Davies, Leader of the Liberal Part

Thus began a reign that was to last longer than that of any other British monarch.

**THE CORONATION** *Gelligaer Times* editor will be pleased to hear from readers who recall Coronation Day or have photographs, memorabilia and/or memories passed down from older family members and friends about it.

This photograph shows the front covers of two Coronation New Testaments, one in English and one in Welsh, presented to local children in their school or community coronation event. The editor will be pleased to hear from readers who have their testaments. It would prove interesting if the inscription on the inside page can be transcribed or photographed.



**Street teas are being held throughout Bargoed to-day and a competition for the best decorated street is being judged.**

Taken from *Western Mail* Wednesday 3 June 1953, page 4, Does any reader know which Bargoed street won the competition for the best decorated street?

**Sash not crown.—**Instead of being invested with a crown. "Miss Hengoed" (Mrs. Betty Dunn) received a silken sash endorsed "Miss Hengoed" from Mrs. D. J. Owen at the Coronation concert at Hengoed.

This extract from *Western Mail* 6 June 1953 page 5 shows that instead of crowning their own *Queen*, a *silken sash* was bestowed at the Coronation concert at Hengoed.

**CORONATION AND BIRTHDAY HONOURS 1953** Two local people were awarded B.E.M. in the Coronation and Birthday Honours 1953

- Sgt. Edward Thomas Chapman, Mon Regt (T.A.), of Pontlottyn, who had previously gained VC for his action near Dortmund-Ems Canal just over a month before the end of the war
- Hilda Hall, Aberbargoed, for her services to the National Savings Movement.

**THE NEW QUEEN'S TOUR OF THE COUNTRY** Soon after the Coronation, Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh toured the country. On the afternoon of 9 July, they were in Pontypridd. Among the local dignitaries presented to the new Queen was GUDC chairman, George Towyn Richards of Pontlottyn. If any of his family and friends read this newsletter, please contact GHS. Does any reader know of anyone who went to Pontypridd that day, perhaps with a ticket for the bandstand enclosure, or to view events from another vantage point?

**ROYAL TOURNAMENT AT EARL'S COURT** Is any *Gelligaer Times* reader able to shed light on any of those who took advantage of this, advertised among the *CHEAP RAIL TRIPS* in *Merthyr Express* 6 June 1953 page 13?

**SOME OTHER EVENTS DURING THE LONG REIGN OF ELIZABETH II** People in many communities celebrated many other events associated with the Royal

CORONATION DECORATIONS ROYAL TOURNAMENT at Earl's Court (June 18-27). SATURDAY, JUNE 13 and EACH TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY and THURSDAY To LONDON (Paddington)	
MERTHYR 6.40 a.m. (35/6), Pantrebach 6.45 (35/-), Troedyrhiw 6.49 (3/)	Merthyr Vale 6.54 (34/6), Quakers' Yard L.L. 7.0 (34/-), ABERDARE L.L. 6.45 (1)
Aberaman 6.48 (35/-), Mountain Ash (Oxford Street) 6.54, (34/6), Penrhiwce L.L. 6.58 (34/3),	Abercynon 7.6 a.m. (33/9), RHYMNEY 6.35 a.m. (1)
Pontlottyn 6.40 (35/-), Tirphil 6.46 (34/6), Brithdir 6.50 (34/3), Bargoed (34/-),	Pengam (Glam.) 7.4 (33/9), Hengoed L.L. 7.9 (33/3), Ystrad Mynach 7.13 (33/3),
Llanbradach 7.9 7.19 (32/6), Caerphilly 7.17, 7.27 (32/-), Llan 7.25, 7.34 a.m. (31/3).	
For details of additional train service on Wednesdays, see handbills.	



family during the decades that followed. Do any *Gelligaer Times* readers have any photographs, memorabilia and/or memories of how the any of the following were marked locally?

- Investiture of the Prince of Wales.
- Queen's Silver Jubilee
- Queen's Golden Jubilee
- Queen's Diamond Jubilee

There were also many other events that may have had more of an impact on some local people, for example

- Some things that happened before the start of the reign but had an impact on local people in the 1950s and later
  - Butler Education Act, and 11+ examination
  - The new National Health Service
  - Nationalisation of industry (NCB and BR)
  - War time rationing continued into the early 1950s. Does anyone have a ration book from that era? What memories do you have of rationing?
- What memories do you have of social and economic life in the 1950s?
  - Do you have any photographs showing the clothes worn at that time?
  - What about entertainment e.g. cinema visits, outings to seaside, etc. For most people it was before they had TV in their home and at a time when few families had a private car.
  - Did local people attend events such as Festival of Britain in London and Empire Games in Cardiff?
  - What about local shops, especially Bargoed's Emporium?
  - How was farm life and work in the local area in the 1950s similar to and different from present day farming operations?
  - What sort of jobs did local people have in the 1950s?
  - Did most families have electric washing machines, cookers, vacuum cleaners, etc in the 1950s? Or were many housewives using washing boards, blackleading grates etc. at that time? Can anyone describe the life and work of housewives in the local communities in the 1950s?
  - Many local places of worship were better attended in the 1950s than they are at the present time. Would any *Gelligaer Times* reader be able to describe chapel or church activities in the 1950s?
  - Similarly, life for pupils in schools in the 1950s was very different from what it is today, So, is anyone able to describe what it was like to attend a local school in the 1950s?

*Gelligaer Times* readers will be able to add many more questions to this list, and, hopefully, will contact GHS [chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk) or [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO GHS  
QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE PROJECT**

**BUT IF YOU HAVE A RECIPE FOR A PLATINUM PUDDING,  
PLEASE DO NOT SEND THAT TO US, INSTEAD CHECKOUT THIS WEBSITE**

**[The Platinum Pudding Competition – The Queen's Platinum Jubilee 2022.](#)**

PS – if you want a second opinion on your new pudding, there are likely to be plenty of volunteers among *Gelligaer Times* readers to taste it for you.

THE ANSWER TO THE PHOTOGRAPH (copyright GHS student member - Leoni Jones)  
PENALLTA ISAF FARM, VIEWED FROM NEAR HENGOED BAPTIST CHAPEL

