



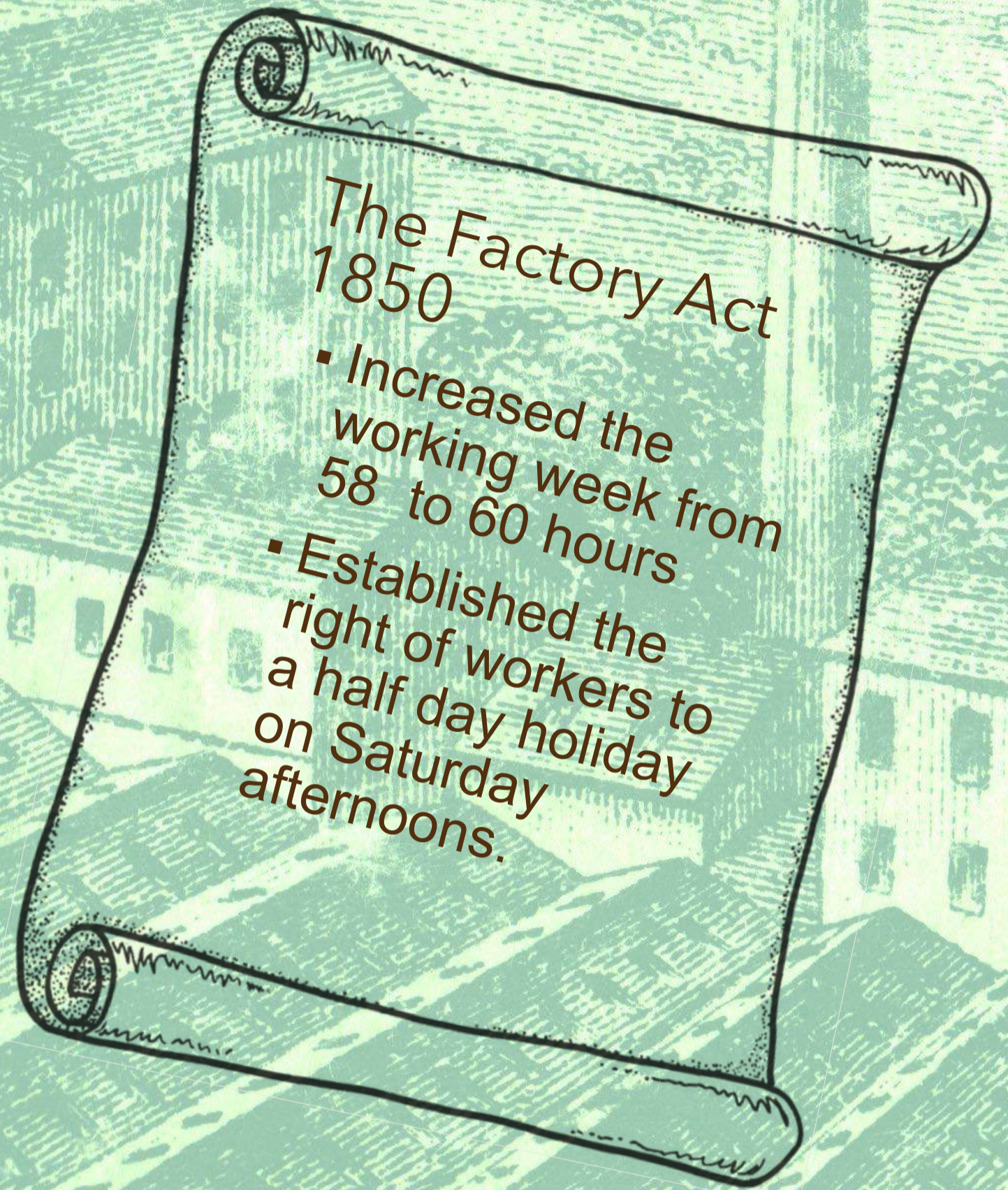
Sport and Leisure in Newtown: 1850-1914

By the end of the 19th century, Newtown had transformed from a small market town to a centre of manufacture, mirroring changes in British society as a whole.

Industrialisation resulted in large numbers of people concentrated in mills and factories working long hours in a six-day working week. The seventh day was reserved for the Sabbath. There was little free time.

Despite the grind of the working week, factory work did create a greater sense of camaraderie and a common identity. This led to developments in trade unionism, self help groups (eg the Oddfellows) and political reform.

It also provided a fertile ground for the growth of a working class sporting culture. But when was there time to participate in sport? Government legislation, from 1850, to reduce working hours established the right of industrial workers to a half day holiday on a Saturday. It was as a result of the 1850 Factory Act that the growth of popular sport can be traced.



Echoes of the Factory Act

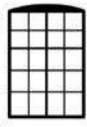
Why do so many sporting events still start at 3.00pm on a Saturday afternoon (e.g. football matches)?

Answer:

1. Sunday was the Sabbath
2. Workers had to put in a shift on Saturday until 2.00 pm



Newtown Half Holiday Football Club: Their name is a reminder of their origins.



Sport: the glue of Society

For the social elites, sport had much to commend itself:

- In the English public school system and in the universities sport was seen as a means of character building, instilling team work and leadership qualities in the young men who would be the future leaders of Nation and Empire .
- Christian denominations were keen to promote clean living, upright citizens and abstinence from the demon drink.
- Employers wanted a sober, reliable and amenable workforce.

The encouragement of healthy pursuits was therefore viewed as beneficial to the cohesion of society as a whole.



Captain R.J.W. Arbuthnot-Brisco of Newtown Hall. President and chairman of Newtown Football Club and Tennis Club. Also president of Newtown Cycling and Hockey Clubs. Captain of 'B Company' of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. He provided 'The Cunnings' (now the gravel car park) for use as a hockey and football pitch.



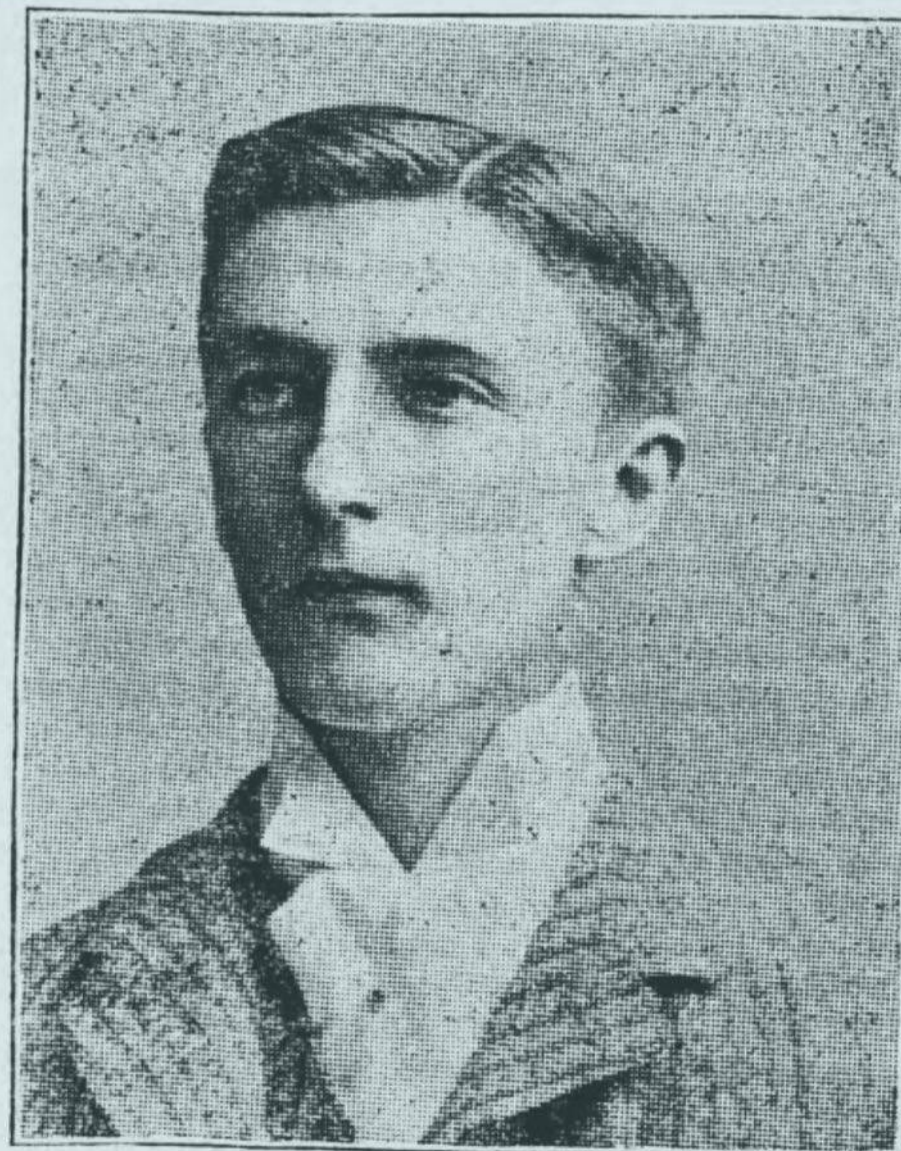
Above: The Checkers Inn Broad Street, one of seventeen pubs in Newtown. The publican, Elizabeth Jones, was only too willing to serve beer on a Saturday afternoon to bored mill workers.

Right: How the Church viewed football. ('The County Times, Decemebr 1913)

Football as "A Means of Grace."

LLANYBLODWEL VICAR AT VILLAGE CUP PRESENTATION TO PANT.

The committee of the Village Cup having awarded the cup to the Pant Blue Stars, it was presented to the captain of the winning team (Harvey) last Saturday at the Pant. The Rev J Allen Jones, vicar of Llanyblodwel, who made the presentation, said that some people objected to football as a demoralising game. A fortnight ago a Welsh County Councillor attacked a Methodist minister who encouraged football, and he thanked God that he had never been on a football field. Presumably therefore the Councillor knew but little of football, and could not be taken as an authority of the evil or otherwise of the game. He (the speaker) believed in football as a manly pastime, likely to develop the best parts of a man's nature. He would go so far as to say that football, rightly played, could even be a means of grace. It could develop the virtue of self-sacrifice and self-denial. The man who played for his own hands, or rather feet—(laughter)—seeking his own individual glory, was of no use to a team. But the man who exercised self-denial, passing the ball that another might score, was the true footballer. Football also helped a man to take his buff-tings in good part without losing his temper. It was a great unifying force. Radical and Tory, Church and chapel were of one accord on the football field.



W. E. PRYCE-JONES,
Captain of the Newtown Team.

William Ernest Pryce-Jones (**above**) and his brother Albert, were both all-round sports men who excelled at football. Both were educated at Shrewsbury School and Cambridge University and both played in the victorious Newtown FC of 1895. The brothers also won caps for the National Team.

Sports Day!

The annual summer sports day was an important event in the town's sporting calendar for at least half a century before the outbreak of World War One. From its inception, it was closely associated with the flannel industry and with its principle employer, Pryce Jones, as the newspaper extract below shows.



The Aber Valley Band (Windsor Colliery Working Men's Silver Band, Caerffili) competed at the Sports in 1912-1914. They are seen here in Shortbridge Street leading the procession from the Recreation Ground into town at the end of the Sports Day.

The Royal Welsh Warehouse takes control

Sports Day became forever associated with Pryce Jones in 1887 when the staff of the Royal Welsh Warehouse held a special event to mark the occasion of his knighthood. From 1889, the Royal Welsh Warehouse Sports Day was broadened to the general public. By the beginning of the 20th century this summer festival was attracting huge crowds from near and far with estimates of up to 20,000 people attending. Sporting competitions were held in on the company's own 'Recreation Ground' on Pool Road, whilst brass band and quickstep contests were held in Broad Street

NEWTOWN

WELSH WOOLLEN MILLS' ATHLETIC SPORTS.—These sports took place on Saturday, August 23, in a field kindly lent by Mr. Pryce Jones, of Dolerw. Saturday was exceptionally fine, and upwards of 700 persons put in an appearance. The Newtown Brass Band played for dancing. The following were the sports contested:—

120 Yards' Handicap, for youths under sixteen years—1, T Bumford; 2, R Richards

Tug of War—Six teams entered. First heat: Boys of Gwalia beat Warehouse Team. Second heat: Cambrian Boys beat Pattern Weavers. Third heat: Cambrian beat Ten Clowns. Final heat: Cambrian Boys beat Boys of Gwalia

440 Yards' Flat Race—1, S Swain, beat by two yards; 2, D Griffiths

220 Yards' Egg Race—1, J Lewis; 2, E Bevan

150 Yards' Flat Race—1st heat: 1, S Powell, 3 yards; 2, L Keye, 7½ yards. Second heat: 1, S Swain, 3 yards; 2, J Morgan, 8 yards. Final heat: 1, Swain; 2, Powell

High Jump—1, E Worthington; 2, J Morgan

80 Yards' Flat Race, open to men over forty years of age—1, Thomas Emerson

One Mile Walking Race (handicap)—1, E. Evans, 70 yards; 2, E Astley, 150 yards

Sack Race—1, Rd Evans; 2, A Parry

One Mile Flat Race (handicap)—1, D Griffiths, 10 yards; 2, G Phillips, 15 yards

No one succeeded in climbing the greasy pole, and the prize of a leg of mutton was run off and won by George Davies. There were no competitors in the young womens' race.

The Cambrian News, 29 August, 1879

GAMBRIAN RAILWAYS ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Royal Welsh Warehouse Amateur Athletic Sports and Musical Festival, at Newtown, Saturday, June 27th.

Brass Band Contest. Male Voice Choir Competition. Grand Exhibition of Aeroplane Flights by Mr Frank Gooden.

ON Saturday, June 27th, DAY EXCURSION to NEWTOWN leaving BRECON at 7.25 a.m. Fare, 3/- Passengers return from Newtown at 9.30 p.m.

EXCURSIONS TO LONDON. On Monday, June 22nd, for 2, 5 or 8 days: Friday, June 26th, for 2, 4 or 5 days; Friday, July 3rd, for 2, 4 or 5 days; Monday, July 6th, for 2, 5 or 8 days; Friday, July 10th, for 2, 4 or 5 days, EXCURSION TICKETS to LONDON.

To.	SEASON EXCURSIONS.	DAY OF ISSUE.	PERIOD.
South Wales	Fridays 8 or 15 days.
Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, &c.	Fridays 8 or 15 days.
Scotland	Fridays 7 & 17 days.
London	Every Saturday	.. 8 or 15 "

EARLY CLOSING EXCURSIONS.

EVERY WEDNESDAY, and until further notice, HALF-DAY EXCURSION TICKETS will be issued from BRECON, by the 1.20 p.m. Train, to TALGARTH, BUILTH WELLS, RHAYADER, and Intermediate Stations.

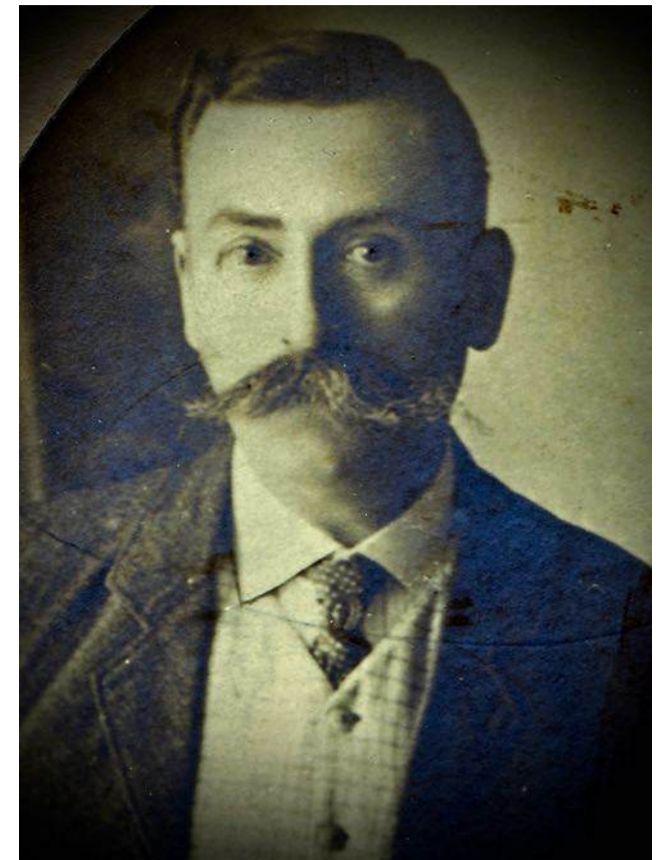
For further information respecting the arrangements shown above, application should be made at any of the Company's Offices or Agencies, or to Mr. Herbert Williams, Superintendent of Line.

S. WILLIAMSON,
General Manager.

Oswestry, June, 1914.

By 1914, the event had become more than a sports day. Generous prizes attracted entrants and spectators from North and South Wales, as well as the Midlands and Lancashire. The Cambrian Railways organised special excursion trains to bring the crowds into Newtown.

The Royal Welsh Warehouse Sport & Recreation Society



John Maurice Jones ('JM') was the organising brain behind the RWWS&RS. He joined the Pryce Jones Company in 1879 and became the Hon. Secretary of the Recreation Company for over 40 years.

After 1887 the Royal Welsh Warehouse Sport and Recreation Society dominated the sporting and cultural life of the town.

Under this umbrella organisation sporting clubs of all kind were formed - football, cricket, bowls, tennis, cycling. It also had its own brass band, organised the annual seaside excursion to the coast and staged concerts.



NEWTOWN

THE ROYAL WELSH WAREHOUSE TRIP.—About 2,500 people travelled by this trip to Aberystwith on Saturday. Two trains of thirty carriages, each drawn by two engines and assisted by a third, were inadequate for the comfortable conveyance of the travellers, and about 200 had to go on by the 9.40 a.m. train. It will be remembered that last year the employees of the warehouse presented Mr W. Ernest Pryce-Jones, on the attainment of his majority, with a massive and handsome silver tankard suitably inscribed. As a return for this, Mr W. E. Pryce-Jones kindly promised to pay the fares of all employed in the warehouse, and Sir Pryce and Capt. Pryce-Jones generously did the same for those engaged at No. 3 and 4 Factories. Saturday last was chosen, and although the weather was threatening in the morning, the day turned out fine, and a very pleasurable time was spent. The committee had to give a large guarantee to secure low fares, the result more than justifying their expectations. Besides a large number from Severn Valley Mills and Powysland Mills at Welshpool, a good number of the public from Welshpool, Montgomery, and Newtown, also joined the excursion. The warehouse band played dance and other music at the Castle, Aberystwith, the grounds of which were crowded, the open air concert and promenade being greatly appreciated. Sir Pryce and Capt. Pryce-Jones also journeyed to Aberystwith, and with many others remained over Sunday. This trip was one of the largest which has been organized on the Cambrian Railways, and though owing to extreme pressure of the traffic the return home was somewhat late, the committee are to be congratulated on the success which attended their efforts.

10 HOURS BY THE SEASIDE!

THE
ROYAL WELSH WAREHOUSE
ANNUAL TRIP

Will this Year be run to
ABERYSTWITH & BARMOUTH,
ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 13TH, 1892.

THIRD-CLASS RETURN FARES.

WELSHPOOL	}	1s. 9d.
MONTGOMERY		
KERRY	}	1s. 6d.
ABERYSTWITH		
CAERSWS		

Further particulars later. c743

ROYAL WELSH WAREHOUSE, NEWTOWN, V. DOLGELLEY.

The return match between these clubs was played at Newtown on Saturday last, June 25th, and resulted in a very easy victory for R.W.W. by 87 runs. R.W.W. won the toss and batted first. They were not all disposed of until the respective total of 103 runs had been scored, towards which W. B. Smith contributed 45 in masterly style. Dolgelley followed, but it soon became evident that they were over-matched, as no less than eight batsmen fell to the bowling of W. E. Pryce Jones and J. T. Williams without scoring a run. The bowling of J. T. Williams and W. E. Pryce Jones is worth recording. The former delivered five overs, one maiden, and securing five wickets for 6 runs, and the latter sent down five overs, two maidens, taking four wickets for 6 runs. Score:—

R.W.W. (NEWTOWN).		
Walter Davies, c W Owen, b E C Owen	..	3
W G Cannon, run out	..	6
W E Pryce Jones, c W Jones, b C Roberts	..	7
W B Smith, c J R Davies, b E C Owen	..	45
W Richards, c C E J Owen, b E C Owen	..	7
T Webster, c and b E C Owen	..	1
W Balfour, lbw, b E C Owen	..	4
R O Evans, b E C Owen	..	0
William Davies, b E C Owen	..	10
R E Jones, b C Roberts	..	2
J Tyson Williams, not out	..	1
Extras	..	17
Total	..	103



PUBLIC NOTICES.

Royal Welsh Warehouse Recreation Society's Annual Entertainment.

PUBLIC HALL, NEWTOWN,
FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MARCH 2nd & 3rd.

THE BEN GREET COMPANY,
IN THE SUCCESSFUL NEW PLAY

"THE LITTLE MINISTER,"

From the Haymarket Theatre, London.

By arrangement with Messrs Frederick Harriss' Optic, Music, and Allied Company.

The Original, Authorised, and Incidental Music has been specially written for this production by HIS EXCELLENCY MACKENZIE.

1. Overture ... "The Little Minister"
2. (a) All (b) "From the North"
3. Pastoral Dance ... "The Rosemaid"

Published by C. and W. May, Gerrard Street, London, W.C. (Opposite St. Paul's Church).

Magnificent scenery by Messrs. G. & Co., London.

Just received at

Reserved Seats, 2s.; Front Seats (unreserved) 1s.; Gallery Seats (unreserved) 6d.; Second Seats, 1s. Doors open 7.30. Carriages at 8.

PUBLIC HALL, NEWTOWN.

THE ROYAL WELSH WAREHOUSE
CHRISTY MINSTRELS

WILL GIVE THEIR
ENTERTAINMENT

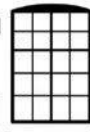
IN THE ABOVE HALL,
On Friday, February 26th, 1892.

Further particulars shortly.

c58

The RWW football team and officials, winners of the Montgomeryshire Challenge Cup in 1914. The eleven players would all go on to fight in World War One and two would be killed in action.





But Where are the Women?

Sometimes, absence tells us more about a society than amplitude. We have very little evidence of female participation in sport in Newtown at this time.

- The RWW Sports day provided no opportunities for women to participate.
- Photos tend to be of sports *men*.
- The only evidence we hold for female participation in sport is the little cup displayed here, although all the evidence points to a later date for this, probably from the 1950s.
- The newspapers of the day seemed less than sympathetic.

It has been remarked that ladies have now resorted to bicycle riding, cricket, and even smoking, but it appears they are not content with these, as I hear a movement is afloat to establish a football club, for which lady footballers are urgently required. What their next move in the sporting world is going to be it is hard to say. What selfish ideas some women have over men!

Shall be pleased to receive fixture cards, etc., from the various clubs in the district.

Montgomeryshire Express 22 September 1891



The women are conspicuous by their absence in this 1903 photograph of the Cycling Club

Carnival

For over a hundred and thirty years the people of Newtown have been donning silly, strange and exotic outfits to entertain and amuse in the annual carnival. The origins of this event is associated with the celebrations to mark the knighthood of Pryce Jones in 1887 when over 5,000 people paid sixpence to enter the carnival field to see acrobats and jugglers, and to take part in music, dancing and fancy dress competitions.

THE FINALE,
as last year, consisted of a cyclists' carnival, performed by the members of the Newtown Cycling Club. This was one of the most popular events of the day's proceedings, as was evidenced by the large crowd that lined the streets en route. The performers assembled at Dolerw, where they were marshalled into single file, and headed by the Newtown Silver Band paraded Milford-road, Broad-street, High-street, Market-street, and back to the Bear Hotel, where the judges were situated. The sight was an attractive one; the brilliantly illuminated machines propelled by wheelmen attired in the most grotesque and outlandish costumes, presented to the vast crowd a sight unparalleled in the annals of Newtown. At the previous carnival the cyclists rode their machines, an operation at once difficult, and not altogether without danger. On Friday, however, it was almost an impossibility to ride the majority of the machines owing to their having been entirely converted into anything but velocipedes. The bicycles were elegantly decorated, and the members of the club who took part in the procession must have gone to considerable expense and trouble in bedecking their machines and themselves for the carnival. They are deserving of every praise for the pains they took, and it must be a source of congratulation to them to know that their efforts were highly appreciated. The following joined in the parade:—S. J. Morris (floral decorations), A. N. Roycroft (Eiffel tower), S. Owen (clown), N. Perry (Sally), H. F. Morgan (Welsh costume), J. H. Bellis (Jameson), C. O. Lambert (sports of England), C. Ll. Downing (Indian Chief), Fred. R. Lloyd (Ship Dr Jim), W. E. Jones (little Tich), A. Powell (red, white and blue), G. B. Carlisle and S. R. Powell (Sedan chair), F. J. Ross (Chinaman), C. M. Kershaw (Welsh harp and floral fete), Tom Norton (Li Hung Chang), Clement Jones (policeman), P. Pritchard (old 'oman), E. Evans (nigger), A. E. Goodwin (Lord Nelson), R. Morris (Betsey). How the judges arrived at their decision as to which was the best turnout is altogether a mystery, but no one can doubt that they did their best. The adjudication was delivered by Mr Woosnam from the balcony of the Bear Hotel as follows—1st prize, Eiffel tower (A. N. Roycroft); 2nd, Red Indian (C. Ll. Downing); 3rd, Sedan chair (G. B. Carlisle and S. R. Powell); 4th, Clown (S. Owen); 5th, Sports of England (C. O. Lambert), and Welsh Harp (C. M. Kershaw).



The Cycling Club was active in organising the carnival celebrations and the finale was a spectacular decorated bicycle parade. The extract from 'The Montgomeryshire Express' (left) describes the scene in 1896. **ABOVE:** A London Omnibus on the streets of Newtown? Look carefully and you can make out two sets of bicycle wheels. Are these the precursors of our modern carnival floats?

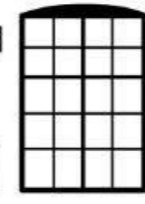
**NEWTOWN
SHOW and FETE.**
FLOWERS AND SPORTS.
Full Description and Prize List.

The annual show and fete at Newtown took place on Friday, under the happiest conditions. Bright weather favoured the festival and the townspeople and inhabitants of the vicinity came in crowds to show their appreciation of the efforts of the various committees to provide for their entertainment. We think no one was disappointed. From the quick-step contest, which opened the show, to the bicycle parade, which closed it, there was not a dull moment. The only incident that marred the enjoyment of the day's proceedings was the unfortunate accident to one of the riders in the galloway race, which we narrate elsewhere. Before the time fixed for the first band to lead in the quick-step contest crowds lined the main streets, which were decked with flags in honour of the occasion. The large numbers of people who chose to postpone their visit to Dolerw Grounds to hear and see this competition proves how popular it is, and justified the wisdom of the Committee in including it in the programme. It is to be regretted that only four of the nine bands entered for the chief contest turned up. All acquitted themselves well, and the result of their efforts with the awards are recorded below. Here it will suffice to say that the Gossage's Soap Works Band, Widnes, conducted by Mr J. J. Brady, took premier honours in both competitions. The show was held, as usual, by kind permission of Sir Pryce Pryce-Jones, on Dolerw Grounds, so beautifully situated amid the surrounding hills and in sight of the river. Space was barricaded off for the various sports. There was an outer track for the pony and galloway races, an inner track for cycling, and a space within, where were the hurdles and water jump for the horse leaping contests. Adjoining the outer track was

Within a decade, the Carnival had become only one part of a huge day of celebration, as the extract from 'The Montgomeryshire Express' of 1896 testifies (left). The day included a dog show, a flower show, an exhibition of bees, a band competition, another sports event and horse racing, before the final parade (see extract above).



LEFT: shows a motley collection vying for first prize. It might have appeared harmless fun to the people of the time. But look closely. The contenders include John Bull, the epitome of British jingoism, a Suffragette, (this was at the height of their campaign for votes for women) in the custody of three police officers, and some ethnic caricatures which would certainly give offence today. So some might think this photograph is evidence of an aggressively patriotic, misogynistic racist society. We cannot hide our history, only interpret it.



The End of an Era

On August 22 1914, Broad Street was again crowded. But for a very different occasion. This time to wave farewell to Newtown's 'B' Company, 7th Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Many of the company would have enjoyed sportsday, a few weeks earlier, or have played in the town's numerous sports teams. The bandsmen leading the march included sixteen members of the Newtown Silver Band who were used to playing on far more joyous occasions.

When the traumatised survivors of 'B' Company returned four years later, they came home to a very different world. Newtown's flannel industry was in terminal decline and with it the society it had created. The paternalist grasp of the Pryce-Jones family gradually weakened. Attempts were made to revive sportsday, but attendances were poor. Some clubs and societies did not survive. Others, however have stood the test of time - Newtown FC, Newtown Sports Club, The Bowls Club, the Carnival to name but a few. And all now far more inclusive than they ever were.

