



## “REMARKABLE ROAD TEST THE ABERDARE COMBINED MOTOR FIRE - ENGINE.”

The above is the heading of a report in the “Aberdare Leader” for the 4th of August 1906 of the delivery Journey of the town’s new fire engine, which is seen on plates 71 and 72 of “Old Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil In Photographs”. The Journey from London required two overnight stops but was thought to be a great success. The report ran as follows;

“The following is the record of a journey of over 200 miles accomplished by the above engine in order that the Aberdare District Council might be satisfied concerning the reliability of the engine on any of the roads in their district.

The machine left the works of the makers, Messrs Merryweather and Sons, Greenwich, London, at 4.30 pm on July 24th, in charge of Mr Maryon, the firm’s designer, with engineer W E Seffrey at the wheel accompanied by Lieut. Davies, Aberdare Fire Brigade.

The route lay through the heart of London, past the Elephant and Castle, over Westminster Bridge, past the Marble Arch, and straight on to Uxbridge, when the first stop was made, having made a safe journey through the thickest part of London traffic at a most busy time. Leaving Uxbridge, the machine arrived at Oxford at 8.50 pm and stopped at the Clarendon Hotel where they garaged for the night after a run of 64 miles. On the road to Oxford, soon after leaving High Wickham (sic) the engine had to negotiate a very stiff piece of hill climbing. Far away in a straight line the road stretched like a piece of tape, rising up and up, until in the distance it seemed like an insurmountable mountain. On went the engine, the driver bending over his wheel, watching intently the ascent before him. The lower slopes were taken on the second gear, then changing to the bottom gear, when relieved of the terrible strain, she bounded along on her journey as if rejoicing on having performed a splendid feat. At Oxford, the machine created quite a sensation.

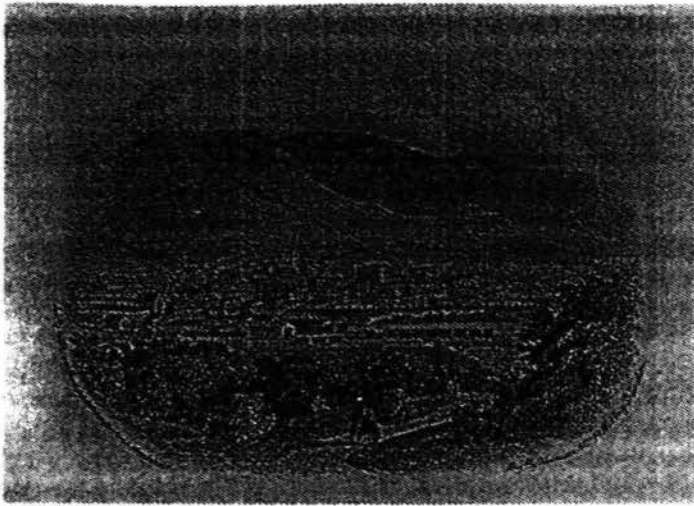
Next morning the journey was continued at 9.30, the send-off being given by a huge crowd, among whom were the majority of the local Fire Brigade, who with their chief officer Symons had thoroughly inspected the engine before starting.

From Oxford to Whitney was a quick if uneventful trip, arriving by 10.16am when a short halt was made, and the engine was photographed by Mr Maryon, who in addition to his talents as a designer, is a photographer of no mean ability. Leaving Whitney for Northleach the wrong road was taken, which necessitated the retracing of their way from Burford to the main road, and caused a delay of about half an hour, arriving at Northleach at 11.15am, where the engine was inspected to see how she stood the Journey. Finding everything allright the journey was continued through Cheltenham to Gloucester, arriving well before lunch time. Lunch was partaken of at the well known palatial hotel, the New Inn.

The engine also needed refreshment and was satisfied with 8 gallons of petrol. A fresh start was made at 2.30pm for Newnham, and having got about three miles on the route the fan pulley broke. This caused a delay of about three quarters of an hour. Proceeding, they arrived at Newnham at 4 pm. Knowing some severe hill climbing was before them and that the fan was broken, the tank was well filled with water for cooling the engine. Although the journey was exceptionally severe they arrived safely at Chepstow at 5.30pm where they met Captain R L Berry patiently awaiting their arrival on the bridge over the Wye which joins the counties of Gloucester and Monmouthshire just below the beautiful ruins of Chepstow castle. They had now accomplished a journey of over 80 miles, and although the latter part of the journey had been covered without a fan the engine worked splendidly without overheating. As it was known that portions of the road were dangerous to travel in the dark, it was decided to continue the journey from Chepstow on the morrow, so the engine was garaged at the rear of the George hotel. Next morning after replenishing the supply of petrol and lubricating oil a fresh start was made at 8am, the engine surmounting the steep ascent which leads out of Chepstow, and continuing the journey arrived at Newport at 10am. Stopping at Messrs Hodges and Sons to enquire the way, the route was taken for Cardiff on the St Mellons Hill. The engine came to a standstill owing to delaying changing the gear too long. The sprag having been lowered, a splendid demonstration was given of the power of the engine to re-start on a severe gradient and Cardiff was reached about 10pm.

Without delay, the engine passed through Cardiff attracting great attention in her passage, reaching Taffs Well at 10.30 where a stop was made to inspect the engine. Finding all satisfactory the journey was resumed, passing Pontypridd. The dangerous gradients and bends of the road past the Traveller’s Rest, Abercynon was successfully negotiated, and the engine was brought to a halt opposite Tyntetown at 11.45 to refill the water tank. The journey was continued without further halts until Aberdare was reached, where a stop was made owing to a dog going under the engine and being run over.

The engine finally reached her destination, the Aberdare Fire Station at 12.30, having successfully stood a test which is without parallel in the history of fire engines. The fact of having successfully travelled a distance of over 200 miles of every kind of road is a striking testimony to the quality of work and the skillful design bestowed upon her by the makers.”



## THE WAY WE WERE THEN No 6

**A MAN SLOWLY ROASTED.** "A very appalling accident happened on Wednesday se'nnight at the Llwydcoed lime-kilns near Aberdare. A young man, named William Thomas, was engaged in superintending the process of burning lime, and having "fed the kiln" as it is called, by piling upon it a large heap of stones, etc, got on to the top of the heap for the purpose of levelling the stones. It unfortunately happened that the mass beneath was highly calcined, and the substratum giving away the heap of stones slowly descended, and the unhappy man was carried with them into the burning abyss. The poor wretch struggled in the hope of extricating himself, and Save utterance to the most heartrending shrieks, but though many rushed to the spot and made what efforts they could to rescue him, all was in vain...Accidents continually occur from this excessively imprudent though momentarily convenient practice; and it is very desirable that some other and safer means should be employed to accomplish the same end. Beyond this we see nothing to blame in this case, awful as it is to contemplate and record such a tragedy. The coroner's jury necessarily returned a verdict of accidental death."

The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian 21 May 1859



## EDITORIAL

Readers may remember that the main article in our last number was devoted to the plight of two imposing monuments of the tramroad age, the impressive bridge at Gelli Isaf and the even more important causeway at Hirwaun which carried the Aberdare Canal Co's tramroad to Penderyn over the River Cynon. Both these structures are scheduled ancient monuments and both are the subject of deterioration which, if not

THE ACCIDENT TO A POLICEMAN AT ABERDARE. P. C, David Evans, who, it will be remembered, had his right arm and leg cut off by a train passing over him on the Taff Vale railway is in a fair way of recovering. The explanation of the accident is that having lost his sleep for the last night or so he felt very fatigued and sat down alongside the line, where he fell asleep and rolled on to the rails."

The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian 11 August 1865.

**THE ABERNANT TUNNEL.** "Very likely most of our readers felt somewhat the same as we did when they heard of the downfall of the Abernant tunnel. For a long time past that precious piece of railway engineering has been on our mind. As a fit continuation of the Abernant road to Merthyr It has been highly dangerous from its inauguration. In a playful sort of way bricks would fall out of its roof on the slightest provocation, and many constant travellers who had occasion to pass through this burrow once or twice daily hardly ever got over an undefined dread of something about to happen. The tunnel directly or otherwise, has been celebrated in connection with several accidents of greater or lesser importance, the last one being the stoppage of the Merthyr end about fifteen months ago when the train ran into a flood of water, and the passengers escaped with difficulty. We hope the present attempt to make the place trustworthy will be eminently successful, certainly experience and personal perseverance will not be lacking to that end and the only question in our minds is, whether the end aimed at might not be reached without a tunnel at all. However, we will not obtrude our amateur notions on the practised engineers of the Great Western Railway, and only wish them success. By the way, it would not be half a bad thing if a few hundred yards of the Abernant road would tumble in'

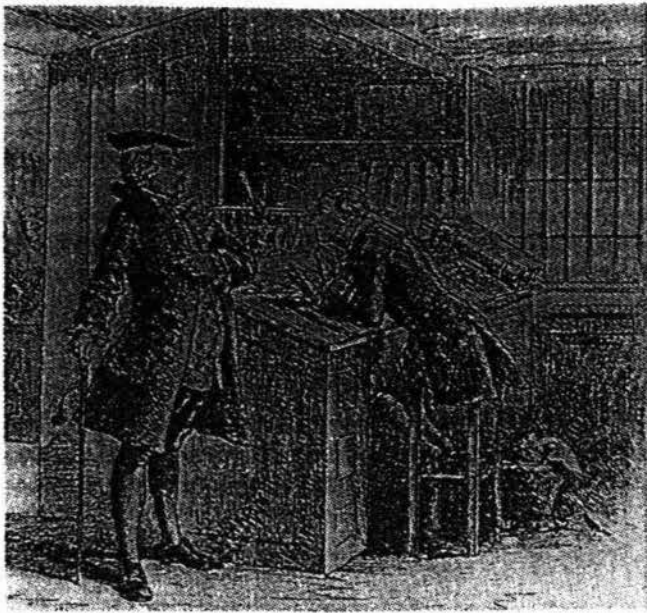
The Aberdare Times 1 Dec 1877.

halted, will eventually result in their collapse, Since then, the only thing that has happened is that the other side of the arch on the upstream side has started to fall into the river as well, thus increasing the rate of decay and bringing forward the day when the bridge will fall into the river.

The article called upon the people of Hirwaun to take steps to save the causeway. That was six months ago, and if anything has been done it has been done in secret. The article also stated that copies of that issue of "HANES" would be sent to the councillors concerned, This was done, but whether they took any notice of it is not known, as from the six councillors I have received no response whatever.

On a happier note, "HANES" congratulates Mr Edwin Greening on becoming a life member of the Society for his services to local history.

The Society has suggested to CADW that the surviving stone sleeper blocks on that part of the Aberdare Canal Company's tramroad which lies to the east of Robertstown Tramroad bridge should be a scheduled ancient monument.



## CAN YOU TELL ME? NO.6

### Question

Have there always been boats on the park pond?

### Answer

Let's have a bit of respect and call it a lake. I seem to remember periods when there were no boats on the lake. Perhaps they were hidden away during the war when they could have been used by an occupying force to capture the island.

The first boats were provided in 1887 by the eccentric local undertaker, Isaac Thomas. (See "Pictures from the Past" Vol I plate 98a) Though there were only three boats involved, a christening ceremony was arranged in the presence of Lady Lewis, Miss Davies Ynyscynon and the High Constable Mr David Davies. After the ceremony they were rowed round the pond while a Mr William Thomas sang suitable verses to the tune of "God Bless the Prince of Wales," accompanied by the brass band of the Aberdare Volunteers.

### Question

Somewhere in Hirwaun (I don't know exactly where) there is a place I have heard mention of as "The Glosters". Can you tell me anything about this?

### Answer

This was the piece of ground between the Aberdare-Neath line and the ironworks, which is now partly built over. The name arises from the fact that this was the site of the "Gloucester Wagon Works", an offshoot of the parent company at Gloucester. The editor would be glad to hear from anyone who can help with the dates of this firm. It is thought to have been there from about 1880 to after W.W.2.

*The Editor will be pleased to receive questions on local history and will attempt to answer them with the aid of local experts.*

## Diary of a Victorian Country Girl

We continue the diary of Joan Lacy of Ty'n y waun for March and April 1879. In our last Issue we omitted to say that the original is in Welsh. The person that Joan Lacy refers to as "Walters" was an unqualified assistant to Dr Evan Jones. (See "Old Aberdare" Vol 5 page 45).

1 March, Beautiful and fine today. Tom [her brother living in Maerdy] and his brother-in-law came over and took the bacon. I promised to go over and stay with them over Sunday.

2 Another bright morning. Mother in bed, a very bad headache. Went to chapel this morning and evening and had two excellent sermons.

3 Mother not much better. Called Walters in to see her and went down for medicine. Went to chapel and had a good meeting. When I came home I found "somebody" [her boyfriend] had called to see mother but didn't stay long and went for a walk. Paid for the hams.

4 Mother a little better, Wrote to Maggie. [her sister Margaret at Gilfach Goch] Went to the singing school. R Richards bought sheep here.

5 Very rough today. Went to chapel this evening. Afterwards for a walk.

6 Very fine today. have been washing.

7 A lovely day. Went to town, Called at Mrs Mills for my glove. "Told me she had given it to H Morgan. Met "my boy", had a few words. Called with Mrs Giles and finally had a chat with Mary, Gave me all the news she had. Had some medicine from Walters for mother.

8 Still very fine. Jacob Thomas called here and promised to get a pup like "old fan". Went to Morgans for butter, had lots of news.

9 Been to chapel today, had two good prayer meetings. School looking flourishing. I Williams called in the afternoon to see mother.

10 Have been making a bonnet for mother today. Went to the rehearsal at Llwydcoed, Met my boy and walked home.

11 Very fine today. Went to town, called to see Mary, had an interesting conversation and wrote a letter. Went to the singing school.

12 Very rough today, Went this morning to look at a cow at John Jones's and this evening went and bought her for £17. Afterwards to chapel, not many there. Inspector Thorney asked to see my mother.

13 The cow came today. Very fine, went for a walk this evening.

14 Went and ordered some bran. Had a chat with Mary;

15 A rough day, preparing for our meeting.

16 The weather has been very favourable and we had excellent meetings. Mr Edwards preached three sermons-Ruth 2,12 Romans 16,7 John 10,28. Mr W Jones Crickhowell preached with him at 2, o'clock, Romans 1,16. Tom and Margaret came over and returned after tea. Miss Morgan and Miss Charles took tea with us.

17 A very wet day. Still, we had two good meetings. The Rev J Foulkes Liverpool preached this morning, Psalms 1,30 3,4. At two, Rev J Evans Merthyr, Luke 23, 42 43 and both this evening, Titus 2,11 and Luke 16,25. Mrs Charles Mrs Jones and Mr Rogers came to tea.

18 A bright morning. Went to Hirwaun to see Mr Williams about the Trysorfa. [This may be a reference to a religious magazine or to a "fund"]. Told me he would put all right. Paid for the cow, had 2/6 (luck). Had a letter from Maggie.

Johnnie very ill again and wanting me to go over,  
 19 Came to Gilfach today. John [her brother] met me at the station. Wrote a line to mother, Johnnie better.  
 20 Have been unpicking Maggie's dress. Went to see John and took tea with them. Called at William's [another brother]. Wrote to mother.  
 21 Maggie went to Cardiff today and bought heaps of drapery and grocery. I washed all the window curtains. Johnnie has been a good boy.  
 22 Johnnie still better. John and Joanna called here this evening,  
 23 Have been in all day excepting to tea at John's. Mr W Davies came there also.  
 24 Have been busy making chair covers etc. Had a letter from my dear Mam. Wrote to tell her, going home tomorrow.  
 25 Home once more, Mother pretty well excepting a cold.  
 26. Have been to town today. Called at Plasdene. Took tea and played with baby. Called at Mr Giles, had a long chat.  
 27. Evan sent for the calf but didn't get it, I met him in town told me it didn't matter, calf killed. Somebody came up and went for a walk.  
 28. Have been busy today, Sold the calf.  
 29. Have done nothing today but walking about. Had to go to town for some veal for Mrs Jones etc. etc,  
 30. Have been to chapel and school. Had a lecture meeting. Called (---?) to learn a chapter of the 'Hyfforddwi'  
 31. Had a note to say Mrs Davies was dead, wrote a line expressing my sympathy. Went to town, took tea with Mary. Didn't go to the lecture.  
 1. April Went to funeral. W.Morgan's little boy. Returned in time for singing school. Capt. Travers came to Cwmdare. Mother thought of seeing him but it didn't please Tom to let her know.  
 2. Have been busy washing. Went down to to Morgan's, afterwards to town. Called at Giles and had a cup of tea. Chapel in the evening.  
 3. Very fine today. Went to Powell's this evening, told me he would sow the oats.  
 4. Have been to town nearly all day. Called at Insp. Thorney's but didn't see him.  
 5. Wet day. The Rev Thomas Watkins came here this evening.  
 6. Have been to chapel all day. Mr Williams preached two good sermons. Had an interesting teachers meeting. Toms brother in law came here from Maerdy, took dinner and tea. Had been to Carmel selling tickets for their lecture.  
 9. Have been busy sewing for Maggie.  
 10. Had a letter from Maggie to say they are coming here tomorrow. Went to Bethania and had two good sermons.

11, Good Friday. Had a note from Miss Davies asking me to spend the evening with her, I did not know how to think of complying with her wishes, but however I did go and enjoyed myself very much. 'Somebody' walked home with me. Maggie didn't come.  
 12. A very miserable day....Maggie & John came from the Maerdy, and of course very tired.  
 13. Very cold went to chapel, Morgan Evan officiated.  
 14. Went to town this morning intending to meet Mrs Richard's funeral. Called to see Susannah... told me they were all coming up. Mrs James Howell, Suzannah and Mary came to tea...Johnnie, was a very good boy during their stay. Afterwards I went to Hirwaun, they came with me to Penywaun, began to make arrangements for Mary's wedding. Met 'My boy', after rehearsal and walked home in good time.  
 15. Went to chapel, very few there, called a committee to arrange about cleaning the chapel and after much talk decided to adjourn for a fortnight.  
 17. Very fine. Have been washing, Maggie went to town. Margaret came over and returned with Mr Rowe  
 18. Have been cleaning the chapel. Ann came with me.. Went up to Powell with a lamb that had been left here. Maggie went to town and mother was left alone with Johnnie. He have been crying for some time.  
 19. Went to town this evening. Called to see Mary and had a chat. Made arrangements for her approaching marriage. Had an awful wetting  
 20. Have been to chapel and school. Had two good prayer meetings.  
 21. Maggie & Me went to town today and took Johnnie with us. We went to Mrs Deers to tea and returned home about 6.00pm, dead tired don't think we shall ever want to take him with us again. Met..... and went for a walk.  
 24. Have been busy sewing for Maggie.  
 25. Maggie thought of going home but it came to rain. I took a parcel to town and left it at Mrs Giles.  
 26. Peggy went home. I went with her to town and returned through the park. Heard the Cuckoo for the first time.  
 27. Went to chapel and to School. Had two good sermons by the Rev. W. Williams, Penarth. (Bett)? and Evan came here.  
 28. Went to town this evening. Met Suzannah, Mary and Miss Phoebe Jones and returned with them to the park and had a long walk. After to the rehearsal at Bryn Sion, very good, Somebody was waiting for me and took me home.  
 29, Very fine today. I went to town and called to see Suzannah and found them all at Mrs Jones having tea in which I joined. Bade her adieu and went to town and returned in time for chapel.  
 30. Have been washing today, Went to chapel. Met 'my boy' and went for a walk, beautiful evening.

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 Edited by John Mear, 7 Tudor Terrace, Aberdare. (01685) 878349  
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