



## *A GIRL GROWING UP Ca.1898-1909.*

The following account of aspects of childhood and family life in Aberdare at the beginning of the twentieth century was written by Mrs. Harriette Fillipa Jane Evans in response to questions compiled by the Museum of Welsh Folk Life, St. Fagan's.

The information recorded here was submitted to the present Editor of **Hanes** in 1990 during his period as Secretary of the Society. The statements printed below constitute a unique and moving account of what life was like for one child at that time – a young girl whose family was much better off, both materially and intellectually, than most others in Aberdare. Her story is a powerful document, contrasting vividly the differences between life “then” and “now”

The Respondent to the questions was the granddaughter of J. Lendon Berry, the photographer, whose work has greatly enriched our knowledge of the history of the town, and the mother of Society member, Mrs. Thelma Roberts.

It is interesting to note that Mrs. Evans would have been nine years old in 1904, the date of the events written about in the essay, Waiting Upon The Spirit, (Hanes, Autumn 2004) and would probably have been aware of the remarkable happenings which followed in the wake of Evan Roberts's visit to the area during the months of November and December 1904, and the early part of 1905.

Name: Harriette Fillipa Jane EVANS.

Father's Name John Macqueen.

Mother's Name: Bertha Macqueen.

Date of birth 26<sup>th</sup>. June 1895.

Father's Occupation

Travelling Draper.

### **PARENTAGE.**

1. Father born Tomatin - Inverness-shire.
2. Mother - Aberdare.
3. Maternal Grandmother - Saltash, Cornwall.
4. Maternal Grandfather - Bideford, Devon.
5. Father's Parents - Inverness-shire.
6. Maternal Grandfather - Professional Photographer.
7. Father's Occupation - Travelling Draper/Herdsman.
8. Mother's Occupation - Assistant to her father in photography business.

### **Family Background.**

My parents met in Aberdare after father arrived in the town (via Ireland) as a travelling draper, known locally as a packman. They were married at St. Elvan's Church, Aberdare on St. Andrew's Day, 30<sup>th</sup>. November, 1893.

I was born at 22 Pembroke Street, Aberdare. Apparently, much to my father's disgust, I had to be bottle-fed, my grandfather taking a photograph of me being fed from a bottle with a tube leading from bottle to teat. I was first born in family, as sister and brother reaching adulthood.

### **Schooling.**

I was at least three years old when I started school at the National School, Aberdare (1). I remember standing on a seat being taught by my Aunt then Miss Nellie Berry. Some boys climbed the wall shouting “Nellie Berry had a fat belly!” just as they would today. We were taught hymns, collects and prayers. I wrote using a slate. My father carved my name Fillipa MacQueen in the wooden surround. I was happy at the National School. Some classes were sent to the Memorial Hall (2) for lessons.

Discipline was very strict, a principle my father very much agreed with. The only discipline I can remember being applied to me was being sent to stand in a corner. I cannot remember any teachers being attacked by parents in my infant days at school – a situation that was different in my junior school days at Blaengwawr (3). No. I did not work before school, or part time and cannot recall earning pocket money.

### Helping out at Home

Any chores I did during my childhood must have been pleasant to me, as I can't remember doing any, though no doubt I did! Mother had a regular routine each day of the week, i.e. washing clothes on Monday, thoroughly cleaning the entire home, except the kitchen, on Friday. The kitchen had a "grand" clean on Saturday, vegetables prepared and shoes cleaned ready for Sunday. The domestic task I remember my father doing was cooking Sunday dinner, which was ready when the rest of the family returned home from Morning Service

### Family Relationships.

My parents were very private and I cannot remember any particular show of affection. Most evenings were spent together at home. Usually, going for walks, we were just mother and children. My mother taught us to sew and knit while my father was more concerned with reading and writing. He had beautiful copperplate handwriting always using a "J" nib. I remember. No, mother had no job outside the home, although for a few years she did have a "front room" shop.

### Memories of Christmas

Going to church in the morning. When we were very small we were not allowed to touch any toys until mother returned home from church. As soon as we were thought old enough we also attended church. Dinner was prepared on Christmas Eve and usually was centered on two chickens and hares, these being an annual gift from my father's brother in Tomatin. The home was decorated with lots of ivy, holly and mistletoe and we made our own paper chains. Each Christmas Aunt Jane, father's sister in Scotland, sent dolls for my sister Betty and myself; I can't remember what Jim received. These were our highlights, as we knew something was coming all the way from Scotland. We were not short of gifts from our parents, either. My father being quite talented in woodwork as a pastime, and I still have two small chests-of-drawers, about 18" high that he made when I was a child. Christmas day, apart from church, was spent at home but during the Christmas season we visited grandparents and our many aunts, uncles and cousins.

### Family Recreation.

My mother knitted and read as her leisure activities, while my father also read, and always seemed to be whittling or working on a piece of wood. He also gardened a lot and supplied us with most of our own vegetables. Work seemed to occupy most of my father's life. The treats I recall mostly were the Berry family outings when one or two brakes took us all to Penderyn where we had a family meal, dining at a long table in the garden of the Lamb Inn (4).

### Housing and Finances.

Our house was owned by my grandfather. We moved twice, firstly to 128 Cardiff Road, Aberaman, because of shortage of room in Pembroke Street. After about four years we moved to 56 Philip Street, Robertstown, as by then my father worked as a herdsman for a Mr. Thomas of Ysguborwen House (5). At first our Philip Street home was rented, but after a few years my mother bought it. Robertstown was much nearer Ysguborwen House for the very early hours my father's work required. I seem to remember my father earning about £1 per week. We didn't have much money but plenty of happiness. I can't remember my mother grumbling about money.

### Diet.

Breakfast Quaker Oats, plenty of milk and syrup for sweetening.

Mid-day Plenty of fresh vegetables. We quite often received gifts of meat from the family at Ysguborwen House, I can even recall dining on venison, and we always knew when the family had been out shooting.

Tea - fruit tarts, stewed fruits, custard. Rice, sago and tapioca puddings.

Supper- cold meats, pickles.

My mother used to boil rice in milk, leaving until cold and solid then turning out onto a plate, cutting it into slices and deep-frying it was delicious! A neighbour of ours was always ready to join us for supper when this was on our menu!

(To be continued.)

### NOTES TO THE TEXT.

1. The National Church School, Cardiff Street, Aberdare. Established 1826.
2. The Bowen Jenkins Memorial Hall, Seymour Street. Built 1894. Now demolished. Jenkins was Vicar of Aberdare from 1883 to 1893.
3. See "The History of Blaengwawr Schools in the Early Years" by Stephen Cooke in *Old Aberdare. Vol. 8. (C.V.H.S. 1982)*
4. A photograph of such a Berry family event is shown in plate 121 *Aberdare Pictures From the Past (C.V.H.S. 1986)*
5. Ysguborwen House was built by Samuel Thomas (1800-1879), a colliery proprietor and would have been occupied during the period 1898-1909 by his son David Alfred Thomas (created Viscount Rhondda in 1915) the Gladstonian Liberal Member of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare from 1888 to 1910. See *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography* down to 1940 at page 942. The house is now a residential home for the elderly. Its grounds were extensive and the later reference to venison suggests there were deer there.

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It is always pleasing to receive praise from unexpected quarters. The kind words set out in this letter were written by Huw Edwards the B.B.C's principal newsreader, and authority on Welsh Religious history. (Many readers will have watched his recent T.V. series on this topic.) Mr. Edwards is the son of Prof. Hywel Teifi Edwards who, with the Revd. Eric Jones, launched Alan Jones's book "Chapels of The Cynon Valley" for us in December 2004.

The letter reads:-

Dear Alan,  
A brief note to say what a brilliant volume you've created in the Chapels of Cwm Cynon. It's nothing short of remarkable.

Above all - I'd like to thank you for the immense hard work which clearly went into it. For those of us who share your passion for safeguarding our Chapel heritage you have given us a real treasure.

BBC News

30 December

Dear Alan,  
A brief note to say what a brilliant volume you've created on the chapels of Cwm Cynon. It's nothing short of remarkable.

Above all - I'd like to thank you for the immense hard work which clearly went into it. For those of us who share your passion for safeguarding our chapel heritage - you have given us a real

treasure.  
Dymuniad uchaf i chi.  
with very fond wishes for  
the New Year  
David



## A LAST WORD ON EVAN ROBERTS

The Following letter, which reads as if a hard-nosed businessman wrote it, appeared in *The Aberdare Leader* on the 28<sup>th</sup>. January 1905.

Sir,

What is to be the result of these religious gatherings in Aberdare?

This enthusiasm will naturally ultimately die down. People cannot always live at this pace of excitement. What will be the afterward? In some towns the result has been the entire closing of shops on Sunday, in others early closing on Saturday nights, and the closing of public houses at the same time. What is Aberdare going to do? Anything or nothing?

A photograph of Evan Roberts appears in *Aberdare Pictures From the Past Vol .2.* with the caption "*Evan Roberts was the leading light in the 1904/5 Revival. Although more emotional in its appeal than the previous revivals, its effects were very short lived. Given at the time there was talk of "Tomfoolery", "Frenzy" and "Pious insanity", and Roberts was accused of being a mesmerist. At least one person from the valley was taken to the asylum with acute religious mania.*"

John Mear in his *The Story of Cwmdare* records that this syndrome also affected a second person. One took his own life a few years later causing the Coroner, R.H.Rhys, to make the frank comment "*He was one of Evan Roberts's victims as far as I know*". The particular chapter in John's book containing this fact is entitled "The Way Of Our Lives."

## EDITORIAL NOTES

There was an error in the note relating to Aberdare's war dead on page 4 of the last edition of *Hanes*. The first line should have read "700 men from the U.D. (Urban District) of Aberdare, and not U.D.C which suggest that all 700 killed were employees of the Council. Our apologies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

Alan Jones and the Society acknowledge that the photograph of Carmel Chapel in 1976, reproduced on page 98 of "Chapels of the Cynon Valley", was taken by Mr. David Workman.



## DAN BEDDOE REVISITED

What is the connection between Aberaman and some of the greatest names of the musical world Gustav Mahler, Walter Damrosch and Leopold Stowkovsky? The key to the answer is to be found in the conclusion of Prof. H. T. Edwards's talk "Cwm Cynon" in May 2002, when he played an early (1911) sound recording of the alto Dan Beddoe.

It seemed that little was known about this artist, and Prof. Edwards appealed for information which would add to his knowledge of Dan Beddoe.

Thanks to the interest and collaboration of Mr. John Davies of Seymour Street, Society members, Hywel Lloyd, Elfed Bowen, and Mrs. Rhiannon Reynolds, the former Aberdare Leader Theatre and Art Critic, and a descendent of Dan Beddoe, biographical detail has come to light which the Society has been pleased to pass on to Prof. Edwards.

Daniel Beddoe was born at 189 Cardiff Road, Aberaman on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1863, a son of Thomas (a coal miner) and Gwenllian Beddoe. The family removed to Llwynypia (Rhondda) where Dan found work as a collier (1881). Fortunately a fine singing voice enabled him to escape from the hardships and dangers of the mines. He joined a local choir, attracted local attention and soon rose in musical circles as a soloist.

In 1885 he won the Tenor Solo Competition at the National Eisteddfod held in Aberdare that year. Two years later he was invited to tour America with seven other National Eisteddfod winners. They called themselves "The Welsh Prize Singers". Their concert tour of the U.S.A. began in October 1887 and ended in May 1888 during which time the group travelled some 13,000 miles. Whilst at Cleveland, Ohio, Beddoe was invited to join the St. Paul's Episcopal Church choir. He did not accept the appointment and returned to Wales where he married.

He returned to Cleveland however, later moving to Pittsburgh (1893) where he remained for 13 years. He did not immediately achieve success and was obliged to obtain paid engagements with two church choirs in that city. His career did not take off until 1902, when he was 39 years old. That year he was engaged by Walter Damrosch and The New York Symphony Orchestra to sing Wagner. He so impressed Damrosch that he invited Beddoe to appear at Carnegie Hall, New York and sing at a Concert of works by Berlioz on the occasion of the centenary of the composer's birth. Subsequently Damrosch and the N.Y.S.O took Beddoe with them on a Wagner tour in which he sang the title roll in "Parsifal". The tour was a great success and established Beddoe's reputation as a soloist of distinction for the next 20 years.

Unfortunately space precludes us from recording Beddoe's fascinating career even briefly. There were many more appearances at Carnegie Hall, concerts under Fritz Reiner, and in 1909 Beddoe sang the Tenor Solos in the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Ode To Joy) under the baton of **Gustav Mahler**.

He set up home in New York and he became one of America's most successful concert singers. During the period 1909-1912 Beddoe made some 30 concert appearances in Wales and the English Provinces. Daniel Beddoe continued to receive tuition to improve his art throughout his career. He died in New York on the 26<sup>th</sup> December 1937. He made very few Gramophone recordings and copies are quite rare. In 1979 Rubini Records transferred 13 of Beddoe's best recordings onto Long Playing Record. Critics have described his voice as "Bright toned, resonant and large. One capable of being heard effortlessly across the orchestral forces demanded by Berlioz, Wagner and Richard Strauss", and "One of resonant clarity, wide range and thrilling timbre, dramatic, rich warm and of superb range." Gareth H. Lewis writing in the Western Mail's Weekend Magazine in May 1979 says, "*Beddoe is totally forgotten in Wales*" Now that Prof. Edwards has a copy of the articles mentioned below we have a feeling that will not be the case for much longer! Meanwhile the Society should perhaps seek to have a "Blue Plaque" erected at 189 Cardiff Road.

Mrs. Reynolds has a fine photograph of Daniel Beddoe.

(With acknowledgement to Gareth H. Lewis in The Record Collector and The Western Mail.)

In the next issue we will conclude "A Girl Growing Up", record something of the 1905 National Eisteddfod held at Mountain Ash, and look at other aspects of the history of that area.

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