



HANES ON TRADE

How many private traders are there in the town today? Apart from those in the Market Hall, the answer is very few.

For a period of a hundred years however, from about 1855 to 1955, our shops were established either by local men, or immigrants from other parts of Wales who were quick to foresee the rapid expansion of the town during the industrial period.

A notable example is the Williams family of Compton House, Victoria Square (formerly Commercial Place). The founder of this drapery business (the name already existed see below), David Williams, came here from the Vale of Glamorgan, and the business passed from father to son, (Iltyd Williams), to grandson (Mansel Williams), and flourished until the 1970's. There are many similar examples William Hodges & Sons, the Clothiers, and Thomas Lloyd (Grocers, Commercial Street), to name but two.

The businesses carried now romantic, and Dickensian sounding names such as "The Beehive", "Commerce House", "The Golden Key", "Cloth Hall", "Emporium", and "Golden Canister".

These old trading families prospered, and provided Aberdare with a middle class elite, a "Shopocracy" (to use a term penned by the late Prof. Gwyn Alf Williams.), that ran the town. The lists of members, of the Vestry, Guardians, The Board of Health, Magistracy, High Constables, and even the U.D.C. until the late 1930's, abound with the names of local shopkeepers.

A few of the "doings" of these old traders are given below.

1854: Early closing! *At a meeting of local tradesmen held in June of this year, it was decided that shops should close much earlier (sic) than previously. The new times were Monday, 9 p.m. : Tuesday to Friday 8 p.m. : Saturday 11 p.m!*

At Aberdare they do profess
To close their shops in time,
But the Masters rather do impose
And close their shops at nine"

(The Aberdare Times 24 June 1865.)

Pritchard and Powell. The Beehive, Aberdare,
Grand stock of furs in all the new shapes,
prices from 6¼d to 10 guineas.
Our profits being small we cannot afford to
illuminate the streets at night.
Train fares paid on purchases of 10/- and upwards.

1861. October "Compton House"
Commercial Place, Aberdare,
Mr. J. Davies respectfully informs his friends and
the public generally that he has opened a General Drapery
in the shop lately occupied by Mr. Wightman.
System of business ONE PRICE and no abatement".

1858: J.Sherbourne, Commercial Place, Aberdare
wishes to inform the public that he has secured a
large number of new and second-hand watches of
the best make, which will be offered at such low
prices as to secure immediate sale and give entire
satisfaction.

HANES ON STREETS (No.1) COMMERCIAL PLACE IN 1875.

"I am a citizen of no mean City" quoted the Chairman of the Aberdare Urban District Council (Mr.W.J.Hodges), with great civic pride, in 1930. Could we say that today? That same year the Editor of The Aberdare Leader, Mr.W.J.Rowlands, reminded people that Aberdare was frequently referred to as the "Athens of Wales" in literary and musical circles. To these we would add architecture. Nowhere is this more evident than in the majestic sweep of Commercial Place (Victoria Square since 1897) and the fine buildings to be seen there. This article seeks to reconstruct the names of the businesses that flourished there in its heyday in 1875. The numbers given are those of the premises. (Source: Worrall's Directory of South Wales, 1875.)

1. David W.Jones, Chemist. ("*The White Horse*".) Established 1826-1827.
2. Private Residence (John Jones, White Horse Chemist)
3. William Morris, (**THE POST OFFICE**), Bookseller, Stationer, Newsagent and Printer
4. Richard Lodge, Grocer.
5. David Williams, Draper (*Compton House*.)
6. Alfred Copeland, Outfitter.
7. Thomas A. Price, Draper and Outfitter.
8. David Phillips, Grocer.
9. J Watkin Thomas, Wine Merchant, (Agent for W & A Gilbey)
10. J Watkin Thomas, Chemist, Bookseller, Stationer and Tobacconist.
11. Henry Lewis, Draper.
12. *The Bailey's Arms* (John Hughes.)
13. Felix Eschle, Watch and Clock Maker.
14. John Henton, Draper.
15. *Fothergill's Arms* (John E. Tremellen)
16. Jenkin Howell, Printer and Stationer.
17. *Waterloo Stores* (Evan Davies, Beer Retailer.)
18. *The Rising Sun* (John Lewis)
19. William Mason, Boot and Shoe Maker.
20. Thomas Dyke, Draper.
21. ?
22. Mrs.M.C.Francis, Chemist, Druggist, and Stationer.
23. Wm.Hodges, Tailor and Outfitter, Boot and Shoe Maker, Dealer.
24. Albion Mullins, Toy and Fancy Repository, China and Glass Dealer.
25. *The Boot Hotel* (Wm. Dyke) Wine and Spirit Merchant.
26. *The Castle Hotel* (Mrs.Thomas Edmunds.)
27. John Jenkins, Grocer.
28. *The Bute Arms*. (Edward Williams)
29. *The Butchers' Arms* (Thomas Morgan)
30. *The Marquis of Bute Inn* (John Evans)
31. Jones & Son, Printers (**THE ABERDARE TIMES**), Toy and Fancy Dealer.
32. John Christmas, Grocer.
33. *The Oddfellows' Arms* (Richard Nicholas.)
34. *The Golden Lion Hotel*, (David Davies)
35. T.Whitsun Jones, Auctioneer, Valuer and Furniture Dealer.
36. Edward Giles, Butcher.
37. *The Black Lion Hotel*, (Arthur Jones)
38. *The Vulcan Inn* (Thomas Lawrence.)

BONNETS AND BUCKRAM AT THE BEEHIVE.

There are still a number of buildings in and around the town bearing raised stone lettering signs on the exterior reminding us of the names of businesses once carried on there. Attention is drawn to Compton House, and The Beehive in Victoria Square, The Freemasons' and The Bush in Commercial Street (Still a pub but now licenced under the name and sign of the "Pickled Pepper")

This article will recall "The Beehive", already referred to in the introductory essay, at 11 Commercial Place (Now 11 Victoria Square). Its business use can be traced back to 1852, when Miles Gabriel, a draper, occupied the premises. He was succeeded firstly by Henry Lewis, also a draper (Fl.1865-1869), and then by G.George who acquired the business in 1885. Mr.George was a Magistrate, and resided at "The Laurels", Meirion Street. It was under his ownership that the shop became known as "Beehive", an apt metaphor for the brisk trade carried on, and the constant bustle of people entering and leaving, customers, commercial travellers, errand and messenger boys, and the deliveries and arrival of parcels and stock. Here follows a word-picture of the business as it was in 1892. One can almost smell the bolts of cloth.

"Among ladies resident in Aberdare and district no establishment enjoys a better reputation than that which is so ably conducted by Mr.G.George, as a draper, milliner, and mantle maker. This business was established forty years ago, and acquired seven years since by the present proprietor, under whose able and enterprising management it has been very rapidly developed and extended. The premises, which are appropriately named the "Beehive", are very centrally situated in Commercial Place, and comprise a handsome double-fronted shop, having an imposing frontage of sixty feet, and extending a considerable distance to the rear. On the ground floor also are situated elegantly appointed show rooms for the display of mantles, costumes, and millinery. Mr.George's stock is one of the largest and best selected in Aberdare; and ladies even of the most fastidious taste will find at his establishment all that they require, thus saving the trouble and expense of sending to London or any of the other large centres. Specialities are made of ladies' fur jackets, coats, mantles, etc., walking and travelling dresses, and children's out-door and indoor dresses, cut and finished in the most elegant styles, and of ladies' hats and bonnets and mob and dress caps and children's millinery, which are trimmed by thoroughly experienced hands, embodying the very latest modes. The workshops, which are upon the first floor, are well-ventilated apartments, under the supervision of experienced manageresses. The general shop embraces light and heavy drapery goods, hosiery and haberdashery, in the latest designs, and of the best manufacture, affording customers a very extensive choice. Not the least important feature of the business lies in the very moderate charges which are made, although quality is never sacrificed to cheapness."

(Source: **A Descriptive Account of Aberdare Illustrated. 1892.**)

Note: By 1912 the business had again changed hands, and was at this date in the hands of Messrs.Powell & Jones. Various photos of the shop appear in our picture books. See for example plate 178, Aberdare: Pictures from the Past. (C.V.H.S. 1986.)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Will Members please note that annual subscriptions are due on the 15th.September next, the date of the A.G.M. We would like to thank all those who continue to pay their membership fees regularly and punctually year by year.

YOUR AREA? AN OCCASIONAL ARTICLE.

No.1: HIRWAUN IN 1900.

The population of Hirwaun in 1900 was 3000. Its principal industry was coal mining. The village had a railway station on the Pontypool and Swansea branch of the Great Western Railway, a bank (Lloyd's), and a sub-Post Office, with a money order and telegraph office under Aberdare.

The main collieries were the Aberdare-Merthyr Colliery, and the Tower (owned by the Marquis of Bute.) There were other industries, the Brickworks of N.B.Allen, near the station, and the Hirwaun Crucible Steel Co. owned by a man named Snape.

The village had a large number of public houses. Twenty-one in fact, that is one pub for every 143 people, children included! They were The Beehive, Blacksmiths', Bodwigiad, Bridge End, Cardiff Arms, Castle, Crawshay's Arms, Cross Inn, Farmers', Glancynon, Globe, Golden Lion, Greyhound, Lamb, Maesyryddian, Masons', Patriot, Prince of Wales, Red Cow, Rolling Mill and The Royal Exchange.

Hirwaun at this period had eleven grocer shops, seven butchers, three tea dealers, four boot sellers/repairers, various general dealers, two bakers, several hairdressers, a surgeon (Dr.I.C.Thomas), a plumber, tailor's shops, a shoeing smith on the Tramway, and two Chemists. The village had a Solicitor, hosier and a cab-proprietor, as well as other necessary tradesmen such as a lamp merchant, an undertaker and builder, painter and paperhanger and a glass and china dealer etc. (Bennett's South Wales Business Directory for 1900. Sub.Hirwaun)

One of the more colourful professional men in the village was the Chemist John E.George. The family were the proprietors and makers of the famous **Pile and Gravel Pills** (Patented c.1870) "*The Marvellous Remedy for Pile and Gravel*".

In 1865 John E.George was also the Postmaster. His son J.Owen George succeeded him.

Their remedies were sold in three forms: -

1. Pile and Gravel Pills.
2. Gravel Pills.
3. Pills for the Piles.

The boxes containing these products were labelled white, blue and red respectively, and carried a Trade Mark of an Eagle on a Globe (and the warning beware of imitations!). They were sold at 1/3d and 3/- a box.

Another well advertised product of theirs was George's **Cambrian Tonic Voice Lozenges** formulated especially for singers and public speakers (after all we did have more than our fair share of preachers!). These lozenges "*Rendered the voice Melodious and as Clear as a Bell*". At 3d. 6d. and 1/- a box they were highly recommended by the singer, Edith Wynne (Agabeg), "*The Welsh Nightingale*", (*Excellent!*), the great Dr.Joseph Parry (*A Treasure- take them before and after exerting the vocal organs.*), Owen Alaw (*Efficacious*) and Eos Morlais (*Superior and a Great Acquisition*)*

*The Editor is grateful to Mr.Douglas Williams for drawing his attention to this splendid advertisement. We regret that we are unable to reproduce it in full. We can however show its heading.

GEORGE'S CAMBRIAN TONIC VOICE LOZENGES

Published by The Cynon Valley History Society.
Hon.Secretary, Brynmor Evans, 45E Oxford Street, Gadlys, Aberdare, CF44 8BE. (01685 875558)
Edited by Geoffrey Evans, 5 Plasdraw Place, Aberdare, CF44 0NS. (01685 871840)
E-Mail Gmorgannwg@aol.com Registered Charity No.51014.).
Printed by: Dial-A-Print, Mountain Ash 01443 474822