

# CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY

## CYMDEITHAS HANES CWM CYNON

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# HANES



NEWSLETTER OF THE CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY  
CYLCHLYTHYR CYMDEITHAS HANES CWM CYNON

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### NEW ERA

It is with regret that I have to inform you that Mr Geoffrey Evans, one of our distinguished local historians has stepped down as the editor of this newsletter. He started as editor in the winter of 2003 and has produced 48 issues of very high quality. He has written many articles for *Old Aberdare*, has co-edited "*The Land your Fathers Possessed*," and his most recent book was "*The Men who marched away*."

I hope that I can emulate him in his gift of making our history so fascinating and producing articles of a very high standard.

I offer my apologies for the late arrival of this issue, which is due to circumstances beyond my control.

Feedback on any of the articles is very welcome, so are any articles that members wish to send in for publication.

Best wishes  
Steven Graham, Editor.

### THE CYNON VALLEY 100 YEARS AGO

In the next few pages are articles from The Aberdare Leader of January 1916.

Acknowledgements are made to Trinity Mirror PLC.

It may be interesting to know that as well as the 1914 Christmas Truce there was a 1915 Christmas Truce, of which no official record was kept. On the evening of Christmas Eve 1915, the Germans started by singing Christmas carols and the British responded by singing Good King Wenceslas. At dawn on Christmas Day, the soldiers met halfway and shook hands, exchanged buttons, sausages and tins of bully beef. There was even a raucous football match, 50-a-side in No-Man's-Land. Lieutenant General Jonathon Riley found out this information as he discovered an unseen diary belonging to Private Robert W.J. Keating of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. The truce soon ended when at mid-morning an officer came upon the men and shouted to them, "You came to fight the Hun, not to make friends with them." British 18-pounders erupted on cue, and the men raced back to their trenches.

From *The Daily Telegraph*, 26 December 2015.

January 8, 1916

## Just a few of OUR MEN

Watch this page each week for others.



This is a photo of Lance Corpl. L. Teague. He enlisted in 1892 in the 2nd King's Shropshire Light Infantry. He has therefore spent 12 years with the colours, mostly in India and Africa. He joined the 6th Service Batt. K.S.L.I. on the outbreak of war. He has just been on a short leave home from the trenches somewhere in Flanders. He has a wife and four children residing at 92 Wind Street, Aberdare.



Pte. Ernest Southey, 1/5th Welsh Regt., Aberdare Co., landed in the Gallipoli Peninsula in August last. He spent four months in the trenches and has seen a deal of fighting. In his last letter to his parents he describes his experience in the recent great storm. He is at present in St. Elmo Military Hospital suffering from frostbitten feet and hands. He says that he is getting excellent treatment, and is progressing favourably. Pte. Southey is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Southey, 2a David Street, Tre cynon, and was a member of St. Fagan's Church.



Pte. George Carhart, Seaforth Highlanders, son of Mr and Mrs. Carhart, Church House, Cefnpennar, Mountain Ash. One of the heroes of Loos.

### Soldier's Gratitude.

Dear Mr. Editor,—May I through your popular paper thank the people of Cefnpennar and district for the kindness they showed me and for the presents they gave me while I was home on furlough the other day. I also wish to thank the Cefnpennar Lodge of Buffs for the privilege and pleasure of being made a member and for the hearty welcome they gave me. I have a good stock of cigs. for a little time, and the presents prove useful and handy.—I am, Pte. George Carhart, 5293, C. Coy., 9th Batt. Seaforth Highlanders, Pioneers, 9th Scottish Division, France.

### Aberamanite in Alexandria.

Appended are extracts from a letter written by Private Danny Hughes, 5th Wiltshire Regiment, from Alexandria, to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hughes, 111 Cardiff Road, Aberaman. Prior to enlisting he was a bank clerk:

"I am writing this letter at 11 a.m. in one of the base camps around Alexandria under a scorching sun. On Tuesday, 30th November, we were transferred to a battleship on which we voyaged to this place. We had a very easy time on the ship, just doing a parade or two a day. The weather was severely cold, and we had snow on two days. The battleship was an old one, and we were packed like sardines. It was a luxury to get a wash on her. To sleep in we had hammocks slung to the roof. Arriving here on Saturday morning we had to march through Alexandria, a distance of two to three miles, with our equipment weighing not far short of a cwt. Talk of beasts of burden! A tramcar took us the rest of the journey of about three miles to our destination. The camp was well situated, being near the sea shore, and the following day, Sunday, there was plenty of bathing. The poorer part of the town looks a regular Jerusalem, but the best part is splendid, having some really grand buildings. The Egyptians and Arabs are a queer people. The tramcar service is a very good one, and about five miles' run only comes to 1½d. During the day the heat is extreme, and of course its winter here now. The nights are rather cold. Yesterday we marched to another camp three miles lower down, and we are busy to-day putting up tents. We are quite prepared to rough it. Life here would give some fellows in England an eye opener. I am in good health."

*Aberdare Leader*, 15 January 1916

### Aberdare Soldier's Pathetic Last Letter.

Private T. H. Morris, 1st Welsh Horse Regt., was killed in action on December 13th at Anzac, Gallipoli. Pte. Morris, who resided at 23 High Street, Aberdare, leaves a widow and two children at this address. The gallant soldier's mother, aged 72, lives at 5 Wern Row, Gadlys, with her daughter, Mrs. S. Collins.

In his last letter to his mother Pte. Morris says that he had received no letters since he had landed in Gallipoli, which made him feel heart-broken. He adds, "We may not see one another again, but I hope we shall some day. I wish the war were over. We are under fire all day long. Yesterday they shelled us out of our dug-outs. I am looking forward to the day that I shall come home. I have seen some heart-breaking scenes out here. We have

left England 10 weeks and have had no news yet. It is more like a hell than anything else here, only shot and shell and blood and thunder."

Prior to enlistment Pte. Morris worked at the Bwlfa Collieries. His wife and children, his aged mother and sisters are the objects of general sympathy.

At Gadlys (B) Church on Sunday evening a memorial service was held in respect of the late Pte. Morris. Mr. E. T. Edwards played the "Dead March," the congregation meanwhile standing. The pastor, Rev. D. Bassett, followed in prayer, and the hymn, "O fryniau Caersalem," was sung to the tune of "Crugybar." Pte. Morris' mother is a faithful member of Gadlys Church.

*Aberdare Leader*, 15 January 1916

### PENRHIWCEIBER.

A COMPETITIVE MEETING was held at Jerusalem on Monday evening. Adjudicators: Music, Mr. John Roberts; literature, Mr. J. Davies. Miskin. Accompanist, Mr. J. Evans, A.C. Awards: Recitation under 12, R. John Davies. Solo under 16, May Evans. Solo under 20, Miss Myfanwy James. Reading music at first sight, Miss Edith Davies. Open solo, Mr. Emrys Davies. Duëtt, Misses Myfanwy James and Edith Davies. Threading a needle, Miss Addie Lewis. Impromptu speech, Mr. Taliesin Richards. Answering Scriptural questions, Messrs. Dan Davies and John Evans, equal. Mr. David Roberts, Miskin, presided.

*Aberdare Leader*, 8 January 1916

The Ridiculous:  
A prize for threading a needle

The Sublime:  
Death in Gallipoli

FOR

AGAINST

### **Aberdare Recruits.**

#### **Local Tribunal's First Meeting.**

The group system under Lord Derby's scheme has been re-opened pending the passing of the Compulsory Military Service Bill. At Aberdare Recruiting Office there has been a brisk response, over 200 men attesting on Monday and Tuesday. The bulk of these were young single men. This feature is very satisfactory, for on the general response of single men throughout the country will depend the necessity or otherwise of persisting with the Bill. Judging by the number of armlets, the number of attestations has been very great in Aberdare, and it would seem that but a few young men employed in non-reserved occupations have refrained from "grouping." Teachers and Council officials and employees have attested almost to a man, and it is hoped and believed that the few young men who are still armletless will copy the example of their fellows in the course of the next few days, and thus save, so far as Aberdare district can, the country from compulsion.

*Aberdare Leader*, 15 Jan 1916

### **I.L.P. and Conscription.**

On Sunday afternoon at the Workmen's Hall, Aberaman, a meeting was held under the auspices of the I.L.P. Mr. T. Russell Williams, Huddersfield, was the principal speaker. Mr. J. T. Norman presided over a crowded audience. In the course of a forcible address Mr. Williams dealt with the fundamental cause of all modern wars, viz., commercial aggrandisement. He showed that Germany aspired for an outlet to the Atlantic in the West, while in the East the acquiring of the Vistula from its source to its mouth was her ambition. In the East she would then become the possessor of some of the richest agricultural and mineral land in Europe. He treated other countries similarly, and affirmed that rival commercial aspirations were the root causes of modern wars. He made a strong plea against conscription, and stated it would be a bad day for the worker when it became the law of the land. He hailed the dawn of the day when Britain would be a bright land for Britons to live in.—Eight new members were enrolled.

*Aberdare Leader*, 22 Jan 1916

### **Military Concerts at Cwmaman.**

On Saturday a concert was held in honour of Driver Frank Gubb, R.F.A., who was home on a few days' leave from the front. Mr. Thomas Duffy presided. Songs were rendered by Messrs. F. Mitchell, W. Davies, B. South, Oliver Harris, Owen Hughes, T. J. Davies, T. Hancock, T. James. Mr. William Davies delivered an address. He said that Driver Gubb belonged to one of the most patriotic families in Cwmaman, his father and three brothers being also in the Army. Driver Gubb thankfully responded. He had been out since the commencement of the war. His opinion was that the war could not last much longer. He was presented with a token of respect. A letter was read from Driver W. L. Griffiths, R.F.A., thanking the Cwmaman friends for the good send-off accorded him. Driver Gubb left for France on Sunday.

*Aberdare Leader*, 15 Jan 1916

### **MR. KEIR HARDIE'S WILL.**

Mr. James Keir Hardie, M.P., who died at Glasgow on Sept. 26, aged 59 years, has left personal property valued at £426 10s. 11d. His widow, Mrs. Lillias Balfour Keir Hardie, and his daughter, Miss Agnes Paterson Hardie, are the executrices of the will, which is dated October 13, 1914. The papers show that £95 13s. 1d. was due to the deceased at the time of his death as salary of an M.P., and that he owned five shares of £1 each in the Labour Pioneer Press (Limited), Merthyr Tydfil, valued at 2s. 6d.

*Aberdare Leader*, 8 Jan 1916

**Aberamanite's Unique Experience.**

Private Glyn Jones, A Company, 4th Battalion Welsh Regiment, Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, son of Councillor Evan Jones, Aberaman, in an interesting letter home states he is now at Rest Camp, Abbrassia, Cairo, and says:—"I left the Peninsula last week, and as I was not feeling extra well I was sent down here. It's just like being in heaven after what I have been through for the last four months. It is practically the first time I have been from under fire for the last four months. It was terrible up the Peninsula the last fortnight. Talk about storms. I have never seen anything like it. The rain was absolutely like a waterfall washing everything before it. Then thunder and lightning, sleet and snow. I thought the end of the world had come. Our trenches were almost filled with water, so we had to get on the parapets to fire. As for the Turks, well they were in a pitiable condition. Being on the hills, their dead were floating right down to us. You can just imagine how cold it was when I say that steam rose from the sea owing to the air being colder than the water. Well, I left the Peninsula last Tuesday week, and came to Alexandria, then to Cairo, a distance of a hundred and twenty miles. We were well treated on both the hospital boat and train, being given cigarettes and chocolates, in fact anything we wanted. What do you think of these few facts: (1) The first time I tasted butter or potatoes for four months was last week; the first bed I lay on; the first time I had a roof over my head, and the first hot bath for that period. How's that for a record? Our regiment is coming off from the Peninsula for a 'clean up' and a rest, so I do not suppose we shall see it again for a time. It is just like summer here now, flowers blooming and a beautiful sun. This is considered the best month of the year in Egypt, as it is the coolest. I intend visiting the Pyramids this week. They are about 12 miles away, and the tramcars go right there. I had an attack of dysentery, but now the only thing I feel is a little weakness in the legs. I am improving every day."

*Aberdare Leader*, 8 January 1916

**WAR MEMS' FROM THE MOUNT.**

**Prisoner of War.**—Pte. A. Morris is the first prisoner of war in Germany to acknowledge his Xmas parcel of goodies.

**Reception.**—A great reception was given to Pte. Tom Day on his return home on Tuesday night. Victoria Street was decorated from end to end and every window ablaze with lamps and candles. This great hero has done his bit, for he has lost an arm and received serious injuries to his face, in fact at one time his life was despaired of. It is only a short time ago that his wife was buried.

**Mountain Ash Soldier's Cheery**

**Letter.**—Pte. Wm. Davies, 2nd S.W. Borderers, writing to a Mountain Ash lady from Alexandria, says:—"I was invited out to dinner by an American on Xmas Day, and, my word, I did justice to the turkey, pudding, etc. Also had a sing-song after dinner. Of course everyone had to sing, I did, with that wonderful voice of mine; reminded me of the time when I used to shout, 'Is, buy a rabbit.' Well, I was the first Welshman to sing in his house, and I'll bet he was wishing I should be the last. The only thing I am wishing for is to have the next Xmas at home. By the way, you will be pleased to know that Frank has been invalided home. Isn't he a lucky old dog? He's one of the best. I only wish I was there with him. Well, I've got another job, am now a dispatch clerk; plenty of work to do, and it's pleasant. Am jolly glad to hear that Miss Allen is doing her 'little bit.' I think the girls have shewn a jolly fine example. Why, it's enough to give any 'slacker' fits. Went to a concert last night. It was promoted by the staff, and jolly fine it was, too. We had Lady Howard de Walden down, and she sang some fine songs. Also had some of the best London singers in."

*Aberdare Leader*, 22 January 1916

**HUNS WITH SAW BAYONETS.**

Private John Evans, of the 1st Batt. of the Irish Guards, was home on furlough from France last week. His parents are well known at Ynysybwl, and reside at Thompson Villas. He has had some very interesting, if exciting, experiences. He arrived home on Thursday, the 6th inst., and returned to France on the 13th. He brought home with him, as a memento of his very narrow escapes, a bullet which passed through his hat, and embedded itself in the walls of the trench behind him, leaving him quite unhurt. Also a bullet which narrowly missed him and struck the ground only a few feet away. He has fought in the battles of Festubert and of Loos. On Christmas Day, whilst at the Rest Camp at the Base, Private Evans attended Holy Communion. The Prince of Wales was present, and occupied a position quite near to Private Evans. Prior to enlisting he was a member of the Glamorgan Constabulary, being stationed at Llandaff North. The following is an extract of a letter which he sent to Police Constable Lewis, of Llandaff, describing his experience at Loos, when taking part with the Irish Regiment:—"We have had a hot time of it lately, only twice have I had my boots off this month. I have just had time to have a wash and a shave, the first for a fortnight. I got through that last engagement at Loos all right, and am in the best of health. Sheils, a former member of the force at Llandaff, was killed in a charge near Loos. I felt a bit down-hearted when I heard about it. The bombardment was something terrible before Loos was taken. The artillery was magnificent. It was a treat to see how they destroyed the German trenches. In some places the trenches were thirty feet deep. We had an exciting time a few nights ago. The Prussian Guards tried to take a trench back from us. They succeeded in going into the trench, but we absolutely slaughtered them with bombs when they got in. They left a hundred killed in our trench alone, and we took two hundred yards of their trench by way of return. They all had saw bayonets, but never had the chance to use them. The bombardment has left me a little deaf. The shells were plentiful—45 burst within twenty feet of me in about five minutes, and one dropped alongside of me but did not burst."

*Aberdare Leader*, 22 January 1916

## Female Conductors Appointed

In Page 2 of this issue will be found a list of 19 women who have been put on trial as car conductors, with the view of appointing 12 out of their number. Seven have now passed the test and have been appointed. They are Miss Mary Davies, Llewelyn Street, Tre-cynon; Mrs. R. Morgan, Morgan St., Gadlys; Mrs. J. Hammonds, Bryn-hyryd, Cwmaman; Mrs. A. Harries, Maelgwyn Terrace, Gadlys; Mrs. A. Evans, John Street, Abercwmboi; Miss W. Driscoll, Maelgwyn Terrace, Gadlys, and Miss F. Silverman, Cardiff Road, Aberdare. Others will be appointed as and when required.

## Germans Shell British Footballers

**FOOTBALL UNDER FIRE.**—Inter-esting letters are being continually re-ceived from Private Edgar Thomas, of the Welsh R.A.M.C., the second son of Mrs. Thomas, of 85 Robert Street. Pte. Thomas proceeded to France early in December last. We below publish an extract from a letter received from him on the 10th instant, in which he gives an account of his experiences:—

We were stationed in an old farm in the midst of our Batteries, about a mile behind our first line of trenches. Of course, as we were soon to find out to our disadvantage, this farm-house was well within the range of the German Guns that replied to our own Batteries, yet we had no sooner entered the hay-loft, where we were to be quartered, than the men there started off with the question, "Can any of your boys play football?" As there was half an hour before dinner would be ready the ball was taken out, and some of the boys went across the road to a field, and com-menced to play. Almost immediately, just as if the Germans had seen them go out, shells began to burst not far away. Although it was their first ex-perience of shell fire the soldiers went on with their game. But each succeed-ing shot got nearer than the previous one, so that when a shell burst in the next field, those in authority thought it time the boys came and took cover in the building which was partly pro- tected by sand bags.

*Aberdare Leader, 15 January 1916*

In order to re- lieve the monotony concerts are often arranged. During Christmas week, while we were at the above-mentioned station, a concert was arranged amongst two sections. Although there were less than fifty men all told we were able to arrange a fine programme. Some of the soloists were absolute novices, yet they acquitted themselves credit- ably, although they were more nervous on the platform than when the guns were roaring in the afternoon. The hay-loft made an admirable concert hall. Some of the more artistically in- clined of the soldiers had attempted to decorate the place as far as means would allow. The first item was a selection by the "Band," which con- sisted, in this case, of one violin played by the cook, although there was a very suitable accompaniment supplied by the Guns outside. This same musician later gave selections on his 'Japanese Fiddle,' which consisted of an old mess- tin and a piece of wooden box for the 'neck.' His attempt at 'Il Trovatore' was very creditable. Officers, as well as men, took part. Some of the comed- ians would not have disgraced an Em- pire Stage. To make it more real, dur- ing a short interval, refreshments were supplied free of charge. I may state that in this case they only consisted of chunks of bread and cheese with lemonade and beer. I can assure you that this, my first concert in the fight- ing zone, will remain impressed on my memory as long as I live."

*Aberdare Leader, 15 January 1916*

## Alun Lewis 1915-1944

In 2015 there were many celebrations to mark the anniversary of Alun Lewis's birth in 1915

On June 27, Cwmaman Institute hosted an Alun Lewis Symposium, organised by Swansea University.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July, a blue plaque was unveiled at Alun's former home at 61 Brynhyfryd, Glynhafod, Cwmaman, funded by the Royal Welsh Regiment. Later that day there was a re-dedication ceremony of the Alun Lewis bronze bust in Aberdare Library. The mayor of RCT Cllr. Barry Stephens, Gillian Clarke, the National Poet of Wales, and Nick Kelland, the Borough Librarian of RCT libraries all made speeches. Some of Alun Lewis's family were present.

In the afternoon there was a lecture given about Lewis by his biographer Dr. John Pikoulis at Green Street Methodist Chapel.

The launch of 'Alun, Gweno and Freda' by John Pikoulis (priced £14.99) took place on 16<sup>th</sup> July at the University of South Wales. Lewis married Gweno Lewis in 1941 but when he travelled to India another woman Freda Ackroyd entered Lewis's life briefly but significantly.



Alun Lewis  
by R.L. Gapper



From L. to R. (standing & front row): D.L. Davies; Alun Lewis (the poet's nephew); the Mayoress & Mayor of RCT; Nick Kelland (head of RCT libraries service); from L. to R. (second row): CVHS members - Alun Watts; Alan Abraham; Haydn Williams; Philip Rees.



Gillian Clarke (National Poet of Wales) & Dr John Pikoulis (a biographer of Alun Lewis)

David Leslie Davies on behalf of the society, gave a guided tour of Cwmaman and the places associated with Alun Lewis on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September.

Dr Pikoulis will also give a guided tour of Cwmaman on September 19<sup>th</sup> with contributions from Glynhafod Junior School – stopping at the important community landmarks associated with Lewis.

At our AGM on October 1st, David Leslie Davies gave a fascinating lecture about Alun Lewis.

## Patagonia – 150

On a wet and windy day in Aberdare on 28th November, a large congregation were transported to the windy desert of Patagonia!

In Siloa Chapel we had a feast of information about the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of these hardy people who sailed aboard the Mimoso in 1865 to build a new Wales in Argentina.

Of the 164 people who were on board 57 came from the Cynon Valley, 35%, the largest percentage from anywhere in Wales.

The event was organised by *Clochdar*, the Cynon Valley History Society and the Patagonia 1865–2015 Celebratory Committee in Wales.



Siloa with Plaque on right of door



The Plaque, now mounted outside Siloa – Inscription at foot of page<sup>1</sup>.

Pupils of Ysgol Rhydywaun reciting at Siloa at the plaque unveiling.

Patagonia-born Mrs Elvira Austin Moseley, now of Port Talbot, whose great-grandfather left Mountain Ash to sail aboard the 'Mimosa.'

Patagonia-born Elvey MacDonal, whose great-grandmother departed Mountain Ash and great-great-grandmother left Llwydcoed to sail with the 'Mimosa'

The programme was mainly in Welsh with instantaneous English translation.

The proceedings commenced with a welcome and a masterly introduction by David Leslie Davies of this momentous event that took place 150 years ago.

Then the "Cytgord" ladies choir sang "Ffarwel gyfeillion annwyl iawn..." (tune Boston) which was sung at Moreia–Aman chapel, Cwmaman by the emigrants who left for Patagonia in 1875.

Elvira Austin Moseley gave a short but fascinating talk about her ancestors the brothers Thomas and William Austin who departed from Mountain Ash aged 11 and 14. Elvey MacDonal then gave a short talk about his ancestors: John and Elizabeth Jones, their daughter Ann and of Eleanor Davies and her son Thomas who went to Patagonia on the Mimosa.

Pupils from Rhydywaun Welsh-Medium Comprehensive School then sang some Welsh songs. Susan Jenkins, the editor of *Clochdar*, and Elfed Bowen of the Cynon Valley History Society gave short talks on behalf of their organisations.

## **Aberdare Library to lose its own Reference Librarian**

At present in RCT, there are three Reference Librarians: in Aberdare, Treorchy and Pontypridd libraries. As a result of the UK Government's austerity measures, RCT have to make significant cuts to their budget. In the period November 2015 – January 2016 RCT have proposed to make a second round of cuts to their library service. One of the seven cuts is to reduce the number of Reference Librarians from three to just one. This will only save a mere £37,000. Despite members of the public and the committee of CVHS objecting to the proposal, the cabinet of RCT have rubber stamped these cuts. This will mean that Aberdare Library will no longer have its own Reference Librarian who is also in charge of the Local History Collection. The one Reference Librarian will travel between the three main libraries and will only spend a maximum of two days a week at each library. It will be seen that the high level of service, which is at present provided at Aberdare library, will decrease. The CVHS committee has sent a letter to RCT asking how they would be able to retain a high quality Reference Library service at Aberdare Library.

1 The inscription:

I goffau Abraham Matthews, 1832 – 1899, gweinidog capel Horeb, Llwydcoed, a arweiniodd 57 person o Gwm Cynon ymysg y 164 ar fwrdd y MIMOSA a hwyliodd o Lerpwl ar 28 Mai 1865 sefydlu'r Wladfa Gymreig ym Mhatagonia.

To commemorate ABRAHAM MATTHEWS 1832 – 1899, minister of Horeb chapel, Llwydcoed, who led 57 people from the Cynon Valley among the 164 aboard the MIMOSA which sailed from Liverpool on 28 May 1865 to establish the Welsh Settlement in Patagonia.

Encircling the main inscription: Codwyd Plac hwn gan 'Clochdar' (Papur Bro Cwm Cynon) a Chymdeithas Hanes Cwm Cynon, Tachwedd 2015.

This Plaque was raised by 'Clochdar' (The Cynon Valley's Welsh District Paper) and by the Cynon Valley History Society, November 2015.

Finally, around the extremity there are the words of a specially written ballad: Ffarwel It Gymru Lanwedd.



## Aberdare HSBC Bank to close

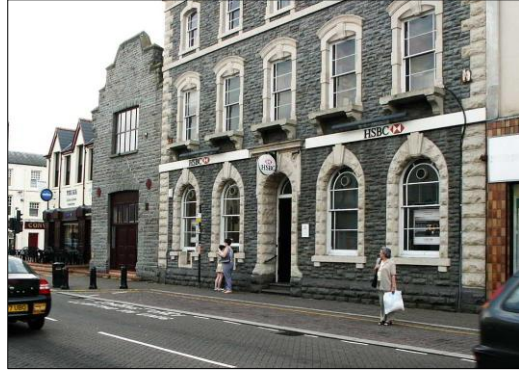
It is with sadness we report that this bank will close on 22nd April.

Andrew Morgan, Leader of RCT council and Ann Clwyd have called upon HSBC to reconsider its decision to close the branch. Cllr Morgan said that he was "appalled that HSBC have taken this decision without any means of consultation with its customers. It is utterly shambolic how HSBC has announced these closures."

An impressive article in the Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian of January 1858 described its opening.

It was built for the West of England and South Wales District Banking Company. The article comments, " ... the building is universally admired, being certainly one of the most striking we have in this rapidly improving town!" The bank was built in a mere nine months. "The architect is Mr W.B. Gingwell, of Bristol, and he is entitled to great praise, for he has produced a most perfect bank, complete in every minute detail, and with an exterior of the most chaste and elegant design, while the outlay has not exceeded the sum of £1800."

Much later after several amalgamations, it became the Midland Bank.



## New books on local history

**Terry Couzens** has written a book called **The Cwmaman Files : a history of Cwmaman**. It has 186 pages and is very comprehensive: it has chapters on many subjects, e.g., the collieries, cinemas, quoits, jazz bands and the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a bargain at £6.00 and is on sale at Aberdare Library.

For sports fans there are two "must buy" books:

**Martyn Ham** has written a monumental history (607 pages) entitled **The Old Firm's Proud Past 1875-1940** on the Mountain Ash Rugby Football Club. It has a summary of each season from 1880 to 1940 and has original match reports from the Western Mail, Aberdare Leader and South Wales Daily News. Fixtures with local rivals, such as Aberdare Crusaders and Abercynon are interspersed with games against the "big four" of Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Llanelli. It is amazing that the club undertook regular winter and Easter tours to English clubs like Bath, Bristol, Exeter, and Leicester; and also toured France before 1914 and played even Canada. There are numerous interesting characters in the book: Ben Tiley - captain for fifteen years - and Dick Thomas, collier, policeman, boxer, Welsh rugby international, Company Sergeant Major in the Welsh Regiment who died at Mametz Wood to name only two. It is a hardback book costing £17.00, and is on sale at the Downstairs Bar at Mountain Ash RFC Clubhouse and at Mountain Ash Library and Aberdare libraries. (Edited review by Jeremy Morgan.)

For local football fans, **Philip Sweet** has written **Aberdare Athletic A.F.C. 1920-1928: a history**. It has a full history of the club, and lists every goal scorer, result, league table and team line-up and has over 40 photographs. It costs £15.00 and copies are available at Aberdare library.

Our ex-chairwoman **Celia Thomas** has written a beautifully illustrated book called **Windows on the Past**. Her book is a collection of short stories set in different countries in different times. Celia has visited every place she has written about from Tintern Abbey and Kentchurch Court to the Great Wall of China and the Taj Mahal. The book had its launch on 30<sup>th</sup> July last year. The book costs £15, all the proceeds will go to Marie Curie Cancer care, and so far, £1000 has been raised.

The book has been a combined effort by some of our members with Tydfil Thomas who wrote the foreword and checked all the historical facts (everyone was right!) and Haydn Williams typed the manuscript and edited it. This special book costs £15 and is available at Aberdare Library.

## ANNIVERSARIES OF 2016

1616, 23 <sup>rd</sup> April	Death of William Shakespeare (there will be many events taking place to celebrate that including TV specials)
1916, July–November	Battle of the Somme
1916, Feb–December	Battle of Verdun
1966, 21 <sup>st</sup> October	Aberfan Disaster

## RECENT HISTORICAL TV PROGRAMMES

Some may be on BBC iPlayer or they may be repeated or buy from BBC Store. They are well worth watching!

The Story of China with Michael Wood BBC2 (6 parts)

Immortal Egypt with Professor Joann Fletcher BBC2 (4 parts)

Empire of the Tsars: Romanov Russia with Lucy Worsley, BBC4 (3 parts)

Blood and Gold: the making of Spain by Simon Sebag Montefiore, BBC4 (3 parts). He unlocks the 2000 years of the fascinating history of Spain.

Jericho (ITV) A fictionalised account of the building of a railway viaduct in Yorkshire.

## Aberaman on film in 1910

Colin Rees, our webmaster, has sent me information about this film, which is well worth watching if you have access to the Internet.

"This is a link to the highest technical quality film I have ever seen of the Aberdare area from the early years of the twentieth century, 1910.

All the scenes are, I think, at Aberaman. You will see how a colliers' train actually disgorged its men; C.B. Stanton; women colliery workers etc."

Unfortunately, there is no sound.

<http://player.bfi.org.uk/film/watch-welsh-coal-strike-scenes-at-aberaman-1910/>

## Oral History: Michael Forrest

Colin Rees has also sent me this article:

The British Library holds a series of sound recordings called Oral Histories of Britain. One is spoken by a Michael John Forrest, born 1934, who lived in Brondeg Terrace, Foundry Town, and who attended the Town Council School, now called Caradog.

They may be of some interest to members who are on-line. The drawback is that the quality of the sound is very poor and it takes a fair degree of concentration to follow what is being said. There are 14 parts! I am not suggesting that everybody listens to them all.

In the first two parts, Mr Forrest mentions that his father was a baker and confectioner, that his sister, Monica, went to Aberdare Girls Grammar School, that he worked in Bud Morgan's garage as a boy, that he played on the Graig Mountain, going up via the Red Path, as I did, and so on.

I have listened only to the first two parts. If anybody is interested, Part 1 is here <http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Science/021M-C1379X0048XX-0001V0>

and Part 2 is here

<http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Science/021M-C1379X0048XX-0002V0>

For your convenience, all three links have been added to the Links page on the CVHS website.

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