



HANES Bach November 2020 (Issue 5)

Dear Members

This time the standard print layout is changed and starts with the quiz! — Why not! Committee still hold monthly zoom meetings. Currently one of the topics under discussion (and actioning) is the archiving of the minutes (from 1971). Looking back over 50 years is quite interesting and makes one realise how things have changed. This is part of the digitising exercise we hope to carry out as mentioned in HB1. Our membership is now over 80 members, which is much appreciated in the current circumstances. We will publish a newsletter in December. (All contributors are self-editors and compilation is agreed with the Committee.)

We Wish You All Well

Quiz/Puzzle, Number 5 by Alan Abraham

This puzzle requires answers to the questions and then, taking the first letter of each answer, these five letters can be used in an anagram to name a fish that is only found in Bala Lake. *All six answers will be found in the next edition of Hanes Bach.*

1. This queen had two siblings, all 3 children had different mothers and each wore the crown of England. (9).
2. This saint's church in the Vale of Glamorgan was a venue of a CVHS's summer outing. (6).
3. The first "Area of Outstanding National Beauty" in the U.K. (5).
4. These people had a battle with the Romans on the Isle of Anglesey. (6).
5. This Welsh holiday resort's name when translated into Welsh, a fish can be found. (5).

Solution to the Quiz / Puzzle, Number 4.

Answers:— 1. Aberdare. 2. Dolaucothi. 3. Offa. 4. Caradog. 5. Manx.

Anagram:— Madoc

Obituary: Bruce George

by Jeremy Morgan

As the dark cloud of COVID-19 rose threateningly on the horizon, in a London hospital, a sadly somewhat neglected son of the Cynon Valley passed away. The Right Honourable Bruce Thomas George was born in Mountain Ash and although he spent the greater part of his life serving his adopted town as the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Walsall South, he was nevertheless a proud son of the valley.

Born on the 1st June 1942, his parents were the well-known local figures Phyllis and Edgar George. His mother was a successful businesswoman, while his father was a respected police sergeant in the town, who went on to be in charge of security for local collieries.

Bruce George attended local junior schools, before gaining entrance to Mountain Ash Grammar School, where a near contemporary was Dr Kim Howells. After school, George studied Comparative Politics at the University of Wales, Swansea, followed by an M.A. at the University of Warwick.

He became a lecturer, unsurprisingly in subjects relating to political and social studies, his first job was at Glamorgan Polytechnic, progressing to posts at Manchester Polytechnic before becoming a senior lecturer at Birmingham Polytechnic. He retained an interest in education throughout his life, being a tutor at the Open University, a visiting lecturer at the University of Essex and a visiting professor at the University of Portsmouth.

George had joined the Labour Party while at university. In 1970, he unsuccessfully stood for the safe Conservative seat of Southport. At the next election, in February 1974, he was successful, winning the then marginal constituency of Walsall South. In his maiden speech in the House of Commons, he stated his sympathy for the industrial working class, saying that 'his constituency [was] one of the workshops in the heart of the country that had produced much of the wealth of the land, but of which there was very little evidence on the streets of Walsall.' As *The Guardian* noted in its obituary, 'His speech evoked his background, raised as he had been in the socialist tradition of the valleys of south Wales'¹.

Walsall South, like so many other Midlands' seats, was never an entirely safe prospect. The longstanding incumbent had been a Conservative and in the 1970s through to the early 1990s the Labour majority

averaged somewhere in the region of 4%. George was a committed and passionate constituency MP and ensured he was back in Walsall every Friday whatever else he was doing. A close colleague said of him, ‘He was a permanent fixture in the town and a dedicated member of parliament. He always put his constituents first.’²

At Westminster, George was primarily noted for his work in parliamentary sub-committees, believing these were essential in holding a powerful executive to account. More than anything else, matters of national defence were his special interest. He was a permanent member of the Defence Select Committee, 1979–2005. As *The Telegraph* noted, he ‘stood up for the Armed Forces and NATO,’ an uneasy position and the antithesis of the mood of a large proportion of the Labour Party.³ He was a member of many international groups, especially concentrating on matters of east-west relations during the Cold War.

The 1997 Labour electoral landslide saw a large increase in George’s majority and the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, nominated him Chair of the Defence Select Committee, a prestigious post he held for eight years, 1997 – 2005, until parliamentary practice saw him relinquish the position after the maximum two terms. During this period, one noted for the large-scale deployments of British forces overseas, he would often be seen and heard on television and radio news programmes talking on matters related to defence.

He was never on the front bench in opposition or government, but in 2001, was accorded the rare privilege for a backbencher of becoming a member of the Privy Council. Among other notable achievements, he was Leader of the UK delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and elected Vice President in 2007. In 2002, he was elected President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, where he served as President Emeritus and Special Advisor on Mediterranean Affairs and in 2012 he was awarded that organisation’s Medal. With the end of the Cold War, he regularly acted as an election monitor in former Eastern Bloc countries. For his efforts in the disputed election in the ex-Soviet state of Georgia, he was awarded that nation’s Order of Honour. In 2011, he was made an Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Walsall.

George, unlike his father who was a prominent supporter of local rugby union and boxing, was a very keen footballer, being offered a trial by Cardiff City. He was joint founder and a regular player for the Commons Football Club as well as a staunch supporter of Walsall FC. George, who suffered from psoriasis, was Vice President of the Psoriasis Association. He wrote numerous books and articles and was noted for the large number of volumes and papers that occupied every space in his Commons’ office.

In 2010, after 36 years as a member of Parliament and nine successful election campaigns, Bruce George stood down. Unfortunately, his later years were marred by Alzheimer’s disease and he died on 24th February 2020 at age 77. George married Lisa Toelle in 1992, when he was 50 and she survives him.

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/mar/19/bruce-george-obituary>

2. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/black-country/tributes-paid-dedicated-former-mp-17813349>

3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2020/03/15/bruce-george-long-serving-walsall-labour-mp-stood-armed-forces>

*While writing this article the author pondered the number of members of the House of Commons that have had a strong link to **Mountain Ash**. The number reached, after some consideration, was seven. Could anyone name these, or even add others? As a guide, I include those who were a resident, or an elector, or studied in Mountain Ash.*

Aberdare Cables in the sixties and up to the sale to Pirelli General in 1971. (Ch. 5) by Alan Abraham

As stated in the previous chapter, aluminium conductor was replacing copper conductor in the manufacture of low voltage (LV) electric cables. This change was driven by the market place, based on financial consideration due to big changes in the price of copper on the London Metal Exchange, whereas the price of aluminium remained relatively stable. To meet this demand for aluminium wire conductor, the Marshall Richards “accumulation block aluminium wire drawing machine” was totally inadequate for future manufacture and a state of the art “high speed aluminium wire drawing machine” was purchased which had the ability to increase the rate of producing aluminium wire by a factor of four. This aluminium wire drawing machine purchase being the start of a planned increase in power cable manufacture which included further acquisition of manufacturing plant and future factory build to increase manufacturing capability by a third. The major driving force for this expansion was an increased requirement for the manufacture of 33kV high voltage power cable to meet CEBG and ESB’s requirements. To meet this shortfall in manufacturing capacity in lead/ lead alloy sheathing, a laying up facility and an 84 bobbin steel wire armouring was required for large diameter cable, together with an increased capacity in the impregnation processing

department. During 1963, Aberdare received the next item, a Swedish manufactured continuous lead extruder incorporating a cross head that could produce a lead sheath of diameter in excess of four inches at speeds more than three times the output of the existing 2000-ton Hydraulic Lead Extruder (Loewy) and with a much improved quality, the cost of this item was in excess of £40,000 (at 2020's value £850,000). Other machinery was installed in the following years, also, at this time a 300-foot unit to accommodate the existing steel tape armouring machines was built. Extra space was required in the impregnation section which needed expansion along the north side of the main factory which required moving huge amounts of material to create a basement to accommodate the new process vessels and storage tanks for high voltage insulating impregnation oil, (treacle like at cable operational temperature but water like at impregnation temperature), and non-drainage insulating impregnation wax, (solid at cable operational temperature but water-like at impregnation temperature).

In September 1965 an official opening and luncheon was held for special guests in the new "300-foot building" and the editors of international and national wire cable trade magazines together with Welsh newspapers and trade magazines were invited for an in depth factory tour of the new facilities.

After the special day, the laboratories, its workshop, and dark room were moved to the Aberdare Cables office block, prior to its final destination in a new Aberdare Engineering office block. On clearance of the laboratory area, the impregnation extension was completed and the steel tape armouring machines were moved to the new "300-foot building" and to complete the project a tension controlled paper lapping machine was installed. The total cost for the expansion project was £500k (at 2020's value £10,500k).

Production of cables continued to increase during and beyond the expansion, meeting its projected targets; at this time development in the North Sea of oil and gas became a target to supply plastic cables with lead alloy sheaths, (protection against chemical contamination), to the land facilities of oil storage at Sullom Voe on Shetland and gas storage at Fergus in North East Scotland; a fleet of lorries was used each week to transfer these cables to Aberdeen for shipment to the Shetlands and also, delivery to the gas facility at Fergus.

We had noticed, at Aberdare, the volatility of Aberdare Holdings shares on the London Stock Exchange; was it a hostile bid for Aberdare Holdings or some dealing by the company? Unknown to the workforce during 1967 a bidding war was taking place between the Boards of Aberdare Holdings and Thorn Electric Industries for the company Metal Industries (MI). This action came to light at the 1967 Aberdare Cables Annual Staff Christmas dinner dance in Cardiff, the Managing Director arrived late in the evening and at a break in the proceedings announced that Aberdare Holdings had acquired MI; this turned out to be unfounded and during the next day Thorn Electrical Industries was announced owners of MI. This battle resulted in Aberdare Holdings making a substantial profit by selling the MI shares, followed by a buying spree resulting in the acquisition of the English Electric Co., Erskin Heap & Co., Yorkshire Electric Transformer Co., Cascade Services, Federal Electric, Natgas and Water Engineering. As a result of these acquisitions, cash flow problems developed within the organisation and to recover heavy losses the Merchant Bankers who were financing the organisation took over the group and sold Aberdare Cables, "the Golden Goose," that had always made an excellent profit, to Pirelli General to recover some of those substantial losses, and on 1st August 1971 Aberdare Cables became a subsidiary of Pirelli General.

Next time, the early years under Pirelli at Aberdare

Members Inputs

Note from OLWEN ROBERTS (née) PREECE

In the war years Aberdare was very cultured thanks to the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, (C.E.M.A.). I remember Sir Adrian Boult coming to our school, (Aberdare Girls' Grammar), and also remember being helped down from a wall outside the Little Theatre by Dame Sybil Thorndike after trying to get her autograph. I was about eleven years old. The boys and girls schools got together in the Coliseum for a performance of 'Macbeth'. When however Dame Sybil Thorndike came on as Lady Macbeth the whole of the boys school laughed. Our wonderful English teacher Miss Winnie Rees was pacing up and down the front row in an utter fury.

NB. In 1940, during the Second World War, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts was established to help promote and maintain British culture. The Council was government-funded and after the war was renamed the Arts Council of Great Britain.

Note from **Dr Trevor Howell Jones** who writes - *I have enjoyed Hanes and Hanesbach and am always reminded of my days in Aberdare. You may like to know that Margaret Edwards was 105 in July 2020 - the granddaughter of Rees and Elizabeth Llewellyn of Bwllfa House, Cwmdare, – a third cousin of mine, (through Elizabeth Llewellyn whose father Richard Llewellyn was a brother to Margaret (née Llewellyn) and my great great grandmother).*

Margaret Edwards devoted her life to her family including helping her father (Charles Edwards) run his solicitors business. She is still a keen pianist and classical music fan. A most detailed family history tree was also provided by Dr Jones dating back to 1762. NB Margaret's grandfather, Alderman Rees Llewellyn, was a prominent figure in the industrial history of the South Wales Coalfield and public life in Aberdare.

Books Recently Published.

A biography of Elaine Morgan, *Elaine Morgan: a Life behind the Screen* by Daryl Leeworthy has recently been published, November, (£9.99, Seren). *The author pays tribute to the life and work of Elaine Morgan as intellectual polymath and feminist icon..... and champions Elaine as a writer for television of both originality and lasting distinction. (In Hanesbach 1, (May 2020), our Celia Thomas also gives a most interesting insight into the life of Elaine Morgan)*

A statue is planned to be erected to Elaine Morgan in 2021 outside the Medical Centre in Mountain Ash.

Elfed Davies, (a member of the Society), has just had his most informative book 'Co-operative Societies in the Cynon Valley 1859–1988' printed. Consisting of 118 pages with numerous black/white illustrations, it costs £6.00. (All profits going to Macmillan Cancer Support). Copies are available from him via Haydn Williams, Book Sales CVHS. (This is not a CVHS publication).

CVHS Book Sales

The following are available from Haydn Williams. The prices given exclude p&p.

Final quantities available from the Society are in brackets ().

Cynon Coal £7.50 ea. (10) Chapels of The Cynon Valley £4 ea. (5)

Old Aberdare Vol. X £3 ea. (7) Land Your Fathers Possessed £4 ea, (7)

Card Packs £2/per pack of 4 cards (60 packs) CDs £3 ea, (40) *contains all HANES (1- 56), plus a descriptive account of Aberdare (1892), Children of the Mines by DLD, the Bacon Drawings and 'A timeline of the history of the Cynon Valley' in Welsh and English (GE/DLD).*

Please contact Haydn Williams for sales on 0165 879 793 or email to haydnwilliams3@hotmail.com

Remembrance Sunday

Steven Graham, (HANES Editor), laid the Society wreath at the Cenotaph at Aberdare on Sunday 8th November. The event was well organised by the Royal British Legion enabling an appropriate service to be held, with many persons present, whilst fully respecting the Covid-19 requirements.

The Cenotaph was erected in Victoria Square in 1923, replacing the Queen Victoria drinking fountain.

The unveiling of the Cenotaph took place on 8th March 1923 with an estimated 20,000 attending.

Whilst the need to commemorate the war dead was recognised, the way that it should be achieved was strongly debated over several years. (Llwydcoed (1921) and Mountain Ash (1922) already had their memorials). Source – 'The Men Who Marched Away' by Geoffrey Evans. CVHS pub. (Also HANES 16.)

Museum

After its temporary closure due to Covid-19, pleasing to say the Cynon Valley Museum was re-opened on 21 November. The plan is for it to be open through to Christmas, (subject to government restrictions). *It is interesting and somewhat alarming to note that the Trust formed to keep and maintain the museum is now in its fifth year. Time flies!* *Jeremy Morgan, Trustee.*

Birthday

This month, (November), is Celia Thomas's 90th birthday. Celia has been (IS) a very keen committee member for many years taking on roles of Chair and Vice Chair during this period. She remains a very active person on the Committee and also writes and publishes books and poems. The Society had wished to celebrate her birthday at the Christmas meeting but in the current situation THE LEAST we can do is wish her a **Very Happy Birthday** in HANESBACH and look forward to the day we can all meet up and enjoy a glass with her of elderflower (or the current favourite Hock!).