

PONTYPRIDD REMEMBERED 2

By Gareth Harris

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Crimes and stories in the district from long ago

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FORWORD
By the author

This is a second book chronicling stories about Pontypridd and surrounding district between 1863 and 1909. Initially it was entitled 'Pontypridd Murders 2' but unfortunately (or luckily) there were not enough murders to fill another book so in the end I have included several interesting stories of the town.

They show that the regard for life at this period was not as great as it is today in a time when manual labour, especially in the collieries, brought rough tough workmen to the district who frequented the many inns and taverns that were practically on every corner in Pontypridd. This influx also brought about prostitution and many brothels sprang up in various infamous districts of the town.

Other stories are of religious life in Pontypridd as it was then including strange deaths and a forgotten tale of the aftermath of the Albion Colliery disaster. 'The Death of a wealthy pauper' also shows how poor and desperate some people were at this time, especially when old age came upon them. However, the first story 'The Pwllgwaun murder' is perhaps the most infamous crime committed in the district and has appeared in a few books in the past. But this time it is told in greater detail than ever before.

The stories in this book show a picture of Pontypridd in the years gone by that will be of great interest to those people who enjoy reading about the history of Pontypridd. I hope the reader will enjoyed this second instalment of Pontypridd Remembered.

GARETH HARRIS

CONTENTS

- STORY 1** **THE PWLLGWAUN MURDER**
JULY 6TH 1900. Page 9.
- STORY 2** **ATTEMPTED MURDER AT PENTREBACH**
27TH APRIL 1863 Page 85.
- STORY 3** **DEATH OF A WEALTHY PAUPER**
Wednesday May 26th 1875 page 91.
- STORY 4** **MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF A WOMAN AT PENYCOEDCAE**
Saturday night April 29th 1882 Page 97.
- STORY 5** **BEER CASK FOUND GUILTY**
April 1896 Page 145. Page 115
- STORY 6** **IMMORALITY AT PONTYPRIDD**
November 1893. Page 119.
- STORY 7** **DEATH OF A STATION MASTER AT PONTYPRIDD**
Thursday, May 25th 1899. Page 127.
- STORY 8** **THE PONTSHONORTON MYSTERY**
December 26th 1901. Page 49.
- STORY 9** **HOPKINSTOWN GIRL DROWNED**
Tuesday, January 24th 1905. Page 149.
- STORY 10** **HUSBAND AND WIFE FOUND DEAD AT HOPKINSTOWN**
March 11th 1909. Page 155.
- STORY 11** **GREAT FIRE AT THE MARITIME COLLIERY – THE PONTYPRIDD
FIRE BRIGADE.-** June 1st 1888 – Page 169.
- STORY 12** **THE PONTYPRIDD MASS MURDERER**
1904 - Page 181
- STORY 13** **THE ALBION COLLIERY DISASTER - A SISTERS' RECOLLECTIONS**
June 23rd 1893 – Page 187

The Pwllgwaun Murder

Chapter One

By 1900 Pontypridd was rapidly losing its reputation as a “wild west” town and on its outskirts villages such as Cilfynydd and Hopkinstown were well established with homes for the miners working in the nearby collieries. Such a place was Pwllgwaun, where work was found at the Great Western, Tymawr, Penrhiw or Maritime collieries. With such large numbers being employed living accommodation was scarce, but most of the local population took advantage of this by taking in lodgers to supplement their income.

With plenty of work available in the mines regular wages were attractive to people from all over the United Kingdom and it was this that drew a newly married couple to the district from Swansea that would result in the most famous crime in the history of the town. The story begins with startling newspaper reports on Saturday, 7th July, 1900: -

Wife murder at Pontypridd – Sequel to a black and white union

Husband surrenders himself – Love and jealousy

A coloured man, named William Augustus Lacey, living at 21, Barry Terrace, Pwllgwaun, Pontypridd, murdered his wife by cutting her throat with a razor on Friday morning, July 6th 1900, and then he went to the police-station, and surrendered himself into custody. Pwllgwaun is a working-class suburb of Pontypridd, and is situated in South Glamorgan. Lacey gave himself up to Police-inspector Evans. He appeared quiet and collected, but the blood which covered his clothes bore terrible testimony to the truth of his statement. Dr. Howard Davies and a number of constables immediately went to the house where Lacey lived, and found the wife lying dead in a pool of blood. Lacey is stated to have said to

the police: - "I loved my wife, but was jealous of her, and would not allow anyone else to love her."

He is well known in the district, having worked at several local collieries. The pair had only been married a few months. She was a white girl, aged nineteen, and he was ten years older.

Pauline Lacey, the victim



Mrs. Lacey, (whose maiden name was Pauline Joseph) was a native of Port Tennant, Swansea, her father living at 33, Hoo Street, in that village, being employed at the smelting works in that place, while defendant was working at the Great Western Colliery as a labourer. On Thursday night Mrs Lacey received a letter asking her to go to Swansea. He objected to her going, and the neighbours remarked that they heard constant quarrelling during the night. Our representative had a chat with another coloured man, named Augustus O'Connor, a collier at the Great Western Colliery, and who is married to deceased's sister. O'Connor said defendant came from Kingston, Jamaica. Deceased's father is a native of Belgium,

her mother being a Welshwoman. The pair were married at the Swansea Registry Office, the girl's parents knowing nothing about it.

"We were," said O'Connor, "all against the marriage, because we knew what sort of a man Lacey was. He was very quick-tempered, but generally very ready to forgive afterwards. We came from New York together about ten years ago, and subsequently started working at Merthyr. Lacey got sick, and was laid up at Pontypridd Workhouse hospital. I returned to America and he came after me, and we met at San Francisco. We came back about fourteen days before Christmas last and arrived at Hull, and then went to Swansea, where he met deceased and married her. He told her before the marriage that if she did not marry him he would kill her." Augustus O'Connor, as above-mentioned, speaks of Lacey as a bad-tempered man. "Only on Thursday last," said, "he insulted my wife, and we fought, and I said then I would have nothing more to do with him. The mother knew of the marriage about an hour after it had taken place."

The scene in the house

William Gay, collier, residing at Shepherd Street, Pwllgwaun, said he went into the house with the doctor and the police, and saw the murdered woman lying in a pool of blood. Mrs Vaughan, the landlady, told him she had been in, but could not stand the scene, and she closed the door and sent for the police. "From what she told me," continued Gay, "I ran to the house and opened the front door, and found her lying on the floor with her throat cut and in a pool of blood. Her clothes were disarranged, and her breast was open. She was a sober, industrious woman as far as I know. I do not know of anything likely to be the cause of the dead except that prisoner would not work." He further said that they had been quarrelling all night, the wife alleging that he would have a poor

pay this week, as he had not been working. "I never," continued Gay, "met a prettier girl on a day's march, and I don't think he had any cause to be jealous of her." When in the police-station the prisoner said, "I would have done for myself if the razor had not slipped. I want to be swept off the face of the earth. Why did not I do it?"

Affecting scene at the house

The tragic event created a great deal of morbid excitement in the town and district; and as the news spread people ran from all directions towards the house, where during the rest of the day crowds assembled discussing the crime. When our reporter called there were a number of women in the house besides others engaged in cleaning the front room and laying out the deceased woman.

The woman who entered into conversation with our reporter generally admitted that the Laceys had apparently not lived very happily together during the time they were in that neighbourhood. Prisoner seemed to have a very quick temper, but although they were constantly quarrelling, they seemed to make up their differences very quickly, and at times appeared to be on most affectionate terms.

"While I was here," adds our correspondent, "a message came to the house stating that Mrs Connor, deceased's sister, and wife of Augustus Connor, was coming to the house. This caused a great deal of excitement among the women, who sympathetically remarked, 'Poor thing, what a terrible blow to her.' Mrs Connor had a child in her arms, and was accompanied by a little girl about five years of age. Both children are coloured. Mrs Connor cried bitterly, and up to the time that our reporter remained in the house she did not enter the room where the body lay."

A neighbour interviewed

Catherine Vaughan, wife of Francis Vaughan, haulier, 21, Barry Road, interviewed, said: - "Lacey and his wife had been quarrelling since three o'clock yesterday because he would not go to work and she would not have any money to go with. They went to bed last night about 11 o'clock and were quarrelling all night. I heard bumping against the partition between our bedroom and theirs as if they were scuffling. I heard them several times in the night. I could not say what time - I have no clock in the room. They came downstairs about 9.30 a.m., and commenced quarrelling again. I left the house about ten a.m., and they were by the table in the front room.

They were then quarrelling with each other and disputing about the amount of small pay she would have from the Great Western Colliery. They occupied the front room and front bedroom. She threatened to leave him and go home. She had received a letter from her father and mother by the five o'clock post on Wednesday asking her to go home. When the letter was delivered I saw the man go out to the back to get some water. He was then crying. Deceased told me that her parents wanted her to go to Swansea, and she wanted her husband to accompany her and to work in the smelting work, where her father was a foreman. She told me that her husband would not go with her. She was married about three months ago, and I saw her marriage lines. They came here about a fortnight, today.

Story of a young woman

Mary Cleaves, a young woman of between eighteen and twenty year of age, daughter of a woman living at 20 Barry Row, said that about seven o'clock she was standing at the door and heard a person screaming in the front room of the next house, and calling

out, "Lacey, don't." She went, and called her mother out of the house. They both listened, and all was quiet. She was standing at the door with her mother when she saw prisoner coming out of the room. He ran a few yards, and then got out of her sight. He was looking back all the time. After he had gone she saw a woman lying on her back in a pool of blood. She then shouted to her mother.

The girl's antecedents

It is said that prisoner had been rather jealous of his wife, who had had an illegitimate child before they were married. Prisoner is a Negro of prepossessing appearance, and speaks very intelligently. When he gave himself up he looked as if he had been crying. Our Swansea correspondent writes: - "Some of the metal works in the outside districts of Swansea have attracted a good many foreigners, including a few Negroes, to the town, and in some cases there has been marriages between them and Welsh girls. The Pontypridd case appears to have been the outcome of such a union.

The father of the deceased woman is a religious man, working at the Port Tenant Spelter Works, who married a Swansea girl, and lived at 32, Hoo Street, Port Tennant. They had two daughters, and one of those married a coloured man named Augustus O'Connor some years ago. They have at least one child, which is at present staying with the grandparents at Swansea.

O'Connor has since worked with his father-in-law at Port Tennant Spelter Works. The other coloured man, Lacey, it appears, left following the sea early in this year, and to have been found employment in the same works, being probably enticed from the sea by O'Connor, with whom he went to lodge at Port Tennant.

O'Connor naturally introduced his friend to his wife's family, who only lived a few doors from him, and it is said that from the first the two men had the design of getting the unmarried daughter, Pauline Joseph, who was only nineteen years of age to marry the newcomer. When O'Connor first introduced Lacey to the deceased woman he is reported to have said that he had brought her a husband. Lacey appears to have induced the girl to marry him. At any rate, in April she married him unknown to her parents, who were bitterly opposed to the match. Since then both the married couples have removed to Pontypridd, and of their life there is little known at Swansea. O'Connor and his wife do not appear, in the end, to have relished the other marriage. A good deal of light is thrown upon this by the last letter received by the deceased woman's father and mother, the day before the murder was committed. The letter was as follows: -

"Dear Mother - I hope you are in the best of health, as it leaves us at present; and in answer to your welcome letter, which we received all right, my dear parents, I am glad to think that I can come home again, but I am very glad to tell you that I have no cause to come home, for my life turned out to be better than what I thought it would be. Augustus (the other coloured man) came to fetch Lacey (her husband) from his bed yesterday morning, and I went out and told him that the people of the house did not want any bother, and he told me if I didn't shut my mouth he would kick me. So Lacey heard what he said, and ran after him, and they had a bit of a fight on the road; but when he (Augustus) found out that he had his match he did not keep up for very long. There were a lot of women about at the time and they threatened to break in his (Augustus's) head if he did not go away.

My dear mother, we know that if you were up here you would not let them put upon Lacey as they did. They thought Lacey was going to be like a baby, but they soon found their mistake, and found he

is a match. But, my dear parents, it is not over yet. They are going to meet one morning coming home from work at one of the collieries. Dear parents, Lacey has not done anything to them. We don't see them once a week personally, for we live away from them. But they are jealous of us living more happy than they. Why they are so I do not know why they want to part us. Dear, dear parents, if anything do turn up I will come home, but I hope not to be under any obligation to other people. But, dear parents, I will miss a good husband when he is gone. I have no more to say at present. You shall hear more in the next letter. We remain your loving daughter and son, Pauline and Will Lacey. Good-bye and God bless you all. Mary Ann (a sister) is coming down in a fortnight. She is going to tell plenty of 'clecks,' but it is all lies to put you against Lacey."

A romantic story

The victim's brother, an intelligent young man, about 25 years of age, told our representative that his mother and father were considerably upset on receiving the telegram with the grim message, "Come quick; Lacey has killed Pauline!" He had just arrived at Pontypridd from Swansea, where he is employed with his father. "She had the best of homes," he said, "and my father gave her everything that was within reason. She, however, picked up with Lacey, and do what we would she would not give him up.

One day she put on her coat and jacket, as usual, and told mother she was going to town, and would be back 'later on.' She did not come, and my mother, going to the registrar's office that afternoon to fetch a certificate for my little brother to go to work, learnt that she had got married a few hours before. They went straight away up here to Pontypridd, and this is the end of it. Not one of us knew anything at all about the marriage until it was over, and we were told that she had had the man who cleans the registry office to

give her away. She wrote to me on Tuesday evening that Lacey had been fighting, and was going to do a month in gaol, and asking if she could come home during that time.

We replied saying that the home was for her now, as it had always been. On Thursday we had another letter saying that the quarrel was now over. She was a fine girl, too. She had been courting another fellow for about two years, but he went away to England, leaving her in trouble. He came back once to see her, and again left, and we've not seen him since. The child, however, died. Speaking to Mrs O'Conner, the deceased's sister, our representative learnt that the prisoner had on a previous occasion threatened to use the knife. He had once remarked that he would marry her at two o'clock in the day and would use the knife at half-past two. They understood this threat, as meaning if her family interfered with him. "He had," she added, "threatened to use the razor to another woman up above here and only this morning I was told he was watching me on the bridge here with a razor."

Magisterial proceedings

The prisoner was detained at Pontypridd Police-station overnight, where a large crowd of people had collected, with a view of getting a glimpse of him in the event of him going to the Cardiff Gaol. He will be brought before the Pontypridd magistrate to-day (Saturday), when only evidence as will justify a remand will be offered.

Additional facts transpire.

Morien (a famous Welsh newspaper reporter) writes on the 'South Wales Echo' of 10th July 1900: - On Sunday evening I visited the house in Pwllgwion - for that is the correct spelling - in the suburbs of Pontypridd, where the poor girl Pauline Lacey was murdered by

her husband, W. A. Lacey, a negro, on Friday last. As is well known to those who have been in the habit of gathering information in Wales among Welsh-speaking-people, there is a considerable restraint on the narrator of facts owing to linguistic stiffness, due to lack of any copious English vocabulary.

This has too often caused shallow-pated Englishmen to insinuate want of straightforwardness and a desire to prevaricate on the part of Welsh witnesses. I found many women and children lingering near the house of mourning, which is in the centre of a long row of substantial buildings, having the backs to Gelliwion wooded mountain side, and facing the Rhondda River. All spoke to each other in low tones, for the coffin for poor Pauline had just been taken into the front parlour, in which the remains of the deceased lay. On entering the passage through the open front doorway I found Francis Vaughan, the landlord, who has lost a leg, and uses a wooden peg, leaning with his back against the wall.

In the parlour between the back of the door and the window was the coffin in which the once beautiful Pauline had been laid from view, the lid screwed down. The blinds were down, and the room presented a dismal appearance. There were half-a-dozen women in it. Among them was Mrs Vaughan. Both her and her husband are from Treforest, and were soon talking to me freely in Welsh.

They have an interesting little girl 12 years of age, and she alone was in the house with the murderer and the murdered at the time the awful tragedy took place. She was in the kitchen when Lacey came suddenly and wildly into it and ran round the table in the middle of the floor. What he wanted in the kitchen will probably never be known, but it is probable the murderous deed had then been perpetrated, and that the rush was made in his mad frenzy with a view to ascertain whether there were witnesses in the house of what he had done.

The little maid was so terrified by his appearance - judging by what she indicated - it was diabolical in the extreme - that she ran out to the road in the utmost terror. But he passed out of the kitchen before she made her escape, and entering the parlour slammed the door after him. The little girl did not hear any words or screams. Immediately after this the black's face was noticed at the window, and he was seen engaged in pulling down the blinds. It appears he had had the razor in his hand in the kitchen, for it was while pulling down the blinds it fell on the floor out of his hand. It will be remembered he told the police that had the razor not slipped he would have killed himself. And to that fact it is believed is due that he did not commit suicide. It was after he left the premises the razor was found on the floor near the window.

Mrs Vaughan recited very intelligently in Welsh her story. It appears that Pauline had spent her time in almost entire isolation in the front parlour during the fortnight she and her husband had dwelt on the premises. Only once she had come and sat in the kitchen with Mrs Vaughan, and on that occasion she remarked, it was very trying to dwell so much alone; that she was fond of children and company. She took hold of Mrs Vaughan's youngest child and went as far as a shop in the next street with it. W. A. Lacey was then at work. On a subsequent evening both she and Lacey came and sat in the kitchen. Francis Vaughan handed Pauline a glass of beer, which she drank, and then offered a glass to Lacey. He declined it, and seemed displeased his wife had taken hers. In fact, the man was insanely jealous, and she could not go to the tap for water, said Mrs Vaughan, without the man following her.

It seemed that this jealousy had been the subject of much amusement amongst the women, and, apparently, Pauline included. They never thought of the native savagery lurking in the nature of the African. On the day before the murder Lacey had caused much quiet amusement by walking to and fro - from the

parlour to the front room - mumbling and gesticulating with his left arm. His actions on that occasion had frightened the little girl, but had only amused others. There is too much reason to believe that Pauline, although a fine woman in appearance, was little more than a child. Aware of her power over Lacey, she amused herself by teasing him, saying she loved better a Swansea sweetheart, and would have lived happier with him, &c.

At last the African was afraid to go to work fearing she might return to Swansea during his absence. While thus at home guarding over her she taunted him for his idleness. Mrs Vaughan stated that sometimes he would be bathed in tears and uttering threats; soon afterwards he might be seen embracing Pauline, and kissing her most fondly. Then Pauline would laugh merrily.

Mrs Vaughan stated that a few nights before the murder Lacey had, unseen, witnessed a relative of both of them kissing Pauline, who cried out, "You must not kiss me now I am married!" It does not appear that Lacey heard the remark, but only witnessed the act of familiarity, which appears to have maddened him. There is another story current. It is said Lacey's fellow-workmen having discovered his frame of mind often chaffed him about his Pauline, saying she would be off with another and cruel things of that sort.

Chapter two

The legal proceedings would begin with an inquest on the body of Pauline Lacey, where if the verdict was returned that she had been killed by her husband Lacey, he would stand before the Pontypridd Police Court charged with murder.



William Augustus Lacey (Left) the alleged killer and his 'friend' brother-in-law Augustus Connor.

Pontypridd murder inquest and verdict

The Coroner's inquiry into the circumstances attending the tragic death of Pauline Lacey aged about 20. who was foully murdered shortly before 11 o'clock on Friday morning, July 6th, 1900, by her husband, William Augustus Lacey, a coloured man, hailing from Jamaica and employed as a labourer at the Tymawr Colliery, was

opened at the Pontypridd Police Court on Saturday afternoon, 7th July 1900, before Mr. E. Bernard Reece (district coroner).

Much interest was centred in the proceedings, a large number of people being in the vicinity of the court. Mr. and Mrs Joseph, the deceased woman's parents, had travelled from Swansea in the morning, and were seated in an adjoining room prior to the opening of the inquest. There were 14 jurymen, and Mr. Ll. Delany was foreman. Superintendent Cole and Inspector Evans represented the police. After the jurymen had been sworn in they proceeded to 21, Barry Terrace, where the crime was committed. The body was laid out in the front room downstairs, which had been occupied during the past fortnight by the unhappy couple.

During the absence of the jury our representative went into the adjoining court, and there found the deceased's parents sitting side by side, each appearing to be greatly distressed and overcome by the terrible blow that had befallen them. After the jury had returned the Coroner ordered the prisoner to be brought in. He was accompanied from the cells by a couple of constables, and appeared in the room just as the first witness was called. Lacey was accommodated with a seat at the end of the lone table opposite the Coroner. He was quite calm and collected, and at once showed much interest when the deceased's sister gave evidence.

Identification

Mrs Connor, wife of Augustus Connor, collier, 16, Maritime Terrace, identified the deceased as her sister, and said she was 19 years of age last Christmas. She lived in apartments with her husband at 21, Barry Terrace, where they had some furniture of their own. Witness went there on a visit last Sunday night, and asked by the Coroner whether they seemed to get on all right

replied that when she went in the accused was sitting down looking rather unpleasant.

Evidence of landlady

Catherine Vaughan, the wife of Francis Vaughan, collier, stated that Lacey and the deceased went to lodge at her house, 21, Barry Terrace, a fortnight before. Lacey had not been working last week, and he and his wife had been quarrelling every day. Witness did not know of her own knowledge that the prisoner had been violent to his wife, but his wife had told her that when upstairs a few days ago her husband had struck her several times.

Witness's brother-in-law was in bed at the time, and she appealed to them to be quiet. On Friday morning after they had come downstairs they were quarrelling in the front room. Witness's evidence seemed to disturb the prisoner. He raised his hand towards the Coroner and remarked, "I beg pardon, sir. I object to this witness, and she says what has not been done." The Coroner: - "Never mind, you shall give evidence presently, if you like."

Ghastly scene

Proceeding, Vaughan said that on Friday morning she heard deceased complaining to her husband about the small amount of wages that she would have, and in about an hour later witness was called back. As she entered the room she saw Mrs Lacey lying on her back on the floor in a pool of blood. She did not see that her throat had been cut, neither did she see the razor, because she was frightened, and did not look. She shut the door, and afterwards the police came.

Mary Cleaves, daughter of Wm. Cleaves, living at 20, Barry Terrace, said that about 11 o'clock on Friday morning, whilst she was

standing on the doorstep, she heard Mrs Lacey scream, "Oh, Lacey, don't." Witness called her mother, and all was quiet while they listened. A couple of minutes later prisoner appeared at the door and began to button his coat. She noticed blood upon his clothes, and after looking at witness and her mother he walked away a few yards. Witness went to the window of the room occupied by Mrs Lacey, and saw the woman lying on the floor in a pool of blood. She then shouted to her mother that Lacey had murdered his wife. She believed Lacey heard her, for he at once began to run towards town.

They sent for Mrs Vaughan, and the police came soon afterwards. Lacey was asked whether he had anything to ask witness, and he answered that he had not, but added that he did not hear witness shout to her mother, as he was on his way to the police station.

The Coroner remarked that he only wanted sufficient evidence to enable the jury to arrive at a verdict. At the trial of course all sorts of questions would be asked as to whether the prisoner had previously threatened his wife, but he did not think it was necessary for their purposes to enter into that now.

Constable's evidence

P.C. David Evans said that on Friday morning the prisoner entered the police station and told him he wanted to give himself up for killing his wife. After taking him into custody, witness ran to 21, Barry Terrace, and in the front room he saw deceased lying on her back with her throat cut in a pool of blood. There was blood all over the floor, and a razor was lying close by. She was quite dead. Witness produced the razor with which the terrible deed was done, and having wrapped it in a piece of paper placed it on a table before him. The prisoner was then two yards behind the constable, and when he saw the gleaming blade his eyes sparkled and he

moved uneasily in his chair. Augustus Connor then made a suspicious movement that drew general attention and led the foreman and several jurors to object to the razor and to the prisoner's attitude, as he had just leaned forward and folded his arms. The Coroner then told the constable to put the razor in his pocket, a request which was promptly complied with. Witness (continuing) said that on his return he cautioned and charged the prisoner.

Prisoner's statement

In reply he made the following statement: - "She told me yesterday morning she will not live with me no more. I asked her why? She said that she would sooner live with the man she had a child from. She said, when I go to work in the evening, when I came home in the morning, she will be missing. Mary Ann Connor and Augustus Connor is against me, and jealous of us.

Mary Ann was afraid that she would get along better than she would, and I am not guilty of what she has said. My wife believed it and told me this morning that she would rather be dead than living. I love my wife to the ground she walks upon. Before any man would have the benefit of her, I would rather see her lying in the grave and likewise myself. I did it like a man, and gave myself up." A look at the prisoner at this stage disclosed the fact that a tear was trickling down his cheek. A Juryman: - "Was the prisoner sober at the time?" Witness "Yes."

Medical evidence

Dr. Howard Davies, the next witness, said he saw deceased about 11 o'clock on Friday morning. He found that her throat had been cut from one side to the other, the large vessels and the wind-pipe being severed. There was a cut one inch long on the left cheek, two

long cuts on the left jaw, a superficial cut over the left bosom, and a superficial cut on the right side of the chest; a cut on the little finger, and also on the back of the right wrist. The Prisoner: - "I object to that." The Coroner (turning to prisoner): - "You say there were not." Prisoner: - "No, sir. I object to these cuts all about the face. There were no cuts whatsoever." The Coroner: - "I suppose they might have been inflicted whilst she was struggling to prevent getting her throat cut?" Dr. Davies: - "Very likely."

The Coroner: - "They were accidental cuts?" Dr. Davies: - "Yes. The nature of the wound in the throat led me to believe that it was done by more than one cut. Great violence must have been used, and death must have ensued within a minute after her throat had been cut." The foreman of the jury asked Dr. Davies whether prisoner was sane. Dr. Davies thereupon replied that he had not examined him.

The Coroner: - "That would have nothing to do with us. It will not be necessary for us to go into that. That will be a matter to be taken into consideration at his trial. We are now dealing with the death of the unfortunate woman."

No further evidence was called, and the Coroner asked prisoner whether he would like to give evidence. Lacey rose and became so agitated that he promptly fell back in his chair. Inspector Evans explained to the prisoner that any questions he chose to ask might be asked through the Coroner, but the prisoner made no reply.

He looked up and having glanced around him bent forward and it was again observed that tears were flowing freely from his eyes. His condition was pitiable in the extreme, and it was with some difficulty that he could be understood, his remarks being very disjointed.

"The cause of my being here," he said, "and my wife lying dead now, is because of my brother-in-law and my sister-in-law. That is the cause of the death of my wife. It was not my wish. They were against me and her. They tried to do everything to part her. We left Swansea and came to Pontypridd to live. They tried to separate us. She loved me." added prisoner, referring to deceased. "I know, and I loved her from my heart." The prisoner again broke down, and the Coroner remarked, "I am sorry for her and for you." The prisoner (in a broken voice): "I can't help it; it is done now."

Summing up

The Coroner then briefly addressed the jury, and said: - "It is such a clear case that no remarks of mine are necessary. If you believe that he did what he confesses he did - and without that confession it can be amply proved of course, you have nothing to do but to bring in a verdict of "Wilful murder."

Verdict

The jury then consulted, and without retiring the foreman almost at once said that they were all agreed in returning a verdict of "Wilful murder." Lacey did not say a word. The Coroner: - "This is a very sad case indeed, the unfortunate woman being only nineteen years of age. I fully believe this creature was fond of his wife and killed her through jealousy or something of the kind."

The prisoner was then removed, and as he was going through the adjoining room where the relatives of the murdered woman were sitting he looked keenly at them and turned round at the door.

His lips moved and he appeared as if he would speak to them, but not a word escaped him, and he speedily disappeared from their view.

Magisterial Proceedings - Affecting scene in court – Prisoner's strange story

Another stage in the proceedings connected with the murder which was committed at Pontypridd, when William Augustus Lacey, a coloured man hailing from Kingston, Jamaica, but who has off and on for some years been employed as a labourer in local collieries, killed his wife, Pauline Lacey, aged 19, a native of Swansea, by cutting her throat with a razor - was reached this morning (Wednesday 11th July 1900), when the prisoner was brought before the Bench at the Pontypridd Police Court and charged with the capital offence.

The magistrates present were the Stipendiary (Mr. J. Ignatius Williams), Mr. T. P. Jenkins, Alderman Richard Lewis, and Alderman W. H. Mathias. The public prosecutor had placed the prosecution in the hands of Mr. W. R. Davies, solicitor; who, singularly enough, conducted the prosecution in the last murder case in the district, when a woman living in the upper part of the Rhondda killed her infant child, and was afterwards upon her trial ordered to be detained in an asylum during her Majesty's pleasure.

Public Interest

The public evinced considerable interest in the case, and for some time before the doors of the court were opened a crowd was waiting for admission. The court was quickly filled, but the great bulk of the people were unable to obtain admission.

Since the inquest on Saturday, when a verdict of wilful murder was returned against Lacey, he has been confined in Cardiff gaol, from whence he was removed to Pontypridd this morning by the 9 o'clock train in charge of P.C. Mitchell, Pontypridd.

The Prisoner's Demeanour

The prisoner appeared in court about 11 o'clock, and the case was at once proceeded with. When he took his position in the defendant's box, and during the opening speech for the prosecution, he had his back towards the Bench, and looked at the spectators in court, amongst whom were his brother-in-law, O'Connor, and others whom he knew.

Case for the prosecution

In opening the case, Mr. W. R. Davies stated that he was instructed by the Director of Public Prosecutions to appear to prefer a very serious charge against the prisoner - that of having on last Friday morning murdered his wife. He would be as brief as possible, and had no wish to harrow the feelings of the prisoner, but there were certain facts which it would be necessary for him to detail, and having called witnesses in support of them it would be inevitable for the Bench to commit him for trial on the capital charge. He had made a confession, but quite apart from that the case against the prisoner was so conclusive that there could be no possible answer to the charge.

A fortnight before last Christmas the prisoner came over from America in the same boat as O'Connor, husband of the deceased woman's sister, and being a stranger Lacey lived with them at Port Tennant, Swansea, for a short time. During that time the deceased, who lived three or four doors away with her parents, constantly visited the house, and an intimacy sprang up between them which resulted in their marriage, which was quite against the wishes of her family.

Previous to the marriage prisoner told Mrs O'Connor that if he didn't have her sister he would have the rope for her. During that

time it was evident that he had very small regard for the sacredness of life, and had only regard to his own desires in the matter.

After the marriage the couple came to Pontypridd, and whilst living in Maritime Terrace with a Mrs Webb there was constant bickering between them, and the prisoner evinced an extraordinary degree of jealousy of his wife, so much so that when he went to his work at night he would order her to remain in her room and not go out until his return. During that time he repeatedly threatened to kill her, and on one occasion he told her that if he saw her with another man he would cut her throat. The prisoner possessed a razor, which he kept in a chest of drawers, and during a quarrel between them on one occasion he took the razor out and put it in his pocket and walked out of the house, saying that he was going to drown himself.

On the 22nd of June they took apartments with a Mrs Vaughan, at 21, Barry Terrace, Pwllgwaun, and there again they were constantly quarrelling, because, it appeared that deceased called him a lazy man. He (Mr. Davies) did not know whether his laziness did not arise from the fact that he was afraid to go to work because of his great jealousy of his wife. Mr. Davies then detailed the discovery of the tragedy and the quarrelling in the room as spoken to by Mrs Vaughan almost immediately previous to the deed, and referring to the confession made by the accused explained that about 14 months ago the deceased woman had an illegitimate child, which died four or five months afterwards. The father of that child, however, had left Swansea, and no communication had since passed between him and the unfortunate woman.

He referred to this because in one or two wrangles the prisoner appears to have taunted the poor woman with the fact, and

suggested perhaps that she would prefer going back to that man. The accused was informed of the birth of this child before the marriage took place. Mrs O'Connor, wife of Augustus O'Connor, 16, Maritime Terrace, Pontypridd, sister of deceased, and others gave evidence, which has already been reported.

Scene in court

The prisoner was then formally charged, and asked if he had anything to say replied that he wished to make a statement. The Stipendiary "You can please yourself, but I think you had better keep silent."

Prisoner: - "Oh, I don't know. What I speak now I will speak again."
The Stipendiary: - "Very well, go on." The accused then made a long, rambling statement to the following effect: - "On Friday morning I rose from my bed, and my wife was lying in bed awake. I says to her, 'I will go down and get you a cup of tea.' I came down, and the fire was not lit in my room yet. I went to Mrs Vaughan's kitchen with tea in it, and drew some tea. I came back to my room with the tea and I poured her out a cup, likewise myself. Before I took it to her I first had mine, and I started making a fire before I took her tea up.

She came down before I took it, when I says, 'Sit down here is a cup for you.' She says, 'No, I won't drink a cup of tea that you made.' I says, 'Why?' She says her heart was full through what I had done to her own sister, and she says she was badly ashamed to hold her head up in the street. I told her 'If you are ashamed my dear wife, to live in Pontypridd I will take you from here further up the Rhondda' She says, 'No, I will not go.' I says, 'My dear, what did you want me to do?' With that I cried, and she says, 'I want you to kill me. I would sooner be dead than be living after you have been with my sister. If my people were to know it they would

object to me to live with you anymore.' I went on my knees and begged her to be peaceable, and to live with me, but that was no satisfaction to her. She rose from the chair, and when she came back with the frying pan to make breakfast she laid down by the side of the fire. 'I am begging you, my husband.' "Yes, my love," I said, "what do you want?" 'I want you to kill me,' she said. 'No,' I says, 'I can't do it Pauline,' and she cried. "I have never killed a moth, and when I see one I go away from it and how could I kill a woman?"

Prisoner was now getting rather wild in appearance, and as his voice rose and fell, and he walked about the dock like a caged animal, waving his arms about, all in court were spell-bound, and listened eagerly to every word. As the prisoner was proceeding with his statement he betrayed emotions and looked somewhat wild in appearance. He walked from one side of the dock to the other, then turned to the crowd in the court and again to the bench.

"She took her shoes off," he proceeded, "and she laid herself down by the coal. She tells me then, 'Lacey cut my throat.' I did not see the razor at the time, and I was cutting bread, and I was sitting down while this occurred. I rose up and I kneeled by her side and drew her to my arms, but she dashed herself from me. I could not hold her and I tried to pet her, but it was no use. She had her bosom open, and she told me to take her life. 'No,' I said, 'I can't do it.' It never came across my mind to do anything of the kind. Why, I had not seen the razor for a week, and I did not know where it was until I saw it on Friday. She took her shoes off, and I did not know where the razor was then, but she had it in her waist. When I knelt by her side she raised the razor up and cut me on my breast. (Prisoner here opened his shirt front and pointed to a small cut which could be plainly seen on the right breast). I tried to draw the razor away, but she cut her throat with it. She said, 'Please, Lacey,

do it.' I then took it up, and like a fool did what she asked me. As soon as I did it and saw the blood, I was afraid, and could not stop."

Distressing spectacle

Lacey was now deeply agitated, and tears trickled freely down his cheeks. For a moment his voice ceased, and then it rose with a loud cry. He went on his knees, and for a moment he almost disappeared from view. Then his voice raised in prayer, declaring that he was not guilty, and as he rose he startled the court by striking the bench violently with his hand. "No," he proceeded, "I am not guilty. I have not done it with a clear conscience, not of my own free will. It never came across my mind to do it. Since my sister-in-law came to live to Pontypridd I have not had a day's peace. She asked me to do it, and I did it."

"Oh," he passionately exclaimed, with uplifted hands and tears still flowing, "I loved my wife. I love her now, and I love the ground where she is" and he turned sharply towards the people at the back of the court and looked around them, "If there is any justice I don't think I shall get the worst of it. Why? Because I am not guilty of it, God knows, and he is the only one that I have got as evidence, and by and by he will prove it. God is not sleeping, and it was not my wish to be here. I did not do it wilfully. Gentlemen of the jury," he almost shrieked, "I did not do it wilfully. If I did it I wilfully I would have tried to escape.

If I did it of my own accord do you think I would be here? No, I would have gone to the pit and raised the 30 shillings that is due to me and gone off. No, no, I have not done it with a wilful mind. When she asked me to do it I told her I would be arrested and be punished, but she replied, 'you tell them that I told you to do it.' "I kissed her, and she put her hand on my breast, and I kissed her

before she was dead. Oh, I did, I did. Oh, God may she rise again and come to me. God have mercy on me. I did not do it wilfully I was frightened, and came to the police-station." Prisoner uttered the last few words with a passion that almost startled the Court. Those present were deeply moved by his words and his agitation, and the eyes of many were dim with tears. When his voice was silent the Stipendiary told him: - "You had better go now. You are committed to take your trial." The prisoner replied, "It was not my wish," and an instant later the dramatic scene closed as he disappeared down the steps and was removed to the cells. Subsequently he was taken back to Cardiff Gaol, his departure to the railway station in a conveyance being watched by hundreds of people.

Body removed to Swansea

Mr. W. R. Davies, solicitor, Pontypridd, on Tuesday morning, 10th July received a letter from the Treasury asking him to appear to prosecute Augustus Lacey at Pontypridd Police-court on Wednesday, on a charge of murder. There seems to be some confusion even amongst the deceased's relatives as to the exact date of the funeral.

Speaking to one of our representatives on Tuesday evening, the deceased's brother said they had now decided that it should take place at Danygraig Cemetery, Swansea, at 3.30 p.m. on Thursday. The body was conveyed from Pontypridd to Swansea by the 6.20 pm train on Tuesday, a large number of friends accompanying it from Barry Terrace, where a brief, but impressive service was held. The coffin was of polished oak, with the simple inscription: -

<p>Pauline Lacey, Died July 6th 1900 19 years</p>
--

Two pretty little wreaths were laid over the inscription, one by her neighbours at Barry Terrace and the other by "a friend."

Funeral of the victim

Another newspaper reported: - The funeral of Pauline Lacey, the victim in the Pontypridd murder case, took place at Swansea, on Thursday afternoon, July 12th 1900, the arrangements being of the simplest character. There was no hearse, but the coffin was carried to the burial ground, Danygraig Cemetery, by a party of young men residing in the neighbourhood. The procession left the house of the deceased's father and mother (Mr. and Mrs. Joseph, Hoo-street., Port Tennant), about four o'clock in the afternoon. On the coffin were two artificial wreaths - one from Madame Salia, and the other from the neighbours at Barry Terrace, Pontypridd. The ceremony at the graveside was solemn and impressive, the Rev. W. A. Williams, Port Tennant, officiating. Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor, of Pontypridd, were amongst those attending the funeral.

Is the accused insane?

Lacey, the West Indian negro, who is awaiting his trial at the Assizes for the murder of his wife at Pontypridd has now been in custody at Cardiff gaol for a fortnight, and as there yet remains a week before he will be called upon to answer the capital charge at Swansea., there will be afforded ample time for ascertaining his mental condition (reported the South Wales Daily News of 22nd July). In several charges of murder in Glamorgan in recent years the counsel for the Crown has called the evidence of experts like Dr. Pringle, of Bridgend Asylum, and Dr. Treharne, chief surgeon at Cardiff Gaol, who have stated the mental condition of the prisoners to be such as to make them unable to plead.

Such cases both at Cardiff and Swansea Assizes will be easily recalled. The ferocity of the attack by Lacey and his subsequent conduct, coupled with the extraordinary scene at the Pontypridd Police Court, were considered in some quarters to indicate that the prisoner was insane.

While in Cardiff Gaol, however, he does not appear to have given any unmistakable indication of insanity, and though morose he has taken his meals with unusual regularity for a prisoner charged with wilful murder. It is probable, if not certain, that Lacey will be indicted before Lord Chief Justice Russell, who will share with Mr. Justice Grant in the work of the South Wales Circuit.

An appeal by the Rev. Ton Evans

Despite Lacey's apparent guilt, there was still sympathy for him in south Wales. The '*Cardiff Times*' of 28th July reported: - We have received the following letter from the Rev. L. Ton Evans, Barry: -

Sir - Having travelled in various countries and laboured some time among the negro population of Jamaica, Haiti, and West Indies, where I was treated with the greatest respect by natives of all shades and ranks, and naturally feeling a deep interest in the African, who, even in Britain, as in America, is often misunderstood, if not sometimes looked down upon as belonging to an inferior race, and treated somewhat accordingly, I ventured - having previously obtained consent - to visit Lacey, the unfortunate coloured man, who now awaits his trial in a Cardiff Gaol on the charge of murder.

As the result of my visit I found the prisoner had no friend or relative anywhere in the wide world who could assist him just now in the dire distress which he has brought upon himself, and that in addition to the terrible charge which must weigh heavily upon him

he is left severely alone. Under these circumstances I willingly volunteered to render him all the help that can be given to one in his position, viz., to see that he is placed on an equal footing to the white men in his own country and under similar circumstances. I have therefore on his behalf instructed Mr. Arthur Hughes, solicitor, to arrange for Lacey a defence and to engage counsel.

Those who share in the opinion that a black man should have equal opportunity with the white man, and there are many, judging by recent expressions of sympathy with the African race in South Africa, will no doubt be glad to contribute in aid of this defence, which will at least cost £25 to £30. Should there be any surplus after paying costs this will go to the Indian Famine Fund."

The prisoner's defence fund

The Rev. L. Ton Evans, Barry, writing again in the South Wales Daily News, 30th July 1900: - "I wish now to inform your readers that Mr. W. Bowen Rowlands, Q.C., has been briefed by our solicitor to defend Lacey at Swansea. While heartily thanking those friends who, in response to the appeal in your columns, have written me expressing their appreciation of the efforts to secure a leading counsel to defend a coloured and a friendless prisoner, and for the postal orders sent in aid of the same, allow me to state that so far only a tithe of the amount required has been subscribed." Two weeks later, another letter from the Rev. Evans: -

Letter from the condemned man - Suggested Petition for Reprieve (South Wales Echo 8th August 1900)

To the editor. Sir, I have received the following pathetic letter from the condemned prisoner in Cardiff Gaol, which, notwithstanding our horror of the crime committed, cannot but elicit one's deep sympathy with an illiterate negro, who to a great extent is ignorant

of our language and customs and undoubtedly the victim of the indiscreet utterances and strong provocative taunting which made life unbearable to Lacey and his wife: -

Cardiff Prison, August 4th, 1900.

“Rev. Sir, - Many a thousand thanks for the able barrister you got for me, who spoke so well on my behalf at my dreadful trial. Pardon me for again troubling you in trying to get up a petition signed on my behalf to get my sentence reprieved, and if you can spare time to pay me a visit I should be very thankful to you, and will you kindly remember me in your prayers to our God in heaven for strength to stand this awful ordeal? Please do your best in getting a petition signed on my behalf. Please do it immediately, because there is no time to be lost. I am, sir, your obedient servant, William Augustus Lacey.”

In response to this appeal I shall be greatly obliged, on behalf of the condemned coloured man, if any friends can help in getting a petition signed at Pontypridd, Swansea, Cardiff, and Barry as soon as possible. Under the circumstances set forth at the trial, and which must have impressed all present, it may not be difficult to get the members of the jury to sign the same. A large number of letters which I have recently received in reference to this defence, the Rev. J. Towyn Jones, Garnant, writes: -

“Dear Mr. Ton Evans, - I have been touched by your fine humanity in standing by a foreigner to see that every fairness possible would be given him in a land which was not his own. I enclose 2s 6d towards the expenses of the trial. Should you fail to get the necessary sum I shall be pleased to send you another 2s 6d.” The defence fund has now reached £5 5s, or about one-fourth of the cost incurred to counsel and witnesses. I am &c. **L. Ton Evans, Barry, August 7th, 1900.**



Pwllgwaun 1888 showing Barry Terrace (road), where the murder of Pauline Lacey took place.

Chapter three

Trial of the prisoner – Extraordinary statements

At the Glamorganshire Assizes on Thursday, August 2nd 1900, before Mr. Justice Grantham, Wm. Lacey (21) a coloured man, was indicted of "feloniously, wilfully, and of malice afore-thought, killing his wife, Pauline Lacey, at Pontypridd, on July 6th last." Mr. S. T. Evans, M.P., and Mr. Vaughan Williams, appeared for the prosecution, and Mr. Bowen Rowlands, Q.C., and Mr. A. C. Thomas, defended. A considerable amount of interest was manifest in the case. A large crowd gathered in the precincts of the Guildhall some time before the doors were opened, and as soon as this was done the Criminal Court began to fill rapidly, so that by the time the case for the prosecution was commenced the body of the court was crowded.

The prisoner - a finely built and intelligent looking Negro followed the proceedings with rapt attention, sometimes bending half over the edge of the dock in his anxiety to hear what was being said by the witnesses. Upon being formally charged, he replied in a firm voice "Not guilty." In opening the case, Mr. S. T. Evans briefly related the circumstances which led up to the crime. He related how Lacey was brought to this neighbourhood by Augustus O'Connor, a coloured man who had previously married the murdered woman's sister; how the parties became acquainted, how they married in April at the Swansea Registry Office, and directly afterwards went to reside in apartments at Pontypridd.

Then came the story of the crime.

He said quite early in their married life disagreements constantly took place, chiefly on account of the fact that Lacey would not attend work regularly. What the reason was he could not definitely say; it might have been because he did not care to work, or, as was

more probable, inasmuch as his duties as a miner took him to the colliery at night, he suffered from a feeling of jealousy - a jealousy for which there was no ground. The week before the crime was committed the prisoner did not work at all, and as a consequence numerous quarrels took place between him and his young wife.

On Friday morning, 16th July, the two were left in the house alone. What happened then only one person alone could tell, and that was Lacey. Cries of "Oh, don't Lacey," were heard, and after Lacey had given himself up the awful facts became known. The fact that prisoner was a Blackman, he (counsel) felt would not affect the trial; he would secure the justice which was the right of all in this country.

The evidence for the prosecution

Mary O'Connor, sister of the murdered woman, said that her husband, Augustus O'Connor, was formerly a ship's cook, and it was upon returning from his last voyage that he brought Lacey with him. Lacey became acquainted with her sister (who then lived with her father at Port Tennant) through her visiting her house whilst he was there.

Prisoner was several times in company with her. On the 19th April they went and got married at the Swansea Registry Office, unknown to anyone but themselves.

In cross-examination witness admitted that her husband had had a fight with Lacey, but she denied that it was on account of his having made a disgraceful statement with reference to Lacey and herself, which greatly disturbed the mind of her sister Pauline. She was also cross-examined at some length with a view to showing that the prisoner was exceedingly fond of his wife, but all she

would say was that before he was married he had said that if he could not have her sister he would have the rope.

Georgina Webb, living at 16, Maritime Terrace, Pontypridd, with whom prisoner and his wife lodged for a time, was the next witness called. She stated that the parties were always quarrelling, and once she had seen Lacey strike his wife two blows in the face. Mrs. Lacey then took up a fish kettle and hit him on the shoulder with it, where-upon he opened a drawer, took from it the marriage certificate and a razor, put them in in his pocket and walked out, remarking at the same time that he was going to destroy himself. Replying to his Lordship, witness said he did not stay out long, and when he returned he "petted" his wife. Cross-examined by Mr. Bowen Rowlands, witness stated that the parties seemed very fond of each other.

Emma McKenny, who lives with her husband - another coloured man - at Barry Terrace, Pontypridd, deposed to overhearing Lacey and his wife "having a few words." She said that Mrs. Lacey called her husband lazy, because he would not go to work, and threatened to go home to her parents. Prisoner said he would follow her and "do" for her, and afterwards "do" for himself.

Mrs. Catherine Vaughan, 20, Barry Terrace, Pontypridd, spoke to the parties coming to lodge at her house on the 22nd June. They quarrelled every day, she said, and she heard them carrying on their disputations during the whole of the night preceding the murder. About ten o'clock on the following morning she went to a neighbour's house.

Some little time afterwards she heard people shouting murder, and she rushed back to the house. Upon entering she found Mrs. Lacey lying dead on the floor in the front room. In cross-

examination, witness remarked she had heard that O'Connor had once kissed Mrs. Lacey, and that he and prisoner had had a fight.

Mary Cleaves, who lived next door to where prisoner and his wife lodged, stated that on the day in question she heard Mrs. Lacey cry, "Oh Lacey, don't." Some time afterwards she saw prisoner come out of the house and walk away. She then went to the window and, upon looking in, saw Mrs. Lacey lying in a pool of blood.

Dr. Howard Davies, surgeon in practice at Pontypridd, testified to being called to the scene of the murder. He found a big gash across the victim's throat, which had the appearance of having been done by more than one cut. The windpipe had been completely severed. There were also small cuts on the cheek, the upper part of the chest, and other places. In answer to the Judge, witness said these were superficial wounds which might have been inflicted in the course of a struggle. His Lordship: - "Yes, but in whose hands would the weapon have been?" Witness: - "That is difficult to say, my Lord."

P.C. David Evans, stationed at a place near Pontypridd spoke of the prisoner coming to the police station to give himself up for killing his wife. When he charged him with the crime Lacey made a statement, in the course of which he said he loved his wife "to the ground she walks." "Before any man should have her I would sooner see her in the ground, likewise myself. I did it like a man, and I come to give myself up." The Court then adjourned for luncheon.

The defence

Upon resuming, Mr. Bowen Rowlands called the prisoner to give evidence. He denied that he and his wife were always quarrelling,

and said that on the Sunday before his wife died, O'Connor came to their house in Barry Terrace and told his wife, in his hearing, that he (Lacey) had been unduly intimate with Mrs. O'Connor. He denied it, and asked O'Connor to bring his wife to face him. Before this he (Lacey) and his wife had got on very comfortably, but since that day there was no peace with her. He petted and coaxed her, but she said she would sooner be dead than alive, she was ashamed to go outside. He remembered the morning of his wife's death.

About ten o'clock he found his wife crying in a corner of the room downstairs. Prisoner went on: - "I went over to her and said, 'Come love,' but she would not rise. She then opened the bosom of her dress and I saw the razor. She made a cut at her throat. I tried to get it from her, and whilst I was doing so she cut me on the breast, and the blood ran on my hands.

I tried my best to get the razor, and seeing the blood, got nervous and frightened. I shook her, and when I could not get it, I said, 'Oh Lord have mercy,' and I went outside. I was frightened at the police station and said I had killed my wife - I did not know what I was talking about. I could not help what I said at that time. I had refused to kill a fowl, much less kill a human being. It isn't in my heart to do it."

Mr. Bowen Rowlands: - "Is it true that you struck your wife in the face?" Lacey: - "No, Sir, I never used violence towards her. I always loved her and was true to her. She was always determined to do something to herself." Cross-examined: - He was not jealous of his wife. He never said at the Police Court that his wife cut herself and then asked him to finish it. Prisoner was also questioned as to why he did not go to work on the days preceding the alleged murder, but he could give no explanation, except that his wife did not wish him to work.

Mr. Morgan Thomas, manager of the Great Western Colliery at Pontypridd, who had employed Lacey for a time, gave him a good character. He said he had found him quiet, decent in his conduct and also polite. This was all the evidence called, and Mr. S. T. Evans then briefly addressed the jury on behalf of the Crown. Mr. Bowen Rowlands made a powerful and eloquent speech for the defence, and in conclusion, said he felt assured that the jury would do their duty without fear or affection, and his only prayer was that God would show them the right course to take.

The judge sums up – The verdict

His Lordship then summed up at some length. Referring to the story told by the prisoner that his wife inflicted the injury upon herself, he asked was it probable that the prisoner would have come out of the house and passed people, whom he must have known, without asking them to go inside to try and assuage the flow of the blood from his wife, if he had not the courage to do it himself?

But the doctor's description of the wounds he found on the victim pointed to them being inflicted, not by the woman herself, but by someone else. No man, even though he were of warm temperament, would stand by and see the woman whom he says he loves cut her own throat, without doing anything to prevent it. The jury retired for about six minutes, and upon returning into court found a verdict of "Guilty."

The death sentence passed

The Judge, putting on the black cap, and addressing the prisoner in a solemn and impressive manner, said: - "William Lacey, the jury have found you guilty of the fearful crime of murder, and I am quite sure that everyone who has heard this case can come to no

other conclusion, for it was the only one that the jury could have found. The evidence was conclusive. It is not for them or for us to find the motive, but no one can doubt for a moment that it was jealousy that actuated you in taking the life of the unhappy woman. From the commencement of your knowledge of her you were actuated by a strong passion towards her.

It may be that from your colour your temperament may be hotter than the white people with whom you reside, yet, as I said just now, it is necessary that you should know that you must obey the laws of the country in which you live. It is our duty to protect our fellow subjects.

The jury have done their duty, I have now to do mine. It is a very painful one, namely, to pass upon you sentence of death. It is that you be taken hence from the place where you came, thence to some convenient place of execution, and that you be there hanged by the neck until you die, and that you be buried within the precincts of the prison where you were confined before this sentence. May the Lord have mercy upon your soul."

Whilst sentence was being passed the prisoner kept restlessly twisting about, as if he had lost all control over himself, and at the conclusion he said rather feebly, "Thank you, much obliged." Then addressing the people in the court, he cried "Good bye to you all; God bless you all." He was then hurried to the cells below.

The trial - an overview

The 'Western Mail' the following day gave this overview of the proceedings on August 3rd 1900, the day after the verdict had been brought in: -

A black man and a white wife - A negro Othello and his Desdemona – Sentence of death at Swansea - Condemned man thanks judge and jury - and bids tragic goodbye to the world

Seldom in the history of a Welsh Assize has a murderer with his own hand drawn the death-noose more tightly than did the Negro who at Swansea on Thursday heard the dread sentence of the law for a crime without the shadow of extenuation. When the proceedings opened the Crown Court was only tolerably filled, and it was difficult to believe that a human life trembled in the balance. There was a distant fanfare, and then entered Mr. Justice Grantham. He looked very ponderous and stern as he laid on the desk beside him the cap which was to do such dismal duty later in the day.

From his lordship the eye wanders to the dock, and as it rests within the spiked area a tall, slight figure steps gently forward, with a certain easy grace that at once betrays the foreigner. How self-possessed he is, this man who to-day will listen to the words of doom. As we study him, we admit a certain interest. True, William Lacey is a murderer, but if we did not know this we might easily mistake him for a coloured evangelist. He has so much about him of "God's image in ebony." He has a kind, nay, gentle face, and he is even handsome as Negroes go; he holds himself well and betrays but little self-consciousness as yet. It is not given to every wife-murderer to wear with such consummate success the mask of innocence.

Before the tragedy the comedy - all the antediluvian comedy of swearing in the jury and what not, performed by a spruce little functionary who has more dignity than his lord himself. And as the comedy goes on and the twelve good men and true are gathered our murderous coloured gentleman looks round with flashing eyes and gleaming teeth and that occasional smile which is so winning

on a dusky countenance. It is a strange voice, on one side this soft-faced smiling son of Ham, and before him the judge, strong-faced, stern, type of Anglo-Saxon rectitude and justice. In the in the court are many notables, prominent amongst them Sir R. A. Morris, in his brilliant scarlet uniform. Fair ladies are there too - they always are when sentence of death is about.

A figure with clean cut judicial countenance is on its feet; it is Mr. S. T. Evans. M.P., opening the case - beginning to tighten the hempen cord around the dusky neck of the Negro murderer of Pontypridd. Adroitly, and yet with a sympathy that does him credit, the well-known barrister opens his battery. Soon there is a visible effect on the prisoner. He becomes uneasy, shakes his head in a deprecating fashion, and summons his junior counsel by his side. The latter, a modern replica of the chief defender, the doughty Bowen-Rowlands, carefully listens to the words of the prisoner, and then resumes his seat. The consultation is repeated several times - it means so little to the man of law, so fearfully much to the man of colour.

The jury are as intelligent-looking as any scratch dozen of human beings, and, doubtless, the prisoner is satisfied, for he raises no objection to the panel. Then comes the evidence, and sad and commonplace enough it is. Shall we summarise it?

A knot of white women enamoured of black men, the black men enamoured in return; much passion, as there always is in these cases; desperate threats if love be not requited; a suspicion, perhaps more, of freer love than is contemplated between our British marriage laws; then, as between the ill-fated pair, jealousy, high words, blows, culminating in a blood-stained razor, pools of gore, the pale form of a young wife with her throat and bosom full of ghastly wounds - the white throat and bosom which once meant

so much to this Glamorganshire Othello; and, last of all, the frank, the damning confession to the police - "I did it like a man."

Three women (do not the female sex see every man's sorrow?) build up the chain of evidence. Prisoner fidgets about and endeavours to extract comfort from confidences with the warders, but it is like hugging his chain. Then the cross-examination begins, and be sure that if there is a point in favour of this dark bridegroom Bowen-Rowlands will seize it, will expand it, will turn it into a mountain, even though it be but an evidential molehill. Alas! How poorly he succeeds.

Prisoner sees this; he watches with painful eagerness, grasping for support the front of the deck. Once he has nervously moistened his lips; later, as a witness makes an incriminating statement, he murmurs, "I did not." It is the first time we have listened to a voice whose accents are soon to be hushed forever.

The female deposition proceeds, and then there is a piece of evidence mute, but eloquent, the blood-stained implement with which the Negro slashed the throat and bosom of his white girl-wife. The doctor and the policeman tell their tale; the latter - a well, known footballer, folks say - causing sensation by his statement, read out with official formality from a constabulary pocket-book. It is the confession of the guilty man after he was duly warned, in words on which even the judge's associate could hardly improve. What need of further witnesses when in his own admission Lacey is a wife-murderer? The cannonade of the prosecution is over, but the defence admit serious breaches in their walls, for, see, they organise a forlorn hope.

Under the new Act the prisoner determines to offer himself as evidence. So brings down the curtain on the first scene. His lordship adjourns for Luncheon, and, following so eminent a regal

authority, we make haste to go and do likewise. Sweet is the sun and fresh the air after that crowded court, but, coloured prisoner, for you they are things of the past. You will stand in the box where freemen stand, and then - the scene will shortly close on you for ever.

The court re-assembles amid a heavy crush; there is fascination in a murder case, and to some, no doubt, a fearful joy in seeing the last act, or rather, the last act but one, for on that last awful act few (thank God for it) are the eyes that may look. We crush in anyhow, and witness a pathetic scene, this black prisoner speaking in his own defence.

He has a gentle even winning voice; he speaks with a kind of eloquence; his gestures are free and natural, giving due emphasis to his words. "Was she fond of him?" He smiles sadly, "She says she was." And then he goes on to tell the tale of the tragedy after his own fashion, and, baring his breast, shows the jury a scar and says his wife inflicted it.

Why had he confessed his guilt to the police authorities? Because he was frightened - he didn't know what he was doing. Kill? Why he had refused to kill a fowl; how much more a human creature, and that human creature his young white wife!

It was not in his power - not in his heart to do it. He had always been loving to his wife, always true to her. She had threatened to do away with herself. And as the prisoner said all this, and much more, the arms waved, and the velvet eyes flashed and the white teeth gleamed and glistened; but, alas! For him, it was a mass of contradictions.

Pitiful was the scene when Mr. Evans reluctantly cross-examined and tore the murder's evidence to tatters. Almost better for him

had he not added a third to two vitally conflicting statements. Evidence of character was given, and then came counsel.

Mr. S. T. Evans speaking with judgement and un-subdued feeling, and Mr. Bowen-Rowlands spinning a brilliant web for a palpably hopeless defence. His lordship's summing up was lengthy, careful, and scrupulously fair. At eight minutes to four he left the twelve good men and true to the performance of their melancholy function. They retired, but it was a mere formality.

At two minutes past the hour they were back with the verdict that every soul in court expected. Prisoner rose in his easy way, and nervously buttoned his coat. He had smiled several times as Mr. Bowen-Rowlands pleaded- smiled perhaps at the brilliant defence, perhaps at the absurdity.

Then, as his lordship donned the black cap and passed sentence, the glistening teeth parted in a smile again. The only smile in that hushed and crowded court. Very solemn was the sentence; the judge's face was grey and drawn. Perhaps he felt the position more acutely than the doomed man did. It is often thus.

His lordship ceased; Lacey steadied himself, then looked at the judge and then at the jury, and stammered out, "Thank you. Much obliged. Thank you all." Then turning to the audience he added. "God bless you." And then he disappeared below. There was no murmur of sympathy; the verdict of the jury was that of the whole court, of everyone outside, and of all who have studied a melancholy case which is not without its lesson and warning.

Chapter Four

Removal of the condemned man

The condemned man Lacey was removed from Swansea Gaol to that at Cardiff yesterday morning (Friday, 3rd August), reported the Welsh newspapers, where the execution will take place. The date of the execution is not yet fixed, but it will probably be next Tuesday fortnight. Lacey travelled in charge of two warders, having both wrists handcuffed. He arrived at Cardiff at 3 p.m., and was at once marched across the platform through the nearest exit door and placed in a four-wheeler, in which he was driven to the prison. There were very few people in the vicinity of the station at the time, and so Lacey's arrival and departure passed off without attracting any public attention. The doomed man wore a despairing look, as if fully realising the fate that awaits him and it was observed that during his progress from train to cab he kept steadfastly looking upwards.

There was still a lot of sympathy for Lacey and newspaper columns contained several letters of support for a reprieve. One such letter appeared in the 'Western Mail' of 8th August: -

The condemned man Lacey

Sir – Please allow me to suggest the advisability of getting up a petition at once on behalf of the unfortunate person. Lacey has been the victim of circumstances, and his sad fate is to be pitied by every human heart. Scores from Pontypridd were in the court on that fateful day, and all were loud in proclaiming their sympathies with the wretched man. All agreed in saying that Lacey was not a bad fellow at all, and they regretted much his fate. It is general known that he was passionately fond of his wife, and even all the witnesses at the trial testified to this. It is also well known that several of his companions at the colliery took advantage of his

attachment to fill his mind with suspicion and jealousy. They were constantly at him, and referring to the infidelity of his wife. He became mad with jealousy, and, instead of going to work, he insisted upon remaining at home to watch the movements of his wife. Now, this is well known at Pontypridd, and the greatest sympathy was evinced for him at the time of his trial. It is a pity that the senseless and cruel people that played the fateful joke on him could not be made to suffer for their horrible crime. Lacey should be reprieved. It is unjust that he should die.

As I and others tried to study his face and movements during the hearing of the case, we could not help thinking that his face had not been shaped by nature into that of a murderer. His handsome features were genial and kind. His expression was full of humanity and nobleness. There was not a trace of brutality visible upon his face. In human nature he appeared far above the average coloured man. Let the Rev. T. Ton Evans (Barry) and Mr. W. R. Davies (Pontypridd), "Morien," and others take the matter up without delay. There are thousands, I am sure, who would be only too glad to sign on his behalf. **I am &c. 'Minister' 6th August.** Another letter two days later supported this view in the same newspaper: -

Sympathy from the public

To the Editor of the 'Western Mail' 10 August 1900 - Sir - As one who was present at the trial from beginning to end I can corroborate every word of "Minister" as to Lacey's appearance and bearing. He looked no more a murderer than the judge and jury who tried him. If there is a strong feeling at Pontypridd of which "Minister" speaks, I trust it will be given tangible form, and at once; but so far as I could see in court the verdict and sentence aroused no sympathy for the prisoner. - I am, &c. **Silent witness.** The Editorial of the same newspaper commented: -

The kindly action of the Rev. L. Ton Evans, of Barry, in ensuring for the Negro Lacey a fair trial, and the benefit of defence by one of the ablest counsel on the circuit was in every way laudable, and it is to be hoped that his fund in that behalf will be augmented to the necessary proportions. Now, however, he is asked by the prisoner to undertake quite another task - in which we feel he will hardly meet with large degree of sympathy from the public. The prisoner, in a letter, appeals for a petition in favour of a reprieve, and piteously says "there is no time to be lost."

Unfortunately, the condemned man in his letter fails even to hint at the grounds (which it would be necessary to explicitly set forth in such a petition) upon which he bases his hopes of forgiveness. The circumstances of his crime will be fresh in the memory, and the facts were admittedly unrelieved by a single detail leading to doubt, or commiseration. He has experienced the fairness and impartiality of his white brethren, who, after seeing a young innocent of their own class done mercilessly to death by her ill-chosen consort, have subscribed to defend him and to produce every scrap of fact, which would tell in his behalf. We observe again that if the prisoner himself cannot suggest any ground on which he can crave the indulgence of the supreme authority of the country whose laws he so ruthlessly violated it will certainly be difficult for others to do so.

Is Lacey to die? - Extenuating circumstances suggested

Jealousy and a teasing wife – Welsh journalist appeals

"Morien," the well-known Welsh journalist explains in local newspapers a case for the reprieve of the wretched coloured man who is incarcerated in Cardiff Goal under a death sentence for the murder of his wife – a prepossessing young Swansea girl. In the course of his ingenious argument, he wrote on 14 August 1900: -

There is no denying that there is a wide-spread desire for seeing the Royal clemency extended to the man Lacey. This is due to several causes. In all countries of Europe degrees of guilt, except in Britain, are taken into account in dealing with a case of this nature. Extenuating circumstances which lead to the perpetration of a murder are considered.

But instead of leaving the question of extenuating circumstances to judge and jury, such considerations are left to the Home Secretary, who, if he thinks fit, can recommend the Crown to exercise its prerogative of mercy and postpone the execution of the sentence of the judge indefinitely. Now, are there extenuating circumstances in the history of the terrible crime for which Lacey stands justly condemned? I made on the spot immediately after the murder careful inquiry into all the circumstances preceding the perpetration of the crime, and I shall divest myself of a sense of responsibility by making public what I gleaned on the spot.

1. As regards Lacey's fondness for Pauline his wife, it bordered on idolatry. So fond was he of her that he was not easy in his mind except in her company, and this operated so powerfully that he neglected his work to be with her. This infatuation became known to his fellow-workmen that they chaffed him and invented lies to the effect that they "knew Mrs Lacey, &c." The simple African was thus driven into a state of constant doubt and suspicion.

2. Poor Pauline could not but appreciate the man's intense devotion to herself and there is conclusive evidence that she exercised to the utmost the power over her lover to tease him and amuse herself by witnessing his paroxysms of jealousy. She, like many woman before her are guilty in the same way, little dreamed of the madness she was causing and the danger to herself and him by her reprehensible conduct.

3. Pauline was tired of Lacey. She had married him after a very short acquaintance during a tiff at Swansea with her first and only sweetheart, and here she was living in comparative isolation and a semi-prisoner owing to her husband's jealousy. She began to invent excuses for what she evidently intended doing, namely, running away from Lacey. She wrote to her parents asking could she return to them. They to their credit replied, "Yes," and tendered their forgiveness, as also did her eldest brother.

The family had sheltered her during a former trouble. Pauline in writing to her parents in the published letter gave Lacey a good character, saying he was a "good husband." But they were frequently quarrelling. Does not the good name she gave to Lacey when writing to her parents betray on her part consciousness that the quarrels were due to her own efforts to disentangle herself from him and then return to the vicinity of her old sweetheart?

It is actually in evidence that she had the hardihood to tell her "good husband" that she preferred her old sweetheart to him. Her own sister's husband during a beery moment had playfully kissed her. This was seen by Lacey. The morning before the crime was committed Pauline had read to Lacey what he regarded as a notice to him of her final separation from him, namely, her parent's letter, telling her their door was still open for her. She was going from Lacey the day he killed her. He was unquestionably a monomaniac that day his overpowering love had mastered all his other faculties. He had evidently intended to slay also himself, but dropped the razor from his hand while pulling down the blinds, which he was seen doing preparatory to committing suicide.

4. In considering the question of extenuating circumstances, it is necessary to take into consideration the mental character of the accused. In the case of the capital crime being committed by a lunatic the law regards as morally guiltless the perpetrator. This

Lacey is a Negro, whose knowledge of English, was such as is acquired in recent years while roaming about the world in search of a livelihood. His nature is a semi-savage one, and the latent ferocity of his race broke out under the terrible strain under which he was put by his attractive young wife.

On the walls of the ruins of Pompeii, Naples, were found chalked the following words written upwards of 18 centuries ago: - "Poor Africanus. Who pities Africanus?" When all the circumstances are taken into consideration one cannot but feel some pity for this poor African now in Cardiff Gaol waiting for the coming of the executioner. I was one of those in the Police Court at Pontypridd when Lacey with clenched hands, upturned gaze, and tears careering down his dusky face, cried to the dead, "Oh, come back to me, Pauline!" **I am. &c., Morien**

Date of Lacey's execution

The 'Evening Express' of 15th August 1900 reported: - We are informed that the execution, of Lacey, who was condemned to death at the recent assizes at Swansea for the murder of his wife at Pontypridd, has been fixed for Tuesday, the 21st inst. The prisoner, who is incarcerated in Cardiff Gaol (where the sentence will be carried into effect), is well in health, but anxious that steps should be taken to obtain a reprieve. He continually talks about his love for his late wife, and it is more than ever apparent that his motive for the deed was jealousy. The same newspaper also reported: -

Movement for Lacey's reprieve

The Rev. L. Ton Evans writes: - Kindly allow me, as there is now no time to lose, to give a list of the most populous centres and names of certain persons to whom petitions have been entrusted: -

Cardiff: - Town-hall, Free Library, 42, Queen-street, 8, Cowbridge Road, the Revs. Charles Davies (Tabernacle), John Williamson, M.A., James Baillie (Tredegarville), Seth Joshua, &c.

Pontypridd: - The Managers of the Great Western, Coedcae, and Maritime Collieries, and the Revs. W. I. Morris and J. R. Jones.

Rhondda Valleys: - The Managers of the Cymmer, Standard, Cwtch, Penygraig, Llwynypia and other collieries, with also Ministers of Religion.

Swansea: - Guild hall, Free Library, Albert Hall, Dr. Gomer Lewis and 11, St. Helen's Crescent.

Newport: - Town-hall, Free Library, the Revs. Jones (Duckpool), Eiwyn Thomas, and Mr. Gibbs (fruiterer).

Merthyr Tydfil and Dowlais: - The Managers of Works, Merthyr Assistant Overseer, and various Ministers.

Aberdare: - The Managers of Nixon's, Treharris, Penrhiwceiber, and other collieries, with Ministers.

Aberavon: - The Deputy-mayor.

Llanelly: -The Revs. Mr. John (Capel Als). Dr. Rowlands, Ac.

The Wells: - The Llandrindod and Llanwrtyd Post-offices.

Porthcawl: - Mrs Edwards. John Street.

Briton Ferry: - Mrs. Gwyn Lewis.

Barry: - The Barry and Barry Dock Public Reading Rooms, Dry Dock, Beach Inspector, Priory, and various Churches.

Mr. Evans adds: - Should the sheets sent be insufficient, friends in charge are earnestly requested to apply for any number they require, and see that the signed sheets are returned to me by to-morrow (Friday).

The Pontypridd murderer and a reprieve

The *'Aberdare Times'* of 18 August commented: - Petitions are being extensively signed for the reprieve of Lacey, the coloured man, who in a fit of madness killed his wife recently at Pontypridd. Supposing that the man was an ordinary white man, to kill his wife under sudden impulse would not be wilful murder in a moral sense, even if in a legal sense.

And the penalty for such a crime should not be the same as the punishment for an act which was premeditated and systematically carried out in order to be rid, say, of a superfluous member of a family. If the murderer had been a white man it would be unjust in our opinion to inflict the maximum penalty of the law.

But since the man in this case is a black man - one whose intelligence must necessarily be inferior to that of the Englishman there certainly would not have been worse injustice dealt to a man than now threatened.

True, he was a British citizen, and for that reason it may be said should not be ignorant of our laws, and should have the same horror for crime as the Englishman. But he was allowed to live in the country. No one objected to him as long as he was peaceful. But in accepting him as an adopted Englishman England accepted him in spite of his previous surroundings, and in spite of the fact that in his native country the use of the knife was thought much less seriously of than in England.

If England allows such men to land on its shores without instilling them with the customs of the country, the consequences should rest with them, for to cause death to a man who by a fit of passion committed a crime, aided by the instincts of his own nature, is indeed a crime.

However, the following letter appeared in '*South Wales Daily News*' on August 16th 1900 showing the other people had a little sympathy with Lacey, but thought it just that he was hanged: -

To the Editor

Sir – I notice that several gentlemen are endeavouring to obtain a reprieve for the prisoner now awaiting execution in Cardiff Goal. The learned judge who sentenced the prisoner to death advised the jury to give the prisoner the benefit of any doubt which might arise. There was no doubt, and hence the verdict with which the judge expressed his agreement. It is only right that any man, he be black or white, should suffer the extreme penalty of the law for a crime such as was committed by the prisoner Lacey.

It has been stated at the trial and elsewhere that Lacey committed the murder in a fit of jealousy, but, then, when a man loses control of his passion, and commits such a diabolical deed, he deserves to suffer for it. That the prisoner was not insane has been proved, and therefore what hope is there for a reprieve?

In his recent appeal to the public to take up his case Lacey does not give any reason why such should be done. Of course, it does not make one feel any the brighter to see a fellow-creature led to the gallows, but it is satisfactory to know that his execution will be a warning to others. I am, &c. **Pontypridd, 14th August, 1900, B. Hughes.**

Yet another letter to the editor showed more sympathy: -

Sir, the able, exhaustive, and human letter of your correspondent Morien on behalf of the man Lacey will, I trust, call forth a strong protest against his execution. A man who commits a murder in a condition of drunkenness is not visited with the ultimate penalty of

the law; and crisis of uncontrollable jealousy is psychologically of equal force with the frenzy produced by alcohol. Therefore it should equally be acknowledged as an extenuating circumstance.

Surely the Welshman's passionate love of justice will throw its support over the poor African, whose mental development is centuries behind their own. Surely the impassioned cry to the dead of that desperate heart will strike a note of sympathy in the heart of every man and woman who heard it in court, as well as of every man and woman who hears it repeated in the justice-compelling letter of Morien. We are obliged to leave such things very much in the hands of the press, and I earnestly hope, sir, that you will give the effect that you are well able to do to these appeals. The daughter of a Welshman who felt himself the brother of all men, of what ever colour, begs your help. I am, &c. **M. V. Langdon Villas, Warren Street, Tenby.**

Home Secretary and the petitions – Mr. Chamberlain's intercession

On Friday evening, 17 August 1900, Mr. J. Arthur Hughes, Barry Dock, the solicitor for the defence of the condemned man Lacey, forwarded to the Home Office a large number of petitions signed for the reprieve of the murderer. This was done in response to a message received by the Rev. L. Ton Evans in the course of the day asking that they should be forwarded at once.

Mr. Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, who had also been asked to use his influence on behalf of the prisoner, also wrote briefly acknowledging the receipt of this letter, and stated that he had been in communication with the Home Secretary. The petitions contained some 4,500 signatures, and included over 100 clergymen of the Church of England and the various Nonconformist Churches, with magistrates and prominent business and

professional men. The condemned man, though profuse in his expressions for the interest taken in his case, still remains much dejected.

The condemned man's last days on earth

The *'Weekly Mail'* 18 August 1900 reported: - Lacey, the black man who is awaiting execution for the murder of his young white wife has given up all hope of obtaining a reprieve. Since his removal from Swansea to the condemned cell in Cardiff Gaol he has shown in many ways that he understands his days are numbered, and that during the short stay that remains to him on earth he must make the best use he can of the chaplain's ministrations. While out exercising one morning this week Lacey remarked to one of the prison officials, "Isn't it a lovely morning?" When the official assented the condemned man cast his eyes skywards, and, with a shake of the head and in a mournful voice, said: - "Ah! Yes, it is a lovely morning. I enjoy the sunshine, but I shall not enjoy it much longer."

During the daytime Lacey is allowed recreation in the hospital patients' yard, out of sight of the other inmates. He is always accompanied by two warders, with whom he has all along been on friendly terms, and with whom he chats on all permissible subjects. At night-time two warders are locked in with the prisoner in his cell, and are not even allowed a key to get outside, if they so desired.

Early every morning the doomed man is seen by Dr. J. D. Williams, of Newport Road, who is performing the duties of medical officer of the prison in Dr. Treharne's absence. There is a popular mistake as to what is the diet of a condemned man, and it might be of interest to give the exact particulars of the food which Lacey is allowed. When first brought to Cardiff he was given for **breakfast**,

bread 8oz., tea 10oz. **dinner** - mutton (cooked without bone) 5oz., potatoes 8oz., rice pudding 8oz.; bread 8oz. This is what is termed "ordinary" hospital diet. As it is usual to put condemned men on the hospital list alone, the doctor is allowed to grant him further "extras," and he now gets in addition, butter, spirits (4oz.), and five cigarettes daily.

Lacey has, however, made several unusual applications. For instance, he is very fond of sweets, and the other morning he asked the doctor to allow him a few ounces of "butter-scotch." As this particular luxury does not figure in the prison regulation diet, it was not possible to accede to his request. Lacey's cell - in which he is not allowed to smoke - is situated in the basement of the right wing of the prison buildings. The passage to it leads to the kitchen in one direction and to the hospital patients' exercise grounds in another.

Between the cell and the kitchen a sharp turn to the right leads to a very small yard, which would not accommodate two dozen people, and is surrounded by a high wall. In this small yard has been erected the gallows, which is only about twelve paces away from the condemned man's cell. It will, therefore, take but a few moments for the man to walk from his cell to his tomb.

The gallows erected consists of a cross-beam upheld by two upright posts. Under the trap-door is a 12ft. bricked pit, lined with padding. Lacey is a fairly well-built man, weighing over 12st. and is likely to be allowed a drop of 6ft.

The drop, as a rule, is decided upon on the eve of the execution, at a meeting of the governor, medical officer, and executioner. The prisoner is a Roman Catholic in religion, and is attended to twice daily by the Rev. Father A. Van Den Heuvel, of St. David's Presbytery, Charles Street.

The condemned man fairly well but depressed

The '*South Wales Echo*' of 20th August 1900 reported: - Up to Sunday no communication had been received from the Home Secretary in reference to the petitions praying for the reprieve of Augustus Lacey. The condemned man had set great hopes on the efforts made for a reprieve, and the absence of any news from headquarters has much depressed him. He is only fairly well in health. With the exception of the chaplain and the doctor, Lacey has received no visitors in his cell. The execution is fixed for 8 o'clock on Tuesday morning and Billington, the executioner, is timed to arrive at Cardiff this (Monday) evening.

Canon Thompson on Lacey's fate

Preaching at St. John's, Cardiff, on Sunday night, August 19th 1900, the Rev. Canon Thompson said that when they thought of the redemption of the race, and of him who consorted with despised publicans and sinners and turned away from self-righteous Pharisees, they thought of the wretched man now awaiting the death sentence in his lonely cell in Cardiff Gaol, hard by.

And, oh! what a light did such an incident cast upon the need for redemption - upon the heinousness and enormity of sin. He saw in him - God help him and God forgive him - he saw in him only the outcome of that spirit of evil fostered by the evil conditions of the society in which we live; fostered by the iniquitous drink traffic and drinking customs; fostered by the over-crowding and squalor and the sordid life in which, side by side with the palaces of the wealthy and great, thousands of the working poor population are compelled to live.

On that poor man was to be visited the sins, the failings, and the crimes of many as guilty really, probably more guilty, than himself.

It must be an awful thing to be expecting the doom which he knows lies before him - to be watching, as it were, for the drop of the rope which is to put a stop to his mortal career.

They did not wish to exonerate or palliate in any degree the crime for which he had rightly to suffer, but they wanted to bring him within the circle of their own hearts' sympathy, and especially within the circle of that redeeming love which compasseth all men. It was for that reason he asked as many of them as could to attend the church at the hour of execution on Tuesday morning, for a special service of supplication and intercession in behalf of a soul - the soul for which the Saviour died.

Home Secretary's decision - Reprieve refused

The High Sheriff of Glamorgan, Sir Robert Morris, on Monday morning received from the Home Office the following letter: -

Whitehall 19th August, 1900.

*"Sir, I am directed by the Secretary of State to acquaint you that having had under his consideration the case of William Augustus Lacey, now lying under sentence of death in Cardiff prison, he has failed to discover any sufficient ground to justify him in advising her Majesty to interfere with the due contract of the law." **I am, sir, your obedient servant, Charles S. Murdoch.*** The execution will consequently take place at 8 o'clock on Tuesday morning at Cardiff Gaol.

A further appeal

Notwithstanding this unfavorable reply from the Secretary of State, the Rev. L. Ton Evans, who has been energetic in superintending the efforts for a reprieve, sent on Monday morning another long

letter to the right hon. gentleman containing further reasons for the respite of the death sentence which have been up to the present overlooked.

Condemned man's condition

The condemned man Lacey, who is to be executed within the walls of Cardiff Gaol this (Tuesday) morning, is in a depressed condition though apart from this his health is good. He now quite realises his position, and he has accordingly paid earnest heed to the ministrations of Father Van Heuvel, who is unremitting in his kindly attentions to him.

Lacey was on Monday morning visited by Father Van Heuvel, who spent an hour with him, and who visited him again in the afternoon. These visits, which are a source of great mental comfort and solace to the condemned man, are we understand, eagerly looked forward to by Lacey. Dr. J. D. Williams, of Newport Road, visited the gaol on Monday morning to ascertain Lacey's physical condition. Captain Schuyler, who has been away from Cardiff for the past week or so, was expected to return to Cardiff later in the day. During his absence the chief warder has been in charge.

Arrival of Billington

James Billington, the executioner, arrived in Cardiff late on Monday afternoon. He was accompanied by his son. Immediately on his arrival he proceeded to the gaol, where during the evening was engaged in superintending the preparations which were being made, and when these completed he tested the scaffold and rope.

The fact that Billington had arrived was not generally known in Cardiff, but a considerable crowd, mostly from the Adamsdown district, gathered round the gate in anticipation of his arrival.

Mr. Joseph and the condemned man

So far as is known the condemned man Lacey has no relatives in this country. It was through one of our representatives that the parents of the murdered woman were acquainted with the refusal of the Home Secretary to reprieve Lacey, and all that could be gleaned from the condemned man's sister-in-law was that no communication of any sort had passed between Lacey and the Josephs since the trial. Prior to the trial Mr. Joseph, at request, went to the prison to see him, but he failed to gain admission.

The Pontypridd murder - Lacey expatiates his crime – Execution at Cardiff (The Cambrian 24th August 1900)

Lacey, the Pontypridd murderer, was executed at Cardiff Gaol on Tuesday morning. Billington was the executioner, and was assisted by his son. Lacey bore himself with the utmost fortitude, and went to the scaffold without uttering a word. The drop given was 7ft. 4in., and death appeared to have been instantaneous.

The execution was in charge of Mr. David Isaacs (under-Sheriff of Glamorgan) who was acting as High Sheriff in the place of Sir. R. A. Morris, and Mr. George Isaacs was present as acting Under-Sheriff. Chief warder J. Wood was present as acting Governor of the Gaol, in the absence of Captain Schuyler.

Those also present were: - Father Van Den Heuvel, who had attended Lacey since his condemnation; Dr. J. D. Williams (deputy Medical Officer of the Gaol), and Alderman T. Windsor Jacobs, who attended as a visiting magistrate.

That the Press representatives were to be admitted came almost as surprise to most people, but for once wisdom had ruled. The bell began to ring at a quarter to eight, and Billington made his

final inspection. The remaining moments seemed like hours, and the bell, with its shrill tinkling, grated strangely on the ears.

It seemed so incongruous that a bell such as might be used to call merry children to school should be clanging out a funeral knell. It lacked dignity.

There was no solemnity about it. The tone was not even tuneful - just a snappy little jingle that jarred upon one's ears and kept him wandering from the frame of mind in which he wished to set himself. Despite that bell, however, it was a fearful moment for anyone with nerves. One or two of us openly expressed the wish that we were out of it; but civility and a warder kept us in our places.

A walk from life to death

At last there was another clank of keys, and the passage door opened. The silence was intense. We could hear the footfalls of the little procession coming up the passage. A measured tread - beat, beat - slowly as at a funeral, and above the gentle tramping the voice of the priest reciting aspirations and prayers. It must have been a hard moment for Father Alphonsus Van Den Heuvel, to whose ministrations the condemned man had listened during the days that had passed since his conviction.

Within the cell Father Van den Heuvel had spoken to the man about the Via Crucis, and offered ejaculatory prayers and exhortations, which Lacey repeated after him in fervent tones. The Catholic polity upon such occasions sets out no service for the burial of the dead.

As they walked down the passage, the priest read prayers from the Liturgy, to which Lacey responded in whispers. The rev. father

spoke in a voice full of emotion, which added to the sentences that he pronounced a solemnity and a fitness that the Anglican Burial Service could not have attained.

The acting high-sheriff and his son came out first, followed by Alderman Jacobs, all visibly impressed with a deep sense of the occasion. They stood aside as the chief warder led the way, followed by the condemned man, who walked with his arms pinioned behind him, with the two Billingtons close at his heels, the elder one guiding him in the direction that he should take, the officiating priest coming next, and the medical officer and more warders completing the procession. The impression of the moment was more sad than solemn.

Here was a young man in the fullness of manhood, his steps guided by a hangman over the few paces that lay between him and eternal doom. He walked with fortitude amid that gloom, for all was in the shade. High walls cut off the sunshine, and not a gleam could creep across his path or his vision. Perhaps it was as well. A last look at the sun is often craved for, but it might only make the parting sadder. So he walked on and on, slowly, now with head bent, then looking round at the walls and upon the people near him. The voice of the priest was continuous, low, and penetrating, leading the thoughts to a better scene than that, and the negro's lips moved sometimes as if in response. A brief halt was made at the doorway, and the executioner moved him forward again. There were chalk marks to show where his feet should stand, and he went to the spot with his face to the wall.

As he took up his position his forehead bumped against the end of the rope that was awaiting use. At the contact he gave a slight start, and then gazed up and down in a most peculiar manner; a slow, inquiring, and examining glance along the rope to the iron

hook in ceiling and then down to the noose again. In moments two pairs of hands were working, and he was pinioned, leg and arm.

There was still more agony - the rope. He bowed his head whilst Billington (shorter in stature) then placed the noose over him, held his head firmly when the noose, not quite open enough lodged upon his crown, and straightened himself again as the hangman tightened the cord and fixed the knot beneath the left ear. Then he turned around and faced the open doorway and the light.

Then he turned to the priest, the muscles of his face all twitching violently, his eyes flashing, his lips working as if he were whispering. It was a last intense look, of supplication tinged with fear. In another moment Billington had placed the white cap over his head and sprang back.

There was a click, a thud, and another life had gone out on the vast ocean of the unknown. Where a man had stood there was only a rope, swaying slightly for a moment and then stopping still. There was not a tremor in the body hanging in the vault below. Death was instantaneous. All the time the priest had read aspirations and prayers.

Now the officials stood around the yawning vault as at a graveside. What a moment before was a human being was now a corpse. He was nothing to them but a prisoner, but as the priest recited the "De Profundis" and the "Miserere" there were murmured responses, until the last petition for the repose of a soul had been offered, and we all moved away.

Scarcely two minutes elapsed between the time that the condemned man came out from the prison door to the end of the grim ceremony. The body was left hanging for the regulation period, and was then removed to the mortuary.

The appearance left no doubt as to the instantaneous character of death. The effects of a drop of over 7ft. were seen in the dislocated neck, but when the body was laid out upon the slab the features assumed the appearance of peaceful rest.

Soon afterwards two notices were posted on the lintels of the gaol-yard gates, and the world had official notification that justice and William Augustus Lacey had travelled to the end of their terrible path together.

One notice was as follows: - "We, the undersigned, hereby declare that judgment of death was this day executed on William Augustus Lacey in her Majesty's prison in Cardiff in our presence." The signatures were those of Messrs. D. Isaacs, Alderman T. Windsor Jacobs, John Wood, and Father Van den Heuvel. The other notice was the medical officer's certificate of death.

Lacey's last request

The last moments in the condemned cell were very uneventful, as Lacey seemed quite resigned to his fate. He slept fairly well during the night and ate a good breakfast, of which the chief items were one or two boiled eggs.

To the priest's administrations he appeared to be very attentive and showed all signs of penitence, but when visited by the acting high-sheriff he said, in answer to the usual inquiries, that he had no statement to make, nor any confession.

The only request he made was that he should be allowed to smoke a cigarette. Upon being referred to Alderman T. Windsor Jacobs he at once consented, but suggested that he should be left practically alone. The cigarette was given to him and the priest and others retired whilst he smoked it.

Scene outside the gaol

Outside the goal walls was assembled an unexpectedly large crowd numbering between four and five thousand people, - mainly to their discredit - composed of young girls, though women with babies in arms were numerous. No one could get a glimpse of what was going on inside, but it needed little imaginative power to follow the proceedings from the bell-tolling.

Above the chief gateway was the flag-staff, and lying on the comparatively low roof over the entrance was a warder, who was waiting to give the first sign to the public that the execution had been duly performed. Naturally he was the cynosure of all eyes, and as 8 o'clock was approaching seconds seemed longer than minutes, and the silence was only broken by an expressive "Oh," or a fervent "God help him" from a negress, who kept well in the background, and who appeared to be the only person present of the doomed man's race.

Had there been no other guide, the expectant crowd unable to see him could not have failed to appreciate the imminence of the voiceless announcement from the nervous actions of the warder, and prompt on the stroke of the hour it was felt that all was over, for evidently the warder was but awaiting the official signal. When he drew at the ropes and the black flag came into view a spontaneous and loud groan burst forth, and the crowd departed quietly, so quickly that ten minutes afterwards no one could have imagined that such a concourse had lined the walls.

With the exception of a rush for positions in such points of vantage as the railway siding running parallel with the gaol entrance, there was no semblance of disorderliness and when it was discovered that the people who had clambered upon some coal trucks could not see the execution, anxiety to get off the road was ceased.

There was no hymn singing or organised religious demonstration of any character, but among the crowd were several prominent leaders in the local churches.

The Inquest

The inquest on the body was held at the gaol before Mr. E. Ll. B. Reece, deputy-coroner, and a jury, of whom Mr. J. Munday was chose foreman. The other members of the jury were Messrs. W. J. Burris, W. J. Boies, A. Madrilovic, J. R. Stevens, R. Holloway, W. Heard, R. Giles, L. P. Oakes, E. Browell, J. Gillard, and E. Price. Mr. John Wood, chief warder and acting governor, gave formal evidence of identification of the body. Deceased was entered as being 21 years of age and as being a collier by occupation. Deceased was received into custody on July 7th last under remand, and after his committal for trial on July 11. He was tried on August 2, was convicted of the murder of Pauline Lacey, his wife, and was sentenced to death by Justice Grantham. That sentence was carried out at eight o'clock that morning, in the course of the law.

Lacey was hanged by Billington, the public executioner, and death was instantaneous. Dr. J. D. Williams, deputy medical officer at the gaol, said that he was present at the execution. In his opinion the immediate cause of death was fracture - dislocation of the neck. The jury, who had no questions to ask either of the witnesses, returned the formal verdict finding that Lacey was indicted for the murder of Pauline Lacey, and that judgement of death was duly carried out. The document bearing the formal verdict - signed in duplicate by the jurors.

Service of intercession

A short service of intercession on behalf of Lacey was held at St John's Church, Cardiff, simultaneously with the execution. Rev.

Canon Thompson officiated. The service consisted of Psalms 131 and 51, said kneeling, and the prayers at the end of the commination in the prayer-book. A large congregation were in attendance, mostly ladies.

Departure of the Billingtons

The executioner, Billington, accompanied by his son, left Cardiff for Bradford by the 9.20 a.m. G.W.R. train on Tuesday. Our representative had a brief chat with him, Billington acquiescing in the reporter's opinion that the execution was as satisfactorily performed as it was possible for it to be.

Murdered woman's relatives interviewed Intense feeling of grief

"Thank God it is all over," were the Words of Mrs. Joseph, mother of the murdered woman, Pauline Lacey, who was seen by a "Post" reporter at Hoo-street, Port Tennant, on Tuesday morning. She stated that Lacey had written to her husband when he was awaiting his trial at the Swansea gaol, begging him to come to see him, a request which was ignored. Another appeal, addressed to Mrs. O'Connor, sister of the murdered woman, who now resides at Wern Street, Port Tenant, St. Thomas, met with the same response.

Mrs. O'Connor, husband, August O'Connor, it will be remembered, was the supposed cause of the jealousy leading up to the crime, was also seen. Her husband, she stated, came down to Swansea soon after the murder, and he has gone to sea.

She informed our reporter that Lacey had written to her husband, about a week ago, from the Cardiff Gaol to the effect that he hoped August would be good to his wife, as he was sure there was a God above. He did not ask him to come and see him.

The closing words of the letter were: "Peace be amongst you, and God will protect you. Mrs. O'Connor received this letter, her husband being away, and after reading it immediately threw it in the fire. The news of the execution was received at Port Tennant with apparent unconcern.

Editorial comments (Western Mail 22nd August 1900)

Now that the prison grave has closed upon the remains of the unfortunate man Lacey it is well his name should be allowed to drop out of the public memory. As a final word, however, we may be allowed to congratulate the authorities on the expeditious manner in which the closing scene was enacted. The presence of the press at such scenes may be objected to by some on sentimental grounds, but the vast majority of the public entertain no such feelings, for they look upon representatives of the press in the light of witnesses that everything is carried out "decently and in order." The 'South Wales Daily Post' had reported execution in great detail thus:-

Graphic description of the last dread act (by our own reporter).

Few whose duty it has been to witness the stern requirements of British law in regard to the dreadful offence of wilful murder carried into effect would care to again witness the awful tragedy of expiation on a prison scaffold.

A more fearful scene it would be impossible to contemplate than that of the despatch of a wretched man, however heinous his guilt, into dread eternity on a beautiful Summer's morning, when the outside world presents a spectacle of glory and beauty.

However terrible the crime, the retribution demanded by the inexorable law of the land is sufficient to exact a full measure of sympathy for the condemned man, and in the case m William

Augustus Lacey - not a native of our own climes, but a coloured man, and to all intents and purposes a stranger in a strange land - the sentiment of pity was bound to be forthcoming from the humane mind. The one redeeming feature about capital punishment in this country is probably the startling despatch with which the guilty wretch is launched into the great unknown. More merciful, indeed, is the law of England to the murderer than the average criminal is to his victim. There is the time permitted for the soul to prepare itself for the ushering into the presence of the Great Creator, and there is the practical immunity from suffering that attends the tragic expiation within the grim prison walls.

Lacy's compulsory atonement for the killing of this prepossessing young white wife, at Cardiff goal on Tuesday morning was beyond the mental suffering he must inevitably have endured prior to the fatal drawing of the bolt painless enough. Of physical suffering there must have been the mere momentary twinge at the most.

The Billingtons - father and son - did their work too well. It was an expeditious operation, effected to its desired end, in the twinkling of an eye. The heavy thud announcing the collapse of the trap door, the lightning descent and disappearance of the victim, the slight, gentle sway of the hangman's rope - and the dead man beneath.

Scene outside the goal

As indicated above, the morning opened bright and summerlike; a cool refreshing atmosphere prevailing, and a greyish sky being relieved with broad patches of blue. The interest of Cardiffians in the fate of the wretched prisoner was evidently of much greater than had been generally anticipated. Long before seven o'clock numbers of people had commenced to foregather. At half-past seven o'clock there at least two thousand around the prison and as the dreadful hour of eight drew nigh it was probably double the number. In the bulk, it was scarcely a charitable crowd so far as

sympathy with the condemned man was concerned. There were many, it is true, who held that the Home Office ought to have conceded a reprieve, but the large majority were full of abhorrence for the bloody deed perpetrated up in the coal valley of the Rhondda, and professed satisfaction with the justice of the dreadful fate that was about to be meted out to the coloured man.

Inside the prison

The principal entrance to the prison was a peculiarly attractive spot for the general public, who scanned very closely the different persons who were admitted. The public hangman, Billington, with his son, who always acts as his assistant at these fearful functions, had arrived at Cardiff comparatively early on the previous day, and in accordance with usual custom had spent the night within the gaol walls. The early arrivals at the prison on this morning included the Under-sheriff. Mr. David Isaac, Swansea, and his deputy, Mr. G. J. Isaac, who drove up in a handsome cab and half-past 11 o'clock. The High-Sheriff Sir Herbert Morris arrived shortly afterwards. Correspondents for the "Weekly Mail," "South Wales Daily News," "South Wales Daily Post," and "Cambria Daily Leader" - who were possessed of official permits to witness the execution, presented themselves at the prison gates, and were admitted, although the passes were closely examined at the outset.

Our representative had previously been informed by the Under-Sheriff that, owing to the limited accommodation at the strictly enclosed spot where the hanging was to take place, special arrangements would have to be made to enable them to witness the execution, but besides this there were stipulations made.

It appears, however, that the gaol officials had not taken altogether kindly to the admission of press representatives, the reason for this probably being the fact that when the last execution took place at Cardiff thirteen or fourteen years ago - the occasion

of the hanging of Roberts, the Cowbridge murderer - the operations on the scaffold did not work altogether satisfactorily, and the pressmen, at the critical moment when the violent dangling of the rope seemed to denote that the death of the unfortunate culprit was not altogether as instantaneous as could be desired, were requested respectfully, but imperatively - to retire.

On the present occasion the Governor of the Prison, Captain E. E. H. Schurley, was away on his holidays, but the chief warder in charge, Mr. John Wood, was responsible for the arrangements, which, it must be admitted, were under the circumstances, of the very best. As the cell of the condemned man was only about twelve paces from the scaffold, it was considered undesirable that the newspaper representatives should join in the procession, but they were placed in a corner immediately facing the entrance of the execution house, and protected somewhat by a sudden projection of the building. The object of this was, so the Under-Sheriff stated, to obviate the possibility of the condemned man's attention being attracted by anything denoting the presence of the general public.

The arrangement worked all right, but it was scarcely necessary, as the wretched murderer, when he appeared in the open from a door to the right of the press-men, and three or four paces from the spacious entrance leading to the scaffold, was too much intent on his devotions, and the hanging rope that was so soon to become an important factor in the final act, to attract any particular notice to his other surroundings.

The minutes before the execution

Punctually at quarter to eight o'clock the prison bell commenced tolling the funeral knell of a living man. It was this solemn mournful peal that, as much as anything, drew one's mind to an impressive realisation of the nature of the tragic drama that was

about to be enacted. The tolling of the bell was also the signal for a warder to conduct the reporters through the inner gate that led across a beautifully laid out lawn to a doorway through a wall that partly enclosed the coach-house-like building in which the capital sentence is always carried out at Cardiff.

As the party wended their way through this open space several people could be discerned on top of the telegraph poles that were on the neighbouring railway line, which are at an exceedingly high altitude. Other persons were noticed on the roofs of high buildings, but whereas they were enabled to note the movements of persons in the gaol yard, it was perfectly impossible for them to catch a glimpse of what was going on at the spot where the execution took place.

Once inside the enclosure, which besides the scaffold house allowed of a few yards of space in front of the scaffold, and a narrow strip of pathway at the pine end, along which the party passed, the pressmen were told to take up a position at the partly-sheltered comer above alluded to. A better position for noting all that occurred it was impossible to imagine.

Meanwhile the Rev. Father Van Heuvei, the Roman Catholic priest, who had been in constant attendance on the prisoner since his incarceration after the death sentence was engaged with Lacey in the condemned cell, he having arrived at the prison at six o'clock.

Lacey displayed the most careful attention to his devotions and was evidently deeply penitent. It required about ten minutes to eight o'clock when Billington and his son emerged from the door from which the doomed man was shortly to appear, and they were also joined by Dr. Williams, the prison medical man.

The younger Billington saluted the pressmen, but his father appeared to be examining a cleanish looking strap, with which he was directly to pinion the prisoner's arms. Billington wore a light

grey cloth cap, a dark, short coat and vest, and brawnish tweed trousers. His son's cap and clothing were of a dark hue, but he sported a glaring tie of red and khaki colour. A final inspection was then made of the apparatus, and this apparently having proved satisfactory, both retired and proceeded to the condemned cell. The last dread scene was soon to follow.

"In the midst of life"

It required about three minutes to eight o'clock when Billington, accompanied by the chief and other warders, presented himself at Lacey's cell, the prisoner was engaged in prayer with his spiritual adviser at the time, but when he was acquainted with the fact that the last moments had arrived, he took a sincere farewell of the reverend father, and thanked him. He submitted quietly to the pinioning process, and carefully obeyed all that was required of him.

The procession was then formed, the Rev. Catholic father reverently read aloud the aspirations, scriptural texts, and prayers used on such solemn occasions, and prisoner's last walk on earth began. As the procession emerged in sight of the scaffold, it was noticed to be in the following order: the prison doctor, warders, Mr. G. J. Isaac, Deputy-Under-Sheriff; Ald. Jacobs, the visiting magistrate; Mr. David Isaac, Under-Sheriff; the chief warder, the chaplain, two warders, the condemned man, Billington and his son, two warders.

Lacey, a fine, physical specimen of the dusky race, shuffled rather than walked, and the Billingtons, who were immediately behind him, touched him slightly with the obvious intention of directing him properly. Lacey, although engaging in the religious responses, seemed half dazed, but the sight of the rope suspended from the beam running along the middle of the roof possessed a dreadful

fascination for him. The prison bell continued tolling, and the solemnity of the awful scene was profound.

The arrangement was for Lacey to stand facing the wide doorway, but for the moment he took a wrong position and stood in profile near the rope, the fatal noose of which was right opposite his face. Once more he took a rapid glance at the rope from the noose upwards. He stood a pathetic figure, and although it appears a singular thing to record, his ebony complexion seemed to bear a pallid hue, and his lips were livid.

In a moment Billington had placed the wretched man in the requisite position, the younger Billington strapped the legs securely together, Billington opened the prisoner's jacket, thrusting it back to secure the neck being bared, and then stepping to the rear deftly applied the noose. "Oh, my God!" said Lacey in distinctly audible tones, as he responded to the ministers prayers, "I am sorry for all my sins." "Into thy hands, Oh, God," said the Rev. gentleman, "I commend my spirit." "Into Thy hands, Oh, God," responded Lacey devoutly, "I commend my _____" the sentence could not be concluded; Billington had drawn the lever, and Lacey was launched into eternity. The trap descended with a heavy thud, and the comparatively unimportant oscillation of the rope was sufficient to show that death was instantaneous.

The doctor immediately descended the well under the scaffold and was easily satisfied that the death sentence had been properly carried out. The Rev. Father Van Heuvel continued for a few moments in prayer, the few and hither-to silent spectators spoke together of the startling expedition of Billington's process, the doors of the place of execution were closed, the body remained as it lay to await the inquest, and all was over. Billington allowed a drop of about 6½ feet.

The hoisting of the black flag above the entrance of the prison was the signal for a rolling murmur from the enormous crowd that had

assembled. They gazed at it intently for a considerable time, and it was over an hour or more ere the people dispersed.

Story of the crime – Brutal and cold-blooded deed

The deed for which William Augustus Lacey was condemned to die was brutal and cold-blooded. Whatever difference of view there may be as to the motive there can only be one opinion about the act having been deliberate and premeditated. It is the worst type of homicide.

Murder when committed in the heat of passion is to a certain degree forgivable, but when done of malice prepense excites abhorrence and repugnance towards the perpetrator.

Lacey's crime was undoubtedly of this character. Hence, by the just and righteous laws of our land, his life was demanded as the penalty. Only the weak-minded will say that the price was too much. At the police court proceedings over five days he confirmed and amplified his story, but in the interval between then and the trial at the assizes a reaction seemed to have set in. The enormity of the crime and its consequences appeared to have burst upon him.

Before Mr. Justice Grantham he invented a lame story of suicide. This palpable falsehood imposed on neither judge nor jury. "If," asked Justice Grantham, "the unfortunate woman committed suicide, why did not the prisoner call in the assistance of the neighbours? Instead of doing that he left the house and actually walked past them without uttering a word with reference to what had taken place inside the house.

Was that the conduct of a man who had witnessed his wife commit suicide?" Lacey was properly condemned to die.

The customary effort was, of course, made to obtain a reprieve, the Rev. L. Ton Evans, of Barry, leading the movement. There were

many who signed the various petitions out of weak-minded sympathy with the culprit others from a conscientious objection to capital punishment.

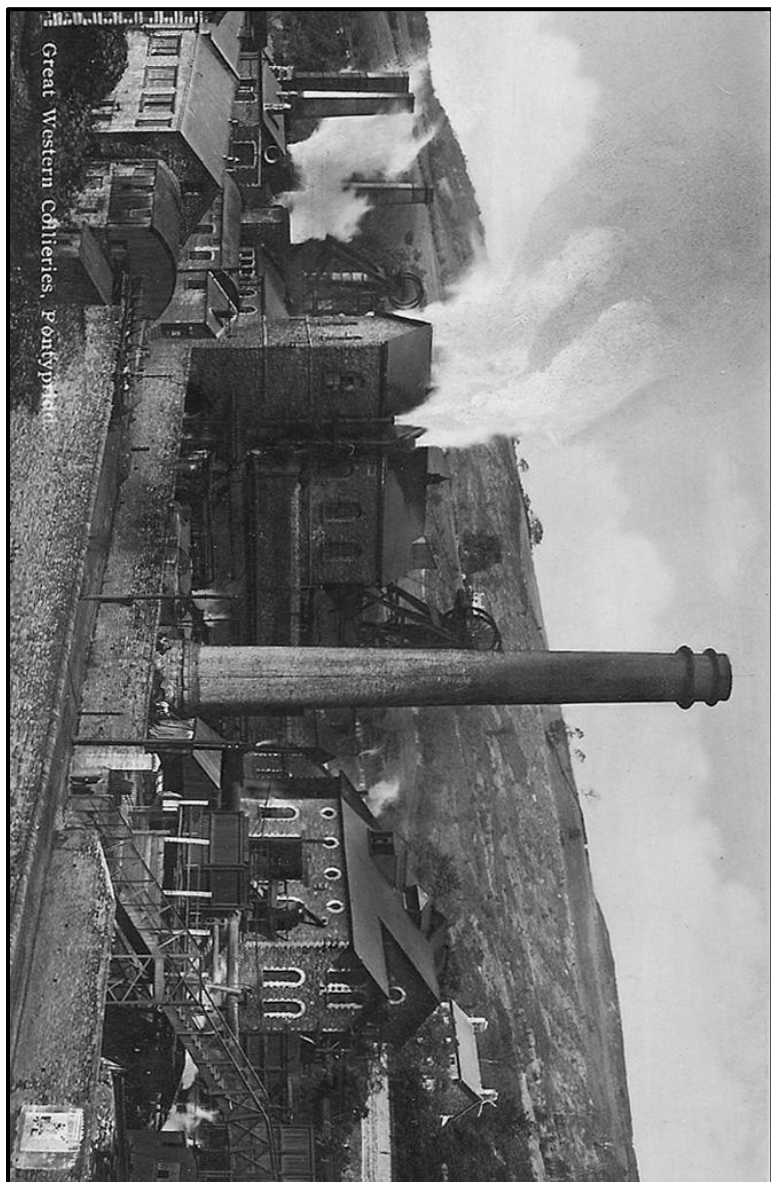
Amongst the signatories at Swansea were forty members of the police force, whilst the copy of the petition placed in the Library was completely filled with names. On the other hand the petition at to town clerk's office was not signed by a single person. Fortunately for the law and justice, their efforts to secure a reprieve failed, and William Augustus Lacey expiated his brutal crime on the scaffold at Cardiff Gaol on that beautiful Tuesday morning.

Comment (by the author)

Lacey seems to have alienated all around him before the murder. His so-called 'best friend' Augustus Connor had kissed Lacey's wife, perhaps playfully, even though he knew her husband was racked with jealousy and had been relentlessly teased by his workmates at his place of work. The victim's sister had not approved of the marriage from the start as had the rest of the family because of Lacey's short temper and were hardly a 'close family.'

And the cut on Lacey's chest, was that self inflicted or had Pauline cut him, perhaps in self defence? Today, if there was still the death sentence in this country would he still have still hung? With a clever barrister and with a plea of provocation he might well have got away with manslaughter not murder. On the other hand it looks like an open and shut case of murder.

THE END



The Great Western Colliery, where William Augustus Lacey sometimes worked

Attempted murder at Pentrebach Road

The 'Cardiff & Merthyr Guardian' of 8th May 1863 reported: - Somewhere about midway between Treforest and Pontypridd, alongside Pentrebach Road, stands a small miserable looking cottage, one story high, built by the person who resides in it, a labouring man, of the name of Read. The cottage stands at a considerable elevation, and the only approach from the road seems to be by a winding flight of steps made of pieces of stone such as are used in the walls which separate the fields of the different farmers in the neighbourhood.

Read, who is a man about 50 years of age, lived in this cottage with a woman, who though not his wife, has been cohabiting with him for some time. It was, however, pretty generally known in the neighbourhood that this woman was not so faithful to him as he wished her to be, and that a man of the name of Isaac Thomas, was in the habit of visiting her during the absence of Read.

It appears that latterly Read had obtained employment at Penarth and he was in the habit of leaving home on Sunday evening, and not returning till Saturday evening. It was also generally believed that Thomas was in the habit of visiting the cottage and sleeping there two or three nights a week.

On Monday morning, the 27th ult., Read left his cottage as usual, but unexpectedly returned that evening. Read, and the woman Matthews, retired to rest, and about 12 o'clock he was awakened by hearing some-one knocking at his door he called out, but received no answer. He jumped out of bed, and on opening the window, saw the figure of a man slowly descending the steps, he took up a gun he had loaded in the room and shot the man in the face as the winding descent brought him in front of the cottage.

Thomas, staggered for about 40 yards, and then fell down from loss of blood.

Read, was of course apprehended the next day, and brought before a magistrate for committal to prison. He was again, at the Petty Sessions, held on Wednesday last, remanded for a fortnight. Thomas, the wounded man, being unable to attend, Mr. Ensor attended on the part of Read, and offered bail for his appearance, which was however declined.

Examination before magistrate – remand of the prisoner

On Wednesday 29th April 1863 the prisoner was brought before Colonel Hewitt, charged with firing with intent to murder. The woman Matthews said that soon after twelve o'clock on Monday night some-one came and knocked at the door. Read called out "Who's there" several times, but received no answer. He then got out of bed, and opened the window, and fired his gun. (The girl here burst into tears, and seemed in a paroxysm of grief.) The gun produced she identified as the prisoner's. She said she had been living with him for the last three years, and that her mother resided at Cowbridge. Mr. Superintendent Thomas said he had apprehended both parties, as they were in the house together, but from what had transpired he did not think it necessary to ask for the detention of the female. Colonel Hewitt then read over the charge to the prisoner, and remanded him till Wednesday.

The newspaper carrying this report stated: - We have visited the scene of the tragedy, and find that Thomas was shot when about twenty yards from the house. He seems to have been able to walk about forty yards, and there fallen down, at which point a large pool of blood was formed. Indeed the whole distance from the spot where he was shot to the point where he was found is marked with blood. The face and breast of the wounded man are entirely

covered with plaster, having been, so to speak, completely riddled with the shots. Notwithstanding his dangerous condition the medical gentlemen who have been attending him are not without hopes of recovery.

Read appears at court

On Wednesday May 13th 1863 William Read was charged with having, on the night of 27th of April last, willfully shot Isaac Thomas, a labourer, with intent to kill him. Prosecutor appeared with his head bandaged up seeming very weak, and was obliged to be accommodated with a chair while the case was being heard. Mr. Thomas appeared for the prisoner.

When the examination began, Prosecutor said, "I am a labourer living at Treforest, I have been in the habit of visiting a girl named Elizabeth Matthews. She lived at a cottage between Newbridge and Treforest, at a place called Pentrebach. I knew she lived with the prisoner William Read, but I have never seen him there. I was shot on Monday night, 27th of April, about a quarter past 12 o'clock. I went with the intention of going into the girl's house. I went to the door of the house, and called Eliza twice. I had no answer, and I went away down by the front of the house to the road to go home. I heard a window open, and then I heard the report of a gun, and found I was shot. I called out, and Mr. Cule and Mr. Maddocks came out to me. I was not on the foot path in the garden, and about 1½ yards from a very deep stone quarry.

Then Mr. Cule and Mr. Maddocks, carried me to my house, where I was attended to by Mr. Morgan the surgeon. There are two rooms in the cottage, both on the same floor - one is used as a sleeping room, and the other as a living room. The footpath slopes in a winding direction from the house to the road, and through the garden in the front of the house."

Cross-examined by Mr. Thomas: - "I had been to Newbridge. I went there about five o'clock. I had been drinking at the Bricklayer's Arms, and was going from their home. I was not drunk. I went to the house by the back way; there is a footpath leading to the door; this door leads to the house, but I never found it fastened. I do not know if it has a lock. On leaving the house I went through the front garden to the road. I was shot when in the garden and fell on my face; had I fallen the other way I should have gone over into the quarry.

I heard the window open, and immediately heard the report of the gun. No one spoke; no one shouted out 'who's there?' I cannot tell how much blood I lost, as after falling down I fainted. I received the shots in face, shoulder, and chest. Many of them have been abstracted by Dr. Morgan. I have been through the garden door at night before, but never found it fastened."

Mr. Cule said: - "I heard the shot fired and went in the direction of the sound. I found the prosecutor lying groaning on the ground. The prisoner was standing in the garden. I asked him to fetch a light, but he did not do so. I then called up Mr. Maddocks, who brought a light and then we removed the prosecutor to his own home. I asked the prisoner if the gun was loaded with shot and he replied 'yes.' He also said the prosecutor had been about his house for two hours.

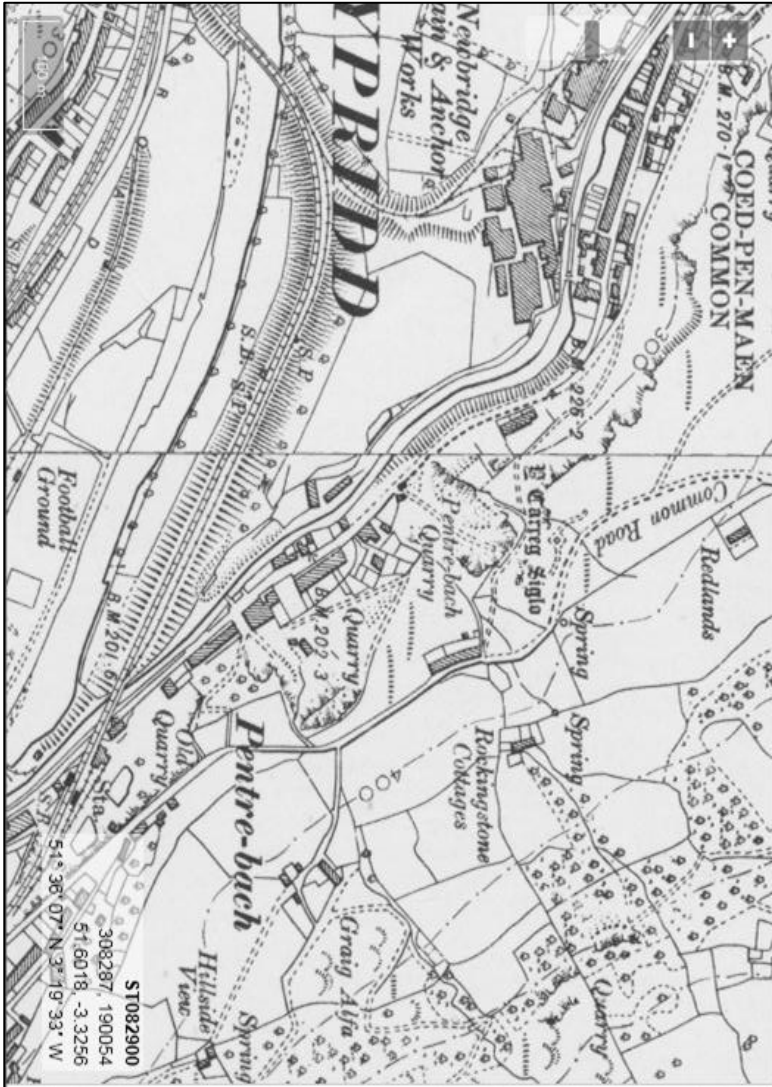
Mr. Morgan, surgeon, of Pontypridd, said: - "About two o'clock on the morning of the 27th April last I was called up to attend Isaac Thomas at his house. I found him lying in bed partially undressed. I examined him and found there were small wounds on the face, shoulders and chest. I produce these shots taken from the face, shoulders, and arms. Most of the wounds are superficial, and in some of the wounds in the chest, there were portions of the clothing driven in with the force. I am of opinion that the wounds

were produced by the discharge of fire-arms. No dangerous symptoms have exhibited themselves.”

Police Sergeant John said, in consequence of information he received, he went about 3 o'clock on Tuesday the 28th of April, to the prisoner's house, accompanied by P.C. Thomas. Prisoner was sitting down and by his side was the gun, he (witness) now produced. Witness took up the gun, and asked prisoner if it was loaded. Prisoner said, 'no not now, I have discharged it.' There was a cap on the nipple. The cap was bright. Witness said he should take him into custody, on the charge of shooting Isaac Thomas that morning, prisoner said “he could not help it now.” Witness then conveyed him to the police station. On his way there prisoner said, “I don't know what possessed me to fire the gun after him, I must have been in a bad temper, I suppose.”

P.C. Thomas said he accompanied last witness to the prisoner's house on the 28th April, and conveyed him to the police station, at Pontypridd. On the way the prisoner said, "I wish that woman had gone away when I wanted her to go, I offered her all my money to go about a week ago. It is she that has got me into this trouble." Witness examined the premises of the prisoner, and found a quantity of blood about 20 yards from the house in a straight direction from the front window on the foot-path in the garden. He produced prosecutor's clothes, which he (witness) received on the following day. There are marks of shot holes in them. The prisoner was then committed for trial at the next assizes.

At the Glamorganshire Summer assizes at Cardiff in July 1863 William Read was indicted for shooting Isaac Thomas, at Pontypridd on 27th of April. As the shooting appeared to be accidentally done and also that the prisoner had no business lurking about the house at that time, the jury returned a verdict of “Not guilty.”



The Pentrebach district of Pontypridd 1888

Death of a wealthy pauper at Pontypridd

Wednesday May 26th 1875

In the mid-1870s at Pontypridd there lived for some time an ancient vendor of sewing materials by the name of Lilly O'Hare. Her needles were considered by her lady customers to possess unusual qualities of elasticity and endurance. Her husband was a pedlar, who sold lace, caps, &c., to the humble denizens of the villages among the hills. Some years before this humble tradesman, on his way home one day, was seized with a sudden illness, which he evidently endeavoured to combat, judging by the mark of a struggle which were visible the next morning by the poor fellow's dead body.

The widow disposed of her limited stock, save her needles and thread, and fell back upon the little money produced. As her circumstances were considered somewhat strained, an application which she made for Parish relief was entertained, so that for some time she was actually a pauper, living on the funds of the Pontypridd Union. But all was not what it seemed. The *Western Mail* of 1st June 1875 reported: -

Death of an extraordinary old woman at Pontypridd

On Saturday afternoon Mr. Thomas Williams, deputy coroner, held an inquest at the Pontypridd Police Station on the body of Lilly O'Hare, who was found dead in her cottage the top of Mill Street, on the afternoon of Wednesday last, an aged sister of the deceased, with her husband were in attendance, having come from Gloucester. The husband conducted himself in an eccentric manner, and appeared to be particularly anxious to secure the money found in the possession of the deceased with little delay as possible.

Mr. Superintendent Matthews stated that as soon as he (the husband) arrived in Pontypridd he hurried to the police-station and demanded the money, taking pains to impress upon him (the superintendent) that she was the only sister of the deceased and nearest relative, The superintendent kindly gave the man a sovereign out of the old woman's hoard, and in a short time after he saw him reeling drunk in the town.

The first witness examined was the sister of the deceased. She said her name was June Nichols, and that she lived in Mitre Street, Gloucester, with her husband, who was a shoe-maker. Lilly O'Hare was her only sister. She had been a widow ten years. Her husband was a pedlar. She (witness) had not seen deceased for five years. The Husband (interrupting): "She was coming to see us this summer. Show the gentleman the letter." The Coroner: "Be quiet, man!" The witness continued and said that the deceased was about 75 years of age. He had received a telegram on Wednesday stating that she was dead. "I should (with emotion), have liked to see her very much."

William John said he was porter on the Taff Vale Railway, and lived opposite the deceased. Saw her out in front of her cottage, bringing something out in a stooping attitude on Wednesday morning. For some time past she had been very ill, complained of cramp, and took rum as a remedy. About two o'clock called in the house, as he occasionally did, to ask how she was, when he found her prostrate on the floor. She was lying on her back. She was fully dressed, but without shoes. She appeared as if she had laid on the floor "to meet her death." Had she fallen from the table she would have inevitably fallen in the fire. By Dr. Hopkins: "It was in the knees she suffered from cramp."

Jane Cheen said that she lived at Zoar cottage, on the hill, Pontypridd. Had known the deceased for thirty years. For seven

or eight weeks prior to her death deceased had been very ill. She received 3s 6d per week from the parish, and she (witness) had "supposed" the deceased mainly depended on this for her maintenance. Last saw her alive between 11 and 12 o'clock on Wednesday morning. She appeared to be very ill and sleepy at the time. Lighted the fire and made breakfast for her, and placed "a drop of rum" in her tea. Cleaned part of the floor, but did not sweep about the fireplace because deceased kept so close to the fire, and complained that she felt cold. Left and went home. In the afternoon heard she had been found dead. Hurried immediately to see her.

By Dr. Hopkins: "Noticed that she took medicine that morning which she had received from you, did not notice any patent medicine in her possession. She partook of two eggs with her breakfast. She did not complain of pain in any particular region of her body." By a juryman: Dr. Hopkins called on her occasionally to see the deceased." Dr. Hopkins said he had no recollection of ever having seen the deceased. Witness continued: "She took the rum for cramp in the legs. Someone had told her it was good for the complaint." The husband of the first witness (to his wife) "Show the letter." The letter above referred to was read by the coroner. It was sent to Gloucester, and it was in the handwriting of deceased. It was dated Newbridge (Pontypridd), May 8th, 1875, and was as follows: -

"Dear Brother and Sister - I received your letter. I was glad to hear you was all well. I have been very bad this last ten days with the cramp in both my legs. I have walked through the house five times a night for three nights on the cold flags before I could get rid of it. Thank God I am a great deal better. I am so weak I cannot walk hardly. I should have wrote before. I am not able to write this. If I get better, please God, I shall go to see you sometime this summer.

I shall let you know in my next letter. I cannot write. I hope you will write soon. No more at present from your sister, "Lilly O'Hare."
A verdict of "Death from natural causes" was returned.

It was announced that the amount of money found in the possession of the deceased was £89 7s 5d. She had received £2 9s 6d from the parish, which will have to be refunded out of the money found. The Coroner instructed the superintendent to retain the money, and told the claimants they must prove their claim to the money in the usual legal way. The following is a copy of the will of deceased, written with her own hand, but which was not witnessed. It is given *verbatim et literatim*: -

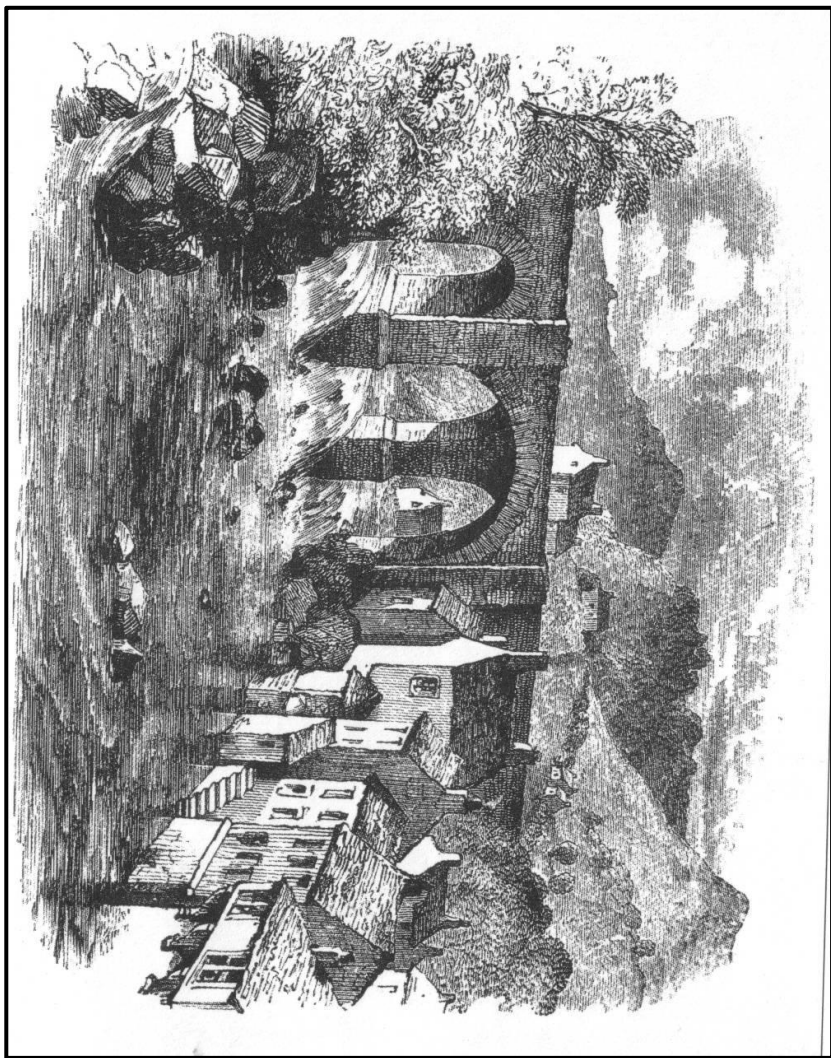
This is my will

I leave £4 10s to bury me, and out of that to get a stone to put over the grave. I leave Mr Thomas, and Mr. Cheen, £2 10s to see to everything done, and to write to my sister Jane, in Gloucester. I leave to Mrs. Cheen the bed, not the pillow nor bolster, that red quilt, the clock, that Resurrection picture, my husband likeness, the work-box, tea caddy - her name is on them - anything on the mantelpiece she likes. Everything - chairs, tables, saucepans, to be divided between her and Mrs, Jones. They may sell them, or do what they like with them, and to each one £2. I hope there will be that much money. They have all been very kind to me. God bless them all.

Mrs Cheen and Mrs. Thomas to superintend everything, burying me with my husband. That £2 for Mrs Cheen and the other things as well. To Mrs Jenkins, the skinner's wife, I leave the two pillows and bolster, teaspoons, sugar, and sugar spoons - six spoons. There is the two parasols for the two little girls, my Bible, Prayer-book, hymn-book, for the others. They have kind to me. God bless them all. To Eliza Jones, William Jones's wife, in Morgan Street, the bed-

stick and the curtains. That other work-box to Ann Williams, and the Dummy. To Mr.s Jones part of the things are for her and Mrs Cheen. To my sister, Jane Nicholls, all my clothes, bedclothes, and everything; she can pack them in that big box. To Mrs Thomas Kinsley, my grandniece, my watch, and if there should be any money left, let my sister and Mrs Kinsley have it in equal shares between them. To Lilly Dawson, my grandniece the black satin shawl, quilt; let them be tied up in that black curtain.

*Send for my sister when I am dead. Don't trouble with sheets on the bed; let it be as it is; put a sheet round me in the coffin; no shroud to get; there is sheet in that big box. The hatchet is for Mr. William Morgan in Chapel Street. I have put in Mr. Bassett's bank £9 to bury me; what is left after burying me, that and the interest is for Mr. Thomas and Mrs Cheen to see everything done. Mr. Thomas can get them at the bank after I am dead. I feel in that way. Signed this day, April 1st, 1875, **Lilly O'Hare.***



Supposed murder - Mysterious death of a woman at Penycoedcae Saturday night April 29th 1882

A revolting and mysterious death, which has caused great and general excitement in the district this evening, has just taken place here. It appears that William Seaton, mason, and Thomas Jenkins, his brother-in-law, working at the Chain Works, were returning from the direction of Penycoedcae village (about a mile above Pontypridd, Llantrisant-wards) at twenty minutes to one in the afternoon, and that on passing an empty house on the roadside to their right, they decided to go in and examine the premises. The house once belonged to a deceased man named Macdonald, but is now the property of a building society. It stands by itself, there is no other house within some distance. It is surrounded by a circular wall 3ft. high. It has been idle a good while, and is somewhat dilapidated.

Seaton and Jenkins got over the wall and into the house through the back door, which was open. They proceeded upstairs to see in what condition the place was. When they went to the back room, they were transfixed by a most ghastly sight, for there, with face downwards, was the dead body of a woman. The men were so startled that, without waiting to make any investigation, they rushed precipitately down to the police-station, and informed Sergeant Jones of what had occurred. The police-sergeant promptly communicated with Dr. Rees Hopkins, and, accompanied by Sergeant Pickwick, P.C.'s Richards and Davies, and Thomas Jenkins, they walked up to the place where the corpse lay. They were followed by some hundreds of spectators.

The deceased was found in the position described. Examination showed that her hair was in a most dishevelled condition, and the expression on the features was apparently one of acute fright or agony. There were some bruises on her forehead, cheekbone,

eyebrows, and hands. There was a general discoloration of the upper part of the body, and it is quite clear that this was the effect of severe ill-treatment or heavy and repeated mischance, in the shape of repeated falls. Opinion, however strongly leans to the former theory. The woman's bonnet lay some distance from her. There was no blood to be seen, but the deceased's clothing was saturated with water. Between her face and the boards was a canvas bag. Seemingly it had been put there to protect her mouth and avoid suffocation. That article, too, was quite wet, and the boards on which she had lain were soaking.

Sergeant Jones carefully searched the body, but failed to find any money on her or clue to her identity. Three yards or so from her was a red handkerchief containing some bread. There was wood in the bedroom grate, and matches close by, and also candle-grease. These appearances suggested that an attempt had been made to light a fire. Amidst indescribable sensation the corpse was carried down and taken in a close carriage to the union workhouse, where it was placed in the dead-house pending the inquest.

The next thing known is that at four o'clock this morning, Bill Smith, a navvy, of about the same age as deceased, came and knocked at the lodging-house of a Mr. Williams, at Llanganna, and after waking up the inmates, called out that he wanted them to come down, as he was in need of assistance. His wife, Mary, he said, was ill, very ill, at an empty house up the hill, referring to Penycoedcae. The people of the house told him to go to the police-station. Upon this he went away, where, no one knows. Nothing more has been seen or heard of him, though the police have been on the alert ever since. A search is still going on for him, and unless he is found by the morning, it is probable that the police will take further and decisive action. His absence, coupled with the fact that he did not call for aid at the police-station after leaving the lodging house and the physical condition of the deceased, have naturally

excited adverse comment. That the woman should have been left to die alone in the bruised helpless state she was in itself suggests atrocious heartlessness. Another newspaper reported: -

THE EXTRA-ORDINARY DEATH OF A WOMAN AT PENYCOEDCAE
A PITEOUS TALE

The Pontypridd district was in ferment on Monday in reference to the tragic death of the woman whose body was found on Sunday afternoon in an empty house by the side of the highway between Llantrisant and Pontypridd. The house stands alone about 200 yards from the village of Penycoedcae. Its front windows are broken and exposed to the north-west wind. Owing to the elevated spot where the house is situate the wind has a great command of the building.

On Saturday night, when the poor wayfarer was carried there to die, a violent storm was raging, and she was laid in the back room, whose windows were entire, so that she was perfectly sheltered from the inclemency of the weather. There was nothing, however, but the bare boards under her, and there was no fire in the grate. In better days the poor woman was the happy wife of Samuel Cook, carpenter, Pendre, Breconshire. In an unlucky moment she yielded to temptation, and abandoned all to lead a wandering life with Bill Smith, and the result was dying as I have described, while under the influence of drink.

Now it is right to state, that there appears to be no foundation whatever for the statement that she died from violence. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that Bill Smith treated her as well as he was able, with the exception of supplying her with drink, which men of his class, too often, regard, alas, as kindness. I have to-day made a thorough search into the circumstances of the case, and the result is as follows: -

On Saturday afternoon Bill Smith and the deceased (whose right name was Lavinia Mary Cook), and about 35 years of age, entered the Gelynog Inn, a mile or two from Llantrisant on the way to Pontypridd. Both were very wet. Some navvies were drinking there, and they subscribed between them a few shillings, which they gave to Smith, as well as supplying both with drink. Both left the public-house between three and four o'clock, and proceeded in the direction of Pontypridd. A little after half-past four o'clock the Pontypridd postman saw the woman lying on her back, near the middle of the road, a short distance from Ty Mabellis, and the man some little distance from her. The postman asked him, "Does this woman belong to you?" He answered "No." The postman then caught hold of her by the arms, and endeavoured to lift her up. She did not say a word, but lifted both hands to heaven, as if in the act of supplication. She made no attempt herself to get up, and the postman left her on the road, and went on his journey.

After proceeding some distance he looked back and saw the man standing over the prostrate woman, and apparently speaking to her. About half a mile higher up is the Hewitt Arms, and the next place where the two were seen was here. This was, it appears, between five and six o'clock. The man entered alone and called for a glass of beer, which was supplied to him. He bye-and-bye mentioned to Mrs. Fletcher the landlady, that his "missus" was behind on the road, and asked her to call her. Mrs. Fletcher proceeded outside and saw a woman sitting on a stone by the side of the road some distance above the house, which she must have passed. Mrs. Fletcher mentioned this to the man, who immediately went to the woman, and returned with her into the house. He ordered a glass of whisky, hot water, and sugar for her, and this she swallowed – at any rate, some portion of it. There was a fearful storm racing without. After a little time both resumed their journey. About two hundred yards from the Hewitt Arms there is a path through the fields. It is about three hundred yards

in length, cutting the sharp angle of the highway, round Penycoedcae, and entering the Pontypridd highway again, three hundreds between the village and Pontypridd. In this angle is the Penycoedcae Farmhouse, kept by Mr. Elias Gronow. His children were standing at the back window watching the storm and looking in the direction of the fields, when they suddenly called out, "Look, look, there is a sight!"

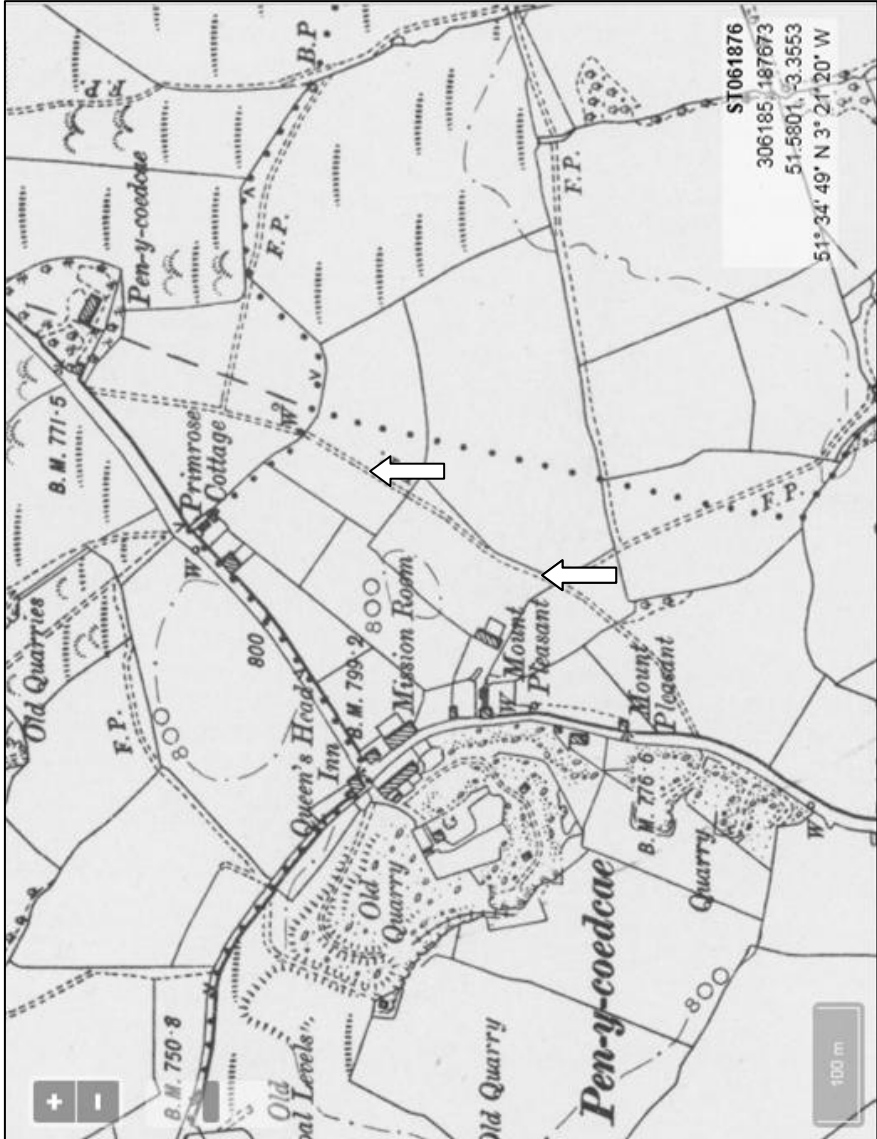
Their parents then saw a man and woman struggling through the storm along one of the fields through which the path runs. Both seemed to be unable to keep on their feet, and were failing continually. At last the woman sat down in the field, and seemed to be refusing to move. The man would go a short distance alone, and seemed to be endeavouring to entice her along, but without effect. Mr, Gronow, proceeded to them, and assisted the man to lift up the poor woman. They got her over the stile, and Mr. Gronow returned home.

At about half-past seven Smith entered the Penycoedcae public-house, kept by Edward Watkins, and begged for assistance to carry his wife, who was, he said lying in a helpless condition in one of the fields. Two men, named Eliazer Jenkins and William John, who happened to be in the public-house proceeded with the man. They found the poor woman as described, and almost in a state of nudity. One of them took hold of her and she murmured: "Leave me alone; leave me alone." Smith then stooped down and the poor woman was lifted on his back and in that way the three men conveyed her to the empty house. After placing her on the floor of the loft, the three returned to the Penycoedcae public-house. Smith had there a glass of beer for himself, which he drank. He then purchased a glass of whisky for the deceased, and William John ran to his house and brought a large piece of bread and cheese. The man then returned with it in his hands towards the empty house. Smith reached the common lodging-house at

Llanganna (Graig), about a mile lower down the road, at four o'clock on Sunday morning, and stated that he had left his wife cold and speechless in an empty house up the road. The lodging house-keeper urged him to go and tell the police, but he did not do so. Mrs. Fletcher, Gronow, Jenkins, and John testify that the manner of Smith towards the deceased was kind throughout when they were in their presence. There were several small contusions on the face of the deceased, but they may have been caused by falling. However, Dr. Hopkins and his assistant made a post-mortem examination of the remains at the workhouse on Monday afternoon.

The 'South Wales Daily News' of Tuesday reported: - The principal topic of conversation in the neighbour of Pontypridd on Monday, was the extraordinary discovery made on Sunday, of the dead body of Mary Cook, at an empty house at the top of Penycodcae. Up to the afternoon, Bill Smith, the navvy with whom she had lived, was still missing. Inquiries made at the Llanganna lodging-house at which Smith and deceased had been lodging off and on for about twelve to eighteen months resulted in additional details of Smith's call there at four o'clock on Sunday morning. Mr. Williams (the landlord) and his wife and the rest of the house were in bed when Smith banged the door. Hearing the rap, Williams called out "Who is there?" The reply was "Bill." Williams: "What Bill?" Smith: "Mary's Bill" (alluding to deceased Mary's husband).

Williams: (thinking that deceased and Smith were there in quest of sleeping accommodation) "There is not a bit of room in the house." (meaning that the lodging-house was full). Smith: - "Well, Mary is in an empty house up the hill. We had a drop of beer on the road coming from Llantrisant, and we went into that empty house. She got bad, she is cold and senseless' in fact, I cannot get anything out of her."



The footpath shortcut across the fields taken by Lilly O'Hare and Bill Smith the night she died. Ordn. Survey map 1888.



1881 o.s. map showing where the body of Lilly O'Hare was discovered (top right arrow). Also shown are the Hewitt Arms and Queen's Head Inn mentioned in the story.

Smith went on to say that he wanted some assistance to carry deceased down from where she lay. Mrs Williams, the lodging-house landlady, said that Williams could not accompany Smith, as he (Williams) had just been under the doctors' hands. There was no one there to aid him. Smith was advised to go in quest of help at the police-station. His foot-steps were heard by neighbours going down the hill towards the police station - and that was the last known of him. Where he went to no one could say.

The lodging house keeper said that Smith was a Lancashire man, they believed; he and deceased got on, as a rule, pretty well. Smith was not so rough as the ordinary type of Navvy, and he seemed to be somewhat fond of deceased; they frequently migrated from the lodging house and then came back again, as Smith could get work. She was unfortunately addicted to drink.

When she got an extra copper she bought a penny worth of beer. When overcome by it she was not noisy or quarrelsome, but went and laid down on the bed. Smith was a moderate-temperate man, and was never known to behave with cruelty to deceased. Five weeks ago, on a Friday night, he had a little "tiff" with her. She had not got his food ready - was a "little gone," and he grumbled. In the slight quarrel which followed he hit her a blow, but not a severe one. Next morning, early, he went up the valley (Rhondda) to work for Mr. Mathias, contractor, at Ferndale. He had been prior to this working on the Caerphilly line at Treforest. He stayed there three weeks, came back to the lodging house on a Saturday, and then proceeded to Llantrisant on the Monday, to do something on the Taff Vale branch line there. Deceased went with him or after him.

They were returning from Llantrisant on Saturday, as before stated. During the absence of Smith deceased "helped" me at the lodging-house. She was very moody at times; would cry for an

hour at a stretch. Asked by the landlady what was the matter, her answer was that she was missing her children at Brecon. The reason why she left her husband is not quite clear; apparently there was some domestic unpleasantness, and it is said that she took to drink to drown her troubles.

She had gone to the Brecon workhouse after she left her home and had stayed there awhile. Her mother was dead, her father was a mason, and was (and is believed to be now) working at Merthyr. He is a mason, and was, it is remembered, at Pontypridd a week or two ago. Whilst living with her husband, deceased kept a bake house, and she used to say that she had by her industry been able to make £1 a week by this means. She represented her children to be 13, 10, and 8 years old respectively. It was only during the last couple of years that she met Smith.

The Coroner's inquest has been fixed for Tuesday evening, in order that the police may have time to institute all possible enquiries into the facts of the case, and get at Smith, if possible. The wet condition in which deceased's garments were attributable, it is believed, to the heavy rain showers of Saturday night.

On Monday afternoon, Dr. Rees Hopkins, the Ashgrove, and Mr. Vanesse, his assistant, and Mr. Thomas, one of his pupils, made a post-mortem examination of the body of the deceased.

The Coroner's Inquest

On Tuesday afternoon, Mr. H. Ll. Grover, deputy-coroner, and a jury of whom Mr. Edwards, Ceridwen Terrace, was foreman, held an inquest at the Union Workhouse, Pontypridd, with regard to the cause of the death of Levina Mary Cook, who was found dead at an empty house at Penycoedcae on Sunday, under circumstances already reported.

The jury having viewed the body, the first witness, **Samuel Cooke**, carpenter and joiner, Brecon was called. He identified the body of deceased as that of his wife. They had not been living together for the last five years. He had not seen her during the last two years or two years and a half. Of her whereabouts or means of subsistence during that period - or indeed since she had left him - he knew nothing. He last saw her at Brecon. He happened to see her in the street. He could not say whether or not she had seen him. He had not spoken to her. He had had a legal separation from her.

The Coroner: "What was the nature of the separation?" Witness: "I would rather not explain that, sir, unless I am bound to. If I went and detailed her conduct it might be thrown in my children's teeth, and I would not like that." The Coroner "But you say that there was a legal separation?" Witness: "Well, not legal but I was supposed to keep her in the union as long as she was there."

The Coroner "Then you separated by consent. I only want to know if there has been any record kept as to the "separation." Witness reiterated that there was no legal separation, but he would rather not go into particulars as to the cause, &c., of separation not because he wished to keep anything back from the jury, but because of the reflection which might be cast on the children, through what might have to be said. Deceased was born in 1842. Witness knew nothing of the man Smith, with whom deceased was understood to have cohabited.

The Foreman: "Was it because she was given to drink that she left you?" Witness: "I would rather not explain. It might be thrown in the children's teeth. Still, if the jury pressed him, he would say what had to be said." The Foreman: "No, I don't wish to press the matter." By the jury: "I left Brecon this morning. I noticed her death recorded in one of the newspapers. I have three children one of them was two years old when deceased left me."

Catherine Fletcher, landlady of the Hewitt's Arms, situate on the road between Llantrisant and Penycoedcae (a mile from Pontypridd), said that a man called there for a glass of beer on Saturday afternoon, between five and six o'clock. He drank it, and said that his "missus" was behind. In about ten minutes' time he went out to see if she was coming, and returning remarked that he could not see her.

Witness then went to the door, and saw a woman sitting down just above the Hewitt's Arms. She acquainted the man with the fact, and he went out, recognised her, and brought her in. She was cold and wet. She did not sit down, but partly drank a glassful of whisky and hot water, which the man ordered for her. Witness could not say whether the woman (deceased) had been drinking at all. Witness did not speak to deceased. She saw no marks or bruises on deceased. Shortly afterwards the man and deceased left the house.

Elias Gronow, Penycoedcae Farm, deposed that his premises were situated in some fields along which there was a short footpath cut from the Hewitt's Arms to the top of Penycoedcae Hill (just above Pontypridd town). At about seven o'clock last Saturday evening his children called his attention to a woman whom he had identified as deceased, and a man staggering across the field in the direction of Penycoedcae.

Witness described the erratic movements of the woman, and the attempts of the man to help her up. She lay in one instance about half an hour on the ground. Both persons were drunk, but deceased, of the two, was the worse. They did not quarrel; they perpetually fell down. When deceased lay helpless on the ground the man walked about, back and fore, and asked her to come. Eventually the man helped deceased (by witness's advice) over a stile. On accomplishing this feat the man and deceased fell. They got up, and deceased was led off by the man - her arm under his

arm. It was a bitterly rough night. Deceased had not night clothing on. The man did not offer to abuse deceased in any way. By the Foreman: "I did not notice any marks on deceased. She was dirty." By Dr. Ross Hopkins: "Near the stile the woman tried to point me out to the man."

William John, collier, Penycoedcae, said that between six and seven o'clock on Saturday night a navvy came to the Queen's Head public-house, and asked for aid to move the woman who was with him, as he was, he said, lying down in the inclement weather right on the field. The landlord asked the man why he did not take her to Pontypridd. The man said he could not move her.

The landlord said that he was by himself, and so could not aid the man, but by the man's request witness and another man named Ebenezer Jenkins went out with the man to where deceased lay. They found the woman in an apparently sleeping condition resting on the ground. They asked her to come in, but all they could get out of her was, "Leave me alone." She could not stand up. Finally, by the advice of witness and his comrade, the man took deceased on his back, and carried her into the empty house in the next field. He took her upstairs, and laid her on the boards, on her back.

As witness and his friends were retracing their steps, 20 yards from the house, the man came after them to the public house, stayed ten minutes or so there, drank a glass of beer, and took a glassful of whisky in a bottle to deceased. The man told the company at the public house that neither he nor the woman had had any food for two or three days. Witness sent his little boy home to fetch a little bread and cheese. This he gave to the man to give to the deceased. The man paid for the whisky and for a pint of beer for the company. The Foreman: "The man seemed to have plenty of money?" Witness: "That was what John Parry, Gelynog, and the landlord told him. They thought that he should have drunk less and

bought more food.” By the Coroner: - “I did not see any blow on deceased. Her hair was down.”

Edward Watkins, landlord of the Queen's Head, Penycoedcae, gave confirmatory evidence. The man asked witness if he would sell him a candle. Witness could not do this, but he gave the man some matches to take with him. The deceased had called before repeatedly (once recently, six weeks ago) at witness's house for a pennyworth of beer.

The Coroner: “Did you ever see the man before?” Witness: “Yes last summer with deceased. That was the first time I saw her. They were drinking then, and stayed an hour or so at the house. I did not see him again until last Saturday. I asked the man last Saturday night if he and deceased were married. He said, “Yes” and that she was the daughter of a publican at Brecon; that he took her off from home and married her in Merthyr and that they had been travelling together over England and Wales for the last five years.”

The man seemed to be in great trouble about the woman, and said that he would not like to lose her for a fortune and that she had been a good friend to him. I did not take much notice of his talk, but sent him off to the woman to get her to her lodgings. The man said they had come from Swansea, and that they had pawned all their clothes before they started. By Dr. Hopkins: The man said on the second visit to the public house that deceased had been drinking. He had, he said, seen her once before at Caerphilly in very much the same way. She had then dropped all of a sudden on the field, and she was then bad for about six weeks. Deceased never complained to me that the man had ill- treated her.

Mary Ann Williams, wife of a lodging-house keeper, living at 20, High Street, Pontypridd, repeated the statements which were detailed in Tuesday's South Wales Daily News. “Bill Smith,” the

navvy, or, as he styled himself, Mary's husband, had at 4 a.m. on Sunday knocked at their door and asked for help to get deceased from an "empty house on the top of the hill." She was, the man asserted, cold and ill, and had had a drop of beer. Witness told him that her husband was too ill to go with him, and advised him to fetch assistance from the police station if that was necessary. The man, who had been working on the line, and who had, with deceased, lodged with witness for the last 12 months or so, went away. Witness did not see Smith, had only heard his voice. Until six weeks ago witness had thought Smith was the husband of deceased at that time her husband was informed by masons working at Mr. Leyshon's, Brewery, who were natives of Brecon, who she was. Witness taxed deceased with the fact. Deceased cried and acknowledged that she was the wife of Cook, a carpenter at Brecon and said that she had left him and her three children five years ago, and had gone to the workhouse, where her husband had to support her until she left the place, as she could not stay there any longer. Deceased said that the reason why she left her husband was jealousy. She blamed her husband.

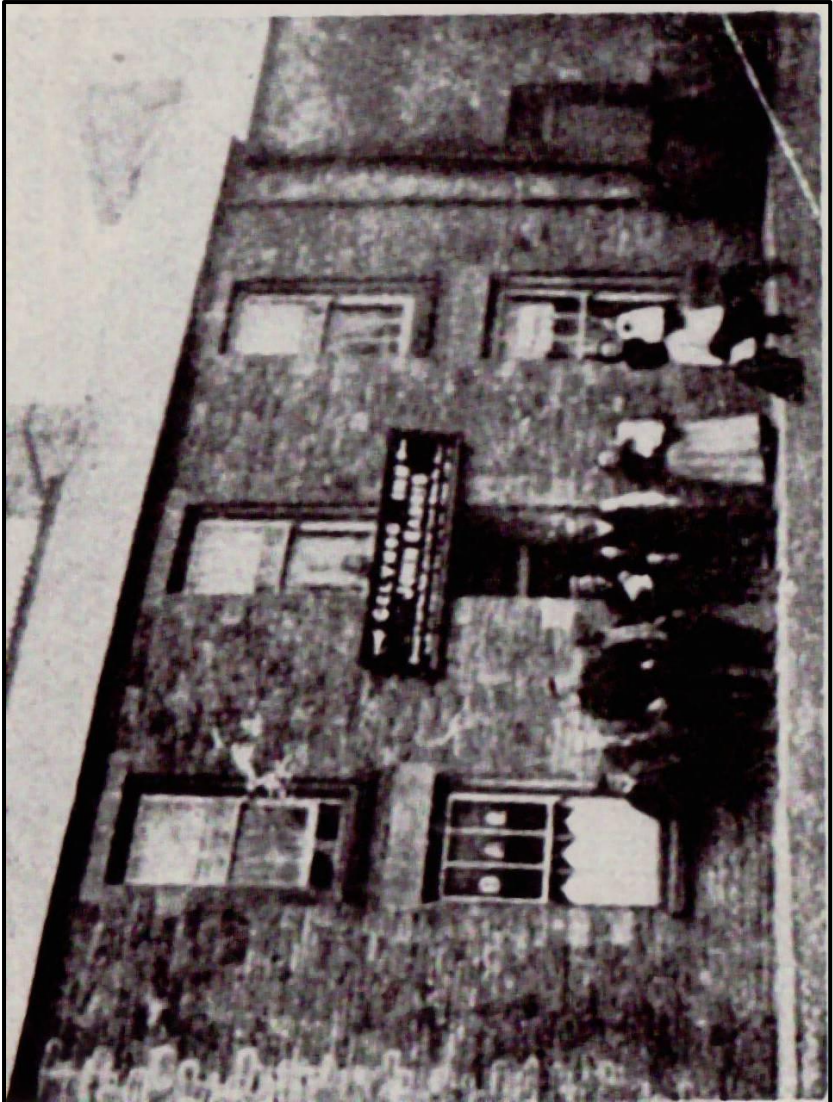
Five weeks ago she had a quarrel - the only notable quarrel with Smith was when she had not got Smith's supper ready in the evening and was drunk. They had words, and Smith struck deceased she had black and blue marks. They did not make it up and he and left early next morning, and did not return for three weeks. He then came back to deceased (who had stayed the while with witness) and gave her money. They subsequently - on the Monday (a fortnight ago) - left the abode of witness (for Llantrisant). Smith went first and deceased followed.

Thomas Jenkins, Graig Street, recounted how he and his brother-in-law Isaac Seaton, had on Sunday for shelter got out of a shower of rain into the empty house at Penycoedcae and how, in viewing the premises, witness discovered the body of deceased in the

upstairs back room. He called to Seaton. They stood speechless for a few moments. At first they thought deceased was asleep. Seaton told witness to push the woman with the umbrella. Witness put his hand on her, ascertained that she was dead, and went and gave information to the police at Pontypridd immediately. Witness and Seaton had found the back door of the house partly open. Deceased lay with her face towards the floor.

Sergeant Evan Jones, Pontypridd police station, explained how he, Sergeant Pickwick, and two other police-constables went to Penycoedcae to the empty house at 1.30 p.m. on Sunday, after hearing what the last witness had reported. They found upstairs in the back room the body of deceased. Deceased lay downwards, her body on the floor, and a cheek resting on a canvas bag. She was quite dead - stiff and cold, her clothes very wet. Her hat was also near. There were bread crumbs on the floor and in a handkerchief, and cheese fragments downstairs. There were evident signs that an attempt had been made to light a fire. Witness had the body conveyed to the union dead-house. The floor skirting at the empty house had, in one place, caught fire. No one had come to the police station on Saturday night to give any information about deceased.

Dr. Rees Hopkins, the Ash Grove, who had been called in to see the deceased, said that he had seen her body upstairs at the empty house at two p.m. on Sunday. He first noticed a strong smell of intoxicating liquors on going upstairs. Her face was of a slight purplish hue. There were two forehead bruises over the eyebrows and a slight laceration over the eye. Over the right cheek bone there was an abrasion from which extended a scratch two inches along the cheek. There were abrasions on the nose (top and right nostril), right upper lip and chin and over the right thumb there was an abrasion caused by a fingernail. All these bruises were superficial.



The Gelynog Inn 1903, where Mary Cooke and Bill Smith visited before returning home through Penycloedcae

On turning deceased over he noticed further slight abrasions. There were abrasions and bruises over both knees, and bruises on both legs below the knee. These injuries were probably caused by her having fallen down - in the manner described by previous witnesses - rather than by personal violence.

Witness made a post-mortem examination of deceased on Monday. The body was fairly nourished. On the forearm there was an old scar showing that deceased had been injured by somebody. There were also marks which might have been produced by the pressure of some one's thumb and finger. The brain, lungs, liver, and kidneys were congested. Witness attributed the death of deceased to cold and exposure accelerated by her drinking, &c. He did not find traces of violence in any degree.

The Coroner summed up briefly and lucidly. The jury, after a brief deliberation, returned a verdict to the following etc. "Died from natural causes, brought about by cold and exposure." Dr. Hopkins said that deceased had died in a comatose state - not at all a painful death. The Foreman said that it would have been better, beyond doubt, if the man Smith had come forward.

The Coroner said he did not think the jury could hold Smith liable in any way. If a man lay helpless in the street and needed aid, the law did not compel a passerby to put him on his back and carry him home. The latter person might be deemed hard-hearted, but that did not affect the legal issues. Doubtless Smith had, when he went for whisky for deceased, thought that he was doing the best thing he could for her.

END

Beer Cask found guilty!

The early 1890s saw the great religious revival in Wales and in April 1896 a great Temperance Campaign was held in Pontypridd itself, which would end with the mock 'execution' of a cask of beer by throwing it from the top of the famous Old Bridge. However successful the whole week had been, the 'common' folk of the town took the opportunity to mock this great revival. The *Pontypridd Chronicle* of the time gave this report of the whole week: -

Great temperance campaign

Mr. E. Tennyson Smith's campaign was proving to be what many hoped it would be, a magnificent success. Enormous gatherings have been brought together nightly in the New Town Hall. It was hoped that by the end the total abstinence pledges would have reached at least 12,000. The proceedings connected with the campaign, or as it was officially called "The Mission," opened on the Wednesday evening, April 15th 1896 with a reception attended by most of the leading temperance people in Pontypridd and Rhondda Valleys. This gathering was held at St. David's Hall, and was mainly intended for members of the committee and other local temperance workers. In the evening there was a well attended public meeting at the New Town Hall. It is said "well attended" adversely, for there was a large audience, but the movement had not yet attained the full steam ahead proportions that would characterize it a little later in the week.

The chair was occupied by Mr. James Roberts, JP, Treforest, Chairman of the Urban District Council, who, in the course of an able address dealt with the temperance question from a practical point of view. He then introduced the leader of the campaign to the audience, Mr. E. Tennyson Smith, whose experiences in

Australia and this country, being followed by exciting incidents while carrying on the aggressive forward movement in the interest of temperance and poor vision. The campaign then went on for a week with increasing number of followers. It all reached a climax at the New Town Hall where a mock trial was held in front of a most representative gathering of the towns people to witness the trail of the criminal 'alcohol,' which after many speeches reached the inevitable verdict of 'guilty.'

It being announced that the 'execution' of the prisoner would take place at seven o'clock on Friday night, the precincts of the Old Bridge were densely packed with people long before the allotted hour. The 'prisoner' was brought to the scene on a brake, and after the difficulty of getting through the crowd had been overcome, the summit of the ancient bridge was reached. From that place of advantage, the scene that presented itself to the eye was a truly extraordinary one. The Old Bridge was crowded; the New Bridge alongside, was occupied by a seething mass of humanity. Tabernacle Square was full, and the roads branching off at Zion Street and over Trallwn Hill, were crowded so that the sea of 'upturned faces' was in itself a clear indication of the interest aroused in the temperance question in the town. It was truly an historic scene on an historic site, and the famous Old Bridge seemed like a triumphant arch erected in celebration of the victory of temperance in their campaign against the 'Demon Drink,' and the victorious criminal alcohol.

Of course, the crowd was a mixed one, for there were sightseer's of all sorts, and where the vast majority heartily sang hymns, there were a few noisy individuals, mostly of the 'loafer' species, bellowing like mad bulls to try and drown the voices of the speakers. Mr. Tennyson Smith, however, succeeded in delivering trenchant observations on the practical application of the trial, and the execution. He pointed out that the main object was to bring

home to the people the evil effect of a traffic which was undermining the foundations of the social and religious life of this and other towns. A sledgehammer having been obtained, the bung of the criminal cask was knocked in, and its lifeblood drained into the River Taff. Then, the body of the criminal, in the shape of the cask, was consigned to the waves, and as it floated down the stream, and got partially filled with murky river water, there were loud cheers, mixed with a few grumbling's from confirmed tipplers about the 'waste' of beer, which people had to pay 1½d a pint. Some declared that the contents were cold tea, others held that neither Mr. Tennyson Smith nor his executioner, had any right to poison the fish. But amidst the scenes of excitement, pledges were being signed, and campaign thus carried on in the open air amongst the throng that had come to witness the execution.

While this was going on, a young man whose connection with the drink trade is well-known paid a boy for going in the river to fetch out the cask. The bribe was accepted, and before reaching the old ford, the victim was caught and brought back in triumph to the bridge on the shoulders of a young man known as 'Mother Lee,' dignified in the '*Echo*' report as 'a man well known in sporting circles.' A pretense was made at drinking the remains of the beer cask, and it is said that some of the river water was actually swallowed by the little group of dirty boys who surrounded the counter-demonstration. If that be true, there never was a stronger argument for the case of total abstinence than the success of rescuing such 'loafers' from themselves.

The water of the river at the spot indicated is polluted by sewerage matter from drains above; by the filthy overflow of the Merthyr District Sewerage Farms, and by the gutters of the slaughterhouse's close by. If to obtain the doubtful dregs of a small cask of beer anyone was found beast enough to drink those dregs, diluted, if not polluted, by 2000% of river water containing a

seething mass of corruption, there is need for continuing the campaign until the town is more enlightened, and the temperance people succeed in rattling the last link in the last chain that links the drunkard to his doom.

Before closing the account of the proceedings, it maybe well, also, to draw attention to the extraordinary conduct of the people in charge of the horrible instruments, organs, which occupied Capt. Williams' Field (now the Precinct, near the rear of Iceland). When the speeches began they started up their steam organs, evidently to try and drown the voices of the speakers, but the distance was greater than they had calculated. Still, taken the will for the deed, the inhabitants of the town might do worse than consider whether they should not do something to abate a nuisance which, at times, is well nigh intolerable to those who are unfortunate enough to live within the reach of the pandemonium which greets the ears of the public when a 'musical treat' is given by those ear-splitting instruments of torture.

END

Immorality at Pontypridd – Desperate assault on Mr. McClune The accused sentenced to two months – Appeal for police assistance

In 1893 immorality in Pontypridd was not just confined to the town centre, but was also driven into some of the out-lying districts as authorities tried to stamp out prostitution etc in the town. The two following stories show such cases. The first in the South Wales Daily News of 16th November 1893: -

Mr. J. F. McClune, principal of the Pontypridd Grammar School, and agent for the East Glamorgan Conservative Association, appeared at the Pontypridd Police-court on Wednesday before Mr. Ignatius Williams (stipendiary), Mr. T. P. Jenkins, and Mr. E. Edwards - to prosecute a navy, named Henry Phillips, employed on the Mardy Waterworks, for assaulting him. Mr. McClune, who appeared in the box with his eye greatly discoloured, lives in The Grange, a house which stands at the entrance to a large plantation known as the Lan Wood, belonging to the Tredegar estate.

Mr. McClune explained that on Saturday last, at 10.10 p.m., when he arrived at his house, he found the gate leading to the woods open. Proceeding to close it, so as to prevent cattle entering his grounds, he was met by a woman coming from the wood. He asked the woman what she was doing there, and she said she was going to Ynysybwll. In fact, however, the woman was coming towards the town. He opened the gate for her, witness advised her to go to the police-station.

The woman thereupon turned back and went into the woods again. He followed for some distance, when the prisoner suddenly appeared in front of him, having apparently emerged from among the bushes on the side of the track. Witness asked him where he came from, and prisoner replied, "From Ynysybwll," and further

declared that the woman who had just passed was his wife. Witness said, "We get plenty of annoyance here from you people of Ynysybwl. I think you had better go home."

Prisoner then, without a threat of any kind, struck him in the face with such force that he (witness) fell into the ditch flat on his back. While endeavouring to rise witness cried, "Let us have some British fair play," but prisoner kneeled upon his breast, and struck him violently with his fist on his forehead and on the sides of his head. Witness called out "Murder" and "Spickett." Mr. James Spickett, solicitor, was living close by, but did not hear him. As soon as he (witness) called out "Spickett" prisoner rose and disappeared in the wood. Witness then went into his house, and afterwards went to his gate to watch for the prisoner, whom, five minutes afterwards he saw coming from the wood. Witness stopped him and told him he must come with him to the police-station. He walked with him as far as Mr. Merchant's house, but there the prisoner ran down Gelliwastad Hill, and witness followed in hot pursuit. At the Vicarage Mr. Roberts, the ironmonger, intercepted the runaway, and the prisoner was then taken to the police-station by the complainant.

Prisoner declared that the prosecutor had said a good deal that was untrue. Mr. McClure had a big stick with him, and was going to strike him with it, so he (the prisoner) thought he would take his own part. He never touched Mr. McClure when he was on the ground. When Mr. McClure got up he rushed at him with the stick again, and he (prisoner) again knocked him down. He only hit him twice. Mr. McClure, recalled, denied having used the stick at all.

He thoroughly believed prisoner would have murdered him if he had not called out "Murder." The Stipendiary (addressing the prisoner) said that if the Bench adopted Mr. McClure's view that he (prisoner) intended to murder him, they would commit him for

trial to the assizes, and he would be liable for a term of penal servitude, probably for life. It was quite clear that the accused went into the woods for an improper purpose. Mr. McClure naturally objected to that sort of thing taking place in the immediate neighbourhood of his house, but when he spoke civilly to him about it he assaulted him, knocked him down, and jumped upon him.

That was a sort of thing that could not be put up with. He would be sentenced to two months' imprisonment with hard labour. Mr. McClure said that inasmuch as this matter had now come before the public he wished to ask the bench to do what they could to protect the respectable portion of the town in which he lived from the frequent visits of characters such as had just left the dock. For 12 years he had been appealing to the police, and occasionally he had received temporary assistance, but during the greater part of that period he (Mr. McClure) had acted as policeman himself at the spot, and he was getting sick and tired of it. He described the terror caused by these people to ladies, children, and servants, and the only thing to stop the nuisance was for these people to be brought to justice and punished.

Unfortunately, there was one class of the community hunting these people from brothels, with the result that they were turned out upon the respectable portion of the community. The Stipendiary remarked that this was a matter they could not discuss. Mr. McClure undoubtedly suffered from a grievous nuisance, and had now made his complaint public.

Very great efforts had been made to suppress this form indecency, and they were in that court constantly having cases and sending people to goal - the general punishment for offences of that sort committed with any degree of publicity being six weeks' imprisonment.

The Lan Woods were a great centre, and no doubt a good many things took place there. It was impossible for the police with the limited number of men at their disposal to watch every place to which people might resort, but he had no doubt that whatever could be done would be done to suppress this evil. The following week the 'South Wales Daily News' of 23rd November 1893 carried this report: -

TERRIBLE STATE OF AFFAIRS

Pontypridd and its morals – Interview with Mr. James Roberts
The licensed "guzzling" shop

Mr. James Roberts, Treforest, one of the oldest members of the Pontypridd Local Board, and who represented the district on the Glamorgan County Council, is loud in his complaint of the gross scenes or indecency which are being continually thrust under the public gaze. Mr. Roberts is especially competent to lift the curtain in this respect for the tramroad between his residence, Taff Vale House, and the town, over which he and members of his family have to walk day and night, has long been a favourite resort of the immoral section of the community. So intolerable is the nuisance that Mr. Roberts has often to walk home at night around the Wood Road, which is double the distance, in order to avoid contact with immorality of the grossest description. In an interview which I obtained with him the other day, Mr. Roberts declared that the picture already drawn in these columns on the state of the town is not in the slightest degree exaggerated.

Asked to give instances of the scenes he had witnessed, Mr. Roberts stated: - "The tramroad has long been the habitual resort of this class of people, and as for instances, why, my dear sir, I can give you scores. There is in open field, or slope adjoining the tramroad, and in this I have often seen indecency of the filthiest kind, and as often as not, a large number little children, from eight

to ten years of age look down over the embankment at what was going on below. On another occasion, when a similar thing was going on, the woman, who was helplessly drunk, remained in a state of semi-nudity on the embankment for hours. Yes, this was in broad daylight. I called at the police-station to give information and was told by the late superintendent that as what I complained of took place on private property nothing could be done in the matter."

"And you and your family, of course, have to use this route daily, like other residents in Treforest?" - "Yes; but I must admit that there is an improvement in the condition of things now on the tramroad as compared with its condition in the past, and I attribute this to the extra vigilance of the police and to the successful suppression of illicit drinking on the Sabbath. Why, I often saw half a dozen of these girls drinking for hours with an equal number of men on the tramroad. But that does not take place now. But there is room for considerable improvement yet. It is evident that what once took place on the tramroad is now carried on in the Lan Wood and other places."

Questioned as to remedies, Mr. Roberts emphatically repudiated the suggestion of having licensed brothels, and added, "I should like to see the magistrates dealing more firmly with cases of this description. I will give you a case in point. A woman was arrested in the act, and the magistrate actually acquitted her, suggesting that she should leave the town. And yet this same woman was seen a few weeks afterwards in the district plying her awful trade with no attempt at concealment. I can't understand why women who are so well-known to the police should not be followed and watched so that convictions could be secured. I a number of times seen these women go with numbers of men from the centre of the town to the neighbourhood of Mr. McClune's residence, and I can quite understand that Mr. McClune has very great reasons for

complaining." - "Was a vigilance committee not formed here in connection with the social purity crusade?" – "Yes, but a large number of the members became so apathetic that the movement was allowed to fall through."

"Do you consider there are publicans who are guilty of harbouring these women?" - "I do, most decidedly, and I have before now drawn the Attention of the magistrates to the matter. Take, for instance, the jug and bottle departments, in which sly drinking is allowed on a very extensive scale. In fact, in these departments loose women can be supplied *ad lib*, without the attendants ever seeing their faces, so that they cannot possibly tell the condition their customers are in before supplying them with drink. I have often seen men and women emerge stupidly drunk from these jug and bottle departments.

Indeed, I consider that these facilities for supplying intoxicants to men and women already drunk lead directly to the awful scenes and immoral exhibitions that are now being exposed in your columns. Yes; I think the police are quite sufficient in number to cope with the evil and if they were to be a little more vigilant, for it is undoubtedly the fact that the parties committing these scandalous outrages are invariably drunk.

I have often seen young men assembling in crowds on the public streets in the daytime watching men and women on the breast of the Graig mountain. It's simply awful! You know yourself that tenants and owners of houses in the Graig district are complaining sorely of their homes being made intolerable by the scenes enacted in the neighbourhood."

"Is Pontypridd worse off in this respect than other towns?" - "Yes, for very many reasons, and the chief of these is the fact that we have so large a number of public-houses here. Why, there are no

fewer than 25 licensed houses on the road from the Cross Keys to the Graig and back to the Rhondda Bridge - a distance of only half a mile, and this is the district from which these people emerge.

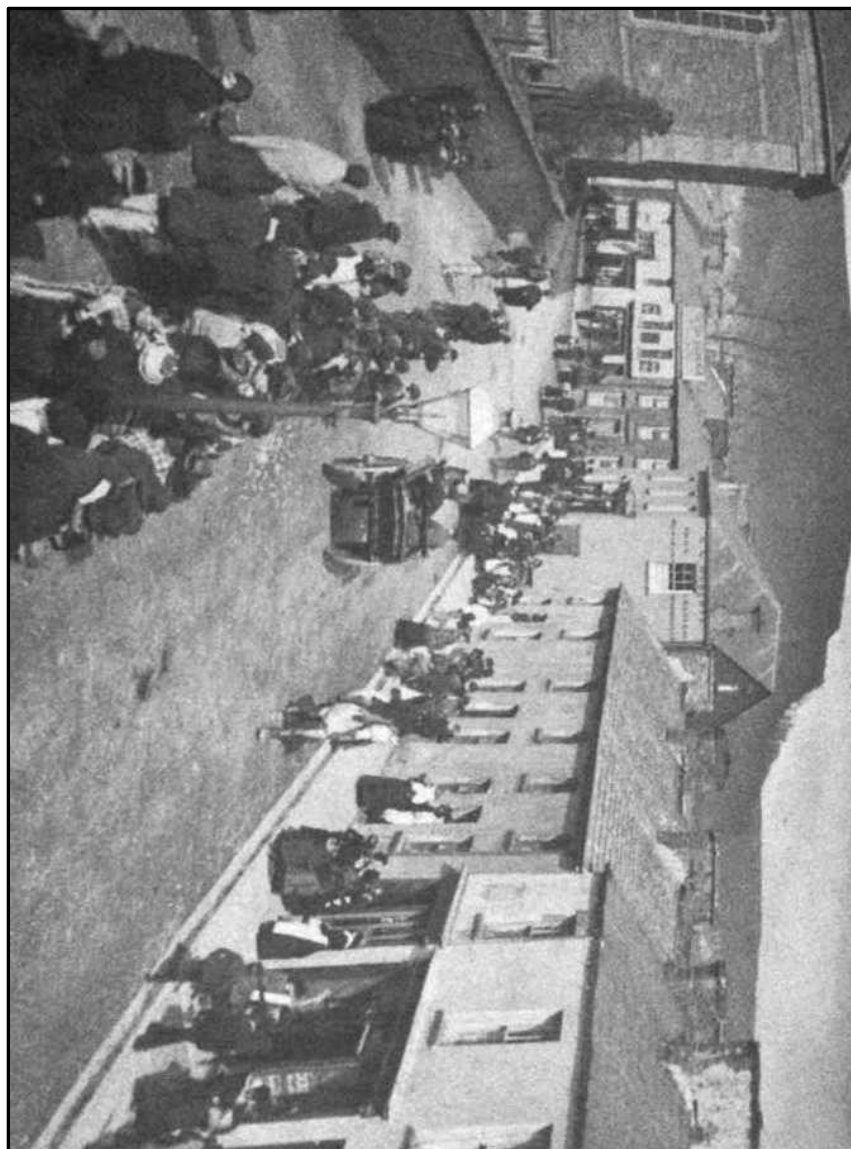
Often on Saturday nights, and on Mabon days, it is positively dangerous to travel home by the last train, because of the drunken crowds of men and women who fill the carriages, who go to the outskirts to spend the night together, and I have seen unspeakable offences even on railway platforms. I should be delighted if the magistrates who carry out their responsible duties in this town would pay a visit to certain public-houses and see for themselves whether they are worthy of that name, or whether they are not simply places for 'guzzling.'

END



The Doctor's Tramroad approaching the Taff Vale Ironworks in Broadway, Treforest, a photograph taken in the late 1880s by Thomas Forrest & Sons. Courtesy Pontypridd Heritage Centre

Tramroad side, Treforest



Pontypridd 1893

Death of a stationmaster at Pontypridd

Thursday, May 25th 1899

The tragic occurrence at the Taff Vale Railway Station, Pontypridd, on Thursday night, May 25th 1899, caused a profound sensation in the town and neighbourhood, where the victim of the tragedy, Mr. W. Felton, the stationmaster, was widely known and highly respected. The discovery was made about 10.15 p.m. After receiving medical attention the unfortunate man was conveyed by special train to Cardiff, where he was taken in a cab to the Infirmary, death taking place at 1 p.m. yesterday. Owing to the reticence of the railway servants at Pontypridd it was very difficult to glean particulars respecting the sad event, but inquiries elicited that a few minutes before 10 o'clock on Thursday night Mr. Felton was engaged carrying out his duties in the ordinary way on the station platform, and nothing unusual was noticed in his manner.

It has been stated that the first person to make the shocking discovery of what had transpired was Miss Powell, a waitress in the railway refreshment department, but this is not correct. The discovery was made by a porter named Payne. It appears that whilst he was sorting tickets in the temporary office on the down side, opposite Mr. Felton's room, he heard three shots, and looking out saw a flash. Rushing across he tapped at Mr. Felton's office window, and receiving no reply he went to the door, which he found slightly ajar and entered. Mr. Felton, who was then, sitting in the chair, asked him to call Mr. Johnson, the platform inspector. During his absence Miss Powell, being told that some shots had been heard, entered the stationmaster's room, which was dark, and was told by him to go away. She sent for Mr. Bevan, the booking clerk, and to him Mr. Felton said he had shot himself. Mr. Johnson and others appeared in the room immediately upon being summoned, and Mr. Felton, who, it is said, then showed little signs of what had happened, told Mr. Johnson that he had shot himself

with a revolver, which was lying two or three yards away, and to which he pointed. Mr. Felton was at the time sitting on a chair near his desk. Dr. Roach (Dr. Howard Davies' assistant) was sent for, and soon afterwards, when the police received information, Police Sergeant Rees and Police-Constable C. James proceeded to the office.

Upon their arrival the stationmaster was groaning, and said that he wished he had died. He also expressed the hope that his wife would not be told that he had shot himself. Dr. Howard Davies arrived soon afterwards, and upon making an examination discovered that the unfortunate man had shot himself on the left side just below the heart, but Dr. Davies could not tell the extent of the injuries. A special train was immediately got ready, and, accompanied by Dr. Roach, P.C. James, and Mr. Johnson, he was conveyed in a guard's van to Cardiff. Mr. Felton was fully conscious during the journey, and frequently remarked that he wished death had overtaken him.

At the Cardiff Station he was placed in a cab and taken to the Infirmary, where a further examination elicited that the bullet had passed through the body just below the heart. The revolver used was a big, old-fashioned one, six chambered and the police found that it contained four discharged cartridges, the other two chambers being empty, and it is supposed that Mr. Felton made four attempts to shoot himself, but that only one of the bullets took effect. Upon making a search of the office a bullet was found embedded in one of the drawers of the desk, which it had entered about two feet from the floor and had gone through the boards. There were also marks of two bullets on the desk. Mr. Felton, who was about 45 years of age and married, had no children. Mrs. Felton was at home at the time of the occurrence, and the news was gently broken to her by Dr. Howard Davies after her husband had been removed to Cardiff.

Early next morning she proceeded to the Infirmary, and remained with her husband until a short time before his death. Though it was recognised that the injuries were serious, it seems that the end came quite unexpectedly. Mrs. Felton, after being for hours with her husband, left about an hour before his decease to visit his aged mother in Carlisle Street, Splotlands, under the impression that he was progressing favourably. Within 15 minutes of death Mr. G. T. Coleman, the secretary to the institution, had a conversation with Mr. Felton, and in answer to his question, "Do you know me?" the reply came quickly, "Oh, yes, I know you very well, Mr. Coleman." Mr. Coleman gave the patient some milk. There were none of the patient's relatives or friends with him when he expired.

Mrs. Felton was prostrated on her return to the Infirmary, and her grief was increased by the fact that she had been given no idea as to the imminence of death. She could suggest no motive for the suicide, and said that her husband had made no communication to her as to what had led him to shoot himself. So far as she knew money matters had not troubled her husband, and she did not think he had had anything worrying him - at all events he had behaved to her in his usual jolly manner. Mr. Felton was a very sociable man, and was always courteous and obliging, and his subordinates looked upon him as an ideal master, firm but kind and considerate.

The news of the tragic event was received with much surprise in the town, and people were at a loss to account for a gentleman of his disposition attempting suicide. Several rumours were circulated as to the motive for the deed, but those who know Mr. Felton best declare as unfounded the allegation that his troubles were due to betting transactions, although it was known that he took a lot of interest in horse racing, and frequently laid money on horses.

It is said that he had become surety for an old friend for rather a large amount, and that the fact that he had been called upon to pay this sum preyed upon his mind. Two well-known Pontypridd gentlemen advanced him sufficient money some months ago to enable him to get out of the difficulty, and one of them informed our representative yesterday that he would have advanced another amount had he known Mr. Felton needed it. It is said that Mr. Felton frequently referred to this matter, and he had been heard to remark that it had meant the loss of all his savings. Prior to going to Pontypridd eight or nine years ago, Mr. Felton was station-master at Penarth. He hailed from the neighbourhood of Cowbridge, where he was educated. The inquest will be held at Cardiff.

Interview with a lady friend

Yesterday evening our reporter was informed that a lady was seen in the company of the deceased at the station a few minutes before he shot himself, and upon making inquiries he found that she had slept at the City Restaurant during the night, and that she did not leave her bedroom until a late hour yesterday afternoon. Meeting her later on our representative entered into conversation with her, and her narrative sheds some light upon the matter, and shows that the deceased was worried with financial matters, and that he had on a previous occasion contemplated ending his life. The lady - who wore a grey mackintosh, a black sailor hat and veil, her age being apparently between 35 and 40 - stated that she was a Miss Gordon, and that she was managing one of Clayton's temperance bars at Penrhiwceiber.

She was born in New Zealand, where her father had a cattle ranch, but about 10 years ago he returned to this country. Soon afterwards her father and mother died, and for eight years she had struggled along herself and was now without relatives. Some time

ago she had managed Francis's Private Hotel at Bath, and she had also been manageress of a similar hotel at Newton Abbot, Devonshire. Miss Gordon went on to say that she had only been in the district a few months, and until lately had been travelling for Mr. Brinton, aerated water manufacturer, Pontypridd. She had known Mr. Felton for some months. "And," she said, "he was a very kind friend to me, and, being a stranger in these parts, assisted me very much in giving advice about the district; indeed," nodded Miss Gordon, with tears, "he was kinder than any father to me. He told me that he took a special interest in me, and when I confided my troubles to him he said that he sympathised with me very much because he too had troubles to contend with."

Then she explained that she was at Pontypridd on Thursday afternoon, and lost the 4.30 train to Penrhiwceiber. She had a conversation with Mr. Felton, and when she was with him a telegram was handed to him. After he had read it he remarked. "Well, well, if this had come half an hour ago I could have put my money on the right horse." This had reference to a betting transaction, and it is a singular coincidence, adds our reporter, that the horse which he had backed at the Manchester Whitsuntide meeting was, it is stated, 'Don't Shoot.'

Miss Gordon added that soon afterwards Mr. Felton and herself proceeded to the Horse and Groom, where they were together for about an hour. They had refreshments, and about 6 o'clock Mr. Felton had a copy of the South Wales Echo. "Did he appear to be vexed when he read it?" asked the Pressman. "Yes." she said "he seemed disappointed, but didn't say anything. Having opened the Echo, he just glanced at it, folded it, and put it in his pocket, but did not say anything."

Proceeding with her narrative, Miss Gordon said that they then separated, and they agreed to meet later on, Mr. Felton stating

that he would be a friend in reference to some business matter connected with herself, viz., finding an appointment as manageress of an hotel. Later in the evening she was with Mr. Felton in his office for over an hour, and she by some means again lost the 9.45 train to Penrhiwceiber.

Having conversed with him for a short time again, she told him that she would go to the railway station restaurant rooms, as she had not had any tea. "Very well," Mr. Felton said, 'I won't wish you good-night, for I will be with you in a minute.' I went inside and ordered some sandwiches and bottle of stout, and almost immediately one of the waitresses rushed in and said that some shots had been heard coming from the stationmaster's office." "Well, I said, what can be the matter? We went out and got to Mr. Felton's office. I asked if there was anything wrong, and I was told there was nothing serious. They would not let me in. I then, accompanied by a porter went to the City Restaurant, but I was not satisfied, and felt very uneasy. I again went back to the station, but the policeman would not let me into the room."

"Did you notice anything strange and unnatural in Mr. Felton's conduct during the evening?" asked the porter. "Oh, no," was the reply, he was quite cool when I left him, and there was nothing strange about his manner. No, he was not under the influence of drink indeed, he was quite sober, and during the time we were together in the hotel he was very abstemious and drank very little indeed." "Did he tell you anything as to whether he had any troubles?" "Yes," replied Miss Gordon, "I happened to speak to him about my troubles, and he told me that he sympathised with me because he had troubles himself. He told me that he had become guarantor for an old friend, whom he was very fond of, and that he had to pay the money." "I suppose, Miss Gordon, you did not notice anything that would lead you to suppose that he intended to commit suicide?" "Not at all," replied Miss Gordon.

"He was evidently worried by the telegram and what he read in the Echo." Then our reporter remarked that he heard Mr. Felton had on a previous occasion attempted his life. Miss Gordon hesitated before replying, but she eventually, but somewhat reluctantly, said, "Yes. When we were sitting in the bay window of the hotel yesterday afternoon he asked me, 'Do you see that little window?' pointing to a small window of his office. I replied." He said, "I intended poisoning myself there some time ago, but just as I was about going to do it someone tapped at the door and stopped me.' I told him that he ought not to think of doing such a thing, and he again spoke of his troubles."

Miss Gordon further said that during the afternoon Mr. Felton pulled out of his pocket some gold and a cheque amounting to £16, which he said he had won the previous day, and which he added would help him to pay his debt. This ended the conversation, during which Miss Gordon more than once expressed sincere sorrow that Mr. Felton, whose friendship she would greatly miss, had committed such a rash deed.

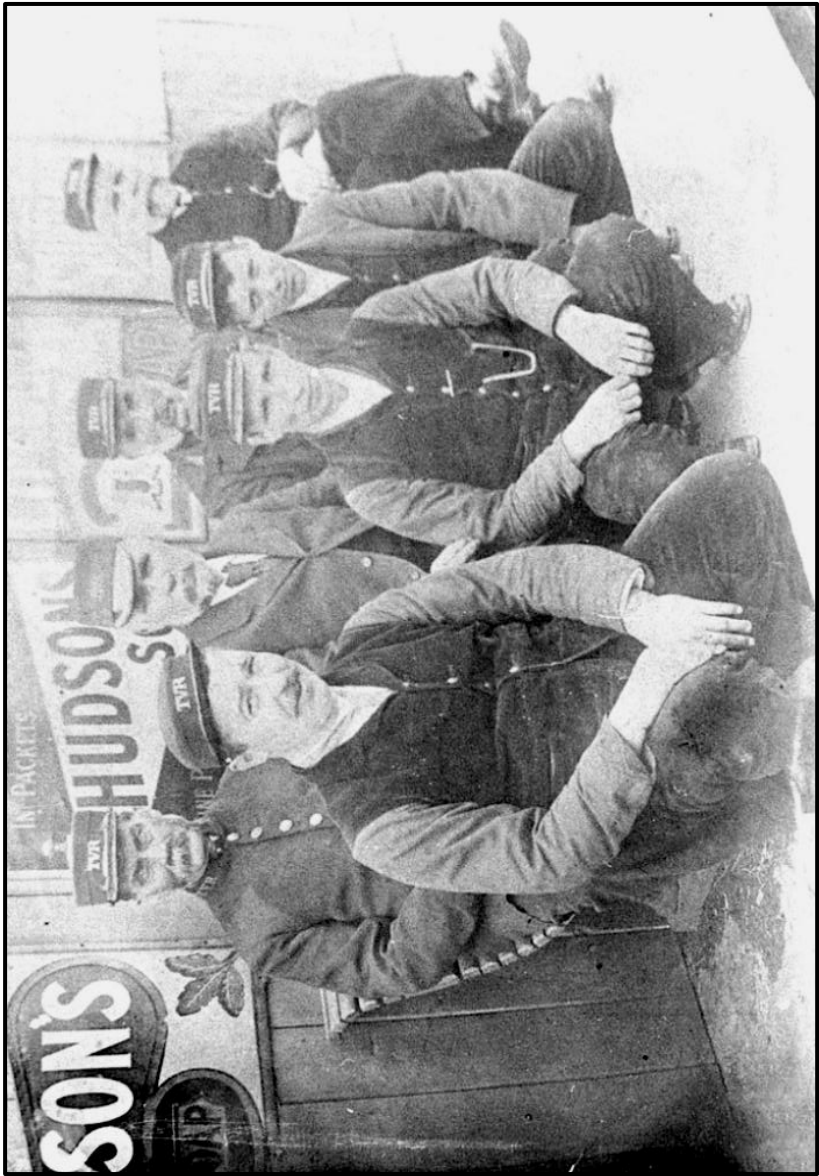
Anxious to die

Mr. Johnson, the platform inspector, remained with Mr. Felton at the Infirmary during Thursday night, a porter from Cardiff taking his place on Friday morning. Mr. Johnson stated that the unfortunate gentleman frequently during the night expressed the wish that he might die.

At the inquest that followed the Coroner, in summing up, said they had not much evidence to show that deceased was in an unsound state of mind, but they had it from Mrs Felton that he had been worried about some money matters. He had become security for some friend, and as is usual in such cases the poor fellow had to make the money good himself, and that had worried him, Mrs

Felton said, some time ago, but she knew of no other trouble that he had had, and certainly from the evidence of those who saw him on the day that he shot himself he did not appear to be otherwise than in his usual spirits, no one seemed to have noticed anything strange in his manner, but he (the Coroner) should think they would all be of the idea that there was some sudden impulse or mania just for the moment that caused him to shoot himself. Even from the remarks he made to Johnson when he was asked why he had done it- "I don't know, Johnson because I was a fool," and when Johnson asked him at the Infirmary he again said he could not tell - tended to show there was some sudden maniacal impulse that came over him. Of course they would say that he committed suicide in a state of temporary insanity but if they were not satisfied they could say that there was no evidence to show the state of his mind. But they could hardly believe that a man in his sound senses, without over-whelming trouble happening, would shoot himself in that way. It was a sad thing. He was a man the Coroner had known for many years, and was always highly respectable. The Jury returned a verdict that deceased committed suicide whilst temporarily insane.

END



Pontypridd Railway Station staff 1899. William Felton
back centre?



The Bassett Arms, Pontshonorton, one of the places mentioned in the next story.

The Pontshonorton mystery

December 26th 1901

This true story shows a little of what life was like for some in Pontypridd in 1901. It paints a picture of wild drinking (perhaps not by all), sleeping rough, lodgers and lodging houses, brothels and public houses on every corner, all leading to the death of a young girl from Pontshonorton.

The village of Upper Boat, on Saturday, December 29th 1901, presented an animated appearance, the shock of finding the body of Grace Bayliss in the Taff River on the previous Thursday (27th) having given place to speculations as to how the tragedy had come about. The general feeling being that the young man, Tegg, who had been last seen with deceased, was also in the river. Drags had been at work for many hours, but without success. The body of the child was found at a bend in the river, almost opposite the Fox and Hounds Inn, where the inquest was held. At this spot the water, after heavy rain, rushes on at a rapid rate to Cardiff. The body of the child looked beautiful in death as it lay in its coffin, pending the jury viewing it. No mark was noticeable, although there had been a slight abrasion of the cheek. Mrs. Meredith, the wife of George Meredith, late of Pontypridd, who keeps the Inn, had performed the last rites, and there was a solemn hush inside the house pending the arrival of the Coroner, Mr. E. B. Reece, for the inquest.

The inquest at the Fox and Hounds

Further particulars respecting the mysterious death of Grace Bayliss, the seven year old daughter of Daniel Morrell, ripper, Pontshonorton, Pontypridd, were disclosed before Mr. E. B. Reece, coroner, and a jury at an inquest held on Saturday at the Fox and Hounds Inn, Upper Boat. John Tegg, the young lodger with whom

the girl left her home on Wednesday night to meet her mother at the railway station, has not yet turned up, and his disappearance has an air of mystery to the sad affair.

The first witness was **Daniel Morrell**, coal ripper, 81, Police-row, Norton Bridge. The deceased, he said, was his step-daughter. She was seven years old last birthday. Mary Ann Morrell was deceased's sister, and was twelve years old. He had two children of his own. On the 26th inst he, his wife, and the two younger children took the 8.30 a.m train from Pontypridd to Cwmpark to visit his father-in-law. He left Mary Ann and Grace at home. Mrs. Lewis, a neighbour promised to look after them. John Tegg, the lodger, was also in the house when they left. Tegg was a young man of 24 years, and worked as a haulier at the Albion Colliery. He had lodged with them several months.

Witness left no one in particular to look after the children, but he understood his wife had asked Mrs. Lewis, one of the neighbours to do so. His step-daughter, Mary Ann, was supposed to prepare meals for the lodger and her sister. Before they left Tegg asked his wife for a sovereign, which she kept for him, and she gave it to him. Tegg told them he was going to have a drink. The Coroner: - "I don't think that is looking much after your children. Here is Tegg asking for a sovereign to go and drink, and you leave the children."

Witness (continuing) said that Tegg left the house before them. He and his wife returned that night, when Mary Ann asked them if they had seen little Grace. They said "No," and Mary Ann explained that Jack (Tegg), had taken her to the station to meet them. Witness and his wife went back to the Pontypridd railway station to look for them, and called in every public-house from Trallwn to the Horse and Groom, but, learnt nothing about them. Tegg was known at the Bassett Arms and the Royal Oak, but the people there said they had not seen him. Late that night he

reported the matter to the police, and again searched the public-houses, but could hear nothing of them. He then went home.

On the following day his wife went back to Cwmpark, thinking they might have gone on there, but could find no tidings. Witness went to the railway station and met all the morning trains, but could hear nothing. He also inquired at the Albion Colliery, but he had not been seen there since the day before Christmas. That afternoon the police told him of a body being found at Upper Boat. He went down and identified it as his step daughter. He was on friendly terms with Tegg, who was fond of the children, and the children of him. Either of them would go anywhere with him, even the youngest one. He thought he was a respectable man, and would trust him anywhere with the children.

Mary Ann Bayliss, the deceased's sister, said that before her mother left for Cwmpark she instructed her to look after little Grace, and not to let her go out. Tegg left the house before her mother, but came back about 9 o'clock, had his breakfast, and went out again. He came back about one or two, and was then rather drunk. He had dinner, and in about an hour went out to the Basset Arms.

He came back about five. He was then 'more drunk.' He behaved kindly to them, had tea, and asked Grace to go with him to meet mamma at the station. She refused, for fear they should miss mamma at the station, and there would be no tea ready for her.

She told Grace not to go, for fear her mother would beat her. Grace told this to Tegg, but he said: "Don't listen to her," and Grace then put on her cap and shawl and went out with him about half past five. Mrs. Lewis was back and fore all day, but did not know that Grace had gone out with Tegg.

The Coroner: - "Didn't you think it was not safe for her to go out with Tegg if he was drunk?" Witness: - "I did not think he would do any harm to her." The Coroner: - "No, perhaps he didn't, my dear, I hope he didn't. What I mean is it was not safe for her to go out with a drunken person, because goodness knows what might happen. You did not think of that?" Witness: "No, sir." She added that Tegg was always kind to her and all the children were fond of him. She further added that it was to Pontypridd station that Tegg asked them to meet their mother, and not Norton Bridge station (with-in a stone's throw of the river).

Margaret Lewis, who resides next door to Mrs. Morrell, said that Tegg had lodged with her for some years, and "never was a more decent fellow in the same house, drunk or sober." He had been drinking heavily on the day in question. She saw him when she went in after the children in Mrs. Morrell's house. She searched for the little girl, but could not find her. She had heard nothing since of Tegg.

The Coroner: - "It is very mysterious, and the question is whether he is not in the river, too. How could they have got to the river from Norton Bridge?" Mrs. Lewis: - "I suppose he went down past Mrs. Bill's shop. He could go down that way."

Mrs. Morrell said that the deceased was her daughter, but that she had not been born in wedlock. Continuing, Mrs. Morrell said that on the day in question she and her husband went to Cwmpark. They asked Grace to come with them, but the little girl was not willing, as she said her grandmother would not let her come back. When I went home that night the child was missing. I searched for her until half-past 2 the following morning. Tegg was always good to the children. He was as good as a father to them. Coroner: "And have you heard anything of him since?" Witness: - "Mr. Oliver has said that he was with a certain woman at Norton Bridge

about half-past 2 on Thursday morning. The house where they were together was in Evan's row.

Mrs. Lewis, recalled, said she was told that Tegg had been in this house in Evans's-row, and that if she went to the right house she would find him. There were a number of bad houses in Evan's row. She went into one of them, and there was a row on. The house was full of men, but she failed to see Tegg. She heard that Mrs. Oliver had seen him that night.

Harriet Oliver, 122 Norton Bridge, said she saw Tegg in the Bassett Arms between 7.30 and 8 p m on the night in question. Little Grace was not with him. Tegg was not drunk, and was treating some women. She had told Mr. Morrell of this. The Coroner (to Mr. Morrell): - "Why did you not tell us that?" Mr. Morrell: - "I forgot, sir." The Coroner: - "You say you went to the Bassett Arms to look for him. Did they not tell you that they had seen him there that night?" Witness: - "The barmaid said he had not been there, but the landlady told him afterwards that he was there from 7.30 until 9 p. m. on the night we came home.

Thomas Watkins, Upper Boat, wood cutter, deposed having found the body at 9.30 on Thursday morning, floating in the river. The river was not very full. He walked into the shallow water and got it out. He took it to the Fox and Hounds. Dr. R. J. Risely, M. B., said he saw the body of deceased on Thursday at 12 o'clock. He had examined the body thoroughly, and there was not the slightest trace of any violence having been inflicted. There was a scratch on the right knee and a slight scraping of the right cheek, but no evidence of any other injury whatever. The immediate cause of death was drowning, and, in his opinion, the body had been in the water over twelve hours. The police stated that they could find no trace of Tegg, and the coroner suggested they should enquire at the houses named by the women. The inquest was adjourned until

12.30 .p m. on Wednesday. Sergeant Williams, Taffs Well, and P. C. James represented the local police.

Comment: - Where was Tegg? Was he dead, drowned like poor little Grace? Or had he been to blame for her death and fled the town? Three days later the whereabouts of Tegg was uncovered.

After an of three days John Tegg, the lodger concerned in the Pontypridd drowning case, unexpectedly turned up on Sunday afternoon at his parents' house in Britannia, Porth, and after he had been informed of the death of Grace Bayliss surrendered himself to the police at Porth. He made a statement respecting his whereabouts since Wednesday evening, when the deceased was last seen in his company upon leaving the home to meet her mother. Tegg informed the police that he knew nothing of the girl's death until Sunday afternoon he did not remember taking her out on the afternoon of Boxing Day. Comment: - The return of John Tegg no meant that the adjourned inquest could now resume.

Coroner's severe strictures.

The adjourned inquest on the body of Grace Bayliss, stepdaughter of Daniel Morrell, coal-trimmer, Pontshonorton, who was found drowned in the Taff last Thursday morning, was held before Mr. E. B. Reece, Coroner, at the Fox and Hounds Inn, Upper Boat, on Wednesday.

John Tegg, haulier, aged 24, the lodger in whose company the deceased left her home on the night of Boxing Day to meet her mother at the railway station, and who appeared at his parent home at Britannia, Porth, after having been missing since Wednesday night, was in attendance.

Mr. D. Roberts-Rosser, solicitor, Pontypridd, appeared on his behalf. Through a clerical error in the report of the inquest on Saturday it was stated that Mr. Oliver said he saw Tegg with some women at the Bassett Arms on Wednesday night, and he desires to contradict the statement.

The first witness called was Mrs. Richards, Bassett Arms, who said she knew John Tegg. He was in the habit of frequenting her house sometimes. She remembered seeing him there on Boxing Day, December 26th, about 7 o'clock, and at different times during the day. She knew Grace Bayliss, the deceased but had not seen her during the day, and saw Tegg for the last time on Wednesday at 7 o'clock. He was then standing in the passage with Mary Halliwell and on being asked to stand aside did so at once. She took no notice of Tegg. There was nothing in his appearance to denote that he was drunk from casual observation.

He then left the passage and she did not see where he went, and had not seen him afterwards, but heard that he and the little girl were missing next day. By Mr Rosser: He had been at her house off and on all day. The witness served him in the morning with three bottles of stone ginger. In reply to a question by Mr. Morrell Mrs. Richards fixed the time at seven o'clock, as she generally put the children to bed at that time.

Mary Halliwell, of 5, Evans' houses, Norton Bridge, a married woman, wife of a Haulier, said she knew John Tegg, and was with him in the passage at the Bassett Arms on Boxing Day at 7 o'clock in the evening. He gave her a glass of beer. He was under the influence of drink, but was not drunk. She remembered Mrs. Richards asking them to stand aside and he went into the smoke room.

She left the Bassett Arms, but looked into the smoke room to see who was singing before leaving, and then went out. She afterwards went to the theatre at Pontypridd. She did not see John Tegg at all after that. He was not at her house in the early morning, nor had she seen him at until today. She knew Grace Bayliss by sight, but had not seen her about at all that night. P.C. Williams: "Could you say what time you were at the theatre?"

Witness: "No; it was very full, but I was in time to see the performance, which had just started. It was too full in the theatre and she did not stay there, but did not see anything of Tegg on her way home."

The Lodger' evidence.

John Tegg, haulier at the Albion Colliery, said that he had lodged with Morrell at 81 Police Row, Pontshonorton for several months. On Saturday before Christmas he gave Mrs, Morrell 30s to keep for him, and of that he had some drink at the Queen's Hotel and Bassett Arms before breakfast. Before dinner he had more to drink and immediately afterwards returned to the Bassett Arms.

He remembers nothing afterwards. He might have gone back to his lodgings, but he could not say, and did not recollect seeing the deceased or even asking her to go out with him to meet her mother when he went back between 4 and 5 o'clock. He was too drunk to remember anything after dinner, when he stated he last saw Grace. His memory also failed him as to being with the last witness in the evening at the Bassett Arms.

The Coroner: - "What is it you remember of that day?" - "I remember myself in Ynysybwl the next morning." - "Where?" - "By a barn on the mountain. I was sleeping by a hayrick." - "What time was that?" - "Between 4 and 5 in the morning. After that I went

to the Windsor (Hotel), Ynysybwl, to get a drink, but as it was not open I walked about the streets until it was open. I then had a drink. I don't know how much money I had, but I had not changed the sovereign. After that I went to the public-house at the old Ynysybwl village, I remained there, but don't remember leaving." – "You got drunk there again?" - "Yes."

"Well, where did you next find yourself?" Close by Ynysybwl in a barn on Friday morning. I could not say what time it was when I awoke, but it was not quite light. I was there drinking all day, back and fore, from one public-house to another, and on Friday night I slept in a field under a hedge. On Saturday I remained in the old public-house at Ynysybwl, and don't remember leaving there at all."

"What did you do on Sunday?" – "On Sunday morning I found myself alongside a hayrick near the Darranddu Level, Ynysybwl, and I then went home to my parents at Porth. My brother then told me that Grace Bayliss was missing, and that I was wanted. I then went straight to the police station at Porth, and told them that I came there to give myself up."

The Coroner, on behalf of Morrell, asked witness why on Sunday morning he did not go Morrell's house (his lodgings) instead of to his parents and his reply was that whenever he had been on the "spree" he always made for his father's house. The Coroner: - "Does that happen very often?" – "No, only on holidays, sir." - "I think you had better be without holidays don't you?" – "Yes, sir."

Mr. Roberts-Rosser: - "You get these drinking bouts sometimes?" – "Yes, on holiday times I go about five days. While they are on you kept away from home?" – "Yes, and also from my lodgings, when I am lodging." – "That has happened for days together before?" – "Yes." – "Did you see Grace Bayliss after dinner on Wednesday?" –

“No.” The Coroner: - “Wait a moment. How do you know? The only thing you can say is that you don’t remember.” - Witness: - “Yes that is so.”

Tegg was asked by Mr. Roberts-Rosser whether it was not quite easy for a child to go from the road to the river side, and he replied that he could not say. The Coroner said that anyone wishing to could do that, and added that if Tegg's statement was correct his mind was a perfect blank after dinner time on Wednesday.

In reply to Police-Sergeant Williams, Taff's Well, Tegg said that he had 30s on Boxing Day, and on the following morning a sovereign and some small change. Mrs. Margaret Lewis, recalled, said that Tegg had lodged with her for three years, and during that time he was frequently on the spree, and then remained away for days at a time. On one particular occasion she remembered receiving £3 from him to take care of, of which he remembered nothing.

The summing up Coroner on Tegg – Worse than a brute beast

In summing up the case, the coroner said that was all the evidence they could get, and he was sorry to say that it was still a perfect mystery as to how the poor girl got into the river. After dinner on Wednesday Tegg's mind was a blank, but the little girl Mary Ann Bayliss (deceased's sister) said that Tegg went to the house between four and five, being then more drunk than before, and went out with Grace, apparently to meet her mother. She gave her evidence in an intelligent manner, and there was no doubt but that she spoke the truth. Tegg asked the two girls to go out with him, and pressed the deceased to go. Nothing was, apparently known of her until her body was found in the river next morning. It was dark when she left the house, and goodness knows where Tegg in his drunken state went.

He might have lost his way and taken her to the riverside, or she might have lost her way and wandered about in the dark; and Tegg, too, might have staggered about and got by the river in a helpless state of drunkenness. There must, of course, be suspicion in the minds of the jury with regard to the conduct of Tegg; because there could be no doubt that he took charge of the girl. They should, however, bear in mind that there were no marks of any violence on her, the only marks on the body being very light. There was not the slightest motive why Tegg should have done her any injury, because the girl's parents and her sister said he was always kind to her, and that he could be trusted anywhere with the children.

The unfortunate death of the poor girl had, however, been brought about by him, and he was morally responsible for it. If he had left her alone she would have been safe with her sister, but instead of that he, whilst in a beastly state of drunkenness, persuaded her to go out with him, and she met her death by going. It was a dreadful thing to read the account of how Tegg spent his Christmas holidays. They talked about the customs of savages, and read about the disgusting orgies they indulged in during their festivals, but could there be anything much worse than such things as Tegg had done in their midst at the close of the century.

He seemed to be a decent fellow when sober, and was in receipt of good pay, and lived in a comfortable house, but what did he do? He spent his holidays in a manner that would a disgrace to brute beast - but beasts didn't do such things. What was the use of men of the kind having good wages? They were no better for it. They could not damage themselves, or others, if they had not enough to spend on drink, but in this case, Tegg, because he had a superfluity of money injured his own health, and caused the death of a poor girl. Money was of no good to such persons.

The jury should consider if there was any legal blame attached to Tegg. He (the coroner) did not think that the evidence would justify a jury to make a criminal charge against him; yet there was no doubt that he was morally to blame, and was deserving of very great censure. He thought that an open verdict would meet the case as there was no evidence to show how she got into the river. After a brief consultation the (14 man) jury returned a verdict that the deceased was found drowned, and that she left the house with Tegg when he was in an intoxicated state, but that there was no evidence to show how she got into the river.

END

Hopkinstown girl drowned

Tuesday, January 24th 1905

A very distressing ice fatality occurred on Tuesday afternoon, at a small pond lying in a hollow between the mountain road, Graigwen, and the Tymawr Colliery tip, which resulted in a girl named Julia Keefe, of 4, Crockett's Place, Hopkinstown, 14 years of age, losing her life. The two other girls had very narrow escapes. The unfortunate occurrence was attended by a series of exciting incidents. It appears that the deceased and two other girls, one named Polly Davies, from Crockett's Place, Hopkinstown, and Mary Gore, Hopkinstown Road, were picking coal on the tip, and foolishly ventured on the ice. The pond is about 35 to 40 yards long and about 20 wide and in the centre is very deep. The girls got safely from the pit end to the other side at narrowest part, and then returned hand-in-hand. Just before they reached the centre the ice gave way, and they were precipitated into the water. Two young men, Mr. J. S. Davies, who is engaged by Mr. H. B. Wales, of Cardiff, agent to the Graigwen estate, and Mr. Ted Cadwgan, Graigwen Farm, were about 200 yards away, and they shouted out warning the girls, but were unheeded. When they saw what had happened they ran to the spot, followed by a number of District Council workmen who were engaged in widening the road immediately above.

Heroic Rescuers

Cadwgan showed a good deal of pluck, for he did not lose a moment in cautiously crawling along the ice to where the girls were struggling and screaming in the water. One of the three girls held her hand out to him, and as he clutched it she became somewhat wild, and the result was that he was pulled into the water. By this time the workmen had reached the pond, and one of them, Thomas Wilson, known as "Swansea," had got on to the

ice to the rescue of the others. Again the ice broke, and he fell into the water, but managed to get Cadwgan out. The scene was now very heartrending. The girls were still struggling, and once or twice disappeared from view. It was seen that not a moment was lost if they were to be saved. A rope was obtained from the tip, and the men stood in a row hand in hand and in this way the girls were reached. The foremost was Wilson, and he was up to his mouth in the water. He succeeded somehow in getting hold of the girls, who were placed on the bank. The last girl taken out was the deceased.

Artificial respiration was resorted to by the men, and was successful in the case of two of the girls, who were assisted home by some of the men. Unfortunately, however, they did not succeed in the case of Julia Keefe. Soon after 3 o'clock Inspector Salter, Sergeant Kavanagh, and P.C. Williams arrived on the scene and assisted the men. When Dr. Dawkins arrived about 3.30 the girl Julia Keefe was dead. Mrs Keefe, the mother of the deceased girl, was present, and was in a very distressed condition, running about wringing her hands and crying, "Oh, Julia, look at me." She caused a very painful scene when she was informed that her daughter was dead, and she had to be assisted away. The workmen are to be highly commended for their good work, for had it not been for their prompt attention and resorting to artificial respiration the two other girls would probably have died.

How the girls were saved.

Ted Cadwgan, who made such a gallant effort to rescue the girls and imperilled his own life, told our representative that when Mr. Davies and himself were on the wall, about 200 yards above the pond they saw the girls crossing the ice from the tip, and they shouted warning them of danger. They took no notice, however, and then as they re-crossed, hand-in-hand, the ice broke. "When I

saw them in the water I rushed down to the pool. I crept along the ice till I reached one of the girls. She gave her hand to me, but she got very wild, and before I had a chance to get her out of the water the ice broke and I tumbled in.

W. Bethel, a mason, came along, helped me out. The other men were down by this time, and we got a rope, and catching hold of each other by the hand we spread out in the water. Tom Wilson was the foremost, and he was up to his mouth in the water, and amid much difficulty he got hold of the girls, one after the other, and they were carried to the bank. The girl who died was the last to be taken out, and she was in the water for some time. All the men had a wetting, and did all they could to rescue the girls.” Mr.

Tom James, foreman of the men employed on the road, said Mr. Cadwgan called my attention to the matter and said, ‘Hurry up, the ice has broken, and the girls are in the water.’ We all ran down, and found the girls struggling and screaming. The ice gave way under some of the men, and we had to break it order to reach the girls. The men worked well, and there is no doubt they saved the lives of the two girls.”

The inquest

The inquest under Mr. R. J. Rhys was held the following Friday at the Hopkinstown Workmen’s Hall concerning the death of 12 year old Julia Ann O’Keefe, the daughter of Patrick O’Keefe, collier, of 4 Crockett’s Place. The first witness called was Elizabeth Gore, a young woman, who was with the deceased on the ice when she met her death. Witness had to be assisted to the chair by her mother and seemed greatly distressed. She stated that the deceased, herself and another girl were sliding on the pond named. There was nobody else there and suddenly the ice gave way and the three were precipitated into the water. The deceased

was the first to fall and in trying to rescue her witness fell into the water.

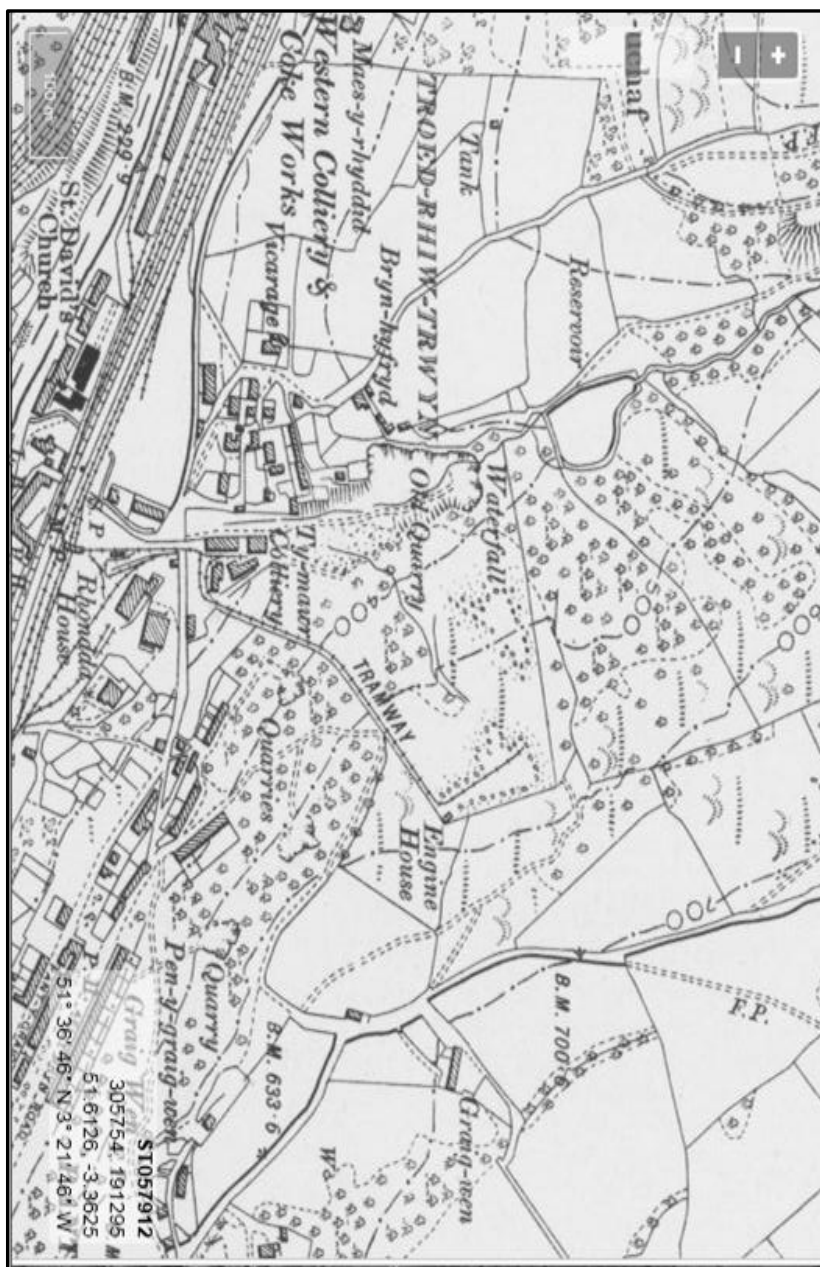
Thomas Cadwgan of Graigwen farm was the next witness. He said he saw the girls about 1.30 on Tuesday afternoon, the 24th inst; they were hand in hand. He witnessed the accident, being about 150 yards away. He shouted to some council workmen close by and rushed to the pond. He crawled on his hands and knees towards the girls, who were in a standing position and caught hold of Gore, asking her and the others to remain quiet, as there was plenty of help at hand, but the girl persisted in struggling, with the result that he, too, was dragged in.

Thomas Wilson, together with William Bethel and Thomas James came to his assistance. A rope was procured and Wilson walked into the pond and carried out first one girl and then another through the icy water, and being told there was still another, again plunged in and brought the deceased to the bank. The Coroner: - "A very fortunate thing you did so well. You did your best I can see."

Tom Wilson was quite overcome in telling his very short but pathetic story, and completely breaking down at the recollection of the scene, sobbed pitifully as he explained: "I have a little girl of my own." The Coroner: - "If it had not been for your presence of mind in acting as you did in getting the rope the others might have been drowned. I must compliment you on what you did." Mr. Rhys also spoke in the highest terms of Cadwgan. "His performance" he said, "was most commendable. Some got frightened when they saw anyone struggling in the water, but he had shown great presence of mind." Police-constable Bodger: "Neither of the men could swim." The Coroner: - "That makes their conduct all the more praiseworthy." A verdict of "Accidental death" having been returned, Mr. D. W. Thomas, the foreman of the jury, added that

they were unanimously of the opinion that Cadwgan should be awarded the Royal Humane Society's medal. The Coroner concurred, remarking that he had known where it had been given in far less deserving cases in some parts of the country.

END



The part of Hopkinstown / Graigwen where Julia Keefe drowned.

Husband and wife found dead at Hopkinstown

March 11th 1909

The first details which came to hand of a tragedy at Hopkinstown, Thursday March 11th 1909, were terse and startling. A man and his wife, who live at 45 Gyfeillon Road, Hopkinstown, had been found lying dead in the pantry of their house, both with terrible gashes in the throat. Further enquiries by our representative reveal the fact that the man, John McCarthy, had been a collier until about 12 months ago, when a serious attack of Rheumatism so affected his limbs that he had to relinquish that avocation. At irregular intervals he had since worked as a labourer. He was a native of Gyfeillon. He is described as a quiet man generally though inclined to be noisy when he had a little drink, which was seldom. We understand that he was a member of the Bristol & West of England Operatives Society, from which we are told he had been receiving benefit, though our information on this point is somewhat uncertain.

He had evidently worried somewhat on account of his illness, as may be gathered from the fact that a next door neighbour had only seen him once since Christmas, but as far as we can ascertain he had never been strange in his manner. Mrs McCarthy was, before her marriage, a Miss Ellen O'Brien, and was a native of Cork or her parents had left that town shortly before her birth. Before her marriage she was in service at the Hollybush Inn, and is described to have been a quiet hard-working woman. Latterly, since her husband's illness, she had been employed during the morning at the Glanrhondda Hotel in domestic work. The parties were married 20 years ago and had lived in the house where the tragedy occurred during most of that time. There are four children, a daughter, aged 19, who is in domestic service with Mr. Rubenstein, Paper Merchant, Taff Street. The ages of the other children are Ellen (14), Mary (10), and John (9).

The discovery

The precise nature of the tragedy will probably never be known. Mrs Sullivan, a next door neighbour, said she had heard that parties having a few words about 2 o'clock on Thursday, but she attached no importance as it did not appear to be serious quarrel there being no high words. Later on she went to the house and getting no answer to her knock went in. On looking towards the pantry door, which is directly opposite the front door, she saw Mrs McCarthy's feet as though she were lying on her back. She at once went to fetch another neighbour, Mr. Jennings, and seeing that something was the matter, though they were still unaware of the precise nature of the tragedy. Mr. Lewis, the landlord of the Glanrhondda, was then brought to the scene.

On his way to the scene Mr. Lewis met a man named Sage, employed at the Great Western Colliery's coke ovens, and the two men went to the scene. When they got to the pantry it was so dark that all they could see was the woman lying on her back and the husband with his face resting on her breast.

Mr. Sage then struck a match and the light revealed the fact that a terrible deed had been perpetrated. Alarmed by the terrible sight they at once set for the police and a doctor. Doctor McDonald was almost immediately on the scene but could only pronounce the all too evident fact that life was extinct. Inspector Salter and Police-constable Welsby were both quickly on the scene. Lying near the bodies was a razor, the broken blade of which furnished evidence of the force with which it must have been used.

Another newspaper reported: - The circumstances of the case are of the briefest, and the tragedy was committed without anybody being aware of anything untoward having happened. No motive is known, and the supposition, therefore, is that the husband must

have become demented, and that in a frenzied fit he must have taken the life of his wife with a razor, afterwards using the same weapon upon himself with equally fatal effect.

The position in which the bodies lay seemed to indicate clearly that though there could not have been much of a struggle by the woman to save her life, the man must have attacked her most furiously, inflicting deep wounds on her head and throat, and completely severing all the vital arteries. The man had also ugly gashes inflicted upon himself, and death must have ensued soon after.

The spectacle in the pantry was revolting! The man's prostrate form lay on the body of his wife, and nearby was the blood-bespattered razor, broken in half by the force used by the man, who seemed to have for the moment acted like a maniac.

The motive or the immediate cause must ever remain a mystery, for the onslaught was made apparently without any great altercation, otherwise those living next door and even across the road would have heard something, as the cottage is so situated and built that any great noise would have been certainly audible.

As it is, however, not a soul was cognizant of anything wrong. So quiet everything appeared that it was only the appearance on the scene of Inspector Salter, and his subordinate officers later arriving which gave any indication that anything out of the ordinary had occurred.

Terrible Wounds

When Dr. Macdonald arrived he at once pronounced life to be extinct, and on examining the wounds it was discovered that the woman had been fearfully hacked about. The man's wounds gave

evidence of having been undoubtedly self-inflicted and both police and the medical men are satisfied that it is a case of murder and suicide on the part of the unfortunate man.

The couple were about middle aged and there were four children of the marriage, the eldest, a girl of about eighteen years of age, being out at service. The other three children were at school, and but for the accidental visit of Mrs. Sullivan would have been the first to find out that they were returning to so sad a home.

M'Carthy had been ailing for some considerable time, having suffered a great deal from rheumatism, which had prevented his following his employment. This fact, however, does not seem to have weighed much on his mind, as he is stated to have been quite as cheerful that day as usual, and he is described as a quietly disposed and sober man, while Mrs. M'Carthy was a most industrious woman, and by her labours managed to keep the household together during her husband's enforced absences from work. Only on that very day she had been out working until noon at the Glanrhondda Hotel.

Neighbours interviewed

“I Can Throw no Light on the tragedy,”

Mr. **Ivor Cadwgan** Lewis, of the Glanrhondda Hotel, in an interview, remarked: “I really cannot tell you very much. The woman had been assisting here during the day, as we were rather pressed, and when I was sent for I had no idea that such a thing could possibly have happened. George Sage, a workman employed at the coke ovens, was there with me. It was, however, so dark in the pantry that even after I got there I could only see the prostrate form of the woman until, I think, George Sage, struck a match. I then realised that something terrible had happened, and I told Sage to at once fetch the police and the doctor, and the police had

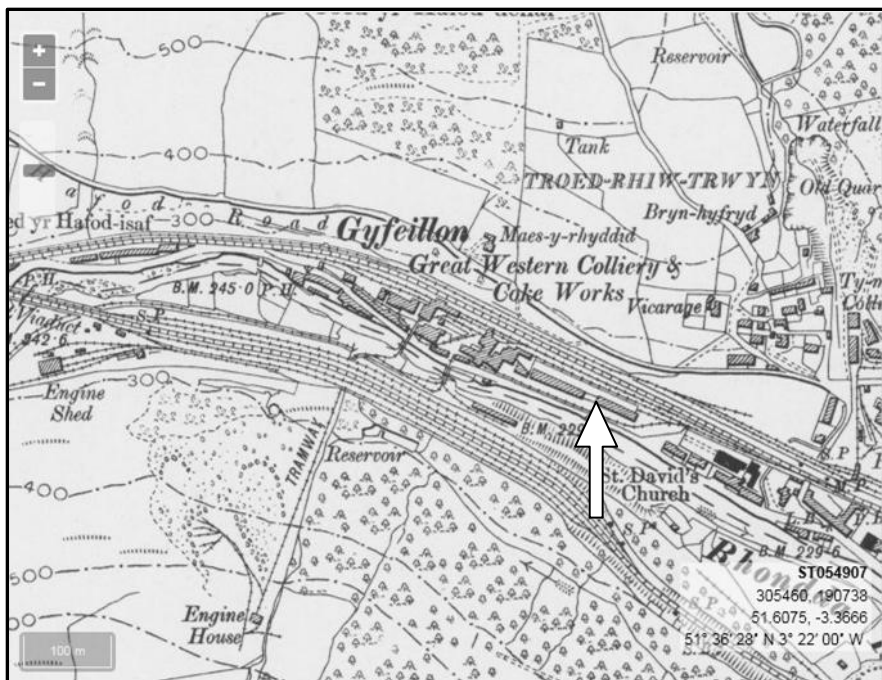
arrived before the bodies were touched. It was only then what it was discovered that both were dead. I cannot, imagine what could have been the cause. I knew them very well, and, as I said, Mrs. M'Carthy was working here for us occasionally."

"A Little Tiff."

Mrs. Emma Sullivan, a rather infirm lady, who lived next door to the M'Carthys, and who was naturally on very intimate terms with them, spoke in highly eulogistic terms of the deceased woman, who, Mrs. Sullivan said, had kept the house together during her husband's prolonged illness, M'Carthy having been a martyr to rheumatism, which had necessitated his abstention from work for prolonged periods. Mrs. Sullivan was almost too overwhelmed with grief to give an interview to our representative. "No," she remarked amidst sobs, "I know nothing at all which could account for so terrible an affair. I knew them well, of course, and had seen them about two o'clock. As I was passing the door then I heard them having a little tiff, but that was nothing more than what often happens between husband and wife."

"Did the husband then appear to be in a rage about anything?"
"Oh, dear, no, you could not call it anything serious. It was simply some little disagreement about something, and there were no high voices between them at all, or else I would have heard them afterwards, but I didn't hear anything at all. I wanted to have the loan of Mrs. M'Carthy's clothes-line, and that was why I went into the house.

I knocked at the door, but received no answer. I then knocked again, but everything was silent. As I knew them so well I tried the door, and finding it unlocked I opened it and went inside, and there in front of me I saw Mrs. M'Carthy's legs in the pantry door, and as if she were lying down. I am not very strong, and so I went round



The Gyfeillon district near Hopkinstown, the arrow showing where the murder and suicide took place.

the corner and called on Mrs. Jennings, and I told her 'I am sure there was something wrong with Mrs. M'Carthy; will you come in with me?' Mrs. Jennings, of course, then came with me, but both of us got too frightened, and I told her to go for Mr. Lewis, of the Glanrhondda Hotel, to come up to us and see what was really the matter, even then I never dreamt of anything of this kind."

Mrs. Jennings, on being interviewed, practically bore out Mrs. Sullivan's statement, but added that it was the sight or the blood on Mrs. M'Carthy's apron which really frightened her and Mrs. Sullivan. "It was rather dark," she continued, "and we could not see

THE TRAGEDY NEAR PONTYPRIDD



Shown is a photograph of the house in which the crime was committed. Standing on the doorway are members of the McCarthy family, including the deceased man and his wife.

Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy and three of their children outside their home at Gyfeillon before the tragic event unfolded.

very well, but I saw enough to make me afraid to go to the pantry, and so I ran at once for Mr. Lewis, of the Glanrhondda Hotel. I thought of him as Mrs. M'Carthy had been working there during the morning."

The inquest

On Saturday afternoon, March 13th 1909, Mr. R. J. Rhys (District Coroner) held an inquiry at the Glanrhondda Hotel, Hopkinstown concerning the deaths of John McCarthy (39), mason's labourer, of Porthglo, and his wife Ellen McCarthy, both of whom were found lying dead in the pantry of their house last week. Deputy-chief-constable Coles and Inspector Salter watched the proceedings on behalf of the police. Mr. B. Wilkins was chosen as foreman of the jury. The inquiry threw little light on the tragic occurrence, there being only one theory, viz; that the man, in a fit of frenzy, cut his wife's throat, and afterwards ended his own life in a similar manner.

The first witness called was Mr. Edward Holden, 26, Hopkinstown Road, who appeared with his arm in a sling. He said McCarthy was his brother-in-law, he having married deceased's sister. McCarthy was employed latterly as a Mason's labourer, but for some time he had been able to do very little, as he suffered acutely from Rheumatism, for which he had been treated by Dr. McDonald. Witness himself had been laid up with an injury for some time, and therefore frequently called to see the McCarthy's. He had known the family for 13 years, and the couple had 4 children. The McCarthy's got on well together.

He saw his brother-in-law on Thursday about 12.30. He (deceased) was then quite sober, not having been out of the house, as he only had one boot on. He was not at all excited in his manner, but appeared rather absent, taking no notice of questions asked him,

and making the same inquiries over and over again. The man did not like being in the house, and yet seemed too ashamed to go out. He thought that if he was seen out of doors people would say that he could work if he liked to do so. At this time, Mrs McCarthy was at the Glanrhondda Hotel, where she was employed during part of the day.

Mr. Ivor Cadwgan Lewis, landlord of the Glanrhondda Hotel, said the deceased woman had been employed at his home during part of the day in domestic work for nearly two years. She left on Thursday about 1.30 and did not return again. There was nothing strange in her manner when she left; she seemed, on the contrary, to be quite jovial.

She had gone home for dinner and had previously been home for breakfast as well. Later on, he was called to the house by Mrs. Janet Jennings, who told him something had happened.

On going to the house he found Mrs. McCarthy lying in a pool of blood, her feet protruding through the door into the kitchen. He saw that Mr. McCarthy's body was lying over that of his wife. He at once sent for a doctor and the police. The bodies were not disturbed until the arrival of the police and the doctor.

Mrs Emma Sullivan, a next door neighbour of the deceased parties, said she had known them for over three years. She last saw Mr. McCarthy alive at about 10.30 on Thursday morning. He was then quite cheerful. About 1.30 she was passing the door and heard the parties having a few words, but nothing out of the way. There were no oaths or screams.

The couple usually got on very well together, as far as she knew. Latterly, however, McCarthy had been somewhat depressed and

was under the impression that people were talking about him, saying he would not work, and was living on his wife's back.

Dr. McDonald said he reached the McCarthy's at house at about 3.20 on Thursday afternoon, and saw the bodies lying as had been described.

On the woman he found along gaping deep wound on the left side of the neck which had severed the jugular vein; a cut almost two inches long on top of the head, extending to the skull; a slight cut on the chin and another on the cheek; there were no cuts on the fingers. Death was due to the loss of blood, and the wound in the throat were probably have caused almost immediate insensibility. The man had a cut on the left side of his neck; that was the only wound he had.

The wound in the woman's neck seemed to have been cut from either the back or from the side by some other person than herself, where as the man's was one which might have been self inflicted. All the wounds could have been produced by a razor. The man had not been a patient of his, and he did not know anything regarding his mental condition.

P. C. George Welsby, stationed at Hopkinstown, said that upon information he received he went to the McCarthy's house, arriving there just about the same time as the doctor. When he went into the house he saw the woman's legs projecting from the pantry door into the kitchen; she was lying on her back in the pantry. Her two hands were crossed over her stomach.

The man was lying with his head on her bosom, and his body on the floor of the pantry. There was a quantity of blood upon the pantry floor. The furniture had not been disturbed and there were no signs of any struggle either in the pantry or kitchen. A razor was

found on the floor of the pantry close to the man's right hand. The man was a very quiet man; witness had often passed the time of day with him. He had never heard of the man and wife quarrelling, and he had passed the house at all hours.

The verdict

The Coroner, in summing up, said the case was a horrible one to inquire into. It was apparent that the man had followed his wife into the pantry and there killed her. There was no evidence to show that a struggle had taken place before the perpetration of the deed.

The jury returned a verdict that the woman was wilfully murdered by her husband, and that the husband committed suicide, but that there was no evidence to show his state of mind at the time. The Foreman informed the Coroner that the jury had decided to hand over their fees for the benefit of the orphans.

The Coroner remarked that it was a very kind action on their part, and called the witness Holden into the room and handed over the money to him to use for the children's benefit. Mr. Holden expressed his thanks for the gift.

Help for the orphans

The tragedy that has befallen the children has evoked a great amount of sympathy in the neighbourhood. Mr. Williams James, manager of the Great Western Colliery, moved in the matter, and the Colliery Silver band, under Bandmaster Foxhall paraded Pontypridd on Saturday night and were successful in making a collection of over £25. It appears through the kind instrumentality of the Rev. Father MacManus, the three younger children will be taken in by relatives and friends.

The funerals

The funeral took place on Tuesday afternoon at the Glyntaff Cemetery, and was attended by a larger concourse of persons than had been seen for a number of years. The procession was of such a length that it reached from the cemetery gates to the Glyntaff Goods Station bridge on the Pentrebach road.

The cortege was witnessed en route to the cemetery by hundreds of people, and was attended mainly by workmen from the Great Western Collieries, where McCarthy worked before his health broke down.

The bodies were conveyed in two hearses, immediately following behind came a mourning coach containing the four children of the couple. There was one floral tribute. The service was performed by the Rev. Father MacManus according to the rites and ceremonies of the Catholic Church, notwithstanding the snowstorm prevailing at the time, there were hundreds of people at the graveside.

The following letter appeared in a subsequent issue of the Pontypridd Observer and appears to bring an end to the sad incident: -

The Presbytery, Treforest

Dear Sir – I desire most sincerely to thank Mr. James (manager of the Great western Collieries), the Great Western Colliery Silver Band, Mr. Gowan, and the many others who so generously came to the relief of the four children of the late John and Mrs M'Carthy. In the hour of trial and affliction, in time of distress and need, I have never in any part of the world witnessed more deep-felt sympathy, more whole-hearted generosity, than in Wales. There, sir, are

characteristics of which and land may well be proud, and none more so than this land of our adoption.

*It may interest many of your readers to learn that the four children, above referred to, will be tenderly cared for by their relatives and friends. In conclusion, sir, and acting on the king request of Mr. Langham (secretary, Great Western Band), I would anyone in Treforest and in the district generally, who desire to help these poor orphan children, to be good enough to forward their donation to Mr. James or to Mr. P. Gowan. Thanks you for inserting this letter. I am, Sir, yours truly, **Reverent Father M. J. McManus.***

END



**The view from 44 Gyfeillon Road looking towards Pontypridd.
Date unknown.**

Great fire at the Maritime Colliery – First Pontypridd Fire Brigade (Pontypridd Chronicle 1st June 1888)

In 1888 there was no local Fire Brigade. If any fire broke out in Pontypridd it was usually left to the local police to deal with the situation. However, a fire at the Maritime Colliery in 1888 would eventually lead to the formation of a Volunteer Pontypridd Fire Brigade. This is the story of that occurrence: -

Shortly after we went to press last Thursday evening great excitement was caused in Pontypridd by a fire which occurred in the Maritime Colliery. It appeared that a comet lamp fell from the pit frame and ignited some tram oil, and that the flames spread almost instantly to the shedding. In a short time the whole of the woodwork was in a blaze, the fire fiercely licking the bar upon the pit frame, and even the oil of the sheave burning.

Thousands of people soon gathered around the shaft, and willing hands went to work to try to subdue the fiery element, which, however, had obtained a strong hold. As it was supposed that the action of the fan in sucking the air downwards drew the smoke and heat into the pit, it was decided, after anxious deliberation, to stop the fan and trust to the natural ventilation. The town hose and reel, in charge of Mr. Supt. Matthews and his staff, were soon on the spot.

Mr. W. Jones, manager of the waterworks, and Mr. Thomas, master of the workhouse, attached a long piece of hose piping to a hydrant at the back of the union, while the police pumped in their supply from a pond close by. The Cardiff Fire Brigade, which had been telegraphed for, arrived about a quarter past nine, but the local police had by that time succeeded in extinguishing the fire. The scene around the neighbourhood of the pit during the progress of the fire was exciting, women screaming and fainting,

children weeping for relatives, and hundreds running about, either assisting with buckets to throw water on the fire, wildly gesticulating, or making inquiries as to the men who were in the pit. One man, named Delaney actually climbed the pit framing, notwithstanding



The Maritime Colliery 1890

the cries of those around, and succeeded at last in reaching the top with a bucket of water in his hand. The daring act was witnessed with great anxiety. However, the task was a fruitless one, for after beating the fire with his coat for a few minutes the man descended. There were in the pit about 55 men belonging to the half-past four o'clock shift, and the anxiety for their safety was keen.

First of all, while the fire was in possession of the pit top, it was feared an explosion would be caused below. Happily, nothing of the kind occurred. Then when the fan was stopped, fears were entertained that the men would be suffocated, but the management had rightly calculated on the ventilation being reversed the moment the stoppage of the fan took place. There are steam pipes in the downcast shaft. The heat from these rarefied the air, and so the upcast became a natural downcast and the downcast became an upcast.

When the fire had been subdued, means were devised for bringing the men out through the upcast shaft, as it was not then known to what extent the other shaft had been damaged. Although the fire only broke out about eight o'clock matters had so far progressed by eleven o'clock as to enable the management to set the fan once more going, and this increased the hope that the men would be brought up safe.

Dr. Howard Davies, the medical officer of the colliery, remained at the pit top ready to render assistance, if necessary, while the officials of the colliery were preparing the rope and bowk (a large tub) for bringing the men up. It appears that the engine at the upcast shaft is used for hauling from a drift and having ascertained by signal that the men were all right the officials considered it would be better even with a little delay to wind them up by means of a proper rope, which they had ready, rather than by the rope used in hauling from the drift.

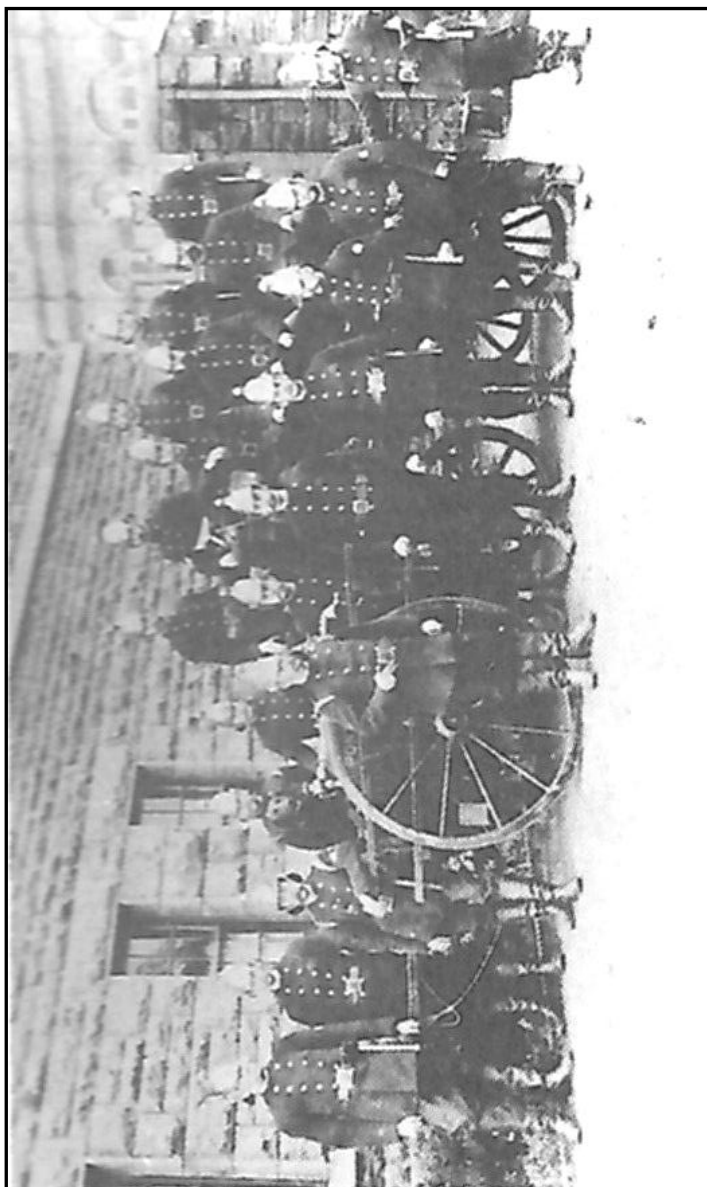
The rope was, therefore, put over the sheave and the bowk attached. Soon afterwards Mr. David Thomas, manager, and Mr. Johnson, mechanic, descended the upcast shaft, and on their return were heartily cheered. The men were then brought up, four at a time, and were received at the top by Mr. Harrison, mining

engineer, who directed operations there for a time, and rendered valuable aid and counsel. The families and friends clustered around and welcomed the rescued men and boys, who when they got up, seemed, with the exception of one man (who was somewhat faint), all right. Some of them admitted that they felt at one time considerable fear.

According to Mr. W. Rees, fireman, who was in the pit at the time of the fire, said they could smell the fire, and were very glad to find the fan had been stopped, for that improved their position. The smoke and heat had previously been coming to them, but the stoppage of the fan reversed the air current, because the steam pipes in the downcast shaft rarefied the atmosphere, and drew the air up that way as soon as the action of the fan had ceased.

Mr. Rees then opened the separation doors so as to assist the ventilation in its reversed state, and he proceeded to collect the 30 men in his district to a safe place - which was the lowest dip in the colliery - to avoid the smoke and heat. He then placed himself in communication with those at the top of the up-cast shaft, and in proper time got his men to the bottom of that shaft ready to ascend.

According to Mr. Rees, the fireman already alluded to, burning timber actually fell into the downcast shaft, but the place was saturated with water and no damage ensued. While the winding up of the men was going on the downcast shaft was being examined, and the first to descend there were Mr. Thomas Mayberry, under-manager; John Thomas, Collier; John Isaac, fitter; and William Davies. Thanks to the untiring exertions of Mr. Hague, the company's agent, and the officers already named, all the men were rescued in the course of the night, not a single life being lost, and not one man being injured.



**The first Pontypridd Fire Brigade volunteers
photographed with the 'Iron cart.'**

The last man rescued was Edmund Thomas, of Penrhiw, who was found on Friday morning, about seven o'clock, looking after the horses in the underground stables. It seems he wended his way to the down-cast pit bottom, lost his comrades by wandering away from them, and after discovering that he could not go up that way he went back towards the upcast shaft, by this time the last bowk had gone, those in charge of it thinking all had come up. Later on, missing him, they went in search and found him as described.

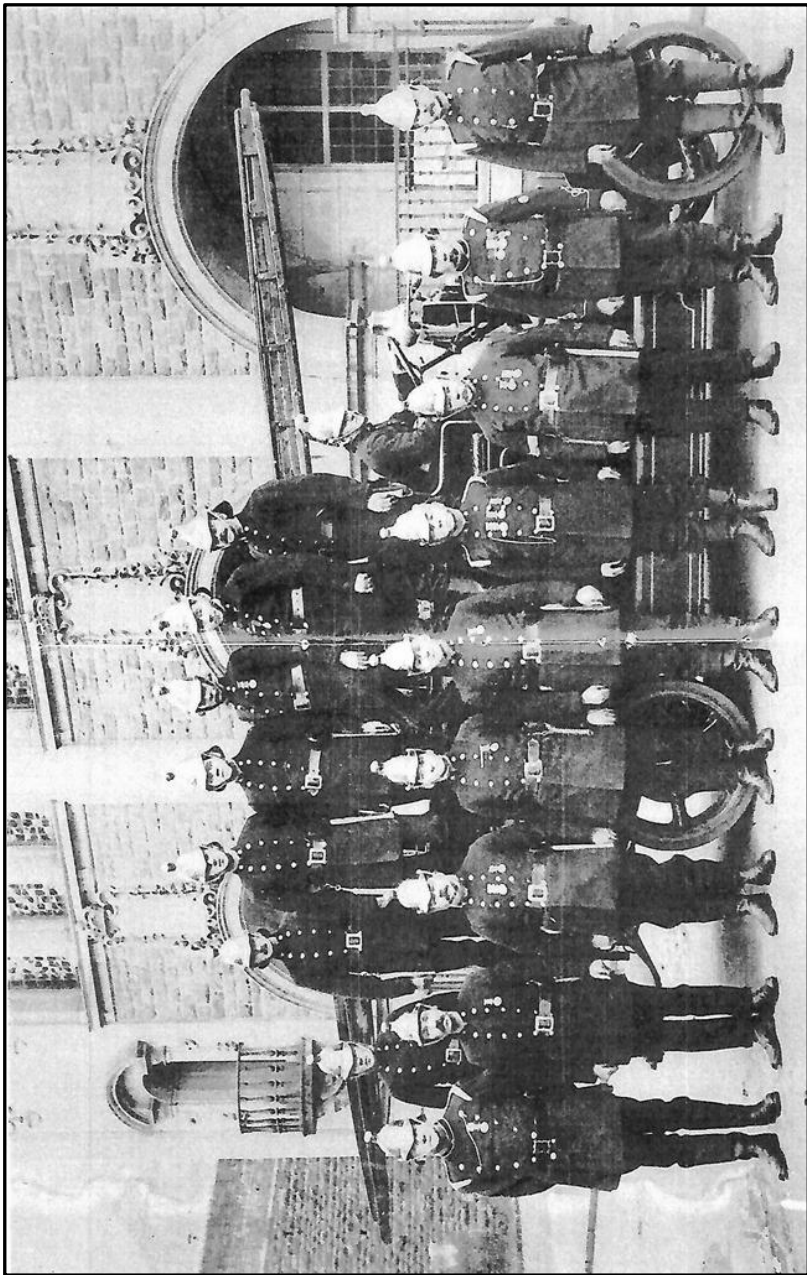
The horses in the pit were found alive and uninjured, though Thomas states that they coughed violently. Workmen were set to repair the damage done by the fire, and on Monday morning work was resumed at the colliery with increased activity.

With the fire at the colliery extinguished the town at last began to realise that what was needed was a properly trained fire brigade and at the the next meeting of the Local Board (Town Council) the matter was heartily discussed. The Pontypridd Chronicle of 15 June 1888: - reported: -

The late fire at the Maritime Colliery - Commendable conduct of the public - Proposed formation of a fire brigade

At and ordinary meeting of the Pontypridd Local Board, held on Thursday, the 7th June 1888, Mr. D. Leyshon in the chair, a letter was read from Mr. Superintendent Matthews with reference to the recent fire at the Maritime Colliery.

The fire engine worked very satisfactorily, and great praise was due to the public for the promptitude and readiness with which they assisted on the occasion. He had been informed by the company that had it not been for the timely conduct of the police and those who assisted, the whole of the pit framework would have been destroyed.



The Pontypridd Fire Brigade 1924

The Surveyor said he had been spoken to by several persons in the town who were willing to form themselves into a volunteer fire brigade. The Board considered this suggestion a very feasible one, but the chairman thought the application should come from outside. Superintendent Matthews said a fire brigade would be very useful in case of fire. In reply to Mr. Jabez Evans, he remarked that the police seldom had anything allowed them as compensation for work done at fires.

There was the late fire on Mr. Coombes' premises; they were promised payment, but never had it. Also, the fire at the back of Mr. Jabez Evans' brewery; fortunately in this instance the fire was soon extinguished, but they had nothing as compensation. Mr. Jabez Evans (to Mr. Matthews): - "Did not you have £5 after the fire at my brewery?"

Superintendent Matthews: - "No."

Mr. Evans: - "I told my son to give it you."

Superintendent Matthews: "We did not have a single penny."

Mr. Evans: - "Then I will see that it shall be paid you. Did not you have something from the insurance company?"

Superintendent Matthews again replied in the negative.

Mr. Evans said he wrote to the company recommending that something be paid to the police. They deserved compensation. Mr. Jabez Evans said the police ought to be paid an annual premium. Mr James was not opposed to compensating the police, but they should be careful not to saddle too much on the rates.

The Pontypridd Fire Brigade

The Pontypridd Observer in 1924 carried the early history of the Fire Brigade: - The interesting group photograph on page 175 is a remarkable instance of long service by the members of one family.

Mr. Ben Lewis, who is one of our best known townsmen joined the volunteer Pontypridd Fire Brigade in 1888, and has served for 36 years. He only recently retired.

Ben Lewis Jnr. has served for 29 years and Mr. M. Lewis for 15 years, a total of 80 years. The people of Pontypridd should be grateful to the Lewis family for their services, services freely given and at all times of the day and night and in all kinds of weather. Mr. Ben Lewis Snr. has served under six captains, viz; Messrs. W. Jones, J.P., A. O. Evans, George Bieth, George Evans, John Edward Brooks, and T. W. Coates.

A few words about the brave brigade might not be out of place. It was originally formed in 1888, and was supported by volunteer subscriptions. The first Captain was Mr. W. Jones, who was then manager of the waterworks, with Mr. Arthur O. Evans as second officer. The question of appliances had to be faced and those pioneers faced the situation by borrowing £56 and five or six gave their personal guarantee for the repayment of the money. In a few years it was all repaid.

At the time the headquarters were at Penuel Lane and the first fire the new brigade had to deal with was in Taff Street. The shop happened to belong to a member of the Hebrew race, but owing to the enthusiasm of the young brigade and a splendid pressure of water it was soon got under control.

Even in those far off days the houses of the members were fitted with electric bells and on many occasions they were brought out in the middle of the night in order to test the efficiency and promptness of the new brigade. There was one agreeable feature in connection with these trial alarms. When the members turned up and found there was no fire, they usually found that some kind

supporter had provided an excellent spread. Needless to say these midnight banquets were much enjoyed.

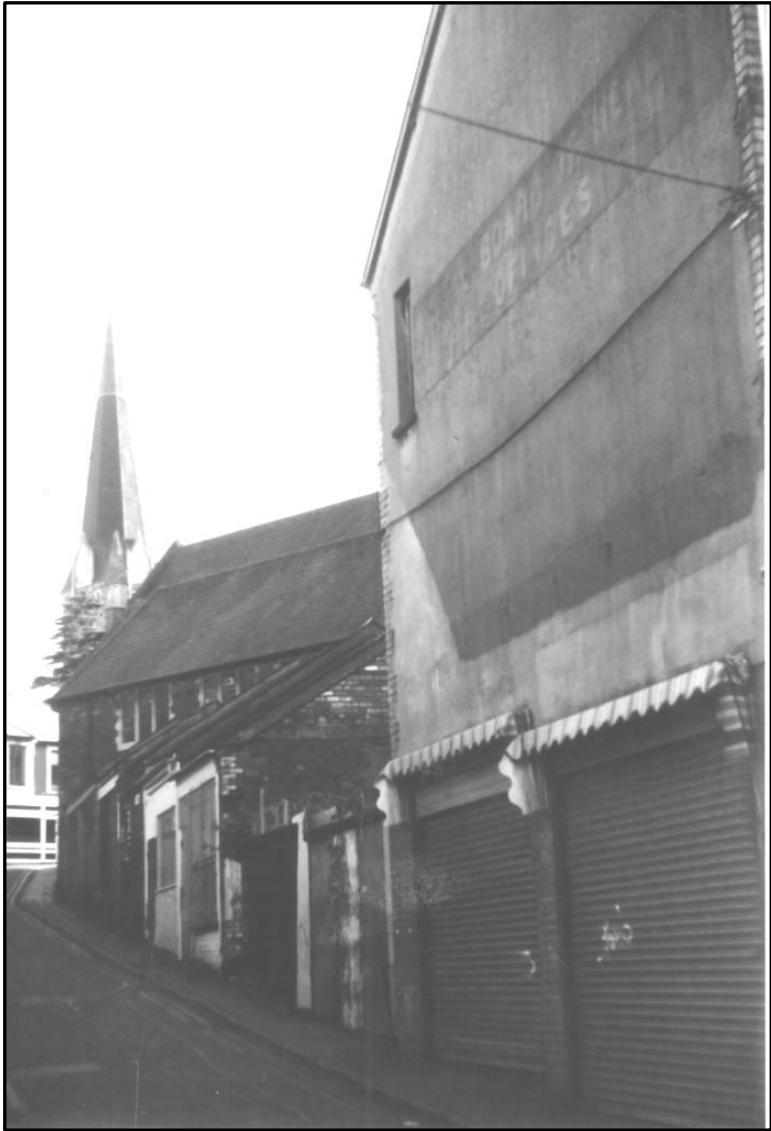
Among the local gentlemen who supported the brigade in many ways were the late Mr. Patrick Gowan, David Leyshon, Mr. T. Taylor, Mr. W. Williams, Mr. Hopkin Morgan, and many other prominent citizens.

The young brigade usually had to deal with between 18 and 20 fires a year, and they always turned up strong and acquitted themselves well. They usually conveyed the hoses in a hand-cart which was knick-named the "Iron-cart." They then had 15 lengths of hose compared with half-a-mile of hose now possessed by the Pontypridd Fire Brigade.

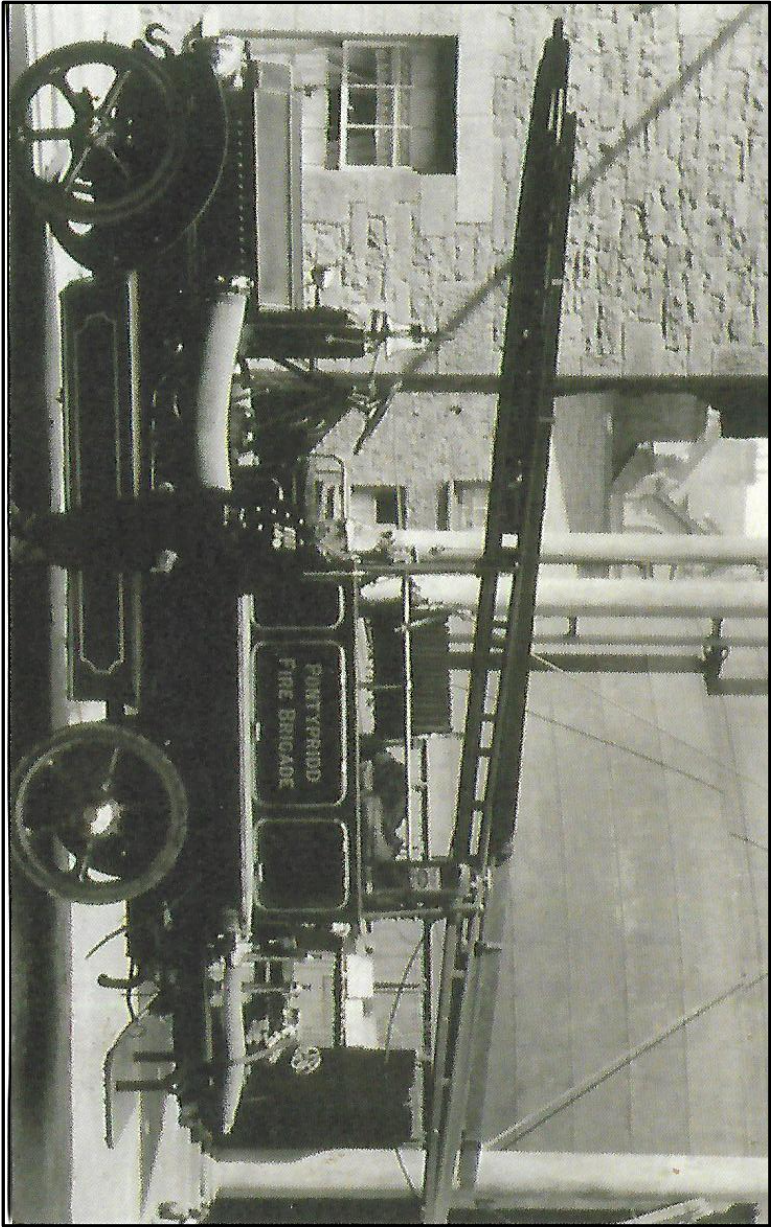
Of recent years the brigade has been equipped by an up-to-date fire engine. Mr. W. Jones was Captain for six years, Mr. Arthur Evans for 10 years, and Mr. George Evans for 2 years, Mr. J. E. Brooks for 19 years and Mr. Coates for 5 or six years, and may he continued yet for many years. The brigade has now been taken over by the council, but for many years it was a purely voluntary brigade.

The original members of the brigade were W. Jones J. P. (Captain), A. O. Jones (second-officer) G. Bieth (third officer), Edward Rees, T. Griffiths, Ben Lewis, David Francis, Teddy Lewis, Albert Hughes, George Carpenter, C. Hudson, Z. Beech, J. Davies, T. Knott, W. Mitchell, W. Davies, J. Nicholls, and J. Williams.

END



Penuel Lane, where the first official Fire Brigade were stationed, probably at the building on the right which belonged to Teddy Lewis, one of the founder members. Note on the building encribed 'Board of Health Offices.'



A later Pontypridd fire engine C. 1930

The Pontypridd mass murderer

Ex-Pontypridd man: horrible allegations.

The *Cambrian* (Swansea) newspaper of 2 September 1904 carried the following shocking story: - Further details of the American horror show that the farmer, Gershom Marx, accused of murdering and concealing the bodies of ten farm labourers and others, is said to have committed the dreadful deeds in order to avoid paying the employees what he owed them as wages. A startling story comes from Pontypridd to the effect that Marx resided at Pontypridd about ten years ago, where he carried on business as a cattle dealer. He was also at one time a butcher. In addition, he dealt largely in wallpaper on premises on the tram-road side in a block of old buildings turning towards Treforest from the Taff Vale Station. A kitchen below, with a storeroom and sleeping apartment above, was about the extent of the building. He was looked upon as being a respectable tradesman, although when first he arrived in the town some curious rumours were afloat. He left Pontypridd between six and seven years ago, having disposed of his wallpaper business to Mr. M. Freedman, pawnbroker and general dealer, who retired from business about five years ago. It was well known that Marx had been several times married, having thrice gone through the ceremony during his stay in the valleys. The first was a Manchester woman, the second the daughter of the caretaker at the Pontypridd Synagogue, and the third was from a home in London.

An American newspaper of the time reported: - A Connecticut farmer who agreed to pay his farmhand \$53 at the expiration of his service was caught out when the Farmhand resigned after six months and asked for his money. Farmer Gershom Marx was almost broke and couldn't afford to pay his employee, Paul Rodecki, so he gave him the \$53, then decided to murder him. While Rodecki was asleep farmer Marx crept up to his bed with an

axe and brought it down on his skull. Satisfied that the farmhand was truly dead, he took back the \$53, chopped off the victim's hands and legs, stuffed the parts into potato sacks, and hid them in a cellar. Two weeks later a new farmhand found the sacks. Marx fled, but was caught in New York, and hanged on Thursday, May 18th, 1905.

In 2015, when Connecticut abolished the death penalty—embedded in its laws since the 17th century—University of Connecticut history professor Lawrence Goodheart's *The Solemn Sentence of Death: Capital Punishment in Connecticut* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2011) was widely cited in support of that change. Among the cases he brought to light for discussion in the media of the present was a disquieting case from more than a century ago.

The 1905 hanging of Gershom Marx, a Colchester farmer convicted of first-degree murder, was used to illustrate how capital punishment in Connecticut was “unenforceable, unfair and unethical,” as Goodheart put it in a 2011 column in *The Hartford Courant*, because it had historically been applied to suspects living on the outskirts of society. Marx was a Jew, an immigrant from Poland, and, at 73, the oldest person to be executed in the state. A look back at contemporary newspaper coverage of the case reveals how a defendant's outsider status can complicate a trial and how the atmosphere in a courtroom can be clouded by biases and misconceptions. These facts were not contested: Marx hired Polish native Pavel Rodecki to work as a farmhand for a six-month period. At the end of that term, in March 1904, Rodecki disappeared. This was not uncommon for itinerant workers, who frequently traveled between farms and mills. However, in April Rodecki's dismembered body was discovered by another of Marx's Polish employees, Joe Strange. Marx fled to Hartford, and from there to New York City, where he was apprehended.

Everything else, however, was fodder for speculation. *The Hartford Courant* and *The Day* of New London published breathless, and often unsubstantiated updates as accusations multiplied: Marx had butchered and buried a second victim, officials alleged; rumors were he had also murdered a peddler and a Russian boy. An “unknown woman” had visited Marx once and “never was she seen again.” Strange reportedly told the sheriff that Marx once gave him poisoned whiskey. Marx was never formally charged with those crimes, but the stories were picked up by papers from Pittsburgh to Los Angeles to Texas to Illinois, and the details morphed like whispered words in a game of “telephone.”

As the trial began in New London Superior Court on October 6, 1904, newspapers covered all the details. Potential jurors, all white men, were screened for what the *Meriden Morning Record* called “anti-Semitic tendencies, acknowledged or suspected,” illustrating that there was some sensitivity to the possibility of Marx’s receiving an unfair trial. The papers reported on the failing health of Marx’s wife, who was also jailed (some accounts said she was held as a witness for the state, others that she was charged as an accomplice in the murder) and the fact that the couple’s four young children were sent to the poorhouse.

Reporters described the spectators—*The Day* noted that “even a casual scrutiny revealed the fact that the majority are members of the prisoner’s race —and the testimony of a succession of witnesses, mostly Jewish or Polish immigrants whose words were translated by a court interpreter, leaving ample room for misunderstanding and error.” The newspaper described Marx, too, in the dramatic manner and stereotype-laden language typical of the era. He had a “wizened face and bent figure,” and “the lines about his mouth indicate that he is cruel and selfish.” He had a “high pitched whining voice and a cringing manner.” He spoke English “tolerably well.” On the day of his conviction, he ate an

apple “with apparent relish,” but after the verdict was read, he was carried to his “cage,” “weeping piteously.”

But while many contemporaneous cases also featured outsiders as perpetrators (and often victims as well), the cultural and religious nuances that surfaced during Marx’s trial made this case especially complex. To comprehend the events surrounding the crime, the judge, jury, and observers would have had to learn about kosher laws, which could have explained how blood from slaughtered livestock got inside Marx’s house. They would have had to understand the significance of the Jewish Sabbath to know why some of Marx’s Jewish neighbors were surprised to see him as he fled toward Hartford on a Saturday. They would also have had to grasp the nature of the tension just beneath the surface of the relationships between Colchester’s Poles and Jews, who often shared a native language and country of origin but diverged considerably in their beliefs and customs. These matters, hinted at during the trial, were never fully explained to the court—or to the readers who eagerly consumed media coverage of the trial.



Also unspoken was how closely the accusations resembled those that had followed the Jews for centuries. The alleged motive—prosecutors said Marx killed Rodecki to avoid paying him—recalled an enduring characterization of Jews as avaricious. (*The New York Times* said Marx was driven by “an insane desire...to escape paying money to persons to whom he was indebted.”) The timeline of the crime overlapped with both Easter and Passover, the traditional season of the blood libel, or false accusation of Jewish ritual murder. In Europe, from whence Marx and many of his Colchester neighbors came, blood libels had spawned persecution and mass killings of Jews. Marx’s lawyers did not know, or did not see fit to mention, that this could have influenced their client’s behavior in running away while Strange (according to court proceedings) confronted him with accusations of murder and then chased him, calling “Stop Jew, don’t run away!”

Marx was found guilty on October 20, 1904. An appeal to the Connecticut Supreme Court arguing that the state didn’t produce sufficient evidence to convict and a special session of the state board of pardons were unsuccessful. Marx’s last words, spoken to the warden of the state prison in Wethersfield just before he was hanged at midnight on May 18, 1905, were “Don’t forget I always said I was innocent. Goodbye.” The charges against his wife were dropped soon after the execution.

Three years later Marx’s name resurfaced in the press in connection with a subsequent murder. On December 25, 1908, Hartford business owner Samuel Rodinsky was shot and killed. Police initially suspected “professional thugs.” But they discovered that Rodinsky’s wife had once claimed (but never actually received) the \$1,100 reward offered by the State of Connecticut and the Town of Colchester for information leading to the capture of fugitive Gershom Marx. *The Courant* surmised that Rodinsky was

“probably murdered because he betrayed [his] fellow countryman,” but no one was ever charged.



The unmarked grave of Gershom Marx

END

A Sisters' recollections of the Albion disaster

(By Sister Catherine of the South Wales Wesleyan Mission)

The Eglwysbach health centre, a former chapel, on Berw Road, takes the name of a village in North Wales which is best known for the National Trust's Bodnant Garden. So what's the connection with Pontypridd? The story goes back to 1840 and the birth of John Evans (pictured below) in Eglwysbach, near Conwy. He grew up on the family farm, attending Capel Ebenezer in the village. He was just 17 years old when he started preaching. Within months he was drawing big audiences to chapels. Chapel officials, expecting the celebrity preacher to be much older, often took some convincing to let the teenager through to the pulpit!



**John Evans
(Eglwysbach)**

Affectionately known as “Eglwysbach”, he was minister at various times in his career at chapels in different parts of Wales and in Liverpool and London. His addresses were so powerful that his audiences sometimes entered a trance, forcing him to sit and be silent until emotions were back in check. He made two preaching tours of the USA. He is credited with converting thousands of people to Wesleyan Methodism.

In 1893, he established a mission centred in Pontypridd for the South Wales coalfield. The following year he established a monthly magazine called *Y Fwyell* (Welsh for “the axe”), targeted at the mining communities. A newspaper described it as containing “matter of a right earnest nature which is calculated to do much good to the Pontypridd and Rhondda people, among whom Mr. Evans circulates for the most part these days”.

After his death in 1897, Wesleyan Methodists in South Wales wanted a fitting memorial to him. The result was this new chapel beside the river Taff, named Capel Goffadwriaethol Eglwysbach (Eglwysbach memorial chapel). The red brick finish, with corners and other details in Bath stone, conveys a sense of grandeur. The wall facing the river, invisible to the arriving congregation, was built of cheaper stone, sourced locally.

The chapel had fallen into disrepair when local GPs instigated its restoration and conversion into a medical practice, which opened in 1990. The quality of the conversion won a Prince of Wales Trust award in 1992. The consulting rooms are around the sides, beneath the gallery. The central part of the ceiling, decorated with two rose patterns, is still visible. The book ‘*Y Fwyell*’ of 1894 carried the following article of their return to Pontypridd after hearing that nearly 300 men and boys had been killed at the Albion Colliery in Cilfynydd: -



The Albion Colliery, June 23rd 1894, where 296 men lost their lives. The following pages tell of the events on the surface upon the recovery of the bodies.

The Albion disaster

“How little we dreamt as we rushed home from London on the afternoon of June 23rd, that some of our dear friends at the mission were passing through such an awful experience as the explosion at the Albion Colliery! Circumstances detained us at Cardiff until Monday morning, when we reached Pontypridd at 9 a.m; and with several of our staff we made straight for Cilfynydd to see what we could do to lend a helping hand to anyone who needed it.

We left our cabs some distance before reaching the pit in order to call at several houses to hear the news - and oh! the terrible wail of anguish that met our ears at every threshold - mothers, wives, sisters, nieces in paroxysms of grief as they pointed to their dead. Several homes had three or four corpses, and one had nine, another eleven, all inmates of the same house; in some cases the living and the dead had to be put together for want of room, and we would turn from the rigid form of some poor fellow to find close by another struggling for life, with convulsive throes trying to breathe through the fire-damp that permeated his body. We hoped to obtain a look of recognition, but could not be certain that we got it as the fire-damp seemed to produce almost the same symptoms that Chorea or St. Vitus' dance would produce in its victims, and the spasmodic twitching of the body were most painful to witness.

One poor widow was hugging in her arms a fine little lad of about two years old, looking very flushed, and, noticing the reluctance to part with the boy, we enquired, and found the child was in the height of scarlet fever, but in the agony all around none seemed to think of the fear of contamination, death and misery reigned supreme. Like the disciples of old, we felt inclined to say, “Let us also go that we may die with him,” we seemed to be in such a wave of death. We had taken a little bag of restoratives with us,

and found them most useful in many of the homes, where grief had closed the lips to food and scared hunger quite away; so in many cases exhaustion and hysteria added much to the misery of the scene; and oh, how glad we were to do something if ever so little to help these poor women to live it out. How helpless we felt in the presence of such sorrow. We could only pray. As Willis says:

-
“O when the heart is full; when bitter thoughts come crowding thickly up for utterance, And the poor common words of courtesy are such a very mockery; How much the bursting heart may pour itself in prayer!”

And we *did* pray, and tried to lead these breaking hearts to *rest* upon God and not to struggle with the question, ‘why?’ which could only be answered in a private interview with God. “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

After visiting numbers of the homes, we ventured to the pit’s mouth, but hearing the cry on the bridge, which was kept in charge by the police, “No females admitted,” we were obliged to let our two gentlemen to go without us, but suddenly remembering our title of ‘Cymru Fydd’ Sisters, we ventured to ask permission to pass, as we had restoratives for the fainting, and with their usual politeness, which never fails towards us, the police let us pass, and we found ourselves right in the vicinity of the pit’s mouth.

This was crowded round with relatives of the dead, who were anxiously waiting in a long line from the shaft to the hayloft to catch a view of the bodies as they were brought up, and very melancholy was it to see some poor distracted looking woman dart out from the crowd as the bodies were borne passed on a rough bier, and seize hold of the boots on the dead hoping to recognize the remains of her poor husband or son.

The hayloft was entered by a sort of temporised gangway, at the bottom and top of which were stationed two policemen. So hoping to be of some use, we told them that we carried restoratives for the fainting, and they at once offered to let us pass into the presence of the unknown dead. With a prayer for strength, we accepted the offer, and ran up the gangway so as not to interrupt the ghastly business. At the door we met three coffins coming out, having had their occupants recognised. To make room for their exit, we were pushed into an office, where from the odours and surroundings we seemed to be treading on the remains of charred horses.

Here every business detail of the bodies taken away was noted down, and we were surprised as the splendid methods and good management on all hands. Directly a passage was cleared, we ventured to proceed into the presence of the dead, and I shall never forget the first impression of that sight. There lay in rows the fine forms of these noble fellows. The dim light, the easy posture, the bronzed features, and the absence of anything like bedding, seemed to transform the hayloft into a sort of monumental gallery, and I could not help thinking that many an artist would have given much to have chiselled models from the splendid proportions of some of these brawny arms and noble faces.

At the back of the hayloft, we encountered our superintendent of the mission, who looked very surprised to see us, wondering how we had obtained an entrance. The relatives going round seeking their dead were most unnaturally calm, in fact, the distress was too awful for emotion, and their business too urgent to give way to feeling, so we found no one needing our help.

Some of the sights we saw were too painful to describe, such as the various parts of the body being adjusted in the coffins; and as we could render no help, we beat a hasty retreat, and went to try

to comfort some of the women outside, who were wringing their hands in despair. Try to comfort! What could we do? We could only look on in mute sympathy at the piteous sobbing wail of the young widow, crying, "He was such a good husband to me. Oh! Jack! Jack! I can't live without you!" We met one man who was at the pit's mouth when the explosion happened, and he was blown bodily on to the embankment, and got up quite uninjured. We had a chat with many of those that had been brought out alive, but none of them seemed to know as much as we did about the whole affair; the gas and fire-damp had rendered them quite incapable of recollection, this makes us hope that the poor fellows who died were not conscious of much bodily sufferings, although we are told that shrieks and groans of the rescued when they were first brought up was most terrible to hear.

Before leaving Cilfynydd, we gathered around our Superintendent as he chose the worst spot in the town right opposite a gin palace, and, raising his hat, with a loud voice he cried to God to sanctify this calamity to the benefit of the survivors, and to convince all the drunkards of the necessity of 'preparing to meet their God.' We heard one woman nearby say, "Oh! It's good to hear something of God at a time like this." But oh! What power the arch-fiend has, that in the face of such a solemn warning, still the men flocked into his palaces for drink, and drowned their manly feelings in the devil's water of Lethe."

Sister's work

The last three decades of the nineteenth century will certainly live in history as a time of the emancipation of women from those galling yokes of slavish bondage, which ignorance, custom, and fashion have placed upon their lives. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in the church of Christ, and women owe a debt of gratitude to that sainted woman, Catherine Booth, who, after



SISTER IDA. MR. H. P. MORGAN. SISTER MARGARET. SISTER CATHERINE.
PARCE, J. EVANS. MRS. EVANS. PARCE, J. KEES.

The South Wales Wesleyan Mission

having consecrated her life to the uplifting of the masses, received a definite call from God to the public ministry, and, being “not disobedient to the heavenly vision,” she took the platform and pulpit in such a vigorous and successful manner, and the Spirit of God so owned and blessed her efforts, that many a student had to re-read St. Paul’s declaration in the light of ancient history and finds the assertion, “Let your women keep silence in the churches” is quickly followed by, “For it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” Women of “shame” were the only self assertive women in those days, and they educated themselves on purpose to be attractive to men. Thank God, a nobler aspiration moved many of the educated women of today, many of whom are taking up definite sections of education, in order to be more fitted to work for God amongst the heathen at home and abroad. And so at our mission at Pontypridd, we believe the time has come which was foretold by the Prophet Joel: - “Your sons and daughters shall prophesy;” and we are trying to encourage the “daughters,” upon whom God’s spirit has been poured (and we want none others) to rally round our Mission banner, and by a united effort, to help forward the uplifting of humanity in the Rhondda Valleys to a somewhat higher plane of morals, if not of spirituality.

We thoroughly believe in open-air work at our mission. Drunkenness, debauchery, impurity, and shamelessness are practised so publicly throughout these Valleys that we feel “where sin abounded,” “grace should much more abound,” and so we hold services in the street every night of the week except one, which we devote to class meetings. Oh, what glorious times we have at our open-air services! We have managed to get standing room for three nights in the week in the very worst place of Pontypridd. We might call it the “Exchange of Sin,” for it seems the rallying point for all the licentiousness of the neighbourhood. Here our staff gathers and sings and preaches the good sound old doctrines of

“Repentance and faith,” and the hundreds who assemble to listen at every occasion testify to the attraction of the Gospel.

Our Sisters go through the crowds pleading and conversing with the audience, who are mostly of a desperate character. We then invite them into a little upper room we have hired over a coffee tavern, and there we pray and plead with them to come to Christ, and very rarely do we meet without several yielding to the prompting of God’s Spirit, and renouncing his sins, they accept Jesus Christ as their portion, and find Him almighty to save. On Tuesday nights, we have an open-air and indoor service at Hafod; and on Sunday evenings our English Sisters hold an open-air meeting at Trallwn, where several of the people are English, and so suddenly has this locality increased that there is quite a large village without sufficient religious accommodation provided. Seeing this, we secured a piece of land, and are now starting to erect our first little Bethel in connection with the Mission work in that neglected quarters.

We believe that the gospel is very much needed here; whether the inhabitants think so or not is another question. We find the people very hard to reach, but there are many signs of interest shown in our work; and they tell us that they quite look forward to the services. We do enjoy this work, although so far we have had very little encouragement, but we cling to the promise, “My word shall not return unto my void.” As we wait until all the good people have left the neighbourhood for their various churches and chapels, we feel that we are talking to the very people whom we wish to get at, namely, those who have made up their minds to spend the evening with their pipes in their mouths; and they are most courteous in listening to what we have to say, and often in helping us to keep the rough boys in order. We have taken many pledges there, and quite a band of children are waiting to join the Band of Hope, which we will start at the new hall.

The sisters' temperance work has been most successful. Oh! What a splendid concoction the devil arranged for the destruction of the Rhondda Valleys when he found out alcohol! We find we must give no quarter to this cursed drink, as many of our converts have been so saturated with it that total abstinence is their only hope, and we try to help them by setting the example. Our sisters have their pledge books with them at every meeting, and we have taken more than 700 pledges during the year. 410 were taken in the open air during the one week succeeding the Cilfynydd disaster. Of these quite 90 per cent. are taken from men, and none under 16 years of age. No doubt some of these cases have gone back to their old ways of drunkenness and sin, but to many of the temperance pledge has led the way to the Cross, and their lives testify to the realized consciousness of the cleansing blood of Christ, and the keeping power of the Holy Spirit.

Our Sisters, of course, take a prominent and interested part in **The Sunday School work**. The Welsh Sunday Schools are comprised chiefly of adults, and ours is no exception to the rule. It is mostly young men who attend most regularly, and their interest in scriptural subjects is most delightful to witness; but nevertheless our Sisters manage to find work. Sister Lilly has an English Bible Class in one of the ante-rooms. Sister Lizzie has a juvenile class, to teach them to read their Welsh bibles. Sister Margaret has an adult class, which is progressing most satisfactorily. Sister Catherine has a girls' class, from which she obtains many members of her Society class, and thus feeds the church.

The social hour was a great success throughout last winter. After the evening service and after the meeting, we admit the young people of the town to come into the Hall for a Social Hour. We provide them with some light refreshment in the shape of coffee, and buns, and cake, and they are expected to put 2d into the collection plate. At this meeting we do not allow children to

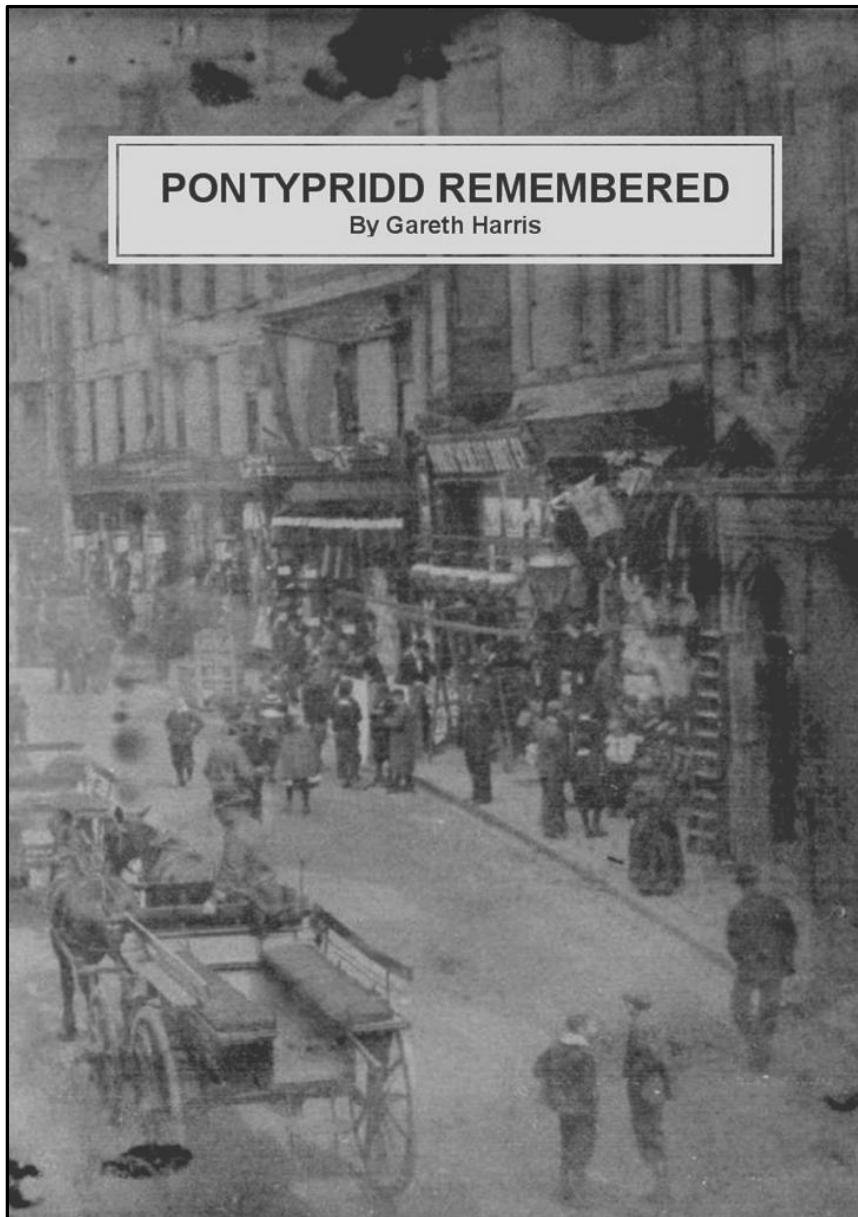
partake of refreshment, as it would involve too much Sunday labour. Sister Margaret and several of the Mission ladies were most devoted in their labour of love last winter, and no doubt many willing hands are waiting to recommence these pleasant times throughout the coming winter. During the hour we are entertained by many of the sweet singers of Israel - and even such a distinguished professional as Madame Penn pays us an occasional visit, and charms us with the melody of song - our sisters go about the Hall and spend their time in chatting and gaining an interest in the people, and many a recruit has come into our ranks through the welcome received at the Social Hour.

Old clothes are an immense help to us, whereby we render practical aid to our poorer sisters and brethren, and many kind gifts from various friends have cheered us very much. I wish I could describe the joy in the faces of some who receive these goods, especially those who have not been so anxious to attend the Mission Services, but could not do so because they will not come without decent clothes. Several have been such faithful attendants since we have given clothing, and see so much value in their religious privileges, we should be thankful to friends if they would send us their cast off clothing, especially men's garments. After the Cilfynydd disaster we were able to help several families with clothing who were in great distress at the time.

Situations have been obtained by us for many worthy applicants, and we are greatly indebted to many kind gentlemen who make an extra effort to give work to our protégés. During the past year we have been used by God to give comfort and help to many of the dying around us, and we have striven to show them their "Title clear to mansions in the skies." Some have left us rejoicing in an "abundant entrance" into Heaven, others have clung to the Cross with bare faith, but we are confident of their safety in the "Arms of Jesus." - **C. K. Evans.**

PONTYPRIDD REMEMBERED

By Gareth Harris



Available from the Pontypridd Museum

Taff Vale Park

Memories Lost in Time

(REVISITED)

Gareth Harris



Another publication available from the Pontypridd Museum



The Author
(Pictured with some of his many publications)

Gareth Harris has been writing local history books for over twenty years. Starting with Pontypridd RFC history books, he has progressed to many colliery disaster books, including the Great Western and Albion collieries. He has also written three books on boxing, the story of Pontypridd legend Freddie Welsh, Jimmy Wilde and Jim Driscoll. Two years ago he published the first 'Pontypridd Remembered' book which sold out and went to a reprint (still available from the Pontypridd Museum, Bridge Street). This year he also published 'The Maritime Rugby Club' a limited edition publication charting the history of a rugby team playing at Maesycoed, and also reprinted an update on the Taff Vale Park book that he published several years ago (see previous page). This is also available at the museum.

