

# Garw Valley Heritage Society Newsletter



## Croeso i Gwanwyn 2021

Who would have thought that it has been nearly a year that we have suffered the effects of this horrible infection. Now that Spring is approaching, let us hope that it will bring the start of better times for us all. This edition is featuring an interesting discourse on the Welsh in America, a rugby item (as it's Six Nations Time), the history of Jack's café in Pontycymer, as well as a 1930's observation of the Square. Also an item about Wally Carpenter's buses, which we need more information about (see below)



**Winter in Oxford Street Pontycymer, as painted by Russell Farmer.**

## On the Buses!

One of our readers fondly remembers Wally Carpenter's buses, which ferried the schoolchildren back and fore, as well as being hired for different functions. He told us that Wally's buses were the only ones he knew of where you had to have an umbrella to go INSIDE, because of the leaks in the roof. It was also fascinating for a child to see how a passenger would be pressganged into sitting at the front in wet weather to turn the knob operating the windscreen wipers.

Wally himself was quite a character, larger than life in more ways than one—a race-horse owner as well as a keen musician who played the violin in the early days of the cinema in Pontycymer, and his family were also musical, with a grand piano in the front room.

Wally's buses were sold to Mansel David in the early 1960's and they also became familiar sights on the Garw roads.

*Picture below shows Wally (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) on the occasion of a wedding hire*



**Has anyone any recollections of those days, any stories to tell about life 'on the buses', anecdotes, or photographs? (these would be copied and returned to you). These would make an excellent part of our transport section in the archives, and with the Garw population getting older, many of these memories will have gone, so please help if you can, to preserve records for future generations.**

Not strictly 'old', but a pleasing note for St David's Day!



# Congressional Record

United States  
of America

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE

92<sup>d</sup>

CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 117

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1971

No. 17

## House of Representatives THE WELSH IN AMERICA

**HON. THOMAS M. REES**  
*of California*  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
*Wednesday, February 17, 1971*

Mr. REES: Mr. Speaker, the birth of St. David, the Welsh Patron Saint, will be commemorated on March 1 by Welsh Americans throughout America – nothing like the St. Patrick gatherings, though St. Patrick was born in Wales, and grew up speaking Welsh, not Latin.

Very little has been written of what the Welsh have contributed in all walks of life in shaping American history. Twenty percent of the Pilgrim Fathers were Welsh, as was the captain of the Mayflower.

How many know that almost 50 percent of the signers of the American Declaration of Independence were Welsh or of Welsh descent – as were nine of the presidents of the United States – and that many of the universities and colleges such as Yale, Princeton, Brown, William and Mary, Virginia, John Hopkins, and Andover were founded by Welshmen.

The man who financed the War of Independence was Robert Morris, Pennsylvania

was founded by William Penn, and Rhode Island by Roger Williams – all were Welsh. It is strange indeed that in such a small country as Wales, – so many people are hardly aware of it's existence – has contributed so much more in proportion to it's size than any other nation, and stranger still that so little has been written of it. Oh yes, the next time you are in the Capital, and feel like climbing the Washington Monument stairway, about halfway up there is a stone inscribed: "FY IAITH. FY NGWLAD. FY NGHENEDL WALES – CYMRU AM BYTH"

Thomas Jefferson would have placed it where more people would see it, for he was very proud of his Welsh origin.

It would take many pages to name the great Welsh Americans since the Founding Fathers, who have helped build America – in government, industry, labor, finance, law, architecture, music, religion, literature.

Yes, the Welsh in America can be very proud of their heritage. And it is to be hoped that as each St. David Day comes around more people will remember how much good has come from so small a country, where the greatest honor each year is to be crowned "Poet of the Year."

As it's Six Nations Time again, a rugby item.



1939 Oldham team, Billy is 3<sup>rd</sup> from the right in back row

### **William John Moore**

Billy Moore was born in his Grandmother's sweetshop at Greenmeadow Terrace, Llangeinor on the 17th February 1908. He resided with his parents there, Bertram and Lily Moore. His Grandmother was Fanny Moore, a Widow. Bertram was a Coal Miner, born in Bettws while Mam Lily was a Housewife. The family had previously lived in nearby Tynyrheol.

Billy was a keen sportsman who excelled at both Rugby and Boxing. After leaving Tynyrheol School he worked as a Quarryman. It is said that he trained for Boxing upstairs in a Boxing ring at the Green Meadow public house.

He played for Bridgend RFC and Glamorgan County before gaining his solitary cap as a Lock forward for Wales against Ireland at Ravenhill Park, Belfast on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1933 in a team that contained some star names in Wilf Wooler, Ronnie Boon, Viv Jenkins, Archie Skym and the legendary Maurice Turnbull. Wales lost the game by 10 points to 5.

The International matches against Ireland in the 1930's were notorious for mass punch ups between the packs. Tough as teak Billy had no fears here as he was an accomplished boxer who the legendary Jack Petersen had failed to stop in a non title bout at Weston Super Mare.

Jack Petersen was British Heavyweight Champion on two separate occasions and had won every one of his first twenty five fights but found Billy Moore a formidable opponent.

Billy signed for Rochdale Hornets Rugby League Club soon after. He also played for the Wales Rugby League side and therefore became a "Duel Code" International

Oldham signed him from Rochdale Hornets in 1937. His first game for Oldham was against Hull Kingston Rovers on 20th November 1937 playing prop forward in the number 10 shirt. His last game for Oldham was against Salford on the 26th December 1947 again at prop wearing number 10. He played a total of 158 matches scoring 5 tries.

He later signed for Oldham RLFC and between 1937-38 and 1947-48 played 158 times for Oldham scoring five tries.

He died in Oldham on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1976.

## WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

Not as much as we would be doing normally, under the circumstances, but correspondence through Facebook and the Garw website has been as busy as ever, and we have received a fair number of photograph collections and articles that we plan to use in future displays. Now that we are a registered charity the trustees will be embarking on training courses organised by BAVO, (Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations), whose help has been invaluable.

It had been expected that we would soon be able to restart our archiving programme in Tabernacle, but as at the time of writing government rules forbid our mixing, but it is to be hoped that with the coming of the vaccine work may be resumed soon.

We are urgently in need of new equipment, as our computer and printer and video camera are all vastly out of date, so we are applying for a grant to help us replace those items.

Meanwhile please continue to support us with your enquiries, offers of material for the archives, and visiting the website.

### Life in the Ffaldau Square, Pontycymer, according to the Gazette, August 26<sup>th</sup> 1930



The Ffaldau Square has a very different appearance and one that compares favourably with that of only a few years ago, hence its increased popularity as a centre of attraction and a meeting place for so many with time to spare. It is a rendezvous where many problems are discussed. The topics of the day are gripped with the keenest possible interest. There, pressing problems are discovered, and unemployment is solved. Eyes scan the mid-day papers for prospective 'winners,' but, alas! too many are eventually 'also rans.' In fine weather, the river side of the Square has the appearance of an esplanade, with the row of seated males debating, approving, confirming, denying, as the case may be. One of the chief topics is the day's work, and "How many did you fill today, Evan?" is a favourite question. Feminine embarrassment is evident as the young ladies go tripping by. The passing vehicles (some rather ancient; others not so new), ply for hire to and from Blaengarw. On Sunday the local Salvation Army Band pleases all with music for the ears of many. The Ffaldau Square, surely, will exist as the centre of attraction for multitudes as long as the Garw valley is inhabited.



Jack's café centre, and the Ffaldau Arms (no longer there) next to it, left in the photo.

**Station Cafe. (End of an Era.)**  
**Gerald Jarvis**

Giacomo, 'Jack' Assirati was only a child when his parents opened an Italian Cafe in Pontycymer. Now at 83, he has hung up his apron for good.

He still lives above the shop/cafe on Commercial Place, better known as The Square, Pontycymer, where the red Formica topped tables and wooden chairs are still there. The Gaggia cappuchino machine now stands silent on the counter.

Giuseppe (Joe) Azzirati, Jack's father, was born in Bardi, Italy. He came to Wales to work before WW1, with the Moruzzi family Ice cream business in Burry Port. He had to return to Italy in 1914 to complete his National Service in the Italian Army which was on the side of the Allies, and was part of a mule transportation column supplying food and ammunition to troops in the Dolomite mountains.

After the Armistice he returned to Wales without his family with his ambition to start up his own business. He succeeded in borrowing £50, and rented a sweet shop in Oxford St. Pontycymer. After WW1 was possibly not the best of times to start a business with a worldwide depression, as no-one had any money, but he persevered; he would open up and let the local unemployed miners come in to shelter from the weather and play cards & dominoes. It was when the depression eventually lifted that those miners gave him their support for his kindness.

Teresa and son Jack were sent for in 1927 leaving older sister Gina with grand-parents on the family farm at Bardi.

The Assirati family took over the Station Cafe in 1932; and it became a popular stop for tea, or a soft drink Teresa would open the cafe in the early morning to catch the local collieries shift changes; typical purchases would be a single cigarette to smoke on the way to work, or a twist of chewing tobacco, to chew while underground. In those days there were one thousand men working in the Ffaldau Colliery alone, and there were another four collieries further up the Garw Valley.



After the morning rush, Teresa would set about scrubbing the cafe clean of the coal dust brought in by the earlier customers. Coffee drinking was in its infancy, so cups of hot Oxo or Horlicks and Peppermint cordial were welcome in winter; Summer cold drinks were Raspberry or Blackcurrant squash. The cafe made its own ice cream, using surplus milk from local farms: it was made in 10 gallon churns and kept cold in specially insulated tubs on site, and sold in 'Halfpenny licks' or cones. The whole family worked long hours to keep the place going.

The Temperance Bar, Pontycymer Square, showing the café that later became Jack's.

Giuseppe (Joe) took over in the afternoons until very late, again to catch the colliers going to and coming from work. There was no rest on Sundays either, as there were strict 'no trading on Sunday' laws in place, but when the Station Cafe realised that opening on a Sunday was often more profitable than complying with the law they would just pay the 7/6d weekly fine from the Court and carry on.

At the beginning of WW2 Benito Mussolini the Italian leader declared his, and Italy's, support for the Axis powers and Adolf Hitler. This was a very sad period for the Azzirati family overall. Joe was declared an 'Enemy Alien' and deported to a Camp on the Isle of Man. Teresa escaped deportation, but she could not live closer than 25 miles from a coastline in case she was a spy, and could signal enemy ships). She was sent to live with relatives in Aberdare.

Young Jack was by now a "Garw boy through and through" and was told to stop his schooling as a sixth former at Garw Grammar school, and to apply for 'war work', which he found at a local farm looking after the horses. The cafe was run by friends during this period.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Assirati were released early from their exile on the grounds of ill health and came back to Pontycymer to try and pick up where they left off. Wartime rationing made things very difficult, so to start with they could only manage to open a few hours a day.

In 1956 Giuseppe died, By this time Jack was running the cafe with Teresa content to be in the background, keeping a beady eye on everything\*. During the 50's things had improved everywhere; younger people were discovering the 'Coffee Bar' culture, they wanted somewhere to go and talk and listen to popular music. So a 'Juke Box' was installed at the cafe at the enormous price of £1,000. This was such a great draw to the cafe of people wanting to hear the latest hits that it paid for itself in 6 months.

The Station Cafe has always been a popular meeting place in Pontycymer. Jack's steamed pies are the stuff of (local) legend, even becoming the title of a play once. Where else could you go to hear the local gossip whilst waiting for a bus, or listen to a debate about the relative merits of different operatic tenors over a cup of cappuchino? It is a sadly missed venue and I am glad to remember it.

\* Teresa died in 1987.

Spring 2021

## Spring Villanelle

While Winter's colours freeze the mind  
And everything is grey and cold  
The signs of Spring are hard to find.

The warmth of sunshine would be kind,  
Might thaw the thought of growing old  
While Winter's colours freeze the mind.

So this is being colour blind -  
When there's no green or red or gold.  
The signs of Spring are hard to find.

We seek for buds beneath, behind,  
Toes raking through the leafy mould  
While Winter's colours freeze the mind.

Throughout long winter weeks we pined  
For sight of tiny snowdrops bold -  
The signs of Spring are hard to find.

To fruitless search we are resigned.  
Is Spring a myth we have been sold?  
While Winter's colours freeze the mind  
The signs of Spring are hard to find.

**Rona Cracknell, February 2021,  
Garw Friend**



*We are keen to borrow historical material so that can be indexed and copied with the consent of the owner, and would be grateful for any photos, family recollections, funny stories, tales of excitement or adventure in the Valley.*

## Daffodil Rap.

By Patrice Schmidt

I'm a Daffodil  
Tall and strong  
And all round Wales  
I sing this song.

With my vibrant colour  
And my dazzling smile  
At last it's Spring!  
And I'll stay awhile.

I am a symbol  
Of this country great  
At my sight  
Your soul will elate

Yellow valleys and yellow hills

It's Springtime!  
And Wales is  
Full of daffodils!

R'wyf y Daffodil  
Tal a chryf  
Ac gyfan amgylch Cymru  
Canfa fy nghan.

Gyda fy lliw euraidd  
A fy gwen disglair  
O'r diwedd, mae'n Gwanwyn  
A mi aros and ennyd.

R'wyn arwyddlun  
Y wlad hon gwych  
Yn fy ngolwg  
Bydd eich enaid elate.

Dyffrynoedd melyn, bryniau  
melyn,  
Mae'n Gwanwyn!  
Ac mae Cymru yn  
Iawn o gennin pedr!