

Garw Valley Heritage Society Newsletter



Croeso i Gwanwyn 2022

Now that Spring is approaching, let us hope that it will bring the start of better times for us all after two years of this awful pandemic. This edition has varied topics as usual: a reference to St David now that March is here, a delve into the archives, a rugby item (as it's Six Nations Time), an item on Welsh nicknames, and of course Spring flowers. Included also are a few words about member David Jones, who sadly passed away before Christmas, and whose contributions were always greatly appreciated. He will be very much missed.



A wood carving of pitpony and handler at Parc Slip Nature Reserve, site of the pit disaster of 1912, where 112 men and boys lost their lives on August 24th 1892 in an explosion thought to have been caused by a miner's lamp. Adjacent to the carving is a stone memorial fountain made up of 112 stones, one for each life lost. This lovely site is now one of great interest to bird watchers and nature rambles, with markers placed to remind people of its terrible history.

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.



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David, Patron Saint of Wales

David (Dewi) was the 6th century bishop of Saint David's in Dyfed, and was later adopted as Wales' patron saint.

There aren't many contemporary references to him, so our knowledge of him comes mostly from the findings of archaeologists, historical geographers, and students of language and early tradition and folklore. Rhigyfarch son of bishop Sulien, wrote a Latin *Life* in the late 11th century, and a Welsh version was written some 200 years later, with several recensions between times. The material for these seems to come from older sources and brings together the myths and legends of his reputation from Irish, Welsh and English sources for the 500 years between his birth and the *Life*.

His mother was Nonn or Non, who from the day of his birth ate nothing but bread and drank only water: David was reputed to have followed her guidance and was known as *Aquaticus*, (the water man), surviving on the local herbs and plants to add variety, becoming well-known as an ascetic and a puritan! He was also well-known for his wisdom and justice, his miracle-working, and his modesty.

His cult spread throughout south and west Wales and south west England and Brittany, even as far as Jerusalem, although there is no proof that he actually went there- later Popes were to declare that 3 pilgrimages to St David's were equivalent to one to Rome, so important was David's standing in the church's hierarchy.

March 1st was the day he allegedly was taken up into heaven, where 'the angels brought him to the place where there is light without end, rest without labour, and joy without sadness-----', and the annals say it was a Tuesday, which is when March 1st falls in 2022!

The illustration of St David above is of the stained glass window in Castell Coch, designed by William Burges



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IN MEMORY OF:

David JK Jones

It is with sadness we heard of the death of David Jones, a stalwart supporter of the Garw Valley Heritage Society and the Glamorgan Family History Society. David was a Garw boy (his email address always included ffaldauboy), and went to live in Porthcawl, afterwards to Cardiff to be near his family, but kept up his contact with both societies through his supply of articles and stories about local people and events in the Glamorgan area. He often lent us artefacts from his own collection of pictures and was always knowledgeable on so many subjects.

Gerald Jarvis writes: *When I first got the idea of writing a 'Biography' of WW1 Ace. Raymond Collishaw, it was David that I turned to for advice and personal information, and he was kind enough to help my efforts and filled in a lot of biographical gaps. I shall always remember giving a talk, (my first) about Collishaw for Glamorgan Family History in Aberkenfig one evening, and spying David in the audience I remember thinking that if I get any detail wrong he will know it, and probably denounce me as a fraud right there and then! I need not have worried, as after my talk he came over and greeted me with congratulations. He was a kind and generous person.*

NO APOLOGIES THEN for printing one of David's memories about footballer Tommy Forse, seen below on the right in David's photograph, followed by his account of Blaengarw RFC v. Maesteg RFC (Youth teams).



Blaengarw Rugby Team 1974



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THOMAS “TOMMY” FORSE

David JK Jones

I had the good fortune and privilege to spend an evening in the company of the oldest living Cardiff City player, Thomas “Tommy” Forse.

Tommy and his brother Edward (Jnr) were initiated in to the Gwalia Masonic Lodge 4213 as Lewis’s in 1947 where their father Edward, was a Past Master of Gwalia and who had also bought and presented the Lodge banner to the Howardian Lodge 5317. Edward (Jnr) is still a Subscribing

Past Master of Gwalia today.

Tommy recalled, *“I only ever got as far as Master Mason as I ran the family milk business and used to get up very early in the mornings. I used to get so tired with the early start that I once fell asleep through an entire third degree ceremony!”*

Tommy was born on a farm on Leckwith Hill in 1916 and attended Severn Road School in Canton. He walked there and back daily as there was no public transport on that route in those days. He recalls listening to the 1927 FA Cup Final on *“Cats Whisker Radio”* when Cardiff City beat Arsenal to bring the Cup to Cardiff for the only time. He later attended Canton Secondary School and left at sixteen years of age to work at the family Milk round business and joined Cardiff City as an Amateur in 1934.

In 1935 the then Manager of Cardiff City, Bartley Wilson offered Tommy a professional contract. Tommy asked for £5 per week as that is what he was earning on his milk round. Bartley almost fell off his chair in shock and horror as the Cardiff players were only getting paid thirty shillings per week! So Tommy stayed as an amateur. One person who he delivered milk to was Hughie Ferguson who had scored City’s winning goal at Wembley in the 1927 final. Hughie lived on Lansdowne Road and Tommy recalled him as *“a perfect gentleman”*.

Tommy gained three amateur International caps in 1937, 1938 and 1939 and spent six years at Cardiff City playing between 350 and 400 games for the Welsh league side, the Reserves and eventually the First Eleven. One season he played 74 games for the three sides that Cardiff ran in those days. His early finish from the milk round always meant that he was available and eager to travel and play in any midweek games that they had back then. His first game in the blue shirt was for the Reserves against Wattstown and his first game for the First Eleven was against Notts County and his last against Coventry City. He says that the best player that he ever played against was Johnny Hancocks of Wolves and England who he played against in a wartime match against Shrewsbury Town. Tommy recalls, *“He gave me a right outing and I couldn’t get near him. We lost 4-1 and he scored two and made the other two. It was no surprise when I later heard that Wolves had signed him”*. He played against all the greats of the day including Sir Stanley Matthews and Tom Finney etc and rates Cyril Spiers as the best City manager ever.

After the war several professional clubs offered him terms including Bath City but he then opted to stay local and he captained the famous amateur club, Cardiff Corries for five seasons.

After playing he became Manager of the Corries and became proficient in football administration, so much so that he became the President of the Football Association of Wales, a fantastic accolade for such a sporting stalwart. Tommy recalled, *“I went to every country in Europe with Wales and also to America and even Japan for the World Cup draw. They were great days”*.

Still sprightly at the age of 99 years, Tommy was still walking four miles each day and still attending Cardiff City and Wales matches.



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Blaengarw Youth – World Champions?

David JK Jones

A head turning headline but how can you say it? Well actually, very “tongue in cheek” but that’s not the way that Maesteg Youth RFC saw it way back in 1974.

By all accounts Maesteg Youth RFC had had an outstanding season beating most teams but above all, touring New Zealand and beating all the teams that the Kiwis put in front of them, the very best of the Southern Hemisphere, and to be defeated by Maesteg allowed the Llynfi Valley side to consider themselves, however tenuously, as “World Champions”.

This Maesteg team was outstanding with numerous players being Welsh Youth and Schools caps. They did, indeed, have kit bags with the words emblazoned on the side as “Maesteg Youth RFC – World Champions”.

Imagine our trepidation seeing all this? At Blaengarw Youth RFC we had had a pretty good season too under our outstanding Captain, Robert Bevan who should surely have had a Welsh Youth Cap that season.

It was with this background that the Garw boys turned up at the South Parade ground at Maesteg on a warm, clear evening after work (and school for one or two) for a “formal defeat” expected by most of the people in the Llynfi valley.

Those kit bags! “Maesteg Youth World Champions” met us as we got off the team bus. “See those blinking kitbags” said our Coach Dai Hughes, “Go and show them what we are about”. (PS: He didn’t say “blinking”)

We kicked off and on a dry, rock hard, end of season ground we were instantly on the defensive. I recall Paul Bridgeman having his nose broken in the first minute and despite that continued, heroically, for the entire game. His nose was like a tap, how can you lose so much blood?

This boy indicated the spirit that us Garw boys had in abundance. We were together socially most weekends for long hours and even days sometimes.

The Maesteg team seemed fairly satisfied when, after about twenty minutes, they scored a penalty and it was Maesteg Youth 3 Blaengarw Youth 0.

Half time couldn’t have come quick enough and we realised that we were very much in this game. *Everyone was bleeding but no one cared.* We listened to our inspirational Skipper’s team talk and our great Coach’s rant and we were ready for the second half, somehow.

Right from the kick off in the second half it was “boots and saddles” but within four minutes the Garw boys got a penalty right on the half way line. Only one man was capable of doing this kick and that was the late, great Billy Hodgson who stepped up and somehow did his old fashioned kicking “tee” (*like New Zealand’s Don Clarke*) and sent the ball soaring through the Maesteg posts like a siege gun. 3-3.

We were elated and within a minute of the restart we were given another penalty.



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This kick was about five yards inside our own half. Billy did his usual ritual of digging up half of the field with his heel etc, and did it again! – The ball soaring through the Maesteg posts still rising as it did so. – 3-6 to the Garw boys.

The remainder of the game was just like the beginning of the game, tackle, tackle, tackle and by god did we do lots of it! I recall Alan Phipps, Wayne Chambers and all the backs being absolutely brilliant. The final whistle couldn't have come quick enough and everyone was bleeding and drained.

We went to the (old) Sawyers Arms and were too tired to celebrate. We ate the meal provided and went home.

Dai Hughes never, ever forgot that game all of his life. I remember him on stage up the Top Club declaring us, Blaengarw Youth as World Champions

.RIP: Dai Hughes RIP: Billy Hodgson RIP: Des Owen

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WELSH NICKNAMES Tudor G Thomas-Davies

My Dadcu, living in Maes-y-Deri was known as Mr Thomas The Station, because of its proximity, even though he had no connection to the station.

Although these might sound apocryphal, the following are people my mother knew of personally, so these are genuine Welsh nicknames.

i) The local 'Beat Bobby' in the Garw when my mother was young was a bit of a 'jobsworth', and if he came across a mischievous young 'un. He would pull out his Police issue notebook, lick the end of his pencil and say something akin to "*I know who you are, and I'm putting your name in my book.*" For this reason, he was known as **Dai Book and Pencil**. Until, that is, he was promoted to Sergeant. At which point, his nickname was instantly upgraded to **Dai Book and Biro**.

ii) N.B. This only makes sense with a Welsh accent.

A man from the Garw (I'm not sure if he was a rugby football player or a collier) had lost the lower part of one of his ears in an accident of some kind. He was thence forth always known as '**Eighteen Months**', because he only had '*A yer and an half.*'

P.S. If you wonder why my surname is 'double barrelled'. When my mother died, I decided to add her maiden name to my surname as a mark of remembrance, because I was not given it as a middle name like all the other males in the family. To all intents and purposes, I'm still just Tudor G. Davies, apart from on official documents. My poor son delights in the name Alexander Tudor Thomas Davies!



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FROM THE ARCHIVES:

PARROT SWORE AT POLICE, BLAENGARW CLUB RAID INCIDENT

A parrot, which was alleged to have been kept in the bar of the Blaengarw Workingmen's Club, was stated to have sympathised with the members of the club when Police raided the premises, and to have sworn at the Police.

Following the raid, application was made to the Bridgend Magistrates today for the club to be struck off the register on the grounds that it was not being run properly; there was frequent drunkenness on the premises, and that persons that were not members were habitually admitted.

W.M. Thomas solicitor, of Bridgend prosecuted for the Police and Mr Forbes, barrister of London, instructed by L.J. Davies & Son of Pontyclun, defended. After dealing with various objections about the club, Mr Thomas stated that the management committee of the club appeared designed for one object only - the sale of beer. On Saturday the 30th of January the day of the raid there were alleged to be only 61 men on the premises, but none of them, according to the subscriptions book, had paid their subscriptions for that quarter. The raid was carried out by Inspector David Richards of Ogmore Vale and 8 or 9 police officers who were posted at various points in the club. When Inspector Richards walked toward some of the men in the bar, they became offensive.



Mr Thomas added that a parrot kept hung in the bar seemed well trained in the atmosphere of the club. It did not conceal its disgust at the Police who raided the club, but expressed its sympathy openly with the members - for every time the police passed the cage, the parrot said

"Bugger you".

Mr Thomas stated that the secretary Mr David Hughes was sent for, and he appeared to be very much under the influence of drink. When the warrant was read out to him, he asked "Who is this Inspector Richards? Where is he?" After the Inspector told him, he said "Well let's have a pint before we start then". Mr Thomas stated that the Police then took possession of the club's books, which showed that the total bar takings for the year 1936 were £2,659.9.2d There were 56 gallons of beer on the premises at the time of the raid - and the books showed that the average consumption per member for the past 6 months was 17 pints per week, but that did not include the amount consumed by casual visitors.

Mr Thomas said that there were no newspapers on the premises but there were 370 books, all covered with dust, and with the exception of one book called "The Maid of Cefn Ydfa", there were no other books being read at the time.

The Club avoided being struck off and the police application failed, but the club was placed under close observation for 12 months.

The parrot got away scot-free.

This excerpt taken from "Blaengarw Workingmens Club 2, The First fifty Years"

by Arthur Davies and was printed in The South Wales Echo 7/4/1937

A Close Shave In the Lions Den.

In 1910, when Sedgewicks No 1 American Circus visited the Bridgend and Maesteg area with its menagerie of hundreds of wild animals, including a herd of elephants and dromedaries. Amongst the events which proved very popular with the crowds was when 'Lorenzo The Daring, the Lion Tamer'



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was shaved by local hairdresser, Mr I. C. Corbett of Nolton St, Bridgend. Nothing unusual in that you may think? Except that this shave took place inside the lion's cage with twenty lions looking on!!

When the fearless Mr Corbett repeated his performance at Maesteg a week later he received £5 and a silver cup from the Sedgewicks proprietor Mr Sedgewick in person.

An added attraction was the Grand Tug o' War match, of twenty men against one elephant. The prize for defeating the pachyderm was a silver cup, to be drawn for by lots.

Seven years later Private 3996. Ivor Charles Corbett, 12th Batt: South Wales Borderers, was severely wounded in the attack on Bournal Wood, and died of his wounds on the 25/11/1917. He was 32. After 3 days fighting for Bournal Wood the 12th Battalion had lost 10 officers and 123 men in all were dead, and a further 12 officers and 243 men were wounded. This one action earned the 12th Batt: 2.D.S.O's, 6. M.C.'

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING, and plan to do:

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.

We are just starting to put together a programme of events for 2022, in conjunction with local organisations, that will have some of our numerous artefacts and records on display; possibilities are the Carnegie building in Bridgend, Bryngarw Park for the Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend, the William Trigg centre in Blaengarw and the Richard Price Centre in Llangeinor. These will be announced on the website, Facebook and local posters and advertising.

To start Spring, a guided walk will take place on March 7th, Monday, around Blaengarw, meeting time 10 am at the William Trigg centre (Dan-y-Mynydd)- wear waterproof clothing!

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



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