



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2024



IN THIS ISSUE

- Christopher Adams
- Garw Valley Fun Palace
- Perfect Welshcakes
 - Saved by a bat!
- Sir Daniel Thomas Davies
- Flowers and herbs of the valley



CROESO!

WELCOME to the summer 2024 edition of our newsletter, with its news, updates and archive items on people and events of Garw life years ago. Of special note below we pay tribute to Chris Adams, a founder member of the society, who sadly passed away in the Spring. For more information and stories, please refer to our website, www.garwheritage.co.uk, where we will be printing an item every month in respect of a notable Garw person. Please let us know if you have a person in mind, perhaps almost forgotten now, but who has made a mark on Garw life through the years.

From members of the Society, we wish you a warm and sunny Summer!

Jean.

THIS ISSUE'S CONTENTS

- 3 Obituary: CHRISTOPHER ADAMS
- 3 FANNIE M. THOMAS Purple Plaque society update
- 4 What we have been doing: BIBLES AND MAPS
- 5 HOW TO MAKE THE PERFECT WELSHCAKE
- 6 Famous Garw people: SIR DANIEL THOMAS DAVIES
- 7 FLOWERS AND HERBS OF THE FOOTPATH
- 8 SAVED BY A BAT!
- 8 *Iolo's Valleys*: THE GARW VALLEY ON TV
- 9 Archive poem: A LITTLE BIT OF HEAVEN IN WALES
- 11 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY
- 12 GARW VALLEY FUN PALACE 2024

THE GARW VALLEY HERITAGE SOCIETY

Registered charity number 1187117

website www.garwvalley.co.uk

facebook www.facebook.com/garwheritage

general email enquiry@garwheritage.co.uk

Society Secretary and newsletter editor Jean Fowlds

email jeaningarw@talktalk.net

telephone 01656 856091

We are keen to borrow historical material 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.

Obituary: CHRISTOPHER ADAMS

It is with great sadness that we heard in April of the death of Chris Adams, one of the founder members, and until recently, deputy chairman, of the Garw Valley Heritage Society.

Chris believed passionately in the Society's aims, which are to record and preserve as much as possible of the vibrant industrial past of this valley, fearing that it may all be lost now that the mines have closed, the chapels are not being used, and many people have had to move away to find work.

His last illness did not stop him from attending meetings via a Zoom link, nor did it halt the project on which he was working, with members, to locate and list the 73 farms of the valley that have been in existence over the last 200 years and more.

His pro-active support, ideas and guidance were always there in abundance, and he will be greatly missed.

Our condolences go to all his family and friends.



A PROJECT WE ARE HELPING WITH



FANNIE M. THOMAS Many of you will know that we have been supporting the Purple Plaque Society in their attempt to obtain a plaque to commemorate Miss FM Thomas (left), headmistress of Ffaldau school, councillor, Trade Unionist and supporter of Women's suffrage. To anyone who wishes to 'Google' her, there is more information, plus the questioning by some as to why this amazing woman hasn't been more recognized. The GVHS has approached the local council, our MP, and AM, who all agree she deserves more recognition, but as we know, money is very tight everywhere, so we are busy thinking of ways to set up a fund for a plaque in Pontycymmer to mark this extraordinary woman's achievements. More information on this to follow.

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING:



We have a collection of Bibles, many in Welsh, but we didn't know quite how many until Colin set about digitising the covers and the inside pages holding family records, and there are 13!



Above: Llest and Pontyrhyl, 1884
 Right: Farmer Tom Hopkins from Eforchwen

We have also accumulated a large collection of maps dating from the 1850's, which are almost all completely digitized at time of writing, showing the Garw as it was before the advent of mining and its associated industries. Large expanses of hill and vale are seen, with only farms dotted about, see map left.

These farms have been the project of Chris and Linda who have found 73, mostly all labelled, and they have not much detail in some cases. The aim of the project is to make all information available to the public, either through digital access or by personal visit with an appointment, but further details to be decided on how best to make this valuable resource available to all.



HOW TO MAKE THE PERFECT WELSHCAKE (although everyone has their own!)

Makes 10-12 cakes | Prep 10 minutes | Cook 4-5 minutes each

- 8oz / 220g self raising flour
- 2oz / 55g caster sugar
- 4oz / 110g margarine or butter
- 1 or 2 handfuls of sultanas
- 1 or 2 free-range eggs depending on mixture

METHOD

- 1 Sieve flour into bowl, then add margarine or butter, rub in finely together.
- 2 Add sugar and sultanas and mix.
- 3 Add 1 egg and mix. The consistency needs to be bound together, so if too dry add an other egg.
- 4 Roll out on a floured board, to about a quarter inch thick.
- 5 Cut using a 2 inch (5cm approx) cutter, then cook on a greased pan, or bake stone, on a medium heat for about 4 to 5 minutes each side.
- 6 The exact cooking length will depend on what you are cooking your Welsh cakes on, but keep a close eye - too short a period and they won't be cooked in middle, and cooked for too long and they will be dry. When touched during cooking they should feel springy, but not wet to the touch (no mixture should come out of the middle).
- 7 Once cooked dust with caster sugar and enjoy.

This recipe is © Kathryn Gunter



Famous Garw people you may not have heard about:

SIR DANIEL THOMAS DAVIES, 1899–1966



© National Portrait Gallery

Daniel Thomas Davies was born in Pontycymmer in 1899 to D. Mardy Davies, minister (Presb) and his wife Esther. He was brought up in the Garw Valley and was educated in Bridgend grammar school and University College Cardiff.

He then went on to train at the Middlesex hospital in London, and later became the pathologist there in 1927, after his training in practical chemical pathology.

He then made a great impression at the Royal Free Hospital when he started there in 1930, staying for 30 years and working also at St John and St Elizabeth hospital (35 years). He published several medical books, including some on pneumonia, peptic ulcers and anaemia.

He was a Fellow of the Royal Medical Society, and in 1938 he became physician to George VI and Queen Elizabeth, as well as continuing to attend the Duke of Windsor, with whom

he became great friends. During World War II he became Lord Beaverbrook's personal physician and in 1951 received a knighthood. He was also a close friend to Aneurin Bevan, but refused to join the National Health Service that Bevan had initiated.

Sir Daniel was an avid reader in both English and Welsh, and although his life and work was based in London he never forgot his Welsh roots and took every opportunity to speak Welsh. He was noted for his story-telling and his conversational skills.

He married Vera Clarkson and had two daughters.

He died in May 1966 at his home in Wimpole Street, London.



Note: Information for this item has come from local people, plus the Dictionary of Welsh Biography.

FLOWERS AND HERBS OF THE FOOTPATH

This is an informal observation of the flowers I have found whilst walking up and down the Garw riverside foot and cycle path, and is by no means exhaustive. In naming them I have made reference to the work by the children of the Bettws and Valley and Vale Groundwork Trust. *Gerald Jarvis, GVHS*

FLOWERS

1) **AQUILEGIA** thought to be poisonous: the seeds were crushed to make a lice repellent.

BLUEBELL much-loved late Spring wild flower (*not pictured*)

2) **COWSLIP** often used to flavour country wines

3) **FORGET-ME-KNOT** garden flower running wild

4) **SCARLET PIMPERNEL** wild flower

5) **WELSH POPPY** more common in Wales than in other parts of UK

HERBS

These have all been found on the cycle path between Blaengarw and Bryngarw

6) **CREeping JENNY** (*also known as Moneywort*) a healing herb used to heal wounds, and good for gout.

7) **SPEARMINT** good for stomach disorders

8) **ST JOHN'S WORT** highly regarded as a cure for depression

9) **HERB ROBERT** good as an insect repellent.

10) **WOODY NIGHTSHADE** one you should not touch, **poisonous!**



One of the many unusual stories in our collection:

SAVED BY A BAT!

In 1932, 12-year-old Peter Mainwaring, of Llangeinor in the Garw Valley, was stricken with a serious illness. The boy was taken first to Bridgend General Hospital and X-Rays revealed something on his lung. Tuberculosis was immediately suspected and Peter was sent to Craig-y-Nos Sanatorium in Powys.



Although he received excellent care in the 9 weeks he was there Peter grew worse instead of better. One day his family received the message to come immediately because he was dying. They came and took Peter home to Llangeinor and made him as comfortable as possible. During that long night, as his father recalled,

“It was about two o’clock in the morning. I sat in the kitchen stirring the embers of the fire. Mary, my wife, was upstairs, and in the next room lay Peter dying. I heard a loud scream and I ran into the room. Hurling itself against a half-open window was a large bat trying to escape. I let the bat free, and attended to Peter. He was coughing so violently I thought each gasp would be his last.”

The local doctor was called and found a large molar tooth had been dislodged from Peter’s lung, and he had coughed it up! Its point was very sharp, like a needle. The boy must have swallowed the tooth two years earlier, and it had entered his lung, causing the symptoms of Tuberculosis. Once Peter had coughed up the tooth, his condition improved and he made a full recovery.

THE GARW VALLEY ON BBC WALES TV!



© BBC

BBC nature presenter Iolo Williams has recently been appearing on television in his new series, *Iolo’s Valleys*. In this short series he is travelling around the valleys of South Wales exploring their nature and wildlife. In the second programme in the series, broadcast on BBC One

Wales on Friday 24th May, he can be seen tracking house martins and dragonflies in Blaengarw, specifically around Blaengarw Road, Gwendolyne Street and Parc Calon Lan. You should still be able to catch the programme, and the series in general, on BBC iplayer.

“A LITTLE BIT OF HEAVEN” IN WALES (a paeon of praise to Bridgend!)

*There's a spot that I know,
A spot far away.
Where a man don't go thirsty
All the long day;
Where the heat is not scorching,
And the ground is not dry.
Where green grass doth grow,
And where sand does not fly;
Where a man can walk,
After nine in the morn.
Without getting struck
By that fierce shining sun.*

*Where flies do not pester,
And Jackals don't howl;
And where after darkness,
The enemy don't prowl.
That place is in Wales,
And its name is Bridgend.
And it's there (though I'm Irish),
My days I would spend.*

*And now, all you people,
You've read my poor rhyme,
Pity a poor 'Tommy'
Out in this sunny clime;
He's fighting and sweating,
And keeping quite fit,
In Mesopotamia;
A-doing his bit.*

L/cpl. 358587 Gerald O'Connell. Welsh(Pioneer)Regiment.

Survived the war, invalided out 15/1/1919.

Printed in the Glamorgan Gazette 24/11/1916.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE YOUR INTEREST IN THE GARW VALLEY TO ANOTHER LEVEL?

If the answer is yes, why not come and help us in
the running of the Garw Valley Heritage Society?

Llangeinor around 1906



As some of us are getting older we are always keen to hear from any current and prospective members who may want to help us in maintaining our Society, its public and web presence, and its archive.

There are so many different tasks in the running of this Society. Whether you are interested in meeting people, getting involved in our exhibitions, helping with our ongoing archiving, helping with our IT, or just offering memories, experiences, advice or your time we'd love to hear from you.

We have many exciting upcoming projects planned, so please get in touch and learn and share more about this beautiful valley.

**If you're interested and for further information please see page 2
for a list of the many ways to contact us.**

Thank you!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



© Richard Berry

MID-JUNE (date and time tbc) – LLANGEINOR CHURCH TALK

Gerald will be up at Llangeinor church giving talks to visitors about the church, the area, St Cein, and the famous battle that took place there many years ago.

LATE JUNE (date and time tbc) – ARMED FORCES DAY AT THE GARW VALLEY RAILWAY

The Garw Valley Railway Society will be hosting an event at the Railway premises at the end of June to celebrate Armed Forces Day and have asked the GVHS for support. More information will be made available soon.

SEPTEMBER - OPEN DOORS EVENT

In September there will be the annual Open Doors event at Tabernacle, part of a Wales-wide scheme organized by CADW to promote historic buildings, and as Tabernacle is a Grade II listed building, it is an ideal venue for displaying some of the many stories and pictures of the Garw over the last 150 years, which the GVHS will be providing.

OCTOBER 5th - FUN PALACE IN THE GARW VALLEY

There is to be a National Fun Day on October 5th, organized by volunteers in the Garw, with the aim of bringing the community together by showcasing various group activities and achievements, and most of all, having an enjoyable time. See overleaf.



CWM GARW FUN PALACE EVENT

On **October 5th this year**, at the **Halo Garw Valley Life Centre in Pontycymer**, the Garw Valley will be hosting its first **Fun Palace day** as part of a national ongoing campaign for community-led culture. This Cwm Garw event will be copied at various venues across the country, all taking place over the same weekend **between 12 noon and 4pm.**

The event's aims are to bring together whatever versions of 'fun' and 'culture' appeal, whether it be linked to the Arts, Science, Craft, Technology, Digital, Heritage or Sports. Whatever your interest in any or all of these, there will be an opportunity for you to come along with ideas that express your individuality and also inspire others to give your creativity full rein.

We have plenty of examples of the type of activities resulting from previous Fun Palace days. For instance, Lancaster mixed together crafting, technology, dancing, singing and drama. Closer to home Pontypridd partnered with the British Science Association and, with participants, created low- and high-tech gadgets such as mirror kaleidoscopes, alongside medieval cooking, hip-hop and Trinidadian calypso! Recent meetings in the Garw have produced interest in macrame, chair yoga, fancy dress litter picking and martial arts, amongst other subjects, so something for everybody!

If you want to get involved, or want to know more, the event is being organised by a group of local volunteers who are meeting in person every few weeks.

☆ Please contact **ABI** and **LAURA** at inaccommonorbit@gmail.com

