



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2026



CROESO I GWANWYN 2026!

WELCOME TO OUR SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER.



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THE GARW VALLEY HERITAGE SOCIETY

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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.

MORE MEMORIES OF BLAENGARW



Dennis Merry of Chester-le-Street, County Durham wrote these memories some ten years ago at the age of 80.

My name is Dennis Merry and I was born in 1935 at 26 Blaengarw Road. This was my grandparents house, Tom and Blodwen Bevan. My mother was the eldest of five children, 3 girls and 2 boys. My mother Bronwen was the eldest and the others were Mervyn, Ivy, Joby and Annie.

I was moved around quite a bit as my father was in the Army, but I remember my times with my grandparents. My grandfather was in the R.A.F. during WW2 and was stationed at Southerndown and St Athan. I can vaguely remember being taken there for a children's party.

If my memory serves me right, the Richards family lived next door down from us and below them was the Williams's. Emlyn was their father but I cannot recall their mother's name. They had three children; the eldest was Colin. He joined the Welsh Guards for three years in 1954 and was posted to Moascar in what was then called The Canal Zone in Egypt, as a Military Policeman.

On his demob, like me, he joined the Police Force. Whilst I was in the Glamorgan Constabulary he joined the Swansea Borough Force. His sister was called Meryl and, after leaving school, she went to work at Blaengarw Co-Op. Tudor was the youngest of the three. I understand that Mr and Mrs Williams later moved to Railway Terrace, Blaengarw.

Above my grandparents lived the Lloyds. Mr Lloyd was a teacher, I believe. Other people I knew in Blaengarw were the Davies family who lived at 47 Blaengarw Road. They had two children – Cadivor, the son, and Margaret, the eldest, who I believe became a Nurse. We were both friends with Melvin Mathias, who was younger than us. Next door to him was the Jones family who had two daughters, Menair who was older than me and Monwen, who was younger than us.

Our playground was the mountainside opposite Carn Houses. There used to be a quarry there with a pool, and we used to catch tadpoles there. We also went for walks up past the Electricity Station and back around the top of Blaengarw Road, coming back down behind Blaengarw Workingmen's Club. Behind the club at the end of Mount Pleasant were the stables where Reggie Gough the Milkman kept his horses. He used to come along the streets with his horse and trap, on which were the milk churns. People used to come out of their houses with their jugs and he would scoop up the milk and fill them up with whatever they wanted.

We will print more of Dennis' memories in future newsletters.

DID YOU MISS ST DWYNWEN'S DAY?

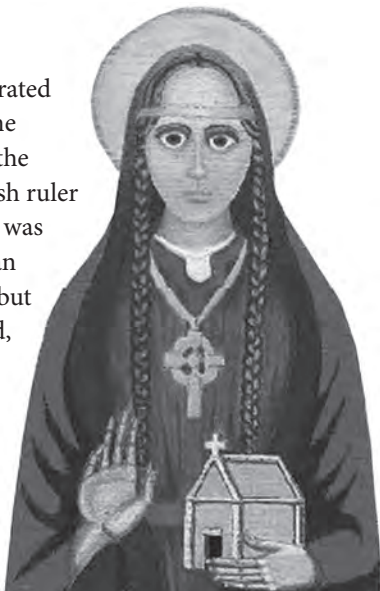
The Welsh Patron Saint of Lovers

There are many versions of the life of Dwynwen, celebrated in poetry and song over the Celtic mists of time. Some ring true, others maybe not! Saint Dwynwen was one of the many daughters of the 5th Century King Brychan, the Irish ruler of Brycheiniog, or Breconshire, and legend has it that she was betrothed by her father to a man she did not love. The man she wanted was Maelon, and she asked an angel for help, but the angel gave her a potion to help her forget him. Instead, it turned him into a block of ice

Thwarted in love, she asked God for three wishes – first that Maelon be brought back to life, second that God be kind to all lovers, and third that she be allowed to serve God for the rest of her life if she couldn't have him.

This last wish was granted, as she founded a convent on a remote promontory in Ynys Môn (Anglesey) and spent her whole life there, dying in around 465. The convent ruins can still be seen in Ynys Llanddwyn, named after her, and ever since Wales has recognised her as the patron saint of lovers, the equivalent of St Valentine. Her Saint's day is January 25th, when not just lovers exchange gifts and tokens, but families and friends too.

For our Scottish friends, January 25th is also important for being Burns night of course!



The stained glass image left is of our Patron Saint David, whose day of March 1st is celebrated all over the world by Welsh people and their descendants.

A FAVORITE SAYING OF ST DAVID

David's last words to his followers were reputed to have been:

“Be joyful, keep the faith, do the little things
you have seen and heard me do”.

The Welsh *Gwnewch y pethau bychan* –
Do the little things – is a saying heard often in Wales.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

APRIL 3-6 (Easter) exact day tbc - GARW VALLEY RAILWAY 10am-4pm.

The railway group is planning an Open Day or similar event for the Easter weekend. The exact date has not been confirmed so keep a lookout for posters and online posts.

EARLY JULY exact day tbc - GARW VALLEY RAILWAY 10am-4pm.

July has its usual Summer Open Day in the Railway Shed in Pontycymer. They are holding stalls and model railways, and the GVHS will be supplying some of their railway photographs and ephemera in support. Date will be announced in due course.

OCTOBER 2nd - THE FUN PALACE 10am-4pm.

The annual Fun Palace event will be taking place again, probably at the Halo Leisure Centre in Pontycymer again. More details will emerge in due course, but the GVHS will attend with whatever is required from our stores, most likely the old-fashioned children's toys which have brought fun, pleasure and fond memories at previous events.

DECEMBER - event tbc

OBITUARIES

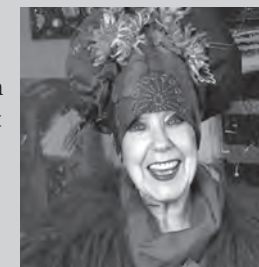
EILEEN PRICE

In Early February we were very sorry to hear about the death of **Mrs Eileen Price** of Alexandra Road in Pontycymer. She had not long celebrated her 99th birthday and was still very active in the community. Amongst her many achievements Eileen was Secretary and trustee to Tabernacle Chapel in Pontycymer, and instigated and supported many events held there over the years. The GVHS has been grateful for her help in housing the artefacts, maps, files and books in our possession in the vestry. Her service to the Garw Valley, particularly to the older members of the community, resulted in her receiving the British Empire Medal in January 2013.

She will be greatly missed, and our condolences go to her family and friends.

MOLLY PARKIN

Another character of the Garw also passed away in the New Year – the flamboyant Molly Parkin, one of the most colourful figures to emerge from the “Swinging Sixties”. She was born Molly Thomas in Albany Road, Pontycymer in 1932, and went to London with her family in 1939. After school in Willesden her career included teaching, writing, fashion designing and editing for up-market magazines. We will write more of her life in future newsletters.



WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING



DANIEL JAMES PLAQUE

We have been told that once the Strand Park in Blaengarw (*left*) had been 'tided up' then the way was open for the grey slate plaque that was made in honour of **Daniel James**, author of *Calon Lan*, to be placed within, possibly on a plinth or on the wall. News of this happening is still awaited, and the plaque itself is held in Tabernacle in Pontycymer awaiting a decision. We are still

pursuing the matter, which has been ongoing since before Covid (BC).

Another notable Garw character, **Miss Fanny Thomas**, headmistress of the Ffaldau School in Pontycymer 100 years ago, is still to be recognised by the Purple Plaque Society, who are keen to place a plaque in her honour. Applications for funding this have been made to council and community projects, but as of yet no offers of help have been received. Again, an ongoing matter we are supporting.

BRIDGEND HERITAGE HUB

The GVHS is a member of this group of heritage and historical societies who hold their meetings at different venues every quarter, and in February it was the turn of Pontycymer to 'host' the meeting. Roger and Gerald represented the Garw at the meeting held in Tabernacle's vestry on the 9th. Representatives came from Porthcawl, Bridgend, Cefn Cribwr, Aberkenfig and surrounds (*see photo below*). Roger was able to show visitors around this lovely Grade II listed building, sadly one of the few chapels still in use in South Wales.

Like all the Heritage groups, everyone is struggling to keep afloat with money needed



for rental of premises, purchasing of equipment and volunteers to help out, but it was clear that all had similar aims – preserving aspects of the past so that they are not forgotten and will provide an archive for future generations.

The groups represented were very supportive of each other, and talks were held on how the societies could support each other with their individual exhibitions or displays that could have a section or corner devoted to a theme from another group.

As far as the GVHS was concerned then we are happy to support the other groups as well as have an opportunity to showcase our own material. Talks are ongoing.

PEOPLE'S COLLECTION OF WALES

A reminder of their aims.

One of the GVHS involvements of the last two years or so has been with the **People's Collection of Wales**, (PCW) with whom we are pleased to be working in partnership. They have welcomed our participation and help in building their extensive collections of photographs, stories and articles on the history of Wales.

The PCW was established and funded in 2010 by the Welsh Government, and is partnered with the National Library of Wales (NLW), the National Museum of Wales (NMW), and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments.

Its aim is to bring together as much as possible of the story of Wales, from articles, memories, stories, photographs and other records, and these can come from individuals as well as organised groups and heritage societies.

All our material and donations will eventually be accessible on their website as well as on our own website, and if you wish to see more of what the PCW does, please look up their collection on the PCW website.

If you have any individual queries then their telephone number is 01970 632811.

Needless to say there is a lot of work involved in cataloguing and categorising our material, and Colin has been very busy organising spreadsheets and labels. We are fully supporting the PCW's aims as we already are aware of much history of the Garw Valley that is being lost, and anything that can be done to keep our heritage alive for future generations must be worth some effort!!





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?

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!