



# SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2026



# CROESO I HAF 2026!

WELCOME TO OUR SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER



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## THE GARW VALLEY HERITAGE SOCIETY

*Registered charity number 1187117*

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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.



## THE TABERNACLE CHAPEL

**T**abernacle chapel in Pontycymer is a Grade II-listed building, designated as such by Cadw in 1997. It was built as a result of the Non-Conformist cause arriving in the Garw along with the influx of hundreds of workers for the coal mines. It is a Protestant, Calvinistic Methodist\* chapel, first established in a stable loft in 1883, moving to the vestry building built in 1884 with the main chapel being built in 1889.

It has been a constant focal point for community activities since then, even though its fellow buildings in Meadow Street such as the Co-Op bakery, the Ffaldau Institute and Billiard Hall no longer function in those roles.

Its pipe organ is one of the few such examples in South Wales still in use for concerts, funerals and weddings, and that alone is something that the Valley should cherish.

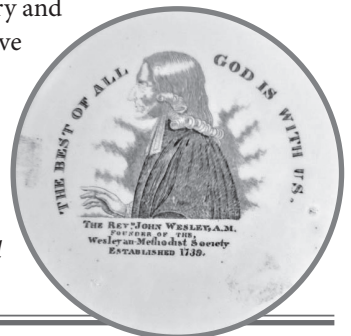
Nowadays the religious services are few, with even fewer attendees, and it could be in danger of abandonment as those members, usually our older citizens, gradually pass on.

***This surely must not be allowed to happen!***

For more details of Tabernacle's history and events over the years, please contact Jean Fowlds (01656 856091) for a copy of the booklet written by Eileen Price BEM, Secretary and Trustee, sadly now deceased.

\*Calvinist Methodism was born out of the Welsh Methodist Revival and the preaching of Howell Harris and Daniel Rowland in the 18th century, and it detached itself from the Church of England in 1811. Calvinistic Methodism became a major denomination in Wales, growing rapidly in the 19th century and featuring large in the religious revival of 1904-1905. We have records of those meetings that took place in Tabernacle. It claims to be the only Christian denomination in Wales to be of purely Welsh origin, the doctrine combining principles of Calvinism (predestination) and the Methodism as preached by John Wesley.

*This plaque of John Wesley was found  
in a charity shop by Gerald Jarvis.*



From the archives:

# DEFICIENCY OF SCHOOL ACCOMODATION IN THE GARW VALLEY

*An item found by Colin Davies in the Central Glamorgan Gazette of 20 February 1885*

We are informed on reliable authority that there is a great deficiency of school accommodation in the Garw Valley. On the Llangeinor side there are 302 cottages, and if we count upon two from each cottage as an average to be of age to attend school, it will be seen that there are 604 children for whom accommodation should be provided. The only accommodation sanctioned by the Education Department is that for 136 children at a room hired by the workmen of Ffaldau Colliery from the Calvinistic Methodists. From the above it will be seen that there is a deficiency of accommodation for 468 children. There are at present about 80 cottages in course of erection, all of which will be occupied in about three months. This will add greatly to the deficiency. We are informed that efforts have been made to raise funds to establish a voluntary school at Pontycymer but the largest ratepayers have refused to contribute, the matter has been allowed to drop.

Our readers are aware that the Garw Valley is developing with wonderful rapidity, and as it even now is only in its infancy, unless the question of school accommodation receives due consideration at the hands of the authorities, we cannot but deplore the great loss this will occasion the children of workmen in the Garw.



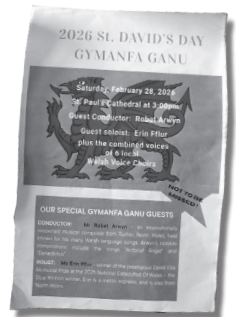
*Blaengarw Junior School, built soon after this article.*

# THE WELSH CHURCH IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA



On a recent visit to Australia to see friends I met someone who had emigrated to Melbourne some 50 years ago from Hensol in the Vale of Glamorgan. He was able to show me around the Welsh Church in the centre of Melbourne, shown here in its setting amongst the skyscrapers of the modern city. Above is its interior, which is similar to its many South Wales' contemporaries, apart from the Australian flag of course! Services are held every week, and every fortnight in Welsh, and they uphold many of the traditions we have grown up with, the Eisteddfodau, the Gymanfa Ganu concerts and St David's Day celebrations.

At right is a programme advertising a concert held in Melbourne's St Paul's cathedral this year, with male voice choirs, guest conductor Robat Arwyn and guestsoloist Erin Fflur. I was told the event and others like this are extremely popular with tickets having to be bought well in advance. It seems that chapel going is still alive and well, even if the other side of the world.



## CAN YOU HELP US?

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. 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.**

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## WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING

### BRIDGEND HERITAGE HUB

The GVHS is a member of this group of heritage and historical societies, and attends meetings and conferences every few months. Colin and Gerald went to their March event held this time in Tabernacle Pontycymer.

### PEOPLE'S COLLECTION OF WALES

We are continuing with work to catalogue all of our written and photographic material for the People's Collection of Wales, with still a lot to be done.

Its aim, as reported previously, is to bring together as much as possible of the story of Wales, from articles, memories, stories, photographs and other records. These can come from individuals as well as organised groups and heritage societies. If you have any individual queries then their telephone number is 01970 632811.



Casgliad y Werin Cymru  
People's Collection Wales

### FUN PALACE EVENTS

Gerald was able to take a group of visitors from non-Garw organisations on a walking tour of Blaengarw on 19th May, in spite of the weather, and this was followed by a talk on the history of the Garw by Treasurer Ian Black. More such events are being planned.

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

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

The Railway have their annual open day - date TBA so watch out for posters and flyers.

### **SEPTEMBER exact date tbc: Open Doors event at the Tabernacle Chapel**

Cadw's plans for opening Tabernacle for their annual Open Doors event have not been made clear at time of printing, so again, TBA.

### **OCTOBER 3rd (Saturday): THE FUN PALACE**

The Fun Palace event of last year which was very successful is to be repeated this year in October at the Community Centre in Pontycymer. More details of this will emerge in due course and the GVHS will be bringing along whatever is required from our heritage stores.

### **DECEMBER exact date tbc: - Santa comes to the Garw Valley Railway**

It's a little early for advertising, but Santa will be visiting the Garw in December - more details in due course from the Garw Railway Society.

More from the archives:

# COLLIERY OFFICES DESTROYED IN AVALANCHE

*From the Glamorgan Gazette of 4 November 1927*

Twenty members of the clerical staff at the International Coal Company Ltd, at Blaengarw, had a miraculous escape on Tuesday 4th November, when a substantial portion of the 100 foot high colliery waste tip behind the office came down and fell right on top of the buildings, which were completely destroyed.

Mr. Evan Jones, a local Butcher, was riding on horseback along the mountain-side when he saw the tip start to move. He turned his horse and galloped at speed towards the offices, shouting out to warn anyone in the vicinity. Just as the very last man evacuated the building there was a heavy thud and the buildings were engulfed with about a half acre of spoil.

All the men were very grateful to their heroic rescuer. "We were busy working," said one, "when we heard yelling, and the clatter of hooves. We thought that a pit-horse had broken loose and was running away so we dashed to the windows to look. We did not realise that we were moments away from death!"

No damage was caused to the pit-shaft, which was about 50 yards from the avalanche site, but, as a precaution, work underground was suspended, and the men were brought to the surface. A few years ago there was a similar occurrence, but on a smaller scale.

The recent heavy rain, together with the mountain springs which abound in this area is believed to be responsible for the landslide. A lot of the debris also fell onto the railway siding below, and smashed tracks and a number of railway trucks.

There are about 40 houses in Pwllcarn Terrace, but none were threatened by the landslide, On Wednesday night, a large number of men were out under the supervision of Mr. W. J. Morgan, Manager for the International Colliery Company. Strong efforts were being

made to divert the spring water which had forced its way through the tip. A Great Western Railway breakdown gang was also in attendance and rendered valuable assistance repairing the damaged tracks.

Blaengarw Fire Brigade were called out to extinguish the flames caused by a fire in timber of the wrecked building. Officials present said that it was hoped to recover colliery records from the building once the debris was cleared.



## A RUGBY PAGE



*Above: **Rugby Team 1957-1958.** Jeff Young, 3rd left in the front row, is wearing a Wales under-18 cap. He went on to play for Wales, was Captain and Coach for Wales, and he also played for the Lions. John Lloyd, back row end right, held the same positions.*

*Below: **Rugby Team 1958-1959.** David Morgan 4th from left and Jeff Young 6th from left, both wearing Under 18 Wales shirts. John Lloyd is 4th from left in the back row.*

