

“Merthyr Express” 2 June, 1866

The Drought The continuance of dry weather is already affecting the works. The balance pits are in jeopardy in consequence of the diminished supply from the little reservoirs.

“Merthyr Express” 9 January 1869

The Rainfall in 1868 By the kindness of Dr. Dyke, Merthyr, we have been forwarded some interesting statistics relative to the rainfall of 1868. The total rainfall for 1868 was 61.59 inches. In the dry season in June, half an inch fell on two days only. In December, in the wet season, 13.69 inches fell in 24 days, a most unusual quantity. The total number of rainy days in the year was 159.

“Merthyr Express” 8 February 1873

Severe Snowstorm On Saturday night a snowstorm began which for severity exceeded anything of its kind within the experience of any of the residents of Merthyr for many years past. The wind blew fiercely, furiously, and with a coldness which made it really a biting blast. The snow fell in such minute particles that they found ingress through the smallest openings into dwelling houses; keyholes were comparatively big ports, whilst every little crevice admitted the sleet in such quantities that when Sunday morning came people found heaps of snow all over their houses, and in the most unexpected places. The storm continued without abatement all day Sunday, and the drift was in places six or even ten feet deep. As a matter of course, these drifts totally obstructed the roads where they occurred. The railways were kept open to traffic with difficulty, but fortunately, no local train was thoroughly snowed under. On the Ebbw Vale branch of the Merthyr and Abergavenny line, the snow drifted to a height that over-topped the back of the locomotive, and on the Brecon and Merthyr line between Pengam and Rhymney a train was buried in a deep drift..

“Merthyr Express” 12 December 1874

Storm Throughout the whole of Tuesday a most violent storm of winds, accompanied by incessant heavy rain, visited the district. The wind blew most violently from a south-westerly direction, and was so powerful at intervals that it shook the houses, but with the exception of a few slates being blown down from the roofs, and a great swelling of the river, together with some flooded streets, we are glad to record that no serious damage had been done to either person or property.

“Merthyr Express” 23 August 1879

Killed by Lightning On Saturday night at Vochriw, as a married woman was going along the road in the storm, she was struck by lightning, from the effects of which she died on Sunday night.

“Merthyr Express” 3 January 1903

Lost in the Snow near Pontllynn: A Woman's Narrow Escape On Tuesday morning, as some of the Penybank residents were on their way to Pontllynn, they saw a dark object near of the Plantation lying in the sleet and snow. Upon nearing the object, they found to their dismay, a woman lying quite be-numbed and in a semi-frozen condition. Assistance was soon at hand, and the Fochriw stretcher being available, she was conveyed to the Pontllynn Police Station, where P. S. Gammon and his men succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. It then transpired that her name was Elizabeth Noles, a pedlar. She stated that she was on her way to Pontllynn. On Monday, she was at Bedlinog, and was seen at Fochriw on Monday night. It is thought that she missed her way on the Pontllynn mountain, and turned to the left, which took her to the Plantation. At the time of writing, she is at the lodging-house in Board-street.

11 December 1909 Storm A regular tornado of wind and rain passed over the district on Thursday night doing damage to some of the buildings. Slates were blown off the Council School, some troughing was blown from the roof of the shop of Coun. John Jones, and several tiles were blown from the roof of St. Mary's Church.

26 February 1910 Gale Fierce gales swept over Fochriw and district last weekend, doing damage to property. On Sunday, the chimney of Mr. John Mantle's house in Pentwyn was blown down. Some of the bricks fell through the roof, and others into the fire, filling the house with soot, etc, whilst they were at dinner. A portion of the roof of the Old Church at Pentwyn was also damaged, a portion of the stone roof being dislodged, and many of the saddle tiles on the vestry blown off.

"Merthyr Express" 5 November 1910

The Storm Due to the storm which visited the district on Monday night, slight damage was done to St. Mary's Church roof.

24 December 1910 Storm Much damage was done throughout the district by the storm on Friday last. Some of the windows of St. Mary's Church were completely blown in, and slates were torn from the roof. Several windows at Carmel were also blown in. Damage was done to the new houses in course of erection at Pentwyn. Whilst Mr. D. Lewis, greengrocer, was returning from Bedlinog, his cart was overturned by the wind, and as a result the shafts were broken. Luckily, man and horse escaped without any injury.

1 November 1913 Storm A terrific thunder storm passed over the village on Monday evening last. Vivid flashes of lightning illuminated the whole sky, accompanied by terrific claps of thunder, and a very heavy downfall of rain. Luckily, no great damage was done, other than the roads being torn up in places, and water finding its way into some houses in Pentwyn and Fochriw. Much damage was done, however, to the roof of St. David's Church, Pantywaun, the chimney, and a large portion of the roof being blown away. Damage was also done to the roof of one of the South Tunnel pithouses.

1 January, 1916 The Gale A heavy gale swept over the village on Monday, when several roof slates, chimney pots, and windows were blown in. The waiting room of the down platform on the Brecon and Merthyr Railway was completely blown away. The storm was one of the worst experienced for many years.

8 January, 1916 Gale Another heavy gale was experienced in the village on Saturday causing much damage. The storm lasted throughout the day.

1 April 1916 A Fochriw Tragedy: Snowbound On The Mountain The blizzard on Monday night, had a terribly tragic sequel in the adventures of a party of young Fochriw people, and the death of Willie Grimmatt, only son of Mr. and Mrs. Grimmatt, Pentwyn. On Monday afternoon, a party of young people walked over the mountain to Pontlottyn to visit a picture show. By the time for their return journey, the storm was blowing with great fury, and while some of the party elected to remain at Pontlottyn overnight, others set out to make the five mile walk over the mountain. Darkness had come on quickly, but the party faced the blizzard in the confidence that they were sufficiently familiar with the road to make their way through. Of the party's fearful experiences, there are, so far, only such a disjointed account as the exhausted survivors can give. No news was received of the young people all night, and after nearly 12 hours, the first of the party was found by a search party crawling on their hands and knees from a disused quarry, where they had found partial shelter. This was at 7:30am on Tuesday morning. Search parties scoured the mountains throughout the morning, the distracted mothers themselves making brave efforts to join in the search, but they were unable to get further than the foot of the mountain. The snows had drifted to unheard-of depths, and the fate of the whole party was for some time in doubt. In the absence of telephone, or other communication with Pontlottyn, hours of anxiety were spent at Fochriw, where it was not known who of the party had set out on their return. The search parties worked through the night heroically, time and again falling back in face of the cruel blizzard. Police Sergeant H. Williams, and Police Constable Perrett, headed the renewal of the search at daybreak, while

the storm still raged. The mountain was thoroughly scoured, but it was not till 7.30 that the first discovery was made. Then, Stanley Williams, 8, Plantation-terrace, Fochriw, was recovered from an old quarry. He was able to give little information concerning his companions, but the searchers set out again, and came upon a sixteen year old girl, half buried in a snowdrift. She was conveyed to a dwelling house, and upon recovering consciousness asked for her little brother. Soon the rescuers came upon a brother and sister, almost buried in heaps of snow. The position of the rescuers was fraught with great peril, but brother and sister were eventually dug out, in an unconscious state, and taken to the Rising Sun Inn, where Nurse Mercer was in attendance. The lad, aged 13, died later. His sister, aged 20, clearly made devoted and heroic efforts during the night to succour her brother and to keep warmth in his body, until weakness overcame her. There still remained a lad, Bob Carter, of Pleasant View, to be accounted for. The rescuers probed the snow with long poles for several hours. At length, some County School boys came across a boot protruding from a heavy drift. Carter was completely buried, but was still breathing when dug out. He recovered after being conveyed home. The night's experiences of this little party created a tremendous sensation, and fine tributes are paid to the courage of the rescuers, who themselves braved considerable peril in their search. The father of the dead lad, Willie Grimmett, is in the Army, training at Rhyl.

14 October 1916 Storm During the storm last weekend, the waiting room on the Brecon and Merthyr station, which is in course of erection, was blown down.

2 August 1924 Torrential Rain Torrential rain resulted in the choking of the culvert behind the Co-op Stores. The build-up of water caused the collapse of a wall.

3 January 1925 Torrential Rain Fochriw has experienced severe weather recently. Both mountain and roads have been flooded. Council roadmen have been kept very busy, but no serious damage has been done.

31 December 1927 The Blizzard Quite a fierce blizzard swept over the village on Christmas afternoon and night. Snowdrifts one for all to five feet deep in several places, and again affected the electric light, the village being in darkness. Places of worship had to abandon their services.

4 March 1933 The Blizzard Fochriw felt the full force of the blizzard over the weekend. Road traffic was completely at a standstill. The railway company managed to run occasional trains.

21 September 1935 Gale Havoc Monday night's gale caused some of the roofs to be badly damaged.

8 February 1947 Roads Blocked The severe snow-storm which took place blocked roads and held up traffic. There were snow-drifts several feet high.

15 February 1947 Village Cut Off Severe snow-storms over the weekend caused the roads to be blocked with snow drifts, cutting off traffic to the village. The railway cutting from Fochriw to Dowlais Top has been closed to traffic for some days. Council workmen, with the assistance of unemployed men, have worked hard to make the roads passable for traffic. Every effort is being made to open the railway line for passenger traffic.

8 March 1947 Worst Blizzard For 30 Years: Nearly 200 Railway Passengers Stranded

The blizzard on Tuesday and Wednesday in the Rhymney Valley was the worst for over 30 years. More than 150 people were stranded on Bargoed Station on Wednesday night, because the train on which they were travelling up the Rhymney Valley, was unable to proceed beyond Bargoed. They managed, however, to reach their destinations on Thursday morning. The reason for the train being held was that another train had run into a snow-drift, blocking the up-line. The Tirphil train was released on Thursday morning. During the night, the stranded passengers, through the efforts of Police Inspector Griffith Thomas and his staff, were provided with refreshments that had been obtained from a local café. Arrangements were also made for the passengers to go to commodious rooms at the Junction Hotel, situated near the station, where every comfort was afforded them. Some 30 people spent Tuesday night in a train that had become embedded in heavy drifts between Fochriw and Dowlais Top. They were provided with food during the night, and were brought to Fochriw on Wednesday night by local inhabitants, who gave them food and shelter until they

were able to get lower down the valley later in the day. The train is still embedded in the snow, and the railway authorities are doing their utmost to release it. Until it is free, there will be no traffic between the Rhymney Valley and Brecon. No omnibuses were working in the valley on Wednesday and Thursday. Many vehicles caught in the drifts on Tuesday, had to be taken out on Wednesday. Some miners returning home from the afternoon shift on Tuesday, spent the night in the omnibuses in which they were being conveyed. Schools were closed on Wednesday and Thursday. Attendances at the collieries was badly affected, there being about 40% of the men at their work. Bread had to be sent from Cardiff to some of the higher townships in the Valley. Few trains ran on Thursday.

15 March 1947 Rhymney Valley Badly Hit By Blizzard: Coal Output Down by Over 20,000 Tons: Soldiers Help to Clear Snow More than 20,000 tons of coal were lost in the Rhymney Valley because of the severe blizzard which struck the Valley during the latter part of the week. For two days, two large collieries, Groesfaen and Ogilvie, were idle because the miners, mainly from Dowlais, Merthyr and Fochriw districts, were unable to reach the pits on account of snow drifts, in some instances 20ft. deep, blocking roads and railways leading to the mines. Many were unable to get to work on Friday, and arrangements were made for them to be paid on Saturday and Monday. The blizzard brought road and rail transport in the upper portion of the area, practically to a standstill on Wednesday and Thursday. Cars and omnibuses were stranded on both sides of roads for several days, and over the weekend troops came in to assist railway employees to clear lines, and dig out trains, which had become embedded in deep drifts. An appeal to volunteers to clear roads in some districts met with a fine response. Members of the Glamorgan Constabulary assisted in efforts to send yeast to bakers in villages that could not be reached by road transport and many thousands of loaves were sent by train from Cardiff to a number of townships. Normal supplies of meat and other foodstuffs failed to reach some outlying places at the weekend. Groceries were delivered to homes on sleighs. Milk had to be carried by householders from depots on a number of days. On Sunday, some districts were without milk as farmers failed to get through with supplies. At Pantywaun, a water main was frozen, and the seat of the trouble could not be located as there were drifts over the pipes. Pipes in many houses have been frozen for over a week, and householders have carried water from neighbouring houses where the position is more fortunate. Farmers in the higher reaches have had a difficult time. Sheep and lambs have been lost, and some have died under drifts of deep snow. It is estimated that hundreds of sheep have died in this way. Over the weekend, a large number of sheep and light horses came down from the mountain slopes in search of food. They entered garden and outhouses, and spent nights sheltering by the sides of houses and at the foot of refuse tips. Sheep, that usually found no trouble in jumping walls, were able to get along only with difficulty because of their weakened state. Over the weekend, bread and meat was carried in sacks to Gellygear Hospital. Sunday was anything but a day of rest for many householders. They spent much time clearing snow from the front of their houses, and from attics into which it had been blown by the strong winds. Failure to clear attics in time resulted in ceilings giving way when the snow began to melt. One Bargoed householder carried more than one hundred buckets of snow from his attic. The thaw that set in on Monday, greatly improved travelling conditions. However, up to Tuesday night, rail traffic could go no further than Bargoed because of drifts at a point above Fochriw. It will be recalled that on Tuesday of last week a train proceeding to Brecon, and carrying some 30 passengers, was lodged in deep snow above Fochriw. By Friday, the train and two locomotives which endeavoured to release it, became covered over to a depth of 15 feet. A railway employee said that every effort was being made to clear the line. Over 400 men have been employed in road clearing in the Gellygear area. Of that number, 250 were unemployed men. The Gellygaer Surveyor spoke with great admiration for the way in which the men had tackled the enormous job of cutting through some of the heavy drifts. Snow-ploughs have been working 24 hours a day in the urban areas.

15 March 1947 Blizzard Hits Fochriw Fochriw has experienced the blizzard in all its severity during the past week. Fochriw was cut off from road, rail and postal services for

many days. Trains are trapped in deep drifts. Many men have been employed in clearing roads. Inhabitants have had to tramp over high drifts for their bread etc.

1 November 1947 Rainfall Lowest on Record Rainfall in the Rhymney Valley for the past six months was the lowest on record, it being 15.61 ins. as compared with 19.15 ins. for the corresponding period of the previous lowest rainfall. This information was given at the meeting on Monday, at Ystrad Mynach, of the Rhymney Valley Water Board, by the engineer, Mr. W.H. James, B.Sc. He stated that one reservoir at Rhymney Bridge was empty, and the other was 29ft. 6ins, below top water level, but was picking up after recent rainfall.

6 December 1952 The Snow Fochriw and district had a considerable fall of snow last week. Large snow-drifts curtailed traffic and buses failed to run. The officers and workmen of the Public Works Department of the Council had a busy time opening the way for traffic with snow ploughs. Railway employees also had a difficult time.

21 May 1955 Blizzard Causes Electricity Breaks: Cables Down Several inches of snow blanketed Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, and Tredegar on Tuesday, after an unprecedented mid-May blizzard. Two thousand people in Rhymney, and another 2,000 at Fochriw were without electric light and power for many hours because of the blizzard. Electric power cables were frozen by the snow, and some at Fochriw, and the lower part of the Rhymney valley, were brought to the ground.

5 January 1963 Snow Cuts Off Village As Its Last Train Storms Out Fochriw was once again isolated following heavy snowfalls on Saturday and Monday. This time, however, there was a great difference – there were no trains. The last train on the Newport to Brecon line left on its final trip as the snow commenced. No motor vehicles entered the village from Saturday until late on Monday night. Mr. Lance Rogers, secretary of the Ogilvie Lodge of the National Union of Mineworkers, said on Tuesday: “It is impossible for the men to get to work. As far as I know, no miners have tried to get to work today.” There were deep snow-drifts on the road between Fochriw and Deri. The village was without bread, milk and newspapers. Mr. W. Morgan, a Pontllytyn dairyman and farmer, said that it had been impossible to get to Fochriw on Sunday and Monday. There were drifts of up to 10 feet on the Pontllytyn to Fochriw road, and the snow-plough failed to clear a way. A bulldozer had to be used before Fochriw was finally opened to the outside world, late on Monday night. Many motorists were taken by surprise by the blizzard. According to a police spokesman, the cars that were stranded belonged almost entirely to local people. A power failure which started at 9 p.m. on Monday continued until mid-day on Tuesday, to complete the discomfort of villagers living in Old Fochriw and Pontllytyn Road Council Houses. In spite of heavy snow and drifts, conditions in other parts of the Rhymney Valley are not too bad.

2 February 1963 New Snowfall Just as Valley Was Recovering The Rhymney Valley was well on the road to recovery from the devastation caused by the snow and frost when the snow returned on Tuesday night. Although the snowfall had been heavy, it was not accompanied by frost and high winds, and added little to the Valley’s troubles, turning to slush after causing morning hold-ups to traffic. However, the water situation seems bad at the moment, but if the thaw continues, and the catchment areas re-freeze, the situation should become easier. Many houses have frozen pipes, and are still without water. The main concern now is leaking gas pipes, damaged by the frost. Only a few schools remained closed among them Fochriw Primary School.

9 February 1963 Snow Causes Valley Chaos in Cold Spell’s Last Fling The Arctic spell had what everybody hoped was its dying kick on Tuesday and Wednesday, when heavy snow and high winds brought back chaos to many parts of the Rhymney Valley. But the wind was from the south, and everybody hoped it would bring the much-vaunted thaw and restore conditions to normal after nine weeks of frozen misery. The heavy snowfalls became a blizzard before midnight on Tuesday, and many motorists and lorry drivers were forced to abandon their vehicles. It brought a further aftermath on Wednesday. The first buses taking people to work, hit drifts, and three Gellygaer Council buses became stuck in drifts between Fochriw and Deri. Fochriw was cut off from both Deri and Pontllytyn, and the town of Rhymney was itself isolated for a time. The aftermath of the night’s snow was closed schools and manning problems at factories and collieries. Tuesday found the Rhymney Valley’s

eleven collieries working, but experiencing traffic difficulties on the surface. As time wore on, however, their problems increased as bus companies tried valiantly to take colliers to the mines and to bring them home. All did not succeed. Mr. A.E. Everitt, Deputy Surveyor to Gellygaer Urban Council said on Wednesday morning: "Conditions are very bad throughout the area. It is still snowing heavily, and the wind is causing drifting around Fochriw. Snow ploughs are working on the roads, but supplies of salt petre are running out, and we have had to rely on mechanical loaders to shovel snow away." Mr. T.R. Thomas, Inspector of the Gellygaer Council Transport Department said that the Fochriw service was off. Buses could run only as far as Deri.