



HANES Bach 6

December 2020

Society Update

Alun Watts

At our last full committee meeting in March, we began to plan for the Society's 50th Anniversary in 2021. Sadly, Covid intervened and we were unable to meet until June, when, using the Zoom facility, Committee Meetings recommenced (virtually!). It had been the intention to hold a celebratory dinner in May 2021. Of course, this is not possible now. However, we are planning to hold the dinner towards the end of 2021, that is, if it is feasible. Naturally, we will keep you informed.

The committee are on course to publish Old Aberdare Volume XI in 2021. We are indebted to our two editors Steven Graham and David Leslie Davies for their hard work in compiling the book and Colin Rees for his input.

The committee have been concerned that we have an incomplete archived record of papers, publications and minutes of the Society covering the past 50 years. Neither is there an up-to-date list of the items held, and their location, to enable members (and others) basic access for research purposes.

In the case of Committee meeting minutes, previous Committee members have/are being contacted to see if they can assist in providing such records. If any of you can help us in this quest, we would be very grateful. (In relative recent times, 1996–2001 is a period short of minutes!)

The Society has recently obtained a grant from the Heritage Fund of up to £10,000 to assist us in digitising Society's records and *Hanes*. If anyone, with expertise, is available to assist in this digital project, we would be very appreciative.

If you can assist with missing papers or contribute to the digital project, please contact me, (Alun Watts), on 01685 870306 or e-mail me at alunwatts6@aol.com or contact any other Committee member.

Merry Christmas to you all and a much better 2021

THE BUTCHER, THE BAKER, THE CANDLESTICK MAKER *by Geoffrey Evans*
(Nursery Rhyme ca, 1789)

It would be an interesting and valuable undertaking to record the minor industries of the Cynon Valley. The project would catalogue brewing, safety lamp manufacturing, brick making, foundries, coach-building, woollen/flannel, boot, shoe and clog making, tanning and much more. Such a survey would be quite formidable.

An early and essential industry was candle making. Candles were used universally throughout most of the nineteenth century in industry, shops and the home.

1850. Candles (*prodigious quantities are consumed in the mines and houses*) [they cost] *5d to 5½d per lb.* (Note, a labourer's weekly wage that same year was 10s a week.)* :



Poorer people would have made their own candles from rushes dipped in fat, the commonplace candle was made from tallow, and later paraffin candles were introduced.

Tallow candles, made from sheep, pig, cow or ox fat, had an unpleasant brown colour and gave off a

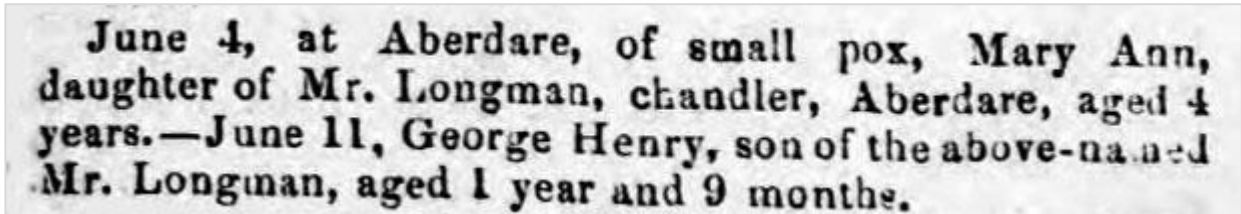
meaty stink. They had to be trimmed frequently or they smoked. In *Bleak House*, Dickens describes how characters felt they could ‘taste the air, and that air tastes either greasy or meaty’

Richer people were able to afford beeswax candles.

There were a number of chandlery in the Aberdare valley; the earliest known was in operation by 1824. The business was at that date run by Butler Jones, tallow chandler, who because of ill health announced he was passing the business onto his son William (*Cambrian*, 5th March, 1824).

Scammell & Co's Trades Directory of 1852 names three tallow chandlers, John Lewis, Commercial Street, Wm Longman, High Street and Edward Pugh, Aberdare.

Webster & Co's Aberdare Directory of 1865 lists Rees Lewis, tallow chandler, Aberaman. Lewis, a Merthyr man, known locally as *Lewis Chandler*, died in 1916; He established his chandlery in 1856.



June 4, at Aberdare, of small pox, Mary Ann, daughter of Mr. Longman, chandler, Aberdare, aged 4 years.—June 11, George Henry, son of the above-named Mr. Longman, aged 1 year and 9 months.

C&MG, 19th June, 1852

It is not known where this business was located but the *Aberdare Leader* of July 1914 carries an advert for the sale of ‘The Old Chandlery in Ynyslwyd Road, Aberaman, suitable for storage and warehouse’.

In November 1863, the local Board of Health granted permission to Evan Williams to open a chandlery at Abergwawr, near the Aman branch of the Vale of Neath Railway.

The 1868 OS map shows a large factory, the *Cynon Candle Manufactory*, located near Abergwawr colliery.

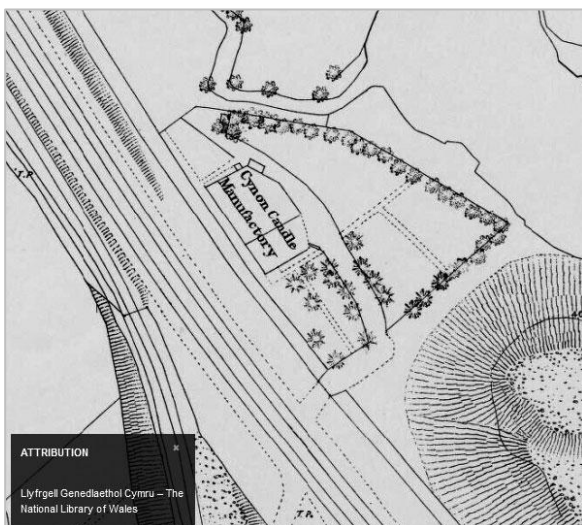
In 1880 this was run by Jane Williams who described herself as tallow chandler and cheese merchant.

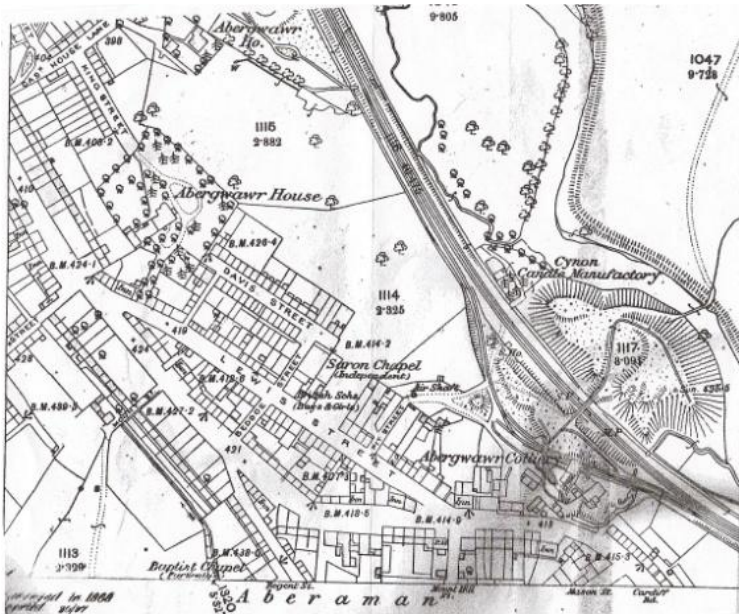
Although the names are the same, it is not clear at present if this business is the successor of the one opened by Evan Williams (above) in 1863. There is disparity too in the records as to the location, although the premises might have relocated.

In 1876 the chandlery stores was destroyed in a fire causing damage estimated at £1,000, ‘the combustible nature of the stock adding to the violence of the conflagration as long as it lasted’. Neither building nor stock was insured. (*Aberdare Times*, 24th June, 1876)

Mrs Williams, who had died by 1882, provides us with a rare glimpse of a local woman running her own business.

Candles could be purchased at almost any grocer’s shop but there were more specialist shops such as the delightfully named *Tea Caddy* (within half a stone’s throw of the market) at 3 Market Street, one of the largest shops in Aberdare, or *Pegler’s* and the *Supply* and *Jam Pot Stores*.





ALL CARS STOP AT
WILLIAMS & CO.,
SUPPLY STORES, ABERDARE,
AND JAM POT STORES, CWMAMAN.

THE ORIGINAL STORES FOR PROVISIONS AT CASH PRICES.

THIS WEEK'S PRICES AND SPECIAL LINES.

FLOUR, Extra Superior	...	...	3/6 per 28 lbs.
POTATOES, Up-to-Date	...	...	1/- per 28 lbs.
CANDLES, 3lb Packet	...	...	8½d. per Pkt
BLUE PEAS, Good Boilers	...	...	3½d. per qt.
SALMON, Large, 1lb. flat, usual price 11½d	...	...	8½d. each.
SALMON, Small ½lb. Size, usual price 6½d.	...	...	5d. each.
PEARS, 10½d. Size	...	Reduced to	8½d. "
OVERWEIGHT MARGARINE, ½lb given with every lb.	...	...	1/-
DOUBLE-WEIGHT	...	1lb given with every lb.	1/-

Buy for Cash at the Cash Stores & Save Money.

Williams & Co., Supply Stores
2 CARDIFF STREET, ABERDARE,
and JAM POT STORES, CWMAMAN.

*Jules Ginswick (Ed) *Labour and the Poor in England and Wales, 1849-1851*, Vol.III. Quoted by Mrs Tydfil Thomas in *Poor Relief in Merthyr Tydfil Union in Victorian Times*. (Bridgend, 1992)

Members Inputs

Following the reminiscences of Mrs Olwen Roberts in Hanes Bach 5, Mrs Nia Davies (née) James has kindly sent us her recollections of that period;

Reading the note from Olwen Roberts led me to recall my own memories of that time. I lived 3 doors from the Coliseum which opened in 1938. In 1942 the BBC Symphony Orchestra was evacuated to Aberdare. Sir Adrian Boult was its conductor. He lived next door to me and used to visit our neighbours regularly. He used to tell me the stories behind the music and about who composed them. I met other members of the orchestra: Archie Camden who was a bassoonist of some renown. After I married I found he lived not far from me in Totteridge, North London. One of his sons married an Aberdare girl. Aubrey Brain was principal horn player. His son Denis was renowned too but died young in a car crash in Hatfield. Where it occurred is now known as French Horn Lane. I heard many of the leading singers of the day, Isobel Bailie, Kathleen Ferrier to name but two. All this gave me a lifelong interest in classical music which has been fed by Classic FM during Covid restrictions. I hope these remembrances from my childhood will be of interest to others. — Nia Davies.

Quiz/Puzzle, Number 6.

This puzzle requires answers to the six questions below and then taking the first letter of each answer and re-arranging them as an anagram to find a festive 'Welsh' word. All seven answers will be found in the next edition of either *Hanes Bach* or *Hanes*.

1. A saucepan would not be out of place in this Welsh town. (8).
2. Who was the mother of Saint David? (3).
3. The only daughter of Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, (last native Prince of Wales), and Eleanor de Montfort was held captive at this priory in Sempringham, Lincolnshire for fifty-four years. Who was she? (9).
4. What was the name of the iconic building designed by the architect Anthony Keck at Margam Park in 1793? (8). *Ignore the definite article.*
5. The Second "X-----" Legion was based at Caerleon from AD72 to suppress the Silurians (the main Celtic tribe of south east Wales). What does "X-----" represent? (9).
6. This boy was born of Welsh parents on 17th January 1863 in Manchester and became an iconic Welsh politician. What was his first name? (5).

Solution to the Quiz/Puzzle, Number 5.

Answers:— 1. Elizabeth. 2. Illtyd. 3. Gower. 4. Druids. 5. Tenby (*Dinbych-y-pysgod*).

Anagram:— Tegid (*this fish, tegid, was trapped in Bala Lake during the last Ice Age and has survived in the lake ever since*).

Erratum: The telephone number given in Hanes Bach 5 for Haydn Williams, book sales, was incorrect. It should be 01685 879793

Although the Aberdare Cables facility was part of Pirelli, the site operated under the name Aberdare Cables until a new division “Special Cables” was set up in 1980. In 1972 Pirelli invested in manufacturing equipment, which had been denied by the Board of Directors of Aberdare Holdings in 1969, to meet its future requirement to the regional Electrical Supply Board’s new cable specifications. In the period 1971 to 1979 the Aberdare facility was used to develop new products utilizing high performance materials for use in high and low temperatures and chemical and radiation environments. Also, to develop specially designed cables such as a high specification fire performance cable for safe use in many applications. Of the products developed, FP200 cable was the most successful, and was made to survive and operate for at least 200 minutes in serious fires. These developments resulted in the formation of a new operating division of Pirelli, the Special Cable Division (SCD) on the site.

The 1937 cable factory was not an ideal environment to manufacture high tech products and an in-depth investigation was undertaken to consider our options for the future. In conclusion it was decided that a new facility should be built to accommodate SCD, after due consideration it was decided to build a new factory on the mainly disused adjacent Aberdare Engineering site which already accommodated a recently built radiation treatment block house. This block house was basically a rectangular building with four foot thick concrete walls, roof and base, and incorporated a section of removable wall, so that cable winding machinery and large cable drums could be moved in and out, with the operation being controlled from an outside office by video link to TV monitors. This development was of considerable cost to the company but it was needed to bombard a number of the specialized plastics with high-energy particles. This treatment changed their physical properties both thermally and mechanically.

Before anything could proceed, the UK Pirelli Board was advised by Southampton UDC that they would not allow Pirelli to renew the lease of the land on which the General Cables Division (GCD) stood. Since land was at a premium in Hampshire, and the Aberdare site was a very large parcel of land, it was decided that SCD would be moved to Hampshire and GCD be relocated to the Aberdare site. Due to the high cost of the relocation and the need to upgrade the GCD’s manufacturing processes into the computerised age, to compete against Eastern European and Asian low cost manufacture, Pirelli required regional grant aid from the Welsh Office for the new Aberdare GCD venture. After a year of secret meetings, the Aberdare work force, early in 1984, was told that SCD would be relocating to Hampshire at the end of the year and that GCD would be taking the site over to manufacture FP200 cable for a limited period. The product FP200 cable was highly profitable, is still being manufactured, and is used in many areas of installation that we never considered in the 1970s.

A new build General Cable factory was opened on the Aberdare site in 1987 by the Prince of Wales. Of the old factory buildings of the Aberdare Cables era, only one building remains, namely the “100-Foot Long Bay” that was built in 1965 for Steel Tape Armouring, but is now used to house the PVC compounding plant.

It may be noted that Aberdare Holdings, due to its acquisition of new companies ended up as a financial disaster and the remaining divisions were sold off in 1973. If one looks at what happened with Pirelli Cables in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, Pirelli Cables went on a buying exercise, starting with the purchase of Standard Telephone Cables, Newport, Gwent and then many other cable makers which included the other cable giant, British Insulated Callender’s Cables, Wrexham, North Wales. This resulted in a similar fate to Aberdare Holdings. It is now owned by a group of venture capitalists.

Quirky Archives.

A recent request to the Cynon Valley Museum for any archive information they might have regarding the History Society was quickly responded to. The museum provided a detailed list of items, such as, a white ceramic plate ‘Cynon Valley History Society 1971–1996’ (Twenty Fifth Anniversary) printed in gold, several programmes ‘Balalaika’ Coliseum, Aberdare, January 8th – 15th, 1949 and a b/w photograph of the Monumental Masons, High Street, Aberdare. But also included were:

Skirt lifter – black cord with metal that was attached to skirt hems to be lifted when crossing over dirty roads !

Spats pair of gentlemen’s spats – brown cloth with buttons on sides – leather straps to secure underneath shoes !