

CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY

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HANES



NEWSLETTER OF THE CYNON VALLEY HISTORY SOCIETY
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HANES ON AGRICULTURE

*God speede the plow,
And give us ale corn enow.*
(From a 15th Century ploughman's song)

The theme of the first Hanes of 2009 is agriculture. This Spring issue comes out in the very season that brings a re-awakening and re-birth of the land. Any passing student of Aberdare's history would be forgiven for associating Aberdare's past with the iron industry and coal mining rather than farming, yet its industrial past lasted a mere two hundred years and forty years from the opening of the Hirwaun Iron works in 1757 to the virtual demise of the coal industry in the 1980's. Agriculture, however, supported life here for probably more than 600 years. Despite this, few records of Aberdare's agricultural history remain; there are a number of extant Manorial Surveys, a run of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Land Tax Assessments, a Survey of Tithes made by the Dean and Chapter of Gloucester Cathedral around the year 1800, and of course the Tithe Schedule and Map of 1844/1847. Other sources, such as old wills etc., are few and scattered.

Hanes therefore offers readers five short pieces on farming in an attempt to connect them to Aberdare's agrarian past

TRANSITION

This Parish is very extensive, but chiefly mountainous. When the last Survey was taken...there appeared to be about 520 Acres of Land annually sown with corn; whereas at present the quantity this year is only 179½. The reason of this very great decrease is that the ironworks are greatly extended, and the proprietors consider agriculture too trifling for their attention, and do not encourage it in a country where the labourers can earn so much more in the mines or manufactories than they could by following ploughs. They are therefore enabled to buy corn cheaper than they could rais (sic) it, whose labour is so high, and the soil in general so unproductive, and as they keep a great number of horses for the use of the works, it is of more consequence to them to lay their land down to grass, than to keep it in tillage. (Ca. 1800, From The Records of the Dean and Chapter of Gloucester Cathedral relating to Aberdare.)

* * * * *

With respect to the two Southern Hamlets, Fforchammon (Sic) and Cefn-pennar, both contain much that is connected with the Town and the Iron-works; the former contains some country, and the latter still more, which is decidedly agricultural. (Report of the Parliamentary Boundary Commissioners, Part VIII, 1832 compiled by T. F. Ellis and W. W. Wylde)

* * * * *

Aberdare... (Is) equally characterised by features of beauty and of grandeur. Its majestic groves of oak and fir, alternating with fruitful corn-fields and luxuriant meadows..

(Samuel Lewis, Topographical Dictionary of Wales 1833. Vol.1)

IN MEMORIAM
Gareth T. Roberts, 11, Plasdraw Place, Aberdare. 4 December 2008

I GIVE, DEVISE AND BEQUEATH...

An early edition of **Hanes** (No.4, March 1986) published details of a local Yeoman's will proved in 1546.

When in August 1691 Thomas Llewelin of Aberdare died, he left a will, and an inventory of his farm was made for Probate purposes. This document provides us with a picture of the pattern of agricultural production on a local hill farm in the seventeenth century. The relevant part of his personal property consisted of the following items:

13 cows, 8 calves and 1 bull	valued at	£20.	10.	0
5 yearling beasts	do	3.	3.	0
46 sheepe	do	6.	0.	0
5 bullocks, 1 heyfer and 2 oxen	do	13.	0.	0.
7 horses	do	8.	0.	0
5 swyn (swine)	do	1.		
7 beast (two year old)	do	8.		
All the corn in his land.	do	10.		
All the hay.	do	6.		
Household stuff.	do	4.		
Implements of husbandry.	do		10/-	
Butter, cheese and wooll.	do	3.	5/-	
All powltreys (sic)	do		1/6d.	

Source: Moelwyn I Williams, *Some Aspects of Glamorgan Farming in Pre-Industrial Times*, in Stewart Williams (Ed), *Glamorgan Historian* Vol.2, 1965.

Nothing more is known about Thomas Llewelin. A Rent Roll of the Manor of Miskin however, dated 1666, names a **Thomas Llewellyn** who *paid a yearly rent of £4.10.0d. and two fat capons*, 1 hariott de opt.* for a tenement called Tir y Gwryd Ycha, being part of Tir y Pimpint. In the absence of other confirmatory evidence we cannot say that the persons named in the will and the Rent Roll are one and the same. However the dates of the Rent Roll (1666) and the Will (1691) make it possible.

In T.D. Llewelyn's essay *Aberdare in 1853 (Gardd Aberdâr)*, the author tells us "There are two homesteads called the Gwryd and Gwryd Canol (Middle), and that the name Gwryd means Chain - the measurement used by the old people in relation to land." Gwryd Canol, was in 1853, called Tir-y-felin Newydd, a name given to it circa 1793 when a corn mill was set up there. In 1638 the larger area of land referred to as Tîre y Pympynt (sic) also comprised the Werfa, Pant y Gerdynen, Graige y Gilfach, Tir y Gwryd Yssa, Tir y Ton Hire and Tir y Coale. At that time Christopher Mathew owned these lands.

NOTES: *A Capon is a castrated cock. (A delicacy). Hariott = Heriot, the render to the Lord of the Manor of the best live beast on the farm on the death of the tenant. A legal custom.

A LOCAL AUCTION SALE

In the autumn of 1849 Richard and Catherine Thomas, the tenants of Nantmelin Farm, retired from farming. Their decision to do so has left us with a fairly detailed picture of agricultural life on an upland farm at that time. An analysis of the *Particulars of the Auction Sale* provide us with information concerning the livestock, implements of husbandry, the produce of that year's crop and, in part, the household furniture in their possession. Although better known to us as Nantmelin, this Cwmdare farm was in 1849, known as Llestri (Lluestai-Ed.) Llwydion (Commonly called Tir-y-Bechgyn). Its history, which can be traced back to 1570, is given in John Mear's book The History of Cwmdare (Aberdare 1991), pp 30-31.

The farm consisted of 147 acres in 1844, when it formed part of the Gwyn Holford Estate, having been acquired by him through marriage to a Mathew heiress.

The livestock consisted of 5 mountain ponies, a colt of the Hirwaun Wrgan breed (doubtless descendants of the "*Great Race and Bredth of Horsis*" observed by John Leland sometime between 1536 and 1539 - Ed.), 6 farm horses, 18 steers and heifers (6 two years old, 6 three years old and 6 four year old), a (handsome) Hereford Bull calf, a fat cow, 10 milch cows (stinted), 2 store pigs, and lots (presumably "Auctioneer's lots" - Ed.) of geese and poultry.

Many of the items of livestock were described as "superior", "useful", "handsome" and "excellent". Although there was no Trade Descriptions Act at that time, we should allow for the canniness of the buyers of the day!

The sale took place on the 20th September, and part of the harvest had already been collected enabling the sellers to offer ricks of well-harvested long and short hay, and that year's crop of 12-15 acres housed in haylofts. The sale also included 2 acres of nearly ripe wheat, and 6-8 acres of oats (then standing).

Implements of husbandry consisted of 2 hay cars, a manure cart, a plough, harrow and drag. Three sets of ploughing harness, 3 sets (with chains) for ploughing, 3 horse collars, 5 pack saddles, girths, pikes, rakes, a pick axe, cattle ties. Three sheep gates and several benches for shearing and other purposes. A chaff cutter, wheelbarrow, 3 prong manure forks, several shovels, a wooden roller, several pairs of panniers, and a capital oak pig trough. (Although these items refer to sheep gates there were no corresponding animals amongst the livestock. Perhaps these had already been taken to market - Ed.)

Nantmelin had also been a Dairy Farm and the items used in connection with that part of the business comprised 4 milk pails, an upright and a barrel churn, and several dozens of milk pans. In addition there were several cheese vats, a butter trendle (a circle or ring, presumably for moulding the butter), prints, a pair of wooden scales, cream tubs, a large iron marmont*, a brass pan and some cheese tubs.

Miscellaneous items consisted of an assortment of corn and other sieves.

The contents of the house, only a portion of which were being sold, reveal 2 cake bake stones, an oak table (Bord amharth), a very large superior oak table, said to be well adapted for a farmer's dining table, or a gentleman's servants' hall. Four large superior oak chests with panel and carved fronts, and an oak chest commonly called Kist. (Chest, box or coffer. Also one in which money is kept. A treasury - Ed.) There was also a very good clock with handsome case, a bedstead and "innumerable other articles all useful for household purposes."

The sale was directed at farmers, graziers and butchers. It was proposed that all items be disposed of on the same day. Anyone purchasing items costing £5 and upwards would be granted a period of eight months credit. Livestock purchased by buyers from outside the area had permission to leave them on the farm for three days after the sale. (Source: **Notice of Auction Sale: The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian 15th September 1849.**)

* Marmont = A three-legged iron cooking pot. I am grateful to Dr. Brigden, Keeper of the Museum of English Rural Life for this information. Editor.

Llwydcoed, Aberdare

**Sale of Cattle, Horses, Household Furniture, Brewing Utensils,
and a valuable Flock of Mountain Sheep**

Mr. W.Morgan

Has been instructed by the Executrix of the late DAVID DAVIES.

TO OFFER FOR SALE BY PUBLIC

AUCTION

Without Reserve on the Premises, at

DYLLAS,

On Tuesday October 22nd 1861

THE UNDERMENTIONED LIVE AND DEAD

STOCK

CONSISTING OF

30 Wethers, 30 Ewes, fit for the Butcher, 20 Breeding Ewes, and 40 Lambs, 1 good Milch Cow, 1 Mare, steady for riding and will go well in harness, 1 two-year old filly of good action, about 7 tons of well-harvested Hay, 1 Chaff-Cutter, several sets of Harness.

The FURNITURE comprises 2 8-day Clocks in cases, Dresser and Shelves, Tables, Chairs, Benches, Bedsteads, and sundry other Articles. Also the whole of the Brewing Utensils, which are in good order.

<p>Three Month's Credit will be given, upon approved security, to Purchasers of £2 and upwards, or a Discount of two and a half per cent for Cash Payments.</p>

Sale to commence at 1 o'clock precisely. — Refreshments will be provided.

NOTES. This sale was occasioned by the death of the Tenant farmer, David Davies, in 1861. The farmhouse still exists today and was once the home of Society founder member the late Dr. Alistair Wilson. It subsequently became a restaurant "The Fox and Hounds" and is now a private residence. In the 1844 Tithe Schedule the farm then called Waun Dyllas was owned by Mathew Wayne and occupied by Thomas David. It consisted of just over 73 acres. The farmer there in 1875 was Thomas Jones (Worrall's Directory). The original of this Notice hangs in the Agricultural Gallery of the National History Museum at St.Fagans.

[OLD DOCUMENTS.NUMBER ONE]

GENTLEMEN FARMERS

(Milkmaids, Straw Trussers and Toasts)

Agricultural Societies were established in Wales in the mid-eighteenth century to encourage the improvement of rural life by awarding prizes for the planting of trees, to encourage the excellence of livestock and traditional craftsmanship, the maintenance of roads, and the good behaviour of farm servants. The first such society in Wales, and one of the earliest in Britain, was the Breconshire Society founded in 1755. The Glamorgan Society dates from 1772 and this and the other Welsh Societies became the channel through which the Agricultural Revolution reached the country.

One would not associate Aberdare in 1877 with agriculture, yet the prestigious Glamorgan Agricultural Society held its annual show here that year. The show returned to Aberdare again in August 1887, the year of the Queen's Jubilee. It was held on the Ynys Meadows (then owned by Daniel Rees JP) over two days, 27 and 28 July. *"Aberdare had on her best holiday garb to greet the Annual Show of the Glamorgan Agricultural Society. Amongst the most distinguished visitors were Lord and Lady Aberdare and party, The Hon.H.C.Bruce, Sir J.Spearman, W.T.Crawshay and party, Daniel Owen (Ash Hall), J.S.Corbett, Francis Crawshay, D.T.Alexander, Rees Hopkin Rhys, Judge Gwilym Williams, John Evans (Croft) and D.W. Williams (Fairfield)."* The Cyfarthfa and Neath Bands were in attendance and played a splendid selection of music.

A great attraction, especially for the ladies, was a large working dairy in full operation with a full staff of assistants explaining every detail of the working.

There was also a spectacular display of state of the art agricultural implements including Hornby's portable vertical and horizontal steam engines, ploughs, drags and barrows, prize taking chaff cutters, mills, thrashing, shelling and winnowing machines and Kell's Drills. A great attraction was Hornsby's thrashing machine with patent straw trusser which could tie straw as fast as it could be thrashed, and a Patent fork elevator which loaded a 30 feet rick in less than five minutes, and was so simple in construction that it could easily be worked by a boy 13 years old.

Entries to the show:-

Cattle, 97	Poultry, 209
Sheep, 48	Implements, 22
Pigs, 11	Sheep Dogs, 16
Horses, 191	Honey, 9.
Dairy Produce, 16	Cabs, 6

There were 8,727 admissions to the showground and 824 to the Grandstand. The Showground receipts totalled £460.15.3d and those of the Grandstand £61.17.0d.

The Annual Dinner in connection with the show took place in the evening at the Market Hall, the portion of the building portioned off for the banquet being very ornately decorated.

The following Toasts (with responses) were proposed:-

The Loyal Toasts,	The Health of the Judges.
The Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese and Ministers of all Denominations.	The Town and Trade of Aberdare.
The Army, Navy and Auxiliary Forces.	The Local Committee and Secretary.
The Health of the High Constable as Chairman of the Local Committee.	The Glamorgan Agricultural Society*.
	The Society's General Secretary.
	The Press.

*Col. Blandy Jenkins, in response to the toast to the Society, said that he did not remember any town in which the Society had received a more hearty welcome, or in which more complete preparations had been made... (It is likely) that this Show will be one of the most prosperous both commercially and financially.

(Source: The Western Mail.)

Errata. Hanes No.44, (page 1). We apologise to Mr. Hywel Vaughan for having anglicized his name to Howell Vaughan. Another error occurred on page 5 where the date of the General Strike was given as 1923 instead of 1926.

LOCAL HISTORY PROJECT

Eight months before the end of the First World War a severe flu epidemic swept the world. Known as "Spanish Flu" it began in March 1918 and lasted until June 1920. Twice as many people died of the epidemic than were killed in the Great War.

An unusual feature of the pandemic was that it affected healthy young adults. It is estimated that worldwide it caused between 20 and 100 million deaths. It is believed that there were **250,000 deaths in Great Britain**. Deaths in Wales are put at 10,000. In Cardiff there were 115 fatalities in one week, those who caught the virus died within a few days.

Two paragraphs in the ***Aberdare Leader*** of 13 July 1918 recently caught my eye. The contents read thus:

INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

Yesterday (Wednesday) a number of workmen employed at the Bwllfa Collieries had to be carried home from work on ambulances, having been seized with the new epidemic known as Spanish Influenza. Several local doctors are also laid up with the malady. The epidemic is on the increase in the Aberdare district.

and

ABERCYNON

INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC - The Spanish influenza epidemic has claimed several victims in Abercynon during the past few days. Several workmen employed at the Colliery are home in consequence of the epidemic, and a few business-men are also down with it.

Would any member/members be interested in researching the topic to ascertain the effect and impact of the epidemic in this area? Were any members of your family affected? It is suggested that a small working group be set up to examine the event

Primary sources would include the local Burial Registers for the period and the newspapers. A start could be made by looking at back copies of the paper to see if there are any earlier references to the outbreak than our excerpts. Do you have any family memories? It is also suggested that the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages be contacted for returns of deaths for the years of the epidemic, and pre and post years so that comparisons can be made.

*The Editor undertakes to publish the findings / Essay(s) in Hanes or elsewhere.
Help provided if necessary.*

The Editor.

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