

Printing on the Spot

by Gary Jenkins

I grew up in a small village just outside of Ammanford in Carmarthenshire. Ammanford, Llanelli, Carmarthen, Llandeilo and the 'Big City' Swansea, are all a short drive away, but as a young lad on my weekends or during school holidays, I visited my 'special town', Pontarddulais. My first couple of years were spent there until my parents, myself and my younger sister moved away, but this is where my grandparents and most of my aunties, uncles and cousins lived. Both parents also grew up in the town. To them and to the locality it became affectionally known as "Y Bont".



Prior to the 1800s, the settlement was but a few small houses and a church in the parish of Llandeilo Tal-y-bont (founded circa 600ad) and was the main crossing point from West Glamorgan to Carmarthenshire across the River Loughor. There is a record that mentions a Pontarddulais bridge (Bridge on the mouth of the Dulais) built around 1300ad, and this connected to roads leading from Carmarthen, Llandeilo and Llanelli, acting as a sort of halfway point to the main route of Swansea. It was used by the mail/stagecoaches and farmers carts of the day trying to

sell their produce to these towns. The crossing route probably dates back as far as Roman times.

Llandeilo Tal-y-bont, means Saint Teilo's Church at the end of the bridge, but this reference is not the same bridge mentioned earlier. Saint Teilo's Church had its own crossing further up the river and dates to medieval times, probably the late 12th Century. In recent years it was carefully dismantled and rebuilt stone-by-stone in St Fagan's National History Museum near Cardiff. The discovery of old paintings in its whitewashed walls hold much historical significance.



St Teilo's Church (original setting)

[St Teilo's Church | National Museum Wales](#)

With the coming of the industrial revolution to Wales, this small, little known hamlet would grow, alongside the town of Merthyr Tydfil, to become one of the main industrial hubs in the country. The village became known as Pontarddulais (Bridge on the Dulais – "Dulais" meaning dark or black stream), which feeds into the Loughor a little way up from the main bridge. The name probably comes from the stream feeding down from the coalfields further up the valley. Anthracite coal was mined in the valleys and transported, initially by road or by the river Loughor, from the coal fields, and was a dropping off point for further transportation to Llanelli and Swansea. In 1839 a railway line was established by the Llanelli Dock Company, through the village from the Amman Valley to Llanelli. In 1866 a further link to Swansea was made and Pontarddulais went from being a small rural village into an industrial town, all through this important rail junction. In 1872 to 1920, six tinplate works were erected, and the Graig Merthyr Colliery was established, where my other great grandfather, grandfather and father worked as electricians. Steelworks, corn and woollen mills were built along the banks of the Loughor, where the town thrived and evolved, attracting migrant workers from all over, even as far away as Italy. Pontarddulais became the most cosmopolitan of all Welsh towns at that time.





By the turn of the Century, Pontarddulais could boast as much as 31 grocers, 24 drapers, 3 fishmongers, 11 butchers, 15 shoe shops, 9 cobblers, 5 newsagents, 3 ironmongers, 2 saddlers, 28 sweet shops, 4 crockery shops, 2 pharmacies, 2 tobacconists, 3 cabinet makers, 6 barbers, 3 DIY shops and 8 milk rounds. Singularly, a jeweller, a bakery and a printer. Many of these businesses would be run from resident's front parlours which they would open to the public. Despite all this industry and migration, the Welsh Language continued to thrive. It was always spoken in the Chapels and Churches during sermons, and in the

pubs or workplaces, being the language of choice. The Italians, it was supposed, picked the language up rather easily. There were also as many as [19 alehouses](#), along the main road of the Bont. If you were to know of the story of Dylan Thomas, it could also explain his affiliation with the town and drove him to write about it. It was considered safer to drink the beer, rather than water as the local rivers flowed with industrial and chemical effluent for many years, which influenced the local wildlife also. The water for brewing was usually sourced elsewhere.

[From Fountain to River: Dylan Thomas and Pontarddulais](#)

In 1843, however, the town and its surroundings gained some notoriety throughout the world due to incidents that happened during the Rebecca Riots. Rioters were attacking toll gates that were appearing across South Wales, affecting on people's livelihoods. It is reported that it all came to a head on the outskirts of Pontarddulais, near the public house they call the Fountain Inn. Much has been written, with many a novella or article regarding these riots, as was a film adaptation called [Rebecca's Daughters](#).

The screenplay by Dylan Thomas, the film starred Peter O'Toole and Joely Richardson, with a bit part by Ray Gravelle, the Welsh and British Lions rugby player. Ray Gravelle became something of a Welsh folk hero and was the keeper and carrier of the ceremonial sword at the National Eisteddfod. His championing of the Welsh language, and for his exuberance as a reporter during rugby internationals, or for his beloved Llanelli Scarlets, meant he became well treasured by the people of Wales. The honour of the Keeper of the Sword has now been bestowed to a neighbour of mine, Robin McBride, who has also played and coached at international level.

Several well-known literary figures had some link to Pontarddulais, as well as Edward Thomas and Dylan Thomas, who had several aunts and uncles in the town. Dylan also wrote about the town and his close friend, Wynford Vaughan-Thomas CBE, was a Welsh newspaper journalist and radio and television broadcaster, was born just three doors down from my great grandfather's shop. His father David Vaughan-Thomas was a celebrated composer, and his mother was connected to one of Rebecca's original ringleaders.

[Fountain Inn and Rebecca Rebecca in Pontarddulais](#)



J.R. Morgan Printers (bottom of Hope Street and Bridge Street)



J.R. Morgan

In 1904, at the height of industrial growth, with the improved roads and rail system, that my link with Pontarddulais began. My great grandfather John Rhys Morgan together with his wife Lilian Morgan, set up his Printing and Stationers shop the end of Hope Street, a short step down from the station, after learning the printing and

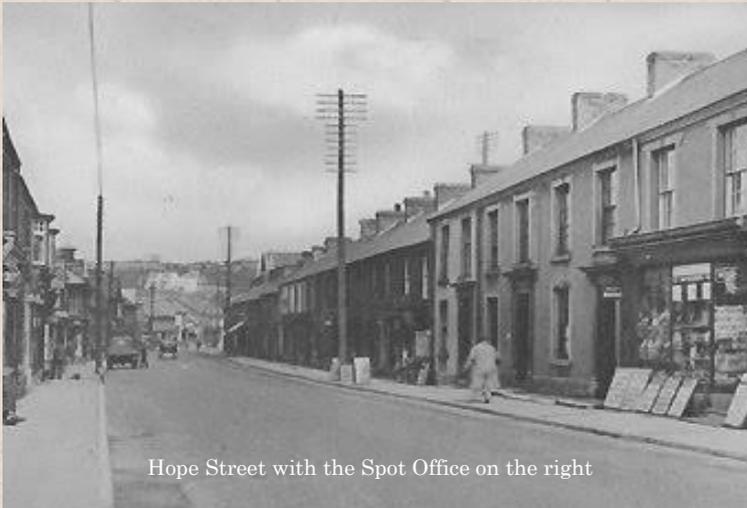
journalism trade in the nearby town of Llanelly (old spelling). His older brother, George Morgan, was the

Assistant Chief Constable for the Carmarthenshire Police together with another brother in the same force. Whilst at Llanelly, he gained his Certificate of Master Printers. The location of the shop, however, was prone to flooding from the overflowing Dulais river during heavy downpours, and after a few of these 'events', he decided to move his business on to 26 Hope Street. Hope Street was the main street that ran through the town and was named after the chapel on the same street. There it remained, when not long after the Second World War, where Hope Street was later renamed as St Teilo's Street.



Flooding in the 1970s.

The business provided mainly printing and stationery, when prior to email, paper and writing was the primary communication means of choice. Posters, pamphlets, programmes, billboards, funeral leaflets, greeting cards and postcards, and writing materials were the main part of his trade. If he was anything like my grandfather, then most of the printing was done in the evenings and weekends in a large printing shed built in the back yard. He fitted in well, almost immediately, into the community and grew respect amongst the locals, so that, when he learned that the local rugby club, Pontarddulais RFC, was on the brink of financial ruin, he offered his services to become its secretary and treasurer that same year. That coming season he had turned around their fortunes, welcoming some of the more prestigious rugby clubs in Wales to come and play there, and hence,



Hope Street with the Spot Office on the right

ensured its continuing survival up to the present day. Incidentally, another relation, George Morgan, later along our family line, became Welsh Rugby Union President between 1987 to 1988.



Two-year-old Gethin and his mother Lilian Morgan

In 1921, my great grandfather printed the first Community Advertising Newspaper 'The Spot'. The Spot was well received amongst the locals, providing local headlines, births, marriages & death columns, Church and Chapel service times, and upcoming events in the town. It had become an important source of information and copies of the paper are archived in the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

The shop became affectionately known as the 'Spot Office' by the locality and was later renamed as such.

Tragically, following a burn he received whilst doing some domestic chores, my great grandfather's hand became infected and he passed away in 1934. My grandfather, Gethin Morgan, the eldest of three brothers, and his wife, Edna Bassett, inherited the business and continued with the printing business.



The Spot newspaper in 1921

Edna together with her sisters and brother Vincent, were brought up in the next village, Y Fforest. Vincent sadly died the day after the War in an accident. Vera Bassett, her sister, became a famous painter, and exhibited at Swansea, London, Cardiff, New York, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Paris, Biarritz, Palm Beach, The National Library of Wales, and Massachusetts. She didn't make much money from her paintings as she was so fond of them, she was loath to sell them on. One such owner of her work in 1954, was Richard Burton and his first wife, Sybil. I have seen letters of thanks addressed from them, and one which included another of his wives, Elizabeth Taylor. There is also a book published of her story and her work: *Vera Bassett – A Rare and Endearing Artist*.

<https://www.welshcountry.co.uk/king-street-vera-bassett/>

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Vera-Bassett-Rare-Endearing-Artist/dp/0995740704>

Stories of the Bont during the Second World War are a bit thin on the ground, but it seems that the town itself did escape much, if any, damage during the Second World War, even though the Swansea Blitz was virtually on its doorstep. Two stray bombs during the Blitz, had exploded in front of and behind my uncle's farm in Garnswllt, a few miles up the road, and those blew out their windows. The blast crater behind the house, is supposedly still there. In relation to the farm, on its grounds was a Swansea to Mumbles tram, that was used for many years as a chicken shed and, we as kids, used to play in. Swansea Museum had a keen interest in acquiring this tram for reconstruction as there were no other surviving mementos of these trams elsewhere. The restored tram is now on display in a window behind the statue of Dylan Thomas in Dylan Thomas Square at Swansea Marina.



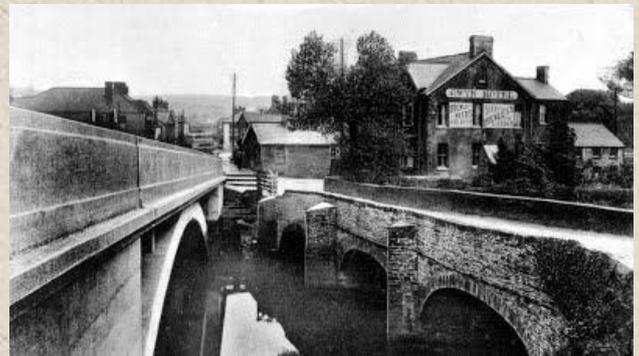
[Swansea Tram.](#)

There are War Memorials in the town from the First and Second World War of those from the locality who served and died for their country. My grandfather did spend some time in the army stationed in Brecon, of which he was none too fond, but I'm not aware of him seeing any action, although his brother Mervyn Morgan was captured as a prisoner of war in Germany. My grandfather did give mention that he and some friends, the day after the Swansea Blitz, had ridden on their pushbikes into Swansea to see if there was anything they could do to help. He said that it had mostly been bombed flat, and those buildings left standing, were still smouldering or burning, too dangerous to approach.

Another story tells of American marines, who were stationed in nearby Grovesend and used to visit the town. My grandfather had some machine out in the front of the shop which distributed either cigarettes or sweets, and the Marines had filled it with silver Dimes which my grandfather had not recovered at the time, so wasn't aware of them. In the early sixties, he decided to throw the old machine in his backyard, which my uncle Spencer, at the age of 12, had discovered a treasure trove of these Dimes still in the machine. He was subsequently interviewed of his discovery by the BBC, and appeared on television to talk about it. My uncle Spencer was to excel at school and was offered a place at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth, where he was offered the role of chairman of the Students Union. This was at the time of Prince Charles' enrolment at the same university for his forthcoming Investiture, and was interviewed in Welsh, just before Charles' arrival. On leaving university, and after some 'bitty' jobs, he joined the Navy as a midshipman stationed in Hong Kong and the South China Sea. Two of the ships he served on were HMS Fearless and the old HMS Ark Royal. He narrowly missed serving with Prince Charles on those same ships, as Charles joined up a little later. He worked his way up in rank to Lieutenant and left the Navy in 1973, shortly before the birth of his first son, and now runs a respected custom jewellery business in Swansea. He was also interviewed, by HTV this time, just before the marriage of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer.

<https://www.spencermorgandiamonds.co.uk/>

The old bridge was demolished near the end of World War 2 and a new bridge erected, but the 1950s saw more modern tinsplate works built in nearby Llanelli. Any existing works were taken over and rendered as light industry from there on. Other writers have painted a rather bleak view of what happened to Pontarddulais since, as a lot of the local people had to find work elsewhere, transforming it into a commuter's village. A lot of the light industry has now gone too since the building of the M4 motorway section bypassing the town.



The old bridge over the Loughor together with new bridge

I was born to the Bont at the later 60s. Living in the nearby village of Y Fforest for my first year, before moving away to another village, Tycroes near Ammanford. As was mentioned earlier, much of my weekends, and some of my school holidays, would be spent at my grandparents in the Bont and, in the evenings with my other grandparents, in Y Fforest. My memories, therefore, are mainly from the 70s to early 80s.

The shop obviously, held a lot of wonder for me, as it was for my younger sister, especially as it had toys and a vast selection of Jigsaws which were very popular at the time. Cap guns, toy cars and marbles in particular, I loved them! My grandmother, as did my mother, went to help in the shop at busy times, but also loved to cook or bake for us when we came to visit. Her Lemon Curd tarts were a delicacy as were her 'butterfly' cakes. My grandmother visited Llanelli about once a week on the bus, in order to buy faggots in the market there, as there was nowhere better for making these meatball delicacies. Of course, there would be other items to take her fancy also.

In those days, it was commonplace for households to grow their own vegetables in the back garden. Homegrown potatoes mashed, garden peas and faggots with gravy were our main meal, and we lapped it up. It was my job to cut away at the Japanese knotweed that threatened to overgrow into the garden most weekends.

Whereas, I quite enjoyed the back garden, kicking a ball against the wall of the shed or playing cricket with my sister, my mother has some mixed feelings on that garden when she was a child. The lady that lived down the road kept chickens, and every so often she could hear her clucking and saying 'chick, chick, chick', all the while holding an axe behind her back. There was also a pigsty at the end of next doors garden and whilst curious, she peeked over the wall only to touch nose to nose with a large sow. She screamed all the while running back to the house and never went near again! Terrifying!

My ball playing would sometimes annoy my grandfather, possibly due to the noise, and probably because it kept knocking down papers he had stacked up on shelves. My grandfather had hoped I would take an interest and carry on the business, but all I interested in was playing sports as a child. The printing business had seen big technological changes during the 80s, and eventually that would cause the equipment and form of printing to become obsolete. I did peek into the shed on a few occasions, but I wasn't allowed in alone and never to go near the machinery. There was one small press operated by a belt system, that I remember my grandfather had to have nimble fingers with, lest he get his hand trapped. That printed the cards, pamphlets and programmes. The large press was indeed huge, with immense hydraulics, and if I got into that machinery there would be no escape. I never got to see that working, it seemed too ominous and creepy. Even heard from the house it was also very loud. There was also a large paper guillotine, operated by a twisting gear, that I wasn't allowed near, or no little fingers. Health and safety conscious, the shed was not, and time had not been too kind to some of the flooring either, mainly around the entrance. There were racks and drawers of carefully sorted lettering blocks, in different fonts and sizes. Also picture blocks that had been carefully carved, and they particularly fascinated me.



Typesetting though, was very much an artform. I would watch how my grandfather would set up blocks of small text using a tweezers and a magnifying glass to set each letter block. It would be very time consuming, need much patience for careful precision, as well as the ability to read backwards. If I would describe it, it would be to a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle of a singular blue whale in a blue ocean.

In the house, I remember they had an old piano in an upstairs room, to which I'd regularly attempt to play. I never had lessons, but I did manage create my own little 'monotonous' tune eventually. I recall a large, dark haired man with his guide dog, a big and scary looking German Shepherd, coming in to tune it occasionally. There was also an old black and white television, which would switch off with a white dot gradually fading in the centre. Soon though, that was being replaced by a new colour set, the first I'd ever seen, bought and installed by the Rediffusion shop down the road. It had around eight buttons, but my grandfather only ever had two stations tuned in and it seemed it was only switched on to watch cricket and the news. Cricket, Golf and Snooker, I loved playing, but to me they do not make good spectator sports. My apologies to those who disagree. When I'd learned how, I would occasionally attempt to tune it in to HTV. By the following week though, that channel would be 'lost'. I later learned that my grandfather had planned to take me to see the Glamorgan cricket club play some day. It wasn't to be.

My Auntie Gwyneth and Uncle Ivor lived a few doors up from the shop and we, my sister and I, would regularly call in to pay a visit. My uncle Ivor had been a merchant seaman, as was another uncle Edgar, during the war, and we were fascinated by his tattoos, but he would scare us off from having any ourselves. I never did, and I doubt if my sister had any either. My Auntie Gwyneth was a keen devotee of Saturday afternoon wrestling, as was my other auntie Ray. They would frequently shout at the television, aimed at the wrestling 'bad guys', calling them bullies and thugs. It would be just as entertaining to watch them as much as the television. My Uncle Ivor turned his hand to a whole host of trades, even though he'd long since retired. He would cut my other grandfather's hair, using an old technique called 'singeing' which included a candle and a steel comb. Fascinating to watch, as it didn't leave any marks and I only know of one other barber who did this, and he retired in his nineties. He was the longest serving barber in the country '[Jack Wardell](#)', who lived in the village I live in now, and he had an article written about him in the newspapers and by the BBC not too long ago.

My uncle also collected ram's horns which he would use to create boats with sails or cane handles together with old billiard cues, a particular fine one he passed on to my grandfather. He'd also tried to teach me how



to fish, when we'd go for a long walk up past the rugby ground, along the old railway and down towards the [Church on the Marsh](#). We never caught anything, but I did find a large stone on the banks, which seemed a little lightweight, and when I threw it back in the water, it floated (!). Pumice and volcanoes are not known to be native to the area! You can see the old church as you pass on the M4 motorway looking down towards the river. I've seen the marshland flooded several times, but the flood water always seems to stop near the foot of the white surrounding walls. It must some

Divine intervention, but why build on the marsh?

In those days, there was little trouble for walking around the town for youths or young girls being unaccompanied, and you'd see them coming into the shop with their pocket money, either to buy toys or birthday cards for their parents. There'd be the odd shy young girl who'd come in for a Valentine's card for their fancy, and then you'd get the few who'll attempt to buy fireworks near Bonfire Night. Home fireworks displays were very popular back then, and often my sister and I would sit and wait for customers to come in that evening, to which we'd reply, "fireworks sold out!", sometimes before they'd even ask! The shop would also have its regulars, to which we'd often know what they wanted before they came in. One was known as 'Annie Gloch Uchel' (Annie High/Loud Bell), who would try to ensure she would be THE customer to have all the proprietor's attention whilst she was in the shop.

My sister and I would often step out on our own, or perhaps together, to buy comics in nearby Carlisle's newsagent, or carefully cross the road to Domachi's Snack Bar to buy their homemade ice-cream or display of sweets. It was probably the first place I'd seen Space Invaders being played, and I'd be a regular. There were a few old-style sweet shops also, where we used to buy boiled sweets, chocolate white mice, a bar of Marathon, Opal Fruits, Blackjacks, Fruit Salad, Mojos and my personal favourite, Sherbet Fountain. Aubrey's shoes, opposite the shop, was the place to buy our shoes. Poor Ken must have dreaded each time I'd come in as I was very dismissive of much he brought out.



My mother said I was being unfashionable, but, in the time when platform shoes and bell bottoms were all the rage, who was going to see what I wore on my feet anyway? We as a family, still do keep in touch though, and my wife, who now works in a local shoe shop, is also familiar. He, as was his wife, and son are very nice people.

I'd also sometimes be sent down to buy some cream cakes and bread from Noakes' Bakery (circa 1910). Their mince beef pies were legendary and sold out on most days. You also had Meirion's the Greengrocer and the Co-op where my father had his first 'real' job, after his bread round, in 1959. He later went to work at the Graig Merthyr Colliery, with my grandfather after college, then to work on the dam at Llyn Brianne, and back to the town in Coated Metals during the late 70s. There was Mathias the butchers and The Lobster Pot for chips and rissoles. My mother and sisters favourite haunts were Vollanders clothes shop and Rhiannon's Hairdressers, which my mother tried to get my hair cut. I couldn't stand the smell of peroxide and sprays, so I went to Eric the barbers a little way down. Eric disapproved of the youth's long hair of the day, but he had his hair constantly greased, probably with Brylcreem. I used to watch him shave customers with a cutthroat razor and a leather strap to sharpen it with nearby, which made me nervous somewhat. There were also other shops around such as ironmongers, a jeweller, wool shop, and Dai Boots the cobbler. Probably the last time I ever saw a cobbler.

Out on the street, people were always clustered around having a chat and there were many real characters. Messers the fruiterers used to drive their horse and cart through the town, but you could swear there was someone following behind, and I witnessed it once, at hand to clear up a deposit after the horse. They must

have had the best roses in the Bont! Sioni Winwns (Johnny Onions), another character, would be on his bike selling onions outside the Co-op. Reportedly, he's been seen to turn up quite recently.

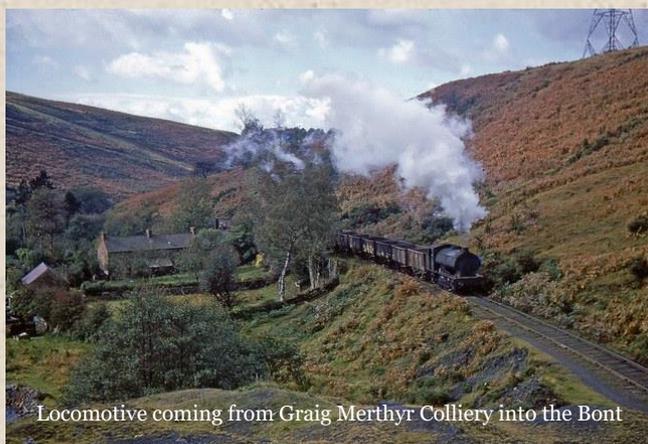
When my cousins Jackie and Neil would visit from Cyprus to stay with my Uncle and Aunt each Summer, we'd go for walks around the town, following the river down and perhaps stopping under the bridge at Water Street to watch young elvers swim around the small waterfall. Again, we'd sometimes visit the park to run amongst the trees, or go around the old station, but very often we'd play snooker in Aldo's café. He had a back room which had three tables, and, to give him his due, he was very tolerant of us kids coming in to play on them, although it was always on the one on the end of the room.



Come the end of the 70s and early 80s, my mother, Glenda Jenkins, gradually became the proprietor of the shop, to which my sister Rosalyn later joined to assist. Once I'd left school, and after my grandparents, auntie and uncle passed away, I didn't visit Pontarddulais that often anymore. The town was undergoing some big changes with the closure of a number of businesses and industry. Some of the characters weren't being seen so often. Much was blamed on the M4 Motorway, which now bypassed the town, and took a lot of custom away, and later there was the one-way system, introduced to ease congestion, which probably didn't help much either. Tesco's coming to

the town, much later, was seen with a 'mixed' response, bringing with it jobs to the locality but many small shops had to adapt or close. The Spot Office finally came to close in 2012 after nearly 110 years and 3 generations, with the retirement of my mother. The old press has gone, as has the old shed, and it did generate with interest from the Museum in Swansea, but would prove too costly to transport. The shop has now changed it's frontage to become a Heating Supplies shop. But many of the old businesses have now gone. In spite of all these changes, the town was rated one of the most attractive postcode areas to live in Wales in 2014.

Another character who was also 'fondly', if that is the right word, remembered, was the town 'tramp', Flwsh (pronounced floosh)! He was a character in that, he was very much a part of Pontarddulais life, and was even well known in nearby localities. He could be regularly seen each day wandering and shuffling his way



Locomotive coming from Graig Merthyr Colliery into the Bont

along the main street, shouting and gesturing profanities at passers-by quite early in the mornings, or generally be hunched up and muttering to himself. He'd always seem wary of my grandfather and my father when passing our shop for some reason, so it was rare that something be shouted out in situ. My Uncle Ivor offered him an old suit of his, so was then 'treated' as his BFF. Flwsh's real name was Idris and the story goes that he was of a 'comfortable' family but chose to work in the mines at the age of fourteen. Traumatized by an accident he received, from there on he would shun any engagement or help from anyone, although he would visit and be provided with some food by the local cafes

such as Aldo's. Allegedly, he used to sleep in the old railway sheds further up the street where the colliery train used to stop. Terry Griffiths, the World Snooker Champion, had his first job at those sheds, and it was mentioned on 'This is your Life' by Eamonn Andrews. Flwsh's sister Doris also used to live in the Bont, to which he used to call in on her every so often whenever he wanted a 'brush and clean up'. He lived out his last days in a Nursing Home in the town, but could regularly be seen on the street, only this time, dressed in his 'Sunday Best', a pin-striped suit I believe. That colliery train was probably the last time I saw an 'operational' steam engine before they were all retired.

Every year Pontarddulais hosts a Carnival, which starts from over the bridge in nearby Hendy and works its way through the town to the fields up in Pontarddulais Park, and there have been some truly memorable ones, especially those of a theme or event. It is generally led by the Pontarddulais Town Band and is one of the oldest brass bands in Wales, and in recent years has won many awards. The beating of the bass drum at the rear of the band, meant you could 'feel' the music and not just hear it, terrifying the younger



children as it came closer. We would sit outside the shop entrance, sometimes joined by my cousins Carwyn, Dorian and Siwan, watching the procession go by. I think I only missed it the once as a child, as I'd contracted a case of Rubella, but even then my father had parked up close to the route. I watched it from the car, all the while, wrapped in a blanket. The floats



could be very elaborate, especially during commemorating themes, where there was one of 'Allo, Allo', with an iron bed and old woman and, a rather excellent reproduction of the car in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. There'd always be plenty of music played, with other bands following, such as a comedy show band, steel bands also, and other people all dressed up in fancy dress walking behind the floats and bands. There was one celebration to commemorate Owain Glyndwr, garbed up in real armour, riding a large decorated horse with regalia through the street.



Pontarddulais raft race

Hilarious though it was, raft races along the river have also taken place in the past, not so nowadays as Health and Safety guidelines have probably taken over and put a stop to things. Not many self-crafted ones would succeed through to the finish line.

The Tivoli Theatre was to be the venue for cinema back in the day, as it was for live performances, and later, for Bingo. It was closed for a time in 1980, and again, later reopened as a cinema briefly, but I don't think I ever witnessed anything there. Remembered fondly by many locals, it was demolished in 1990. The Rugby Club also had many live performances of note, and one such famous performance was by Max Boyce in 1975, where he also recorded his album '[We All Had Doctors Papers](#)'. The first song on that album 'Sosban Fach', is sung as the theme song for the Llanelli 'Scarlets' rugby team, and regularly sung at Welsh rugby international games. It is a reference to the Steel saucepans that were tinplated in Llanelli.



Max Boyce amongst his Pontarddulais 'fans' in 1975.

Pontarddulais can also boast of its Male Voice Choir 'Côr Meibion Pontarddulais', the most successful competitive choir in Wales. They can boast to having won at the [Welsh National Eisteddfod](#) a record 15 times and the [International Eisteddfod](#) prize twice. The choir also performed at the royal fireworks on the

marriage of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer, also choral parts in the Pink Floyd film *The Wall*. Doctor [Dennis O'Neill](#) CBE, the famous tenor, was also a member.

[Pontarddulais Male Voice Choir on YouTube.](#)

They've also recorded with [Roger Waters](#) of Pink Floyd on his hit single "The Tide is Turning". Incidentally, my wife has also been sung to by another famous choir, The [London Welsh Male Voice Choir](#), who happened to be in the same venue as we were having a meal that day.

Other natives of the town and to the neighbouring villages include:

- John Walters, of Y Fforest, produced the first English/Welsh Dictionary between 1770-94.
- David Cuthbert Thomas, (1895-18 March 1916) was a Welsh soldier of the First World War and was made subject to one of the greatest war poems of the era.
- Ieuan Evans the Wales rugby international Captain and British Lion, who is also a relation.
- Derwyn Jones, Welsh rugby international and now agent to many current internationals.
- Terry Price, Welsh rugby international and British Lion.
- Robert Croft, of Y Fforest and Hendy, Glamorgan county and England cricketer
- Tony Chappel, professional snooker player
- Brett Johns, Professional MMA and UFC fighter
- Eric Jones, composer
- David James Jones, philosopher

Other sites of interest: [Bont Photos: From Fountain to river](#)

[A potted history of Pontarddulais](#)

[Bygone Days in the Bont](#)

Acknowledgements and final word:

It has certainly been a trip down memory lane, and I wish to thank all those sources who have contributed to this journey of discovery, and to reminisce over my childhood days. It has not been my intention to create any distress, or to mislead, denigrate or belittle individuals, events or places I may have mentioned. If I have, then it is regrettable. Please do click on the various blue links, which will give some more insight into the history of Pontarddulais, numerous old photographs, or information regarding notable persons or societies I've mentioned previously. I am immensely proud of my family and friends, and I am fiercely proud of my country, it's heritage, customs and language. We are a very small nation but have consistently performed way above our station. After all, where would America be without Wales. That is a history lesson for another day.

Gary Jenkins.



