

CORWEN CHRONICLES



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Neuadd y Cyfnod (The Old School Restaurant)

by Jean Smith

NEUADD Y CYFNOD is one of the oldest buildings in the market town of Bala. Its present use as a restaurant is a far cry from its colourful past and the history behind it can be traced back to the 1660s.

The building was formerly known as Ty tan Domen (the house below the mound) and was one of the most prominent houses in the town. Edmund Meyrick bought the property and following extensive alterations it was opened as a Free School in 1713–14 and as such it remained unaltered until 1851. The first master was paid £25.00 per annum as salary and £1.5.0d to be spent on the maintenance of the buildings.

It was during the period 1866-72 that the school became recognised as a grammar school.

Edmund Meyrick, who died on April 24th 1713 was a wealthy man and Jesus College, Oxford benefited in his will. It is recorded that the college ‘owned the school where they clothe and educate 30 boys’.

In 1851 the old school was rebuilt with the main hall designed as a replica of Jesus College. Structurally it remains unaltered to this day. The carved oak panelling

which surrounds the interior of the Banqueting Hall was installed in memory of those scholars who paid the supreme sacrifice in World War 1 and was paid for by the pupils of the school.

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The Banqueting Hall was the original school classroom and was divided by a curtain with a fireplace at one end and a wood/coke stove at the other. At the beginning of the 20th century it was changed to be the Assembly Hall and now has a distinct Welsh atmosphere accentuated by the model of a lady in full Welsh costume seated at a harp and is accompanied by a background of soothing Welsh harp music. The Banqueting Hall now accommodates parties large and small from finger buffets to wedding receptions and other grand occasions.

The restaurant kitchen is located in what was the 'Physics Form V1' and the Physics Laboratory is now the lower bar with seating for 40 diners in a more intimate atmosphere. The décor in the bar has an Olde Worlde theme with stuffed animals and birds in glass cases, horse brasses, lamps and numerous photographs of the pupils of the former school. The diner's seats in the bar are reclaimed church pews and add to the atmosphere. Being a free house the bar offers a varied selection of ales and beers. There is also a separate seating area to rest in comfort while waiting for your order. The old Chemistry Laboratory is now used as a storeroom.

The gardens at the front of the restaurant are a welcoming feature with tables and chairs for the summer visitor to enjoy lunch or mid morning snack. The arched main gate and pathway to the noble entrance make a perfect backdrop for wedding photographs especially when lovingly decorated with flowers for such occasions

The property was purchased by the Evans family in 1968 but as it was in such a sorry state it took three years to be renovated. Now retired Mr Evans has handed over the management of the restaurant to his only daughter, Nia. During an interview with Nia Davies she revealed that it was her original ambition to become a vet but with her father as a role model she opted to join the family business taking over the management at the age of twenty after completing a catering course in Manchester. Under her expert management she became 'British Young Manager of The Year' in 1987 and the restaurant was also awarded

'Welsh Restaurant of The Year' and Welsh Lamb Restaurant of The Year.

Among her attributes, Nia is an accomplished horsewoman and for some years played the organ in Church, an activity which she admits she hated doing. Now married to a farmer she has three young children but still manages the restaurant to a very high standard. When asked where she might be in ten years time she replied that she hoped to retire by the time she is forty and help out on the farm. Her only regret is that she didn't take time off after college before taking over the restaurant as she would have liked to travel and experience culinary delights from further a field.

Where Spirits Walk

by Lynn Bishop

FOR SOME UNKNOWN REASON North East Wales is said to be the most haunted place in the United Kingdom. Perhaps it is because of the number of very old houses in the area or perhaps it has more to do with the great number of battles that have taken place here. Whatever the reason there is no doubt that it is a favoured place for paranormal investigators and ghost hunters alike. With psychic and paranormal programmes proving to be very popular on television parts of this area are now catering for a new type of tourist. Some who come are serious paranormal investigators others are people who want to give ghost hunting a try. Whatever their reason for coming they are coming.

Corwen has always been a stop off point for travellers and because of this it has many places for people to stay. There is no reason why Corwen can't be used as a base for those who want to search for ghosts because many people believe that ghosts are all around us. Many are harmless and cause no problems to those with whom they share space. I have researched this subject and I will now share some of my findings with those who are interested. There should be enough to start your own journey of discovery.

Corwen: Along with the well documented ghost of a lady in the Owain Glyndwr Hotel another of Corwen's Inns is haunted. The 17th century CROWN INN. Having spoken to the landlady, Mrs. Grace Bird, I was informed of the spirits that frequent the Inn.

A small jolly man with a ruddy face, wearing a large leather apron, maybe the first landlord of the inn and he

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likes it there. He is the one that is probably responsible for the ashtrays moving around because he has a good sense of humour.

There are several children, from the spirit world, found in and around the inn. These children were orphans from the workhouse, they were welcomed at the inn by this landlord and they liked to play there. They still visit today because they like the current Innkeepers.

The second landlord that has stayed at the inn is a very smartly dressed man, quite tall and was running the inn in the nineteen twenties or thirties. He is a bit of a chauvinist and he is not keen on Grace running the inn. The spirit children that visit stay out of his way because of a mutual dislike of each other. Grace told me that she knows when he is in a bad mood because, for no reason, things start to go wrong in the bar.

On the first floor there is a prankster who can impersonate Peoples' voices. Though never seen several different people have heard someone they know call them to the first floor either from upstairs or downstairs. When the person who was called asks why they were wanted they get told that they were never called. Strangely even a deaf chef thought that he heard Grace call him from the kitchen on day. On another occasion two people where in the kitchen with the door closed and they both heard some one knocking on the door, they were told to come in but no one entered. Once again someone knocked on the door so it was opened but there was no one there.

In one of the bed rooms Grace has seen the figure of a man, she thinks he was dressed in the clothes of a cavalier. Again up in the bedrooms Grace has found herself being pushed out of the room and the door slammed behind her. There was no one to be seen.

In another room a guest was greeted by a young woman who said "hello" smiled and then disappeared.

Finally in the old garage Grace finds the atmosphere very unpleasant, as do some other people. Nothing has ever been experienced in there but no one wants to spend much time in there.

A shopkeeper who owns a shop on the opposite side of the road from the Inn says that she regularly sees a Monk walking through her shop. Others have seen monks walking across the road towards the cemetery. Of course

there are tales of different ghosts being seen in the grave yard itself. Many of them are children.

Another spirit has been seen on the *Carrog road*. It is of a priest who walks that road after being killed there by a falling tree in a storm in 1910.

Other mysterious things have been reported in other books about this region. Found in *Haunted Clwyd* by *Richard Holland*, there is a report of a phantom funeral seen by a man in the centre of Corwen. He was borne into the procession and recognized one of the people in the crowd beside him. About fourteen days later a friend passed away. At the funeral he recognized the people as the ones he had previously seen in the phantom funeral.

Cynwyd. A “dark hound of destiny” otherwise known as “A dog of darkness” (or The Gwyllgi) has been encountered on the moor near *Cynwyd*. The “hound” is said to be a huge shaggy black dog with red eyes. It followed very closely behind a Mr. Edward Jones putting the fear of god into him. This phenomenon has also been seen in other parts of Wales.

The bridge over the River Dee, in *Cynwyd*, is said to be haunted by a young woman who drowned herself there because of a disastrous love affair.

Ty Nant/Llangwm. Just off the A5 there is a seemingly inaccessible gorge, through which the white waters of Afon Ceirw flow. It is deeply wooded and hundreds of years ago it was a much used route to Ireland. Because of the nature of this valley it was a place where the highway men and robbers lurked ready to ambush solitary travellers. So many murders took place in the valley that at night it is said to be crammed with ghosts of robbers and travellers fighting in life or death combat. In the guide of the top ten most haunted places in Wales this Valley is placed at number four.

Pont y Glyn, a little stone bridge spanning the gorge also has its stories, of a varied nature. Shadowy figures, on horseback and on foot, have threatened those brave enough to cross after dark. On one occasion a man threw himself under a coach coming from Cerrigydrudion. The coach was stopped and the road was searched but no body could be found.

Garthmeilo Farm, in nearby *Llangwm*, was said to have once been haunted by Betsy, the dairy maid. She was murdered as she sat on a heap of stones by the bridge awaiting her lover from a neighbouring farm. Her body was never found but is thought that her murderer threw her into the ravine. The only thing left behind was her

traditional Welsh hat. One day a farm bailiff was passing near to Pont y Glyn when he saw a young woman in Welsh costume, sitting on a pile of stones. At first he was not afraid but he became terrified. The shape of the Girl started to become massive until it filled the whole road. Without waiting to see what happened next he turned and ran away.

Also at the bridge is a particularly frightening phantom, thought to be a demon, which took on unexpected shapes. Once it became a massive turkey whose body seemed to be covered with translucent feathers. The turkey would fan out its tail and twirl madly around growing bigger as it did so. No one ever stayed around long enough to find out how big the bird would get. There was also said to be a phantom *witch*, who was said to be the ugliest creature imaginable. Having only one eye in the centre of her head, large fang like teeth and arms like sticks with claws on the ends. It would approach travelers wailing and making as if to embrace the person by means of its claw like hands after which it sailed up into the air over a clump of trees that form a wind-break. Sometimes a red light would be seen glowing and sometimes moving within these trees. There have also been reports of headless phantom horses being driven into the ravine by a figure resembling Satan. Even today the local people will not venture there after dark.

Ruthin (Rhuthun). Only twelve miles from Corwen this town is known for the ghost of The Grey Lady, who is said to walk *Ruthin Castle*, now a luxury hotel. It is said that she killed her husband's lover with an axe and was consequently sentenced to death. As a murderess she could not be buried in consecrated ground so she was buried within the battlements, this is thought to be the cause of her wanderings. She is often encountered on the ramparts, or most commonly in the medieval chapel, now the banqueting hall. Less known than the Grey Lady another ghost has been reported within the *Ruthin Castle Hotel*. This time it is a knight in chain armour who seems to be searching for something. As he is only wearing one gauntlet people wonder if he is searching for the other one. Finally a Georgian Dandy has been seen walking up the garden path, wearing a tricorne hat. He swept the hat off of his head and bowed then vanished.

Near the *Kissing Gate at Ruthin* a miner said that he saw a troop of miners about four foot tall coming towards him along a narrow pathway. The phantom miners were being led by two monks, both over seven feet tall, dressed in

black. The man noticed that all in the procession were faceless. Petrified he tried to run away but found that he couldn't move. As they advanced towards him he made a supreme effort and managed to jump into the nearest hedge, where he fainted with fright. An archaeological dig a few years ago, unearthed several small skeletons along with two very tall ones near where the phantom procession had been seen. No doubt there had been a burial ground adjacent to the Castle.

Another place of interest is Ruthin Gaol. I have attended a Vigil there myself and I can confirm first hand that it is haunted. A new venture has just begun this February. It is now possible to take part in an overnight Vigil at the Gaol, on the first Saturday of each month. At the first Vigil contact was made with a girl calling herself Jose, short for Josephine. It was later confirmed that she had been the daughter of the Gaol Governor and that she had spent a lot of time there. Many other unexplained things have been seen, heard and felt within the Gaol. It is open to the public for tours around the building but some of the building is now used as an archive store.

Llangollen. There are two main sites in Llangollen, The first is at the home of "The Ladies of Llangollen," *Plas Newydd*. There have been several sightings of the ladies walking around their gardens, these sightings have only been seen by men.

The second site is the *Valle Crucis Abbey Ruin* in the vale of the cross Llangollen.

1. It is reported that an Abbot was enjoying an evening stroll when a man in warrior garb approached him. The Abbot instinctively knew it was Owain Glyndwr and he struck up a conversation with him. Owain told the Abbot that one day England would be ruled by monarchs of Welsh descent. The Abbot later spread this prophesy about and it later became truth, when the Tudors took the English throne.

2. The second tale tells how two preachers were walking past the ruin early one morning, on the way to meet a fellow preacher and his brother. As they passed the ruin they heard someone singing in Latin. They were entranced by the wonderful sound and stopped to listen. When the singing stopped they were surprised by the fact that the sunlight was flooding the grounds and they knew that they were late for their meeting. They were in fact *three hours* late. They should have met the others to go by dog-cart for the rest of their journey. Later they heard that their friend and his brother had been in an accident. Their horse had bolted and the preacher was badly hurt and his brother

was killed. That could have been their fate if they had not stopped to listen to the singing that morning.

3. In August 1950 a woman was walking back to her campsite near the Abbey. It was 10.30pm and she had a friend with her. She heard music coming from the Abbey, it sounded like an organ and choir. She was the only one who heard it

4. Another report of singing coming from the Abbey came from a cyclist who had stopped because of a puncture, again he was the only one in his group that could hear the singing. Every one who reported hearing the singing said that it was exquisite.

5. One night a woman from Wrexham was passing the Abbey. She said that she saw a large circle of the most dazzling light. In the centre she saw a golden object, several feet high, people dressed in gold with helmets on

their heads were moving around the object. This sighting is thought to be of a pagan ritual that took place on the site before the Abbey was built.

Finally for Llangollen a lesser known tale. It is said that a young woman haunts a fisherman's cottage down by the River Dee. She is quiet but is often seen by the owners and visitors alike. No one knows who she is or why she haunts the cottage.

I could go on with many more tales to tell you but I think that you will have more fun finding out for yourselves.

However, I will finish with a tale of Two Lakes.

The first one is Lake Vyrnwy. This is currently number one on the list of the Haunted Places of North Wales. Now a reservoir and Nature reserve in Powys, less than one hour's drive away from Corwen. Lake Vyrnwy was created by building a Dam, Between 1881 and 1888, to block the River Vyrnwy. The village of Llanwddyn, several farms and a large house, Eunant Hall, were demolished and then the valley was flooded. In the 1870's a local vicar made a list of the ghosts in the area. He counted an unlucky 13 of them. Many strange things happened in the area and it is worrying that all this is now under water.

Another eight hundred acres of land were drowned in 1965 to create Llyn Celyn (Celyn Lake) near Bala. This covered the village of Capel Celyn and the Trewern valley. Farms, the school, the post office and the chapel and cemetery were all lost to the reservoir. Although I have not found any reports of haunting in this valley I would not be surprised to hear some.

If you decide to go ghost hunting yourselves please take care, protect yourselves and keep safe at all times.

Now you have a starting place all I can do is wish you good hunting

**Coch Bach y Bala – ‘The Welsh Houdini’
(The Little Redhead of Bala)**

by Eth Barford

IT IS A CURIOUS FACT THAT A GREAT many people, no matter how law abiding they are themselves, have always been fascinated and enthralled by the derring-do exploits of those who manage, in one way or another, to outwit the law.

During the times of the American ‘wild west’, when lawlessness was a part of everyday life, some outlaws had the ability to capture the public’s imagination more than others. Jesse James and Billy the Kid are still regarded as heroes in the US and countless books and films have been made about their escapades, although both were bank robbers and murderers.

The mythical hero, Robin Hood of Sherwood, was also a thief, and I would hazard a guess that not only the poor benefited from his lawbreaking. If he did indeed exist, It would probably be safe to assume, that not *all* of his motives were for purely altruistic reasons, and that at least some of his ill-gotten gains, found their way into the back pocket of his own Lincoln Greens.

In more recent times, the great train robber, Ronnie Biggs, who escaped from prison in the 1960s, and managed to evade capture many times over, became the stuff of legend. Who could ever forget, when he was finally tracked down to Brazil, how the Scotland Yard officers failed, yet again, to recapture him, when it was discovered that his Brazilian girlfriend was pregnant? Under their

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law, he could not be extradited for crimes committed in another Country, if he was the father of a Brazilian child. The whole of the UK seemed to hold its breath, willing the child to be born strong and healthy, and save his fugitive father from a thirty-year gaol sentence in a British prison. Biggs lived the next thirty years as a free man in Brazil. Living off his notoriety and being feted as a celebrity in every bar and nightclub in Rio, until he finally gave himself up in 2002. Old age and poor health brought with

it a desire to return to his own country and, although many people here believed that he should have been given an amnesty, the police finally got their man when Biggs was escorted off the plane at Heathrow airport and driven, under tight security, back to Belmarsh Prison.

Stories of those who buck the system seem to capture the imagination of ordinary citizens and become a rebellious symbol of hope to many who feel aggrieved, but would never dream of defying the law themselves.

Even at school, the kids who give the teachers the hardest time, quickly become the class heroes. It seems an undeniably human trait to admire the courage of those who laugh in the face of authority.

During the early part of the last century this area of North Wales had its very own dubious hero, in the shape of a little red - headed man named John Evans. Coch bach y Bala ran rings around the law enforcers of the time and quickly became a local legend. His many daring escapes earned him the nickname of 'The Welsh Houdini'.

In the days before radio or television it is easy to imagine how his daring escapades would capture the imagination. His latest exploits the main topic of conversation around many a cottage fireside or hostelry bar. Of course, the stories grew in the telling, and were usually embroidered and exaggerated beyond recognition. Jones revelled in his own notoriety and would often boast of his exploits. His self-publicizing nature causing him to admit to crimes that he couldn't possibly have committed.

'Coch Bach Y Bala's' criminal record started as a boy, when he received the customary corporal punishment of the day for minor offences of theft. His first term of imprisonment was at the age of eighteen, when he was sentenced to one month for poaching.

Early in 1872, at the age of nineteen, he was given four months in Ruthin gaol for the theft of an 'empty purse' at Llanderfel. In the following July, the rather harsh sentence of six years for stealing 13 shillings (80 pence in decimal money)

Jones was to spend over half of his life inside one gaol or another with convictions for theft, breaking and entering, and on one occasion, for rioting against the Police in Bala. For this offence, he was convicted, along with five others, and spent the Christmas of 1878 in Ruthin gaol. This particular misdemeanour only serving to enhance his reputation in the eyes of the public. He was extremely anti-police, but his behaviour in prison (with the exception of his escapes) was usually very good. Often earning him early release.

At this time, Jones was probably being blamed for almost every crime that took place in North Wales, but it is true that he revelled in his notoriety and often stole things that he had no use or need for, secreting them in hedges, in case he needed to come back for them.

Convicted in Denbigh in July 1878, for the crime of being 'a rogue and a vagabond' he was sent to Chester gaol for ten months. Soon after his release, he was arrested again for the theft of fourteen watches at Bala and Llanfor, and sent to Ruthin gaol to await trial. It was from here in November 1879 that he made his first escape from prison, by walking out of the main door whilst the guards were at supper.

A reward of five pounds was offered for information leading to his re-capture, and he was eventually apprehended three months later in bed in the Swan Inn, Mochdre near Colwyn Bay. This was probably brought about by a tip-off from a customer who had heard Jones's boastful stories in the bar that night, his self-publicising nature being the cause of his downfall.

Convicted of stealing the watches, additional burglary and for escaping from Ruthin gaol, Jones was sent to Dartmoor prison for fourteen years. I expect that the towns and villages of North Wales were much quieter places during this period.

Jones was next heard of in July 1891 when he was convicted in Essex of two cases of burglary. In spite of attempting to escape when arrested, he pleaded guilty and was given a further seven years in Dartmoor. He was later released on license, probably for good behaviour!

When he wasn't being detained at Her Majesty's pleasure, Jones worked at a variety of professions including bricklayer, joiner, labourer, seaman and stoker. All who employed him claimed him to be a good and reliable worker, but it was as a poacher and persistent thief that he was best known.

Convicted at Beaumaris in 1895, of the burglary of ten pounds from the Waterman's Arms, Amlwch, he claimed the Police had framed him. Jones received a five-year sentence with an added two years for attempting to escape from Caernarfon gaol by barricading his cell door and tunnelling through the floor.

Of above average intelligence, Jones conducted his own defence on several occasions. In 1906, charged with burglary and attacking a 71year old woman, his defendant's address to the court lasted until 3am.

Unfortunately for Jones, the length of his speech did not save him from conviction, and he received another seven

years in Dartmoor prison.

Jones seems to have made his way back to his old stomping ground, and was convicted at Dolgellau in 1913 of breaking and entering the premises of Jordan's Solicitors office, Bala. While awaiting trial he escaped from Bala police cells and was apprehended in a barn three miles away. He was sentenced to three years.

It was while awaiting transfer from Ruthin gaol to Stafford to serve sentence, that he made his last and most daring escape. Bearing in mind that Jones was now sixty-years old, he absconded by tunnelling through his cell wall, and by using a rope made from prison bedding, climbed over the chapel and kitchen roofs, finally escaping over the prison wall.

Jones was on the run for six days before being tracked down on the Nantclwyd Estate several miles from Ruthin. He was shot in the leg by his pursuer, nineteen-year -old Reginald Jones-Bateman, and died of shock and haemorrhaging due to his injury.

Despite his wrongdoings, Coch Bach Y Bala was a popular figure and the circumstances of his death caused a great public outcry. Jones-Bateman was the son of an increasingly unpopular local landowner, which appeared to rub salt in the wounds. Jones-Bateman was initially charged with manslaughter, although the charges were subsequently dropped.

Jones must have been an extremely strong and resilient little man to survive his long spells of penal servitude, as life was very hard in Victorian prisons. Hard labour and a diet, which consisted mainly of oatmeal gruel, bread and potatoes, were hardly to be recommended for the good of one's health.

After his death, postcards showing his funeral, and the location of his shooting, were mass produced and sold in their thousands.

SENSATIONAL ESCAPE FROM RUTHIN PRISON

“John Jones...effected his escape from Ruthann Prison on Tuesday morning, in a sensational manner, and at the time of writing is still at large. He gained his liberty as the result of indomitable pluck, great astuteness, and wonderful agility...‘Coch Bach’ is regarded by some as a hero, his performance is certainly a daring piece of work. The escape took place between four and five o'clock in the morning, before the majority of the warders entered upon their duties...The daring manner of his escape and the quickness with

which he left behind him the precincts of the prison baffled the gaol authorities and the police.”

North Wales Times, 4th October 1913.

I think this newspaper article illustrates perfectly, how Coch Bach Y Bala was admired by all sections of the community.

The Next Train From Corwen

by Lynn Bishop

IT USED TO BE POSSIBLE to get to Corwen by rail, using the Llangollen to Corwen railway, completed in 1865. Absorbed by The Great Western Railway in August 1896. It then became part of a through route from Ruabon to Barmouth, completed in 1896. It was also possible to travel up to Rhyl. The line was due to be closed in 1965 but had to close in 1964 because of flooding. The Llangollen Railway Trust reopened part of the track in 1975. Manned by enthusiastic volunteers the Llangollen railway is slowly being extended to Corwen. So far the work has been completed up to a point just west of Carrog. I have been informed that these volunteers are mainly English men and that although almost every one in Corwen wants the rail link back there are only eight people from Corwen that actually do anything to help. If more locals were to help with the things like digging and fencing The link could be made much quicker. Volunteers have to be paid up members of the Llangollen Railway Trust, this ensures that they are insured whilst doing any railway work. When you volunteer you complete a application form stating any skills, qualifications and experience. Then you would be asked to indicate what sort of work you would be interested in doing. You would then be introduced to the Head of Department for that skill and be given training as necessary. Nearly all the jobs are covered by volunteers, without these enthusiastic helpers the service could not be run in such a professional manner.

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In safety critical jobs such as Drivers, Guards, Signalmen etc you would have to pass various tests to prove that you are totally competent to do the job. You would only have to work as and when you are able, there are no set number of times that you have to attend. The trust does have to make sure that there are enough staff to run the rail service. This is arranged by roster each week. The trust currently has

240 working volunteers, only 8 from the Corwen area but they hope that more volunteers will join soon.

Lots of people in the world love to travel by steam train, it is a great attraction for many. I have been informed that around 30% of Llangollen's economy is generated through the railway. That sort of thing is much needed in Corwen and the community could only benefit from this link. A new station needs to be built as the old one is now a depot for a trailer company. I believe that there is a plan for a new station to be built near to the pavilion. Many people in the area are waiting for the sound of " the next train from Corwen..."

Honest Cop

by Georgina Ann Jones

RANK SERPICO WAS BORN on the 14th April 1936 to Italian parents. When he was eighteen he enlisted in the United States Army, served two years in Korea, later he worked as a part time private investigator and as a youth counsellor while he was at college.

Then in September 1959 he joined the New York Police Department (NYPD).

As a patrolman it was his ambition to become what he most wanted to be - a respected cop, worked for two years filing fingerprints before he was assigned to patrol in the 81st precinct; then in plainclothes he encountered widespread corruption.

His work in Brooklyn and the Bronx to expose vice racketeering was short-lived, because he swam against the tide of corruption that engulfed the NYPD during the late sixties and early seventies. He refused to take bribes for looking the other way and he risked his own safety to expose those who did.

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After numerous failed attempts to report this corruption within the established police and government, In 1970 Serpico went public on police corruption, speaking of bribery and kickbacks. The *New York Times* published an explosive story. Partially in response to this the New York City Mayor then John Lindsay established the Knapp Commission to investigate the assertions. Serpico received many death threats, because he was testifying against a former partner. Somehow they knew of Serpico's supposedly secret meetings with top police investigators.

While on a drug bust in February 1971. Serpico was shot point blank in the face. It is believed that his fellow officers were trying to silence him by setting him up to be shot, and then by not calling for help.

Frank's colleagues, with whom he had been working since being assigned to narcotics, failed to call in an officer distress signal and they left him bleeding on a tenement stairwell. An elderly gentleman comforted Frank and called the police. Only one police car responded; his colleagues were nowhere to be seen.

Frank paid a high price for the courage he displayed as a lone honest cop. Frank Serpico was deafened in his left ear by the gunshot, which severed an auditory nerve. He survived and continued to testify for the Knapp Commission. He retired from the NYPD in June 1972.

Also he was awarded the Medal of honour for conspicuous bravery in action.

While travelling in Europe during 1979 to 1980. Frank Serpico lived in Orissor collage in Corwen, as he was one of the founders and Director of Orissor that used to be the Work House.

After a disagreement with Orissor he stayed for a few weeks in a b&b before he returned to New York City in 1980.

Whisky, University and the IRA

by Jean Smith

FOLLOWING THE EASTER RISING in Dublin in 1916 in which 1800 Irish volunteers took part, Captain Michael Collins was captured and as a prisoner of war was sent first to Richmond Barracks and later imprisoned at Frongoch internment camp, in North Wales.

While he was imprisoned there his ability as an organiser was recognised and the camp gained the nickname of 'The University of Revolution' as it was there that plans to come up with a strategy to fight back against British forces were laid and the execution of those plans eventually led to Irish independence.

Travelling north three miles from the town of Bala, Frongoch may be passed by un-noticed, the only clue to its existence is the roadside shop and post office which selling groceries and souvenirs.

Hardly visible are the houses that are secreted off the road out of sight built on what used to be the station of a long forgotten busy rail line. Looking closely you may just spot a commemorative stone, the only clue to the lesser-known fact that once in this tiny village was not only a whisky

distillery but one that was later closed down to make way for a prisoner of war camp.

In 1916 Michael Collins as president of The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) returned to Dublin and took part in the Easter Rising. He received a volunteer's uniform and as Captain Michael Collins he was second in

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command to Joseph Mary Plunkett in the General Post Office.

After his release from prison he rebuilt the IRB and by 1920 as the founder of Sinn Fein he was wanted by the British with a price on his head. On the 22 August 1922 his convoy was ambushed at a place known as 'Beal nam Blath' – the mouth of flowers' – and Michael Collins was assassinated by an extremist republican.

It can be said that Michael Collins was the founder of Sinn Fein behind the formation of the IRA but in gaining independence they sacrificed their language. The Welsh on the other hand kept their language and sacrificed their freedom from the centralised government of the UK.

Anthem For Doomed Youth

by Eth Barford

In memory of Private John Evans of Bridge House Cynwyd.

Remembered with honour.

AT THE OUTBREAK OF WW1, on the 4th August 1914, Britain had a small professional army of just 150,000. This relatively small force was considered sufficient to handle any European conflict Britain might get involved in, as it was expected that our invincible Royal Navy would be able to blockade all enemy nations into submission. However, it soon became clear that events were not following this British game plan any more than they were Germany's Schlieffen Plan, and it became obvious that many, many, more soldiers would be needed.

Such was the initial enthusiasm in Britain for the war that 1,186,350 young men rushed to volunteer for the fighting by the end of 1914. This was a colossal amount in four short months and was brought about by a national recruitment campaign, the like of which had never been seen before or since.

Popular songs were used to help whip up general enthusiasm for the conflict and young men were encouraged to sign up by marches and public rallies.

Colleges, village halls, cinemas, dance halls, and football grounds, anywhere where young lads gathered, were targeted and they signed up in their hundreds of thousands.

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“Now God be thanked who matched us with his hour,” wrote the poet Rupert Brooke in 1914, “and caught our youth and wakened us from sleeping.”

“I adore war,” wrote another young poet, Julian Grenfell, when he first arrived in France. “It’s like a big picnic.” For many of our young men the main anxiety was that they would not get to France in time to fight, as the war was expected to “all be over by Christmas.” But it was not over by Christmas and the men who went to France were to discover that it was anything but a picnic. Julian Grenfell was killed at Ypres in 1915 while Rupert Brooke died from blood poisoning the same year.

Because of the massive recruitment campaign, lads from every town and village in the country “took the kings shilling” and encouraging each other, joined up together. Because of this they were given the nickname ‘The Pals’ but the tragedy was that the pals also died together. Many roads, streets, and villages across Britain lost a whole generation of their young men and many families lost more than one son.

Wales was no exception and like the rest of the UK flocked in their thousands from every city, town, village, tiny hamlet or remote farm to join up. These lads looked on it as a great adventure --an opportunity to do something exciting-- and couldn’t wait to get there. The small village of Cynwyd was no different and lost fifteen of her young men in the terrible conflict. Most were with The Royal Welsh Fusiliers and lost their lives in France in the battle of the Somme.

John Evans was one such lad. John was born at Bridge House, Cynwyd, in 1894, the middle of three sons born to his parents Edward and Margaret Evans. John had had more than his share of grief before the outbreak of the war, having lost his mother whilst he was still a child. His father, who was a builder by trade, died in April 1911 when John was seventeen years old, leaving the three boys orphaned. Edward left a will, which was signed January 1911, and as he died only three months later, suggests that he was probably ill at the time and knew that he was dying.

“I leave my watch and chain to my son John.” is the first line of his will, even before he mentions the house or its contents. I find this particularly poignant, as time was soon to run out for John.

Edward’s youngest son, David, was only twelve years old at the time of his father’s death, and the will leaves David’s care to his sister, Catherine Davies, “If she is prepared to take him, in exchange for twelve-pounds a year for his maintenance, out of the value of the house, until he is 21 years of age.” Says the will. I wonder if Catherine took him on?

I presume that John and his elder brother, Evan, lived alone in Bridge House until the start of the war, but I have no way of knowing if Evan joined up too; maybe he did and was lucky enough to survive.

John Evans would have attended the old Cynwyd School. He probably had lots of friends in the village and got up to the usual mischief that most youngsters do. He would certainly have played in the fields, woods and hills, swam in the lake on summer days, collected birds eggs (as boys did in those days) and fished in the River Dee. He probably dreamed of his beautiful Dee- valley homeland, while he lived the waking, mud-spattered nightmare, of the Somme trenches.

Private John Evans, 23330, 16th Battalion, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, died in the Battle of the Somme, on 11th July 1916. He was 22years old. His name is listed, along with fourteen pals’ from his home village, on the War Memorial in Cynwyd churchyard. The Thiepval Memorial, the memorial to the missing of the Somme, bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20th March 1918 and have no known grave. Over 90% of those commemorated died, like John, between July and November 1916.

John Evans’ name appears on the Thiepval Memorial. The memorial was designed by Sir Edward Lutyens and was unveiled in July 1932 by the Prince of Wales.

ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH

What passing bells for those who die like cattle?

Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles’ rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,

Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, -

The shrill demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Wilfred Owen

Wilfred Owen was born in Oswestry and was killed by machine gun fire on 4th November 1918--one week before the war ended; he was 25 years old.

Llyn Tegid (Bala Lake)

by Georgina Ann Jones

THE COMMUNITY WAS RULED OVER by one of the cruellest men to have ever lived in Wales. When his wife gave birth to their first child he ordered a huge feast to celebrate. So it was that he summoned Dewi a local harpist to play at the feast. The young man hated the ruler, but knew that it would be unwise to refuse and most probably fatal. So on the night of the feast Dewi played his heart out; but the guests ignored him and the music. Later, as the guests got wilder through drink, he heard a curious voice whispering behind him and when he turned, he saw a small bluebird that was repeating one word over and over again "Vengeance, vengeance" it said, whilst indicating with its wing for the harpist to follow it. As the harpist followed unnoticed he left the palace and followed the bird up the hillside. Still whispering "Vengeance, vengeance", and then the bluebird flew away. The harpist was now alone on the hill, feeling rather foolish because he followed the bluebird. He was feeling tired so decided to make himself comfortable. He lay down beneath an oak tree and closed his eyes. When he woke at dawn he looked down into the valley where the town should have been, but instead of the houses and smoke from early morning fires was a huge lake, and floating on the surface was the Dewi's harp.

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The little bluebird had saved the life of the only innocent person in the town, away from the sin and iniquity; the water was the tool of retribution against evil noblemen.

This happens in Wales many times valleys get flooded so people can have water, so maybe this tale is true or not, who can say, but a nice tale all the same.

Owain Glyndwr, The Rebel Prince: Corwen's Hero

by Lynn Bishop

Owain's Story:

OWAIN WAS PROCLAIMED PRINCE OF WALES

by a small band of followers, On the 16th of September 1400. This was a revolutionary statement in itself but many thought it reasonable, as he was descended from the Princes of Powys on his father's side and could claim descent from all three major royal houses that dominated Wales before the Edwardian conquest of 1282. In the late 1390's a series of events had started Owain towards rebellion.

King Richard started to consolidate his hold on the kingdom to break the power of the magnates who constantly threatened his authority. As part of the plan he established a new principality around the county of Cheshire and systematically built up his power in Wales. Wales was ruled as a patchwork of feudal states, bishoprics, shires, and territories under direct Royal rule. Richard eliminated his rivals, took their lands or gave it to his favourites. By doing so he raised a class of Welshmen up to fill the new posts created in his new fiefdoms. These Welshmen enjoyed these days of opportunity but the English magnates saw it as a sign that Richard was out of control.

Richard died under mysterious circumstances in Pontefract, after being imprisoned first in Chester, after a meeting with Henry Bolingbroke at Conway Castle in 1399. It was some time before his death was known. Parliament quickly made Henry regent and then king.

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Men like Owain were made to decide where their loyalties lay. As they were traditionally supporters of Richard they were suddenly uncertain as to where this left them.

Soon after a revolt was started with an argument with Owain's neighbour. The De Greys of Dyffryn Clwyd were Norman landowners with a reputation of being anti-Welsh. They were in a long running land dispute with Owain. Reynald de Grey used his influence with his good friend King Henry to have Owain's appeal to parliament rejected. He also deliberately withheld a summons for Owain to join the King's Scottish campaign, as a tenant in-

chief to the king, Owain was obliged to provide troops. By not responding to the summons Owain had committed treason.

Following the proclamation of Owain as Prince of Wales Owain's men spread quickly through North- East Wales. By September 19th. The de Grey stronghold of Ruthin was attacked and almost destroyed. Between then and the 22nd. Denbigh, Rhuddlan, Flint, Hawarden and Holt were attacked. On the 22nd. the town of Oswestry was so badly damaged that it had to be re-chartered. Moving south on the 24th Welshpool was sacked by Owain's men. Other prominent families started to switch allegiance to Owain, launching guerrilla war against the English.

Henry IV was on his way to Scotland, he turned his army around and by 26th September he was in Shrewsbury, ready to invade Wales. He was hit by bad weather and had to contend with constant attacks by the Welsh guerrillas. By the 15th October he was back in Shrewsbury with little to show for his efforts. Owain's revolt soon gathered momentum, in 1401 the whole northern and central Wales had gone over to him. Even in the south in Brecon and Gwent reports were heard of attacks on property by groups calling themselves *Plant Owain* (the children of Owain.)

In June, at Mynydd Hyddgen in west Wales, Owain scored his first major victory in the field. Owain and his army of four hundred were camped at the bottom of the Haddgen valley when fifteen hundred English and Flemish settlers from Pembrokeshire charged down on them. Owain rallied his men and fought back, killing two hundred and making prisoners of the rest. This situation was serious enough for the King to assemble another expedition. Again the King was subjected to guerrilla attacks and severe weather. Wet starving and dejected he returned to Hereford with nothing to claim for his efforts.

In 1401 the English saw the revolt prosper and it attracted disaffected supporters of the deposed King. The English king struck back with anti-Welsh legislation designed to establish English dominance in Wales. The laws actually codified common practices that had been at work in Wales and along the Marches for many years. Sending the message that the English viewed all Welshmen with equal suspicion. This now had the effect that the wavering Welshmen now turned to support Owain and the middle ground between Owain and Henry disappeared.

In the same year Owain captured his enemy Reynald de Grey in an ambush at Ruthin. Owain held him captive for one year until he received a substantial ransom from King Henry. In June Owain's forces encountered an army led by

Sir Edmund Mortimer. Mortimer's army was badly defeated and he was captured. Owain offered to release Mortimer for a large ransom, but this time Henry IV refused to pay. In response, Sir Edmund negotiated an alliance with Owain and married one of his daughters, Catrin.

The French and Bretons were known to have started to help Owain in 1402. They hoped to use Wales, as they had already used Scotland, as a base from which to fight the English. Many English ships were attacked, by French privateers, in the Irish sea and the French provided weapons to the Welsh. By 1403 the revolt became truly national. Owain struck out both to the west and south. Royal officials reported that Welsh students were leaving Oxford to go back to Wales and Welsh labourers and craftsmen were leaving their employers and returning to Wales in droves. Many battles now took place.

In the north Owain's supporters launched another attack on Caernarfon castle, this time with French support, and captured it. In response Henry of Monmouth, Son of Henry IV and future king of England (Henry V) Owain, attacked and burned Owain's homes in Glyndyfrdwy and Sycharth. Henry, then only 16, then went onto Shrewsbury and engaged in a battle with the rebels and after a full day of battle the Welsh rebels were beaten.

In 1404 Owain captured and garrisoned the great western castles of Harlech and Aberystwyth. To demonstrate his seriousness as a ruler he held court in Harlech and appointed Gruffydd Yonge as his chancellor. Soon after he called his first parliament, known as "Cynulliad or gathering", of all Wales at Machynlleth where he was crowned Owain IV of Wales. There he announced his national programme. He declared his vision of an independent Welsh state with a parliament and separate Welsh church. He wanted to have two national universities, one in the north and one in the south, he also wanted a return to the traditional law Hywel Dda. Senior churchmen and important members of society all followed his banner. English resistance was reduced to a few isolated castles, walled towns and fortified manors.

Owain is said to have negotiated a "Tripartite Indenture" with Edmund Mortimer and the Earl of Northumberland. The indenture agreed to divide England and Wales between them. Wales would extend as far as the rivers Severn and Mersey, including most of Cheshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire. The Mortimer Lords of March would take all of southern and western England and Thomas Percy, the Earl of Northumberland would

take the north of England. Some historians dismiss the Indenture as a flight of fancy, but it must be remembered that things were going well for Owain. Local English communities in Shropshire, Herefordshire and Montgomeryshire had ceased active resistance and were making their own treaties with Owain. Old allies of Richard II were sending money and arms to the Welsh. Furthermore, the Percy rebellion was not ended until 1408 when the Sheriff of Yorkshire defeated Henry Percy at Bramham Moor. Far from a flight of fancy, Owain was capitalizing on the political situation to make the best deal that he could.

On the international front, Owain's talks with the Scots and the Lords of Ireland bore no fruit but Owain dispatched Yonge and his brother-in-law, John Hanmer, to France to negotiate a treaty. The result was a formal treaty that promised French aid to Owain and the Welsh. The immediate effect seems to have been the joint Welsh and Franco-Breton attack on Kidwelly Castle where they lay siege to the castle.

The Welsh also counted on semi-fraternal aid from their fellow Celts in the then independent Brittany and Scotland. Scots and French privateers were operating around Wales throughout Owain's war. Scots ships had raided English settlements on the Llyn Peninsula in 1400 and 1401. In 1403 a Breton squadron defeated the English in the Channel and devastated Jersey, Guernsey and Plymouth. The French made a landing on the Isle of Wight. By 1404 they were raiding the coast of England, with Welsh troops on board, setting fire to Dartmouth and devastating the coasts of Devonshire.

1405 was the "Year of the French" in Wales. On the continent the French pressed the English as they attacked English Aquitaine. Simultaneously the French landed a large force at Milford Haven in west Wales. Led by Jean de Rieux, the Maeshall of France, armed with modern siege equipment and joined by Owain's forces they marched inland and took the town of Haverfordwest, but failed to take the castle. They then moved on and retook Carmarthen and laid siege to Tenby. The Franco-Welsh force marched across Wales and invaded England again. This time they marched through Herefordshire and into the Midlands. They finally met the English Forces outside Worcester at the ancient British hill fort of Woodbury Hill. The armies viewed each other for eight days without any action, then for some reason both sides withdrew. The joint army went back to Wales. More French were to arrive as the year went on but they withdrew after their politics

shifted towards the peace party and by 1406 most of the French had returned home.

There were signs that the revolt was encountering problems. Owain's forces suffered defeats at Grosmont and Usk (Pwll Melyn). It is thought that these resulted in the deaths of Rhys Gethin and Owain's brother, Tudor and the capture of Owain's eldest son Gruffudd. Adam of Usk reported that after the battle of Pwll Melyn Henry had three hundred prisoners beheaded in front of castle Usk. More serious for the rebellion English forces landed in Anglesey from Ireland. Over the next year they would gradually push back until the resistance in Anglesey was formally ended towards the end of 1406.

At the same time the English adopted a different strategy, instead of focusing on punitive expeditions favoured by Henry IV, the young Henry of Monmouth adopted a strategy of economic blockade. Using castles that were still in English control he gradually began to retake Wales while cutting off trade and weapons supplies. By 1407 the strategy began to bear fruit.

In March 1,000 men from all over Flintshire appeared before the Chief Justice of the county and agreed to pay a communal fine for their adherence to Owain, gradually this pattern was repeated throughout the country. In July the Earl of Arundel's north east lordship submitted. One by one other lordships also surrendered. By midsummer Owain's castle at Aberystwyth was under siege. Envoys were sent to France to ask for help but they got no response. Gruffudd Yonge was sent to Scotland in an attempt to rally support, nothing came. The castle fell, Edmund Mortimer died in the final battle. Owain's wife two daughters and three of his Mortimer grand-daughters were taken prisoner and were incarcerated in the Tower of London. They all died in the tower before 1415.

Owain was still at large, but now he was hunted as a guerilla leader. The revolution spluttered on. In 1409/1410 Owain rallied his supporters for a last deep raid into Shropshire. Many of his most loyal commanders were present. The raid went terribly wrong and many of the leading figures were captured. Rhys Ddu of Cardigan was captured and taken to London for execution. Philip Scudamore and Rhys ap Tudor were also beheaded and their heads displayed at Shrewsbury and Chester.

In 1412 Owain captured and later ransomed a leading Welsh supporter of Henry's, Dafydd Gam in an ambush in Brecon. This was the last time that Owain was seen alive. In 1414 Owain's rebellion was still active in Snowdonia. By

then things were changing. Henry IV died in 1413 and his son began to adopt a conciliatory attitude to the Welsh. Pardons were offered to the major leaders of the revolt and other opponents of his fathers regime. In a symbolic gesture the body of Richard II was interred in Westminster Abbey. In 1415 Henry offered a pardon to Owain whilst in negotiations with Owain's son, Maredudd ab Owain Glyndwr, but nothing came of it. In 1416 Maredudd was offered a pardon but refused. Perhaps his father was still alive and he was still unwilling to accept a pardon while he lived, but he did finally accepted the pardon in 1421, suggesting that his father was now dead. Nothing is known for sure about the death of Owain Glyndwr. Despite enormous rewards being offered he was never captured. Some say that he retreated to the home of his daughter, Alys Scudamore and passed himself off as an aging Franciscan friar.

Others say that he died and was buried at his estate in Sycharch. Who knows?

Owain's connection with Corwen

Corwen is situated in the Dee valley. Glyndyfrdwy, an area of Corwen, is the recognised birthplace of Owain Glyndwr. There are many references to Owain Glyndwr within the town. One of the hotels on the square is named after him and the banner of Owain can be seen flying within the town. The mountain behind Corwen is known as Cadair Glyndwr (Glyndwr's seat/chair). According to legend Owain threw his dagger from the mountain and it flew all the way to the church in the town, leaving an impression on the church tower. This can still be seen today.

Within the town square there is a modern statue of Owain Glyndwr. It was commissioned by the Corwen Community Council. It was designed and made in iron by the sculptor Simon Van de Put, to be unveiled in April 1995. Many of the town's folk fell very strongly that this statue is not a good enough representation of Owain and there was a great deal of controversy when it was unveiled. Soon after its unveiling the statue was vandalized, having paint thrown over it and after only one week the statue was removed. It was returned to the square in October 1996 on a much higher plinth with the hope that this would deter the vandals. Many call the statue, "the gnome in wellies" and they are pleased that a new statue has been commissioned to replace the one now standing in the square. Historians visiting Corwen say that the statue is not authentic in dress or arms. One was heard to say that the statue was a copy of a statue in northern France, of a French Lord. Who knows? One thing for sure is that we all

await its replacement.

The new life sized statue will be cast in bronze and will show Owain Glyndwr mounted on a horse with his sword drawn. The new statue has been paid for with funding from public and private donations, directed by Corwen Town Partnership. It took 18mths. to gather the cost of £100,000 and now a Cheshire based firm, Brimstone Artworks has been commissioned to complete the work. It is hoped that the statue will be completed and in place by the summer of 2006. It is also hoped that the new statue will attract visitors to the town and raise Corwen's profile as a tourist destination.

Another place of interest connected to Owain Glyndwr is Glyndwr's Mount, a local land mark in Lldiart-y-Parc, on the A5. It is said to have been the site of his house and also the spot where he was proclaimed Prince of Wales by his followers on 16th September 1400. This site is on private land and can only be viewed from the road. The town's folk are very proud of their connection with Owain Glyndwr, even the Farmers market has taken his name. They hope that you will come to celebrate this connection with them. There are plenty of places to stay.

Script From The Crypt

by Jean Smith

As to my latter end I go, to meet my jubilee.

I bless the good horse Bendigo, who built this tomb for me.

STRANGE WORDS to be found inscribed on a tomb.

But such a tomb can be found among some impressive and varied gravestones in the churchyard in the village of Llanfor. The tomb, not immediately noticeable was built for the late John Lloyd Price who was interred there in 1887, the inscription above is written over the sealed entrance. The story behind the epitaph is as fascinating as the words themselves.

The village of Llanfor, which translated means 'The Village or Church by the river', has the river Hafesp trickling through on its purposeful journey from the hills bisecting the hamlet as it meanders down to the river Dee. Nestling half a mile east of the town of Bala, Gwynedd, North Wales, the village, a collection of thirty or so dwellings house the community. They include some picturesque cottages, a Bed and Breakfast establishment and 'The Smithy' which at one time, as the name implies, is where the local farrier carried out his trade but is now a welding shop where all kinds of farm equipment is made and repaired. The village used to be part of the now much

diminished Rhiwlas estate owned by the Price family. Rhiwlas itself, a converted castle, is the residence of Mr Robin Price, the present owner of the estate, farmer and much-respected member of the local community. Llanfor church, slightly elevated and in the heart of the village, is a comparatively recent build, erected in the 1920s and although sadly no longer in use, it's spire still

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towers above the hamlet as a permanent reminder of its once important purpose. The churchyard, full for many a year is kept in good order by Dennis Edwards, a local greengrocer.

Research has revealed that the story behind the strange churchyard inscription is a reminder to the compulsion of John Lloyd price who, as rumour has it was an obsessive gambler. Having gambled and lost all his cash John Lloyd Price wagered the whole of the Rhiwlas estate on the horse Bendigo, 'the good' being added to the inscription as the horse did indeed win the race and ensured the retention of the estate by the Price family.

MY QUEST FOR NELSON'S LOVER.

by Georgina Ann Jones

Journal

1761 TO 1765

APRIL 26, EMY LYON, that, at least is the date she always celebrated her birthday, as no record of her birth survives, the year of her birth is not known for sure, but her parents Henry and Mary Lyon, were married on 11 June 1764, Emy was baptized on the 12 May 1765, so it is assumed that she was born in the year of her baptism.

She was born in Denhall, Near Ness, in the parish of Great Nelon, Cheshire. Through her life she would variously use the Christian names Amyly, Emly, Emyly, Emily and Emma and the surname Hart.

Her father Henry died from an unknown cause, and was buried on the 21 June, just two months after Emy was born. Emy and her mother moved to Hawarden, Flintshire where they lived with Emy's grandmother, Mrs Kidd.

1776 TO 1780

When young Emy was placed as under-nursemaid in the Thomas Family, Mr Honoratus Leigh Thomas was a surgeon, who lived in Hawarden and practised in Chester. Emy worked for them sometime after her twelfth birthday

in 1777, then in 1778.

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Emy's mother went to London once she had seen her daughter established at the Thomas's. She then found a post for Emy in the Capital and ordered Emy to join her, where she worked as nursemaid in the family of Dr Richard Budd, he was a physician at St Bartholomew's Hospital. She also worked in a number of jobs that have included Shop Girl, Lady's Maid and Barmaid, but she most certainly worked for the Quack-Doctor James Graham in his Temple OF Health, he was from Edinburgh. He had obtained tremendous encomia from the Duchess of Devonshire.

1780 TO 1782

Her name now had changed to Emily Hart, she gave birth to a child, known as "Little Emma". Emily had reputedly been the mistress of Captain John Willett Payne and "Little Emma" was most likely his daughter. The child was entrusted to her grandmother Mrs Kidd, back in Hawarden, and with that ended alike the interest of Father and Mother.

During the year of 1781, she lived under the "protection" of Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh. At his Mansion, Uppark in Sussex.

She lived amongst a dissolute set, reputedly to be dancing naked on the table for them. Then she became pregnant again, this time by Sir Harry, then in the December she was dumped by him, thrown out and sent on her way, with barely enough money to reach Hawarden.

She managed to get to Hawarden and she was reunited with her Grandmother Mrs Kidd and gave birth to a second child, but sadly nothing more is heard of it, so most probably it was stillborn. She wrote to Sir Harry who refused to answer her letters.

1782 TO 1786

She then wrote to the Hon Charles Greville, who was the son of an Earl and one of the most decent men she had met at Uppark. He fetched now Emma and her Mother to London. Charles, Emma and her Mother all lived together in a small house near Paddington Green, Charles had no fortune, and they lived in modest and economical way.

During the next four years, Emma received instruction in music, singing and with encouragement from Charles she read poetry and novels also to take an interest in a wide

range of issues. Then in the summer of 1782 she was introduced to the artist George Romney, who painted her at least 38 times.

Very often in classical poses, Emma had a profound effect on Romney and his later work (Emma would later be painted by Reynolds, Hoppner and Lawrence in England and afterwards by numerous artists).

Grenville's maternal uncle Sir William Hamilton came for a visit in the summer of 1784. He was an ambassador in Naples and a widower. At his nephew's house he saw and was greatly impressed by his mistress. "She is better" he is reported to have said about Emma "than anything that is to be found in antique art". Charles realised that his only chance of financial stability was to marry a wealthy wife and set about ridding himself of Emma by forging a relationship between Emma and his uncle. To this end Emma was encouraged to go, with her mother for a holiday in Naples.

1786 TO 1791

Emma left England for Naples. She hoped that she would return to England and Charles, and wrote many letters to him, in October Charles had promised to fetch her from Naples, but it was never to be.

Although it had never been her intention, a relationship with Sir William began to develop and in November 1786 she became his mistress. They both lived in Caserta and Naples.

Emma blossomed in the environment in which she found herself. As the mistress of an English ambassador, she was possessed of a wondrous beauty, she sang divinely, spoke Italian—for which she had the gift with marvellous quickness and with a remarkable turn for repartee, she became a great social power.

Artists, poets, musicians, raved about her, and a series of so-called "Attitudes", or so-called tableaux-vivants, which she was in the habit of giving, at once achieved an almost European Celebrity. He gave to Lady Spencer a frank account of his decision to marry Emma.

(A man of 60 intending to marry a beautiful young woman of 24 (Emma was 26) and whose character at her first outset of life will not bear a severe scrutiny, seems to be a very imprudent step, and so it certainly would be 99 times in 100, but I flatter myself I am not deceived in Emma's present character- We have lived together five years and a half, and not a day passes without her having testified her true repentance for the past.

I have at length consented to take off these difficulties, and as the world calls it make an honest woman of her. So I do

assure your Ladyship that Emma is out of the common line).

On September 6 1791 on a visit to England Emma and Sir William were married at Marylebone Church. And during this visit the Queen Charlotte refused to recognise her, but things were different in Paris she was welcomed and received by Marie Antoinette who was the sister of Maria Caroline, the Queen of Naples.

1791 TO 1798

During these years Emma's influence in Naples grew. And within a short time she became the confidante and friend of Queen Maria Carolina, and one of the leaders of society. Her closeness with the Queen meant that she inevitably found herself enmeshed in the politics of the time.

It was claimed by Nelson in the codicil to his will that Emma obtained the King of Spain's letter in 1796 to his brother, the King of Naples. This was expressive of his intention to declare war against England, from which a letter the ministry sent out orders to St John Jervis to strike a stroke if an opportunity against either the arsenals of Spain or fleets".

Nelson's first meeting with Emma was in September of 1793, when he visited Naples to commandeer Neapolitan troops for the defence of Toulon. By 1798 the French army was dominant in Europe and threatening amongst others the Kingdom of Naples. As Nelson sought the French fleet throughout the Mediterranean Emma may have facilitated its taking on provisions in the neutral port of Syracuse. After his great victory at the Battle of the Nile Nelson took his squadron to the sanctuary of the harbour at Naples. The people fed him, included Emma who helped and nursed the wounds he had sustained in the battle. With the invasion imminent, the Neapolitan royal family, the Hamilton's and a host of others were evacuated by Nelson to Palermo in Sicily.

1799 TO 1800

Naples was indeed invaded by the French, but then recaptured and on the 24 June 1799 Nelson was able to return to Naples. He was sent by the King and Queen to negotiate the peace, and with him were Sir William and Emma.

It was here that Emma played a part in the greatest scandal to dog Nelson's career.

The Neapolitan admiral was executed for treason and rebellion, although Nelson could have shown him mercy. Emma was present at his execution.

Whether from vanity, emotional enthusiasm, or genuine admiration, Emma laid herself out with complete

success to win Nelson's heart. The two lived for and with each other, to the scandal of the Mediterranean station; keeping up at all times the extraordinary pretence of a pure Platonism. No one knows exactly when the relationship started between Emma and Nelson rumour has it that it was consummated in Palermo and others say it was as late as April 1800 when Emma and Sir William accompanied Nelson in the Foudroyant on a visit to Malta. Also Sir William bore Nelson no malice and husband, wife and lover formed a relationship, which has been described as "Trio juncta in uno".

Some time around April Emma became pregnant with Nelson's child (Although there was never any proof that Emma bore the child or that Nelson was the father).

By the summer of 1800 Sir William had been recalled to England and Nelson had run out of excuses why he needed to stay in Naples. The decision was made that Nelson and the Hamilton's would return to England together, not by sea, but overland. Then from Leghorn the party travelled homeward through Vienna, Dresden and Hamburg, where they crossed over to Yarmouth, and then on to London.

For part of November Nelson lived with Fanny at 17 Dover Street. But there were some painful and embarrassing moments including a trip to the theatre where Fanny fainted. So before the month was out Nelson abandoned his sham of a marriage and joined Emma and Sir William at their house in Grosvenor Square. For the rest of his life Nelson was committed to Emma.

Christmas was spent at Fonthill, William Beckford's Gothic mansion in Wiltshire. Emma gave a performance of her "attitudes" telling in mime the story of Agrippina and as an encore she inappropriately imitated an abbess welcoming novices to her convent.

By now Emma was eight months pregnant.

1801 to 1803

Emma and Sir William rented 23, Piccadilly and on about the 28-of January she gave birth.

On the eve of sailing for the Baltic, he sent a most private letter to Emma a fine and frank avowal of his love for her Now, my own dear wife, for such you are in my eyes and the face of heaven, I can give full scope to my feelings- you know, my dearest Emma, that there is nothing in this world that I would not do for us to live together, and to have our dear little child with us. I firmly believe that this campaign will give us peace, and then we will set off for Bronte---- I love, I never did love anyone else, I never had a dear pledge of love till you gave me one, and you, thank god, never gave one to any body else.

You, my beloved Emma, and my Country, are the two dearest objects of my fond heart. My longing for you, both person and conversation, you can readily imagine.

What must be my sensations at the idea of sleeping with you; it sets me on fire, ever the thoughts---- if any woman naked were to come to me, even as I am this moment from thinking of you, I hope it might rot off if I would touch her even with my hand.

The letter was given to Frances Oliver to sent to Emma. The most bizarre intrigue followed whereby Emma and Nelson pretended that their child was that of one of Nelson's sailors and had been adopted by them. In fact the child was given to the care of a nurse allowing Emma to continue a normal life.

In her letters to Nelson she was disparaging about Fanny and Josiah, her son referring to them as "Tom-tit and the cub".

At this time the philandering Prince of Wales had designs on Emma and Nelson was driven to distraction as to what might happen in his absence. No sooner had Nelson returned from his victory at Copenhagen he was put in charge of Channel defences. He was able to spend time with Emma in Kent. He then asked Emma to find him a "little farm" outside London where he could live when not on active service.

By October Emma had arranged the purchase of Merton Place, in Surrey and moved in with Sir William and Nelson joined them after the Treaty of Amiens, which brought peace with the French, which would last until May 1803.

This was the period of "Paradise Merton" Emma, Sir William, and Nelson lived as a "Ménage a trios".

Emma entertained whilst Sir William fished and regularly went up to London. The not inconsiderable household expenses were shared between Nelson and Sir William.

Members of Nelson's extended family and other acquaintances were regularly in attendance.

Then between the 21st July and 5th September they made a tour of the Midlands and Wales so most probably passed through Corwen on the way Flintshire. The aim of the tour was to visit Sir William's estates at Milford Haven, but on route they visited some twenty other towns. The tour was a huge success, Nelson being generally feted everywhere he went.

1803 to 1805

Sir William died on the 6th April, Emma was holding him in her arms, Nelson was at her side, he was seventy-two.

Emma penned a note on herself: unhappy day for the forlorn Emma ten minutes past ten Dear Blessed Sir

William left me.

On the 12th April Sir William was buried quietly, beside his first wife in the Barlow family vault in Slebeck Pembrokeshire.

Emma took on a smaller house in Clarges Street and under Sir William's will Emma's debts were to be settled. In addition she also received a lump sum of £800 pounds and an annual sum of £800 pounds charged on the Welsh estates, payable quarterly.

Emma began to petition the government for financial reward in recognition of her services to her country while she was in Naples.

Before Nelson left he arranged for Horatia to be christened at St Marylebone Church, on May 13th. Where Emma and Sir William had been married. With the recommencement of war with France Nelson left Emma, to take up his new position as Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet.

Emma now was expecting another child. She could not settle and drifted between Merton and Clarges Street. She passed her time with friends and Nelson's extended family. For two years Nelson did not set foot on dry land, this saw much copious correspondence between Emma and Nelson; though Emma's letters to Nelson were destroyed he did keep all his letters to her. Nelson allowed Emma £100 per month for expenses at Merton.

It was between Christmas and the New Year that Emma gave birth to Nelson's second child, named Emma, but alas the child did not survive long, though the circumstances of her birth are uncertain.

Emma's portrait was hung in the Royal Academy Exhibition the artist was Masquerier. Nelson was still at sea the battle against the French. Emma went to stay in Ramsgate staying with Lady Dunmore. When she returned to Merton she had a distressing letter from Nelson.

13 August 1804

I am now going to state a thing to you, and to request your kind assistance, which, from my dear Emma's goodness of heart, I am sure of her acquiescence in. Before we left Italy, I told you of the extraordinary circumstances of a child being left to my care and protection. On your first coming to England, I presented you the child, dear Horatia. You became, to my comfort, attached to it, as Sir William, thinking her the finest child he had ever seen. She is becoming of that age when it is necessary to remove her from a mere nurse, and to think of educating her. Horatia is by no means destitute of a fortune, my earnest wish is that you take her to Merton, and if Miss Connor

will become her tutoress under your eye, I shall be made happy. I will allow Miss Connor any salary you think proper.

1805 to 1806

Nelson joined Emma at Merton for his first leave in two years.

Emma and Nelson took communion together. They exchanged rings and it was thus a ceremony that served a double purpose, affirming the innocence of their relationship while regularising it with “marriage”.

September Nelson left Merton to rejoin the fleet. In his diary he wrote:

Friday night at half-past ten drove from dear Merton where I left all which I hold dear in this world to go and serve my King & Country. May the Great God whom I adore enable me to fulfil the expectations of my Country and if it is His good pleasure that I should return my thanks will never cease being offered up to the throne of His mercy, if it is His good providence to cut short my days upon Earth I bow with the greatest submission relying that He will protect those so dear to me that I may leave behind. His will be done amen, amen. Amen.

The great victory had taken place on the 21st October in the shoals of Trafalgar of Cadiz. Nelson wrote his last letter to Emma two days before. (Though she did not receive it till December).

Victory Oct 19th: 1805 Noon –

My Dearest, beloved Emma, the dear friend of my bosom the Signal has been made the Enemy's Combined fleet are coming out of port. We have very little Wind so that I have no hopes of seeing them before tomorrow. May the God of Battles crown my endeavours with success at all events I will take care that my name shall ever be most dear to you and Horatia, both of whom I love as much as my own life and as my last writing before the battle will be with you, so I hope to God that I shall live to finish my letter after the battle. May Heaven bless you prays your Nelson & Bronte, Oct 20th, in the morning we were close to the mouth of the Streights, but the Wind had not come far enough to the Westward to allow the combined fleets to weather the shoals of Trafalgar, but they were counted as far as forty Ships of War, which I suppose to be 34 of the line and six frigates, a group of them was seen off the Lighthouse of Cadiz this Morning, but it blows so very fresh & thick weather that I rather believe they will go into the Harbour before night. May God Almighty give us success over these fellows and enable us to get peace.

21st October Nelson's hair was cut off and his clothes all

but his shirt, were removed. Nelson's body was placed in a "LEAQUER" cask of Brandy mixed with Camphor and Myrrh to preserve it till, according to Nelson's wish, he should be buried in England.

Captain Thomas Hardy packed the letter that he had written to Emma on the 19th and put it with the hair of Nelson and all Emma's portraits away in a box, safe from the Admiralty's grasp.

Nelson wrote a codicil to his will, in which he acknowledged the contribution made by Emma and stated "I leave Emma, Lady Hamilton therefore Legacy to my King and Country that they will give her an ample provision to maintain her Rank in Life" it was witnessed by Captains Hardy and Blackwood.

On the 6th of November a Mr Whitby from the Admiralty brought Emma the news of Nelson's death. She screamed and fainted. But when she came round she was unable to speak or even cry. She sat silent and withdrawn for almost ten hours.

In Nelson's will Emma was left Merton and its contents, a cash sum of £2000, and £500 a year for life secured on the income from his Bronte estate.

Extracts from certain of Nelson's letters to Emma were published which showed only too openly what their relationship had been. The letters gravely embarrassed some of Emma's supporters.

1805 to 1813

Emma neither visited Nelson as he lay in state or attended his funeral. She collaborated with James Harrison in the publication of his "Life". It was Emma's most subtle attempt to impress the public with justice of her case for a pension. The agreement was that Emma was to supply him with bed and board in exchange for half of the royalties, but she never got them.

Emma continued to keep open house to any professed friend or acquaintance of Nelson, and many were sharks, took her hospitality and never gave anything in return. She was reckless and too generous. She continued to pursue a pension through any avenue she thought might help her.

By now Emma was in almost hopeless difficulties. It was obvious now even to Emma that she was bankrupt. So a meeting with some friends was held to consider her case; as a result of which Merton and the rest of her property was assigned to the creditors, and a sum of £3700, to be charged on the estate.

Emma's health was at a low. She had an attack of jaundice. This turned into dropsy, and her figure began to swell as

fluid began to settle in her legs and abdomen. The medical treatment of frequent bleeding and a daily intake of several pints of fluid—preferably porter or weak beer complicated her condition and set up a chain of urinary and liver troubles; most probably hepatitis.

Then in 1810 Emma's mother died she was buried in the church in Paddington Green. She was Emma's constant companion.

Emma was arrested for debt and consigned to Fulham to the King's Bench Prison, on the south side of Black Friars Bridge. She remained there for a year while she was there she invited the Prince of Wales to dine with her which he duly did.

1813 to 1815

In the spring of 1814, two volumes were published anonymously entitled "The Letters of Lord Nelson to Lady Hamilton with a supplement of interesting Letters by Distinguished Characters". The affect was catastrophic since amongst other things Nelson had described the Prince of Wales as "A frequenter of pimps and bawds". (The publisher may have been James Harrison or a servant, Oliver, with whom Emma had quarrelled. And in her obituary in the Morning Post, Emma was accused of selling the letters for personal gain).

Then on 2nd July 1814 two old friends negotiated a temporary release from prison and Emma took advantage of this to flee to France. She and Horatia boarded the channel packet at Tower Bridge and travelled to Calais. Emma and Horatia lived in at least three premises in the Calais area; they had to live on a small remittance from England. Emma taught Horatia privately at home. Her health deteriorated and she came to rely on alcohol.

15 January

Poor Emma died, her body may have been embalmed for her to be returned to England, but this did not happen and she was buried in Calais in the graveyard of the Eglise de St Pierre. But during the rebuilding of Calais the grave has disappeared.

Horatia

Horatia was just fourteen years old; she returned to England and lived in the care of Nelson's sister Catherine, and her family the Matchams. She married a clergyman Stephan Ward and had eight children. She died at the age of eighty, still denying that Emma was her mother.

Acknowledgments: the letters of Lord Nelson to Lady

Hamilton G.P.B.Naish.and Flora Fraser.

The Mysterious Magician

by Eth Barford

CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS have always held a fascination for me. Even as a small child when my grandmother used to take me to the cemetery to lay flowers, I loved to wander around and imagine the lives that lay behind those last, final inscriptions. Each headstone telling its own tale. The words that record the end, the concluding lines and full stops, in the story of a unique human life.

Most people, if asked, could tell you what they would like their epitaph to say, but few of us have any input or hand in the final written sentences that bring our lives to a close. This is usually left to the imagination of others, who, in their grief, can only remember the 'Dear Dad'- 'Loving Mother' or 'Special Sister' they knew. We are all of these things to our nearest and dearest but we are also much more as life-living individuals and our epitaph should leave suitable clues. The memorials which fascinate me the most, are the ones that say something personal, something extraordinary, unexpected or enigmatic. Occupations, achievements or characteristics that add insight and are so

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much more illuminating and inspiring to the casual tomb reader of the future.

When I first saw the following words on a gravestone in my local churchyard, you can understand why my curiosity was aroused. There must be an interesting story here, I thought.

Oscar Paulson

'International Magician'

1899-1980

He vanished gloom and brought great joy

To every state and station

And when the golden stairs appeared

There was no misdirection.

Oscar H Paulson was born in East London, South Africa, on February 2nd 1899, the only surviving member of a family of eleven children. East London stands at the mouth of the Buffalo River. It was set up by the British in the year 1836 as a military post and served as a base during the Xhosa-Wars. It was given town rights in 1873 and is blessed with an all year round pleasant and sunny climate. Like all places along The Sunshine Coast, it has many beautiful, sandy beaches and is the only harbour

that lies on a river. For some unknown reason, Oscar's family decided to leave the warmth of South Africa and came to settle in England, where he was eventually employed as a telegraphist, later becoming the Manager of the Cable & Cipher Dept. for I.T.T. Company.

Oscar was a renowned International Magician with a semiprofessional comedy act and had the distinction of being an Ex-President of the I.B.M. British Ring, and Inner member of the Magic Circle.

The Magic Circle is an organisation for magicians and promotes magic in all its forms. It has been named "the house of 10,000 secrets" because members swear not to reveal how the magic tricks are achieved.

In 1924 when he was a mere 25 years old, Oscar produced the Magic Circle Show, so I think we can assume that he was involved, at a high level in the art of making magic, from quite a young age.

Magicians and magic shows have a history dating back over 4,000 years and are still as popular today. Most onlookers have difficulty believing their eyes by what they see, but expert magicians achieve their results by using immaculate sleight-of-hand. Some will go so far as to risk their lives, in pursuit of the perfect magic trick. The great Houdini is an example of one who actually gave his life for his art.

According to those who knew him, Oscar was a "charming person and a wonderful magician with a relaxed style, all of his own and a priceless line of patter". Unfortunately, during his latter years he was severely disabled, the result of leg operations that did not mend properly. Even so, he managed to get about and took a keen and active interest in magic right up to the end.

Oscar died peacefully at his home, on Sunday, 28th December 1980, aged 81. Many of his friends who visited him over the Christmas period and fellow magicians, "cherished some wonderful memories of him."

I would like to have known Oscar, he appears to have been an interesting and amusing character, but it is the person who penned his final epitaph, who can take the credit for Oscar's story being re-told today, 26yrs after his death.

My research into Oscar's life conjures-up as many questions as it answers--Did he ever marry and have a family--and what brought a man who was born in the sunny climes of South Africa, to the small Welsh village of Cynwyd? Perhaps we will never know!

I am grateful to the secretary of The Magic Circle for supplying invaluable information about Oscar's life.

The plight of the 74: How the compulsory rehousing of 74 people led to Welsh Devolution

by Jean Smith

EVENTY-FOUR PEOPLE LIVED in the rural community of Capel Celyn, a village to the North West of Bala in the county of Gwynedd. An insignificant number by today's standards but the inhabitants tried in vain for eight years to prevent the destruction of their homes.

On the 1st of August 1957 Harold Macmillan, supported by Henry Brook, who was minister for Welsh affairs, had the 'Tryweryn Bill' passed by his conservative government. The Bill was a compulsory purchase order of the Tryweryn valley so that it could be flooded to form the Tryweryn reservoir or Llyn Celyn, as it is now known, to supply a constant supply of water for extraction in Chester and Liverpool.

The village was one of the last Welsh-only speaking communities and its proposed flooding caused much controversy resulting in thirty-five out of thirty six Welsh MPs opposing the passing of the bill.

In 1961 work commenced on the construction of the earth dam, the largest in Wales and although this provided many jobs for local people it did not deter the growing animosity against the English parliament and gave the Welsh people a growing desire to have a stronger political force behind them.

To have more say in the political aspect of rural Wales rather than being ruled by a centralised UK government. This led to Plaid Cymru becoming a major political party

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and eventually to Welsh Devolution. It also piloted the way to the formation of 'Cymdeithus yr Iaith Gymraeg', the Welsh Language Society.

The Tryweryn Bill and the drowning of Capel Celyn also gave rise to a more militant response from the Welsh and 'Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru or MAC was formed. In February 1963 a transformer on the dam construction site was blown up in the name of MAC who also carried out other bombings over the following six years.

The building of the dam was completed in 1965 at a total monetary cost of twenty million pounds and by 1966 the

valley was completely flooded submerging the village including the post office, school, chapel and cemetery under 71,200 mega litres of water. Also lost to the lake were twelve complete farms and eight hundred acres of land from four other farms.

Although reservoirs are constructed for benefits the negative effects can outweigh any positive ones. The inhabitants of four settlements had to be re-housed including those already interred in the cemetery. The bodies were exhumed and reburied at Llan-y-Cil and the gravestones moved to a memorial site at the side of the lake. Smallpox is only infectious for a short time but the exhumation of a whole churchyard can be an emotive issue even without the threat of an infectious outbreak.

As well as the disruption to the human residents of the area, the flora and fauna were also affected as the construction of a dam alters the flow regime both upstream and downstream as sediment accumulates adjacent to the dam. The creation of the dam destroyed the salmon spawning grounds but a fish trap immediately downstream of the dam was constructed, inducing fish to spawn there the eggs later being transferred to hatcheries. The Tryweryn valley was chosen for the site for various reasons, the surface area profile, its location in a national park and only a sparse population requiring relocation. The dominant rock series are the 'Ordovician rhyolitic tuffs' of the Llyn Conway Formation, and although these are badly jointed, the overall permeability is low enough to seal the reservoir.

To minimise the visual effect, the facing wall of the dam has been grassed over and as it is curved with a gradual gradient it blends in well with the surrounding countryside. All the dam buildings are clad in masonry local to the area.

Not only does the reservoir supply drinking water it also dampens storm hydrograph responses and generates a modest 4.4 megawatts to the national grid, something considered unusual for a reservoir intended for water supply. As the flow of water from the lake into the river Tryweryn is regulated it has now become a popular white water venue for rafters and canoeists attracting sportsmen and women worldwide and bringing much welcome visitors to the area which relies quite heavily on the tourist trade. This fact however is little consolation to the relatives of those who were uprooted so many years ago neither is the formal apology received from Liverpool City Council on the 19th of October 2005, forty years after the completion of the dam.

An Interview with The Saga Lady

by Jean Smith

THE APPARENT LIFE STYLE of the elegant chauffeured passenger in the classical open top red and white limousine is a far cry from the real life hardship and dedication endured by the actress who plays the part.

The Saga advertisement, recently constant viewing on the small screen has earned Pat Parr-Burman the title of 'The Saga Lady'. A seasoned professional actress, here she retells some of her experiences over more than half a century while fulfilling her lifelong acting ambition.

From early childhood, living in Edinburgh, it was Pat's only desire to be on the stage despite the objections of her mother, a beautician and father, a physician and surgeon who were totally against her chosen career.

Pat won her first job at the age of 17 only because she was able to do high kicks and the splits; never having had any formal training. She understudied the singing and dancing in the pantomime 'Sleeping Beauty'.

Under the supervision of her dancing teacher Pat attained levels 1 2 and 3 of the Royal Academy of Dancing in ballet. She also won a scholarship to Art school but opted not to go.

Her quest for work found her travelling to London by train, alone and with very little money. On her arrival in the Capital so young and naïve, a fellow thespian, Peter Layton took her under his wing, offered to find her work

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and a place to stay, which turned out to be in his bed, an offer she found the courage to refuse.

After finding a room herself she gained work at 'The Windmill' theatre staying for a year before venturing into straight acting and touring with the play 'Claudia'. Still only 19 the play management departed with the takings from the show and the wages, leaving her and the rest of the under 21s in the cast stranded in Winchester.

Penniless, she took the train to London giving only her address to acquire a seat.

At the age of 20 she fell pregnant to her first love, Roman, a Polish officer who didn't like the theatre and although they lived together for a time he told her to get rid of the baby, which she refused to do. So young and alone she moved to a mother and baby home in Highgate where she

worked while awaiting the birth. The institution was run very strictly by nuns and left Pat with vivid memories. Many of the young girls had babies to Yanks and were waiting adoption of their sad bundles. The mothers of the black babies had a long stay in the home, as nobody wanted to adopt a black baby in such times.

Tired of the rough treatment, the scrubbing and screams in the night Pat packed her meagre belongings and climbed over the wall at midnight to escape. Taking the tube, the next day she arrived at the Council for unmarried mothers and was sent to work for Hilda Evans looking after her children while she was at work. She was told that Hilda's husband had been sent overseas with his job but later discovered that he was in prison.

After leaving Hilda's she stayed with a friend in Clapham for a while so she could see Roman but soon found herself in a home in Golders Green, which was run by the Red Cross. Pat had her baby in Bushy Heath hospital and from there was sent to 'Marylands' a home for naughty girls and

their babies. She was trapped; with no financial support the girls were not allowed to go out, until one-day fate dealt a better hand.

Lady Letham who worked for the Red Cross recognised Pat's name on the list of residents in the home and contacted her mother who on sending the money for the train fare on 'The Flying Scotsman' insisted that she returned home.

Living with her mother for the next three years, she took work as it came available sometimes as an artist's model and recalls having to hurry home to breast-feed the baby while sitting for art students. The acting work continued with the 'Arts Repertory Players' doing plays and revues. While in Glasgow she joined Beryl Reid for six months in a review called 'The 8.30 Show'.

In the course of her work she met Bryn, an actor and comedian who, while working in Cornwall told Pat he had found her a job in the Contemporary Theatre in Truro; although she was touring with Harry Henson she joined Bryn and for many years they worked and toured together doing pantomimes, plays and revues. Pat's second daughter Sally was born while she was touring and accompanied Pat on all her travels from the age of 6 weeks.

Bryn asked Pat to join him in County Leix in the West of Ireland but when she arrived the hotel was so grotty she could not stay and moved to a Sporting Hotel where she stayed with friends and for a while enjoyed a lavish

lifestyle.

Bryn was brutal towards her and she left him taking Sally and just a Gladstone bag, hitched a ride on a milk lorry to Dublin and there boarded a ferry to Holyhead. The company she was with in Holyhead folded after two months and she found herself returning to Dublin and Bryn.

Sally was seven by the time Pat agreed to marry Bryn and only then so Sally could have a 'daddy'. Bryn was lazy and incapable of coping without Pat. To achieve the best she could for her daughter Pat paid for Sally to attend a boarding school in Llandudno while she continued working in northern clubs and cabaret.

On moving back to the South Pat bought a house in Surrey working by day as a secretary and by night in pubs and doing cabaret in order to pay 'the bond' on the house. Sally had left school and was herself eager to join the theatrical world, by the age of 20 she had met her future husband Paul and Pat, knowing she would be well cared for left Bryn for the last time, unable to put up with his laziness and brutality any longer. Unfortunately in doing so she lost all claim to the property only to discover many years later that Bryn's second wife inherited the house and all the contents that she had worked so hard to pay for and only to drink it away.

As a free agent Pat had many acting roles in Scotland, Ireland and Wales and further a field including South Africa and Cuba, where the Saga advertisement was filmed. Having known her present partner Alan Granville for more than thirty years who is also a professional actor starring in films such as 'Black Terrorist' and recently toured in a stage play with Paul Nicholas. Together they moved to South Africa where there was an *abundance of work for a time*.

While working on a film together Alan had to carry Pat on his back, barefoot across a murky river. Looking back she squirms at the thought of the diseases or parasites they could have picked up. In another film she had to cross a rickety rope bridge over a deep ravine and was assured that the scene would be completed with one take. Being afraid of heights she was violently sick on reaching the far side only to have to repeat the performance a further 14 times.

Pat and Alan returned to Wales due to the political climate in South Africa and the lack of sufficient work choosing to live in a picturesque village on the outskirts of Corwen and close to her family.

Still a working actress Pat spends her 'resting' time

keeping fit by doing Yoga, writing her memoirs and painting, a successful hobby from which she sold fifteen paintings while in Africa. Throughout her varied career the most enjoyable of which she recalls was her time in Africa working with animals.

Due to her life experiences, Pat is a very down to earth lady and is not afraid to speak her mind openly admitting she has little patience with modern youth always expecting a helping hand.

A Light In The Window

by Georgina Ann Jones

R IRVING OF TYŃ-LLWYN LLANGAR kept a lighted lamp at night for his son, so he would find his way home.

His son Andrew “Sandy” Irvine was one of the mountaineers who attempted to make the first ascent of Mount Everest, the other was George Mallory.

Andrew was born in Birkenhead on the 8 April 1902; he was educated at Birkenhead School, Shrewsbury School and Merton Collage at Oxford.

He was also a keen sportsman and excelled at rowing and was a member of the crew that won the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race in 1923.

Irvine was selected for the Everest expedition when he was still an undergraduate in 1924. The ascent took place in early June, and the last day that the climbers were seen was on 8 June 1924. But unfortunately the two never returned to the camp that day, and it is still uncertain if they ever reached the summit. Up to this day Irvine’s body has never been found.

Then in 1999, Mallory’s body was found at around 28,000 ft on the north face of Everest by an American expedition. What may possibly prove evidence would be the recovery of images contained in the cameras that the two men carried, unfortunately, neither of the two cameras that they carried have been found. Many have speculated that Irvine may have been carrying one of the cameras when they were killed. Experts from Kodak have said that if one of the cameras was found with the film there is a good

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chance that the film could be developed to produce “printable images” due to the fact that they would be in the nature of black and white film that was used at the time.