

CHAIR'S REPORT

Martin Wright

It seems only weeks ago that we met at Tonypany for our last Annual General Meeting, when in reality another year is rapidly slipping away. Those of us who work in education have seen another academic session come and go, another cohort of students move through to take their place in society. That society, though, hardly offers a very comfortable habitat for them at the moment. In the wake of one of capitalism's great and periodic crises, we are witnessing an attempt – undertaken by a coalition government of dubious legitimacy - to recast it according to the desires of its wealthiest members.

The worst is yet to come: draconian cutbacks to public services, a constant diatribe against those who work in the public sector, the running down and gradual privatisation of the National Health Service, an increasingly exclusive system of Higher Education, the whittling away of support for the vulnerable and the persecution of society's weakest members, all of these things have only just begun. To those of us who remember the 1980s it all has a horribly familiar feel. A divided society littered with human casualties and wasted talent is the spectre that rises before us. For us in Wales there is the hope that the Assembly Government might protect us from the worst of the deluge. Only time will tell, but as a nation that suffered disproportionately the predations of the 1980s and 1990s we can only look upon the desire of our wealthy rulers to 'reform the public services' and 'rebalance the economy' with deep suspicion, indeed fear.

In such an atmosphere it would be easy to feel that the work of Llafur is but marginal. Such an assumption could not be more wrong. Indeed, it is more important than ever that Llafur continues its work to deepen and enhance our knowledge and understanding of the past of the ordinary people of this country. A knowledge of the past serves as a resource and a guide in facing the future, a map

and compass without which we are lost in the present. Each Llafur event and each publication, it is hoped, supplements and adds value to that resource, and – to paraphrase the words of Horace Haigh, a miner from south Wales who attended Coleg Harlech during the Great Depression of the 1930s, – helps 'equip us to live affirmatively'. Details may be found within this newsletter of events planned for the autumn and winter, to which all are welcome.

In particular, I would like to draw members' attention to the Annual General Meeting and dayschool, to be held on the 29th October at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff. The theme will be War and Society in Wales. It would be difficult to find a more relevant theme for the present. When asked, at the close of 1899, what the greatest challenge to humanity would be in the new century, Keir Hardie replied without hesitation 'militarism'. He wasn't mistaken, but what is more alarming is that the same answer could have been given as accurately in 1999 as 1899. Our dayschool should provide a valuable opportunity not just to reflect upon the prescience of Hardie's statement, but also to deepen our knowledge of our nation's relationship with war at a time when a significant number of its sons and daughters find themselves engaged in conflict once more.

Finally, one of the issues that will be debated at the forthcoming AGM is the future of our journal. A proposal from the journal editors to introduce a system of peer-review sparked a lively discussion at last year's AGM. Consequently, it was decided that members should be more widely consulted before any decisions were made. Within this newsletter, the editors present a detailed paper summarising the proposals. It is also published on our website, and members are warmly invited to respond and make their views known. This is an important matter, and Llafur *is* its members. It is important, therefore, that all members voice their views, so that a fully informed debate on the matter can take place at the next AGM. I look forward to chairing that debate, and to enjoying the wealth of expertise that will be available at our forthcoming events.

SOCIETY NEWS

From birthday refrains for Ieuan Gwynedd Jones in Aberystwyth to Dai Smith's singing in Llwynypia this has been a year for Llafur members to reminisce, reflect and celebrate. We've been fortunate to hear a range of notable and excellent speakers share the wealth of their research throughout the year. However, the opportunity to celebrate Ieuan's magnificent contribution to Welsh history with his former students was certainly a high point. Full details of each of our events follows. We should also note the very successful conference on Cold War Wales organised by the Centre for Modern and Contemporary Wales and supported by Llafur. The event held at the University of Glamorgan saw a mixture of academic papers and personal reminiscences from activists involved in peace movements. The 2011 edition of the journal will be a special issue on Cold War Wales and will include a range of papers from the day.

Llafur members were also formed part of the audience to mark the third Ursula Masson Memorial Lecture on International Women's Day back in March. Llafur Vice President Angela John was the speaker using research from her latest biography which is on Lady Rhondda, Margaret Mackworth. The excellent and well attended event also saw the launch of a new edition of *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830-1939*.

Looking ahead to this year on **18th August**, Llafur will support a Discussion Forum to mark the centenary of the 1911 Llanelli Strike and Riots.

On **Saturday 24 September**, an event to mark the **40th anniversary of Llafur** will be held at the South Wales Miners' Library from 1-5pm.

On **Saturday 29 October**, we will hold a Day School on 'War and Society in Wales'. This will be held at the Temple of Peace, Cardiff. It will be followed by the Society's AGM.

On **12 November**, an event about the People's Collection Wales will be held at St Fagans: National History Museum.

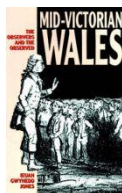
A Day School to mark the centenary of the Rhondda Labour Party is being planned for later this year. Further details to follow.

Next year will see two events in Bangor. In the spring, a day school will be held to explore the work of Welsh language socialists. From 8-10 February, there will be a conference to mark Duncan's Tanner's contribution to labour history.

Llafur members will also be interested to hear about the Women's Archive of Wales 14th Annual Conference & AGM 2011 – 'We Shall Overcome' Saturday 15th – Sunday 16th October Y Galleri, Caernarvon.

We look forward to seeing you at our events this year. For more events relating to Llafur and other organisations, as well as regular updates please visit our website www.llafur.org or contact Sian Williams (s.f.williams@swansea.ac.uk).

RECENT LLAFUR EVENTS



**Celebrating the 90th Birthday of
Ieuan Gwynedd Jones
Day School on Victorian Wales
National Library of Wales,
Aberystwyth
Saturday 19 June 2010
Report by Lowri Ann Rees**

On Saturday 19 June a day school was jointly organised by Llafur and the Ceredigion Historical Society to celebrate the 90th birthday of the renowned historian, Professor Ieuan Gwynedd Jones. The location was the impressive Drwm at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, whilst the theme of the event was Victorian Wales, chosen in recognition of Ieuan's considerable contribution to this field of historiography.

The day school began with Professor Geraint Jenkins extending a warm welcome to all, and in particular to the guest of honour, Ieuan, and his family. The first speaker to present was Dr Ryland Wallace, whose paper focused on the emancipation of women in Victorian Wales, chaired by Professor Angela John. Perceptions of traditional male and female roles in society were considered, and how the Victorian understanding of physiology and anatomy therefore deemed women as the weaker sex, which restricted their freedom in comparison with men. Ryland accounted for the Welsh aspect of the suffragette movement, and of particular local interest was the crusade of John Gibson, first editor of the *Cambrian News*, who strongly supported the

cause, and even sat on some of the same committees as the influential Pankhursts.

After a morning coffee break we were treated to Dr Russell Davies's paper, entitled 'The Happiness, Humour and Sexuality of the Welsh in the Age of Victoria', which was delivered and chaired (by Dr Eryn White) in Welsh, with simultaneous translation. Whilst nineteenth-century Wales is not traditionally perceived in the above terms, with Queen Victoria's famous retort 'we are not amused' encapsulating the climate of the era, Russell managed to convince us otherwise, showing that there was real humour, and indeed much scandal, amongst the Welsh. Even the somewhat dated Victorian jokes Russell shared managed to evoke much laughter during an entertaining paper, packed full of amusing tales and examples.

Following this second paper was an appreciation of Ieuan's life and academic career by one of his many students present, Geraint Jenkins, the session chaired by Richard Suggett. Accompanied by a rich visual presentation, containing many personal photographs gathered with the help of Ieuan's son, we were privileged to hear a sample of a recording of Ieuan lecturing with such clarity and enthusiasm on the impact of the 1868 election on Welsh society.

After breaking for lunch, the afternoon session commenced with Dr Paul O'Leary's discussion of the Salvation Army during the 1870s and 1880s, and how their military brand of street religion provoked questions regarding the appropriate place of religious worship. These early years of experimental street religion interestingly thrived in the revivalist coalfields in comparison with the rest of Wales. Paul considered the emotive role of music, in addition to the contribution of women, with female Salvationists able to become captains, gaining the authority and public respect they lacked in society through the organisation. Links were drawn with Ryland's earlier paper on the political emancipation of women.

During afternoon tea, Ieuan was presented with a gift and birthday cake, which was cut after all gathered to sing 'Penblwydd Hapus/Happy Birthday'. The last paper of the day was a lively presentation by Richard Ireland, entitled 'White Gloves and Blue Books: Community and Crime in

Nineteenth-Century Wales'. Richard admitted that unlike the other speakers of the day, he had not been formally taught by Ieuan, but he felt no less indebted to him for the insight into nineteenth-century Wales gleaned through much study of his work. Focusing on rural south-west Wales in particular, Richard explained the unreliability of official crime statistics. Again, as Russell mentioned in his paper, the Welsh were traditionally seen as law abiding and moral, the country described as *Gwlad y Menyg Gwynion* (*Land of White Gloves*); but, as Richard explained, this was not always the case. Moral crimes such as the concealment of births and bestiality often did not go to court, where the convicted would be brought before an English speaking judge, as they would reflect badly on the community. Therefore, methods of community justice were utilised to punish offenders, with one of the most extreme forms being the *ceffyl pren* tradition. Richard's enthusiasm for his research and engaging presentation ensured that the day school came to an end on a high note.

Proceedings were brought to a close by Martin Wright, Chairman of Llafur, who invited Ieuan to say a few words. Ieuan expressed his heartfelt thanks, declaring how he would always remember this day, having thoroughly enjoyed listening to his old students present their research. Drawing attention to the vast sum of knowledge gathered on the day, Ieuan was confident that this knowledge would continue to grow in the coming years. Martin thanked the organisers of the day, Lona Masson and Eirionedd Baskerville of the Ceredigion Historical Society, and Siân Williams of Llafur, in addition to the speakers, those who chaired sessions, the National Library of Wales staff, all who had attended, and most importantly, to Ieuan, for his valuable contribution to the enhancement of the field of Welsh historiography.



'150 years of the Co-Operation in South Wales'
Cwmdare Miners' Hall
3rd July 2010
Report by M. Eggerton

To mark the 150th year since the establishment of the first Co-operatives in Wales Llafur members met in the fitting surroundings of Cwmdare Miner's Hall on the 3rd July 2010. At this enjoyable event members were treated to excellent papers from Chris

Williams, Alun Burge, Nicole Robertson and Len Arthur. Topics ranged from the first Co-operative communities in Wales to the possible future for the movement.

After a rousing welcome Chris Williams' paper 'Owenite Communities in Wales' focussed on Robert Owen's belief that the existing world could be made into a new moral world. Chris put forward three fascinating case studies of Owenite communities. With stunning photographs to illustrate each case we were led through the communities of Blackwood, Pant Glas and Garn Llwyd; considering how each interpreted and put into action Owen's way of living. Chris argued that Blackwood represented the least Owenite of his three examples as it was too conservative and lacking in radicalism. However, Pant Glas was an attempt to build a community in a paradise of isolation which ultimately failed agriculturally, and logistically, as the number of members never reached sustainable levels. And finally Garn Lwyd, Chris stated, should be seen differently as it was a bridging phase between Owenite ideas and Co-operative ones. Overall Chris suggested that these communities are worth studying as they symbolize the prehistory of Co-operatives in Wales.

The next paper was given by Alun Burge entitled 'The beating heart of Co-operation in south Wales snapshots from Cwmdare and Aberdare'. In Alun's own words he provided a '130 year skimming' of the history of the Co-operative Movement in south Wales considering the historical context for their success and ultimate decline in the second half of the twentieth century. Throughout his paper Alun considered the different characteristics of the Cwmdare and Aberdare Co-operatives and highlighted their local aims and wider ambitions. These two Co-ops were only set up after 1859 and enjoyed financial success by the 1890s thanks to the stability and quality of the respective leadership. Indeed, Alun highlighted, how Cwmdare and Aberdare Co-operative leaders went on to become figures at a national level. Alun explored the impact of various strikes and lockouts on the Co-ops, especially after 1900. In fact, Alun suggested that the events of 1926 broke the back of the Co-operatives signalling their decline until they were described as 'behind the times' by the 1960s. Alun's paper was wonderfully sprinkled with personal memories of his local Co-op stores and the attitudes that abounded within

it. After a fantastic lunch arranged by the Cwmdare Miners' Hall, to whom special thanks must go, the audience reassembled to hear Nicole Robertson on 'The Co-operative Movement and the Community. A case study of three Co-operative societies in Wales during the first half of the twentieth century.' During her paper Nicole looked at Co-operatives in Ton, Ewloe and Queensferry and the way that societies provided retail services, 'the divi' as well as the financial aid they set aside for members and local communities. Nicole began by discussing the innovative character of the Co-op retail sector through self-service but noted that these strides forward could not be maintained and the Co-ops lost ground to other retailers. Nicole argued that the role of the societies as stimulators of thrift was very important and it enabled the working class to save both for luxury purchases as well as necessities in leaner times. This was especially the case in Ewloe and Ton where 'the divi' was proportionally higher. The paper focussed on the way that the societies had to change to fit wider economic trends which saw the wide use of credit and higher purchase which could be seen as fundamentally against the founding principle of the Co-operative movement. Nicole then finished by looking at the way that Co-operatives gave regularly to local and national charities and how this grew over time, leading very nicely in to Len Arthur's paper about the possible future of the Co-Operatives.

Len Arthur, in his paper 'Co-operatives, left or right into the future', looked at the changing nature of the society with 12.9 million members and 237,000 UK employees. He also discussed the society as a social movement which could act to bring about reform or revolution, one example of this being the work at Tower Colliery until its closure and another being their Fair-trade stance. Len closed by considering the ideas of Trotsky and Engels who saw co-operatives as transitional organisations before the birth of working utopias.

As the day drew to a close it was apparent that the 150 anniversary of Co-operatives had been celebrated not just by considering the birth of such societies but also by the opening up of discussion and debate about their role in the twenty-first century. ***For updates and more information make sure you regularly visit our website www.llafur.org***



**Tonypandy – 100 Years on.
Coleg Morgannwg, Llwynypia
Saturday 30th October 2010
Report by Matthew Eggerton**

A huge audience made the pilgrimage to the Auditorium in Coleg Morgannwg to celebrate and reassess the impact of the events of Tonypandy 100 years ago. We were welcomed by Leighton Andrews AM who began by placing the events of 1910 into the wider context of Wales' political history and its tradition of 'active citizenship'.

We were treated to an unexpected start from Dai Smith who began his paper by singing 'All the nice girls like a striker'. In his paper, 'Tonypandy 1910: Breaking All the Rules', Dai considered not only his own links to Tonypandy but also the way in which the history of 1910 has been re-evaluated since the 1970s. In this Dai suggested that the causes of 1910 could be traced to a regression of authority before that year and that only by 'breaking all the rules' can the historian really know the truth behind major events like those seen in Tonypandy.

Our second paper, provided by Jane Aaron, 'Fictionalizing Tonypandy: The Riots in Literature' was an interesting look at the way that Tonypandy's riots have been reflected in popular literature throughout the last century. Jane looked at six novels, ranging from romantic to social realistic texts and in each case we saw how the authors viewed the riots and the people who took part. For example, Jane considered the way Jack Jones' use of the riots is affected by his being an outsider as well as how Lewis Jones was inspired by Tonypandy, and other factors, to become a novelist of historical events. Finally, Jane looked at the works of Alexander Cordell and Catrin Collier and the way that events like Tonypandy could be used as backdrops for novelisation.

Before we broke for lunch Chris Williams' paper, 'I depict a riot': the Cambrian Combine dispute in the cartoons of J. M. Staniforth', looked at the way external observers interpreted the plight of the miners in Wales at the beginning of the last century. Chris argues that the work of cartoonist Staniforth in the *Western Mail* showed a man not sympathetic to the socialist cause rather one sympathetic to needs of 'real miners' who he saw as naive and innocent. Chris concluded that Staniforth's ideas should not be easily dismissed

as he was no minor cartoonist to have remained in that trade for 30 years; his views must have chimed with his readers.

After a long lunch interval our final speaker was Louise Miskell whose paper was entitled 'Beyond Tonypandy: the other face of the "Coal War" of 1910'. Louise re-examined the 'Block Strike' at the Powell-Duffryn collieries in Aberdare that she suggested have been overshadowed by the riots of Tonypandy. These strikes, she argued, should be considered quite separately from Tonypandy, although still part of the so called Coal War, as these were begun without ballot as a result of long-term changes in pay and conditions. The latter part of Louise's paper focussed on the leader of the strike, C. B. Stanton an obdurate man who was seen by contemporaries as a radical figure, who Louise added, later went on to become a jingoistic right-wing politician who turned on the south Wales miners. Louise finished by admitting the more lasting legacy of the Cambrian Combine dispute, but added that other actions within the Coal War should not be overlooked.

The day was brought to a close by Joe England who ended by saying that Tonypandy and the events considered throughout the day prove that it is better to do something and fail than not do anything at all when facing injustice. It was agreed that they day had been a fantastic success and very befitting of the centenary occasion.

Proposed Changes to the Journal

As editors, we would like to set out some proposed changes to the journal for discussion at the next AGM. For a number of reasons, we believe it necessary that certain arrangements to do with the journal are changed slightly to allow it to meet some of the challenges it faces currently.

The vast majority of articles published in the journal are submitted to us by academic historians and this has been the case since the journal's first edition in 1972. The editors have always commented on submissions and given advice on how submissions might be made suitable for publication. We have noticed in the last few years that an increasing number of authors have asked that referees be found to comment upon their submissions; referees have indeed been used occasionally in the past and have proven useful to

both the authors and the editors. Furthermore, we have noticed a number of cases in which potential contributors, especially younger historians, have decided not to submit their work to the journal as a result of being advised to place their work in 'refereed journals'. Both these situations have developed as a result of the regular assessments of academic research (the RAE and the REF) that have developed in recent years, which require that work submitted to these assessments be peer-reviewed before publication. As such, readers of the journal have been denied the fruits of research carried out by young researchers working in new fields, while young historians themselves have suffered a cost to their futures as a result of publishing in *Llafur*.

In order to address this situation, and in order to ensure that *Llafur* remains as relevant in the future as it has been in its past, we propose that it becomes a refereed journal. This would mean the creation of an Editorial Board of acknowledged experts in people's history who would provide assistance and guidance to the editors. In addition, a referee would be sought for each submission and would read and comment upon the submitted work. Such comments would be used as a form of feedback to the authors and can help guide the editors in their work with the authors. We believe that such changes would ameliorate the difficulties being faced by younger historians and would help to secure *Llafur's* longer term future as the essential place in which to publish the latest and very best research in Welsh history.

These proposed changes do not mean that the journal will no longer be open to non-academic or 'amateur' historians who might otherwise be discouraged by the introduction of such a system. On the contrary, the journal will continue to seek and publish work by such individuals as part of its continued commitment to the development of people's history in Wales. We would seek members of the editorial board who are as committed to the inclusive nature of the journal as are the editors themselves. Referees would be made aware of the journal's inclusive nature and its role as a platform for the work of the broadest range of authors possible, while the editors would continue to work to ensure that the proposed changes did not affect the ability or inclination of

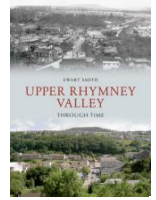
such authors to submit work to us.

Paul O'Leary Steven Thompson Stephanie Ward

This matter will be discussed and voted on at the AGM on 29 October 2011. We would welcome your views in advance of the meeting. Please send your comments to the Secretary, Siân Williams at the South Wales Miners' Library, Swansea University, Hendrefoelan Campus, Gower Road, Swansea SA2 7NB Tel: 01792 518693 Email: s.f.williams@swansea.ac.uk

BOOK SECTION

Ewart Smith, *Upper Rhymney Valley Through Time* (Stroud, 2010), 96pp, £14.99.



This is one in the series of *Through Time* local history picture books from Amberley Publishing. Essentially it is a series of 'then and now' photographs illustrating the changes that have taken place over time. Unfortunately the 'then' photographs are not dated and obviously come from different periods so that there is a vagueness matched by the sparseness of the commentary. What is clearly illustrated is the disappearance of collieries, railways, chapels, workmen's institutes and shops, and their replacement by parks, lakes, cars and roads, care homes and supermarkets. Streets once thronging with people are just parking lots. Consumer capitalism has dramatically improved life for individuals in the once Black Domain but opportunities for communal life have shrunk. Members of *Llafur* will be aware of that without having to refer to the photographs in this book which is really an exercise in nostalgia for those familiar with the locality. But the photos on pages 32 and 51 which show how the sites of the Groesfaen and Britannia collieries have been transformed are dramatic. Eccentrically, it carries no photos of Rhymney, than which it is hard to get more geographically 'upper'. *Joe England*

All opinions within the newsletter are those of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of *Llafur*.

If you would like to contribute a book review or an article to the newsletter please contact Matthew Eggerton (newsletter@llafur.org).