



1909-1988

## GEORGE EWART EVANS

**George Ewart Evans** was a writer and historian born and brought up in **Abercynon**. He was one of a family of eleven children whose parents ran a grocer's **shop in Glancynon Terrace**. After education in **Abertaf Primary School** and **Mountain Ash County School** he proceeded to **University College Cardiff**.

**He captained the College rugby team** and played for **Mountain Ash RFC**, then a first-class club. The family business was badly hit by the Depression and Evans paid his way through college by running professionally at the **Welsh Powderhall** in Taff Vale Park and other venues. He was unemployed for three years until he took up a teaching post in Cambridgeshire where he met his wife Ellen. After his wartime RAF service they settled permanently in East Anglia and raised four children.

In 1948 he gave up teaching to concentrate on writing and over the next 30 years he produced short stories, poems, a novel, and a sheaf of books that are now regarded as brilliant studies of rural life, based on conversations with his elderly neighbours - East Anglian farmworkers and craftsmen from whom he acquired a wealth of knowledge about their vanishing customs, work habits, dialect and superstitions. His classic ***Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay (1956)*** and several other books like ***The Days that We Have Seen (1975)*** and ***From Mouths of Men (1976)***, in which he returns to the South Wales coalfield, marked him out as a pioneer in the field of oral history - of getting evidence from people rather than documents - before it became academically fashionable.

He always acknowledged that his upbringing in Abercynon shaped his life and work, a result of the indelible mark left on him by his discussions with unemployed and retired miners on the hillsides in the 1930s. Welsh-speaking, he was always conscious of his Welsh roots, and wrote *'I count myself lucky to be born where and when I was and have never wished to have grown up in a different setting.'* Circumstances prevented him from ever moving back, and he died in Brooke on the Norfolk/Suffolk border in 1988. His ashes were brought back to the hills above Abercynon.

## GEORGE EWART EVANS COMMEMORATIVE EVENT

**Saturday 1st April 2017 (10.30 am-12.noon)**

- 10.30am **Plaque Unveiling Ceremony** (Premier Stores 51-53 Glancynon Terrace)
- 11.00am **Function for donors and sponsors** at Llechwen Hall Hotel  
A short talk about George Ewart Evans life - Professor Gareth Williams
- 11.20am **The launch of an illustrated booklet** about George Ewart Evans' life in Abercynon and the influence on his writings of growing up and living in a coal community.
- 11.30am **Musical entertainment** by Côr Meibion Abercynon.  
Light Refreshments

I/we would like to attend the commemorative event.

Name/s:

Address:

Contact:  
Email or  
Phone

### DONATIONS

All donations will be acknowledged in the booklet.

Please make cheques payable to:

**George Ewart Evans  
Memorial Society**  
and send to:

David Maddox  
'Bryn Awel'  
20, Hilltop Crescent,  
The Common, Pontypridd  
CF37 4AD



1909-1988

# GEORGE EWART EVANS

'I count myself lucky to be born when and where I was [Abercynon ], and have never wished to have grown up in a different setting, human or topographical. A child can make a heaven of where he finds himself even though it seems to the world an unfavoured place'.

'After spending some days in the valleys I became restless and longed to get on to the hills. I felt freer on the hills and responded to their austere beauty. So that even fifty years later, after seeing many much vaunted and acclaimed beautiful spots...nothing moves me so much as the unencumbered skyline of a Welsh hillside.

**The Glamorgan hills spoke to me as no other scene has spoken to me since'.**

**George Ewart Evans, *The Strength of the Hills* (1983)**

My first introduction to the idea of collecting oral evidence was in the early 1930s. This was in the mining valleys of Glamorgan where I was born and brought up. My immediate neighbours were miners and in my walks on the hills, eating up time and taking the free air, I often met groups of miners going along the old Roman road that ran along the spine of the hill above my home. If there was a cool breeze I would find them squatting on the lee side of a dry-stone wall. Here, almost any topic under the sun was likely to be tossed about in the course of a morning's talk.

**George Ewart Evans, *From Mouths of Men* (1976):**

'George Ewart Evans was first and last a writer, and he never wrote anything of significance that did not owe its inspiration to the environment, culture and community of the south Wales that nurtured him. 'My upbringing in a mining valley', he wrote, 'made it almost inevitable that my writing should take a certain slant, and should be coloured and deepened by being in a community that was in crisis. That community was Abercynon.'

'It was the time and place into which he was born and where he was brought up that shaped him, the valley and also the hills, those Welsh hills which 'had always formed the clearest map in my mental topography that half a century of living in a flat landscape (E. Anglia) had failed to eradicate.'

**Professor Gareth William, *George Ewart Evans*, (1991)**

