



E-NEWSLETTER

JULY 2025

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Society was founded in 1978 by the late Alec Keir. Our focus is on the ancient parish of Roath - the modern-day suburbs of Adamsdown, Splott, Tremorfa, Pengam, Plasnewydd, Penylan, parts of Cathays and Cyncoed as well as Roath itself.

Our lively and interesting meetings are held at 7.30pm on the second Wednesday of the month from September through to May. See [Programme](#) for details. We meet at [St Edward's church](#), Westville Road, Pen-y-lan, Cardiff CF23 5DE. Annual membership is just £13 ([membership form](#)) and visitors are welcome to attend any meeting, in person or on Zoom for £3.

In May, June and July we undertake a series of trips to places of historic interest in Cardiff and the wider South Wales area.

Our Life President is Jeff Childs and our Life Members, appointed in recognition of the service they have given to the Society, are Dr Diane Brook, Gwyn Smith, Judith Hunt, Peter Gillard, Martin Sheldon and David Parry.

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E-NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the July edition of the newsletter. As I write, I am sweltering under a hot Sussex sun, with the temperature in the shade being 29.2° C. In July 1901, Europe was also experiencing a heatwave. In Paris, numerous deaths and cases of "insanity due to heatstroke" were reported, and Parisian cabbies distributed 1,200 sunhats for their horses. In the City of London, gentlemen discarded their silk hats and frock coats. I suspect that Victorian society would be scandalised at today's tendency to discard clothing as soon as the sun emerges. My maternal grandmother was firmly of the school of thought that "one should cast neither breech nor clout 'til May was out" and I always wondered how she could possibly bear to wear her woollen coat (with an Astrakhan collar) even in the warmest of weather. Perhaps they were made of sterner stuff in those days.

For no other reason than it's a lovely photograph, here's Roath Park in its summery finest.



Credit: Tracey Pattison on [Flickr](#), reproduced under [Creative Commons licence](#)

Jon Roberts
Newsletter Editor

Unveiling of headstone on grave of Margaret Lindsay Williams in Barry Cemetery

Further to Gareth's piece last month, here are some photographs of the unveiling of her headstone.



This photo shows Dr Jonathan Hicks who along with his wife Wendy initiated the quest to put a headstone on the unmarked grave of Margaret Lindsay Williams, the renowned but largely forgotten artist and portrait painter who was born in Barry. He raised the money for the headstone by organising events including various talks he gave about this fascinating woman and her life history. Also in the photo are the Mayor of Barry, Councillor Dennis Clarke who unveiled the headstone in the ceremony on 21 June 2025 and the Rev Canon Zoe King, Ministry Area Leader and Vicar of All Saints, Barry who blessed the headstone.

Also named on the headstone are Margaret's younger sister Olwen and her parents. Among the guests attending the unveiling which was preceded by refreshments and a talk by Dr Hicks about Margaret Lindsay Williams' life and achievements was the legal 'owner' of the grave. This family member was tracked down by Dr Hicks in order to obtain permission for the erection of the headstone. Along with other family members she travelled from Canada to attend the event.



Addendum to last month's Part 1 of the Virtual Blue Plaque walk

On the walk on 28 May we were fortunate to be invited into the house on Romilly Road, where the journalist Gareth Jones was born. While there Gareth Brown decided that it would make more

sense if the whole of Gareth Jones' story was told here rather than while standing outside 11 Porth y Castell in the windy weather. So the section about Gareth Jones which is in the second part of the Blue Plaque walk in the newsletter was related to the audience at Romilly Road.

After Gareth Brown submitted the description of the first part of the walk to the newsletter editor he obtained additional information about Margaret Lindsay Williams' story through genealogical research, after obtaining the book *Wedded to her Art- Margaret Lindsay Williams* by Angela Gaffney and more recent newspaper reports found online.

The foundation stone for the Masonic Temple in Barry was laid by Lord Llangattock the 'right worshipful provincial grand master of South Wales eastern division' on 16 October 1905

While re-checking the death record of Margaret's grandfather Charles Williams, Gareth came across the record of the death of an infant, Charles Lindsay Williams in Cardiff. Realising then that all of Samuel and Martha Williams children had Lindsay, Martha's original surname, as a middle name, it was an easy task to search birth and death records on a genealogy site for the details of Margaret's two brothers who had died before she was born. Charles Lindsay Williams' birth was recorded in Cardiff in the 3rd quarter of 1885 and his death in the following quarter. Edgar Lindsay Williams' birth was registered in the 4th quarter of 1886 in Cardiff and his death in the first quarter of 1887.

Samuel, Margaret's father, sought the advice of Sir Hubert von Herkomer regarding Margaret's obvious interest and talent in painting. Having seen an example of her work, von Herkomer responded that 'although the faults were glaring', she deserved to be trained by the best skill available. He suggested she should begin at the nearest art school and confine herself to drawing. Sir Hubert himself had been a child prodigy in art and had attended a local art school before becoming a prominent artist and portrait painter who established his own art school. He was born in Bavaria and was also a pioneering film director and a composer.

Margaret's father Samuel was at one stage a deacon at the Windsor Road Congregational Church when Margaret was a girl and she used as models for her painting *Dives and Lazarus* in 1910 at the Royal Academy, the minister, Rev. DH Williams, and deacons at the church. The painting which won Margaret her gold medal while a student at the Royal Academy was *The City of Refuge* 1911.

Her paintings in the 1910s-1920s, with religious themes and symbolism and ominous suggestions, were influenced by her upbringing as a Congregationalist and her continuing faith, and also by the horrors of the First World War. These works include *The Devil's Daughter*, *The Triumph*, *The Imprisoned Soul* and *The Menace*. The *Imprisoned Soul* and 3 other of her paintings which were thought to be lost or secreted away in private collections in the USA, were found rolled up and in a dire condition resting against a wall in Dyffryn House when it was taken over by the National Trust. The staff did not at first realise the significance of their finds.

Margaret encountered prejudice against her and her art because she was a woman. She apparently craved recognition of her skill. She concentrated on portraiture from the mid-1920s having found a patron in Lord Riddell. He was a solicitor in London who acted as the legal representative of Cardiff Corporation and other public bodies in South Wales. He became chairman and subsequently a director of the *Western Mail* and purchased the *News of the World*. Margaret painted at least four portraits of him and he was obviously well connected, so Margaret was not short of work or remuneration from painting portraits of his wealthy friends and

acquaintances.

She knew the David Morgan family from her childhood in Dinas Powys and spent a lot of time with Dame Clara Novello Davies and Ivor Novello.

Margaret recounted the story of her portrait of US President Warren Harding. He was usually chatty at sittings but one day he was serious and silent before suddenly exclaiming, "Miss Williams, have you ever been in love?" Margaret was taken aback and struggled to reply before managing to say, "Oh Mr President, I am wedded to my art". Hence the title of Angela Gaffney's biography. Warren Harding retorted "Then you have escaped some of the tragedy of this life". This statement makes sense if you read about President Harding's life history.

Reference: *Wedded to her Art- Margaret Lindsay Williams 1888-1960* by Angela Gaffney. This is a well-illustrated 52-page booklet which gives much background information and a full picture of Margaret's personality and struggles. Published by University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. I highly recommend it. It should still be available from suppliers online.

Virtual Blue Plaque Walk in Barry - Part 2 By Gareth Brown

Bethel Baptist church, previously known as Bethel English Baptist Church, was built to the design of G Morgan and Son of Carmarthen, between 1902 and 1903. It also had a school room. Unlike the two nonconformist churches we have seen already, it is still in use. The original church was erected in haste and opened by 1893, in wood and corrugated iron. Bethel had the commanding view over the area until All Saints Church was built on the opposite side of this corner, which some people have fancifully called Amen Corner.

I described the building of All Saints Church and the personalities involved in detail on my previous walk in 2022 and in articles in our e-newsletter. Suffice to say that it was built to replace Saint Nicholas Church as the parish church. That incarnation of St Nicholas church was built after the old church was demolished and was consecrated in 1876 to seat only 120 people. It was designed by John Romilly Allen, the nephew of the parish priest Canon E.E. Allen.



Some people had predicted that a dock would be built in Barry and that the church would soon become inadequate for the booming population and this was soon the case as workers came in to build the No.1 dock and railway from 1884. All Saints was built in two stages, stage 1 from 1907-1908, when the incumbent was the Rev H.H. Stewart, and stage 2 from 1914-1915, when his successor Rev T.W. Welch was in post. It was, of course, one of the greater churches of Edwin Montgomery Bruce Vaughan, costing £10,870 and able to seat 573 worshippers. The Anglican church could therefore attempt to rule the roost again, albeit as the new kid on the block, in the most prominent position on this side of Barry, in opposition to the various nonconformist churches in the area, some of which we have seen on this walk today. Its style is basically Early English Gothic, with some features of the decorated style.

We now pass the building in a mock Tudor style which was the first shop in the ancient village of Barry. This is old Village Road, which was the centre of the old village of Barry prior to its redevelopment with the building of the docks. Some authorities reckon that prior to this, the original village was further up the hill on what is now Cwm Barry Way. The cottages on the right-

hand side of the road were built by the Romilly estate for its workers and were based on the original cottages here. The Village Green was originally on the left-hand side of the road, but it was built on, and a new village green was established at a site we shall pass later on.

Grace Williams

Now for another blue plaque at 9 Old Village Road. Grace Mary Williams was born in Barry on 19 February 1906 and died in the town on 10 February 1977. She is regarded as Wales' most notable female composer and is the first British woman to score a feature film - *The Blue Scar*. Her parents were William Matthews Williams and Rose Emily Richards, who were both teachers. Her father was a noted musician and a choir master, the conductor of the Romilly boys' choir. Grace learned to play the piano and violin as a girl and used to participate in piano trios with her father and her brother Glyn, as well as accompany her father's choir. I am not sure if this was musical accompaniment on the piano or that she travelled with them!



Her father William was born in Wrexham and spoke both Welsh and English. In 1901 he was living at 74 Dock View Road, Barry, aged 25, whilst an assistant school master. He was married in the Cardiff district of which Barry was part in 1901 to Rose Emily Richards. It is likely that this was the Rose Richards who was a boarder and single, aged 24 or 26 and a schoolteacher, born in "Llanelly", Carmarthenshire and was also bilingual. She was living at 30 Woodlands Road, Barry, where the head of household was also a school teacher.

In 1911 they lived at 9 Old Village Road. William now 35, still a schoolmaster and Emily Williams, now 39. There was also Gracie Williams, aged 5, born in Barry, who also spoke Welsh and her brother Glyn, age 2, who was born in Barry. William was an Assistant schoolmaster at Romilly Boys' School in the 1921 census and he was a contemporary of Edgar William Jones, who came from the same part of Wales, also a Welsh speaker. Even if they were not teaching at the same school, it is quite likely that they were acquainted in the small town of Barry. There was also a daughter, Marion aged 3 years who was also bilingual.

Grace had her secondary education at the County Schools as did Glyn, a few years after the school was divided, so that girls had a separate school from the boys. The headmistress was musically inclined and secured the appointment of the first full-time music mistress, Miss Rhyda Jones who had recently graduated from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, where she had been taught by Walford Davies.

Grace developed an interest in composition at school and was much influenced by Miss Jones, with whom Grace kept in contact by correspondence when she herself was 70 and her teacher in her 80s. Grace won the Morfydd Owen scholarship to the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire in Cardiff in 1923, where she studied under Professor David Evans and took her Bachelor of Music degree in 1926. She said that the course in Cardiff was rather mechanical with endless exercises, which gave little opportunity to her instinct for composition. Nevertheless, she was encouraged by Professor Evans to go on to the Royal College of Music in London to study composition with Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacob. Other notable female composers studying with Vaughan Williams at the RCM were Elizabeth Maconchy, Dorothy Gow and Imogen Holst, the daughter of Gustav Holst. Grace said that they were encouraged to meet to criticise each other's music. They became great friends and she was still in contact with Elizabeth MacConchy in particular when she was 70. In 1930 she was awarded a travelling scholarship and chose to study with Egon Wellesz in Vienna, where she remained till 1931. She described him as a superb teacher who could immediately sense when something she had composed was not right and offer his advice to correct it, whereas Prof Evans could do the first but not the latter.

From 1932 she taught in London, part time at Camden Girls' School where she mainly taught singing to the girls, and at the Southlands College of Education. Being part time, she still had time

to compose music. Around this time she became a close friend of the composer Benjamin Britten who gave her assistance and encouraged her to develop her gift for composition, though she declined an invitation to become his assistant. During WWII, the students were evacuated to Grantham in Lincolnshire where she composed some of her earliest works, including the *Sinfonia Concertante* for piano and orchestra and her first symphony. One of her most popular works, *Fantasia on Welsh Nursery Tunes* (1940) was written during this period. *Sea Sketches* for String Orchestra, written in 1944, is the first work in her mature style. It is vividly evocative of the sea in all its moods.

In 1945 or 1947 (I have read both dates), she returned to live in Barry in this same house. She said that the cost of living in London was increasing but she did not want to take up the offers of full-time teaching work because there would be no time for composition. In her words, she was ill and she cracked and came home to Barry where her parents could care for her and she was able to dedicate herself more or less to full-time composition. It appears that during and after WWII, she suffered from depression and stress-related illnesses. She was also in poor physical health but, back in her hometown with the support of her parents, she regained her health. She ended up caring for her parents in turn.

In 1949 she became the first British woman to score a feature film with *Blue Scar*. In 1960 to 61 she wrote her only opera, *The Parlour* which was not performed until 1966. She turned down an OBE for her services to music in the 1967 New Years Honours' list.

Grace Williams's most enduringly popular work is *Penillion*, written for the National Youth Orchestra of Wales in 1955. She revisited some of the same ideas in her *Trumpet Concerto* of 1963. Despite the tradition of choral music in Wales, her portfolio of compositions was largely of orchestral or instrumental pieces. *Ballads for Orchestra* of 1968, written for the National Eisteddfod in Barry that year "*has all the colour and swagger of a mediaeval court*" according to Wikipedia. Outstanding amongst her vocal works are her acapella choir version of the Latin hymn *Ave Maris Stella* and *Six Poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins*, for contralto and string sextet, 1958. Welsh language settings include Saunders Lewis's carol *Rhosyn Duw* for SATB, piano and viola, 1955, which she later incorporated into her large-scale choral work *Missa Cambrensis* 1971. Her last completed works were in 1975 - settings of Kipling and Beddoes for the unusual combination of SATB, harp and two horns. The last music she wrote is actually in her second symphony originally, composed in 1956 and substantially revised in 1975. She was particularly fond of the trumpet and her music was often written for this instrument. She said that during the WWI military bands would march around Barry and she would hear the trumpet being played.

Even though she became a pacifist in later life, the sound of the trumpet still enthralled her.

She was BBC Radio 3 Composer of the Week in August 2006, on the centenary of her birth. This prompted several new performances of long unperformed works. In March 2016 there was the premiere of modern performances of her large scale *Missa Cambrensis* and of her symphonic suite '*Four illustrations for the legend of Rhiannon*' (1939-40).

Grace Williams was a quiet and unassuming person, highly regarded by her fellow composers for her intelligence and the quality of her judgement. She struggled hard to live as a professional composer at a time when women composers were not given due respect. She was also self-critical and destroyed many of her early manuscripts and everything that she thought unfit to survive. She enjoyed sitting by the sea in Barry and the sounds influenced some of her compositions. She died in February 1977 from cancer but was prepared for this as she had long suspected such a demise, as I have read in her correspondence with Elizabeth MacConchy, as she calmly prepared for her end. The plaque on her family home at 9 Old Village Road reads '*Grace Williams 1906-1977, composer, lived in this house, 1908 - 1926 and 1947 -1977*'

We are passing **Barry Castle**. Again, I described this on the 2022 walk and in a subsequent e-newsletter. It was probably more of a fortified Manor house, built on the site of a homestead from Roman times. The de Bari family developed the castle after a man called Odo was rewarded for his part in the Norman conquest of Glamorgan by gaining possession of the sub-manor of Barry,

being part of the Manor of Penmark. His grandson was Giraldus Cambrensis. The first castle was likely a ring work castle with wooden buildings built in the 12th century. Lucas de Barri built two stone buildings in the late 13th century but in 1316 the castle was badly damaged in the revolt of Llewellyn Bren. John de Barry made repairs and further building in the early 14th century. By the 16th century the castle was abandoned and in the reign of Elizabeth I part of it was demolished and a cottage built within its walls. This became used as a tavern. It was still standing in the 18th century when it was called the Castle House. Possibly the Gatehouse was rebuilt during the Civil War and it was used as a local manor court until 1720.

Somewhere in the area lived **Thomas Jones**. He was born in Rhymney in 1870 to a Welsh speaking family who foresook yr hen iaith, apart from in chapel and Sunday school. His father was able to afford the school fee at Lewis school Pengam after Thomas failed to win a scholarship there. He left school at 14 and at his grandfather's insistence started work as a clerk in the local Ironworks. He was a good public speaker and was locally famous as a preacher winning the Calvinist Methodist scripture gold medal in 1890. He went to University College of Wales Aberystwyth to study for the ministry, but he changed course and eventually graduated with a first-class honours in economics from the University of Glasgow. In due course he became Professor of Economics at Queens University Belfast 1909-10. He returned to Wales in 1910 to become secretary of the Welsh National Memorial Association dedicated to the eradication of tuberculosis, a post which led to his close association with the Davies family of Llandinam. He settled in Barry and stayed here for a few years commuting weekly to London. In 1916 he became assistant secretary to the cabinet and then deputy secretary to the cabinet from 1916 to 1935 and served under David Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay Macdonald. He was particularly close to Lloyd George and Stanley Baldwin the Tory who appreciated his common touch and his associations with all strata of society enabling Baldwin to appreciate the effects of political and economic measures on those outside his circle of Tories. Jones was also friendly with many rich and influential people, including the Astors and excelled at extracting money from rich people for worthwhile causes, such as adult education. He founded Coleg Harlech. He was friendly with and in the same social circle in Barry as Gareth Jones's father and I have read that he was a near neighbour suggesting he may have lived in the Colcot Road area in the 1920s. He was instrumental in introducing Gareth to David Lloyd George. He was known as TJ but was also described as one of the six most important men in Europe, and also as the King of Wales and keeper of 1000 secrets. His biographer EL Ellis considered him one of the three greatest Welshman in 20th century public life along with David Lloyd George and Aneurin Bevan. On being appointed Minister of Health in 1945 Bevan's first comment was "I'll go to see that old bugger from Rhymney"

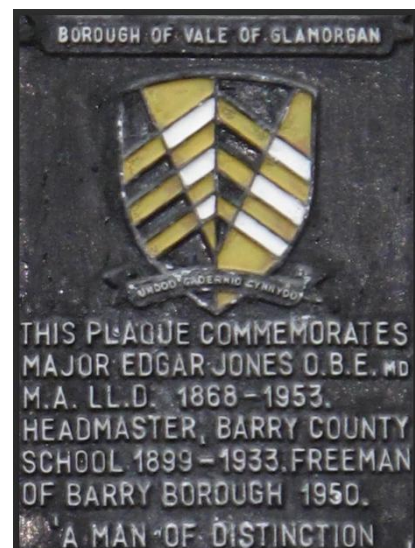
One of Thomas Jones's three children was Eirene White who became Labour MP for East Flint in 1950, one of the first female MPs in Wales. She served in Harold Wilson's cabinet in the 1960s. On retiring from the House of Commons in 1970 she was created a life peer taking the title Baroness White of Rhymney in the county of Monmouth.

Across the road is Millennium Hall a community facility and I believe the site of a nursery school or playgroup. It was St Francis Welsh language school in the past, the first Welsh language primary school in Barry and one of the first in South Wales. Prior to that it had been St Francis Church a multi-denominational nonconformist church, I have been told.

11 Porth y Castell

Let us proceed to 11 Porth y Castell. This is the house that Gareth Jones' family occupied from 1931. It was named Eryl. In the early 1930s, Gareth urged his parents to buy property as it would be the best investment to make and the safest place to protect their wealth during the time of the Depression which he saw in New York working for Ivy Lee. "*World situation very grave. Must buy house within a couple of months. Only safe investment*" read one of his telegrams from New York. The house cost £1250. He had also sent his parents a large supply of Heinz baked beans. Gareth's room was on the top floor of the house, where he stayed from April 1933 to October 1934.

In 1911 Edgar William Jones and his family were living at a rented house at Eryl, Colcot Road, Barry which was opposite the Buttrils. Edgar Jones was the Head of household, aged 42 and married. He was born in Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant in Denbighshire in December 1868. This village was divided by the river into two parishes, one in Denbighshire and the other in Montgomeryshire. Pistyll Rhaeadr, one of the Seven Wonders of Wales, was just upstream. The Reverend William Morgan was living in Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant when he translated the Bible into Welsh before one was translated to English for general use in England. By doing so he contributed massively to the establishment of Cymraeg as a written language and his version of Welsh became the standard version from which the modern version is derived. Edgar was the headmaster of a Barry County Intermediate school, employed by the County Council.



He had been married for 16 years to Annie Gwen Jones from Dowlais. She had 3 children still living. Their eldest child was Gwyneth Valerie Vaughan Jones, a schoolgirl aged 15, who was born in Llandeilo. Next was Eirian E Vaughan Jones, 11, a schoolgirl born in Barry. The third child was Gareth Richard Vaughan Jones, 5, born in Barry. Edgar's sister in law, Winifred May Jones, aged 31 and single, born in Fochriw, Glam, was in the household as were 3 boarders and a domestic servant. All the household apart from one boarder spoke Welsh as well as English.

In 1921 the family home was still Eryl, Colcot Road. Edgar was still the headmaster of the County Intermediate School, Barry. His wife Gwen was present and Gareth was the only child at home on census night aged 15 years and 10 months. Gwen's sister Winifred May Jones 38, Auntie Winnie was still part of the household, her occupation described as home duties. There was also a general domestic servant, Diana Jones 18 years old, born in Ynysybwl. Everyone in the house could speak both Welsh and English.

Edgar was the son of Richard Bellis Jones, a school master in Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant, and Hannah, née Vaughan. He was educated at his father's school and later at the Northern Institute in Liverpool and then at Oswestry High School under Owen Owen. From 1885 to 1890 he was a student at University College of Wales, Aberystwyth and returned there, after a period of teaching at his old school in Oswestry where he taught English, French and Athletics, to read English and Celtic studies for the degree of MA (London) which he gained in 1894. He was appointed headmaster of Llandeilo County School at the age of 26 and remained at the school from 1894 to 1899.

He became the headmaster at Barry County School in 1899, three years after the school had opened, a post he occupied until his retirement in 1933. He was a vigorous and imaginative headmaster and very forward looking, introducing a wide curriculum. He inspired great loyalty among pupils and staff and had a happy school with complete authority but without oppressive discipline. He was very interested in all the arts, and this was reflected in the subjects his pupils could take, and he was also interested in sport. He was an athletics champion in Aberystwyth, a very fast sprinter, the captain of the football team and also played rugby for the first XV. When teaching at Oswestry he had a very good game when Oswestry lost to Everton 3-0.

After his retirement as headmaster, he became advisor on Welsh matters to the BBC, where he organised school programmes and was secretary of its Religious Advisory Committee. He held various roles at the University of Wales Guild of Graduates; a member of the Central Welsh Board, the only one to serve for its entire duration and a member of the Court and Council of University of Wales, Aberystwyth, University College of South Wales, and the National Museum of Wales. In 1910 he was president of the Association of Welsh Secondary Schools.

At the turn of the 20th century, he joined the submarine miners, a branch of the Royal Engineers who laid mock mines in the Bristol Channel. During World War I, he became officer commanding

the Glamorgan fortress engineers with the rank of Major and was awarded the military OBE. He was however a man of peace and was very active in support of the concept of the League of Nations. He supported Lord Davies in the establishment of the Temple of Peace and Health in Cardiff. The University of Wales conferred on him the honorary degree of MA in 1922 and LLD in 1951. He received the Freedom of Barry in 1951. He was therefore a very impressive and important figure in the town, one of the great and good and a great role model for Gareth. He died in 1953, the year after Winnie his sister-in-law died.

Siriol, Eirian's daughter, remembered how vibrant the house on Colcot Road was, full of fun and laughter. It was crowded on Sundays with visitors, some coming by bus from Cardiff and enjoying Auntie Winnie's tea. The intelligentsia of South Wales met there, including Mortimor Wheeler the archeologist who won the MC in WW1 and was Keeper of Archeology and then Director of the National Museum in Cardiff, which he helped develop in the 1920s. Dr Glyn Daniels was another. The famous Davies sisters also stayed at Eryl. Old boys of the Major's school such as Barnett Janner, Baron Janner of Leicester who was born in Lithuania to an Orthodox Jewish family who moved to Barry at the age of 9 months and later was a Liberal MP before being a Labour MP in Leicester, were welcomed at Eryl. (His son Greville born in Cardiff succeeded him as MP for Leicester Northwest.) Other old boys who visited were Sir Charles Campbell Woolley another who was awarded the MC and who was a Governor of Cyprus and Sir John Habbakuk an Economic Historian, academic and university administrator and one time Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University - he was born in 1915 so likely visited Porth y Castell.

Gareth's mother Annie Gwen Jones, known as Gwen, was born in Dowlais, the daughter of Thomas Jones, a grocer of Gelligaer. Edgar and Gwen met when they were students at Aberystwyth. Gwen was one of the first female students there and they became engaged in 1889 before Gwen, at the age of 20, did the remarkable thing of moving to the Ukraine to be the tutor to the grandchildren of John Hughes. He was a pioneer in the development of Russian metallurgy, who built a steel works in the town known as Hughesovka, later known as Donetsk. She fled Donetsk in 1892 during the cholera riots. After she returned to Britain she married Edgar in December 1894 at Oswestry, the same month as he became the headmaster at Llandeilo. They were then in a position of security and able to marry. She was a great support to the Major and a highly intelligent woman in her own right and a suffragist. She taught Gareth at home up until he was seven. No doubt Gareth's interest in learning Russian and visiting the Ukraine was because of his mother's life story. His two sisters, Gwyneth and Eirian, also went to university at Aberystwyth. The family had great affection for the college.

The following is a direct quote from womensarchivewales.org -Women's Heritage Walk: Barry. I think there are some mistakes in it. Annie Gwenllian Jones (née Davies) [???!-my comment] educated in Merthyr and at UCW Cardiff (again?) and Aberystwyth, Annie Gwen came to Barry in 1899. She was President of the local Women's Temperance Society, Secretary of the Barry Branch of the NUWSS, a founder member of the Barry Cymrodorion Society and the Twentieth Century Women's Club (and its President). An advocate for Welsh culture and world peace, she led local archaeological and cultural excursions and international tours to Paris and Geneva. She served as a County Magistrate and as a member of the South Wales Conscientious Objector's Tribunal during WW2. Her talks on her experiences in the Ukraine were broadcast by the BBC. She died aged 97 in 1965.

Her daughter Gwyneth won a scholarship to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth in 1913 and taught French in Swansea and Cardiff before being appointed headmistress of Barry County Girls School in 1939, a post she held for twenty years. She was active in the British Federation of University Women and Barry Cymrodorion Society. Widely travelled, she encouraged her pupils to attain high academic standards. She did not marry and lived in this house until it was burgled in 1990 and she went to live near to her niece Siriol and her family in Nottingham. Siriol was Eirian's daughter and was a GP in Nottingham. Gwyneth died in Nottingham aged 100.

After the burglary the family rushed down to the house to rescue as much as possible. Siriol said it was if life had stopped still in 1935 after Gareth's death, little had changed. There were inches of

dust everywhere and the house was in a dilapidated state. Gareth's room was on the top floor and they found Soviet posters from the 1931 trip under the bed. Gareth's diaries kept by his mother were found and in another room there was an old trunk full of interesting documents. The burglars had been disturbed by the barking of a dog next door and little was stolen. Siroil used these resources to write her books on Gareth's life.

Gareth started working for the Western Mail on 1 April 1933 as was already planned before his last trip to Russia. The storm brewing in the USA at Duranty's inception was about to cross the Atlantic and engulf Gareth. The Editor of the Western Mail, Sir Robert Webber, assigned to Gareth the task of writing articles about Wales. Was Sir Robert leant upon from above or did he want to protect Gareth from further criticism? Gareth wrote about the dying rural crafts, life in various parts of rural Wales and the National Eisteddfod. No further articles by Gareth about the Soviet Union were ever published and it was a whole year before he wrote about Germany again. I have already described his visits to Germany in May 1933 and June 1934.

Gareth did express his views on the Soviet Union in a lecture tour of Britain and Ireland entitled *The Enigma of Bolshevik Russia* in the winter of 1933-34. He made little mention of the famine. His views were reported in provincial newspapers.

He decided to investigate the problems of the Emerald Isle after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 and made a number of trips there. He spoke to Protestant Unionists in Belfast and in Dublin he met with Professor Michael Hayes, who took part in the Easter Rising 1916 as a member of the Irish Volunteers, who showed him the various places where significant events took place. Gareth noted that to the British 1916 is many years ago and the Irish war of 1920 is for memories not for emotions, but for the Irish they both happened yesterday and for them Cromwell lived only the day before and hatred of Britain is still the greatest rallying cry to whip up Irish feelings. He also spoke to W.T. Cosgrave, the first President of the executive council of the Irish Free State and interviewed a member of the IRA. His final meeting was with Eamon De Valera, prime minister or Taoiseach of Ireland who was not the grim, fierce, rigid type he had expected. Gareth left Ireland appreciating Irish hospitality "which knows no national boundary and is gay, unselfish and sincere" with kindness to Welsh and English visitors. He also felt that their humour is spontaneous and so irrepressible that even the "President" is not spared its shafts. Gareth was buoyed by his visits to Ireland, his spirits were lifted and his confidence and sense of fun returned.

After he returned from a visit to Berlin and Prague in June 1934, Gareth visited Randolph Hearst the American press baron, in his Welsh retreat, St Donats Castle. They discussed the continuation of war debts to America and Hearst said that repudiation of the obligation to repay the debts had destroyed mutual confidence and esteem. Gareth said "*was not America's contribution to the war millions of dollars while that of Britain and France millions of men?*" Hearst countered saying "*it was their war not ours*". Gareth got Hearst to agree that having lived in Wales he was wrong to have previously stated that England had Welshed on her debt. Hearst was amused by this but in a serious vein said that "*Welshing on a debt is a phrase devised by Englishmen to gratify the vanities and prejudices of Englishmen*". He added that "*there has never been in all history such a conspicuous default of honourable obligations voluntarily incurred and advantageously employed as a repudiation of England's debt to America. They had Englished on the debt!*" Hearst also said that he did not think that peace could be established in the League of Nations, "*the majority of its members are warlike*" and he urged America "*to resist being more entangled with the present League of Nations which is selfishly controlled by the European powers.*" They discussed President Roosevelt's naval plans in view of the Japanese menace. Hearst said that President Roosevelt's wish was for disarmament but "*the United States will surely not allow the forces of Japanese aggression to surpass our forces for defence.*" They obviously got on well and Gareth stayed for tea with Hearst and his companion, the film star Marion Davies. Hearst was due to meet Hitler in August so it is very likely that Gareth discussed the rise of Nazism and his meeting with Adolf Hitler. Gareth was invited to stay at Hearst's ranch Hearst Castle at San Simeon in California when in the USA.

After meeting Ivy Lee in Berlin and Hans Otto Meissner, the son of Otto Meissner, Hitler's First Secretary of State, Gareth went to assess the situation in Austria after the assassination of the

Austrian premier Engelbert Dollfuss, including relations with Italy about the South Tyrol, now part of Italy. He briefly crossed into Slovenia in Yugoslavia and to Trieste in Italy which Austria was allowed to use as a port, amidst Italian fears that it would lose it if Austria allied with Germany. Then he went to the rally in Munich to hear Goering speak. Hitler was voted Chancellor on 19 August 1934 with 38 million votes for him in the plebiscite and 4 million having the courage to say no. During these late summer months Gareth was planning a round the world fact finding trip which he intended funding by writing articles for the Telegraph and International News. He returned to Germany in October before he embarked on the tour to say farewell to his friends in the country which he loved but had lost its freedom and its soul. He left with an air of despondence. After visiting his close friends in Danzig, he returned to London to embark on his world tour. He said farewell to his father, his sister Eirian and her daughter Siriol, and his close friends the Van de Walls and left Waterloo station on the boat train to Southampton.

After arriving in New York, he gave a talk to the citizens of Worcester about his meeting with Hitler, lunched with old American friends, travelled to Washington, Chicago and Milwaukee. In Wisconsin he visited Frank Lloyd Wright, the world-renowned architect at his home Taliesin. Lloyd Wright's mother was a member of the Lloyd Jones family that had migrated to Wisconsin from Wales. Apparently, Gareth was fascinated by Lloyd Wright more than any man, with the exception of Lloyd George.

He had many amusing adventures in the towns, cities and countryside as he crossed America and after a brief visit to Mexico, he reached Hollywood. He thought this was a wonderful, beautiful place where he was feted and treated with great kindness. On New Years Eve 1934 he travelled to Randolph Hearst's ranch at San Simeon in the mountains overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Great opulence was on display. There was a zoo in the gardens and Greek and Roman style statues everywhere. After a very busy schedule of engagements in California he embarked on the SS Munro for Hawaii on 18 January 1935. It was a rough voyage during which he was homesick but not seasick. The ship berthed in Honolulu on the 25 January. He wrote about the strategic defence point of Hawaii, saying an enemy could not land in California without first capturing Hawaii. He noted that there were 140,000 Japanese in Hawaii, nearly half of the total population.

After visiting Hitler, Randolph Hearst became more profoundly anti-Communist and commissioned articles written by Goering and Nazi sympathisers for his newspapers, also instigating a witch-hunt, asking his editors to investigate the Communist activities of university staff. He commissioned further articles by Gareth about Russia and re-published his previous ones. Undoubtedly this would have brought Gareth back to the attention of the Soviet Union and Stalin once more. Gareth knew that he was on the blacklist of the OGPU, a forerunner of the KGB, but he was fearless and lacking in awareness that his movements were likely to have been tracked. It was common knowledge that he intended to visit Japan and then Manchukuo, a colonial province captured by Japan in Manchuria bordering on the sensitive area of Siberia. The ill-defined frontier between Manchukuo and Siberia was a potential war zone and there had already been skirmishes between the Soviets and the Japanese. The Japanese Foreign Office press officer believed that there were 200,000 Soviet troops stationed at the frontier, ready to attack Japanese forces. Neither the Soviet Union nor Japan would have no compunction in eradicating a man giving them cause for concern.

Gareth arrived in Tokyo on 9 February and met with Gunther Stein, a Jewish journalist Gareth knew from London who used to work for the Berlin Tageblatt newspaper. Stein invited Gareth to join him in lodging at the Bunker apartments. Stein had only recently arrived in Japan and Gareth had more contacts there and introduced him to eminent Japanese. Gareth was not a discreet person and would have enjoyed relating accounts of his meetings with Japanese statesmen to Stein. Gareth attended news conferences in Tokyo and discussed Outer Mongolia with the Russian correspondent for Tass. It is likely that he outlined plans for his visit there to Stein. Unbeknown to Gareth, Stein was an undercover Soviet agent.

Gareth left Japan after five weeks and via the Philippines, Shanghai and Singapore, toured a number of countries bordering the Pacific Basin, enquiring with expatriates their considered views on Japanese intentions. He finally arrived in Peking on 4 July, from where he embarked on his final

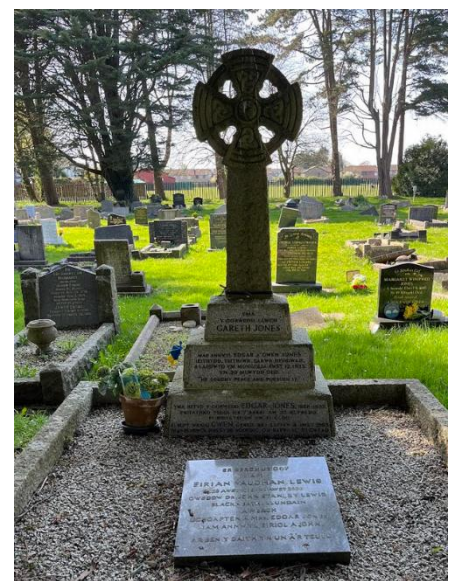
journey into Inner Mongolia, with the intention of reaching his destination of Manchukuo.

He was accompanied on this journey by a German, Dr Herman Muller who wrote a comprehensive account for the British Foreign Office, the details of which were never published in British newspapers. Dr Muller said that he was an experienced traveller and had known Inner Mongolia since 1913 and gone thousands of miles there. He knew the risks and hardships of travelling in the region and advised Gareth to travel by train, but was persuaded by a third party to let Gareth accompany him, to which he reluctantly agreed, telling Gareth that taking another foreigner with him for the first time was against his principles.

Gareth, Muller and Baron von Plessen of the German legation in Peking first attended the Court of the Mongolian Prince Teh Wang, then Muller, along with his boy Liang and Gareth, set off on the longer journey to the north-east of Inner Mongolia. Herr Purpis, director of the Wostwag in Kalgan, had placed a motor car at Muller's disposal and the chauffeur was a Russian, Anatoly Petrewschtschew. The Wostwag was ostensibly a Soviet company trading in furs but was in fact a cover for espionage in the far east by the Soviet secret police, the NKVD. Mr Purpis was Latvian, a horse-trader known as the King of Kalgan. In 1938 he was in New York and was cited as the third associate of a Soviet spy ring in the USA.

They ventured into territory purported to be Chinese and into the town of Dolomor bordering on Manchukuo where Japanese troops were amassing. Muller said that soon after, on 28 July they were captured by Chinese bandits, controlled by the Japanese from Tientsin. Muller was released after two days ostensibly to obtain the ransom of 100 000 Mexican dollars demanded for the release of Gareth. This was forthcoming but a second group of bandits, 100 strong, took over from the first group when Muller left. They were far more hostile than the first group. Gareth was alone and so exhausted that he was unable to remount his horse on 12 August, the eve of his 30th birthday and he was shot three times and killed.

The whole story is murky. Was Muller involved in a plot to kill Gareth? He knew the leader of the first group of bandits. Although the second group of bandits were also thought to be Chinese controlled by the Japanese, Gareth was captured in a vehicle driven by a Russian and owned by a company which was a front for Soviet espionage and whose director was later denounced as a Soviet spy. So was the Soviet Union responsible for organising the killing of a man who was a thorn in their side for announcing to the world Stalin's responsibility for the starvation and deaths of millions in the Soviet Union? Or did Purpis merely organise the capture by the bandits to receive a portion of the ransom money and his plot went wrong when the Japanese controlled more brutal gang took over and subsequently killed Gareth? Was there a subtle collusion between the Japanese and the Russians? Did Stalin order the killing as he feared that Gareth would report details of Russian troop movements to the Japanese or did Japan murder Gareth to prevent him reporting their activities in the area? It is likely that the answers to these questions will never be known. The killing of Gareth Jones was not investigated at the time it seems. Certainly the truth was not revealed. Gareth was an embarrassment to British diplomats and also to Moscow-based foreign newspaper correspondents and the journalistic establishment. His story was airbrushed out of the narrative of 20th century history. Even the Western Mail, Gareth's employer before his death, when publishing "*In search of news*" a 1936 memorial book dedicated to Gareth's career, failed to mention anything of his famine articles from 1933 which they themselves had published. Britain was complicit in the appeasement of the Soviet Union and chose to ignore and forget the bravery and honest reporting of this young Welshman. It was only due to the diligence of his niece Siriol in piecing together his history and publishing two books that the name Gareth Jones became known again in his home town and the wider world. What might he have achieved in the public



The Jones family grave in Barry, where Gareth's ashes were interred.

life of Britain had his life been spared? We do not know who ordered his death but as Lloyd George said - he was killed because he knew too much.

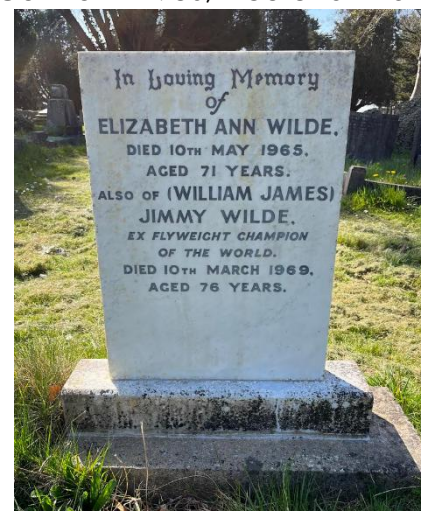
Jack Petersen

And now an added bonus. While on a walk, I discovered a fifth blue plaque on a house just down the road, on Porth y Castell, where Jack Petersen lived. Jack was born in Cardiff on 2 September 1911 and lived in various parts of Cardiff including Roath Park. He became British light heavy weight boxing champion and the British heavyweight champion within 50 days in 1932 in his first 10 months as a pro. He regained the latter title in 1934 after a defeat to the same boxer Len Harvey in 1933. He retired aged 26 in 1937 with a professional record of 33 wins in 38 fights, 19 by KO's and 5 defeats, three to a German, Walter Neusel. He never weighed over 13 stones, very light for a heavy weight boxer.



In his retirement he became President of the British Boxing Board of Control in 1986, vice chairman of the Welsh Sports Council and was awarded the OBE. He was a councillor in the Plasnewydd ward in Cardiff 1951-53. He had a sports shop in Barry while living in the town and latterly lived in Porthcawl. He died in Bridgend on 22 November 1990 and his grave is in Cathays cemetery. Read Ted Richard's [superb article](#) on Jack Petersen in July 2022 for full details of his life and his family.

The grave of another boxing champion also lies in Barry, that of Jimmy Wilde, a flyweight champion of the world from 1916.



Gorsedd Circle

This is the replacement village green given to Barry by the Romilly estate. The Gorsedd stones were placed for the proclamation in 1919 of the 1920 National Eisteddfod here in Romilly Park Romilly Park.

As I described the Romilly family and its contributions to Barry on my previous walk and in the e-newsletter I shall not go into any detail today. Suffice to say that Sir Samuel the prominent lawyer, legal reformer and politician bought the land comprising the old sub manor of Barry as an investment in 1812. The land was co-terminus with the parish of Barry prior to its recent incorporation as part of the Barry Ministry Area. He died by suicide on 2 November 1818, cutting his throat in grief, after the death of his wife four days before.

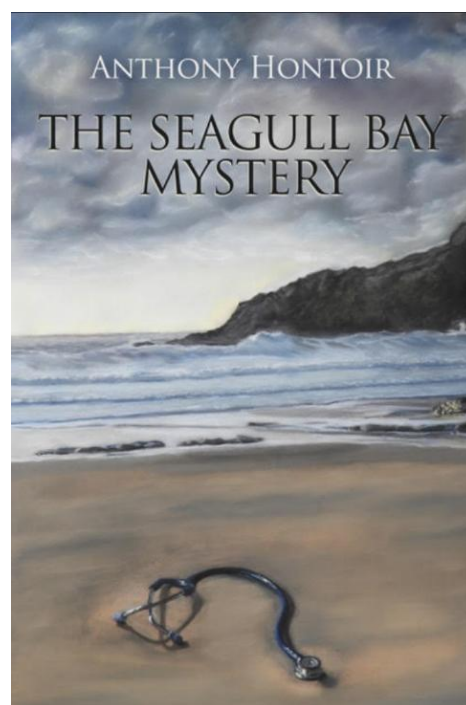
The family developed the land as farm and park land, but with the development of Barry as a port, the Romilly estate could realise the land's potential, as the port and the servicing railway line were built over their land, as well as that of other landowners. The land comprising Romilly Park was donated to the people of Barry by the Romilly estate on the proviso that the trees in the upper part of the park that the family had planted were to remain and that a road should be built around the park to prevent houses encroaching on the parkland. The main phases of construction were between 1898-1911 and only minor changes have been made to the park since that time. It was designed by the Council Surveyor Mr. J.C. Pardoe after the full Council rejected the parks committee choice of Thomas Mawson who, amongst other accomplishments, had designed the layout of Dyffryn Gardens.

Sources:

- Wikipedia
 - Jonathan Hicks whose original research added to and made more vivid my knowledge of this remarkable lady and artist
 - *More than a Grain of Truth* by Margaret Siriol Colley- the life history of Gareth Jones by his niece. My information about Gareth was almost entirely derived from this excellent book.
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SPEAKER NEWS

Anthony Hontoir was our speaker in February when he talked about the Llandow Air Disaster. He mentioned that he was writing a whodunit novel, and members may be interested to learn that he has now completed it and has it hit the bookshops. "The Seagull Bay Mystery", which was published on 23rd May 2025 in paperback. The plot of the book centres around a young lady doctor who goes missing in the fictitious town of Saltcombe (not Salcombe) in South Devon. The book is published by Downwood Books, which is part of Anthony's Downwood Film Productions company and appears on the website as book two in the Erwin Graham series.

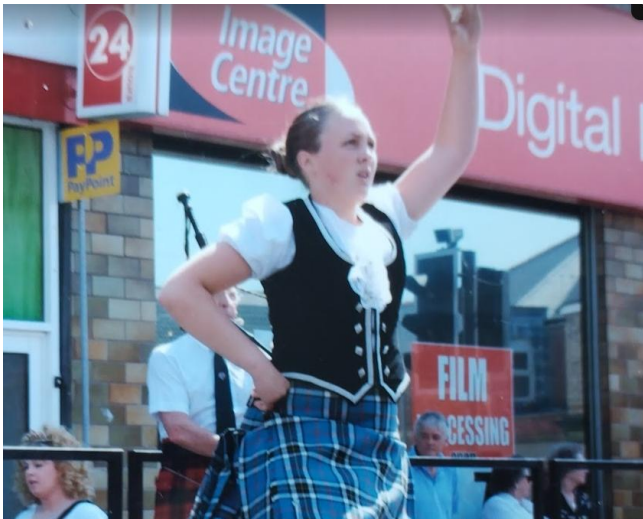


CITY ROAD CENTENARY REVISITED by Jon Roberts



On 10 July 2005, a celebration was held to mark 100 years of City Road, noting its origins as Plwcca Lane, then Merthyr Road, and then, following Cardiff's grant of city status, as City Road. The event saw the closure of the road from its junction with Albany Road down to Northcote St, and a fun family day was had with street performers, music, dancers, displays and stalls.

That event of 20 years ago now forms part of the history of the road. Were you there? If so, what were your memories? Below and overleaf are some reminders of that day.





OTHER LOCAL HISTORY LINKS



Rumney and District Local History Society

Their meetings are held at 7:30pm on the second Thursday of every month (excepting January and August) at Rumney Baptist Church Hall, Tyr-Y-Sarn Road, Rumney, CF3 3BD.

Their next meeting is on 10th July, when the Society's old maps and documents will be perused.

The annual subscription is £20 and visitors can pay £3 per meeting.

Find the Rumney and District Local History Society on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/rumneyhistory>

Grangetown Local History Society



At the time of going to press, no details of their future talks were available, but have a look at their [website](http://www.grangetownhistory.co.uk).

British Association for Local History

The Roath Local History Society is a member of the British Association for Local History. Their website

www.balh.org.uk/ offers a varied collection of local history stories, 10-minute videos and loads of helpful ways of researching local history. Some is of general relevance, but there are also pieces on very specialised subjects. Have a look at back issues of *The Local Historian* at

<https://www.balh.org.uk/thelocalhistorian>. Members of the BALH are also entitled to a [discount on](#) courses. If you'd like the code to obtain the discount, please email me.



Roath Local History Society on the web

There's also lots of Roath history on the [RLHS website](#), and in the excellent blog posts – do subscribe. There is also the re-energised [Facebook group](#) which has lots of interesting posts and comments. You need merely to answer 2 simple questions to join. And find us at [roath_history](#) on Instagram.

Latest blog stories are:

- [Lord David Owen and his Cardiff Connections](#)
- [Red Cross Hospital, Newport Road – photographs from the David family album](#)

- [Searching for Theodora, Harold and Arthur](#)

Louvain Rees | hellohistoria

Louvain Rees's [Hellohistoria](#) blogposts are well worth a follow. She is a BBC Award-winning social historian, specialising in Bridgend and her primary research interests are paupers, poor law, lunacy, and poverty between 1790 and 1921. She confesses to a taste for death and graveyards.

GET IN TOUCH

For newsletter feedback and submissions contact:

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