

WAUNARLWYDD

a

*HISTORY
of the
VILLAGE*

by

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WAUNARLWYDD

A History of the Village

Introduction

We all tend to take the place that we live for granted, in particular if it is a village. We know the people; we are familiar with the houses, roads, chapels, churches, pubs, the local school and so on.

Then perhaps we pause and wonder and ask ourselves the following: –

- ❑ Which is the oldest house in the village?
- ❑ Why are some houses built in long rows?
- ❑ What was on the site of that building a hundred years ago?
- ❑ Why has that road been given that particular name?
- ❑ Why is there a coal tip there?
- ❑ Where does that stream begin and end?

.....and a hundred and one other questions.

If we care to find out we would be amazed at the interesting things to be discovered about our locality.

We must remember – *‘History is all around us’*

It is indeed a long story from the waste land, the first isolated farm house in a countryside with a few narrow nettled lanes, dotted with small woods, common land and marsh – to the busy, bustling place which we now know as Waunarlwyydd.

Nowadays, Waunarlwyydd is too large and scattered to be called a village. The closing down of old industries: the establishment of new industries; the building of new housing estates and the influx of new people have drastically changed the character of the village – but each change has contributed to its history.

Origins of the name

The name **Waunarllwydd** – what of its derivations?

There may be three possible explanations: -

- a) **WAUN – AR – LLWYD** (an old spelling according to some ancient maps) The meadow on the Nant Llwyd (The Grey stream). This is the stream that separates Waunarllwydd from Gowerton and conveniently marked the boundary of the old Swansea Borough. (According to the Ordnance Survey Map – the name given to this stream is *Gors Fawr Brook*) The source of the stream is near to two farms appropriately named **Cwm Llwyd** (*the Grey Vale*) and **Nant Llwyd** (*the Grey Stream*).
- b) **WAUN – AR – LWYDD** The meadow of success. The word '**LWYDD**' derived from the Welsh word '*llwyddiant*' meaning '*success*'. This was obviously a reference to the exploitation of the rich coal deposits in and around the village from the early eighteenth century.
- c) **WAUNARLLWYDD** – This is presently the accepted spelling. Originally **WAUN ARGLWYDD** or **WAUN ARLWYDD** – it was slightly 'telescoped' to **WAUNARLLWYDD**. Translated from Welsh this means :- '*The Lord's Meadow*'. Old documents support this version. There is historical proof that the site upon which the village now stands was once part of the Lordship of Gower. In a charter more than 800 years ago – *Portmead* – (now a large council estate) – or '*the Meadow of the Port*' was originally in the possession of *Lord of the Seignory of Gower*. In the reign of Henry VII, *Portmead* was divided and the Lord retaining the part that became known as **WAUNARLLWYDD** or **GWAEN ARGLWYDD** – '*the Lord's Meadow, Moor or Mountain Pasture*'. It is interesting to note that this portion of land was let at the annual rent of one sparrow hawk. Therefore we could discount explanations a) and b) as there seems to be enough historical evidence to support the correctness of c)

Generally our knowledge of history came from written records.

Unfortunately theses were very few in number.

Folklore and legend were handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another and as each generation tended to change and distort the version they received – they were not very reliable as sources of history.

WAUNARLWYDD DURING PREHISTORY

The period when there were no written records can be called '*Prehistory*'. However, despite the lack of written records we know a vast amount about the people of prehistoric times :- where they lived, the way they lived, the animals they hunted, the weapons they used and so on.

We know these facts through the development of '*Archaeology*'. The word archaeology derives from the two Greek words meaning '*old things*' and '*knowledge*'. If you visit a local museum you will be able to appreciate the value of the archaeologist in relation to Prehistory.

What is all this to do with **Waunarlwydd**? - you may ask. There certainly was no village here in prehistoric times. If you look at a map you will see that Waunarlwydd is situated in the neck of the **Gower Peninsular**. Gower has proved a 'treasure trove' of prehistoric finds. So, not many miles from the present village site is ample evidence that Stone Age man existed.

We have evidence of Stone Age habitation in the human and animal bones, flints, bone tools etc. which have been found in many Gower caves. The finds in **Paviland Cave** (near Pilton Green – Rhosili) and **Cathole Cave** (Parkmill) were particularly important. The human bones discovered in Paviland by William Buckland, the famous '*Red Lady of Paviland*' later proved to be the skeleton of a male.

This important discovery of evidence represents the very first people to inhabit our district. It has been proven through the process of radio-carbon dating that the 'Red Lady' lived and died about 2,000 years ago. Perhaps we can speculate that these ancient hunters roamed over the district in which we now live. At that time the area was a bitter, harsh Arctic region inhabited by such animals as the woolly rhinoceros, the giant ox, the Irish elk, reindeer, wolf, fox, hyena, cave bear and the woolly mammoth.

Although no known prehistoric finds have been recorded within Waunarlwydd – isolated finds of leaf shaped flint arrowheads have been discovered in the immediate vicinity at **Gowerton** and **Gorseinon**.

Historians divide time into broad '*Ages*'. We have already mentioned the *Stone Age*. Following this era came the *Bronze Age* which occurred between *1800 – 300 BC* and later the *Iron Age* between *300B.C.* and *50 AD* *our*. Before and during these Ages there were dramatic changes in climate and both sea and landmasses changed their shape which gradually governed the way people lived. These changes also affected our district.

During the *Bronze Age* there lived a tribal culture known as *Beaker People*. These were so called because they made curious earthenware beakers or drinking cups which were often decorated.

In the *Late Bronze Age* we know that these people must have been familiar with the area in and around Waunarlwydd. They probably did not settle here because they were a nomadic people relying on cattle, pigs, sheep and wild animals for their food supply.

The *Beaker People* were an innovative culture being the first to introduce metal tools, made of bronze – one of the most important discoveries of ancient civilization. They also had a unique custom of burying their dead in mounds of earth called *round barrows*. Later they cremated the body and ashes were placed in a vessel called a cinerary urn, which was then placed inside these barrows.

By looking in a northerly direction from Waunarlwydd towards Gorseinon and Penllergaer, you can easily *Garn Goch Common* upon which stands the red- bricked Garn Goch Hospital. On a piece of land to the right of the hospital, amateur archaeologist and antiquary enthusiast *SIR JOHN T.D. Llewellyn of Penllergaer* excavated a round barrow in 1885.

Among the finds from this excavation were two cinerary urns; an incense cup; a crude flint knife and a rough spear head. As this barrow was within easy walking distance of the village, we can safely assume that our district was familiar to the Beaker People.

From the time of Paviland Man, many wandering tribes arrived in our area and some of them settled here. The dark complexioned, short **Iberian**; the **Beaker People**; the tall, blue-eyed and blond Celt. At around 400BC a tribe of people called the **Brythons** (*Y Brythoniaid*) came to this part of the country we now know as Wales. They spoke a language which later developed into Welsh.

Then came the warlike **Belgae** whose wood painted warriors resisted the Romans landings in **43 AD**. In South Wales we had the tough **Silures** who strongly opposed the better armed Roman legionaries. Later on, the coast and countryside within the vicinity of Waunarlwydd were raided by Irish pirates, Danish rovers and the redoubtable Normans. Therefore the district around Waunarlwydd was often a bloody battlefied.

The original natives of our village were proud to call themselves Welsh – but they were of a very mixed ancestry indeed. One wonders, could the typical short, dark half backs of many local rugby teams could trace their ancestors back to the **Iberians**?

DRUIDIC TIMES

There seems to be some evidence that the place name '***Graig – y – Bwldan***' – the hill immediately to the south of Waunarlwydd - the foot of which is now covered with houses – indicates some form of occupation in the times of the Druids. The words '***Graig – y – Bwldan***' literally translated mean '***The Rock of the Fireball***'.

This could also have a more simple meaning – '***Beacon Hill***'. When we look at the hill in relation to the cairns and stone circles of Cefn Bryn on the Gower Peninsular and others on the hills to the north of Waunarlwydd it is quite possible that '***Graig – y Bwldan***' may have been the location of a primitive signal station with fire being used as a means of communication.

Despite this we can safely say that at this time there is no evidence whatsoever of the village or even a small settlement in our particular area.

Perhaps one would like to think that the wandering Ancient Briton once stood on the crest of '***Graig y Bwldan***' or '***Banc Mawr***' and watched the Blue stones from the Presceli Hills in Pembroke being transported between dug out canoes or skin boats up the Bristol Channel via the Bristol Avon to their final resting place at Stonehenge.

THE ROMAN PERIOD

Among the best known dates in British history are 55 BC and 54 BC when Julius Caesar made two invasions of southern Britain. In the year 43AD the Romans again came and this time stayed for nearly 400 years. It was about 30 years after the 43AD landing that the Romans turned their attention to Wales.

One of the lasting signs of the Roman occupation is seen in our roads.

Not far from Waunarlwydd runs the road A48. Perhaps buried under the surface of this road are the stones of a Roman road – the *Via Julia Maritima*. This was a coastal road from *Caerleon (Isca)* to *Loughor (Leucarum)*, then to *Carmarthen (Maridunum)* and the west. The Roman out post of *Leucarum* is mentioned in the third century road book known as the “*Antonine Itinerary*”.

As far as we know, no Roman finds, within the present day village boundary, have been recorded. This is surprisingly so as the *Via Julia* and the Roman fort on the Loughor estuary would have been visible from the village site. However within a very short distance 30 Roman coins dating from *69 AD* to *158 AD* were unearthed during the building of the Gowerton County School (1938 - 39) and isolated finds are also recorded in nearby villages.

It was the custom of the Romans to place smaller military stations along the road and two such encampments are reputed to have been established on ‘*Mynydd Garn Goch*’. Therefore we can assume that Roman legionaries of the second legion once explored the neighbourhood of Waunarlwydd and perhaps traded with an isolated group of people who happened to be in the area - maybe tendering a Roman coin for an item of food.

WAUNARLWYDD and St.CENYDD

After the Roman occupation, Christianity spread through the teaching and preaching of the Celtic saints. Was the birthplace of one of those saints on a site now occupied by a farmstead on the slopes of *Graig-y-Bwldan*?

Is there connection between *Caergynydd* (probably *Caergynydd Fawr*) and the sixth century *Saint Cenydd*?

Saint Cenydd is regarded as the patron Saint of Gower.

Tradition has it that the carved Celtic stone coffin lid in Llangenydd Church once marked his grave. His birth and upbringing was steeped in legend, but his life was recorded in history. The legend of his birth is interesting. *Cenydd* was born the son of a Prince of Brittany.

King Arthur was holding his court in Gower, on a Christmas Day, the Prince of Brittany had brought his daughter to the court and while she was there gave birth to *Cenydd*.

Because of the great sin by his father poor *Cenydd* was born with one leg stuck to his thigh. The prince seeing this ordered a wicker basket to be made in which the baby was placed and cast upon the waters of the *River Lliw*.

The stream carried the basket down to the *Loughor Estuary* and out to sea. As it drew near to the dangerous *Worm's Head*, a great number of sea birds snatched the baby boy in from the waves with their beaks and talons and placed him safely on a rock.

They make him a bed of feathers and kept off the wind, hail and snow with their wings. On the ninth day an angel of God appeared and placed a breast shaped bell in the infant's mouth from which he was miraculously fed.

When he was older he was looked after by a '*hind of the wood*'.

This story was recorded in Latin by Capgrove in his '*Nova Legenda Angliae*' and published in 1526.

A part of the story reads :-

'In those days, Arthur ruling all Britain, when he held his court, on Christmas Day, in the province named Goyer (Gower), ordered the chiefs to assemble at the aforesaid place; amongst whom, the Prince of Brittany ...took his way and brought his daughter with him. She gave birth to a son in the tents pitched about a mile from the palace of King Arthur.'

Two well known authorities on their lives of Celtic Saints (Baring Gould and Fisher) suggest that *Caergynnyd*, Waunarlwydd would correspond to this site.

Mr. N.L. Thomas in his '*Story of Swansea's Districts and Villages*' suggests that *Caergynnydd* means a '*growing fort*'. It is interesting to note that in the view of Messrs. Baring-Gould and Fisher's suggestion and the fact that *Llangennith* (Ordnance Survey spelling) is the English form of *Llangynydd - the Church of Saint Cenydd* – could *Caergynnydd* mean – '*The field of Cenydd*'?

Thus could a humble local site lay claim to be the birthplace of *Saint Cenydd*, a friend of Saint David, the Patron Saint of Wales?

Mr. Thomas also mentions :-

'Caergynnydd, the field of Cenydd' as a parcel of land involved in a law suit during the reign of Henry VII - so in all probability Caergynnydd and Caer-genith refer to the same tract of land. The fact that the area where Waunarlwydd is now established and the land to the north and west of it lay between to old strategic sites of Swansea and Loughor made it the scene of frequent violent and bloody battles.'

The period of the Welsh princes from about the sixth century to the Norman conquest of Glamorgan were indeed dark days in our region's history. It was a story of recurring strife, when the Welsh prince's fought among themselves; when they battled against the marauding Irish, Saxons and Danes, so there was disorder within and attacks from without.

The few historical accounts we have of this period relate to conflict and bloodshed. Some of the battles which took place in the immediate vicinity of Waunarlwydd are referred to in '*Brut y Tywysogion*' (*The Chronicle of the Princes*) and in the '*Book of Hergest*'.

Several place names in our locality have definite historical associations. For example *Cadle (place of battle)*, *Garn Goch*, *Gorseinon*, to name but a few, are permanent reminders of the battles which took place between the Welsh and the Irish, Saxon, Danish and Norman invaders. The ground in and around Waunarlwydd had been subjected to a great deal of devastation and bloodshed.

THE NORMAN PERIOD

The Normans found Wales a difficult country to conquer. For about fifty years after the Battle of Hastings they would raid and sometimes settle over wide areas of Wales and each raid would be met by fierce Welsh resistance. This was true of our locality.

The Normans arrived in the Swansea area in the 1093 devastating the Gower area to such an extent that it was compared to a desert. Even so it was not until 1099 that Gower and district was overcome by **Henry de Newburgh** who proceeded to consolidate his conquest by erecting of four crudely built castles at '**Abertawy**' (Swansea), '**Aberllychwr**' (Loughor), '**Llanrhidian**' and '**Pen Rhys**' (**Penrice**). As time went on more castles were built and these gradually developed from the simple '**Motte and Bailey**' type (a mound surrounded by a wooden stockade and ditch) to the more sophisticated stone castles.

These Norman castles were the targets of repeated Welsh attacks. One can gain an idea of the intense ferocity of these battles by reading a vivid account of a battle which took place between Swansea and Loughor in 1136. The place of battle is generally accepted as **Garn Goch Common**. The account is from *Florence of Worcester's Gesta Stephani, Book I (Forester's translation)*, and here are some brief extracts: -

'The Welsh, who always sighed for deadly revenge against their masters, threw off the yoke which had been imposed on them by treaties, and, issuing in bands from all parts of the country, made hostile inroads in different quarters, laying waste the towns with robbery, fire and sword, destroying houses and butchering the population.'

The first object of their attack was the district of Gower on the sea coast, a fine and abundantly fruitful country, and hemming in with their levies on foot the knights and men at arms, who to the number of 516, were collected in one body, they put them all to the sword. After which, exulting in the success of their first undertaking, they overran all the borders of Wales, bent on every sort of mischief, ready for every crime, neither sparing age nor respecting rank, and suffering neither place nor season to be any protection from their violence.'

Afterwards the Welsh made a desperate inroad, attended with destruction, far and wide, of church vills (towns), corn, and cattle, the burning of castles and other fortified places, and the slaughter, dispersion, and sale into captivity in foreign lands of countless numbers, both of the rich and poor.'

Another version of the battle records the number killed as over 3,000, apart from those drowned and taken prisoner.

Apparently a pile of stones was erected to commemorate the battle of *Mynydd Garn Goch*.

The very name means "*The Mountain of Red (blood) Stones.*" A slightly different version and one backed by local tradition was that the indiscriminate slaughter and killing was so terrible that the horses were actually up to their fetlocks in blood. 'Carn' being the Welsh for hoof: - *Mynydd Carn Goch* thus became the "*Mountain of the Red or Blood covered Hooves.*" Another local tale of tradition is that the tumuli on Garn Goch are the mass graves of the victims of this battle. There may have been a horror stricken witness of this battle standing on the high ground of *Banc Mawr* or *Graig y Bwldan*!

The twelfth century and the early part of the thirteenth century were turbulent periods in local history and Norman castles in the Lordship of Gower were repeatedly and bitterly attacked by Welsh foes.

As N.L.Thomas puts it :-

"In bygone days, the country between Swansea and Loughor witnessed many bitter and fierce battles as Saxon, and later, Norman invaders struggled with the inhabitants for the supremacy of Gower and area. No doubt, in the past, ground near and around Waunarlwydd has echoed to the clash of swords and the defiant battle cries of the fiery warriors. Early Norman invaders and their mercenaries were soon to discover that Welsh territories, unlike the lands of the defeated the Saxons were not to be conquered by one or two main battles alone!"

During this period there is no evidence of anything indicating a settlement here in Waunarlwydd. One can picture a few isolated farmsteads scattered here and there and these would probably belong to the same family group. For example not far from Waunarlwydd was, the now were demolished '*Penllergaer House*' the mansion of the *Llywellyn* family. There seems to be documentary evidence that there was a thirteenth century building on this original site – so could there be similar buildings at *Ystrad Isha* or *Caergynydd* ?

The Norman occupation had a tremendous effect on our locality and permanently changed the way of life of its people.

Gower became a Norman lordship by the beginning of the 12th century, with its centre or '*caput*' at Swansea Castle. The territory which now constitutes Waunarlwydd was included in this Lordship. Gower became a patchwork of English and Welsh manors. The lordship of Gower not only referred to the peninsula had included a large area of land between the rivers Loughor and Tawe
-the hill country of Blaen Gwyr.

The Normans quickly realised the value of the year fertile, well drained, limestone lands of the southern and western parts of the peninsula when compared to the colder hill and moreland further north; moreover they appreciated the fact that these richer parts could be more easily controlled and administered.

The Normans divided the *Lordship of Gower* into two parts respectively:-

□ *Gower Anglicana -English Gower or the Englishry.*

This comprised most of the peninsular of Gower.

The inhabitants were English speaking and here the Norman feudal system was imposed.

□ *Gower Wallanica - Welsh Gower or the Welshry.*

Here the land was not so hospitable and the Normans faced a hostile people with strange customs and speaking a strange language. Therefore the Norman lords allowed them to carry on with their traditional Welsh customs and way of life.

Any dwelling in or around Waunarlwydd at this time would have been in the *Welshry*, and its inhabitants would have been affected by events taking place in the *Lordship of Gower*. The marked differences between the *Englishry* and *Welshry* remained for centuries and some are evident even at the present time.

Here is an interesting account of them, written over a century ago: -

“The people of Gower have thin faces and narrow foreheads, flat cheek bones, with a flat and rather sharp nose; hair for the most part light, or brown, with blue or grey eyes. On the other hand, the Welsh have dark eyes, dark hair, high foreheads, with prominent cheek bones.”

“ The dress of the female in Gower is a short jacket and petty coat, with a straw hat, and a piece of course red cloth, about two yards long and one yard wide, with the deep fringe on one side, this is thrown over the shoulder; hence the garment is called a *Gower Whittle* (a cloak or shawl of course cloth)”

“Those of Welsh origin wear a long gown, a long blue cloak, and a beaver hat.”

The language of the Gower people is English while if you enter into a Welsh village, though not 3 miles distant, the people will refuse to speak to you in English, even though they are able to do so.

They seldom inter marry. When a man of Gower is asked about the home of one in *Llangyfelach* or Waunarlwydd (villages of the *Welshry*), it is a common reply: -

“I danna knaw – a he lives. Somewhere in the Welshery.”

But this is retaliated upon them by the Welsh, who never speak of the people of Gower without adding ‘thieves’ or ‘robbers’.

Perhaps it would be appropriate to state at this point that the differences are apparent even today: - if we compare Waunarlwydd to a typical Gower village, with its agricultural background, its houses clustered around an ancient Norman church, with its square battlemented tower, its village green and may be a mill and its speech English - the comparison would present a different picture from our village, where industry and not agriculture was the foundation; there would be no compact collection of houses but still ambling rows of miners' cottages strung along Swansea Road, once it's only main thoroughfare, in a typical 'ribbon' type industrial development.

The chapel was the traditional stronghold of religion and culture and where Welsh is still the medium of conversation among many of its inhabitants.

The history of *Lordship of Gower* up to the fifteenth century is confusing. We can only picture what the Waunarlwydd area was like during this time. Probably there would have been a few simple farmsteads in the district set amidst a landscape of rough meadow, woodland, meadow and waste land.

Each farmstead would have been self-sufficient, all of the necessities of life would be provided by a home skills and the produce of its fields.

Communication between these isolated settlements would have been difficult as there were no roads. There may have been rough tracks or narrow bridle paths of-since the horse was the only other means of transport other than on foot.

These scattered holdings would be grouped together and the Norman lord would exact a payment in kind, or later on in money.

For example, the plot of land retained by *the Lord of the Seignory of Gower*, which was consequently known in Welsh as '*Gwaun – Arglwydd*' and which gave our village its name - was let at an annual rent of one sparrow-hawk.

Perhaps a Waunarlwydd sparrow-hawk was instrumental in providing many a tasty morsel for a Norman baron's feast in a Gower castle?

Mediaeval Times

In the village of Waunarlwydd there has long been a traditional belief that the dwelling of the Lord of the Manor – the manor house – was situated close to the now derelict '***Ystrad Isaf Farm***'. This was referred to locally as the '***Plas***'. Nearby was another building where the court leet would have met once or maybe twice a year. The court leet would discuss the affairs of the Manor. Various officers would be elected and they would in general, be responsible for the small was running of the manor. The holding around the Manor house at '***Ystrad Isaf***' was that of a '***demesne***' manor of '***Gower Anglicana***'. The word '***demesne***' indicated that the manor house and adjoining lands belonged to the lord and that he could use them for his own purposes and impose his own conditions of service. Among the well known ***Lords of Gower*** were the Norman and Anglo-Norman family called '***de Breos***', the Earls of Warwick and the Earls of Worcester. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a tremendous amount of encroaching of the lords' lands by their tenants took place.

The practice was to take part of the lords pasture land, fields, woodlands or common land in the demesne manor and enclose it with a hedge or fence and thus lay a claim to it. (Something similar is happening on Dartmoor and Exmoor today). It is recorded that from the waste of Mynydd Garn Goch a man encroached and enclosed 120 acres of land - which apparently he turned into better use.

There were long, bitter disputes over these encroachments and during the reigns of Henry VI I and Elizabeth I, there were legal battles involving land in our immediate district.

It was during this period that specific parcels of land known as '***Waun Arglwydd***' and '***Cer-gennith***' appear in written form. We learn from the charter of William de Breos of 1305-06 that he granted to the '***Burgesses of Sweynseye***' (Swansea) the possession of '***the meadows of Crow-wode and Portmede***' except '***that part of Portmede which at present we hold in demesne being reserved to us and our heirs***'.

Over two hundred years later, during the reign of Henry VII, the Portmead estate was the subject of a lawsuit concerning an enclosure by *Jenkin Ffranklin*. The *Ffranklins* were a powerful and influential family- free holders of the Englishry of Gower - and who played a prominent part in the history of Swansea.

As a result of this lawsuit Portmead was divided and the Lord of the Seignory of Gower retained a portion of land. This was appropriately called '*Waun Arglwydd*' - *the lords meadow*. Thus the name given to a parcel of land almost seven centuries ago was the origin of **Waunarlwydd** - the name of our village.

It is interesting to note that another name '*Cer-gennith*' with strong Waunarlwydd associations was mentioned in it a lawsuit during the reign of Elizabeth I. This again involved one called *Jenkin Ffranklin* who had '*enclosed one parcel of ground of the south side of the Lords meade by 'Cer-gennith*'. This land was the land of the Burgesses.

We can safely state that some of the earliest settlements of Waunarlwydd were connected with sites now occupied by existing farms; farms allowed to become derelict or farms swallowed up by industrial development. It is well to remember before any more are demolished, that these old farmsteads can be as valuable as historical documents.

The word **Caergynnydd** is common to three farms in Waunarlwydd; namely *Caergynnyd Fawr*, *Caergynnydd Fach* and *Caergynnydd Isha*.

Before we examine the meaning of the word Caergynnydd, and indeed many other local names, we must consider the fact, that for many reasons, place names undergo changes in the course of time, and different spelling of a place name are commonplace. For example there are over eighty ways of spelling the old form of Swansea. On maps and documents one can see the village name spelt as *Gwaun Arglwydd*, *Waun Arglwydd*, *Waunarlwyd* or *Wain Arlwydd*. We have *Cer-genith*, *Caergynnydd*, and *Caergenyydd*.

Fortunately in most cases, the original meanings are still evident, but sometimes their true origin can be rather confusing. This is true of the word *Caergynnydd* connected with local farms. ***Caergynnydd*** could be an abbreviation of '*Caer-yn-cynyddu*' from the Welsh words '*caer*' - a camp or forte and '*cynyddu*' - to grow - which literally translated means '*a growing fort*'.

A long standing local version was that ***Caergynnydd*** was simply ***Caer Gynnydd*** : - *the camp or fort of Gynnydd* -indicating that in the dim and distant past a Welsh lord or a tribal chief had built his stronghold on ***Graig-y-bwldan***. Unfortunately there is no clue as to who ***Gynnydd*** was and no evidence of a camp or fort construction here; but in view of the numerous hill and hill slope Iron age forts in Gower –who really knows? So is there is stronger link between the present and the remote '***Cer-genith***' – '*the field of Cenydd*', than we think? *Cenydd*, the Celtic saint, so often called the Patron Saint of Gower is associated with many place names in the Swansea area and even further afield. One of the oldest names for Swansea itself was ***Seinhenydd***. Therefore can we be justified in hoping that the suggestion of Baring-Gould and Fisher that the *Caergynnydd* of Waunarlwyd corresponds to the birthplace of *Saint Cennydd* is correct?

During the Tudor period and for the next three centuries momentous changes took place, many of which directly affected our locality.

Throughout this period the Waunarlwydd area remained rural in character - the few farmsteads reared cattle, sheep and pigs on a small scale and cultivated corn crops.

In 1697, Isaac Hamon, a very perceptive steward of a Gower estate, described the region between Swansea and Loughor as follows :-
"This area in the northern part of the Swansea hundred is characterised by corn ground, meadow and pasture, some part is woody, with coal veins but no limestones."

These '*coal veins*' proved to be a significant factor in transforming a few scattered holdings in Hamon's day to the still expanding Waunarlwydd of today.

Early Years of the Coal Industry

A detailed history of Waunarlwydd and its coal mines would merit a written history book in itself, but like the original colliers we can only scratch the surface.

Owing to lack of documentary evidence we cannot put an accurate date when coal was first used as a fuel in our district. There is some evidence of pits and coal workings in the thirteenth century – but the earliest record of coal mining in Swansea area is contained in William de Breos' charter to Swansea in 1305. Among the privileges granted to the burgesses was the right to take pit coal. For the next 300 years there is hardly any recorded information on coal mining. Later more written evidence became available: mention is made in 1639 of a 'coalworke' in Morfa Lliw, Loughor; there are documents confirming coal mining in Clyne valley in 1642 and 1764 and reference to Penclawdd in the 1720's : -
'several coal works in ye neighbourhood selling called to sea at 21 shillings per wey'.

Daniel Defoe, the author of '*Robinson Crusoe*', oft quoted description of '*Swansey*' as a very busy town.....
"*one sometimes sees a hundred sail of ships at a time loading coal here*".

This applied to the years 1724-1726. In the 1750's Swansea's importance as a coal exporting port was firmly established and coal was exported across the Bristol Channel to Somerset, Devon and Cornwall and even to Ireland and France.

In 1764 Waunarlwydd is mentioned in a transaction involving Miss Anne Mackworth. This lady according to one old map of 1757 owned Cob's Hill on the Loughor estuary and Loughor Dock (Broadoak). She also owned several plots of land in the district - among which were 8 acres at Waunarlwydd. Bishwell was also named among the holdings. She planned to extend the existing coal mining industry in this locality and for this privilege of working coal, royalties had to be paid to the Duke of Beaufort. It is significant to note that she was allowed to use '*any old workings, or open new*', which indicates that there were coal mines in the area prior to 1764.

In 1879 Thomas Richards, a well known a mining engineer and surveyor, wrote to a William Thomas, regarding a colliery at *Mynydd-Bach-y-Glo*. Within the letter is included this sentence: -

"I must say this place is full of valuables seams of coal besides what is proved in the Waunarwydd Old Pit sixty years ago."

Upon this evidence we can justify that there must have been a productive colliery in Waunarwydd in 1809 and we can therefore safely assume that small coal mines were a feature of the Hamlet in the 18th century.

Farmers would see their landscape scarred by these coal mines, perhaps not an unwelcome site, because the coal produced was used not only for domestic purposes but for lime burning. To the farmers of this era lime was important to counter act the acid nature of the soil. Almost every farm had a small kiln built for lime burning - there certainly was one at *Ystrad Ishaf*.

Conditions in these early mines were hard and dangerous. The early miners had no experience of techniques required to combat the problems of drainage, lighting and transport - a frequent collapse of the workings, the deadly menace of gas or threat of flood were constant dangers.

We learn that: - *"in the 17th century coal mining was so unpopular an occupation that condemned criminals were pardoned the King on condition that they would apprentice themselves to Sir Humphrey Mackworth and work for five years in his mine at Neath. Subsequently an offer of captured pirates was also made to the mine owners - but this offer was declined."*

From the latter half of the 18th century Waunarwydd was slowly developing - events were taking place which had a profound effect on the hamlet's future. The expanding copper, iron, steel and tinplate industries were hungry for more coal, steam was being successfully harnessed, communications were improving with the result that in and around Waunarwydd there were intensified efforts to find more coal. This resource was found to be in abundance and the Waunarwydd of today was born.

The numerous coal tips around the village were a silent monument to generations of village colliers. In the latter half of the 19th century many of them had trudged from the farms of Carmarthen and even further afield to make a new life in Waunarwydd. These impoverished farm workers became the skilled colliers, steel workers and tin plate workers of the village.

These 'immigrants' were young and mostly Welsh speaking and their vitality enriched the growing community of Waunarlwydd. Many of them, after a long, back the breaking working day, often under conditions which would not be tolerated today and hampered by a lack of formal education, still actively participated in the cultural and religious aspect of village life. These were the 'pioneers' - their names written on the old decaying tombstones of Sardis, Zion, Bethany and St. Barnabas. Fortunately many of their direct descendants are still resident in the village, and carrying on the tradition of service.

The Old Penclawdd – Waunarlwydd Canal

Around about the year 1800 adequate means of transporting coal from the developing local collieries was becoming a problem. In and around Waunarlwydd, roads, as we know them today, when non-existent. There were rough country lanes leading from the village eastwards towards Swansea and westwards towards the hamlet of Ffosfelen (Gowerton) and onto Penclawdd. Along these tracks, a combination of short, steep hills to the east and marshland to the west, presented loaded horse drawn transport with almost insurmountable difficulties.

To overcome this problem of transport - the construction of a canal was mooted by a small company of local property owners and industrialists. In 1811 a Private Act of Parliament authorised its construction - the canal to be known as: - ***The Penclawdd Canal and Railway or Tramcar Company.***

The company hoped that the canal would eventually provide an easier and a more convenient way of transporting coal from the collieries in the Rivers Lliw and Llan neighbourhood for shipment at Penclawdd.

Roughly, the course of the canal ran from Penclawdd via Pony-y-Cob - across the site of the old Elba of steel works at Gowerton – Melyn Trafle Farm and thence in a comparatively straight line to within approximately 400 yd of Ystrad Isaf Farm '*near a bridge there called Pontllewydda*'.

Traces of the canal are still evident today. Apparently it never completely fulfilled its original purpose but of interest to Waunarlwydd is the notice which appeared in the Cambrian Newspaper of 28th May 1814: -

"to be sold; coals, of superior excellence, possessing high bituminous and binding qualities, and durable, calculated for culinary purposes, Smith's work etc. and for the Irish and foreign markets, will be ready for shipping on the 13th day of June next, in the New Dock, at the extremity of the Penclawdd Canal, from a new colliery at now opened by Lockwood, Morris and Leyson at Wain Arglwydd, known by the name of the Poor Man's Coal. The Dock is very commodious, situated at the side of the Burry river, near Penclawdd, having sufficient depth of water for vessels of the largest burthen. Great improvements are in progress on the River and Bar, by active Gentleman appointed commissioners, by late Act of Parliament. The Harbour dues will not exceed one halfpenny per ton.

Apply to John Thurston, Ystrad Cottage, at the head of the said Canal."

The '*New Colliery*' was connected by a rail road to the head of the canal which was situated less than half a mile west of Ystrad Isaf Farm and just to the south of the River Llan. The rail or tram road ran across a slightly sloping, open meadow to join the '*coal works and shaft*' at the place east of Heol Felyn (Roseland Road) and on the edge of Mynydd-Bach-y-Glo. The trams would have been horse drawn.

The canal was in use for four years, the original intention of serving the collieries adjacent to the canal did not materialise and coal supply was limited to the output of the Waunarlwydd colliery. When coal production ceased from this colliery the canal fell into a disuse.

It is interesting to note that, though the primary function of the canal was the conveyance of coal, it was also concerned with the limestone trade. Limestone was brought to Penclawdd by small ships or *lighters* from Oxwich and other parts of the Gower coast. From Penclawdd it was carried along the canal by barges then to the farms with access to the canal. In those days farmers burned their own lime to place on the fields, consequently there were lime kilns at Berthlwyd, Pont-y-Cob, Llwynmawr and of particular interest to Waunarlwydd at Ystrad Isha Farm.

Local Mining in the 18th and 20th Centuries

At the beginning of this century many an old Waunarlwydd collier would have recalled harrowing tales of frightening darkness, rats, the eerie creakings of timber supports, of long shifts and poor wages. These were not the exclusive experiences of a matured collier but often of a boy twelve years of age or even younger.

During the mid years of the last century it was common practice to employ children and young persons. Dire poverty and large families made the three shillings or four shillings a week earned by a child a vital item in the family budget. In the mid 1840's - a recorded weekly wage a Collier supporting a wife and seven children was twelve shillings plus a coal allowance. After a break down for absolute necessities, the family was left with *threepence* to cover the cost of clothing and any other vital item.

Many of these youngsters were employed as '*door boys*' an irksome task of opening and closing ventilating doors along the underground roadways. A one-time Waunarlwydd collier, named **William Abraham** - better known as '**Mabon**' graduated from a '*door boy*' to a Member of Parliament and thus was well equipped to fight against exploitation in the mines.

There was another side of the picture - the increasing demand for coal resulted in the emergence of a wealthy industrial class and the creation of great estates. Fortunately, not all the rich employers were ruthless and exploiters, some really cared for the welfare of their workers.

From 1870 and for the next five or six decades, one such family played a significant part in the growth of Waunarlwydd namely - the **Glasbrook's**. This name became synonymous with coal in the Swansea area.

John Glasbrook (1816-1887) was a member of a well known Llangyfelach farming family and became a powerful and influential figure in the affairs of Swansea. He had five sons, one died at the comparatively young age, the others: - John, David, Tom and Isaac became the well-known colliery proprietors known as **Glasbrook Brothers Ltd**. In 1870 John Glasbrook, Senior, opened a pit on Garngoch Common, just above the Llewitha Bridge. This was known as **Garngoch No.1** and the pit employed many colliers from the older pits in the locality many of whom came from Waunarlwydd.

The Glasbrook Brothers sunk many pits in the Swansea district. Another two were opened on Garngoch Common – No.2 Colliery in 1886 and No.3 in 1906. Despite the fact that No. 1 pit was closed down from 1907 to 1914 the Garngoch project prospered. Colliers from the surrounding villages of Gorseinon, Penlgeraer, Fforestfach, Cockett, Gowerton, Penclawdd, Waunarlwydd and even further afield found employment in these three pits.

The years between 1906 and 1920 all proved to be comparatively prosperous for the village and its immediate mining communities. The Glasbrook mining concern employed about two thousand men; a good the number from Waunarlwydd. During the 1914-1918 War (World War I) -nearly 2,000,000 tons of coal were produced from the Garngoch pits alone, and during the next few years the output was an average of 14,500 tons per day.

In 1920 the Glasbrook's sold their interest to the *Grovesend Steel and Tinsplate Group* for about half a million pounds. This group was headed by **Mr Henry Folland**, who had many associations with Waunarlwydd.

After 1921, an ill wind blew over the coal mining industry - there was a diminishing demand for steam coal, therefore output fell, labour relations deteriorated, these factors combined with post war problems culminated in the disastrous strikes of 1921 and 1926.

In those dramatic days - particularly during the long, suicidal **General Strike** of 1926 - life in Waunarlwydd mirrored the bitter frustration experienced within any other South Wales mining community. For the first time in the history of the village a soup kitchen was housed in the vestry of St.Barnabas Church for the children of the unemployed. To the proud and independent villager this was reluctantly accepted as a necessary indignity.

The long, hot summer of 1926 saw groups of the unemployed on Gypsy Cross Common, talking, arguing, signing and gambling - for matches. Practically every collier's garden possessed its own miniature mine among the potatoes and cabbages. Those who were not miners had to scabble for long discarded coal on old disused pits to satisfy simple domestic needs. Phillip Snowdon addressed a meeting at Zion Chapel. Whole families left the village to seek and find work at places like Southall, Birmingham and Coventry. This was a soul destroying period in the story of the village.

Garngoch No.2 was closed and abandoned in 1921. Garngoch No.1 was closed by the National Coal Board in 1955 and finally Garngoch No.3 on February 11th 1966. Thus for almost a century the Garngoch '*Trinity*' of pits had provided work for generations of Waunarlwydd colliers. It was the end of an era – symbolised by the fact that the gaunt winding gear of Garngoch No.1 is no longer a familiar silhouette to the north of the village - it has now disappeared with every other vestige of the old pit under a new landscaping scheme.

Up to the mid 1920's colliers engaged in the various local pits had to walk to work. Those who worked at the Cape or Garngoch No.1 collieries walked along Roseland Road (*Heol Felin*), across the common to Ystrad Ishaf Farm, across the river Llan by a primitive bridge along the old tramway to emerge near No.1 pit. In bad weather especially during the winter or even at night this was not a very pleasant route.

In 1926 Messrs Burnley Lewis and J. Myrddin Thomas initiated a 'lorry service' to convey colliers to the Mountain (Gorseinon) and Garngoch No.3 pits. The distance by road to No.3 from the village was almost five miles - so we can appreciate the tremendous help this comparatively new form of transport gave to the miners. The 'lorry service' catered for the three shifts of 6 a.m. – 2p.m.; 2p.m. – 10p.m. and 10p.m. - 6 a.m. The fare for the workers was sixpence return or threepence single or on a weekly basis of three shillings payable on a Friday (pay-day).

Unfortunately, there were occasions when the village was reminded of the grim cost of cutting coal in the bowels of the earth. To witness a solemn procession of grim, black faced miners-, wending their way up Roseland Road, bearing the roughly shrouded body of one of their comrades, was an and unforgettable sight. In those days, it was the unwritten law of the pits, to stop work if a fatality had occurred, and if circumstances allowed, to bring the body home. Over the years there was more than one Waunarlwydd family that had this harrowing experience.

Thursday in 24 November 1924 proved to be a tragic day for the mining communities of Dunvant and Waunarlwydd, when news seeped through of the flooding of the Killan Colliery in Dunvant. There were 65 men in the pit when the water rushed through the various slants. Eleven men were entombed and five killed. Grim courage, faith and resourcefulness kept the entombed men alive for just over two days and nights until finally rescued. There were incidence of great courage by the colliers and rescue teams. A fire which occurred at St. Barnabas Church was almost coincidental with the Killan flooding and alerted many of the villagers of the disaster.

Waunarlwydd miners were involved - the poignant pit head vigil of one Waunarlwydd family proved in vain. Mr and Mrs George John, who lived near the Masons Arms, were no strangers to coal mining tragedy - lost their youngest son Wilfred John - aged fourteen and not long out of school.

During the late 19th century and early 20th century Waunarlwydd colliers worked at many of the district's pits including some like the Garngoch complex with a long, productive record - others similar to the 'Klondike' colliery where the promised gold-never materialised. The number of pits reflected the feverish search for coal during this period.

They included the following: -

Waunarlwydd Old Pit, Ystrad Isaf, Mynydd-Bach-y-Glo, Redhead, Gors Llewina, Worcester, Redwood, Talyfrawe, Pwll Sant, Pwll Bach (Roseland Road), Klondike, Rock Colliery, Box, Dunvant. Ballarat, Gwaith-y-Bwced, Gorwydd, Bishwell, Killan, Cape, Mountain, The Elms (Old Caergynnydd) and the Garngoch No.1, No.2 and No.3.

The last viable pit in our locality, Brynlliw, Gorseinon, closed in 1979.

At the beginning of this century there were 620 mines in the South Wales coalfield employing 232,000 men, in 1976 there were 42 mine and 30,000 miners. The change to mechanisation is starkly emphasised in the fact that in 1913 more than 17,700 pit ponies were working underground, in 1974 there were just 144 - today there are none. Around 1912 the wage paid to a collier was 2 shillings for cutting a ton of coal, a long, long way from the £300 a week later advocated. How things change!

In the early part of 1976, of Welsh Miners' Museum was opened at Afan Argoed. Set in the beautiful countryside of the Afan Valley it is well worth a visit. An excellent article on this project, written by John Dolan, appeared in the South Wales Evening Post and the following extract paints an accurate picture of mining community of yesteryear - such as our own village: -

“The canvas would need to take in stories of great endeavour, grim courage in the face of the many hazards to be faced, tales of heroism, stoicism, humour, and a faith that gave miners the heart to press on to win a reasonable way of life for their families.

Within that way of life there had to be room for an outlet that was completely divorced from underground labyrinth which claimed its strength, this skill - and sometimes their lives.

The coal mines have produced not only teak tough men who would fight with their hands or run with a rugby ball, but men who because of their way of life learned to be philosophical, men who became scholars, and men big enough in the fullest sense of the word to become leaders.”

The Waunarlwydd of yesterday - where the esteddfodau, ‘penny-readings’ and the Gymynfa Ganu flourished, where the colliers, steel workers and tinplatemen took a pride in their brass bands, and choirs, where rugby was almost a religion and where the language was predominantly Welsh.

Other Industries

Up to the early part of this century coal mining had played a pre dominant part in the industrial story of the village. Gradually, there had been a process of change and the coal industry was being overshadowed the steel and tinplate industries. This resulted in a wider choice of occupation for the men and women of Waunarlwydd. What was once a small predominantly farming and coal mining community, became a larger village enriched by the added experience of its steel workers and tinplate men.

Industries which employed men and women from Waunarlwydd included the following: -

Coke making

Coke making was carried out at some of the local collieries. Gorwydd colliery was opened in 1871 by Mr A Sterry - its main purpose being a feed to the steelworks. This colliery was situated on the right hand side of Gorwydd Road going from Waunarlwydd to Gowerton - just above and opposite the Gorwydd Lodge. The old stack of this colliery was visible for many years after the colliery had been abandoned. There were thirty coke ovens here - situated near the present village farm chalet site.

During this period, a railway siding crossed the road near to Gorwydd Lodge - this came from the adjacent Bishwell Colliery now the Bishwell estate. This pit was opened by a Mr. Padley, but was taken over by the Forest of Dean Colliery Company and other finally sold to Messrs Wright, Butler and Co. (Steelworks). Here twenty coke ovens were erected.

Briefly the production of coke involved the use of small coal, this was used after being washed and small stones etc. removed. It was then placed in ovens where it was burned for about 3 days. Water was then poured onto it until it was cool enough to be removed from the ovens. It was then ready for use in the blast furnaces.

The Steel Industry

The extension of the Great Western and later of the London and North Western Railways and the establishment of their respective stations in Gowerton - then Gower Road - improved local transport facilities. This was a major factor in the growth of the steel and tinplate industries of the district. It is interesting to note that temporary accommodation was erected for the 'imported' navvies employed on the railway construction on the old Waunarlwydd road between Gowerton and Waunarlwydd. Many of these workers remained, settling in the district.

For various reasons many Waunarlwydd Colliers left the mines and found employment in the expanding steel and tinplate industries.

The Elba of steel works at Gowerton employed hundreds of Waunarlwydd men following its establishment in 1872 by Messrs. Sterry, Beck and Healy. After many years of difficulty and experiment a highly successful mild steel was produced by the then Wright, Butler and Co.

The works was gradually enlarged to accommodate additional mills and furnaces and thus absorbed more workers. Incidentally the old, and disused Penclawdd/Ystrad Isaf Canal caused considerable construction difficulty when extending the building.

In 1905 - a well-known and respected local figure returned to the Steelworks - John Cecil Davies; son of Thomas Davies, originally a Waunarlwydd man. Influenced by the tremendous drive and experience of J.C. Davies, the success of the Steelworks was assured for many years.

Except for the closure of doing 1898/99 the steel works provided employment for many Waunarlwydd men - over the years many of them held responsible positions and several could lay claim to over forty years and some to order fifty years service if in the works.

Today the mills and furnaces have been completely demolished, the site bulldozed and in its place a leisure playing field complex and a housing estate has been established. In 1980 the cleared site was the venue for the National Eisteddfod of Wales.

Gowerton Foundry

This foundry was in existence from 1878 until trade depression forced it to close in the early 1930's. During these years the ownership changed hands several times - but it was still referred to as either the Gowerton or Nevill's Foundry. Many Waunarlwydd men played their part in producing the Foundry's products which had a well deserved reputation for its excellent quality.

The Tinsplate Industry

Many Waunarlwydd men and women found employment in the tinsplate works situated in the immediate area. During the 19th century the making of tinsplate developed into a thriving industry. As the steel and tinsplate industries are closely connected, improved steel production, resulting from the Bessemer and Siemens method of manufacture, was paralleled with the production of better quality tinsplate. In 1891 there were 51 tinsplate works with a total of 277 mills in Glamorgan alone. The basic processes of tinsplate manufacture, despite great technical improvements, still involved a great deal of manual labour and the skilled individual played an important part in the various processes. Waunarlwydd men provided a fair quota of these skilled operators - the picklers, annealers, tanners, rollersmen, examiners etc.. A considerable number of Waunarlwydd women were also employed in various capacities.

Even in those days, the world was shrinking, and a decision in far of America affected the lives of many a Waunarlwydd family and many others in the locality of Gowerton, Gorseinon and Llooughor. In 1890/91 the Welsh tinsplate industry suffered a severe setback when its best customer - the USA decided to produce its own tinsplate. In 1891 the McKinley Tariff was imposed, which put the price of British imported tinsplate up by 7 %.

The Welsh tinplate industry was thought to be doomed, works were closed and many tinplate men became unemployed. Many Welsh families emigrated and found employment in the new works in America and elsewhere. Among them were a few families from the village, who responded to the attraction of the high wages and better working conditions and the success of many an American tinplate works was established by the expertise of these Welsh tinplate men.

Fortunately, the local tinplate industry survived and indeed prospered.

Among the works employing Waunarlwydd personnel was The Fairwood Tinplate Works at Gowerton.

Erected in 1889, a nephew of the original owner Mr Ernest Gough - lived at 'The Firs', Waunarlwydd. The 'Firs', demolished a number of years ago, was a large house a few hundred metres from Gypsy Cross and its site is now part of a new council housing estate. In years gone by the grounds of 'The Firs' were frequently the venue for village fetes and carnivals.

Other works which absorbed Waunarlwydd labour were at the Bryngwyn, Maerdy and the Grovesend Sheet Mills.

Village Life in the Early 20Th Century

Up to the World War I period of 1914/18 - there was only a limited choice of work available for the women and girls of Waumarlwydd. Many entered domestic service, others became dressmakers, milliners, shop assistants or pupil teachers. To many a Waunarlwydd girl an apprenticeship served at Jenkins Draper's Shop at Gowerton was a stepping stone to employment and the large Swansea stores of that day, particularly the Lewis Lewis and Ben Evans. A few of the hardier girls were employed by Mr John Shaw at Gurnos, Gowerton where he had a landscaping and nursery business. The girls employed there were rather derogatorily known as 'Shaw's She Navvies'. However, the employment of women at the local tinplate works deprived Mr Shaw of his female labour force with the result that his 'Garden Centre' had to close down.

The village 'Gymanfa' singing festival, Sunday School treats, and of the Eisteddfod were major events in Waunarlwydd's social calendar. Two village Eisteddfodau were held annually on good Friday and Easter Saturday and Sardis and the Zion chapels respectively.

If a young villager possessed any musical talent or showed promise as an elecutionist - this was encouraged and inevitably he or she would become a competitor at the Eisteddfodau. They were assiduously trained and the cultivation of a suitable stage manner and presentation was impressed on each.

Success ranged from prize winners at local Eisteddfodau to the notable win of the Children's Choir at the National Eisteddfod at Mountain Ash in 1905. The choir was conducted by Mr David J. Jones (*Alawfwyn*) who was for many years the precentor at Sardis Capel and the accompanist was the talented musician Mr Joseph George.

To be a winner at the local Eisteddfodau meant a small cash award was placed in a small silken bag. The bag was hung around the winners neck with the solemnity of an Olympic gold medal. These bags were beautifully and lovingly made and were creative works of art in their own right. Many a Waunarlwydd parlour had a wall festooned with these colourful bags – symbols of a successfully delivered song, recitation or piano piece. One can recall such consistent winners as the Gravelle, Jones and a Meredith families among others and Mrs Gertrude Bowditch as an elocutionist.

Another facet of village life during the early part of the century was the Saturday morning trek of many Waunarlwydd women to the more industrial and affluent districts of Manselton and Sketty and even to Swansea market. The purpose of this weekly trek was to sell home grown garden produce. In those far off days, economic reasons demanded a far greater degree of self-sufficiency than today. It was the age of large gardens and practically every garden in the village was cultivated and was well stocked with basic vegetables and often a colourful array of flowers.

Many a village Collier was a market gardener on a small scale, and garden produce surplus to the family was sold to the less rural communities around Swansea. The selling devolved on the women. This resulted in a week-end of feverish activity - Friday evening was the time for the washing and bundling of the vegetables and flowers and meticulously packing them into large straw baskets - usually the basket used to collect the family washing. This Friday evening preparation was essential - so an early start on Saturday morning could be guaranteed - often before 7 a.m.

This was the traditional 'col' or 'load'. The loaded basket was quite heavy and before the advent of a bus service, many a Waunarlwydd woman carried the heavy load expertly balanced on her head. The coming of a regular bus service provided an unforgettable site around 7.30 a.m. on a Saturday - at each bus stop women jostling for place for themselves and their 'col' until the vegetable and floral 'jigsaw' was completed. When the bus finally left the village it resembled a mobile horticultural show. If the bus happened to come from Penclawdd, loads of cockles, mussels and laverbread would be added to the general fusion and bedlam.

To ease the situation, Mr. Harry Thomas, owner of the Tivoli cinema in Gowerton, ran a special service for the Waunarlwydd women, but unfortunately this very welcome service did not last long.

It was extremely hard work for the women who regularly made this weekly trek - but to many it was a necessity in order to supplement the meagre family income prevalent at that time.

The womenfolk of that era were a courageous and hardy breed. The women of a mining community lived in a state of perpetual fear and anxiety. The impending dangers of the colliers' working life underground were never far from their thoughts. This strengthened the feeling of belonging so characteristic of the village of that day and age.

It was a time of large families and inadequate accommodation. An age where the vacuum cleaner, fridge, freezer, washing machine, TV, main drainage and domestic electricity were unknown. Women had few amenities to help them. Housekeeping was on a shoe-string budget and house cleaning was a hard physical chore. Despite this the average household was kept scrupulously clean.

A traditional cottage type dwelling of the period was a simple four roomed house - two up and two down and occasionally an additional building used as a scullery or pantry. The ground floor rooms were the kitchen or '*Y Gegin*', the principal living room and the parlour. The parlour was referred to as 'the best room' -- the place reserved for the best furniture and maybe a piano. A characteristic feature found in most parlours was the big, black family Bible in which the dates of the births and deaths of the family were recorded.

The kitchen with its sanded floor, white 'free stoned' doorstep, the gleaming brass fender and stand, the equally well burnished brass candlesticks and lustre jugs on the mantelpiece would present a typical picture. One wall would be practically covered with a Welsh dresser filled with rows of cups and jugs to a background of patterned plates, and interspersed with souvenirs from a variety of Welsh resorts.

The chairs were wooden and strictly functional - there was no comfort in those days. The '*gadair fawr*' - the big chair - was sacrosanct - reserved for the use of the man of the house. There would probably be a '*skew*' or '*settle*' who had the dual purpose of providing a place to sit and a store place for clothes.

Another wall would be taken up with a large open fireplace flanked by an equally large oven from which the delicious smell of home baked bread would emanate. The bars of the grate and oven doors would invariably be gleaming from constant '*black leading*'. The rafted ceiling would contain at least two strong iron '*butcher's hooks*' from which a side of salted bacon would be hung. This reflected the fact that practically every household possessed a pig sty - *twlc mochyn* - and its unfortunate inhabitant would eventually be hanged, drawn and quartered. Some of these sites or their remains can still be seen today in the gardens of the older houses of the village.

One can recall '*Shoni mochyn*' a well - known character who was, more or less, regarded as the official slaughterer of the village pigs. He expertly caught the doomed animal, held it firmly between his knees, despite the animal's frantic struggles, and a razor sharp knife deftly drawn across the pig's throat would quickly complete the job. It was the custom of the village boys to witness this gory event and wait eagerly for the pig's bladder which made an excellent football.

Part of the village scene was the cry of '*Sand yellow*' when sand was sold from a donkey cart for the purpose of sanding the kitchen floors or '*Sane Wlan*' (woolen stockings) - these were sold by very austere gentlemen. Working men's woolen stockings and skeins of wool were suspended on a long pole which he carried on his shoulder. Then there were the regular weekend visits of the Penclawdd cockle women with their cry of '*Cockles and mussels*'. The travelling tinkers and the knife sharpener with his treadle operated grinding stone used to sharpen anything from gardening tools to scissors. Gypsies also travelled from door to door selling their wooden pegs.

When domestic lighting depended upon paraffin - a familiar figure was '*Jenkins the Oil*', who for many years sold paraffin at Waunarlwydd and the surrounding villages. Mr. Jenkins was a highly respected gentleman who hailed from Fforestfach. His heavily laden horse and cart was the first mobile hardware shop in the district. The third generation of the Jenkins family is still in operation having a wholesale furniture warehouse at Gorseinon under the name Arthur Llewelyn Jenkins.

Another familiar sight was that of Mr Hudson the baker who delivered his bread to the village until his retirement in 1968. Mr Hanson would carry out his deliveries using a horse drawn van. This slow moving form of transport was regularly the cause of many traffic queues between Waunarlwydd and Fforestfach.

The Llangyfelach and Gowerton Fairs

During the 19th century fairs played an important part in the life of the Welsh people. Many villagers organised their own small fairs. One of the largest and most important of Welsh fairs was '*Fair Fawr Fawrth Llangyfelach*' – the great March fare of Llangyfelach. It was an eagerly awaited event in the life of Swansea and its surrounding district and indeed of South West Wales. People attended the fair from nearby towns and villages and even as far afield as Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire.

People from Waunarlwydd travelled to the fair either on foot or by pony and trap. The fair was originally held in the church yard but was later moved to an adjacent field. The old fair lasted for three days. The first day was the hiring fair when scenes reminiscent of the African slave trade occurred. Men and women who wished to serve the farming community were lined up against the churchyard wall while the farmers and their wives would parade up and down the line, solemnly deliberating each individuals merits before making their final choice.

Apparently the original purpose of the fair was to sell wool - '*Ffair Wlan*' – when farmers and weavers from Carmarthen and the neighbouring counties came to sell wool and woolen goods.

Thus the second day was devoted to serious business. Stalls were set up and a wide variety of articles were bought and sold. There were rolls of flannel, shawls, blankets, ready-made flannel shirts and home spun cloths - representing months of hard work at the cottages and farmsteads of South West Wales. There would be the wood carver with his display of all kinds of farm and domestic wooden implements, together with items of the Saddler's craft and the products of a variety of cottage industries. There was also a sale of horses.

The third day was a pleasure fair with its noise and excitement and attractions ranging from a boxing booth to the merry-go-round.

Gowerton Fair

Some time in the year 1875 four local people got together and decided to promote a fair at Gower Road. These were Richard Morris, Howell John on-line David Morris and David Lewis. David Lewis was a Waunarlwydd man and his descendants as the living in the village.

A great debt is owed to these four enterprising and far-seeing gentlemen as the fair became an established event in the social and business programme of the South West Wales community. As the 'Cambrian' newspaper stated in February 1876: -
'Altogether the new fair, as an experiment, was a success, and several habitues of fairs gave it as the opinion that a fair at Gower Road could hardly be otherwise'.

Gower Road was an ideal venue for such a venture as the village contained two railway stations - the GWR (Great Western Railway) and the L & NWR (London & North Western Railway) thus provide entrance good facilities for the wall and flannel traders of Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire. Eventually a special train was run to accomodate people from the Newcastle Emlyn area. Reasonable road routes also converged on Gower Road from the neighbouring villages, this coupled with the fact that industry was attracting more people into the immediate area, assured the success of the fair. Thus for over half a century there was a lively meeting place of farmers, traders and pleasure seekers.

The original name for Gowerton was Ffos Felen (The Yellow Ditch), then it became known as Gower road - in 1885 it was changed to Gowerton to and to avoid confusion the Gower Road that runs between Sketty and Dunvant.

The original site of the cattle and pleasure fair was a field adjacent to the Commercial Hotel. The fair was run on similar lines for the Llangyfelach Fair combining both business and pleasure. The cattle fair was later transferred to a field near the Gower Inn, now the Welcome to Gower.

Fair days were held on the first Monday in February and September, the latter becoming the more important. Both fairs were eagerly anticipated by adults and children. Local schools would be given a whole or a half day's holiday to give the children an opportunity to spend their pressures pennies

As one can imagine the cattle fair presented an animated scene. Haggling farmers and buyers, raucous drovers and horse dealers would be mixed up with the bellowing cattle and squealing pigs. The cattle sales commenced on the morning when cattle, calves, pigs and a number of horses were submitted for inspection. After some shrewd bargaining, a price would be agreed and the purchase completed. Often to bond of contract was simply saying 'Your hand' followed by 'the hand clap' and more often than not further confirmed over a welcome drink at the nearby hostelry.

The flannel fair was held on the field now occupied by the present weekly cattle mart. Weavers from Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire would erect their portable stalls and rolls of good Welsh flannel would be attractively display. In those far off days the flannel fair was a boon to the hard working and thrifty housewives of a locality, who purchased sufficient rolls of flannel for the family use until the next fair came around.

The cattle and flannel fairs catered for certain sections of the community such as the farmers, butchers and houswives but the pleasure fair attracted all and sundry, young and old alike. The field near the *Commercial* would be a seething mass of people of all ages jostling each other for a place at the various booths and stalls.

The fairground was dominated by the 'Studts' Merry-go-round and its music. There were swings, chair-a-planes, rifle ranges, hoop-lah, coconut shies, Aunt Sally, 'Try your strength' among its many attractions.

Strung along the station side of the road going towards Waunarlwydd would be another amazing assortment of stalls and traders. Here you could have bought almost anything from ginger bread to goldfish. Chips, whips, walking sticks, nuts, figs, oranges were on sale.

There would be 'Cheap Jacks' selling china, trinkets and jewellery; 'quack' doctors offering medicines and pills guaranteed to miraculously cure any known or unknown ailment. There would also be a fortune teller, a strong man and other fascinating characters.

One of the features of the Llangyfelach Fair and earlier Gower Road Fair was the boxing booth of the famous Bill Samuel. A well-known pugilist of his day. Bill was reputed to have boxed against the great Tom Sayers. All comers would be invited to stand up to Bill for a set number of rounds. There was a story that the challenger managed to knock out Bill - but his triumph was short lived as he in turn was promptly 'laid out' by Mrs Samuel.

Progress decreed that the cattle fair has now become the well established Gowerton Mart; the Flannel Fair no longer exists; there is still a pleasure fair, but only a pale shadow of that of yesteryear's.

Religion in Waunarlwydd – The Beginning

At the close of the 18th Century Waunarlwydd was still a predominantly rural community despite the rather primitive efforts to exploit the rich coal seams in and around the village. It had remained a rather isolated community of scattered farmsteads and remote cottages. Contact with the outside world was limited and life was generally harsh and monotonous.

During the following century coal was being worked on a larger scale using more sophisticated methods, then followed the establishment of the other basic industries of steel and tinsplate the district. The growth of these industries attracted workmen from the neighbouring counties of Carmarthen and and Pembroke and even further afield from Somerset, Devon and Ireland. Thus Waunarlwydd, in common with other industrial areas of south Wales, was transformed by this marked increase in population and the old established rural way of life was permanently disrupted.

As far as religion was concerned, this industrialisation of sparsely populated areas created many sided problems. The influx of English speaking workmen posed a language problem to the chapels and churches. Again this was the period when existing parishes covered extensive areas and the established church was slow to appreciate the new situation and conditions which accompanied industrialisation.

On the other hand Nonconformity flourished in Waunarlwydd and the surrounding district. The mushrooming of the gaunt, grey chapels christened with strange Hebrew names such as Sardis, Zion, Bethany, Bethel, Bethlehem etc. became familiar features of the local landscape.

The roots of local nonconformity can be traced back to the early 1640's - to the meetings at Tirdonkin Farm, near Llangyfelach, to Ilston Cwm, near Parkmill and Wernllath, in the parish of Bishopston and then to the establishment of the chapels and Mynyddbach and Crwys (Three Crosses).

The overall history of Welsh Nonconformist worship, with its saga of oppression and restriction, of fines and imprisonment, of migration and of secret meetings held by courageous people in isolated farm houses and cottages, and secluded valleys - was mirrored locally. The first Baptist church in Wales was founded at Ilston Valley by John Myles in 1649 - somewhat later Waunarlwydd had its counterparts at Llodre Brith with its old baptismal well and reputed chapel. Meetings were held at local farmsteads and cottages – such as Caergynnydd Isaf (mill) and many of the village's original inhabitants walked long distances along tortuous paths to other farm and cottage meetings.

One can safely speculate that news of the great religious upheavals experienced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries must have infiltrated into the quiet backwater of our village. Events such as the Methodist revival of 1731 - the impact of John Wesley and earlier of John Myles - the Circulating Schools of Griffith Jones, Llanddowror, (many were set up in Gower) - the Sunday School movement instigated by Thomas Charles of Bala - the emotional oratory of the great Welsh religious reformers and preachers such as Howell Harris, (he preached at Llangyfelach, Goseinon, Loughor and Crwys), Daniel Rowland, William Williams y Wern, Christmas Evans, and John Elias - the hymns of William Williams, Pantycelyn and Ann Griffiths, Dolanog - must have gradually reached the lonely farmsteads and cottages in Waunarlwydd and contributed to the spiritual awakening of its inhabitants.

The nineteenth century witnessed the greater availability of the Welsh Bible to the ordinary folk, this coupled with an increasing output of religious literature printed in Welsh greatly helped the Nonconformist cause. Therefore at the end of the nineteenth century the Nonconformist chapel became the focus of the people's religious activities. The coal mining areas proved to be particularly fertile ground for the seeds of nonconformity and dissent, as there seems to be a strange affinity between the hazardous but monotonous occupation of the Collier and the emotive, evangelical appeal of Nonconformity. By 1880 approximately 80 % of the population of Wales was Nonconformist.

During this era, education and religion were closely connected as to be almost inseparable. The state of education in Wales was deplorable and totally inadequate. Initially, the attitude of the local farmer and collier towards the education of their children was, to say the least, lethargic and complacent. In the context of the time, this attitude was perhaps understandable. One can appreciate the fact that they knew their children would inevitably inherit their own kind of narrow existence on the land or in the mine, thus to educate children condemned to such an existence, was in their reasoning - pointless. However, despite this attitude and during a period of great and far reaching social upheavals in the industrial and rural areas and bitter sectarian squabbling over education - the Nonconformist chapels played a dominating part in the reform and development of education. This was true of our village.

Religion – The Chapel and the Sunday School

The chapel and the Sunday school were the focal point of a Welsh community's religious, intellectual, social and political life. The grim, forbidding looking chapel and its vestry embraced not only religious activities but became a place where lectures were given; where concerts, dramas, eisteddfodau, organ recitals were held; where the village choir presented its oratorios, operas; where the singing festival the Gymanfa Ganu took place; where by Bible classes, and the local literary and debating societies found a home; and where 'Penny Readings' and the 'Band of Hope' catered for the children. Therefore, the grey gloom of the chapel buildings was dispersed by these activities. The medium of communication was predominantly Welsh and thus the chapel and the Sunday School became the guarantors of the ancient Welsh language, because in them it was a living tongue.

The Welsh Sunday School is unique because it catered (and still does) for adults as well as children. In the old days age and youth attended its classes where they were taught to read in their native tongue. Again to the local farmer and cottager living in comparative isolation, human contact was an essential factor in breaking the monotony of their lives and meeting other people was an eagerly looked for event. The chapel and the Sunday school provided the means of satisfying this yearning for contact with one's neighbours.

Here is an interesting account of a nineteenth century farmhouse Sunday School written by Robert Roberts (1834-1885) :-

"the church was three miles lower down the valley, and the nearest chapel was about two miles off, over the hills in the 'cwm' which ran parallel to hours. To remedy in some measure, this want of spiritual accommodation, a Sunday School had been held at Hafod for some years. Our house was the largest of the farmhouses about and had therefore been fixed upon as the most convenient to hold the school. Shortly after dinner the neighbouring farmers and their families began to drop in, each with his Welsh Bible under his arm. They like to come early that they might enjoy a little gossip before school commenced. Here they discussed the preachers of the chapel, the news of the week, and sometimes a little politics.

When the kitchen got pretty full, my father would ask some 'religious' man to commence by singing a hymn and offering a prayer. They would then disperse through the house to their several classes, for the large kitchen would not hold them all. We had one class of women in the parlour, presided over by my grandfather; another occupied one of the bedrooms. Young and old were there, from my great-grandmother my grandfather's class down to the young children of five or six who sat on the hob by my mother's side. My father who was reputed to be a better educated man than any of the others, had a 'teacher's class' at a large kitchen table.

Most of the adults can read pretty fairly, the reading of Welsh is an easy matter and does not take long to learn. But to some of our older scholars, reading was a great mystery. There is old Robert Hughes, of Morlgan, for instance, a man of seventy and upwards, who sits on a form at my right hand with two of his middle-aged sons by his side. They have been attending school regularly from its first commencement and they have not passed to the 'a', 'b,' 'c' yet.

The above extract would have been descriptive of similar Sunday Schools held at Waunarlwydd farm-houses and cottages before the erection of the village chapels.

Evan Roberts and the Revival (Y Diwigiad) of 1904/05

Not so many years ago an old Waunarlwydd Collier was asked what were his most vivid of memories before the first world war. Without a moment's hesitation he answered : -

“the year 1905 when I saw a Dr. Teddy Morgan score that try against the All Blacks and when I heard Evan Roberts preach.”

Thus he touched on two topics of intense Welsh national interest - rugby and religion.

Dr. Teddy Morgan's try at Cardiff on that day in 1905 excited the rugby fraternity of the village and provoked an argument which literally became worldwide. On the other hand the impact of Evan Roberts, the evangelist, was local and therefore more intense. Waunarlwydd and the predominantly Welsh speaking neighbourhood villages experienced an almost fanatical feeling of religious fervour. It was a phenomena akin to that experienced at a Billy Graham crusade - but far more intense in its zeal.

Evan Roberts was born in Loughor in 1878. When only eleven years of age he began work as a 'door boy' at the Mountain Colliery, Gorseinon. After working at Blaengarw and the Broad Oak Colliery at Loughor, he was apprenticed as a blacksmith to an uncle at Pontarddulais. However, he found the burning urge to preach too strong and returned to Loughor. He spent long hours in prayer and meditation - often lasting until the early hours of the morning.

In 1904 he prophesied a great religious revival. His first meeting at Moriah Chapel, Loughor attracted a mere 16 persons, but very soon be his services were attended by hundreds of people. The chapels of Loughor and the surrounding district were packed to capacity and frequently many hundreds were denied admission to these highly emotional services. In an overwhelming atmosphere of Welsh 'hwyl', hymn after hymn would be sung and often repeated. Tough colliers would openly and unashamedly weep among outbursts of spontaneous praise from individuals in the congregation.

There would be no time limit on the services - many continuing for long hours. This was a typical scene at many a local chapel.

For almost two years (1904-05) the effect of the revival on the locality was dramatic. The village drunk, wife-beater, gambler would publicly pray for forgiveness. Prayers were often said in the streets and pleasure was condemned with Puritan zeal. Local dances and dramas were no longer patronised, the pubs emptied and the crime rate fell. Saturday's rugby team would be hopefully announced. Players names would be called only for them to answer in return :- "not available, converted." This resulted in the match being cancelled.

The revival lasted for two years. Many people sneered at Evan Roberts and his followers - to them it was a typical example of mass hysteria – but it undeniably changed the lives of numerous people. To many the change was of a temporary nature but to others it proved a crucial turning point in their lives. There were authentic cases in Waunarlwydd when a family's life was changed into a better and a happier one as a direct result of Evan Roberts Revival.

Here is a written account is an account of the revival that demonstrates the effect it had upon local communities.

"Preaching and song have been the two wings upon which the soul of the Welshman has risen to heaven. The religious revival that swept through the mining valleys of South Wales in 1904 under the leadership of Evan Roberts, was kindled by his fervour and by song. The people sang without books the old hymns they new by hearts, taking parts as Welsh people always do, repeating the verses again and again till roused to a pitch of feeling in which great emotional experience changed the whole course of life. Indescribable scenes took place at the meetings. Sometimes a torrent of prayer and then of song would sweep over the people. Long-standing debts were paid, stolen goods were returned, public houses were forsaken, oaths ceased to be heard, so that, it was said, in the collieries the horses could not understand the language of their drivers. Manager's of works bore witness that the amount of work turned out by the men since the Revival had been more than they had known for years."

Village Personalities

‘Mabon’ - William Abraham M.P. (1842-1922)

Wauanarlwydd can claim that it housed and employed one of the best known –Members of Parliament and the first President of the South Wales Miners’ Federation, namely William Abraham - perhaps better known as ‘Mabon’ - his badic title.

He came to live in Waunarlwydd in 1870 and lived in a cottage near the Masons Arms, now No.100 Swansea Road and was employed at the old Caergynnydd Pit (later called the Elms Colliery) at the foot of the western end of Graig-y-Bwldan.

Mabon was born at Cwmafan 1842; unfortunately his father died at an early age and Mabon was obliged to seek work in the coal mines as a door boy - he was ten years of age. By the time he was 16 he was an active member of Tabernacle Calvinistic Methodist Chapel at Port Talbot and became well known as the young conductor of the choir and leader of the Band of Hope.

In 1870 he came to work in Waunarlwydd and was employed at the Caergynnydd Pit. A religious man he attended the Sunday School meetings held in a barn of *Fferm Isaf* (Caergynnydd Isaf) conducted by the farmer, *William Eynon*, a native of Llangendeirne, Carmarthen, who had bought the farm in 1869. Later he became a member of Zion Baptist Chapel, Waunarlwydd. Around 1873, he moved to Gower Road (Gowerton) and became a member and precentor of the newly opened Bethel M.C. Chapel.

His other great interest was the eisteddfod which at this time attracted huge crowds. ‘Mabon’s’ burly appearance and powerful voice ideally equipped him as a popular conductor of eisteddfodau. He was also a successful conductor of a United Choir composed of local choristers. He, himself, would often sing to audiences with a good tenor voice.

He left Gower road in 1877 for the Rhondda where he was elected Member of Parliament for that constituency. He fought hard and long for better conditions in the mines and a better standard of living for the colliers, and became the first President of the South Wales Miners Federation. From 1892 to 1898 – miners did not work on the first Monday of the month and this day became known as ‘Mabon’s Day’.

After a lifetime of dedication to the miners cause, to the eisteddfodau and his chapel, he died in 1922.

Here follows a written biographical account off 'Mabon' by David Williams.

'In 1875 'Mabon', was 33 years old, and he had emerged as a leader only in the industrial conflicts of the early 1870's.

An incomparable orator, in both Welsh and English, he exercised great influence over his followers and was equally prominent in the activities of Welsh Nonconformity, as well as in the eisteddfod and in Welsh cultural life. After the Reform Act 1884 he entered Parliament, the first a miner to do so, and he retained a seat until 1920. He was a radical in politics, but he had little sympathy with socialism, for he believed that the interests of the employers and workmen were identical and could be adjusted through argument. It was through his influence alone that a sliding scale worked with reasonable smoothness from 1875 to 1902.

The sliding scale system was a device, already known in other industries, by which wages were regulated according to prices. A standard wage was calculated, and a change in the price of coal of one shilling a ton was henceforth to involve a change of 7½% in wages. Wages and prices were to be adjusted every 6 months and 6 months notice was necessary to terminate the agreement. The first agreement was reached on December 11th 1875. The scale was to be worked by a joint committee of 5 employers and 5 representatives of the miners.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain to which the South Wales Miners' Federation had been affiliated, opposed the sliding scale and in 1902 the S.W.M.F. gave notice of its termination. Mabon's personal influence continue to act as restraint to on his associates, but he was no out of sympathy with the militant section of his own federation. Mabon became formerly a member of the Labour Party only in the last decade of his Parliamentary career, and he never advocated socialism.'

John Rowlands F.R.S.L.

John Rowlands is still affectionately remembered by many living in Wauarlwydd as the respected headmaster to at least two generations of village folk. John Rowlands was a '*character*'. A highly articulate and cultured gentleman equally fluent in Welsh and English. He was well worthy of the letters *F.R.S.L.* he was entitled to put after his name - a ***Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature***. To him literature was life and Shakespeare was literature. He knew his Shakespeare so thoroughly that there was hardly an occasion he couldn't match with an appropriate Shakespearean quotation. Whenever a boy reported for the cane - John Rowlands would produce from his vast knowledge of Shakespeare an apt saying that fit the punishment and the crime.

Before coming to Waunarlwydd from the Rhondda he had received an accident - so serious - that it necessitated the amputation of a leg. The amputated limb had been replaced by an artificial one - known to his school boys as John Rowland's '*cork leg*'. Thus to the boys of that era it was the epitome of courage and daring to stick to pin into the unfeeling limb and quickly withdraw it before John Rowlands would notice. The inevitable happened and a certain boy unwisely used a nail on the real leg and not the '*cork leg*' - the dire consequences can well be imagined and old-fashioned discipline soon prevailed.

John Rowlands was for many years a deacon at Sardis Chapel. Those were the days when the sermons were long and frequently punctuated by devout '*Amens*' from the '*set fawr*'. On occasions the minister would ask if any of the deacons would like to say a few words. It was with some degree of trepidation that the younger element of the congregation would watch John Rowland arise to make his contribution. He would stroke his beard - begin speaking in fluent Welsh and then inevitably lapse into a Shakespearean hwyl - much to the inward annoyance of the impatient youth sitting in the gallery.

The Sabbath of John Rowland's era was a sombre day, any kind of work or play was frowned upon, even the traditional Sunday lunch was prepared on a Saturday. It was the day when Sunday best was worn - and black or other sombre colours were the order of the day.

One can remember John Rowlands appearance in chapel - his short, stocky figure immaculately dressed in Puritan black, a Churchillian hat, spats, completed with the inevitable walking stick befitting his status in the village.

He was also in demand as an adjudicator of the literary items at the local and school eisteddfodau. He was a prolific author and poet in Welsh and English. Among his published works were a book called 'Shakespeare still enthroned'; a long poem of four cantos and a prayer called 'God is love'; a play couched in Shakespearean language and style: - 'Ellen Donne' or 'The Bride of the Banks of the Dee'; several poems and songs.

Perhaps an extract from 'Ellen Donne' will acquaint the reader with his style of writing: -

The scene..... on the green, before Ulkington Palace, where Ladies and Knights are assembled to celebrate Ellen's birthday.

In this scene one of the characters, David speaks: -

*"Who would not live for ever in this scene,
Where heaven and earth, this tranquil night, appear.
In mystic grandeur fair! No other land –
No other clime upon this beauteous earth,
Could lend a charm so exquisitely sweet
As now is ours."*

The fabric of many of his poems contained a thread of his love of the locality - such as 'Swansea Bay'; 'Mumbles' and 'Above Hendrefoelan'. One of his oft repeated fantasies was to possess the power to remove Graig-y-Bwldan, which he regarded as an obstacle between Waunarlwydd and the beauty of Swansea Bay. Perhaps, if he could have accomplished this he would not have written the following poem - a geography lesson in verse: -

Above Hendrefoelan

*On Hendrefoelan's summit fair I stand,
A pleasant league from Swansea's mansions gay;
And as I now survey the opening land,
Six counties meet my vision far away:
Plains, woodlands, towns, and mountains stern I see,
And rolling oceans dark immensity.*

*Before mine eyes, where glows the mid-day sun,
Roll the blue waves of Swansea's peerless bay!
And, on its breast, the joyous vessels run
To seek the shores of nations far away;
And, grandly, with its lighthouse in the sea,
Rises aloft the Mumbles promont'ry.*

*Beyond the Bristol Channels surging tide,
The sunny shores of England now appear;
And, in pellucid air, the corn fields to wide,
Of Somerset and Devon seem quite near;
And, outward, like a monster of the deep,
Stands Lundy Isle - a channel watch to keep.*

*Far to the west, beyond the Gower sands,
The cliffs of Pembroke lift their massive form;
And, intervening, glisten many strands
That oft reveal the ruins of the storm;
And, smoking darkly, stands Llanelly nigh,
Whose lofty turrets pierce the azure sky.*

*Carmarthen, too, displays her ridges wide,
Whose tops in glory leave the setting sun –
Her white washed farms – old Cambria's greatest pride –
Her thousand fields that oe'r her mountains run –
Her hamlets fair, mid dell's and woodland gay,
Where peace sits smiling through the ling'ring day.*

*Then to the North, extending sharply clear,
The sable a range of Brecknock swells on high;
And, to the East, Glamorgan hills appear.
Where smoky heights becloud the sunny sky;
And, downward, from the mountains serried bands
I view - to Pyle, and Sker's bright shining sands.*

*Such is the range that opens to my view.
This summer day, that lingers fair and clear;
And as I turn and bid the scenes adieu,
My heart would fain remain and linger here;
For, all around, what varied life I see,
what grandeur mantling forth, what majesty!
(Written circa 1890)*

One can gauge the respect in which he was held by reference to a rather unique incident in the village's history. John Rowlands lived in a house almost at the junction of Victoria Road and Bryn Road (sometimes called the incline). Therefore to get to the village school he had to journey down Bryn Road to *Denton's* and then turn right along Swansea Road for about 500 yards before reaching the old school. This was a formidable walk for a man with his severe disability.

The villagers were aware of this and as a token of their regard and respect a few householders gave their land so that a lane connecting Victoria road and Swansea road could be constructed, thus considerably shortening John Rowlands' journey from home to school. This lane is still in existence and still extensively used. It is now publicly maintained and follows its original route, joining Swansea Road by the Post Office and almost opposite or Sardis Chapel.

In the context of the educational ideals of the time John Rowlands was admirably fitted to the role of village schoolmaster - his influence towards the good was not confined to his school but was extended to the village and to a wider community.

Shortly after celebrating its centenary in 1968 - the old school was demolished - its walls and classrooms completely obliterated - something which, fortunately, cannot be done to the contribution of John Rowlands and many of his successors made within those walls.