

**Raymond Jones Gunter**, (30 August 1909 – 12 April 1977),

Raymond Jones Gunter, (1909-1977), trade unionist and politician, was born at 18 High Street, Llanhilleth, Monmouthshire, on 30 August 1909, the son of Miles Gunter, a fruiterer and later a colliery pumpsman, and his wife, Clara Adeline Jones. After attending Abertillery and Newbridge secondary schools, he became, at the age of fourteen, a booking clerk with the Great Western Railway. When he was sixteen, he joined the Railway Clerks' Association (later the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association) and the Labour Party. He became active in both. On 04 August 1934, at the Methodist church at Newbridge, he married Elsie (d 1971), an elementary school teacher, daughter of James Elkins (a coalminer), with whom he had one son. During the Second World War Gunter enlisted in the Royal Engineers in 1941, and was promoted to staff captain in 1943, overseeing the transport of arms from Iraq to the USSR.

Gunter returned to Britain in 1945 to contest Essex South-East in the general election and, to his surprise, won the seat. He was then narrowly elected for Doncaster in 1950 and equally narrowly defeated in 1951. He unsuccessfully contested Doncaster again in 1955 but eventually found a safe haven in Southwark, for which he sat from 1959 to 1972.

While out of the House of Commons, Gunter became president of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association in 1956, having previously been its treasurer, and he held the post until 1964.

Emphatically anti-Bevanite, he was a member of the national executive committee of the Labour Party from 1955 to 1966 and, as head of the party's organization committee, took a tough line against left-wing critics during the early 1960's. He was a steadying and unifying influence during the clash over unilateral disarmament during and after the 1960 party conference, and for a brief moment he was seen as a future leader of the party. He became opposition spokesman on power in 1960 and then served as shadow minister of labour from 1961 until the 1964 general election. He was also chairman of the Labour Party from 1964 to 1965.

[Untruth: He made an error in his first week as Minister of Labour when he tried to introduce a Midwifery Bill. someone had to tell him 'Not that sort of Labour Ray'.](#)

On 17 October 1964 Harold Wilson included Gunter in his new cabinet as minister for labour. Gunter called his new post 'a bed of nails' (Wigham, 'Much more a unionist'). Under any administration of the period, mediating between the employers and workers was an exciting and unenviable task, but in 1964 the Ministry of Labour was expected to construct the coherent and genuine labour market policy that seemed an essential prerequisite to union participation in a voluntary incomes policy. It thus formed a pivot around which the government hoped to turn its social and economic policies.

Gunter's performance as minister of labour was mixed. He piloted through parliament the Redundancy Payments Act and successfully set up the industrial training boards required by the Industrial Training Act of January 1964. However, in both instances the spadework had already been done by the previous Conservative government. His Trade Disputes Act (1965) overturned the *Rookes v Barnard* judicial decision of 1964 that threatened the unions' legal immunity in respect of strikes.. The achievement which probably gave him greatest satisfaction was paving the way to ending casual dock working by setting up the Devlin Committee.

In other respects, Gunter's achievements were less satisfactory. His creation of the Donovan commission (the royal commission on trade unions and employers' associations) in April 1965 soured his relations with the unions. During the seamen's strike of May 1966 his ministerial status

was undermined when the handling of the dispute was taken over by Wilson. The strike helped to precipitate an economic crisis in July 1966, but Gunter in cabinet was unable to resist either the imposition of the pay freeze or the subsequent elongation of statutory control of collective bargaining.

In April 1968 Wilson moved Gunter to the Ministry of Power, Gunter bitterly resented this, not least because he loathed his successor, Barbara Castle, and resented Wilson's expansion of the now renamed Department of Employment and Productivity. Two months later, on 28 June, he resigned from the cabinet. Had he chosen to go in April his motives would have been clear, but as it was they were obscure. For this reason, his resignation is remembered as an example of how not to resign (Kaufman, 168-9). But his comment that he would be forgotten within ten years (Wigham, Much more a unionist) proved correct.

Ray Gunter was a rotund and smilingly self-confident figure, who employed an emotional, rumbustious, and sometimes demagogic oratory in the service of the Labour right. After meeting him in May 1968, Richard Crossman, who 'never trusted him a yard' described him as 'a huge squat bullfrog of a man, with a great Welsh voice and the less attractive qualities of the Welsh as well' (Crossman, Diaries, 3.50) He was pro-European long before this became common in the Labour Party and was a firm believer in co-operation between management and workers. In a sense he was more a trade unionist than a politician, though his white-collar connections disadvantaged him within the TUC general council, where some referred to him dismissively as 'the ticket collector' (Jenkins,7). Within the cabinet he was unpopular among some of his colleagues for leaking information to the press (Castle Diaries, 1964-70, 304). His appointment and dismissal as minister for labour mirror the changing attitude of Wilsons' government to the unions. Gunter campaigned relentlessly against traditions and practices that were dear to many Unionists but that he perceived to be hampering change; in a speech to the Scottish council of labour he remarked, 'I do wish so many of the comrades would stop equating profits with incest or lechery', adding that profitable industry meant further investment and more jobs (Sunday Times, 20 August 1967). For this he was bitterly resented by the left, and when he returned to the back benches he had few political reserves on which to draw. His Europeanism was a major factor in his decision to resign the Labour whip in February 1972, when he insisted 'our country has a new role in Europe, not only on economic grounds' (The Times, 17 February 1972). He also cited his resentment at the dominant role of intellectuals, whom he thought out of touch with the interests of ordinary people, among a Labour leadership lacking the working-class ballast which he, Frank Cousins and George Brown had provided.

Ray Gunter died at his cottage, Y Bwthyn Bach, Launceston Close, Old Town, St. Mary's on the Isles of Scilly on 11 April 1977.

A Blue Plaque in honour of Ray Gunter can be viewed at Llanhilleth railway station.

On Friday 6th December 2013, Torfaen MP Paul Murphy unveiled a commemorative plaque in honour of Ray Gunter, the Llanhilleth born former Labour MP and Cabinet Minister. The plaque was placed in the railway station of his hometown in recognition of his time as President of the Transport and Salaried Staff Association.

Born on 30th August 1909, the son of Miles Gunter, a fruiterer and later colliery pumpsman, and his wife Clara Adeline Jones, of 18, High Street, Llanhilleth.

He attended Abertillery and Newbridge Secondary schools and at the age of 14 years became a booking clerk with Great Western Railway.

The 1939 Register shows him living in Burvale, Commercial Road, with his wife, Elsie and son, David.

Ray Gunter had a long and distinguished career in Parliament from 1945 to 1972. He served in the Cabinet of a number of Labour Governments, most prominently as Minister of Labour under Harold Wilson.

The unveiling was attended by Nick Smith MP, Mostyn Lewis the Mayor of Blaenau Gwent, and Councillor Hedley McCarthy, Leader of Blaenau Gwent Council.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Murphy commented,

“As a young man, fascinated with politics, I became aware of Ray Gunter when he was a member of Harold Wilson’s Cabinet. What impressed me was that someone who came from the same part of the word as myself and who had the same accent as mine, could aspire to be a member of the Cabinet. It is fitting that a permanent memorial should be erected to honour his memory and I am very privileged, as a former Labour Cabinet Minister myself, to be associated with this event.”

Councillor McCarthy added,

Video of interview with Ray Gunter:

<https://www.macearchive.org/films/atv-today-02071965-ray-gunter-interview>

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/80437219/ray-gunter>

British Statesman, Born in Abertillery in South Wales, he left school at the age of fourteen, to become a booking clerk with the Great Western Railway. During the Second World War, he served in the Royal Engineers and, in 1943, was promoted to Staff Captain, where he oversaw the transport of arms from Iraq to the Soviet Union. In 1945, he was elected to Parliament, representing Essex South; this, however, was not a safe seat, so, in 1950, he transferred to Doncaster, in Yorkshire, but was defeated the following year. He stood again, unsuccessfully, in 1955 at Doncaster, but, in 1959, was elected at Southwark, in South London. When the Labour Party returned to government in 1964, under the leadership of Harold Wilson, he joined the Cabinet as Minister of Labour. In April 1968, he was moved to the Ministry of Power; but, two months later, he resigned from the Cabinet. He continued to sit in Parliament until February 1972, when he resigned his seat, largely because his pro-European views were at odds with the leadership of his party; at the subsequent by-election, the seat was held for Labour by Harry Lambourn, a fervent anti-Marketeer. Like Wilson, Gunter had a cottage on St. Mary's Island on the Scillies, and it was in that cottage (Y Bwythen Bach, in Launceston Close) that he died.

**David Brunt - "The father of meteorology" - 17 June 1886 – 5 February 1965**



What is the link between the ‘father of meteorology’, Llanhilleth and, Abertillery County School?

In 1896, John Brunt, a lead miner from Montgomeryshire brought his family to Llanhilleth where he worked as a collier. On the 1901 census they lived at No.7 High Street, Llanhilleth. The youngest of nine children, David, was brilliant at Maths and in 1899 he won a scholarship to study at the recently opened Abertillery Intermediate School, one of only 2 ‘secondary’ schools in the ‘western valley’.

In 1904, David Brunt won 2 scholarships, which enabled him to study physics and mathematics at Aberystwyth University where he graduated 3 years later with a first class degree with distinction. His academic studies continued at Trinity College, Cambridge where he specialised in Astronomy, studying the Sun.

In 1913, David left Cambridge to lecture in Mathematics at Birmingham University but returned to Monmouthshire a year later where he taught at the Monmouthshire Training College for teachers at Caerleon. In 1915 David married Claudia Roberts, a fellow pupil from Abertillery County School and Aberystwyth University where she graduated in French with distinction. Her father, William Roberts, was a schoolmaster at Nantyglo.

By 1916, the First World War intervened in David’s career and he joined the Meteorological Section of the Royal Engineers as an officer. Here, David got involved in the practicalities of weather forecasting and did important work related to atmospheric conditions at low levels in chemical warfare. He later became meteorologist to the Air Force. After the war he joined the Met Office, which became the Air Ministry in 1921, applying his mathematical skill to the problems of handling large amounts of data from weather observations. He accepted Sir Napier Shaw’s invitation to join him as part-time professor of meteorology at the Imperial College, London. After the retirement of Sir Napier Shaw, he became the first full-time professor of meteorology in Britain, holding the chair from 1934 to 1952. Two years later he was elected a Fellow of the College.

David’s pivotal role in putting weather forecasting onto a scientific footing for the first time has led to him being called, ‘the father of meteorology’.

Between 1936 and 1939 he contributed to a theoretical understanding of fog dispersal, information used in the development of the FIDO fog dispersal system - allowing the landing of aircraft returning from raids over Germany in poor visibility by burning fuel in rows on either side of the runway.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1939 and was awarded their Royal Medal in 1944. He went on to serve as their secretary from 1948 to 1957 and as their vice-president from 1949 to 1957.

He served as President of the Royal Meteorological Society from 1942 to 1944 and received both their Buchan prize and their 1947 Symons Gold Medal. He was also president of the Physical Society from 1945 to 1947.

He was made a Knight Bachelor in 1949 and Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) in 1959

### **Brunt Ice Shelf**

It was named by the [UK Antarctic Place-names Committee](#) after [David Brunt](#), British meteorologist, Physical Secretary of the [Royal Society](#), 1948–57, who was responsible for the initiation of the Royal Society Expedition to this ice shelf in 1955.

Brunt Ice Shelf in Antarctica calves giant iceberg

<https://www.bas.ac.uk/media-post/brunt-ice-shelf-in-antarctica-calves-giant-iceberg/>

Halley Research Station is a research facility in [Antarctica](#) on the [Brunt Ice Shelf](#) operated by the [British Antarctic Survey](#) (BAS). The base was established in 1956 to study the [Earth's atmosphere](#). Measurements from Halley led to the discovery of the [ozone hole](#) in 1985.

### **Brunt–Väisälä frequency**

The [frequency](#)  $N$  at which a displaced [air parcel](#) will oscillate when displaced vertically within a [statically stable](#) environment.

$$N = \left( \frac{g}{\theta_{va}} \frac{\partial \theta_{va}}{\partial z} \right)^{1/2},$$

where  $g = 9.8 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  is gravitational [acceleration](#),  $\theta_{va}$  is the ambient virtual potential temperature, and  $\partial \theta_{va} / \partial z$  is the vertical [gradient](#) of the ambient [virtual potential temperature](#). Units are radians per second, although this is usually abbreviated as  $\text{s}^{-1}$ .

Untruth: He always recalled his childhood days in Llanhilleth, in particular walking home one night during a terrible storm, when he witnessed a cat and a dog being washed out of a high garden. It was he who later in his career coined the phrase 'raining cats and dogs'.

[https://llanhilleth.gwenheritage.org.uk/content/catalogue\\_item/david-brunt-the-father-of-meteorology](https://llanhilleth.gwenheritage.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/david-brunt-the-father-of-meteorology)

<https://biography.wales/article/s2-BRUN-DAV-1886>

**Cyril Thayer: [Thayer's Ice Cream – the scoop.](https://roathlocalhistorysociety.org/2019/10/25/thayers-ice-cream-the-scoop/)**

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There can't be many more evocative old shop names in the Roath area than Thayer's. Drop the name Thayer's into any conversation you are having with a mature Cardiffian and soon they will be reminiscing about their favourite flavour ice cream or their preferred form whether it be cone or tub.

I was fortunate enough lately to meet John Thayer who kindly shared with me some of the history of the family business that centred around the shop in 13 Wellfield Road.

Thayer's dairy ice cream business was started by John's father Albert Cyril Thayer. The Thayer family originated from Cwm in the Ebbw valley where Cyril's father Joseph Thayer had owned a grocery business. Joseph Thayer was born in Llanhilleth in 1888. He originally worked at the colliery but following a serious flood, forcing him to leave his tools behind, he changed career, moved to Cwm and opened a grocery shop.

The Wellfield Road premises were purchased by the Thayer family just prior to WWII. For ten years before that it had been a dairy shop owned by F.I. Day. Cyril Thayer served in WWII and after coming out of the army, married Irene Jackson and opened Cardiff's first self-service grocery store at 13 Wellfield Road. What great foresight. Who would have ever thought that self-serve grocery shopping would ever catch on!

The business went on to be very successful. Strong contacts were built up with local suppliers. Eggs from Mrs Johnson's farm in Usk and turkeys from another source, milk from a nearby dairy, being some prime examples.

Another example of Cyril Thayer's foresight came later when he witnessed a nearby business struggling to make ice cream of high enough quality to sell and instead having to throw it away. Cyril thought he could do better than that and the rest as they say is history. Via their grocery business Cyril Thayer already had good access to the materials needed to make ice cream.

As the years passed competition in the self-service grocery sector increased but by now Thayer's dairy ice cream was so popular that the shop business could be sustained on ice cream alone. The back of the shop morphed into an ice cream parlour serving knickerbockerglories and sundaes and the front into an area to sell ice cream and cream to walk-in customers. Queues could often be seen snaking back out of the shop and along Wellfield Road.

So what was the secret of Thayer's dairy ice cream? Quite simply it was good quality, honest, natural ingredients. As well as milk and cream, ice cream is made from milk powder. Whereas many other producers would cut costs, Thayer's always used full cream milk powder in their formulation. So here's a scoop. Here's the recipe for Thayer's ice cream which John can still remember to this day:

280 milk, 30 dairy cream, 125 butter, 125 full cream milk powder, 250 sugar, 25 glucose, 12 eggs, a bit of emulsifier and stabiliser thrown in but never any preservative. I know what you are going to say. There are no units quoted. Well the units were kilograms but I thought if I put that in someone

would try and copy it and end up eating ice cream for three years. And no vanilla flavouring in there either, this was pure dairy ice cream.

There were of course the various other flavours, over twenty in all. Thayer's strawberry ice cream was infamous. The business used to use 14 tonnes of strawberries each year. That's an awful lot of strawberries. Then there were the other favourites, chocolate, coffee. And I'm sure I remember orange, or is my memory playing tricks there.

The very early ice cream making equipment in 13 Wellfield Road made no more than 2 gallons at a time. More machinery was purchased to make larger quantities but eventually the time came when the company got so successful that other premises were needed. In 1966 Thayer's ice cream started to be made at a site in Wentloog Road, Rumney.

By now Thayer's were employing over 100 people, supplying their ice-cream throughout a sizable geographical area, mainly to the small traders such as corner shops. A small fleet of 14 vans was used to supply the distribution network all efficiently choreographed using early Rediffusion computers. There was even a small factory in North Wales in Llandudno that John used to visit weekly to supervise the ice cream making.

Thayer's was very much a family business. John recalls helping out in the Wellfield Road shop from a young age serving people such as Mr A G Meek who ran the shoe shop around the corner in Albany Road. Over the years John and his brother and sister took an increasing role in the business and eventually took over from their father Cyril. John used his knowledge gained from studying engineering at university to make the process more efficient whilst maintaining their superior quality.

However, all good things must come to an end as they say. People's shopping habits were changing and the corner shop outlets fast disappearing. Margins were shrinking and the sad decision was eventually taken to sell the business together with the name. It was purchased by Express Foods in the 1980s. David Thayer, John's brother, does still have an ice cream shop in Bath trading under subtly different trading name of David Thayer's Ice Cream Shop.

Cyril Thayer, the entrepreneur and perfectionist and man whose name is synonymous with one of Cardiff's most famous brands, passed away in 2006. He was also a dedicated family man and devoted his later years of his life caring for his late wife Irene, who suffered from Alzheimer's Disease, as well as raising awareness of the condition.

For me the name Thayer's takes me back to my childhood. For a special treat some weeks my grandfather would be sent down Pen-y-lan Hill to buy a block of Thayer's ice cream whilst my grandmother was busy making dinner. It would arrive back, carefully wrapped in newspaper to insulate it. By the time dinner had been consumed the ice cream was in perfect condition, nicely soft around the sides and full of flavour. Raspberry ripple was my favourite. There were no freezers in those days so naturally the whole block had to be consumed in one sitting – such a hardship.

So I'll leave you to reminisce, trying to recall if you were a tub or a cone person and what was your favourite flavour.

Untruth: Thayers went through a phase of jumping on the health bandwagon and developed flavours such as watercress, spinach and finally sprout.

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### **Other useful Llanhilleth Links**

Llanhilleth Heritage Centre: <https://www.llanhillethinstitute.com/heritage/heritage-centre/>

Llanhilleth Community Archive: <https://llanhilleth.gwentheritage.org.uk/>

Friends of St Illtyd: <https://www.illtyd.co.uk/home>

Video of St Illtyd church: <https://vimeo.com/803064049>