

Pontypridd Notes

Last week I went to the doctor and says, "Doc, I can't stop singing certain songs. All morning I've been humming 'The Green, Green Grass Of Home.' Yesterday it was, 'Delilah.' Last week I sang 'What's New Pussycat?' at least 100 times! What's wrong with me?"

The Doctor says, "Sounds like Tom Jones Syndrome to me."

The man says, "Never heard of that. Is it common?"

Doc says, "It's not unusual."

Commonly called Ponty by the locals. Gateway to the valleys.

The town sits at the junction of the Rhondda and Taff valleys.

Pont y tŷ pridd, Welsh for "bridge by the earthen house", referring singly to successive wooden bridges that once spanned the River Taff at this point.

The volumes of coal extraction soon led to construction of the Taff Vale Railway, which at its peak meant a train passed through Pontypridd railway station (including the freight lines immediately to its west) every two or three minutes. The station was originally built as a long single island, at one point the world's longest platform, a reflection of both the narrow available geography of the steep valley side and the need to accommodate many converging railways lines at what became the 19th-century hub of the valleys.

Coal

The history of Pontypridd is tied to the coal and iron industries; before their development Pontypridd was a hamlet of a few farmsteads, with Treforest initially becoming the main urban settlement in the area. Sited at the junction of three valleys, it became an important location for transporting coal from the Rhondda and iron from Merthyr Tydfil, first by the Glamorganshire Canal, and later by the Taff Vale Railway, to the ports at Cardiff, Barry and Newport. Its role in coal transport lengthened its railway platform, which is thought to have once been the longest in the world in its heyday. Pontypridd in the second half of the 19th century was a hive of industry, once nicknamed the "Wild West". There were several collieries within the Pontypridd area itself,

Other instrumental industries in Pontypridd were the Brown Lenox/Newbridge Chain & Anchor Works south-east of the town.

Richard Parks: Born in Pontypridd in 1977. Parks was born on 14 August 1977 in Pontypridd to a Jamaican mother, Lee, and a Welsh father, Derek Parks. Went to Monmouth School. Following his retirement from rugby, Parks embarked on a challenge to climb the highest mountain on each of the world's seven continents and complete the Three Poles Challenge (N&S Pole & Everest) within seven months.

Pontypridd Fountain

The stone drinking fountain was unveiled in 1895 by its donor Sir Alfred Thomas, MP for East Glamorgan, (later Lord Pontypridd). It was designed to provide fresh drinking water to passers-by and animals. The relief inscriptions on the undersides of the projecting bowls read as follows: DUW A DIGON / HEB DDUW HEB DDIM (God is Everything Without God Without Anything).

Alfred Thomas, 1st Baron Pontypridd DL (16 September 1840 – 14 December 1927), was a Welsh Liberal Party politician, who served as MP for East Glamorganshire from 1885 until 1910, when he was elevated to the peerage as Lord Pontypridd. Early in his business career, Thomas was involved with the construction of the Rhondda Fach branch of the Taff Vale Railway. He was also involved with the construction of the Llanishen reservoir. As mayor he was central to the decision to locate the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire in Cardiff, rather than Swansea. Another landmark during his mayoral year was the opening of the Cardiff Free Library and Museum. Thomas joined the congregation at Tabernacle Church, Cardiff, where he later became a deacon.

Transport for Wales HQ at Llys Cadwyn near the museum.

Old Bridge

Pontypridd is noted for its Old Bridge, a stone construction across the River Taff built in 1756 by William Edwards. This was Edwards's fourth attempt, and at the time of construction, was the longest single-span stone arch bridge in the world. Rising 35 feet (11 m) above the level of the river, the bridge forms a perfect segment of a circle, the chord of which is 140 feet (43 m). Notable features are the three holes of differing diameters through each end of the bridge, the purpose of which is to reduce weight. On completion, questions were soon raised as to the utility of the bridge, with the steepness of the design making it difficult to get horses and carts across. As a result, a new bridge, the Victoria Bridge, paid for by public subscription, was built adjacent to the old one in 1857. Pontypridd was known as Newbridge from shortly after the construction of the Old Bridge until the 1860s

Pontypridd came into being because of transport, as it was on the drovers' route from the south Wales coast and the Bristol Channel, to Merthyr, and onwards into the hills of Brecon. Although initial expansion in the valleys occurred at Treforest due to the slower speed of the River Taff at that point, the establishment of better bridge building meant a natural flow of power to Pontypridd.

The Welsh national anthem *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* ('The Land of my Fathers') was composed in Pontypridd by local poets/musicians Evan James and James James. They have a memorial in the park. Evan James (also known by the bardic name *Ieuan ap Iago*) (18 January 1809 – 30 September 1878), was a Welsh weaver and poet from Pontypridd, originally from Caerphilly, Wales, who wrote the lyrics of "*Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*" ("Land of my Fathers"), the national anthem of Wales.

Duration: 1 minute and 16 seconds.1:16"*Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*", by Madge Breese for the Gramophone Company (1899) – the first known recording made of any song in the Welsh language[1]

James, a weaver by trade, employed several people at his mill on the bank of the River Rhondda.[2] According to family legend, his son James James, was walking one day in January 1856 on the banks of the river when the melody for *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* came to him. When he gave the tune to his father, Evan James was able to compose the words which are the present-day Welsh national anthem. It is likely that James senior was inspired by the fact that two of his brothers had emigrated to the United States and had written in praise of their adoptive country and urging him to join them.

A memorial to Evan James and his son, in the form of two figures, representing Poetry and Music, stands in *Ynysangharad War Memorial Park*, Pontypridd. Evan's face is shown alongside that of his son, but appears younger because the photographs available to the sculptor, *Goscombe John*, were taken many years apart.

Pontypridd was home to the eccentric *Dr William Price* who performed the first modern cremation in the United Kingdom.

Dr William Price (1800 – 1893)

Wore a foxes hat – (similar in the appearance to *Jacob Chansley* of an American far-right conspiracy theorist, rioter).

physician and political activist best known for his support of Welsh nationalism, Chartism and involvement with the Neo-Druidic religious movement.

Known for adhering to beliefs such as supporting equal rights for all men, vegetarianism, vaccine hesitancy and cremation while opposing vivisection and marriage, some of which were highly controversial at the time, he has been widely known as an "eccentric" and a "radical"

Rocking Stone

The rocking stone was used as a pulpit by Dr William Price to preach his own brand of Druidism. It was also here in 1881 that he married Gwenllian Llewellyn. He later found fame when charged with heresy for attempting to cremate his son Iesi Grist (Jesus Christ) in a tin of paraffin.