

The photograph is an historical document: the postcard provides a view of Merthyr Tydfil otherwise lost to us. It is a glimpse at the past which the printed word cannot match; the visual, the spectacle image of the camera, whether on film, on television or on the postcard racks of the local newsagent. It is the duet of the "Now and Then" in the title of this book; e.g., of old Penydarren High Street as it was in 1929 and as it is in 1979. It is no longer sufficient for those in custody of old postcards and photographs to continue showing polite film shows and "talks illustrated with slides" to audiences in Merthyr Tydfil. There must be an attempt made to get behind the image of the photograph: who took that particular shot of that particular view?; why and when? These are difficult questions and this essay does not hope to provide many answers. Its object is, rather, to stimulate an interest in the subject of photography as a branch of local history; an entreaty to those holders of old postcards and films to take good care of them against the ravages of damp, light and sheer carelessness; to inform the local libraries of their existence; and to have second and even third copies made (easily possible without negatives by modern reproductive processes), so that a record will survive of a Merthyr Tydfil that is otherwise gone from our gaze.

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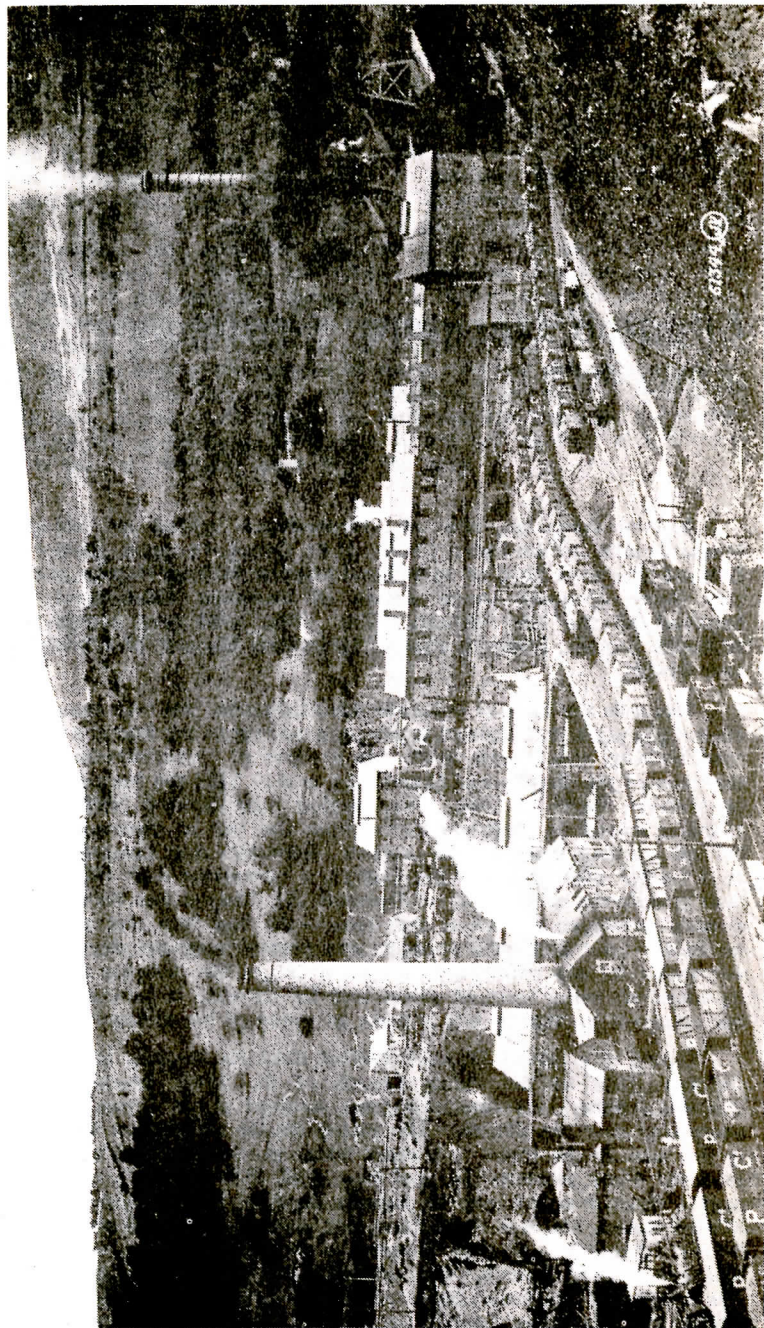
Edmund Harman: Gentleman

by EIRA SMITH

As the American War of Independence ignited at Lexington, Massachusetts, in the Parish Church of St. Catwg, Pentyrch, Glamorgan, Edmund, the sixth child of agricultural labourer William Harman and his wife Anne (formerly Anne James of Llanishen, Glamorgan) was baptised on the 5th February 1775. This child was named after William's brother, Edmund, also an agricultural labourer of Whitchurch, near Cardiff.

This was the time of industrial transformation; the invention of the spinning-jenny and the steam engine, the making of the first iron bridge, road building and canals. With this process of industrialisation came the likes of the Guests and Crawshays, and in 1787 the Harmans came to Merthyr Tydfil as well. They settled near Richard Hill's Works, formerly leased by Anthony Bacon from the Earl of Plymouth. Here William Harman and his sons worked. Edmund's first occupation was as a haulier with Lewis of the Duffryn, a contractor with Hill, and he later transferred to a collier at Plymouth pit. Only a few colliers were directly employed by Hill at that time — the late 18th and early 19th centuries — but Edmund's strength was notable amongst them. Once, witnessed by his employer, he won a wager for carrying part of a fly-wheel so many hundred yards, and for carrying it back at the run his employer purchased him a drink as token of his strength.

During this period Edmund married Susanna Jenkins, on the 11th October, 1802 at the Parish Church of St. Tydfil, Merthyr Tydfil. Susanna's father was Jenkin Jenkins, landlord of the Cross Keys Inn positioned near the Church. The young couple established themselves in this part of the town, in a small house purchased by Edmund. He laboured many years at the coal face, until 1816 when his occupation took a fresh direction, and he became landlord of the Three Salmons, Market Street, Merthyr Tydfil (now Mr. Arthur Eggaford's Shoe Repair Shop). Aided by his wife Susanna, a noted economist, he speedily amassed a good fortune. This property, centred amongst the inns in this section of the town, provided shelter for the carriers to the local market from Cardiff, Carmarthen, Cardiff, etc. Edmund accommodated



Plymouth Colliery, near Merthyr Tydfil, early 20th century

many in the large room above the bar. They slept on straw on the many wooden benches sealed to the walls. A few pence secured an overnight rest.

At this time, Edmund and Susanna had their portraits painted by visiting artists. Later viewers saw Edmund portrayed three-quarters profile with the high collar and side-burn whiskers of that time — the early 19th century. His brown hair, parted on the left-hand side, was carefully arranged over the balding crown, and his heavy but pleasant countenance showed later in Harman nephews of a newer generation. Susanna appeared more ill at ease with her full portrait, her dark hair framing a pale face with a slight frown, yet still a kindly face, her dress plain with a fashionable neatness. This portrait was hurriedly painted, and with the artist failing to complete the varnishing it resulted in the work peeling from the canvas in later years.

Edmund, although tenant of the Three Salmons, now opened the Globe Inn (now Peacock's Shop) on the High Street, together with its yard, gardens, brew-houses and stables. He transferred the same for £850 in 1826 to malster William James. This money later purchased for him the Gwaelodygarth Arms, Cross Keys Lane, Merthyr Tydfil, it being named by him as a reminder of his childhood at Craig-yr-Hyd, Pentyrch, Gwaelodygarth being the adjoining village. Although Edmund retained the tenancy of the Three Salmons, he leased the premises to David Thomas and later to Henry James, whilst he and Susanna resided at "Ivy Lodge", Court Street, with a female servant. Susanna never conceived, but they opened their home to a young girl named Mary Davies. They purchased some cottages and a stable in the adjoining Gillor Street. They never allowed his family to reside with them but permitted one nephew, Lewis, to rent one of their houses in Lower High Street whilst Susanna's nephew, Isaac Whitehouse, was foreman at the Caedraw Gas Works.

Some remnants of the Harman family resided at Anthony Hill's cottages at Glynmil Uchaf (Upper Glynmil), Merthyr Tydfil, on the mountainside above the Plymouth Ironworks and collieries, serving their daily toil at the coal face or the coal bank nearby. Neither Edmund nor indeed any of the family succumbed to the cholera epidemics which ravaged the district every decade until the 1860s. They found comfort in the new Mormon religion preached in the large Market Place off the High Street. Edmund never changed his faith, and he was often seen attending his parents' grave in the churchyard of St. Tydfil together with that grave of Susanna's brother, Thomas, and his sister Rachel. This grave bore the inscription, "Edmund and Susanna Harman own this grave", yet they never lay there. Susanna was interred in the cemetery of St. Tydfil adjoining the local workhouse in 1857.

Prior to her death saw the completion of the sewer constructed from Plymouth Street to the Star Inn and onwards into Court Street near their home. This was one of the many changes from the time when this part of the town was called "the Village". This "Village" dramatically changed from having one constable to a disciplined police force, necessitated by the riots and low moral life associated with a fast growing industrial town. Edmund never took an active part in town affairs although allowed to vote by virtue of the property he owned. His financial interests continued to increase as he purchased shares in the Dowlais Gas Works and the Taff Vale Railway.

During Susanna's infirmity it was necessary to employ two female servants, but with her death he opened his home to a relative. Ann Harman, his niece from Cowbridge, became his housekeeper and consequently, in 1862, he purchased property there, renaming it "Tydfil House" in gratitude to the town which helped develop his wealth. Ann cared for him during his years of failing health and eyesight. These senses had witnessed, amongst many others, the following events: the completion of the Glamorganshire Canal from 1790 to 1798; Richard Trevithick's first steam locomotive run along a tramway on Sunday, 12th February, 1804, and just two years later than Nelson's visit to Cyfarthfa Ironworks with his friends Sir William and Lady Hamilton—the Cyfarthfa of the same Crawshay family who was responsible for building a castle at a cost of some £30,000 in 1825. As the ironmaster's wealth increased, so did that of Edmund's, for he bought the Mason's Arms (now British Home Stores), Cardiff, and his money had spread to three Glamorgan towns.

In January 1869 he breathed his last, at "Ivy Lodge", Court Street, watched by his nephew Lewis. He had been ill just six days according to his death certificate, which pronounced him to be in his 95th year. He was interred with his wife, Susanna, at the cemetery adjoining St. Tydfil's Workhouse. The *Merthyr Express* for January 30th 1869 revealed: "Mr. Edward Harman, the oldest inhabitant of Merthyr died in his 95th year". Even in its earliest days the *Express* was incorrectly reporting names! His death certificate, issued by William Thomas, Deputy Registrar for Merthyr Tydfil Lower District, revealed: 28th January, 1869 at Ivy Lodge, Court Street, Merthyr—Edmund Harman aged 95 years, GENTLEMAN—died of Acute Bronchitis".

On examining documents of different properties owned by Edmund Harman, we find that he never learned to write, always signing his mark with an "X". His nieces and nephews, beneficiaries of his estate of £3,000, made changes in their lives, for Ann Harman, his niece-housekeeper, married George Sibbering, an aspiring doctor, whilst William Harman, a nephew, with his share departed for North America, true to his Mormon faith, and where there are now fifty descendants of his later marriage. Without the drive and foresight of Edmund Harman, genealogical research would be a more difficult task, especially for those Harmans not bearing that surname.

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A Visit to Heolgerrig

by PAT VAUGHAN

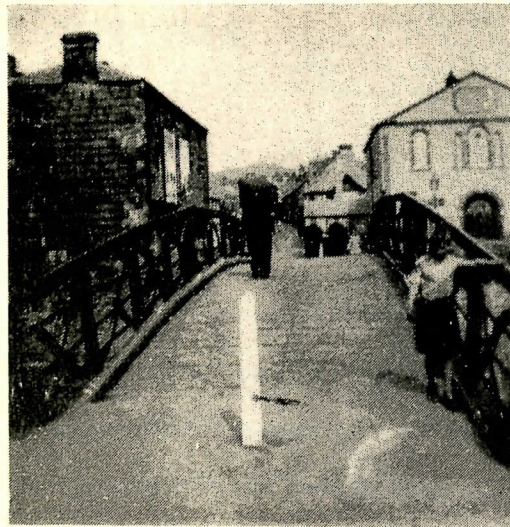
At Heolgerrig is one of the most interesting public houses in the Borough of Merthyr Tydfil, the Six Bells. It was first shown on a map dated 1832. Evan Evans, the first landlord, originated from the Neath Valley before settling in Penyrheolgerrig. Originally, this establishment had massive oak beams stretching across the ceiling from which hung large wooden hooks made out of tree roots. Eventually, a brewing house was added to the public house, the remains of which can still be seen.

Christmas Evans, one of the sons of Evan Evans, purchased the old mansion of Penyrheol, which he demolished before building a stately modern mansion in 1888. At the time, it was one of the finest buildings in Merthyr Tydfil, and this is now the Heolgerrig Social Club.

There was once a woollen factory at Penyrheol, which at one time made specially designed Welsh flannel waistcoats for local Chartists to be worn on special occasions. The woollen factory was later carried on at Glanynant, on the upper side of the Cwmyglo road. A large pond was constructed in the field behind Salem chapel to store water for the factory, and a water-wheel was positioned in the brook. The factory fell into disuse about 1860. Not far away is the ruin of Cwmyglo chapel, built in 1690 in a hollow surrounded by thick woods on the slopes of the Aberdare Mountain. It was used by religious dissenters who came there from Blaencanaid Farm, which had been used for meetings since the mid 17th century. Near the ruins of Cwmyglo is a quarry, which supplied the stones used in the building of Cyfarthfa Castle in 1825.

Before 1845 there were few houses in the district of Heolgerrig, but later people began to be attracted to the village by the sinking of coal pits, the opening of levels and the ironworks at Cyfarthfa.

The first houses in Heolgerrig are at Pantycelynen, which were built in 1902 on the site of two very old houses that had holly in the hedges in front of them; hence the Welsh name: "Pantycelynen", or "the hollow of the holly bushes". In more recent years estates have been built. Brondeg, a council estate, was built in 1920 on land which belonged to Penyrheol Farm. Building on the Shirley Gardens estate



The Iron Bridge, Merthyr Tydfil (1942)

MERTHYR TYDFIL: Then And Now

*Edited with an introduction
by HUW WILLIAMS*