

### **December 2007 newsletter**

No complete record survives of those people who worked on the Swansea Canal, either employed by the Swansea Canal Navigation Company, or by the later owners, the Great Western Railway Company, or British Waterways. Nor by the dozens of canalside industries that had their own barges and canal workers.

However, information has been extracted from a number of sources to create a file of canal people. I have researched the Swansea Canal Company Minute Books, Census for Swansea, Llansamlet, Llangyfelach, Llangiwig, and Ystradgynlais. Parish Registers (Baptisms and Marriages), newspapers, Trade Directories, and interviewed a number of individuals whose ancestors worked on the canal in the past.

The following list names individuals who worked on the Swansea Canal between the years 1794 – 2000, together with their stated occupations. After the year 2000, there were no staff dedicated to working on the Swansea Canal, from that year on they formed part of a British Waterways South Wales Group of mobile workers. Unfortunately, records do not identify the employer, especially those giving their occupations as bargemen or boatmen.

The lock-keepers and engineers were all employed by the various owners of the Swansea Canal.

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Occupation</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>
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#### **Swansea Canal Navigation Company Minute Book**

John Jones	canal engineer	to 1820
Benjamin Hill	canal engineer	1820-57
Howell Gwyn	chairman of committee	1838-59
William Williams	lock-keeper	1802
John Williams	lock-keeper	1807
Daniel Williams	lock-keeper	1812
David Williams	lock-keeper	1800-47
George Lewis	lock-keeper	1853
James James	lock-keeper	1830-55
Llewelyn Powell	lock-keeper	1855
James Williams	lock-keeper	1858
George Lewis	lock-keeper	1858
Thomas Owen	lock-keeper	1858
Thomas Grove	canal clerk "Trade Directory"	1825
Thomas A Marten	canal clerk "Trade Directory"	1869

**Swansea Canal Boat Check Book 1812-22**

John Leyson		1812
M Harry		1812
R Lewis		1812
William Hopkin		1818
Hopkin Williams		1818
John Thick		1818
Griffith Williams		1818
Richard Lewis		1818
William Williams		1822

**Swansea (St Mary's) Marriage Register**

Richard Phelps	bargeman	1838
Edward Anley	bargeman	1845
Llewellyn Abraham	bargeman	1846
Griffith Abraham	bargeman	1846
William Evans	bargeman	1846
John John	bargeman	1846
William Harris	bargeman	1848
Thomas Rontree	bargeman	1849
John Davies	bargeman	1849
David Williams	lock-keeper (Swansea)	1850
Thomas Williams	lock-keeper (Swansea)	1850
William Evans	bargeman	1850
William Harris	bargeman	1850
William Harris	bargeman	1850
Gad Hughes	bargeman	1850
Evan Harris	bargeman	1857

**Clydach (St John's) Marriage Register**

Samuel Williams	lock-keeper	1847 Clydach
William Richards	bargeman	1848
John Owen	lock-keeper	1848 Clydach
James Owen (son)	lock-keeper	1849
John Owen (father)	lock-keeper	1849
John Grove	bargeman	1850
James Davies	bargeman	1853
Lewis Morgan	bargeman	1854
William Grove	bargeman	1855
John Edwards	bargeman	1856
David Lloyd	bargeman	1861
William Grove	boatman	1861
Edward Thomas	bargeman	1862
William Lot	boatman	1866
Isaac Francis	bargeman	1875
David Francis	bargeman	1875
William John	bargeman	1881
Evan Thomas	bargeman	1882

**Pontardawe (Llangiwig) Baptism Register**

Morgan David	bargeman Ynysmeudwy	1814
William Hopkin	bargeman Pontardawe	1814
William Hirt	bargeman	1822
Evan David	bargeman	1823
John Lewis	boatman Pontardawe	1827
William Lewis	boatman Pontardawe	1831
Morgan Williams	boatman Pontardawe	1834
Thomas Williams	boatman Pontardawe	1835
David Williams	boatman Ynysmeudwy	1836
Evan Jenkins	boatman Ynysmeudwy	1836
John Rees	bargeman Ystalyfera	1844
Lewis Williams	boatman	1866
John Williams	boatman	1869
David Hopkin	bargeman	1870
Thomas Williams	boatman	1872
John Rees	bargeman Ynysmeudwy	1877
Walter Williams	lengthsman Pontardawe	1912

**Pontardawe (Llangiwig) Marriage Register**

William Skully	boatman	1853
Thomas Evans	boatman	1853
Richard Hopkins	lock-keeper Ystalyfera	1853
John Llewelyn Rees	lock-keeper	1854
Richard Lewis	lock-keeper Corbwill	1854
John Owen	lock-keeper Ystalyfera	1854
John Williams	boatman	1855
William Richard	bargeman	1855
Evan Evans	lock-keeper Ynysmeudwy	1856
Richard Tibbot	Lock-keeper Pontardawe	1856
John Williams	bargeman	1857
Thomas Evans	bargeman	1858
Morgan Morgan	barge haulier	1859
James Thomas	boatman	1860
Rees Morgan	boatman	1860
John Williams	boatman	1860
James Williams	lock-keeper	1863
Thomas Rees	boatman	1865
David Williams	bargeman	1866
John Rees (son)	boatman	1866
John Rees (father)	boatman	1866
John Jones	boat discharger	1866
Abraham Hodge	canal constable	1867
Lewis Williams	boatman	1868
Richard Lewis	lock-keeper (Ynysmeudwy)	1869
Lewis Lewis	boat discharger	1871
Morgan Morgan	boatman	1871
Richard Griffiths	boat discharger	1871
Llewellyn Llewellyn	boatman	1871

Lewis Williams	boatman	1873
Edward Williams	boatman	1876
Robert Williams	lock-keeper	1885

### **Royal Commission into Employment of Children 1842**

Thomas Williams     bargeboy, aged 10

### **Census returns (Llangiwg) 1841**

John Owen	canal counter	1841
William Thomas	navigator	1841
John Rees	bargeman	1841

### **Census Returns (Llangiwg) 1851**

Mary Williams	undertaker of barge hauling, age 44
John Williams	bargeman, age 9
William Williams	bargeman, age 18
David Williams	bargeman, age 11
Lewis Williams	bargeman, age 15
Evan Jenkins	bargeman, age 40
Elias Thomas	bargeman, age 11
John Davies	bargeman, age 18
William Hopkins	bargeman, age 14
Richard Jones	bargeman, age 17
Lewis Morgan	bargeman, age 15
Morgan Morgan	bargeman, age 30
Owen Jones	bargeman, age 20
John Jones	boatman, age 26
Thomas Evans	bargeman, age 27
Evan Evans	bargeman, age 20
Thomas Bowen	bargeman, age 29
John Bowen	bargeman, age 24
Elizabeth Williams	bargewoman hauling, age 29
Jane Williams	bargewoman hauling, age 23
John Williams	bargeman, age 21
John Lewis	bargeman, age 44
John Lewis	bargeman, age 19
William Jones	bargeman, age 51
William Jones	bargeman, age 23
John Rees	boatman, age 46
John Rees	boatman, age 17
Evan David	bargeman, age 58

### **Census Returns (Llangiwg) 1861**

David Llewellyn	bargeman, age 28
David Hopkins	bargeman, age 13
David Jones	bargeman, age 14
Thomas Hopkin	bargeman, age 38
John Williams	bargeman, age 37
John Jones	bargeman, age 13
William Evans	bargeman, age 31

Associate Member of the Inland Waterways Association. Charity Registration No. 1105624

Aelod Cymdeithasol o'r Inland Waterways Association. Rhif Cofrestrriad Cardod 1105624

Thomas Lewis	bargeman, age 16
James Thomas	bargeman, age 45
Daniel Daniel	bargeman, age 35
Jenet Daniel	boatgirl, age 15
Thomas Evans	bargeman, age 38
Daniel Jones	bargeman, age 15
George Evans	bargeman, age 29
David Williams	bargeman, age 22
Richard Jones	boat carpenter, age 19
Lewis Williams	bargeman, age 24
John Morgan	bargeman, age 17
Thomas Williams	bargeman, age 57
William Walker	bargeman, age 15
Isaac Morgan	bargeman, age 24
William Morgan	bargeman, age 24
Elizabeth Lewis	bargewoman, age 50
David Walters	boat making apprentice, age 14

### **Census Returns (Llangiwg) 1871**

Thomas Lloyd	boat builder
Josiah Lloyd	boat builder
Richard Lloyd	boat builder
Lewis Williams	boatman, age 31
John Landry	boatman, age 20
David Thomas	boatman on canal, age 22
Anne Thomas	boating on canal age 19
Mary Thomas	boating on canal, age 16
John Lloyd	boatboy, age 12
John Hughes	boatman, age 18

### **Census Returns (Llangiwg) 1901**

John Lewis Williams	labourer on canal, age 74
Mr Calland	canal labourer
Mr Gibbs	canal labourer

### **Ystradgynlais Marriage Register**

William Janes	lock-keeper	1838
John Lewis	navigator	1850

### **Ystradgynlais Census 1851**

John Lloyd	boat discharger, age 37
William Williams	boatman, age 20
John Evans	boatman, age 30
Thomas Morgan	boatman, age 17
John Price	navigator, age 18

### **Ystradgynlais Census 1861**

Thomas Evans	boatman, age 12
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### **Great Western Railway Company/British Transport Commission**

Jack Phillips	foreman	circa 1920-63
Will Penhale	blacksmith and pump house stoker	circa 1920-50
George Holloway	Pontardawe lengthsman	1919-1959
Dick Burke	Abercraf lengthsman	circa 1920-58
Dafydd Roderick	Clydach lengthsman	circa 1914
David Price	Abercraf lengthsman	circa 1920-30
Joseph Walters	foreman	circa 1920-30
Richard Morgan	lengthsman	circa 1920-30
Jim Snowdon	Landore lengthsman	circa 1950-69
Brian McCurry	Clydach lengthsman	circa 1920-55
Stan Harris	Trebanos lengthsman	circa 1960-65
Wallace Evans	Ystalyfera lengthsman	circa 1920-55
J Edwards	lengthsman	1938-
Will Jones	Ystradgynlais lengthsman	circa 1958-65
Thomas Gwyn John	Clydach	circa 1925-35
Mr Ferris	Abercraf	circa 1940-58
Martin Griffiths	Godre'r Graig	circa 1940-50

### **British Transport Commission/British Waterways**

John Hutchins	foreman	1954-94
Alwyn Thomas	lengthsman	circa 1950-93
Mike Strawford	mason	circa 1989-2003
Rhodri Bowen	lengthsman	circa 2000 -

### **Cambrian Newspaper**

Edward Henley	bargee Ynysmeudwy Pottery Company	1855
David Williams	canal policeman Ynysmeudwy Pottery Co.	1859
William Williams	bargeman	1869
C.R.Drury	Canal hauling company	1861

### **Gravestone**

Hannah Gibbs	toll collector's wife Ystalyfera	circa 1890
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### **Personal recollections from interviews and local history notes**

Benjamin Hill senior	boat builder	1795-1820
Benjamin Hill junior	boat builder Clydach	circa 1820-70
John Hill	boat builder Clydach	circa 1820-70
Samuel Hill	boat builder Clydach	circa 1820-70
David Griffiths	barge captain	circa 1850
Mr Griffiths	canal engineer	1858
T R White	canal engineer	1858-1905 local history
T S White	canal engineer	1905-1922 local history
Mr Voysey	steam tug captain	1920-30
Griff Ayres	coal merchant and bargeman	circa 1920-30
Bryn Ayres	“	“
William Ayres	“	“
Raymond Ayres	“	“
Glyn Ayres	“	“
Jane Williams	barge girl, age 16	1890

Sarah Butler	barge girl	circa 1890
William Griffiths	bargeman	circa 1880
William Walker	bargeman	circa 1890
Lewis Walker	bargeman	circa 1900
William Walker	bargeman	circa 1900
John Walker	bargeman	circa 1900
Evan Lloyd	bargeman	circa 1920
Byron Griffiths	barge discharger	1916
Enoch Rees	bargeman	circa 1920
David John Nathaniel	bargeman Vivians Co.	1907-12
Tommy David	bargeman Vivians Co.	1916
Richard Lewis	bargeman Harper and Co	1812
Mr Evan John	bargeman Ynysmeudwy	1890
Thomas Parry	bargeman, aged 16 Hafod	1923
Mr Howard	boat builder Godre'r Graig	1918

The stories collected from personal recollections give an insight into the daily life of a canal worker. Mrs Gaynor Richards of Pontardawe related the story of her grandfather William Griffiths who lived at Ynysmeudwy, working on the canal in the 1880's and pulling barges with a rope, not using a horse. Sarah Butler, an immigrant from Cork in Ireland, lived at lower Cwmtwrch in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and worked on the Swansea Canal carrying goods from the Gurnos Wharf to Swansea.

Mr David Evans of Alltwen related a story of his grandmother Jane Williams from Alltwen who was a barge girl at the age of 16 years leading the barge horse from Ynysmeudwy to Swansea. During the 1890's she took coal, stones, and tinplate to the docks at Swansea.

Mrs Ayres of Clydach related stories of her ancestors who were coal merchants and barge operators at Clydach circa 1890-1930. Griff Ayres used to purchase coal from the Ynystawe Patent Fuel Works near Clydach, load the barge with his sons Bryn, Will, Raymond, and Glyn. They transported the coal to a coal wharf below lock number 5 and delivered the coal by horse and cart to homes in the Clydach area. Byron Griffiths thought that unloading coal barges was extremely hard work (see canal newsletter October 2003).

William Henry Barnes liked working with horses, and on weekends 1920-23 the he operated the Swansea Canal ferry boat "Grace Darling", carrying workers along the canal to and from the various industries sited along the canal corridor between Swansea and Morriston.

The daily life of Richard Lewis was recorded in a Society newsletter during the early 1980's. Many stories remain to be recorded and told so that future generations of people can learn about everyday life of the workers in the past.

Clive Reed 04 November 2007