

07 November 2008

The following information was given to Clive Reed by Hywel John of Ynysmeudwy Uchaf on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

Hywel's grandfather, Evan John, then residing at Ynysmeudwy Isaf farm, was told by his father to get himself a job away from the farm because the farm was too small to support all his sons. Evan was then about 13 or 14 years of age. Evan decided to work on the Swansea Canal, flowing past the farm, and something he saw every day. He was given a horse by his father, and told to make his own way in life.

Evan was employed with his horse, pulling barges of coal to Swansea. We don't know who he worked for. He was just another bargee. He worked with his uncle, another bargee.

Hywel related the initiation ceremony for those becoming bargees on the Swansea Canal. Evan was told by his father, either you jump into the canal when I am watching you, or the other bargees will throw you in. Evan decided to jump in himself being he was very near the farm where he still lived, and he would not have far to get home in wet clothes.

Another tale was of the people who travelled by canal barge to Swansea to do their shopping. In the winter time when it was very cold, and the travelling time by canal from Abercraf to Swansea was about 10 or 12 hours each way, the passengers would be kept warm by having an iron stove placed in the centre of the barge. An iron plate was placed on the floor of the barge to prevent it burning, and the stove placed on top of the plate.

Many of the female passengers used to carry an umbrella whilst travelling on such shopping trips to Swansea. The barge had to pass under many bridges on the journey to Swansea and it was the custom of several of the more mischievous boys to stand on the parapet of the bridges and try to wee on the people in the barge. The use of the umbrellas gave some protection from that.

Clive Reed