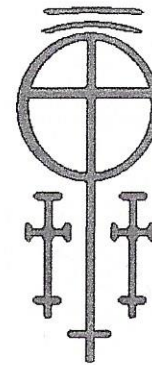


# Llantrisant and District Local History Society



March 2018

## THE MAKING OF TINPLATE IN PONTYCLUN

1872-1960

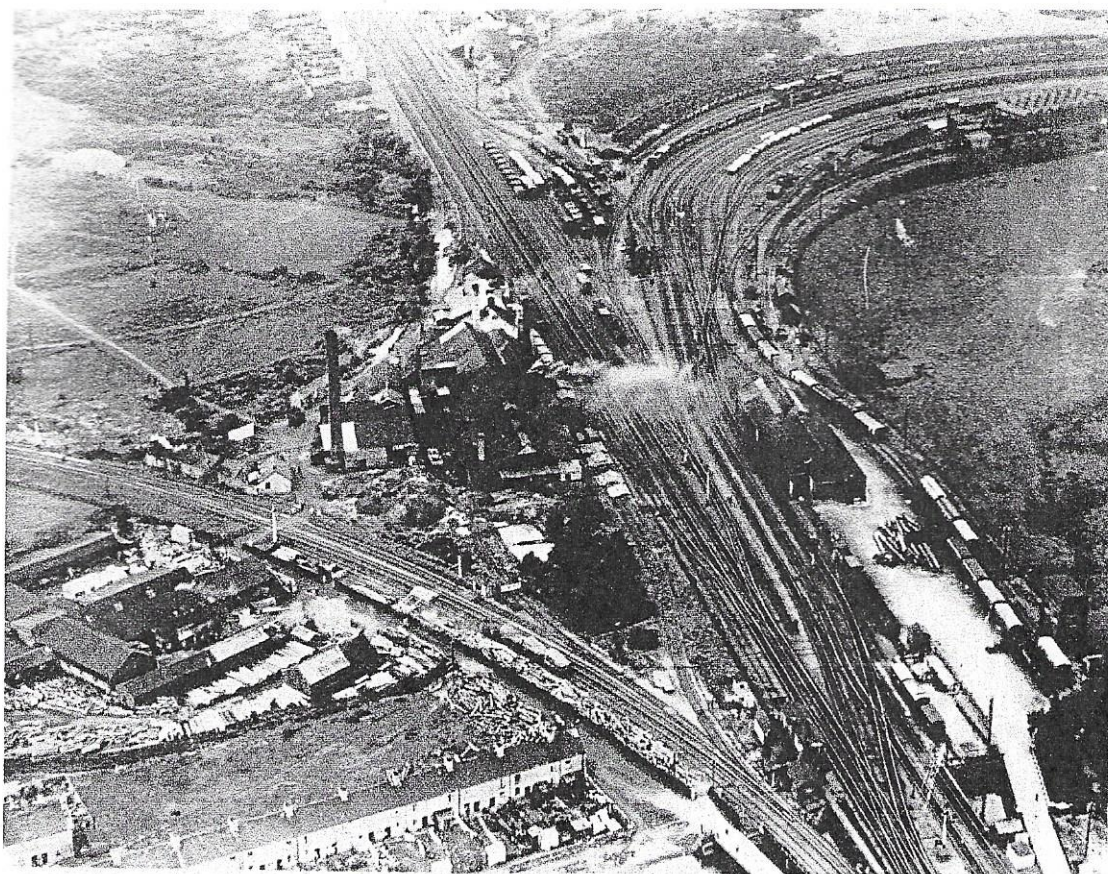
By  
Edgeley Thomas



Female and Juvenile workers at the Pontyclun Tin Works, c.1904  
With thanks to the original photographer and David J Francis.

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LANTRISANT LOOKING WEST  
15 SEPTEMBER 1929.

## A brief introduction to the Tinsplate industry in Great Britain

Before getting into the detail of the works in what is now Pontyclun, we need to see the local works in the context of what used to be a thriving industry in Great Britain and particularly in South Wales. Much has been written about the rise and fall of the tinsplate industry and the reader can pick up a book in most libraries or bookshops which will give as much detail as the reader needs. But that is not the object of this book which is to place the local works in the context of the growing village of Pontyclun between the early 1870s and the early part of the Second World War by which time tinsplating in Pontyclun had finished.

For the history of the Tinsplate Industry in the UK and Wales I can do no better than refer to **W E Minchinton's** *The British Tinsplate Industry-A History* published in 1957 and *Tinsplate in Wales* by **Alan John Richards**. The following remaining paragraphs of this introduction contain extracts from those excellent publications.

For centuries, iron vessels used for household and other purposes had been protected with a coat of tin to prevent them from rusting. Such articles were tinned **after** they were shaped or fabricated. The essential characteristic of tinsplating is that the iron or steel sheet is tinned and **then** fashioned into some kind of object.

Evidence suggests tinsplate was first made in Bavaria in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century Great Britain imported small amounts into London for use by the Royal Navy to protect wood panelling and for food containers. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century imports threatened the pewter trade. In 1618 the 30 years war broke out and this disrupted the tinsplate manufacture in Europe leading to attempts in Great Britain and elsewhere to found tinsplate industries. After the Restoration of the English Monarchy, which started in 1660, interest was renewed and attempts were made to learn the principles of manufacture from Saxony.

When a man by the name of **Yarranton** returned from a fact finding trip to Saxony in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century he floated the idea that with the then distressed state of the Cornish tin mining industry and that of the Forest of Dean iron mining it would be technically possible to make tinsplate here in Great Britain. The development of rolling mills and the imposition of tariffs under the Subsidy Acts of 1703 and 1704 made the manufacture in these islands financially more attractive and arguably was the start of two hundred years when tinsplate meant **Welsh** tinsplate. It is likely that tinsplate was first made at the Pontypool works by **John Hanbury** in the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. From 1750 onwards, the tinsplate industry expanded more rapidly when both charcoal iron and coke iron were used. The former was preferred to the latter as coke iron was said to be brittle. The rolling process gave British tinsplate a finer gloss and by 1755 some tinsplate was exported. New tinsplate works were set up in England and South Wales to meet demand. Tinsplate manufacture required cheap fuel, skilled labour, easy access to tin and iron supplies and much water for the cleaning process and for driving the mills.

The financiers of the early tinsplate works were the Ironmasters, seeking an assured outlet for at least part of their production, and iron merchants.

In 1805 the Great Britain industry produced 80,000 boxes [about 4,000 tons] of which 50,000 boxes [about 2,500 tons] were exported. There were now 14 works in Great Britain with just a few in England and the remainder in South Wales. All were small with usually one mill except in Caerleon and Melin Griffith [in Whitchurch, Cardiff] which had two mills each.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the tinsplate industry was firmly established in Great Britain. Overseas demand for canning food and for packaging petrol [the first oil well was drilled in the USA in 1859] was on the increase. The products of the Huntley and Palmer Company were some of the first to ensure that goods arrived as fresh as the day they were tinned. The besieged of Lucknow [in present day Uttar Pradesh, India] in 1857 and those of Khartoum [in present day Sudan] in 1884/85 were all assisted by canned food. Arctic expeditions of 1824, 1845 and 1852 also benefited and the American Civil War of 1861-1865 was probably the first war where troops did not have to live off the land. So, tin cans empowered adventurers. From Captain Parry's 1819 quest for the North West Passage to Captain Scott's Antarctic Expedition of 1911, "embalmed provisions" gave explorers a fighting chance. Some abandoned cans and contents have survived to this very day.

Expansion came to a halt in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the **McKinley** Tariff named after **Congressman William McKinley** and the effective closure of the USA market to British tinsplate. He was to become the 25<sup>th</sup> USA President from 1897 until his assassination in 1901. In the late 1880s he had proposed a 50% increase in import duty for goods including tinsplate imported to the USA. Before the change, the USA was taking about two thirds of Welsh tinsplate output but after the implementation of the changes in 1891 the reduced demand meant near catastrophe. In the previous 20 years Welsh production was up to 600,000 tons but within three years of the new import duty it was halved. All was not lost, however, because by 1904 output matched the 12 million box level of 1890 as a result of new markets including the canning of soft fruits, fish, soups etc. During the post **McKinley** depression Welsh tinsplate workers went to the USA, Spain and Italy to help establish works in those countries. No doubt some of these were Pontyclun people. Usually a foreman would persuade a number of tin worker colleagues to join him in an overseas adventure.

Consumption in Great Britain was 1,500 tons in 1805, 9,000 tons in 1837 and 12,000 tons in 1850 as a result of increasing demands for wrought iron wares, tin trunks, cash boxes and tea urns to name but a few. By 1880, 84,000 tons were used in Great Britain and about 130,000 tons by 1890 partly as a result of improved techniques of canning and by 11 new works being set up in the Midlands and a further 19 works in South Wales, Monmouthshire and Gloucestershire. By 1880, 64 out of 78 tinsplate works were in South Wales; by 1891, 90 out of 98 were here. In terms of mills, by 1891, 502 out of 525 were in South Wales.

The geographical split of works in South Wales is interesting. Minchinton's map of the location of tinsplate works in South Wales, 1700-1956, shows an east/west split. Those in the east were mainly in the Monmouthshire valleys from Brynmawr in the north to Newport on the coast and in the west in the river valleys and coastal belt between Port Talbot and Loughor. Central Glamorgan had few works but there were those at Machen, Melin Griffith, Aberdare, Maesteg [Llwydarth] and, of course Llantrisant [in present day Pontyclun] where the Ely works were situated. The availability of raw materials, water, skilled labour etc was central to the positioning of the works but, later on, when exporting became important the nearness to ports was vital. Predominance in the eastern area reflects the iron industry around Merthyr from which the forges of the tinsplate mills got their iron bar.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the use of steel replaced iron thus reducing spoilt plates known as wasters [which presumably led to the oft used description of someone or something which is of no use] and allowing a smoother surface so the weight of tin required was reduced. This in turn reduced the demand for tin and the price fell. Overall the cost of tinsplate fell. These efficiency improvements were in part accountable for the average mill producing 750 boxes per week in 1913 compared to only 500 per week in 1890.

In World War 1 tinsplate manufacture was not seen as an essential industry and suffered a reduced allocation of steel. Some workers were transferred to other areas of the iron and steel industry or went to the armed forces. Production and home consumption fell in the war years but revived afterwards as a result of more canning demand and the freedom from Government control. In the 1920s more countries were manufacturing tinsplate; cut price competition forced down prices and reduced profits to owners. For a period, home produced bar was more expensive than imported bar. Although a price stabilisation scheme was introduced to improve trade, the post 1925 period featured more competition and reduced consumption abroad leading to large unsold stocks at home. The introduction of mechanical tinning machines in 1920 and extra "hands" in mills increased the average production per mill from 750 boxes to 1,000 per week.

The General Strike in 1926 led to the closure of many works, despite the formation in March 1924 of the South Wales Tinsplate Corporation to act as a central selling agency. The 1930s saw consumption increase and a concentration of production in a reducing number of companies such as **Richard Thomas and Company**. The Commission for Depressed Areas was set up and in 1935. **Richard Thomas and Company** purchased a site in Ebbw Vale to establish the well known steel works at a cost of £8.5 million. It was in full production by the end of 1939 but it was estimated that the industry would need to reduce workers from 25,000 to 11,500. The possibility of closing some of the idle and redundant tinsplate mills was discussed and a compensation scheme was eventually introduced.

The conclusion of the Lend-Lease agreement with USA in 1941 led to reduced exports from Great Britain and it was stated that 26 works were to be taken over for wartime storage purposes [*Hansard*] under the Defence [General] Regulations 1939 made under the Emergency Powers [Defence] Act 1939.

It is believed this happened to the Ely works and accordingly that year was the final year when it could have been described as a tinsplate works.

By the 1950s, therefore, Wales's primacy was eroded as more countries produced their own tinsplate and tinsplate itself was challenged by plastics, aluminium and die-casting. Deep freezing and freeze drying were well developed and the global availability of fresh food reduced the need to preserve food in the first place. Perhaps more compelling [D Morgan Rees in his *Mines, Mills and Furnaces - Industrial, Archaeology of Wales, 1969*] was "the greater efficiency of the strip mill where two modern works were able to improve upon the productivity and quality of the remaining 27 works of the old type which housed about 120 mills".

### Where were the Ely Works and why was it established in Pontyclun?

The first thing to make clear is that we now regard the Works as always having been in Pontyclun but when the Works came to this area from 1872 there was little of what we now take as being Pontyclun. In the same way as the railway station was called "Llantrisant" to recognise the largest settlement in the area, then so the Tinsplate works were called the Llantrisant Tin Plate Works but also, confusingly, the Ely Tinsplate Works presumably because of its proximity to the River Ely. The latter name is used during the rest of this history.

Why were the works established in Pontyclun? In the introduction above we have seen that most tinsplate works were set up in either the east or western parts of South Wales. One of the exceptions was the Ely works which had copious amounts of water available from the River Ely and the nearby stream, lots of labour available in an area which was already [from 1861] on the main railway line, and in an area which had the raw materials of coal [e.g. the Cardiff Navigation Colliery in Coed Cae Lane from the 1870s] and iron [e.g. the Llanhari mine which closed in 1976]. It is not clear if these sources provided raw materials direct to the Ely tinsplate works.

### Setting up the works and infrastructure in Pontyclun

For the Ely Works to be established an agreement dated 4<sup>th</sup> December 1872 between the **William Davies and Isaac Davies [agent Rees Taylor]** Iron Founders of Briton Ferry, and **Vaughan H Lee [1836-1882]** of Lanelay Hall was made and included the lease of a piece of land "near Llantrisant Station" of about 2 acres for the erection of tinworks and buildings. It also included an agreement for the extraction of water from Trecastle Brook [also known as the Nant Melin] and the Ely River. This agreement was effective from Christmas Day 1872 for 99 years for which five shillings was to be paid for the first 15 months and then £50 per annum for rolling mills, tin houses, scale [sic] houses and a Manager's House. Production at the Ely works started, then, about 1873 or 1874 whereas the other local works such as Pentyrch commenced in 1890 and Melin Griffith, in Whitchurch, Cardiff much earlier around 1760.

The site appears to have been carefully chosen as the Trecastle Brook is close by on its western edge and the River Ely equally close on its southern edge. The site is adjacent to the main railway line and the works eventually had its own sidings for

delivery of raw materials and for transportation of the finished product.

A further agreement between the same persons was also dated 4<sup>th</sup> December 1872 and covered the lease of a piece of land in excess of one acre for the erection of "not less than eight dwelling houses". This land was between Trecastle Brook and the railway and was to become Tin Works Row but sometimes called Ty'n y Bryn. The lease was effective from 25<sup>th</sup> December 1872 for 99 years at a cost of £20 per annum. **Arthur V H Vaughan** of Lanelay Hall leased a further piece of land to **William Henry Edwards** of Morrision [who was then owner of the Ely Tinsplate works] from 31<sup>st</sup> December 1891 for 99 years at £4 per annum for the building of a further 4 houses. This brings to 12 the number of houses for which land was leased and ties in neatly with the final number of houses built in Tin Works Row. In April 1906 **Lt Col AVH Vaughan Lee** of Lanelay Hall agreed to sell the land on which the houses were built to the Tinsplate Company for £1750.

The Ely Tinsplate Company took the tenancy of a piece of land "near Llantrisant Station" from the Great Western Railway effective 1<sup>st</sup> July 1885 to lay down a railway siding at £5 per annum. This was about 11 years after production at the works would have started. This agreement was supplemented with another in December 1904, again with GWR, for the tenancy of some land and the use of a railway siding near Llantrisant Station.

Finally, in 1909 **Richard Thomas and Co Ltd** [now the owners of the Ely works] acquired an easement from the Taff Vale Railway Company to carry water from the Ely River at a cost of one guinea per annum. Presumably, this formalised an existing practice of extraction or replaced an old one as water was essential to production and the works had been up and running for 25 years or so.

The aerial photograph in 1929 gives a good impression of size and position of the works. Over the years of its existence changes would have been made to improve efficiency and to import the latest and best production techniques. An undated drawing of the works for **Richard Thomas and Company** [therefore post 1908] shows a site of rather less than 3 acres comprising the works site of 2.5 acres, a cottage area of about 0.5 acres and a tipping ground of just under one acre. It also mentions a site of two separate cottages. The works site was triangular with its base parallel to the railway line. The main features of the buildings which were essentially the pack-mill process were:

**The main production area** of approx. 440 feet by 110 feet comprising.....Up to 4 mills at any one time, rollers, at least two annealing furnaces, a bar cutter, opening benches, an assorting room, auto tinning pots, a scruff house, a finished black plate store and pickling areas.

**Off the main production area** a coppers shed, a hot well boiler, an electrical engine house, three Lancashire boilers and a stack, plus timber house and mess room.

**On the site periphery** there was a men's lavatory [no female facility was shown], an office, stores, fitting shop, blacksmith and a shafting engine and grindstone room. A pond about 150

feet long was situated on the southern edge of the site close to the railway and River Ely. Until fairly recently there was a small building [now demolished] marked "1872".

### **What was tinsplate and what was the production process?**

In the beginning there was tin! So, what is it? Wikipedia tells us tin is a malleable, ductile and highly crystalline silvery-white metal which melts at about 232 degrees centigrade. It was discovered about 3,500 BC and our Cornish cousins were mining tin at least 2,500 years ago. Tin resists corrosion from water but can be attacked by acids and alkalis [see the manufacturing process later]. It can also be highly polished and had often been used as a protective coat for other metals. Tin bonds readily to iron [hence tinsplating] and is used for coating lead or zinc or steel to prevent corrosion. Tin plated steel containers are widely used for food preservation and this forms a large part of the present day market for metallic tin. A tinsplate canister for preserving food was first used in London in 1812. Speakers of British English called them "tins" while speakers of American English called them "cans" or "tin cans". The slang term "tinnie" or "tinny" means a "can of beer". The term "tin whistle" is so called because it was first manufactured in tin-plated steel.

The overall process was clearly described in "*Tin plate Wales*" by *Alun John Richards* in 2008 and by Minchinton but an understanding of the incremental sub processes is necessary to get the full picture. Before doing so the reader might be interested to know of the tinsplate works occupations declared by Pontyclun residents in the census records from 1881 to 1911. These were rubber, packer, catcher, labourer, furnace man, coal hole boy, reckoner, wheeler, roller, stocktaker, doubler, behinder, boxer, dipper, clerk, plate worker, shearer, foreman, riser, manager, annealer, filler, pickler, carrier, assorter, opener, duster, washman, hammerman, greaser, cutter, cold roll boy, roll turner and fireman. Some of these roles are obvious but the following should shed a light on the lesser well known skills.

**Rubber**....was the worker who rubbed the metal as part of the cleaning process of rolled metal prior to tinning i.e. covering the metal with molten tin. From the early days, branning and dusting were the methods of freeing plates from grease after coating by cleansing by bran by hand. Eventually sheepskin rollers were replaced by revolving brushes on to which bran was fed from hoppers.

**Behinder**....the worker who worked behind a huge roller and passed back the rolled sheets to the roller man who worked in front of the roller.

**Catcher**....was the same as a behinder.

**Doubler**.....was the worker who doubled [i.e. bent over] the rolled sheets after rolling.

**Dipper**...was the worker who dipped the cleaned sheets in the molten tin.

**Shearer**...was the worker who cut the sheets to the required size.

**Annealer**.....was the worker who heated the plates to a specific temperature/colour and then allowed them to cool slowly so that the metal could be cut and shaped more easily. In early days plates were annealed before and after cold rolling in an open furnace. The author's grandfather Walter Edward French [1894-1954] was described as "Annealer in Tin Plate Works" when he married in 1915.

**Pickler and pickling**....was the process by which plates were cleaned by sulphuric acid. There were a number of Patents including those for black and white pickling. Sometimes plates were passed from one end of an acid container and removed at the other end. Cradles were eventually used to immerse the plates and agitated for several minutes. There was an incident at the Ely works [unconfirmed] when a young worker somehow fell into the acid and was saved by being carried and immersed in the nearby brook.

**Assorter**...was the worker who inspected and graded the polished tinplate. Obviously processes changed over time but the following should give a good idea.

**The milling process** began by heating tin bar which was a bar of iron 15-20 feet long by 9 inches wide and between three eighths and seven eighths of an inch thick. This was rolled to a suitable thickness, sheared in half, rolled again folding and cropping as necessary and all with any necessary reheating to produce 2 packs of 8 sheets. There were often 4 men [later increased to 6] in the team led by the rollerman who was always an experienced and comparatively well paid man. He took hot bars from the furnaceman [who was the second man of the team] and passed the hot and heavy material through the rollers making sure the roller gap was correctly aligned and properly adjusted by the big screw jacks at either end of the stands. In many mills, breaking a roll often involved automatic dismissal.

The rollerman was assisted by the behinder [or catcher] who was the third man of the team who caught the plates as they passed through the rollers and grasped them with tongs. He then passed them back to the rollerman who, in turn, would either pass them back to the furnaceman or to the doubler [the fourth team member]. The doubler literally doubled the sheet over with tongs and by using his feet on which he wore special boots and by using a squeezer. In later years a helper and second helper were added to this part of the process to make six in the team.

Before looking at the later processes we should try to imagine the conditions in which these people worked before Trade Unions and other pressures began a time of improvement. The heat must have been infernal, "insufferable" some Victorian writers claimed. The noise was deafening and in the midst of this there were hot, jagged edged plates arcing through the air on tongs or skidding along the floor risking burns and lacerations to the workers.

The mills, of which there were four in Pontyclun at one time, were the "hot" end of the production process. The "cold end", sometimes called the tin house was where packs were separated, sheets pickled, annealed, cold rolled, re-annealed, tinned, washed, hand cleaned assorted and packed. The actual process varied with time and place but in this area was to be

found the young boys, older or injured men as well as women as this was much lighter work than in the mill itself.

The final product was counted and packed in standard size boxes. The basic box contained 112 sheets of tinplate measuring fourteen inches by twenty inches; a total of 217.8 square feet.

*Reminiscences of Pontyclun* is an undated and anonymous description of the Ely Tinplate works in the Glamorgan Record Office [GRO DX 181/2];

*"On the tinworks.....Mr Sid Evans was responsible for the tin....he would pass the sheets into boiling tin....there were rollers in the molten tin and he would catch the sheets with a tongs. He had a hemp brush to off all the bubbles until the tinplate was quite clean and then put it to one side.*

*Girls worked in the tinworks....Janet Thomas and Trewarther [sic].....they used sheep skins on their hands and used a bran tub to polish the sheets. Joanna Thomas was there also....the owner went to America. [Probably a reference to Mr Richard Lewis who went to Pennsylvania in 1892]*

*Mr Williams of Alma Cottage on the Graig was employed as a clerk in a small office alongside the railway line. There was a water tap in his office and many men drank there but also had beer from the Boar's Head. [A public house situated at the rear of Tinworks Row]*

*Mr John James was a rollerman."*

### The workforce, rewards and conditions

A skilled, labour force was essential to the complex processes involved in making tinplate. In the Ely works there were up to 4 mills and 4 rollers working at any one time with the number in operation depending on the demand for tinplate. Up to 1899, there were normally between 50 and 75 workers needed per mill. So, a minimum of about 200 and a maximum of about 300. New starters would usually be youngsters and started on simple jobs such as cold roll boy or greaser. Promotion in the mill was from behinder to furnaceman to doubler and then to rollerman or sometimes to shearer. In the tin house promotion was from boy helper to riser to washman to tinman and then to assorter who was effectively the foreman.

Women and girls were employed in relatively lighter jobs such as opening plates after rolling, pickling, cleaning and packing.

So, there were process workers in the mill and tin house and also day workers on maintenance work, drivers, engineers, carpenters and blacksmiths.

There are examples of tinplate works providing reading rooms, cottages and schools for their workers. The building of Tin Works Row in Tyla Garw and the fact that the school fees for tinworks children in the National School in Pontyclun were paid by the Works are examples of the caring attitude of some employers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some 27 children from the Ely tinworks school were transferred to the National School when it opened in 1880.

In 1874 according to *Cambrian* the Industrial Association of Timplate Workers had 4,000 members and in the same year rollermen and shearers were paid £2 per week, doublers £1 15 shillings per week, furnacemen £1 10 shillings per week and behinders 15 shillings. After the **McKinley** tariff in 1891 some employers reduced wages by 10-15% because demand reduced. However, wages paid were based heavily on productivity and *Minchinton* produced the following comparisons between rates paid per 12 boxes in 1874 and 1920;

Rollermen 3 shillings and 5 pence and 4 shillings and 3 pence  
Doublers 2 shillings and 9 pence and 3 shillings and 5 pence  
Furnacemen 2 shillings and 7 pence and 3 shillings and 2 pence  
Behinders 1 shilling and 5 pence and 1 shilling and 9 pence  
First Helpers 2 shillings and five pence and 3 shillings  
Second Helpers 1 shilling and 8 pence and 2 shillings and 1 penny

Shearers 1 shilling and 1 penny and 1 shilling and 4 pence  
Openers 7 shillings and 9 shillings and 8 pence per 100 boxes  
Between 1899 and 1924 the working week was shortened and by 1914 few mills had 12 hour shifts; 8 hour shifts became the norm. In 1900 most mills operated continuously from 6am on Monday to 4pm on Saturday but in later years finishing the week by noon on Saturday was the norm. Millmen worked a 42 hour week but maintenance people 54 hours. June to August were the months of hardest work in the mill because of the high temperatures inside the mill and outside too.

Contracts for workers were often for one month with wages paid first monthly, then two weekly and often involving a "sub" periodically for families to make ends meet.

In 1911 **Collis and Hilditch** conducted a full scale enquiry into working conditions in the timplate industry where the average at death was only 45. In the mills, specific grouses were the high temperatures and bad ventilation which were partly relieved by installation of cold air systems. Arguably, tin house conditions were worse. Irritating fumes, dust and the physically demanding nature of the work were worse for women and young girls in particular. Improvements followed the outcome of the 1899 Conciliation Board which itself awarded 8 days annual holiday, improved wage rates and gave some protection against arbitrary dismissal.

The First World War brought a period of stagnation for the industry as workers were carried off to war or diverted to essential work in the other allied industries. When the war ended, there was much unemployment and many workers employed on part time contracts. One can only imagine the misery and poverty this brought to Pontyclun and its nearby villages.

**Appendix 1** shows at least 30 different skills employed at the Ely Works between the censuses of 1881 [about 7 years after production in Ely started] and 1911 which is the latest census record available. The data has been gathered from the resident records of Tinworks Row, River Row, Brynsadler and Pontyclun although no doubt there were other employees outside these areas from time to time. The analysis from these residences shows 94 employed in the Ely Works in 1881, 106 in 1891, only 38 in 1901 and 138 in 1911. There appear to have

been no employee records retained by the various owners over the years nor are there any known details of how many mills were in use at any time. The employee numbers appear low when the norm for one mill in operation was about 75 employees but, of course, these numbers are only a snapshot on census days. Numbers would have increased when demand was high and lower when demand fell. Labourers or tin workers accounted for the biggest proportion in each of the years shown and the number of the key workers [furnacemen, rollermen, behinders and doublers] pretty similar except for 1901 when demand was low with the industry still suffering the effects of the **McKinley** Tariff of 1891. Changed processes would have accounted for some skills being no longer needed, such as the washman, where none are shown in the last three censuses for the residences used.

**Appendix 2** is a summary of Ely Timplate workers living in Pontyclun, Brynsadler, River Row and Tinworks Row on the same census years as above. Female workers are small in number ranging from about 4% of the workforce in 1881 to 15% in 1911. None were shown in the census for 1901.

**Appendix 3** shows the persons who declared themselves to be working in the timplate works in the 1911 census and who lived in Pontyclun, Brynsadler, Tinworks Row and River Row.

Two of the workers listed gave their lives in the First World War. **Harvey Callow** was a cold roller in the works and shown as such in the 1911 census. He lived in the railway restaurant in Pontyclun [now the Brunel pub]. He was killed in action aged 20 in Flanders and has no known grave. More on this serviceman can be found in the New Series Volume V11 number 1 of the March 2012 paper of the Llantrisant and District Local History Society entitled *The Pontyclun War Memorial*.

The second worker was **Frank Atkinson** who lived in Bryn Terrace, Brynsadler in 1911. He died in 1917 and, again, more detail can be found in the paper on the *Pontyclun War Memorial*.

The nature of the industry with its trading ups and downs meant many workers and their families remained only a short time in the Pontyclun area. However, there were exceptions. **George Jacob** lived in the "Old Bute" [the original Bute Arms near St. Paul's Church] in 1881, was 20 years old and was a labourer in the works. By 1891 he was an assorter, by 1901 a "superintendent" assorter and in 1911 was still in the Old Bute and worked in the timplate works' washhouse. **Thomas White** was a 16 year old catcher in 1891 from Briton Ferry and was still in the tinworks in 1911 as a 37 year old doubler. This could well be the same Tom White who appears in the Pontyclun RFC 1896-97 photograph [front row middle] on page 15 of John David's book "*Hard Kicks but good touches - a History of A Hundred Years of Village Rugby in Pontyclun*".

**Appendix 4** shows biographical and other data on Managers of the Timplate Works.

**Appendix 5** shows production, financial, trading and other data for the Timplate Works under Richard Thomas and Company from 1909-1922.

## Significant events during the lifetime of the Ely Tinsplate Works

1. In 1872, **Vaughan Hanning Lee** of Lanelay Hall leased land near Llantrisant Station to **William Davies, Isaac Davies and Rees Taylor** [as Agent] for the erection of tin works and buildings as well as to extract water from the Trecastle Brook and the River Ely. In the same year **Lee** leased more land to the same persons for rolling mills, tin houses, a scale [sic] house and Manager's house. A third agreement between the parties was for the lease of land for the erection of not less than 8 dwelling houses. This was probably for Tin Works Row [now demolished] but might also have covered River Row [also now demolished]. [Source: Tata Steel Records Centre, Ely Tinsplate Co Ltd Number 1 Ledger 1872-1927]
2. Demand for tinsplate in the 1870s was very high and international events such as the **Crimean War** drove up the demand for tinned foods.
3. The appendix to the *Chronology of Tinsplate Works of Great Britain* by **E H Brooke** 1944 states than in 1874 **Mr Llewellyn Davies**, metal merchant of Briton Ferry advised the author [**Brooke**] that his father was the founder of the Ely Works and was sole proprietor. **Brooke** also stated that in the same year 2 mills were started by **Davis [sic] and Taylor trading as Taylor and Co** but only for a short period as from 1876 the proprietors were the Llantrisant Tinsplate Co which itself ceased trading in **May 1881**.
4. In 1882 tin prices fell while the cost of raw materials rose. This soon led to a number of works closures and by the end of 1882 20,000 tinsplate and allied workers were out of work; 28 works closed-most of them in South Wales. [**Minchinton**]
5. In 1885 the Ely Tinsplate Company ceased trading and was acquired by **W H Edwards** of Morrision. By 1893 it was a three mill plant and in addition to the coke brands of "Trisant" and "Hensol" and charcoal brands of "Windsor" and "Vaughan" it had further coke brands of "Ely " and "ID". [**Brooke**]
6. In **June 1896** the *Pontypridd Chronicle and Workmen's News* reported that **Mr W H Edwards** had met the men employed at the works and agreed to start two mills "on Monday next "at a reduced [wage] rate of 25% for three months at the end of which the position of affairs would again be considered. It was further reported that... "The inhabitants are delighted at the result of the conference and congratulation is expressed at every hand". The works had been idle since a fortnight before Christmas [about 6 months] and the majority of men had left the district but it was anticipated that many would now return.
7. In **September 1897** the *Cardiff Times* reported on a deputation of men from the Ely works who had visited **Mr W H Edwards** in Morrision to seek arrangements for the restart of the Llantrisant works. The deputation had failed to see the owner on the Thursday but was successful a day later when they offered reductions in wages of seven and a half percent, then 10% then twelve and a half per cent .The owner responded by saying he would not entertain anything below 15% and he would not commit himself even to accept that. The deputation agreed to return and to put this to the men.
8. In 1898 it was a four mill plant and employed about 300 people to produce 2,000 boxes per week. **Mr William Richard Watkins** was manager for the owner **Mr W H Edwards**. [**Brooke** and the *History of Llantrisant* by **Taliesin Morgan** 1898]
9. The *Pontypridd Chronicle and Workmen's News* on **30th December 1898** reported that the men employed at the Llantrisant and Maesteg works owned by **Mr W H Edwards** are now working out a 28 days notice which "will terminate this day week". The men are working on a reduction of about 25% in wage rates compared to the 1874 wage list and in the tin house workers are paid 2d per box. It was claimed that the rates paid were about the lowest in the tinsplate trade.
10. The logbook of the National School in **Pontyclun** on **18th January 1900** noted that "some of the children have left the neighbourhood owing to the stopping of the tin works".
11. The *South Wales Daily Post* on **4th September 1900** reported that works were closing down and any orders being placed with them were "ruinous". It claimed that American prices were high, Welsh prices were low and that there was a chance that exports to America could be resumed. Exports to Canada of cases in which to pack salmon were likely to be one million fewer than expected.
12. Sessional Papers Volume 14 in the House of Commons [**HMSO 1902**] included the Report of the Commissioners-Salmon Fisheries [pages 99 and 182] on the pollution caused by the Ely Tinsplate Works to the River Ely. This followed on from the *Annual Report of the Inspector of Fisheries [England and Wales]* in 1894 which claimed that ".....fishing in the River Ely has been almost entirely decimated owing to the pollution caused by the Ely Tinsplate Works at Pontyclun". There had been an abortive prosecution by the Glamorgan County Council. On **28th March 1903** the *Cardiff Times* said that the determination of the Sanitary Committee of the County Council and the Board of Conservators to jointly prosecute the Ely Tinsplate Works"..... is exciting widespread interest in Llantrisant as a large section of the population are entirely dependent upon the works". Works Manager **John Hughes** was quoted as saying that about £2,000 had been spent to rectify the problem and, further, that his tests had shown the river to be free of acid. The detail of the action by the County Council can be seen in the Glamorgan Record Office [GRO/C/61 and DX72/3].
13. In 1904 **Edwards** leased the works to **Mr R Peregrine and Mr Richard Lewis**. **Mr Lewis** had from 1892 managed the Morrision works for **Mr Daniel Edwards** [father of **W H Edwards**] at Earnest Station in USA and **Mr Peregrine** had been manager at the Langennech, Morlais and Old Lodge works. [**Brooke**]The Application for a Certificate of Incorporation for the Ely Tinsplate Company was made to the Board of Trade [BT31/10657/80687] on **11th April 1904** showing seven persons holding one share each in the names of **Richard Lewis**, of Swansea ,tinsplate manufacturer, **Samuel Llewellyn** of Coed Parc, Bridgend ,Colliery Owner, **Richard Morgan** of Swansea, Inspector, **William Phillips** of Neath,



Brass Founder[ sic], **Richard Peregrine** of Aberavon, Secretary of the Company, **John R Richards** of Swansea, Solicitor and **T Herschel Jones**, Tinplate Merchant of Swansea. The first three named were Directors/Managers. **Thomas Morgan**, Wine Merchant of Pontyclun and **Gomer Morgan**, Surveyor, also of Pontyclun had managerial roles. The nominal capital of the new company was £10,000 being 2,000 shares of £5 each and the registered office was in Pontyclun.

**In June 1904** £4,645 had been received in cash for shares and £800 was paid to **Edwards** for stock. [BT31 as above]

**In February 1906** a mortgage of £6,000 on the company was taken out being 60 debentures of £100 each at 6% interest. A further mortgage of £3,000 was taken out in similar debentures but at 5%. Clearly, the company needed new funds. [BT31 as above]

**14.** An entry in the Ely Tinplate Company Limited ledger [1872-1927] of **27<sup>th</sup> January 1906** refers to "**W H Edwards** and the Ely Tinplate Company -assignment of Tinplate Works". It refers to the will of **William Davies** [see first paragraph of Section 6 above] who died 28/12/1874 and the fact that **Isaac Davies** and **Rees Taylor** are unable to pay their creditors. The outcome of bankruptcy proceedings was that **W H Edwards** agreed to sell the Ely works for £8,000 to **Richard Thomas and Company**. On the site were 4 mills, 4 rollers, coupling boxes, shearers and 4 sets of mill furnaces plus ancillary items.

**15.** The *Cardiff Times* in **January 1908** reported on a settlement made to the millmen at the Llantrisant works. They had claimed a month's pay in lieu of notice from **Mr W H Edwards** who was proprietor in August 1903. The men had began legal proceedings but this was put on hold pending a test case at the Cilfrwr works. The Court of Appeal had found in the men's favour in that case and following an intervention by the Steel Smelter's Union, a cheque in full settlement was sent. It was also reported that a sum of money due to **Mr Edwards** from the men as his tenants for rent [presumably for the cottages in Tin Works Row] was set aside by him.

**16.** By **May 1908**, a number of directors had resigned and were replaced by **Richard Thomas** of London, **Richard Thomas** of Penarth, **Herbert Thomas** of Cardiff and **Henry Bond** of London. **Herbert Thomas** had resigned within a few months. [BT31 as above]

**17.** On **27<sup>th</sup> October 1908** a meeting was held by the Ely Tinplate Company and a Special Resolution was passed to wind up the company voluntarily and **David Jones** appointed as liquidator. [BT31 as above]

**18.** In **November 1908** the Ely Tinplate Works were acquired by **Richard Thomas and Company Limited** and the Ely Tinplate Works ceased to trade as a separate company. [Brooke]

**19.** On **19<sup>th</sup> July 1909** at an extraordinary meeting of the Ely Tinplate Company it was agreed that all the books and accounts of the company were to be passed to **Richard**

**Thomas and Company** for the benefit/disposal by that company.

**20.** In **1915** the *Chemical News and Journal of Industrial Science* stated that "Two mills of the Ely Tinworks in Pontyclun are being started by **Messrs Richard Thomas and Co**".

**21.** The *South Wales Weekly Post* on **1<sup>st</sup> January 1916** presented an article giving information to the effect that all tinplate works in the South Wales and Monmouthshire region are to be taken over by the Government as controlled establishments. It was estimated that 70% of total output would be for the British Government and Allies war effort in World War I.

**22.** The *Cambrian Daily Leader* printed an article in **October 1918** saying **Richard Thomas and Company Limited** had recently taken over two Swansea works and now had ten tinplate works including Ely.

**23.** **1919** appears to have seen a huge increase in demand for steel and tinplate. The *Cambrian Daily Leader's* article of **15<sup>th</sup> January 1919** claimed 14,000 men were needed and that only half of all tinplate mills were running.

**24.** Minute Book 3 of **Richard Thomas and Company**, on **5<sup>th</sup> March 1923**, proposed that a restart to the Ely Works was to be looked at. It was not stated how long the works had been idle.

**25.** The same Minute Book records on **19<sup>th</sup> May 1924** that ".....a restart of additional mills" would be left for further consideration. Ely was not specifically mentioned and was one of about 20 owned by the Company at this time.

**26.** Minute Book 4 of **Richard Thomas and Company** covering the period **December 1924 to May 1933** contains no mention of the Ely works specifically. However, some minutes do give a flavour of the local and national situation regarding the industry:

**First**, a minute of **13<sup>th</sup> May 1926** mentions the General Strike and the Company decided not to restart any works which did not have enough coal to last a minimum of four weeks. It was thought that three works including Ely could be restarted but no dates were given.

**Second**, a minute of **8<sup>th</sup> July 1926** recorded the discussion on the "Coal Stoppage". It was contended that payments by Poor Law Authorities to the strikers' families helped to prolong the strike. It was agreed to put up notices in works that the loss of tinplate business was a real possibility if the strike continued.

**Third**, a minute of **26<sup>th</sup> September 1929** noted amounts payable for tinplate works sites under the Rating and Valuation Act of 1925. Ely had a reduced value of £300 and was one of the lowest for all the Company sites which gives a fair impression of the comparatively small size of the Ely works.

**Fourth**, a minute of **19<sup>th</sup> February 1931** agreed a reduction in salaries of Company Directors and staff earning more than specific sums. Reductions ranged between 5% and 20% in order to reduce Company overheads.

**Last**, a minute of **21<sup>st</sup> May 1931** recorded the depression in the trade and claimed that demand for tinplate was only 38% of production capacity.

**27. The depression years and the Wall Street [USA] crash** were inevitably felt in Pontyclun as well as other parts of the UK and indeed the world. The depression halted and reversed the growth in industry which had been flowing for about 150 years. It caused massive emigration which has been referred to elsewhere in this account. Wales lost about 390,000 people [many with well honed industrial skills] in the 4 years up until 1929 and the Wales population did not regain its 1925 level until 1973. By 1932, Wales with a male unemployment rate of about 43%, was amongst the world's most depressed countries; this unemployment was most severe for steel, coal, tinplate, slate and transport industry workers. Inevitably this enforced idleness led to despondency, poor health and sub standard housing. No specific figures are available for Pontyclun but as we walk through a relatively well off and bustling Main Street we should reflect that these events were only 3 generations back. Disagreement over support for the unemployed led to the collapse of the Labour Government of 1929 - 1931.

**29. The Mechanical World and Engineering Record Volume 101 in 1937** recorded the Ely Tinplate Works reopening after ".....the works had been closed for some years-about 150 men are to be taken on".

**30. Minute Book number 5 of Richard Thomas and Company in September 1939** did not list the Ely works as a site where ARP personnel equipment was installed to protect staff in the event of air raids in World War II. It seems likely that the site was idle at this time and the 1939 pre war census, recently released, shows no more than a handful of residents in the Pontyclun area who described their occupation as tinplate related.

**31. In 1941** the premises were acquired by the War Office for storage. [Brooke]

**32. In March 1946** both mills were sterilized under the Tinplate Industry Redundancy Scheme as part of Section 25 of the Finance Act 1935. [Brooke]

**33. A conveyance of 20<sup>th</sup> May 1960** [Tata Steel Record Centre, Box 144, consignment 2, Code 271] saw the ownership of the site pass from **Richard Thomas and Baldwins and Another to Robert J Capener Ltd.** The sale comprised freehold premises of the site of the former Ely Tinplate works and other properties, specifically the 12 houses called Tyn y Bryn Terrace otherwise known as Tinworks Row. In all 4.39 acres were sold which included the piece of land between the works site and the Terrace which is now the road leading to Woodland Terrace. Eleven of the houses were rented out but number one nearest to the works [former tenants were **Dai and Lottie Bartlett**] was described as derelict and subject to a closing order by Cowbridge RDC on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1925. Each tenant paid weekly rent of 6/2d [about 32 pence in present day money] and were listed as **Ernie Edwards [number 2], Mrs. A Parker [number 3], Mr H H S Jobbins [number 4], Mr. Peter Jobbins [number 5], Mrs. H Houghton [number 6], A Allen [number 7], Mr. E Merrifield [number 8], A Ranson [number 9], Mr. W H Griffiths [number 10], Mr. Edgar Davies [number 11], and Mrs. R F Tweedie [number 12]**. Initials and titles of tenants in the conveyance have been updated to familiar names and titles with the help of **Mr. Brian Jobbins**.

The same **Mr. Brian Jobbins**, now of Llanhari, was born in Tinworks Row in 1942 and has spoken to the author about his memories of the Row. His grandfather was **Henry Herbert Simeon Jobbins** of Caerleon who married **Lilian Lewis** of Llanhari. Brian's father was **Trevor Daniel Jobbins** who was known as **Peter** and was a prominent member of Pontyclun Cricket Club for many years. **Brian** tells me his family lived firstly in River Row, later moved to Tinworks Row and that that Row was demolished about 1968/9. All tenants except two were rehoused in Llanhari.

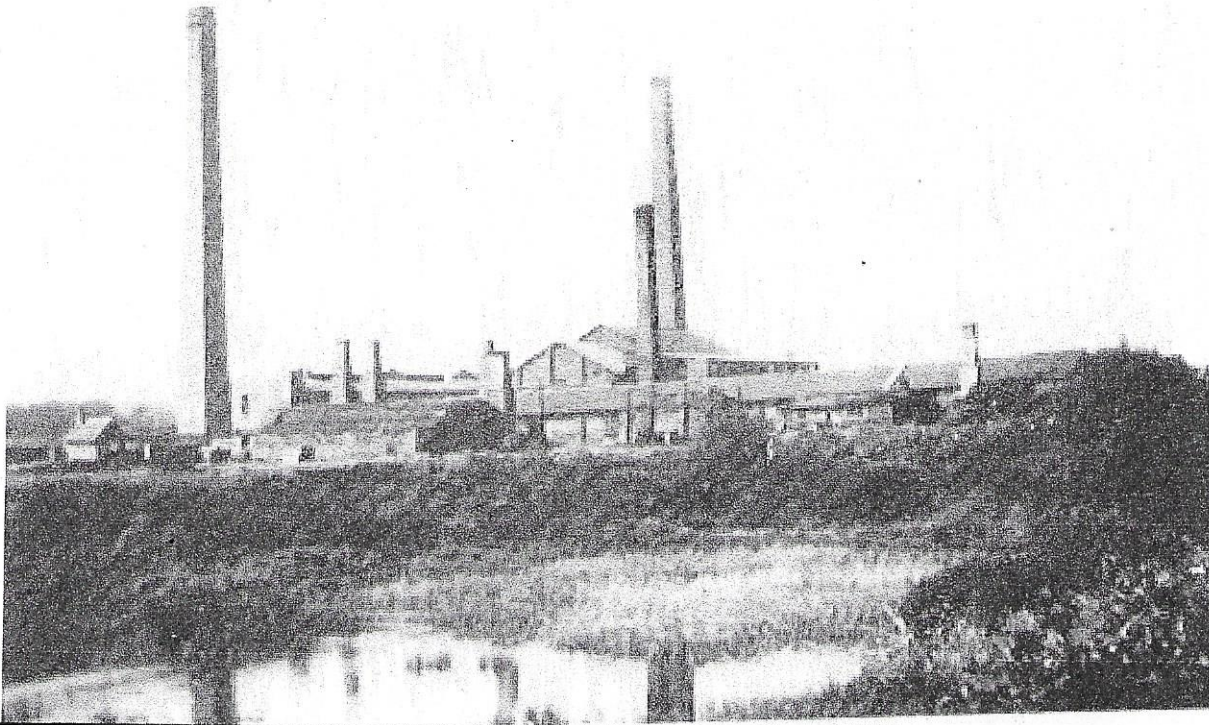
According to **Mr. Ralph Theaker** of Pontyclun, **Robert Capener** was the father of the late **Roy Capener** who carried on a Builder's Supplies business on the site in the 1970s for about 6 years. Previously **Mr Capener, senior**, supplied caravan windows and doors.

Now, **Wayne Humphries** of **W A Humphries [International Transport]** runs his business there.

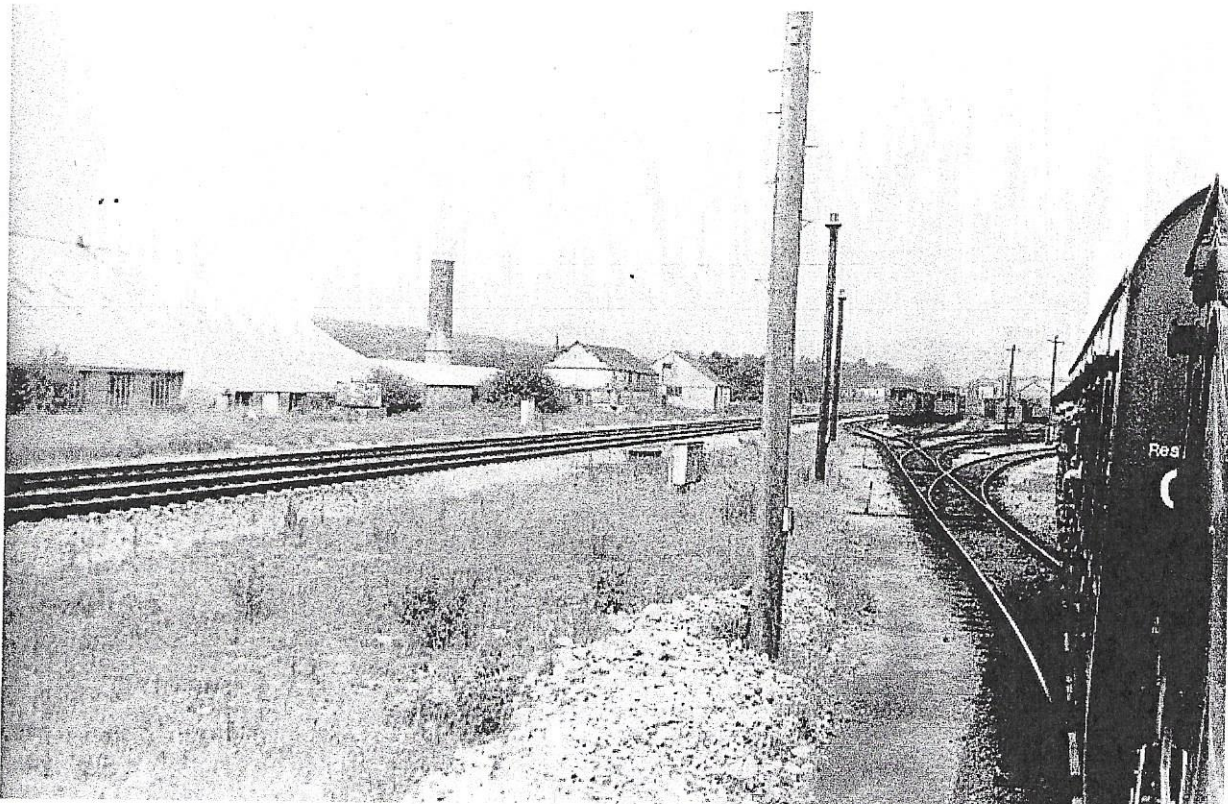
#### **Acknowledgement of help received in putting together this history**

In no order of priority, the following people and organisations are thanked for their assistance:

Mr Brian Jobbins, Mr Michael Walker, Mr W E Minchinton, Mr Alan John Richards, Mrs Christine Palmer, Glamorgan Record Office, Tata Steel, Pontyclun Community Council, Mr Brian Davies, Mr Ken Mathew, Mr Glyn White, Mr Viv White, The National Archives, Mr Graham Walker, Mr Cliff Winmill, Welsh Newspapers Online, Mr Ralph Theaker, Mr Wayne Humphries, Mr David Ranson, Mr Trevor Wooding, Llantrisant and District Local History Society, Mr Martin Reynolds and Mr Leighton Harris.

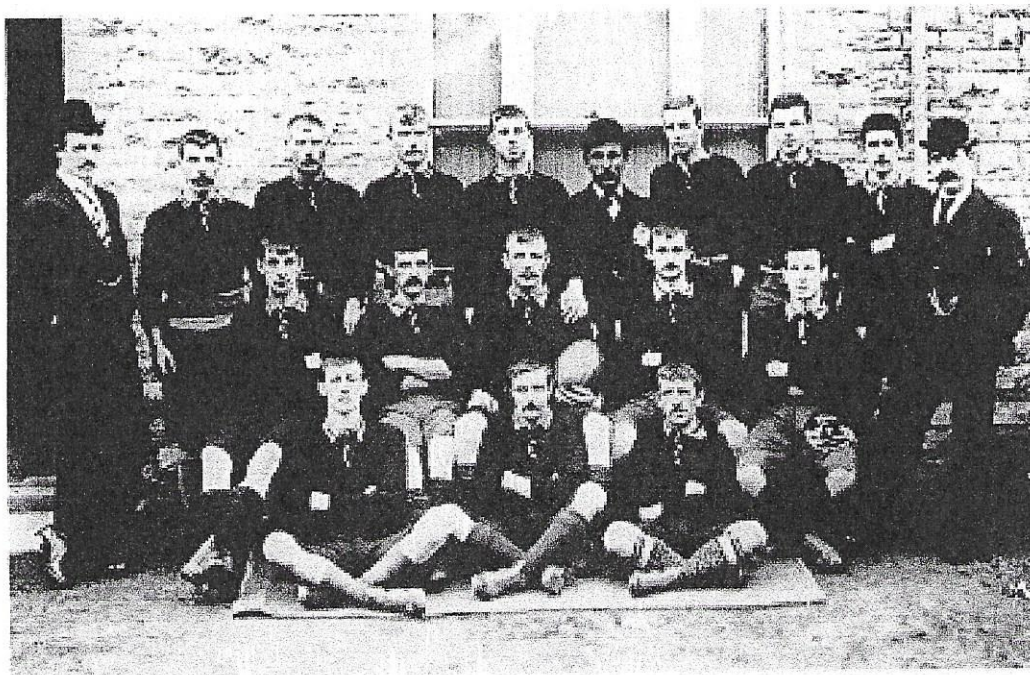
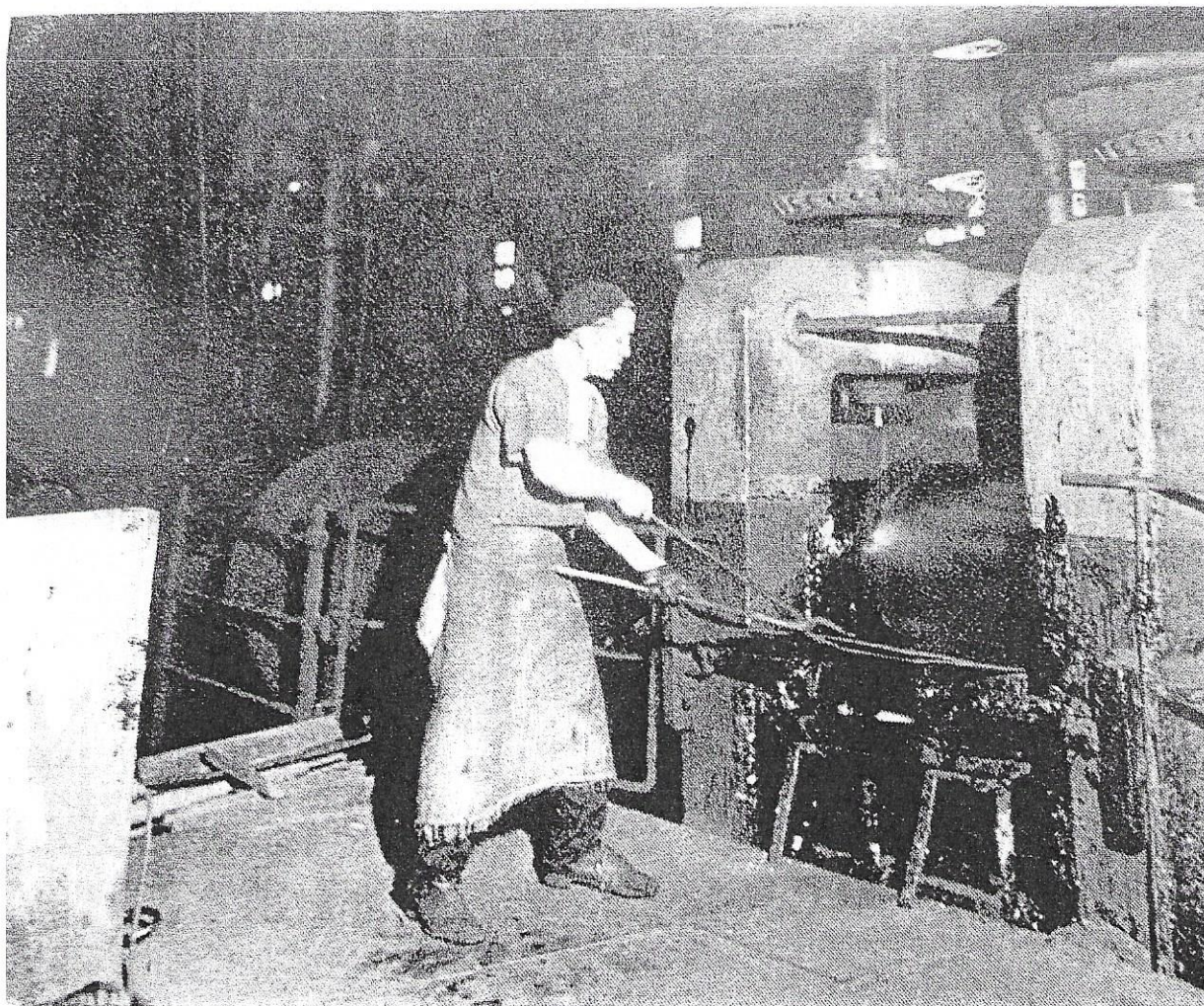


Pontyclun Tin Works, no date. Some of the building remain while the chimneys have gone  
The works was set up in the 1870s.



This photograph is reproduced with thanks to Brian Rolley

Behinder receiving a pair of singles at Clayton Tinsplate Works, Pontardulais



Pontyclun R.F.C. 1896-97  
*Back Row*, I. Lovett, J. Gully, T. Carter, F. Powell, J. Mort, W. Griffiths  
A. Hoskin, W. N. Davies, I. Slocombe, W. Wareham  
*Middle Row*, L. to R. A. Jones, D. Owen, H. Davies, P. Jeffries, T. Burston  
*Bottom Row*, L. to R. R. Rees, T. White, J. Han

### APPENDIX 1

Ely Tinplate Works occupations shown in census records  
or Pontyclun, River Row, Brynsadler and Tinworks Row.

Occupation	1881	1891	1901	1911
Washman	7	0	0	0
Rollerman	13	15	7	16
Furnaceman	5	4	1	9
Washhouse	0	0	0	2
Labourer	31	47	15	34
Manager	1	1	0	1
Fitter	0	0	0	2
Behinder/catcher	8	6	0	12
Foreman	1	0	0	2
Weigher	0	0	0	1
Doubler	4	4	2	6
Riser	0	3	3	6
Assorter	1	3	3	2
Shearer	2	5	2	4
Blacksmith	0	0	0	2
Cold Roller	7	3	1	7
Sorter	5	1	0	2
Annealer	1	1	1	6
Packer/bundler	0	0	0	3
Boiler shop	0	0	0	1
Stoker	0	2	2	1
Finisher	1	2	0	1
Timekeeper/stocktaker	0	1	1	1
Fireman	0	1	0	1
Engine Driver	0	0	0	2
Pickler	2	3	0	1
Opener	3	1	0	11
Night Watchman	0	0	0	1
Coal Hole Boy	0	1	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>138</b>

### APPENDIX 2

Summary of Ely Tinplate Workers between  
sexes in Pontyclun, Brynsadler, River Row  
and Tinworks Row in census records 1881-1911

	1881		1891		1901		1911	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Pontyclun	18	0	23	1	7	0	65	1
Brynsadler	24	0	15	2	6	0	24	0
River Row			33	7	8	0	15	10
And	48	4						
Tinworks Row			23	2	17	0	17	7
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>18</b>

M-Male  
F-Female

**APPENDIX 3**

**1911 Pontyclun Census of Pontyclun, Brynsadler, River Row  
and Tinworks Row residents who declared themselves to  
work in Tinworks**

**THOSE LIVING IN PONTYCLUN;**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Job</b>	<b>Born in</b>
Mark Warren	31	Rollerman	Brecon
William David Jones	20	Furnaceman	Maesteg
Herbert Crandon	25	Furnaceman	Somerset
George Jacob	49	Washhouse	Llantrisant
David Lewis	37	Labourer	Llantrisant
Albert Ellis	20	Labourer	Llantrisant
Ernest Ellis	14	Labourer	Llantrisant
Samuel Hillman	22	Rollerman	Gloucs.
Richard Gillman	55	Manager	Gloucs.
Richard Gillman	23	Fitter	Gloucs.
Cyril Gillman	22	Behinder	Gloucs.
John Griffiths	40	Rollerman	Glam.
Ben Wall	43	Labourer	Somerset
Frank Nutting	22	Labourer	Wilts.
Roy Smith	28	Labourer	Cornwall
William B Edwards	18	Labourer	Llantrisant
Alex Hosey	25	Foreman	Lincs.
Thomas Jones	40	Furnaceman	Carms.
William J Owen	36	Weigher	Gloucs.
Fred G Downing	25	Doubler	Lydney
Bert S Downing	14	Washer	Lydney
Esau Saunders	20	Riser	Glam.
Edward Stephens	25	Furnaceman	Radyr
Edward Hinvest	24	Labourer	Hants.
John Warburton	53	Assorter	Glam.
Thomas Warburton	20	Behinder	Brecon
Alfred Warburton	15	Rollerman	Glam.
William H Jones	20	Riser	Llantrisant
John Phillips	45	Doubler	Carms.
William J Phillips	20	Catcher	Briton Ferry
Albert E Pickard	16	Catcher	Cardiff
George Stephens	48	Shearer	Glam.
Thomas W Stephens	17	Blacksmith	Glam.
Arthur J Payne	23	Furnaceman	Llantrisant
William Payne	17	Cold Roller	Llantrisant
George Williams	41	Rollerman	Aberavon
Mary Williams	17	Sorter	Llantrisant
Fred J Cox	19	Cold Roller	Mon.
Thomas Stephens	39	Rollerman	Cardiff
Richard Humphrey	56	Annealer	Cardiff
John Lovegrove	26	Annealer	Shropshire
Harvey Callow	15	Cold Roller	Llantrisant
Thomas H Hodgkinson	33	Riser	Staffs.
William H Parry	25	Packer	Swansea
John R Lewis	19	Furnaceman	Llantrisant
Robert Grey	49	Fitter	Glam.
Gomer Rees	16	Bundler	Pontyclun
Frank Thomas	32	Catcher	Mon.
Edward A Jones	25	Boilershop	Lancs.
Mark Bunston	29	Furnaceman	Somerset
Thomas S Melhuish	42	Assorter	Merthyr
Arthur Payne	29	Doubler	Glam.
Charles G Tremblett	48	Shearer	Somerset
Arthur Thos. Tremblett	23	Behinder	Brecon
Noah Samuel	33	Roller	Glam.
Jesse Warburton	27	Labourer	Carms.
Thomas Samuel	22	Behinder	Mon.

Name	Age	Job	Born in
George Martell	49	Roller	Gloucs.
Robert Varker	28	Labourer	Llantrisant
William J Jones	29	Stoker	Cardiff
John Harris	37	Finisher	Aberdare
Thomas A Watkins	28	Rollerman	Aberdare
John Thomas	26	Annealer	Pontyrid
Isaac W Merryfield	52	Doubler	Somerset
Thomas E Merryfield	23	Furnaceman	Llanharry
Glyn I Merryfield	15	Bundler	Llanharry

Notes ; 66 workers of whom only one was female  
45 were born in Wales and 21 in England  
oldest worker was 56 years old  
youngest worker was 14 years old

**1911 Brynsadler census; those residents who declared themselves to work in Tinworks**

Name	Age	Job	Born in
Thomas Davies	70	Timekeeper/Stocktaker	Glam.
Albert T Davies	25	Riser	Glam.
David F Davies	24	Riser	Glam.
John T Davies	17	Junior Clerk	Glam.
Thomas Humphrey	33	Tin Worker	Mon.
Edwin Wintle	38	Fireman	Mon.
Victor Wintle	20	Labourer	Mon.
Edwin Harvey	23	Worker	Llantrisant
William Pooley	30	Worker	Llantrisant
William Parker	22	Labourer	Glam.
William G Howells	15	Tinplate man	Blaina
J Price	40	Engine driver	Hereford
Herbert J Beard	30	Rollerman	Mon.
William Harwood	24	Labourer	Pembs.
Ben Giles	21	Blacksmith	Cardiff
Dan Hughes	54	Annealer	Pontypridd
Gomer Farrant	32	Furnaceman	Glam.
Adam Davies	27	Pickler	Brynsadler
Thomas W Webster	26	Labourer	Ogmore
John Webster	24	Annealer	Ogmore
E Brown	21	Labourer	Cardiff
Frank Atkinson	21	Worker	Cardiff
David Atkinson	18	Worker	Cardiff
John Harris	42	Doubler	Llandaff

Notes: 24 workers all male  
Only 1 person born outside Wales.  
Oldest worker claimed he was 70  
Youngest worker claimed he was 15

**1911 River Row census; those residents who claimed to work in Tinworks**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Job</b>	<b>Born in</b>
Leonard Dauncey	18	Behinder	Cardiff
Herbert Davies	30	Rollerman	Pontypridd
Edgar Davies	21	Cold Roll Polisher	Llantrisant
Horace Edwards	47	Rollerman	Caerleon
Beatrice Edwards	18	Cold Roller	Nantyglo
George Dulson	15	Cold Roller	Pontyclun
Augustus Jobbins	N/K	Furnaceman	Monmouth
Parrick O'Dwyer	28	Iron Cutter	Tipperery
Daniel H Davies	47	Rollerman	Treforest
Michael P Gavin	38	Labourer	Tipperery
Mary Ann Strong	20	Opener	Penygraig
Martha E Strong	19	Sorter	Penygraig
Sarah J Strong	17	Catcher	Penygraig
William J Strong	14	Catcher	Penygraig
Samuel Parsons	16	Worker	Llantrisant
Minnie Stephens	17	Worker	Glos.
Catherine Cooke	18	Cold Roller	Pontypridd
Elizabeth Cooke	15	Opener	Pontypridd
Mary Lloyd	36	Opener	Abertillery
Charles Beer	39	Labourer	Cardiff
George Stephens	23	Bar Cutter	Glos.
Ralph Stephens	25	Labourer	Newport
Thomas H Clark	27	Annealer	Worcs.
Mary Jones	21	Rollerwoman	Llantrisant
Annie Jones	19	Opener	Llantrisant

Notes; 25 workers in all of whom 10 were female[ 40%]

5 workers were born outside Wales [ 20%]

Oldest worker was 47

Youngest worker was 14

The four Strong sisters were daughters of George and Catherine Strong of 10, River Row, Pontyclun.

They had four other children of school age.



**1911 census of Tinworks Row; those residents who declared they worked in the Tinworks.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Job</b>	<b>Born in</b>
William Humphrey	32	Engine Driver	Lydbroo
Joshua Harrison	60	Labourer	Nottingham
Joshua Harrison	23	Labourer	?
John Harrison	14	Riser	Pontyclun
William Grace	43	Tinplateman	Aberavon
William Harris	18	Iron Foundry	Northumberland
Ivor Harris	17	Worker	Pontyclun
Thomas White	37	Doubler	Morrison
Charles W Bunston	40	Tinman	Llantrisant
Hannah Jane Bunston	19	Opener	Llantrisant
Edwin Bunston	17	Catcher	Llantrisant
Beatrice Bunston	16	Opener	Llantrisant
John Jones	52	Rollerman	Caerleon
Laura Jones	25	Opener	Abercarn
Edmond Jones	20	Behinder	Abercarn
Maggie Lyke	20	Opener	Bedwas
William John Davies	25	Tinman	Abertillery
Gwynfor Griffiths	21	Opener	Carmarthen
Christiana Grifiths	17	Opener	Pontyclun
David J Hinkin	42	Rollerman	Aberdare
William Griffiths	34	Rollerman	Cardiff
Gilbert Stamp	36	Tinman	Cardiff
Benjamin Humphrey	58	Night Watchman	Whitchurch
Lily Maud Humphrey	22	Opener	Whitchurch

Notes; 24 workers in all of whom 7 [29%] were female

3 workers were born outside Wales

The oldest worker was 60

The youngest worker was 14

In summary, in 1911 139 persons declared themselves as working in the tinworks. 87% were male.

#### APPENDIX 4

#### Some biographical and other data on Managers of the Ely Tinsplate Works

In the 1881 census of Tin Works Row [RG 11.5328] **John Richards** claimed to be the Mill Manager. He was 40 years old, from Neath originally and lived near the works with his wife and 12 children plus his niece. Five of his sons were also employed in the industry. Nothing can be found in later census records on this family; perhaps they emigrated to USA to help set up the tinsplate industry following on from the McKinley tariff in 1891.

In 1885 **David Williams** was noted as the works Manager in the Ely Tinsplate Works Ledger of 1872-1927. These records are now held by Tata Steel.

Also in 1885, **Mr W R Watkins** was Manager according to **Taliesin Morgan** in his *History of Llantrisant*. He married **Catherine Morgan** [b 1868] of the Post Office and left Pontyclun to join **Mr Richard Lewis** [see below] in Pennsylvania USA. Upon his departure he was presented with a walking stick inscribed "Presented to **Mr W R Watkins**, late Manager by the Ely Tinsplate Workmen as a token of respect on leaving the firm September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1899" [*Pontyclun and Talygarn* by **J Barry Davies, Trefor I Rees and M A K Duggan** 2002]. It is not known when he left for the USA but his wife was living in 1, Bute Crescent, Pontyclun at the time of the 1901 census aged 32.

Curiously, **Mr William Griffiths** was appointed by **W H Edwards** as Manager in 1889 [when **Mr Watkins** appears to have been Manager] according to the *Pontypridd Chronicle and Workmen's News* in September of that year. He had previously been Manager at the Dyffryn Tinsplate Works in Morriston.

**Mr John Hughes** was stated to be Manager by the *Cardiff Times* on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1903 when there was pollution in the River Ely allegedly caused by the tinworks.

**Mr Richard Lewis** lived in Windsor Terrace, Pontyclun at census time in 1891 and was described as "Manager in Tin Works". He was shown as being born in Tydu, Glamorgan and was aged 44. His wife, son and a general servant lived with him; ten years earlier he was in Salamander Street, Llanelli when he was a "Tin House Fireman". This appears to be the same **Richard Lewis** who leased the Ely Works from **W H Edwards** in 1904 with **Mr R peregrine** but who had left for the USA about 1892 to manage works in Pennsylvania. [*Pontyclun and Talygarn*] He was joined in that country by **MR**

**W R Watkins** [see above]. In 1904 a tenancy agreement between the GWR and The Ely Tinsplate Company mentioned **Mr Richard Lewis** as Managing Director of the Works so he could have returned by that time.

**Mr Richard Gillham** was appointed as Manager by **Richard Thomas and Company** with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 1908 according to the Company's minute book held by Tata Steel. He was to be paid £275 per annum rising to £300 per annum from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1909. He was born in Bristol in 1856 and was Cashier in a tinsplate works in 1901 when he lived in the Forest of Dean. Ten years later he lived at 18, Llantrisant Road, Pontyclun with his wife of 34 years.

According to *Pontyclun and Talygarn* [above]

**Mr Arthur Eastmond** was the last Manager of the works up to 1932. **John David**, in his book on the history of Pontyclun RFC entitled "*Hard Kicks but good Touches*" tells us that **Arthur** became Honorary Secretary of the club and appears in a photograph of 1921 [see below]. **Arthur** was born in Pontyclun in 1888 to **Silas and Mary Eastmond** and lived in Windsor Terrace for a number of years. The 1911 census shows him to be aged 23, single and living with his mother and stepfather at 59, Llantrisant Road, Pontyclun. At this time he was described as a Tinsplate Merchant's Clerk but, confusingly, was shown as **Arthur Eastwood**.

## APPENDIX 5

### Production, financial, trading and other data for the Ely Tinsplate Works under Richard Thomas and Company from 1909 to 1922

The information below is taken from Minute Book numbers 1-3 of the Company which are held at the Record Office of Tata Steel in Deeside. The production figures in the Minute Books are sometimes shown as "tons" and at other times as "ingots". Sometimes no measure apart from a number is given. The output shown below is as it is shown in the Company records.

Following the half year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1923, although the half yearly performance of works is noted in the Minute Books, no detail of individual works is shown. Presumably written reports were made available but these appear not to have survived.

For the half year to 2nd January 1909, output of 3,028 ingots and a loss of £748. Overall profit for the Company was in excess of £31,000.

For the half year to 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1909, output of 3,369 tons of ingots but as loss of £2,366. Overall profit for the Company was about £35,000.

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1909, output of 3,016 [presumably tons] and a profit of £68.

For the half year to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1910, output of 3,273 and a profit of £1,124.

August 1910, "Tinplate trade continues excellent-demand growing".

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1910, output 3,152 and a profit of £2,663.

For the half year to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1911, output 3,396 and a profit of £1846.

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1911, output 3,260 and a profit of £3,633.

16<sup>th</sup> February 1912, "Very little margin on making tinplate-severe competition from USA"

For the half year to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1912, output 2,609 and a profit of £3876.

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1912, output 3,146 and a profit of £512.

For the half year to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1913, output 3,265 and a loss of £1,108.

15<sup>th</sup> August 1913, "Big slump in tinplate prices-crisis in the UK. Government to be urged to give a 5% preference rate".

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1913, output 3,411 and a loss of £539.

For the half year to 4<sup>th</sup> July 1914, output 3,405 and a profit of £1136.

10<sup>th</sup> July 1914, "Notice given to employees; Ely works to go on a day to day basis after the end of the month. It will probably be desirable to stop these works entirely instead of stopping other works periodically so as to keep within the Tinplate Conference quantum". It was later decided to defer the Ely stoppage.

"World War 1-impossible to gauge effects".

21<sup>st</sup> October 1914, "Ely works not going well for sometime-only two mills working recently. Chairman authorised to close if he thinks fit".

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1914, output 1,853 and a loss of £200.

"Stoppage of Ely works from 19<sup>th</sup> March 1914".

"2 mills started on blackplate reported on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1915 and a further mill started on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1915".

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1915, output 2,471 and a profit of £969.

For the half year to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1916, output 2,748 and a profit of £2,056.

For the year to 30<sup>th</sup> June 1917, output 1,511 and a profit of £1,626.

For the 3 months to 30 September 1917, output 877 and a profit of £10,260.

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1918, output 1,715 and a profit of £10,412.

10<sup>th</sup> December 1918 World War 1 ended -at Ely 2 mills going, another one to be up by end March 1919".

1<sup>st</sup> September 1919 "Proposed footbridge over the level crossing at Ely works -await reply of the Clerk of the Council".

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1919, output 1,853 and a profit of £5,339.

For the half year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1919, output of 1,420 and a profit of £122.

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1920, output 1,878 and a profit of £13,395.

For the half year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1920, output 1,730 and a profit of £3,464.

For the year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1921, output 1,054 and a profit of £549.

For the half year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1922, output unknown but a loss of £416.

For the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1923, output unknown but a loss of £320.

For the half year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 1922, output unknown but a loss of £416.

Overall during these 13 years, the Company made profits of £63,050 and losses of £6,113. Taken together, the Company made net profits totalling £56,937.



Pontyclun and District Rugby Football Club. Season 1920-21  
*Back Row, L to R:* W. Griffiths, F. Growther, I. Sheppard  
 A.C. Eastmond, (Hon. Sec.) H. Lord, G. Retter, W. Grimes  
*Third Row: L. to R.:* P. Davies, H. Crandon, D. Jones, J. Davies, J. Hellings  
 G. Hopkins, I. Richards, W. Wareham, G. Rowe, F. Rees, B. Beard  
 J. Thomas, (Asst. Sec.), G. Napper  
*Second Row, L. to R.:* W. Davies, B. Edwards, I. Napper, W. Blythe (Capt.)  
 W. Lovett, (V. Capt.), W. Grace, W. C. Corbett, (Chairman)  
*Front Row: L. to R.:* A. Bartlett, H. Charles, J. Grace

The Llantrisant and District Local History Society meets in the Pontyclun Community Centre on second Tuesdays at 7. p.m. from September to April. Three field meetings are arranged in May, June and July.

For nearly fifty years we have been researching the medieval and early modern history of the borough and the parish and their place in the medieval lordships of Meisgyn and Glynrhondda. However, we are weak on modern history of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Pontyclun is fortunate in having Edgeley Thomas who is doing such excellent research in this area. Other communities in the parish, including the town, are not so lucky. There is therefore ample scope anyone seeking a new hobby to take up local history in Llantrisant and district. Help and guidance can be arranged for complete beginners.

For more information see our website [www.ladlhs.org.uk](http://www.ladlhs.org.uk).