

# CABAN

MARCH, 1964



*THE MAGAZINE OF THE OAKELEY SLATE QUARRIES*



# CABAN

THE OAKELEY SLATE QUARRIES CO. LTD.,  
BLAENAU FFESTINIOG, NORTH WALES,  
MITRE COURT CHAMBERS, OLD MITRE COURT (off Fleet Street),  
LONDON, E.C.4

● FRONT COVER: *Slates sent down from the Oakeley Quarry in the background awaiting despatch at the loading wharf, Blaenau Ffestiniog.*

"Caban" is the name of the type of mess-room in which the men of Oakeley meet for their meal-break . . . and which is also the centre of social life, and passing of information throughout the quarries, hence the title of this magazine

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## SIR KEITH JOSEPH MEETS THE SLATE-MAKERS



*Anxious moment for Sir Keith Joseph in the  
~~Bone Goedan mill—but the slate was neatly split~~*

“A beautiful end product”—this was the compliment paid to Welsh slate by Sir Keith Joseph, Minister of Housing and Local Government and Minister for Welsh Affairs, at the end of

a fact-finding tour he made of the Oakeley Quarries on January 18.

It was Sir Keith's first visit to a slate mine—Oakeley's is the deepest in the world—and he had warm praise, too, for





*Arriving at the foot of the C incline. The Minister (second from left) takes in the lofty surroundings of the quarry.*

the skill of the craftsmen after seeing slate won from an underground chamber and the finished article in the mill.

Blaenau Ffestiniog could hardly have provided a finer winter's day. Bright sunlight was dispelling early morning frost and melting ice on the quarry lake when the Minister arrived to be welcomed by Mr. A. D. Fordham, a director and secretary of our company. Mr. Gwilym Humphreys, the quarry manager, was indisposed and unable to be present.

In the party were Mr. T. W. Jones, M.P. for Merioneth, Mr. H. N. Jerman, Assistant Secretary, Welsh Office, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Mr. A. F. J. Grant, Director for Wales,

and Mr. C. H. Folland, of the Ministry of Public Building and Works, Cardiff, and Mr. Tudwal Davies of the Central Office of Information, Cardiff.

Equipped with helmet, wellingtons and a miner's lamp, Sir Keith rode on a truck down the C incline, taking in the lofty surroundings of the quarry, and descended into the mine on the K balance. The party's "guides" were deputy-manager William Thomas and under-manager Morris John Jones.

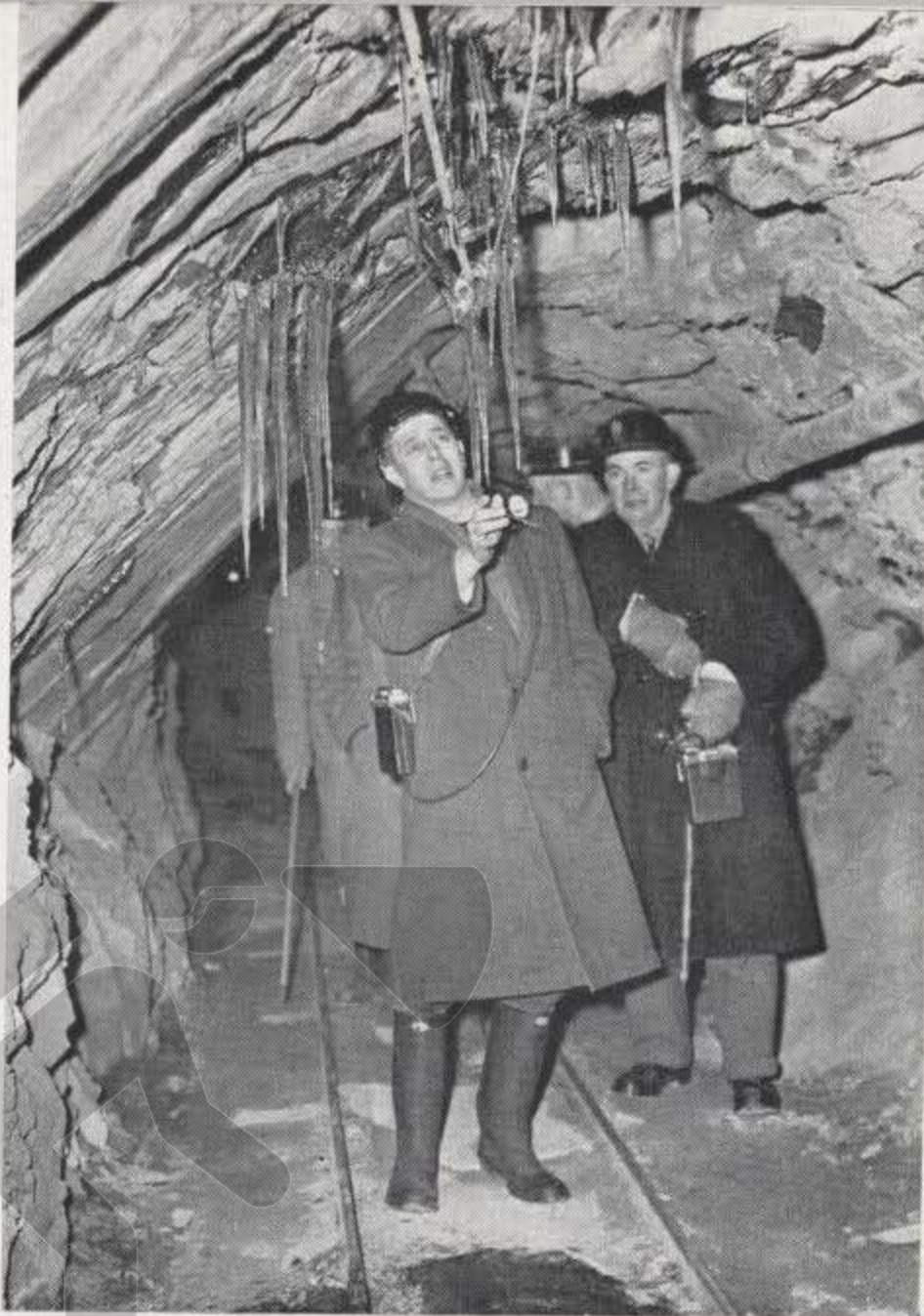
Walking along the first level Sir Keith broke away a cluster of icicles—hanging from the roof like stalactites—created overnight by frosty air drawn in by the natural ventilation system.



*An unexpected obstruction  
— icy "stalactites" en-  
countered in the mine.*



*The technique of pillaring  
a block of slate is explained  
to Sir Keith Joseph who is  
seen with deputy manager  
William Thomas. On the  
block are under-manager  
Morris John Jones (left)  
and rockman Evan H. Ellis.*





Being a Saturday, when normally the quarries are closed, it was extraordinarily quiet below ground, only a few men necessary to the special visit having been brought in. The party's objective was chamber KB 1, which was reached by a short walk through tunnels running from the main level.

Here Sir Keith saw rockmen David Roberts and Evan Ellis carrying out the drilling and pillaring method of reducing a block of slate weighing about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  tons, which they had brought down from the high rock face of the chamber. In this operation the block is split longways by a few sharp blows with a sledge hammer on a "plug and feathers" inserted in the hole drilled in a strategic position. The block divides in proportions expertly calculated to yield the maximum number of slates.

The technique intrigued Sir Keith. Noticing that the line of the split curved towards one end of the block, he asked what would happen "if it had gone

wrong," and was assured that it could not go wrong. It was explained that the split followed the pillaring line and that any deviation was a consequence of the way in which the slate had originally been formed. Sometimes the pillaring line was perfectly straight.

The demonstration was viewed in a pool of light, and so that Sir Keith could judge the size of the otherwise dark chamber all lamps were turned upwards. "It is like a cathedral," he remarked, and was surprised to learn that this particular chamber had been worked for about 40 years.

He wondered how the rockmen managed in so vast a space with only their individual lamps and was told there was no difficulty about that. Before the introduction of electric lamps men had worked with candles.

Sir Keith also enquired whether there were any ventilation problems in the

*Continued on page 27*

*All eyes look upwards—with the lights of miners' lamps only partially penetrating the darkness of the vast chamber.*





Mr. T. W. Jones (left), Merionethshire's Member of Parliament, and Sir Keith Joseph, find the underground scene absorbing.



In the mill a block is "sliced" along the cleavage, as opposed to pillaring, and Sir Keith's questions are answered by slate-makers Austin Roberts and Richard H. Jones.



Before leaving the mill Sir Keith chatted with Richard H. Jones and elicited the fact that he has been working at the Oakeley Quarry for 44 years.





# FROM RECORDS OF THE OAKELEY HOSPITAL

TWO old books in the Oakeley Quarry office survive as records of a "quarrymen's hospital" which was opened at Blaenau Ffestiniog nearly a century ago. A patients' entrance book inscribed "Mrs. Oakeley's Hospital, Rhiwbryfdir" gives its original name—Mrs. Oakeley was the wife of Mr. W. E. Oakeley, founder of the company which bears his name—and the architectural design of the building which still exists is characteristic of others built on the Oakeley estate at Maentwrog.

The first entry in this book is dated January 15th, 1866 and for some years thereafter the hospital, served by various doctors and surgeons, ministered to men injured in quarry accidents until it was superseded in the 1920s by the Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital. Its humanitarian function ended, the building became Clwb yr Oakeley, a popular centre for the social and recreational activities of our quarrymen and their families.

Although spanning the busiest era in the slate quarrying industry of the Ffestiniog area the old hospital records still preserved cannot be said to add much to local industrial history but the lists of admissions to the Oakeley Hospital, as it later became known, at any rate reveal the extent of the region from which the quarries drew their workmen.

## *Throughout North Wales*

They came from towns and villages scattered throughout North Wales and outside—from Aberdaron, furthest point on the Llyn peninsula to the west; to Oswestry in Shropshire to the east; from Holyhead in the north to Aberystwyth in the south. Tiny hamlets in the Denbighshire uplands appear as addresses in the hospital book. There was one patient from South Wales, and the word "Utica" against the name of another gave one to think for a moment that he

came from the U.S.A., but this was and is the name of a chapel in Maentwrog and its immediate locality.

Many of the men who came to work in the quarries from distant places lived by the week or longer in barracks built at the quarries—a description of life in one at Oakeley can be found in an earlier issue of *Caban*—or in lodgings in the district.

Both the old books with which we are dealing record only the admissions of accident cases, descriptions of the injuries and treatment. Some of the entries testify to the care and attention given to the patients. The worst accident mentioned in the book is briefly recorded thus: "February, 1888, five men killed—bridge accident."

## *Aids to convalescence*

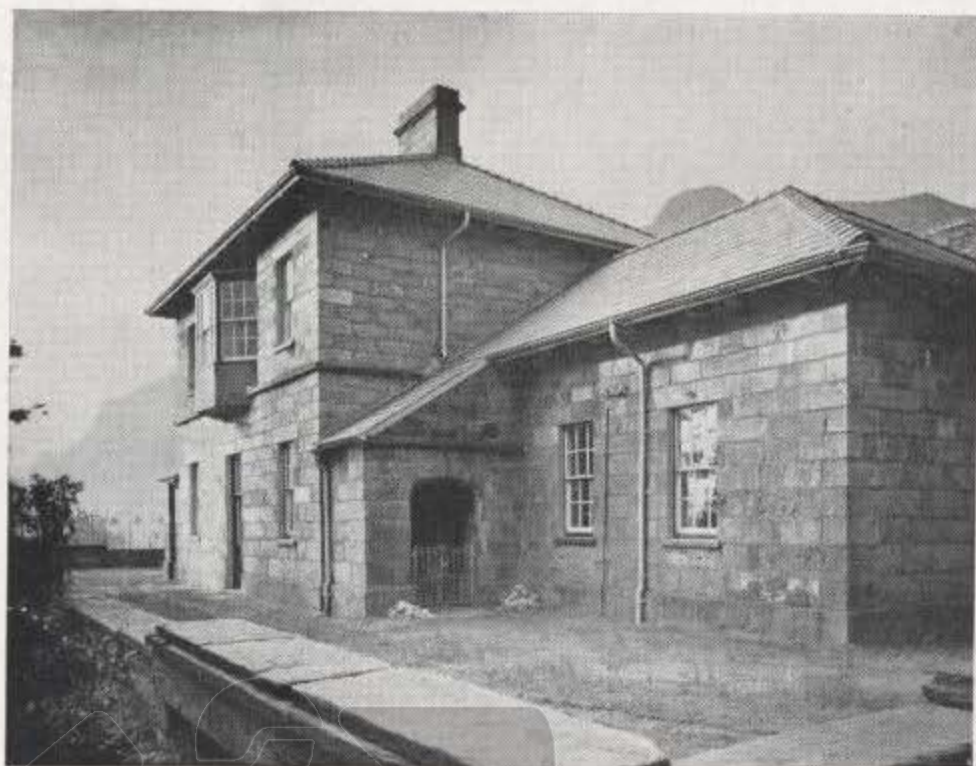
Dietary instructions appearing more frequently in the second book, which covers the years 1891 to 1909, make interesting reading. As aids to convalescence the doctors ordered for one patient or another, beef tea, a bottle of port wine, half-a-pint of ale or a pint of beer daily, or chicken broth—luxuries which no doubt were welcome extras to the "ordinary diet" more often mentioned.

Only few of the entries can be described as complete. For instance, an Oakeley quarryman admitted on December 19, 1906, with "sprained ankle and slight internal injuries," had these two further entries against his name: "December 26, recovery favourable—1 pint beer daily. January 10, stop beer. 2 doz., 8 bottles in all."

Among the last few pages in this book are the instructions for a special diet for a patient making satisfactory progress after 15 days in hospital "but still rather anaemic through loss of



*This was the Oakeley Hospital until the 1920s.*



blood." These read: "Brandy, champagne, tawny port wine, chicken broth, beef, mutton, soda water and lemonade."

But perhaps the best evidence of the work of the hospital is afforded by the comment concluding the record of a quarryman who was admitted with a crushed leg and was in a critical condition for some days before an amputation was decided. It reads: "But for the careful attention that patient has had from Mrs. Williams and the Matron patient would have had no chance of recovery."

This was signed by the surgeon, T. J. Carey Evans, whose name frequently appears in the record with those of R. D. Evans, Richard Jones, M. Vaughan Roberts and J. T. Price.

[The son of Dr. R. D. Evans, T. J. Carey Evans, later Sir Tom Carey Evans, married Olwen, daughter of David Lloyd George who became the first Earl of Dwyfor, and was in practice in London for years. Lady Olwen Carey Evans lives near Criccieth.]

The hospital's facilities were available to Ffestiniog quarries and the medical services were paid for by those employed in them. Revised rules dated "Oakeley's Hospital, August 1875" provided that every worker who paid a shilling every four weeks (children under 14, sixpence) through the quarry offices towards the medical services should have the right to use the hospital. The contributions

were to be handed over to the doctor appointed to receive them.

The services of the doctors (then Messrs. Roberts, Williams and Roberts) were available to the workers and their families in cases of ill-health or accident, and it was provided that the doctors should receive an additional fee of 10s. 6d. for attendance at the birth of a child of a worker.

Two others of the rules, which are printed in Welsh, are worth mentioning. One stated that the doctors were to supply only drugs and other things they considered to be essential, and the workers were to provide bottles and pay for everything that came into their permanent possession, such as girdles (belts), syringes, etc., "and also cod liver oil and leeches."

#### *Penalty for poaching*

Under another rule a worker who brought injury or ill-health upon himself through some unlawful behaviour, such as fighting, drunkenness, poaching, etc., made himself responsible for paying the doctor in such circumstances, independently of the monthly contributions.

According to the rules, the doctors agreed to give their services to workers and their families in the following districts: The Hospital District, to include Blaenau Ffestiniog, Tanygrisiau, the various quarries and the Dolwyddelan area; the Ffestiniog District, to include



the remainder of the parish of Ffestiniog and of the parishes of Trawsfynydd and Maentwrog; and the Portmadoc District, to include the Tremadoc division and the "Workhouse" area from Ffestiniog to the village of Talsarnau.

The Committee whose names were appended to the rules were W. E. Oakeley, the Right Hon. Cowper Temple, M.P., Samuel Holland, M.P., J. W. Greaves, E. W. Matthews, J. Ernest Greaves and A. M. Dunlop.

Workers' contributions to the medical fund were deducted from their earnings and to comply with the Truck Acts, 1831, their agreement to the deductions was necessary. This was signified by their initialling an "authorisation sheet" opposite their names.

#### *For the smith*

Documents of this kind preserved in the Oakeley Quarry office contain three columns for contributions respectively to "Relief Fund," "Medical Fund" and "Smith."

In the last column were entered the "monthly dues" to the quarry blacksmiths from the quarrymen for sharpening chisels and drills which they themselves provided. This was the custom until not many years ago, and the money deducted from earnings was handed over to the smiths.

It is of interest to recall that the last blacksmith who worked under this system at the Oakeley Quarries was a Hugh Price. He was apparently a genius at sharpening tools and a specialist in making them, particularly the splitting chisel, for his skill was called upon by quarries in many parts of Wales.

## *Opening a new chamber*

**O**PENING a new underground chamber is the task of the miners, first to extend the communication tunnel from the previous working chamber for a distance of 30 to 40 feet—the width of the pillar which will remain between the two chambers—and then tunnel upwards towards the floor above in which a suitable opening is made for ventilation and bridged.

Part of the operation is illustrated in the photograph reproduced on the opposite page, which was taken on Q Floor, some 800 feet below ground. The miners, having tunnelled along the level, are drilling and blasting their way upwards to P Floor.

Almost invisible at the top end of the tunnel is W. R. Jones—the circle indicates his position—and below him is his miner partner Robert E. Lewis, held by safety chains.

Into the tunnel runs a compressed air-line for the operation of the drill and also an air-line for extraction of dust during the drilling of holes for explosive charges.

The task of the miners will be completed when they have prepared a working surface for the rockmen who will move in to win slate from the new chamber—B 1, Q Floor.

## **Present from Denmark**

**A** PLEASANT surprise for the Oakeley stamp-collectors who were featured in the "Hobbies Gallery" in the previous issue of *Caban* was the arrival for them of a large assortment of used Danish stamps of various denominations.

They came as a gift from Messrs. Christensen and Neilsen, of Aarhus,

Denmark, esteemed customers of our Company, with a note signed "S. Petersen" which read: "Please forward these stamps to the two philatelists Glyn Williams and James Alan Roberts at Bonc Siafft, about which two we have read in your last *Caban* number."

The thoughtful gesture of our friends in Denmark was much appreciated.





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*Miners at work on Q Floor.*



# WELSH ROOFS IN



## **New housing estate at Llan Ffestiniog**

**T**HE Moelwyn mountains form the background for this view of part of the Ffestiniog Urban District Council's new estate of 18 houses and four flats at Bryn Coed, Llan Ffestiniog. Slates for roofing are being supplied by the Oakeley Slate Quarries Co., Ltd., the builders are Messrs. J. H. E. Williams, contractors, Wrexham, and the architects, Homeville & Co., Ltd., Maidenhead, Berkshire.

## **Slate in power project**

In the valley below the Oakeley Quarries, near Tanygrisiau, at the foot of the Moelwyn mountains, stands the Central Electricity Generating Board's Ffestiniog Power Station, the pumped storage scheme which has attracted world-wide attention, and been visited by thousands of people following its official opening by Her Majesty the Queen in August 1963.

The Oakeley Quarries, among others, supplied slate to the building contractors, mainly for use in the construction of walling in the environs of the power house. Our picture of the station shows in the foreground a slate-built wall on the bank of the lower lake from which water, after driving the turbines, is pumped back into the upper lake, Llyn Stwlan, high in the Moelwyn range, to be harnessed again for power generation.



# TOWN & COUNTRY



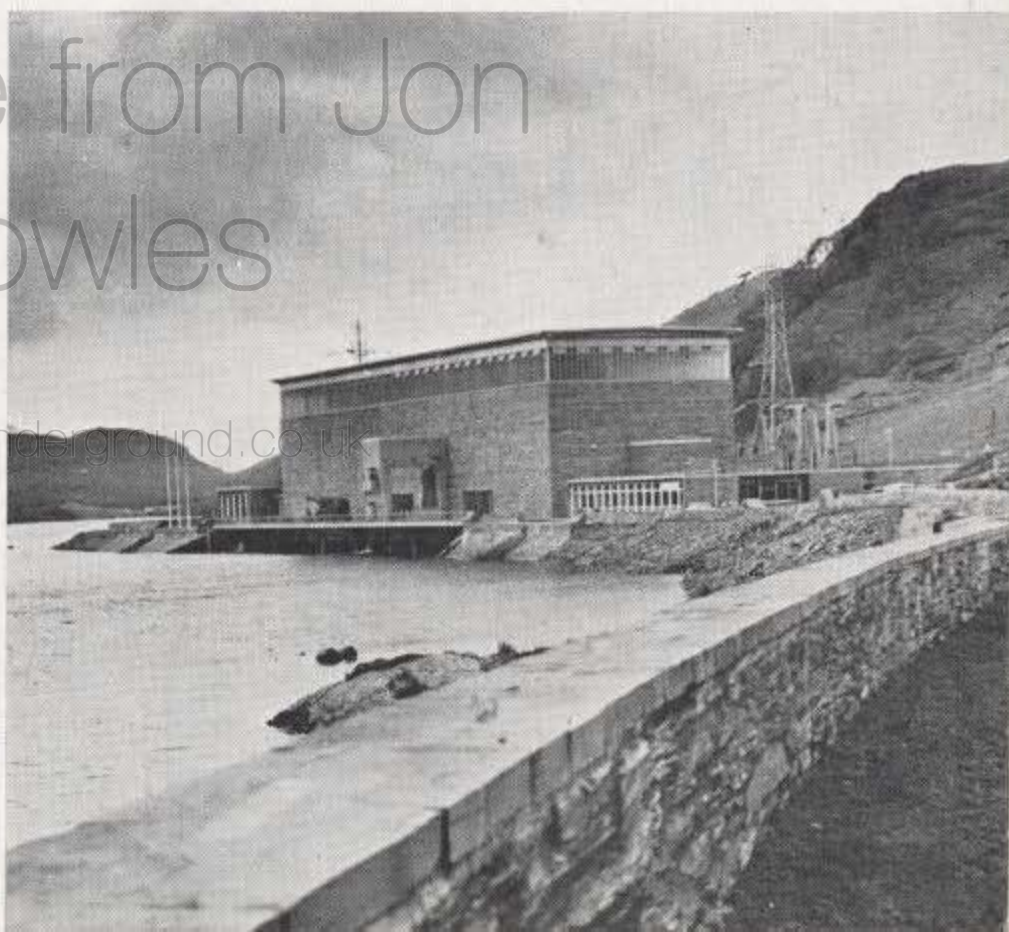
**O**AKELEY slates roof these neatly-designed buildings erected for the Flintshire County Council at Broughton. Completed last year the building on the left is a Children's Group Home for housing young children in the care of the county council, and the main contractors were Nield (Builders, Broughton) Ltd.

On the right are a pair of houses, with garages and offices, built for the county's

Standing Joint Police Committee by George Eastwood and Sons Ltd., Hawarden, near Chester.

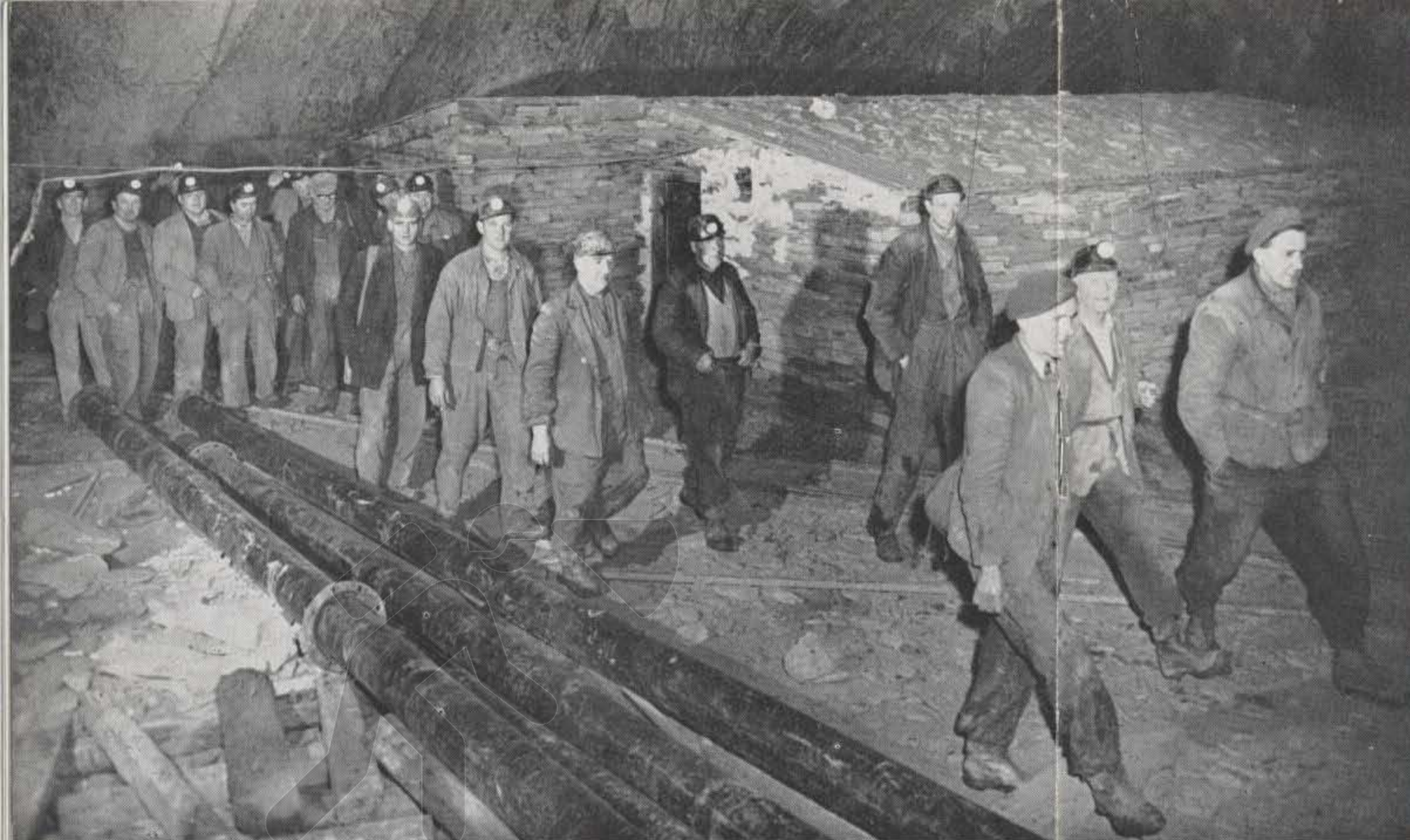
The buildings were designed by the county architect, Mr. R. W. Harvey, A.R.I.B.A. and in both instances the slates were supplied and fixed by Messrs J. G. Tuxford, roofing contractors, Conway.

*Ffestiniog Power Station*



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## SEARCHLIGHT in MINIATURE

**A**N essential aid to the securers, whose responsible task it is to ensure the safety of the rock-face, is a beam of light powerful enough to enable them to detect, even in the high "ceilings" of cavernous underground chambers, a piece of stone which might be suspect.

Until recently a Tilly paraffin lamp, efficient enough but cumbersome to transport about the mine, was used by the securers on their regular inspections, and this has now been replaced by an electric lamp operated by rechargeable batteries and much more easily carried.

A searchlight in miniature, the new lamp is being demonstrated in our picture by Thomas Roberts and his fellow-securer William Jones. The old lamp is shown for comparison.

## AFTER THE MID-DAY BREAK

**F**ROM their caban under the rock, just off the railway on K Floor of the Oakeley mine, quarrymen step out—back to work after the mid-day break during which they have their packed lunches, washed down with mugs of freshly-brewed tea, and exchange news and views with a good deal of cheerful banter.

The men in this picture are Ifan James Evans, William L. Chart, David E. Jones, Ernest John Ellis, Richard David Jones, Richard Jones, David Lloyd Jones, Glyn Roberts (president of the caban), Thomas Ellis Jones, David Roberts (timekeeper), Evan H. Ellis (secretary), John Llewelyn Roberts, Robert Cadwaladr Roberts, Robert Goronwy Hughes, Griffith Arthur Williams, Trebor Roberts and Geoffrey John Osborne.

### After many years service

*Caban* extends good wishes to the following who have retired during the past year after long service to our Company: Evan L. Morris, slate inspector, who retired owing to ill-health after 32 years' service at the Oakeley Quarry; Hugh Hughes, saw sharpener (30 years); John E. P. Jones, loco driver (40 years); David Hughes, rockman (36 years); Daniel Jones, rockman (36 years); Trefor W. Davies, slate-maker (45 years); Richard W. Smith, loco driver at the wharf (40 years); John Edward Jones, diamond saw attendant (44 years at Votty), and Edward E. Edwards, labourer underground at Votty (41 years).

Securers Thomas Roberts and William Jones.







## MODERN AND OLD-TIME EXHIBITIONS

**A**LWAYS an eye-catching feature of the Building Exhibition in London's Olympia, the stand of the North Wales Slate Quarries Association at last year's show again captured a great deal of professional and public interest.

"There is nothing to touch it" was the unsolicited comment most often heard, which might be taken as a tribute to the quality of the products of the Welsh slate quarries that were on view as well as to the designers of the display, Arnold Rattenbury and Associates.

As an interesting contrast in exhibition technique we reproduce a photograph of a "trade show" long ago in the old Crystal Palace, London.

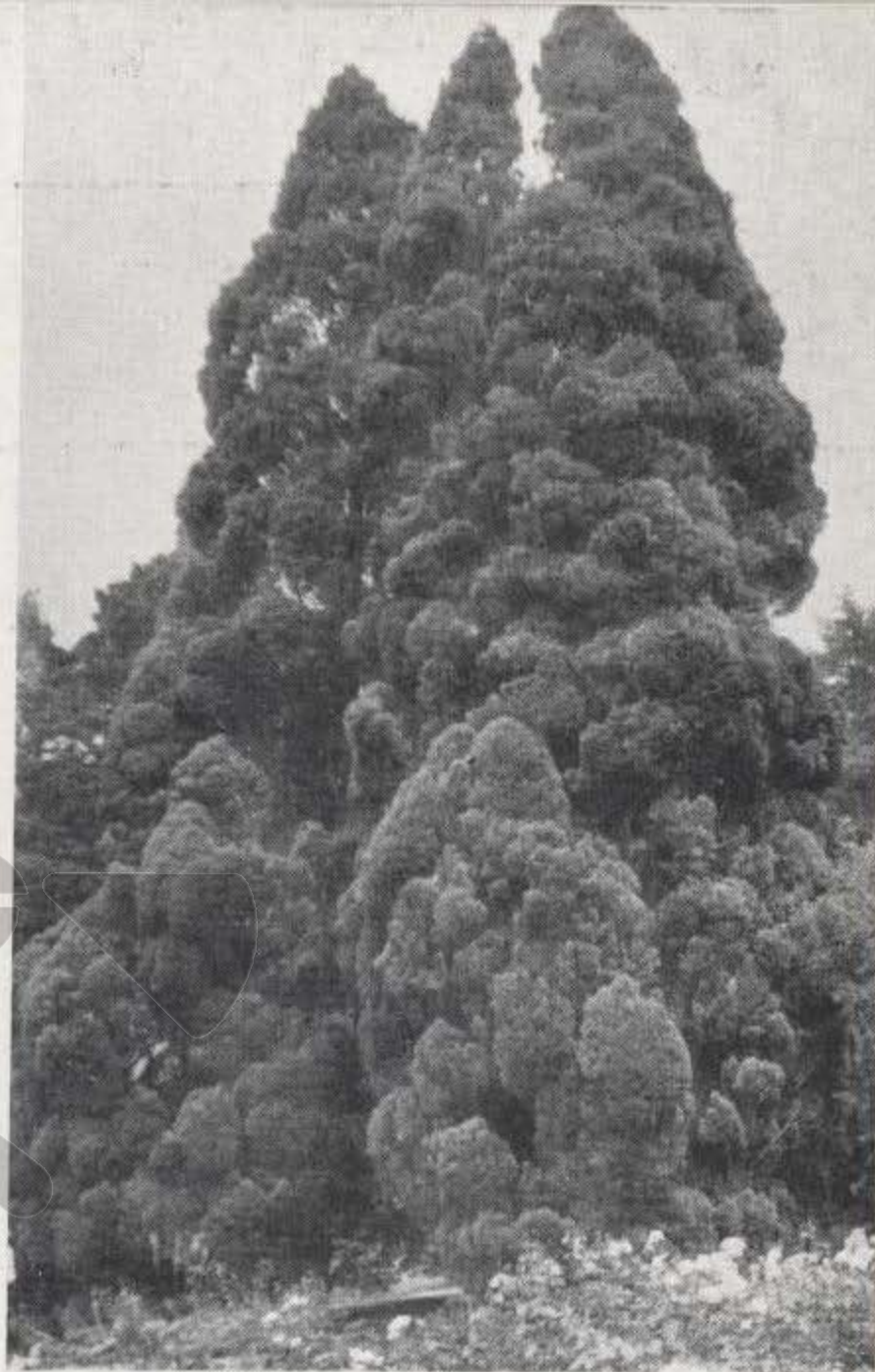
The Oakeley Quarries stand, illustrating the flexibility of slate in roofing and affording working demonstrations of slate splitting and dressing, drew the crowds then, too, judging by other old photographs in the quarry records.





# Holiday snaps competition

**I**N our Holiday Snaps Competition, which did not produce as varied an entry as usual, the total prize money is shared between R. C. Roberts (M. Floor), who found his subjects during a visit to the famous Bodnant Gardens in the Conway Valley, and J. G. Hughes (Bonc Shaft) for his seaside picture at Criccieth.



Above: These graceful trees in the National Trust part of the Bodnant Gardens are a form of Lawson's Cypress "*Chamaecyparis Lawsonia*" "*Erecta Viridis*".



Left: Bodnant, the residence of Lord and Lady Aberconway.

Right: Sea-front at Criccieth. In the background the ruins of the castle, said by some to have been built by the Welsh princes and cased with masonry by Edward I.





# TAITH I AMERICA

gan

Griffith Williams

*Ar ymweliad a theulu iddo yn America yn yr hydref y llynedd, teithiodd Griffith Williams gryn dipyn yn y wlad honno ac fe welodd lawer. Rhyfeddodau byd enwog fel y Niagara Falls ac adeiladau enfawr New York, a golygfeydd llai syfrdanol, ond nid llai rhyfeddol, serch hynny, i'r ymwelydd o'r Blaenau. Taith i'w chofio oedd y daith hon i'r Byd Newydd.*

**Y**R oedd gan fy nhad chwaer a thri brawd wedi sefydlu yn America flynyddoedd yn ôl, a phenderfynais ymweld â rhai o'u plant sydd yn aros yno.

Cychwynais o Dalwaenydd nos Fercher, Medi 11, 1963, mewn modur i Lerpwl i gychwyn, ac oddiyno i erodrom Manceinion. Yr oeddwn yn un o 109 o deithwyr yn cychwyn am chwarter wedi un bore lau, yr oll wedi ein rhybuddio i wisgo y "safety belt" a pheidio ysmegu hyd nes byddai y plen yn "airborne."

Wedi awr o hedfan cawsom swper ac yna rhoddwyd rhai o'r goleuadau allan er mwyn i ni geisio cysgu. Wedi bod yn hedfan am rhyw bedair awr daeth gair i ddweud ein bod yn dod i storm o wynt cryf, ac yn wir yr oedd y plen yn siglo fel crud yn y dymestl. Newidiwyd y cwrs am Gander, Newfoundland, er mwyn cael cyflenwad o "fuel," gan fod y plen wedi arafu yn y gwynt cryf.

Daeth gair cyn hir i ddweud ein bod yn nesu at Gander ac erbyn hyn yr oedd yn doriad dydd. Wrth edrych allan daeth geiriau'r emynydd i'm cof.

"Gwel, uwchlaw cymylau amser,  
O fy enaid, gwel y tir."

Wedi glanio cawsom awr i gerdded o gwmpas, a hyfryd oedd teimlo ein traed odditanom.

Ail gychwynwyd, a hedfan uwchben Nova Scotia a Halifax. Yr oeddym 20,000 o droedfeddi o uchder ac yn nesu at ben ein taith 3<sup>1</sup> awr ar ôl ein hamser. Cawsom frecwast cyn cyrraedd New York, ond yn Idlewild cymerodd rhyw awr i fynd trwy y "Customs." O ganlyniad collais y plen o Airport y Mohawk Air Lines. Yr oedd 300 o filltiroedd i fynd cyn imi gyrraedd Utica. Yr oeddwn yn dra diolchgar i gyfnither i mi a'i gwr, a

ddaeth i'm cyfarfod, ac a aethant a mi i Long Island i aros amser. Er nas gwelais hwy o'r blaen yr oedd eu croeso yn eithriadol, a mawr fy niolch iddynt. Yr oedd y gwres yn uchel, a minnau wedi dod mewn ychydig oriau o oerni y Blaenau.

Gan mai dynion duon oedd y rhan fwyaf o'r staff yn Mohawk Airport, a'u hiaith yn bur ddieithr i mi, yr oeddwn yn ffodus fod gwr fy nghyfnither wedi dod gyda mi cyn belled a hyn, ond rhaid oedd teithio ymlaen fy hunan am Utica. Daeth perthynas arall i mi a'i gwr i'm cyfarfod yno, sef Nell ac Ellis Williams, ef yn frawd i'r diweddar Joseph Williams, ysgrifennydd yr Undeb. Aethom daith o rhyw 13 milltir a chyrraedd Utica am 10 o'r gloch wedi blino dipyn erbyn hyn.

## *Pawb yn groesawus*

Yr oedd bore Gwener yn eithriadol braf ac awyr las uwchben, ac aethom oddiamgylch i weld dipyn ar Utica. Daeth rhai o'r teulu i'm gweld. Nid oedd yr adeiladau yn uchel fel yn New York City, a theithiais drwy'r prynhawn gyda Nell ac Ellis trwy bentrefi New Hartford, Onesta a Dinsboro. Rhyfeddwn weld y tai wedi eu hadeiladu â choed, yr oll wedi eu paentio yn wyn a'u gwresogi â "central heating," gan nas gellid gwneud tân glo mewn tai coed. Yr oedd pawb yn hynod o groesawus.

Bore Sul aethym i'r oedfa. Dim ond un oedfa a geir ar y Sul—lle bu tair gynt. Cyfarfod amryw o Gymry, rhai o'r Blaenau, ond heb unrhyw gysylltiad â'r lle erbyn hyn. Fore Llun daeth cefnder i fy nôl, sef Dave Roberts o Quinton, pum milltir o Utica, ffermwr cefnog wedi ll yddo'i gwneud hi'n dda.



Teithiais gydag ef, wedi gweld ei fferm, i Gatesdale ac ar draws y wlad i Edmondston, State of New York, ac i Leonardsville, lle y ceir arwerthiant mawr anifeiliaid. Amryw o'r amaethwyr yn cwyno ar y sychter — "We badly want the million dollar rain here." A newydd iawn i mi oedd gweld Indian corn yn cael ei hel i ysguboriau. Bwyta i y bobl "sweet corn" wedi ei ferwi. Nid oeddwn yn hoff iawn ohonno, diffyg arferiad mae'n siwr. Dywedais wrth un ffermwr mai nid iar oeddwn — "Ei roi i'r ieir yr ydym yn yr hen wlad."

llynnoedd prydferth. Yr oedd llawer o wiwerod llwyd, ac ambell i fwlbart yn croesi y ffordd. Rhyfeddwn at y glanweithdra oedd i'w weld ymhobman.

Mynd i noson lawen yng nghapel Moreia, Utica, a chael te yno a chyfarfod amryw o Gymry. Yr oedd cymanfaganu y Sul dan arweiniad T. Gwyn Jones o Bethel, Arfon, ac ar ôl cyfarfod y prynhawn cefais de gydag un o blant y Llan, sef Betty Ephraim, a'i phriod, Hywel Jones. Bore Llun teithiais i Rome i weld un o'r Garn, sef Owen Williams, Penybont, a'i briod.

*Griffith Williams gyda'i gefndryd a'i gyfnither yn America; o'r chwith, Christmas Roberts, David Roberts Griffith Williams, Sarah Ellen Roberts, William Roberts a Arthur Roberts.*



Gelwais i weld fferm gwr enwog o'r Garn, sef Humphrey Jones, a adnabyddir yn yr Amerig fel y "Potato King."

Bore dranoeth cychwyn o Utica i le o'r enw Remsen, 22 milltir i ffordd, i weld yr hen gyfaill R. D. Roberts (Sbondar) o'r Penrhyn gynt, a'r teulu i gyd. Aethum ymlaen i weld y llynnoedd a'r coedwigoedd gwyh, a sefyll ar lan llyn Kayutah, ac i gapel Cymraeg o'r enw Bethel, wedi ei adeiladu yn y flwyddyn 1838. Yr oedd amryw o Gymry wedi eu claddu yma ond nid oedd modd olrhain o ba le y daethant yng Nghymru. Troesom yn ôl wedi swpera gyda Morganwg Roberts a'i briod.

I Leslie Arc bore Sadwrn. Cychwyn gyda cefnder arall i mi, Chris Roberts a'i briod Eleanor, a oedd a'i rhieni o'r Penrhyn. Ganwyd hi yn yr Amerig ond 'roedd ganddi Gymraeg hynod o dda. Cychwynasom am y Lake Mountains a chawsom olygfa wych o goe a

Yn Quinton gwelais W. R. Jones, oedd a'i wreiddiau yn Talywaenydd. Y mae yn 95 mlwydd oed a'i dad wedi ei fagu yn Tai Frest. Bu yn rwbwlwr bach yn chwarel Holland pan yn 12 oed gyda Bryfdir. Cofia am un o'r enw Rhys Roberts, Dinas, oedd yn rybela yno hefyd yn Ebrill, 1884. Cychwynodd ei dad a'i fam i'r Amerig ar Ebrill 6, a drwg gennyf nas gallaf gofio o ba le yr hanna i ei briod, ond cofiaf iddi ddweud fod ei mam wedi bod yn forwyn i John Jones, Talsarn. Dydd Mercher cychwynais gyda bws y Greyhound o Utica i Buffalo, 288 milltir, ac yr oedd cefnder i mi yn fy nisgwyl tu allan i Buffalo, mewn tref fechan o'r enw Tonamanda. Yma y gwelais fwyaf o bobl dduon.

Bore Iau dyma gychwyn am y Niagara fawr, rhyw 40 milltir o'r lle yr arhoswm. Golygfa fyth gofiadwy. Ni welais erioed y fath lifeiriant o ddwr yn dymchwel i'r gwaelodion gyda rhu fel taranau. 'Roedd



yn rhaid i mi fynd ar y llong, "Maid of the Mist," i gael trochfa o'r trochiannog ddwr. Trip i'w gofio oedd hwn. Cefais olwg ar y gerddi prydferth a'r parciau, ac yna i'r "Seagram Tower," a agorwyd yr haf hwn. Yr oeddym 288 o droedfeddi o uchter wedi cyraedd y top mewn lift. Gwelwn yr Horseshoe Falls a'r American Falls prydferth o ben y twr hwn, ac yna ymlaen a fi i weld y "Niagara Whirlpool Rapids" a'r "Great Gorge" a'r "aero car" yn croesi y Niagara. Gweld hefyd yr "Ontario Hydro Floral Clock" wedi ei wneud o flodau bychain o bob lliw. Yr oedd yn "taro" bob chwarter awr. Gwelais y "Rainbow Bridge" ac wrth gwrs "Cave of the Winds," "Falls Goat Island" a'r "Old Fort Eyrie," a adeiladwyd gan Lloegr yn 1814, ac yna yn ôl i'r Niagara at amser y goleuadau. Golygfa i'w chofio.

Mewn tywydd godidog troi yn ôl am Utica, a chyfaill yn gofyn i mi "Beth wyt ti yn ei feddwl o'r lle?" "Gallaf ddweud am y tywydd" meddwn:

"Lle mae'r awel fyth yn dyner,

Lle mae'r wybren fyth yn glir."

Gyda chyfaill, Hywel Jones, a'i briod, Betty o Llan Ffestiniog, a chyfnither arall i mi, Sarah Ellen, cychwyn bore Sadwrn i Granville, 150 o filltiroedd, lle 'roedd dwy gyfnither yn fy nisgwyl. Arhosais yno hyd y dydd Mercher dilynol. Cefais olwg ar y chwareli yno, yn West Awlet, a rhaid addef mai siomedig iawn oeddwn. Yr oeddynt yn fychan iawn ac ansawdd y llechi yn bur wahanol i'r eiddom ni. Fel yma, prinder gweithwyr. Yr oedd y cyfaill a aeth a mi yno wedi gweithio blynnyddoedd yn y chwareli a soniai am y rhai o'r Blaenau a ddaeth yno i weithio amser yn ôl. 'Roedd gair da i ddyn ifanc o Glanypwll o'r enw John Hughes. Gelwir un mynydd yno yn Fynydd 'Stiniog.

Troais yn ôl ddydd Mercher am Utica a chyfarfyddais âg Evan G. Jones a'i briod o'r Garn, a ddaeth trosodd yn y "Queen Mary." Gadewais Utica am 4 o'r gloch am New York gyda plen Mohawk, yn hedfan yn isel, gan ei bod yn ddiwrnod heulog braf, er mwyn i'r teithwyr fwynhau y golygfeydd odditanom. Yn Idlewild yr oedd Milton Wolfe i'm cyfarfod. Ymlaen 20 milltir i Hollis Jamaica, a bore Sadwrn i ddinas fawr New York City.

## OUR FOUR

The note in Welsh below refers to four octogenarian pensioners of our Company, the oldest of whom is 89 years old David Roberts, still remarkably active despite his years. "Caban" called at his home in Blaenau Ffestiniog on a mild January day to find that he was out walking in the country and would not be back for two or three hours!

**B**YDDWN yn cael gair oddiwrth brai o hen weithwyr weithiau—yn arbennig oddiwrth bensynwyr. Wrth sylwi ar eu henwau synwn weld fod pedwar o honynt dros eu pedwar-ugain oed—dyma nhw —:

David Roberts, Edward Lloyd, John Roberts a David Lewis.

Yn wir y mae David Roberts yn 89 oed ac wrth gwrs yn byw yn yr hen ardal o hyd. Ac mae John Roberts yn Nhanygrisiau a David Lewis yn Benar View.

Ar hyn o bryd yn Birkenhead y mae Edward Lloyd ond y mae ganddo fwthyn ger Corwen a dyma bennill bach a anfonodd ychydig o flaen y Nadolig—

*Disgwyl caf roi tro i'r bwthyn  
Unwaith eto ddechrau'r flwyddyn,  
A chaf yfed dwr o'r ffynnon —  
Y moddion gorau i wella'r galon.*

Cofion gorau Caban atoch i gyd.

Bum yn sylhau yno ar y "skyscrapers" y clywais gymaint sôn amdanynt, ac i fyny 47th a 48th Avenues a mi hyd nes cyraedd restaurant y paffiwr enwog Jack Dempsey. Aethum i weld St. Patrick's Cathedral, lle yr oedd cerfluniaeth gwych. Wedyn i'r dociau i gael llong y Star Line i fynd i weld Manhattan Island, tair awr o forio. Yr oedd mynd yn ymyl y "Statue of Liberty" yn rhywbeth gwerth ei gofio.

Gan ei bod yn nosi erbyn hyn cefais gyfle i weld goleuadau New York, ac wedyn moduro trwy dwnel Brooklyn i

—Terfynwyd ar dudalen 26



**OCTOGENARIAN      PENSIONERS**



*David Roberts*



*Edward Lloyd*



*John Roberts*



*David Lewis*



## Brooch in two-colour slate

# BETWEEN



**H**ERE is a rare, possibly unique, piece of artistry in slate, the work of some unknown craftsman.

An oval-shaped brooch two inches long, an inch and a quarter at its widest and a quarter-inch thick, it is made from a two-colour slate — purple and light green — which had evidently been split and the two pieces fixed together in reverse so that both colours are to be seen in fairly even proportions in the name “Catherine.”

This curio was found by Oakeley slate-maker Phillip Owen among the

effects of his late father, Owen Owen who was a carpenter at Oakeley until his retirement, and he told *Caban* that had he not chanced to see it among some unwanted things the brooch might well have gone into the dustbin.

It has virtually been round the Oakeley quarries and no one can recollect ever having seen such delicate craftsmanship in slate.

The “Catherine” for whom the brooch was made was a sister of the late Owen Owen, and that is all that seems to be known about its origin.

## “Santa Claus” remembered

**T**O help make it a Happy Christmas for the children of our quarrymen, gaily-wrapped Christmas parcels containing chocolates and sweets were presented to them, and in our picture John Barlow (left) and David J. Jones, members of the Oakeley office staff are seen preparing the gifts for distribution.





# OURSELVES

## Sketches from memory

MANY a caban and small "office" above and below ground at Oakeley has its decoration in the form of colourful reproductions of outdoor scenes, cartoons and other illustrations which catch the quarryman's fancy—even a "pin-up" or two.

Sometimes the artistic bent of the men finds expression in a modest display of their own work. *Caban* discovered the latest example down the mine on K Floor in the "office" of under-manager

Alfred Humphreys, which is also a first-aid post in his charge.

Pencil drawing is his hobby and on the wall were sketches of Arthur Askey, Sir Thomas Beecham, Gilbert Harding, Sir Winston Churchill and Floyd Patterson. In our picture Alfred Humphreys is seen touching up his impression of the boxer.

He draws his subjects from memory, the only lessons he ever had were during his schooldays—he is now 50—but obviously he finds a lot of pleasure filling in the odd moment with pencil and paper.

Colour he has not yet attempted, neither has he drawn any member of his family, and he confesses that he has often tried but never quite succeeded in capturing to his satisfaction the characteristic features of Mr. Harold Macmillan, the former Prime Minister.

*Alfred Humphreys touches up a sketch of Floyd Patterson.*



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# CEREMONY AT ERW FAIR



*After the presentation (from left): Messrs. David Griffiths, Dennis Roberts, E. Jarrett Jones, H. Gwilym Jones, Emlyn Jones, Stanley Evans, Gwilym Jones, A. D. Fordham, Pierce Roberts and W. O. Williams.*

FOR a trio of members of the staff who have worked together for many years at Erw Fair, our despatch office, the parting of the ways came at the end of 1963 with the retirement of two of them, Mr. Pierce Roberts, the despatch manager, and Mr. Stanley C. Evans. Together they had given not far short of a century of service to the Oakeley and Votty companies.

Mr. Roberts joined the staff of Votty in 1914 and Mr. Evans the Oakeley staff at Portmadoc in 1919. The third of the trio, Mr. William O. Williams, who has worked in the despatch office for many years, succeeds as despatch manager.

In a ceremony at Erw Fair in January Mr. A. D. Fordham, a director and secretary of our Company, made presentations of gifts for which the staff had subscribed—a fireside chair to Mr. Pierce Roberts and a transistor radio set to Mr. Stanley Evans.

Mr. Fordham referred to their long service and the very happy relations that had always been so evident, and on behalf of everybody associated with the presentations wished them good health and happiness in their retirement.

## WEDDINGS

THREE Oakley men were married last year: Glynne Williams, diamond saw attendant, to Miss Mona Wyn Williams, at St. Martha's Church, Manod, on July 27; Vivian Jones, slate-maker, to Miss Glennys Jones, a nurse at the Royal Infirmary, Liverpool, at Blaenau Ffestiniog, on November 30; and Glyn Evans, fitter, to Miss Olwen Jones, a school teacher, at Bethesda Welsh Presbyterian Church, Blaenau Ffestiniog, on December 21. Congratulations and good wishes to them from *Caban*.



# BLUE HARD AND THE YELLOW BAND

**Q**UARRY terms, current and past, have been given in previous issues of *Caban* but the record would not be complete without the descriptive names by which the rock strata of the Oakeley Quarry workings were known.

They make an interesting collection. The lists were compiled by the late J. W. Jones (father of John Penry Jones, a fitter at Oakeley) who acknowledged that the terms in the first list he obtained from overseers at Oakeley where he himself worked for many years.

In a note at the time Mr. Jones explained that the descriptions of the rock "veins" were not to be found in geological publications but were those applied by the able rockmen of long ago.

Some descriptive of location, others of the nature of the rock, the terms are characteristically Welsh but the translations given will perhaps enable our English readers to appreciate the complex structure of the extensive workings of the quarry above and below ground, and the ingenuity of the rockmen in labelling the working-places, sometimes in picturesque phrase, for all concerned to identify.

## *In translation*

The term "gwythiennau" translated into the English "veins" can be quite misleading when it is remembered that the main beds of slate are called veins. For instance, the Welsh "Hen Lygad" becomes in English "Old Vein" though the exact translation of "lygad" is "eye." Then we have "New Vein" for "Llygad Newydd," "Narrow Vein" for "Llygad Bach" and so on.

It is suggested therefore that the so-called "gwythiennau" in slate should in English be termed "bands". They really are bands traversing the slate, sometimes though not always, at right angles to the pillaring and penetrating into the thickness of the bed at a flatter angle than the cleavage as a rule.

Here then, with translations, are the names of the "bands" in the "Old Vein" starting from the overlying hard at the top of the bed and working downwards to the underlying hard, that being of course the top of the "New Vein."

**Y Gwnithfaen Glas (Y Slont Glai)** The Blue Hard (Clay Slant).

**Gwythien y Meinars** : The Miners' Band.

**Y Gwythiennau Rhywiog** : The Easy Bands.

**Y Withien isaf o'r tair a'r teulu** : The Lower Band of the three and its associates.

**Gwythien y Crych Du** : The Band of the Black "Crych" (wrinkle).

**Y Withien Sulphur** : The Sulphur (pyrites) Band.

**Y Pum Wythien** : The Five Bands.

**Y Withien rhwng y Pump a'r Wythien Wen** : The Band between the Five and the White Band.

**Y Withien Wen a'r teulu** : The White Band and its associates.

**Yr ail oddiwrth y Wythien Fawr** : The Second Band from the Big Band.

**Y Withien Fawr** : The Big Band.

**Y Wythien Fawr a'r teulu** : The Big Band and its associates.

**Y Wythien Gam** : The Crooked Band.

**Yr ail Wythien Gam** : The Second Crooked Band.

**Gwythiennau Man a'r Sulphur** : The Small (narrow) Band with sulphur (pyrites).

**Pen uchaf y Llygad Caled (Tew Bras)** : Top part of the Hard Bed (the coarse thickness).

**Y Wythien Galed a'r teulu** : The Hard Band and its associates.

**Yr ail Wythien Galed** : The Second Hard Band.

**Y Wythien Lwyd** : The Grey Band.

**Y Wythien Fflat** : The Flat Band.

**Y Wythien Grych** : The "Crych" (wrinkle) Band.

**Sulphur y Llygad Caled isaf** : Sulphur (pyrites) of the Bottom Hard bed.

**Y Wythien Galed Isaf** : The Bottom Hard Band.

**Gwythien y Smotiau Isaf** : Band of the Bottom Spots.

**Gwythien y Sulphur Du a'r rhai diwethaf** : Band of the Black Sulphur (pyrites) and the last ones.

**Gwnithfaen Isaf** : The Bottom Hard.

The second list gives the names of the bands in the "Red (Back) Vein." They are :

**Gwnithfaen Uchaf** : The Top Hard.

**Tew Curli** : The Curly Thickness (or bed).

**Tew Uchaf, sef Gwythiennau bras, a'r Wythien Gortyn yn ei ganol, a gwythiennau man ar ei waelod** : The Top Thickness (or bed) containing the Coarse Bands, the Rope Band in the middle and the small bands at the bottom. *Continued on page 27*



# Oakeley Apprentices

*Learning the craft of slate-making at the Oakeley Quarry are Gwynnaf Williams (left), aged 15, and Richard William Lewis, aged 16.*



*Below (left) are Thomas Roughead, aged 17, apprentice blacksmith, and Edward Edwards, apprentice locomotive attendant.*



## O dudalen 20

Coney Island, ac yn ôl am Hollis Jamaica. Fore Sul mynd i weld y parc enfawr lle y bydd y "World's Fair" y flwyddyn nesaf, ac amryw o wahanol gwmnïau eisoes yn adeiladu adeiladau gwych ar gyfer hynny. Cefais olwg ar y Jewish Temple, gan mai Iddew oedd fy nghyf-aill, a chefais ynddo ffrind o'r math gorau.

Bore Llun, Hydref 7, dychwel i Jamaica, lle bu helynt yn ddiweddar ynghylch y du a'r gwyn. Mynd i ysgol

lle nad oedd ond du ei groen, ac yna i ysgol arall lle nad oedd ond gwyn yn cael eu haddysgu.

Rhaid yn awr oedd troi yn ôl gan fod eisiau paratoi i ddychwel i'r hen wlad. Aethom i Idlewild Airport, ac wedi ffurfio a chyfeillion ffwrdd a ni-cychwyn yn ôl am chwarter i unarddeg "New York Time"—4 o'r gloch y bore—a noson oleu braf, dim awel ond wybren glir. Cyraedd Ringway, Manceinion am 12.15 dydd Mawrth a hithau'n bwrw gwlaw. Y fath newid.



*Continued from page 6.*

mine and was satisfied to learn that there were none; the men, he was informed, worked in "natural air" throughout the mine.

Returning to the surface the visitors were taken to Bonc Goedan Mill to see how the blocks sent up from the chambers below are further reduced to conveniently handled proportions, to be split into roofing slates by chisel and gentle hammer taps and finally dressed to size.

These operations were demonstrated by slate-maker partners Austin Roberts (splitting) and Richard H. Jones (dressing).

### *Tribute to quarrymen*

Before he left Sir Keith Joseph told *Caban* he had enjoyed his visit very much. "I am most impressed by what I have seen," he said, "particularly the beautiful end production, the sturdy, self-reliant men of judgment handling it, and the great investment decisions that have to be made by the management. These are the things that impress one. The production is by men who seem craftsmen to the ends of their fingers, with much hard work, but with great delicacy of touch and judgment."

Sir Keith added that management, of course, had to face a great deal of expenditure that might be abortive. "I think, to the layman, it is immensely impressive—and the product is so good," he concluded.

The Minister, who earlier had paid a courtesy call on the chairman of Blaenau Ffestiniog Urban District Council, Councillor Sem Evans Jones at the Council Offices, and there also met the clerk, Mr. T. H. Morgan, and Mr. H. Evans Jones, chairman of the town's Development Association, left Oakeley to join members of the North Wales Slate Quarries Association for luncheon at Caernarvon.

In a press comment following discussions there, Sir Keith said: "We are very much in favour of the use of slate wherever it is suitable to the surroundings, which is often the case in Wales, and, generally, we are delighted to welcome the use of slate."

## BACK COVER PICTURE

*The scene is one of the tunnels on Q Floor about 800 feet below ground at the Oakeley Quarries with rockmen Morris Hughes and Cynwal Williams starting a big block of slate on its way to the surface and their slate-maker partners in the mill.*

*Continued from page 25*

O Tan y Tew Uchaf, mae Gwnithfaen Glas, Tew Tair Wythien, neu Tew Fflacs, a'r Wythien Derfyn ar ei waelod. O tan y tair Wythien mae'r Wythien Wyllt, a'r Wythien Gron yng nghanol y Tew Bach sydd o dan Tew y Tair Wythien. Yno mae'r Wythien Las.:

Under the Top Thickness, or bed (which by the way is many yards thick) there is a Blue Hard, the 3-Bands Thickness, or bed (or Slabs Bed), and the Termination Band at its bottom. Underneath the three Bands is the Wild Band, and the Round Band in the middle of the Small Thickness (or bed) underlying the bed of the Three Bands. There also is the Blue Band.

At the bottom of the Top Thickness (or bed) are to be found the following bands:

Y Wythien Ffyrnig: The Fierce Band.  
Y Ddwbl: The Double Band.  
Y Saith: The Seven Bands.  
Y Bitch: The Bitch Band (a significant term?).  
T Tolc Dwbl: The Double-dent Band.  
Y Gortyn: The Ropey Band.  
Y Ddifyr: The Pleasant Band.  
Y Fawr Uchaf: The Upper Large Band.  
Y Felen: The Yellow Band.  
Y Fawr Isaf: The Bottom Large Band.  
Y Tolc Mawr: The Large-dent Band.  
Y Las Isaf: The Bottom Blue Band.  
Y Datws: The Potato Band.  
Tair Wythien Isaf: Bottom Three Bands.  
Pum Wythien a'r Gwnithiennau Llwydion: The Five and the Grey Bands.  
Tew Bach ar y Gwnithfaen Isaf: The Small Thickness (or Bed) and the Bottom Hard.

It should be understood that the term "Tew" is a difficult one to define. Generally it cannot be measured in thickness, though in some instances it does refer to a thickness of four to six feet of rock. It can also refer to a thickness, or bed, of a definite quality—good or bad. The only definitions in English appear to be the two words thickness or bed—with some preference for the latter.





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*Starting a block on its way to the surface from the depths of the Oakeley slate mine*

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