

CABAN



MAY 1949



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MAGAZINE OF THE OAKELEY AND VOTTY SLATE QUARRIES

CABAN

OAKELEY SLATE QUARRIES CO. LTD.,
THE VOTTY AND BOWYDD SLATE QUARRIES CO., LTD.
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CONTENTS.

	<i>Page</i>
FFESTINIOG SLATE	3
THE OAKELEY CLUB	7
NOSON LAWEN	8
BLAENAU FFESTINIOG	14
ON DUTY—OFF DUTY	16
ACCENT ON ANIMALS	17
A PLACE FOR YOUTH	18
ROOF OF THE WORLD	22
NEWS EXCHANGE	24
FROM CABAN TO "CABAN"	27



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FROM DARKNESS TO DAY-LIGHT.—Up the incline goes another load of Votty slate—to take its first look at daylight, after three or four hundred million years.

FFESTINIOG SLATE

For years the slates of Wales have been known as the finest roofing material in the world. And, for years the families of Britain and of countries overseas have lived under their welcome covering . . . without ever, perhaps, realising the true miracle which they represent.

For theirs is a story that goes back to prehistoric time—to what geologists call the Ordovician and Cambrian Periods. They reckon that the deposits which produced the slates of Blaenau Ffestiniog were laid down some 350 to 400 million years ago. At that time North Wales was evidently covered by the ocean, for slate is formed from undersea deposits subjected to folding, intense pressure and consequent heat by the later vast earth movements that raised the Welsh Mountains.

Many of the beds were distorted or bent at acute angles, the typical angle of the veins in the Oakeley Quarry is one example of the effects of such distortion; and it is because of this formation that surface quarrying has slowly ceased, and the miners have been forced to follow the vein deeper and deeper into the mountains.



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LIKE MASONS IN A CATHEDRAL—the securers work on the roof of a chamber at Oakeley, to remove any loose rock which might endanger those far below.

Today, both Oakeley and Votty Quarries are worked almost entirely underground. In fact, the layman would probably call them not "Quarries," but Mines. Though there is an enormous difference between the chambers of a Slate Quarry, and the narrow tunnels of, say, a South Wales Coalmine. Your coalminer is used to working in

confined spaces, and to being able to put up his hand and test the roof or timbering overhead; the "wide open spaces" of a Slate Quarry would be completely foreign to him, and to the methods of working which have been inborn in him through many generations.

When you enter the Quarry, underground, you step from the incline into

a world of caverns—"Chambers," to those who work in them—linked by tunnels cut through the solid rock. To stand in one of them for the first time is an astonishing experience, even though—after years of working in them—it becomes second nature to the rockman and his mates. It's a scene which has astonished hundreds of visitors—among them M.P.'s, reporters from the newspapers of half a century or more, artists, photographers, engineers. "Like working in a cathedral" is the reaction of the average man from the outside world, when he sees what the rockman does and the surroundings in which he spends his working day.

Sometimes, the chambers are lit by electric lights; others, by the cap lamps of the rockmen, high up on the ledges of the cliff-like walls. In many chambers, candles are the source of illumination, which the rockmen find adequate—for, as Shakespeare pointed out, a candle can throw its beams very far, in a place which would otherwise be completely dark. CABAN's photographer was able to produce a temporary dark-room for himself, when he wanted to change his plates, simply by picking an unoccupied chamber, blowing out the candle, and working with an old slab of slate as an improvised table.

Wherever you go around Ffestiniog, you can see slate as part of the everyday life and building of the town. There are slates cut into decorative shapes and made up into beautiful designs—the like of which, unfortunately, are less frequently seen today. The war memorial slabs, not only at the Quarry but in the Post Office, are carved in solid slate. It is difficult to spend any length of time in Blaenau without being reminded, again and again, of the whole purpose of the town and the source from which the community draws its livelihood.

Where Skill and Muscle Link Hands with Mechanical Power



(Above.) The first task is to free the great slab. The rock having already been cut across with a channelling machine, the rockmen are now cutting a "free side."

(Below.)—Machines such as the EIMCO mechanical shovel speed the routine tasks.





INTO THE DAYLIGHT. The rockman's last job is to chalk on the slate his identifying mark and that of the chamber in which he is working. Then the underground workers themselves come up to the surface.

These pictures do something to show how the Quarry works, underground . . . the vast and echoing chambers, the passageways through the rock, the Cabanau, the securers hammering away high in the roof . . . individual items which, put together, make up the complex life and atmosphere in which so many of us spend our working lives. We hope that they will be of interest to those who do the other half of the job, up in the Mills ; and also to the many

people who are constant buyers and users of Ffestiniog Slate.

This is the Quarry—*underground*. Further articles in this series will show the work of the surveyor who lays out the elaborate room and pillar system on which we work ; of the Mills, which take the raw slabs of slate and transform them into the finished article ; and finally of the organisation through which the completed slates are dispatched to their users.

The Oakeley Club

its members and some of the things they do there

As you go from the town of Blaenau Ffestiniog, up the road towards the Oakeley Quarry, you pass on your left a handsome building known as the Old Hospital. This piece of information is included for the benefit of the comparatively few who haven't yet found their way there; for what *was* the Old Hospital has now become the Oakeley Club, and the path to it is already well trodden by the feet of its members and visitors.

Don't, by the way, be misled by its name—it's a club for Oakeley *and* Votty, with membership drawn from both, and Votty represented among the organisers and committees. Anyway, what's in a name provided the thing itself is good?

So much progress has been made in so short a time that, to an outside eye, it would be almost impossible to believe that the very idea of the Club dates back to little more than a year ago. Like so many other good ideas in Blaenau, it began in the heart of one of the Quarries. In one of the Cabanau, to be exact, whose members conceived the excellent idea of endeavouring to run a local Eisteddfod. A little thought showed that this would involve more time and effort than one Caban could take on single-handed; instead, they decided to form a Male Voice Choir, which began practice on the spot, during every dinner break.

Room Hired for Meetings

Soon this was no longer enough. The Choir was flourishing, and if it was going to compete in local events it needed more time and space for properly organised practices; and so the story moves on to a room in Blaenau, hired from the local Education Committee, at which the Choir met for weekly practices. It was there that someone put forward Idea No. 2—that the Choir should hold a supper to celebrate its success, to which should be invited the Management of the Quarries.

And it was during the speeches of that supper that one of the leading members of

the Management in turn expressed Idea No. 3—one which he had hoped for a number of years to see put into practice one day. That idea was the establishment of a centre at which members of both Oakeley and Votty would be able to meet, not only for Choir practice (and this time, without any hiring charge) but for games, sports, meetings and other recreations.

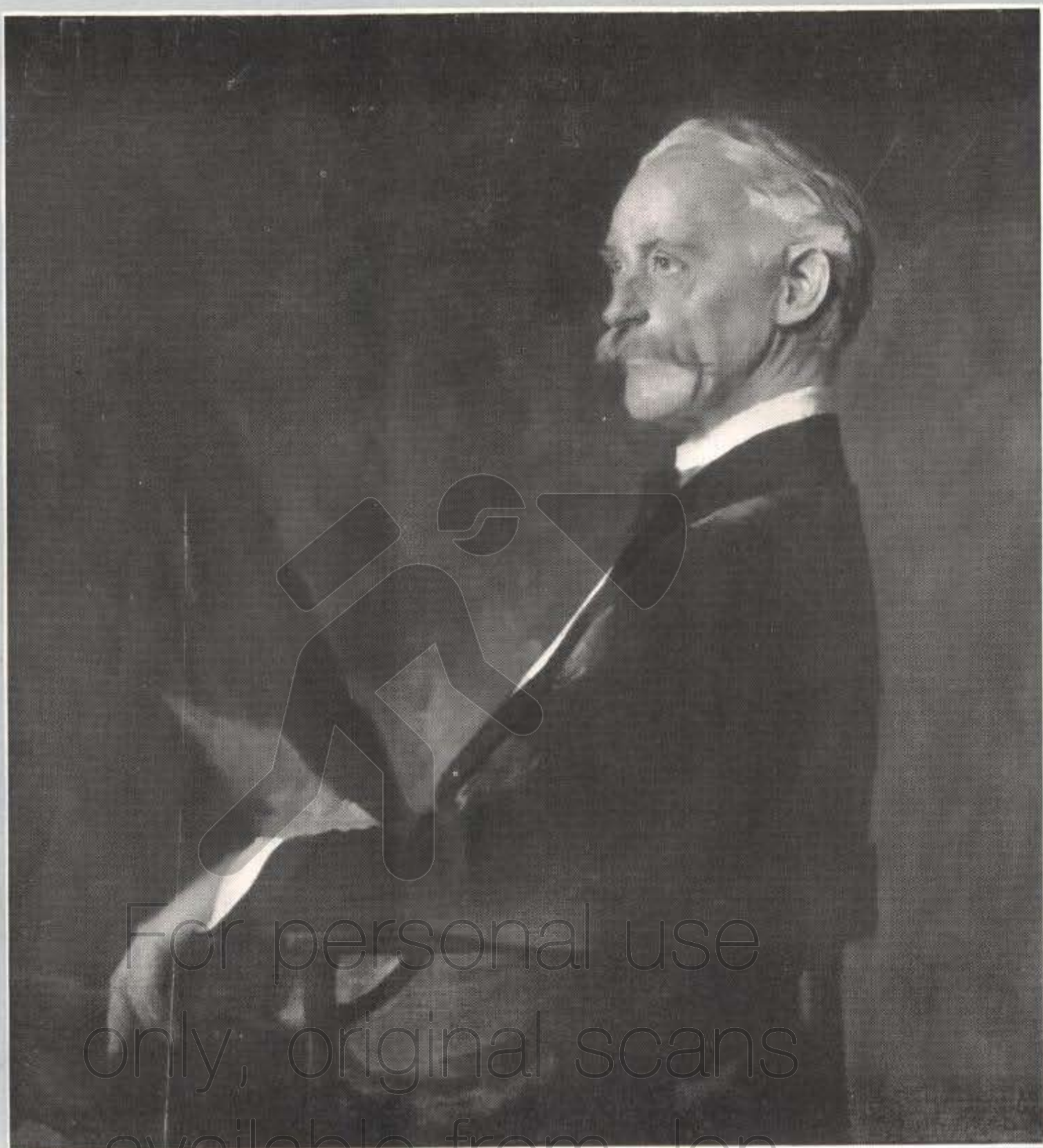
For this purpose the Company offered to make over the Old Hospital, and later adjacent land which it is hoped ultimately to turn into a Sports Ground for outdoor games of all kinds.

Forming the Committee

So far, so good; but the finest building will not make a Club without a committee to run it. And as this was a Club whose members should be drawn from every part of the quarries above and below ground, to do the job properly their committee must be drawn from every part of the Quarries too. That is just how the men in charge were ultimately elected... as representatives of the Cabanau, so that each section of the Quarries would have its spokesmen among those at the helm.

Behind the scenes are a number of people who put in a great deal of time and trouble to keep the Club running smoothly and ensure that it's a success. For it isn't just the "star" evenings that make a call on the organisers—everything that we use and do on the premises during even an ordinary night's activity has meant thought and work by someone, somewhere, at some stage of the Club's development. With so many helpers, it would be impossible to list them all, and it seems unfair to single out a few; but there are one or two names and faces which inevitably come to memory as one thinks of the Club and its story... Hugh Griffith Hughes, for instance, Cadfan Hughes and John Williams.

What's it like, this Club which plays so big a part in the "off duty" life of Oakeley
(Continued on page 10).



THE ACADEMY PORTRAIT, by A. K. Lawrence, R.A., of Mr. A. H. Hoare, Chairman of the Company for many years, a reproduction of which hangs in the Oakeley Club.

NOSON LAWEN

Above you see the Academy portrait of Mr. Arthur H. Hoare, until recently Chairman of the Oakeley Slate Quarries Company, Ltd.—a reproduction of which hangs in a place of honour in the Oakeley Club. The presentation of the picture to the Club was one of the highlights of the Social Evening held there in December last; an evening which was also chosen as a fitting occasion for the presentation of the Billiards Handicap Cup to the winner, Mr. John Roberts, together with a cigarette case; runner-up was Mr. G. W. Humphreys. The Male Voice Choir was, as usual, prominent in the entertainment. The Noson Lawen gave the Club an opportunity to welcome Mr. John C. Jones, who once worked in the Oakeley Quarries, whence he emigrated to Australia. We wonder what he thought of the transformation that had taken place in the “old Hospital” since *his* day!



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THE COMMITTEE

The Committee is a fully representative one, with members from every part of the Quarries—above and below ground. Here you find Oakeley and Votty intermingled, a man from one exchanging a point of view with a man from the other. The views of the different Cabanau, too, are aired one after the other—so that the management of the Club becomes a joint effort, in which the needs of everyone are considered before any decision is taken.



and Votty? It is a big, centrally heated building, with room enough for any kind of organised entertainment on which the Committee may decide. Already, its main room is in regular use for choir practice and whist drives; another houses a full-sized billiards table; and elsewhere you can find table tennis, miniature billiards (for the lads), darts, card room, and a reading room which has during the winter been the scene of fortnightly classes under the auspices of the W.E.A.

The billiards room (with full-size table) is, of course, one of the main centres of attraction—and if you want to watch a really “needle” game of snooker this is the place to come. Or was it just that the players happened to be on the top of their form on the night that CABAN took its photographs? There’s an annual Billiards Handicap with a cup (presented by Mrs. Inge) for the winner; maybe that helps to act as an incentive to plenty of practice and good play.

One of the most enjoyable Blaenau events of 1949 was the recent Eisteddfod for Oakeley and Votty employees. And, appropriately enough, that too was something conceived and run under the auspices of the Club. You’ll find elsewhere in this issue a brief report on it and a reproduction of some of the winning entries on the literary side. But, of course, the musical performances—which unfortunately we cannot record in words on paper—were also a great feature of the evening. And so the Club, which sprang from the desire of one Caban to organise an Eisteddfod, was able to achieve its original ambition.

So far we have talked mainly about the Club itself and what it does.

The “Old Hospital,” the building in which the Club is housed, is itself of some interest. The older generation of quarry men will remember when it really *was* a Hospital in fact as well as in name. For a number of years it served this purpose until the new Memorial Hospital was built and

(Continued on page 13).

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THE CONDUCTOR RAISES HIS BATON . . .
the pianist strikes the first notes of the
accompaniment . . . then, the club is
filled with the sound of voices.



HOW DO YOU PLAY WHIST ?



There are many ways of enjoying a game of cards, and so . . .



. . . a Whist Drive at the Club produces a host of different expressions.



No evening's whist is complete without refreshments. But Mrs. Jones, who looks after the Club and the welfare of the members, seems to be well prepared for a rush of customers . . . !



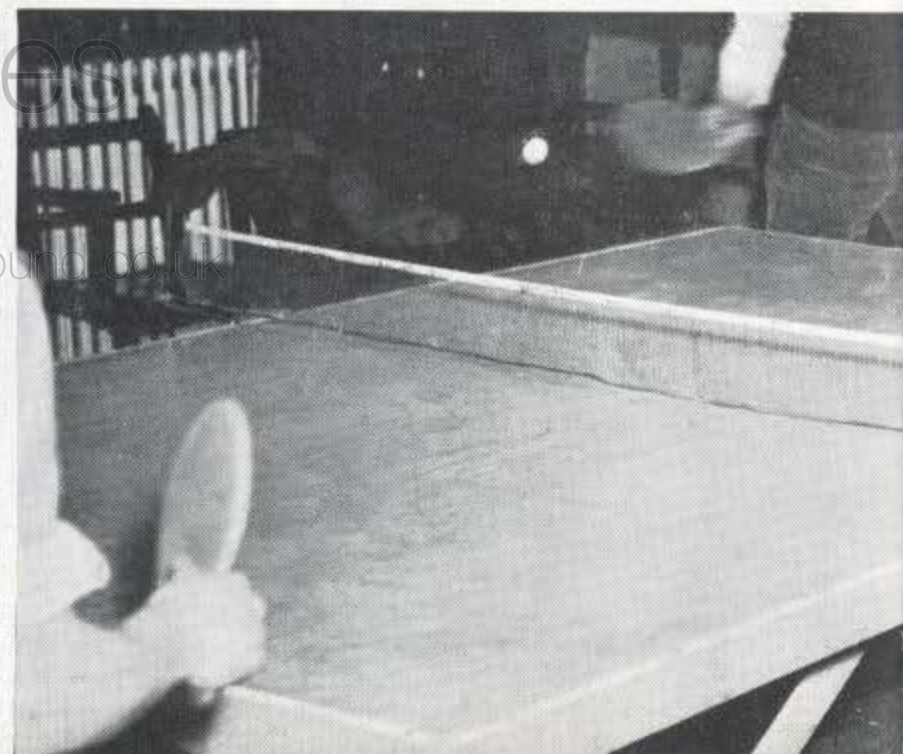
THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING TO DO AT THE CLUB



The Club's motto is "something for everyone," and our photographer . . .



. . . found plenty of material for his candid camera to record.



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the existing building was taken over as the Despatch and Commercial offices of the Oakeley and Votty Quarries.

As you can imagine—that is if you are one of the few readers of CABAN who haven't been to see the place for themselves—a building that was suitable for the Hospital and later the offices of a big company has room to spare for Club activities.

First of all, the big rooms. The Billiards Room, for instance, large enough to accommodate a full-sized table with plenty of space to move around it; and the other big room on the ground floor which houses the Choir Practice, Whist Drives, and other big gatherings (between times it's used for Table Tennis).

But, of course, it isn't always that such spacious rooms are needed; for lectures, darts, cards and so on something smaller is better suited to the case. And, conveniently, the upper floors are sub-divided into rooms of the right size for such purposes.

Around the old Hospital its grounds give it a pleasantly rural atmosphere. The building itself, recently decorated, fits well into its attractive surroundings.

Yes, Blaenau Ffestiniog may be a comparatively small place when you consider it as a spot on the map or judge it by the number of its inhabitants. But when it comes to slate, or anything connected with it, Blaenau has for generations been one of the leading places in the world. It's appropriate that this new part of Quarry life should live up to the Blaenau tradition . . . with a building, a committee, and a programme of which any club in the country could be justifiably proud.

So much for the past—now, what of the future? The Club Committee has big plans for the season of 1949 . . . and for the seasons to come after that. For convenience in working the main Committee is divided into several sub-committees, each with its secretary and its own particular responsibilities. Thus, the different sporting and social activities are each in the hands of a real enthusiast; and that, we're all agreed, is the way to get things *done*.

And so, this article in CABAN is but the first of many, in which we look forward to tracing the development of the Oakeley Club, step by step, and from strength to strength, through the years ahead.

The last game has been played. Cheery goodnights have been said. Now the Club members stream off to their homes . . .



BLAENAU FFESTINIOG

An Impression of our Town in Words and Pictures

In a cleft in the mountains lies the town — traditional home of the best Welsh slate.

The signpost promises the beauties of Wales—as you come from the station.

You come to it suddenly, as the road drops over the mountain ; or, if you are travelling on the little railway that runs from Llandudno Junction through some of the loveliest scenery in Britain, the train puffs into a tunnel—puffs out again—and you're in Blaenau.

And what a transformation has taken place in those few minutes ! From lakes and valleys and fields, from farms and agricultural villages, you have passed into a place where, unmistakably, men work with their hands.

There are plenty of reminders, of course, of the open country that lies around the town as closely as the hem of a garment. There's the vista of it, for instance, that you get as you climb over the Crimea, or walk across the Votty tip ; and the mountain sheep who wander down the street as though it was their own property, stopping occasionally to snatch a hasty meal from someone's garden. But for all that Blaenau itself has the purposeful look of a place with a job to do.

It isn't only the grey slate tips . . . the quarrymen in their underground clothes, streaming down the road. What is it, that gives Blaenau its character ? When we asked that question some cynics (visitors especially) answered : " Its weather " ; but we have ignored them, and tried to show on this page one or two of the things by

which, wherever we might be transported, you and I would remember the town.

First and foremost, of course, there's the look of the place itself. All around, the mountains ; deep below, the slate which is our livelihood ; and, in the hollow, the cluster of houses which are the homes of the men who mine and prepare it. Then the rocks above—appropriate enough as a landmark for a place, whose main wealth is itself a special kind of rock. Or again, says our camera man, one of the things that stick in his memory was the signpost that greeted him as he walked along from the L.M.R. Station, a signpost bearing the names of beauty spots that overseas visitors come thousands of miles to see.

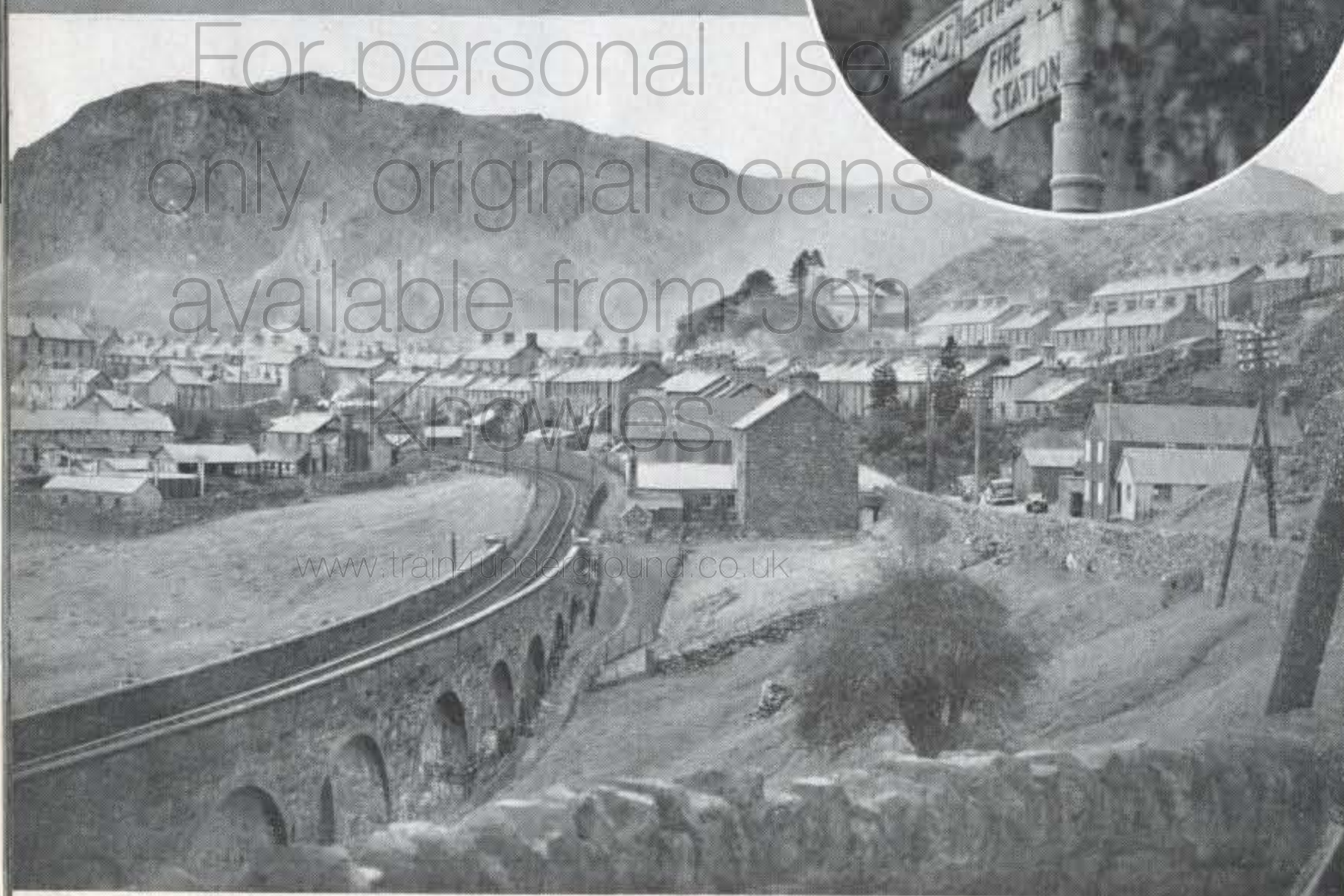
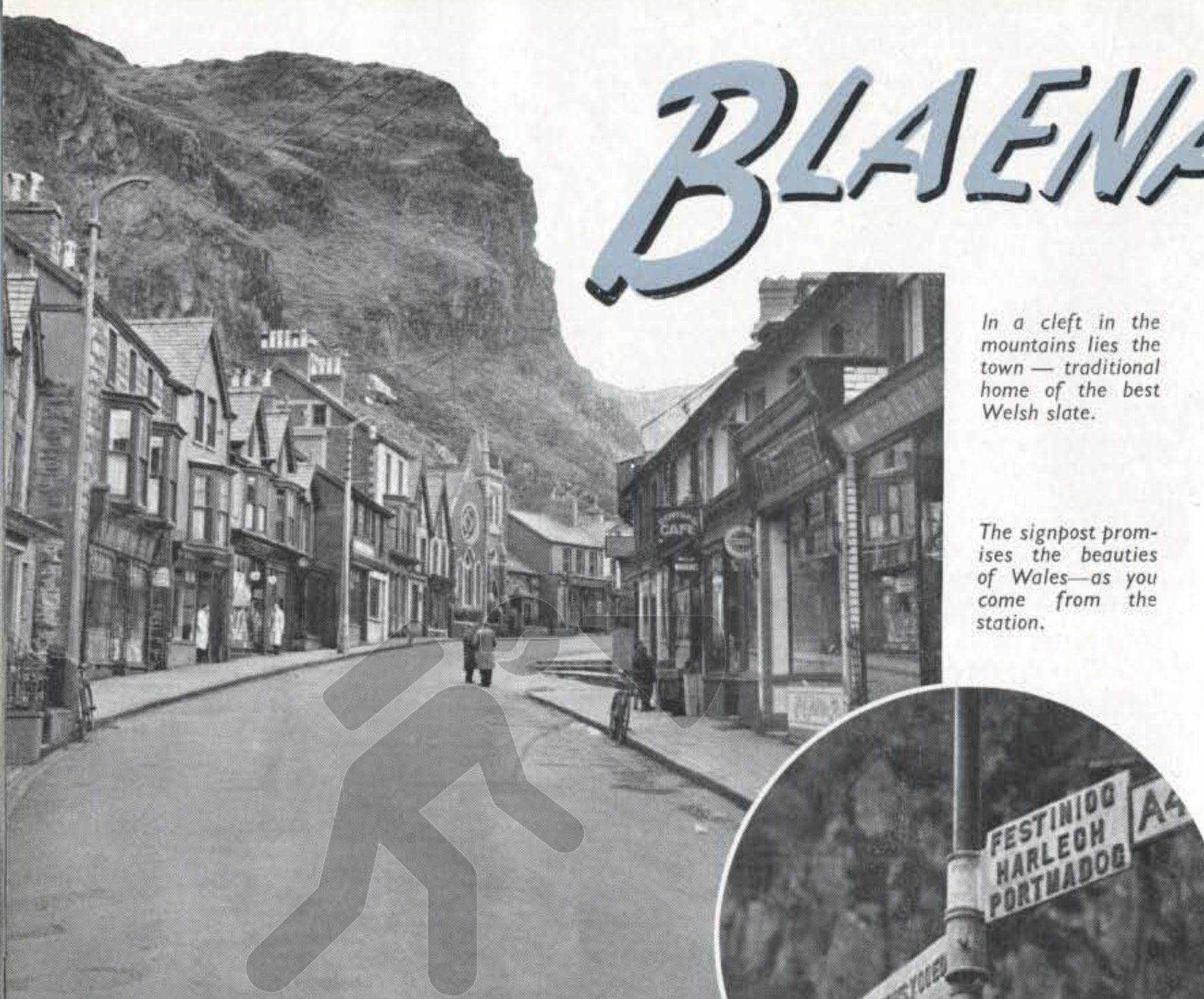
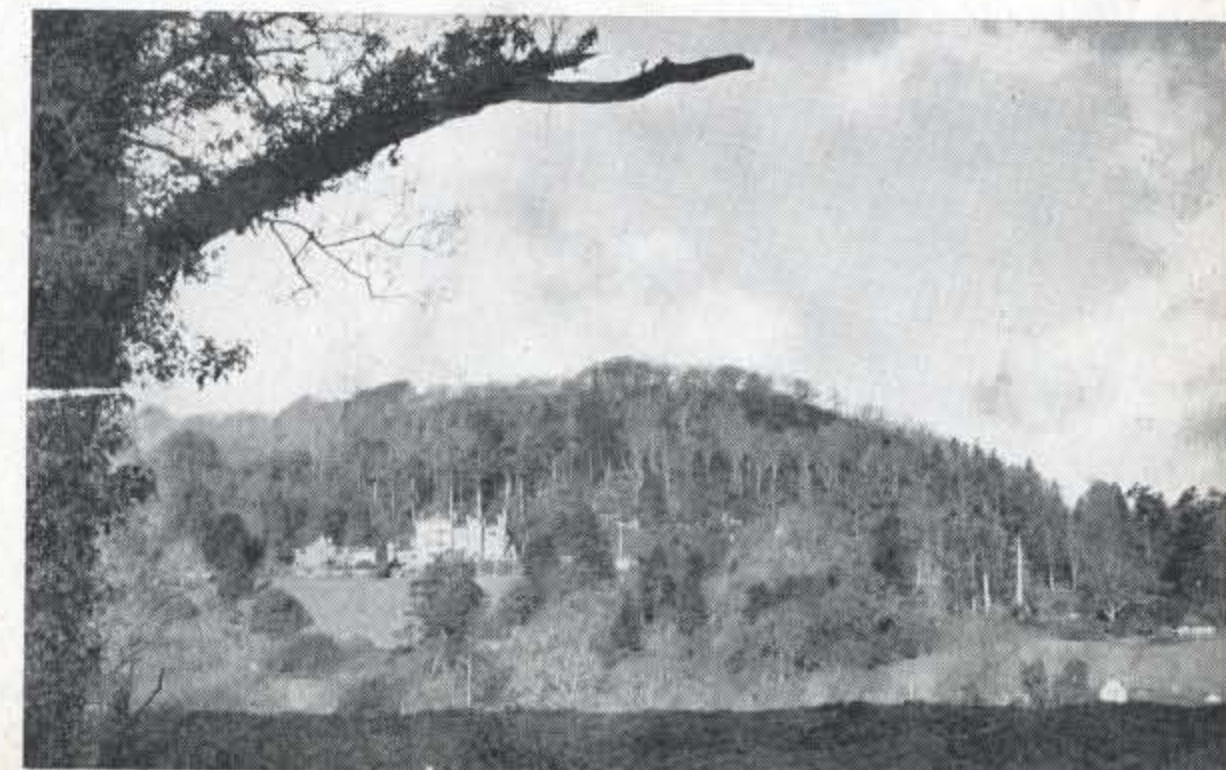
And so we're back where we began in the countryside on the other side on the ridge, and lastly, we have included a picture of a stretch of typical North Wales countryside only a few miles from Blaenau Ffestiniog, and intimately associated with the Oakeley Quarry—the Plas, Tan-y-Bwlch.

But don't let this be the end of the articles on " our " town in CABAN. Many of our readers must have stories to tell of Blaenau —stories of the town as it was, fifty or more years ago ; memories of great occasions ; tales with a chuckle about their neighbours and ours. Send them to us ; we will include them with more pictures of Blaenau in an issue to come.



(Left) Above and behind tower the rocks, by which Blaenau is remembered by all who have visited it.

(Right) Only a few miles outside is the open country —of which this view is a typical example.



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ON DUTY – OFF DUTY

“Caban” Interviews Some Oakeley and Votty Personalities

You can't think of much greater contrast than that between a quarry chamber deep down under the mountains, and the open air and rolling views of a typical Welsh farm on their slopes. But that's the change that takes place twice a day in the life of DAVID HUGHES, of Votty.



Meeting David on his way from the quarry, we accepted his invitation to come and see for ourselves what he is doing to keep up Britain's food supplies. And his way home took us to 40-acre Ty-Newydd farm, which has been in the hands of his family for 112 years.

It's a real man-size farm, is David's, and we wondered how he manages to look after it as well as putting in a good day at “The Lord.” But, like so many other things it's a family affair in which everyone lends a hand. After a walk around the farmland, we found his daughter Sally busy at the milking—an operation which David then supervised; that was the moment our photographer chose for the picture on this page.

And does David mind the daily transition from one kind of job to quite a different one? Not a bit! For though he was born and bred on the farm, he's been at the quarry, too, since the age of 14 years, so both things are second nature to him by now.



Another man with an outdoor turn of mind on his off-duty hours is JOHN H. WILLIAMS, under-manager of Votty. Maybe John and his family have a sweet tooth; anyway, his hobby for the past 19 years has been bee-keeping.

Near his home at Penrhyndeudraeth, John has 11 hives, with which he has a great deal of success. Last year, he says, wasn't a particularly good one, but that's all in the luck of the game, and this season he's already getting ready for better things.



We've always heard that a bee-keeper has to be one of the most patient of mortals; but it was only as John explained to us all the details of looking after a hive all the year round that we began to realise quite how much work the keeper (as well as the bees) has to put into every pound of honey.

More Biographies Later

The two Votty personalities interviewed here are only two out of quite a gallery of portraits and biographies which CABAN has up its sleeve. If you have already been interviewed or photographed and don't appear in this number, don't be disappointed — you'll find yourself in a later issue. Or, if there's an interesting story to be told about you or one of your workmates, on duty or off, send the details to the Editor of CABAN, so that we can add it to our collection.



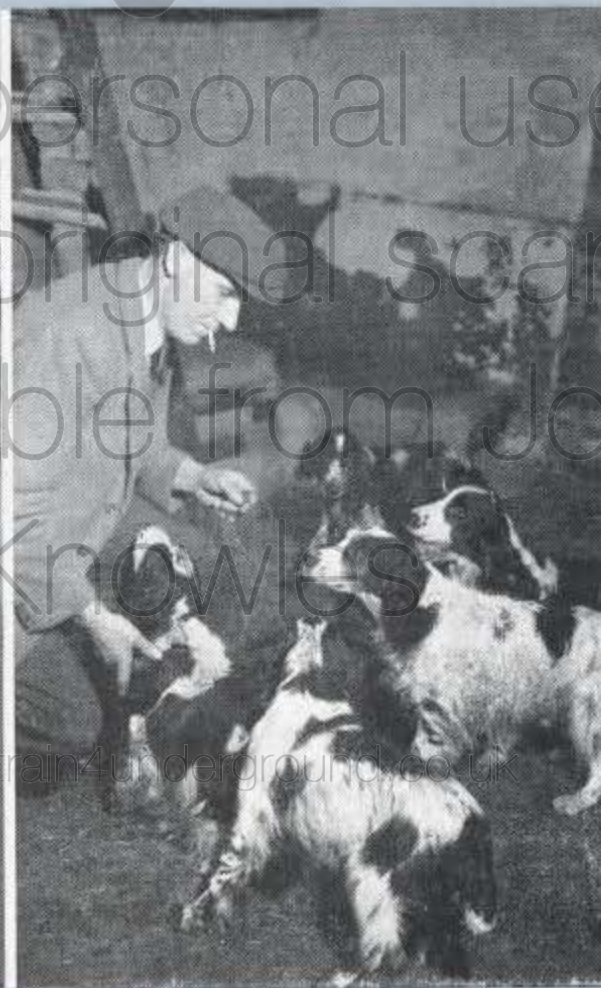
ACCENT ON ANIMALS



You won't go far in Blaenau without meeting a dog-fancier. JOHN P. JONES—of Oakeley fitting shop—is a terrier enthusiast ; here Mrs. Jones proudly displays to the rest of the family two of the latest arrivals at the kennels.



IDRIS JONES of Oakeley is a fancier too. But spaniels are his particular love . . .



. . . and they certainly seem to win him all the prizes, at the local shows.



Dogs take time—but not so much that Idris can't lend an occasional hand in the family shop.

A PLACE FOR YOUTH

In the old days, if you wanted to learn a trade, the first thing you did was to get a job as a helper. You worked with a craftsman, kept your eyes open, and more or less picked things up as you went along. If you were lucky, you were attached to a man who believed it his duty to pass his skill on to the new generation which must follow him; if not . . . well, you did the best you could!

It worked, of course—many of our best craftsmen of the present day were trained in just that way; but it was at best a rough-and-ready system. In these days, training of the hit-or-miss variety has become out of date.

One of the Oakeley mills, therefore, you will find is manned—well, perhaps “manned” is the wrong word—by a high percentage of boys and youths. For this is the Oakeley Training Mill, where newcomers to the quarry are given planned, step-by-step guidance in all branches of slate-making, until they become fully proficient in their chosen craft.

In charge of the school is JOHN WILLIAMS who has the help of an able assistant.

Slatemaking is, like so many other things, one of those jobs that look deceptively easy—until you try your hand at it for yourself. Then you realise that the effortless ease with which the trained splitter does the job is really the accumulated skill of years, that makes the right way “come natural,” and anything else against the craftsman’s instinct.

Practice Makes Perfect

You don’t pick up dexterity like this, without practice—and plenty of it! But the right sort of guidance in the early stages can considerably shorten the path. Watch John, for instance, as he takes charge of a newcomer and explains the essentials of the business to him.

First, the instructor splits a few, while the lad looks on; see how the slate seems to fall apart, almost of its own accord. Then they change places—and what a difference! Now, it’s an effort to make the stuff split at all, and when after a good deal of trying it *does* yield, the results are ragged

and rough. So, the instructor begins to explain the essential points of the job—the simple things, such as the way to handle the tools, that make all the difference. He demonstrates, for instance, that the tool must be held absolutely square—any suspicion of an angle, and the split will inevitably be spoilt.

And so it goes on. The same supervision is applied to the boy’s first attempts on the dressing machine, in which the roughly-split slates are trimmed square and to an accurate size. The result, again, is that in a very much shorter time than formerly the lad is producing useful work.

These are just the first practical steps.

There’s a Lot to Learn

There is an enormous amount to learn about the nature of the rock—the cleavage and pillaring, for instance, that control its manufacture into the finished article. Therefore, a spell in the mill is the finest training for any job in slate, above or below ground—as the best rockmen will tell you, it gives you the feel of the rock, helps you to understand its temperament, to know how and where it is going to split; to pick up some of the knowledge, in fact, on which the rockman relies when dealing with giant slabs weighing many tons, down in the chambers far below.

For slate—above or below ground—is a craft of a very specialised kind. Many other of the old traditional crafts as the years pass by—the village blacksmith, for instance, and the thatcher! Many jobs in Industry and Engineering have been broken down into simpler processes until they have become almost routine jobs. But the ever-increasing degree of mechanisation being introduced in the slate-quarries does not have a similar effect. It reduces the physical labour . . . it increases production . . . but one thing it can never effect is the degree of personal skill, and therefore the constant interest of the job.

Whatever the tools you use, you still have to know the nature of the rock on which you’re going to use them. You still have to sum it up in your mind’s eye and act according to your own judgment. You are still doing something as personal, in its own way,



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**THE RIGHT WAY
... AND THE WRONG**

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—You must hold your tools dead square, and not at an angle, if you want a clean break when splitting slate. Here JOHN WILLIAMS gives a demonstration to a beginner who, as the small picture shows, hadn't quite got the knack of it . . .





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IN THE OLD DAYS, you had to take your chance of picking things up as you went along. Now, every stage of the job is explained and demonstrated until it's perfectly clear...



IT ISN'T ONLY SPLITTING that has an art of its own. Here some of the boys are learning to be quick and accurate on a dressing machine.

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Place for Youth (contd.)

as the work of a fine cabinet maker or any of the other craftsmen who transform, with their knowledge and the skill of their hands, a piece of raw material into an object of precision and value.

In these days too slate making is a job worth doing in another sense. Housing is a problem that will be with us in one form or another for a generation and more to come. First, there's the wreckage of war to repair (a job on which, as you'll read elsewhere in this issue, Oakeley slates are in demand) both in Britain and in battle-ravaged lands overseas. And even that is only a beginning. When the last bomb-damaged or shell-torn house is repaired there still remain thousands of new homes to be built . . . old houses to be replaced, slums to be cleared . . . new schools, new hospitals, new public buildings to be put up.

Who *are* these lads, who work in the Training Mill? Most of them, of course, are Blaenau born and bred; though one exception is 15-year-old George Rogers, whose birthplace is Liverpool. He came to Blaenau as an evacuee at the age of 5, after the first blitz on his home city, and went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Humphries. "He couldn't speak a word of Welsh when he came," they say, "but now he's become as Welsh as any of us." And so he has; for, at the end of the war, George didn't want to go back to Liverpool, and has settled down for good here in Blaenau.

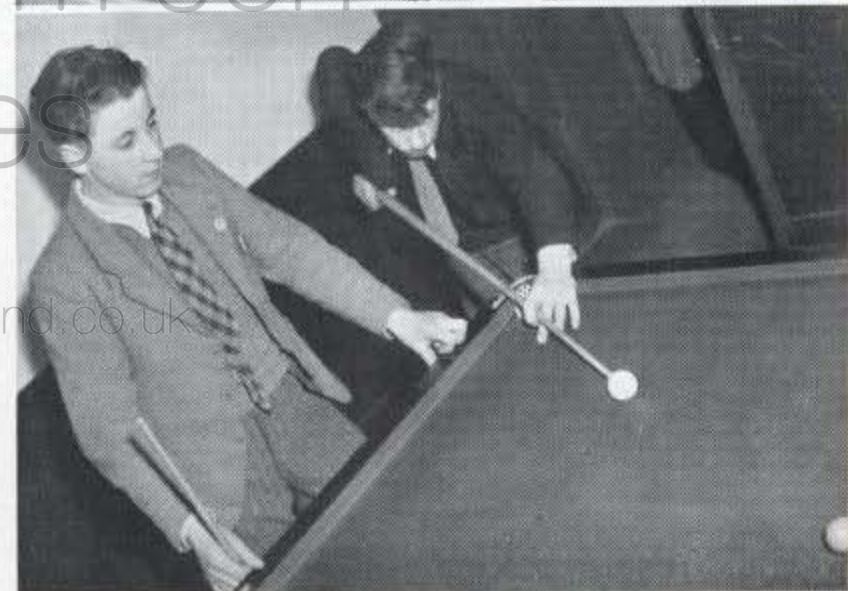
Mr. Humphries is an enthusiast over rabbits and cavies, which he has been breeding for 50 years, and is a member of four Rabbit and Cavy Clubs. So George was soon introduced to the 17 rabbits and 70-odd cavies which live in hutches at the back of the house. Since then, he's become an expert himself, and shows in his own name; which, we felt, must keep him pretty busy when he gets home from the mill.

"All work and no play. . . ." Seeing George with his rabbits had started us wondering what the other lads from the Mill do with their off-duty hours, and we spent a certain amount of time in finding out. The result was a bag of table-tennis players, football enthusiasts, and two whom we found drilling in the T.A. Hall with

the local cadets, in preparation for the duty of forming guard of honour to H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth on her visit to Blaenau Ffestiniog.

We hope that we have given you a picture of what is going on—something worth while, and something that is producing as fine a bunch of lads as you could wish to find, either in Blaenau Ffestiniog or anywhere else.

PLAYTIME FOR YOUTH . . .



Roof of the World

Coventry—the very name of that great industrial city that is one of Britain's workshops immediately conjures up visions of one of the most concentrated "blitzes" of the war—one that made the Germans add a new word, "Coventrated," to their language and ours.

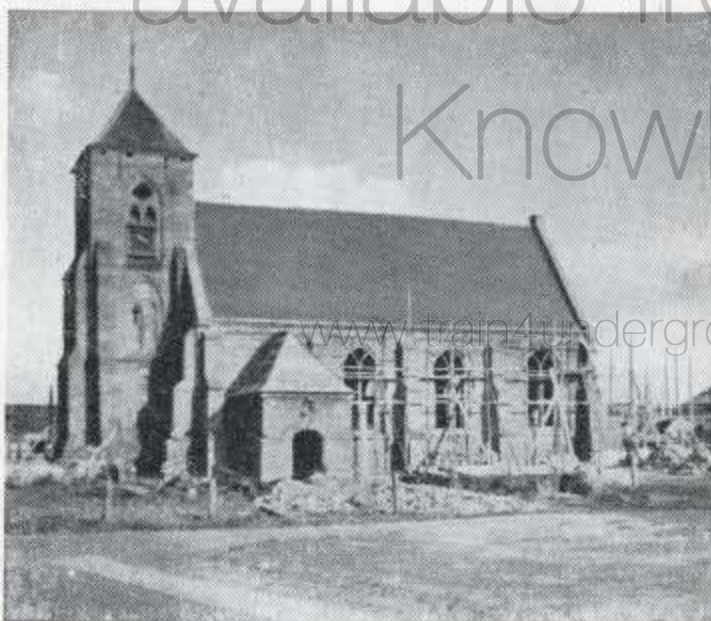
But that nightmare of reality took place just over eight years ago; to-day the new Coventry is rising from the ruins of the old. Men and machines are busy at work on the preliminary stages of operations that, when completed, will make the city centre and its suburbs the last word in planning and design.

Customers for 50 years

Making a notable contribution to this task are our good friends and constant users of Ffestiniog slate—Messrs. Wormell's, builders' merchants and roofing specialists. For just on fifty years they have been using slates from the Oakeley and Votty Quarries, and that, in the words of the chairman of directors, Mr. R. J. Wormell, "is sufficient proof of their reliability."

When CABAN called on Mr. Wormell at the firm's temporary main offices in a 12-roomed, three-storeyed Victorian house—Hitler's raiders put paid to the original premises—we learned a lot about the present day difficulties of providing enough houses to meet the demand. One of them,

The newly renovated roof of Zoutelande Church rises smoothly above the surrounding scaffolding.



Mr. Wormell says, is a dearth of much-needed slates—"I wish I could get many more of them".

Discussing the use of slate, Mr. Wormell revealed that this material is being used almost exclusively in his area for re-building and patching-up jobs, such as partially destroyed houses. Other materials often have to be used for roofing completely new houses and factories, due mainly to the heavy demand for all kinds of slate—a demand which in Mr. Wormell's estimation will last for many years.

He had these few (and very appropriate) words to say on the reliability of slate: "During an enemy attack on Birmingham, two houses were situated at an equal distance from the spot where a high explosive bomb fell. Welsh slates which formed the roof of one house didn't show any sign of damage, but the roof of the other, made of a different material, was badly shattered."

Wormell's, by the way, celebrate their centenary next year. The finest present for himself and his quarter of a thousand workers, would be, the chief director thinks, an unlimited supply of building materials, including plenty of our own. Well . . . Anyway, we're doing our best to produce to the limit, he can rest assured of that.

From Wales to Walcheren

Quite a number of people have at some time or another scratched their name and address on a slate, and wondered if they would ever get a note from the person by whom it would ultimately be handled.

One of those who does so, now and again, is Torwerth Jones, and recently he has had not one but two letters from the Island of Walcheren, where Ffestiniog slates are helping in the work of clearing up the devastation that the war left behind.

One letter was from Mr. W. Messer, the architect responsible for the work (to whom, incidentally, CABAN is indebted for the photograph of the church which illustrates this article).

"The slates from your quarry," he writes, "have been used on a 13th century church

Oakeley and Votty Slate in use in Many Parts

in Zoutelande on the Island of Walcheren.

"As you might remember, in 1944, in November, the dykes of the isle, which is surrounded partly by dykes and the bigger part by sand-dunes, were bombed by the Allies. Enormous gaps in the dykes made Walcheren a part of the sea. At the beginning of November, 1944, landings were made under cover from shellfire from several men of war, including the *Warspite*. The church in Zoutelande was one of the many buildings hit by one of the shells.

"In summer of 1947, long after the dykes had been closed again, the restoration of this church had started and now, precisely four years after the shelling, the church has a new roof, covered with slates from your quarry, as far as I know the first English slates to be used in Holland after the war.

"Keep up the good work of sending, or rather helping in sending, your slates. We need them here badly on several of our old monuments which have been badly damaged in this war."

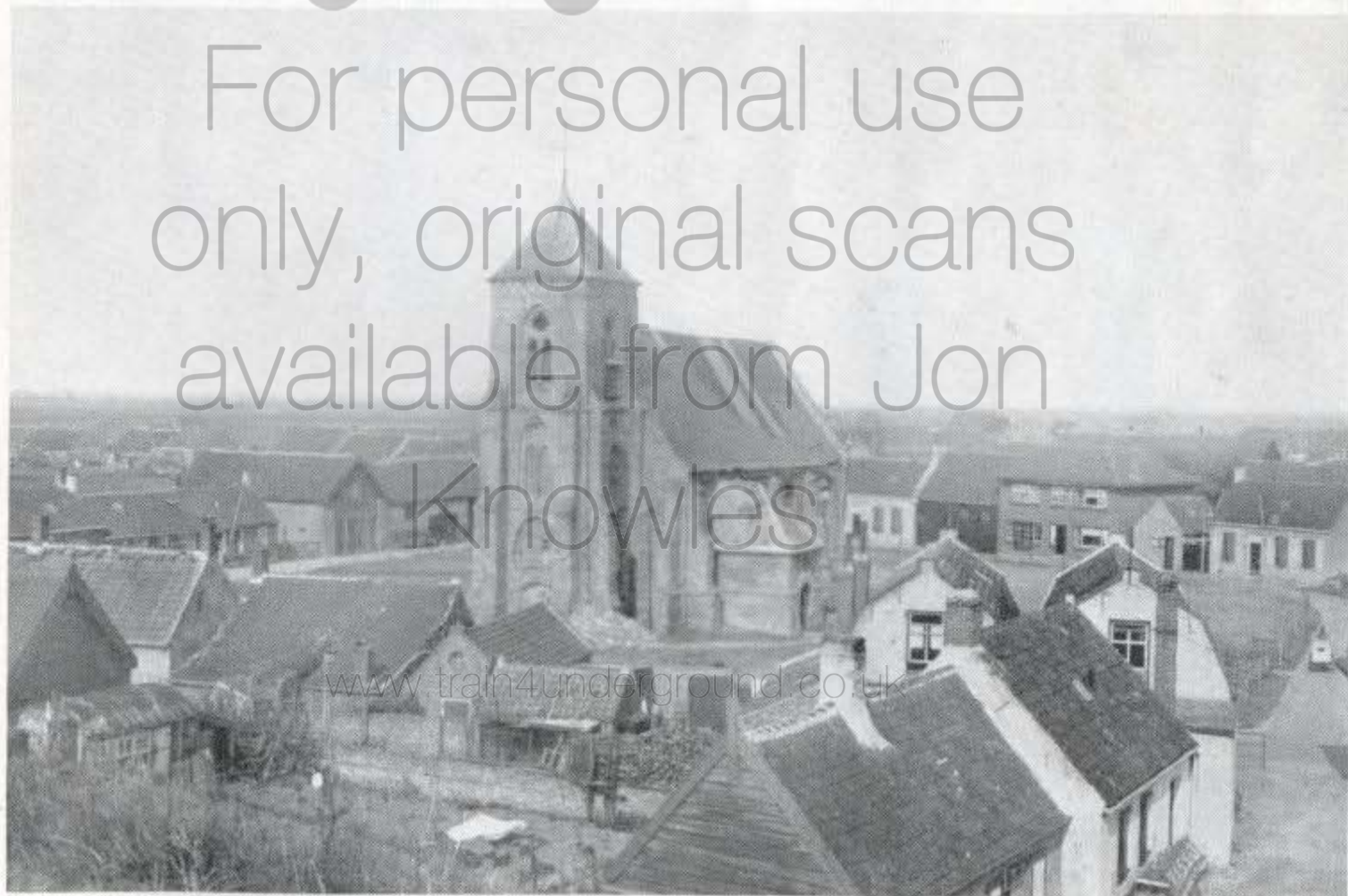
Second letter was from Mr. Rogier Dingemanse, of Zoutelande, who writes :—

"We are at present busy with the roof with the laying on of the slates. While I was busy getting the slates ready I chanced to see the one on which your name and address was written.

"You see now that your slates travel quite a distance before they reach their destination !"

When Mr. Dingemanse wrote that last sentence he probably didn't realise precisely how true it was. In the past a very great quantity of Oakeley slates have travelled a long way before they reached their destination. They have gone to Australia and New Zealand, to South Africa, to Nigeria, to the Gold Coast, to Buenos Ayres . . . and, as a contrast to these warm places, to Iceland.

But the two letters we've just quoted reminded us first and foremost of the use that's been made of Oakeley slate in Holland in the years gone by. There was the time nearly forty years ago when 200,000 of our slates were used in a world-famous building at The Hague, Holland's capital. This was the Carnegie Palace of Peace opened in 1913.



Another view of the 13th century church in Zoutelande as it stands amid the houses and cottages of the people whose place of worship it is.

NEWS EXCHANGE

Many members of *N Floor Caban, Oakeley Quarry*, will remember J. G. GRIFFITHS, who left the Quarry to emigrate to Australia. Recently, the Caban received a letter from him. Unlike the climate of Blaenau, he says that the scarcest thing in his part of the world is *RAIN*!

He is now working in the sugar plantations—in which, he says, there is plenty of work, though little available in other Australian industries. He has not quite lost touch with work like ours, for nearby is a small gold mine (known as the Mount Peter). There is, he says, plenty of gold in Australia, but it is most expensive to mine.

Mr. Griffiths is expecting his wife and son to arrive any day now. On behalf of all Oakeley and Votty employees, CABAN wishes them all the best of luck in their new life.

* * *

Now, a batch of news from the *Votty Mill Caban*—which, during the winter months, has been having several discussions on World Affairs. The debating, they tell us, sometimes became very heated.

* * *

Mr. WYNNE GRIFFITH, the noted novelist on Welsh life, paid the Caban a

visit. Discussing his work, he explained that up to the moment he has endeavoured, in his novels, to present Welsh life of days gone by to Englishmen, in their own language. In future, he intends to concentrate on similar novels, but dealing with the Welsh life of the present-day.

* * *

Thanks to Mr. HOWELL WILLIAMS for his lecture and several studies on the Welsh poets—a fascinating subject to which, from his extensive knowledge and vivid memory, he did full justice.

* * *

EVENTS—PRESENT AND FUTURE.

Among the happenings which are taking place as this issue of CABAN goes to the printer—or which have been fixed for a little later in the year—are the following, most of which we hope to report in later numbers of this magazine:—

On April 20th, Oakeley Club was visited by the Pen Morfa Institute, for a Billiards, Table Tennis and Darts Contest.

The Billiards Handicap for the Mrs. Inge Cup is to be played off by the end of June.

The Quarry Teams Billiards Tournament Final was played on May 3rd, 1949.

The W.E.A. Class are preparing for a tutorial session, to begin towards the end of the year.

And, lastly, CABAN learns that plans are well advanced for a Quarries Football Competition, to be run by the Oakeley Club.

16-year old EVAN THOMAS (apprentice slate maker), Votty, shows a piece of his work to his Father IVOR (who is a miner) and 24-year old brother JOHN, who drives the loco.



News Exchange (contd.)

FIRST OAKELEY CLUB EISTEDDFOD.

On another page of CABAN, we show you some of the members of the Oakeley Club practising in readiness for the Club's first Eisteddfod. Since those pictures were taken, the Eisteddfod has been held—before a crowded audience which filled the St. David's Hall, Blaenau Ffestiniog, to capacity. As an experiment, the Eisteddfod was a great success, and the organisers are already planning to make it an annual event; though, they say, next year they want more entries from competitors in the lower age groups.

The Eisteddfod Conductor was Mr. Howell Williams (Llan) and the adjudicators: Music: Miss Dorothy Edwards, L.R.A.M., Blaenau Ffestiniog. Literature and Recitation: Rev. Herman Jones, B.A., Portmadoc. The Chairman of the Organising Committee was Mr. Cadfan Hughes and the Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. George Woolford.

The occasion—which was held on March 14th—commenced with the audience standing to revere the name of Dr. T. Gwynn Jones, the well-known Welsh poet, who had died at Aberystwyth in the preceding week, and then singing "Cwm Rhondda."

The winners of the various sections of the Contest were as follows:—

Solo (under 45 years old):

ROBERT JONES (Llan)

Short Essay "Fishing" HUGH GWILYM JONES

Solo (under 25): WILFRED WILLIAMS

Piano Solo: BOBBIE JONES

Limerick: WILFRED WILLIAMS

Solo under 18: WILFRED WILLIAMS

Humorous Story: THOS LLEW WILLIAMS

Quartette: Glanypwll (D. J. WILLIAMS)

Solo (over 45): WILLIAM ROBERTS

Poem—eight 4-line verses on "Oversleeping": CADFAN HUGHES

Duet: JAMES PARRY and ROBERT JONES

Recitation—Open: CADFAN HUGHES

Male Voice Choir: D. J. RUSSELL'S party.

Most of the prizewinners will be well known to every reader of CABAN. Robert Jones is a rockman, on Floor N. Hugh Gwilym Jones, Wilfred Williams and Bobbie Jones are all to be found in the office,

Thos. Llew Williams is a platelayer, and D. J. Williams is a rockman on Floor 2.

Special mention must be made of William Roberts—who is a clearer in the Middle Quarry Mill, as well as being a well-known competitor in local eisteddfodau during his off duty hours; though competing in the "over 45" category, he is in fact past his 70th birthday. And also of D. J. Russell, who recently sustained a fractured leg in an accident and hobbled into the eisteddfod on two sticks. Before singing, he explained to the audience that he was a bit nervous, but that only one knee could tremble—the other being encased in plaster!

James Parry is a securer in the Quarry, whilst Cadfan Hughes of the slabmill is well known to everyone, as Chairman of the Club.

Unfortunately, CABAN can do nothing to recapture the splendid musical performances; but as a happy reminder of a successful evening, we reprint the prize-winning verse and essay:—

CYSGU'N HWYR.

Bu llawer i storm ar aelwydydd ein bro,
Y wraig yn ei ffwdan, a'r gwr bron o'i go
Dim tan yn y gegin, a'r drws o dan glo,
Oherwydd cysgu'n hwyr.

Bu'r aflwydd yn achos helyntion diri,
Cyn bod y cloc larwm, 'roedd hwn yn ei fri,
Ond heddiw fe gan yr hen gloc yn ty ni,
Rhag imi gysgu'n hwyr.

A minnau yn eistedd fin nos wrth y tan,
Daw atgo i'm helpu i lunio fy nghan
Am lu o obeithion a chwalwyd yn fan
Oherwydd cysgu'n hwyr.

'Rwy'n cofio Meg wiwlan a Sion Pen-y-Bryn
Yn mynd i'w priodas ar fore gwyn, gwyn,
Ond byw ar wahan y mae'r ddau erbyn hyn
Oherwydd cysgu'n hwyr.

'Roedd William yr Hafod yn dipyn o gawr,
A Mari ac yntau yn bobol go fawr,
Mae y ddau yn y tloty ers amser yn awr,
Oherwydd cysgu'n hwyr.

Mi gofiau y taro tra byddaf fi byw
Rhwng Huw bach "Y Felin," a stiward y
Rhiw;
Bu'r stiward mewn 'sbytty, a charchar gadd
Huw,
Oherwydd cysgu'n hwyr.

News Exchange (contd.)

Ar Now bach yr hogwr, 'roedd wedi troi saith

Bob bore cyn cychwyn, ar redeg, i'w waith ;
Un bore fe syrthiodd—daeth i "ben ei daith"

Oherwydd cysgu'n hwyr.

Gwrandewch air o gyngor ar derfyn fy nghan,
Os mynnwch hapusrwydd ar aelwyd fach lan,
Wel—prynnwch gloc larwm—un uchel ei gan,

A pheidiwch cysgu'n hwyr.

CADFAN HUGHES.

PYSGOTA.

Pysgota ydyw yr enw a roddir ar y grefft neu gelfyddyd o ddal pysgod, a chan ei bod yn grefft rhaid i'r sawl a fyn fod yn llwyddiannus wrth ddysg a phrofiad. Gall pysgota fod yn gyfrwng bywioliaeth neu adloniant. Y mae llawer math ar bysgota, sef dal pysgod gyda rhwyd, neu eu dal gyda genwair, lein a bach ac abwyd ar hwnnw. Prin y credwn fod rhwydo pysgod yn gymaint crefft ac ydyw eu dal gyda'r enwair. Rhaid wrth hir ymarfer cyn llwyddo i daflu y lein allan, a gollwng y bach a'r abwyd yn ysgafn ar y dwr i geisio dynwared prfyn byw. Rhaid astudio felly pa bryfaid fydd ar y dwr y bydd y pysgod yn neidio atynt a'u llyncu, er mwyn rhoi pluén mor debyg ag y bydd modd i'r pryf neu bryfaid hynny. Rhaid astudio pa fodd y bydd y gwynt yn chwythu, gan mai gorchwyl anodd iawn ydyw bwrw y lein allan yn erbyn y gwynt. Bydd y pysgotwr da hefyd yn gofalu bob amser, os yn bosibl, i wynebu yr haul, neu

bydd ei gysgod ef a'i enwair ar y dwr, a cheidw hynny y pysgod draw. Meithrinir amynedd dihafal gan y gwir bysgotwr, gan ei fod yn gyfarwydd iawn a siomedigaeth. Yn anad dim arall, gwyr ef yn dda fod yn rhaid iddo guddio ei hun o olwg y pysgod os am lwyddo i'w dal. Awgrymir mai dyma rai o'r cymhwysterau a ganfyddodd y Gwaredwr yn hen bysgotwyr Galilea i'w gwneuthur yn ddisgyblion ac yn bysgotwyr dynion.

Adroddir llawer i stori am droeon wrth bysgota, a cheir hwyl gan bysgotwyr ar ganmol maint y pysgod a fachwyd ond ni ddaliwyd. Tro rhyfedd oedd hwnnw o eiddo hen frawd wedi iddo ddal pysgodyn braf. Yr oedd newydd ei lusgo i'r lan trwy'r baw ar fin y llyn pan ddaeth rhywun ato a dweud fod y pysgodyn yn fudr iawn., Rhoddodd ef yn ol yn y dwr i'w olchi ond nid oedd y pysgodyn wedi marw a fwrdd ac ef o'i afael. Dyna dro digri iawn arall oedd i rhyw bysgotwr doniol wedi iddo fod wrthi yn pysgota am rai oriau heb ddim hwyl, ddal pysgodyn bychan iawn. Taflodd ef yn ol i'r llyn gan ddweud, "dos yn dy ol fy ngwas i ac anfon dy dad yn dy le, neu os na ddaw ef, tyrd ti drachefn wedi i ti dyfu dipyn mwy." Gellid ysgrifennu cyfrolau ar droeon trwstan bysgotwyr.

Defnyddir y gair pysgota hefyd mewn ystyr arall, sef y grefft honno o holi yn gyfrwys gall er ceisio rhyw wybodaeth yn aniongyrchol heb i'r sawl a'i medd ganfod y bwriad. Defnyddir hefyd y gair am yr arfer y bydd rhai yn fedrus ynddo, o geisio canmoliaeth pan na roddir hwnnw heb ei geisio.

Yr oedd y prif-fardd Pedrog ychydig fisoedd cyn ei farw yn pysgota yn y llyn Lladin chwedl yntau. Yr ystyr oedd, chwilio i mewn i'r geiriadur Lladin a cheisio dal ar ambell air, ac o'i ddal, egluro i'w ddarllenwyr ei ystyr yn fedrus a manwl.

Tybed nad pysgota ydyw amcan Eisteddfod Clwb y Oakeley a cheisio dal doniau newydd. Pwy a wyr na cheir hwyl ar bysgota !

Prentis yn y grefft.

(HUGH GWILYM JONES).



OLD HANDS.—Four veterans photographed in Oakeley Mill. They are OWEN GRIFFITH (Slate dresser); EVAN JONES (Platelayer) ; WILLIAM OWEN (Slab Mill) ; and WILLIAM ROBERTS (Unloader). Only one of them is under 70 years of age—and all four are still going strong !

CABAN SALUTES CYRIL WILLIAMS

Of all the personalities connected with the gallant Yangtse action of H.M.S. Amethyst, there were three who above all others captured the public heart and imagination.

You could see that, from the crowd's reactions as the Amethyst procession marched along to St. Paul's, passing within a stone's throw of Oakeley and Votty's London offices. One of those people was, of course, Commander Kerans himself; the second was the doctor who had brought medical aid (sole representative of the R.A.F. in what was otherwise an all-Navy procession); and the third was the member of Amethyst's crew who had lost both legs in the action, and drove in the procession in a wheelchair.

While the procession was on its way to St. Paul's, two Blaenau people were on their way to London. For the Amethyst hero was of course Cyril Williams—whose father, Llewellyn Williams, worked underground at Oakeley until a few years ago, and whose brother Emlyn is still in C Mill at the Quarry.

Mr. and Mrs. Williams came to London, met Cyril as he came from the Guildhall lunch, and saw him decorated by the King at the Investiture at Buckingham Palace.

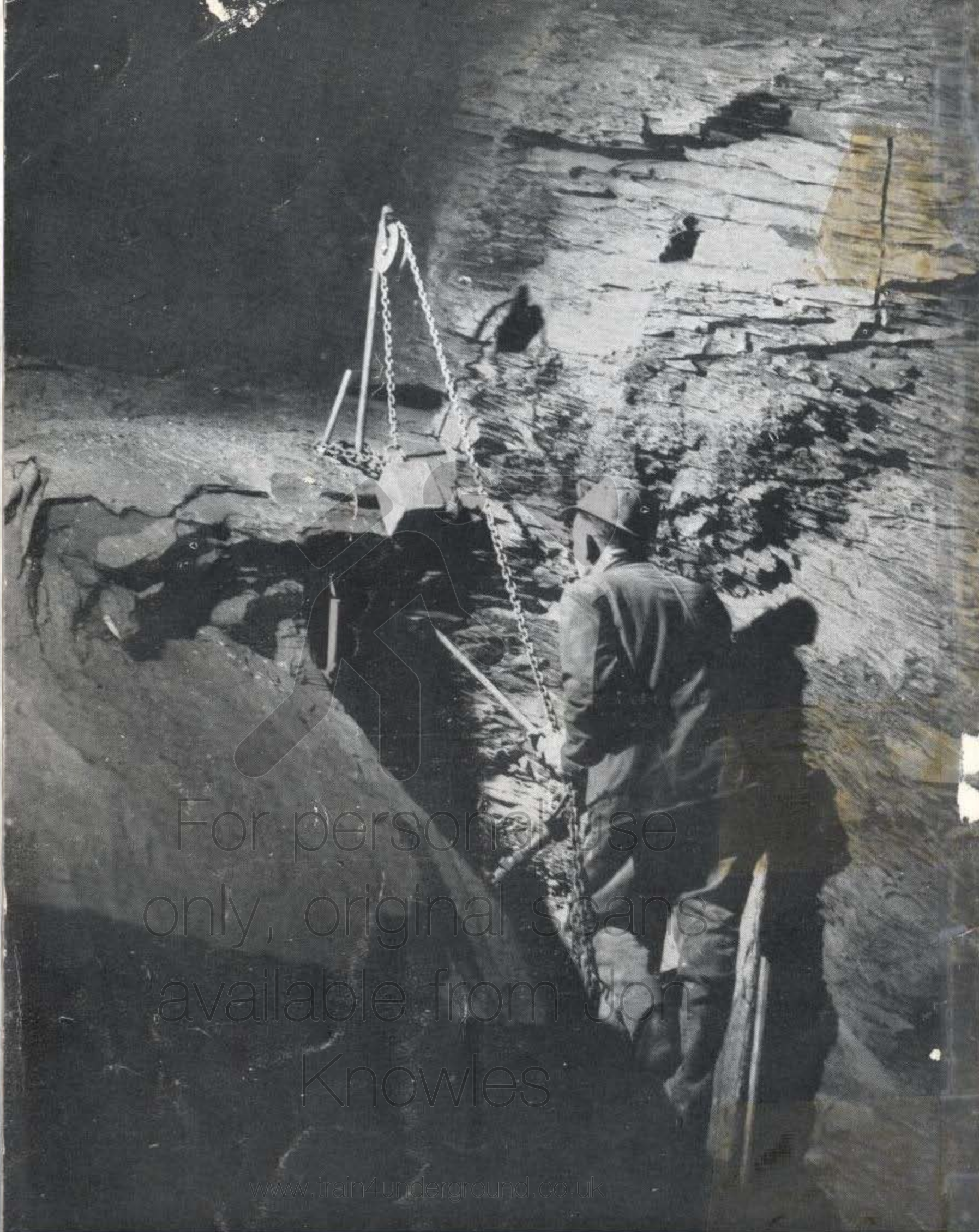
Emlyn had already seen his brother; by a special arrangement, made by the Admiralty and the Red Cross, he was able to fly to Hongkong and spend a month with him, while he was in hospital.

Apart from a spell in the Forces, the Quarry has always been Emlyn's career—he has been at Oakeley since 1934. But, from the start, his brother was determined to go to sea; and joined the Navy as soon as he was old enough—15½; he has now been in the Service for just on ten years.



ABOVE—Mr. & Mrs. Williams look over some of the press cuttings about the Amethyst; BELOW, Emlyn Williams, snapped by CABAN after returning from his Hongkong visit.





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How Far this Little Candle . . . (See page 11)

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