

BA (Hons.) History
EMA for A329: The Making of Welsh History
Dissertation

May 2024
The Open University

Why was Maerdy such fertile ground for the growth of communism in the early twentieth century?

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Word Count 7533 Words

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Abbreviations

ILP	Independent Labour Party
MFGB	Miners Federation of Great Britain
RUDC	Rhondda Urban District Council
SWMF	South Wales Miners Federation
TVR	Taff Vale Railway

Glossary

- Checkweigher** The checkweigher was a man elected by the miners responsible for weighing each tram of coal as it came to the surface and recording which miner was responsible for cutting it. The miners' wages depended on the weight of coal he cut. The miners relied on his honesty.
- Syndicalism** Syndicalism was a political doctrine that sought to unionise workers according to their industry and to take control of the means of production from the employers and bypassing the state.
- Industrial Unionism** Industrial unionism is a method of organising all workers for the same industry into one union which developed out of the factory system. It aimed to be holistic and industry wide. Some Unionist Industrialists advocated violent revolution. It overlaps with syndicalism.

Introduction

According to Karl Marx:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.¹

By 1919 socialism and communism were so well established in Maerdy that it would soon be known as 'Little Moscow'. This dissertation will investigate the factors that led Maerdy in the Rhondda, Glamorgan, to become receptive to socialism and communism before the end of the First World War.² From 1875, when the first pit at Mardy Colliery was sunk, to the end of the First World War a period of rapid growth turned Maerdy from an isolated farm at the head of the Rhondda Fach into a thriving, vibrant village entirely dependent on the colliery's four pits. The initial influx of people appears to have come from the neighbouring valleys and other areas of Wales but by the 1890s Maerdy was attracting miners, some with their families, from the West of England. The early twentieth century saw the growth of left-wing politics and the arrival of political radicals, such as Noah Ablett (1883-1935), selected by the men, to be checkweighers at Mardy Colliery.³ This study of the Maerdy community aims to discover the political and socioeconomic factors that led to the adoption of socialism, communism, and militant trade unionism. This dissertation will not consider the period after 1919 when socialism and communism were established in Maerdy. This period has been well documented by historians. Instead, it will concentrate on the early twentieth century, a period which has not been fully covered by historians to produce an accurate picture of life in Maerdy at the time and to fill in gaps in existing knowledge.

¹ Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, [18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. Karl Marx 1852 \(marxists.org\)](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18brumaire.htm) accessed 1 May 2024.

² During the late nineteenth century Maerdy was usually spelt Mardy but by 1914 the spelling Maerdy was more common. I have kept the spelling Mardy for the colliery as it was known by this for most of its working life.

³ The checkweigher was responsible for weighing the amount of coal dug by each individual miner which determined the amount the miner was paid.

Only English language sources have been used. The primary sources used include newspapers, census reports and other government reports. Maerdy features in a variety of newspapers published in South Wales including *South Wales Daily News*, a Liberal newspaper, the Conservative backing *Western Mail*, and the Lib-Lab *the Rhondda Leader*. The newspapers have been chosen to provide a balanced perspective. The local newspapers covered day to day events including the activities of religious and social groups as well as coverage of industrial disputes and are relevant to both chapters. Government papers cover a number of topics including census reports and places of worship in Maerdy in 1910 was given to a royal commission.⁴ Local trade directories provide information on the range of inhabitants, businesses, places of worship and some amenities in Maerdy. The report of the government Commission of Inquiry into Industrial Unrest 1917 provided an account of the state of industrial relations during the First World War in South Wales. These sources provide insights into the everyday life of the community which are difficult to find elsewhere.

Key works about industrial South Wales tend to concentrate on the Maerdy of the 1920s and 1930s or later and industrial disputes. Francis and Smith (1980) in their history of the South Wales Miners Federation give a brief history of Maerdy in which they attribute the subsequent militancy there to the election of Arthur Horner, a communist, as checkweigher at Mardy Colliery in 1919.⁵ However, Leeworthy (2021) records that Mardy Colliery had elected a socialist, Thomas Isaac Mardy Jones (1879-1970), as checkweigher in 1907 which suggests that the miners were voting in someone who shared their values into the responsible position and that socialism was considered acceptable.⁶ Leeworthy argues that Jones prepared the ground politically for those who followed. Wright (2016) argues that socialism was also debated in rural West Wales

⁴ R.L. Vaughan-Williams, *The Royal Commission on the Church of England and Other Religious Bodies in Wales and Monmouthshire Volume 2, Minutes of Evidence Book 1*. (London, 1910)

⁵ Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century*, (London, 1980), p.158.

⁶ Daryl Leeworthy, *Labour Country, Political Radicalism and Social Democracy in South Wales 1831-1985*, (Cardigan, 2018).

among Welsh speakers, home to many who settled in Maerdy.⁷ Both Jenkins (2016) and Williams (1998) provide an overview of the politics of the South Wales coalfield in general, beginning in the late nineteenth century.⁸ Smith (1988) considers the influence of *The Miners' Next Step*, published in 1912, on radicalism while Morgan (1982) argues that class warfare existed in South Wales, including Maerdy, by 1917.⁹ Williams and Parry (1999) have analysed the use of the English and Welsh languages as revealed by the 1891 census. While Maerdy is not included in their study they have included analysis of the neighbouring settlement of Ferndale which may have similarities to Maerdy.¹⁰ Knotter includes Maerdy in his study of communist settlements.¹¹ Journals such as the *Welsh History Review* and *Llafur* contain relevant articles on life in the Rhondda and South Wales coalfield. Individuals such as the radical Noah Ablett (1883-1935), co-author of *The Miners' Next Step*, and his protégé Arthur Horner, have also been featured in *Llafur*. Egan's (1986) biography of Ablett appeared in *Llafur* volume 4.3, and his leadership considered in Stead's (1972) article of South Wales leaders in *Welsh History Review*.¹² The earlier historiographies have in part been superseded by the work of later historians. This study will be an important addition to existing work as it will focus on a neglected area.

Chapter one will consider the social and economic aspects of Maerdy, its origin, location, its people, their origins, and languages they used in daily life. It will briefly consider if Maerdy was different to similar settlements. The organisations and facilities available to the men and women of Maerdy, secular or religious, including public

⁷ Martin Wright, *Wales, and Socialism: Political culture and National Identity Before the Great War*, (Cardiff, 2016).

⁸ Phillip Jenkins, *A History of Modern Wales 1536-1990*, (London, 1992).

Chris Williams, *Capitalism, Community and Conflict, The South Wales Coalfield 1898-1947*,(Cardiff, 1998).

⁹ David Smith, 'From Riots to Revolt, Tonypandy and the Miners' Next Step' in *Wales 1880-1914* ed. by T. Herbert and G.A. Jones (Cardiff, 1988) pp.107-137.

Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation, Wales 1880-1980* (Oxford, 1982).

Unofficial Reform Committee, *The Miners' Next step*, (Tonypandy, 1912).

¹⁰ M.A. Williams and G. Parry, *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census* (Cardiff, 1999).

¹¹ A. Knotter, 'Little Moscows in Western Europe: The Ecology of Small-Place Communism', *International Review of Social History*, (2011) 56(3), pp. 475–510. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859011000381> Accessed 14 May 2024,

¹² Peter Stead Working Class Leadership in South Wales, 1900-1920 in *Welsh History Review*, 6.1. (Cardiff, 1972) pp.329-353.

spaces and whether all the social classes were represented, including the colliery's owners and manager will be explored. It will also consider the part, played by the owners of Mardy Colliery in the life of Maerdy. Chapter two will consider the politics of Maerdy including socialism, the arrival of radical influential checkweighers, Thomas Isaac Mardy-Jones (1879-1970) and Noah Ablett to the election of Arthur Horner (1894-1968). The importance given to worker's political education. It will consider the change from liberalism to socialism, syndicalism, the growth of Marxism and the presence of other political parties.¹³

¹³ Syndicalism was the aim of transforming capitalist activity by direct working-class action through trade unions.

Chapter One Social and economic aspects of Maerdy.

The political life of Maerdy did not occur in isolation it was part of the collective life of Maerdy. Francis and Smith argue that Maerdy became communist because of the election of Arthur Horner as a checkweigher in 1919 but his election was the culmination of developments involving the whole community over many years¹⁴. This chapter will consider the socio-economic factors that influenced how Maerdy developed as a community and became fertile ground for the growth of communism in the early twentieth century. Many of the newspaper sources that form the basis of the chapter are only one or two sentences long. The subject choice of the editor can reflect the political bias of the newspaper as well as the longer articles.

Before 1875 Maerdy was an isolated upland farm at the head of the Rhondda Fach valley, close to the northern edge of the South Wales coalfield. Mordecai Jones (1813-1880) sank the first pit in 1875 connected to Ferndale by a new railway track and a new parish road. Steep tracks and footpaths over the mountains connected the village to the neighbouring valleys (see map two, Appendix 1). A proposed road from Aberdare to Maerdy was labelled an unnecessary expenditure of public money in 1881.¹⁵ The railway provided Mardy Colliery with a direct link to Cardiff docks thirty-six kilometres away.¹⁶ Following the success of the first pit Mardy Colliery was sold to Locket's Merthyr Steam Coal Company Limited, a joint stock company, in 1877 who sank the No.2 pit close to the first the following year.¹⁷ Both produced the Welsh steam coal favoured by the Royal Navy.¹⁸ No.3 pit was sunk in 1894 a mile further up the valley after which the company was wound up and a new owner, Locket's Merthyr Collieries (1894) Limited

¹⁴ Hywel Francis and David Smith, *The Fed a history of the South Wales Miners in the twentieth century* (London, 1980), p.157.

¹⁵ Percival Tomkyns, Letter to the editor, *The Aberdare Times*, [MARDY ROAD.\[1881-12-10|The Aberdare Times - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 1 May 2024.

¹⁶ E.D. Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys* (Worcester, 1963), p.130.

¹⁷ Anon. Coal winning in Mardy, *The South Wales Daily News*, 20 September 1878, p.4. Available at [ICOAL-WINNIYG jN THE MARDY.\[1878-09-20|South Wales Daily News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 2 May 2024.

¹⁸ John Davies, *A History of Wales*, London (2007 edition) Penguin Books.

established.¹⁹ It sank No.4 pit, the final pit, in 1914 close to No.3 (see figure 2 Appendix 1). All the inhabitants of Maerdy were directly or indirectly economically dependent on the colliery. It generated a tightly knit community that was a factor in Mardy becoming fertile ground for communism²⁰.

A study of the 1891 census returns demonstrated that in Ferndale, the nearest settlement to Maerdy, the first inhabitants were Welsh speaking miners from Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil.²¹ It is likely that this was replicated in Maerdy. Men were also attracted from further afield as demonstrated in the number of bodies sent to West Wales for burial following the disaster of 1885.²² An increasing number of English-speaking people were attracted to the area from the west of England.²³ At home and in the public sphere Maerdy operated in two languages, Welsh and English. Single men usually lodged with families who spoke the same language.²⁴ Activities associated with chapels were separated along linguistic lines, denominations had both Welsh and English language chapels, but they could cooperate. In 1910 The Rhondda Leader reported plans for over a thousand Sunday School children from both Welsh and English non-conformist chapels to go on a daytrip to Barry Island.²⁵ Newspapers were readily available in English and Welsh. Both Welsh and English language books, periodicals and newspapers were available first at Coffee Tavern then later at the Workingmens Hall and Institute.²⁶ The members of Mardy Lodge of the South Wales Miners Federation (SWMF) kept its minutes in both Welsh and English until 1914.²⁷

¹⁹ In the matter of Locket's Merthyr Steam Coal Company, *The London Gazette*, issue 26586, January 4 1895, p.105, Available at [Page 105 | Issue 26586, 4 January 1895 | London Gazette | The Gazette](#). Accessed 4 May 2024.

²⁰ A. Knotter, 'Little Moscows' in *Western Europe*, p.489.

²¹ Geraint Jenkins, Gwenfair Parry and Mari A. Williams, Chapter 22 Conclusion in *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census* by Gwenfair Parry and Mari Williams, p.478.

²² Unknown, The Mardy Explosion. *The Western Mail* 2 January 1886, p.8 [THE MARDY|1886-01-02|Weekly Mail - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 20 April 2024.

²³ Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys*, p.236.

²⁴ Mari A. Williams, Chapter 5 Ferndale, Glamorgan in *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census* by Gwenfair Parry and Mari Williams, p.115.

²⁵ Anon. Maerdy, *The Rhondda Leader*, 23 June 1900, p.5. Available at [Maerdy.|1900-06-23|The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 4 May 2024.

²⁶ David Owen, The History of Maerdy Workingmens Hall and Institute. Available at [The History of Maerdy Workingmen's Hall & Institute | Peoples Collection Wales](#) Accessed 15 May 2024.

²⁷ Francis and Smith, *The Fed*, p.159.

Knotter suggests that rapid growth of a workforce with different backgrounds, as occurred at Maerdy, was a common factor in the growth of ‘Little Moscows.’²⁸ Language was not a barrier to communal activities and differences appear to have been accepted and worked around.

The ability to reach a consensus and find solutions to recognised problems was necessary for those living in the overcrowded conditions of Maerdy. The inhabitants of Maerdy demonstrated from the beginning that they could speak up and act together when needed. In 1882 the residents of the earliest built houses requested that Ystradyfodwg Local Board provide pavements in front of their houses and more street lighting.²⁹ Successful petitions to the Taff Vale Railway (TVR) by Maerdy residents, the Chamber of Trade, and supported by the colliery owners, led to the opening of a new passenger railway station in 1889 enabling Mardy residents to travel to Porth, Pontypridd, Cardiff and beyond.³⁰ Road travel remained dependent on horse power until the first trams reached Maerdy in April 1912.³¹ In 1891 all the ratepayers petitioned for a police station, which was subsequently built, to deal with drunkenness and petty crime.³² In 1898 the village was held up as an example to the rest of the coalfield when it established a limited company, led by local shopkeepers, to supply electricity to Maerdy to provide an alternative to expensive gas lights.³³ The following year, when the Postmaster General refused to change the official spelling of Mardy to Maerdy, it was decided a raise a petition in support of the name change which was ultimately

²⁸ A. Knotter, ‘Little Moscows,’ in *Western Europe*, p.489.

²⁹ Anonymous. Mardy. *The Pontypridd Chronicle and Workman’s News*, 28 January 1882, p.2. Available at [MARDY.\[1882-01-28\]The Pontypridd Chronicle and Workman’s News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 5 May 2024.

³⁰ Anonymous. Opening of a Railway Station at Mardy, *The Western Mail*, p.3. Available at [IOPENING OF A RAILWAY STATION AT MARDY.\[1889-06-19\]The Western Mail - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 20 April 2024.

³¹ Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys*, p.128.

³² Anonymous. Mardy. *The South Wales Daily News*, 11 March 1891, p.6. Available at [MARDY.\[1891-03-11\]South Wales Daily News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 5 May 2024.

³³ Anonymous. Electricity at Mardy, *The South Wales Echo*, p.3. Available at [IELECTRICITY AT MARDY.\[1898-03-04\]South Wales Echo - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 4 May 2024.

successful.³⁴ It could be argued that experience of successful collective actions gave an impetus to the development of socialism and communism in Maerdy.

Unlike larger settlements Maerdy did not have a thriving middle class. Only six men are listed as Private Residents in Kelly's Directory of 1895, four are ministers of religion, one the colliery manager and the other its cashier.³⁵ Small business owners and the miners themselves provided the leadership and organisation for numerous groups from chapels and churches, sports clubs, friendly societies, evening classes to political groups. Working class members occupied responsible positions in lieu of a middle class. They learnt to organise numerous activities for men and women including the musical events important to their community. In 1897 the Maerdy section of the Crystal Palace Choir prepared for their trip to London³⁶ Welsh chapels held regular *gymanfu ganu* (singing festivals) while English performed oratorios and other choral pieces and the community organised its own *eisteddfodau* (cultural festivals). Often performances involved both men and women as in February 1899 when both Carmel English Baptist Chapel and Siloa Chapel gave concerts.³⁷ Until the opening of the Workingmen's Hall and Institute in 1905 chapels were the largest indoor spaces available to the community and, with David's Hall at the Maerdy Hotel, were used for public meetings open to both men and women. As Maerdy grew larger more attractive alternatives to chapel became available to young men such as trade unionism, sports clubs, political parties, evening classes and public houses. The growth of religious indifference, coupled with a lack of social control by the middle classes, helped create the specific time and place where communism could grow.³⁸

³⁴ Anonymous. Rhondda Urban District Council, *The South Wales Daily News*, 29 April 1899, p.6 Available at [RHONDDA URBAN DISTRICT.1899-04-29|South Wales Daily News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](https://www.library.wales/ark:/61909/3Q1M-TD99-04-29). Accessed 4 May 2024.

³⁵ *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales 1895 (Part 1 Monmouthshire Directory and South Wales Localities)*, (London, 1895), p.647, Available at [Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire & S Wales, 1895. \[Part 1: Monmouthshire Directory & South Wales Localities\] - Historical Directories of England & Wales - Special Collections](https://www.library.wales/ark:/61909/3Q1M-TD99-04-29) Accessed 15 May 2024.

³⁶ Anonymous, Maerdy, *The Glamorgan Free Press*, p.5. Available at [Maerdy.1897-07-17|Glamorgan Free Press - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](https://www.library.wales/ark:/61909/3Q1M-TD99-07-17). Accessed 2 May 2024.

³⁷ Anonymous. Maerdy, p.5.

³⁸ A. Knotter, *Little Moscows in Western Europe*, p.507.

Women took part in many activities but not all women fitted the stereotype image of the ‘Welsh mam,’ the reality was more complicated. As wives and mothers, they were responsible for the housekeeping, perhaps providing baths and meals for shift workers, and child rearing. Women bore the brunt of water shortages in the droughts of 1893 and 1911, when there was criticism of shortages despite Maerdy being near the reservoir.³⁹ Women supported, and were expected to support, union actions including strikes. In 1904 women supported the campaign to make union membership compulsory at Mardy Colliery by refusing to accept non-union lodgers.⁴⁰ Women were active members of chapels and churches. They had access to some books at the Workingmens Hall and Institute, could attend its entertainments and some lectures there. It is unlikely any women attended the lecture about pithead baths in 1914 despite its potential benefit to them.⁴¹ A few women appeared in the Police Court charged with theft, drunkenness, child cruelty or fighting. However, the Western Mail would have caused widespread offence when it disparaged Maerdy women as ‘hoydens’ and ‘members of the Co-operative Stores’ in 1918 when women, with babies, watched a grocer’s shop windows being smashed one night. He was suspected of concealing a food delivery.⁴² The Rhondda Leader, perhaps mindful it was the local paper, was less judgemental of mothers and babies being out at night although any untoward activity in Maerdy would attract a mixed audience.⁴³ The complex and varied roles played by women at home and

³⁹ Anonymous. The Great Drought, *The Western Mail*, 6 May 1893, p.7. Available at [THE GREAT DROUGHT. \(open.ac.uk\)](#). Accessed 4 May 2024.

Anonymous, Mardy, *The Rhondda Socialist Newspaper*, 1 September 1911, p.1. Available at [Mardy Notes. | Rhondda Socialist Newspaper | Friday 01 September 1911 | British Newspaper Archive](#) Accessed 23 May 2023. Access maybe restricted by a paywall, see also Appendix 2.

⁴⁰ Anonymous. Maerdy Strike, *Evening Express*, 10 August 1904, p.2. [MARDY STRIKE|1904-08-10|Evening Express - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#)

⁴¹ Mardy Notes, *The South Wales Worker*, 7 February 1914, p.8, [Mention This Paper When You Buy | Mardy Notes. | Rhondda Socialist Newspaper | Saturday 07 February 1914 | British Newspaper Archive](#) Accessed 13 May 2024, the newspaper is behind a paywall, see Appendix 2 for download.

⁴² Western mail

⁴³ Anonymous. Uproar at Mardy, *The Rhondda Leader*, 2 February 1918, p.4. Available at [Uproar at Mardy.|1918-02-02|The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 5 May 2024. Rhondda shop raids, *The Western Mail*, 31 January 1918, p.4. Available at [Seven Firemen Killed. | Western Mail | Thursday 31 January 1918 | British Newspaper Archive](#). Accessed 5 May 2024.

in the community helped bind the worlds of home and work together creating circumstances that would contribute to Maerdy being fertile ground for communism.

The social development of Maerdy was affected by the colliery owners. The first owner Mordecai Jones, a staunch Calvinistic Methodist, gave free land to the early chapels.⁴⁴ The relationship with the new joint stock company directors, Mr Locket, Mr Judkins and Mr Wood, all of London, was more distant although they visited when the new passenger railway station opened in 1889 and gave donations to chapels and schools.⁴⁵ Mr Judkins, described as a frequent visitor to Maerdy, paid for the recreation ground.⁴⁶ However, most contact with the colliery owners was via the colliery manager or colliery agent. Mr William Thomas of Aberdare, the first Colliery Agent was associated with the colliery from 1879. He and his wife made generous donations to good causes in Maerdy and were popular choices to lay foundation stones. Thomas was also the principal negotiator for the company during industrial disputes. When the Workingmen's Hall and Institute opened in 1905 the company chairman, Mr Ronnfeldt, opened the library and Locket and Judkins sent letters and a cheque for twenty-five pounds towards paying off the debt on the hall.⁴⁷ The library contained many books donated by William Thomas to enable men to educate themselves. While Henry Maltby, the colliery manger, was elected a Conservative councillor in 1908 was later the council chairman⁴⁸ It was inevitable that the relationship between miners and a joint stock company would be

⁴⁴ Watkin William Price, (1959), Mordecai Jones (1813-1880), *Dictionary of Welsh Biography online* Available at [JONES, MORDECAI \(1813 - 1880\), promoter of British Schools, colliery proprietor, etc. | Dictionary of Welsh Biography](#). Accessed 5 May 2024.

⁴⁵ Anonymous. Opening of a Railway Station at Mardy, *The Western Mail*, p.3. Available at [IIOOPENING OF A RAILWAY STATION AT MARDY | 1889-06-19 | The Western Mail - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 20 April 2024.

⁴⁶ An Eisteddfod at Maerdy, *The Western Mail*, 5 September 1883, p.4, Available at [AN KISTEMftOl\) AT - MAKKDY | 1883-09-05 | The Western Mail - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 5 May 2024.

⁴⁷ Anonymous. New Institute for Mardy, *Weekly Mail*, 4 February 1906, p.10. Available at [=---NEW INSTITUTE FOR MARDY | 1906-02-24 | Weekly Mail - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 5 May 2024.

⁴⁸ Anonymous, Mr H.E. Maltby (Mardy), *The Rhondda Leader*, 11 April 1908, p.5. available at [MR. H. E. MALTBY \(Mardy\) | 1908-04-11 | The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 16 May 2024.

Anonymous, Mr H.E. Maltby, ME, JP, *The Rhondda Leader*, 20 May 1916, p.4. Available at [Mr. H. E. Maltby, M.E., J.P. Mardy. | 1916-05-20 | The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 16 May 2024.

different to that of an owner who lived nearby but perhaps it gave a greater sense of freedom and independence to the miners.

Maerdy's independence grew in part because it was physically isolated in comparison to villages such as Cilfynydd, a mile from Pontypridd. Both were new settlements dependent on a local colliery, both experienced disasters, Maerdy in 1885, the Cilfynydd in 1894. Both had active SWMF lodges, but Mardy Lodge gained a reputation for militancy. Lacking a nearby town centre Maerdy organised its own entertainment whether chapel, or secular. Maerdy Workingmen's Hall and Institute was the venue for union meetings and entertainment, including from 1910, cinema films.⁴⁹ Cilfynydd close to Pontypridd had a wider choice of shops, a market, and entertainments. Travelling entertainments visited Maerdy but tended to visit Pontypridd rather than Cilfynydd. Both communities had close bonds that grew out of dependency on each other for safety underground. It was the growing militancy at Maerdy that set it apart. It could be argued that the necessity of organising chapels and societies gave the people of Maerdy confidence to use their own agency to obtain what they wanted. Collective actions helped unite a people who began to question the political status quo and distribution of wealth.

⁴⁹ Anonymous. Mardy, *Rhondda Leader, Maesteg, Garw and Ogmore Telegraph*, 11 June 1910, p.7. Available at-----[Mardy|1910-06-11|Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmore Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 5 May 2024.

Chapter 2 Political aspects of Maerdy.

It was not a foregone conclusion that Maerdy would gain a reputation for left wing politics in the early twentieth century although people were increasingly questioning the gulf in wealth between rich and poor and devising their own solutions. Different political parties vied for the votes of Maerdy voters as they did elsewhere and Mardy Lodge of the SWMF would play an increasingly important role in the political education of its members.

It could be argued that William Abraham (1842-1922), commonly known by his bardic name Mabon, dominated local politics from his election in 1885 as a Liberal MP until his retirement in 1920 as a reluctant Labour MP. He was the first Welsh working class MP for the Rhondda, a renowned orator in Welsh and English, and steeped in Welsh nonconformist culture.⁵⁰ In Maerdy the Liberal-Labour alliance was strong in the late nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century. Its inhabitants played active roles in the Rhondda Liberal Labour Association with Thomas John Morgan its president in 1905 and Jeremiah Jones the chairman in 1909.⁵¹ There was also an active branch of the Young Liberals' League mentioned in the local press in 1911.⁵² The Conservative party was also active in Maerdy opening its first Conservative Workmens' Club in 1896 and in 1908 celebrated the election of H.E. Maltby, the manager of Mardy Colliery, as a local councillor.⁵³ The article stresses he is a popular manger without mentioning that

⁵⁰ Williams, John. William Abraham [pseud. Mabon] (1842-1922), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [online], Available at <https://doi-org.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/30326> Accessed 12 May 2024.

⁵¹ Anonymous, Mardy, *The Rhondda Leader*, 22 April 1905, p.7. Available at [|Mardy.|1905-04-22|The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 13 May 2024.

Anonymous, Mardy, *Rhondda Leader, Maesteg, Garw and Ogmored Telegraph*, 11 September 1909, p.5. Available at [Mardy.|1909-09-11|Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmored Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 13 May 2024.

⁵² Anonymous, Mardy, *The Rhondda Leader*, p.6. Available at [-Mardy.-|1911-04-01|The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 14 May 2024.

⁵³ Anonymous. Conservative Club for Mardy, *Evening Express*, 7 January 1896, p.3. Available at [CONSERVATIVE CLUB FOR MARDY.|1896-01-07|Evening Express - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 14 May 2024.

Anonymous. Mr H.E. Maltby (Mardy), *The Rhondda Leader*, 11 April 1908, p.5. Available at [MR. H. E. MALTBY \(Mardy\)|1908-04-11|The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 14 May 2014.

he was involved in numerous disputes with the Mardy Lodge. In 1899 they hosted Conservative peer Lord Glanusk.⁵⁴ It could be argued that the diversity of political opinions made people in Mardy more willing to listen new ideas that challenged the existing political and social ideas, including socialism and Marxism.

The formation of the SWMF in 1898 and its affiliation to the Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) changed the dynamics of power by increasing the bargaining strength of miners against the combines. Mardy Lodges could seek wider support in disputes. There were many disputes and campaigns, the longest running were those for a minimum wage, secured in 1912, and for only union members to be employed at Mardy Colliery. The latter dispute included refusing to work with non-union labour and the agreement of women to refuse non-union lodgers.⁵⁵ By the early twentieth century a younger generation of miners was emerging who were less tolerant of Mabon's concept of unity of interest between mine owners and miners, suspicious of his friendship with D.A. Thomas M.P. and coal owner, and more confrontational. They were less likely to share Mabon's Welsh nonconformist background and more likely to embrace socialism. Wright argues that the interaction of trade unionism and socialism produced a distinctive socialist culture in Wales, of which Maerdy was part.⁵⁶ The Mardy Lodge, part of Rhondda No.1 district SWMF would become increasingly left wing with its choice of checkweighers.

Morgan has argued that the Liberal party, reinforced by Welsh nonconformist culture, was the dominant party of Wales until 1914 while socialist parties had little impact despite the affiliation of the SWMF to the Labour Party in 1908.⁵⁷ However, Wright,

⁵⁴ Anonymous, Views of Lord Glanusk, *South Wales Daily News*, 10 October 1899, p.5 Available at [PUBLIC OPINION.\[1899-10-10\]South Wales Daily News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). accessed 14 May 2024.

⁵⁵ Anonymous. Maerdy Strike, *Evening Express*, 10 August 1904, p.2. [MARDY STRIKE\[1904-08-10\]Evening Express - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#)

⁵⁶ Martin Wright, *Wales and Socialism*, p.142.

⁵⁷ K. O. Morgan, 1972, "New Liberalism and the Challenge of Labour, The Welsh Experience, 1885-1929", *Welsh History Review*, (1972) vol. 6, pp. 288. Francis and Smith, *The Fed*, p.10.

suggests that debates about socialism in Welsh language areas has been underestimated.⁵⁸ It is possible that many Welsh language speakers who moved to Maerdy were, like their English counterparts, already familiar with socialism. Many of the first miners were from Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil which had their own traditions of radicalism. Political changes took place in what has been described as a fluid environment where many questioned the disparity in wealth between the industrialists and their workers.⁵⁹ A variety of political speakers visited Maerdy. Notice was given of Tom Mann, a syndicalist, to speak at Mardy in 1896 on socialism.⁶⁰ The views of Jim Connell of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) expressed in 1897 reportedly caused members of the audience at David's Hall to leave early. Only one remark was quoted in full that 'no man in business could be a true Christian' presumably because it would be of most interest to its business owning readers and reinforced ideas of socialists as atheists.⁶¹ A lecture on why workmen should be socialists, by Mr Malpas of Berkley, Gloucestershire, a year later was well attended and uncontroversial.⁶² Apart from the lecture by Connell it is difficult to know whether or not the socialist speakers were well received because there is so little evidence in the press. However, there were enough interested people for Mardy to send delegates to the South Wales ILP and Socialist Federation conference in 1899.⁶³ Also in 1899 Miss Enid Stacy BA, a trade unionist, was reported to have spoken to about 150 'attentive' workmen in Maerdy Square with Jeremiah Jones, checkweigher, acting as chairman. Stacy, from Bristol, was a member of the ILP.⁶⁴ Early twentieth century Mardy was open to socialist ideas that would grow within its trade unionism.

⁵⁸ Wright, *Wales and Socialism*, p.147.

⁵⁹ Wright, *Wales and Socialism*, p.89.

⁶⁰ Anonymous, Mardy, *The Pontypridd Chronicle and Workman's News*, 3 July 1896, p.5. Available at [MARDY.|1896-07-03|The Pontypridd Chronicle and Workman's News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 13 July 2024.

⁶¹ Anonymous, Mardy, *South Wales Daily News*, 14 August 1897, p.6. Available at [MARDY.|1897-08-14|South Wales Daily News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 13 May 2024.

⁶² Anonymous, Maerdy, *South Wales Daily News*, 26 August 1899, p.6. Available at [MAERDY. 9|1898-08-26|South Wales Daily News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 13 May 2024.

⁶³ Anonymous, Socialism, *South Wales Daily News*, 27 March 1899, p.5. Available at [SOCIALISM.|1899-03-27|South Wales Daily News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 13 May 2024.

⁶⁴ Wright, *Wales and Socialism*, pp. 46 and 71.

Anonymous, Maerdy, *Glamorgan Free Press*, 9 September 1899, p.5. Available at [-Maerdy.|1899-09-09|Glamorgan Free Press - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#) Accessed 14 May 2024.

The Mardy Colliery checkweighers played an important role in the political life of Maerdy and were influential, almost elected heads of the community. Each of Mardy Colliery's four pits had its own checkweigher and deputy. It was not unusual for them to be politically active. The obituaries for Thomas John Morgan, died 1905, and Jeremiah Jones, died 1909, reveal both men were active in the Rhondda Liberal and Labour Association, and had good relations with colliery officials, Morgan was also secretary of the Mardy Lodge, SWMF.⁶⁵ Francis and Smith note that the Mardy Lodge minutes were kept in English and Welsh until 1914 suggesting that among the members were miners who preferred to communicate in Welsh before 1914.⁶⁶ It is possible that most, if not all, the checkweighers in the early twentieth century were bilingual including Jeremiah Jones, Morgan Weeks and Noah Ablett. Arthur Horner, elected 1919, was an English Speaker.⁶⁷ Checkweighers often chaired meetings and lectures outside the workplace. The relationship between checkweighers and colliery officials varied. Morgan and Jones were credited with having a good relationship but a dispute, involving two unnamed checkweighers and colliery officials, was discussed at the SWMF Rhondda District meeting in 1902.⁶⁸ The involvement of checkweighers in the wider life of Maerdy could help build the close relationship between work and residence that could later enable the growth of communism.

Checkweighers were also involved in workers' education. Maerdy held a variety of evening classes but in 1902 the arrival of Ruskin Hall, also called Ruskin College,

⁶⁵ Mardy, *The Rhondda Leader*, 22 April 1905, p.7. Available at [| Mardy.|1905-04-22|The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 13 May 2024.

Mardy, *Rhondda Leader, Maesteg, Garw and Ogmored Telegraph*, 11 September 1909, p.5. Available at [Mardy.|1909-09-11|Rhondda Leader Maesteg Garw and Ogmored Telegraph - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 13 May 2024.

⁶⁶ Francis and Smith, *The Fed*, p.159.

⁶⁷ Jeremiah Jones, 1901 Census, RG13/5020,p.7, see Appendix 3

Morgan Weeks, 1901 Census, RG13/5020 p.34, see Appendix 3

Thomas John Morgan, 1901 Census RG13/5020 p.46, see Appendix 3

Arthur Lewis Horner, 1901 Census, RG13/5026 p.17. See Appendix 3

Noah Ablett, 1911 Census, See Appendix 3.

⁶⁸ The Coal Trade, *Evening Express*, 19 August 1902, p.2. Available at [THE COAL TRADE.|1902-08-19|Evening Express - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 13 May 2024.

courses were announced. Founded in 1899 in Oxford its aim was to educate intelligent workingmen who could raise their own class to be ‘sound and good citizens.’⁶⁹ It held residential and correspondence courses and would play an influential role in Maerdy.⁷⁰ In 1907 Thomas Isaac Jones, an active member of the ILP and SWMF, a graduate of Ruskin College and Fellow of the Royal Economic Society, was elected checkweigher at No.3 pit.⁷¹ He later incorporated Mardy into his name.⁷² Politically active from the start he lost the 1908 council election to the Conservative colliery manager, Henry Maltby.⁷³ Jones successfully campaigned for SWMF to sponsor scholarships to Ruskin College.⁷⁴ Noah Ablett was one of the first recipients. In 1909 Mardy-Jones left Mardy Colliery. Throughout his time as a checkweigher he promoted the ILP and sought to educate the miners in socialism and economics. Taliesin Richards, the colliery agent, observed that the men were dominated by the socialist doctrines of Mardy-Jones.⁷⁵ Richards was not pleased when Ablett was chosen to succeed Mardy-Jones.

Ablett had returned from Ruskin with more radical left-wing ideas than Jones. Richards thought Ablett a greater troublemaker but less cunning than Jones.⁷⁶ Ablett supported the student strike at Ruskin College in favour of the teaching of Marxism theory and economics. This resulted in the setting up of the Central Labour College (CLC) which he

⁶⁹ Anonymous. Ruskin Hall Lectures at Maerdy and Ferndale, *The Pontypridd Chronicle and Workman's News*, 25 January 1902, p.7. Available at [RUSKIN HALL LECTURES AT MAERDY AND FERNDALE.\[1902-01-25\]|The Pontypridd Chronicle and Workman's News - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 15 May 2024.

⁷⁰ Andy Miles, Workers Education: The Communist Party and the Plebs League in the 1920s in *History Workshop*, number 18 (1984), p.102. Available at [Workers' Education: The Communist Party and the Plebs League in the 1920s on JSTOR \(open.ac.uk\)](#) Accessed 16 May 2024.

⁷¹ Anonymous, Ferndale, *The Rhondda Leader*, 29 June 1907, p.5. Available at [!Ferndale.\[1907-06-29\]|The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 18 May 2024.

⁷² Leeworthy, *Labour Country*, p.161

⁷³ Anonymous. District Council Election, *The Rhondda Leader*, 21 March 1908, p. [District Council Election.\[1908-03-21\]|The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 16 May 2024.

Anonymous. Mr H.E. Maltby (Mardy), *The Rhondda Leader*, 11 April 1908, p.5. Available at [MR. H. E. MALTBY \(Mardy\)\[1908-04-11\]|The Rhondda Leader - Welsh Newspapers \(library.wales\)](#). Accessed 14 May 2014.

⁷⁴ Dr Graham John Jones, Thomas Isaac Mardy Jones (1879-1970) in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography Online* Available at [MARDY-JONES, THOMAS ISAAC \(1879 - 1970\), economist and politician | Dictionary of Welsh Biography](#). Accessed 16 May 2024.

⁷⁵ Leeworthy, *Labour Country*, pp.162-163

⁷⁶ Leeworthy, *Labour Country*, p.166.

supported but it was not until 1911 that the Mardy Lodge backed the CLC over Ruskin.⁷⁷ The strike also resulted in the establishment of the Plebs League to promote workers Marxist education, favoured by Ablett.⁷⁸ The SWMF sponsored workmen to attend the CLC, its correspondence courses and local classes in Marxist political theory and economics which Ablett promoted and taught around the Rhondda. Ablett was a member of the Unofficial Reform Committee which published *The Miners Next Step* in 1911 and actively campaigned for reorganisation of the SWMF and was described as syndicalist.⁷⁹ Ablett denied he was a syndicalist, describing himself as an Industrial Unionist who wanted every worker to be in a union and control the conditions of his daily life.⁸⁰ The continued campaign against non-union labour at Mardy Colliery resulted in several strikes. His radicalism was influential. While Ablett advocated the control of mining by the workers, he opposed nationalisation arguing it only replaced the combines with the state which would be worse. Egan argues that he wanted to combat and defeat the state through Industrial Unionism.⁸¹

The First World War brought more challenges. In August 1914 Ablett, a member of the SWMF executive committee, unsuccessfully proposed an international miners strike to stop the war. Ablett was described as neither for nor against war but someone who wanted to take what he could from employer and state for the miners.⁸² He continued to teach Marxism and lead strikes despite the risk of imprisonment posed by the Defence of the Realm Act. Complaints from the Chief Constable, Captain Lindsey, to the Home Office about Ablett, arguing he promoted sedition, were ignored.⁸³ By 1917 increased industrial unrest led to a government inquiry. Its report noted that the elected officials of

⁷⁷ Anonymous, Mardy, *The Rhondda Socialist Newspaper*, 1 September 1911, p.1. Available at [Mardy Notes. | Rhondda Socialist Newspaper | Friday 01 September 1911 | British Newspaper Archive](#) Accessed 23 May 2023. Access maybe restricted by a paywall, see also Appendix 2.

⁷⁸ Colin Waugh, *'Plebs' The Lost Legacy of Independent Working-Class Education* (Sheffield, 2009).

⁷⁹ [National Library of Wales Viewer](#)

⁸⁰ Industrial unionists advocated the working classes should organize themselves into industrial unions committed to the eventual revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. In Egan, Noah Ablett, p.22

⁸¹ David Egan, Noah Ablett (1883-1935), in *Llafur*, 4.3., p.25. Available at [Llafur the journal of the Society for the Study of Welsh Labour History. | Vol, 4 no. 3 | 1986 | Welsh Journals - The National Library of Wales](#) Accessed 19 May 2024.

⁸²Egan, Noah Ablett, p.25.

⁸³ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, p.166.

the lodges were taking an active part in the local life of the community and political education of the working class.⁸⁴ Ablett, encouraged by the Russian Revolutions, attended and addressed a convention in Leeds as a representative of Mardy Lodge and unsuccessfully called on miners to take international action to end the war.⁸⁵ Having led the miners through the numerous disputes during the war Ablett left Maerdy in 1919.

Arthur Horner, a communist protégé of Ablett, was elected as checkweigher in his place. He was then in prison.⁸⁶ Horner and the checkweighers before him were integral parts of the community that chose them, not outsiders imposed from above. Knotter argues that communism in Maerdy was a social movement of a specific time and place, rooted in its trade unionism and attractive to the second generation there.⁸⁷ Arthur Horner and his contemporaries were the second generation and Maerdy was fertile ground for them.

⁸⁴ Thomas, D.Lleufer, Evans, Thomas, and Hartshorn, Vernon. *Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest. No.7 Division. Report of the Commissioners for Wales, including Monmouthshire 1917-18.* Command paper number Cd.8668. (London, 1917), p.17. Available at <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1917-020815/usgLogRstClick!!?accountid=14697> Accessed 13 April 2024.

⁸⁵ David Egan, p.14 *The Swansea Conference of the British Council of Soldiers' and Workers' Delegates, July 1917: Reaction to the Russian Revolution of February 1917, and the Anti-war Movement in South Wales*, in *Llafur*, 1.4. (1975) p.14. [Llafur the journal of the Society for the Study of Welsh Labour History. | Vol, 1 no. 4 | 1975 | Welsh Journals - The National Library of Wales](#)

⁸⁶ Francis and Smith, *The Fed*, p. 158.

Horner had fought in the Irish Citizen Army and was arrested on his return for refusing to be conscripted into the British Army for which he was imprisoned. He was released soon after his election and made his stand clear, he would fight for the working classes but not capitalists.

⁸⁷ Knotter, *Little Moscows in Western Europe*, pp.506-507.

Conclusion

The election of Arthur Horner, as checkweigher at Mardy Colliery in 1919 was a catalyst for the growth of communism which had its roots in the trade unionism of the colliery and in the wider community. Maerdy came into existence in 1875 and grew rapidly as the Colliery developed until the final pit was sunk in 1914. The earliest arrivals in Maerdy appear to have come from neighbouring settlements and valleys including Aberdare and Merthyr Tydfil which both had a history of radicalism. Later arrivals came from other parts of Wales and the West of England and may already have been aware of socialism. The earliest arrivals were often bilingual Welsh speakers but from the 1890s there were more English speakers arriving. As a result, Maerdy learnt to function in both English and Welsh but by 1914 the English language had begun to dominate. The rapid growth of Maerdy with its diverse population entirely dependent directly, or indirectly, on one industry, coal mining was a factor that helped make Maerdy fertile ground for the growth of communism.

Another factor that helped Maerdy become fertile ground for communism was the lack of a substantial middle class. The 1895 directory showed only six private residents two of whom were connected to the colliery. Mordecai Jones, the original owner of Maerdy Colliery took an interest in Maerdy donating free land to chapels but following the sale of the colliery there were only limited interactions with the new directors. London based, they visited for major events such as the opening of the passenger railway station and the Workingmen's Hall and Institute. They donated land and money to good causes but left the manager and officials to run the colliery unless there was an industrial dispute. The lack of middle-class residents resulted in the working-class miners and small shopkeepers having the opportunity to run many organisations including chapels, the Workingmen's Hall and Institute, sports clubs, and the Electric Light Company. The result of the rapid growth of Maerdy meant that inhabitants had to petition authorities to provide things they wanted including transport links, street lighting, police, even the

fixed spelling of village name. By doing so they learnt how to work together for a common cause.

Maerdy was physically isolated, it was the terminus for the TVR, the tram service and all road traffic but the people were not isolated, they were exposed to new ideas and experiences. They were able to travel in and out of the village with sports teams playing away matches and choirs travelling to the Crystal Palace, London to perform. Various speakers came to Maerdy including politicians such as Mabon the constituency MP, the Conservative peer Lord Glanusk, the syndicalist Tom Mann, and trade unionists including Enid Stacy a female trade unionist. Political campaigners of all parties brought new ideas to disseminate. The ILP, the Rhondda Liberal-Labour Party, Liberal and Conservative Parties were all active in Maerdy. Other speakers lectured on a variety of subjects, held in chapels, the Workingmens Hall and Institute or on licensed premises. Activities were held in English and Welsh. The miners were a diverse group who moved to Maerdy for work, some single, some with families, which Knotter argues was a factor in the growth of communism.⁸⁸

While Morgan and other historians have argued that the Liberal Party dominated Wales until 1914 changes had already taken place in Mardy Colliery. The Mardy Lodge of the SWMF provided an opportunity for men to be involved in the organisation and running of the Lodge, union business and industrial disputes both locally and in the wider union. It provided informal political education at Lodge meetings. There were politically active checkweighers, Thomas John Morgan and Jeremiah Jones in the Rhondda Liberal Labour Party, while Mardy-Jones and Ablett used their presence as an opportunity to teach political theory and economics. They also took part in the social life of the community being involved in debates, charring lectures and social functions. Without militant trade unionism and its leadership, it is unlikely that the right circumstances for communism to grow in Maerdy would have occurred. Women were necessary for the success of the trade unionism in Maerdy. From the day-to-day housework to refusing to

⁸⁸ Knotter, 'Little Moscows' in Western Europe, p.489.

accept non-union lodgers' women played a vital role which helped bind the worlds of work and home together. The bond between work and community helped create the specific local circumstances necessary for the growth communism.⁸⁹

The people of Maerdy made their own history, under the circumstances they encountered and transmitted it from the past. The election of the communist Arthur Horner was the continuation of an existing militant tradition not a break from the past or imposed from above. He would work with and develop what was already in existence, but Maerdy would remain as diverse as ever.

⁸⁹ Knotter, 'Little Moscows' in Western Europe, p.506.

Appendix 1 - Maps



Figure 1. Enlarged detail from Ordnance Survey map, 1st edition, Quarter Inch to the Mile, 1899, showing position of Maerdy. Reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland.

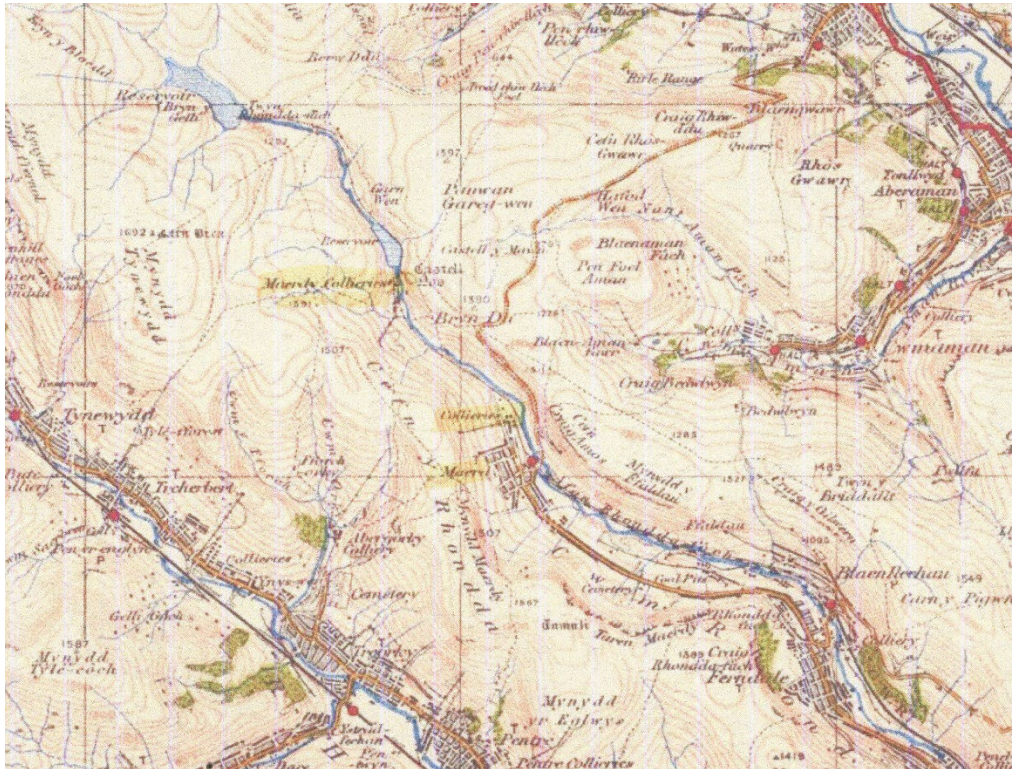


Figure 2. Enlarged detail from Ordnance Survey Map 2nd edition, 1 inch to 1 mile, Sheet 101, printed 1923, showing the position of all four pits of Mardy Colliery. Reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Appendix 2

The South Wales Worker, 7 February 1914.

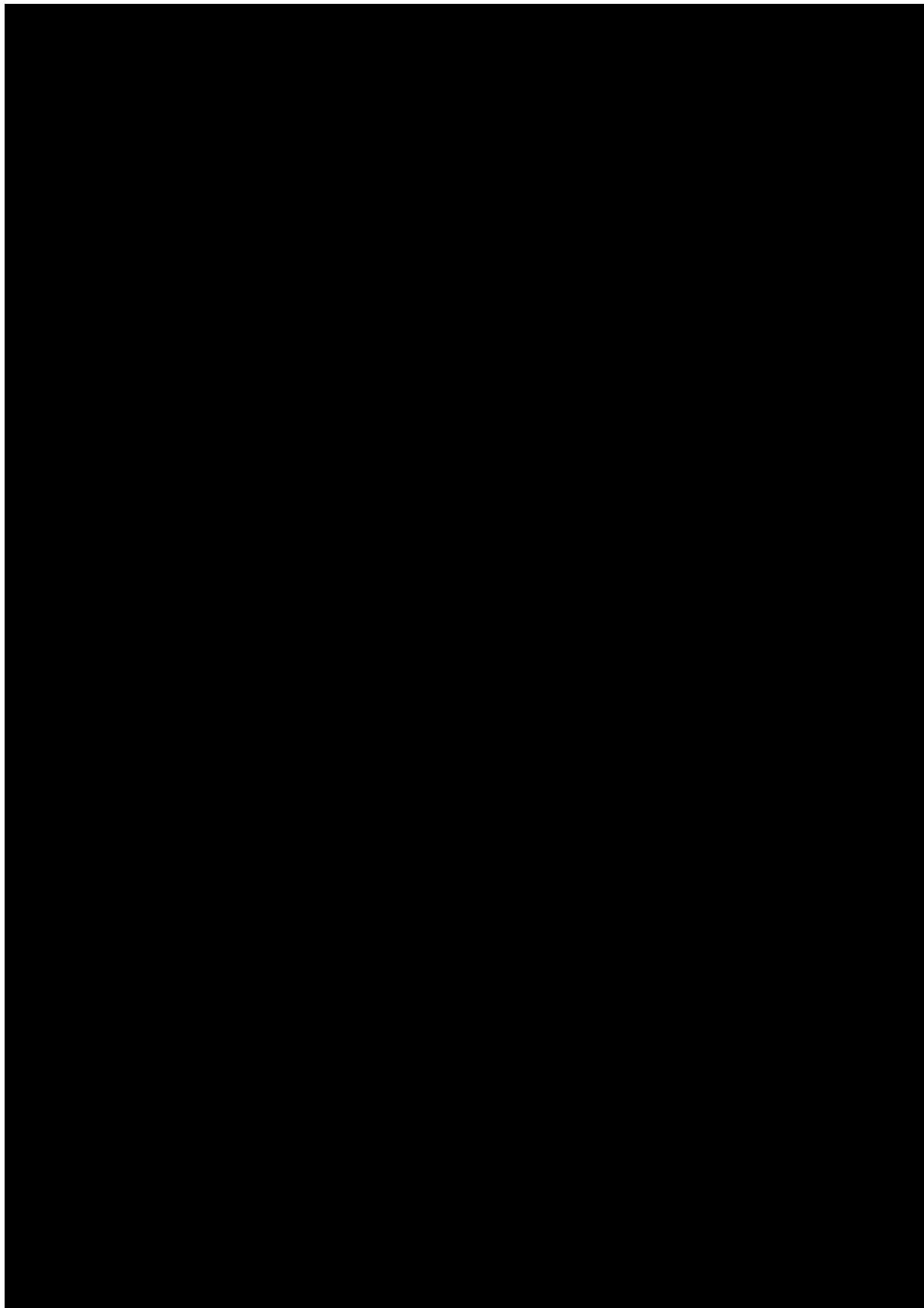


IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Transcript of Mardy Notes, The South Wales Worker, 7 February 1914.

On Friday, 11th January, an interesting lecture on 'Pithead Baths' was delivered here by Mr Henry Davies, under the auspices of Mardy Lodge S.W.M.F. During the lecture, which was illustrated by limelight views of the interior and exterior of similar institutions on the continent, Mr Davies demonstrated the tremendous advantage and boon pithead baths would be to colliers.

Taking all possible objections one by one during his highly educative and instructive lecture, he demonstrated the benefits to be obtained, and riddled the objections. The lecture which took two hours to deliver, will long be remembered in Mardy, as denoting the time when we really began to understand this much vexed and debated question. The large audience at the Workmen's Institute Hall expressed their approval in hearty fashion. Mr Noah Ablett ably filled the chair, and at the conclusion of the lecture Mr Chewins proposed, and Mr D. Lloyd Davies seconded, a vote of thanks to the lecturer who suitably responded.

The Rhondda Socialist, 1 September 1911.

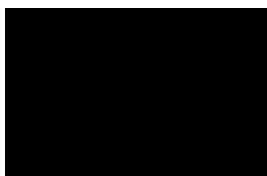


IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Transcript of Mardy Notes, The Rhondda Socialist 1 September 1911.

Thanks to the torrid weather we at present experiencing, the extension of the sweating system threatens to become universal. The only objects impervious to its existence seem to be the clouds which are presumably suffering from the prevalent strike fever. As a consequence Mardy, in common with many other localities, is suffering from the effects of the drought. Loud and bitter are the curses being heaped upon the head of that long suffering and patience provoking body, the Rhondda Urban District Council. The irony of the situation is this, although we are within a stone's throw of the reservoirs yet we are the last to get the water, and in many streets, such as James Street, the pressure is insufficient to force water to the taps.

The irate citizens have convened a public meeting to air their grievances and to vent their spleen against the weather and upon the Water Works Committee of the R.U.D.C. Moral – so near and so far.

The local lodge of the Federation has almost unanimously decided to affiliate with the proposed L.R.C., and if the enthusiasm with which this proposal was received and supported is any indication of the general spirit here in the Rhondda constituency, there is likely to be some fluttering in certain dove-cotes, and the local gallant Liberal Three Hundred will receive a rude shock which will disturb the profound slumber of contentment into which they have fallen for so many long years. With the L.R.C. organisation perfected through the two valleys, there will cease to exist once and for all the anomaly of a so called 'Labour' member returned by the efforts of Liberal campaigners and efforts, and certain hybrid politicians will taste of a dish likely to somewhat disagree with their refined political palates.

Truly Mardy hath repented of her sins and atoned for her past misdeeds. The agitation throughout the district in favour of the Central Labour College, the only true working-class college, has culminated in a magnificent and overwhelming majority in its favour. Ruskin Hall has been discredited and defeated. Amongst the secessions from the ranks of Ruskin College and converted to the Central Labour College is the Mardy Lodge. Well done Mardy. The untiring advocacy of the [...] of the Central Labour College by Mr Noah Ablett have borne fruit. In this connection we would like to extend our congratulations to [Mr] Charles L. Gibbons, who at the recent examinations held by the Rhondda District headed the list as one of the two successful candidates. May he follow the path so successfully trod by his predecessors of the Mardy Lodge, Mr Mardy Jones and Mr Noah Ablett.

Appendix 3 Census returns.

1901 Census, Thomas Morgan, checkweigher (line 8).

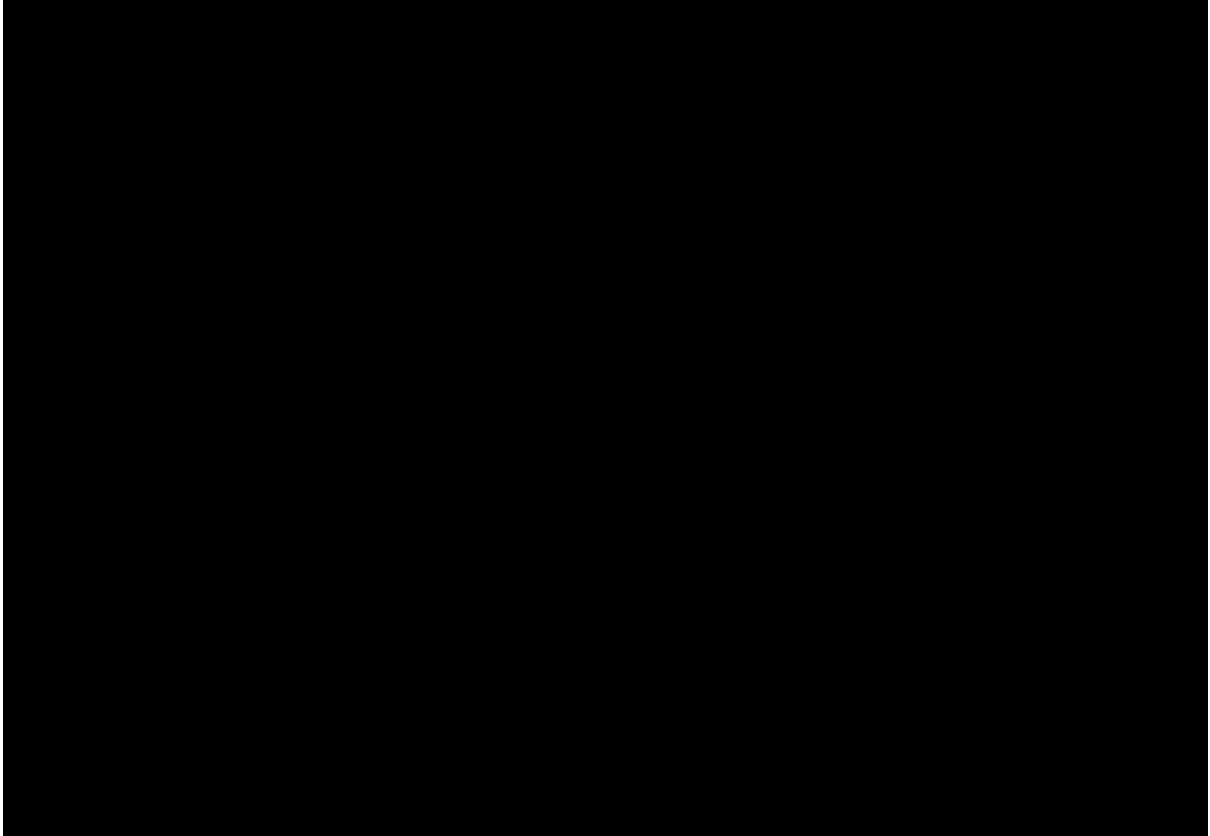
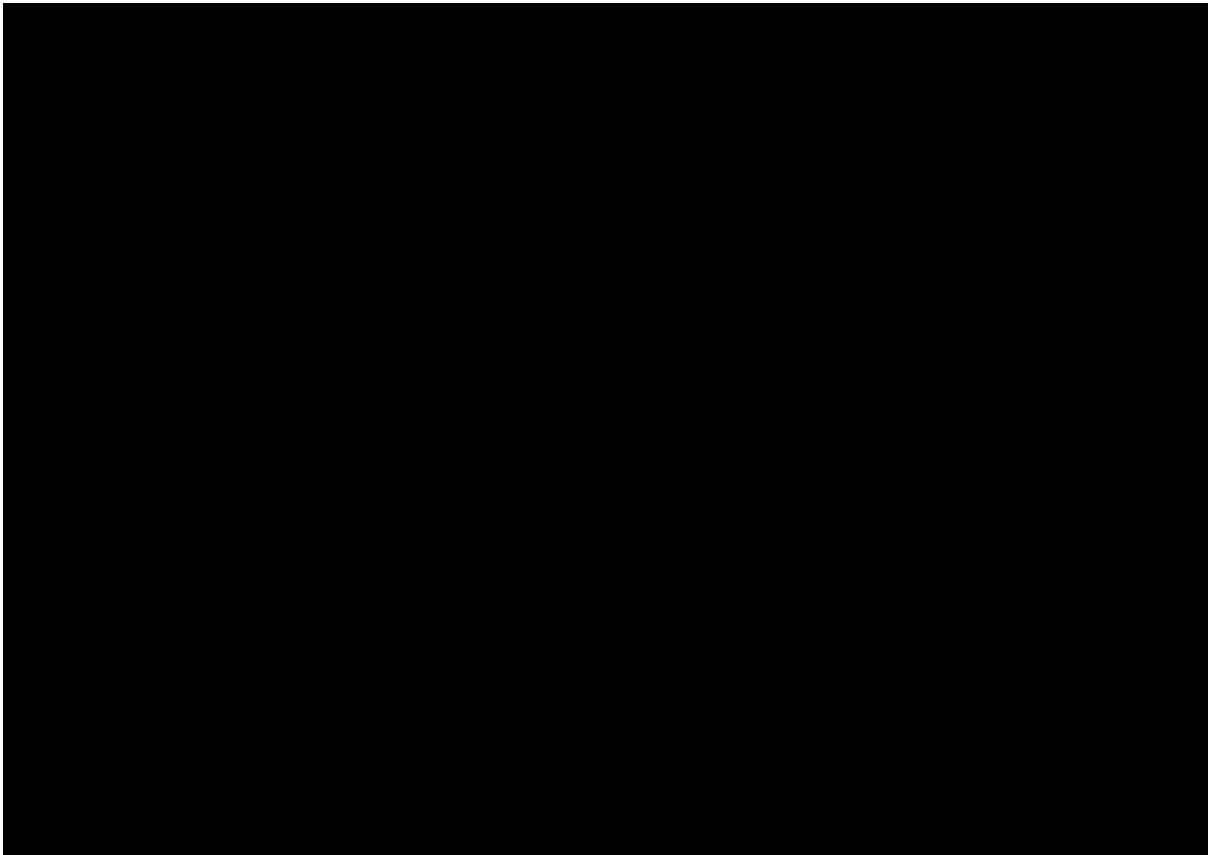
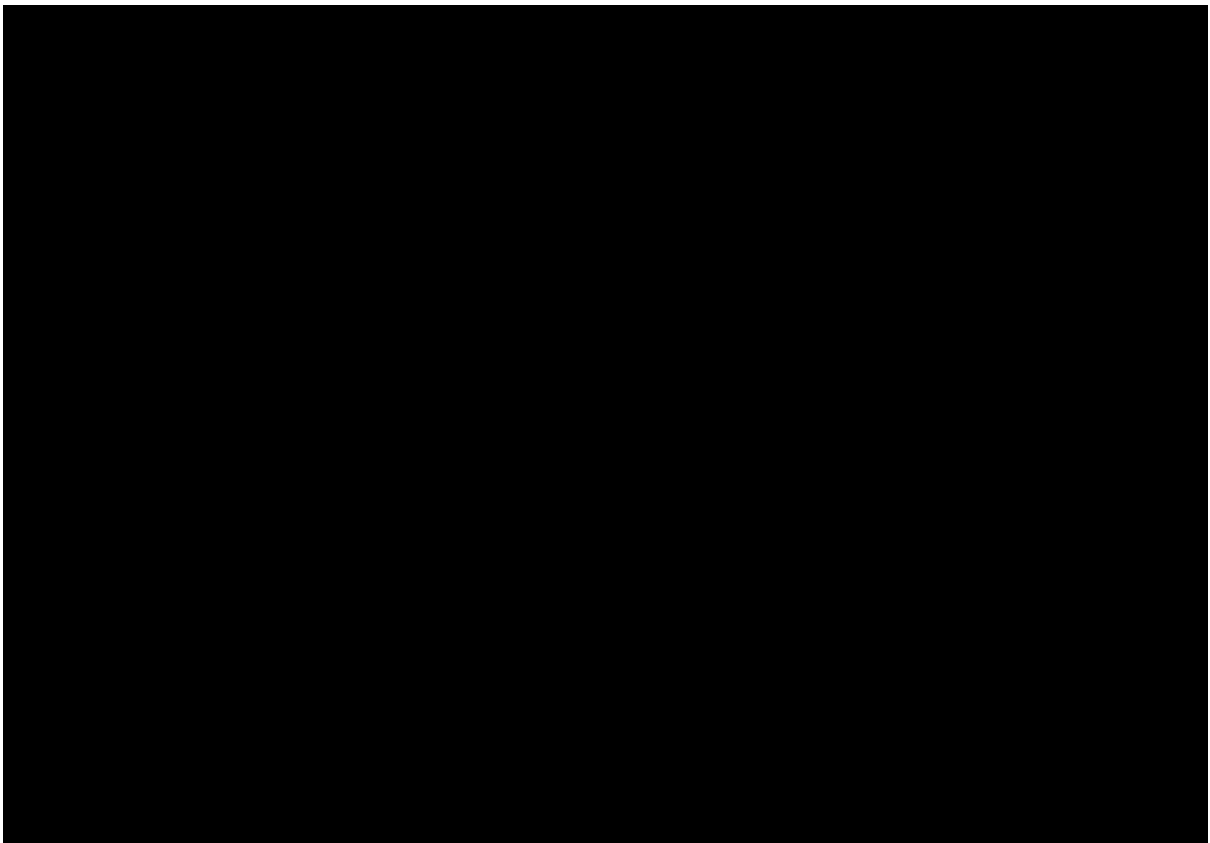


IMAGE REDACTED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

1901 Census, Jeremiah Jones, checkweigher (line 4)

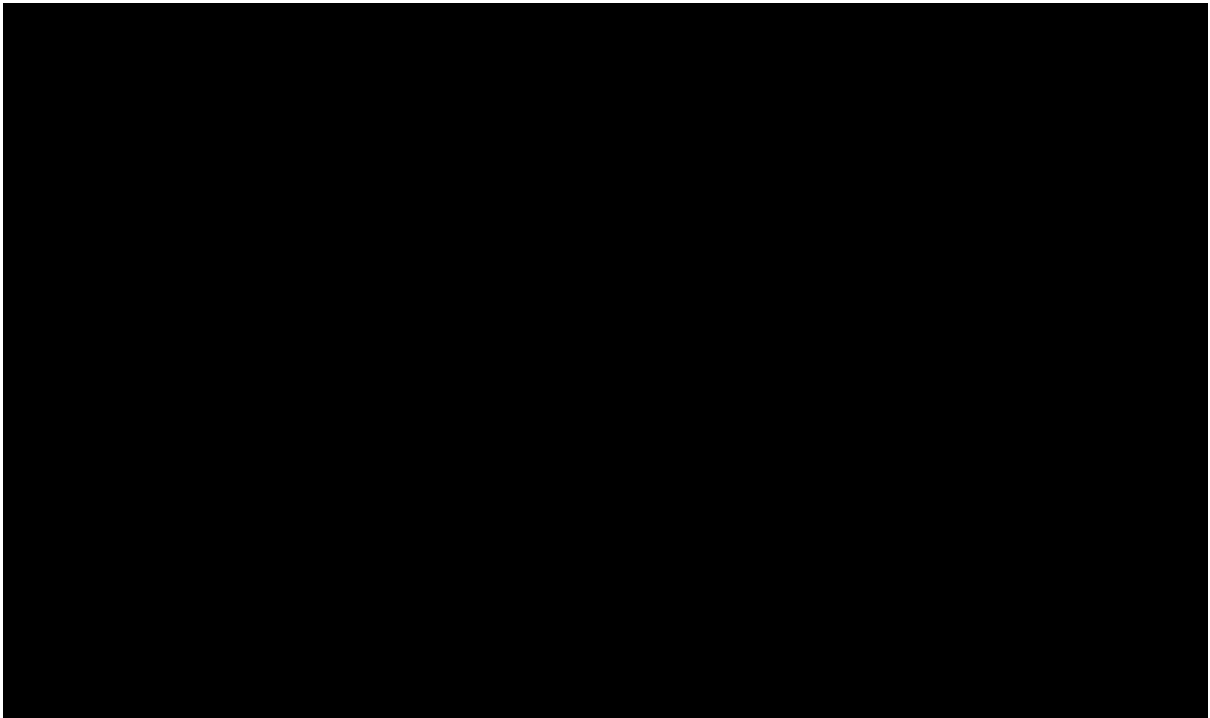


1901 Census, Morgan Weeks, checkweigher, (line 7)

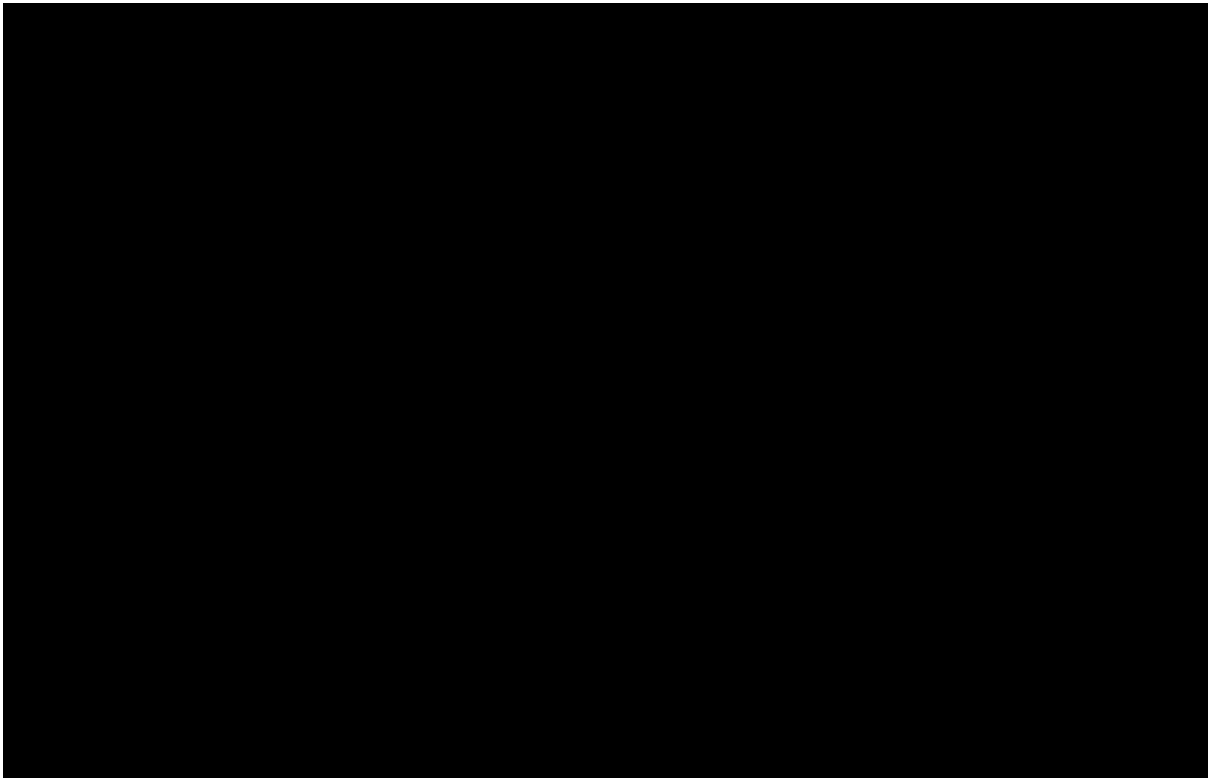


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1911 Census, Noah Ablett, checkweigher (line 4)



1901 Census, Arthur Horner, (line 4)



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