

# THE WELSH REVIVAL in CAERPHELLY & SENGHENYDD

## Caerphilly

At the opening of a new chapel the Friday before the visit of Evan Roberts, the people had little hope of seeing great things. That was partly because the 1859 Revival only touched Caerphilly lightly. One remarked, "It would be as easy for one to blast the walls of yonder Castle with a small hand-pistol as for Evan Roberts to convert the people of this town." Within three days he was otherwise convinced and pleasantly surprised. These meetings were one of the salient points of the Revival.

**Monday December 5, 1904**

Coming from the Rhondda to Caerphilly, Evan Roberts and his singing evangelists were met by crowds for whom the chapels were totally inadequate. The meetings recalled the 1859 revival, when the country people flocked from large tracts of country. To see the Market Square thronged, while two or three chapels were crowded to overflowing was a sight worth seeing, indicating the hold that the revival had taken on the town.

In the morning there was a service at the **Welsh Methodist Chapel**, and though the evangelist did not attend, there was a very varied gathering: farmers on horseback, tradesmen in traps, hundreds by motor-cars, hundreds more by train, colliers and other workmen on foot, all bent on seeing and hearing the revival, and the man. Until now there was nothing like the rush of people in the street just to catch a glimpse of Evan Roberts when he merely passed from the chapel to the chapel-keeper's house at the close of the afternoon service.

The afternoon service was held in the **Calvinistic Methodist Chapel**, which was so closely packed that the people actually trod on the gas-pipes, jamming them so as to make it impossible to get light to hold the evening meeting there. Still, despite the over-crowded conditions, the work was carried out with enthusiasm with Mr Roberts accompanied by three of the young lady evangelists.

The outstanding feature was a passionately-fervent prayer of a young woman whose appeals for her father, sister, and little brother were not only pathetic. Her whole prayer, for eloquence and "wrestling with the Spirit" was, perhaps, more touching than any public prayer since the coming of the revivalist in the upper part of Glamorgan. There was hymn-singing and some sang during part of this prayer, but the very fervency and "inspiration" of the supplication seemed to carry everything before it, and even the music of this "singing revival" gave way to the powerful and pathetic prayer. The solo singing, always effective, was for once lost sight of, an indication that the second stage of the revival is being reached. Mr Roberts had said when some objected to so much singing, that there are two stages of a revival; singing first and praying afterwards. The second stage would come.

The **Van Road Chapel** was crowded before 6pm for a service supposed to begin at 7pm. There was no time wasted, however. The congregation sang hymns, so that by 7pm the meeting had attained a high pitch of enthusiasm and fervour.

Evan Roberts arrived about 7.15pm, and promptly spoke. Despite the crowded aisles and lobby, there was absolute silence. His queries, put with a view to set people thinking, as much as to elicit answers, were answered with intelligence and quickness as well as reverence.

The heat was intense, and the atmosphere close, so that Mr Roberts had to appeal for more air. The chapel is supposed to hold about 500, but it probably held 650 that night. While the congregation was slacking its "crush", he asked the people to sing prayerfully. A hymn was sung very deliberately, and seemingly with full responsibility of the serious words.

On resuming Mr Roberts said he was been compelled to say that he believed this revival would not only reach all Wales, but go over England, Scotland, and Ireland as well. More than that, he considered they were on the eve of a revival which would go over the whole world. In the last days certain things would happen, and he believed that we lived in the "last days." Young men "saw visions," and others "dreamed dreams"; there was bloodshed on earth and there were signs in the heavens. He had seen a vision of a candle burning brightly, and then the light of the sun shining upon all; and he took it to mean the light of the Gospel first as a, candle, and then the great sun shining upon the whole world.

When he asked all who confessed to Christ arise, only around 40 or 50 stand to their feet. Bringing his hand down somewhat heavily upon the big pulpit Bible, Evan Roberts, raising his voice in surprise, asks, "What! Is this the number of those in this congregation who confess Jesus Christ?" The Rev Tawelfryn Thomas, standing beside the revivalist, shouts out "No, no!" and more responses followed when the audience realise they have not come to be entertained, but to "show their side," The responses even then were not so numerous as the size of the congregation might have suggested if the meeting had been filled with Church members. But there were very many present who were not members anywhere.

"Throw out the lifeline" was then sung, and the new converts were numerous. Initially, 30 to 35 declared for Christ, with more as the service went on until the number reached 59. The singing of hymns went on, prayers alternating with exhortation and praise until a little after 1am, when Evan Roberts left to get ready for the next day's work. The meeting still carried on, for the people did not seem to want to go away, and by about 4am, ten hours after the meeting begun, the converts had reached 99!

### **Tuesday December 6, 1904**

Despite the rain and the knowledge that the chapels were far too small to accommodate any great numbers, the crowds who came to hear and see, or try to hear and see, Evan Roberts were just as large as on the previous day. This was not so manifest to the casual observer, perhaps, because, instead of being brought together into the square near the "Twyn" Chapel. the people were scattered about, the meetings being held in various chapels at the other end of the town, and there was some uncertainty as to where the missionary would speak, or whether he would address more than one place of worship.

The afternoon meeting was at ***Bethel Congregational***. Evan Roberts spoke at some length, dealing specially with the condition of Wales. He said it pained him to think of how many in the Principality lived careless, drunken and sinful lives, and so frequently cursed and swore and used the sacred names of God and Jesus Christ in vain! When he pondered upon that terrible fact he dreaded the sight which the Judgement Day would present!

In his travels Evan Roberts at times dealt drastically with unfavourable conditions. Where he was announced to be, nearly if not quite all available chapels were opened for the thronging crowds, but the building he was likely to visit was often in a state of siege. Where people are so densely massed, real evangelism is difficult. In the night service at ***Tonyfelin Chapel***, for example, the crush was so great as to make it difficult to speak or hear. He appealed to some of those already blessed to leave to ease the pressure. But very few or none moved. Having appealed the second time in vain, he took a bold course and left to go to the ***Wesleyan Chapel***.

At this there was consternation. The whole service was about to break up when one of the young singers on the platform asked, "Is it to be Evan Roberts or Jesus Christ?" The tumult was stilled as suddenly as it rose and in a few moments the effectiveness of the meeting was fully restored. While conversion and the strengthening of conviction were going on at the other chapels, the service at Tonyfelin continued just as actively as if the missionary had remained. Miss A M Rees was, as usual, particularly energetic in her evangelistic work, and her quiet conversations with dozens of young men were remarkable in every respect. Before the Rev E Bush left at midnight, the conversions numbered between 45 and 50, but the service went on and on, and before it was brought to a close the converts in that chapel alone numbered 63.

Two of the meetings were not concluded till the early hours of Wednesday morning. It was estimated that on Tuesday night at all the chapels there must have been over 120 converts. One of them had declared the previous night that there was an incident in his life preventing him making his confession.

The answers to special prayers at Caerphilly were extraordinary in character and number. Evan Roberts told how prayer became so passionate and mighty here that at midnight a number of men formed themselves into a praying "Get-them-out-of-bed brigade". In an hour or two, three of the sinners prayed for became so miserable in bed that they dressed hurriedly, came to the service and yielded to Christ there and then. In one case a woman had asked for prayers for her husband, who would not come to the meeting. The man was unable to sleep that night, came to the meeting and was converted. In another case a man and wife, having left one of the evening meetings, returned in their slippers after having been to bed, and were converted.

## Senghenydd

*Wednesday December 7, 1904*

Being it was half day in Cardiff, only about 15 miles from Senghenydd, the shop assistants crowded the trains to have a glimpse of the renowned Revivalist, and to see what the meetings were like. A prayer meeting was held in one compartments and revival hymns were sung in almost all the others, until the valleys were resounding.

There are chapels in this village holding from 500 to 600 people, but even in the morning, **Tabernacle Calvinistic Methodist Chapel** was far too small, and an overflow was held in the Baptist Chapel. The arrival of Evan Roberts was hailed with joy by large numbers. The Caerphilly converts came in great number, and some broke out in praise for what God had done for them. The meetings were almost as full of enthusiasm as the services at Caerphilly.

A young lady from Bedwas set the afternoon meeting on fire by relating how the previous night she had asked Evan Roberts to pray for her as she did not think she was doing enough for Jesus. He advised her to tell her neighbours and others about her Saviour. She went home, and in the morning in the train spoke to a woman from Pentre, Rhondda, who said neither she nor her husband went to any chapel. She prayed with the woman, at first without avail. She prayed again, and the woman accepted Christ, and then promised to try to influence her husband.

Then the young lady added, "I hope my brother is in this congregation" appealing for prayer for him. Several prayers were offered, and shortly after a shout was raised from the far end of the gallery. Her brother was converted. There was a mighty shout of "Diolch iddo" and "Songs of praises I will ever give to Thee."

But perhaps the most unusual remark she gave was of a young man who did not know how to break off an engagement for a championship fight. She was going to pray for him, and, as there was yet time in the week, would go to work, and believed she would succeed.

An elderly man in the gallery got up and declared he was one of the converts of the previous night. He had been a backslider, and rejoiced he had been brought to see the seriousness of his position. He appealed earnestly for prayers for himself and others of the same kind who required strength to remain steadfast.

Meanwhile, Evan Roberts had gone to the **Welsh Baptist Chapel**, where there was a somewhat smaller congregation, and where the meeting was, for a time, decidedly colder, so cold, indeed, as to affect the young revivalist with deep emotion. He prayed and asked others to pray for a downpour of the Spirit, and presently there was a warmer feeling, the responses to the invitations to “confess” being numerous.

Among those who spoke from the gallery was one of the Caerphilly converts, who had come to the meeting after prayers had been specially offered for him. He made special reference to the conversion of some of his “pals,” one a somewhat noted pugilist, and hoped that another whom he and other friends had been trying to get to join them would now be won over. He appealed very forcibly to young men in the congregation to listen to the appeals being made to them, and not to waste their time any longer in idle pursuits.

## Harvest of the Revival

- These lists have been taken from the Western Mail Revival Pamphlets.
- They **only** cover Evan Roberts' First Journey, 8 November 1904 –28 February 1905.
- Many places are not included in the grand totals because they did not send in returns.

|                                 |               |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Abertrdwr                       | 124           |
| Senghenydd                      | 526           |
|                                 | <b>650</b>    |
| Caerphilly                      | 750?          |
| Watford (nr. Caerphilly)        | 87            |
| Llanbradach                     | 264           |
|                                 | <b>1101</b>   |
| Bedwas                          | 50            |
| Machen                          | 212           |
| Rudry                           | 50            |
| Draethen                        | 10            |
|                                 | <b>321</b>    |
| Bargoed and Aberbargoed         |               |
| Bargoed                         | 191           |
| Fleur-de-Lis, Pengam, & Gilfach | 214           |
| Gilfachgoch                     | 451           |
| Maesycymmer                     | 196           |
|                                 | <b>1052</b>   |
| Bedlinog                        | 190           |
| Gelligaer                       | 17            |
| Nelson                          | 383           |
| Treharris                       | 2000          |
|                                 | <b>2590</b>   |
| New Tredegar                    | 404           |
| Pontlottyn                      | 242           |
| Rhymney                         | 868           |
|                                 | <b>1514</b>   |
| Merthyr                         | 946           |
| Dowlais and Penydarren          | 1365          |
| Beaufort                        | 238           |
| Tredegar                        | 1560          |
| Brynmawr                        | 488           |
| Ebbw Vale                       | 1720          |
|                                 | <b>6317</b>   |
| Blackwood                       | 368           |
| Newbridge                       | 500           |
| Crumlin                         | 18            |
|                                 | <b>886</b>    |
| Crosskeys                       | 500           |
| Risca                           | 654           |
|                                 | <b>1154</b>   |
| <b>Grand Total (S Wales)</b>    | <b>79,566</b> |
| <b>Grand Total (N Wales)</b>    | <b>7,370</b>  |
| <b>Grand Total for Wales</b>    | <b>86,936</b> |