

## Llangwm in 1869

On Saturday 20th March 1869, two little girls aged about 7 and 9 years were left alone at their grandparents' house. The house was at North Hill, part of the Llangwm Hill estate, situated between Llangwm village and Hook village.

The girls found a flask containing gunpowder in a cupboard and were playing with it near an open fire. The powder exploded and shattered the flask. The elder child suffered a severe injury to her hand and her sister was struck under the right eye by a piece of the flask. The girls received medical aid but were lucky not to have been more seriously harmed.

Their grandparents were William and Sarah Evans. Originally a collier, William had then worked on the river as a bargeman or lighterman but, by the 1860s, he was farming between 40 and 50 acres. The couple had at least 7 children, of whom the eldest son was also called William. It was this William Evans who was the father of the two girls. William was a coalminer, initially working at Hook Colliery, but moving to Aberdare sometime before 1857.

The two children were not named in the newspaper report covering the accident but, by a process of elimination, they must have been Emma and Sarah. It is evident from the censuses that the girls were sometimes left with their paternal grandparents in Llangwm.

According to 'The Welshman' newspaper, "the most exaggerated rumours" were circulating after the explosion. It was claimed that the injuries were caused by a tramp who had called at the house and gouged out the children's eyes and nearly murdered them. Police Constable Thomas Beynon, who lived in a house at The Kilns in Llangwm village, was requested by Sergeant Clarke of the Pembrokeshire Constabulary to investigate the story.

The truth was that Emma had invented the tramp story, fearing that she would be punished for meddling with the gunpowder.

*Researched by Nikki Bosworth. Sources for the above include censuses, parish registers, maps, newspapers and police diaries available at Pembrokeshire Archives and Local Studies.*



On a cold but fine Friday in mid-October 1869, a Regatta was held on the river Cleddau just downstream from Haverfordwest. The old walk of Fortune's Frolic was lined with hundreds of people and the hillside was crowded with locals enjoying a day's holiday. On the steamship "Wave" (built in Pembroke Dock the previous year), moored midstream, the band of Castlemartin Yeomanry Cavalry played a selection of tunes.

The sailing and rowing races included a special event for the Llangwm dredge boats. Four boats, to be "manned" by two women and one man, competed in the race. However, the winning boat was subsequently disqualified as the crew was found to consist of two men and one woman. The names of crews were not recorded in the newspaper reports of the event.

On shore, in the Croft Field, a number of "rustic sports" took place. Apart from running races, high jump and throwing a cricket ball, there was the chance to win a leg of mutton and 2

shillings 6 pence by climbing a greasy pole. This contest was won by a man named Stultz who got to the top of the pole by means of a rope tied round the pole, with loops attached in which he placed his feet alternately, whilst, with his hands, he raised the rope a small amount at a time.

Three donkeys participated in the donkey races - Moses, Betty and Polly - for a prize of 10 shillings. In the first race, about 50 yards from the winning post, Polly bolted and knocked over a stall selling gingerbread, cakes, nuts, apples and pop. The aim of the second race was for the last donkey to finish to be the winner - and the owners had to ride an opponent's donkey. Both races were won by Moses.

In the evening, a dinner for the organisers of the regatta was held at the Salutation Hotel.

*Researched by Nikki Bosworth. Information from local newspapers available online at [newspapers.library.wales](http://newspapers.library.wales) and on microfilm at Pembrokeshire Archives and Local Studies.*