

synopsis & transcript

MAERDY 8

INFORMANTS:

A:		B:	
Male:	63 year old	Male:	40 years old
Welsh:	fluent/ <u>some</u> /slight/none	Welsh:	fluent/ <u>some</u> /slight/ <u>none</u>
Mother's birth:	Porthmadoc, N. Wales	Mother's birth:	Maerdy
Father's birth:	Aberdare, Glam	Father's birth:	Maerdy

They start rummaging through the pictures in front of them. [00.00 min - 00.10 min]

They see a picture of the Houston Brothers, and talk about them. They talk quite a lot about Stanley Baker. Informant A was at school with him, and remembers his father. They talk about famous entertainers that have come to the Club, and the sad state of the Club now: [00.10 min - 03.50 min]

A: . Tonypandy

B: (looking at picture) . . over in Tonypandy

I: who were these then . were they born around here

B: . . . the other valley . . yes . . within the Rhondda

I: . . oh right . . and erm . . . did~did

A: . . oh yeah they were good~good actors

I: you like them did you go and see their films

A: fair play all right . . . I remember them acting like .

B: . . before my time (laughs) [aye]

A: (laughs) . . yeah . . . Glyn and Donald

B: . .

I: erm that's . . who is it . Donald Houston

A: Houston no

B: [aye] . no

I: . . yeah . . did they . . did they ever come around the clubs

A: nowhere around here anyhow . . I've never seen them around

B: . . no [no]

I: . . . and what

A: Stanley

I: other famous people have been produced now in the Rhondda Valleys

A: Baker I mean . I was in school the same time as

B: Tom Jones . . Ponty

A: Stanley Baker like so I . aye . . bottom of

B: . . he's from Ferndale wasn't he

A: Ferndale . . . I knew him well like . .

I: . . . what ~what do you remember about him

A: what . . he was a hell of a bully he was (laughs) . . he was a bloody thug he was .

B: thug

A: fair play . . oh he and his father . I can remember his father as well . . . you

A: couldn't miss him . he had one leg . . . his old man did (huh huh)

B: did he . . I can

A: . . aye . well it was up on . .

B: remember his . erm . funeral they buried his ashes up

A: on . . aye . they had the . . choir and all up there

B: they buried his ashes up in [Pandy]

A: [they did] [aye] . . yeah . . . I don't

B: aye . . there was thousands of them up there wasn't there

A: know why the hell they buried his ashes . chucked his ashes up there for (laughs)

B: . . aye

A: [yeah](inaudible) I don't think

B: {they} all like to come home to rest don't they . .

I: yes

A: he ever came back mind he had his ashes

B: . . no . . yeah [he had his

I: . but he had his ashes

A: scattered~scattered up on top of the mountain . .[yeah]

B: ashes] yeahthere was

I: . . did he

A: . . yeah . . I remember

B: thousands up there wasn't there . thousands and thousands

A: when they . started . when he star~ had the first . . when he got a play you know he
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A: was in the . New Hall . . . in . . . there was . . a school play it was like and . . they
=====

A: were . . there was four . . four of them went . . . out of the play . to London then .
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A: . for interviews . . . and he was the only one they kept . . the other three came back
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A: like one of them was a erm . . . cartoonist in the Dai~ . the . . Echo . . . South
=====

A: Wales Echo . . . for years . . . I don't know if he's still there now
=====

I: oh was he a good
=====

A: oh yes
=====

B: I should
=====

I: looking boy then erm . [why did he . . why . was he successful as an actor]
=====

A: he was tall . he was a big boy like
=====

B: imagine he was tall was he [tall] carried himself
=====

A: he was a . . fair play he he~ he was a good actor mind
=====

B: well aye he
=====

A: [yeah]
=====

B: I suppose he look~ . . he looks average enough on telly though (inaudible) but out~
=====

A: [yeah] oh he was a big lump of a chap like
=====

B: . . outside he sticks out a bit doesn't he
=====

I: and erm . who else then . what other famous people come from around here
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A: oh I don't know aye

B: . . it's hard to think now isn't it (laughs) [as] I say Tom

A: . . oh aye . . . Tom Jones has been

B: Jones . . he's sung up here hasn't he [yeah] . . before

A: . yeah . . no . . we~we can't

B: he was famous obviously [no]

I: . . does he come around at all

A: afford him (laughs) . .

B: [we'll get] . . we'll get him back on his . when he's going down-hill . . (laughs)

A: I don't think we'll ever have him . oh this

B: . . no

I: ah well there we are

A: place has seen a lot of people mind . a lot of famous people . . actors you know and

B: [yeah]

A: . . entertainers

B: [well] . . they had what-do-you-call last year didn't they erm . . . David

B: Alexandra . . . [and erm] he died last week didn't he . and they had him last

I: oh yes . . oh

A: [yes]

B: October didn't they upstairs . . big show supposed to come back . but they'll

A: oh he was . . quite a . . few big artists up [here] upstairs

B: never have him now mm

A: . . . that was when they had a couple of bob that was . we haven't got nothing now

B: [yeah] [yes]

A: (laughs) . yeah

B: . . . we was a rich club once

I: . . . does it . and how does it keep going

A: . . just about managing

B: well they . . I think they're all white

I: this big building

A: [yeah]

B: elephants .erm the old . . miners' institutes . erm . . have had their day haven't they

A: . you know . . it's such a big place . the upkeep . the~the lighting alone is

B: . . so

A: terrific like . and the heating . . takes so much money . . . they can't hardly keep it

A: going . oh yeah only the club

I: and is it all erm paid for out of the club funds

A: funds that's all keeps it going

B: . . and they've had a bad policy of . . . bricking

A: . . aye

B: windows up

They discuss the dilapidated condition of the building, the bricking up of the windows and the financial problems in keeping the Club going. They say that Ferndale Hall, just down the Valley, has been pulled down. To make matters worse, the price of a pint of beer at the Club is high, and they can no longer afford decent entertainment.

[03.50 min - 07.40 min]

They recall the range of entertainment taking place at the club when the times were better. They talk about people's lack of money through reasons of low wages or unemployment. Informant A is lucky. He has a pension from the National Coal Board. Informant B has had different jobs, and even left the Valleys for a time in search of work.

[07.40 min - 13.50 min]

B: oh about ten years ago when upst ~ . . when we were rich . . we'd have three shows

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B: . . every Sunday . . erm . like an opera singer or . . an hopeless singer I'd call them

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B: at the time . . a comedian or a duo . . and then the main group . . or main artist

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B: well now . . . they . . they just . . . got their speakers and their . . karaoke .

I: . . really

=====

B: tapes and they sing from there one singer . and you can't . . afford them can

I: yes

=====

A: no

B: you so it's hard . to get a good atmosphere going so

I: [yes] . . yes

=====

B: 'cause . th~this . club used to be . . well . here it was more or less every night of the

A: [every night] of the week they used to have something here

B: week wasn't it [it] was full with

A: [yeah] [yes]

B: bingo up . a crowd upstairs . cause there were so many . . balcony and all . bingo

B: Monday and Thursday dance on a Friday . I~ I can't remember what was a

I: yes

A: [yes] and a . and a Wednesday . we used to have

B: Saturday and . . concert on a S~Sunday [wasn't it]

A: a show on a Wednesday

B: [yeah] . . . and before videos come out then we used to have films

A: . aye

I: yes w~what's needed is a bit . of . prosperity around here isn't it

A: . oh yes

B: . oh aye . of course . besides that then everybody's . either on low wages

B: now . . or on . . dole income support or . . invalidity . so . . they can't afford to go

I: yes

A: . . I mean everywhere . everybody's . . .

B: . drinking . . more than once a week

I: . . . no

A: nearly everybody around here there's . . there's no work at all . you've got to

A: travel to have work

I: . . . what~ what per~percentage of the men are out of work now

A: . . oh

B: . . . I don't think it's so much the percentage . . the one's that's out of work

B: . . there's not many on good money . . . you know . erm . . hundred and forty

B: before tax erm . before tax . . so you know you're . only bare~ . . barely making a

B: hundred pound . . . and some of them got to have a car to get to work . and .

B: you know . so it's . . . your overheads are . . . so high when you start work

I: . . . yes . . . low

A: [yes]

B: . . low wages yes . . . there's one or two on high wages but of course

I: wages . . . yes

B: if . . if their friends can't afford to go out . . the~ the whole atmosphere's . . gone

B: the . the one's that's making the money I suppose are the old . . miners

B: that's had redundancy and still got . . . erm either invalidity or a pension . .

A: no

B: you know . . but . the youngsters . haven't got nothing have they

A: yes . I've got a pension

I: have you got a pension [inaudible] . . . what age did you

A: . . fifty four [yeah]

B: see so . I suppose everybody over fifty . . . are quite

I: retire then

B: okay . . . but everybodyunder . say forty then . . or under thirty five . . you . . .

A: . yeah but that only went for . . . until nineteen

B: you know they . . low wages sort of

A: eighty six . . . after that there was nobody having a pension

B: pension no . . they

A: . . we had one lump sum we had I mean when I finished we

B: just had a lump s~ yeah

A: was having . . we didn't have much . such a big lump sum . but we had a pension

A: every week . if you was over fifty

B: that's when they tried to bribe . the jobs in

I: yes

B: the beginning . . . but as they got a bit more . . cocky they . . . kicked that out and . .

B: threatened that the pit . if you didn't take it the pit would shut and which

I: [yes] [yes]

B: was going to shut anyhow . . but erm

I: did you work down erm . . down the

B: . yeah . . yeah . . twenty years

I: pit here . . . at . at Maerdy . . and . and what have . .

B: . . . I've

I: . . . erm . . . have you had any . . . job opportunities you know . . . things to do

B: {one} . . . I've had one or two . . . I've worked on a chicken farm . . . for about a year

B: . . . and . . . done a bit of long distance driving or short distance it was but

B: HGV . . . erm but that's . . . about it really the wages . . . then . was getting a bit

B: . . . thin for . . . erm . low . and the . . . the hours were getting longer . . . 'cause the

B: last time I was driving was . . . there was like only two hours work . . . but it was on

B: the M 25 . . . but you were taking three hours to get there . . . th~th~three . more

B: . sometimes more than three hours to get home and so two young kids

I: yes

B: . . . you know . . . fa~ family commitments . it was . . getting a bit hard

I: [yes] . . .

B: I've . left . the area .

I: . do many . . do many . people your age leave the area

A: [i n a u d i b l e]

B: I've only just come back . . . erm . . . I don't know . . . I don't know where they go

A: [i n a u d i b l e] . . . I mean erm . . . all

B: to . I don't think it is . nowhere special to go anywhere now

A: over the country you can't . there's nowhere . there's no work anywhere really

A: like . . . and we had . most of the ones they have . was manual workers . . well

I: mm

A: . . . you know they didn't have a . . . a trade or nothing like that

B: mm

I: . . . yes . . what

A: . . no

B: no . . . training for

I: about training schemes then . . are they any ~any good

A: . . couldn't train you for anything so we didn't . there was no good

B: what . . (laughs)

A: there was . . . what are you going to train for{there}

B: yeah erm . mind you . . I . .

A: . . . what you went on that . . [training] with Ian

B: I did . . erm do my HGV with erm yeah

A: . aye . they didn't have that when I [finished]

B: . . but that's . . awful hard to get a job . . 'cause

B: . although I can drive . . . it's . . the experience of off . . off loading or loading . . .

B: if you have a tipper wor~ . . tipper work . . . it's . . erm . . . fr~frightening to . . .

I: mm

B: to~to go and tip by yourself you know . 'cause erm . . it is dangerous and . . . the

B: same with any . . of the . . driving you know erm so passing your test

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A: (c o u g h s) (coughs)

B: don't do much for you really . it's getting the {work done}

I: [yes . yes]

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Informant A says he has been lucky because he has had his pension. He describes how Tylorstown and Ferndale collieries were closed down and the workforce moved to Maerdy. They discuss types of coal: steam coal in the lower Rhondda Fach, but anthracite at Maerdy.

[13.50 min - 15.30 min]

TAPE ENDS