

## Bargoed Notes

### Bargoed

Bargoed lying in Glamorgan and [Aberbargoed](#) in Monmouthshire.

Originally a market town, Bargoed grew into a substantial town following the opening of a colliery in 1903. By 1921 Bargoed had a population of 17,901; this has been steadily declining since that time, as the general demand for Welsh coal continued to fall. Bargoed had three collieries, like a black varacious vein through the valley. Colliery closed during the 1970s. It has/had the largest spoil heap in Europe.

The town was home to a factory built by the [Austin Motor Company](#) from 1949. This was a project by Austin chairman [Leonard Lord](#), with government funding, to employ miners suffering from [pneumoconiosis](#), a lung disease caused by prolonged inhalation of dust. The factory work was understandably light, with the main product being the J40 children's [pedal car](#).

Ref: Wikipedia

**Pit Heads** / Miners' Heads and Pit Head Poetry Steps. [Malcolm Robertson \(b.1951\)](#) Glass reinforced concrete. 2013. Three monumental miners' heads, joined together in a semi-circle to signify brotherhood, dominating the square. The theme chosen plays on the theme of pit heads. The artwork is constructed in layered vertical slabs depicting the contours of the surrounding hillside and the areas industrial heritage. The inscription on the steps leading up to the heads was composed by local schoolchildren.

Reference: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/pit-heads-miners-heads-and-pit-head-poetry-steps-314123#>

**Angel statue.** The Angel was officially unveiled on December 1st 2012. The galvanised steel statue was designed by Malcolm Robertson.

Towards the Light – artist unknown. An untitled abstract steel sculpture, set into a granite plinth with the inscription; "Yesterday will not return, forward we go towards the light" Located in the former mining Town of Bargoed, County Borough of Caerphilly, South Wales.

### Giant Daffodil's

**Coal Miner** - Relief Sculpture - Bargoed, Wales. A small pillar made from brick & stone topped with a touchstone, at the top of steps is engraved "Once flowing black with a darkness drawn from deep within the earth, Now a vein of clear hope, washing away the memories." and the Sculptors Signature "Howard Bowcott 1999"

**Alun Hoddinott CBE** (11 August 1929 – 12 March 2008) was a [Welsh composer](#) of [classical music](#), one of the first to receive international recognition. BBC Hoddinott Hall at the Millennium Centre.

Alun Hoddinott was born in Bargoed on 11 August 1929, the son of a schoolteacher, Thomas Ivor Hoddinott, and his wife Gertrude (née Jones). The family moved to Gorseinon and he received his education at Gowerton Grammar School, which boasted a strong musical tradition. He began the violin at a young age and was one of the first members of the National Youth Orchestra of Wales, formed in 1946. In the same year he gained a scholarship to the University College in Cardiff, and during his time there took private lessons in composition with Arthur Benjamin in London. He graduated B.Mus. (Wales) in 1949 and in 1951 was appointed to the then Cardiff College of Music and Drama. In 1953 he won the Walford Davies Prize for composition and in 1957 the Medal of the Arnold Bax Society. He was appointed to a lectureship at his old college in Cardiff in 1959 and gained the D.Mus. (Wales) the following year. He was promoted Reader in 1963 and Professor in 1967. He founded the Cardiff Festival of 20th century music and attracted prominent composers such as Benjamin Britten and Olivier Messiaen to take part. He retired from his university chair in 1987, and from the Festival in 1989, to concentrate on composition.

Reference: <https://biography.wales/article/s10-HODD-ALU-1929>

New Continental run by the Strinatis. There used to be 300 Italian cafes in South Wales. Hailed from the Bardi area of Italy.

**John Tripp** (22 July 1927 – 16 February 1986) was an [Anglo-Welsh](#) poet and short-story writer.

Born in [Bargoed](#), Wales, [1] he worked for the [BBC](#) as a [journalist](#) with the BBC, and later became a civil servant. He edited the literary magazine, [Planet](#), and was a popular performance poet. The John Tripp Spoken Poetry Award was founded to commemorate him.

Reference: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Tripp\\_\(poet\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Tripp_(poet))

John Tripp and Dylan Thomas swam in the same sea. He may not have been as famous as his elder compatriot, nor as talented. He never visited America either. But in terms of volume his output was similar. He had comparable dealings with the media, read well on stage, had a voice that was good on the ear, drank gallons, had the same kind of difficulties with money. The two of them swam in the Welsh sea, the one which surrounded a Wales which meant something, a place that was not England.

In his cups John Tripp (1927 – 1986) would chant a personal mantra: “I was born in Bargoed in 1927 and I want to know why.” Those near him in those days all heard it and familiarity through the years allowed it to lose meaning. But for John it remained as real as it could be. The birth in Bargoed gave him a Welsh

legitimacy. Better than Cardiff, to some as remote as Llanystumdwy. Among the younger writers he mixed with the 1927 made him an elder if not quite a statesman. The “I want to know why” gave him purpose. A questioning of life he could write about, a realisation that it was all a joke that put him up there with the nihilists, allowed him to be as rude as he wanted to anyone and everyone. And he did this often. The tales of Tripp half-cut are legion.

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His years in Cardiff at a heady time for the changing world were accompanied by two girlfriends, a shed of booze, and a formidable output of performable, energised, engaging and highly readable verse. The life of the bar which John chose meant spending copious amounts of time in the company of those who also drank. A daily watching of the clock moving towards stop-tap, talking about nothing and everything to anyone who'd listen, poet of the people, far nearer the ground than most in academia, a hater of pretence and of those who would “not recognise a poem if it came up behind and bit them.”

He was on the side of the young and the explorer rather than the great and the good who'd already arrived. I met him in the mid-sixties when I was starting up what was to morph into an international journal at the cutting edge of new verse, [second aeon](#). Tripp contributed his work, readily, enthusiastically and for free. Ormond wouldn't do that, he complained to me. Although John Ormond subsequently did, just not with same open-heartedness nor in the same quantity.

[John Ormond](#) was someone JT would measure himself against. They both drank nightly at the Conway, Ormond in the front bar among the locals (he himself lived in Conway Road), JT mostly with the rebels in the back. “I'm going in there to sort him out,” John declared one evening when someone among us had been complaining (with no foundation, as history would reveal) about Ormond lording it with the hoi polloi in the front and never being willing to mix with us new beginners. “Who does he think he is. What's he actually published. I'm going to tell him how it is.” We watched through the bar hatch expecting to witness what was to become a typical Tripp display of shouting, amazingly personal insults and arm-waving diatribe. Tripp, our man, the only Anglo-Welsh poet on the books who understood the new generation. Instead all we witnessed was the two of them quietly talking. Ormond bought JT a drink. JT drank it. “Yeah, I told him,” JT said to me later, “but he's not so bad.” JT, man of the even hand. Ormond and he later appeared in the same volume, [the last gasp of Penguin Modern Poets](#). Ormond the measured, the man who took care. Tripp the rager who let it flow.

As a public reader of poetry John had few contemporary equals. This was in the seventies, of course, when performance poetry had yet to evolve. In fact, the very idea that poetry might also be entertainment was in some quarters perceived as a challenge. JT, Harri Webb, Herbert Williams and others were at the heart of the poetry and pints movement, the recitation of in your face and usually funny poems in bars. Verses interspersed with songs from the likes of Heather Jones. No one worried if the audience came and went, occurrences frowned upon at the more sedate readings of the traditionalists.

John had a reputation as a drinker, a man who would forever be borrowing money to fund the next pint and then insulting the donor for being alive. He was known to fall asleep in the readings of others and to leave restaurants either without paying or by collecting the tips for himself. Public scenes in pubs late at

night were commonplace. Yet I never once saw him fall off a stage nor stumble his words. A Tripp poetry reading was seriously done. There was order in the selection, entertainment and information in his introductions and perfection in his delivery. Drink later not before. Be seen in the streets with a pint in your hand, fine, but read with clarity first. Audiences loved him.

Not that any of this prevented his regular relapses into writerly alcoholic haze. That's something that stayed until the end. The whiskey bottle on the couch when he died. The ranting sandwich-throwing, drunken ghost that returned at his Welsh Union of Writers organised wake in 1986 at the Gower Hotel in Cathays. It's a memory that stays with all who knew him – the poet who walked a tightrope and the man who often ended up falling down.

Reference: <https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/1986/02/bare-essential-john-tripp/>

## Armistice Day '77, Honiton

The two minutes' silence was cut to one  
that November day; it was a busy world.

By chance, on my way to a gig  
I walked into a ceremony of six  
in the rain: crosses in a ring, and the poppies soaked.

Down two sides of the slab were names  
linked to this piece of England – the sound  
of country stock grown old in duty  
and the acceptance of pointless loss.  
Names going back to Minden and before.

(Were these the only ones left  
to remember their dead?  
Already sixty seconds were lopped  
off any dignity. Would their children  
forget, as I had forgotten?)

No more came. On some other day  
I might have felt an interloper  
marring their ritual. At eleven o'clock  
the men took off their hats  
and we all bowed our heads.

A minute in the rain in a country town  
may whisper the whole grief of history.

Picture a knot of seven around that block,  
the red wet poppies, and just for a moment  
a complete and utter silence in the world.

Reference: <https://www.serenbooks.com/2016/11/friday-poem-armistice-day-77-honiton-john-tripp/>