



# CWM DULAIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## CWMDEITHAS HANES CWM DULAIS

Newsletter - Cylchlythyr

November/ December 2020

### *Christmas Greetings 2020*

Usually about now the Society would be holding its last meeting of the year and celebrating our Christmas Party. No such opportunity this time – I'm sure in the history of the club since it was established in 1964, no other Christmas Get Together has been missed! So this year we celebrate in an imaginary virtual bubble!

However, things are beginning to look slightly more positive for a revival of activities in 2021 especially once the vaccination systems are up and running – fingers crossed. But I am sure we will all be remembering someone or something memorable from this exceptional year. The Society has lost members and sadly families have too.... our thoughts are with you all.

Hopefully, let's look forward to a new year when we might safely re-establish the Society and meet together again.

*Nadolig Llawn a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year*

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### **A Story of Adelina Patti – Part 2**

by Eifion Williams

#### **A new base in Wales:**

It was at this time that Nicolini and Adelina together bought Craig-y-Nos (with Adelina's money). To ensure that her still husband, the Marquis, could not lay his hands on the estate, the purchase was made in Nicolini's name and held in trust for Adelina Patti.

The purchase of Craig-y-Nos provided Adelina with a quiet retreat and resting place between her heavy engagements and for Nicolini a place where he could pursue his hobbies of shooting and fishing. They spent a fortune on alterations and extensions to Craig-y-Nos culminating in the 1890's in the erection of a beautiful theatre where both Nicolini and Adelina entertained their invited guests.

Adelina and Nicolini were still only lovers when they bought Craig-y-Nos as both were still married. Nicolini's divorce was fairly amicable, but in Adelina's case it cost her half her fortune. It is said that the Marquis received one and a quarter million francs in 1885.

The following year Adelina and Nicolini were married. They had a civil ceremony in Swansea followed by a religious ceremony at Ystradgynlais Parish Church with seven hundred people packed into the church and village people on the streets wishing them well on their journey to Craig-y-Nos.

The couple were very happy there. Nicolini pursued his hobbies and Adelina relaxed between her operatic commitments. She also began to play her part in the valley communities and in the nearby towns of Brecon, Neath and Swansea with each one benefitting from her generosity.



Craig y Nos Castle facade complete with private opera house (entrance on left below the clock tower.)  
Photo. T. Fearnside

After some disappointment in America, Nicolini persuaded Adelina that South America was there to tour. It was in December 1887 that Adelina undertook the arduous journey to Buenos Aires via Paris and Madrid. In South America she was paid £1000 per performance as well as a percentage of the profits. She gave 24 performances and was undoubtedly the highest paid singer of her time. She then toured Montevideo. On her return to Britain, she could now command very high fees.

Patti was loved by the people in the Swansea, Neath and Brecon areas and she endeared herself to the whole of Wales when she sang *'Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau'* at the National Eisteddfod in 1889 in Brecon. Her kindness did not go unnoticed and on May 24<sup>th</sup> in 1897, Brecon made her an Honorary Burgess of the Borough of Brecon. Swansea followed suit a few years later when on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1912 she was made a Freeman of the Borough of Swansea. (The first woman to be so honoured and the first woman to hold both positions at the same time.)

Adelina continued to further her career and, as she still attracted capacity audiences, toured America in 1891 - '92 and again in '92 - '93. This latter visit included her appearance in *'Lucia'* and *'il Barbiere'* at the New York Metropolitan Opera House. It transpired that this was to be her last performance on the American opera stage. That 1892 - '93 Winter/ Spring Tour in America was a dismal affair; poor arrangements, poor supporting artists, a nationwide economic crisis and with the artist herself suffering from a cold, the tour was never completed.

Back home in May 1894, at the Royal Albert Hall she sang Traume from the set of *'Funf Gedichte'* and then in July, she performed Elizabeth's Prayer from *'Tannhauser'*. The Sunday Times reported that... *"the rendering is incomparably fine"*.

In December of the same year Adelina was commanded to sing privately before Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace and she was invited to spend the night at Windsor Castle. The Queen presented her with a fine brooch-pin fashioned with the Royal crown and monogram.

In 1895 Patti sang in a refurbished Covent Garden - her performance being described as *"a triumph without a flaw"*. She sang six times at Covent Garden during that season before bringing her operatic appearances to a close. She continued singing however in provincial concerts, London appearances and concerts in France while not forgetting her charitable work raising money for the poor-funds and the hospitals of Neath, Swansea and Brecon.

During 1897 Nicolini's health was failing and on January 18<sup>th</sup> 1889 he died in Pau, France with Adelina at his side.

Patti still sang in London and in provincial concerts and on November 14<sup>th</sup> 1898 she appeared in a concert at the Albert Hall escorted by a gentleman whom she introduced as Rudolph Caderstrom - a 37 year old Swedish baron. After a short period they were married on January 25<sup>th</sup> 1899 at the Roman Catholic Church in Brecon. This event was treated as a civic occasion with gateways and fences festooned with flowers; Madam Patti became Baroness Cadestrom and he a rich man!

Patti's lifestyle changed after the marriage. Lavish entertainment with Adelina's friends whom Cedestrom didn't particularly like ceased. The good times disappeared and became something of the past. The little theatre (Patti's pride and joy) was rarely used but Patti continued to give concerts which were always successful and well patronised.

In 1903 the baron persuaded Adelina to make another tour of America. The tour was another American disaster. At one venue people actually rioted in an attempt to recover their money however, the tour was financially fruitful for Patti as her fees were pre-guaranteed!

In 1905, Adelina agreed to record her own voice - but on her own terms. Firstly, the recordings were to be made at Craig-y-Nos. This was agreed. The recording company then rushed to London to produce the records, so that Patti could approve - she did. Adelina had never heard her own voice and she was pleased with what she heard.

The last public appearance for Adelina was at the Albert Hall on October 24th 1914 when she came out of retirement at 72 to sing in a charity concert in aid of the Red Cross. Once again she sang to royalty as King George V and Queen Mary were present and thus at this venue her career finished in style.

Adelina Patti died at Craig-y-Nos on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1919. She was embalmed and after lying at rest in Craig-y-Nos, Ystradgynlais Parish church and at Kensal Green, she was buried, in accordance with her will, on May 29<sup>th</sup>, near Rossini, in Pere La Chaise Cemetery, Paris.



### Contemporary commendations about Adelina Patti...

#### Composer Rossini

Once asked to name his favourite three opera singers. He replied... "*Patti, Patti and Patti*"

#### Composer Giuseppe Verdi

Wrote in 1877... "*Perhaps the finest singer who has ever lived and a stupendous artist.*"

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### Poem

Written by **Ethel Lunn**, Patti's senior laundry maid.

*Lovely is that valley in the heart of Wales  
Where Craig-y-Nos so proudly stands weathered by gales  
Beautiful as sunshine on Tawe's wave unfurled  
A Nightingale once sang that rang across the world.*

*Sweet as golden sunbeams that swirl on summer morn  
With the soft white mist that rises o'er Tawe's vale at dawn  
Bewitching as the tapestry the ashgrove weaves in June  
When summer beams are falling from rising summer moon*

*Softer than the sighs of grasses playing with the breeze  
Louder than the storm that tears among the leafless trees  
Across the world it sounded may it echo loud and long  
The peerless voice of Patti beloved Queen of Song*

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