

Swansea Jack VC (1930-1937)

He saved lives from the cold, dangerous depths of Swansea Docks. He was a born hero. Jack: Swansea's most famous and heroic dog!

Jack, a mischievous, flat-coated retriever, was born in 1930. His first owner, Mr Davies of Cwmgelli Cottages Landore, found it increasingly difficult to keep an eye on his mischievous puppy. In fact, his roguish behaviour forced him to part company with the dog, who subsequently found a home and lifelong friend in Mr. William Thomas of nearby Riverside Cottages.

The pair moved to live near Padley's Yard at Swansea's North Dock where Mr Thomas worked in the haulage industry. Jack was frightened of the water but as they lived (and worked) near the sea, Mr Thomas decided to throw his dog into the dock where a number of boys were waiting. After an initial struggle, (and a few repeat incidents) Jack got to grips with it, and he learnt to love the water.

His first known act of bravery was in 1931 when he saved a 12 year old boy, (who was also named Jack), from the depths of the docks. The young boy had lost his footing and fallen in. Jack automatically pounced to the rescue. This was to be the first of many such incidents.

In August 1931 Jack was made an honorary life member of the renowned Tail Waggers' Club number 426034; a non profit making organisation dedicated to promoting the welfare of dogs and their owners. From then on Jack appeared at carnivals, regattas and sports events, raising money for charities throughout South Wales.

Numerous honours and accolades were bestowed upon him in recognition of his achievements. These included:

- 1931 - The people of Swansea presented an inscribed silver and leather collar
- 1932 - Swansea Carnival presented a medal for extreme gallantry and worthwhile work for the town
- 1934 - Swansea Corporation presented a silver mounted lead
- 1935 - National Canine Defence League presented a Special Medal - the canine equivalent to the Victoria Cross
- 1935 - Jack received the Daily Mirror Award for Bravery
- 1936 - The Star 'Bravest Dog of the Year' Award
- 1936/37 - Jack Attended Crufts in the presence of the Royal Family
- 1936 - He won a Pewter Tankard at the Blackpool Championship Show

In 1933, Mr Thomas moved to the Victoria Hotel, where Jack befriended the landlord's son, who accompanied him on his missions thereafter. By 1934 he had saved 14 lives. Many of these were not officially recorded but it is widely believed that he saved animals as well.

Mr Thomas retired from the haulage industry in 1936 and the pair moved to Treboeth. Jack, not used to suburbia, often made the three mile journey to the foreshore. A virile dog, he had already fathered numerous puppies, but unfortunately none of them inherited his life saving qualities.

Sadly, Jack became ill in 1937. Mr Thomas noticed that the normally energetic dog had become lethargic and dull, and a visit to the vet confirmed that he had been poisoned. Jack passed away on 2nd October 1937 after a month-long illness, suspected to have been caused by rat poison. He was held in such high regard that the Canine Defence League offered a £25 reward for information leading to a conviction for poisoning, but nobody was ever caught.

Jack was initially buried in his master's back garden; but at a Council Parks meeting the same week, a more suitable burial place for Jack was discussed, which sparked a huge response from the local community. A public burial was held for Jack on October 21st 1937, and his body was laid to rest on Swansea Promenade, outside the Swansea South African Memorial enclosure, next to the Boer War memorial. His coffin was paid for by a local schoolmaster, and Swansea sculptor Mr Cecil Jones offered to create a memorial free of charge. However, a public fund collected over £70 and donations were received as far afield as Canada and New Zealand.

It took longer than expected to create, but on the first anniversary of his death, the 6ft by 3ft bronze and grey Penzance granite memorial was formally unveiled by the then Mayor of Swansea.

Mr Thomas passed away during the blitz in 1941, content in the knowledge that he would soon be joining Jack. The air raids during the War wiped out the Victoria Hotel (Jack's old home), the rubble of which was ironically used to fill in the North Dock in later years.

The Ballad of Swansea Jack was recorded in 1979 as a tribute to the canine hero, and in the same year, a public house on Oystermouth Road changed its name to 'The Swansea Jack'.

In later years, speculation mounted over the validity of some of Jack's alleged rescues, but there was no disputing the awards that he won and to this day from time to time somebody still puts flowers on the memorial. It is widely believed to be one of the 27 people reportedly rescued in the 1930's.

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Jack Abertawe VC (1930 -1937)

Achubodd bywydau o ddyfnderoedd oer dociau Abertawe. Roedd yn arwr ganedig. Jack: ci mwyaf ddewr ac enwocaf Abertawe.

Fe aned Jack, adargi cot-wastad ddu ym 1930. Cafodd ei berchennog cyntaf, Mr Davies o Fythynnod Cwmgelli, Landore, yn anodd i gadw lygad ar y ci bach. I ddweud y gwir, bu'n rhaid iddo gael gwared a'r ci oherwydd ei ymddygiad, ac fe ffeindiodd Jack cyfaill a thy newydd gyda Mr William Thomas o Fythynnod Glan yr Afon gerllaw.

Symudodd y ddau i fyw ger Padley's Yard yn Noc Gogledd Abertawe, ble roedd Mr Williams yn gweithio yn y diwydiant cludiant. Roedd Jack yn ofni'r dwr ond gan eu bod yn byw (a gweithio) ger y mor, penderfynodd Mr Williams daflu Jack i'r dwrble roedd dau grwt yn aros amdano. Wedi trafferthion cynnar (a digwyddiadau syml bellach) dysgodd Jack i garu'r dwr.

Digwyddodd ei achubiad arwrol cyntaf ym 1931 pan aeth ati i waredu bachgen 12 oed (a hefyd enwir Jack) o ddyfnderoedd y dociau. Roedd y crwt wedi cymryd cam gwag a chwmpo i'r dwr. Yn awtomatig, neidiodd Jack i'w achub. Dyma oedd y cyntaf o amryw o ddigwyddiadau syml.

Yn Awst 1931 , fe grewyd Jack yn aelod anrhydeddus o'r 'Tail Waggers Club' rhif 426034; sefydliad dielw wedi'i ymroddi i hybu lles cwn a'i perchnogion. O hyn ymlaen fynychodd Jack carnifalau, regatas, a digwyddiadau chwaraeon, yn casglu arian i elusennau De Cymru.

Cyflwynwyd nifer o anrhydeddau a gwobrwyon i Jack er mwyn cydnabod ei orchestiori, yn cynnwys:

- 1931 - Pobl Abertawe yn cyflwyno coler arian a lledr wedi'i arsgrifio
- 1932 - Carnifal Abertawe yn cyflwyno medal am ddewrder eithafol a gwaith i'r dref
- 1934 - Corporation Abertawe yn cyflwyno tennyn arian
- 1935 - Y Cynghrair Amddiffyn Cwn Cenedlaethol yn cyflwyno medal arbennig-cyferwerth y Groes Victoria
- 1935 - Jack yn derbyn gwobr y 'Daily Mirror' am Ddewrder.
- 1936 - Gwobr 'Ci Mwyaf Dewr y Flwyddyn' y 'Star'
- 1936/37 - Jack yn mynychu Crufts ym mhresenoldeb y Teulu Brenhinol
- 1936 - Ennill tancard piwter yn Sioe Pencampwriaeth Blackpool

Ym 1933, symudodd Jack a Mr Thomas i'r Gwesty Victoria, ble gwnaeth Jack ffrindiau mawr a mab y perchennog, a fu'n gwmni i Jack oddi ar `ni. Erbyn 1934 roedd y ci wedi achub 14 o fywydau. Aeth y nifer o'r rhain heb ei recordio ac fe greidir bod Jack wedi achub anifeiliaid yn ogystal a phobl.

Bu Mr Thomas ymddeol o'r diwydiant cludiant ym 1936 ac fe symudodd y ddau i Dreboeth. Nid oedd Jack arfer byw yn y cyffiniau ac roedd yn gweld angen y dwr felly roedd yn aml i'w weld yn cerdded y tair milltir i'r mor. Roedd yn barod wedi cenhedlu nifer o gwn fach ond yn anffodus nid oedd yr un ohonynt wedi etifeddu ei ddoniau achub.

Yn anffodus, aeth Jack yn sal ym 1937. Sylwodd Mr Thomas fod y ci bywiog bellach yn flinedig a difywyd, a bu yrriweliad i'r milfeddyg cadarnhau ei fod wedi'i gwenwyno. Bu farw Jack ar 2il Hydref 1937 ar ol fis o salwch, ai' hachoswyd, yn ol pob tebyg, gan wenwyn llygod mawr. Roedd Y Cynghrair er Amddiffyn Cwn yn parchu Jack cymaint y bu gynnig gwobr £25 am wybodaeth a fyddai'n arwain at y gwenwynwr, ond yn anffodus ni ddaliwyd yr euog.

Fe gladdwyd Jack yn wreiddiol yng ngardd cefn ei berchennog, ond yng nghyfarfod parciau y Cyngor yr un wythnos, trafodwyd claddfa mwy addas i'r arwr bach, a hybodd trafodaeth eang ymysg y cyhoedd. Cynhaliwyd claddiad cyhoeddus Jack ar 21 ain Hydref 1937, ac fe roddwyd ef i orwedd ar Rhodfa Abertawe, tu allan i Amgaead Coffaol De Affrica Abertawe, gerllaw Carreg Goffa'r `Boer'. Fe dalodd athro lleol am ei arch ac fe gynigodd cerflunydd o Abertawe, Cecil Jones, greu carreg goffa am ddim. Fodd bynnag, roedd casgliad cyhoeddus wedi codi dros £70 ac fe dderbyniwyd rhoddion mor bell i ffwrdd a Chanada a Seiland Newydd.

Cymerodd fwy o amser nag yr erfyniwyd i'w greu, ond ar ben-blwydd cyntaf ei farw, dadorchuddiwyd y garreg goffa efydd a gwenithfaen Penzance 6tf x 3tf, gan Faer Abertawe yr amser.

Bu farw Mr Thomas yn ystod `blitz' 1941, yn ddigon bodlon y byddai'n ymuno a'i ffrind bach cyn bo' hir. Roedd y bomio yn ystod yr Ail Ryfel Byd yn gyfrifol am ddinistrio'r Gwesty Victoria (hen dy Jack), ac yn eironig fe ddefnyddiwyd y rwbel i lanw Doc Gogledd Abertawe yn y blynyddoedd i'w ddilyn.

Recordiwyd 'The Ballad of Swansea Jack' ym 1979 fel teyrnged i'r arwr bach, ac yn yr un flwyddyn, newidiodd ty tafarn ar Heol Ystymllwynarth ei enw i'r `Swansea Jack'.

Am flynyddoedd wedyn, bu nifer o dybiaeth am wirionedd achubiadau Jack, ond ni ellir amau'r anrhydeddau a medalau arbennig yr enillodd; a hyd yn oed heddiw mae rhywun yn doddi blodau ar ei fedd yn gyson. Credir efallai, mai un o'r saith ar hugain o bobl yr achubodd sy'n gyfrifol am hyn.

Mae'r gwybodaeth yn y daflen hon wedi'i brintio gyda'r bwriad gorau, ac nid yw Dinas a Sir Abertawe yn cymryd unrhyw gyfrifoldeb am gamgymeriadau neu wallau trwy esgeulusfod.

I dderbyn y gwybodaeth yma mewn fformat arall, ffoniwch 01792 636851, neu anfonwch e-bost: marketing@swansea.gov.uk