

Where shall famous composer be buried?

SHRINE IN THE PARK?

WILL the remains of Evan James, composer of the Welsh National Anthem, be transferred from Carmel Baptist Church graveyard, Pontypridd, to Ynysangharad Park or Capel Rhondda, Hopkinstown.

This question will be discussed at the next meeting of Pontypridd Council's Parks Committee, at which representatives of the Baptist Union and Mr. W. T. Gilmore, of Hopkinstown, have been invited to attend.

A letter from Mr. W. H. Morris, of Bonvilston Road, Pontypridd, informed Tuesday's Council meeting that the Baptist Union Corporation Ltd. were the trustees of the graveyard of Carmel Baptist Church, Graigwen.

At the request of the Esat Glamorgan English Baptist Association, of which Carmel was formerly a member, he was acting on their behalf in the matter of the neglected condition of the site where Carmel once stood.

DUE HONOUR

Having regard to the possibility of vandalism at the graveside, it was suggested that the Pontypridd Council should acquire the site and consider the question of exhuming the remains in the various graves with the view to their re-burial at Glyntaff Cemetery, with the exception of those of Evan James. It was suggested that the Council should consider re-burying the remains of Evan James at a spot in Ynysangharad Park near the memorial to Evan James and his son, James James (who

composed the music of the national anthem).

It was felt by both the Corporation and the Association that this suggestion would allow proper facilities, and supervision, for the remains at present interred in Carmel graveyard to rest in peace and to be appropriately honoured in the town of which Evan James was an inhabitant.

Mr. E. D. Thomas (Deputy Clerk) told the meeting that the Clerk (Mr. Bernard M. Murphy) had received a letter from Mr. W. H. T. Gilmore in which he had said he had read a newspaper report about the possibility of the remains of Evan James being re-interred in the local park. Mr. Gilmore inquired whether it would be possible for him to meet the appropriate committee concerning any matters pertaining to Evan James.

CHURCH OBLIGATION

In a written report, submitted by Mr. Bernard M. Murphy, it was stated that the original intention was understood to be merely that the council would take over the portion of the ground at Carmel in which the body of Evan James was interred and turn that area into a Memorial Garden. It would now be seen that the church authorities were requesting the council to take over the whole burial ground. This would entail not only the site of the originally proposed Memorial Garden, but also the larger area situated on the other side of the Graigwen Road.

Proceeding, the report stated that quite apart from the question of the cost of the acquisition of the freehold interest in the land, the removal and re-interment of

the bodies, including the expenses of preparing the necessary schedules of graves and advertisements, etc., could amount to a considerable sum.

Although the council were originally disposed to consider taking over the one portion and maintaining it as a Memorial Garden, it was only intended that, having been established as a Memorial Garden, the council would be responsible for its future maintenance.

The Clerk's report declared: "It seems to me that if such exhumations and re-burials are desired, these matters should be attended to and completed by the Church authorities before the council consider any further action in the matter."

Mr. Murphy pointed out that the council were not the burial authority. Any arrangements for re-interment of the bodies must be made with the Burial Board. Before any exhumations could be made, it was necessary that a complete schedule of graves, with details of the persons buried in such graves, should be prepared and then public notice required to be given in a local paper setting out details of such graves, and names where ascertainable, of the deceased persons.

CONFERENCE

Further, if there had been any burials in the last 25 years, individual notification must be given to the personal representatives or relatives of such deceased persons. Before actual exhumations commenced, it was necessary to obtain a licence from the Secretary of State authorising such work to be done.

Mr. E. R. Bowden said the last time he spoke to Mr. Gilmore, he (Mr. Gilmore) showed him certain documents in connection with the grave of Evan James. "He told me," said Mr. Bowden, "he would be as helpful as possible. We have also received this letter from Mr. Morris, of the Baptist Union.

"I feel this matter may very well be referred to the Parks Committee and that we invite Mr. Morris, Mr. Gilmore and other interested parties to attend."

Mr. Charles Anzani associated himself with Mr. Bowden's remarks, adding that he understood Mr. Gilmore had documentary evidence that the remains of Evan James be re-interred in Capel Rhondda.

EDITORIAL FOOTNOTE:

Music is almost certainly one of the reasons why a desire has been expressed that the remains of Evan James should be re-interred in Capel Rhondda's graveyard, rather than in the town's central park. For it was the precentor (leader of the singing) at Capel Rhondda, Mr. John Hughes, who composed a wonderful hymn — "Cwm Rhondda" — that is now sung all over the world. The James father and son, of course, operated a woollen mill in Mill Street, Pontypridd, during their lifetime. The son died in Aberdare and he was buried there.

The proposal that the remains of Evan James shall be removed to the park was prompted by a suggestion that the new burial place should be made into a national shrine and placed in the keeping of the town council.