and protected by the populace, who treated him with all the reverence of a folk hero.

However, like all folk heroes and the stories of their exploits, over the years fact and fiction have become so irreversibly bound together it is today impossible to separate the reality from the legend passed down over the years from the mouths of father to son.

Will Cefn-Coch did not find it easy to stay hidden. Although the search for him was countrywide the police were always fairly sure that he was never more than a few miles from the place where he had been born and spent his life.

William Richards's most active ally was David Joseph, a watch cleaner from Tregaron, who took it upon himself to direct Will's continuing evasion of the police. David Joseph would turn up on the doorstep of the house he had decided Will would stay in. That night and calmly tell the occupants it was their duty to shelter the wanted man. His only condition in selecting a house was that it had at least two doors. With many simple Welsh labourer's cottages of the period this was often not the case. Nobody, we are told, refused.

Although constantly on the move, Will did, on three occasions, come very close to capture. Twice due to his hiding place having been disclosed to the police. Despite his popularity and the closing of ranks of the local people, there was one family, for their own gain — it appears they coveted Cefn-Coch and its lands — prepared to betray him to the authorities.

The first occasion was when the police went to a local mill, having received a tip-off that Will Cefn-Coch was hiding there. They searched the mill thoroughly from top to bottom but could find no trace of the fugitive. Believing he could not have made his escape, the police ordered the miller to stop the mill wheel so that they could search inside it.

The miller protested. He would stop the wheel if they insisted, but the inconvenience and time lost would be great. He explained that he had a large quantity of wheat to grind that day and what with that, and the time taken in diverting the water so that the wheel could be stopped, he would be unable to finish until late into the night.

The police listened patiently to these convincing arguments,

thought it over and decided it would be impossible for anyone to hide in the wheel anyway. As soon as the police left, Will, who had received warning of the police raid, emerged from the mill wheel, wet, bruised and dizzy, but still free.

On a second occasion Will was being hidden in a farmhouse. The police again having been told that he was being sheltered there, turned up in force. It happened that minutes before the police arrived a woman of the house had given birth to a child. The police, reaching the room where the mother and baby were, looking in, saw the woman in bed, the newborn child at her breast, and tiptoed away so as not to disturb them.

Under the bedclothes next to the mother was Will Cefn-Coch. (One cannot help but admire the tact of those old-time Welsh police.)

The last time was when Will had returned home to CefnCoch to visit his mother. While Will was there a lone policeman called at the farm. Will hid in the attic, his mother answered the door. The policeman asked, "Well mother, is Will at home?" For some reason, possibly because she felt her son innocent and should take his chances with the courts, this good woman said, "Yes." The story is that the policeman was either so surprised or alarmed he stepped back quickly, tripped and fell down, breaking his leg. Taking advantage of this fortuitous accident Will Cefn-Coch made his escape.

After this episode Will decided he had had enough, being constantly on the run was no way for a true Welshman to spend his life, and he was realistic enough to know that he could not hope to stay at liberty for much longer. The only course of action left for him was to flee the country, a task which in itself posed many problems. He was by then so notorious, and with wanted posters for him on the walls of every port in Britain, the hazards in attempting to escape were daunting.

Nevertheless, a group of people led by David Joseph, and including the Welsh poet, John Jones, planned his journey across the country to Liverpool where he intended to try and take a ship for America.

So, with the staunch David Joseph as his companion, some two to three months after he had killed Joseph Butler, William Richards set off for Liverpool on foot. They had one advantage over the police. David Joseph was an expert at makeup and