

Gracie's "Lad" Is Young Welsh Composer

GOSSIP OF SOUTH WALES
Conducted by "The Stroller"

BEHIND Gracie Fields's fine broadcast last night lies a story of how a young Welsh pianist-composer, whom the great artiste aided, made good.

He is Mr. Harry Parr-Davies, a native of Neath. Local people recall how as a schoolboy he used to write music and submit it to local entertainment producers, who often



MR. HARRY PARR-DAVIES

encouraged him by accepting his work.

The way he got into touch with Miss Fields is in the best tradition of the determined young man making good against heavy odds. He was in Blackpool for a holiday. It was a wet day and he wrote a song with the determination that Miss Gracie Fields should hear it and sing it.

Going to the stage-door of the hall where she was appearing he met with the inevitable rebuff. That did not deter him. He persevered and in the end "Gracie," always generous to beginners and triers, agreed to hear his song. He played it for her. It captured her interest at once. She bought the song and encouraged him to write more for her.

* * *

"My Lad"

OUT of this developed the arrangement by which she had a first call on all his songs, and ultimately he became her pianist. Often she refers to him on the wireless when he is playing for her as "my lad."

Miss Fields encouraged him to specialise in "light" musical numbers. At the age of 20 he received a cheque for £1,000 as advance royalties for his compositions. This was stated to be the largest amount of advance royalties ever given to a song-writer.

In the film "This Week of Grace" he composed three numbers for Miss Fields—"My Lucky Day," "Mary Rose," and "Happy Ending"—and also appeared as the pianist in the film band.

He also composed several pieces of music in the film "Sing As We Go," and other pictures.

* * *

Cutting from The Wales
Echo & Express, Monday
January 8th 1940.