

COWBRIDGE AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 29

NOVEMBER 1988



COLWINSTON

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The Editors wish to apologise for the absence of a Newsletter since February. It is hoped to resume normal (i.e. three times a year) service in future.

Looking back over an enjoyable year, the Society has had a full programme of lectures, the usual Charter Day dinner during March, and a visit to the medieval village at Cosmeston Park in the summer.

Looking forward to 1989, the Charter Day dinner is already planned for March 18th but will be held this year in the Duke of Wellington ballroom. On 5th May, the monthly meeting may take the form of a conducted tour of Penhow Castle, followed by a candle-lit supper. On Saturday, 10th June, it is proposed that we should join members of the Cardiff Archaeological Society on a coach trip to visit three castles in West Wales. Further details of these events will be given later.

The Society meets on the first Friday of each month at 8.00 p.m. in the Lesser Hall of Cowbridge Town Hall. All are welcome.

LOST OR BORROWED!

A book entitled 'The History and Topography of Glamorgan' has been missing from the Museum for some months. The curator and her staff are most anxious to have it returned, as it is a valuable source of reference.

Can you help?

FUTURE PROGRAMME

January 6th

'Murder Most Foul'
Speaker : Leonard Davies

February 3rd

'The Stock Exchange'
Speaker : David Jones

March 3rd

'The Church of Llandeilo and Tal-y-bont'
Speaker : Robert Child

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FEBRUARY MEETING

Mr H. E. Bailey talked about John Batchelor, whose statue, inscribed 'Friend of Freedom', stands in The Hayes in Cardiff.

Mr Bailey traced John Batchelor's story from a book written by Batchelor's grandson and by scrutinising contemporary documents.

During the 19th century Cardiff expanded from a small town with a population of 18,700 to become a large port with a population of 90,000 by 1883. John Batchelor was connected with Cardiff during the years of expansion.

He spent his early days in Newport but left in 1836, working first in Sunderland and later in Scotland before moving to America where he lived for 3 years. During this period the Chartist uprising took place and, although Batchelor had friends in that movement, there is no evidence that he was actively connected with it. He returned to South Wales in 1843, setting up a small ship-building firm in Cardiff with his brother. The business flourished but, six years later, owing to the diversion of the Taff during the building of the railway, the brothers had to vacate this site. They set up elsewhere as tenants of the Bute estate which owned much of the dock area.

Batchelor became involved in public affairs whilst still a young man and was often 'a pain in the neck' to the established order. At the time of the Corn Laws he organised a petition to the Queen asking for free entry of corn into British ports. He pressured the Town Council to improve the condition of Cardiff streets and he was elected a Street Commissioner in 1848. He favoured the disestablishment of the Church and refused to pay Church Rates to St. Mary's. Following the cholera epidemic of 1849 a committee comprising Batchelor and two clerical gentlemen was formed to implement the Cholera Act. He was elected to Cardiff City Council in 1850 and became Mayor in 1853.

In 1852 Batchelor persuaded W. Coffin to stand as Liberal against the Castle party candidate, Nicoll, who had represented Cardiff in Parliament for 20 years. Coffin took the seat, but Batchelor's action proved to be a turning point in



METHODIST CHAPEL ABERTHAW

his life. He was given notice to quit by the Bute Estate. Batchelor retaliated by planning a dock at Penarth, which naturally ran into opposition from the Bute Estate. Eventually the Penarth Dock and Railway Bill went through Parliament and the monopoly of the Butes was broken. Batchelor continued to build ships until 1866 when the depression forced him into bankruptcy. He retired into private life but continued to serve on School Boards. In 1874 a vellum scroll was presented to him at the Town Hall.

Mr Bailey found it impressive that a man who was often so difficult should nevertheless be so well respected, as the Hayes statue shows.

The chairman, Mrs Yvonne Weeding, thanked Mr Bailey for his talk on this very interesting character.

M.H.

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MARCH MEETING

There was a capacity audience to hear Canon W. D. Davies talk about the history of the Diocese of Llandaff which celebrated its 14th centenary in 1960.

Canon Davies told how Christianity was brought to Britain during the Roman occupation. Following the withdrawal of the Romans in 410 A.D. and the subsequent Saxon invasions, the Christian Church in South-east Wales became cut off from English Christianity. A distinctive Celtic Church was formed, intensely monastic with a strong missionary zeal, founded on the work of the Celtic saint St. Teilo was one such missionary, based at Llandeilo Fawr. He is accredited with the building of the first church at Llandaff in about A.D. 560.

Following the Norman conquest of Britain, Urban was consecrated as the first Norman Bishop of Llandaff. The Church in Wales became subordinate to

Canterbury, losing much of its national character. Urban organised the construction of a more magnificent building at Llandaff of which the chancel arch still remains. The Normans also founded their own monasteries in Wales, such as the Benedictine monastery at Ewenny and the Cistercian monasteries at Margam and Tintern.

The Reformation caused by Henry VIII resulted in the despoliation of the great abbeys and the deprivation of the Diocese continued to the end of the 16th century. Even so, during this gloomy period, in 1588 Bishop Morgan first translated the whole of the Bible into Welsh.

In the 17th C., under Cromwell, the Cathedral was entered by Roundhead soldiers and desecrated, books and records being burned. Although worship and association by Anglicans was outlawed at this time, services, continued to be held clandestinely. Meanwhile, understandably, the Cathedral buildings fell into disrepair.

The Methodist revival of the 18th C., instigated by two Anglican priests, Charles and John Wesley, had success in South Wales and was supported by some clergymen. In that century, too, plans were made to rebuild the Cathedral in Grecian style. This was begun, but abandoned for lack of funds and was rebuilt later in the 19th century in the pseudo-Gothic style.

During the Industrial Revolution of the 19th C., the expansion of the area brought increasing social needs. Bishop Ollivant and his successors responded by building schools and churches and by founding St. Michael's College for the training of clergy.

By the time of the formation of the Church in Wales in 1919, the Diocese was huge and part was hived off to form the Diocese of Monmouth. Canon Davies continued to trace the history through the present century, including the terrible damage done to the Cathedral by a landmine in 1941 and the subsequent rebuilding. He spoke of the Diocese' response to changing social conditions following the shift of population and the building of large housing estates. He closed by showing a slide of the Cathedral as it is today.

The Chairman, Mrs Yvonne Weeding, thanked Canon Davies for his interesting and comprehensive talk.

M. H.

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APRIL MEETING

The Society ended its 1987-88 series of meetings in the Town Hall on 8th April. Noticeably fewer than usual attended – probably because, during Easter week, many members were away from home. The few were well rewarded. The speaker was John Soulsby and he called his talk "How to get a Coat of Arms – a General Introduction to Heraldry".

Though there are many good books on heraldry, there is little information on designing and acquiring a coat of arms and so it was these aspects that the speaker concentrated on. He did so by telling us about a fictional Mr Scarf. In the course of the story he showed us examples of heraldic design and dwelt on matters of heraldic interest – such as the medieval and modern functions of the Earl Marshal, the combination of two or more arms on a single shield (by impaling or quartering), and the position of women in general and heiresses in particular.

Mr Scarf had a successful career. After early retirement and becoming a magistrate he took a notion to have a coat of arms. He avoided bogus heraldry and had an interview at the College of Arms. There he was talked out of a probably unsuccessful, and certainly expensive, attempt to trace an armigerous ancestor. Instead, his worthiness having been established, he was persuaded to go through the routine of applying for arms of his own. Next came the design, which taught him much about heraldry and was a process that he obviously enjoyed. Finally, having paid the herald's fee, the arms were granted to him.

The discussion after Mr Soulsby's talk ranged widely and touched on matters of Scottish heraldry. Mr Geoff Pratt proposed a well-deserved vote of thanks.

G.B.

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' A. N. OLD BOVIAN V.C. '

[In this article Dr Michael Duggan follows up the story in our last Newsletter to give further information on his search for the identity of the 'Old Bovian V.C. ']

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The evidence in favour of Raby's being the Old Bovian V.C. is largely circumstantial. He was of a middle-class background; he came from the area (i.e. South Wales) that supplied all but a few of the pupils at Cowbridge; his parents were away from home a great deal and might have thought a residential school more desirable than "dumping" the boys on their grandparents and paying for private tuition.

There is, however, the question of why Raby (and possibly his brother) should have transferred from Cowbridge to Sherborne (in 1840 in the case of Henry). Many Cowbridge boys accompanied or followed Hugo Harper to Sherborne, but that was ten years later. Raby, if he were at Cowbridge at all, would have sat at the feet of the Old Doctor or of his deputy, Thomas Edmondes. As pointed out, Cowbridge School was flourishing at that time, while Sherborne was in almost terminal decline. But of course, the same objection would apply, to a lesser extent, if Raby had been sent to Sherborne directly from home. No details of the education of either of the Raby brothers, prior to their entry, are preserved at Sherborne School (5).

I consulted the records held at the Imperial War Museum for further information about Raby, but I found little new, save a splendid picture of him in old-age, covered with his decorations and looking, in high collar and epaulettes, the very epitome of the Victorian establishment. Similarly, the Dyfed County Archives hold no information at all about Raby or his family, while the Llanelli Public Library could only supply some newspaper-cuttings about Raby himself, covering the same ground as the documents I had seen, and an essay on the Raby family, relating their contribution to the town's industrial development (6). The family left Llanelli altogether after the death of Raby's parents, and the only descendant of whom I could find mention was an unmarried centenarian who died in Bath early this century. There seems little chance of tracing more information about Henry Raby's early education, for this would relate to a period one hundred and forty years ago; almost certainly, it no longer exists.

Within the limits of the assumptions I have made – reasonable, as I believe them to be – Raby is by far the most likely candidate. But there are two or three other suppositions, which further undermine my position;

1. It is possible that the compiler of the Report of 1870, one Mr Bompas, made a mistake in correlating the information he received about Cowbridge School, or even that his informant, the Rev'd W. Holt Beever, made a mistake about past pupils. In this case, there might be no Cowbridge School V.C., of course; but I have assumed that such a man did exist and shall continue to assume it.

2. The book W.C.'s of Wales and Welsh Regiments might not be comprehensive; a "Welsh" V.C., who attended Cowbridge School, might have been omitted in error. Since the book is the only one of its kind, there is nothing with which to compare it. In its favour is its obvious attention to detail and the regard in which it is held at the Imperial War Museum. The author, W.A. Williams, spent a great deal of time researching there, and his book is now used as a convenient compendium of Welsh V.C.s by the staff of the Printed Records Department, since their own classification is chronological and alphabetical, as one would expect.

3. It is possible, if unlikely, that the Old Bovian in question had few Welsh connections, or none at all, and that he did not belong to a Welsh regiment.

Tracing him would then involve examining the records of all those awarded the Victoria Cross in the relevant period. I made some attempt to do this at the War Museum, but I cannot say that I might not have overlooked someone – there is a very large number to be considered. Further, the educational details of many are incomplete. I can say only that I did not find anyone who was supposed to have attended Cowbridge School, nor did I find any recipient with Welsh connections who had been omitted from V.C.'s of Wales and Welsh Regiments. It is obviously quite beyond my means to research further into everyone who had received the decoration up to 1864; it would take many years, and, ultimately, the relevant information might simply be unavailable.

Unfortunately, Canon Lummis, the greatest authority on the Victoria Cross, died just as I started my research. His papers were all deposited at the Museum, and were among the documents I consulted; W. A. Williams had corresponded with him when writing his own book. But I was advised that he might have been able to recall some additional helpful detail from his vast memory, for he had made a lifetime study of the subject. Such was not to be.

There, I think, the matter will remain. I am certainly in no position to recommend to Mr James, the Headmaster of the Comprehensive School, that he commemorate Henry Raby in some prominent place in the museum he has established, for that would be a totally unwarranted "borrowing" of a distinguished Old Shireburnian. What I can say is that Raby is very likely to have been the man referred to in the Report of 1870, and that it is a great pity he cannot be established with certainty as the Old Bovian V.C., in view of his unique distinction.

It is ironic, in any case, that this remarkable Old Boy, whoever he was, should have remained unnoticed until his School had been destroyed. Perhaps it is appropriate that he remain anonymous in an age that cares for none of these things and has set its face resolutely against its past.

M. A. K. D.



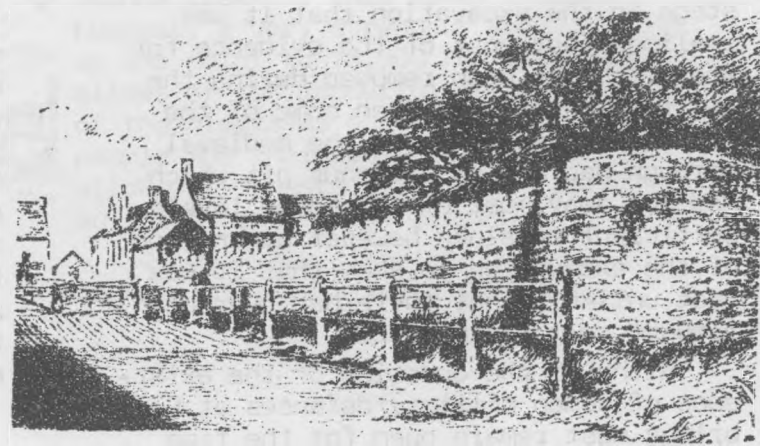
The South Gate and the Toll Gate (copied from an old painting).

Notes :

5. This information was kindly supplied by Mr M. R. G. Earls-Davis, sometime Assistant Master at Sherborne School, and Honorary Secretary of the Old Shireburnian Society, together with a reprint of Henry Raby's obituary from The Times, February 14th, 1907.
6. Letters from Ms E. Twist, Archivist-in-charge, County Record Office, Shire Hall, Carmarthen; and from Mr D. F. Griffiths, Borough Librarian, Llanelli.

I am most grateful to those persons whose names are recorded in the notes appended to the two instalments of my article for the information supplied, and to the staff of the Department of Printed Records, Imperial War Museum, for their consideration and help. It goes without saying that the comments of Iolo Davies, my friend and mentor, were invaluable.

M. A. K. D.





RECENT WORK BY THE TRUST IN COWBRIDGE

As many members of the local history society will already know, a small team from the Trust recently concluded investigations at the rear of the Midland Bank. The work was necessitated by the forthcoming extension to the adjacent Bear Hotel, and the Trust is most grateful to the owner, Mr Lewis, for his co-operation and interest.

The site was first investigated in 1981/82, when trial explorations revealed a sequence of features including the abutment for a bridge outside the north gate of the medieval borough, and one edge of a very large Roman ditch. This ditch ran at 90° to the axis of the military bath house which had been examined on the Arthur John Car Park site, and appeared to have fallen out of use during a period when troops were being redeployed in the earlier part of the second century AD; therefore a military function seemed likely for this feature. What was not clear however was the direction in which the ditch ran, or whether there were any associated features such as a rampart which would confirm its defensive nature. Given the extensive circumstantial evidence (such as the baths and several finds of items of military kit including crossbow bolts and part of a helmet), the questions raised by the discovery of this ditch were obviously crucial to the interpretation of the evidence for occupation during the Romano-British period which the Trust has revealed in several excavations since 1977.

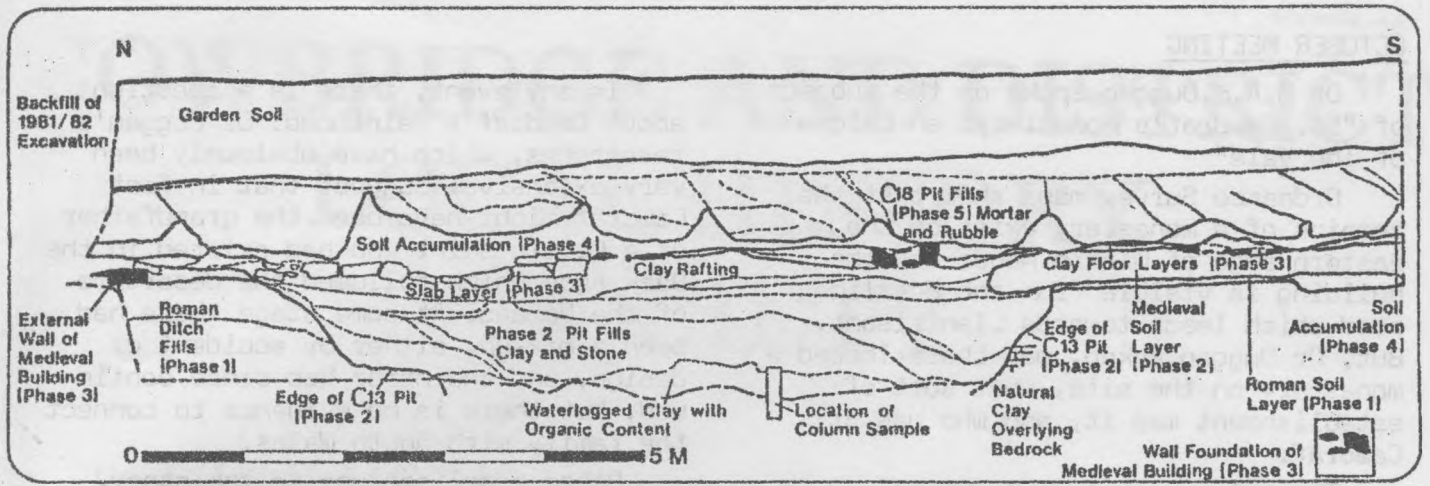
The ditch however was two metres down from the existing ground surface, so it was not until a relatively late stage in the excavation that it was realised that most of the evidence for the ditch had been removed during the thirteenth century, when some of the earliest inhabitants of the medieval borough had dug an enormous pit which had cut away most of the Roman levels. Sufficient remained however at one end of the excavation to show that it was most unlikely that there had ever been a rampart next to the ditch.

Although the question of the existence of Roman military defences at Cowbridge must remain open for the time being, the medieval pit was itself quite

a bonus, for the lowest layers within it had remained waterlogged since they were deposited seven hundred years ago. This meant that the organic material within it was remarkably well preserved, and included items such as off-cuts from leather working, wooden carpentry waste, and plant and insect remains such as beetle wing-cases. The diversity of species within the insect world is in itself a reflection of the way in which particular species adapt to particular environments; in other words the beetle species identified will be a very sensitive indicator of the environment in the period during which these deposits were derived. The wood and leather on the other hand add an extra dimension to what we know about the crafts and industries which were undertaken in the town centre.

Later on, probably towards the end of the thirteenth century, the pit was filled in and covered over with a thick rafting layer of clay and stone to prevent subsidence of the building which was constructed on the site. The building seems to have been a well constructed two-storey structure, probably with the principal accommodation on the first floor. On the lower floor there were at least four small rooms which may have acted as storage compartments. The clay floors were virtually at the same level as the floor of the vaulted undercroft of the medieval building a few yards away at the rear of the Bear Hotel. The building underwent modification on at least one occasion, and the masonry found in 1981/82 represented an extension to its northern end.

Traces of one of the surfaces of the road to the North Gate were discovered which were contemporary with the building. After the demolition of the building the road seems to have diminished in importance and a layer of dirt was left to accumulate over its surface. By the time it finally went out of use (along with the North Gate) shortly before 1630 it was described as a "footway", a description which seems to be confirmed by the archaeology.



Cowbitidge Midland Bank, Composite section showing main contexts in east bank. Principal horizons are shown in solid lines.

The final phase of activity on the site consisted of a complex sequence of episodes of refuse dumping, the most important of which took place during the late eighteenth century when the building at the front (High Street) end of the plot was demolished and the rubble buried in the back garden, there being no municipal tip at the time! Analysis of the rubble suggests that it was derived from a medieval structure with numerous later additions. The deposits also contained a substantial collection of pottery (some of reasonably good quality); indeed the site as a whole has

produced the best medieval and post-medieval pottery sequence which we have yet recovered from the town. This will provide useful comparisons for analysis of less well-dated material from other excavations in the Vale such as Llanaes and Cosmeston.

Analysis of the environmental material and the other finds is still going on, but when completed the data should do much to enhance our understanding of developments in the town centre.

Jonathan Parkhouse
Field Officer

SEPTEMBER MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society took place on September 9th. The business part of the meeting was brief and there followed a talk given by the Chairman, Mrs Yvonne Weeding, about her return trip to Nepal.

Travelling with members of her family Yvonne trekked, this time, towards Everest, a very strenuous walk, rising at one point to 16,500 feet. She showed slides of the wonderful mountain scenery of the Himalayas and of the Nepalese people and their customs. We also saw slides of monasteries as well as other buildings and market places.

It was very pleasant to enjoy the rigours of this trip sitting down.

GREAT HOUSE.
LLANBLETHIAN

M. H.

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OCTOBER MEETING

Dr M. A. K. Duggan spoke on the subject of "St. Cawdraf's Monastery: an Enigma of The Vale"

Ordnance Survey maps show that the remains of a monastery exist on the eastern edge of Misikin Manor and the building is visible from the M4 slip road which leads towards Llantrisant. But, Dr Duggan asked, was there indeed a monastery on the site, what sort of establishment was it, and who was St. Cawdraf.

The enigma can largely be blamed on the famous bard, Iolo Morgannwg, who often used his vivid imagination to embellish and even to fabricate evidence which would enhance the importance of Glamorgan. Iolo described the building as an ancient Celtic monastery which had already ceased to exist at the time of the Reformation (because it was not in the lists of suppressed establishments). Subsequent historians have relied on Iolo's statement and thus perpetuated the description.

The earliest known record of the building is a reference by Henry UE¹'s Inspector of Antiquities (Survey of 1536-1545) to "some ancient PLACE". This is taken to infer a mansion which was in a state of disrepair. The most authentic report now is that by the Royal Commission for Monuments in Wales which refers to a large ruinous courtyard house of the late 14th C. and which was reduced to a farmhouse probably in the 17th C.

And what of St. Cawdraf? Dr Duggan led us through a somewhat complicated genealogy explaining the apparent changes of names due to the lack of standard spellings. Cawdraf's name appears from sources in the Llyn peninsular and in Anglesey. His transition to Glamorgan seems to follow another of Iolo's habits: transferring North Walian people and events to South Wales.

In any event, there is a question about Cawdraf's sainthood. Dr Duggan's researches, which have obviously been very extensive, suggest that in fact Cawdraf might have been the grandfather of a Celtic saint who had existed in the Dark Ages which followed the departure of the Romans. At some stage there had been a mix-up, either by accident or design, and the error has since continued, but there is no evidence to connect the family with South Wales.

Other complications to the story, such as a former church, destroyed by fire, on a site now under the M4 slip road, were all carefully examined by Dr Duggan. These were shown to be irrelevant to the building which must be downgraded from Iolo's monastery to a 14/15th century family house.

A. H.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

President : Rev. Norman E. Williams

Hon. Chairman : Mrs Yvonne Weeding
(Cowbridge 2878)

Hon. Secretary : Mr John Miles
(Cowbridge 2270)

Hon. Treasurer : Mrs Val Shannon
(Cowbridge 3957)

Programme Secretary : Mrs Gwynneth Keay
(Cowbridge 2879)

Museum Curator : Mrs Marion Eveleigh
(Cowbridge 2495)

Editors of Newsletter : Marjorie &
Alan Hey (Cowbridge 2869)

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COWBRIDGE