

COWBRIDGE AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 33

APRIL 1994



CONGRATULATIONS

The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales presented Mr David John with the Rural Wales Award at a meeting in Cowbridge last November. The Award was in recognition of his creation of a Wetland Sanctuary in Cowbridge.

The Society would like to offer its congratulations to Mr John.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

President :	Rev. Norman E. Williams
Hon. Chairman :	Mrs Yvonne Weeding (Tel. 772878)
Hon. Secretary :	Mr John L.S. Miles (Tel. 772270)
Hon. Treasurers :	Mrs Valerie Pugh (Tel. 772593) Mrs Ivana Locke (Tel. 773252)
Programme Sec. :	Mr Derrick Kingham (Tel. 0443 228889)

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The Editors would like to thank those who have contributed articles from which two newsletters have been produced.

Unfortunately the stock of articles has now been used up and we need more for the next edition. It would be pleasing to be able to publish a newsletter to start the next season in September or October - so put your thinking caps on and see what you can do!

ST. QUENTIN'S CASTLE



The very strange events of St David's day must now be known to everybody. Somehow the news that the castle had been taken into Guardianship by the Welsh office was handled in such a way that the manner of the announcement almost totally distracted the effect of what such good news it is.

For the record, around four hundred people had stated their intention of attending the Public Enquiry. Another six hundred signed a list to say they were working that day but still supported the use of a CPO.

We are waiting on CADW to provide fuller details on the working of Guardianship. At the moment we understand it to mean that they will have all the rights that they would have obtained by acquiring the castle, with the exception of actual ownership. By another route we are also seeking to obtain a copy of the Guardianship agreement.

The brunt of our efforts to obtain a solution has been directed in the past at CADW. However, it should be understood that the delay was mostly caused by an undertaking made to Parliament in 1979 during the reading of the Ancient Monuments Act. It was promised then that a CPO "will never be used, except when it is the only way of securing the preservation of a monument".

A CPO has still not been used anywhere for this purpose, despite the Act having been passed. The Government has continued to insist that it should not be used. This will have placed CADW in an impossible position as this fact was well known, including to the castle's owner.

Despite our requests, nobody has been able to explain the reason. The situation is even more bizarre as CPO's are now regularly used to acquire "Listed Buildings". The recent welcome news that Sker House has been acquired by Ogwr Borough Council is just one example.

These events are now behind us. We should be looking forward to develop the best possible relationship with CADW. It is regretted that some local people are still seeking to throw brickbats at CADW. It is perhaps only human nature that the most vociferous of these people seem to be the same ones that were otherwise occupied when real support was needed in previous years. For the future work on the castle, we need CADW and CADW needs the goodwill of Cowbridge.

In addition to the solution for the castle, other good things have happened. In the words of a former Cowbridge Mayor "when the cause is good enough, the people of Cowbridge can still make their voices heard". The effort to justify saving the castle has forced more intensified research into its history and many new facts were revealed of historical, architectural and archaeological importance.

Continuing on a positive note. Mr John Carr, the Chief Executive of CADW, has accepted the invitation from the History Society to attend a special meeting of the Society to be held in the main hall of the Town Hall on Thursday, 12th May. The programme, starting at 20.00, will include a talk on the castle by Hilary Thomas, using some of the new material. Mr Carr will then make known CADW's plans for the castle and also talk about the role and functions of CADW.

Entrance to the meeting will be free to History Society members, with a small charge to visitors.

(cont'd)

THE BEAR INN

One of the joys of Cowbridge High Street is that historically so much of what is concealed can be revealed.

The Bear Inn, like so many in the Vale, did not start life as an inn. It was the town house of Llanmihangel Place. There were a lot of these town houses in Cowbridge, owned by the local gentry. The Carnes of Nash Manor owned Great House, where Sylvia Williams, the chemist, is today. When roads were very bad and lighting non-existent - you only have to look at a carriage's lights - to realise how much more comfortable it would be to stay in Cowbridge. Then the law courts could be attended, as well as the balls, the races, the fairs and markets.

As you walk past the Bear you see an 18th century coaching inn with sash windows and gateway for the coach. But enter the cross passage and you see that all the rooms on the front were built in late medieval times. It was probably a one-storied building and only later was the upstairs added.

Next time you are in the lounge bar look for the remains of the medieval fireplace behind the bar. Not much remains because an arch has broken through it but you can still see the fragment of carved lintel. The hindquarters of a leopard is there and above it a shield bearing a cross and, alongside, a head. You are in the hall of a medieval house, the main living quarters. Walk through into the inner room beyond and you find a late 1500's fireplace backing on to the hall with a door of the same date in the north wall. The plaster ceiling is probably early 18th century.

Go back to the cross passage and enter the room on your left and you are in an outer room, the parlour. Late medieval parlours often had beds in them. Return to the cross passage and leave the medieval building in reception but look at the medieval fireplace which has been re-sited there. Beyond this was another medieval building detached from the rest. The ground floor is spanned by a long barrel vault under which is the cellar, known as the Bear Pit. The first floor was converted into an 18th century assembly hall when a bowed end was added.

The Edwin family of Llanmihangel, forebears of the Earls of Dunraven had their possessions mapped in 1782 and the Bear is shown on a map of Cowbridge.

About 1786, Christopher Bradley tells us that he took over as the landlord of the Bear for 18 years. During this time it became a well-known coaching inn, the Royal Mail calling there to change horses. In 1804 he had been succeeded by Michael Glover. A furious quarrel broke out when Bradley inserted an advert in the Cambrian headed 'Posting at One Shilling per Mile' and assured readers he would be continuing the posting business from his own house, the P.O., in Cowbridge, and thanking his 'friends and the public' for their liberal support during his years at the Bear. Bradley's temper had not always made him the most popular host, as one of his customers' descriptions show:

"If signs are emblems of what landlords are,
How like must Bradley be unto his Bear"

Some of you may remember, years ago there was a large hooded chair in the passage from which tickets are said to have been issued and collected.

It is difficult to choose among the many different visitors to the Bear. The Quarter Sessions were held in Assembly Rooms. In 1772 'The Glamorganshire Agricultural Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture, etc.' was formed there.

The prisoners from the abortive French landing at Fishguard during the Napoleonic Wars, on their way to London were housed at the Bear, presumably in the vaulted cellar.

One grand Hunt Ball in 1853 resulted in many of those who attended developing Cowbridge Fever (typhoid). There was such an outcry that the Town Corporation appointed a health inspector to look into the matter. At the back of the Bear, he wrote, was 'an offensive open gutter known as the Town Ditch containing a quantity of putrid matter, from which an effluvia of a very offensive nature arises'. This was filled in as a result of this report.

The present owner of the Bear Hotel is Julian Hitchcock who was educated at Cowbridge Grammar School (which later became the Comprehensive School - but that is another story!).

St Quentin's Castle continued.

MUSEUM NEWS

Because the solution for the castle should not have taken so long, it has been thought appropriate that a body should be formed to monitor the future well-being of the castle and perhaps other Cowbridge historical buildings in need of care. The organization will be known as "The Friends of St Quentins". Further details will be available shortly but the principal aims will be to encourage and help the conservation of the castle, to further research its history and other activities to guarantee the heritage of Cowbridge.

Finally it would be wrong to write about the position without trying to thank all those people whose efforts made it happen. The complete list would be too long to attempt here and it is hoped that those not included will accept this as a valid reason.

Sadly, because of the way things dragged on, some like Sir Raymond Gower and Arthur Gilbertson are not here to witness the solution. However, it is possible to thank Walter Sweeney, the current M.P. , and John Smith, the former M.P. , who in 1990 had the castle's fate debated in Parliament.

Sir Cennyth Treharne has always encouraged our efforts. The support and coverage given by The Cowbridge Gem, The South Wales Echo and The Times are very much appreciated.

There must be special thanks to the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Wales who helped so considerably.

There are, of course, the 54 Cowbridge tradespeople who made sure that almost every window in the High Street carried a castle poster, some of the same shops also collected signatures, the team of people who pushed over a thousand leaflets through letterboxes and all those who provided ideas and their time.

There is no need to calculate how the effect of these can be measured. All that is certain is that each and every effort contributed to Cowbridge's voice being heard and action being finally taken to guarantee the future of the castle.

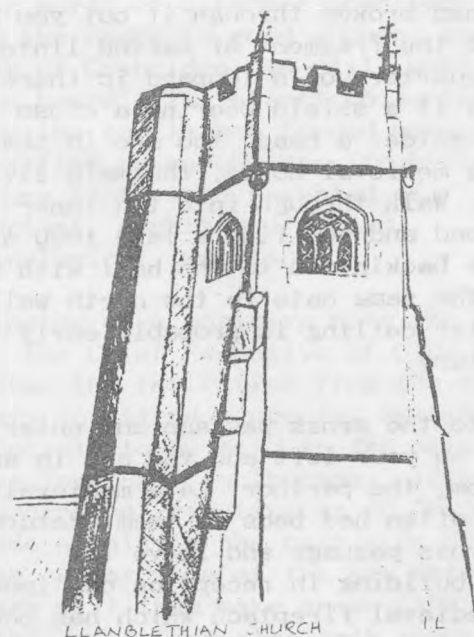
George Haynes.

The Museum has been granted full Registration by the Museums and Galleries Commission. This means we are accepted as a fully fledged museum by the museum authorities.

The Trustees would like to thank every one who has supported the museum during the last 13 years, especially the committee members. Without their loyalty and willingness to dedicate their time to the regular opening of the museum, registration would never have been achieved. An important condition for registration is that the museum should be open to the public on a regular basis.

Our next exhibition is to commemorate D-Day and the Normandy landings. It will be a small exhibition, but we hope to have it on display from May to September. We would be grateful for any photographs or memorabilia of that period of the war. If you are willing to loan them for a short period, please contact me on 772495.

Marion Eveleigh



LLANBLETHIAN CHURCH

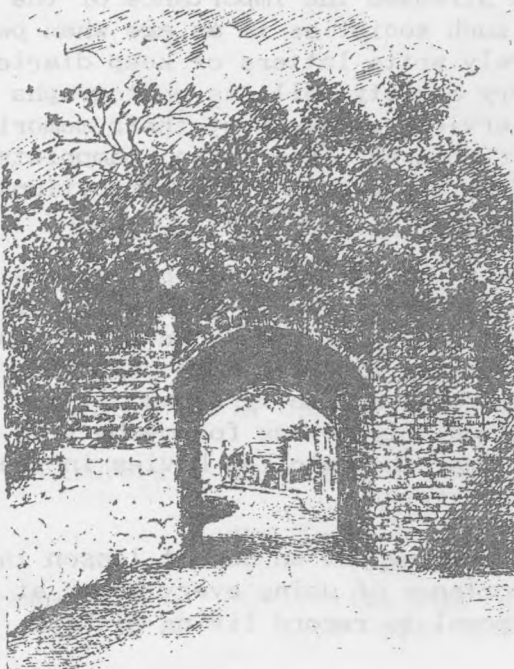
IN SEARCH OF EVERID

or

How I found Nanny Pink and the Gurneys.

In 1865, the great G.T.Clark bought Talygarn from Frances Lisle, daughter of the late owner, Dr W.B.M.Lisle, for the sum of £7,500. He paid in bank of England notes and having, it seems, inherited some of her father's business acumen, Miss Lisle went immediately and invested it in Taff Vale Railway stock. Clark, who then lived at Dowlais House, visited Talygarn from time to time and began various improvements to the house and estate. Later it became the Clark family home and remained so until sold in 1923 by his grandson, Wyndham Damer Clark.

When George Clark's wife died he immediately set about building St Anne's church, Talygarn, in her memory. Soon after building began, Clark and his daughter Blanche went to Venice where he bought various mosaics and some of you will remember that a few years ago St Anne's achieved short-lived fame when the 11th century Torcello mosaic head was sold at Sotheby's for £240,000. The Governing Body of the Church in Wales received the money but allowed the parish to have the interest for three years to repair and refurbish the church.



The Old South Gate, Cowbridge.

As part of this refurbishment, the organ was moved to a different position to reveal a memorial tablet - "in loving memory of Everid Viviane, daughter of Wyndham Damer and Viviane Clark of Talygarn, married Captain J.J.Gurney, Welsh Guards, of Northrepps Hall, Norfolk, died 5th April 1956". I decided on my next visit to Norfolk to go "in search of Everid". The happenings on that visit were too numerous and remarkable to tell in this short article. Briefly, in Northrepps Parish church I met Pamela Gurney, Everid's sister-in-law, who told me her brother Joe still lived at Northrepps Hall and had remarried. Strangely, it seemed, she was reluctant to say much about Everid but I later discovered she had been well-known throughout Norfolk as the Red Cross Commissioner and a regular exhibitor at many flower shows. She had died tragically in her bath and there was an inquest but I don't yet know the verdict.

Everid is buried in Northrepps Churchyard with other members of the family, nearly all the graves having similar plain stone crosses. Behind, against the wall, is another grave with the same stone cross. Another Gurney, I concluded, but why there? It wasn't a Gurney, it was Violet May Pink, "beloved nanny to the Gurney family for 45 years, died 9th March 1959". The old retainer, the faithful servant whom they loved and wanted buried with them - but decently, a few paces behind, as befits a servant!

Nanny Pink is mentioned in a fascinating book. The Northrepps Grandchildren by Verily Anderson, herself a Gurney. From this book and other sources I began to learn about the remarkably interesting Gurney (originally de Gournay! family and their cousins the Buxtons and the Barclays who dominated this part of Norfolk for several centuries and who still live there. Originally Quakers, many of them were greatly talented. The reformer, Elizabeth Fry, was originally Betsy Gurney and Fowell (Sir Thomas Fowell) Buxton was largely responsible for the abolition of the slave trade in Britain.

A family about whom I want to know more and I hope on my next visit to meet Verily Anderson to talk about Everid, whom she knew, and the Gurneys in general and to tell her about the Clarks. How much has followed from the re-discovery of one small tablet in Talygarn church!

Derrick Kingham

RECENT MEETINGS

JANUARY

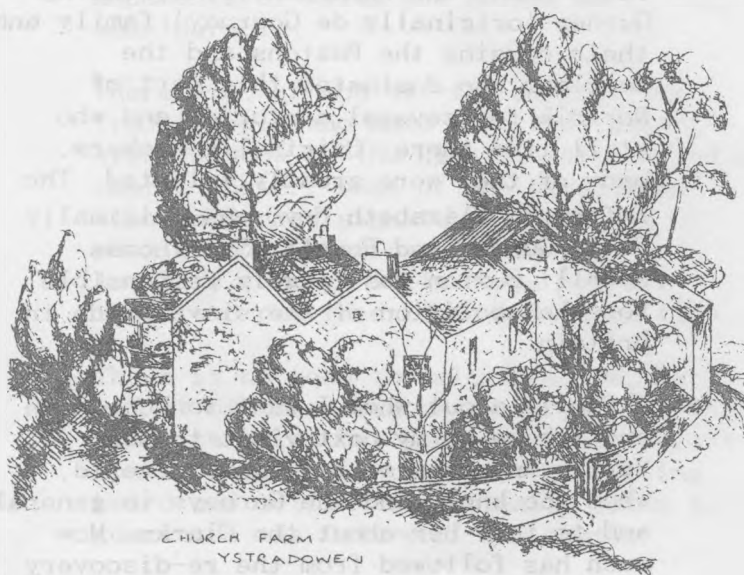
Philip Riden talked to us about 'John Bedford - Ironmaster Extraordinary'

John Bedford was born in the 18th century in Birmingham into a family of cutlers. He learned the trade of japanning and moved to South Wales when the trade started up there.

He later turned his interest to iron forging, managing a forge at Trostre, near Chepstow, before acquiring his own forge in Cardiff. Subsequently he moved to the Bridgend area, owning at one time a forge at Maesteg and a blast furnace near Cefn Cribwr. He built a large house and bought up a large area of land, but, although he experimented with forging and smelting techniques, he produced only small amounts of iron. He may have had cash problems and he would not take a partner.

John Bedford died in 1791 but the ironworks were not sold until after the railway was opened between Maesteg and Porthcawl in 1820. Even then comparatively little iron was produced and the works were eventually abandoned.

Because of the archaeological interest, Ogwr Borough Council is now taking steps to preserve the sites. It is hoped that the Cefn Cribwr furnace site will be opened to the public in about two years time.



CHURCH FARM
YSTRADOWEN

FEBRUARY

The title of the talk given by Hilary Thomas was 'Princes, Priests and Paupers' and concerned the history of the Parish of Ystradowen.

The church is of ancient foundation, but was rebuilt in the 1860s. There are various historic remains in other buildings in the area. The motte next to the church dates from the 12th century and was substantial in size, but was apparently never fully completed.

Hilary also told us about some of the known history of the area, some of the legends and fantasies that have grown up and some stories of local people who lived there.

She has produced a booklet on the subject commissioned by the P.C.C of Ystradowen. Copies may be obtained from Llansannor Rectory (at £3.50 plus 50p. postage) and profits go to Ty Hafan Children's Hospice Appeal.

MARCH

Katherine Beaudette of the Barry Preservation Society gave a talk on the work of the Society, entitled 'Oral History in Valley and Vale'.

She stressed the importance of the work of such societies in an age when people rarely write letters or keep diaries. The Barry Society collects photographs and interviews people about their memories of days gone by. From these, pamphlets and videos are produced and exhibitions are given.

We were shown extracts from videos on the Gwalia Stores (which are now in St Fagan's Museum! The Miner's Eisteddfod at Porthcawl, the Parc Slip explosion at Aberkenfig and Barry Docks. It was particularly moving for members to see and hear the late Len Davies in the Barry Docks video.

The evening was an object lesson in the importance of using every means at our disposal to record living history.