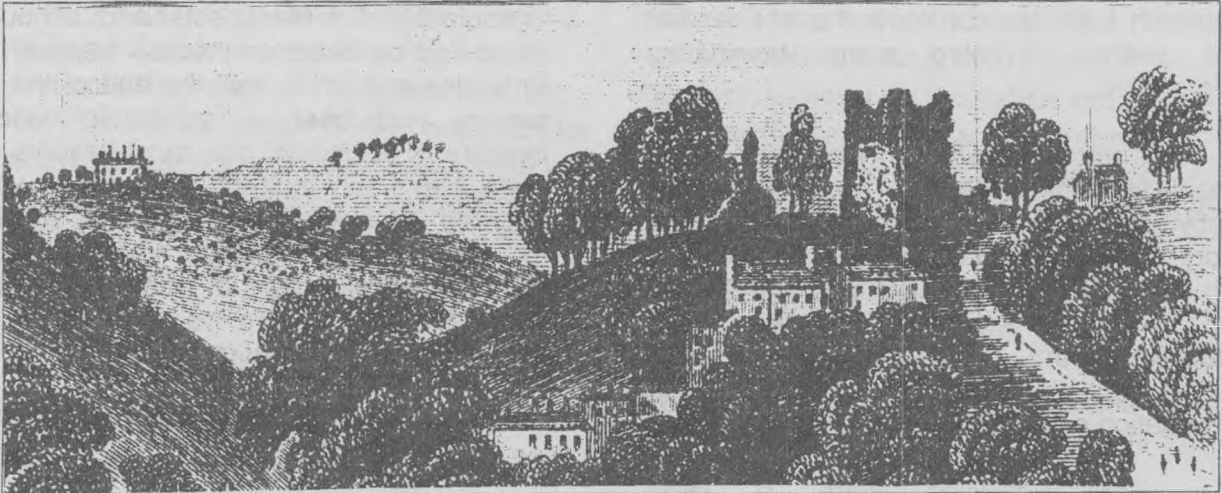


COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Next Meeting

April 7th: Anthony Hopkins, of Gwent
Record Office

The Mediaeval Boroughs of South Wales

We are looking forward to an interesting and thought provoking talk from a highly recommended speaker for this, our last meeting until September.

Please note that the September meeting will be on **September 8th** (in the Lesser Hall at 8pm).

Don Wallis will be talking on the History of Llandow - after the (short) AGM. Put the date in your diary now!

This Issue

I am delighted that this time we have had contributions from three members, as well as snippets from me! My thanks go to Sylvia Banks, Liam Ginn and Betty Whyatt for their interesting articles.

It is important that this newsletter is used to show your views and interests - so keep the written work flowing in to me. Deadline for the next newsletter is August 15th.

CHARTER DAY CELEBRATIONS

The granting of the first charter to Cowbridge - by Richard de Clare on March 13th 1254 - is well worth celebrating. Cowbridge, in that document called 'Longa Villa', was in effect a new town, planted to raise revenue for the Lord of Glamorgan. The burgesses of the new town were given some privileges - and had to pay one shilling a year for the rent of their burgage plots. These long narrow plots of land, on which houses were very quickly built, still show up beautifully on aerial photographs of the town.

This year, 35 members of the Society celebrated Charter Day rather differently from usual. To start with, it was on March 14th - and we went outside Cowbridge, to a country house which had long been linked with the town. Plas Llanmihangel was the venue - for a most stimulating tour of the building, where we could appreciate the work, the loving care and the technical skills which Mr and Mrs Beer are lavishing on the house. It was good to be in a gentry house with a real 'lived-in' feel, and where we were encouraged to sit on the chairs! We concluded with an excellent tea, a most lavish spread. It was a good afternoon out.

The Entwisles in the Vale

By Sylvia Banks

Why did 4 members of this large and notable Lancashire family move to the Vale in the early 19th century? After several hours of research I still do not know the answer but the search revealed some fascinating information.

I am a friend of Betty and Jeff Alden originally from Rochdale, from where the Entwisles moved, and when they told me the story I was fired with enthusiasm. On my next trip to Rochdale to visit relatives I called into the extremely efficient Rochdale Local Studies Library. Unfortunately, time was limited but here follows a resume of information collected.

The Entwisles were a large prosperous land-owning family in the Bolton area of Lancashire. It is thought a branch of that family moved to Rochdale in the early 16th century buying land from an existing wealthy Rochdale family, the Buckley's, and establishing themselves at Foxholes. The earliest record I found was of Edmund Entwisle being taxed 3s 4d in 1523 and his estate has since been presumed to cover "thousands of acres and sprinkled with many small tenanted farms". The first concrete evidence is from a proven will of 1574 when the Entwisles were known to be freehold farmers at Foxholes, Rochdale.

There is very little recorded about the family's activities over the next two hundred years but it is obvious that their estate grew enormously and in 1784 they were described as being of the "successful landlord class".

The direct line of Rochdale Entwisles died out in 1787 and I have a copy of Robert Entwisles will leaving his estate to a distant relative, descended through the female line, John Markland, on condition that he assumed the name and arms of Entwisle. He obviously inherited a great fortune and large estate: in the trade directories of 1798, 1820 and 1824 the Entwisles of Foxholes were listed as "gentry". Several sons had married into the families of extremely wealthy woollen manufacturers e.g. the Royds and Smiths. At around 1790 the Entwisles were credited with "persistent business ability and a measure of good fortune". They built Anglican Churches and were patrons of new livings and for a long time owned a large brick works.

John Markland Entwisle was the father of the four Entwisles who came to live in the Vale. His father had been a "manufacturer" in Manchester and, although I could find no direct connection between the Entwisles and what, until the end of the 18th century had been a substantial woollen industry in Rochdale, one must assume that there had been indirect connections which afforded considerable wealth. For example the cotton industry began to develop rapidly in Rochdale after the turn of the 19th century - large factories were being built and the Entwisles owned the brickworks.

So why did the four Entwisle children leave such great wealth?

In the 1800's Rochdale turned increasingly to cotton manufacture and to steam power; woollen manufacture had largely been in smaller water driven mills. Wool dwindled rapidly after 1820. At the close of the 18th century Britain was at war with France (20 years war 1795-1815) and trade was at a standstill with the country "oppressed by heavy taxation". In Lancashire there was a shortage of wheat following a succession of bad harvests particularly in 1816. There were many bankruptcies.

There was considerable unemployment in Rochdale and in 1808 "shuttlegatherers" burnt down the New Bailey where manufacturers had deposited their shuttles for safety, and in 1819 over 1000 unemployed men from Rochdale took part in the Peterloo Riots in Manchester. Women and children were being employed for low wages in appalling conditions. In the 1820's there was a succession of strikes against competition from machinery and cuts in wages. Living conditions were dreadful.

Hugh, the second son of John Markland Entwisle, had gone to sea in 1799 at the age of 14 and retired in 1822. One can easily see why he might have been reluctant to return to Rochdale and prefer instead the pastoral scenes of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Perhaps the reason why the Entwisles chose South Wales lies with the Royds family who also moved to the area from Rochdale - research is to continue.

OWEN WILLIAMS OF CROSSWAYS

Owen Williams was born and bred in the Lleyn peninsula of North Wales, near the village of Edern, not far from Pwllheli. Like many young men of that region he became a sailor on the Lleyn coastal trading vessels, first on sailing ships and then on steam. By 1899 he and his brother Watkin had given up active seafaring to run a shipping company - the Silurian Steamship Co at Cardiff. In the following year they set up the Golden Cross Line - aficionados of Cardiff's pubs will know the *Golden Cross*, newly restored by Brains, at the end of the Hayes and opposite the ice rink.

This shipping line, which employed many men from the Lleyn peninsula, was set up to run a cargo service to Mediterranean ports, and benefited from the rapidly increasing freight rates just before the first world war. Owen became a wealthy man. When he first moved to Cardiff he lived in Plasturton Gardens just off Cathedral Road (Norman Roderick, who was a solicitor in Cowbridge, lives in that street now). A sign of Williams' increasing wealth was his move in 1907 to a small mansion, Hendrescythan, near Creigiau, as was his ownership of a De Dion Bouton car in which he used to visit the family home at Edern.

In 1917 the 55-year old Owen Williams married 17-year old Margaret Thomas, the daughter of a Pontypridd mining engineer. It might seem that his wealth was a considerable attraction! Not only did he buy his father-in-law's exceedingly dirty mine, known locally as Dan's Muck Hole (now buried under the Sardis Road rugby ground), he also bought Crossways House and the associated land. Somewhat coincidentally, the then owner of Crossways was another mining engineer and colliery proprietor, Sir William James Thomas of Ynyshir in the Rhondda. It was a time when the money made in the coalfield was being invested elsewhere.

Owen Williams expanded the Crossways

estate by buying land from the Nash and the Rayer estates, and entered into farming with gusto, paying inflated prices not only for pedigree horses and cattle but also for workaday animals. He proved a good employer, however, as the stables and stud, as well as the house and farms, employed many. (There is a report in the Glamorgan Gazette in September 1923 of a Mr Collier of the Crossways Stud acting as judge for the cart horse classes in Brecon Agricultural show).

In addition, Williams had the reputation of being a generous man. Together with Mr Thomas of Stallcourt, Owen Williams volunteered to pay for a Dinner Concert for all returned servicemen of the district. This was held in Cowbridge Town Hall - "a right old do it was. There was enough drink to have a bath in it" reported one of the participants.

Contemporary photographs of Crossways show that it was lavishly decorated and furnished, with 18th century French furniture, Flemish tapestries, and Swansea and Nantgarw porcelain. Williams also extended the house, particularly the north wing, where the arch over what must have been a coachway bears his initials, intertwined with those of his wife. No expense was spared on the house or on his young bride. On her 21st birthday, in 1921, Owen took Margaret to Cardiff docks to see one of his liners arrive from Italy. The deck was covered with a large tarpaulin, and when that was removed by a crane, a red Fiat sports car was uncovered - his birthday present to her.

By 1924 however, Owen found himself in very grave difficulties - marital, agricultural and financial. His wife is said to have run away with an Indian nobleman (was this His Highness the Jam Sahib Sir Ranjit Singh Vibhaji, the Jam Sahib of Nawangar, I wonder - Crossways was mortgaged to him in 1925, and he is reputed to have had the

OWEN WILLIAMS OF CROSSWAYS

East Lodge built. If he were the lover, as well as the new owner of Crossways, it surely would have been a double blow to Williams).

Williams' cattle were affected by disease, and prices slumped in the 1920s, partly because of general economic malaise and partly because the demand for horses slumped in the face of mechanisation of transport and of agriculture.

Shipping freight rates had fallen drastically after the end of the war; unfortunately Williams had over-expanded his operations, and had also bought unwisely - so he had too many, out-of-date ships which led to severe losses.

Imminent bankruptcy led to the sale of the

estate and farmland in 1924, at a time when demand, and prices, were falling rapidly. Great House, Llanblethian, which he had bought in 1917 for £4000, was sold in 1924 for £2000, and similar losses were made on the remainder of his lands. Crossways and its contents were sold in December of that year. There is a sad account in the Western Mail of the sale of antique silver at Sotheby's, when his collection realised very little.

Owen Williams left the Vale, of Glamorgan, laid up some vessels and sold others, and moved to London where he lived a solitary life, until he returned to Edern in 1930, with - as a family member told me - ten shillings in his pocket. It was a sad end to a varied and interesting life.

A FRAGMENT OF LOCAL HISTORY

I have always known that my grandfather WILLIAM THOMAS LEYSHON had been a boarder in Cowbridge Grammar School in the late 19th century. Since he died about a year before I was born and my mother also died when I was quite young, I did not know much more about the Leyshon family.

When my youngest son, Matthew, was a pupil in the Lower School he helped to clear out some old cupboards in the library. There he came across a book dedicated "to the memory of DAVID JOHN LEYSHON". Matthew started asking questions. I had not heard of David John. On enquiry, it turned out that he was a younger brother of my grandfather who had also been a boarder at the school. David John died, aged about 14, whilst still a pupil at the school. The family story is that he died of pneumonia, following a chill caught during a cross-country run.

Later, as a member of an extra-mural class in the local history' of Cowbridge, I helped to analyse the Parish Registers of Llanblethian, covering the baptisms and burials for the period 1840-1893. In so doing I came across a whole series of entries, relating to Leyshons - all children of David and Mary Leyshon of Pontypridd. These turned out to be brothers and sisters of my grandfather - a typically large Victorian family.

The baptismal entries were in three batches:

15th July 1880 - William Thomas (13 years old), Anne (12), David John (9), Alice Mary (6), Martha Jane (5), Edmund James (2).

14th September 1882 - Edward Robert and Margaret Helen - no dates of birth given in this entry.

29th September 1890 - Catherine Elizabeth (6), Edith Louise (4), Lilian May (2).

(Age at time of baptism in brackets)

A FRAGMENT OF LOCAL HISTORY (cont.)

Their father DAVID LEYSHON was born in Llangan in 1840. When he married MARY WILLIAMS (aged 17) in 1865 it was in Bethany Baptist Chapel in Cardiff. He was then described as a grocer. All their eleven children were born in Pontypridd. At the time of my grandfather's birth in 1867, David Leyshon was a commercial traveller.

The entries in the Llanblethian Parish Register describe David Leyshon as a brewer. What prompted a Pontypridd brewer to have all his children baptised according to the rites of the Church of England in Cowbridge? Did the then headmaster of the school, Revd MP Williams, put pressure on the father because his eldest son boarding at the school had not been baptised at the age of 12+? At that time it was customary, because of high infant mortality, to baptise children whilst still babies.

Why did he carry on doing so for all the younger children? The two younger sons did not attend Cowbridge School. My own idea is that even then Cowbridge was regarded as a more socially acceptable place especially for someone like a prosperous selfmade entrepreneur, who had risen from humble origins.

David Leyshon did not enjoy the company of his younger children for long. In 1897 he died, and was buried in Pontypridd.

Like so many researches into family history, this snippet raises more questions than it answers.

Liam Leyshon Ginn

JOHN VALLANCE'S SHOP

The article in the last newsletter asked for information on the nature and uses of the materials and textiles listed in the 1750 inventory of the contents of John Vallance's shop.

I am indebted to Mrs Betty Whyatt of Llanblethian for her prompt response, which has solved many of the problems.

"Most of the fabrics are pretty straightforward and of a practical nature. As most of the clothing would have been lined, many of the fabrics are for that purpose. The Walebone (whale bone) speaks for itself, while many of the corsets and stomachs would have had Fustian in them, as well as canvas.

"The 770 yards of Chincase Berrin Crapes and Plads have me guessing. This may have been some slight evidence that the extravagant mid-eighteenth century fashions had had some influence on South Wales - but at 12d a yard, it was hardly expensive!

"Some specific details:

Duroy: a coarse woollen West of England cloth. There is a reference in a 1722 London Gazette of someone 'wearing a duroy coat and waistcoat'.

JOHN VALLANCE'S SHOP (cont.)

Fustian: originally produced at Fustal (Cairo) in Egypt. A fabric having a linen warp and a thick twilled cotton weft, which is cut one side, showing a low pile. In the thirteenth century St Paul's Cathedral had a 'white chasuble (vestment) of fustian'.

Nankeen: a cotton cloth of yellowish-brown colour, originally made in Nanking in China. It was usually used for breeches or trousers.

Dowlas: a coarse linen used chiefly for shirts, smocks, etc - it was poor country ware.

Shagg: a napped fabric, usually of rough wool, sometimes used for linings.

Broadcloth: a fine woollen cloth of plain weave.

Serge: a loosely woven twilled worsted. Many varieties were imported with the names of origin distorted - for example, Serge de Nimes became known as 'Denim'

Holland: a kind of linen, used especially for furnishing. Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable states that it is so called because it used to be sent to Holland to be bleached (As lawn is cloth bleached on a lawn, according to Brewer).

Shalloom: a light twill-weave woollen fabric, used chiefly for coat linings, and originally made in Chalons sur Marne, from which it derives its name.

Camlet: a fine cloth made of goats' hair, taking its name from the Arabic for Angora goat.

Damask: a reversible fabric, usually silk or linen, with a pattern woven into it; originally from Damascus.

Drabb: a fabric of a dull grey or brown colour.

Some of the other words are by modern standards, mis-spelled; Bays is probably baize, Mushing could well be muslin, and Ticken is ticking. Crapes and plads are of course crepes and plaids.

So, we've sorted out the origins and meanings of most of the fabrics. Some are still a puzzle - was Bromsgrove a centre of the British linen industry? ('Broomsgrove Flaxen at 18d a yard'). In addition, judging by the length of material - Vallance had miles and miles of the stuff, if you add it all up - was he a wholesaler, or an importer, rather than a simple shopkeeper? If anyone comes up with any information, please let me know.

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