

COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 46 : SEPTEMBER 2001



PROGRAMME FOR 2001-2002

2001

- September 7 AGM and Don Gerrard
The History of Bridgend
- October 5 David Llewellyn
Drovers' Roads
- November 2 Stan Lane
Old Cardiff
- December 7 Arthur Peplow (Vice-president)
The Maud Gunter Memorial Lecture
Constantine, Helena and the Holy Cross

2002

- January 4 Jon Gruffydd
Y Wladfa: Self-determination or Exploitation (The Welsh Colonies in Patagonia)
- February 1 Dr Peter Elmes and Mrs Patricia Moore (Vice-president)
The Appreciation of Historic Gardens and the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust
- March 1 Chris Collard
Paddle Steamers of the Bristol Channel, from the Eighteenth Century
- April 5 Barry Griffiths
Aspects of Kenfig

All meetings are held in the Lesser Hall, Cowbridge, and start at 8pm.

AGM Agenda: 7th September 2001

1. Apologies for absence
2. Confirmation of the minutes of the AGM of 8th September 2000
3. Correspondence
4. Chairman's report
5. Annual financial report
6. Election of officers and committee for 2001-2002
7. Plaques on historic buildings
8. AOB
9. Address by Mr Don Gerrard on 'The History of Bridgend'

Officers and Committee for 2000/1 were:

Chairman	Mr Jeff Alden	
Vice Chairman	Mrs Yvonne Weeding	
Hon Secretary	Mr John Miles	
Joint Hon Treasurers	Mrs Ivana Locke and Mrs Val Pugh	
Programme Secretary	Mrs Sue Collier	
Publicity Officer	Mr Bruce McGovern	
Editor of the newsletter	Mr Jeff Alden	
Representative: Vale Conservation Advisory Group		Mr George Haynes

Committee:

Mrs Betty Alden, Mrs Arlene Boulton, Mrs Sue Collier, Mr Don Gerrard, Mr Liam Ginn, Mr Keith Jones, Mr Bruce McGovern, Mrs Val Shannon, Mrs Iris Simpson, Mr Don Wallis

LOCAL HISTORY CLASSES

The new season of local history classes, held under the auspices of Cardiff University Centre for Lifelong Learning, will start on Friday September 28th. This year the classes will be held at Old Hall, between 10am and 12 noon, at fortnightly intervals - ten sessions in all, so we will extend into the Spring Term.

Under the title of 'Cowbridge in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' we intend to study all of the town, High Street as well as Eastgate and Westgate. These classes are suitable for beginners, but I hope to be able to introduce enough new material to maintain interest for the regulars!

You will be aware that we have made great use of property deeds in our 'house detective' work, and so if any member has access to deeds of property in the streets mentioned and would be willing to make them available to me, that would be of great value.

The classes cost £45 full, £35 for those on occupational pensions.

A SMALL TENANT FARM IN LLANGAN IN 1841

(The third in Liam Ginn's series of articles about his Leyshon ancestors)

The third factual source about Thomas Leyshon is in the tithe apportionment for Llangan for 1841. This consists of a map and accompanying text showing the ownership, occupier, acreage and name of each area of land, literally field by field.

Thus we find that Thomas was then a tenant farmer, mainly renting from the Earl of Dunraven (who owned land and property over much of the western Vale, including Cowbridge and Llanblethian). Thomas farmed just over 24 acres, spread over 11 separate plots. These did not adjoin each other: he would have had to walk from field to field to work.

Extract from Tithe Plan

Owner	Occupier	Name of Plot	Area			Annual Rent Charge Payable to Rector
			Acres	Roods	Perches	
Earl of Dunraven	T Leyshon	Cae Ton Ty Du (arable)	4	1	12	
		Croft Sion Dafydd (pasture)		3		
		Ty a Gardd (House + gdn)			27	
		Erw (pasture)	1	0	16	
		Cae Dan yr Heol (pasture)	2	2	35	
		Cae Maes Lar (arable)	3	2	4	
		Milwr Mawr (pasture)	4	0	6	
		Tri Chwarthor (pasture)	1	1	12	
			17	3	25	£3 0s 7d
Llangan Glebe (i.e The Rector) Rev Richard Prichard	T Leyshon	Cae Newydd (arable)	2	2	14	9s 0d
		Odyn Galch			14	
		Maesydd Isaf (pasture)	5	2	33	12s 0d
					£4 1s 7d	

Thus he was assessed as liable to pay in lieu of tithes, £4 1s 7d annually to the Church of England, even if he had been a nonconformist, plus rents to the Earl of Dunraven and to the Revd Richard Prichard. Since the tithe was supposed to be one-tenth of the value of the income from the land, one can guess at an annual income of under £50. Out of this he had to pay his rent and his tithe charges, and feed and clothe a growing young family. Imagine what life on such a small farm would have been like at that time: non-stop toil in all weathers, new babies on the way at short intervals, the need to set aside money for the rent.

In contrast, Thomas Leyshon's mother-in-law Catherine Bryant, in association with the curate the Revd James Howell, farmed 80 acres. Her husband John was not listed, so presumably by 1841 she was a widow. She had married John Bryant in Llangan in 1808.

In the 1851 census for Llangan, there is no mention of Thomas Leyshon and his family. Thomas had given up the hard struggle. He had left the area, like so many other working men, farm labourers and small farmers moving from the rural Vale to the newer industrial areas in search of higher wages. By family tradition, he is said to have moved to Pontypridd in 1850. I do not know what his occupation was at that time. More research is needed!

Liam Leyshon Ginn

Joyce Tonkin's reminiscences

I was born on 8th July 1907 at the blacksmith's house in Pendoylan. My mother, Alice, had been in service at Penllyne Castle and then in Radyr. My father, John Sanders, was apprenticed to the blacksmith in St Nicholas, and my parents were married in Radyr church. My grandfather managed the Vale of Glamorgan brewery which stood opposite the Duke of Wellington in Cowbridge. I was the eldest of four children, all girls - Joyce, Zena, Cynthia and Monica. Both Cynthia and Monica died before they reached the age of five and are buried in Cowbridge churchyard.

When I was 6 months old, we moved to Cowbridge, and lived in a house opposite the Police Station in Westgate, near the nonconformist chapel. We then moved to Town Mill and lived in the Mill house (now Town Mill cottages); the mill was in ruins, but the old mill wheel was still there. The floor was rotten, and the Grammar School boys used to creep in to the building to smoke. My father's smithy was in Eagle Lane, next to the old lodging house, where he concentrated on shoeing horses. On a few occasions he attended the Smithfield Show as a blacksmith, where he was highly commended. He also kept the hooves trimmed of the Hereford bulls which were shown by the better-off farmers.

I remember the outbreak of the First World War, when the Glamorgan Yeomanry mustered on Stalling Down. Cowbridge was the gathering point for horses for the army before they were sent to France. The horses were kept in the market. My mother had seven soldiers of the Yeomanry billeted on her during the war, each for a period of three months, before they were sent to France with the horses. I remember one Irishman, a Regimental Sergeant-Major, who was billeted with mother for some time, who made great use of the 22 public houses which were then open in Cowbridge.

I went to school on Broadway, Cowbridge. I remember Mr Sloman and Mr Harvey, who was a strict disciplinarian. There was also Mr Owen Phillips, who married Miss Baden, who taught Science at the Girls' High School; they went on to live at The Cairns in Llanblethian. I then went to the High School, where Mrs Forrester was the headteacher and Miss Gunter taught History and Geography. She lived opposite what became the cinema in Eastgate.

I left school at 16 and went to Clark's College in Cardiff for a year. I caught the 7.45am train from Cowbridge, and on some occasions on the journey home I had to walk from Pontyclun because the train would not wait for the connection.

I then went to work at the Cowbridge Garage, in the office, for Mr Arthur Mills, who came from Cardiff and sold bikes as well as cars. He was the main Ford dealer, and became Mayor of Cowbridge four times. He had two children - Freda, four years older than me, and Clifford, who was younger. They kept two maids in their house, which occupied all the rooms above the garage; I used to stay to look after the house when the family went to their Porthcawl house for the summer. Mr Mills then built and opened the Pavilion Cinema in Eastgate in September 1927, and I worked in the box office there. Mr Mills wanted to open on Show Night (the Vale Show) but the work could not be finished in time. The first film shown in the cinema was "This House of Vanity" and the films always played to crowded houses. The first films were of course silent, with a pianist, but talkies were introduced when

the cinema was sold to Phillips of Pontyclun. The Hunt Ball was always held in the ballroom of the cinema.

I married in 1932, and went to live in Gloucester, and then Leicester. I worked in the cash office of a munitions factory there during the war. I came back to Cowbridge at the end of the war because my mother needed help in the cafe she ran on the Downs. This was a little wooden hut, next door to the Road House (today's Mughal Emperor). Mother did teas and cakes, and there was a tent at the back where the washing up was done. We then built the cafe across the road (now known as Norman's Cafe) and built Richmond House, where I now live, next door to it in 1957. The cafe was originally a cart shed, and the cafe was known as the Richmond Cafe.

Before the war my only surviving sister, Zena, married Ivor Treharne, a corn and agricultural merchant, and they lived in Town Mill Road. Town Mill Road then was tree-lined with large gardens, and I remember my uncle Reg (Sanders) had bee hives there, near to the Mill, and next to the river. Tom John lived in the Verlands House, and he had a brewery in Pentre in the Rhondda. There was a large garden there in which Becky Jenkins' father worked. The Johns had two Daimlers; he kept a chauffeur for his wife, who would often be taken into the Dorothy cafe in Cardiff for half a dozen cakes. They had one son, Maurice, who had married one of the Thomases from Stafford House; every Monday morning Mrs John would stand by the gate of their drive waiting for a letter from her son.

Stan Treharne, the milkman, was Ivor Treharne's brother. He came from Penylan, and his wife's mother lived in the brewery house of the Vale of Glamorgan Inn, where my grandmother also used to live, and where I spent much time as a child. The bottling shop was where Dai John's clothing shop now is; the bottles of lemonade were sealed with glass marbles. The brewery was at the back - through the double doors at the side of the 'Vale'; the house was where the pub is today.

In Church Street, next door to 'Granny' Jenkins, lived John John, known to everyone as 'Johnny Grassy'. He was a diminutive man, but a jaunty character who frequented all the hunt meets. He had a little white beard, used a thumb-stick, and always wore a bowler hat and breeches.

At the end of the war, Dr Moynan of Woodstock House, opposite the Masons Arms, rolled a barrel of beer to the Town Hall. This was in November 1918. He was another man who always wore breeches.

I too remember Ma Haig, coming into Cowbridge from Llanblethian. She always came in a donkey and cart. She liked a drink or two, and always went into the Railway Inn (now Basil's). The donkey always knew his way home!! Sometimes however, when Ma was in the pub, the boys would untie the donkey and put him in the cart backwards, for a prank.

We didn't have much to amuse ourselves when I was growing up, apart from visiting friends. In the summer we might catch a train to the Leys for a day out at the seaside.

Joyce Tonkin

(interviewed by Don Gerrard, April 2001)

NEWS FROM COWBRIDGE MUSEUM

Following protracted negotiations, it is very pleasing to report that a home has been found for the artefacts found during the excavations in Cowbridge between 1977 and 1988. Delivery was taken of over 75 boxes of material in May and the finds are now housed at Old Hall. The trustees are particularly grateful to Barbara Walters, the administrator, for her help in resolving this matter. A selection of items from the store were exhibited in the Town Hall Council Chamber to mark National Archaeology Day on 21st July and attracted considerable interest.

The curator has recently been informed that some 13 boxes of material arising from the excavations at 11A Westgate last summer will be deposited with the museum during early Spring 2002. This site appears to be more significant than originally anticipated due mainly to the discovery of a Bronze Age cairn during the latter part of the excavation. Other activity included Romano-British industrial evidence and two phases of medieval occupation. A report on the excavation will appear in the journal *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in due course.

Recent acquisitions have included a delightful collection of drawings of Cowbridge by Adelaide Williams, donated by Miss Margaret Jones of Stowmarket. These turned out to be some of the original illustrations for the book *Old Cowbridge* by LJ Hopkin-James, published in 1922. Another donation by Mrs Joyce Williams of Llanblethian was an atmospheric photograph of 'Bopa' Lewis sitting outside the Almshouses on the corner of Broadway and Castle Hill on the occasion of her 100th Birthday in August 1899. Local people allegedly contributed to a gift of 100 golden guineas to mark the occasion!

The curator is still seeking new stewards for the museum's Saturday openings and anyone interested is asked to contact Keith Jones on (01446) 775139.

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Glamorgan County History Trust, to commemorate the millenium, invited entries in a competition for books recently published on aspects of the history of Glamorgan. We are delighted to announce that the committee was "so impressed by the general calibre of scholarship" that they decided to award a prize to Hilary Thomas for her book *St Hilary: A History of the Place and its People*.

Brian James, in his review of this book for *Morgannwg*, wrote "Visitors and villagers now have this thoroughly researched vade-mecum to guide them easily through the complexities of the last thousand years of history; they can read about how the place came to be as it is, and about how its people lived their lives in the past, whether they were landowners, or farmers, or craftsmen, or farm labourers.

There are numerous illustrations which add another dimension to the pleasure of reading the well written text. The old photographs - especially the three groups of children taken in the 1880s (it would be worth buying this book just for these) - are wonderful; they give such vivid insights into and reminders of past lifestyles. They also show how much even a place like St Hilary has changed in the recent past, as indeed the author herself stresses in a chapter on the twentieth century."

If you've not bought the book, do so!

“At Cowbridge Grammar School, 1949 - 1966”

by Peter Cobb; Cowbridge Record Society, ISBN 0 9537029 1 X, £4.95

Peter Cobb, who until his retirement was Vicar of Magor and Redwick with Undy, and before that Vicar of Penmark with Porthkerry, spent seventeen happy years as Geography master at Cowbridge Grammar School. This book contains his reminiscences of life in Cowbridge and the school between 1949 and 1966.

In the opening chapter, Peter paints a vivid picture of post-war Cowbridge, and then goes on to describe life in the boarding house, and teaching in Old Hall. He shows how important was the relationship between ‘town and gown’, and how the life of the school was closely linked with that of the town.

There are some evocative descriptions (some perhaps rather tart) of members of the staff, with a chapter on Idwal Rees, the Welsh rugby international, Cambridge blue and an excellent classicist, who was headmaster throughout Peter’s teaching career, and who was responsible for making Cowbridge GS something special among Welsh schools. Many of the boys are also considered - with a page on Anthony Hopkins. Those who knew Peter in Cowbridge will not be surprised to see his interesting account of the school plays (and to see less on sport than others would have written).

There is affectionate observation, reflection and analysis - and no statistics or lists - and so the appeal of this beautifully-written and eminently readable book is much wider than the title would suggest. It is no bland rose-tinted view, but a sometimes sharp and always critical look at the school. Anyone with an interest in Cowbridge would enjoy reading it; anyone who attended a grammar school anywhere could find parallels with their own experiences.

Peter Cobb has given us a welcome addition for our bookshelves.

ANOTHER BOOK

The Cowbridge Record Society, of which I am chairman and editor, hopes to bring out its third volume, ‘Llanblethian Buildings and People’ in the autumn.

Like the Cowbridge book, its origins date from the local history classes which I have taken for Cardiff University. The class members had researched the history of some of the buildings in Llanblethian, and work since the classes has given us the chance to describe most of the buildings of Llanblethian village - at least those which are a hundred years old or more.

There are fewer historic buildings in Llanblethian than there were in Cowbridge - so this has given us the chance to go into more detail than in the Cowbridge book, with the opportunity to include some reminiscences of current residents. The book will be illustrated with photographs and not line drawings, and will be another useful Christmas present. More than that, we hope it will be an interesting and readable addition to the literature of our part of the Vale of Glamorgan.

EDITORIAL

The programme

It is good to note that once again a member of this society will be giving the first of our talks this year. Don Gerrard has volunteered to lecture on the history of Bridgend; he taught history for many years and so we expect an illuminating and interesting account. Don's contribution will follow the AGM.

In addition, two of our vice-presidents are among our speakers - Arthur Peplow is back for our 'mulled wine and mince pies' meeting in December, while Patricia Moore will combine with Dr Peter Elmes to talk on Welsh historic gardens in February.

Sue Collier has worked hard to produce such an interesting list of speakers, and our thanks are due to her. Well done!

Darren Farm development

Bellway Homes have submitted an outline application to build houses (and 'associated public open space') on the triangular area of land, the boundaries of which would be Tyla Rosser, Darren Close and the Llantwit Road on one side, the A48 on another, and the lane running past Llanfrynach church on the third. The application also includes a road running between the Llantwit Road to the A48 through the middle of the site, with roundabouts at both ends. It is stated that this road would form the western limit of housing development. Drainage is to be agreed with the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

I have written (on a personal basis) to object, as I fear that more flooding will result. The only way to avoid more floods would be to take all the surface water to the River Thaw some point downstream of Llanblethian - and I cannot see this being done by a private developer. In addition, I do not think that the town should expand beyond the rim of the 'basin' in which Cowbridge is situated. The proposal that a road would act as the limit of development is ridiculous - the pressures to build beyond it would be great, and difficult to counter.

Grammar School

Still no news, and the building is looking more and more forlorn. So many visitors to Cowbridge remark on its sad state; the wheels of the Charity Commissioners, and the Education Authority, grind exceedingly slowly.

Master Brewer

So I was right after all - it has been bought, and it is intended to put the building to good use, though not as a public house.

Contributions

More thanks to Don Gerrard, for his most effective interview of Joyce Tonkin (who lives in the house on the Downs, next to Norman's cafe). These reminiscences are proving popular with readers - if you want to get involved in recording the memories of local