

COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 51 : APRIL 2003

*Ruined Chapel at Nash -
now used as a lime-house.
On the walls are vestiges
of mediaeval paintings,
illustrating some old saintly
legend. My first sketch of
the 1864 batch, and my
first use of the pencil for
16 years*



FUTURE PROGRAMME

April 4th

An Introduction to Family History
Rosemary Boyns

[All talks are held in the Lesser Hall, Cowbridge,
and start at 8pm].

SUMMER EXCURSION

Tuesday, 17th June, at 2.30pm

Visit to Newton/Newton Church -
led by Gwyn Petty

[details in the April meeting]

Bruce McGovern and Valerie Pugh are
co-ordinating the organisation of this visit.

DARREN FARM

The public inquiry into the appeal by Bellway
Homes for the development of the Darren
Farm site will start on 20th May at the Town
Hall, Cowbridge. Please make an effort to
attend to make clear the public opposition to
this development.

UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Please write in support of the Council's
decision to exclude Cowbridge (including
Darren farm) from any large-scale
development!

CHARTER DAY 2003

We had an excellent day! First came
the unveiling of two more plaques, elegantly
performed by the Mayor, Cllr Janet Williams.
The plaques had been equally elegantly fixed in
place on the *Bear* and the *Duke* by Danny
Powell, to whom we are very grateful - and the
whole proceedings, from ordering the plaques
to liaising with the council and the owners of
the properties, had been most efficiently
organised by Bruce McGovern.

Dave Wallis, of the *Duke of Wellington*,
then took pity on the shivering bystanders and
treated us all to a most welcome cup of coffee.

This was followed by a visit to the
Sycamore Tree at Colwinston, where 36 members
enjoyed an excellent lunch (thanks to Yvonne
Weeding for her organisation). We then went
on to Nash Manor, where Mr Eric Williams
gave us an interesting and enlightening tour of
his home. Nash Manor is a warm and
welcoming house, with a wealth of interesting
features, and we all enjoyed looking around the
house and garden. A good day, indeed!

(A very short account of the history of the
house appears on page 2)

Editor: Jeff Alden, 01446-773373

NASH MANOR

The district of Nash belonged to the medieval bishops of Llandaff, and was formerly known as Little Ash or Osmund's Ash to distinguish it from Monknash which belonged not to Llandaff but to Neath Abbey. (The illustration on the cover, taken from a sketch by David Jones of Wallington in Cardiff library, depicts the medieval chapel of St Osmund which stood in the grounds of Nash Manor until the chapel was demolished in 1963).

By early in the 15th century, Nash had been leased to a branch of the Giles family of Gileston; a Giles heiress, Tibbet Giles, married Hywel Carne. He probably came from Gwent, and was the first Carne to settle in Glamorgan. A man of some substance, in 1425 he held the office of the lord's approver. One hundred and thirty six years later, his grandson - also Hywel - obtained a perpetual lease of Nash from the Bishop of Llandaff, at a low annual rent, thereby securing the link between the Carnes and Nash which continued until 1951.

The house is a fine building which has evolved over the years. The hall at the entrance (within the courtyard) is the oldest part of the current house, and is of late 15th or early 16th century date. The parlour in the west wing is of late 16th century origin; it has high ceilings with fine beams, and the superb oak panelling is one of the wonders of the house. The Elizabethan staircase with intricately carved newel posts, between the hall and the parlour, is another. The remainder of the west wing was built by the end of the 17th century; the gatehouse and courtyard walls (and what a pleasant and impressive courtyard it is) by 1789, and the east wing in the 19th century.

The grounds included a deer park when it was visited by Leland in 1538. That has now gone, but the gardens are varied and interesting. To the west of the house, the font from the chapel is now used to grow plants, while a coffin slab with incised cross is of interest. Mature trees including a lovely beech are a feature of the gardens.

The family's links with Cowbridge are shown in the family's possession of Great House, the town house of the family until it passed to Daniel Durel in 1763, as well as other properties in the town and in Llanblethian. The finest memorial in Cowbridge Church is the 1626 Carne memorial; it depicts William and Elizabeth Carne and six 'weepers', commemorating the six of their children who survived infancy, and was placed there by one of them, Sir Edward Carne, who was the Receiver-General for South Wales. Towards the end of the 18th century, Revd John Carne of Nash recorded in his diary his visits to the Assembly in the Spread Eagle at Cowbridge, and to Cowbridge races.

JA

THE COAL STRIKE OF 1893

The Glamorgan valleys were largely pastoral until they were transformed by the development of the coal industry in the 19th century. Coal had been mined in south Wales as early as the 13th century, but by 1850 coal mining had become a huge industry with great export potential, but liable to fluctuations in the world market.

The Hauliers' Strike of 1893 started in the Ogmores and Garw valleys. David Watkin Jones, a local bard, described the region thus: "until about 1860 the Ogmores valley was a wilderness disturbed by none but the huntsman and the shepherd". Settlements were small. The Garw valley in 1801 had 280 inhabitants in 60 houses. Of the 192 adults, 170 were engaged in farming, the others being craftsmen such as carpenters and masons.

David Davies of Llandinam opened collieries in the Garw valley in 1865 and the Ogmores valley in 1868, to supply Brogden's new iron works at Tondy. By 1900 there were five collieries in the Ogmores valley and five in the Garw. The population of the Garw valley had risen by 1901 to 19,907 in 3,223 dwellings.

The cost of living in south Wales in the 19th century was high, and there was a direct link between a rise in prices and industrial unrest. This was the situation in 1893 when low wages were unable to keep pace with the cost of living.

The miners were paid on a Saturday, at fortnightly intervals - the intervening Saturday was known as 'Black Saturday'. Wages were approximately 18/- a week, from which a large family had to be supported, often seven or eight children. Rent was 6/- a week; butter 1/- a pound, sugar 2½d per pound, tea 6d a quarter, and a 4lb loaf of bread cost 1/2d. Vegetables and milk were cheap but the diet was monotonous, and food was not over plentiful. Wages tended to fluctuate and there was often short-time working - and of course no wages came in after a death in the mine. The chapels and public houses served to make the valley communities close-knit and independent.

The hauliers' strike of 1893 was the first 'big' coal strike. It was a conflict not only between management and labour but also between two rival unions and two rival union leaders. On one side was William Abraham of the Cambrian Miners' Association (CMA), and on the other William Brace, the south Wales agent of the Miners' federation (the 'Fed').

Miners were paid on a sliding scale, a formula tied to the average selling price of coal. The CMA supported this, whereas the 'Fed' demanded a standard wage, independent of the coal market. The scheme had been operative since 1875 and was a complicated one based on the selling price of steam and house coal, plus 5%, using the wage rates of 1869. It tended to keep wage rates down, to the benefit of the coal owners, although so complicated was the scheme that it was little understood by the men. Thus strikes were few, although short-time working was imposed in 1879 and 1886.

Wage rates fell by some 40% between 1891 and 1893, although the price of coal did not fall by the same amount. In 1892 the unions wanted to end the sliding scale, and in 1893 wages continued to fall. On 31 July, Wyndham colliery in Ogmore Vale stopped work. Within a week, thousands of hauliers were on strike, demanding a 20% wage increase, although there was some division among the men.

The strike spread rapidly from valley to valley, by 'marching gangs' of hauliers. By 7th August, the dispute had spread to the Rhondda, 40,000 men were on strike across south Wales and 90,000 were locked out. Mass meetings were held in Pontypridd in August, and the owners agreed to a small wage increase of 1¼% if the men called off the strike. The CMA urged the men to return to work, while the 'Fed' supported the continuation of the strike.

By 9th August the strike had spread to Monmouthshire, where a further 10,000 came out. By 19th August the strike had reached its peak with every colliery in south Wales on stop, except those in the Swansea area. Attitudes of course polarised, with some violence being shown towards the few non-strikers. On 18th August the owners requested the presence of troops, alleging riotous conduct and insurrection. 2,000 troops were sent, which virtually sealed the fate of the miners. They would soon have given in anyway, because there was no financial support from the 'Fed'. Thus, as in most strikes in the 19th century, hunger and deprivation were the miners' real enemies, and the coal owners' allies, and this drove the men back to work - not the police and troops and threats of imprisonment. The presence of the troops, however, led to clashes at Ebbw Vale, Mountain Ash, Aberdare and Ferndale

There had been some hope that the railwaymen would join the strike, but the first week of September saw a general return to work, with the men accepting the 1¼% offered on 5th August. The last big meeting took place in Pontypridd on 2nd September, when 20,000 men gathered, 600 having walked from Ogmore Vale, with a band and banners.

On Monday, 11th September, the strike ended with a return to work in the Ogmore valley. It seemed that the men had gained little, but the south Wales coalfield was never the same again. In 1898 the South Wales Miners' Federation was formed, and within a few years the united Welsh union saw the end of the hated sliding scale.

Don Gerrard

St Quentin's Castle

The second phase of CADW's consolidation work on the castle is almost completed. There is still some work to be done on the south eastern stretch of the curtain wall. The signs and the explanation panels are now in place. The views of the surrounding countryside from the top of the gatehouse are quite remarkable.

Behind the de Clare gatehouse is the fortified tower built by the St Quentins. The pressure on CADW for the urgent conservation of other historic buildings and monuments in their care has resulted in a delay to the plans to excavate the tower. In the meantime this has been earthed up to a certain level. This meets the safety requirements necessary to allow full public access to all of the historic site.

Unfortunately, the well being of the castle is again under threat.

A fresh planning application has been made to build eight houses on the site of the former Castle Bailey. This is the strip of land running parallel to Love Lane, from the rear of Castle Cottage to Porth-y-Green.

The Cowbridge History Society intends to use its seat on the Vale of Glamorgan Conservation Advisory Group to oppose this application. The main reasons for doing so are these.

1. When Gilbert de Clare built his castle he was making a statement. Quite simply, he was telling everybody that this was 'his territory'. Approaching the castle today, 'the message' is still very clear because of the way the castle dominates this particular area. The construction of a block of eight identical modern houses at its base will both distract from the visual impact of this important national monument and at the same time destroy its magnificent setting
2. Several hundreds of thousands of pounds of public funds, raised through taxation, have been used by CADW to repair and conserve the castle together with the tower. This huge investment in our built heritage must to be protected.
3. These are not small houses. The height to the roof ridges are seven and a half metres [25 feet] plus the height of the chimneys. Standing on top of the hill, they would totally dominate the skyline, particularly when seen from Three Fields.

Several tens of thousands of pounds of public funds were also recently spent when the Vale Council commissioned a report entitled 'Landscape Working for the Vale'. The report recommended very strongly that the landscapes around Cowbridge should be protected from future development.

We probably all have a mental list of our favourite views of the town and its surrounds. But the one landscape which must figure the most often on such lists, will be this view of the Thaw Valley, across Three Fields, with Llanblethian Church and Mount Ida as a backdrop and the protective medieval castle standing guard.

4. The 1841 Tithe Map shows the site to be the former Castle Bailey.

Some will remember that in 1977 the Royal Commission discovered on this site the foundations of the medieval village which had been built under the protection of the castle. The outline, shape and sizes of the buildings were very clear. So also was the line of the original road which ran straight out of the Castle Gateway towards Cowbridge. Love Lane, the current route, must have come later.

The Royal Commission, anxious to schedule [i.e. protect] this extraordinary find, visited the site in the company of the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust. They discovered, on arrival, that they had lost the race to a JCB which was digging up the medieval village and piling the rubble at one end of the field.

The following year the rubble was mixed with cement to build 'the footings' for seven houses. For those who know what to look for, it is still possible to see in these 'footings' the fragments of pennant sandstone roof tiles and green-glazed ridge tiles dating from the 13th and 14th centuries.

We believe that although this medieval site has been severely damaged, it should be preserved and be part of the future excavation work programme to be carried out on the castle. The Ancient Monuments Board for Wales has acknowledged, in writing, the importance of the bailey site

5. The ownership of this site and the ownership of Three Fields are one and the same. Should this current application prove successful, it will open the way for a fresh application to build on the land of Three Fields. With the skyline lost, justifying that this should not happen will become that much more difficult.

6. The development plans show two vehicle entrances into the site from Love Lane.

As every driver will know, Love Lane is already narrow and is approached from both ends by 1 in 7 hills [hands up who can claim to have never stalled on Constitution Hill], combined with the two, almost blind, right hand bends. To turn these corners and to be confronted by vehicles manoeuvring in or out of the site must constitute a serious road hazard, not only at their construction stage, but also once the houses are occupied.

In these troubled and even dangerous times, there seem to be less and less opportunities for individuals to exercise their democratic rights to try and influence events. This is not such a case. We would strongly urge all society members to act so as to help remove this new threat to the castle and its historic landscape.

This can be done by making your views known to those in a position to influence the outcome.

In any correspondence, you will need to quote the reference number of the application which is : **0300238 FUL**. The description of the site is 'adjacent to Love Lane, Llanblethian, Cowbridge'.

Here are the details of some potential addressees. You can use one or more of the above objections or reasons of your own. If you wish to write to more than one person or copy your letter around, so much the better. In any case, including both officials and politicians on your list should have greater effect.

<p>Council Officials</p> <p>1. Mr Robert Thomas Head of Planning Vale of Glamorgan Council Dock Offices Barry CF63 4RT</p> <p>2. Mr John Maitland Evans, Chief Executive, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Holton Road, Barry CF63 4RU</p> <p>3. Mr Robert Quick Director of Environmental & Economic Regeneration [includes planning] Vale of Glamorgan Council Dock Offices Barry CF63 4RT</p> <p>Central Politicians</p> <p>4. Mr John Smith MP MP for Vale of Glamorgan House of Commons Westminster London SW1 0AA [To support the castle being taken into care by CADW, Mr Smith raised the issue in the House of Commons]</p> <p>5. Mrs Susan Essex Minister for Environment National Assembly for Wales Cardiff Bay Cardiff CF99 1NA [When the castle was opened to the public, Mrs Essex presided over the ceremony]</p>	<p>6 Mrs Jane Hutt AM AM for the Vale of Glamorgan [address as 5]</p> <p>7. Mr Jonathan Morgan AM AM for South Wales Central [includes Cowbridge] [address as 5]</p> <p>8. Mr David Melding AM AM for South Wales Central [includes Cowbridge] [address as 5]</p> <p>Local Politicians</p> <p>9. Councillor Jeffrey James Leader of the Council Vale of Glamorgan Council 1 Lon Cefn Mably Rhoose CF62 3DY</p> <p>10. Councillor Tony Williams Chairman of the Planning Committee Vale of Glamorgan Council Vale View Welsh St Donats CF71 7SS</p> <p>11. Councillor Michael Harvey Chairman of the Conservation Advisory Group Vale of Glamorgan Council 87 Wallston Road Wenvoe CF5 6A W</p> <p>12. Councillor Catherine Clay Llwyn Helig Cowbridge CF71 7AQ</p> <p>13. Councillor G. Cox 27 St John's Close Cowbridge CF71 7HN</p>
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With apologies to William 'S' and Henry V, act 4, scene 3:

'And gentlemen in Cowbridge now abed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here
And hold their manhood's cheap whiles any speaks
That scribed with us upon Saint Quentin's day*

* includes the ladies.

In fact, St Quentin's day is not until the 31st October. Please do not wait until then. Please act today. Future generations will think kindly of you for doing so. St Quentin's castle is not just a local historical site and part of a superb landscape, it is also a National Monument. After all, a descendant of the St Quentins became Queen of England.

Why not ask members of your family and friends to also write?

GHH March 2003

FAMILY RECORDS IN SCOTLAND

My knowledge of my family's history has always been sketchy and although I have obtained copies of my parents' birth certificates I have not found (or made) the time for further research. My hopes were raised some time ago when it was announced that census records for England and Wales would be available on the internet, but the facility was short-lived, though now re-introduced (and available on www.census.pro.gov.uk).

The problem is that I am computer illiterate and have no access to the internet but 'I know a man who can'. Our son-in-law, who is a Scot, has been researching his family history through the official government source of genealogical data for Scotland: www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk and has done the same for me in respect of my Scottish ancestors. This service is provided by the General Register Office for Scotland at a charge for access of £6, giving 30 'page credits' valid for 24 consecutive hours.

My mother was born in Earlston, Berwickshire, in the Scottish Borders. Her mother's maiden name was Nichol, and it is this line that has provided most information, taking me back to my great-great-grandparents, James Nichol and Agnes Kennedy, who were born sometime in the second half of the eighteenth century. My Scottish ancestors were country people with occupations such as gardener, shepherd, farm labourer and roadman until my grandfather changed direction and became a journeyman draper. They lived in the same corner of south-east Scotland until the Great War of 1914 -1918 disturbed the pattern of their lives.

Statutory registers of births, marriages and deaths in Scotland commenced in 1855 and before then the only records are in the 'old parish registers' which were maintained by the Church of Scotland. These however are far from complete; record keeping varied from parish to parish and often from year to year.

The registers of deaths from the early years show how medical knowledge has advanced over time. My great-grandfather, William Nichol, died in 1879, and the cause of death is recorded as 'breaking up of constitution'. On the same page are recorded the deaths of William Walker, aged 89 years, 'old age - no sickness of any kind', and Charles Baillie, Lord Jarviswoode, retired Senator of the College of Justice, aged 74 years, 'softening of the brain'. My GP assures me that such descriptions have to be more precise today!

Alec Jones

Editorial

My thanks to our contributors to this newsletter - to Don Gerrard for his account of the 1897 coal strike, to George Haynes for his impassioned plea to save the Porth y Green land from development, and to Alec Jones for his fascinating glimpse into researching his family history. You now have a longer period to prepare your contribution - for the September newsletter, articles should be in to me by August 15th. They can be of any length, on any local history topic, and even any questions would be welcomed!

Cowbridge and Llanblethian Council have asked us to suggest sites for four more blue plaques, and we have suggested the Masons Arms, Town walls, Old Hall and the old cinema. We are preparing the wording for these, and are delighted to be involved, as we will be in preparing a Town Trail linking these and other sites in the town, ready for 2004, the 750th anniversary of the first charter.