

COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 62: NOVEMBER 2006

This is a joint Local History Society/ Record Society newsletter, produced initially as an experiment. Both societies, with largely similar aims, needed to contact members this month. This page relates largely to the LHS; the back page mainly to the CRS.

Revised Programme for 2006 - 7

November 23rd (THURSDAY) at 7.30pm

'Cowbridge on Film'

Big Screen in the Town Hall

December 1st

The Maud Gunter Memorial Lecture

'Wil Penybont – my great-grandfather'

Brenda Youde

followed by mince pies and punch

2007

January 5th

'Roman Iron-making in South Wales'

Tim Young

February 2nd

The Don Wallis Memorial Lecture

'The Reconstruction of St Teilo's Church,

Llandeilo Talybont'

Janet Wilding

March 2nd

'Where there's a Will' (History through wills)

Lilian Charles

April 13nd (NB date)**

'The Battle of St Fagans'

David Webb

May 4th

'Six Pontypridd Anniversaries'

Brian Davies

(rescheduled from October)

Lecture meetings are held in the Lesser Hall,
Cowbridge, on Fridays at 8.00pm

Please note the two changes to the previously published programme: COWBRIDGE ON FILM will be shown in the Town Hall (upstairs) on Thursday 23rd November, to start at 7.30pm, and Brian Davies's October talk which had to be cut short when he was in full flow will be repeated in the extra May meeting. We are very grateful to Brian for readily agreeing to do this, and are, of course, also delighted that Cecil England has made a rapid recovery.

COWBRIDGE ON FILM

This exciting project will bring to the screen many historic and previously unseen archive films of our area. You may be on the films – or your grandparents, or your grandchildren! Thanks to the kindness of many local people we will be able to view extracts from their cine films and videos on a 80-minute DVD. We will watch the Vale of Glamorgan Show on the Bear Field, a point-to-point at Penllyn, harvesting at Trebettyn and at New House farm, Cowbridge and Llanblethian in the snow in the 1960s, the Comprehensive School in 1997 and the Grammar School in 1961, the building of the by-pass, and parades and carnivals galore. Who said life in Cowbridge was dull?

There are obviously limits to seating in the Town Hall, so tickets will be needed – but they will be free. They may be obtained from me (Jeff Alden, on 773373) or from Arthur John and Sons' ironmongery shop in High Street, Cowbridge. The cost of producing the film has been met by a grant from Creative Rural Communities, and as a result a free copy of the DVD will also be available.

EDGAR WALLACE'S BLOOMER!

Late July 1926: Arthur W Gwyn, the respected solicitor of the old-established Cowbridge firm of Gwyn & Gwyn, set out on his regular morning walk from Brynfyro, his new house on Broadway, to his office on Eastgate. The memory of the General Strike was fading away, the miners' strike seemed to be fizzling out – and that was a world away from Cowbridge; it was a bright and sunny day, Cyril Morgan's chickens were scratching about in Windmill Lane, and all was well with the world.

By the time he reached his office, however, Arthur felt a little uneasy . . . why had two of his friends stopped their conversation as he approached and then could only manage a weak smile? . . . had John Wadham shouted "Good morning, Mr Gwyn" in a particularly emphatic manner? . . . had Edwards the butcher grinned, almost rudely, at him?

"Don't be silly" he muttered to himself, "I'm just imagining things", as opened the door of the office, to be greeted immediately by his secretary. "Mr Vivian would like to see you straightaway" she said, ushering him into his brother's room.

Vivian was seated at his table, reading a yellow cloth-bound book. "Ah, *The Black Abbot*, the new Edgar Wallace" Arthur murmured; "is it up to standard?" "Sit down, Arthur: we, or rather you, have a problem, a ticklish and unpleasant problem to deal with", said Vivian Gwyn. "This book is about a solicitor who is guilty of forgery, embezzlement and fraud . . ." "Not unheard of" interrupted Arthur.

"But wait" interjected Vivian. "In this book, the solicitor who forges bills, who steals his sister's fortune and fraudulently disposes of an estate he is administering, is called Arthur Gwyn, of the firm of Gwyn and Gwyn – and if you look at the blurb on the back of the cover you can read about 'the unscrupulous and dandified Arthur Gwyn' . . . People are beginning to talk, Arthur; have you not noticed anything?"

The events leading up to our Arthur Gwyn's discovery of the content of the new book by Edgar Wallace may not have been exactly as stated above, but it is a fact that *The Black Abbot*, written by Britain's most celebrated and widely-read crime writer of that time, and published by the highly-respected firm of Hodder & Stoughton, had as its villain a solicitor, admittedly based in Holborn, London, of the name of Arthur Gwyn, of the firm of Gwyn and Gwyn.

The ensuing solicitors' letters, and letters both from Arthur Gwyn and from Edgar Wallace, have been preserved. From them one can perceive Arthur's annoyance at the mis-use of his name, and at the possibility of his being confused with the villainous solicitor - in a book by such a popular author that the identification could have wide circulation. In particular he did not appreciate the description of the "unscrupulous and dandified Arthur Gwyn".

One can also note the real regret expressed by Edgar Wallace. He wrote from 71 Clarence Gate Gardens, NW1: "I was staggered to get your letter on my return to town today and I lose no time in telling you how terribly sorry I am if I have annoyed you. It is all the more distressing to me because I was careful to look through the London Telephone Directory to see whether there was a Gwyn & Gwyn, or an Arthur Gwyn, before I set my wicked solicitor down in Holborn . . . I cannot tell you how sorry I am that this stupid and innocent blunder should have occurred and I hope you will forgive me for even associating an honourable name with my Holborn villain."

The whole episode, despite (or perhaps because of) the involvement of two firms of solicitors, Gwyn & Gwyn in Cowbridge and the publishers' solicitors in London, as well as counsel's opinion in Cardiff, did not go to law. Hodder & Stoughton immediately withdrew the book from sale and called in all unsold copies. The book was reprinted with a different name for the solicitor, Edgar

Wallace having checked that the name did not appear in the latest Law List. Arthur Gwyn received a respectable amount of compensation, and also a copy of the newly-printed book with an expression of regret signed by Edgar Wallace on the fly-leaf. Ironically, (or was it done on purpose?) Wallace spelled the name Gwyn incorrectly on the dedication – two 'n's instead of one. Arthur, true to form, insisted that a correct version be sent!

JA

ATTACK ON A SERGEANT BY A CONSTABLE – 1890

During the late evening of Easter Tuesday in the year 1890, a feud which had been developing for some time between the Sergeant and a constable stationed at Cowbridge developed suddenly into a bitter fight, which resulted in the Sergeant losing an eye and the Constable receiving a sentence of 15 years imprisonment.

Sergeant William Martin, a native of Brecon, had joined the Force in 1867 at the age of 22, having previously been employed as a railway signalman. After service in Pontypridd and the Rhondda he was promoted to Sergeant at Tonypany in 1877, and transferred to take charge of Cowbridge in February 1880, when Sergeant Jennings was moved on promotion to Inspector at Maesteg. The constable, William Evans from Pembrokeshire, was a single man living in at the Cowbridge police station with five years service just completed. He was 5ft 10 inches tall - a good two inches taller than his Sergeant.

At the hearing, the Sergeant testified that on the day before the incident (Easter Monday) he had posted PC Evans on duty at 2 pm with orders to return to station duties at 5 pm and to meet on the beat at Nash at 8pm. Evans did not return and the Sergeant had to go to Nash himself. On his return to Cowbridge he saw the constable in the town and told him that he would be reported for being absent from the station without leave.

The next morning Evans was booked out on duty at 8.30 am and returned to the station at 1 pm when "he appeared to be in a sullen mood and scarcely spoke". The Sergeant then continued, "About 2pm I saw him preparing to go out and I told him I did not want him to go out, to which he replied that he was going out because he wanted to see PC Williams of Llanharan. He did go out and did not return until 4pm. This was quite contrary to the rules. When he returned he walked straight into the garden at the back of the station, passed me by the door and did not say a word. He appeared terribly sullen. When my wife sent the girl to ask whether he wanted tea, he said no."

"I left the station about 6.15pm and returned at 6.30pm to look for the defendant. He was not at the station where he ought to have been. I next saw him on duty by the Town Hall at about 9.30pm. I spoke to him and asked if anything particular had occurred. I saw him next shortly at 11 pm and told him what I had heard about him, that instead of being at the station he had been out in plain clothes, fishing, and that I would report him. He said that I could do as I liked. This was on the road near the *Masons Arms*."

"I next saw him near the Eagle Stores shortly after midnight, on my way to the station. A man named Roberts was with him. Roberts said to me, 'You did all you could to harm me last Tuesday'. When I asked him what he meant he said, 'You swore I was drunk and I lost the case when I had old Jenkins on in court'. I told him not to bother me, or we would lock him up. At this point, Alderman Edward John opened his window to us and I said 'All right Mr John, we

are off' and walked with the defendant towards the Police Station, then after 50 yards, turned to walk the town again."

"As we walked a conversation took place between us. The defendant started it by saying, 'You don't know your job, talking of locking up a man who had committed no offence'. I told him I did not wish to lock him up, only to get rid of him. He then said, 'You are not fit to be a Sergeant, I am a better man than you and know my duty a great deal better'. I said, 'All right, if you do' to which he said, 'You are not fit to be a Sergeant talking about locking people up'. Then he accused me and said, 'You are down on me too'. I told him I was not, but his manner warned me that something was about to take place."

"We were just opposite the *Globe* (a public house in The Butts), when I said to him, 'Unless you drop it I shall go back to the Station' and the words had scarcely left my lips when he sprang on me like some infuriated brute. He tried to get me down, and I tried to free myself. I got away, but he flew at me again, tripped me and I fell in the channel at the side of the road, with him on top of me."

"Directly we were on the ground he made for my eyes and I said, 'Leave my eyes alone' and prevented him two or three times by removing his hands, but he came back and had his thumb in my eye and had it out, and started on the other one. I shouted, 'Roberts, Roberts' and I thought I was finished, but fortunately Mrs Trott (the landlady of the *Globe*) came out and dragged him off me. I was then taken to Trott's house and Dr Meller removed my eye completely."

The Sergeant also testified that a prisoner had complained to him months earlier that PC Evans had attacked his eyes and injured them in a struggle.

Cross examination revealed that the defence would be that the Sergeant was drunk, that the injury to the eye had been caused by the handle of the door to the Eagle Stores as he fell, and not by the deliberate action of the defendant as described by the witness.

The Sergeant admitted that he had had one drink at the *Cowbridge Arms* (which was near the *Duke* on the same side of the road) and one at the *Bear Hotel*, but denied that he went into the *Duke of Wellington*, had a drink there, and was assisted out of the house by the licensee who left him holding on to the door-post.

He also denied that he had to use his hands to steady himself when he left the *Bear*, that he staggered as he stood outside the *Mason's Arms*; that he was under the influence of drink in the *Horse and Groom*; that he fell against the warehouse door and that he had not reported himself for drinking on duty. He testified that he had told the Superintendent about it.

To an objection to the examination as to drinking, the defending solicitor said he could bring half a dozen witnesses to prove the Sergeant was under the influence of drink that night, which the prosecution countered by saying that if this were allowed he would bring a dozen witnesses to prove otherwise.

For the prosecution, Mrs Trott and a Mrs Morgan testified that the whole struggle took place on the ground and that the parties had not fallen against the storehouse door. Mrs Trott, who had run to the scene to pull away the Constable, corroborated the Sergeant in that Evans was working his hands over Martin's face. Sergeant John Davies of Bridgend (later to become Superintendent there) produced a statement made by the defendant which made no mention of the fall against the warehouse door of the Eagle Stores.

A 'navvy' gave evidence of the incident referred to by Sergeant Martin and said that when being arrested by PC Evans for being drunk and disorderly they had a scuffle, and Evans got him

down and put his hand in his right eye saying "I have got you now". He shouted for help and two men separated them. His eye had been badly injured.

For the defence, Mark Roberts, a milk vendor of Eagle Lane, who had been present throughout the whole incident, gave evidence which conflicted to that of the Sergeant's. He said that the Sergeant was drunk, that he had struck the first blow by hitting Evans in the chest and that the Sergeant and Evans had staggered to their feet during the struggle and fallen against the warehouse door locked together. Alderman John who saw the closing stages of the fight from his bedroom window corroborated the collision with the door.

If it had not been for the positive evidence given by Dr Meller, some difficulty may have been caused by the conflict of evidence as to whether or not the damage to Sergeant Martin's eye could have been caused by striking the door knob of the Eagle Stores warehouse. Dr Meller stated that Sergeant Martin was not intoxicated, but Evans was under the influence of drink though he could walk and converse. He described the injuries and said that they were such as to follow from an eye being pulled out. The injuries could have been caused by a man's fingers or nails. Under cross examination he added that the injuries to the eye could not have been caused by the knob of a door. If there had been such a blow from a door knob he would have expected severe bruising to the external covering of the eye and injury to the bone structure forming the socket and to the eyeball, as well as pains in or near the eye at the time and for some time afterwards, whereas no such marks or injuries were present.

As a consequence PC Evans was found guilty and sent to prison for fifteen years. It is not known whether an appeal made in the mid-1890s to the then Home Secretary, to release him, was successful. Meanwhile Sergeant Martin was transferred to Pontycymmer, sporting a glass eye paid for by the police authority.

Don Gerrard

LLANBLETHIAN – MY CHILDHOOD HOME

(the concluding part of June Faulkner's reminiscences of an evacuee's life in Llanblethian)

In Piccadilly lived Mrs Batten at Hilddrop. She had three daughters - the eldest was married and I used to play with her little girl Pat when she visited her grandmother. Her second daughter was Bess, a beautiful young lady who married Bob Tucker our coalman, he moved into Hilddrop and I can still hear his beautiful Welsh singing when he got home from work and was cleaning up and washing - ready for his meal, they were a happy couple and it was such a tragedy when Bess died so young. I was fond of Bob because he looked like my own father who had been killed in the Navy in 1941. The third daughter Ethel married a Westcott (they owned the tuck shop cafe in Cowbridge). I remember seeing them walking around the village - he wore a uniform then.

There were three more cottages in Piccadilly. In one lived an old lady called Mrs Boobyer, she used to stand at the cottage gate (with fuschias growing either side) and watch us skipping or playing hop-scotch in the road, this cottage changed hands and Lottie lived there. She married late in life to a man in Aberthin and promptly produced a large family. Then Mr and Mrs Batchelor moved in, they had a pretty little curly-haired daughter Pauline and moved up to Porth-y-Green later on. The next little cottage was occupied by Agnes Chisell. When she married, Mary Jane made her dress from parachute silk and I helped dye muslin the colours of the rainbow to make the bridesmaids' dresses. Next to Agnes lived my dear friend Margaret Williams (Maggie), also a small cottage. She had a brother Gilbert and sister Mary, both older than she was. I can remember Mary's wedding to Dilwyn -she was friendly with my middle sister - and Maggie was the friend of my childhood and I'm still in touch with her daughters Julie and

Lisa. It was just following her visit with Bill to my wedding on 31/10/87 that Maggie died in a dreadful accident. I was married and they were here enjoying a well-earned break, we put them on the train four days later and on Remembrance Sunday morning Maggie died having accidentally drunk anti-freeze that had been left in a lemonade bottle - what a lesson to us all.

Opposite 'Rose Cottage' (Maggie's house) was a farm run by a Mr George Williams. He was very old and bent but he used to get his horse and cart out and take us up to a field in Porth-y-Green to help with the hay-making. This field is where the council houses were built after the war - behind Mrs Edwards's farm.

Passing the Baptist Sunday School, the Spencers were in the house on the right; on the left was the Mill where Mr and Mrs Stone lived, he was the miller and she opened a sweet shop there. I lived in Mill Cottage No 2, the Ashcrofts were in No 1.

I loved peeping through the corrugated cover to watch the great wooden wheel turn, the drops of water falling off the paddles like diamonds - the mill run was opposite our cottage - I caught tiddlers and Tommy big heads in the run when the mill was not working - it was shallow and all sorts of things could be found. Maggie and I collected broken china pieces and also water cress. When the mill was working the water level came up and we sailed paper boats and pieces of leaf and wood down the run. I remember Connie, Walter and Henry and I believe there may have been another brother who was in the Navy. I was always playing on the steps of the mill. I was sitting on them on my 11th birthday, 15th August 1945, when Mary Jane told me the war was over. I loved watching the great horses pulling the corn to the mill to be made into flour. I remember all the cats, one with only one eye. They used to catch the rats in the mill. I played at the old pump by the path to the Mill Fields and there was an old oak tree hollowed out which served as a house for us children to play in, it was easy to climb up the inside of the tree to reach the big branch that hung over the river - some of the tree was burnt hollow but some branches produced leaves and acorns which we used as cups and saucers etc. It was a natural beautiful place to play as children and of course at the top of this field stood the great castle keep of St Quentins, a magnet for the local children. It was covered in ivy, and we used to climb up the ivy to the top of the walls, never thinking of the danger should we fall.

Down the road was the Bakehouse and a family called Mr & Mrs Rea from Ireland lived here, they had a daughter Violet and a boy Johnny. I did hear that Johnny died as a child. His mother took him on the chair-o-planes at a visiting fair in Cowbridge; she had him on her lap and he fell.

On the left after passing the old Bakehouse were three cottages - the first a very little one and an elderly gentleman with a white beard lived in it - Mr Vaughan. Next door was Mr & Mrs Flanders - Illtud and Ethel. They had a son Vivian and an older lad called Ken Vaughan lived here. He was very kind and showed Vivian and me how to catch eels. He was also very handsome (my eldest sister had a crush on him). He went into the Navy I believe. Next to the Flanders were the Jenkins family, where two lads from my home town of Gillingham were evacuated, Peter and Ronnie Dolling. They loved it there

Then we come to Greenfields where an elderly lady called Miss Williams lived. On the other side was a little cottage my aunt grew up in and Maggie's aunt lived there (Miss Royal) Auntie Em. I believe she had a little family in Cowbridge by the name of Hawkins - very nice girls - Josie and another sister were in school with Maggie and me. My aunt used to get quite wistful and say how lucky Aunt Em was to have them. Opposite where the alms houses once stood was the little farm where my sister Georgina was evacuated. She loved it, staying with Mr & Mrs Jones.

Then over the bridge were some dwellings on the right, all had little bridges crossing a small water ditch into the front gardens. A lady called Rene Vaughan lived here until this family too moved up to Porth-y-Green and I remember several of the families produced twins. It became a

joke - 'Don't move up there if you don't want twins.' The big house belonged to Bob Morgan the butcher who had rather a rotund shape and if I got too greedy and wanted another piece of my aunt's delicious apple pie she would tease me and say 'If you eat any more you will get a tummy like Bob Morgan.'

Many of the walls on his farm were built by Italian prisoners-of-war. The children used to watch them at work, they wore dark brown overalls and used to be very friendly and seemed quite happy and usually sang very beautifully as they worked.

I used to walk to school up the hill to the right after passing Aunt Em's. The house on the right, Cartrefle, was a big one and a Mr and Mrs Thomas lived there, the parents of Dulcie. Opposite here were two cottages and Anne Ashcroft's grandmother moved to one of them from the place at the bottom of the Mountain. Further up to the right was Beechcourt where Mr Thomas (the one like Father Christmas) lived. A lady who played the church organ lived in the house on the junction of Porth-y-Green and Broadway. Mr Cox lived in the old farm to the left; one day I picked a few roses from his front garden and got into deep trouble at school and at home. There were houses to the right as we got to the school and Miss Aubrey lived in the one nearest the school.

I remember the school so well. Mr Roberts was headmaster and lived in the school house. Miss Aubrey and Miss Cogbill were the Infant teachers, Miss Miles (Buchalik) class 1, Mr Frederick class 2 and 3. The formidable Miss Thomas had class 4 and Mr Roberts class 6. I did not know it then of course, but they were the best years of my life.

Up the hill from the mill the first house on the left - The Firs - never seemed to have anyone living there. I could see into their garden from my back bedroom window and wondered who lived there. Immediately behind our cottage was the boundary of St Quintins House, a Mrs Homfray lived there, she had a lovely maid called Mary (she gave me cakes or sweets when I went up there). Opposite was St Quintins terrace. In the middle cottage a lovely young lady lived with her mother. Hilda Hayman used to visit us, she played the organ at a little church on the Cardiff road. She married a nice chap from Maendy and became Mrs Busby. Next door at the Cairns lived Mr & Mrs Phillips - he was a schoolmaster. Looking down the hill was a house belonging to Mr & Mrs Raggett, they had a boy about my age. She was the sister of my teacher Miss Miles (Buchalik)

The cottage on the right, just past the castle, had a lovely garden. Anne Ashcroft's maternal grandmother lived there, I sometimes went to see them with Anne and her mother (Edna). I always think of that lovely garden when I see aquilegia, 'Granny's Bonnets', growing in my own garden. I remember Anne's Gran telling her 'Make new friends (me) but keep the old ones, new ones are silver but the old are the gold ones' and I always felt that I was only a silver friend. Anne had the most beautiful auburn hair, she was quite poorly as a child and I was told not to be too rough when playing with her. We used to collect things - cards and pictures of babies.

Then we come to Porth-y-Green and Love Lane where the Council Houses were built after the war. My dear friend Margaret Williams (Evans) lived there as did many of the people from the village. My aunt Mary Jane had a flat up there. I just can't bring myself to visit the estate now - it holds so many memories of people who were a big part of my childhood.

June Faulkner

Cowbridge Record Society

Registered Charity No 1094061

Newsletter No 10

November 2006

Editor: Jeff Alden, 01446-773373

This is a joint Record Society/ Local History Society Newsletter. This page is specifically relevant to the Record Society; it is hoped that all other pages will be of interest.

CONTENTS

November meeting

Cowbridge on Film

Edgar Wallace's Bloomers

Attack on a Sergeant by a
Constable - 1890

Llanblethian – My Childhood
Home, 1940-1945

ROTARY QUIZ SUCCESS

Our team of Deborah Fisher, Jose Rawlins and Jeff Alden was once again successful in the Cowbridge Rotary Club Quiz, and Ty Hafan has benefited by £250 from our efforts!

NOVEMBER MEETING

The Record Society only holds two meetings a year, but these meetings are regarded as being among the most enjoyable of their kind. This November we are delighted that our own Hilary Thomas has agreed to speak (and provide musical illustrations) on the topic of 'Faure in Llandough and Llantwit Major'. Hilary is always an interesting and entertaining speaker and we very much look forward to this talk.

In addition, our meetings always seem to have generous supplies of liquid and other refreshments, so do come along for an evening of education and jollification. Meetings are free to members, but we welcome new members - and for £3 a year, membership is a bargain!

This year the meeting will be held in the Lesser Hall, Cowbridge, on Tuesday 28th November, starting at 7.30pm.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG

It is very much hoped that the archaeological dig in Old Hall grounds around the base of the Town Wall will start on November 20th. Anyone keen to help should contact Luke Millar on 773528 as soon as possible.

NEW BOOK

Our Chairman, Deborah Fisher, has a new book due out this month. Published by the University of Wales Press, it is a companion volume to her successful "Princesses of Wales". "Princes of Wales" will make a most acceptable Christmas present.