

NEWSLETTER

of Cowbridge History Society

Summer 2021



Returning to the old normal?

The light at the end of the tunnel...

To begin with, let me apologise for the absence of a spring issue of this newsletter. I've been extremely busy, as have the rest of the committee, with various projects. Mine were mainly relating to other societies that I am involved with, but I can assure members that no one has been idle.

A full programme of talks has taken place since Christmas, albeit over Zoom, and the committee has been attempting to assess members' wishes in terms of future meetings - whether to continue with a mixture of live and online meetings, return to the old "live" format or strike out in a completely new direction.

*Deb Fisher
Publications Officer*

Talks of the season

The first monthly Zoom talk of 2021 took place on 8th January, via Zoom, and was very well-attended, as always with the talks given by Brian Davies. The subject was "Welsh Heroes; the statues in Cardiff City Hall". Brian was his usual entertaining self, and did his best to provide visuals for the audience by showing us photographs from a book, which were sometimes a little blurry but did the job. Most members adapted well to the use of Zoom, and only one person was visibly asleep on her sofa during the talk. It is wise to remember that, if you have your video on, you can be seen by others attending. If you have your audio on, you can be heard by others attending. So take note of those two little icons, as we are likely to be continuing to use Zoom in the future, if only occasionally.

On 5th February, our Chair, Dick Buswell, gave us some history of The Limes, in his talk, "You in your small corner, me in mine." As a present-day resident of The Limes, Dick has carried out extensive research into this corner of Cowbridge and was able to give a detailed account, which led to many questions from the audience.

On 5th March, Andy Seaman spoke on the subject of "Early Medieval Landscapes in the Vale". With help from local archaeologist Dr Tudur Davies, he explained how archaeologists have collected environmental cores from several sites in south east Wales in order to throw light on land use during the transition from Roman Britain to early medieval Britain. This was a fascinating insight into the close relationship between technology and archaeological science.

On 9th April, Deb Fisher, having spoken previously about the Battle of Agincourt, gave a talk called "Following in the Footsteps of Henry of Monmouth". It dealt with Henry V's earlier life, concentrating on his experiences in Wales, from his birth in Monmouth to his involvement in putting down the rebellion of Owain Glyndwr.

The AGM was held on 7th May, and was followed by a talk from Phil Carradice, a veteran of such occasions. Entitled "Following in the Footsteps of Henry Tudor", this followed on naturally from the April talk, both being based on books in the "Following in the Footsteps" series, published by Pen & Sword. Henry Tudor was of course a scion of the House of Lancaster, the dynasty begun by Henry of Monmouth's father, King Henry IV.

AGM Report

At the AGM, all incumbent members of the committee were re-elected for the year 2021-22. The business of the meeting included a long and thoughtful discussion of the society's position post-COVID, centring on the topic of whether Zoom meetings are able to fulfil members' needs.

Following discussion of the various options for future monthly meetings, a poll was taken to assess the opinions of those members present. The result was:

Option 1: That the 2021/22 programme of eight talks should consist of five in-person talks in the Lesser Hall (in Oct, Nov, Dec, Apr and May) and three talks via zoom conferencing (in Jan, Feb and Mar).

For: 3; Against: 13; majority of 81% against and 19% for

Option 2: That the 2021/22 programme of eight talks should consist of six in-person talks in the Lesser Hall (in Oct, Nov, Dec, Mar, Apr and May) and two talks via zoom conferencing (in Jan and Feb).

For: 13; Against: 5; majority of 72% for and 28% against

Option 3: That the 2021/22 programme of eight talks should consist of eight in-person talks in the Lesser Hall.

For: 8; Against: 12; majority of 60% against and 40% for.

Note that members were allowed to vote for more than one option.

The result suggests to the committee that a programme of 2 on-line and 6 in person talks would be most acceptable to the majority of members. If you weren't able to attend the AGM and have any strong views on this, please do let us know.

Other news

We hope to reopen the Local History Studies Room (the Jeff Alden Room) at Old Hall to the public in October. It is recommended that a maximum of 6 people use the room at any one time. Our current understanding is that the 2 metres distance will not apply, but that keeping a "reasonable distance" is still considered necessary.

You may be aware that the new weekly paper, the *Glamorgan Star*, is hoping to print regular columns from local history societies in the area. The committee is currently considering how best to achieve this, and hopes to supply material to the paper on a monthly basis. Any suggestions from members for content are welcomed.

Two copies of the *Cowbridge Buildings & People* source book (containing the original research on which the publication was based), originally sold to members at a price of £25, are available for purchase. Please contact Betty Alden at 1, Mill Park, Cowbridge CF71 7BG, if you are interested in acquiring one of these.

The “Twt Beech”

The art project continues, making new use of the old beech tree that was removed from the Twt park in 2018 for safety reasons. (Having seen some of the tree’s “insides”, we can vouch for the fact that the tree was diseased and its removal was justified.) Cowbridge History Society and



other local groups continue to work with sculptor and community artist Ami Marsden to produce decorative panels using wood from the trunk. When complete, these will be put on public display at indoor venues in the town.

Observing COVID restrictions, and despite the recent poor weather, representatives of CHS have had sessions with Ami to design a plaque that reflects Cowbridge’s history. The panels are due to be completed some time during the summer.

From the archive...

Just to demonstrate that nothing much changes, Betty Alden has unearthed a planning application from the past. Perhaps fortunately, this one was unsuccessful.

On 29th July, 1899, members of the Cardiff New Asylum Committee reported on their visit to Llansannor to inspect a site for the new asylum that had been offered by its owner - who happened to be the mayor of Cardiff, Sir Thomas Morel. Others who took part in the visit included Alderman D. Jones, Alderman J. Ramsdale, Councillor E. Thomas, the town clerk, the borough engineer and a Mr. E. J. Jones, described as “the mayor’s architect”.

The deputation travelled by the Great Western Railway and Taff Vale Railway to Cowbridge, where they had “a well-served luncheon” at The Bear before setting off for Llansannor. An earlier prospective site at Radyr, the property of Lord Windsor, had been rejected by the Lunacy Commissioners. Another site, at Aberthaw, had been rejected on the grounds that it was “placed so close to the sea as to be quite unsuitable”!

Foremost in the committee’s minds seemed to be questions of finance: how much they would have to pay for the land, and how much financial support they could squeeze out of the local authority for the upkeep of Cardiff’s “lunatics”.

As far as can be ascertained from the report, no decision was actually made by the committee on the day of their visit. However, one alderman referred to a search for sites that “in

contour and character are only likely to be found in that “new earth” which will come after the Millennium. The millennium they were looking forward to was of course the year 1900. Why there should be “new earth” available then is something that the report does not explain.

Eventually, the proposal was rejected and Whitchurch Hospital opened in 1908; sadly, it closed in 2016.

Betty Alden

Cowbridge Fire Station

Steve Monahan recently made use of the archive to produce an article about the fire station that was formerly located in Cowbridge Town Hall. The text of the article can be found online at the U3A site, by following this link: <https://u3asites.org.uk/cowbridge/page/112768>

If you would like a hard copy of the original, please let us know.



The above photograph shows Cowbridge firefighters receiving long service medals at a ceremony on the Bear Field in 1909. The medals were presented by Mrs Ebsworth of Llandough Castle.

The Aubreys of Llantrithyd

Llantrithyd and its neighbouring hamlet of Tre-Aubrey lie in the Vale of Glamorgan, about a mile south of the A48, three miles south-east of Cowbridge and two miles south-west of Bonvilston.

The two settlements and their surrounding farms and dwellings had, in 2011, a population of 221. They occupy a secluded position in a well-wooded valley, which is watered by a small rivulet, and there is a spring in each village.

The Church of St Illtyd and the adjoining ruins of Llantrithyd Place dominate the village, and are both Grade II listed buildings. They have been classed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council as "County Treasures". Near the altar of the church are some sepulchral slabs, one of which is inscribed "Blanch Aubrey 1588", but she remains a mystery. Llantrithyd Place passed into the hands of the Aubrey family after 1586, when Mary Basset, a co-heiress to the huge Llantrithyd estates, married Thomas Aubrey, the second son of Dr William Aubrey, and henceforth Llantrithyd and Llantrithyd Place would be associated with the name Aubrey - until 1910.

Dr William Aubrey was born in Cantref, Breconshire. At Oxford he obtained a BCL (Bachelor of Civil Laws) in 1549 and a DCL (Doctor of Civil Laws) in 1554, was a Fellow of All Souls and Jesus, and Principal of New Hall Inn. By the mid 17th Century Llantrithyd Place had a well-preserved structure of house plus gardens and deer park, completely and securely enclosed. During the course of the century the Aubrey family substantially improved both the house and the estates, to comprise some 30 hectares.

He was unusual in that he held high office in the reigns of both Mary and Elizabeth e.g. Master of Chancery 1558 and Master of Requests 1590. He was strongly anti-Puritan. He was able to acquire extensive estates in Breconshire, Wiltshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, and Kent. He had a town house in London and another in Bath. He died in 1595 and was buried in St. Paul's. He left an estate said to be worth £2,500 a year in rents alone, and in excess of £20,000 in cash. (Today he would be regarded as a multi-millionaire.) However, his "trustworthy servant", Hugh George, fled to Ireland with much of William's assets, and the money was never recovered.

William's children and grandchildren were great losers, including his grandson John Aubrey (1626-97), the famous antiquary. Sir Thomas Aubrey, William's second son (1565-1641) was more fortunate. He had married, in 1586, Mary, co-heiress of the Mansel Llantrithyd Estates. Henceforth the tenure of Llantrithyd Place and its estates would be associated with the name Aubrey. Thomas Aubrey moved into the house, where life with his mother-in-law was not always easy, particularly after Anthony Mansel died in 1604. However, after she died in 1607, Thomas Aubrey's authority was unhindered.

Thomas Aubrey made frequent improvements to Llantrithyd Place, including the creation of a "grand gallery" and a magnificent fireplace. Detailed and unique accounts of his expenditure in the 1620s and 1630s have been itemised and recorded. See Bowen, Lloyd (ed.) - *Family and Society in Early Stuart Glamorgan. Household accounts of Sir Thomas Aubrey of Llantrithyd 1565-1641*. (South Wales Record Society 2006). These show that he often used local materials such as wood from the estate and alabaster from Penarth. Sir Thomas' last accounts were dated 1637 and his son John succeeded him on his death in 1641. By this time the dark clouds of Civil War were gathering.

Wales was almost wholly Royalist in the Civil War, either Anglican or Catholic, and most castles were Royalist garrisoned. The large landowners mainly supported the King, although there were a few influential figures who supported Parliament, e.g. the Earl of Essex, who had large estates in Carmarthenshire; and the Earl of Pembroke, the largest landowner in Glamorgan. People living in the rural areas, such as the Vale of Glamorgan, knew very little about the disagreements between King and Parliament. They were unlikely to have any contact with Puritan preachers, and therefore, supported the King, as did virtually all their immediate landlords, the gentry.

The gardens were typically Elizabethan, consisting of geometrical cultivated areas and complex terraces, ponds and walks. Statues were purchased and nectarine and cherry trees planted. In 1635 a large summer house was built, by which time the gardens were regarded as

being fashionable and sophisticated. In 1652 it was described as being “a Welsh paradise for building and situation, pleasure and plenty”. (CADW, Register of Landscaped Parks and Gardens of Special Historical Interest - Llantrithyd 2002.) In the mid 18th century John Stone, in a survey of the estate, described it as having “two kitchen gardens, heated greenhouses, walled gardens and orchards”. Soon after 1660 a large deer park was created.

John Aubrey (1626-97; pictured below) was a noted English antiquary, best known as the author of *Brief Lives*, and a prominent archaeologist of the Avebury region. He was also involved in the compilation of the County Histories of Wiltshire and Surrey. He was a cousin of the 2nd Baronet Aubrey, and spent a good deal of time at Llantrithyd in the mid 17th century. He attended Trinity College, Oxford, and was a Royalist during the Civil War. His father died in 1652, having large estates in Herefordshire but also large debts, which Aubrey made worse due to his addiction to gambling. Very much a traditionalist, he drank the King's Health in the Interregnum.



He was a member of the influential Coffee House culture in the reign of Charles II, and became a member of the Royal Society in 1663, only three years after its foundation. By 1670 he had lost his estates, largely through gambling and unwise investments, and he came to depend on his friends for support. He died in 1697 and is buried at Magdalen College, Oxford.

During the Interregnum (1649-1660) Royalists in Wales were hunted down. In certain Royalist houses they were given sanctuary, including Llantrithyd Place, which became a haven for Royalist refugees. John Aubrey sheltered many prominent Royalists. One fugitive in 1652 described Llantrithyd Place as “a Welsh paradise, for ----- situation, pleasure and plenty”.

At the Restoration in May 1660, Charles II returned from exile in Holland. He sought to reward those who had supported his father in the Civil War, and as a result, in July 1660, Sir Thomas' eldest son John (1605-79) was given a baronetcy. Although the Llantrithyd estate had been sequestered by Parliament, by 1650 Sir John had recovered it.

Other wall monuments in the church relate to members of the family:

1. Sir John Aubrey (created Baronet in 1660); this monument shows the combined Coat of Arms of the Mansel and Aubrey families. It was originally in the Long Hall of the Place.
2. Sir John Aubrey (2nd Baronet) died from a fall from his horse in 1700. A monument on the South Wall records his second marriage to the heiress Mary Lewis, who brought the manor of Boarshall in Buckinghamshire with her.
3. On the North Wall, Sir Thomas Aubrey (5th Baron, died 1826), and his wife Dame Martha. “A most indulgent husband and father, as well as a truly just and honourable man.” Dame Martha “lamented by all who had the happiness of knowing her ----- a most affectionate and liberal hearted mother”.
4. There are two side monuments to their son Richard, “He delighted all who knew him” and his wife Frances: “Learn to live as she lived and then you need not be afraid to die.”
5. There are also monuments to some Stewards of the Aubrey estate, John Edmonds and John Leyshon.

Although Sir John's wife Mary survived him until 1717, and married twice more, she had no children (in fact by any of her four marriages). She bequeathed the Buckinghamshire estate to Sir John Aubrey (1680-1743), the son of her husband's first marriage to Margaret Lowther.

The 3rd Baronet moved his main home to Buckinghamshire in 1717, and already the Aubreys were spending less and less time at Llantrithyd. He appears to have had a severe upbringing, but after his father's death in 1700, he seems to have celebrated his freedom by having an affair with his stepmother's maid, Mary Stealey. It is frequently claimed that she became pregnant and that he was forced to marry her, but in fact she produced no child until 11 months after their marriage, which may mean that Sir John married her just as soon as he was free of his parents' shackles. She later produced two sons and five daughters before she died in 1714. Sir John married twice more and fathered three more daughters before his death in 1743 at Boarstall in Buckinghamshire.

Of the 4th and 5th Baronets little is known. They spent almost the whole of their time in Buckinghamshire and became thoroughly English country gentlemen. The 4th Baronet (1707-67), Sir John, apparently made a servant pregnant but refused to marry her, and in 1737 his father disinherited him. He settled the Buckinghamshire and new Oxfordshire estates on his younger son, Sir Thomas Aubrey (?1709-86). At his death the estates seem to have been divided, the smaller Llantrithyd estate going to Sir John and the more profitable Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire estates to Sir Thomas.

Sir John Aubrey, 6th Baronet (1739-1826), took more of an interest in public life, although still based himself in Buckinghamshire. He was the son of the 5th Baronet and Martha Carter, and was educated at Westminster School and Christchurch, Oxford. He was a DLC in 1763 and later a Lord of the Treasury. Between 1768 and 1826 he was M.P successively for no fewer than seven constituencies!! He died at Darton House, Buckinghamshire, in 1826. He was succeeded by his nephew, the last of the Llantrithyd Baronets (1782-1856), who lived wholly in Buckinghamshire as a country gentleman, and played no part in public life. He died without issue in 1856, and the title died with him.

After the Aubrey family inherited extensive properties in Buckinghamshire, they gradually deserted Llantrithyd. As early as 1693 the family were spending little time in Wales, the land being administered by stewards. In 1832 the roof of the mansion fell in, and by 1846 the house and gardens were described as being in decay. In 1901, the Welsh and English estates passed unexpectedly, after a long period, to Sir Henry Fletcher, 4th Baronet of Clea Hall in Cumberland. Long before this, however, the Llantrithyd lands had fallen into headlong decay. Nevertheless, the crumbling bones of the mansion, the remains of a noble and eminent past, still to be seen and admired next to the church at Llantrithyd, are a part of our past.



Don Gerrard

COWBRIDGE HISTORY SOCIETY

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Covid-19 Precautions for Meetings in Lesser Hall

TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS, PLEASE: -

ONLY attend if you have no covid-19 symptoms (cough, temperature, loss of sense of taste/smell etc.)

ONLY attend the first meeting if you have had TWO covid jabs before 15th September.

USE the sanitizing gel available at the door.

Maintain 1 metre or more distance where possible.

The use of face masks is optional.

Doors and windows will be open to promote ventilation where possible.

Dick Tonkin, Secretary

2021-22 Subscriptions

Please note: Membership fees for 2020-21 were waived, but we have begun collecting subscriptions

(£7.50 per person) for 2021-22.

We need to observe Covid procedures by not crowding together to pay membership fees, so we would appreciate it if members either send a cheque, payable to "Cowbridge History Society", to Beverly Tonkin at Porth y Felin, Town Mill Road, Cowbridge, CF71 7BE, or send the fees by BACS to Cowbridge History Society account no.00034614 at Barclays Bank UK PLC, sort code 20 12 25 **using their surname and first initial as a reference.** A standing order could be set up if preferred.

Beverly Tonkin, Treasurer

PROGRAMME FOR 2021

Talks in the autumn session this year will be either in person or by Zoom invitation on the first Friday of each month, starting at 7.30pm. The speakers and topics for the next three months are:

We plan to host our three autumn meetings of 2022 in the Lesser Hall, assuming no changes to present COVID restrictions.

- 1st October** “The World whistled their Melodies”
Griff Harries
- 5th November** “My grandfather was a milk courier”
Gwerfyl Gardner
- 3rd December** “A History of Christmas in Modern Britain”
Martin Johnes
(with mince pies and wine if meeting in person)

2022

Note that the first two meetings of 2022 will be held via Zoom; from March onwards we will return to meeting in the Lesser Hall.

- 7th January** “The Plant Hunters”
Anthea Guthrie
- 4th February** “The Pettigrews: The family that landscaped Cardiff”
Rosie James
- 4th March** “Parties, Passion and Politics in 1950s Wales”
Gareth Thomas

13 th March (Sunday) Charter Day Celebration: TBA

- 1st April** “A Brief History of Medical Practice in Cowbridge”
Chris Turner
- 6th May** AGM at 7.00 followed by: -
“Toll Roads and Trusts in South Wales”
Dick Buswell

This newsletter is issued approximately three times a year. Local history news items can be sent to dicktonkin@btinternet.com for potential publication in the next newsletter.