

# NEWSLETTER


of Cowbridge History Society

**COWBRIDGE MOTORS**  
(Proprietor - A. MADDOX)  
Charabancs and Saloon Buses for Hire.

:: PARTIES ARRANGED AT MODERATE PRICES. ::

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*Paid With Thanks*  
*July 9*



*A. Maddox*

**Easter 2025**

You will notice from our cover illustration that, 100 years ago, trips were being made by coach by groups of people from Cowbridge, just as they are today (though their vehicles were probably less comfortable than they are now). What I initially took to be the date of the trip (7/4), alas, represents the price of 7 shillings and 4 pence "per head", as pointed out by our perceptive proofreaders. Nevertheless, it is a reminder of all the hard work done by Beverly Tonkin in organising our annual History Society trip!

## Charter Day Trip 13th March 2025 Free samples from the Royal Mint!

Before setting out, some of us considered opening a book on how long it would be before one or more of the party came up with the elderly joke "Are you giving out any free samples today?" But it was unnecessary because they actually were! More of that later.

We assembled in the lobby of the "Royal Mint Experience" on a bitterly cold day in March. We were a little confused by the "Closed" signs outside the door. Our tour group would be the only visitors because work was being done to make changes to the tour route and content. Fortunately, we were expected, and we were pleased to see that the cafeteria was open. The weather caused several of us to treat ourselves to a hot chocolate or similar beverage before even meeting our guide.

It was just as well that we took the opportunity, as we had to step outside a couple of times to move from one building to another - the site covers 38 acres, and we only covered one small part of it. Though coins have been made in Britain since pre-Roman times, a unified Royal Mint was only created in 1279, by order of King Edward I of England. This was located at the Tower of London. The main centre for coin-making relocated to Llantrisant only in 1968, when the new building was opened by the late Queen Elizabeth II. Many of you will remember Eric Sewell who, with his wife Dorothy, became a new face in Cowbridge at that time; both were highly regarded members of our community. Eric was Chief Engraver at the Mint, and designed the earliest £1 coins.



Our guide, Carys, took us through the exhibition, first showing us machinery that is used to create the blanks and stamps from which coins are manufactured. Most of you will be aware that the Royal Mint used to manufacture coins on behalf of other countries as well as the UK, and it came as a bit of a surprise to learn that these exports have been discontinued because they are no longer economical. To make up for this, the Mint has now gone into the business of harvesting the small amount of gold in computer

components, making some of it into jewellery for sale.

Then we went into the factory itself, where the “real” work is done - except that the changes to the tour route meant that all we saw was machinery being moved (and workers doing a lot of shouting). At the end of this phase of the tour, we watched a young man called Daniel “striking” a coin. We had the opportunity to strike our own coin - or more accurately, a “brilliant” uncirculated coin. Only Sian James stepped up to demonstrate the process and acquire her own personal brilliant (at a cost of £7.50).

Then came the free samples! As a consolation prize for not being able to see all the machinery at work (and for the shouting), Carys and Daniel offered us a choice between two commemorative coins, each in their little display packet - we could have either an NHS 75-year-anniversary coin or a Harry Potter commemorative coin. Later, in the shop, we saw these selling for £15 each, so we really felt we’d had a bargain.



There was plenty of time to look around the exhibition, which included many things you would not immediately associate with the Royal Mint: Olympic medals, coins reclaimed from shipwrecks, and so on. One of the most unusual is the Mini pictured left, decorated with pennies.

During previous Charter Day trips, we have often enjoyed refreshments at our chosen destination, but I don’t think we’ve ever had a lunch more welcome in its day - bearing in mind the cold weather - than the one served to us by the catering team at the Royal Mint, who served us with “soup and a sandwich” (the latter was actually a half-baguette generously filled with cheese and ham), coffee, and slices of home-made cake.

In the photo below, you can see how much our party enjoyed it!



## Big Plans for Old Hall: the story continues...

In the previous issue, we mentioned the proposed improvements to Old Hall. The final proposals have now been submitted to Cowbridge Town Council. If they are accepted (as we hope), it will soon be time to apply for funding from sources such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

### In the meantime - what about our existing historic buildings?

Jean-Yves Robic, the archaeologist who did such sterling work on the Town Walls many years ago (many of you lent a hand) has invited CHS committee members to view the interior of the former Masons Arms (where he has been carrying out an archaeological investigation) prior to redevelopment beginning. [See last year's AGM minutes.] We will of course report back on his findings.

### Town Hall Heritage Room

The good news for this ongoing project is that St Fagans has provisionally agreed to return some of the Roman artefacts that were displayed in Cowbridge Museum until about 15 years ago when the powers-that-be decided that the display conditions were unsuitable. After several years in storage in some deep recess in Cardiff, during which time the Museum received its accreditation, they are considering sending some of them back to us. To date it has been difficult to obtain an inventory from the National Museum of which artefacts they have, even though they were given our only copy of the excavation report when we handed them over!

Looking after the exhibits is an important job, and the Museum is *always* looking for new volunteers. Like CHS, they would love to attract younger people, but in this case there is an incentive, since volunteering is an aspect of the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards, which many local youngsters work towards; the Museum is perhaps a more comfortable and more interesting place to meet this requirement than some of the alternatives!

### Talks of the season

On 7th February, CHS member Tony Curtis talked about "The Glamorgan Icarus", a very different individual from the previous month's "Gentleman of Glamorgan". Many of the audience were previously unaware of the poem "High Flight", which has become very popular in latter years, and even fewer knew anything about its author, John Gillespie Magee Jr, a US-born Canadian airman who was stationed at Llandow airfield at the time he wrote it in 1941 (aged only 19!) Sadly, he was killed not long afterwards, following his transfer to RAF Wellingore in Lincolnshire. Tony extended his talk into a more general one about Welsh poets of the Second World War.



In March, we had our long-awaited talk from archaeologist Tim Young, who gave us the lowdown on last summer's excavation in Llantwit Major. Tim's recent appearance on *Digging for Britain* alongside Alice Roberts (*see above*), talking about this very topic, is still available on iPlayer at the time of writing.

In April, it was the turn of a familiar face, Sue Pattinson, who spoke on the subject of "RAF Llandow and what went before". There was a *lot* of new information here to absorb. Who knew that there were once several Bronze Age tumuli on the site of the airfield!

**Our AGM** will take place on Friday 2nd May at 7pm, followed by Chris Turner: "Crime and Punishment in C19th Cowbridge". There will be a lot of work to do at the AGM as we need to make changes to the committee. Please attend and hear all the exciting news!

The minutes of last year's AGM, along with the year's financial report, are included in this edition, along with an agenda for the forthcoming meeting. See back pages.

*Dick Tonkin*  
Programme Secretary

## The Dictionary of Cowbridge Biography

The dictionary is a compendium of people born before 1900 who have a significant connection to Cowbridge and its district or who have made an important contribution to the life of the town or surrounding area.

Suggestions for inclusion are welcome and can be submitted to Chris Turner ([chrisbturner@live.com](mailto:chrisbturner@live.com)), who edits the Dictionary. Chris can also provide advice on relevance and word limits, but by way of example see earlier issues.

*Chris Turner*

## The Romans in Wales

In August 55 B.C., Julius Caesar, with 10,000 soldiers, landed on the coast of Kent. He was midway through his conquest of Gaul, and, according to his *De Bello Gallico*, the purpose of his expedition was to punish the Belgae tribe of Southern Britain for the assistance they had given to their cousins, the Belgae of Gaul, although it probably had more to do with his own ambitions. He returned to Gaul after less than a week, and in a second visit the following year, again his visit was short.

Thereafter, a century elapsed before a serious attempt was made to invade Britain. During this time, the Belgae consolidated their hold over S.E. Britain and the Kingdom of Cunobelinus, with its lively trade and prosperous agriculture, was highly developed, and appeared once again attractive to Roman expansion. Continued 'interference' in Gaul gave Rome the excuse it needed, although the real motive was the desire to seize the fertile lowlands of S. Britain, with its rich supplies of corn to feed the Legions. This would however create another border to defend and make Britain perhaps unprofitable to the Empire.

Nevertheless, greed triumphed over prudence, and in May 43 A.D. the Claudian Invasion began. AULUS PLAUTIUS landed with 4 Legions plus Auxiliary troops, a total of 40,000 men. Within 3 months Rome's hold over S.E. Britain was secure enough for the Emperor Claudius to visit, and by 47 A.D. S.E. Britain was part of the Roman Empire, and the Fosse Way, which ran from Exeter (ISCA DUMNONIORUM) to Lincoln (LINDUM) was the new frontier.

This frontier of course was unstable. It came under attack from the tribes beyond it, the chief among them being the SILURES of S.E. Wales, under their leader CARACTACUS. They attacked the new province in 47 and 48 AD, but Caractacus was captured and taken to Rome in 51 AD.

In 48 AD, as a result of these attacks, a Legionary Fortress was erected for the 20th Legion at Gloucester (GLEVUM), together with a series of smaller forts in Wales. In 52 AD there was a defeat for the Romans, but between 57 and 60 AD north-west Wales was brought under Roman control. In a series of campaigns accompanied by much slaughter by successive Roman governors, JULIUS FRONTINUS and JULIUS AGRICOLA (67-84 AD) the whole of Wales yielded to Roman rule - "the arms of Rome are everywhere" (TACITUS).

Wales had become important to Rome, outside the fertile south, as a rich source of minerals, LEAD, GOLD, COPPER and a small amount of ZINC. From the three Legionary Bases established on the Welsh Borders (each holding about 5,600 to 6,000 men) at VIROCONIUM (near Shrewsbury) 20th Legion, DEVA (Chester) 14th Legion, and ISCA (Caerleon) 2nd Legion, the Romans extended control all over Wales, establishing a network of Forts, Fortlets and Roads. Some 55 of these small forts have been identified. Also, the sites of a huge number of marching camps (built as resting places each night), dotted all over Wales have been discovered, some in the most inhospitable of places.

Except for the southern coastal area, Wales was a region of military occupation. The major road in South Wales, the VIA JULIA MAXIMA, ran from Caerleon to Carmarthen, and equates approximately with the more modern A48. There were major auxiliary forts at Cardiff and Neath (NIDUM), which could hold up to 1,000 men. There were smaller detachments of maybe 100 men at intervals, one certainly at Cowbridge, which we know contained men of the 2nd Legion, and another near Bridgend, another strategic point on the River Ogmere. South of the road the Vale of Glamorgan produced much of the grain and meat needed for the area and for the Legions, and contained 6 important villas.

Cowbridge, although a relatively minor settlement, was crucially important in its position on the River Thaw and the new road. Not a great deal of excavation has been done in Cowbridge,

but the little which has been completed reveals that, certainly until about 120 AD, the detachment of the 2nd Legion was stationed there, showing its importance (the 2nd, an Augustan Legion, was regarded as one of the most important of the Legions, a prime fighting force). In 1977, near Old Hall, evidence of shops and houses was found, and near Bear Lane further evidence of a military presence, a bath-house with bricks stamped with 2nd Legion. The military may have left after the Legion was withdrawn in about 120 AD, when it was transferred to Hadrian's Wall. It has been suggested that the settlement may have been abandoned after the Legions left the area some time between 380 A.D. and between 410 and 429 AD.

#### **SOURCES**

- Davies, John - History of Wales (Penguin, 1993)
- Collingwood, R G & Myers, J N L Myers - Roman Britain (Bell, 1939)
- Oxford History of England (OUP, 1952)
- Mattingly, D - Britain in the Roman Empire (Penguin History of Britain, 2015)
- Fleming R. - Britain after Rome (Penguin History of Britain, 2017)

*Don Gerrard*

If you want to know what happened next, read the continuation of Don's article in our next issue!

**Cowbridge History Society**  
Registered Charity 1094061

Honorary Secretary: Mr R.Tonkin, Porth Y Felin, Town Mill Road, Cowbridge, CF71 7BE

5th April 2025

Dear Member(s),

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's 13th Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.00 p.m. on Friday 2nd May 2025 in the Cowbridge United Free Church Maendy Hall; doors will be open from 6.30. The AGM will be followed at 7.30 by a talk titled "Crime and Punishment in C19th Cowbridge" to be given by Chris Turner.

**The AGM agenda is:**

1. **Welcome** by Chairman Dick Buswell
2. **Approval of the minutes of the 12th AGM of 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024**
3. **Officers' Annual Report for the year ending 5<sup>th</sup> April 2025** by Dick Buswell
4. **Presentation and Adoption of the accounts for the year ending 5<sup>th</sup> April 2025** by Honorary Treasurer Beverly Tonkin

**5. Election of the Management Committee**

The present committee consists of the Society's Officers: - President Brian James, Chairman Dick Buswell, Hon. Secretary and Programme Secretary Dick Tonkin, Hon. Treasurer Beverly Tonkin, Publications Officer Deb Fisher and three ordinary, i.e. non-officer, members (of which there could be five) Betty Alden, Don Gerrard and Chris Turner.

Dick Buswell has indicated his intention to retire as Chairman. Don Gerrard has indicated his wish to step down from the committee and Dick Tonkin has indicated his wish to retire from his role as Honorary Secretary but to continue as a Joint Programme Secretary.

The committee hereby nominates for election: - Dick Buswell and Brian James as Joint Presidents, Chris Turner as Chairman, Val Monaghan for Hon. Secretary and Kishli Laister and Dick Tonkin as Joint Programme Secretaries. Beverly Tonkin, Deb Fisher and Betty Alden are nominated for re-election to their current roles on the committee.

All these positions are open to any fully paid-up member of the Society. Any further nominations for membership of the committee must be received by the Secretary not less than ten days before the date of the Annual General Meeting; such nominations being signed by a fully paid-up member of the Society and by the person therein nominated. All elections for which there is more than one nominee for a single position shall be by ballot of the members present at the Annual General Meeting.

**6. Conduct of such other business as may be necessary;** ten days' notice of such business being given in writing to the Secretary.

Yours sincerely,

*Dick Tonkin*  
R. Tonkin, Hon. Sec.

**Minutes of the 12th AGM held at 7.00 pm on 3rd May 2024  
at the Maendy Hall, Cowbridge United Free Church.**

**1. Welcome.**

Prof. Dick Buswell, the Society's Chairman, began by welcoming all present to the 12 th AGM of the Cowbridge History Society and began proceedings by paying tribute to the late Rev Norman Williams, a founder member of the original history society and, up to the time of his death, a Joint President of the Society who took an active interest in its activities. The Chairman also advised the membership of the sad and sudden death of Prof Chris Williams who was a popular speaker who had enthusiastically accepted an invitation to be the keynote speaker in the 50 th Anniversary Celebrations later this year.

**2. Approval of Minutes of the AGM of 5th May 2023.**

The draft minutes of the 2023 AGM had been distributed with the AGM Notice. No suggested amendments were put forward from the floor. The Chairman proposed they be approved as a correct record; proposal approved without objection.

**3. Officers' Report.**

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee's Officers, reported on the past year and expanded on his initial appreciations of Rev Norman Williams and Prof Chris Williams and proceeded to outline our President Brian James's intended method of contributing to the work of the management committee. He then observed that the age profile of the Society and its committee is heavily weighted towards the elderly and expressed his hope to also attract a younger cohort of new members. He touched on the programme of talks over the closing season, the variety of interesting topics covered and the number of replacement speakers needed over the year. The Chair then outlined the Society's role in liaison with the Vale of Glamorgan Council on Cowbridge's empty buildings and the deteriorating condition of The Market Place in particular. He then advised the meeting of the 50 th anniversary working party set up under Dr Chris Turner to select activities and plan and manage the event; he called for volunteers to help make it a success. He closed by outlining the proposed publications schedule for this year and going forward.

**4. Presentation and Adoption of Accounts.**

Beverly Tonkin had issued accounts following their audit by Mrs Carole Bird who is a local, qualified accountant. Beverly advised the meeting that despite the increase in annual subscription to £10.00 the Society membership has stayed steady at 90 members and its finances are in good shape with total cash assets of £8,778.20 following a surplus of income over expenditure this year of £644.06. This is attributable to the increased subscription; book and DVD sales of £329.45 and, at last, interest of £221.73 earned on the banked funds. She opined that there appears no longer to be a need to consider further rises in the annual subscription for the foreseeable future.

Beverly spoke for all the membership in expressing gratitude to our speakers, many of whom gave talks gratis and to the caterers who supply cakes and drinks often at no cost to the Society. Beverly advised that a large part of the funds held by Barclays has now, after much time and aggravation on Barclays part, been moved to the interest-bearing account at Yorkshire Building Society. She concluded by observing that the Society is well placed to fund the new book publications and 50th anniversary events.

As no queries were raised the Chairman proposed that the accounts be adopted; there being no objection this was passed.

**5. Elections to the Committee.**

Following the Chairman's confirmation that all current members of the committee were willing to continue and had been provisionally nominated and advice from Dick Tonkin that no further

nominations for the Committee had been received, the Chairman proposed that the current committee members be re-elected "en bloc" for the year 2024/25. This was passed unanimously.

**6. Resolution to amend clause 5 (b) of the Society's constitution to read: - "The committee shall meet on no fewer than two occasions in the year. At committee meetings, four members shall constitute a quorum, of whom at least two shall be officers of the Society".**

Dick Tonkin briefly reiterated the background to the need for this change as had been set out in the AGM Notice and Agenda; it being to ensure the continued smooth running of the management committee in the light of its depleted number. There being no questions it was put to the vote and passed unanimously.

**7. Conduct of such other business as may be necessary.**

No matters had been received.

**8. Other matters raised.**

Gwerfyl Gardner suggested that we increase our profile and the younger part of the Cowbridge community's awareness of our activities through e.g. the use of a stand on the Bear Field at the time of events being held there and similar promotional initiatives. This proposal was well received.

**9. Closure.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7.30 pm.

I accept this as a true record of the meeting held on 3rd May 2024.

Signed ..... Chairman. Date  
.....

## Subscriptions

Please now pay your subscription for 2025/26, either by sending a cheque, payable to "Cowbridge History Society", to Beverly Tonkin at Porth y Felin, Town Mill Road, Cowbridge, CF71 7BE, or transfer the fees by BACS to Cowbridge History Society account no.00034614 at Barclays Bank UK PLC, sort code 20-12-25, using your surname and first initial as a reference. A standing order may be set up if preferred. The annual subscription rate is now £10 per person.

Non-members are welcome at all our monthly meetings, at a charge of £2 per head, payable at the door.

## Income and Expenses 06/04/2024 - 05/04/2025

### Income

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Anniversary Celebration INC</b>         |                   |
| Book Sales                                 | £ 108.00          |
| Catering                                   | £ 201.00          |
| Grant                                      | £ 600.00          |
| <b>Anniversary Celebration INC - TOTAL</b> | <b>£ 909.00</b>   |
| <b>Book Sales</b>                          |                   |
| Colwinston                                 | £ 3.00            |
| Miles                                      | £ 373.00          |
| Other                                      | £ 13.32           |
| <b>Book Sales - TOTAL</b>                  | <b>£ 389.32</b>   |
| Catering                                   | £ 86.50           |
| Charter Day                                | £ 550.00          |
| DVD Sales                                  | £ 20.00           |
| Donations                                  |                   |
| Other                                      | £ 9.00            |
| <b>Donations - TOTAL</b>                   | <b>£ 9.00</b>     |
| Gift Aid                                   | £ 230.21          |
| Guests Fees                                | £ 71.00           |
| Interest Earned                            | £ 274.68          |
| Membership Fees                            | £ 1,077.00        |
| <b>Income - TOTAL</b>                      | <b>£ 3,616.71</b> |

### Expenses

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| <b>Anniversary Celebration EX</b>         |                   |
| Books                                     | £ 43.00           |
| Catering                                  | £ 89.97           |
| Hall Hire celebration                     | £ 210.00          |
| Publicity                                 | £ 345.70          |
| <b>Anniversary Celebration EX-Other</b>   | <b>£ 124.50</b>   |
| <b>Anniversary Celebration EX - TOTAL</b> | <b>£ 813.17</b>   |
| <b>Bank Charge</b>                        |                   |
| Sumup                                     | £ 0.74            |
| <b>Bank Charge - TOTAL</b>                | <b>£ 0.74</b>     |
| <b>Book Printing</b>                      |                   |
| Miles                                     | £ 479.32          |
| <b>Book Printing - TOTAL</b>              | <b>£ 479.32</b>   |
| <b>Catering Expenses</b>                  |                   |
| Charities                                 |                   |
| British Legion                            | £ 20.00           |
| <b>Charities - TOTAL</b>                  | <b>£ 20.00</b>    |
| Charter Day                               | £ 394.90          |
| <b>Computer Equipment</b>                 |                   |
| maintenance                               | £ 25.20           |
| <b>Computer Equipment - TOTAL</b>         | <b>£ 25.20</b>    |
| <b>Hall Hire</b>                          |                   |
| Insurance                                 | £ 90.00           |
| <b>Running Costs</b>                      |                   |
| Digitisation consumables                  | £ 46.80           |
| History Room Rent                         | £ 240.00          |
| Postage                                   |                   |
| Book Postage                              | £ 4.80            |
| Postage-Other                             | £ 40.80           |
| <b>Postage - TOTAL</b>                    | <b>£ 45.60</b>    |
| <b>Printing</b>                           |                   |
| News Letter                               | £ 19.80           |
| Programme                                 | £ 16.15           |
| Printing-Other                            | £ 71.50           |
| <b>Printing - TOTAL</b>                   | <b>£ 107.45</b>   |
| Stationary                                | £ 23.49           |
| Web page                                  | £ 85.35           |
| <b>Running Costs - TOTAL</b>              | <b>£ 548.69</b>   |
| Speakers Fees                             | £ 280.00          |
| <b>Expenses - TOTAL</b>                   | <b>£ 2,946.02</b> |

**TOTAL INCOME - EXPENSES**

**£ 670.69**

### Balances

Barclays Bank Plc 933.09  
 Yorkshire Building Society 8515.80  
 9448.89

Opening Balance 8778.20 Signed  
 Excess for the year 670.69  
 9448.89 Hon Treasurer

*B. M. T. A. L. S.*

I have received these accounts and certify that they accord with the documents and explanations given .