

Registered Charity No 1094061

BLUE PLAQUES

Two more blue plaques for Cowbridge! This time it is the Record Society which is footing the bill, with help from the owners of the two properties. This activity fits in well with the Society's aim of increasing public knowledge and understanding of Cowbridge's historic past.

The two buildings chosen are the *Bear* and the *Duke of Wellington*, both properties which have played a significant role in the history of Cowbridge. The plaques read as follows:

BEAR HOTEL - famed as a coaching inn and meeting place, this medieval building was earlier the town house of the Thomases of Llanmihangel.

DUKE OF WELLINGTON - The old Town Hall and Preaching Cross stood in the street outside this fine medieval building, which has been an inn since the 17th century.

Both plaques will have the Town Crest at the top, and the words 'Cowbridge Record Society 2003' at the bottom.

The Mayor of Cowbridge, Cllr Mrs Janet Williams, has agreed to unveil the plaques at a small ceremony to which all members of the society are invited. This will take place on Thursday 13th March - at ~~11.50am~~ outside the *Bear Hotel*, and about 11.45am outside the *Duke of Wellington*. The date has a special significance for Cowbridge, as 13th March 1254 saw the signing of the first charter of the borough, by Richard de Clare, Lord of Glamorgan. Cowbridge was one of the new towns established in the thirteenth century. Next year will therefore be the 750th anniversary of a very special event. Even though the administrative role of Cowbridge has diminished over the years, the early burgage plots - the strips of land on which the first houses were built, adjoining the street - are still preserved in the walled garden plots of many of the buildings.

We are very grateful to Bruce McGovern for the tremendous amount of work he has put in in organising this event. He has liaised with the owners of the properties, with Cowbridge with Llanblethian Council, with the foundry and with Danny Powell who was once again kindly agreed to erect the plaques for us. Do come and make your presence known at the ceremonies.

ANOTHER INVITATION

This invitation is for you to renew your membership! The financial year for the Society starts on April 1st, and it would be appreciated if you would pay your £3 membership fee (per person) as soon as possible. A tear-off slip is attached to this newsletter. Payment should be made to the treasurer, Keith Jones, 48 Eastgate, Cowbridge CF71 7AB

You will remember that, in addition to helping to promote the history of Cowbridge, members have the privilege of purchasing any of the books we have published at £4 instead of the usual price of £4.95.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The new financial year means that it is time for the AGM. The venue is the Pagan Room, upstairs in the Duke of Wellington, 7.30pm on Monday, April 28th.

At the moment, the officers of the Society are: Brian Ll James, President; Richard Press, Chairman; Jose Rawlins, Secretary; Keith Jones, Treasurer; Betty Alden, Minutes Secretary; Deborah Fisher, Publicity Officer; Jeff Alden, Editor, together with Andy Banks, Bruce McGovern and Hilary Thomas.

Any nominations for officers or members of the committee should be received by the Secretary, Mrs J Rawlins, 8 Mill Park, Cowbridge, CF71 7BG by April 18th.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 16th April 2002
3. Reports of Officers: Chairman
Treasurer
Editor
4. Election of Officers
5. AOB

After the AGM, there will be a short talk on *Inns and Alehouses of Cowbridge : a progress report*, by Jeff Alden, after which refreshments (wine and sandwiches) will be provided by the society. We look forward to a most pleasant evening.

Source Book - Cowbridge High Street

Since the appearance in 2000 of the first book of *Sources and References* dealing with all the properties covered in *Cowbridge Buildings and People*, we have uncovered a great deal more information. As a result, I have prepared a re-write of the High Street part of that original volume, incorporating as much new information as possible. Much of this consists of specific references to the sources of information relating to the owners and occupiers of houses in the High Street, though a number of interesting anecdotes can also be found. Obviously, there is a great deal more material than could be printed in the *Cowbridge Buildings and People* book.

As the comb bindings of the earlier volume were brittle and therefore unsatisfactory, I have prepared this one in an A4 loose-leaf file. This should make the material much more convenient to read, and of course it will be easier to replace or amend individual pages. The 240-odd pages, of which 176 are text, have been photocopied, by Infographics of Llandow: it is good to keep our work in the neighbourhood. A copy of the Source Book will be deposited in Cowbridge Library, but should anyone wish to purchase a copy, the cost to members will be £14, and to non-members £17.50. (Please give your orders to me.) Brian James has kindly given me a good deal of additional information, but I must stress that the errors (and especially the typing errors, of which there are probably quite a few) are mine alone.

I intend to work towards updating the information on the other buildings covered in our first book - and I hope eventually to complete the coverage of the town.

BURGAGE RENTALS

Among the most significant recent finds relating to the history of Cowbridge, has been the discovery in the Bute papers at the National Library in Aberystwyth of the lists of Burgage Rents payable to the Marquess of Bute.

Cowbridge, as a medieval planted town, was also a planned town. The major element of this planning was the burgage plot, the long, narrow strip of land usually extending back from the main road to the boundaries of the borough. A house or workshop was usually built on the street side (often end-on), with gardens and outbuildings behind. The standard yearly rent for a single burgage in Cowbridge - as throughout England and Wales - was one shilling. Robinson's book on *Cowbridge: Archaeology and Topography* points out that in 1263 the town yielded fixed rents amounting to £2 19s pa. He then deduces that in 1263, the population of Cowbridge represented about 59 burgage tenements, and using the same calculations, suggested that the number of burgages had risen to 135 in 1281 and 233 by 1295. Even by the end of the thirteenth century, however, the number of burgages did not necessarily represent the number of households, as some burgages had been subdivided, and other plots amalgamated.

The earliest of the 'Bute Rentals' is for 1738. This certainly shows evidence both for earlier subdivision and for amalgamation, as there are many half-burgage properties, and some of up to seven burgages. The total within the walls, however, is $58 \frac{3}{4}$ burgages, as far as I can work out, suggesting that the 1263 population was solely within the walls, and that the town soon spread out beyond the physical limits of the walls.

What is of great interest to anyone attempting to repopulate the town, is that the lists always start at the West end (south side), work eastwards along the south side of the High Street, (with minor incursions into Church Street and the Limes), and then on reaching the eastern limit, work systematically westwards along the northern edge of High Street. For each property in 1738, we have the name of the owner, and the size of the plot (in terms of burgages). By 1744, we also have the name of the tenant, and all this information is subsequently provided for all the rentals. There are some gaps in the records, but fortunately very little change in number or size of holdings is shown for the period covered by these rentals, that is from 1738 to 1834, and so these have proved extraordinarily useful in working out 'who lived where'.

The earliest date of Land Tax Assessment for Cowbridge is 1773, but using Burgage Rentals we can now go back about 50 years earlier with very much more detailed records. There are problems, as different officials varied in working out who was a freeholder, a tenant, a lessee or an occupier. It is also clear that some of the tax-collectors copied out older lists without making many, if any, amendments, even though some of the people recorded had died or moved away.

Despite the difficulties, for many properties we can follow ownership and tenancy clearly throughout the period. There are also great leaps forward to be made when links can be made with property deeds. For example, there is only plot in all Cowbridge recorded as being of three-eighths of a burgage; and so when a deed mentions a plot as being "one quarter of a burgage and a half of one quarter" it is in all likelihood the same property. Thus the history of 79 High Street can be pushed back to 1603, when Matilda John als Hughes and John Hughes, probably her son, conveyed this property to Robert Robinson, MA Cantab (and he subsequently conveyed it to William Morrice of Cowbridge, tailor, etc, etc).

Perhaps even more importantly, knowledge of the ownership of specific properties has helped us correct the errors of an eighteenth-century lawyer's clerk (and also the errors of a

much more recent editor). The deeds for an inn called the Half Moon and belonging to Pierce Cornish have one entry stating that the house was 'on the west of Church Street', and the other entry stated that the house was 'bounded on the west by Church Street'. For the *Buildings and People* book, I used the first definition, and so placed the Half Moon at 50 High Street. The Burgage Rentals, however, make it quite clear that Pierce Cornish's property was what we now know as the *Duke of Wellington*. Small annotations are required for the *B & P* book!

OUR LATEST BOOK

Cowbridge and District Remembered, 1900-1950 has proved to be another success, and has given a great deal of pleasure to many people. We had just over 1000 copies printed, and have fewer than 200 left, so if members wish to buy any further copies at the special price of £4, hurry!

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF EMMA EDMONDES, 1860-61

(with thanks to John Edmondson for permitting me to read and use the diary)

On December 13th, we go to London, and on the 19th went to Wales to keep Christmas with our uncle, John Homfray, Penllyne Castle, Cowbridge, Glamorganshire. Uncle John's coach – yellow – was at Bridgend Station to meet us – it was cold and snowing. They were very kind and gave us a great welcome – Uncle John, his son John "Jones" as we called him (he was great fun) and his bride Mary Homfray "Culey".

For Christmas, the Bassetts came over from their home – Bonvilston – about 6 miles off. They were Richard Bassett and his wife "Nia" - Mary "Moons", John "WeeWee", Thurstan and Baby or Babs. They are all so nice and we play all sorts of games and dance a great deal. It is Christmas, so everything is allowed. They are lively, pretty and handsome, and full of good spirit and stories. On Sunday we went to the Church at the gate – on Christmas Day we all drove to church at Cowbridge about 2 miles off in the break – Nia had a new bonnet from Paris and we had our new things on. We slide all afternoon.

At Merthyr Mawr, 4 miles away there is a ball for Xmas – Moons and I though not "out" yet are allowed to go – it is very jolly going and coming for we fill 3 carriages, and sing nearly all the way – we danced everything and enjoyed it very much. How well I remember all about it. I wonder if others remember as well as I do.

On 1st Jan 1861, Moons and I walk to Cowbridge in the morning to deliver a message from Culey to Mrs Edmondson to come up in the evening to dinner and dance. (Moons, Weewee and Thurstan had our dinner alone) that night – we saw Mrs and Mary Edmondson and at the door Charles the eldest son met us and said he was looking forward to instruction that evening for we were to learn the "Imperial Quadrille". We gave the message quite to our own satisfaction. Came back and went sliding – then they came to dinner. Moonsy, Weewee, Thurstine and I had tea by ourselves in the housekeeper's room, as there would be a slight crowd in the dining room, and appeared in the drawing room in plenty of time for coffee an oh! The dancing. We all had a very jolly evening and enjoyed it greatly.

2nd: We slide on the ponds and walk about the place, and on 3rd Jan all but Uncle John went to a ball at Bridgend. Enjoyed it very very much indeed. I did not get back till 5.30 singing all the way – It was so nice – I should like that ball very often. 4th: not at breakfast till 12 after our ball, which was talked over leisurely.

The 5th I was ill. Castor oil.

(Emma was to marry Charles Edmondson)

Jeff Alden, Editor, 1 Mill Park, Cowbridge, CF71 7BG; 01446-773373

Emma 1843 - 1922

4

Charles Greyford E. 1838 - 1893