

Cowbridge and District Local History Society and the Cowbridge Record Society

NEWSLETTER

December 2008

This newsletter is an attempt to serve both these thriving societies, keeping members and others who are interested aware of activities and events over the year. Ideally, it should have come out last September, but hopefully it is better late than never!

The Local History Society, meeting the first Friday of the month in the Lesser Hall, has changed the starting time to 7.30 pm.

Chairman	Dick Buswell
Hon Secretary	Don Gerrard
Hon Treasurer	Beverly Tonkin
Programme Secretary	Dick Tonkin
Publicity Officer	Robert Cope
Committee	Ivana Locke, Val Pugh, Marilyn Cope Betty Alden, Keith Jones.
Representative on Vale Conservation Advisory Group	: George Haynes
President	Revd Norman Williams
Vice Presidents	Yvonne Weeding, Revd Stanley Mogford

At December's meeting, with mulled wine and mince pies, Revd Peter Cobb will be the speaker. As former boarding master and Head of Geography at Cowbridge Grammar School, he will tell us of the school (and town) as they were in the 1950s.

Programme of Talks for 2009

9 th January	Curating Contemporary Life at St Fagan's Museum of Welsh Life by Owain Rhys, the curator
6 th February	The 4 th Don Wallis Memorial Lecture - Morgan John and the Welsh Indians by Brian Davies, of Pontypridd Museum
6 th March	Cardiff's Hidden History – Bute Park by Rosie James, Cardiff City Parks Dept.
13 th March	Charter Day Celebration – afternoon tour of Atlantic College, preceded by a pub lunch.
3 rd April	Cardiff – a City at War by Denis Morgan followed by wine and cheese.

Annual membership of this society is £7.50, but you are very welcome to come along as a visitor to any meeting for a payment of £1

The Record Society held its Annual General Meeting in May, and a book launch in November for Jose Rawlins's book "The Great War – Memorials of Cowbridge and Llanblethian". This detailed account of those from the district who served and perished in that war is now available from the Cowbridge bookshop or Davies the Newsagent (or from Jose herself at 8 Mill Park, Cowbridge, CF71 7BG) – cost £4, or £5 by post (£6.40 for overseas post).

President	Brian James
Chairman	Deborah Fisher
Hon Secretary	Jose Rawlins
Hon Treasurer	Keith Jones
Committee	Hilary Thomas, Luke Millar, Richard Press, Nicole Burnett, Hannah Mitchell, Betty Alden

Deborah Fisher writes:

On 22nd May, Cowbridge Local History Society and Cowbridge Record Society held their first joint event. In the tradition of the walks through historic Cowbridge, on which Jeff Alden sometimes took members of his local history class, we took a historic tour of the village of Colwinston, led by local resident Philip Jones.

Philip is one of Colwinston's most active citizens, and is currently one of the leaders of the campaign to form a "civic trust" within the village, with the aim of progressing projects such as landscaping and repairs that cannot, for whatever reason, be taken on by the local authority and that may attract grant aid. We began our evening at the Sycamore Tree Inn, where Phil gave us some background information about the village. Despite heavy showers earlier in the day, the rain stayed off throughout our walk, and the ground was dry – just as well, because the route would take us through several fields. Places of interest pointed out in Colwinston's main street included the old schoolhouse (complete with outside toilets), the site of the former sawmills, the slaughterhouse, and the dwelling place of Richard Burton's ancestors, the Jenkins family.

At the first stile, we lost Ivana. They just don't build stiles for people under 5 feet tall these days! Perhaps because Phil adjusted his usual route to allow us to start and finish at the pub, there was some confusion about where we were to rejoin our missing comrade, and we didn't see Ivana again until we arrived at the medieval parish church of St Michael's, half an hour later. By that time, we had been shown the former baptistery of the now-defunct Ebenezer Chapel – in other words, a pond in a field which has been neatly landscaped by the landowner – and the location of the watercress pools that once supplied the village's population with their "greens".

Miraculously, our numbers swelled by around 20% as we entered the Sycamore Tree to enjoy a convivial meal together (but then, there were only 14 of us to start with....) It was a little unfortunate that the weather earlier in the day had caused the restaurant staff to jump to the conclusion that we weren't coming after all, and the sole bartender/waiter was a little overworked at times, but somehow delays in serving went almost unnoticed amid the chatter and general jollity.

I fervently hope that we will be able to organise a similar event at some future date. If any CRS or LHS members have ideas for local historic walks, or indeed for other suitable joint events, please do let your committee know. History should be shared and it should be fun.

The Local History Study Room, Room 5, Old Hall, Cowbridge

This small, but very pleasant room has been dedicated to the memory of Jeff Alden, who had gathered together a wealth of photographs and documents relating to the history of this town and its surrounding area, which he loved so much. Over the past months, volunteers have helped with the huge task of sorting and cataloguing this material, so that it can be made available for public use. In early September, eight Comprehensive School sixth formers came for a week of work experience, and later that month exhibitions in the room, and the adjoining room, were open for two days as part of the weekend celebrations for the 400th anniversary of the Grammar School's foundation. The History Society's blue plaque, which Bruce McGovern had pioneered and which marks the Grammar School as a historic building in this town, was mounted on its Church Street wall that weekend too.

Although there is much material still to sort, it is proposed to open this local history room on a regular basis, probably one half-day a week, early in 2009. The intention is that people can come here simply to browse through and enjoy the material, or research their ancestors, their houses, streets, families of the area etc. There is certainly room for someone to re-start a small local history research/study group. A financial contribution for the use of the room is being made jointly by the two societies, so it is important the facility is a well used and valuable part of the town, complementing its excellent museum.

A number of people have kindly volunteered to help with this project. A meeting has been arranged for Wednesday, January 7th at 10 am in Room 6 (next door to Room 5) of Old Hall for all who are interested to be involved. Do please come along, and if not then, when the room is regularly opened.

Jeff Alden Local History Awards 2008 - given by the Record Society

The awards have been won by Alice Coe and Samuel Thomas who submitted well-presented projects relating to the history of Cowbridge. Six year old Alice, living in the Verlands, decided to find out "why our street is called The Verlands" and, after gaining information from many sources, presented an excellent summary for all her research. Samuel, aged eleven, who lives in Bonvilston, researched the history of the 'Bear' and the 'Ancient Druid' with which his ancestors were connected. He too presented an excellent summary of his work.

Rotary Charity Quiz

A Record Society team (Deborah, Richard, Nicole and Jose) came second out of 32 teams in the Charity Quiz held on November 13th, losing by just one point to a team fielded by CAOS. The £150 prize has been donated to Wales Air Ambulance.

Further newsletters

Betty Alden has undertaken this one, with grateful help from various others. Hopefully, there will be two (possibly three) each year, but if so we need someone to gather the material and put it all together. If you are willing to take this job on, please contact one of the committee members from either society.

Can you identify this building?

A Dunraven deed of 1662 (the 14th year of Charles II) relates to the transfer of ownership between Rice Portrey of Boverton and Margaret Seys of Cowbridge widow - one burgage in Cowbridge town, being a messuage, stable, brewhouse and garden, between the lands of Sir Edward Thomas on the east, the almshouse on the south, the street there leading towards the Church on the west and the street from Cardiff to Swansea on the north, near the high cross.

Answer : at the foot of page 4

This letter came to light amongst Jeff's material, and may be of interest:

From E.W.Miles. solicitor, Cowbridge to the Revd Dr L.J. Hopkin James (author of 'Old Cowbridge', and vicar of Llanblethian).

27th June 1923

Dear Doctor Hopkin James,

Regarding the origin of the name of "Mount Ida" for Llanblethian Hill, I have a clear recollection, being familiar with the locality continuously from Childhood. During my Childhood days it was always referred to as "Llanblethian Hill" and it was an attractive resort for myself and Companions.

In the year 1864 I, with some of the local boys, (who have now passed away to their eternal destiny) became day pupils at the Grammar School. At that time a Mr William Thomas lived at the "Town Mill" where he conducted an extensive Flour Milling and Malting business. He had two boys who were familiarly known as Willie and Eddie, rather younger than myself and schoolmates. Not being subject to the then rigid regulations of the School Boarders, we day boys, when released from school discipline, made the Town Mill our centre, where swings and other attractions were provided for our entertainment. Amongst other games we practised Scouting, through reading Books of Adventure, and Llanblethian Hill was adopted as the field of operations. I have always had the fact in my mind that it was on one of these Scouting excursions that the Hill was first named "Mount Ida" by one of my Companions, and I have a strong impression that it was Eddie Thomas of The Mill who first suggested the name. Our little Company always afterwards spoke of it as "Ida" to our Schoolmates – the Boarders- and it became the adopted name by the School. This must have been about the year 1865 and the name has really been reserved down to this day by the Successive generations of the Grammar School pupils.

When I became a pupil Mr Beaver was the Principal. School opened at 6:30 in the morning. There were very few small boys in the School at that time, most of the pupils being about and over 21 years of age, full grown men, apparently of wealth – The Shaws, Batemens, Cloughs, Jim Thomas, Ben Johnson, Llewellyns, Lawrences, Alexander etc. etc. The Revd. Curre Thomas and W.F. Evans and Harold Thomas are the only survivors to my knowledge. At that time there was a School Boat Club and Boating on the river, and the Mortar Board Hats were worn by all, the 6th Form Boys being distinguished by Tassels on Hat, but the Revd Thomas Williams introduced the School Cap about the year 1865.

Yours Sincerely.

E. W. Miles
(Solicitor, Cowbridge, Glam)

Answer from Page 3

The building known now as the Duke of Wellington public house