

# COWBRIDGE AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 26

SUMMER 1987



St. Hilary

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Vera and Iolo Griffiths, who have done so much for the Society in the past, are opening their garden at Hafod-y-Coed, Greenwood Lane, St. Fagans, on Sunday afternoon, June 14th. Proceeds will go to charity.

Vera, as Chairman of the Medical Benevolent Society, has asked if any members would care to go to Margam Orangery in autumn when Patricia Moore, our Vice-President, will be giving a talk on the History of the Orangery. There will be a buffet, with wine. Details will be given by the Excursion Secretary after the A.G.M. in September.

### Long Weekend Break in Normandy

4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th September.

900th year anniversary of death of William the Conqueror.

Stay in Rouen and visit Bayeux, Falais. Travel from Cowbridge and back by coach, which will stay with us for the weekend.

Dinners, Bed & Breakfast, Coach travel will cost £120.

Travel arrangements by Roddam Travel.. Details from Yvonne Weeding, Cowbridge 2878

## FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

### September 11th

Annual General Meeting – followed by 'Dubrovnik' –an audio-visual presentation by Ray Toogood.

### October 2nd

'The Life and Times of William Thomas, the Diarist.'

Speaker: Roy Denning.

### November 6th

'Cholera – Epidemics in Cardiff and the Vale.'

Speaker: L. N. A. Davies.

### December 4th

The Maud Gunter Memorial Lecture: 'Constantine, Helena and the True Cross'

Speaker: Arthur Peplow.

Except for the A.G.M., the Society meets on the first Friday of the month at 8.00 p.m. in the Lesser Hall of Cowbridge Town Hall.

All are welcome.

## FEBRUARY MEETING

The speaker was Henry Owen-John, deputy director of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust.

He began with a brief resume of the prehistory of South Wales from the Ice Ages of the Pleistocene period. Traces of human habitation have been found in the limestone caves of the Gower, dating from the later Pleistocene during Palaeolithic times. The most notable is the Paviland cave. At that time, man was a hunter, preying on such animals as the mammoth, which were able to withstand the arctic conditions.

During Mesolithic times, the climate became warmer, ice and tundra gradually being replaced by forest. Hunting techniques changed to accommodate the different species of animal then available, e.g. deer. Later in the Mesolithic, and during Neolithic times, man began to change the landscape himself, living in fixed settlements and cultivating the land. Communal burial chambers, such as the one at Tinkinswood, date from this period.

With the coming of the Bronze Age, burial methods changed, individual mounds and cairns replacing chambered tombs.

The Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age saw the construction of defensive 'hill forts', so called because the remains are only generally visible on high ground. However aerial photography has led to the discovery of many forts at lower levels.

Mr Owen-John then proceeded to place some recent local archaeological work within this historical context, illustrating with slides. He mentioned work done by Anthony Ward of Swansea University on Bronze Age ring cairns at Cefn Bryn on the Gower. It is generally assumed that the cairns are funerary monuments, but the speaker pointed out that, according to one school of thought, they are the remains of houses wherein burials have taken place.

He went on to discuss the dig of a group of cairns at PENRHIW CRADOC, near Mountain Ash, through which Forestry Commission workers had inadvertently ploughed. The cairns were found to have a regular rectangular structure within, the largest containing three pits with burned bones, possibly cremations. Radio carbon dating placed the cairns in the 2nd millennium B.C.

Finally, Mr Owen-John talked about a rescue dig at COED-Y-CYMDDA, near Wenvoe. The site was a Bronze Age enclosure with an outer defensive ditch. Two antler picks which had been used in the construction were found on the site. The enclosure appeared to have been constructed solely as a defensive fort, there being no evidence of occupation beyond one small hearth. Various artefacts were found, such as flint implements and pottery, but these, mysteriously, seemed to pre-date the enclosure. The fort appeared not to have been completed.

The Rev'd John Marshall gave a vote of thanks for a most interesting lecture.

M.H.



## MARCH MEETING

At the March meeting Vivien Turner spoke on HUNTERS AND GATHERERS - THE FIRST AFFLUENT SOCIETY.

She pointed out that man had in fact been a hunter-gatherer for 99% of the time from his first origins to the present day. Much of the information for the talk was provided by surveys of present day hunter-gatherer societies in Australia and in the Kalahari desert.

It used to be thought that hunter-gatherers spent all their time in an incessant quest for food and that they were undernourished and in poor health. Medical evidence indicated that their health is as good, or better, than ours. They are not short of food and, on average, have a calorie intake in excess of their needs. Surveys show that food-connected activities do not usually exceed 3 - 4 hours each day, although on occasional days up to 7 hours is spent, but on others, less than 1 hour.

Against the apparent advantages of the hunter-gatherer lifestyle must be set the stark fact that the homicide rate is high. In part this is due to the abandonment of older people when they are no longer able to keep up with the group. Each family has one child at intervals of about four years. Children are breast-fed for this length of time and lengthy lactation may inhibit fertility, but it is suspected that a degree of infanticide may be practised.

Much of the abundant spare time is spent in sleeping or in argument or banter. They appear generally contented and, because their needs are limited, they consider themselves affluent. The social groups in which they live are egalitarian and there is no sex discrimination. Children appear to enjoy an extended childhood and do no work unless the group has taken on peripheral agricultural activities.

At the close of the talk, many questions were asked and the ensuing discussion had to be curtailed to bring to a close a fascinating talk.

M. H.

#### APRIL MEETING

'Two views on Wales' was a fascinating talk given by Dr William Linnard on April 3rd. Dr Linnard is a researcher at the Folk Museum at St. Fagans.

The first view entitled 'A German in 1856' was of a German, Julius Rodenberg, who visited North Wales in the mid 1800s, was very impressed by the country and people and on returning to Germany wrote a book "Ein Herbst in Wales" - An Autumn In Wales. Julius landed at Liverpool by boat. He took the train down the North Wales coast, and found a pleasant farmhouse to stay in at Aber, near Bangor. He was of a very poetic nature, he got to know the locals well and did much walking around Aber and in Snowdonia.

He was much taken by one daughter of his host, named Sarah. He tended to have a romantic view of the society and wrote at length about various customs and habits with a certain amount of poetic licence. He found himself having sympathy with the Welsh and disliking the English tourists. His book is a fascinating mix of fact and fiction originally written in German and now translated into English with additional notes by Dr Linnard. Julius Rodenberg obviously had a most enjoyable



stay in North Wales and made a most unusual contribution to our view of history.

The second account entitled "A Gentleman Farmer in 1797" is much in contrast to the first. In 1964 an old lady died near Bath. The neighbours sorting out her house made a bonfire to burn old papers, out of which fell a leather bound book which was rescued by two sisters. This turned out to be a diary covering 14 years from 1788-1802 giving an account of the everyday working of a gentleman farmer in the Vale of Glamorgan. The diary is written on sheets of paper meticulously drawn into sections and bound together.

From the diary could be gleaned much information as to the writer's family, even to the names of the cows, but much more detective work was required to ascertain that the farmer was called John Perkins. He came from a well-to-do family who lived in St. Brides Super Ely. His father died in 1781 when he was 21 and he married Elizabeth Willis, the daughter of Rev. W. Willis of Gileston. (Probably a relative of the deceased old lady, as the crest on the diary binding was Willis). They rented various farms in Llantrithyd, eventually settling at Tydrew.

The diary is a day-to-day account of the farm's activities and local events. The Napoleonic Wars are mentioned and the way grain prices boomed. The children were taken out of school during smallpox epidemics and we are told of medicines used during ailments. Life was very mundane with the occasional outing, mainly within the county, to a fight or fair. The diary is probably one of a set as there is no definite start or end - the rest could be hidden in someone's loft or may have been burnt on the bonfire. Mr Perkins was a thorough, meticulous man devoted to his family, and Dr Linnard, having dug the diary out of

the archives has worked hard to discover its history and make it come alive.

Dr Linnard gave us a most interesting talk, augmented with slides, and proved how old documents can lie in archives and old books in shops waiting to be brought alive by the discerning historian.

Ruth Sherwood



ST. QUENTIN'S CASTLE LLANBLETHIAN

memories of a successful and interesting History Society outing. Also seen were slides of the U.S.A.; a Cruise from Naples to Dubrovnik via the Red Sea, the Himalayas and Nice.

Viv Whyte brought pictures of her uncle, Gwyn Nichols, who was captain of the team who beat the famous New Zealand All Blacks in 1905 at Cardiff Arms Park. Awen produced a very interesting album of old postcards depicting local views and also a collection of humorous World War I postcards which she and her husband collect.

I apologise to any member whose contributions I have not mentioned as I was not able to see everything brought along. However I hope that I have given an indication of the variety of photos and cards seen.

We then adjourned for our meal, concluding an evening full of laughter and much reminiscing at about 10 o'clock.

Diane Lloyd

#### AMERICAN SUPPER AND PHOTO EVENING

FRIDAY MAY 8TH, 1987

This was the last meeting of the 1986-1987 Programme. Although not as well attended as other meetings, all those present agreed that it had been a very pleasant evening.

The food for the American Supper was laid out on a long table in the Lesser Hall and colourfully laid tables were also arranged around the room. Most people had brought photos and memorabilia of interest and the first part of the evening was spent wandering around the room chatting and looking at each other's wares. Many interesting bits and pieces were brought along for example there were photos of "The Cowbridge History Society Buildings Group" on visits to Llansannor Court, Llandaff Cathedral, Llancarfan Church, Llantrisant and St. Mary's Penmark. These were of particular interest to me as these visits took place before I joined the Society.

Ray Toogood brought along a slide viewer projector which was available for use by individuals or groups and we were therefore able to see the fascinating slides of Sanjit's trip to Kenya. The slide of the balloon trip across the Masai Mara was especially exciting. We also saw slides of the trip to Glastonbury and Wells which brought back happy

#### FRIENDS OF THE COWBRIDGE MUSEUM

The Friends will be holding their first meeting on Friday, 5th June, at 7.30 p.m. in the Lesser Hall of Cowbridge Town Hall.

Dr. D. Bassett will be the speaker, and all are welcome.



HOLY CROSS CHURCH  
COWBRIDGE

## THE SANDLAND STORY

### (Second Instalment)

My note in the February Newsletter – about the letter from Ann Sandland of Llanblethian to her son in Australia in 1856 – has generated some interest!

First of all, Marjorie and Alan Hey managed to locate the grave of George and Ann Sandland in Llanblethian churchyard, to the left of the path just inside the gate.

Secondly, Betty Williams tells me that a Thomas Whapham, a vet, used to live at The Poplars : he died there in 1903, aged 65 : so he could have been the son of the Charlotte mentioned in the letter – almost certainly he was a relative.

Thirdly, I had a long letter from Brian James, Librarian at University College, Cardiff, and he was able to give a lot of information :



The Old South Gate, Cowbridge.

"It seems to me that St. Nicholas rather than Cowbridge or Llanblethian is the focus of the news/gossip in the letter. The family must have lived for some years at Dyffryn (=Daff) Lodge and they continued to take a detailed interest in the affairs of the Bruce family of Dyffryn and the Tylers of Cottrell and the humbler residents of the parish. Lewis Bruce, who was going to live at the Great House, St. Nicholas, following the death of his aunt, the widow of William Bruce Knight, Dean of Llandaff, in July 1856, was a younger son of the

squire of Dyffryn. (Mrs Bruce Knight was, by the way, a sister of the Rev. John Montgomery Traherne of Coedriglan.) Lewis Bruce was the father of Sir Gerald Bruce of St. Hilary, whom many in Cowbridge will remember as Lord Lieutenant before Sir Cennydd Traherne.

Further down the letter there is a reference to Mrs Bruce who forced Jane Edwards to marry in the nick of time. This Mrs Bruce was the wife of Lewis's brother, William Bruce, who was Rector of St. Nicholas from 1840 to 1872. "Whats the butcher" was William Watts of St. Nicholas! The Harbottles were farmers at Tinkinswood.

The famous Cymer Colliery explosion occurred on 15 July 1856; 114 were killed, not 140. Jabez Thomas, the manager, Rowland Rowlands, the overman, Morgan Rowlands, the fireman, and others were indicted on the findings of the coroner's inquest and were tried for manslaughter at the Assizes at Swansea in March 1857. They were found not guilty. The full story is told by E.D. Lewis in the 'Transactions of the Hon. Society of Cymmrodorion', 1976, pp. 119-161.

There are references to several public houses – Bush, Red Lion and Greyhound – which were all in Cowbridge.

The comment about the number of people who had recently left the Vale for Australia is very interesting. It reminded me of a letter I came across printed in the Bridgend Chronicle for 19 December 1857. It is from John Harry who had emigrated to Melbourne. He writes to his father in Llantwit Major : "My dear Father, I wish you to tell Dr Carne that all young men and females that come to get information to emigrate to Victoria, I hope that gentleman will give them his good advice, and tell them to stop in the old country." (Dr Carne was J.W. Nicholl-Carne of Dimlands.)

I wonder if the "Davey Jones" mentioned at the end of the letter could possibly be David Jones of Wallington, then a young man living at Great House, Llanblethian?

There are many other points in the letter that I cannot explain. The detail about the quarries at Penderyn is particularly puzzling; why should an old lady in Llanblethian give her son this information? I hope other people will come up with further explanations."

All help gratefully received!

Jeff Alden



# The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd.

## *Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeological Morgannwg-Gwent Cyf.*

Many members will be familiar with the work of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, who have carried out a number of investigations in Cowbridge over the years. Formed in 1975, The Trust is primarily concerned with 'Rescue Archaeology'; the recording of archaeological information prior to its destruction. The agencies of destruction are many. Threats such as housing, road construction, and quarrying are obvious, but natural erosion and new techniques of agriculture can also create havoc with the heritage.

The Trust's activities are varied, and although we are most evident whilst undertaking 'digs', we are also involved in many other activities; consultation with local authorities and developers at the planning stages, compilation of the regional Sites and Monuments Record, various forms of survey, preparation of exhibitions and educational material and the all important work of post-excavation analysis and publication. In a future newsletter I hope I shall be permitted to write about what the Trust does apart from excavation, but in the meantime, for members who may be tempted to come and see the Trust in action during what will be the fine summer months, details are given here of some of the Trust's excavations.

### USK

Usk was a crucial military site during the initial stages of the Roman invasion of Wales, and seems to have seen either a legionary fortress or supply-base used by the army prior to the establishment of the legionary fortress a little way down the river at Caerleon c. A.D. 75. The present work is adding much to our appreciation of the nature of the military history of Roman Wales.

A complex structural sequence is emerging which includes evidence for types of building unique in Britain. Nearby in the cemetery associated with the Priory examination of the skeletal remains of some of the Priory's inhabitants will yield data concerning diet and disease of the Middle Ages, whilst later in the project it is hoped to examine what is thought to be the site of a twelfth century hospice founded by Richard de Clare (an ancestor of the de Clare who founded Cowbridge). The excavations and on-site exhibition are open during normal working hours and at other

times by arrangement; for further details please contact the Project Director, Andrew Marvell, at the site office (tel 029 13 3536).



GREAT HOUSE.  
LLANBLETHIAN,

### COSMESTON

The Cosmeston Medieval Village project, now entering its fifth year, is one of the largest archaeological investigations ever undertaken in Wales. Here, for the first time, a medieval village is being examined as near as possible in its entirety, and the environment and structures being painstakingly reconstructed. The project is also looking at the earlier and later episodes of activity on the site and at the evolution of the surrounding landscape. Recently Cosmeston won the 'Heritage in Britain' award for the best-designed project involving long-term preservation and presentation of an archaeological site.

The reconstructions and experimental work being carried out are just one aspect of the ways in which the Trust carries out its obligations in the field of public education. The Trust has recently obtained the use of the 18th century Cosmeston Cottage, itself an integral part of the archaeological remains, which is in process of being converted into our Visitor Centre. In addition to site visits during working hours and on Sunday afternoons a programme of events has been planned for the coming months. Please telephone the site office (0222 708686) for up-to-the-minute details of events at Cosmeston.

## THE SALT HOUSE, PORT EYNON (GOWER)

The Salt-house is one of the oldest surviving remains in Wales, if not Britain, of what was an essential aspect of the economy - the production of salt. Excavations have revealed advanced technology in use during the 16th century. The associated buildings, still partly standing despite the assaults of high tides and winter storms, were occupied until the 19th century. Guided tours are available during working hours and on Sunday afternoons; for details contact the Trust's main office (0792 55208).

These are just some of the main excavation projects with which the Trust will be involved this summer. We shall also be continuing our programme of excavation in the area of the extensive civilian settlement around the legionary fortress at Caerleon, conducting further work to elucidate the topographical development of medieval Monmouth, and carrying out further work at the Atlantic Trading Estate, Barry, where the complex settlement remains includes a substantial cemetery of the Early Christian period.

Closer to home, we hope to be back in Cowbridge, this time examining the area adjacent to the Bear Hotel prior to the construction of a kitchen extension. Earlier investigations by the Trust on the same site revealed evidence for the North gate of the medieval borough and a tantalising glimpse of what might be a Roman military ditch. Further investigation of this feature is vital to our understanding of the origins of the settlement at Cowbridge. Volunteers will be most welcome and should contact J. Park-house (0792 55208).

The people of Cowbridge have given the Trust invaluable support over the years. It was in response to such support, here and elsewhere, that the Friends of the Trust was formed in 1985. The Friends organise lectures, visits to sites of archaeological interest, and a variety of social events. Members are kept in touch with current archaeological activities in the Glamorgan/Gwent area by means of a newsletter and meetings of the various local groups of the Friends, such as that based in Bridgend. Details may be had on application to the Secretary of the Friends of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, c/o GGAT, 6, Prospect

Place, South Dock, Swansea, SA1 1QP.  
Jonathan Parkhouse

FIELD OFFICER

## CHARTER DAY DINNER 1987

Charter Day was held on Friday, March 13th. The Mayor of Cowbridge, Councillor Don Borthwick, was kind enough to receive us in the Mayor's Parlour and Council Chamber for the pre-dinner reception where he and Mrs Borthwick welcomed the History Society members and their guests.

Following an introduction by Mrs Dilys Parker, the Mayor opened a display in the Museum Cells commemorating the Victorian weekend held in Cowbridge during September 27th-29th 1986 which celebrated the centenary of the Victorian Charter of September 28th 1886. The focal point of the display is a Parian bust of Queen Victoria, dated 1887, which was given to Mrs Parker (for the Museum) by Mr Billy Phillips of the Victoria Inn, Singtonstone, and who unfortunately was unable to be present.

The dinner was attended by 95 people including the Mayor and Mayoress of Cowbridge, Mr Arthur Peplow, Dr William Linnard, Mr Philip Riden, Mrs Vivien Turner, Mrs Jane Clarke, Mr Lennard, and Val and Simon Nichols. We were all very pleased to see Val and Simon, two former stalwart Committee members now living in Cheltenham, and glad that Val is now looking so well. Our President, the Rev. Norman Williams, and our Vice-President, Mrs Patricia Moore, were also present.

Afterwards we adjourned to the Main Hall for a pleasant and convivial evening. The food had been prepared by Mr the Trust's Head, the wife (0792) Jimmy Keay and Eric Sewell. My thanks go out to Jimmy and Eric, not only for the wine, but also for their help in setting out the hall. This is a major contribution to the success of Charter Night, and a job for which they always so kindly volunteer.

At this stage I would also like to say a 'thank -you' to Maureen Frost, who is retiring as Town Clerk, and who, during my three years of organising Charter Evenings, has been of invaluable help and thereby assisted with the smooth running of the occasion.

Diane Lloyd

An afternoon at BEAUPRE, on May 9th, 1987.

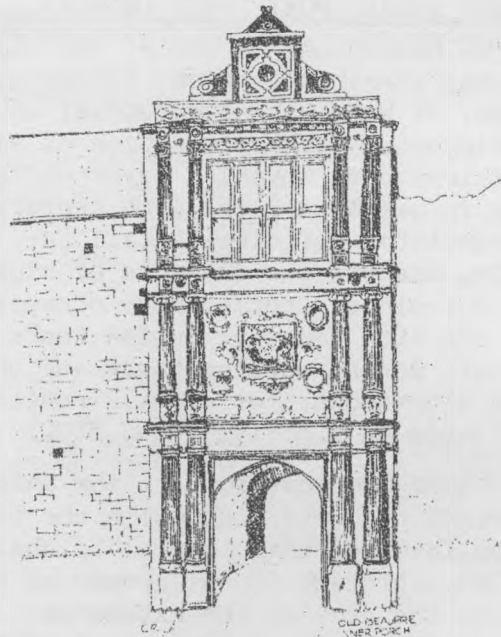
Summer clad members walked across meadowland next to the old mill stream bubbling in the sparkling sunshine, towards the grey, high walls of the fortified and castellated Beaupre House.

Yvonne Weeding gave members her time and talent explaining the history and architecture of this building and also arranged with Mr Arthur Bridgman for us to see the part of the house which is his private family home.

Mr Bridgman told us that the original house was built c. 1300 and more was added in 1540 and 1586. In the grounds he had just discovered the foundations of an old dove-cot or culver; the word 'culver' meaning a dove or pigeon. Nearby on the outside wall is a control drain with a sluice gate, where there was formerly a pond, and high above that was the garderobe, proving that in those times sanitation was fairly efficient. The doors of the building were then pointed out, the narrow ones were built in the 1300s and the wider ones in the 1500s both with narrow pointed arches, edged with strong Sutton stone from Southerndown but constructed of the local limestone.

To the rear of the farmhouse, past an ancient well is the first floor hall and the former medieval gatehouse. The original courtyard is now the private garden. Inside Mr Bridgman's living room, formerly the old kitchens, are two large fireplaces occupying the full length of the wall with the bread oven at one end. One of the ceiling beams has 1614 carved on it.

Members then moved on to the part of the building open to the public, to the N.E. 13th. century gatehouse built by the head of the Bassett family. The courtyard here has no doors but for security reasons a ladder only was in use. A hundred years later a really grand hall was built for reasons of prestige in order to keep up with the Jones's! The windows were added in the 15th century and later a grand staircase leading to the bedrooms, each one having its own fireplace and garderobe. It was at this time that one of the Fishwier family married a Bassett.



Upstairs on the other side of the building is the gallery which also led to another bedroom on the walls of which a plaster rose can still be seen.

Outside is the 1586 gatehouse, started by Rice Mansell and finished by William and Richard Bassett. The Renaissance gate has the earliest brickwork in Glamorgan and has a peep-hole incorporated in it.

In 1709 the building was sold by the Bassetts who could no longer afford the upkeep, due to losses in the Civil War and the financial ravages of a spendthrift son.

The finale to the afternoon was a 20th century picnic in the sheltered courtyard in the hot sunshine.

Barbara Toogood

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OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY .

- President : Rev. Norman E. Williams  
Hon. Chairman : Mrs Yvonne Weeding  
(Cowbridge 2878)  
Hon. Secretary : Mr John Miles  
(Cowbridge 2270)  
Hon. Treasurer : Mr Neil Shannon  
(Cowbridge 3957)  
Programme Secretary : Mrs G. Keay  
(Cowbridge 2879)