

COWBRIDGE AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

No. 34

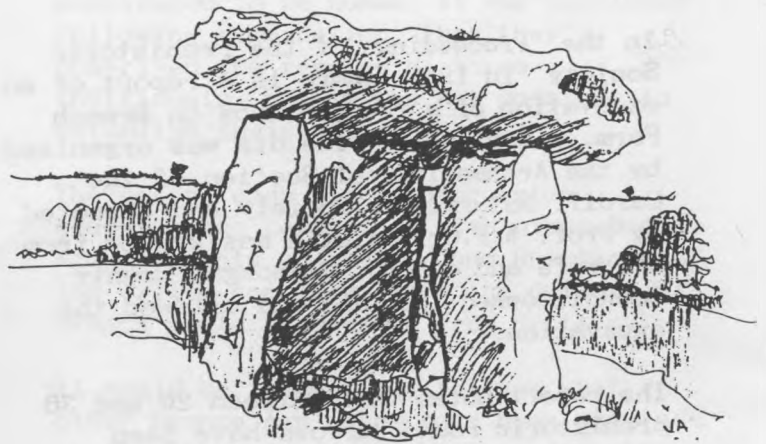
DECEMBER 1996

MARION EVELEIGH M.B.E.

The congratulations of the Society are due to Marion on receiving this most deserved award to become a Member of the Order of the British Empire for her work with the Cowbridge Museum.

Marion has run the museum since it was started by members of this Society and she continued to do so when it became independent on the formation of the Museum Trust in 1985. There has been a number of faithful helpers over the years, as Marion is the first to acknowledge, but it takes a special kind of person to maintain the enthusiasm and interest in such a project, as she has done.

The Society and this town owe a great deal to her. Thank you, Marion, and 'well done'!



ST. LYTHANS CROMLECH

J.GWYN ARTHUR

I have had a request, from Bexhill. in East Sussex, asking whether I had any information about an old boy of Cowbridge School, J .Gwyn Arthur. Mr Arthur went up to Jesus College, Oxford, in 1944 and probably read Maths and Physics. He was brought up on a farm near Cowbridge and was a good hockey player.

If anyone knows anything about him. I'd be pleased to pass on the information.

Jeff Alden

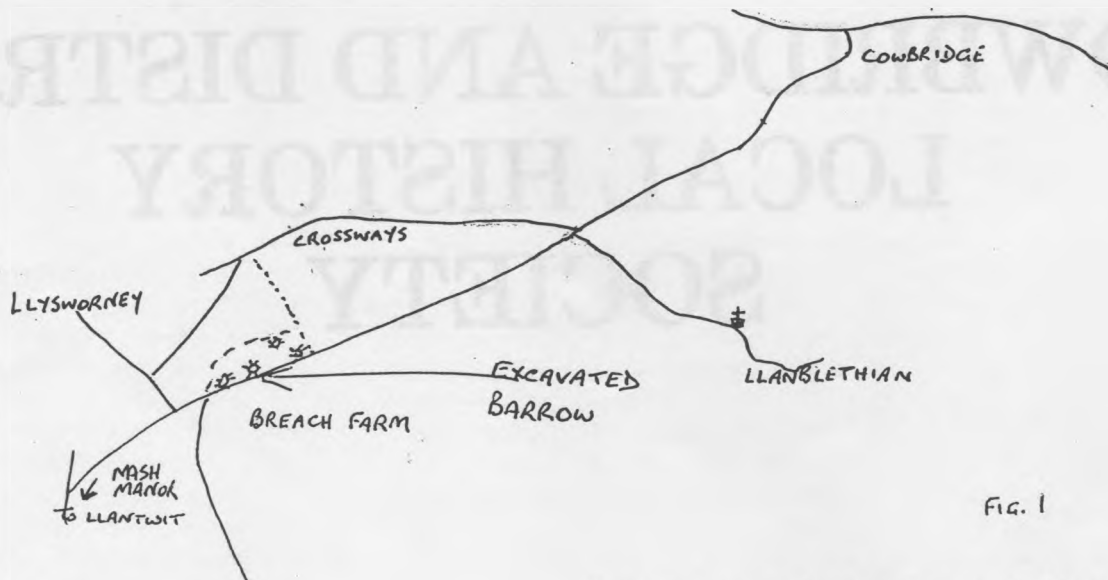


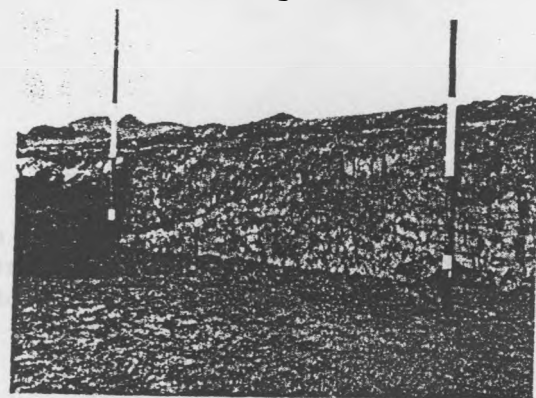
FIG. 1

In the 'Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society' in 1938 there is a report of an excavation of a round barrow on Breach Farm, Llanblethian. The dig was organised by the Archaeological Section of the Cardiff Naturalists Society and directed by Prof. W.F. Grimes with assistance from his wife and others. Glamorgan County Council owned the land and allowed the excavation.

The report notes that between 20 and 30 prehistoric round burrows have been recognised between Llantwit Major and Cowbridge, seeming to indicate quite a high level of occupation. The barrow excavated was one of a group of four lying within a field on the north west side of the Llantwit Major - Cowbridge road about two miles from Cowbridge (fig. 1). The shapes of all four had been disturbed by agricultural activity. The top of the excavated barrow was quite flat and its original shape and size was difficult to estimate.

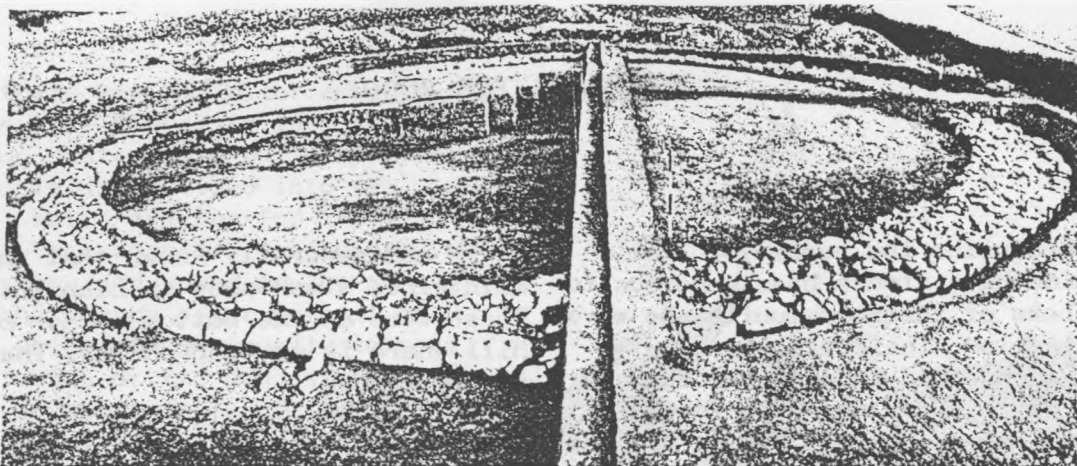
The barrow was divided into quadrants, being systematically dug at first from the outside to the centre, foot by foot. However, when the excavators encountered the facing stones of a stone ring, some of their effort was concentrated on uncovering part of this. It was discovered that the stones were a circular low wall surrounding the monument and enclosing a central mound of clay.

As the excavation progressed it was possible to see the profile of the bar beneath the present-day ground surface. This showed in the cross-balks which separated the excavated quadrants (fig 2). The central clay mound sloped beneath the stones of the circle, indicating that the circle was constructed after the mound. The highest part of the mound rose some 3 1/2 ft. over the old ground surface.



2- The profile of the 'mixed' the horizontal line marks the level.

The stone circle had a diameter of about 81 ft., varied in width between 5 and 8 ft. and was constructed mostly of local lias limestone. Facing stones were only used on the outside of the circle and were apparently meant to be uncovered as no clay was found on the outside. Part of the circle had only one course of stone on the south side two courses were frequent and in places three courses we found. The excavators considered that perhaps originally the whole circle was three courses high.



The harrow at a late stage in the excavation, from the west.

As the excavators reached the centre of the monument, they encountered a clay heap of the same composition as the rest of the mound, but appearing distinct from it. This was found to cover a central burial pit and was probably formed by subsidence of the mound over the pit (fig.3).



3- The central clay heap in section; lip

The burial pit itself was about 28 inches wide and roughly oval. Inside were burnt bones at the bottom with a pigmy cup on one side and bronze and stone artifacts on the other. There had also been some wood, which had deteriorated to pulp. The four metal implements were badly corroded - one was too corroded to be identified and two others, a chisel and a dagger disintegrated shortly after being excavated. Only a bronze axe-head was preserved: this was of considerable value in that the style was a useful indicator of the possible date of the burial, probably between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages (perhaps around 1.700 B.C.).

Under the bronze objects were 23 flints, including 13 arrow heads, a leaf-shaped point and a convex scraper still retaining white chalky crust. It was considered that much of the flint was imported from England, being of a higher quality than that found locally. The stone implements included arrow shaft smoothers.

The pigmy cup was a thick pot, 51mm. high and 97mm. in diameter, having a dark-brown/black surface with traces of red colour. It had a fine incised decoration (fig.4). The bones had been burned and were fragmentary, but were considered to be human. It was concluded, following examination, that they comprised the remains of three individuals, but it was not possible to establish their age or sex.

The report ends with a discussion studying the connexions with other Bronze Age monuments in England and Brittany and the writer concludes that the culture at Breach could be derived from Brittany.

It would be interesting to know what other Bronze Age sites have been examined in the 60 years since this one and what happened to the bronze axe-head and pigmy cup. Have other excavations at this or other barrows come up with different conclusions? Does present-day technology enable archaeologists to date the barrow with greater certainty?

Marjorie Hey

(PHOTOGRAPHS REPRODUCED FROM THE "PROCEEDINGS OF THE PREHISTORIC SOCIETY" 1935)

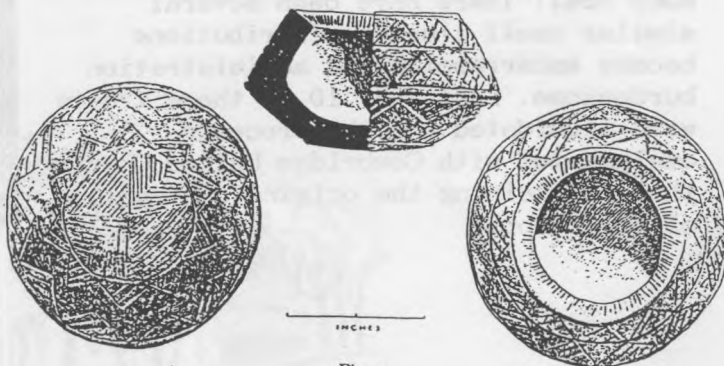


Fig. 4
The pigmy cup

"REMEMBER THE POOR"

Over the centuries the people of Llanblethian have always been generous to those members of their community who were poor or disabled. Their efforts were generally channelled through the church. Overseers of the Poor were appointed by parishioners at the Annual Vestry Meeting and it was at Vestry Meetings that the circumstances of paupers were discussed. Instructions would be given to the Overseer to pay for clothing or for the maintenance of the needy of the parish, (mind you. they were very loath to help those they considered belonged elsewhere)

The Vestry set the rates which had to cover the cost of repairing roads, of the police and maintaining the poor. They also received and dispensed alms originating in various benefactions. Some of these are listed on the benefactions board on the wall of the parish church. Perhaps the most well-known of these is the 'Evan Jenkins Trust' created in 1699 to put in order the tenor bell in Llanblethian church and then to use the income for the reparation of the churches of Llanblethian and Ystradowen "and also to bind the poorest sort of children apprentices..... and likewise to relieve old labourers that should be unable to work" This trust is still going strong with substantially the same objects.

Although donations at the time of bequest may have seemed generous, the income they produce now has become pitifully small. In 1871 Mary Ann Entwisle left £100, the income to be used to supply free coal about Christmas time to poor residents of Llanblethian, preferably to poor widows of good character. In 1992 this was producing £2.48 p.a., which would not buy much coal! There have been several similar small trusts: distributions became embarrassing and administration burdensome. Last year 10 of these trusts were liquidated and the proceeds amalgamated with Cowbridge United Charity thus maintaining the original intentions of the donors.

It is not generally known that the church maintained almshouses in Llanblethian. These were at the bottom corner of Castle Hill where it meets Broadway. The site is now overgrown.

I have seen a letter in a file of Messrs Gwyn & Gwyn stating that the site was vested in the Vicar and Churchwardens of Llanblethian in 1699 (?given by Evan Jenkins, or just a coincidence?). I hold (on behalf of the Church) a parchment document signed on March 3 1821 by Henry Plumptre, Vicar, setting out the known benefactions to Llanblethian. It includes "A house and croft containing three quarters of an acre by Llanblethian Bridge of customary lands, given also by an unknown person to the use of the church and worth per annum. . .17s Od."

In 1837 the Charity Commission ordered an enquiry into charities around the country. The Report concerning Llanblethian refers to this property. To quote " The cottage is kept in repair out of the poor's-rates and is occupied rent-free, by poor persons therein placed by the officers. On a stone tablet in front of this building are the words 'Remember the Poor'."



BRIDGE ROAD, LLANBLETHIAN

In 1897 there was a similar enquiry into charities. The Report to the Charity Commission states "The building: here mentioned is now divided into two cottages, which are let for 17s.4d. a year each.....The rents are received by the churchwardens and added to the general fund of the church after payment of repairs, which amount usually to more than the rents of the houses. The vestry select aged poor people of the parish and allow them to occupy these cottages at a very low rent."

it is not surprising that in 1919 these now ancient cottages were in a state of disrepair and the Sanitary inspector for Cowbridge Rural District Council gave notice of intention to close them "unless the houses are made fit for human habitation" In 1924 an order was made for closure, and they were eventually closed in March 1925. A copy of the churchwardens' accounts for the year to Easter 1925 includes "To rent of Alms Houses up to 9/3/25 12s."

Next door to the Almshouses stood another cottage. This was on the corner and belonged to the Community Council. It was generally known as Em's Cottage but also as the 'Tin House' because of its corrugated iron roof. Local children were regularly admonished by the tenant for throwing stones onto the roof! This building, too had long since become derelict and in 1984 the remaining wall was demolished. The Council replaced it with a garden, thus tidying up that corner of the village.

We are fortunate to have photographs of these cottages and one of these is reproduced here. This was taken before the bridge was reconstructed, but does show a corner of Greenfield.

Alan Hey



The Old Town Hall and High Cross
(copied from an old painting).

THE "CAMBRIAN" 1809

Mr John Lyons has provided this extract from "Cambrian" dated 14 July 1809:

"Escaped from the House of Correction at Cowbridge, Tuesday 11th July 1809, Thomas Thomas a deserter from the Monmouthshire and Brecon Militia. Had on when he went away a short blue coat, red waistcoat, duty white trousers and round hat. About 5ft 10ins high, dark complexion and dark hair and eyes. Whoever will apprehend the said Thomas Thomas and lodge him in any of H.M. Gaols shall receive a reward of 2gns by applying to E. Deere keeper of the House of Correction"

This advert (notice) also appeared in the following week.



When I was a girl, living in the city of Bradford, I often walked down 'into town' with my grandfather on Saturday mornings. The centre of Bradford lies in a hollow surrounded by hills. At the bottom of our particular hill was Forster Square - a real square in those days. (Forster, incidentally, was a local M.P: who worked to make education available to all children) There was an island in the centre of the square where trams and trolley buses stopped and which was surrounded by gardens. On one side of the square stood the L.M.S. station and on another was the large Victorian G.P.O. . obscuring the view of the medieval cathedral (it still does!). But the side of the square which intrigued me most was a long row of tall wool warehouses, humming with activity - no five-day week then! Horses brought carts carrying huge bales of wool, which were lifted by cranes to the upper storeys of the warehouses. There are photographs of this scene, but they do not describe the noise or the smell, of horses, horse manure and raw wool - quite unlike anything I 've experienced since.

Forster Square isn't a square any more. What is left of it is just a characterless traffic interchange. The centre of Bradford is now like many other city centres today, where, if you were suddenly dropped in, it would be difficult to say which city it was. In fact Bradford was in the vanguard of the post-war movement to divest English cities of every shred of individuality. The wool trade was no more, so down came the warehouses.

Well, What has all this to do with Cowbridge and District Local History Society? It's because my childhood is history - and so is yours. There have been sweeping changes everywhere. I have lived here for only 16 years and it is not the same as when I came. Even though changes in rural area are slower, there are older people around who have seen things change out of all recognition from what they knew as children.

We live in a beautiful area which boasts a long history and still has many historic buildings and monuments around. But there is a limit to what historic remains can tell us. The bronze age people of the Breach Farm barrow were not able to leave much record of their lifestyle, but we have no excuse.

Thanks to Marion and her helpers we have a good town museum, but I think it is time for the rest of us to try to persuade people to record their experience of life around here, whether in writing or on tape. Should the Society appoint some person, or group, to obtain and conserve records of personal experiences, so that future members can look back on our local history?

It is now well over two years since we issued the last News Letter. This one contains all the material that we have been given for publication in that time. Our own experience of the locality is limited, but we have succeeded in finding a couple of subjects of local historic interest. However we cannot continue to fill so much space ourselves every time. We need your help. If members want a newsletter, then members really must contribute appropriate articles.

Marjorie Hey



The museum will be open as usual 11 am-4pm on Saturday December 7th and January 4th, and then every first Saturday in the month during 1997. As well as the finds and artifacts that tell the history of Cowbridge from the Stone Age to the 20th century, we are building up a collection of documents, mostly photocopies. For instance (1) the will of Sir Leoline Jenkins. (2) newspaper reports of the Eisteddfod held at the Old Tennis Court which became Mr Aubrey's wheelwrights yard and later the cinema, the facade of which has recently been restored by Mr G.Thomas, (3) minutes of the first meeting of the Glamorgan Chairs Gorsedd at Tyla Rhosyr.

The museum's reference library is now quite extensive and visitors are welcome to study the books and documents on the Saturdays when we are open and also on Thursday afternoons, by appointment. Friends of the museum can borrow a book for one month, to be collected and returned on the 1st Saturday of the month. Membership of the Friends is £3 per year. We have an annual meeting every year which takes the form of reports of the museum's progress, a speaker on a museum related subject and finishes with light refreshments.

Group visits can be arranged at a convenient day and time. Children's groups are especially welcome but are restricted to 30 at any one time. This is because of the limited size of our accommodation.

Marion Eveleigh

1997

JANUARY 3RD The work of the National Trust (Alan Jennings)

FEBRUARY 7TH Civil War in South Wales:
The Battle of St. Fagans
(Ray Bowen)

MARCH 7TH The story of Morgannwg Hospital (Dr Doreen Annear)

APRIL 4TH Llanmihangel and its History (Hilary Thomas)

Meetings are held in the Lesser Hall. Cowbridge Town Hall, at 8.00 p.m.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| President : | Rev. Norman E.Williams |
| Hon. Chairman : | Mrs Yvonne Weeding
(Tel. 772878) |
| Hon. Secretary : | Mr John L.S.Miles
(Tel. 772270) |
| Hon. Treasurers : | Mrs Valerie Pugh
(Tel. 772593) |
| | Mrs Ivana Locke
(Tel. 773252) |
| Programme Sec. : | Mr Derrick Kingham
(Tel. 01443 228889) |



OLD HALL, COWBRIDGE