

COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 40 : SEPTEMBER 1999



PROGRAMME FOR 1999-2000

1999

September 3 AGM and Peter Sain Ley Berry
Tinkinswood Burial Cairn

October 1 Christine Young
The Seys Family of Boverton

November 5 Jeff Alden
Reminiscences of Old Cowbridge

December 3 Patricia Moore (Vice President)
The Maud Gunter Memorial Lecture
Duffryn Gardens

2000

January 7 Colin Chapman
The Cowbridge Railway

February 4 Denis Heal
The Peggy Heal Memorial Lecture

March 3 Neville Granville
Mid Glamorgan Colliery Communities

April 7 Anthony Hopkin
(Gwent Record Office)
The Medieval Boroughs of South Wales

All meetings are held in the Lesser Hall,
Cowbridge, and start at 8pm.

LLANBLETHIAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

This is the title of the course which I will be leading for what is now called the Cardiff University Centre for Lifelong Learning - in other words, the Extra-Mural class. We intend to study the Tithe Map to find out what we can about Llanblethian in the 1840s, and then use the census information for 1851 to 1891 to build up a fuller picture of the parish in the remainder of the century .

Because Llanblethian is such a large parish - it includes Trerhyngyll, Newton, Penylan, Aberthin as well as the village itself and the farms like Breach and Marlboro to the south, we will probably concentrate on the larger properties - but if students have a particular interest in any house we will try to accommodate their interest!

The course will be held fortnightly, on Fridays between 10am and 12noon, in the upstairs room of the Duke of Wellington, Cowbridge. The fee for the 10-week course is £36; there is a 25% reduction for those on occupational pensions, and a 50% reduction for those depending on State benefits or pensions. New students are welcome.

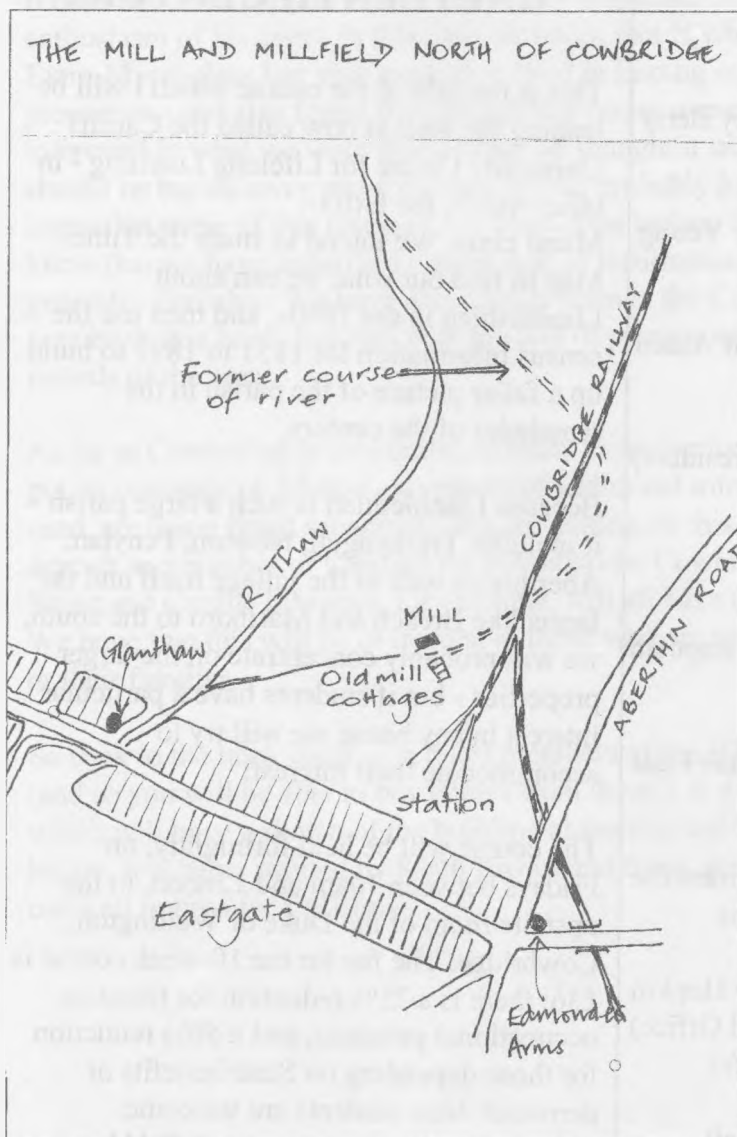
Jeff Alden

WHAT'S IN A NAME? - MILLFIELD DRIVE

Many of the names of streets in Cowbridge - whether the streets are of ancient origin or on modern housing developments - have thought-provoking links with the past.

Millfield Drive, to the north of the town behind Eastgate, is a case in point. The field in which it was built has long been known as the Mill Field. A record of 1574 refers to 'Cae'r Velin' beyond Cowbridge's east gate, and in 1697 there was reference to 'The Mill Close' (seven acres of land) which was owned by Jenkin Williams, who arranged a mortgage of £50 for this field from John Wyndham of Dunraven. By 1703, he had a mortgage of £80 from Robert Deere of St Mary Church for the same land.

In 1746/7, Williams leased 'Kae yr Velin' and the Mill Close (and an adjoining 0.75 acre field called the Hams) to Thomas Edmond of Old Hall. Edmond appears to have bought all this land by 1759 when he sought a mortgage on this and other properties from a Haverfordwest merchant. In 1790 an Edmond deed refers to the passageway from the eastern village, through the mill field to a bam occupied by David Bowen. A footpath and right of way is still preserved in this area, between the Post Office sorting office and 'Sideways', though this has changed its location slightly.



By 1800 there was mention of two cottages and the Millfield, leased from the Edmond family to David Abraham the blacksmith, whose son, also David Abraham (a farrier), had his house and forge on Eastgate where the Newschase shop stands today.

The "old town mill" here was also known as "Johnny's" in 1849 (Johnny was apparently John Jenkins, the miller, listed in the 1835 Pigot's Directory). This, together with the adjacent closes, was then owned by a number of Cowbridge business people including members of the Bates family (medical practitioners in the area).

An examination of old Ordnance Survey maps and the Tithe Map for Llanblethian show that the mill stood just outside the Cowbridge borough boundary, in Llanblethian parish. More

importantly, it stood on the banks of the river Thaw - because before the 1860s the Thaw flowed in a wide loop to the east of its present course. The river was diverted for the construction of the railway line from Llantrisant. Deprived of its main source of water, the mill fell out of use, though the adjoining cottages remained. (In 1868 the Cowbridge Railway Company bought the land including a "dwelling house, formerly com grist mill called Bates's Mill or Johnny's" and the adjoining meadow).

Older residents of Cowbridge today can recall the Oldmill cottages, which were frequently flooded; they were demolished in the 1950s and their residents rehoused. Miss Evelyn Hopkin, in a church magazine article of 1977 said "I was born on March 10th 1889, at Millfields, Cowbridge. Lovely little cottages, they were. Faced with spar, which used to glisten in the western sun..."

EMA

POSTSCRIPT

What's in a name? As editor, I choose the titles to contributions, and now I find there's a name very near to Millfield Drive which I cannot explain.

Druids Green is, I think, straightforward enough. The building at the entrance to the estate and to the railway yard used to be the *New Druids Hotel* (having taken that name when the *Ancient Druid* across the road ceased to operate as an inn). I believe that the *New Druids* was for a short period of time called the *Ancient Druid* too, just to complicate matters!

Slade Close runs up towards 'The Slade' and Slade Farm, so that is fair enough.

I can even remember Deborah Hollings winning a prize in the 1970s for naming Longmeadow Court, her reason being that Cowbridge in the past had been nick-named Y Hen Dref yn y Waun - the old town in the meadow.

But what about Gray's Walk? Who was Gray? If anyone could enlighten me, I'd be very grateful.

THANKS, DERRICK

The programme printed on page 1 has been organised once again by Derrick Kingham. It seems to me that this is what we as a local history society should be hearing - talks about our local area, largely by local people. It is very difficult to get the balance right, and I am sure that Derrick has done this most successfully at a time when he has been very involved with the future of Talyarn..

Because of these other pressures, he has now decided to stand down from the position of Programme Secretary, but I am sure we will continue to see him regularly at the meetings. We thank him heartily for all his efforts on behalf of the society.

PIGEON PIE

When we get snarled up in the traffic at the bottom of Tumble Hill, instead of getting irritated at all those determined to spend their money at the superstores, or those who zoom around the roundabouts like people possessed, perhaps we should calm ourselves by thinking of past times in that area, which we call 'Culverhouse Cross'. A *culver* was an old name for a pigeon or dove, and so a culverhouse was a dovecote or pigeon house. So here would have been a large estate in the middle of the countryside!

There is a good number of dovecotes, or pigeon houses, still existing in the Vale. There are fine examples at Llantwit Major, Monknash, Sutton and East Orchard; there also used to be one at Gelligarn Farm at St Mary Hill, but I couldn't find it the last time I was there.

They were built, usually in the grounds of monasteries, monastic granges or manors, to provide food in the days when it was difficult to provide enough fodder to keep many animals alive and well in the winter. Pigeons were a main source of food, all the year round. The Cistercian monks and lay-brothers working at Monknash would have supplied Neath Abbey with pigeons for travellers and guests, but the other dovecotes provided a major local food supply. In fact, many of our older farms have a relatively small number of 'pigeon holes' set in bam walls, for the farm's own use.

Pigeons have an exceptionally short breeding cycle - every six weeks or so they can lay a pair of eggs, hatch them out, fatten them up on pigeon milk to a weight of about 1lb. - and then lay another two eggs! They can apparently carry on doing this for seven years, and also manage to live together in close proximity to each other. With up to 500 nesting holes set on the inside of the *Columbarium*, there were about one

thousand of these domesticated pigeons in each pigeon house.

Of course, they fed off whatever they could forage - particularly the crops of the surrounding fields. Their demands for food would have been considerable - gardeners today know the damage that wood-pigeons can do to their gardens! It is no wonder that pigeons were a protected species until 1800, as any farmer who saw his crops being eaten by the lord's or the monks' pigeons would have considered them a major pest. This also helps to explain the numbers of young lads who were employed as bird-scarers.

The introduction of root crops for fodder, thanks to the work of 'Turnip' Townsend in the eighteenth century, was a major step forward in winter food supply. From this time on, it became much easier to keep stock over winter, and so pigeons lost their importance as a major source of food, and accordingly lost their protected species status.

The dovecotes remain, however, as impressive examples both of medieval building skills and of agricultural change.

Jeff Alden

Cowbridge and District Local History Society

Membership is £4 per year (which covers attendance at all meetings, and three issues of the newsletter). Subscriptions are now due, and can be paid at the September or subsequent meetings.

Non-members pay £1 per meeting.

LLANTWIT MAJOR LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

We are pleased to be able to publish the programme of our neighbouring society, with whom we hope to establish closer links. Their meetings are held in the Town Hall at Llantwit, and start at 7.30pm

14th September Neville Granville
Mid Glamorgan Colliery Communities

12th October Dr Douglas Bassett
Iorwerth Peate of Llanbrynmair and the Welsh Folk Museum

9th November Mrs Anne Rodgers
The Life of Lady Charlotte Schreiber

14th December Vivian Kelly
The Legacy of St Illtud

11 th January Steven George
Margam Estate, its power, its wealth and its people

8th February Jeff Alden
Cowbridge: Some Buildings and People

14th March Mrs Christine Young
The Seys Family of Boverton

11th April AGM

WANTED

Four things, really - firstly, in the light of the book which we have produced, any additional information about Cowbridge would be most welcome. After my request last year I managed to acquire a wonderful lot of postcards and photos to copy (and return); so if anyone can dig out their house deeds, or write down their reminiscences of Cowbridge, I'd love to hear from them!

Secondly - photos, deeds, reminiscences, information about Llanblethian parish would be very helpful to add a little colour to this year's class.

Thirdly - the November meeting will be an opportunity for you to talk and tell us what you know about the town. Last year's effort was so successful - if you remember, Bill Lewis did a wonderful job in commenting on the slides and adding to our knowledge - that we decided to try to do it again, with different photos.

Fourthly - contributions for the newsletter, please! I would particularly like to see people's memories of the Vale - like Miss Hopkin's reminiscences which were quoted in the article on the Mill. The parish magazines of the 70s had lots of this kind of article in them - and interesting they are too!

Jeff Alden ~ 01446 773373



NEW BOOK ON COWBRIDGE

Which former inn in Cowbridge has been known under five different names?
Who was the house-owner who so disliked her neighbour that she piled a great heap of manure in front of his windows?
Who was the corpulent gentleman who with ten others went into a hollow elm tree at Trevychan, behind Llwynhelyg, drank some beer, and emerged unscathed?
What does *Cymedroldeb* (temperance) have to do with the Vale of Glamorgan Inn?
Which was 'Mrs Cecil Thomas's house on the Market Place', named on the Church Benefactions Boards as providing 12/- annually to supply bread for the poor?

You will be able to find the answers to these questions, and very much more, from November 1st, when we expect to publish 'Cowbridge - Buildings and People'. This is a study of practically all the buildings in High Street, some in Eastgate and a few in Westgate, where we have tried to find out as much as we can about the ownership of the buildings and about the people who have lived in them. Not all the facts are as colourful as the extracts above, but we have amassed an amazing amount of detail about the history of Cowbridge - and, we hope, have presented it in a readable and interesting format.

It does not often happen that a class leader is spurred on to a great deal of work by the enthusiasm of his class! In this case however, that is what happened. My students in the Extra-Mural class last year worked so hard in finding out details about the Cowbridge properties - and also found that present-day house owners and occupiers were very interested in what we were doing - that we thought it would be a pity that our researches should be buried away and forgotten, as had probably happened in the past. Certainly, we know that some of this research had been done before, but never published - and we also know that we have unearthed a great deal of information that has not previously been generally available. We have accordingly formed the Cowbridge Record Society, initially to publish this book, but also with the aim of preserving (and perhaps publishing) other records of the area.

As far as Cowbridge is concerned, in many cases we found out so much more than can be put on one page of A5 size - so pieces of additional information, and the sources that we used, are being listed separately. We are putting all this in a 'Source Book' which we will deposit in a number of libraries for consultation. Cowbridge Library, Bridgend Park Street and Cardiff Libraries, for example, will all have copies of the detailed information. We hope that this will be of interest to those who are researching histories of their houses or their families.

So back to the book itself..... a lot of members of the History Society have contributed (and so you will be able to buy copies from them!). It will have over 100 pages, most of which will have a sketch of the building at the top, followed by the historical account below; it is being printed by Keith Brown and Sons, and will cost £4.95 - and should be out well in time for Christmas!