

# COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 50 : DECEMBER 2002



*Cowbridge 1959*

## FUTURE PROGRAMME

### December 6th

The Maud Gunter Memorial Lecture  
*Historic Gardens of Glamorgan*  
Hilary Thomas

### January 3rd, 2003

*The Great Western Colliery, Pontypridd*  
Brian Davies

### February 7th

*Porthcawl*  
Gwyn Petty

### March 7th

*Lost Ports of the Severn Sea*  
Alan Thorne

### March 13th

Charter Day, see opposite

### April 4th

*An Introduction to Family History*  
Rosemary Boyns

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

## CHARTER DAY

Thursday, March 13th, 2003 is the 749th anniversary of the granting of the borough charter. We intend to celebrate with a lunch at the Sycamore Tree, Colwinston, at 12.30pm, followed by a visit to Nash Manor at 2.30pm. Numbers will be limited (at both venues). Once the menu and costs have been confirmed, we will circulate details in the meetings. Our thanks to Yvonne Weeding for organising, and to Mr and Mrs Eric Williams for kindly agreeing to show us around their home.

## WEBSITES

'Gathering the Jewels' is an interesting website containing the best of the collections in the museums and libraries of Wales. Look at [www.gtj.org.uk](http://www.gtj.org.uk); type in Cowbridge, for example.

The Glamorgan History Society website is just about up and running (address in next newsletter) - we will have to get ourselves organised to develop our own website to link in with the GHS. Any volunteers?

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Comments to Chairman/Editor Jeff Alden at 01446 - 773373. Contributions for next newsletter by March 15th, please

## THE DIARY OF JOHN PERKINS

(An article by Nigel Williams entitled *The Willis and Perkins Dynasties* appeared in Newsletter No 47, of December 2001. This article adds a little more information to the earlier one.)

One of the treasures of the Museum of Welsh life at St Fagan's is the diary of John Perkins - a hand-made diary, cut and sewn to make fourteen booklets, one for each year from 1788 to 1801 inclusive. The manuscripts were retrieved from the flames of a bonfire in Monkton Combe, near Bath, in 1967, where some 'rubbish' belonging to a Miss Alexander, lately deceased, was being disposed of. I know that a William Alexander, of the Glamorgan auctioneers' family, died in Holt near Melksham in the late nineteenth century - I wonder if this was the route taken by these documents?

John Perkins was a gentleman-farmer who, when he was living at Saint y Nyll in 1781, inherited from his father a sizeable estate in St Brides super Ely, Peterston, St Fagans, Caerau, Llandaff and Llantrisant. In 1783 he married in Cowbridge a rich widow, Elizabeth Willis, who was eight years older than he (and who had been the fourth wife of Revd William Willis, Rector and Lord of the Manor of Gileston). She had been a mantua maker, and came from Llancarfan.

In Cowbridge, the Perkins family - for they were to have eleven children, three of whom were baptized in Cowbridge - lived in a house where *The Shield* in Eastgate now stands. Unfortunately for our purposes, none of his diaries for the period before 1788 survive, and then in March 1788 Perkins and his family moved to St Athan; from then, references to Cowbridge, though they do occur, are more sparse. He sent his sons to school in Cowbridge, at the Eagle Academy; the boys lodged in Cowbridge during the week, going home for weekends. His mother continued to live in a house at the crossroads at the east end of town, where *Basil's* is today.

This extract deals with some early entries - with an interpretation, where possible, in the right-hand column.

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### 1788 - January

8th Mr Robinson called to see the house, told him the rent £15, he said I should hear from him soon.

9th Went to Town, called at the X, do on Mr Williams attorney, do at printing office to buy a dictionary for Mr Rich T. Engaged to drink tea at the X on Friday next, in evening I went to Club. Thomas Thomas president. Returned at 10 o'clock

11th In the evening, Bessy, Jonny and self drank tea at Mrs Thomas's X, Bevan met us there, till twixt 12 and 1 to cards

13th (Sun) A very fine day. Bessy, Jonny, Maria and myself went to church. Mr Williams of the Free School preached there for the first time.

Perkins was attempting to rent out his house as his move to St Athan was already planned.

X is The Cross, (today's Spar) where Cissil Thomas and her attorney son John lived. 'Printing office' was probably that of Henry Walters, the son of Revd John Walters of Llandough. Thomas Thomas, a skinner, lived at 29 High St.

Bessy = Elizabeth, his wife; Jonny was his son. Bevan was Dr Bevan, the family doctor, and the father of John Bevan, the noted Cowbridge solicitor of the 19th century.

Williams was Dr William Williams, headmaster of the Grammar School for 60 years (1787 - 1847)

14th Mrs Geddes called relative to renting the house, gave her a paper of the particulars, went to Young's in evening, stayed till 10

16th In morning called at Great House. Mrs Geddes not in. Saw Miss Keir, asked them both to dinner on Thursday next

20th Agreed with Mrs Geddes for house - £14

22nd Portry called here in the morning. I went to market. Mr Alexander sent us a brace of partridge in evening. Called at Mrs Geddes's, and PO and at Tayntons, nd Jonny with me called at my mother's. Harry going to Bristol by Aberthaw tomorrow

### February 1788

5th Went to market, received of Mrs Simkins a razor and strap she brought for me in Bristol, and a shaving brush and two new scissors

6th I went in the morning to town, bought a whip of Anthony Thomas for 9s. I went to club to Horse and Jockey. Billy Deere President

9th Went to town, paid Bradley a bill of 1/8d, called at Coal's, bought a pair of hinges and screws there, called at Ann Clements and bought a tobacco box

### March 1788

5th Club dinner at the Eagle, Mr Williams attorney President

12th Two workmen of Mr Coal's here painting - went to Club, Ballard president

14th Cadogan here papering

15th Cadogan here making a window frame for the stair

20th Mr Alexander brought his horse and cart for the goods to St Athan, do hired another. Bessy, children and self in the evening in the Bear chaise

22nd Evans of Llanblethian lent us his cart to bring furniture from Cowbridge

Mrs Geddes, widow of Alexander Geddes, who lived in Great House with a companion, Miss Keir. Young was Nathaniel Young of *The Greyhound* (today's *Vale of Glamorgan Inn*)

Portrey- of a Boverton family. Alexander - owned land in the Vale, and possibly the farmhouse in St Athan which Perkins was renting. Tayntons - probably Robert Taynton at 33 High Street. Aberthaw was the principal port from which to import goods from Bristol and beyond.

Mrs Simkins had a shop at 49 High Street

Anthony Thomas' shop was at the entrance to Cooper's Lane. The *Horse and Jockey* was a short-lived name for the *Horse and Groom*, then in its earlier location - where *Patterns* is today. Billy Deere was keeper of the House of Correction, and probably also landlord of the *Cross Keys*.

Bradley of the *Bear*; Coal = Cole, ironmonger, at 50 High St; Ann Clements - at 12 Eastgate.

*Spread Eagle* inn; there were a number of Williamses who were attorneys.

Edward Ballard was a skinner and lived at 55 High Street

Cadogan Howell lived in Westgate and was a friend of Perkins.

Thus they are then living at St Athan.

## NEW BOOK FROM THE RECORD SOCIETY

This book is entitled *Cowbridge and District Remembered, 1900 - 1950*, and is a collection of reminiscences of people of our area including Llanblethian, Llysworney, Aberthin, Maendy, Ystradowen and Cowbridge itself. The contributors give a vivid and most interesting picture of life in the first half of the last century - a picture which will awaken many memories for older readers and which will give a great deal of information and pleasure to newcomers to the area.

The idea for the book came after reading two fascinating memoirs about life in the district. The first was written by the late Ralph Bird, of Garden Centre fame, who dealt with the very early years of the century, and the second by Bert Jenkins - originally of Llanblethian, and later of Aberthin and now Porthcawl, writing about Llanblethian. I felt that these were important historical documents, and were worth preserving to be enjoyed by a wider audience. To these have been added contributions by eleven others: Gwyneth Williams, Joyce Tonkin, Arthur John and Herbert David, all of whom deal with their early days in Cowbridge, Becky Jenkins and Walter Stone who remembered the Llanblethian of their youth, Winifred Huish who has an amazing memory of Aberthin and Cowbridge in the 'twenties, Alf Charles with his recollections of life in Trerhyngyll, Maendy and Ystradowen, Hubert and Alan Thomas who between them covered Llanblethian, Llysworney and Cowbridge, and Elgiva Thomas who remembered Cowbridge Girls' High School in the 'thirties.

There is some pleasing overlap of memories, so on occasions we can consider the same event from different viewpoints, and it is clear that some events and personalities stand out. As editor of the Record Society, I feel that this is a most interesting and readable book, once again very well produced by Keith Brown & Son. At £4.95, it should sell well - and as our print run is only 1000, get your copy immediately!

Jeff Alden

## COWBRIDGE RECORD SOCIETY

This society was set up to collect, record, preserve and publish information relating to the history of Cowbridge and district. Part of this task includes encouraging people to treasure their own records and information, and to get our help in finding out how these can best be preserved. We have already been instrumental in depositing in the Glamorgan Record Office some valuable material - the first Cowbridge Board School admissions book for 1876-1885, and three account books of the Griffiths family of blacksmiths, dating around the mid-nineteenth century. More material - plans of the cattle and sheep markets, and details of war-time bomb damage in the Cowbridge RDC area - will be offered shortly. Other donations have been received - such as Mr Idwal Rees's bound copies of *The Bovian*, which will eventually go to Cowbridge Library, and some interesting family and other photographs. It is very much hoped that the latter could be placed in the Cowbridge Museum where they will be available for public inspection.

Membership of the Society costs £3 pa, the year running from April. It enables members to obtain a discount on publications, to receive the newsletter, to attend the occasional meeting and above all to know that they are helping to preserve elements of Cowbridge's history. The treasurer is Keith Jones of 48 Eastgate, Cowbridge, phone 775139.

JA

## CHURCH FEES IN 1811

Parish Register books may sometimes yield far more information than a simple list of baptisms, marriages and burials! The front inside cover of the Register of Baptisms, 1796 to 1812, for Llanfaches has the following inscription, written by the Rev. Thomas Morgan M.A., Rector, on the 3rd May 1811:

The account of the established Fees in the parish of Llanvaches (sic) in the County of Monmouth and in the diocese of Llandaff

	Sexton's Fees	
	£ s d	£ s d
Marrying by Licence	10 6	2 6
Marrying by Banns	5 0	1 0
Publishing of Banns	1 0	
Certificate of the Register	1 0	
Burying a Parishioner	1 0	3 6
Burying an Out Parishioner	5 0	4 6
Funeral Sermon	10 6	
Funeral Sermon on a particular text	1 1 0	
Certificate of the Register	1 0	
Christening on Sundays or on any Fast or Festival		
Christening on an express attendance required	5 0	2 6
Certificate of the Register	1 0	
Churching of Women	1 0	6

At a time when an agricultural worker's weekly earnings were counted out in shillings, the cost of a marriage ceremony in church (seven shillings at the cheapest estimate) could well be too much for a poor labourer to afford. The size of church fees may be one reason for 'common law' marriages, and so may be one reason why family historians sometimes fail to find a much sought after marriage entry in the parish register for their ancestral village!

**Jose Rawlins**

### PETTY SESSIONS, 1897

A snippet from the Borough Petty Sessions records for February 9th, 1897:

In court, charged with 'sliding in the street' were William Slade, aged 14, William Power aged 13, William Bennett, aged 11, James Oakley, aged 15, and Edward John, aged 10. All were found guilty, and fined one shilling each, including costs.

Who were these poor lads, enjoying themselves in some seasonably cold weather? Willie Slade lived in High Street (where High Street Garage is today), and had been born in Cowbridge; his father was from Sticklebath in Somerset and his mother from St Athan; by 1901 he was a general labourer. Will Power, also from Eastgate and Cowbridge-born, became a carpenter, while Will Bennett, again from Eastgate and born in Cowbridge, became a wheelwright's apprentice. James Oakley lived in Westgate and had been born in Kempsey, Gloucestershire; by 1901 he was a rural postman. Edward John, from East village and Cowbridge-born, and whose mother came from Dorchester, had become an errand boy by 1901. Fortunately their brush with the law did not seem to spoil their careers.

## David Williams of Ystradowen and Ynyscynon (Alaw Goch)

David Williams was a mine owner of some importance in the Aberdare area, developing the Ynyscynon mine in 1843, and Deep Dyffryn at Mountain Ash by 1855. He also helped publish a weekly newspaper at Aberdare, *Y Gwladgarwr* (The Patriot), and bought Misken Manor in 1857. He was the father of Judge Gwilym Williams, and the grandfather of Sir Rhys Williams. In Wales he is of considerable interest because of his interest in Welsh literature; his bardic name was Alaw Goch and he played a leading part in the formation of the National Eisteddfod.

I have some interest in Alaw Goch's family, as his father David (born about 1775) and my great-great-grandfather were brothers, the sons of Thomas William of Llwynwyddog farm, Ystradowen. For some time I have been trying to discover more about Alaw Goch's father. Various accounts state that in his youth David Williams senior was press-ganged into the Navy. He did indeed serve in the Navy for a time and I have discovered that he was aboard HMS Alexander, a 74-gun ship, at the Battle of the Nile in 1798, as also was one of his brothers, Thomas. The naval records at the Public Record Office reveal that he had joined the ship on the 15th September, 1796, and that whereas his brother Thomas was listed as an Ordinary Seaman, he was entered as a Landsman. This description, implying lack of seafaring experience, may perhaps give some support to the tradition that he had been press-ganged into service, but on the other hand it could merely mean that he had joined as a craftsman, eg as a carpenter, which was his trade later in civil life. The two of them must have been in the navy before 1796, since in November 1795 they had both made allotments of their pay to their mother Jane William 'of Cowbridge' (though her home was at Ystradowen). With the temporary cessation of hostilities that followed the Treaty of Amiens some naval personnel were paid off, among them Thomas Williams on 20 August 1802. It is not recorded when David was released, but it is possible he too was paid off at the same period. He was certainly back home when he married four years afterwards. His wife's first name was Elizabeth, so it seems fairly certain that he was the David Williams of Ystradowen who married one Elizabeth Owen, widow, at Llanblethian on 12 April, 1806.

The couple afterwards lived at Llwyn Draen, a cottage small-holding near Ystradowen rented from the landowner JF Gwynne of Llansannor. They are stated to have had three sons, of whom David (the future Alaw Goch), said to have been the eldest, was born on 12 July 1809. The Land Tax records show David Williams senior as the occupant of Llwyn Draen until 1825, after which the family moved to Aberdare, as did his brother William and family.

David subsequently worked as a sawyer or carpenter at the Abernant Ironworks, Aberdare, and the family probably lived nearby, possibly in a house on the company's land in the Abernant/Blaenant area. He was left a widower when his wife died on 2 April 1837, and August of that year saw the marriage of his son David (Alaw Goch) to an Aberdare girl, Anne Morgan. David Jones of Wallington states that Alaw Goch 'worked for my father (in Llanblethian) after his marriage for ten shillings a week'. The 1841 census records show however that he was then living with his wife and father at Blaenant, where he had the tenancy of a small farm. Shortly afterwards he obtained the tenancy of Ynyscynon farm, Cwmbach, where he developed the Ynyscynon mine and where his father continued to live until his death on 14 March, 1857.

Alaw Goch lived only until 1863; the village of Trealaw was named in his honour.

*Edward G Williams, Chepstow*

Mr Williams would be very grateful if anyone can supply further details of Elizabeth Owen or her first husband, and also if there is any connection between the family of Alaw Goch and Iolo Morganwg, as has been rumoured.