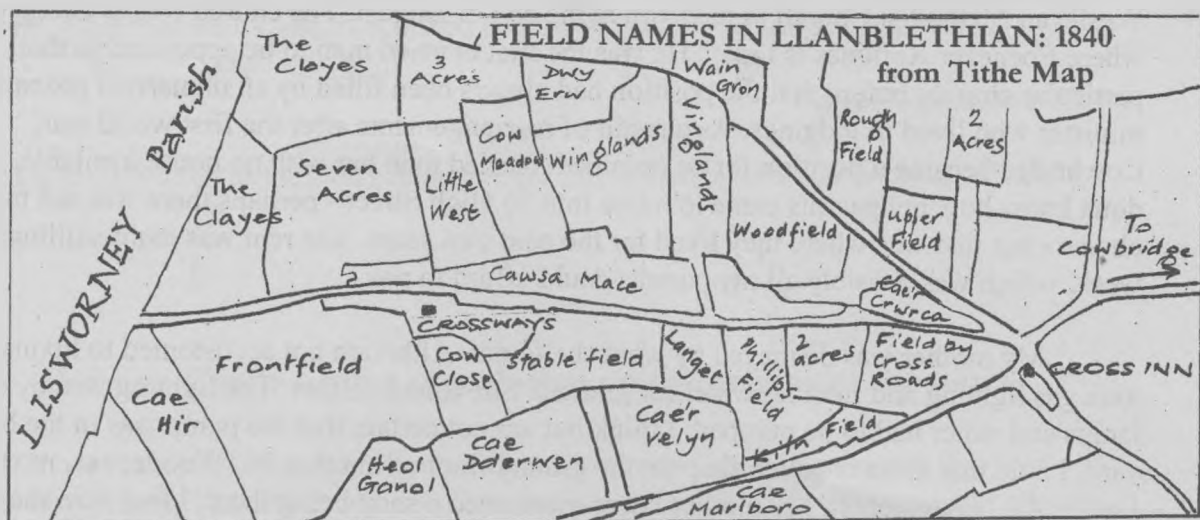


# COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 48 : APRIL 2002



## Next Meetings

April 5th: Barry Griffiths of the Kenfig Society, speaking on **Aspects of Kenfig**.

This will be the last meeting until September.

Our September meeting will be on September 6th, when Don Gerrard has once again offered to take over the hot spot after the AGM. This time his talk is entitled **Monasteries in Tudor Glamorgan**.

## This Issue

It is most pleasing to record that we have had so many contributions for the newsletter that I have had to hold one article over until the next newsletter. It is also nice to be able to put in a disclaimer about the work of so many members - the articles submitted represent their own views and are not the views of the Society!

Articles for the next newsletter by August 12th, please.

## Cowbridge Record Society

Inaugural meeting, Tuesday 16th April, at The Pagan Room, Duke of Wellington, at 7.30pm - all welcome. Discussion of the society's constitution, membership, and a talk on the History of the Duke by Jeff Alden.

## The Grammar School

Exactly a year ago I set up this heading for the newsletter, and wrote "it seems that at last something is moving with the ongoing saga between the Vale and the Charity Commissioners".

Well, the school is up for sale, together with the 'covered playground'/staff car park area, tally court and tennis court. Tenders have to be in to the Council by April 24th. I went on a tour of inspection, and was pleased to see that despite its dreadful appearance, the building did not look completely beyond repair - but of course this was to my inexperienced eye. I would hope that there is a lot of potential for a sensitive development.

## Blue Plaque on Great House

There was a very pleasing turn-out of members for the unveiling ceremony on what turned out to be a very windy Charter Day. Our President, Revd Norman Williams, managed to hold his 'flu at bay for long enough to make a charming speech in which he welcomed this commemoration of the importance of Great House as the town house of the Carnes, and pointed out how fortunate we were that we had so many historic buildings remaining in Cowbridge.

## COWBRIDGE, 1919 - 1921: REMINISCENCES FROM NEW ZEALAND

My father, Reverend WT Tilsley, was ordained as a Wesleyan Methodist minister in July 1919, married my mother Ceinwen Muriel Newman a few days afterwards, and then after a honeymoon in Mumbles arrived in Cowbridge to take up his duties as a minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the town at the end of August. The church was in Eastgate, where Ebenezer Antiques is today. He was the first married man to be appointed to that particular church; before that the position had always been filled by an unmarried probationer minister who lived in lodgings. As a result of rearrangements after the first world war, Cowbridge became a position for an ordained married man but with no house available. I don't know how my parents came to move into 36 High Street - perhaps there was not much choice - but that was where they lived for the next two years. The rent was eight shillings per week, which was possibly all my parents could afford to pay.

My mother was dismayed by what she found. Although not accustomed to luxury she took gas lighting and running water for granted. She found neither. The lighting was by oil lamps and water had to be pumped. I think but am not certain that the pump was in the back yard. I note that there is now a shop on the ground floor of number 36 (Woodcocks, next to Davies the Newsagents). My mother never mentioned a shop being there. I feel sure she would have spoken of it if one had been there: it would have added to her feeling that she had come down in the world if she had had to live over a shop.

She told me there was a tunnel leading out of the cellar beneath the house but that neither she nor my father had ever explored it. My mother also referred to an old coach-house at the rear of the property - probably the coach-house belonging to Great House, which can be seen when you look through the arch. My mother's much younger brother came on a visit and found a coachman's uniform there. He put on the clothes and developed either scarlet fever or diphtheria (I forget which) and this was said to have been acquired from the clothes.

Out of my father's salary of £180 per annum, they paid 8s a week for rent and 5s a week (plus her food) for a daily maid. The maid's name was Beattie Newman (same surname as my mother but no relation). She stayed in my mother's memory for one incident in particular: Beattie gazed at my mother, who was wearing some sort of overall, and then at my parents' wedding photograph, and exclaimed "Gosh, don't clothes make a difference!"

I was born on 18 November 1920 in No 36. I was supposed to have been delivered by Dr Torney but my father was angered by his refusal to give my mother an anaesthetic and went and got another doctor whose name I have forgotten. My mother told me that she later thought Dr Torney had been right: she was very upset when I was shown to her streaked with purple from the gentian violet that had been put on the cuts I sustained from the instruments used to deliver me.

Although she was horrified by the house, my mother had affectionate memories of Cowbridge. She made friends with a young woman called Violet Lewis, who every spring for many years sent my mother a tin packed with sweet-smelling violets which she had picked. My parents were also friendly with a former mayor of the town whose name was Willy Davies. The only other person I can remember my mother mentioning was a young man named John Longdon or possibly Longden. His father, the superintendant of the Wesleyan Methodist circuit and so my father's immediate boss, lived some miles away, possibly in Bridgend. My parents had no telephone - very probably the superintendant was also without

one - so messages were delivered to my father by John Longdon on his motor bike. He stayed in my parents' memory because he later became a reasonably well-known stage and screen actor. Almost the first talkie I saw was "Atlantic", based on the Titanic disaster. My parents, my brother and I went to see this in about 1931 because John Longdon had one of the main parts, that of a heroic priest.

When I was about 8 or 9 months old we moved to Mountain Ash, where my brother was born. After that we moved to Scotland and our links to Cowbridge disappeared.

*Beryl Hughes, nee Tilsley*

(part of a letter written to the Cowbridge Record Society after reading *Cowbridge Buildings and People*)

### **Fonmon Castle - some speculation on the origins of the name**

Those members of the Society who visited Fonmon Castle to celebrate this year's Charter Day (March 13th 2002) will recollect that our guide gave a brief introduction to the history of the castle. Robert Fitzhamon, first Lord of Glamorgan, is said to have granted to the St John family the right to build a castle at Fonmon around the year 1200. The natural features, with a steep sided valley on the north and north-east, lend themselves to such a purpose.

The guide offered us two versions of the origin of the name *Fonmon* - the first from Norman French (*faux mont* in modern French, literally translated as a artificial mound) - and the second, suggested to her by Sir Brooke Boothby, the present owner, from the Latin for cedar. As there is no sign of a motte or mound at the site, and cedars are a relatively late introduction to Britain, another origin must be sought.

The medieval Vale of Glamorgan was not completely anglicized; the descendents of the old Welsh Princes held sway in the uplands, the Blaenau, and by the early 15th century many families in the southern Vale (Y Fro), whose names showed their foreign ancestry, had become Welsh in speech and sympathy. Welsh poets were welcomed to their castles. Lewis Morganwg of Cowbridge, one of the most famous Welsh bards in the period 1520 - 1565, sang and addressed poems to the St Johns of Ffwl-y-Mwn. *Mwn* is a variant of *Mwnt*, a mount; *Ffwl* is a fool. Could this have been a Welsh adaptation of the Norman French *Fou le* (or *du*) *Mont*, which has the same meaning? The alternative is that this Welsh name existed for a feature in the region (such as the mount or steep-sided area) before the Conquest, and this was adapted by the Normans directly to the similar-sounding Fonmon. There is a strong imitative element either way.

Professor Gwynedd Pierce, the acknowledged expert on place-names in the Vale, plumps eventually for *Valmont* (from the Latin *Vallis Montem*). You can take your choice.

*Liam Ginn*

## The Locations of Vale Churches – Evidence of a Sophisticated Early Civilisation?

*This paper builds on a previous talk I gave to the Cowbridge Local History Society about the positioning of the Tinkinswood Burial Cairn. It presents evidence to show that the sites now occupied by many churches in the Vale, appear to have been positioned deliberately in relation to each other and to geographical features so as to form part of some (as yet undiscovered) pattern. The precision of this positioning suggests that a sophisticated and capable people, with mathematical accomplishments the equal of those developed in Mesopotamia, possibly inhabited the Vale some 6,000 years ago.*

About two years ago in my talk to the History Society I demonstrated that the Tinkinswood burial cairn near St Nicholas was not located randomly but very precisely on the intersection of three imaginary lines. These lines connected firstly the then most easterly and westerly points in the Vale of Glamorgan, secondly two river mouths and thirdly a mountain top and Cold Knap point.

I showed that the first two of these lines were each one thousandth of the earth's circumference while the third was exactly half this length, and that the Tinkinswood site bisected two of these lines in the ratio 3:5. It bisected the other line in the ratio 3:1.

I also demonstrated that that a number of the sites now occupied by churches in the Vale (and beyond) appeared to be located with reference to Tinkinswood, either by falling on an imaginary line connecting Tinkinswood with an important geographical feature or along an astronomical alignment. That this was not a chance occurrence I demonstrated by showing that the lengths of such lines were precise whole numbers, typically whole thousands of poles. Thus, for instance, the site occupied by Machen church is exactly 4,000 poles from Tinkinswood and an imaginary line drawn from Machen to Tinkinswood passes through the churches at St Fagan's and Michaelston-super-Ely. Carried beyond Tinkinswood the line also passes through the church at Penmark.

Tinkinswood is believed by Cadw – the body in charge of Welsh historic monuments – to be about 6,000 years old. The churches in the Vale are for the most part medieval. However, churches were frequently constructed on the sites of earlier places of worship and therefore it is not unreasonable to suppose that, where there is a relationship to Tinkinswood of the kind I have described above, or a similar relationship between a number of churches themselves, then the sites of those churches were perhaps laid out at a similar neolithic date (1).

The pole seems to be the measure that 'fits' the distances between these sites. We know the pole (5½ yards) to be an ancient measure. What is less well known is that the pole is a measure related to the earth's circumference. When the metre was derived, the earth's circumference was assumed to be 40,000 kilometres – this distance is 7.954 million poles. (We now know the actual distance is 40,077 kilometres or 7.969 million poles). Put a simpler way there are 198.84 poles in a kilometre or, to within an accuracy of 6 parts in a 1,000, we can say there are 200 poles in a kilometre. This makes it easy to work from a 1 in 50,000 Ordnance Survey map where 10 centimetres equals 1,000 poles (strictly 994 poles). 500 poles make a Celtic League – a measure in regular use in Wales at least until the middle ages - and equal to two and a half kilometres or roughly a mile and a half.(2)

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(1) Some direct evidence for the above comes from the incidence of much older structures on the sites of Vale churches. The oldest and simplest examples of this are churches constructed next to earth 'mottes' as at Llanilid and Ystradowen. Such structures have been developed into castles as at St Donat's, and Coity; fortified houses as at Llansannor and Llanmihangel; and even Town Halls as at Llantwit Major and Cowbridge, though this latter structure has been demolished leaving only the cross in the road.

From studying ordnance survey maps of the Vales of Glamorgan I have been persuaded that the locations of many of the medieval churches here are not random, but precise. Take Llanfrynach church, for instance. It lies on an imaginary line connecting the church at Llanmaes with that at Llanilid. This line would be unremarkable — except that it runs very nearly due north south (the bearing north is about 358.5 degrees — that is just one and a half degrees anti-clockwise of grid north). Moreover, the distance from Llanilid to the sea is such as to suggest that the imaginary line was probably 3,000 poles long before several thousand years of coastal erosion.

Such an alignment of three churches — and even its length — could be held to be coincidence but for the fact that this is only one of a number of similar lines.

Thus close by there is a second north-south line, running on an almost identical bearing (359 degrees). This has four churches located on it — St Hilary, Flemingston, St Athan and Gileston. This line appears to be 1,500 poles long from St Hilary to where the sea might have been 6,000 years ago. In addition the distance between the sites of St Athan and Gileston churches is an exact 200 poles.

Another line, this time appearing to be 5,000 poles long (allowing for coastal erosion) runs on a bearing of 345.5 from the sea at St Donat's, through St Donat's church, through Wick church and on to Bridgend church. These two latter churches, moreover, are exactly 3,000 poles apart.

Still another north-south alignment connects the church site at St Mary Hill with the sites of Llysworney church and Llantwit Major church. The bearing is 355 degrees (360 would be true north) and the line would appear to be 2,500 poles long after allowing for coastal erosion.

Further to the west is yet still another line of three churches — St Brides Major, Pen y Fai and Tondu. This line has a bearing of 359 degrees and aligns with the 555 metre trig point on Mynydd Caerau. A short way below this point is a cairn and the distance between this cairn and Tondu church is 3,000 poles.

It is tempting to speculate that these lines followed some astronomical variance or perhaps the movements of the earth's magnetic pole — the current bearing of which is 345 degrees. I have no information on this point. What involves less speculation is the position of the coastline

Using the assumptions above one can plot a rough picture of the coast 60 centuries (or thereabouts) ago.(3)

So much for North-South alignments; what about east-west? Here there is only one — at least so far as I can discover. This line is of particular interest however. First, it runs exactly parallel to the east-west map grid. That is a bearing of 90-270 degrees. Secondly, there are

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(2) I would add as a footnote that I have noticed that whereas 3,000 poles, say, should be represented on the 1/50,000 scale ordnance survey by a distance of 30.18 centimetres, in practice I have not found it necessary to make this correction. This suggests that the pole of ancient times may have been slightly shorter — say 197 inches — than its accepted current value of 198 inches. It would then relate, even more closely, to the earth's circumference.

(3) It is not impossible — especially given the position of the eroded Tusker rock — that this line was 6,000 poles long with the site of Tondu as its mid-point. This would suggest some considerable coastal erosion had occurred at this point. Some possible confirmation of this is comes from the possibility that the shoreline could have been 1500 poles due west of Llandow if the east-west line was anchored to the coast.

three churches on it and, in addition, the Tinkinswood burial cairn. The line begins at Llandough church near Penarth Head and continues through Tinkinswood, St Hilary and Llandow. 1,500 poles beyond Llandow and you are in the sea by a kilometre. Thirdly, the distance between the four sites is 1,500 poles.(4)

I have drawn attention to the regular whole numbers of Celtic Leagues (500 poles) that appear to be a characteristic of these imaginary lines. Even when it is not possible to find straight-line alignments of church sites, the frequency with which these 'whole pole' distances occur appears greater than chance alone would dictate.

This is particularly noticeable in cases where the churches are dedicated to the same saint. Take the case of Michaelston-super-Ely for instance. This lies exactly 1,000 poles (5 kms) from Michaelston-le-Pit and 3,000 poles from Michaelston-y-Fedw (between Cardiff and Newport). In the western Vale, St Donats church is located just 2,500 poles from Welsh St Donats church and St Brides Wentlooge is 4,000 poles from St Brides-super-Ely. (St Brides Major, in the west of the Vales, is 8,100 poles from St Brides Wentlooge and 4,100 from St Brides super Ely).

Such results could hardly have happened by chance even though not all such pairings are whole pole numbers apart, Peterstone-super-Ely measuring an irregular 3,775 poles from Peterstone Wentlooge.

It is however the proliferation of 1,000 pole distances between churches that shows clearly that some guiding principle must be at work in their location. Apart from Michaelston-super-Ely and Michaelston-le-Pit quoted above, the following pairs of churches are exactly 1,000 poles apart.

Llanmaes-Llysworney	Pendoylan-Ystradowen
Llandaff Cathedral-Llandough (Penarth)	Ystradowen-Llandough (Cowbridge)
Bonvilston-St Hilary	Llantrithyd-St Nicholas
Peterston-super-Ely-Caerau, Ely	Llanblethian-Flemingston
Caerau, Ely-St John's Cardiff	Treoos-Llandow
Caerau, Ely-St Andrews Major	Llantwit Major-Broughton
St Brides Major-St Johns, Bridgend	

The above list is not necessarily exhaustive. In addition there are many other cases of churches being located 1,000 poles from other sites, earthworks, castles, or geographical features.

It seems probable that some principle underlies how these churches are located. With the alignments along imaginary straight lines and with the precise distances between them, the church sites appear deliberately placed dots on a canvas. The problem is in knowing how they are connected.

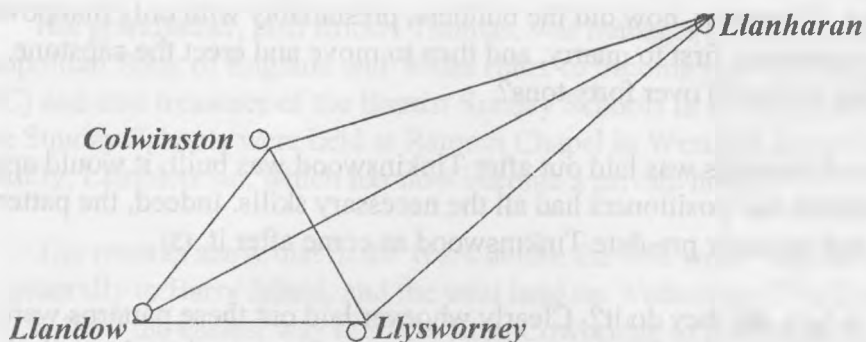
In an attempt to look further into this I recently took 24 churches in the western Vale and looked at all the distance pairings of 1,500 poles or less. From 201 measurements I noted that

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(4) Except the above is not quite true. St Hilary is the only church that has appeared twice so far. If St Hilary were to be located exactly half way between Llandow and Tinkinswood then it would not align with Gileston-St Athan-Flemingston. St Hilary lies in fact 1,480 poles from Llandow and 1,520 from Tinkinswood. It is displaced by some 20 poles in a westerly direction.



a number of sites were located in such a way as to be equidistant from a pair of churches. A typical example is the three church sites, Llandow, Colwinston and Llysworney. These three churches form an isosceles triangle – that is a triangle in which two of the sides (Llandow-Colwinston and Llandow-Llysworney) are of the same length. Investigating this triangle of churches further I discovered a remarkable feature. If I marked a point so as to bisect the imaginary line connecting Llysworney with Colwinston (the side of the triangle that is unique) and drew a line from Llandow, through this point and onwards I would describe a figure not unlike an arrow in a bow (if one imagines a straight bow). This ‘arrow’ was then pointing directly at Llanharan church.



This could of course be chance were it not for the fact that Colwinston church (and therefore Llysworney church for this is now a symmetrical shape) were exactly 2,000 poles from Llanharan.

These three church sites – Llandow, Colwinston and Llysworney - seem particularly associated with this type of geometry. Thus Llandow is also equidistant from the site of Cowbridge church and from the site of Llandough (Cowbridge) church. Colwinston is equidistant from St Mary Hill and from Coychurch. Colwinston is also equidistant from Llanmaes and from Llantwit Major churches. In this case the projection from the point bisecting the line between the Llantwit Major and Llanmaes church sites through the site of Colwinston church, aligns to Tondy which, like Llanharan, is 2,000 poles from Colwinston.

St Johns Church in Bridgend is equidistant from Colwinston and Llangan. In this case the projection aligns to Porthkerry church and the distance from Bridgend to Porthkerry is 4,500 poles.

### Conclusion

Clearly there is ample evidence justifying the conclusion that the locations of the sites, on which today stand many churches in the Vale, are not random. Churches – or rather the sites on which they were built – have been laid out according to some intelligent principle by intelligent (human) beings. (I dismiss the aliens hypothesis). But why? And what is the principle or pattern? That is the question.

I have unable to find any coherent pattern at all - even simple pythagorean triangles. Though assiduous study may find some. All I find is many interesting bits of patterns, none of which seem to relate much to each other. It is like having the remnants of half a dozen jigsaws – each incomplete – in the same box.

It could be that one pattern was laid out and later another was laid on top of it and later still a third. My own particular feeling (which is no more at this stage than a hunch) is that patterns were laid out to reflect the stars – but as the positions of these changed over the centuries, new patterns had to be laid out to keep the accuracy.

Another question is when these patterns were laid out. We know that the patterns seem relate to Tinkinswood (and indeed other burial cairns in the Vale). And Cadw puts the date of Tinkinswood at around 4,000 BC. If the date were much earlier than this then rate of coastal erosion in the last couple of thousand years must have been much faster than it is today.

And in any case Tinkinswood is positioned with a degree of sophistication and accuracy in relation to geographical features that would tax surveyors today equipped with global positioning systems. Moreover, how did the builders, presumably with only manpower and lacking metal tools, manage, first to quarry, and then to move and erect the capstone, weighing (according to Cadw) over forty tons?

Even if the pattern of churches was laid out after Tinkinswood was built, it would appear that Tinkinswood's builders and positioners had all the necessary skills. Indeed, the patterns found in the Vale could just as easily pre-date Tinkinswood as come after it. (5)

Another question is how did they do it? Clearly whoever laid out these patterns were excellent surveyors and capable of making accurate measurements and mathematical calculations. They appear to have been able to measure the circumference of the earth at more or less the same time as the Assyrians and Babylonians. Was there a civilisation in the Vale as scientifically advanced in 4,000 BC as in Mesopotamia? And if so what became of it?

Why is there no trace of their writing – for they must have written? Why was nothing carved on their stones (in the Vale at least) and so far as we can tell only odd spiral patterns in other places – Ireland for instance. Did they write only on a species of paper or bark, lacking the edged tools to chisel stone?

These are all questions for further work. I hope others may take an interest. I like to think that the Vale did play host to one of the most sophisticated of early civilisations. But all that is left is the position of their sacred sites. It is not much to go on. But every time I discover a new alignment, or ratio of distances, or geometrical fragment I am amazed, and I hope others will be too.

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(5) One thing that may have helped them is the Vale's geography. In essence the Vale of Glamorgan is a series of terraces. From hill after hill, moving inland from the sea, the landscape is spread out beneath you like a map. To see a map of the Vale one has only to stand, for instance above Bridgend where the wind turbines now spin, on a clear day.

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*Peter Sain ley Berry*

### **Tour to Toulouse and the Midi-Pyrenees**

Arthur Peplow, who is one of our Vice-Presidents and a regular speaker to the Society, has asked me to publicize the fact that he has two double rooms available on this tour, which departs from and returns to Cardiff. The dates are 18th to 26th May 2002; the cost is £625. Places to be visited include Moissac, Toulouse, St Bertrand de Comminges, Carcassonne, Albi, Cordes, Cognac, Nantes.

Full details from Arthur on 01633 666151



## THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TREAT

In the days before mass travel and package holidays, the highlight of many a child's summer was the Sunday School outing. Robert Thomas, formerly the senior partner of Herbert R Thomas and Son and Edwards, Chartered Surveyors and Auctioneers, has recently found some account books which give details of such outings from Cowbridge in the early years of last century.

His grandfather, also Robert Thomas, was manager of the Cowbridge branch of the Metropolitan Bank of England and Wales (later to become part of Midland Bank and now HSBC) and also treasurer of the Baptist Sunday Schools in Cowbridge and Llanblethian. These Sunday Schools were held at Ramoth Chapel in Westgate and at the schoolroom in Piccadilly, Llanblethian, which has now become a private house.

The records show that in the years before the first world war the outings or 'treats' were generally to Barry Island, and the treat held on Wednesday 20th July 1910 is recorded in detail. In 1910 the easiest way to travel from Cowbridge to Barry was by train, and the correspondence shows that a special train was provided by the Taff Vale Railway from Cowbridge to Aberthaw, leaving at 9.10am and returning from Aberthaw at 8.40pm. At Aberthaw it was necessary to walk back to the high level station served by the Barry Railway where another special train had been arranged. This left Aberthaw at 9.45am, and returned from Barry Island at 8.00pm.

The total charge for 60 children carried by the Taff Vale Railway was 15/-, and for 67 children carried by the Barry Railway was 16/9d. There is no indication of the adult fares, nor where the extra seven children appeared from at Aberthaw! The Aberthaw stations were several hundred yards apart, and the time allowed for the change was not very great, so one can imagine the head counting and marshalling required.

Arrangements for refreshments at Barry Island were made with the Dorothy Cafe, whose proprietor, Richard Edward Davies, describes himself on the billhead as *Confectioner, Fancy Draper, Grocer, Caterer for Picnic Parties and Commission Agent*. The cafe's menu offered a range of meals from **Children** (under 13 years of age): cake - three sorts (seed, sultana, currant), tea, best bread and butter, as much as they can eat and drink, two meals for 9½d, to **Adults**: first meal - ham and beef, with use of knives and forks, tea, best bread and butter; second meal - seed, sultana, currant cake, tea, best bread and butter, two meals for 1/4d.

In responding to the first enquiry in 1910, Mr Davies had written "We don't take parties bringing their own food in July and August". The June 1909 treat, also to Barry Island, had taken their own food to the Dorothy Cafe where they had been charged 1½d per head for the use of a room together with knives and forks. The amount of food taken for the day was of heroic proportion: 100 lbs of cake, 100 buns, 20 loaves of bread, 24 lbs of sugar, 3½ lbs of tea, 10 lbs of butter, 5 gallons of milk, 41½ lbs of ham, 6½ lbs of pressed beef. The accounts show a charge of 1/- for the use of a stable and it seems likely that a pony and trap had carried the food to Barry Island. It would have been difficult to take that amount of food by train in view of the change to be made at Aberthaw.

There is no record of how the day was spent at Barry Island but the late Gwyn Thomas in his book *A Welsh Eye* describes the homegoing scene at the station on a day when "the entire

body of the believers in the Lower Rhondda descended like hail on the beaches of Barry. The hour of return was like distribution day in Heaven: Porth Congregationalists, Platform Three, ten past eight; Hafod Baptists, Platform Four, quarter to nine; Ynyshir Seventh Days, Platform One, any time now”.

It would be nice to think that on one summer evening each year the roll call included: ‘Cowbridge Baptists, eight o’clock special, change at Aberthaw’.

*Alec Jones*

### Book Review: COTTRELL, by John Richards

Every resident of the Vale will know the name Cottrell though each will probably think of a different facet of its history. This book is a deceptively simple account of the changes in use and ownership of the area that became the focus of the house and lands called Cottrell. The author, John Richards, gives a concise and easily readable account of life in the countryside and the effects of government at each change of ownership from the Norman Knights to the English Industrialists without losing the readers’ interest.

It is deceptive because each stage is lucidly explained with pictures and inset notes like the newest school textbook, but the text is filled with accurate local history. A reader may be well versed in history but will find considerable interest in the wealth of local fact and anecdote. The writer has clearly absorbed all the published articles but has also made extensive research of his own. Each change of ownership with Cottrell house as its central theme is used to create a vignette of the new owner and the local characters of the period. History provides a greater range of character than any novelist would dare to introduce and the author does not flinch, for he has the diaries of William Thomas and David Jones and others to illuminate his narrative.

Perhaps he has only used part of the material available but he has made excellent use of that which he has used and has ensured that there is a Bibliography, Index and Notes that are thoroughly done to enable any serious reader to accept this as a good work of reference as well as a glossy coffee table production with excellent pictures.

Whilst it is surprisingly good value as a book it is not available at bookshops, though the local libraries have copies. It is only available from the Cottrell Golf Club who had it privately written and published. To get your own copy drive to the Club house car park, look for the Portakabin where you pay green fees, and for £12 a pleasant young lady will sell you a copy, or they will supply by post for £15.

*Ray Caple*

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