

COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 58: SEPTEMBER 2005

Programme for 2005 - 6

2005

September 2nd

AGM and
'Cowbridge & District: a photo quiz'
Jeff Alden

October 14th**(NB date)

'History of Flatholm'
Deryk Careless

November 4th

'The Cowbridge Physic Garden: Plans and progress'
Dan Clayton-Jones

December 2nd

The Maud Gunter Memorial Lecture
'Princesses of Wales'
Debbie Fisher

2006

January 6th

'Venta Silurum – Caerwent - Excavation of a Roman Town'
Richard Brewer

February 3rd

The Don Wallis Memorial Lecture
'Games and Pastimes'
Walter Jones

March 3rd

'Heraldry – the shorthand of history'
Anthony Jones

April 7th

'The Royal Mint'
Haydn Walters

Meetings are held in the Lesser Hall,
Cowbridge, on Fridays at 8.00pm

Many thanks to Dick Tonkin for once again organising a stimulating and interesting programme. Please note that the October meeting will be held on the **second** Friday in October, and not the usual first Friday of the month (because the Lesser Hall had been pre-booked by another organisation).

We are pleased to announce that the first Don Wallis Memorial Lecture will be held on Friday, February 3rd. Don loved local history, edited the Llandow village history, and gave us a most interesting talk on the village. He was a keen and enthusiastic member of the Society and an active committee member. Pam has given a very generous donation to the society in his memory and the committee thought it most fitting that he should be remembered in this way.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Thanks to Don Gerrard for another of his interesting articles which illuminate the wider scene of the history of south Wales; this time he deals with the Rebecca Riots. This article will be concluded in the next number of the newsletter, the December issue.

Our military correspondent, Alec Jones, has given us an insight into Ordnance Survey mapping: many thanks to him, as ever.

Dick Buswell has given us some interesting news about *Big Screen*, which is complemented by Huw Davies's article

on the history of the Cowbridge Cinema.

I am also very pleased to be able to publish an article which John Miles wrote in about 1975, about the Llanblethian woollen industry. We all knew John as a very knowledgeable and well-informed historian, but he has always been reluctant to get into print. This article is particularly relevant as there is currently a planning application to create a house by building an extension to the Factory.

AGM Agenda : 2nd September 2005

1. Apologies for absence
2. Confirmation of the minutes of the AGM of 4th September 2002
3. Correspondence
4. Chairman's report
5. Annual financial report
6. Election of Officers and Committee for 2005-6
7. Address by Jeff Alden on *Cowbridge and district: a Photo Quiz*
8. Cheese and Wine - a chance to chat.

Officers and Committee for 2004/5 were:

Joint Chairmen	Mr Bruce McGovern and Mr Jeff Alden
Hon Secretary	Mr Don Gerrard
Joint Hon Treasurers	Mrs Ivana Locke and Mrs Val Pugh
Programme secretary	Mr Dick Tonkin
Publicity Officer	Mr Bob Cope
Editor of the newsletter	Mr Jeff Alden
Representative: Vale Conservation Advisory Group	Mr George Haynes

Committee:

Mrs Betty Alden, Professor Dick Buswell, Mrs Marilyn Cope, Mr Liam Ginn, Mr Keith Jones, Mrs Iris Simpson.

Minutes of the AGM of the CDLHS held at the Lesser Hall, Cowbridge, on 5 Nov 2004 at 7.45pm

1. There were 69 members present
2. The Co-chairman Jeff Alden opened the meeting
3. Apologies were received from Revd Norman Williams, Yvonne Weeding, Mr and Mrs K Rawlins, George Haynes, Marilyn Cope, Geoff Cox, Joy and Tony Rees.
4. Minutes. The minutes of the AGM held on 5 Sept 2003 were read by Jeff Alden and approved by the meeting. The chair was then taken by Bruce McGovern.
5. Chairman's address. 2004 had been both the 30th anniversary of the Society and the 750th anniversary of the first charter. In 2005 it was hoped to expand the activities of the Society, especially visits. Mr McGovern suggested there be a combined newsletter of the History and Record Societies, but Jeff Alden preferred to keep them separate. Members were encouraged to join the Record Society. Thanks were given to the Joint treasurers, to Arline Boulton for the serving of coffee, to all members of the Committee, to Dick Tonkin for arranging an excellent programme, and to all members for excellent attendance at meetings. With continued support the Society can go from strength to strength.
6. Financial Report. There was a surplus of £65 over the year. 105 members had paid subscriptions. The report was accepted by the meeting.
7. Election of officers and committee: as above. In addition, Val Bird, Luke Millar and Dick Buswell offered to help on the Vale Conservation Advisory Group should George Haynes be unable to attend meetings.
8. AOB. Jeff Alden reminded members that Llantwit Major History Society Christmas cards were on sale, also copies of the Centenary Bovian.
There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed at 8.00pm.

CONGRATULATIONS!

. . . to Deborah Fisher whose book on The Welsh Princesses has just been published by the University of Wales Press. It is in a very convenient pocket-sized format, and is well-written, well-produced, and has been well-received. Well done! Congratulations are also due to her for being asked to produce a companion volume on the Princes of Wales.

THE REBECCA RIOTS (PART I)

In 1801 Wales was still overwhelmingly agricultural, approximately 92% of the population relied on farming. Although most communities in rural Wales were self-sufficient, there were regular markets and people travelled long distances to attend them. Life in the countryside was harsh and primitive. Women and children carried out heavy manual tasks, and many of the improved methods of farming had not yet reached Wales. Farm labourers often earned as little as eight shillings (40p) per week, when the price of a 4-lb loaf was 1/6d (7p). A coal miner in Glamorgan could earn £1.10s.0d (£1.50) per week.

There was widespread discontent in Britain after 1815 due to the distress in town and country caused by the effects of rising prices after the Napoleonic Wars. This culminated in the Chartist Protests during the "Hungry Forties".

In rural Wales there were added pressures:

- **1. The rapid growth in population.**

In the old counties of Dyfed the population rose from 166,553 in 1801 to 263,136 in 1841 - an increase of 58%. There was no corresponding growth in available land or jobs. Hence wages were lower.

- **2. Enclosures of common or waste land were a cause of friction.**
- **3. The Game Laws** were a constant source of irritation. Poaching was considered a serious crime punished by transportation. (Man traps existed to 1828).
- **4. There were increasing complaints about the landowners in their role as magistrates.** Many were absentees and were seen to impose an English legal system on Wales.
- **5. The Poor Laws.** Before 1834 parishes had looked after their poor, old and sick. The rapid growth of population, and unemployment meant that the poor rates became excessive. Poor Relief in Carmarthenshire in 1776 cost £1085; in 1819, £20,418.

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act established workhouses where families were separated and kept in severe conditions.

- **6. Tithes "these were second only to the Turnpike System as a cause of discontent".** (1844 Commission of Enquiry into the Turnpike Trusts). In 1836 the Tithe Commutation Act stated that tithes must be paid in cash, and values were re-assessed. (Tithe Maps were produced). These cash payments were hard for the poor to find.
- **7. Turnpikes.** First Turnpike Act 1663. 1706 First Turnpike Trust which empowered a group of men to take over a stretch of road, usually 12 miles, and levy tolls at gates. The gates had pikes on them and opening the gate was "turning the pike". They were unpopular because many were inefficient and dishonest. There were riots in many parts of the country in the 18th century, in Bristol, Somerset and Northamptonshire.

By 1839 conditions in West Wales were very bad. There was dissatisfaction with rents, rates, tolls and tithes, coupled with appalling poverty.

On 13 May the first tollgate was destroyed, at Efailwen, and on 6 June about 400 men disguised as women marched on the gate calling for an end to tollgates. The destruction of other gates followed and on 17 July a mob assembled led by a man, disguised, named 'Becca'. An emergency meeting of the Whitland Trust met at St Clears and decided that no new tollgates would be built. "Rebecca" had won her first victory and there were no further disturbances for three and a half years.

Who was "Rebecca" ? The Efailwen leader is thought to have been Thomas Rees, a farm labourer from Mynachlog Ddu, who was also a well known prize fighter and lay preacher. After this he seemed to play no further part in the riots.

Where did the name "Rebecca" come from? There have been several explanations, the most likely being the Biblical one - Genesis, Chapter 24, verse 60 "And they blessed Rebecca and said until her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them".

There were no more riots until 1842, probably because the initial attacks had the desired effect - the gates had been destroyed and not replaced.

However, new gates appeared at St Clears in October 1842, which meant that travellers must pay twice within a mile. On 18 November the gates were destroyed, re-erected, and destroyed again on 12 December. Further attacks continued before and Inspector and two constables from the Metropolitan Police arrived in Carmarthenshire, with 54 special constables, the Marines from Pembroke Dock, and the Castlemartin Yeomanry. There were, however, no arrests.

Further attacks were made on the gates at Pwlltrap, Haverfordwest and Whitland, with much activity on the Pembrokeshire-Carmarthenshire border.

In May 1843 the gates in Carmarthen itself were destroyed by 'Rebecca' and her sister 'Charlotte' and a mob of some 300. This began an escalation in the scale of the riots, and there was widespread refusal to pay tolls, backed by mobs against the soldiers and constables. By the summer of 1843 Carmarthenshire was in a state of panic. The Magistrates had lost control and gates throughout the County were being destroyed.

(TO BE CONTINUED : Part II in next Newsletter).

Don Gerrard

WHAT THE '45 DID FOR US

We often forget that many of the devices which make modern life easier and safer were born out of preparations for war. World War II, for example, brought us radar, the jet engine, four wheel drive vehicles and the ball point pen. There is however one item still in everyday use which had its origins in a much earlier, albeit domestic, conflict: this is the Ordnance Survey map.

The Ordnance Survey came into being following the Jacobite rising of 1745, and the defeat of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender (Bonnie Prince Charlie, grandson of James II) at the battle of Culloden on 16 April 1746 by the Duke of Cumberland, the son of George II. The maps used by the army in this campaign and the subsequent pacification of the Highlands were very imperfect, and the Government of the day ordered the Army to carry out a proper survey of the Highlands. This work started in 1747, and was ultimately extended to include the whole of Scotland. The survey took many years to complete, being interrupted by the Seven Years War and the American War of Independence, both of which drew troops away from Britain.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the need for a national survey of Britain attracted much attention, and under the auspices of the Duke of Richmond, Master General of his Majesty's Ordnance, work was put in hand. On 10 July 1791 the Duke appointed Major Williams and Lieutenant William Mudge, both of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, together with Mr Isaac Dalby (who later became professor of mathematics at the Royal Military College) to carry out the survey. For the next thirty-three years the survey was devoted to producing a one-inch map of the UK.

The initial survey of South Wales took place between 1800 and 1809 under the direction of, by now, Lieutenant-Colonel William Mudge and Captain Thomas Colby. Key trigonometrical stations were on Ogmores Down and on Mynydd Maen near Pontypool. A feature of these early surveys was that the first draft of the resulting map was sent, for comment and corrections of any mis-spelt place name, to a local dignitary. The Revd JM Traherne, FRS, of St Hilary - who

planted the clump of trees on St Hilary Down, and was responsible for moving the Town Hall in Cowbridge to its present position - provided such comment for Cardiff and the Vale. The survey in our area in the 1820s saw Captain Charles Dawson, RE, occupying Great House Llanblethian, with his men camping in the field opposite Great House. Among his officers was Lieutenant Boteler, who later, as Colonel Boteler, lived at Llandough Castle. Captain Dawson's second wife was Ann Bevan, daughter of John Bevan of Cowbridge

The first Ordnance Survey maps of south Wales were published on 1 January 1833 by Lieut-Col Thomas Colby, Royal Engineers, at the Tower of London where the maps had been drawn and the printing plates engraved. Copies of these maps, with the addition of railways to 1883, have been republished by David and Charles of Newton Abbot, Devon.

Comparison of the present-day Vale with that map is very interesting. The road patterns, for example, have changed very little. The line of the present A48, from Tredegar Park, Newport, to the outskirts of Bridgend, with the exception of the modern by-passes, has hardly deviated from that of the road existing at the time of the survey. The towns, however, have altered out of all recognition: Cowbridge at that time consisted of what is now the main street, Bridgend had not grown to any size, and Porthcawl was just a harbour at the end of the Porthcawl branch of the Llynfi Valley railway.

FOOTNOTES

1. In the early years of the OS, the officers were drawn from the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers because these were the technical troops of their day. The Royal Engineers was a corps consisting entirely of officers, but the men they commanded, who undertook most of the hard physical work of the survey, belonged to the Royal Sappers and Miners. This title was believed to be no help in attracting good quality recruits to the regiment, and on 17 October 1856 the two units were joined together under the one title: "Royal Engineers".
2. From its earliest days until well into the nineteenth century, the Board of Ordnance was the largest and most important department of state, and the office of Master General of the Ordnance was held by men of great power, including the Duke of Wellington. The office of Master General still exists although now of lesser importance, the present holder being a Major General with the rather more prosaic title of 'Technical Director, Defence Procurement Agency'.
3. The survey of the UK was based on key trigonometrical stations, mostly on high ground, and it was essential that these could be seen from adjacent stations. Poor weather conditions often made this difficult, and the surveyors often found that more accurate observations could be made by employing bright lights at night. One of the Royal Engineers employed on the survey invented a lamp which made use of the fact that lime, when heated, becomes incandescent and gives out a brilliant light. Such lights were seen over a distance of 67 miles during the survey of Ireland. The same method was used in theatre footlights of the time, hence the phrase "In the limelight".

Alec Jones

THE WOOLLEN INDUSTRY OF LLANBLETHIAN

The first reference to any kind of woollen manufacture in Llanblethian comes in a 1295 inventory of the lands and tenements belonging to Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Hereford in the Manor of Llanblethian. "Three water-mills and one windmill which are worth yearly £16 and there is a fulling mill which is worth yearly forty shillings". Fulling is the cleaning and thickening of the cloth by closing together the threads of woollen cloth, by pressing and kneading with the assistance of soap and liquor. This was done by wooden hammers operated by the water-driven fulling mill. We do not know where this early fulling mill was situated, but its existence shows that cloth must have been woven locally for such a mill to be required.

The first specific mention of a named weaver comes in a grant, dated 23rd September 1637, of several pieces of land to a weaver. Evan Jenkins of Cowbridge for £50 made the agreement with Jenkin Edward of Llanblethian weaver. The will of the same Jenkin Edward, dated 27th August 1655, left his land and goods to his family, and there is reference to his working frame in the inventory.

In the Llanblethian parish records, George William or Williams, was a weaver, who died on 25th October 1679. David Williams, weaver, Llanblethian made his will on 13th September 1699, and it was proved in November 1701. This showed that David Williams had three properties, including Greystones where he lived, and three weaving looms. John or James Richards died 14th May 1725 before he made a will. He was a labourer, but his son was a tucker. He must have been more than an ordinary labourer, as he owned wool, cloth, flannel, 2 shears, and a hot press. Perhaps this was a family business where he would shear the sheep and his son would process the cloth.

The censuses for Llanblethian of course give more details. In 1851, for example, in the parish were 9 dressmakers, 1 seamstress, 1 dressmaker's apprentice – all unmarried girls under 24. There were also 3 tailors, 4 tailor's journeymen, and 4 weavers. The owner of the Factory was a weaver – Thomas Evans, aged 26, who employed 1 man (David Jones, 24, handloom weaver). The second weaver was John Thomas, who was also a publican living at the King's Head (today's Belgrave). The third weaver, John Miles, lived at Aberthin, while David Howe at Newton also employed one man. On this return, 3 handloom weavers were recorded. One worked in the factory; the other, Robert Thomas, also employed a handloom weaver. There were also two widows classed as paupers, formerly the wives of weavers.

Churchwardens' records of the sum to be distributed among the industrious poor, not receiving parish relief, show that the first record of weavers receiving this relief was in 1841.

1. John Thomas received relief 1841-1862 (stopped 1851-54). Amount varied from 3s to 6s.
2. Wm Lewis, tailor, recd 1841-62, except 1858-9.
3. Robert Thomas and John Miles, weavers, also received it.
4. By 1851 there were six tailors and weavers receiving this relief, by 1856, seven. The amount varied; in 1856 £7.6s.6d (Total to cloth workers £1.9s. 6d)

About John Thomas, David Jones of Wallington wrote "But Shon y Gwaith's is the oldest house and down in the village must be considered the village ale-house. Shon y Gwaith (John the Weaver)'s name is quite a household word in Llanblethian, and popular consent has bestowed his name upon the little "Public" instead of the name it bears on the sign. If you wanted the house you may ask twenty people in the village for its whereabouts, not one of whom at a first thought could tell you anything of the King's Head, but ask for "John the Weaver's" and the youngest child that plays at the roadside will tell you Johnny is a village character."

Kelly's Commercial Trade Directory, S Wales & Mon, 1865 and 1875 refers to the Factory in the Cowbridge section. 'Flannel manufacturers - Thomas Evans (and all kinds of woollen goods, stocking yarns, etc, The Factory, Llanblethian.' This proves that the Factory was selling goods as well as material. Next reference in 1895: 'Mrs Jane Howell, flannel manufacturers, The Factory'. Parish register: birth 1883 to Charles Howell weaver and Jane Howell, a daughter Ann; residence the Factory. Mrs Howell also had a retail outlet in Cowbridge: 'Howell and Company, drapers, East Village, Cowbridge'. [Howells operated at 79 Eastgate in 1885-6, but this was a Thomas Howell - JA]. Cowbridge was an important market centre in the prosperous Vale of Glamorgan, and it had several linen and woollen drapers, dressmakers, tailors and wool dealers.

John LS Miles

FILMS IN COWBRIDGE

After an interval of many years the cinema returns to Cowbridge! This is thanks to the efforts of a new organisation called *Big Screen-Sgrin Fawr* which over the last twelve months has been piloting a mobile cinema for audiences in villages in the Vale. This initiative came from two entrepreneurial young men working for the Creative Rural Communities development programme of the local council and based in Old Hall, Phil Chappell and Jamie Grundy. They obtained funding, mostly from the European Union, to buy the latest mobile cinema equipment including a massive wide screen, surround sound and a state-of-the-art DVD and video projector and amplifier - all a long way from *The Smallest Show On Earth* or *Cinema Paradiso*!

Phil and Jamie were soon joined by a small band of enthusiastic volunteers, and films for adults and children were shown in the halls of Peterston super Ely, Colwinston, Llancafán and other villages.

Well, now, it will be possible to show films in Cowbridge at a variety of venues including the Town Hall. A small committee has been set up to take over the running of Big Screen and to launch the season a weekend of film shows is planned for Friday 16th, Saturday 17th and Monday 19th September in Cowbridge Town Hall. The details of the programme have yet to be finalised so watch out for posters in local shop windows, the library and elsewhere. It is hoped to show films for children and adults. There will be a charge to cover the cost of hiring the films and it is hoped to have the usual intermission facilities!

Following the launch Big Screen will continue its programme of film shows in local villages throughout the winter and spring. It is hoped to be able to include films in the programme of the Society at some future date.

Dick Buswell

What of the history of the cinema in Cowbridge? **Huw Davies** supplied the following:

It was at the east end of the town that on December 14th 1922 Arthur Thomas Mills, proprietor of a garage in the High Street, bought an area of property from Charles T Edmondson for the sum of £590. The property comprised a pub, called The Wheelwright's Arms, a large garden to its rear, and land on its eastern side called The Ballcourt.

Mills, who later became an Alderman of the town, was a skilled architect and he developed the site into a cinema and ballroom called 'The Pavilion'. The ballroom, opened on Armistice night in 1925, was situated on the top floor of the building and was considered at the time one of the best in Wales. With its maple floor and grand decor, it was home for many functions and dances. On the ground floor, opened a month or two earlier than the ballroom on the same night as the Cowbridge Agricultural show in September, was the cinema.

The cinema's opening night was attended by probably most of the town's populace, and its first showing was the feature film *This House of Vanity*. The most popular showing would be the Saturday Matinee where the children, and adults, of the town would cram in to watch the films.

The films at this time were all silent, with a piano player providing the musical accompaniment to the action on screen, and it was not until 1927 that the Pavilion saw its first sound film. Practically the whole town went to see Al Jolson in the film *The Jazz Singer*, and it is said that they all cried too!

Phillip Phillips leased The Pavilion in 1934, and subsequently bought it. A very tall man, Phillips had married into the Studt family of Glamorgan who were well known fair owners around South Wales. John Studt Snr used to go from village to village with his small fair, and part of that fair would be a small show cinema. The family eventually expanded into running permanent cinemas, also owning those in Pencoed, Llanharan and Pontyclun. Phillips was eventually the main booker for films in the South Wales area.

Len Stirling of Cowbridge also worked in the local cinema industry. He remembers Phillips booking films out from Cardiff on a Sunday, and going from cinema to cinema

throughout the week. He would have 2 or 3 days at the Pavilion, 2 days at Llanharan cinema, and one day at Pontyclun. Running them around in his car, he would then return them to Cardiff the following Sunday, and also pick up some more. Of course, there were no Sunday cinemas in those days. Mr Sterling was himself a very prominent cinema booker, once booking some 59 cinemas in South Wales and the West of England.

It was also remembered that during the intervals at the Pavilion, a motorbike would speed up to the Pontyclun cinema with the film just shown, and would return with the film they had just seen.

During this time, the hub of the Welsh and west of England cinema industry was at the Dominions Arcade on Queen Street in Cardiff. All of the major film companies, including MGM, Warner Bros., Rank, Columbia, Pathe, 20th Century Fox, and RKO Radio, were here, with offices and despatch departments. When the Second World War came in 1939, these companies decided to move their departments out of the bomb-targeted capital, and into quieter areas. Many moved to Green Farm at Culverhouse Cross, whilst MGM decided to move to the Pavilion in Cowbridge. They kept their office staff in the ballroom, whilst the despatch departments went into buildings in the field behind the cinema. Luck obviously wasn't on their side though, as on April 16th 1942, fire ripped through the ballroom, destroying everything inside and badly damaging the rest of the upper floors. 5 fire units were called out to quell the fire, one of the firemen ironically being Phillip Phillips. There were rumours that it was something to do with the reels of film that the fire broke out, but this was never really confirmed.

The cinema was rebuilt and reopened in 1948, but finally closed in the early 'fifties.

EUROPEAN HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Cowbridge Museum will be open on Saturday September 10th from 11am to 4pm as well as on the regular opening day on September 3rd. Free entry, and well worth a visit!

Tondu Heritage Ironworks will also be open on Saturday Sept 10th, between 10am and 4pm, with guided tours at 11.30 and 2.30. The adjacent **Tondu Methodist Church** will also be open (both are on Maesteg Road, Tondu).

VISIT TO LLANCAIACH

Bruce McGovern organised another successful summer outing, to Llancaiach Fawr on July 5th. The guides were most interesting and played their parts very realistically; we all learned a lot, and it really is a fine building. It is good to be reminded from time to time how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful part of the country. Many thanks to Bruce for all his work.

COWBRIDGE:YOUR CENTURY

ITV Wales broadcast a very interesting programme on July 26, with a wealth of information packed into 25 minutes or so – and some good film clips too. Well done to all participants!

THE COWBRIDGE VC

The April 2004 newsletter alerted readers to the fact that William Sylvester, son of Dr Sylvester of Woodstock House, Cowbridge, had been awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery in the Crimean war. At that time we had no evidence that he had lived in Cowbridge.

However, on a recent visit to the Jesus College archives in Oxford, kindly organised by Robert Cope, I discovered the class lists for Cowbridge School for 1848 – and there was the name of Sylvester. No Christian names, as was the practice in schools in those days, but it would now seem almost certain that we in Cowbridge, and in the school, can claim Assistant Surgeon WHT Sylvester as “our VC”.

IOLO MORGANWG BOOK

A Rattleskull Genius – the many faces of Iolo Morganwg is to be launched in the Town Hall on November 2nd by Professor Geraint Jenkins of the Board of Celtic Studies.

ROTARY QUIZ

October 15th our team is Robert and Marilyn Cope and Beverley and Dick Tonkin
Any other volunteers?

PHYSIC GARDEN

It is good to see real progress!