

# NEWSLETTER

of Cowbridge History Society



Volunteers at Cowbridge railway station

*"And there with the rest are the lads that will never be old."*

*("The lads in their hundreds", A E Housman)*

## *2014: Remembering the First World War*

## WELCOME TO THE NEW SEASON

I must begin with an apology. We had intended to issue another newsletter in the spring, but it proved impossible because of other commitments. But we're here now, with an edition to whet your appetite for the year 2014-2015 and we hope you will get as much enjoyment out of it as ever.

The AGM was held in May 2014, and your committee for this year is as follows:

**Chair:** Dick Buswell

**Treasurers:** Bev Tonkin, Keith Jones

**Secretary/Programme Secretary:** Dick Tonkin

**Publications Officer:** Deb Fisher

**General committee:**

Betty Alden

Robert Cope

Don Gerrard

Our joint presidents, Brian James and Rev. Norman Lewis, are not subject to election and remain in place. The programme for the coming year can be seen on the back page.

## REMEMBRANCE

It will not have escaped your notice that the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War has already begun. The media already seem to have given saturation coverage to centenary events, and one wonders what they are proposing to do for the next three years. On the other hand, such in-depth coverage will undoubtedly have the effect of making more people - particularly younger people - aware of Britain's recent history, and some real gems have already emerged from the radio and television schedules, such as the dramas *37 Days* and *The Wipers Times*, and excellent documentaries on such previously obscure subjects as the role of bagpipers in encouraging the troops.

Over in Colwinston, the Thankful Villages project continues, with the Community Council planning to raise a commemorative stone to house the plaque they were given by the bikers of the "Thankful Villages Run", when they visited last year. However, some village residents did not feel that the proposed site for the memorial was prominent enough, and a suitable alternative location has now been found. New village signs have also been erected.

On August Bank Holiday weekend, the village of Aberthin hosted a very successful exhibition to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the war. Entitled "Aberthin Village 1880s-1920s – the war, the farms and cottages, the villagers and the Chapel, its chandelier and hour glass: a glimpse of agriculture during the Great War and the challenges that country people faced", it was held in Aberthin Village Hall over a four-day period.

The following weekend, Cowbridge Museum held another of its very informative "Home Front" exhibitions, ably organised by Pamela Robson. Over 300 visitors came through the doors in the course of the weekend, and were full of praise for the efforts of the volunteers.



Recently I learned that Gunner C Ribbans, whose son James later settled in Llandow and passed away in 2002, was a member of the crew of the famous tank "Musical Box". A "Medium Mark A Whippet", the tank got so far ahead of the rest of the British line in August 1918, during the Amiens offensive, that it was cut off and roamed for nine hours behind enemy lines, wreaking havoc among German forces. Gunner Ribbans and his officer were eventually taken prisoner; the other crew member was killed. There is more to this story than meets the eye, and it has already caught the attention of the Western Front Association; perhaps I will have more to tell at a future date.

Meanwhile, the History Society has its own plans for commemorating the outbreak of war. In addition to our programme of speakers for the coming year (see back page), we intend to host an additional evening event, a special showing of the ground-breaking 1969 film *Oh! What a Lovely War*, a satirical look at the war using popular music of the period.

*Deborah Fisher (Publications Officer)*

### **From the Cowbridge History Society collection at the Local History Studies Room**

#### **Cowbridge and Llantwit Major District Minutes of Public Meeting held October 15th, 1915**

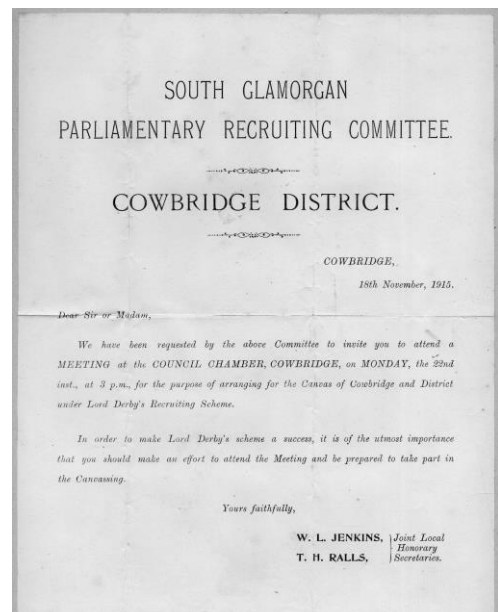
A public meeting was held on Friday October 15th, Town Hall, Mr D Tilley in the chair, to consider the question of opening a Red Cross Hospital for Cowbridge and district. A requisition has been received from the War Office by Mrs Byass, Llandough Castle, Lady Chairman for this Red Cross Division to provide further accommodation for wounded soldiers.

A resolution was put to the meeting by Mrs Byass as to whether an attempt should be made to open a Red Cross Hospital for Cowbridge and district, seconded by Mr Fred Dunn and unanimously carried. The house mentioned for the purpose being Beaupre, which would be let by the owner, Mr Thurstan Basset, at a rental of £52 per annum, exclusive of rates. Mrs Byass would very kindly make herself responsible for the rest.

Proposed by Mr L Chard, seconded by Mrs Byass, and carried that Mr D P Davies, manager of the National Provincial Bank be appointed Treasurer for the Hospital Fund. Donations to the amount of £250 have already been promised. One of the donors, Mr Illtyd Nicholl, late of The Ham, Llantwit Major, in addition to the donation, would give 10 shillings weekly towards the upkeep of the Hospital.

The question of the management of the Hospital being discussed. It is understood it would be managed entirely by Red Cross Officials, the accounts being published periodically, and inspected by Military Officials of the Western Command.

Resolved that a committee be formed of the ladies present, with power to add to their number, to meet on Friday October 22nd at 3pm to arrange the districts to be canvassed for Hospital equipment, weekly subscriptions of money or things in kind. It was also resolved that Mrs (?Mr) Byass as Honorary Assistant Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer Mr D P Davies be empowered to sign cheques on the Hospital Banking Account.



**Town - Hall,**  
**COWBRIDGE.**  
 Thursday, Nov. 1st, 1917.

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AN

**ENTERTAINMENT**

WILL BE HELD

On behalf of the National Institution for the Blind  
 Consisting of Music and suitable  
**CINEMATOGRAPH DISPLAY**

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**The Rev. G. W. LLEWELLYN**  
 (Rector of Llandow), will speak on behalf of the Institute which has the  
 Care and Tuition of Blinded Soldiers.

**FUNDS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED.**

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HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR will take the Chair at 7.15

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Seats, 1s. 6d. and 1s.-; Children, half-price.

**A House-to-House Collection will be  
 made November 5th and following days.**

Gibbs & Brown, Eastgate Printing Works, Cowbridge.

**CALVINISTIC METHODIST CHURCH,**  
**COWBRIDGE.**

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 1916.

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*Visit of His Worship the Mayor,*

**Capt. T. J. Yorwerth**  
 And Members of the Corporation.

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Order of Service, 11 a.m.—Conducted by Rev.  
 Emrys J. Davies, Pastor.

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PREACHER:  
**REV. W. M. YORWERTH,**  
 Newcastle-on-Tyne.

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*A Collection will be taken at the close of the  
 Service in aid of the Beaupre and Ash Hall Hospitals.*

Gibbs & Brown, Printers, Cowbridge.

1209  
 CERTIFICATE issued under A.C.I. 1424 of 1916.

*David Talley Esq Cowbridge*

is authorized by the Army Council to inspect lists required to be kept  
 by employers under Defence of the Realm Regulation No. 41A, and to  
 require the production or particulars of a Certificate of Exemption  
 granted under the Military Service Act, 1916, as provided by Section 10  
 of the Military Service Act, 1916 (Session 2), or granted otherwise than  
 under the Military Service Acts, 1916, as provided by Defence of the  
 Realm Regulation No. 45B.

*Produce.* 00000  
 COMMANDER G.O.C.-in-C.  
*Western* Command. *Cowbridge*  
*Botolph Claydon*  
*Stamington*

Area over which this authority extends

Date *31st Jan 1917*

GH8047 5000 7/16 HWV(P1181) A16/1176  
 W5551-8716 2500 8/16

**BOOK REVIEW: *A Wartime Romance* by Julie Jakeway PublishNation, 2014 (e-book, £1.96)**

This is an unusual book. It attempts to tell the story of an ordinary couple, Ray Llewellyn from St Mary Hill and his new (English) wife Joan Beardsworth, as they begin their married life during the Second World War, immediately separated from one another by Ray's military service. Ray and Joan were, of course, the author's parents. The story is partly told through the letters they exchanged during the period of their separation.



Interspersed with their romance (although, to tell the truth, the events leading up to their marriage are not recounted in any great detail) are more general chapters about contemporary life, including many details of ordinary people's experiences, both at war and on the Home Front, during the years 1939-45 and the immediate post-war period.

Some of the content is repeated in different chapters, in much the same way as Cowbridge Record Society chose to repeat the occasional piece of information in our 2008 publication, *The Great War: Memorials in Cowbridge and Llanbethian* by José Rawlins, and presumably for similar reasons. When you are dipping in and out of a book, you may find yourself short of some piece of critical information that would help you follow the thread of another chapter. This technique is perfectly valid but has to be carefully achieved so as not to become tedious for those who choose to read the book from cover to cover.

The personalities of the young couple come through clearly in their own simple, unsophisticated words. In 1946, before his demob, Ray writes, "Then I'll have to get myself a job (that will break my heart), did I hear you laughing, bet you did."

I was less sure about the usefulness of the general chapters, on topics such as air raids, rationing (including some intriguing recipes from contemporary cookbooks), employment and housing. Thorough research has been done, as well as hard work to find the relevant illustrations, and the content is never dull. Nevertheless, some of these subjects are well-worn now, in the context of our growing British tradition of remembrance, and there is little need for another book on the subject when so many have been written by professional historians. It would have had more impact, I felt, if the author had told us more about her parents, perhaps including her own memories of them. I wonder if she thought that this would not be of as much interest to the general reader as the historical background. If so, I think she underestimates herself; my experience is that fact is stranger than fiction - and all the best stories are true.

In all, this uneven volume could have been two books, each worth reading: the story of a young couple's struggle, and the background information about life in Britain during and after the war. The inexperienced writer is daunted by the thought of producing the required number of words and in this case has produced a book that falls between two stools. The beauty of electronic publishing is that it can be revised and re-issued as often as the author wishes, and I hope Julie Jakeway will give some thought to this. I would certainly like to see the result.

## COWBRIDGE HISTORY SOCIETY Programme for 2014-2015

Meetings take place in the Lesser Hall, Town Hall, Cowbridge

*Talks start at 7.30pm on the first Friday of each month unless shown otherwise.*

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| 3rd October 2014   | The Life of Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)<br><i>Phil Carradice, writer and broadcaster</i>  |
| 7th November 2014  | The Battle of St Fagans and the Second Civil War in South Wales 1648<br><i>Robert Matthews</i>   |
| 12th November 2014 | SPECIAL EVENT: A screening of "Oh! What a Lovely War" at Cowbridge Town Hall (courtesy of Big Screen).<br><i>Note that this event will be open to non-members and there will be a modest admission charge.</i> |
| 5th December 2014  | Traditional Fishing in Wales<br><i>Dylan Jones, Senior Curator, National History Museum</i><br><b><i>The Christmas meeting is followed by wine and mince pies</i></b>  |
| 2nd January 2015   | John Nixon and the South Wales Coal Trade with France: origins of Cardiff's twinning with Nantes<br><i>Brian Davies, Pontypridd Museum</i>   |
| 6th February 2015  | Pentyrch and the Garth - a light-hearted local history study.<br><i>Don Llewellyn</i>  |
| 6th March 2015     | Daniel Jones of Woodford and Beaupre<br><i>Graham Phillimore</i>   |
| 13th March 2015    | Charter Day celebration<br><i>Destination TBD</i>  |
| 10th April 2015    | The Edmondes and Cowbridge - family, land and Old Hall<br><i>Dick Buswell</i><br><b>Note: This is the <i>second</i> Friday of the month.</b>   |
| 1st May 2015       | <b>AGM at 7pm</b><br><i>followed at 7.30pm by</i><br>The Founding of Ramoth Chapel<br><i>Brian James (President)</i>   |