

COWBRIDGE RECORD SOCIETY

Please address correspondence to the Secretary, Mrs J Rawlins, at 8 Mill Park, Cowbridge, CF71 7BG

Dear members

There are one or two people in Cowbridge who are under the misapprehension that Cowbridge Record Society will quickly cease to exist following the sad loss of our founding member, Jeff Alden. Nothing could be further from the truth. The committee has, however, decided not to hold the usual pre-Christmas members' meeting. We want to give ourselves a little breathing space in which to consider the future of the society, and to build up to next spring's AGM in a positive spirit. When the time comes, we expect to have a wealth of ideas to put before you; but for the present, we are only halfway through the year, and we have a lot of work to do to bring some of those ideas to fruition.

At the recent committee meeting, it was a great pleasure to welcome our former Chair, Richard Press, back to the committee as a co-opted member. The contrast between the cumulative experience of long-standing committee members Brian James, Betty Alden, Keith Jones, Jo Rawlins, Hilary Thomas and Luke Millar, contrasting with the new blood and youthful outlook provided by our newest committee member, Hannah Mitchell, made for a lively and interesting meeting. We unanimously agreed to issue this newsletter as a summary of our recent news and future plans. Previous members' newsletters have been issued jointly with Cowbridge Local History Society, and it is hoped that in future we will be able to have our own CRS "column" in the newsletter of the Local History Society, but for the time being our plans are fluid.

Jeff Alden was of course the society's General Editor, and he was constantly planning and/or actively working on future publications. This activity will continue, but for the time being will be carried out jointly by a small group of us who have experience of writing, proof-reading, editing and publishing. Our plans for the next twelve months still include the publication of Jo Rawlins' research into the names on the Cowbridge and Llanblethian war memorials. The original intention was to publish this in booklet form on Remembrance Day this year. We have had to accept that this plan is not now realistic, as Jeff was in the middle of editing the manuscript when he passed away. The work will instead be published during 2008, which is of course the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War. There is sure to be a great deal of interest in the war, which will help us obtain further publicity. Other ideas for future publications are being actively pursued.

Many people have asked what CRS is doing in the way of a "memorial" to Jeff Alden. We feel that the society is in itself a living memorial, if one were needed, to Jeff. Nevertheless, several possibilities have been discussed. Over the past few years, Jeff worked with the Welsh Heritage Schools Initiative to arrange for the presentation of an annual prize for a local history project relating to the Cowbridge area. His hopes were finally realised last summer, when the prize of £200 was won by St David's School, Colwinston, for a project on their village's historic parish church of St

Michael's. Ironically, Jeff was unable to attend that day to present the prize, and it was my privilege to be at the ceremony in the National Museum at Cardiff to make the presentation to two young representatives of the school. The committee has decided that this prize will continue to be awarded annually for the foreseeable future and will be renamed "The Jeff Alden Prize", a very fitting tribute to a man who spent so much of his life helping young people to appreciate the historic significance of their surroundings. We hope that those of you who are involved in any way with local primary schools will encourage them to enter the competition, as the dearth of entries in previous years was a missed opportunity for them as well as a disappointment for us.

The other major topic of discussion at the committee meeting was the future of the collection of research materials accumulated and cared for by Jeff. There is a clear need to find a permanent home for these materials, where they can be preserved in a good state and be kept securely. Whether this should be in a room accessible by the public is another matter. The Local Studies Room run by Llantwit Major Local History Society has been held up as an example; but Cowbridge and Llantwit are different places, with different needs. Before making a decision on the future of the collection, we need to ask ourselves many questions, such as: how would we finance such a room, where would we find volunteers to open it regularly, and – perhaps most important – is there in fact a need for it? No one would wish us to rush into such a scheme without careful advance planning. To help us in assessing the situation, we will begin by reviewing the collection and completing the cataloguing project that was begun some time ago. Only when we have carried out this task will we be in a position to evaluate our needs in a realistic way.

Another topic discussed by the committee was the interim report on the Town Walls excavation, which we have just received from archaeologist Jean-Yves Robic. Members will recall that the excavation was partly financed by CRS, on the understanding that we would be offered the opportunity to publish a "lay person's edition" of the report in due course. Jean-Yves has been held up in the completion of his report by problems resulting from the Grammar School excavation which he also carried out. However, we aim to make copies of the interim report available for viewing by members before the final report is issued.

All our previous publications continue to sell well, and we anticipate something of a "run" on Peter Cobb's book, *At Cowbridge Grammar School*, during 2008, the year which marks the 400th anniversary of the school. There is also the possibility of a further publication on this subject.

Naturally, the committee will be pleased and grateful for members' comments on any of the subjects mentioned above (and indeed on any other subject). Please feel free to approach us in person. It would be very helpful if any written correspondence could be sent to Jo Rawlins at the address that heads this newsletter.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Fisher
Chair, Cowbridge Record Society