

Cowbridge and District Local History Society / Cowbridge Record Society

This newsletter is an attempt to serve both these thriving societies, keeping members and others who are interested aware of activities and events over the year. Ideally, it should have come out last September, but hopefully it is better late than never!

The Local History Society, meeting the first Friday of the month in the Lesser Hall, has changed the starting time to 7.30 pm.

Chairman : Dick Buswell

Hon Secretary : Don Gerrard

Hon Treasurer : Beverly Tonkin

Programme Secretary : Dick Tonkin

Publicity Officer : Robert Cope

Representative on Vale Conservation Advisory Group : George Haynes

Committee : Ivana Locke, Val Pugh, Marilyn Cope, Betty Alden, Keith Jones.

President : Revd Norman Williams

Vice Presidents : Yvonne Weeding

Revd Stanley Mogford

At December's meeting, with mulled wine and mince pies, will be Revd Peter Cobb as speaker. As former boarding master and Head of Geography at Cowbridge Grammar School, he will tell us of the school (and town) as they were in the 1950s.

Programme of Talks for 2009 : 9th January

Curating Contemporary Life at St Fagan's Museum
of Welsh Life by Owain Rhys, the curator

6th February

The 4th Don Wallis Memorial Lecture
Morgan John and the Welsh Indians
by Brian Davies, of Pontypridd Museum

6th March

Cardiff's Hidden History – Bute Park
By Rosie James, Cardiff City Parks Dept.

13th March

Charter Day Celebration – afternoon tour of Atlantic
College, preceded by a pub lunch.

3rd April

Cardiff – a City at War by Denis Morgan
Followed by wine and cheese.

Annual membership of this society is £5, but you are
very welcome to come along to any meeting with a
payment of £2

The Record Society held its Annual General Meeting in May, and a book launch in November for Jose Rawlins's book "The Great War – Memorials of Cowbridge and Llanblethian". This detailed account of those from the district who served and perished in that war is now available from the Cowbridge bookshop or Davies the Newsagent (or from Jose herself at 8 Mill Park, Cowbridge, CF71 7BG) at the price of £4 (£3 to members of the Record Society).

Chairman of the society : Deborah Fisher

Hon Secretary : Jose Rawlins

Hon Treasurer : Keith Jones

General Editor : Deborah Fisher

Committee : Brian James (President), Hilary Thomas, Luke Millar, Richard Press, Betty Alden

Deborah Fisher writes :

On 22nd May, Cowbridge Local History Society and Cowbridge Record Society held their first joint event. In the tradition of the walks through historic Cowbridge, on which Jeff Alden sometimes took members of his local history class, we took a historic tour of the village of Colwinston, led by local resident Philip Jones.

Philip is one of Colwinston's most active citizens, and is currently one of the leaders of the campaign to form a "civic trust" within the village, with the aim of progressing projects such as landscaping and repairs that cannot, for whatever reason, be taken on by the local authority and that may attract grant aid. We began our evening at the Sycamore Tree Inn, where Phil gave us some background information about the village. Despite heavy showers earlier in the day, the rain stayed off throughout our walk, and the ground was dry – just as well, because the route would take us through several fields. Places of interest pointed out in Colwinston's main street included the old schoolhouse (complete with outside toilets), the site of the former sawmills, the slaughterhouse, and the dwelling place of Richard Burton's ancestors, the Jenkins family.

At the first stile, we lost Ivana. They just don't build stiles for people under 5 feet tall these days! Perhaps because Phil adjusted his usual route to allow us to start and finish at the pub, there was some confusion about where we were to rejoin our missing comrade, and we didn't see Ivana again until we arrived at the medieval parish church of St Michael's, half an hour later. By that time, we had been shown the former baptistery of the now-defunct Ebenezer Chapel – in other words, a pond in a field which has been neatly landscaped by the landowner – and the location of the watercress pools that once supplied the village's population with their "greens".

Miraculously, our numbers swelled by around 20% as we entered the Sycamore Tree to enjoy a convivial meal together (but then, there were only 14 of us to start with....) It was a little unfortunate that the weather earlier in the day had caused the restaurant staff to jump to the conclusion that we weren't coming after all, and the sole bartender/waiter was a little overworked at times, but somehow delays in serving went almost unnoticed amid the chatter and general jollity.

I fervently hope that we will be able to organise a similar event at some future date. If any CRS or LHS members have ideas for local historic walks, or indeed for other suitable joint events, please do let your committee know. History should be shared and it should be fun.

The Local History Study Room, Room 5, Old Hall, Cowbridge

This small, but very pleasant room has been dedicated to the memory of Jeff Alden, who had gathered together a wealth of photographs and documents relating to the history of this town and its surrounding area, which he loved so much. Over the past months, volunteers have helped with the huge task of sorting and cataloguing this material, so that it can be made available for public use. In early September, eight Comprehensive School sixth formers came for a week of work experience, and later that month exhibitions in the room, and the adjoining room, were open for two days as part of the weekend celebrations for the 400th anniversary of the Grammar School's foundation. The History Society's blue plaque, which Bruce McGovern had pioneered and which marks the Grammar School as a historic building in this town, was mounted on its Church Street wall that weekend too.

Although there is much material still to sort, it is proposed to open this local history room on a regular basis, probably one half-day a week, early in 2009. The intention is that people can come here simply to browse through and enjoy the material, or research their ancestors, their houses, streets, families of the area etc. There is certainly room for someone to re-start a small local history research/study group. A financial contribution for the use of the room is being made jointly by the two societies, so it is important the facility is a well used and valuable part of the town, complementing its excellent museum.

A number of people have kindly volunteered to help with this project. A meeting has been arranged for Wednesday, January 7th at 10 am in Room 6 (next door to Room 5) of Old Hall for all who are interested to be involved. Do please come along, and if not then, when the room is regularly opened.

This letter came to light amongst the material, and may be of interest :

Dated 27th June 1923 and from E.W.Miles. solicitor, Cowbridge to the Revd Dr L.J. Hopkin James (author of 'The Cowbridge Story', and vicar of Llanblethian).

Cowbridge Record Society and Cowbridge Local History Society Newsletter - December 2009

Welcome

This newsletter aims to keep you up to date with the happenings of both the Cowbridge Record Society and The Cowbridge Local History Society and includes the latest news and developments, updates and details of future events.

We appreciate your continued support and wish all of our members a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Cowbridge Record Society News

The Jeff Alden Prize for 2009, awarded by the Welsh Heritage Schools Initiative and sponsored by Cowbridge Record Society, was won by St David's Church-in-Wales Primary School, Colwinston. The prize was presented by CRS Chair Deborah Fisher during a special end-of-term assembly at the school in July.

This year the Cowbridge Record Society once again entered a team in the annual Rotary Club Charity Quiz. The team, consisting of Richard Press, Jo Rawlins and Deborah Fisher, despite being one person short, managed to keep up CRS's magnificent record in this competition, finishing in first place. The result was a donation of £250 to LATCH, the children's cancer charity.

The Cowbridge Local History Room Update.

The Cowbridge Local History room has been open to the public for a year or so now, and Wednesday mornings tend to be busy sociable gatherings of volunteer workers and visitors. Believe it or not, after all this time the archives are still being sorted and catalogued, but at least a system is emerging to ensure they are easily accessible – essential for thorough use and enjoyment. An ongoing interchange of information and material with the town's museum has been established, and also with the Llantwit Major archives room.

Donations over recent months have included souvenirs of the town's theatrical productions (sadly, both Gladys and Denis Clinton died this year, having given long service to the amateur theatre). Bert Jenkins, with his remarkable memory for detail, has given material relating to the swimming baths in the Thaw and to the early days of the Post Office in Eastgate. He also produced (from his grandmother's collection) an 1878 ticket allowing passage through Cowbridge's West Gate for 'wagon, cart, horse, ass, carriage, beast, gig, pigs, sheep'.

Recent visitors have been researching the Howell family (keepers of the Picton Inn, Llanblethian, and the Commercial, Cowbridge), the Cowbridge Studio of Edwin Ernest Miles (an essentially Bridgend-based photographer in the early 20th century), The Glamorgan Yeomanry in this area, plus studies of individual properties in Llanblethian, Cowbridge, and Aberthin. Internet and telephone enquiries, from those living further away, have sought information on the Bassett and Vallance families, the Savours of Breach Farm and Llanblethian House, and Samuel and Elizabeth Phillips whose children Blanche, Thomas and Richard were born in Cowbridge between 1904 and 1913, but of whom we have so far found no records.

With grateful thanks to the joint funding of both the Record Society and the Local History Society, the room continues to open in term-time on Wednesdays from 10 am till 12 noon. Anyone interested in helping sort, label, cut, stick, do detective work etc, is always most welcome, as of course are those who just wish to come and browse, to reminisce or to research.

Betty Alden.

Cowbridge Record Society – Publications.

Looking for Christmas gift ideas? – Why not give a book!

The Cowbridge Record Society has published 7 books on a range of local subjects, all contain unique research. Copies are available from The Cowbridge Bookshop, Celtic Knot, Davies the Newsagent, or from Cowbridge Record Society, 8 Mill Park, Cowbridge, CF71 7BG.

Titles include:

- **COWBRIDGE: BUILDINGS AND PEOPLE.**
- **AT COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, 1946-1966** by Peter Cobb.
- **LLANBLETHIAN: BUILDINGS AND PEOPLE.** -almost out of print.
- **COWBRIDGE AND DISTRICT REMEMBERED , 1900 – 1950** - almost out of print.
- **OLD INNS & ALEHOUSES OF COWBRIDGE.**
- **HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW COWBRIDGE?** by Jeff Alden
- **THE GREAT WAR: MEMORIALS IN COWBRIDGE & LLANBLETHIAN**
by Jose Rawlins

Cowbridge & Llanblethian War Memorials

The Great War: Memorials in Cowbridge and Llanblethian, published by Cowbridge Record Society in November 2008, was in need of correction within days of the official launch on 5th November! The little book was written as a tribute to the courage and sacrifice of the forty-three young men whose names are inscribed on memorials in Cowbridge or Llanblethian. On 7th November 2008 the name of Stoker Benjamin Hayward was added to the Cowbridge roll of honour and the forty-three men became forty-four men.

It is now nearly ninety years since both memorials were unveiled at dedication services and the passage of time has sadly meant that very little is known about many of those whose names are read out during services on Remembrance Sunday. However, during the past year a little extra knowledge has been gleaned about some of the casualties and, thankfully, no serious errors have been found in the very basic history of the battles on the Western Front which accounted for the overwhelming majority of the local casualties.

Much of the original information about the casualties and their family background was found in the census of 1901 but for at least fifteen men there seemed to be no record anywhere of them having lived or worked in Cowbridge or Llanblethian and therefore no reason why they should have been included on the memorials. A recent trawl through the census of 1911 offered a hope that they would be recorded as living somewhere in the Vale at a date only three years before many of them enlisted. However, so far, none of the 'mystery men' has surfaced in 1911 although the entries for the **Dunn** brothers in Llanblethian and **Arthur Stockwood** in Bridgend have been found.

In 1911 Frederick and Jennett Dunn had been living at *The Cross* for seventeen years. It is the large house situated just below Llanblethian church and needed to be large for it not only housed the parents but also their five sons and a daughter,

Jennett's nephew from Llantrisant, plus a cook, three maids and a page boy. Apart from eldest son, Fred, who, like his father, was a mining engineer, the young men, aged between twenty-six and nineteen years, were all students: Frank and Tom were studying engineering, Jack was a law student, Guy was an Oxford undergraduate and their cousin Glynne Morgan was a mining student. How very different the household would be just ten years later. Fred, Frank and Jack had all enlisted by October 1914 and in July 1915 Frank and Jack, as second lieutenants serving with the 5th Welch, sailed from Devonport bound for Mudros in the Aegean Sea. The battalion formed part of the 53rd Division which would land at Suvla Bay in the Gallipoli peninsula on 8th/9th August. Frank was killed in action during a disastrous assault on Scimitar Hill on 10th August and Jack died of wounds ten days later. The third Dunn brother to die on active service was Tom who accidentally drowned in Monmouth in May 1916.

Frederick Dunn died in 1911 and Jennett in 1915. After the end of the war *The Cross* must have seemed unbearably empty to their three surviving children and it is hardly surprising that they moved from the old family home in 1923 to live in Penllyn.

John Arthur Stockwood, killed in action in September 1916 while taking part in the attack on the fortified village of Guillemont during the Battle of the Somme, was by far the oldest Cowbridge casualty. In 1911 he was living at 53 Park Street, Bridgend with Beatrice Ellen whom he had married in 1906 and two children, four-year-old Ethel and month-old Alick. A third child would be born before he enlisted in the Rifle Brigade in response to Lord Kitchener's appeal for volunteers. Arthur Stockwood was a solicitor like his father John Stockwood, at one time Cowbridge Town Clerk and his uncle, S H Stockwood, clerk to the Bridgend Magistrates.

Although not found in the 1911 census three more Llanblethian men have been identified by Carlè Crozier who lives in Worthing and is the great-niece of David Miles and also related to Edward Miles, both commemorated on the Llanblethian memorial. According to recollections written by Arthur Miles, youngest brother of David, **William Henry Williams** was the eldest son of Henry Williams who lived near the flannel factory in Factory Road and who delivered coal around the village. Born in 1900 he was one of seven children and although conscripted into the army, served for only a very short time. He was discharged on health grounds, returned to work at Llandough hunt stables until he became seriously ill and eventually died on 14th February 1919 at *The Malthouse* in the care of Angelina Miles, mother of David and Arthur Miles. His unmarked grave is in Llanblethian churchyard.

William Willment and **Noah Brakewell**, who were both killed in action during the Battle of Loos while involved in attacks on the Hohenzollern Redoubt, were neighbours in Llanblethian. The two men were married and lived with their wives in the cottages opposite the parish hall known as Brook Cottage and Ger-y-nant. William Willment is also named on the Cowbridge memorial possibly because he was employed as a groom by Dr Meller at Caercady House. Noah Brakewell worked as a labourer for a building contractor. Both men may have been recalled to the colours as reservists as they served with regular army battalions; Willment as a corporal with 2nd Royal Sussex and Brakewell as a private with 2nd Welch.

An appeal in the 'Help Needed' column in the August issue of the Dyfed Family History Society journal resulted in a phone call response from California with the solution to the mystery of **Morris James Marsden's** presence in Cowbridge! Morris Marsden was the youngest of three sons of John Marsden who farmed

Rhydybannau, Cribyn in the Cardiganshire parish of Llanfiangel Ystrad. A member of the Marsden family confirmed that before his enlistment Morris had been employed at one of the three banks then flourishing in Cowbridge: the London Provincial (now Barclays), the Metropolitan Bank of England & Wales (HSBC) or the National Provincial (NatWest). Morris was killed in action during the Battle of the Menin Road in September 1917. He was serving as second lieutenant with the 214th company of the Machine Gun Corps which was attached to the 58th (London) Division.

Benjamin Hayward was born in Llanblethian and **Sidney Hayward** was born in Cowbridge. They were two of the eleven children of George Hayward from Wiltshire and his Cowbridge-born wife, Elizabeth. For more than thirty years the family lived locally, at first at the Causeway, Llanblethian and later near the post office in Eastgate but by 1911 the parents and their adult children had all moved away. When the memorial in Cowbridge was commissioned in 1920 no relatives lived locally and the names of the two Hayward brothers were omitted. Sidney, serving with the Royal Welch Fusiliers, was killed in action in June 1917 manning a trench in the Ypres salient. Benjamin had enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1897 and was recalled from the naval reserve on the outbreak of war in August 1914. He was discharged on health grounds in 1916 and shortly afterwards died of malaria at his home in Wick.

The war records of both brothers have been researched by their nephew Stan Hayward and as a result of his efforts and, with the support of the Cowbridge branch of the Royal British Legion, Lance-Corporal Sidney Hayward was added to the memorial in 2001 to be followed by his brother, Stoker Benjamin Hayward, in 2008.

There is still much that is unknown about the forty-four men commemorated on our local memorials to the Great War of 1914 to 1919 and any further information would be greatly appreciated.

José Rawlins.

Cowbridge Record Society is a registered charity No 1094061.

Outstanding membership payments can be sent to the treasurer, Ruthyn Fach, Ruthyn, St Mary Hill, Bridgend, CF35 5EB. Other correspondence can be sent to the secretary, 8 Mill Park, Cowbridge, CF71 7BG.

Cowbridge Local History Society Programme of Meetings

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| December 4 th | The Treachery of the Blue Books – Gwerfyl Gardener
(followed by punch and mince pies) |
| January 8 th | Living in 18 th Century Glamorgan – Richard Watson |
| February 5 th | Timber Castles in South Wales – Charles Hill, Dyfed
Archaeological Trust. |
| March 5 th | Beaches, Fields, Streets and Hills: WWII anti-invasion
landscape of Cowbridge and its environs – Jonathan Berry,
CADW. |
| March 13 th | Charter Day outing to Ewenny Priory, with pub lunch. |
| April 9 th | Joseph Jenkins, The Welsh Swagman – Rita Griffin.
(followed by cheese and wine) |

All meetings are held in the Lesser Hall, Cowbridge and start at 7.30 pm.
Non-members welcome, and can pay at the door.