

## COMING EVENTS

This year's meetings will be held on the first Friday of the month, at 8p.m., in the Lesser Hall.

October 3: The Oddity called Llantwit - Mr Elwyn Gibbs, Vice-President of Llantwit Major Local History Society.

November 3: Archaeological Excavations at 75 High Street, Cowbridge - Mr Dave Allen of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeol. Trust.

December 1: Margam Orangery and the Mansell Family (The Maud Gunter Memorial Lecture) - Mrs Patricia Moore, County of Glamorgan Archivist and Vice-President of the Society.

January 5: The First Cowbridge Printers: Rhys Thomas and Henry Walters - Mr Brian Ll. James Sub-librarian at University College, Cardiff.

February 2: Were those the days? - Mr Philip Bradshaw.

March 2: Nanteos and the Holy Grail - Mr Ray Toogood.

April 6: Fleet Marriages - The Revd. Roger L. Brown.

Membership still costs only £1 for the year; students and OAPs 50p. Visitors are welcome at all meetings - fee 20p. During excursion meetings, a collection towards the guide's expenses is made. Details of Society excursions, and Building Group excursions, will be given later.

At the A.G.M., both Mrs Mary Collins and Dr Iolo Griffith stood down from the posts - of Excursions Secretary and Treasurer respectively - which they had occupied since the formation of the society. *Me* are very grateful to both of them for the hours of work they put in for the society; very many thanks.'

## OFFICERS, 1978-9

President - Mr Norman Williams, C 2107

Honorary Vice-Presidents -

Mrs Patricia Moore

Canon S.H. Mogford

Chairman - Mrs Yvonne Weeding, C 2878

Secretary - Mr John Miles, Cardiff 36490

Treasurer - Mr Jeff Alden, C 3373

Programme Secretary - Mrs Gwynneth Keay, C2879

Excursions Secretary - Mrs Nona Ginn, 0 3058

Publicity - Mr Jeff Alden

Committee - Mr S. Davies, Dr I. Griffith,

Mr A. Jones, Mrs V. Nicholl,

Mrs D. Sewell, Mrs V. Whythe.

SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER.....

*Me* have had a very successful Walkabout in Cowbridge Week, attended by more than 100 people. We had a fairly detailed look at Old Hall grounds, at the Old Grammar School Buildings, inside and out, and at the church, followed by a tour through the High Street and Bear Lane.

The Members' Evening on May 5 was held in the council chamber; we had a variety of speakers, lots of slides, and a most enjoyable time. Our thanks are due to all who took part.

There have been two excursions of note: The Picnic excursion to Margam Abbey Church, the Stones Museum and Margam Park, ably led by a member of Port Talbot Historical Society, took place in good weather on September 3, while the visit to Penllyn Castle was on September 14. We were welcomed, guided and entertained by Mr and Mrs Christopher Cory; in appreciation of their kindness we have sent a small cheque to a charity named by Mrs Cory, the Jane Hodge Holiday Home.

The first evening meeting of the 1978-79 year was the September 1 meeting - the Annual General Meeting, together with a beautifully photographed film on ancient monuments (or, really, Ancient Monuments) in South Wales.

## EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN GLAMORGAN.

(This note is based largely on comments I jotted down during Mr J.M. Lewis's talk to the society in May , together with a few notes from Margam. Errors are mine alone, I fear. -JA)

410 A.D. saw the official end of Britain as a Roman Province; Roman troops had been withdrawn from South Wales at the end of the fourth century. The period from 410 to 1100 is known as the Dark Ages, but in Wales, the period was important for three developments. It saw the establishment of those political divisions of Wales whose names - Glamorgan, Powys, Dyfed -we know so well; it saw the development of the Welsh language which has changed little since the Dark Ages, and it saw the conversion of Wales to Christianity.

Admittedly, the Roman Empire had been officially Christian since the time of Constantine at the beginning of the fourth century, and 410 there was a well-organised Christian set-up with British bishops; it was a religion based very much on the Roman towns and villas. The conversion of Glamorgan owes less to Roman encouragement, however, than to later workers trained in the missionary schools in France, established by St Martin of Tours and St Germanus of Auxerre. Among these workers was Illtyd who developed a monastery at Llantwit Major, Cadoc at Llanancarfan, and Docco whose monastery was first established at 'our' Llandough but later was moved to Llandough near Cardiff..from these monasteries, information was spread throughout the countryside.

The Dark Age monasteries were quite different from later ones - they were a collection of huts, together with more important wooden or stone buildings, enclosed by a fence or earthen bank. No trace of these early monasteries remains today. Similarly no Dark Ages church is preserved, although the dedications to many Vale churches are to these monks - it seems that most of the churches were founded by the saints or their close followers.

Near Cowbridge, Llanfrynach is dedicated to the fifth century Irish missionary Brynach (as is Nevern in Pembrokeshire), while St Athan is named after the Irishman Tathan, a late fifth century saint. Llangan, Canton and Pontcanna all commemorate Canna, one of Illtyd's followers. Dedications to these saints are found on both sides of the Bristol Channel, and some also in Brittany.

Gravestones and memorials remain as the only material evidence of Christianity in the Dark Ages, the early stones showing a mixture of Celtic and remembered Roman elements. Some of the stones have Ogham inscriptions - an Irish alphabet - marked by means of notches along, the edge of the stone. More were found in the uplands than in the Vale; there are some magnificent examples in the Margam Stones Museum. Locally there is a fine collection in the church at Llantwit Major, and a concentration of stones was found at Merthyr Mawr (the word Merthyr is derived from Martirium, a place where a saint is commemorated). The eighth or ninth century wheelcross in the churchyard at Llangan is of the Irish style, depicting the crucifixion. The Irish monasteries - which probably maintained schools of stone carvers - were very rich, and so became the focus of Viking attacks at this time. Their staffs dispersed, and so the craftsman became 'footloose in the Irish Sea' looking for patronage, and one man must have been brought to Llangan.

When the Normans under Fitzhamon established their rule over Glamorgan, the churches and monasteries suffered severely, and many of their estates were seized. The land of the Llanancarfan monastery went to the Abbey of Gloucester, while Llandough and much of the Llantwit land went to Tewkesbury Abbey. The Dark Ages had ended with considerable changes.

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NB Any contributions on any historical topic will be welcomed for future newsletters