

COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 49: SEPTEMBER 2002



PROGRAMME FOR THE YEAR

September 6th

AGM and *Monasteries in Tudor Glamorgan*
Don Gerrard

October 4th

Llanfrynach and other early Christian locations in the Vale
Dr Edith Evans and Ray Caple

November 1st

Annals of a Vale Vet
David Llewellyn

December 6th

The Maud Gunter Memorial Lecture
Historic Gardens of Glamorgan
Hilary Thomas

January 3rd, 2003

The Great Western Colliery, Pontypridd
Brian Davies

February 7th

Porthcawl
Gwyn Petty

March 7th

Lost Ports of the Severn Sea
Alan Thorne

April 4th

An Introduction to Family History
Rosemary Boyns

All meetings are held in the Lesser Hall,
Cowbridge, and start at 8pm.

MRS PATRICIA MOORE

It was with great sadness that we heard of Patricia's death. She had fought hard and gamely against her cancer, showing the positive approach that characterised her life. When I wrote to her conveying the Society's disappointment that she was not well enough to attend last February's meeting, and sending our good wishes for a speedy recovery, she wrote back immediately and at length, thanking us for our interest and expressing her determination to be able to walk along the High Street once again. Alas, it was not to be, and she died on May 18th.

Patricia was Glamorgan Archivist for nearly twenty years, Chairman of the Council of the Glamorgan History Society, Editor of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, actively involved in the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust (we well remember the wonderful talk she gave on Dyffryn Gardens two years ago) and was active in countless other linked societies.

Patricia loved Cowbridge, and as VicePresident of the Local History Society, she was a tremendous supporter of all our efforts, encouraging us to record and cherish our built heritage. We are grateful for having known her, and have sent our sincere condolences to Donald.

AGM Agenda: 6th September 2002

1. Apologies for absence
2. Confirmation of the minutes of the AGM of 7th September 2001
3. Correspondence
4. Chairman's report
5. Annual financial report
6. Election of Officers and Committee for 2002-3
7. AOB
8. Address by Mr Don Gerrard on 'Monasteries in Tudor Glamorgan'

Officers and Committee for 2001/2 were:

Chairman	Mr Jeff Alden
Vice-Chairman	Mrs Yvonne Weeding
Hon secretary	Mr John Miles
Joint Hon Treasurers	Mrs Ivana Locke and Mrs Val Pugh
Programme secretary	Mrs Sue Collier
Publicity Officer	Mr Bruce McGovern
Editor of the newsletter	Mr Jeff Alden
Representative: Vale Conservation Advisory Group	Mr George Haynes

Committee:

Mrs Betty Alden, Mrs Arleen Boulton, Mrs Rosemary Farmer, Mr Don Gerrard, Mr Liam Ginn, Mr Keith Jones, Mrs Iris Simpson, Mr Don Wallis

I would like to thank Sue Collier for her excellent work as programme secretary and event organiser. Now that she has moved to Aberavon, she feels unable to continue in that post, so this is a vacancy which will have to be filled.

One development which has occurred over the past year should make the task of finding speakers very much easier. George Haynes, working under the aegis of the Glamorgan History Society, has contacted all local history societies in Glamorgan and has compiled a list of speakers and contact numbers. This means that the committee could narrow down a short list of potential speakers; from this point the societies could be contacted for some feedback before speakers are engaged. We are very grateful to George for all the hard work he has put into this project, and for the fact that we now have a very useful list of speakers.

LOCAL HISTORY CLASSES

Cardiff University Centre for Lifelong Learning class, in Old Hall, on Friday September 27th, from 10.00am to 12 noon, and fortnightly thereafter, for ten sessions.

Title: Inns and Alehouses of Old Cowbridge and District. Tutor: Jeff Alden.

The prospectus states: "This is a research project, with a view to the eventual publication of a history of the inns and alehouses of the district. Students will use a variety of records, including primary sources and local knowledge. The course will be classroom based but will require field work in between meetings".

Don't be put off by the above; it will not be too academic, nor is there any need for excessive drinking!

COWBRIDGE AND THE BLUE BOOKS

In 1846 William Williams, MP for Coventry, convinced the government of the time of the need to launch a commission of enquiry into the provision of education in Wales. The enquiry was conducted by three English barristers with eight assistants, seven of whom were Anglicans. Their report, published in 1847 - commonly called the Blue Books after the colour of the cover - caused a furore, and can still raise blood pressure in some people today. How did Cowbridge fare from the visit of David Lewis, one of the assistants?

Lewis seemingly was not expecting to visit the Grammar School, for the commission was only prepared to consider education provision within the means of the poorer classes. However he was assailed by John Bevan, the Cowbridge solicitor, then living at Newton House, concerning the fixed money payments from Jesus College and the provision of free places under the will of Sir Leoline Jenkins. In one of the few attempts at objectivity in the report, the views of the headmaster were sought and both sides of the argument were presented without comment.

Lewis did not visit the Eagle Academy in Westgate (recently restored to its pre-school glory), merely noting that it "enjoys a very extensive reputation as a commercial school, but is beyond the reach of the poor". In his evidence to the Commission, Revd Thomas Edmondson commented that the smaller farmers tended to send their children there.

Lewis visited the National School on Cardiff Road on 12th March, 1847. (This is now a private house, the last house directly on the road when leaving Cowbridge towards Cardiff.) The school had been established in 1839 and though the building itself was in good condition, the outbuildings were deemed insufficient. The schoolroom measured 31ft x 18ft x 12ft and according to the formula used by the commission could accommodate 93 children. The equipment was insufficient but in good repair, a comment which appeared constantly in the report. There were 68 on the register and the master had taken up his post within the previous twelve months, the school having been closed for the preceding six months. Two girls and four boys were under five, four girls and 39 boys were aged five to ten, and two girls and seventeen boys were over ten. Six of the latter group acted as pupil teachers.

Lewis heard eighteen boys and four girls read the first chapter of Luke. However the group failed to answer questions about Aaron and the sacraments and did not know the words "translated" and "translation". 4292 was subtracted from 5621, and 94381 divided by 526 correctly.

The master reported that attendance was irregular and many did not come to school more than two days a week. The master was not named. However he was 38 and had trained at Westminster Central for six months. Before becoming a teacher at 20, he had been a student. His salary of £40 pa was made up from subscriptions. Census and church records suggest that he was Edmund Seccombe Hodges, born in Mevagissey in Cornwall, and who had taught in Tewkesbury before moving to Cowbridge, for it was there that his two sons were born. The Hodges family lived in The Cross, Llanblethian, and Edmund was left a widower after his wife, Hannah, died three days after giving birth to their fourth child in 1850.

On 3rd March Lewis visited all the dame schools, the first one being that run by Mrs Burton. In the 1851 census a Mary Barton, aged 64, is recorded as living in West Village, next door to the Eagle Academy. The school, established in 1835, was held in her home in a room 18ft x 18ft x 10ft, sufficient accommodation for 54. There were fifteen children on the register - two

boys under five, three girls and five boys aged between five and ten, and five girls over ten. According to Lewis, the children were only taught reading and spelling and the girls a little sewing. However he found the children were all very orderly in the behaviour. Evidently Mary Barton had taken up teaching in her widowhood and it provided an income of some £10. 8s. pa.

Miss Harris had established her school in 1840. Again according to the census of 1851, Catherine Harris, aged 49, lived in East Village, at 51 Eastgate. The room measured 9 x 12 x 8 and was sufficient for eighteen pupils. Though there were twenty-six pupils on the register, including one boy under five, ten girls and five boys aged between five and ten, and ten girls over ten, only sixteen girls and six boys were present. Lewis reported that the dame "seemed a superior person; her scholars were farmers, tradesmen and mechanics' children. There was only one labourer's child in the school, and this one of the better class.... This school was, upon the whole, a nice one". Miss Harris had become a teacher at 33 and had spent her time before that at home or working linen. Her income from school pence - about £30 p.a.

Lewis was dismissive of the third school he visited - Mrs. James's School. "It scarcely deserves the name of school. When I first entered the house the dame had gone to church to supply the place of her husband, who is sexton, and was at work elsewhere. The next time she was out when I entered, but came in with a baby in her arms. I only found present six very young children, five of whom were reading Vyse's Spelling Book; the other was in the alphabet. The mistress told me that it was entirely for the convenience of her own children that she kept the school; and as her attention to her family was becoming more needed, she was very shortly to give it up". It did however provide an income of £10. 4s p.a.

The assistants were also deputed to visit Sunday Schools. The one attached to the Church was run by Mrs. Barton in her house, with the help of the ladies of the town. Some 54 children - 7 boys and 47 girls all under 15 attended and all were in education during the week. They seemed to be able to answer Lewis' questions to his satisfaction, though they said the Lord's Prayer "in a very careless manner".

Ramoth's Sunday School was held in the vestry. There were nine teachers and some 45 pupils - twenty-five under 15 and the rest over 15. They were usually taught together through the medium of both Welsh and English. When Lewis entered he found "the children and four teachers seated round the fire, and the place presented anything but the appearance of a school". He heard them read part of Matthew's Gospel in Welsh but they were unable to answer any of his questions. He reported "I have never met more thoroughly ignorant children; they actually knew nothing".

The Sunday School at Sion chapel in the Limes catered for some 60 children, equally divided between under- and over-15. Girls and boys were taught separately for some two hours each Sunday through the medium of English and Welsh. Their religious knowledge seemed somewhat stronger than that of the pupils at Ramoth. However Lewis noted "they did not seem to be under any discipline whatever, but did what they pleased, and when they pleased".

David Lewis completed his task by visiting the Sunday School at Ebenezer (the Wesleyan Methodists, probably then at 4 High Street, in what is now the Filco car park) on 7th March. There were some 51 pupils on the register most of whom were under 15. School lasted two hours and was conducted through the medium of both English and Welsh. He heard groups read from the Gospels in both languages and received satisfactory answers to his questions from the group using English.

What can be drawn from this investigation into the provision of education in Cowbridge? Probably not a great deal. Suffice to say that it received a mauling similar to that of most towns in Wales. Country-wide it made Nonconformists increasingly reluctant to accept State aid for education and soured their relationships with the Anglican Church. Eventually it resulted in the establishment of the Board Schools in 1870. The Blue Books also had political repercussions for it helped to shake Methodism in particular out of its acceptance of the status quo and created an active interest in radical and reforming politics.

Nigel Williams

THE BALL COURT OR TALLY COURT AT COWBRIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The recent planning application to instigate repairs to the Grammar School building - very praiseworthy, of course - also included, apparently as an afterthought, an application to demolish three structures. These were: a wall between the Boot House and the garden, to allow ingress of vehicles (fair enough, it would seem, especially as the stone was to be saved to be re-used), the boiler house at the end of the corridor (even if dated incorrectly in the application, it is of no architectural merit), and the tally court.

I have so far had no response to my request for a reason for the demolition. It will, temporarily, open up the view of the church, but I think it unlikely that this is the purpose of the application; we shall have to enquire further.

However, this application did send me looking into some old copies of the magazine of Cowbridge Grammar School, *The Bovian*, to find out something of the history of the tally court. Unfortunately, the first issue of the magazine only appeared in 1894, and though I feel that I have seen, somewhere, a reference to a ball court being there in the mid-nineteenth century, evidence so far is lacking. These are the extracts:

Bovian No 8, June 1896

Dear Mr Editor,

... Would it not be possible to turn the old playground adjoining the big schoolroom into [a fives court]? It is already used for a similar game, and by building up one of the walls, or even part of one, and cementing the floor, it could be turned into a real court, which would be a great boon to us, and also save the floor of the big schoolroom from being covered with a lot of black mud every time there is a shower of rain..

Bovian No 12, Nov 1897

Dear Sir,

As extensive alterations are being made in the old fives-court in the matter of relaying the ground with gravel, may I suggest that the gravel in front of the talley-wall be hardened by means of cement for a distance of 24 feet, or some such distance? Without a hardened surface it would be almost impossible to have anything like a decent game, because the ball would not rise. I venture to suggest also that as the wire on top of the talley-wall has seen its best days, and is now simply a collection of huge holes, through which the balls escape into the churchyard, that new wire be provided. When these alterations have been introduced, then will the lovers of the old game of Talley be able to get a decent game. Hoping that the above suggestions will be taken up,

I remain, Yours truly, "Fives"

Bovian No 14, June 1898

The lower end of the old play ground has been turned into a very serviceable open fives court. The walls have been thoroughly cemented and wire netting placed around the top and on the sides, and a large piece of granolithic laid down.

Bovian No 17, June 1899

Since the new Fives court has been made, this game has received a great deal of attention.

During the cold weather it was found an excellent game for warming the hands.

At the end of last term a Fives Competition was got up, a cup being offered to the winner. The players were handicapped as follows: nine entrants - owe; seven entrants - 3pts; four entrants - 4 pts; one - 6pts. Each game in the knock-out tournament involved two players.

Bovian No 134, July 1938

In 1927 the Tally Court wall collapsed into the churchyard. When the wall was rebuilt, the addition of a central wall and of a new wall of the Church Street side produced a fives court. Unfortunately the new game has never caught on and the only use made of the Fives Court is to provide an extra space for soft-ball cricket.

The Eton Fives website, and a correspondent therefrom, both suggest that the early use was for Eton Fives, which only started in the public schools in the mid-nineteenth century. The complicating factor in this part of Wales is of course that handball was a traditional game much earlier than this. Cowbridge had its own court at the Tennis Court Inn (which eventually became converted into the cinema), and there was great rivalry in handball between the men of Cowbridge and the men of Llantrisant. In the latter town, the game was played against the church wall. There seems to have been no space in Holy Cross Church for such a game to have been played, but the school 'playground' named in the first letter quoted above could well have been a ball court.

Can anyone remember playing tally in the school court? What was the nature of the game? Any information would be welcomed, because by the time I started teaching at the school, in 1966, as far as I am aware the court was only used for knockabout cricket and football sessions.

Jeff Alden

REMINISCENCES

Many will have seen my note in *The Gem* stating that the next publication of the Cowbridge Record Society will be a book of reminiscences of inhabitants of the area, covering the period 1900 to about 1945. We have assembled a very interesting collection of material which is now being edited and is being prepared for publication. We hope to launch the book in November - more details in LHS meetings and in the *Gem*.

Membership of the CRS costs £3 pa, which gives a discount of £1 on the published price of all our books, and an occasional newsletter - but more importantly it gives the knowledge that members are helping to preserve the history of Cowbridge and district.

CHURCH STREET

There have been some exciting finds in No 6 Church Street - the right-hand one of the two cottages: a Georgian grate in the known Medieval fireplace upstairs, some fine chamfered beams, and (till now unrecorded) a magnificent fireplace downstairs, with a lintel over 8 feet wide. As it also has stone arched doorways of late Medieval date, and a stone staircase with slabbed roof, this now ranks as one of Cowbridge's most important historic buildings. We are delighted that Mr Cope, the new owner, is keen to preserve it.

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