

# COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

No 57 : APRIL 2005



*Fishweir*

## FUTURE MEETINGS

April 1<sup>st</sup>: "In Search of Kenfig" - Dr Terry Robins  
Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>: AGM and "Where in Cowbridge is this?" -  
a picture quiz by Jeff Alden  
Summer excursion; probably at the end of May or  
in early June. Details in the April meeting

## CHARTER DAY

Yvonne Weeding organised an excellent celebration for Charter Day: a very good lunch at the Bush Inn in St Hilary, followed by a visit to Fishweir, on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March. The Bush is a fine historic inn of mid-sixteenth century origins, and is now one of the few buildings in the Vale with the once ubiquitous thatched roof. The two-centred arch stone doorways, the stone staircase, and the great fireplace with a hood supported on corbels are all features for the local historian to enjoy.

We arrived at Fishweir in convoy; thanks are due to Mr and Mrs Bevan for their welcome, their hospitality and an informative tour of the house. Unfortunately, we had to impose a limit on numbers, so for the benefit of those unable to attend I attach some notes about Fishweir.

Fishweir is one of the minor gentry houses of the Vale, situated in the Thaw valley between St Mary Church and Flemingston. Like the Bush, it was built in the mid-sixteenth century, and was first noted as the home of Thomas Bowen who had married Anne Kemeys of Cefn Mably (and was related to the Llanblethian Kemeys family). Their daughter Catherine became the first wife of Richard Bassett of Beaupre in about 1586. Their son,

Edward Bassett lived at Fishweir and was described as being 'of Fishweir' when he married Catherine Carne of Nash Manor. The Bassetts got into financial difficulties as a result of the Civil War, and were forced to sell up. The purchaser of the house and lands was Sir Edward Mansell of Margam. Neither he nor any member of his family resided at Fishweir; it became a tenanted farm – perhaps fortunately for us, for the house was not modernised. It was left to the Bevans, when they took over more than 20 years ago, to preserve all the early features which remain in the house.

One of the rooms downstairs was in a sorry state with a vestigial stone staircase; the room and the staircase have been rebuilt. The two principal rooms were the kitchen and the hall; the kitchen has a great fireplace, about 14½ feet wide, as befitted a gentry house. The fireplace in the hall, though smaller, contained a hiding place, just big enough to conceal a man. The hall also had wide stone arches over what were termed dais seats.

Upstairs, the great chamber over the kitchen has the remains of probably the original plaster frieze on two walls, with fleur de lis and Tudor rose devices among others. The loft showed modern steelwork as well as the original oak beams – and the burns of tallow candles dating back to when these were the servants' quarters.

Outside, the large stone-built barn – reputedly the tallest in Glamorgan – indicates the importance of Fishweir as a farm.

## PLANNING

We have objected to the planned development of six houses on land between Porth y Green House and St Quintin's castle. This is of course a crucial sky-line development on the field which stood at the entrance to the castle. And where medieval materials have been found. The points at issue seem to be:

- The houses (up to 1 metre higher than the previous, failed, application) are of undistinguished design and will be clearly visible on the horizon
- As parking for 36 cars is envisaged, and the houses are large, much of the surface will be built over – far too great a density for a rural site
- the tall wall, which bounded the Marquess of Bute's vineyard in 1898, is an integral feature of the site; the plans suggest this will be demolished and replaced with a low, modern wall
- an archaeological survey before determination of the application is essential.

There are lots of other planning applications, including a new ballroom for the Bear (instead of the marquee), a welcome refit of the Masons Arms, and an elegant new porch for The Cross in Llanblethian. Perhaps the most interesting one (for me) was the planning proposal for playing fields for the new "Aberthin Comprehensive School" to be sited on agricultural land on the other side of the abandoned railway line. This does not mean that the four owners of the fields have yet come to an agreement with the Council – this is simply a planning application. It will take a lot of ground work to make the fields suitable for playing cricket – or even rugby. Should these fields be developed successfully, however, there is then the question of the future of the Grammar school cricket field. Parking for Waitrose, perhaps?

We have also made representations about the deteriorating state of Greenfield in Llanblethian, which has been a blot on a very pleasant corner of the village; the Vale council is responding positively, so we expect developments!

## ARCHAEOLOGY

The dig at 36 Westgate proved to be quite informative, with Roman material (but no buildings) and a very wide well (or even, possibly, an ice house). As there are plans for an extension to West House, next door, we may learn more about the early history of this part of Cowbridge.

Work on the former High Street Garage must be nearing completion. Inside the building (the old Green Dragon Inn) a corbelled fireplace - similar to that at the Bush in St Hilary – was an interesting find. Outside, after all the garage paraphernalia had been removed, was very clearly a typical yard of a coaching inn

I was pleased to see that exploratory trenches have been dug in the 'Council Depot'/covered playground site in Church Street. I do not know what has been found, if anything; we shall have to wait for the GGAT report.

## PHYSIC GARDEN

Work has now started in the former Grammar school kitchen garden in Church Street. The Phillips brothers have worked very swiftly on the clearing of the trees – first cutting them to about 3 feet high, and then with the expert assistance of Adam Barnicott on his JCB, uprooting them. It is good to see that local expertise is already being used.

Bruce McGovern has written a detailed article on the Physic garden on page 4.

## NEW BUILDINGS

It is pleasing to see a new building of quality marrying well with the historic buildings of Cowbridge. I refer to Dale Kennedy's house, unashamedly modern, which he has designed to fit in with the rear of the Barclays Bank/60 High Street building.

The other garage site, on the bridge, is also nearing completion; the houses a little too tall, the roofs a bit too steep, perhaps, but a reasonable effort to maintain the character of Cowbridge. Certainly better than the adjoining 'Old Blue Bell'!

*(Continued from the December newsletter)*

## **THE SOUTH WALES CANALS (Part II)**

### **1. The Glamorgan Canal**

This canal was the promotion of the Merthyr ironmasters – the Crawshays of Cyfarthfa, the Homfrays of Penydarren, the Hills of the Plymouth works and the Guests of Dowlais. They were all anxious for improved transport down the Taff Valley to the growing port of Cardiff, for the export of manufactured iron. The Act of 1790 authorised a canal 24½ miles long from Merthyr to Cardiff. There were originally 50 locks with a total drop of 543 feet; the engineers were Thomas Dadford, his son, and Thomas Sheasby. The canal was opened in 1794. Rapid growth of the iron industry followed and in 1830 over 200,000 tons of iron and coal were carried. In 1851 the total tonnage moved was nearly 590,000 tons despite the competition from the Taff Vale Railway. However, by 1870 the railway had taken away most of the Canal's business. The Merthyr section closed in 1898 and the Abercynon to Pontypridd section in 1915, both partly due to mining subsidence. The Cardiff-Pontypridd section closed in 1942, and the canal was bought by Cardiff Corporation in 1944. The Glamorgan Canal Nature Reserve at Forest Farm houses one of the few remaining sections of the canal; nearby is the Melingriffith water pump, a water-powered beam engine which lifted water from the Melingriffith tinplate works feeder up to the canal.

### **2. The Aberdare Canal**

This 6-mile-long canal was authorised by Act of Parliament in 1793 but not opened until 1812. It ran from Aberdare to join the Glamorgan Canal at Abercynon. There were two locks and coal and iron were the chief goods carried. An extensive system of tramroads linked the head of the canal with the ironworks at Hirwaun and the Neath Canal at Glyn Neath. This canal was closed in 1900, also because of mining subsidence, and has since disappeared without trace, most of its course being covered by roads.

### **3. The Neath Canal**

An Act of 1791 authorised the building of this canal, 10½ miles long and with 19 locks, from Glyn Neath to a point just downstream of Neath, and it was completed in 1795. The engineers were Thomas Dadford and Thomas Sheasby. The cargoes were mainly coal and iron, some 200,000 tons being carried annually as late as 1850. By 1880, however, the Vale of Neath Railway had captured almost all the trade, and by 1920 the canal was little used. The lower part of the canal is still used for recreational purposes and to supply water to industry.

### **4. The Tennant Canal**

What became the Tennant Canal was completed in three stages between 1785 and 1824. First was the Glanywern Canal, finished in 1790, and 3½ miles long. In 1818 George Tennant extended the canal to link the R Neath with the Tawe at Port Tennant: this was known as the Red Jacket canal. Finally in 1824 this was extended northwards to Neath Abbey and Aberdulais, where an aqueduct carried the canal over the River Neath to join the Neath Canal. This canal was 8½ miles long and the main cargoes coal, timber and iron-ore. Maximum traffic reached 225,000 tons in 1866, and it remained busy until the 1890s with imports of copper ore from Chile. There has been no traffic since the 1930s, the main user now being the BP refinery at Llandarcy, which extracts water from the canal.

The spectacular 340-foot ten-arched aqueduct at the Aberdulais basin is well worth a visit; next to it is the graceful skew bridge marking the junction of the two canals, and nearby the Tonna workshops where a visitor centre is being developed. The adjoining National Trust Aberdulais Falls site is of great significance in industrial archaeology.

### **5. The Kidwelly and Llanelly Canal**

The Act for this canal was obtained in 1766 and it was opened in 1769, to carry coal from the Gwendraeth valley to Kidwelly quay. It was 3 miles long. In 1824 branches were opened across Pembrey marshes and by 1838 a 9-mile canal existed from Pontyberem to Burry Port. The canal company converted itself into a railway company in 1865, and a railway was built along the line of the canal. However, Llanelli was never reached by the canal.

### **6. The Swansea Canal**

An Act of 1794 authorised a canal from Swansea for 16 miles to Abercrave in the Tawe valley. There were 36 locks and a short section at Landore was built and owned by the Duke of Beaufort. Thomas Sheasby engineered the greater part of the canal, which was completed in 1798. Coal and iron were the main cargoes carried to the port of Swansea. The Swansea Vale Railway, opened in 1859, drew off much of the traffic but in 1872 the GWR bought the canal and there was a profitable traffic on it for 20 years. It ceased to operate in 1931. The main part of the canal was abandoned between 1949 and 1957, and the Pontardawe-Morrison section is now administered by the British Waterways Board.

### **7. The Monmouthshire-Brecon Canal**

In 1880 the GWR took control of the Monmouthshire Railway and canal Co's 42 miles of canal from Newport to Brecon, and the 11-mile branch from Newport to Crumlin. The canal had originally been two undertakings – the Monmouthshire Canal, built under an Act of 1792, and the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal, authorised in 1793. The Monmouthshire Canal was very prosperous, taking all the coal and iron traffic from the county to Newport for export. It bought the Brecon and Abergavenny Canal in 1865, after which time the canal went into decline.

The main Monmouthshire Canal, opened in 1796, used 42 locks, and the Crumlin arm, opened in 1799, climbed through 32 locks in 11 miles. The Brecon-Abergavenny canal opened for traffic in 1800, but did not join the Monmouthshire Canal at Pontypool until 1812. tramroads connected the canal with ironworks at Blaenavon and Nantyglo.

By 1939 the canal had ceased to be used commercially and was closed between 1949 and 1962. The old Brecon-Abergavenny section has now been restored and as one of the most beautiful canals in Britain is used extensively for recreation. It is 33 miles long, with 5 locks and several aqueducts.

*Don Gerrard*

## **A 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY PHYSIC GARDEN FOR COWBRIDGE**

One outcome of the 2004 celebrations of the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the granting of the first charter for Cowbridge was an initiative by the Welsh Historic Garden Trust to consider the possibility of creating a physic garden on the site of an area that was once part of Old Hall, the home of the Edmondson family from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

A physic garden is a garden where plants with medicinal properties are grown. Such plants have been known to man from time immemorial and grown in gardens for many centuries in countries throughout the world. In the Middle Ages physic gardens were associated in particular with monasteries. In gardens close to an infirmary, plants, flowers and herbs such as rose, lily, cumin, lovage, tansy, mint and rosemary would be grown to treat fevers, aches and pains and other ailments of the monks and their guests

The first garden intended to provide plants to study was established at the medical school of the University of Padua in 1545. By the end of the seventeenth century physic gardens were proliferating throughout Europe, all linked with universities where medicine was taught. The Chelsea Physic Garden in London was established in 1673 by the Society of Apothecaries to train their apprentices in the identification of medicinal plants.

The site for the planned physic garden in Cowbridge is located in the south eastern section of Old Hall gardens and is presently enclosed on three sides by high stone walls – one of which comprises a section of late-thirteenth century Town Wall. The complete eastern wall, with gated access into Church Street forms part of the most historical streetscape in Cowbridge. It includes the grade I Holy Cross Church, the grade II\* former Grammar School, the grade II\* South Gate, the grade II sixteenth-century cottages and the grade II ‘Duke of Wellington’. The boundary wall to the north is fully extant but is now badly overgrown and deteriorating. The western wall separating the site from the gardens of Old Hall no longer exists, although until very recently the original footings of the wall were still in situ. These have now been removed to allow a new west wall to be built which will help to create the “secret” garden and the right environment for the plants.

The Edmondes family acquired Old Hall in the mid-eighteenth century and re-designed the house and garden as their principal residence. At that date the gardens would have been formal, laid out to strict geometric patterns, with allees, parterres and arbours. Historical records indicate that, at the end of the nineteenth century, the walled enclosure was laid out formally with paths and beds, probably to a design that had been established many years before. At one stage the site was used as a kitchen garden by the Grammar School but in recent years it served as a tree nursery for the local Council. The site had been neglected for some years and was until very recently a virtual wilderness. It is slowly being brought back to life by the Cowbridge Physic Garden Trust; now that the ground has been cleared, the true potential can be revealed.

The walled garden at Old Hall, Cowbridge presents a unique opportunity, not only to re-create the formal garden of the Edmondes family of circa 1750 but also to incorporate into it a Physic garden of that date. While England, Scotland and Ireland have retained examples of these historic gardens, in Wales Physic gardens in any form remain extremely rare. The design of the ‘Physic Garden’ is being undertaken by Anthony Jellard Associates, based near Abergavenny, who are one of Wales’ leading landscape architects. Robin Walley, the foremost authority in the UK on parterre/formal gardens of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries will assist the design work.

“A pretty concept”, I hear you say, “but it cannot work –have they no idea what it is likely to cost – it is just not possible”.

Well – it is possible, and we will do it. A lot of effort has gone into properly establishing the Cowbridge Physic Garden Trust. We now have a structure, an appropriate legal framework, a number of permissions and licences, we are a registered charity and last, but by no means least, we have a reasonable amount of finance to drive the first stage forward. The site has been cleared – with full regard to wildlife and archaeological obligations, the Topographical Survey has been undertaken, the final designs for the hard landscaping have been completed and we now await planning permission.

We know that there are many hurdles to overcome – we have already encountered quite a few – but we will achieve our objectives. The work that we plan has to be done in a number of distinct phases and during 2005 we intend, in addition to what we have already done, to:

- Complete our wall survey
- Repair / restore the north and east walls.
- Reinststate the missing west wall (approximate cost £30,000).
- Construct paths – including service ducts and drainage.
- Create walkways and banking.
- Construct suitable disabled access to the garden.

Then of course we go into 2006 when amongst many other things we will restore our section of the Town Wall and the derelict stone sheds, possibly create a pergola walk, purchase and install plant material, benches, equipment, interpretative signage etc. We have in addition a planned programme of enhancement that will run through into 2007, all being well, which will include a summerhouse, floodlighting, irrigation systems, a water feature and much more.

We have been extremely fortunate (with a lot of hard work and solid local support) in being able to obtain initial capital finance from the Welsh Assembly and the European Union under a WDA project. However we are required to generate a very significant slice of matched funding to ensure that the garden is developed as we would wish. Our initial lease on the site will be for twenty-five years, there will be no admission charges and it is hoped that much, if not all, of the maintenance can be undertaken by volunteers.

If anyone would like to know more about this rather special garden or would like to assist in any way please contact Bruce McGovern on 01446 7736611.

*Bruce McGovern*

## **COWBRIDGE'S WAR MEMORIAL**

Like many cities, towns and villages in the British Isles, after the Great War of 1914-1918, the borough of Cowbridge commemorated the young men of the town who had lost their lives in that conflict with a war memorial on which their names were inscribed. The statue of a private in the infantry stands in front of the town hall with twenty-eight names engraved on the plinth; this is a surprisingly large number of casualties from a small market town which, in the census of 1911, had a total population of just over a thousand people. From the list of *Soldiers who died in the Great War*, published in 1920 by HM Stationery Office, and the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission which together record each man's place of birth, which branch of the armed forces he joined, the town of enlistment, theatre of war where he died and occasionally his next-of-kin, and by checking with the 1901 census, at least 19 of the 28 were found to be the sons of Cowbridge families. The remaining nine, which included three of the five officers, had probably been living and working in the town for at least long enough to be honoured with those born and bred in Cowbridge.

The edition of the *Glamorgan Gazette* published on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1914 listed, by name, 69 Cowbridge men who had joined the army since the declaration of war with Germany on the 4<sup>th</sup> August; the short paragraph ended with a strident call for all eligible men in the district to follow their patriotic example and serve their country. The *Gazette* did not, however, record the first Cowbridge death three days later on the 26<sup>th</sup> October. Alexander Pates, born in Aberdeen, was almost certainly a reservist recalled to his regiment on its mobilisation in August. He died in a casualty clearing station of wounds sustained whilst fighting with the 2<sup>nd</sup>

Welch regiment north of Ypres in defence of the town against the last great German offensive before trench warfare dominated the Western Front. Almost exactly four years later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1918, nineteen-year old Arthur Gibbs was the last of the Cowbridge men to die overseas. He too died of wounds but in a German hospital as a prisoner of war captured during the final desperate German offensives between the end of March and early July in the last year of the war. Between these two October days there would be twenty-six other deaths spread over four years and mostly occurring during British offensives at Gallipoli, Loos, the Somme, Arras, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ypres and the final advance towards Germany.

There were five deaths in 1915, three of which were of men serving with Territorial battalions. Army reform after the South African war from 1899-1902 resulted in better training for the professional regular army and the creation of a Territorial Force to replace the old militia and volunteer battalions. The civilian 'Saturday afternoon soldiers' who practised drill and rifle-shooting in their spare time and spent two weeks at an annual camp, were not obliged to serve overseas unless they volunteered to do so. After the disastrous losses sustained by the regular army divisions in the first three months of war, some Territorial battalions were already in France before Christmas 1914 to be followed by many more in early 1915. However, the diversionary assault on Turkey in May 1915 would result in the next Cowbridge death; Arthur Wynne Jones, born in Montgomeryshire and serving with the 5<sup>th</sup> Welch, fell on the landing beach at Suvla Bay in Gallipoli on the 8<sup>th</sup> August. William Willmott, a reservist with the Royal Sussex regiment, died during the opening attack on the German line on the first day of the battle of Loos whilst Cecil Chard and Arthur Miles both died on the 13<sup>th</sup> October in the closing stages of that battle and Ronald Wall, a former master at the Grammar school, died two days later at a military hospital in Wiltshire.

Six Cowbridge men died in the six weeks between the 7<sup>th</sup> July and the 14<sup>th</sup> September 1916, all in British attacks on German defences during the battle of the Somme: Owen Evans (son of Congregational minister William Evans of Llanbethery), William Lane of Westgate, Herbert Williams (son of John Williams, draper of London House), Arthur Stockwood, solicitor, aged 38 and leaving a widow and three children, Fred Lord, a Grenadier guardsman born in Norfolk and Albert Gibbs, (son of Joseph Gibbs, printer of Eastgate who would also lose Arthur, the sixth of his seven sons, in 1918).

The year 1917 would see the deaths of three of the Second Lieutenants on the memorial: James (Joshua) Payne, whose parents lived at South Shields, was killed in action at Arras in March, Harold Moynan (son of Dr Richard Moynan) and Morris James Marsden, whose parents lived at Cribyn, Cardiganshire, died in July and September during the 3<sup>rd</sup> battle of Ypres, as also did Private Bassett James Davies from Westgate. The only man commemorated on the memorial who did not serve in the army also died in 1917; he was David Spencer, son of Margaret Spencer landlady of the *Duke of Wellington*, who, in the worst year for German U-boat attacks on British merchant shipping, died as second engineer on the *SS Portloe*.

The last year of war brought the most losses among the many Cowbridge men who were now serving in the armed forces. Two would die as a result of the final desperate German attacks on the allied front line: David Fitzgerald of Aubrey Terrace, killed in action in April near Bethune and Arthur Gibbs who died of wounds in captivity. Seven more Cowbridge men fell during the final allied offensive between July and November. William Trew, eldest son of James Trew of Westgate, struck down whilst manning his machine gun and Charles Lewis of Aberthin Road, serving in the newly formed Tank Corps, both died in July. William Archer fell during an allied attack launched from the Arras tunnels at the end of August as did Lieutenant Thomas Torney, only son of Dr Hastings Torney who was also in uniform with the Royal Army Medical Corps. David Bond and William Burley, both from Westgate, were killed in action advancing across the old battlefield of the Somme, on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>

September. Second Lieutenant William Owen died in a British military hospital near Lyon on the 11<sup>th</sup> October. Exactly one month later, on the eleventh hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918, the guns were silenced.

The Great War was over, the boys came home and no-one thought to write down their memories of the friends and fellow townsmen who had not returned. Every year on the anniversary of Armistice Day and then after 1945, when nine more names had been added to the plinth, on Remembrance Sunday '*We will remember them*' is solemnly intoned in front of the memorial but eventually the survivors themselves grew old and passed away. For '*Time like an ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away; they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day*'.

Two of the men commemorated on Cowbridge's war memorial are not listed in *Soldiers who died in the Great War* and their graves were not recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Any information about the service records of Ralph Goulden and Richard Morgan (Australian Imperial Force) would be greatly appreciated as indeed would be any family recollections about the other twenty-six men who gave their lives in 'the war to end all wars'.

*José Rawlins*

*A leaflet donated to the Record Society by Jeff Wadham records the appeal which was made to erect the war memorial. Dated 15<sup>th</sup> March 1920, it states:*

"At a Public Meeting held in the Town Hall on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, under the presidency of the Mayor, the recommendations of the Committee (appointed by a previous Public Meeting) were adopted as to the form the War Memorial for this borough should take, namely the erection of a Statue in front of the Town Hall.

The design for this memorial as supplied by Messrs J Hopkins & Son (the Cowbridge monumental masons whose yard was in what is now called Penny Lane) is a "Hopton Wood" stone base surmounted by a marble figure of a soldier standing with arms reversed. The names of the Cowbridge men who who fell in the war to be inscribed on the base. The cost of the statue, including fixing and lettering is £320.

The same committee has been appointed to collect subscriptions to defray the above cost, and we have been asked to solicit your your kind and generous help towards carrying out and completing the work of the Memorial . . .

We are,  
Yours faithfully,  
WL Jenkins (Ex Mayor), Chairman of Committee  
Wm T Gwyn (Town Clerk), Hon Sec "

The following donations have already been received:

Proceeds of Sunday School Dancing Class ball, £12;  
proceeds of Victory Dance at Cowbridge, £10.16s.6d;  
collection at St Mary's Church on Peace Sunday, £8.0s.10;  
part surplus balance of Peace Celebration fund, £12.19s.5d.

Donations from the Mayor (Alderman Edward John, JP), £5; Alderman Lewis Jenkins, £10; Alderman John Williams. £10; Mrs J Williams, £5; Cllr WL Jenkins, JP, £10; Mrs WL Jenkins, £5; Mr WT Gwyn, £10; Mrs WT Gwyn, £5.

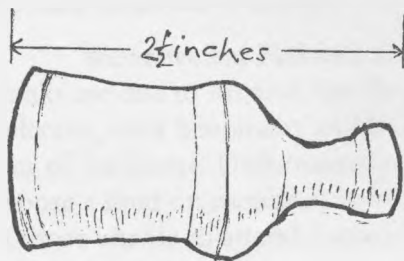


## WHAT IS A POT SHOT?

My dictionary defines a 'potshot' as a random shot or a shot at a game bird for the pot, but the word may – but only may – have a different origin.

Once again, as with the 'last post' bugle call, we have to look back to the English Civil War. During the early years of the war, Shrewsbury was an important Royalist stronghold. After raising his standard at Nottingham on 13 September 1642, King Charles marched his army across country to Shrewsbury where he camped for three weeks before moving on to the first major battle of the war, at Edgehill on 25 October. The King visited Shrewsbury several times during the following years but on the morning of 3 February 1645 the town fell to the forces of Parliament. Shrewsbury was not the site of a major battle during the civil war, but there were skirmishes in and around the town. Objects found in recent years, at points where such fighting took place have given rise to speculation about the original meaning of the term 'pot-shot'.

These objects are pot-shaped, about two or three inches long, were crudely made in bronze or brass, and were roughly finished. The 'pots' had a small hole in the base for a match or fuse. When charged with powder and shot they could be held in the palm of the hand and fired like very small cannon.



*The original pot shot?*

The suggestion is that they were made by village blacksmiths and carried by musketeers as a 'last ditch' weapon for personal defence. Normally the musketeers would have been protected by pikemen, but if the pikemen scattered, the musketeers would have been defenceless while reloading their matchlock muskets. The musket match or fuse, however, would remain alight and

could be used to fire a loaded pot-shot in close quarter fighting.

A number of pot-shots have been found at Shrewsbury but not elsewhere, and there is no written record of their manufacture or of their use; so, for the time being at least, this origin of the term 'pot-shot' remains no more than an interesting but unproven theory.

*Alec Jones*

## TOWN WALLS

There was a good response to the Charter Trust's appeal for volunteers to train to clear the Town Walls of ivy, bushes, etc. The training, insurance, etc, would be provided by the Vale council, with work scheduled to start in the autumn. Luke Millar is coordinating this.

## SKER HOUSE

It has proved impossible to organise a visit to Sker House this year, but we have started discussing with the owners about the possibility of a visit next Charter Day. We are hopeful about reaching a positive conclusion!

## EDITOR'S COMMENT

Many thanks to all contributors; a real bumper bundle this time. Articles, short notes and questions or reminiscences are always welcome.

*Jeff Alden 01446 773373*