

NEWSLETTER

of Cowbridge History Society

Spring 2017



Tretower Court - first call on this year's Charter Day trip

***End of the season...
And still lots to look forward to!***

Recent delights

The first few meetings of 2017 have proved no disappointment at all, and have been extremely well-attended. In January, committee member Don Gerrard continued his foray into the history of religious dissent in Wales, looking at the period from the English Civil War onwards. Chris Turner took up the theme in February, concentrating on the 19th century and giving a run-down on local places of worship during that period.

March's meeting was addressed by Jeff Childs, who gave us an entertaining slide show that prompted a lot of memories for some members of the audience. The theme was "Three Cardiff Communities: Roath, Splott and Adamsdown". The narrative that went with the pictures was an account of how and when all three communities came into being, and their changing relationship to one another.

The annual Charter Day trip on 13th March was extremely successful, with a full coach taking members first to Tretower Court near Brecon and afterwards to the less well-known Bedwellty House in Tredegar. On the next page is a full report by Beverly Tonkin.

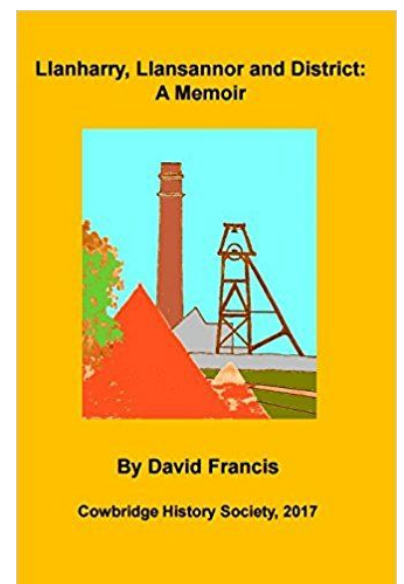
April's meeting started a little late because our speaker, Graham Phillimore, had some technical problems with his laptop and had to return home to get another. His presentation was well worth waiting for. Graham lives at Woodford House in Llantwit Major, a historic building that was for a time occupied by the "Blue Pilgrims" (real name, "The Beatrice Hankey Foundation"). Few of those attending the talk had even heard of this religious order or were aware that they had such a presence in Llantwit Major during the lifetime of Miss Mollie Turner (died 1964), known by the pseudonym "Desire". The order still exists and apparently is thriving in Bangladesh.



Coming up in May...

Next month we will be holding our AGM, as usual. The speaker will be Phil Carradice, Radio Wales's "Past Master" and a doyen of Welsh literature. His fifty or so books include fiction, non-fiction, poetry and children's books, many with historical themes. I first met Phil about twenty years ago when he came to talk at a meeting of the Port Talbot Historical Society, and we have been friends for nearly as long. You will know as well as I do what an entertaining speaker he is, since over the years he has addressed both Cowbridge Record Society and Cowbridge & District Local History Society, not to mention the Friends of Cowbridge Museum.

Later in the month we will be celebrating the launch of a new publication, David Francis's *Llanharry, Llansannor & District: a Memoir* (ISBN 0953702995) David is a long-standing member of Cowbridge History Society and has several other local history publications to his name. The 52-page book is a new departure for us, and we have numbered it "The Rural Vale Remembered, volume 1", in the hope that it will become the first in a series of shorter publications dealing with the subject. With an eye-catching cover designed by Robert Cope, we think it will be a great hit. If you know of any unpublished memoirs that you think might fit in with this series, please let us know; we will be delighted to consider them.



The launch takes place at Llanharry/Llanhari Primary School (by kind permission of head teacher Mrs Coates) on Tuesday 16 May at 1.30pm. This is an unusual time for one of our launches but will enable those attending to enjoy entertainment by the children of the school, which will include some music and a celebration of the life and career of David Francis, originally devised for his recent 80th birthday. **All members are very welcome to attend.**

Nothing to De Clare...

Cowbridge History Society has been approached by Taylor Wimpey, the contractor responsible for the major new housing development, asking for suggestions for a name for the development as a whole (individual street names will come later). We did not feel able to respond on behalf of our members without consultation, but our Chair has come up with the suggestions of Parc De Clare, which would seem to recognise the town's historical importance. There is no guarantee that this, or any other suggestion from the public, will be adopted by Taylor Wimpey.

*Deb Fisher
Publications Officer*

CHARTER DAY -13th MARCH

Yet again, the weather smiled on us as we set out on our trip on 13th March. Our first stop was at Tretower Court and Castle, set in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

For over 900 years Tretower Court and Castle has been altered, adjusted and adapted. Much of this was done to keep up with style, fashion and the tastes of the time. The Picards and the Vaughans who lived here were rich, influential Welsh families; the movers and shakers of their time. They needed a place to impress, and the sumptuous accommodation they created reflected their high status as Welsh gentry. When the Vaughans left in the 18th century, Tretower Court became a working farm and where ladies and gentlemen lived, lambs and geese moved in!

Our tour was given by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide, Ian Andrews, who shed light on the history and on a lot of domestic detail giving an insight into the way life was lived when the Court was first built.



Bedwellty House, Tredegar

We then moved on to a very different property, Bedwellty House in Tredegar. The original farmhouse, called "Coedcae y Cynghordy", was built for Lodwig Rees in 1768, but in 1822, Samuel Homfray, an iron master latterly of the Penydarren Ironworks, created a classical-style residence which was extended with two additional wings in 1825 to create the building that we see today.

After the Homfrays left the house in 1853 it was lived in by managers of the ironworks. It then became the offices of Tredegar Urban Council, where Aneurin Bevan was a Councillor from 1922 until he became an MP in 1929. Again, after a good lunch, we had a tour led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide, and some of us were able to look around the gardens before it was time to head home.

*Beverly Tonkin
Treasurer*

All the news from 1902 (continued from vol 3, no 4)

In the previous issue, we reproduced some stories that Betty Alden had transcribed from 1902 editions of the *Glamorgan Gazette*. We only had room for the first half of the year. Here is what happened from July onwards.

The saga of the Coronation celebrations continued. You'll recall that Edward VII, who had acceded to the throne on the death of his mother, Queen Victoria, in 1901, had to postpone the actual coronation ceremony until August 1902 because he was suffering from peritonitis. It should have happened in June, and many celebrations went ahead as planned as soon as it was known that the king's life was out of danger. Mr Govier, the landlord of the Commercial Hotel, accused four men of causing damage to his premises when a brawl broke out. (Three of the defendants were surnamed Davies - I wonder if they were related?) However, the case was dismissed and Mr Govier ended up having to pay his own legal costs.

On the same day, children from the United Board Schools were treated to refreshments at Slade Farm field; the tea was followed by games and sports, with medals being given out - I am not sure if these were for the children who won the games or, as seems more likely, for all the children as a memento of the coronation. After Queen Victoria's long reign, they probably did not realise there would be another one only nine years later.

A couple of weeks later, a Cowbridge couple went to court to settle a marital dispute. Marshall Higgs, who had worked as a coachman at The Verlands, had run away to Bridgend when his new bride discovered he was already married, and had a wife and two children alive and well in Monmouth. He was charged with desertion and put the blame on his troubled conscience!

The town's publicans were again in trouble during August and September. David Jenkins, landlord of the Pelican, pleaded guilty to selling adulterated whisky - presumably during the post-Coronation celebrations. The landlord of the Railway Inn, William Davies, was also in court, charged with permitting drunkenness.

On the day of the agricultural show in September, police arrested two speeding motorcyclists from Swansea. The report does not say how fast they were going, but comments that they "dashed through the town" and represented a danger to other road users. Ironically, when they stopped to repair a wheel, Sergeant Jones was able to catch up with them, and they were fined by local magistrates, who were described as "indignant at the Ancient Borough being made a racing track". What would they think if they could see it now?

Two locals of note retired from their jobs in October. One was Simon Wilment, the lamplighter, who would have been a familiar sight to Cowbridge residents. The other was Mrs Phillips of Folly Farm, Llanblethian, who sold off all her equipment, livestock and crops.

Finally, in November, there was even more trouble for the licensees. David Jenkins of the Pelican was once again in court, this time for opening illegally on a Sunday. Another pub, the Horse & Groom, was moving to new premises, and landlord William Hurch was granted a licence. In the meantime, John Morgan took on the licence of the Greyhound Inn, given up by Ann Giles.

Betty Alden & Deb Fisher

Windmills - the traditional way

A recent enquiry on the Facebook page caused Betty Alden to look into the question of Windmill Lane in Cowbridge and the question of whether there has ever been a windmill at that location. Since the name "Windmill Close" is documented in a sale deed of 1668 as having been among the 25 acres purchased from Blanche and John Carne by Thomas Carne, it seems safe to assume that the name came from a very old building of which no physical remains have survived.

Books for sale

The following second-hand books are available for purchase from the Local History Room at Old Hall. If you are interested, please contact Betty Alden. Note that all proceeds from the sale of these books will go directly into CHS funds.

| Author & title | Price |
|---|--------------|
| <i>The Greater Houses of Glamorgan</i> , volume 4, part 1 | £25 |
| <i>Old Cowbridge</i> by Lemuel Hopkin James (1922) | £25 |
| <i>The Border Vale of Glamorgan</i> by David Francis | £2 |
| <i>Cowbridge and Llanblethian Past and Present</i> by Brian James & David Francis | £10 |
| <i>A Certaine Schoole</i> by Iolo Davies | £10 |
| <i>History on My Doorstep</i> by Stewart Williams (1959) | £5 |
| <i>Glamorgan Historian</i> , volume 1 (1963) ed. by Stewart Williams | £10 |
| <i>Glamorgan Historian</i> , volume 6 (1969) ed. by Stewart Williams | £5 |
| <i>Glamorgan Historian</i> , volume 7 (1971) ed. by Stewart Williams | £7 |
| <i>Glamorgan: its History and Topography</i> by C J O Evans (1938) | £2 |
| <i>History of the World in 100 Objects</i> by Neil McGregor (2010) | £7 |
| <i>A Short History of Our Own Times</i> by Justin McCarthy (1897) Leather-bound copy with Cowbridge Girls High School stamp | £15 |
| <i>Heroes of the Crusades</i> by Barbara Hutton (1868) Leather-bound copy with Cowbridge Girls High School stamp | £15 |

We also have a copy of the Holy Bible with lithograph illustrations, that belonged to the Thomas family of the Cowbridge Arms (now 46 High Street). We do not know how much to charge for this, but invite you to make us an offer!

Behind the scenes at the museum...

Steve Harkett informs us that, as of the 6th April, 2017, Cowbridge & District Museum has been awarded full accreditation. This is something that previous curators have attempted to achieve over a period of some years.

Cowbridge History Society congratulates the Museum Trust and curator Aled Lewis!

MONTHLY PROGRAMME FOR 2017

**Cowbridge History Society meetings take place in the Lesser Hall, Town Hall, Cowbridge
Talks start at 7.30pm on the first Friday of each month unless shown otherwise.**

2017

5th May **AGM at 7pm**, followed by:
History like Teacher never taught it
Phil Carradice

This will be the last talk of the season, but see page 2 for details of the book launch on 16 May, to which you are all invited.

As we are into a new financial year, you can join for the 2017 - 18 season now or wait until the start of the new season in October. The membership fees are unchanged at £7.50 per person and any cheques should be made payable to "Cowbridge History Society".

Autumn 2017 (new season)

6th October *A Journey along the Thaw Valley*
Chris Young

3rd November *At the Grave of Henry Vaughan: a 1924 Road Trip*
Deborah Fisher

1st December *A Walk Around the Dyffryn Estate ... NOT the one at St Nicholas!*
Brian Davies
Followed by the traditional wine and mince pies

This newsletter is issued approximately three times a year. Local history news items can be sent to the Secretary at dicktonkin@btinternet.com for potential publication in the next newsletter, or may be brought along to the next monthly meeting.

Notification of any topics members wish to raise for discussion at the next committee meeting on 19 August can also be sent to the Secretary.

