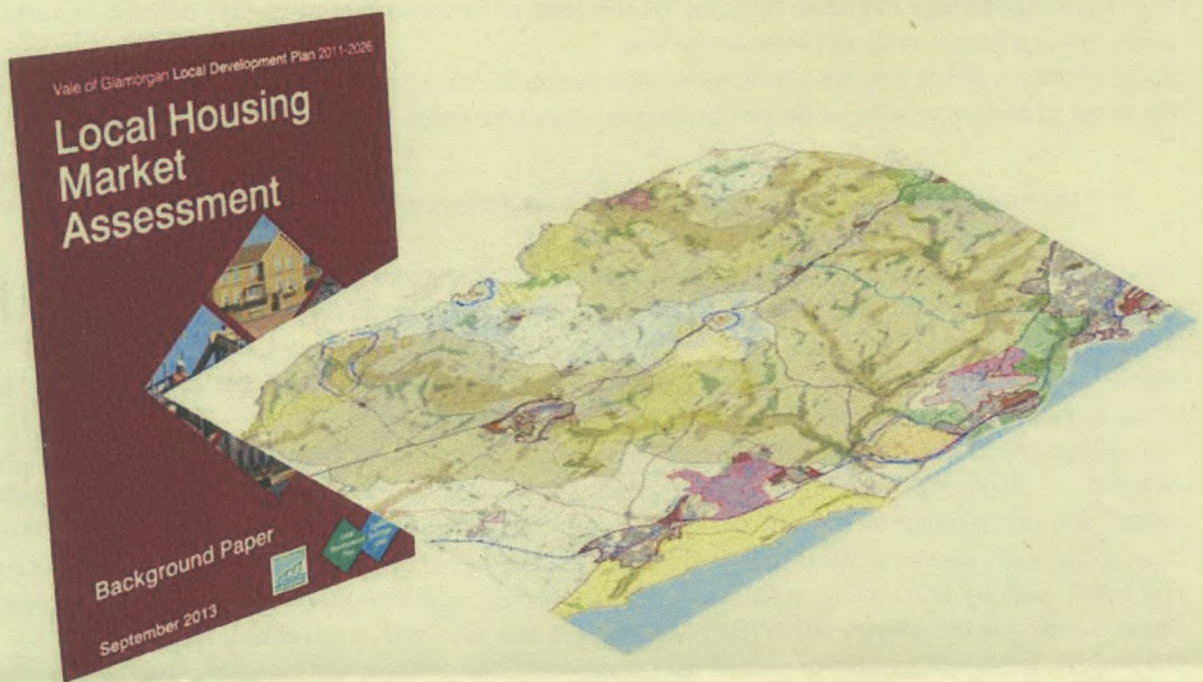


Betty Alder. & John Sherwood.

Cowbridge History Society  
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# NEWSLETTER

of Cowbridge History Society



*Another housing controversy?  
And should we care?*

## THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN – FROM OUR CHAIR

As I am sure all our readers will be aware a new Local Development Plan has been published by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. As your chairman I have been examining this on your behalf. I would urge you to make representations through the official channels. In the meantime you may have seen my, and other, letters to the *Gem*. I should also say that I sit on the organising committee of the Cowbridge and Llanblethian Residents Group, chaired by Dr Chris Pearce of Darren Close, who is one of our members.

I think it important that observations be made by the Society and its members on the plan in so far as it may affect the historic town of Cowbridge and the neighbouring villages that come within our catchment. It is important for as many members as possible have a look at the LDP's proposals for our area and to make their views heard. They can be consulted at four places in the Vale including the Council Offices in Barry, at the Alps, Council offices and at local libraries. However, all the plans and supporting papers can be found on line at <http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/ldp>

*Below I set out what I believe to be the principal proposals that should be our main concern:*

1. An additional 500+ houses are to be allocated to Cowbridge, an increase of between 25 and 30%
2. This will increase the population of the town pro rata
3. The reason Cowbridge has been selected for this level of increase is because it is defined as a sustainable town, 4th in a league table of places in the Vale
4. Sustainability is defined by the LDP in terms of accessibility to services and employment
5. For some of the larger villages smaller but nonetheless significant increases are proposed.

*Are the arguments used by the Plan defensible and the proposals sound?*

1. The analysis for defining Cowbridge as sustainable to the degree proposed is flawed. Most of the services (schools, health, library etc and commercial services such as retailing) are already 'full' or close to being so.
2. Employment in the town and its villages is now similarly constrained by a lack of capacity for further expansion. There are already severe restrictions on car-parking in the town
3. Any additional population will have to seek work outside the immediate area, in the larger settlements of Bridgend, Barry, Penarth and Cardiff with many of the economic benefits taking place elsewhere. This means that commuting can only increase, increasing the dormitory function of Cowbridge and its villages.
4. One of the main measures used to help define the settlements as sustainable is the ability to use public transport, walking and cycling. On these scores Cowbridge and the villages perform lamentably poorly. There is only one bus service left in the Western Vale, the X2. There is no railway station.
5. Both of the two large estates proposed for Cowbridge (one of them will be larger than some villages in the Vale; Darren Farm would have in excess of 300 houses) are not within walking distance of the major services of the town such as the schools. There is no provision in the plan for improved and safer cycling facilities. Cowbridge and Llanblethian are located in a relatively deep river valley so that walking and cycling to and from the two major estates proposed would be difficult except for the fittest of young people. Currently, 50% of the town's population is over 50 years of age.
6. Given these facts work and many services will have to be sought outside the confines of the area and involve travelling by private car, mostly on a daily basis. This will only increase pressure on the only main road linking the principal centres of employment - the A48 - which is already suffering from a series of congestion points for example, at Culverhouse Cross, the new traffic lights leading to the airport and narrow speed restricted pinch points in most villages. It will also mean that pollution and energy consumption will increase substantially. None of these seems to accord with the LDP's ideas on 'sustainability'

***For Cowbridge to become sustainable it would need to:***

1. Provide more employment, but the plan and nature of the historic fabric of the town and its definition as a Conservation Area with its many listed buildings means that development space is severely restricted. The only places for expansion are on the fringes of the town on farmland in close proximity to the major routeway, the A48. There is no provision for this in the Plan and in any case such development, like the growth of the housing proposed, would seriously undermine Cowbridge's status as one of Wales's most important planned, historic towns
2. Expand its secondary and primary school provision. The Comprehensive School has recently been enlarged primarily to accommodate the junior forms once housed in the huts on Town Mill Road. One new primary school (Welsh medium) is planned for the Darren Farm site. It is unlikely in the present economic climate and with restrictions on local government spending that further expansion of education provision is likely.
3. More people and more traffic even if a proportion of its movement is largely directed outwith the town (and is therefore unsustainable as defined) will nonetheless impact considerably upon the historic built form of Cowbridge. There will inevitably be pressure to convert and build within the Conservation Area and among its listed buildings. Car parking, already at saturation point, will soon spread into adjoining areas.



*Cowbridge town centre in the 1960s: photo from the Local History Studies Room*

My background as geographer and an historian tells me that, of course, towns - even historic towns like Cowbridge - must change and adapt to the future. There are plenty of examples of how that took place in the past - the growth and changes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the opening of the by-pass in the 1960s and the building of new estates in the 1970s - are evidence of what can be accommodated. But these new proposals

are all out of scale with what is already here. Their impact would most certainly undermine Cowbridge's claim for significance in the history of Wales as made manifest by its form and function over eight centuries. It would become yet another example of the dormitory town with its surrounding new estates dead during the day and only alive as workers, shoppers and school pupils got in their cars at 8 in the morning and returned at 5 or 6 in the evening. What has made Cowbridge so successful as a country town has been its size on a scale that permits access to its facilities, with safety and very low crime rates and a very strong sense of community witnessed by the high levels of participation in its very active social life. Change the scale of the place and you change its attraction.

If members wish to make their own observations of the LDP's proposals they **must do so on The Vale of Glamorgan Deposit Local Development Plan 2011-2026 Representation Form** obtainable at local public libraries and council offices or at the following website <http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/ldp> Forms must be received by the Council **before** December 20th.

*In addition, the Council has now agreed that members of the public can express their ideas about the proposals in the form of a letter to:*

The LDP team  
The Docks Office  
Barry Docks  
Barry  
Vale of Glamorgan  
CF63 4RT  
**Telephone:** 01446 700111  
**E mail:** [LDP@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:LDP@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

However, you must still address the particular policy proposals you wish to object to or support, as in the official forms. Some of the information required may appear technical, even unfriendly, but please do not be put off!

*Dick Buswell, Chair, Cowbridge History Society*

#### **SEASON'S GREETINGS AND A FRIENDLY REMINDER**

We would like to wish all members and their families the compliments of the season. We would also take this opportunity to remind everyone that subscriptions for the new, merged Cowbridge History Society are £7.50 per person and not all of you have paid yet.

If you are unable to get to meetings, we will be more than happy to receive your cheque made payable to Cowbridge History Society. This can be posted to either of our Treasurers: Keith Jones, Ruthyn Fach, St Mary Hill, Bridgend CF35 5B or Beverly Tonkin, Stallcourt Mews, Stallcourt Close, Llanblethian, Cowbridge CF71 7JU.

We intend to try to keep to a schedule of 3-4 newsletters a year from now on. Unfortunately, we cannot afford to print and mail these to anyone who has not paid their subscription, so those who have not paid for the current season by January 2014 will not receive the next edition.

*The committee of Cowbridge History Society*

## REMEMBERING TWO LOYAL MEMBERS

### MARYLYN COPE (1936-2013)

Marylyn Cope was born Marylyn Gower, in the Bible Shop, Crosskeys. She came to Cowbridge, with her husband, Robert Cope (now well-known in this area for his artwork), in 2002 and took up residence at 6 Church Street, in a fascinating old house about which Robert documented his research in this society's most recent publication, *Echoes of Old Cowbridge* (2011).

Marylyn, an ex-teacher, was proud to be able to say that her grandfather had been a member of the Captain Jones XV and won a Welsh cap. She and Robert were living in Pontllanfraith when their children, Emma and James, were born, and later moved to Harrogate. Subsequently they lived in Ross-on-Wye, where Marylyn ran a boutique, and later still in Brecon, where the couple reinforced their love of history by restoring County House, a Georgian property.

Shortly after their arrival in Cowbridge, Marylyn and her husband became stalwart members of many local societies, including Cowbridge Local History Society and Cowbridge Record Society. Marylyn was a regular volunteer at Cowbridge Museum and, after a bout of ill-health which resulted in her being unable to carry out her regular stewarding duties for a few months, she became a museum trustee – although she soon returned to her place as a steward, welcoming visitors in her inimitable way. As a trustee, she proved invaluable, a practical but kindly voice with a genuine desire to improve museum facilities and attract more visitors. She was a great listener, who always showed a warm interest in others.



*Volunteers at Cowbridge Museum pictured in 2012: (L-R) Marylyn Cope, Jo Rawlins, Deb Fisher, Pamela Robson*

As a member of the working group set up to discuss the merger between the two local history-related societies to which she belonged (and which eventually resulted in the official creation of Cowbridge History Society earlier this year), Marylyn was strongly in favour, recognising the benefits that would ensure the longevity of both societies.

As individuals, we will miss Marylyn enormously, and Cowbridge History Society will miss her equally. We will at least have many happy memories of her to console us in our loss. We extend our sympathies to her family, who have one small consolation in the form of a new grandchild born in December 2013.

### **ENA BRENT (1927-2013)**

The passing of Ena Brent, of Newton, Penylan, came as a shock to her many friends in Cowbridge History Society. Ena was a valued member of both CHS's predecessors, Cowbridge and District Local History Society and Cowbridge Record Society, for many years. With a vivacity that belied her 85 years, she was one of those people who is always rallying round, ready to carry out the mundane tasks, such as washing up and putting out chairs, without expecting any recognition for her hard work.

She was born in the East End of London and was proud of her Cockney roots. It was in London that she first trained and then practised as a nurse. She and Len married in 1952 and later moved to the Cowbridge area where their children, Nicholas and Anne, were born and brought up; both were taught at school by the late Jeff Alden, former Chair of the Local History Society and general editor of Cowbridge Record Society's publications.

Ena later qualified as a Health Visitor and was a well-respected and appreciated figure in the area. She had many interests as well as Cowbridge History Society and was active in Cowbridge Amateur Dramatic Society, the Operatic Society, the Monday Luncheon Club (which she had been running for the last fifteen years), Meals on Wheels through the WRVS, U3A, the Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, and of course local church activities.

In recent times, undeterred by the passing years, she had developed an interest in archaeology and attended classes in Cardiff.

Bev Tonkin writes: "You always knew where you were with Ena. She was a great "doer" and was always seen brandishing a tea towel when we had tea and cake after meetings. She will be remembered with great affection for her kindness and humour."

### **MORE CHEERFUL NEWS**

On Saturday 16 November, Cowbridge History Society entered the Rotary Club annual charity quiz for the first time under its new title. In our previous incarnation as Cowbridge Record Society we had an unequalled record of having come either first or second every year. No other team has come anywhere near this (not even Cowbridge Local History Society)!

The team on the night consisted of Don Gerrard, Jo Rawlins and Deborah Fisher. Those of you who read the Cowbridge Gem will know that, under our new name, we managed to keep up our record by finishing in first place. It was a very close thing, but Cowbridge History Society won on a tie-breaker, by getting the closest to guessing the answer to this question:

*What was the population of Wales at the 2011 Census?* You can find the correct answer at the bottom of the last page of this newsletter. See how close you can get.

The result meant that we were able to donate £250 to Marie Curie Cancer Care, a charity nominated by both Marylyn Cope and Ena Brent. Unfortunately the *Gem* chose to print a photo of some other team captain, rather than the photogenic Mr Gerrard!

## PENTRE MEYRICK

*Brian James, Joint President of Cowbridge History Society, offers this insight into a local settlement.*

Almost all the villages and hamlets in the Cowbridge district can be traced back centuries, but rarely do we know exactly when they were first settled, or by whom. Pentre Meyrick is different. There were no houses there at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – in fact, the nearest dwelling was Tewgoed, a seventeenth-century farmhouse half a mile away on the road to Pencoed.

In 1824 or 1825 Thomas Meyrick bought six small fields (26 acres all told) around or near the crossroads and it is probably that he immediately built a house for himself – the house now known as Cross Farm. The other side of the Pencoed road he built two cottages (now Holly Cottages). In the adjoining field another landowner built three cottages. Over the next few years, the Morning Star public house was built a quarter of a mile away in the direction of Cowbridge.

By the time of the 1841 Census there were eight households in Pentre Meyrick. At the next census in 1851 there were still eight householders there, but now no fewer than three of them were innkeepers or publicans. Their trade depended on travellers along the main road; there were far fewer travellers on the road after 1850 when the South Wales Railway opened, so the public houses at Pentre Meyrick very soon went out of business.

Pentre Meyrick House (originally called Plas Newydd) was not built until about 1890.

Who was this Thomas Meyrick? Born in Penllyn in 1768, the son of a labourer, he worked for Squire Thomas of Tregroes, Pencoed. The squire had an unmarried sister, Florence, a lady who suffered from poor health. The story goes that she was advised that marriage would improve her health. So in 1791 she married Thomas Meyrick; she was in her forties and he a young man of twenty-three. Since Florence lived to be 77, it would seem that marriage had indeed agreed with her. Their tomb can be seen in Llanfrynach churchyard.

It may be assumed that it was his late wife's money that made it possible for Thomas Meyrick to buy the land on which Pentre Meyrick was mostly built. At about the same time he also paid £1,510 for 36 acres in the parish of Llanmaes. But he did not live long to enjoy his new estate or his house at Pentre Meyrick, for he died in July 1826, aged 59. In his will, written a few days before his death, the place-name "Pentre Meyrick" appears for the first time. In the short time that he owned the property, he had succeeded in persuading the locality to accept the name, which translates as "Meyrick's village", by which it has been known ever since.

### EXTRACT FROM MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT ON THE SANITARY STATE OF COWBRIDGE (c.1890)

"...The nuisance inspector has shown much energy in the conscientious discharge of his duties. There has been a marked improvement in the condition of the channel on either side of the road in the East Village. The construction of the new Cattle Market has removed a very serious nuisance which used to exist by the cattle being located on the public pathways on Market and Fair days. The condition of the public streets as regards their repair and cleansing has been excellent and quite devoid of nuisances.

"I need hardly point out the unsatisfactory condition of the drainage and sewerage of the town. When drains exist, they are frequently found in a most defective state from want of repair, leakage and absence of proper ventilation and flushing. The sewers are not only insufficiently ventilated and flushed, but they empty themselves into the river at a point in the immediate vicinity of the town. Here the water is dammed up by the Town Mill, situated about 400 yards below the entry of the sewers, forming a perfectly stagnant pool which sometimes during the summer months awaits for several weeks sufficient accumulation to permit of the working of the mill, and the escape of its polluted content down the river into the sea some miles away, causing a nuisance to the adjoining village of Llanblethian."

## LATEST ACCESSIONS TO THE COWBRIDGE LOCAL HISTORY STUDIES ROOM, OLD HALL

*Betty Alden would like to thank the following for their recent donations to the Local History Room:*

- **Robert Dickinson of Swindon** - details of an 18th century journal he has acquired belonging to Ann Williams, who lived at that time at Breach Farm, Llanblethian. Her brother became headmaster of Cowbridge Crammar School.
- **Michael Clay, Llwynhelig House, Cowbridge** - details of the history and occupants of Llwynhelig, and family tree of the Clay/Homfray/Turberville families in this area of Glamorgan and beyond.
- **Tony John, Ogmore by Sea** – copies of his paintings of scenes of Cowbridge for the Art Society calendar, and further memories of his great-grandparents in 6 Church St., Cowbridge.
- **Mary Gowan** – photos of the shops at 62 and 64 Eastgate in the 1990s
- **Ian Griffiths of Blaenafon, Gwent** – his family tree, and details of his ancestor, William Griffiths of the Cowbridge Arms in the 1790s
- **Nick Gibbon** – further box of bill headings from builder W A James of Stafford House in the 19th century (gradually being filed amongst the appropriate Cowbridge tradesmen's details)
- **Iris Ashby, Llandough and Jane Hotton, North Yorkshire** – family trees and details of Evan Morgan and family of Llanblethian Farm, Cross Inn, Eastgate butchers etc.
- **David James of Ammanford** – photos and details of his father Wyndham James (Cross Inn, Llanblethian) and other Cowbridge people
- **Ron Chamberlain** – box of documents relating to the 'Keep Cowbridge Special' campaign in the 1990s (Darren Farm, cattle market etc)
- **Longmeadow Court, Cowbridge** – wartime photos and others, plus other documents of the late Meurig O'Connor, who grew up in Pentremeyrick, and whose father was landlord of the Pelican Inn, Westgate for a while. Most of these records are now in the Glamorgan Archives at Leckwith.
- **Gillian Egan, Llantwit Major** – letter from her uncle, Morgan David, serving in World War 1 (plus his family tree and military records). He lived on Mount Ida, Llanblethian.
- **Glyn Evans and Mike Wilcock** – CDs of Cowbridge events over recent years
- **Tim Edwards, Melbourne, Australia** – photos and details of Westgate and land around Llwnhelig before the bypass (1950s).

### ANSWER TO THE QUIZ TIE-BREAKER ON PAGE 6:

The total population of Wales at the 2011 census was found to be **3,063,456**.

**DON'T FORGET!** – the first meeting of the New Year will take place at 7.30pm on Friday 3 January, 2014, when our old friend **Nigel Williams** will talk about "200 years of holidaymaking in the Vale".