

# NEWSLETTER

of Cowbridge History Society

*New Year 2020*



*Unexpected bonus from the Co-op!*

## Cover story: Co-op funding - great news!

The funding round for benefits to be obtained from Co-op members, which began on 28 October 2018, is now at an end. To our surprise and delight, we have received a cheque from the Co-op for £4770.32. This is way beyond our expectations and will make a very welcome contribution to the cost of the digitisation project that has been ongoing for the past few years. It was the ideal early Christmas present.

As most of you will be aware, the archive held by Cowbridge History Society at Old Hall has been progressively digitised and one of the ways the public can access it is through People's Collection Wales, who have already put about two-thirds of our archive on-line. This is something the Society may be very proud of seeing that we, at 5th place in the PCW's list of most popular sites, with 1,029 accesses to our archive, are not that far behind several national organisations. For a small society with dedicated volunteers working hard over a number of years, this is a truly amazing achievement and the digitisation working party thought it would be something the membership would be delighted to know they have supported and enabled it to happen.

Even though a large proportion of our members are of "a certain age", it is interesting to note that the majority are computer-literate and our e-mail list contains no fewer than 87 members, most of whom have the capability to access the archive and to take a look at our Facebook page now and again. So our efforts to ensure that Cowbridge History Society keeps up with 21st-century technology have not been in vain.

Almost as soon as we received the news of the Co-op award, we were invited to attend a presentation at the Co-op store in High Street, Cowbridge, on Saturday, 23rd November. Accordingly, a group of members was swiftly mustered, as you can see in the cover photo and the image on the right. The store manager can be seen in the background, but it seems as though some of our more diffident members were hiding out of shot.

The Co-op's generosity means we can discontinue our long-running efforts to be included by Waitrose in their list of local charities. Sadly, Waitrose have never followed up on our application, made in 2012.



## Talks of the season

Gareth Thomas made a triumphant return in October, to give his talk on Iolo Morganwg to Cowbridge History Society, which had to be postponed earlier in the year because of his accident. We were very pleased to see him looking so well, and we hope he will take better care of himself in future. His talk on “Iolo Who?” was entertaining and engaging and went down extremely well with members.

In November, Rosemary Scadden gave an illustrated talk entitled “On the Edge”, in which she explored the history and topography of the shores of the Severn Estuary between Chepstow and Nash Point, highlighting features of particular interest such as churches, industrial sites and lighthouses.

December’s pre-Christmas meeting enjoyed a talk on Llantrisant by the popular Dean Powell. This talk was followed by mince pies, wine and general conviviality.

The first meeting of 2020 is a talk by Philip Morris, retired archdeacon of Margam, on the history of Llanilltud Fawr (Llantwit Major), an ancient town which may be one of the most enduring Christian settlements, not just in Wales but in the world.

Note that February’s meeting is on the second Friday in the month, the change being necessary for logistical reasons. This talk by Brian Davies, formerly of Pontypridd Museum, is sure to be well-attended. It has the intriguing title of “Evan Thomas and his Lamps”.

In March we look forward to hearing Gwerfyl Gardner, another CHS stalwart, talking on the subject of “Are You Being Served?” and thus giving us some insight into the history of the department store. In April another loyal CHS member, Chris Turner (see Chris’s article later in this edition) will talk about the Rebecca Riots.

Between these two events we will have the opportunity to visit Insole Court in Cardiff for our annual Charter Day celebration. Beverly Tonkin is taking bookings for this outing on 13th March. See the back page for further details.

*Deb Fisher  
Publications Officer*

## Annual Rotary Quiz: November 2019

After last year’s improvement in performance, we had hoped that the Cowbridge History Society quiz team would again finish in the first three this year at the Annual Rotary Club Quiz in Cowbridge Town Hall. However, in the event, we were unplaced for only the third time in the history of the competition. We really need to swot up next year if we are going to get back to form!

This year’s team consisted of Betty Alden, Dick Buswell, Deb Fisher and Chris Turner, and, although not disgraced, we lost ground in the last few rounds and ended up a long way behind the winning team, with a total score of 76 points (out of a possible total of 120). Many other members of CHS were present at what is always an enjoyable and memorable occasion, but their allegiance is already given to other teams. However, anyone who is interested in taking a turn in the CHS team next year is more than welcome to put their name forward to the committee.

## The missing Cowbridge - Barry railway line

Many of you will have noticed an exchange of letters in recent editions of the *Cowbridge Gem* on this subject. A correspondent wrote to the *Gem* to suggest that the “Cowbridge to Barry railway line” might be restored. A response from another reader in the week before Christmas pointed out a number of reasons why this suggestion was impractical, beginning with the fact that no such line ever existed, though there was of course a railway line running from Llantrisant to Aberthaw, which passed through Cowbridge. It had no connection with the line to Barry, and the creation of such a connection represented an engineer’s nightmare.



From Llantrisant, Cowbridge residents could travel on to stations in Cardiff, and one of the interviews included in Cowbridge Record Society’s *Cowbridge and District Remembered* volume, published in 2001, included an account by the late Herbert David of how he had been taken to Cardiff by his father to buy a bicycle and it had been delivered by rail to Cowbridge station, arriving before the family got home.

The *Gem*’s second correspondent also mentioned that much of the land on which the Llantrisant to Aberthaw line was built, along with most of the stations, was sold off and redeveloped following the removal, first of the passenger service between Cowbridge and Aberthaw, and later of the goods service. Cowbridge’s railway station (right) lasted somewhat longer, thanks to the continuation of the service to Llantrisant until 1951 and a goods service thereafter. When the station closed in 1965, it had been in operation for 100 years.



The coming of the railway to Cowbridge followed the passing of the 1845 South Wales Railway Act, but many people opposed its arrival. The creation of a local committee in 1861 eventually led to the construction of the line to Llantrisant. It’s well worth looking at Don Gerrard’s article on this topic in CHS’s 2016 publication, *Cowbridge and Llanblethian: An Historical Medley*, which covers the earlier period in more detail.

## Spies in the Vale!

*A recent meeting with our old friend Phil Carradice revealed that he is currently writing a book on A Hundred Years of Spying, scheduled for publication in 2021. Phil has kindly produced the following article for the Newsletter, including some of the fruits of his research.*

The outbreak of war in August 1914 brought what can only be described as “war fever” to the towns and villages of the country. Reservists and Territorials were called to the colours and all over Britain there was an immediate rush to enlist in the army – over one million men by the end of December. The Vale of Glamorgan was no different from any other part of the country.

What did make the Vale different, however, was the existence – within a twenty mile band of coast – of three large coal docks. Barry, Penarth and Cardiff were essential to the successful promulgation of the war and it was inevitable that the government and people who lived close by were terrified of German forces interfering with or destroying the structures.

It was a time of spies and fifth columnists, real and imagined, and the papers in South Wales were immediately full of lurid stories about their exploits. Incoming ships were soon being stopped, their captains interrogated and the vessels searched before entering any of the docks. If they failed to stop they were fired on by the guns from one of several forts like Penarth Head and Nells Point in Barry.

According to the *Penarth Times* one ship took three hits from the guns of Barry Fort and had her funnel blown down before she finally came to a halt! Throughout the war the local papers gleefully recorded such incidents, happily declaring that sailors on the ships had been injured or even killed by the accuracy of the glorious British gunners.

From the beginning of the conflict, Anti-German feelings were rife. Prejudice mixed with patriotism, causing one man to write to the *Penarth Times* on 27 August, just a few weeks after war was declared:-

*‘Sir: I have been taken for a German many times and I am very sorry to see the public under a misapprehension as to my nationality. I was born in Mons, Belgium, and came to Wales 27 years ago. My wife is a native of Wales. After being so long in Great Britain I call myself a British patriot. Yours truly, Jules Guldentops.’*

Such hatred did not stop there. The *Penarth Advertiser* for July 8th 1915 ran an article about industrial unrest in Barry Docks:-

*‘In May, over 150 coal tippers and trimmers on the docks ceased work as a protest against the employment of naturalised Germans. They declined, upon any terms, to return to work for several hours.’*

There were similar demonstrations in Cardiff Docks, this time over the use of Chinese labour. The big concern, however, was spies.



Foreign sailors, on shore leave while their ships were discharging cargo at Barry (left) or Penarth, were often mistaken for German spies in the early months of the war. They were invariably taken into custody but released when their true nationality was revealed. Any German sailors – and there were no fewer than four German vessels that were “marooned” in Cardiff Docks when war broke out – were liable for harsher treatment. The ships’ cargoes were confiscated and the crews interned for the duration of the war.

When, at the end of August, an unknown stranger was seen walking in the Sully/Penarth area and asking questions about where the troops guarding the coast were stationed, he was followed by a

local resident called Mr Beer. The pursuit went on for several miles until, realising he was being “shadowed”, the stranger took to his heels and was lost in the outskirts of Cardiff. (*Penarth Advertiser*, August 1914).

Such reports were common and sometimes they led to more serious actions. *The Penarth Times*, 27th August 1914 gleefully ran a story under the headline “Shots in Penarth”:-

*‘The usual peaceful calm of the residents near to St Augustine’s Church was disturbed on Wednesday morning by the sudden firing of shots, and some alarm was felt. It appears that a sentry on duty near the church was fired on by somebody who shielded himself behind the bushes in the enclosure facing the church. The sentry quickly responded with a couple of shots but the culprit managed to make good his escape.’*

Friends playing a prank, a nervous and tired young man on duty in the dark, a genuine Fifth Columnist – the truth has never been uncovered!

Three days after War was declared, a young school teacher by the name of Edward Thomas Davis was arrested when he was found making sketches of Barry Fort. He was, the arresting officers decided, going to pass these on to German High Command with the result that Zeppelins would soon be seen in the air above Barry and the Vale. After he had been held in custody for several weeks, it transpired that Davis was merely making his sketches as part of a summer school project for Barry College. Even so, his drawings were destroyed and he was given a severe reprimand – he was lucky to escape a custodial sentence or, given the hysterical nature of public opinion at the time, the firing squad (*South Wales Echo*, 10th August 1914.)

According to the *South Wales Echo* of 7th August 1914 there was another exchange of shots when a prowler was discovered in the area around Llanishen Reservoir. The man did not respond to the sentry’s challenge and, according to the soldier, returned fire. It does not take much imagination to conjure up the reaction of a frightened poacher suddenly confronted by a gun-happy sentry!

There are many more tales of spies in the Vale. The commandeering of Penarth Pier and the subsequent claims and counter claims for damage to the structure make fascinating reading – but that, as they say, is another story.

## Biographies: Sir Leoline Jenkins (1625-1685)

*Here is another episode in Chris Turner’s occasional series about historical figures from the Cowbridge district.*

Civil lawyer, diplomat, benefactor of Cowbridge Grammar School and Jesus College Oxford.

Leoline Jenkins was the son of a yeoman father of same name of Llanblethian, though Leoline junior it seems was born at Talygarn, Llantrisant, around 1625. Leoline was the anglicised version of Llewelyn (ap Jenkin). From around 1635 he attended Cowbridge School and tradition has it that he walked barefoot to school every day, but the family must have been reasonably well off if he was able to attend the school at all. From there in 1641 he went on to study at Jesus College, Oxford. His studies though were interrupted by the Civil War and, being a staunch Royalist, he was forced to return to the relative safety of his native Glamorgan. This is where he met other prominent royalists who had taken refuge in Sir John Aubrey’s house at Llantrithyd.

Here he became a tutor to Sir John’s son and others, but such was the strength of political divisions at the time that he was forcibly removed and charged with keeping “a seminary of rebellion and sedition”. He swiftly moved back to Oxford but his known Royalist connections soon forced him once again to flee and this time to the continent where he stayed for five years. But he used his time there wisely by studying Civil Law, a qualification that was later to enable him to enter public life with great success.

His fortunes were to be transformed following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. In 1661 he was elected Principal of Jesus College, a position he retained until 1673. Importantly for his future career he was made in 1661 a Deputy Professor in Civil Law at Oxford and this heralded a period of considerable advancement to high office. His appointments included presiding over the High Court of Admiralty, later

becoming a Privy Councillor and Secretary of State. As a lawyer he was said to be one of the pioneers of international law. He was MP for Hythe in 1671 and later represented the University of Oxford in Parliament.

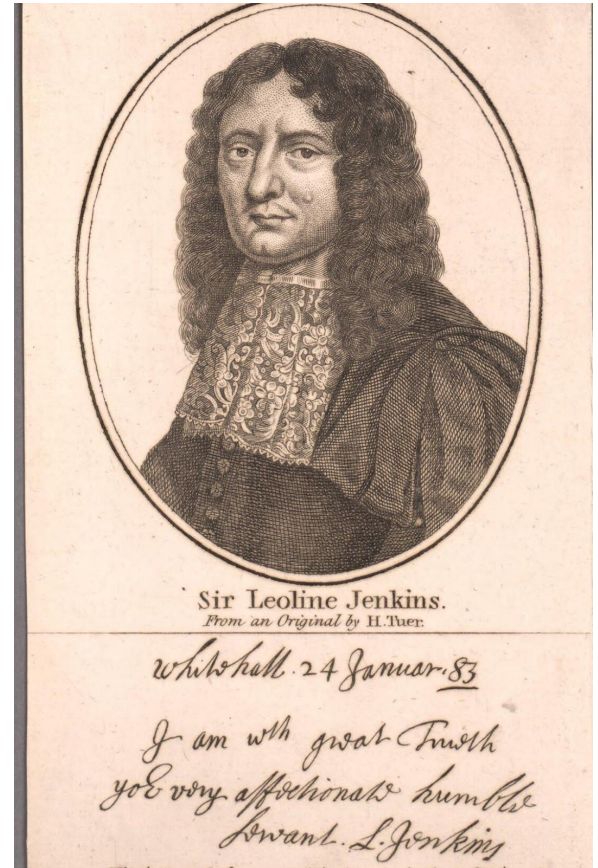
The government of the day also regarded him as a reliable diplomat and in 1675 he was the principal English mediator at the Congress of Nijmegen. The Congress agreed a series of treaties, involving a number of European countries, and bringing to an end the Franco/Dutch war of 1672. Jenkins was regarded by contemporaries as conscientious and incorruptible but also firm in his principles. A member of the French Court who did not know who he was asked him for a specimen of his native language, to which he replied, "Nid wrth ei big y mae adnabod cyfflog" ("You can't tell a woodcock by its beak").

Jenkins died in 1685 and was buried in the chapel of Jesus College. Being very well off and unmarried, he left his fortune to two educational establishments – "a certaine schoole ... in the towne of Cowbridge" and Jesus College, Oxford. Shortly before he died he had purchased Cowbridge School from the Stradling family and his will was to be the foundation charter of the school for the following two hundred years. Another lasting legacy was the grant of scholarships and exhibitions, allowing pupils of the school to proceed to Jesus College.

Sir Leoline Jenkins was a local man of relatively humble origins who achieved considerable national eminence and was a great benefactor of Cowbridge School; he was, too, very much a man of his time and he typified the highs and lows of life in the seventeenth century.

Sources: *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, Iolo Davies, *A Certaine Schoole* (1967), Brian Ll. James and David J Francis, *Cowbridge and Llanblethian: Past and Present* (1979).

*We would welcome involvement from Cowbridge History Society members in the biography project. If you are interested, please approach Chris Turner at one of our monthly meetings, or e-mail us.*



# **COWBRIDGE HISTORY SOCIETY**

## **PROGRAMME FOR SPRING 2020**

Meetings in the Lesser Hall, Town Hall, Cowbridge.

**Talks start at 7.30 and are on the first Friday of each month, except in February, when the talk will be on the 14th.**

**The May meeting will begin with the AGM at 7.00.**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2020     *Llanilltud Fawr - some insights into a Celtic Christian Community;*  
Philip Morris
- 14<sup>th</sup> February**     *Evan Thomas and his Lamps;* Brian Davies (note: 2nd Friday in the month)
- 6<sup>th</sup> March             *“Are you being served?”;* Gwerfyl Gardner
- 13<sup>th</sup> March            Charter Day Celebration: Insole Court - talk, tour and lunch  
This year's Charter Day Trip takes place, as usual on Friday March 13th. At 11am, we will meet at Insole Court in Llandaff, where we will enjoy John Prior Morris's "Fred Insole" Talk, an amusing costumed presentation in which Fred tells the story of his family, whose Victorian rise and Edwardian decline mirrors Cardiff's status during the same period. This will be followed by lunch which should be at Insole Court. If the weather allows, we will also be able to stroll around the grounds. The cost of this visit will be £18.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> April                *The Rebecca Riots and rural protest in South Wales;* Chris Turner
- 1<sup>st</sup> May                  **AGM at 7.00** followed at 7.30 by *Early Medieval Landscapes in the Vale;* Andy Seaman

## **Submissions**

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

There is now an archive of old Cowbridge History Society/Cowbridge Record Society/Cowbridge & District Local History Society newsletters available for reference in Cowbridge Library. Electronic copies of newsletters going back to 2014 are also available.