

# Gelligaer Times

Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No 4

November 2006

Apologies! Time was against me, consequently Newsletter 4 is a month late! However, it would help if there were a few contributions from other authors!

To date there have been two meetings this session. In The September meeting Edward Besly focussed upon Coins. He explained that most 'finds' to which he referred were not from the Gelligaer area. However, coins were found during the Gelligaer dig in 1905, but sadly they have been lost, possibly within the museum collection.

People in Wales were not initially great coin users. The first to be found dated from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., produced by the Duboneii tribe (not from Wales), but their coins have been found in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Romans introduced coins to the area, for all uses. Indeed, Romans were attracted to Britain for gold and silver (and copper?), principally for coinage. Thanks to Roman coins bearing an imperial image they can be dated - the first being from Claudius' time. Silver and copper coins were described as 'peoples' coinage, Caerwent being a major source. Initially coinage was limited to the garrisons, but by the second century A.D., they were in general use. Generally, copper coins preserved resulted from casual losses, but gold and silver coins are usually found in hoards.

Emperor Hadrian's were first to show Britannia. Diocletian reformed the currency around 300 A.D. permitting local mints to produce and mark coins — gives us clues to movements and trade. A major problem was debasement as shown in many of the hoards found in the Vale etc. Diocletian's reforms actually encouraged debasement, thus further reforms were needed.

With the onset of the 'Dark Ages', use of coins petered out. In England there was little serious coin use for 200 years. In Wales coinage disappeared sooner and returned later, reflecting the rural, pastoral economy. A few Anglo-Saxon coins have been found in Wales. Only one specifically Welsh coin has been found, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century relating to 'Hywel the King', but its purpose is unknown. (Continued on p2)

## **Officers of Gelligaer History Society 2006-07:**

President	Mr Islwyn Hughes
Chairman	Mr Terry McCarthy
Secretary	Mrs Jean Kember
Treasurer	Mrs Hazel Waters

Membership - £5 per year - non members are welcome, but a contribution of £1 per lecture would be appreciated to defray expenses.

**(continued from p1)**

The Normans brought coinage to Wales, initially used in Norman towns and ecclesiastical centres. There were no mints in Wales for indigenous production. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century coins were in general use in Wales.

From Tudor times Spanish coins seem to have been in circulation made from American gold. The Stuart period saw some Scottish coins in circulation, but the Civil War period has yielded a number of hoards. During the Civil War tokens were issued *in lieu* of coins, many circulating in south Wales being minted in Bristol.

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century, coins were no longer hand made and less easy to debase. Shortages during the Industrial Revolution led to tokens being reintroduced — banned 1831. During the Victorian period our pre decimal coinage was standardised and remained so until 1971.

Today, most British coinage is manufactured in Wales, at Llantrisant, an ironical location in view of Wales' initial disinterest in coinage.

At the second meeting 12 of us were entertained by Jeff Childs speaking on Llangyfelach, the second largest parish in Glamorgan, located north of Swansea. Like Gelligaer, it was an upland parish, which during mediaeval times extended over 27,000 acres. The parish encompassed a number of estates, many contributing to the development of industry and settlement in the Swansea valley from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As ever, the history of the estates is complex as a result of marriages and inheritance. The families included:

Popkin family— notorious for indebtedness, a product of gambling. Thomas Popkin (1665-1752) established Forest Copper Works. His grandson's mismanagement led to land sales, but the last was sold by the Court of Chancery in 1831.

Martin family - Duke of Beaufort's mining agent settled at Ynystawe. Estates dispersed amongst family.

Morris estate - site of earliest copper works (1717). Lived in Tredegar House, later Clasemont and ultimately Sketty Park. John Morris linked with Morris' 'Castle' and planned housing of Morriston.

Duke of Beaufort (Lords of Gower)-owned some land, including the manor of Clase. James Evans Baillie - seriously pro-slavery! Never, having married this estate was broken-up after his death.

Nash-Vaughan family - based in Somerset.

Penlleger estate- Price family initially, broken up in 18<sup>th</sup> century. Llewelyn family took over — Dilwyn (from Walthamstow in 1802) polymath, M.P., historian etc. Son, John Dilwyn Llewelyn very gifted - astronomer and photographer,

Mansells of Briton Ferry - their estate failed in 18<sup>th</sup> century, reverting to Earls of Jersey.

Gilbertson - set-up works in and built Pontadawe.

Most estates broken-up by First World War, but played a significant part in developing the areas - as happened in Gelligaer.

**Conference June 2007**

TM still needs details of Local History or Family History Societies in the Borough, i.e. names and addresses of contacts, to begin consideration of an invitation list. The aim would be to provide a 'window' for Societies to raise awareness of their existence, the work they are doing and how we might co-ordinate our work better. We would be asking for each contributing society to provide a speaker for a 30 minute presentation and help with publicising the event.

## **Gelligaer Volume XVI**

Articles for volume XVI are beginning to roll in. David Mills and Fred Holley are the joint editors, with John Holley undertaking the necessary computer work. The suggested deadline for articles has past, but there is at least one that has been promised which needs more time. So if you started something of potential interest, please complete it and send it to the editors. Publication? Next year - Easter?

Meanwhile, copies of Volume XV, published January 2006 are still available- cost £4. However, copies of Vol XIV are in short supply. If anyone has any unsold copies, please return them to Terry McCarthy.

Index for Vols. I-XV, copies available £1. The Society does not have a complete collection Journals of its own, but there is a complete set in Bargoed Library and between us the membership have a full set. If articles from past issues are required, we can arrange photocopies to be produced at 50p per page.

### **Family & focal history day Llancaiach Fawr 12/13 August 2006**

A GHS stand was duly erected and manned by those members of the committee not in far-flung foreign parts! Attendance at the event were disappointing it seems — a lack of publicity perhaps? Nevertheless, a number of copies of Vol. XV were sold, some new members recruited and the Society was out in the public eye, so it was not a wasted effort.

So thanks to Judith and all the others who helped out. Well done!

### **‘Fleur-de-Lys: The Story of our Village’.**

Members will recall the visit and lecture given to us last March, by Annie Jarman relating to research she (and others) had undertaken on the history of Fleur-de-Lys. On Friday 8 December 2006, the group, now know as the Fleur-de-Lys History Society are launching the book produced as a result of their researches. It comprises various essays, subjects including John Moggridge and the Rumney Tramroad, plus accounts of personal memories of ‘growing-up in Flower during the 20<sup>th</sup> century’ and some photographs. All this for £9.95.

If anyone is interested in a copy see TM,

### **Digital Story telling**

Earlier in November TM was contacted by Paula Major of ‘Breaking Barriers’ about a project her organisation has secured funding for. The idea is that trained facilitators would create a ‘story circle’ to generate short (250 words) stories which can be turned into a script and ultimately a short ‘film’ using digital technology. Paula is looking for facilitators to train in the process, including use of software and thinks there are people within the Society who might be interested - oral history possibilities.

Paula is to give a brief introduction to the scheme before the November meeting begins, with a view to establishing a training group early in the new year.

### **Grants etc.**

Clive Andewartha and TM have completed an application for grant help towards setting-up and maintaining a web site. We are on the reserve list for 2006-07 -- success in 2007-08 financial year?

Now we need to seek grants to help finance Gelligaer Vol. XVI - or sponsors.

## Gelligaer Historical Society

### **Unveiling - Commemorative Plaque for Evan James - Caerphilly 7 October 2006**

Six members of the Society attended the unveiling of a Green Plaque, commemorating the birth in Caerphilly of Evan James, author of the words of the Welsh National Anthem (he lived most of his life in Pontypridd). The ceremony took place in Caerphilly Workmen's Hall, accompanied by Caerphilly Male Voice Choir, also celebrating their centenary.

Chairman of Caerphilly County Borough Council, Councillor Harry Andrews explained the Green Plaque concept, i.e. recognising buildings, achievements and individuals who lived within the boundaries of the Borough. Two green plaques have been instituted to date, one to commemorate the south **Wales** participants in the Spanish Civil War, the other recalling Morgan John Rees at Hengoed Chapel.. Although the C.C.B.C. Heritage & Museums service is responsible for installing the plaques, they require sponsorship — Caerphilly Local History Society sponsored the Evan James plaque. A further aim of the Green Plaque scheme is to inform tourists, so helping visitors gain a positive view of the contribution of the Borough to the wider history of Wales and the U.K., besides generating income.

The unveiling was undertaken by Mike White, organist St. Michael's Church, Caerphilly, assisted by the Mayor of C.C.B.C. Councillor Elizabeth Aldworth. Before the guests went to the tourist centre for refreshments, Caerphilly Male Voice Choir, appropriately, performed the Welsh National Anthem.

***Factoid:** Did you know that the Welsh National anthem was the first Welsh song to be recorded in 1899? It can be downloaded from the Internet.*

### **Publicity Officer**

Hazel Hodson has resigned. A publicity office needed urgently - volunteers see TM or JK as soon as possible. Post will require contacts to be made with local press etc. to publicise meetings and other events, plus write reports-

#### **Meetings 2006-07- Bargoed Library 19.30.**

Wednesday	29 November	Queen Victoria, Edwina Slack.
Wednesday	13 December	Recollections of the Renovation of Llancaiach Fawr. Jeremy Lowe.
2007		
Wednesday	31 January	Tribal Princes of Senghenydd Supra & their Descendants, Jean Kember
Wednesday	28 February	Heraldry - The Shorthand of History 2, Anthony Jones.
Wednesday	28 March	The Vikings in Wales, David Wyatt.
Wednesday	25 April	South Wales Railways in World War II, Terry McCarthy
Wednesday	30 May	AGM

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