

Gelligaer Times

Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No 5

January 2007

A New Year and restoration of the Newsletter schedule. Still no other contributions received, has no one anything else to say? The Society still needs a Publicity Officer to tell others in the community about our activities. Can you help?

Since publication of Gelligaer Times No. 4 there have been two further meetings. In November, Edwina Stack told us of Queen Victoria's early life and how she came to the throne, despite not being the daughter of the monarch.

It all started with George III. Like all kings he needed an heir and a spare! Marrying a German princess he achieved this target by siring 15 children. His children had a strict upbringing. Unsurprisingly, when they reached their majority they rebelled, discovered 'credit' and became serious debtors. Notwithstanding this, Prince George, Prince of Wales was under no illusion that his duty was also to produce an heir. From a choice of two eligible brides, he chose Caroline of Brunswick, whom he described as 'fat and ugly' amongst other pleasantries! They stayed together long enough to produce an heir – Princess Charlotte. She married for love, but she and her baby died in child birth. Thus the Prince of Wales had no heir.

The nation looked to the other princes. The Duke of York was married but had no children. The Duke of Clarence lived with a lady and had 15 illegitimate children. The Duke of Kent had a happy marriage, but was childless. The Duke of Cumberland, an unpleasant character was not legally married and Adolphus was not married. Spurred on by 'need', 'old' wives were dispensed with, new wives were sought and the race was on to be first to produce an heir!

Edward, Duke of Kent married Victoise, his brother's sister-in-law in 1818. In 1819 they had a daughter. At the christening the Prince Regent rejected all names except Alexandrina and Victoria. After a 'gypsy existence' the indebted Kents settled in Sidmouth, but soon after the Duke of Kent died, followed by the King.

The Duchess returned to Kensington Palace, by which time Victoria was recognised as heir. In the meantime, John Conroy became the Duchess' aide and virtually ruled the household.

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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

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Rhys Goch, born 1070 in Breconshire won land in the area by conquest. One branch of this family line lived in Ysgwyddgwyn Hamlet (Deri) from the 1300s, descended from Dafydd, father of Howell, born 1370.

During the Civil War this family were Puritan and dissenter meeting were held in the farmhouse.

Enion ap Rhiwallon – father's pedigree included the King of Scotland. His son Ifor, born 1170 in Senghenydd. Many descendants of this family are buried in Hengoed Baptist chapel, notably Evan Edwards of Llancaiach Isaf, a farm of yeoman status. From about 1100 this family were known as Lords of Brithdir and during the Civil War whose line was initially Royalists and Anglicans, but became a Republican. The family was distantly related to the Pritchards of Llancaiach Fawr.

Ifor ap Meurig (Ifor Bach), 1100-1170 – Lords of Senghenydd, from whom both the Pritchards of Llancaiach Fawr and the Lewis' of the Van were descended. Although they owned land in the Merthyr area, their centre was in the Gelligaer.

At the time of the Norman Conquest the tribes were hill dwellers and pastoralists and, on death, land was divided among the children (gavelkind), but usually through the same family.- primogeniture (eldest son inherits all) not adopted until 16th century. Nevertheless, three families, descended from a different tribal prince, whether or not they inbred with Norman settlers (especially Ifor Bach's family) contributed fundamentally to the life, stability and history of the area.

Interesting website:

www.walespast.com various articles presented, including one on Gelligaer Fort.

Gelligaer Volume XVI

Fred and John Holley have produced a mock-up of Volume XVI – 96 pages long. After proof reading and other adjustments, the copy will be ready for final printing. Then we shall have to secure quotes and, hopefully grant help to produce the final product for an Easter launch?

Articles include: Tribal Princes of Senghenydd Supra & their Descendants; Letters to & from America & the Welsh National Anthem; Lewis family of Killfach Vargoed; What rises up ... Closure of Bedwellty School; Fochriw, Pontlottyn & Rhymney Brass Bands; The Norman Church – not just at Gelligaer; Thanks Goodness for Alcohol; N.L.W. Document LL/CC/G/758; Fleur-de-Lys: Immigrants from Somerset & Gloucestershire, 1976 Drought Recalled.

Copies of Volume XV, published January 2006 are still available– cost £4. However, copies of Vol XIV are in short supply. Any unsold copies, please return to Terry McCarthy.

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

Digital Story telling

In November TM was contacted by Paula Major of 'Breaking Barriers' about this project. The idea is that trained facilitators would establish 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. Might there be people within the Society who might be interested – oral history potential? TM attended their 'Showcase' in Blackwood Institute in mid January, which suggested the scheme has possibilities.

Trysor & Community Archives

A number of members attended a seminar in Bargoed Library, 16/01/2007, presented by trysor on behalf of Glamorgan Record Office. A software program, Commanet, was demonstrated to show how local archives might be created by groups such as ours.

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? On 02/02/07 we are meeting Helen Kell for advice about our grant applications including grants to help finance Gelligaer Vol. XVI – or sponsors.

The Communities First Trust Fund grant application we were asked to lead for a feasibility study for the future development of the Gelligaer Roman Fort site, has been completed and despatched.

Conference June 2007

TM and Chris Morgans are meeting in Llancaiach Fawr on 08/02/07 to consider the proposals for a Conference/Summer School later this year. Once a date has been negotiated an invitation list of other Local/Family History Groups will be finalised and despatched. At least one other organisation might be prepared to co-sponsor the event.

An Alternative Venue?

In view of Bargoed Library's uncertain future, plus the likelihood of us needing a base for activities such as web site production, the committee are investigating alternative venues. Llancaiach Fawr could be available at a cost. Other possibilities include: Hengoed Community Centre, The Settlement (Bargoed) and Have you any suggestions?

Gelligaer Historical Society

Launch of Fleur-de-Lys – book produced by Fleur-de-Lys History Society 8 December – Fleur-de-Lys Community Centre.

The Chairman was invited to this auspicious event. The book was launched formally by Doug Touhig M.P., whereupon sales and the buffet opened! Sales of the book, costing £9.95, were rapid after the formalities were concluded. Sufficient photographs were taken of the event to fill a Volume II in one go!

The book itself is a well- presented soft cover volume of 108 pages, produced by Old Bakehouse Publications. A wide range of topics are covered , starting with a brief outline the origins, then a more detailed exposition of some early influences: John Hodder Moggridge, the Rumney Tramroad and the coal industry. Some extracts from the Government Commissioners Report of 1842 into conditions in the mining industry (they visited at least one pit in the ‘Flower’ area), give an insight into life in the 1840s. Until the 20th century most collieries were small and short-lived, but the large collieries at Britannia and Pengam had a more profound impact.

Analysis of the Parish Tithe Awards and Census Enumerators returns provided insights into life in the area in the 1840s, as well as demonstrating how the population was structured, its origins and sizes of households.

Following this was a section considering various aspects of life in ‘Flower’ post 1919, featuring local churches, including West Country links with Methodism in the village, Sunday School outings, and Schools. Thereafter, a range of smaller articles considered doctors, pubs, the brewery, entertainments, sports, shopping and shops and personal memories.

All was copiously illustrated by a range of well-reproduced photographs. All in all, a very worth-while booklet, which sheds more light on life in this interesting village community.

One final comment. A neighbour, ‘Flower’ born, was adamant the village name has been spelled incorrectly; it should be Fleur-de-Lis, as shown on a number of local road signs and maps. The book gives no justification for their choice of spelling. the village name, other than the suggestion it is known as such to ‘most local people’. Another item for Volume II?

Meetings 2006-07 – Bargoed Library 19.30.

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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