



# Gelligaer Times



Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No. 10

[www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.com)

May 2008

More than half of spring has elapsed, nights get shorter and another lecture season ends.

With one meeting to go, plus the A.G.M. reviewing the year's events can start. The move to Llancaiach Fawr proved a wise one, particularly in view of the continuing public uncertainty about Bargoed Library, our former venue. Our web site is up and running, and with the new venue, seems to be responsible for increasing meeting attendances – 42 at the April meeting. Meanwhile, preparations for next season are under way, with another exciting programme (see. P3), the Joint Autumn History Conference, articles for Gelligaer XVII arriving and ideas for ways of enhancing what the Society does for its members and the community at large.

The chairman was particularly pleased to be involved in a Year 9 Project at Heolddu Comprehensive School early in the Spring term. We hope the pupils and Mrs Jo Jones, their teacher, benefited from their studies and, apart from knowing more about Bargoed's colourful history, will do well in the competition for which the project was intended. Hopefully, examples of their work and findings will be displayed at the Conference.

## Meeting Reports

### **Bedwellty – David Mills-27 February 2008 – Llancaiach Fawr.**

Though born and brought-up in Aberbargoed, David's Bedwellty born grandmother introduced him to Bedwellty. Later, encouraged by an Annie Owen local history class he began to do 'something' (acknowledging that Mr Kinnock's title 'Lord Bedwellty' helped put the place 'on the map'), hence this photographic tour through some of Bedwellty's places of interest. Links with Gelligaer were emphasised; churches within sight of each other and Lewis School Pengam was endowed for children in Bedwellty as well as Gelligaer. Also, Charles Winter, member of Hengoed Baptist Chapel moved to Craigbargoed to establish the first Armenian Baptist Church, dedicated to St. Cattwg.

Ffynon Wen cottage (spring at back of house) also known as Harry's Mill, had links with Tredegar House. It was demolished for road widening. Next door, Mr Jones, owned an outfitters shop in Pontllanfraith (Tregenna House). Jack 'Bedwellty' Jones lived there – one of the 'Terrible Eight', who went 'North' in 1914.

At the lych gate at St. Sannen's, coffins were inspected – corpses had to be wrapped in wool to encourage a Welsh woollen industry – Act repealed 1814. To the left is a preaching cross, now restored, once the focal point for outdoor services. In the chancel is a cast iron tombstone and the 'priests door'; the doorway into the original church?.

Lewis Jones, started the parish registers in 1633. Ousted by the Puritans, he continued to baptise and maintain records until the Restoration, when he too was reinstated. During an outbreak of plague in 1638 he buried 109 people – a large proportion of the local populace.

Bedwellty Parish was extensive, but the agriculturally richer south contrasted with the upland north. Industrial development – iron industry – caused the latter to overshadow the rest, as Rhymney, Tredegar and Ebbw Vale flourished.

St. Sannen's well, in the garden of the former 'Countryman' hotel, is a spring and probably source of Bedwellty village's water supply. Despite its reputation for healing, the well, like many, was a potential source of disease.

Maesruddud House, now Maes Manor, started in the 1890s, by Captain E.D. Williams; whose family had been in the area for 500 years, was based on one of many farms he owned. In 1895 he purchased Hollybush colliery. Dying without issue, the estate was inherited by a nephew, who moved to London. During World War II it became a hospital and afterwards, a Dr. Barnado's home. It was a grand house, with a large coach house, built in 1904(?).

Moving north, a potential iron age fort in Phillipstown (part of the Tredegar Estate) was discussed, as was the site of a cholera cemetery on the road to Tredegar.

Finally, we returned to Bedwellty village and New Inn, extant for over 150 years. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was also a wheelwright, cheese maker etc. Behind the cottages stone piles are road chippings produced by workhouse inmates. Nearby, Groesfawr farm exemplifies the traditional Tredegar estate style. Church Inn, a farm that became a public house; the steps outside being part of a collapsed barn.

So thanks to David for shedding more light on Gelligaer's near neighbour, across the river and, for a long time, the border.

### **Sir Francis Drake, Part III – Tudor Fisher – 26 March 2008 – Llancaiach Fawr.**

Unfortunately, the editor was in Queenstown, New Zealand when Tudor gave his third absorbing lecture on Sir Francis Drake, consequently no meeting report was produced.

### **The Silures – Ray Howells – 30 April 2008 – Llancaiach Fawr.**

'Searching for the Silures' was the focus for the evening's presentation. Much of what is known about them is derived from Roman writings, mostly Tacitus, but archaeological excavations of Silurian sites is beginning to give us a clearer view of these people.

Initially, Ray outlined Julius Caesar's attacks and later Claudian invasion and occupation. The latter was not achieved peacefully, but resistance in the West Country, e.g. Maiden Castle, was eventually subdued. Caratacus, of the Catuvellauni tribe, eventually

made contact with the Silures, who proved willing allies. Concentrating their forces under Ostorius Scapula, Caratacus was driven north to Ordovices territory and defeated in battle in the upper Wye valley. Thereafter, the Silures fought a 25 year guerrilla campaign – Rome’s ‘Afghanistan’ . The Silures were defeated in AD74/75. In AD78 there were 3000 troops and many forts in Wales, notably Caerleon, built to control the Welsh region. Defining Silurian territory is difficult, but it extended approximately from the Wye to the Tawe and south to the Severn estuary. Their main remains are hill forts. Aerial photography has identified a number, but few have been excavated, e.g. Lodge Hill, only the 5<sup>th</sup> Silures site excavated. Their homes were roundhouses – rectangular buildings were built as stores. Various artefacts have been discovered, notably iron broaches. Many are linked with horses – harnessing and wheeled vehicles. The latter are a paradox as their territory was unsuited to wheeled vehicles – war chariots? It is evident that red was their colour of warfare (link with adoption of red for the Welsh rugby jersey?)

Caerwent became the civitas capital of the Silures. Excavations there of a basilica, suggest it resembles a tribal senate chamber; coin finds, dated it to Hadrian’s time. Other Silurian links, include the Paulinus stone, c126 AD. The Silurian leadership evidently ‘bought-into’ Roman civilisation, but signs of tribal identity remained. Caerleon is known to have had a Christian Archbishop in attendance at the Congress in Arles, 314 AD. During this time, many roundhouses became villas, others did not, suggesting Roman civilisation was a veneer. After 400 AD Britain had to look after its own affairs, hence the rise of many small kingdoms, e.g. kingdom of Gwent – perhaps replicating what went before.

Silurian language is uncertain, but there is some evidence that pre-conquest British remained in post Roman times, with an admixture of Latin. However, on-going excavations at Llantwit Major are providing useful information, but as Ray suggested, there is much to do yet.

## News

- Emma Wilson Recently appointed assistant to Helen Willson, in C.C.B.Cs. Museum & Heritage Service. All the best, Emma.
- Winding House Museum Opening in ‘Summer 2008’.
- GHS Journal XVII Potential contributions have been received. The committee have agreed to proceed with another publication, hopefully for late 2008 or early 2009. Dr. Fred Holley has agreed to edit the Journal, while TM is applying for funding as part of a wider grant application to finance the project.
- ICT Training Seven members of GHS enjoyed a one-day ICT training session with John Paul Jones of Novas Scarman Group. Further, events are being planned for both web site construction/maintenance and Photoshop.
- Bargoed Library As part of Bargoed’s regeneration, the library is scheduled to be closed. Temporary arrangements have been made for the lending library to go to St. Gwladys’ Church Hall and some of the Local/Family history resources will be moved to the Winding House. The chairman has received assurances that a new library is to be established in the Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel – itself a listed building. He is also meeting the Caerphilly Library Service Business Manager in June to discuss the implications of these developments for historical research in the mid valleys area.

## Welsh Heartlands Autofest – 19/20 April Civic Centre, Pontllanfraith.

An ambitious undertaking, spoiled by the weather – cold and wet all weekend. The editor visited on Saturday morning, when many exhibits were still arriving, including many buses. There was much to see, including many restored cars from the 1960s to 1990s, which proved most evocative. There was a range of commercial vehicles, including a hearse or two. Five buses were present, only two of which were ‘vintage’; both were local – R.V.D.C. and I.B.T. A display of invalid vehicles proved interesting, as were the mobile engines for pumping etc.

Rhymney Valley Transport Preservation Society are to be commended for their efforts, it was a show that had great potential, if only the weather had co-operated.

Sadly, GHS were unable to take-up an offer to have a stand at the show, but I hope they might be able to make an appearance at the Conference in October.

## Joint Autumn Conference – Saturday 25 October – Llancaiach Fawr

Plans are progressing. Seven lectures have been provisionally booked on a range of topics – Bronze Age Ring Cairns, Owain Glyndwr’s Invasions, Religious Dissent, David Williams’ History of Monmouthshire, Water Supply to Cyfarthfa Works, Coal Mining and Bedwas, Mediaeval Brewing. Pre-booked Tickets, £10, including a buffet lunch. Full details in July. We hope you will all support this venture, one we hope will surpass the acclaimed 2007 event.

## Gwent Family History Society Research Trips 2008:

- 29 May Thursday Bristol City & Exeter Record Offices  
 5 July, 27 September Saturdays National Archives & Family Records Kew  
 GHS Members welcome – details 01495 223995 or [trips@gwentfhs.info](mailto:trips@gwentfhs.info)

## Gelligaer Historical Society

Important changes have been made to the roles being undertaken by the GHS committee, as shown below, as from the committee meeting on 05/12/07:

President	Mr Islwyn Hughes
Chairman	Mr Terry McCarthy
Meetings Secretary	Mr David Mills
Treasurer	Mrs Hazel Waters
Publicity & Membership Officer	Mrs Jean Kember
Web master	Mr Greg Buick
Journal Sales Manager	Mr Gerald Kember

Membership - £6 per year – non members are welcome, but a contribution of £1 per lecture would be appreciated to defray expenses.

<b>2008</b>	28 May	The Management of the Gelligaer Estates to the 1600s.	Annie Owen
	25 June	A.G.M.	

Members are encouraged to attend the A.G.M. to find out how the Society is run, its problems and possibilities, besides making a contribution to future policies and events.

### A.G.M. Agenda – 24/06/2008:

1. Apologies
2. Minutes AGM 30/05/2007
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Report 2007-08
5. Treasurer's Report 2007-08
6. Secretary's Report 2007-08
7. Elections of Officers & Committee 2008-09
8. Plans for 2008-09
9. A.O.B.

### Meetings Provisionally Scheduled for 2008-09:

<b>2008</b>	24 September	Victoria & Albert	Mrs Edwina Stack
	29 October	Sailing Ships that could be seen in the Bristol Channel which can be seen today.	Mr Alan Thorne
	26 November	St. Christopher – a wall painting from Talybont Church, Llandeilo.	Dr. Madeleine Gray
	17 December	Public health in the 17 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup> Centuries	Mr Tony Hopkins
<b>2009</b>	28 January	T.B.A.	
	25 February	The Ancestry of Dr. William Price	Dr Tony Jukes
	25 March	Morgraig Castle	Mr Brian Davies
	29 April	Lord Tredegar – Death or Glory	Mr Paul Busby
	27 May	T.B.A.	Dr. Ray Howells
	24 June	A.G.M.	

### Gelligaer – Journals - Volume XVI and Anthology

Volume XVI, published in 2007 – cost £5. Copies of an Anthology of Vol XI – XV inclusive, produced by Dr. Fred Holley for the Society are available for £6.99. Index for Vols. I-XVI, £1.

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