



# Gelligaer Times



## Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No. 11

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

August 2008

Anyone notice summer? At present, the temperature is just over 15°C, wind around 4 mph on average and it is raining. It is August! But are we downhearted? No! Not with another season of lectures ahead, a possible outing, the conference and a new Journal (XVII) to look forward to.

Since publication of Gelligaer Times No. 10, we enjoyed one lecture and the A.G.M. In addition, I hope all our readers have enjoyed the summer break and visited many places of historical interest. Hopefully, articles for Volume XVII have been worked upon, so that we can offer the history-loving community something of quality and value once again.

### Meeting Reports

#### **Origins, Growth & Management of Larger Estates in Gelligaer, 1660-1815 – Annie Owen – 28 May 2008**

Annie's initial research was undertaken in the 1980s, since when things have changed. I.T. research at home has replaced a lot of library research. However, I.T. brings its own trials and challenges: e.g. spelling of place-names – do you look-up Gelligaer or Kellygaer? Furthermore, downloaded documents still need interpretation and evaluation and not all work on-line is properly researched and accurate, thus careful verification is essential. I.T. is particularly valuable in presentation, but while computers are a help, they are not the complete answer.

Gelligaer was a large parish (16,388 acres) in the Hundred of Caerphilly, bordering Glamorgan- Merthyr and Llanfaban; Monmouthshire – Bedwellty, Mynyddislwyn and Bedwas; Brecknock – Vaynor, Llandetty and Llangynidr. There were five hamlets: Brithdir, Ysgwyddgwyn, Cefn, Garthgynydd and Hengoed and it was part of the Lordship of Senghennydd. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was granted to William Herbert, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Pembroke, a line that finished, when Charlotte (1746-1800) married John, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquis of Bute (1714-1814).

Being relatively high, with inferior soils, neither landlord nor tenant expected much from the land, until the mineral wealth beneath was discovered. Maps (Yates 1799) and written descriptions (Nicholas Carlisle 1811) suggest the area comprised moorland and bracken, with extensive woodland in the valleys. Samuel Lewis (1830) described the area as one of pastoral farming, sheep and other livestock., corroborated in the Tithe returns, which also show the use of the commons for feeding the flocks.

Until censuses began in 1801, population estimates are difficult, but anecdotal evidence suggest there had been little significant change up to 1831, when the parish had a population of 825, increasing to 3,215 by 1841 as industry began to appear. In 1881, population increased to 11,592, mainly concentrated in Brithdir hamlet, i.e. Pontlottyn.

Sources vary. Little prior to 1815, but thereafter, trade directories, census, newspapers, etc. Pre 1815 sources lack detail and suffer from repetition of names, usually patronymics. Maps and schedules accompanying the 1841 Tithe Awards proved a useful base-line. (Photocopies available in Bargoed Library). Census returns of limited use. Land tax assessments 1780-1830, provide lists of names and assessment of taxation. Four out of the five hamlets have good runs; Brithdir having the poorest (available in Glamorgan County Record Office). Estate and family papers helpful for large estates, e.g. the Butes, but much in the hands of small freeholders.

Parish Records some help, notably Bishop's Transcripts (from 1696), but unreliable pre-1760s, and complicated by the name-problem. Probate information lacks precision, especially in identifying individuals and parcels of land. Few farms possessed or needed plans, thus Tithe maps and schedule returns useful in Gelligaer.

Many small farms. 50+ acres were necessary to support a family. 21 parcels were smaller than this. Larger farms needed labourers. Six largest estates were concentrated upon:

- Marquis of Bute (1379 acres) – Rhymney Bridge area, comprising 5+ large farms. Description of one – pastoral farm, land adequate to provide a living, farmer, wife, wife's sister, servants, one male and one female child. Administration not intrusive so long as rent paid. Leases usually long.
- Llancaiach estates (1194 acres) – Estates added to by marriage agreements, commons encroachments and state land handouts. Pritchards ran out of male heirs – divided between two daughters. Jane married an Englishman, who sold land to Richards family of Cardiff, Mary married Jenkins of Hensol, who became Lords Dynevor – the estate being jointly owned by these two families. In 1841 Estate comprised 12 separate farms, e.g. Llancaiach Ucha – smallish fields, no access to moorlands. Grew crops.
- Capel Hanbury Leigh (780 acres) – First to own land in parish – Gilfach Fargod Fawr. Well liked absentee landlord in Pontypool and probably in Gelligaer. Many tenancies – 2-3 generations. Name survives – 'Capel Street' and 'Hanbury Road'.
- Sir Charles Morgan (619 acres) – land accumulated by marriage, political patronage. Demographic crisis – Sir Charles Gould, who married Jane Morgan, changed name to 'Morgan'. Most land let-out as farms.

- Charity Land, from Sir Edward Lewis (520 acres) – Farms in Gilfach area, income for education and care of poor. Management of land acceptable.
- Edmund Williams of *Maes Manor* (512 acres) – most local of estates, Lived in Bedwellty. Farms in upper Rhymney Valley, others in middle section, e.g. Glyngaer and Carngethin – most nineteenth century land leased for farming.

In 19<sup>th</sup> century, moved to leasing mineral rights and tramways.

Thanks were extended to Annie for a most informative presentation, one which included some significant pointers for members' research – methods and sources.

### **A.G.M. – Report of Meeting Wednesday 25 June 2008 – Llancaiach Fawr**

The best attended A.G.M. in recent times with approximately 20 members present. Having accepted the minutes for 30/05/2007 AGM the meeting continued with the Chairman's report. 2007-08, was described as 'exciting' with positive progress made in most areas of the GHS development plan. This included setting-up the website; on-line in January, following the accumulation of hardware purchased using the Communities@One grant. Our contribution to the Roman Fort project enabled the project to proceed to the next phase, in which we are not directly involved (i.e. not applying for more grants on their behalf).

Pleasure was expressed at the increase in GHS membership during year, from 21 to 31 by May 2008, due, in no small way to Jean's and Gerald's sterling efforts to publicise meetings and the society generally. Significant too, is the website, the influence of the Conference and our 'new' venue at Llancaiach Fawr. The challenge for 2008-09 - maintaining this progress, for which all members need to play an active part. A factor in GHS growth, has been the excellent programme organised by Jean Kember, before handing over the Meetings Secretary role to David Mills. It was agreed, Jean will be a tough act to follow. Another success, was the Autumn Conference held in September 2007 at Llancaiach Fawr, hopefully, the first of many more. Future conferences, however, would have to take more account of financial realities.

Work on Journal XVII has started, but sales of Vol. XVI have been slow. No other publication plans have commenced.

The resumption of regular committee meetings was cited as a positive development, but for GHS to flourish, we need more help to undertake the necessary tasks involved.

The Treasurers Report which followed was similarly positive. The end of year balance +£1,560.63 was acknowledged as 'healthy', though with larger financial commitments ahead, e.g. meeting costs, publication of Journal XVII and other proposals for the 2011 Golden Jubilee, website maintenance etc., we must seek alternative sources of funding, hence the application to Awards for All.

The Secretary's report emphasised the growth in meeting attendances – 42 attending Dr Ray Howells' lecture in April, a consequence of increased publicity. She rightly suggested 'we cannot rest on our laurels' as much more remains to be done, but together we can make it happen.

All the officers were duly re-elected to serve in 2008-09 (see below)

Any other business, brought forward a number of issues. A proposal to increase membership subscriptions to £8 a year was carried, as was a proposal to hold a society dinner *in lieu* of a January meeting. Discussion about 'spreading the word' led to agreement that we should consider the needs of GCSE specifications in future programme planning, besides inviting particular neighbouring societies to specific meetings. Respect was paid to Mrs Davies, who died recently.

Tea/coffee was then taken, discussion continued and a productive meeting came to an end.

### **NEWS**

**Winding House Museum** Opening Saturday 6 September 2008. Thereafter, the Museum will be open Tuesdays to Sundays inclusive (closed Mondays), 10.00 – 17.00. Members are encouraged to go along and see the exhibits.

**Bargoed Library** As part of Bargoed's planned, but ill-starred regeneration, the library is scheduled to close. Temporary arrangements are being negotiated for the lending library to go to St. Gwladys Church Hall and some Local/Family history resources to the Winding House. At a meeting with the Caerphilly Library Service Business Manager in June, the Chairman was assured funding is in place for a new library (plans are most impressive) to be established in a reconstructed Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel ( a listed building).

Since, problems have arisen on more than one front. The project is seemingly 'on hold' - failure to reach agreement with the Chapel managers. Additionally, withdrawal of project leaders for the retail park development has put matters on the 'back burner'. Naturally, the library is reluctant to do anything before contracts are signed with the dependent participants. So watch this space.

### **Gwent Family History Society Research Trips 2008:**

27 September & 1 November                      Saturday                      National Archives & Family Records Kew  
GHS Members welcome – details 01495 223995 or [trips@gwentfhs.info](mailto:trips@gwentfhs.info)

## Gelligaer Journals - Volume XVI and Anthology

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

**Gelligaer Journal – Volume XVII** Several contributions received. Publication, hopefully, late 2008 or early 2009. Dr. Fred Holley has agreed to edit the Journal. TM has applied for grant aid to finance the project. Further contributions welcome.

### Gelligaer Historical Society

<b>Society Officers 2008-09</b>	President	Mr Islwyn Hughes
	Chairman	Mr Terry McCarthy
	Meetings Secretary	Mr David Mills
	Treasurer	Mrs Hazel Waters
	Publicity & Membership Officer	Mrs Jean Kember
	Webmaster	Mr Greg Buick
	Journal Sales Manager	Mr Gerald Kember

Membership - **£8 per year**

### Meetings 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	GHS Dinner – Llancaiach Fawr.	
	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.	

Non members are welcome, but a contribution of £1 per lecture would be appreciated to defray expenses.

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

Start 09.30 for 10.00, ending 16.30. Programme for day:

Bronze Age Ring Cairns in the Glamorgan Uplands	Frances Lynch, Former chair Council for British Archaeology in Wales.
Owain Glyndwr's Invasions of south Wales	Ralph Griffiths, - Swansea University.
Early Religious Dissent in the Rhymney Valley	John Gwynfor Jones - Cardiff University
Morgan John Rhys & the Welsh Indians	Brian Davies, - Pontypridd Museum
A Water Supply to Cyfarthfa Works	Mike Jones, - OHIHS
Coal Mining and its affect on the development of Bedwas	Tony Jukes, Chairman, Bedwas and Trethomas Local History Group.
Mediaeval Brewing	Mike Anthony

There will be breaks for tea/coffee and lunch – included in ticket price. Displays etc. will be provided by a number of societies/organisations in the Barn.

Tickets – cost £10 per delegate (limited to 120) – sold on a first-come-first-served-basis - obtainable from the Chairman. *At the time of publication, tickets not received from printers – a further communication will inform you of availability.* We hope it will prove an enjoyable, stimulating and purposeful day.

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