



Gelligaer Times

Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No. 15

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August 2009

Summer is here? The sun is out and its not raining. Although the media interpreted the Meteorological Office's optimistic long range forecast as the promise of a 'Barbeque Summer', we have actually enjoyed a typical British summer! Recall of summers from the 1950s -1990s shows they were marked by changeable conditions, with few exceptions, e.g. 1955, 1959 and 1976. During the 1990s and early '*noughties*' summers were generally warmer/drier, until 'normality' returned in 2007! Lulled into false expectations; global warming and economic downturn, led to foreign trips being forsaken in favour of a British holiday. Their moans and groans, echoed by the media, indicate they had forgotten what a proper British summer is like! Seriously, there has been lots to enjoy this summer, locally and further a field. Your editor enjoyed Cornwall's offerings in June – Tintagel and Restormal Castles, Lost Gardens of Heligan, Trerice, Cornish Mines and Engines at Cambourn, Levant Mine, St. Michael's Mount, Bodmin & Wadebridge Railway and the historic port of Charlestown. All in just one county! Meanwhile arrangements for the Autumn Conference continue apace. Tickets have been printed and application forms sent (e-mail or post) to all members (for whom I have addresses) and those who attended last year. Ticket sales have already reached 40, in a week!

The Bargoed-Gilfach project makes steady progress, as indicated in the recent working party meeting (22 July 2009), but there is much to do and we need a lot more researchers. To help fund some of the latter activities, the chairman is making another grant application. But money is not our greatest need if our ambitions are to be realised.

Soon a new season of meetings and lectures will begin. The programme for the 'new' year is on page 4 and has something for most tastes. Achieving the latter is difficult and some will be disappointed. However, some requests for topics to be covered were thwarted by the want of a speaker expert in those areas of study. If you have a research project you could share with us or know of someone working on a particular subject, our meetings secretary would be pleased to hear from you - he is already thinking about 2010-11, which we hope will be an extra special year ... no pressure there David!

Meeting Reports

Caerleon Tetracylon & other matters 27 May 2009 – Dr. Ray Howell - Llancaiach Fawr.
Ray started with an update of recent research projects in Gwent, including:

- Use of a powerful package to compare Silurian/Romano-British/Mediaeval landscapes to identify common landscape patterns.
- Further digging in Caerleon – much on plans unsupported by evidence, but digs led by Pete Grant and Andy Gardiner are beginning to prove things.
- Legionary stone found – senior centurion. Dating still needed.
- Time Team in south Wales – Llanybi.
- Welsh Water's JCB discovery in Caerleon! While digging a hole for their own purposes they hit something 'big' – proper excavations revealed the foundations of a four-way arch or Tetra pylon. This became the focal point of the evening's presentation.

Examples of such impressive structures were shown in Jordan and Libya, but others exist.

Archaeological evidence showed it was present at the time the fort was renovated following the Silurian guerrilla war. There were also signs that it had been deliberately undermined causing it to collapse. Ceramics discovered there suggest this occurred in the 13th century, when the palace was destroyed. Why? Ray explained this in the context of the political machinations of some local Welsh chieftains and Norman Lords.

At the Norman Conquest, Gwent had a high density of castles (highest in Europe?). Prior to the conquest, King Harold built a 'hunting lodge' in Gwent. Following its completion, it was attacked and destroyed by Caradog ap Griffith. When Chepstow Castle was built (1067) Caradog ap Griffith did a deal with the local Normans – in 1072 Norman knights fought for him. On his death, (1081) his son, Owain, took over, losing land to the Normans. His sons (particularly Morgan) led a Welsh revival in the 1120s, helped by Civil War in England (Stephen v Matilda) ambushing and killing Richard de Clare, so taking control of Usk and Caerleon Castles and much of their grandfather's land. Morgan did a deal with Robert of Gloucester, providing military support; fought at the Battle of Lincoln.

At this time Caerleon still had impressive Roman remains, as recorded by Giraldus, used by Morgan to link his rule with the Arthurian legends. Sponsored by his patron Robert of Gloucester, Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'History of the Kings of Britain', placed Arthur at Caerleon. Morgan used this to promote his 'kingship' and signed himself 'Morgan the king'. Robert of Gloucester died in 1137, whereupon Morgan transferred his allegiance to Roger of Hereford. Morgan was killed in battle by Ivor Bach and his brother took over the title, Lord of Caerleon. His son, Howell, succeeded to the title in 1175 on his father's death, invaded Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, attacking castles.

However, his main adversary, William Marshall, strongly supported by Henry II and given Chepstow Castle by Richard I began the systematic destruction of the Lords of Caerleon. Caerleon Castle, highly symbolic in local political structures, was demolished – including the Tetra pylon? Much of the stone was used to construct new castles to defend his territory. Thus demolition of the Tetra pylon, a huge undertaking, was symbolic and, perhaps, suggested Ray, an exercise in 'ethnic cleansing'. This provided a very plausible possibility in the historical context of the time, in which it is calculated the event took place.

Gelligaer Common Historical Walk – Judith Jones – Wednesday 10 June

Thirteen eventually met at Carn Bugail on a chilly, but bright June evening. Led by Judith Jones the group explored parts of Gelligaer Common. First stop considered the nearby 'leaning standing stone'. A short walk to Carn Bugail took us to the assemblage of cists. Their origins, contents and destruction (some, sadly very recent) were discussed. A trek across to the Bedlinog side of the Common warmed us and revealed the sites of a couple of platform houses. Punctuated by the Chairman's delight at seeing a coal train descending from Cwmbargoed, we managed to consider the origins of these houses and causes of their demise in the late 14th century. Climate change? Thereafter, we returned to the car park, noting the heavy density of sheep grazing and marvelling that the torrential rain of earlier in the evening had not returned. Thanks are due to Judith for such an informative, enjoyable and bracing evening's activity!

A.G.M. – Report of Meeting Wednesday 24 June 2009 – Llancaiach Fawr

30+ members attended the A.G.M. – a record? Accepting the minutes for 25/06/2008 the meeting continued with the Chairman's Report. 2008-09 planned as a year of consolidation, saw positive progress made in most parts of our development plan.

Although no grant aid was received this year, funds improved thanks to increased membership, better co-ordination of Journal sales and a small profit from the Conference.

Meetings attendance increased (ranging from 27 to 40+), thanks to the quality programme

offered and increased publicity. All but one meeting went ahead as scheduled, and for the one a last-minute replacement was provided.

The second Autumn Conference proved successful, generating positive feedback. Also successful was the first 'annual' dinner in January, supported by 28 members.. A mediaeval-style banquet, was the centre-piece of an evening, which featured appropriate musical accompaniment and finished with a history quiz.

Journal sales have been slow this year, but have benefited from efforts to co-ordinate business and encourage sales through generous 'packages'! Although ready on disk, publication of Journal XVII, was delayed to encourage sales of XVI and the 'Anthology'.

Thanks were given to the committee for their work (including two committee meetings).

The Treasurers report was positive, our accounts showing a positive balance of £2399.25.

Approximately £1400 of this is committed to planned expenditure – Journal Vol. XVII, Room hire & speakers expenses. Although grants will be applied for, the Society will have to fund golden jubilee plans, including research costs and linked purchases. It was felt there was no need to increase the annual subscription. Membership was reported to have increased from 31 to 60, while attendance at meetings regularly exceeds 30.

The website is attracting many 'hits' and is being used to disseminate a wide range of information, both historical and GHS business.

All officers were duly re-elected to serve in 2009-10, although attention was drawn to Hazel Water's appeal for help to cope with increased activity in the Treasurer's role.

Discussion followed embracing a range of issues – details of golden jubilee celebrations e.g. garden party, dinner etc. Proposals for future walks were considered. Proposals to slightly amend the Constitution were discussed – approval to be sought at a special meeting on the evening of the first meeting in September. The meeting closed for tea/coffee and informal discussion – a successful end to a successful year.

Bargoed-Gilfach Project

A working party meeting on 22 July suffered low attendance. Progress was discussed – rather fitful. It was agreed that as research continues, writers of allotted sections should try to write a skeleton article by the next Working Group meeting – 07/10/2009. Researchers are still needed - anyone wishing to help would be welcome – see Annie Owen.

The Chairman is making a further application to Bargoed Town Council (and possibly other sources) for funding to assist the research process.

Joint Autumn Conference – Saturday 24 October 2009 – Llancaiach Fawr

Presentations booked and confirmed:

Les Shore – Welsh steel from Furness iron

Dr David Wyatt – Cardiff ex-slave narrative

Prof Pryce Morgan – Iolo Morganwg

Prof J.G. Jones – Morgans of Tredegar

Dr. Elin Jones – Welsh literary tradition

Dr. Ray Howell - Caerwent

Several local societies and organisations involved in historical research have been invited to put on display stands – the first 10 will have space in the Barn. Tickets are now on sale from the Chairman at £12 per delegate, inclusive of tea/coffee and buffet lunch. Networking time has been scheduled and account will be taken of dietary needs – labelling food etc.

Gwent Family History Society Research Trips 2009:

19 September Saturday National Archive - Kew

31 October Saturday National Archive - Kew

GHS Members welcome – details trips@gwentfhs.info

Gelligaer Historical Society

Society Officers 2009-10	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

We need an assistant treasurer to give Hazel a hand – more members means more work! Volunteer?

Membership - **£8 per year** – Non members - contribution £2 per lecture appreciated .

Meetings Scheduled for 2009-10:

2009	30 September	‘Am I not a man and a brother’ .. south Wales communities and the campaign to abolish slavery 1790 - 1865	Dr. D. Wyatt
	28 October	Life and Times of a Sun Dial ... civilisation’s most enduring timekeeper.	Kevin Karney
	25 November	Llanbradach	Dennis Selwood
	16 December	Roman Food - with samples	Elizabeth Baker
2010	27 January	GHS Dinner – Llancaiach Fawr	
	24 February	Gelligaer Common	Judith Jones
	31 March	Henry Morgan ... Buccaneer	Dr Hywel Moses
	28 April	Topic on mining (Curator of Big Pit)	Ceri Thompson
	26 May	Ffos-y-Fran.the history and future of a Mountain	Stephen Tilman
	30 June	A.G.M.	

All meetings start at 19.30 at Llancaiach Fawr Manor – usually in the Barn.

News

<i>Winding House Museum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Tuesdays to Sundays inclusive (closed Mondays), 10.00 – 17.00. • Exhibition – CCBC & Second World War – from 29/08/2009 • Autumn History Week – Drop-in – 20-23/10/2009 – pre-Conference.
<i>Bargoed Library</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Local/Family history resources available in the Winding House. To undertake research booking advisable to telephone to book – 01443 875548
<i>Glamorgan FHS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local & Family History Fair – Saturday 3 October 2009, City Hall, Cardiff. GHS have been invited to attend . Volunteers for the stand needed.
<i>Llancaiach Fawr</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22/08/2009 for two weeks – Bargoed & District Art Society exhibition. • 11/09/2009 – Tudor Supper - £12.50
<i>LEARN</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanities courses (history) cut severely. No programme until after Christmas.

Gelligaer – Journals - Volumes XVII, XVI and Anthology

Gelligaer Journal Vol. XVII: Should be ready for publication at September’s meeting.

Members paying their subs on time can buy their issue at a special members’ price.

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.

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