



Gelligaer Times

Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No. 16

www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk

November

The first blast of winter is upon us as I start to write this. The summer was not so good, but the early part of autumn was quite reasonable, until November dawned. Despite the changing season and its weather, another season of G.H.S. meetings is underway and with the Annual Conference, the new season has made a good start, may it continue. However, changes are in the offing.

Gelligaer Times – The Future

As a consequence of the Chairman's decision to relocate to Eastern England sometime in the near future, this will be the last edition of Gelligaer Times he will produce. It seems sensible to 'clear the decks' in readiness for the move, yet still be around to assist the new editor should they need any. So if a GT 17 etc. is to be produced a volunteer, preferably one who attends meetings regularly, will be needed to produce the next issue at the scheduled time.

Thanks for all your support and the kind comments received since embarking on this project, one that has given me a lot of pleasure to do.

Meeting Reports

30 September 2009, 'Am I not a man and a brother.. south Welsh communities and the campaign to abolish slavery 1790-1865', Dr David Wyatt, Llancaiach Fawr.

Dave Wyatt's interest in slavery and south Wales was prompted by a pamphlet found in Cardiff University library, ostensibly written by a former slave who escaped from the U.S.A. and settled in south Wales in the 1860s.

Slavery goes back into antiquity and still exists. It was important in many major civilisations, e.g. Egypt, Greece, Rome. It existed in England and Wales until the 12th century. In the latter about 10% of the population were slaves, whereas in Ancient Rome, Pre Civil War U.S.A. and Caribbean 30% of the population were slaves.

Slavery existed throughout the Middle Ages in Europe, but European colonisation from the 15th century gave it new prominence. Portuguese and Spanish colonists found white slaves succumbed quickly to disease in the tropical colonies and native societies (Amerindians) proved unsuitable. The Portuguese began to use West Africans where it was part of the culture. Trans-Atlantic slavery transformed this and with increased demand from Spanish, Dutch and British colonies a slave trade was encouraged. Indigenous West African warriors captured other Africans and sold them to Europeans, making many West African kings very wealthy. Estimates suggest 10-15 million people were enslaved and transported between 1500-1850. Britain's involvement came late, when plantations (especially sugar) in Virginia and the Caribbean began to prosper. Charles II granted a monopoly to the trade, which involved royalty, church, City of London, but later, Bristol's merchants challenged this domination, with their understanding of African trade based on non ferrous metals, which encouraged industrial development in S.W. England and beyond. By 1700 Liverpool was a major player in the triangular slave trade. By 1780 Britain's involvement in slavery was a significant element in Britain's economic development.

Initially south Wales had little involvement in the trade, but later, industry developed to serve

it, e.g. Penclawdd Copper Works. Welsh seamen were involved in shipping slaves, some owned plantations and others were involved in the Parliamentary pro-slavery lobby. Other links, include Nathaniel Wells, son of a Welshman and slave 'wife' – first black Sheriff of Monmouthshire in 1833.

During period after 1750 anti-slavery literature generated opposition to the practice, especially amongst non-conformists and Quakers. In 1787 a Committee to Abolish Slave Trade was established in London – William Wilberforce a member. Abolitionism was encouraged by publication of memoirs of slaves, e.g. Olaudah Equiano, plus reports of slave revolts in the Caribbean (20 between 1789-1832). Pressure led to Abolition of Slave Trade Act, 1807 – slaves could still be held, but not traded. Instead, many plantation owners bred slaves. Abolitionists set-out to abolish slavery altogether; achieved in the 1833 Act., which awarded slave owners £20 million compensation.

The anti-slavery movement in south Wales, initially small-scale, dated from the 1780s. Iolo Morganwg, based in London in the 1790s, friend of William Wilberforce, composed anti-slavery poems. At the St. Asaph eisteddfod, essays and poems appeared with abolitionist themes. 20 petitions were presented to Parliament from south Wales in 1792. Welsh interest increased post 1807, the Welsh press reporting campaigns against slavery in the British Empire in English - Welsh tracts came later, e.g. Seren Gomer, 1814, in Swansea. Thomas Clarkson toured Wales in 1824 and was appreciative of Welsh efforts and recruited Thomas Prothero in Newport and Price of Neath Abbey works – the latter starting a successful society in Swansea. Following the 1833 Act the movement declined, but links with U.S.A. showed slavery existed there. South Wilians were fascinated by slave auctions etc. and ex-slave life-stories, e.g. Moses Roper, of the English Baptist Church, Cardiff, in 1838. Many ex-slaves became non conformist ministers. In the 1860s, Cardiff merchants traded with the South, thus many narratives were also political tracts against these links.

Ramifications of abolition were many and some unexpected. West African kings were 'thrown' by the change of view and post emancipation, many racists views were increasingly generated by both black and white people. A major consequence of abolition was the acceptance of 'human rights' for all, a view encouraged by many in south Wales.

Thanks are due to Dave for sharing this fascinating aspect of history with us.

28 October 2009 'Life and Times of the Sundial', Kevin Karney – Llancaiach Fawr

In starting Kevin posed the question 'Why do we want to measure time' – he showed there are no simple answers to this. From this he continued by showing the range of sundials, plus their significant component parts. He then considered the views of philosophers, poets and scientists to time and its measurement through a number of chronological periods.

During the classical period the Babylonians were concerned with time and its measurement for religious and bureaucratic reasons and clay tablets were used to keep daily records 7000 years ago. The first known sundial was developed in Egypt about 1500 B.C. and not until the invention by the Romans of the water clock was it challenged. A sundial from Syria showed the day divided into hours – but the hours were unequal. An example of this is seen on the Parthenon, Athens.

During the 'Dark Ages & Islamic flowering' astronomical thinking influenced sundials. Initially, cosmology fitted the requirements of religious groups. In the Moslem world mathematics were used to develop navigation, especially to calculate the direction of Mecca. They also modified the sun dial to permit division of the day into equal hours, mainly to time their prayers. During this period, monasteries developed another rival with candle clocks. Sun dials continued to be significant and most British churches had one in the Middle Ages. The Renaissance brought greater sophistication, besides the recognition that the Earth was not

the centre of the universe. From that period science played a greater role than religion in measuring and recording time. The sun dial came under growing competition from the 'egg-timer', water clocks and later, mechanical clocks, the first in Britain being that at Salisbury Cathedral. From the latter clocks, chronometers (Harrison's work most notably in navigation) and watches developed. During the late 20th century atomic clocks of great accuracy were developed for a range of functions.

Sun dials still exist and are still being constructed, often as memorials.

Overall, a fascinating subject told in a most informative way – thanks Kevin.

Bargoed-Gilfach Project - working party meeting 7 October 2009

Progress reviewed, despite Annie Owen's enforced absence. A number of reviews of progress were considered, including reference to issues arising for the experience of those who had written a first draft of their work. Suggestions of future progress were made and some topics were firmed-up for future research. The Chairman announced the receipt of a £100 grant from Bargoed Town Council towards research expenses – details of essential claim forms discussed. Costs of producing the proposed book were discussed – circa £10,000 – grant application next year? Annie reported that there were a couple more researchers coming forward, but more are needed to achieve our goals.

Joint Autumn Conference – Saturday 24 October 2009 – Llancaiach Fawr

The 3rd annual conference went ahead as planned, with six presentations. Les Shore began with an account of the pivotal role of Cumbrian entrepreneurs and inventors in the development of the south Wales iron and later steel industry. Dr Dave Wyatt, analysed a slave-narrative published in Cardiff (1862). William Hall, the escaped slave's story was examined and declared plausible, but of his existence - hard evidence seems to be lacking. Pryce Morgan delivered a light-hearted discourse of Iolo Morganwg, including his radicalism in London and espousal of revived druidical traditions, culminating in the 'modern' Gorsed of Druids. John Gwynfor Jones considered the rise of the gentry in south Wales, as exemplified by the Lords of Tredegar before and particularly after the Act of Union, 1536. Their devotion to their land, and its acquisition, besides embracing the roles of J.P and County Sheriff to enhance their status and standing. Elin Jones delved into Welsh literary traditions in the Rhymney Valley, noting there no such traditions during the 20th century and what exists today has been brought in – the local Gwent dialect is extinct. She highlighted 19th and 18th century pub and chapel traditions respectively, besides earlier traditions including the gentry, Gelligaer parish church and Caerphilly. Ray Howell examined the impact of the Silures on Roman settlement and civilisation & on the development of Caerwent civitas. Evidence suggests an exchange of influences, but Silurian traditions endured to the end of the Roman period and beyond. Nine local societies and organisations brought display stands which were appreciated. Feedback indicates though the lectures were commended (apart from one which went over time) there were some dispiritingly negative comments about tea/coffee breaks and lunch arrangements. Happily, most delegates seemed to be satisfied. Next year? We shall see.

Gwent Family History Society Research Trips 2010:

20 March	Saturday	National Archive - Kew
8 April	Thursday	Bristol City Record Office/Somerset Archives
3 June	Thursday	Somerset Archives/Devon Record Office
12 June	Saturday	National Archive - Kew
18 September	Saturday	National Archive, Kew
30 October	Saturday	National Archive, Kew

GHS Members welcome – details trips@gwentfhs.info

Gelligaer Historical Society

Society Officers 2009-10	President Chairman Meetings Secretary Treasurer Publicity & Membership Officer Webmaster Journal Sales Manager	Mr Islwyn Hughes Mr Terry McCarthy Mr David Mills Mrs Hazel Waters Mrs Jean Kember Mr Greg Buick Mr Gerald Kember
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Judith Jones has volunteered assistant treasurer to give Hazel a hand. Thanks.

Membership - £8 per year –Have you renewed your membership for the current year yet? Membership fees are due now! P.S. Don't forget the renewal offer for a reduced price for Vol. XVII of the Journal.

Meetings Scheduled for 2009-10:

2009	25 November	Llanbradach	Dennis Selwood
	16 December	Roman Food - now <u>without</u> samples	Elizabeth Baker
2010	27 January	GHS Dinner – Llancaiach Fawr	
	24 February	Explosion at the Darren pit 1909	Judith Jones
	31 March	Henry Morgan ... Buccaneer	Dr Hywel Moses
	28 April	Defunct Industrial Equipment and antique trinkets (Preservation of Industrial Heritage)	Ceri Thompson Curator "Big Pit"
	26 May	Ffos-y-Fran. The History and future of a Mountain (Archaeology at Dowlais Open cast)	Stephen Tilman
	30 June	A.G.M.	

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

Non members - contribution £2 per lecture appreciated .

Committee Meeting

Wednesday 2 December 2009, 19.00, Hazel's house, Trelewis. Agenda circulated.

Society Dinner 29/01/2010 – to date Hazel has been given 16 names for the GHS dinner in January, consequently the function will not be viable (25?) . The final date for names to be added will be the December meeting, 16/12/2009. It went well this year and we hope it might become a fixture on the calendar, but your support is necessary.

News

Winding House Museum	<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
Bargoed Library	<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

Gelligaer – Journals

Gelligaer Journal Vol. XVII. £6.00 (Members paying their subs on time can buy their issue at a special members' price of £5) Postage & packing £1.50.

Volume XVI, published in 2007 – cost £3.50, p&p £1.00,

Special Bundle: All the society's publications from 1976 to the present time (Volume XVII, XVI & Anthology of Vol XI - XV Purchased together £10 + £3 postage (a saving of £2)

(All are available at our meetings without package & postage)

Storage – with the editor in the throes of clearing his attic in preparation for his planned move, is there anyone who could store some boxes of Journals – up to six need safe-keeping. Please contact the Chairman soonest.

Issue no. 17 – published February 2010 – contributions by 20/02/2010 (See above)

Published: Gelligaer Historical Society, 34 Gwerthonor Road, Gilfach, Bargoed, CF81 8JS.