



Gelligaer Times

Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No 21

www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk

Summer 2011

A message from the Chair

As Gelligaer Historical Society reaches the end of its first five decades, it is worth reflecting on some of the ways in which local history has developed in the past half century. Today's local historians access information on-line, study documents in the air-conditioned premises of Glamorgan Archives in Cardiff, National Archives in Kew or National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth and make notes on laptop computers --- all very different from the ways in which members of the dedicated group worked to prepare the history of this area in the later 1950s. They consulted books and the limited range of original sources available to them, made hand written notes, before sitting in front of a typewriter to prepare the work for publication. The publication, the blue-grey hardback volume with *The Gelligaer Story* picked out in gold lettering on the front cover that introduced the history of this part of south east Wales to many people over the years, serves as a fine testimony to their hard work. Their enthusiasm, in part a product of post-war Britain's renaissance in local history, continued with the formation of Gelligaer Historical Society in the autumn of 1961.

The Society's Golden Jubilee programme concentrates on the history of the area covered in *The Gelligaer Story*. If you feel that you can contribute anything to enhance this programme please contact any member of the Committee or the website www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk *Annie*

Update on the Bargoed and Gilfach research

Most of the research has been completed and the work is being prepared for publication, with a book launch planned for November. However, it is not too late for you to share any memories and/or photographs relating to life and work in Bargoed and Gilfach over the years. If you think you have anything to contribute, please contact the Society's website www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk or telephone Annie on 01443 813122. The next newsletter will include details of how you can order your copy of this book, a volume that will shed light on the fascinating and unique history of the largest urban community that developed within the area studied in *The Gelligaer Story*. *Annie*

June 29th 2011 AGM

The following officers were elected at the A.G.M

President	Islwyn Hughes
Chair	Annie Owen
Vice chairman	Judith Jones
Treasurer	Greg Buick
Publicity Secretary	Iris Owens
Committee	Ken Reynolds
	Miss Nesta Jones
	Dr.D Williams
	Mair Jones

Judith Jones will also act as Minute Secretary

Berly Mapstone is again helping with the organisation of the Annual Dinner

Diane Walker will help with meeting the needs of guest speakers.

Following the main meeting it was decided to change the start date of our meetings to 7 pm.

Looking for Elizabeth

Society member, Audrey Griffiths gave a short talk after the AGM on what she discovered while researching the life and achievements of Elizabeth Andrews – pioneer for social reform in the 1920s. Audrey described the main thrust of any research as 'Motorways', interesting diversions as 'A Roads' but the most fun and most intriguing being the more obscure data which turn up when you ramble down the 'country lanes' of the past and find 'fields of buttercups' - stories, anecdotes and connections you could never have dreamed of. Such was the case when Audrey dug deeper into her family history (Elizabeth Andrews was her great aunt) and followed up many leads from Elizabeth's autobiography: *A Woman's Work is Never Done*, Honno Press 1958, reprinted 2006.

Audrey's aim is to prepare a talk and possibly a book on her ancestor, whose blue plaque is in Bailey Street, Tonpentre, Rhondda. Audrey Griffiths has a repertoire of talks on historical and other subjects. *Looking for Elizabeth* will shortly be expanded into a full length talk along with *Incidents in the Valleys* about bombing during WW2.

Society Dinner

This year the GHS dinner will be held on Friday evening **October 14th 2011** – at 7.30 at Llancaiach Fawr Manor. If you were at the AGM you will have picked up the application form, otherwise Beryl Mapstone will be sending out invitations by post or email.

Programme Autumn History Conference : Llancaiach Fawr – Saturday 15 October 2011

09.15 *Arrival, registration of delegates. (Tea/coffee available from 08.45 a.m.)*

10.00 *Welcome & Introduction to Day*

10.05 The Llan-gors Textile Louise Mumford, National Museum Cardiff

11.05 Contemptible Foes and Scoundrels : Chartism's Enemies Prof. Chris Williams, Swansea University

12.05 *Buffet Lunch*

13.05 Tourist views of early industry in South Wales Dr. Maddie Gray University of Wales Newport

14.05 The Tonyandy Riots, 1910-1911 David Maddox, O.B.E.

15.05 *Tea/coffee*

15.30 Marriage and Family in South Wales and the North-East of England in the Era of the Great Depression
Dr. Stephanie Ward, Cardiff University

16.30 *Conference Ends*

16.40 Staff of Llancaiach Fawr Manor will lead an Optional Architectural Tour of Llancaiach Fawr Manor House (Maximum 30 places available, cost £6 per person) .This is NOT the standard costumed tour of the Manor house, which many of you may have enjoyed. This is a SPECIALIST tour which covers aspects of architecture which can be seen in the building. It also gives a wider perspective of the history of the site and the house put in the context of the local area and the various periods when it was occupied.

Program of Talks for 2011-2012

Monthly Talks – as this is the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Society we have tried to have as many local talks as possible)

September 28 2011	Brian Davies	Dr Griffiths' Tramroad
October 26 2011	Judith Jones	Gelligaer and Merthyr Common
November 30 2011	Gareth Salway	Penallta Collier

(Gareth Salway is the author of the book "Penallta, A Pit and its People"

(The Gelligaer Historical Society was begun in November 1961 so this meeting will be the 50th Anniversary and will include a Birthday Cake)

December 14 2011	Members evening- details to be announced	
January 25 2012	Dr Elin Jones	Women in Rhymney Valley
February 29 2012	Darren Valley	Ogilvie Project
March 28 2012	Greg Buick	Hamlet of Brithdir - Pre-1840
April 25 2012	Terry McCarthy	Railways in Gelligaer Parish
May 30 2012	Iris Owens	Coal to Dole – Regeneration project in Trelewis
June 27 2012	AGM plus a short talk on Witchcraft in the area by Ken Reynolds	

Other Events

Church service at St Gwladys – date to be confirmed -probably early September (before our first meeting).

Publication of Book on Bargoed-Gilfach

We also hope to produce a 50th Anniversary Calendar – Do you have any photos for inclusion?

My First Dig

When I joined the Cardiff Junior Naturalists society in the early 1950's, I discovered that as well as Botany and Geology, there were talks and visits to places of historical interest.

On Saturday 1st May my friend Jean and I caught the Western Welsh bus to Wenvoe to meet the other members of the society for a dig. The objective was to assist a team of archaeologists who were excavating a medieval site, possibly an old farmstead. The sun shone out of a clear sky as we headed into the wood, where bluebells were in full bloom and birds sang all around.

Mr Cleary, the organiser of our field trip had said to wear old clothes and to bring an old paintbrush and trowel. Thinking back, I don't think Mr Cleary had children, otherwise he would have known that old clothes are usually outgrown clothes. My mother who had no idea what happened on an archaeological dig suggested a blue and white candy-striped dress with broderied anglaise panels, a hand me down from a cousin, which I wore with a red corduroy jacket. All the others were dressed in jeans, which my parents would not allow me to have.

'Iris looks as though she's going to an accordion party' commented Mr Cleary loudly.

'These are the only old clothes I have' I told him, smarting from his sharp tongue.

We were soon briefed as to what was expected of us and were allocated to different trenches where our paint brushes and trowels were soon helping us to reveal medieval potsherds and animal bones, from some bygone repast. We continued excavating productively, hardly noticing that the sky had clouded over. Mr Cleary suggested lunch so we downed tools, settled on the grass leaning against the trees to enjoy the sandwiches our mothers had made for us. Then the rain started. It soon shifted through the gears from a few drops, to a little light rain, to a continuous heavy downpour. There was no shelter. The leaves on the trees provided negligible cover and we and our sandwiches were soon sodden. No one had a waterproof, hood or umbrella. We became quite chilled as the rain ran through our hair and down our necks, onto our shoulders and through our summer clothes, into our sandals from the top and out at the sides. The trenches too were soon filled with water and even the seasoned archaeologists decided to call it a day.

We squelched back through the wood, crushing the wild garlic along the path, dripped at the bus stop and steamed up the windows when we finally got on the bus.

A '*drowned rat*' was how my mother described my appearance when I arrived home. The red dye had leaked out of the jacket and ruined the dress, which was torn up for rags.

We went on other field trips during my time with the Junior Naturalists but no more digs. I now go on my digs vicariously with the Time Team, where I don't have to think about what to wear or how to keep my sandwiches dry.

Iris Owens.

Perhaps you have had an experience on a dig. Why not let us know so we can put it in the newsletter.

Recent talks enjoyed by members:

April 27th 2011

Historic Churches in Llandaff Diocese by Dr Edith Evans

Dr. Evans gave a beautifully illustrated talk, which as well as pointing out the typical architectural styles prevalent in the area, also identified some of the more unusual styles. An expert, not only in church architecture but also in the history of Christian worship tradition, Dr Evans was able to point out how the format of the service, the architecture and church furnishings changed to become compatible with doctrinal and social change. For many of us it was good to see buildings with which we are familiar and brought back memories of Sunday -school, christenings weddings and funerals of the past.

May 25th 2011

Evan Morgan 2nd Viscount Tredegar- by Paul Busby.

We were both informed and entertained by Paul Busby who has an in depth knowledge of the Morgan family and the colourful 2nd Viscount- a 'Wild Child' of the early 20th century. There is no doubt that Evan was a kind, generous, loyal and hospitable friend who unfortunately did not conform to society's norms nor live up to his father's expectations. His love of animals and birds charmed some of his friends and terrified others including the long-suffering staff at Tredegar House. The many facets of the Viscount's life contrasted significantly and gave the lecture variety and depth. Paul Busby also had some old photos of the 2nd Viscount which he passed around after the talk, including one with the famous (or infamous) parrot - Blue on the shoulder of the bird-loving Viscount.

Gelligaer Volume XVIII - Journal 2010

The latest edition of our Journal is available for £5 – there are five articles
1825 – GELLIGAER MAN TRANSPORTED TO AUSTRALIA
1847-54 – THE GELLIGAER EISTEDDFODS AT THE HARP INN
1834 – THE BEGINNINGS OF ABERBARGOED
1841-TODAY – RAILWAYS IN GELLIGAER
1894-1908 – HISTORY THROUGH SCHOOL LOG BOOKS

The Gelligaer Historical Society has published a journal since its inception. We would like to produce a small journal annually and would welcome any article you may have relating to the history of the parish or the communities within it. We don't say we will publish it and we will certainly not pay any money for it. Any piece can be from 1 to 10 pages (400 to 4000 words), although preferably not too long. If you have such an article then email it in Word or similar format to: webmaster@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk

Other Publication Available

Gelligaer Journal 2009 Volume XVII	£6	£1.50 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal 2007 Volume XVI	£4	£1 post & packaging
Gelligaer Journal 2005 Volume XV	£4	£1 post & packaging
Gelligaer Journal 2004 Volume XIV	£4	£1 post & packaging
Gelligaer Journal Volumes Vol XI – XV in 1 volume	£7	£2 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal Volumes Vol VI – X in 1 volume	£7.50	£2 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Farms & Families 1540-1840 - Garthgynydd Hamlet	£5	£1 post & packaging

The single volume collections were kindly produced for the society by Dr. Fred Holley
All publications are available at our monthly talks with no postage

Focus on Merthyr

During Adult Learners' week in May, Merthyr Council organised two guided historical walks - one in Merthyr and the other in Dowlais. For the first one 16 or so hardy souls assembled outside the Tourist Information Office. The weather was cool and a stiff breeze was blowing for the walk to such sites as the former Workhouse (now the cottage Hospital), the former pumping station, now the social Security Office, the Ynys Fach Engine House and the tunnel which gave access to China, the notorious part of Merthyr where nearly everyone lived in poverty and many were involved in crime.

It wasn't much warmer for the gentle stroll around Dowlais where we had to imagine many of the sites, such as the Market and the tram roads and the barracks but where many of the old Iron Works buildings still exist as well as chapels and churches and the bungalows built to accommodate Spanish workers. We ended up in Dowlais library for tea and biscuits and a short talk and discussion on Dowlais' history.

In June this year, the Workers Education Association in conjunction with the Zoar Chapel arts centre organised a series of lectures and discussions on Merthyr Women's History. These ranged from the great and the good, such as Charlotte Guest and Rosemary Crawshay, through the working women who toiled in the pits and foundries to 'Women behaving badly' and concluded with the role of the traditional Welsh 'Mam'. Participants had the choice of attending the discussion sessions in Welsh or in English. The organisers hope to get some digital stories going starting on Tuesday 19th July at 7 pm at the Zoar Project. Anyone interested should get in touch with Mair Rees, Heritage Officer Menter Merthyr Tudful who can be contacted on: mair@merthyrtudful.org.

Mair is also interested in what the Gelligaer Historical Society is organising for the coming year so I will be guiding her towards our website.

Iris Owens

Deadline for pieces for Issue 22 of Gelligaer Historical Society Newsletter - 26th October 2011