



Gelligaer Times

Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No 24

www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk

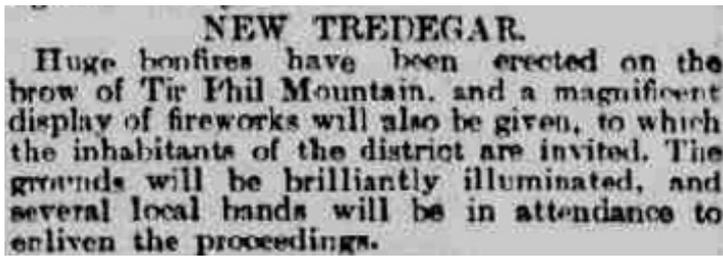
July 2012

A message from the Chair

Elsewhere in this issue I write about the song *In the Good Old Summer Time*, written by Pontlottyn-born George Evans. After many months of lower than average rainfall, our summer of 2012 has got off to a very wet start. Hopefully we will have some pleasant summer sunshine soon.

During 2011-2012 Gelligaer Historical Society has enjoyed a very successful Golden Jubilee session. The Society has a sound membership base and monthly meetings have been well attended. *Morgannwg* Volume LV 2011 (The Journal of Glamorgan History) carried a favourable review of *Bargoed and Gilfach a local history*, the book that was researched and published to mark the Golden Jubilee.

Gelligaer Historical Society accepted an invitation to have a stand at the World War II Event in Llancaiach Fawr during the two Bank Holidays in early June. Some of the volunteers who manned the stand during the day were among those who witnessed local beacons lit to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee on the Monday evening.



I conclude this message with an extract from *Western Mail* Tuesday June 22 1897 describing a local event on the first occasion that a British monarch celebrated a Diamond Jubilee.

Annie

In the Good Old Summer Time

Did you know that **George Honey Boy Evans (1870-1915)** who wrote the song *In the Good Old Summer Time* was born in Pontlottyn in 1870? He emigrated to America where he earned a fine reputation as a songwriter, comedian, entertainer and musician. If you are interested in finding more about the career of this son of Gelligaer parish, I suggest that you search the Internet as there are several websites (including *Wikipedia*) that include information about him.

I have not been able to find any details about his family background or when he went to America and I will be interested to hear from anyone who can shed any light on these. Annie

Horrible History

In a recent initiative by Gelligaer Community Council, local junior schools were encouraged to participate in a history project. In order to avail themselves of the latest technology, cameras, recording devices and other equipment deemed appropriate, each school received a substantial grant. The new 'cool gear' might also have helped dispel the myth that history is something only found in dusty old books, read by equally dusty old people.

Gelligaer Historical Society was asked to judge the entries. A team comprising Greg Buick, Annie Owen and Dr David Williams met to consider the merits and standards of the children's work. All the entries were of a high standard. Hats may be raised to all the pupils and their teachers who took part in the competition. Homing in on children's predilection for a bit of horror, the 'Horrible Histories' books have been a big hit with the younger generation. Thus Hengoed School were on to a winner with their project entitled 'Horrible Hengoed' which looked at aspects of school life over the years. Congratulations to Hengoed School, worthy winners of the competition.

Ypres in Gelligaer

Has anyone wondered why there should be a house named after the battle of Ypres in Gelligaer? My grandmother, Florence Price, named the house after her brother, William Weeks, who was awarded the DCM for conspicuous gallantry in carrying in his officer's body under shell fire. William was born in Gelligaer, 1882, but moved to Cardiff with his parents as a baby. He first joined The South Wales Borderers, as a young boy, and rose to the rank of Company Quarter Master Sergeant, serving in the Sudan and South Africa. At some time, certain battalions of the regiment were amalgamated into the Royal Welch Regiment with which he served in France. Following his Award he was promoted to Captain. Although not killed in action, he suffered the effects of mustard gas poisoning and died in 1928, at the young age of 46 years. He is buried in St Mary's Church, Langham, Essex.

I'm sure many of the society will remember my grandmother Florence Price as she was well known in Gelligaer. She was deputy church organist, Mother's Union



organist and also played for weddings and funerals. She was orphaned as a baby and was brought up by her aunt and uncle, living at "Old School House". I still see her standing, watching it being pulled down with tears rolling down her face. In fact, I still have the photos of Old School House and those of St Catwg's Church choir, that were provided for the first *Gelligaer Story* and also later editions. I remember well, Gethyn Thomas spending hours with her asking her about the past. Unfortunately, she wasn't given any recognition for the vast amount of knowledge she provided. She even remembered visiting The fort as it was being excavated. People would often turn up on the doorstep to enquire where a relative was buried in the Churchyard and more often than not, she could tell them!

Carol Henderson (nee Price)

Gelligaer Historical Society Bags

This is a photograph of Annie's *GHS bag* on its return from a shopping trip to *Tesco* in Ystrad Mynach. If you are a GHS member and haven't received your bag yet, it will be available when the new session starts.

If you take your bag on holiday, please send us a photograph and we may print it in future *Gelligaer Times*. No prizes, but we will be interested in knowing where our bags travel, or if you find any unusual uses for them.

Summer break

Following the summer break, we have a programme of talks and events to suit a wide range of interests, including, of course our autumn conference. Meanwhile if you visit an interesting site, at home or abroad, a castle, a stately home a church, archaeological dig or something more exotic such as a temple or pagoda, how about writing a short article for the newsletter and send it in to us; if you can add a photo, even better.

We look forward to seeing you at our summer events and hope we can all get out and about to visit some historical venues now that the good weather appears to have come at last.

Iris Owens Editor.



Gelligaer Historical Society Autumn History Conference

Saturday October 20th at Llancaiach Fawr

The society has once again decided to put on a History Conference in the Autumn. Thanks to the generosity of Llancaiach Fawr we have been able to keep the price unchanged at £15. We have kept to the same format as before with five speakers who have all been booked.

Iron, Blasphemy and Barbados: The Erbery Family and Radicalism in Seventeenth-Century Wales

Dr. Lloyd Bowen, Cardiff University

The Erbery family came to Merthyr in the early 17th century, they bought the farm Cefn-y-fforest above what is today Treharris, Lydia Fell the Quaker was born Lydia Erbery.

Morgan Jones: from Conscientious Objector to Labour MP

Wayne David MP

Morgan Jones taught in Bargoed at the time of the First World War, he was a Conscientious Objector during the war but afterwards became the local MP

Finds from the Frontier: New discoveries from the Roman fort at Brecon

Joe Lewis, Caerleon

A recently discovered assemblage, comprising hundreds of important finds of Roman date, together with a few highly-significant late Iron Age artefacts were recovered from the vicinity of the Roman Fort near Brecon, Powys.

Welsh men in the International Brigade 75 years ago

Richard G. Felstead

Mr Felstead's grandfather Jack Roberts was one of those who fought in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War

Wales and the seventeenth-century medical world

Dr. Alun Withey, Swansea University

Dr Alun Withey has ploughed through old records to shed light on the little known world of Welsh traditional medicine between 1600 and 1750...

Juice of snails was used as eye drops in the 17th and 18th century!

Book sales

Sales of 'Bargoed and Gilfach, a local History' have now reached 570 copies and are available at a wide range of local outlets. If you haven't got yours yet, we always bring copies to our meetings. The Society has had very good feedback on the content, style and presentation of the book, which makes an excellent gift, or to enhance your own collection.

Roman Afternoon

GHS concluded its Golden Jubilee season with a successful *Roman Afternoon* in Gelligaer when, fortunately, the weather was kind to us.



This photograph shows GHS Committee member Iris Owens watching Dr. Edith Evans (Gwent Glamorgan Archaeological Trust) prepare for her *demonstration and tasting of Roman cookery*. Later in the afternoon, Dr Peter Guest (lecturer in Roman Archaeology, Cardiff University) gave a well-received talk *New discoveries on the site of the Roman fortress at Caerleon*. In addition those attending had the opportunity to view some of the finds of local metal

detector Malcolm Jones and take walks around the nearby Roman fort under the expert guidance of Graham Oxlade and Clive Andrewartha. Thanks to everyone who helped to make this a successful event.

Recent talks

The talks on topics of local interest have proved popular among members and continue to attract a number of visitors to the Society.

February: Darran Valley History Group's interesting and comprehensive presentation on their Ogilvie Project stirred the memories of many members of the audience. This group has not been in existence for long, but their enthusiasm and commitment are responsible for their achievements in saving memories of their coal mining heritage. It was a privilege to hear about their work.

March : When Greg Buick shared the results of his research on the farms and families of Brithdir Hamlet, his audience included some of today's Brithdir Hamlet farmers who were fascinated by the continuity of field layout.

April : Exile member Terry McCarthy, with his usual enthusiasm for his subject, gave a comprehensive presentation on the impact of railway development on Gelligaer Parish.

May : Judith Jones spoke about Gelligaer and Merthyr Common, tracing its history from prehistoric times to the present.

Annual General Meeting

Attendance at the Society's AGM, on the last Wednesday in June, was similar to that at the 2011 AGM. The reports of Chair and Treasurer reflected the success of Gelligaer Historical Society's Golden Jubilee year 2011-2012 and showed that the Society is well-placed to enter its second half century. The President, Islwyn Hughes, assumed the chair for the election of officers to serve 2012-2013, and the programme for the coming year was announced.

After the AGM, David Mills gave a short presentation on *Charles Winter*. He referred to the wall plaque in Bedwellty Church as well as to Charles Winter's links with Hengoed Baptist Chapel and the founding of Graig Fargoe Chapel.

Marching out of History.

Many of our traditions are steeped in history. Some, like Christmas and Easter have been retained but their original significance is often lost from collective memory. Some traditions, which 50 or 60 years ago were widespread are now confined to a few venues. I refer especially to the tradition of the Whitsun Marches, where members of church and chapel Sunday Schools would march around their villages, behind their banners stopping at regular intervals to sing hymns. Some of you may have fond memories of this event and of the Whitsun treat on Whit Monday, to Barry Island, or in the case of Trinity Methodists in Cardiff, which I attended as a child, to a large field near Saint Fagans, (often bearing traces of its four legged inhabitants) for games, races, a picnic under a large marquee and a cricket match.

Now that Whitsun Bank Holiday has been replaced by Spring Bank Holiday (though it does sometimes coincide) and also with a decline in church attendance, Whitsun Marches have all but



Horeb, Gelligaer, Whitsun Procession May 1951

D T Blatchford

disappeared in Wales.

I am fortunate to attend a church where the Whitsun March of Witness still takes place. Saint Michael's, Aion, and Bethesda from Tongwynlais and Saint Mary and Saint James of Taff's Well all participate in this tradition. This year we enjoyed blazing sunshine as we made our way in the shadow of Castel Coch past the Lewis's Arms, where glowing cyclists nipping off the Taff Trail, were enjoying their ale, and around the quieter streets of the village. Local people always turn out to stand at their garden gates to wave. Spurred on and kept in time and in tune by the Tongwynlais Temperance Silver Band playing their gleaming instruments, we cover most parts of the village. With modern health and safety advice in mind, we were all slapping on sun cream, carrying bottles of water, and wearing hats, precautions especially the first two which our grandmothers and grandfathers would not have deemed necessary. When we are not blessed with fine weather, in other words on the occasions when it tips with rain, the band can't bring out their instruments and the event has to be called off. This is a huge disappointment as all those who participate are keen to keep this historic tradition alive now and into the future.

Iris Owens

Monthly Talks for 2012-13 Season

September 26 th	The Wilson government and pit closures in south Wales, 1964-70	Dr Ben Curtis (Cardiff University)
October 31 st	Roath, Adamsdown and Splott	Jeff Childs M.A. (Joint editor of Morgannwg, Journal of Glamorgan History Society)
	<i>An illustrated talk about three well-known Cardiff districts from pre-Norman to modern times, focusing on the transformation of the mid-19th century rural parish of Roath into an urban, industrial and commercial area. Covering agriculture, industry, families and estates (e.g. Tredegar, Bute, Mackintosh and Roath Court), religion and suburban development.</i>	
November 28 th	Elizabeth Andrews	Audrey Griffiths
December 15 th	Three 15 minute talks	To be announced
January 30 th	Chartists [to be confirmed]	Geri Thomas
February 27 th	Benjamin Hall	Len Burland (Author of "A Historical Tour around Mynyddislwyn Mountain)
March 27 th	The National Parks of Wales	Dr Robert Ll. Davies M.B.E.
April 24 th	Moorish Spain	David Tolley
May 29 th	Pontlottyn Murder in 1920s	Iris Owens
June 26 th	Annual General Meeting	followed by A short talk

Talks are on the last Wednesday of each month at Llancaiach Fawr and start at 7.00 pm

Gelligaer Volume XIX - Journal 2012

The Gelligaer Historical Society has published a journal since its inception. We intend to produce a journal for the beginning of next season 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 please email it in Word or similar format to: webmaster@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk by the end of July

Current Publication Available

Bargoed and Gilfach, A Local History	£10	£5.00 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal 2010 Volume XVIII	£4	£1.00 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal 2009 Volume XVII	£5	£1.50 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal 2007 Volume XVI	£3.50	£1.00 post & packaging
Gelligaer Journal 2005 Volume XV	£4	£1.00 post & packaging
Gelligaer Journal Volumes Vol XI – XV in 1 volume	£5	£2.00 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal Volumes Vol VI – X in 1 volume	£5	£2.00 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Farms & Families 1540-1840 - Garthgynydd Hamlet	£5	£1.00 post & packaging
Gelligaer Farms & Families 1540-1840 - Brithdir Hamlet	£7	£1.50 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