



Gelligaer Times

Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

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www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk

November 2014

Message from the Chair

As I write this, the days are getting shorter and cooler, and it is time to forget about gardening and return to local and/or family history research. The local historians who researched and published *The Gelligaer Story* in the late 1950s, and whose efforts led to the formation of our Society in 1961, would be amazed at the wealth of sources available to us and the ways in which we can access them today.

There is so much information on the internet these days, both on subscription and free sites, that it is easy to be tempted to ignore the treasures in local and national libraries, museums and archives. So, as a visit to a library, museum or archives can yield interesting, useful, and often surprising, information that is not available online, I append a list of contact details for some of you who may wish to visit. While it is not necessary to book in with many of the libraries, it is always worth contacting to discuss your needs before your first visit so that you avoid a wasted visit. If you are planning a visit to either National Library of Wales (NLW) or The National Archives (TNA), it is essential that you spend time studying the relevant website before you go so that you not only take the required documents to be issued with your Reader's Ticket but also you know what documents you wish to study and how to order them. Even if you are not able to visit NLW or TNA in person, you may find that, in common with many other Archives, their online material is useful.

Nowadays, the facilities in most of these premises are excellent, with good lighting, seating and ventilation, and in many cases you may be able to use your digital camera to copy documents as well as make notes directly onto your computer/tablet. So why not do some research, and submit it for publication in a future *Gelligaer Times* or *Gelligaer Journal*.

Annie

Library, Museum or Archive	Address	Telephone	Email address (for contact) and Website for further details (including online contact, events, opening hours, closures, etc)
Bargoed Library	Hanbury Chapel, 6a Hanbury Rd, Bargoed. CF81 8QR	01443 864714	libbarg@caerphilly.gov.uk www.caerphilly.gov.uk
Aberdare Library	Green Street, Aberdare CF44 7AG	01685 880050	Aberdare.Library@rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk/lib...
Merthyr Tydfil Central Library	High Street, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8AF	01685 353480	www.merthyr.gov.uk
Pontypridd Library	Library Road, Pontypridd CF37 2DY	01443 486850	Pontypridd.Library@rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk/lib...
Tredegar Library	The Circle, Tredegar NP22 3PS	01495 357869	www.lifeleisuretrust.org.uk/libraries/tredegar-library
Newport Central Reference Library	John Frost Square, Newport NP20 1PA	01633 656656	reference.library@newport.gov.uk www.newport.gov.uk
Cardiff Central Library	The Hayes, Cardiff CF10 1FL	02920 382116	www.cardiff.gov.uk/centrallibrary
Winding House	Cross Street, New Tredegar NP24 6EG	01443 822 666	windinghouse@caerphilly.gov.uk your.caerphilly.gov.uk/windinghouse/
St Fagans National History Museum	Cardiff CF5 6XB	02920 573500	www.museumwales.ac.uk/enquiries/
Glamorgan Archives	Clos Parc Morgannwg, Leckwith, Cardiff CF11 8AW	029 2087 2200	glamro@cardiff.gov.uk www.glamarchives.gov.uk/
Gwent Archives	Steelworks Road, Ebbw Vale NP23 6AA	01495 353363	enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk www.gwentarchives.gov.uk
National Library of Wales	Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 3BU	01970 632800	www.llgc.org.uk/en
The National Archives	Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU	02088 763444	www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/

World War I Commemorative events

Places of worship the length and breadth of the country held special services to mark the centenary of the outbreak of World War I and the following two reports relate to two such services in Ystrad Mynach

Holy Trinity Church Ystrad Mynach

To remember the outbreak of WW1, a hundred years ago, and those who died from his parish, the vicar of Holy Trinity, Ystrad Mynach held a Requiem Eucharist on Sunday 3rd August. Gelligaer Historical Society was approached to send a representative and given the opportunity to sell copies of the Special WW1 edition of the Gelligaer Journal after the service.

The service was very well attended by local people of all denominations and every pew was occupied.

The congregation, some of whom had lost relations in the 1914 to 1918 conflict, was made up of a wide variety of individuals in public and private life and civic society, representing their area of service and responsibility. Others simply wanted to remember with respect, local people who gave their lives. Members of the Ystrad Mynach branch of the Junior Air Corps and the Scouts were present, smartly turned out in uniform and well-polished boots.

The service started with the hymn 'Oh valiant hearts' sung to the tune 'Supreme Sacrifice', the theme of which is to give comfort and hope through their Christian faith, to those who lost loved ones in war. After readings from the Old and New Testaments by members of Holy Trinity and a Gospel reading, the vicar the Rev. Canon Steven Kirk delivered a sermon based on the events leading up to the outbreak of war in August 1914. He stressed the folly and pointlessness of war and the importance of working for peace and reconciliation but also remembered the local families who lost fathers, sons, uncles and nephews in the conflict. (This included three sons from one family, and we should also remember the women as there is one female named on the local war memorial). Many of their descendants were present in the congregation. We were all invited to come forward and light a candle, either in memory of a relation lost in WW1 or of an individual known to us. A poignant and lengthy list of names was read aloud of all those from the parish of Ystrad Mynach and Llanbradach who never came back.

On a personal note, I lost no one in WW1 but lit my candle in memory of the civilians who died in that conflict. I also gave thanks that my father, who served in France in 1918, returned safely. My life would have been very different had he not survived, for he married my mother in 1927 and they adopted me in 1941.

The second hymn, 'God is Love: let heaven adore him', sung to the tune of Calon Lan reflected the message that God's love, helps friends and relations deal with their grief. The last verse was sung in Welsh.

Following communion, which was administered by three sacred ministers of the Church in Wales, in Requiem vestments of black and silver, the congregation sang the final hymn 'Be still my soul', to the tune of 'Finlandia'. It filled the church to the rafters with a message of hope, through trust in God.

Following the service, members of the congregation were invited to a welcome cup of tea and cake and to chat. Many showed interest in copies of Gelligaer Historical Society's Bargoed and Gilfach History and the WW1 Journal and in the society's aims and programme for the coming year.

I returned home and lit a candle in my front window to remember the outbreak and fallen of The Great War, as people were doing up and down the land.

Iris Owens

Lights Out Service, Lewis Street Methodist Church, Ystrad Mynach

On the evening of August 4th, a vigil was held in Lewis Street Methodist Church, to commemorate the centenary of the start of the 1914-18 war. The local A.T.C. and Scouts attended, with three of their number carrying their flags/banners through the church before placing them at the front. Everyone in the congregation was given a candle. At 10 p.m., lights were extinguished, the first candle was lit and that candle was used to light the next candle which was in turn used to light the next candle, a process repeated round the church until every candle was lit. There were readings from the bible as well as readings of poems written by serving poets before Rev Paul Donnison gave the address. The congregation sang *Pack up your troubles* and *It's a long way to Tipperary*, while a series of pictures showing soldiers whistling and singing as they marched to war, the horrors of trench warfare and fields of poppies appeared on the screen. One of the most moving moments of the evening came when the silent congregation, in a darkness illuminated only by the sea of flickering candles throughout the church, heard the names of those Ystrad Mynach and Hengoed people who made the supreme sacrifice read out. The small World War I exhibition laid out in the Glass Room including a number of interesting and moving items. The Church thanks Gelligaer Historical Society for permission to use information included in their recent publication and on their website.

Ivor Harris

Keeping the Home Fires Burning -- October 11 saw a sizeable Gelligaer Historical Society contingent among the capacity audience at the Winding House to hear Audrey Griffiths, a member of the Society and an experienced speaker, on *Keeping the Home Fires Burning*. Her audience, knowing it would be something special, was not disappointed. Delivered in her impeccable style, it was both well-researched and imaginative in the way in which she told the story of one family in 1915-1916. I'm sure she will deliver this talk again and so I won't spoil it for you by telling you much about it. NOTE by David Mills -- *Audrey has agreed to deliver this talk at one of our monthly meetings, but such is the popularity of our talks that it will not be until 2016 !!*

Glamorgan History Society Day School November 15 2014 -- Gelligaer Historical Society was represented at this Day School when the theme was World War I. Dr. Gethin Matthews opened the day with a talk on *South Wales chapels and the First World War* that suggested some lines of enquiry that could be researched for some of the chapels in our part of north east Glamorgan. The second talk, *Welsh women's work in the First World War* by Professor Deirdre Beddoe, highlighted that, in spite of the fact women had acquired many and varied skills during the war years, the end of the war saw a return to the pre-war position as most women in Wales learned that poorly-paid domestic service was their only option for paid employment. After a satisfying lunch, the day concluded with Dr John Alban's talk *Belgian refugees and Swansea's Belgian community*, in which he gave a clear exposition not only of the reasons why the refugees came to UK but also how they were received. This photograph shows Court Colman where the day school was held and further information about its history and present use is available at websites such as www.court-colman-manor.com.



Family History day at Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, Merthyr Tydfil



Greg at the start of the day

On behalf of the Society Greg Buick and David Mills attended an event arranged by the Merthyr Branch of the Glamorgan Family History Society. Visitors were shown how to research records with particular reference to WW1. A steady trickle of visitors throughout the day visited the stalls set up by local history societies. Although a "Merthyr" event, a number of visitors were interested in



The GHS stall

our stall. One visitor, who had spent his childhood holidaying with family in Bargoed, was delighted to find, and purchase, our Bargoed and Gilfach book.

SEPTEMBER 2014 MEETING

Oliver Blackmore (of Newport Museum) opened the Society's 2014-15 season with an interesting and informative illustrated talk on the early *Excavations at Caerwent*. Many finds from these excavations can be seen at Newport Museum

OCTOBER 2014 MEETING

After a gap of a few years Alan Thorne, the well known local historian attended to entertain, and inform, the audience with one of his many talks on nautical matters. This time he spoke about the activities of German U Boats (submarines) around the coast of the UK, with particular emphasis on the Welsh coast.

Alan's interest in the U boats came about after he was told a story about U boat crews landing in Pembrokeshire to obtain fresh water, and even calling in at pubs!. In his usual well researched and entertaining style Alan was able to dispel this myth. However, he discovered the fact that three submariners who were prisoners of war escaped from a camp near Llandudno and were at large in the area for a few days; they had called in at shops and pubs before being recaptured, this may be the origin of the story. Alan also discovered a similar story exists in the Ilfracombe area where it is rumoured that submarines parked underneath a waterfall to take on fresh water, he again gave sound reasons why this simply did not happen.

By using archives containing the log books of German submarines, and also British shipping records, Alan gave details of the huge number of vessels attacked, and sunk, by the U boats. In WW1 the losses were heavy because there were no detection systems in place. The most common way of sinking a vessel in WW1 was by the U boat surfacing and attaching mines to the hull. At that time a great number of the vessels were sailing ships and they proved to be easy targets for the U boats.

Publishing

Dr Fred Holley has published another volume of the Merthyr Historian series. Merthyr Historian Vol. 26 was launched at the Engine House, Merthyr Tydfil on Saturday, 19th November where Huw Williams, who chaired the event, paid tribute to Dr. Holley's contribution to history in the Parish. He praised the production of the volume and also praised Fred as an editor, noting that Fred is a commissioning editor, exercising the minimum of control over authors who sometimes are seeking a first foothold in print for their research. Huw also stated that Fred gives freely of his own notes, references, books and manuscripts to authors to craft an essay. Alongside Fred in the production of these books, Huw pointed out that credit should also be given to Vida and John. Fred has said that he will stand down as editor of Merthyr Historian after Volume 27 - his will be a very hard act to follow!

Dr. Holley has also contributed much to Gelligaer Historical Society both as an author and the publisher of Gelligaer journals, including his involvement in publishing our compendiums. He is now a life member.

Another of our life members, former president Islwyn Hughes has been in hospital with a chest infection. He has now recovered and is in the Bargoed Care Centre. He is quite bright and visitors are welcome.

GHS Publications

Gelligaer Journal Volume 21 Great War edition 2014 has received positive feedback, and the Committee plan for further Great War editions to appear in 2016 and 2018/19. So any members or friends of the Society with WWI-related stories, please research them and submit them for inclusion in either of these volumes.

General topics -- Several articles on a variety of topics have been submitted for inclusion in Volume 22 which will be published in September 2015. But there is room for more, so if you have anything that you would like to see in print, please send it to the website www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk for consideration. Please don't worry if you are out of practice with writing, just jot your ideas down and it can be edited for you.

Other Book launches

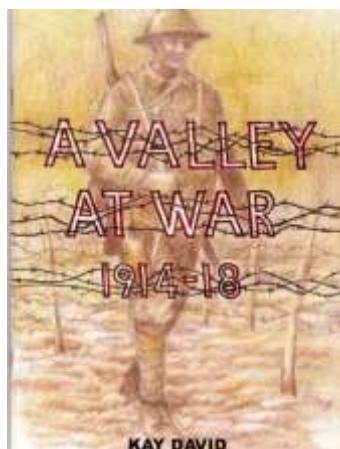
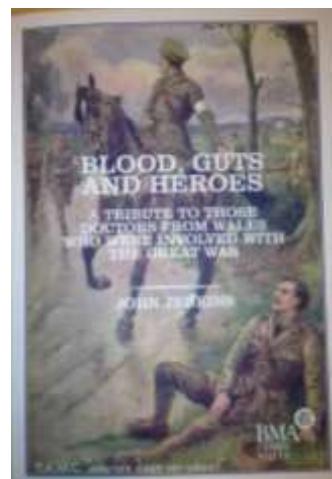
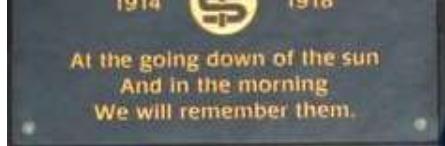
Blood, Guts and Heroes -- At the invitation of Dr Philip Banfield and Dr Richard Lewis, Chairman and Secretary of BMA Cymru Wales, Gelligaer Historical Society was represented at an event in Pierhead Building Cardiff Bay on October 16.

The hour long ceremony opened with Howell's School Junior Choir capturing the optimism of many early war volunteers by whistling as they marched on stage before singing wartime songs such as *It's a long way to Tipperary*. The mood changed when

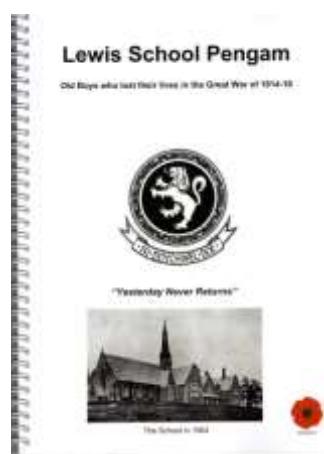
Joshua Frost, Head Boy of Howell's School, read a selection of poetry and prose that evoked the grim realities of the war.

First Minister Carwyn Jones unveiled this commemorative plaque and John Jenkins's book *Blood, Guts and Heroes* was launched. There are a number of local doctors, including Brithdir's Dr. E. W. S. Martin, mentioned in

this tribute to doctors from Wales who were involved with the Great War.



Book lunch in Lewis School Pengam – These two World War I related books were launched in LSP on November 11. *A Valley at War 1914-1918* is the work of former teacher Kay David, while *Lewis School Pengam, Old Boys who lost their lives in the Great War*, is the result of research by Ludovican Paul Williams. *I take this opportunity to remind readers of Gelligaer Times that pupils of LSP will give a presentation based on the school's ambitious World War I Project at GHS January 2015 meeting. The meeting will start at 11 a.m.* and those who wish to purchase lunch at Llancaiah Fawr following the meeting are advised to inform the Society by January 21.



Future Events

DECEMBER MEETING

Our December meeting takes place at Llancaiach Fawr on the **10th December** 2014, commencing at 7 p.m. Tea/coffee & mince pies will be served. As in previous years the format will be informal and audience participation will be positively encouraged. The following people have kindly agreed to contribute:

Iris Owen will bring some bound copies of WW1 newspapers and give a brief preamble about her latest research project.

Steve Kings (of Bargoed Library fame) will bring along OS maps of Bargoed, dated 1875, 1900 and 1925 together with the tithe map for the Parish of Gelligaer. Steve will be happy to discuss these maps and any other topic concerning the documents held at the library.

Graham Oxlade well known to members of the society for his knowledge of coins, particularly from the Roman period, will bring along two books he recently purchased. Coxe's Tour of Monmouthshire printed in 1803 and Gerald's Tour of Wales, reprinted in 1806. Both books were illustrated by Sir Richard Colt Hoare and Graham will give a short talk on Colt Hoare's life.

JANUARY MEETING

As last year the January meeting will be a morning meeting. The talk will start at 11.00 am. Members of staff and pupils of Lewis School Pengam will talk about their recent experiences relating to World War 1: the memorials they had cleaned in partnership with the Winding House, the intergenerational trip they organised to Flanders and the Somme, the two books they worked on with two local authors and the play that was performed at Blackwood Miners institute based on the school and Morgan Jones.

There will be an opportunity to buy lunch after the event. If you wish to have lunch please advise us by January 21, (i.e. the Wednesday before) so we can let Llancaiach know.

MARCH 28 2015 - CONFERENCE

The Conference will again be held at Llancaiach Fawr and the speakers have been booked. They are, in no particular order,

Les James	Zephaniah Williams' revelations about the Chartist Rising 1839
Angela Evans (Cardiff PhD student)	Cinema history, with reference to the local area
Dr. Toby Thacker (Cardiff University)	David Jones 1937 <i>In Parenthesis</i> --
Dr. Sian Rhiannon Williams (Cardiff Metropolitan University)	Teachers trained in inter-war period
Barrie Davies	Early Glamorgan Genealogy

Cwmfelin Flitch Trial

Many readers of *Gelligaer Times* will have heard of the Dunmow Flitch Trials, the history of which can be traced back to the early twelfth century. Today the Dunmow Trial is held at Great Dunmow (Essex) every four years and, as in the past, a flitch of bacon is awarded to a couple who can satisfy a Judge and Jury of their happiness together for a year and a day. But (and I address this question especially to readers with Bedlinog roots or connections) do you know anything about the *Cwmfelin Flitch Trial* that was reported in *Merthyr Express* March 14 1931?

Annie

Chartist 175 years Celebration by David Mills

Several events have taken place in Newport and other areas of Gwent to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the march on Newport. One such event was a convention held at Newport on 1st November. The joint-chairs for the event were Dr Elin Jones, of Ystrad Mynach, and Les James (who will deliver a lecture on a Chartist related topic at the Gelligaer Historical Society Annual conference next year).

Prior to the start of the lectures, I spoke with Dr Elin and Les. Naturally, the subject of the Gelligaer area was discussed. It was agreed that there is a lot of research still waiting to be done on the role of workers from the Gelligaer area and the part they played in the march on Newport. If any member of GHS wishes to explore the role of the Chartists in the Gelligaer/Llanfabon area then it may be that an informal research group can be set up. If you are interested then please contact Annie Owen or David Mills, or contact the society via our website.

During one of the breaks, I saw a demonstration of the new, soon to be up and running, digitised tithe map system. If you have a computer at home it will no longer be necessary to visit the archives or libraries. What I saw was impressive, it will be possible to overlay the tithe map with more modern maps. The apportionment schedule will also be available.

For an advanced peep, please go to cynefinblog.archiveswales.org.uk. Enquiries have already been made on behalf of the society on how volunteers can assist by transcribing documents which will help to improve the web site. As soon as more information comes to hand an email will be sent to all members. **David Mills**

Encouraging birds into your garden!

With the autumn and winter approaching and the breeding season over, bird numbers will have increased with not only adults looking for food but this year's young as well. And with the following two seasons potentially being wet and cold then birds will become reliant to an extent on garden food particularly as wild food becomes scarce.

This is where feeding our garden birds really comes into being but do remember that once you start feeding them to continue throughout the autumn and winter, and if you are going away ensure that someone tops up the feeders and water on your behalf otherwise the birds will have to quickly find an alternative food source, and that could mean the difference between life and death for some.



Nuthatch feeding – N.D.



Great Spotted Woodpeckers love peanuts too – N.D.

Ensure the bird table is strong and up to the mark for the tough weather ahead and also ensure feeders are cleaned on a regular basis. Also from time to time alternate the position of the bird table for a week or so and clean up around where it previously stood. Always make sure the bird bath is cleaned and topped up with water. Even in the winter birds still need to drink and bathe.

It is always a welcome sight to see birds in the garden and particularly watching them at the feeding station. The regular visitors will always be present such as Blue Tit, Great Tit and Coal Tit and perhaps a small flock of Long Tailed Tits too. House Sparrows, Starlings, Goldfinches, Chaffinches and Bullfinches have all learned to exploit getting food from the feeders as has the Robin in recent years. Dunnocks are never far away, usually preferring to feed on the ground, sometimes with a Song Thrush or Blackbird.



Starlings absolutely love the fat balls – N.D.



Rowan berries, loved by birds – N.D.

But regular feeding can attract some other visitors too. Great Spotted Woodpeckers relish the peanuts and will dominate the peanut feeder giving some excellent views. Suet or similar pushed into cracks in the bark or in a makeshift log with holes will attract a Treecreeper and Nuthatch – although the Nuthatch can also be a regular sight on the peanut feeders.

Who knows, some people get lucky with some special visitors to their gardens such as winter visiting Redwings and Fieldfares which particularly love berries such as Hawthorn, Rowan, Cotoneaster and Berberis but will also sample wind fallen fruit left on the ground (once this goes mushy remove to discourage vermin). Occasionally one speciality visits gardens for some lucky people – the beautiful Waxwing. Now that would be fantastic.

Enjoy watching the antics of your garden birds this autumn and winter and place out a good selection. Peanuts and black sunflower seeds are a favourite with a variety of birds, but grain and fat balls are equally important and all of the above will pretty much take care of all the visitors to the garden. To finish just a few things to note, never provide desiccated coconut as this swells in the birds tummies (buy the half ones found in most shops), bacon rinds make them thirsty, rice is a no no and bread has one of the lowest energy values for birds and will attract rats if left too long. Sweep up fallen seed and grain daily but leave some for the ground feeders too.