

GELLIGAER TIMES

Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

Summer 2017 issue 38

Editor David Mills



Message from the Chair

I hope that, having enjoyed the summer break, you are looking forward to the interesting 2017-2018 programme that Judith has prepared. At the time of writing, *Gelligaer* Volume 24 is with the printer, and so should be available at the September meeting. It is intended that, in 2018, the Society's WWI Project will conclude with volume 25, the third WWI commemorative issue, and a final effort to identify more names on local war memorials. Your submissions for inclusion in Volume 25 will be welcome, as will any information relevant to the database of names on local war memorials (see <http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk/index.php/wwi-memorials>). At the moment a small editorial team is working on *Brithdir, yesteryear in an upper Rhymney valley community*, the culmination of Roy Smith's decade-long research into his home village. Hopefully, it will be available before Christmas 2017, and an ideal Christmas present for anyone interested in the history and heritage of the upper Rhymney valley. Several researchers are busy preparing for the Society's Diamond Project, a study of nineteenth century across the old parish of Gelligaer. Please contact <http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk/> or a committee member if you wish to be involved.

I hope existing members feel able to renew their memberships for 2017-2018, and we will welcome new members also. I look forward to seeing you all at the September meeting, remember there will be tea/coffee at 6.15 pm.

Best wishes

Annie

Season 2017-2018

September 27th 2017 John Watkins George Paget: working-class hero or villain of the piece?

Gelligaer volume 24 will be launched at this meeting. **Tea and biscuits available from 6.15**

October 25th 2017 Menna Hughes Madame Betty and Chateau Bourblanc

November 29th 2017 Dr. David Jenkins "I hope to have a good passage" – the business letters of Captain Daniel Jenkins, 1902-11

December 13th 2017 Informal evening: with coffee and biscuits

1) Kevin Dicks - Nelson Handball Court 2) Dr. David Williams Evan James and Bargoed

January 31st 2018 **11.00 a.m. start** Huw Williams Understanding the Valleys: 1800-1900

After lunch (which can be purchased at Llancaiach Fawr) The Sock of the New: Modern Wales.

February 28th 2018 Peter Walker Empire Jack, soldier, arsonist and engineer

March 28th 2018 Brian Davies The View from the Rocking Stone

April 25th 2018 Jeff Childs Parish Churches of the Lordship of Gower

May 30th 2018 Lyn Pask Understanding and Locating the History beneath our Feet

June 27th 2018 A.G.M. and short talk by David Mills - Blackwood in the 1830s

Annual Conference March 24th 2018

Dr. Elin Jones	Women's' Suffrage and the 1918 Act
Prof. Angela V. John	A Giant Stride, Dr Frances Hoggan, Victorian Champion of Women's equality
Alun Morgan	Welsh Rugby and the 1905 Religious Revival
Dr Stuart Broomfield	Revisiting the story of Llewelyn Bren in the year that marks the 700th anniversary of his brutal death

Books

Gelligaer Journal Volume 24 Available for £5 from September 27th

Mason on the Move (Morgan Edwards 1850-1925)	Nesta Jones
History of Penybank	Annie Owen
The Chartists of Llanfabon and Gelligaer	Brian Davies
Thomas Matthews: A Broken Harp	Dic Felstead
The Watson family, Tir y Felin, and the development of Deri	Judith Jones
Chief Fire Officer Capt. Percy Jack Moody GUDC Fire Brigade	Keith Mills
Glan-y-nant, Pengam – A 1947 Survey	Margaret Boulton
Building Clubs – Railway Street, Trelewis	Greg Buick
A Long Time Ago: Bargoed, 1945	Dr Whitney Jones
Bargoed Memories	Clive Williams
The Running Track at Bargoed Park	Clive Williams
David Williams: Some Awkward Questions	Dr Whitney Jones
George Paget 1874 – 1956	John Watkins
John Morgan (Trelynnydd) – Welsh Bard	Royston Smith
Madame Betty & Chateau Bourblanc a true story of many parts	Menna Hughes
Newspaper reactions to industrial disaster in south Wales: A comparison between Senghenydd, 1913, and Aberfan, 1966.	Owen Evans

BRITHDIR - YESTERYEAR IN AN UPPER RHYMNEY VALLEY COMMUNITY

By Royston C. Smith Projected publishing date late November

This will be a hardback book, about 350 pages, similar in size to Bargoed & Gilfach book.

GHS will be continuing to work towards publishing a book to mark our Diamond Anniversary in 2021 – on the transformation of Gelligaer during the 19th century from a Rural Parish to an Urban District – if you are interested in contributing please contact us if you have not already done so.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Thanks to everyone concerned for another successful conference held on Saturday 25th March 2017 at Llancaiach Fawr. For those unable to attend, the following reports give a flavour of the talks.

Render the Chartist Defenceless

Les James started by explaining the internet has now made much more information accessible to historians. He went on to describe the events surrounding the attack on the Westgate Hotel, Newport and the subsequent trial of John Frost, Zephaniah Williams and William Jones, the acknowledged leaders of the march. They were found guilty of High Treason and sentenced to death. Due to the intervention of Lord Chief Justice Tindal, those sentences were commuted to transportation for life.

Les explained that in the aftermath of the march on Newport on 3rd and 4th November 1839, a small number of generally local publications appeared, however these were published with the aim of discrediting John Frost and the Chartist movement. There was a long gap until David Williams published his work *John Frost, a study in Chartism* 1939. Les first studied this book when taking his "O" levels in 1961, and that work remained the standard version of the march until David Jones and Ivor Wilks published their books, in 1983 and 1984 respectively. Those works turned upside down Williams's theory that the march on Newport was just a monster demonstration. Added to this was the discovery of a copy of letter (now known as the confession letter) written by Zephaniah Williams, whilst on board *The Mandarin*, convict ship bound for Van Diemen's Land. In that letter, Zephaniah Williams laid bare the intentions

of the march. Ness Edwards M.P. for Caerphilly brought the letter to the attention of David Williams and this caused Williams some embarrassment. However, whilst the authenticity of Zephaniah's confession letter was not really in doubt it was, after all, only a copy. This remained so until October 2016, when, at three o'clock in the morning, whilst trawling through documents on her computer, Sarah Richards, a colleague of Les, found a catalogue entry for what she suspected to be the original letter, buried in a huge file of papers at The National Archives, Kew. Les and Sarah visited Kew and, by comparing the writing and signature on that letter with others written by Zephaniah Williams, its authenticity was confirmed. This was proof, if proof were needed, that the digitization of catalogue records is a significant improvement in the maintenance/preservation of historical documents.

Les is now writing another book about John Frost, but rather than follow David Williams biography of Frost, he intends approaching this work by writing it from Frost's standpoint, after he (Frost) returned home from what he described as a hell hole at Van Diemen's Land. Despite promising so to do, Frost never published his story, or his version of the ill-fated attack on Newport.

David Mills

The little man speaks out: local communities and public health in Rural Glamorgan

Professor Keir Waddington began his talk with some quotations which immediately caught the attention of his audience. In the 19th century, he said, the Welsh displayed *the inherent slowness of the pastoral mind*. Guide books described Wales as mediaeval with *Old fashioned ways of life and superstitions*. Common terms for the rural poor were *ignorant, prejudiced, dirty, filthy, careless*, and that it was normal in rural Glamorgan for personal waste to be tipped into *open cess pits*.

In 1896, members of the sanitary authority described rural communities as *mired in their own filth*. It took time for rural authorities to react to proposed changes. The fast growth of industrial towns meant that many rural communities were just on the edge of the improving, if imperfect, urban sanitary arrangements. Still, diseased meat was passed between the two areas.

Despite the fast growth of industrial Wales, old perceptions continued and a medical officer described rural communities as *underdeveloped, backward, primitive*. The perception of rural sanitation was so poor that the towns were also suspected of the same. It is true that many authorities ignored the sudden changes in rural areas being changed into quasi-urban developments by patterns of industrialisation, and negative reports continued. Living conditions in rural Glamorgan were widely reported *in visceral and emotive detail*. Sanitary inspectors used *primitive, filthy, disgusting* to describe the conditions, and inhabitants had *defective drainage, rudimentary water supplies and lived near pig sties*.

The *Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Bridgend Rural Council, 1895* gives the following *obstacles to sanitary reform*; Permissive legislation: Vacillating local government decisions: Lack of local technical expertise: Conflicting advice: Resistance from tight little oligarchies: High rural poverty: High rate of rural evictions and many residents in small houses – overcrowding.

The working industrial class was regarded as poor and powerless, possibly because urban development was mostly financed by the ironmasters and colliery owners. By the late 1880s, in rural areas, communities were trying to exercise their own power especially about improvements which cost money. Their importance came from local knowledge e.g. how sewerage outfalls affected current water supplies

In the late 1880s, isolation hospitals had been built and rural communities became *pro-active* and organised. They asked industrial experts to visit *afraid that fever would break out*, they applied for loans to be spent on hygiene improvements. It was recognised that it was not *backwardness* but *local circumstances* which had influenced past inactivity. By the end of the century the introduction of *one man, one vote* gave a feeling of ownership to any problems. Many improvements would come.

Audrey Griffiths

Exploring the high ground of South Wales

David Leighton, Senior Investigator, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales

The first talk of the afternoon session was given by David Leighton who began by telling us of his long-standing fascination in the landscape of upland Wales and his interest in ensuring that the archaeological heritage of Wales is

recorded and understood. With the aid of appropriate, interesting photographs - which explained his purpose and aims - he captured the interest of his audience as he showed that the varying topography and geology of an area shows environmental change and that, together with archaeological field work, photographs, including aerial photography, can prove usage and development of land and human settlement from post ice-age to the 11th century. He explained how this research continues throughout history, looking at industrial sites from the quarrying of limestone in the 14th century to the early coal mines - bell pits, which can be clearly seen from aerial photographs, and concluding with how the coal mining regions look today. Whilst acknowledging the aid of present day technology Mr Leighton ended by saying that, anyone walking around our hillsides could discover something of archaeological interest

Ann Pinch

Samson in Treharris - Revisiting the Land of Song 1870-1914

Professor Gareth Williams gave the fourth, and final, lecture of the day. It proved to be an enlightening and humorous account of the evolution of industry in tune with music.

As industry had developed and the population increased, more chapels were built and these had become dominant centres within their communities where many activities were held and choirs formed. They also became pivotal centres of learning. Being a choir member, either male or female as there were both Male Voice Choirs and Mixed Choirs, meant for those members: - Socialisation; Learning Basic Skills; Learning to read Musical Notation - Sol-fa; Becoming familiar with the music of the Composers who had written the Oratorios; for the men, opportunities to travel both home and abroad (and a release from work) and most importantly, enjoyment. Work place choirs were also formed. Comparisons between The Temperance Movement, Sport and Choral Music was also discussed.

What was really significant was the rivalry between the Choir Supporters during eisteddfodau competitions, and the exploits and devious behaviour used by choir members and officials to enable THEIR CHOIR TO WIN!

Professor Williams concluded his lecture by playing the final part of *The Martyrs of the Arena*. This had been a truly informative lecture full of humour, and delegates could just imagine listening to a choir competition then it could have either been frightening due to unruly behaviour or jubilation, dependent on which choir you were supporting! The 2107 Conference had ended on a high note.

Susan Price

HARPIST EVENING

The evening of Wednesday May 17 saw the first joint venture between GHS and Friends of Llancaiach, when Harriet Earis gave her concert talk *The history of the harp in Wales* to a sizeable and appreciative audience in The Barn, Llancaiach Fawr.



GHS memorial to late Iris Owens



Prior to the May meeting, GHS members and friends gathered alongside Iris's daughter Delphine, and her family, to witness the dedication, by Rev Zoe King of the Society's tangible memorial to Iris. GHS chair (Annie) and Llancaiach Fawr manager (Diane) spoke and Audrey read *In Dreams* by Dylan Thomas, before the short ceremony concluded with the dedication.

Iris, a popular Society member who (as noted in *Gelligaer Times* issue 36) made an indelible mark not only on the Society but also in the hearts of fellow members. This memorial, the result of generous donations by fellow Society members, not only acknowledges Iris's varied and valuable contributions to Society life but also reflects our pride in having known Iris and our appreciation of her cheerful and positive personality. The inscribed bench (shown in the following photographs provided by Roy Smith and Nesta Williams) is sited to offer a view of the bed of irises and Llancaiach Fawr manor house.



The following poem is reproduced with permission of a member of GHS who passes Iris's home on her daily commute to work

After the Murder

After the man has been charged
and the police tape removed,
the scene settles into ordinariness.
The recycling outside
belies the bloodied flesh.
The birds sing heedless of a
deed unnatural, the breath
stopped, the lives ruined, as if
she were about to hang out
washing, put the kettle on,
correct the proofs of her latest
study - another death in
another place. History
assumes a bland face. Maybe
in ninety years another
pen will animate this crime.
Till then, let the ordinary
be what is best remembered.

Rev. Zoe King and Iris's daughter Delphine



Members' news

GHS was saddened to hear of the recent passing of Tony Jukes and Jean Kember.
The world of local history and heritage is much the poorer.

Talks at monthly meetings

February Ceinwen Statter The Italians in south Wales
March Dr Stuart Broomfield and Gareth Williams Sir Thomas Picton-Hero or Villain ?
April Annie Owen Troedriwfwuch
May Bill Smith Rhymney Iron Works
June AGM – GHS once again managed to make a profit for the year, with the help of a grant towards the financing of the Conference..

Since the issue of the last newsletter, the Society has received news of some members' activities outside the Society.

- During the summer, GHS was delighted hear that Dr. Fred Holley and his wife, Vida, were presented with Merthyr Tydfil Historical Society life memberships, recognising them as valued Society members who have contributed so much to the historical culture of Merthyr Tydfil.
- In March 2017, Annie Owen was awarded Cardiff University's Elsie Pritchard Prize for an essay *Legends and Folk Tales of the Rhymney Valley* submitted during an online course *The Otherworld and Alternate Realities*. Annie follows in the footsteps of another GHS member, Roy Smith, who was awarded this prize for work submitted on a local history course in 2002.
- Congratulations to Angela Evans who, after careful research submitted her dissertation and has been awarded PhD by Cardiff University. Readers who attended the Society's 2015 conference will recall her talk *From Showmen to Businessmen : Cinema entrepreneurs in the South Wales valleys* which was essentially an interim report on her research into this interesting aspect of local history. Her essay *A brief history of film exhibition in Bargoed* appeared in Gelligaer Volume 22 (2015). Angela has sent a summary of her work which appears below



Her dissertation is entitled Cinema, entrepreneurship and Society in the South Wales Valleys, 1900 to the 1970s. It explores the role played by small-scale entrepreneurs in establishing cinema as the predominant cultural medium of the twentieth century. The continuing dominance of small-scale ownership in the South Wales valleys (in most areas of the UK, the major cinema chains, such as Odeon and ABC, came to control the market) meant that cinema proprietors were often prominent local figures. Not only did they exercise a considerable amount of influence on the audience experience, they were also active players in their local communities, cultivating relationships with civic leaders, contributing to a range of local good causes and promoting the community benefits of cinema. Given the controversial nature of cinema, they were adept 'cultural brokers'. The divisive nature of cinema makes it an ideal lens through which to examine the dynamics of civil, social and commercial life of South Wales towns as they transitioned from conditions of economic boom to post-industrial bust. The focus of the research is Bargoed, which was home to the Withers, one of the most important, and yet little known, cinema-owning families in South Wales.

Llancaiach Fawr

Recently, Diane and her staff have been busy preparing the new display boards, and, on a recent visit, GHS member Sue Allen was thrilled to read an account of a ploughing match and find that her great grandfather, William Jenkins of Hengoed, was mentioned, and his farm servant, Septimus Price was awarded third place in a competition.

William Jenkins, tenant of John Perrott of Hengoed Hall, was landlord at Cross Keys Inn, Cefn Hengoed. It is not clear when the building was demolished and replaced by the present premises, and Sue wonders if anyone has seen a photograph showing the building in which her great grandparents lived. As William Jenkins farmed the land attached, it is likely that his wife, Margaret, was responsible for day-to-day work in the pub.

About 1878, William Jenkins took over tenancy of Penllwyn Fawr Farm, Pontllanfraith, and lived in the old Penllwyn Manor House. It was while he was there that William Jenkins became involved with Bedwellty Agricultural Society, and at one time, served as the Society's treasurer. This photograph shows Penllwyn Fawr Farm in the early years of the 20th century. Sue wonders if the person standing by the entrance is her great grandfather.



Another Royal Visit to Llancaiach Fawr



Photographs and details courtesy of Diane Walker

372 years after King Charles I visited the manor during the Civil War of 1685, Prince Charles followed in his ancestor's footsteps to formally open the new orientation exhibition at Llancaiach Fawr, which has been twelve years in the planning and execution since Diane Walker started as general manager in 2005. The project was to improve the interpretation of the Manor by completing the period feel of the interiors, creating the servants' quarters in the attic, building an accessible staircase tower and creating a new bilingual exhibition to tell the wider story of 4000+ years of occupation at the site.

HRH Prince Charles was introduced to the staff and specialist team who created the new exhibition and those who worked on the conservation of the Manor. He agreed that the staircase tower was an appropriate addition and certainly not a *carbuncle* as he once famously described additions to historic buildings in London. He ended his tour with a visit to the period gardens, including the newly planted physic garden. His visit is yet another occasion to add to the long history of Llancaiach Fawr.

Merthyr Express, 24th December 1910

DERI LANDSLIDE: WATER STORAGE TANK BURSTS.

Transcribed by Judith Jones

Owing to a landslide, due to the recent rains, a water storage tank was destroyed at Deri on Saturday morning, and the first reports with regard to the affair created much sensation in the district, and gave rise to exaggerated reports. The accident did not cause quite so much damage as was at first supposed. What was described as the bursting of a reservoir was really the collapsing of a storage tank situated on the right side of the mountain slope on land belonging to Mr. G. Watson, Cardiff. The tank, which is the property of the Rhymney and Aber Valleys Gas and Water Company, supplies the major portion of Deri. It is not the bursting of this tank which took place, but the sliding of a considerable area of the mountain side, which is marked by gaping fissures and deep subsidence.

The damaged tank is situated at the base of a disused quarry, in which protrude huge menacing rocks. The cause of the breaking up of the mountain slope is evident. Three or four levels have been worked in the quarry directly under the three or four cars now dislodged, and an ugly crescent-shaped opening of considerable depth, in some parts, and some 17 feet wide, in others, can now be seen. This crack passes right across the tank, hence its destruction. The levels mentioned were stopped by the Water Company because the working interfered with the water pipes. All the levels have now fallen in, and this, together with the recent storm, accounts for the movement of the mountain side. The slope is some 1,300 feet above the sea level, and immediately below the affected ground are two rows of houses, some of which would be in danger of destruction if the towering earth toppled over. The rush of water was not dangerous, for there could not be a strong volume having regard to the capacity of the tank. The big reservoir which supplies the town of Bargoed is situated on the other side of the hill, above the Darran Colliery. The Company's work-men were engaged on Sunday repairing the tank and replacing the pipes. Our Rhymney Valley representative visited the spot on Saturday evening to make enquiries. He was in company with Inspector Canton, Bargoed, and Mr. D. M. Davies, a surveyor, whose residence is on the side of the steep mountain which towers above the main roadway of the village of Deri, and the top of which is almost 1,300 feet above sea level. He was taken to the spot by P.C. Stead, and by the aid of a lantern traced the fissure in the surface, which circled in almost crescent form the land, about three-quarters of an acre, which slipped. The fissure varied in width from two or three inches to two or three feet. By reason of the slip one of the walls of the tank had given way and the water, of course, had escaped. The tank was constructed by the Rhymney and Aber Water Company, to which pipes were connected to take the water to the roadway near several houses, and a standpipe with tap erected to enable them to draw water for domestic use. The tank was fed from a spring in a quarry higher up the mountain and this source of supply is doubtless of the purest in the district, as there is little fear in regard to its being contaminated by any refuse matter. The pipes had been curiously disarranged by the landslip some of them were even standing on end, whilst a high fence which had enclosed the square tank had been removed several yards away from the tank, apparently stopped in its career down the steep mountain slope by the underwood and dwarfish trees.

The damage to the tank was only discovered at noon on Saturday, when Mr. James Edwards, a farmer, of Deri Newydd Farm, noticed the disarranged pipes. He followed the pipe track to the tank, and then discovered the deep fissure at that point. Some connection with the slip, however, may be traced in the fact that at about eight o'clock on Wednesday evening, the 14th inst., Mr. D. M. Davies and those in his house with him felt a shock and heard a dull

thud. The windows of the house were shaken. Mrs. Richards, Mrs. George, and Mrs. Jones, of Deri Newydd-street, also had the same experience and talked about it the next day.

Another coincidence may be found in the fact that this particular mountain is part of the same which, on the Rhymney Valley side, is a source of continual trouble to the Rhymney Railway Company and the Rhymney and Aber Water Company, by reason of the huge and constantly moving landslide at Troedyrhiwfuwch. Taking the mountain as a triangle, one side is slipping away in the Rhymney Valley and now the other side (possibly as the result of the first slip) has commenced to go on the Deri side. Beneath the mountain, it is known there is a quicksand which is said to extend as far as Troedyrhiw, in Merthyr Valley. At the summit overlooking Tirphil, there is another deep fissure extending a quarter of a mile in length, and of considerable depth.

Standing on the steep, precipitous side of the mountain on the Deri side, one can easily see what a terrible disaster to the village an avalanche of earth from its steep side would be. The cottages would be swept down like reeds, but, fortunately, there does not seem to be ground for thinking that such a disaster is immediately probable, for report has it that there is a stratum of fire clay at the lower part of the mountain which would check any such sliding of the land. Such slides are generally caused by the water beneath flowing above a rocky surface, and when the water stops, there the land is likely to stop in its descent. And seeing that the water could not percolate through fire clay, it would have to remain against it until, by its bulk, it found another way round, thus leaving the land brought down in the first instance at the place it had been forced to lodge itself. The land affected by the slide is said to be the property of Mr. G. Watson, of Cardiff. The damage done to the tank and the dislocation of the pipes will be easy to repair, so that inconvenience in regard to the water supply of Deri would not be, it would seem, a very prolonged one.

Wladfa 2017, by Carwyn Hughes

We (Carwyn and his wife Menna) spent a few weeks earlier this year in Y Wladfa, Welsh Patagonia, which is a region of South America part in Chile and part in Argentina. Politically, Y Wladfa is known in Argentina as Chabut Province. Buenos Aires was our first port of call enabling us to catch a flight to Esquel, in the foothills of the Andes. The pilot had difficulty landing the aircraft because of the wind, a constant companion. Nearby Trevelin, a very small town, a village by our standards, was our first base. From here we visited the Alcerces National Park, named after trees a thousand years old. However, our main interest was in our country folk, who came to inhabit this area, and their continuing culture. Bethel is a chapel with hymns being sung in both Welsh and Spanish. On the right is a photo of Bethel and a visiting Gaucho. The chapel and a primary school, Ysgol yr Andes, share the same campus. The school has



been built from funds donated and the Senedd sponsors a few teachers every year to Welsh schools in the province. There was a Celtic festival in the nearby town of Esquel, with dancers and singers from all over Argentina plus the folk group, *Plu*, from North Wales. This is an annual event to add to the eisteddfodau, which are also held in the province. For those who have read *The Old Patagonian Express*, there is a “retired” engine parked in the main street. On the right is a photo of Patagonia Celtica, *Esquel-Puerto Madryn Ladies*.

The two settlements are located in what was named on sight by the first settlers *Cwm Hyfryd (The Pleasant Valley)*. The settlers who first saw the valley in 1885

thought it an appropriate name having travelled hundreds of kilometres through semi-desert. Socially and politically, the early settlers were way ahead of the people in their homeland. Women had the vote decades before Mrs Pankhurst

forced the measure and they also voted plebiscite to allow this area of Patagonia to be ceded to Argentina rather than Chile.

From Cwm Hyfryd we followed the course of the Afon Camwy, aptly named after its many meanderings, to the towns of Gaiman, Trelew and Peuetro Madryn. In between the settlements is semi-desert with scrub vegetation, no trees, a geologist's paradise because the rock structures may easily be seen since they are not covered with vegetation. The photographs below show the landscapes and natural vegetation which is typical of much of Chabut Province.



The area of the valley around Gaiman may easily be seen from space, this is because of it is a green diagonal rectangle representing the irrigated agricultural area. At ground level there are green fields with grazing herds of mainly Hereford cattle and flocks of sheep with poplar trees providing protection from the wind.

Gaiman is very Welsh, with tea shops and more Welsh flags than Cardiff on a rugby international day. Speaking with relatives of the original descendants, I was fascinated to hear their Welsh accents reflected the areas of Wales of their forebears. One lady told me she had visited Bedlinog during a visit to Wales, her brother now lives near Aberystwyth. Some spoke English with a Spanish accent.

Finally we reached Puerto Madryn to catch our flight to Buenos Aires; it was there in 1865 that the original settlers landed and the relics of their original habitation and stores are now protected as part of Argentina's historical development. The Welsh Chapels such as Moriah in Trelew, which is the only one with a cemetery where the grave stones of the original settlers are marked with bronze plaques, are also protected buildings. Much of Chabut Province is semi-desert and there must have been a tremendous campaign, which induced the *Mimosa* settlers, and others to come here in the following decades.

Answers *Where in Gelligaer* from the last newsletter



A The former Ogilvie Colliery, Deri

B Pentwyn near Fochriw



C The former Lewis School, Gelligaer

D Stone from Capel Gwladys,
now in St Catwg's Gelligaer



E Brithdir Station looking northwards

WHERE IN GELLIGAER/GELLYGAER and a newspaper report in 1910

In previous editions of *Gelligaer Times* we have simply printed the answers to this photographic quiz. However, with a view to make this section more interesting, it has been decided to invite readers to send in memories they may have of the places that appear in this section. Subject to the author being willing, their comments will be published. This section can then be expanded, possibly an up to date photograph of the subject matter would enhance any comments.

A



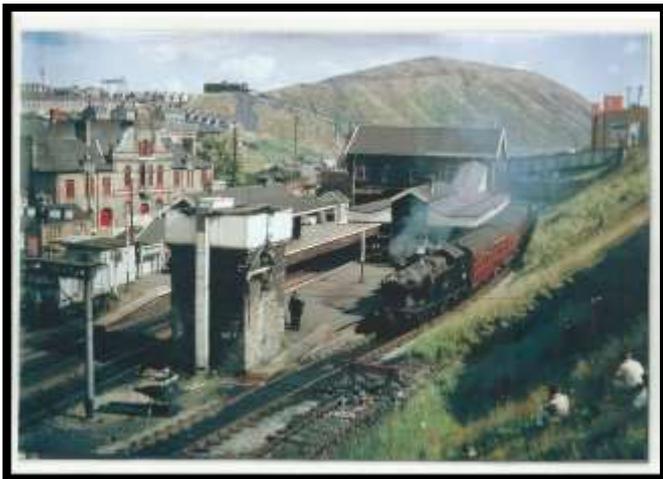
B



C



D



E



GELLIGAER OR GELLYGAER ?

"What's in a name?" has been often asked. Not much, relatively, when the importance of a single letter in the name of a place is seriously considered, as it was to-day by the Local Government Committee of Glamorgan County Council. It was a question of spelling "Gelligaer" "Gellygaer," and some of the members lost their gravity and smiled over the magnitude of the proposal. The urban council wrote that the letter after the second "l" should be a "y." The Local Government Board, communicated with, referred the local authority to the county council. In his reply to the urban council, Mr. Franklen (clerk to the county council) said that in the Local Government Board order creating the area the name was spelt "Gelligaer," and nothing short of an Act of Parliament could alter the name of a parish. (Laughter.) Who was the authority for spelling a name which was a matter of research? The Rev. E. T. Davies: What does Morien say? (Laughter.) Mr. William Williams said the Rector of Gelligaer was anxious to change the spelling. The urban council was divided, and, finally, the matter was forwarded for decision to the county council. On the motion of the chairman, it was decided that the committee had no authority to make the momentous lexicographical alteration.

Photos D & E may be fairly well known to some, so any memories, comments etc. would be welcome

Lewis lore

Gelligaer Historical Society member Dic Felstead is currently engaged in an exciting project at Lewis School, Pengam.

In 1912, the students of Lewis School, under the guidance of their newly appointed Welsh master Thomas Matthews, wrote a book of local legends entitled *Llen Gwerin Blaenau Rhymni*. Following on the heels of their success the boys published a second book of folklore, *Dail-y-Gwanwyn* in 1916. The profits from the volume were charitably donated to the Welsh Hospital at Netley near Southampton which tended to the needs of the Principality's wounded soldiers returning from the battlefields of France and Belgium. In 1984, Dic gave the Lewis books a makeover and retold them in English in his *Legends of the Rhymney Valley*.

Now in 2017, the legends have been reworked yet again, this time by small groups of Key Stage 3 Lewis pupils. In a short five week period between Easter and Whitsun, Dic and Samantha James, a member of the English department and curriculum leader, conducted a series of ten writing workshops for some seventy aspiring authors. Together they have produced a volume entitled *Lewis Lore*, which will be published Friday October 27 2017, at an event in LSP when the mural to Thomas Matthews will be unveiled. GHS members are invited to the event (which starts at 7 pm).

LEWIS LORE



**Some legends of the Rhymney Valley
retold by the lads of:**

LEWIS SCHOOL PENGAM

Cover illustration by John Jones, retired Head of Art at Lewis School

The selection of tales has been modernised to take into account our 21st century's technological and digital age. Including a wide variety of genres, *Lewis Lore* is an eclectic mix of poems, songs, diary extracts, interviews, newspaper articles, reports (forensic, police, medical and psychological), a newsletter, a short play, a radio weather forecast, a film review and an internet chat room dialogue.

On the evening of the book launch, a memorial portrait of Thomas Matthews will be unveiled in the school foyer – the inspirational work of Sharon Price, Head of Art.

Dic told us that Thomas Matthews has sadly been forgotten by history. He died at forty-two years of age in September 1916 but had already established a reputation as a historian of note, author, art critic and educationalist. His name doesn't appear in any national biography and, until now, there has been no memorial to him. The book launch and unveiling ceremony will rectify a century's sad oversight and negligence.

(An article on Thomas Matthews written by Dic Felstead appears in Gelligaer Journal Volume 24)

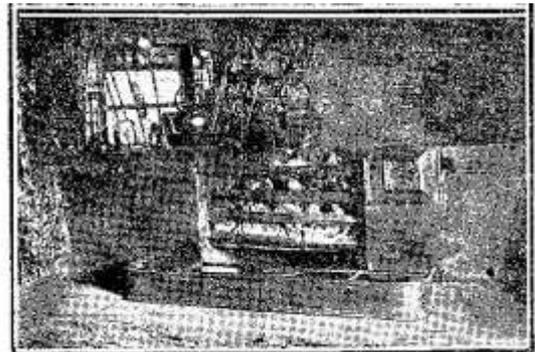
The Austin factory at Pengam

A previous issue of this newsletter contained some information about the Austin factory at Pengam. Fortunately, it was read by Sian Davies, who has very kindly sent the photographs that appear below. The one on the left is of her grandfather, sitting and wearing a *Dai* cap. He was Arthur Ivor Samuel David John Samuel Boulton, but everyone, including his grandchildren knew him as DAI. He lived at 65 Pengam Street, Glanynant. The man, second from the left is someone who was probably far less popular in Glanynant than Dai; he is Edward (Ted) Heath M.P., a former prime minister. The photograph on the right is of Dai's grandson, Ceri, with an Austin car bought for him by Dai.



Heol Ddu Isaf Farm, Bargoed

The following photographs, unfortunately of not very good quality, have been extracted from a newspaper printed in 1910



The following caption also appeared in the same newspaper

The first photograph represents Heol Ddu Isaf, Bargoed the barn of which bears the date in the 16th century. In the forefront can be seen the ruins of what appears to have been a monastery. Mr T Wendon Edwards whose ancestors were closely connected with Gelligaer history is seen in the picture. Unfortunately, the great progress of the town of Bargoed has induced the owners to put the buildings in the hands of the house breakers. Our second photograph shows the old fireplace in the farm. It bears the date 1714 and has a Fleure de Lis design by reason of the fact that it was made in Fleur de Lis and was indeed the first article turned out from the famous foundry of the little Rhymney Valley Village.

Fortunately, because of the Cynefin project, it has been possible to pin point the site of the farm in present day Bargoed. The map on the left is the Tithe map of 1840s. On the right is a present day map. The red dot in Henry Street is in the same spot as the red dot on the Tithe map



David Mills (if you have any knowledge of the whereabouts of the original pictures please let us know)

The common landscape project (Photographs and details provided by Caerphilly County Borough Council)

The Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Programme together with Caerphilly County Borough Council’s Winding House Museum are in the process of developing and delivering a couple of projects that are focused on the heritage of our beautiful county. Much of this work will be carried out in the area around and on the Gelligaer and Merthyr Common. These projects include:

Mapping our Heritage: The aim of this project is to create an map of the local area highlighting the vast array of highly important social, rural and cultural heritage sites that can be found here. These will include historically important buildings, archaeological sites, etc. that exist here.

Our area is rich in history, people have lived and thrived on our land for thousands of years, late Stone Age/Early Bronze age settlements and burial sites on Gelligaer and Merthyr Common, Roman forts, practice ground and encampments, Medieval standing stones and Castle, Tudor Manors, Early Non-Conformist chapels. Also a huge collection of buildings and sites that came after the boom of the industrial revolution and all have left their mark in one way or another.

This project will see the engagement of a professional consultant to work closely with the thriving local history groups that have, over the years, carried out detailed research into their own particular areas and along with their unique local knowledge will be able to make a valuable contribution to this project.

Once all the information is gathered it will be built into a web based resource. A map of the area will be created that will show each of the historically important sites encouraging visits to these sites by both local and out of area tourists. The digital map will be interactive and when the cursor is over each site the information on that particular site will be shown. It is hoped that this information will also be used at the sites themselves, with the use of mobile devices and QR codes. The sites that are physically accessible will have small signs at them with the QR code on it, once scanned into a smart phone the code will take you to the relevant page of information. This project aims to deliver the first such heritage mapping in Wales.

In the development of this project, we have been in discussion with other authority areas in South East Wales and received favourable feedback with the hope that in the near future other areas will carry out similar exercises and a complete heritage map of South East Wales will become accessible for tourism purposes.



What's under our feet?: Geophysical studies on some of the ancient monuments found on Gelligaer and Merthyr Common. A request from the Gelligaer Historical Society and Llancaiach Fawr to carry out a study to give us a greater understanding of some of the more important sites of heritage on the common.

Bygone Skills: A range of taster training days to teach the ancient arts of dry stone walling and hedge laying or pleaching.

To become involved in any of these projects including registering onto the training days please contact Phill Loveless, RDP Development Officer on 01443 838632, email: lovelp1@caerphilly.gov.uk

ANNUAL CHARTIST CONVENTION

This year the convention takes place on 4th November 2017 in the splendid setting of St. Woolos Cathedral, Newport. Please visit <http://www.our-chartist-heritage.co.uk> to book tickets. Paul Flynn M.P. and Dr Elin Jones will chair the Convention. GHS has accepted an invitation to have a stall at the event. Hopefully, the stall will contain material that supports an article by Brian Davies *Chartists of Llanfabon and Gelligaer*, which will appear in *Gelligaer* Volume 24, due to be launched at our September meeting.

The Programme is

12 noon Registration

12.30 Tour of Cathedral with Jeremy Knight

13.30 Introduction Paul Flynn M.P.

13.40 The Bristol Riots 1831 Roger Ball

14.30 Events in Newport at time of Bristol Riots Les James

15.15 Tea-Coffee- Refreshments

15.30 The Rebecca Riots Rhian Jones

16.30 The Chartist Scarecrows Ray Stroud

17.15 Conclusion

18.00 Free event Chartist Commemoration in Cathedral Grounds

18.45 Chartist walk down Stow Hill

19.30 Chartist Music Evening at the Pen & Wig Stow Hill - admission on door £10 or can be booked at a discount on line via our chartist heritage web site (see above)

Book reviews

Give Me Strength: A Story From The Rhymney Valley by Cari Glyn (alias Jen Pritchard)

(an ebook available on Amazon)

The year is 1909. Bargoed is a burgeoning town in the Rhymney Valley since the sinking of the coal mine by Powell Duffryn Steam Coal Company. Walter Lewis, the newly elected miners' agent represents the working men of the valley who pay their penny due to the Fed, the South Wales Miners Federation.

Comment: Wonderful book written by Cari Glyn a fellow pupil of my old school about our valley at the turn of the 20th century, full of drama and description, capturing the strength and humanity of the men and women, the fights for rights of the miners and welfare, the chapel, the union, the concert, five a side (and not forgetting the bat and catti)....the sadness and gladness of a great story, well told. Completely without cliché, really gripping. Thoroughly recommended !

Handball The story of Wales' first national sport by Kevin Dicks (y Lolfa 2017)

In this volume, GHS member, Kevin Dicks, traces the history of Handball, a simple *hand to ball to wall* game, from early times to the present day. After an introduction outlining his experiences on LSP Fives Court in the 1970s, Kevin proceeds to describe and analyse the evolution of the sport in Wales. Not only does he describe the courts and the players, but he also sets the developments within the context of contemporary changes across Wales and in the local area. This is a well-researched history as witnessed by the meticulous footnotes and lengthy bibliography, and GHS members and others should look forward to Kevin's short talk at GHS December 2017 meeting.

Voices from the Factory Floor by Catrin Stevens (Amberley 2017)

Some readers may recall Catrin Stevens addressing a GHS conference on the experiences of women who worked in the manufacturing industries in Wales, 1945-1975. The project, then in its infancy, has concluded with this publication in which the text, illustrated by many photographs, conveys the feelings of these female former factory workers.

The Editor would like to thank Ceri Creffield & Leighton Smart for their assistance in compiling this Newsletter.