

# GELLIGAER TIMES

Newsletter of Gelligaer Historical Society

Spring 2018 issue

Includes reports on the Annual Conference

Editor David Mills



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Since the last newsletter, GHS received the sad news of the passing of our much respected President Emeritus, Islwyn Hughes. Messages of condolence were sent, respects were paid to him at the January meeting and the Society was well-represented at the funeral in his church, St. Catwg's, Gelligaer. May he rest in peace with his beloved Joan, who, like Islwyn, contributed so much to this Society over many years. There is a tribute to Islwyn elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Society has also heard of the passing of two other members, Edward Woosnam and Steve Kings (only recently retired from Bargoed Library). Messages of condolence have been sent to their families and the Society was represented at the funerals.

2017-2018 seems to have been a long and difficult winter with snow falling early in December and again, repeatedly and accompanied by extremely cold conditions, in February and March. Although bad weather forced cancellation of its February meeting, GHS has not been inactive during the winter, as evidenced by the various reports within this newsletter. Hopefully, we will soon enjoy pleasant spring weather and perhaps consider accepting the offer of Ben Evans (see December meeting report and article on TIPical) to visit some of the local mineral spoil sites to see how they have become havens for wildlife.

The Society's WWI Project is on its last year. A third commemorative issue of *Gelligaer* is planned for autumn 2018 and articles should be submitted by July 1. From time to time, further information is uncovered to add to the database of names on local war memorials -- see <http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk/index.php/wwi-memorials-2> for progress. GHS's Diamond Project on 19<sup>th</sup> century Gelligaer parish continues.

If anyone has any WWI information or wishes to join the Diamond Project research team, please contact [chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

*Annie*

## **THE LATE ISLWYN LLEWELLYN HUGHES (31<sup>st</sup> March 1928 to 7<sup>th</sup> January 2018)**

Islwyn was born in Troedyrhiw however, his parents moved around and he spent some time in Maesteg and then Kent before the family settled down at Cascade. He married Joan at St. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1966. Both he and Joan were long-standing

members of Gelligaer Historical Society. Joining the Society in 1981, they soon became committee members and officers and remained in these positions for many years, their enthusiasm, friendliness and commitment to the Society and their encouragement of their friends to join too were very much a part of Gelligaer Historical Society's scene in the 1980s and '90s. Both were always willing to share their experiences of other Societies' events to expand the talks and trips of our Gelligaer Society.

Joan became a committee member in 1982 and was a willing helper at all times; be it pouring the tea, collecting money, lending a friendly ear to all members, helping with the Day School lunch on an infamous occasion and was also assistant treasurer for a period.



In 1982 Islwyn became treasurer and press secretary, then was elected as chairman a few years later, a position he held until 2005 when he became President of the Society. In 2015 Islwyn was elevated to President Emeritus and was also one of the first life members of Gelligaer Historical Society. He contributed to the Society's journals, writing *In the Footsteps of St Catwg* in Vol. xvii, 2009, where he described the *pilgrimage* (led by Gethin Thomas) he and Joan made with others from Gelligaer Parish Church to Ile de Cado, the church founded in Brittany by Gelligaer's St. Cadog. Islwyn was also known for his talks and was happy to share his large collection of slides with Society members who benefited from the Brittany pilgrimage and from his research into the Tudor and Stuart Kings and Queens. Islwyn was an excellent chairman at both monthly meetings and at the Society's Day Schools; his easy but firm control contributing greatly to their success.

Both Joan and Islwyn are greatly missed by Gelligaer Historical Society members.

#### **The late Jean Kember**

Members were saddened to hear in September 2017 of the death of former member Jean Kember. Jean's interest in local history was ignited when she inherited a small silver harp which had been awarded to her ancestor David Davies (Dafydd Penygarreg) as an eisteddfod prize. She then began researching the Davies family (who kept the Harp Inn, Gelligaer), obtained copies of his music from the National Library at Aberystwyth and even learned to play the triple harp. Jean was a committee member of the Society, at various times secretary and membership secretary, and she, together with her husband, Gerald, tirelessly promoted its journal. An authority on the mediaeval period, Jean's knowledge, and enthusiasm will be greatly missed in local history circles.

*Clive Andrewartha*

#### **The late Tony Jukes (1940-2017)**

Anthony Edward Jukes was born in Swindon in 1940. The family later moved to Portsmouth which he always regarded as his home town. Tony studied chemistry at Birmingham University, gaining the degrees of BSc and PhD, followed by 2 Research Fellowships at Iowa State University. In 1970, he took the post of research chemist at Machen works of Coates Brothers. Later, he taught chemistry, first at Duffryn High School, Newport, then at Pencoed ,

Bridgend, as Head of Department. He was married to Margaret and had 3 children – Edward, Amelia and Robert, and one grandson, Lewis.

His interest in industrial history led him to join Oxford House Industrial History Society at Risca, where he was secretary for many years. He actively participated in *pick and shovel* excavations at Melin Griffith Mill, Cardiff, and Rudry Iron Works, Machen, leading to their Grade 2 Listings. The remains of Tongwynlais Iron Works were unearthed around the same period. He led many walks to explore the industrial past in the area. With the formation of the Ruperra Conservation Trust, he became its first chairperson. It is now the flourishing Ruperra Woodland Trust.

His researches led him to publish two books under the Danygraig Books Machen logo, The Cwmcarn Dam Disaster and Crumlin Colliery, which he co-authored with Arthur Clarke.

He initiated Bedwas Local History Society in the early 1970s, writing copious notes. With the formation of Bedwas and Trethomas Local History Group in 1998, he willingly became the chairperson, a position he held to his death. He joined with Derrick Jones and Gordon Maslen in the publication of 2 volumes of the history of the two villages. Tony gave talks to many different groups, especially Machen Men's Probus. For relaxation, he was a keen gardener and member of Cactus and Fuchsia Societies. Canoeing was a special favourite. Family holidays often pursued outdoor explorations.

His researching was prodigious and he would spend whole days at the National Archives in Kew or at National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, along with John Evans of Blaenavon. Any lecture that Tony gave always seemed to be the definitive one. Family history enquirers were rarely disappointed.

He died on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2017. We salute his many achievements, his unflagging enthusiasm and his willingness to serve.

*Gordon Maslen*

## REPORTS ON MONTHLY MEETINGS

**September 2017** —GHS member, John Watkins, spoke on *George Paget: working-class hero or villain of the piece?* to a large audience of members and visitors. Those who missed this talk may like to read *George Paget, 1874-1956* in *Gelligaer* volume 24 (the volume was launched at this meeting).

**October 2017** — Menna Hughes, another GHS member, gave a talk entitled *Madame Betty and the Chateau Bourblanc* which expanded on another article in *Gelligaer* volume 24, *Madame Betty and Chateau Bourblanc – a true story in many parts*.

**November 2017** — Dr David Jenkins visited the Society again and spoke on the subject matter of his recent publication *I hope to have a good passage .... the business letters of Captain Daniel Jenkins, 1902-11*.

**December 2017** — The meeting followed the successful informal format of recent years. There were three short talks:

- Ben Evans spoke on *TIPical Valleys Project* (see his article in this newsletter)

- Kevin Dicks on *Handball The story of Wales' first national sport* (the subject of his recent publication)
- And Dr David Williams on *Evan James and Bargoed*.

Thanks to committee members Ann Pinch and Susan Price for assisting with serving tea/coffee and mince pies, and to Judith Jones for organising the members' special raffle, won by Ceri Creffield, and the 'open ' raffle, and thanks also to those who donated prizes for the raffle.

**January 2018** — Following the practice of recent years, the meeting started at 11am. It opened with a tribute to late Islwyn Hughes, the Society's President Emeritus. There was a large audience to hear Huw Williams speak on *Understanding the Valleys: 1800-1900*, and many of them stayed to enjoy lunch and conversation in the café before returning to the Barn to listen to Huw speak on *The Shock of the New: Modern Wales*.

**February 2018** — Unfortunately the meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather brought by what the weathermen called the *Beast from the East*. The speaker will visit GHS in autumn 2018.

**March 2018** — A sizeable audience enjoyed an interesting talk, *View from the Rocking Stone* by Brian Davies, former curator at Pontypridd Museum.

**April 2018** – Jeff Childs visited the Society again and gave a well-researched and interesting talk on *Parish churches of the Lordship of Gower*.

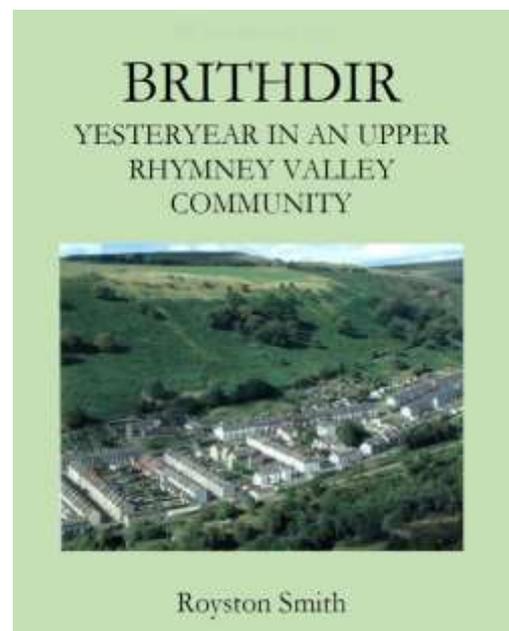
## **BRITHDIR, YESTERYEAR IN AN UPPER RHYMNEY VALLEY COMMUNITY,**

by Royston Smith. Published by Gelligaer Historical Society, 2017. 356 pp. including over 300 photos. Hardback £15.00 and Paperback £8.00.

Following more than a decade of research, Royston Smith, member and treasurer of Gelligaer Historical Society, has produced this history of Brithdir, the former coal mining community in which he grew up in the mid twentieth century. Situated a mile or so north of the town of Bargoed on the west (Glamorganshire) bank of river Rhymney, the community was originally known as George Inn, but became Brithdir after its railway station's name was changed from George Inn to Brithdir in 1891. After a short introductory chapter, the volume comprises chapters entitled Farms and farming families, The Village, The coal industry, Transport and communications, Churches and chapels, Education, Shops and services, Social life, Sport, Brithdir at home

1900-1939, War service 1900-1919, Brithdir war memorial and World War II, before concluding with Brithdir alphabet, a 100-page miscellany relating to Brithdir people and issues. Copies of the book have been posted to numerous countries ranging from Argentina, Australia and Sweden as well as places such as Merthyr Tydfil, Phillipstown and Bedwas.

For copies of the volume please see [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)



**Launch** -- The book was launched at a well-attended event in White Rose Information and Resource Centre on the evening of Friday 24 November 2017. People gathered by 6 pm and, before the formal launch, watched with interest the audio-visual presentation prepared by

Eamon Spillane, grandson of the much-loved former local doctor, Dr O'Shea. The formal launch opened with a welcome from GHS Chair, Annie Owen, before Roy Smith addressed the audience about this project, and Gloria Harris, Ivor Harris and Eamon Spillane read extracts from the book. Mayor CCBC, Councillor John Bevan, attending with his Consort, spoke of his memories of childhood visits to Brithdir, and Eddie Griffiths, descended from the Bevan family, one of the earliest families to settle in the new Brithdir community in the 1850s, launched the book

After the formal launch, the audio-visual presentation was shown again, refreshments were served in the foyer and books sold briskly. GHS thanks Roy Smith for the years of work on this project, the Brithdir community for support at all stages of the project, the staff of the venue, GHS members Judith Jones, Ann Pinch, Susan Price and Greg Buick for their work to ensure that refreshments and book sales ran smoothly. It was a privilege to have Mayor CCBC and his consort in attendance as well as so many members of the Brithdir community.

**Photo Gallery** The first photograph shows (left to right) Gloria Harris, Ivor Harris and Eamon Spillane, three people with strong Brithdir connections who kindly agreed to read extracts from the book at the launch event.



The second photograph shows (left to right) GHS Chair Annie Owen, Eddie Griffiths, Roy Smith and Greg Buick.

The third photograph shows author Roy Smith sharing memories of Brithdir with Mayor and Consort.

Roy has received many complimentary comments, the following are examples:-



*Although I have no personal connections with Brithdir the book paints such a complete picture of the lives and personalities of so many of the villagers that I almost felt I knew them.*

*Just wanted you to know how impressed we are. It looks wonderful and I have started reading it and am anxious to show my children and grandchildren*

*Thank you Roy for the beautiful book I received today, I can't put it down.*

## THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Thanks to everyone concerned for another successful conference held on Saturday 24 March 2018 at Llancaiach Fawr. Readers may like to note that Llancaiach Fawr has been booked for a similar event on Saturday March 23 2019. For those unable to attend the 2018 event, the following reports give a flavour of the talks.

### *Women's Suffrage and the 1918 Act* Dr Elin Jones



The conference opened with an entertaining and educating talk on *Women's Suffrage and the 1918 Act* given by Dr Elin Jones. She began by tracing women's suffrage back in history - even to the Bible, Geneses 3:16 where it says that the husband shall rule over the wife. This was linked to beliefs in many religions today. Attributing a challenge to the social structure as early as the 16th century, Dr Jones explained that it was not until the 18th century, and the book by Mary Wollstonecraft *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, that the campaign for women's rights really began.

In the 19th century, the aim to improve the status of women accelerated with action by the Suffragists - such as Caroline Norton and Millicent Fawcett who struggled peacefully to achieve their objectives by writing letters and using their personal influence to lobby ministers. In 1897, Millicent Fawcett was inspired to start the Suffrage Society.

At the beginning of the 20th century suffragists such as Emmeline Pankhurst began employing dramatic tactics and gaining more publicity for their aims. The First World War changed the conception of women as being tied to the home and family - women went out to work, clothing changed, trousers were worn! In 1918 The Representation of the People Act was passed giving votes to some, but not all, women. It was not until 1928 and the Equal Franchise Act that all women could vote. Dr Jones ended her talk with a quote from Susan Bromwell Anthony in 1868 - *Men, their rights and nothing more. Women, their rights and nothing less.*

***Ann Pinch***

## *A Giant Stride - Dr Frances Hogan - Victorian Champion of Women's Equality*



Llenyddiaeth  
Cymru  
Literature  
Wales

GHS acknowledges the financial support of Literature Wales for this talk by **Professor Angela V John**

This was an interesting talk about a little known, but instrumental Welsh woman - Dr Frances Hoggan. Professor John concentrated her talk on Frances's little known humanitarian and health education cause in England from 1870 to the first half of the 1880s, and her work in education in Wales during the same period.

Dr Hoggan was born Frances Morgan in Brecon in 1813 and became the first British woman to gain an M.D. in Europe. As well as being a member of the medical profession she also became a campaigner and social reformer who championed equality for women in both England and Wales; in doing so she aspired to improve women's lives and opportunities.

Even though she had not lived in Wales since the age of ten, she campaigned tirelessly for improvements to health, welfare and education for women and children in her country of birth. In 1882 she spoke at the National Eisteddfod in Denbigh and was at a meeting organised by the Cymmrodorion (of which she was the first female member). Her speech, entitled *Education of Different Ages*, emphasised the benefits women could make at this vital developmental stage of education in Wales.

Amongst her achievements can be listed becoming a Suffragist, with a particular interest in racial issues. These are but two of the many causes she supported and became involved with during her long life.

She died in 1927 leaving a lasting legacy of her work which, hopefully, is now beginning to be recognised in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Professor John's book *Rocking the Boat* contains a chapter *Speaking Out* which makes interesting reading and illustrates the many causes supported by Dr Frances Hoggan.



***Sue Price***

## *Revisiting the story of Llywelyn Bren in the year that marks the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his brutal death - Dr Stuart Broomfield*



Dr Broomfield (left chatting to Dr Elin Jones) began by describing the scene in 1318 of Llywelyn being dragged through the streets (after being condemned to death as a traitor) to the Black Tower of Cardiff Castle to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

The rebellion of 1316 was an unintended consequence of the death of the young Gilbert de Clare at the battle of Bannockburn in 1314. As de Clare had no male heir, the inhabitants of Glamorgan faced the unwelcomed prospect of royal administration. This was postponed for some three years, partly because de Clare's widow insisted she was pregnant. Prior to de Clare's death, it seems that Llywelyn had been a trusted confidante

of the de Clare family, and was probably trusted to act as Constable when Gilbert de Clare went to war.

The earliest mention of Llywelyn is in 1307 (when he must have been in his 40s) and refers to him having lands in Whitchurch, Merthyr and Eglwys Gwladus (Gelligaer) together with substantial cattle and pasture land throughout Senghenydd and beyond. Although these were his hereditary lands, they would only have been leased to him and once the Crown took over the lordship Llywelyn was soon removed from his position of authority. Dr Broomfield expressed doubts whether Twyn Castell in Gelligaer is the remains of one of Llywelyn's houses because it appears to have been of timber construction whereas by Llywelyn's time it should have been of stone.

Edward II initially appointed Berengar as the first of the Anglo-Norman Stewards to administer Glamorgan, the Crown's prime interest being to increase revenue. The regime of the despised Berengar was terminated in late 1314 when de Badlesmere, who appears to have had a brief to reconcile the Welsh, replaced him. However in 1315 he was replaced by Payn de Turberville, the Norman lord of Coity, who was extremely anti Welsh and who raised taxes and attacked the traditional customs to collect fire wood, cut earth etc. Llywelyn met de Turberville and pleaded on behalf of his people who were also suffering the effects of famine due to three poor summers. On being threatened with his comeuppance, de Turberville reported Llywelyn to Edward II resulting in Llywelyn having to go to London to plead his case. Although ordered by the King to attend the next parliament at Lincoln, Llywelyn instead returned to Senghenydd and assembled an army (of probably 1-2,000 men), attacking Caerphilly Castle in January 1316, taking the Constable prisoner, but failing to get into the centre of the castle. His men then turned their attention to the town of Caerphilly, probably using Castell Morgraig as their base to attack Cardiff (with little success) before moving on with greater success at Llantrisant. The King acted quickly and ordered two armies to meet at Cardiff and they subsequently defeated Llywelyn at Cefn Carnau, the thickly wooded mountain area between Cardiff and Caerphilly.

Llywelyn then retreated towards Gelligaer Common and decided to confront the army of the Earl of Hereford at Ystradfellte. When he saw the size of the army facing him he decided to surrender himself to Hereford and Roger Mortimer, who took him to Brecon Castle and promised to plead for his life. Llywelyn and two of his sons were then taken to the Tower of London, the King agreed to them being punished, and their people fined - but that Llywelyn would not be executed. In 1317 Hugh Despenser, a favourite of Edward II, was made Lord of Glamorgan and one of the first things he did was to take Llywelyn from the Tower of London to Cardiff Castle where he was tried and sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered, the remains of his mutilated corpse being interred in the Grey Friars priory. Hugh Despenser was eventually charged with judicial murder against the wishes of the King and was himself executed.

An enlightening lecture on an event which deserves commemoration and which has had scant coverage to date, the latest being Craig Owen Jones' book of 2006.

*Clive Andrewartha*

## ***Welsh Rugby and the 1905 Religious Revival Alun Morgan***



At first sight, rugby and religion may seem to have little in common; however, as Alun Morgan informed us, at the turn of the twentieth century, they were locked in a battle for the hearts and souls of the Welsh people. At that time, Wales was an industrial power-house, a young society, fast changing and subject to migration, a nation re-establishing and inventing its identity and in search of both entertainment and fulfilment. Sport and religion were the two main vehicles for these needs. From the start, the Anglican Church considered rugby to be in the tradition of muscular Christianity and a fitting outlet for the rougher tendencies of young men. The Nonconformists, on the other hand, deplored its association with violence and with public houses, (the first club-houses of the day).

The passion for rugby came first, slow initially, but gathering rapid momentum in the last decade of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, when the Welsh team seemed to carry all before them. In contrast, the 1905 revival spread like wildfire from its starting place in Loughor. With its emphasis on spontaneity, emotion, singing, and excitement, it cut across barriers of language and industrial/rural lifestyle and offered a release for normal social constraints, appealing in particular to young women. It certainly helped that its major proponent, Evan Roberts, was young, handsome and charismatic and a group of attractive and tuneful teenaged girls, The Sisters of The Dawn, accompanied Roberts as he travelled around the country at a tremendous pace, often preaching at several locations in one day. Crowds gathered wherever he spoke, to the extent that in Penydarren, the windows had to be broken to allow some air into the building. We were treated to a dramatic and amusing account of the Welsh-American pastor Robert Cynddylan Owen, a schoolteacher in his native Bedlinog who was prompted to fall to his knees and sing in the streets, drawing out all those in the pubs and billiard halls to see what the commotion was about.

One of the pledges demanded by the revivalists was that its converts should give up any *doubtful* activities, all the better to focus on religion. In some cases, this led to players giving up rugby. For instance, the entire Ynysybwl team was baptised and gave up the game for three years! Those who did keep playing ran the risk of being attacked by the revivalists. Many clubs closed and there was a drop in those who came to spectate.

In the end, though, it was rugby, which proved more enduring. The revival was too fevered to last. Evan Roberts, himself, always prone to periodic illness, could not maintain his gruelling schedule and suffered a breakdown from which he never truly recovered. As the movement began to lose momentum, rugby gained in strength. In late 1905, the Welsh rugby team, undefeated that season, faced New Zealand in what was billed as *The Match of the Century*. At a time when the growing might of American industry, the German navy, and the Boer War, the poor state of health of many of its would-be recruits threatened the British sense of superiority. New Zealand, Canada, and Australia had been staking claims to a better, manlier way of life. In this context, New Zealand's tour pitted the colonies against the old empire, and their victory over the other home nations was deeply troubling. The Wales-New Zealand match was also

noteworthy as the first occasion on which Mae Hen Wlad Fy'n Nhadau was sung – initially in opposition to the Haka. Wales won by a single try.

*The Empire is Saved!* Trumpeted a UK newspaper. This was an occasion of immense national pride, ushering in five years of total supremacy for the Welsh rugby team. Thus it was that rugby came to be perceived as a defining characteristic of the Welsh, whereas the religious revival gradually faded. With its stories of gun-toting referees and the spiritually inspired burning of rugby jerseys, this was a highly entertaining, as well as informative talk.

*Ceri Creffield*



The editor thanks Judith Jones (and her new smart-phone) and Carwyn Hughes for the conference photographs

### **Grandad's War in augmented reality**

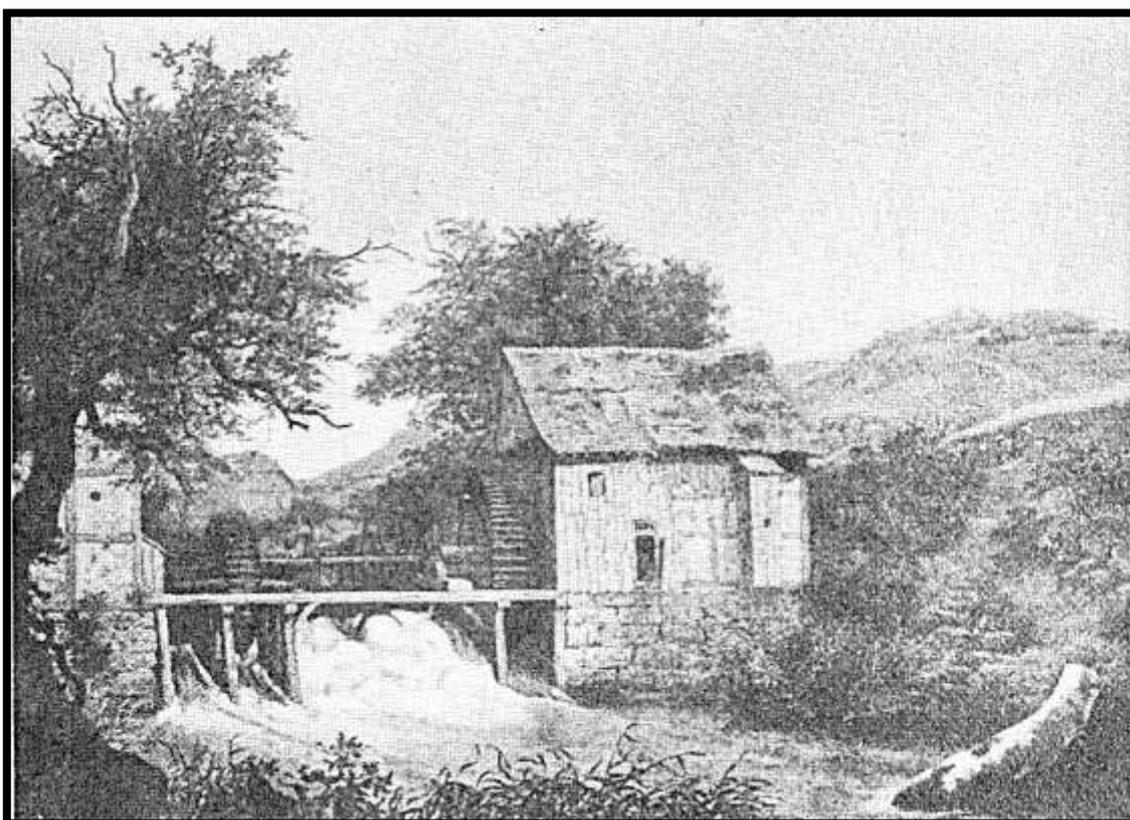
GHS members and friends will recall Lynda Osborne's *Grandad's War in Gelligaer* Volume 23 (2016), the Society's 2<sup>nd</sup> Great War commemorative journal. Now Lynda is proud to have a framed copy of a painting telling the story in augmented reality in her home.

Having photographed the artefacts in Lynda's home, artists Marc Marot and Scarlet Raven produced an oil painting which, using modern technology, tells the story in augmented reality. The painting was exhibited in Cardiff's Castle Gallery of Fine Art in December 2017. It was in Manchester Central Library until March 31 2018, and in August, will go to Titanic Belfast, before being exhibited in London. After that, the oil painting, which will take 20 years to dry completely, will be for sale (with half the proceeds going to Royal British Legion).

To experience augmented reality, point a smartphone or iPad, with free app (Blippar) downloaded, at the painting. There is further information on the internet, for example on <https://www.artsyshark.com/2017/10/11/> and <http://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/15778827>

### **THE OLD MILL, FACTORY ROAD. BARGOED 1866**

The photograph below was kindly sent to the editor by Lyn Pask. It appeared in a 1968 souvenir copy of *The Bargoed and Blackwood Advertiser*, having been submitted to that newspaper by Tom Jones of 41 Heolddu Road, Bargoed. Any comments would be much appreciated.



## Deri War Memorial

Darran Valley History Group, formed because a few Deri residents thought there were episodes in Deri's past that should be remembered, came into being shortly before the centenary of Darran Colliery Disaster of October 1909. In that disaster, miners and their rescuers lost their lives, and afterwards George Medals and Carnegie Medals were awarded to the heroes who risked – and sometimes lost – their lives trying to save their comrades.

A century to the day after the explosion a simple stone memorial, bearing the names of all twenty-seven who perished, was placed alongside Parc Cwm Darran footpath adjacent to the remains of Darran Colliery. Deri school-children read out the names of the victims and there was a church memorial service and an exhibition of photographs and memorabilia which remained open for the following week.

In the following years, the Group published two books. Both included many old photographs of Fochriw and Deri, thanks to the expertise and dedication of group member Peter Price. He was also the driving force behind the erection of a memorial in Fochriw to those who had died in wartime, as well as in the area's industries.

Although some fund-raising was done in the 1920s, Deri, unlike many other communities locally and elsewhere in the country, did not erect a war memorial in the interwar years. Research by David Williams uncovered the names of twenty-four men with Deri connections who had died in the First World War, and a further five who had died in WW II. There was already a memorial garden with a stone dedicated to past residents, and that was chosen as the centre to a circle of engraved granite plaques each bearing the name of one of the fallen.

With the help of South Wales Monuments, a design was worked out, 80% grant funding was secured from Caerphilly County Borough Council, and the completed memorial was dedicated at the end of September 2017. The Lord Lieutenant of Gwent, the Mayor of Caerphilly County Borough, other local dignitaries and Deri school-children took part in the dedication, after which they toured the exhibition of pictures and WWI artefacts.



A Remembrance Day service was held at the new memorial in November 2017. A Book of Remembrance in Deri Library is a further lasting tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in both wars.

*Brian Jarrett*

## ANNUAL CHARTIST CONVENTION

The Society was invited to have a stall at the 2017 Chartist Convention, which took place on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November in the impressive and evocative surroundings of St. Woolos Cathedral, Newport. The event takes place each year on the Saturday nearest to the date (4<sup>th</sup> November) when, in 1839, carnage took place outside the Westgate Hotel, Newport. Whilst exact figures will never be known, it is generally accepted that at least 20 Chartists were killed and over 50 were wounded. Following perfunctory inquests on ten bodies, which had been kept in the stables at Westgate Hotel, they were removed to St. Woolos churchyard and buried in unmarked graves. The church register simply records *ten men, names unknown who were shot by the 45<sup>th</sup> Regiment*.

The northern end of the Cathedral no longer has seating and provides space for a number of community uses; this was where GHS and other organisations were able to display their wares. The picture, on the right, shows David Mills at the GHS stall, fortunately hidden behind the figure of a lady in a blue coat. Another person closely associated with GHS, Dr. Elin Jones, can be seen in the middle of the picture walking towards the stall. The display boards on the stall included material that complimented Brian Davies's article *The Chartists of Llanfabon and Gelligaer* in *Gelligaer Journal Volume 24 -2017*. Pontllanfraith History Society and Fleur de Lys History Society provided some additional material. Information about Fleur de Lys may well be used in the GHS Diamond Jubilee project, an in-depth study of the "old" parish of Gelligaer, 1800 - 1900. As Brian Davies pointed out in his article, the whole of the workforce at Rosser Thomas's collieries took part in the march on Newport. The main colliery was at Garngethin, Cefn Hengoed, in the parish of Gelligaer, but the company (truck) shop was in the parish of Bedwellty, near Pengam river bridge. Furthermore, Fleur de Lys was the only settlement of any size near that colliery so many of the work-force would have lived there.



Before the programme started, Jeremy Knight treated the audience to a brief tour of the Cathedral.

This photograph shows Jeremy Knight at the start of the Convention



The keynote speaker for the day was Rhian E. Jones (shown in this photograph) author of *Petticoat Heroes: Rethinking the Rebecca Riots* (UWP 2015).



She was ably supported by Roger Ball of Bristol Radical History Group, Les James, and Roy Stroud. The talks by Roger Ball, Les James, and Rhian Jones all had a common thread running through them; namely, the *disturbances* they described were not the acts of wanton and sometimes allegedly drunken behaviour, but were deliberate acts by a society who were aggrieved, both by the action and inaction of the Government, local gentry and employers. Rhian pointed out that the Rebecca rioters were not simply vandals smashing tollgates, but were opponents of the New Poor Law and its workhouses. Roger Ball spoke about the weekend of 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> October 1831 when the contemporary press depicted the riots that took place in Bristol as *mindless vandalism*. He argued that this was not so, with the evidence pointing to astute organisation where the attacks were made on three prisons and the wealthy areas of Queens Square, the Bishops Palace and the Mansion house. Les James linked the events surrounding the march on Newport with the Merthyr Rising in June 1831, and the Bristol Riots of October 1831.

Those events, particularly the Merthyr riots, germinated insurrectionary aspirations across the south Wales coalfield, which led to a series of secretly held meeting amongst the Chartists culminating in an organised march on Newport. The march was not an ad hoc event. However, the plans went horribly wrong.

Opposite GHS stand was an interactive display put together by Gareth Croft, who has provided these photographs. To view the interactive display in the comfort of your home then visit *newportrising* <http://newportrising.co.uk/>



A number of other organisations had stalls, which were grouped together in the northern end of the Cathedral thus allowing delegates to see what was on offer and find out more about those bodies. The layout allowed the delegates to perform the important task of mingling with each other and sharing experiences and views on a whole range of topics, not just Chartism. As an example, WWI publications and posters on GHS display attracted considerable interest. All in all a thoroughly interesting day with lots of *chat* amongst those who attended.

*David Mills*

## A visit to the Chartist Cave.

Recently I took a guest on a guided nature walk around the Llangynidr area to include a walk to the Chartist Cave. Along the ridge we had been watching numerous Common Buzzards and several Red Kites amongst other species of birds, and had delighted in looking at some lovely plants such as Cow Wheat and Common Butterwort. We followed one of the tracks along the Limestone ridge to the area where the cave is situated.

When I showed him the entrance and location of the cave, my guest was amazed at how concealed it was in the landscape, and equally impressed at how large the cave is once inside. The surrounding area is quite flat here with many outcrops, mounds and little ridges, so the cave blends in quite well. I would imagine that during its use the entrance may have been concealed with local vegetation or boulders?

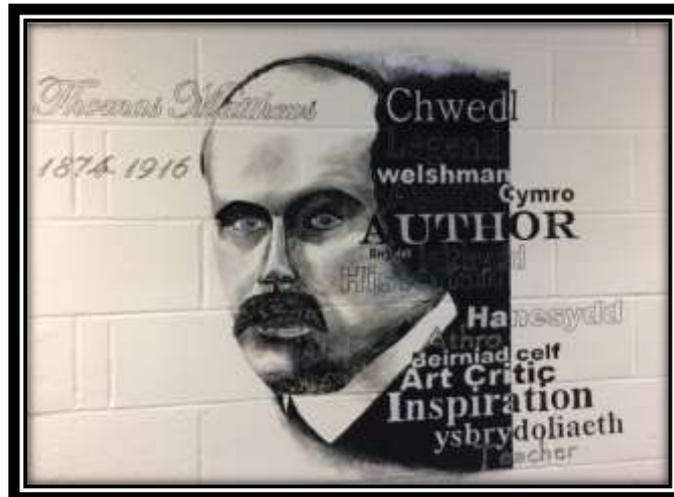
Once inside our eyes soon got used to the light, and the walls were adorned with Green Spleenwort ferns with Hart's Tongue fern near to the entrance. Once inside you can walk a little further in and there is another section that drops down even further back – an ideal location to store equipment.

We spent some time in here admiring the cave and wondering what it would have looked like during its use. There is a plaque fixed to the wall outside the cave that highlights the history of the Chartist Cave. For those who haven't visited this historical site I thoroughly recommend a visit here. I would be happy to guide a group across to the cave and if you are interested, please email David Mills via [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk/](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk/) for further details.



Article by Neville Davies  @ecology\_cymru

## Thomas Matthews Memorial Evening



The start of the autumn half-term holiday witnessed a special event in the history of Lewis School Pengam when it paid a fitting tribute to one of its former schoolmasters, Thomas Matthews. For a little over a century, Tom's memory has rusted with neglect in the scrapyard of history. But events arranged by the school have rectified the sad oversight that has corroded his reputation.

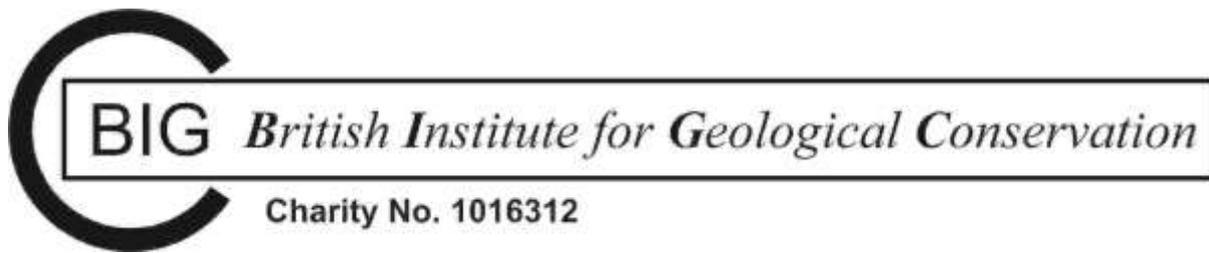
Thomas Matthews arrived at Lewis School in April 1911 with a formidable reputation, and remained there until his untimely death in September 1916. Whilst in Pengam he was greatly valued for his commitment to teaching excellence, and he edited two books of his students' work containing collections of folklore that were prevalent in the Welsh-speaking community.

To honour his memory pupils of Lewis School have now rewritten a selection of his legends in a modern idiom which embraces our digital and technological age. *Lewis Lore* is written in a potpourri of genres which reflect the eclectic nature of our present society. A group of the young authors read some of their tales to the audience who were also entertained by musical items performed by students from the Music department.

The evening's guest of honour was Dr Mari Jones, Professor of French at Cambridge University. Mari has close links with the school because her late father Phil (former head of Machen Primary School) was a pupil at Lewis School. In her address Mari outlined the main events of Tom's career focussing on his ground-breaking historical research, his authorship, his reputation as an art critic and his driving commitment to the Welsh cultural renaissance that defined the early years of the twentieth century. The evening also saw the unveiling of Tom's memorial portrait in the foyer which is the inspirational work of Sharon Price, Head of Art at the school.

Dic Felstead, GHS member, who conducted the writing workshops which produced *Lewis Lore*, said:

*Thomas Matthews died in 1916 at the age of forty-two after several years of fragile health. His death was much overshadowed by the horrors taking place on the killing fields of France and Belgium. Like the young men who gave their lives serving their country, Tom had very much more to offer. One of his obituaries said that Tom's harp was broken early. But tonight, the boys of Lewis in retelling and illustrating Lewis Lore have put new strings on his harp and produced a music that is sweetness to the ear.*



TIPical Valleys is British Institute for Geological Conservation's (BIGC) new 2 year project. TIPical Valleys is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

This highly original project aims to inspire and engage communities in the Cwm Taf area, reintroducing them to the wonderful geology, biodiversity and heritage of Mineral Spoil landscapes. For many years tips have been viewed as eyesores, a blight on the increasingly green valleys of the former mining areas. For decades now tips have been planted, removed and reclaimed in the name of progress. But neglect and the passage of time has allowed an incredible transformation. The remaining tips have naturally revegetated and now form part of an important and locally distinctive mosaic habitat known as Ffridd. Many of the tips that were once seen as scars on the valley sides have gone and become colonised by unique and unusual assemblages of flora and fauna.

Scratch the surface of these tips and their rocky substrate provides valuable geological information yielding rare fossils and unusual minerals. Now that most of the mines have closed, tips provide a unique window into the rocks that lie beneath much of South Wales. Following the Aberfan disaster there was a systematic removal and unsympathetic restoration of many important tips. Planners still consider tips to be derelict and suitable only for redevelopment or remediation, and as a result these precious places are still being lost at an alarming rate.

Amongst ecologists, geologists and historians there is growing appreciation and understanding of the once unsightly tip. Many communities regard the now iconic tip as part of their cultural identity and an important part of their local heritage, displaying a reverend fondness for these distinctive landscape features.

Our TIPical Valleys project sets out to challenge the misconceptions surrounding mineral spoil. Through a two year-long phase of public engagement, our project will bring together people from local communities with specialists from a wide cross section of stakeholder organisations and encourage them to work together and take part in a series of walks, talks, surveys and inspirational discovery type activities.

BIGCs project will reintroduce communities to mineral spoil localities across the Cwm Taf area, encouraging and validating their use and appreciation. As part of the project we will be developing community methods for auditing and assessing the features and value of mineral spoil. The project will involve experts from many different fields imparting their invaluable specialist knowledge to local Cwm Taf communities.

Through education, active citizenship, research and sympathetic community management, this project intends to raise the profile of mineral spoil, highlighting its importance as valuable biological, geological and heritage resources with decision makers and regulatory bodies.

As part of the TIPical Valleys project, BIGC will be working in the Bedlinog, Gelligaer and Treharris areas and will, hopefully, be involving GHS and its members in our project. If you wish to personally get involved or find out more, please contact Ben Evans (BIGC Project Manager) at [tipicalvalleys@gmail.com](mailto:tipicalvalleys@gmail.com)



### WHERE IN GELLIGAER ?

A





B



C

D



ANSWERS TO THE LAST *WHERE IN GELLIGAER?*

A Old Fire Station Hengoed

B Parc Cwm Darren

C Old Mill Ystrad Mynach

D Bargoed Railway Station

E The Clock on Bargoed Emporium