



# Gelligaer Times



## Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No. 12

[www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.com)

November 2008

Autumn is now well advanced the weather little better than the 'summer' - indeed we have even had our first snow! It has also brought the 'credit crunch' and fears of a recession. However, the shops are getting ready for Christmas and the passenger lounges at Heathrow and Rhoose are still busy coping with holiday makers taking foreign holidays, **so there is hope!**

We have also had our first meetings of the new season and concluded a very successful conference. Furthermore, we have the prospect of Journal XVII, with several articles already delivered for inclusion. There is also the prospect of a post Christmas Society dinner, should there be sufficient demand. We shall also endeavour to organise some form of excursion for next spring/summer, as history is often best understood through the soles of our feet! In the meantime, there is the prospect of a third annual autumn conference to organise ... so the editor had better get weaving!

### Meeting Reports

#### **Victoria & Albert – Edwina Stack 24 September 2008 – Llancaiach Fawr.**

This was the second of Edwina's occasional series of lectures on the life of Queen Victoria. Brought-up to be queen by an opportunistic mother and the devious Sir John Conroy, Victoria ascended to the throne in 1837, whereupon, she consigned her mother to separate apartments in Kensington Palace and began to enjoy life as queen.

Aware of her 'duty' to marry and produce an heir, she was in no hurry to do so, enjoying a life of balls, dancing and general gaiety. Her mother was eager for Victoria to marry her cousin from Coburg. Albert, aware of such 'plans', was more concerned with academia. In October 1839 Albert arrived at Windsor, to find Victoria on her sick bed, nevertheless she considered Albert to be 'beautiful' and was immediately besotted. Soon after, Victoria told Lord Melbourne (Prime Minister), that she would marry Albert. There were issues to negotiate (allowances and bridesmaids!), but all was settled so on 10 February 1840, wearing a dress of Honiton lace and attended by 12 bridesmaids, the couple were married.

Settling in Buckingham Palace, Victoria was soon pregnant. A daughter, Vicky, was born in November 1840. A second pregnancy followed soon after. Meanwhile, Albert had saved her from an assassination attempt, helped with the Red Boxes, instigated re-organisation of the Royal Household and sired seven more children, all by 1857. For the last two, Victoria availed herself of the newly developed (by Joseph Simpson) anaesthetic, chloroform. Educating the future king proved challenging. The Prince of Wales was not a 'natural scholar', exacerbated by paternal chastisement for poor progress, but he proved to be good with people.

Christmas was a family celebration. Albert popularised the Christmas tree, a tradition continuing today. Stressed by life under the London 'microscope', Sir Robert Peel suggested the family go, occasionally, to Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. Albert designed a replacement house and garden there, which became a favourite retreat for the Queen. Later they 'discovered' Balmoral. Duly purchased, the old house was rebuilt, to become a place where the family could escape London's polluted air.

Life-changing was their first rail journey in 1842 (Windsor to Paddington). Victoria enjoyed the experience, but Albert deemed it too fast, so imposed speed restrictions on future journeys!

1848 brought reconciliation between Victoria and her mother – Sir John Conroy had embezzled her mother's money. Albert's involvement in many projects led to his presiding over the successful Great Exhibition of 1851. Attracting 6 million visitors, the profits of £250,000 were used to establish the Victoria & Albert Museum. Visitors included Napoleon III, who in turn invited Victoria, Albert and the Prince of Wales to Paris – the Prince fell in love with France and Paris, a significant factor in future political alliances.

The Crimean War concerned the Queen; she waved troops and sailors off, read reports of their privations, knitted scarves etc. and entertained Florence Nightingale. In 1857 she gave medals to ordinary soldiers, including her own, the Victoria Cross, actually touching their hands (previously forbidden by royal protocols).

Soon after Albert was made Prince Consort. Princess Vicky married the heir to the Prussian throne – a tearful farewell ensued. In early 1859 Victoria's mother died, causing her to have a nervous breakdown. Albert was concerned about the Prince of Wales' 'activities', but following a visit, he fell ill with typhoid in December 1861 and died, aged 42.

Victoria was grief stricken, spending the next 40 years of her reign in mourning for her beloved husband.

The story of Albert and Victoria is significant because of the way they changed the monarchy and laid the foundations for the modern constitutional monarchy which survives today.

For sharing her researches with us, we are most grateful to Edwina.

**Sailing Ships that could be seen in the Bristol Channel which can be seen today, Alan Thorne  
Wednesday 29 October 2008 – Llancaiach Fawr**

Alan Thorne told us of the ships which used to trade with the Cardiff Bay ports. By the 1880s ships from Cardiff and Penarth were going to all parts of the world, most of which were commercial sailing ships and some of which can still be seen.

Most of the vessels shown were engaged in the coal trade with many surviving beyond 1945, but some succumbed, e.g. the Eleam, originally a three-masted schooner, built in Amlwch in 1908 for the continental trade. She ended-up in the Caribbean, but sank off Venezuela in 1984. Another recent loss was the ketch Emily Barrett, converted from a schooner in 1927. She traded until 1960 and was moored on the Thames near the Prospect of Whitby, prior to being broken-up in 1998.

Some vessels have 'survived' only as wrecks. The Emma Louise, built at Watchet, is one of 12 vessels decaying on the banks of the River Torridge near Appledore. The Joan Adam built in Newport in 1838 as a Severn Trow, sailed until 1949, when she was fitted with a motor. She was hulked at Lydney in 1963, where she remains. Pommern, a square-rigger survives, in excellent condition but unrestored, in the Baltic, having been laid-up in 1939

Happily, a number of vessels which traded out of Cardiff etc. survive, two within the Bristol Channel area: the Great Britain in Bristol, and the Kathleen & May, the last surviving Welsh-built schooner (1903) in Bideford. Two survive in the south West: the ketch Irene, restored in 1964, now being re-restored in Cornwall having sailed the world.

Nearby, in Plymouth, is Bessie Ellen, built in 1907 and brought back from the Baltic in 2000 for charter work.

Former Cardiff Bay visitors exist in other parts of the U.K. Cutty Sark, under restoration at Greenwich, visited Penarth in 1880. The three-masted schooner, De Wadden was mainly engaged in Irish Sea trade and in the 1980s was restored and remains in Liverpool's Albert Dock Museum. Flash, built in Ulster in 1893 is kept in the Ulster Maritime Museum. Apart from her role in the coal trade, she was a Q ship during World War I and saw action!

Surviving in Europe is the Passat, built Hamburg 1911 as a four-masted barque (in Penarth between 1949-51) and is now restored and at rest on the Baltic Coast of Germany. Built in Copenhagen in 1907, Viking was a frequent visitor in the 1930s. Her trading days continued post 1945, before being laid-up in Antwerp. She returned thence to the Baltic and is preserved in Gothenburg, Sweden. Several Cardiff Bay traders are preserved in the U.S.A. Balclutha, built Glasgow 1886 traded between Cardiff/Port Talbot and the west coast of South America, and survives in San Francisco. The barque, Onesia, built in 1877, still sails from Galveston (Texas), while the Wavertree, built in Liverpool, is presently in New York.

Alan communicated well his love for these fine ships, but during a short period of questioning, highlighted the hazards of trading in sailing ships with stories of long voyages, towering seas around Cape Horn and attending to the sails during all weathers. It was a matter of some pleasure that Alan was also able to demonstrate that we can still see some of the ships which helped to make the Cardiff Bay ports so prosperous 100 years ago. Thanks!

**Joint Annual Conference – Saturday 25 October – Llancaiach Fawr.**

Pre-event ticket sales of 110 indicated enthusiasm for the conference, confirmed by the end-of-conference feedback, showing most aspects were to the liking of the majority of delegates.

The Conference was graced by seven very interesting presentations, all delivered enthusiastically and well. The day began with Frances Lynch; the 'godmother' of north Wales archaeology, speaking of bronze age ring cairns. She demonstrated how the post glacial climatic warming (warmer than today!) led to funerary monuments moving from the coastal plains to prominent passes and upland areas, where a range of forms evolved – most of which being illustrated in the Mid Glamorgan context. Prof. Ralph Griffiths followed with a discourse on the short-lived Owain Glyndwr rebellion. Reluctantly proclaiming himself Prince of Wales, Owain spent about 8 years endeavouring to secure support. His initial success gradually faded away, when areas like the Rhymney Valley showed disinterest in his rebellion, whereupon he simply disappeared.

Following a break, when tea and coffee were taken and displays visited, Prof. John Gwynfor Jones spoke about Early Religious Dissent. He considered the origins of the 'non-conformist' forms of Protestantism, based mainly on models from the Continent. These took root in London, before moving to the Welsh borderlands and eventually, the Rhymney Valley, where the Pritchards became adherents. A number of communities developed in the area, e.g. Hengoed and Watford and laid the basis for Welsh Non Conformism. Next Brian Davies developed the theme of Morgan John Rhys, a local radical, supporter of the French Revolution and observer of life in the young U.S.A. His particular interest was the American Indians, which led to his being introduced to the legend of a Welsh-speaking tribe of Indians in Virginia,. Sadly internecine warfare wiped out this tribe, thus evidence to prove the contention was not available. Brian examined the legend's likely sources, dipping into Tudor literature and the epic poetry of Southey to find a crumb or two of support.

After a pleasant lunch, conversation and visits to displays, Dr. Tony Jukes, started the afternoon with a comprehensive, illustrated history of Bedwas from its rural origins to its growth as a significant coal mining village in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mike Jones followed with a photographic stroll beside a feeder for Cyfarthfa Lake and iron works, demonstrating the trouble taken to ensure a good water supply even in wet Wales!

Then a quick cup of tea before Mike Anthony truly refreshed us with a light-hearted lecture on Mediaeval brewing, its importance as a source of income and its place in Britain's social evolution.

So ended a very good and worthwhile day, with many looking forward to 2009's event!

Thanks must be given to all who made the day possible: staff at Llancaiach, Helen Willson's office at the Winding House, the speakers and above-all, the delegates. Thanks to you all!

**Joint Autumn Conference – Saturday 24 October 2009 – Llancaiach Fawr**

*Gelligaer Historical Society*

<b>Society Officers 2008-09</b>	President	Mr Islwyn Hughes
	Chairman	Mr Terry McCarthy
	Meetings Secretary	Mr David Mills
	Treasurer	Mrs Hazel Waters
	Publicity & Membership Officer	Mrs Jean Kember
	Web master	Mr Greg Buick
	Journal Sales Manager	Mr Gerald Kember

Membership - **£8 per year** – Have you paid-up yet? Jean Kember will be pleased to provide you with a membership form, relieve you of your subs and add you to the list of members.

Non members welcome - a contribution £1 per lecture would be appreciated to defray expenses.

**Meetings Scheduled for 2008-09:**

<b>2008</b>	26 November	St. Christopher – a wall painting from Talybont Church, Llandeilo.	Dr. Madeleine Gray
	17 December	Public health in the 17 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup> Centuries	Mr Tony Hopkins
<b>2009</b>	28 January	GHS Dinner – Llancaiach Fawr.	
	25 February	The Ancestry of Dr. William Price	Dr Tony Jukes
	25 March	Morgraig Castle	Mr Brian Davies
	29 April	Lord Tredegar – Death or Glory	Mr Paul Busby
	27 May	Recent findings relating to the early history of South east Wales.	Dr. Ray Howells
	24 June	A.G.M.	

**Gelligaer – Journals - Volume XVI and Anthology**

Volume XVI, published in 2007 – cost £5. Anthology of Vol XI – XV inclusive, produced by Dr. Fred Holley for the Society, available for £6.99. Index for Vols. I-XVI, £1.

News

<b>Winding House Museum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Tuesdays to Sundays inclusive (closed Mondays), 10.00 – 17.00. Members are encouraged to go along and see the exhibits. Display of Arthur Wright's photographs worth visiting.</li> </ul>
<b>Bargoed Library</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Closed mid October. Lending library has moved temporarily in St. Gwladys Church Hall and some Local/Family history resources to the Winding House. If you wish to undertake research it would be advisable to telephone to book.</li> </ul>
<b>Caerphilly History Society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Day – 25 April 2009, Twyn, 10.00 – 16.00. GHS invited to have a stall there – volunteers? 'Road Show'-type service for historical artefacts to be available.</li> </ul>
<b>LEARN Cardiff University</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free conference – History, Archaeology &amp; Identity – exploring the dynamics of the past. Saturday 9 May 2009, Senghenydd Road, Cardiff. Interdisciplinary perspectives – papers on history, archaeology, literature and music.</li> </ul>

**Gwent Family History Society Research Trips 2009:**

21 March      Saturday    National Archives & Family Records Kew  
 16 April      Saturday    Bristol City & Somerset Record Offices at Taunton  
 GHS Members welcome – details 01495 223995 or [trips@gwentfhs.info](mailto:trips@gwentfhs.info)

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## Appendix to Gelligaer Times No. 12

Following a committee meeting held on 20 November last, a number of decisions were taken that need to be shared with the membership.

### 1) Meetings related:

**Wednesday 28 January 2009** – proposed Society dinner at Llancaiach Fawr. Need minimum of 20 participants by the end of the meeting on 26 November 2008, plus a deposit of £5, payable to Mrs Hazel Waters? Menu below:

#### Starters:

Soups – Tomato & Basil, Seasonal Veg., Leek & Potato.	Oak Smoked salmon - £4.95
All £3.55	Cured duck breast & walnut salad - £5.65

#### Mains:

Glamorgan sausages & Spiced fruit compote, etc. - £8.95	Chicken breast & salad - £11.50
Accompaniments: Mixed seasonal Veg.	Roast beef & Yorkshire pudding - £14.75
Roast potatoes	Fresh salad
	Baby new potatoes

#### Desserts:

Cheese & biscuits - £3.00	Gateau & cream - £4.25
Seasonal fruit crumble with cream/custard - £4.35	

**Wednesday 10 June 2009** – Mrs Judith Jones to lead a walk over part of historic Gelligaer Common – details to be confirmed.

### 2) Gelligaer Journal Vol. XVII:

Dr Holley requires all articles promised to be handed/sent to him by 01/01/2009. He will then prepare the contributions on disk for printing. Publication, Autumn 2009, in readiness for the Autumn Conference on Saturday 24 October 2009.

### 3) Golden Jubilee Publications:

Following discussions the following was agreed –

**a) Main publication project – A History of Bargoed-Gilfach**, published 2011. This will be co-ordinated by Mrs Annie Owen, who is likely to set-up a working party. Members are requested to think about contributions they might make, in writing by the end of the February meeting – future needs can then be assessed and delegated.

**b) Gelligaer Journal Vol XVIII** – the Golden Jubilee issue, published in Autumn 2011. Theme – developments over the past 50 years in the old Gelligaer U.D.C. area – views of/contributions from the few surviving members of the Gelligaer Story working party of 1959-60 are being sought, but articles will also be invited from the membership and others.

### 4) Sales of Gelligaer Journal Vol. XVI:

We still have large stocks on hand, along with the ‘Anthology’. We encourage all members to attempt to sell more copies, or even purchase additional copies as Christmas offerings – NB. Offer for a reduced price when purchasing a copy of Vol. XVI and the Anthology at meetings.

NB. We hope to boost sales by taking stands at local/family history conferences – we shall need volunteers to help out. E.g. Caerphilly – 25 April 2009.