



Gelligaer Times

Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

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May 2009

A typical spring day – breezy, bright periods and scattered showers! Since issue 13 the Society's meetings have continued to attract pleasing audiences. Membership has increased to 48 fully paid-up members. Can we pass 50 next season? Work on the Bargoed-Gilfach Project continues apace and much research has been undertaken. There has been a pleasing amount of interest shown in the community and it seems that we might be able to apply for funding to finance the pre-publication phase, with the help of Zoe Williams of GAVO. GHS attended the Caerphilly Local History Society event in Caerphilly and though Journal sales were small, we were 'seen' and the networking was potentially useful. Planning for the Autumn conference is progressing, with the programme complete, as shown below.

However, there is still one more meeting of this year to go, plus a walk and then the A.G.M. We hope as many of the membership will attend and perhaps volunteer to help the committee out.

Meeting Reports

The Ancestry of Dr. William Price – 25 February 2009 – Tony Jukes - Llancaiach Fawr.

An audience of 27 were treated to an unravelling of the complex history of a wealthy local family, whose activities touched upon many aspects of local history, besides giving us one of south Wales' more colourful characters, Dr. William Price.

The first 'Price' known in the area was a Thomas Price of Caerphilly, in 1607. Their origins are uncertain, but there might be tenuous links with the 'Prices' of Kingston-upon-Thames; descended from a Gwaeth Foed, Prince of Cardigan c 1054. Thomas Price, amongst other things was an innkeeper – Boar's Head? Or Black Lion? He had two sons, Nicholas and John. The latter, a glover, lived and worked in Cardiff and his 'line' drops out of the picture. Nicholas inherited the Boar's Head, plus land in Watford and Pentyrch. One of his sons, Thomas, a friend of John Wesley, built Watford and Groeswen Chapels (1742) and Watford Fawr (1750?) – now listed, along with many of its furnishings. Thomas' son, William, squandered his money (bankrupt before he died), but was a partner in Dowlais Iron Works.

Another son, Nicholas, whose second wife Blanch Ward, was from a wealthy family of tanners, had links with Machen Iron Works and Tintern Tin Works. This Nicholas became a tanner, involving his sons. Again, he married money, Elizabeth Greenfield of Cardiff, by whom he had four daughters – one married into the Wedgwood family. He lived in Pontypandy (opposite present-day Asda), centre of his estate – buried in family vault, St. Martin's. A second son, William, took over Pentyrch House, from where (1743), he directed the rebuilding of the Pentyrch furnaces (founded 1570). James, the third son lived in Bedwas House. He, along with brother Charles, made a lot of money in brewing, tanning and iron making. They gave two of the six bells hung in Bedwas church.

Charles, lived at Pwllpant and was described as a mercer. He leased land on the Van Estate and in Rudry, where he mined iron and coal. Iron was supplied to Machen Forge and Caerphilly furnace (1680-1820), while coalmines were leased to the Morgans of Tredegar Park to supply their iron furnaces. Charles married twice and it was his second wife who bore a son, William. Living on Poset Farm he was a tanner and built a mill. He married four times and one of his sons

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born in the Green Meadow Inn, William, the notorious Dr. Price, Like his father he suffered from schizophrenia, nevertheless, he was educated in the school provided by the iron masters at Machen Forge, from where he proceeded to Oxford University to study medicine.

Thus Dr. William Price, despite the mythology surrounding his life, came from a local family of some standing and wealth, who fulfilled a significant role in the socio-economic development, especially, of the lower Rhymney Valley. Thanks are due to Tony for sharing the fruits of his fascinating researches with us and providing us with an insight into some of the people who lived in and influenced the Caerphilly Basin.

Morgraig Castle – Brian Davies - Wednesday 25 March 2009 – Llancaiach Fawr

At the eastern end of the Traveller's Rest public house's car park (beside the A469, Caerphilly Mountain) is woodland, but within a short distance, can be seen remains of walls of dressed stone, some of which are up to 15 feet high and 8 feet thick. This is Castell Morgraig, subject of much speculation, but little real investigation, but one worthy of Brian's inimitable attention. There seems to be no documentary evidence about Castell Morgraig and until the early 20th century, no one seemed to know anything about it. In 1903-04 the Earl of Plymouth gave permission and paid for labour to enable Cardiff Naturalists to excavate the site. Plans were produced, suggesting it was a mediaeval castle, twice the size of Castell Coch. However, there was little indication of who built it (or if it was completed) and why.

A military man consulted by the Cardiff Naturalists suggested it was built by people defending the land to the north of Caerphilly Mountain from those to the south. Comparisons made with Welsh Native castles excavated in north Wales, notably Dolwyddelan Castle, of similar size and shape suggest similar origins. That it was likely to have been a Welsh castle has been supported by Corbett's work on mediaeval boundaries – many of the English parishes end at the foot of Caerphilly mountain and are overlooked by Castell Morgraig.

Explanations about the 'who', 'when' and 'why' of its construction, could be linked it to events in the 13th century, involving political conflict between the Normans at Cardiff (Richard, and later Gilbert de Clare) and the Welsh Lordship of Senghenydd. Relations were generally cordial, at least until the civil war in England in 1262. Initially, De Clare and the Lord of Senghenydd were allies, but the latter and Llewellyn of Gwynedd allied themselves with Simon de Montfort, whereupon Gilbert de Clare changed sides and, in 1266, arrested the Lord of Senghenydd. Prior to this, Llewellyn sent his surveyor to build his ally a castle (Castell Morgraig?), to which Gilbert de Clare responded by starting construction of a large castle at Caerphilly in 1268. In October 1269 Llewellyn burned down the partially built Caerphilly Castle, but following Llewellyn's defeat, construction recommenced in 1271 and was completed. Meanwhile, the incomplete (?) Castell Morgraig seems to have been abandoned (of no strategic value to the Normans) and much of its stone work was taken for alternative constructional purposes, e.g. Traveller's Rest and Caerphilly Castle.

Thus Castell Morgraig could be a monument to a civil war, in which the Welsh Lordship of Senghenydd chose to support the 'wrong' side, consequently his fortifications were superseded by the victor's Caerphilly Castle. So ended yet another delightful evening of historical analysis and interpretation ably and enjoyably conducted by our friend Brian.

Further information: Alan Gill article in Journal of Caerphilly Historical Society. Websites of interest: www.castlewales.com/morgraig and www.urban75.org/photos/wales/morgraig

A History of Bargoed-Gilfach. Terry McCarthy - Wednesday 29 April 2009 – Llancaiach Fawr.

Our scheduled speaker, Paul Busby, being sick, the Chairman stepped into the breach and spoke on the History of Bargoed-Gilfach, an awareness raiser for GHS' Jubilee project.

Originating in the mid 19th century, the Bargoed-Gilfach urban area extended from a small

settlement - Pontaberbargoed, astride the confluence of the Rhymney and Bargoed-Rhymney rivers. The name was shortened to 'Bargoed' by the Rhymney Railway, when naming its station on the newly opened line in 1858. Initial growth was slow, being based on a few small collieries. Gilfach emerged first, as by the 1870s larger collieries had developed there. Bargoed's expansion began after 1895 when Powell Duffryn Company began to sink a large colliery on the valley floor south of the station. Bargoed grew rapidly, doubling its population in the first decade of the 20th century to reach 9000 by 1911.

Effects of this growth were illustrated – housing, shops, schools, public houses, chapels and a range of leisure activities developed within a short space of time. Prosperity was evidenced by the range of shops, improved train services, the development of roads and, later, bus services.

Growth slowed during the 1930s, but post 1945, demand for coal fell and lacking alternative major employers decline set-in. Eventually (1977) Bargoed colliery closed, with Hanbury Road becoming something of a 'ghost' town, as shops closed. Improved transport, both road and rail, encouraged commuting, thus population decline stopped and new, 'suburban-style' houses began to appear in increasing numbers, perhaps giving a hint of the future.

Bargoed-Gilfach Project

Under Annie Owen's leadership, and following plans agreed in February a working group has commenced research for a History of Bargoed and Gilfach, our principal contribution to the Society's Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2011. Leaders for specific topics were confirmed and a number of issues, notably funding, were discussed. A further meeting on 22 April, noted the research progress already made and received advice from Zoe Williams of GAVO about grant applications – our first application proved unsuccessful, but other possibilities were indicated. Helpers are still needed - anyone wishing to help would be welcome – see Annie Owen.

Joint Autumn Conference – Saturday 24 October 2009 – Llancaiach Fawr

On 29/04/2009, the Chairman attended a meeting at the Winding House, concerned with organising the 2009 Autumn Conference. Presentations booked and confirmed:

Les Shore – Welsh steel from Furness iron	Dr David Wyatt – Cardiff ex-slave narrative
Prof Pryce Morgan – Iolo Morganwg	Prof J.G. Jones – Morgans of Tredegar
Dr. Elin Jones – Welsh literary tradition	Dr. Ray Howell - Caerwent

The next stage will be to invite a range of local societies and organisations involved in historical research to put on display stands – the first 10 will be given space in the Barn. Despite earlier optimism costs have risen, consequently, it was felt necessary to increase tickets cost to £12 per delegate, inclusive of tea/coffee and a buffet lunch. Noting the feedback comments there will be more time for networking factored into the schedule and more account will be taken of dietary needs – labelling food etc. Ticket sales from in mid July.

Gwent Family History Society Research Trips 2009:

28 May	Thursday	Devon Record Office & Somerset Archives.
20 June	Saturday	National Archive - Kew

GHS Members welcome – details trips@gwentfhs.info

Friends of Llancaiach Fawr Summer Trip to the American Museum, Bath:

GHS members are cordially invited to join the 'Friends' on this trip on Independence Day, Saturday 4 July, leaving Llancaiach Fawr at 08.30. Cost £16. Details and bookings - phone Angela Murrell 01443 412248. Editor can e-mail booking form.

Gelligaer Historical Society

Society Officers 2008-09	President Chairman Meetings Secretary Treasurer Publicity & Membership Officer Web master Journal Sales Manager	Mr Islwyn Hughes Mr Terry McCarthy Mr David Mills Mrs Hazel Waters Mrs Jean Kember Mr Greg Buick Mr Gerald Kember
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Membership - **£8 per year** – Non members - contribution £1 per lecture appreciated .

Meetings Scheduled for 2008-09:

2009	27 May	Recent findings relating to the early history of South east Wales.	Dr. Ray Howells
	24 June	A.G.M. See below – Agenda.	

Outdoor Event

	10 June	Walk over part of historic Gelligaer Common – details to be confirmed.	Mrs Judith Jones
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A.G.M. Agenda – 24/06/2009:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apologies 2. Minutes AGM 25/06/2008 3. Matters Arising 4. Chairman's Report 2008-09 5. Treasurer's Report 2008-09 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Secretary's Report 2008-09 7. Elections of Officers & Committee 2009-10 8. Plans for 2009-10 9. A.O.B. |
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Committee Meeting:

Wednesday 17 June – 19.00 – venue to be decided. To consider A.G.M. etc.

News

<i>Winding House Museum</i>	• 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.
<i>Bargoed Library</i>	• 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 – 01443 875548
<i>Glamorgan Family History Soc</i>	• Local & Family History Fair – Saturday 3 October 2009, City Hall, Cardiff. GHS have been invited to attend – we have accepted! We shall need some volunteers for the stand.
<i>LEARN</i>	• University of Cardiff propose to cut all Humanities courses provided by LEARN – Centre for Lifelong Learning. Should this happen a significant and publicly accessible source of history research and courses will be lost.

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.

Gelligaer Journal Vol. XVII: Dr Fred Holley is preparing contributions on disk for printing. Publication, Autumn 2009, in readiness for the Autumn Conference on Saturday 24 October 2009.

Issue no. 15 – published September 2009 – contributions by 20/09/2009.

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