



**The Stone from the south  
east gate of the fort**



**Maen Catwg**

## **GELLIGAER TIMES**

### **NEWSLETTER 68 MARCH 2023**

#### **Editor's note**

Following my previous attempts to enlighten readers about *Bingo Lingo* I announce that 68 is known as *Find a mate*. But in an attempt to lift my efforts to a higher plane I offer the following explanations/facts about the number 68, although I confess that the mathematics are beyond my comprehension.

**Mathematics** 68 is a Perrin number.

68 is a composite number. Factors of 68 are  $2 * 2 * 17$ . Number 68 has 6 divisors: 1, 2, 4, 17, 34, 68. Sum of the divisors is.??? Number 68 is not a Fibonacci number.

68 is the largest even number that can be expressed in two ways as the sum of two prime numbers:  $68 = 7 + 61 = 31 + 37$ .

#### **Some facts**

At 68 % proof, Brewmeister's Snake Venom beer was named as the world's strongest in 2014

The planet Jupiter has 68 known moons.

There are 68 species of bumblebee in Europe, 68 species of mosquito in Florida and 68 species of freshwater fish in Finland.

In the year A.D. 68 the Roman Emperor Nero committed suicide

#### **In this newsletter you will find**

**Conference 2023 notes**

**January 2023 meeting**

**February 2023 meeting**

**Sunday school trips to Barry Island**

**Extract from *Western Mail* 10 November 1932**

**Coronation of King Charles III**

**Book Review**

**Potpourri of links**

## Gelligaer Historical Society Conference

The Covid 19 outbreak resulted in the cancellation of the conference planned for 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020 and plans for 2021 and 2022 events came to nought, so it was on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2023 that Llancaiach Fawr hosted Gelligaer Historical Society's annual conference for the first time since 2019. Over 80 people attended and enjoyed "catching up" with other delegates and browsing the displays and books provided by GHS, Roger Morgan, Glamorgan Archives, Darran Valley History Group, Six Points, Dic Penderyn Society, Merthyr Tydfil branch of Glamorgan Family History Society and Merthyr Tydfil and District History Society as well as the goodies sold in support of Ty Hafan. The main purpose of the day, however, was to hear the four excellent talks which have been summarised below by Ann Pinch.

I want to thank everyone who was able to help on the day as well as those who came along and supported the event. Thank you also to the many other south Wales local history societies who advertised the conference resulting in the participation of delegates from the whole of the region.

We have confirmed the venue and date for our next conference so I hope you will all join us again at Llancaiach Fawr on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024.

*Judith Jones*

### Workers' Hero William Abraham      David Maddox

Opening the conference with his talk about this influential character, Mr Maddox asked the question- *Was he a hero or a hypocrite?*

William Abraham-- known by his bardic name of **Mabon**- was born in South Wales in 1840 and from humble beginnings he rose to become an influential miners' leader and eventually the Member of Parliament for the Rhondda. At the age of 10 he went into the mines, married at 19 and had 12 children. He was well known for his powerful speeches and used his expressive voice to dramatic effect when controlling difficult situations and influencing miners' meetings. From the 1870s he supported the miners' cause, becoming the first President of the Cambrian Miners' Association; he was known as an apostle of industrial peace, believing in conciliation. He succeeded in achieving the Sliding Scale of wages for miners and in establishing what was known as *Mabon's Monday* when every miner had one Monday a month without work.

The 1890s saw a period of major unrest in the coal industry resulting in a miners' lockout and dreadful poverty throughout the region - the miners even lost their *Mabon's Monday*. As President of the Federation, Mabon fought the mine owners and was influential in the creation of the Great Britain Mining Federation.

During his lifetime he dealt with many mining disasters and championed the miners' causes, believing in *'A fair day's work for a fair day's wage.'* But some miners later turned against him, disagreeing with his conciliatory views. However, he was the man who built the strong united miners' union, took on the mine owners and when he died in 1922 all aspects of society marched in the procession to celebrate his life.

Mr Maddox left us to decide the answer to his question: - Hero or hypocrite?

### The Knights Hospitaller      Roger Morgan

Mr Morgan, our second speaker, took us back to Jerusalem in 630AD when monks were tending to the early pilgrims. As their numbers increased this led to the foundation of the Order of Knights of the Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem in 1099 when their hospice provided sanctuary and medical help to all. At this time the medics of Islam and the Hospitallers were similar in that they both used opiates, but the Hospitallers used medical instruments, cleanliness was not great and there was much infection and a greater loss of limbs - and life - under the Hospitallers medics than the Saracens from whom they learned so much about medicine.

As numbers of pilgrims increased, with ships from Italy bringing rich merchants, the hospice expanded, and the Order grew richer with the accumulation of estates. The tolerance between the different religious groups in Jerusalem eventually broke down, war ensued but pilgrims still came and needed help and protection leading to a more military order being formed- *The Knights Templar* and these spread throughout Europe establishing priories and hence more wealth for the Order. After 1291 when Jerusalem was lost to the Knights they retreated to Acre, then Cyprus and Rhodes. In 1312 the Knights Templar was dissolved; the Church (the Pope) was envious of the richness of the Order which resulted in them having to fight both the Church and the Saracens and after a defeat by Suleman the Great in 1522 they moved to Malta where they developed the magnificent harbour of Valetta which they eventually surrendered to Napoleon in 1798. The Knights Hospitaller Order now moved to northern Europe and is still in existence today with a wealthy Order in North America. St John's Ambulance, here in Britain, still uses the cross of the ancient order on its uniform. In conclusion, said Mr Morgan, it is an incredible Order with a marvellous history.

### Visions of War: Seeing the First World War in Wales Dr Gethin Matthews

Beginning the afternoon session Dr Matthews stated that the French Revolution had shown people a different view of the world around them, and that World War 1 would see this view change again as the advent of various media and its accessibility to the public gave more reality to the war. In South Wales, newspapers quickly became part of daily life, with photographs showing brave soldiers and encouraging men to join; targeting groups such as rugby teams and hoping that all the team would be recruited. Cartoonists would help push for recruits with their cartoons - a famous one being '*The Pied Piper of Crumlin*' - British soldiers would be seen as brave soldiers and the Germans as brutal and evil. Later in the war casualties and lists of the dead would be printed. Alongside war information would be descriptions of life in France bringing alive a flavour of early century France and the atrocities which took place. Postcards played a part-hundreds were sent home by the soldiers and all meant to prove the strength of the British and Imperial soldiers and to show humiliation of the enemy. Women weren't forgotten photographs of them as nurses, mothers and members of The Women's Auxiliary Corps. Dr Matthews with the aid of slides from newspaper, photographs and postcards proved how the use of the new media brought war home to the public with violence and killing seen visually.

### Castles of the Glamorgan and Gwent Uplands Mr Will Davies.

Our final speaker, Mr Will Davies, began by explaining that he intended to link the castles geographically. Explaining that during excavations all castles showed physical evidence of life even if they differed in size and usage; some were pure defence, others offered protection to homesteads and churches. The latter part of the eleventh century saw defences being constructed and/or expanded along the border between Wales and England, these included hill forts built by local people and the larger Norman castles. Coastal areas of Wales also saw Norman castles – they were needed both for defence of the land and to transport armies to other areas. The Upland areas of South Wales has castles dotted around and where castles were built settlements developed, and '*under the turf*', said Mr Davies, artefacts may be found after painstaking work, sometimes with no results. Mr Davies used diagrams and photographs to enhance his talk; with mention of a '*town castle*' at Gelligaer, a covered mound near the church at Mynyddislwyn, while Twmbarlwm was referred to as a good example of a hill fort. In conclusion he stated that many Welsh placenames show evidence of castles or defensive posts of some kind and that villages, farming, economy, and communication can all be linked to the location of many castles and hill forts.

## **January 2023 Meeting**

Following tradition, the January meeting was held during the day time, one talk before lunch and another afterwards. Dr Victoria Owen has kindly provided a summary of her talk: -

Twenty-one-year-old Lady Charlotte Bertie, daughter of the 9th Earl of Lindsey married Josiah John Guest of Dowlais, ironmaster and MP in 1833. Despite a large difference in age and background, over their nineteen-year long marriage, husband and wife enjoyed great happiness and much adventure.

A woman of immense energy, in addition to bearing ten children, Charlotte taught herself John's business. A remarkable facility for languages equipped her to produce an authoritative English translation of Pierre Armand Petit-Dufresnoy's treatise *Sur l'emploi de l'air chaud dans les usines a fer de l'Ecosse et de L'Angleterre* (1833) published by John Murray in 1836. In the same year, she joined her husband on a business trip to Cornwall. In the late 1830s and 1840s, she not only produced her pioneering edition of the *Mabinogion* but also encouraged John in his promotion of the Taff Vale Railway and supported him throughout his long wrangle with the 2nd Marquis of Bute over renewal of the Dowlais lease.

It meant that when John died in 1852, she was uniquely well-placed to succeed him as head of the works - a remarkable position for a Victorian woman. Not only did she endeavour to introduce reforms, but - rather to her dismay - had to weather a potentially destructive strike. Then, just as the works returned to productivity, she fell in love with Charles Schreiber, tutor to her eldest son and they married in 1855.

Under the terms of John's will, it meant that she had to relinquish management of the Iron Company to fellow-trustee George Thomas Clark. With Charles, she took up collecting fine ceramics and the Schreiber Collection is now in the V&A. But she never forgot Dowlais, or the friends that she made there.

### ***Victoria Owens***

Victoria's talk was well received by the audience who came up with a few "searching" questions which allowed Victoria to add further details drawn from her extensive knowledge of Lady Guest.

The second talk of the day was given by Brian Jarrett of Darran Valley History Group who spoke about "The Lost Villages of the Darran Valley" - gone but not forgotten. The villages of Pantywaun and Penybank were developed because of the need for housing for the workers of the iron industry and the coal mines. Old photographs showed the streets and the living conditions of these villages, both of which included chapels and public houses. It was ironic, that while these villages had grown into being because of the area's developing industry, it was coal mining which caused their demise - Pantywaun in the early '60s and then in 1964, Penybank was bulldozed after mining caused subsidence. Brian's family relationship with the Darran Valley and the village of Pantywaun together with his amusing personal anecdotes ensured an interesting and successful talk.

### ***Ann Pinch***

## **February 2023 meeting**

### **Wales in the Second World War Dr Stuart Broomfield February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023**

Beginning with an explanation that, while he would be talking about the whole of Wales, he would also be referencing our local area, Dr Broomfield proceeded to discuss various issues of the war.

He began with a reminder that the pre-war years in Wales saw a time of high unemployment, poverty and unrest resulting in a migration to other parts of the country and the world. Then

with war on the horizon the government introduced more industries and hence employment in Wales.

Moving on to the war years, Dr Broomfield dealt with various issues beginning with the air raids on different locations although Wales was thought to be a safe place. So safe that as the war went on children were evacuated from English cities to Wales. Not only children but priceless works of art were moved to Wales.

Arms factories were introduced throughout Wales including Glascoed and Treforest, coal production was increased leading to more employment for both men and women.

The Farming Industry was recognised as important to the war effort with Wales receiving its quota of the Land Army.

Airfields and army training camps were constructed, and American troops were sent here to train. Beaches in west Wales were used to practise for the Normandy landings.

Concluding, Dr Broomfield emphasised that while street parties were held to celebrate the end of the war it must not be forgotten that this time was one of both happiness and sadness and that the contribution of the Welsh men and women must not be forgotten.

After personal memories from members, a vote of thanks was given by Mrs Susan Price who expressed the feelings of all when she mentioned the excellence and enjoyable evening which everyone present experienced

***Ann Pinch***

## Sunday School Trips to Barry Island

*Gelligaer Times* 47, August 2020, contained several receipts kindly provided by G.H.S. member Pat Davies, two of which are reproduced below. I decided to ask Pat for further details which may help in understanding the relatively large number of “trippers” and amounts of money expended on the trips. By using the website [measuringworth.com](http://measuringworth.com) the amount expended in 1935, £110/2/6 equates to a minimum of £8133.10 at today’s value. The amount in August 1939, £69/10/8, a month before the start of WW2, equates to £4586.80. However, that reflects the total number of “trippers” being 526 less than in 1935 and makes one speculate that the impending, and immediate threat of war, meant that people were cautious about many things.

I do not pretend to understand all the various formulae used on the Measuring Worth site which produce all sorts of valuations so I have used the calculation that provide the minimum amount to achieve constancy.

Pat, with the aid of friends, answered my query about the numbers involved by detailing the number of chapels or meeting places that were part of the Bargoed United Sunday Schools. The Anglican Churches and the Catholic Church were not, in those days, part of the group. The list is as follows: -

Central Hall Methodist, Primitive Methodist, Salvation Army, Hanbury Road Baptist, Calfaria Welsh Congregationalist, Bethania Welsh Presbyterian, Trinity Congregational, Gospel Hall (x2), Bethel Presbyterian, Gilfach Presbyterian, Aionon Welsh Baptist in Gilfach.

(1964 Mod.)

Month August 7 1935.

Messrs The Bargoed United Sunday Schools.  
Mr. Bargoed.

Dr. to The Great Western Railway Company.

In any communication in regard to this account, please quote  
Account issued by BARGOED, G.W.15 Station

It will facilitate the Company's account keeping if you will kindly remit the amount of this account to—  
GOODS AGENT,  
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY STATION.

Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed and made payable to the order of the Great Western Railway Company.  
The only valid receipt is the Company's adhesive form.

Date	From	To	Name of Consignee	Description of Goods and Marks	Weights		Rate	Amount of Freight			Total Amount due to Consignee
					Tons	Cwt. qrs. lbs.		£	s.	d.	
July 27	Bargoed	Barry Island		5 Hrs Adults 7 1/2 Hrs Children			7/6 1/3				68 00 45 50
				Pass 25 Adults return							113 50 3 26
											Total £110 26

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.  
No. 52 BARGOED, G.W.15  
August 7 1935  
Remitted in Amount for the GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY  
The sum of £110. 2. 6  
W. Morgan

(1964 Mod.)

Month August 1939.

Messrs The Bargoed  
Mr. United Sunday Schools.

Dr. to The Great Western Railway Company.

In any communication in regard to this account, please quote  
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Date	From	To	Name of Consignee	Description of Goods and Marks	Weights		Rate	Amount of Freight			Total Amount due to Consignee
					Tons	Cwt. qrs. lbs.		£	s.	d.	
July 29	Bargoed	Barry Island		30 1/2 Adults 4 1/2 Children			2/8 1/4				40 28 29 80
											Total 69 10 8

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.  
No. 47 BARGOED, G.W.15.  
22/8  
Remitted in Amount for the GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY  
The sum of £69. 10. 8  
W. Morgan

I thought it would be an idea to compare the cost of an adult ticket in 1935 (2 shillings and six pence [8½p]) with the average miners earned per week. The extract from *Hansard* that appears



below shows that on average miners earned 9 shillings two and a half pence [just under 50p] **per shift, exclusive** of allowances. In *Hansard* May 1949, it was stated that on average a miner's weekly wage in 1939, **inclusive** of allowances of 2 shillings and two pence, was £2 fifteen shillings and nine pence per week [£2.75]. **IF** my calculation is correct a miner could buy twenty- two tickets if he chose to spend his weekly pay in one go. I hope those readers who can still calculate in "old" money will test their knowledge and correct me if I am wrong.

**MINERS' WAGES. House of Commons Debate 19 December 1935 vol 307 cc1928-9**

**§35. Mr. HENDERSON STEWART** asked the Minister of Labour the percentage increase per shift in miners' wages over 1913 now being paid, and the percentage increase in the index figure for the cost of living for the same period, with similar figures for railway employees?

**Mr. E. BROWN** According to statistics published by the Mines Department, the average earnings (exclusive of allowances in kind) per man-shift worked in the quarter ended 30th June, 1935, was **9s. 2.85d.**, as compared with **6s. 5<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d.** in June, 1914, an increase of about 42 per cent. The average weekly payments (including payments for overtime, Sunday duty, night duty, etc.) to male adults in railway conciliation grades in the week ended 9th March, 1935, according to statistics published by the Ministry of Transport, was 63s. 1d. According to statements made to the Railway National Wages Board by the Railway Companies in 1932, the corresponding figure in 1914 was 28s. 5d. The increase in average weekly wages, calculated from these figures, is thus 122 per cent.



Barry Island in 1938

*David Mills*

# Memories of the Bargoed of Bygone Days

## Industries and Customs that Have Disappeared

By "URGAIN"

During convalescence after a long illness, with nothing to do but think, my thoughts naturally surveyed the past. I saw, in my mind's eye, the home of my childhood and its neighbourhood—Bargoed and district.

It was not called by that name in those days. The Monmouthshire side was called Aberbargoed, down by the river the "Bont," and the Glamorgan side, above the railway, "Charlestown," and the whole, as signified on the school timetable, as Pont-Aber-Bargoed.

It was a most beautiful little place to look at, so clean and natural, with its few cottages on the Monmouthshire side, all white-limed, looking as if they had been dropped from Heaven to nestle here and there on the hillside. On the Glamorgan side a few streets had actually been built, the whole being surrounded by farms, the houses of which were tenanted by sturdy, intelligent, cultured gentlemen.

Its situation was in a narrow valley, with the River Rhymney, joined by its tributary the Deri River, running through verdant meadows. The water of these rivers was as clear as crystal and teeming with fish, which could be clearly seen flitting about. Many a time have I caught scores of fish (just under the viaduct, in the Deri River) which we children used to call "barrabite"—the proper name I never knew. The rivers were a great attraction to the children, the Ynys being a favourite spot, as also was another little island near the factory, on which trees grew.

### THE INDUSTRIES

The industries were a few coal "levels" and one coal pit, "Pengarreg," worked on the hillsides; farming, an excellent woollen factory, and a flour mill worked by a water-wheel situated to the north-west of the then old Mill Inn, which was a long, low building, and which was on the opposite side of the road to the present Old Mill Hotel, and, by the way, was kept at

that time by a relative of the composer of the Welsh National Anthem.

The flour mill ceased working about 55 years ago, and what a paradise it became to the younger generation. How we used to revel in climbing into the empty bins or the wheel, running up and down stairs (it was three storeys high), or trying to work the heavy millstones.

The factory was removed to Maesycwmmer about 30 years ago, and has kept up its reputation for good work. The writer still has flannel in use made at the Bargoed factory over 40 years ago.

Employment was also found for a few on the railways, which ran one on each side of the valley, connecting Newport and Rhymney on the Monmouthshire side, and Cardiff and Rhymney on the Glamorgan side. A branch line also ran up the Deri Valley and connected Newport with Brecon via Bargoed.

### PLACES OF WORSHIP

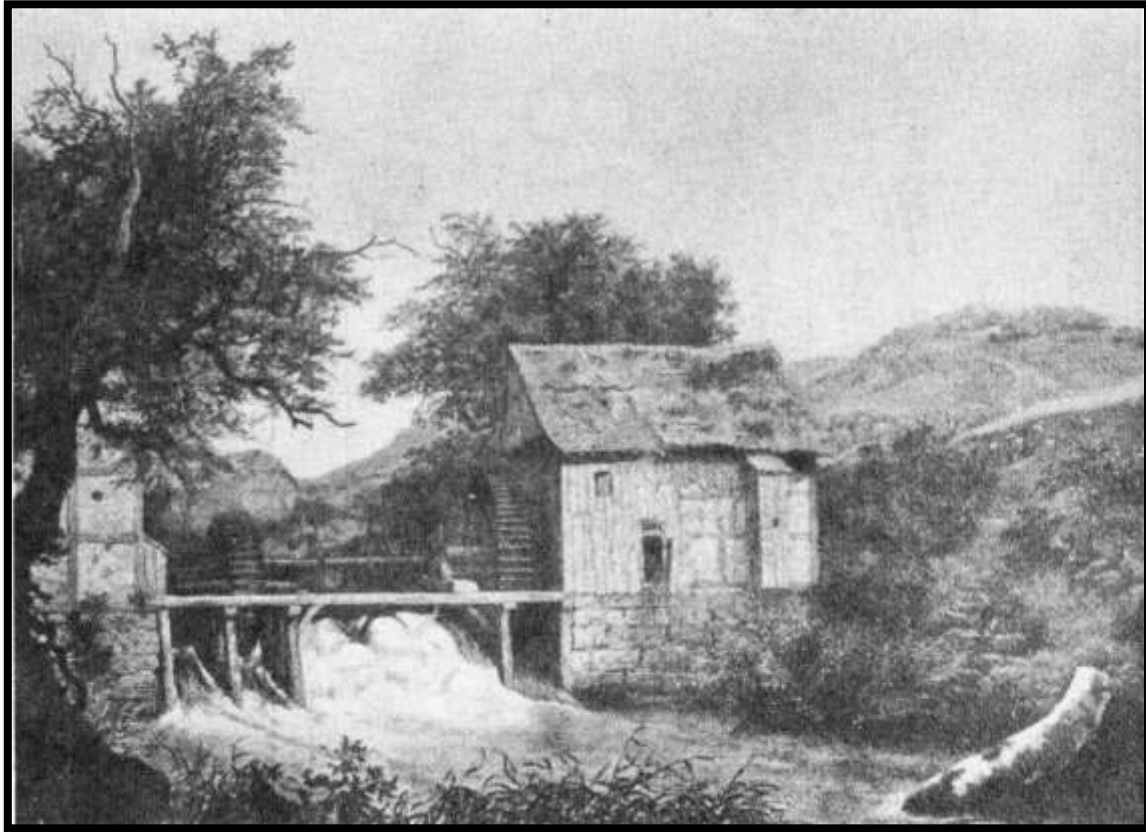
We were well supplied with places of worship—Caersalem Welsh Baptist, Calfarfa Welsh Congregational, Bethania Welsh Methodist, Primitive Methodists (at that time called "Ranters"), and St. Gwladys' Church (Anglican).

It was wonderful to see the numbers who regularly attended Divine service. A pretty and popular sight was the occasional baptismal service conducted by the Baptist church. The members and the Sunday school scholars marched down in procession from the church to the meadow alongside the river. An open-air service was held, followed by the immersion of the candidates in the river. Scores of people would foregather to witness the ceremony. The singing was always very

*Gelligaer Times Newsletter 67* contained references to Pont Aberbargoed. An old sketch of the mill said to be at Bargoed appears below. The article above refers to the flour mill saying



it was three stories high. A plan of 1796 shows that the mill was to the north of the Darren and was fed by a mill race which took water from someway upstream, the water then discharged into the Rhymney river. Mills were three stories as the ground floor contained the gears etc which allowed the wheel to turn the mill stone. The first floor would be where the grinding took place and the top floor would be where the grain was stored and from where the millstone was fed.



### The Coronation of King Charles III

This event will take place on 6<sup>th</sup> May **2023** at Westminster Abbey. The last Coronation took place almost 70 years ago on 2<sup>nd</sup> June **1953** when the late Queen Elizabeth II was crowned at Westminster Abbey. The year **1553** saw Queen Mary 1<sup>st</sup> being crowned in Westminster Abbey.

It will be interesting to compare and contrast this year's Coronation with the one seventy years ago, will it be less pomp and ceremony? Possibly on a slightly smaller scale? For those readers who remember the souvenirs from seventy years ago a sample is shown below. But you may still have your own and if you would care to share what they look like then please submit them for inclusion in a future newsletter. Again, it will be interesting to compare and contrast the souvenirs that are produced this year, but already the inevitable mugs and flags are available, a sample of these are also shown below

**1953**



2023



## Book Review

THE PARISH OF PONTLOTTYN: ITS EARLY YEARS, by Roger L. Brown, *Morgannwg* Volume LXVI (2022), pp.57-71. *Morgannwg* is the journal of Glamorgan History Society and is available from [Glamorgan History Society - Cymdeithas Hanes Morgannwg](#) £12.50

Roger L. Brown opens this essay with a description of the area in the north of the old Gelligaer parish, for centuries a sparsely populated rural area far distant from the parish church. By the mid-nineteenth century, its emerging industrial communities were presenting challenges to which the nonconformist causes responded more quickly and effectively than the established church was able to, although the latter was making some informal attempts in Pontlottyn and Fochriw about 1861.

It is not clear when Roger L. Brown wrote this article but it does not reference *PARISH OF GELLIGAER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*, GHS, 2021 in which, on pp. 138-140 and 155-159, Clive Andrewartha and Dr. Stuart Broomfield describe and explain the work of Revd G.C.F. Harries in the parish in general and especially in the north. It is disappointing that, on page 59, Pontlottyn's benefactor is dismissed as *a Mr Williams who was a local landowner*. However, read on to page 65 to learn that *A new chalice had been given to the parish church by Mr Edmund D. Williams of Maesruddud, a member of the family who had given the original chalice when the church was built*.

The work of the missionaries in the area in the 1880s is described and the comprehensive use of information in 1891 Pontlottyn parish magazine which includes *The Banner of Faith* shows how useful such sources are not only for church matters but also for general local history.

While it is good to read about a part of Gelligaer parish in *Morgannwg*, it is disappointing that there is no reference to GHS publications, especially *PARISH OF GELLIGAER IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY* (2021) and articles on Troedrhiwfwch and Pantywaun in *Gelligaer* 22 (2015) and 26 (2019), as well as the work of Jervis Pearce on Pontlottyn parish.

I add, as a post script to this review, a plea to readers of *Gelligaer Times*. If you have any parish magazines, please look after them and consider asking GHS officers/committee to help arrange for them to be safely deposited in Glamorgan Archives (or Gwent Archives if more relevant). The same is true of so many other items that people collect over their lifetime – photographs, cuttings from newspapers, funeral leaflets, newsletters of all sorts, property sale catalogues, programmes of events, celebration dinners and the like, to name just a few. Please preserve history and heritage and help the environment by saving such documents from the skip and landfill.

Other work by Roger L. Brown that might be of interest to *Gelligaer Times* readers includes: 'The parish of Gelligaer during the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century', *Gelligaer*, 12 (1982), 12-14 'Laying the Foundation Stone of Lewis' School Pengam – an Episcopal Sequel', *Gelligaer*, 13 (1990), 12-17

‘The Parish of Gelligaer in the Nineteenth Century and the foundation of the Parish of Bargoed’, *Morgannwg*, XLVI (2002), 21-55  
*Annie Owen*

### Potpourri of links

The topics may seem obvious –But you pays your money and takes your choice

[Unlocking the Chartist Trials/ Datgloi Achosion y Siartwyr ...](#)

[Bedlinog \(culturalecology.info\)](#)

[Lives of the First World War | Lives of the First World War \(iwm.org.uk\)](#)