



# Gelligaer Times

## Newsletter of the Gelligaer Historical Society

No 23

www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk

Winter 2011-12

### A message from the Chair

Happy New Year.

The first half of Gelligaer Historical Society's Golden Jubilee year has been memorable with not only the successful launch of our book, *Bargoed and Gilfach a local history* but also membership and attendance at meetings showing that interest in local history in this part of the old county of Glamorgan is every bit as lively as it was when the Society came into being five decades ago.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find an article on Glamorgan History Society. That Society is over a decade older than our own Society, but like GHS its name and the area it studies is becoming increasingly difficult for many people to identify with as both Glamorgan County and Gelligaer Urban District were swept away in the local government changes on the early 1970s. *Annie*

### *Bargoed and Gilfach A Local History*



The photograph on the left shows GHS President, Islwyn Hughes, presenting a copy of *Bargoed and Gilfach A Local History* to Councillor Harry Andrews M.B.E. who launched the volume at Lewis School Pengam on 22 November 2011, exactly fifty years after the Society was formally inaugurated at Gelligaer Urban District Council (GUDC) offices in Hengoed.

The photograph on the right shows (from left to right) GHS President Islwyn Hughes, Terry McCarthy, former Chair of the Society, Annie Owen, current Chair,

Dr C. J. Howard, Head of Lewis School Pengam, and Judith Jones, Vice Chair.

The book has proved popular with 400 copies sold in the five weeks leading up to Christmas and sales now exceed 465. Most sales have been local but we have had an order from Shetland, and the book has also gone to Australia, Canada, USA and Colombia.

The book is available locally at the Winding House, Bargoed Library, Occasions Card Shop in Bargoed, Fleur-de-Lys Post Office, Deri Library, Newscene (Rowlands) Blackwood, Siop y Bont Pontypridd Market, and Siop y Ganolfan Merthyr. Those not living locally can contact us through our website and obtain it from us by post/cheque for £10 + £5 p&p (unfortunately it weighs about 1005 grams and those 5 extra grams cost £1.20). It is also available from us through Amazon (credit/debit card), but naturally we would prefer it was bought from us direct.



### Winding House New Tredegar

- Readers of this newsletter may be interested to know that John Evans is giving a talk on *history of the iron industry in the heads of the valleys area* in Winding House on **Wednesday 14th March at 7pm** (arrive here by 6.45). Such talks are always very popular and as numbers are limited in line with fire regulations it is **essential that those interested book their places** -- just phone Winding House - 01443 822666.
- GHS is arranging a **members' daytime visit to Winding House Museum during March**, Details will be available in the February meeting and on the website. Museum staff have agreed to talk about their work and to discuss the care and management of the items in their custody.

### Winding House acquires 2000 year old Roman ring

The County Borough Museum, the Winding House in New Tredegar, was thrilled to have recently acquired a 2000 year old Roman silver finger-ring, which was found on Cefn Brithdir in the Darran Valley.

The ring was found by a metal detectorist earlier in 2011. Realising straight away that it was possibly made of silver and over 200 years old, thus making it officially "treasure", the gentleman went through all the correct legal channels necessary under the Treasure Act and contacted the Finds Officer, Portable Antiquities Scheme.



The ring was passed to the National Museum in Cardiff which identified it as a typical Roman silver finger ring from the 1st or 2nd Century AD, although its gemstone is missing.

It was declared to be treasure trove and placed in the care of the British Museum who then offered the ring to the Winding House, as it was discovered within the boundaries of Caerphilly County Borough.

The ring was purchased by the Winding House Friends and Volunteers through donations made by members of the public.

Assistant Museums and Heritage Officer, Gill Levy, who is responsible for the museum collection says *we are very pleased and excited to have acquired the ring for the Winding House collection. We don't of course know who the ring belonged to - whether it was a Roman soldier marching across Cefn Brithdir, or perhaps was worn by a settler in the area. We have plans to involve local schoolchildren in a creative writing exercise to come up with their own suggestions.*

Delighted staff collected the ring from the British Museum in late November and it is now on display in the West Gallery of the Winding House. *Emma Wilson, Museums and Heritage Officer CCBC.*

### **Welsh week 2012 in Ystrad Mynach College**

Gelligaer Historical Society has accepted the invitation to participate in Ystrad Mynach College's Welsh week commencing February 20 2012 in Athena learning Centre. At the time of writing several members are preparing presentations covering a range of themes relating to the local area. The themes include government, politics, economic activity, hardships of everyday life and the growth and decline of communities in the south Wales valleys. GHS members who wish to come along to any of these presentations should check for details on the Society website.



### **Glamorgan History Society**

Have you ever thought about joining Glamorgan History Society? Did you know that such a Society existed?

When the Society was founded in 1950 it was called *Glamorgan Local History Society* but it changed its name to *Glamorgan History Society* in 1966. From the beginning the Society aimed to promote and encourage the study of the history of the county of Glamorgan within the wider context of the history of Wales. Today it does this through its journal *Morgannwg*,

Day Schools and links with local history societies such as our own Gelligaer Historical Society.

The Society encourages professional and amateur historians to pursue original research and the results of some of this research appear in *Morgannwg*, the Society's journal. *Morgannwg*, published annually since 1957, has earned an enviable reputation among academic and amateur historians for its high standard and it has made a major contribution to the understanding and appreciation of the history of Glamorgan. Not only does each issue include several articles arising from original research but it also highlights recent archaeological investigations, keeps readers up to date with news from the county's archives (in Cardiff and Swansea) as well as relevant recent publications through reviews and short notices. Readers of *Gelligaer Times* may be interested to know that *Gelligaer* Volumes XVII and XVIII and *The Farms and their Families* Volume I received short notices in the most recent issue of *Morgannwg*. An index is published every ten years. The full text of *Morgannwg* Volumes 1-48 is freely available on-line from the National Library of Wales Welsh Journals On-line Project which has a searchable database of back-numbers for a large number of Welsh academic journals and can be found at <http://welshjournals.llgc.org.uk/browse/listissues/llgc-id:1169834>.

The Society's AGM is held in May (on the same day and in the same venue as that of South Wales Record Society) and after the business meetings the members of both Societies join to hear a talk given by a guest speaker.

The Autumn Day School is an annual event. The talks, delivered by guest speakers, relate to a particular theme of relevance to Glamorgan, and there is ample time for discussion following each talk. Recent themes have included Historic Gardens, Cathedrals and late C19 and early C20 Industrial Society, and, in 2011, the theme was Unrest and Dissent. There is plenty of time to browse the bookstalls of various local history societies, archive offices and publishers before the programme starts and during the lunch break.

Membership of Glamorgan History Society (currently £10 per year) is open to anyone with an interest in the old county of Glamorgan. Members receive a copy of *Morgannwg* and booking forms for the Annual Day School and Annual General Meeting.

For further details about Glamorgan History Society visit the website : <http://www.glamorganhistory.org/index.html> (which also provides a link to [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)) or ask Judith Jones or Annie Owen who are both currently members of the Society's Council.

### **Program of Talks for 2011-2012**

**Monthly Talks** – as this is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the Society we have tried to have as many local talks as possible)

February 29 2012

Darren Valley

Ogilvie Project

March 28 2012

Greg Buick

Hamlet of Brithdir - Pre-1840

April 25 2012  
May 26 2011  
June 27 2012

Terry McCarthy      Railways in Gelligaer Parish  
Judith Jones          Gelligaer and Merthyr Common  
AGM plus a short talk on Witchcraft in the area by Ken Reynolds

The Committee will be finalising the programme for the 2012-2013 session in the near future and welcomes the opinions of members on whether or not to include a similar format for the December 2012 meeting (possible dates December 12 or 19).

Thanks of the Committee to those members who have suggested possible speakers for future meetings (especially as they have provided contact details as well). Please contact the website if you have any further ideas for speakers or for any other activity that might be appropriate for the Society.

### **Recent talks enjoyed by members:**

November 24<sup>th</sup> 2011      Penallta Colliery by Gareth Salway

Gareth Salway, the author of *Penallta: A Pit and Its People*, gave a very well attended talk on the history of Penallta Colliery from the sinking of the first shaft in 1905 to the pit's closure in 1991. The talk was well illustrated with photographs. At the end of the talk there was a lively discussion and some reminiscing from those in the audience who had worked at the pit. (It is hoped we can include the text of the talk in our next journal)



Gelligaer Historical Society also celebrated its birthday at this meeting with a birthday cake. Society president Islwyn Hughes and long-standing member and current valued committee member Nesta Jones cut the birthday cake which was then enjoyed by all present.



December 15<sup>th</sup> 2011

The December meeting was described as a member and guest evening. Those present used the opportunity to express their views on the Society before we heard two very interesting short talks. Miss Nesta Jones who delighted us with her description of Hengoed in the interwar era, before Dr David Williams took us back to Pontaberbargoed about half a century earlier.

January 26<sup>th</sup> 2012      Where are the Women of Cwm Rhymney?

The title of Dr Elin Jones talk had most of us intrigued as we took our places at the well attended meeting in January. The structure of the talk was carefully crafted with Dr Jones looking at the formation of the Gelligaer Historical Society and its membership back in its foundation year of 1961 and pointing out the proportion of men, women and student members (mostly sixth form girls) present for the first lecture. She progressed to look at the speakers, contents of the lectures and membership of the committee over the years. She came to the conclusion that while women were well represented in the Society, the number of women speakers was less than the number of men. When it came to talking about people who had made their mark and merited being subjects of lectures there were far more men than women. Were there no local heroines or women who made sufficient impact on society to warrant being the subject of research and a subsequent paper or talk, hence the rhetorical question in the title: Where are the women of Cwm Rhymney?

It was a call to action to the men and women of the Society to take themselves off to libraries and onto the internet, rummage in old newspapers and family albums, uncover some new data and publish it or at least present a paper on it.

Now! there's a challenge.      Iris Owens

### **Research**

Are you currently doing any research? From the start Gelligaer Historical Society has been concerned with research. During the last three years members have concentrated on studying the history of Bargoed and Gilfach and there is no doubt that research on this urban area will continue. Over the last couple of years as well as that project, I undertook one for the University of Essex on the Trelewis Regeneration Project. When they were both completed, it left a gap in my life, so I am currently involved in finding out about specific aspects of life in Pontlottyn in the early 1920's.

At present I am using the microfilm copies of the Merthyr Express, held in the new Bargoed Library. The staff are really helpful and I am getting lots of data. The only problem is one of ergonomics; the chairs, table, microfilm reader and I are not compatible. Nothing fits. Even with the chair raised up my chin is level with the bottom of the

screen and my feet don't reach the floor. To use the wind-on knob on the microfilm viewer you have to sit with your right arm fully extended permanently. There is nowhere to put a notebook and the place is freezing cold.

After two hours everything aches (I'll spare you the details) and I revive myself in the 'Cwtch Café' with a quick 'cuppa' after which I resume until I reach the point where I feel I could compete with Quasimodo in terms of body shape. Only another year of Merthyr Express to go and I can graduate to the Bargoed Journal and then down to the Glamorgan Archives where I hope you do not have to be a contortionist to use the equipment.

If you are doing any research, do let us know by writing a short article for the Newsletter, especially if you are running into problems. Other members may be able to help. For example, we recently had a sepia photo showing an old gent in regalia, emailed to us. Based on the ceremonial crook he was holding, he may have been a member of the Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds. I hope this information has enabled the researcher to progress with their family history.

So please, share your experiences with us and perhaps we can help each other when it comes to research.

Iris Owens, Editor

Other members have embarked on other research projects including:-

- Annie has started a Gelligaer parish-wide study of the era of World War I which she hopes will be completed by 2014, a century after the start of the Great War
- Dave is researching the Brewer-Williams family of Maesrhuddud (now Maes Manor hotel)
- Greg is continuing the project he has started on farms and farming.

If any readers of *Gelligaer Times* feel they can contribute to any of this research please contact the website [www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

*We were recently sent this photo of Samuel Carter (born 1836) with an enquiry as to whether anyone recognised the regalia he was wearing. I don't know that we have been able to answer the query. But as it happened one of our members was also descended from Samuel Carter, and had been unaware of this photo so we were able to be of some use.*

*Samuel Carter would appear to be holding a shepherd's crook and the sash he is wearing may have the letters P W on it. If anyone does recognize the regalia please let us know.*



### **Gelligaer Volume XVIII - Journal 2010**

The latest edition of our Journal is available for £4

- 1825 – GELLIGAER MAN TRANSPORTED TO AUSTRALIA
- 1847-54 – THE GELLIGAER EISTEDDFODS AT THE HARP INN
- 1834 – THE BEGINNINGS OF ABERBARGOED
- 1841-TODAY – RAILWAYS IN GELLIGAER
- 1894-1908 – HISTORY THROUGH SCHOOL LOG BOOKS

The Gelligaer Historical Society has published a journal since its inception. We would like to produce a small journal annually and would welcome any article you may have relating to the history of the parish or the communities within it. We don't say we will publish it and we will certainly not pay any money for it. Any piece can be from 1 to 10 pages (400 to 4000 words), although preferably not too long. If you have such an article then email it in Word or similar format to: [webmaster@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@gelligaerhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

### **Other Publication Available**

Bargoed and Gilfach, A Local History	£10	£5.00 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal 2010 Volume XVIII	£4	£1.00 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal 2009 Volume XVII	£5	£1.50 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal 2007 Volume XVI	£3.50	£1.00 post & packaging
Gelligaer Journal 2005 Volume XV	£4	£1.00 post & packaging
Gelligaer Journal Volumes Vol XI – XV in 1 volume	£5	£2.00 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Journal Volumes Vol VI – X in 1 volume	£5	£2.00 post & packaging.
Gelligaer Farms & Families 1540-1840 - Garthgynydd Hamlet	£5	£1.00 post & packaging
Gelligaer Farms & Families 1540-1840 - Brithdir Hamlet	£7	£1.50 post & packaging

The single volume collections were kindly produced for the society by Dr. Fred Holley

All publications are available at our monthly talks with no postage

***Deadline for pieces for Issue 24 of Gelligaer Historical Society Newsletter - 26<sup>th</sup> April 2012***