



Abergavenny Local History Society



PENALLTA COLLIERY

# NEWSLETTER No 33

## AUGUST 2017

If you are reading this newsletter in black and white, you could be reading it in colour on your computer.  
email [alhs@live.co.uk](mailto:alhs@live.co.uk) to be put on the Society's emailing list.

[www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk)

Charity registration number 1098582

## PROGRAMME

Thurs. 28th. Sept.	<b>Trevor Hert</b> 2017 VICTORIAN BRASS BANDS AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION
Thurs. 19th. Oct.	<b>Miranda Aldhouse-Green</b> CELTIC MYTHS IN MEDIEVAL WALES
Thurs. 16th. Nov.	<b>Peter Strong</b> WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE IN THE 1860's
December.	NO LECTURE.

If you have not renewed your membership, please send your subscription (£10 per person payable from 1st May) to the Membership Secretary as soon as you can so that your new card can be sent to you.

Thurs.  
18th. Jan.  
**Christopher Parry**  
MERTHYR'S INFAMOUS CRIMINAL  
COMMUNITY IN THE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

Thurs.  
22<sup>nd</sup>. Feb.  
**Gerallt Nash**  
SAVING St. TEILO'S CHURCH AND  
LATE-MEDIEVAL WALL PAINTINGS.

Thurs  
15th. March.  
**Ann Benson**  
TROY HOUSE-ITS ARCHITECTURE,  
GARDENS AND RESIDENTS.

Thurs.  
26th April.  
**Bleddyn Penny**  
MEN OF STEEL.

Thurs.  
17th. May.  
**Frank Olding**  
PEOPLE OF THE BLACK MOUNTAINS.  
RAYMOND WILLIAMS & ARCHEOLOGY  
Follows the AGM.

THE SOCIETY MEETS AT THE BOROUGH THEATRE AT 7.30 pm.

**Please bring your card to all meetings.**

Social events and visits will be publicised separately.

## CONTACTS

**Chair**

**Lecture  
Secretaries**

**Secretary**

**Treasurer**

**Visits Team**

**Membership Secretary**

**Floodlighting  
Secretary**

**Newsletter  
Editor and  
President**

Email: [alhs@live.co.uk](mailto:alhs@live.co.uk)

The society website is [www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk)

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## THE LAST VISIT OF 2016 WITH FRANK OLDING

We took the Head of the valleys route and it was most interesting to see the new road developing from the extra height of a bus seat. We stopped for coffee at Llancaich Fawr. We visited this house many years ago but is now obscured by a pleasant new development with restaurant and coffee shop and, of course, the inevitable gift shop!



From there at Parc Penallta we visited Sultan, a remarkable pit pony carved in the landscape from colliery waste and designed by Mick Petts. We climbed to a metal grid representing its ear and walked the length of its body and down the tail to the ground level.

At Gelligaer we saw a tablet commemorating David Lewis School and glanced into a green space, which was once a Roman fort very similar to the one at Abergavenny. There was a most interesting glass window depicting what the fort looked like.



From there we visited the old Penallta coal mine.



The winding house was too

dangerous for us to enter but Frank provided a photograph that showed a very elegant interior. The workshops had been converted into dwelling blocks. The site was derelict and not very pretty but it could form an important relic of the past if it were suitably cleaned up.

We then took a narrow lane on to Gelligaer Common, a large and very muddy open space, and walked from the bus to a small ring that enclosed our party but we did not notice it until Frank pointed out where we were standing.



Further up the hill we encountered a strange standing stone leaning at an angle. This commemorated an Irish warrior of the dark ages C6th-7th and bore his name in Ogham script NEFROIHI meaning 'Champion of the heather'. We returned to the bus and back to Gelligaer where at the Cross Inn on the edge of the common we had an excellent buffet lunch. We wrapped up what was left and took it home for tea!

Thanks are due to Frank who with his great humour always provides us with interesting information.

**KEN KEY**

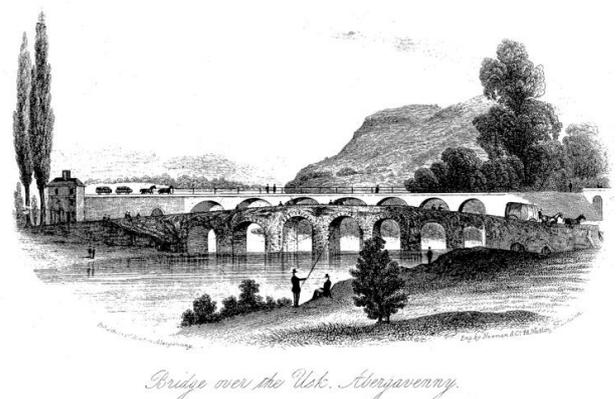
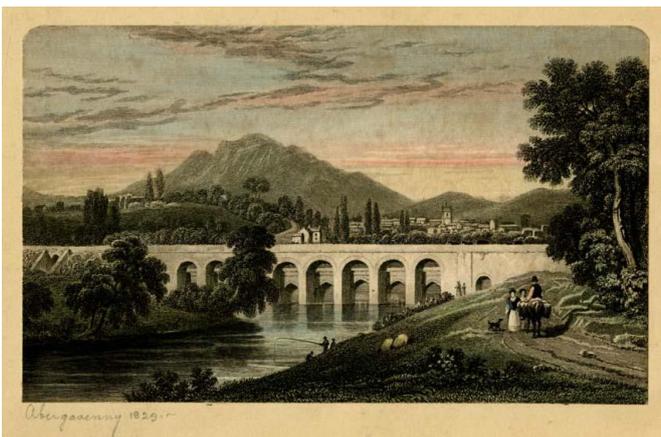
## Abergavenny Bridge – an illustrated dash through history



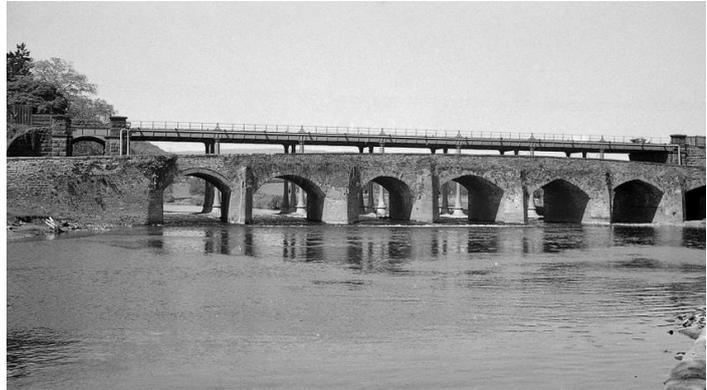
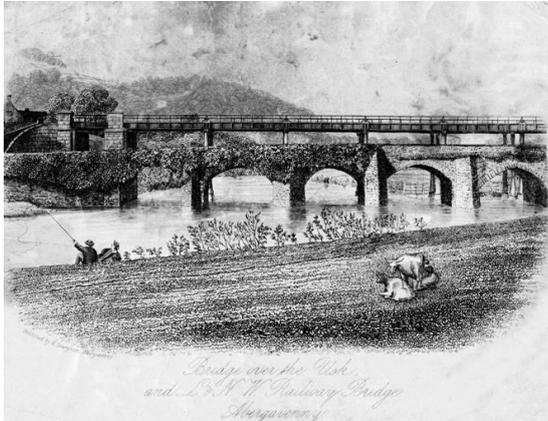
The bridge over the River Usk between Abergavenny and Llanfoist is so familiar to us all that it is easy to take it for granted. Coflein tells us that it was formerly known as Tudor Bridge as it is recorded as being built by Jasper Tudor, duke of Bedford and Baron of Abergavenny during the reign of Henry VIII. The seven arches and piers on the downstream side, plus the two low flood arches on the Abergavenny side are the originals from the fifteenth century. During the fifteenth century eight bequests are recorded for the repair and maintenance of the bridge. Maintenance of the bridge from Elizabethan times was the duty of the parish as the Highways Act of 1555 made it the responsibility of the two Surveyors of the Highway for each parish to announce annually which of the highways were to be repaired, then the parishoners provided the labour and carts. This system was later replaced by a rate on the parish to pay for the work. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the surveyors of the highway for Abergavenny frequently needed to raise rates for the maintenance of bridges. In 1788 they asked for a rate of 6d in the pound 'towards necessary repairs on the Great Bridge and dry bridge'.



The painting above left is by J.M.W. Turner and is possibly the one titled 'Abergavenny Bridge', which was displayed at the Royal Academy in 1799. If this is that painting, it shows a somewhat romanticised version of the bridge, though it might look very similar to how it would have appeared in the 15th Century. It shows more than seven arches, though the flood bridges would have been more apparent than now. The print on the right dates from 1784 and shows just how narrow the original bridge was. But does appear to be well maintained.



The stretch of the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal that runs through Llanfoist opened in 1812. The company had additional powers to build tramroads within eight miles to serve the canal. The engineer for the canal, William Crosley, was asked to survey two tramroads: from Brecon to Hay-on-Wye and from Llanfoist to Llanfihangel Crucorney. The designs were subsequently modified by John Hodgkinson and the tramroads built between 1811 and 1814. This was when the viaduct over the River Usk was built alongside the old Abergavenny Bridge to accommodate the Llanfihangel tramroad. The illustrations above clearly show it towering over the old bridge.



Crawshay Bailey developed a number of tramroads in the area and for him the obvious progression was to convert the tramroads into standard gauge railways. The Act authorising the incorporation of the Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway was passed in 1859 and specified that the line must be completed within five years. Work started in 1860 but the company ran into financial difficulties and it wasn't until after the company was taken over by the London and North Western Railway that the line was completed, including the new bridge over the Usk, and the first section opened in 1862. There does not appear to be any record of how it looked when all three bridges were there, as it was for only six years. In 1868 the Abergavenny Town Commissioners made the decision to lower the tramroad viaduct and combined it with the road bridge to make one wider bridge. This is why the tops of the arches on the upstream side are a different shape from those on the downstream side.



The last passenger train journey on the line was in January 1958 and the railway bridge was removed during the 1960s. The abutments can still be easily seen today. The gasworks are also long since gone but this view must bring back memories for many long-term Abergavenny residents, who will also remember learning to swim in a rather calmer River Usk on summer days.

## Sue Smith

**References:** <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/en/site/24229/details/usk-road-bridge-abergavenny-bridge-abergavenny>  
Ed: A. W. Skempton: *A Biographical Dictionary of Civil Engineers in Great Britain and Ireland Vol 1 1500-1830*  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merthyr,\\_Tredegar\\_and\\_Abergavenny\\_Railway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merthyr,_Tredegar_and_Abergavenny_Railway)

**Picture credits:** Thanks are due to Abergavenny Museum for the use of most of the pictures  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Images>, Malcolm Bowen via <https://en-gb.facebook.com/ForGottenAbergavenny/>

## **BOOZE AND BACCY IN WORLD WAR ONE**

### **BOOZE**

*A photograph of some of the waste tip*



In March 2017, a large stash of bottles of gin, whisky, wine and beer making up 70% of a waste tip, was unearthed in excavations ahead of constructing a new highway near Ramla, Israel, where British soldiers had been garrisoned during WW1. Troops were given issues of rum and there are many stories of supplies of wine and spirits being ‘liberated’ from the surrounding areas in which troops were billeted.

At home, it had been a different matter. There was already an active Temperance Movement and in August 1914, thousands of leaflets and posters were rushed off the presses. Pledge Cards “Don’t Ask me to Take a Drink” were distributed at recruiting centres. There was much concern about the effect of alcohol on the munitions workers and the shortage of munitions prompted Lloyd George to take action. In January 1915, Lloyd George, although not a teetotaler himself, started a campaign to persuade national figures to make a pledge that they would not drink alcohol during the war. King George V supported the campaign and promised that no alcohol would be consumed in the Royal household until war was over.

DORA (the Defence of the Realm Act) was extended in the spring of 1915 and the Liquor Traffic Central Control Board (CCB) was established. Pub opening hours were limited reducing the hours from 5a.m. to 12.30am to just 5 hours with closure during the afternoon. This was to prevent the possibility of workers extending their lunch time drinking and not returning to work. People were banned from treating others to alcohol and both the publican and the buyer of a round could be (and were) prosecuted. Sales of take-away alcohol were reduced and even the strength of alcohol was reduced. The tax on alcohol was increased – the cost of a bottle of whisky was five times greater by the end of the war.

On the other hand, changes in women’s working patterns meant that the type of women frequenting public houses changed. A study in 2013 showed that with more of them working and with so many men away at the front, women had found themselves with more disposable income and they were freed from many domestic restraints. In increasing numbers, they flocked to pubs, traditionally the preserve of men, and drank alcohol in greater quantities than before. The trend prompted moral outrage among many observers, with calls for the Government to take action to keep women out of bars, for publicans to stop serving them, and even for changes to the design of pubs, to discourage female drinkers. In fact, changes to public houses were made, but to accommodate the new breed of drinkers with their demands for more pleasant surroundings and such luxuries as toilets for women with entrances not ‘out in the yard’. These changes persisted after the war, but attitudes to women drinking in pubs took longer to change, as many of us will remember.

In Abergavenny, very little information about drinking alcohol appeared in the press apart from the occasional report of a prosecution for drunkenness, usually in charge of a vehicle or a horse. We could find no accounts of public houses changing their accommodation to suit female drinkers, or any outcry from locals about more women being seen in public houses. This is likely to be a reflection of the largely rural nature of the occupations in the immediate vicinity. In November 1915, after the introduction of the regulations there was a report in the press that as a result of the ‘Effects of No Treating’ there had been ‘A marked diminution in the number of women and children standing outside public-houses drinking has been noticed, and in many districts the practice has ceased altogether.’ And that ‘drunkenness generally, and among women in particular, has decreased’. In February 1916, all licenses for public houses had been renewed in Monmouthshire although there were difficulties finding sufficient tenants and licensing hours were restricted to 12.30-2.30 & 18.30-21.30. Licensed Victuallers appealed for a reduction in their assessments in consequence and the Committee agreed to a 25% reduction.

In 1917, food shortages were beginning to bite. An article records that there was an announcement from the National Free Council of Wales campaigning to prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors. They emphasised that that ‘huge quantities of sugar, maize and barley are wasted in the production of beer’.

Five Welsh County Councils passed resolutions in favour of wartime prohibition and there was support from 1,800 churches and the western miners. Officials from the National Sailors and Firemen's Union appealed to the Prime Minister to bring about prohibition during the War. However, it appears that little changed locally, apart from the restriction on opening hours and the prohibition against treating.

### **BACCY**

By contrast, there was widespread support for tobacco. At the onset of the war, most soldiers smoked tobacco in pipes, but as the war ground on, cigarette smoking increased in popularity. Although cigarette advertising exploded in this era, other, more practical concerns probably led to the decline of pipe smoking during this period. Cigarettes in a tin are much more convenient than a pipe in trench conditions. A pipe smoker has to keep his loose tobacco dry, which muddy trench conditions in Flanders would have made difficult. Cigarette smoking also takes much less time than a pipe making them more ideal for trench conditions when a soldier may have had to move at a moment's notice. Pipes also need to be constantly relit throughout the smoking process, which is both inconvenient and potentially dangerous as the light from this repeated activity would attract attention at night. The tobacco supplied to the troops was not of good quality and even when provided together with papers for rolling, was not as popular a 'smokes from home'.

Tobacco funds were set up everywhere and people contributed generously. Even organisations like the Red Cross and the YMCA, which had been opposed to smoking before the war, found themselves caught up in supplying what was thought to be essential. Tobacco companies multiplied their profits with clever advertising too, promoting cigarettes as being an integral part of manly fighting, rather than the pre-war association with being rather effeminate.



*An advertising poster for the Tobacco Fund*

In October 1914, the King's daughter Mary, launched an appeal to fund a Christmas gift for every member of the armed forces. The funding was used to produce small boxes, made of silver for officers and brass for other ranks that contained tobacco, cigarettes and a lighter, amongst other small gifts.

Advertisements appeared almost every week in the Abergavenny Chronicle for people to send sixpence to the tobacco fund right from the beginning of the war. There were letters and postcards from soldiers thanking people for their cigarettes. There were lists of donors to the tobacco fund published every week. By 1916, the amount appealed for was increased to one shilling. On 18<sup>th</sup> February 1916, one girl auctioned her puppy for the Tobacco Fund and made twenty three shillings (and her puppy was handed back to her at the end of the auction!). Two choir boys gave two shillings. There was an editorial imploring civilians to economize – not to buy that new suit and to cut down on their tobacco use so that there is more for our boys at the front.

By September 1916, anxieties were increasing about the number of charitable donations being requested and about whether all the organisations were properly run. All local efforts of fundraising must be registered –with a fine of £100 if anyone tries to raise money without being registered. Advertisements for the tobacco fund continued in the Abergavenny Chronicle.

It is interesting to contrast the attitudes towards tobacco and alcohol. Alcohol was seen as a social ill, to be controlled and constrained, used as a medicine (the 'tot of rum') for the troops but restricted at home. Tobacco, in contrast, was seen as an essential aid to the fighting man's ability to fight, or to recuperate afterwards, especially if injured. Although some reservations were expressed about the harmful effects of smoking, the overall dependency of most soldiers and the clever advertising links with heroism, ensured a steady supply to the war front, to barracks, to hospitals and in convalescence.

**GILL WAKLEY** is collating the results of research done by members of the ALHS Research group into *The Home Front in Abergavenny*. She is working on an article on the subject for the *Gwent Local History Journal* in the near future.

## RESEARCH ON THE GUNTER MANSION

A Friends of Gunter group was set up in early 2017 to work closely with the Welsh Georgian Trust to develop a restoration programme for the Mansion and bring in necessary funding. A Historical Research and Interpretation Group has been formed to carry out research on a number of themes including the Mansion's place in Catholic history, the history of the building, the Gunter family and their local and national connections and the story of the rediscovery and recovery of the hidden chapel. The group, which currently has around 15 members, meets every two months or so and would welcome additional support. Your contribution can suit your own circumstances and interests, and can be as little as a few hours here and there. If interested contact **Angela Evans at [angela@thegunterproject.org.uk](mailto:angela@thegunterproject.org.uk)**

The Mayor opened the Gunter Mansion 'Pop-Up-Shop' on July 20<sup>th</sup>. It contains many interesting displays of the history both of the Gunter Mansion and the Local History Society. It will be open 10.30-4.00 on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Volunteers to man it should ring **Gill Wakley on 01863 853324**. It is hoped eventually to make the rest of the Mansion safe for visitors.



## VISIT TO MARGAM AND ABERDULAIS



Our journey to Margam let us see the latest development of the new Head Of The Valleys road through the Clydach Gorge.

Oliver Fairclough gave a talk on the Margam house and its history in the Margam Orangerie, now a vast white hall, ideal for such events as wedding receptions.

The Abbey ruins were most impressive, particularly the Chapter House.



The Aberdulais falls site has been much improved since our last visit many years ago. It is possible to explore the spectacular upper part of the water course that fed the great wheel that drove the rolling mill that produced the tinfoil. The exhibition showed many familiar tin packages once produced from tinfoil made on the site.

**KEN KEY**

## VISIT TO RED LODGE



Red Lodge was built as a guest house for entertaining visitors to the Great House which occupied the site of the Colston Hall in 1568. It was built in 1577 and was painted a deep red. In 1730 it was extended to about double its original size. A restoration in 2010 discovered a well beautifully lined in stone and about 40 feet deep dating from 1580 that has been restored and covered with a glass floor. In 1830 the house was used as a medical dissection theatre. In 1854 it became a school for girls.

Its main feature is the Great Oak room with its lovely panelling and lavishly decorated fireplace. There is yet another decorated fireplace in another room. The print room is interesting and in one room there is a chair that converts into a table. There is a lovely Elizabethan Knot Garden. We were fortunate to have an excellent guide to show us round.

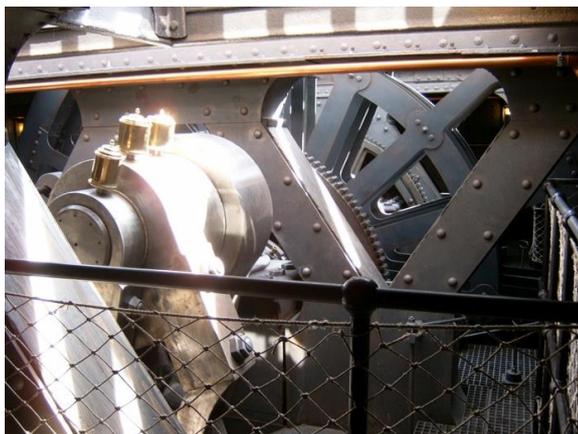
## THE S.S. GREAT BRITAIN



There have been many changes since the Society visited this ship more than 20 years ago. It has been repainted in its original colours and the inside considerably tidied up with the main features being the lower covered deck lit by original glass windows in the ceiling and the first class dining room lit by original windows in the ceiling below those on the higher deck. Isambard Kingdom Brunel deserves tremendous credit for such a brilliant design.

We toured the steerage accommodation where the beds were hardly less luxurious than in first class but not so well lit.

The kitchen seemed hardly big enough for such a crowd and included some realistic rats. There was even a glimpse of part of the engines.



It reflects great credit on the people who brought this historic wreck back from Australia to the dock where it was originally built and

restored it to its present condition. Again we had a brilliant guide, (the smitten image of our own Dai Morgan) to show us round.

**KEN KEY**

## ANNUAL REPORT JAN 1<sup>ST</sup> - 31<sup>ST</sup> DEC 2016

The objects of Abergavenny Local History Society (charity registration number 1098582) are:

1. To promote the local community's knowledge of and interest in history
2. To provide local historical and general interest information for visitors
3. To support Abergavenny Museum and Castle

### **Achievements to meet these objects**

1. During 2016 the society members attended lectures on: Tunnelling to Victory in WW1, Wales and the East India Company, Cartooning the Great War, Rural Life in South Wales on old film, Eisteddfodau through the Ages, Bog Bodies Uncovered, The Story of Cyfartha, and Sudbrook and the Severn Railway Tunnel.

During the summer months, visits to places of historic interest included: Llanelli House built in 1714, with a trip by the River Tawe to see the remains of Swansea's industrial heritage, a weekend to North Wales with visits to Conway Castle, Plas Mawr, Gwydir Castle and Llanrwst, a visit to the Newport ship enhanced the information gained from the lecture, and was followed by a visit to the Newport Transporter Bridge after lunch at the conserved Edwardian Waterloo Hotel. A visit to Bristol took in the SS Gt. Britain and a guided tour of the oldest house in Bristol, Red Lodge. Frank Olding completed the visits with a tour of sites from his new book, *The Archaeology of Upland Gwent*.

The newsletter reported on the visits for those unable to attend (all visits were overbooked), and included articles on Recusancy and Gunter House, Eisteddfodau in Abergavenny, and the Hunt for Verdun Oaks and Chestnuts grown in Bailey Park. There was also a report from the Research Group on the Abergavenny Street Survey, recording the monuments in the Old Hereford Road Cemetery, recusancy in Gwent, and The Home Front in Abergavenny in WW1.

2. To provide information about local history to visitors and more widely, the research group completed the updating and digitisation of the Abergavenny Street Survey and established a website:

[www.abergavenystreetsurvey.co.uk](http://www.abergavenystreetsurvey.co.uk) which is freely accessible. This has resulted in some feedback from interested residents and others. The research group has also had their work published with two articles resulting from their transcription of The Abergavenny Vestry book in the C18th, and another on Eisteddfodau in Abergavenny, appearing in the Gwent Local History Journal, so that the work is available in the public domain.

The society provided staff for the Lle Hanes (History Place) at the National Eisteddfod where they sold books on local history and answered many queries. A display about local history was also produced for the tent. Guided walks around the historic area of Abergavenny were offered daily but unfortunately there was little demand.

A bilingual booklet with a history trail around Abergavenny (Taith Trwy'r Hanes/ Walking through History) was written by Helen Morgan and published by the society in preparation for the National Eisteddfod and is being sold at the Museum and Tourist Information Centre as well as our other publications. Publications are also available for sale at lectures and other events attended by the chairman such as the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association and Gwent County History Society. A calendar produced by Helen & David Morgan to raise funds for the National Eisteddfod also paid for extra day tickets for the society to provide someone to be available every morning and afternoon the National Eisteddfod was held.

The society continues to support the Abergavenny Eisteddfod with a contribution towards the prizes and the chairman presented the prizes to the literary competition. We were pleased to hear from one of the people from King Henry VIIIth School to whom we had given a history award three years ago – Matthew Collier gained a first in History from Aberystwyth University. We will be giving awards this year to Bethan Gilson and Robert King who reading history at Exeter and Cardiff respectively.

Once a week, the society organises and provides a human presence in St Mary's Priory Church, which contains one of the best collections of monuments in the country. This provides information about the collection and its links to the local history to visitors and local people.

The society continues to provide information via the website: [www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.co.uk](http://www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.co.uk) from where guided walks can be downloaded or leaflets or books requested. Information about the society activities is available. Visitors can attend lectures free (although we do ask for a donation). Links to other societies of relevance are also provided and there is a query page where questions about local history can be collected. Answers are provided or the question passed onto other bodies that may be able to assist. The annual report and financial reports will be made available on the website.

3. The Castle and Museum continue to be floodlit during the evenings of September to April and sponsorship is sought from members towards the cost of maintenance and electricity, although most of this comes out of the main account. The Victorian Garden in the Castle grounds, maintained by members, continues to attract many compliments from visitors.

The new display cabinets at the Museum, towards which the society contributed £1,000, make it easier to view and appreciate the displays of local finds. We helped with the background information on John Owen Y Fenni to whom a new display case has been dedicated.

Members of the society volunteer at the Museum and the chairman has helped prepare reports with the Museum Curator, such as the Statement of Significance and Need for the Castle and Museum and to the Heritage Plan for the next five years.

Trustees during 2016 were:

Chairman: G Wakley. Secretary: M Senior. Treasurer: J. Davies until May 2016, B Hurley until January 2017. H. Buchanan, J Butt, C Fairclough, D Morgan, H Morgan, G Oakley, J Patrick, D Phillips, S Smith, J White. R Rogers is nominated as the representative from Monmouthshire Museums.

There is an urgent need for more members to volunteer to help run the society as many of the committee wish to retire after many years of service.

### **CHAIRMAN'S ADDITIONAL REMARKS May 2017 AGM**

As you will see there have been some changes in the format of the Annual Report and Accounts. We were gently reminded by the Charity Commission that new guidelines had been issued.

The annual report now finishes with the end of the financial year. It contains our objectives and how we have met them during the last year. Both this and the annual accounts have to appear on our website so that they are available to the general public and you can download them from there.

I would like, briefly, to add a few words to the report. As you know, we changed Treasurer at the last AGM, but Brendon Hurley was unable to continue and we were very fortunate to find someone with financial skills to take over and make sense of everything in January. There were the usual bank delays over the change of mandate but we are very grateful to Anne Ward who prepared and audited the general accounts and is now keeping us correct. Ian Smith is also owed our thanks for assisting and auditing the visits accounts kept by Caroline Fairclough. I think that you will find that all the accounts are now in excellent order.

You may be interested to know that we had 316 members at the end of the year, (down from last year when it was 322). We made 44 new members this year, but 54 members did not renew. The reason for this is largely due to age, infirmity and death. Membership in 2006-7 was at its maximum at 396 and there has been a steady decline since, although not as great as for some other history societies in Gwent, some of which have had to close. Our website attracts a large number of visitors and we have advertised through Helen Morgan's monthly articles in the Focus, flyers left in suitable places like Gwent Archives and the Library, posters around the town, in Claim Your Date in the Chronicle and most recently on the electronic notice board across the road from the Town Hall. Suggestions and help in recruiting new members are welcome.

I would also like to thank all the committee members who stepped up to help when I was ill in January and February. And also, for their continued activity in keeping the society active. I would make yet another plea for more volunteers – the more we have, the easier it is for people. We urgently need volunteers to join a small group to help with planning and booking the visits for next year. And you will see notices asking for Church Watch volunteers to join the existing team as well (ring Michael Prys-Williams on 01873 850861). This is *your* society, run by a small team, but it cannot continue without your help.

Since the end of the annual report the society have republished the *Trails and Tales leaflet: Whigs, Flannels, Normans and Romans*, which is a self-guided trail around the ceramic and stone plaques which ALHS erected around various historic features in the town. The revised leaflet was part funded by the Abergavenny and District Tourist Association and we are hoping to prepare two more leaflets shortly with their help. If there are any queries, suggestions or offers of help please contact the chairman or a member of the committee.

**GILL WAKLEY** Chairmam

## VISIT TO LOWER BROCKHAMPTON, LEDBURY AND KEMPLEY CHURCHES

On 24<sup>th</sup> May, members gathered at the bus station for the first visit of the 2017 season. It was a beautiful summer morning and we were to be blessed with a whole day of sunshine.



We travelled via Hereford and Bromyard to the National Trust's Brockhampton estate. Driving through the extensive estate's parkland we arrived at the 15<sup>th</sup> century moated manor house of Lower Brockhampton. Set in orchards and gardens the half-timbered gatehouse and manor house are incredibly picturesque.

After welcome refreshments at the Apple tree tearoom, members proceeded through the little gatehouse bestriding the moat and entered the manor house.

This house has been lived in for most of its history, the building being adapted and shaped by the people who lived there, changing from the grand medieval hall, built in 1425, to a more humble dwelling for farmers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Touring the house it is possible to trace its changing fortunes under the ownership of Dumbleton, Barneby, Lutley and Freegard families, the latter handing it over to the National Trust in 1946. Since then it has been gradually restored to its original form.

The heart of the house is the timber-framed great hall, with its minstrels' gallery, and its superb roof structure. Proceeding up the stairs from the hall and through the door leading off the gallery one finds a number of rooms, two of the most interesting of which are bedrooms. One contains a magnificent four-poster bed, upon which is found a copy of the instructions given to servants in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These include a direction to regularly inspect the bed for lice and fleas!

Another bedroom contains First War uniform, rifle



and memorabilia connected to Thomas Sprague, who was a gamekeeper on the estate. Sadly he lost his life on 23 November 1917 at the age of 30, his name being commemorated on the Louveral Memorial near Cambrai. My own uncle was killed in the same area a week later, and is also commemorated on that memorial.

Leaving the idyllic surroundings of Lower Brockhampton we proceeded to Ledbury for a lunch break and from there drove on to the village of Kempley, where we were to visit its two churches.

We were met at the 12<sup>th</sup> century Norman church of St. Mary by Professor Jarvis, Chairman of the Friends of Kempley churches. He gave us an excellent talk on the wonderful paintings and frescoes contained therein. These paintings were whitewashed over at the time of the Reformation and initially uncovered in the 1870s by the then vicar. A major restoration was carried out in the 1950s and since 1984 the church, no longer used for worship, has been managed by English Heritage.



Amongst a number of tempera paintings in the nave are a wheel of life and a depiction of the three Maries at the Sepulchre, dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The greatest glory is that of the frescoes in the chancel dating from the 1120s. The vault shows Christ in Majesty, whilst on north and south walls the 12 Apostles are depicted, with hands and heads raised in adoration. The whole collection is regarded as one of the finest examples in Europe.

We were then led to the present parish church of St. Edward the Confessor, which also is of considerable historical importance. John Betjeman praised it as “a cathedral of the Arts and Crafts movement”. Dedicated in 1903, it is in its architecture and adornment very typical of the movement. Once again we were given a very enlightening talk by Professor Jarvis.

All visits were most enjoyable and much enhanced by our journey through the wonderful Herefordshire countryside on such a perfect summer’s day.

**David Powell**

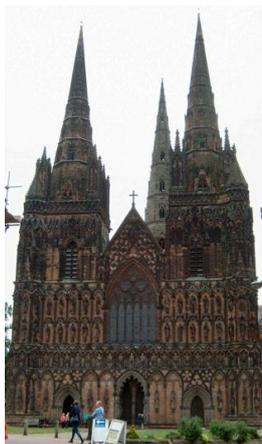
### CHURCH WATCH

We are grateful to Michael Pryce-Williams who has organised the stewardship of St Mary’s church each Wednesday afternoon for some years.

**He urgently needs some more volunteers**

The task is not onerous and is rewarding and one meets interesting people. He would be glad to hear from anyone who can help. His number is 01873 850861

## THE WEEKEND IN DERBYSHIRE



A relatively small party of about twenty stopped on the way for lunch at Lichfield. In my youth this was the halfway stopping point on my 250 mile cycle ride from Lancaster to London. This time I welcomed the opportunity to visit the vast cathedral, the Minster Pool and a lively town much changed since the 1940's.

The Old Hall Hotel in Buxton was a little old fashioned with a broken lift but with good food and helpful staff – rather more comfortable than the Youth Hostel of my early days.

Haddon Hall is an amazing house with kitchens, bedrooms, a long gallery for exercise in the typical inclement weather, numerous old tapestries, beautiful gardens and all the things you would expect and more.



Eyam is the village that caught the London plague and cut itself off to avoid spreading the deadly disease. It is full of beautiful flowers. The church has an interesting reredos and a well preserved cross.





On our visit to Cromford Cotton Mill we had an excellent guide although the views of the partially destroyed site did not inspire photography. Sir Richard Arkwright built the mill as a sort of fortress against a cliff with high walls and a defensible gateway. He feared that the cottage textile industry and competition would turn violent against him.

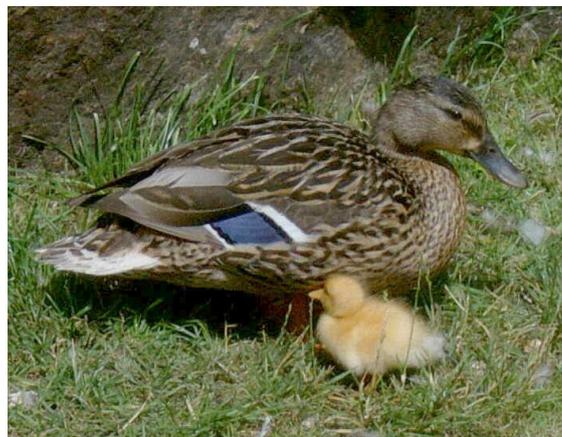
The most interesting exhibit was a drawtwist machine for converting the combed cotton into thread. How sad my photo was blurred but it reminded me of the modern drawtwist machines at British Nylon Spinners where I worked. The idea is the same after some 200 years!

Fortune provided three streams that turned three waterwheels to power the machines housed in three buildings. Other buildings provided storage for cotton that came from Liverpool when the weather made transport possible.

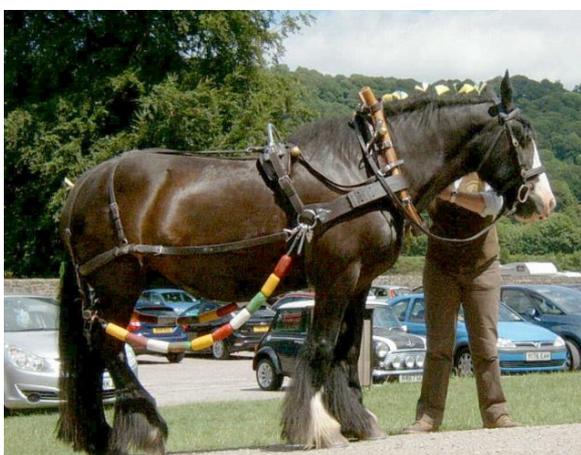
There was a school for managers of Arkwright's other mills and a sick bay. Outside the walls is a chapel containing the Arkwrights' bodies buried and concealed under a carpet. A very modest ending for great engineers.



*Our hotel breakfast needed only a snack before we embarked on a horse drawn barge along the Cromford canal.*



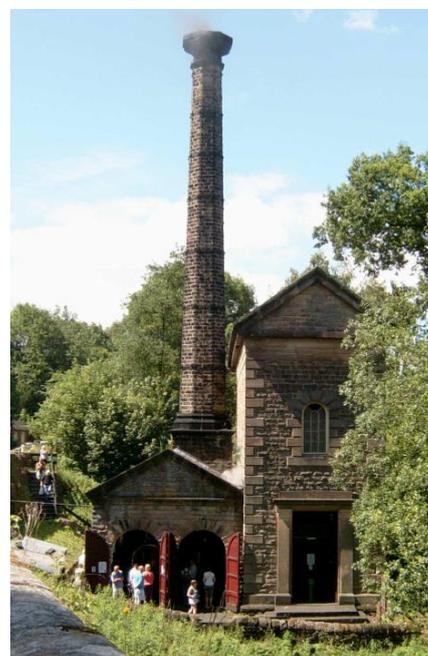
*The yellow duckling was a great attraction.*



Two coal-fired boilers drove an enormous pump that was only allowed to top up the canal on certain days. Our journey home took us up over the moors to Leek. It was good to see the countryside that I had walked at weekends when I lived in Manchester

I am reminded that we are much more than just a Local History Society. The help and sympathy for my broken wrist turned what could have been a disaster into one of the most interesting and instructive outings we have ever had.

**KEN KEY**



## **HAS HENRY VII'S BIRTHPLACE BEEN FOUND AT PEMBROKE CASTLE?**



Hawlfraint y Goron CBHC – Crown Copyright RCAHMW

Geophysical surveys at Pembroke Castle have revealed the remains of structures within the inner and outer wards which were previously unsuspected. Although Pembroke Castle is one of the most prestigious castles in Wales, its layout is poorly understood because the buildings are hardly mentioned in medieval manuscripts.

Toby Driver from RCAHMW (yes, the one who hangs out of airplanes taking photographs!)

identified parchmarks in aerial photography of the area. A team led by Neil Ludlow has since carried out magnetometry, resistivity and Ground Penetrating Radar surveys.

The arrangements of the parchmarks suggest a winged manor house in the outer ward of a style consistent with a late 15C high status building. This may be where Henry VII was born and excavation will confirm the date and form of the building. Two, possibly three, unsuspected buildings were identified in the inner ward. But in the outer ward the results were more surprising. It appears that the area was otherwise largely empty of buildings and suggests that the area was used as an open space. A large rectangular and a smaller lean-to were identified against the south-west curtain wall. The discovery of a possible well may solve the mystery of the castle's water source. (more information on <http://castlestudiestrust.org/blog/tag/pembroke/>)

**GILL WAKLEY**

## **FOOTPRINTS AT PORT EYNON**

<https://changingtidesproject.wordpress.com/2015/06/24/footprints-at-port-eynon/>



Uncovered in 2014, the pre-historic footprints of children and adults at Port Eynon on the Gower were initially thought to date to the Bronze Age. Recent results from radiocarbon dating by Cardiff University have shown that they are 3,000 years older and could belong to a Mesolithic hunting party. Archaeology PhD student Rhiannon Philp said that the group of children and adults travelling together and the presence of tracks of deer and wild boar travelling in the same direction suggest a tracking party travelling through boggy ground which is now under the sea and revealed

only at low tide when the sand had been washed out of the footprints.

The majority of post-Ice Age footprints are rare and most of those discovered in tidal sites have been found in Wales. They are difficult to record but rapid digital photography from many angles makes the race against the tide more feasible than in the old days of having to measure and draw them.

**GILL WAKLEY**