



Abergavenny Local History Society



CHERRY STONER. IDEAL HOME EXHIBITION. OLYMPIA 1936
(Still stoning cherries and damsons in 2018)

NEWSLETTER No 34

AUGUST 2018

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email alhs@live.co.uk to be put on the Society's emailing list.

<http://www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk>

Charity registration number 1098582

PROGRAMME

2018	
Thurs. 27th. Sept.	Eleri Lynn QUEEN ELIZABETH 1 st & THE BACTON ALTAR CLOTH
Thurs. 18th. Oct.	David Cartwright MAN FROM MERTHYR WHO FOUNDED A TOWN IN TSARIST RUSSIA
Thurs. 15th. Nov.	Dr. Ann Benson GLORY DAYS OF RAGLAN CASTLE

**LECTURES IN 2018 ARE IN THE BOROUGH THEATRE
at 7.30pm.**

Annual subscriptions payable from 1st May

PLEASE BRING YOUR CARD TO ALL MEETINGS

2019	
Wed. 16th. Jan.	Brian Davies WELSH PAINTINGS OF JULIAN IBBOTSON
Wed.. 13th. Feb.	Mari Fforde HAY CASTLE: THE PAST 100 TEARS
Wed, 13th. March.	Phil Hughes TALES FROM THE TOWPATH
Wed. 17th April.	Gwenallt Nash SAVING St.TEILO'S.

**LECTURES IN 2019 ARE ON WEDNESDAYS AT KING
HENRY VIII SCHOOL HALL at 7.30 pm.**

EXCEPT: VENUE TO BE ANNOUNCED

Wed. 15th. May.	Frank Olding TALK ON GODS OF GWENT Follows the AGM.
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Social events and visits will be publicised separately.

CONTACTS

Chair

**Lecture
Secretary**

Secretary

**Lecture and
Summer Visits
Team**

Treasurer

**Floodlighting
Secretary**

Membership Secretary

Publications

Publicity

Research

Schools

**Liaison &
Refreshments**

**Newsletter
Editor and
President**

Email: alhs@live.co.uk

The society website is www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk

Charity registration number 1098582

Frank's 2017 visit



Monmouth once had three railway stations; a line from Raglan went through TROY and divided. One branch went over an iron bridge to MAY HILL and followed the Wye north. The other branch went through a HALT near Hill Farm and followed the Wye South to Chepstow. We walked down the disused line coming from May Hill to the iron girder bridge



across the Wye. From there we could see the stone bridge on the Troy to Chepstow line.



Our next stop was the furnace in the Angiddy valley above Tintern, dating from 1672. In summer a large building stored iron ore brought on dry roads for use in winter when roads were impassable.

A leet brought water to a large



waterwheel driving the bellows producing the blast.

The forge at Pont-y- Saison higher up the valley produced a particularly good 'Osmond Iron' used in the wire works further down the valley.

The valley produced tinplate between 1888 and 1895. The valley also produced copper and brass. There were some 20 waterwheels. The river Wye was much higher in those days because there were no reservoirs upstream and the river carried the products to customers.



Our coach driver received tremendous acclaim as he backed the coach about a quarter of a mile down the narrow valley without needing to go forward more than once or twice.- A remarkable nerve wracking ride.

We had a sandwich lunch at Tintern Station and proceeded to Redbrook - another village with an industrial history. All that remains is the dammed up pond on the small stream. We walked to the iron railway bridge over the Wye and back to the coach.

KEN KEY

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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 2017 the society members attended lectures on: The Story of Middleton Hall, Carmarthenshire; Famous & Forgotten Women in Wales; Priests, Poetry & Purgatory in Late Medieval Wales; Amy Dillwyn, Suffragist & Pioneering Industrialist; Archaeology of Upland Gwent; Victorian Brass Bands & the Industrial Revolution especially in Wales; Celtic Myths in Medieval Wales; and Women in Agriculture in the 1860s from the report on Gwent.

During the summer months, visits to places of historic interest included: guided tours of Brockhampton, Ledbury and Kempley churches; guided tours of Margam Abbey and Aberdulais Tin Works; a weekend to Derbyshire visiting Buxton, Haddon Hall, Eyam, Castleton and the Derwent Valley; and an industrial history visits to Monmouth railways and Tintern iron working sites.

The newsletter included short reports on the visits of the previous year for those unable to attend. It included articles on Abergavenny (Llanfoist) Bridge, 'Booze & Baccy in WW1', information about the setting up of a group to support and investigate the historic Gunter Mansion in Cross Street with its hidden Catholic chapel, and two reports on recent important archaeological finds in Wales – Mesolithic footprints at Port Eynon on the Gower and possible traces of Henry VII's birthplace at Pembroke castle.

2. To provide information about local history to visitors and more widely, the research group completed the review of historical documentation from the First World War and a long article summarising the findings will appear in the Gwent Local History Journal in Summer 2018.

The research group continue to work on recording the gravestones in Old Hereford Road Cemetery and exploring ways to remove the overgrowth of trees and vegetation obscuring many graves after attempting some clearance themselves.

The Abergavenny Street Survey (www.abergavennystreetsurvey.co.uk) continues to be updated with information received or obtained.

The research group had previously contributed to an initial survey of historical sources for Gunter Mansion and several members have continued to support the work as part of a Gunter History group. Anyone who is interested in doing some local history investigation is welcome to join the research group and will receive support as needed.

The society continued to support the Abergavenny Eisteddfod with a donation and the chairman announced and presented the literary prizes. This year we have changed the system for the History Award of £200 given to pupils going on to study history at University. It had been noted that many students now changed schools to study at A level and local students might attend any of the schools or sixth form colleges in the area. We agreed to change the criteria to 'any local student' rather than limit it to King Henry VIII comprehensive school. We wrote to all the schools and colleges in the area with A level students to inform them and asked for written applications from the students explaining why they thought they should receive the awards and confirmation from the school or college that they were supported in the application. We received two applications: from Kathryn (Katie) Davies and Rhys Gilson. We already knew Katie as she had worked with the research group on the Street Survey. Both applications explained well their interests in history and their future aspirations and we had no difficulty in giving both an Award, which were presented to them in December by the Chairman.

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. We do, however, need more volunteers for Wednesday afternoons.

A revised leaflet for the Trail around the ceramic plaques (Wigs, Flannels, Normans & Romans) was printed with more than half of the cost being donated by the Abergavenny & District Tourist Association. This free leaflet in the series Trails & Tales has been very popular over the summer tourist season. Two further leaflets – 'Parks & Gardens' and 'Chapels & Churches' are in preparation for next year's tourist season. Members continue to receive emails notifying them about events of historical interest in the area as well as information about the activities of the society.

The society continues to provide information to the wider public via the website:

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 floodlight 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.

New displays have been created in the Museum and opening hours have been changed to reflect the greater demand for Sunday and lunchtime opening.

Members of the society volunteer at the Museum and the society is supportive of the intention of the Museum service to provide an Events Pavilion in the grounds to provide a covered space for activities. It is hoped this will encourage appropriate use of the Castle grounds and provide some much needed income for the Museum service. As part of this, the society provided part of the funds for a geophysical exploration of the area opposite to the Castle Lodge house to ensure that no archaeological remains would be disturbed by the building of the structure.

UPDATE TO THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Much has happened since the report required by the Charity Commission at the end of 2017. We have lost a treasurer, David Stein, who briefly took over the accounts in December, but resigned in February. Fortunately, the secretary, Janet Cormack, has worked very hard to take over the books and has started the important task of putting everything in order after frequent changes of treasurers. You may have noticed that ALHS has not claimed gift aid recently, so this needs to be done as this is an important part of our income, and I would urge you (if you pay tax) to complete a gift aid form if you have not already done so.

Janet Cormack cannot do everything so we needed another secretary and in the absence of any new volunteers, Marian Senior has offered to take on this role until one is found.

We need a volunteer to become secretary.

We are grateful that Julia Zajicek and Susan Langford-Johnson have volunteered to help with the subcommittee formed to organise the visits and lectures programme and to be members of the committee.

We need at least one more person to join this group who could take the bookings for the visits. The financial oversight will now be done by the treasurer.

We would also like someone to be deputy chairman on the committee. The committee now meet five times a year. Anything else is done on email, meeting individuals as required. It is not a big commitment but one which is very necessary if the society is to continue providing the services you enjoy currently.

There is an excellent programme of visits and lectures to look forward to. Please help us to continue.

Gill Wakley

TIME IMMEMORIAL IN OLD HEREFORD ROAD

Cemeteries exist for a variety of reasons, including, rather prosaically, the hygienic disposal of human remains. Sadly, for the very poor, that was very much it, and older cemeteries abound with the unmarked and frequently totally forgotten graves of paupers. And perhaps the growing demand for "natural" burial may reflect a modern and more humane return to this theme.



But mere disposal isn't a function most of us would think of when visiting a cemetery or churchyard. Read the inscriptions on grave markers and tombstones, and "In loving Memory" is a very common and generally sincere theme.

Families who can afford the expense of buying or leasing a private burial plot and the erection of a suitably durable monument (typically of stone or even iron), do so to preserve the memory of dead family members, to celebrate the lives of loved ones and, incidentally or otherwise, to draw attention to the standing and achievements of the family itself.

In this respect, little has changed for many centuries, though the nature of the monuments themselves have varied with wealth, fashion, tradition, religious belief and, latterly, municipal regulations! Grave monuments are designed and intended for the long run, to provide a permanent focus for remembering and honouring the dead. "Loving Memory" indeed.

But what happens when there's nobody left to remember? Families move away or die out. Cemeteries and graveyards become full and new burials cease. As family maintenance ceases, weathering may destroy headstones and other grave markers, whilst subsidence may cause larger monuments to collapse completely.

Very often redundant cemeteries are simply abandoned to become overgrown semi-jungles. Rough sleepers may use the location, and vandalism and fly-tipping are constant risks. Litter accumulates. (Hereford Road has an interesting potential geological stratum representing the recent history of sweet and snack wrappers blown in from the nearby school!). Many local councils try to maintain such spaces as best they can, but doing so is a huge liability when every penny must be counted, and care may be rather perfunctory. Mechanical mowing may even result in accidental damage to monuments. This has certainly happened in Old Hereford Road Cemetery.

This situation is exacerbated by strict legal responsibility to ensure that the monuments are safe. A recent court judgement in Glasgow awarded a family a six-figure sum when a small boy was crushed by a falling 7ft. headstone. The temptation therefore is either to treat all monuments as dangerous and lay them flat, (usually wrong-way round, so they can't ever be read) or else simply to remove them as architectural salvage and sell the Sites for development.



A headstone in Old Hereford Road Cemetery

Many kinds of stone allow water penetration (a kind of rising damp), and freezing etc. then splits away the surface layer, rendering an

There is a school of thought that seems to argue that spaces such as Old Hereford Road Cemetery should simply be left "for the wildlife". However, this isn't really practical. Firstly, there is the underlying responsibility for ensuring public safety referred to above. This isn't "elfnsafetygonemad". It's sheer common sense. A further point is that there is no natural climax vegetation in such places. There tends to be a massive growth of invasive plants, such as laurel, bramble etc. and often surprisingly poor wildlife diversity. In addition, St Peter's Cemetery in Blaenafon has a problem with Japanese knotweed. We definitely don't want that!



Invasive growth in Old Hereford Road Cemetery

What appears to be a tree stem is a memorial cross, encrusted with ivy and with self-rooting laurel and ash.

This growth can eventually topple the monument, as well as eroding inscriptions etc.

Deep-rooted trees such as sycamore can also undermine monuments.

The Common Law used to recognise the passing of time "...such that the mind of Man runneth not to the contrary" - otherwise "Time Immemorial". Some cynical members familiar with "the mind of Man" in other contexts will not be surprised to read that this period of time is conventionally no more than 20 years! This is quite enough time for a rather thuggish version of nature to take over and for both the landscaping and the memorial architecture of the cemetery to be lost.

And yet redundant cemeteries like Old Hereford Road potentially offer valuable community resources, both in relation to their intended memorial functions and as havens of wildlife diversity.

As a recent English Heritage document argued:

" The inscriptions on memorials, the design of monuments, the choice of stones, the architecture of buildings and the landscape design shed light on past social customs and events and combine to make a cemetery an irreplaceable historical resource... As general interest in genealogy and family history grows, so does the importance of cemeteries as repositories of biographical information to the wider community "

Cemetery monuments are a biographical record of the community and its individuals. The location of different types of burials, the arrangement of prestigious plots and pauper burials and types of memorials and use of grave spaces all adds to the understanding of the history of the cemetery. Many of these aspects are currently under investigation by members of the ALHS Research Group.

In addition, Old Hereford Road dates back to before the advent of modern high-input agriculture, and may even act as a reservoir for insects and plants which have become rare outside this one small space and which would struggle to survive elsewhere. We simply don't know, and an intensive survey is urgently needed. Careful management of the cemetery can increase and sustain biodiversity, as well as maintaining an important social resource.

Prof. David Smith

WOMEN ARE NO USE TO THE FARMER

Food shortages in Abergavenny in WW1

An exhibition about The Home Front in Abergavenny in WW1 will be in Gunter Mansion during August (based on the research done by the Research Group).

Farmers in the First World War did not think that women could do farm work. This was quite clear from the articles and especially the letters appearing in the Abergavenny Chronicle. The farmers were being encouraged by the government to put more land under the plough to grow food. Farm work then was very manual and they did not have the labour – the men had gone to the front. Holding a plough handle while the cart horse pulled it through wet and muddy sods of earth required a lot of strength and many older farmers found that increasingly difficult. Livestock farming also required an ability to control large and awkward animals – especially a bull seeing a field full of cows!

So, they did have a point. But as the war progressed there was little other option. The farmers asked for boys to be released from school and this was occasionally granted but for short periods only. They asked for council workers to be released to work on the land – but there were few enough of them and some were even being replaced by women who were even mending roads! Later in war, some Prisoners of War were used, but labour was incredibly scarce and food in short supply.



For many years, older girls had been released from school to attend dairy schools in this area. The dairy schools moved from one large farm to another and sometimes residential accommodation was arranged. By January 1918, it was recorded in the Agricultural Minutes that, since 1895, 1,812 girls had received instruction in running a Dairy and 344 had attended Cheese Schools. Dairy work was highly skilled, involving the care and milking of cows, the scrupulous cleanliness required to prevent contamination of the milk and the making of butter by churning – the slip

slop of the milk in the churn turning quite suddenly into the slap, slap, of the butter against the wooden sides. They also had to be physically strong to lift the large churns from trailer to the platform by the road to be collected. Cheese was only made on some farms where milk was plentiful, a use for the whey milk could be found, and there were suitable cool buildings for long-term storage of the cheeses once made.

Women were keen enough to work. Many of them had experience of gardening, planting trees for orchards, bee keeping, looking after chickens and dealing with horses. Most farms still used horses – few of the very basic tractors were available to farmers.

In July 1916, five 'ladies' set up a local sub-committee to organise the employment of women in agriculture under the auspices of the War Agricultural committee. By August 24 women had applied for 12 scholarships to receive four weeks training in milking and light farm work. An application to the main committee in Cardiff gained approval to pay for all 24 applicants. In October 1916, Miss Jackson explained the scheme to the Council and gained support to extend the scheme. Unfortunately, they received a letter from Usk College of Education (as it was then), to say that training opportunities could not be offered due to lack of facilities.

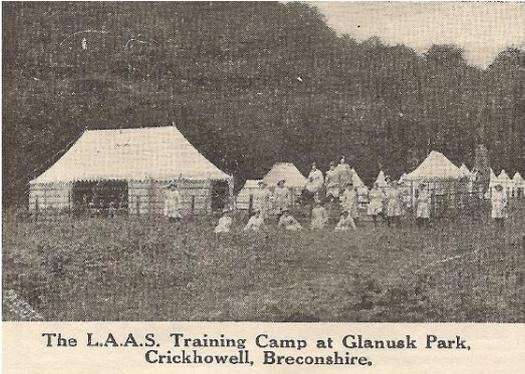
In January 1917, Miss Evans of Nantyderry House, offered her house, gardens and land to train women in Horticulture and Market Gardening. She would contribute £40 each for six women to receive bursaries to train there, but if they wished to go to Usk College, they would have to pay for themselves. They were to pass an entrance examination and produce a medical certificate. From May 1918, another three students were funded to attend Nantyderry.



The local Agricultural Committee agreed to fund twelve residential scholarships to Usk College for £12.10s each, six for boys and six for girls, with an entrance examination set by the Principal of Usk College. In July 1917, 'Townsend V, Lanvapley Rectory, Abergavenny and Osman E J of Nantyderry' were awarded scholarships. Three girls from Usk were also recommended for Horticultural scholarships at Usk college. But there was no accommodation for the girls and they had to board out at extra cost. Their parents protested and Cardiff Agricultural Committee agreed to fund the extra expense. The girls were joined in October by Elizabeth Muir from Abertillery. (Accommodation for women students at Usk College was not arranged until 1923.)

All this was a drop in the ocean of need. Food shortages were becoming acute after a very cold December in 1916 and the winter and spring of 1917 were bitterly cold with frequent falls of snow.

In June 1918, the Women's Land Army locally got going with a tented establishment at Glanusk Park,



The L.A.A.S. Training Camp at Glanusk Park, Crickhowell, Breconshire.

Crickhowell. There were wooden huts for the kitchen, store-rooms and wash-houses. Water was laid on (luxury!) and a boiler and camp oven built. 18 tents housed the staff and trainees with one serving as the recreation tent complete with piano.

Other efforts to provide more food locally included the council providing allotments. By May 1917, almost all the new allotments by the New Cemetery had been taken up. The local schools combined to rent seventeen acres on a local farm. The Victoria Road headmaster had to seek leave of absence to arrange the ploughing. Then the boys cleared the fields and parties of boys and girls (separately) went out to plant potatoes.

Potato picking continued throughout the summer and into September. It was so successful that, with the support of parents, it continued into 1918 and 1919.

Articles and letters appeared in the Abergavenny Chronicle encouraging people to keep pigs. The town piggeries were reconstructed by early 1918. The Abergavenny Pig Breeding Association purchased sows and a local farmer offered his boar.

Local arrangements for rationing had come to grief when local shopkeepers issued their own cards for items such as sugar. The cards were then denounced as invalid or could not be used, as that shop had no sugar left. After much confusion National ration books were sent out in May 1918.

Looking back, it is clear that the experiences of the First World War were invaluable in preparing for the Second World War – for example, the Women's Land Army was relaunched in June 1939, and rationing of food began in January 1940. But it didn't stop the shortages of food happening again!

Gill Wakley

A SHOCKING MURDER AT ABERGAVENNY

It was the evening of Friday 14th September 1892. At about 8 o'clock Edwin Wilkins, a brakesman for the L & N.W. Railway Company, was on his way home from work. As he came near to the allotments at the bottom of the newly built Hatherleigh Road he heard smothered choking sounds. When he heard the noise again he struck a match and found what he at first took to be a heap of clothes in the gutter. Then he realised it was a woman with her face covered in blood and her dress saturated in blood which was flowing from a gash in her neck. He rushed off towards the Police Station, telling a man he passed on his way to stay with her. He met with PC Powell and they both went back to the woman. Superintendent Freeman was informed and a doctor sent for. Dr Elmes Y. Steele arrived after all life had left the unfortunate woman, by now identified as Mary Connolly, and the body was removed to the Workhouse mortuary. The police made an inspection of the allotments and blood was found near a shed about 200yds from where the woman was found, so it was supposed that she had managed to drag herself that far. A search for the murderer was immediately initiated and the townspeople of Abergavenny quickly spread alarm at the possibility of the town having its own 'Jack the Ripper', as Mary Connolly was well known as a prostitute.

On the following day an Inquest was held at the Workhouse. Superintendent Freeman said he'd been called to the scene at about 8.30 the previous evening and had found the body still warm but with no signs of life. When lights were produced he identified the girl as Mary Connolly, a prostitute aged about 22, who was living in Tudor Street but had no fixed residence. She was the daughter of Jeremiah Connolly of Pant Lane and was known to the police (she had been released from Usk Gaol after a short sentence that same day). PC Robert Thomas described how he had been to the allotments at 5am that day and seen the shed with blood and footprints around. He had found the deceased's hat and followed a trail of blood to within 50yds of where the body was found. Dr Steele gave evidence that the deceased was dead when he arrived but she was still warm. He had inspected the body that morning and confirmed that she had died from having her throat cut by a sharp implement. He didn't think the wound could have been self-inflicted. As Edwin Wilkins had gone off to work that morning before the inquest had been arranged he was not available to give evidence, so the inquest was adjourned until Monday.

At about 6am on Sunday morning a man entered the Police Station saying "I am the man that killed the girl and the police are after me and I've got no money, and thought I'd better come here." He gave his name as Thomas Edwards and was searched then locked up. At about 11am he asked to make a confession. He made a statement saying he had bought the girl drinks and given her a shilling. She had taken him to some garden or field where he had cut her throat with a razor. He had been with her about two months previously when she had taken £2 off him and given him "the bad disorder". He had left the girl on the ground, washed his hands in some water he found then went back to the same public house they had been to earlier. He had been a soldier in the Shropshire Regiment and about six or seven years previously Colonel Findall had been murdered by "one of these loose girls" in Birmingham. Since then he had been thinking about murdering these girls and had planned going to Newport to kill one or two, but had no money. He had served in the Egyptian campaign and been invalided from there with bad pains in his head. He'd had these pains again before killing the girl. His mother had been in the Asylum twice and was there now. Later on Sunday Thomas Edwards went with Supt. Freeman and Sergt. Capper up the Tredillion road and Edwards showed them where he had hidden the razor. Edwards had told them he had also hidden his hat and collar somewhere else, but these could not be found.

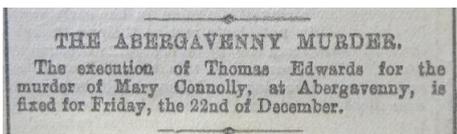
The adjourned inquest was held at 7 o'clock on Monday with the accused present. He was described as being of slight build with fair complexion and an occasionally somewhat vacant expression. The doctor was recalled and said he had held a post mortem examination and found the deceased to have had healthy organs. Then Thomas Adams and his wife said that they had served Edwards with four half pints of beer between 4.30 and about seven o'clock when Edwards must have left. Other witnesses said they had seen Edwards in the Cross Keys and in Tudor Street apparently looking for Mary Connolly's house. Annie Vicks told the Inquest that Mary Connolly had been at her house until after seven on Friday evening then gone to the Cross Keys for half a pint of beer. Then she returned to say "I have got a chap waiting for me at the corner and I am going." Annie Vicks followed Mary towards Castle Street where Mary had stopped and was talking to a man.

Annie told Mary not to go with him but to no avail. Annie Vicks identified Thomas Edwards as the man she saw with Mary Connolly. Michael Colgan, a gardener, then gave evidence. He said he was at the Somerset Arms Inn on Friday and saw Mary Connolly there with a man she was on friendly terms with at about half past seven. Catherine and Charles Powell of the Somerset Inn gave evidence that Mary Connolly and her companion had been served with 2d of whiskey and a glass of beer. Mr Powell thought that the man had previously left a parcel with his wife but was unsure of the details and whether this was the same man. At this point Thomas Edwards said he thought it was time to object to the witness's evidence.

Edwin Wilkins gave his description of how he had discovered Mary Connolly who was then still able to move slightly and, leaving a young man in charge, went off to find the police. PC Powell then described his part in the proceedings and described the position of the body as being on her back about ten to fifteen yards from the road. Her left arm was on the bank and the other one was somewhat bent by her side. In her left hand he found a shilling (produced). Superintendent Freeman's evidence from Saturday was read then he described how Edwards had arrived at the police station and given a statement. Edwards had told them that Mary had asked him to go with her and he had paid for the drinks and given her a shilling. He also described the discovery of the razor the previous day. Sergt Capper described his part in Sunday's proceedings and PC Powell's evidence from Saturday was read out. Then Supt Freeman said that was all the evidence he proposed to offer. The prisoner was cautioned and said, "I couldn't have been in my right mind when I did it." The Coroner then summed up all that had been heard, saying there was no conflict of evidence. He said the jury must first decide the actual cause of death, then to say whether any person was criminally responsible for the death, but that it was not their responsibility to take into account any health problems that the prisoner may have. The room was then cleared and after deliberating for a short time the jury returned a verdict to this effect: That the deceased, Mary Connolly, died from the effects of throat being cut on the 16th inst. by a razor. That such injuries were inflicted by Thomas Edwards who is guilty of the murder of Mary Connolly.

Mary's funeral took place on Tuesday. Her body had been moved from the mortuary to her father's house in Pant Lane and was now carried on a bier with a number of wreaths and cut flowers placed on her coffin. A large number of people gathered in the streets to watch the funeral procession pass by, but they were disappointed when they reached the cemetery to find that there was to be no service and many left for home. Eight or ten relatives knelt to say prayers beside the grave. It was later discovered that there had been no service because, as a "notorious public sinner" she could not have a Roman Catholic burial without being reconciled. The Bishop had been referred to and had confirmed the ruling.

Edward Thomas was brought before the Justices at Abergavenny on Wednesday and was committed for trial at the next Assizes on a charge of wilful murder. The prisoner looked haggard and ill and repeated that he could not have been in his right state of mind when he did it. He was tried at the Monmouthshire Assizes on 1st & 2nd December in front of Mr Justice Day. After a ten-minute deliberation the jury found him guilty of murder and he was sent to Usk Gaol to await his execution.



The execution, carried out by James Billington, took place on 22nd December and was reported in full in the local press. It took place so quickly that the chaplain had barely enough time to read a few sentences before the bolt was pulled. The hanging was immediately followed by the inquest. This would have been of very short duration

had not one of the jury asked for the Doctor to be called to confirm that the death had occurred by dislocation of the neck. The Coroner did not think this necessary and the rest of the jurors agreed. The jury unanimously confirmed the identity of the deceased and that he had been hanged according to law. One of the jurors asked if they could be permitted to see the scaffold and the chief warder agreed to this. Thomas Edwards' execution was fourth of the seven that took place at Usk Gaol between 1874 and 1922.

Sue Smith

HOPE HOUSE



The picture above showing Monk Street was painted by Joshua Gosselin, probably during his tour of Wales in 1805. The building in the middle is Hope House (and the one on the far right is probably Lulworth House). From its style Hope House was probably built in the 17th century. In 1910 it was described as “a stone and slate building with three large and lofty reception rooms, seven bed and dressing rooms, good offices, stabling, extensive and well fruited garden”. As can be seen from the tithe map, above, it must have been roughly where the Monmouthshire Multi-Agency Centre is now. Discovering the story of a building that has long since disappeared can be a challenge but Hope House saw some interesting times.

During the Napoleonic Wars a number of towns were used to hold French prisoners of war. Abergavenny received about 200 officers and an unknown number of soldiers. The soldiers were held in various barns around town and at the Castle (where they made gardens). The officers were on parole, living in lodgings in town. In 1813-14 some officers were lodging in an apartment in Hope House where they set up Freemasons Lodge ‘Enfants de Mars et de Neptune’. A Masonic history informs us that, “Tradition says that the officer’s mess room, an apartment in Monk Street, remarkable for a handsome arched ceiling, also served for Lodge meetings.” But by 1815 the French officers’ lodge had been superseded by the ‘Philanthropic’ Lodge which kept some collars, swords and other articles which belonged to the old French prisoners’ Lodge, now kept at the St John’s Lodge. (The Philanthropic Lodge met at the King’s Head in 1815 then the Angel in 1818.)

In May 1821 the lease of Hope House with garden and adjoining parcel of land was purchased by Mr George Pocock from Thomas Richards (timber merchant), Thomas Davis, gentleman, and Elizabeth Price. George Pocock was a Bristol Methodist preacher and master of Prospect Place Academy. He planned to open a school at Hope House to be run by his son John. In July of that year an advertisement appeared in *The Cambrian*, placed by John Pocock, saying the new school would open on 23 July. Then on 21 July the paper reported that John Pocock had died. Fortunately there was a younger brother, George junior, who stepped in and a further entry on the 4 August edition showed that the school had opened on 23 July as originally planned. The terms for Hope Hall Academy were: Boarders, 25 guineas per annum; Entrance; one guinea; Washing, two guineas. Each young gentleman would have his own bed and the privilege of Tea Afternoons. There would be the usual charges for French, Drawing and Mathematical Education. More advertisements were placed in *The Cambrian* over the next few years giving the date of the commencement of each new school year. In July 1824 there was a report in *Jacksons Oxford Journal* of the death at Hope House of John Greenwood, aged 26, the son of Rev. John Riles. This was probably one of the masters. The *Carmarthen Journal* of 23 Dec 1825 reported the marriage of Mary Rees of Haverfordwest to Mr Pocock of Hope House Abergavenny.

Then on 12 July 1826, for reasons we do not know, George Pocock senior relinquished the lease of Hope House, along with a seat in the gallery of St Mary's. But it was not the end of Hope House Academy because on 17 July another advertisement appeared in the Bristol Mercury announcing the reopening of the school under Messrs Evans and Rutherford. The young gentlemen were to be instructed in the Classics and the various branches of Mathematical and Commercial Instruction. The school appears to have continued successfully for a number of years. On 23 June 1834 Mr Jos. Evans of Hope House married Catherine, youngest daughter of B. Peach Esq. of the Priory. But the advertisements eventually stop and by 1834 Hope House was owned by a Mr Brown who in 1839 let it to a Mr EW Morgan. Mr Morgan put an advertisement in the Monmouthshire Mercury announcing the opening on 17 January of a boarding school for young gentlemen and pledged himself to use every effort to ensure the intellectual and moral improvement of his pupils and listing the subject to be taught and the terms. But later that year Mr Morgan moved his school from Hope House to Pen-y-Pound.

Hope House seems to have always been in multi-occupancy, as it is not named separately in any of the Censuses. So it is not possible to track down the occupants on the Census dates, but various businesses were operating there all through the rest of the 19th century. But Hope House did make another appearance as a school. In February 1864 the Usk Observer printed an item saying that the Girls' National School had formerly been in Hope House, where there was a suitable room, but the premises were now required for the board room and offices of the Merthyr & Abergavenny Railway Company and the school had moved to a room in Byfield Lane. The new vicar hoped to raise sufficient funds for a suitable building to be erected for the school and he must have been successful as the new school was erected in Castle Street in 1866. In 1884 Kelly's Directory lists the occupants of Hope House as John Nesbitt, Solicitors and Suzanna Doidge, Milliner. In 1891 John Nesbitt had been joined by William Gulliford and Suzanna Doige was still there, though she was gone by 1895. In 1901 Charles and John Nesbitt were solicitors there but by 1906 John Gethin Jones, land agent and surveyor, was using Hope House and by 1910 there was also a drapers.

On 7 October 1910 an advertisement in the Abergavenny Chronicle says, "To be sold privately, freehold, Hope House with stable, coach-house, large fruit garden and lawn. Also cottage and Hope Hall. Net price £2,200. A private sale cannot have been achieved because on 4 November there was another advertisement, shown on the right. On 25 November the Chronicle reported that at the auction the lot was withdrawn at £1,450. It was then offered in two lots. The first being the hall and villa occupied by Mr Morgan, draper, was withdrawn at £550. The second, being Hope house and garden, was withdrawn at £900.

And this appears to be end of the tale of Hope House. A sketch map of the area in the 1920s that the old building must have been demolished. The 'newly erected' Hope Villa shown in the advertisement appears to have retained the old hall, but it seems improbable that the existing building is the same 8 roomed house as described. There is no sign of the old hall, which had seen duty as Masonic Lodge and school room for many years.

Sue Smith

Thanks are due to Keith Rees in Australia for the use of his Pocock family history notes and to Janet Herrod at Abergavenny Museum.

SALE AT LOW RESERVE.
BOROUGH OF ABERGAVENNY.

MESSRS. TOMKINS & CHADWICK are instructed to offer by Public Auction, at the ANGEL HOTEL,
On **TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15th,**
At 3 o'clock in the Afternoon (subject to the Common Form Conditions of the Monmouthshire Incorporated Law Society), the below-mentioned centrally situated

FREEHOLD PROPERTIES :

LOT 1.—All that Valuable Villa and Hall, known as **HOPE HALL & VILLA,** situate in Monk Street, comprising all that newly erected brick and slate Eight-roomed House with large hall 33ft. by 19ft. adjoining, in the occupation of Mr. Morgan, Draper, at the low rental of £35 per annum. This property is well adapted for business premises, club or institute.

LOT 2.—All that Valuable Family Residence and Garden, known as **HOPE HOUSE,** Monk Street, adjoining Lot 1, and comprising in all about 380 Square Yards, or thereabouts, with well-built Stone and Slate Ten-roomed Residence, with offices, together with Stabling and extensive well fruited Garden. Possession on completion.

Full particulars from the Auctioneers, Progre Chambers, Abergavenny.

SWANSEA BAY FINDS



Paul and Angela Tambling found this early Bronze Age dagger in 1971 while walking along Swansea Beach. They were not aware of its significance until recently when a project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund was exploring the area in 2016 & 2017.

Other finds included some mysterious items, such as a Bronze Age tool with a curved blade, which gave rise to many guesses about its purpose - perhaps opening shellfish or carving bowls. There were fragments of Bronze Age trackways and prehistoric forests, Roman brooches, ceramics, shipwrecks and the remains of World War Two bombs.



A number of medieval pilgrim badges were found, including one brought back from the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury. Pilgrim badges are usually made of lead or pewter and were often bought at shrines as a souvenir and worn on the pilgrim's hat or cloak. It is thought that those found in Swansea Bay were probably thrown into the sea by pilgrims returning to South Wales by boat thanking God for their safe return. This is similar to the modern practice of throwing coins in water, a survival of ancient religious rituals for good fortune.

RAMSEY ISLAND AND POPPET SANDS

The Ireland-Wales CHERISH project has found exciting new archaeological sites while investigating climate change and coastal heritage. In 2017, a fabulous fish weir was spotted at Poppett Sands. More recently, Ramsey Island has been mapped using LiDAR, which is a laser scanning technique used from the air which penetrates the scrub and bracken. This has added Bronze Age burial mounds and, on the northernmost tip of the island, a promontory fort that is thought to have been a permanent defended settlement. A large number of medieval sites, field boundaries and pillow mounds (often used for rabbit farming) have also been identified. An exciting find is the possible site of Capel Dyfanog, which, according to written records was built before the C15 and faced St David's. You can find out more about the project at www.cherishproject.eu



Fish trap at Poppett Sands (RCAHMMW)



Ramsey Island RSPB reserve

Gill Wakley

MORGANS

Margot and Bryn Seabourne on holiday in West Wales encountered a meeting of the Morgan Threewheeler Club involving some 20 of these iconic vehicles. This was of especial interest to me since my first car was a 1933 Morgan purchased in 1950 for £85.



This encounter prompted Bryn to wonder what the collective noun for such a gathering would be and his suggestions are:-

It also prompted Bryn to break into verse as follows: -

A swarm, a frolic, a festivity, a congregation, an admiration, a sparkle, a pride, an envy, a rumble, a rustle, a rash, a roar, an elixir, a growl, a shoal, a plague, a parley, a chatter, a dash, a sprint, a parade, a procession, a convocation, a temptation, and a Noddy (as in the kids' cartoon T.V. character.)

Tune. "A Gordon for Me."
A Morgan for me, a Morgan for me!
If it's not a Morgan, it's no use to me.
Yes, your Daimler is neat,
And your Rolls-Royce a treat –
But my sporty wee Morgan
Just cannot be beat.

My Morgan travelled to the continent on several occasions by air (Silver City) and by Ferry, between 1950 and 1955, doing 2500 mile round trips. The pictures show it on the top of the alpine passes with my wife Freda (who, with Gwyn Jones founded our society).



The third picture shows me on a comic mock up in an apprentices' revue in about 1953.

I have news that my Morgan is now in America. The proud owner imagines that he has an original car. The truth is that as an apprentice I had many workshop facilities and access to a wonderful scrap heap. This provided transformer cooling tubes for the exhaust, insulating board for a new dashboard with new switches and controls and a small rotary converter providing a 250V supply for shaving. The oversized headlights came from an old Rolls Royce. A hood and sidescreens protected me from the weather.

Two years ago I had the privilege of visiting the original Morgan factory in Malvern Worcs. where Morgan threewheelers are still made.

I have had a Renault Megane for the last 18 years. It is getting a bit long in the tooth (like me) and I think the authorities would like to see it, together with old boys like me (age 93!), off the road. I have just bought myself a scooter known as the 'Noddy Car' It is a brilliant piece of kit and I will run it in parallel with the Renault. I think these may be my last vehicles.



Ken Key

BOOK REVIEW

***Abergavenny A History Tour* by Irene Morgan Pub: Amberley Books £6.99**

This booklet is published by Amberley Books as one of their pocket- sized walking guides to towns. Forty destinations in the town are briefly described with a small amount of historical information about each one and sometimes with added details about nearby buildings.

The necessarily brief details have been well selected and are written in an admirably clear and succinct manner. The amount of detail is probably about enough to stimulate anyone interested in the history into making further purchases to discover more. It is sufficient for those who want a superficial and pleasant stroll around a pleasant and interesting market town. Errors of fact were not expected from this local expert and, indeed, not found.

The references to the illustrations are not as clear and sometimes it was not obvious why an illustration had been chosen. For example, at site 8, Vaughan's of Tretower, why was a picture of Charles Price's shop next to the British Legion shown as an inset. Perhaps to show what it looked like previously but when and what was the relevance? At another insert (at site 14 Cibi Walk), the inset 'before' photograph was not obviously the same site at all to a stranger. Others were immediately relevant, like the interesting before and after photographs at 33, the Coach & Horses pub.

It is a pity that the small size has so limited the map as the central area is so covered in red numbered blobs that the street layout, complicated enough here, is obscured. This would severely limit the ability of anyone to find out where they were in this area and how to get from one site to another. The lack of any directions (common to this format) might also provide some challenges.

All in all, a reasonably priced and handy guide for the casual visitor to this interesting market town.

Gill Wakley



VISIT TO ST DAVID'S

Nice to have a picture but no write up!

EPILOGUE

Our world has always been in a bit of a mess because of incompetent or tyrannical leaders. Our Local History Society, on the other hand, has been extremely lucky. For several decades, committees of willing hands have produced excellent lectures, visits and publications and endowed many students and good causes.

However, rather than being a democracy we have been more of a press gang and often we are elected en bloc without many changes. Many of our committee members are feeling, righteously, that they have done their bit and would like to retire with honour; we recently had a crisis when we could not find a treasurer and were nearly forced by law to wind up.

The newsletter this year has no visit reports because although I swim 20 lengths of the pool each morning, I find difficult walking and have not been on this year's visits.

It seems incredible that with some 300 members, many of whom are qualified professionals, we find difficulty in getting people to run such a successful Society.

I enjoy the work that I do. Fortunately I can still do it and it is easy for me to continue out of loyalty to our late founders, my wife Freda and Gwyn Jones but I am well past my sell-by date and sooner or later you will be looking for a replacement.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Ken Key