

# COWBRIDGE & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## Meetings for 2001

January 5th: 'Clockmaker-craftsmen of the Vale' - Bill Linnard

February 2nd: 'Y Wladfa : Self determination or exploitation' (The Welsh colonies in Patagonia) - Jon Gruffydd

March 2nd: 'Artisan to Gentry - four generations of a coal-owning family' - Richard Watson

April 6th: 'Mid Glamorgan Colliery Communities, 1900-1920' - Neville Granville

Meetings are held in the Lesser Hall of Cowbridge 'Town Hall on Fridays at 8.00pm

## This Issue

I am pleased that the newsletter is going from strength to strength, as this time we have had contributions from three members - Liam Ginn, George Haynes and José Rawlins - as well as from Nigel Williams from Llantwit Major. Many thanks to them all for their stimulating articles.

I will welcome further contributions, of any length and on any local history subject. Deadline for the next newsletter is March 15.

No apologies for having two articles about St Quentin's Castle; it is worth emphasising the excellent work done by CADW (as a result of campaigning by members of this Society). Make sure you take your Christmas visitors there!

## CHARTER DAY CELEBRATIONS

Every year we celebrate the granting of the first charter to Cowbridge, by Richard de Clare on March 13th 1254. Last year we had a most successful visit to Plas Llanmihangel, and so we envisage having a similar excursion this coming year. Llansannor and Fonmon have both been suggested as possibilities; details in forthcoming meetings.

## TRACING ONE'S FAMILY

Tracing one's ancestors in the early nineteenth century becomes progressively more difficult for a variety of reasons.

The registration of births, marriages and deaths only became compulsory in 1837; before that one has to rely in the first instance on Church Registers. In Wales, these were not well kept.

There can also be several versions of the same name. In the case of my own family, now spelt LEYSHON, there are entries in the Mormon Register (extracted from all available Parish registers) under LEYSON, LEISON, LEYSEN, LEYSAN, LLEYSHON, LLEYSHAN, LLEYSON, LISION, LISHON and LEYSTON. I suppose that if the person whose details were being recorded could not read or write, he was not too bothered about how the entry was written down.

A further complication is that there were no Welsh surnames based on occupations or geographical regions, such as occur quite early in England. Welsh names were patronymic, that is the son (or daughter) took the father's Christian name as his second name. Thus John, son of William, became known as John William. A will of LEWIS WILLIAM of Penllyne in 1653 names his two sons as William Lewis and Robert Lewis, and their children as Margaret William and John Robert. In Welsh, 'ap' (son of) was used, as in Dafydd ap Rhys, which later developed into PRICE. Patronymics persisted quite late, probably up to the 1837 Act, and even up to the mid-1850s in Cardiganshire.

Things, however, could get even more complicated. To take one example, WILLIAM THOMAS, a well-known 19th-century preacher and bard (Glanffrwd), who wrote a history of Llanwonno (which included details of other members of my family) was born in Ynysybwl on 17th March 1843. He was the son of John Howell Thomas, who in turn was the son of William

Thomas Howell. No straightforward patronymics here!

The opening up of iron-works in places like Merthyr Tydfil, and later of coalmines in the Rhondda and many other valleys in South Wales, led to large-scale migration from the rural areas to these new industrial centres. It is thus hard to keep track of a particular family, although the Censuses, every ten years from 1841 to 1891, will have detailed names for each household, provided that you know in which area to start your search. Your task will be less difficult if your family name is not too common, and even easier if the family stayed in the same village or town over several generations. It is even better if they had some substantial property, and thus made wills - or resorted to litigation against their neighbours or within the family.

Good luck in your researches!

*Liam Leyshon Ginn*

Readers will remember Liam's earlier article, in the April 2000 issue, about one of his ancestors. He has now given me another three articles, of which this is the first, about his researches into the history of his family. The other articles will appear in successive issues of the newsletter.

Family historians will be pleased to know that Cowbridge Library now has copies of the Census for Cowbridge for the period 1851 to 1881.

## EXCISE DUTY

*José Rawlins*

In July 1643, following the outbreak of the English Civil War in the previous year, John Pym introduced a Bill in Parliament to permit the levy of Excise duties on certain home-produced goods: beer, cider, salt, soap and vinegar. The main purpose of this new form of taxation was to raise money to finance the Parliamentary army. It was to be an exceedingly unpopular tax, for excise duties were levied at the point of manufacture and were therefore added to the costs of production and passed on to all consumers. The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 brought no relief from Excise as the new government quickly realised the effectiveness of this method of raising revenue and soon added imported goods, such as tea and spirits, to the list of dutiable goods - thereby causing numerous clashes between customs officers and excise officers at sea ports. The separate Boards of Customs - the payment of duties on foreign imports (which dated back to the reign of King John) - and Excise were not to be combined until 1909.

By 1683 the method of collection of excise was so organised that it hardly changed over the next 200 years. England was divided into 39 Collections which roughly coincided with county boundaries. Wales was divided into four Collections (North, Middle, West and East) which were then divided into Divisions and further sub-divided into Rides which were based in market towns, each one with its own excise officer who calculated the duties. Each Collection had a Collector who made eight Rounds of his area every year. An Excise Office (usually set up in an inn) would be opened in the town and the local manufacturers and traders were required to attend and pay the duties which had accrued since the Collector's previous visit. With an annual salary in the 18th century of £50 and the benefit of a retirement pension (the first in England and Wales) of £10 per annum, there was no shortage of recruits to work for the Board of Excise; security ranging from £200 to £2000 was often demanded which effectively barred entrants without land, money or "connections". The full career of every exciseman can be compiled from the Excise Board and Secretariat Minute Books which are held at the Public Record Office at Kew. These books contain notification of the first and every subsequent posting of an exciseman until his dismissal, death or retirement.

The list of dutiable goods was steadily extended throughout the 18th century and the increased revenue therefrom largely paid for the wars against France and the American colonies. The century closed with the most expensive conflict of all - the war with France which raged from 1793 until 1815. Even more dutiable goods were added and in 1792 there was a recruitment drive for extra excisemen. The Universal British Directory (1793) lists John Phelps as the excise officer in Cowbridge. It is likely that he lived at 66 Eastgate, as the Land Tax Assessments show a John Phelps as owner and occupier in 1784, and as owner but not occupier in 1800. It is unlikely that there are any of his descendants living in the Vale for it was Excise Board policy that its officers were stationed for not much longer than four or five years in any town. The Minute Book (CUST 47/423) records on the 1st July 1801 that Morris Thomas, officer of Llantrisant Ride, at his own request, was to succeed John Evans, officer of Cowbridge, who was moving to Newport.

By 1820 newer forms of taxation, such as Income Tax, were beginning to supersede the old excise duties and with the growth of Free Trade policies it was realised that the duties were hindering the development of British manufacturing industries. By 1861 candles, cotton, leather, salt, wire, bricks, glass, paper, soap, vinegar, sails and starch were all tax free. However, as we are all very much aware at this present time of anguish over "Fuel Tax", Excise Duty is **still**, after 360 years, part of the British taxation system, being levied on motor spirits and hydrocarbon oils, on beer and cider, wine and spirits and on tobacco.

## COTTAGERS' EXHIBITION AT ST QUINTIN'S CASTLE

Jeff Alden

The Park Street, Bridgend, Local Studies centre is a wonderful storehouse of goodies, and I particularly like reading through past issues of papers like the Glamorgan Gazette, and its predecessor, the Central Glamorgan Gazette. Recently I have been going through the issues of 1866, and came across an article on *The Cottagers' Exhibition at St Quintin's Castle*.

I had already been aware of this exhibition because of some terse comments in Revd FW Edmondson's diary - "1865: 10th August - the cottage garden show. Mrs Jenner (at Llanblethian Cottage, the predecessor of the Old Vicarage) had 30 to lunch after it, a very good spread. 1866: 9th August - cottage garden exhibition at Llanblethian - croquet and big tea afterwards." The Central Glamorgan Gazette certainly gave some more detail - and a lot more purple prose!

"The seventh annual exhibition of the cottagers of the parishes of Llanblethian, Llandough, Llanmaes, St Hilary, St Marychurch, St Athan, Cowbridge, Llantwit, Lisworney and Penlline was celebrated in the grand old ruins of St Quintin's Castle, and we can scarcely conceive a more romantic spot for the holding of a floral fete than the rich urban district of Llanblethian.

"St Quintin's Castle is commandingly situated on the steep of a hill, and evidently was once a structure of very considerable magnitude; it was built on the site of a baronial dwelling in existence at some remotely anterior date. The entrance to the castle is still imposing in its appearance, but alas! for the grandeur of baronial halls; the ante-chamber is now used as an out-house. *Tempora mutantur.*

"The committee of management consists of twenty-two gentlemen, and the honorary secretary is the Revd Lewis Morgan of St Hilary. The competition is limited to the labouring class, and no obstacle is placed in the way of the humblest cottager if he feels disposed to make an exertion in the cultivation of flowers and vegetables. Who can gaze upon the cottager's bonnie rose, his fuchsias and lilies, and lilacs, and geraniums, and tulips, and sunflowers, and crocuses, and last, though not least, the towering hollyhock, and not applaud him for these products? and the pretty and neatly kept gardens speak well for the agricultural labourer's love of home."

(One particular photograph during Hilary Thomas's talk on St Hilary in the November meeting seemed to illustrate this so well - that one showing a cottage garden, taken about 1900, with some wonderful cabbages or lettuces in the foreground, and hollyhocks growing against the cottage wall.)

"The weather seemed to have put on its best attire for the occasion, and gusty winds and drenching showers gave way to bright sunshine and zephyr breezes. The change in the weather was very fortuitous, for more reasons than one. The tent, which had been engaged for the occasion, arrived on the morning of the show minus its canvas walls, proving useless, and the turfed terraces of the castle were thus not only found pretty but useful in the display of flowers, as also the verdure-clad shelvings which enrich the open space. From the castle keep the royal standard floated, and many-coloured flags and pennants floated gaily in the breeze.

"The doors were thrown open at half-past three o'clock, and we would venture just to suggest to the committee that they might with advantage commence somewhat earlier. It would certainly present the floral specimens to much greater perfection before the public gaze, for picked at an early hour, they fade to some extent before the visitors are admitted. But at this

## COTTAGERS' EXHIBITION AT ST QUINTIN'S CASTLE

*contd*

show the vegetable kingdom gets more attention than flowers. The potatoes were so good that the judges themselves experienced some difficulty, and it required the nicest discrimination to justly award the prizes, and to the unprofessional eye all seemed to merit a prize, whether kidneys, Oxford blues or forty-folds. The onions could scarcely have been better, some measuring 15 inches in circumference, and were 'as sound as a bell.' Parsnips, carrots and turnips were all of good quality. Cucumbers looked 'seedy', peas rather faded, and what wonder when they have been in such request by voracious ducks.....there was indeed little exception to be taken to the vegetable classes. The dishes of fruit looked quite luscious for the late period of the season. The floral products reflected great credit on the persons who sent them, more especially when taken as the unaided industry of the poorer classes of this neighbourhood; but it was evident that the vegetables were the distinctive feature of the show.

"As we append the prize list, we need scarcely dwell longer upon the subject than to remark that the castle had a very animated appearance during the afternoon, there being a very fair attendance. At intervals the band of the 18th Glamorgan Rifle Volunteers, under the leadership of Sgt Williams, played selections of music. Each district had its stall, indicated by a gaily-printed bannerette. In prominent positions, the following mottoes were disposed - 'Success to the Cottage Garden Exhibition', 'The hand of the diligent maketh rich.'

"List of prizes:(which I insert for the benefit of family historians!)

### LLANBLETHIAN

Cottage garden - James Braddick; Potatoes, 1st - John Tidball, 2nd - William Thomas; onions, 1st - J Braddick, 2nd - Robert Pring; Peas, 1st - David Adams, 2nd - William Thomas; Beans, 1st - James Bradick, 2nd - John Williams; French Beans, 1st - David Adams, 2nd - John Jenkins; Parsnips, 1st - David Adams, 2nd - David Thomas; Cabbage, 1st - Robert Thomas, 2nd - David Adams

### COWBRIDGE

Cottage garden - William Moore; Potatoes, 1st - Edward Thomas, 2nd - William Moore; onions, 1st - Thomas Perkins, 2nd - William Williams; Peas, 1st - Edward Thomas, 2nd - William Moore; Beans, 1st - William Moore, 2nd - Thomas Williams; French Beans, 1st - William Moore, 2nd - Richard Thomas; Parsnips, 1st - Evan Edwards, 2nd - William Moore; Cabbage, 1st - William Moore, 2nd - Evan Edwards

### ST HILARY (inserted especially for the attention of Geoff Cox!)

Cottage garden - Evan Cox; Potatoes, 1st - David Williams, 2nd - Evan Cox; onions, 1st - Thomas Llewellyn, 2nd - Evan Cox; Peas, 1st - Evan Cox, 2nd - David Williams; Beans, 1st - Mary Morgan, 2nd - Evan Cox; French Beans, 1st - Evan Cox, 2nd - Thomas Llewellyn; Parsnips, 1st - Thomas Llewellyn, 2nd - Evan Cox; Cabbage, 1st - Evan Cox, 2nd - D Williams."

It is interesting to consider that the Floriculture and Vegetable Produce tent at the Vale of Glamorgan Show, now held at Fonmon Castle, could well be a successor to this Cottager's Exhibition at St Quintin's Castle.

The Revd Robert Nicholl Carne, who according to the Tithe Apportionment and Map for Cowbridge, owned a group of houses on the south side of Cardiff Road in 1843 (where the black and white half-timbered ones are today), was the youngest son of Whitlock Nicholl of the Ham in Llantwit Major. He was born in 1763 and in 1781 followed in his father's and his uncle's footsteps and entered Jesus College, Oxford, graduating as Master of Arts in 1787.

Unusually for a student, Robert Nicholl kept meticulous accounts in which he recorded his investments, the money coming from bequests he received. He notes that "during these last two years (i.e. 1786-7) what I received from my scholarship and from my curacies enabled me to maintain myself". In fact, his income during his time as a student at Oxford exceeded his expenditure by over £300.<sup>(1)</sup>

Robert had entered holy orders in 1786 at Christ Church, Oxford and was ordained the following year. During this time he had visited Chavenage, a country house and chapel, within the parish of Horsley near Stroud, Gloucester. Later he was to become curate at Chavenage and in 1792 married Mary Woodward, a relation of the Stephens family, who had owned the Chavenage estate since 1553.<sup>(2)</sup>

Whitlock Nicholl had died in 1788, leaving his youngest son £105 p.a. and some 100 acres of land in Llantwit Major abutting the parish boundary with St. Donats <sup>(3)</sup>. Both Robert and his wife benefited on the death of the last of the Stephens of Chavenage, when the estate passed to a cousin, Henry Willis. Willis found the pressures of running an estate of 1750 acres too great and fled to a Trappist community <sup>(4)</sup>. Also at this time Robert was appointed a chaplain to the Marquis of Bute and subsequently to the rectorship of Port Eynon.<sup>(5)</sup>

Robert and Mary seemed to have difficulty deciding where they were to live. Houses were purchased in Bristol and an estate purchased from the late Thomas Lewis in Llanblethian in 1791 for £821 5s. . This estate, which included Hill House, was sold four years later for £886 and the family settled into Llanmaes House, a Nicholl home for centuries <sup>(6)</sup>. He then concentrated on his property in Llantwit Major, increasing the estate and building a family home at Dimlands. Unfortunately Mary died in 1799 but Robert did not stay a widower for long, marrying Elizabeth Carne, the heiress to the Nash Estate, the following year.

In 1842 Eleanor Markham died and Robert Nicholl inherited the Nash Estate through his wife, provided they took the name Carne. In 1828 the Nash Estate had brought in £4112, so this was a considerable increase in fortunes.<sup>(7)</sup>

The Cardiff Road properties in Cowbridge were part of the Nash Estate and may have been disposed of later when the family concentrated on their Dimlands and Nash properties. Robert died in 1849, leaving household goods to the value of £750 and bequests totalling £8000 <sup>(8)</sup>. It is somewhat ironic that the properties seemed to disappear on the construction of the railway line from Cowbridge to Aberthaw, as Robert invested heavily in railways with great success<sup>(9)</sup>

#### Sources

1. G.R.O., D/D C F16 Account book of Robert Nicholl.
2. Victoria County History. Gloucestershire Vol. XI pp 175-184.
3. G.R.O. D/D C 1069 Will of Whitlock Nicholl 1779.
4. Victoria County History. Gloucestershire Vol XI *ibid*.
5. G.R.O. D/D C F16.
6. G.R.O. D/D C F17 Account book of Robert Nicholl.
7. G.R.O. D/D C E6 Rent Roll of the Nash Estate 1828.
8. G.R.O. D/D C F1064/1065 An Inventory of Dimlands and Personal Property bequeathed.
9. G.R.O. D/D C F36 Papers concerning investment in the Midland Railway.

## History of St Quentin's Castle : Extract No V

There is no record of Hugh St Quentin coming to Wales and he was probably dead before the Normans turned their attentions in earnest to this area.

The first recorded member of the St Quentin family in Wales is Hugh's son Herbert I de St Quentin. He was in Wales in about 1102.

He was witness to a charter by which Robert de la Haye and his wife Gundreda gave substantial gifts of land to Glastonbury Abbey for the Foundation Charter of the Priory at Bassaleg. Other witnesses were: William, Sheriff of Cardiff, Robert Le Sor and the Abbot of Glastonbury, Alfred of Lincoln.

There is no date on this charter. However, the document states that the gift was made with the permission of Robert Fitzhammon and Sybil, his wife. We know that Robert had returned to Normandy by 1104 and died in 1107. We also know that Alfred had been made Abbot in 1100, meaning that the charter date is between 1100 and 1104 or, at the very latest, 1107.

This charter helps support the belief that Herbert I came with Robert Fitzhammon, ten years or so earlier, during the conquest of Glamorgan for which he received the Lordship of Llanblethian.

Robert Fitzhammon gave further land to Herbert I as the survey of Winchester, carried out in 1110, shows him owning several houses both

inside and outside the city walls. He was later to gift two of these houses to the nunnery at Godstow.

Elsewhere, Herbert I held Stanton St Quentin in Wiltshire, a village still known by that name.

However, Herbert I's main fief was in Yorkshire in the Holderness. This is the strip of land which is between the River Humber and the North Sea. Here, he was a feudal tenant of Count Stephen of Aumale.

Herbert I's landholdings in Yorkshire grew substantially with many villages and areas to his name. He established his main base at Brandsburton, where the church now contains many of the St Quentin tombs.

Additionally, he held land in Lincolnshire at Thimbleby and Stainton which he later gifted to Thornton Abbey.

Herbert I married twice. The name of his first wife is not known. By her he had at least two children; William and Richard. By his second marriage, there were three children; Walter, Alan and Adeliza.

His second wife was called Agnes de Arches, daughter of Osborn and great grand-daughter of William, Count of Arques who was the brother of Duke Robert of Normandy, the father of William the Conqueror.

The St Quentins had the habit of marrying rich and powerful women and she was the first. Much of the family's wealth was obtained in this way.

*To be continued.....*

*George Haynes*

