

NEWSLETTER

of Cowbridge History Society



What was happening in Cowbridge in 1890?

ONWARD AND UPWARD

Welcome to the third newsletter of Cowbridge History Society, incorporating Cowbridge Record Society and Cowbridge & District Local History Society.

Please note that this edition gives notice of the first Annual General Meeting of the newly-merged society. Note also that the AGM will this year be held at a different venue – the Maendy Room at the United Free Church (Ramoith) in Westgate. This is due to a combination of availability and members' existing commitments. We hope that you will attend, as this is an important occasion.

PLEASE NOTE that access to the Church Hall is via a door located in The Broad Shoard, not by any of the chapel's other doors! We will of course be looking out for you.

As usual, refreshments will be provided at the meeting. After the AGM we will hear an illustrated talk from one of our members, Robert Cope, about Christmas Cottages, the historic building in Church Lane, Cowbridge, that has now been recognised with a blue plaque largely as a result of Robert's efforts.

NEWS

The Rural Vale Remembered

We are still looking adding potential contributors of reminiscences for our next scheduled publication. We have three contributions "in the bag" but we need many more to complete this piece of research. Anyone who was living or working in the Vale before 1970 and is willing to be interviewed about their old way of life is welcome to contact us. Written reminiscences can be submitted if preferred. If you know anyone who fits the bill, do please let us know or ask them to get in touch with us.

Cowbridge Museum – call for new volunteers

The Museum is seeking new volunteer stewards to assist with manning the reception desk. In order to meet the requirements for accreditation, the museum has to open twice a month (11am-4pm) during the summer. Volunteer hours are entirely flexible: you can come for two hours once a month, five hours twice a month, six hours spread over six months, or any other variation.

It is also worth knowing that we can accommodate young people wishing to do voluntary work as part of a Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme or similar, who can not only gain useful interpersonal skills but can learn from experts about the art of conservation.

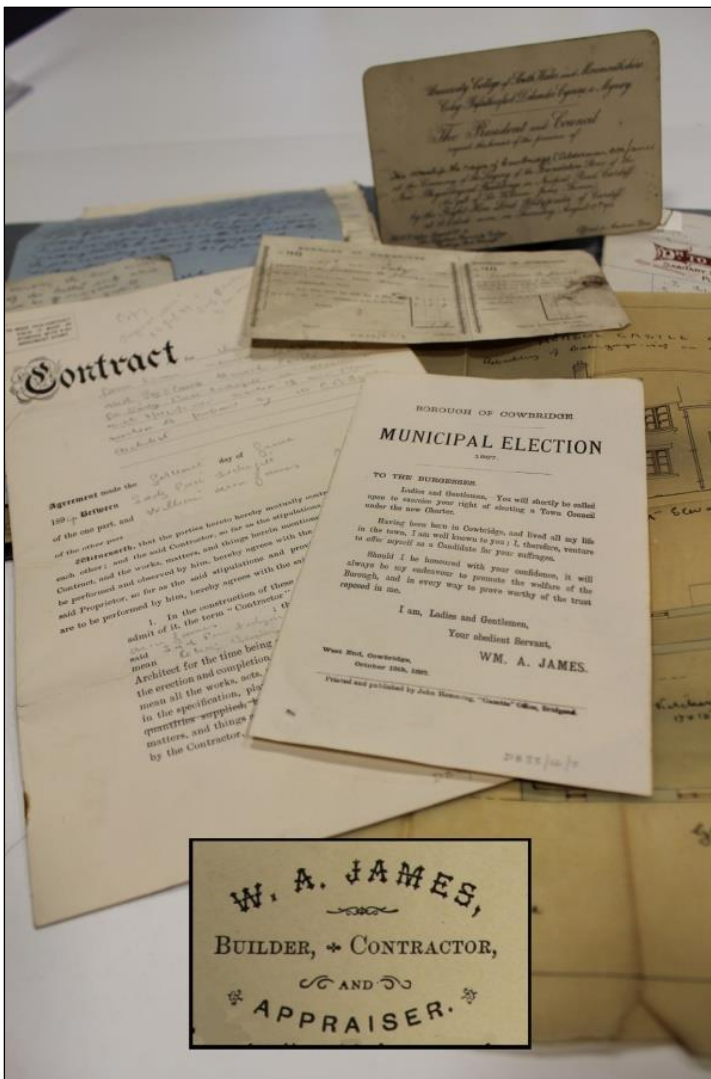
Please get in touch with the Curator, James Evans (cowbridgemuseum@gmail.com), or with me, if you are interested.

Deb Fisher, Acting Publications Officer of Cowbridge History Society

THE MARGARET GIBBON OF COWBRIDGE COLLECTION

This article by Glamorgan archivist **Susan Edwards** is printed by kind permission.

Glamorgan Archives is in its fourth year at its splendid new accommodation in Leckwith, Cardiff. Since the move, accessions have been received apace, averaging over 260 a year. They range from single items to van loads in size with an age range to match and have often had some adventures before arriving at the Archives. In the previous reporting year the most random survival was received from an individual in Cowbridge.



These are the business and personal records of William Aaron James (1847-1915) of Stafford House, Cowbridge, who ran a small building firm in the town. James appears as a builder in directories in the East Village in 1875 and later in West village 1884 and 1906, employing fourteen men and three boys in 1881. He was one of the first aldermen of the new corporation of Cowbridge 1886, serving as mayor in 1889, 1899 and 1914 and married Selina Booth (born 1857 at Leek, Staffordshire) in 1876. Children recorded in census returns 1881-1911 include William Arthur James (born 1879), Clara Gwladys James (born 1887), and Ethel Selina James (born 1890). James served as secretary of the St Quintin's Lodge of the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows and the papers include records of his lodge and others as well as letters and receipts for building work to local houses, churches and public buildings covering the period 1838 to 1924.

This interesting collection was discovered in the attic of a house in Cowbridge where the papers had, at some point, been spread as a form of loft insulation. Now fully listed and available to searchers, the papers demonstrate

the resilience of archives and are a spectacularly unusual example of how their survival often depends on their value for purposes never imagined by their original creator!

The full list of the papers can be seen on our electronic catalogue, Canfod, accessible from our website www.glamarchives.gov.uk with the reference D833.

AN INCIDENT AT COWBRIDGE POLICE STATION

In the same year that William James's youngest daughter was born, the peace of Cowbridge was disturbed - by the forces of the law themselves! This is a summary of an account, held by the South Wales Police Museum, of an incident that occurred in the town in 1890; fuller details can be found on the website:

[www.http://www.southwalespolicemuseum.org.uk/en/content/cms/history_of_the_force/policing_cowbridge/policing_cowbridge.aspx](http://www.southwalespolicemuseum.org.uk/en/content/cms/history_of_the_force/policing_cowbridge/policing_cowbridge.aspx)

It was Easter Tuesday and all was quiet in Cowbridge as 45-year-old Sergeant William Martin, originally from Brecon, was out on patrol, near the Eagle Stores (now Cowbridge Balti House and the Little Shop of Calm). There he came across one of his constables, William Evans, originally from Pembrokeshire, in the company of a local milkman, Mark Roberts, whom Martin had recently arrested. Roberts began an argument, which stopped only when Alderman Edward John leaned out of a window above to complain about the noise.

The two officers continued their beat; but there had been several incidents in preceding days that had led to bad feeling between them. As they were passing one of Cowbridge's twenty-odd pubs, The Globe, which was located at The Butts, PC Evans began to harangue Sgt Martin about his conduct towards Roberts. With little provocation (at least, according to Martin), he then attacked the sergeant, gouging both his eyes in the ensuing struggle. A local resident named Mrs Trott then appeared on the scene and seems to have been instrumental in dragging Evans away from Martin, who later had to have one eye surgically removed by Dr Mellor of xxxxxx House¹.

During the subsequent court case, the defence claimed that Sgt Martin had been drunk when the fight took place. Martin denied this (though he did admit having had two pints that evening). Evans said that the injury to the sergeant had occurred when he stumbled against the door of the Eagle Stores and caught his eye on the handle. Several witnesses corroborated Sgt Martin's version of events. The only witness who supported PC Evans was, not surprisingly, his friend Roberts, who testified that Martin had started the fight. Dr Mellor, who also gave evidence at the trial, said that it was Evans, not Martin, who had been drunk, and also gave his expert opinion that the injuries sustained could not have been caused by a door handle – although Alderman John, disturbed once again from his slumbers and watching from his window, had seen both men fall against the door of the shop.

Evans was found guilty and sentenced to fifteen years in prison. Sgt Martin was transferred to the station at Pontycymmer and had to wear a glass eye for the rest of his career.

It is interesting to note that PC Evans, who was single, was actually living at the police station at the time of the incident. Presumably he was expected to be on call whenever needed. We cannot imagine having that level of policing in the town of Cowbridge these days – but, thankfully, it is also a long time since anyone was so seriously injured in a drunken fight in our High Street.

¹ Most of our readers will be aware that Dr Mellor's name can still be seen, engraved on the letterbox of the house. In 1881 Dr Charles Booth Mellor founded the general medical practice now known as the Cowbridge & Vale Group Practice.

COWBRIDGE HISTORY SOCIETY

Incorporating Cowbridge & District Local History Society and Cowbridge Record Society

PROGRAMME FOR 2013-2014 (provisional)

Meetings start at 7.30pm in the Lesser Hall, Town Hall, Cowbridge

N.B. All talks are on the first Friday of the month

- 4th October *The Richard Burton Diaries*
Prof. Chris Williams, Swansea University, College of Arts and Humanities
- 1st November *Creating Copperopolis: the people and places behind the Swansea Copper Industry*
Dr Louise Miskell, Swansea University History Department
- 6th December *The Life of the eccentric Dr William Price*
Dean Powell
Followed by mince pies and wine.

2014

- 3rd January *"I do like to be beside the seaside - 200 years of holidaymaking in the Vale"*
Nigel Williams
- 7th February *A History of Bonvilston*
Paul Fisher
- 7th March *Rorke's Drift - 'Zulu' - and the Welsh Connection*
Don Gerrard
- 13th March **Charter Day Celebration**
- 4th April *Hats through the Ages – Victorian to Present Day*
Janet Jennings
- 2nd May TBA

COWBRIDGE HISTORY SOCIETY

INAUGURAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013

Preceded by the final AGM of Cowbridge Record Society

Wednesday, 10th July 2013 at 7.30 pm

United Free Church Hall (Ramoth Chapel), Eastgate

Access via the door in The Broad Shoard

The AGM of Cowbridge Record Society will take place first, with an agenda as follows:

- 1 Welcome (Deborah Fisher, Chair) and apologies for absence
- 2 Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 30th May 2012
- 3 Approval of Cowbridge Record Society accounts for the financial year 2012-2013
- 4 **Committee motion:** To defer all outstanding business to the Inaugural AGM of Cowbridge History Society

INAUGURAL AGM OF COWBRIDGE HISTORY SOCIETY

AGENDA

- 5 Welcome (Dick Buswell, Acting Chair) and apologies for absence
- 6 Any outstanding business resulting from the minutes of the 2012 AGM of Cowbridge Record Society
- 7 Treasurer's report
- 8 Motions
- 9 Election of President and Officers for 2013-2014:
Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Programme Secretary, Publications Officer
- 10 Election of Executive Committee (at present comprised of
Keith Edwards, Hilary Thomas, Beverly Tonkin, Dick Tonkin)
- 11 Any other business.

NOTE on items 8, 9, 10 and 11: *Motions for consideration at the AGM, nominations for the officer and committee positions, and any other business for discussion must be submitted in writing to the Acting Secretary (Mr Don Gerrard, 34 The Verlands, Cowbridge CF71 7BY) no later than 5pm on Tuesday 9th July 2013. Motions and other business from the floor will be accepted only at the discretion of the Chair. Nominations from the floor will be accepted only if insufficient nominations are received in advance of the AGM.*