



SOUTH WEST WALES INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

CYCLCHLYTHYR

CYMDEITHAS ARCHAEOLEG DIWYDIANNOL DE ORLLEWIN CYMRU

No. 12 - March 1976

Editorial committee: F.G.Cowley, P.R.Reynolds, W.I.Roberts

Price to non-members: 10p

FUTURE EVENTS

Saturday 20th March, 11.15 a.m.

University College of Swansea

Mr J.D.H. Thomas, Head of the History Department, Barry College of Education, will speak on "Settlement and early industry in the upper Swansea valley". This will be followed by a coach trip in the afternoon to visit sites described in the morning.

Full details and a booking form will be found on the separate sheet enclosed with this newsletter.

N.B. Mr Thomas's lecture is based on his M.A. thesis. This thesis also forms the basis of a recent article by him in the National Library of Wales Journal, Winter 1975. See back page.

Thursday 22nd April, 7.0 p.m.

Royal Institution of South Wales

Mr T.J. Evans (Aberdare). "Chapels and engine houses"

Saturday 15th March

Study tour of sites in the Merthyr Tydfil area, led by Mr W.E. Jenkins, Tutor in the Extra-Mural Department. Full arrangements will be circularised in due course.

Thursday 20th May, 7.0 p.m.

Royal Institution of South Wales

Mr David Richards and Mr John Morris. "The Ynysgedwyn ironworks and the anthracite industry in the Ystradgynlais region", which includes a film on the Swansea Canal.

N.B. This is a confirmation of the provisional arrangements announced in the programme sheet sent out in January

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's AGM will be held at 7.0 p.m. on Thursday 8th April in the Royal Institution. The usual business will be transacted, following which there will be refreshments and a slide-show by the Society's Photographer, Mr Hayden Holloway. This will consist of a selection of slides from the Society's collection showing some of our activities in the past year.

Please note that to save postage this is the only notice that will be given. Copies of the agenda are enclosed with this newsletter. Members should send nominations for the various officers and committee members to the Hon. Secretary (Mr W.I. Roberts, Grove Cottage, Gloucester Place, Mumbles, Swansea) to reach him by 25th March. Members are also requested to give him notice of any matters they may wish to raise under the final item on the agenda, also by that date.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

May I once again remind members that their subscriptions are now due for the current year? The rates remain unchanged at £1-00 each and 50p for OAPs and full-time students. A form is enclosed which you may find convenient to use when sending your subs. in to the Hon. Treasurer.

COURSES, SUMMER SCHOOLS, ETC.

Cardiff. The 8th annual conference of the Western IA Societies will be held in the Reardon-Smith Lecture Theatre of the National Museum of Wales on Saturday 3rd April 1976. It is hoped to include a contribution from members of this society. Further details from the Hon. Treasurer, Paul Reynolds.

Swansea. A course of six weekly meetings entitled "Learning about archaeology" are to be held at Berwick House, 6 Uplands Terrace on Friday evenings at 7.0 p.m. starting on 23rd April. The tutor is Anthony Houghton-Brown, a research student in the Department of Archaeology, University College Cardiff. His main interest lies in the excavation of medieval sites. Full details from the Department of Extra-Mural Studies, Berwick House.

Aberystwyth. "Industrial archaeology and transport in Central Wales" is the title of a residential course from Saturday 31st July to Saturday 7th August. Further information from Dr Edwin Course, Department of Extra-Mural Studies, The University, Southampton.

Coleg Harlech. Saturday 7th-14th August. A summer school is to be held on the general theme of "The Welsh scene". Two IA options are offered. The first is devoted to slate quarrying and copper mining in North Wales, and includes a full-day visit to Blaenau Ffestiniog and a half-day visit to the Sygun copper mine. The course director is D. Morgan Rees, and the tutors Lewis Lloyd and Richard Keen. The second option is a practical one, consisting of a detailed survey of the Gwynfynydd gold mine which was flourishing in the latter years of the 19th century. Copies of the prospectus and application forms are available from the Hon. Secretary, Idris Roberts.

Members may also like to know that the Standing Conference for Local History publish a list "Residential courses in local history" giving information on such courses, including some of IA interest. It is available from them at 26 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3NU free on receipt of a stamped-addressed envelope.

NEATH GENERAL STATION

It seems that the lengthy controversy over the future of Neath station has yet to be resolved. After a decision from the Welsh Office that pleased no-one and two surprising volte-faces from Neath Borough Council and British Rail it is still uncertain whether the old station is to be demolished or refurbished.

Following a seven-month delay the Secretary of State for Wales finally announced on 29 January last that he did not require BR's application to demolish the station to be referred to him, and that Neath Borough Council were to decide the matter as they thought fit. The Council, the Mayor and the local M.P. were all annoyed at the long delay before the original decision of last June was, in effect, endorsed; whilst those anxious for the preservation of the station were angry that there was to be no public enquiry at which all the issues might be aired. The first surprise was BR's response to the Welsh Office announcement: they would not, after all, be able to start on rebuilding the station straightaway. Since demolition was halted last April the cost of a new station had risen from £220,000 to over £300,000 and BR's present financial plight meant that at that price the project would have to be postponed. The most that BR could promise was that if planning permission were granted they would do their best to minimise the delay.

However, an even bigger surprise was in store. BR put in their application again to Neath Council for Listed Building Consent to demolish the station, fully expecting - as did everyone - that this would be no more than a formality since permission to rebuild had already been given by the Council on two previous occasions. But when the Planning Committee sat on 10 February they most surprisingly rejected BR's application by 14 votes to 12, a number of members having changed their minds, perhaps as a result of last minute representations made by Sir Lincoln Hallinan of the Victorian Society and Mr Douglas

Hague of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales.

There the matter rests for the time being with a victory for the preservationists thanks to the help rendered by their two improbable allies. BR are now said to be considering their next move. Rumours have been put about that the rejection of their planning application is the first step on the road to the complete closure of Neath station, but this has been firmly denied. A petition has been started at the station requesting the Council to reconsider their decision and allow the station to be rebuilt, and it is said to have attracted a large number of signatures in a short time. About the only thing that is clear at present is that the saga of Neath station still hasn't come to an end.

WEAVER'S MILL

I Swansea to have its own version of the Neath station affair? That must be what a number of people are wondering after recent decisions on the future of Weaver's Mill.

Since it fell into disuse in 1963 Weaver's Mill has formed an unlovely feature of the Swansea townscape, and it achieved the doubtful honour of winning the Evening Post's first "Ugly Award" in 1975. However, although the mill is a remarkably unattractive building, it also has considerable historical interest as the first ferro-concrete building in Britain. It is understood that it would have been demolished long ago if the cost had not been prohibitive, but recent developments in high explosive techniques have made it possible to destroy the building at an economic cost. Consequently the owners of the mill submitted a request to Swansea City Council for permission to demolish it, and this was heard at the meeting of the Planning Committee on January 16, who granted permission with great enthusiasm with words such as 'eyesore' freely bandied about.

However, as soon as permission was given, opposition came from various bodies such as Save Britain's Heritage, supported by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, the Victorian Society, and the Concrete Society who want to preserve examples of the structure. Their combined influence led to the mill being spot-listed by the Welsh Office on 12 February. A highly indignant City Council responded immediately by recommending the owners of the mill, a consortium of local businessmen, to apply directly to the Welsh Office for permission to demolish it. It is understood that the intention of the owners is to sell the lease on the site when cleared to the City Council.

Weaver's mill and its associated silos were built in 1897-99 as the first multi-storey reinforced concrete structures in the U.K. The method of construction was based on the new material 'béton armé', or armoured concrete, patented in 1892 by the Frenchman François Hennebique. It was through L.G. Mouchel, the French consul at Briton Ferry, that Swansea came to have the first example of this new building technique. Mouchel had become interested in ferro-concrete when extending his own business premises, and in 1897 opened an office in London to promote it as Hennebique's agent. His influence must have carried weight with the directors of Weaver & Co, a profitable and expanding flour-milling firm who liked to cultivate an up-to-date image. The directors were men of standing in Swansea who inspired confidence in the adoption of the new technique. The building was designed by the Swansea architect H.C. Portsmouth and the contractors were the French firm of Hennebique and Le Brun who imported the materials and key workers from France.

The building has lasted well and it is still said to be structurally sound. The only reason for the 'Danger' notices is the fact that holes exist in the floors where machinery has been taken out. For this reason the Victorian Society claim that it could be converted for use as a warehouse without difficulty or excessive expense.

(N.B. the historical material in this note is derived from the researches of Mrs Patricia Cusack of the Uplands, Swansea who has recently completed a thorough examination of the design, construction and history of the mill as a project for the Open University. A copy of the project has been added to the stock of Swansea University College Library, and an article based on her work appeared in the Evening Post for 3 January 1976.)

SIEMENS' LABORATORY

Siemens' laboratory at Landore was scheduled as an historic monument on 18 December 1975. At the time of writing the intended selective demolition has not commenced, but it is understood that it is likely to start within the next month. It is proposed to preserve the northern bay with the distinctive range of eight chimney stacks, but the other walls will be demolished to window level, an unfortunate necessity due to the derelict condition of the building.

MORRISTON OLD MARKET

Swansea City Council have recently recommended that the old market in Market Street, Morriston, should be listed for its architectural and historic interest. Built in 1827 the old market is now used as a furniture store. It has four arched doorways and flanking towers with Gothic windows. Originally these towers were castellated, but they have at some subsequent date been cut short and now end abruptly at gutter level. At one time the first floor housed a "twopenny dole school" which was entered through a door in the left-hand tower. The old market was replaced by the nearby New Market in 1875. The approval of the Welsh Office for the proposed listing is currently awaited.

CONSERVATION IN INDUSTRIAL AREAS

A conference on this theme was recently held in Swansea and was attended by over 250 delegates from several European countries. Among the 15 papers presented on conservation, planning and industrial monuments and archaeology was one by Lord Sandford, a former minister at the Department of the Environment and the Department of Education and Science. In it he suggested the establishment of a series of "Centres for Swansea Studies", possibly run by the Extra-Mural Department of the University College. Another interesting fact to emerge from the conference was that in Wales 135 grants have been made to historic buildings from government funds since 1952. Of these 135, only five are in the industrial belt of South Wales where 70% of the population live, and of these five buildings, two are farmhouses, one a park, one an abbey, and the fifth is Swansea's Royal Institution. None are industrial monuments.

SCOTT'S PIT, LLANSAMLET, SWANSEA

As one travels through the mining areas of Cornwall one sees the ruins of typical Cornish pumping engine houses. Their design was diffused to many mining areas in other parts of Great Britain during the later years of the 18th and the first half of the nineteenth centuries.

Scott's Pit engine house is an example of this design, except that instead of having a tapering cylindrical chimney it is square in section. In studying the interior of the engine house another difference is observed from the usual Cornish design. I am convinced that it contained two engines, one for pumping and the other for winding, the former being in the basement below the foundation of the vertical winding engine cylinder which worked the winding drum situated inside the building on the floor, from which the winding rope passed to thee exterior wheels of the pit winding gear over the shaft. Both engines were beam engines and the beam of the pumping engine passed through the aperture of the end wall adjacent to the shaft. In passing I might mention that the winding arrangement and engine house at the old Birchgrove pit was similar to the one at Scott's.

In the retaining vertical wall of the coal landing platform is to be seen a brick bearing the name "White Llansamlet". If one could discover when White's brickworks were in operation at Llansamlet one could date the building of Scott's engine house with more accuracy. Up to the present I have been unable to do so.

When James Watt's patent expired in 1800 other firms began to manufacture this type of beam engine with modifications and using high pressure steam: one of these firms was the great Neath Abbey Ironworks which made engines for pumping and winding and boilers from 1800 onwards. It is most likely that the machinery for Scott's Pit came from this nearby works.

An interesting feature of Scott's Pit is that leading from the shaft is a brick culvert, now broken, which enters a brick chamber covered with brambles near the road passing the pit. Was this arrangement for withdrawing foul air by means of a fire lit above the chamber, a kind of ventilation system?

Scott's Pit was formerly known as Venture, and later, in Welsh, as Menter, because of the difficulties in sinking it presented by inflowing water. On 2 September 1816 John Scott of London and his partners took over a lease for coal mining in the Llansamlet area from Benjamin Morgan, the nephew of the late Mrs Mary Morgan of Gwernllwynchwyth who had in 1816 granted a lease to Chauncy Townsend to mine coal under her land. Scott & Co traded under the name of the Old Church Pit Colliery Company for a number of years until 1828 when the lease was transferred to Charles Henry Smith, the great grandson of Chauncy Townsend, who worked the coal in the area until 1837.

Dr. E.G. Meyrick

COAL MINING FATALITIES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: THE COURTS OF
GREAT SESSIONS AND INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY

The Courts of Great Sessions came into being as a result of the legislation passed between 1536 and 1543 which united England and Wales, and they continued to exist until 1830. They met twice a year within each of four circuits. With the court's records were filed copies of inquisitions on deaths from other than natural causes taken by coroners' juries. These inquisitions are a rich source of information for the social and industrial historian. The following abridges transcriptions referring to coal mining accidents give some idea of the kind of material they contain for the Swansea Valley area. I am indebted to Mr G. Milwyn Griffiths of the National Library of Wales (where the records are now stored) for first drawing my attention to this source.

1748. Inquisition on the body of Thomas John. On 29th July between nine and ten in the morning the deceased being driving a cart and four oxen from the riverside to the coalworks of Robert Morris at Cwmreedyviliast in the parish of Llangyfelach, and when standing on the tongue or beam of the cart a fly stinging one of the oxen, they ran by which the deceased was thrown off the cart down to the ground by which means the oxen drew one of the wheels over the deceased by which his back was very much bruised, two of his ribs and his collar bone broken, of which bruises and the breaking of his ribs and collar bone he languished till two of the clock and then languishing died. (NLW Wales 4/614/7)

1770. Inquisition on the body of Thomas John, collier. Being at work in the colliery of Gruffydd Price at Penllwynmarch ... the sulphurous inflammatory air in the said coalworks took fire on Wednesday 21 November and the said Thomas John was by the force and violence of the said blast or explosion blown from the place where he was at work into a hole or hollow whereby his face and hands were and he was so much bruised in other parts of his body that it brought on a fever of which he languished and died. (Wales 4/622/1)

1771. Inquisition on the body of William Hugh, collier. The said deceased William Hugh putting the rope down into the coal pit of James Townsend of Glandwr on Wednesday morning 2nd January, he jumped upon the arm of the whim which was over the pit, which turning round with great swiftness he was thrown off with great violence against the planks of the side of the pit whereby three of his ribs were broken and received some inward bruises of which he languished about twelve hours and then languishing died. (Wales 4/622/1)

1776. Inquisition on the body of Thomas Cook. Being on Thursday 7th November at work in the level of Thomas Lockwood & Co. now carrying on under the waste called Graig Trewyddfa and having put a charge of gunpowder in the rock in order to blow it, upon setting it off a piece of stone flew off and struck the deceased in the back part of his head by which his skull was fractured and he then and there instantly died. (Wales 4/623/7)

1776. Inquisition on the body of George George. Going to work in the new Fire engine pit of John Lockwood & Co. situate at Llandwr between five and six of the clock and having gone down to the underground street in the said pit and walking there without a candle and in the dark he accidentally fell into a small pit about nine fathoms deep at the bottom which was about four feet of water by which fall he was much bruised and falling into the water was then and there suffocated and drowned. (Wales 4/623/7)

1778. Inquisition on the body of Edward Lewis, collier. The deceased being at work near the Fire Engine of Thomas Lockwood & John Morris & Co. situate near the copper smelting houses in Graig Trewyddva, he went down into the ash hole of the said Fire Engine to eat his dinner and sat down. He was by smoke and steam of the ashes overcome and then and there instantly suffocated and died. (Wales 4/624/2)

1786. Inquisition on the body of William Prosser, infant. Being at work in carting of coal in the colliery of John Morris called Penvillia from the head to the waggons which carried it out, part of the coal accidentally fell on the said deceased to the amount of about a waggon load ... which crushed the deceased in so violent a manner that he then and there instantly died. (Wales 4/624/4)

F.G.C.

RECENT LITERATURE

J.D.H. THOMAS. The industrialization of a Glamorgan parish. (National Library of Wales Journal, 19,2,1975, pp.194-208)

The parish of Llangiwg lies on the western side of the Swansea Valley and includes Pontardawe, Ystalyfera and Cwmllynfell. The change from an agrarian to an industrial economy took about 75 years and was not finally completed until the 1870s. Coal mining figured largely at the beginning of this transition, but subsequently iron and tinplate became the major industries. The author also looks at the pre-industrial farming economy and at the effects of industrialization on the religious and cultural life of the parish.

D.E. BREWSTER. Motor buses in Wales, 1898-1932

A small book of 52 pages of which 32 are plates. The author has assembled a most interesting collection of photographs including a good number from Swansea and district. A particularly handsome vehicle is CY 1622 of 1912 operated by Thomas Evans of Fforestfach, as is the early South Wales double-decker L 1128 shown at Ystalyfera in 1914. The text can necessarily only sketch the outlines of Welsh 'bus history, but references will be found to the South Wales Transport Co. and to less well-known local companies such as Swan, D. Bassett or the Swansea Motor Co. who started a motor 'bus service as early as 1899.

(Oakwood Press, Old School House, Tarrant Hinton, Blandford Forum, Dorset. £1-35.)

R. DENNIS (ed.) Stewart Williams'' Glamorgan Historian, vol. XI

Articles of particular interest in this latest volume of a well-known and appreciated series include '" Neither a borrower ... ": Sir Robert Price, Bart., M.P.' by J.A. Flint (pp.82-97) which recounts the story of the Tondy ironworks, and 'A walk through Glamorgan 1819' by Tegwyn James (pp.109-125) which reprints extracts from a manuscript in the National Library of Wales describing a walking tour in South Wales, including several mentions of industrial activity.

(Stewart Williams, Bryn Awel, Buttrills Road, Barry, South Glam.)

GOWER. Vol. XXVI, 1975

The articles most directly concerned with industrial archaeology and history in this issue are 'Swansea houses - working class houses, 1800-1850' by Bernard Morris (pp.53-61) describing industrial housing with plans and illustrations; and 'A Swansea railway accident - 1865' by Gerald Gabb (pp.68-70), an account of the well-known disaster on the bridge over the North Dock.

(Gower Society, c/o Sales Officer, 142 Glanmor Road, Sketty, Swansea. 95p.)

LLWCHWR SOCIETY MAGAZINE. Vol.1, 1975

The first issue of this magazine contains articles on the history of Penllergaer, Gowerton, Loughor and Llandeilo Talybont. The introductory 'Historical sketch'; by the Editor, Mr Emlyn Thomas, contains references to the district's industrial history, while D.T. Davies and E. Thomas tell 'The story of transport in our area' including roads, bridges and railways.

(Mr E. Thomas, 5 Woodlands Road, Loughor, Swansea.)

D.W. CROSSLEY. Sidney ironworks accounts (Camden 4th Series, vol.15.)

The 16th century documents reprinted in this work are mainly concerned with ironworks in Sussex built by Sir William Sidney. However they also contain the accounts of the Glamorgan ironworks for 1564-65 and 1567-68 and the estimates drawn up there in 1568 for the cost of producing pig iron and plates for steelmaking. The location of the works is uncertain, but it has been suggested that the furnace was at Tongwynlais near Cardiff and the forge at Rhyd-y-gwern in the Rhymney Valley.

(Royal Historical Society, c/o University College, Gower Street, London.)