

CHRONICLE

Issue 2 Summer 2013

William Roscoe

Swansea Castle

Welsh Bible

St Melangell

**Monastery Community
Centres**

The Medieval Church

**Medieval Higher
Education**

**Did Richard III kill
Abraham Lincoln?**

£1 (free to members)

MEDIEVAL ISSUE

Historical Association, Swansea Branch

Promoting History in South West Wales

From the Editor

'Are you still pleased that you went to live in Wales'?

That's what everyone asks as soon I venture back to England. 'Yes', I reply, 'most definitely. It's made me look at history, living in Swansea'. I used to live in the shadow of Hampton Court Palace, so surrounded by history, I never thought about it. We knew it all, Henry 8th, all his wives, Cardinal Wolsey, the Tudors ... but Swansea came as a great surprise; I'd never heard of Copperopolis.

Coal was something we used to put on the fire. I had made oil paintings of tin mines in Cornwall, but never thought about where the tin went. I'd sold Victorian japanned tin plate trays and coal boxes in my antique shop but had never heard of Pontypool except as something to do with Rugby! As for Owain Glydwr, who proudly marched through Swansea with his army in 1403; he went unmentioned in Surrey.

When I arrived in Swansea I visited castles all over Wales; some in ruins, like Caerphilly and some Gothic inspired buildings like Castle Coch. When shopping in Swansea I hardly noticed Swansea Castle which has been standing there since 1106 but The Historical Association is working to give it greater prominence.

What a lot I've had to learn and am still learning. Last year I went to an eisteddfod: in the pouring rain, my shoes sinking deeply into the mud. First lesson: if you live in Wales, buy wellington



boots. That's why I'm so pleased to be editing 'Chronicle'. I'm sure there are many people like me, who need to learn and have their interest in History and Wales rekindled.

In Swansea we have many academics with many differing spheres of knowledge and I'm hoping they will write for us and pass on the understanding of their subjects. But I hope also that non-academics will share with us facts about local history. Stories about life in Hafod and White Rock are just as important as tales about Acts of Parliament. Don't forget the grant that the branch was awarded to research oral histories. Volunteers are welcome, contact John Ashley. Our next edition will feature aspects of Christmas. So please let me have articles telling of Christmas's past from AD 1 onwards. A hundred words or 800 words, all copy welcome by the middle of October. Thanks.

In this medieval issue we have 8 extra pages so have been able to group together a diverse range of subjects, from religion, education, monasteries, myths and castles. Yes, I am still really pleased I live in Swansea.

Margaret McCloy

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Cover photograph by Rosemary Crahart

Beware the Power of Myth: Did Richard III kill Abraham Lincoln?

Historians spend much time identifying and demolishing myths. The greatest myth-maker in the English language was Shakespeare, and the greatest of his mythical subjects was Richard III.

His 'Richard' has enjoyed continuous popularity in performance since it was written – hence its influence on popular characterizations of the king. In America, where it was first performed in 1750 in New York City, it achieved even more.

English repertory companies performed it on the east coast and it was the favourite choice for acting groups of British soldiers in New York during the American Revolution.

The first English actor to open 'Richard III' in America was G.F. Cooke, who took the play to New York in 1810 and on to Boston and Philadelphia. Then, Junius Brutus Booth and his son Edwin took it to the frontier, to wagon-trains and mining camps.

In 1821 a company of free blacks staged the play in Manhattan, at a clubhouse called the African Grove – which, however, was forced to close because the Park Theatre close by, where Junius Brutus Booth was starring as Richard, resented the competition. In those early years, did American audiences enjoy Shakespeare's demonic portrayal of an ancestor of King George?

Shakespeare's character became a touchstone of human depravity in the US. President Andrew Jackson was compared by his enemies to the murderous, insecure Richard; while in January 1835 Richard figured in the attempted assassination of the president.

President Jackson went to the Capitol to attend the funeral of Warren R. Davis, a congressman from South Carolina – who was about to become more famous in death than in life. As the president passed the casket, a figure six

feet away drew a pistol and fired point-blank at Jackson. The report echoed deafeningly in the rotunda, but the pistol misfired. The would-be assassin, Richard Laurence, pulled out a second pistol; the cap exploded but again the pistol misfired. Jackson lunged at Laurence with his cane – as one might expect of the first westerner to become president – but a young army officer reached him first and subdued him with the help of Davy Crocket.

Richard was seen as the embodiment of evil, in the form of a deluded madman.

Laurence claimed at his trial that he was Richard III and rightful king of England, and that Jackson was barring his path to the throne. Laurence evidently knew something about King Richard, but he was declared insane and put in a mental asylum. According to the newspapers, Richard

and the madman were foiled by God's protective hand, a conviction strengthened by the evidence of a small arms expert that the odds on two pistols misfiring in the same way within seconds of one other were 125,000:1. Davy Crocket later declared that 'I wanted to see the damnedest villain in this world – and now I have'.

Thirty years later, did over-exposure to performances of 'Richard III' take another actor, Junius Brutus Booth's second son, John Wilkes, to Ford's Theatre to attempt the same thing – this time successfully when Abraham Lincoln was mortally wounded?

So much for the power of myth! Modern apologists may run the risk of creating more myths. The discovery of a skeleton in a Leicester car park and the claim that Richard III wanted to be buried in Yorkshire may provide good copy, but might they not add new myths to an already myth-laden king?

Ralph Griffiths

William Roscoe of Liverpool, 1758-1831

A Pioneering Historian of the Medici

William Roscoe was a self-educated polymath, who began his career as a market gardener. He became a poet, and appreciated the poetry of others, of Robert Burns, for example. He became a Member of Parliament (1806) and championed radical issues, notably the abolition of the slave trade, and a more tolerant attitude towards Catholicism.

He was a philanthropist, and a leading supporter of 'good causes' in his native city. He had interests in agriculture and botany, and was made a fellow of the Linnean Society (1805).

For the historian, he was a pioneering biographer of two leading figures of the Italian Renaissance, Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-92) first published in 1796, and his son Giovanni de' Medici, later to become Pope Leo X (1475-1521), first published in 1805. Both biographies were immediate commercial successes, running into many subsequent translations and editions, widely reviewed.

The success of the Leo biography in its Italian translation was assured by it being placed on the papal Index of prohibited books. Roscoe's achievements were all the more remarkable because he never visited Italy, and depended on his own library and on British and Italian correspondents to carry out what today would be called 'original research' in Italian libraries and archives.

Not that these publications were always well received. Some critics found his style somewhat wordy and over-enthusiastic.

For others, Roscoe's admiration for Lorenzo 'The Magnificent' as a poet and patron of the

arts, architecture and learning, distracted his attention from the subversion of the Florentine Republic by the Medici family in the course of the fifteenth century. His sympathetic treatment of Pope Leo was thought - for example, in the influential Edinburgh Review - to have been too uncritical of a corrupt Church and papacy. Moreover, as research on Florence, the Medici and the Renaissance Papacy has moved on so far from Roscoe's day, he is now rarely cited as an 'authority'.

However, in more recent years his significance as a 'public figure' and his contribution to the

appreciation and study of the Italian Renaissance has attracted growing attention.

Although he did not use the word 'Renaissance', his recognition of a rebirth of Antiquity in Renaissance Italy was very influential in

terms of the historiography of the phenomenon.

He was the first British historian to draw – albeit by correspondence- on the extensive Medici archives.

The on-going popularity of his Medici biographies undoubtedly helped stimulate informed post Grand Tour visitors to Florence and Italy, as well as the publication of 'serious' tour guides and studies of Italian art, literature and history.

He is also increasingly appreciated as a pioneer in a shift of taste away from the High Renaissance of Raphael and Michelangelo towards earlier Renaissance painting, of the Sieneese school and painters like Simone Martini.

Much of his own collection can now be seen in the Walker Art gallery in Liverpool, and while he

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was not the only collector, critic or connoisseur to move in the direction of the so-called Italian 'primitives', the National Gallery in London - for example - reflects the change of interest which he helped to foster, as does the work of the Pre-Raphaelites.

Finally, there was his vision of Liverpool as a 'Florence of the north', where wealthy and influential families could also become patrons of the arts and learning, on the Medici model.

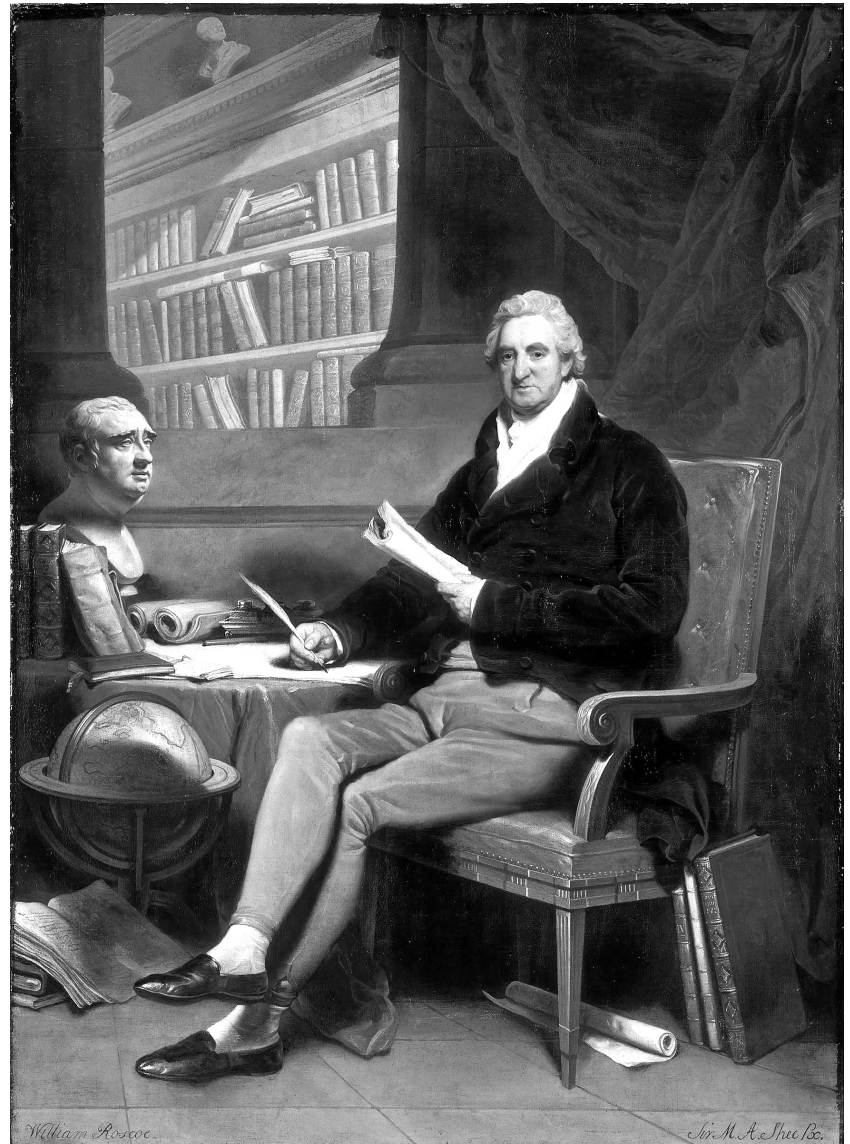
This had considerable influence in North America and the United Kingdom - for example on Isabella Stuart Gardner of Boston (1840-1924) and William Burrell of Glasgow (1861-1958).

His writing may well have encouraged the interests of such industrially wealthy and aspiring families as the Vivians of Swansea, as travellers, collectors and benefactors.

Ironically, however, the Medici bank which helped to create the family's political ascendancy in Florence declined under Lorenzo, while William Roscoe was associated with a banking failure in Liverpool in 1816, forcing him to sell his library.

The renewed interest in William Roscoe referred to above can be seen in a collection of essays edited by Stella Fletcher: *Roscoe and Italy, The Reception of Italian Renaissance History and Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Ashgate 2012).

This came out of a conference held in the Liverpool Athenaeum, an institution which Roscoe helped to found. Launches of the collection were subsequently held at the Athenaeum itself, and at the British Institute in Florence.



Walker Art Gallery

At the latter, further emphasis was directed to Roscoe's sensitivity to the poetry of Lorenzo, and to Lorenzo's activity as a villa builder in the Mugello, in the environs of Florence.

In an age of public libraries and archives, of the internet and on-line resources, of photocopyers, of generous research councils and encouraging universities - especially in the humanities - it is humbling to realize what was achieved by such a pioneering historian of the Italian Renaissance as William Roscoe.

John Law

The Early History of Swansea Castle

In 1106, King Henry I granted the lordship of Gower to Henry de Beaumont, first earl of Warwick and the first Norman lord of Gower. Henry de Beaumont chose the site for the principal castle of his new lordship near the mouth of the River Tawe, on a defensible knoll alongside the river, a little to the north of the present ruins, building it sometime in the few years after 1106. This site and its immediate surroundings became the borough of medieval Swansea. In 1116 the outer defences were burnt down by Welsh forces led by Gryffudd ap Rhys. However, having been built of timber, they were easily rebuilt.

Before the middle of the twelfth century, it seems that the political situation in the area had stabilised enough to allow the castle to be used for the minting of coins, with silver pennies being produced in the years 1137 to 1141. The stability of this time, however, was just a characteristic of a time of attacks of lesser ferocity than had been experienced in 1116.

There was a resurgence of a more powerful Welsh military presence in 1192 when the castle suffered an almost successful siege by the forces of the Lord Rhys, ruler of Deheubarth in west Wales. Twenty years later, Rhys Gryg, son of the Lord Rhys, attacked the lordship in a move that began a series of assaults at a time when King John and his barons were seriously out of harmony with each other. In 1217, Llewelyn ap Iorwerth (Llewelyn the Great), prince of Gwynedd, took possession of the lordship of Gower and granted the castle to Rhys Gryg.

Later that year, the same Rhys destroyed the castle in reprisal for the siege of Caerleon by the Normans. However, 1218 saw Llewelyn the Great make peace with the new king, Henry

III, and Gower passed once more into Anglo-Norman hands. It would seem that it was about this time that the opportunity was taken to rebuild Swansea Castle in stone, although it has been claimed that the replacement of timber by stone first occurred a little before the end of the twelfth century.

In the twentieth century, parts of that first site were excavated on a few occasions, with the findings giving an idea of the size and layout of the structure and its surroundings. It is clear that the position of that first castle was the best

In later times, when the not too distant castle of Oystermouth was a more attractive residence, the castle deteriorated ... in the early 1500s, an alternative use for a portion of the castle was that of a prison.

that could be found in the vicinity in the context of the early-twelfth century, and it generally served its military purpose well until time and pacification caused that purpose to be no longer necessary. By 1316, the Anglo-Norman conquest

of Wales was complete and the castle's function as a garrison had lost its significance, although this was briefly revived during Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion in the early-15th century. As a seat of local government, of course, the importance of the castle was still strong.

In 1332 or at some time soon after, the building of the 'New Castle', that is, the structure that we see today, took place. This was built within the line of the outer defence walls but was a structure separate from the component buildings of the old castle. It has been suggested that, because of the similarity of arcading on the castle's south wall with those of the bishop's palaces at St David's and Lamphey, the structure at Swansea was itself a bishop's palace. However, the arcading in question was added slightly later than the construction of the castle and the greater likelihood is that the design was just copied from those west-Wales palaces. It

may be noted that Henry de Gower, bishop of St David's, was having the Hospital of the Blessed David built at this time, which was just a few hundred yards from the castle, so stone-masons with knowledge of the west-Wales arcading were probably involved with this subsequent adornment of the castle.

In later times, when the not too distant castle of Oystermouth was a more attractive residence, the castle deteriorated and, in the ensuing centuries, it underwent a number of varied uses. For example, in the early 1500s, an alternative use for a portion of the castle was that of a prison.

After the Civil War in the mid-seventeenth century, the Parliamentary government ordered that Swansea Castle be 'disgarrisoned and the works slighted'. This is likely to have been a stock phrase used in respect of the many castles around England and Wales that had held out against Parliamentary forces. In the case of Swansea Castle, there was little slighting work to be done as the castle was already in a decayed state. It is possible that part of the north-west wall of the courtyard was removed in this exercise.

Colin Wheldon James

Bishop William Morgan and the Welsh Bible

The reign of the first Elizabeth was significant in many ways, but in one particular, for the people of Wales alone. It was during this period that the Bible was translated into the Welsh language and its effect has reverberated down the years to the present day.

Following the break with Rome and the growth of Protestantism, church services were no longer conducted through the medium of Latin, but in English. However, while the Welsh were familiar with the Latin service, they were unable to understand the English and this led to concerns among the clergy as to the divisions this could cause.

A group of campaigners led by Richard Davies, the Bishop of St David's, lobbied Queen Elizabeth and her Parliament for the translation of the Bible into the Welsh language. As a result, in 1563, the Act for the Translation of the Bible and the Divine Service into the Welsh Tongue was passed and 1567 specified as the year by which the translation of both the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer should be completed.

William Salesbury, an Oxford lawyer, translated the New Testament, the Psalms and the Book of Common Prayer into Welsh by the deadline of 1567, but his translation was difficult to read and was not well received. William Morgan, the Vicar of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant in North Wales, then took on the task of revising

Salesbury's translation and translating both the Old Testament and the Apocrypha.

William Morgan was a biblical scholar, but he was also steeped in the literary traditions of Wales, including the work of the poets. He included these elements in his translation of the Bible and in his revision of Salesbury's work. The result was that his work was universally accepted as a masterpiece and was published in 1588.

When, in 1611, the English Authorised Version of the Bible appeared, Richard Parry, the Bishop of St Asaph, along with his brother-in-law, John Davies, revised William Morgan's translation in line with the Authorised Version. No extensive alterations to Morgan's work were required, but the language was made to conform more closely with the practices of the poets.

William Morgan's Bible had further benefits for the Welsh people. It helped to unify the various dialects spoken in different parts of Wales into a language that could be spoken and understood throughout the country.

When Griffith Jones of Llanddowror started his circulating schools in 1731, it was by means of this Bible that over 200,000 people learned to read, and finally, it helped to ensure the survival of the Welsh language.

Rosemary Crahart

Historia divae Monacellae

An Account of St Melangell

The *Historia divae Monacellae* is a rarity, being a Latin Life of a Welsh female saint. It is the only written witness to the cult of Saint Melangell in the remote region associated with her, and the only existing testimony to the rights of sanctuary connected with Pennant Melangell (near Llangynog, Powys).

Without it, there would be only whatever remained of oral tradition and the silent evidence of carved stones and wood. Melangell would be yet another of the many saints whose stories have been lost.

No Welsh life of Melangell survives, though the early oral tradition was Welsh, and some of the documents on which the present Life is based may have been Welsh. Now only the Latin life remains, and it is noteworthy that it makes no claims of miracles attributed to Melangell's relics, which may be why the Shrewsbury Benedictines bypassed her cult centre at Pennant Melangell and went to Gwytherin to fetch Gwenfrewy instead.

The story contained in the *Historia Divae Monacellae* reads like a fairy tale. A powerful prince was hunting a hare in the forest when it darted into a thicket of brambles. His dogs chased it and he followed, and found a beautiful girl praying in a clearing, with the hare boldly looking out from under the hem of her skirt. No amount of urging from the prince would make the dogs seize it.

The girl was Melangell, an Irish princess who had fled from home because she wanted to stay a virgin and serve God, whereas her father wanted her to marry. Until that day, she had spent fifteen years in prayer and contemplation, and Prince Brochwel gave her the land for a nunnery and sanctuary for people and animals forever.

She lived there for thirty-seven years with the hares, through which miracles were performed during her lifetime. After her death, a man who came to the sanctuary intent on rape was

struck down and died, and a warning of God's vengeance on others who might breach the sanctity of the holy place followed.

The *Historia* actually gives the year 604 for her meeting with Brochwel Ysgithrog, but this is unreliable, having been taken from a date given by Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It seems unlikely that there will ever be a definitive answer to the question of her dating, or even of her existence.

There is a similar haziness about Brochwel's dates, as those given for him in the genealogies vary from the middle to the end of the sixth century. His father was Cyngen Glodrydd, supposedly descended from Vortigern, and his mother a saintly daughter of Brychan Brycheiniog. Brochwel was the father of saint Tyssilio by his wife Arddun Benasgell, daughter of Saint Pabo. With these saintly connections, his recognition of Melangell's holiness and his generosity towards her become readily explicable. Brochwel was also fulfilling his responsibilities in Welsh Law, as safe-keeping of virgins was within the king's *nawdd*, or protection.

Historia Divae Monacellae asserts that a grant of perpetual sanctuary was given to Melangell, and that Brochwel's successors, Tyssilio and Cynan, then Tambryd, Curmylk and Durres Claudus, confirmed the sanctuary rights. The later names seem to be unique to the *Historia*, and the Welsh historian Huw Pryce believes that the author had access to an earlier written source at Pennant Melangell which set out the sanctuary rights and included these names. No indication has been found elsewhere that Pennant Melangell had any rights of sanctuary whatsoever, so the *Historia* is the sole extant 'proof' of this claim, and was probably written to assert, and demonstrate the antiquity of, its rights.

The princes of Gwynedd attempted to curb churches' sanctuary rights in the thirteenth century, and the princes of Powys may have

had similar aspirations. Possibly the clerics at Pennant Melangell were attempting to maintain their control over their sanctuary against attempts to wrest it from them. The theme of sanctuary links the various parts of the story, from the hare seeking sanctuary with Melangell to Brochwel granting her lands for a perpetual sanctuary, to warnings for kings and princes against violating sanctuary.

Thomas Pennant's comments about the area's oral traditions - hares being called 'Melangell's lambs' (wyn Melangell) and the locals' refusal

to hunt hares — show that even in the late-seventeenth century, Melangell's story was alive. However, lacking surviving evidence from other sources, the *Historia divae Monacellae* is extremely important, being the only written testimony to Melangell's cult. Furthermore, in the absence of any corroboration elsewhere as to the rights of sanctuary at Pennant Melangell, it is a unique written statement that such rights existed, which was probably its author's main purpose.

Rhian Rees

“Please inform the cook ...”

“... that there will be eight for dinner tomorrow night. We will need 8 gallons of wine and 6 gallons of ale. She will need to roast a swan and prepare, geese, capons and woodcock; not forgetting the salmon, sturgeon and eels. Use some of those new spices, but not too many, they are extremely expensive. Put some saffron in the custard to dye it a bright yellow colour and try to make one of the new blanc mang we heard about.

“Some vegetable pottage will do for the kitchen staff.”



Witch Hunt – The Field Guide

First of all, you need to find yourself a witch. Living as you do in the medieval era, you will most likely find that your ideal candidate is a widowed, older women who practices herbal remedies. In fact, around 80% of the witches hunted during this time are women.

But, what is a witch exactly? It is believed that they were heretics and in league with the devil. The typical life of a witch would be to curse those who have wronged them, allow their familiars, like a cat or dog, to suck on their blood in order to contact the devil, and gather in groups in forests under nightfall, naked, to sacrifice animals. Once you have found a possible candidate, you need to find sufficient evidence to prove that they are a witch. To begin the process, all that is required is a neighbour's accusation, which may go along the lines of ...

‘I refused to let her shelter in my house when it was raining, later that day my son died of mysterious causes.’

Next, proof needs to be found on the witch herself, a mark that reveals her true nature. It may be a deformity, a hairy birthmark or even a third nipple. A confession may be extracted by torture. Now, it is the time for persecution in the Church or Feudal court. The judge will either test if she is really a witch, or sentence her to death. Tests will be either dunking the witch in a river, burning at the stake, or by hanging her. If your witch survives, then she is a confirmed witch, but if she does not survive then she has passed the test. Unfortunately, your candidate is already dead. Good luck with your witch hunting!

Hayley Simmons



Neath Abbey (John Ashley)

Were Monasteries Community Centres?

Challenged to justify the inclusion of monasteries in an historical treatment of community centres, a conference project of the branch, the writer has gone back to his sources. This has included Acts of the Apostles, the Desert the Fathers, St Benedict, St Symeon and Domesday!

Hitherto minded to be sympathetic to the monastic cause [the unappealing character of Henry VIII was a factor], I now have doubts!

There could be no escaping the fact, as entry after entry in Domesday presented evidence enough, that in 1086 many an abbot had assets enough to live the life of Riley. Did this invalidate

my claim that the monasteries were community centres?

Early in Domesday the holdings of the Abbey of St Augustine in Canterbury are listed. Its antiquity [founded by Augustine in 597] and the fact that, as a perpetual corporation, its bequests, variously given out of guilt, fear, and genuine love for God, had vastly accumulated, was clearly a factor. But the intentions of the very first monastic pioneers had made clear that the purpose of retreating to a community, with a distinctive rhythm of life, was to enable the monks to serve a wider community, by offering prayer on its behalf, by providing hospitality, welfare and education.

Symeon could not have been more explicit:

'...Visit the sick, console the distressed, and do not make your longing for prayer a pretext for turning away from anyone who asks for your help, for love is greater than prayer...' (1)

This did not seem to be a picture of the Domesday monastery. The Abbey's estates yielded an annual income in the order of a third of a million pounds, by today's reckoning, though some calculations would put the figure much higher. Illustrative is the entry in respect of Minster:

'... vii The Land of the Church of St Augustine in Thanet, the Hundred of St Mildred. The abbot himself holds MINSTER, a manor which is assessed at 48 sulungs. There is land for 62 ploughs. In demesne are 2 [ploughs]; and 150 villans with 50 bordars have 63 ploughs. There is a church, a priest who gives 20s a year. There is one salt pan, and 2 fisheries rendering 3d and 1 mill. TRE it was worth £80, when the abbot received it, £40; now £100. Of this manor, 3 knights hold as much of the villans' land as is worth £9 when there is peace in the land and there they have 3 ploughs.' (2)

In essence, here is an extensive territory, roughly the size of a later rural deanery and larger than a parish. In all, it required 62 ploughs, each with eight oxen. Apart from the abbot's men needed to exploit the untenanted portion and supervise the manor, the population, including families and dependent would surely have reached four figures. Though admittedly, this was probably the largest asset, after the monastery itself, it was but one of 39 abbey estates.

Estimated by D. Knowles, about a sixth of the actual revenue in England was in the hands of monasteries. It is palpably clear that the monasteries' 'good works' were not limited to the activities cited by Benedict and Symeon but were more akin to modern investment banks. Notwithstanding, as comfortably noted by Janet Burton, charity to the poor, sick and needy remained ...

'... an important function ... and most almoners had a separate income which was used to care for both casual and long-term indigent, sometimes within the monastery or nunnery and sometimes outside...at Canterbury, Abingdon and Evesham...it was the custom of the almoner to visit the poor and sick in their homes ...' (3)

Further, her testimony seems to offer the clincher:

'... Monasticism now embraced a much wider range of ideals and practices which had fused the eremitical spirit of primitive monasticism with the concept of community-for monasticism is, perhaps above all-about community ...' (4)

Now, where does that leave the case for including monasteries in a study of 'community centres'?

That their purpose had been obscured by increasing wealth, greed and temporal cares, meriting shortly after Domesday, a fundamental refocusing on a simpler life, does not detract from their institutional character: the monasteries were most assuredly not only significant centres of community but were a dominant part of the wider community, whether they sought to aid it or exploit it.

The probability is that it was much of both. For the present, then, the writer is minded to leave the monasteries in the historical catalogue of community centres ...

Robert McCloy

References

- (1) Philokalia, Practical Texts, para. 143.
- (2) Domesday Book, folio 12v Kent, a sulung constituted 2 hides, a hide was roughly a hundred medieval acres, each approximately the size of a cricket pitch, whilst TRE was the abbreviation for 'In King Edward's Time'.
- (3) Burton, J, 'Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300', p. 173.
- (4) Burton, p. 264.

... in 1086 many an abbot had assets enough to live the life of Riley.

The Role of the Church in the Lives of Medieval People

In an age beset with famine, pestilence and violence, and the general belief that mankind was surrounded by the malevolent forces of evil, it was a natural reaction to turn to religion for comfort and protection in this world and in the faith that adhering to its principles would lead to eternal joy in the next.

Every village had a church; often the church had developed from a hermit's cell and the villages had formed around these nuclei.

The medieval church saw itself as the head of mankind, and its role as providing direction and rule to society. The church was omnipresent in European life, fulfilling many of the functions of the modern state. It dispensed justice through its courts to all its clerics.

It has been estimated that the ratio of clerics to laymen in the medieval period was ten times higher than today, and it has been suggested that in 1200, the number of clerics in England amounted to 5.6 percent of the adult population. T

hey ruled on disputes in matters concerning marriage, divorce and bequests, exercised exclusive control on education and book production, and provided care for the old, the sick, and the poor.

The significance of religion and its attendant institutions in medieval society was central to every aspect of life, at every social level.

The medieval church building, often the only stone building in a rural village, has been described as 'God's stronghold on earth', its

function providing protection and shelter within its walls.

Medieval congregations saw their church as the repository of divine energy, radiating from God, the church's particular saint, and other holy relics in the church's possession. This holy energy banished evil, and even in death protected those interred within its precincts and especially those whose status allowed burial within the walls of the building itself.

To medieval man, life was a battlefield where

Satan and his minions were in unceasing conflict against God and his saints for dominion over mankind. A twelfth-century, widely-held belief was that the Mass itself was a battle with the devil, led by the priest acting as Christ's deputy, whose vestments represented holy armour; his task, to lead his people to

salvation.

This pragmatic view of religion might be expected from a largely illiterate population, often led by clergy whose training was of doubtful quality. Priests were often from the communities they served, and would have been swayed by popular convictions, possibly tinged by ancient folklore. It is of little wonder that twelfth-century bishops seized on the support of the Augustinian canons as 'an effective means of making good the deficiencies of a notoriously lax and poorly educated secular clergy'.

To a medieval community, their church would have been both theatre and school.

In the largely rural population of Western Europe, even comparatively wealthy farmers

To medieval man, life was a battlefield where Satan and his minions were in unceasing conflict against God and his saints for dominion over mankind.

would have lived in dark, smoke-filled, windowless houses, often sharing their accommodation with their animals.

By contrast, the churches' walls were covered with colourful depictions of subjects from the Bible and from the lives of the saints. They were illuminated by the miracle of stained-glass windows, and furnished with carved representations of the saints.

According to the historian F D Logan, the whole would be surmounted, not merely by a cross, 'but a cross with the body of the dead Christ, the emphasis on his physical suffering and humanity'.

Congregations would have been in awe, and would, in time, have gained a bond of familiarity with the stories that accompanied these dazzling features of their church. It is understandable that with such a building in the centre of their community, it would have become a focal point of the individual lives of its congregation.

The major events of their lives, from baptism through marriage and committal after death, would take place within its shadow. The years of their lives would similarly be marked by the passing of the church's festivals and saints' days.

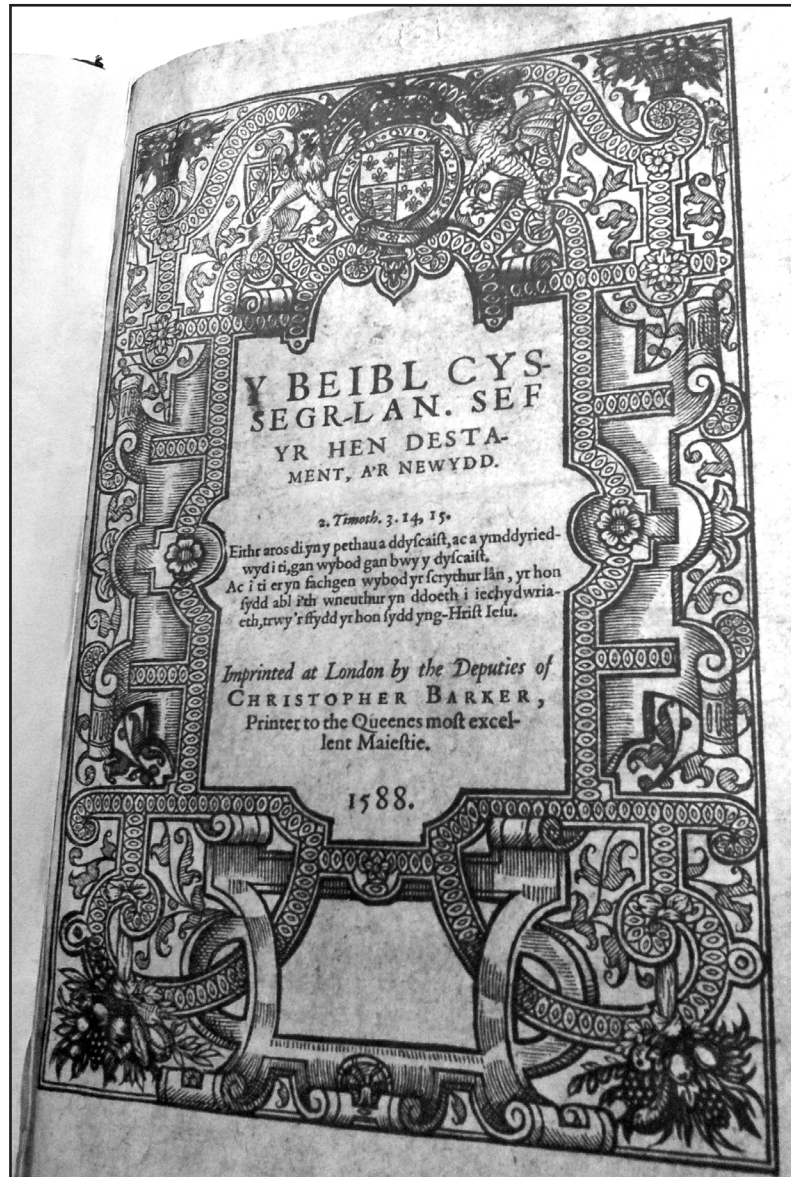
The spectacle of the Mass, especially after Transubstantiation was made dogma at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, meant that congregations were now regular witnesses to this miracle occurring in their own church.

For many whose lives were gruelling, monotonous and comfortless, this sacred spectacle would have been of profound relevance and comfort.

It is clear that Christianity was of enormous significance to medieval society at every level, from the king to his serfs.

The Church matched the authority of secular leaders; indeed it was the only truly international corporate organisation of its day.

Its presence was felt from small rural villages to the cathedrals of Europe's leading cities.



In the words of historian Morris Bishop, 'the Church was, in sum, more than the patron of medieval culture; it was medieval culture'.

Peter E Rees

Photo: Welsh Bible at Lampeter (Margaret McCloy)

The Rise and Impact of Higher Education 1050–1215

The development of education throughout Europe during the period from 1050 to 1215 was quite phenomenal as not only did the character of the educational institutions develop, but there was also innovation in the range and specialisation of the subjects that were offered to the students.

The natural progression of this revival of learning during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the development of a more advanced type of educational establishment: the intellectual and the institutional revolution developed together.

However, the circumstances that led to schools evolving into universities and the early progression of such institutions remain unclear. Yet there is evidence that as the early universities developed, they became independent corporations and autonomous within the church system.

The creativity and vitality that occurred on many levels in medieval European society during the tenth to the fourteenth centuries were also present in the education institutions including the university.

The creativity that was reflected in the growth of the educational institution was also achieved in the standing of many of its teachers.

The achievements of medieval intellectuals were considerable, with their work based on the Greek and Roman concepts of mankind and the world, with a Christian perspective. Consequently, the revival in 'the classics' also brought renewed interest in the ancient languages, especially Greek and Latin, with the

knowledge of Latin becoming a basic essential in medieval Europe.

The emergence of the schools studying canon and civil law between 1088 and 1150 was fundamental to the development of Bologna. Bologna became an outstanding academic centre for law, as did Paris for the arts and theology.

These and along with other schools of logic, law and theology gradually grew into universities. The masters at the universities taught the entire seven liberal arts, which consisted of

the trivium, that is, grammar, rhetoric and dialectic, as well as the more advanced quadrivium which included arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music.

Some universities developed from offshoots of established institutions, the most

famous being Oxford, which allegedly grew from a migration from Paris in 1167. Cambridge in its turn developed university status from Oxford in 1209.

While many cathedral schools did not develop into universities, there was the development of clerical centres of learning such as York, London, Salisbury and Lincoln and with Canterbury, Exeter and Hereford during the twelfth century. They were financially supported by beneficiaries and their educational leaders were bishops and chancellors.

In Germany and Spain, the learning institutions were monasteries, friaries, cathedral schools and the aristocratic courts of Castile and Aragon. The lack of universities in Spain and Germany encouraged the migration of many

The achievements of medieval intellectuals were considerable, with their work based on the Greek and Roman concepts of mankind and the world, with a Christian perspective.

Spanish and German scholars to universities like Paris and Bologna, although some of the most distinguished scholars in Europe including Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas were schooled at German institutions.

One of the achievements of the higher education system at this time was the level of education that would result in intellects that could construct legal frameworks which would influence future politics for generations. The expansion of higher education was important



Countries in Scandinavian eastern Europe and the Celtic regions had also not established universities, so indigenous students would have to travel if they wanted to study for a higher education.

The vitality of some of medieval Europe's finest and enquiring minds enabled the curriculum to expand from the narrow scholasticism to a broader range of studies incorporating law and logic.

An important factor in expanding the curriculum was the ability of scholars like Peter Abelard, who ignored religious prejudice to study and use knowledge gained from Muslim scholars in Spain and Sicily. This resulted in the exact sciences of mathematics, astronomy and medicine becoming available to western Christian students.

The specialisation of certain subjects had a very real impact on the medieval world. The refinement of the legal training for clerks became essential as the necessity to use written accounts and documents became increasingly important. This was needed as the achievement of developing the system of Roman and canon law created layers of bureaucracy throughout the power structures of Europe.

for the economic as well as social growth of medieval Europe.

From an economic view, new industries such as printing and paper making grew up around the ever increasing education system and new career opportunities were forged.

The social impact was more profound, for as education throughout Europe became institutionalised, increasing numbers of students travelled from different parts of Europe to participate and learn from a common cultural and educational experience. The mix of students from different cultures gave the institutions an international atmosphere and encouraged a cosmopolitan culture.

Many foreign students would return home after finishing their studies, with the more successful attaining important political and ecclesiastical positions in their homelands.

This mobility of education and intellectual transitions would have encouraged parallel expansion throughout the countries of Europe, unifying their intellectuals and bureaucrats with a common experience.

Karmen Thomas

St David's Trip, 28 June 2013



An account of the Historical Association's trip to St David's cathedral built in 1181 in Pembrokeshire on the most westerly point of Wales; and is, some say, the burial place of Gerald of Wales in 1223.

The coach arrived in LC2 car park, looking like something out of Toy town, bright yellow with 'Cymru Coaches' emblazoned on the side and immediately was nicknamed affectionately as the 'Yellow Peril'.

Even though I had paid for my seat, I had an offer from Colin our hard working executive Secretary, who, because he had given up his seat to another member, offered me the opportunity

to accompany him to St David's in his very upmarket horseless carriage, an offer which I readily accepted.

On arrival at the cathedral, we were met by the very reverend Bishop of St David's who showed us around the cathedral for a very informed and sometimes humorous presentation. I have sung in the choir in St David's cathedral on many occasions and I am always amazed, as many as the trip were, by the contradicting angles of pillars, walls, floors and many other vital supports. Looking at the building's exterior the perpendiculars are correct, as they should be, but there is a safety examination every three months because of the stringent rules.

The bishop stressed how much we owe to the Victorians who did much work to improve and sustain the decaying structure of the cathedral, preserving such an incredible place for worship today and for the future generations to worship, marvel and enjoy, as I have for many years past and, I hope to come.

After Lunch in the refectory the group departed for Tenby where Colin and I enjoyed refreshments in a local hostelry. We made for home, passing the 'Yellow Peril' coach on the way back, we waved but there was no response. It was a wonderful day out, inspirational and very enjoyable.

Sid Kidwell Citizen Historian.



Wallace Day



On Saturday 15th June the Branch joined with Neath Antiquarian Association and others to celebrate the centenary of the death of Alfred Russel Wallace, co-founder with Charles Darwin of the Theory of Evolution Natural Selection.

Following the very successful talks a plaque commemorating the event was presented to Neath Town Council by George Beccaloni, Natural History Museum Curator. In the evening the dinner was well attended. See the branch website, www.haswansea.org.uk, for photos.

Chronicle 3

We are looking for articles telling of Christmas's past from AD 1 onwards. A hundred words or 800 words, all copy welcome by the middle of October.

If you don't enjoy writing, just email **margaret.mccloy@sky.com** and she will edit it for you. Copy by the end of November please.

We would also welcome letters from our readers that we can print. Also please e-mail Margaret with ideas of what you would like to see featured in future editions. We hope you enjoyed this first one and the editor would welcome your comments.

Local History . . . Live! 2013

The third **Local History . . . Live!** will take place on Saturday 12 October in the National Waterfront Museum. The exhibitors will be in the main hall, with overflow in the gallery.

The centre piece this year is the **60 Second Show and Tell**. A stage will be set up in the centre of the main hall. Contributors are given 60 seconds maximum to showcase their object and describe its use and importance. There will be a chair to ensure timekeeping and fair play, and to ring a bell at time out.

Steph Mastoris, Director of the Museum, and Industrial Curator Ian Smith will chair the show and provide expert commentary. Swansea Museum will bring along a selection of 'touching objects', and I have a feeling they will be a source of mystery objects too! All will be in a spirit of good fun to engage existing and new visitors in local history events. Bring your objects on the day to amaze and mystify.

Exhibitors are welcome – there is no charge. Contact John Ashley, john@globespinner.net or 0770 990 788 to book space.

John Ashley

Letters

The face of public history in Swansea has been enormously enhanced over the past few years by the activities of the revived and rejuvenated Historical Association. Now we have the Chronicle to record their deeds and deliberations, with every prospect that it will continue to go from strength to strength.

**Chris Williams, Professor of History and
Head of the School of History,
Archeology and Religion at Cardiff
University.**

Many thanks for the Chronicle, which I picked up yesterday. I've dipped in and it looks most interesting and instructive.

I shall read it all with relish (but don't fancy the recipe).

**Professor Anthony Lentin, Wolfson
College, Cambridge**

White Rock - Connected Communities

The White Rock site was cleared of excess vegetation by Swansea Council in the 1990s. Since then it has been allowed to deteriorate, resulting in some places being inaccessible (notably the Smith Canal) and damage to stonework. CADW last surveyed White Rock in 2004, when it was found to be in a 'worsened condition'. Before and after aerial photos are on the web site Clearance page.

We are working with CADW and Swansea Council to clear the White Rock site to its 1990s condition. Our vision is the 'Park' in Industrial Heritage Park.

Scheduled Monument Consent is required to carry out any work on the site including placing QR posts and dog bins, with only minor exceptions. This includes work on the river bed, even removing the supermarket trolley in the dock! A survey of access routes and SMC permission will be required for vehicle access during clearance. The council is already cutting paths through the grass, leaving attractive meadowland between. We hope to start work in the autumn, when SMC has been obtained.

The White Rock team will contribute to Swansea Open Houses, 14/15 September, with at least one guided walk. The Connected Communities Exhibition for all six projects runs from September to November in the National Waterfront Museum.

The Digital Trails app is in beta testing. We have identified the waypoints for the White Rock Trail and have the first pass at interpretation via the app. Interpretation so far uses text and images. This will be developed to include audio and video.

New volunteers are welcome. Have a look at the web site, email me or phone to talk about the work that to be done. We particularly need more research in the oral and other archives, and there are opportunities to collect new oral histories.

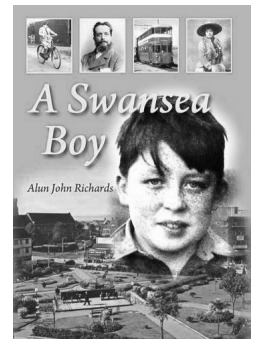
www.whiterocktrails.org john@globespinner.net, 0770 9900 788

John Ashley

Books

A Swansea Boy by Alun John Richards. Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, £7.50.

Alun John Richards is a retired engineer and aviator, author of a large number of books on slate in Wales, and passionate Welshman. Now in his eighties he has turned his hand to write his own story from, "... times when we had less information but were better informed, had fewer time saving devices but had more time, when shops had less variety but more choice."



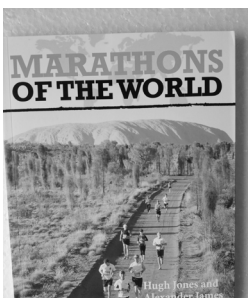
Richard's father was 'in business', a wholesale grocer with employees and vehicles. In the first part of the book Richards paints a picture of growing up in a middle class family between the wars in Swansea (not that they knew they were between anything) . There are stories of daily life, household management, religion, shopping, recreation, school, cinema, cafés, and the ultimate mystery – girls.

Richards also writes about his holiday stays with his mother's family in West Dereham. Throughout the Wales and Norfolk parts of the book the characters in his family are recognisable. Most readers will have moments when they say, "My Aunt Gertie was just like her!"

Richards has not relied just on his own memories. He has followed them up in Swansea, Carmarthen and Norfolk Archives, and contemporary newspapers, to fill in and I am sure at times to correct his childhood recollections. There are substantial descriptions of business and trade that would have passed by a small boy.

The result is a fascinating social history, necessarily selective but representative of the period and the mood. The story ends with Richard's entry to the fray at the start of World War 2. I hope he continues the story to the post-war fifties and the evolution of Wales after yet another great war.

John Ashley



Marathons of the World

*Hugh Jones and
Alexander James*

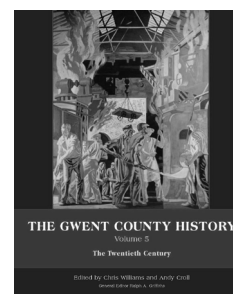
*New Holland Publishers
(UK), £14.99*

If you've walked around the Gower Peninsular and still feel full of energy, how about running in a marathon? If you don't know where to start, try this book of Marathons around the World. It gives in depth details of 50 different marathons, race details, how to apply, difficulty ratings and what to see when you get there. Or, it's a beautifully illustrated book just to sit in an armchair and read.

The Gwent County History

*Ralph Griffiths, Chris
Williams and Andy Croll.*

*University of Wales Press,
£65.*



An essential read for all Welsh historians, it is the fifth and final volume and spans the history of Gwent in the the 20th century.

It is edited by Chris Williams and the General Editor is our president Ralph A. Griffiths.

The chapter on Changes in Local Government is written by another HA member, Robert McCloy.

HA Swansea Branch Programme

17 August 2013

Richard Turner (Cadw), **The Medieval Cult of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.**

21 September 2013

The Presidential Lecture by Professor Jackie Eales (President of the HA). **The Campden Wonder of 1662: The Murder and Miraculous 'Deliverance of William Harrison'.**

12 October 2013

Local History ... Live!, The Historical Association's Local History Fair

19 October 2013

The Anniversary Lecture by Professor John France, **Warfare in the Age of the Crusades: A Clash of Contrasts.**

16 November 2013

John Hugh Thomas, **A Swansea Squire: Music Making in 19th-century Swansea.**

21 December 2013

Dr Steph Mastoris (National Waterfront Museum), **History of the Christmas Card.**

All events are at the National Waterfront Museum, 11:00 Saturday, unless otherwise stated.

7 January 2014

Annual General Meeting (members only) followed by a talk.

18 January 2014

Dr Ritchie Wood, **The experiences of South Wales miners within the tunnelling companies in the Great War and the effect on their families at home, and the work of women at home.**

15 February

Dr Nicholas Barley, **Get Off My Land! Aeneas Tacticus and the City-state in Fourth-century Greece.**

15 March 2014

In commemoration of the centenary of the birth of Dylan Thomas, Peter Read presents **Dylan's Day . . .**

11am: **Dylan's Final Journey; a one man play of Dylan Thomas's last days in the USA.**

2pm: **Dylan Thomas at 100.**

16 August 2014

Dr Simon John, **A History of Cricket during the Great War.**

haswansea.org.uk

How to Join

Join at a meeting, or email:
haswansea@gmail.com

Individual membership: £10.
Concessionary membership: £5.
Family (household) membership: £15.
Student (to 30 September 2013): £3

National Membership

Members of the national Historical Association living in the area have automatic branch membership.

www.history.org.uk

Officers and Committee

John Law (Chairman), John Ashley (Vice Chairman), Colin James (Executive Secretary), Ray Savage (Treasurer), Claire Vivian (Membership Secretary), Dave Burrow, Rosemary Crahart, Caroline Franklin, Rosie Gitsham, Royston Kneath, Robert McCloy, Elizabeth McSloy, Eddie Owens, Ian Smith, Karmen Thomas. Representative members: Sid Kidwell (Citizen Historian), Brenig Davies (Friends of Carmarthen County Museum), Robert Leonard (St Mary's Church, Swansea), Irene Thomas (Neath Antiquarian Society).