

# CHRONICLE



Issue 4 Spring 2014

## VICTORIAN ISSUE

**Historical Association, Swansea Branch**

Promoting History in South West Wales

# From the Editor



I started writing this letter seated at a desk in Gladstone's Library in Hawarden, North Wales, surrounded by a wonderful collection of theological, historical, cultural and political books. What better place to introduce the 19th century issue of the Chronicle than in the library of one of Britain's greatest 19thC Prime Ministers.

Besides collecting, cataloguing and arranging books on his shelves, one of Gladstone's odder hobbies was chopping down trees. It provided perhaps a practical way to vent his aggression against Disraeli and other politicians? When not hacking down oaks, his passion was for reading and by his own estimate he had read 20,000 books from his collection of over 32,000.

Just imagine that when Gladstone died in 1898 he still had twelve thousand books in his collection still to read. Much influenced by the classics, Homer and Dante it is claimed that when Winston Churchill discovered this fact he snorted

'They told me Mr Gladstone read Homer for fun, which I thought served him right'

Hopefully, you will find Chronicle's wide-ranging collection of articles, all covering the 19th century both fun to read and of interest. Our next issue will focus on Classical times, the Greeks and their great 'fun' poet Homer, the Romans and the Egyptians.

This issue of Chronicle has many interesting articles varying from The Merthyr Rising, Pembrokeshire slate mines and the life of the exotic poet Ann of Swansea and even though Burns died four years short of the 19th century he has been included to remind us off the great Burn's night supper that we enjoyed earlier this year, hosted by our kilt wearing chairman.

Must stop writing now and leave magnificent Hawarden, I shall go, pack my Gladstone bag and make my way back to Swansea.

**Margaret McCloy**

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Cover: Bluebells in Penllergare Woods (John Ashley)

# Nineteenth Century Facts

- 1801** The Kingdom of Great Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland merge to form the United Kingdom.
- 1804** World population reaches 1 billion.
- 1806** Lord Nelson is given a state funeral at St Paul's Cathedral, attended by the Prince of Wales.
- 1807** The Mumbles Railway became world's first passenger railway service.
  
- 1813** Jane Austen publishes *Pride and Prejudice*.
  
- 1820** A plot to murder the Cabinet of the United Kingdom, (the Cato Street Conspiracy) is discovered.
- 1822** St David's College, Lampeter (now the University of Wales, Trinity St David) is founded by Thomas Burgess, Bishop of St David's.
- 1823** In Paviland Cave on the Gower Peninsula, William Buckland discovers the 'Red Lady of Paviland', the first identification of a prehistoric (male) human burial.
- 1825** London becomes the largest city in the world, overtaking Beijing (Peking).
  
- 1830** The Liverpool and Manchester Railway opens becoming the world's first intercity passenger railway operated solely by steam locomotives.
- 1831** Coal miners riot in Merthyr Tydfil, for improved working conditions.
- 1832** The British Parliament passes The Representation of the People Act (known informally as the Reform Act). This introduces wide-ranging changes to the electoral system of England and Wales.
- 1833** Slavery Abolition Act bans slavery throughout the British Empire.
  
- 1844** The first electrical telegram is sent by Samuel F. B. Morse from the U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. to Baltimore, Maryland, saying "What hath God wrought?"
- 1848** In London, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels publish *The Communist Manifesto*.
  
- 1859** Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*.
  
- 1860** While campaigning for the presidency, Abraham Lincoln makes a speech defending the right to strike.
- 1863** First section of the London Underground opens.
- 1865** Abraham Lincoln is assassinated while attending a performance at Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C.  
The Christian Mission, later renamed the Salvation Army, is founded in Whitechapel, London by William and Catherine Booth.
- 1868** The Parliament of the United Kingdom passes the Capital Punishment Amendment Act, thus ending public hanging.
  
- 1871** Henry Morton Stanley meets Dr David Livingstone near Lake Tanganyika.
- 1876** Queen Victoria becomes Empress of India.
- 1877** The first Test cricket match is held between England and Australia.
- 1879** Thomas Edison tests his first light bulb.
  
- 1880** William Ewart Gladstone defeats Benjamin Disraeli in the general election to become Prime Minister for the second time.
- 1886** Burma is presented to Queen Victoria as a birthday gift.
- 1888** Jack the Ripper murders occur in Whitechapel, London.
  
- 1896** The Olympic Games are revived in Athens.
- 1898** The British government signs a 99 year lease for Hong Kong from China.

# The Cry For Meaning

This piece has evolved. A recent visit to the library, on a wet Wednesday afternoon, saw me stumble upon a sharp critique of Richard Dawkins by the theologian Alister McGrath. It beckoned from the shelves, reawakening my interest in Darwin and his epic work, *On the Origin of Species*. I had my subject. It seemed a natural selection.

But then, a sudden mutation of the mind. Back home, I remembered a book from 15 years ago that transcended the narrow focus on Darwin to encompass wider issues of faith and doubt. In *God's Funeral*, writer and scholar AN Wilson unfolds the whole, sweeping saga of collective apostasy to which the 19th Century – or, at least, a large portion of its thinkers – fell prey. And yes, there it was on the shelf: a work of intelligent design, ironically enough, correctly identifying the ructions of 1859 as merely one current among many; part of a broad philosophical river which was to lead – randomly or otherwise – into the waters of religion's Dead Sea. There is, as Darwin might say, a grandeur in this view of things.

And pain. The 19th Century was when humanity awoke in its cot, observed the bears and bunnies that had given it such psychological comfort and, deciding that it had finally outgrown them, threw them out. How could it cling to an implausible divinity, it reasoned, when there were more grown-up toys to play with? From the unabashed atheism of Marx, via the smoke-and-mirrors theology of Carlyle – God does not exist, but the myth of him must be preserved at all costs – to the mysticism blowing in from the East, a world of brave new options had become available to the emancipated mind.

At least, that was part of the truth. But history

is narrative, and the tale one tells depends significantly on what one chooses to behold. If doubt was the 19th Century's piped lament, progress was its wedding march. For this was a time when democracy, medicine and material comfort gained their purchase on the lower rungs of the ladder; when literature, art and invention flourished; and when all the great team games of the modern era burst with vigour upon the English-speaking world. Get your

genes round this: the 'God is dead' decades of the late 1800s were also the flowering of La Belle Epoque.

Perhaps the coincidence is precisely that. More likely it is what happens when the Tree of Knowledge grows big enough to overshadow the Tree of Life. Read between

the lines, however, and the rise of religious scepticism presents a clear, quiet warning that echoes down the years: in a contest between reason and longing, the latter currency trades higher every time. Charles Darwin, exposed to the full revelation of Nature's brutal indifference – its unflinching habit of consigning whole species to oblivion – did not regard his scientific findings as unequivocally betokening the non-existence of God. It took the death of his adored eldest daughter, Annie, to underpin his intellectual scepticism and coat it with a darker shade of grey. Grief experienced trumps a thousand griefs observed.

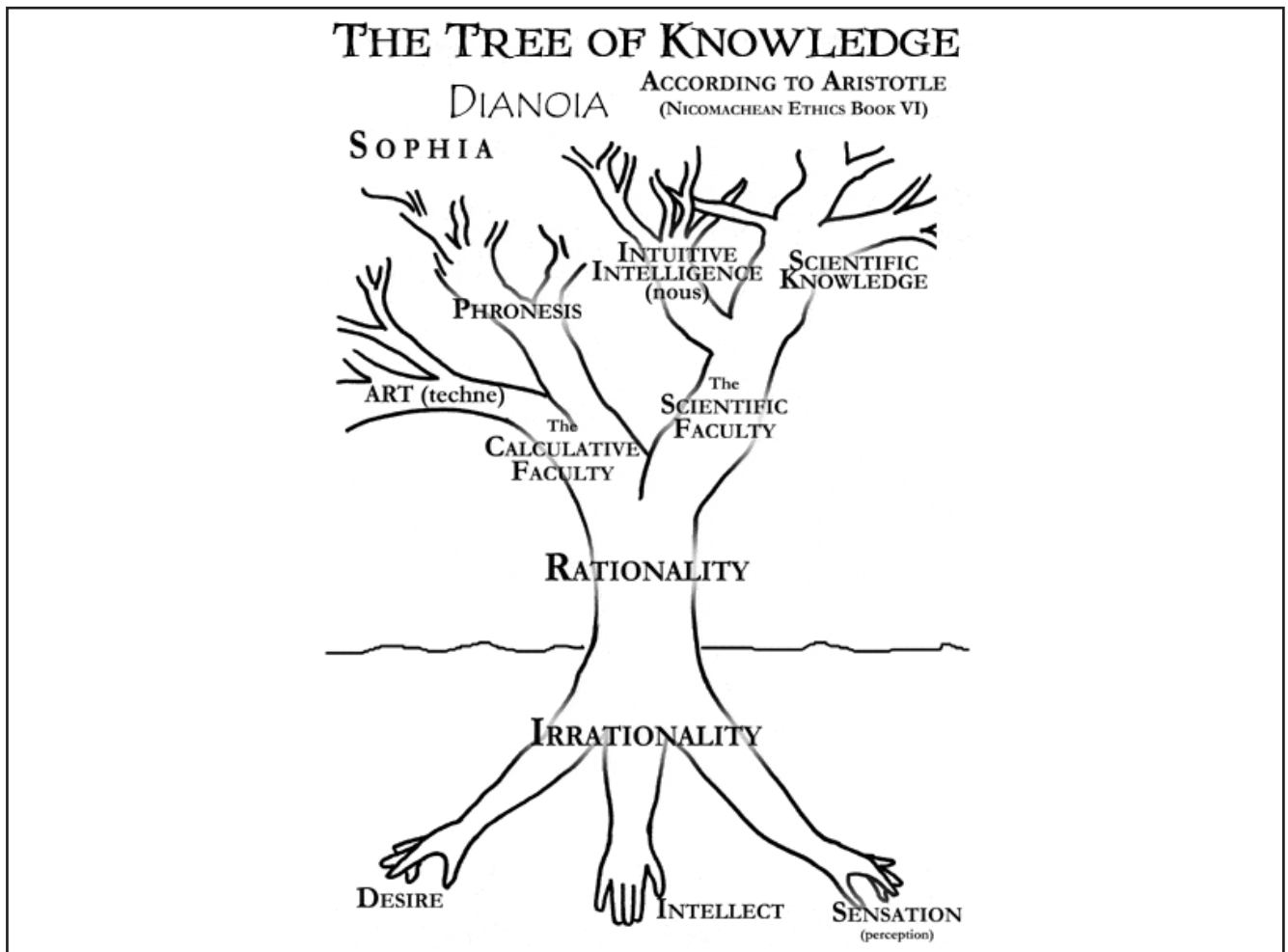
Thomas Hardy, the apostle of rage against religious hypocrisy and repressive social mores, retained a fondness for the aesthetic beauties and seasonal rhythms of the Christian faith, long after faith itself had departed. Late in life, with the ashes of *Jude the Obscure* now cold in the Bishop of Wakefield's angry grate, he would frequently attend church three times

***The 19th Century was when humanity awoke in its cot, observed the bears and bunnies that had given it such psychological comfort and, deciding that it had finally outgrown them, threw them out.***

on a Sunday. In God's Funeral – the poem that furnishes Wilson's book with its title – the Wessex master pronounced the death of the deity. Yet this was the same man who, in *The Oxen*, melted willingly into the sentimental glow of the past, recalling an ancient superstition about the animals kneeling on Christmas Eve

of romance, but it also chimes eerily with the general sense of existential loss:

*But – after love what comes?  
A scene that lours,  
A few sad vacant hours,  
And then, the Curtain.*



in reverence for Christ. Deep into his 70s, literature's doubting Thomas pondered the old story, "hoping it might be so".

Pascal's famous claim that "the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of" may be strictly unintelligible, but Hardy's sentiment and Darwin's despair bear witness to something similarly profound: a thirst for meaning in the order of things that no reasoned rebuttal can quench.

This cry for meaning, rising above the march of progress – a plaintive treble over a pounding bass – was the soundtrack of the century. It was heard everywhere, from *Dover Beach* to *Starlit Stonehenge*. He *Abjures Love*, another Hardy offering, is a valediction to the illusory beauty

We know, of course, how the story ends. What Eric Hobsbawm called the Long Nineteenth Century (1789 – 1914), with its twin motifs of dynamism and doubt, was swept to its bitter end by the swift, treacherous currents of the Marne, the Aisne and the Somme. After that, no doubt remained that Darwin's pitiless universe was at hand. Contrary to rumour, God was not dead; but from now on, his advocates were on notice to sharpen up the case for the defence. The old complacent certainties were gone, sunk in a lost world of mud; and in all the sad shires of England, the closing of Hardy's curtain had become the drawing-down of blinds.

**Richard Nye**

# The Nineteenth Century

What a remarkable century! The C19 was one that saw practically every aspect of daily life improve for almost everyone. It was the century that saw 'industry' change the way we lived, worked and spent our leisure time.

The world both expanded, as lands were discovered and kingdoms created, and shrank as thanks to the growth of the British Empire and the opening of trade routes a wide array of new and exciting wares began to arrive in Europe. In London, Liberty's department store opened to display and sell the exotic fabrics, furniture and object d'art that began appearing from the tropics and the Far East. London Zoo opened with the objective 'to interest, educate and amuse the public' and soon boasted the most extensive collection of animals in the world. A zebra and giraffe, both gifts from Egypt, were seen for the first time in Europe since Roman times. The Great Exhibition provided a superb mid-century display case for trade, industry and the arts. Significantly, items purchased after the exhibition provided the nucleus of the foundation collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Advances in science and medicine ensured a healthier population lived longer. London was the capital of the British Empire, becoming the world's leading power, controlling one quarter of the world's population and one fifth of the total land area.

Travel expanded in a remarkable way and became accessible to vastly greater numbers. Railways took us further and got us there faster. Sea travel became commercially viable, new trade routes opened up and great wealth was brought to coastal cities that exploited such connections. Advances in telecommunications meant that adjoining towns, then countries,

then continents could communicate readily with one another.

Elementary education became compulsory, Universities were founded, libraries and museums were opened and a fairer system of rights and responsibilities for the working classes became the norm. The Reform Act ensured that voting rights were extended beyond the ruling classes. It was the century that saw a gradual acceptance that women had a role to play in society other than of a wife and housekeeper and in 1893 New Zealand became

***London was the capital of the British Empire, becoming the world's leading power, controlling one quarter of the world's population and one fifth of the total land area.***

the first country to enact women's suffrage. At the start of the century the morality of slavery was being openly questioned and challenged.

Gradually opinions changed and laws followed that outlawed this abhorrent practice. Finally by 1865, even in the deep south of the United States where this tradition was most firmly

entrenched, slavery was abolished.

The list of achievements is endless and it is both humbling and inspiring to see what was accomplished during the nineteenth century. It is good to note that Wales played a significant part in many of these accomplishments. In 1807 the Mumbles Railway became the world's first passenger service. In 1842 Sir William Grove, a Swansea scientist became known as 'the father of the fuel cell' for his work developing a technique of combining hydrogen and oxygen. And it was a Welshman, Dr William Price, locally known as 'the eccentric from Llantrisant' and surely one of the oddest men of the times, who by cremating his son in 1884 challenged the established practice of burial and paved the way for the Cremation Act of 1902. For this and the many other contributions from the principality dylen ni fod yn falch, yn falch iawn. (We should be proud, very proud).

# The Merthyr Rising

The period between May and August 1831, beginning in the wider Merthyr Tydfil area, is significant in Welsh History. The two primary concerns in the area were: The Court of Requests; and Parliamentary Reform.

Parliamentary Reform was supported by the Crawshay family, ironmasters in Merthyr, and by many of their workers, including a 23 year old miner called Richard Lewis (known also now as "Dic Penderyn"). It was during a Reform protest that he was among thousands of local workers in the streets of Merthyr, some fighting local special constables in early May 1831.

The special constables were mainly made up of local shopkeepers. Witnesses later claimed that a barber and special constable, called James Abbott, shouted to Lewis that he would "be up with you!" (get his revenge).

Dic Penderyn had joined the campaign in demanding the right to vote for all men (as the campaign was at that time).

The Merthyr Rising happened in June 1831. On the 3rd, a crowd of possibly ten thousand people gathered outside the Castle Inn, having destroyed the house of the president of the Court of Requests.

The Court of Requests was an unpopular system among workers. Workers would go to shops to buy goods and be offered credit. When they could not pay, the shopkeeper would go to the Court of Requests, bailiffs would be sent out and claim the "best goods" from the houses - to the value of the debt and costs - which workers could not lawfully resist. The Rising involved reclaiming goods, which was termed as "theft" in court.

The Rising of 1st June 1831 - from the 5 acre farm home of Lewis Lewis at Blaen Cadlan, near Penderyn, leading into the Merthyr area - was an outpouring of frustration over the Court

of Requests. On the 3rd June, there was a confrontation outside the Castle Inn, in central Merthyr, between thousands of workers and a group of Highland Regiment soldiers sent from Brecon.

The battle resulted in a number of wounded soldiers from beatings, including Donald Black, whose own bayonet had been turned into his own leg by at least one rebel. Richard Lewis was later charged with this – the lead witness being barber James Abbott (who could not have been seen the incident from his position from within

the Castle Inn, as was later demonstrated by witnesses). Around sixteen people

(some not even in the demonstration) were killed by the soldiers firing out into the street from the first floor of the Castle Inn.

Richard Lewis was convicted at Glamorgan Assizes on 9th July and condemned to death, though deferred for the enquiries of Quaker Joseph Tregelles Price, who wrote in two petitions that nineteen witnesses could testify that Richard Lewis had not committed the offence. Even so, Home Secretary, Lord Melbourne (William Lamb), decided that Richard Lewis should hang. The execution was carried out on 13th August 1831. He was buried at St Mary's churchyard, Aberavon the next day and is remembered as

***"Dic Penderyn" a trade union hero and Wales's First Working Class Martyr.***

However, Richard Lewis's funeral was a spark to the explosion of trade unionism from Swansea to Newport in the summer of 1831 that has sustained to the present day.

**Steffan ap-Dafydd**

***A crowd of possibly ten thousand people gathered outside the Castle Inn.***

# Pembrokeshire Slate in the 19th Century

In Pembrokeshire, slate was won at some 100 sites. It was an ancient industry probably begun long before slates from the Eastern Cleddau anecdotally roofed Whitland Abbey in the 12th century. Some worked the sea-cliffs between Whitesands Bay and Llangranog, others the flanks of the Cilgerran Gorge, the rest were at disparate inland sites, on the Eastern, Cleddau, the Taf Valley and elsewhere

By the beginning of the 19th century, slate in north Wales was becoming a major industry with large undertakings developing new methods and about to lay down railed links to ports. In Pembrokeshire it remained fragmented in tiny ephemeral sites, locked onto a near medieval time warp, many sporadically worked on an 'as required' basis.

During the first half of the 19th century some sites such as Porthgain (SM813325) and its associated Trwyllwyd (SM832329), overcame the 'Brand Image' of 'Bangor' and Portmadoc'

roofing slates by installing saws and planers to make less 'brand sensitive' slab and 'added value' items such as tombstones, fireplaces and the like. Summerton (SM992302) even developed their own 'Sawing Machine'.

Cronllwyn (SM985353) had a mechanical saw as did Upper Quarry, Cilgerran (SN203429) and Fforest (SN190450). Sealyham (SM960275) also had a saw but was fairly successful with roofing slate. A number of smaller quarries made slab using the 'Carpenters' frame saw, unique to the area.

Any product not used in its immediate locality was transported by sea but except for the maritime sites and the Cilgerran Gorge quarries which boated down the Teifi to Cardigan, all had a difficult cartage to the coast.

After the arrival of the GWR in the early 1850s, there were some loadings at Narberth Road (now Clarbeston). However the railway chiefly served to bring in slate from north Wales,



A Horse Drawn Cart Carrying Slate In A Landscape, George Morland, 1st Art Gallery



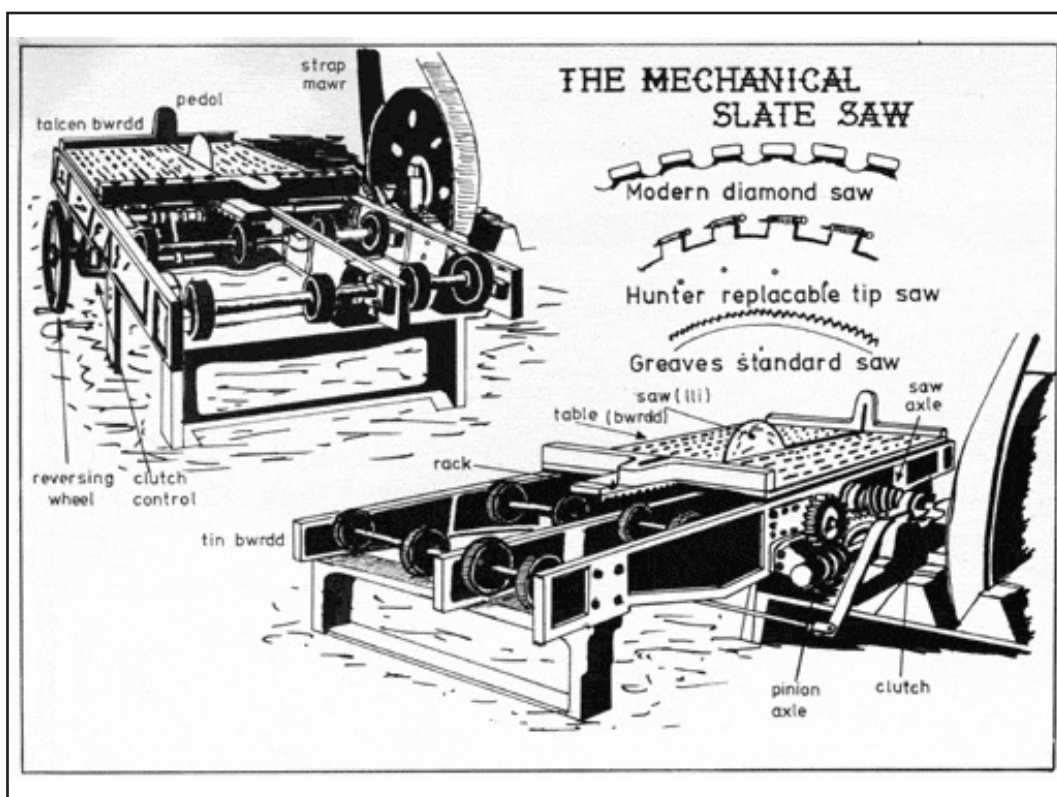
where the two 'Superquarries', Penrhyn and Dinowig were already rail connected and whose vast veins yielded thinner slates in larger sizes than did the Pembrokeshire outcrops.

The big northern producers having made their profit on the larger and better slates, could afford to dispose of at knock-down prices, the smaller and inferior grades that were the typical Pembrokeshire product. In the later decades of the century the slab market was eroded as more and more burials were memorialised with fine headstones in Blaenau Ffestiniog and Machynlleth material.

Maenclochog. Nevertheless the quarry's output more than doubled the Pembrokeshire total, but with slate prices in meltdown, such a scale of production proved unsustainable.

Meanwhile, the 1874 opening of John Owen's Whitland & Taf Valley Railway, enabled him to rapidly develop his Glogue Quarry (SN220328) into a substantial undertaking, it never matched Rosebush in size but survived well into the 20th century.

Other quarry developments made use of the line with limited success. The line's 1884 extension



The 1872 re-gauging of the GWR made branches practicable, the grandest being the Maenclochog Railway by Mancunian Edward Cropper to serve his Rosebush Quarry (SN079300). Terraced in Caernarfonshire style it had a water-powered sawing mill and introduced roofing-slate dressing machines to the area. It was planned to drive these latter from a windmill, but they remained hand-cranked.

He also built 26 cottages, a shop, a manager's house and a pub, Tafan Sinc. The railway's 1877 opening was not auspicious, its first slate cargo being north Wales's slates to roof a chapel at

to Cardigan facilitated the development and mechanisation of Dolbadau (SN19843`), Plain (SN2044429) and Cefn/Pats (SN207431) reinvigorating Cilgerran slate.

Near the end of the century, the Eastern Cleddau quarries working on igneous rock marketed their green slates as a premium product Gilfach (SN128271) and Tyrch (SN145294) being particularly successful dispatching on the Cardigan line at Crymmach Arms.

**Alun John Richards**

# Ann of Swansea



Ann of Swansea, William Watkeys (1835), *Swansea Museum*

**I wonder if any HA members can add any information to what we already know of the nineteenth-century writer 'Ann of Swansea' [1764-1838]?**

Ann Julia was born into the Kemble family of strolling players and her father had a theatre at Brecon. Her elder sister and brother became the famous Shakespearean actors Sarah Siddons

and John Philip Kemble. Ann did not follow them into the profession because she was lame, but this portrait, painted when she was nearly seventy, shows she must have had striking looks despite her smallpox scars.

Strong-minded and intellectual, she was first teased as the eccentric 'genius', then ostracized as the black sheep of the family. Her marriage to

a comedian named Curtis in the early 1780s was revealed to be bigamous, and she subsequently made an unsuccessful suicide attempt in Westminster Abbey.

Ann then supported herself as best she could by publishing poetry and by delivering lectures on 'The Present State and Influence of Women' in the 'Temple of Health', where the quack doctor James Graham treated sexual problems and nervous disorders. The papers reported she was accidentally shot in the eye when working in a bagnio.

***Strong-minded and intellectual, she was first teased as the eccentric 'genius', then ostracized as the black sheep of the family.***

In 1792 she married William Hatton and they travelled to America. Inspired by the French revolution, Ann wrote an 'Ode to Democracy' for the Democratic Society of New York, then a successful libretto for the first American opera to feature a Native American, which was a hit on Broadway.

After a spell in Nova Scotia, the Hattons returned to settle in Swansea in 1799. There Ann would live for the rest of her life, and she adopted the soubriquet 'Ann of Swansea' when she published poetry and a stream of popular novels for the Minerva Press. She often used Welsh settings and characters for a touch of Romantic exoticism.

The Hattons were a driving force in the town's attempt to become the Brighton of Wales, as they ran the bathing house (on the site where the Civic Centre now stands), rented out bathing machines, and provided an assembly room and lodgings for visitors.

After her husband died in 1806, and

industrialism took hold in the town, Ann gave up the bathing house and kept a dancing school in Kidwelly instead. Eventually she returned to Swansea where she lived by her writing, supplemented by a small income from her famous siblings.

It was rumoured that the Kembles stipulated she was not to live within a hundred miles of the capital. She moved in theatrical circles in Swansea, performing and reciting occasionally in local productions. Ann wrote a play Zaffine or the Knight of the Bloody Cross, as a vehicle for the charismatic young Edmund Kean who starred in it in 1810 in the Swansea Theatre Royal in Bank Street (later Temple Street). This was the oldest theatre in Wales and was managed by William Macready in 1819.

Ann is chiefly remembered now for verse collections such as Poetic Trifles (1811) which includes 'Swansea Bay'. Here she depicts herself as a melancholic exile.

*In vain by various griefs opprest,  
I vagrant roam, devoid of rest,  
With aching heart, still ling'ring stray  
Around the shores of Swansea Bay.*

*The restless waves that lave the shore,  
Joining the tide's tumultuous roar;  
In hollow murmurs seem to say –  
Peace is not found in Swansea bay.*

*The meek-eyed morning's lucid beam,  
The pensive moon's pale shadowy gleam  
Still ceaseless urge – why this delay?  
Go hapless wretch from Swansea Bay.*

*Then Kilvey Hill, a long adieu,  
I drag my sorrows hence from you;  
Misfortune with imperious sway,  
Impels me far from Swansea bay.*

Ann Julia Hatton also produced many lively novels and Gothic romances which often included 'Celtic' themes. These are often four or five volumes long and were staples of circulating libraries. You can sample them in Swansea University Library or online via Google Books.

**Caroline Franklin.**

# Book Review

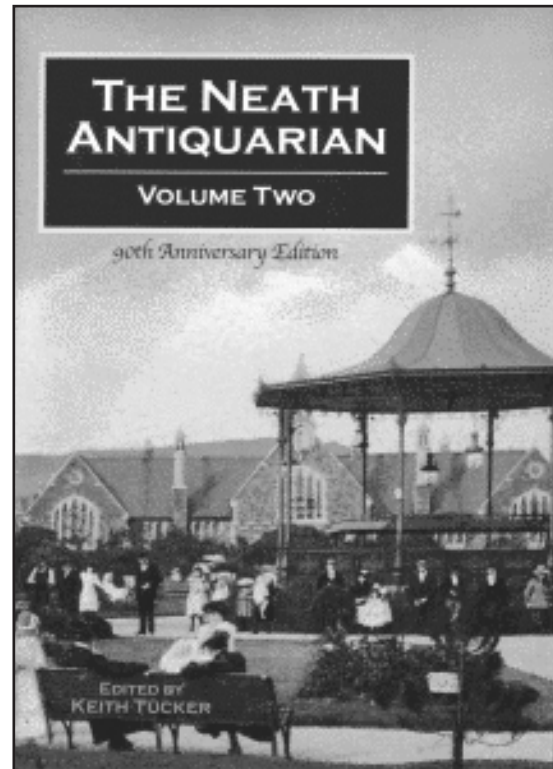
## The Neath Antiquarian Volume 2

The content is varied, ranging from the 'then and now' photographs showing how time and the developers have changed the face of Neath, a poem from the Fifteenth Century on wild bees and honey to a description of the understandably much feared workhouse.

I began with the images of Neath Look how has Altered and progressed to the article The 1907 Neath Town Guide Revisited. This article not only includes reproductions of advertisements from the guide, but includes notes as to what now occupies each site. High Water at Neath seems particularly appropriate at this time of storms and tells of the long-case clocks which gave the times of high water between Milford Haven and Gloucester.

Particularly interesting is the article The Name of Skewen, which gives the possible origin of the name, which has puzzled many people, for a long time. I very much enjoyed this book and would recommend it to anyone with an interest in history, an extremely interesting and enjoyable read.

Rosemary Crahart



On Saturday 18th October. The Swansea Branch of the Historical Association presents

## Stalin, Hitler and Mr Jones

An award winning film that documents the short tragic life and mysterious death of Gareth Jones, an investigative journalist for the Western Mail.

He was a Foreign Affairs Advisor to Lloyd-George in 1930 and in his writings he exposed a famished Russia.

*'A dense, powerful, moving film'* The Guardian.

**Arnold Rosen will talk about Gareth Jones, born in Barry in 1905.**

Besides a showing of the film there will be an exhibition of letters, diaries and other memorabilia of Gareth Jones. An all day session.

# Letter and Book Review

Dear Margaret,

How nice to hear from you.

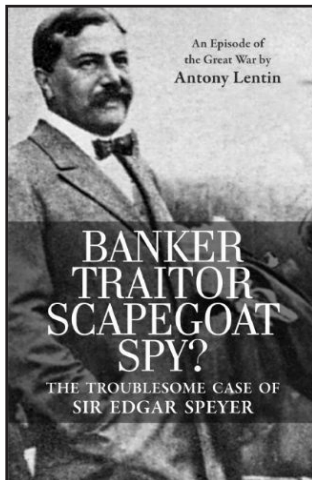
Thank you for your most flattering invitation. I should love to have had a go at the task of summing-up L-G in a nutshell (Keynes: 'Who shall paint the chameleon, who can tether a broomstick? How can I convey to the reader ... any just impression of this extraordinary figure of our time, this syren, this goat-footed bard, this half-human visitor to our age from the hag-ridden magic and enchanted woods of Celtic antiquity?' Bentley Gilbert and then John Grigg tried in all those volumes. Michael Fry (2011) in a massive doorstep tome. And you invite me to do it in 400-800 words!

But I'm snowed under by preparing for Speyer events <http://www.edgarspeyer.co.uk/index.php>

Kind regards,

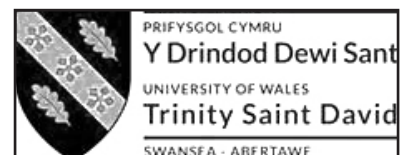
Tony

*Tony Lentin, Senior Member of Wolfson College, Cambridge, is the author of Banker, Traitor, Scapegoat, Spy? The Troublesome Case of Sir Edgar Speyer (Haus Publishing, 2013). Here he explains how he came to write about this now relatively unknown person, born in 1862:*



I had never heard of Sir Edgar Speyer until a few years ago when his name cropped up in connection with another book I was working on at the time. His story intrigued me and I determined to find out more about him. Though largely forgotten today, Speyer turned out to be a big-shot in Edwardian England: a wealthy Anglo-German merchant-banker, who, as chairman of the UERL (Underground Electric Railways Company of London), raised gigantic international loans to finance the construction of the deep tube lines and became known as 'King of the Underground'. A generous philanthropist, he rescued the 'Proms' from bankruptcy and ensured their survival by subsidising them himself. He also organised the fund-raising for both of Captain Scott's expeditions, for the relief of the explorers' dependants and for what became the Scott Polar Research Institute. He was a friend of Prime Minister Asquith, who secured for him a baronetcy and membership of the Privy Council.

***Professor Mike Phillips and his staff at University of Wales TSD, Swansea Metropolitan, wish to congratulate the Swansea Branch of the Historical Association for promoting history in South Wales.***



***A student at Swansea University, Chris Bovis, who got a high calibre PhD funded post at York, told our chairman that what clinched his application was his involvement with the HA and the Museum.***

# Robert Burns

1759 - 1796

Robert Burns was born in Ayrshire. His father was a none-too successful farmer, who brought up his son in the Calvinist faith while securing for him a good education despite circumstances of relative poverty.

Robert was very well read in English, French and Scots. Like his father he worked as a farmer, and from about 1784 began to write poetry.

In 1786 his first collection of poems was published in Kilmarnock, *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. This proved very popular and brought him fame in Edinburgh, the 'Athens of the North' where, known as the 'ploughman poet', he was lionised by the city's literati. Further works were published and he contributed hundreds of

new and re-worked songs to James Johnson's, *The Scots Musical Museum* (1787-1803). Burns had a leading role in what has come to be regarded as one of the finest collections of Scots songs; this has since been reissued by the Folklore Association, Hatboro, Pennsylvania in 1962.

Burns returned to the farming life, but like his father was unsuccessful and in 1792 he and his family moved to Dumfries where, despite some sympathy with the French Revolution he worked for the Excise. He continued to write and to collect from the Scots poetic and lyrical heritage, contributing a great deal of material to George Thomas's *A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs* (1793-1811). Never of good health, but

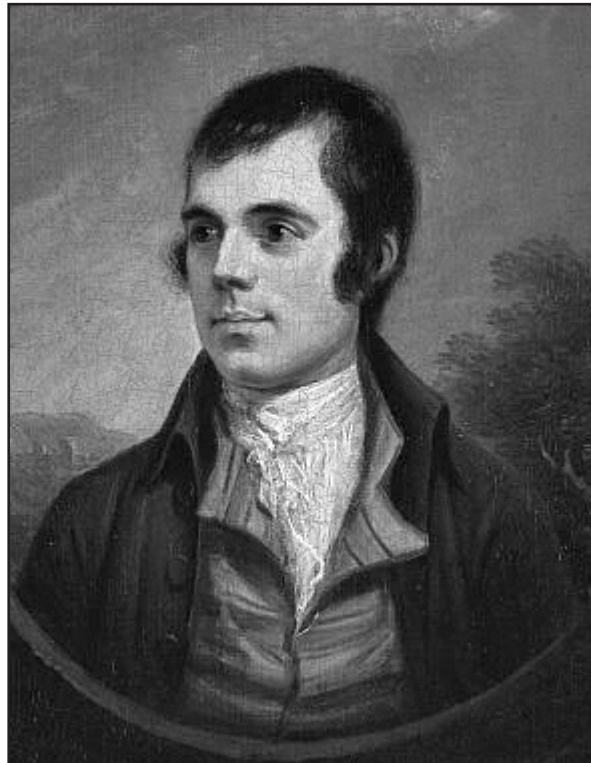
fond of 'good living', he died of rheumatic fever in 1796 aged thirty-seven.

Burns had a turbulent love life which inspired some of his most famous poetry. His poems

and songs were also characterised by sharp social observation, tenderness, humour, a love of nature and storytelling. He appreciated, and drew on, the Scots literary and lyrical tradition writing in English, 'light' Scots and Lowland Scots. For the historian, of particular interest are his patriotism, his nostalgia for the Jacobite cause and Scottish independence, and his contacts with the 'Scottish Enlightenment'. A friend of the pioneering antiquarian Francis Grose (1730-1791), Burns's famous

poem *Tam o' Shanter* was included in Grose's account of the haunted church at Alloway (Ayrshire) in his *Antiquities of Scotland* (1791).

Despite never leaving Scotland, after his death Burns quickly acquired international fame. In 1803, William Wordsworth was inspired to write 'At the Grave of Burns', and a poetic form associated with him came to be called the 'Burns Stanza'. Settings of his songs were composed, amongst others, by Haydn, Beethoven and Weber. His iconic portrait by his friend and contemporary Alexander Nasmyth (1780-1840) was widely reproduced. Civic monuments were erected in his honour in Kilmarnock, Edinburgh and elsewhere. His life and work inspired distinguished painters like



David Wilkie (1785-1841); the centenary of his death brought with it sculptural commissions from New York to Dunedin.

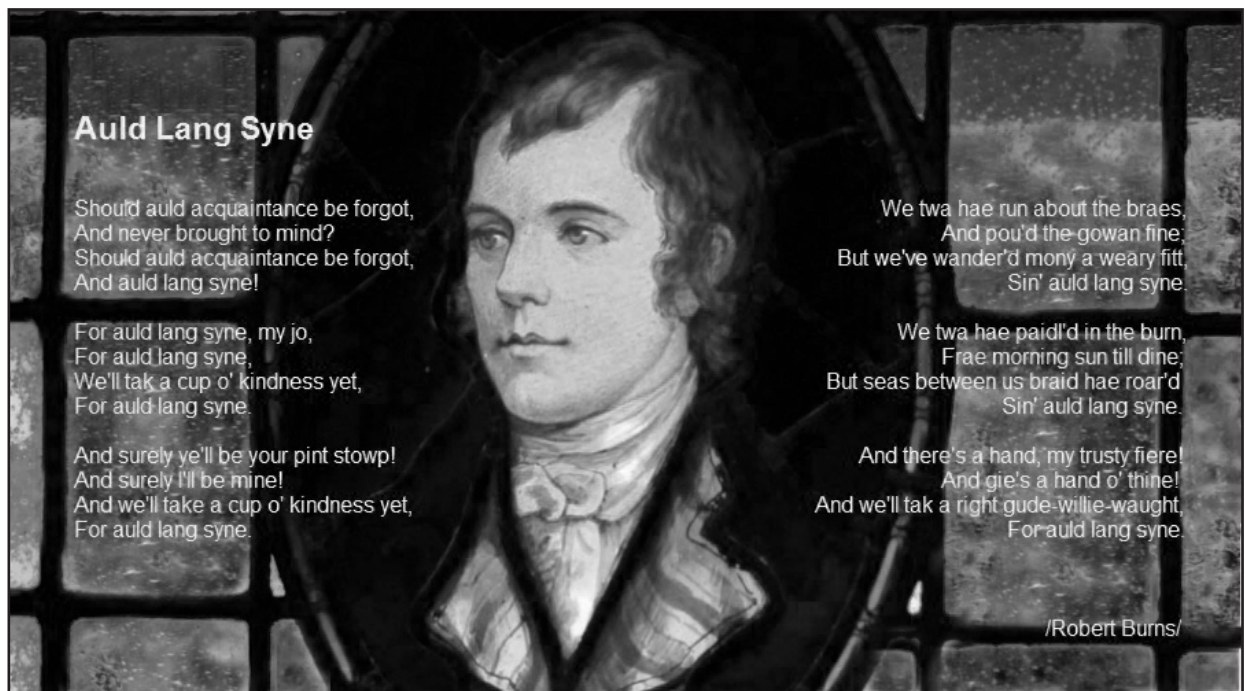
On a more popular and affordable level, Burns's work has been depicted in Staffordshire figures, brass ware, Mauchlineware and treen. He is a mainstay of the heritage industry in Ayrshire and beyond. His poetry and songs are constantly being recited, performed and recorded. The poet's memory is also sustained by the Burns Suppers held annually in his honour in Scotland and around the world. In

***"The best laid plans o' mice  
and men gang aft aglay."***  
**Robert Burns**

Russia, Canada, South Africa and Japan his memory is celebrated, his verse recited and his songs sung. A wide-ranging source on the poet's work, life, times and legacy can be found in Maurice Lindsay's Burns Encyclopedia (1959), a revised edition of which is available on-line.

The Swansea Branch of the Historical Association held a Supper on 24 January in the fine surroundings of Sketty Hall. A provisional booking has been made for 23 January 2015.

**John Law**



**Address To The Toothache**

My curse upon your venom'd stang,  
That shoots my tortur'd gums along,  
An' thro' my lug gies mony a twang,  
Wi' gnawing vengeance,  
Tearing my nerves wi' bitter pang,  
Like racking engines!

When fevers burn, or argues freezes,  
Rheumatics gnaw, or colics squeezes,  
Our neibor's sympathy can ease us,  
Wi' pitying moan;  
But thee-thou hell o' a' diseases-  
Aye mocks our groan.

Adown my beard the slavers trickle  
I throw the wee stools o'er the mickle,  
While round the fire the giglets keckle,  
To see me loup,  
While, raving mad, I wish a heckle  
Were in their doup!

In a' the numerous human dools,  
Ill hairsts, daft bargains, cutty stools,  
Or worthy frien's rak'd i' the mools, -  
Sad sight to see!  
The tricks o' knaves, or fash o' fools,  
Thou bear'st the gree!

Where'er that place be priests ca' hell,  
Where a' the tones o' misery yell,  
An' ranked plagues their numbers tell,  
In dreadfu' raw,  
Thou, Toothache, surely bear'st the bell,  
Among them a'!

O thou grim, mischief-making chiel,  
That gars the notes o' discord squeel,  
Till daft mankind aft dance a reel  
In gore, a shoe-thick,  
Gie a' the faes o' Scotland's weal  
A townmond's toothache!

# Branch Outreach Activities

In the HA's drive to support local organisations in south-west Wales by promoting interest in historical topics, the HA website now outlines an offer to supply speakers drawn from our membership to visit and make presentations on a variety of historical subjects.

Our activities began in July 2013 in collaboration with CADW, at their Festival of Heritage, Culture and Arts, held in the picturesque grounds of Laugharne castle. Two hour-long presentations were made. In the morning, Colin James presented a cameo of Gerald of Wales, and in the afternoon I presented an adaptation of my recently submitted dissertation entitled *Developments in Welsh Monasticism 1000–1200*.

The HA website gave rise to two requests from organisations established to support mentally and physically handicapped citizens of Swansea. 'First Steps Forward' is based in the Penlan district of Swansea. A talk on the Industrialisation of Swansea was given on 21 August, and will be followed by a second talk in October, to be given by Citizen Historian Sid Kidwell on Swansea during the Three Nights' Blitz.

Cwmbwrla Day Services is a purpose-built facility set up to provide training in topics as diverse as beekeeping and motor mechanics for citizens with special educational needs. The hard-working staff attempt to provide as varied an educational programme as possible, and we were able to respond by visiting them over four successive weeks in September. On the 4th, Colin James spoke on Swansea Castle. This was followed on the 11th by a repeat of my talk on Swansea's early industrial history. On the 18th, Sid presented his ever-popular talk on wartime Swansea, and on the 25th, Colin rounded off the series with a talk on the life and works of Dr Joseph Parry.

Whilst our offer to provide outreach support was not made with the intention of its being a money-making activity, to our surprise and gratification we have been able to transfer to our Branch Treasurer a sum of £200 as a result of these initial activities.

This programme is, perhaps not surprisingly, also establishing a view of the Swansea Branch of the Historical Association as being the premier organisation of its kind in the locality.

9 May 2014 at 2.30 pm, Peter Rees will speak to the Llansamlet Historical Society on **'Monasticism in Medieval Wales, 1000-1200'**.

4 June 2014, John Ashley will speak to the Cymmer Afan and District History Society **'The White Rock Project'**.

28 October 2014, Colin James will speak to the Swansea Probus Club on **'Swansea Castle'**.

Another date for your diary:

Janet Burton, Professor of Medieval History at University of Wales TSD, will be giving a talk on **'Monastic Wales'** at 5pm on Friday 9th May at the Lampeter Campus. There will be a reception at 4pm Please contact Colin James our Executive Secretary for further information. colwjames@yahoo.com.

**Peter Rees**



# Letters from WW1 - Winter Chronicle

Our Winter issue of Chronicle in 2014 will have the title 'War and Peace',  
the slightly shorter version by the HA Swansea Branch.

The editor would love to know if you have got any letters or personal postcards from family or friends sent from the front that you can share with us. Not just WW1, but anytime from the Boar

War to the Falklands. If we have enough correspondence we could think about producing a booklet.

*3rd June 1915*

*3rd Battery Motor Machine Gun Services  
British Expeditionary Force, France*

*Dearest Ma,*

*Hello, how are you? I am in the pink, everything is A1 out here. We are at present resting, we hear plenty of gun fire, but of course, up till now we have not been in any of it.*

*Everybody seems to be very decent, we have some fun trying to make ourselves understood by the people round here, and the beer is not so bad for 1p a glass and wine is about the same.*

*We get plenty to eat for all around there are people living in the houses as usual, you would not think there was a war on. The boys, although they have been out here for about six months, speak well about things in general, so I don't think there is much to worry about.*

*Yesterday, you should have seen us cooking some steak on a fire of sticks, in our billy cans, just like one big picnic, for we are as jolly a lot as you could find. One of them has got a flute so we have some music.*

*With fondest love*

*Cliff*

Later he wrote,

**Mid shell torn trenches and sudden death  
A blinding flash, a friend the less.**

**Copy required by mid October** or preferably sooner, so plenty of time to rummage through those old boxes of papers stored in the attic. **Please email to [margaret.mccloy@sky.com](mailto:margaret.mccloy@sky.com) or post a copy to:**

**32 Marina Villas, Trawler Road, Swansea SA1 1FZ**

**A new website, <http://warletters.net>** is an excellent site that should interest teachers working on the First World War.

The site provides links to a vast range of freely available online primary and secondary historical sources about the First World War. For any teacher wanting a good place for their students to start exploring original documents and sources online it makes a great place to start. There are links to official histories, government reports and documents, service records, bibliographies, theses, legislation, memoirs, letters and diaries, films, maps, images and much more. All are available at no cost without subscription or registration.

# AGM 2014

**It was most rewarding** to see so many people attend the AGM, where officers and committee members were elected. Colin James the Executive Secretary gave a very full report on the year's activities including the many varied and interesting lectures given.

After the meeting we were treated to an informative lecture by our Branch President, Professor Ralph Griffiths in which he discussed the recent discovery of the bones of Richard III (or maybe not...) in a Leicester car park. Dr John Law was elected Chairman, John Ashley, vice-chair, Colin James, Executive Secretary.

## **Academic Sponsors**

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**Business Sponsors:** £10 an issue or £30 for four.

**No Sign Wine Bar** in Wind Street, Swansea, 01792 465300.

**Gallinis Italian Restaurant**, Fisherman Quay, Swansea Marina, 01792 456285.

**The Pump House**, bar and restaurant, Swansea Marina, 01792 651080.

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Sheila Crutchley, Jean Webber, Roy Fisher, Caroline Lewis, Mark Williams.

If you would like to be a sponsor, please send a cheque made out to Historical Association, Swansea Branch to Margaret McCloy, 32 Marina Villas, Trawler Road, Swansea SA1 1FZ

I welcome letters from readers, whether to say that you have enjoyed the Chronicle, what you would like to see included or even to be 'grumpy from Gower' with suggestions of how we can improve what is, after all, your newsletter.

## **Dylan Thomas**

There did not seem to be too many grumpy people on the 15th March when the Historical Association enjoyed a brilliant and moving performance by Peter Read performing his new play about Dylan Thomas's last days in America. Peter has played Dylan more than 100 times on stage to great acclaim both here and in America. In the afternoon we listened to an informative lecture about Dylan, again by Peter Read.



***Dylan once advised a student to  
take his rusty pen and write and  
write and write***

***"... 'till he scored a bull's eye."***

I'm sure Dylan would have agreed that Peter had indeed scored two bull's eyes.

# End-Piece

## Wales on Wheels 2014

The Road & Road Transport History Association in association with Swansea Bus Museum presents

**Wales on Wheels Saturday 17th and Sunday May 18th**  
**All day event at The Waterfront Museum**

View historic vehicles commemorating the anniversary of South Wales transport, horse-drawn WW1 ambulance, cars, fire engines and many more!.

HA members are invited to attend a dinner on the Saturday evening at the Marriott Hotel at which Professor Stuart Cole will speak. Contact John Ashley, [john@globespinner.net](mailto:john@globespinner.net), [www.rrtha.org.uk](http://www.rrtha.org.uk)

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on the Chronicle. I thoroughly enjoyed the last issue. Being a learner Welsh speaker would it be feasible to have a short column in Welsh occasionally?

*Editor replies, if enough people would like this, I'm sure we can find a Welsh speaker to write a column.*

Dear Editor

I very much enjoy the meetings but would it be possible to meet half an hour before in the room so that we could just talk to one another on a social level? It seems a shame just to leave the meeting and never meet anyone.

Jean Webber

***Does anyone have books that we could sell at the Book fair later in the year to help raise funds for the Branch? Or prizes for the raffle. The last raffle raised £100. Thanks everyone.***

Dear Editor,

Someone told me that there was a plaque to Ann Frank near the Dylan Thomas centre. Does anyone know where it is please?

Mark Williams

Dear Editor,

Could we have a wine and cheese evening perhaps so that could get to know folk and raise some money to help pay for printing the Chronicle?

Joan Arthur

***Congratulations to John Ashley for organising the White Rock open day that was so well attended.***

***[www.whiterocktrails.org](http://www.whiterocktrails.org)***

### Officers and Committee

John Law (Chair), John Ashley (Vice Chair), Ray Savage (Treasurer), Colin James (Executive Secretary), Claire Vivian (Membership Secretary), David Coley, Rosemary Crahart, Caroline Franklin, Royston Kneath, Elizabeth McCloy, Karmen Thomas, Sean McGrevey, Anne Thomas. Representative members: Sid Kidwell (Citizen Historian), Margaret McCloy (Chronicle editor), Brenig Davies (Friends of Carmarthen County Museum), Irene Thomas (Neath Antiquarian Society), Peter Stgopp (Laugharne & District History Society), Francesca Tate (Swansea University History Society).

# HA Swansea Branch Programme 2014

Saturdays at 11.00, National Waterfront Museum



16 August

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

(20 September to be arranged.)

18 October

Arnold Rosen, **Stalin, Hitler and Mr Jones.**

26 April

Dr Leighton James, **Total War: Nationalism and the Wars of Liberation, 1813-14.**

17 May

Professor Maurice Whitehead, **Wales and the Grand Tour.**

21 June

John Ashley, **Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Swansea.**

19 July

Dr Lesley Hulonce, **A Social Frankenstein in our Midst? Prostitution in Victorian Swansea.**



## Membership Form

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Phone .....

Email .....

Individual membership: £10.  
Concessionary membership: £5.  
Family (household) membership: £15.  
Student (to 30 September 2014): £3

Cheques to *Historical Association Swansea Branch:*

Membership Secretary  
Historical Association  
156 Chemical Road  
Morrleston  
Swansea SA6 6JQ

[www.haswansea.org.uk](http://www.haswansea.org.uk)