



Roath Local History Society

Bringing History to Your Doorstep - since 1978



Dear R.L.H.S. Members,

What a tumultuous month September 2020 turned out to be - just when we were getting used to the *new normal*. I mentioned last month that my Wales Green Badge course was due to recommence, well it did - briefly! We were looking at *Guiding from a Moving Vehicle* and each week, the route had to be changed as local restrictions were announced. Finally, with Cardiff and all her neighbours back in lockdown, and with nowhere left to go, the actual examination has now been postponed. Quite a few people have asked me *What a Green Badge Guide is?* Well, Wales Official Tourist Guides come in three colours - **Brown** for Site Guides (Royal Mint etc.), **Green** for one of the three Regions (South-East, West and North Wales) and **Blue** for Guides accredited Pan-Wales. I'm studying our patch, which happens to be rather large - west from the Severn Estuary to Swansea and north through the Brecon Beacons and Powys - with absolutely everything in between!

September's E-Newsletter prompted several responses; you will be pleased to know that amongst them, a lady was able to reassure **Terry Hughes** that his memory was *not* playing tricks with him:

I noticed your recent piece about Roath Park Lake and a 'penny in the slot gas - for boiling a kettle'. I can confirm the writer is correct and it would have been about the 1930's. My mother (who is still alive) always talked about this penny in the slot for a kettle of hot water to brew a cup of tea. I asked her and yes it was near the children's paddling pool in a large open hut. She used to go down there with her mother after school and in the holidays. I have never doubted her memory as she first told me about this in the 1960's.

September's issue also sparked memories for **Peter Gillard**:

Thank you for another newsletter crammed full with interesting information. I was particularly interested in **Alun Salisbury**'s article on **Insole Court**. On leaving school, my first job was at what was then known as **Llandaff Court**, working for the Parks Department. I have many happy memories of my time there and know quite a lot about the evolution of the gardens over time. In the South Garden, there is a leat and on the banks of the little stream, **Mrs Insole** used to grow her collection of iris. During my time there, this area was extensively altered. Originally, there was quite a large stone grotto on the western end. This was dismantled and the large slabs of stone were used to

reinforce the banks of the stream, where they still remain. Also, the west section of the paving and balustrade in front of the house was reconstructed and I worked on both of them. The areas Alun refers to were well known - with the exception of the hidden grotto - but it was not realised that much of the rock-work was man made. You will be aware that much **Pulhamite** work was done at **Dewstow Gardens**.

When the restoration work began, no-one knew what lay beneath the great mound of ivy covering an obscured building on the right of the path, up to the former stables. I was able to tell them that this was the original potting shed, occupied by the five permanent gardeners who worked there. When the building was rescued from the ivy, a decision was made to convert it to the present tea room and I suggested the name *The Potting Shed*.

Another feature of Insole Court was that it housed a gold medal winning collection of fuchsias, most of which were propagated there and were entered in major horticultural shows. There was a permanent display in a conservatory on the west end of the building, now unfortunately out of use and boarded over.

I have been invited to several meetings with the group who are conducting the research there and was able to provide some information from my personal memories, for their archive. Also, at the invitation of Alun, I have given talks to the over 50's group that he is involved with. Happy days and happy memories.

R.L.H.S. regularly receives enquires, from far and wide, and without exception, the **A-Team** of **Jeff Childs** and **Ted Richards** are able to help. **William Pugh**, contacted the Society from Canada. He used to live in Stacy Road and was asking for advice on where to get photographs of the shops in Clifton Street, from around about the 1930's. In acknowledging the help Ted gave, he shared the following: *The reason for asking for Clifton Street photographs of the stores is as follows, My Dad (Leonard Pugh) used to walk to and from Junior School down Clifton Street. In one of the store windows was a mechanical metal crane, as a prize. The prize was for the person who had the most receipts over a given period. Every day he came home and told his mum about the crane and how much he would like it. This went on for a while until one day the store window was empty. When he got home his mum had got the crane. On asking how, he found out that his mum had purchased every item on her weekly shopping, individually, going in and out of the store to qualify for the receipts. I just thought for other members of our family it would be nice to try and identify the store. We still have the crane.*

We have also enjoyed an on-going correspondence with **Tim O'Shea**, now living in Tottington, Lancashire; where he's setting about writing his life history. His father's family lived in Newtown from the mid 1800's and his Dad was a dock worker. Tim was born in 1942, lived in Inverness Place and went to St. Peter's Junior School in St Peter's Street. He's keen that in putting his account into context, it should be factually correct and his initial query involved the exact location of the **Crwys Bychan Toll Gate**, as referred to in the following descriptive piece - of a location, I'm sure you'll recognise:

As late as 1869 this area hadn't been developed and all five roads were only muddy unnamed tracks with another track leading to the isolated Tyn-Y-Coed farm house (House in the Wood). The Rhymney Railway cut through this intersection and further up the track there was the Crwys Bychan Toll Gate.

Jeff Childs supplied the knowledge that Crwys Bychan was the name of the farm, on whose land the Toll Gate stood. Furthermore, Woodville Road Baptist Church was later built on the site.

Mr. O'Shea has kindly allowed me to share these evocative photographs of Roath, which give such insight into the community life of the period. Tim would be delighted to receive any feedback our Members can contribute - perhaps you even knew the family?!



Mr Wellbeloved the Milkman, who lived at 131 Roy Road and delivered milk in his horse and cart. Children photographed in his tricycle include: Tim, Roger Palser, Terry Webley and Marylin?



Terry Webley and Tim O'Shea on Shirley Road, returning from fishing with their empty NHS milk powder tins.



Group photo outside 159: Tim, Terry, Roger, Kevin and Maureen Jordan, Maureen O'Shea, Peter Doyle and Douglas Lewis (Tim's half brother).



Class 1 photograph, C1947, St Peter's Junior School, Roath. The names Tim remembers are Peter Wilson, Steven Irons, Bernard O'Keefe, Terry Crimmings, Janet O'Flynn, Shirley McDonald and Clare Bannister.



Victory in Europe Day, 1945



Tim's mother outside 159 Inverness Place. In 1953 it cost Tim's dad £500, a few years ago it was up for sale and listed on WalesOnLine at £310,000



Group photo of older boys taken in Tyn-y-Coed Place at the corner with Inverness Place



1953 Coronation street party

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Roath 2021



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December

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email: benchildsphotoart@hotmail.com

FEATURING 12 ORIGINAL ART PHOTOGRAPHY IMAGES OF ROATH

What our Chairman, **Ted Richards** has been getting up to:

I've had a busy summer researching though not necessarily all strictly on Roath matters. At the start of the year a friend was flicking through the pages of an old edition of the Guinness Book of Records and came across Captain George Auger, the Cardiff Giant, Wales's tallest man. My friend suggested that I may like to investigate if he came from the Roath area. It turns out he wasn't but by then I was so engrossed in his story that I couldn't stop. I joined forces with two other family historians and we delved into the records uncovering all sorts of things that hadn't been discovered previously.

He was born in Gough Street, Temperance Town which used to be outside Cardiff Central station, where the new BBC headquarters stands. His stay in Cardiff was brief. He mainly grew up (an appropriate term to use in his case) in the London area. By the age of 12 he was already 5' 8½" when he joined the Royal Marines. He only lasted a year before choosing to desert. He had a stint in the police force too aged only 15 and well over 6 foot. As he continued to grow he worked as a theatre doorman and had a stint in pantomime before he went to America and joined the Barnum and Bailey Circus and billed as the World's tallest man.

He died suddenly on 30 Nov 1922 aged 40. His early death is made even sadder by the fact that he was about to break out of the circus role and embark on a career in the 'moving pictures'. He had signed a contract said to be worth \$350/week to star alongside actor Harold Lloyd as the giant Colosso in the film 'Why Worry?'. We also discovered he was the uncle to Brian Auger, the jazz pianist. Our findings were published in a [blog post on our website](#).

Our latest blog just published concerns another man who made it big in America. [John Vipond Davies](#) lived on Newport Road. He went on to become a renowned tunnelling engineer and is especially known for connecting various boroughs of New York.

The enquiries we receive are very varied though recently we've received a few by people wanting advice on researching the history of their house. Jeff Childs had kindly put together this response that others may find useful:-

To start-off (and depending on the age of the property) I would suggest the following sources in order of priority:

- 1. The various census enumerators returns for the property (from 1841 to 1911) and the 1939 Register as these are all on line via Ancestry or Findmypast.*
- 2. Trade directories, showing street-by-street occupants over time (available at Cathays Heritage Library and Glamorgan Archives).*

3. Electoral registers showing occupants over voting age (at Cathays Heritage Library).
4. Ordnance Survey maps (at Cathays Heritage Library, Glamorgan Archives and online via National Library Scotland).
5. Tithe maps and schedules (online via National Library of Wales tithe maps; Cathays Heritage Library and Glamorgan Archives).
6. Rate books naming household heads and other ratepayers (at Glamorgan Archives).
7. Photographs (aerial and otherwise at Cathays Heritage Library).

There are plenty of other sources as well as books on how to trace the history of one's property. Various details should be available online or Cathays Heritage Library. It is also useful to research the wider history of one's locality to understand why houses and other properties were built or appeared there.

Jeff's ideas have been built on and a new page created on our website aimed at helping people who are embarking on local history in the Roath and surrounding areas. The page is headed [Advice](#) and there is a tab on our homepage to help you find it.

The team at Cathays Heritage Library recently came up trumps for me again in finding a picture of Greenlawn, the mansion that once stood on Cyncoed Road, opposite the Llenedeyrn Road junction. This used to be the home of surgeon Dr John Lynn-Thomas. As well as being a top surgeon he had a strong interest in druidry. He had the mock cromlech built outside the Prince of Wales Hospital in The Walk that is still there to this day, unlike Greenlawn which has long gone.



See you Zoom?

It's been a long time since February, when we were last able to get together for **Dean Powell's** marvellous lecture "The Incredible Life of Dr William Price". The R.L.H.S. Committee has continued to meet throughout Lockdown, but virtually, using Zoom. At our last confabulation we pondered on whether we could use this technology to reach a wider audience. I know that many people little dreamed, they would be keeping in touch with their family, friends, doctors, church groups etc. in this way. While it has been untenable to run our winter lecture programme this season, we hope that through this E-Newsletter and the Website, you still feel connected and part of Roath Local History Society. To fully explore what other options are open to us, we have taken a preliminary look into the cost and practicality of offering some live, online Talks and Presentations. It would involve something of a learning curve, but it does appear feasible. These events would not replace our traditional meetings, but they could provide us with a point of social contact and interest, while we wait for the danger of the pandemic to pass. If we are to go forward with this idea, we need to know whether you, the Membership, would hypothetically be interested in attending? In case it influences your decision, I hasten to add that at this point, no costs (to you) involved!

If you like the sound of this, please send me a quick e-mail with your name and *YES*.

roathhistory@gmail.com

Looking forward to hearing from you - stay safe and sound,

Elizabeth Morgan.

R.L.H.S. Honorary Secretary.

E-mail: roathhistory@gmail.com
Telephone: 029 2048 2658 * Mobile/Text: 07801 544 823
R.L.H.S. Web Site: www.roathlocalhistorysociety.org