



E-NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2022

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EDITOR'S WELCOME



As I write this, the sunshine is beating down on the Ginkgo trees in Roath Mill Gardens, as the daffodils which line the banks of the Nant Lecky sway gently in the breeze. It feels spring is here at last, and not a moment too soon. Balmy afternoons of tea and croquet on the lawn, boating on the lake and picnics next to the rose gardens beckon!

We had a two-for-the-price-of-one month this March, albeit more by accident than design! A thousand thanks to our website manager, Ted Richards, for valiantly stepping up to the plate with his images of old Roath. These included the above, the now lost Roath House, which was located on Newport Road adjacent to Roath Court. While neither as grand nor as ancient as its next-door neighbour, it was never-the-less a house of some stature, by Roath standards, and this edition of our newsletter includes Margaret Smith's research on its one-time occupants. We also have the latest instalment of Deanne Pickstone's serialised History of Cardiff, along with an update from our Membership and Events Secretary.

Best wishes,

Geraint Denison-Kurg
Honorary Secretary

PROGRAMME, EVENTS & MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Dear R.L.H.S. Members,

There are a few things to tell you about; firstly, our Membership continues to grow and we have now topped 160 Members. This is a wonderful achievement, but not without some logistical concerns.

Fortunately, the advent of Zoom and the application of our Techie Team, spearheaded by **Geraint** and **Ted**, has enabled us to offer our Lectures to more people than could be accommodated by St. Edward's Church Music & Arts Centre. Going forward, we fully intend continuing with this hybrid approach and Committee Member, **Jon Roberts**, has joined the Techies, in offering extra support and backup.

R.L.H.S. MID-WEEK SUMMER SPECIALS - hold the dates!

Wednesday, 8th June, 2022 @ 2 o'clock (half-day - make your own way)

Wednesday, 15th June, 2022 @ 9.30 and 13.15 (half-day - mini-buses available).

Wednesday, 22nd June, 2022 @ 11.00 o'clock (half-day - make your own way).

Wednesday, 29th June, 2022 @ 9.30 (full-day - mini-buses available).

Wednesday, 6th July, 2022 @ 2.30 (half-day - make your own way).

Wednesday, 13th July, 2022 @ 9.30 (full-day - mini-buses available).

I've completed organising our six summer visits and will soon be sending the **Programme**, along with a **Booking Form**, to you, once a few last details have been settled.

I can reveal that on offer will be a guided visit to the ancient heart of a Cardiff suburb; three mini-bus trips to fascinating destinations - two in England; a guided Heritage Walk; and a lengthy, but extremely leisurely ramble through town, coast and country.

- It is essential you book your place for **each** and **every** event.
- Numbers are limited, both for group sizes; and the number of seats available on the VEST Community mini-buses we are hiring.
- This year, because of number constraints, Members have priority for places. The exception to this being our two BIG DAYS OUT; when Members are welcome to make their own way to the destination, bringing with them non-members, friends, family or children. If this is your intention, in order to

benefit from our group rates, you will still be required to book and pay for places and enter the attraction/s on the day, as part of the group.

- Various attractions involve additional costs, that, along with transport costs, need to be paid up-front to our various venues and transport provider.
- Therefore, your many individual payments need to be in the R.L.H.S. account, ahead of the Society withdrawing large amounts to pay our providers.
- To enable as many people as possible to take part, one visit to a small-size venue, will be on twice on the same day, enabling two groups of 30, to attend.
- Subject to demand, there is also the possibility, of re-running two of our walks.
- I need to receive all registrations and money as quickly as possible; and certainly no later than our last meeting, on **Wednesday, 11th. May.**
- As with other years, if you have to withdraw, I'll endeavour to fill your place from a list of reserves and refund your outlay. However, if this is not possible, then I'm afraid you will lose your payment, as these costs cannot be borne by the Society.

For now, our exciting destinations are a (soon to be revealed) mystery! You can look forward to some very pleasant times ahead; but please remember, **book early to avoid disappointment.**

RUPERRA CASTLE FROM 2022 to 1626.

Speaker: Pat Jones-Jenkins, Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust

<http://www.ruperracastle.wales>

Our April talk will cover a quick history of Ruperra Castle, with memories of disastrous days; glimpses of the glory days and where the R.C.P.T. is today.

In the 1980's Pat founded the Rudry Local History Group, which morphed into the Ruperra Conservation Trust. In 2,000 R.C.T. achieved the purchase of Coed Craig Ruperra. An area of 153 acres of recovering broadleaved woodland, that formed part of the Lords Tredegar, Ruperra Estate, for over 400 years. Ongoing concern for the fabric of the castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, Grade II* Listed Building, and its future; led to the launch of Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust.

After the talk, there will be an opportunity to purchase various items in support of the R.C.P.T. You may wish to order in advance online, for collection on the evening.

<http://www.ruperracastle.wales/films-and-books.html>

Also, on the night, anyone wishing to join R.C.P.T.

<http://www.ruperracastle.wales/membership.html>

is being offered a complimentary book or DVD, when paying Full or Family Membership.

If anyone intends watching via zoom, but would like to make a purchase, I am happy to collect and arrange delivery for anything that takes your fancy.

Best regards,

Elizabeth Morgan
R.L.H.S. Programme, Events & Membership Secretary

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ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Wednesday, 13th April, 2022

RUPERRA CASTLE FROM 2022 TO 1626

RUPERRA CASTLE PRESERVATION TRUST

SPEAKER: PAT JONES-JENKINS



St. Edward's Music & Arts Centre 7.30pm start,
with access from 7.00pm. For link to live stream, please apply
to Geraint, no later than **Monday, 11th** on:

denison-kurg@outlook.com

ALL WELCOME! GUESTS £2.00 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP £10.00

FROM CATHAYS TO CORNWALL, AND BACK AGAIN...

Rita Bray

I read with interest in the February Newsletter, articles relating to members' homes. I am about to do some research on the house where my Grandfather was born in 1886. I know he was born at 8, Woodville Road and I am keen to know more about this house. For example, when was it built? Who owned it? Is it a modest cottage, terraced house or maybe something grander? And, of course, is it still there? Do any of the readers/members of the Society know anything about this house? If so, I would be delighted to hear from them at thechase2@hotmail.com.

Geraint replied:

When your grandfather was born, Woodville Road was relatively new, having been developed from the 1870s onward. While it comes under Roath parish and is addressed as such on some documents, the area is quite distinctly Cathays. Houses such as these would originally have been occupied by the lower-middle classes, lesser clerks and the such, in one of the town's growing commercial interests such as shipping. The railways were another major employer and there were extensive works in Cathays, which sits alongside the former Taff Vale Railway main line; this was the most important route for the transport of coal from the coalfields to the port. Cathays was developed by the trustees of Cardiff's predominant land-owner, the Marquess of Bute, and represents one of the earliest suburbs of Cardiff to be developed outside of the historic borough boundary.

8, Woodville Road, is still there, and is a double-bayed terrace. Cathays has now become dominated by student housing. Woodville Road is rather a local landmark due to the presence of the Woodville pub, long a favourite with students, and due to it being the main pedestrian thoroughfare from Cathays to many of the university buildings.

There are, of course, a number of ways you could research the history of the house itself further. I suspect as a genealogist you will already have checked the censuses, but a resource which can be especially interesting is the original house plans, which will be available at Glamorgan Archives (formerly, and still often referred to as, the Glamorgan Record Office or GlamRO). I appreciate you're in Cornwall, but if you contact them for a small fee they should be able to send you a scanned version of the document.

THE HOLMES FAMILY OF ROATH HOUSE

Margaret Smith

Those of us present on Wednesday 9th March, and disappointed not to hear the planned talk on Pengam Airport, were nevertheless very pleased that Ted stepped in without delay and gave another presentation of various views around Roath, inviting members to give any information they might have regarding several 'unknowns' — THANK YOU Ted!

Among these (reproduced below), to my surprise, were a few which I had shared with Jeff Childs several years ago. It was indeed a pleasure to be able to throw a little more light on the people in one of these photographs, which was of Miss Rachel Doris Price Holmes and my grandfather, John Andrews Down, who worked for the Holmes family at Roath House.



Miss Holmes, known as Doris Holmes, suffered from rheumatoid arthritis and was conveyed in a large invalid carriage, of a typical design of that era. My grandfather gave assistance when she needed to be taken out, as well as carrying out gardening duties at the family home and also at Roath Court. Sadly, she died at the age of only 43 in 1938. The daughter of Mr. John Holmes and his wife Rachel Jane (nee Price), she and her brother David Price Holmes had grown up at Roath House just past Roath Court,

where semi-detached houses were built later on. Roath House was demolished sometime around the mid 1930s, no doubt to facilitate the widening of Newport Road at that time. Mr. and Mrs. Holmes

had come from the Tredegar area, where they had married, then settling in Cardiff. By the time Doris Holmes died in 1938, her mother having predeceased her only two years earlier in 1936, the family had been living at a house further along the same side - 197, Newport Road - called Ivydene.

Doris' brother, David Price Holmes (pictured together, right), became well-known through his army and medical careers, having qualified as a doctor in the 1920s, and later becoming Medical Superintendent at Rookwood Hospital. As my grandfather had been wounded in the First World War, losing an eye, I am inclined to think that the Holmes family would have been sympathetic towards him. Also as there were stables and horses, it was perhaps an advantage that he had been described as 'good with horses' in his army record! He had at one time been in the Army Veterinary Corps, then the South Wales Borderers.



Dr David Holmes married a Norwegian lady, Miss Gerd Ottersen, at Tredegarville Baptist Church in 1938, not long after the death of his sister Doris. Sadly, Dr Holmes didn't live a very long life either, having died at the age of 59 in 1961. His funeral took place at Llandaff Cathedral, by which time he was referred to as Colonel David Price Holmes. I had never known any of this family, or indeed my grandfather, as all had died long before I was born, but a lot of information had been handed down to me along with quite a collection of Holmes family photographs, which I feel privileged to have inherited.

THE HISTORY OF CARDIFF
-PART FOUR-
Deanne Pickstone

In 1776 the Lordship passed to the Bute family. John Stuart embarked on an ambitious plan to modernise the Castle. He stayed at a coaching inn during his visits to Cardiff, the Cardiff Arms Hotel, then at the junction of Angel Street (now Castle Street) and Westgate Street. It was demolished in 1882 but its name lives on in the world-famous Cardiff Arms Park.

The first marquess married Charlotte Windsor in 1782 and inherited lands in Cathays. He built Cathays House at a cost of £40,000 - its grounds stretching from Corbett Road to Kingsway - and from North Road to Park Place. Today we have Windsor and Park Place. In 1792 the first Marquess of Bute stopped work on the castle, which was fenced around and sheep grazed in the grounds.

There was a flood in Cardiff in 1792 and Cardiff's stone bridge collapsed. It was not replaced until 1796. The Melingriffith Works in Whitchurch was a major manufacturer of tinsplate with its two mills, forge, and brickyard. Transportation was difficult and a canal system was initiated. The town gates had been pulled down. On 10th February 1794, the first barge entered Cardiff. Tolls were calculated and cargoes weighed at the weighbridge situated by the site of the old East Gate facing the Venetian styled Queen's Chambers in Queen Street. The canal then ran behind and parallel with the Hayes, the barges being pulled by winding gear through a tunnel into Mill Lane. From there it went into the canal basin at the end of St Mary Street which led to the foreshore.

In 1800, Lord Bute's wife died and a mausoleum was built by the old St Margaret's Church. At that time Cardiff had 27 Pubs but only 25 retail shops. Under the Town Hall there was a market for dairy and poultry and another for corn. The cattle market was in Crockerton Street, now Queen Street, and the pig market by the Golate. In the 1801 Census the town population was just 1,086.

In 1802 came the Enclosure Act, which caused distress and poverty. Until that time the Great Heath was used by commoners to graze

their live-stock and some even built cottages. There were two farms, namely Allensbank and Wedal, and a Race Course with a starting post in what is today's Allensbank Rd. In 1838, Heath House was built. It was bought by the local authority in 1938 and was seriously damaged by fire in 1965; it was later pulled down, and today the site of the house and its extensive stables is home to Cardiff Model Engineering Society, of which my husband Carl and myself are long time members.

In 1814 the first Marquess died and his grandson, aged just 11 years, became the second Marquess of Bute. By 1830, centred around Merthyr and the many valley towns north of the coastal plain, the Industrial Revolution was at its peak. The Glamorganshire Canal was extremely busy with some 200 barges daily through Cardiff.

In 1825 in Georgian Church Street, a Wesleyan Chapel was built. Today the dated white facade is to be seen above a Tapas Cafe and a Pizzeria.

In a Government Report of 1831, it reported that Cardiff's principal streets were paved and lighted with respectable houses and shops. In the 1831 Census the population of Cardiff had increased to 6,137. However, with the increase in the working-class population, many lived in crowded and unsanitary conditions. There were 50 Courts in Cardiff. Some were neat and clean, but most were squalid. Today, to my knowledge, there are only two remaining: Jones Court in Woman by Street and Castle Court hidden away behind a shop in Duke Street by the Arcade entrance.

In 1834 the Poor Act was implemented and in 1836 a Workhouse was built in Cowbridge Road. It later became St David's hospital. The modern hospital is located at the rear of this site, with houses and flats occupying the remaining buildings fronting Cowbridge Road.

The second Marquess is regarded as the Founder of modern Cardiff. He built the West Dock in Cardiff which could accommodate 300 ships. It opened on 9th October 1839. The first ship to enter was the Manulus. The following year the Taff Vale Railway was opened with its Headquarters in Bute Street. The

Railway ran from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff, bringing coal and steel for export.

Cardiff was converted into a huge prosperous commercial, industrial and retail town during the Victorian era. Its diverse population rocketed rapidly. This can be seen from the many different religious buildings erected around Cardiff area.

Until the West Dock was opened, Adamsdown was a huge barren moor. There was Adamsdown Farm, and Adamsdown House was occupied by Henry Hollier, the Butes' Agent. In the early 1840's the Marquess of Bute encouraged sea captains, merchants, stock brokers and other professional middle class people to live in the elegant houses of Loudoun and Mounstuart Squares and surrounding streets. In 1843, the Anglican St Mary's Church opened, and in 1848 St Mary's Anglican Church School opened in Bute Street. In 1890's my Grandmother Alice Lyons, the daughter of Elizabeth Ashton, had her first position as a teacher there.

Longcross House was built on the site of Payne's Cross, Adamsdown's mediaeval boundary. After the Chartist Riots, the property was replaced by an army barracks in 1844. In that year Queen Victoria presented the Regiment with a Kashmiri goat and it became the Regimental Mascot. Today all goat mascots come from the Royal herd now living wild on the Great Orm in Llandudno.

Cardiff was subjected to frequent flooding and in 1844 Brunel altered the course of the River Taff to its present position. Westgate Street came into being, named after the Castle's West Gate. On the reclaimed land of the river, Temperance Town was built nearby the Central Station. The stagecoach era finished and the last stagecoach left Cardiff on 2nd August 1850.

In 1883 the South Wales and Monmouthshire Infirmary was built in Longcross Street at a cost of £23,000. In 1923 it became Cardiff Royal Infirmary. Also in Longcross Street, the first Institute for the Blind was opened in 1865, where my grandfather, Richard John Bowhey, a former ship's captain, was the South Wales Secretary for the Blind, travelling regularly to St Dunstan's in London.

The district of Newtown was the first area of Adamsdown to be developed. It was inhabited mostly by Irish immigrants, who came to Cardiff to help construct the West Dock in 1837.

In 1848 Adamsdown Cemetery was opened, but in 1849 there was a huge cholera outbreak in Cardiff and some 3,000 people died. In 1854, today's Cardiff Prison was built and opened in Newton.

Over the following years many industrial, commercial and manufacturing businesses were created in the area, and the workforce for these numerous enterprises needed to live locally. By the 1860's in Butetown, as it known today, the original residents had moved away from the area, and the grand houses became crowded tenements. Tiger Bay was born. Butetown was inhabited by a myriad of nationalities with their different religious beliefs. The first mosque was built in Pearl Street, and the Norwegian fishermen's church originally stood by the entrance to the West Dock before being moved in its entirety to its present position overlooking the Bay. St Paul's Roman Catholic Church opened in Tyndall Street in 1870 and the Greek Orthodox in 1906.

The old Spanish frigate The Hamadryad was opened as a hospital to serve seamen and the poor people of Butetown. It did so for many years before it was replaced by the present brick-built Hamadryad Hospital, designed by E. W. M. Corbett, in 1905.

Cardiff's Theatre Royal had opened on 5th September 1827 but it was destroyed by fire on 12th December 1877. The derelict site was bought by the store owner James Howell and a Consortium. On 28th April 1885 the Victorian Gothic Hotel "The Park" was opened, together with a public house, the Park Vaults which has only recently closed. There was also a theatre, but in 1930 it became the Park Hall Cinema. In 1879 the Prince of Wales Theatre in Wood Street opened as the New Theatre Royal. It closed in 1957 and today is a Pub. In 1906 the New Theatre opened on the corner of Greyfriars Road. This elegant Edwardian theatre is still a much-loved venue today in the 21st century. During the 1920's Cinemas came to Cardiff. There were six cinemas in Queen Street and many others in the Suburbs.

Under the Public Health Act, local Boards had the authority to create parks. However in Cardiff this was rejected as too costly. Today Cardiff is well known for its parks and open spaces. This process began with the opening of Sophia Gardens in 1857. Formerly, citizens were allowed to walk around the castle walls, the keep and the castle green, and Lord Bute even hired bands to entertain the crowds on Sunday afternoons. Sophia Gardens was opened in lieu of this arrangement, on the land on the west bank of the Taff. It named after the second Marquess' second wife, Lady Sophia Rawdon-Hastings, who erected a fountain in the park, now sadly lost. After the Second World War, Sophia Gardens Pavilion was created and used for Exhibitions, recitals and dances. In 1887 the Marquess of Bute donated marshland which became Roath Park, but ratepayers had to pay for its development. It was opened in 1894. Today we have Lake Roads East and West facing the lake on former Bute land.

Lord Tredegar, noted for his generosity, donated land which became Waterloo Gardens and Roath Brook Gardens in Penylan. In 1901 Lord Tredegar donated again further land which became Splott Park. With a gift of £5,000 from Charles and Herbert Thompson, the Council was able to purchase land from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1898, and today we have Llandaff Fields. Charles Thompson also presented to Cardiff the gardens beside his home at Penhill, with its lake containing the beautiful statue of a young boy sculpted by Sir William Goscombe John. Today, Thompsons Park in Canton is perhaps the town's prettiest park. Also in Canton is Victoria Park opened in 1898, and named after Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Trelai Park in Ely opened in 1922.

Today a number of countryside walks have been created: Forest Farm Country Park follows the old canal system passing through Whitchurch and Llandaff; the development of the Ely Trail along the length of the River Ely; St Fagans Circular Walk, believed to be the site of the Civil War battle in 1645; Nant Fawr Woodlands; Rumney Gardens; Cefn Onn Park; and the Taff Trail.

Continued in May's Edition.

GET IN TOUCH



For general society enquiries, newsletter submissions and to request loans from the R.L.H.S. Archive, contact:
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