



E-NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2024

CONTENTS

Click on the relevant title below to jump to that page of the newsletter!

<u>E-Newsletter Editor's Welcome</u> <i>Jon Roberts</i>	Page 3
<u>The development of Barry Island</u> <i>Gareth Brown</i>	Page 4
<u>The sad and short life of Susan Lily Evans</u> <i>Jon Roberts</i>	Page 8
<u>East Moors Steelworks – a postscript</u> <i>Gareth Brown</i>	Page 10
<u>Forthcoming events</u> <i>Elizabeth Morgan</i>	Page 17
<u>Get in Touch</u>	Page 18

Published by Roath Local History Society, Cardiff, 2024

All the material reproduced in this newsletter is with the kind permission of the contributor and remains the intellectual property of the original writer. Content from published sources is reproduced in line with fair use. Roath Local History Society kindly requests that you contact the editor should you wish to learn more about the ownership of copyright.

E-NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S WELCOME

Dydd Gŵyl Dewi Hapus! I wondered what the newspapers were telling their readers on St David's Day in years gone by, hoping to find an uplifting tale of local significance. However then, as now, the papers seemed to delight in purveying only mundane matters or bad news:

- Cardiff School Board Expenditure (1880)
- The recent gas explosion at Roath (1892)
- Fatality at the Docks (1894)
- Shipping disasters (1895)
- The distress at Roath (1895)
- A Roath Tragedy (1899)

In the absence of an uplifting news story, here's a picture which I hope will gladden the heart.



Designed by Freepik www.freepik.com

In this month's edition we have another account from Gareth Brown, based on his summer walks around Barry, this time homing in on the seaside favourite, Barry Island. I've written about a sad case of child neglect in Adamsdown. More contributors would be most welcome!

Jon Roberts
Newsletter Editor

The development of Barry Island

Gareth Brown, RLHS Chairman

The walk itself is not described as such but buildings and points of interest are described in the order in which we came upon them. An Act of Parliament in 1894 allowed a railway across a new embankment to the island. Permission for a road was also in the Bill so road access was achieved by 1897 and Island Road previously the access route through the dockland was closed to the general public.

The rail line was extended through a tunnel to Barry pier near the docks entrance in 1899 as boat excursions were popular. Visitor numbers increased.

The Beach

Originally Whitmore Bay was more open. It was backed by sand dunes and there were no shelters and no promenade. Tents or boats on the beach acted as food and drink shops. There were boat trips from the beach either by rowing or sail. Donkey rides also were present from the early days. In 1890 Windsor opened the new Marine Hotel further from the beach to the east of the island, transferring the licence from the original Marine Hotel.



In 1891 there were refreshment rooms on the Island and the Ship Hotel was rebuilt and enlarged. In 1894, after a denial in 1893 that he intended demolishing the hotel on Friars Point, Windsor demolished it and built a new smaller house and the gardens were landscaped. The family started using it as summer residence.

Friars Point House

An Archaeological survey by John Storrie in 1894 and 1895, prior to the development of the island under Windsor, revealed skeletons in trenches off Friars Road. There are reports of skeletal remains found during gardening by residents of Friars Road. The excavations unearthed St Baruc's chapel and a priest's house buried in sand over the previous few centuries. Shell mounds, flint scrapers, medieval pottery shards, the site of a 17th century farmhouse destroyed by the railway, a 'Roman well' where the railway crosses Paget Road, St Baruc's Well at Nells point, and a group of probable medieval houses on the future site of the amusement park were all laid bare by Storrie.

The early days of the beach at Whitmore Bay

Bathing machine numbers were inadequate. No mixed bathing was allowed in the early days. In 1905, a stone terrace of women's changing cubicles was built on the edge of Friars Point and a similar one for men on the other side of the beach. In 1907 two ex-policemen became beach inspectors whose duties included regulating bathing costumes, supervising boats and life-saving. There was mixed bathing at the Knap. The Inspectors were supposed to supervise there too, but they were stretched! There was a Beach Inspectors' hut, next to

the entry to Friar's Point, which was a paying entrance to the point. A concrete sea-water paddling pool was built by the ladies' bathing house at the same time.

By the 1930s, women could show bare arms, but men could not show their bare chests. Donkey rides were very popular and their numbers increased. In 1897 the Council ruled that donkey-men should wear blue waistcoats, trousers and caps to be identifiable, and donkeys carry registration numbers which were displayed on their noses. Punch and Judy shows and sand sculpturing also were popular entertainments in the early days.



In 1903 Lord Plymouth built a private promenade above the beach, with paid entry of 1d, reduced to 1/2d after a few months. There were two bridges over the two wide entry points to the beach through the dunes and a high fence at the edge of the beach, to stop people gaining access to the prom from the beach, but not impeding the view of promenaders. Entrances to the private promenade were at either end from Friar's Road in the east, and New Street at the western end.

Barry Island seen from Friars Point on a glorious day

In 1905, the Council accepted Plymouth Estates offer of a lease on sand and space for shelters at a nominal rent for 99 years. Lord Plymouth also gave land from the high-water mark to Friar's Road and adjoining foreshore. The Council considered proposals for a pier, pavilion and shelter. A band was engaged to play twice a week. The Public Works Committee said that the state of things on the beach was chaotic and disgraceful, and a sub-committee was to take immediate action. A sea wall to stop movement of the sand was suggested.

In 1911, the Planning Committee proposed a sea wall, a promenade with shelters and a slipway, all for the cost of £1500. The Plymouth Estate was not prepared to make over Friars Point to the Council.

The number of traders on the beach caused congestion, and a bye-law was instituted in 1907 to control obstruction, nuisance and sales on the beach. Traders were licensed and the unlicensed traders were taken to court and fined.

In 1909 the council decided not to issue licences anymore, and the evening of the last Tuesday in August was the time limit for all sellers to move from the beach. Beach shows by travelling entertainers were originally in tents amongst the other sales tents. When the beach was cleared of tents and traders the entertainers were provided with an illuminated protected platform on the western edge of the beach called the Pavilion Theatre. It was a cosy corner and the entertainment season ran from March to September with a weekly change of acts of great variety. Most visitors to Barry Island then, as now, were day trippers. On August Bank Holiday Monday 1909, 30,000 came from Cardiff, the valleys and elsewhere, largely by train and there was also a huge crowd on the Tuesday.

Barry became a resort for the working class with cheap cafes and gift shops, the numbers of which increased. The trippers were less likely to observe segregated bathing so the Council bowed to the reality of the situation and allowed mixed bathing from 1911.

Boating at Barry Island

There were rowing boats from the early days from rocks on Friars Point or on the sand. Motor launches followed with movable ramps, so people could get on and off at any state of the tide. In 1922 there was a near disaster after a motor launch caught fire and the fumes overcame the two crew members. The passengers were rescued by another motor launch and, presumably, the crew too.

Aeroplanes

In 1920, Alan J Cobham wanted to operate planes on a 250-yard strip between tides. This was rejected by the Council, so he suggested using sea planes, but then opted for flights from Holton Farm, off Jenner Road.

The Athletic Ground

Barry Cricket Club was formed in 1890 and resurrected in 1899 at a meeting at St Nicholas Hall. It played at Porthkerry on Romilly land. In 1904, Jenner gave land on the island for a pitch, a bowling green and then 2 tennis courts. In 1922, the Earl of Plymouth leased more land to bring the cricket ground up to county size and so the hockey club could then have space for men's and women's teams, not playing on the cricket square. The cricket team became known as Barry Athletic CC. Only 2nd XI county games have been played here by Glamorgan.

Residential street development and public amenities

Redbrink Crescent, which overlooks the docks entrance, contains some imposing houses and Plymouth Road had large houses, some of which became guest houses. In June 1924 the Council decided that it was unseemly for allotment holders to keep pigs on the land between Plymouth Road and the railway line, and so a year's notice was given for them to be removed. Clive Road Board School opened in 1898/99. St Baruc's Church opened in 1897 on the corner of Phyllis Street and Archer Road. Its congregation had outgrown the church by 1909, when they moved to a corrugated iron church on Plymouth Road. This had previously been in Penarth, possibly as an overflow church of St Augustine's. By the 1960's the congregation had dwindled, so the church moved back to its original home of St John with St. Baruc. The "tin church" was demolished and a block of flats named St Baruc's Court was built on the site. A Welsh Baptist chapel (1889) and St John's Wesleyan Methodist Church (1901) and its two school rooms (1905) were also built. Bethany Baptist Church, another iron building, moved to Archer Road from Barry Dock in 1898. It has also been demolished. I believe there were other variations of non-conformity on the Island, as indeed there were all over Barry where the spiritual needs of the growing town were well satisfied.

The provision of well-maintained roads did not keep up with the new builds. In 1900 the Windsor estate passed several roads over to the Council and gave land at New Street for the Council to build toilets. In addition, the Council also erected a cloakroom and reading room. A small museum was also built behind the public toilets where historic artefacts owned by Lord Windsor were displayed. When the artefacts were moved into the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, the museum became a morgue. The morgue and the toilets are long gone.

Further development at the beach.

In 1922 there was a grant from the Unemployment Grants Committee for 65% of the costs and other financial help to build a sea wall, shelters and promenade gardens. There were

stipulations on the workers engaged, eg. a minimum percentage of married men, ex-servicemen etc. A 2000 year-old skeleton was found on digging down into 9-10 ft of sand to rock at the site of the promenade and western shelter.



Local limestone was used to build the western sea wall which, along with the promenade and shelter, were finished by 1924. "Immoral practices by young people in the western shelter, many of whom in army uniform" was reported in 1924. An 18-hole mini golf/ putting green was established on the lower slopes of Nell's Point, and above the coach park was a 9 hole golf course with bunkers. There were also tennis courts and on top of the Eastern Shelter skating was allowed. The sporting and recreational needs of visitors and locals were better satisfied then than now, I venture.

Western shelter today

In the 1930s two new concrete refreshment bars replaced the original wooden huts on the prom and the above-mentioned concrete coach park was built on Forest Drive and car parking was allowed nearby.



The Battery

The Windsor Estate sold the summit of Nell's Point for a battery in 1897. Two 4.7 inch guns were placed to protect the docks. These were replaced in 1908 by two large 6 inch guns and an extra 4 inch naval gun was in situ in World War II.

A well-known refreshment bar today

In 1899, sub-marine miners (ie laying mines not coal miners!) were trained here and at Barry docks and elsewhere in the town. There was also a shooting range by the docks entrance. In the early 1900s annual volunteer training camps were held at the

battery. In World War I St John's Methodist Church was used as a military hospital. After WW1 the battery was one of six officer training camps for the army in UK. Other groups, including youth organisations, used the battery. It was closed in 1956.

The sad and short life of Susan Lily Evans

Jon Roberts



In 1885, 40 year-old Benjamin Evans, his wife Emma and their four children lived at 64 Helen Street in Adamsdown, off Broadway. The street has now been redeveloped but then it comprised terraces of small houses, and the Evanses rented out two rooms in one of them, tenants of John Bennett, a labourer, and his wife Kate.

Helen Street shown in 1892



Susan Lily Evans was their youngest child, aged 16 months when they moved into the Helen Street rooms. She died on 10 March 1886, of starvation. Benjamin Evans was convicted of her manslaughter and sentenced to 10 months' imprisonment.

Emma's account of the circumstances leading up to poor Lily's death were disputed by Benjamin, but there were a sufficient number of witnesses to give credence to Emma's evidence. Benjamin Evans was employed on an irregular basis. He called himself a clerk, but his work

was said to be as a labourer on farms and elsewhere. One witness said that she had only known him to earn money from, somewhat bizarrely, "stuffing an owl". He was the sole earner in the house, and spent all his money on himself, buying clothes, food and drink.

Before moving to Adamsdown, the family lived in John Street, in similarly destitute circumstances. In desperation, Emma took her children to the Workhouse, and sought relief there. However, her husband took her out, the Relieving Officer having no power to keep them there. They then moved to Helen Street. Their living accommodation was beyond what might be described as "spartan" – there was nothing. No bed, no chairs, no table – the family slept on bare boards, and later, on some sacks and hay. Emma Evans had no shawl, and her only dress was so threadbare that she had to borrow clothing from her landlady to go out. The oldest daughter, aged 8, was forced by her father to beg on the street for food.

Emma pleaded with Benjamin for food for her and the children, but he was said to have laughed at her, jingling coins in his pocket. If she spoke of his mistreatment to others, he would hit her. Again, she took the children to the Poor Law Union to apply for relief, where she appeared with marks of violence on her face. She was given some money and was advised to go to the Workhouse, but she said that she was not in a fit state to do so. She was referred by the Relieving Officer to a surgeon in Roath, who found that Susan was malnourished, and prescribed (but did not provide) a quart of milk a day. However, by that time, Susan was incapable of digesting what little milk was provided to her, and her condition deteriorated, despite further visits from the doctor, and she died a day or so later, weighing just 8lbs 6oz, some 14 lbs less than would be expected for a child of that age.

Benjamin Evans protested his innocence, saying that he gave money to Emma and that there was always bread and butter in the house, and that Emma neglected Susan because of drink. However, this was not supported by witnesses. The jury received instructions from the judge as to whether Evans was guilty of murder or manslaughter. They chose the latter, and he received a relatively light sentence because his wife and other children would be deprived of his earnings otherwise.

Susan Lily Evans is buried in Cathays Cemetery. I cannot find her grave, and if it was ever marked all traces are long gone. Nor can I find out what happened to the family thereafter.

Whilst nowadays we hear, from time to time, of tragic child deaths, some involving failures in social services, it is reassuring to realise that

today children at risk like Susan are very likely to receive protection from local authorities – sadly, over 7000 children in Wales are in the care of local social services, mostly through care orders.

The house at 64 Helen Street and others nearby were demolished and the “New” Brewery for SA Brains Ltd was built there in 1914. That was demolished in 1995 and has been replaced by a children’s play area, Brewery Park.



**Brewery
Park today**

East Moors Steelworks – a postscript

It was pleasing to see a number of ex-steelworkers and their families attending our meeting on 14 February about East Moors Steelworks. A number of the members of the Society hope to collect oral histories or written recollections from people who worked there and their families, once our research group is re-established and the scope of the project is determined.

Anyone interested in the project should look out for further announcements in future newsletters or at our monthly meetings.

Gareth Brown
Chairman, RLHS

FORTHCOMING EVENTS
Elizabeth Morgan, RLHS Programme and Events Organiser

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
WEDNESDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2024

**THIRD MARQUESS OF BUTE AND
THE CATHOLIC IMAGINATION**

THE VERY REVEREND FATHER SEBASTIAN JONES M

THE TALK WILL INTRODUCE THE
CONTEXT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF THE **GOOD SHEPHERD CONVENT**
AND HOW THIS PARTICULAR
ENTERPRISE OF THE
THIRD MARQUESS WAS CONSISTENT
WITH HIS BROADER CHARITABLE
ENTERPRISES WITHIN CARDIFF AND
THE BUTE ESTATES.



**CONVENT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD,
TY GWYN ROAD, PENYLAN.**

**SHOWING THE FARM BARN TRANSFORMED
INTO THE CONVENT CHAPEL BY THE
THIRD MARQUESS OF BUTE'S ARCHITECT,
WILLIAM BURGES.**

**IMAGE COURTESY FACEBOOK: DAVID INGS,
CARDIFF NOW & THEN**

SAINT EDWARD'S MUSIC & ARTS CENTRE

Start 7.30pm access from 7.00pm. For live stream Zoom link please apply to:

RLHSZoom@gmail.com no later than Monday 11th March

ALL WELCOME! GUESTS in-person, or online £3.00

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP £13.00

GET IN TOUCH

For newsletter submissions contact:

Jon at RLHSEditor@gmail.com

To request loans from the R.L.H.S. Archive, contact:

Geraint at Denison-Kurg@outlook.com or on (029) 2048 8358.

For membership, contact:

Lyn at RoathLocalHist@yahoo.com or on 07975 751807

For events and programming enquiries, contact:

Elizabeth at RoathHistory@gmail.com or on (029) 2048 2658.

For website enquiries, contact:

Ted at RoathHistoryWebsite@gmail.com.