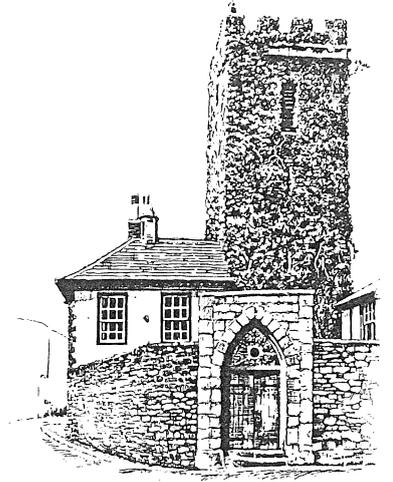


Abergavenny Local History Society



St. John's, Abergavenny

NEWSLETTER No 7
August 1991

SUMMER VISITS 1990

We were blessed with fine and often very warm weather on all our summer visits during 1990. We began in the Cotswolds with visits to the ruin of Hailes Abbey and to Sudely Castle the beautiful 12th century home of King Henry VIII's wife Catherine Parr.

In June Mr Peplow took us first to Coity Castle, a Norman stronghold guarding an area of the Vale of Glamorgan, then to Ewenny Priory, a splendid example of a monastery with military defences. Our day ended at Margam Abbey with its Museum of Stones, some dating from Roman times. Our two evening visits took us first to Caerleon Roman Museum where Mr David Zienkiewicz took us into parts of the museum not normally open to the public, as well as explaining artifacts in the museum.

Mr Richard Brewer, Assistant Keeper of Roman Archaeology at the National Museum of Wales was engaged in an excavation at Caerwent, and together with some of his helpers explained how investigations are carried out and showed us around the dig as well as taking us on a circuit of the Roman walls.

On our way down to Brighton for our weekend, we stopped off at Chichester to look at the cathedral, and at Arundel Castle the home of the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshall of England.

On the Saturday we began our day at Battle Abbey and the site of the Battle of Hastings. There was time to walk around Rye with its Mermaid Inn opened in 1420, before going on to Pevensey Castle, where our guide showed us how it was originally built by the Romans, and then, after the Norman conquest, King William built a castle within the walls of the Roman fort. Fortunately, the refurbishing of the Brighton Pavilion was completed only a few weeks before our visit, and all the scaffolding had been removed revealing the Pavilion in all its glory. The Pavilion was designed for the Prince of Wales in the early nineteenth century by John Nash. Earlier in his career he designed a new market for Abergavenny. On our last visit in September we went to Sir Edward Elgar's birthplace. Our summer visits ended with a guided tour of Worcester Cathedral, which was started in 1084. Amongst its many monuments is the tomb of King John. As I write this the Summer Visits programme for 1991 is almost upon us. I hope everyone enjoys them.

Alan Spink

LECTURES 1991-92

1991

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| 19 Sept | Mr Brian Hughes | Poor Law Administration in Gwent 1834-1929. |
| 17 Oct | Mr Brian Davies | Industrial Wales in Art. |
| 21 Nov | Mr Arthur Peplow | The Royal Tombs at Westminster. |
| 5 Dec | Members | Christmas Dinner and Social Evening.
Admission by ticket only. |

1992

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| 16 Jan | Mr David Zienkiewicz | The Roman Legionary Fortress at Caerleon. Recent discoveries. |
| 20 Feb | Mr Terence McCarthy | The Newport-Abergavenny-Hereford Railway. |
| 19 March | Mr Brian Scott | Romanesque Portals in France. |
| 16 April | Dr. Madeline Gray | Sir Joseph Bradney, The Hundred of Newport. |
| 21 May | 15th Annual General Meeting
Mr Frank Olding | The Mapping of Abergavenny. |

A SMILE ON MY MEMORY

Road, railway and river competed for space in the narrow valley. The small, ugly village, built for the men who worked in the two collieries which dominated the tightly packed terraces, often suffered the ravages of river flooding. My first school books had been dried out and patched together after some previous soaking. As a consequence, we not only shared books, we shared pages and those early stories often lacked a middle, even if one had been lucky enough to lay hands on a beginning and end.

We did not miss the luxuries of life because we were blissfully unaware of their existence. Our simple pleasures, so rich in memory, were cheaply bought. On Saturday morning we walked to a cinema in the next village for the "twopenny rush". According to a cousin, whose mother had inherited a considerable sum of money, one could have a seat upstairs and a free bag of sweets for 4d. Music and poor, mute Alec entertained us before the film. From the front row he would conduct us with flaying arms and contorted face through the marches of Souza and other favourites. He was sometimes mimicked, but never with malice. Alec's love of music had been encouraged by the Salvation Army when their band played at street corners, though it was some time before he could be persuaded that the coppers he collected were for their charitable work and not for his pocket!

After the cinema the return journey to our village was occasionally hazardous. The first group to leave would head home and sometimes without warning knock on someone's front door and run. Those who followed had to run even faster to pass that door before the irate occupant shot out onto the pavement. It was even more dangerous when six foot Jimmy stood on his doorstep. He had an unfortunate eye-squint and would already be on edge with all the door knocking going on. A careless derisory comment from anyone and Jimmy's anger would stampede us into a gallop. I would return home and flop exhausted onto a chair in the kitchen where my mother would often be cleaning the brass. I still feel a little breathless at the sight of a tin of Brasso!

HAF.

THE HIGHEST BIDDER!

From the Fine Rolls Oct 26 1413

Commitment to Thomas Walwayn esquire and Robert Vynter, clerk of the keeping of the alien priory of Bergevenny in South Wales 10 marks provided also that if any other person shall be willing without fraud to render more for the said keeping by Easter next, then the said farmers shall render thereafter such larger sum, or be removed from the said farm at the will of the king.

St Mary's Research Group

EDITOR'S PLEA

How nice it would be to be merely an editor and not a contributor as well. There must be amongst 200 society members just a few budding authors who could produce something of interest without being goaded. Please get out your pens and don't leave it till the last minute! Many thanks, of course, to current contributors.

Ken Key.

THE STORY BEHIND THE MEREDITH MEMORIAL
IN THE CHANCEL OF LLANELLEN CHURCH

Glan Usk House was built in 1708 and is situated near the river Usk in the lane leading from Llanellen Post Office to Llanover Church. For many generations it was the home of the Meredith family. Giles and Joan Meredith had five children, their names being Giles, Catherine, Anne, Mary and Cecily. Their father died in 1731, to be followed quickly by Giles (1736) and Anne (1737).

In 1737 their Aunt Mary and her husband made a claim to the estate because the young girls were Roman Catholics and incapacitated. The claim failed because the family continued to live there. The last of the daughters, Cecily, died in 1788 and requested the erection of the memorial tablet which is positioned in the chancel. Cecily, in her will, left £20,000 to John Williams who was vicar of Llanellen Church from 1770 to 1780.

H.W.Gilbert.

LICENCING JUSTICE IN 1687

From the Calendar of Treasury Books 1685-89

To the Justices of Peace in Co Monmouth. We have received a petition from Christopher Churchey, an inhabitant of Abergavenny, showing that he inhabits a house there which has been used as an inn for above 100 years and has been kept by his father, mother and himself for above 60 years in which time they have always kept an orderly house and for many years past have paid the king after the rate of £50 p.a. for the excise of beer and ale brewed and expended in the same house; that he is tenant therein to Chas. Price esq., and is obliged by covenant to grind all his corn at the mill of the said Price near that town; that Sir Jas. Herbert, Thos. Herbert, Wm. Herbert and Robt. Gunter esqurs., being relations and Justices of Peace in said town and some of them having mills near the said Price's mill, have refused for four years past to grant petitioner a licence to sell beer and ale in the said inn with no default assigned in him but that he refuses to grind his corn at one of their mills; further that about six weeks since he brewed some drink against a fair to be held at Abergavenny on May 3 last and entered same with the ganger and paid the duty and by direction of the ganger sold some part thereof on April 30, at which time many persons came into the town to attend the fair; that thereupon the Justices have issued their warrant for committing him to the house of correction for a month whereby he is forced to quit his habitation and neglect the affairs of his farm of the wine licences which he holds under His Majesty. We apprehend this case to be very severe on petitioner and prejudicial to the revenue. We desire you to withdraw and suspend the said warrant and to grant him a licence to sell beer and ale in his inn as formerly, or show cause why you refuse.

St Mary's Research Group.

THE GOLDEN LION

(6 Frogmore St. Later THE SUGARLOAF)

One of the oldest establishments in Abergavenny, THE GOLDEN LION gave its name to Lion Street and certainly dates back to the early 17th century. At that time John ap William Parry of Pen-y-Clawdd bought the inn from William Lloyd. The tavern is next mentioned in a document dating back to 1667 when the proprietor was Elizabeth Rumsey.

In 1678 Father David Lewis, the Catholic priest arrested for saying mass in the secret chapel at the Gunter Mansion in Cross Street, was brought to the LION for questioning by John Arnold J.P. He was hanged, drawn and burned at Usk on August 27th, 1679.

By 1732 the pub had been rebuilt and advertised to be let:

'To be lett immediately. In the town of Abergavenny The Ancient Lyon Inn.....containing five rooms on the first floor, seven on the second and third floors each, also two cellars, one Brewhouse, two Stables, a large Garden and Backside and three pieces of Meadow ground thereunto adjoining.'

A map of 1760 shows a 'Fives Court' in the tavern yard and for many years horse sales were held there as well.

In 1830 the annual meeting of the Abergavenny Union Society (a friendly society for tradesmen) was held at the inn. By 1840 a coach was sent daily to meet the Bristol to Newport packet boat across the Severn.

In 1980 the name was changed to THE SUGARLOAF, and in 1986 the pub finally closed after more than 300 years in business.

Licensees: William Lloyd (early 17th century), John ap William Parry (early 17th century), Elizabeth Rumsey (1667), E. Taylor (1822), Mary Jayne (1835), William Crump (1842), John Tucker (1850-1852), Mrs Amelia Dew (1858-1865), Edward Lewis (1871-1877), S. Perris (1884), Charles Knight (1891-1895), James Bell (1901), James Harding (1906), Edmund Evans (1910-1912), Walter Hall (1920), Amos Jones (1926), Wilfred and Lena Mary Walbeoff (1944-1963).

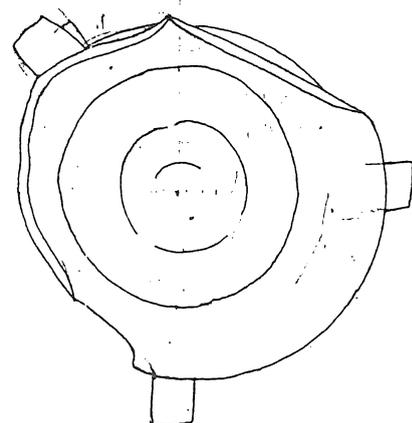
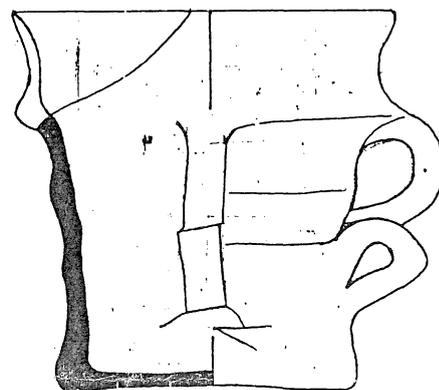
Frank Olding

THE LOST PUBS OF ABERGAVENNY

Frank has asked me to remind you that this exhibition is on at the Museum throughout July and August.

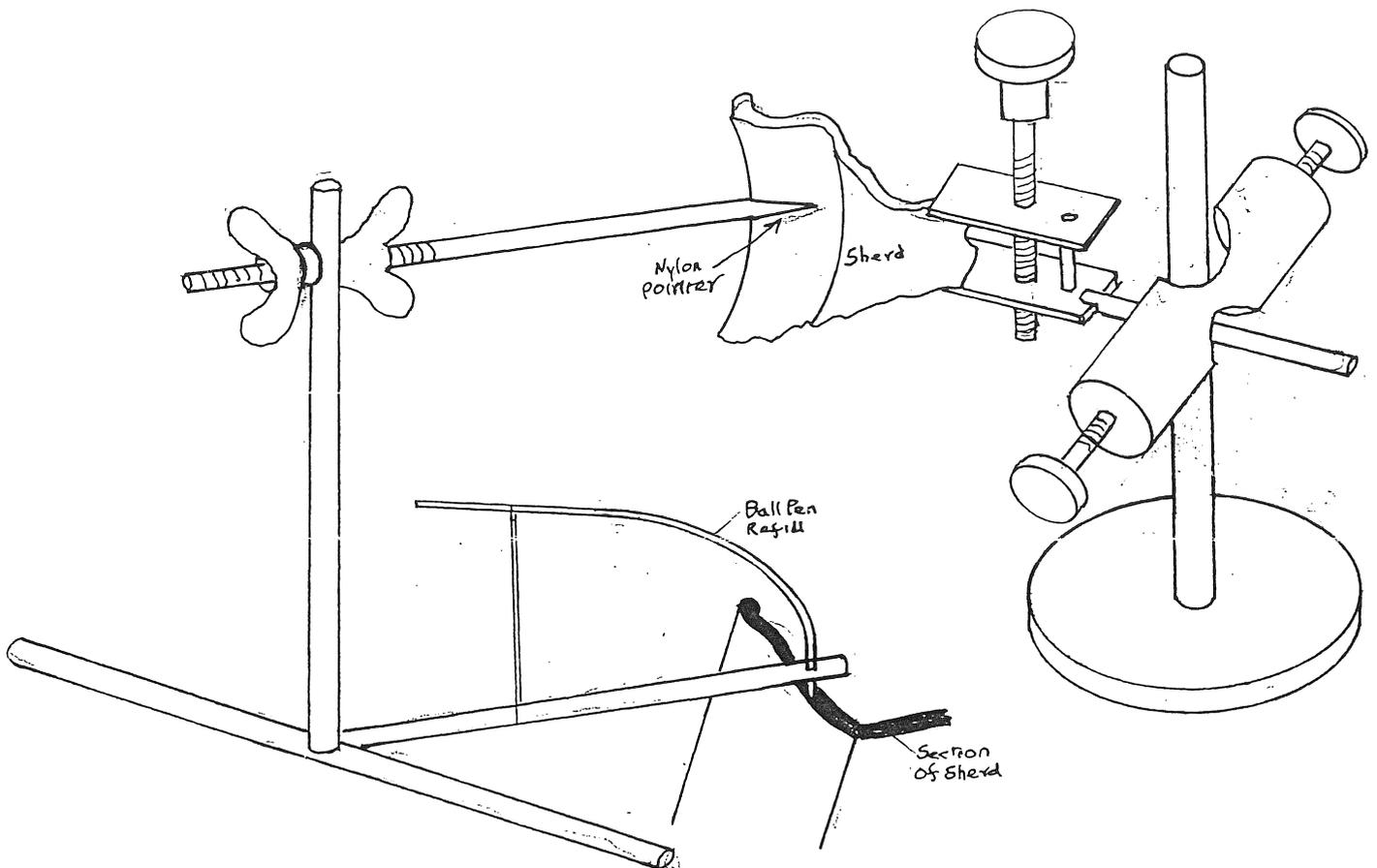
DRAWING SHERDS

As one who failed Matriculation Art (they gave me a gas mask to draw!) I found great difficulty in recording the many sherds from the excavation in Castle Street in 1971. The usual method was to press wire or cored solder around the pot and use this to draw the outline. There were some clever lines of pins which could be pressed onto the contour of the pot but all these methods were inconsistent in result and thus none too accurate. The method which I devised involved a framework of rods which held a pointer vertically above a ball point pen refill and is shown in the diagram on the next page. In order to set the pointer, a thin sheet of tin was held vertically in the clamp and the wing nuts were adjusted until the sheet could be drawn with its correct thickness by pointing at right angles to it on each side. The pointer was then carefully bent sideways until the sheet could be drawn with its correct thickness with the pointer on each side and as nearly in line with the sheet as possible.



The sherd was then placed in the clamp with its rim vertical and its centre on a level with the pointer, which was preferably made of Nylon so as not to damage the sherd as it was traced around it.

It was possible to estimate the rim diameter by matching it with concentric arcs of circles and if the base was also available, this could be used as a check. If the pot had been turned and not too distorted in the firing, a fair drawing could result.



A great many fragments of brown pub mugs were found on the Castle Street site. There was a pub in Lower Castle Street and another further down Castle Street. Perhaps one of the "Completely Lost Pubs of Abergavenny" was on the site itself - who knows?

These mugs are not remarkable but shown on the previous page and drawn using this apparatus is a most interesting six handled 17th. century tyg found in Flannel Street which is on display in the museum.

There were, of course, a vast number of pubs in the vicinity of Flannel Street and I am assured that the tyg was not, in the language of the archaeologist who hasn't a clue, "ritual" but was in fact an "imbibing vessel". Why six handles?

Ken Key.