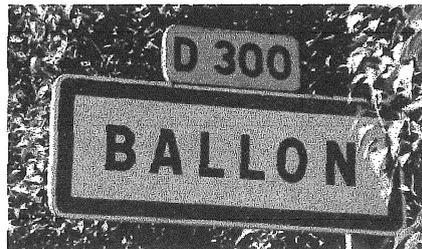
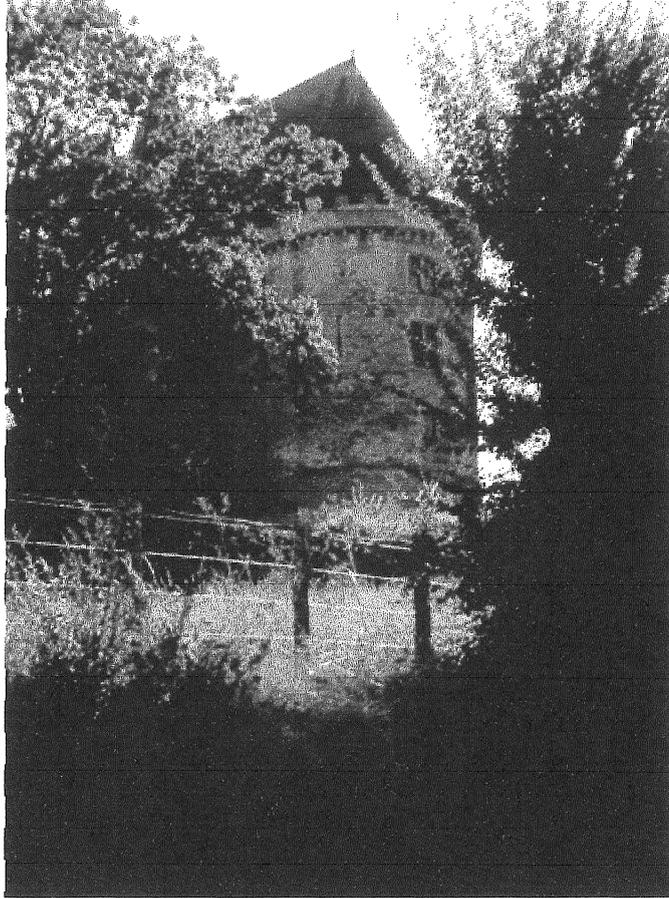


**ABERGAVENNY LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**



**NEWSLETTER No 14
AUGUST 1998**

BALLON

Hamelin the first Lord of Abergavenny was born in Ballon, a typical French town some few miles north of Le Mans.



His castle in Abergavenny was probably made of wood and only later took the form of a round tower in stone. The present Victorian folly was built as a shooting lodge and now houses our excellent museum

Ballon, like Abergavenny, has a promontary on which stands its Donjon. Some twelve years ago two ladies showed me round and introduced me to the owners. Unfortunately my camera failed to take many photographs of the interior. Two years ago I visited Ballon again. Unfortunately the Donjon was closed on Wednesday and only open in the afternoons during the summer and I had a ferry to catch. I hope my pictures of the outside might encourage people to visit both the Donjon and its gardens.

Ken Key.

PROGRAMME 1998-99

1998		1999	
Thur 24th Sept	Mr Arthur Peploe CHATEAU OF THE LOIRE	Thur 21st Jan	Mr Frank Olding LANDSCAPE ARCHAEOLOGY OF GWENT
Thur 22nd Oct	Mr Andrew Helme MONMOUTH AND THE NELSON CONNECTION	Thur 25th Feb	Mr Richard Keen COLLARS COGS AND GOBS Memories and images of the South Wales Coalfield
Thur 26 Nov	Mr Brian Scott THE CISTERCIANS Mediaeval Art and Architecture	Thurs 25th Mar	Mr Arthur Peploe THE HIDDEN WORLD OF MISERICORDS
Thur 17th Dec	MEMBERS CHRISTMAS DINNER at The Lamb and Flag Hotel Abergavenny 7 for 7.30 p.m	Thur 29th April	Mrs M O'Keefe JOHN ARNOLD OF LLANVIHANGEL CRUCORNEY. A story of 17th century anti-Catholicism
The Society meets at The Borough Theatre at 7.30 p.m.		Thur 27th May	The 22nd Annual General Meeting followed by Mr John Van Laun A NEW LIGHT ON TRAMROADS IN SOUTH WALES

Members subscriptions are due after the A.G.M.

MONUMENTS RESTORATION AT ST MARY'S

The photograph of Sir John de Hastings on the front cover of our Society's 1998/99 lecture programme was chosen to commemorate the final stages of the outstanding mediaeval monuments restoration project at St Mary's Priory Church.

That the monuments have been saved is the vital issue but members may be interested in how the Local History Society became involved. My brief account is based on filed correspondence and Local History Society minutes.

When Eric Finney and I began conducted tours of *St Mary's church with adult and school groups* about fifteen years ago, we soon became concerned at the deteriorating state of the monuments. In particular, rising damp and a leaking roof had caused considerable damage to the *alabaster figures*; repair work that had been attempted was of a very low standard and the Royal Arms of Queen Anne was almost beyond repair.

We aimed to encourage awareness of the situation at St Mary's and formed a sub committee of the Local History Society (Eric Finney, Howard Pullan, Ken Key and myself) and wrote seeking advice and financial support.

* in summer 1985 to The Council for the Care of Churches who replied that action had to be initiated by the Parochial Church Council.

*in December 1985 to Canon Morgan Clements advising him of the content of the above letter.

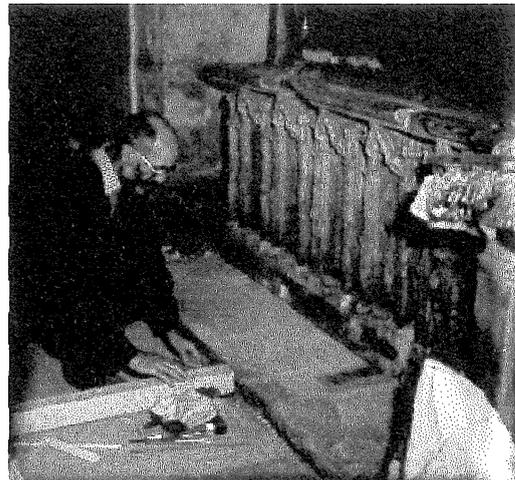
*in June 1986 to the Church Monuments Society.

*in July 1986 to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

It was not until 1987, after the Rev. Colin Sykes came to St Mary's, that a meeting was at last arranged between the Local History Society sub committee and a small group of PCC members led by Colin. We passed details of our contacts and correspondence to him. He collected us together as a *committee with the late Peter Williams as our outstanding chairman*. Colin arranged the all important gathering of interested bodies in St Mary's in November 1991 to receive advice on sources of finance and selection of monument restorers etc. Claude Blair emerged to guide us through that first meeting and has been our invaluable adviser and inspiration ever since. The Monuments Restoration Committee met for the first time in December 1991.



The Bedesman



Mike Eastham Restorer at work

Gwyn Jones.

Chairman M.R.C.

FAIRY LORE IN 18th CENTURY MONMOUTHSHIRE

We all enjoyed **Frank Olding's** talk on fairies but the copy he has given me does no justice to his most entertaining and humorous delivery. However, the following extract deserves repeating. The time and the language is of 1733 but just imagine Frank talking as you read it.

A Mr. Edmund Miles of Ty yn yr llwyn in Ebwy-vawr, and some young Men of the neighbourhood, going with him a hunting, to Langattock Crickhowel, in Brecon-shire . . . Among others a brother of mine went with him, Mr. Miles being my father's Landlord. After hunting a great part of the day, and they had sat down to rest, when they were concluding to return home, up started a Hare just by them. After which the Hounds ran, and they, after the Hounds. After the Hare had given them a long chace, the Hounds followed it to the Cellar-window of Richard the Tailor, who kept the Publick-house in the Village of Langattock, and challenged the Hare at the Cellar-window: that Village at that time being very infamous for Witches in all the Country round, and this Man among the rest was believed to be one, and one who resorted to the company of the Fairies. This begat a suspicion in the company that he was the Hare which had played them that trick; to make it too late for them to return home, that they might stay to spend Money at his House that night. It being now too late to return home, and being weary, they did stay there. But they were very free in their suspicions and reflections upon him. Mr. Miles who was a sober wise Gentleman, altho' of few words, was not without his suspicion, with the rest, though he persuaded them to speak less. And when my brother, some time in the night, wanted to go out to make water, Mr. Miles, and others with him, dissuaded him from going out, but to do it in the house; which he disdaining to do, ventured to go out; but did not return; which after waiting a while, the company became uneasy, and very stormy, and abusive in Language to the Man of the House; threatening to burn the House if my Brother did not return, and so troublesome were they, that the Man and his Wife left the Room, and went to bed. The company were still waiting, and expecting his return, and slept little. Next morning, not very early, he came to them. They were exceeding glad to see him, tho' he appeared like one who had been drawn thro' Thorns, and Briars, with his Hair disordered and looking bad, who was naturally a stout Man, and of a good healthy complexion. They were very curious to know where he had been, and what had happened to him. He told them he had been travelling all night in unknown, rough ways, and did not know where he was, until early that day, he saw himself at Twyn Gwnlliw, near the entrance to Newport Town, where he helped a Man, from Risga, to raise a load of Coal which had fallen from his Horse. Suddenly after he became insensible, and was brought back into the place from whence he had been taken. In a few hours therefore he must have been carried, by these infernal spirits thro' the Air, more than twenty Miles, for so long is the way from Newport to Langattock Village . . . After this he became sober and penitent . . ."

SUMMER VISITS 1997

The highlight of our summer visits program was probably the tour of the Prior's Lodging at Much Wenlock Abbey. It is only very occasionally open to the public and we were lucky to be shown around by the owner Mr Louis de Wet who with his wife the actress Gabrielle Drake was carefully restoring the building which was begun in the 11th century. Before this visit our guide Arthur Peplow had taken us around the imposing ruins of the abbey itself.

After lunch we went on to Shipton Hall, a delightful Elizabethan stone manor house built around 1590 with a parish church dating from the Saxon period.

Our summer programme began with a visit to Runnymede where we saw two of the three memorials on the site. The first was the Magna Carta memorial commemorating the sealing of the charter by King John in 1215 and the second the John F Kennedy memorial. The third memorial on the top of the hill was the Air Force memorial commemorating by name the 20,000 airmen killed in World War 2 who have no known graves.

Afterwards we went on to Apsley House the homes of the Dukes of Wellington since 1817. Situated at Hyde Park Corner its address is No 1 London The house contained wonderful displays of the first Duke's collection of paintings, porcelain, silver, sculpture, furniture and his orders and decorations.

Our first evening visit was to Sheldon Manor a Plantagenet manor house lived in as a family home for 700 years. There were many treasures to see in the house and the garden had a profusion of old fashioned roses.

Trivora near Skenfrith was the destination for our second evening visit. It was a very interesting old house which was shown to us by the owner Mr Iori Harries.

For our last visit we went to Gloucester to the National Waterways Museum which tells the exciting story of 200 years of the inland waterways. Situated on three floors of an old warehouse it brings to life the rich fascinating pattern of canal life.

After lunch we took a short cruise down the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal on board Queen Boadicea II one of the Dunkirk little ships.

Alan Spink.

FLOODLIGHTING

Celebrate an anniversary! Floodlight the Castle for £4 per week
Kath Spink will take orders at meetings.

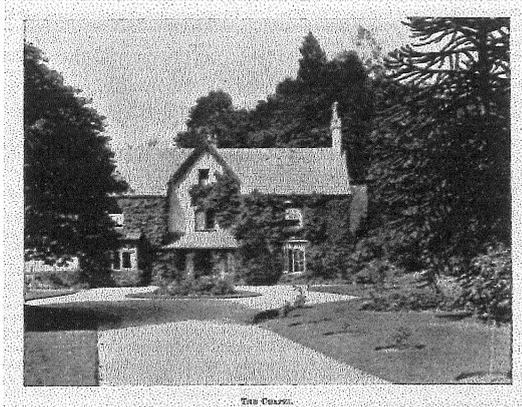


CHAPEL ROAD

My friends and relations in England who have never visited my house in Chapel Road imagine that I live in a deeply religious sabbath keeping community centered on an ecclesiastical building typical of Welsh nonconformity. Chapel Road has always puzzled me and I vowed that when I retired I would research the name. However, in desperation for newsletter copy I have turned my thoughts very briefly and temporarily to the problem.

The nearest place of worship is of course Christchurch in North Street which, when I came here in 1956, was made of corrugated iron and has always been known in my family as the 'Tin Tabernacle'. There is a lot of history to this place which would warrant an article in this journal but it seems unlikely that it is in any way connected with Chapel Road.

Avenue Road changes into Chapel Lane which joins Chapel Road near The Chain. Here is another piece of history. There is a sort of by-pass from the Old Hereford Road running above the council estate and into Chain Road which crosses Chapel Road and along Pentre Road to the Brecon Road. This must have been quite an important thoroughfare since a chain was drawn across it for the purpose of collecting tolls. On the side of Chapel Lane remote from Chapel Road there is a long tithe barn now converted into separate residences. There is



more history here since the barn belonged to the monks of the priory. The Cybi brook nearby is made into several ponds and it maybe this was where the monks bred fish. If you venture through the arch you will discover behind the tithe barn a house known as The Chapel. There is little doubt that this is a dwelling house and according to Bradney's History of Monmouthshire it was a dwelling house as far back as the early 1400's. Bradney suspects that there may have been a chapel to St David on the site or nearby or even in part of the barn. It may be

that before the Chapel Road houses were built there could have been some access from Chapel Road across the fields. I think this may be stretching imagination.

There is one more remote possibility. My daughters used to keep two horses in a field next to Newhouse on the approach to St Mary's Vale. They walked up Chapel Road past Llwyndu Lodge and picked up a short cut on the left up through the fields to the farm. I can remember a large cider press in the field. I wonder if it is still there? Just below our field at Newhouse there was the shell of a building with no roof known as St David's which some years ago was converted into a house of the same name. I wonder if this was the chapel which gave my road its name?

I have been retired now for more than ten years. I have never been busier but it really is time to visit the Records Office to find out which Councillor or Improvement Commissioner decided that my road should be called Chapel Road.

Ken Key.

ROYAL VICTORIA BREWERY

Before acquiring the Dragon's Head in Nevill Street from his future father-in-law in 1825, William Ellis was a simple yeoman. He began his career as a brewer by leasing Isaac Wyke's new brewery in Lion Street in February 1827, when he is described as a "traveller". By 1839, he was building on a plot of land near the Grofield Inn in Baker Street (Now the glass shop) and, shortly after, opened a new brewery there known as the Royal Victoria Brewery. In 1880, an Abergavenny Octogenarian recalled that:

"This Mr. Ellis lived at the Lower Pentre, and one night, on his way home, he fell off his horse, and dislocated his neck, and was killed."

William Ellis was still at the brewery in April 1852. He is described in a receipt of that date as "Ale and Porter Brewer To Her Majesty by Appointment". By July 1853, the brewery was in the hands of Francis Purfrey and Co. It seems likely therefore that William Ellis fell off his horse sometime between April 1852 and July 1853. Francis Purfrey also lived at the Lower Pentre (now known as Pentre Court) and is recorded as bankrupt in 1855 [Cox and Cox,p.61].

By 1858, the brewery was owned by Samuel Trotter. Trotter had begun business in Monk Street by 1842 and seems to have retained his interest in the business there for some time, certainly until 1862. By then, he had retired and the business had passed to his daughters, Susan and Emma, who employed a manager at the Royal Victoria by the name of Henry John Higginson. By 1865, Higginson had been replaced by John Dawes and the brewery was known as the Abergavenny Brewery.

By 1868, the business had passed to Nathaniel Cook. He seems to have fallen into financial difficulties, as his water was cut off in that year! In 1871, the owner was Joseph Cooke and the place had reverted to its original name. From 1873, the owner is recorded as Edward Phillips, though by 1880 he had moved on to the Tyne Brewery in Newcastle upon Tyne. The owner in 1884 was James Gough (Royal Victoria) who also owned the freehold on the Old Fountain Inn in Frogmore Street. He put the brewery up for sale in 1888 and the sale particulars give a very detailed description of the premises:

"The premises are most substantially built and comprise: spacious covered yard, capable of stowing 500 empty barrels with ample room for drays and other purposes, Malt House with cistern capable of wetting 15 quarters; Store Rooms with malt bins capable of holding 600 sacks of malt. The Brewery comprises: Tun Rooms, Water Tank, Stores, extraordinarily large and compact Cellars, Hop-rooms, and every other requisite building for carrying on an extensive Malting and Brewing business; also a well with a never failing supply of water, worked by a steam pump; Manager's house containing underground kitchen with cellar, larder and pantries. On the first floor: Breakfast Room and Dining Room; on the second floor: Double Drawing Room, with folding doors; Bedroom and W.C. and three Bedrooms

on the third floor. Also another dwelling house suitable for a foreman and containing five rooms together with a commodious counting-house and office . . . also . . . Two Dray houses, excellent stabling for 12 horses and a Coachhouse with loft over the whole, two harness rooms, and large open yard. The whole . . . shall be taken . . . at the sum of £150."

In November 1896, Edwin Morse, the then owner, leased part of the premises out to the Conservative Club.

Frank Olding

CHURCH STEWARDS

The Rev Jeremy Winston has asked me to thank all those members of our Society who watch St Mary's church on Wednesday afternoons. In turn I am grateful to all those who help me to compile the rota. We are all getting older and I need to replace some of our members who feel they need to drop out. VOLUNTEERS PLEASE.

Ken Key

EDITOR'S PLEA

The 1997 newsletter was rewarding because many of you got out your pens and sent me contributions. This year I have almost had to write the thing myself.

I find it difficult to believe that among our 200 members there are not more of you who have houses, roads, reminiscences, old maps, family history and even NEWS which would make the 'Newsletter' worth publishing.

I have just spent a weekend with a lovely family from our twin town of Beaupreau. I wonder if there are any similarities with our own town which would make an interesting story. The same might be suggested about Ostringen or Sarno.

What about it?

Ken Key