



Abergavenny Local History Society



NEWSLETTER No 29

AUGUST 2013

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email alhs@live.co.uk to be put on the Society's emailing list.

www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk

Charity registration number 1098582

PROGRAMME

2013

Thurs. 26th. Sept	Dr. Ray Howen MEDIAEVAL CAERLEON.
Thurs. 24th. Oct.	Elizabeth Belcham THE BAD GIRLS OF SWANSEA.
Thurs. 28th. Nov.	Rick Turner HOW TO BUILD A CASTLE - CHEPSTOW
December.	NO LECTURE

If you have not renewed your membership, please send your subscription (£10 per person payable by 1st May) to the Membership Secretary as soon as you can so that your new card can be sent to you

2014

Thurs. 23rd. Jan.	Jenny Moody JOSEPH HARRIS; BLACKSMITH. ASSAY MASTER AND ASTRONOMER
Thurs. 20th. Feb.	Professor Chris Evans RISE AND FALL OF MERTHYR TYDFIL
Thurs 20th. March.	Dr. Celyn Gurden Williams LADY LLANOVER. WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
Thurs. 17th April.	Robert Protheroe Jones MILLIONS OF SPARKS WELSH INDUSTRIAL ART
Thurs. 22nd. May.	37th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Followed by : Frank Olding Title to be announced

THE SOCIETY MEETS AT THE BOROUGH THEATRE AT 7.30 pm.

Please bring your card to all meetings.

Social events and visits will be publicised separately.

CONTACTS

Email: alhs@live.co.uk

The society website is www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

On behalf of the society I would like to thank all members, especially the committee, who have worked hard on behalf of the society during the year.

Oliver Russell has continued to supply the committee with monthly financial reports and keeps a close eye on the finances. He reports to the Charity Commission and keep us all up to scratch with record keeping and risk management. Helen Morgan as secretary keeps accurate minutes and writes the Focus monthly magazine articles which have recruited several new members.

Marian Senior and Dai Morgan found excellent lecturers during the year and you will see that they have an interesting lecture programme for next season. Although they have started on the programme for 2014-5, they feel that new blood is needed and ALHS is looking for new programme secretaries – *please think about helping in this important role*. We have good support in the Borough theatre from the technical staff, for which Ken Key, Robert Bender and I operating the audio-visual aids are often thankful. Jane White and Jeanette Butt provide Fairtrade tea and coffee after lectures. Thank you also to all our volunteer fire stewards and card checkers who include Glynn Davies, Nick Tatum and Ann Walker.

Our Membership Secretary, Sue Smith keeps our members informed by email and post and works hard for the society in the background. She and David save ALHS many pounds by delivering cards and newsletters by hand. She tells me that we had 362 members at the end of April, and that, sadly, four current members died during the year. Membership has been falling slightly each year; most members join after personal contact, so ask all your friends if they would like to come! Since last May, 34 people signed in to the lectures as Visitors and donated a total of £26.10. Four of these visitors, so far, have become members.

Sue Smith also co-ordinates the Research Group and I would like to thank the volunteers for the past year: Nola Bates, Janet Constable, Sarah and Tony Gascoigne, Lavinia O'Brien and Chris Turvey. They are currently working on the Abergavenny Chronicle archives, an update of the Street Survey and Tony is looking at databases. Chris is also compiling a contents list for the Newsletters while helping Sue to tidy up the later history of the Castle. Paddy Beynon continues to maintain the Castle garden, with help from Lavinia O'Brien and Carolyne Watkins. She also sells the books and manages the commercial side, liaising with

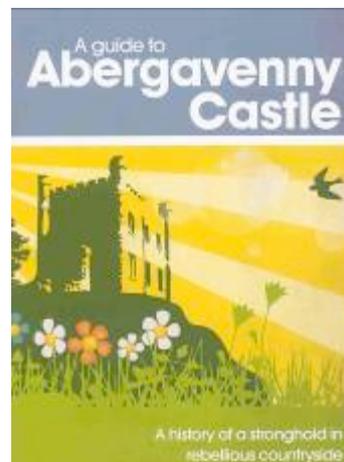
bookshops and customers, as well as arranging the floodlighting sponsorship. Hazel Buchanan has been helping Paddy and she also arranged an enjoyable visit to Treberfydd House last summer.

Thank you also to John Skinner who continues to find interesting venues for the visits programme and Margot Seabourne who has the difficult job of juggling the lists of those going on the visits, with many withdrawals and replacements, and of managing the finances. We are sorry to say farewell to Margot who has worked so hard for so long to give enjoyment to others and welcome Diane Bevan who will take over as visits administrator.

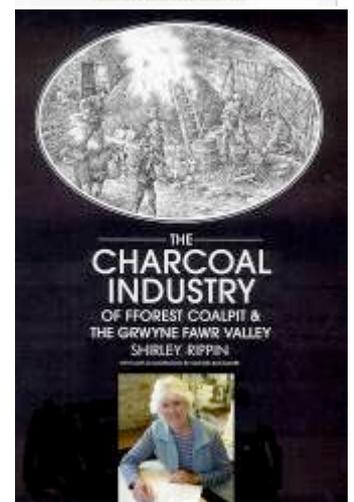
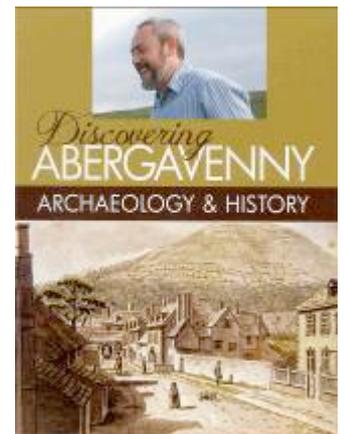
Helen and Dai Morgan and I represented the society at the Abergavenny Eisteddfod last year and the society donated one of the prizes, as we will do again on June 15th this year. We hope that, this year, the audience will be bigger for the evening concert which is of excellent quality and accessible to both Welsh and English speakers.

Rachael Rogers has arranged some interesting temporary exhibitions at Abergavenny Museum during the past year. The list of her activities that she reports at committee meetings is amazingly long. She has increased visitor numbers and is working with other organisations to utilise the resources of the museum.

Discovering Abergavenny: Archaeology and History by Frank Olding has sold well. We also published an information booklet *Abergavenny Castle* (available at the Museum)



and have just released the book *Charcoal Burning in Fforest Coalpit & the Grwyne Fawr Valley* by Shirley Rippin.



The renewed information panels in Abergavenny Castle are looking splendid as is the new



information panel by the wooden carving in Linda Vista Gardens.

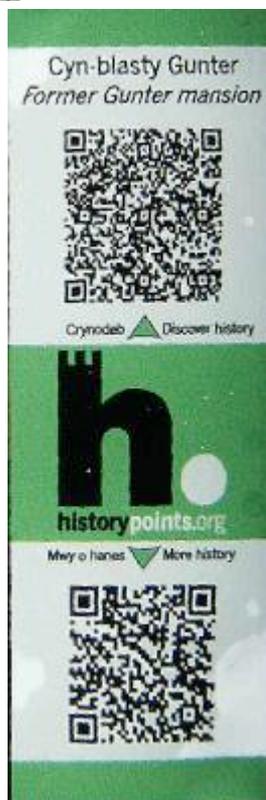


We are hoping to add to our ceramic plaques and are involving local schools with assistance from Jane White.

Our website offers guided walks to groups and several organisations have already booked up. Thank you to Dai Morgan, Jane White and

David Jenkins who offered un-booked walks last summer, but after low numbers, we decided not to offer these again. A self-guided walk around the blue plaques is available on the website and leaflets about the ceramic plaque trail from the Tourist Information Centre and other outlets.

"QR history points" are another of our projects to inform tourists and others about our heritage. For those who haven't seen them, they are small printed boxes with black squiggles in them. You point your smart phone at the squiggles and are connected to the website where you can



read a couple of paragraphs, in either English or Welsh, about the history of the building or area at which you are looking. There is one already, in the shop window (The Pot & Pineapple) on Gunter Mansion in Cross Street and others will follow soon. The website is: <http://historypoints.org>

The website www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk continues to develop, and Sue Smith, Helen Morgan and I keep it up-to-date and with new information. It receives around 100 "hits" a month, so is a useful advertisement and source of information. All the newsletters from past years are now available to read or download. The National Library of Wales has now collected a copy of all of the newsletters, as well as copies of all of our books. Ken Key, with assistance from Sue Smith, produces excellent quality newsletters, and they are always pleased to receive possible articles.



On a more sombre note, I know that some of you attended the memorial service for Gwyn Jones who died on 13th December 2012. Gwyn was a founder member of Abergavenny Local History Society in 1977 and was its chairman for 20 years before becoming its President. He was also one of the ALHS members who researched and wrote the Street Survey of the central streets of Abergavenny. He wrote several books on Abergavenny, including the Pre-historic, Roman, Norman and Medieval periods, and on the town's markets. He was a leading member of the committee formed to restore the monuments at St Mary's Priory Church.

Gill Wakley
Chairman
May 2013

2014 SUMMER VISITS

Saturday 17 May: National Botanic Gardens of Wales and Lunch. Dinefwr Castle and Park (National Trust). Tea in Llandeilo.

Thursday 5 June: Boscabel House (English Heritage) where the future King Charles II hid in an oak tree to escape Parliamentary pursuers. David & Barbara Powell our guides. Lunch in Bridgnorth. Steam train on the Severn Valley Line to Bewdley, then re-embark on coach and stop for tea on way home.

Afternoon Thursday 19 June: Jane White guides a tour of the local "Three Castles" with tea en route.

Evening Tuesday 1 July: Frank Olding's industrial archaeological tour, followed by a Pub Supper at the Mountain Air, our usual pub in Trefil.

Weekend Friday 25 to Monday 28 July:

Friday: Audley End House (often likened to a "Palace") Saffron Warden, Essex (English Heritage).

Saturday: Guided tour of part of Cambridge University, visit museums, etc.

Sunday: Sutton Hoo Anglo-Saxon royal burial site, ancient ship, exhibition hall (National Trust); p.m. visit Layer Marney Tower near Colchester.

Monday: Guided tour of St Albans: Roman site, museum, medieval Abbey, etc.

Thursday 7 August: Blenheim Palace and Lunch. Bourton-on-the-Water (miniature village, two museums) and Tea.

Further details, costs, etc, will be in my annual Visits' Letter. Please phone me if you have a query about next summer's programme, John Skinner

FUTURE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY VISITS

Many thanks to members who responded to my request in last November's letter for suggestions for future weekends. About the same number favoured weekend visits to Cambridge, etc (arranged for 2014) as those favouring Chatsworth House, Bolsover Castle, Haddon Hall, etc. Visiting the latter is likely to be on the last weekend of July 2015.

Members' suggestions are always most welcome.

Last year's Newsletter featured excellent articles recording aspects of our November 2011 World War I Ypres and Somme battlefields/cemeteries tour written by members who went on that tour. We are grateful to Bryn Seabourne for co-ordinating the input.

This July we shall go to Normandy to visit the beaches, other battle sites and Ranville Cemetery, connected with the Allied Landings of June 1944. Let's have some articles and photos for this trip for the 2014 Newsletter. Much obliged - in anticipation!

While planning the Normandy trip, I found that a nonagenarian member of the Probus Branch, of which I'm a member, fought throughout the Normandy campaign with his Welsh infantry battalion. Through his, Jane White's and others people's efforts, the French school and Abergavenny's Harold Road School were twinned. A group of children from the French school visited us recently and the History Society members on July's Normandy trip will reciprocate by calling at the French school. David will tell us of his experiences in battle-hit Normandy when he accompanies us on our tour.

WORK SHARING

All members who go on History Society visits will wish me to use this Newsletter to emphasise how indebted we are to Margot Seabourne for her sterling work during the past five years. Margot certainly did us proudly - when there were many other calls on her time and expertise.

Diane Bevan has very kindly agreed to fill the breach.

David Phillips, a committee member, helps this ageing organiser count, lead and help participants on our tours. If you ever feel like getting lost on one of our jaunts, and if Dave is with us on that jaunt, phone his mobile: 07989- 647981. Otherwise, ring my mobile (number below). Dave's help is greatly valued.

David and Barbara Powell guided our visit to Much Wenlock Priory in 2012 and they have offered to guide our trip to Boscabel House next June. We are planning another trip to Shropshire in the not too distant future. Most grateful, David and Barbara.

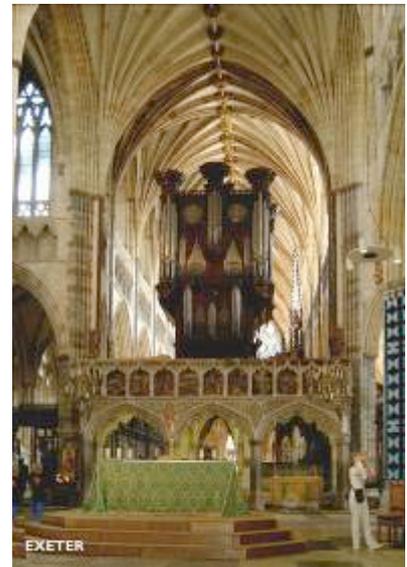
Many thanks are due to Jane White, a committee member, who has consented to guide next summer's "Three Castles" tour (Grosmont, Skenfrith and White Castle).

Patricia Cane volunteered to assist with printing, enveloping, addressing and mailing our History Society's annual visits' letter. Much appreciated, Patricia.

Frank Olding's annual industrial archaeology tours are always superb and so very well received by all members who accompany him. Many thanks, Frank.

John Skinner

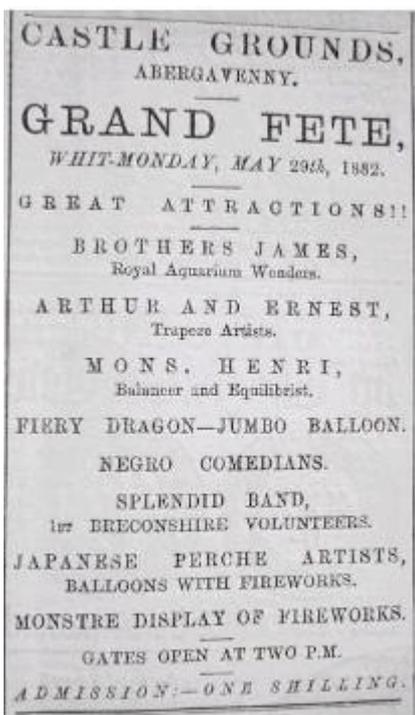
Visits Organiser





In July Frank Olding took us to Bedwellty House, built in 1818 and the home of Samuel Homfray, the ironmaster. Frank took a great part in restoring this place where he has his office amid beautiful gardens. We then visited Cyfarthfa to see the remains of the six blast furnaces of the largest ironworks of the time, built in 1765, closed in 1919 and finally dismantled in 1928. We also saw this remarkable bridge, the Pont-y-Cafnau, The Bridge of Troughs. It was built in iron by a carpenter with dovetailed and mortise and tenon joints. It carried a high level aqueduct from the Taff Fawr which fed the giant 48ft. diameter waterwheel to drive the blast furnace fans. A second aqueduct under the tramway led from the Taff Fechan and fed the brickworks machinery. After the visit we enjoyed a sumptuous carvery meal at the Mountain Air Trefil.

ALHS RESEARCH GROUP



An advertisement from the Abergavenny Chronicle, May 1882

Over the past year the Research Group has completed the task of finding out as much as we can about what went on at Abergavenny Castle between the building of Castle House in 1818 and the Museum opening in 1959. All the information has been put on to an external hard drive and handed to Abergavenny Museum, along with the archive of all the ALHS Summer Newsletters.

Our current project is to update the Abergavenny Street Survey, published by the Society in 1984, which gives the history of every building in the town centre (there are copies in Abergavenny Library if you haven't seen it), to get the survey digitised and ultimately put it all online.

If you enjoy looking at old documents, have an eye for detail and have an hour or two to spare most weeks, then please consider joining the group. Our aims are more about making data available for research than in completing the research ourselves but the more people we have, the more interesting projects we can attempt. Contact us if you think you might be interested.

Sue Smith

ABERGAVENTNY PRIORY AND LLANELEN

Llanelen lies about two miles south of Abergavenny and originally was a small, rather dispersed, settlement around the crossroads of the Abergavenny to Pontypool road and the Llanover to Llanfoist road. It was known as *Croes Llanelen* in a lease from 1618¹. The church is now dedicated to Helen, possibly the empress St Helena (*around 255-330*), reputed to have been born in Britain. Another suggestion is the North Wales saint, Helen of Carmarthen, wife of Maccsen Wledig, who was supposed to have introduced monasticism into Britain. It was called *St Helen* in 1100 – 6, *Sancta Elena* in 1254, *Llan Elen* in 1349, *Lanelyn* in 1385, and *ll.eelen* in 1566¹. Originally, *llan* described a circular enclosure, but has become synonymous now with the site of a church and suggests the church was established on this site before the coming of the Normans.

The Benedictine Priory of Abergavenny was established in 1087 by Hamelin de Ballon, the first Norman Lord of Abergavenny. The tithes from Llanelen parish were paid to the Priory from at least 1291, when they were valued at £1 in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*. At this date the total value of the assets of the priory were valued at £51 17s 10½d. In 1291, the Priory was listed as owning only a small estate of 240 acres and two mills in Llanelen, but in the fourteenth century, the map of South Wales made by William Rees suggests that the priory held the whole of Llanelen parish, an area of 3,000 acres (1,200 hectares). Also the current place name Coed-y-Prior, which was in use by 1571, suggests a more extensive holding, which is confirmed by the tithe map and apportionment which allocates Priory Wood to Abergavenny Priory. However, the amount of land in Llanelen parish shown as being tithe free is small. Holdings belonging to the Priory itself would not pay tithes.

After the changes due to the reformation, the priory demesne (land retained for its own use) was granted to William Harbert on 16th May 1538. Other lands in Llanelen were granted to James Gunter in 1546. The mill was let separately to Watkin Draper, but the site of this mill is unknown, as there are several possible sites of mills in the parish.

Gill Wakley

¹ Jackson V & Kissock J. *A Medieval Landscape: Llanelen, Abergavenny*. The Monmouthshire Antiquary (2013) Vol XXIX pp 3-7.

¹ Owen HW & Morgan R. *Dictionary of the Place Names of Wales*. (2008) Gomer Press.

WALKERS ARE WELCOME - CELEBRATING THE LAUNCH

Abergavenny was successful in its application and became the 100th town to join the Walkers are Welcome (WaW) organisation. This gives networking and promotional opportunities with the other WaW towns, raises the profile of facilities for walkers and local footpaths, and strengthens the town's walking reputation, bringing benefits to the local economy.

Abergavenny Local History Society supported the application and provided a well-received history walk (thanks to Dai Morgan and Jane White) on the day of the launch, together with a stand (provided by Gill Wakley) telling people about what we do. Our local history trails will now link into other walking and cycle trails to increase the number of visitors to the town, as will the QR points mentioned elsewhere.

Gill Wakley



LIVING AT ABERGAVENNY CASTLE IN THE 19th CENTURY

Scenes of life, death and scandal

In 1818 the Earl of Abergavenny arranged with his agent, Mr Baker Gabb, for the ruins of the keep of Abergavenny Castle to be pulled down and a house built to replace it. Castle House was built using the stone from the ruins but using the remains of the keep as foundations. At least forty loads of stone were hauled there for use, possibly for the lower part of the building and lodge. In 1887 it was said by an anonymous 'Octegenarian' in his *Memories of Abergavenny*, that Castle House had been built as a hunting lodge for the Earl by Baker Gabb. It is possible that, as Eridge Castle (the Earl's seat in Sussex) had been built on the site of an old hunting lodge, he felt it was appropriate to have a replacement, but there does not appear to be evidence for Castle House ever having been used by the Earl as a hunting lodge. There were already gardens at the Castle, some of which had been laid out by French officers who were prisoners of war based in Abergavenny. More trees were planted and benches provided for people passing by.

Baker Gabb gave the Castle as his address when he married Mary Ann Stead in April 1822. We don't know if he took his new bride to live there and it is possible that Castle House was used for the Earl's official business as it is named as 'The Court House' at this time. Estate accounts feature a number of repairs to the fabric of the building so there must have been a certain amount of 'settling'.



From December 1824 to September 1825 Charles Acock was paid to look after the Castle and again from July to September 1826 so nobody can have been renting the house in those periods.

In October 1826 an indenture was drawn up between the Earl and Thomas Paytherus for renting the Court House, the Castle ruins and Castle tump. A list of defective fittings was attached to this document and Mr Paytherus asked for the glass to be mended in some windows. We do not know who made up the household but a Mrs Paytherus, aged 67, died at the Castle in February 1830.

By 1835 Castle House was occupied by Michael Hansby, a general practitioner, and his family. Unfortunately the Census records for the Castle in 1841 are missing but several Hansby children were born in Abergavenny during this period and one, Michael, sadly died at the age of three in 1847. Some of the children must have been there to enjoy the excitement when canon were hauled to the Castle mound and fired to announce the start of the 1845 Eisteddfod.

The 1851 Census shows Michael Hansby and his family, now consisting of his wife, three daughters, two sons, a niece, an Assistant for his practice and three servants, all in Castle House. The Lodge was occupied by James Evans, a journeyman tailor (and Chelsea Pensioner) and his wife. In 1852 Mrs Mary Ann Hansby, wife of Michael, died suddenly and sometime between then and 1858 the Hansby family moved out and Castle House was taken on by William and Sarah Bellamy.

W.E. Bellamy, Esq., was a wine and spirit merchant and the couple came from Manchester. Mr Bellamy died suddenly at Abergavenny Castle on 3 February 1861, so did not live to see his wife's name mentioned in the 'Extraordinary Marriage Case of the Yelvertons'. A sister of the young Miss Teresa Longworth, Mrs Bellamy failed to arrange to meet her off a steamer from France, so leading to the impressionable young woman's first meeting with Major Yelverton. The Major fought in the Crimea and Teresa also went out there to work as a nurse. They went through an informal marriage in Edinburgh which the Major subsequently denied when he remarried. The scandal took up many column inches in the *Usk Observer* as well as in the national press. (Teresa Yelverton

never gave up her claim to be married. She took up writing to support herself and later lived in the USA and died in South Africa.)

When the 1861 Census was recorded Sarah Bellamy was at Castle House with a visitor and one female servant. The Lodge was not occupied but a tenant was expected. In 1862 Mrs Bellamy was again mentioned in 'Another

Yelverton Case' but in 1863 she made the press on her own account by taking action against Thomas Owen, a preacher, for committing damage to grass at the Castle. On 4 August a group of people had gathered at the Castle to hear Mr Owen preach, much to Mrs Bellamy's annoyance. She got her servants to bang pots and pans and ring bells in the hope of disturbing



the proceedings. This caused great mirth at the court hearing. Mr Walford, the Earl's agent, said that there were two rights of way across the Castle grounds from Castle Street to Mill Street and the grass was well worn already. There had been plans to make an official preaching area at the Castle but this had not yet been agreed with the tenant. Several witnesses confirmed that the Castle Green had been used for preaching for as long as anyone could remember and the late Mr Gabb, the Earl's previous agent, had placed seats there for public use. The judge declared that there was no case to answer as no damage was shown to have been caused, and the long-term use of the green made the case beyond the court's jurisdiction.

The next time Mrs Bellamy hit the headlines was in 1866 when her servant, Johannah Hagan, sued her for £3 12s 4d for unpaid wages, wages in lieu of notice and for assault. The Manchester Times as well as the Usk Observer covered this case. Johannah Hagan had been unwell and unable to work, so sent a message to say she had taken to her bed early. Mrs Bellamy first sent a boy to demand that Hagan went back to her work then came to her room and threw water over the unfortunate woman. The case was found and Hagan was awarded £1 19s 4d for damages and unpaid wages.

Mrs Bellamy was still living at the Castle when a terrible murder took place at Castle Walk on 14 February 1874. The Abergavenny Chronicle had been in publication for several years by then so it was able to cover the case in detail. The victim was John Nicholas, a shoemaker of Llanddewy Rhydderch, who died from blows to his skull. Three men and a woman were subsequently arrested and tried. Mrs Bellamy was not put off living at the Castle by this event and was mentioned again in 1876 when the Cambrian Archaeological Society visited the Castle and expressed regret that access to the place was denied the general public. They suggested that the ivy should be removed from the ruins but Mrs Bellamy protested against this idea.

She is last mentioned in Kelly's directory in 1877 as the occupier of the Castle but her lease was due to expire shortly and she was gone by 1880 when the Abergavenny Improvements Commissioners signed an agreement with the Earl to rent the Castle and grounds in order to open them to the public. A Mrs Smith at the Lodge was paid 10 shillings in compensation for the loss of crops from the garden. From then on Castle House was occupied by Wardens of the Castle and the Lodge by the Caretaker and a whole new phase of the Castle's history started.

With thanks to ALHS Research Group for the Abergavenny Chronicle items and Abergavenny Museum for the pictures

Sue Smith

AARON BRUTE'S BRIDGE, BLAENAVON

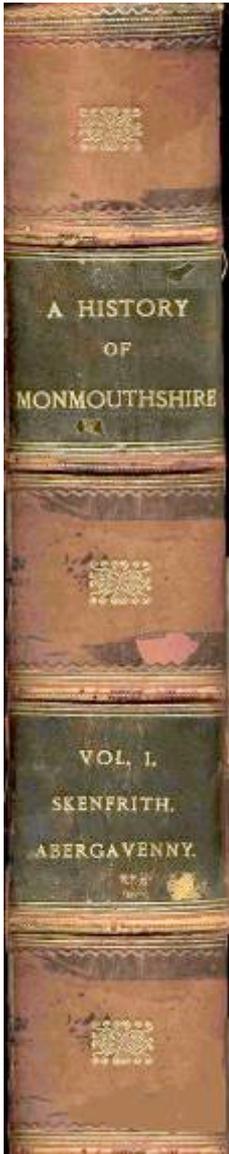
This bridge is due to re-open in May 2013. In 2012, Archaeology Wales, Torfaen County Borough Council, Cadw and specialist heritage consultants worked with contractors on a project to restore and consolidate the 200 year old cast iron bridge across the Afon Llwyd in Blaenavon. The bridge is thought to be one of the oldest cast iron bridges in Wales but had been neglected for many years and was in danger of falling into the river. The aim of the project was to lift the bridge and restore it, consolidate and rebuild the bridge abutments and weir, and return the bridge to use as a public footpath.



The bridge is known locally as Aaron Brute's bridge and is thought to have been built in the 1810s to carry trams laden with coal and ironstone from a small mine adjacent to the river to the ironworks in the middle of the town. The bridge was lifted in May 2012, after considerable efforts to protect it and ensure it did not twist and break. It was transferred to Penybryn Engineering, specialist conservators, who assessed its condition and designed ways of bringing it up to modern standards. Despite its age and the years of neglect, the bridge was in a reasonably robust condition. Unfortunately, all the plates forming the bed of the bridge were beyond repair and had to be replaced, and modern beams were necessary to take the weight of new steel plates. The metalwork was shot blasted to remove all the corrosion and painted, with the original elements painted a dark green and the modern structure black. New hand rails were attached, copying the style of the nineteenth-century fencing that survives along the line of adjacent tramway. The abutments were strengthened to hold the weight of the bridge and the new structural elements, and the weir was rebuilt. On 7th February 2013 the bridge was placed back on the abutments.

Gill Wakley *thanks the Council for British Archaeology (Cymru) for this information.*

JOSEPH BRADNEY and A HISTORY OF MONMOUTHSHIRE



Those of us who like to look things up, use Bradney's *A History of Monmouthshire*. I was interested to read about the man himself recently. He was not a historian, as his school, Harrow, only offered instruction in classics, mathematics, modern languages and natural sciences. He became rebellious and unruly in his later years at school, and was criticised for doing "other work" in school time, reading genealogy and antiquarian history which interested him more. He obtained an ordinary degree in classics at Trinity College, Cambridge, as History was not on offer there either at that time.

After he graduated in 1880, he came into the family estates in Monmouthshire, Wiltshire and Somerset, married, and rapidly became an establishment figure in the county of Monmouthshire. He was high sheriff, a county councillor, and alderman; a colonel in the territorial forces and a justice of the peace. His interest in the Welsh language led him to appoint Welsh speaking servants. His local history publishing activities were part of his role as a leading country gentleman and he had access to the records of many local landowners, gentry and farming families, as well as the archives held at the great country houses and local solicitors' offices.

His working papers, now in The National Library of Wales, show that he collected together large amounts of material, parish by parish before writing the history of each one. He was assisted by a William Deane, possibly from Abergavenny, who did most of the work in Somerset House and the Public record office, saving Joseph Bradney the trouble of travelling to London.

Between 1904 and 1913 he completed the volumes on the hundreds of Skenfrith, Abergavenny, Trellech and Raglan which I use frequently. Unlike many at the time, he did not include a preliminary volume on the natural history of the county, but launched straight into the details – the derivation of the name, the early history, the demographic information such as the area in acres, population 1801 -1901, manorial history, and descriptions of the larger houses (so invaluable today) and the pedigrees of families, followed by an account of the church and a list of its rectors, etc. His presentation was surprisingly modern in outlook with the use of photographs, plans of archaeological sites, maps, as well as line drawings of buildings and monuments.

His work is an invaluable source of information for genealogists, as well as historians with interest ranging from professional and occupational groups, land markets, social relationships and local politics. Unfortunately, he was amongst the many taken in by the forgeries of Iolo Morganwg, although he shows a little more critical assessment of some of the other information he received. He included few details of industrial history, perhaps unsurprisingly for someone of that era and living in what was a mainly rural area with only a few small urban areas.

Work on his Monmouthshire history was halted for the First World War and afterwards he worked more slowly with increasingly failing health on the remaining volumes, of which the last, Newport, was deposited, uncompleted, in note form in the National Library of Wales before his death in 1933.

Gill Wakley

Further reading:

Bradney, Sir J.A., *A History of Monmouthshire Volume I Part 2a The Hundred of Abergavenny (Part I)* Mitchell Hughes & Clarke, London, 1906, reprinted by Academy Books, 1991.

Rimmer D. (2013) County Histories of Monmouthshire and Gwent. *The Monmouthshire Antiquary* Vol XXIX pp103-117.

THE USK BRIDGE AT LLANFOIST

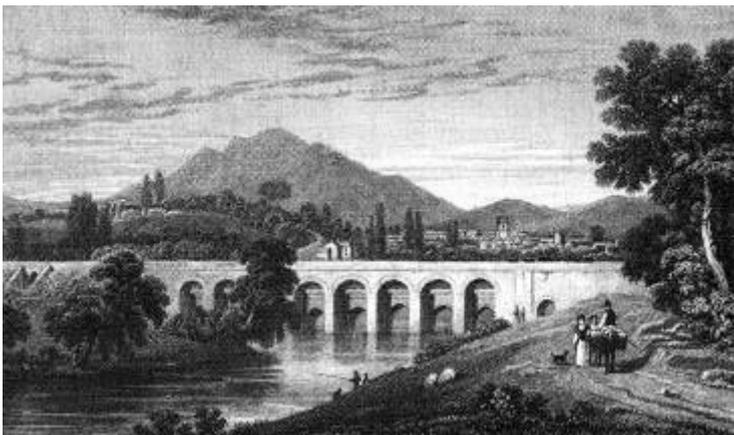


The mediaeval or Tudor bridge was constructed c1450 in the reign of Henry VI by Jasper Tudor, Duke of Bedford and Baron of Abergavenny.

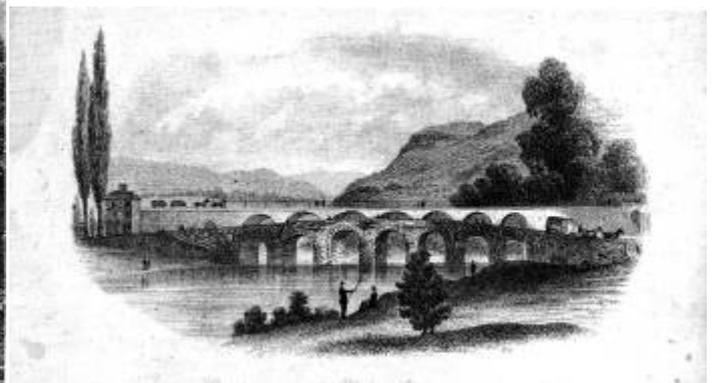
It is shown on the left in this 1784 watercolour by Joshua Gosselin.

In 1811 a tram road was commenced to carry coal, iron, lime etc from the canal at Govilon towards Hereford, initially terminating at Llanvihangel Crucorney.

The footings of the medieval bridge were extended, allowing the tram road to run alongside the road but 7 to 10 feet higher.



c1853 engraving, the bridges from the west

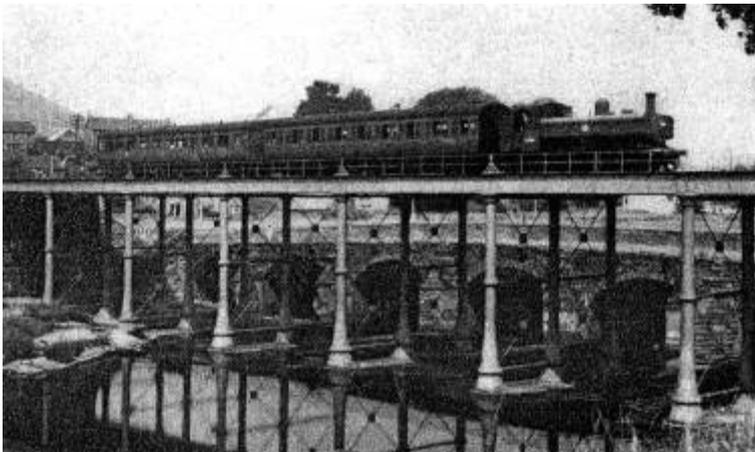


c1845 engraving, the bridges from the east

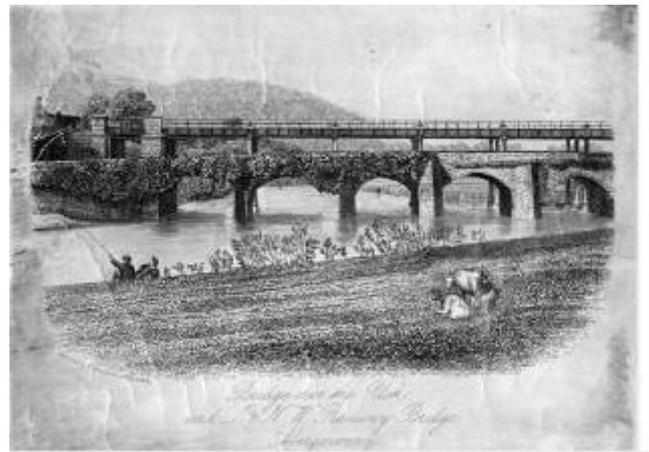
By the 1850s the Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway had taken over the tram road, using the existing single track line across the bridge.

In 1868 a new iron double track rail bridge was constructed upstream.

The existing rail line bridge was abandoned. It was lowered and re-arched to create a wider road bridge. The iron railway bridge was demolished in the 1960s.



c1950 photograph of the iron rail bridge



c1870 engraving of the iron rail bridge

Janet Herrod

Illustrations from the Abergavenny Museum collection.

CHURCH STEWARDING

The Society has always had an interest in St Mary's church and it was our Founder Chairman Gwyn Jones who, realising that we had the wonderful heritage of its monuments, started raising funds for their repair and founded the Monuments Restoration Fund. The result is that one of the finest collections of monuments in the country has been beautifully and expertly restored.

Newsletter No 4 published in August 1988 announced that a group of Local History members had agreed to steward St Mary's church each Wednesday afternoon. My wife Freda organised and I typed the first rotas but in 1989 she died and I took over and am about to publish the 76th. list. I am extremely grateful to the many people who on two or three occasions each year have spent the two hours helping and guiding visitors.

However, I have just suffered a small stroke and in my 89th year I feel it is time to hand this task over to someone else.

It is not particularly onerous. There is about a dozen people most of who are on e-mail and can manage to fit in with the rota. If not, then I need to do a bit of juggling to make sure each Wednesday is covered.

ANY VOLUNTEERS?

Ken Key

SUMMER VISIT AUGUST 2013

