



The South Wales Record Society

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Newsletter No.2 : April 2013

At the last AGM we were pleased to hear favourable comments about our first newsletter. Many of you live too far away to attend book launches and AGMs and so this is a means of keeping people in touch with the Society's aims and progress.

Professor Ray Howell, our general editor, discusses future publications.

I am pleased and quite excited by our new publication *War Underground*. Not only do the recollections of Michael Edmonds provide incisive observations of life underground in the 1940s but also interesting observations about the Valley Communities which were very new to him when he first arrived as a young 'Bevin Boy'. Readers will be struck by a new format for an innovative volume. The author became an artist of note in later life and full colour reproductions of some of his work appear in one of the most colourful books which the Society has produced.

We will endeavour to develop our 'new look' publications in future with some exciting new titles. After dipping into the diaries of Margaret Jones of Garth, members and other readers will be able to follow a life at sea setting out from Cardiff Bay and enjoy a bit of sorcery with 'Cas gan Gythraul', our first bi-lingual publication. But first, reserve your copy of *War Underground: Memoirs of a Bevin Boy in the South Wales Coalfield*.

Editing the volumes

Since the Society was established in 1982 there have been four general editors and 26 volumes have been published. Professor Chris Williams has edited his last volume and Professor Ray Howell has edited his first volume. It might not seem a good idea to publicise a book not published by the SWRS, but in the case of our former general editor, Chris Williams, we must make an exception. He has recently edited *The Richard Burton Diaries*, Yale University Press. ISBN 9780300192315. It was published on 4th September 2012 and has received many excellent reviews.

Dr Peter Wakelin describes how he came to edit Michael Edmonds' memoir, *War Underground*.

It is rare to edit a historical text helped by the original author (and rarer still if you go back a century or two, unless you believe in the ouija board). Working with Michael Edmonds on his memoir of being a Bevin Boy seventy years ago has been a privilege. While some authors of historical sources may have been people one would rather not spend time with, Michael has been a delightful and insightful collaborator throughout.

Michael wrote his memoir in 1947, when he was coming out of the mines and still a very young man. It was destined for publication by Methuen, but Michael was too preoccupied by starting his training as an architect to make changes the publisher was seeking. The typescript was put away in a drawer and lay forgotten for decades.

Cut to 2004, when I was curating an exhibition at the National Museum in Cardiff that included work by Michael, who by the 1950s was one of Wales' leading modernist artists. Michael appeared in person at the opening and we were introduced. The conversation soon flowed from art to industrial history, as I was then

just completing my guidebook to the Blaenavon World Heritage Site. Michael mentioned his unpublished memoir, and I said I would like to see it.

The typescript came in the post a few weeks later and I was impressed immediately by the young author's ability to combine obvious authenticity and accuracy with something approaching poetry in his love for mining landscapes and communities. Writing the book for the class-ridden audiences of the 1940s, Michael had wanted to counter the astonishing ignorance of the educated by explaining things they didn't know about the skill, intelligence and values of the South Wales miners. For him personally, the whole experience was a revolutionary journey from a solitary childhood on a Dorset fruit farm and at a minor public school into the comradeship and knowledge of 'down-in underground'. What for many might have been a terrifying inversion of life was an experience that Michael continues to look back on in his eighties as his 'gold brick in the cellar', a set of memories that grounded and enriched him on his way through life.

When I read it I had no doubt that the text was still potent in the twenty-first century, albeit in a radically different way than Michael had intended, for instead of exploring the present and future of a vital sector of the economy it was describing a world that no longer existed. I sent proposals for the book to several publishers, with disappointing results. What is history to many of us seemed like old hat to them, so I was delighted when the South Wales Record Society saw what the book could be and came to its rescue. Michael and I then worked together to bring out the great strengths of the original manuscript, check various versions for authenticity to the original memoir, cut out some of the material that seemed less helpful for a modern audience, and supplement it with a glossary, index,

notes, epilogue and introduction. A highly appropriate foreword was contributed by the former miners' leader and Cabinet Minister Dr Kim Howells.

Both Michael and I are extremely pleased with the work the Society has done to bring this book to fruition seventy years on from the experiences it describes. It is beautifully produced, illustrated by Michael's later drawings and paintings recalling his time in the mines. I'm sure that this wise, informative text will be a prime source about twentieth-century mining communities and how they kept at work in wartime. I can also promise a good read, about one young man's extraordinary experience of growing up.

Our President, Dr Maddy Gray discusses the Galilee Project and Volume 25

It's always nice to see Record Society publications being put to immediate use. I have been helping the Llantwit Major church and history community with a very exciting new project. They have raised a staggering amount of money to rebuild the ruined Galilee chapel at the west end of the church. This will give them a proper space to display their spectacular collection of early medieval 'Celtic' crosses. It will also provide much-needed facilities such as toilets and refreshment areas.

The leading lights behind the project were very excited by a reference in Christabel Hutchings' calendar of T. H. Thomas's correspondence. Document 660 in the calendar (pp. 244-5) is a letter from the Cardiff architect John Rodger describing some thirteenth-century crosses which he found in the foundations of the 'sacristan's lodging' at Llantwit Major. This lodging was of course part of the Galilee chapel. The project team are following up the reference in order to locate the drawings which Rodger made of the stones and which are now in the Thomas archive at St Fagan's.

I am myself intrigued to see that thirteenth-century memorials were being reused within a couple of centuries as foundations for a fifteenth-century chapel. The stones are probably among those now on display in the church. There are no plans to move the later medieval stones but the Galilee chapel will have an interpretative exhibition which will encourage people to look at what is in the rest of the church as well.

Excavation for a new floor has revealed several skeletons but they probably have nothing to do with the tombstones.

Dr Mark Lewis, Curator of the National Roman Legion Museum, discusses the importance of SWRS volumes in his historical research.

Adding History – New Discoveries from Ancient Sources

Existing history books, and church guide books written using them as their basis, cite Fr John (the wrecker) c. 1334 as the earliest recorded priest at my home parish of Caldicot, Monmouthshire. Reference to the SWRS volume *Llandaff Episcopal Acta 1140-1287*, edited by David Crouch, has facilitated access to two 'new' priests for Caldicot dating back to the mid-twelfth century. The tale of Sebric and Walter, the two priests, is a most interesting one and the reader is referred to pp5-6 for the beginning of their story which continues later in the volume. The interests of Llanthony-by-Gloucester Priory at Caldicot and their acquisition of the church of Dewstow are hugely important records which, with the story of Sebric and Walter, shed light on their early acquisition and mergers operations here.

The information on Caerwent and the foundation of its chapel at Crick is equally valuable. We learn that mass was said at Crick once a week, on Saturdays, and on Saturdays and Thursdays in Lent.

Leaping forward to the SWRS volume 'The Letters of Edward Copleston, Bishop of Llandaff, 1828-1849', edited by Roger Lee Brown, we find that the politics surrounding the appointment of priests had not changed much since Sebric's and Walter's time. Here we are introduced to the issues surrounding the ownership and sale of the presentation at Caldicot (p189). David Jones, the curate, was 'thrown out of employ' and 'at sea' as a result in 1834.

What their volume's title's often lack in snappiness, SWRS volumes more than make up for in usefulness to anyone researching in this area. Where else can we readily learn that the impotent and blind women of Caldicot were left 2s. towards their relief in 1596, as we do on p189 of SWRS' 'Monmouthshire Wills Proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 1560-1601' calendared and edited by Judith Jones.

Christabel Hutchings reveals how Belgian artist Emile Fabry's painting *War and Peace* was commissioned for University College Cardiff, but never installed.

Although a multi-faceted man, T.H. Thomas regarded himself primarily as an artist. Document 821 from volume 25, is a letter from Ernest Howard Griffith (1851-1932) who was Principal of University College Cardiff. The letter, dated 22 March 1915, is located in Thomas's archive at the National Library of Wales. Thomas was a member of University College Cardiff's Court of Governors, but also sat on sub-committees such as the committee set up to oversee the offer of a work of art, by Belgian artist Emile Fabry (1865-1966), to decorate the archway over the entrance to Cardiff University council chamber. Emile Fabry was probably one of the ninety-one Belgian refugees brought to Wales by the Davies sisters. Dr Polderman, a Belgian Professor at University College Cardiff, visited Belgium in 1914 to invite artists to Wales. It was hoped their presence would remedy the 'deplorably backward condition'

of Welsh art (*The Welsh Outlook*). Dr Polderman arranged for Fabry to receive a commission from Lord Plymouth to produce a work of art for the university.

Fabry was a Belgian symbolist painter and designer who had studied at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels under Jean-François Portaels, and worked with the designer Cir Jacques. David Tovey, in his book *Sea Change*, describes his work as revolving around the portrayal of suffering and grief through a depiction of wild-eyed figures. The large scale of the figures, the elimination of details, the intense expression, but most strikingly the deformation of faces give his images a hallucinatory effect. The letter reveals that Fabry's initial design was not acceptable because 'the subject was not suitable and the treatment too rude'. Obviously Fabry's artistic style was not appreciated by the committee entrenched in nineteenth century art and they wanted a work of art in the classical style. Fabry therefore produced a second design which was, according to the letter, entitled 'Peace and War'. It is now known as 'War and Peace'. The Principal of the University was having difficulty obtaining a quorum for the committee which was overseeing Fabry's design and Thomas was too ill to attend and died in the same year. The principal therefore sent a copy of the design for Thomas to see. What Thomas thought of the design we do not know. However, the committee eventually rejected it and it was never installed.

It came up for sale in January 2008. *War and Peace*, measured more than 13 by 22 feet. As you can see above, on the left side were figures depicting war and on the right side peace. The painting was first seen in public courtesy of Brussels-based dealer Patrick Lancz. He had discovered it rolled up in the home of a private Belgian collector, who had acquired it from Fabry's descendants. According to the dealer, the shimmering pointillist brushwork needed only minor restoration. It was much

admired by art critics and the public. Its idealized nudes and apocalyptic imagery was compared to the art of William Blake. As no one matched the asking price of €200,000 (\$294,000), it remained unsold.

Fabry's huge painting *War and Peace* is illustrated in David Tovey's book *Sea Change*. Tovey acquired twenty two of Fabry's portrait sketches executed in St Ives from Patrick Lancz and a number of these had originally been offered by Fabry to the National Museum of Wales without success. However, two of his works *War*, and *Woman with violin*, were donated to the Museum, It was a great pity that the painting was never installed in Cardiff University as today Fabry's work is highly regarded. Fabry spent most of the war at St Ives. Before the war he had been drawing master at the Brussels Academy and after the war returned to the institution gaining ever higher positions. His friendship with the architect Victor Horta led to numerous decorative works in public buildings in Belgium and he became an establishment artist. It is to be hoped that eventually this painting will be on view to the public.

References: David Tovey, *Sea Change: Fine and Decorative Art in St Ives 1914-1930* (Wislon Books, 2010); Jacqueline Guisset, *Emile Fabry, 1865-1966* (Brussels, 2000); *The Welsh Outlook*, November, 1914; Moira Vincentelli, 'The Davies Family and Belgian Refugee Artists and Musicians in Wales', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 22 (1981).

The Website

Andrew Dulley continues to do a magnificent job in keeping the website up to date and many books are purchased via this contact. See: www.southwalesrecordsociety.co.uk

Thanks to West Glamorgan Archives and Gwent Archives

We would like to thank Kim Collis of West Glamorgan Archives and Gary Tuson of Gwent Archives for their willingness to store our books. The storage of books was a problem whilst remedial work was being carried out at Swansea Guildhall, but now the stock has been rationalised between the two institutions and is in safe hands.

The Treasurer needs your help

Last year we decided to put up the subscription from £3 to £5. Many people have not renewed their standing orders or provided a gift aid form. Could you please do so, as we need to maximise our income in order to continue our work. Contact Richard Hutchings if you have any queries. rjh@hutchingspc.com. Thanks to those of you who have provided email addresses as it has reduced the cost of postage and duplication.

Extracts from Book Reviews

***Men at Arms. Musters in Monmouthshire, 1539 and 1601–2*, ed. T. Hopkins (South Wales Record Society, xxi, 2009), reviewed by John Morgan-Guy, University of Wales Trinity St David, in ARCHIVES, xxxvi, 2011**

The South Wales Record Society has established a reputation for producing varied and interesting volumes, not always on subjects usually associated with such enterprises. ...

With volume 21 the society returns to rather more traditional fare, the surviving records of the Monmouthshire Musters of 1539 and 1601–2, here meticulously and painstakingly edited by the county's Deputy County Archivist, Tony Hopkins. Hopkins is to be warmly congratulated on making sense on far from full or well ordered, let alone decipherable,

manuscripts. The militia was at this period regularly summoned and drilled under the direction of a county's deputy lieutenant, and the obligation to respond fell upon the majority of the sovereign's subjects. Manpower, horses and weaponry had to be provided, according to means. The 'Musters' are the lists of the men and the weaponry, and Hopkins' edition provides literally thousands of details, based upon E 36/42, E 36/26 and E 101/66/3 at the National Archives (TNA), and Bute MS G3 at the National Library of Wales. The lists provide information that will be of interest to genealogists and family historians, as well as to those interested in the history of weaponry.

Hopkins also provides a valuable introductory essay, which clearly – and rather alarmingly – reveals the archaic and ramshackle nature of the military organisation of sixteenth century Tudor England and Wales, especially when it is placed against the backdrop of tensions and uprisings at home as well as the threat of invasion from abroad. The essay also sets the 1539 and 1601–2 musters in their context, and analyses their content, as well as discussing the problems which arise in respect of individuals at a time when surnames were only beginning to emerge from the Welsh preference for patronymics. ... This is altogether an interesting and intriguing volume.

***The Swansea Wartime Diary of Laurie Latchford, 1940-4*, ed. K. Elliott Jones and W. Cope. (South Wales Record Society, 2010), reviewed by Peter Donaldson, University of Kent, in ARCHIVES, xxxvi, 2011**

This volume ... is a welcome addition to the growing body of work detailing life on the home front during the Second World War ... [and] it is relatively rare to find an account dedicated to the experiences of a single author ... Happily, Laurie Latchford was no ordinary diarist ... [as] he chose to concentrate as much on national and

international events, and his feelings about them, as on the impact raids by the Luftwaffe and the hardships of war generally had on him and his family. On the former, Latchford is particularly well informed, with his work as a customs and excise officer at Swansea docks allowing him access to some privileged information to supplement his own natural curiosity. Although denied, by dint of his reserved occupation, direct experience of combat, his deliberations on ... events ... provide, nonetheless, a fascinating way to trace the history of the early stages of the war.

Latchford's record also presents a valuable corrective to the populist image of the ARP warden as the bumptious jobsworth so perfectly captured by Bill Pertwee's Mr Hodges in the long-running BBC series *Dad's Army*. Although disputes with angry householders over failures to adhere to blackout regulations do feature in the pages of the diary, these are the exception rather than the rule. Instead, the impression given is of a dedicated volunteer force whose professionalism and courage earned the respect of the communities they served. ... Latchford says little about his own emotional life. Yet, this omission does not detract from the intimacy of the record. The juxtaposing of reflections on the growing danger that Britain faced in the early dark months of the war with descriptions of everyday family life serves to draw the reader directly into the world that Latchford inhabited. The concluding description of the 'three nights' Blitz' to which Swansea was subjected between 19 and 21 February 1941 is as compelling as it is horrifying.

... The editors note that, in his later years, Latchford was keen to have the diary published, and certainly the polished prose and scope of analysis suggest that such an ambition may well have shaped the work at the time of writing. Nonetheless, this should not be allowed to detract from what is a remarkable account

of an extraordinary time. The editors' introduction and footnotes offer helpful clarification of both the local and national context, while Latchford's fluent narrative rattles along with all the pace of a thriller. This fascinating book will be of interest to both the professional historian and lay-reader alike.

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