



Roath Local History Society

Bringing History to Your Doorstep - since 1978



Dear R.L.H.S. Members,

By now, thanks to the efforts of the “**Stuffers and Senders**” - **Graeme Brown, Carol Ball, Ted Richards** and **myself**, you will all have received next season’s brochures and Membership Renewal. I’m already getting a steady trickle of forms and cheques through the letterbox, for which, I am most grateful - *keep ‘em comin’!*

When we return in September, it will be for our **AGM**, prior to the lecture at 8.30. Next month, I will be sending out the **Agenda** and **Minutes** of last year’s AGM, for you to consider beforehand. We are currently accepting nominations for **Chair** and **Committee**, as well as desperately seeking an (impartial, non-Committee) **Minute Secretary**. The commitment for Officers is 3-years and Committee Members renew on an annual basis. We usually hold 4 meetings a year (including the AGM), on a Thursday evening.

Not As Published

Unfortunately, the very popular speaker, **Gwyn Prescott**, suffered a nasty accident which necessitated him withdrawing from our February Meeting. We all wish him well and hope to re-schedule his lecture, for R.L.H.S.’s 2019 - 2020 season.

In Gwyn’s stead, **Alan Knight** has managed to secure the following excellent Speaker and Talk. Those disappointed at not being able to visit Flat Holm for themselves this summer, can at least enjoy a virtual tour!

THURSDAY 14th. FEBRUARY

“The Story and History of Flat Holm Island”.

Mr Peter Sampson, Chairman and Island Tour Guide of “The Flat Holm Society”, will speak from the perspective of the charity, dedicated to help protect the island’s wildlife and historic environment.

<http://flatholmsociety.org.uk>

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!



YES! IT'S BI-LINGUAL

Ted's been doing his best, but:

🇬🇧 English 🇬🇧 to 🇬🇧 Welsh 🇬🇧 Translator **Still Needed!**

Webmaster

Over the last couple of weeks, **Ted Richards** has been making great improvements to the R.L.H.S. Website. Take a look and you will find the format has been refreshed and updated, with lots more textual and visual interest. **Publications** are enticingly described, the **Links** tab (button) lists and links us to local organisations with common interests and we now have a **Blog!** Don't be daunted by the technical term, you can simply view the Blog as you do any other page, on the website. Here you will find on-going snippets of historical interest, that will be developed over time, to include Member's contributions.

Ted's Techie Blogging Info:

You may notice the option to "subscribe" to the blog. This is an invitation to submit your e-mail address to Wordpress (our website providers) so that when a new blog is posted you are notified by e-mail. Some people choose to do this, but you can find yourself being added to other Wordpress blogs by default and have to actively unsubscribe from them.

It is also possible to "comment" or "like" a blog post. You may find yourself needing to register with Wordpress if you wanted to go down this route. Remember, it is not a necessary part of blogging - most readers simply read the blog and move on.

The easy option is to visit the website periodically to look for updates.

*For the latest news on living in the past, regularly check the **R.L.H.S. Website** and **Blog** at:*

www.roathlocalhistorysociety.wordpress.com

Our Last Two Summer Visits:

Highfields Church

The large corner site, at Monthermer Road, had originally been obtained at the end of the 19th. century, by Rev. John Pugh, for the Presbyterian Church of Wales, who saw the need to build a church complex, in tandem with the expanding housing development of the area.

The chapel, was built on a vast scale, to accommodate 1,000 worshippers and opened in 1900. In 1906, this was followed by the Pierce Hall, which was used as a Sunday School, for up to 1,200 children.

It was planned to use the remaining space between the two edifices, for a Women's Training Institute, where Christian women could train in Wales, for work with the poor. However, with the death of Rev. Pugh, this was not realised and two domestic-scale houses were erected instead.

Eighty-years later, the congregation had dwindled and the soaring structures were becoming an unsustainable liability. In 1986, Highfields Church, a member of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches took on the challenge of renovating the site, as a home for their own ministry. Members of the congregation contributed their professional expertise and generated the necessary funding, through "sacrificial giving".

On our visit, we were shown all around, including the tower rooms and outside preaching pulpit. The original Chapel had a 44 foot high ceiling, supported by ornate iron columns. It also featured a balcony, where the young liked to gather. The floor of the balcony now extends across the void, transferring the whole Chapel to the new, upper floor, with a complex of Meeting Rooms on the ground floor. We ended our afternoon with refreshments in the light and airy 1st. floor coffee lounge, which has a glass wall, overlooking the Pierce Hall. This hall is now a flexible, multi-functional space, used as a nursery, sports hall, classroom etcetera.

Our visit to Highfields was of particular interest to Deanne Pickstone (who helps Jean Rose in the kitchen, providing our refreshments). Deanne was born and spent her early life in the area and has always cherished happy memories of the close-knit community and the social activities centred around the church. She brought with her, a marvellous photograph from 1953, taken on the old,

full-size stage. It showed a big cast of local people, involved in the large-scale, annual pantomime.

Another memory of Deanne's, prompted by our visit, was of Fred Barter, who was destined to become the recipient of Cardiff's first Victoria Cross. Deanne recalls an attempt to honour his achievement, with a Blue Plaque on 60, Daniel Street, which has yet to come to fruition.

For your interest, I am copying Phil Carradice's 'BBC Wales Blog', about Fred, from Friday 16 May 2014

Company Sergeant Major Fred Barter, Cardiff's first Victoria Cross winner in **World War One**, was a hero. Such a hero, in fact, that when he returned to the city for a brief period of rest and recuperation (and, of course, for a quick boost for army recruitment) on 5 July 1915 only a few weeks after winning the award, he was met at the station by a crowd of several thousand eager spectators and new friends.



CSM Frederick Barter VC. Image courtesy of the Royal Welch Fusiliers Regimental Museum

The crowd cheered and waved. They sang patriotic songs and they all pushed and shoved to get a glimpse of the man who, just a few months before, could have passed unnoticed among them. Not now. Now he was a celebrity.

It did not stop there – the Germans could not wound him but one over enthusiastic young lady threw a box of chocolates in his direction and hit him in the face. Sgt Barter was bruised, his nose skimmed and his eye blackened. He apparently took it all in good humour.

Frederick Barter was born at 60 Daniel Street in the Cathays area of Cardiff on 17 January 1891. Educated at Crwys Road Board School, he joined the **Royal Welch Fusiliers** on 4 December 1908. By the time war was declared in August 1914 he had served his time with the Regulars and was then doing his obligatory stint with the Special Reserve.

After leaving the army Barter worked in the Cardiff area as a collier and as a porter with the **Great Western Railway**. He was recalled to the Colours in August 1914 with the rank of Sergeant Major and was soon in France with the 1st Battalion of the Regiment.

During a "push" against enemy positions on 16 May 1915 Fred Barter gathered together a party of eight volunteers and attacked the German lines with bombs and hand grenades. He managed this so effectively that three officers and 102 men of the enemy force promptly surrendered.

By his efforts, Barter had captured 500 yards of enemy trenches and also managed to cut the wires on 11 German mines that could have caused undue havoc for advancing British soldiers.

For his bravery, Fred Barter was awarded the **Victoria Cross**, the award being presented to him by the King at Buckingham Palace on 12 July.



CSM Fred Barter's medals. Image courtesy of the Royal Welch Fusiliers Regimental Museum

Soon after his return visit to Cardiff, Fred Barter was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant and, after another brief period in France, was seconded to the Indian Army where he served with the 4th Battalion 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles. He was promoted Lieutenant in 1917 and went on to serve in both India and Palestine.

Barter was also awarded the **Military Cross** and the **Cross of St George**, a Russian decoration. In an interesting footnote to his story, on 10 April 1918 he was involved in another award of the Victoria Cross – this time, however, not to him.

In an action at El Kefir in Palestine, Rifleman Karanbahadur Rana of his Regiment was awarded the VC – for saving Barter's life.

A few weeks later Fred Barter was admitted, full time, to the Indian Army. Unfortunately a serious bout of fever saw him invalided home in 1919 and although promoted Captain in 1920, he retired from the army on 5 November 1922.

Married in 1925, Barter settled in the Home Counties where, during the Second World War, he acted as Major in charge of a Company in the Middlesex Home Guard. After being widowed, he died in a nursing home at Poole on 15 May 1952. His Victoria Cross is now kept at the **Museum of the Royal Welch Fusiliers** in Caernarfon Castle.

Fred Barter was a modest and unassuming man who little thought when he was recalled to the Colours in the summer of 1914 that the highest decoration in the land would soon be his. He remains one of Cardiff's great heroes.

Cyfarthfa Castle

The grand finale of our summer programme, saw Dolly, the “Vest” mini-bus, with outriders, heading up to Merthyr. Cyfarthfa's excellent guide Chris, showed us around the Castle's suite of grand reception rooms, which now house much of the Museum and Art Gallery. Chris's thorough knowledge and passion for, the history of Cyfarthfa, in parallel with the development of the area, was outstanding. He traced the growth of a wild and remote place, with a few scattered farms, to the booming, pandemonium of a world-dominating Ironopolis. An enterprise led by successive generations of the Crawshay family.

After this marvellous introduction, we were free to take tea in the courtyard, at Julie's Castle Tearooms, walk in the gardens and grounds and explore the rest of the collection for ourselves. These included several more rooms of paintings and artefacts and displays housed in the former (celebrated and extensive) wine cellars. We were also just in time to catch the temporary exhibition, “100 Years Ago - Merthyr Tydfil and the Great War”.

The bulk of Cyfarthfa's original holding, was donated by the people of Merthyr and includes many items pertinent to the area. Local people who have distinguished themselves in various fields are also celebrated, such as the “Merthyr Matchstick”, Bantamweight Boxer, Johnny Owen and fashion designers Laura Ashley and Julien Macdonald OBE.

I was struck by many wonderful, Victorian, landscape oil paintings of the area, painted by Thomas Prytherch. It was also intriguing to read about his background. He was born in 1864, the son of an ironworker and at 10, was himself working at the Dowlais ironworks. However, his natural artistic ability was recognised and he was transferred to the engineering drawing office. Then, in a campaign led by the Merthyr M.P. of the day, the town sponsored him to attend the Slade School of Art, from where, he was able to pursue a prestigious career in art.

Silly Season News



MOST WANTED!

Carol Ball and **Elizabeth Morgan**, spending a brief spell in the Merthyr Lock-up, as “caught” by **Charles Ball**.

*Despite various **R.L.H.S. Members** shouting “**Throw away the keys!**”, the duo succeeded in breaking-out and were last sighted escaping in a Cardiff-bound, “**Vest**” mini-bus.*

*Shockingly, it appears they were aided and abetted by **Big Terry** - get-away driver and **ex-policeman!!!***

Continue to enjoy an historically good summer and see you in the autumn!

Best regards,

Elizabeth Morgan.

R.L.H.S. Honorary Secretary.

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