

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Project Newsletter



ROATH MILL

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SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS

SOCIAL

The Roath Local History Society has just celebrated its tenth birthday. The occasion was happily celebrated on 8th December by a dinner held at The Bronte Hotel, Newport Road, Roath and which was attended by 21 members and friends. Unfortunately our Secretary, Jeff Childs, was unable to attend as he was a victim of influenza. We are glad to hear that he is making a good recovery as is the Reverend Daniel Pugh who, because he was unexpectedly detained in hospital overnight was also prevented from attending the function with his wife.

We have received the distressing news of a vicious attack by a young thug on one of our elderly members, Miss Elizabeth Smith of Dorchester Avenue, Pen-y-lan as she was returning home from the bus stop in Pen-y-lan Road on 9th December. She has been admitted to the Sir William James Thomas Ward at the Cardiff Royal Infirmary suffering from fractures of the shoulder and hip. We wish her a speedy recovery.

Ken Lewis who has been making a cheerful and determined effort to overcome the effects of a stroke has had a difficult time lately but continues to keep in touch with us.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Mrs Joyce Davey of 1 Lincoln Close, Newport, Gwent, on the death on October 30th of her husband, Gethin, who had been a member of our Society for many years. He was not able to get to our meetings but derived pleasure from reading our Newsletters. He wrote many charming letters to the Editor one of which on the subject of "Nant Fawr - The Roath Brook" was published in Volume 4 (pp.11-12). His widow tells me that on top of a laryngectomy fifteen years ago he suffered a major stroke two years ago but still struggled valiantly to write or type his letters with one hand. He wrote a short book of local interest on the subject of fox-hunting, copies of which are still available. (Price:£3.50 direct from Mrs Davey).

PROJECTS

Judith Hunt is making good progress with her Tithe Map project but she will require the assistance of only two or three people at each project session to help bring it to a conclusion. Meanwhile Jeff Childs has launched his 1881 Census household analysis project which is going to keep us busy for many Thursday evenings in the new year.

Local family historians have sought our assistance in participating in a massive nation-wide project known as the Co-operative Indexing Programme to transcribe the whole of the 1881 Census for the U.K. for subsequent storage on the Mormon computer at Salt Lake City which will then produce various indexes for universal availability. We have been invited to undertake the transcription of the portion relating to Roath.

We have much to gain in co-operating with family history societies and other local history societies on this exercise if only because the copies of the 1881 Census for Roath made available to us will provide most useful source material for our own future projects.

But we need more volunteers to work on transcribing the photocopies of the 1881 Census returns for Roath on to the specially printed forms provided. If they cannot get to our "workshop" meetings at Howardian High School on Thursday evenings 7.15 p.m. during term times, volunteers should get in touch with the Chairman, Alec Keir, at 6 Melrose Avenue, Pen-y-lan, Cardiff (Tel 482265) who will be glad to make arrangements for work to be done at home.

A project which has occupied many hours of diligent work by Vic Smith and myself in the old Cardiff Central Library has been abandoned. The work involved going through the minutes of the Borough of Cardiff Public Works Committee minutes to extract all the references to plans approved for properties in Roath. We had completed Manuscript extracts for the years 1883 to 1892 when we learned that precisely the same information had already been extracted and fed into their computer data bank by the team working on the "Cardiff Survey" under the Employment Training scheme.

For the same reason it has been decided to discontinue the series in the Newsletter devoted to the minutes of the Roath District Board of Health. These gave details of house plans etc. approved by the Board for the period up to 1875, but this data will also eventually be incorporated in the Cardiff Survey project.

Future Meetings

We are pleased to have secured as our first guest speaker in 1989 Mrs Patricia Moore, the Glamorgan County Archivist. She will speak about the Archive Service on Thursday January 5th at the Roath Community Hall, Ninian Road, Cardiff.

All Community Hall meetings will commence at 7.30 p.m. and an admission charge of 50p will be made, which includes the cost of light refreshments.

The programme of future meetings has already been circulated but members are asked to note a correction to the title of the address to be given by the Reverend Dr. John R. Guy on October 5th 1989 as shown, in the circular headed "DIARY of ACTIVITIES". The correct title is: "NOT JUST BELLS AND SMELLS - THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE ANGLO-CATHOLIC REVIVAL IN ROATH"

I have already apologised to the Reverend Dr. Guy for any distress caused to him by the error in our last circular.

Alec Keir

REMINISCENCES OF THOMAS GLYDE OF CARDIFF IN THE 1860's

On Christmas Day 1911 The South Wales Daily News started a series of six articles based on interviews with Thomas Glyde, the veteran journalist, under the title of "Cardiff Memories - Places and Personalities".

Seventy seven years later we make no apology for reproducing the articles in this issue of our Newsletter despite their lack of direct relevance to Roath. They provide a glimpse through the eyes of an elderly journalist of some aspects of life in Cardiff in the 1860's. Mid and early 19th century reminiscences were published by several Cardiff public figures (e.g. S.W.Allen, W.J.Trounce and John Winstone). Glyde's own articles in the S.Wales Daily News and Cardiff Times "The Growth of Cardiff 1875-1880" were published by D. Duncan in 1880 but these reminiscences taken from the South Wales Daily News in 1911/12 have never been re-printed and accordingly remain virtually unread except by a small number of diligent researchers going through old local newspapers in the Cardiff Central Library. In the form and style in which they are written, they would certainly be rejected by an editor of a modern newspaper. The verbatim replies to the reporter's often undisclosed questions produce rather disjointed reminiscences with occasional repetitions. Despite these faults, we consider them worth reading.

From: The South Wales Daily News 25 December 1911 - 12 January 1912

The modern Cardiffian little appreciates the amazing changes which the past half century have brought in the borough. During that period the population has grown from about 32,000 to something like 190,000 - an increase of nearly 600%.

The oldest journalist in the city of Cardiff or in South Wales, for the matter of that, is Mr Thomas Glyde, who came to South Wales more than half a century ago. Mr Glyde whose memory of the early sixties is wonderfully good, has been chatting with a member of our staff of those times, which, in view of the enormous strides which have been made during the half century which has since elapsed, seem to be a great deal further off than they really are.

MR GLYDE'S REMINISCENCES

When I first came to Cardiff, if you took a line from Cardiff Castle along Crockherbtown (now Queen Street) to the Taff Vale Railway bridge, thence to West Wharf by the Great Western Railway bridge, over the canal at the bottom of St Mary Street and thence back to the Castle you would enclose practically the whole of Cardiff. There were of course a few outlying houses, but the great districts of Canton, Saltmead, Grange, Cathays, Roath and Splott were then for the most part open country - partly fields and partly undrained marshes. Compare that in your mind's eye with the Cardiff of today, and you will appreciate something of what the past half century has produced.

The Old Tollgates

There were several toll-gates at the outskirts of the town. One of these was on the western side of the river on the Cowbridge Road near where Cathedral Road now joins it. Up till about that time there was a path where Cathedral Road now is, to Llandaff. There was another toll-gate on the North road, near where the late Mr Pettigrew's house used to stand just inside Cathays Park and there was a third to the eastern Side of the town on the Newport road, near where the present Infirmary now is, and at which point, a by-road known as Plucca lane joined the Newport road.

But the changes in Cardiff during the past half century do not merely concern the huge increase in size. An equally striking feature is the manner in which the old portion of the city has been renovated.

Let me illustrate this by this picture, (pointing to the photograph which we reproduce elsewhere in our columns.) That is a bit of St Mary Street as I first knew it. This particular picture was taken a good deal later than the time of which I am speaking, but these houses were not pulled down until the early 80's.

The Old Police Station

The little two-storeyed low pitched buildings with the tiled roof were close to the Police Station which stood at the eastern side of St Mary Street where the palatial pile, Market Buildings, now Stands. Of some of the figures on the pavement I will speak later. At the time this photograph was taken, the house at the right hand end was a tinsmith's shop which I well remember and you may see in the picture some of the tea-pots standing in the window. What a contrast that window presents to the great plate-glass windows of the shops occupying the site today!

Talking of Cardiff shops, the improvement in these has been in almost every case very striking. I think one best appreciates the change by comparing the shops today in the evenings when the lights were on with what they were when I first came to Cardiff. In those days only a few streets such as Crockherbtown, High Street and a part of St. Mary Street were lighted by gas lamps, and these were poor and only few and far between. In the other streets the only illuminant was oil lamps and you groped your way along on to the narrow pavements or on the uneven roadways in a sort of dim light. The shops too were all ill-lit, and the result was that after darkness came on, practically no business was transacted. When you went to a shop in the evening, you probably found the door, which was not infrequently made in two pieces (an upper and a lower) fastened. If it was on the latch, you pushed it open, and as you did so, a bell which was hanging on the inner side, would ring to advise the owner of your arrival. Inside the shop the light would be supplied by one small oil lamp and the shopman would move this about from one part of the shop to another as he was looking for the articles you required to purchase. This was the state of affairs in most of the shops in the leading thoroughfares of Cardiff half a century ago. I remember at one shop in Duke Street, David's the leather merchant, from the pavement you had to go down two or three steps to get into the shop.

An Interesting Group

You were asking about the people in that photographic group. There are four standing on the centre of the picture, all of whom are in tall hats. The shortest of the three I knew very well; his name was Evans, and he was for many years clerk to Mr Watkins - Alderman Watkins, the registrar and father of the present Superintendent-registrar, Mr R.J.Watkins. When I first remember the late Mr Watkins, he had his office in an old wooden shed, which was locked up at night, and which stood on the western side of St Mary Street down somewhere about where the Philharmonic now stands. Afterwards of course his office was moved down to West Wharf and this remained in use up till within the past ten to fifteen years.

Of the figures in high hats in the photograph, the left hand one was an Irishman, and a very nice fellow who used to manage the Cardiff baths. The old man next to him with a long beard had something to do with the Bute estate, but I can't recall his name. The individual in the centre with a lot of papers in his hand is a gentleman still well known and popular in Cardiff - Mr Sam Allen.

[Conversation then drifted to the advertisement seen in the picture on the walls of old St Mary Street houses.]



"The Infirmary Group" referred to in Thomas Glyde's Reminiscences

An Infirmary Advertisement

You will notice the advertisements concerning the Cardiff New Infirmary scheme.

Then, as now, difficulty was experienced in obtaining sufficient funds, and as there wasn't a Colonel Bruce-Vaughan to rake the money in as there is today, recourse was had to other methods, and one of these was a grand prize drawing to help the building fund. There were 1,032 prizes value from £100 down and the tickets were 6d. each. It was of course a lottery, and this being the case, the Home Office of that day interfered and were about to stop it, but after some persuasion, they consented, in view of the excellent cause for which it was being held, to allow it on condition that it was not repeated, and as I remember that after the Home Office interfered, the first prize instead of being described as £100 was referred to as 'One Hundred Medallions of the Queen !' I believe the originator of that movement was the late Alderman Alexander. I remember that the drawing took place in the Drill Hall. Alderman William Alexander by the way, was in his time one of the ablest men in the Cardiff Council, and he was Mayor of the town in the year 1859.

In the old days, the lower end of Quay Street was an important centre of Cardiff. Of course, when the River Taff flowed along where Westgate Street now is, this was the spot at which much loading and unloading of vessels went on. That was rather before my time, but I well remember hearing a good deal about it; and in the early sixties that corner by the 'Ship on Launch' and the 'Ship and Pilot' retained quite a quayside flavour. It was there that the captain, when he brought his ship, would, on arrival, discharge his crew, for in those days, it wasn't a case of coming in on one tide and getting away a day or two later. When a ship came in, it stopped for four or five weeks sometimes. The inns that I have mentioned were at that time the resort of all the seafaring men who were on the look-out for a job, and the captain of a ship had no difficulty in getting a crew as soon as he was ready to sail.

There is, you know, an old charter granting to Cardiff people the land which abutted on the east of that part of the river. A lot of this land was lost to the Corporation, but of course they still own most of it from Quay Street corner along to the present Central Fire Station. Few people seem to know today that it was due to that old charter that the Cardiff Corporation obtained that land. The corner piece of land by Quay Street was, I believe, afterwards turned into a slaughter-house, and there used to be pens there for breeding the stock. Part of the land along there between the slaughter-house and the site of the present fire station was taken up by Police Superintendent Jeremiah Box-Stockdale's garden, and this I remember there in 1860.

Some of the Old Hotels

Some of the old Cardiff hotels which have now been pulled down and in certain cases rebuilt on other sites, were the centre of much social intercourse. In this respect they occupied a much more important position relatively in the life of the community than they do today.

The Late King at the Cardiff Arms Hotel

The old Cardiff Arms Hotel was a very fine building, which was not in the first place intended for an hotel but was the town house of the Thomas family, who built Wenvoe Castle. The Cardiff Arms Hotel stood out into what is now Castle street, somewhere about half way between Duke Street corner and the present site of the Angel Hotel. It faced east and thus looked down Angel street which of course ran parallel with old Castle street, and in a straight line with Duke Street.

'The Cardiff Arms' was kept for many years by a Miss Wood, a very superior type of person, who was a sister of the keeper of the Cardiff Gaol at the time. 'The Cardiff Arms' might almost be described as an exclusive sort of place. It was not frequented much by commercials, for the latter used generally to go to the 'Angel'. 'The Cardiff Arms' was notable as having been visited, I believe, during the time that Miss Wood kept it by the late King Edward. This was rather before my time for it was in the fifties when the late King was Prince of Wales and was a lad in his teens. The future King was at the time travelling through Wales with his tutor and stayed one or two nights in Cardiff, during which time I think he visited Llandaff Cathedral and other places of interest in the district.

The Old Cowbridge Arms

Opposite the Cardiff Arms Hotel was an open space which connected the western end of Angel street with Castle street, and on the eastern side of this and facing the Cardiff Arms Hotel was the old Cowbridge Arms, which as you will see from the photograph, was a much less imposing hostelry than the former.

The Cowbridge Arms, however, did a very big trade, especially on market days, when it was the resort of nearly all the farmers from the western side of Cardiff. They used to leave their carts there in the road. I have seen as many as fifty there on a market day, mostly two-wheelers, and all packed up close, with the shafts of one under the body of the next. All the horses were stabled somewhere in the back. The horses used to have to be led right through the house - through the narrow central door between the two windows, and I remember that the passage through which they were led was paved with flag stones.

In these days, it seems a queer thing to lead the horses in through the main entrance of the inn, but at that time no one seemed to think anything of it. I remember that they used to do just the same thing at the old Masons' Arms in Crockherbtown, which on market days used to be the house of call for many of the farmers on the northern side of Cardiff.

The Old Angel Hotel

A good deal of the social life of Cardiff in the sixties centred around the old Angel Hotel, which stood on the southern side of Angel Street just about where the Bute Offices now are.

The old Angel was the resort of most of the leading people in Cardiff, including most of the members of the Corporation. It was there that in the old days the London coach used to call. It was kept by Mine Host Cousins, who was celebrated among Cardiff hotel keepers of that day for his remarkably fine brews of punch. -

Imagine for a moment what Cardiff would be like without its daily newspapers. All the journals that existed in those days were the two weekly papers, which did not come out until the end of the week. The Corporation meetings used to be held on Mondays. They were held quarterly, but there was always an adjourned meeting, so that in reality they came about every six weeks. Naturally people weren't going to wait till the end of the week to hear what had been done, and this provided the townspeople with a good excuse to drop into the Angel in the evening to hear the latest news !

Municipal Figures in the Sixties

There, sitting in chairs around the cosy well-warmed room, you would find the leading figures of the Cardiff Corporation of the sixties. Many would be smoking long churchwarden pipes and taking an occasional sip from the glass which stood before them. I don't consider that there was very much excessive drinking on these occasions, but it didn't do to go in without having a drink of some sort. In a special chair that was always set apart for his use you would see Alderman William Alexander, who was Mayor in 1859, and others around the room would generally include Ald. C.W.David, who was Mayor of Cardiff in 1860, 1866, and again in 1870 and 1871 and also Ald. Watkins and Ald. Bowen, both of whom subsequently filled the office of Chief Magistrate. Alderman Alexander was quite one of the ablest men on the Corporation of that day. The son of a farmer near Cowbridge he came to Cardiff when a young man as a clerk in Watson's timber yard, and by dint of hard work and business ability he worked his way up to the top of the tree, and for years rendered good public service in Cardiff. I well remember him presiding at the old Council meetings which used at that time to be held in what was afterwards the grand jury room in the old Town Hall. He used to sit at the end of the table near the fire, and had a small hammer with which he used to rap on the table. He was a stickler for work, and being a fine business man himself he used to keep the members to the point, and I have heard his smart 'rat-tat' upon the table followed by the appeal, 'Gentlemen, gentlemen, it's half past 12 o'clock, and this talking will never do; you must be short and get the business done!'

Other Figures of the Sixties

Then in another corner at the old Angel you would see Alderman C.W.David, who was a tall fine man with a very genial manner, who keenly appreciated his smoke and was in his way quite a good raconteur. He was another of the ablest men in the Corporation of that day. He was a man of property with a tanyard down where Grangetown now is, and a leather merchant's shop, approached down three steps, in Duke street. The business which was founded, I believe, by his father, was evidently a lucrative one. Alderman David did little at it himself, but appeared to leave its management to others. You must remember that in those times there wasn't the competition

that we have today! Subsequently the late Major Sloper joined Mr David in the business, which was afterwards transferred to St John's square.

Alderman Watkins was another whom one used to meet at the old Angel. He was the manager of the old London and Provincial Bank, which was close to the old Borough Arms (now the Bodega) on the eastern side of St Mary Street, and he was also the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. I still retain vivid memories of his jocular manner and the very racy stories which he used to tell. Then there was Alderman Bowen, who was engineer to the Cardiff Gas Works, who was a very good fellow and who lived in a private house in Crockherbtown. Other leading members of the Corporation at that time were Mr John Bird, who was a solicitor. Another notability was Alderman Winstone; he took a private house at the extreme end of Crockherbtown beyond the Spittal Cottage, just where the Alexandra Hotel now stands. Having taken the house he obtained a licence for it and opened it under the name of the Winstone Arms.

Changes at Duke Street Corner

Talking of the Angel Street and Castle Street and the Duke Street corner, few parts of Cardiff have altered more. The block of old houses which stood between Angel Street and Castle Street, which included, of course, the old Cowbridge Arms, has been entirely swept away. So also have the two houses which stood to the right hand of the entrance to the Castle. Of these the end one was the picturesque three-storeyed Tudor House which was the office of Messrs Luard and Shirley, the solicitors to Lord Bute, while next to it stood what was known as the 'High Corner House', about which I must tell you on some future occasion. The entrance to Luard and Shirley's was in Angel Street which then, of course, turned westward, close to the Castle gate at right angles. In the little house beyond Luard and Shirley's and immediately outside the Castle gate lived the gate-keeper, a consequential individual, and his mother. The old lady used to show visitors round the tower, and I remember that on these occasions she used to trot out a piece of rusty old iron and used to exclaim: 'This is the instrument that was used to put out the eyes of Robert, Duke of Normandy!'

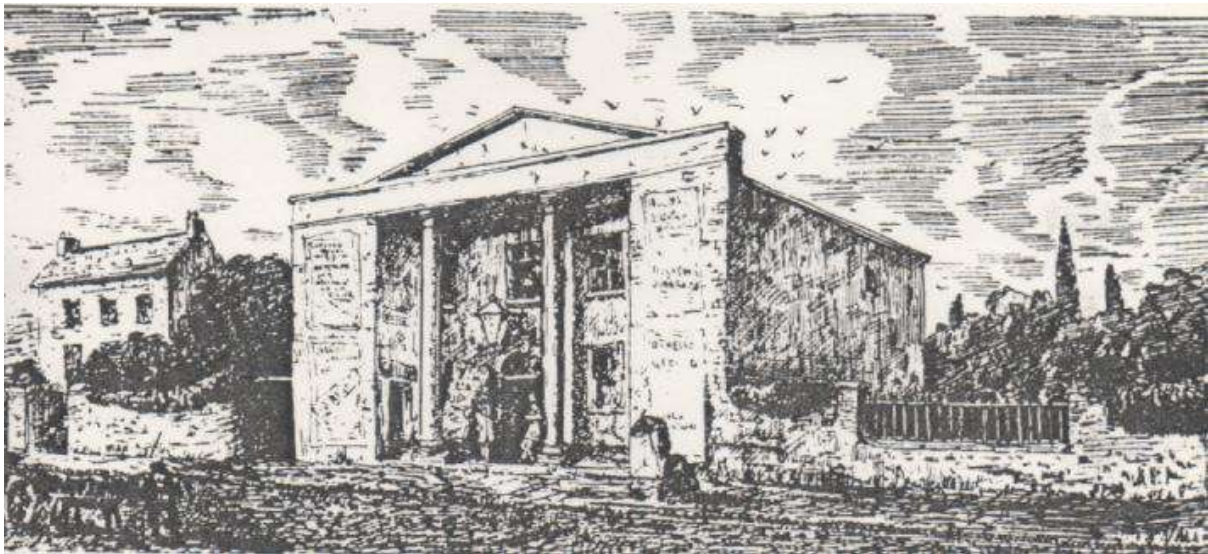
[In our last interview Mr Thomas Glyde, the veteran Cardiff journalist, chatted interestingly of the old Cardiff hotels..... But Mr Glyde has also much of interest to recall regarding Crockherbtown in "the sixties".

It is somewhat remarkable that though photographs of Castle Street, Angel Street and many other parts of Cardiff were taken prior to the great alterations of "the seventies", few, if any, prints remain of Crockherbtown, Running Camp and St John's Square. For pictorial presentments of these, therefore, one is dependent upon the few paintings and sketches which remain.

Only last week at the conversazione of the Cardiff Naturalists Society some interesting oil paintings of Cardiff in the early part of last century were exhibited by Mr T. Stevens of the Dorothy Cafe. We are indebted to that gentleman for kind permission to photograph and reproduce some of these pictures which are supposed to have been the work of Wilson, an artist of somewhat irregular life, who did a good deal of sketching in and around Cardiff between the years 1835 and 1845. Among these paintings is an especially interesting one of Crockherbtown taken from a point just to the

eastern side of the feeder in Queen street and looking along the street in a westerly direction. In this view, a photograph of which we reproduce, the old Cardiff Theatre will be seen to the right hand side and the tower of St John's Church in the distance. Mr Glyde, on seeing this photograph, at once recognised the place. - *note not the same picture as that reproduced in this Newsletter* - Editor

This was drawn, of course, some years before I came to Cardiff; but still, that is the old Cardiff Theatre, and there is Mr Bradley's house which stood at the corner of Bradley's lane (now Park Place) next to it. It was drawn prior to the cutting of the feeder, because the latter came along immediately on the eastern side of the old theatre, and there is no sign of it in the photograph. The ground about there was at that time very damp due to the presence of a good many springs and insufficient drainage. The portion of Crockherbtown immediately opposite the theatre was known as Spring Gardens and it was here in the sixties that Alderman John Bird and Alderman Bowen used to live. The houses in Spring Gardens were very nice ones. Some of them exist now with shops built out on the front of them.



From the Print Collection, Cardiff City Library

The Old Theatre in Crockherbtown - built in 1827 and destroyed by fire in 1877. It was on part of the site now occupied by the Park Hotel. Mr Bradley's house is on the left on the corner of Bradley's Lane (now Park Place).

Cardiff Corporation and the Drama

I can't tell you the date of the building of the old theatre but I do know that it was built by subscription, and it is an extraordinary thing that when the list was opened the Cardiff Corporation of that day took 20 £1 shares, and for this purpose utilised the ratepayers' money. Though you went up two steps to the theatre, the pit was somewhat below the level of the roadway, and as the result of the damp nature of the soil the water in rainy weather used to collect in the pit and in the place occupied by the orchestra.

Such a nuisance did this become that eventually they boarded over the pit and put the seats higher up. After the feeder to the dock was made, however, there was practically no trouble with the water in the theatre, for it found its way into the feeder.

I've often been to the old theatre. They used during the winter to have a stock company there, and then on occasions some well-known actor would come down and play the principal part. I well recall the popularity of Charles Matthews, who used to create roars of laughter in 'Cool as a Cucumber'. Other famous actors there were - Charles Dillon, George Melville, the father of Andrew Melville, who was better known as Emm, and it is interesting to recall the fact that Mr Edward Terry played there as a young man in one of the stock companies. For a provincial theatre of that day the old Cardiff theatre was a very well appointed one, with boxes, second boxes, pit, and gallery, and at that time it was a very popular place of resort. Eventually it was allowed to fall somewhat into disrepair, and the end of it was that late in the seventies it was burnt down, and the performances were then carried on in the old Philharmonic Hall in St Mary Street, until the Theatre Royal in that thoroughfare was built.

Next to the theatre, on its western side, was Mr Bradley's house, which stood at the corner of Bradley's lane. It was a well-built house, coming out close to the roadway, and I think that must be the front of it which you can see projecting beyond the theatre in the photograph of Wilson's picture.

Queen Street as a Residential Thoroughfare

I should have told you that after the old theatre was burnt down a Mr Edward Payne propounded a scheme for the erection of a new theatre in St Mary Street with shops underneath it facing the street, but his ideas were too ambitious, and the scheme never came to fruition. Afterwards, of course, the Park Hotel was built on the site occupied by the old theatre and by Mr Bradley's house and garden, as these occupied between them all the space between the feeder and what is now the corner of Park Place.

In the sixties there wasn't, so far as I can remember, more than one shop of any kind on the north side of Crockherbtown anywhere to the east of the canal. Let us take a stroll along that side of the street. Practically all of the houses are good ones, and each stood in its own plot of ground. There is an irregular appearance due to the fact that some have their houses standing back with the gardens in front, while others were nearer the street with the gardens at the back. The house on the

western side of Bradley's Lane, where it joined Crockherbtown, was occupied by Mr Montague Grover who was the town clerk of Cardiff from 1864 to 1867. Dr. Willaim Taylor lived in one of these nice pleasant houses with large gardens. His was the house previously tenanted by Mr Edward Priest Richards at whose death Dr Taylor bought it. This was about where the shop of Messrs David Evans now stands. A little further along, pretty well next to it, I think, lived Dr Thomas Evans, the father of Dr Fred Evans. In a house just about where the Cardiff Empire now stands lived Mr Jenks, the builder and decorator and a near neighbour of his was Mr Jacob Scott Matthews, who was a great teetotaller and who is remembered as the man who built Temperance Town. Mr Matthews who was a florist had his shop next door to his house which was just about where Mr Case's shop now is. Mr Matthews also had a garden about on the site now occupied by Dumfries Place. In going along the northern side of Crockherbtown it wasn't, with the above exception, till you got to the western side of the canal that you found any shops.

A Picturesque Feature

At the south side it was very much the same. At the extreme eastern end was the private house which became the Winstone Hotel, on the site of the present Alexandra Hotel, and close to the western side of it, where the Dutch Cafe and Mr Jesse Williams's shop now stand, were the picturesque little thatched tenements known as the Spittal Cottages. Further west came the houses known as Spring Gardens that I mentioned before. To the west of the Spring Gardens houses, and extending along from the feeder to Charles Street was Dr Vachell's fine garden. The house stood a long way back from the street, which at this point sloped down considerably, and along here, close to the south side of Crockherbtown, were three old thatched cottages.

Westward of Charles Street and from that thoroughfare to the beginning of Running Camp there were private houses. In one of these lived Mr W.D.Bushell, who was for some time a director of the Taff Vale Railway, and I believe I am correct in saying that for a time Mr J.P.Ingledew also lived in one of those houses. The occupant of another was Dr W.T.Edwards who lived, I should say, about on the site now occupied by Messrs Stoate Knight's shop.

So much regarding Crockherbtown to the east of the canal. Now I must tell you of one of its picturesque features - the block of houses which stood in what would be now the middle of Queen Street, opposite the Gas Company's new offices, and which in those days separated Crockherbtown from Running Camp. The latter was little more than a passage, and as far as I can estimate, it wasn't much more than seven or eight feet in width. An interesting feature of Running Camp was the fact that it had a line of posts across at each end to prevent cattle running in on market days and on other occasions when they were being driven through the town, There were only some four or five houses in this block, which was broadest at its western end. This was occupied by Mr Petrazzini, whose cutlery shop faced the end of Duke street. He lived over the shop, and this was really the only large premises in this block.

The other three or four houses were very small; they stood close up, back to back, and the block got narrow till it almost came to a point in one narrow shop at the eastern end. The removal of this block of houses constituted, as you may imagine, a tremendous improvement.

Old Houses in St John's Square.

Talking of that part of Cardiff, what changes have taken place at the end of the North Road and in St John's Square! At the south end of St John's Square, of course, stood the old vicarage, abutting on the street and close up against St John's Church. In the middle of St John's Square there was another block of houses very similar to that separating the western end of Crockherbtown from Running Camp. At the northern end of this block and facing up the North Road was the shop of Mr Grierson, one of the leading drapers of that day; and another of the shops in that block which I well remember was that of Mr Good, the fishmonger.

Another time I must tell you how it was that these and the other old blocks of houses came to be swept away, because their clearance forms a notable link in the story of how the Cardiff of half a century ago became transformed into the fair city it is today.

The transformation of the Cardiff that I first knew in the early sixties into the present city has been in the main spread over four decades, and of these not the least important was that between 1870 and 1880.

There were four places in Cardiff in which 'in the sixties' blocks of houses existed in the main streets. One of these was where Castle Street now is, and I have already described this. Another was that which separated Crockherbtown (now Queen Street) from Running Camp; another was in the middle of St John's Square, while a fourth was in High Street and consisted of the Old Town Hall.

So far as I can remember, the beginning of the events which led up to the clearance of these picturesque obstructions to traffic was the action of Lord Bute's trustees in clearing away the old house which formerly abutted on the Castle wall on the north side of Castle street. These must have been cleared away between 1850 and 1860. Not only the ground but the houses were Bute property, so that the operation was not a very difficult one.

These houses had disappeared a short time before I came so that I never saw them but I believe a good idea of them may be gathered from Thomas Rowland's picture, though the latter was, of course, drawn many years earlier. Then the Corporation had to consider the question with the Bute trustees of clearing some of the blocks which existed in the Streets which I have mentioned. Of these, the first to go was that which included Pedrazzini's shop between Crockherbtown and Running Camp (the end of Queen street nearest St John's Square). Then the Corporation who had armed themselves with Parliamentary powers, set to work to accomplish the removal of the block between Castle Street and Angel Street, and very soon after this, down came the block in St John's Square opposite the old vicarage. The last of the obstructions to go was the old Town Hall in the High Street.

Don't forget that the vast improvements were not accomplished without great difficulties and they weren't all done at once. Some of them were demolished one house at a time, as the leases expired, because in the interests of the ratepayers, it had to be done as economically as possible. But quite apart from the additional room which was given by the demolition of these houses, it was inevitable in the interests of the public health that they should be removed, because in most cases they had no

back yards of any kind. There was no through draught; they were built close up, back to back, and as such were bound to be unhealthy and a menace to the public weal.

With the broadening of some of the main streets came a not unnatural and very laudable ambition on the part of many of the leading tradesmen to improve their shops. There used some time ago to be a good deal of argument among Cardiff tradesmen as to who it was that really led the way, but I think the real credit must be accorded to the tailors and clothiers, chief among whom at that time were the late Mr Jotham and the late Mr William Price. In those days Mr Jotham lived on the eastern side of St Mary street in a private house where their big premises are now, and he had a small shop there. He was one of the first to give a lead to other tradesmen in Cardiff in the matter of enterprise by the addition of a shop next door; he pulled down his old place and erected fine new premises.

At that time there was a Mr William Price who had a little tailor's shop at the corner of St Mary Street and Caroline Street. I well remember this place. It was a little two-storeyed house with a small white-washed shop window behind which the tailors sat stitching away at the clothes. You see, in those days there were no such things as readymade clothes. It was the same with boots. When you wanted a new pair you had to go and order them, and then the shoemaker would go round to David's shop in Duke street and get the leather to make them. But I am digressing somewhat. I was going to tell you that Mr Price pulled down his old shop and put up a fine new front.

This enterprise on the part of the tailors very soon set other tradesmen cogitating ways and means to improve their premises and first one and then another of the old shops of 'the sixties' were renovated out of all knowledge and so the great changes were brought about.

In 'the sixties' the leading drapers of Cardiff were Mr D.W.Jones who lived at what was known as the "High Corner House" next door to Messrs Luard and Shirley's offices in Castle Street. He had a good shop. Then there was Mr Peter Davies who also had a shop in Duke Street and the other leading drapers were Messrs Herne Brothers who had a shop which they greatly improved on the site now occupied by Messrs Howell's china and glass shop on the western side of High Street. These three tradesmen were among the first to put in large and attractive new fronts to their shops.

When describing as I have done the evolution of the Cardiff shops, I ought to say a word or so regarding the development of the Cardiff Market. The present market is the third market that Cardiff has had within the past century. Let me just refer to the others. I do not remember the original market, that having being done away with before I came to Cardiff but it stood somewhere in behind where Stephenson & Alexander's offices now are, and had an entrance from High Street at about that spot, and another entrance from Duke Street that came out about where the shop of the late Mr Barry is in Duke street.

Business on market days in the past was by no means confined to the markets and in the early part of the last century many had stalls in the streets but still there was a lot of trade done in the market, and the original one to which I refer became eventually quite inadequate. The second market occupied a portion of the site of the present one. It was this one that I remember in the sixties. It was next door to and on the northern side of the old Borough Arms. It had a heavy stone portico supported by pillars and was approached up two steps from St Mary Street. At the top of these two

steps was a short passage leading to the interior of the market, and on either side of it were two or three shops. One of these was owned by the late Mr Solomon Andrews, and I well remember his cry of 'Rock, a penny an ounce !' It was wonderful stuff was that rock. It was light in colour and was so made that wherever you broke it, there inside it in red you found the name 'Andrews'.

A remarkable change has come over Cardiff in respect of its roads and pavements. Half a century ago the streets were pretty well pitched with roundish stones - "petrified kidneys" - and the result was that every vehicle rattled all the way along the street, so that today, though there is fifty times the traffic, there is probably less noise. In those days the pavements were considerably higher above the roadways than they are today, and in saying this I have specially in mind High Street and St Mary Street. From the edge of the roadway, there was a slope covered with small round stones, upward to the pavement level. This took the place of the modern curbstone and this was continued till it met the long strip of paving stone which ran along the centre of the pavement. The pavements today are about on the same level as they were then, and the difference in relative height between the roadway and the pavement has been achieved by raising the former.

In the sixties there was a Queen's Hotel standing at the corner of Golate. It was not of course the present building but it was a very good one, for it had originally been a private house and had been adapted to the use of an hotel. Between the Golate and Wood Street pretty well all the houses had only two storeys and were very low pitched. A picture of these is in the Y.M.C.A. at the present time. One of the best of these houses was on the corner about where the newer part of the Royal Hotel now stands, and it was here that the late Dr. Wallace used to live. This was the last house before you came to Wood street. Near here the ground was very marshy and in wet weather there was quite a big pool of water at this spot.

Wood Street chapel was built at this time, but it wasn't used as a chapel, nor was it originally built for that purpose. It was originally a place of amusement and was made into a chapel afterwards, and I remember going to a circus performance there. The site of the present Theatre Royal was then a field with wooden railings round, and I have seen Hengler's Circus there in the old days. South of this field were a few small shops and houses, the most considerable of which so far as I can remember was the Cornish Mount public house. Where the Great Western Hotel now stands there was nothing but bog and I could tell you a story about that, but let it wait till another occasion.

The present Post Office in Westgate Street is the fourth that I myself can remember, though I have heard of another, about which I will tell you presently.

When I came to Cardiff in 1860, the only Post Office in Cardiff was in Duke Street. It formed part of the shop of Mr William Bird, the publisher and bookseller, and it was the business and on the same site now occupied by Mr William Lewis. It must have been in that year that the Post Office people, owing to the increase in the work, took new premises, which were solely devoted to Post Office work, in Church street.

The Post Office in Church Street

The Church Street office was situated on the corner of the Old Arcade, now occupied by Messrs Boyle's, the boot and shoe makers. Here the Post Office business was carried on from about 1860 to 1870, the latter being the year that they moved into the much larger premises which were erected in St Mary Street, on the northern side of what we now call the Old Town Hall. At the outset the upper floor of the St. Mary Street Post Office was used by the Inland Revenue Department. It was about this time that the Post Office people took the old buildings of the Magnetic Telegraph Company and converted them into the Docks Post Office, where for many years most of the telegraphic work of the Cardiff G.P.O. was carried on.

I well remember the old Church Street office. I used to call there for our letters every Friday morning. This was the day that the Old 'Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian' was published, and by calling we got our letters earlier than they would have been delivered to us. Mr Thomas Webber was the postmaster in those days. He was a son of the proprietor of the old 'Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian.' Mr Webber's right-hand man in those days was Mr Hudson, who was connected with the Cardiff Post Office for many years. Another official at the old Church Street office whom I well recall was Mr Loyns, whose son is today the assistant postmaster of Cardiff.

Cardiff's Woman Letter-carrier

I told you in a previous article of Alderman David. His memories of Cardiff went back many, many years before I came here, and I recollect hearing from him about the days when the Cardiff Post Office was in St Mary Street, just about where Messrs Walker and Hall's shop now stands. This was, of course, prior to the removal of the postal work to Mr William Bird's shop in Duke street. Alderman David related how in those early days Cardiff had but one letter-carrier. He fell ill, and during his illness his wife took round the letters for him. She must have done her work satisfactorily, because on his death she was appointed in his place. Alderman David used to say that she carried the letters in a large open basket on her arm.

The Old Globe and its Associations

In telling you about the old Cardiff hotels, I forgot to refer to one that retained until within the past ten years its condition as I remember it in the sixties, and that was the old Globe in Castle Street. This was the resort of some notable figures of Cardiff at that time, and as the little coterie that foregathered here was quite distinct from that at the Angel, I will tell you about two or three of the principal figures. You entered the old Globe by going down two steps from the street, and the room in which these gatherings used to take place was a large, square, very low pitched room on the ground floor. It had a moulded ceiling, which was quite a work of art, and a carved wood mantelpiece.

The leading character among those who gathered here was the late Mr George Thomas of Ely. He was a very regular at tender and every one used to look up to him. He was a farmer and a very fervent Welshman; in fact whenever a Welsh topic came up, and he began to talk, everyone would be all attention. He was always ready with an apt quotation from the Triads or from some other branch of Welsh literature, and could always hold his own in the discussions which went on. Mr George Thomas remembered Cardiff back into the early thirties, and used to state that he was the last person near Cardiff who used oxen for ploughing.



Mr George Thomas of Ely

Mr Luke Evans and the Late Registrar

Another notable character at the old Globe was the late Mr Luke Evans. He was a brother of the late Dr Evans and would therefore be an uncle of Dr Fred Evans. Luke Evans was a chemist, and his shop was at the corner of High Street and Church Street, where Mr Oliver's boot shop is now, and here he lived for many years. His mind was stored with memories of old Cardiff which went back a very long time, for he used to tell of the last ale taster, a man who bore the nick-name of 'Toby Philpot'. He remembered seeing people in the old stocks and used to relate how one market day he saw a man tied to the back of a cart and flogged through High Street.

After Luke Evans gave up his business he was made in 1872 inspector of weights and measures to the Corporation and in this Capacity he used to go round to the tradesmen's shops. Mr Luke Evans' principal assistant in those days was none other than Superintendent Geen of the Cardiff Fire brigade. In those days Mr Geen was in charge of the fire brigade, but there were very few fires in Cardiff then compared with today, and so he used to fill up his spare time by assisting Mr Luke Evans.

Another of the coterie at the old Globe Hotel, who also was a good raconteur was the then registrar of births, deaths and marriages, the late Mr R.R.Watkins. As a young man he went out to the Australian gold diggings and returned to Cardiff with many interesting experiences to relate. He was a man full of fun and with a great fund of anecdotes who could always keep the company on good

terms with themselves. He lived at that time in one of the old houses in West Wharf by the canal at the bottom end of St Mary street.

With such men as these and with some others whose names I can't recall at the moment you may imagine what a bright and interesting company it was that used to gather at the old Globe half a century ago.

Memories of the Hayes

I spoke in an earlier article of the blocks of houses that used to stand in some of the Cardiff streets. A similar block stood on what is now the triangular open space in the Hayes. Let me try to describe the Hayes as it used to be. On the eastern side from the street back to the old Town Hall it was mostly Corporation property. It was the late Mr John Cory who acquired the property at the lower end of this strip, backing on the canal, and who erected there the Stuart Hall, with the object of propagating total abstinence principles. The hall was, and still is, upstairs, and below was a row of shops, one of which was that in which the late Mr James Howell first opened in Cardiff. Proceeding from this point northward, and still on the eastern side of the street, were several small shops and public houses and a foundry, and beyond them was the old Infant School. This site was acquired by the late Mr Solomon Andrews, and in front of the school he erected a shop.

On the western side of the street, at the lower end, stood the Old Tabernacle Chapel, and north of this were one or two public houses and several very old cottages. The old houses in the centre formed quite a picturesque feature. The block occupied the greater part of what is now the triangular space where the John Batchelor statue and Express Delivery Shed now stand.

Old Trinity Street Chapel

The northern portion was taken up in those days by the old Vicarage garden, but the rest was occupied by houses, the chief of which was that of Mr Ayers, the pork butcher, who, by the way, was the contractor for the scavenging of Cardiff for many years. The street between this central block of houses and the western side, where Messrs James Howell's grocery stores now stand was very narrow; not more than one cart could go along at a time; and so far as I can remember there was no pavement.

On the present site of the Free Library stood Trinity Street Chapel.

The chapel took up most of the space from Trinity Street to Working Street though there were one or two small houses, and I think a public house or two on the site also. All of these were of course cleared away when the present Free Library and Museum were built. I believe there were entrances to the chapel both from Trinity Street and Working Street. It used to have a minister who was a pluralist, for he also had a chapel at Caerphilly, where he used to live. He was in the habit of riding into Cardiff to preach and there was a little projection on the Working Street side of the chapel to which he used to tie up his pony during the service. This site was sold eventually to the Corporation,

and with the money obtained therewith the chapel trustees erected the present chapel in Pembroke Terrace.

In our next and concluding article, I must tell you some stories of the old days which go back long before I came here and which were related to me by old inhabitants of Cardiff in 'the sixties' and early 'seventies'.

In the seventies there was a Major Knox, who was governor of Cardiff Gaol, and he had in his possession a book of old records dealing with events in Cardiff Prison, going back many many years long before the erection of the present gaol, which was, I believe, built between 1830 and 1835. Major Knox allowed me to read this old record, some of the strange things in which I still remember. Prior to the erection of the gaol, prisoners were kept in the old gaol in St Mary Street, which was afterwards converted into a police station.

The Exploit of Tim the Barber

Of course in those days there were many people imprisoned for debt. When they were imprisoned in the cells under the old Town Hall their friends used to come and speak to them through the barred windows. In the old St Mary Street police station one side was kept for debtors to whom imprisonment meant nothing more than detention, and if their friends brought them a goose for dinner, well they were allowed to eat it. Many of them also had drink conveyed to them by their friends who were able to communicate with them by removing a little pane of glass in the window. At the back of the police station was a square yard in which the debtors used to play bowls.

One of the little houses near the police station was inhabited by a barber who used to be known as Tim. It was part of his duty every Friday to go into the prison and shave all the inmates. On one occasion, all or one of the prisoners got hold of him and bribed him to take his place in the shaving chair. When the time came for Tim to leave the prison one of the prisoners marched out in his stead and escaped. When the prison officials some time later went to take their dinner in to the felons, lo! and behold, Tim the barber was a prisoner in the place of the man who had regained his freedom.

The Old Gallows Off St Mary Street

I have been told that in the old days public executions took place in a court off St Mary Street, not far from the present market entrance and nearly opposite the London and Provincial Bank.

The court was known in the early part of last century as Gallows Yard, and was close to the then County Gaol. At the entrance to this yard the gallows were permanently fixed - a visible menace and warning to all and sundry. The chain with which the poor fellows were hauled up hung from the gallows, and on windy nights it would swing to and fro and creak. I was told that after nightfall many people were frightened going by it because it used to be popularly regarded as haunted by the ghosts of those who had been hanged there. I have always understood that the last man who was publicly executed there was Richard Lewis (better known as Dick Penderyn) who was hanged in 1831

for the part he played in the Merthyr riots. The late Mr Luke Evans used to recall this, because he, as a boy, though he didn't see the actual execution, afterwards saw the body hanging on the gallows.

Taking Prisoners to Assizes in the Forties

One of the most interesting men with whom I came into contact in Cardiff in years past was the late Mr Thomas Dalton, who was for many years Clerk of the Peace. When I knew him he must have been 70 years of age, and his memory went back to the time when the old Town Hall in High Street was in regular use. He and I had many long chats together, and he used often to recall interesting incidents of the way in which things were done in the forties. He used to tell me about the Assizes and Sessions or, as they used to call them, 'the big Courts'. They were held then as now, sometimes at Cardiff and sometimes at Swansea. In those days they used, when the Assizes were at Swansea, to take the prisoners all down in an open waggon. All the prisoners were leg-ironed to prevent them escaping en route. He used to go down with them, and as he described it, some amusing scenes took place. When they got to Tumble-Down-Dick-hill the order used to be given, 'Now boys, get out and put your shoulders to the wheel', and out they used to get as quickly as their manacled legs would allow, and help the horses to get the waggon up the hill! All the way up the hill old Mr Woods the governor of the gaol, and several warders would march on either side of the prisoners, each warder carrying a big pistol ready to fire at the prisoners if any of them should have endeavoured to escape. Then at the top of the Tumble they would all get in again and rattle along to Cowbridge.

Drinks at Cowbridge and Neath

In those days, people showed a good deal of sympathy towards the prisoners. The stop at Cowbridge to change horses would allow time for the inhabitants to assemble. Someone would say, 'Poor fellows. Look at 'em, Let's give 'em a drink' and then the inhabitants would all act on the suggestion with the result that the prisoners would become the centre of hospitality from all sides and would have quite as much as was good for them! Much the same thing would happen at Neath and perhaps one or two other places, and the result was that sometimes by the time Swansea was reached a good many of the prisoners were drunk. They used to take the precaution of taking them down a day or so early so that they were all sober by the time the Assizes opened!

Old Mr Dalton was a curious man and he used to wear a low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat of white dogskin. I don't remember ever seeing him wear anything else, and in fact he told me he had had it for ten or twelve years. He was at that time besides being Clerk of the Peace, the head of the firm of solicitors who still carry on the practice in their original premises at 6 Working Street - Messrs Spencer & Evans. Probably this is almost the only firm in Cardiff whose premises remain externally exactly as they were half a century ago. Formerly there was a court extending up the side of the house where the arcade now is and which used to be known as Dalton's Court.

Old Canton Bridge

In Mr Dalton's early days when they used to drive the prisoners in a waggon along to Cowbridge and then on to Swansea, the present Canton Bridge was not built. The present bridge was erected in 1859 or 1860, just before I came, and alongside of the old bridge, the foundations of which you may still see in the river bed on the north side of the present bridge. This old bridge which had been built in 1796, was very narrow. It had no footpath, I believe, and here and there were little niches in the side for people to get into when carts came over it. I believe that it remained for a short time after the new bridge was built, and I feel pretty certain, though not quite sure, that I saw it myself when I first came to Cardiff.

Castle and Burgesses in the Forties

A famous character of Cardiff of the forties about whom I have often heard was Mr Edward Priest Richards, who used to live in a big house with a large garden on the north side of Crockherbtown. He was town clerk of Cardiff from 1836 to 1857, and was solicitor to the Bute estate. Tales used to be told of the attitude he sometimes assumed at gatherings of the freemen of Cardiff when he was desirous of obtaining their support to further the schemes of the Bute estate. These little happenings throw a striking light upon the attitude of the Castle towards the burgesses of Cardiff 70 years ago. I have been told by those who have been present that he would appear at meetings of the freemen and put a paper down before them containing some parliamentary scheme by the second Lord Bute and ask them to sign it.

"What is it, Sir ?" someone would ask.

"Never you mind what it is. If Lord Bute wishes it, isn't that enough for you ?"

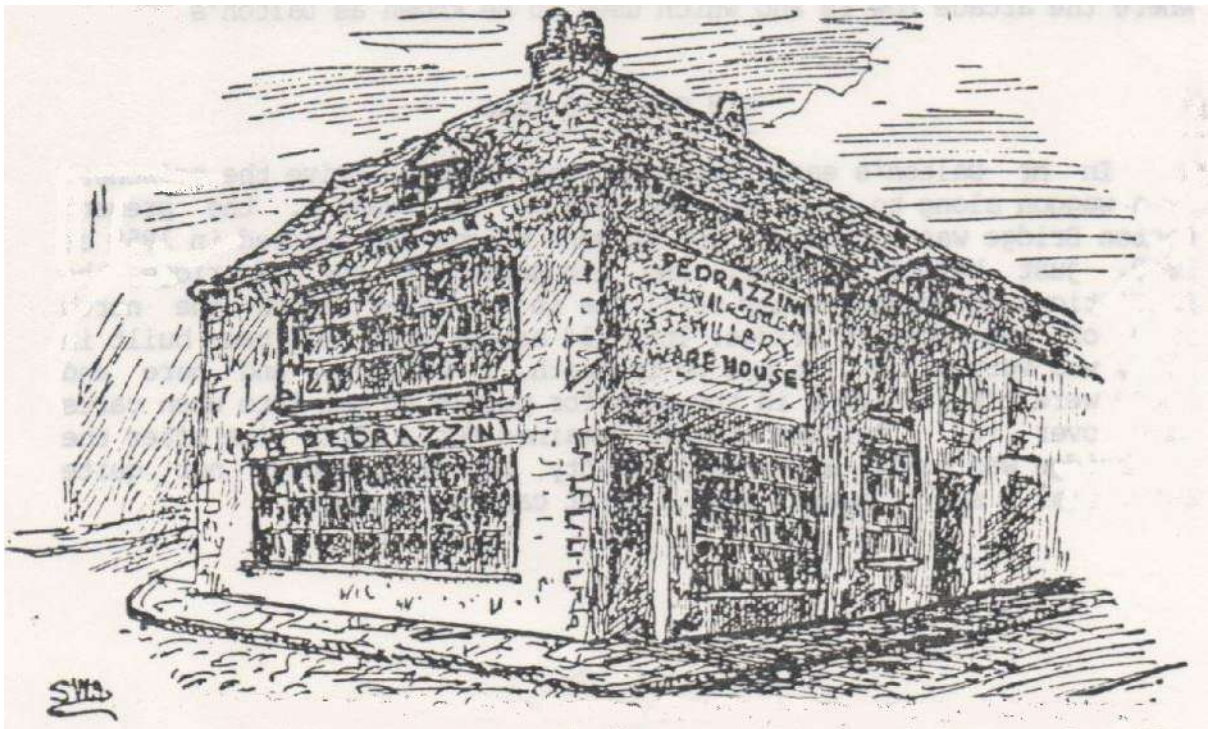
"Yes, but what is it? We want to know before we sign it," some more determined freeman would interpose.

Then Mr Priest Richards would retort with equal determination. "Never you trouble yourself. You just put your name there, that is all you've got to do."

What a wonderful and gratifying change has come over the relations between the Bute authorities and the people of Cardiff since those far-off days.

Another Popular Old Cardiffian

An Old Cardiffian whom I well remember was Mr James Ware, who was a coal merchant. He was a contemporary of old Alderman Watkins of the London and Provincial Bank, and one used to see the two strolling up and down St Mary Street arm in arm. Mr Ware would laugh sometimes and say, "Ah, it does a man's credit good to be seen walking up and down the street with his banker". Mr Ware was a justice of the peace, and used to sit on the bench at Penarth. He was a very kind-hearted man, and many and many a time he would quietly slip into the hand of one of the court officials the money to pay the fines of one or other of the prisoners.



Mr Pedraezzini's shop between Running Camp and Crockherdtown

from a sketch by S.W.Allen from his "Reminiscences"

THE FLOOD OF 1607 - Notes by W. Hamlin

The visit of the Roath Local History Society on 30th June 1988 to St John's Church, Cardiff brought to members' attention a reproduction of an old woodcut of the disastrous flood of the Wentloog Level in January 1607 [See illustration]. In Cardiff the old church of St Mary, situated as it was, on a low site at a bend of the tidal River Taff was inundated resulting in rapid deterioration of the building. John Speed, whose plan of Cardiff was published in 1610 speaks of the River Taff:

*But as the Tave is a friend to the Town for
making a Key for arrivage of shipping, so she
is a foe to St Marie's Church in the South,
with undermining her foundations and
threatening her fall.*

His plan shows how by that date, a corner of the churchyard had been carried away. In 1629 Dorothy French of Cardiff, widow, left half a crown towards the reparation of St Mary's Church, Cardiff. The present church of St Mary was built on a new site in Bute Road in 1843.

I obtained my copy of the woodcut in the 1950's from the late Dr F.J.North of the National Museum of Wales when putting together material for filmstrips on the history of Cardiff. Dr North reproduced an illustration of the woodcut in his book "The Evolution of the Bristol Channel" (3rd. Ed. 1964. Pub. N.M.W.). It comes from a tract entitled "*GOD'S WARNING TO HIS PEOPLE OF ENGLAND - Lamentable newes out of Monmouthshire in Wales, containing the wonderful and most fearful accidents of the overflowing of the waters in the said country, drowning infinite numbers of cattle of all kinds, as sheep, oxen, kine and horses, with others, together with the lives of many men, women and children, and subversion of XXVI parishes on January last.*"

As Dr North writes (p.76):

The tract (published anonymously but known to have been written by the Rev. William Welby) is essentially religious in its outlook, and apart from the paragraphs quoted below gives little exact information relating to the catastrophe. It has some anecdotes of miraculous escapes and an exhortation to the reader to "thinke upon the judgements which God hath inflicted upon others for their vices, that so wee may be the more auerted from the like offences... The Lord of his mercie grant, that we may learne in ume to be wise onto our owne health and valuation, least that these water-flouds in particular, prooue but fore-runners unto some fearefull calamities, more generall."



"Wofull newes from Wales, Or The lamentable losse of diuers Villages and Parishes by (a strange and wonderfull Floud) within the Countye of Monmouth in Wales; Which hapnde in January last past 1607, whereby a great number of his Ma^{ties}. Subjects, Inhabitating in those partes, are vtterlye vndone.

The following is the narrative:

"Upon Tuesday, being the 20th January, 1607, there happened such an overflowing of Waters, such a violent swelling of the seas, and such forcible breaches made in the firme land in the Counties following, that is to say, in the Counties of Gloucester, Somerset, Monmouth, Glamorgan, Carmarthen, and diuers and sundry other places of South Wales, the like never in the memory of man hath ever bin seen or heard of.

"For about nine of the clock in the morning the same being most fayrely and brightly spred, many of the inhabitants of those Countreys prepared themselves to their affayres:- then they might see and perceive afar off as it were in the element huge and mighty hills of water tomling one over another in such sort as if the greatest mountaynes in the world had overwhelmed the lowe villages or marshy grounds. Sometimes it dazzled the eyes of many of the Spectators that they immagined it had bin some fogge or miste comming with great swiftnesse towards them, and with such a smoke as if Mountaynes were all on fire, and to the view of some it seemed as if myllions of thousands of arrows had bin shot for the all at one time.

"So violent and swift were the outrageous waves, that in less than five hours space most part of those Countreys (especially the places which laye lowe) were all overflown, and many hundreds of people, both men and women and children, were then quite deuoured by those outrageous waters -

may more, the farmers and husbandmen and shepherdes might behold their goodly flockes of sheep swimming upon the waters dead.

"The names of some of the Towns and Villages which suffered great harmes and losses hereby were these, viz. - Bristoll, and Aust, all the Countreys along both sides of the Severn from Gloster to Bristoll, Chepstowe, Goldclift, Matherne, Calicot Moores, Redrift, Newport, Cardiffe, Swansea, Langharne, Llanstephan.

"The foundations of many Churches and Houses were in a manner decayed and some carried quite away, as in Cardiffe in the Countie of Glamorgan, there was a great part of the Church next to the water side beaten downe with the water.

"Divers other Churches lie hidden in the waters, and some of them the tops are to be seen, and some other nothinge at al to be seen but the very tops of the Steeples, and some of them nothinge at al."

At St Thomas's Church, Redwick, Gwent. (O.S.Ref.412 842) there is a hole in the porch at five feet and the inscription:

"Great Flood. A.D.1606"

Professor William Rees in "Cardiff - A History of the City" records that five hundred persons were said to have been drowned in various places along the coast. The loss of 400 sheep, owned by Mathew of Llandaff is recorded, probably on the Moor between the Rivers Taff and Ely.

The South Wales tract "printed for W.W. to be sold in St Pauls Churchyard at the Sign of the Greyhound employed the same artist to cut another woodblock for a further tract which was "Printed at London for Edward White and are to be sold at the sign of the Gunne at the North door of St Paules". He economised for this tract for Somerset and Norfolk by using much of the same artwork but adding a baby afloat in a wooden cradle.

The area of the Wentloog and Caldicot levels now threatened by urbanisation and industrialisation is protected by a massive sea wall to keep out the spring high tides. The sea wall was first built by the Roman legions. They were probably responsible too, for the beginnings of the drainage system which converted the areas protected by the sea bank into valuable farmland.

A slab of lias limestone found in 1878 washed out of the sea bank about 400 yards west of the site of Goldcliff Priory can be seen in the Legionary Museum at Caerleon indicating that a part of the wall was built or repaired by them; it has the following inscription:

COH(ORTIS) I D3 STATORI M(A)X(I)MI P(ASSVS) XXXI S(EMIS)

[The Century of Statorius Maximus in the First Cohort (built) thirty one and a half paces.]

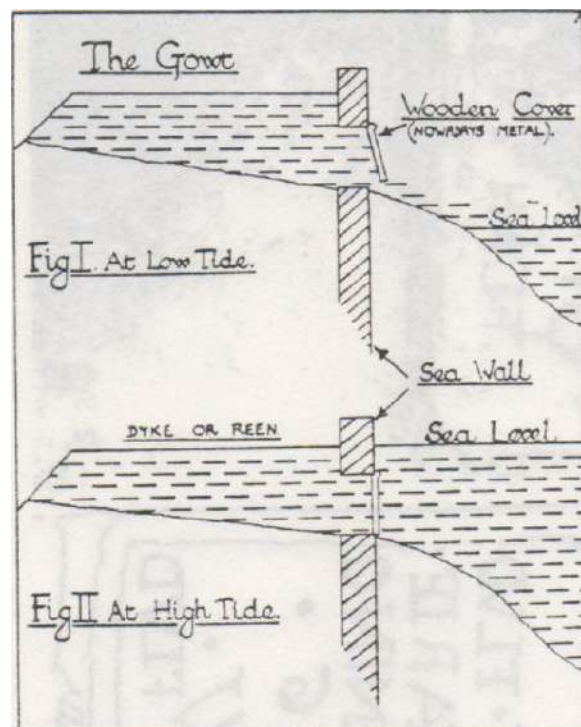
Later Benedictine monks who had a priory at Goldcliff were busy digging new reens. One, the famous 'Monk's Ditch' running south from Llanwern Steelworks still survives as a monument to the industrious holy men. In medieval days the maintenance of the wall was the responsibility of the lord's tenants and they apportioned the work between themselves, the lord of the manor being responsible for the repair and Maintenance of the gowts, their gates and 24 feet of the wall on each side.

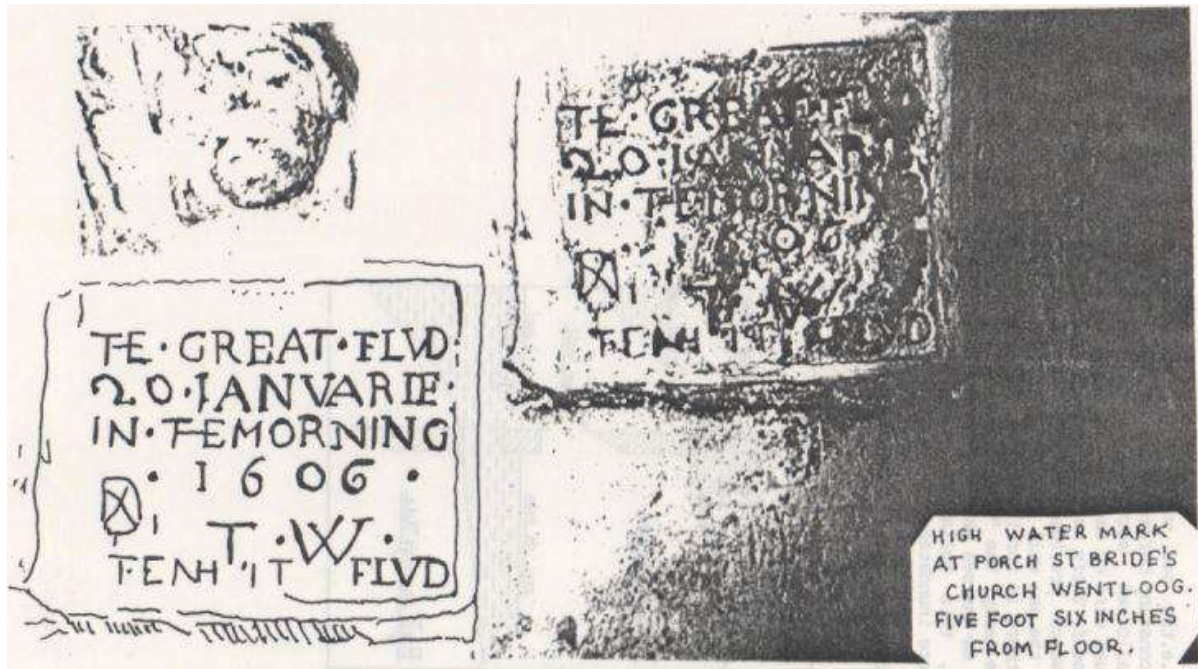
The work now falls under the jurisdiction of the Caldicot and Wentloog Level Commissioners who levy a rate on all property within a certain area to provide for the maintenance and repair of the sea wall and gowts.

The diagram or "The Gowt" is taken from a post-war booklet on "The City of Cardiff" compiled by pupils of Cardiff High School for Boys under the direction of Mr Mervyn E. Price, the senior history master.

To quote from this excellent publication:

Its [i.e. the sea wall's] care and maintenance were a constant burden for everyone, since the Lord allotted sections of the wall to the individual care of each villein, keeping the gowts for himself. There were [In Rumney] two of these gowts which provided outlets for fresh water through the sea wall and one of them survives even today; there is for instance a "Gowt Farm" down upon the Lamby. The "Gowt" was a fool-proof system as long as the sea wall kept out the sea. In 1607, however, this collapsed, and all the Rumney Low lands were inundated to a depth of six feet. Many people were drowned, and large numbers of livestock were lost. Rumney people, however, escaped since they lived on slightly higher land.

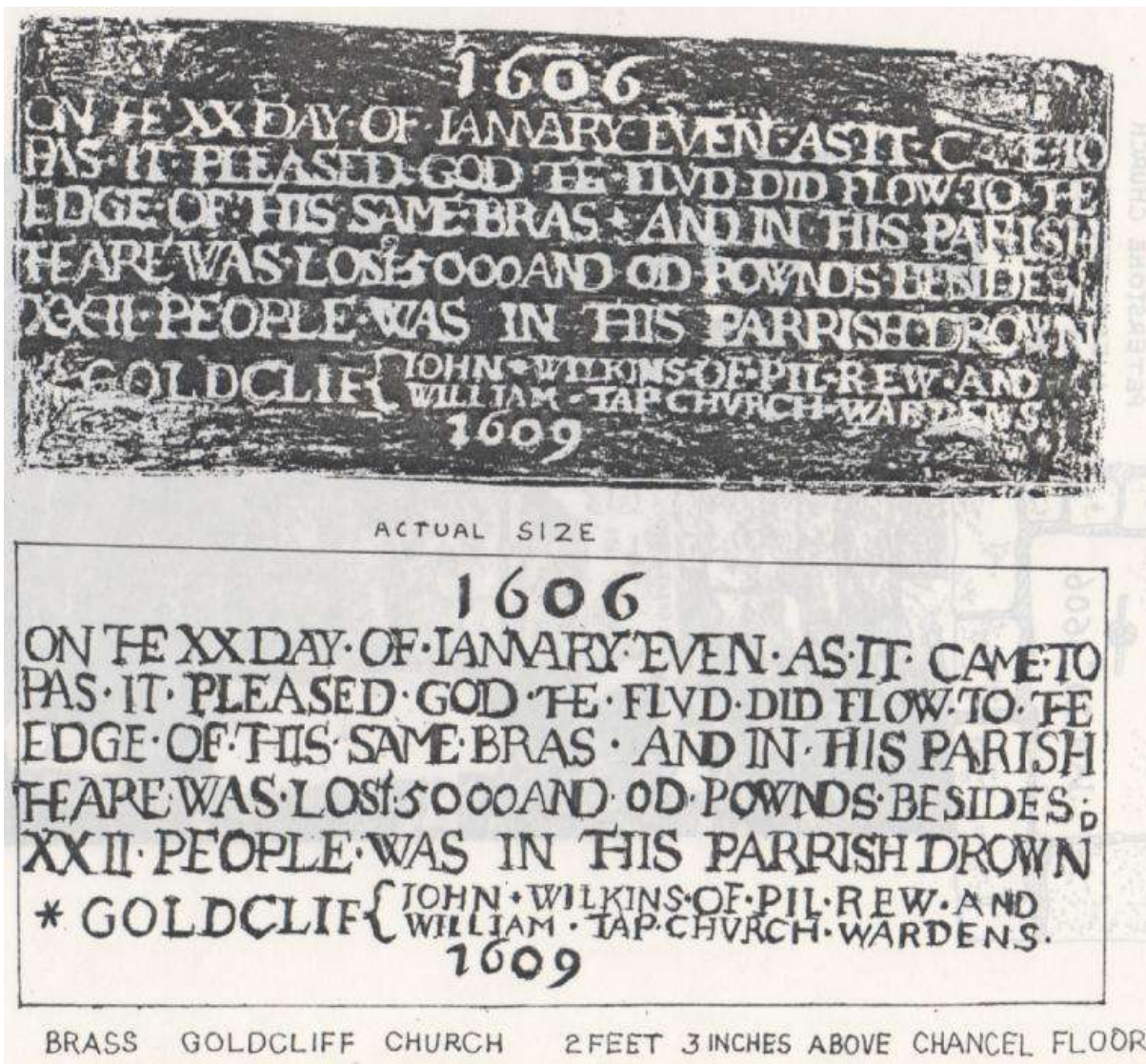




At St Bride's Church, Wentloog, the date 1606 is given on the inside wall of the porch inscription.

THE GREAT FLUD/20 JANUARIE/IN THE MORNING/1606

[According to the old style dating, the new year started on March 25th. What was then January 1606 would therefore be 1607 according to our new style dating.]



This was the way in which John Williams and William Tap, churchwardens, recorded the terrible flood. The five thousand and odd pounds is recorded before the fate of the twenty two people. The churchwardens later presented a plate, paten and chalice inscribed with their names and the date 1609.



PLAQUE ON OUTSIDE WALL OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH, PETERSTONE WENTLOOG