

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Project Newsletter



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ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 5 No.4

The principal article in this Newsletter has been kindly contributed by Mr A.Campbell on "The Milestones of Cardiff". Regrettably, it is impossible to reproduce the professional quality of his photographs by the ordinary photocopying process that has to be used for the production of this publication. Let us hope that some arrangement can shortly be made to display the original prints at a local public exhibition.

At the end of Volume 5 No.2 (pp.49 - 56) we reproduced some photographs of non-conformist places of worship in Roath to accompany the preceding contribution by Mr Brian Llewellyn James. In this issue we continue the series of pictures.

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A Bibliography of Cardiff History

The "Survey of Cardiff" is an organisation registered as a charity currently staffed by young people available under the Employment Training Scheme. They are undertaking research with the long term aim of producing a detailed topographical and historical survey of Cardiff, beginning with the area directly affected by the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation project. The general management of the Survey is in the hands of an Executive Committee on which our Society is represented.

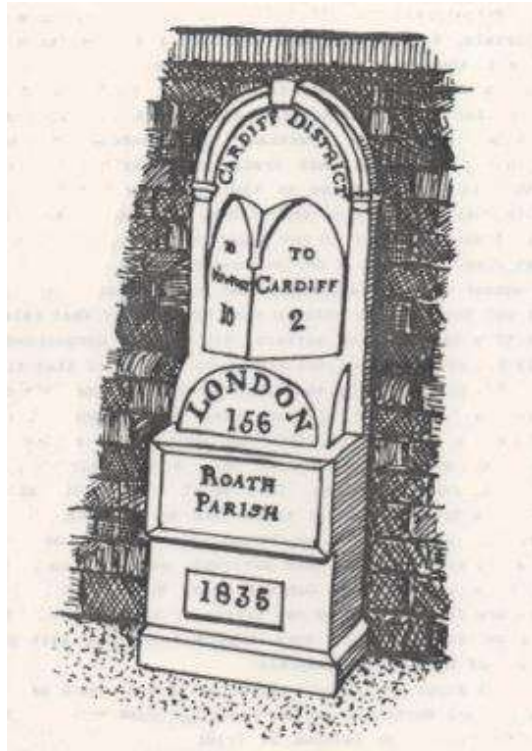
Of considerable interest to local historians is their first publication, described as Occasional Paper No.1. A Bibliography of the History of Cardiff. It was compiled by Brian Llewellyn James with a useful Appendix on architectural and town planning sources compiled by Dr Sam Romaya. In his preface Mr James says that although the bibliography makes no claim to completeness, he hopes nothing of major importance has been omitted. We are under a debt of gratitude to the compilers for allowing the result of their labours to be placed in the public domain and to the officers, committee members and staff of the Survey for producing the first published bibliography of the history of Cardiff. No doubt, further editions will be published in due course and I am sure the Survey office will be pleased to pass on any suggestions, corrections or omissions that readers of this Newsletter may wish to contribute.

The booklet is available at £3 from main booksellers in Cardiff Or direct from the Survey of Cardiff Office, c/o Department of Extra-Mural Studies, University of Wales College of Cardiff, 38 Park Place, Cardiff. CF1 3BB.

LOCAL POPULATION STUDIES

As our project team is faced with having to obtain a large volume of photocopied material at considerable expense before a full analysis of the 1881 Census and other sources relating to Roath can be completed, an application was recently made to the Local Population Studies Society Research Fund for a grant. As a result, we are pleased to report that our Society's funds are now augmented to the extent of £250. This generous grant will enable us to proceed with the purchase of the necessary source material. Although there are no strings attached to the loan, we have undertaken to provide the L.P.S.S. with reports on progress and the results of our group projects in the field of population studies. But we need more volunteers to assist in the research projects at our "workshop meetings".

Amongst the aims of the L.P.S.S. are the encouragement, assistance and advice to groups and individuals pursuing demographic research. The Society has organised a day conference in Cardiff on Saturday 18 November 1989 at the Open University Centre, Cathedral Road. Subject:- Population History of Wales and the Marches. Further details will be given nearer the date. Meanwhile, please make a note in your diary.



THE MISSING ROATH MILESTONE

Does anyone know what has happened to it ? (see following article)

(Picture supplied by Mr W. Hamlin)

The Milestones of Cardiff

Milestones are odd things in their way, markers or memorials, ticking off both distance and time inseparably, as all the great stone placers knew. The Greeks built temples and placed memorials at the roadside, for the relaxation and contemplation of passersby. The ancient standing stones one sometimes comes across on isolated hillsides marking a pack trail or drover's road were as mystic in their origins as they are today, set up on an individualistic whim or from tribal motivations and equally pulled down or moved to new locations through the bickering centuries, to prove a dubious ownership or boundary. Today we wonder at their meanings. What mystery caused them to be set up? How has time allowed them to survive? What relevance did they have for the setters? All this is unrecorded, and only the stones themselves remain to tell us of that time.

The Romans set up the first milestones, that are called such, and known of. It was they who invented the word Milliarium, which comes from the word Mille, meaning 1000. The Roman mile was 1000 paces long, a pace being two steps of approximately 5 feet. They built over 10,000 miles of roads in Britain, and if these were marked with milestones for their whole length, would represent a hefty mountain of rock. However very, few have survived, perhaps less than 100, and only one from the Cardiff area. Mostly the few marks that are legible on them say little of distance to or from a town or fortress, but more likely bear long epitaphs in praise of emperors or generals.

The first modern milestones in Britain were set up on the Barkway Hertfordshire to Cambridge road between 1725-27 by the Master and Fellows of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, who took it on themselves to improve the road to London, which they used so often. They later reclaimed expenses from the Cambridge and Wadesmill Turnpike Trust. Why they set up stones is unknown, but others seemed to take to the idea, and their regular use spread widely. Today the vast majority of those that have survived come from a later era, when the turnpike trusts had spread over the rest of the country. First established in the late 17th century, but only begun in Glamorgan around 1760 and continuing till the mid 19th century, where stories and memories of antagonism to the toll takers, the Rebecca riots and the breaking down of toll gates seemed to have brought to an end that era of road building and milestone placing. When the counties took responsibility for road building and maintenance there was no place for such romantic nonsense as milestones. Black and white painted signs give the destination and distance so matter of factly and no doubt are soon to be replaced by blue and white ones giving the same distances in kilometers. Kilo incidentally also means 1000.

Cardiff has a rich heritage in old milestones, fourteen in all. With the odd boundary stone and museum exhibit the number rises to 23.

This famous stone is at the top of Westgate Street, opposite the Angel Hotel and Cardiff Castle. It is



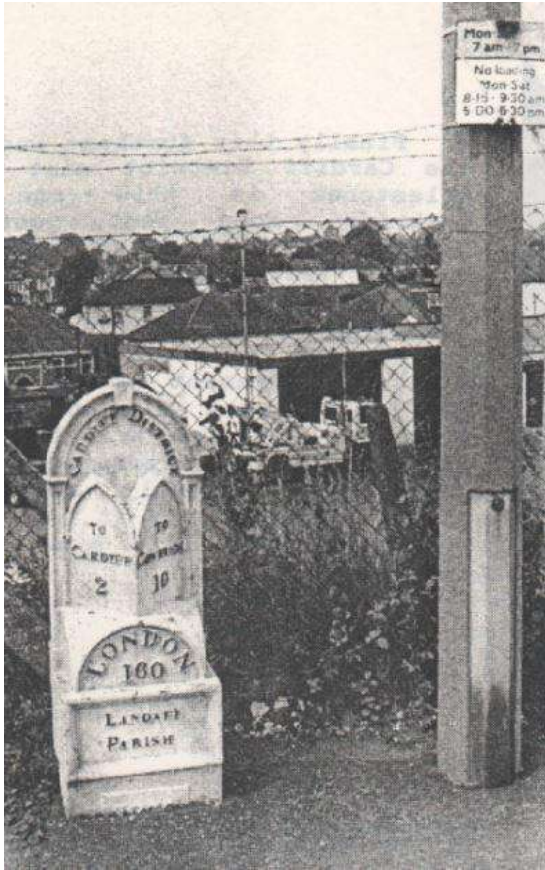
well known to the passing Rugby crowds, and is part of a set of five, running out along Cowbridge Road to Culverhouse Cross. They are among the best preserved, and are the largest left in the City. Made of cast iron and with inscriptions on five different levels of cathedral architecture. This one is conveniently exactly twelve miles from both Cowbridge and Newport. Unlike the others it is marked Cardiff Town, rather than parish-and is dated 1835 as are all the set of five.



Out along Cowbridge Road East, at the junction of Canton Cross, is this smaller cast iron milestone. This type were used on the lesser turnpikes, that is roads other than the main London routes. It is positioned in front of Husband and Husband, solicitors, Cadogan House, at number 273 Cowbridge Road, and is out of its true position, having been moved from a site about one hundred yards north in Llandaff Road at some time in the mid-fifties, when it is shown on the Ordnance Survey maps in its old position. There are four of this type in all in Cardiff. The other three are in Roath, Llandaff and Caerphilly Road. At one time there were many more, but one by one, most have been lost over the years. There are inscriptions on three levels and no mention of parish or date, though probably about 1830.

Another of the five large, west of Cardiff centre stones, with its second lowest tier showing Llandaff parish, and the mileage from Cardiff and Cowbridge standing proud like the tablets of Moses. It is located in Cowbridge Road East, at the corner of Pen-y-Peel Road in a curvature of wall that seems to have been specially built to accommodate it. There is an additional little plinth of about two to three inches at the base, which none of the others show, being buried too deep in the pavement. None of these cast iron stones show any foundry mark of just where they were made, but one wonders if this plinth were of a manufactured height of ten to twelve inches would there be any further inscription.





Further west at Ely roundabout is another fine cast iron milestone. It is positioned beside the British Rail bridge where Ely Station used to be, and though it is buried a little deep in the pavement, the 1835 date can just be seen. Its site is bleak with heavy rushing traffic, gusting winds and exhaust fumes, a chain link wire fence, and barbed wire behind it, and few pedestrians to visit it.

In Cowbridge Road West there is this last Llandaff parish cast iron milestone. It sits quietly in a residential area, outside house number 322, just off the junction of Crossways Road opposite the entrance to the Western Leisure Centre. In this case it is buried so deep that the date inscription is totally obscured. All these cast iron stones are most certainly second generation replacements of wooden marker posts that went back to at least the turn of the nineteenth century.





Finally this furthest west of the Cardiff District cast iron milestones is this one in Cowbridge Road West, outside Western Cemetery, and opposite Knights Well Road. Again it is buried so deeply as to obscure the 1835 date. However a new inscription of Michaelstone parish gives a pleasant change. The heavy dark trees give an ominous setting, but the wrought iron fence behind has a pointed gothic arch motif directly above it which complements it with a permanence that only a cemetery can convey.

Moving to the east of the town centre is the oldest Cardiff stone proper, sometimes called the Ancient Milestone or Ancient Stone. It is in the triangular garden of Roath branch library. The inscription reads:

From
the Town
hall in
Cardiff
1 mile

This refers to the old town or guildhall, sited at the junction of High Street and St Mary Street, which was removed in 1861. This old stone most likely dates from the 1760s, when the Turnpike Trusts were established, and good quality coaching roads and bridges were built. It is shown on George Yate's map of Glamorgan of 1799 as are most stones on the main roads in the county. The slope of the lettering and the oddly formed lower case 'e' also suggests such a date. Of added interest is that this stone was removed in about 1900 by the authorities, but due to vigorous local protest, by Roath residents, it was reinstated in its present position, and so survives today.



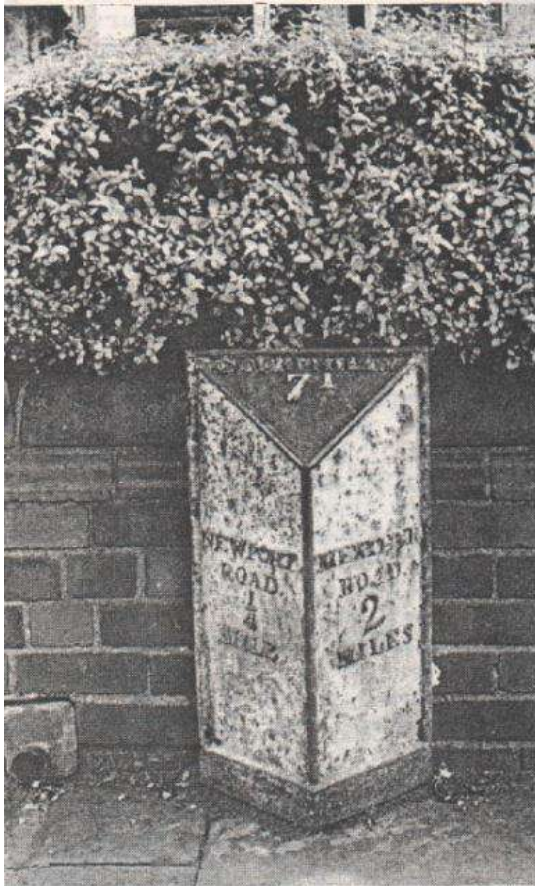
Not so lucky was the large cast iron stone of 1835, positioned in Newport Road, against the wall of the Royal Infirmary, opposite Wordsworth Avenue. Perversely it was removed in a road widening scheme of the 1950s, and lost to the city. Perhaps the enthusiasm of the locals was not as intense as that of 1900, which saved this Roath ancient stone.



This fine monument, the Newport Road milestone until a few years ago stood against the wall of the old trolley bus depot, opposite Rover Way. Since the transport department vacated the site, the stone has gone missing, and there is the deep suspicion that they are responsible for its disappearance, though why this act of public vandalism should have occurred, is not known. Whether it was broken up for scrap, placed in someone's private garden, or is being held in a warehouse for safe keeping, it has still been stolen from public ownership, and it is now time for its return. There are a number of secure positions, close to its old site, with stout brick walls to protect it. Roath is poorer for its disappearance. Picture credit: Bill Hamlin

This stone is on the former site of the Taff Vale- railway bridge situated on the north east side of North Road under the Gabalfa flyover. It is again of cast iron, and is the only one of its type of all the Cardiff stones. It is of medium size, with a rectangular base that on the larger stones had the name of the parish set in. Whether this stone ever had a parish name is not known, but the surface is extremely irregular, as though it could have, but has now been lost. There is no date, but the type face is similar to the smaller stones, such as at Albany Road, Llandaff, Canton Cross, and Caerphilly Road. This suggests that this stone and the smaller ones were made at around the same time, but perhaps earlier than the 1835 of the larger stones.





Aside from the ancient stone which is buried to all but 10 inches, this stone is now the only one in Roath. It is in Albany Road, opposite Roath Court Place, outside house number 243. It is in fairly good condition, but seems to have missed out on the coat of paint that most of the others had at the time of the Queen's 25th Jubilee. There is a figure 2 missing from the top inscription "Caerphilly 7½". That it could be lost reinforces the possibility that the parish name could have been lost from the Gabalfa stone.

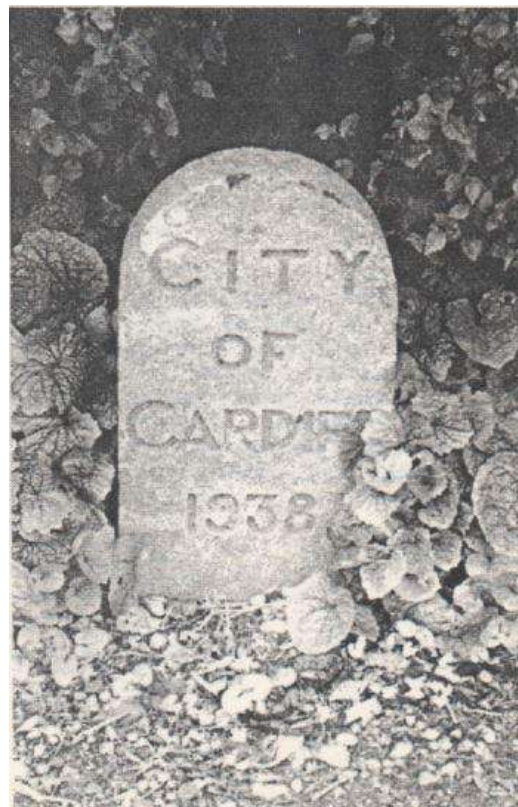
A little further east near the top of Rumney Hill, on the south side of Newport Road, in front of house number 732 is this fine stone, made of a hard good quality carboniferous, limestone. It has all its inscriptions intact, and had a coat of paint at the time of the Jubilee, which still gives it a good character today. That it is of limestone rather than cast iron suggests that being in a different county, Monmouthshire, it came under a different Turnpike trust. Its date is unknown, but is most likely between 1820 & 30, in any case earlier than the cast iron stones.





Another Monmouthshire milestone is this one in Newport Road, by the fence of Rumney High School. The parish name St Mellons is in very good condition, but all the other inscriptions have been purposely obliterated, probably at the start of World War 2, by some misguided local worthy, in an endeavour to hinder any potential German advance into the Principality. This was an era when many finger posts and other distance and direction signs were destroyed in the name of military necessity, and also a time when many cast iron milestones were broken up for scrap metal. or as they said at the time, "to build spitfires". Still one wonders if it would be possible to re-engrave the inscriptions on this and others also mutilated. They would be more worthy landmarks for it.

Though not a milestone, and made of more modern and brutal reinforced concrete, this little boundary stone is half hidden in the undergrowth and wild flowers, on the south side of Newport Road, near St Illtyds High School. There are others of similar age and character around the city, but this one will serve for the lot.





This stone at Coed Kernew, beside Tavern House, though not strictly in Cardiff, is still worthy of comment, if for no other reason than its sad state. The inscription is similarly obliterated to the one near Rumney High School and all the same can be said for it. It is sunk too deeply in the grass to be able to read the parish inscription, though considering the sad state of the other lettering this is probably a virtue, thus preserving what is there for the future.

This stone is on the north side of Cardiff Road in Llandaff, just outside the gates of the Cathedral School. It is in extremely good condition, and of the smaller type, as others already mentioned. It is of cast iron, and obviously of the same era.





Again of the smaller type, this, cast iron stone is in Caerphilly Road, just outside the Gnome Factory. It is in good condition, undated, and obviously of similar vintage to others of its type.

Finally there are three stones in St Fagans Folk museum. Not properly belonging to the city of Cardiff, never-the less they are resident in it. They are a sad lot, set as they are so far from their original and proper homes, yet being a museum exhibit they are most certainly safe for the future. This largest one is almost identical to the five tier larger Cardiff milestones, though dated 1841, it also has very minor differences in detail and type face.





Also in the Folk Museum is this badly marred and worn milestone. the inscription reads

Bridgend

()

Llantrissant

6

It is of good quality limestone and most likely from the turnpike trust era, though it is undated.

Lastly at St Fagans, is this boundary stone. The word boundary runs vertically, and is partly illegible. One side reads Aberavon Street and the other reads Turnpike Road, and is obviously from the Port Talbot and Neath area.



There are three Roman milestones in The National Museum of Wales, in Cardiff. This one found in 1926 in the bed of the Coal Brook at Margam near the East lodge, is a quadrangular block of sandstone, 25" high. The inscription reads "For the Emperor Caesar Marcus Cassianus Latinus Postumus Augustus". The Emperor Postumus, dates from AD 258 - 68.



This very rough pillar of millstone grit is 34" high by 8" wide. It was found in 1892 beside the railway at Melin Crythan, near Neath. It showed signs of later reworking, possibly to be used as a lintel, and much of the inscription is lost. What remains reads "for the Emperor Caesar Diocletianus Augustus". Diocletian dates from AD 284-305.

This is the lower part of the milestone only, the rest is lost. It is of a fine grained igneous rock, measuring 22" by 10". It was found in 1954, not far from Bwlch-y-Ddeufaen ('Pass of the Two Stones') in the Conway Valley. The inscription reads "for the (...Constantinus) Invictus Augustus, son of the deified Constantius Pius Augustus". Constantine I dates from AD 307-37.





Finally is this famous cylindrical milestone of millstone grit. It is 79" high by 19" in diameter, and was found in 1883 buried in a field about 7 miles west of Caerhun fort (Kanouium) in Caernarfonshire. Though the inscription says eight miles. The Roman miles were usually shorter when measured along devious mountain roads, where the uphill pace was shortened. Likewise the modern English mile is longer. There is only a cast of it in the National Museum, the original is in the British Museum, London. The inscription reads:

"The Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, in his fifth year of tribunician power, father of his country, thrice consul: from Kanovium 8 miles." ;

The father of his country title dates from Hadrian's fifth tribunacy AD 120-9.

There are a number of finger posts of interest around Cardiff, as for example at Fairwater and near Culverhouse, but I have decided to limit this to stones. I have endeavoured to include all the milestones of Cardiff in this small Survey, but if any are known that have been left out, I would be pleased to hear of them.

Al Campbell 1989

References:

The National Trust Book of Bridges, by J.M. Richards, 1984, published by Jonathon Cape, London.

Cardiff a History of the City, by W.Rees, 1969, published by the City of Cardiff.

Roman Roads, by Ray Chevallier, 1976, published by Batsford, London.

The Old Roads of England, by Sir W. Addison, 1980, published by Batsford, London.

The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, by R.G.Collingwood & R.P. Wright, 1965, published by The Clarendon Press, Oxford.

With thanks to Richard Brewer of the Roman Antiquities Department of the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

Some Further Notes on Milestones

(1) It is reasonable to suppose that the milestone in the residential portion of Albany Road was erected in 1804 when the narrow lane that ran through the village of Roath was converted into a new highway constructed to the standard specifications laid down by the Heath Enclosure Act, 1801.

This new "enclosure road" extended from Roath Court on Newport Road to the two-mile stone by the Gabalfa flyover and was known as the New Merthyr Road. It was in effect a Cardiff by-pass road for travellers approaching from the direction of Newport en route to Merthyr Tydfil, which at that time was a much larger and more important town than Cardiff. The portion between Roath Court and the parish boundary (junction with Whitchurch Road/ Crwys Road) was renamed Albany Road in 1884 when housing development began on the Mackintosh estate. The significance of the inscription on the Albany Road milestone can be fully appreciated only when considered against the background of the history of the road on which it stands.

(2) Mr Geoff Dart has supplied us with the following interesting note:

Extract from DAVID, Rev. William, M.A. (Rector of St. Fagans and Rural Dean). The Pedigree of the David Family of Fairwater, 1894.

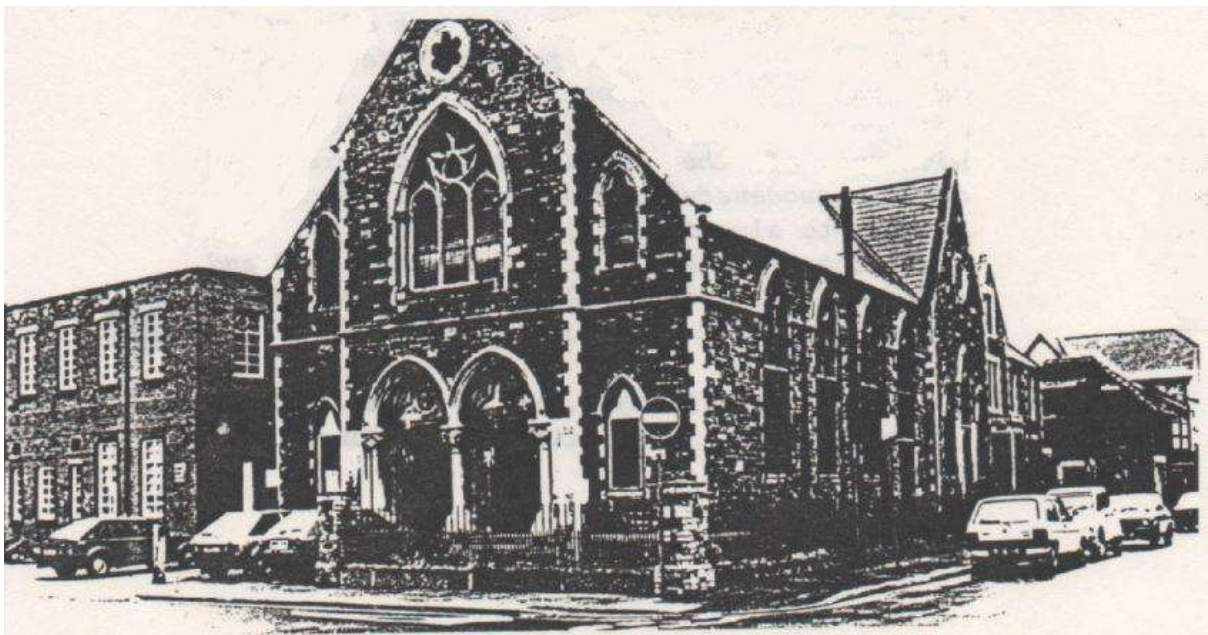
On p.17 in his short biography of his father, EVAN DAVID, J.P. of Fairwater House (1789-1862) he states:-

On a Saturday afternoon in 1835, on his return to Radyr Court from presiding at the Board of Governors, he cut out of a small block of wood, with his pocket knife, a model of what may be considered as numerous monuments, fixed equidistant along our highways, of the readiness with which he could successfully apply his versatile ability to almost anything he cared to, for that afternoon he simultaneously designed and modelled our very shapely and unusually instructive cast iron mile-marks.

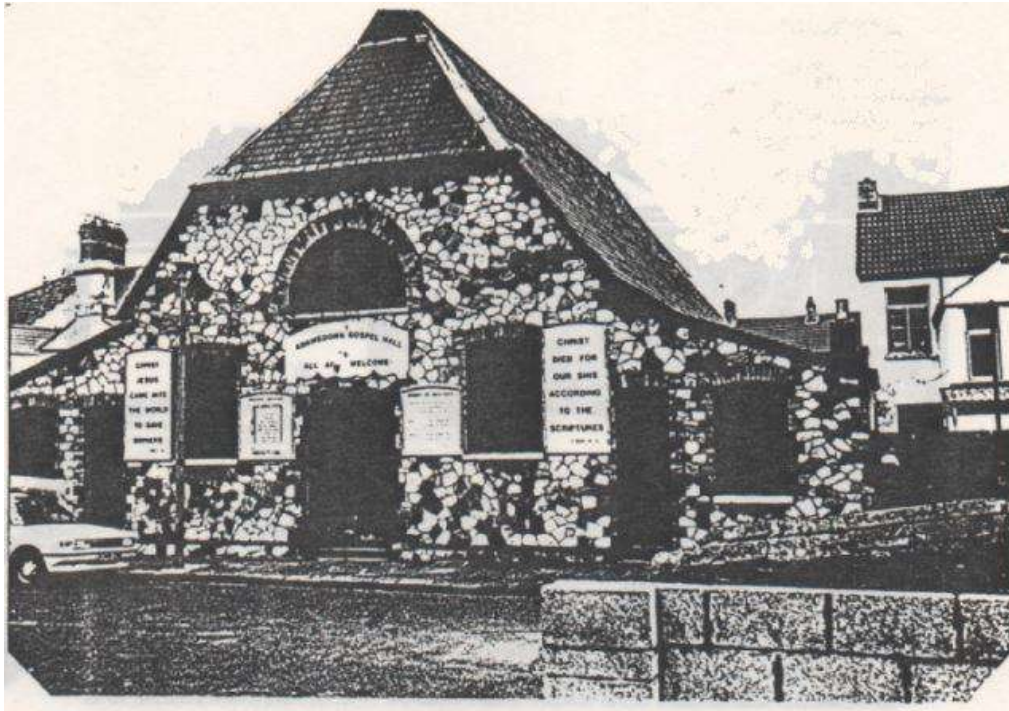
Despite the author's prolix style, it is clear he credits his father with the design of the large iron milestones dated 1835 on the main 'old' A48 road.



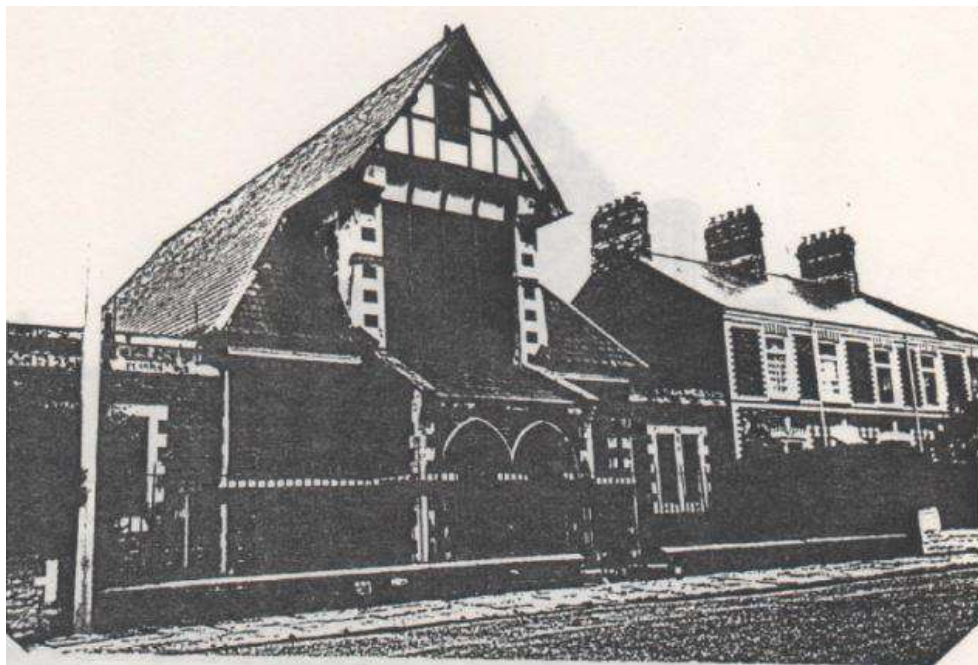
Pearl Street Baptist Church ("Ebenezer") (1888-92)
(now Sikh Gurdawara Temple) Cardiff



Longross Street Baptist Church, closed 1967
(now part of Cardiff Royal Infirmary)



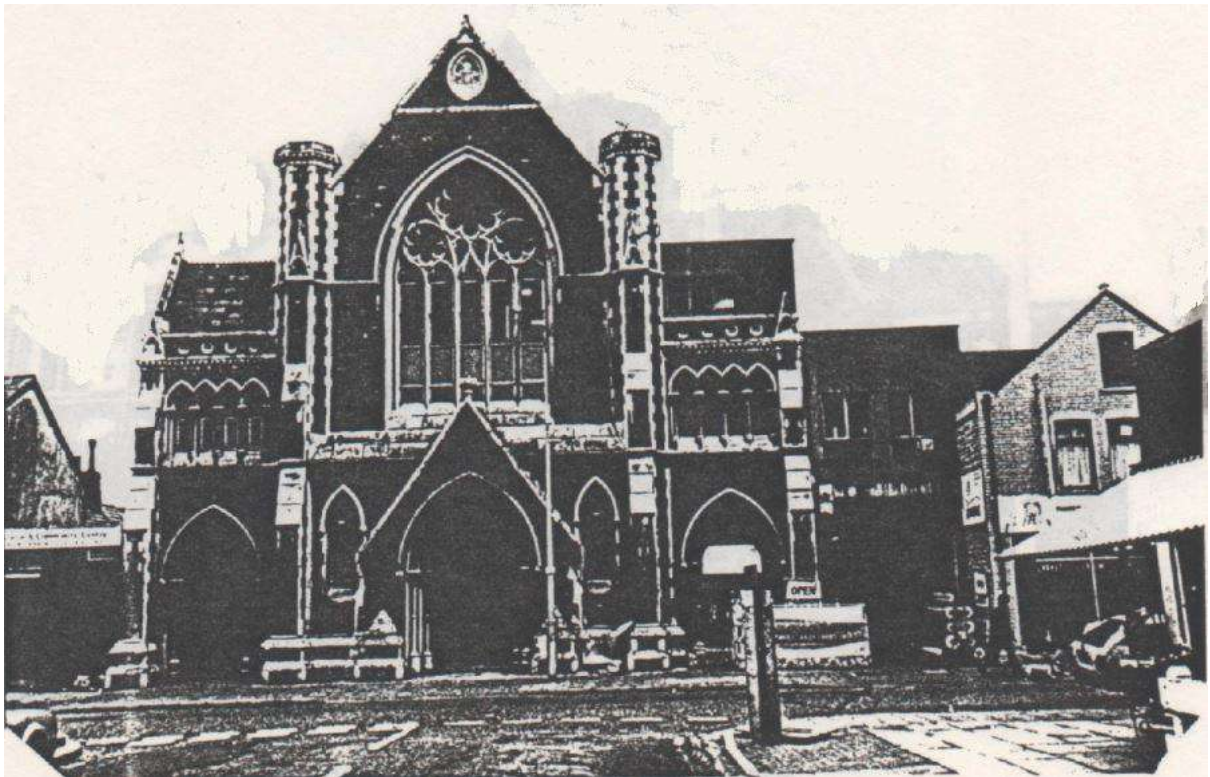
Adamsdown Gospel Hall (Brethren)
Kames Place entrance, Adamsdown



Adamsdown Gospel Hall (Brethren)
Clyde Street entrance, Adamsdown



Church of the Nazarene, Stacey Road



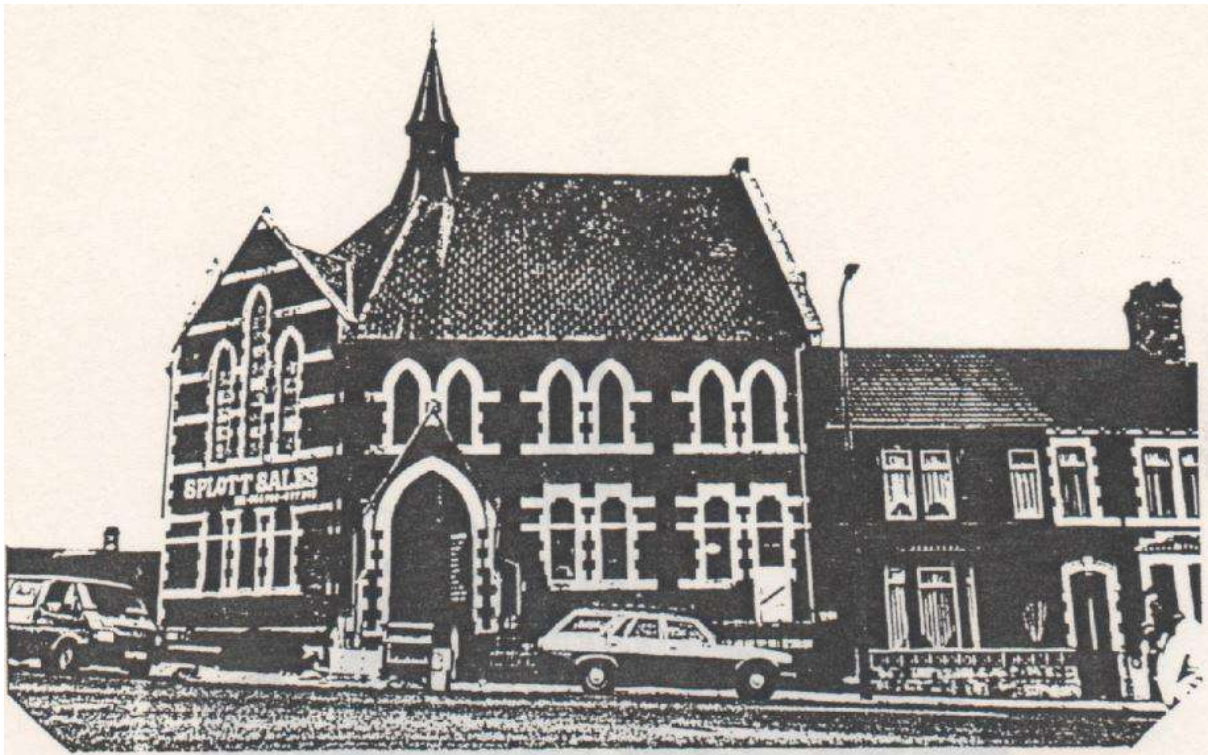
Broadway Wesleyan Methodist (1879-80)
(now a Moslem Mosque)



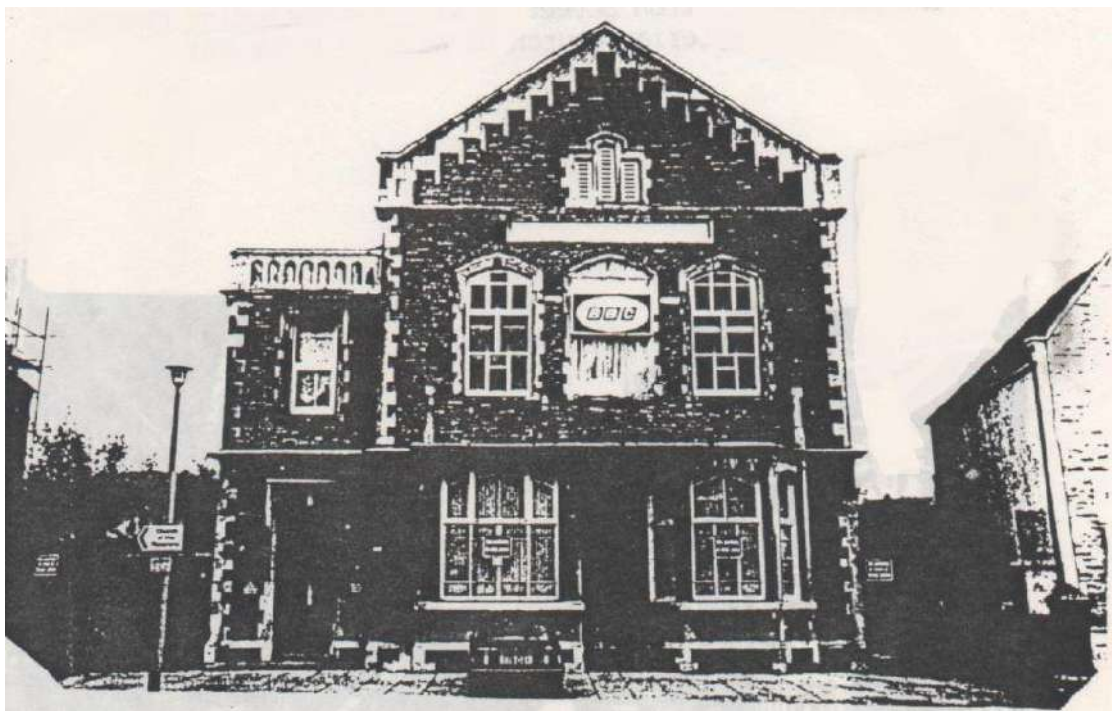
The derelict Clifton Street Calvinistic Methodist Church.
(Presbyterian Church of Wales) (1868-80)



Clifton Street, Roath



Former Salvation Army "Roath Temple" Splott Bridge, Splott Road



Roath Congregational Church, Stacey Road (disbanded 1916 - now used by B.B.C.)
Before 1st World War here was Roath Electric Theatre and Roath Public Hall. After 2nd War the hall was purchased by the Labour Party (Stacey Labour Hall) and the Star Ballroom was also here.