



E-NEWSLETTER

MAY 2025

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Society was founded in 1978 by the late Alec Keir. Our focus is on the ancient parish of Roath - the modern-day suburbs of Adamsdown, Splott, Tremorfa, Pengam, Plasnewydd, Penylan, parts of Cathays and Cyncoed as well as Roath itself.

Our lively and interesting meetings are held at 7.30pm on the second Wednesday of the month from September through to May. See [Programme](#) for details. We meet at [St Edward's church](#), Westville Road, Pen-y-lan, Cardiff CF23 5DE. Annual membership is just £13 ([membership form](#)) and visitors are welcome to attend any meeting, in person or on Zoom for £3.

In May, June and July we undertake a series of trips to places of historic interest in Cardiff and the wider South Wales area.

Our Life President is Jeff Childs and our Life Members, appointed in recognition of the service they have given to the Society, are Dr Diane Brook, Gwyn Smith, Judith Hunt, Peter Gillard, Martin Sheldon and David Parry.

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E-NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to the May edition of the newsletter. I wondered if Roath residents ever celebrated May festivities around a maypole or nominated a May Queen or May Lord. I could find no reference in Welsh newspapers to such merriment.

The nearest I could find was a story of 1910, when Rees Jeffrey Jones of Cardiff was fined 10s. for being drunk in a public place. He was found asleep in the street with no fewer than a hundred children being reported as dancing round him like a human maypole. That would have been a sight worth seeing!



St Margaret's Church framed by spring blossom

This month sees the last of our season's talk when we hear about Iolo Morgannwg, a fascinating figure, given by the author Gareth Thomas on Wednesday 14th May. I hope you'll agree with me that we have had some excellent talks, with superb speakers, and I'm sure that Gareth will round off the season in style.

Elizabeth Morgan has also come up trumps with the summer series of visits, details of which should have arrived in your inbox by now. The visits are bound to be in great demand, so do book your places early.

This edition is slightly smaller than usual owing to holidays – more contributions for future editions will be warmly welcomed.

Jon Roberts
Newsletter Editor

A stroll down memory lane: recollections of some of the special places of Cardiff present and past...

Although I live in Johannesburg and have been here for over 30 years, I oft sit on our stoep (patio) waiting to catch a trolley bus at the stop between Arran Street and Kinraig Street, outside Victor Davies's greengrocery shop and take a short ride into Town. Cardiff is such a wonderful city full of interest. And Roath the best of suburbs to grow up in. I have been very fortunate in my career to see a good number of cities, but Cardiff will always be the finest for me. That Red Dragon knows how to lead the way.

Trips to Town with Mam and my brother, Den, on Saturday mornings were always a real treat. Visits to some of the splendid arcades one of many highlights. The Castle Arcade was one of the

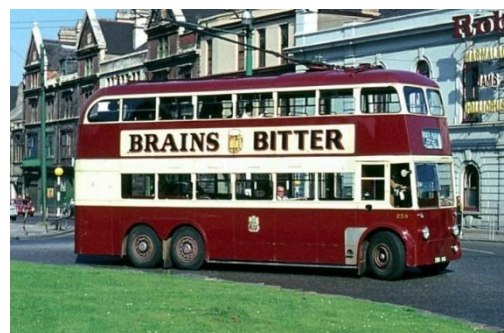


Castle Arcade pictured in 1951, with Bud Morgan's on the right

Credit: Wales Online/Media Wales

constructed. Just below Mach 1 at the Rec or Splott Park.

A month of pocket money was spent in one visit. But what pleasure in return.



Who (besides Les) remembers the Cardiff Corporation trolley buses?

By Alan Murray-Rust, CC BY-SA 2.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=106736771>

favourites as Bud Morgan had his model shop there. Aircraft fascinated me as a lad; I had that pocket-book giving details of all types of aircraft and it was consulted regularly. I often flew with Squadron Leader Neville Duke as he broke the sound barrier in his Hawker Hunter. Littlehampton has never seen anyone fly over it at 727.63 mph before. Bicycle rides to the airfield at Tremorfa to watch the Tiger Moths taking off and landing another favourite pastime.

But back to Bud Morgan. Mr Morgan, we addressed him. A man who had lost one arm but was very skilled with the remaining one. Could on times be somewhat curt so I, and my friend, Terry Chorley who lived in Swinton Street in Splott, always showed the greatest of respect. Terry admired the Hawker Hunter whilst I thought its rival, the Supermarine Swift, a better fighter plane. We would leave the shop clutching our balsa wood kits having also

purchased a Jetex engine each and fuel capsules to fly our planes once



Les's kit of choice

Credit: Airfix/ Hornby Hobbies Ltd 2025

Another Arcade that also was a favourite on a Saturday morning was the Morgan Arcade. It contained a most remarkable shop where one could enjoy a glass of sarsaparilla often served by the owner Charlie Jones. He took over the shop from his father with the secret formula for the drink which he never revealed. Sweets were also sold in that shop situated at a junction in the Arcade I seem to remember. Glasses of the required amount of sarsaparilla stood on the counter waiting to be filled with water from a most unusual tap operated by a vertical rotating bar which Charlie Jones skilfully performed with his right forefinger. Much of that I never realised at the time but have drawn from Brian Lee's most interesting article that appeared in the South Wales Echo.



Dunn & Co in Duke Street – the stained-glass panels representing their branches across the UK can still be seen today – see below Credit: Wales Online/Media Wales



Road to Queens Street. In my time it had very few shops. At the end of it I recall the office of the Department of Labour. Another less visited Arcade was the Wyndham at the end of St Mary Street. I used to go there to visit a former schoolfriend, Mike Beynon, who had joined his uncle's horology business. They sported a fine cuckoo clock. In the Arcade was a Wine Bar which I believe was the first in Cardiff. Almost opposite was the Pavilion Cinema at 78/80 St Mary Street, the former Cardiff Philharmonic Hall. I remember being taken there by my parents to watch the film "Four Feathers"

The Duke Street Arcade I remember well, too. Dunns was on the corner opposite the Castle. Mr Reg Cocks, my friends Jeff and Steve's Dad, worked there. Sold me my first sportscoat. A Harris Tweed jacket. Mr Cocks also demonstrated his skill steaming a trilby. A very smartly dressed man who looked as though he had stepped out of Dunn's shop window. Sang in the St Anne's choir. In that Arcade (though it may have been the Castle) was another gents outfitter, Boltons. I spent a good part of my clothing allowance there before my first overseas posting to Delhi. Two fine suits much admired as was the tuxedo. Mr Bolton insisted that I purchased patent

shoes to go with the dinner jacket and trousers. I looked as though I was headed for the Oscars not India. The Duke Street Arcade, along with the High Street and Castle Arcades, formed the Castle Quarter Arcades. Built in 1902 it retained many of its original features including painted floors and a curved passageway.

Lesser known was the Dominions Arcade that lead from near Greyfriars



The Cardiff Philharmonic Hall

Credit: [roath park mark](#) on Flickr

produced in 1939 by Alexander Korda. Another 1939 film I clearly remember was "Gunga Din" loosely based on Kipling's poem. Little did I know then that very many years later in my 50's I would spend six years in Pakistan and enjoy much time in the North-West Frontier Province.

Up until the 1790's there were only 25 retail shops in Cardiff. The opening of the Royal Arcade in 1858, which was the first indoor arcade built in Cardiff, saw that number significantly increase. In 1861 a free library was set up above the St Mary Street entrance to the Royal Arcade. Later before the end of the century the Cardiff School of Art was using rooms above the Arcade. Other arcades followed, Cardiff boasting seven Victorian and Edwardian arcades, more than any other city in the UK.

Another treat was to visit the tobacconists, A E Lewis, a few doors away from the cinema, on the corner of St Mary Street and Wood Street and admire the seven-foot Russian bear. With some trepidation. Bruno, as he was called, was said to have been 200 years old. Not stuffed but mounted on a metal frame. Many young lads enjoyed visiting him, my two nephews included. He now resides in The Bear Shop in the Wyndham Arcade as part of a cigar shop.



The re-opened feeder canal on Churchill Way, where otters have been spotted

Lane: the man who stood at the end of a lane in Queen Street with cigarette dangling from his lower lip shouting "Lastecho" which us youngsters thought was a French newspaper: the Kardoma also in Queen Street - the aroma of coffee being ground filled the whole street almost : going to see Cardiff's other famous animal, Billy the Seal in Victoria Park, actually a female who during severe flooding enjoyed a trip down Cowbridge Road through Canton. She's been immortalised by that very talented Kaairdiff performer, Frank Hennessy. Guildford Terrace Baths down Pembroke Terrace was where many of us youngsters learned to swim on school visits. On Saturdays the several cinemas in Queen Street offered a range of films to see.

If we decided to walk into town, we'd go down City Road, up to the top of The Parade and take that short, unmade path past the Railwaymen's Institute. On reaching Newport Road just before the railway bridge and town was the Rhymney Pie Stall



The Bear

Photo credit:
[roath park mark](#) on
Flickr

Other memories of old Cardiff was being taken to see the canal feeder that flowed down the middle of Pembroke Terrace later renamed Churchill Way: the feeder behind the fruit and veg stalls in Mill

Stopping there for a pie and a cuppa always enjoyable. Sometimes for a change of scenery we'd take St Peter's Street, go past the Mansion House into West Grove and then into the top part of The Parade. The mock Megalithic chambered tomb at the entrance of the Prince of Wales Hospital, on the corner of West Grove and The Walk, used to fascinate me. That hospital started as the Red Cross Hospital in 1914 to treat soldiers who had lost limbs in WWI and WWII. In 1953 it moved to Rhydlafer, near St Fagan's.

All those wonderful memories well worth the trolley bus fare into town and the time taken for a walk.

I am most grateful to the Editor, Jon Roberts, for his efforts in securing not only most suitable illustrations for my pieces but ensuring copyright is observed. Thank you, Jon.

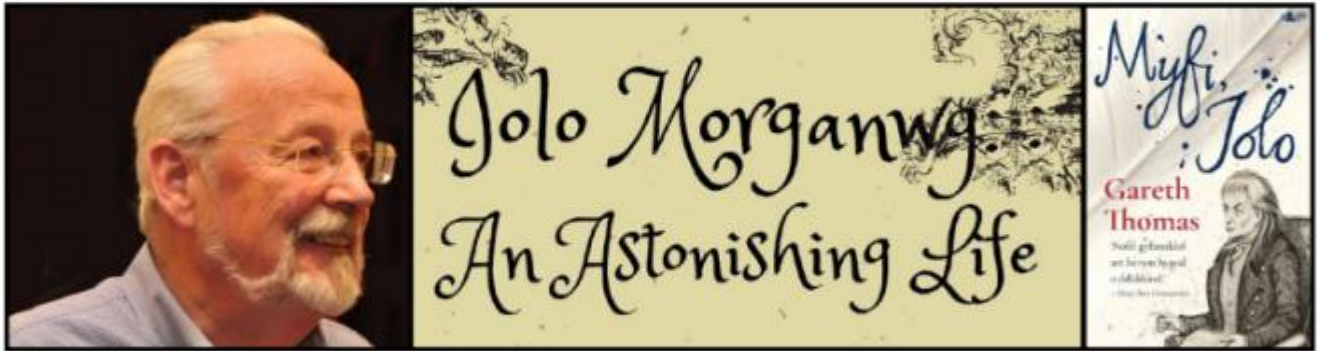
Les Phillips - who left part of himself in Roath in 1967.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Elizabeth Morgan, RLHS Programme and Events Organiser

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Wednesday, 14th May, 2025



*An account of 'Edward Williams' origins,
education, tribulations and triumphs;
of why he is regarded by some as a rogue and
praised by others as the architect of Welsh national identity.*

*Copies of Gareth's book, in both Welsh and English,
will be available for sale on the night.*

SAINT EDWARD'S MUSIC & ARTS CENTRE

Westville Road, Roath, Cardiff. CF23 5DE.

EVERYBODY WELCOME!

Start **7.30pm** access from **7.00pm**. For live-stream Zoom Link contact **Jon Roberts** on:

RLHSZoom@gmail.com

GUESTS in-person, or online **£3.00** **ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP** **£13.00**

OTHER LOCAL HISTORY LINKS



Rumney and District Local History Society

Their meetings are held at 7:30pm on the second Thursday of every month (excepting January and August) at Rumney Baptist Church Hall, Tyr-Y-Sarn Road, Rumney, CF3 3BD.

Their next talk is on 8th May, when Paul Busby will be talking about the history of Llanrumney Hall.

The annual subscription is £20 and visitors can pay £3 per meeting.

Find the Rumney and District Local History Society on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/rumneyhistory>

The British Association for Local History

The Roath Local History Society is a member of the British Association for Local History. Their website www.balh.org.uk/ offers a varied collection of local history stories, 10-minute videos and loads of helpful ways of researching local history. Some is of general relevance, but there are also pieces on very specialised subjects. Have a look at back issues of *The Local Historian* at <https://www.balh.org.uk/thelocalhistorian>. Members of the BALH are also entitled to a [discount on](#) courses. If you'd like the code to obtain the discount, please email me.

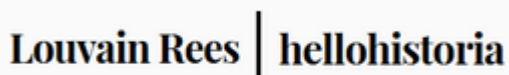


Roath Local History Society on the web

There's also lots of Roath history on the [RLHS website](#), and in the excellent blog posts – do subscribe. There is also the re-energised [Facebook group](#) which has lots of interesting posts and comments. You need merely to answer 2 simple questions to join. And find us at [roath_history](#) on Instagram.


Latest blog stories are:

- [Searching for Theodora, Harold and Arthur](#)
- [Farming in Llanedeyrn](#)
- [Trick Cycling on the Rec](#) (the story of Billy Brian, Welsh Champion Trick Cyclist)



Louvain Rees's [Hellohistoria](#) blogposts are well worth a follow. She is a BBC Award-winning social historian, specialising in Bridgend and her primary research interests are paupers, poor law, lunacy, and poverty between 1790 and 1921. She confesses to a taste for death and graveyards.

Our very own Ted Richards is giving a talk next week about a Roath family he wrote about on the website in May last year.




The Billups Family

**and their pivotal role in the formation of the
Salvation Army**

with Ted Richards
Friends of Cathays Cemetery & Roath Local History Society

Tues 6th May 7pm
in
Cathays Cemetery Chapels
(Fairoak Rd)

Free admission * On-site parking * 07753 169891 for further details



GET IN TOUCH

For newsletter feedback and submissions contact:
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