



E-NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2026

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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EDITOR'S WELCOME

I've just realised that I've missed St Dwynwen's Day on 25th January, and now St Valentine's Day looms. It's amazing that it's still celebrated at all (or is that only in the minds of marketing executives?) as it was reported to be on the wane as far back as 1888, when the South Wales Daily News reported thus:

"THE DECLINE OF ST VALENTINE - CARDIFF TREATS THE FESTIVAL WITH COLDNESS

The good old custom of celebrating the 14th day of February by a profuse dispatch of valentines seems likely in this matter-of-fact age to die out entirely. According to the postoffice authorities, the number of such amorous missives is lessening every year, and at Cardiff it appears not only that there were fewer this time than last, but, dreadful to relate, that the higher classes had begun to foreswear them altogether. The result was that the heaviest rounds of the postman were in Grangetown and Canton, while in the more select Roath there was hardly any increase on the usual delivery."

Whilst it's nice to know that Roath is "select", are its residents really less romantic than those of elsewhere in Cardiff? The emptiness of my doormat on 14 February is probably not a reliable means of testing this hypothesis.

It was on Valentine's Day in 2024 when we last welcomed Professor Louise Miskell, when she gave a well-attended and well-received talk on the East Moors Steelworks. Almost 2 years later we welcome her again on 11 February when she will talk to us about Copperopolis, and an insight into Swansea's copper industry from a viewpoint not often covered in modern studies.

Last month I posed a picture puzzle. The Welsh motto is on the hanging sign outside The Claude on Albany Road – not somewhere I'd readily associate with Welsh mottos. The words *Cywir in gwlad* mean "True to the Land" and is a motto linked with the Williams surname. This may be a homage to the Williams family that originally owned Roath Court and surrounding land, including the Claude Hotel. However, it is not the arms of the family – their grant of arms, dated 1836, is entirely different.

Jon Roberts
Newsletter Editor

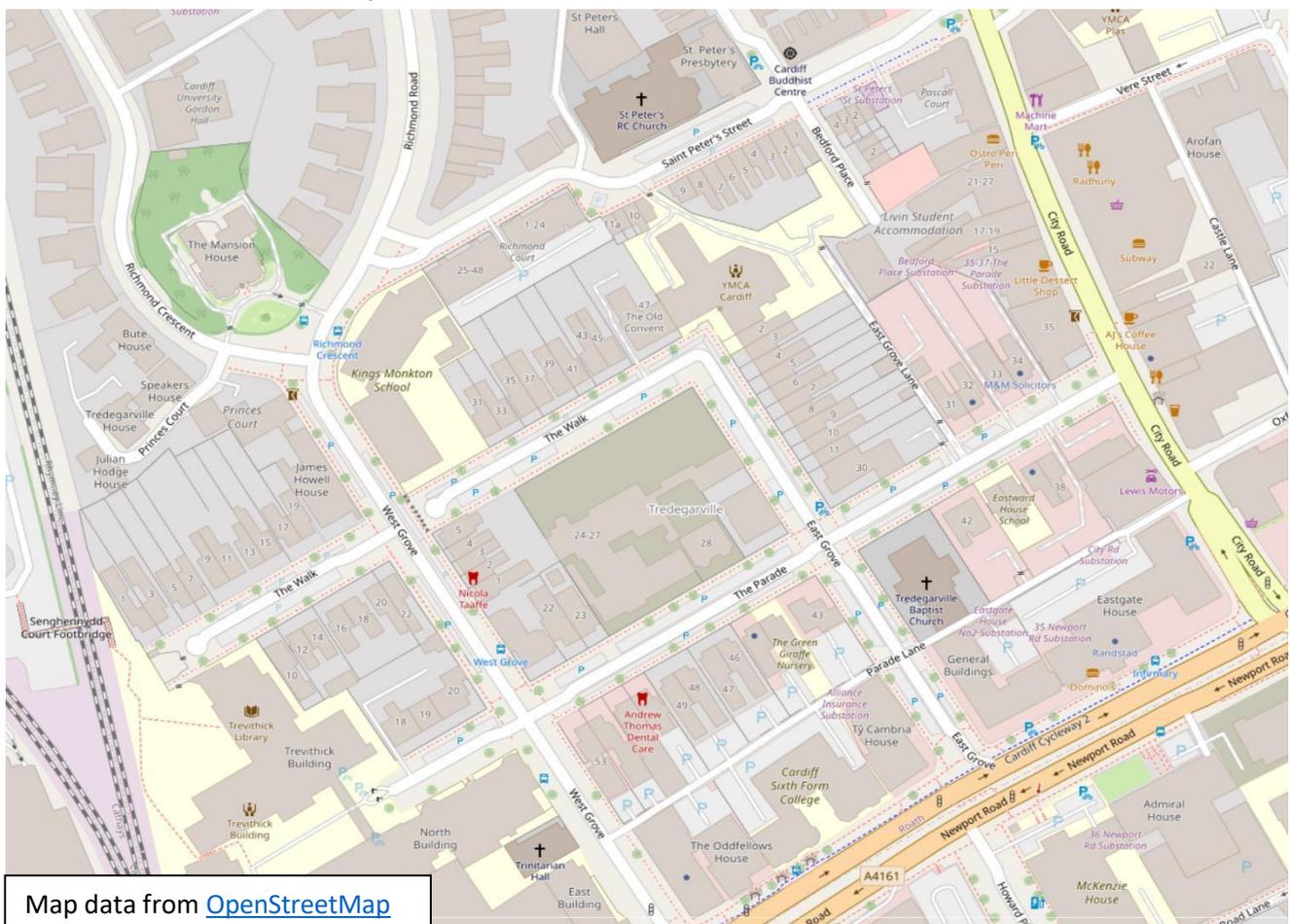


Stanley House/47 The Walk, Tredegarville, Cardiff – its History Part 1

By Nicky Macartney

In February 2013, I was lucky to take part in a U3A Local History 'Walk and Talk' around Tredegarville, led by Geraint Denison-Kurg, a member of RLHS. I learnt so much, and my interest was piqued by number 47 The Walk and its history. All the original villas in that area have rich pasts, but this house was uniquely intriguing.

I researched a little on my return and found an amazing article written by our guide in the July 2021 RLHS newsletter. This article is based on this piece, but with some extra flourishes and controversy.



Tredegarville as it is today

Tredegarville was built between Plwcca (Muddy) Lane (Castle Road/City Road) and the Rhymney railway line, Roath Road (Newport Road) and St Peter's Street, and comprised of The Parade, The Walk and East and West Grove. Charles Morgan, 1st Lord Tredegar, decided that the affluent residential areas of Cardiff were getting hemmed in by too many of the lower classes and there was demand for a fresh, out-of-town, smart development. The architects, WG and E Habershon, designed grand villas and leafy, tree-lined streets to attract wealthy, middle class and mercantile clients to Cardiff's first suburb.

On a map from 1875 – 1881 in the National Library of Scotland, the area appears complete, except for one plot at the north end of East Grove, shown in red below. This was deliberate. The original plan was to extend The Walk and East Grove northwards to meet a proposed westerly extension of Penline Street. It was never realised. Instead, Godfrey Morgan, 2nd Lord Tredegar, leased the land, probably to John Davies, and 47 The Walk was built between 1881 and 1884. But why then, after 20 odd years?



[Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland](#)

No one really knows why for certain, but one explanation may have to do with the building of St Peter's-in-the-Fields, Roman Catholic Church, 1860-61, the influx of Irish workers to Newtown to work on the building of the 2nd Marquess of Bute's docks and their lack of local Catholic church to worship in.

Newtown or Little Ireland was developed by the 2nd Marquess of Bute from 1846 (Peter Finch – Real Cardiff). There were 6 streets – Rosemary St, Ellen St, Pendoylan St and Place, North William St, Roland St and Tyndall St. It had 200 houses for Irish families from Cork, Wexford and Waterford, that he had shipped over, who were initially employed in the construction of his new Bute docks for exporting his coal. This was around the time of the Great Famine. Everything has been demolished now, but Ellen St, Rosemary St and Tyndall St still exist, if only in name.

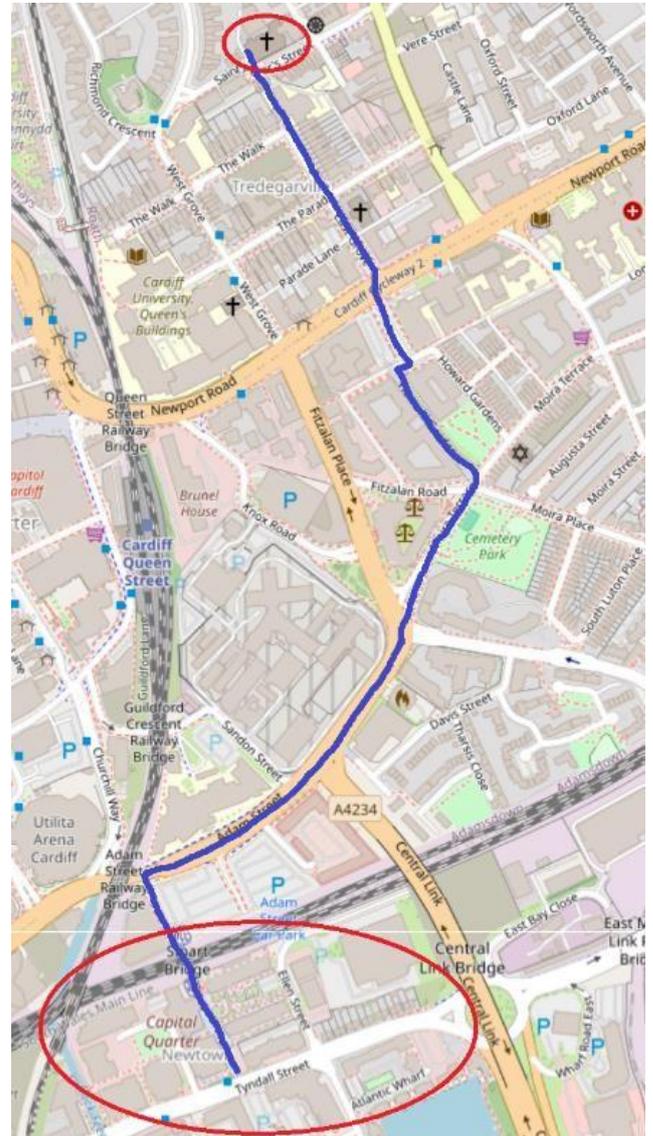
St Paul's Catholic Church in Newtown was established in the 1850s, but the first chapel was only built in the mid-1870s with an additional school and church hall, and later rebuilt in 1893, funded by John Crichton-Stuart, the 3rd Marquess of Bute. Reports suggest that the church, at all stages of development, was packed with worshippers. Where else could the Irish Catholics go to worship?

St Peter's-in-the-Fields, at the edge of Tredegarville, was built in 1860-61, designed by the architect Charles Hansom for the Rosminian Fathers (Institute of Charity).



Credit:
Llyfrgell
Genedlaethol
Cymru – The
National
Library of
Wales

The church currently has a seating capacity of around 1,000 people, suggesting it would have accommodated the Newtown congregation. Their walking route could well have passed through this vacant lot as a shortcut from Newport Road to St Peter's Street. Could this have been the impetus that the Morgans needed, on behalf of their wealthy and influential Tredegarville residents, to finally close the gap?



Certainly, Godfrey Morgan, 2nd Lord Tredegar, finally granted a 99 year lease on this plot of land and Stanley House was built between 1880 and 1884. So, number 47 The Walk was born.

Its first owners were John Ogleby-Davies and his wife, Mary Woollacott Davies (née Cory). John (from Middlesex/London) was in partnership with Valentine Traves in the timber trade, as well as being a colliery agent and coal exporter. Traves was from St Teath, north Cornwall and married a girl from Penarth. John was also a leading Wesleyan.

Staying with the Traves family for one moment, if you go to 'Trease.org.uk' you will see that Valentine and his wife, Amelia (Williams, from Llandough), settled in Cardiff and their 3 children were born here, with 2 daughters being born in Roath.

Mary Woollacott Cory was the daughter of Richard Cory, originally from Bideford, Devon. Richard was a shipowner and broker, trading and exporting coal from Cardiff, becoming the owner of one of the largest shipping companies in the world. He was a Methodist leader and passionate supporter of many charitable organisations, particularly the

Temperance Movement. Mary and her 8 siblings (including John and Richard Junior) followed in his footsteps.

John and Mary named their house 'Stanley House'. They had 9 children. I found newspaper articles for this family, mentioning their house by name, and a couple caught my eye.

1. 3 October 1885 there was a report of the trial of Ralph Ogleby-Davies, their eldest son, and 3 other lads, when they were caught swimming in Ladies' Cove at Langland Bay (Rotherslade Bay) near the Mumbles, which as its name suggests was a female-only bathing area. The court decided to 'make an example of them', rather than let them go free. No punishment is mentioned (Herald of Wales)
2. 17 Oct 1894 the wedding between Harriet Emily Davies, their middle daughter, and Edward Evans, of Brimscombe Court, near Stroud, took place at the Roath Road Wesleyan Chapel. After the ceremony a luncheon was held at Stanley House, with food and the bride's cake being provided by Mr Thomas Stevens of The Dorothy Café, 14 High Street. In the house, 'the presents were displayed, and same were numerous and choice' (South Wales Daily News).
3. 19 Sept 1906 It was reported that Henrietta, the 3rd eldest daughter of John and Mary, had fallen to her death from Lavernock Cliff (Preston Herald).

Looking at census records, for example in 1891, John (68) and Mary Ogleby-Davies (63) are living with their 4 daughters – Sarah Louisa (37), Mary Eleanor (35), Henrietta (26) and Charlotte (22) – and 2 servants – Mabel Lawrence from Penzance and Jane Wright from Minehead.

John Ogleby-Davies 73 died in the house on 22 August 1896 from acute pneumonia and heart failure, and Mary Woollacott Davies died in Fulshaw Lodge, Cheltenham, on 21 October 1907 aged 82. She had moved to Cheltenham the previous year. Both are buried in Cathays Cemetery. At this point, Stanley House changed hands and function, but kept its name for a few years. All of which shall be revealed in Part 2.

Grateful thanks to Geraint Kenison-Kurg and his article in the July 2021 edition of RLHS newsletter.



Forewarned is Forearmed – the Royal Observer Corps in Cardiff during the Cold War

By Jon Roberts

Accounts of the Home Front during the Second World War abound with examples of men and women “doing their bit”, whether it was in the Home Guard, the Civil Defence and Fire Service, the Air Raid Precautions Wardens, the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the Women’s Royal Volunteer Service and many others. One of those bodies was the Observer Corps – founded in 1925, in the days well before the invention of radar, they were the first line of defence, responsible for identifying enemy aircraft and relaying information about types of aircraft, their numbers, location, direction and height to Fighter Control, primarily using the “Mark 1 eyeball”. We were told at a RLHS talk in 2023 that Insole Court in Llandaff was one of the many sites around the UK used by the Observers, but there was also a regional centre in Ely. In recognition of the valued service provided by the Observer Corps during the Battle of Britain, King George VI granted the Corps the use of the title “Royal Observer Corps” in 1941.

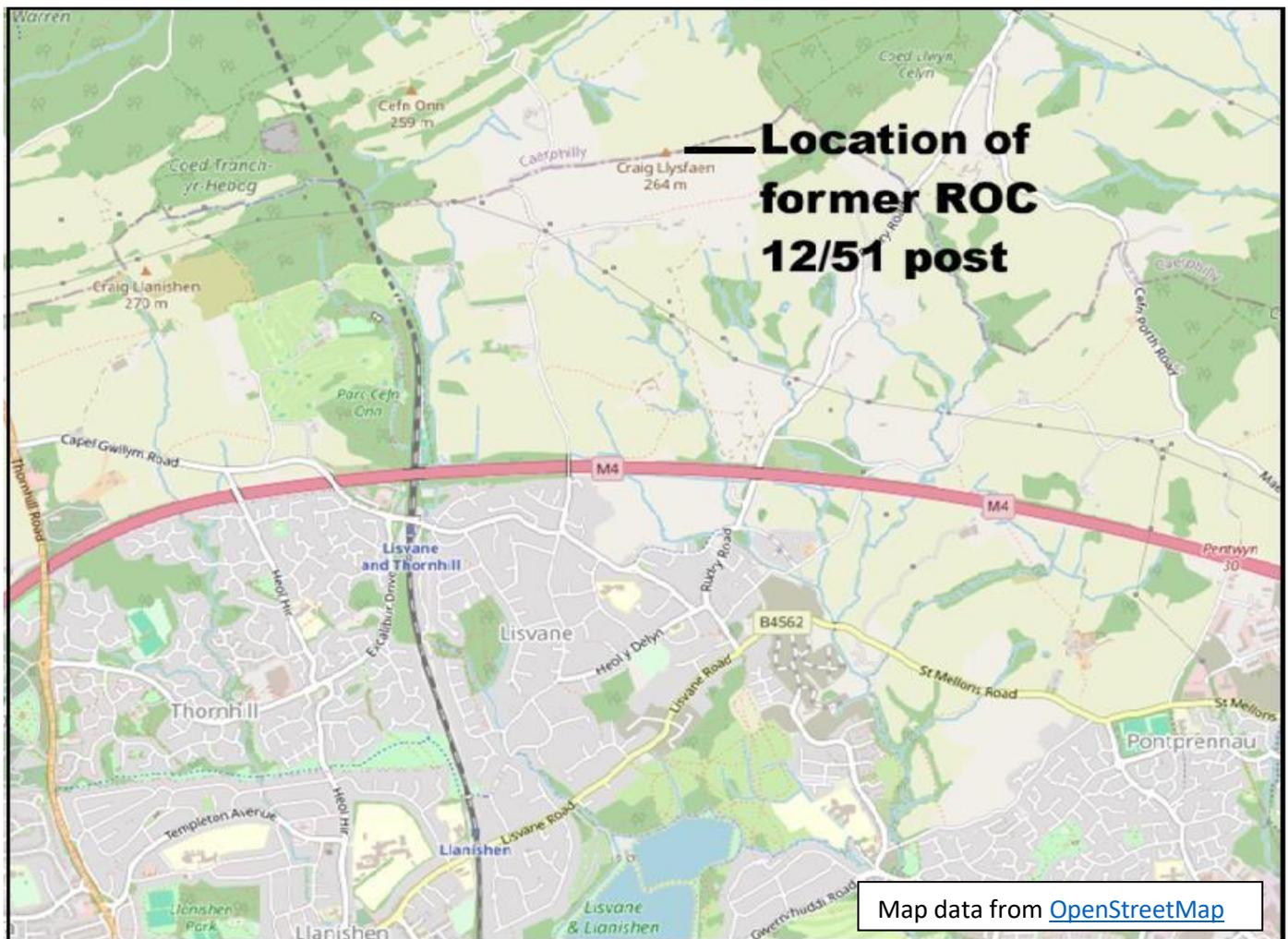
Photo credit: [John Blower](#)
[CC BY-NC 2.0](#)

The role of the ROC after the war is less well known. After being stood down for 18 months, the Corps re-formed in January 1947. In 1955, the Corps took on the nuclear reporting role under the aegis of the Home Office, as part of the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation. The Corps was staffed by salaried ROC officers who were “uniformed civil servants” based in a headquarters at Bentley Priory and in regional headquarters around the UK as well as a phalanx of locally-based volunteer part-time officers and observers, stationed in over 1500 monitoring posts across the country. No longer did they scan the skies for enemy aircraft – the new threat was nuclear bombs from the Soviet Union. The Cold War was considered by NATO to represent a genuine threat to the West, and enormous resources were spent on countering it – RAF Avro Vulcan bombers carried nuclear bombs, whilst the Royal Navy bought American nuclear Polaris missiles to equip submarines which patrolled the ocean depths. The British Army on the Rhine had nuclear-armed howitzers, stockpiling more than 300 weapons.

In the 1960s and 70s Russian bombers daily probed UK airspace, intercepted by RAF English Electric Lightning and McDonnell-Douglas F-4K Phantom fighters from bases in Scotland and the East of England. Silos throughout the Soviet Union on the western side of the Urals bristled with thousands of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). Rhetoric from Soviet leaders like Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko threatened the prospect of obliteration in response to real or imagined slights by the West. Western powers promised swift retaliation in the event of a nuclear strike – the era of Mutually Assured

Destruction was born. Even though we now live in uncertain times, we don't fear the prospect of sudden annihilation in the same way as we did in the Cold War, and it can be hard to recall the real threat and sense of fear that prevailed at the time.

Cardiff hosted its own ROC post, immediately south of a public footpath which runs along the spine of The Graig, north of Lisvane, some 866 feet above sea level, next to a triangulation pillar shown in the photograph overleaf. The post was known as 12/51 Post, 12 being the region number whose headquarters was in Lansdown, outside Bath. From that elevated position, stunning views could be obtained of pretty much all of Cardiff



(including the old Parish of Roath), Penarth and the Bristol Channel, albeit that in winter, it could be bleak and windswept. The post was difficult to reach by car, as although there were car parking spaces at the top of the hill, they were reached by a very steep, winding single-track road. When the road was icy it was too hazardous to drive on, when the post could only be reached from the bottom of the hill on foot.

The post comprised a fenced off compound within which was an underground concrete bunker with an access shaft, ladder, toilet and operations room, which was furnished with a desk, chairs, storage cupboard and two metal bunks.



Trig point on the ridge of Graig Llysfalen-geograph-1934423-by-John-Lord.jpg. (2025, January 21). *Wikimedia Commons*. Retrieved January 26, 2026, from https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Trig_point_on_the_ridge_of_Graig_Llysfalen-geograph-1934423-by-John-Lord.jpg&oldid=985767567.

The bunker, from a design of 1956, was cold and somewhat damp, with no heating and no running water. A separate ventilation shaft provided fresh air. Gerry cans of water, refreshed far too irregularly, provided drinking and washing water. A small petrol generator was hauled up to the surface each time the post was used to provide electricity.

Above ground equipment was designed to detect radiation, bomb blast pressure and the location and height of an explosion. The data would be sent by voice to the Bath HQ on a dedicated BT line. The post announcement of the devastating news of a nuclear explosion would be prefaced by the words “Tocsin, tocsin, tocsin”, using a somewhat archaic term meaning warning – Charles Dickens used the word three times in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The position of the Lisvane post, along with neighbouring posts at Cardiff Airport, Malpas and Caerphilly, ensured that there was overlapping coverage in the area. Some of the equipment used in the posts was basic – the device for recording the location of a nuclear explosion was little more than a pinhole camera, a biscuit tin with holes in which projected the flash of an explosion onto photographic paper. Whether the dedicated underground BT line would have survived the electro-magnetic pulse of a nuclear explosion is a question that luckily remains unanswered.



The interior of a ROC monitoring post
Credit: [Tom Blackwell](#)
[CC BY-NC 2.0](#)

The post was manned by a cadre of uniformed observers, headed by a Chief Observer, with a Leading Observer as second in charge, together with about half a dozen observers. They wore a formal uniform based on the standard RAF kit, but with ROC insignia, although boiler suits were worn in the post. Observers attended weekly training meetings, either at the monitoring post or at Maindy Barracks in Cathays. Weekend exercises were held at the post or at other posts. An annual 5 day training camp was held at an RAF base, the location of which varied, attended by hundreds of Observers. In the event of “the balloon going up”, all observers were instructed to report at the post, and a rota would be devised to ensure continuous manning of the post, in shifts of three.

Glasnost, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the break-up of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact effectively ended the Cold War. The perceived nuclear threat diminished, prompting a review of Government civil defence measures, inevitably leading to the disbandment of the Royal Observer Corps in 1991. Despite the subsequent souring of relations with Russia, there is no likelihood of the Corps being revived. The Corps estate was sold, or leases relinquished. The salaried officers were redeployed elsewhere in the Civil Service or faced redundancy. Most posts were filled in and returned to agriculture, whilst others were re-purposed as telecommunications sites, as was the case with the Lisvane post, which is now a radio telephone transmitting station for Telefónica and Vodafone.

At least one former ROC Monitoring Post (in Westbury, Wiltshire) has been listed as being of special architectural or historic interest, in this case due to its historical significance and rarity, a heritage asset to be safeguarded for future generations. But like at Lisvane, there are still reminders for the rest of us to see, giving some hints at their former role and contribution to British military history.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Elizabeth Morgan, RLHS Programme and Events Organiser

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, 11th FEBRUARY, 2026

COPPEROPOLIS:

a history of Swansea's copper works from the middle

Professor Louise Miskell



A view of the **Bristol Company Copper Works** near Swansea, with smokestacks in the centre, and a river with boats to the fore.

Who were the decision-makers, problem-solvers and creative thinkers who took responsibility for much of the day-to-day business of keeping the famous smelters of **Swansea's 'Copperopolis'** running when the industry was in its heyday in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

In this talk we will look beyond the Vivians, the Grenfells, and the other big-name owners of the copper works, to discover some of

the lesser-known people whose business acumen, engineering skills, scientific knowledge and attention to detail, were essential to the operation of the industry throughout its 200-year history.

This '**middle-man**' view of Welsh industry is important for what it reveals about the different layers of expertise at work in an industry like copper. It also addresses a traditional historical blind-spot between the owner and the manual worker; who tend to dominate studies of work and labour relations in histories of modern Wales.

SAINT EDWARD'S MUSIC & ARTS CENTRE

Westville Road, Roath, Cardiff, CF23 5DE.

EVERYBODY WELCOME!

Doors open at **7.00pm** - Meeting starts at **7.30pm**.

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 event is on 12 February 2026 – Old Cardiff on film – 60s, 70s and 90s.

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>

Grangetown Local History Society



At the time of going to press, no details of their future talks were available, but have a look at their [website](#).

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.



If you wish to be kept up to date on events held by BALH, please subscribe to their mailing list at <https://www.balh.org.uk/#subscribe>

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:

- [Margaret Lindsay Williams – Royal Portrait Artist](#)
- [Memories of a Steelworks Electrician](#)
- [Preswylfa School, 82 Pen-y-lan Road](#)
- [Confessions, Opinions and Autographs of my Friends: The Story of an Autograph Album owned by Alice Tovey](#)

Louvain Rees | [hellohistoria](#)

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.

Cardiff Naturalists' Society

Images taken in the early 20th century by Harry Morrey Salmon, Welsh naturalist and "the father of British bird photography", are now available online via the [National Museum's Collections online system](#)

At the time of writing this there are 818 images online of the target 1000, but that is more than enough to enjoy. If you click on an image you will be able to zoom in and also be able to see the negative format for those images that are negatives.



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www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CardiffNaturalists>

<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.com/>

GET IN TOUCH

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