



E-NEWSLETTER MAY 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, Martin Sheldon and David Parry.

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EDITOR'S WELCOME

The talk on 13 May will be the last of the current season. I hope that you will agree that we have been entertained and informed by the varied speakers who have delivered talks since September, and I would like to thank Elizabeth Morgan for her hard work and ingenuity in devising such an interesting programme. The picture below is entitled *Summer Evening in Wentloog Marshes*, which is a nod to the interesting talk last month on Gwent Levels and the evolution of a wetland landscape.



Credit: Cardiff University

The painting also has Roath relevance, in that the artist, Joan Oxland (1920 -2002), used to live at 97 Westville Road in Penylan, just a stone's throw from St Edward's Church where we hold our meetings, before success propelled her to the loftier heights of Cyncoed.

I hope that you will enjoy the summer programme of visits and I look forward to seeing you again in September.

Jon Roberts
Newsletter Editor

The Care of the Wounded Soldier – an anatomy of a painting

By Gareth Brown

A couple of months ago I read an article about the painting *The Care of the Wounded Soldier in the First World War* by Margaret Lindsay Williams about being treated in the King Edward VII hospital that became the Cardiff Royal Infirmary in 1923. I either read it first on walesonline or the BBC site. Ted Richards has a link to the article in his recent blog on the artist in which he has added additional information and pictures to the article of mine which was published in our society's newsletter in June 2025. He also has provided links to other sources which we both found useful. I recommend Ted's article and the references regarding this remarkable and talented lady who had been, until recently, largely forgotten in her country and in Barry, the town where she had her upbringing.



Care of the Wounded Soldier at Cardiff Royal Infirmary during the Great War
by Margaret Lindsay Williams 1916 Credit: Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

The article was about Pam Jones and was entitled '*How forgotten painting of an injured soldier inspired nurse's career.*' I shall give just a brief synopsis of this fascinating story. In 1974 Pam Enani, as she was then, was a student nurse on the orthopaedic ward in CRI and was being given a hard time on the ward by the matron and was feeling dispirited. As she was going on her break, a patient, Mary Jones in her 90's asked if Pam could pop down to the Mametz ward to see if the painting of the injured soldier was there. It was, and when she returned to her ward she asked Mary Jones if she was the ward sister in the painting - and indeed she was. Mary Jones had noticed that Pam was being put upon and told her to stand tall, be more assertive and remember why she cared. Pam never forgot those words.

In the britisharmynurses.com article '*Care of Wounded Soldiers at Cardiff Royal Infirmary during the Great War*' Mary Jones asked Pam to look for the painting in the entrance hall. This was in 1975 and from what I have gathered it is likely that it was there at that time. I cannot say that I noticed it there in my short and only teaching block at CRI on renal medicine in the mid-1970s, or there or on Mametz Ward when I was on that ward in 1970 having had six teeth removed under general anaesthetic!

The painting was unveiled in 1924 on the ward that later became named Mametz ward, named after the terrible battle of Mametz Wood on the Somme in July 1916. About 4000 Welsh troops, including members of the Cardiff City battalion, were killed and 10,000 injured according to the BBC article, although the firstworldwar.iwm.org.uk article states that 3993 Welsh soldiers were killed or injured in the battle and the article from britisharmynurses.com says 565 men of the Welsh division were killed, 585 were missing (probably killed) and 2893 wounded, i.e. 4043 in total which was about 20% of the starting strength. Whatever is the true figure, it was a terrible toll on the Welsh Division, whose leadership was castigated by the Army's top brass, including Sir Douglas Haig and Sir Henry Rawlinson, for the initial failure to capture the wood and after seeing so many of the troops becoming casualties, refusing to send the men to certain slaughter. The Divisions' leaders were concerned about the plans from HQ when received the night before the battle commenced. The wood was more heavily fortified than realised, defended by elite German troops. The advance was not at dawn, it was exposed, the men were ordered to walk down a slope then up to the wood and were easy targets. There was no smoke cover and this was the first action that some of the division had faced, including many of the Cardiff city battalion. The commander of the Welsh Division was dismissed, replaced and sent home. Haig and others reputedly accused the Welsh troops of lack of mental fortitude. He apparently wanted the wood taken by the British troops at any cost and the battle descended into hand-to-hand fighting and bayonet attacks, as depicted in Christopher Williams's gruesome painting of the battle.

I came across the two references in the previous paragraph after I thought that I had completed this article and was about to send it to our editor. The British army nurses article in particular is very interesting, giving an overview of the Battle of the Somme, particularly Mametz Wood, the establishment of the Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS) and details of the TFNS nurses, matrons and sisters at CRI and Neath and some further details of those in Margaret Lindsay Williams' painting and of the artist herself and the composition of the painting. This later hung in the main foyer of CRI for many years.

Pam left CRI in 1976 and worked abroad and in the intensive care unit at UHW for more than 30 years. In 2016, Pam saw the painting again hanging on the wall of Robertson Hall at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in a TV documentary to mark the centenary of Mametz Wood. Having a lifelong fascination with Margaret Lindsay Williams, this inspired her quest to find out how the painting had ended up there.

She found out that after the hospital closed in 1999, the painting was cut out of its frame, rolled up and stored in the dank chapel building. This has been renovated and when in 2022 members of Roath Local History Society visited the now named Capel i Bawb which serves as a cafe and library, a fine print of the painting, donated by the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) Association, was hanging on a wall of the cafe. The original painting was found by chance by a former nurse, Mary Read who was visiting the hospital for the last time before its demolition in 2005. According to healthcharity.wales, Mary, a member of the QARANC Association, noticed that the painting was no longer hanging in the CRI and brought this to the attention of the QARANC Association. She spent months looking for it before eventually finding it and was instrumental in arranging for it to be displayed, on loan, at the Army Medical Services Regimental Headquarters.

Sandhurst did not realise quite what they had, as the painting was in such a dilapidated and unrecognisable condition and its restoration cost £70,000. Funding to restore and frame the painting was provided by the QARANC and RAMC associations. Pam researched government and NHS documents along with newspaper cuttings to give Sandhurst more details about the painting and the curator told her how it had ended up in Sandhurst, but wanted to know more about the people in the painting.

Pam set about finding out who the figures in the painting were and this is where I started to worry that I had given wrong information to the Society about them. I looked through my contributions to our newsletter and to my relief I found no mention of their identities given by me. Neither did I find any in the written copy of the talk I gave in Capel i Bawb in November 2022 although I have a nagging doubt that I may have said that the man in military uniform sitting on the bed was the Commanding Officer, Lt Col David Hepburn, and not Lt Col Philip Rhys Griffiths as identified by Pam. I thought I had made a lazy assumption but more likely I had copied the information from Arnold S Aldis's book -

Cardiff Royal Infirmary 1883-1983. The British Army nurses article also names him as David Hepburn.

Ted Richards has awarded a virtual red plaque to Prof David Hepburn of Ninian Road in his 'Roath People' section on our society's website. In the picture on his plaque he has a splendid moustache but the likeness of the military man in the painting is very similar to photographs of Philip Rhys Griffiths with a more restrained moustache that I have seen in '*Meet the Staff: House Surgeon, Philip Rhys Griffiths- The first House Surgeon at the new Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire Infirmary and Dispensary*'. The photographs are annotated 'Image courtesy of Cardiff Naturalists Society'. Thus, I agree with Pam that the man at the bedside is Philip Rhys Griffiths.

Philip Rhys Griffiths

I decided to find out more about him. His obituary in the British Medical Journal of 24 July 1920 read as follows:

Lt-Colonel Philip Rhys Griffiths, R.A.M.C.(T.F.) died suddenly at Cardiff railway station on July 13th, aged 63. He was educated at University College Hospital and took the M.R.C.S. in 1880 and the M.B. and B.S. in London in 1881, after which he settled at Cardiff. He was appointed house-surgeon to Cardiff Infirmary, now the King Edward VII Hospital, in 1882 and after holding that post for two years, went into practice in Cardiff. In 1886 he became assistant surgeon to the hospital and gradually rose to be senior surgeon, retiring from the regular staff in 1919 when he was appointed consultant surgeon. He was for some years lecturer in physiology and hygiene to University College, Cardiff. He was also consultant surgeon to the Mountain Ash Workmen's Hospital and to the Great Western Railway and medical referee to Court Circuit No.32. He was an ex-president of the Cardiff Medical Society and a member of the British Medical Association. At the Annual Meeting in 1903 he was vice-president of the Section of Diseases of Children. He was also a member and a past-president of the Cardiff Naturalists Society and a member of the Cardiff Cymmrodorion Society. In 1908 he took a commission as Major in the 3rd Western General Hospital, R.A.M.C.(T.F.) and in June 1915 was promoted to Lt-Colonel.

It can be seen therefore that he died 20 months after the end of WW1 and was already deceased when the painting was unveiled.

The "meet the staff" article on Glamorgan Archives gives a good insight into his career after the building and opening in September 1883 of the Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire Infirmary and Dispensary. Philip Rhys Griffiths was 27(?25) when appointed as house surgeon at the infirmary in June 1882, the son of a surveyor from Aberavon. The house surgeon was the only salaried full-time doctor at the hospital. It was a very hard job. He oversaw all inpatients, usually at least 60 at any one time and he dealt with admissions, conducted daily ward rounds and was on call at all hours. He also had to

keep the four honorary surgeons and physicians informed of their patients' progress. He dealt with all emergency cases brought to the infirmary, visited patients at home after discharge who were unable to attend the infirmary and was in charge of the Dead House, i.e. the mortuary. He was required to live on the premises and not engage in private practice. Any absences had to be agreed by the management committee and only allowed after a locum had been found. For all this, he received £100 a year, plus board, washing and furnished apartments. It sounds even more onerous than my enslavement as a houseman in the 1970s!

The one resident doctor was inevitably at the centre of life at the infirmary. Griffiths threw himself into all aspects of his role and sang for the patients as part of the entertainment provided on Christmas Eve! He also organised fundraising through the annual charity ball and supported the matron's campaign for improvements in nurses' training and accommodation. He resigned from this appointment in May 1884 and left the infirmary in August. He returned to the infirmary in 1886 as outpatient medical officer, one of three who dealt with the thousands of outpatients seen at the hospital each year. He was later appointed as a surgeon as previously noted. He was a well-known figure in Cardiff and his letters were often published in the local newspapers. He was a keen traveller and lectured on a wide range of topics including the history of medicine in Wales.

According to the Cardiff Naturalists Society obituary, Dr Rhys Griffiths was one of their most active members giving nearly 40 years of devoted service to the Society. It states that he was a native of Aberdare and was elected a member of the Society in 1882 and a member of the Council in 1888. He was Honorary Librarian for some time and was elected to the office of President of the Society in 1909. He was an early and enthusiastic photographer and gave freely of his camera work to the Society and its sections. He was a lover of nature who knew his native Glamorgan intimately and realising the importance of recording the natural beauty and antiquities of Glamorgan in the time of rapid industrialisation, recorded these in



Philip Rhys Griffiths (left) pictured in 1912

Photo used with kind permission of Cardiff Naturalists Society – photographer unknown

photographic illustrations which he gave to the Society. He was one of the founders of the photographic section of the Society of which he was President in 1912-13 and he presented the gift of a silver rose bowl for competition annually by the members of the photographic section. He travelled widely abroad and gave talks illustrated by his own artistic slides to the Society. An important collection of his negatives and lantern slides was said to be in the National Museum of Wales at that time. He was also described as an ardent nationalist, deeply interested in all Welsh movements and entered with enthusiasm into any proposal which concerned the welfare of his native land. He had made a study of early Welsh medicine and published several papers on the topic.

So, he was a native of Aberdare but with a father who was a surveyor from Aberavon. I had hoped that some genealogical research on my part would confirm or clear up any confusion about his origins. Unfortunately, this was not to be. The following contains my best hunches but may not be correct!

I could not find him at first in the 1911 census and in fact only tracked him down whilst doing my subsequent postscript article. But I eventually tracked him down at the same house he was occupying in 1901- 50 Newport Road! Then, he, his wife Florence Alice, daughter Enid aged 20 and single, and two servants were present. The other daughter, Florence, was living but not at that address. Philip was born in Pencoed, wife Florence in Llandaff and Enid at 71 Newport Road. I note that each of the Griffiths family has an indecipherable name in front of Griffiths. However, his widow Florence's entry on the census of 1921 shows that the family were using or known as Rees/ Rhys Griffiths in 1911. It was not a double-barrelled surname but the middle name of Philip being used for them all. This is similar to the former Welsh rugby captain, universally known as Alun Wyn Jones, but I do not think that the rest of his family use Wyn and are just plain Jones! The joys of genealogical research!

In 1901 Philip Rhys Griffiths was living at 50 Newport Road, Roath, a 44 year-old head of household, a surgeon born in Pencoed, Glamorgan who spoke Welsh as well as English. His wife, Florence A Griffiths, was 33, born in Cardiff who spoke only English. He had two daughters, Enid 10 and Florence S, 6, both born in Cardiff and non-Welsh speakers. There was also an English governess, a female cook/ domestic servant, from Caerphilly and a housemaid/ domestic servant from Cwmavon, none of whom spoke Welsh.

54 Newport Road is still standing in the grounds of CRI. It is House 54/ Ty 54 and houses the Community Addiction Unit where the Cardiff Alcohol and Drug Team have a base. On an OS map of 1915 there is a definite boundary line between the Infirmary and five properties along Newport Road up to Orbit Street. Number 50 is the second of these.

The entry above it in the census is 48 Newport Road, described as a private hospital, the inhabitants being the Head, a matron, two hospital nurses, a probationer nurse and nine

patients. One was a dock pilot from Penarth, another a girl from Penarth described as an imbecile, a man working at a colliery, 5 young or middle-aged women and a 3 month old-baby. Also present were a cook and two housemaids. Was this part of the infirmary or a separate hospital? I think the infirmary would have been classified as a voluntary funded hospital so I believe it was a different entity, as confirmed later. The boundary on the map between it and the Infirmary confirms this for 1901.

The 1901 census entry for the 'Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire Royal Infirmary' shows over 170 persons comprising, medical, nursing, domestic staff and patients including the formidable Matron, Miss Elizabeth A. M Wilson. The census entries above 48 Newport Road were those of Metal Street, Adamsdown. I note that Ted Richards has an entry on our website about photographs from the David family of the St Pierre Hospital at 58/60 Newport Road, dated April 1917. This features nurses with red crosses on their uniforms and it seems that this hospital was also known as the Red Cross hospital. Number 58 is the building with the four-storey tower on the other side of the junction of Orbit Street with Newport Road. I have read that it was occupied by someone of note in the history of Cardiff, but I cannot recall who this was. See my subsequent article. Number 60 next door, now 'The Sixty' an "apart hotel" was the home of Solomon Andrews, the remarkable Cardiff entrepreneur and his family. He is described here in the 1901 census as a confectioner and other businesses and an employer. Baker, in different handwriting, has been added to his list of occupations.

In the 1891 Census the Griffiths family were at 71 Newport Road, Philip, 34 is described as a Practitioner of Medicine/ Surgeon born in Pencoed. His wife Florence is 23. Their daughter Enid is "under 2" and there is a a nurse/ domestic from Ely and another general servant (domestic) from Cheltenham, Glos. Number 71 Newport Road was opposite the Infirmary on the opposite side of Newport Road. It has also been demolished. That part of Newport Road up to Wordsworth Avenue now contains blocks of accommodation for the elderly, either nursing or residential I believe. No 71 was halfway between the block between City Road and Wordsworth Avenue.

No. 45 was the first property on Newport Road in the Parish of Roath. In 1891 it was occupied by a 45 year-old a doctor and his family, and no. 47 by Solomon Andrews, a "merchant" and his family. In 1901 a bank manager and his family occupied no. 45, presumably living in the bank premises and at no.47 the head was a physician.

So Philip Rhys Griffiths was living very close to the infirmary in 1911, 1901 and 1891. In 1881, then aged 24, he was a boarder at 64 Charrington Street, St Pancras, London. He is a surgeon not in practice, M.R.C.S. and an undergraduate of London University. This corresponds to the information given in his BMJ obituary. I could not find him in the 1871 census. In 1861, when he was 4 or thereabouts, there were a number of Philip Griffiths of

the correct age in Glamorgan. The most likely entry, if his father was indeed a surveyor, was that of the Griffiths family of Canon Street, Aberdare. The head of household was Evan Griffiths, 36, a surveyor and architect, his wife Mary, 34, and they had 3 daughters aged 8, 6 and 1 and a son Philip aged 4. All members of the family were born in Aberdare in this census entry, yet Pencoed was Philip's birthplace in the 1901 and 1891 censuses! Have I and my sources above got the wrong information on his father's occupation and his birthplace and hence the wrong family!?

In the birth records three Philip Griffiths were registered in the Merthyr district of which Aberdare was part, and one in the Bridgend district, which I am assuming included Pencoed, between 1856 and 1858. I would need to see the actual birth certificate to see the full name and parents' names.

Philip Rhys Griffiths was married in the Kensington district of London in 1899. His wife would appear to be Florence Alice Kelly. Her father, Samuel Kelly, 43, of The Elms, Llandaff Road, Canton is a colliery owner from Monmouthshire and a JP, her mother, Maria, is 39, born in Dowlais. Florence, 3, and her brother, 1, were both born in Llandaff. There is also a female teacher from Essex, two housemaids and a cook all from South Wales.

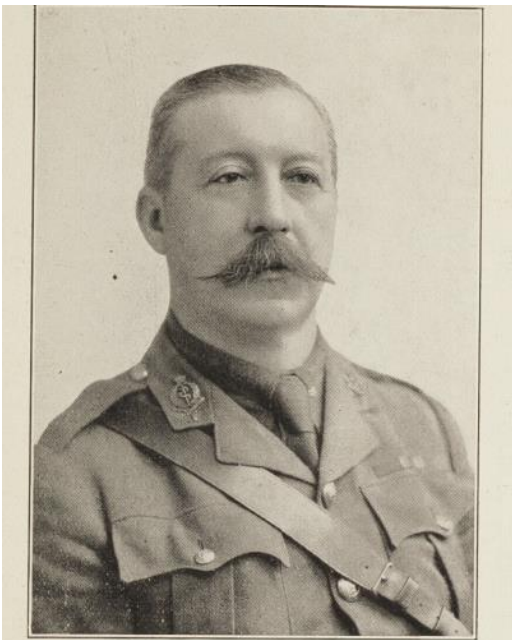
I have made assumptions that the sons of coal miners or other manual workers would not have become doctors in the 1880s and I am trusting that the obituary stating his father was a surveyor is correct and can be supported by other evidence. I also assume that a doctor at that time would have married a woman of similar social status. My assumptions are most likely confirmed by examination of the records.

A Florence Alice Rhys-Griffiths, a widow aged 53, born in Cardiff, was living as the Head of household at 95 Linden Gardens, Kensington in the 1921 census, with female servant who is a cook and housekeeper, single and born in London. Florence is very likely to be Philip's widow. She did marry in Kensington. I have not been able to find any more children of Philip and Florence from when he arrived in Roath till his death. Enid married Hugh Pearce Gould, a London solicitor in 1913, and Florence Sylvia Griffiths married Mr William L Simpson of Bury St Edmunds, a Chartered Surveyor. She died there in 1933, age 38. She served with the British Red Cross in France during WW1 and subsequently trained as a masseuse at Guy's Hospital, thereafter working in that role in private practice and then at Bury St Edmunds General Hospital.

In any case I think Philip Rhys Griffiths is worthy of a virtual red plaque from our Society! He lived at least 23 years in Roath, probably more and certainly worked in Roath at the Infirmary for many years possibly all but three years of his career including his post as a senior surgeon at the 3rd Western General Hospital during WW1.

David Hepburn

Who was the military man that Mr Aldis named as sitting on the bed of the wounded soldier? This was Lt Col David Hepburn, CMG, FRSE. He was born in Milnathort, Kinross-shire in 1858. Kinross-shire used to be a separate county, the second smallest in Scotland, now part of Perth and Kinross. His birthplace, like his father's, was Orwell, Kinross-shire according to the census in 1861 and 1871. This could now be part of Milnathort which is near to Kinross. There is an Orwell Road in Milnathort. His father John Hepburn was the local vet and Elizabeth Dunn Hepburn was his mother. David went to the University of Edinburgh to study anatomy, possibly intending to become a vet, but he moved specifically to human anatomy and medicine. He graduated as a doctor, MB, CM, with honours in 1881 at Edinburgh. In 1884, he became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and in 1891 became a MD winning the gold medal of the University of Edinburgh.



Colonel DAVID HEPBURN, V.D., M.D., R.A.M.C. (T.F.),
Officer Commanding,
3rd Western General Hospital, Cardiff.

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Spires QVRM TD

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After resident posts at Edinburgh infirmary, presumably as a surgeon, he became a demonstrator in anatomy in Edinburgh, dissecting cadavers, while the professor, Sir William Turner lectured. This I think is a far more efficient way of learning anatomy than two years laboriously dissecting a body as I did, particularly if there is no intention to become a surgeon. He became the principal demonstrator and lecturer in regional anatomy, 1885 to 1903. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1890.

In 1903 he became the Professor of Anatomy of the University College in Cardiff which was known as the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire in those days. He was a popular teacher and a sound administrator. He is described as having clarity of thought and exposition and was able to simplify difficult aspects of anatomy for his students. He represented the University of Wales on the GMC from 1912 to 1927 and was a member of various societies including the Anatomical Society of which he was President 1916 to 1918. He was also a member of the Scottish Microscopical Society, the Scottish Natural History Society and a one-time President of the Cardiff Medical Society. He became Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Cardiff in 1920 and was an examiner at various medical schools.

During the First World War he commanded the Third Western General Hospital at the Infirmary. He was created CMG- Commander of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George in 1917 and became Honorary Surgeon-Lt Colonel and Colonel. He was also a

Knight of Grace of the order of St John of Jerusalem. He retired in 1927 and died in Cardiff on 9 March 1931, with the funeral three days later. He left a widow, a daughter and a son.

In the 1911 census David Hepburn was living at 61 Ninian Road (pictured right) opposite the Roath Park recreation ground. He is the head of household aged 52, married and a Doctor of Medicine and Professor of Anatomy at UC Cardiff. His wife Mary Hepburn is 51, married with two children born alive and still living. She was born in Stockton on Tees, Co Durham. Daughter Winifred is 17 and single, still at school and born in Edinburgh, as was their son Aglionby, 13. There is also Beatrice Stokes, a servant, born in Ynysgir. Therefore, we can also claim David Hepburn as a Roath boy! As I have already said, he has a virtual red plaque from our Society.



I obtained this information from the British Medical Journal when searching for his son Aglionby Hepburn because of his unusual name. Aglionby was named after his mother's grandfather Aglionby Ross Carson and, after a career as a surgeon in the Royal Navy, became Medical Superintendent of the Hamadryad Seamen's Hospital in Cardiff by the time of his father's death.

Elizabeth Wilson

The tall stately looking woman at the foot of the bed in the painting is the matron, Miss Elizabeth Annie Montgomery Wilson, RRC. She was born about 1856 in Drumgolán, Co Cavan, north-west of Dublin and probably is known as Drumgola. She trained as a nurse in the Adelaide Hospital, Dublin and became a Sister at the West Kent Hospital at Maidstone, Matron at Tewkesbury Hospital and at Cromwell House, Highgate London.

She was appointed Lady Superintendent, i.e. Matron at the King Edward VII Hospital in 1892 when it was still called the Glamorgan and Monmouthshire Infirmary and Dispensary and she remained in post until 1924. She joined the Princess Christian's Army Nursing Service (Reserve) in June 1900 and saw service in the Boer War at Number 10 General Hospital at Norval's Point, and Number 6 General Hospital in Johannesburg. She was also the Sister in charge of the field hospital near the Delgoa Bay line from where she sent a letter to her colleagues at the King Edward VII Hospital in Cardiff.

When the Territorial Force Nursing Service (TFNS) established after the Haldane reforms of 1908 was inaugurated in the First World War, she was appointed Principal Matron for the 3rd Western General Hospital based at the infirmary. She is wearing a military nurse uniform in the painting by Margaret Lindsay Williams. She was responsible for the

organisation of nurses for between 2000 and 3000 beds based at the hospital and its extensions at Newport and Neath which had their own matrons, other small extensions and annexes, including Red Cross hospitals and the schools which were used as hospitals, of which I believe five were in Cardiff including Albany Road School. Miss Wilson was awarded the Royal Red Cross in 1916, and Bar in 1920.

She was described as a tall, very erect and stately figure who was a strict disciplinarian. Nurses were trained to a very high standard during her time as Matron at the Infirmary. In the 1901 census she is described as single, aged 40 a hospital nurse, matron born in Ireland and living at the Glamorgan and Monmouthshire Infirmary, Newport Road, Roath. In the 1911 census she is 55, single, a matron living at the same address now in Cardiff. The hospital actually was known as the Cardiff Infirmary in 1901 and 1911! We could claim her therefore as a Roath girl, but I doubt if Miss Wilson would appreciate that!

Mary Jones

The britisharmynurses.com article gives further details about Sister Mary Jones. She was from "Rhydargaeu" near Carmarthen - (spelling probably should be Rhydargaeau. If so, it is on the A485 north of Carmarthen). After training at the King Edward VII Hospital, she enrolled in the TFNS in January 1910 and in 1914 was mobilised to the 3rd Western General Hospital at the site. She was awarded the Associate Royal Red Cross (ARRC) in 1919 and demobilised but remained in the TFNS. She transferred to the Territorial Army Nursing Service when it was formed and was promoted to Assistant Matron in 1922. She resigned from TANS when she married in 1927.

Genealogical research on her was difficult. Was Jones her married or single surname? Mary and Jones are common names in Carmarthenshire and Wales in general. If Mary Jones was a resident at the Infirmary on the night of the 1911 census, when there were 59 nurses in residence including the Matron and Sisters, all single, then the only Mary born in Carmarthenshire was Mary Jones aged 30, single and a nurse born at Llwyndryei, who spoke Welsh and English. If this was her, she would have been about 46 when she married.

William James Thomas

Another erroneous assumption of mine is the identity of the smart looking gentleman in the suit at the foot of the bed. I thought that he was likely to be a member of the medical staff, but Pam Jones named him as Sir William James Thomas, 1st Baronet (WJT), and this is confirmed by other sources. On reflection I should have realised that working in a hospital for wounded soldiers, a doctor would likely be wearing military uniform and not too far in the past, the patients in the infirmary were managed by just a single house officer so that there may not have been Junior staff at this General Hospital. In fact, this painting of the Care of the Wounded Soldier was commissioned by WJT himself!

My sources state that he was born in Caerphilly on 10 March 1867 and died on the 3 January 1945. His parents were Thomas James Thomas and Jane Thomas. Following the deaths of both parents he was taken in and cared for by his paternal grandparents during his formative years. I have been unable to confirm these details by genealogical research. His paternal grandfather James Thomas (1817-1901) was a pioneering figure in the coal industry. He worked his way through the ranks to become a coal owner in his own right and at the age of 60 sank the Standard pit in 1874 and the Ynyshir pit, both in the Rhondda Fach. After attending local schools in Mynyddislwyn and Pontypridd, WJT entered the service of his grandfather, which gave him hands-on experience in the coal trade and helped him develop business acumen and consideration for workers' welfare when he was managing the operations in the future. After his grandfather died in 1901, WJT inherited the bulk of the family fortune and assumed control of their coal mining operations centred in the Rhondda Fach as the Ynyshir Steam Coal Company. The business grew and prospered due to Thomas's shrewd management and he acquired significant land holdings in Monmouthshire as well as Glamorgan. He developed the Bedwas Navigation colliery near Caerphilly, opening just before the First World War. [Just a thought - but was the adjacent Trethomas named after him? Wikipedia suggests it was.]

Thomas also held directorships in the Great Western Railway and the Barry Dock and Railway Company which facilitated efficient and profitable shipment of coal to the ports. By the early 1910s he owned multiple collieries, contributing substantially to the regional output of steam coal for industrial and naval demands. In 1914 he sold his entire mining interests to United National Collieries Ltd, a major combine that absorbed several South Wales operations to streamline production. Subsequently he shifted his focus towards. His efforts helped sustain coal production vital for the war effort. In 1919 he was created Baronet Thomas of Ynyshir in the County of Glamorgan, acknowledging his impact on the Welsh economy as well as the coal industry through his industrial development and strategic business decisions. In 1915 he became a Freeman of the City of Cardiff in recognition of his standing in the city's civic life.



Credit: Cardiff Council

He was also a Magistrate, Deputy Lieutenant of Glamorgan and in 1936 was appointed High Sheriff of Glamorgan, a position with

ceremonial and judicial duties. He influenced local policy and development over many years as a Glamorgan County Councillor.

He used part of his wealth in the preservation and promotion of Welsh arts and culture. He commissioned and gifted artworks to public institutions. In 1924 he commissioned the painting *The Care of the Wounded Soldiers* displayed in Cardiff Royal Infirmary for many years which according to one of my sources depicts “*scenes of medical care during wartime and highlights themes of compassion and resilience central to Welsh identity*”. He commissioned four significant works by Margaret Lindsay Williams, including the *Imprisoned Soul* (1920) which explores moral and spiritual themes, along with three plaster interior decorations featuring mystical Welsh motifs. These were donated to the Glamorgan County Council in 1955 for public appreciation and safeguarding. The artworks by Margaret Lindsay Williams which were rediscovered in 2018 at Dyffryn House during National Trust restorations are being conserved at a cost of about £50,000. He also supported traditional Welsh cultural festivals, particularly the National Eisteddfod, and in 1928 at the Treorchy National Eisteddfod, he provided generous prizes.

WJT also made significant contributions to education in Wales, especially financial support for medical training. He donated £100,000 to the Welsh National School of Medicine which helped it become the first medical school in Wales. In a previous article for the Society I mentioned that Edwin Montgomery Bruce Vaughan, the local ecclesiastical architect and principal fundraiser for the Infirmary, who rejoiced in the nickname of the Prince of Beggars, had persuaded WJT to part with £90,000 to fund a department of Preventative Medicine in the pre-clinical department in Newport Road, close to the Infirmary. This thwarted UC Cardiff’s attempts to develop the Cathays Park site and helped the Infirmary to become the clinical teaching base of a full, complete School of Medicine. Thomas was awarded an honorary LLD by the University of Wales in 1931 for his educational philanthropy. He was elected Vice President of University College Cardiff that same year.

He contributed over £20,000 to endow beds at the CRI to increase its capacity to serve patients in South Wales. At one stage almost every bed in the infirmary had a tablet above it recording who had donated the money for the bed. £1000 could endow a bed in one of the wards in perpetuity and the donor could have the privilege of recommending patients for admission to that bed! Along with other benefactors to the infirmary such as William Diamond, John Cory, and John and Elize Nixon amongst others, William James Thomas had a ward named after him. He donated £5000 to the Welsh National Memorial Anti-tuberculosis Fund to combat a major public health issue in mining regions. Lord Davies, the grandson of David Davies of Llandinam, was the leading figure behind this fund. He also donated £2500 for improvements to the infirmary and several thousand pounds to hospitals in Newport, Porth and Cardiff. He contributed also to various religious causes reflecting his lifelong membership of Saron Welsh Congregational Church in Ynyshir. He

was committed to uplifting working-class communities through his targeted philanthropy. It is of note that Margaret Lindsay Williams was also a lifelong Congregationalist.

He married Maud Mary Cooper on 11 April 1917. She was the eldest daughter of George Cooper of Bexhill-on-Sea and was the deputy matron of the CRI, a post she had held since 1916, but had to relinquish on marriage. They had three children a daughter and two sons but his gravestone states that the couple also lost two infant daughters. The eldest son William James Cooper Thomas (1919 -2005) succeeded his father as 2nd Baronet upon his father's death in 1945. Maude Mary Thomas died on 10 November 1952.

In his later years WJT's main residence was 53 Park Place in Cardiff, a prestigious address (shown right). In earlier years it appears that he lived at Bryn Awel House, Ynyshir, around 1901, following his inheritance of the estate. According to the Bexhill Museum information Maude Mary (and presumably William James) also lived at Birchwood Grange, Penylan. Does this qualify him for a virtual red plaque as a Roath boy too?! [Ed's note – yes, Birchwood Grange was just within the old parish of Roath]. He was buried in Cathays cemetery. His monument is rather grandiose.



WJT is another of the great and the good of South Wales in the late Victorian period and the beginning of the 20th century. Like Archibald Hood, David Davies, John Cory, John Nixon who I have previously researched, his fortune came principally from the coal mining boom of the 19th century. Along with Bruce Vaughan these men and so many others contributed greatly to the civic life of South Wales and the development of educational, academic, medical, social welfare and artistic facilities. Many of these men came from humble family backgrounds but did not forget their roots and the plight of the ordinary working man, his wife and family. Cardiff in particular owes a lot to men such as these. They were giants who walked amongst the equivalents of us a hundred years and more ago. It is a shame that there are few like them today!

Coming back to the painting, the last person to be mentioned and it could be said the most important is the patient in the bed whose dressings to a head injury are being attended to by Sister Mary Jones. The soldier is a Welshman, Private B.J. Davies, who was evacuated from the Western Front. I have no more information about him other than he was said to have served in the 6th Battalion, the Welch Regiment.

I beg your indulgence in allowing me to express my personal opinions. I think the painting by Margaret Lindsay Williams of the care of the wounded soldier is a wonderful painting, telling the story of life on the ward during the First World War. I like the relaxed attitude of the doctor in charge of the patient and the professional looking uniforms of the nurses at

that time. It does remind me of the many ward rounds I attended when I was a hospital doctor. Notwithstanding the vast amount of money which has been spent at Sandhurst to restore the painting, I feel that it should return to its home in Cardiff, if not at the Infirmary, then at a suitable premises such as the National Museum of Wales (NMW). If my memory is not deceiving me, it was displayed there along with Christopher Williams's *Battle of Mametz Wood* in the exhibition to commemorate the end of the First World War.

Recently I went to the NMW to see the exhibition of the artwork of Gwen John named *Gwen John: Strange Beauties*. I am no art historian or art critic, or someone with any ability in art myself, but I know what I like, and I like what I know! While I can appreciate the skill and the technique of Gwen John in her fine portrait drawings and paintings, I found a lot of her work repetitive and rather self-indulgent. I contrasted this with the paintings I have seen in books and online of Margaret Lindsay Williams. They are more to my taste, particularly her earlier paintings, before she became more involved in portrait painting. She painted a wider range of subjects and themes which I found more interesting. Even after the publicity of the unveiling of the headstone last year on her previously unmarked grave in Barry cemetery, it amazes me that Miss Williams's work is still largely unknown by the wider Welsh public, in contrast to that of Gwen John. I would hope that in the future there will be an exhibition of Margaret Lindsay Williams's work. I suppose that the vast amount of Gwen John's drawings and paintings already owned by the NMW made it easier to organise an exhibition to celebrate the 150th anniversary of her birth. The whereabouts of her paintings in various art galleries and museums around Britain and abroad were known, again making an exhibition feasible. The whereabouts of many of Miss Williams paintings are unknown and some, such as the *Imprisoned Soul* at Dyffryn, have deteriorated badly but hopefully it and the interior decorations on plaster can be stabilised and restored and again be accessible to the public.

Returning to the painting *The Care of the Wounded Soldier*, I have been wondering if it was a coincidence that all the persons featured were there at the same time when Margaret Lindsay Williams arrived to make the original sketches. Or was it arranged for them to all turn up on the ward by the bedside of a soldier for a staged bedside consultation to be drawn? Or did Miss Williams make separate drawings and paintings of the characters either at the hospital or elsewhere and add them to the painting of the patient in the bed with other wounded soldiers in the background. In other words, did that scene actually happen or is it an idealised scene including some important figures associated with the 3rd Western General Hospital at the King Edward VII hospital? Private Davies would certainly have been drawn during the war and as Philip Rhys Griffiths died in 1920, he was probably painted before the end of the war.

The painting was unveiled and dedicated in November 1924 by the widows of Lieutenant Colonel Frank Hill and Company Sergeant-Major T John of the Cardiff City Service

Battalion, Welsh Regiment, in memory of the men of the battalion who fought and died at Mametz Wood in July 1916. Local ex-servicemen and Cardiff citizens raised £7900 to help commission this painting. The painting has made a big impression on me and led me to learn of the life and work of Margaret Lindsay Williams.

Apology

I didn't intend to write such a long piece but, as usual, I got rather carried away - the second instalment will be much shorter. It is always best to go to primary sources if these are readily available, as secondary or tertiary sources often give inaccurate information. The primary sources that I do use are the census returns and birth, death and marriage registers but even these can mislead. I have seen birth places of various people vary from census to census, incorrect spelling of names by the person who collected the information etc. Therefore, I cannot guarantee that all that I have written here is 100% correct.

Sources and references:

Cardiff Royal Infirmary 1883-1983 Arnold S Aldis

RLHS blog Margaret Lindsay Williams - Royal Portrait Artist for sources in addition to those which I have included below.

BBC website- How forgotten painting of an injured soldier inspired nurse's career.

BMJ obituaries 24/7/1920.

cardiffnaturalists.org.uk- Philip Rhys Griffiths MB, BS (1857-1920) 32nd President

Glamorgan Archives online - meet the staff, article on Philip Rhys Griffiths the first House Officer at the Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire Infirmary and Dispensary when it opened in 1883

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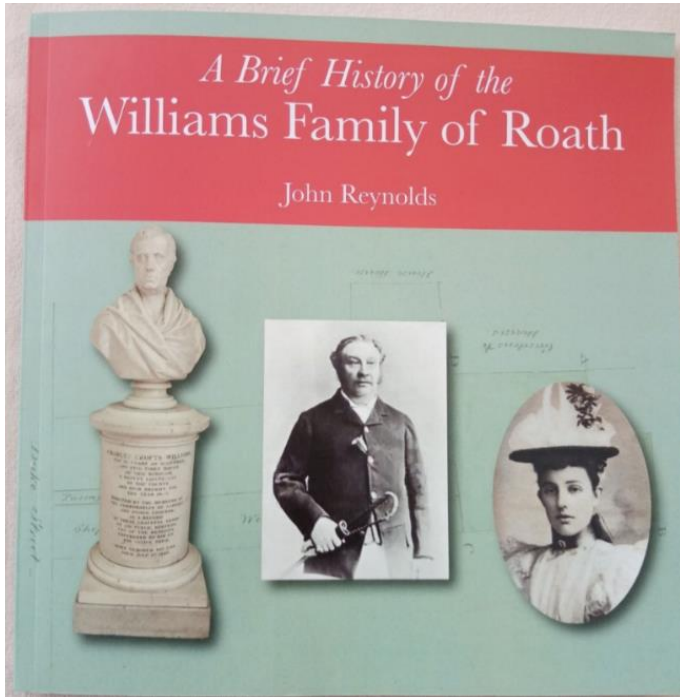
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firstworldwar.iwm.org.uk - The Battle for Mametz Wood

bexhillmuseum.org.uk-Cooper Maud Mary (married name Thomas)

SOCIETY NEWS

A Brief History of the Williams family of Roath



John Reynolds, a descendant of the Williams family of Roath Court and Llanrumney Hall, has written a short history of the family. The Williams estate in Roath stretched from the family's home at Roath Court (now a funeral home) westwards between Albany Road and Newport Road as far as Wordsworth Avenue, and was developed over a period of about 100 years, from 1850.

The booklet is richly illustrated, with some photographs not previously seen, and a sample page is shown here.

John's booklet is privately published, but we may have a unique opportunity to obtain some copies for sale to members of the Society. Should we be successful in obtaining more copies, it is likely that they will cost £7 each. If you would like to register your interest in buying a copy, please let me know by emailing me at RLHSEditor@gmail.com and I shall add you to the list.

A copy of the booklet will be available for inspection at the final talk of the season at St Edward's Church on 13 May 2026.

Charles was a well-known figure in and around Cardiff. He was for many years chairman of the Roath Board of Health and a director of the Taff Vale Railway Company. As a Glamorgan justice of the peace, he was chairman of the petty-sessional division of the district of Kibbor. He at one time raised a troop of volunteer cavalry, which he commanded and which regularly drilled in the grounds of Roath Court.

Meanwhile, George was continuing with his cricketing exploits, playing county cricket for both Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire in the 1870's. George was a member of the South Wales Cricket Club and went on their London tour during July 1875 and played in matches at Lord's and The Oval, as well as in the contest against the Gentlemen of Sussex at Hove.

In 1866 George had become one of the founding members of the Cardiff and County Club and together with his hunting friends he organized in 1887 the first ever point-to-point steeplechase in South Wales. The four mile race took place between Llanrumney and Castleton, with the course crossing land owned by his brother Charles and Lord Tredegar. As stated in his



Charles Henry Williams (2nd right) playing cards outside Roath Court with his future son-in-law James Reynolds (2nd left) and friends

Peter Gillard (1934-92) RIP



Members will be very saddened to hear of the recent death of one of RLHS's most longstanding and faithful members, Peter Gillard, two months short of his ninety-second birthday. A native of Cathays, where he lived most of his life, Peter was very much a stalwart of the society who held the offices of secretary and programme secretary, performing each role with his customary diligence and effectiveness. I first came to know Peter when he attended the series of weekly lectures, Alec Keir (RLHS's founding chair) and I gave at Albany Road Junior School in 1982-83 under the auspices of the then Department of Extra Mural Studies of University College, Cardiff. A couple or so years later, Peter became a full member of the society, quickly establishing himself on the committee. He was a source of great support to me both during my time as chair between 1990-2000 and when he was a member of the publication group, which oversaw the production of the Roath, Splott and Adamsdown pictorial volume in 1995. When the second Roath, Splott and Adamsdown book, with the subtitle of One Thousand Years of History, was published in 2012, again it was Peter, along with others, who was instrumental in seeing the book come to fruition, both by providing staunch back-up and encouragement and as a travelling companion.

Peter himself gave illustrated talks on local history and on his travelling experiences abroad. He had a very kind disposition and would help colleagues at a moment's notice. He was a generous and convivial host of many committee meetings held at his residence at Cathays

and subsequently at Cyncoed where, as usual, he always put the interests of the society first. He, as much as any, was delighted with the surge in its membership growth in recent years. It was also Peter who was at the forefront of reviving the idea of awarding honorary life membership to those who had made a significant impact on the society, an accolade he himself so richly deserved when he it was bestowed on him in 2018, 'In recognition and sincere appreciation of his outstanding dedication and long commitment to the Roath Local History Society.'

The society's condolences go to Peter's family, notably Philippa, his niece who, on the occasion of Peter's ninetieth birthday, provided the above image which appeared in the 'Grounds Management' magazine. Peter himself was an expert in this field being employed in the first half of his career as a practising groundsperson, where his last job was Grounds Manager at Cardiff Arms Park. The second half of his career was spent as a lecturer, teacher and assessor at the Glamorgan School of Agriculture in Pencoed, before its redesignation as the Mid Glamorgan College of Agriculture and Horticulture in 1974. It was Peter who set up the first college-based course for grounds personnel and greenkeepers. He was also involved fully with the Grounds Management Association, being active in the Welsh branch for some sixty years serving as branch secretary, chairman and vice-president.

(I am grateful to Philippa Keane, Elizabeth Morgan, David Parry and Martin Sheldon for their help in compiling this appreciation.)

Jeff Childs

John Burke Leeds R.I.P.

It is with great sadness we announce John's passing at a hospice, during the second week of April.



Come rain or shine, ex-serviceman John, was a keen attendee at our monthly meetings; and absolutely loved participating in our Summer Visits. Another favourite activity of his, when he could get to the Forest of Dean, was horse riding.

Many of you will have chatted with him, as he rested on his determined way, up and down Pen-y-lan Hill. He was always upbeat and had *many* intriguing stories to tell.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Elizabeth Morgan, RLHS Programme and Events Organiser

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

WEDNESDAY, 13th MAY, 2026

Hi de Hi - Being a Butlin Redcoat



Rosemary Chaloner

Rosemary had always wanted to be a professional ballet dancer - imagining herself as another "Margot Fonteyn".

This didn't happen, but an opportunity to "perform" eventually occurred. Her journey - a 1960's fun experience - will bring back many happy memories.

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 14 May 2026 when Ian Malcolm will show his film *Tales of Old Grangetown and the Docks*

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:

- [Kenneth More and his Cardiff Roots](#)
- [Margaret Lindsay Williams – Royal Portrait Artist](#)
- [Memories of a Steelworks Electrician](#)
- [Preswylfa School, 82 Pen-y-lan Road](#)

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.



cardiffnats@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

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

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

GET IN TOUCH

For newsletter feedback and submissions contact:

Jon at RLHSEditor@gmail.com

To request loans from the R.L.H.S. Archive, contact:

Geraint at Denison-Kurg@outlook.com or ☎ (029) 2048 8358.

For membership, contact:

Nicky at RLHSMembershipSec@gmail.com

For events and programming enquiries, contact:

Elizabeth at RoathHistory@gmail.com or ☎ (029) 2048 2658.

For website enquiries, contact:

Ted at RoathHistoryWebsite@gmail.com