



E-NEWSLETTER AUGUST 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

Welcome back after the summer break. You have not been kept short of local history in the meantime - Ted Richards has been indefatigable in digging out all sorts of interesting snippets in his blog and social media posts and the Society has produced its second YouTube video, this time on the [history of the Mackintosh](#), which I hope that you will already have seen. If not, please have a look, give us a "like" and subscribe to the RLHS channel. Our thanks go to Gordon Plant who filmed and edited it.



You may recall that our first YouTube video was on the Scott Memorial Lighthouse, so it was interesting to come across this postcard showing the lighthouse as an advertisement for the virtues of Temperance. Not that Captain Scott was teetotal – he took champagne with him to the South Pole to toast his anticipated success. Wonder what happened to those bottles?



Reproduced with the kind permission of the University of Lancaster Livesey Collection

We recently received the sad news that one of our regular contributors in recent years, Les Phillips, died at the end of June. I shall pen a tribute to him next month.

Jon Roberts
Newsletter Editor

Just who lived in Newport Road in its prime?

by Gareth Brown

Part 1: St Johns - overview

When I started this article, it was intended to be a short postscript to the previous article about the people around the bedside of the wounded soldier in the painting by Margaret Lindsay Williams, particularly about the surgeon Philip Rhys Griffiths, who was the doctor in Army uniform sitting on the bed, and some observations on the people living on Newport Road near his home in 1891 and 1901. I then discovered that he was living on Newport Road in 1911, but some census referred to house names, whilst later ones referred to house numbers, so I went down a rabbit hole trying to match names with numbers. As usual I got carried away. Once I get my teeth into something I am like a dog with a bone and I found that I was in danger of biting off more than I could chew, to mix metaphors with a simile. So this piece “just grewed like Topsy” as I listed properties and heads of households in each census from 1881 to 1911 and added some details of other family members or other occupants for some of the households.

The Editor and I decided not to include the full listing of properties and heads of household so that this article is not overly long and as some people may find poring over census information tedious. A longer version for reference purposes will be placed on the website in due course. We have retained the short ‘potted histories’ I had written of some of the inhabitants I was interested in. I did not include Archibald Hood, EM Bruce Vaughan or Richard Cory junior, as I have already written about them and their families in other works.



— An early postcard of Newport Road, looking east. On the right is St James the Great church and behind it the Infirmary (before the infirmary chapel was built). On the left is Roath Road Wesleyan church, bombed in WWII and subsequently demolished.

A study of the censuses of 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 along with some other evidence has shown me that in that period Newport Road was a desirable and prestigious place to live. Many of the movers and shakers of Cardiff's civic life lived on the road along with professional people such as lawyers, civil engineers and a substantial number of doctors and surgeons who were in private practice, some of whom were consulting doctors to the hospital staff of the infirmary. They gave their services voluntarily at first but were later paid a modest retainer. They were often doctors who had been on the hospital staff for a few years and then set up on their own. Some heads of household were widows or spinsters living on their own means or account.

Virtually all the households had servants, usually more than one and often as many as four, and in one case, five. Many came from Wales or the west of England, but some were from further away, in Ireland or occasionally Scotland. As Cardiff expanded, Roath became an inner suburb instead of being on the outskirts of the town and wealthier people moved further away from the centre to leafier suburbs, leaving Newport Road to gradually deteriorate, particularly in the last half century or more since I was a child and young man living nearby.

In my opinion Newport Road in Roath and the old parish of St John into town is a sad entity compared to the turn of the 20th century, judging by photographs I have seen. Now it is a busy, traffic-filled route into the centre of Cardiff from the east. Then it was a pleasant looking tree lined avenue with a tram line in the middle and barely any motor vehicles on it, but with plenty of well-dressed people walking along the pavements. Maybe the photos were taken on a Sunday or a special occasion! Now many of the properties look tired and care worn and on the southern side of the road between Glossop Road and town there are some tall modern buildings replacing the villas of the past. It compares unfavourably with Cathedral Road which although also being a busy traffic filled route has by and large retained its charm and attractive housing.

I also decided early on that the scope of this article would just be Newport Road to the west of City Road and Glossop Road i.e. in the parish of Saint John the Baptist rather than including the first part of Newport Road in the Parish of Roath. I shall deal with that in a future article.



In 1881, the old infirmary was on the north side at the start of Newport Road in St. John's parish. Moving eastwards there were seven houses comprising Brighton Terrace up to West Grove opposite Fitzalan Place. Then there were three groups of three houses forming Halswell Terrace (as it is named on the Cardiff, Glamorganshire XLIII.15.4 OS map, surveyed 1877, revised 1898 and published 1900) up to East Grove then 5 properties followed by two smaller semidetached houses which may have been associated with the Roath Road Wesleyan Methodist Church which was on the corner of Castle Road and Newport Road. Various villas and named houses including Oscar House where Richard Cory junior resided, Rutland House where lived Philip Williams who was a brewer, Cae Coed, Tredegar Villa, Glamorgan Villa, Dyffryn Villa, Singleton House, Belvedere and Glanmore House were named houses on this northern side of Newport Road from the University College to Castle Road in the 1878 map revised in 1898 and published in 1900.

Haswell Terrace



By 1891 the houses on this part of Newport Road were all numbered and not recorded as villas or part of a terrace. It seems that 1 Haswell Terrace became 17 Newport Road but 5 Haswell Terrace became no. 23 Newport Road. Oscar House became 27 and the other villas of 1881 leading to Castle Road were numbered as expected by 1891 ending with Glanmore Villa becoming no 43 Newport Road and again occupied as in 1881 by a Wesleyan Minister almost certainly officiating in the adjoining Roath Road Wesleyan Methodist Church.

At **2 Haswell Terrace** in 1881 the Head of household was Andrew Davies 56 Physician b Haverfordwest, Pembs. He had a wife and 8 offspring living at home aged from 24 to 5 including an 18 year old son called John Vipond Davies, a student studying mechanical

engineering. Please search for a wonderful article on John Vipond Davies by Ted Richards on the blog of our RLHS website detailing his amazing career in civil engineering and his rugby exploits. He is also included in the section 'People of Roath.'

The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel and ? School. Address in Castle Road and Roath ? Mews definitely not Roath Road. Roath Mews was no 1 Castle Road/ City Road which Solomon Andrews bought in 1865 according to Malcolm Ranson's 'Rough History of City Road' on our website. It was a livery stable for the company's cab business and later a petrol station and garage in 1920. In 1881 there were three households at this address headed by a cab driver, Manager of ?Mews and another cab driver, making 30 enumerated. The census then travels up Castle Road where at no 1 according to the census is a tobacconist and hairdresser shop- "no residence only inhabited during the day"

In 1891 on the northern side of Newport Road

At no **15** Herbert Vachell Doctor of Medicine annotated Surg- he had 9 beds on Ware ward, a medical ward in the new infirmary to give it its shortened name, as an Honorary Consultant. He was described as genial, skilful and courteous by a patient as quoted in Mr Aldis' book. He was a member of the prominent, long standing and wealthy Vachell family of Crockherbtown, Cardiff of which there were several doctors as well as businessmen. Charles Street was named after one of the family and an area south of Queen Street was called Vachell Town apparently. See references below for details about this family.

At no **23** as in 1881, then known as 5 Halswell Terrace was Alfred Sheen, 51, Registered Medical practitioner entry annotated 'surg.' (pictured right). Mr Aldis said that Dr Alfred Sheen was "appointed surgeon to the Infirmary in 1871 and was one of the prime movers in the building of the present Infirmary in 1883" He also "in conjunction with the Matron introduced training programmes for the nurses based on those established by Florence Nightingale in her school of nursing". The cathayscemetery.coffeecup.com doctors and Men of Medicine article says that he was born in Leicester in 1839 and died in Cardiff 1906. He was house surgeon in the Cardiff infirmary 1864 to 1866. In 1869 he became the medical officer to the new Bute dock works and the South district of the Cardiff Union. In 1870 he became the medical officer to the workhouse and the Ely schools and in 1871 was appointed honorary physician to Cardiff Infirmary. He lived at Halswell House. His funeral was held at Saint Germans Church officiated by the Reverend RJ Ives and at his burial conducted by the Reverend Canon Beck many prominent Cardiff men were present including family members, his son-in-law Mr Gordon Cory, the Lord Mayor Dr C.T. Vachell, Dr Herbert Vachell, David Davies, Richard Cory and the funeral arrangements were by Mr Augustine Stone of Working Street.



27 / Oscar House as in 1881, Richard Cory 61 second son of Richard Cory of Richard Cory and sons and brother of John Cory of Cory Bros, Colliery Proprietor. He was a Baptist by religion and on this census night a visitor to his home was a Baptist Minister.

35 Mary Ann Riches a widow living on her own means. She was the widow of John Osbourne Riches co-founder in 1872 and co-owner of collieries at Clydach Vale which became part of the Cambrian Collieries Ltd. He stood with Archibald Hood in the initial promotion of a dock at Barry with its railway line from the Rhondda. Mary like her husband was born in Norfolk.

So, some very wealthy and prominent persons were living on this part of Newport Road in 1891 including a solicitor, an iron merchant and another ship owner

North side of Newport Road in the Parish of St John in 1901 and 1911

In 1901 on the north side of Newport Road in the parish of St John three properties were unoccupied and one had no details on the census entry. Only the following were occupying the same property as in 1891:- John Miles the caretaker of the University College at no 1, Rees Jones the coal merchant at 17, Alfred Sheen -the physician and surgeon at 23, Richard Cory Retired Coal Merchant at 27 a home known as Oscar House, Philip Williams at no 29 now clearly described as a retired Mechanical Engineer and Harriet Bagan the widow living on her own means at 33.

At no **31** the head was Alexander Goodfellow, 27, local manager of some sort of institute working at home. He was British, born in Buenos Aires and his wife was a matron.

At **39** the head of household was Oswald Stoll (later Sir Oswald), a music hall director, pictured right



In 1901 this part of Newport Road was still largely occupied by professional men and their families and some notable and wealthy characters in the history of Cardiff and South Wales. In 1911 at no.11 there were joint female heads, Mey Thomas and Ellie Williams of the British Women's Temperance Association along with a married dressmaker and 7 general servants.

Augustine James Arthur Stone had moved from no 19 next door to **17** and was now solely a funeral furnisher. He must be the predecessor of Augustine Stone of AJ Stone and W. Ham funeral directors of 1a Neville Street in Cardiff who tend to serve the Canton area.

At no **19** now was Charles Radcliffe a single man aged 49 who was a shipowner born in Merthyr Tydfil and able to speak both languages. By his age and presence through many census entries he is the younger brother of Henry and Daniel of the renowned Cardiff shipowners the Radcliffes of Evan Thomas, Radcliffe and co

No. **29** now has a 38 year old man, John Joseph Dunne on Army Pension serving as a club steward with his wife assisting as the stewardess along with a 37 year old female club cook and a 16 year old club pageboy.

At **35** the head of household is George Andrew Seccombe 58 born in Mevagissey Cornwall an employer but his profession/ occupation was illegible. His wife 58, 2 single daughters 29 and 21 and a 28 year old single son were all born in Liverpool. His son was a retail draper. This rang a bell with me and yes those of you of a certain vintage, George Andrew Seccombe established Seccombes Ltd, department store in 1895 as George A Seccombe and co, fancy drapers, milliners and costumers at 45 Queen Street. It later moved to 22 Queen Street (closed after 1924) The company had acquired premises at 79, 81 and 83 Queen Street by 1920. Information from canfod.glamarchives.gov.uk

The 1911 census is more difficult to read quickly as each household is recorded separately and I have not been able to find entries for **39,41** and the **Wesleyan Church**. It seems that by 1911 institutions ie a club and the British Womens Temperance Association were becoming established in this part of Newport Road. Perhaps this was because younger families were not wealthy enough to buy and run a household here when the previous occupiers died or moved to more prestigious residences or that Newport Road was losing its allure somewhat.

Having walked this stretch of the road recently there was only one house that looked as if it was one of the original villas and another that could be a markedly altered one.

On the opposite side of Newport Road in the present day, the buildings of 1881-1911 have been removed apart from St. James Church which was built in 1892-93, the architect being EM Bruce Vaughan.

Starting from the Rhymney railway bridge and line there was a road called Grove Road, probably now Fitzalan Road with a few small buildings, then 4 houses of Belgrave Terrace on the 1877 O.S. Map survey. On the 1898 revision there is now a separation to 5 houses of Woodfield Place then Woodfield House on the corner of Fitzalan Place which was called South Grove in 1877 and opposite West Grove. Then further eastwards were two large houses, then Elmsfield then a gap to Howard Lodge. Then there was the junction with Howard Place followed by two semi detached houses, then a large double house, then the same building plan but divided into two semis and then Sherwood the house of Archibald Hood. It had a second house, a lodge behind it. There was a gap then to St James the Great church. Stoneham House, Batsford House and Jacob Bank were names of some of the houses on this side but they are not named as such on the map. As far as I was able to work out the order of houses moving eastwards along Newport Road on the southern side in St John's Parish was as below and I include details of occupants for some of the properties in 1881.

South side of Newport Road in St.John's Parish 1881

Salesbury or Salisbury House.

Rolfe House

Acton House (this census collector's handwriting is very difficult to read) Richard B Boulton, 49, Dental Surgeon, b. Iron Acton, Glos. Wife, 10 daughters all single, ages from 20 to 11 (i.e. one every year) plus 2 servants.

1 Woodfield Place

2 Woodfield Place.

3 Woodfield Place

4 Woodfield Place (a private school)

5 Woodfield Place

Woodfield House

The census then journeys down Fitzalan Place for 17 entries including a number of private schools before resuming on Newport Road

Windsor Villa

Brook Villa

Elmsfield Sarah Anna Reece, 68, widow, annuitant, b St Vincent, West Indies.

Lodge back of Howard Lodge.

Howard Lodge.

Lodge back of Fleur de Lis.

Fleur de Lis.

Jacob Bank. Cornelius Lundie 65
Civil engineer, b Kelso
Roxburghshire

Batsford House. Charles Sankey
46 Tea (? Dealer) Merchant b
Sittingbourne, Kent. I'm certain
that Charles was an uncle of John
Sankey who became Lord
Chancellor in Ramsey



An early photograph of Howard Gardens

MacDonald's cabinet. Charles and John's father, Thomas, had the same mother who, as a widow, lived with Thomas in Moreton in Marsh in 1861, with Charles in Roath in 1871 and here at Batsford house in 1881. Her age was correct for each entry and place of birth at Sittingbourne in various census entries matched up. A fuller version of the genealogy is in the longer version of this article and I commend Ted Richard's superb article 'Viscount John Sankey, Lord Chancellor-Roath's top brief' on our society's website from where I had the feeling that there was likely a family connection. Batsford is a village very close to

Moreton in Marsh so the family connection to this part of the Cotswolds may explain the naming of the house. Batsford Park, now Batsford Arboretum, was where the Mitford sisters spent part of their childhoods.

Stoneham House

Entry 151 indecipherably named House. Richard Short 40 Shipbroker b St Ives.

Sherwood House. Entry 150a John Williams 34 Iron Merchant b Cardiff

Lodge back of Sherwood House. Robert Jones 57 widower. Gardener born in Hereford.

Entry 150 **St. Sherwood House.** Archibald Hood 57 Colliery Owner b Scotland. (pictured right) *Photo credit to Friends of Cathays Library*

Entry 149 **St James' Church** is on the census although it was built in the 1890s!?

By checking the names of occupants of houses between 1881 and 1891, the same names suggest **Rolfe House** became no.6 Newport Road.



Acton House became no.8

1 **Woodfield Place** became 10

2 **Woodfield Place** became 12

3 **Jacob Bank** became 32

4 **Sherwood House** became 42

If one of say the lodge of Howard Lodge or the Lodge of Fleur de Lis is treated as an annexe and the other given its own number, then the number of properties in 1881 equals the number but I cannot attribute definite 1891 numbers to the house names of 1881 apart from those shown above.

On the south side of Newport Road in 1891 in the civil parish of St John

No 2 Richard Bolton, 27, Plumber and Decorator, his wife was an artist, miniature portraiture; **2a** Henry Arthur Angle, 29, a violinist, wife a pianist

14 Richard de Soldenhoff, 45, Civil Engineer, b. Belgium as were his wife & 16 year-old son

18 Adeline MH Simpson, 62, widow living on own means with 3 daughters, ages 30, 21, 19 all teachers of Music

22 David Duncan, 43, widower, Newspaper Editor and Proprietor with 11 year-old daughter, a governess, 3 servants, one a male page. He was the second son of David and

Anne Duncan, Scots who came to Cardiff from London. David, along with his elder brother John and younger brother Alexander, were taken into partnership with their father to form Messrs D Duncan and Sons, whose business comprised the Cardiff Times, the South Wales Echo and the South Wales Daily News. See reference below for details of his family particularly his elder brother Sir John. David was also knighted. In the 1871 census, age 23, he was at 54 Crockherbtown with his 47 year old mother, a wife born in Perth, John, 25, his brother, a sub editor for newspaper, born in Edinburgh, sister Ann, 21, b. London, as was his brother Alexander, 18, a compositor. Sister Isabella, 10, a scholar, b. Cardiff. David was a sub editor bookkeeper, b. London. By 1881 he was married to Emmeline, and they had 1 yr old daughter, Emmeline Ethel, and were at 17 Park Place. In 1901 and 1911 he was living at Bron y Glyn, Penarth with Elizabeth, his second wife. They had no children. I have written a further article on the Duncan family.

Reference jd2387.wordpress.com Sir John Duncan (1846-1914)

26 Henry James Paine 75 Retired Physician annotated Surg, JP. Dr Paine was a general practitioner who investigated the outbreak of typhoid fever in Cardiff in 1847 and concluded that the high death rate of 200 was due to insanitary conditions, i.e. dangerously polluted water and no sanitation. The theory of infective agents rather than “miasma” being the infective entity had not been widely accepted at that time. In 1853 he was appointed Medical Officer of Health for Cardiff, a post he held till 1889. He attempted to implement the recommendations of the Rammell Report into the conditions in Cardiff, ie establishing a safe water supply with a new reservoir and a proper system of drainage and sewerage costing £200,000. He encouraged inoculation against smallpox and bought an old Naval vessel, the Hamadryad, the 3rd ship of that name to use as an isolation hospital for seamen with contagious infections and fevers entering Cardiff and other local ports, rather than at the Infirmary. Flatholm was also acquired to treat certain fevers. The incidence of smallpox decreased despite the rapid population growth of Cardiff, and it has been estimated that Dr Paine’s efforts had saved over 15 000 lives by the time of his retirement. For further details see article on the Roath LHS website and in Doctors and Men of Medicine in Cathays Cemetery by the Friends of Cathays Cemetery on cathayscemetery.coffeecup.com



Dr Henry Paine

Photo credit: Cardiff Libraries

32 Cornelius Lundie, 75, Civil Engineer, b. Kelso, Roxburghshire. Wife Rosabelle b. Kingston, Jamaica

42 family away (wife dead) is the entry. 4 servants present, one male. Archibald Hood Esq named as Head.

Census 1901 south side of Newport Road in St John Parish, Adamsdown Ward

8 Ann Boulton, 62, widow, living on own means, b. Bonvilston. Also 5 single daughters and a servant. There was a boarder, William Kittow, 30, a dental surgeon, as was Ann's late husband.

14 E. M. Bruce Vaughan 45, single, architect, b. Cardiff, with sister, a niece and 2 servants

18 Herbert R Vachell 47 Single, Physician, annotated "Surg" working on own acct at home, b. Cardiff.

26 Eliza Paine, 89, widow, b. Cardiff.

32 Cornelius Lundie, 85, widower, Engineer and Railway Manager, b Scotland. With grandson, 24, Oxon graduate, a granddaughter, 26, and 2 servants. Cornelius's wife, Rosa, died in 1896.



30-36 Newport Road today

Locomotive "Lundie" at Llanbradach Colliery in 1961, named in honour of Cornelius Lundie.

Credit: The Kevin Williams Collection via Facebook

36 Adelaide Stoll, 48, widow living on own means b Dublin.

42 Archibald Hood, 77, widower, Colliery Manager, annotated mineman, employer b Scotland with son William H Hood, 43, single, Colliery Owner/ mineman, employer b Scotland, speaks "foreign language" and English

Of the 23 households in this section of the road, 12 were occupied by the same family as in 1891, although one householder had gained 14 years in the decade, had a completely different occupation, yet had the same place of birth - Neath! Three heads were the widows of heads of household 10 years previously. Also, a chronometer/ watch maker had become an optician, a combination I came across for another man in this story. The physician and surgeon Herbert Vachell had moved across the road from no. 15 since 1891.

South side of Newport Road in the Parish of St John in 1911

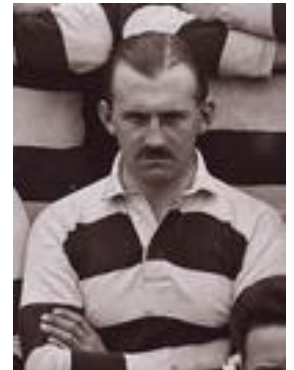
4 Charles Fautley 28 manager Surgical Instrument manufacturer b Camberwell, working at home with his wife who was “assisting” in business. They had a 2 month-old son, Charles. Louis Fautley, 24, brother of Charles, a traveller for the surgical instrument manufacturer.

8 Clara L.B. Boulton, 39, single, b. Cardiff. She was the eldest of 5 daughters of the head of household Ann in the 1901 census, who was the widow of the previous head, Richard Boulton, the Dentist in 1891 and 1881 of Acton House. William Kittow, 40 and single, was still a boarder there where he practised as a dentist on his own accord and was an employer. He was born in Cannington, Somerset.

10 Daniel Aloysius Fitzgerald, 39, single, Surgeon in medical practice on own account at home, b. Limerick. He was the Assistant House Surgeon, aged 28, at the Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire infirmary. He had one servant only in household in 1911

24 Ernest Howard Griffiths, 59, Principal of University College, his 101 year-old widowed aunt, a sick nurse, a lady’s maid, a cook, a housemaid and a parlour maid were present.

28 also known as Howard Lodge. Thomas Wallace, 62, Doctor of Medicine, General Practice, Worker? At home, b. Kirkhills, Ballymoney, Co Antrim. His wife Margaret, b. Cardiff, was the housekeeper, son, John, 33 and single, an Assistant in Medical and Surgical Practice, a worker at home, b. Cardiff, 2 daughters born in Cardiff and three female servants. He was at the same address in 1891 and 1901. In 1891 he had 7 children at home and was described as a Doctor of Medicine/ General Practitioner, and someone annotated Surg to the entry.



Dr Tom Wallace, playing for Cardiff RFC

Credit: Cardiff Rugby Online Museum

[CC BY-NC 4.0](#)

32 Jacob Lodge. George Archibald Lundie, 68, Civil Engineer, b. Melbourne, his wife, son, 29, single, Coal Exporter and Employer and son 24, single, Mining engineer and Manager of a China Clay Company, all born in Cardiff and 3 servants, namely a cook and 2 housemaids. George was living at 11 Richmond Road in 1891 and 1 Richmond Road in 1881 but was not in house on census night. Son George, 4, and son Cornelius, 2, were in 1881. Almost certainly George Archibald snr inherited the Newport Road house when his father Cornelius died.

36 Col Guillermo Enrique Petty, 56, Widower, Consul for Uruguay, b Uruguay, daughters Leila Edith 25, single; Alice Rose 21 single both born in Argentina, sons Harry Gordon 19, single and medical student b Southampton, Hants and Cyril Frederick 16 b Cardiff and 2 servants. **Sherwood Cottage rear of no 42** Charles Mayo 49, Coachman, (domestic) worker b. Brockhampton, Herefordshire.

42 Sherwood. Henry William Martin, 65, widower, Mining Engineer on own account, b. Dowlais, as were his sons Ephraim, 26, single and a medical student and George, 22, a Horticulturalist. Also present were his daughter Muriel Pringle 33 married b Nagasaki and his granddaughter Elizabeth Douglas or Dowlais? Pringle 2 b Hawick, Roxburghshire plus 5 single female servants.

There were 25 properties occupied in this part of Newport Road in 1911, two were not occupied or entered on 1901 census. Between 1901 and 1911, four family members became heads of household when the previous head of household in the family died. The new heads of households were 2 daughters, a widow and a son. Seven properties had the same head of household as in 1901 and twelve had a new head of household, not obviously related to the previous one. Three widows and 2 daughters as heads of household were living on money derived from their husband or father. Married women on this road generally did not work outside the home. One was an assistant to her husband and another was described as a housekeeper despite having servants. Most households had servants and were occupied by the well-off middle-classes. Six of the properties were occupied by doctors or dentists, one not the head of household. Just two were involved in coal sales and another was a mining engineer.

References BMD and censuses on The Genealogist and Ancestry

Mr Arnold S. Aldis' book Cardiff Royal Infirmary 1883-1983

Ordnance Survey maps

Wikipedia

And other online sites mentioned in the text.

What's in a Name?

John Hobson Matthews and Ffynon Llandenis

By Liam Affley



In 1897 a patch of boggy farmland lying to the north of Cardiff was transformed into a Victorian pleasure garden. Enclosed by railings and planted with bamboo, rhododendrons, and other ornamental shrubs, the new garden – enclosing an ancient spring - became the sixth and final section of Roath Park. Together with the Recreation Ground, the Pleasure Gardens, the Botanic Gardens, the Wild Gardens, and the Lake, it completed the creation of what has since been hailed, “the most beautiful late Victorian park in Britain”.

The one thing missing? A name!

Unsurprisingly, because of its oval shape, locals had already begun calling the new park, “The Oval.” However, that was not good enough for the Cardiff Corporation, which preferred a more elegant and horticulturally themed name, one which better suited the new garden’s layout and design. It settled on “Bamboo Brake”.

Accordingly on 28 January 1898, the Cardiff Parks Committee met to formally name the garden, “Bamboo Brake.” However, before proceeding, the Chairman, Alderman Ebenezer Beavan, announced that he had received a letter from the Borough Archivist, Mr John Hobson Matthews. This concerned the ancient well situated within the Oval. Alderman Beavan would read this letter to members prior to any final decision regarding a name.

John Hobson Matthews



John Hobson Matthews (1858–1914) was a remarkable man. A solicitor and historian, in 1894 he became the first Archivist to the Cardiff Corporation. Between 1898 and 1911 he wrote the monumental “*Cardiff Records*”, a six-volume compilation of charters, court rolls, maps, and municipal papers that remains the single most important printed source for the city’s early history. He was also a linguist with a particular interest in Celtic languages, Welsh, Cornish and Irish. With family roots deeply tied to St. Ives in

Cornwall, he was a major player in the revival of the Cornish language. His Welsh was excellent. He edited *Emynau Catholig* and was the translator of *Ffordd y Groes*. He was a member of the Welsh Bardic Gorsedd and was known in Welsh literary circles by his bardic name, “Mab Cernyw”. He was a Catholic and worshipped regularly at St. Peter’s in Roath. He died in 1914, leaving behind a body of work that continues to underpin research into Cardiff’s medieval and early-modern past.

Welsh history lay at the heart of Matthew’s work. It was his firm belief that the stories underpinning many of Wales’s cultural sites were in danger of fading away through disinterest. It was for this reason that he wrote to the Parks Committee. Here is his letter:

“To the Chairman of the Parks Committee.

“Sir, in the interests of local archaeology I beg permission to lay before you the following facts:-

Within the northernmost enclosure of Roath Park is, as you are, doubtless, aware, a beautiful spring or well. It rises out of the ground with great force, and immediately forms a pool of considerable size, which is overhung with trees, and teems with aquatic growths of various kinds. The scene is one of wild and romantic beauty.

Mr. Pettigrew is now engaged in laying out this portion of the park, but you have wisely instructed him to leave the well in its original state. For this the intelligent public will give you thanks.*

My object in addressing you is to point out the antiquarian interest which attaches to this beautiful spring. It is known to old inhabitants as “Ffynon Llandennis” - “the well of the sacred enclosure of Saint Denis”- and has for ages past been regarded with great veneration by the country folk. This was owing to its association with the memory of a saint, and to the reputation it enjoyed as a healing well. Its water was believed to possess singular curative properties, especially in cases of rheumatic and scrofulous affections, and also for the eyes. It is certain that the water is of remarkable purity. I have been informed by old people living hard by that down to quite recent times this well was resorted to for the cure of the maladies referred to above, and that owing to the excellent quality of its water for ordinary drinking purposes—persons coming from great distances to procure the same.



It is beyond doubt that this well has been a noted place for many centuries.

The six-inch Ordnance Chart of circa 1838 shows a tenement marked with the name Capel Denis - “Saint Denis’ Chapel”—at or close to this spot. This circumstance enables us to identify the site with the “Capella Sancti Dionysii de Kibur,” which, in the

starting point, Matthews guided committee members to the Twelfth Century when, in 1180, Bishop Nicholas of Llandaff provided documentary evidence which “confirmed” that the Chapel of St Denis, of Kibur - an administrative district covering present-day Roath, Penylan and Cyncoed - had been gifted to Tewkesbury Abbey by the then Lord of Glamorgan, William FitzRobert. William FitzRobert, second Earl of Gloucester and grandson of King Henry I, held the Lordship of Glamorgan between 1147 and 1183. He was one of Tewkesbury Abbey’s principal benefactors, as was his maternal grandfather, Robert Fitzhamon, who set in train a pattern whereby Tewkesbury Abbey was largely financed from the town of Cardiff,” including the takings from the annual fair...and the endowments of the churches.”

In other words, Ffynnon Llandenis and its chapel formed a distinct community — a living entity, not an obscure rural shrine. The chapel’s connection to Tewkesbury Abbey shows that it belonged to a wider network of dependent chapels, tithes, and glebe lands administered by one of the most influential Benedictine houses in medieval England and Wales. The chapel, and almost certainly the nearby spring, would have been familiar territory to the Norman Lord of Glamorgan, the Bishop of Llandaff, and, without doubt, to the Abbot of Tewkesbury. It also occupied a notable position within the regional administrative unit of Kibur, giving it both ecclesiastical and territorial weight.

If, in writing to committee members, Mr. Matthews intended to persuade them that the new park deserved a name more appropriate than “Bamboo Brake”, then he succeeded. Members immediately expressed their appreciation of the letter’s content and asked that their thanks be conveyed to Matthews “without delay”. Mr Lloyd Meyrick proposed a motion that, “the above portion of Roath Park should be called, ‘Ffynnon Llandenis Park’”. The motion was passed unanimously. No further mention was made of “Bamboo Brake”!

With this decision, and with the Committee’s determination that, “the spring’s historical and cultural significance should be officially recognised”, Matthews’s objective had been achieved. It was a notable success, one which, in reality, should have marked the beginning of a sustained interest in the “Ffynnon Llandenis” spring and its remarkable history.

If only that had been the case.

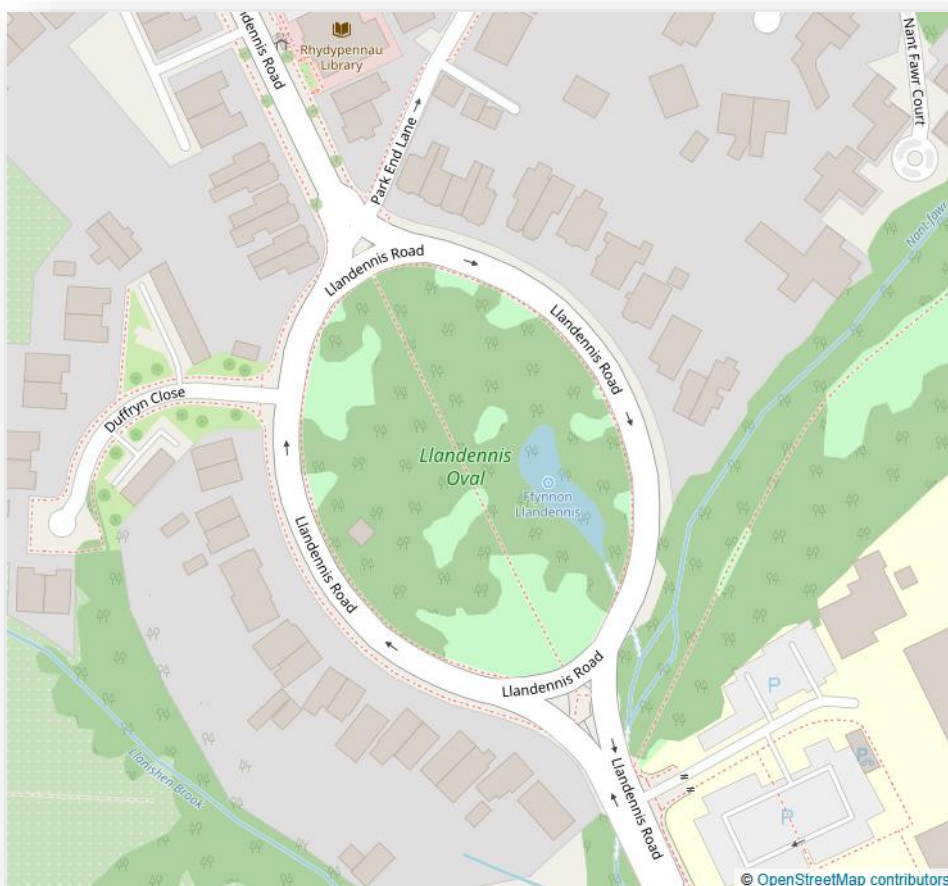
For much of the following century, the spring appears to have been largely overlooked.



Apart from occasional clean-ups by volunteer groups, its history seems to have faded from public memory. To that can be added the fact that, since January 1898, the official name “Ffynnon Llandenis Park,” has been largely ignored. Apart from a handful of antiquarian references, the name has appeared in very few official documents or local histories during the entire 20th century.

During the same period alternative names have abounded: “*Llandennis Gardens*”, “*Llandennis Garden*”, “*Llandennis Oval*”, “*Oval Gardens*”, the “*Round Garden*” - all have been used over the years. Even the 1920 Ordnance Survey Map of the park provides a pick and mix of names: “*Ffynon Llandennis*”, “*Roath Park*” along with a caption showing “*Llandennis Gardens*”.

At present there appears little chance that the official name, “*Ffynon Llandenis Park*” will ever be restored: that possibility has long since passed. Besides, since 1898, nothing has really changed: local people still prefer to use “*The Oval*”, as the name for the park. However, as far as the spring and its surrounds are concerned, there is a difference and that is a pressing need to keep the area’s history alive. How can this be achieved? One avenue might be to approach the Cardiff Council in the hope that it would consider the erection of a



discreet sign at the site - one which would remind residents and visitors alike that this is no ordinary park; this is “*Ffynnon Llandenis Park*”, a park with a spring whose history stretches back centuries; a park which forms a small - yet meaningful part of the cultural heritage of Wales and, in particular, of Cardiff itself. Let’s see!

It is fitting to close with an extract from an article in the “*Western Mail*” of 29 January 1898. Brief though it is, it achieved three things; firstly, it calmed the anxieties of those who feared that the spring at Roath Park might become a centre of religious pilgrimage, “*à la manière catholique*”; secondly, it affirmed the wisdom of Alderman Beavan’s Parks Committee in avoiding the use of the name “*Bamboo Brake*”, and, thirdly, it offered an implicit tribute to John Hobson Matthews - to his scholarship, and to his success in restoring to the spring its traditional name.

"The Corporation of Cardiff is possessed of a Sacred Well of reputed curative properties. Start not! There is no intention of founding a chapel, erecting a shrine and instituting a pilgrimage for the benefit of tradesmen or of any local church. Fortunately, the Sacred Well is enclosed in a portion of Roath Park, and it has narrowly escaped being known as the Bamboo Garden. Mr Hobson Matthews, the Corporation Archivist, who has located Ffynon Llandenis - " the Well of the Sacred Enclosure of Saint Denis" has rescued the site from the misfortune of being known by a very prosaic name. He has preserved an historic landmark, a rare antiquity, and paid the Antiquary's tribute to superstition by creating a new interest in a lost fable. Ffynon Llandenis is another landmark of Wales safely secured against neglect and loss, and as such the Antiquaries of Wales will tender Mr Hobson Matthews thanks and possibly show some gratitude to the Metropolis of Wales for retaining the once cherished name instead of christening the spot a "Bamboo Garden!"

Sources:

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John Hobson Matthews: Cardiff Records, Volume V

The Official Guide to Roath Park 1905

"Man About Town" South Wales Echo 29 January 1898

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The Megalithic Portal and Megalithic Map UK

Cardiff County Council: Reports of Council Committees and Minutes 1897-1898

The Wild Hunt: Pilgrimages: Britain's Holy Wells and Baths

With thanks to Dr Mary Gillham for allowing the use of her 1973 photograph, "Landscape and Water".

The Mr. Pettigrew mentioned in the letter was William Wallace Pettigrew (1867–1947) one of the most important figures in the creation of Cardiff's public parks, and arguably the single most influential horticultural professional in the city's history. A member of the prestigious Pettigrew family which cared for Cardiff's parks over many years, in 1898 he occupied the position of Parks Superintendent and was in charge of the early development of Roath Park. He wrote the early guide to Roath Park published in 1905. He also wrote "The Public Parks and recreation Grounds of Cardiff" before leaving Cardiff in 1915 to take on the role of Chief Parks Officer for Manchester Corporation.



Society news

As you can imagine, Elizabeth Morgan will have been working hard over the last few months to finalise the new season's talks. The new programme and Membership forms will be dropping through your letterboxes over the next few weeks, and if last season's cornucopia of treats was anything to go by, I'm sure that we'll have some great talks to look forward to.

The new season begins on Wednesday 16th September when we'll have a talk following the Annual General Meeting, details of which will be in your programme, but do mark the date for your diary.

GET IN TOUCH

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