



E-NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 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 to October's edition of the newsletter. We started off our new season with a great talk on Ruperra Castle, followed by a fundraiser for the church organ restoration fund, when we were entertained by Graham Lovelock-Edwards who talked about Cads, Scoundrels and Vagabonds. They bode well for what's to come, I'm sure,

At the AGM we had a presentation for Robert Heynes, our outgoing auditor, who has retired after "several decades" of valuable service. We thank Robert for his past work, and we are very grateful that our retiring Treasurer, Martyn Swain, has volunteered to step into Robert's shoes.



I thought I'd feature a photograph of The Maltings as one of the largest listed buildings in the old parish of Roath, (is it the largest?) and had intended to provide a brief summary of its history and significance. However, the more that I looked into it, the more I realised that a few words would not do it justice – so a longer account is provided on the next page.

Jon Roberts
Newsletter Editor

The Maltings, East Moors

by Jon Roberts

The building was the brainchild of Mr John Henry Mullins, the Cardiff manager of Spillers and Co, who, following the abolition of the Malt Tax in 1880, realised that if Cardiff brewers could come together, they could profit from a joint enterprise, importing and malting barley for their breweries in Cardiff, with the remainder to be sold at profit elsewhere. At the time there were some 19 breweries listed in Butchers Trade Directory of Cardiff, 1880, and so in 1885 leading brewers such as JW Dowson of the Phoenix Brewery, 20 Working Street, Dominick Watson of the Old Brewery St Mary Street (formerly of Quay Street) and the man who would come to prominence in the annals of Cardiff beer, SA Brain, met the project with enthusiasm.

Thus, the Cardiff Malting Company Limited was born, but it got off to a rocky start – or perhaps a rocky start would have been advantageous, as the site for their intended malting house was on Bute land by the Glamorgan Canal, south of the town centre. However, the foundations were too soft and unable to support the weight of the intended building. They therefore acquired land at East Moors, and then progress was swift.

The massive six-storey building was opened in 1887, designed by architect F Baldwin of 17 Church Street. But calamity was soon to strike; on 1 November 1887, about a month after opening, cracks appeared in the external walls of the maltings, and the steel girders holding up the concrete floors gave way, causing tons of concrete and steelwork to come crashing down. A large concrete block crushed the skull of 50 year-old mason, Joseph Jellings, of Rose Street, Roath killing him instantly.

The inquest jury concluded that the building's walls, the girders holding up the concrete floors and the quality of the concrete used were insufficient for the building, and were the cause of Mr Jellings's death. There was no mention of any criminal or civil liability for negligence, or any compensation for the family of poor Mr Jellings.

The maltings had to be reconstructed, presumably to a much better specification, at a cost of £4000. Once up and running again, the company appointed a maltster from Burton-on-Trent to oversee the operation of the concern, and the maltings grew to be a great commercial success. It produced malt of a very high quality and in prodigious quantities, exporting to England, including Burton-on-Trent, and Ireland. So great was demand for their malt, that they acquired a defunct flour mill adjacent the railway station in Chepstow and converted that to a maltings as well. The company continued to do well, and expanded the East Moors building in 1901, by which time it had a floorspace of 130,000 sq. feet.

I confess that despite having worked in a brewery, I had only the vaguest idea of what malting actually involved. In brief, barley grains, stored in the uppermost loft of the maltings, are steeped in water to provoke the activation of growth hormones and the production of enzymes in the husk of the grain. The wet grain is transferred to the malting floor, where it is piled up, then gradually raked out into a bed, a few inches deep, and turned as necessary. Here it begins to germinate. The next stage is to carefully dry it in the kiln, using warm air over a few days to stop germination and it is again spread out over a permeable floor. The enzymes in the malt are reactivated in the beer making process, providing both colour and taste to the beer. When I arrived in Cardiff in the late 70s, the aroma of malt emanating from the Brains Brewery and the Welsh Brewers site was all-pervasive around the southern part of the city centre.

The need to spread out the malting grains was what necessitated the large floorspace. Great skill was required to judge the variables involved in creating the perfect malt, and the spreading and turning of the malt was both laborious and labour intensive. For these reasons, the industry was ripe for mechanisation, and new kilns, spreaders and turners came to be developed, leading to larger and larger maltings around the country.

Although The Maltings continued in production for many years to come, profits consistently fell and in 1974 the company pulled the plug, when malt production ceased. The building was listed by the Secretary of State for Wales in 1974 as probably the best large scale example of a maltings in Wales, retaining its industrial character in its conversion. The building was put to use as workshops, stores and offices and continues in these roles today. In 2013, the building received a £3 million investment, bringing the office accommodation up to a high standard, winning an award from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.



The northernmost part of the former East Moors (Dowlais) steelworks used to lie immediately opposite The Maltings on the west side of Lewis Road. Not a vestige of that industrial behemoth survives, so we are fortunate that this 138 year-old building still stands as a reminder of the city's industrial past.

Newport Road – characters and personalities: Oswald Stoll

By Gareth Brown

Last month we had an in-depth look at two families who lived in Newport Road at the turn of the 19th century. This month we continue with an account of perhaps the most famous of those Newport Road residents, Sir Oswald Stoll.

I was drawn to investigate Oswald further because of his unusual name, his birthplace of Australia and that he was a Music Hall director, aged 35, living in 1901 at 39 Newport Road, a road dominated by serious professional people. With him were his wife Harriet, 26, born in Cardiff, their daughter May, age 6, and 3 servants.

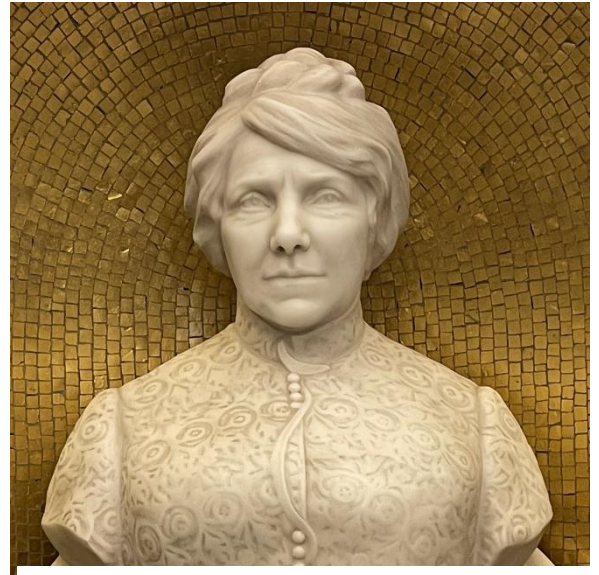
From Wikipedia and The Stoll Foundation I found out that Oswald was born on 20 January 1866 in Melbourne and his father, Oswald James Alexander Gray, was from Enniskillen. His mother's maiden name was Adelaide Marguerite McConnell, who was from Dublin. His parents married on 1 April in Dublin South and Oswald JA Gray was born on 31 Dec 1839 and that his father's name was Roderick Gray, 1811 -1879. Other people on the Ancestry site have said that his mother's name was Susannah Wright 1815-1861.

Oswald James Alexander and Adelaide emigrated to Australia about 1863. Their son Oswald had an older brother Roderick and a younger sister Blanche according to stoll.org.uk which also says that the family moved to Liverpool about 1867 and there were rumours of a shipwreck on the way. The Wikipedia entry says that Oswald Stoll's father died in Australia and that the mother brought the children to Britain. This is not supported by the death register entry. The fuller information given by the Stoll Foundation article makes me tend to believe its version of Oswald's relocation from Australia to England. The 1871 census in Lancashire shows Adelaide Gray 24 as Head of household at 13 Dunkeld Street. She is a widow and her occupation is named as "theatrical", born in Dublin. She has sons Roderick, 7, and Oswald, 5, both born in Australia and a daughter Blanche, 3, born in Liverpool. With them was her sister, Annie McConnell, 18, unmarried and also "theatrical". An Oswald Gray, age 28, died in West Derby, east of Liverpool in 1870. The Belfast Newsletter reported his death occurring on Boxing Day 1870 as does Ancestry and his father's name Roderick. A private family tree on Ancestry confirms that this death was of Oswald James Alexander Gray, first husband of Adelaide.

Adelaide Gray married again, to John George Stoll, a Danish theatre proprietor, in 1879 in West Derby. Stoll died just over a year later aged 43 or 48 in West Derby, and was buried on 20 April 1880 in St James Cemetery, Liverpool. The burial record states that he lived in Lavan Street, was 48 years old and died on 16 April 1880. There was a John G Stoll, 20, living at The Brook, West Derby with his parents and his siblings in 1851. His father was

also John G Stoll and was described as an agent. Both were born in London as was his elder sister. In 1861 his father, 50, is described as a Concert Hall Proprietor, but his son, 31, disappointingly, is a collector of rents etc! I cannot trace either in the 1871 census in Britain so I cannot confirm from occupation if the son is the 2nd husband of Adelaide. Maybe he was Danish and living in Denmark then or was there at the time of the 1871 census? Maybe this is a complete red herring and not Adelaide's future husband at all! This John George Stoll was buried in a grave where there was a total of 8 Stolls if I have read the information correctly or maybe it was 8 in the cemetery.

Whatever, Adelaide whose occupation was theatrical in 1871 and who married a Theatre Proprietor would seem to be deeply involved in the theatre business. The 1881 census shows Adelaide Stoll, 33, as Head of household, a widow at 24 Lavan Street in Everton, Liverpool. Her occupation reads as publican and she was born in Ireland. With her were her son Roderick Gray, 17, a clerk in the corn trade, Oswald Gray, 15, a clerk in general merchandise, both born in Australia and Blanche Gray 13, a scholar born in Liverpool.



Bust of Adelaide Stoll on display in the London Coliseum

Photo credit: LondonRemembers.com

I note that Adelaide's children did not take the surname Stoll immediately John George became their stepfather as they were still Gray in the 1881 census. According to the Stoll Foundation biography of Oswald Stoll, the family moved to Cardiff not long after John George Stoll died but does not state precisely when. I am not sure how accurate is this information as the same article says that Harriet Lewis, Oswald's first wife was from Nottingham and that Millicent Shaw was Cardiff born both contradicting and reversing the birthplaces as seen by me on images of the birth registers.

In 1891 Oswald Stoll was a boarder, age 25, a Music Hall proprietor and an employer at 7 Guildford Crescent, where the head of household was Patrick Roddy, 62, an auctioneer born in Ireland, along with his wife Maria, 53, a wardrobe dealer from Bodmin, his daughter Jenny, 23, who was an assistant born in Cardiff and his nephew, Peter Smith, 2, born in Cardiff. There were 3 other boarders, one born in Birmingham, another in India and Blanche Stoll, 22, born in Liverpool - obviously Oswald's sister who was working as his assistant. They had one domestic servant.

Oswald married Harriet Lewis in Cardiff in 1892. The Stoll Foundation states that Harriet and Oswald had 4 children - Vera Adelaide, May, Oswald Patrick and Blanche Harriet but

only May reached adulthood, the others dying in infancy, the oldest when they were living at 3 Pembroke Terrace. This is confirmed by baptism and death registration records which shows the deaths of three of their children in 1894, 1898 and 1899, during which time the family moved from 3 Pembroke Terrace to 29 Park Place. In the 1901 Census Oswald Stoll, 35, of 39 Newport Road is a Music Hall Director and a worker born in Australia. His wife Harriet 26 was born in Cardiff as was their 6 year-old daughter May as noted previously

Oswald's wife Harriet died in 1902, age 27, when she was still living at 39 Newport Road. She was buried on 15 February 1902 by R Shelley Plant, the curate of St. John's, who had baptised daughter May 6 years earlier.

On 25 March 1903, Oswald Gray Stoll married again in the Strand, London. His spouse was Millicent Shaw, born in 1878. A John Oswald Stoll's birth was registered in 1904 in Cardiff. He was buried on 24 March 1904 by the curate of St. John the Baptist. He was just 30 days old, and lived at 39 Newport Road. Oswald Leslie Stoll was born on 21 March 1905 in Cardiff. He was baptised on 18 April 1905 at St John's Church by the curate, his father is entered on the parish records as a Theatrical Manager, address 39 Newport Road. He died at the age 78 in Poole, Dorset if I have the correct information. His brother, Lincoln Erlanger Stoll was born in 1908, in Wandsworth, dying in Thanet, age 40 in 1948.

In the 1911 census the Stolls were living at 50 Putney Hill, Chartfield in Wandsworth. Oswald was 45 and chairman of Entertainment Cos Ltd, born in Melbourne, Victoria, whilst Millicent was 32, born in Kimberley to the northwest of Nottingham, and she had 4 children born alive with 2 still living. Possibly the second child of Millicent who died as a baby was John George R. J. Stoll, born and died in 1907. The remaining children who were in the household were May Stoll, 16, born in Cardiff, Leslie Stoll, 6, born in Cardiff (to Millicent) and Lincoln Erlanger Stoll, 3, born in Putney. There were also 4 servants. Oswald somehow appeared on the 1911

Gloucestershire census as a visitor staying at the Royal Hotel, College Green, Bristol.



Sir Oswald as caricatured by "Owl" in Vanity Fair 1913, entitled "The Coliseum"

© National Portrait Gallery, London

Another son, Dennis Gray Stoll was born 25 May 1912 in Wandsworth. Carlton House is the name given to 33 Putney Hill in the article by the Stoll Foundation, at least in 1941. Dennis Stoll died in December 1987.

In the 1921 census, Oswald, "Millie" and the 3 children, Leslie, Lincoln and Dennis, were still at Carlton House, 33 Putney Hill and Oswald was Chairman and Director of Entertainment companies and theatres.

In the 1939 Register Sir Oswald Stoll chairman and Managing director of Entertainment Company was still living at 33 Putney Hill with Lady Millicent Stoll, along with a housekeeper and a housemaid. Their son Oswald Leslie Stoll was a theatre company director and a worker, who was divorced, and was living at Flat 70, Exeter House, Putney Heath.

Oswald Stoll had a daughter May with his first wife Harriet and 3 sons with his second wife Millicent that survived childhood but he had lost 2 daughters and a son as infants or young children with Harriet and probably 2 sons with Millicent as far as I am aware. Infant mortality was high in those times even in relatively well-off families. Infective diseases were rife as was poor nutrition. As well as the loss of his children mentioned, between 1890 and 1899 Oswald lost his brother and sister. If this is the case then Roderick Gray Stoll who married Mary Loftus according to some on Ancestry in 1887 in Liverpool is likely to be the Robert Gray, 26, of 43 Bedford Street, Liverpool who was interred at Necropolis, Low Hill Cemetery on 14 June 1890. There was another Roderick Gray Stoll born in Liverpool born in 1889. When he was 21, he married Rebecca Eveline Violet Ives, 22, at St. Mark's Church, North Audley Street, London. His occupation was Theatrical Manager as was that of his deceased father who shared the same name. So it seems Oswald's brother and nephew were theatrical managers and this occupation and Christian names ran in the family.

Blanche Catherine Gray, daughter of Oswald and Adelaide Gray of 39 Queens Road was baptised in the District Chapelry of Emmanuel, Everton on 12 January 1868, Oswald Gray was an Architect. Blanche's birth was registered in West Derby. Blanche Catherine G Stoll married Selig Thomas Cartney Brukewich, 23, a bachelor and ship chandler of 48 Richmond Road in 1895 in Cardiff and her marriage was solemnized at the Parish church of St John the Baptist, Cardiff on 14 February 1895. She was age 25, a spinster of 36 Newport Road. This was the address of her mother Adelaide, a 48 year-old widow, living alone on her own means in the 1901 census. Selig's father, also Selig Brukewich, was a ships chandler. Blanche's father was James Oswald Gray, an architect. The witnesses were Oswald Gray Stoll and Freddie Brukewich. Sadly, Blanche Catherine Brukewich died the following year in

1896, when she was 26. Her burial was in the parish of St John on 27 July 1896. Her home was 1 Howard Gardens. In the marriage, death and burial records she is 2 years younger than the birth record would indicate Selig Thomas Cartney Brukewich married again in September 1897 in St Martins in the Fields and died in Cuckfield Sussex in 1904. His family history is intriguing but is not for this story about Oswald Stoll and his family. I may tell it at another time when I have researched further. I attempted to obtain some digitised images of death certificates for the infants, young children and young adults in Oswald Stoll's family from the General Register Office at www.gro.gov.uk but was unsuccessful. I was curious to know if the children had died of infective diseases and if the adults had succumbed to tuberculosis.

What happened to May, Oswalds only child that survived infancy from his marriage to Harriet Lewis? May Gray Stoll, 21, a spinster of Carlton House, Putney Hill married Axel Hethey, 25, a bachelor and a something Manager living at 19 Chartfield Avenue, Putney at St. John the Evangelist, Putney on 2nd August 1915 His father Gustav was a Managing Director as was Oswald Gray Stoll. Axel was born in Germany on 28 January 1889, and at age 11 was living in Swansea with father Gustave, mother Emilie and 2 siblings. Gustave was the Managing Director of British Mannesmann Tube Co. Ltd. and was naturalised when Axel was 15. The family were living at 33 Chepstow Villas Kensington. Axel was a Metallurgy student at the Royal School of Mines, graduating with a BSc in 1911. In the 1911 census he was 21, when the family were living at 19 Chartfield Avenue, Putney.

May and Axel had a son, John Hugh Hethey, baptised on 28 June in Bury St Austins, Sussex. The Parish record book was not filled in completely so the year and name of the church have been omitted. Axel Hethey's occupation was now an Engineer. The three of them arrived at Southampton on 13 November 1920 from Rio de Janeiro. Their address was St Austens, Rudgewick, near Horsham, Sussex and May and John Hugh arrived in Liverpool on 23 October 1921 from Rio. The ship on both journeys seems to have started from Buenos Aires. Axel must have been working in various places in the world as there are various entries of him arriving home from South America, travelling from Canada to USA, being in Australia and New Zealand. The couple divorced in 1923. Axel Hethey married Margery Belsey in Westminster in 1949, possibly dying in Western Australia in 1973.

May Gray Hethey of Den Cottage, Saltford married Leonard Augustine Michils in Bathavon, Somerset in 1939. May Michils died age 90 in 1984 in Bath. Sadly, May's son Lt. John Hugh Hethey was killed in Italy in August 1944 during the Second World War. He served with the Royal Armoured Corps and the 5th Royal Enniskilling Dragoon Guards.

That is enough family history. What of Oswald Stoll's career?

The Arthur Lloyd website www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/OswaldStoll.htm gives a good account of Oswald Stoll's life but it perpetuates the story of him arriving in the UK after the death of his father, when he actually died after the family returned to the UK. Once in England, his mother Adelaide ran the Parthenon Music Hall in Liverpool. The intothelimeight.org site says that she married John Stoll who was the owner of the Parthenon Rooms and took over the venue shortly after John's death in 1880 and The Parthenon Music Hall was born. Oswald, when only 14, looked after the actors backstage and eventually put together the programme and booked the acts. He became an agent and soon owned and managed many Music Halls and Theatres throughout England and Wales.

Oswald and his mother bought the lease of Levino's Museum of Varieties in Cardiff for 999 years at £175 per year, along with adjoining properties and reopened the building in September 1889 as a music hall with a music and dancing licence. It was called The Empire Palace of Varieties. Wikipedia has an interesting item on the Empire Theatre which includes the origin of Levino's Museum of Varieties and mentions Levino's dispute with the owner of the Philharmonic music hall. The Museum of Varieties/ Empire was in Queen Street. There was an advert in the Western Mail on 2 October 1889 for the appearance of Miss Marie Loftus - "the Queen of serio-comedy" and a powerful Variety Company at Mrs. Stoll and Son's Empire Palace of Varieties. I wonder if this was Mary Loftus who is one of two postulated spouses for the marriage of Roderick Gray Stoll in January 1887. If so, she would have been Adelaide's daughter-in-law and Oswald's sister-in-law. I have been unable to see a marriage certificate online.

By 1892, the Philharmonic in Cardiff, the Newport Empire and the Swansea Empire were added to the Stoll's portfolio and they sold the Parthenon in Liverpool. By 1895 the Empire in Cardiff was having to turn away people from its music and variety shows, the demand exceeding the theatre's capacity. The Stolls decided to enlarge the property and set up a new company called the Cardiff, Newport and Swansea Empire Palaces Ltd with H.E. Moss of the Moss and Thornton Circuit.

Moss bought the lease of the Cardiff Empire and some of the adjoining properties from the Stolls along with the leases of the Newport and Swansea Empires for a total of £48,000. He made them over to the new company and became the Chairman, with Oswald Stoll the Managing Director.

The Cardiff Empire was rebuilt red brick and Bath stone with an expanded capacity at a cost of about £25,000. Designed by Frank Matcham it featured a central tower and a sliding roof to improve ventilation. Its capacity was around 2300 and could host two performances a night.

A minor fire broke out in one of its rooms in the first month and the building had to be evacuated. On 31 October 1899 another fire led to the building being largely destroyed and the new building again designed by Frank Matcham was a steel and concrete entity with the stage entirely separate from the auditorium. Asbestos was also placed around the stage to avoid fires spreading to the rest of the building. It was said to be more elaborate than the one it replaced and cost around £15,000. The opening night on 30 September 1900 was attended by Cardiff's Mayor, SA Brain. The theatre was rebuilt again in 1915 and in 1932 it was converted into the Gaumont cinema by the Gaumont British Theatres Corporation. It closed in 1961 and was demolished the following year.



The Moss-Thornton Stoll company was very successful and Stoll became a wealthy man. By 1905 the Moss Thornton and Stoll Theatres circuit had 37 variety theatres in the UK including the London Hippodrome, the Glasgow Coliseum, the Empire Dublin and the Empire Belfast. In 1904 Oswald had his greatest achievement when the London Coliseum, again designed by Frank Matcham, was opened on Christmas Eve. It surpassed in size the biggest theatre in London at the time, the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. He worked with the theatre architect, Frank Matcham on several theatres, including the Nottingham Palace, 1898, the Hackney Empire 1901, the London Coliseum as mentioned 1904, the Bristol Hippodrome 1912 and the Chiswick Empire.

In 1912 Oswald Stoll decided to go it alone as Stoll Theatres Ltd in 1910. This company eventually owned the London Coliseum, the Manchester Hippodrome, the Bristol Hippodrome, the Hackney Empire, the



The iconic London Coliseum

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Shepherds Bush Empire, and many others. The first Royal Command performance at the London Palace Theatre on 1 July 1912 was organised by Oswald Stoll. Profits from the show were given to the Variety Artistes Benevolent Fund, now the Entertainment Artistes Benevolent Fund. Over 80 more of the shows (now known as the Royal Variety Performances) have been produced over the years, always attended by a member of the Royal Family and always in aid of the benevolent fund.

Sir Oswald Stoll was knighted in 1919 and a celebratory dinner was organised for him at the Savoy by Viscount Burnham. It featured a speech from Lord Chamberlain and was attended by the giants of the arts, industry, media and politics. Viscount Burnham was fulsome in his praise and said that he had heard that Oswald was acting manager for his father (step-father, J.G.Stoll) when he was 10 and had worked tirelessly through his life and achieved success through his own efforts. He said that Sir Oswald had improved the old music halls which were full of fun and frolic and had with others given them a “beauty of many colours and an interest of many kinds” including ballet ie he had raised the tone and standard of entertainment from the bawdy and vulgar shows of the old days. He had provided sumptuous entertainment and magnificent spectacle for all classes in all parts of the country. He said that women now felt able to attend music halls and theatres and he also noted the work and help Adelaide, his mother had given him through his career. The Lord Chamberlain Viscount Sandhurst in his speech praised Sir Oswald for providing a light kind of entertainment for those that had recently come out of the trenches and wanted something to take them out of the scenes from which they had just come, not the more solid kind of entertainment i.e. not serious high-brow material.

Sir Oswald’s reply mentioned the War Seal foundation set up in 1916 to provide housing for disabled soldiers from WWI. He said it provided the kind of housing a disabled man needed after leaving hospital so that future needs are anticipated and the man can “stay in contentment in a real home, not in neglect in a slum or misery in an institution.” He provided the land for this foundation in 1916. He had previously noted the suffering of men returning from the Crimean and Boer Wars. Today the foundation is known as the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation.

An old-soldiers home named Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions based in Fulham Broadway continues to house disabled ex-servicemen and women. It provides supported housing for veterans suffering from mental ill health and ex-service personnel who have found themselves homeless.

In 2023 the foundation announced it would sell most of the site to Chelsea Football Club retaining 20 of the 157 flats. The Stoll Foundation has organised workshops designed to help veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress through performing Shakespeare. This would have resonated with Oswald as he also stressed the importance of the stage and screen or motion pictures as the schools, not of the intellect, but of the practical. as distinct from the purely religious emotion showing the consequences of

right and wrong. He said that the Shakespeare of the stage, the ballad mongers of the music hall, the Griffiths and Chaplins of the screen are the educators of our emotions. It is sad that the problems he tried to alleviate after the First World War still exist now with some of our veterans. Sir Oswald was interested in national finance and wrote six books and a number of articles on the subject of which he mentioned in his speech at the ceremony.

He remerged his company Stoll Theatres with that of Moss Empires to form Stoll Moss Theatres under the directorship of Prince Littler. Lew Grade acquired the company in 1964, who went on to run most of London's West End theatres and others across the country for many years. The company was then sold to Australian Robert Holmes à Court in 1982 and run by his wife until it was bought by Andrew Lloyd Webber and run under the name Really Useful Theatres (now LW Theatres). The Really Useful Group inherited just 12 West End theatres and some have been sold off, so LW has just 6 West End Theatres as of 2025, including the London Hippodrome and the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

Sir Oswald Stoll was also involved in film production. In 1918 he bought a small studio in Surbiton and in 1920 a former aeroplane factory in Cricklewood which he converted into a production facility called the Stoll Studios. His film production company Stoll Pictures was a leading British studio of the silent era and was in production until 1938. It produced a series of expensive films during the early 20s such as *The Four Feathers* and *The Prodigal Son* which cost £37,000 and was at the time the most expensive British production ever.



The Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation Headquarters in Fulham

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He was slow to adopt the talkie technology, and Cricklewood was sold to an aviation company in 1938. He was also a composer and arranger and often helped to produce the music in his shows.

He was very close to his mother Adelaide who gave him his start in the theatre business and raised him and his siblings alone for most of their childhood. As mentioned previously, Oswald became Adelaide's only remaining child as Roderick and Blanche died in young adulthood and she was also twice widowed. She lived close by to Oswald in Newport Road, Cardiff in 1901 and on the same road, Putney Hill when they moved to London. Her house at no.13 was Villa Marquise. Oswald continued to honour the roots of his business by installing his mother in each new box office, so she could take the first ticket sale. Adelaide died in 1924 and in 1925 Oswald had a bust of Adelaide erected in the box office of the London Coliseum in recognition of her service. It was named 'The Lady of the Coliseum'. "It is to my mother that I owe everything" was a later written tribute. After probate in London in 1924 her estate of £52,005, 8s, 3d was left to Oswald.

Sir Oswald was extremely prim and proper. He was teetotal, well spoken, and almost always dressed in top hat and tails. He was very opposed to profanity and lewd content in his music halls and theatres and wanted to engender a family-friendly atmosphere. Because of this he often clashed with actors and writers, most notably with Marie Lloyd the "Queen of Comedy". He considered her act to be vulgar resulting in her being snubbed from the Royal Variety Performance line up. Apparently, he once dragged a fire hose onto one of his stages to spray a rowdy audience who refused to settle down!

Sir Oswald died at home, Carlton House, 33 Putney Hill on 9 January 1942 at the age of 75, after a short illness. It was said that he never recovered from his house being destroyed by a German bomb in November 1941, while he and Lady Millicent were sat at the dinner table and of their maid being killed. He was buried at Putney Vale Cemetery close to his mother, at an hour that would not clash with his theatres' shows, according to his wishes. Millicent took over as President of the Stoll Foundation and continued in this role until she died in 1962 at the age of 84 in Lambeth. The company name Stoll Moss still exists but is never used and Oswald Stoll is a forgotten name from a lost era.

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The Stoll Foundation www.stoll.org.uk/heritage/sir-oswald-stoll/

Arthur Lloyd www.arthurlloyd.co.uk intothehighlight.org engole.inf

Plus others noted in the text above.

Born into slavery! From Rae Town, Kingston, Jamaica to Roath

By Jon Roberts

In September's newsletter, Gareth Brown told us about Cornelius Lundie, the General Manager of the Rhymney Railway, who lived at 32 Newport Road. His son, George Archibald Lundie, lived at 14 The Parade, then 11 Richmond Road and then 139 Newport Road, before inheriting his father's house at No 32 on his father's death in 1906. Somewhat bizarrely, father and son shared the same mother-in-law – George married Mary Ann Brandon junior in 1873, and his father married Mary Ann's older sister 12 years later, in 1885.

Mum-in-law, Mary Ann Winter Brandon, then about 70 years old, moved from London to Cardiff, presumably to be with her daughters and Mary Ann's grandchildren. She also had family living in London, including a son and two other daughters. In 1891, she was living at 11 Richmond Road, (pictured right) with her daughter and her husband George, their 5 boys, one of her nieces and the three family servants, a total household of 11 people.



At least by 1895 she had moved into her own house, a newly-built three-storey terraced property at 37 Claude Road. The house was under construction at the time of the 1921 census, so she may have been the first occupier. Perhaps she was awaiting its completion and that was the reason why she was living with her daughter's family in 1891. The house was within easy walking distance of both daughters' houses in Richmond Road and Newport Road. She remained in the Claude Road house until her death in 1898. A picture of cosy familial relations.

However, there is so much more to this remarkable woman, and her mother before her. Mary Ann was born into slavery in Jamaica on 18 April 1820. To unpack this, we need to look in more detail at the story of Mary Ann's mother, Susannah Andrews. In this, I have been helped



37 Claude Road today – now in use as 3 flats

immeasurably by a remarkable podcast about Susannah and her descendants, and from the help given me by her great-great-great-grandson, Garry Chapman.

In 1817, when Jamaican slave owners were first required to register their slaves, Susannah Andrews was recorded as being a slave belonging to Mrs Eliza Pearce, (wife of Lieutenant James Pearce of the Royal Navy), in Port Royal, Kingston. Susannah was born in approximately 1786 and was one of about two dozen household slaves owned by Mrs Pearce. On the 1817 slave register it was stated that Susannah had three children, two to a white man, John Hewitt, and another with a different surname, presumably to a man called Jago. Nothing is known about John Hewitt, but we know he was white, because the slave register records the children as “mulatto” and Susannah as “negro” and “creole”. In the Jamaican slave registers, ‘negro’ referred to a person as having no European ancestry, ‘creole’ referred to having been born in Jamaica, and ‘mulatto’ as having mixed African and European parentage. At that time it was common for slaves to be rented out to other people, so perhaps John Hewitt was her master at the time (or prior to 1817).

Two of Susannah’s descendants were kind enough to share the relevant results of their DNA tests, so we know that Susannah’s forebears were trafficked from West Africa – modern day, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Ghana and the Yorubaland area of Nigeria. The last slave to be taken to Jamaica was in 1808, just 12 years before Susannah’s manumission, so we have no idea when she arrived in Jamaica, or how many generations before her were in slavery.



The exact nature of Susannah’s relationship with John Hewitt is not known, but as a slave, she would have no choice but to acquiesce in any sexual relationship. In 1820, she was living in the household of Moses Brandon, again, perhaps rented out to him by Mrs Pearce. In that year she gave birth to Mary Ann - a child born to a female slave became the property of the slave owner, so Mary Ann was born into slavery. However, in Mary Ann’s baptism record of 27 July 1820, it states ‘free bro’, meaning free brown (of mixed African-European parentage) – so her exact status is unclear. What we do know is that on 21 December 1821, Mary Ann’s mother Susannah and her two older children were

manumitted, that is freed from slavery, paid for by John Hewitt, at a cost of £5 (worth about £500 in today's money).

Thereafter Susannah was a “housekeeper”, described as such in Moses Brandon's will of 1835, a term often used to describe concubines or mistresses. She, in turn, had slaves working for her – not an uncommon occurrence – that was the system, until the abolition of slavery and emancipation in 1838. Moses Brandon was unmarried and a merchant, from a Sephardic Jewish family of Portuguese origins, whose ancestors were originally called Brandao. Several generations had lived in Jamaica, with a few generations living in London before that. Moses and Susannah went on to have another 4 children together, living at Marble Hall, a late 18th century villa. Moses died in 1835 leaving Susannah ten properties from which she collected rents. The collapse of the sugar market led to a sharp decline in the Jamaican economy, and a cholera epidemic had also taken its toll on the population. Susannah, George, Susannah's oldest son, by then an established merchant, along with his wife and son, emigrated to Australia in 1853 where a gold rush had begun.



George Bryant Brandon
1824-1896

There is a lot of fascinating information available about Susannah, George and his descendants, but that somewhat diverts us from Mary Ann and Roath. However, I shall just give you a brief flavour – they settled in Melbourne, with George initially working as a merchant, but not without some financial troubles. However, he reinvented himself up as a schoolmaster, with some eventual success. His oldest daughter, Emma, known as “Amy”, followed him into teaching, taking over when he died. One of Amy's brothers, John Brandon, became a manager in a mining company that grew to become BHP, originally the Broken Hill Proprietary Company, and now the largest mining company in the world, and Australia's second biggest company.

Amy's youngest son, Vic “Flippa” Thorp, achieved fame as an Aussie Rules football player, twice named Champion of the Colony, and was honoured as recently as 2015 as one of only ten “Immortals of Richmond Football Club”. Due to his skin colour he was sometimes thought to be of indigenous Australian descent, perhaps understandably confusing his Afro-Caribbean heritage with a more local one.



Victor Charles Thorp
1890-1941

Susannah, who changed her name to Susan Brandon on arrival in the colony) had a less happy time in Australia – in 1861, she was charged with lunacy and was incarcerated in The Immigrants' Home. This might be interpreted as being admitted to an institution similar to a Victorian-era workhouse suffering symptoms of dementia. She was then



The Yarra Bend Asylum, Melbourne, 1870-1875

Credit: American & Australasian Photographic Company, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

transferred to the Benevolent Asylum in Melbourne, where one description of her said: "Old lady with blackest skin and whitest teeth once the 'connubial partner of one who had wealth at his command' and it made reference to her former home of Marble Hall. She was moved to the Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum (pictured right) and in 1875, she had a stroke and died.

Returning to Mary Ann, the future Roath resident; she married another Jewish merchant, David Brandon, the son of Moses Brandon's brother Manassah, so Mary Ann's first cousin. At one time they lived in Orange Street in Kingston, where, about 100 years later, it was to be the heart of the Jamaican reggae scene, and a haunt of Bob Marley. They later lived at Marble Hall, Rae Town, near Kingston Harbour, the former home of Moses and Susannah. David Brandon died in 1862, leaving property to Mary Ann. By this time, she was 42 years old and had given birth to 10 children, eight of whom survived to adulthood. In 1866 Mary Ann moved to London, and lived at 28 Russell Road, Kensington, where she was an annuitant, living off rents from her Jamaican properties. With her were three daughters, a son-in-law, four granddaughters and 3 servants.

I had wondered why Mary Ann emigrated to Britain, rather than to Australia where her mother and older brother lived. It seems possible that the answer was that her oldest son, Mortimer Moses Brandon, who was born in 1837, was sent to school in England and later became an East India merchant in London. In 1871, he was living in Ealing, with his wife and three year old daughter, along with two live-in servants. He continued living in



The townhouse at 28 Russell Road, Kensington (behind the tree!) now separated into flats

England, although as two of his later children were born in Jamaica, it's clear that he travelled back and forth. In 1901 he was recorded as being retired, living in Chiswick Lane and he died in 1908. A younger son, David, was just finishing his education here as well. He attended Murchison Castle School in Edinburgh (alma mater to innumerable cricketers and rugby players, as well as Baron Davies, brother of Gwendoline Davies and Margaret Davies) and then went up to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, he was called to the Bar around the time that Mary Ann came to Britain. Thereafter he practiced in British Guiana, before returning to Jamaica where he became a Justice of the Peace and died there in 1908.

Mary Ann lived at 28 Russell Road for over a decade. My guess is that it is in London where her daughter Mary Ann junior met George Archibald Lundie. In 1871 he was a 28 year-old Civil Engineer, living in what appears to be an upmarket boarding house in Norfolk Street, St Clement Danes. As eligible, young, middle-class people, perhaps they met at a dance or some other fashionable social event. On 10 June 1873 they married in Kensington, and in 1877, their twin boys Lionel Brandon Lundie and George Lundie were born in Cardiff, followed by another 3 boys, Cornelius in 1879, Kenneth in 1882 and Robert in 1887.

So it's not surprising that Mary Ann senior wanted to move down to Cardiff where there was such a large brood, and to be near Rosabel, who married George's father Cornelius

Lundie in 1885. Very sadly, Rosabel developed an incurable kidney disease which marred the last six months of her life, causing her unbearable pain, leading to depression. On a trip to London in May 1896, when Cornelius was attending a Parliamentary Committee and the couple were to seek specialist medical advice, Rosabel, without telling anyone, booked into a boarding house and took her own life by consuming 3 or 4 bottles of laudanum (tincture of opium), which was available as an over-the-counter medicine without a prescription until the early 20th century.

Mary Ann senior died at her home in Claude Road on 7 May 1898. She is buried in Kensal Green Cemetery in London, along with Rosabel. She left an estate amounting to £2156 (worth about £238,000 in today's money), to be shared between Mary Ann's five children and two grandchildren (although she had many more than two!). Her sons David and Mortimer fell out over the execution of the will, with one claiming that the other owed him money due from their father's will! In 1900 the Jamaica Daily Gleaner reported on a court proceeding in Kingston to seek permission to bring the case to trial, which was granted, but there was no report of a subsequent trial. Perhaps they made up?

I am grateful to Garry Chapman in Australia and Paul Brandon in Canada for their assistance and encouragement in producing this article. For more information about Susannah, George and their descendants, do have a listen to this 40 minute [Caribbean Echoes podcast](#), which was part of a larger series dealing with slavery and Australia, which was awarded the Digital History Prize in the 2026 New South Wales History Awards.

Society news

Reminder from the RLHS Membership Secretary

Hello everyone!

May I start by thanking all of you who have renewed your RLHS subscriptions and sent me your forms, and welcome to all of our new members!

There's still time to get your money to us, if you would like to continue receiving our monthly newsletters, be kept informed of local history related events and news and enjoy free admittance to our monthly talks.

Here's how -

***Internet Banking:* Recipient - Roath Local History**

Account Number: 50710903

Sort Code: 20-18-15

Reference: *(your name)*

***Cheque:* Payable to Roath Local History Society**

***Cash:* Paid at one of our up-coming events**

***Card Reader:* For credit or debit card payments at an RLHS monthly talk**

It would be helpful to me to receive a freshly completed renewal form (search for: roathlocalhistorysociety.org/membership if you need one), even though your details may not have changed.

Those of you who wish to receive a printed copy of the newsletter each month must give me 12 second class stamps for the postage. Thank you to those who have already provided me with theirs.

***My details:* Nicola Macartney, RLHS Membership Secretary**

72 Cyfarthfa Street, Roath, Cardiff CF24 3HF

***Email Address:* rlhsmembershipsec@gmail.com**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Wednesday, 14th October, 2026

Doors open: **7.00 pm** • Lecture starts: **7.30 pm**

JULIAN HODGE - From **Roath** to **Riches!**

Speaker: **Rhys David**



Windsor Place



Hodge House
1960s headquarters

It is now more than a quarter of a century since the death of Julian Hodge, arguably the most successful and influential Welsh businessman of the 20th century.

He spent most of his productive years running his business from Roath - Windsor Place - and lived in White Lodge, one of the splendid shipping owner properties in Ty Gwyn Road.

In this talk Rhys David will be re-evaluating his life and achievements and asking where his reputation should now stand.

SAINT EDWARD'S MUSIC & ARTS CENTRE

Westville Road, Roath, Cardiff. CF23 5DE.

EVERYBODY WELCOME!

For live-stream Zoom Link contact **Jon Roberts** on:

RLHSZoom@gmail.com

GUESTS in-person, or online **£3.00**

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP £13.00

ROATH LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Wednesday, 28th October, 2026

Doors open at 6.30 Lecture *begins* at 7.00 o'clock



TREASURES of TRELAI

TOM HICKS, Archaeologist - CAER Heritage

Since 2011 CAER Heritage has been investigating the **Iron Age** site of **Caerau Hillfort**. Having undertaken **5 community excavations** at the hillfort we have a good understanding of its occupation and development, being built around **600BC** and home to a powerful community.

In the **early 1st century AD**, *before* the Roman conquest, it was apparently largely abandoned. The big questions now are where did people live before and after the hillfort?

To answer these questions our attention turned to the area surrounding Caerau Hillfort. Around 1,500m east of the hillfort is the modern parkland of **Trelai Park**. In the centre of the park lie the remains of a **Roman villa**, excavated in 1922 by **Sir Mortimer Wheeler**.

In 2022 we discovered another enclosure 200m south of the villa. This second settlement we are calling the "**Trelai Enclosure**" and this has been the site of our previous **5 excavations**. Remarkably the settlement is *not* Iron Age or Roman, but dates to the **Middle Bronze Age**, around **1,500BC**. Though there has also been fascinating **Late Iron Age** and **Roman** period finds at the site.

This talk will provide an update on our latest findings at the Trelai Enclosure, shedding light on life in the **Bronze Age South Wales** and on the **Late Iron Age** and **Roman** period activity there.

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