

“Tell Us Your Story” Winning Stories

Anglesey Archives

1. Vanda Bourhill

We live in a traditional Anglesey cottage down a small lane near a small village. The cottage always feels cosy and I didn't want to leave on my first visit, staying more than an hour for our first viewing of the property. I decided to find out about the people who had occupied our cottage years ago. Also, who had owned it and the history of our local village. Visiting Anglesey Archives I looked at some old maps to check the parish and location. I then used the microfiche to look through census forms – 1891, 1861, 1851 and 1841 which gave me wonderful insights into life over the years. In 1841 a widow, Margaret Jones was the head of the household; she was 47 and had 2 children. Over the years I was able to follow her life and all the other tenants in our cottage. In 1881 I found several families shared the property, including a Tinker as lodgers. In the Archives I could link up with information I was given locally to give me more basis to my story. How Margaret had become widowed when her husband had saved a child's life by pushing it free of the cart which had killed him. She received a merit for the deed so became the 'Head of the household' on the census form.

Further to visits to the Anglesey Archives involved looking at old point maps and deeds with a lot of help from staff there. I still had to find out the full story and will keep on going back to do this. Last time I used all the index cards to make notes of any documents which may help me at a later visit. I could spend weeks in there it is so interesting.

On my last visit the 1841 Tithe map helped me by identifying the owner of the cottage, a Catherine Williams. The land was divided into field 30 tenanted by a John Rowlands and 31 by Margaret Jones the lady I had previously followed. I know our cottage had originally been larger as we have two massive stone wedges on one side. Also, on our deeds we do own a mysterious piece of land about 12 feet square about 20 foot away from the cottage on the front of the lane. Now I can't wait for my next visit to see how our cottage, Llain Delyn changed over the years and why.

Carmarthenshire Archives

2. Dennis Gardner

The story starts in Tasmania at Port Arthur which we visited in 2004. In the record office we found a Giles Coates who arrived in 1835 aboard the George III which foundered on the rocks and he was recorded as drowned.

This set the search off as my mother's family name was Coates. Using the archive service in Carmarthen I have traced our family back to Chedworth in Gloucestershire. Giles(2) was born in Chedworth in 1783 and followed after his father Giles(1) as a clockmaker. He married Sarah Restall in 1805 in Northleach. Their son, Giles(3), was born in 1806 and was apprenticed to S Rentsch, Master Clockmaker, for seven years

in St James Square, London. He also spent fourteen years with BL Vulliamy at 68 Pall Mall, London, who held a Royal Clockmaker's Warrant.

In 1833 Giles(2) was poaching and was caught by the gamekeeper, the gun went off in the struggle injuring the gamekeeper. Giles fled to London because a £50 reward poster was put up in the county.

A retired Bow Street Runner apprehended him in Pall Mall and Giles offered him first £10 and then £20 to be set free but to no avail. He asked to be taken to his son in Pall Mall but was refused and was taken to Gloucester Gaol.

He was sentenced to be hung but fortunately the gamekeeper survived and the sentence was commuted to transportation to Van Diemen's Land. Half way across the Indian Ocean a fire broke out in the ship, it was put out but many rations were lost. So to save time on arrival in Tasmania a short cut was made and the ship foundered on rocks. There was no sign of Giles(2) and hence was recorded as drowned. His widow, Sarah, believing him dead, remarried to John Moss in 1839. In 1846 Giles(3) sailed to Hobart on the Miranda, arriving on 23 September 1847. Why was the next question. A clockmaker there using a false name could be the reason, had Giles(2) survived? Maybe, there is a burial of a Giles Coates in 1863 in Berdigo, Victoria aged 79, the exact age that Giles(2) would have been, more research will hopefully tell.

Giles(3) returned to England to collect his children (his wife had died) and sailed to Nelson, South Island, New Zealand in 1850. He set up a clockmakers and jewellery business there the following year, moving to Christchurch in 1861. He continued to travel back and forth to England, marrying again in 1865 to Rosa Dalby. He returned to New Zealand in 1867, returning again to England in 1868 where he died in London on 11 January, eleven days before his son Giles(4) was born.

When Giles(4) was of age he sailed to New Zealand and carried on the business of Giles Coates & Co with his father's partner, Henry Thompson, at least for a short while.

The story has many more twists and turns to tell ...

Conwy Archives

3. Adrian Hughes

At the Western end of Llandudno's Victorian promenade stands the town's impressive war memorial that has stood in tribute to the menfolk that died in three wars spanning nearly 100 years.

I have always been struck by the splendour of this 50 foot granite obelisk, topped with its flaming grenade, golden in colour and the poignancy of the red poppy wreaths that contrast starkly against the white stone.

As a social historian and local boy I have always wanted to research and tell the stories of the 122 names that are cast on bronze plaques on the World War 2 side of this monument. It is all too easy to see the names as just that, names, but as well as being a son and very often brother, father and uncle these soldiers were members of

the Llandudno community. I was keen to learn more; I wanted to find out about these men before they went off to the war, their families and their everyday lives.

Thanks to my local archive service I have been able to do just that. I have discovered the proud military family that one man came from, another's uncle was an Olympian and Davis Cup winner while a third was a Crossville bus driver before he was called up and a talented amateur musician to boot. Each of the 122 had an equally amazing story.

It is a sobering thought that while I am studying in Conwy County Archives I am sitting in the same building that many of the men that I am researching were educated in some eighty or so years ago. Sadly within a few short years they had paid the ultimate price and gave their lives for our freedom today

Conwy Archives

4. Paul Flavell

Archives have helped us unravel a family hearsay and found it to be true! My 3 maiden aunts – they kept the Rugby Café in Mostyn St Llandudno, always said one of their family had lived in a cave up the Great Orme. Oh yeah!

Their Foulkes side of the family we have traced back to Peter Foulkes who kept the Plough Inn in St Asaph in early 1800's (through marriage and baptism records seen in the archives of Ruthin and Hawarden) Fascinating!

The eldest of his 9 children was Edward who seems to have led a colourful life – 2 extracts were searched out in the Llandudno Advertiser of 1903. The first states 'Llandudno veteran sends his photo to the King (Edward V11)' where he tells of his life as a carrier and the royalty he saw. 'I had one horse which died on one of these journeys compelling me to work as a miner in the Snowdonia Copper Mines' and so he lived in the old part of Llandudno up the Orme which we have walked with a copy of an 1889 map – the whole place has come into a new perspective with shafts and workings where there are now houses, but no sign of a cave dweller.... Until getting onto the census of 1881, where there is an Edward Foulkes living at 'Rock Castle' and 1891 census confirmed this to be 'The Cave' where he was dwelling! His respectable occupation had been fishmonger. The cave is fenced off now, but we would love to get permission (is it from Lord Mostyn?) to go into it.

At the Llandudno Archives we asked if they knew anything about this cave, but they said they didn't, until one of the staff took the extra time to 'search out the back' and found... an old slide with the words 'Foulkes Cave'. It showed a theatre type stage in front of it- obviously part of the Victoriana entertainment (and the spot made famous by our Mr Foulkes was obviously now well know.'

In his obituary it says 'His fund of information concerning early Llandudno made him a very interesting subject for conversation, many visitors spent hours in his company. Mr. Foulkes' sense of humour was certainly above average and his unfailing courtesy and frank and open manner made for him many friends.

He also witnessed the opening of the first railway on Sept 15th 1830 which ran from Liverpool to Manchester. It was on this occasion that he saw the Duke of Wellington and was an eye witness of the fatal accident to Mr William Huskison (something we would read in history books.)

He married his second wife in 1879 and took Fanny to live in the cave, but the mystery continues as it seems her name was really Marian and so it's back to the Archives for more searching!

Denbighshire Archives

5. Julie Anne Jones

This is the story of my great grandmother's life and how I found the information through Ruthin Archives. The research started with my Dad finding the name of a woman being buried in my great grandmother who no-one knew who it was. The research leads us to the 1901 census which said my great grandmother was in the Wrexham Union workhouse, where the records are kept in Ruthin Archives. From the archives it helped us piece together the story of her life, this is the story I want to tell.

Ethel Turner was born in 1896 to William Turner and Ann Marsell in Leigh, but the family came from Cannock Chase in Staffordshire. She had 4 sisters Mary Jane, Nellie, Florence May and Edith Alice Millicent and a brother William. The family moved around a lot as the father William Turner said on the 1889 census he was a coal miner and the areas they moved to where in coal mining areas.

While looking where the family were on census 1901 showed that the family was in the Wrexham union workhouse but William the father was not with the family at all. How long they were in there was not shown, they were taken into the workhouse from the Gwersyllt area close to Wrexham.

They left the workhouse as a family in April 1901 where they went is unknown but they are together. Sadly in May 1901 Mary Jane, Nellie, Ethel and Florence May were sent back to the work house in Wrexham by their older brother William who was 12 years old at the time. It is unknown why the girls were sent back and what happened to the mother and youngest sister as they fall off all records completely one possible reason is that they died leaving William to look after the other girls and all he could do was send them back to the work house.

Over the years each of the girls in turn left the workhouse and were boarded out. The first was Ethel in June 1902 to the Spencer Jones family in Wrexham.

The next was Nellie she was boarded out in July 1903 but to whom is unknown but she went to Holt. In 1911 she is living in Holt in Wrexham as a domestic servant.

Next was Florence May she was adopted out in December 1904 in Wrexham. In 1911 Florence was living in Rhostyllen.

Mary Jane was the last to leave the work house in September 1906 but she was not adopted into a family as she was in her 20's, she left the workhouse and went into service in a big house in the local area but it is unknown which she went to or what happened to her.

In 1911 Ethel Turner is living in Wrexham with Mr Spencer Jones and Mrs Spencer Jones who receive 2 shillings a week for looking after her and it is said in her adoption records she had her own room, the record says that she did not know her own birthday and says that she says her birthday is the day she left the workhouse. She lived with them till she married her husband my great grandfather Ben Jones in 1916 at the age of 19. They had 9 children together, sadly Ethel lost her daughter in 1926 she was two years old in the Maelor hospital which was the original Wrexham Union Work House. Ethel also had 3 of her sons went to war, her eldest son my Grandfather was wounded in 1944 in France after D-Day, her twin boys went one was killed in 1942 aged 23 and is buried in a military cemetery in Madagascar so never came home and the other one came back with shellshock.

When Ethel's adopted father Mr Spencer Jones died her adopted mother went to live with Ethel. In 1939 Mrs Spencer died was buried in the family grave in Wrexham cemetery this is the person who we did not know who it was and started the search.

Ben Jones died in 1954 suddenly while getting ready for work aged just 62. Ethel herself met a tragic end by the hands of a relative which ended a very hard life. Ethel was buried in the same grave as her daughter, husband and adoptive mother who she must have thought was her mother.

A big thanks to Ruthin archives that me and my family know her story and can tell it as no one in the family knew anything about her background.

Denbighshire Archives

6. Ruth Pritchard

My 'Eureka moment at the Denbighshire Records Office was more exciting than I'd hoped for because I came face to face with my Great Grandfather. He looked out at me from the microfilm viewer, the first photograph I had ever seen of him as a man, as though he'd been waiting for me to find him.

I had got all the 'dry' facts from BMD records and the censuses. My family knew that he had died of typhoid and that he gained a cap for officiating at an international match, but I wanted to know more.

He died on July 30th, 1908 and so I looked through 'The Weekly News' for the obituary. Instead, in the edition July 31st, there he was, as large as life, alongside headlines 'The North Wales Coast Football League. Annual Meeting.' He hadn't actually attended that meeting, which was held on Saturday July 25th as he was 'indisposed'. Few will have known, whilst reading his annual report as secretary of the league, in that newspaper on the 31st, that he had died the day before.

His name was Francis Jesse Hope Beech, aka Frank. He was born in Rhyl in 1874; his family had an advertising business and a china shop in the town. He married Clara Nown in 1900 and they had three children.

The newspapers gave me a wealth of information about all the various positions he had held within the local football scene. He refereed the International Trial Match at Wrexham in 1906. He gained his cap when he acted as a linesman for Wales at Wrexham when they played against Scotland. The Weekly News had columns called 'Football Notes' and 'Football Chips' written by 'Vigilant'. These gave me a real sense of my great grandfather, and below are some of his quotes.

'Secretary and Referee Beech has been an assiduous secretary, and his innate love of the game causes him to be heart and soul in his work. I am sorry I did not meet you Frank, when you received your honorarium, for I would have helped you smoke some of it in Marcellas or Havanas'

'That Frank Beech never thought he was so good looking until he saw his likeness in 'The Weekly News' last week'

'That Frank doesn't believe in 'running with hounds and holding with the hare.'

Priceless snippets that help me build up a picture of Frank.

I was keen to find out more so I wrote to the Welsh F.A. who sent me a photograph of the Wales team who played Scotland at Wrexham in March 1907, and there he was again, stood next to the famous Billy Meredith.'

Frank was a big man both physically and in personality but he was killed by a tiny bacterium called Salmonella typhi. He died aged 33, in the Isolation Hospital, Towyn, Abergele.

There was more to Frank than his football but that will have to wait for another day.

Flintshire Archives

7. David A Davison

I was born and brought up in Liverpool for almost three decades when after several career changes I ended up living in beautiful Flintshire. After retiring, and having reached the pinnacle of my gardening expertise I started to look for other things to occupy my time. I vaguely remembered from my youth being told that my fathers family came to Liverpool from Flint, so decided that I would research my family history, I didn't own a computer nor was I computer literate, so my research started at the reference library at Mold using the parish records and the microfiche viewers which were a revelation and an inspiration to me to become a computer 'expert' I bought a very basic model, and my children gave me some basic lessons.

Next took a course on the internet at the Queensferry library, I had obtained readers ticket at the Record Office and used the facilities there to glean more information didn't just get there by a magic wand, and when I saw an article in the Flintshire Evening Leader asking for volunteers to digitise photographs for the Record Office I applied, and was excepted to put these photos on the Record Office computer along with all the other volunteers. After that project was completed I managed to be considered capable to assist in the conservation department with cleaning a collection of National Coal Board records for Flintshire Coal Mines, after cleaning we measured the volumes and boxed them up in specially made containers and numbered them. I am currently digitising a collection of the Mostyn family records and placing them on the Record Office computer. I still use the record office facilities for my family history research and attend their special events to further my knowledge.

Flintshire Archives

8. Paul Clark

I first went to our local archives about twenty years ago when my niece was researching our family tree for a project in school and what a journey it has been!

Since I joined the archives I have always found the staff most helpful and friendly, guiding me to research firstly my maternal side which goes back centuries locally so this is what I concentrated on initially. Through the archives I was able to access Parish records, local newspapers for obituaries family and births and weddings etc. Then I decided to tackle my paternal side which originated in the North East and what a fascinating can of worms I unearthed!

My grandmother was born in 1900 and one of her brothers in 1896. Through my research I discovered that he served in the first world war but deserted a few months before the world war ended and joined the merchant navy, boarding a ship bound for Sydney, Australia, where he jumped ship. What enabled me to go further was that it was obvious he changed his name because only a few years ago my Aunt (Fathers sister) gave me letters he wrote to his mother in 1922 via a P.O. box in Australia signing them your loving son but a different name.

From these letters and with help of the computer in the archives I requested information about him and I found one of his grandchildren in Australia was also looking for information about his relatives in England! Since writing these letters his family in England never heard from him again and his Australia family knew nothing of them.

Then I found that he had married, had ten children and unfortunately was accidently shot by his eldest son in 1940. He was 46 his son was 17.

He has a generation in Australia, all of whom are known by assumed name but even though he used a different first Christian name and surname he kept his own middle name and from his marriage certificate he used his mothers correct Christian name and former surname both of which were unusual, all of which confirms that the man who has a large family in Australia is my great uncle.

One of his grandchildren together with her daughter visited us in Wales last summer and more of the family are in touch. Now they know why, when they applied for a British passport their application was returned because no person in that name existed.

Glamorgan Archives

9. Steve Evans

We had a brilliant day on Tuesday when we took a class of year 7 pupils to the Glamorgan Archive. We looked at records from Victorian workhouses, court records and accounts of what it was like to be a child and poor in Britain 150 years ago. This culminated in working with artist Paul Evans to produce cartoon strips and cartoon characters based on the Victorian background research we were given. We produced a 'teacher's cartoon strip' on our feelings about the day.

**OUR DAY
OUT...
YAPPEE,
NO SCHOOL!**



10. Glamorgan Archives



Cardiff People First

Research at the Glamorgan Archives



For Our



Ely Hospital Project

Cardiff People First is a self-advocacy group for People with a learning disability. Two years ago we started a project to help our older members tell their stories from Ely Hospital.

Ely was a long stay hospital in Cardiff.

It had a terrible reputation for abuse and neglect and a big scandal in the 1960s led to the start of the closure of all long stay hospitals in the UK.

"I wanted to be involved in the Ely Hospital project I loved meeting new people and listening to their stories" (SA Cardiff People First Community Voices member)

"I have been waiting for this for years" (MH Cardiff People First member and former Ely hospital resident)

"I wanted to talk about Ely Hospital" (BT Cardiff People First member and former Ely hospital resident)

"I can't wait to visit the archives I've always wanted to go there" (Cardiff People First member and former Ely hospital resident)



The first thing we did was start a steering group. We worked in partnerships with Newport People First, the Cardiff Story Museum and Glamorgan Archives.

We met once a month at the Glamorgan Archives.

Cardiff people First members enjoyed going to monthly steering group meetings.



Our women's group had a big role in researching the project. They visited the archives and were shown behind the scenes to see how the old documents are kept.



Rhian Phillips (Senior Archivist) showing member's old ordnance survey maps of Ely.



Rhian and Janice reading through patients' meals register. The documents contained records of the patient's daily intake of food and drink.



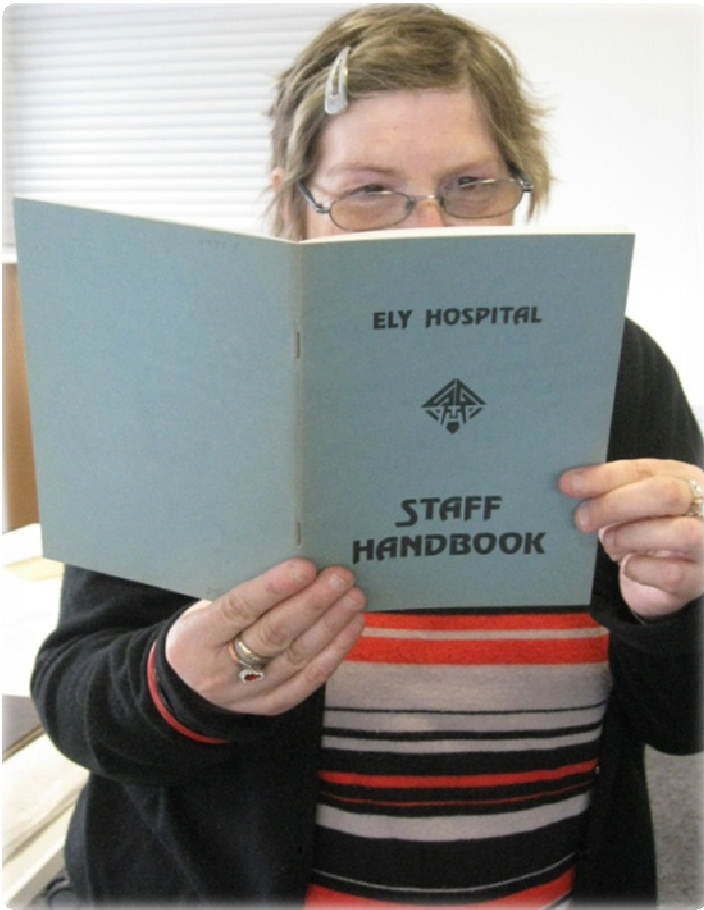
Janice, Christeena and Sam looking through former residents' case notes.

**"It was interesting to read through the old notes but sad too. The way the notes were written was not very nice. Patients were called imbeciles"
Says JP**



Janice and Rhian seeing how the moveable shelves worked in the cool room. This is where the documents were best kept.





Janice reading through the staff handbook.



Janice giving a presentation to the steering group about the women's group visit. **"All the staff were really helpful, researching documents and maps with us, and supporting us to understand what they meant". Says Janice**



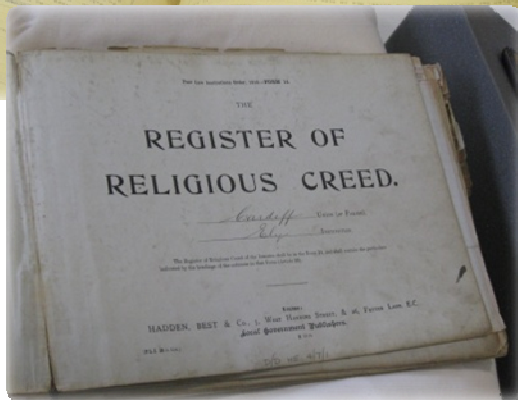
Cardiff People First visited Glamorgan archives to look at old documents from Ely Hospital. Rhian Phillips welcomed us to the archives.



Rhian Phillips shows the group the old ordnance survey maps
"I enjoyed looking at the old maps of Ely. It was really interesting to see how much Ely has changed"
Says A.O.



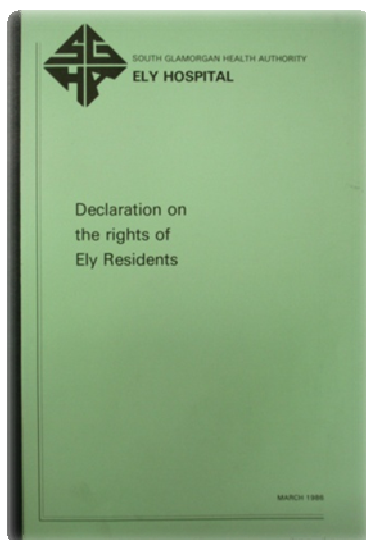
Gwen looking through the former resident's case notes.



Amongst the documents at the Archives was a register of Religious Creed.

Also there was a copy of the Declaration on the rights of Ely Residents.

'I worked on these 'Rights for Residents. Before that, we had no rights' said MH.





Martin speaking to Rhian and the group about the old Ely Maps.



Rhian shows the group the cool room.



Janice is proud to show off the documents we have researched at our Exhibition at the Cardiff Story Museum



Photos of the members doing their research were displayed in the exhibition at The Cardiff Story Museum, alongside copies of the documents from The Glamorgan Archives. Some of the Visitors who came along to the Exhibition donated articles and documents to Glamorgan Archives. One man donated a master journal from when the hospital was a workhouse. All the Staff and the members from Cardiff People First enjoyed working with Glamorgan Archives, and look forward to working with them again!

Glamorgan Archives

11. Lakeside Primary School

Five children submitted their own stories about the school celebrating its 50th birthday. Please find below an example of one of the stories –

Lakeside Primary School opened in 1963, meaning this year, 2013, our school is celebrating its 50th birthday. To commemorate, each year group had been assigned to learn about a decade in history. Year six pupils, including myself, were studying the 1960's.

We had various topics that we learnt about the 60's, which we wrote about in our history books. The most beautiful and neatest piece of writing would be placed in our "time capsule" for future students and teachers to contemplate our work. The main topic that we were focussing on was what had changed since the 60's, mainly how the shops on Wellfield Road had changed. For this we had to do a little bit of research. To do this, we had to know what shops were there now and in the 60's. To know about 2013 was simple, a group of around ten children travelled to Wellfield Road with a willing teacher and studied the shops. As well as taking photos, they also interviewed customers at the shops, asking them questions about how the shops had changed. They gave some interesting answers, most of them pointed out that supermarkets had been introduced and that much smaller local stores are going out of business. To fully understand what shops there were back then we needed a trade directory of the shops on Wellfield Road from 1960 to 1970. In order to do this, we had to go to Glamorgan Archives where they had an array of files and records from hundreds of years ago. When we examined the trade directory and compared it to the modern trade directory, that the group who went to Wellfield Road made, we noticed a change in the type of shops. There are much more charity and gift shops then there used to be. There is also more empty buildings now then there was. But there has been a decrease in food, home, clothing, health and hair dressing stores. Afterwards, we went into greater detail about this, we asked ourselves WHY these changes had occurred. After many hours, we realised that the evolution was the result of supermarkets and department stores. These big stores can supply themselves with huge amounts of goods, and a variety of them and then sell them all at one location to the customers. This is why small shops only specialising in one area are forced to close down.

But we were not only just focussing on shops, but also on the location of different landmarks and prime areas. For such a task, we attended a school trip during the 50th anniversary week to Glamorgan Records Office. Where we, within groups, investigated two different maps from the two different eras we were studying. With the help of some teachers we found out our school Lakeside Primary secede to exist in the 60's. And that Rhedepeny Primary School and Roath Primary School are a few years older than our beloved school.

And that week of fun and learning is how me and my classmates learnt about the 1960's.

Gwent Archives

12. Alison Sussex

As a lecturer of the Welsh BaccaLaureate I have been struggling to find valuable informative links between Welsh culture, environment and technological development in Wales. Visiting the Archives has solved my problem and engaged the learners in a practical and interesting way. As an added bonus it has also provided them with the opportunity for work experience.

Their next project will be to research who lived in their house 100 years ago. So in effect the Gwent Archives has greatly assisted my delivery of the Welsh BaccaLaureate qualification.

Gwent Archives

13. Evelyn Jenkins

I had a two fold reason for visiting the Gwent Record Office – as an exercise in researching a site for a history degree, and to find a well at Penterry. There had been a small exploration excavation the previous year with 2 eye-witness accounts of 90 year olds who swore that they knew the site of the well, which was two days of wasted labour as the well was not found. At Gwent Records, helpful archivists pointed me to the minute book of Chepstow Rural District Council 1919 onwards, the Tintern Parish Council records and the St Arvan's Church accounts. I also saw the Ordinance Survey map (a photocopy was quickly provided). The map showed the well to be reached from an ancient footpath in a field to the north of the St Mary's Parish Church and nowhere near where we had been told it was. We also noticed a trough or enclosure further down and possibly the water was channelled down. A ninety year old man said the well had been filled in because parishioners got their feet wet. I had got the information it was called 'Achurs' Well' 'Garlic Well' in Welsh but locals call it 'Arthurs Well' possibly an Anglicisation. What they had seen filled in was possibly the trough or the well and trough. There had been fir trees around and perhaps the title 'Well Wood' should have given us a clue! Further explorations are pending and there are various accounts which look interesting!

Gwent Archives

14. Josephine Doe

What dark secrets my lie undiscovered in those years between the records for baptism, marriage, censuses and death?

Where was my G.Grandfather George Stevens before 1881?

1881 Wales Census

Lliswerry, Newport:

George Stevens with wife and six children;

George's birthplace – Maidstone, Kent 1843

His two eldest children (Laura and Ernest) birthplaces – Weymouth and Shepton Mallet;

But I was unable to find their birth/baptisms using this 1881 information

Finally, after fruitless years of searching, a chance conversation hinted of a family 'scandal'

-that after the death of his wife in 1885, G.Grandfather may have been in prison!

At the Newport Reference Library

Newspaper 'The Monmouthshire Merlin', I almost overlooked a report for 4 September 1886 because it referred to the arrest of 'George Tassel', but reading on, he was also known as 'George Stevens'. Shockingly, George was charged with the rape of his own daughter Laura, found guilty, and imprisoned for 18 months. (Reports of his two trials – together with later facts, was he guilty?)

From this new information I was able to piece together George's life before, and after 1881:

The GRO:

Birth entries for George Tassell 1843 Maidstone,

Laura Tassell 1872 Weymouth (father George, Gunner in the Royal Artillery);

Ernest Tassell 1873 Shepton Mallet (father George, Brewery Labourer)

The National Archives:

Royal Artillery Records – Attestation/Muster Rolls:

George Tassell – Deserter, just after daughter's birth

Caldenar of Prisoners – Oxford Circuit – Conviction /Sentence

The Gwent Archives:

Newport Workhouse

Admission Register, 4 September 1886 shows that all the children with exception of 14 year old Ernest were admitted. Laura and her baby brother remained in the Newport Workhouse

Workhouse birth register, March 1887 – Birth of Laura's son.

Carleon Industrial School

5 September 1886 – the four eldest boys were moved here (attached was a 30 acre farm where boys were taught farm work.)

Workhouse Records for 1888 June – upon his release, George immediately gathered together his children. (1900 Laura died of TB and the 1901 census shows George bringing up her child as his grandson)

My Grandfather

After leaving the Workhouse School my Grandfather and two of his brothers worked on local farms. Grandfather married in 1896 – and by 1918 he owned his own farm.

How has this discovery affected my life?

Desertion, Imprisonment for rape, 18 months in the workhouse – out of shame these things were kept secret from us – but, because of my findings I have great admiration for my grandfather in overcoming his traumatic childhood and making such a secure and happy home-life for his fourteen children.

My grateful thanks to the staff at the archives for the help and advice they gave during my long search for the truth – without all these precious records, our past would remain a secret.

Gwynedd Archive

15. Deanna Groom

I am researching shipping losses around the Welsh Coast during a storm 25 – 26 October 1859, during which a Liverpool – Melbourne passenger vessel called the Royal Charter was lost on Anglesey. Also lost during the storm were some 100 other vessels around the Welsh coast. My search today is of the Port of Caernarfon shipping register. There are many sad stories but also ones of bravery and courage associated with each wreck. The stories of aid given by local people to ship wreck survivors reaffirm faith in human kindness. The Caernarfon and Denbigh Herald confirms several such stories in letters and news.

Gwynedd Record Office - Caernarfon

16. Cheryl Lianne Williams

After starting to play the cornet at school, around 12 years ago began to play for the Llanrug Silver Brass Band. Having thoroughly enjoyed being part of the banding community and playing for Llanrug band, I became quite embarrassed that I had no knowledge of the history of the brass bands. When I began my course at Bangor University 3 years ago, studying History I became very interested in the history of music and how it socially affected society and community life. When it came to deciding what to write my history dissertation on I thought it would be the greatest opportunity to learn more about brass bands, it's role in society and how the banding community has developed and changed since the 1830s to today.

It has been a pleasure writing my dissertation on a topic that is of both interest to myself and that is local. Having the archive service in Caernarfon on the doorstep has made my research process much simpler and quicker. At the archives I have been able to view many photographs of brass bands and have learnt a lot about their history.

National Library of Wales

17. Tasmin Leighton

Whilst undertaking research amongst the huge sources of information and archives at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, I came across quite a funny story, one I shall be using as an important source in my extended essay.

I decided to research newspaper correspondence in the area, and with luck the sources could be useful for my extended essay, and also a useful source to give a snapshot of Rhosllannerchrugog society during the 1850s.

Whilst researching in the 19th century newspaper collections in the archives I came across the title '*Rejoicings at Rhosllannerchrugog*' in the 1854 edition of the *North Wales Chronicle NWC*. The story starts like this: In June 1854 Mr Henry Jones, owner of Llanerchrugog hall, married Miss E.R. Taylor in Rhos. The reporter describes the wedding celebrations, and notes the funny things done by the inhabitants of Rhos. We also see how close the society is in the way they welcome the Bridegroom and Bride back to the hall. In order to give Mr Jones and his wife a most respectful welcome, the whole village took a day off work and played quite an interesting part in the couple's journey back home. As the carriage came through the village from chapel, a large number of people followed the carriage. As the carriage arrived at The White Horse (a pub in Rhos) the horses and carriage were released and '*The worthy pair were drawn by the inhabitants from there to Rhosllannerchrugog hall*'!

I am not aware if such a celebration/welcome received by Mr Jones and his wife was commonplace in other villages during this period, but I am certain that such an event would never happen in our society today.

This is a great story in my opinion, not only for my extended essay, but also a great story to share with friends who still live in Rhos and university friends who have never been to Rhosllannerchrugog before, but who now believe it is a village whose inhabitants are insane. They may be right.

I thank the National Library of Wales Aberystwyth and for all the sources available FOR FREE!!

Swansea University - Richard Burton Archives

18. Christian Erbacher

I have been travelling a thousand miles to the Richard Burton Archives, and it was worth the effort. A walk through Lincoln [actually Singleton] Park in the fresh morning air brings me to the reading room. The philosopher; whose papers I study, hasn't published during lifetime. For he regarded writing as thinking and thinking as living. He wouldn't stop changing and improving his manuscripts as long as he was alive. Today thousands of pages display this lively mind in Richard Burton Archives' Collection.

Each time I open a new folder it is as if I set a foot on a new land. I explore this country of thought and try to give my readers a sense of what I have experienced. Telling their twists and turns the philosopher's views live again and pass on to others. This is why archives belong to the DNA of thinking.

Swansea University - Richard Burton Archives

19. Sion Durham

While studying history at Swansea University I was offered the chance to take part in a revolutionary and experimental module, Research and Retelling. This module was directed at researching into a part of Swansea University Student Union. After learning about how archives work and seeing the inner core of the vault we were given the task of developing our own project.

Reading the countless amounts of newspapers, minute books and policy notes I came across an interesting development. This was that since 1950 Swansea Students had fought for a Student run bar on campus. This was an extremely odd case as most universities by the 1980s had won the right to host its own facilities. Here in Swansea it had been unsuccessful due to the actions of students.

I remember the quote which really enthralled me into finding out more, 'Over 80 glasses had been smashed at the ball last night in the refectory, can we prove that students are responsible?'

This pulled me in and got me grasped on the question, 'When did we gain our independent student bar which we all still use to this day', the mid boggles. I persisted and came across countless amounts of valuable sources. These sources were all centred on the 1980s, a time in British history of unionism and activism. These records show how students fought tirelessly to achieve its goal. The countless arguments, newspaper articles and increasing support saw a piece of Student Union history brought back to life in my reading.

Since the 1990's this union had forgotten its vast amount of history dating back to the 1920's Swansea University although still not quite 100 years old and by far not as internationally known as Oxford or Cambridge, it still has its own unique history. Found in a trolley in Union House being saved from the scrap heap, this deposit of history was far from worthless to the eyes of all 11 of us studying the module. It provides an increasing knowledge on activism, changing lives of students, the area of

Swansea and the effect on students regarding BRITISH AND International affairs. It shows how terms like fresher were not as 'new' as once thought and we have been smashing glasses for years.

However, what makes an archive is not the building it is housed in, the city it lays or its opening times on the weekend. It is the people that run these services. Having met many people across Wales who work within the archive service, the ladies here make this an outstanding place to go and research. Their helpfulness, friendliness and encouragement make this archive a place worth a visit. Even if the material is not in the archive you can still gain support in routing out your research all across the country.

The luck of the draw was, I took part in a module that I never would have done before and was introduced to the world of archive research and student history!

West Glamorgan Archives

20. Pauline Anderson

I'd been thinking about researching my family history for quite some time when I noticed, on the Swansea Council Intranet that the Archive service was offering free 2 hour work steps on how to go about it. The one I was most interested in was how to research my family tree. So I immediately sent the department an email to book myself a place. On the day of the course I was very impressed with the ladies who were running it. They gave some excellent information, including which websites to look at and where to find specific information. Also, if you registered with them you would be able to have the use of Archive's computers to view the websites for free. I was so inspired to find out more that I booked myself an appointment with one of the Archivists. It only cost £5 for an hour.

I knew from my mother that her grandparents had originated from Romania and that she also had connections with the Isle of Man but with this small amount of information Elizabeth was able to find out that my great great grandmother's family had actually emigrated from West Prussia (now Poland) to Liverpool in the 1850's and my great grandfather had arrived there from Romania in the 1880's.

Since then I have become addicted searching through census records to see who you can find on there. Its great being able to pop down to the Archives in my lunch break or go on a Tuesday evening after work. Ancestry.co.uk and Find my Past are 2 very useful websites.

Last week I managed to trace my grandfather's family back to 1824 in the Isle of Man. My sister and I plan to go there for a holiday in the summer to see if we can find any other ancestors from the Parish records as the census ones only go back as far as 1861. Hopefully we may be able to find some living relatives.

West Glamorgan Archives

21. William Davies

Some time in the early 1840's, Daniel Davies left his home somewhere in West Wales and set out on foot in much haste I fear. In doing so, he was leaving forever his home, family, friends and neighbours. He left behind those troubled times when men with blackened faces and dressed in women's clothing, roamed the countryside to burn down the hated toll gates – the Rebecca Rioters.

Born (somewhere?) in 1820 and something of a hothead, Daniel would have been in his early 20s when he trudged those mountain tracks and drover's roads, sleeping wherever he could find shelter – a barn or maybe a farm outbuilding.

In time, a hundred or so miles later he eventually reached the uppermost end of the Swansea Valley so very far from everyone he knew, but feeling much safer I'd guess. Nothing was then known of him until 1851, until the census enumerator knocked at the door of Cefn Byrle Uchaf, in the tiny Breconshire hamlet of Coelbren; some twelve miles from the nearest market town of Castell Nedd (Neath)

Ever suspicious, as is our Welsh tendency, Daniel simply gave the enumerator his age as 31, his occupation as a collier and birthplace, Cardiganshire. Whatever or whoever lay in his past, we see that he must have settled in Coelbren a while as he was now married to 27 year old Sarah, who like her husband must have walked to Coelbren from her native Tredegar home – birthplace of Aneurin Bevan. Also listed on the 1851 census was their first born John, aged three.

So it was that Daniel began to settle down and toil away underground throughout the 1850's. However, when the next census was taken in the Spring of 1861, we find that he'd moved, but only a few hundred yards or so down the hill to the tiny Cefn Byrle Isaf Farm. Anyway, as noncommittal as ever, Daniel gave David Gethin his correct age as 40 and that he was still a collier but, when asked his birthplace he paused for a moment before opting for the Carmarthenshire village of Llnboidy. (Mr Gethin was a forbear of Dennis Gethin of the Welsh Rugby Union.)

Other than working as a collier, Daniel had also been working hard to increase Coelbren's population. He was now the father of another two sons (Daniel, William) and a daughter Sarah. (Oh, with Sarah's help of course!). Unlike her husband Sarah had no skeletons in her wardrobe. She gave Mr Gethin her proper birthplace, Tredegar, Mon.

As a man brought up in the countryside of West WALES, Daniel's thoughts were now beginning to turn away from life underground, a life so very alien to his farming upbringing. So by the mid 1860's we see his life beginning to take a decided move away from coal. The first inkling of his impending career change was written in the vestry book for the parish of Helen and Llech. At a meeting held at the Mount Pleasant Inn (today's Penycae Inn) on 27th April, 1865 John Morgan entered just one line... Mr Daniel be rated for Cefnbrille Tavern £12 gross for Cefnbrille Tavern.

Daniel's plan was simple. Continue working as a collier and also run a small beer house for a few years. His timing was perfect, as were his customers – the hordes of thirsty navvies working on the new railway line being constructed – the Neath and Brecon.

It's not known when but some time before 1871, having amassed through enough capital, Daniel made his second move, not too far again just a few hundred yards further down the hill to Cefn yr Erw farm. (Today's animal sanctuary.) He had finally returned to his roots. When the census enumerator called in the Spring of 1871, Daniel had no problem in stating his age to be fifty and that he was now a farmer, but true to form, he's looked up his atlas and decided to choose a new birth-place – Llandybie – a few miles from Ammanford.

By now, those storks must have been so confused. Thus far they had dropped him off in Carmarthenshire, Llanboidy and now Llandybie. Oh, forgot to mention, Sarah. Although she had given her age correctly as 47 methinks Daniel had finally convinced Sarah into changing her birthplace as well. She was now a Breconshire girl! There were five children listed from 19 year old Daniel Junior down to 4 year old Thomas.

This canny old chap appears to have ducked beneath the radar in 1881, but did surface in 1891. When asked about his birthplace, out came his atlas. He was still farming at Cefn yr Erw at 70 years old and certainly not running out of ideas. His Welsh geography should be commended though, as he certainly knew his way around Wales, as did those poor storks!

Anyway Daniel decided on Cardiganshire Coast as his birthplace for the 1891 census so the stork was instructed to drop him off in Llangrannog – the home I believe of Urdd Gobaith Cymru. Thankfully for Sarah, she had no further need to lie about her birthplace as she had passed on.

So on into a new century to 1901 when this tough old character is still farming at the age of 80. Having given so many different birthplaces he would surely have passed his geography exam with 'flying colours' had he ever gone to school. His son Daniel Junior certainly never had the privilege of even the most basic education, as he had spent his early life working on the farm. Indeed when Daniel Junior married Eleanor Watkins in 1875, they both signed their marriage certificate with no difficulty – X

There is not much more to say about Daniel, other than to tell you that aged 81 he was still living at Cefn yr Erw farm at the time of the 1901 census – his last on earth. Still sound of mind as wary as ever he had already decided to give the stork one last change of direction – wishing to be dropped off at the Carmarthenshire village of Llanllwyni near Llanybydder.

It would be the last time he needed to consult his battered old atlas.

So it was that some time in early 1900's, then well into his 80s Daniel 'called it a day' packed his belongings aboard a cart and made his way back up the hill to his original home – Cefn Byrle Uchaf. He really was a tough, hardworking old guy fair play. He died in 1910 – aged 90.

Daniel Junior would meet up with him four years later aged just 64. They now lie in the peaceful graveyard of Tyn y Coed Chapel, down the hill yet again below the farm – marked 3 in the photo.

It really was such a pity really that Daniel died just one year before the 1911 census, as I would have so dearly liked to have known where the stork would have dropped this wily, old ancestor of mine. (Was he one of the Rebecca Rioters?)

Daniel Junior was my great grandfather.

William T Davies