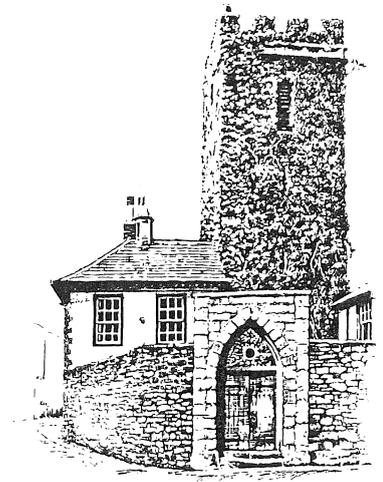


# *Abergavenny Local History Society*



*St. John's, Abergavenny*

NEWSLETTER No 8  
August 1992

SUMMER VISITS 1991

The possibility of a weekend visit to Durham was discussed several times by the committee, but it was always felt that the 300 mile journey was too far.

However, in response to many requests, it was finally decided to make the visit but to extend it from three to four days.

We broke the journey at Escomb to visit the 7th century church, a lot of which was built from stone taken from the nearby Roman site at Binchester.

The following day, after guided tours of both the castle and cathedral at Durham, we visited the award winning Beamish Museum.

There was such a lot to see on the site including a farm complex, a railway layout, a drift mine and a number of shops and cottages arranged as in Victorian times. It was a pity the weather was not kinder to us!

Our last day started at Jarrow with visits to the church and museum connected with the Venerable Bede, and ended at Alnwick Castle, the beautiful home of the Duke of Northumberland.

On the way home, we travelled along the length of Hadrian's Wall, calling in at the Roman town of Corbridge.

Our visits programme began in May with a guided tour of the lovely Cotswold village of Chipping Campden, followed by a visit to Broughton Castle, the home of Lord Saye and Sele, which was specially opened for us.

Arthur Peplow made our visit to Lydiard Tregose church so very interesting and after lunch he took us to the 15th century moated manor house, Great Cholfield Manor.

Our evening visits took us firstly to Tredegar House in Newport for us to see the changes which had taken place since our last visit in 1984. John van Laun took us up lanes, barely wide enough for the coach, to visit some of the old industrial sites around Tintern which, at its peak, employed several thousand people.

Our visits programme ended with a guided tour of the part Norman Bristol Cathedral followed by a walk around the late 17th century house Dyrham Park.

By the time this newsletter is issued, most of the 1992 programme will have been completed including another four day trip to Norwich. I hope it is proving as popular as in previous years.

Alan Spink.

HORSE TRADING

About a hundred years ago my grandfather worked for a German, the Baron Deutschmann, who had gone to live in Oxfordshire for the fox hunting. On several occasions the Baron sent my grandfather to Wales to buy ponies at the sales. Being able to speak Welsh, my grandfather was able to do his own bidding and did not need to employ a translator to do it. This must have saved the Baron a great deal of money as translators were expensive. The likely destination of these ponies would be a German estate.

To some extent the use of Welshmen by English farmers to bid at auctions has survived to recent times. There is much poor grassland in Wales on which beef cattle cannot be fattened for slaughter. However, in Leicestershire there is a surplus of good grass in summer, and farmers buy cattle from Wales in early spring and fatten them to be slaughtered for the Birmingham market.

About forty years ago I was told by one of these farmers that if he wanted anything any good he had to hire a Welshman to do the bidding. This was expensive and he preferred to buy his cattle from markets in Ireland, where he could do his own bidding to get what he wanted.

Arthur Fleet.

LECTURES 1992-93

1992

- Thurs 17 Sept Mr Michael Keen Romantic Traveller in Gwent  
[The well-off traveller discovered the beauty of Scotland, the Lake District and Wales when his tours of Europe were curtailed by the French Wars.]
- Fri 16 Oct Mr Arthur Peplow English Mediaeval Monasteries.
- Thurs 19 Nov Mr Brian Davies Dr William Price  
[The highly eccentric Chartist from Pontypridd]
- Thurs 17 Dec MEMBERS' CHRISTMAS DINNER AND SOCIAL EVENING  
at The King of Prussia Penpergwm

1993

- Thurs 21 Jan Mr Brian Scott Stained Glass in Bourges Cathedral
- Thurs <sup>4</sup>18 Feb Mrs Elizabeth Whittle Historic Gardens in Gwent  
[Mrs Whittle is a consultant on historic gardens.]
- Thurs 18 March Dr William Jones In Search of Uncle Sam  
[The story of Welsh emigration to America]
- Thurs 15 April Mr Frank Olding Roman Abergavenny.
- Thurs 20 May The 16th Annual General Meeting followed by  
Mr Windsor Clarke Working with Prime Ministers

A LINK WITH DEVON

It was on a visit to my brother in Devon that I found an unlooked for connection between Abergavenny Castle and Totnes Castle. We were looking around the Norman castle and I bought the usual guide book but did not read it until I got home. I was astonished to find that our William de Braose received the honour of Barnstaple in 1196 and his son, also William, was made Lord of Totnes in 1205. However, in 1208 he fell out again with King John, who put William's son and heir to death and gave Totnes to Henry, an illegitimate son of Henry I.

In 1219 Henry's estates were confiscated by Henry III and given to Reginald, a surviving son of William de Braose. Reginald died childless in 1230 and left Totnes to his sister Eva, who was the wife of William de Cantelupe. Her stone tomb was believed to be the one in St. Mary's church Abergavenny, although there is now some doubt about this. It makes one wonder how many days it would have taken them to travel between the two castles in the 13th. century compared with today's car trip of 2 1/2 to 3 hours.

Molly Parry.

### WHICH WAY GOBANNIUM?

In 1964 the Abergavenny Archaeology Group excavated in Flannel Street on the site of what was to be the Post Office. It discovered, among other things, a Roman ditch and gateway.

In 1966 the Group excavated mechanically at the rear of the King's Arms across what was to be the Police Station and the Magistrates' Court.

It found nothing and thus established that the Roman fort extended in the direction of the Methodist Church. The gate was, therefore, the West Gate of the Roman fort but unfortunately the plaque on the Post Office names it as the South East Gate. The Local History Society, I must emphasise, did not erect this plaque!

In 1969-72 The Group excavated in Mrs Ewers' garden opposite the undertaker between Castle Street and the bluff. The most exciting discovery was a hole in the ground indicated by slightly different coloured soil which was the sleeper beam trench of the corner of a Roman building.

This led to a professional archaeologist, Patrick Ashmore, in 1972 excavating the adjacent Orchard site. He discovered, among other things, the timber slots of the Roman rampart and of a Roman granary.

I have made some careful measurements to ascertain the alignment of the Roman fort. The Flannel Street gate points 52 degrees west of north and the Ewers' Garden building points 60-65 degrees west of north.

Patrick Ashmore states that the Roman features on Orchard Site are at about 10 degrees (which side unspecified) to the present bluff. While he says that the Flannel Street ditch is at right angles to the bluff, I would place the bluff at 40 degrees rather than 52 degrees west of north. This would make his fort point 30 or more likely 50 degrees west of north.

It is quite possible that the Roman fort was not precisely rectangular and the river has probably eroded the bluff so that the figures of 52, 60-65, and 50 degrees west of north for the three sites are compatible.

However, Patrick Ashmore's diagram in his interim report would indicate an alignment of only 14 degrees west of north. I await his final report with considerable interest.

Ken Key.

### APPEAL

Once again I am part author as well as the editor of this newsletter. It is not a medium for the thoughts of Ken Key and I appeal to members to make it an active organ of the Society. It costs money to produce and if members cannot contribute and support it I feel the money could be better spent on other things. I should, on the other hand, be very sorry to see this publication of which Freda Key was first editor discontinued.

Ken Key

### BERGAVENNY UNDER SEIGE

(From the Patent Rolls of Henry IV June 14th 1404 p440)

Order to the Sheriff of Hereford to cause further proclamations to be made and to assemble all the king's leiges of the county, knights, esquires, archers and other fencible men to go with the king's kinsman Richard of York, whom the king has ordered to go with all speed to the castle and town of Bergevenny for their rescue; on information by letters sent from the Marches of Wales and the relation of trustworthy persons of those parts that the king's kinsman William Beauchamp, Lord of Bergevenny, now staying in person on the safe custody of the castle and town, is so destitute of men at arms and archers that he and his men and the castle and town are in the way of perdition through the assault of the Welsh rebels.

St Mary's Research Group