

Annual report Abergavenny Local History Society January 1st to 31st December 2016

The objects of Abergavenny Local History Society (charity registration number 1098582) are:

1. To promote the local community's knowledge of and interest in history
2. To provide local historical and general interest information for visitors
3. To support Abergavenny Museum and Castle

Achievements to meet these objects

1. During 2016 the society members attended lectures on: Tunnelling to Victory in WW1, Wales and the East India Company, Cartooning the Great War, Rural Life in South Wales on old film, Eisteddfodau through the Ages, Bog Bodies Uncovered, The Story of Cyfartha, and Sudbrook and the Severn Railway Tunnel.

During the summer months, visits to places of historic interest included: Llanelli House built in 1714, with a trip by the River Tawe to see the remains of Swansea's industrial heritage, a weekend to North Wales with visits to Conway Castle, Plas Mawr, Gwydir Castle and Llanrwst, a visit to the Newport ship enhanced the information gained from the lecture, and was followed by a visit to the Newport Transporter Bridge after lunch at the conserved Edwardian Waterloo Hotel. A visit to Bristol took in the SS Gt Britain and a guided tour of the oldest house in Bristol, Red Lodge. Frank Olding completed the visits with a tour of sites from his new book, *The Archaeology of Upland Gwent*.

The newsletter reported on the visits for those unable to attend (all visits were overbooked), and included articles on Recusancy and Gunter House, Eisteddfodau in Abergavenny, and the Hunt for Verdun Oaks and Chestnuts grown in Bailey Park. There was also a report from the Research Group on the Abergavenny Street Survey, recording the monuments in the Old Hereford Road Cemetery, recusancy in Gwent, and The Home Front in Abergavenny in WW1.

2. To provide information about local history to visitors and more widely, the research group completed the updating and digitisation of the Abergavenny Street Survey and established a website: www.abergavenystreetsurvey.co.uk which is freely accessible. This has resulted in some feedback from interested residents and others. The research group have also had their work published with two articles resulting from their transcription of The Abergavenny Vestry book in the C18th, and another on Eisteddfodau in Abergavenny, appearing in the Gwent Local History Journal, so that the work is available in the public domain.

The society provided staff for the Lle Hanes (History Place) at the National Eisteddfod where they sold books on local history and answered many queries. A display about local history was also produced for the tent. Guided walks around the historic area of Abergavenny were offered daily but unfortunately there was little demand.

A bilingual booklet with a history trail around Abergavenny (Taith Trwy'r Hanes/ Walking through History) was written by Helen Morgan and published by the society in preparation for the National Eisteddfod and is being sold at the Museum and Tourist Information Centre

as well as our other publications. Publications are also available for sale at lectures and other events attended by the chairman such as the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association and Gwent County History Society. A calendar produced by Helen & David Morgan to raise funds for the National Eisteddfod also paid for extra day tickets for the society to provide someone to be available every morning and afternoon the National Eisteddfod was held.

The society continues to support the Abergavenny Eisteddfod with a contribution towards the prizes and the chairman presented the prizes to the literary competition. We were pleased to hear from one of the people from King Henry VIIIth School to whom we had given a history award three years ago – Matthew Collier gained a first in History from Aberystwyth University. We will be giving awards this year to Bethan Gilson and Robert King who reading history at Exeter and Cardiff respectively.

Once a week, the society organises and provides a human presence in St Mary's Priory Church which contains one of the best collections of monuments in the country. This provides information about the collection and its links to the local history to visitors and local people.

The society continues to provide information via the website:

www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.co.uk from where guided walks can be downloaded or leaflets or books requested. Information about the society activities is available. Visitors can attend lectures free (although we do ask for a donation). Links to other societies of relevance are also provided and there is a query page where questions about local history can be collected. Answers are provided or the question passed onto other bodies who may be able to assist. The annual report and financial reports will be made available on the website.

3. The Castle and Museum continue to be floodlight during the evenings of September to April and sponsorship is sought from members towards the cost of maintenance and electricity, although most of this comes out of the main account. The Victorian Garden in the Castle grounds, maintained by members, continues to attract many compliments from visitors.

The new display cabinets at the Museum, towards which the society contributed £1,000, make it easier to view and appreciate the displays of local finds. We helped with the background information on John Owen Y Fenni to whom a new display case has been dedicated.

Members of the society volunteer at the Museum and the chairman has helped prepare reports with the Museum Curator, such as the Statement of Significance and Need for the Castle and Museum and to the Heritage Plan for the next five years.

Trustees during 2016 were:

Chairman: G Wakley. Secretary: M Senior. Treasurer: J. Davies until May 2016, B Hurley until January 2017.

H. Buchanan, J Butt, C Fairclough, D Morgan, H Morgan, G Oakley, J Patrick, D Phillips, S Smith, J White. R Rogers is nominated as the representative from Monmouthshire Museums.

There is an urgent need for more members to volunteer to help run the society as many of the committee wish to retire after many years of service.

G Wakley Chairman