

Newsletter No 4: July 2019



LLANTHONY
VALLEY &
DISTRICT
HISTORY
GROUP

www.llanthonyhistory.wales



Cwmyoy Hall talks 2019

At our *January meeting* Justine Wheatley provided a scholarly view on the impact of the Romans on the Black Mountains area between 43-410CE, highlighting the important role the Iron Age Forts at the bottom of the Llanthony valley, Twyn y Gaer and Pentwyn, played in the resistance of the Silurians to Roman conquest.

January	Romans in the Black Mountains area
February	Changes in our natural environment
March	Recusancy and the Gunter project
April	The local influence of the National Park

In *February* our meeting on past and future changes in our local natural environment began with interesting perspectives from Steph Tyler (on plants and birds), Jeff Davies (erstwhile National Park warden) and Colin Passmore (Llanthony farmer). A wide-ranging discussion ensued with many contributions from the floor.

In *March* Rupert Otten told us about some of the families and martyrs from Monmouthshire and Herefordshire involved in 17th century Catholic recusancy, including the influential Gunter family who built the Gunter mansion in 1625. He described the archaeological survey of the house conducted in 2018 by the Plas Gunter Mansion project.

As a result of popular demand that he continue National Parks warden Clive Williams gave the longest History Group talk ever (almost 1½ hours) at our April meeting. Using a collection of photographs he talked about the history of the BBNP and its current activities.

History Walks 2019

Cwm Dic and the Ffwyddog May 15th

Following coffee and biscuits provided by Camilla Swift a tour of the mysterious half-excavated structures at Cwm Dic in the grounds of the Pant was led by David Austin and Jeremy Swift. Cwm Dic was built on a slope; at the top and quarried into the hill were 3-4 small adjoining houses which were occupied between the 15th and 17th centuries. Excavated ceramics from different times are on view in a case by the buildings. Down the slope there were 4-5 revetted terrace levels some of which has been dug out. A stream went down the middle and there was a stone-lined dam and walls which looked like bases for launders which deliver water to mill wheels. Water mills were used in mediaeval iron smelting processes but David thought it more likely the water was used by weavers for fulling and to power looms. Further investigation should produce evidence in favour of one or other theory – this would benefit from funding.



Llanvihangel Court and Llanvihangel Crucorney and Pandy

Julia Johnson led us on a fascinating tour of Llanvihangel Court, the stables built by Nicholas Arnold II in the 1630s and the cider mill and press. She provided refreshments and let the group use the library for their picnic and to listen to, and supplement, short talks on some aspects of the history of Llanvihangel Crucorney and Pandy. Douglas related how, during the last ice age, the Llanvihangel end moraine diverted the Honddu from the Usk (which used to flow through Cwm Coed-y-Cerrig) to the Monnow and thence the Wye.

Important historical features of the village highlighted on Pip's map included Pen-y-Dre (17th century), St Michaels' Church, the Skirrid Mountain Inn, the three vernacular houses at the bottom of Skirrid pitch, the Presbyterian and Baptist chapels, the Grosmont tramroad, Pandy school, knocked down after the widening of the road, and Pandy and Llanvihangel Crucorney railway stations.



Interesting residents included John Arnold (1635-1702) and a female architect (Isabella? Bernadette?) from the Rosher family who designed a number of estate cottages in Pandy in the 1870s. Three Jeremiah Roshers owned Trewyn from the late 18th century until 1895. Academic and author Raymond ('Jim') Williams grew up in Pandy and Rosie Russell described his life, his family, his first play which was produced in Pandy Hall, and the novel 'Border Country' which draws on his family experiences in Pandy. Using Kelly's directories and the memoir of Stanley Bayley Pip described some of the features of the village in the early 19th

century.

In the afternoon we visited St Michael's church and John and Mary Evans at the Mill where the discussion ranged over many pieces of history.

Cwmyoy hamlet and environs July 10th

The group met outside St Martin's church and talked about the geology and historic landuse visible in the wider landscape. They looked at the monuments inside the church including those in memory of residents of Llwyn Celyn and the Siarpal. Henri Collings, who grew up in Cwmyoy) found the site of the grave (later moved) of a German POW (Heinrich Harkötter) killed in a forestry accident in 1918. We passed the site of the Black Lion pub and visited the school which was built as a church school in 1855 and remained in use for a century.

Most of the group then walked up the Graig path via White Castle (second quarter of C19) to Ty Hwnt y Bwlch where they picnicked before exploring and discussing the fascinating C16 and C17 century farmhouse at length thanks to Caroline Dashwood. Some then walked on to Blaenyoy farm at the top of the Cwm where they talked to farmer Bill Smith. Henry led the group back to the church identifying where a jettisoned German bomb had fallen on the Graig in c1942 and the site of his family's market garden and the bungalow built by his father in c1932.



Research Day Saturday 6th April Cwmyoy Hall

Not many people came to the morning session but that allowed some interesting in-depth discussions on a range of topics including Welsh-speaking around Capel-y-ffin and mills and millers. We looked at Pip's draft for the snowy winters project which will be supplemented with information from Voices of our Valley interviews and also at the website and the Dropbox folder both of which are to be re-constructed. Oliver Fairclough used a powerpoint to talk about his research on Ffordlas (on the west side above the Grwyne Fawr valley) and its residents and the sources he has been using.

In the afternoon we started a new project about the **history of the houses and their residents** in the Llanthony and Grwyne Fawr Valleys and Forest Coalpit and Bettws. Pip brought large maps showing inhabited houses in the Llanthony and Grwyne Fawr valleys and Forest Coalpit and Bettws and a list of the houses with the some of the names of current and past residents added. Eleven invited long-term residents came to share their memories of houses, the people living in them, and their relations with residents of other houses and these were recorded. Colin Knight brought lists of people he could remember from the 1940s and we will be using Isobel McGrachan's research on houses and residents and adding to our accumulating knowledge with individual interviews.

Cwmyoy Hall talks September 2019 – April 2020: 3rd Wednesday of month at 7 p.m.

Our new programme covers the histories of Llanvihangel Court, local apple-growing and cider-making, the Priory and local churches, local primary schools, the Civil War, and the decline of Welsh in the valley, and includes a Christmas party with films. The programme is on the website www.llanthonyhistory.wales and will be circulated. Membership: £10 a household, £7 an individual. Join at a meeting or contact Pip Bevan [pbevan@mokoro.co.uk, 01873 890609]

The Llanthony Valley: a Borderland by Oliver Fairclough

The history group book costs £10 but joint and single members may buy 1 copy for £5. Contact oliverfairclough@yahoo.co.uk; 01873 890540

Join the history group: £10 for a household, £7 for an individual. Contact pbevan@mokoro.co.uk or come to the (very short) AGM in Cwmyoy Hall on Wednesday September 18th 7 pm followed by an Oliver Fairclough talk on 'Llanvihangel Court: buildings & people'.

