



Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Llanelli Llanelli Historical Society

President: Sir David Mansel Lewis, KCVO, JP, FRCA, KSJ

Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 1
March

Nostalgia Evening, Early Llanelli on Film

The films of old Llanelli screened at the February meeting proved to be a great success. The evening began with the Stepney wedding of 1911, and this was followed with the opening of the Benjamin Howells factory, the unveiling of the Parc Howard bowls pavilion, the last days of the Mercury newspaper and the Queen's visit to Llanelli in 1953. More than a hundred people were present and there were times when the room was abuzz as members of the audience recognised people in the footage.

Derek Newton-Goverd has done some splendid work in transferring these old films to DVD and laying a soundtrack of appropriate music to them. This certainly enhanced our enjoyment of this historic footage.

The project is an ongoing venture, with the Society working in partnership with the Llanelli Library. The Chairwoman welcomed Mr Mark Jewell, chief librarian, to the meeting and he was presented with the first of



many planned DVDs that will form a set to be stored in the library.

We were all delighted to have with us that evening, Harry Davies (known to many as Harry Scarlet) who was able to name for us many of the people who appeared in the "Last Days of the Mercury." Harry had been employed at the Mercury some years before the film was made, and he delighted us with anecdotes, and some of his personal memories of that time. Thank you Harry.



Harry and Joyce Davies seen here with Iris Vereschinsky, one of the many members who took the opportunity to welcome them into the Society

In her introduction the chairwoman also acknowledged the work done by a former chief librarian, Harold Prescott, without whose foresight and enthusiasm we would not have had this wonderful collection of old films.

Inside this issue:

<i>Publishing Fund</i>	2
<i>Open Days</i>	2
<i>LHS in the Llanelli Star</i>	2
<i>Railway Strike Riots</i>	2
<i>Book Launch</i>	3
<i>Sticke Tennis at Cilymaenllwyd</i>	3
<i>LHS Committee</i>	3

Awards for all Wales

The committee is delighted to announce that the Society has received a second grant from Awards for all Wales. £3,000 has been given to the LHS to finance this year's open days, and to support the ongoing work undertaken by Society members.

Following last year's Open Day, we received many invitations to take the results of our research projects out into the community, and many Society members gave talks and presentations to groups throughout Llanelli and district. This financial support will greatly assist that work in the future, and make preparation for this year's open days far easier.

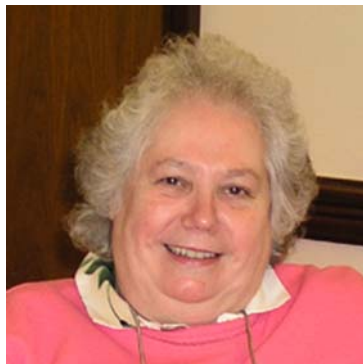
**Open Days
Friday, May 14th
Saturday, May 15th
More inside!**



Publishing Fund

Thanks to the generous and ongoing donations from Benita Afan Rees and William Rees, the LHS has been able to open a publishing fund. Benita and William are donating £5 from the sale of every CD Rom, "Llanelli- Birth of a Town" that is sold either through the LHS or at the Llanelli Star Offices. The fund is already truly launched but we will also be looking for donations from grant sources to further boost this fund so that we can enable Society members to see their work in print.

An editorial group will be formed shortly with the task of looking at manuscripts and if there is anyone who might be interested in this kind of involvement, please contact the secretary (e-mail or telephone would work well for this-joycemollet@beeb.net or 755388).



everybody about every subject I was working on at the time, pubs, chapels, industry, shops etc.

It was through this personal contact that I have made so many friends. Now I have emails and letters from all over the world, and every time I open up my email I find someone interesting to correspond with. I even have

a letter from none other than the Duke of Wessex (formerly Prince Edward) on post-boxes, of all subjects!

Open Days

**Friday for the schools and
Saturday for the public**

Llanelli Parish Hall

The first planning meeting/workshop for our Open Days will be held at the J Arthur Rank Building, Trostre Road, (Foothold) on

Saturday, March 13th at 9.30 am.

Many of you have already shown an interest in becoming involved so please come along—all are welcome.

Benita has contributed the following words of encouragement to other Society members:

Since I came to Llanelli ten years ago and became fascinated by the town's history I have made many friends and acquaintances. In the beginning I was not sure where to start so I began at the public lending library and then as my confidence grew I progressed to the reference library.

Then I wrote to anybody and

I would like to say to anyone who is interested in history, but unsure about what to do, take the bull by the horns, ask and write, and you will be surprised what you can uncover.

Good luck, if I can do it, anyone can do it, go for it!!!

LHS in the Llanelli Star

Members of the Early History Group and their achievements were recognised in the Star on February 12th.

Greg Jones in his article reported how CADW has declared the island in Pontwym - Old Castle Pond, " to be the past location of a large artificial earth mound known as a motte bailey." The article was illustrated with John Wynne Hopkins' sketch of the location as it would have looked in the 13th century.

The Early History Group has reason to be proud of the work they put in on the research and documentation of this site and for drawing CADW's attention to the importance of the site and



the need to officially recognize it.

Here we see two of the group members, Peter Francis and Colin Morgan, preparing the dinghy for an expedition over to the island.

1911 Llanelli Railway Strike Riots



The programme for 2004 was launched with an extremely well received talk from John Edwards where he outlined the events of this important period in the town's history. The talk was made even more interesting in that we were not only able to share in John's extensive research into this period, but also heard, at first hand, the "story" of the publication of his book. He related some of his experiences and the attitudes in the town that still prevailed more than seventy years later. Extremely informative and very entertaining – thank you, John.



Book Launch

The launch of "Eddie John and the Lost Community" by LHS member, Nevil Williams, took place on 4th December 2003.

The title indicates the dual purpose of the book. Firstly, it is a tribute to his late stepfather, Eddie John, for his evangelistic and pastoral ministries in Carmarthenshire, especially in South Llanelli where he established the Burry and Morfa Gospel Halls.

Secondly, it is a record of the history of the villages of Machynys and Bwlchgywynt where he lived and worked. They have now disappeared because of the



Redevelopment Proposals of the Local Authorities.

The Communities First and Foothold Group Partnership along with the Local Authorities have sponsored the book. A copy has been sent to the Welsh Assembly and it has been sold at the Social Evening of the

LHS, the Llanelli Star Office and Llyfrau'r Ddraig, and the proceeds will provide funding for future publications. It is also in the Welsh section of the 10 local lending libraries and in the library of Lampeter University, where Nevil graduated in 1980. In all, 500 copies have been sold.

Comments regarding the book are encouraging, such as, "excellent," "very interesting," "humorous" and "well

LHS Committee

Chairwoman:
Caroline DeAbreu: 756141
Secretary:
Joyce Mollet: 755388
Treasurer:
John Williams: 810677

Committee Members:
Peter Francis: 759920
Derek Newton-Goverd 775943
John Wynne Hopkins: 750761
Lyn John: 774273
Alec Jones: 757656
Ken Jones: 772479
Vaughan Jones: 756232

compiled." Providing there is sufficient demand a reprint is possible.

To make a provisional order phone Nevil after 6pm on 752599 or the above-mentioned outlets.

Question: What can be found in Llanelli and nowhere else in Wales?

Answer: A Sticke Tennis court.

"But what is Sticke Tennis?" I hear you ask.

We were able to discover the answer to this at the beginning of February when we had a very interesting visitor at our monthly meeting.

Graham Tomkinson visited Llanelli from Beaconsfield, Bucks in his quest to research the history of the game for a forthcoming publication. He had discovered that the only purpose built court in Wales was at

Cilymaenllwyd, and had been built by Sir Stafford and Lady Meriel Howard back in 1913.

Benita and William Rees, and Joyce Mollet accompanied Graham on a visit to Cilymaenllwyd where the farmer opened up his barn and Graham was able to confirm that, yes, this was a purpose built court.

We were able to see the viewing gallery with original fireplace and staircase, the specially designed doors and door-handles, and examine the extra thick plaster on the walls to withstand the pounding of the balls.

If Lady Stepney was an active participant, as this indicates, then it is not hard to trace the genes that her daughter, Marged Howard Stepney inherited to become a junior Wimbledon champion!

Graham explains the game as follows:

Sticke Tennis was and still is a hybrid game that is half way between Lawn Tennis and Real Tennis and played in a closed court (about 80 feet x 28 feet) with lawn tennis rackets. It used the walls (like squash) but was played with the style and characteristics of Real Tennis. About 30 courts in total were built. Only two are in current use, one of which was built in 1904 (Hartham Park, Wiltshire) and one in 1907 (Knighthayes in Devon).

The Sticke Tennis Court at Cilymaenllwyd was one of these 30 courts - my reference is from the Tennis and Rackets Association meeting minutes - all of whose other Court references have been found to be correct. They refer to Sir Stafford having built the court and Mrs. Garnons Williams' memory of the balls being dyed red.

