



Cymdeithas Hanesyddol Llanelli

Llanelli Historical Society

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

**Newsletter
September 2006
Volume 4, Issue 3**

Founder member: Caroline De Abreu

Established 1999

Robin Craig Collection

The Committee of the LHS is very proud to make the following announcement.

In May of this year, Robin Craig, a well-respected maritime historian, Llanelli man and member of the Society since its launch in 1999, donated the Carmarthenshire section of his extensive library to the LHS.

The magnitude of this gift will become clear when we report that two vehicles had to make the trip to Dover to bring back the collection. Early on a Friday morning in May four members of the committee (Caroline DeAbreu, Joyce Mollet, Benita Afan Rees and William Rees) set off for Dover. After a warm welcome by Robin, they



Robin, summoning the group to start loading the cars!

immediately got down to the task in hand - exploring the collection and making decisions on what could be brought back. Work continued throughout the weekend and on Sunday the priceless collection was

packed into the two vehicles. It would be impossible to record here the details of what the collection consists of, but suffice to say that the unique personal records, maps, books and sets of journals will keep Society members occupied in research and writing for many years.

Committee members have been very glad of the Summer recess for it has given them the opportunity to begin work on the sorting, cataloguing and safe storage of the items.

Kidwelly Civic Society Dinner

Members of the Kidwelly Civic Society warmly welcome all members of the LHS to join them at their Annual Dinner, to be held at the Ashburnham Hotel, Pembrey, on the evening of Thursday 14th September. This year's guest speaker is William Wilkins, and his topic will be Llanelli House. Tickets are priced at £14 and anyone interested in joining the LHS Chairwoman's party should contact Caroline (01554 756141) as soon as possible.



Robin, at his home in St. Margaret's Bay, Dover, with members of the LHS, chairwoman, Caroline DeAbreu and committee members, Benita and William Rees.

Some members will know Robin personally and many more will have met him when he travelled from his home in Dover to speak at our monthly meeting in March 2003 on the subject of trade and shipping in Llanelli. This is an extremely generous gift and the Society feels honoured that he has chosen us to be the custodians of such a valuable collection.

New Web Site (<http://www.llanellihistorical.co.uk/>)

The committee is very proud to announce the launch of the LHS revamped web site. It is the work of Jason Gill at "anabolic budgie" (<http://www.anabolic-budgie.co.uk/>). He has done an extremely professional job and we can all be rightly proud of the result. We have already had a great deal of positive feedback about the site, for example the British Association of Local History, on their web site (<http://www.balh.co.uk/directory.php?cat=local>) described it as "An exemplary local society website, effective, clear and easy to use"

Well done Jason and thanks from us all.



Awards for all Wales Update



Most of the grant that the Society was awarded earlier this year has now been spent and as a result, we have a very efficient and portable sound system. We also have camera equipment (including video and still cameras) so that all our talks and presentations can be professionally recorded and will then find a place in our ever-growing library. The cameras will also be available to the various research groups so that good quality records can be kept of any work undertaken.

Thank you, John Gallacher

A large number of maps form part of the Robin Craig Collection and John Williams took over the sorting, cataloguing and storage of these. Some were in a fragile condition and all irreplaceable, many dating back to the 19th century. He was concerned about how we would store these until it was suggested that we use the heavyweight cardboard tubes around which carpeting is rolled for delivery. Paul DeAbreu contacted John Gallacher of Gallacher Carpets, Llanelli, who came to the rescue and has supplied the Society with sufficient of these tubes to store all the large maps. At one stage Paul felt a little like the Sorcerer's Apprentice when, in the Summer, the tubes kept on being delivered on his doorstep, as they became available, with seemingly no way of stemming the tide!

Many thanks to John Gallacher for providing us with free and secure storage for the maps and to John Williams for his work in sorting, storing and then labeling each container. The committee now plans to photograph each map in sections, storing the images on the computer and creating an index of the collection. Members who wish to refer to the maps for research purposes can then make a request and receive a printout of the relevant map.

Your Society needs you

The Committee would like to apply for charitable status for the Society. Is there anyone in the membership who has experience of this and feels they would like to undertake the task. of form filling and generally pursuing this goal ? If you feel that that person is you, then please contact a committee member.



Robin shares some of his unique photographic collection.

October Raffle

The raffle prize at our October meeting, (Monday 2nd October) will be a bit more special than usual, thanks to the Robin Craig Collection. The framed print is of two engravings of the Parish Church, one of which is a rare view of the exterior and was found in one of the books from the collection. So, don't forget to purchase your ticket when you arrive at the meeting to be in with a chance to win and take home this fine prize.



Please keep in mind that Peter Francis (co-editor of the Llanelli Miscellany) is still accepting articles for inclusion in this year's Miscellany. The deadline is upon us so if you have any work to be considered, please contact Peter immediately. (His contact number can be found on the next page.)

Members' thoughts on the Summer Break

Let the committee know your views on having a summer break. Do you want to continue with this next year? Was the timing right? Should it be shorter? Should we offer trips/outdoor activities instead of meetings in the summer months? Caroline has already started to put together the programme for next year and would welcome some feedback.

Rest of the programme for 2006

We can look forward to two meetings before Christmas. The October meeting when we will view Llanelli, past and present on film, and November when the Early History Group will give their final presentation on the work they have done on water mills in Llanelli and surrounding area.

Grant from the Town Council

The Llanelli Town Council has once more made a generous donation to assist in the Society's finances. We are very grateful for their generosity and the money is a great help with the ever-increasing running costs of the Society.



Stop Press On Sunday, 20th August, the editor was at her desk preparing the September newsletter when the phone rang. “Drop the dead donkey, get down here fast, Park Street is ablaze”, was the message from the chair of the Society. In true Kate Adie style the editor covered the story for the LHS!!



Sadly, members of the Society watched as part of Llanelli’s heritage went up in flames taking with it the hope of “renovation rather than demolition”. They watched as one of the little shops in Upper Park Street burned and the typical Victorian shop frontage was destroyed, further threatening the survival of the remaining shops.

Many Llanelli residents watched as firemen successfully contained the blaze to just one of the properties but few seemed aware of the history of the buildings. They saw an eyesore in the town going up in flames little



realising that this was one of the oldest parts of Llanelli, once a thriving shopping area and the main route through the town. Over the last twenty years these fine buildings have been left to deteriorate. However, towns that have valued their old buildings and chosen to restore them rather than demolish them have reaped the benefit in the form of an increase in visitors and a far more attractive environment.

On that Sunday afternoon, watching the further deterioration of these buildings, the question remained, which way will Llanelli decide to go? Will we see more demolition or, this time, will these valuable assets be respected and will a programme of restoration be adopted? Sadly, we all knew the outcome. These buildings would go, in much the same way, as so many of Llanelli’s old buildings have gone over the past years, often to be replaced by inferior structures.

May Meeting

In May we had a visit from Peter Goodall who spoke on the history of Swansea Prison. Peter has written a number of books on this aspect of social history all of which we have in the Society Library, including his most recent, “Ring the Bell in the Gaols of Brecon”. Thanks to Peter for an extremely interesting talk.



June Meeting

In June, David Mathias spoke on the subject of “Trafalgar”. Having so recently celebrated the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, we were delighted to welcome David who is President of the Llanelli Branch of the Royal Naval Association. Our thanks to David for a very interesting talk.

July Meeting

Two of our own members made the presentation in July. Caroline and Paul DeAbreu gave us an illustrated account of the second year of the Boer War. In last year’s programme, they related the lead up to the War and the events of the early months, and this year they continued the story. Paul gave an overall view of the events of the second year of the war, while Caroline reported on Llanelli’s involvement. We were transported back to Llanelli of 1900 and seeing the faces of the men who fought, hearing their names and learning of the local events of the day made it a very real experience.

Those who were unable to attend the meeting can read the account in an article by Caroline and Paul in this year’s Miscellany.

LHS Committee	
Chairwoman:	
Caroline DeAbreu:	756141
Secretary:	
Joyce Mollet:	755388
Treasurer:	
John Williams:	810677
Committee Members:	
Peter Francis:	759920
Derek Newton-Goverd:	775943
Pamela Raikes	
Benita Afan Rees:	775320
William Rees	775320

Please send any contributions for future newsletters to the editor, Joyce Mollet. News, views, short articles, letters, photographs - all welcome!